Tommy Stroller
- poems -

Publication Date:
2019

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive
I live and am retired in Croatia now on the Bay of Kvarner, but I have lived and worked as an English teacher in the UK, Brussels/Belgium and in Denmark. I am a traveller of many lands and still travelling in my mind.

More of my poetry can be found on my blog:

Stories:
The History of My Luggage
A 60s Tatoo

In the Nunnery world
That bore me from
Teenage angst to twenty something guilt
An innocence was given birth to
Beyond the reason that kills
This horizonless world

For there were no bars
To that open cloister
Morality was merely
An experience in changing bodies
Freedom a day
Not yet completely lived
Tomorrow a sign
Tattooed on our talentless heads

Tommy Stroller
A Certain Darkness Of Touch

The dark
Is a minder
I shall not want
It makes me lie down
With its black god-nailed boots
On my neck

Takes pictures never seen
In my holiday photo album

Has the mouth of a toothless whore
Offering unusual services
For less than half price
But slightly more
Than half a body

The dark is a reminder
Of who precisely is not there
He and whose army under the bed
Of the dead child

Is the missing spot
In the mind that over-reaches
Time and again for the gin

The dark is the eclipse and proof
Of mothers, mantras and necklace charms
The waste of mental effort
By all those eyes past
Searching

Tommy Stroller
The Danes they gather
In some full and unlonely bar:
"Strandlyst" - a name that self obviously
Means
Light on the strand,
Somewhere close
By the harbour of a harbour town,
To remember one special
Old friend who died two weeks before
And drink to his good life amongst them.
"Heshima" they call it in old Tanganyika -
Respect or "respekt" - is what is given
By drinking schnapps or Gammeldansk
Or just Tuborg øl,
Honouring the name of the dead sailor,
A carpenter, and amateur player
On their local theatre's boards
A man not just based
In Danish waters, but who spread
Himself on many foreign shores
From St. Thomas, in the Caribbean
To United States, Canada, and back again
To Thurø, Tausinge and more local isles:
They remember and name the places
Of every home and temporary destination.

They are
Stout fellows with strong Danish wives
All who, without even one tear,
Make me sad to think:
Who will remember me when I am gone?
I was just a stranger at the table
Of a passing bar
In the far corner of their lives.

Tommy Stroller
A Song Below Growing Old

There is a song below growing old
A master lyric that has not been told
The dread of dying cannot stifle its voice
The love of living is its altar place

When this poor body is near massacred
And aches and fevers are all that fascinates
Call to the love that makes it all worthwhile
Summon it close to light the very last smile

And if the good ashes scatter on an offshore wind
Play the tunes then that we always planned
But never quite succeeded to usher in
Play our songs and let the host this truth confirm:

Though godless men this ball of dirt do own
Finer spirits will cleanse it finally from
The waste of time, the greater waste of love
And stop the lies that poison our song

Tommy Stroller
Across The Table From Rilke

&quout;No more can the captain hold the bowsprit of his ship when the hidden lightness of her godhead launches her upward in the bright sea wind...&quout; from Rilke's Requiem for Paula Becker

I sit opposite
Your mask of death
In some cafe not unlike
San Marco's.
I sit full of the questions
You already have answered
But to which my intelligence
Can hardly second guess.
I sit opposite you not only in Trieste
But Opatija, Oostduinkerke and
Fischerude's lonely cabin
Where the suicides trailed
Their coupled routes to death.

Your work was my holiday
But your holidays always work:
Like a panther you pounced
On every simple fresh sight
Transporting our old cages
Into poems new for this night.

Waiting, yes we waited
Vigils without cease
Inspiration came only
When angels could not sleep.

Duino halls we paced along
And life's endless corridors
Exchanging towers for craggy walks
Over a warm muscled sea
And sandbanks of seas northern
Were one with our loping ease.

Marriage was not
One of either our strengths
Men we cuckolded, women
Left waiting, tense.

Now that I have you
With a coffee on both sides
You stare at me deeply
Your beard Paula's shroud.

The requiems you sang to them
Were warnings to the dead
You ghosts of my lines
Be careful where you tread,
While shivers of uncertainty
Passed down their spines.

Who do I belong to? And Where should I go?
Paths to heaven or hell
Look so much the same.

How many verses were lost to that sea?
How many footsteps retraced but not seen?
Hide them in that space between our lives,
Yes, and in that space between these lines.

Your love of the simple
The poor and extraordinarily
Rich, your distrust of machines,
All left you in a purgatory
Unconnected to modern scenes.

But Rilke's speech is all
Our undoing, this my reply
A silent refusal
To lie beneath our table.

We stare lost at each other
The table does not move
The writing before me
Is maybe life's final key
Or poetry is still, as Eliot said,
Little more than coffee spoons.

Rijeka, Croatia, Twenty Ninth January, Two Thousand and Nineteen

Tommy Stroller
Admission (For Men's Eyes Only)

My mother's will inspires me
To testify her tidiness
Yet she who bore me
Begat also, a reflection
In every woman sought
Now all those women
Circle me
With wagging fingers
And accusing tongues
Reprimanding
The sloth of my life
Tugging my dirty cloths
Reflection
Or projection
It does not matter
The screams are all too real
Denying my every choice
My freedom narrowed
To this small channel
Drain-water, dirty
And swilling in the dust
In my twisted life
It still reaches
The gutters of bitter spite
I believed I was free
In my hip-happy days
Of all her straightened love
But when I glance
In those accusing eyes
I tremble still
And settle for
This final re-admission

Tommy Stroller
Apples

The road like a river of cars
all heading from the mountain fading light
sundown between high survival
and winter breaks in the city
the ghosts of fake chauffeurs
coasting home with sunkenhearts
tucked deep in their leatherette seats
belted and ready for cooked turkey
the resumés of frozen guides
lost somewhere over the last col

Here I am in the dreaded city dusk
offering apples to dead shaman
who haunt my last invasions
of naked and half-derelict discotheques

Tommy Stroller
Between Africa & Europe

Who is this woman?

She is the movement between Africa and Europe.
She is beauty and sight watching each other. She is the mirror of everything - as in a kaleidoscope.
She is partial yet she is full.
She is the tentacle and she is the small fish being drawn in. Whatever she wishes for is mesmerized inside her.
She makes the world into a toy for herself then throws it away once the amusement wears thin.
She loves the surface but expresses the depths.
She is the dark core of passion with a light touch.
She puts all things in order in order to forget them.
She has the intelligence of the sea, eroding and shifting all solid forms while making
file beach of our dreams.
She creates the glittering things that pull us forward, but she is also our fall once they are past.
She is too young to be sad and too old to be blindly happy or free.
She is the first blood of womanhood and the last drop of innocence.
She has come when she has gone.
She is change.

Tommy Stroller
Chemical Love

Much is made of the chemistry of love
But what of the love that resides
Deep in every chemical reaction:
2H2O + 2SO2 = H2SO4 + O2
For instance, is a beautiful coupling
Resulting in a corrosive explosion
Likely to dissolve just about any metal:
2Zn + H2SO4 = Zn2SO4 + H2
Zinc is so loved by this acid
Their child is the precious gas
Hydrogen, which one day
May save the planet

One of the only metals
Not loved by the sulfurik vitriol:
Au + H2SO4 ? AuSO4 + H2
Is gold
Which alchemists thought
Was compound and not pure
But pure it is like
A true narcissist
So we treasure this unlovable element
Not just as marriage rings
Or necklace charms but because
It is immutable
Incorruptible and unchangeable
Just like love itself

The power of love therefore
Is not just in the genes
Or pheromones
Nor just in our longing bodies
It is the base metal of everything
It is alive and well
And kicking
In every molecule and atom

Tommy Stroller
Coming To The Limfjord

Coming over the long slow hills
Of Jutland and its weather-torn
Landscape of blunted moraines
And trilling darkforest
The bridge over Aggersund appears,
A mouth with metal teeth
Gaping over the Limfjord
That northern sea that once
Was unsalted lake, a maze
Of febrile land and water
Islets, coughing off narrow spits,
The low foam rarely amounting
To waves of real neighbour seas,
A winter harbour for viking hordes
Waiting to deliver invasions
And bring again here the women captives
From foreign tribes.

And in that winter's evening hour
Suddenly the sun's light behind
Imprisoning clouds breaks free:
The light now upon the face of the sea
And the face of the leaden sea
Reflected in mine

Tommy Stroller
Early Snowfall On The Toison D'or

Rich & poor
Lost in the spiral snowflakes,
Beggars & choosers
Croaking on the freezing air
And it's still only November
On the Toison d'Or.

The cars sleep in the street,
Snoring monoxide in cumulant lines:
It goes up as snow comes down
Slowly driving in all directions
Tearing the night sky to bonnet ribbons.

The feel of the hooded vapours
Breezing through the heart,
Soft chambers of melted emotion
Carbonised in the slow thump of feet.

A hundred or more desk-tenders
All seeking a way home,
Gazing sullenly at the sky:
Those uncountable points of light
Pricking their vision.

Like and yet so unlike
More familiar points of view
Flashing across their computer screens.
A world passing under
A world being reinvented
Recast by the orange pearls
In their languid white-capped lamps
That tour behind the dark.

Too late for the salt in the wound
Too early for millennial thoughts
There was once here snow-blind oxen
Struggling across the fields
With our hands bound to frozen wheels.
Now in this city
Daughter to Europa
A white opium puts the business mind to sleep
A pure morphine of love
For once we - both rich and poor,
Do all equally share
The same and frozen ground
On the Toison d'Or.

Tommy Stroller
Encounter At Valbjerg Sands

the human
coming down thru the valley
toward the sly booming northern sea
alighting at the final plain of broom, heather, dunes
& marram grass:

the horses
stood in a cleft between day-ending & inrushing
night between finally softening storm
& a horizon of stillness
under the first stars & purple ragged
dusk, their field the whole goddam strand
from mad incoming foam to forest's gaping
jaws

the horses were they
wild? dangerous?
massive & corralled in solid defence
they stood there at least twenty
dark eyes following his slow
approach
as the distance between them
narrowed till two arms' length
& shivering he knelt
waited
held his hand full of nothing
but a small wildflower
breathing heavy
(trying to be)like a
stallion but crouching in the dirt
head down

not fooled but curious one
then two big mares crept closer
one sniffed his hand,
ate the flower
eyeballed
the man as he blew into its nostrils
curious but unassured by hay-less
breath they jerked away abruptly
till turning stopped again
not knowing what to judge him:
mad
centaур or
beyond specification

finally they joined
the others & went on eating
nervously back-glancing, their
perfect blaue reiter spines
outlined in the fading western
lights & the geese in delta flight
tipping south & inland

Tommy Stroller
Glass Eye

The eyes of the copse
Hunger for the turning
For this is their trade.
The winter dives back under the sun,
Shifting the dusk and setting
Up beyond the teazles. The line grazes
Empty now of iron and oak
Soon the granite too
Will be tractored away.
This quiet space of rabbits and hares
Goes gradually back into the race
That man makes
But always loses.
Night polishes her glass eye
And leaves well alone.

Tommy Stroller
Haiku 1

Rain drilling
on the sea
Bare trees too drip
But the wave hollow
□ dry

Tommy Stroller
Homeward Ride

Invisibly

The geese rise
their klaxon sounds unfurl
in the cold and empty hall of the sky.

I, biking the corridor of coming night,
follow my little light beam
as it moves
towards the wall of gloom

Tommy Stroller
If There Is Snow

If there is snow
Across the city's roofs
And the trees dance
In their new white shirts
I will return again
On the full moon
So your cold nose
Will find a home in me
In our bed in the air
Above the stove

Tommy Stroller
La Mure

Those alpine hues
That spark from late summer blooms
And chant from limestone walls
They stencil the August sky
And distribute a colour blue
Only known here

The mountains shout
And pull out small hamlets
Of withered streets
In little drawers

The river's spliced by lighter-blue stones
White combs unfurling
The damned-up pools

The pines smoke
In dusky softer tones

The air in knuckle-backed valleys
- cold of the morning, warm waves
in evening lairs -
Is breathed
And lived and loved
By all the creatures dwelling here
In heaven's second chamber:
L'Haute Provence

Tommy Stroller
Le Monde

The gold of my whiskey
Belongs to a world not quite
In here - it is born in the sky
Delivered by the evening sun
And transposed by my polished table
But once drunk it becomes
These lines: my poetry
And your fantasy

Tommy Stroller
Leaving Only Footprints In The Sand

This lucid ball we enter in
To dance our lives away
Is only mysterious for those who pray
To Gods who pierce their skins

It is no sacrifice to offer hands
To nails or women's taunts
We usher in the glorious fool
Who saves poor clueless aunts

We wonder where we travel to
When life exposes tired bones
The final resurrection comes
When cowering fearsomly alone

When there is no help, no consoling friend
To ease our very last days
And we seek the maker of our frame
We turn inside ourselves

The peace that passes in elderdom
Is created in younger cells
Those who have danced to the very end
Leave only footprints in the sand

Tommy Stroller
Music

Some music makes you shake
Some music makes you rock and roll
Some music wakes up your soul
Some music makes you cry
Some music makes you wanna die
Only the music-master knows the tunes to play
When your either up or down
In love or relieved
To be broken hearted, free and outta town.
Music is for the highway, the church and the
Lonely apartment just down the block
It's always there when you need it
Radioed, stereoed, or spottified
Its always there when you unlock
Your head and get turned on or tuned out.
You can still get your glass of music
At every bar and passing cafe.
That time you hear your favourite singer
Blasting out from a passing car stereo
You know that heaven is literally
Just down the road.

Tommy Stroller
My Grandmother

“He once said, too,
Let us be humans even if we are Serbs.
But we could not grant this plea of his
(The neighbors would laugh at us).”

Stojan Bogdanovic

My grandmother
- who was a reluctant viking
battleaxe - lived on a hill
in the far far north
facing the three cold winds

she had little time
for chatting with the neighbours
the family was always enough
four young miners to feed
& clothe not to mention
grandad who was a silent pit
all to himself

she had little time
for God or his earthly salesmen
what with the three meals a day
she had to conjure
on nowt much but pennies
& a house full of coal dust
but she sent all my uncles
to sunday-school

she had little time
for anything really
except family, my cousins
& all the news from
those few relations
who had spread their way
further than the village

like for instance from
her daughter my mother
who went alone to London
at the tender age of twenty
& spent two years
learning how to convert
the savage northern miners
& her own mother
to a new religion

but grandma
was a difficult case
her religion was shockingly simple:
she always told me
&quot;when God made the world
the last place he made
was this village&quot;

& though she was as hard
as the coal she cooked on
she always had time
for us bairns
always a pair of warm hands

Tommy Stroller
My Morning Friend

Robin! You are my morning friend
a friend indeed who comes to
worship at my feet, bowing
& tossing your little head gaily
aside: then all the troubled thoughts
of night are blown far out to sea
on that same salt breeze
that ruffles your feathers
but still leaves you slick,
smart, with puffed-up waistcoat
like a proud waiter
serving your passionate red dreams
then ready to dip & bow again
turning that perfect beak & beaded eye
up to my so tall frame which
goes on walking in this garden of shame
my black thoughts skim away
on your light-splattered wings.

You fly up between the boughs
& re-greet me further along
my every morning pathway.

Tommy Stroller
Night-Vision

The stars fall in the sighing fields
The moon strings trees of cannibal lace
Limbs of sleeping valleys settle one by one
Their liquid veins pumping abstract life
Slowly out to sea. The mountain gorse
Dips yellow fingers in night-cooled air
Still yellow, still yellow:
Sky and earth and faces melt
And glowing slide into the gentle abyss of the night
Where we do rise like purple ghosts
And with love harmonize
The utter day

Tommy Stroller
Nite Ride To 'frisco

on the nite-train to 'Frisco
man beast machine
blazing tinder
ramps up
the blind curves
tween silken mountains
hasting through
te cold valleys
& warm minstrel
p-winds of
tange grove plains
tollowing moon glints
h naked steel
licking the night
oto chimney stars
& cinder streams
te clash of old points
lacking constant
nder our feet
nd all about
te music of the iron spheres

Tommy Stroller
Nobody

Nobody leaves like the sea
Nobody burns like the sun
Nobody feels like the wind
Nobody lives like the earth
Nobody dies like me

Tommy Stroller
Old Age

Old age is the full knowledge
that whatever can be done
should be done
it's a vision of youth
by one who no longer misses it
because the child within
is finally free

Tommy Stroller
On The Boat To Caldey

We are a great and glorious family
that meets and re-meets and enjoys
countless reunions over many lives
We are all in the same boat
headed for the island of peace

Tommy Stroller
One Day You Will Not Recognize Yourself

I looked at him
And he looked at me
And so I said
"I've seen you before somewhere
But many years ago..."

The man however
Refused to confess
And the only thing certain
Was this wasn't the same face
Nor the same man

Whoever he was
He'd grown a lot older
Than me

So we turned back to back
And walked away
Until the next day's shave

Tommy Stroller
Post-Humanism

“I sit in a dive...” W. H. Auden

On the ballroom skin of the earth
Sly couples waltz through civil wars
Trading guns for kisses, bombs for orgasms
Shattering the puzzles of temporary peace-talks
Ending their dagger-eyed cease-fires
With the undying underlying truth
That we are born not to love but to hate
And hate with a fury that easily eclipses
All of passion's cruel inventions

At the end of all our longings and polities
Lies the wrecks, the ruins
Of bodies of cities
Of hearts of arteries
Camping out in a thin skeined gomorrow
The cold winds will alone
Caress us

Le Monde, 7.2.2019

Tommy Stroller
Recollected In Tranquillity

I was twice in Wordsworth's graceful valley
Ambling through Grasmere's forested lanes
First at eighteen while free and easy with life
Covering my loves in rhododendron kisses
Not too far into Wordsworth to dismiss
The mountain traffic beyond his romantic sight.
Again at sixty eight - a fifty year
Anniversaire - the same fog and rain,
And though mourning lost loves and life-long pain,
Feeling joy too at life's returning cheer.
What was once so new is still so new.
What was misty, grey, seems clearer now.

Tommy Stroller
Rest & Exorcism

in this dim pavilion
of the far flung woods
i set my stall by sunset`s close
to sleep under evening's sloping bower
a night hall to clean my many sins
a church of wood and leaf
to finally worship in

Tommy Stroller
Riders In The Sky

Riders In The Sky

(apologies to Rainer and Jim)

Who are the riders in the sky?
For there are no stars called riders
Though you famous riders were always stars
Maybe we are the riddle
And God's heavens the rider's crop

Tommy Stroller
Routines

A time to ponder on my routines
And what they mean
The morning saw between numb fingers
Eyes and thumb
Dropping the evening logs by the stove
The walk across the ploughed ridges
To the copse of hawthorn and elm
The birds emptying as I enter
Washing the evening dishes
In the old metal sink
The evenings of writing and gazing
At my daily work's destruction
In the grate
A time to ponder on my routines
And what they mean

Tommy Stroller
Something That The Wind Blew In

Something that the wind blew in
Through that midnight banging door
Sets my heart to wandering
Wraps my thought in fur

Vacant lots on city streets
Lonely pines on moors
Telephones ringing in empty flats
Minds that fall through floors

Yesterday's unfinished washing up
Beachballs left in dunes
Jigsaws and wine almost spilt
Coffins in front rooms

Connections between bus and train
Timetables and accounts
All add up to the same:
Nothing was destined to meet

It was by chance we came this way
Chance when we shall leave
The only certainty's in our reason
Or spells cast in the dark

Tommy Stroller
Spring Up

Who knows
the name of the hounds of heaven
when they howl March's coming
& strip the last leaves of oak?

Who knows
how the sea grows warmer
cleaned & transparent from winter's keep
when early suns tend further east?

Who knows
what moves the caterpillar
from his wingless sleep & bids him
return to the blossoms & spreading buds?

Who knows
how the cherry ripens
in the heart of the bud
& is put out for the wandering gazer?

Who knows
where the lark springs from
to throw that sky-born voice
clear from its tall & lucid tower of air?

Who knows
why the sparrows' twittering grows louder
as they clamour in gable ends
& every bush?

Who knows
why men long seaward
when April shows its skirts & frolics
under the bows of newly launched skiffs?

Who knows
who women long for
when sheets lie heavy on itching skin
& imagination runs further than husbandmen?
Who knows
why sailors keep watch
on Orion's higher rising
in its spinning merry-go-round of April nights?

And who knows
who finally keeps the candles burning
in Rembrandt's dark study
on the far side of our tears?

Completed Cafe Rouge, Svendborg DK 18.14.18

Tommy Stroller
Star On The Mast

A star sails into harbour
On the yuletree
On the mast
Of the old tug
Desperate for repair

Tommy Stroller
The Ballad Of Jay & Magdalena

Intro:

Binadamu1 strung out
between Heaven & Earth

Short-term forecast:

Heaven - Suffocating
Earth - Melting
Manunkind - Procrastinating
Woman-kind - Suffering

Part 1

1. Intro

"What have they done to the earth?" 2

By now we know the answer
- yes everyone knows but most are in denial
Luckily the earth cannot be torn down.

For mother earth is already
avenging herself on her children
those ungrateful wretches of her dreaming
the mortal confetti of the great wedding
& the lost citizens of her sad empire.

Will we survive? - No
but the earth will rebear us in another form
fit to dream her great dream once again
& real-ize her dreams.

There must come a man
transformed by countless incarnations
to break the mould the magic spell
of materialism
of cunning consumentalism
there must come a man
to turn the profits of the rich
back into the wages of the poor
there must come a man
to trade the leisure of the idle
for the artistry of the unemployed
there must come a man
to train the lenses of the paparazzi
back upon the moguls of media & film
there must come a man
to reveal the final designs of fascism
as the dream of modern liberal democracy
yes there must come one man
to reach into the heart of sick religion
& tear out the bloody pumping mess
for exposure as the thing it has become:

☐

☐ The bloodsucker & the vamp
☐ The pederast & the pimp
☐ The terrorist liar & the gangrenous open sore

& replace it with the law of true emotion

There must come a woman
to renew the fertility of young boys & the fields
there must come a woman
to cleanse the forests & the golden streams
there must come a woman
to return the innocence to our children
merely through care & total devotion
& there must come one woman
whom we love to believe in
because she at last can believe in love

& her name could be Magdalena
& his name maybe Jay
but it could be just another story
& we’d have to fight another day.
So this is the ballad of Jay
& Magdalena
at the Battle of the (not quite) OK World

1. Binadamu (Swahili) the children of Adam, Human Beings
2. Jim Morrison "The Music's Over"

Tommy Stroller
The Ballad Of Jay & Magdalena 10

Part VIII

1. The Empress

Jay-wandering down
the myriad paths of forested Arden
he came upon a clearing
in which sat the most enormous throne
in which sat
noooo not a fairish maiden
noooo not the white-haired crone
but yes a kind of combination of a hybrid of a
transformation of
all three

Jay approached
from both sides at once
& from the back
he did not know the occupant
yes she had white hair
but as glossy as celluloid
& as curvily ornate as
a michelle angled O
or rather S

So his head grew tall
over the pointed wooden throne
& the hair grew voluminous
down the back & the arms
of said queenstool

& from the front
he approached with recognition
it was the Empress
in full drag
Minerva the night queen
she of owly wisdom
& the flower face
& it was the white goddess
full of inspirational seeds

The kind queen of hearts
& the cruel queen of clubs
the cool queen of diamonds
& the rather fussy
queen of spades
in one pack-
ed delicious dish
of womanhood
but a little middle-aged
for his immediate liking

& another thing
none had been in
Magdalena's reading

But hush
kind folks
give the girl a chance
after all the Empress
comes even before
the Emperor
in ancient packs

Recognition was his
not only of the rapturous locks
but too of the two
piercingly royal
Copenhagen blue
eyes
set in their
porcelaine whites
& also the modest
diamond tiara
bearing a thousand thousand
sparkling stars
the somewhat flimsy
Boticellian wedding dress
or maybe it was a negligé
but he recognized it never the less
in her hand the sceptre
of dominion
over men
her ruling mien
& the mess of material
caught underneath her

It was the crone OK
proving to be
a real crooner
having taken some youth
elixir & with a quick
change of clothes
for the new role
entertaining the whole forest
with a Brahms or a Bruckner
or maybe it was some kind
of magic fluting
- for Jay's classical knowledge
was a little lacking

Whatever
she was definitely Jay's kind of woman:
under her skirts
on the grass by the throne
the regulatory swan
& two bickering birds
could they be eagles
or ducks?
difficult to make out in the darkness
down there
for their differences were
portrayed
like a silent home movie
of a flickering heart

They checked out dates
in their horoscopes &
agendas & decided
to marry next day

It was a long wait for Jay ....
I think she knew Jay
better than he knew himself
for all the questions were his
& so was the need to tell
his story
forgetting that she
had already starred in it
but not started it

The day after next
after the usual nuptials
conducted with ridiculous haste
theirs was a conversation
something like this:

"Yeah OK so when I left you last I moved right up the trail through the forest & onto the plateau where there was absolutely no water so I had a difficult time staying alive.."

"Sure" she said not bothering to check the details because they were probably made up anyway.

"So this white horse comes up to me, mane as soft & as beautiful as yours"

"Do you mind, I am not a horse - I have a head of hair"

"Yes, well, it was a very fine mane & it seemed to know me this horse, & I could see it was longing for a ride, I mean someone to ride it, it seemed to speak to me & tell me it wanted someone to take it to Asgaard, you know Odin's realm, the old viking heaven"

"Yes, I was there just the other day"

"OK"

"But the horse was not that famous mother of eight-legged Septenir, said she, "Odin's steed, no I think it was Tristan's mount, it passed me by sometime before it reached you. In the great wilderness of Broceliande underlying all our consciousness Tristan has been wandering for centuries now looking for his lost Isolde. So in his despair & love-blindness he must have misplaced his white horse. It is a good job you did not try to mount it"

"Why, fair Empress, what would have happened. But strange to say I already had that intuition, I knew that the beautiful mare was not available to me"

"If you had stupidly taken its reins then it would certainly have trampled you to death. It is Tristan's steed & no other man's. Shall we go down?"

"Down where dear wife?"
Remember you have one last saving task. You said nothing of the fount of knowledge I told you about. No wonder, you headed right up above the forest to that limestone plain where the dry stone blocks appear like strange monsters bearing a hundred dead eyes & where the waters hardly ever run. What did you drink there by the way, to stay alive I mean.

I hesitate to tell you my queen what I was forced to drink, for you might think somewhat less of me, especially when we kiss.

Well I get your drift, it rhymes with that last word & all that you have missed.

At this point Jay could not help breaking into verse again

2. The Fount Of All Knowledge

Jay took the hand of his queen
& unerringly
imposedly led her north to that
source of the Orf
which he precisely knew
would show him finally
his true love
(for he still wasn't quite sure
that the aristocracy
beside him was
the one she was supposed to be
queen & reigning
monarch of his heart
the final one to rein in
his troubled & wandering ways
the Ceres of the New Earth)

& after two millenia
of wandering (though it
could have been a few millenia
more or less)
they struck upon
that beautiful valley
where Orf stream gently
meandered between rushy banks &
low pastured-clad hills
redolent of olden days
when sheep a plenty
went to market
& poor men could
afford not only mutton
but lamb chops
& luckily Jay & the White Queen
were definitely not
for the high jump
though that kind of French wedding
would have been fun

Leaving her side with
gentle imploring words
whispering his faith
that now alone to the mouth
of truth he must go
& in a few days
return to her side
would not be swallowed by
a crocodile's
tears or turned into stone
or maybe even get crazily drunk
on those pure waters
& wander orf again in
to the meandering arms of Broceliande

She just said in that typical
direct ice queen manner
"just get on with it
do what a man
has gotta do";

Under the towers
of solace & sanctity
circumcision & voluntary
castration of the loving seed
which we still call
a mona's story
Jay made his humble way
across those almost Cambridge
levelled lawns closely cropped
never by surrounding sheep
but only the monastic dentures
of the eternal chewing
of wisdom's cud, ...

(&quot;get on with it he&quot;
could hear his queen braying...)

... to the basin containing
that outpouring gushing frothing
stream from the MOUTH
mystery of the deep
words cannot contain what words themselves
spring from
we can never stare
into the guts or lungs
of all creation

But dipping his hands in there
below the sacred lips of cold
& oblivious stone
Jay felt a gentle tickling of another
life form
then suddenly a trout
(& not a trite salmon)
leapt up & placed
his first real wedding ring
gently between his lips
from her lips
then fell again
almost silently below
the surface of the pool

It was a pure apparition
thought he at first
but the gold of the ring
was plucked from mouth
by his own hands
shaking
in cold & excitement
& the ring was a thing
of excelling beauty
even though uncut or moulded
or in any way hall-marked

Having plucked from his mouth
the true ring of bright water
he was ready to swallow the whole river

& here's a thought
o yes a thought
a very subtle thought
for one so young
for one so forever old
were his days of
thirsting for energy
& knowledge
over?
& had his nightingale now turned
into a fish?

Down that eternal stream
Jay chased
Dylan who chased
Gwydion otherwise known as
Merlin who chased the fish
who turned into a dish
then a fishing rod
which caught poor Jay
by the pants
threw him heavily
onto the bank where
waiting lay the fair unmaid
Marion because married on
a throne yes the queen of tarts
all things slightly burnt

"Empress, what are you doing here;"
said Jay to the lovely layday

"You silly fool"
I was always here
do you think
I'd allow you
on such a dangerous mission
without first curling
into your box of
fishing tackle -
you don't know what
you might have caught
without me to guide you”;

Jay decided that he had caught quite enough old boots for one day so collecting up his queen they made a mean getaway to the lower reaches of Arden to meet the people in need of pardon from illness both great & small.

Part IX

Finale

“......three plagues fell on to the island of Britain, such as none in the islands had ever seen the like of. The first was a certain race who was called the Coranians, & so great was their knowledge, that there was no discourse upon the face of the island, however low it might be spoken, but what, if the wind met it, it became known to them. & through this they could not be injured..... & their coin was fairy money, money which when received, appeared to be good coin, but which, if kept, turned into pieces of fungus...” 1

At the junction of somber Morse they set up a school in healing trades & lived happily not quite forever after..... for

One day Jay died
but the day before he died
he gave this reading
to the gathered multitude
who were in danger
of creating yet another
delusion
another crude religion:

"What is it I have in my hand my friends?" he asked holding his left hand high
empty of everything
except its wrinkled skin

"A flower" one cried "a snail" cried another "a cross" said a third
"no it's an albatross" cried yet another
& so on & so
forth ad illuminatum

"No, to all your answers
so far & no before you say it
it is definitely not a smiley
or a passcode
I have nothing in my hand
& let it be the same
in your meditations
& in your memory of me
for I am just dust in the wind

& Jay made his last address
as much to the spirits
as to his unanointed ones

"I will make food
for the poor & lonely spirits of the night
I will succour them with sacrificial words
let the wind carry my song
the rain thicken my meaning
the seas of the of the world bear my truth
for the night is long
& the dead many more than the counting
the night is cold in the unforgiving of the light
the creeds are many but
the carriers & the loaders few
so the spirits go hungry when their shrines
are buried by the debris of heartless minds
smothered by the business-mended souls of the greedy"
locked out of the tombs of our closed bodies

Spirits come & eat & breathe the life
retake the inheritance that was stolen
haunt again the troubled minds of men
forgetful in their drunken sleep
empty in their meaningless songs of lust

Spirits come burn the paper with your blue flame
feed on the royal faces of those who brought you low
their emblems are already fading
their merchants grow mad on insatiable cravings
their warehouses crack open with the falsehoods of plenty
these layers upon layers that rest over your magic
only finally serve to reveal your gifts

For you though starving can sing
on the wires of their computers
you though banished can weave
strange fantasies in dictator's heads
all are ripe for your bewitching
when you lead them to destroy one another
let no God-intoxicated man behind our backs ever again."

"My loved & healed ones
multiply your love
in the networks of friendship
strengthen your trust
by sacrificing to the spirits
offer to Cæser
& first false ministers
no more
than obedience
when you must
& make my name not
into any religion"

But the crowd were disgruntled
at Jay's words
they wanted a guru
they wanted him to die
& get reborn
in all of them

Jay lay down on his favourite
settee in the orchard
in front of that school of
re-learning
under the arch of anonymity
& died peacefully

It was just old age
having cured himself & most others
of everything else

& the rain started
petering on stone windows
& tired tearful cheeks
the music droned &
the distant drums of death
resounded through the forests
leaving a ring of mourners
under ever-blackening skies

Now here's the rub
after 3 days serious mourning
& wailing through the nights
when even the heavens continued
sniffling

the assembled wives
daughters & heal-lead followers
got so fucking angry because
A: Jay had not even left a will &
B: Jay had not whispered to any of them
the secret of the Orfful fount trout &
C: ditto his healing powers which
may or may not
have been the same mill
stone round the ankle
of Hermes
which as we all now know
was the reason for this god's
flight
Waaaaal
Jay the Gwydyliodion
the gentle Joker
was told the sacred word
the name of all the trickster shamin
from dear old Dan to him
the name he would not reveal
to the funeral revellers
followers or even close family
I WILL REVEAL TO YOU!

Yes that name he learnt from the sacred fish
the name of the now missing ring
the O mega of the holy fount
the three sprigs of Arianhod
I will give to you
dear reader for it appeared
after his death
on that arch
over the wooden gate
to Jay’s School of Healing
welcoming both sick & appren-tices
but none realized its significance
even less its true magnificence

The name of names
the game of games

(Bloody well get on with it
admonished mo(u) rning Minorffa)

was
Okidokiluoghj jogin Dan-y-Llew
or to you
simply
Jay

for short
The body of the holy Jay
lay serenely prone
under muslin covers
in the front vestibule
for all to investigate & simper over
but not for long

The mad crowd of females kicking
screaming & spitting & gnashing
teeth & skin & each other
came bursting in
to snatch the body
drag it out & carry it
over their heads chanting
followed up by a bunch of minstrels
hoiking up a ghettoblaster
over their silent mouths
playing every single number
from Dionysius Jim
to (yes)Mick Jagger
& through the thrashers
of late 70s bands
from Sid to Clash to Joy
(later Jay] Division
& the bare plain-songs
of the dandy 80s
including a few
of the Karma Chameleons
& a canful of modish de=pêcheurs

Yes you knowz what's going to happen
'cos you heard this number before
even if this particular story
is unavailable at any record store
beside that it's all written in Greek

The plain of Mars
by the Lion Stand
ancient battleground
of little Napp'lyon
& Wellington
(yep the one who left us
the famous boots
is where they finally dropped
him while dancing & grooving
jigging & moving to
those sounds of our
latterday musical saints
the minstrels changed CDs
at the rate of R & Ds
on to Oasis
they screamed & roared
even to Elton
(not Ben but John)
until at last
the lady divas divesting
of all except a fulcrum
of dancesteps & revolvers
& a crotch
just hidden but so fulsome
that it was difficult not to touch

Yeah all were getting involved
in the evening of destruction
in the main event down
on Champs de Mars
the Mænads of home
& family of faithful followers
& a few just there for the sport
tore Jay finally apart
head from body
rib from rib
limb from torso
& torso from limb
fingers & toes
nobody knows
where they goes
trampling into dust
all that they could
whilst his tortured spirit
stared on

Not content
with their callous
dismemberment
they strung out his guts
like necklace pearls
& twisted them round arms
& bodies
in a woadish design then
stamped on his breath-case - source of so many
cononundrums
smashed his skull
& devoured the brains raw
leaving very little more
than his thoughts
slaverling over every last morsel
they pulled out his teeth
& ceremoniously threw them
to the sky
(though some collected a few
for a tooth-chain)

Then they carved off his meat
such as it was
then popped it in a soup
called "Jay Oblivion;"
then ladled it out
from a steaming hot cauldron
kept boiling till dusk
until so finally replete
of dead Jay
they broke off the feast
for long sleeping

So they left his bones a-moulding
in the Belgian dust a-holding
ancient battle & burial ground
to all & sundry nations
of poor Miss Treated Europe

BONES BONES & THE OCCASIONAL
PIECE OF GRISTLE
BUT NOT EVEN A BIT OF THE MUSCLE
THAT JAY ONCE POSSESSED APLENTY
JUST BONES WERE ALL THAT  
WERE LEFT AS THE MOON ROSE  
& THE MÆNADS WERE SOON  
GONE BACK - I GUESS TO FIND  
ANOTHER MASTERSOHN  
& THE RAIN STOPPED

But will the Empress  
ever release the scattered Jaybird  
from this press of death?

& what will she do  
now that there’s no glue  
to put back together  
their shattered lives?

Take another man?

The Empress sat in discomfort  
on her rather too wooden throne  
shuffling her thin bottom  
for lack of cushioned support  
& waited for the next  
dinner party for Jay’s mates  
to make her final comments

Yes there would be a Jay sequel  
but she couldn’t consider it  
in this lifetime  
unless it was some young  
quarterback  
who could give her her youth  
well ... back...

She would administer the rites  
at the correct & appropriate  
times after his passing  
& live off the proceeds  
of the healed ones'  
grateful gifts  
then herself pass on
to higher motives
& votives
make a bow to this
earthly bado hoping
to join Jay at the
heavenly sauna
or Turkish hammam
for that was the place
where Jay had indicated
for their first after-life
come-on

So farewell Empress
& remain the one
originally intended
& not the one
your surly mother
delivered

Stars comets & satellites
glinted down on Jay's dull bones
the moon struck a chord
in its ancient modal tones
that milk-grey remnant of some angry
goddesses' shoot-out with
mother earth

The wind whistled
through the hollowed bones
& made a tune of sorts
a melody at least
to Magdalena's ears

The spirit of the girl
lost in the desert
rattled fourth
on her four-stroke
30 horsepower
rather clapped out
B S A motorbike
coming from that other Golgotha
really not so far away
in fact right next door
to all of you
she came hunting for her man
drawn & fascinated
by the song-lines in his bones
the boney rhythms she knew so well

So Magda Leen & all
her different forms
came to find him
then picked up every bone
placing them in a basket
of river reeds
took them to Neverland
for she was Freya's sister
& palace to Athena
& needed her
BSA Shooting Star
never-more

& there in skyhome
on the rainbow's far side
beyond all human sight
or even vision

She pounded away
in her grindstone mortar
those so mortal bones
that she collected that day

& the dust of past being
where Jay had stood alone
she spat on & blessed
for the world's saving cause

across the four heavens
she flew with the ashes
which she threw by the rainbow
of Adam's all hoping
A strange light trembled through her
& was seen by the earth-dwellers
it ignited a spark in their hearts
which roared out as a furnace of love

Melting everything down
trees birds highways seas
poetry & life itself
into one great gift

Of perfect knowing

& the afterglow
of this love so mindless & free
could never be consumed
would not die with death itself

but transformed
into new lives new loves
new longings whispering
between the boughs

Between the paths of circling gulls
arcing forever from
sea to sky to storm-lit clouds
then falling as musky rain

On a parched & alien land

So Jay was at last given
back to the earth
where the virgin males
became fertile again

& their lovers fruitful
& kind

Thus Magda delivered
the seeds to the womb
of the Lena of all creation
 ключ
 the key
 the shooting stars
References:

1. Mabinogion, "The Story of Llud & Llevelys", tr. by Charlotte Guest. There are multiple references to Mabinogion stories in this final part.

Tommy Stroller
The Ballad Of Jay & Magdalena 2

2. The Meeting

A long time ago
in the age of 60s innocence
our sister to the earth dear
Magdalena Nightingale
for that was her real name
the lost night-songstress
was wandering in the desert
somewhere south of Maroc
when she fell in with a bunch of thieves
with more capitalistic than sexual designs
our heroine was drugged in order
to be robbed of everything
including her sanity.

They took her beauty
and turned it into lust
They took her beautiful body
and turned it into meat
They took her sequinned clothing
and turned it into porn-flesh
They looked at her longingly
then sold her as a whore
for others' pleasure
They stole her incredible mind
and turned it into
jingles & ringtones

& everyone looked at her through shaded lenses
under the cruel glare of the spotlights
on the arms of producers
& the covers of their cars
in the beds of sheiks & kings
until at last she was hooked
onto the genitalia of apes
on high rise banners & bold bilboards
on fuzzy TV pix
& wraparound cinemascope in 3D
You could hear her silent vacant screaming eyes
everywhere
& everyone cared so deeply
for her meandering juices
she was God having orgissms with the devil
she was the queen of decadence & the princess mother of AIDS
she was everyone we ever wanted her to be
including yesterday’s wannabe

But when the 60s ended
she too was forced to come home
someone ordered a taxi
to bring her back from the Sahara

& on seeing her for the last time
her father committed suicide
& thus abdicated the scene
so allowing the many free hands
of the punk-gods of post-glam rock
to cover her shame

When she got back
her mother wrapped her so tightly in her arms
as if never to let her escape
back into the desert of her lost dreams
her brother guarded her jealously
& summoned a troop of flick-knife wielding greasers
for her multiple protection
& her pleasurable deliction
in short she was the normal daughter
of a normal family in a nineteen 70s' village global
awaiting rehabilitation

But first they had to screw back
to the whites
the pupils of her drug-soused eyes
with a shipload of mogadon
largactil & valium
& a barrel full of convulsions
on a bed of electric nails
in the holy white temple
of the psychy-hat-trick nurses
under Consultant Godalmighty
Doctor to the good & flighty
the busted drug barons & space oddity sidekicks

So after a good not so good two years
she was passed out as one of us:
the worthy-to-be-screwed again
not quite consumated consumers
of blighty's empire incorporate.

Yes Magdalena was already in rehab
we all went to classes with her
yeah - the whole world seemed to be in classes
cold-turkeying from 60s' indulgence
reconstructing their skeleton lives
in their evening adultstitutions
each in their own way

☐

☑ clay or plasticine
☐ post-scene absurd theatres
☐ bright colours & pretty glitters
☐ other art-therapies unoccupational
☐ through a phenothiazine haze
☐ dead & angry sleepers

In her eyes -
Burnt but not found-out
she still cornered revenge on us all
despite the long & boring lessons from her keepers

It's time for Jay to break his entry
into this 70s' faux-tragic story
he had a walk on part
in a zen-angelo pose
as a model in her sculpture class
which Magdalena had chosen
as the route to her Golgotha
or way station to Nirvana -
not the band - yet to be created -
more the place -
& it was touch & go which.......
Nirvana or Golgotha.

She was modelling the new man
out of pre-feminism & clay
on a platform of Russian poets -
most of whose suicides
were more convincing than her father's -
& a refound desire for pure speed

She called her creation
the "RUNNING MAN"
& sure enough he never stopped
escaping
out of the hands that so lovingly
in-formed him

Jay Modelman was deeply puzzled
when she glanced at his twisted torso
whipped as it was into muscular friezes
by the sadistic art teacher
who was a Mussolini muscle addict
while her Running Man
was a wire-thin Jack O'Ciaomethy,
late edition anorexic,
& nothing like Jay's rugby-playing hulk.

But with every look she leaned towards him
just as her creation ran the other way.
with every week her eyes grew bigger
just as her clay man grew thinner
till one day he climbed down from the platform
& asked her just this one question:
who will be the first to leave?
will it be him or me? &quot;
to which she at once replied
neither - it will be she.

& Jay could not convince himself
into being her only saviour,
but he knew she was his lover
& one he could not figure -
& this was the biggest come-on of them all.
Soon they were walking home every night
talking of poets & revolutions,
of philosophers & the history
of music, the last supper
& the ejection of her spirits
into the wilderness
or was it a re-injection
of those untamed demons
& homeless Moroccan djinns
into her dovelike & wastrel soul
in the cinema of lost illusions
of post 60s confusions

They covered Gurdjieff & Ouspenski
& a host of false inquisitors
to the riddle of existence
till they ran out of paths
to her half-orphan's home
& met a mother over-anxious
to prevent her missing fledgling`s fall
a second time from the nest
made more of gaps than twigs

& soon they were conversing
in intimate half-whispers
down the cracks of class pauses
as if hiding something deep
something fragile & just forming
a new life scared to see
the light of the usurping day
something too private to even risk
before the ears of future parents
or the spirits of the dead
or those just half deforming
in the late winds left over
from the 60s children`s maelstrom

Tommy Stroller
The Ballad Of Jay & Magdalena 3 & 4

3. The First Separation

Then one day there came an absence
of her lithe & smallsom body
from the front of his sculpturing class

Only her Man kept Running
under a sackcloth of damp mourning
running alongside its missing maker
in the darkness & the shade
running through a storm
inside Jay's heart

Walking home
so poignantly alone
he knew after all
that he was the running man
chasing her disappearance
but then another Nightingale
came forward - the mother
walking ahead of him -
like Christ before a disciple -
on that shorter road
to realization
and not Emmaus
though in front of her
there was a shadow of something
he could not even then recognize

For she was heading to
another hospital
another doctor
& a different set of machines
& this time the comparatively mild electricity
ran away & not towards
her poor broken head

Jay had failed to trace the path of Magdalena
unspinning from the dizzy harmattan winds of Africa
delivering her high & dry to a pilgrim’s lost & ancient road
far up on the hills of Golgotha-England
Jay arrived too late
to save her
this time

So
Magdalena had taken
her brother`s BSA 500
tried to hunt those terrorists
in her eyes
tried to run off the last trace
of heroine
that still blazed & crept
under her skin
tried to spear the last of her devils
with natural speed
on a pilgrim`s way to hell

But she ran out of greed
for pills hash & Moroccan travel guides
was thrown from the kicking horse
of forced hippydom
lost first her footing
& then her head
crashing against the north downs
& ups of lost causes
on the oldest of pilgrims ways
& the bucking ridgeway
of a hogsback

Helmetless & hopeless
they found her
poor unprotected mind
in a smashed skull
on her easy rider road
from Stonehenge to Nirvana
(not the buried cantor)
in 1972

In the hospital
her mother pulled him in
dragging his uncomplicit body
to the lysergol bedside
seeming like a cliff
of suicidal hope
a space too far to cross
in the vacant terror of his mind
the coldest of entrances
in this theatre of reverses

But the mother took his hand
& guided it to M.`s
& he knew instantly
that cold limp petal
possessed nothing
more of Magdalena`s own
life
that the last traces
of her freed soul
were brushing the very bushes
where she had fell
that this body was going nowhere
except the fire

And in that moment
Jay promised
one day he would find her again
even if it took a thousand lifetimes
but surprisingly
it needed only just that one

4. The Marriages & Careers

Jay walked home
& found another's arms there
to comfort him
Jay took those arms down a thousand aisles
of cinemas, theatres, & sometimes churches
& up the moving staircases
of metro stations
arndales & airport departures
leading to the down escalator
of all those post-war English dreams

This was his way
of searching for the move
that would finally absolve him
from M.'s subtle & infinite hauntings
until yes at last he made it down the aisle
that ends in marriage
but nothing could vanish
or unspeak her

The night before his hitching
on that sword swallowing road to
certain divorce
Jay paused
on the banks of his local Liffey
watching the swan
sink into its own sad
& graceful motion
& he wanted to believe in ghosts
to believe in reincarnation
to fall into
Irish metempsychosis
but he never heard the music
from other spheres

The moon rose on the waters
the nymphs danced naked
in shadowy crystal veils
& he cried the tears that all men cry
when faced with death's surgical removal
of a woman so well-loved

He felt a friendly arm on his shoulder
but it was not a ghostly hers
only a best-man
anxious for his buddy
lost on grief & woe
"why are you crying on your wedding night?"
best-man said
so Jay told the story of his
nightingale near-lover
& then a miracle occurred

From deep in the dark on the far side of those moon chewing woods came the sweet trilling voice of a real bird of the night seeming to call him away & down into the bottomless dark of Lethe`s undying sadness & join her immortal song become one with the element he the poet most knew how to swim in:

song

He woke
to the call of deeper tones
his best-man hauling
him from sinking
into the swamp of a trance
that threatened to pull him in
by the chorus of a siren
gone before
& willing him to join her
in the murky underwater world
of her deaths

Shook his head &
felt the arms of reality
fold round him
was grateful for the
interruption
on the plain road to certain oblivion
his friend had shown him

Wedded bedded but not so well fed
instead he had children
many more than he could count or know
some named some not
by him
some whose names hid
the very reason
for his half-existence
& he buried her in one half-child
naming her Maggie
& tried to find her alive
in this first born`s eyes
but the child turned him constantly aside
as if half-knowing
& rebelling
against this alien
identification
with a myth

So yes he got hitched to endless wenchposts
(this was the 70s folks
in a time & a land
of buy-now-pay-later constant free love)
& wondered how to drown
the whine of that BSA
that would never stop dining on death

But still invisible
Magdalena never left his side
& though dismissive of his muse
he was hung with her
through myriad straight careers
followed to support his
tripling of the tribe

Jay One
became a bureaucrat lawyer
& hid her in a
thousand rules & cases
or looked her up in lost causes
just in order to satisfy himself
she really must be dead

Jay Two
became a therapist
& searched for her eyes
in a hundred schizophrenics
who each had a jukebox
of persecuting voices
but never one that matched
Mzone

Jay Three
became a teacher
& he tried to teach the errors
of the century
but he never saw the faults
in his own ways
& only searched out hers
for leaving him

Jay Four
became a traveller
criss-crossing the choked networks
of European road & rail ways
& six years after her burning
in a pause between stations
he heard a birdsong fill
the swelling fulness of that summer night
this time in a Belgian garden
far from his final destination
& he knew at last
it was the visit
for which he had so long been waiting

It was 1979
& a culture-counter rebellion
was hanging in the air

I know that nightingales
don`t sing punk songs
but this is a mythic exception OK?

In fact this nightingale had already sung
crosby stills nash & not forgetting young
in the legers of his local law books
patti smith
in the screams of his too bit patients
waiting for their daily cut
of electro-inconclusive-therapy
joni hissing mitchell
in the drums of far off jungles
he had not yet seen
& sade at the chalk face
of his many learning rooms
but he never had his ears quite tuned enough
to hear her

but then her naked voice rang out
through so many sleepless nights
& it was time to take her
inform then re-form her
& let someone re-born her
in the light of a new land
but reader
we will hear of this more
a little later

Jay Five
became an anthropologist
& visited ruined African tribes
where he longed to find a shaman
he could trust
to un-witch her
till one day he was sat there
in the dust
of some poor hovel
when he deigned to notice
a spirit that really moved..........

The Shaman's name was Yusufu
The demonizing Muslim
who seemed to levitate his
patients from their grounds
& play tricks with scientifically inclined minds

This Africano wizard
turned him outside-in
screamed in places
he had never before known
or reached in his
spirit-body
even though they would be
one day comfortably placed
inside his sound balanced skull

Laughing at every scribble
he hurried to his notebook
this master of the spirits
made him see Jay’s so reasonable
anthropological science
was just a total waste of words

& Jay was amazed
at the trail of sickness
snaking its way
to Yusufu’s door
& even more amazed
that they came away pure
dancing out their sickness
for dancing is what the spirits come here for

But Jay himself never danced
he was a watcher then
not a doer
& he had to write a peer-work
to the masters
of his academic existence
back in Thatcher’s blighted bare-cupboard farm
devoted to household economies
& running up an overdraft of unemployed

Tommy Stroller
The Ballad Of Jay & Magdalena 5 Intermission

INTERMISSION
(or the wilderness years 1979-97)

1. The New Nest

Back in movement land
in way knows when
at the crossroads of Europe
Jay was headed west-east
to a Berlin not yet united
& a ny on the threshold
of a refound confidence
solidly bedding
down her capitalistic dreams
whilst the other half dined
on ersatz coffee
& second-hand levi jeans

He was train-ing his way
carrying his invisible load
through a shamefaced Belgian landscape
still sorrowing at its ill-luck
for having been twice-fold the terminus
of Europe’s deflowered youth
in the blood-bathed trace of Flanders’ soil

& alongside him for comfort
was a fragile young daughter
(yes that same Maggie from the farm)
unmothered & feeling the unwanted
survivor of a car-crash marriage
in the final stages
of its undoing

They played cards from Zeebrugge to Berlin
but halfway through Belgium
they both lost a hand
& a nightingale spirit
unhitching itself from his carrying care
went hunting for a new womb

The child seemed unsettled
in this carriage to her future
as if haunted by the near-born one
but Jay was well settled
& would have won every hand
though for her sake he
always played to lose
thus teaching her to win
like a million hippy-begot children
so ungracefully

Mistake, big mistake
a child of the 80`s
hates to lose &
feels destined by politics
always to win
especially one called Maggie

When they reached the fulcrum of Europe
they descended to
the hauptbahnhof platform
feeling somewhat lighter than they had begun
but both attributed this bearable lightness
to the long long journey
& the sudden closing
in of an alien land

Meanwhile back in Flemish Belgium
night came creeping in
nightingale turned
temporarily owl
then went hunting
for a womb to finally nest in

Magdalena turned into Lena
& one year later
Lena became Leen
except to those who could later recognize
her nervous & restless eye-gleam
reflected from a pre-BSA
past

2. Reborn

She was born
in the form of man-woman
in equal proportion
under the stars of the balance
baptized in the music
of Brel & Nirvana
(the band & not
the future space
for buddhies)
she was heavy-metalled into life
by a small time Flemish burger
living off the fat of his eateries
& selling the pork
to the poorer franky-phones
which was a great shame
as he wuz married to one
& 'twas his wife who inherited
le grand magasin
& kindly passed it on
to flanders & her man
in other words
a micro cosmosis
of all that is not quite right about Belgium

Not a bad handicap
for a non-golfer
but her father made up well for that
on the green lanes of catholic fidelities
opening small supermarket after supermarket
in the slums of Brussels rand
& the flummeries of Flanders
where the willing burghers piled in
for bargains both false & thin

Her Mum spoke French to her
but because they lived
on the wrong side of a language border
her father forbade her to utter
even the one word back
in those hated franchified tones of former slavemasters

Not a bad balance
for the re-make-up
of a new europe
O O O Seberbia
O O O Croashasia
O O O Ballymeaner

& she missed
unconsciously
the one who had
formed & transported her
the one whom she most
resembled
for his presence in her half-life
had molded her
to his shady & arcane designs
he who was travelling away
for a time
oh dear Jay

3. Back in the USUK

Meanwhile the rest of us
on Maggie senior's farm
were hanging around
waiting for deliverance
from MTV fashions
& the constant ringing of phones
from privatized passions
or their utilities

Luckily for us but not for Maggie
mobiles had not yet been invented

We were checking in at the check out
& god they had ne'er invented
so many ways to check in
nor so many forms
to check out
before a poor man could withdraw
his weekly dole

We were working out
on work-schemes that just
didn`t seem to work
like rats inside a treadmill inside a trap
we took the rap
for a failing middle class
whilst those nouveaux riches
played lottery golf
with their fading betters

We were taking our
sign-on trips
to mad Majorca
or Costa Lot
& slowly building empires
for post-hip Virgins

4. New Europa

Back in bulging Belgium
Leen-magda was feeling
kinda much too toute seule
in a house full of half-brothers
& a father who had stopped speaking
even Flemish to a mother
who spoke only French

So her mother was even more clingy
than the one she'd last been freed from
in a double-karma deal
of the sum
though the biggest lesson of all
was yet to come

How alone can you feel in a family
when you're not allowed
to speak your mother's native tongue?
when you are the only girl
except a mum mother
with five brothers
& a father who commits not suicide
but something else
to your up till then
inviolate little body?

It's 1991
& Jay's been more than ten years missing
but looking
& you are just a slip of
a girl in the heat of flowering but one
whose face would launch not a thousand ships
but one day
more than a thousand lines of poetry

yes you were precocious
yes you were beautiful
beyond all other human measure
but no you didn't know
how to make a man come on

You'd hidden in your
one girl room
with Kurt C. & his metal choristers
biding your time on the one thing
your family could afford you:
a collection of guitars
made for the sound of moaning
that you could only make alone

The violation occurred
in a family confirmation
in a feast-hall of last reprisals
for the gantly Phlegmish culture
in the sticks

Excusing yourself to go
into that unladylike mixed toilet
you suddenly saw a knee push through the cubicle door
it was a cousin of the family
  to you barely knowable
  but he really wanted to fill you
  with his carnal knowledge brand
  learnt from the store

But this cousin was well-known
  to your father
  & your brothers
as one who drinks a goodly quart
  of Belgian beer
  & even though he's barely 17
  he's a favorite of the party
  as is his jokes & his stories
  so his reputation is almost sacred to
  the tribe

Leen came out from the ladies
  a woman instead of a child
  but her tears & red cheeks
  were picked up by a tante
  who asked her of the matter
  & was so offended by the tale
  she heard so unbelieving
  that she promptly told the story to dear Pa
  in whispers of course
  in Catholic whispers worthy of a Jane

  & being the good generous family man he was
  Pa strolled to the other side of the zaal
  to put a friendly word inside the cousin's father's ear
  to pour the man a trappiste
  then a pintje for the boy
  though he'd rather have had a triple
  but he & papa were so glad
  the family would not be troubled
  by Leen's sin

The Flemish country mantra of un-matriarchy:

  Smooth things over


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Forgive your enemies
only if they are
in the family
for their trespasses are so much like your own

Keep up appearances

Destroy the honour of virgins
for the sake of family peace

Break hearts but never family bonds

The brotherhood is stronger than the law
the lust of women, & all those other kinds
of vice
the lice that crawl under the skin
of our otherwise perfect culture

How many of these smoothed over cultures
can we stomach
without a hint of revulsion
over their
chopped up quim?

Naturally she took up karate
to defend herself from
the cartel of Flemish brotherhood
& she took up poetry & song
because they couldn't forbid Jaques Brel
a national hero even for the non-French pratlers

But the family
saw her now
as a whore in the waiting
& she drifted into lone
& sore confusion

How alone can you feel
when your virgin soul is sullied
& your main-man's committed suicide
no not father or
Jay the spirit-walker
But Nirvana's perfect Mr. Blond

But Jay had shaped her soul
to be worthy of the struggle
so her heart refused so easily to be malformed
& from the post-punk rebellion
of goths & heavy metal
she hammered her character
into half assassination
half martyred post-modern saint
looking for a cause
beyond her in-cast taint

& that heart was already longing
for the older man who `d brought her
to this point in her existence
though she couldn't reason
how or why or who

5 Cultural Differences

Back in blighty protestant
but not too much methinks
there was a poll change of sea-tax
Majors overcame miners
& soap box politicry
became fashionable
but all in the name of purifying
the pound of flesh
taken from every stomach-less
property owners in the land
it was 1992 blues
for the confused and house-lost
consumers
1994 hello sailor
for the merry merry
fortune-maker bankers

& Jay was hanging on
to a heart full of bingo balls
Jumping in random harmony
up & down
& waiting for his real number
to come up

He had no job
no place to live
he was just another street-bum
on the way to find a meal-ticket
at the sally army counter
when suddenly his number just came up

It was time to be the rat
that his horoscope had foretold
& desert this sinking tugboat
that was itself being sorely hauled
toward a Reagan & far out from Reichdom
from a Saxon angled marché
to a welfare wisdommed farce
sinking in a sea of Sun-ny columns

So he was long ready when
his lost anthropological soul
found a letter on the aether:
"get your arse
back down here quick
regards Yusuf Shaman"
from somewhere south-east of eden's
misty sphere

So he trolled his way southwards
to the wilds of somewhere
Ost Africa
& came
face to face with his fear
in a ceremony meant to power him
as a far out astral sailor
& a down-at-heel healer
providing more than his self-redemption
under Yusufs wise direction
instead he was split
into a perfectly imperfect three
No dear listeners
not god the holy ghost & a recycled
JC but

Jay one in English suit
with a crease as fine
as any
pinstripe &
a brain that was tuned to
BBC

Jay two was dressed in drag
or rather muslim djellabiah
& a sumptuous cap royale
of feathers, turban & beads
for he was ready for the take off
to a bado
further out than Ricardo
or even the one that
Musselman Yusuf had entertained

Jay three was in plain hell
or the gap between the footstools
that stood upon the mud of
Yusuf's floor
& there he was a-floundering
whilst Y. he was a-screaming
to the spirits he was guiding
to Jay`s seemingly lost & parted soul

plain English
was split
the head
danger of becoming three-in-one
with the schizophrenic dead

The Running Man ran out of his life
out of his ceremony
into the arms of a sickness
that shook his mortal soul
was faint-hearted
and couldn't stop farting
as his brain caught fire
between the footstool and the
fated cup
proving that initiation
is more than immersion
a culture that was both foreign
and not yet quite all used up

De-voiding his fate &
Deviating from his destiny
Our running man took a walk to a bus
the bus to a plane
and the plane to a land
He'd once known as home
but which now scorched his body into
105 degrees of feverish fahrenheit
within two small inches of his death:
He had a fever that would stop
An elephant not just
The sucked & inside out man
That he had become

The guardians of many religions
Had already cast their lots
For his safe & fulsome burial
One of heaven's
Many disused backyards

6. Initiation at Last!

Waking in hospice St. Pancras
patron saint of trains
& tropical diseases
Jay had been one week
in no-body's-land
otherwise known as
first bado to the left
& straight on till
sunrise
but there was no instant
dawning in his mind
only karma
played-out barmy karma
strutting its wares
down the line
mainline from Nirvana
to instant enlightenment

Jay knew he was lost
& so did Lena
but they still didn't know of each other
just an ache where everybody else's heart was beating
just a mis-pronounced word in a foreign tongue
in the mouths they were born with
& mothers who were strangers to the end
this they had in common
but were never conscious of each other
yet somehow their paths were contrived to cross

Lena was sweet sixteen
Jay forty nine
when he finally recovered
what should ever happen
when they met?

But first Jay loped back to Europa
after opening a healing shop
in sad & starved New Labour-land
more designed to slake his needs
& a mega-spiritual thirst
than to cure the needy mob
that cluttered round his door

Blighty, Belgium, & back to Black
Jay permuted
every triangulation
as he dreamed still of getting back
to listening to the song
of a living nightingale
whose cage had been opened
one fraction more
but whose realization
his mis-initiation
had stalled

Then one day in (f)U(c)K
as he was afro-drumming
in a group of fellow celebrants
a shadow fell before him
& a voice in his ear
calling him to the self-same ritual
that five years before he'd fled in fear
& he knew that that Sunday
would be creased forever
in his mind
for the voice was of Yusuf the seer

He marked his route before him
treasured the game that would reward him
& came across two oceans
to look at Yusufu's smiling face
again.

The old shaman reminded him
that the time was fit for warriors
& that cowards could not win
in this sacred game

& Yusuf Shaman told him
"why do you wanna do such a fool thing as play spirit drums
on a Sunday?
Don't you know that the Christians
empty their churches of spirits
before they enter
& spirit drums are forbidden
on that Christ-alive Sun-day?"

The old seer shaman gently informed him
"but the place you played:
the way-station for the spirits
that you made
it was good
it brought me there"
you were sitting on the terrace
drinking tea
in the shade
of that beautiful
Japanese red maple tree
Only of course
Afro-shaman
though they can certainly fly
aeroplaneless
to foreign lands
they don't know
our name for that beautiful bower
so he spoke of it
as "tree-of-the-red-leaf-like-a-hand"
just to assure Jay
at least his triple eye had joined the feasters
on that last Sunday of celebration
back in Evropa-Ulaya
miraculously
all the way from Africa

And so to Africa
it was back he went
having had to
circumvent
a posse of needy clients
still stranded at his door

& after months of preparations
his goose was nicely cooked
he was ready to take the final test
so Yusufu stuck a pair of kukus
on his lap

They sang & danced all round him
all those villagers come to adorn him
with the trinkets of a shaman
who only just made third grade

The price was the chickens
as cuckoo as he was
& they took them from his hands
to saw through their necks

Well he was sore astonished
to see those birds a-running
headless & just as aimless
as his travels in the earth-lines
for he & they were one
until consumed

& it happened in so strange
a manner that he almost up-vomited
what he had not yet consumed
but a true shaman knows
when his bile just has to be kept down

The consumption was even stranger:
the children were called to eat those birds
with rice & pilau sauces
on a tray balanced
right on top of his very confused head

But after singing his & others' praises
at dawn the village walked him
to out his every side
& they sang again
&quote;on this day a new shaman will be born&quote;

Proud & rather bloody
from the thrashing of headless chickens
nevertheless he had to calm his
eager soul
from a desire to rush at
phantoms
& deliver the world from spirits
that his own puny ghost
could hardly leash

So he returned to Europe not in triumph
but with a question in his brainbox
&quote;how the hell am I gonna start healing
those crazy wazungu people
from the spirits that possess them
when they don`t even know
they are possessed? &quot;

It certainly was for many
a new & momentum shift

Some Swahili words:
Ulaya = Europe
Kuku = chicken
Wazungu = white people (literally people of miracles)

Tommy Stroller
I first saw Jay4 at the Hammersmith Odeon London in late 1991. He had just come back from bowling over all his audiences in Europe & the last stop was London. He had made a gruelling tour of both East & West called the Evropa Roxy-Body-Shop Tour, which included dates in Amsterdam, Koln, Hamburg. Copenhagen, Prague (twice)Warsaw, Nuremburg, Stuttgart, Geneva, Toulon, Turin, Bruxelles & finally Paris. I know this from the rave reviews he got everywhere & the fact I still have a T-shirt of the tour dates. He was particularly big in Germany as, unusually, he could RaP in their own language, though he always tended to mix it up with English, a dash of Dutch & French & even spatterings of Danish - a language in which he only knew a few phrases but used to great effect to send his fans berserk. But in London he contained himself to English - I guess because he realized few of the audience were bilingual. let alone quadrilingual as he was (being fluent in French, Dutch & German as well as English).

Another strange thing about him was that in every city he was billed as Jay4 something or other - not just Jay4. For instance in Prague he was first Jay4 the Reds, then later Jay4 the Skins, in Germany he was J4 the Ossies, & in France Jay4 President - probably because France was again going through another bout of political navel-gazing & presidential power was under threat from the extreme right. In London he was just plain J4 - but his act was anything but neutral. Not that he insulted any racial or political groupings - no he was too subtle for that. Someone dubbed him "existential rap", whilst others preferred the label "metaphysical rap"; - but when asked by reporters about it he would say "I don´t know what rap is let alone metawotsical c´rap". This was perplexing because to most his act was definitely in the rap groove. There was great controversy about where he came from too, & he fuelled the confusion by offering such out of the way places as Magadan Russia, Monterey California or Abertawe in Wales. Most believed him to be English but my opinion was somewhere further out, maybe a diplomat's son born & raised on the hop from one embassy to another. But he was certainly a European.

Whatever - but his first impression on me that night in the Hammersmith Odeon
was &quot;what planet does this particular ape come from&quot; & the reason I say ape is because he wore this black suit with black collarless shirt, tangled freaked out kinda goth hair & had the longest arms & the biggest whitest hands I`d ever seen on a man. But it was the way he used those hands that grabbed your attention. They were always in motion, a kind of Mussolini plus Bowie, belting out an a ironic mime of either one or the other, or sometimes just his own unique self - all in perfect accompaniment to his rapped out & guttural lyric. In contrast the heavily made-up androgynous face was almost anonymous, being hidden by his black locks or simply because he always turned it away from the spotlight & spoke sideways into the mike, which unlike so many other stars, he never touched or used the stand as some kind of penis extension. But the effect was mesmerizing. & the three other musicians in his group were even more anonymous, standing for most of their time with their backs to the audience - except that is the black rasta-haired tenor sax, who often fronted the whole band with blasts of howling wolf-sounds. The drummer was always in the dark, & the mysterious guy who stood against a conspicuously-lit bank of what looked like ancient giant computers, just constantly fiddled away, producing a wall of sampled sounds - all of which were familiar from the past 40 years of pop music from Little Richard to REM. But you never once saw his face.

I made a private recording of the performance that night from close to the stage, & later I transposed the lyrics onto my computer. On his one & only CD made in '92 the lyrics were written inside but they were not the same as what was on the disc even, & certainly not what he delivered on stage. He used to make slight variations from the fixed format, so that the many bootlegged albums produced in the mid-nineties were later worth a fortune because each one was unique. So what I deliver below cannot be taken as the final version - he was literally an inspired performer who on a good night could out-perform a Patti Smith, or even a Jim Morrison, with his spontaneous verse. Here is the lyric from the one time I heard him live, because in '92 he moved into the studio for the year & in '94 he totally disappeared - many of his fans believing he had totally cracked up or gone back to whichever planet he had originally come from. But in fact he was in Africa because that was where I first met him face to face. But I don`t know where he is now.

TommyS June 1998

The Hammersmith Odeon J4 performance 1991 - best number:

Radio Aether
Out of place & out of time
On love street
You can buy anybody you can buy anything
On the long lustful streets of love
You gotta realize you gotta see
That the blood of Christ
Streams in you it streams in me
We are the hosts for the life of a god
But just in case
We better get fixed up tonight
We better get fixed
Blood junkies are out to score
Life is just a dream
& the spirits are crowding in the dawn
Good morning Pakistan

Radio Aether
I turn you on
Get Istanbul instead of London
Give me some hip-hop
Gimme some blues
That funky house party
I sure could use
Lost for ideas
Out of the body
I took a flight down
Alpha Centauri
Wish you were here in my black-holed brain
Emotions exhausted from too many planes
Radio Aether I turn you around
The night is a waltzing star merry go round
I gotta make some alternative place
Bridges of fears & ports of queens
I'm just an AIDS junkie trying to live clean
Knocking the spots off my favourite star
What did your band die of?
Was it plastered groupies or just band-age?

I dig Dutch
I dig Dansk
I love Polish

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But I hate Fransk
It's so romantic
It's just too chic
I get my kicks on the Eiffel Tower
They call it the English disease
The only place to go in these fin-de-siècle days
Is to gang-bang in Iceland
In a sauna full of guys
It's lonely in the north
& there's nothing else to do
Can you blame the poor buggers
When the winter's so cruel

But when you get back
From Paris or Ceylon
Just make sure
That you've got your rubber on
'Cos the virus hates the ice
But it sure likes friction
& friction is nice
In my kind of fiction
& if you see Mama Green
Out there in Nairobi
Say hullo from me
If she's still disrobing
London's a whore
& Hamburg too
But Toulon is quite nice
If you've got time Toulouse

Feather dusters
& peacock poets
Dreams of icicle pricks
In Leather Johnnies
Whiskey Macs
& softly spoken Welshers
The water beds of Warsaw
Are leaking in O-O-Ostende
I carved my name behind some canal
Round the seven circles
Of Amster's dam
In a cafe full of artists
An actress turns red in English
We can see what she's been thinking
It's too good to save for cycling
& the bulges in the crotches
Of the too-quick-cum Don Juanists
Are like pimples in the side
Of some upturned holy devices
Derangement before St. Sophia
Is not permitted on the grass
This city's full of crosses
Holding hands with needled junkies
Dear Jesus Crises
Can you ring down the curtain
On this stage of old surprises
You know - those infinitely ad nauseam replayed bitter sweet bonking romances
Tony Perkin's a ferkin (sic)greasy git
& those trousers it's about time they bloody split

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Tommy Stroller
The Ballad Of Jay & Magdalena 7

Part II

1. Jay Settles in Flanders on the Horns of a European Dilemma

His searches for a home
where the spirits could attract her
the nightingale spirit of his lost soul
took him far & wide

so checking out of hospital Britain
Jay launched a crusade cross Europe
a resurrected body-shop tour
looking for the healing style he'd been promised
he sliced the continent in pieces
from Copenhagen to Turin
Prague to Köln & back on home
he rested a while in London
then charged off in paranoia:
he couldn't handle the country
England had become
so chock-full of handle-merchants
getting a load of this
an earful of that
a pound of flesh here
and an ounce of nonce there
& nowt other
on the chained aether
the four square competers
& reclaimed purveyors
of the shortest exam notes
to universal das kapital
collectors

Not only England but
the whole world seemed like menace
every body was threatened & a threat
the trust between humans
had been irrevocably broken
by a decade of greed & glut
but the crashed out nineties
began with the great Brit-hop
revival of spirit even if
it didn't sound quite so pure
to ears too used to hearing
the same old grinding gears
of pop

Meanwhile Jay himself hip-hopped
from train to train
in desperate search of a Magdalena
or at least a healing
from the pain
that welled up in his back
for the bug that had bitten him
in far off Africa
was boring a hole in his brain
from healer to hipster then unholy spy
only a couple of steps awry

On the rail-racked tracks of the heart
his pain increased with every mile
but he couldn't stop the looking
though none of his friends could figure
why or where he'd gone at all

Circling closer to 'Lena's spirit
he passed by
like a bull roarer
so he backed into Belgium
first by Brussels, then by Antwerp,
& then Ghent
for the first time in years
& he saw the Catholics there were in grave need
of a massanger who could save them
from a belief system in open crisis
but nevertheless open
to beliefs in more than material affairs.

Finally he settled
not one thousand meters
from a sleeping Lady Magda
with a new woman
who took him in
her car one day
on his route from hell to
nirvana
via the lacoon Hand-Thrown1
intersections
key to the production
and subtle distribution
of all our pre-packed superstitions
which still are strangely called
"goods";

she was gentle
in her caring
this alternative Florence
Nightingale
for his wounded soul
& sorely over-used feet
socks still smoking
from hitching over &
training under
a continent
of dreams to
battered souls

In her hands
she half-healed him of his longing
& his fever to ever travel
to upstage every drama queen
& make off with the king's cherry tarts
but she couldn't put the clock back
in his heart

After several further courses
in the methods of Zen masters
from a guru recently
returned from Kyoto
to Belgechic
Jay installed himself unknowingly
with his new love
in a village not a 1000 meters
next to M's
the incarnate mate
of his soul
& the old tension between marriage & spirit
home-builder & rover
was as taut as his 12 stringed guitar
in this house
that he could never quite call his own

& he started
a standard practice of healing arts
that went down quite well
with the quiet Flemish burgheresses
seeking temporary escape
from their boundless & unstoppable fears
& their boundless & unstoppable male peers

2. (Magda) Leen's Happily Unhappy Marriage

At nineteen years old
Leen got pregnant with the wrong man
- the mis-recognition of a blinded soul -
a long haired salesman
of cheap female hosiery
on market stalls across
those Flemish plains
who gifted the gab
who traded
in commodities more valuable
than life or at least
that must have been his last thought
for every moment was given
to increasing his stock
and his penny-pinching profits
in the numerous money games
he played so well

Vance the capital capitalist
the so very convincing salesman
saw his life as a pyramid
climbing ever upward
but never quite arriving at the top
for the invented reasons
of more profit more acquisitions
more ways to skin the fools
he thought of as his customers

Her father was of course angry
at the announcement of child
& wedding all on the same day
but after meeting the marketeer
saw there were many things
to their mutual interest
in giving away his damaged goods
dear M. to a man even meaner
than himself
& a fellow traveller
in the avenues of trade
maybe it was relief
to have this unreliable hussy
off his hands
or maybe it was his eye
on the common advantages
of business matters & trade
for he was one to involve every member
of his family
in the keeping of his shops
& in the deals that undercountered
in the sticks

He could not persuade his eldest boy
Leen's brother
to follow in his firm-steps
instead he harassed & he haunted him
to borderline insanity
in the back room charcuterie
for his lack of shop acumen
in the meat & two veg regimen
for said brother
just wanted like Leen
to be a guitar star
and certainly not a goedkoopster
like his pa

What did make the old man smile
for the first time in years
was the giving of her hand
at the white wedding ceremony
when the lace & trim
of her shining nuptial gown
just about covered the secret
underneath & within
though of course in the family
it was already an open one
& the talk & speculation was even
of another father & not this husband
just about to be

Older of course by numberless years
sweet-talker & mirage image
of long past pictures
the first man of her new life
took her in
in many more ways than just this one
Vance could only love
to control
so great were his endless fears
after a life-full of misplaced trusts
& destructive divorces
in other words
he was just like all of us
floundering in a world
of ever-changing uncertainties
whilst the wild eye for profit
& not losing face
saves & sinks us
in almost a single glance

but nevertheless
he was a route for her escape
temporarily from the family
who held her for a ransom so dear
for Leen was still searching
for her missing running man
whom she'd left by her death's highway
in the hospital hell
of posthumous dreams

With this man now the father
(but never her real husband)
to a daughter that she molded
as a fellow refugee
in a world that she was puzzled
to call her own
Said newly married
sank into bland routine
that was life for some
but mind-numbing poison
for Magdalena Leen

& the prison he gave her
in exchange for her familiar freedom
was
a flat without windows
a room without furniture
of any comfort or value
a bed without a common space
to feel love - yes -
nothing he gave her was worth a sou
& everything he took
he took to keep her gaoled
in that small apartment
over an old decrepid farm
with its back to the future
rolling plains of semi-independent
Flanders
it was Morocco all over again
but this was he told her
only for their own common future
the money from the other ladies' underwear
he sold, & the fake jewellery
not to mention the
blah blah blah
or the second hand cars
& the landlorded money jars
all went into their golden
savings with profit to come
from the promised pavilions wherein
he packed all kinds of immigrants
& poor androgynous miscreants
for a pretty penny or rather cent
but in his own home
& on his own wife
he spent not a sou

Leen began to realize
that their future was beyond
all horizons
he added with their savings
his store of new-bought homes
all were his but never hers

3. The Unrecognized

Yes she realized
that she'd exchanged one prison for another
& soon joined the queue
for the healing arts
of a neighbouring jay-bird
the final trigger
to her depression
being the death of her mother
racked by cancer & conscience
as she'd never found her métier
let alone her own true man

But daughter unlike mother
found hers in the treatment room
via a friendly family neighbour
former client to Jays hand
manoeuvres
who knew nothing of the bonfire
she would ignite
in Leen's heart

She waited three years in the wings
of Jay`s No-theatre
peeping beyond the curtain
when she thought he wasn't looking
& only recognizing him
in her inner soul
and her soul was turned
back and forth like a flag
waved by his ministering hands
but love was growing growing
in the newly watered garden
of her heart
& compulsion to be there
under Jays massaging hands
contrived to play its part

& for his part
he played the therapist
almost too well
yes her depression soon passed
& was replaced by a longing
to be something much more than just
the patient patient
for instinctively she knew
she had a promised place
in the Jayman's heart

Did Jay recognize Magdalena?
no not yet for
he had lost her
seemingly forever
one long night ago
on a broken-skull hill
in a storm of ravens & nightingales
but there was something in those eyes
so green & wild
that told him that he was not so old
for they were the same eyes
of a past yet still alive girl
curled at the base of his brain
sewn into the sinews of his soul

Even when she told him
of her nightingale nightmares
the feelings of flight
& the terror of fall
& her fears of the road
still did he not
make the obvious connection

She drove only on the byways
never on the highways
in an auto inherited
from her recently de-ceased mother
so generously given
by a still grieving father
for yes he was sorry
for the silence of those
uncounted days the waste-
land of a marriage he had
failed to save
& yes he loved his grandchild
& strapped her carefully
in the child seat
while mother Leen almost froze
at her steering wheel labours
heading only
the short distance
between shop & home

After two years alongside him
full of Jay's treatment
Leen was with second bun
in her oven
baked & almost burning to be released
but this pregnancy
was a strategy
designed to bind herself tighter
to the wheel of her
marketing man
for her heart was now certain
that if it couldn`t have Jay
so she must chose the child
to fill the hole of the he
who was boring his way
securely into her soul

Leen came for treatment
with a rapidity that was measured in fear
for a Caesarean was the only way
her life had been saved
with the birth of her earlier child
& she`d do anything to avoid that again

& it was like a frieze
a repeat in reverse
from that original studio
some thirty five years before
when she put him
every day on the dais
hand on clay
eyes on body
mind running running
to the one future they would surely share
& the product was the same
a running man made in clay
but not the clay that held her hands
still in that grave
faraway
the man in Jay
was still running
but this time gradually back towards her

In fact
the roles were now truly reversed
she was on her back
he was over her
giving her the pure treatment
& loving with his eyes
a body he never touched
except professionally
love transformed
to healing energy
The turning of his mind
& eyes finally came
after the birth of her one & only son

From the berthing sickbed
of a hospital quite local
she texted him a message
& quot;oh my I am feeling
close to dead & quot;
after twenty hours of labour
& a freezing epidural
that paralysed her will & her conscience
she called him -
& would he come?

She was in mortal danger
for the doctors had punctured her
spine against her bettered judgement
for an epic epidural
& the gap
it was not closing
that gap in her world
& the precious brain fluid
was leaking
out of line
her mind
was in danger of a crushing
with her very slight move
oh irony
for this was a reincarnated
epiduralized version
of Magdalena's
original unthinking sin
of her brain's freezing
in that hashish bath
trapped in that original concubin

Yes he would come
yes his present-bodied mind
had at last begun to reckon
on what his consciousness
was still just dimly aware
that she needed him
for a reason
beyond them both

PART III

1. The Hole

There’s a hole in our throwaway world
& through it is dripping
the planet’s cerebro-spinal fluid
& the hole is a brain-drain
it’s a last flush
of irresponsible minds
unwilling to take
their own responsibilities
let alone those for their fellow man
let alone for this poor sad
dirt-ball
we have turned it into

There’s a hole in the world
where all our dreams
are leaking through
dreams of so many lost youths
dreams of a safe old age
dreams of warriors in the safe hunt
of their own prey
dreams of politicians
figuring a third way
dreams of scientists
trying to find that long lost cure
for AIDS
& the million bugs
resurfacing
on the consciousness of a dreamt-out world

There’s a hole in all our worlds
but there`s always a way we can join them
there`s a way to relieve them
yes there`s a way to heal them
quite simply with song

There's a hole in our disposable world
& the billions of dollars of oil
we smoked away
as exhausted fumes
or burnt to keep our hearts and homes well heated
are coming back to haunt us
like a great black bat
in the skies and seas of the Gulfs
of Guinea, Persia & Mexico

Yes there is a hole in our world
a punctured trust
of bankers politicians & medicants
a broken promise
to every child
born in innocence
to a planet
they didn`t deserve

there is a hole in Lena`s backside
that won`t stop
bleeding her precious thoughts & dreams away
all because she wouldn`t say no
justifiably because
all the other choices were
too further to go

all our lives are leaking away
all our creativity & intelligence in the slow
drip-drip of a world of temporary distraction
from the main theme
in the bleating
a million phones
from facebook to falsebook
and from the twittering cognoscenti
to the craw in our throat
and in the great escape
from our gulag reality
created by a Stalin-like media

But how many of us
say yes to the things
that we are persuaded to see as good
& doubt in their hearts

for what is good on the surface
what tastes sweet on the tongue
will one day choke
& blind us
will the next day block our drains
will the next year soak our planet
in blood

But there is one hole at least in this world
Which never drains away
And never drains our love
It's a hole in the middle of your head
That is begging to be filled with song!

2. The Healing

So Shayman Jay
came in singing his way
to the ward she was on
came muttering
his displeasure
with what had gone wrong
in his her their our
blackhole-in-the-head-world
for the hole in the world is really not
in its back bone
but it's here
in everyone's minds

Jay came in singing
& he gaily told her
no problem no problem
we`ll soon have this fixed
in a slice
of Occam`s good razor
THINK why you got it
this gap in your existence
THINK why it`s leaking
your life away

& she knew it
before any need to tell her
she had let her father
her brothers
her man
her doctors
her friends & even her mother
invade her
cross her borders
puncture a great hole in her beliefs
sully the principles she held dear
& that little hole
in her spine
the essence of her life
ebbing slowly away
was only a carnation
of her fear
a sign physical
of that invasion
a real hole in her life
created out of despair

Jay told her to dream a new dream
of oneness & completion
of intactness & strong borders
"visualize" he said "the hole is closing
dream it all night
then in the morning
your world will be
one with itself
& all those fears
of losing yourself
of giving in
to manipulation & malice
will be gone& quot;

& he took a fingertip of spit
to gently rub on her back
but this was only the seal
of his lifelong promise
at another deathbed
in another land
and a long gone time

So Lena did
just what he suggested
& next day the doctors
got a shock
to find the unpluggable keyhole
locked

no problem no problem my friend
if we would only listen to the
life-force
& throw away the
knife & the
suffocating pills
but visualise the spirit
as it heals

Jay felt
the pride of his profession
welling up
inside his chest
until he heard inside him
Yosufu`s voice a shouting
& quot;in these things
you have no choice:
givethanks to God
So he said
to an awed
maiden Magda

"It’s not my work
it belongs to God
go to your church
& say 3 Hail Marys;"

for she of course
had been born
under a papal star

So with a little help from Jay
Lena saved herself
just like we all save ourselves
sooner or later
some more later than sooner
sixty two or twenty six
it doesn’t make a difference
what age we move
in to realize ourselves
what makes the crucial decision
is beyond all choosing
it comes only when we are ready
when fully formed
& informed

Part IV

1. The Winding Recovery

But her recovery
was not without its painful
under-story & just as Jay
had predicted
her liver was not strong enough
to support a second child
either in or out-side of her
& during the press of the birthing
said liver broke off in pieces
& began floating deliriously
to her brain
& in her blood-ways it rode
the waves of anarchic pleasure
bore itself to distant synapses
as broken thoughts
addled her childlike dreams
while she lay so long there
in her so clean white linen bed
a broken body with
a mended head

She almost died a second time
in the hands of medicals
for Lena Mark II could not handle
their sterile machine ruled world

The jaundice reduced her skin
to a yellow beyond cowardice
in the face of the almighty
medical take on this reality of ours so thin
for it was fear that had undone her
& the unbidden unconscious fate-driven past
that eluded her

In her fiery dreams
she lived again the bruising
of all her past seductions
the riveting she'd received
in so many unwomanly arms
from Africa to this present bedside
from stranger to cousin
from lover
to lover turned vamp-ire
for Vance too
was sucking at her life-force

The child slept peacefully
by the mother's side
in that white asylum of the half-alive
we deem fit for our sick
& paid short long lost souls

The child slept healthily
whilst family toasters whetted his sleeping head
with the help of a few triples
of Affligem's finest
stored by the hospital bed
& mother smiled wan smiles
glad that they had reason to cheer
but the sounds soon died
in the silence of her post-partum fears

The child slept stealthily
in her weak & broken arms
while eyeing his mother
when his mother would rather be dead
exhausted from reliving
all that horror again
but innocence lay calling
calling for her mother instincts
to be once more regained

Though she had no motive
to make the boy live
why after all reproduce
more of the same pain
though she had no milk
to make the boy grow
or bind her to him
& he to her
yet the child thrived
in that artificial world
even though she had barely strength to touch him
he became her kind of saviour
her reason to live again

Ah beautiful & mysterious karmic fate
what would we be without you!
After six weeks she was finally discharged & it cost her a lifetime's realization that subtle parting from the authoritative hands of doctors who write up our world in bugs & blood as if that is all we amount to as if that is all that we could

Never again would she trust herself to those allopathic fancies that deal themselves as real science for there is no flaw in nature only flow only a flaw in our thinking when thinking is divorced from soul and the soul's unifying energy

When doctors over-reach their re-mit & forget the first rule in healing: at least do no harm - then being alive is harmed & being dead is sometimes better 'coz a life not worth living is no life at all

2. Honeymoon

But now for the good news it's time for take-off for Jay & Magda Lena it's time they climbed into the cockpit of their love & exploded into the stratosphere of earthly feelings of real reunion & reaffirmed the certain passage of stars over our birthplace earth healing the years & years of broken trusts
'cos this will be a right royal wedding
& the very fertility of the planet
will be its tryst

for it was secret in its conception
& secret in its death
until the poet made the sacrifice
& the spirits revealed it
in this serial filler
in until then his uninscribed heart.

I know you been waiting
for such a long long time
I know you`ve been really patient
you`ve been following every line

But just like Magda Lena & Jay
you are going to see their wedding day
or at least a curtsy of a
honeymoon

But where? ? ? ?

In a grimy hotel
at the back end of the wrong side of the tracks
in the most polluted country
in Europe
a fitting place for a wrong royal couple
giving birth to sore misconception
a fitting parallel to the birth
& the biggest immaculate misconception of them all
but let's not jump the cross
or gun down this story
before it's even told

& like all women
Magda Lena had a lot of getting ready
before she could make her final move
she wore many changes of costume
- this time loose & chintzy
- next time low cut black & frowsy
at every meeting accidental
& non-accidental:
but at her regular weekly
massage appointment
to the mat -
the flying carpet to her future dreams -
she always wore plain black

But Jay he was blissfully unaware
Of her sly & subtle designs
on him
till one day
next to her in the bar
at a casual &quot;reunion&quot;
he nearly fell off the bar stool
into her more than ample cleavage
which she revealed in all its
tell tale common glory
for the first time in their long
& close encounter
but it only made his head turn
the other way
& run in fright to his massage-parlour home
it was hard-to-believe
in her V-shaped plan

Next time Lena was mat-wise
under his probing thumbs
she was purdahed to the eyes
unmade-up to the skies
wrapped in her dark training
suit she delivered her apologies
in the language of un-seductive clothing
& remained as usual
as silent as the promise
of resurrection

But she ain't had the religion yet
so she gumptioned up the question
how about a round
of peace talks & orange juice
under the sign of the Piano
for it was to
the famous local piano bar
she was tending
with an eye on the main man-frame
yet pianissimo

Yeah she dreamt of his body
but lusted mentally instead
for knowledge
of the things that moved his soul
& in these he'd found her apprentice-
ship & vessel to the future
the spirits were choosing their own
& believe me or not
attraction had nothing to do with it

Ever fallen in love & couldn't figure out
why the hell him or her?
well sometimes it's for the learning
sometimes it's the spirits
not we who really choose
but it's all for our long time good
all because that place we'll be ending
is the place where we really should

Attraction had everything to do with it
so began he to think grad-
ally
during the long cool evenings
in autumn of 2006

In fact attraction is a spell played by the spirits
just to get the right offspring born
but theirs was a zero-sum game
in every link of the chain

After non-alcoholics
& rounds of consideration
of the nature of spiritual-political
affairs
they decanted to the woods
where he weaved a bigger spell
round & round her hair
round & round the great beeches
that stood as silent witnesses there
to the talk of his history
& a certain bewitching
that had carried him from
there to here
from England to Belgium
from Magdalena to Leen
& back again
not that he then realized
that they were one & the same person
no it was just the spiritual coup-de-grâce
in a story that Lena
just had to be told

The mystery wound deeper
then their conscious minds could detect
the mystery was not
created by them
but passing through them until
the passion of their lives would grow cold

Ah how we dally & linger
here at the gates of our deaths
not knowing how or what to think of
in the run in for the living by the dead
and death’s little helpers

Lena too was blind
to the story’s deeper meaning
blind except to the deep longing
to be one in his body

and in his arms
so later when he'd already
good-nighted her
she took off on a journey of her own

Their two little cars
ran in tandem
all the way to the sleeping village
under the hill of their future loving

Then she took a left
& he straight on home
& he watched her red tail-lights
like wide wild-cat eyes
slowly narrowing
in the blue electron night
then a kind of miracle occurred
when he parked by his doorway
& looked across the mist enfolded fields
the roving lights of her little car
turned again towards his long-bitten soul
then stretched & yawned
across those foggy intermediate spaces
slowly circling him
swinging on the back roads
where they should never have been
but rather should be coursing home
to a bed that was never fully her own
swinging in the balance
between passion & reason
between future life
or death
in this one
her life turned into a searchlight
from & for the gods

Then out of the lane
where he`d reserved his next day`s Sunday stroll
the lights rounded on him
growing suddenly bigger
till they finally stole up to his shared & open
front door

Because yes Jay was not a free man
not in Catholic Belgium
not in the so-called free world
Jay was again 15 years married
to the woman who had half-healed
his long-time troubled soul
& this was now his dilemma
for at last the light was dawning
on just who Leen had really been
in that lifetime stretching deep
into his distant mis-stanced past
in the aching that he felt
not just in his heart
but to his hard & vital cool calcium core

But Jay´s second-round wife
was not home
she was on a kind of pilgrimage of her own
& he never hesitated
when the silhouette of blond hair
ducked under his doortlight
& her voice said trance-like
out of the long cave of darkness
a tunnel dug by time-travelling minors
& quot;I had to come back
there was something we didn´t finish& quot;

What fine understatement after so many years!

& quot;Then you´d better come in for a cup of tea& quot;

Tea? Tea at 2 in the morning?

Both tea & cups soon grew cold
while bodies & hearts grew hot
in the clinches of their passion

But breaking out from the rush
to join their souls
to make one what was never before one
even if the Fates intended them
always to be one
in the watery anguish
of life´s longing
to make its own
duplicate
in the copyshop of the heavens
he stopped & looked at her
yet still her blue-green eyes
both fascinating & fascinated
meant nothing in terms of reminding him of their origins

& she for her part
saw only love
in the reflection of herself
in his eyes
she saw a man she had always wanted
but only in this, her thought-to-be one & sad & incomplete living time

"Stop" he said "we cannot do this here
in the living room of my marriage; for though he’d made no Christian vows to break
daily living impresses unspoken vows
into our skins
& breeds a faith
& sometime an unbreakable religion
from out of simple habit

He led her through the night
back to her solitary vehicle
caressing her neck
& whispering that soon
they would be free to love
in time yes
give it time
after all
it felt like
she
& maybe he
had waited already too many lifetimes

So it was in the coming month
they made love in haylofts
in forests in
parks where convuluted paths
led into bowered cul-de-sacs
where no-one ever ventured
in railway sidings
& bicycle sheds
by lonely lakes
& even in the last carriage of the last train home
from her evening classes
in wholesome nutrition
never dreaming that the theory
would be followed so quickly by the practice!

They made love so many times outdoors
that she jokingly suggested that
if they drew a map of their neighbourhood
& stuck a yellow flag in every
orgasmic location
the chart would look like
a yellow canary

No
they never had a Tristan & Isolde moment
immense in mythic time
let alone a week
or even a night
in Tristan`s cave
only one night
in a grimy ghent hotel

The cock-pit of their loving came one day in
a hidden hayloft
specially prepared
with old mattrasses & pillows
stuffed to overfilling
in a corner of the barns
overlooking the little farmhouse
where he domiciled
guiltily still with bespoken wife

This loving began one sunny afternoon
when the heat under the roof-tiles
made flesh creep with sweat
& eyes fill with tears
in a feverish & lost-longing love
& they loved for uncounted hours until
a familiar carsound sought its way home
& a wife was brought
into full view between the eaves
& both were suddenly
like the lost pair in paradise
after snake-knowledge had finally bitten
its way into plain thoughts
of ejection

both knew this could not go on without
confession or resolution
& both stupidly believed
that love
could conquer all
even the jealous eyes of a heedless world
even in the simple regard
of a wife & husband
from different marriages
not yet present
to the fact of such a wonderful & cruel
adultery

Tommy Stroller
Part V - The Recognition - a game of cards

1. Jet-Lag

Before the days of aeroplanes
& rigs for drilling oil
before motorways
& diesel guzzling trucks & tankers
the only real way to travel
was in the mind

But it wasn´t only shaman who could get there
it wasn´t only magicians that made their tribal party tricks
anyone with the yen to be a wordsmith
or zen speechmaker
would take his audience
on journeys to destinations
that not even we
with our technological sleights of hand
can reach now

For no matter how high we climb
in the inestimable heavens
unless we can BE there
with all our small
though miraculous faculties
we will never cut the ice
or the mustard
never leave home
without forgetting our heads

No - our stations are still tied to the cross
roads of indecisive needs
of incomprehensible longings
for desert island solutions
where no-one can be alone
with a tourist army cloned
by jet-lag
Our lives are ruled by greed for things we don’t really need & they will one day so clutter our mental backyards we will choke from the lack of living breathing meaning & empty space

All life springs from the dark vacuum a nothingness that can never be quenched

Lucky for us the only species who can but realize it

So what we do realize in deep empty far out space in the covers under the sea in the backrooms of our minds is ourselves the earthly creatures of infinite pace

When we can BE all that we have lived & seen & taken in then will we truly BEcome worthy of this grand & sage inheritance

As Walt said in slightly other words it`s all about a hymn to me........

2. Jay's Journey To The Centre Of The Earth & The Economics Of Love

But Jay had a dilemma remember & decided in order to find the solution he would travel to the centre of the earth
Was it karma that his new love had come along
just at the moment when his old love was becoming lost?

Or was he causing her to get lost
in the trammelled highways of their common mind?

In running the same race everyday
to the end of working time
did he fail to see the familiar faces
slipping below the horizon
dipping under love`s radar?

Or was it a karma that she too should find
new horizontals?

The battle was drumming in his head
the choices multiplying to stultifying
numbers their open mouths
waiting to be fed

Jay decided to sink to the bottom of the sea
where man-made drills had been before
but never mined his kind of quicksilver liquid gold

Jay blew a hole in the bottom of his ocean
but nothing came up except hatred
a hatred of the mass murderers
called trucks lorries & cars
a hatred of all who profit
from the earth's destruction
even if they do so
purely unconsciously
this was a passion stronger than
the gushing black earthstream
that now & maybe forever
will stain our saintly shores

O New Orleans
why is it that you again
must suffer another
of these man-made insults
to the Great Spirit`s gentle & insistent speech
these misdirected hurled tomfooleries
into the court of the gods?

Jay was lost to the earth
deep in the thousandth floor
beneath the sun's rising
beneath the sea's churning

Lost in his thought of Lena
& who she might have been
lost in the unquenchable fire
of the host's inspiration

& the night was long & full of freighter ships
bearing their cargo to destinations
barely traceable in the mist of choices

He had spent his whole life
on a journey to a destiny
he could not fathom
& now he was almost there
& yet the night doubts flew in
like moths around the candle flame
of his adultery

In the economics of love
he was in debt to the woman
who had nurtured him
from near madness
into a new land
full of Belgian chocolate box surprises
into an anarchy of securities
into gifts freely given
but binding in their massing
of love's debts
but for this he had
to be
eternally thankful
In the economics of love
what we give over
to the sum of loving
can be nullified by one
short night of passion
nay one short clinch
or even glance
can unmake homes & beds
& even pull apart children
so carefully put together

& the mortgages paid
the hard work accumulatively made
all come to nothing
with a flash of an eye
a flick of a skirt
& a sigh for the lost beneficiaries
children of the suddenly unmade
wedding bed

& so it was for Jay
he could not exempt himself from the rule
that the same cake cannot be
twice eaten

Leaving his Belgian long term lover
was no easy feat for Jay
the festive free-fall giver of all
those massages & healing
from his domesticated mat
stitched together
over so many years

But he had less than zero
choice

3. Jay Moves Out To The School of Many Tongues

So he took up his feuton
& walked across Brussels town
bearing little else
for the living & comfort of his soul
installing himself in a fourth-floor garret
above a school for the learning
of lessons foreign
in languages fit
for Europeans
lost to the sound of their own

& in the day he listened to the garble
& babel of many new tongues
perfecting their vowels & their grammar
way below him
in sounds he could scarcely recognize
as English - but that was surely
what was being taught
whilst his head
was faraway in Leenland
at the top of a knot-Rapunzel tower

& at night he dreamed & he dreamt of her
yes naked yes young
in a body
only half sung
those eyes so green
singeing the air
& a voice
a melody from the fair
lines of poetry
she had once read for him in
one so long ago lifetime
but she rarely seemed to come
to him
now

In the garret they practised
once a week hurried love
above the dissonant
melding of voices
tuning their lips to the
English tongue
But Leen spoke no English
she spoke only with her eyes
moulding her image deep within
him gradually
surfacing her history
on his mind
placing her tongue
only under his

4. Vance Vaunts Forth To Claim His Property Rights

When Vance was made relevant
the fact she was longing
leave him at last
she had to inform him
his anger gathered some support
from near & far regions
of the streak of land
where he was market tending
& amassing bricks & mortar
whilst keeping her in perjured penury
& the salesman of privates
the slack rentier
the purveyor of fake jewels
for the poor & helpless immigrants
yes the man who was worthy to be
opponent of the nature king
& all that he could never be
he had friends

Mr. Do the Business rang Jay
to make a meeting
where all could be fully discussed

But the whole arrangement was a sham-us
a trap for the unwary hero
for at the rendezvous
a distant cafe in the sticks
the place was inside surrounded
by a flurry of Flemish friends
who would gladly
beat the shit out of him
& send his carping carcass
in a box back to England
where it had never properly belonged

Jay carefully surveyed the lay & lie
of the land, noting the fault-line
of cars before the bar
he feinted an entry
direct through the front door
but just when the crowd
of he-men supporters
scraped the chairs from out under
their tables
bolted J. direct out the back door
& the mass who tried to follow
were jammed in the back entrance hall
& far from their cars of vain
pursuit - end of story

Next the would be victor
decided to visit Jay's wife
long suffering but just about more
to be tortured
knocked he at the very moment
when Jay also happened to be home

So shocked was the twee man's wee frame
by Jay's sudden appearance
that he crumpled before the door
frame
and folded arms within shoulders tame
from a Jay puffed up higher than an oak
who took him by the skin of his neck
only to drop him on the bonnet of his car

But the poor man knew never when to give up
for when Jay later swang out to his car
& drove back the direction of town
the O Volvoluminous wagon
of his rival & erstwhile mate
suddenly appeared at the pass
determined as the man was to cut him off
& block the lane of Jayman's exit

This time the knicker vendor
came bolting from his car with wheelbrace
just as Jay was screeching rubber
not ten meters from crushing the man
against the side of his own car
but Jay reacted quick as a dice
thrown on a mat of smooth ice
he skidded to one side
drove his vehicle up a bank
& escaped around the side of the other's flank

Modern road rage had nothing on Leen's man's feelings
at that fuming moment

But let us divert
from this high noon pass
& examine one more time
the source of Mr. Modern Businessman's ire:

In our civilized west
we do protest too much
that we are nothing like those musselman
hiding their wares of women
in purdahed robes & courtyards
of closed-off minds

No our women are free
are they not? let out
on the more subtle chains
of money & mobile phones
of shopping sprees & negligés
but we still fear the burglar of the night
that very same dark charmer who'll
steal the apple of our
balls

In our free world
we have other ways of surveilling the
wanderings of lustful femininity
of protecting & procuring
the fertility of the tribe
we tag them no longer with
animal male magnetism
or chastity belts
or gangs of brothers
(though our particular tribal man also
has a host of proxies)
but rather with the electro-magnetism
of texts & SMS` s
with insistent questions
of where & why they have been
& all the time refusing
to give one clue
into our own secret male doings
we feed their guilts & push their motherhood
against them
then force them into a market
of tithe home labour
which only serves to host the modern male
& all his sportive whims
that proud democrat & freedom loving
miscreant of masculine fun
who always puts his freedom
before the woman's

So what Jay had broken were no holy vows of
some other male's marriage
but the property rights of the lord
who suddenly loses his vassal
& vessel of his lust

But that did not excuse Jay's own broken promises
& night after night he turned
& he tossed
on the bed of a sad & guilty longing
that was never assuaged
by the shortness of intensified passion
with his Magda
shared in his
less than an ivory tower
5. The Toll Of Memory

Then one night he woke deep in the city's silence & heard for the first time in a hostage of past years the songbird of his lost dreams a nightingale's long call the line that weaves & eclipses all lost time the line whose thinness mocks our own then the clanging & echo of a bell from the great church at the bottom of the stone-deaf street who or why should such a bell ring at that time in the morning he would never know but if it was a fire the bells were exclaiming they were also sounding inside his head

but it woke him from the trance the bird had woven for so many years: Magdalena Nightingale had returned!

At four in that dark morning he sat bolted to the head of his bed turn-keyed into wingless fright locked into the incredible thought

that made him heedless of any need for sleep but raced to write down the exact process of his thoughts how Lena & Magdalena were one & all the little proofs thereof:

their common fear of the road & no wonder
considering her brain-shattering fall

their love of art, of pictures
yes & naked forms
the wonder of self-creation
the touch & forming of the new
the mother love of bearing forth
all life in birth & imitation
of creation in its smaller forms
of music poetry and clay
that same earth
that held her hands
so long

t heir shy & timid manner
hiding from the grin
in the face of early death
and foreheading
those green eyes
which bore down constantly
on him

they never played with dolls
but only boys & brothers:
they loved a good fight
& fought dirty in the clinches

eye were fascinated by human borders
not just of the wild places
at home in nature's arms
but even more of the inner spaces
the wildness that can only be touched
by the silvery hands of potents
smoked or drunk
the lands that no train nor car could reach
yes both were addicts of themselves
self-wounded & self-wounding
locked in their separate
wards of isolation

Both had fathers
who committed themselves to death
the one by hanging
the other by withdrawal
of his heart
from her world
Leen's progenitor
committed a premature
emotional suicide
that left a shadow of a shell of a man
a default father & a frozen faced lover
to her poor & speechless mother

so both missing daughters
searched for men who could lovers be
but only from an older age
& both were crazy
for the touch of a healer
for both had been the violate invaded
of innocence lost too young

& both preferred their lonely rooms
with music self-created or spun
from the shaman songsters
of their idol adolescent days
those healers of the airwaves
be it Dylan or Nirvana
Morrison or Morrisey
echoing the miseries and mysteries
of our so so human race

Overturning all inside his mind
our hero grew more certain
of the fertile fatal equation
one & one make one
in different lives & times

& the final proof if proof
the more was needed:
Leen's knowledge of his body
& the perfect loving thereof
as if she´d read it inside out
studied it for some exam
& knew its every crevice joy & glad protusion
but then of course it was no "as if"
she had read it
Inside the classroom
of her Magdalena mind
the untouched model
of many yesteryears
that own-goal of artists
& adult learning
had now become her man

When first Jay came
close to Magdalena's naked skin
his loins caught fire
his hair was whit-sunned
his brain was potato mush
his heart a diesel engine
a throbbing two stroke throttled high
breaking water speed records
dating back to the 1950's
& he tore off the strips
of one skin after another
until he felt closer to her
than the G string panties
that she never wore

Leen lay back on his Tuesday bed
spread her legs
& bid him enter between them
with a surreptitious sideways grin
& so gently softly yet urgently
did he lie inside her
that the whole earth rose up
in song
the animals too
brayed barked
roared & grunted
along in joyful union

Just when Jay's penis rose to
magical heights
& his heart opened
to broad new worlds
then Magda's eyes glazed
in fulsome ecstasy
her head thrown back
her lips moist
her breasts swelling
like white volcanoes
with hard long nipple eruptions
cooled yet copulated
by Jays exquisite tongue

The motion rocked higher
faster deeper - the plunging piston
of his penis
penetrated so deep in her clinging chasm
that Lena felt that touch
which few women ever feel:
it brushed the womb-tip
& sent a tremble to the top
of her throat
but deeper & harder he plunged
until he ploughed her fields
her marshes & forests
then on to her hot hot core
which was the earth's in all its
magna-matic heat & thrall
her eyes now squeezed shut tight
the tension grew
her whole pelvic cradle
the penis glowing brighter
in all her folds & creases
its subtle rim trembling over
the lightly ribbed walls
of Magdali's inter alles
their shuddering bodies
holding onto reins
that linked & held them
forever
in love's enchanted entwined grace
the thing that bound them
coming from oh so far
in common history
in genes
& previous lives - eternal coupling
as if heaven too could only be realized
in this sexual duet of love
the swinging singing nerves & skin
allowing all to break out in song
the spheric music of the cells
a chord of two body notes seeking
final home & soul-mated perfection
so at last the predestined pair
were two in a million!

Then simultaneously both
jolted open hungry eyes
eyes hungry to see
the ecstasy in the others'
to mark this moment
in their long-shared history

Thus were Jay & Magdalena
more than one
they peopled the new earth
with their coupling
this tantric tosspot magic
revealed to all their masturbating
onlookers
"in"
on the show
the un-porno movie
the magnificent alchemical
jacuzzi
& Magdalena resonated
with all the fecund blossoms of spring
& Jay saved the planet
in the nick of his penis rim
& they reinvented the act of love
from the consummated pyre
of vanities
from the bonfire
of mass consumption
of useless goods
& the false promises & tricks
of the advertisers & news-givers
the porno kings & adult false fantasies
the mob of modern choristers
screaming their evil
at innocent eyes
all were burnt to a speck
in the rapturous embrace of Magdalena's arms
in the flame-throwing gaze of her pupils
in her revenge on the ape-lovers
who had hoisted her to the top of the empire state building
only to see King Kong
fall in love again & again & again
for we men are all King Kongs
smelling our own armpits
& calling the stink Gaultier
or Ralph Lauren
when its really only a poor version of old semen

Before this great loving
which lasted more than just one night long
until the birds coughed
the pissed postie & the
wandering unemployed milkmen
came swishing down their drive
& their two bodies refused
to disengage
& in every small crevice
& in every succulent kiss
for kissing there was now
even more
in abundance
flagging the future climax
so long awaited
so often dangerously put off
from the shores of foreplay
to the dunes of up then a little down
only to rise further up
in the stakes of ecstasy
to the foothills of orgasms
& finally this enormously long plateau
of almost-coming
still the kisses came deep &
so mutually rewarding
as if kissing in & of itself
would render its own
innerly orgiastic explosion
from the tongues
clashing like some gladiatorial storm
& sucking each other inside out
til nerves & tendons thrummed
skin surfaces
drummed
& erogenous zones
emigrated to Africa

Then consciousness
was near lost
they did their best
to hang on
to this wild stallion
& good that they did
during the nag emerged
as a concert pianist
playing with all four dextrous hooves
the triple forte keys of
each others' heartbeats
& the bass note of true orgasm
pitched deep into this & every other life
both their own past
& all of the planet's others
& reincarnated
via a million sperm
injected into the womb of earth-Leen
combed & quiffed
by a thousand followers
the new world-child was born
in songs of innocence
& froth bearing lust

(apologies to Blake et al.)

♫ yes
Leen was Magdalena's
reincarnation
Leen was the woman
the perfect guest
he’d always sought for
in the sanctus of his wandering home-lost heart

Part VI

The Final Proof & the Loss

1. The Books Of Russian Poets

Jay was so soul disturbed by his revelation
by the extasy of their pairing
that he wanted to start a new religion
dedicated to the eternal return
of the nightingale
he could not keep
the good tidings in
& rushed out to tell the world
the founding miracle

Natural though this first reaction was
it led him to be seen
close to being mad by even his best of friends
& worse still
provoked a storm
of justifiable rage
inside his Belgian wife

By telling her
he stupidly believed
that she would see
their separation as lovers
as inevitable
& give over to this fate-made plot
that neither could control or alter

But for her it was merely
some crazy story
invented to un hinge her
it was another
& even more monstrous nail
in the coffin of their loving

One friend who though close
lived so far away
he could see the delicious trap
Jay was leaning
into
& gave his sage advice in words that Jay could better accept:
"the story is incredible
but maybe not untrue
in this one sense:
at least it is a myth
a charter
for your perfect partner
ship;"

Yes ships are launched this way
with myths of provenance & perfection
of unsinkable virtues
that repute them better than all others
but ire & hubris
are the true measures that men make
both for others & for themselves
unfortune ate me says the worm
& not design
to the greedy blackbird
that hunter & nemesis
of more than worms words or worlds

& the last he told
out of pure fear for her reaction
was Leen herself
yet she was the first to want to believe him

He called her to come to his room
& above the muted din
of classroom language manoeuvres
told her for the first time
of Jay & Magdalena's full history
& how it was her own
& how he could maybe
prove it

& he was astonished
only at the lack of her astonishment
her fascination with the nightingale
her life & former town
in England, her death - Leen's appetite
seemed endless
for a past & place
she'd always lacked
in present Belgium
a legitimacy she'd always doubted
so she attacked the question
of her former lifetime
with an enthusiasm he could only read as truth
& confirmation

But confirm he would
in the very next moment
with a trick learnt from Tibet
for he had in his possession
one last book from the original M.
sacred to him & true
remaining across all those years & safe
from moves of home from fires
of jealous & angry lovers
from carelessness & borrowing
a tome of faithfulness
tattered but never destroyed
carried in the inside pocket
of his naked & battered heart
& this he mixed & hid
in a flush of cards
or rather books
with 20 others of similar ilk
poetry & books on poets all
for her to choose the same one she had given
across her sculptor's table
when in the first & rather different flush
of her love for him
& what is that book
you may really ask
which held the secret
of a double life-time`s longing
& of the proof of their loving
ininitely?

Reader you must wait
until she chooses
as choose she surely must
the sacred lots
of fate-bidden books
& before I reveal
such a hidden name
that none save a chosen one could recognize
that same connoisseur of Russian lines
& the sad history of that cold
& pale half-continent
as the original purchaser

She looked & looked again
perplexity creased her forehead
& then she said:
"I feel drawn to two
but don't know why
this one here
with the man in leather greatcoat
& streaked grey hair
such a strange name Voznesensky
& this one too
the essential who
or what is Esenin?"

What miracle! he inwardly spoke
that she has chosen the only two Russians
I have laid down there
from my large poetry collection

But which one is she really
going to know
came only from Magda's hand?
"Choose again!" he said
"Between these two" for she
was on the track to the left
of right & more right
than she could imagine.

& how we follow
all these dark tracks in our forest night
never knowing we are guided
hand over hand & light
after light & friend leading to
friend
until our end -
an end we will never try
consciously to reach for

She took a finger
from that beautifully pouting mouth
pricked by nowt except hunger
to learn her backward fate
so young & mock innocent
in her choice of him
the man of ultimate shelter
whose old & time-creased face
she seemed inexplicably
to know & still yearn for

Then placed it finally down
on the name of Voznesensky's
"Antiworlds"
& in that moment
she had created
a master world of anti-life
auntie oza's mnemonogram
annulling all the previous dross
that wound itself back in again
like a flounder to its fisher
heading backwards to its source
its mottled inspiration

But who was it it that nudged her hand
to choose the one rather
than the other
the anti-world
rather than the real? ?

& so winding in
the old & forever new
thread of Ariadne she led him
out of the labyrinth of lost causes
to a new heaven of knowing
& fresh in-loving strength

Both were astonished at her
truthful choice which reaffirmed them
in their bachelor love
& bound them
until some newly-invented hell
might split & burn them up again

But that was not a tale
tellable at that moment
the day was a day for perfect loving
& with love to solidify
all that they had been
& not been
able to fulfil in lives of hard and disillusioning
mornings
of missing pieces from life's strange puzzle
from years of constant & thwarting
confusion
& of why until now
two pieces did not fit

The honeymoon of perfect love
never lasts so long
love of this intensity burns
like a phosphorus flame
needing no oxy-gene of social approval
but merely itself in self-renewal
& the life span of such
fusible material? - we can give them
a fuse
slightly more than one year long
in this fabled tall tale
of metempsychosis
of Tristan & Isolde
loneliness

& after passion comes knowledge
& the passion that opens the mind
is the truest emotion of them all
for it reasons not, hopes not, wants not
it is the inner compulsion of a lifetime
& sometimes the latent energy
of a thousand reincarnations:
Jay at last with re-found M.

the aftermath & the ruin of their love bed
was the book of their learning
the open heart surgery of their soul
the dreamtime of their senses made holy text
& the question that had hung between them
- why? - why so young a woman
was attracted to a so old & life-bent man
for Jay was already bending
like a willow at the lakeside
already wrinkled like the willow bark
far beyond his natural years -
- this question was now well answered
as far as passion was concerned
but not as far as karma's far flung purpose
for they knew each other in so much more
than any biblical sense
the raison d'être
& charter of their love
was mutual learning -
an envelope of spoken words & letters
exchanged over months then years
love-patterned in that patchwork blanket
designed to warm & protect their future
a mutual morse code of survival
in the harder times to come
The next week Jay took her
to his secret place of power
a tight den hidden in the surrounds
of giant beech & willow
high in the low hills
of Breughel-land
& by a small altar he'd set for the spirits
he taught her
how to make the sacred fire
the herbs to burn
& the lore of the spirits' longings
& beside the hollow house
set for the lost & needy jinns
they made love
constantly
thus confirming Morrison's prophecy
that was really prognosis
they could indulge in great golden copulations
plan a murder
& start a religion

He opened her mind
to the possibility
of what she could become
in the buzzing blooming profusion of her new thought-life
& reaching beyond their love
gave her the licence to believe in herself
as the true healing woman
her wounds had fitted her for
for there is no greater learning
under the bounds of the sun
than the pain of broken hearts
& love's separations
concatenations
calamities of afterlives
& breaking dawns
of true births betrayed
in cuckoo faux-family nests
& from this she was recovering
in order to give to us her rest
Her story was in huge miniature
the story of the best of us
crawling in this swamp & black
morphing mess below the
call of heaven's starry gifts
from this sludge & slurry
of naturally inclined ease
to peaks of healing &
accomplishments of song
that befit the most ordinary of souls
& ordinary was she
in everything
except imagination & beauty

& there below the roof
of green & star-shaped leaves
they made & fixed their love
healing in each of themselves what for so long had been
so righteously wrong

2. The Tarot Reading

But even in the certainty & beginning
of this truest love
there was the seed of their undoing
the sprouting of a doubt so small
yet naggingly constant
in its pursuit of their after-fall

The springs of love are strange
& rarely are they pure
most often sullied, muddied & poisoned
by influences & hangovers unbenign
at once their force is to fuse
the love even more strongly to its base
& the baser instincts held
under the lid of outward disapproval
heats under that pressure
a passion of even greater force
until the final forced explosion
who will pick up the pieces?

A week after the rituals
of the early spring of their love
she begged him to read the Tarot cards
of mutual future paths
the end they were heading for
the seal of fate
in forged forgetting

So he shuffled this time a bigger deck
of seventy four
& laid them swift & neat
before her - saying - you
must choose
you are the one who is asking
what can or must befall us
& in his cowardice
there was already
an inch of splintered doubt
piercing deep
inside his now unshuttered soul

So she chose the ten cards
& laid them out
under the plan
of the kabbalist temple
entry to the mystery
of creation & destruction
of lives & time
of standing on two feet
or the reverse
humpty dumpty's broken egg-headed
upside-down dumb confusion

First position - the present situation
the prince of swords:
a desolate scene
of war & wasteland destruction
saved only by
the musketeer's ability
to swallow the sharpest
& most important of swords
attack the febrile matter
with the piercing eye
of solid inspiration
& side step the parries
of gruesome fate

Interpretation:
life is not gonna be easy
in this world new for both of them
they're gonna need both wits & grit
& the cutting edge of keen intelligence
allied to their unused
& unusual spiritual gifts
if this wasteland
should be renewed

Second position: the obstacle
the ace of cups:
something good that
does not produce good
a love affair
a grace divine
the holy grail & seer
but in the wrong place
where love itself is the obstacle
to the fulfilment of love

Interpretation:
the root & branch of their feelings
cannot lead to flowering
something is in the way
wonder what that could be............

Third position: the ideal
the objective & what
is most wished for
being the seven of swords:
a man trying to carry too many
foils - he manages five -
but leaves the other two behind
a cup: a base & longed for home
Interpretation: we asked for a place of our own
we are searching for somewhere
to put all our eggs inside
but if we find it
two may be left behind
it's a futile search
we are lost in a dream
for we are carrying too much
& those two left behind
they may be children..........

Fourth Position: your base
& means to work with
is the Devil!

Interpretation: only lies, deceit
& violence will ensure
your tenuous survival

Position Five: the past
disappearing the three of swords
reversed - a heart cut in three

Interpretation: such three-way cuts describes the heart of one
torn between three forces
naturally enough it's Jay
her family & her man
with Lena's little infants
pulled allways
in this three-way compulsion
the past refuses
to be turned back on its feet
but keeps coming back
& never becomes truly past & gone
but stands as a dam
to any future

Position Six: the future is
the three of talents
again reversed:
a young man painting
the walls of his cloister
being watched by a modest maid

Interpretation: Leen
is fascinated by
the inspiration of this man
who has cloistered himself
so long from true love
but is it mere fascination?

Will she be led to believe
in the reality
of the picture
he is painting for her
of their common future?
Or is it all illusion
a party game of shaman's tricks?

Position seven: their attitude
to the trip
found in the Wheel of Fortune

Interpretation: this first sign
of good fortune & God-given
luck though positively
indicated
though sending
the message that
they were on the right path
& had the right to build their lives together
& live in their own place
was mainly just what its position said:
their attitude to the trip

Position eight for their
friends, home & immediate environment
was Miss Justitia Libra
she of the balancing scales
of karma & correction
positive again
Interpretation: could be simply
they were doing the right thing
but more deeply perhaps
their future destiny & home
might be the annihilation
of all illusion
& after all
justice is blind
objective
& self correcting:
thus
not so cosy either

In the ninth position was
Knight of Wands - their hopes & fears:
horseman of apocalypse
the lord of fire & lightning

Interpretation - oops
bloody obvious
what that betokens

In the final position
& over-ruling all
the kind result
of all their hopes & plans
the five of talents:
in Crowley's un-simple tongue
the card of worry

Interpretation - I
wonder why they should:
a picture of bland misery
the outcast lovers
living in a cold wilderland
beggared & bruised from society's
stern rejection
friendless & barely surviving in
endless penury
Jay looked at sweet Magdalena
& told her straight
"I don't care what it costs
I still want to live my life with you"
but M. was suddenly silent
smoked her cigarette
& in her heart knew
their survival would be
more than miraculous
but her mind still hastened to follow him
for he was the gate if not the quarry
of her very salvation

3. Exiles

Meanwhile Leen's home became
ever more her prison
& her man her gaoler -
a sad figure desperately clinging
to those driftwood thoughts of her body
which repeatedly guided itself to this other man

First he wrote letters to Jay
threatening mayhem & maverick revenge
then sometimes pleading
for Jay to leave her be
or else he would place all responsibility
in Jay's hands - his own suicide
& the total cost & care
of his children

But then not content with threats
he followed her to check
her every destination
or called her up constantly
on her very mobile mobile
to ask the most banal of questions
followed by the inevitable
where & whens & whys
of her exact position
in space & very bodied time
he suddenly grew violent
punishing her with fists
for every evening's slight lateness
or question not directly answered

The whereing out of Leen
from beatings
& from threats
against Jay
against his very own life
& even of his wife
began to weaken her resolve to leave the man
or ever to find a new home
with her lover-man
began to make her search in her heart
whether even Jay
could deliver her from this utter mess of a life
began to make her want to lie
& make only a secret lover of him
he who would be an impossibly open husband
then she began to renounce the intention
that she would pack up
her bags
her life
& her children
into the car her mother had given
& simply go

For she feared most of all two things
that many in her desperate plight
so feared:
that at the first signs of her leaving
would come the instant sharp reprisal
if in secret haste
she tried to gather
the clothes the furniture the kitchenware
nearly all of which were hers
all the debris of their life together
surely she would never reach the door in time
before discovery - & then.......... & second:
even if she cleared the decks
escaped her man without regrets
then still the strings of support & last attachment
to her family would finally be snapped
with disastrous consequences
for her young ones
and her Flemish soul

So it was with a mother's instincts
she began to prevaricate
on the plan J & M had hatched
to make their roofs one

The lid was descending on her dove-pot
her soul was being squeezed
between the desire to stay recognizably
humanly alive
& a passion she could not resist
for the man of her life
& so she began to lie

& Jay waited patiently
knowing any kind of browbeating
would end with a wingless nightbird
& even if the cage was opened
she might never fly from this clipping
by all the men around her
he knew the timidity in her soul
was not formed in one
but many imprisoned lifetimes

Yes the river of love is strange
& rarely is it straight or pure
most often twisted & polluted in its surety
by influences & rapids
undesigned yet human
at once its will is to force
the love more strongly to its sinuous mould
through canyons of base instincts
under the screaming bridges of social reproof
it's narrowed & pushed under that same pressure
to a passion of even greater force
until the river bursts its banks
until the coming of floods
of confused emotion
wherein all is born away

& as the lies grew
from their first shoots & small bushes
to a forest of linking branches
so too did that forest
feel like a wilderness trap
to their longings to be free
& to the lies
were added pressures from even the
common wayfaring of their minimalized life
those very moments
when Jay believed they were unseen
proved even more a far-off dream
in the crowded streets
of their meetings

so it was with our young-old couple
first the differences in age
made appearances in public
traumatic for little Leen
she would shuffle along
even in the free roads of his city
three or more paces behind
Jay's striding form
always avoiding the invitation
of his outstretched hand
in an echo of her
long gone Arab mores
taken over from
her former lives

Imagine then how much worse it was
when he came calling
to her infant country
town by rail
how he would sneak
from carriage & round back of station
to her car parked hidden in some alley
how they sped away
to quiet lay-bys in the smallest lanes
or to the forest shelters
reserved normally for hunters
strange kind of game this
but in this pork-scratching country
the Flemish mafioso
had relations & eyes
everywhere
the salesman & his brothers
& her brothers' friends
& friends of friends
were the dense embroidery they tried
every time to thread their needle through
uncaught unseen
in Flanders flat & open country

in her head
the compartments of her life
could not be joined
it was a fusion too-far off
to contemplate
even to the point she came home every night
pretending that her new love was dead
to a man she could only despise
but still had to share his bed

4. The Tick-ling Of Guilt

Jay became everyday more desperate
in this prison into which
they had put themselves
& more angry
just not with the man
who owned the keys
but at Leen for allowing him
finally his patience had given out

Time & again he began to
scream of ending the doomed relation
ship - foundering on seas
of pure illusion

Time & again she pleaded with him
to have patience
to give her time
until she was strong enough
to fashion a way
out of their dungeon
for more dungeon-like every day
it seemed in the tower
of his babel
the room over the school
of many tongues
and just when
did he wonder
this tour-de-force
might come crashing down

For Jay it grew more not less
impossible to live this lie
more lonely & inevitable
that all would end in loss
& their shrinking balloons of joy end
like tossed away condoms

After 3 months secret loving
& scurrilous routing
to grass-bed grasping
at loving straws
one Tuesday morning back at the school
at their regular loving hour eleven thirty
& after a night of tearing
his head out of his heart
& seeing the reality of their Tarot conjured fate
coming ever more true
he welcomed Leen not at all
but stood at the top of his hall
as she climbed the three floors
to that soon to be smashed tower
of murmering tongues
the tears still staining the sunken cheeks
the words sticking & pricking
his desert-dry throat
then forcing their way
one by one into the dull
stasis of her consciousness

"Stop
we have to stop this madness
I can't go on
in this world with no hope
no future no outside
no beginnings
only the stone walls
that we can beat upon
& thrash against
the pricks of our soured loving"

He grew sick
with the longing for their freedom
he grew confused
with the crossed purposes of
their existence
he grew mad with the falseness
of his very being
& then not fortuitously
he succumbed to a fatal disease

Ah science you are so quick to tell us
the causes of all & sundry
on this materially surfaced world
your boundaries run only to solid
epitaphs
on all that mysterious domain
beneath
but who can sum the true depths of a soul
as it fights for freedom to know its own
destiny
how can science's scalpel
 teach us of the flowing edge of spirit
gesturing into flesh
let alone the rest............
But science diagnosed the bug
which caused the fever
in chemistry’s honest name
within a body tortured on the rack
of Leen’s refusal
to be an honest woman in such
a dishonest world
the bug that entered him
from the same forest floor
of the common bed of their loving
& manifest itself as a deadly fever
soaking his brain in chemicals
& poisons sore
adapting to his normal thoughts
those of paranormalnoia
then entering every morning the muscle
tissues of his every limb
to rack him yet again in such a plurality
of pain
& twisted mental torture
from which only evening shortly
released him
& the name of this new game
devised by fate to teach
the poor lost Jaysoul?

Science called it borrelia
tick-derived & fatal if not treated

Leen did not desert him
but came with ministries of love
& sometimes food
even when their loving was made impossible
by fevers cruel
but then when
she would depart
he’d pull her down
longing for such closeness
& comfort as only full loving
can provide
& tied & strapped to the sweat
of the lover's bed
he would barely survive
the thrashing
of this love in the time of borrelia

After finally admitting to be
touched by a doctor's hands
penicillin was administered
but the dose came too late
& the fevers ran on unstaunched
made worse by the stomach's reaction
to the bitter & heavy dose

After six months disease
& two months wasted treatment
Jay was fifty kilos
& a confused wreck of himself
from dawn until dusk
but evening brought hiatus
& a small rest from its rack
it gave him time to consider
was all this worth it
just for this life of short-fused love
in the longer fuselage of fever
for in five years more
or less - according to all texts medical -
he'd be dead
frothing like a rabid dog

First he went in search
of other forms of healing
he would have sought
all the way
to Africa but old Yusufu
was long gone
to meet his many makers

He called a Shiatsu Master
of local provenance
known & trusted for his handling of lesser cases
but could he rise to the test
of this syphilis of the soul?

Jay forced out his story
in confidence
though his reluctance to tag every detail
was prescient as it turned out
he really longed for healing
from the master's touch
& never came seeking judgement

But the Master became judger
the judgement fake catholic
fake divine:
if Jay was to be cleaned of the disease
the answer was to rid himself of Leen
for in the Master's eyes
(& he inferred: the heavens')
the fatal thing was the sin
committed between one so old
& so young
these unnatural acts had to stop!

Jay became angry but bit his tongue
for he both feared the sullen judgement
of this world & yet
despised it for what it was:
the purest form of hypocrisy
for this Master surrounded himself too
with the many young bodies of sycophants
he was ever eager to instruct
in the ways of Shiatsu touch

He could never see the tick
that bit him
as the revenge of righteous Furies
on acts so sweet as his love
for dearest Magdalena
such fundamentalist tosh
which points the finger at all
that society fears as the beginning
of the end of our moral order
at all minorities who suffer enough
without this tainting of their
one source of love & pleasure
should be consigned to the rubbish bin
of failed & archaic dross
it only serves to save
the righteous
those clean
& un-besmirched minds
of tight-arsed intelligentsia
and paranoid false-truth pedallers
from the ransom of their own desire
those who in fact
are never on God

5. The Cure

In early spring
a voice called him to the far north
in a dream
an antler man was dancing
in a great fire of stars & sparks
the wild animals not cowering
but charmed by his spirit whiles
came closer to the fire
& Jay he stood a-watching
from the other side of the blaze
& his soul was burnt away
stripped to its black carbon core
as he stepped into the fire
not fearing but drawn
to the face he would acquire
& searching under the hooded gaze
of the old Odinesque shaman
he found there his own eyes
eyes that could look
onto the dark-side
into a world beyond all pain

Waking in a sweat of excitation
he knew now his destiny
was to go north to seek
the battleground of the spirits
on the longshores of the fjords
& meet with his ancestor there

So sadly he parted from his dear Lena
explaining the journey as a pilgrimage
towards his final healing
& she understood the message clearly
he'd received from the far side
of that holy fire

& in a northern wilderness
in April snows & winds
the white mantled branches
were the only love offered him
as he struggled down the forest avenues
& bivouacked with the foxes & the deer

Then one night in his warm sack
meant to defy the 10 degrees of frost
that still bit & ate his
bare protruding ass
it came to him
a dream of himself
dancing naked in the forest glades
with troops of animals following
in his shade
as fires burnt round them in a circle

& the world turned its face from him
& in the dark other he'd last entered
by Yusufu's guiding stem
& branch & leafy good words
he saw the answer to his careful prayers

There stood in the light
of a tunnel passing under
the world of common senses
a woman whose figure
he easily recognized
in bowed silhouette
his wife of many years
she to whom the guilt
still felt by him
was answer & resolution
to his dreaded ill

He saw too
there was no sin in his actions
that the love he had fallen in
to Magdalena
was the necessary foretasting
of this unfolding
higher love
to which his whole being yearned
& tended now

& this purer love
would lead him back to this
long forsaken wife
not as lover
but as the key
to his healing
from the fevers that even then
afflicted him under the quilt
of forest sewn-in snow

Even before the parting
from his hermite northern ground
was the vision-hunter fulfilled
by his vision
& the sickness its sordid hold was
loosened

& he once more came southwards
of the land of language wars
of defence works over high-piled dead
of the place it seemed where new beginnings
should always
commence for him
& where his ending was destined
to be engraved
amongst the sleeping millions
of British French &
soul-lost Tyskers

& the woman of his
wandering dreams
she who had always taken him in
despite his love infractions
gave him shelter one last time
& offered him a balm
for his shattered inners
suffering still
from the long term siege
of penny-shilling drugs
cheap & useless antidotes
for a shrunken & dessicated physik

This was no potion magical
but the super concentration
of the juice of a fruit
so common as to be laughable
in the courts of costly science
& taking care to imbibe
in waters pure such drops
as were necessary
for the soothing of his disturbed
guts - the medicine found another cause
the undoing of the wracks & fevers
attached to his brain & body
by bacteria running madly now
on every nerve-string & sinew

The cure took its time
as all good cures should
but by summer his bitter aches
& pinings
were things of a
well-learnt past
messages from the carcasses
of shelled & empty bacteria
still blocking liver & kidneys

Flexing his re-found strength
he broke new ground
in his labile brain
made connections for future healing
of the many who would be bled
by the arch ministry
of deadly borrelis
but still his body moved slowly

& now he had a resurrected
love to attend to
though Leen was strangely distant
at the return to robust health &
diligence of her once
sick & battened man-love

The irony of life is lost
on lovers too far on
in the intimacy of their total commitment
& so it was with poor Jay
now in recovery
whilst Leen waiting & thinking that
her far off love in northern wastes
was perhaps deserting her
perhaps forever
had stumbled herself into an act
of cruel but inevitable desertion

6. The Final Betrayal

In her mind she too had persuaded herself
no issue or safe exit
could be gained from her love of Jay
& that his exhortations
to leave him
to find her own way alone
were not
the desperate words of a faithful love
hosting her better future
but a real desire for parting
so in his absence
she had allowed herself to be seduced
by a younger suitor
had taken another lover
not to hurt Jay but to relieve him

& this she all revealed one day
when she saw the road was already made
to his safe & certain recovery
thinking to herself not of his
passion for her but only of
that other love the one
that fed her soul & kept her glad
in all those months of torture

Sitting in the piano bar
where she had first seduced him
where the same music
sang out from hammered wires
he was un-seduced by her slow
& definite confession:
she loved him still but now
could see that all he had said
of a love going nowhere
was truer than her body could long believe
that longing had now gone
& in his absence she had shared her body
in the way he had always
encouraged
in those days of desperation
of forced & long imprisonment
to the deadly bug
that messenger of the futility
of a locked-in and triple barred
love

Jay was stunned by her words
yes he had always said
it was for the better
if she would find a younger love
someone she could truly live her life with
in freedom
someone she could grow old with
without fear
of death's hand
on her shoulder
someone who could enjoy step-fatherhood
& stop this one-act play
with children who
would still be young when Jay was dead

Yet of course it broke his heart
for this was the woman
he had waited a lifetime for
& now she was turning away
she was turning him away
& he knew not where
to turn now
but to turn his face to hers
was an agony of recognition
that the beauty there
was no more for him
that now there was only the
long journey into the mirror
of old age reflecting
none but his own face
but that there was such all-consuming beauty
in this world
that it lived still
in his ex-lover's face
this lit his world from within

Tommy Stroller
The Ballad Of Jay & Magdalena 9

Part VII

1. Regret

"Who today can enjoy
The inalienable fruit of their labours?

I will connect you in all the ways
of a past that is straight & narrow
and in the plan of the future
born innocent and true
in all of Adam's kind;
was one of Jay's great messages

He remembered
bodies entwined
limbs trembling
with possession and joy
fingers dancing
on unadorned skin
spirits reaching out their hands
from same dumb bodies
into the deep seas of stellar feelings
the spirals of longing
that galaxies make
spinning across the limits of God's love

He remembered
much too clearly
time & again
how lost they had become
in that infinite inner space
of mutual passion
the soft dark night of touch
the merging of spirit to body's core
the limitless choice & trust
the exploration
of the linings of the soul

& yes he remembered
how many times
he had had to pull himself
up from the loving bed
& pull M. too away
or otherwise all life
& plain responsibilities
to work & friends
& even children
might be given up & lost forever
jettisoned on the altar of their
sonambulent passion

Yes there were truly Tristan & Isolde moments
branded on the inner skin
of his tear filled lids
where in the cave of irresponsible loving
he served as exile from his public
& his family home
and where
those sacred two
burnt their candles at three ends

& they had no need of magic potion
to seal their lives together
unless potion it be
this very abstruse & unbelievable
story
of the reconciliation
between two lost & separate
lifetimes
the binding force
of believed-in fate
now acted as
a poisoned curse as much as a
blessed chalice

2. The Parting
So now M. & Leen
were growing apart again
the nightbird was escaping
her temporary home
the cage of human flesh
& as she flew away once more
down that long dark corridor
of nights
without a single bright day
into the same darkness
from which she first appeared
he fell into a kind
of holy madness
holy sadness & utter melancholy
for now he was lost of both

& he longed to follow her
to throw his life away
on a whim
a fantasy goddess
but of only human dimensions
his world reduced to unholy zero
bereft of the magic
that had once informed
& enlivened it
bereft of her
her spirit bird
inside the beautifully
but not now so long
young Lena body

It tortured him
this new belief
that he had only been in love with a phantom
fed & furnished solely
by his love-fevered brain
that all that was left to him
was the speck & the gleam
on the surface of her celluloid eye
preserved in the films
they had made together
& the music shared
from Magda to Lena
Brel to Jackson (Browne)
from Morrison's outdoor perceptions
to Joni's frown
the river of song
towered high in their lives
with Cohen at the bottom
& Emmy Lou in the sky
it ran on & on
in new bodies
& future resides
from Chrissie's pretenders
& the division of Joy
by suicide
to Evanascent songsters
via Nirvana's cold turkey
to Anoukian tattooed blues
& the returning play of Coldcuts
fixing no-one except
those cold-blooded junkies
& on to K's bitter choice
between the forceps & the grand jury
the tabloids & the stone
it was a marriage of generations
with a missing whole
once egg-shaped but now square
in Maggie's tired backyards
where the Piggies still
kept guard & made the animals
pare their hoofs & claws
down to bones bare
all was stored on Jay's hard disc driven
brain

for the first time in so so
long he was exercising
the real small muscles
of his heart
3. Mythogenesis and an Important Reminder from the Original Magdalena
Quoting the Russian Poet Esenin

"To be a poet — is the same as when by truth of life? you scar your own tender flesh, and with the blood of feelings caress the souls of others.?
To be a poet — to sing freedom, as you know it best -? the song of the nightingale doesn't hurt him -? his song is always the same..."

"The world needs real songs — so sing like only you can even if you sound like a frog.?? Mohammed has overdone it in the Quran? when he forbade strong drink?. That is why the poet will not stop ?drinking wine before he goes to the torture? and when a poet goes to his lover, ?and finds her lying with another?, he, kept by life-sustaining liquid, ?won't send a knife into her heart. But, burning up with jealous recklessness, ? will whistle on the way back home?: so what, so I will die a vagabond, ?on this earth, such fate is also known." 1

Magdalena was
the face that launched a thousand lines of poetry

Jay was
the man that became his own volcano
& who tapped the lava springs from his own exploded heart
a man worthy
of transformation by Maenads mad
& holy in their mutilation
of his very soul-cells & bones
□Bach of poetry or Einstein of the heavenly loving orders
giving himself finally
to the singing god or Orpheus
of Final Inspiration
?
he quenched his life & all who touched him
in the fires of creative loss & dissolution
for the benefit of those creatures mired in less
whilst moving all
Magdalena married her new man
adopted his 11 year son
& lived in a proper house
one fit not for a princess
but the young mother she now was
of three
was somehow happy
but still in the certainty
that she was not herself
the child of her Flemish father
nor any other father
but that the Great Spirit
had born her through many lives
& now she was re-learning
all that she had took in
& even that which she could
not bear to look in
the fall from Flemish grace
the fall from her much older brother’s
B S A
she read again in the
quiet spaces of her heart

& did she think of Jay
& all that was gone
between them?
If she did she kept this too
in an even deeper kist
of that same quietus heart

5. Melancholia

Jay brooded in his garret
deaf to all the multilingual terror
stories deaf to even
the Brussels’ night mythology
the poets & the renegades
of a lost Union
& deaf to to the ministrations
or contact with his previous Flemish wife
every day was the same:  
an ocean of cold deadness  
which he was forced to cross  
with nothing but the  
shrinking life-raft  
& broken oars  
of his deserted life  
absence of a love  
that was once as intense  
as a hot shower of  
lava brought him to that  
stand still position  
as still as the Running Man  
whose intention was halted  
by legs of clay  
the very same figure  
from Magdalena's hands  
was his for real  
on a cold March day

After two or more months of  
bitter stoneness  
where drinking or eating  
was of equal value  
to pissing & shitting  
& nobody passed his  
backstairs door  
he hatched an addled  
egg of a plan  
to do away with himself

He took a rope  
as thick as the wrist  
on his beloved Lena  
he made tracks to the forest  
that lay south from the  
city which had buried  
his dreams  
on a June day as sunny  
as a century of Facebook  
smilies he turned his thumb
from the world &
all his toes too down
in the direction of the
assaulted &
insulted
mother earth:
he strung a flowering cherry
with his blue cord
intending to circle his throat
with the burning strands
he stood on the bough
of a dazzlingly high stem
reversing the forces
that Orpheus had sung from
intent on delivering his body
& life to the air
but where is the body
is it with the soul
or is it already passed
into some dark Tibetan hole?

But he could not take the air
he could not reach into
that blackest centre of despair
& cast his soul into it
he could not walk free
to the dangling depths
& for this he found a caveat

The voice said
of a little bird:
I am not there
not in the place you are tending
not in the space between
life & death
hope & despair
heaven & earth
the cells & oblivion
I am singing on the branch
beside you
if you look to your left
across your shoulder
I will be forever there

& Jay looked in wonder
& greyish attention
to the toy wise owl
that stood blinking there
"go back down my friend
to the world
for you are sorely needed
your life design is
destined to be shared
your healing power
is bread & meet
to the lost & lonely fellows
of the lower regions
the sick the sad & the money-lost
angry - all will desire
your siring inspiration
all will hear your message clear";

Unhooking the rope
he realized once again
that far from being wise
he really was the dope

Whatever Magdalena
had done to him
it was not her fail
the reading of the runes
had told him long ago
that this was both
his & her
her & his
immaculated fate

Hauling himself from the sacred cherry
he plucked a twig
that was just bursting to
flower & took it home
to place it on his
simple table
by the window
over the street
between two churches

It was an offering
to more than mother earth
it was a deep sorry
for his insult to
that poor & hapless tree
which next year
would be struck by yet
another JCB making out with
progress in a land full of
none

6. The Journey

"Path your way to the valley, then hill to mountain, & soon he was lost to all." 2

Jay passed out of the gates
of the city
out of the seven rings
of hell & finding his way
by instinct & moonlight
paused only to drink
from unpolluted streams
or sleep in the branches
of the track
which inexorably led him
slowly upwards &
he gave no time
to look back

People he avoided
tarmac & farmyards too
the only comfort was his
sleepsack the only food
the gruel of grits & oats
he bagged as one last trophy
from that small kitchen
over the speaking
in tongues

The many valleys
were really only one:
death & his fair sisters
awaited far beyond his ken
but he knew they were waiting
& gladly
he put them off
the forests descended
to his advancing toes
the sum of human folly
only added to his woes
but firm in resolution
he carved his way above
through countless glades &
empty fields the lonely bark
of dog in kennel
sounding over these low hills
on these his first meditations
What did it mean
this loss of love
& a partnership that straddled
not just years but
generations?

It meant there were holes
in civilized walls built by humans
where cultural bullets
had passed right through
& grass & fern now grew

It meant there were cracks in our ceiling
where no light could get in
for the mother & illumination
of this world
was permanently gone

It meant that seas
had retreated
to leave their carcass detritus
high on the raised beach
of lost hopes

The gravitational pull
on the hands & heart of Jay
& through him all men
meant the loss of all trust in women
the loss of all fertility in the fields
of his mind

Jay & Magdalena were no more
& their uncoupling
& falling apart
also led to the dis-solution
of all certainty
removing the moral compass
in all our hearts

So on planet earth
the hosts of love
became exiles
& the guests
became house owners
with stones in their stomachs
but the houses were built
on water
the life lived was
just a daily piss-up

The failure of their love
caused the markets to race
to their proper conclusion:
the rat consumption
was back in the temple
now that the cat of the long face
had escaped

The value of gold dwindled
& stocks soared
all due to the failure
of Jay's stock in the world
of Magdalena
7. The Forest & the Crone

Jay dipped his feet
in the forests of Arden
& climbed until
the altar places
of the grubby Gods
in their late winter
shirts of slush & melting
ice were in sight
the endless lines of soldiering
trees were no barrier for him
he knew where to choose
his way
the command always higher
through the larches & firs
the last oaks & fading ash
to the high ridges above all else

& below occasionally
the sedate torrents
of the Ourthe winding northwards
then riviere Semois
in her majesty & spring
glory for
north was his tending
& deeper into the guts
of that great wood

There was an ancient
abandoned mill that
seemed could do no harm
so he arrested for some days
& took his fill
of the pure & incontaminate
stream

But his lodging was not alone
as in the morning
there stood a crone
with greying & matted hair
above his bed of gathered straw  
The woman was of an age  
where age no longer mattered  
extcept to measure forwards  
towards a long awaited end

"Who are you?" he questioned her  
believing himself  
to have first claim  
on this ruin  
of his life & love  
in the shaded dancing groves

She challenged him  
as to his purpose  
& why he’d made his home  
in the corner of a building  
she claimed was hers  
alone  
to which in his timid misery  
he had no answer  
except to go

But calling him  
when wending  
his sorry way  
back to the forest  
she drew him back  
with questions of her own

"What are you looking for?" he questioned  
here on the road past ruin  
& the many paths that  
lope through the limits  
of human culture  
& the last stations  
of knowing

Yes what was Jay looking for?  
the question ran deeper  
than the gay singing stream
under the mill’s foundations

"I think, I think...
I am looking for
a pain that would finally absolve me
from love's much greater smear
I am looking for
the fount of all knowledge
& for a realization
that will make me whole
once again
for I have lost all
on one throw of fate's dice
& my sins
stir no answers from
religion's store."

Though smelling of
rotting hay & with a face
of creased & hanging flesh
that left that sunny day
all the poorer
for all her rough outline
the woman's voice
was sweet
almost as sweet as a nightingale
but no that could not be

"Is this sin
in the form of an act
or abstention of an act
towards the woman
of your life?"

"My sins are many:
I chose a young bird
barely out of nest herself
someone that was forbidden to
this old vulture
I have falsely seen in her
the spirit of another
who died in my youth
whilst she was still
in the making
of herself &
her clay creation
of a running man
which strangely
was also of and in myself
at that time
but for her it was from
a gone-by life
unconsciously emerging through thin hands
that moulded that running figure
for there were things
that could never be undone
in her sad young
& short term on this planet
there were things repeated from
that life before us both
when we met
in short she recognized the ghost of myself
forever running
from eternity's youth
to my present old age;

"All I can hear
is that you have lost in love
& that your love
is somehow lost
in the great Ardenner forest
if you wish to find
your darling
be she young or old
go to the forest clearing above
the abbey of the Orf
& seek there a fountain
& from it
a small eddying pool
which is bounded by humanly
built stone & mortar
and the greenest grass
of this sacred land
& wait there until the message
from your love is made known;

He could not see her reason
but her words gladdened his heart
& made him change his shirt
& he made straight off
to depart
she called him a second time
to come & say
a fuller farewell
than his wave
then garlanded him
with anemone
eyebright & rosemary
& kissed him full on the cheek
in welcome goodbyes

Jay fought back
the nausea & compulsion
to pull away
from her embrace then
shyly & slyly
made his final way away

The forest thinned
the high plateau levelled
& the trees slowly gave way
to green fields & slow
grazing cattle chewing
cud
on their knees in the sun
the river was but a beck
with now gentle shoulders
ushering its way east
as he moved west

8. The Mare Of Empty Dreams

"though nothing can bring back
the hour of splendour in the grass
of glory in the flower
we will grieve not
but rather find strength
in what is left behind" 3

There is no fault line
in an angel's symmetry
there is no fear in the movement
of an angel's wings
they fly true & quick to their goal
love finds its way without help from the spiritual
but karma is the price that love's choice pays

What made the doubts in Jay
well up was the suspicion
that Leen was less than she should be
& Magdalena had never in-formed her
Leen was just a shopman's daughter
& not the bird of mystery

On he walked to mountains high
clean of beasts & bare of trees
still a flock of crows did follow
Calling raucously "caw caw caw"
it was a song so rough & dry
- stark in contrast to our nightingale's -
pecking his ears with un-lyrical discomfort
pricking his conscience with un-atoned sins

Mrs. Crow is eager to remind human kind
that the limits of love & what is left behind
will soon be eaten & gone forever
on the wings of this black feathered dove
on the feathers of this flawed
mistress
of fate

He sought a ridge beyond human misery
& came upon that brow of hope
then dancing up the other side
came a white steed with mane full flowing
snorting to a sudden halt
right beside his bowing frame
“Horse where is your steadfast rider
has he fallen or just slid on home?
Tell me what your meaning holds for
one so abject & alone
have you come to bear & save me
mean you to haul me from my woes?
Is there a stable to which you are wending
or have you merely lost your way
& now do you make of this companion
a man who needs an alibi
hostage to fortune or
brother without reins in arms? &quot;

Jay looked at horse & horse felt Jay's fear
fear that cloaked Jay's loneliness
strung from Lena's longingness
for someone younger than Jay's years

But mare was trained to feel no fear
waited calmly under the ridge-top
beckoning Jay with twitching ears
nods & eyes that bore a message:
&quot;I await the master rider
one who'll guide me through the fire
to the land of frost & rainbow
bridges to the world of Odin
mythology's home & Asgard's heroes&quot;
or did he just imagine it all?

Jay approached with solemn 'meanour
holding eyes that transfixed his
stood before the white magnificence
blew in nostrils staring wide
for breath is speech to equine brains
curious was the animal's answer
lowering her head & muzzling him
Jay was almost knocked over backwards
but held her mane with clutching nails

Pausing by each other's side
Jay addressed these words to her ears
"I know the emptiness you find on your saddle
know you yearn for pastures new
lands where men p'raps live in happiness
cities distant where artisans rule
& the blacksmith is still chief auditor
first to translate heaven's messages
& never to let out Loki's fire;"

The horse nodded

"Horse you cannot feel how broken
this my heart is & so defiled
travel could never eclipse my heartache
nor adventure heal me from my sighs
if I let you guide me distant
it alters not my deeper feelings
longing still for she that caused me harm
& bound me to her cursed charm
no life nor novelty encountered
would blunt me to this hallowed pain
& though I long for freedom from enchantment
still I languish in my lover's chains
bound my heart & bound my body
to a wheel that turns around her
axis to my every move"

"Go my friend your quest is not mine
gallop to find a better knight
so you shall remain but riderless
for at least a shorter term than I
leave me in my tears & sadness
I will seek freedom from my plight
only through this rational mind;"

The mare that bares the night
on the sore back of our dreams
slunk away to the forest glades
below the soleman Jay

8. Recap & The Last Temptation
Hunger & deprivation
weariness & despair
beset our wandering Jay
wondering if there would be
any end let alone happy mending
to his need & quest

He sat & meditated
on an ancient barrow
a pregnant protuberance
on the side of
that long mynd

He drank from inconstant springs
in that lime landscape
which slaked not his thirst
for true knowledge
but kept him alive
& when not
available he resorted to
drastic plumbing methods
drawing from his own
rather unhealthy resources

The message from the crone
to go it alone
to find the sacred stone
from which the spring of truth
& revelation sprang
came back to him
but he feared even
the wise woman's instruction
preferring to find
in his meditation & reason
the cause of this
abhorrent abeyance
this lack at the base
of his chakra soul

He longed to hear
the voice of his bird
but the night shared nothing
not even the squawk of a
wood grouse or the screech
of the owl
which had once
held him
from his fall
into the hanged-man's noose

So loose were his thoughts
they ranged over all
the history between them
the sacred past of
Jay & Magdalena

He tried to account
for the chain of being
that had led him to count
the karma points
in Shiva's lost ledger
& Yahweh's eternal
table turning plan
but he would not give credence
to the debts of evil

Like an already dead man
lying he slept & was forced
to re-experience
every past sin & every
crisis lived through
with the lady-luck
of his life
from meeting her
in the club of lost
60s souls in a
70s life class
for sculptured futures
from her Running Man
to the running away man
that now stood
in his predictably feet
of clay
Jay remembered
Leen's betrayal once again
Leen's betrayal twice over
Leen's betrayal thrice
in at least as many
lifetimes
but he never could blame her

But the searing pain
of her removal
times three
made him believe he
was maybe Job
& not the saving Jay

Jay felt again
the sucking fevers
of his infected
spaced out
wasted brain
under the tick's curse
the borellian worm
the gravity that was leading
to a gaping hole
in the earth
& certainly to
no rainbow
but he could never blame her

& he realized all
he had learnt from this affliction
all could he use to heal others

Jay saw again
in a vision
the cards cast & how true
was their prediction:
Jay & Leen
they had become beggars
in a wilderness of sorrow
as in the card of WORRY
just like all of us dupes
without a slim chance
of a different tomorrow
but he could
never blame her
or even the Tarot's call
for his lonely fall

Of course the cards
were correct
because he had made his choice
& the fate in the cards
was just a mirror
of that same choosing
free will being confirmed
in every free roll
of the dice
the lesson plan completed
because of he having
willed it

So what was he learning?
what was just about dawning?

Jay balanced again
between two stools
the bathtub & the goat
the learnéd & the shaman
the businessman & the
wandering Jayman
under a canopy of holey
fronds
the here & now
& the fornever
- so could he stand in
rather than against
the rhythm of the eternal plan?

He thought he knew
but he could not blame any other
for falling between two stools
& being shot
by Goronwy's arrow
least of all
could he blame
guiding Magdalena

No he could not blame her
for their separation
even less that ghost
that came between them
even though the pain
was experienced
again & again
it was a truly
Sisyphean moment
that led him believe
the two sides of the mountain
of Magdalena & Leen
were never even
were never the same person
that p'raps Magda's spirit
had just hitched a ride
in Leen's Belgian Pullman
had left him there by the railway
in that lost and lower ground country
only to gather a beautiful
yet hapless soul
one she could torment him with
but no-one with who
he could ever be permanent

But if so where o where
was magnificent Magda now
where was the spirit that had
abandoned both him and its host? ? ?

Tracing this backward karma trail
his final trial assaulted him
like a night full
of tossing rhinoceroses
in his vision
feeling & inner
reality
he was brought again
to Magdalena's dying side
without a mother to intercede
or encourage him
& he felt in double
her stalling fate
her slow falling state
from the high saddle
of her 60s vehicle
into cold cold oblivion
he felt it as her
passing further further
into no other side
no salvatory heaven
just the loneliness of a spirit
haunting the living
messenger without a host
ghost without blood & flesh
or warming body
& as himself
he was yet again wounded
by the withdrawal of her life
& offered false hope by her
haunting

But he could not blame her
only himself for believing in her
for conjuring her again
& again into existence
like we all do
those phantoms
that control us
& nor could he blame her
for her becoming
his guide

So what was he learning
what had already dawned
in the cold freezing light of
that spring morning
on the side of a ridge
on a hernia mound
rising for the dead?

That maybe Leen
was not the Magdalena
of his dreams
that he had been wrestling
shadows not
messenger spirits?

He saw one last time that other ridge far away
across the channel selfishly named English
he saw that pilgrim’s way to hell
that was once the joyous 60s
the pig's back on which all
was fought & lost
he saw the pieces of her
the poor Magdalena
scattered in the bushes
gnawed by dogs & media hyenas
the helmet-less head crushed
& ready for icing
in a hospital morgue
he saw Kali fucking Shiva
& carving him apart
he saw his life finally fall
below her footstool
& all women were welded
into that awe-full vision

After the dawn he knew he had
an answer of sorts
because all answers
in this veil of unknowing
in this valley of dark-seeing
in this mirror
of our life
we call words
are of sorts

& taking her bones
her crushed head
the torn & beautiful white skin
the scalp of spikey tufts
of red hair
the white lips & sunken cheeks
he sorted them
put them in order
& stitched them together again
letter by letter
poem by poem
with words
mere words
& breathed life into them
with his pure inspiration
with holy metaphors, ugly alliterations
& triumphant similes
(though he was not so good
at simulating)
just in order
that she would live forever

Even if
(& what an if)
she was no longer
by his side

Jay had one last task
to complete
before going down
to the waiting monastery
of his home reforming
to the spring
of future knowledge
& that was to sacrifice
to all the spirits
& all the gods
from every culture
past & present
on the highest mountain of Arden
to suck out of himself
the greatest thank-you
for all the help he’d received
in saving his own life
literally
& finding the only person
in the mirror he'd been holding
up to his face through those
freezing hair-shirt nights
was just himself
was justice itself

But weak, hungry, tired
he stumbled upwards
following the rising sun
to that strangely pyramidal peak
high above the scrubby limestone
plain gasping coughing &
slipping he groped his way on
more than fours
on belly sores
until the brow of the crown revealed
such incredulous insight
& outsight
across the lands of Europa
far to the heavily white clad peaks
of Schweis & maybe even
Italia

He turned his back on Blighty
one final time & absorbed
all the beauty that had nurtured
poetry sculptures symphonies
novels films & litanies
religious & political
ideals of culture
lived but then broken
like the shards & scree
that lay
directly below him

O O O O Europa
the pale moon brings
the morning winter sun
the great bull the mænad one
daughter of Dionysius
& Jagger

www.PoemHunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive
in silent generation
& music wild & wonderful
to us in the headphone winds
in the turbulent change
& constant reduction
to zero
are you merely the sum
of your peoples
Slavs, Ungars, Celts, Tyskers, Franks
& all those sub
& stranger tribes
or are you the zero-sum game
of our future
& the magnificent
almost time & time again lost
then refound past we come from

Jay cried
tears of mixed joy & terror
wrung from a heart
thrice broken
by a woman
and a continent
but a million times broken
the poor poor poor Europa

Terror gripped
one last time
he was seized with the thought
that Magdalena had
finally left him
not alone in the flesh
but that lonely troublesome
spirit too was departing
he saw in the bluest of skies
what he took
was a backward flying angel
waving that fading final wave
as it began to disappear
in the wisps of clouds
mouth & lips
oh so beautifully perfect
bow & arrow cupid lips
opening & closing
in a final message

But he could not hear her
dammit what was she saying
then her voice
the original half-punk
half-sprite enticing voice
came faintly across the æther

"Come away
come & find me
in this eternal game
of hide & seek
let us fly together
to that other world
Yusufu always promised you;"

Fading she was fading
as Jay´s feet struck out to follow
gasping at thin air
seeing the ledge disappear
& then the edge
the last footholds before
looking down at last
the 1000 feet crevass
crash to certain death

Head reeling
heart sealing
all that passed between them
over so many years
especially those so few
last months in the desperate
sex-filled gardens
of his imprisoned mind

She was far away now
but still pulling the thread
strung out between her
& his innermost soul
dragging him
over the precipice

Wildly his mind struck out
against her
he must grasp another thought
or maybe thought
of another
& so it came to him
the picture of the white haired crone
more ugly than any sin
& twice as pruned

He had to contact her
before this unrelenting
extreme force of pre-
nature finally
toppled him
forever

TELEPATHICALLY
HE RANG HER
SHE PICKED UP THE PHONE
YES IT WAS THE OLD CRONE
& HE EXPLAINED HIS
EXTREMELY PRECARIOUS
SITUATION
HOW CAN I HOW
CAN I ESCAPE THE EXTREME COMMANDS
OF MY PAST PUCK
TINKER BELLE & CALIBAN
ALL ROLLED INTO ONE & DRESSED
AS THIS EXTREMELY
INTRANSITIVE TRANSVESTITE
MISLEADING MY NIGHT
& DAY WANDERING
BALANCING MY SOUL
ON THE CROCODILE'S NOSE
& CRUELLY TAMING MY REAL
MISS-STRESS? ? ?

"Calm down" she said
"it almost seems
that you'd rather be dead
than amongst us
your loving
earth companions
come back from the edge
come back from the wilderness
come back to you arveal
inheritance & pick up the treasure
you've been weaving
all those years
& remember
if you get this way again
on the edge of a dead hog´s back
you still have my number!"

Jay climbed down
from the heights
& all his previous supposes
now he only had to look for
the fount of knowledge &
bag the slipperiest fish
in the world lake
of consciousness
which leapt from the smallest of springs called
inspiration

References:

1. Esenin's abbreviated poem 1925 written shortly before he killed himself. His last poem was:

Farewell, my good friend, farewell.
In my heart, forever, you'll stay.
May the fated parting foretell
That again we'll meet up someday.
Let no words, no handshakes ensue,
No saddened brows in remorse, -
To die, in this life, is not new,
And living's no newer, of course.
2. Colin Haydn Evans "Tristan & Iseult" from his Forest Tales Part 1

worth's "Ode to Immortality";

Tommy Stroller
The Ballad Of Jay & Magdalena 999 - Finall Song To The Earth

Final Song for the Earth
from the Ballad of Jay & Magdalena

We have to sing this World
back to its beautiful womb
the flux of all creation
the mouth and mother-river of life itself
we have to begin again without
these foolish misplaced games
senseless sorties on the apron strings
of mother earth

We have to wrap the ears of the Gods
with joyful paradoxes
of unblemished and unashamed song
renew the rainbow pledges
reflourish the deserts
and bring them home
to the place they were
In Jaysus´ time
when xtians and uslins were one tribe

A song to remove all the stains
of past errors and post-romantic pollutions
of false dreams of technic control
of life- destroying and pestilent potions
of oils on troubled waters

Singing and dancing we will come
from all the nations under our one sun
united all as it was before we began
with war and her lunatic offspring

Let the war-goddess and her jealous pixies
politicians and world movers
of arms
worms of the underground system
slugs of TV video-control
the border-guards of minds and lands
BEWARE! ! ! !

We will unite and cross all frontiers
what began in 89
will continue and sweep both east
and west
Tianamen was it`s nadir and turning
Genoa its Golgotha
but truth will spread in muscle and in bones
when both are used in salsa and tango
the thrumming beats of Africa
and polynesian chants

And this truth to which we all belong
will spread in the networks and beehives that connect us
and through the buzzing and raucous cadres
electric and mouth to ear
we will pass our trail-blazing songs

And praise the great tree of Ysdraggil
that bears the songs and woes of adamkind
the mouth that spews us into future lines and lives
against which seems so paltry
this minor offering

Tommy Stroller
The Blind Flute Player

The blind flute player whistles in the dark
And the dark sings back more beautifully
The autumn shadows close over the narrow entrance
Of the maze, responds to the travellers words,
And openmouthed admits
All the poets and the clowns
Of that stealthy world but forbids
Anyone who claims he knows the way.
Yes! True performers do not second-guess
The future but follow only their wicked
Inspiration, and the thread
Of Dædulus - they are lead,
But never lead, to find
The minotaur of their fate
In glad surrender

Tommy Stroller
The Crow

The Crow can only become
Eagle
And the Fox
A human protector
When splayed and pinned
On death's stem
By the gamekeeper
or concentration camp guard
It is the emblem and curse
Of human failure
To comprehend
The rout of nature

Tommy Stroller
The Light Is Going

The light is going
Way over the copse
It shrinks from the ploughed
Gullies and the blackbird runs
Between the hawthorn
Gilding still the leftover
Harvest straw, the elm tips
Threading the November dusk
Stripped and lonely lifelines
On the hill's horizon:
Old man, old woman -
Two lightning blasted hulks
Awaiting their turn to rest
Only the old railway
Holds a claim on the future:
All else is nature's sleep
Turning its nose into the cold
Pillow earth of the night
And the longer stillness
Which is ours in the watching

Tommy Stroller
The Painted Lady

The painted lady cannot be touched.
She stands behind bars
Of soap, face cream, and the time
It takes to make up.
This is her sole protection
From a bitter, ungrateful world.
Her lips weep a little
In their painted corners.
Her rouge stains the night air.
Her smile is more than
Five hundred years in the making,
But her face is renewed for every stare.

Intermezzo al canto:
She never plays the lyre
Or listens to sad music,
Heart strings too taught
To be plucked.
She never cries in public
Or seeks common comfort,
She's much too pure to be...

Ah, painted lady
That body which you cover
Every night you sleep alone
Can it never be shared or sown?
Oh my lovely painted lady,
Your hidden face of sadness
B'yond the eye shadows and the creams,
Is the one you must call your very own.

Tommy Stroller
The Road

We came over the hill
Over the quiet sandy ridges
We had no destination
Except sleep and departure
We merely kept faith
With the meandering road
Through tenantless villages
The tarmac giving out
Under nature’s strain
Through great Gandalf forests
Always west
Refusing every turn
That threatened to return
Home
For home was no longer
In any direction
Except somewhere further on

Tommy Stroller
The Road From Nødager

The Road from Nødager (1)

Life is a walk to many horizons
A tale of true and false starts

The tarmac road so straight and narrow
Hauls me up the bare-breasted hill

The masked parade of sunset clouds
Trail vapour lines for horns

November is a memory month
Reflected on dead summer's eyes

The trees lie flat on the evening sky
Leafless in nodular rhythms

A flock of geese in victory lines
Is glazed by incendiary rays

Autumn is a truth that cold nights mouth
To children late for school

The hill that scans Nørdager's boundary
No longer harvests hunger

It signals hope on the rise

(1)The name for the Danish village Nødager literally means "the fields of hunger;"

Tommy Stroller
The Smile At The End Of The Tunnel

Eurydice came behind me
But i never looked back
As we approached the surface
In my mind she was no longer so real
More like a phantom i had conjured from a bad dream
Dissolved by a thin beam of light
From the end of my tunnel
Dissolved by a smile
Appearing at the end of my tunnel
Making everything clear
In this my darkest night
And my heart was no longer stoppered
By fear
Yes, that smile was the solid ground
Of reason
Of charity
After a season of fear
And the smile grew wider and embraced
My longing waving arms
Until finally i was up and free

Tommy Stroller
The Springs Of Love

The springs of love are strange
some are pure but others
sullied, muddied and poisoned
by influences unbenign
but gold is found in dirty streams
crystals of amethyst and quartz
in base and granite rocks
the force of sin and degradation
can heat our tainted love
to moments of even greater perfection:
the man on the cross-
roads of so many lives

The Watchtower, Caldey Island, 3.7.2018

Tommy Stroller
The Unforgiving

The unforgiving beauty of the world

The dazzling symmetry of bodies

The doors of love that can never be entered twice

The knocking in the tombs of memory

The faces in the windows of darkness

The pavements that echo where no foot treads

Tommy Stroller
The Unheard Demiurge

Who dances here along this silent lake-shore
Half-hidden amongst the reeds and lillies?
Wherefrom this troop of pucks and black-masked nymphs
Emerged? Who set
This altar stone beneath rose arches,
This sacrifice of yearly virgins
In motion? Which God
Is celebrated here, what spirits called
By pipe and lute in hybrid shadows' hands?
And who is this priest that satisfies himself
At the cost of my dreams?

I strain to hear the music of the Demiurge
But all I hear is water
Falling.

Tommy Stroller
Tropical Rain

The sweet sound of rain
Startling on my metal roof
In ears too-used to hearing it.
The pungent dust absorbs each starting drop
A bloodburst soul arriving
Hammering through the skull of the earth.

Now far-off the rain absolves us
And sweeps away our arrogance
Leaving the human termite mound
In which we scrape a living
From the left-over pickings
Of the rain-gods
That we no longer
Recognize.

Far beyond the battles of word and doctrine
Of rational irrigations and unfulfilled goals
There is the impudence of silence
Between the raindrops
Between the rains.

It's time these streams
Became torrents.
It's time to build our arks
Again.

Tommy Stroller
Warhol's Impressionism

the leaves that deck my forest floor

are like an impressionist painting

by Andy Warhol - each leaf

a face of different colour

each blade a suicide note

to winter

Tommy Stroller