

Day 10

Bristol

Wednesday 19th July 1843

Wa-Set

3 (Athyr). Akhet. VI. 7 Thutmose I

*Oh, of all the money e'er I had –
I spent it in good company...*

Th'horizon rent –
it became fire-red.

*And all the harm I have ever done –
alas, it was to none but me...*

Th'ellipses of the night –
they became dawn.

*And all I've done
for want of wheat?*

In flamelight, licking o'er –
emergent present.

*To mem'ry, now,
I can't recall...*

Rise, resplendent
resurrection.

*So, fill to me the parting glass –
goodnight, and joy be to you all.*

Sunrise o'er the city of the sceptre; dawn about the fort upon the chasm.

*So, fill to me the parting glass
and drink a health, whate'er befalls.
Then gently rise and softly call:
"Goodnight, and joy
be to you all."*

Crowned in matted-wisps, the disk turned sphere 'n chased the dark unknown; head-first into life, it held its breath. Suspended 'tween the earth 'n sky, cradled by 'Gyptian hands, t'was covered in the blood of coiled Mehen.

The mother stood on bricks, her squat form held on either side by th'hands of Hathor 'n Taweret; of neighbour women. With the wind of Amun soothing; with Bes keeping harm at bay; with Khnum waiting at his potter's wheel with health: the midwife crouched, her Isis-arms held out to catch the falling life, and, in the cool upon the roof, guided the son.

Bearing the sun between her horns,
Hathor rejoiced.

"Here – use this."

The young woman – her em'rald eyes still wild, unlike her hair that strained beneath its taming cords – took the flint knife.

And as the child was held in th'Isis-arms of the midwife, the young woman cut through
th'occluding tether.

Above primord'yul Nun,
her chaos-waters abyss-deep,
the Bennu heron heralds
imminent life.

The babe is placed upon a stone;
Bennu alights the rock –
a shrieking cry shatters
the timeless silence.

The blueprint lay – conceived of fearless, 'maginative minds that see the chasmic spanse of chaos
reaching t'ward them, calling: "Come." – in its womb of forged gestation, engineered b'side
channelled waters, fully formed 'n manifest through phys'cal labour.

A mass of colour, crowds, 'n weather bright'ning 'tween the stutt'ring of the clouds who kept
their scattered watch o'er boats, 'n flags, 'n people.

Bonnets, brollies, bowler hats, 'n Oxford Commas came en masse to marvel at the steamship's
floating-out.

Ribbons, flowers, banners, boys 'n girls of sep'rate schools: they all did line the quayside
stretches, streets, 'n cobbled harbour-corners.

Men 'n women climbed the backs 'n the edges of the wooden-slatted stands erected for to give a
risen view.

The monumental boat was birthed unto the floating harbour of the former second city of the
empire. Small pilot boats 'n ridden rafts threw cheers toward the hull, their voices smashing gladly
'gainst the iron.

There were royal visitors en route. The men who built the behemoth sat arranged along a scaffold
in the dry dock.

"I watched my love go floating out..."

"At summer's height! At summer's height!"

"... to sail 'pon hist'ry's waves, no doubt."

"At summer's height at the harbour!"

"To cheers she left th'dock where we met..."

"At summer's height! At summer's height!"

"... 'n dreamt of journ'ying she'd do yet."

"At summer's height at the harbour!"

"She left me on the scaffold, torn."

"At summer's height! At summer's height!"

"Our time – at end; my soul – forlorn."

"At summer's height at the harbour!"

"Our time together? Only t'was..."

"At summer's height! At summer's height!"

"... to realise our parting love."

"At summer's height at the harbour!"

"Creation's pangs – inev'table – ..."

"At summer's height! At summer's height!"

"... are sorrows welcomed; pain joyful."

"At summer's height at the harbour!"

"And so, to cheers, she's leaving now..."

"At summer's height! At summer's height!"

"... to meet the future at her bow."
"At summer's height at the harbour!"
"I watched my love go floating out..."
"At summer's height! At summer's height!"
"... to sail 'pon hist'ry's waves, no doubt."
"At summer's height at the harbour!"

I watched them sitting side-by-side:
(The Aten peaked; the Aten fell.)
the Nile; the Avon; th'girl 'n guy.
(The final scene of their stories...)

"Describe to me the setting I'm within."

Delightedly, she danced the purest smile upon her features. Focusing her sight until it filled the all around her, her eyes of blazing green took in the harbour.

"Your river lies calm – as little motion as the sky that glows with fire to the west, yet blackens, bleeding blue, up from the east. A wharf of unwashed stone... There are no reeds to stand amphib'yus. Obelisks of ochre brick, flattened at their peak, send smoke of earth unnatural; houses, across, stand t'gether. There are monuments among them – tall, spiking spires. The poles of resting ships lap at their heights."

"And the sun?"

"The Aten looks toward the woods for dying. But..."

"?"

"... a cold, out fire... no ash with which to mark the uncarved walls..."

"Stone, too, passes o'er eventually."

She saw, now, from her perch upon a stone outside the city, its crowned, New Kingdom glory full of fyor'yus sound 'n life, that, across from black 'n green, across the Nile, beyond the land of ghosts 'n tombs 'n cemeteries, of the netcher wraiths 'n daemons, where the hyaenas 'n jackals stalk the lionesses for to scavenge food, the sun disk was not dying but becoming, there, a spirit w'thin the haze of the horizon of the land of Egypt, and, unable, now, to reconnect her vision to the spirit who, in far off time 'n future lands, had found her in his mind to make some sense of sens'ry chaos 'n to calm the eddied-turbulence, its slipstreams searing violent, she did search the soundscape, chasing down the voice that vanished into an incomprehensibility 'n morphed into utterances unknowable, ungently trailing dusk – movement in the amber that the sun wrote 'cross the sky; the earth reached for to read the mortal verse; the walls on which her childhood's told shed layers like papyrus, their disintegration dawned, springing fertility from virginascant ground; she felt herself called to approach the flooded river; she felt the now-famil'yur pain within her body.

As she moved, her naked feet finding the dust-dirt-sandy earth to bring her westward from the walls of Wa-Set city, he watched a cormorant, its wingspan soft 'n silent in the sky as sails to dry their canvas thoughts upon the wind.

He looked into the skyline of his present 'n his past – a fixture of his future; of his self.

It leant upon his lap, the notebook – closed – , with its top against the grainsome wood; the leaves of layered mind showed folds of thought of saypyence etched. The hieroglyphic voices of millen'ya past sing human; their hearts blaze true within the minds that meet them. Were that notebook found mere cent'ries on – translatable; pristine – would any of its rhythms strike famil'yur beats?

Did any of its chords meet minds divine?

She turned her face to the cool north wind at the edges of the red-dyed water; her womb was soothed of its grief as the Nile lay sediment upon her ankles. Torn from the surface of the bed 'n

stripped away to the sound of sistra rattling rhythms of the raw, re-virgined ground, mirroring the blood along her thigh.

The beads on her wrist did shake when she did lift her arm to reach out.

"There, at the edges of the black-green land: she rises, then, to guide me through Iteru."

The Avon, floating in its muddy height, did ripple 'long its tideless surface.

A sycomore ascended in the duskligh.

The inner bark of yellow gave the sprouting trunk its golden sheen to 'lluminate the earth, backlit by th'Aten's crashing waves. Three metres tall – now four; now five – the trunk writhed up and took on female form: the hips of bearing breadth; the laden-breast above. In the dark'ning haze of heated air it arched its back 'n branched, reaching up 'n out with golden arms – ten high; eleven; twelve. A milky sap that fell 'n hit the ground did cause a floral growth about the rooted base, that now, in pap'ry strips, was dressed – the orange-green of bark climbed high to clothe the naked shape 'n coil its arms in thick enrapture at its apex.

The girl,

she moved her feet.

The water lapped about her knees.

A canopy caressed the air in reaching out 'n up, its branches spreading wide with dark-green leaves a-spiralled 'round the twigs 'n branchlets bearing, now, its flow'ring fruit of figs of ripened red; the beauty of its head of hair complete.

The young woman who watched/The child who saw grasped at her own, undoing all the ties that bind 'n setting free her frayful flowerings – dishevelled, dark, 'n matted, matching Hathor's hair for beauty and the sycomore for tangled, turning tresses.

The water lapped

about her skirted waist.

Her feet: they fumbled; steadied.

Down from the spreaded branches came the cobras – four 'n slow 'n long as half the trunk they moved down t'ward the ground. One left her line of sight to watch the west, as th'others settled on their coils to stand, their hooded heads held fixed 'n fast – the sentinels looked out to each horizon on the map, cardin'ly guarding for the night of lightless, witching hours at hand.

Beneath her feet, the sediment – it shifted.

She fell into the riv'ring tears of Isis.

About her primal movement, currents carried off her blood.

She tried to rise again and died.

Somewhere to the west, within a gleann green, clean valley slopes abound with sides concave, a keening grew from out a veiled face, grey-cloaked with dishevelled strands of fire.

Haggard and a beauty supernatural: the cry of the lady of the fairy mound was carried on the ocean of the air. Mingled with the sound of seagull calls and the telling bells of Redcliffe, he heard it faint, that caoineadh; a note repeated 'til it sounded out it's ninth.

In the warmth of the entrance of the July evening's p'rade about the echoes of the sunset, he brought his gaze back down upon the surface of the floating harbour.

He was sat atop a pile of lumber, his boot-soles flat against the cobble. Each elbow lay behind each knee, hands gently o'erlapping, their fingers tracing veins 'tween wrist and knuckle.

To himself 'n the river 'n the gull (in feath'ry flux from grey to white) he sighed:

"And so it ends, from start to finish, as found in writing."

Between the sky 'n the river 'n the earth 'n the stars, he'll live/he lived/he's living.

The day let go its twilight grip and ended.