

19.9b

Swoop

Dylan Harris



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Potato Press

by Dylan Harris
4 anticipating the metaverse, 3 nation six dog, 2 discard

chapbooks

20.0: *r* dye-de-ho, *q* antwerp, *p* tension nitro ego, *o* church is dangerous
vital, *n* tin rush, *m* the A rush, *l* an engineering rush (ii), *k* Miss
Demeanour, *j* flock state, *i* be infinity, *h* Namings, *g* nation six dog, *f*
uncivil law, *e* dead write, *d* chase chase, *c* an engineering rush (i), *b* a
much for we, *a* The Joy Of Tax

19.9: *c* Inn, *b* Swoop, *a* An Ode To The A14

19.8: *c* Rose, *b* Hymnen, *a* Darmstadt

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(Specify “19.9b” in the subject line of any email)
Recitals of some of these poems may be found online

Poems

Swoop

Home Town

Her Catching Eyes

Bright

Swoop

1.

Drunk?

No, I wasn't really drunk:
a single pint, an unfed mind,
made the world sparkle
just a bit.

The Theatre?

Yes, I'd mentioned Shakespeare:
you know, the usual
"would she be interested?":
a corner in an email.

See her there?

No, I hadn't expected to see her,
it was her day off.
Mind you,
I'm often there,
that time.

I had to ask.

I didn't get the choice,
I just watched myself,
engaging.

In a week.

It was fully booked.
You're right:
it seems a century.

Yes,

all the usual clichés,
but for me,
right now,
those clichés live.

2.

Swung:
my mood has swung
to heavy-eyed unhappiness.

Once we've seen the play
"she'll stay with an old friend":

not
to let
the chance
of us
establishing.

And, so foolishly,
I said some words of hope,
just once, elsewhere.

Now chatterers,
they swoop this privacy
and incomprehend so perfectly
they could be the pissing-in-the-wind parents
of a children's film.

I fear their rumours spread
like hay fever
on a summer breeze.

I'll call her,
hear if—
just hear.

3.

I was stupid in shock.

Her girlish giggles,
her “hold me, kiss me, fuck me” giggles:
I am a serial fool.

Her voice turned away
as I exhaled stupidity.

4.

The night was darkening.

He said to me,
"She's my girlfriend,
look after her,
she's scared of walking home alone,
walk with her".

With these words,
my madness flew.

So I walked with her,
and she talked,
she talked a never-ending harmony of fear.

And there was something of these darkening streets,
something of the light
too weak to illuminate where my footstep rang,
illuminating nothing.

And this darkening infection,
it was invading me,
it was riding on her voice's chattering fear.

And I rode as though my undefended self,
a reeling self, looked up,
and saw the claws of madness dive,
a dive to snatch existence,

as we walked along the darkening.

I fought,
for an hour,
I fought.
I gave my sex
to stay.

And had I lost,
had I fought the easy fight,
who would I be?

5.

She might have said:

“I do so love these fireworks,
sparkles of bright moment,
an insistence in the sky,
flowering.

Then the pub,
friends,
the usual walk home.

And a familiar stranger passes on,
his eyes clutch madness
as though it were an overcoat
in a bitter wind.

We slow,
we gather time around us.

Then, in a luminous dark
on the edge of lamp-post light,
a something on the ground
breathes.

It is that madman,
a man collapsed,
shivering in the summer night.

And his eyes open anger,
and the street light
loses the power to form.

And it seems to me
he has a need
to strike his agony out,
to find its poisoning heart,
but that dark agony, devious,
telescopes his sight away
to those who flaunt existence,
coincidence.

And I know
as a bigot dare not look inside himself
to see his source of death,
so a madman, insane, cannot.

So he attacks when his agony tolls,
and his agony tolls at us.

And in this tidal darkness
I hear him howl his agony howl, a migraine howl,
and my instinct grips my reason dead,
and I run.

But his howls retreat beyond the distance
to someone else's problem,
and I relax,
and I, alone,
I let my pride
walk me slowly home."

And this is what she might have said,
but she won't.

The bastard,
he:
me,
I had a knife.

Home Town

The evening fog
glows headlight rushing white
in serene yellow streetlight.

Ice forms.

The town,
yet knowing of traffic,
does not hear a between-lorry silence
fill, like a continuity error,

with the engine down of a slowing car,
turning, sloping, stopping
at an ordinary motel.

A cat that doesn't care
cosies in a window
of homely light,
watching the movement.

No dog barks
its unnecessary warning.

Even the wind is still.

The visitor,
leaving his fussing car,
walks to the motel door.

Thin,
thirty or forty,
straight black hair,
a tidy working suit,
a familiar coat,

he has the stride of tired confidence,
the caution of strange surroundings.

Inside this mock–welcoming place,
he shares mock jokes,
and makes mock laughter,
and buys his night’s
mock home.

He walks austere white corridors
on cold grey carpet
and retreats beyond
a mock–locked door.

He can’t relax;
he can’t watch those television programmes
so familiar elsewhere,

so routine decides
to wash and bathe,
dry and shave,
brush and comb,
and sleep an early night.

*Its great to have a coo and gurgle now
and then; although thank God that I can give
'em back to mum if they should scream and howl,
or stink and do what babies do. To live
a life of dreadful luck from careless thrill,
nine months of getting fat, and growing fright
of things gone wrong, then hospital who fill
you up with drugs and that's if things go right.
I wouldn't have the chance of looking good
for months, then there's the bites and nipple strife,
a smelly child, a screaming stink, that could
not do the simplest thing, and grief for life.
A soul that's caged, there's no way that's for me,
I don't want such responsibility.*

Awoken by the morning light,
“coffee,
where's coffee?

Oh God,
instant sawdust”,
and long life thumb—pot milk
as sharp as dreaming
someone else's memories.

Fog,
the weatherman gloats
to stop the country's rush,
and ice, the weatherman adds:
a threat.

Having no urgency,
and it's too early for kitchen staff,
the visitor wanders,
opening doors,
finding reflections
in the dance hall

*His catching eyes attract as fire in hearth,
alighting on myself a burning lust;
the pub, the people, places, all of Earth,
vanish. I smile. He smiles. My eyes, in trust,
down–turning, blur. I know his psyche hums,
his eyes are bright with life itself. This dare
I'll take, and him as well: he walks, he comes
to me. And I, I wait for him; to where
we meet and find that private space. His hand,
I shall entice to want, a need to touch,
adore my female style. We talk a grand
unworded stream of wish. In need, as much
in me, I find I dance and flaunt my curves,
and taunt myself as all his life deserves.*

Eaten, filled,
the visitor,
he walks the town,
and finds

architectural finesse subjugated
by I'm here me-too shout-out signs,
by redbrick and rotting frame,
by rude commercial of the crude.

Yet the town's nature survives
above the abject word of merchant promise,
in patterned brick, and chimney stack.

Less crass, a low line bungalow,
an architecture built to say
"honest, its going to be alright",
the doomed assurances of a surgery.

*The doctor said my body's going wild,
the safest thing to do is to abort:
if I did that, I'd never have a child
again. He told me this is what I ought
to do, and so I told him where to go.
I want to take this chance of giving birth;
he said he thought that's what I'd say. I know
it is a risk: some mothers bleed to death
because of what I've got. He said he'll keep
an eye on me. It's strange: I feel I'm like
the rope they strain in tugs of war—I need
to have my child, I want to live a life—
yet I'm relaxed. I've made my choice. I'll ride
these rolling die. God knows I have to try.*

Newspaper scanned, forgotten,
magazine thumbed and empty,
crossword incomplete,
the visitor drives.

And of complete control
stops sharp
as a young child,
who's learnt the how
but not yet the where
of running,
skelters across the road

to be gathered
by her chasing,
fearing,
father.

Sweat.
No blood.

A moment crawls.

Still seated,
the visitor
hears a tyre howl,
a metallic slap,
and is kicked,

and his car
which had stop
now drifts
a helpless drift
towards the gathered child.

The father moves,
my God, they move.
Safe. They are safe.

Stillness.

And shock continues
as a young
thunders out
of the ego–music
lout–mobile,
abuse exploding
anger–faced
arms streaming mania.

A policeman comes,

with strength to quell a dozen tanks, with build
to match, a matchstick man, the constable,
a man to glare the sun back down, he comes
to be control. No dreams, no doubt, the now
of am, in small, in slight, in uniform,
he leads the calm he is:

he,
who walks with Gods who can't exist,
a man the town has never seen before,
nor ever will again.

With eyes, all bow,
though none know why.

The youth: silent.
No words are said,
for now he knows,
without that shunt
he would have broken
the motherless child.

The visitor,
invaded by relief,
feels triumph
like hot water
washing his soul.

He leaves
shaken,
safe,
into the fog,
into the hills,
unseen.

Only the birds hear
the sound of the driven

finger
snap
mute.

Her Catching Eyes

Her catching eyes attract as fire in hearth,
alighting on myself a burning lust;
the pub, the people, places, all of Earth,
vanish. She smiles. I smile. Her eyes, of trust,
down–turning, shine. Her face, her features, glow
like understanding God exists. This dare
I'll take, and she as well: I rise and go
to her. And she, she waits for me; to where
we meet and find that private space. My hand,
it has a need, without command, to touch,
caress her female style. We talk a grand
unworded stream of wish. Of heat, and much
in guile, she moves her dancing female curves,
and taunts herself as all that life deserves.

My lust, a violating fire of force,
can burn from silent calm in dark forlorn
to whims of torment striking out. A course
to deepest guilt, perhaps, but I was born
this way, and love this way, I must. That rare
courageous one, I seek, a phoenix from
the gulls, who gains her smaller death in fear
and suffered flames: we'll share our burning wrong.
But here, with catching eyes, I fear my lust
unchecked could cause a grievous hurt; a bird
of fire is rare indeed. Alight, I must
infer her beaten path. I'll risk her spurred
to disappointed euphemistic hate;
its worse to curse a gull the phoenix fate.

So evolution's gift to me is like
mass market beer, unsubtle tasteless flow
of fizz to rue the morning after, spiked
with dreadful chemistry to lay me low
for years. Well, balls to that, I'll go without,
it isn't worth the grief. There's better things
to do with life, of that I have no doubt:
create with deep technologies, or swing
a nifty business deal, reflect it all
in art, explore the world around us, look
to God's creation, see that life is small
and weak, relax alone and read a book.
A shallow life, a loneliness, the head
the only thing. The empty heart is dead.

Bright

For Matt Bright

This is how it was:

work
exhaustion,

leaving
my brain
strained

like a cup
of stewed tea,

and I'm sitting amongst friends
and Bright words dazzle wit around me:
and I can see shock ideas sparking from mind to mind,
and I can see the air bright as each temple burns,

as I fight
to raise
my words
beyond
the dull.

Its like
trying
to make
espresso

using
dust.

That was me, tonight:
dull, someone kept saying.
She was right.

