

Poetry Series

**Jean Bernard Parr**  
**- poems -**

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## Jean Bernard Parr(26th May.1946)

Brought up in Britain after the war.

Briefly trained as an art restorer

Worked as film editor mostly news and current affairs  
and writing screenplays and fiction

point my telescope at the night sky

sail my Laser on the Bristol Channel, when its not too rough.

Stare out of windows

# A Bee

A bee stumbles into  
our glasshouse the way  
a man back from the pub  
stumbles through the front  
door after closing time

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# A Stoning

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Accusation

You don't have mudguards  
she said, delicate boned  
below the transparent almonds  
of her haughty lorgnette  
a failure of  
culture it is, then  
I, feel  
too soon dragooned into  
preparing  
for monsoon  
the pearls remain fingered  
and the question lingers  
an ectoplasm of  
steam from the  
La Gaggia machine hovers  
above our heads like a  
comic strip speech bubble  
'no' I say 'mudguards are  
too much trouble'  
not to have mudguards  
in this country with  
its green squares in  
patchwork quilt not  
having mudguards  
is an observation  
by those who choose  
sensible shoes  
owners of houses in  
the Dordogne who dimly  
suppose they know  
the rules of cricket  
where rain  
can stop play,  
clearly, they  
don't understand the  
essence of cycle racing  
they  
who are in tune with  
barbour and dogs and all

things british.  
Here, in not sporting  
mudguards, I show myself  
to be no better than  
a whirling devil,  
likely to run amok  
upsetting the tea things  
inspite of lashings  
of tutoring  
from Dan Dare  
keeping in check  
those grim faced Treens  
I ride uneasy I  
ride away, away,  
rootless, orphaned  
again and again  
life chained to unbeing  
on these indecent and  
unsheathed wheels  
afraid to tread this  
minesewn English soil

Jean Bernard Parr

# An Easterly

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr



# An Unopened Present

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# As The Wind Does

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

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# At Sully

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Autumn At Dogmersfield, Hampshire

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

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

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

My handlebars are twisted  
into a silver question mark;  
is this one of those special years

where autumn brings a blaze  
like a good year for the vine  
or is it that I'm seeing it  
for the first and last time?

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Before You Get To Euston

before Euston  
it gets dark  
the almost tunnels  
among zombie shadows  
and clankings  
sepulchral side chapels  
Red Bull tins, strewn  
and votive  
everything  
browning  
with unnatural oils that  
thicken the cable coils  
lumbering  
my train  
painfully  
riding the points  
backbone straining  
then back to black  
and shufflings for  
luggage on rack  
the grimy window  
flickers  
images of factories  
with long histories  
and there  
down there  
on the tarry track  
in a  
cone of light  
between  
ferocious  
swords of  
glistening steel  
a small green and  
trembling weed  
small  
defiant  
a first night actress  
you can see

she brings news  
of a movement  
but with our  
well rehearsed  
yearnings  
hearts pounding  
as we reach  
for the handle  
on the outside  
and step down  
beestormed  
with uncertainties  
we miss the point  
the early warning  
we miss

Jean Bernard Parr

# Between Fleet And Crookham

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr



# Billy Is A Grass

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Blue

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Bonsai

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

then, some day soon  
when the wind shakes  
and snatches at the car door  
and twirls the ghost of  
a shopping trolley across  
the tarmac floor, you  
remember that sapling  
the kids nearly broke making  
a path through to the  
gas station, moths to the neon  
the sweet counter, that platoon  
conscripted by mums  
to get the milk,  
the path shone in the rain  
a Boeing contrail undone  
like a ribbon of silk  
the little tree healed now  
look  
between windscreen lashes  
how graceful these

wind curved limbs  
this ballet of  
riot-bent branches  
it just goes to show  
it will come out alright  
if you leave things alone  
to take their chances

Jean Bernard Parr

# Bright Beach

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Brittany Ferry

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

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

there are children moiling  
for want of a plaything

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

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Canal At Dogmersfield July 2019

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

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

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

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

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

and there is no guessing then  
where, nuzzled by a caprice of wind  
the little raft of twigs will be

and again the rain, come to smack  
the broad docks, rain,  
summer sweet and no time now for clocks

Jean Bernard Parr



# Car Radio

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

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

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

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

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

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

with the radio on

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

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

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

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

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

A troupe of gipsy travellers  
fan out like lichen on a rock  
stoop for kindling,  
their wily dogs orbit with  
door mat hair, devoid of dread  
the women nurse a knot of tinsel red  
voice scraps, sharp angled

as the fluttering pennant  
at the clattering masthead.  
A skein of blue smoke unravels  
along the brooding shore  
and beyond, the islands bulk  
and take a breath for the next  
thousand years  
all this is here and near  
with the radio on

Jean Bernard Parr

# Chuckling Out The Sofa

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Colossus Found At Ilfracombe

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

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

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

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

if one day they dare uproot  
or some vanity crazed fool

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

interstellar space, show  
apostates everywhere, woman

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

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

above these facebook men  
minded I am, to set their  
vanities on fire, you can bet  
this goddess is here to stay

show you how to make war  
and make babies well

Jean Bernard Parr

# Dead Tree

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

this tree will not be less  
for loss of uprightness

Jean Bernard Parr

## Diva (1989)

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

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

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

There floating  
red-rimmed on the stage  
The death lamenting voice,  
ululating its  
fan of tragedy over us



like a space gun  
close the book,  
blow out the candle,  
ring the bell;  
I have excommunicated sorrow,  
commanded it to depart  
as I sit there beside you,  
wishing to be  
a machine, a man without a heart.

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

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

The unity of the choir annihilates my senses  
I am transported to a pastoral scene;

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Doctor

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



# Dodge City

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Down The Pub

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

Jean Bernard Parr

## Elfs' Jars

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Evening

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr



# Exodus

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

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Factory Settings

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

Jean Bernard Parr

## Fifth Column

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Fleeing

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Girl At Arrivals

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

arms at her sides  
uncluttered, unlike  
this story I made up

Jean Bernard Parr

# Glimmer

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

## Going To See The Chickens (Niort, France)

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

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

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

Now we don't talk



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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Gold In Gold

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Have You Seen!

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

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

shameless,  
undimmed-  
taunting  
coy constellations  
to make  
brighter pricks

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

Jean Bernard Parr

## Hayling Island (August 1958)

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

paints with bravura  
in a streak of gold  
a girl with a profile  
a figurehead, noble  
you could set in the bow  
and that was really  
my first epiphany  
and may well have been  
my last for all I know.

Jean Bernard Parr

# He Did The Tiles

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

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

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

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

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

through  
the aeroplane floor?

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# He Was A Boy

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

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

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



Always the boy  
that's what you remember  
he was always a boy  
who stood up straight  
the boy you could count on in a scrape

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Heron Creek

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# His Allotment Shed

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

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

The trim agent  
let herself in  
breaking a  
bright red  
teardrop nail  
trying the lock

her heels  
tacking down  
an archipelago  
of iron hard lino  
'there's no chain-  
this should go quick! '  
she scolded into  
her mobile phone

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Holiday Romance

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Hurting

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# I Am Not Very Brave

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# I Missed The Autumn

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



seeing the year out  
little mounds with  
furry tufts, they do  
better than me  
who missed the autumn  
my rage at corporations  
this blue barrelled rifle  
will rust in a cupboard  
when they've turned me to dust

Jean Bernard Parr

# I No Longer Am

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

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

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

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

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



# I Saw The Moon

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# I Told Her The Screwfix Catalogue Was My Favourite Book

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Incident At Cadoxton Station

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Incomprehension

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





## Incorrect Thought 26

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Infinity

While all around me  
Time proceeds  
My body slows with age

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

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

Of innocence and playful glee  
A life unfolds- infinity

Jean Bernard Parr

# Installation Of An Ikea Kitchen

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

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

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

Nov 2019

Jean Bernard Parr

# Island

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Jealousy

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

## John Jenkins' Garden (Aberdare)

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Junkshop Find

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr



# Keys

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Love Letter To The World (Niort August 2016)

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Mametz Woodjuly 1916 In Memory

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Man

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Meander Miranda

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Meditation

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

Jar of enlightenment!

Jean Bernard Parr

## Meditation On A Fake Rolex

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

morning with seagull witch-cackle  
heralds my clown life fairground trick  
among twigs of disturbed slumber  
there nests the gaping beaks of doubt  
you have to feed, no quiet for me  
I have transacted with Mephistopheles  
between lizard crawling out of slime  
to mans' crafting things divine  
wasn't there a Fall, somewhere inbetween?  
then sleep breaks like a cracking chain  
and there is the whore-watch from  
the night before, the fake Rolex

winks from stinking clothes  
that jumble the bedroom floor  
I lie alluvial and heavy limbed  
caked in a cloak of jurassic mud  
I, the final pawl to a little movement  
made by pauper children in grimy huts  
and all for them is unjust, so Greed  
the genie with pride and gluttony at his side  
pops up, belches a beelzebub of flies,  
laughs, and revels in my devil deals  
the tumblers spin, no gain, no gain, no gain  
come the night, out of unhallowed ground  
the gaunt children in thin pyjamas, hollow eyed  
pale procession under jittery yellow bulb  
each with a crown made of sharp escapement forks  
pinions and balance wheels- they go  
to joyless toil making the instrument  
that measure the drip drip drip of pain

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

Jean Bernard Parr



# Meditation On Montgomery Castle

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Migraine

I'm lying here in a darkened room  
where outside the rooftops glisten

slate grey clouds have come to listen  
to the sing song of the girl next door

thunder that trundles its grey bundle  
from Devon to here, looming

over fake squeals  
and squall-slapped washing

there is a slamming shut once more  
are all of us in various ways locked in?

I heard them come today to empty the bin  
come, and empty my head of everything

later a chaos of kids fresh out of school  
like roosting starlings line the road edge

waiting for a future to bid them cross  
windscreen wipers every other second

blink anew, theres a Christmas thats near  
and the present has wrapped a sense of loss

Jean Bernard Parr

# My Daughter

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

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# My Heart Is A School Out

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# My Mother As An Event Horizon

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



# My Old Filleting Knife

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

Jean Bernard Parr

## Near Goonhilly

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

Jean Bernard Parr



## Near To Marconi (At Sully Island)

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# News

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

Jean Bernard Parr

## Nighttime In Niort, France

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Nineteen Crows

nineteen crows in a field  
no corn  
no wind

Jean Bernard Parr

# No Man's Land

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# No Title

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Ode To An Airgun Pellet

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# On Finding A Stone Age Tool At Hitches Lane

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

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



Jean Bernard Parr

# On The Beach (After Storm Ophelia)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Ordering A Full Breakfast In The Age Concern Cafe

As I enter  
it smells of lightness  
of the thin boned and  
airship-ribbed  
Am I too heavy for this?  
I can feel the spaces  
vast like spaces between planets  
this grandmother and the  
toying child, a child comfortable  
with age, they are atolls  
haloed with whiteness and  
among this lightness I order  
a breakfast, slow in coming  
the heat to make it feels slow  
in coming among the icy  
whiteness, its as though  
the microwave is in the death zone  
of some howling peak  
where all are bone-chilled  
among the sparseness of  
nursed tea mugs eeking warmth  
into supplicating hands  
and I sense that I have interrupted  
some secret flow of thing  
there is something of heresy  
in ordering a full breakfast  
in the Age Concern café  
something that points to transgression  
the full breakfast might be too full  
among the Spartan outlay  
on pale tables where the poor  
test the rich tea biscuit for  
tensile weakness in an even  
weaker brew. I have transgressed  
some unknoweable law, I have  
failed to see how they struggle  
to produce a block of temperature  
the opposite of glistening ice  
in a far off country

tong- unloaded on a summer wobbled day  
there is stooping behind the counter,  
whispers, a convocation of sorts  
an offering up takes place and  
the white enamelled reliquary  
emits a bee drone and brings about  
a hush.

O the fullness of the full breakfast!  
expectancy of plenitude! How it  
weighs and drags me down  
to an ocean floor of guilt  
as I watch the child draw on notepad,  
poundshop I grasped in flytrap  
grip, flintlock knuckles white tipped  
and I can feel all around me the reluctance  
to release the temperature needed  
to heat food, the tables are full  
now of hands cupped around tepid teas  
and a woman rises and dumps a stack  
of slender books down on a bowed shelf  
'love stories...' she excuses with the  
faintest smile. Love stories! Kindling  
found in the wilderness for the heart  
that foundry-cast engine that needs restart  
I glimpse the compression  
of our collective sadnesses into a ball  
the span of eons shrunk to seconds  
then its bubble-gone, the full  
breakfast forgotten as in a little while  
with the stealth of melting ice, the bingo  
game begins, and I sit at my table,  
apostate, salt and pepper loom like  
cooling towers, I listen to the liturgy  
of numbers called and ask for forgiveness  
hoping for another epiphany someday.

Jean Bernard Parr

# Over The Points

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Painting A Sunset

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

(reporting back to base)  
that on his palette  
you will always find some red

Jean Bernard Parr

# Paper, Steel

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

Jean Bernard Parr



# Party Girls

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

then there are the party girls  
with pale unsunned and serious faces,  
smiles so faint  
hiding the all-knowing  
they have high collars and  
hawthorn sharp black heels  
they know how it all works  
the party girls underneath  
the handshakes and glad double hands  
that masks the broadsword grip  
they know all the angles the

red lipsticked party girls  
they spiral and wheel round the  
dressed down man of the people  
who beams like a lighthouse with  
his deep Florida tan  
the party girls do it  
because they can, they can

Jean Bernard Parr

# Predator

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

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

five minutes! comes the cry  
place your order  
then its outside to  
feed my fright  
to the mewling gull  
let the dog run down the street  
open wide that thermal collar  
and from wind-squeezed tears  
rock-cold diamonds form  
command the heart  
as kids pour out  
and start to holler,  
under this cold blue sky

follow the meandering  
vapour trail, see it  
eagle sharp, and in fine detail

Jean Bernard Parr

# Red

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

Jean Bernard Parr

## Requiem 2

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

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

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

then smooth  
with a natural glow

Jean Bernard Parr

# Rigging The Mirror

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

Jean Bernard Parr



# Road Accident

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Rocks That Fall

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Scorched

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Seti

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

Jean Bernard Parr

## Shared Hills

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

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Sharpshooter

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Spider Hotel (Lampoon On The Labour Leadership Contest 2015, Uk)

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

On the other side  
of the singularity  
We are accustomed  
At Spider Hotel

To welcome delegates  
When they arrive early  
Nothing is too much trouble  
We aspire to standards  
Of service to be proud  
Our facilities  
Have something for all  
And tonight we present  
The Spider Ball.

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

Jean Bernard Parr



# Supermoon 2016

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Supernova

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

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Target Shooting

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Tell Me

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Ten Bears

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Austere

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Bitch

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Blue Ikea Bag

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





# The Broken Umbrellas

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

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

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

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

we die in the gutter  
in a world full of noise  
We, the broken umbrellas

Will rise up again  
avenge this ignoble fate  
the common man  
we must learn to hate  
we shall choose privilege  
and royalty, stay behind  
in limousines  
and keep the crooked  
civil servant dry  
in ministerial corridors  
we will decipher where  
deep echoes hollow  
out caves to follow  
lispings conversations  
and near hatstands  
louchly propped  
reap careless  
and discarded sounds  
know what goes on  
above and below  
give away secrets  
to foreign powers,  
only shelter  
the city slick  
the actress and  
filthy rich boy  
who rings her bell  
help Lucifer  
to stay dry in Hell  
smoothly open with a click  
keep from sun and rain  
the tyrant and dictator  
drug lord, torturer  
and humble street corner hood  
all these will feel  
our cool thin winged embrace  
the only way  
to get understood

we are going to get even  
make sure no one  
gets to heaven  
that the sickly child  
stays unwell.  
We, the broken umbrellas  
will see you all in hell  
the broken umbrellas  
We are the broken umbrellas

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Cage

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

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

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

Now is the time to set yourself free  
To feel moondust between your toes  
To have a bypass in your head  
Belong to a more primitive nation  
Go on a vacation with an idea  
that you can sit on your shoulder,  
Soon, you will nurse a cageful  
of prowling thoughts  
Then do like Superman,  
and with your eyes  
Move that boulder.



# The Dear Departed

they don't talk about  
the dear departed  
never do they crop  
up in conversation  
it makes you think  
did they really know  
each other those two?

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

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

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

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

witters on about

computer scams

traffic jams

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

on the cards, something

Jim always said, or Fred

no Day of the Dead

or firecracker skull-grins

in the street, the best here is

pilgrimage to car wash

once a week

Jean Bernard Parr



# The Hard Stare

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Kid On Tv

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Last Supper Of The Radiologists

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

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

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

the canteen ladies they dole it out,  
the lugubrious beans and Jurassic sausages  
with meteoroid of stuffing  
I am grateful for the last supper  
I sit here reading New Scientist  
specifically 'What is Thought? '  
the light slices down as they come in

They are twelve, exactly twelve,  
and their radiation badges make it clear  
there is one with bunched black hair, tied back neat  
Judas Iscariot and Jesus are the same person...  
I saw it right there, like cable intertwined  
just as Stephen Hawkin and James Hartle married  
quantum mechanics with general relativity  
'When a particle travels from A to B  
it doesn't take a simple path, but passes  
along two or more paths simultaneously,  
interfering with itself at the other end,  
as if it was a wave'

As if it were a wave.

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Maker

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Maker Of Crowds

Marc turns his hand to anything  
and through my windscreen  
I see him bowed over a cone  
of sparks, breathtaking, always  
this metier shower that makes  
dark all. No pall, these particles  
are so excited, and invite that  
you follow eachs' story before  
wonder bleaches into each life, the  
sad quenching, look! Metal cloud of  
reddy flies, each has life so bright  
before rebound to extinction-more  
follow, and you are wondering  
why the fountain should stop, stop  
the bright bouncing, fizzing spark  
so dead now, so invisible and  
indivisible, and it is here  
that I turn off the pitter patter  
of traffic news and muse on these  
new found possibilities;  
the big small and the small  
big.  
What star doesn't live its eons so  
large in that dark ocean and one day  
to glow, glimmer and die. And so do  
we, trooping up to play, gesticulate,  
swoon, all  
so very soon

Jean Bernard Parr

# The New Toyota

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

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr



# The Reunion

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Somme

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Sun Is In His Motor

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Sunday Boys

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

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

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

its a matter of pride  
when out for a ride  
that you get a nod  
from the Sunday boys  
that the bike has a look  
Italian or Belgian  
a machine ridden  
on the Tour de France  
they can tell at a glance  
when something is  
out of place  
the peleton of  
the Sunday boys.

They are on you  
swarm,  
clicking  
wheel-swishing  
then gone  
a commuter  
with ankle clips and bag  
is a creature from outer space  
nor will straight handlebars  
get a nod  
its the nod that counts  
the nod from the Sunday boys  
that says you're in not out.

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Tin Door

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# The Waterfall

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

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

First there is  
a soft heart drum  
birdcall and something  
like a jet plane roar

you get to a clearing  
and all that white  
is tumbling down  
in a frame of green  
suddenly you see,  
you're on your own  
seeing what everyone  
has seen before

Jean Bernard Parr



# Them Dictionary Blues

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

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

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

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

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

paper and wood

Jean Bernard Parr

# There Might Be Boats

I wish I could have  
woken William today  
Bill, I would have said,  
get a load of this  
here we are at last mate  
flying above the mash potato  
heaven cant be far from here  
he turned to me and said, then, this  
woman looks up from her Kindle,  
smiles at William, the sort of smile  
people have for people who are  
out to lunch or a bit doolalee, but  
William doesnt notice he is  
just looking  
at the dark blue above  
and trying to guess how much further  
heaven is  
suddenly  
there is a hole in the cloud  
and you can see a beach and as we had  
only just taken off moments before  
the woman  
got her Kindle out, you could  
see the people  
all the specks and the flecks in water  
flecks that might be boats

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# There Was A Sky

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# There's A Man

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Things That Just Happen

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Those Benches You Don't Use

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Ticking

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr



## Torture Of The New (Memory Of Avignon 1958)

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

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

But lust starts to perish  
at the first sight  
of blemish, the hard won  
prize tarnishes  
excitement dims  
and you return the find  
to the drawer  
with other things

far better to order  
a museum in the mind  
deep down you know  
that worldly pile  
will grow a whirl  
of worry and  
destruction in a while

Jean Bernard Parr

# Travel

what men do is  
worry their time zones  
as the spider weaves its web  
because it must

the cat leaves a paw print  
on a roman tile and flexes  
her sylvestrian stealth  
over the weightless sparrow

and one day we saw  
a footprint on the moon  
etched in disturbed grey dust

what will they make of us  
that came before, or of  
that armoured boot  
and did we really get further  
than our own front door?

Jean Bernard Parr

## Untitled (Written For Fjf 1994)

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Wanderer (To A Meteorite Found)

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Wasteland

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# We, The Cold War Kids(Memories Of Rheindahlen)

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Weathergirl

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

Jean Bernard Parr



# Where Are The Hearths

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# You Dont Need Grammar

They say walk before run  
but its not true

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

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

if you get that feeling  
just get down to it soon

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

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

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

Jean Bernard Parr

# Zen

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

Jean Bernard Parr