Jean Bernard Parr
- poems -

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Jean Bernard Parr (26th May.1946)

Brought up in Britain after the war.
Briefly trained as an art restorer
Worked as film editor mostly news and current affairs
and writing screenplays and fiction

point my telescope at the night sky
sail my Laser on the Bristol Channel, when its not too rough.
Stare out of windows
A bee stumbles into
our glasshouse the way
a man back from the pub
stumbles through the front
deroor after closing time

so I have my feet up on my
rickety garden chair
and right there a drama is
playing out, the silly bugger
has bumbled his way
up to the apex where a spider lurks
a tiny knot of barbed wire
the web ragged and will-do
I am friends with the bumblebee
a bear with humming wings
so close to freedom yet
closer to the ectoplasm trap
the spider is goal- hanging now
biding his time as the bee
starts to twirl in the thread

I coax him away from
the lethal mess he's in
finally out to open sky
dizzies to the sun
instead of being dead
and I ask myself
who once shot rabbits
with a gun, what's not fair
is something we make up
and depends on storybooks
we liked, and kept by the bed

Jean Bernard Parr
A Stoning

cut the moon I grabbed
between clouds
the walking wounded
this raddled and
tragic moon, sports
the pox
all exaggerated in her
pale kabukki make-up
so injured
take your eye away
and weep for the eons of pain
in those sharp craters
that something so bright
so big should suffer
this eternal drive-by,
you get a sense
of what it was like
that day on Golgotha
laughter and jeering
a casual spear thrust
and the taking
a long time to die
well its the same
with this moon
she got a stoning
like that girl on U-tube
these wise old men
from the village
and with a rock
dash the brain as
her mouth makes
soundless words
they pulled her skirt
over her legs
for the sake of modesty
don't tell me it doesn't
feel, this body
the one you're
standing on does
Jean Bernard Parr
Accusation

You don't have mudguards
she said, delicate boned
below the transparent almonds
of her haughty lorgnette
a failure of
culture it is, then
I, feel
too soon dragooned into
preparing
for monsoon
the pearls remain fingered
and the question lingers
an ectoplasm of
steam from the
La Gaggia machine hovers
above our heads like a
comic strip speech bubble
'no' I say 'mudguards are
too much trouble'
not to have mudguards
in this country with
its green squares in
patchwork quilt not
having mudguards
is an observation
by those who choose
sensible shoes
owners of houses in
the Dordogne who dimly
suppose they know
the rules of cricket
where rain
can stop play,
clearly, they
don't understand the
essence of cycle racing
they
who are in tune with
barbour and dogs and all
things british.
Here, in not sporting
mudguards, I show myself
to be no better than
a whirling devil,
likely to run amok
upsetting the tea things
inspite of lashings
of tutoring
from Dan Dare
keeping in check
those grim faced Treens
I ride uneasy I
ride away, away,
rootless, orphaned
again and again
life chained to unbeing
on these indecent and
unsheathed wheels
afraid to tread this
minesewn English soil

Jean Bernard Parr
An Easterly

For three days
a cutting wind
my hands share
an infants' sock
I, for a second,
thought to leave
it on the path;
a nest-borne,
enriched
doting knit that
may jolt return.

Of winter clothes
I need none, but
this bone-saw wind
hid behind a sun
that beckoned
and did not warm
did not warn
being frozen
makes it easier
to steal from
one so young.

Jean Bernard Parr
An Unopened Present

'I have to rush' and
'I will open it later'
hush, do
and give birth to
an unborn child
a tiny mite that lies
boxed, in state for days
forgotten on alabaster mantle
so like a flower of joy, crushed
when about to bloom, now
buried in history's frigid loam
forgotten, become a sarcophagus,
pale ribboned, in the hearts' unheated
room. There is no life in the
unopened, for that is to be ungiven
else we would all be citizens
of the labyrinth and the pyramid
where the unseen is everlasting
so neat and daintily strangled
a friendship is, by that fast fading ribbon
it's bow immobile as the dust pinned
moth in heavy curtained gloom
and in a week or a month
the phone might ring
and down the line come
like unstopped wine, the gushing thanks
and gilded poean, too late
the guardian flame already guttered
and not my tears solidified
on wax white and petrified columns
grade, I vow never again
to do things later

Jean Bernard Parr
As The Wind Does

She did as the wind does
jail-broke me out,
me, unseen, the unseeing,
there's a forehead,
a breast so smooth, you
can see in parts I was adored

she did as the wind does
look, me at the window
following the flight of a dove
or is it something harder
going on out there?
Something harder even
than the stone I'm made of

She did as the wind does
wore me down, til I was bare
and then she dare not make
another chip to leave me
asymetrical, leave me eyes
that aren't identical

She did as the wind does
with her reckless blows!
I got away lightly
with a scar on my lip
two stone hearts going
knock, knock!
at the last chisel cut
it was the silence
that begged her to stop

Jean Bernard Parr
At Sully

They came to the playing field
by the sea in waves they came,
this joyful host, of guides and scouts
these fizzing lives breathing blue above
and green below, the redding sun
eeking out its evening loan

and inbetween tufts of squeals, I hoist
a bright boat sail to slap the wind,
a young mind, pausing to look
may play undimmed, a slowed down
cinema scene, even in the shaking years,
and fashion a compass, from this
crimson shimmer, this heady shout
unhoisted, all dreams come to nowt

Jean Bernard Parr
Autumn At Dogmersfield, Hampshire

On my bike I gatecrashed
a rush of trees, quietly
gold-leaved, stately
and with a still solemnity
my arrival announced
by a hooting owl
there was such a blush
you had no idea that these
dark veined branches
were soon to lose their charges
impatient and clicking
soon to carpet this woodland floor
and mask stealthy footfall
of winter's prowl

It was a parade, as such
with military decorum
this blazing infantry
in splendid silence-
no surging rabble this-
one by one, summoned to fall
by high voiced twittering
sparrow call

And inbetween this
shimmer and sheen
a russet fox appears
serious as a sergeant major
and I swear he said
well, what are you doing here?
a blink and he is gone
and then I realise
that in his stiff red fur
he is at one
with what is going on

My handlebars are twisted
into a silver question mark;
is this one of those special years
where autumn brings a blaze
like a good year for the vine
or is it that I’m seeing it
for the first and last time?

I made a note the other day
to watch at night a meteor shower-
none came, and a meeting
of Venus, Jupiter and Mars
was spoiled by the rain,
but as I leave the known road
the way bark leaves a whittled stick,
it's got closer this vault of stars
and lives in every arching bower

Jean Bernard Parr
Before You Get To Euston

before Euston
it gets dark
the almost tunnels
among zombie shadows
and clankings
sepulchral side chapels
Red Bull tins, strewn
and votive
everything
browning
with unnatural oils that
thicken the cable coils
lumbering
my train
painfully
riding the points
backbone straining
then back to black
and shufflings for
luggage on rack
the grimy window
flickers
images of factories
with long histories
and there
down there
on the tarry track
in a
cone of light
between
ferocious
swords of
glistening steel
a small green and
trembling weed
small
defiant
a first night actress
you can see
she brings news
of a movement
but with our
well rehearsed
yearnings
hearts pounding
as we reach
for the handle
on the outside
and step down
beestormed
with uncertainties
we miss the point
the early warning
we miss

Jean Bernard Parr
Between Fleet And Crookham

I saw a golden hill today
and as my eyes drank their fill,
wished for a sky of azure blue
but knowing it would dazzle,
and be untrue, settled instead for grey

A black rag crow tenants that tree,
forlorn, whose eastward lean
is ordered by our turning world
I am grateful for a sky of muddled grey
not one of gaudier hue
a gentle zephyr wanders
careless through the corn
wavers under soft caress
I turn to speak with you

Jean Bernard Parr
Billy Is A Grass

They whitewashed
it on the end wall
the day he got out
got two be out in twelve
and now back, another
house with a steel door
she went crazy
and there were lights
flashing blue
and the fat kid
with the sweetwrapper heart
is out on the street
the word is out for Billy
Billy is a grass
I saw the social worker
sitting in her battered Micra
all worked over
with neck band, badge
going home to the gin
you cant get in
they changed the locks
yesterday
yes
every other day
is yesterday

Jean Bernard Parr
Blue

Theres a blueness
close to heaven pure
when the sky has done
with weightlifting
these grey dumbbells
now in a corner dumped
look who's here!
this bright moon
doorstepping like a
girl blushed up for going out
you want to shout, to shout
this should be dawn!
not the lights going out

Jean Bernard Parr
Bonsai

Changing the shape
of a young tree
is a pretty brutal affair
you get the steel beak
in hand to cut those
unruly aerial wands
bunkered buds asleep
now
so dead, and if you left it
til spring its a hurried
cull with a blade that's dull
then, burn the evidence
in this washing machine drum
but your tree has a stammer now
and is all fucked up
got the shape of
wooden lightning sprouting
from the ground up

then, some day soon
when the wind shakes
and snatches at the car door
and twirls the ghost of
a shopping trolley across
the tarmac floor, you
remember that sapling
the kids nearly broke making
a path through to the
gas station, moths to the neon
the sweet counter, that platoon
conscripted by mums
to get the milk,
the path shone in the rain
a Boeing contrail undone
like a ribbon of silk
the little tree healed now
look
between windscreen lashes
how graceful these
wind curved limbs
this ballet of
riot-bent branches
it just goes to show
it will come out alright
if you leave things alone
to take their chances

Jean Bernard Parr
Bright Beach

to walk into the beach shop
child
this is what heaven is
child
windmill on stick, the whirling
dazzle, the bin of colours
the rainbow in bits
child,
feast the virgin eye
hurl image to your brain
gorge on shimmering a
glittering
a child,
now
here comes the dark parent
with his dark matter
not for nothing does he wear
Ray Bans
child, break free
asterisk shape
your revolution,
scream the portal
become snow crystal
child
unchain from
summer heat, graze
fields of
glitter, trail bright flowers
that beat with glitter
child, gaze
with discoverers' gaze
untest the test
when one day
you shoulder a pack
eyses you will have
to see only the best

Jean Bernard Parr
Brittany Ferry

I'm OK with this engine, this
trembling giant beneath
I'm OK with this circle of sea
round as a cats' saucer of milk
cute as baby kiss curls

you know, don't you, how to
summon a deeper growl, I've seen
them claws, that furious mane
but for now

there are children moiling
for want of a plaything

a balloon twisted into sausage shapes
squeals in piglet capture rapture
teased away by big brother
and his piano-wide maniac laugh

and so begins the plaintive plainsong
and so, on the duty free deck
performs pirouetting victim-sister,
pull-cords her liturgy of mewing

in tongues, a voice announces
a lunchtime quiz, the promise of fun

A mum, a dad, iPhone raddled
and automaton stiff, they struggle
with the realism of glassy stairs
and all around, the sea, the hissing sea

Jean Bernard Parr
Canal At Dogmersfield July 2019

the willow is a cataract
silent and still, no time for clocks
the canal is full and has drunk
its fill of school chatter raindrops

the dangled and languid fingers of green
as if ordered by some ancient protocol,
stop short of fondling the water;
this makes a dark band, a dark aurora,
its denizens a maddening of flies,
and below
waiting for the moment,
a silver muscle of fish

I walk on the flinty towpath
over there, a flotilla of
going-nowhere twigs
nothing moves in the canal
nothing moves unless something pushes it
just like electricity you see!

and here is me, not here for long
the boy from the city
in my bookcase unopened
a little book on herbs
a present long ago undeserved
and, in meaning to do this and that
made time instead for irregular verbs
and rubbish TV

the canal is going at the same pace
as the galaxy and right on cue
lilypads come into view, their
straining buds urgent with new born stars
that will be for tomorrow

and there is no guessing then
where, nuzzled by a caprice of wind
the little raft of twigs will be
and again the rain, come to smack
the broad docks, rain,
summer sweet and no time now for clocks

Jean Bernard Parr
Car Radio

There is a storm for two days
a wolfish fur-lined sea
I sit in cradle-rocked car
with the radio on, and thinking
how hard opening the door would be.

The branches of trees maniacal
and inside sugarlit seafront houses
ovens bake nice and even
but deep underground
you can sense that moving treacle.

Meanwhile
above all the deep down stirring
there are disappointments
across the table
children who won't do
when they are able.

here will be women
left to cope
because a bloke thinks
there is no hope,
you see, he has a secret plan,
set himself a deadline.

He has found a girl who is just divine
but he doesn't know
what goes on underground
he thinks his world is solid state
when it's nothing of the kind.

When the lovers' hand
is transparent and thin
with veins like twigs
under ice of winter pond
the battery gone
in the doorbell gong
remember this
with the radio on

And in the hallway is a stick
with a badge on it from Keswick
and the campervan
green-roofed, and up on bricks

Grandma once said about
someone who is dead
'he always got out of his chair
and stood to attention
when anyone mentioned
Wellington or Napoleon'

I was a kid, but understood
war made you do things
I imagined a puppet
standing up all jerky
tangled up in strings and wires
a private, who knows
the generals are all liars.

This comes to me
with the radio on
I'm here, tell them I'm here
but the wind is telling me
there is no-one there.

What if there was nothing
to diminish this broiling sky,
a ladle stir of darkening noon
where the best you could hope for
is a low and foggy sun
from which loping shadows loom.

A troupe of gipsy travellers
fan out like lichen on a rock
stoop for kindling,
their wily dogs orbit with
door mat hair, devoid of dread
the women nurse a knot of tinsel red
voice scraps, sharp angled
as the fluttering pennant
at the clattering masthead.
A skein of blue smoke unravels
along the brooding shore
and beyond, the islands bulk
and take a breath for the next
thousand years
all this is here and near
with the radio on

Jean Bernard Parr
Chucking Out The Sofa

Same lifespan
as mums cat
you ring the council
and that's that
my indoor atoll
the north korea
of my comfort zone

No one decided
no death warrant
a new one is coming
from John Lewis
I had to unscrew it
its in the street
ignoble in bits

always too close
to the wall, she said
the wall had to breathe
suffocating sofa!
glad you're gone
I hope the wall
starts to breathe
how do you know?
how can you tell?
walls everywhere,
breathe

Jean Bernard Parr
Colossus Found At Ilfracombe

she is the new Athena
that would be the people's

favourite, her on key rings
bought in gaudy gift shops
just like the Greeks did
dey knew that size mattered

a sharp indrawn breath
that's a long sword she holds

aloft, with a grey wink as the
ships come in, grey with pain
she is, grey, flayed, defiant,
thinks' 'I'm worth it'

if one day they dare uproot
or some vanity crazed fool

comes to chainsaw my bronze
foot, the reverent might one day
tuck me into a loading bay
and send me tumbling through

interstellar space, show
apostates everywhere, woman

at the end of the day, is a
nice piece of work, rather than
a nice piece of ass, you know,
something that's got class

but for now I'm quite happy
to stand guard and tower

above these facebook men
minded I am, to set their
vanities on fire, you can bet
this goddess is here to stay
show you how to make war
and make babies well

Jean Bernard Parr
Dead Tree

white and cat skinned
the storm did for
this muscular trunk
let's straight off debunk
the two hundred proudly
stood years
please, no tears, you were
from day one a runt
an oak will go down
like any other
become home to mice
voles and worms
shelter creatures of
the bustling undergrowth
girth no measure
of sintered worth
in epochal terms

dthis tree will not be less
for loss of uprightness

Jean Bernard Parr
Diva  (1989)

An insistent cymbal
a plangent violin
traffic outside, night rain
On the pavement, zigzag lights
traded in for this
muted mutated murmur
Then a single voice
heralding the pain of God
dwarfing this punier pain
in this cathedral of sound
It is God who rules here,
the shared around One
In all of us.
Now the choir, clean as a laser cut
severs the chains
now, I am free of you

A time ago when
on that day
the day I metalled up to leave you
on that day your blondness didn't help
That bright phare bringing my ship
towards angry wreck

In this valentine red theatre seat
I turn to look at you
a profile once soft and yielding
a hard mask now, petrified by me
I can only guess at the
bundle of thoughts you will carry,
not gift wrapped at all, when you grow old
A time ago when, my grief, it flowed
for days until the tap ran cold

There floating
red-rimmed on the stage
The death lamenting voice,
ululating its
fan of tragedy over us
like a space gun
close the book,
blow out the candle,
ring the bell;
I have excommunicated sorrow,
commanded it to depart
as I sit there beside you,
wishing to be
a machine, a man without a heart.

You cover my hand, too late
the keys have been turned,
the memories spin and blur
the voice shows us the beginning of time,
how we count for nothing, yet are everything.
The voice beckons towards
a journey into nothingness

Forget warm cornfields
blades of grass between parted lips
forget warm bright wood
sunday papers spread like water lilies
forget the swirl of fish, those
gently strangling weeds of parental visit
forget the soft laughter in the room next door
forget the cat purr of the Mini
pouncing at traffic in Camden
forget the stiff cotton nested warmth
of careless creases, and sudden lust
forget the trilling phone, friendly affirmations
and party invitations
forget the fervid murmur in the Anarchists'Bookshop
where there in a corner lurks the reedy acolyte
of the half baked theory
and later, while doing the washing in a hotel laundry
He lisps the litany of distortions and textual evasion
And with a logic at once frightening and dreary
Bends the meaning, perfects the deadly algebra
for genocide in some forgotten nation.

The unity of the choir annihilates my senses
I am transported to a pastoral scene;
a school of pregnant B52s
ploughing high sierra furrows
lowing and lowering, this one an airborne herd
high up and giving birth to death
The new born and unseeing bombs
wind ripped from their metal wombs
'Suck on that, Motherf*****s!'
That will teach you to be poor
That's what you get for eeking
reclaiming and recycling
for mastering small time husbandry
and making the litre of water last all day,
and above all,
that's what you get for looking up,
hand on mattock, anxiously at the sky

'You will find God up here, Motherf*****s
and a special kind of rain'

And the choir empties us of pity
with its celestial syphon
There is no room here for you and me
domestic dramas and burnt toast under the grill
This is about the bigger, and looking down
My hands fly apart, free, a fluttering thrill
I look to you and see a stranger, no emanation
a face cast in granite, immobile with frozen lips
I must go on, having done the deal with
Mephistopheles, taken his gambling chips
I rise from the red plush theatre seat, willing
Feet to walk, suddenly all around
is talk and chatter,
but I hear nothing, just a roaring
one door opens, another to close
Outside, only footsteps clatter
Outside
The black and yellow eyed panther crouches
Waiting.

Jean Bernard Parr
astronaut babies
with semi-detached mums
lip chewing, anxious
on mobile phones
the secretary is
behind protective glass
adjusts lorgnette, later
she will tidy the magazines
and add the Horse and Field
for a touch of class
there's a notice board
with not enough pins
and on it the symptoms
of some nasty things
doctor will see you now
doctor, doctor
there's something wrong
but it's not you, you're in a dream
somewhere in this drum-skin room
there are muted voices, hiss
of water, emulsioned walls that
give away nothing
save bottled babble from a womb
I can't hear the words
to the radio song
outside in too bright sun
thin grass is trimmed
the machine sputters
an algebraic proof
that things go on and on
the young men whistle
troop up to the girl with
the sandwich van
doctor, doctor
there is something wrong
I can't remember the words
to the radio song
Jean Bernard Parr
Dodge City

how easy to choose
fixing a lawnmower
than finish something
you started
how easier to undo
those air filter screws
than to get the paper ball
out of the basket, press
undo, but then there's
the reckoning
rewriting is harder
than gunplay in a
Clint Eastwood movie
you know you gotta go back
in through those batwing doors
leave lawnmowers to townfolk
scattering down sidewalks
then spur-jingled step
in the creak-boarded saloon
"I had to come back"
and he will say
"I know"
we didn't come here to talk

Jean Bernard Parr
Down The Pub

You can have
a proper family
down the pub
they are a laugh
these mates of mine
an old joke or two,
a light ale for me
then its shuffle
back and forth
for a pee
like those great
buffalo migrations
you see on the tele
the ash trays
get emptied
at closing time
remember
you asked for
lager and lime
won the quiz
and got a pink teddy

Jean Bernard Parr
Elfs' Jars

I study her jars stacked on shelves
in the plaster peeling downstairs loo
(space is at a premium in our house)
papyrus labels gone archaeological
but not the love she bottled up
inside, crammed in the genie
who lives in the compost bin
each jar messaged with fruit
borne of her earth
with fingers that soothed
with grateful care
as though
it were stars she hermetically sealed
as though
in her jars, mankind could be healed

Jean Bernard Parr
Evening

ey came to the playing field
by the sea in waves they came,
this joyful host, of guides and scouts
these fizzing lives breathing blue above
and green below, the redding sun
eeking out its evening loan

and inbetween tufts of squeals, I hoist
a bright boat sail to slap the wind,
a young mind, pausing to look
may play this slowed cinema scene
undimmed, even in the shaking years,
and fashion from this a compass, this
crimson shout
make of the world a seed, for
unhoisted, all dreams come to nowt

Jean Bernard Parr
Exodus

Has the emptying of Syria,
all its babies back to the waters,
has it 'made' those grim philosophers,
commercial break cut-throats
in flutter flag black?
their white on bone black
bleached bone script
tutors of gun toting babies
womb ripped

While we go to church
next to the village green
in hot sand a twisted torso
gives a lurch, a womans' scream
makes you swoon
go, Scorpion,
make yourself a ring of fire
sting yourself for a gangster god
a fly-blown dunghill where
your brain should be.

What? No-one left to kill?
No one left alive?
First we remove the head,
that's the dangerous part
in case it creates art
then what?

All you've got left
is a head in the sand
before a bullet in the head

Jean Bernard Parr
Factory Settings

my advice to anyone is
dont customise anything
as it comes, straight
out of the box so dont
customise kids by sending
them to school all you
do is turn them into
a tool
dont change the wallpaper
let the capitalists choose
your blue sky welcome
if I was in your shoes
I wouldnt make anything yours
not the point size the typeface
the borders, your computer
is a hard faced bitch
will glitter
then see you in the gutter

Jean Bernard Parr
Fifth Column

look! how they pour over the wall
look! they are coming to shake the tree
with eyes that sparkle at the lustre
of this still-hanging hoard, even
fruit on the ground looks perfect and round
hot fingers stub and stroke, throw sticks
to get the last ones down, shouts of glee

but this night when the moon creeps
and her bright blade touches the lumber
in the yard, the tiny mite will set to work
beneath the heavy tangled cider-slumber
and in the morning unseen,
burrows into the bruised skin
to quietly deliver ruin within

Jean Bernard Parr
Fleeing

they are gone
muddy on buses
to other places
in France
we are told
some will get old
in those
other parts
stop wishing
for England
forget England
take a chance
then make a dance

Jean Bernard Parr
Girl At Arrivals

She had slipped out
or so it seemed
taken her coat down
from a hook behind the door
next to the tangle
of bridle and cord
She had taken her keys from
the cracked gondolier
fixed long ago
with a river of glue
She had driven through the gate
in the battered Nissan truck
where the wiper only worked
on the drivers' side
the yellow headlight beam
the horizontal rain
became ash from the volcano
on her papier mache island
banished to the attic
once the dust had settled
She had pushed down the pedals
with worn down pumps
mouse grey at the toes
bare legs, unworried
by gorse-shaking flurries.
Her one concession
the favourite dress,
no make-up
gaze and mouth unmoving
set on Arrivals
stainless steel horizon
all letterbox openings and
unexplained clatterings
in that tall and echoing hall
the cleaning machine parked
very neat,
not the crazy angle
of her pick-up truck
She stood and waited
arms at her sides
uncluttered, unlike
this story I made up

Jean Bernard Parr
Glimmer

like puppies
some wont make it
but there is joy
in those that do
so isn't it a miracle
that you've grown up
seen, heard, hated,
touched, poured scorn
and, when
feeling blue said
'I wish I'd never been
born'
well it looks to me
like it isn't up to you

The question is
do you count yourself
among the best
when everything turns
to cosmic dust will
you join hands with
the rest?

And as one day
the world boils dry
and there is no one
left to cry, to mourn
for life undone
will it be the turn
of those unborn
to root and flower
in some distant
celestial bower?

Jean Bernard Parr
Going To See The Chickens  (Niort, France)

My stroke was all wrong
he said,
I watched him plough
lazy ocean swells
now his arm dwells
on the rail, afraid
of footstep fail.

He patched this bit of wall
careful with the trowel
mixed just enough
to do the job
didn't waste none
letting it fall.
His proper tools
on a high shelf,
the toolfitters bag
serial numbered, oiled
leather so stiff
you'd think it was tin.

His gaze anchors here;
mending,
something you do
to things outside of you.
We are going to see
Madame Hubots'chickens,
the postman stops
on his chick-yellow bike
he knows him well-
the call from a ladder
get a second coat on
before big raindrops
then there's a new Peugot
to admire, news
of a baby
several postmen ago...

Now we don't talk
two deep sea divers
in slow motion
just another gear you're in
I'm tempted to tell him
but that's not fair
he knows
about wear and tear

Look!
Madame Hubots' chickens
are covered in rust
we have to count them
Fifteen
always fifteen,
and although
fascists and communists
come and go
there will always be chickens
something you won't find
in any book.

Jean Bernard Parr
Gold In Gold

It was the sunflower picture I took in
Three fat suns in a green vase, a big gold frame then
that's settled, paid up front, and walking back
clock the following
privet
dog,
angry mask behind glass at the crossing
stare back in slow motion, best dysfunctional android
in pocket, toss the crippling carbuncle of car keys
like a little metal salad
is this frame I chose too big? Too much gold
there is gold in gold and its gone
too far. Modest everything in modesty dust like Pompeii
should have chosen something
more reserved. Gold is for pharaohs and the like
the sunflowers wont hang in my house
these patrician blooms have made a servant of me
I stride condemned to search pavement squares for clues
more vexation is to come
now
 elevating gaze to thin pencil grazing
then entering cloud like a confident lover
Ive made up my mind, too big for the likes of me; this painting
will be given out of spite to someone rich, someone with gold
at the wrist,
Im going to have to find someone who gold doesn't blind

Jean Bernard Parr
Have You Seen!

world on fire,
it seems,
have you seen
that stately
cricket-ball spin
down there?

have you seen
that firestorm
bling-strewn
whore-world;
a bedroom
burgled like
they stole the art
from some chiffony tart

shameless,
undimmed-
taunting
coy constellations
to make
brighter pricks

they will say one day
that she was old
before her time
they will say one day
that we were afraid
in the dark,
they will say that
before we swim out
to the ark

Jean Bernard Parr
Hayling Island (August 1958)

They had a boat on stilts
half built, beamy
like Noahs ark
made of wood
Dad drove down the A30
in the Vauxhall Wyvern
one weekend
Hayling Island
even today
Hayling Island
that's a special sound
they had two daughters
whose reefer-smoothed voices
lulled me to sleep
on the deck under
summer-wobbled stars
I heard them pass
the navy rum
'take a drag, go on-'they said
and me having bragged
about starting at ten on
Wills Woodbine
made them laugh
their names, I have forgotten
but not the balmy night
nor the scent of rum
and turpentine and fresh sawn
nor being between sleep
and reason so high off
the ground, nor the silky
voices that fluttered
coloured with mirth
nor the chitter drifting up
from below of Ma Jong
and then before long
sneaks in through splits
in dark plank sky
that bastard Dawn,
uninvited guest who
paints with bravura
in a streak of gold
a girl with a profile
a figurehead, noble
you could set in the bow
and that was really
my first epiphany
and may well have been
my last for all I know.

Jean Bernard Parr
He Did The Tiles

He did the tiles
in the kitchen
my dad
on hands and knees
knew those tiles
close up
knew them better
than he knew me

they are stern
like him
full of
school latin,
evensong,
chapel and
bomber squadron

he got it wrong
wouldn't listen
to jumped up
baby boomers
start in the middle!
don't start at the edge!
a great one
for rulers
the edge it is...

I look now at the
uneven gaps
between the tiles
how it began
with that fatal flaw
and I wonder

did he see,
to the sound
of engine drone
a patchwork
of snow-white fields
through
the aeroplane floor?

Now he's gone
the middle of nowhere
is my home
but when all is
said and done
he showed me
how to get back
from where I had come

Jean Bernard Parr
He Was A Boy

he was a boy
you could see that in him
he was always the boy
always on the lookout
for a horizon, you can bet
he rushed home for tea
after school but it was the
battered tin plate of the
lone adventurer he saw
the more impossible the exploit
the better, under bedclothes,
the torch growing dim, with
War Picture Library, Battler Brittan
and Gunga Din

He was always a boy
who loved tales of hardship
and loss in frozen wastes
spellbound by air crashes
in the high Andes, don't
start to walk, stay with the plane
don't listen too hard
to the baying of wolves
rescue will come,
if you stick to the rules
he was always a boy

he was always a boy
his night time bath and rubber duck
he made into an Atlantic, unforgiving,
rough, and if that wasn't enough
conjured a rogue wave to make you tremble
a terror the size of the white cliffs of Dover-
hold on to the wheel, close your eyes
throw out the sea anchor, let it drag
and the ships timbers groan and creak
now all the crew are safe in bed,
well, wasn't that a narrow squeak?
Always the boy
that's what you remember
he was always a boy
who stood up straight
the boy you could count on in a scrape

jean Bernard Parr
written in memory of Roger Dykes, Sully Sailing Club

Jean Bernard Parr
Heron Creek

they flew in twos, threes,
lofting above trees
of river bend dream
the dactyl-herons,
gun-grey, old as a day
you lope across
on your ancient wires
underfoot, tremor
of discrete propeller
up there, a glimpse of
how it was before me
before everything, the leaves
turned yellow back then,
fell, turned as they fell
to cold water shocks
and above
the herons turned the
slow turn of clocks

Jean Bernard Parr
Shove hard
to open
this crazy
wooden shack
The wind
bashed his landship
with icy cuffs,
besieged now;
green bayonets,
revolutionary weeds
they shout
New Order!

Inside,
cathedral dim
a greying bundle
of bamboo sticks,
wire-stiff string
to mark out
the flower border
and in an old
tobacco tin
next to the oil can-
(brazed seam
bleeding a metal
pearl,
got a prize
in that year)
the rusted key
for his house,
the one
made of brick

The trim agent
let herself in
breaking a
bright red
teardrop nail
trying the lock
her heels
tacking down
an archipelago
of iron hard lino
'there's no chain-
this should go quick! '
she scolded into
her mobile phone

The next day,
on floorboards
desert dry
one last dogged box
slugged it out
with clumping boots
and outside
bright new wood
bore the word: 'Sold'

A leaded diamond
fell out, when
the door slammed shut,
silence seeped in and
unanchored dust
rushed to fill
a lane of light
weightless
as stories untold

Jean Bernard Parr
Holiday Romance

there's nobody on the streets unpale
except Kirsty and Kiley who
went to Bali, whose boyfriends
said shall we and why can't we
all with uncrisp hems now kerbing
sugar enriched kids to circle
the lame pushchair, the one
with the dodgy wheel
like wildebeest they are, uncertain
about the rushing waters
that belong to gleaming cars and so
with no clear command to cross
they wheel like gulls and the mums
are locked into their phones
like rocketeers
blood in ears seethes
its a blokes' job to check the oil
and not let the radiator boil

Jean Bernard Parr
Hurting

blue hued world
an apology
for crude extraction
you're in the
dentist chair today
we will soothe
and re-assure
then explore
every fissure
there will be
nothing left
and when we've done
you will feel clean
with that zing
in a mouth
gone black with grief
fish on a hook
they say feel
no pain
we will
do it
again and again
hurting
is something
you will
have to learn
as you turn and turn

Jean Bernard Parr
I Am Not Very Brave

I worked out the odds
getting into a fight
mostly it was crafted
stage managed, if you will
I got it wrong
now and again
once at Christmas
wearing that stupid hat
It was like
Take that!
dark drops in the snow
The truly brave are those
who are reckless, the ones
who don’t care
deep down, I know I don't dare

Jean Bernard Parr
I Missed The Autumn

I was cynical this year
about falling leaves
raging about corporations
motor insurance, worn tyres
and then I nursed this
purple bruise like I was
raising a child and so
the weather turned
and all that helter skelter
those golden armies
were just more enemy
to make you slip and slide
and there is me
who missed the autumn
stealing into dank garage
where in a corner
piled inner tubes of
dark intestines grew, I
genuflect before
the gleaming altar
on which my wounded car
is offered up
I have missed the autumn
instead I sit in the middle
of a faery ring of
scaredy-cat things
accident prone, old,
chilled to the bone
hunched over this screen
but now I'm looking on eBay
for a riflescope, and wearing
the ghost of a grin,
I want one
with low light illumination
to zero in teenage
and kindle a thrill
not kill but spy
on what goes on at dusk
creatures banking on
seeing the year out
little mounds with
furry tufts, they do
better than me
who missed the autumn
my rage at corporations
this blue barrelled rifle
will rust in a cupboard
when they've turned me to dust

Jean Bernard Parr
I No Longer Am

I no longer am
in the world
I'm really out of it all
I don't know the rules
anymore, don't know
the law, don't know
what a dollar is
against the pound,

but as I sit on the bus
and look out over
an arching sky,
(Im aware that the
world is round)
really, wasn't it
always thus?

There was always
a kind of fog there
around mouths and
words, no way to know
who pays the Queen
and can that policeman
imprison me?

And here's me sitting
in the bottom of
a phone box
reading the Beano,
trying to make sense
of a head spinning world
that was my university.

It just seems
more complicated now,
more worlds
more than one
I don't know how.
I Saw The Moon

I saw the moon last night
white and red
that newspapers said
had clearly bled
and aroused a nest
of Nostradamus nutters
who chorused cataclysm
famine and fire
and other things
completely dire
astrologers to the barricades!
pitchfork the panic
crowbar the flood
to fit the glove
of a gladhanding, smiling
and deceitful god

Jean Bernard Parr
I Told Her The Screwfix Catalogue Was My Favourite Book

I told her I was a poet
then tried to show it
really she said
thinking of Peter Rabbit
she twisted her chain
in a knot, I could see
that I'd put her
on the spot, a grown man
and fluffy things
I think she was glad
when I did my trick
and disappeared into
the party din, a quick change
and I was back dressed in black
charcoal stubble on my chin
straightoff I tell her
the Screwfix catalogue
is my favourite book
and she gives me a long look
sighs and eyelash swept me
oooooh she says as if
I'd just shown her
the dead sea scrolls
but what all this goes to show
is that like the blackbird
and his strawfilled beak
a Phillips screwdriver
is all you need,
if you get intellectual
you'll only come across
as ineffectual

Jean Bernard Parr
Incident At Cadoxton Station

I saw a boy today
a day grim with hail
waiting for a train
on a high island
he was waiting
in the freezing rain
huddled close to
a gossamer bin
the kind you throw
newspapers in
waiting for a train
his cigarette too thin
from a tired plastic bag
and in it
might have been
all he had

I have been
young and poor
but not all over
threadbare, in need
of food and care
I wanted to give him
my coat that would
have made a home,
armour for the world
but in the end
all I could do was hope
and his stories,
they swoop after me
like mewing gulls,
that caw right back
to my door, and,
way after the key
has gone in
I sit and look,
I watch how
it dangles now
from the hook
Jean Bernard Parr
Incomprehension

A chicken self-executes
rolled as casually
as a cigarette under
the slow wheels
of a traffic jam
a brown football
that came undone
I watched
as it crossed the road
uncertain about determinism
but pushing ahead a sonic boom
of death-agency, you could
guess the outcome this
chicken head with its fake
and nervy urgency
and
harsh as it may be
look
on TV how those zebra foals
twist away from crocodile jaws
clueless chicken should have
kept away from traffic
should
have kept away from the world
where affect is
the new buzzword
in academia and while
the professor,
she weighs out food-ration words
looks out of the window
unfocussed
there, a tiny fly that jerks blind
across an ocean of pane
towards the tourbillon web
an untidy death when chicken
is another word for victim
and mechanised death,
those millions
Jean Bernard Parr
Incorrect Thought 26

we make a fuzz
of all our senses
nothing that
a sharp winter
could not cure
with its fur and frost
or else endure
the paleontology
of ourselves
cheeping mobile
frozen in milky ice
selfies, crack open
these petrified eggs
show,
how we
stumbled over
zebra crossings
forgetting we
had children
looking for that
nirvana fearing
forgotten and
never was
talk more deadly
unseen, the trap
harvesting us
like minnows
a net cast so gracefully
we mistake it for a cloud
whisper
don't say it aloud

Jean Bernard Parr
Infinity

While all around me
Time proceeds
My body slows with age

Metred along well
Trodden ways
Of love for man and child-my-deeds

Set, recorded: black
Ink, white pages
My heart reflects more youthful days

Of innocence and playful glee
A life unfolds- infinity

Jean Bernard Parr
Installation Of An Ikea Kitchen

They are coming the men
grafting something space age
onto something stone age
these walls are nearly daub and wattle
but they will come the men
men with sharp angles
they will move aside like erring fronds of hair
wires that dangle dead ended
wires out of which we hope
gleaming kettles will suckle
these executioners who will measure and trim
my fond chipped and rounded corners blasted as the moon
will they come early or start at noon?

For this is a bolt-on, its a fix
not a concept or dare I say, a grand design
so long as I can dust the table white
and roll mydough, set out the slow cook
Im not excited by gleaming bars and cubist taps
worst of all, my old steam radio has had to go

Theres a blue light now that beckons from a silver cone
and asks me in oystershell voice, what I've got
in mind today?
So I say the weather's fine
lets go out and play

Nov 2019

Jean Bernard Parr
Island

where did you put that cup of tea?
it's hiding in the island of ideas
about where it might be
the rest is an ocean of non belief
for those unable to picture
a cup nearly empty or half full
hiding in the island of ideas
heat loss will dim it, bring fresh tears

Jean Bernard Parr
Jealousy

I shuffled down in my rough dressing gown
black-eyed windows denying the dawn
and stood behind the chair you had occupied
they were blind those kitchen windows, blind
as I worked out the geometry of where
your head had been, and the still-life on the table
the populated ashtray, refinery of wine
that your tumbling fruit machine eyes had seen
three shapes reflected crooked in those dark panes
and I wondered as I held your constellation
between my hands what shallow words
he would have lisped through that rock-star grin
catching your silk in his old snake skin
thinking easy lust as your Cinderella foot
opened the carburettor door and made the car roar

they are not opaque now, these eyeless windows
there is a grey wound growing in the night
a million sided world is coming to give me a fright
better to slope between night and day
where there is no sharp detail, befriend shadows
become inert, become a gnarled root in some
bleak fissure, storm bashed, numb, eke out
succour where there should be none, but first
there is a game to be played; can I start a fire from
this single glowing coal, to fail is to see the dead grey
planet spin, and all lifeless within

Jean Bernard Parr
John Jenkins' Garden (Aberdare)

The cat sits on the garden wall
and slowly licks his paw
there are things rusting in the garden,
some to do with ships.
Here on the wolf-grey zig zag hill
a rowan explodes with berries.
Beyond the gribbly door
paint peeling world map,
closed as a damp book
an arch of brick,
birthday-cake pink
John Jenkins came back.
He never did the garden, and now
he looks out over a sea of green
that covers all the rusting things
that had to do with ships

Jean Bernard Parr
Junkshop Find

Find solace
in metal
Forget skin
Sit in worn chair
Clear away the tea things
Brush crumbs from the table
You wanted this real bad
With money from
The pillaged tin
When you were a lad

But somehow
The colours are
Unbrightened
By the bookend years
This red dial
Less red now
Look
Not as red as
The red dress
The red
you remember best

Jean Bernard Parr
Make a million more metal boxes, keys to open, 
wheels to petrol-push, for a million hopes, 
for something better than opening a lovers' letter

We made keys to brighten the dulled soul 
to promise base metal into gold, make all young 
and when the ding-dong is done, from the hot held

million keys, there will be machine tales to tell 
but if you believe the buzz from frantic bees 
something now is happening unforseen

that unsheens the dreamers dream, to turn 
wish-well into cindered and sintered hell; 
all is not well in the world of the million keys

that opened our poison boxes, stuff we knew was toxic, 
but how we wanted our million boxes! Now, no 
wiser than the spinningh fly, there is time left to cry

and shuffle in the porches of the cosmic mansion 
preparing to make of this world a closed room 
and hurl the key somewhere you won't find it soon

Jean Bernard Parr
A cloud wisp on widescreen blue
grounded hollyhock arcing to heaven
mystery hills of uncertain hue
the sharpness of things near
crumble of bricks, scatter of sticks
foot-shone stone of never ending tread
and this wind-bent tree, alone
in the taunting storm, but with hermit sinew
hoards its years, a crook’d beggar
with wooden bowl
but these are slow things to make
the round whole, the darting wasp
and copulating fly are too quick
for me to try.

who knows how sensible the small
how passionate ephemera
is there an ocean of urge
before they stumble and die?

Jean Bernard Parr
Mametz Woodjuly 1916 In Memory

A tree is explosion in slow motion
a wood therefore a creeping barrage
whistling steel like starlings twirl
and unflesh stumps
some will find green sap spring
when leaves once more unfurl
to hide the blackened bark

Jean Bernard Parr
Man

theres a man on the beach
gold watch, and walrus skinned
not that he has sinned
and Im sure he is of the best
but the gold tells of
lurking piracy, somewhere
hidden in his old treasure chest

Jean Bernard Parr
Meander Miranda

Look, there's a
moon Miranda, is
that Miranda from
daytime TV? well
there's a daytime
moon for you Miranda
flip open the coffin
hinge, Miranda and check
your emails, the Facebook
page get into a rage
is it to do with age?
There's a moon up there
Miranda, Miranda
pearl in sea of pale blue
but down here everyone
wants a bit of you

Jean Bernard Parr
Meditation

on a shelf, jam preserves
a yellow label curls, then falls

Jar of enlightenment!

Jean Bernard Parr
Meditation On A Fake Rolex

the deal is done among stale beers
they linger the leers long after the
gaggle looks and shoulder shrugs
the slap and tug of the pub quiz
from the depths of that whirlwind
overcoat of his, inside the bar stools
sudden scrape, deft magi moves
there the watch lies, a sacramental
wafer, not fake he says, a copy, a tribute
I peer into a tiny world within world
walled and domed, Blake's jewelled city
"pick it up, feel the heft, feel the quality";
in the ramparts of my ear he easily pours
a vial of words that anneals my vanity
poor Rolex, homeless, what a pity!
miniature makes men into mummy
look at this devilish artistry in the round
the symmetry, a tiny courthouse that argues
and twinkles for heavens purity and within
a moment the storm-front overcoat of
grey flecked wool is gone
and all
grows dim,
the last I saw of him
and of my money

morning with seagull witch-cackle
heralds my clown life fairground trick
among twigs of disturbed slumber
there nests the gaping beaks of doubt
you have to feed, no quiet for me
I have transacted with Mephistopheles
between lizard crawling out of slime
to mans' crafting things divine
wasn't there a Fall, somewhere inbetween?
then sleep breaks like a cracking chain
and there is the whore-watch from
the night before, the fake Rolex
winks from stinking clothes
that jumble the bedroom floor
I lie alluvial and heavy limbed
caked in a cloak of jurassic mud
I, the final pawl to a little movement
made by pauper children in grimy huts
and all for them is unjust, so Greed
the genie with pride and gluttony at his side
pops up, belches a beelzebub of flies,
laughs, and revels in my devil deals
the tumblers spin, no gain, no gain, no gain
come the night, out of unhallowed ground
the gaunt children in thin pyjamas, hollow eyed
pale procession under jittery yellow bulb
each with a crown made of sharp escapement forks
pinions and balance wheels- they go
to joyless toil making the instrument
that measure the drip drip drip of pain

for now, I run fast and slow, and
having bought the imperfect train
time now to recreate
get in the dreaded boat
I row I row
I row I row
I know
I know

Jean Bernard Parr
Meditation On Montgomery Castle

Its gravity that makes it work
and, in the end, gravity that
does it in.
look! vicious archer slits
to pierce the teeming
ghosts below
and how smoothed are
the sticking out bits
they live these stones I walk
between, elephant grey
they
blind-stumbled in jumbled
force labour line
slighted, razed and randomised
by order of puffing Parliament
but
like patient ants, it was
gravity did the work,
with tea breaks in between
the click of hammers
discussions, about how comely
a passing woman's breasts
might seem, and so, out of these
time-jealous stones now
comes the truth about us
(cross-bearers to a man)
they, the silent witnesses
of what can't be undone
the list goes on and on
but the castle still groans
with all its weight
and bears down
to make earths'centre
give it time-
nothing here in stone
ever is too late

Jean Bernard Parr
My Daughter

you got a smack
the minute you were born
there was a lot of hooha,
screaming
not to mention, bleeding
you wouldn't think it now
your face like quiet hills
gestures unhurried, composed
a presence that the room fills

I never for a moment supposed
the way you set your bag down,
(a desert caravan coming to halt)
or find the right page in a book
giving out that certain look,
I never for a moment supposed

that in the future
there may be trouble
that your homeland
may not stay green
but turn to rubble.

A true Englishman would not
give it a second thought
Earthquakes famine and flood
are things that are foreign
to these shores
and are far less important
than test match cricket scores

Jean Bernard Parr
My Heart Is A School Out

My heart is a school out
For half term
Waiting for trickle of murmur
To become torrent of shout

The beats, stacked chairs
Untidy, dust rimed
Awaiting noise and return
In a dark space under stairs

I stand in voided classroom
In charge of echoes
And scraping footfall
Can you hear, boom boom?

And now the jealous door
That stifled creakings
In the galleon bookstore
We went in there for more

Beating moth breathless dust
In chrysalis dress
With creases crisscrossed
Your proudworn map of lust

I won't dwell on this silent stair
Cold and sepulchral
But the pounding goes on
As I hot wire your hair

My heart is a school out
For half term
Waiting for trickle of murmur
To become torrent of shout

Jean Bernard Parr
My Mother As An Event Horizon

She has been left out
of all this
I notice
The truth is
I never know where to start
She is big in my life
Like the Death Star
But then with a shrug
I say
Its like that
There is no definite edge
No beginning
No end
I do know
She could have been somebody
She could have been
a contender
You see
There was this myth
About her and Art
He bought her a paintbox
I recall
Then along came the golf bag
in the hall
What with her being French
There was that
reluctance to
embrace Bohemia
which afterall, is the gateway
to creativity,
The cliff you fall off
Before you get down
To the nitty gritty.
If you really want to know
I blame it on the war
Bit of a spacewalk really
And what with me and
My umbilical cord
My Old Filleting Knife

the sea gets everything
in the end
the blade, the quicksilver
sliver of my Normark blade
pitted like the moon
I retire you to the sepulchre
of the bottom kitchen drawer
you felt the spray and in
your day, lay in gory glory
on the salt strewn deck
sated with slicing the electric
blue mackerel
you listened to our pretend
viking roars, not with oars
but rods bow-bent, and now
to Valhalla my blade is sent
to applause from raised cups
and those shadows in the Hall

Jean Bernard Parr
Near Goonhilly

the night sound of the sea
in my tent fills three sides
you can hear the legions seethe
but in my mind is a dried up
river bed where lies something
not quite dead
go, discover
in rough drops
left on the spines of leaves
tiny jewels that twinkle
between distant boomings
as those unseen in a bedroom
box made of velveteen
its the glitter you cant ignore
that calls you to take Music
by the hand and together
stumble to the edge where
there lie pools of sound
that wait to be stirred
I fear
waking
after an unseasoned sleep
that went on for years
and left me without ears

Jean Bernard Parr
Near To Marconi  (At Sully Island)

I wish you could be
my cheerleader
when I push my boat
into this frisky sea
to see your dot on the shore
your thoughts dashing across
this hackled, cat-fur water

A radio I would become
crackle, and down my mast
a simple message
and if lucky, a crystal look
not see, but know your face
framed with a sharp cut
arms around knees
compact and neat
like a bright diode
with your gaze aimed
at another country
and if lucky, get me
some courage, amplified
just enough to win the race
just enough to win
just enough

Jean Bernard Parr
News

news of her death
makes big the clock
loud, the tick-tock
news that doesn't
come with hearty knock
but murmurs
in twos and threes
over garden wall
news, like a naughty dog
slips over the road
to make unravelled
his worry ball
and while the talk is
among her hollyhocks
there is now a space
in our pop-up book
the telephone rings, look
someone at the door?
the things are neat,
still, and waiting
in the kitchen drawer
and on a shelf, a torch
you cant get the batteries
anymore

Jean Bernard Parr
Nightime In Niort, France

there is a moon up there
sharp as a Stanley knife
there, above night shuffled
trees that crowd
the gangling water tower
below, on the edge of a circus
mustard-yellow,
a delinquent taxi glows
its like a flying saucer
just upped and gone
deciding the laundr-O-mat
widescreen didn't warrant
a death-ray beam
still, the town
in the armlock of summer heat
still the town, folded, night-neat
save for the lamp battering moth
a little duststorm in a heartbeat

Jean Bernard Parr
Nineteen Crows

nineteen crows in a field
no corn
no wind

Jean Bernard Parr
No Man's Land

Im in no man's land between
white toothed winter, and this
pale dissembling summer
where the seasons horse-blinker
the particulars, no time to feel for
newborn leaves who want to
jostle and play, be gay
no time at the train window of
life, fast harvester of all
the gap between woods
and hills, where you crash land
your 747, slowed down cottages,
farms neat as dice, the sprawled
effort of land toil in
this rural heaven, the tractor
left outside to rust,
sump without oil

speeding, speeding
opposite, a woman reading,
look!
comfortable cats in barns,
men down the pub
trading certainties, yarns
its only foreigners who doubt

over the points we rattle
sudden as death
there's a wedding and there some
overheated bedding that
made more people
to drive more cars
whatever you do
don't look up at the stars

Jean Bernard Parr
the world is a ball
so, young
we have
all played with it
grown, we should
own what goes
with having a ball

Jean Bernard Parr
Ode To An Airgun Pellet

Fly true
my tiny lead ballerina
Spin to the mark
unfailing
a keyhole you've made
to unlock
knowledge of the heart

Jean Bernard Parr
On Finding A Stone Age Tool At Hitches Lane

This blade of glassy flint
I un-earth with fingers
the first to touch!
it emerges, a chrysalis,
blinking away six thousand years
since that skilled artisan
knocked flake from parent stone
of him no trace is left,
save this work, not rude
nor rough, but accomplished
in the choosing
of angles, and where to strike,
deft, the blow, I see him
cross-legged, in quiet corner,
basking in evening glow
apart from ravenous children din
turning the stone, with practiced
heft
then,
what thoughts might assail, as all
are nested in nights dark blanket?
or what wondrous shapes
and forms appear, dancing
around bone-blackening firelight?

This shard of flint rasping
the edge of my page cuts
a small victory for a life
long gone,
to dent the present thus!
when my wayward spark
from life's fire detaches
and spirals in upward dash
paper and ideas soon whirled
away as wind banished leaves
no hymn to my fevered vanities
no paeans will ring out
nothing weightier
than the husk of a grasshopper
Jean Bernard Parr
On The Beach (After Storm Ophelia)

Not giving up
is what she does best
the sea gives up nothing
what is given one day
will be taken away the next
a watery accountancy of sorts

I knew all this when the
little boat came in, marooned
on crowding stones
packed there tight to gawp
at the strange craft
come from outer space

A little boat, so very little
I wonder what the sea will do
then with a hiss of shingle
sharp as quenching iron
she deliberates, nudges

and the boat moves to
get more ease on
those rasping noggins
the stupid populace of
unyielding beach stones

it broke free in the fury
tiny and tossed but faring
better than the famed Cunarder
cast here and ominously empty

this bone-bleached pod, unmastered,
scudding under a rolling moon
once filled with joyous shrieks
or was it that other end
a gull-wheel of unheard wails of doom?

Jean Bernard Parr
Ordering A Full Breakfast In The Age Concern Cafe

As I enter
it smells of lightness
of the thin boned and
airship-ribbed
Am I too heavy for this?
I can feel the spaces
vast like spaces between planets
this grandmother and the
toying child, a child comfortable
with age, they are atolls
haloed with whiteness and
among this lightness I order
a breakfast, slow in coming
the heat to make it feels slow
in coming among the icy
whiteness, its as though
the microwave is in the death zone
of some howling peak
where all are bone-chilled
among the sparseness of
nursed tea mugs eeking warmth
into supplicating hands
and I sense that I have interrupted
some secret flow of thing
there is something of heresy
in ordering a full breakfast
in the Age Concern café
something that points to transgression
the full breakfast might be too full
among the Spartan outlay
on pale tables where the poor
test the rich tea biscuit for
tensile weakness in an even
weaker brew. I have transgressed
some unknoweable law, I have
failed to see how they struggle
to produce a block of temperature
the opposite of glistening ice
in a far off country
tong- unloaded on a summer wobbled day
there is stooping behind the counter,
whispers, a convocation of sorts
an offering up takes place and
the white enamelled reliquary
emits a bee drone and brings about
a hush.
O the fullness of the full breakfast!
expectancy of plenitude! How it
weighs and drags me down
to an ocean floor of guilt
as I watch the child draw on notepad,
poundshop I grasped in flytrap
grip, flintlock knuckles white tipped
and I can feel all around me the reluctance
to release the temperature needed
to heat food, the tables are full
now of hands cupped around tepid teas
and a woman rises and dumps a stack
of slender books down on a bowed shelf
'love stories...' she excuses with the
faintest smile. Love stories! Kindling
found in the wilderness for the heart
that foundry-cast engine that needs restart
I glimpse the compression
of our collective sadesses into a ball
the span of eons shrunk to seconds
then its bubble-gone, the full
breakfast forgotten as in a little while
with the stealth of melting ice, the bingo
game begins, and I sit at my table,
apostate, salt and pepper loom like
cooling towers, I listen to the liturgy
of numbers called and ask for forgiveness
hoping for another epiphany someday.

Jean Bernard Parr
Over The Points

I'm in no man's land between
white toothed winter, and this
pale dissembling summer
where the seasons horse blinker
the particulars, no time to feel
for newborn leaves who want to
jostle and play, be gay
no time at the train window of
life, fast harvester of all the
gap between woods and hills, where
you crash land your 747, slowed down
cottages, farms neat as dice
the sprawled effort of land toil
in this rural heaven, the tractor
left outside to rust, sump without oil
speeding speeding, needing needing
opposite, a woman reading
look
comfortable cats in barns, men down
the pub, trading yarns, its only
foreigners who doubt, who don't know
over the points we rattle
sudden as death
look, a wedding, and there's some
overheated bedding, make more people
to drive more cars, whatever you do
don't look up at the stars.

Jean Bernard Parr
Painting A Sunset

I have to see it
the way someone
from Mars would see it
that means
stripping out
everything that's twee
the foreground figures;
they are the first
to go, and further,
discard that
overgrown barn
and while painting
I'm hating Ruskin
the British managed
to make picturesque
colonial murder, snobby
Merchant Ivory movies
spring to mind
excuse me there are
ladies present
the sepoys have Cawnpore!
and all that that
entails, we will blow
their entrails
from the mouths of guns
then do a good job
of fighting the Hun
stay tight lipped
you top hatted ministers
black coated, sinister
don't say sorry
to all those mothers
so many brothers dead
someone has to see
when there is war
between you and me
the sunset stays the same
and isn't it the case
your Martian would observe
(reporting back to base)
that on his palette
you will always find some red

Jean Bernard Parr
Paper, Steel

A gravel path
autumn worn
then
little white ghost
of paper blows
across not
unpurposed
to my ticking chain
and bird-delicate
alights
slow motion
waterfall brink
quick plunge
into gear train
to be teeth torn
but like
dying bee sting
explodes
the little
cage of wheels
wobble stop
and listen
trees
breeze
forces
you don't feel

Jean Bernard Parr
Party Girls

A cluster of red and rising balloons
they come round with stickers
miss me out, me in red and my bike
against the sea wall
they are lucky with the weather
everyone agrees
we are lucky with the weather
I get a sticker from a thin man
with a grey beard who is rationing
stickers to the deserving poor
grey beards are in this year
and shiftily the cameraman is here
like a tradesman at the back door
looking for girls that are sparrow bright
and ranks form out of thin air
her in a blue suit, clipboarded
its you go there and there and there
she ordered, and the ranks formed anew
the candidates in the front row
spruced like first communion pure
the boys in suits and ties too big
rosettes on supersonic lapels, bloom
like grandmas funeral lipstick all set
for kissing babies and
out there on that disinterested sea
we can hope for floating voters
or defectors maybe

then there are the party girls
with pale unsunned and serious faces,
smiles so faint
hiding the all-knowing
they have high collars and
hawthorn sharp black heels
they know how it all works
the party girls underneath
the handshakes and glad double hands
that masks the broadsword grip
they know all the angles the
red lipsticked party girls
they spiral and wheel round the
dressed down man of the people
who beams like a lighthouse with
his deep Florida tan
the party girls do it
because they can, they can

Jean Bernard Parr
when you get old
become those invisible
razor blades that
move in trees
shake off shape
like an old snakeskin

when you think of death
with the morning pill
and confront the fear
of sensations' fade
and how long really
is a whole decade?
go enter the library
of the year
bookend the month
stack the days,
take the hour out on a lead
bark at minutes
strain at seconds
then queue with kids
for fish and chips
there's a guy with a bow tie
on the wall TV talking
about relationships

five minutes! comes the cry
place your order
then its outside to
feed my fright
to the mewing gull
let the dog run down the street
open wide that thermal collar
and from wind-squeezed tears
rock-cold diamonds form
command the heart
as kids pour out
and start to holler,
under this cold blue sky
follow the meandering
vapour trail, see it
eagle sharp, and in fine detail

Jean Bernard Parr
Red

I wander in the dappled apple
fairground race
in the éclat of your face
revisiting that early
web-jewelled down of youth
and it's here that I trespass
under a slanting sliver of moon
sharp as a sycle
or an indrawn breath
no, I'm not going to ryme
something with death
I was out there,
talking to Mars
sulking in heavens' bookstore
glowing like a whorehouse lightbulb
in the boudoir of the night
charging this dynamo
for some future sin

Jean Bernard Parr
Requiem 2

Its sad hooking fish in the evening
almost like the sun
daren't watch instead
knits long shadows
from fleece scraps
blown onto barb wire
there is this silver thing
garnished with grass on fire
gasping, curiously,
not for want of air,
silver exclamation mark
minus the dot
surprised to be not
only skull-crushed dead
but jerked out of an
atmospheric medium
imagine if we were
plucked from stars
and instead
placed in celestial jars

it is the likes of us
with our Polaroid vision
that does for him
me coming here
in that modern prison
of complicated car,
somehow
we lose our way since flint

as I look at this trophy
digital snap, there is
an unbridged gap
over unknowable flow
and a feeling that
its all a bit unfair, this
oyster world
we rough out for fun
then smooth
with a natural glow

Jean Bernard Parr
Rigging The Mirror

You don't want to be indoors
so I went to the shore
and there was the little
wooden boat cocooned
pulling back the cover
is like opening a present
at Christmas but then after
I had hoisted those red sails
it was poppy short the time
I had with her, and trying
new knots the sun got level
with some goalposts, it was
the squeals out of school
my real clock I looked out
at fading blues and greys
shadow puppet houses marching
down the Point, then I got
to feel, had I missed something
tying knots, something subtle?
no hurtling asteroid thunderclap
but maybe a flight of geese
with their squeaky wings
or just wavelets practice
folding over a mop of weed,
look, how they do it for real

Jean Bernard Parr
Road Accident

A tilting of sorts
There, look
In the steaming
After-storm road
Like someone
Was ironing the past, present
And future all at once
The knights' helm
Crowned with headlight rim
There's an impossible
Shine on everything
Liquorice tyre
The boys stare,
Can't do the geometry
What a mess
Someone, cut that
Engine
Totem pole stiff
She leans
Like a girl in
The naughty corner

Aimless mobile
As if reading for
Radiation and drops
Onto red-flowered dress

Jean Bernard Parr
Rocks That Fall

this sun,
this high ball of yellow
soon to stoop, but for now
it's the bladed cliff that's
red
folded in layers, neat as a
swiss army knife, and here
fallen
these renegade boulders
tumbled by shocks, mason
squared, as though on
the way up for a new cathedral,
but instead do the sly-inch
down to the foam-winged sea

All moves downwards,
and on the point,
bare for eons
they build hurry-up houses
jammed tight these toy bricks
like battery chicks you
feed them lifespans
until the front doors close
with a soft click, then,
only then
will they start the broadcasts
and drown your song

Jean Bernard Parr
Scorched

It must be great to
come back to earth
in a tin can too hot
to touch
I've always wondered how
the parachute survives
all that delicate silk
even if somehow they make
it fireproof you come back
burnt on one side
and underdone on the other
and if it all goes wrong
you're toast, I saw this
girl reborn in a photograph
in black and white
being helped out of a Soyuz
capsule like she was a
germinating out of her
steel seed. She was
helpless you could see
her legs couldn't take
the sudden weight of being
and that's what it must have
been like in the beginning
a few people in villages
learning how to make
something hot, and with
existences, all fragile

Jean Bernard Parr
Seti

biplane
airship rocket
to the moon
mothership
airliner
balloon
we better get used
to doing it simple
because
you can't keep it up
like a spark
that won't last
we listen
antennas out for them
they listen too
you get the idea
the way submarines do

Jean Bernard Parr
Shared Hills

It is the fear that wakes me
Firestorm of lost opportunity
the fear that awakens,
Dresden of wasted time
That was my yesterday

My sharp-angled love,
that forgotten flint tool
Lost on the hardness of
A wind-knapped mountain
Unable to share, lost
Under a strata of pain

It was love that saved me
From stone cold squeezing
As you forced me to flee
From the sharp mountain

We scrambled into our
Unstable and rusting craft
Dumped the core sample,
sandwich of ore
Full of memories,
Not of stone
But the bullfighters' gore.

Jean Bernard Parr
Sharpshooter

I found bullets in a room
among his jam jars filled
with nails and screws
bullets nested in clips of five
a litter of steely snouts
and I wondered
in that dusty gloom
what you saw, Soldier
eye slits over
summer field, insect
and clover brimmed
or if you heard pregnant drops
of hard hitting rain
drops that go tick tock
soldier, don't think twice
you feed one in,
let the barrel choose
the quick worm
that brings a mother's pain
and dread, in the attic
of another house
somewhere there is
an old desk drawer
a felled-leaf letter that shouts
he's dead! he's dead!

Jean Bernard Parr
Spider Hotel (Lampoon On The Labour Leadership Contest 2015, Uk)

Spider!
Spider!
Earthrise, only horror
Over the bath rim
Asterisk black
Black as a crack
Still
As the chrome tap
Births a water drop
Twig leg scrabble, then
Still
The affront
The fright
Unannounced and
Uninvited
Anarchist marauder
Black on white
shock headline
And not at all
the downy thing
Early morning and
Dew dandled
Patiently at the
Centre, knitting
those cosy homespun
Galaxies
No.
Not this one
Still
Hoovers up fear
Ancient as flint
Like a mini black hole.

On the other side
of the singularity
We are accustomed
At Spider Hotel
To welcome delegates
When they arrive early
Nothing is too much trouble
We aspire to standards
Of service to be proud
Our facilities
Have something for all
And tonight we present
The Spider Ball.

We are totally at one with
Conference noise and din
The aims of the Party
That is, to serve the People
A smorgasborg of flies
With a little side dish thrown in
Which brings me to the point
That should you decide
On fratricide and murder
You can rest assured
At Spider Hotel
Distinctions are blurred
We don't think it's a crime
To eat your neighbour
Or to benefit
From the fruits of your labour

Jean Bernard Parr
Supermoon 2016

O modest moon, who
pull up about you
this grey army blanket
fortunately threadbare
I glimpse your palor
through the hastening
troop of clouds
less languid than
peopled day
the silence swaddles
the lamenting bugle
in the cradle of
the remembrance ground
this much I take note
while windscreen wipers
keep impatient time
but this bigger moon
is no busier than
the last, dawdling
and still far, but near
as near as the life
of the engine in my car

Jean Bernard Parr
Supernova

Gold is pollen
from the giant flowers
of supernovas
and like iron
is in all of us.

If we are made from gold,
how then do we grow old?
should not our faces glow
still with the apple skin
flush from the first kiss
to last stumbling sin?

Youth is golden and sure
to outlive the rock, the cliff,
the cathedral's lead lined spout
yet unsure about how long
anything should last.

Until a fiery star crosses
fast that black mapped sky
and inbetween the ooohs and aaahs,
excited shout
might there be the first tingling
you're not a permanent thing

Jean Bernard Parr
Target Shooting

The rifles are hi tech these days
it's hard to keep up
and anyway, I'm always amazed
how the pellet, air driven
is so true, it flies in a curve
and drops neatly into the black
but I daydream and dally
eyeing the target through keyhole
into a dream of Custer's last stand
and a siege at Bloomfontein

Jean Bernard Parr
Tell Me

what can you remember
tell me
what is the first thing
tell me
try harder
tell me
is it a fright
tell me
or the taste of milk
tell me
is it some
cloudy delight
tell me
or a scare
was it
something behind the curtain
when you weren't there
tell me
or the powdery madness
of a moth
tell me
you were on your back
and couldn't move
when patterns on wallpaper
hove into view

Jean Bernard Parr
Ten Bears

He is big now
there are ten of him
where before
there was none
a speck unborn
a seed swimming
somewhere in
some guarded envelope
waiting to unfold
and yet there is more
water here by this
unguarded shore
as I look,
there are ten of him
looking out to sea
never in to see
always out, the ten
looking out,
and I wonder, tomorrow
who will he be?

Jean Bernard Parr
The Austere

my windscreen wipers
those black stand-up sticks
that click and flick
the november pages
timekeepers of doom they are
for these unruly leaves
as they lighten grateful trees
then curl, furl gold in gutters
see this truant horde scamper
down the street, wind bleak
skirmish of last-dance
delinquent leaves, now, under
pale pond-skimming sun
the time has come
time for a more ordered troop
the time now is for
the sharp, dark and stand-up twigs

Jean Bernard Parr
The Bitch

the bitch tailgating in my mirror
came
to rest inches from me, the bitch,
the one banged
by joyriders from behind
slammed into me
she will always be
that tailgating bitch
who slammed into me
I will never forgive her

Jean Bernard Parr
The Blue Ikea Bag

Ikea rymes with idea, the idea
was to have a clear out
so there it was in the middle
of the floor, a floor grey with dust
a floor in a house near Krakatoa
Aready Id trundled a few car loads
down to the tip, there was this
painting I had done, the deep blue
bag was getting full
then I found this painting
it was Snowdon mountain all
done in dots and there was snow
a sprinkling on top, which is where
I got the idea of doing it in dots
so I threw it in that bag big as the sea
it was the pointilism that
did it for me, so insincere, so
contrived, I was like, where is
your head, man?
and yet I had climbed the bastard
quite a few times, and I pulled it
out of the Ikea bag and looked
absolutely sure that I must have been
fucked up when I did this
and mountains, they are so stable
when you're a mess so I had it in
for the painting I did of Snowdon
the one that said sunday painter,
said? it screamed it at you
so how dare Snowdon be stable when
you're a fucking mess? Why can't Snowdon
be more like Krakatoa, darken skies
for a year, you could hear the explosion
thousands of miles away so I chucked
the mountain and the Ikea bag
into a council skip,
so casual like those kids that used
Van Gaths paintings for target practice
Jean Bernard Parr
The Broken Umbrellas

They die in the gutters
the broken umbrellas
unsung in traffic hiss
slack-winged,
and broken backed,
spattered with the piss
of late night nutters

no candlelit requiem
for these sad pteranodons
what does for them
is a delinquent wind
under bullying clouds
testing and tiresome
tugging for easy surrender
they die in the gutters
the broken umbrellas

A tangle of spokes
on the glittering street
without ceremony, the
careless sword thrust into
overflowing trash,
casual as an alley murder
next to passing feet,
they die in the gutters
the broken umbrellas

In a last act before they die
(Look, at last-
a blue hole in the sky!)
Where before with
taut black wing
we shielded you from
drumming locust rain
and for our pain, discarded
our geometry no longer fit
for tidy office boys, left
limp by gurgling drain
we die in the gutter
in a world full of noise
We, the broken umbrellas

Will rise up again
avenge this ignoble fate
the common man
we must learn to hate
we shall choose privilege
and royalty, stay behind
in limousines
and keep the crooked
civil servant dry
in ministerial corridors
we will decipher where
deep echoes hollow
out caves to follow
lisping conversations
and near hatstands
louchly propped
reap careless
and discarded sounds
know what goes on
above and below
give away secrets
to foreign powers,
only shelter
the city slick
the actress and
filthy rich boy
who rings her bell
help Lucifer
to stay dry in Hell
smoothly open with a click
keep from sun and rain
the tyrant and dictator
drug lord, torturer
and humble street corner hood
all these will feel
our cool thin winged embrace
the only way
to get understood
we are going to get even
make sure no one
gets to heaven
that the sickly child
stays unwell.
We, the broken umbrellas
will see you all in hell
the broken umbrellas
We are the broken umbrellas

Jean Bernard Parr
The Cage

It starts with school railings
That's where fear starts
Not with nailing to a metier cross
Beware, my child, upward straining spears,
corralling your whirling
Horses of hope aimed at heaven

But somehow we miss the point,
down the years, avoiding the tricycle
In the hall, drifting
with spindrift friends from bar to bar
The careless lookout for Nirvana
You end up marvelling at a bouquet
Of close-up angers
As red as storms on Mars.

Not caring about who is in pain or the
Wreckage of a passing train
The sun will always awaken
His red ragged horde
Skinned rabbit slivers scattered overhead
And then play an ace, a blue sky
sent to torment you with the thin sound
Of distant childrens' laughter
As you walk in the shadow
Of those thick black bars.

Now is the time to set yourself free
To feel moondust between your toes
To have a bypass in your head
Belong to a more primitive nation
Go on a vacation with an idea
that you can sit on your shoulder,
Soon, you will nurse a cageful
of prowling thoughts
Then do like Superman,
and with your eyes
Move that boulder.
Jean Bernard Parr
The Dear Departed
	hey don't talk about
the dear departed
never do they crop
up in conversation
it makes you think
did they really know
each other those two?

Christmas, you would
hope for some kind
of glass clink for
the dear departed
they are there, you know
the dear departed
into memory they fold

the sad thinned blade of
a sallow bone penknife
fills you with dread
of a gone era
funerary bric a brac
in clammy window
the charity shop
the next stop for things
of the dear departed

you'd think we never spoke
in past present future
the way they carry on
these folk
criss crossing in parks
doing dog-lead fencing

there's one, look!
yap-yap on a string
under arm, the Daily Mail
rehearses plot at work
something that cant fail
moans about the office bitch
witters on about

computer scams
traffic jams
no mention of us, nothing
in despatches, you'd think
a funny story would be

on the cards, something
Jim always said, or Fred
no Day of the Dead
or firecracker skull-grins
in the street, the best here is
pilgrimage to car wash
once a week

Jean Bernard Parr
The Hard Stare

I had come from the chip shop
around the corner from William Hill
and stepped aside to let him glide
inelegant astride a fat wheel bike
just time for him to give me
a hard stare, that measured
metronome beat of hate for
anything that is free;
in a teen this would be seen
as a chuckleworth of red rebellion
but the hard stare in someone old
is given by that jailbird in the soul
crippled of wing who can't give
who measures intelligence in
defence capability, weakness as
'something in it for me'.
This is the tragedy of the hard stare
its someone in a cage, blind
shaking bars of rage

Jean Bernard Parr
The Kid On Tv

the kid with
the pushy mum
the kid on TV
that's the cute kid
the one with
the pushy mum
who got him on TV
that's the kid
that got hit by a car
his agent said
this kid will go far
the kid with
the pushy mum
no one will remember
the kid who got
hit by a car
we are glad
hes dead now
the kid would
have been a star
hes dead now
the kid with
the pushy mum
who got him on TV

Jean Bernard Parr
The Last Supper Of The Radiologists

They were twelve, and right there
the tall thin one, back to the window
in black- Judas or was it the Nazarene?
all wore security tags, for radiation,
for chains of office
tall and thin in serious suit
a head down lip-biter
eyes boring into ghostly under table glow
almost as if there was God or the other
fellow hiding there, hissing, shush
don't give us away, we don't want to be
at this fucking meeting either
he could have been a contender
the tall thin one in serious suit

I recall the light came down slanting
when they all trooped in, a careful and careless
pecking order, you could sense the monkey fist knot
of fealty at the tables' end where Miss Control
was pulling her strings
he could have been a contender
the tall thin one in serious suit

You got better here or didn't
one late came in backing through swing doors
like a birthing
there was applause, and his untucked shirt
signalled a boy among all these clinicians,
a boy amongst middle managers and deranged
polystyrene cups exists somewhere in a drawer
in a tin, a celluloid curl of a tree climbing boy

the canteen ladies they dole it out,
the lugubrious beans and Jurassic sausages
with meteoroid of stuffing
I am grateful for the last supper
I sit here reading New Scientist
specifically 'What is Thought? '
the light slices down as they come in
They are twelve, exactly twelve,
and their radiation badges make it clear
there is one with bunched black hair, tied back neat
Judas Iscariot and Jesus are the same person...
I saw it right there, like cable intertwined
just as Stephen Hawkin and James Hartle married
quantum mechanics with general relativity
'When a particle travels from A to B
it doesn't take a simple path, but passes
along two or more paths simultaneously,
interfering with itself at the other end,
as if it was a wave'

As if it were a wave.

Jean Bernard Parr
The Maker

I see Marc through the windscreen
hunched over a cone of sparks
and you wonder at the short life
of each, none survive to pass
on a morcel of kindling, yet alone
a flame. Who is to blame when extinction
is proof of communion and still spurs
the red fountain as I search
for some law that governs this flaw
these sparks jet out in one direction
and die in tumbling chaos, its what happens
inbetween that goes unseen

Jean Bernard Parr
The Maker Of Crowds

Marc turns his hand to anything and through my windscreen I see him bowed over a cone of sparks, breathtaking, always this metier shower that makes dark all. No pall, these particles are so excited, and invite that you follow eachs' story before wonder bleaches into each life, the sad quenching, look! Metal cloud of reddy flies, each has life so bright before rebound to extinction-more follow, and you are wondering why the fountain should stop, stop the bright bouncing, fizzing spark so dead now, so invisible and indivisible, and it is here that I turn off the pitter patter of traffic news and muse on these new found possibilities; the big small and the small big.

What star doesn't live its eons so large in that dark ocean and one day to glow, glimmer and die. And so do we, trooping up to play, gesticulate, swoon, all so very soon

Jean Bernard Parr
The New Toyota

You would be
a sensation in Cuba
my demure little geisha
among those old tarts
with American hearts-

glad I haven't a clue
as to where you've been
but, as I step out of
the grey, organ-failure Toyota
and into this one that is
nice, new, and pea-green
that I would have loved
age seventeen

but now, all I see as I
make the engine purr
is the assembly team crew;
their jokes in the restroom,
their loves and quarrels,
dogs, children
and pilot fish dreams
the unerring dart
in double top
and the whipround
for The Kids'
carp rod and reel

the new car is made up of
ideas, floaty as dust
a kaleidoscope mix
and the possibilities
that multiply and lurk
between finger
and opposing thumb
the cleverness of not
throwing out oddities
you can see, they've been
putting madness to work
Jean Bernard Parr
The Reunion

she comes to the funeral
mole smooth and mole black
and I wonder if her life
has been smooth, or has it
twisted and turned like that
old tree root of mine a
forked lightning rod for trouble
that somehow got me food
shelter most of the time
she remembers me alright
the smallest and loudest
in our gang, married a cop
I found out later,
there's some crime
in my tunnel of life
or is it just grime

Jean Bernard Parr
The Somme

a young fox too early dead
with yellow pelt, muddied by
those wheeled sofas
that ooze urgency
and lamp post-piss comfort zone
and at once empty
as abandoned sea shells
we will pile up soon
but he is dead
on his way to sniff the air,
hone hunting skills
pause for butterflies
among foxes, a poet
nothing now to be
and I think of thousands
that lay one day
in those fields of france
the bluster of wind
and a chatter like teeth
the bluster of commanders
explain to mothers
why normally
this happens only to others

Jean Bernard Parr
The Sun Is In His Motor

Phoebus has just bought
a gold GTI from this guy
and is driving it
round the ring road
in the sky
he'll be doing that
again and again
til the day I die

Jean Bernard Parr
The Sunday Boys

this saddle is too big
for wheels so thin
will they notice
those Sunday boys?

my bike is a mirror
to me, and I should
be allowed
eccentricity
if it looks right
it is right,
the saying goes
but what will they make of it
the Sunday boys?

fearless down lanes
big with hedges
past the vicar
polite conversation
flowery hats
the tolling bell
and creaking congregation
they take on hills
as if opening the book

its a matter of pride
when out for a ride
that you get a nod
from the Sunday boys
that the bike has a look
Italian or Belgian
a machine ridden
on the Tour de France
they can tell at a glance
when something is
out of place
the peleton of
the Sunday boys.
They are on you
swarm, 
clicking
wheel-swishing
then gone
a commuter
with ankle clips and bag
is a creature from outer space
nor will straight handlebars
get a nod
its the nod that counts
the nod from the Sunday boys
that says you're in not out.

Jean Bernard Parr
The Tin Door

In our street
They came and fixed her
A tin door, three times
She had bashed it in
One night she came unglued
Six cop cars
When she took her house apart
Along the fence they wrote
Billy is a grass, she hopes
The rain will wash it off before
He gets out there will be balloons
Bring out sofas in the sun, speakers
Really loud, let the world know
Billy is out
Her and the fat kid, the one
With the sweetwrapper heart
And in school they will snigger
at the kid and his mad mum
and Billy who goes in and out
Through the the tin door

Jean Bernard Parr
The Waterfall

They were slow moving waters I waded in when I was young a long time figuring out how you write the novel that is going make your name none came, there were flaws, ok, but I liked the little gargoyles I had made I thought they were proof of ingenuity that I had it in me

trouble is, the edifice was all wrong my keystone blocks my buttresses, arches and kneelers didn't add up in the end I put it in a drawer, not bothering to put out feelers the rain gurgled out of my gargoyles but it never became a flood and now that I am old and have let go of everything I know I have found poetry the way you find a waterfall.

First there is a soft heart drum birdcall and something like a jet plane roar
you get to a clearing
and all that white
is tumbling down
in a frame of green
suddenly you see,
you're on your own
seeing what everyone
has seen before

Jean Bernard Parr
Them Dictionary Blues

How did I make it
through life
without the weight
of the dictionary?
was it sleight of hand,
a market boy's trick?

Soon it will be time
to meet Judge Dredd
the words I never checked
are going to come
and get me,
little zombies crawling
out of the heavy tome

Where do words belong?
Surely
in the market throng,
not flower pressed
in some museum
of a book where
they wouldn't get
a second look

the dictionary,
word-garage
all the rage
this latest model-
take her for a spin,
and just look
what we got
under the hood?

there's a danger
unless you're cute
at turning the page
you'll get caught
staring for hours
at a knot between
paper and wood

Jean Bernard Parr
There Might Be Boats

I wish I could have woken William today
Bill, I would have said, get a load of this
here we are at last mate
flying above the mash potato
heaven can’t be far from here
he turned to me and said, then, this
woman looks up from her Kindle,
smiles at William, the sort of smile
people have for people who are
out to lunch or a bit doolalee, but
William doesn’t notice he is
just looking
at the dark blue above
and trying to guess how much further
heaven is
suddenly
there is a hole in the cloud
and you can see a beach and as we had
only just taken off moments before
the woman
got her Kindle out, you could
see the people
all the specks and the flecks in water
flecks that might be boats

Williams eyes got wider and wider, then
I was on the beach looking up at the silver
sliver of jet
the jet William was on

Jean Bernard Parr
there was a sky as I
walked along the
clifftop, there, higher still
a fan of pale plumes
you could measure in degrees
contrails up there
sharp, going thin
a half hearted knit
that got put aside
like the time I made
a suede moccasin
the kids foot grew
it got put in a drawer
staying there too long
when it started to look
like a mummys'tongue
I threw it away,
ever did the other
he never had a brother

Jean Bernard Parr
There's A Man

there's a man on the beach, gold watch
and walrus skinned, not that he has
sinned, but the gold tells of lurking
piracy, somewhere hidden in his
old treasure chest

Jean Bernard Parr
Things That Just Happen

There's that politician on tv
who once gladhanded me
behind him the river and city bridge
can you see the big wheel creeping, creeping..?
the truth is everything inches towards something
thus proving its real
this I think, watching the river slow-wink
those blurred and lazy worms

but the tv show is fast
not built to last
here comes the smile, the nod,
the shake of the head, the speed
at which questions are fed
attack, riposte
a name that comes up on the screen
fades like a ghost
tesserboard life
of the programme host
and
as words billow to fill the faltering argument
a seaull plies her aerial furrow and flies
through the head that talks in the Thames
she wings the river low, to the bright star cluster
that turns and mewls over dark underbridge water

Jean Bernard Parr
Those Benches You Don't Use

They are getting closer
those benches you don't use
you know the ones, they look out
over the town in odd corners
that's what they do
theres one on that sloping scrap
of green where everyone knows
you stop the bus
some have slats missing and are
squeezed between bleak pebbledash
shops patronised by the whining
tied up dog, others grander
with memorial plaques
windswept with a harbour view-
the orange sweetwrapper lifeboat
and its crew whithin granite hug
of the sea wall

They wait for me, those benches
you don't use, when the
twinkling bicycle wheel grinds
its last mile and the spokes grow dull
when forward motion is less
I hope to be alert and on watch
among clicking bulrushes, where
the warship grey heron is on guard
and me, silent trespasser
entranced, painted with
summer soft shadows
still breathing and still here

Jean Bernard Parr
Ticking

I bought a watch in Argos
On the eve of election day
People stood with tickets
Warmed by holiday schemes
and tugged at by children
with their crooked fairy wings
in a treasure chest of dreams

It hasn't started ticking yet
So don't you count today
Unseen sun and moon
I bought a watch to start
This angry world anew
Tiring of grey government
And things you cannot do

Jean Bernard Parr
When young and sight-keen
we love the new,
the sheen on things
in the green arched
sparkling street, passing
the black garbed
old that sit stooped and bowed
we look out for anything
that glows like gold
on pavement café tables
silver satin swirls
the emerald drink
the little girl has got
eyes wide, aunt-fussed, spoilt,
she gives you
a knowing look that says
'you've got nothing
and I've got a lot.'

Meanwhile, in that
fecund world
of curating
unscratched things
that are not yours-
the slender bladed knife
from Spain that
belongs to a brother
in the creeping silence
with no one there
is when we start to dare

But lust starts to perish
at the first sight
of blemish, the hard won
prize tarnishes
excitement dims
and you return the find
to the drawer
with other things
far better to order
a museum in the mind
deep down you know
that worldly pile
will grow a whirl
of worry and
destruction in a while

Jean Bernard Parr
The islands prowl this unmade bed of sea
like grey cats creeping
no light anywhere
claws of gorse scratching the dishcloth sky
you long for a meltdown fire
to redden a horizon
in lieu of this stillborn sunset
while on that other shore
the ghostly playbrick blocks
cover the fuel rods of Hinckley Point
indistinct through my telescope
my footfall clings to a cliff edge
sharp as your skirt hem
remembered navigation full of heat
you as a city girl then, confident under
a city sun, wintering a fiery cheek,
a furnace of golden hair, your
moves, large with promise
and I, the incubator of despair

the turnkey of time clicks and groans
the gaoler of love
I still look for you in these greying mounds
the mewing seagull and other sounds.

Jean Bernard Parr
Wanderer   (To A Meteorite Found)

A lump, I hold
a metal heart
nest you, in both hands
and wonder
where you have been
bearing these scars
from careless tumbling
between stars
up close you can see
you are not made
for stillness or rest
did you consort
sometime with darting Mercury,
that enticer of the fickle tryst,
to shipwreck here in white heat
streaked with iron tears?
how long, how long
have you roamed
this boundless vault?
had you not flitted so close,
dark moth, to this blue
candle flame
your fiery arrival may have been
merely a half way beacon
for an odyssey between
the spheres lasting another
hundred thousand years

there is in me the urge
to set you free, a nursed
and mended bird, but that is
not to be, I cannot teach you flight
and so we are both prisoners
of a heavy country, feet and
eyelids pulled down
by relentless gravity

Jean Bernard Parr
Wasteland

It dripped the stone
it dripped a beat then missed one,
I went back for it everything
muddled in the puddled rail bridge
prison dank leaned my bike against
unfriendly push back wall
a white bread sandwich gleaming
in a wrapper, some kid had surely thrown down
you dont look good in the playground
with a sandwich made by your mum
the white triangles white as the
wings of a wounded dove
the bloated steel drops of cars
hissed by all amplified by the arc
of dark and I thought of the hand
that had opened, taken the knife from the drawer
and cut
a workman would have been more careful
no it was a child who had cast someones
love aside
careless and with a hint
a drizzle of spite

Jean Bernard Parr
We, The Cold War Kids (Memories Of Rheindahlen)

When you were six you
were a country kid with
nettle stung shins and
brothers with voices that
whined like jet engines
the Bloodhound missiles sprouted
like new sewn garlic
the crocus bullet head shoots
unseen in mounds against
ground attack
we were the cold war kids
when you were ten we trod
the dirty gunpowder dust from
bombed out pines, threw hatchets
at trees like Kirk Douglas
(it had to stick in)
passed around the sacred
bb gun, took sisters hostage
yeah we had some fun
whooped in the woodsnap
gunshots
gonging out signals
on a battered old drum

Jean Bernard Parr
Weathergirl

She plays this game
the weathergirl
always the same
question she poses
beside the torn edges
of this sea bound scrap
rough as a present ravaged
by midnight christmas kid
and rightly thinks she
is more arresting
than the crosshairs
of where I live,
describes whats coming
with balletic hyperbole
and a faintly mocking smile
that says
these arrows that curve
towards my fluttering heart
are explained by isobars
so close together and
that's the only intimacy
youre allowed but even she
cant see the unknown calamity
that beset her hemispheres
her box of toys, joys blown
by something
not factored in
squeezed between
something
rumbling at her feet

Jean Bernard Parr
Where Are The Hearths

Where are the hearths
Of warriors
Where are their hearts,
Do they think of home?
Where are the hearths
And the warm loaves
And the hot smell of stone?

Bring me the hearts of warriors
When the bullets are done
Do they dream of fireside
Family and song?
There are no hearts in warriors
Who tell ragged children
They only can do no wrong

Jean Bernard Parr
You Don't Need Grammar

They say walk before run
but its not true

teachers mess you up
make you walk slowly
like that man on the moon

you think you need school
before you write a book
well take another look

if you get that feeling
just get down to it soon

its the same with grammar
all that learning
will make you stammer

knowing what is
a reflexive verb, or an epithet
 transferred
is not a precondition
of the avant garde tradition

so write down that gobbledygook
while its real hot
that's what the Beats did
and look where they got

Jean Bernard Parr
Zen

like an old curtain
clouds part
there, stars,
aeroplane
beetling across night sky
brimful of certainties
like not being boot crushed
in a celestial garden
or falling now
when all falls

Jean Bernard Parr