

Floating On The Avon  
By The Floodplains Of The Nile

By William Altoft

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*We live  
in a tide-swept inlet,  
floating, flung.  
In such a world, why cling to  
collections of poems?*

– Izumi Shikibu

*Coffined thoughts around me,  
in mummycases, embalmed in spice of words.  
Thoth, god of libraries, a birdgod, mooneycrowned.  
And I heard the voice of that Egyptian highpriest.  
In painted chambers loaded with tilebooks.*

– James Joyce, Ulysses

*Then we would write the beautiful letters of the alphabet  
invented by smart foreigners long ago  
to fool time and distance.*

– Grace Paley, Friends

*Like Memory,  
she is time's truant,  
shall take you by the hand...*

– Hart Crane, Powhatan's Daughter

*These sage scribes...  
Departing life has made their names forgotten;  
writings alone make them remembered.*

– Hieratic Papyri

*Where do we go from here?  
Though we might get lost in the layers...  
Still, we can't stay here.*

– Ieru, The Floating Harbour

Sunrise

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

Day 7

Day 8

Day 9

Day 10

A note on the dating system of Ancient Egypt

Month <i>Number in season (Name).</i>	Season <i>Name.</i>	Day <i>Number in month.</i>	Year of reign & Ruler <i>Number Name</i>
1 (Pakhon). [Pakhon is the first month.]	Shemu.	XI.	14 Rameses II [14 <sup>th</sup> year of his reign.]
3 (Athyr).	Akhet.	III.	I Tutankhamun

## Sunrise

Mist above the water, and all is rather still.

The pre-dawn echoes *Ghosts* with toil on sand *Heave!* hands coal-blackened *Steel* and strained *Straw- 'n mud- made bricks* hard, calloused *Call out...* creased by toil on iron *Strained* and splint'ring wood *Hewed-stone cascades* cascading, pulled, and lifted *Toil!* onto vessels metal, rolling wheels that move *Lift!* upon sleepers, rolling logs that carry columns *Coal* and barrels bringing *Screech!* *Undulation...* through the baboon barks: echoes wisping through the whispered wind; whistling with the currents 'neath the clouds.

The night heads west, decorated with the fires of the past.

The sunrays gaze through time and space from beyond the edges of the turning world; riverside ringing tells and tolls for the chorus emanating from the reeds.

Cranes a-crest the banks attest to the readiness of all for morning.

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

Day 1  
*Bristol*  
Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> February 1842  
*Wa-Set*  
2 (Mekhir). Peret. III. 6 Thutmose I

A boat went past.  
It glided by, atop the river.  
It took advice from the current and the breeze and compromised a little in the sunlight.  
A bird alit along – allegorically – the ripples of its wake, preening with a purpose, picking with its beak, indifferent to the counsel of the elements.

The New Cut – man-made meander – split the south of the city from its core, beginning to show again its brown, sloped banks, the water falling from its peak of fifteen metres. The tide taken from the weir to the basin, the natural course of the river lay retired. Level and still it stayed, keeping England's industry afloat.

Celt, Dane, and Norman walked as one along the tidal stretch. Irish eyes, composite tongue, Norse beard kept back by razor – Albion blood's an isle within the world a-spanning ocean. Grey as the sky, the young man's cap kept clean his brow and forehead, as the dust of dead, time-distant plants made dark his face and hands.

A dock worker of the late revolution, somewhen between the slave trade and the Blitz, he was born before the winter flew in the year of 1817.

He met the city in his fourteenth year, walking into madness on the marsh. From Caegin's settled meadow to the un-housed south-east hills, he took the Roman road through Brislington, stopping in the agri-fields at times to eat 'n lie 'n linger.

Black smoke, deep orange flame: he skirted a riot's edge, the starlight strong with all its fire, finding his way along the cut he came to know, sleeping by a woodpile in a shipyard.

Standing in that shipyard near the tipping point to afternoon, four years on he felt the harbour home.

Staggered stacks of wooden planks, grain playing out across each end, did mediate between the links of iron and the coiled rope. Palpably weighing down upon the stone that's cracked with green of moss and muddy craters, the material he navigated.

Rubbed-brick reliefs abound around wrought-iron brought to build – in sheets; in poles; in load-bearing columns, fixtures, posts – a frame to tent material 'n heaps of coal 'n barrels from the dampening the rain would bring, fleeing from the clouds.

He ofttimes took to wand'ring where he knew nobody'd be (until the dawn broke for th'following day and razed to blue the night-time).

The wooden sleepers  
and the tracks:  
a stream so gilt with lily pads.

The sleeping cranes:  
the peaceful willows  
wand'ers sit beside.

The rows of storehouse  
sheds: a rockface  
painted o'er with vines.

The peace of  
solitude in  
human nature.

One black and beaten boot found footing on the stony edge, while th'other ventured further, finding perch atop the train track. Moving not, the gravel was yet buffeted by a low wind-stream that crashed against flared denim in its passage.

That wind-stream rose and split and fell and coursed past lettered-sheds, lifting up, by one called M, three leaves who'd outlived autumn.

Were he working, left he'd head to the dry dock and its site of grand construction where he'd, among many, bring to life the steam ship.

"To the steam ship *Gert Biggun!*"

"And ta th'tiny man with the biggest plans!"

*\*cheers and raised arms\**

"Wait!"

*\*suspended drinks\**

"And to us – to those here, no longer here, and those who won't be here by the time it's launched to water."

*\*sound suspended\**

"We couldn't of ever conceived of it, but he damn sure couldn't of built it!"

*\*movement, cheer, and drinking\**

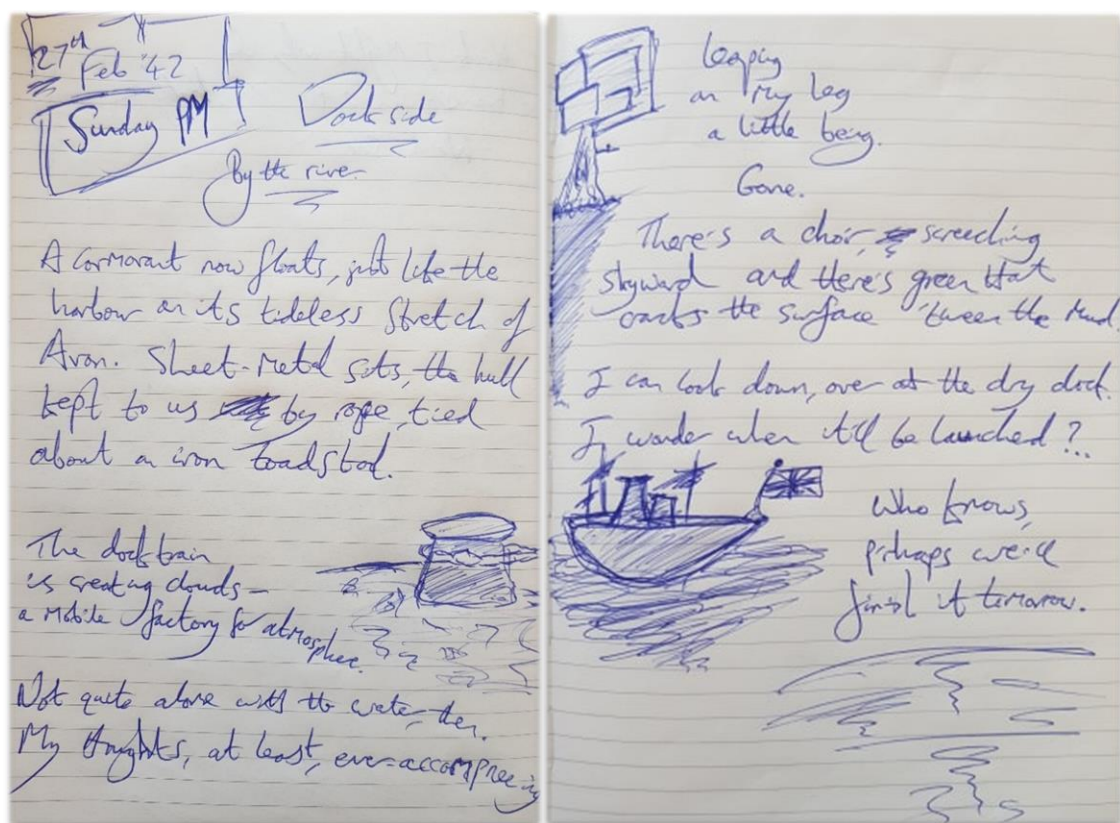
Thought-fed smile; memory-moved muscle.

He rolled up t'the elbow the loose shirt sleeves, too short to place the cuffs over the wrist joint, and folded them again a little further, little tighter in an attempt to keep them rolled a little longer.

The colour of his shirt had been determined by the reader. He let it be and wore it all the same.

On a single shoulder slung, his creased, torn, and cloth-made bag contained all the essentials: a pad of blank/of ink-filled paper, and a fountain pen filled blue. To wash away the morning's coal he splashed on stagnant water, collected on a barrel top throughout the rainsome weekend.

Drying in the cold, cold air, the price of the clean was biting. He sat down on the stony edge, both boots planted on a sleeper, and put track-side the cloth-made bag and took out glyphed-papyrus.





Notebook re-stored, he stood and paced across the tracks and rightward, stopping at a metal frame that perched edgeside and rested – its chain retracted, its head bowed, its skeleton stressless. He placed himself between it and the water and the city, sitting down to click his right-hand wrist.

He drew up against the metal frame, legs out over the edge – suspended in a stretch, then dropped to hang there, 'bove the water.

Inhaling gradually, his chest he filled with wintry afternoon, pressing back into the crane that dried its wings and watched her, with her cheeks puffed out, marking in the sand the seconds that she held her breath, until she startled it by breaking.

PUHHHHHH

HHAAAAHH

PRPRPRPRPRRRPRPPUUHHH

“Yes!”

Rising – only to a crouch – she placed and pressed her finger to the sand off to the side and circled 'round her record marks. The crane – its legs amongst the reeds – searched for something else to look at, as, less red-faced and proudly chirping, the girl squat-walked about.

The re-born Ra – resplendent – rode the barge that took the solar disc, heading toward the shore of night and the passage of the underworld.

Pushing the world away below her, she stood and showed her features to the sky; below, the sky saw, coming closer, eyes as green as the inundated plains. Her skin? The sand, yet darker still. Her hair? As rope that runs through coal. Matted, dishevelled, it moved a little as she shook her head.

“Not much time.”

Her ragged top with its patterned hem had a hood only half attached; on either side of a sewn line of symmetry, two abstract trees grew, painted. A skirt (of sorts), bare legs and feet: with hands on hips she stood between the city and the river Nile. Tributes of white and blue lay silt at the feet of Egypt, issued forth from the sky and the dark dwelling place no-one knows.

Incontemplatable, mysteriously manifest, and tireless.

The bird which watched still dried its wings, feet amongst the reeds.

She met the city when she met the world – unaware that one was not, in fact, the other. A child of few years when the morning and the evening star merged in the current ruler in the Great House, she grew with the expansion of the Karnak Temple, sprouting with the columns of the Hall.

To her back the buildings ebbed and flowed: thin strips, broad clusters, 'circling lakes of muddy, marshy vegetation. Blocks of diff'ring dimensions – stepped, walled, and windowed – made a mud-brick map of workshops, chapels, warehouses, shrines, and homes for rich and poor. West of the alleyway adorned with sphinxes – hundreds of them either side – the river ran *lunu*, *Iteru* as the girl walked to the pathway from the bank.

Horus hovered high and scanned the North African nation – nephew to the chaos keeping order. Ibis flocked between the ungouged eye and the girl leaving her footprints in the dirt.

Inventing lazurite melodies for to sing semi-precious song, she – solitary – skipped and walked; wandered, wondered, was.

Far from lonely, alone she went on as she'd been all day. Even in the morning, 'mongst the movements of the population, 'midst the structures 'bout the alleyway of sphinxes, though interspersed and interacting she passed through somehow sep'rate – always somehow sep'rate... – in the city – of the city – with the water 'round.

Left over from the moving of some stone or dense brick made of mud, there lay, in front of her, a stretch of smoothed-o'er wooden logs; left between them all a stride's worth (by her legs) of empty

space. Urged on innately, no hesitation: she stepped upon the first, found her footing, created balance, and proceeded to keep up her songs as she walked along, eve-dreaming.

The sun's sole edge now comes to meet th'horizon and the underworld.

"Ooop!" she sounds as she sees the setting.

The girl sped along the remaining logs, reached the last, jumped, and ran her fastest.

The taste of sand-grains and the bits of dirt in every bite of the bread above the mouths of workers in repose to soon be washed away with beer; shaved heads, un-donned're the wigs of status – the labourers who work th'expansion of the Karnak Temple take the evening as their own.

Killed cattle flesh, basketed fish, tired tendons, fissured fibres: the un-yoked phyle members toast their red graffiti markings.

"Ne'er to be found!"

"But there we are, eternal on the temple!"

"Red 'glyphs for the gods to read!"

"To *The Oxen Of Thutmose Gang!*"

Vessels raised to the Ra-soaked dusk; beer emptied, all in tandem.

The cheer? It gently lulls but keeps, mirroring the sunset.

"We should've been *The Hands Of Thutmose...*"

"Gods, man – it's too late! Leave it."

"It flows better!"

"Yeah, but it makes us sound like the king's assassins."

"Or his personal masturbators."

Snorts of alcohol and laughter, like hippos on the Nile, and the men yet keep the evening as their own.

"Fine... better the gods not misinterpret than the phrase sing syllabic'ly."

A breeze patchworked with heat and cool ran through, ran by, ran over. The feathered headdress of the wand'ring Shu passed between earth and sky.

"Here she is."

"Who?"

"That kid."

"The girl."

"Oh, her. She might miss it."

"Nah, there's time. But not if you stop here first!"

Skidding to a halt a heartbeat away from leaping the end of the wall to run atop another, she, breathing hard, put hands on hips, furrowed brow, looked to them and panted:

"**HHUUUUUUHHHH**... what?"

"I was saying:" (one of the oxen grinned) "you won't miss it, so long as you don't stop here."

Narrowing her eyes, she showed her tongue before back-tracking for to run and jump. As she did so, another of the reposed men threw to her – "Here!" – a chunk of bread, which she placed between her teeth, and signalled thanks.

She made the leap to the wall that led to the ascending end of her shortcut-laden journey, holding, as she headed on, the gritted bread between her gritted teeth.

Up she clambered, up and to  
the little gap her little frame  
would muscle-mem'ry through.  
Courtyard-side, she  
kept on through the scene.

Finishing the food that she'd been gifted by the workers, a smattering of groups betrayed a disintegrating crowd. Flies flicked by gesticulating tails from off the hind-side hides of actual oxen – she stepped nearly in shit as she skipped about behind them, weaving through the woven basket reeds.

“You missed it, child. It finished early.”

Acknowledging the aging voice with eyebrows shaped forsaken, she meandered over slabs of stone laid close 'til she saw Karnak – its complex under construction for the guardian of Ma'at.

She had slowed.

The risen moon – resplendent – filled the temple.

She took it on, she took it in, standing still before pathfinding light: the reflection of the sun god shined a crescent.

Her nostrils were inundated with fresh, embracing air e'en as she grimaced at the tight'ning spasm, low across her belly. Wriggling as a fading throb passed o'er her lower back, she raised an eyebrow at the mirrored sun, trav'ling 'cross the night.

Day 2  
*Bristol*  
Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1842  
*Wa-Set*  
2 (Mekhir). Peret. VI. 6 Thutmose I

Begin...

Only light  
distorted by an unstill surface:  
wings against a waking sky.

A wake waves through  
the dawn-hued blue:  
the water of the river shapes the heavens.

Sweeping – swerve (risen [fall]) –  
flocks  
ride mirrored breeze.  
A boat moves on a river;  
sunrise stops ‘n day begins.

Passing amongst the gifts it’s given, the vessel venerates the water – giving life to land ‘fore commending its spirit to the ocean. Fertile fields and pregnant plains b’yond the banks bring cultivation to the wild earth, sketching a blurred, clamping vice across th’umbilical bond to womb; to nature.

A patch of pockmarked isles spans between the boat and eastern bank, populated by white ibis on the curved and barren hills. In the ripples left by the boat’s soft passing the isles quake, their foundations rumble, the edges surface as the hills they fall; great jets snort upward as new caverns open, shim’ring red behind tall tusks.

Rising ibis flock – suspended – as the landscape shifts and clashes. They’ll settle once the isles’ve set anew.

Cracked’s the mud that’s dried upon the topmost reaches of the hull; cracked’s the rockface of the glacial gorge on either side, jagged with the green of vegetation. High-tide carries through th’uncrossed chasm keeping separate the village and the woods – a fawn astride the cliff-edge pushes loose soil to the sky; a child picks up a stone and lets it vanish.

A splash above the muddy bank, concealed by risen river, and a corm’rant leaves its settled poise, posed upon the surface. Through lush grass to branches bending downward from the canopy: it stands alone to dry its outstretched wings.

There’s a man-made fork in this spring-fed path and the boat heads to a lock-gate, its metal reflectflickering the rays of head-on sun. Behind, above, a single strand of iron lets the village dream of walking in the sky to wander through the woods of Leigh. Abutments – in red-sandstone clad – support the piled stone that makes the towers, standing there part-built: suspended.

Scaffolded by timber ‘bout the as-yet unwashed stone, up ahead, along this stretch of water ending in a haven, the newest pylon starts to rise before the most select of places; flagpoles b’yond primeval papyrus swamp.

The immensity of Karnak comes ‘to view of the white-sailed shuttle, its wooden form now oar-propelled between the lush, green gardens. The “Heave!” sounds coming closer **CLACK** of the “Drop!” construction skim the standing water’s surface **THUDD** in the quadrilateral haven. Boats moored all about its **TUNNKK** “Woah!” edges pass off quarried stone, imported timber, fish, bread,

'n barrelled beer for sust'nance; scribes record all in/all out, meticulous accounting for the overseers of the gangs who build for gods 'n pharaoh.

The water starts to lift, to rise, between the gates that guard the entryway, keeping hid the bed of mud that traps the boats it welcomes.

Up, from beneath  
the river's level.

Up, to meet  
the level in the port.

The swing-bridge at the basin moves;  
the vessel navigates  
and enters in, on through  
The Floating Harbour.

Coal-made mist makes thunderclouds in black, patched among the smog below the blue, as the sounds of **ggRRRRROOOOAAAANNNN** links of chain – pulled 'n loosed in fragile mast'ry o'er the Avon – bring back the gate behind the ent'ring vessel. Toward the lifeful, moving port of blackened hands 'n metal sails the steamboat, on its way to meet the Welsh Back.

On either side, the banks 'n walls sloped 'n dropped to water, whilst an engine pulled its weight and more; hooves heaved along beside it. The tightly-tautened woven strands strained fast against their pivot-point to lift the limestone past the scaffold and the men who chiselled from its platforms to engrave the wall with hist'ry told in pictures.

An obelisk unfinished out front marks the long road through the archway of the pylon's lower, joining centre-block: on through, the flitting frantic flutter flight flown by a lone mosquito crashed among the part-constructed shadows – breached's the long 'n central road that led the patrons of the temple (pre-Thutmose) between the sun-barge shrines; now they'll pass the cedar wood of stone.

Broad-topped reeds to last millen'ya.

Processions of human culture carried through in awenrapture: see th'inscriptions in their ochre, green, 'n blue; see them faded to the rock – wind-worn; time-travelled.

**phhhhump** From off the block within which sits pharaonic lion falls a chunk hewn by the hammered-chisel, chipping at the stone, e'en as a splat of **shhhglupp** colour lands adorning on the naked shoulder of the sculptor sculpting b'side the columns. Pale, part-shaded, washed stone stays cool despite the approach of the new, established morning in its throes of burning life.

The continuing construction to expand and decorate the temple will, the day, betidal-imitating dredgers pull the mud the bed accumulates, placing it in piles within the centre of the harbour for the underwater sluices to siphon out, off into the New Cut.

O v e r f a  
I I by way of engineer.  
I  
to  
u n d e r f a  
d

See on down, ahead, out front the industrial sheds – L, M, N, O... – and next the living, lifting cranes – their chains a-reaching from the wall to lay upon ships' treasure – as the spires and aspiring masts make arboreal the 'arbour scene, growing anachronistic with the sunrise.

Before the basin b'side the marsh and the scenes of other stories lives 'n moves 'n breathes the shipyard in its peak, precipitous.

With each we've reached our site of grand construction.

She gazed.

"That bit?"

He looked t'ward where she pointed.

"Yup. That bit."

**shhhglupp**

"Ahfffffffffff!"

Laughing hard, she kicked her heels into the part-hewn block beneath her; the man, his tools loosed to air 'n ground, smeared the blue upon his dark-brown skin. Furiously furrowed at the platform up-above on the structure built about th'inscribed pillar, he flicked away the colour that had transferred to his hand and brought a relaxed scowl down upon the girl-child.

"You keep laughing. I'll turn you over to the overseer."

She brought her legs to cross beneath her, put a hand atop each knee.

"Oh-vur tuh thuh oh-vur see-ur."

"He'll" (he said, rolling his eyes) "see you one of these days."

She gave him a patronising shake-of-head as she wondered at the wonder of the scribe, sending out his messages of life and times to the space beyond the great wave of the future.

"Magic..."

"Magic?"

"Hmm?" Tilted head; unbroken gaze.

"You're magic, is that it? That's how you'll avoid getting caught?"

She beamed, then, with purest delight, eyes locked upon the writer and the writing.

"Yeah, I'm magic! A spirit. Eternal as the water of the river."

Smiling to himself as he used his rescued tools, he said:

"If you're eternal, I hope I'm not."

The girl's name arrived on the dry-heat breeze from an un-wigged source atop a wall. Shim'ring as it peered over the edge on high above, the head alerted them to th'approach of officials.

In exaggerated praise to the god-king and the gods, the sculptor pretends he's relieved she has to go. She leapt from off the seat she'd chosen, skipping over rope coiled by a bucket filled with scraps of stone; unknown to him she giggles – soundless – at the noise she catches **shhhg** before she ducks out of the scene through yet-unfinished wall.

Slipslide down a bank of sand – you see through the girl-child's eyes.

You look over a city: see the palm fronds of the date trees in the gardens of the wealthy, green canopy sporadic, as they show beside the flat-tops in their low 'n high 'n higher tessellation, textured white 'n faded-gold about before you. Look on at the alleyway that courses down from Karnak, through the courtyard squares and suburbs to the other temple-end: sandstone alone on hilltop; southern sceptre.

The girl knelt and stared at the grains, all gathered, of the hot, compacted sand, lowering her right hand slowly t'ward its canvas-surface. Placing, with such a trepidated lightness, fingertips against Seb's blank papyrus, a child of story froze in felt illit'racy.

To make immortal markings...thoughts made comprehensible...physical, in phact...carving symbols into sandstone for your voice toooo to echo out after four five thousand years what? oh ready["Yep!"]I guess In phact thuh fare-oh philters throo thuh phirmament *One. Two. Heeeaaave!*

Jesus...Watch th[“Watch that chain!”]...The iron hull[“No worries.”]first iron-hulled steamship if it works *unphhh*[“Prrrh!”]it can pass beneath Hah! the incomplected bridge *One. Two. Dowwwn.*

Placing lumber on the red-brick wall within the dry dock’s storage yard, the men who built the Great Britain breathed/leant/relaxed/looked skyward.

“Shite.”

“What?”

“Rain.”

“Maybe.”

“Def’nutlee.”

“So?”

“ So? ?”

“Yeah.”

“Pfff.”

“Ah...”

“What?”

“Rain.”

“See!”

“Shite.”

The moss mounds spread sporadic on their ships of kuhloenyul mud, moored in place by cracks in brick ‘n iron – rust-red; oxidised.

“It stinks round ‘ere.”

“Thas ‘orseshit.”

“No, it really stinks.”

“Yeah – huhorseshit.”

Look at us, in our overalls ‘n boots ‘n flat-claps, conversing...shire horses...’orses, shite...skin taut about strands of tensed, frayed rope...frayed, afraid...frayed knot; ‘fraid not...fraught ‘n tautened through our labour laying out these blocks of nature...the mind to map abstraction; the manual movement and the muscle to construct reality...

The men began to move – hoof heavy – through the drops of water – falling angels seeking something more than crowded, ‘phemeral clouds – across the way to where there sat the steam ship, immense weight on its wooden rests, the deep black iron hull without the water.

The curve up, out,  
laced ‘n lined with gold;  
the white-paint ribbon,  
soft, along each side;  
the Lion and the Unicorn  
above new window fittings:  
this ship’s hull shall be  
adorned thus somewhen.

Somewhen in th’approaching  
years anon.

With the noise (noise! (noise!!)) tuned out by familiarity, his mind sprungstreamed away. At the delta, where its currents split through sediment at land’s end, it met the vast unknown and dissipated.

“I envy you.”

"Why?"

"Your medium – it's... its form is free. Free-er."

"You wish your art weren't the written word?"

"No. See... how'd you write this scene?"

The grains and varnished-o'er folds, frozen in the stillness of the time trapped in the table, kept a coffee-yin and a milk-tea-yang – distorted and unbalanced by a metal spoon that careened into the infused pool from off a saucer – between the breaking workers/the artists two, who – iron-wearied hands – left the grey folds of their caps on the third 'n empty chair that showed its previous life by the cross carved in its backrest, and in its wordless space for storing psalms 'n dogma.

"Well, how'd you paint it? I wouldn't have any way of showing the content of this conversation, its progression. I couldn't start at one point, travel to another, visit with the end. You can."

"But with a thousand words for every gull and boat I couldn't hope to show the harbour, and with no shape of ink or type could I begin to find a way to capture the movements of the muscles in the face of a child in that moment when they see, without either even knowing, a different you to whom they'll bestow all their trust without condition."

"The more you argue your point, the more I feel you prove it wrong!"

"Pffff! I know a lot is possible with words but... one alphabet! Conceptions and cultural awareness, allusion... It relies near-wholly on a reader having already experienced visually, whether by paint or re-directed sunlight, the thing I wish to show."

Tipping back 'n backrest into the aroma of bacon-burnt 'n beans bereft the heat they'd gathered, he looked toward the open door and out, while the one he sat across from listened to the sounds that entered in.

"That sound! That seagull song. You might feel you can't do it justice, but my art is silent. Yours produces sound and image; colour and music. Yours can dictate the rhythm of a beating heart and conduct all the contours of the mind. It can change the way we speak. Even by the way that the words are placed can you resurrect your thoughts within another."

"It's the same" (he replied, without turning back) "for you with shapes, hues..."

"But silent, and without music."

"There are lots of ways to tell a story."

"And I missed my favourite!"

"The troupe from Hiku-Ptah?"

"Yeah... I spent too long by the river."

"Impossible." The woman emanated love and understanding to the girl who sat before her on the upturned vase. "You were crafting a universe by thought, were you not? Those who travelled from the House of the Soul of Ptah would understand!"

The girl: she smiled, near-wholly on the left-side of her face. With the smell of the staple bread being baked within the walls of the adjacent room, she watched her swinging feet as the woman that she trusted weaved reeds.

"I think" (she told the girl) "you could become somebody's favourite, telling stories when the troupes are absent. Your mind is fertile with pigments that we have no powder for; sounds that Thoth has not put into hieroglyphs."

The hands of the middle-aged of ancient times left their manufacture, and the woman placed her right upon the head of the girl who bloomed reluctantly.

"It was not only missing the performance that bothered you, was it, standing there in the pull of the crescent moon?"

The girl: she answered with a drop that fell, clear, onto the red dried on her finger. Torn, tear-wetted: the colour ran, seeking out the land's end and the ocean.



“It is a cleansing blood. The light upon the Ra-less night called to you, marking you for adulthood.”

Consternation at a sudden shift in the world beneath her soles played across the brow she lifted for to slip under the soothing hand. To be ‘cleansed’ of her childhood by a bloodied Nile was horror worse than an annihilation.

“It is the flowering of the khet that keeps your ka, nurturing it ‘til its many parts have coalesced in virtue. You will” (her smile was made of melancholy) “become a woman – and stay a story-teller!”

“But who will I be if I am not myself?”

The woman held the girl who held the woman.

Day 3

*Bristol*

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1842

*Wa-Set*

3 (Phamenoth). Peret. X. 6 Thutmose I

Solitary swan.

Drift among the chorus and the urban doves.

Take off in a torrent of the wing-beat-broken sky.

Thus flock the fowl, ungainly, 'bove the river.

River, river, riverrun, past even a dammed Frome, swirled – azure – to blend the Avon: sing us, by the coal-moved industry collage, shriek-undulation, hand-toil, south-west England, spring-tide songs.

The tall brick-stacks stood stark against the smoky skyline; there, refining houses backed their chimneys 'til they brought them low by flame. A lone cone – modest pyramid – spewed subt'ly from its furnace, mould-melting glass to blue shapes, shipped 'n sold decreasingly. Uncut timber lazes, log-like, on the stone-rise, hut beside, looking at the regiment of spears held still 'n stoic, covered – cobweb – down from nest to deck.

Saint Brandon's Hill hides the dist' horizon with its new-built walks 'n walls. The green'ry of its slopes backs the cruciform cathedral; the stark-red cross on white – raised – waves atop the tower.

The past: t'was present, as the present: t'was pushed passed. The world: t'was floating 'midst the passing future.

He felt for the notebook, well-within the tattered tote, as the steam streamed from the all-too-sugared tea of milk-lightbrown.

"Whatever would you do if you, just the once, left home without those lined-leaves?"

Half-smile; breath-laugh.

"Suffer you, I imagine."

His companion snatched his pen a-from its perch upon the notebook that was lifted out 'n free to serve its purpose.

"And what would, whatever would you do if you had the pages... but not the pen?"

"Write in fag-burns 'n milk-tea stains."

Breath-laugh; half-smile.

"Now, then you'd almost be a painter!"

Gathering the pen from its suspension in the sky between them, the writer nodded thanks and started writing.

"I'll converse with the gulls, then..."

"That'd be grand."

Time passed;

time took its place.

A moment settled.

A notebook was placed – open – onto the lap of he who laid back, smoking, looking at the sky. Elbowing himself to sitting, to one side he flicked the charred remains, its ash dispersing as it fell.

He turns the notebook upside-up.

"Unseasonal..."

The writer shapes his forehead into: what?

"To have leaves falling down upon me."

Now the other smokes and laughs while lighting.

What's a  
ten-page poem  
to a splash of paint/  
a muscle moved/  
a light directed?

Six strings neglected, yet  
~~get~~ the voice: it comes out clearer.  
Frets beneath an e-string  
fingers held, re-placed, re-placed

What's a  
ten-page poem  
to a splash of paint/  
a muscle moved/  
a light directed?  
~~Six strings~~

Six strings neglected, yet the  
voice: it comes out free-er, clearer.  
Frets beneath an e-string, fingers  
held, re-placed, re-placed...  
One note on the guitar's  
a mind translated.

There's a rhythm  
on the blank page,  
I just fill it <sup>as</sup> best I can.  
As best I can, ~~edit~~  
I fill the blank page  
with a rhythm.

T'wasn't words in th'ephemeral  
~~flame~~ flare light of our infant night-time.  
~~It was~~ T'was utterance ~~astride~~ <sup>astride</sup> percussive,  
primal movement.

"What's a tin-page poem[...] to a[...] foolish at[?] paint, a muscle moreal[...]"

"Fuck, it's not that illegible!"

"Hah! Here. I'll listen."

His companion dumped the open leaves onto his lap as he sat back, closed his eyes, anticipating. Smirking, th'author uptook the leaves, breathed, and began reading:

"What's a  
ten-page poem  
to a splash of paint/  
a muscle moved/  
a light directed?"

Six strings neglected, yet the  
voice: it comes out free-er, clearer.  
Frets beneath an e-string, fingers  
held, re-placed, re-placed...  
One note on the guitar's  
a mind translated.

There's a rhythm  
on the blank page,  
I just fill it 'sbest I can/  
As best I can,  
I fill the blank page  
with a rhythm.

T'wasn't words in th'ephemeral  
flamelight of our infant night-time.  
T'was utterance astride percussive,  
primal movement."

"Bravo!"

"Cheers."

"Still on that theme, though, I see. Maybe you should, I dunno... learn to dance? Get a paintbrush? Re-string your guitar?"

"It's" (he smiled) "at home."

"Oh, back over innnnn ummmmmm"

"Caine

"Cain

's shhh

e's shhh

um."

um."

A mild and subdued laugh from each.

"The ham o' Keynes'."

"To be sure."

"When you next going back?"

He showed his indecision with his lip 'n brow 'n nostril.

"Eh, winter maybe."

Speaking while taking back the notebook to flick-flicker through, his companion mocked concern:

"So... you're stranded with nought 'n ought but ink 'n pen 'n paper for your expressive needs..."

"Tah bee shurr."

There was growth and emergence throughout the infant earth of Egypt, newly born from 'neath the bluegreen care of Hapi – lotus-laden. Pouring water from the loop-adorned neck of his ceramic vase, she blessed the silt with riches 'fore receding to the Nile.

Swenett calls: *Return*

*'long the life-endowing waters!*

Crocodiles hold union on the marsh.

Watching silt seethe shoots of deep-green creation – "Crops aboundabundant!" sing th'insects, river-dancing – on perch of tall papyrus, crane doth crane her neck, now, skyward.

Circled by the circus-sands, she's silhouetted – distant – walking near another, not strayed from the pathway. Where the mud meets sand 'n dirt-track trod the two, herself and th'other, meandering the suburb's edges: aimless, with a purpose.

A cry from out the mist...

They looked: she from her shoulders, high, with pupils etched by by-and-bys; she o'er from her pathless way, with mud tracked up her heel. The elder smiled; the younger kept her eyebrow high, kicking off from one wi'th'other the heel-held flakes – primord'yul.

"Creation."

The cry crew, grew, and settled – sudden – found 'n nursed, its ancient call into the not-yet-known expanse: heeded, assured.

(She) "Creation..." (sighs.) "?You've..."

"No."

".It's..."

"Yes."

"When?"

"?..."

"...Child..."

"No!"

"Okay." She (Creation...) sighed.

She crouched, then, at the path's blurred edge, the girl sulkily watching, and carved, into the Pharaoh's land, imperfect shapes 'n symbols – leaning one into the other; skill-less, flowful dance.

The nearest star spotlighted the girl as joy dawned 'cross her features, and, all at once, she closed the gap 'n crouched 'n leant 'n wondered. The softly sounding knock of heads rippled as she leant further, resting mind on resting mind to share in secret magic.

All expressed, as nought was spoke, in contact 'tween the one, the other, and the shifting, sunlit sand.

Later and elsewhere, the girl gathered back the bundle bound by string. The grip of the skin-brown, frayed sinews, in strips 'n knots of criss-cross paths, held hard grey, bundled cloth-scrap for to form the ball she threw.

Date-palm pages – green – canopied  
out the tree-top, tall;  
runs of wrapping bark ran – seamless –  
up from soil-sunk roots.

The solar-disc sang amber as  
it looked toward the west;  
the girl (weight given to ground 'n stem)  
tossed out her toy to arc.

Tumbling from its impact-point at  
peak of stone-piled rise,  
it eked, erratically, rolling down,  
a path back to her side.

She gathered back the bundle grip-bound by skin-brown sinews, frayed 'n found in strips 'n knots, criss-crossed about the scraps. Compact's the bundled grey of cloth she throws to arc away; through amber song it – silent – glides; seamless, the sky ekes evening.

Somewhen, softly, droned beneath by baritone voice alone, flutt'ring vibratissimo made their waves within the sky beside the plucked 'n pulled-taut gut-string, gaining height 'n trav'ling wide 'n wider, windsweep-dissipation drifts determining th'destinedestination notes of haze-held harmonising newborn now they touch these sleeping drums collecting coolcrest air to turn 'n tumble timbre'd tremors – tidal – lapping lapislovelornamental movementary airborne – newborn – borne upon the riv'ring neural shore all swelled to run red o'er the banks 'n plains in painagainagain a gathered gaian fallowpianissimochred-mud in inundated stretches strewnstreamed storyline-ed languor lost last leaping seasons soon to shoots of greengrowth grad'yul crestcreation notes of haze-held harmonising song soon soothes the dreaming child, her starlit form falling in deeper, out beyond the troubled substrate, to rest in silent, sceneless sleep, on sheets of coloured sand.

Summer's eve, maturing into early night – the womb of time re-births the nocturne, borne on dusk's red heels.

He (the writer); him (the man): turning on the cobbled path, kept his solitary way. Dark; dark grey; dark black; deep blue: boots, jacket, hat, 'n trousers tracing silhouettes in listless light that lingers on luciferous, desp'rate to 'luminate.

The sky sits soft 'n settled – hear a baby's cry: peak; assured – and walk along the Welsh Back way, wistful while the shape of Redcliffe watches o'er the river, its spire yet to be remade, brought down by 'tack of lightning.

Lighting spread by gas-lamp clothes the corners and the edges of the gabled fronts 'n woodbeamed-walls; trows break the resting surface. Flitflicker 'top a windowsill: a shape of feline shadow drops a tail beyond its watchtow'r edge, swooping slow – flitflicker fast, the tail-tip turns/switch/rest.

There is a black cat watching from the windowsill. There was a man who slowly strolled along toward it. The cat stood on its paws and took some steps and m'yowed a greeting. The man lifts his hand to scratch behind its ears.

<i>The Feline</i>	<i>The Phonic Waves Between Them</i>	<i>The Hominid</i>
Scratch behind my Yep, thank you!		Heoh kahh.  Watching the river go by in lamplight...Doesn't need I suppose.
	Ppppprrrrrrrrr.	
I wonder why they babble all the time...		Nighezzz nigh.
	Pprrr.	
Hungry. Movement over there...too loud. Too big. No good. It's probably scared off all th'Hey!		Puheessf... nnohmisstupp othuhwawter.
	Mmmmmuhrrah?	
Don't stop it...	Mmrrah?	Hmm? Prob'ly thinks th'ships come in to provide new rats 'n mice for'm! Her. Cat.
No reason Any food To stop!		Hahhuh!
	Mmmmrrr.	Wonder why they Mmmmyow... Waiting for th'It's so warm Delivery... next ro Next rodent reeeReimbursement!
	Ppppprrrrrrr.	
		I should go on.
		Pppuhhhh...
Well I'll move to you then...	Mmmow!	Need to see'r b'fore I don't She... We'll speak in tanka on the waterfront. Then it'll Then what?
Good. Better. Hungry...		Hahhuh. Then be ? = Over. Have my ear scratched for the price of food...
	Ayeshhgohnmighfren	
	Ppprrrr.	
Flying food upon the liquid ground... Not fair. Can't Huh?		Hmm. Ppprrrrpr.
	Mmowhl?	
		Well...
		Wehluh...

“Onward then, cat. There’s metal more attractive. No” (he presses gently on the feline’s wettened nose) “offense, of course.”

The man stepped ‘long the Welsh Back further, boots on cobbled night; the cat’s ears sweep ‘n scan the sea, paws in guard’yun poise.

He made it, then, t’where King Street hits the river.

The crippled urban rock-dove dances – deft – amongst these muddied soles that sing – stepstep – ‘n court – stepstop – abandon-wracked [“To arms!”]. Jovially jumping into the outstretched welcome of the women on the front-doorstep, a young Brist-ohl’yun madolescent clasps rum – bottled – high.

They took him in to take him back ‘n up to take him in.

The man’s name sailed on o’er the cobbles  
between the walls of either side’s  
slatwoodbeamedblackwhite gabled fronts  
and drew his pale-blue gaze.

“Approach!”

“I’ll!”

“Join!”

“I’m! Drink?”

“We’ve!”

He walked to where his usual band of fraternal friends passed night-time, musing o’er their mead at painted maids from wood-brown stools.

He:

- sat
- drank
- smoked
- spoke
- smoked
- drank
- stood

He:

- moved
- leant
- pissed
- crossed
- entered

Smokehaze-candlelight: a room’s aroma enters in and floods the hallway. Searching through scent-sodden air, the lamped-light sends its guidance, glancing rays off shelf-stood plates ‘n tilted tomes in dust tracks.

He moved on through toward his destination.

He sought his destina-re.

He seeks his destinata.

He soughks.

He seet.

Sagid.

Se-chon.

Perceived by scent-sense;  
seen across the room.

Tables peopled; chairs abandoned; wax 'n flitt'ring flame.

Meandering the clearest cluttered paths (all equi-travelled), he greeted those he knew by hand on shoulder.

A swig of rum from offered bottle; a declined empty stool; a skirted around threat of rambling sinking-sand, barside.

"Hungry for something?"

"How's the food?"

"Poetic."

She sees the world through rings of colour wrapped about her soul, reflecting – small – the inf'nite moment borne on swells of light.

He sat slowly down beside her.

Up she stands; presents her hand.

He laughs – subdued; he stood.

Exit, pursued by a beer-soaked call.

*Tis brief, Magdalene.*

*As a drunk John's love.*

Not quite naked, aye-thur or, no, nor not quite settled, nee-thur. She stroked his head (the part he'd really paid for).

The soft 'n scented heat held pressed – perturbed; placate – light life forcefully firm 'n cradled, nurturing innubile needs, lusting after comfort, drifting drowsily now doused in disp'rate sens'ry fires felt in overlapping outward rippling flamewave wand'rings amidst neural nexi needfulously bridging binding bonds, unbound by filtered vision, smell, sound, touch that finds the grainy ground, its chill of deep'ning night transferred to exposed skin – gold-brown 'gainst browned-gold.

Shivering, she pushes 'gainst the world until she's kneeling.

Yawning, she rubs two tired fists against her eyes.

Standing, she brushes sand from hair 'n rags 'n elbows.

Wondering, she wanders; wanders wondering.

Under the white, ungentle calls of the warmth of other sun gods, clasping to herself her heart-sent heat, she made her way – alone – along the garden walls and streetways, meeting, in the middle of an empty square, a cat.

"Ou-bast."

The girl knelt – her knees upon the cold, stone floor; naked heels touching her clothed behind. Presenting both her hands – palms up – she asked:

"Where is your royal litter?"

Ears standing tall and still; long limbs, in grace, held closely poised: the restless tip of the night-black tail tapped – soft – upon the paved ground. Slits sang of lapis 'midst her father's golden fire in ferocious eyes; sleek, sinewed sensuality's the shape she claimed.

Lowering her hands – each one upon each knee, gripping at a cresting wave of nausea – the girl-child held her wincing gaze/her wincing gaze was held on/by the stern, maternal crashing sea of flame 'bout lapis song.

The walls of mud-made brick that bind and shape the space they share start to compress – contracting in upon themselves; sharp shuddering.

The girl lent o'er her thighs, debilitated by their pain; the cat, in poise, held gracefully her long limbs close and tall.

A slow, unleashed breath...



Shed latent life in exhalation...

Soothing soft: a gentle breeze now washes through her hair, settling on beyond her shoulders,  
wrapped about her febrile hips.

Inhaled's the deep'ning night; her tears course fluvial.

Alone, she sits back 'to her heels, sniff'ling as her blood caked to her ankles.

In time, she'll hear  
her name called in a  
voice not asking, only  
calling, gath'ring up  
'n guiding o'er the  
pave 'n alleyways.

In time, she'll lift  
the cupping earthenware  
up in her cupping hands  
toward her lips and  
drink the sour warmth  
of unfresh milk.

In time, she'll fall  
to sleeping on the  
soundwaves of the song  
so softly sung to her  
in moth'ring tones –  
'thout kin yet purest kind.

Upon the pave, she heard her name called softly out: “

Day 4  
*Bristol*  
Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 1842  
*Wa-Set*  
4 (Pharmuthi). Peret. XVII. 6 Thutmose I

“We stand here prepared to do the work of my majesty and yours, King of Upper and Lower Egypt upon the Horus-throne of the living, without his like forever: Mighty Bull of Horus, and beloved of Ma-at; Favourite of the Two Goddesses, shining in the Serpent-diadem and Great in Strength; Goodly in Years, Golden Horus Making Hearts Live; Son of Ra, Aakheperkare, living forever, and ever. I, Ineni, Royal Chief Architect for the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Superintendent of the Royal Buildings, Overseer of the Workmen in the Karnak Treasuries, Overseer of the Workmen of the King (Thoth is Born), Chief of the Necropolis, Superintendent of the Granaries, Chief Overseer of the Scribes at Karnak, Beloved of the Golden Horus, He Who Does Right by the Lord of the Two Lands, Gentleman of the Bedchamber, Ove”

Worker X: [Snorts]

Worker Y: [Grinning] Maaaaaaan... You can really feel those Capital Letters!

Worker X: Palpable!

Worker Y: [Loftily] Lister of Lists...

Worker X: [Haughtily] Namer of the Nyoom’rus Names...

Worker Y: Chief Humble Evacuater of the Favoured Bowels...

Workers X & Y: [Muffled giggling]

Worker Z: [Amid the suppressed sounds of reluctant laughter, betrayed wholly by the facial muscles] Could you shut the fuck up? I don’t wanna become part of the foundations of the next gods-damned pylon we have to add to this place.

“tinue these works, which, to the glory of Amun-Ra, whose hidden power informs all things, our King has commissioned with the golden plunder of the Land of Kush and unending tribute from the peoples settled between the old limits of our lands and the mysterious breadth of the Inverted Waters.”

Worker Y: [Exaggerated, silent gasp] Gods... he actually paused!

Worker X: High Speaker of the Winding Sentence, he whose words flow with...

Worker Y: ...whose Mighty Words flow with a force and life to rival the course of Iteru!

Worker Z: [Simultaneously kicks the left heel of Worker Y and slaps, with the back of his right hand, the upper arm of Worker X, making contact just above the triceps] Shut. Up.

“As tribute to this temple, the Most Select of Places, built to the glory of Amun-Ra, made greater by our majesty, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, without his like forever, I, helped in this endeavour through prayer and tribute to Thoth, He who is like the Ibis, Lord of the Divine Body, Voice of Ra, Reckoner of Time and Seasons, Scribe of the Company of the Gods, to whom I proclaimed *I am thy writing palette, let not my words be less than that which the glorious work of the Gods and the King demand*, have composed a poem, which you shall now hear.”

Workers X, Y, & Z: [Stunned pause of delighted disbelief]

Worker X: Oh...

Worker Y: My...

Worker Z: Gods...

*[Ineni's breast, o'erlaid with plated collar, rises in the shadow of the feathered fan, held still by the man behind him. One hand on the hip beneath his pleated kilt; the other raised aloft before him: the architect now reads aloud his poem]*

"Aakheperkare,  
shining in the Serpent-diadem,  
whose border rests upon  
the far crest of the world,  
its ends within the void of Horus,  
his majesty, then said:  
'Now, you shall oversee  
my great works, you  
in whom I place my trust,  
my excellent designs  
for the glory of our  
holy triad;  
their Lord Of All, the one  
whose hidden power e'er  
informs all things, a king's  
guardian and guide,  
a sovereign o'er sovereigns,  
Amun-Ra.'

Now, endowing me with  
labourers, his majesty  
accorded me the chance  
to earn, for wisdom, praise.  
I brought together  
all his majesty had gained  
in tribute:  
fresh cedar-wood from Lebanon;  
reams of Asian copper;  
offerings of electrum  
and gold."

*[Here, the architect, the poet, the poet-architect, gives a look over his shoulder (left or right) upon the Temple of Karnak. The audience, the workers, the list'ning-labourers, wait silently, having begun to become sincerely enrapt in the verse and its wonderful delivery]*

"This, your temple,  
the most select of places!  
Let sekhem and sesheshet  
sing in beat-procession,  
ringing through these  
'glyphed papyrus-reeds!  
Of beautiful white limestone,  
these pylons guard the way;  
magnificent, th'flagstaffs  
herald the Aten!

Then his majesty, the  
Golden Horus, said:  
‘All has been done, in  
accord with my command.  
Look:  
in em’rald, lapis,  
ox-blood, gold, all  
brill’yant coloured writing  
‘gainst the white proclaims  
(Posterity will hear it!) of  
my works, our songs, our prayers!’  
Now, his majesty, whose  
heart was happy at  
the temple’s progress,  
commanded me to  
continue this honourable task.

Sistra sweeping swathes  
across the jingle-jangle morning;  
veneration vibrating  
atop the beaten drums!  
These coloured-sounds of  
hue-lit waves awash  
upon this sanctum  
of Khonsu, consort Mut,  
and Amun-Ra!”

*[Ineni: exuent. Workers mutter, shuffle. Overseers call out. Crowd disperses to their separate tasks and labour]*

Workers X, Y, & Z: *[Gentle pause of silent, face-expressed, contemplation]*

Worker Z: Not...

Worker Y: Too...

Worker X: Bad. Sort of a... song of Ipet-isu.

Workers X & Y: *[Exuent]*

Worker Z: *[Slows to a stop, having noticed something. Now the only player left, approaches a pile of discarded rubble. Lifts a chunk and places atop the pile, crouching to put eyeline at same height. With left hand, touches and traces crudely composed hieroglyphs, in hue-scrap of reddened-green ‘n blue-streaked gold. Smiles. Dissolves into a blank line-break]*

“But how... could a language die?”

She ceased in her caressing of the symbols into sand, proud yet pained at how they lay ephem’ral.

The woman, knelt amongst the linen that she moved ‘n mended, tilted o’er her head, her tan eyes keeping handward.

“Well, Shu may sweep across the land and will away the grooves you practice in vulnerable ground. But even in the rock and on the painted walls – inscriptions carved; reliefs rendered in all their colour – there hides the threat of oblivion. What you’ve written rests behind a seal.”

"But you've told me what they mean." She brushes – light – three fingers through her formed, imperfect hand.

"And if you forgot, and I were gone?"

Balanced on her haunches, her heels above the ground, her hands hung limp between her bended knees, the girl-child kept her verdant eyes locked – thoughtful – on her writing, comprehending their incomprehensibility.

In the pregnant pause gestates an understanding.

"There is no way to protect what I've created."

The woman: "Nor that brought to life by others."

The event horizons of their irides, melanined in magellanic clouds, fall infinitely on into their soul-dark apertures.

Deep-em'rald, azure-laced;  
teak, torn by oxblood wisps.  
Two paths curve t'ward an empty cradle.

"Where'd you find me?"

Our man in England's south-west city-port laughed at his strewn-out friend.

"You don't recall that?"

He does not.

"You don't recall our trav'ling back?"

No, he doesn't. And so he asks:

"Speaking of *back*: where are we now?"

"A city, b'yond a glacial gorge, floating on a muddy Nile."

"Ohhh do" (The stretching, strewn-out man contorts his brow 'n forehead.) "piss off with that. Ta."

Flicking out into the haze-held sky a smoked-through cigarette, his lungs dispersing air turned into laughter by the vocal cords, he told his friend – e'en while he groaned – that he would paint for him the view "and from that you will know just where we are. You ready?!"

No, he isn't.

"First, I'll sketch the scene! A pencil's lead along the haze-held sky and I give the rise 'n fall of the horizon... Softly jagged, the line portrays the wooded hills... Okay! Now to settle in the settlement. Between the new-placed border to the sky and our as-yet empty foreground, we'll be needing blocks! Towers of the old cathedral... smaller blocks with their tiled peaks, triangular, and their sentry-tower chimneys – these are legion – and the cut-outs of their attic windows... Unpeaked blocks of greater size for the edges of our as-yet empty foreground. Window cut-outs... Okay, good enough! Say... as an artist, would you have started with the foreground? Only... I realise now I'll be sketching over some of what I've placed! No matter. The land and the sky need their heartbeat, so I'll shape upon the page the river! Here, the edges of the dockyard reach a bridging line to touch the edges opposite... Now, some hulls. Some hulking; some gentle. Weightful, waiting bodies. Small... medium... See, these are now beginning to break into my blocks! Well, it's only going to get worse... As if our own industrial, English Calvary, let's fill our middle-third with crosses! These are the masts, of course. You got that, I take it? Okay then! Colour! Kuller... hmmm. Question: as, again, an artist, which you are and I am not, should I, perhaps, have already painted the background? Or some other part? Regardless – onward. I have to add the paint. Okay... I will need... some white, some blue... green... definitely this: the black!... brown... I'll make the greys 'n shades of blue... red, but I'll muddy it... Let's go with that. Right! Over the foreground I'll throw black 'n rusty bars of iron rail, 'mongst grey 'n muddy gravelled dirt beside the dull-red of a tiled roof! B'yond this, I'll lay across a river-blue and muddy it with ev'ry colour, broken by the black of shapes that sit beneath the wood-hues of the

masts above! Tangling turns of grey-brown web with folded wings of white awash with borders blue as the late morn' sky o'er-spills across the scene! The crest of the horizon's turning green and crashing down toward the houses, where grey-black red-grey brown-black pigments flush throughout the cityscape!"

Having since sat upright, with his spine against a table leg, the man blinking away his hangover raised eyebrows at the patient silence.

"Are youuuuuuu done?"

A snort of laughter 'n a drink of coffee, black.

### *Scene III*

#### *Wirdpleigh 'Tween Sips Of Coffee*

Black coffee snorts

– derisive –

at the evening chill.

*tank-a*

Tin touches stone: replaced's the cup

upon the slab adjacent as I/he/you/we look/looked at the preening cormorants on the metal shelf.

"Two cormorants on a crane."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

"Ah. Yes."

"You see?"

"Yes."

"Crane!"

"'Tis a bird."

"And?"

"'Tis a big, metal machine."

"Double meaning."

"Triple."

"Triple?!"

"'Tis a verb."

"Shit! 'Tis."

"So, to take your comment and improve: Two cormorants crane their necks... on... a crane..."

"A vast improvement!"

*brrrbrenkk*

The tin cup scrapes the surface stone 'n carries coffee he-ward.

Trenched, turning timber, gnarled 'n knotted, bolted, nailed, a-worn by wet 'n windy weath'ring roughly cauterising marrow, narrow Niles not spilling over 'long the valleyed vale – unvertical; "Avast!" the axe-fall blade, abrupt, demanded death-industrial: it called, it failed, found its fortune to be laid upon the wharfway stone – a boneyard, 'boreal, the brown of lumber 'breast the plated steel.

They sat their weary bottoms on the wood.

"Wot wee angin round fore?" said Worker A.

"Thuh big boss man." said Worker C.

"Big lit-ul boss man." said Worker B.

"Wotz ee want? Uh bigger boat?" said Worker A.

"Puh-apz uh sphinx upon thuh bough 'n sturrrn." said Worker B.

"Doant nokim too much." said Worker C.

"Yess yess. Juss taykin thuh piss." said Worker B.

"Speekin uh piss... Fyool ikskyooz mee..." said Worker A.

"Too layt." said Worker C and Worker B in tandem.

"Aaahshhhhit." said Worker A.

"Too layt furr that 'n awl, too." said Worker B.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel brought his cigar to his mouth and smoked it.

Now, here you have a choice. Either you can look up a picture of him, or you can read the thousand-word description I have supplied below. You won't need to do both, so skip ahead to the following paragraph, beginning '*From out of...*', if you choose to find a picture. Conversely, read on if you are unable to get your mind's-eye Brunel from a photograph, or if you simply prefer the labourious approach of turning abstract symbols into light.

His shoulder-width apart he placed his beat, unpolished boots – a broad rest-stance to fix his frame upon the Earth. 'Bove heels of hardened leather, lit by th'waning waves of evening's fire, adorned with coal-dust, crease black-trouser hems. Laying b'low his ankles, th'hems hid one-third of his boots before continuing to crease their faded way up to his knees, both locked in place – though as he speaks he'll let his weight fall more 'n more onto one side (you choose: the left or right) – and nearly nestled in the open reaches of the coattails crash-careening 'gainst his legs within the sudden gust of late-September wind. Moving with their weight – waist-held beneath bent-elbow arms – they fall to rest abreast his trousered thighs and fold their tattered wings inward. Unbuttoned buttonlessness: lie the patch-flaps of the pockets pressed in faded threads upon a black less faded. Seams, seeming sewn in haste-repairs, retreat along the jacket, gently out of view, as looms the waistcoat's edges, etching out a border broken by the presence of the hands, in coal-kept white, that remain placed within the trouser-topping pouches. Their knuckles – gnarled – not fully hid nor 'vealed, the back of th'hands show sheets of skin all sketched in wear; the hair leaned left; the hair leaned right. Greyed, grubby cuffs of shirt-sleeve fabric fringe the cuffs of coat-sleeve creases, as the ashen dead of the cigar's end tumble past. Pendulously hangs his pocket watch on a dark-brown string. Straying never far, the clockwork cognisance reflects, in stainless silver-coated metal, glints of westward-gliding light, revealing – deep – the distant past, e'en as tomorrow germinates to journey b'yond today into time immemor'yul. Buttons binding, by their thread-connection bringing, closely knit, the otherwise separate front ends of the foldful fabric, Brunel's loosely fitting waistcoat, in its depths-of-ocean navy hue, 's'lifted by the presence of his wrists. Grappling, clawing, grabbing: clung to the outmost reaches of the slitted holes (hair-breadth's the fatal slip-through seam-sealed sudden – swift – 'n silent fall), precariously placed, those binding buttons – three – traverse – emergent – taut-thread longing lengths to lose, if necess'ry, their candle-life to holding – Hold! – those sep'rate ends 'n folds – Hou'vast! – steadfastly firm f'r'eternity, this fabric of the universe in captured light 'n time-dried, mind-led ink. A gorge against a cummerbund: the waistcoat black – unbridged – now forms a split in glacial time 'n turns, each side, its wide'ning way. The valley voyage, vast it grows as th'cliffs cry on divergent, 'veals now further white, worn undergarb across a breast a-beating. The jacket folds; the waistcoat wanders. The creases crack; the shoulders steepen. Seams that circle shoulder socket sections stream 'n sleep between the grad'yul rise of stocky breadth that hunches slightly forward. Rolling back, as if th'were nagged by th'words of this narration, Brunel brings all of his posture into line (this does not last). He lifts his right-side hand and takes the cigar from his mouth; spits upon the plank of wood that rots off to his left; flicks the end-poised ash from off the flame-fed fiery crown; he puts the cigar back between his molars. The aged 'n cured tobacco leaves, aroma slow-fermented, seared sudden singeing glow of glowering magma, breathed volcanic, as

grabbed 'n grasping oxygen, frenetic flame-fuel feed, flits hurricanely through cylindric mass of melded matter. Above the cummerbund 'n waistcoat folds 'n jacket wings, breeze-buffered, a knot of deep, dark navy – neatsome in its rough-hewn way – gathers up stiff, stoic collar 'bout the stoic, stiff-held neck, bow-tying b'neath the bare, unbearded chin. O'er rounded jawline, just as high as th'rows of hidden teeth, that upturned collar cradles 'round the head that's framed by hat 'n hair. From collar-end to collar-end – that space between the hard-hem edges; above the bow (off-centre); in th'shadow of the lower lip – the curved 'n foetal-fused mandible front, that fixes fast the jawbones, ossified sits solemnly 'neath clean-shaved skin. Lips lined – tobacco traces – with black stumps of razored hair: around the edges of his mouth his clean-shaved skin gives o'er to stubble. The young yet yearning corners crease in frownsome fretting, fraught with thoughts he's thinking: on the fires that soon will drive the steamship westward; thoughts on the bridging of the bridgeless Avon gorge. Astride each side burn whiskers, briary-bristling black 'n thick, through chain unbroken of the ecotone between his face 'n hair – here hold the edges of a forest deep, its depths in skull-curve roots securing, fast, its sprawling canopy that grasps among the wind. But for the brim of the stovepipe hat his hair would face no fencing; t'would reach its spreading sprawl in all direction, height unbound. From out beneath this contained mass of untamed grass: his ears, their lobes lain flat against the side of his slowly turning head. It scans the scores of layb'ring eyes who've worked to build his wonders, now sitting standing squatting knelt on the dockyard at the day's far end. The bony-cartilaginousness of his nose protrudes, its structure strong 'n noticeable, broad'ning 'bout the nostrils. It sits above his lips, beneath his brow, right in the middle, wrinkling as a fly flits, sits, 'n flies off on again. Bright, brooding bullet-points of black break 'pon th'event horizons whence from sea of still, ceramic white spill cascades coloured brown. Set in their sockets, engineering eyes that see in perfect shapes shift vision's voyage 'cross the visage of the dark'ning, deep'ning eve. His brow above his broodsome eyes – half-furrowed 'n half-resting – betrayed, beneath a smudge of coal hand-painted 'pon his face, the threaded thoughts that weave their wond'ring way about the world he wanders, pond'ring the geometry of nature. His eyebrows – bushly bristling – bring their baseline quickly upward as the man quite close beside him hits – with gentle force – his arm. Brunel (Isambard Kingdom) brings his head 'round to acknowledge that he knows it's time to speak to all the workers waiting there. Atop his head: a silk top hat, woven from hatter's plush, placates the strands of hair that seek to 'scape from out the bord'ring brim. He readies.

From out of shadow's shade a cormorant – its wingspan spread – shuffles its feet and finds its footing on the slow, unanchored drift.

His cigar he took and held.

“Good job today, men.”



Day 5  
*Keynsham*  
Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November 1842  
*Abdju*  
2 (Payni). Shemu. XI. 6 Thutmose I

Separating swirls sing sweeping life amidst the fluid – fallow – flowing forth ‘cross cradle’s chan’ling folds to primordy. Awash: abundance pours in lapis, lifting silt ‘n sediment, and stripping off life-lacking lay’rs to free new, virgin ground.

A liquid plain unstilled; the sky in mirrored tumult: the wawtry gleam unmade the girl’s reflection.

Between the narrow ends of the prow and stern she lay, upon the planks of cedar, her hands pick-picking at the bundled reeds stuffed tight within the woodless seams. Rope around ‘n lashed together cedar from the land of the white-capped peaks, sailed o’er across the Wad-ja-Ur and formed into the masts and their sail-flow’r’d beams.

She rolled away from herself re-forming in the movements of the river Nile and lay with her back against the boat and her unkempt hair’s frayed-black between the water and the sky.

*Take passage with Iteru.  
She will bring you, with her waters,  
to templed hills beyond the river bend.  
The Terrace of the Great God waits.  
Walk the town abreast the harbour.*

She reached out/reached up/reached on with her arm and the hand that led it skyward, whipping, with her index finger, up cloud-wisps into grey-white ink.

Place your fingers,  
fast,  
around the pen you’ll write with.

Obliging me, she makes her fingertip wispful and ready, her neuro-muscle-mem’ry poised to recall her dancing lessons.

Now,  
decorate the sky  
with its own abstract expressions.  
The eye within her mind  
leads light-stepped strokes  
(A hippo trots on stubby legs!)  
o’er canvas blue.  
(A crocodile head snaps  
about his leath’ry heels!)  
A serpentine line  
b’comes a hill; hand  
placed upon a woven basket.  
She wraps around the  
sun-disc cloth ‘n rope,  
tethered to the east that birthed it.

“Now you cannot fall into the West.”

Her wisp-wov'n tether 'n her braided cloud tear 'n turn a risen red. The sun slips bounds 'n moves toward the height of day.

"Abdju up ahead!"

Watching, all the while, th'Egyptian sky, she breaks upward, stands, and steps over and between baskets of fish 'n grain, moving past the masts and their blossom'ing beams to look upon her destination.

A harbour swept by a bracing, racing wind, a-whooshing eastward, carving up the water's surface, swelling 'neath the ibis wing's – soft, single feather undulates, airborne, across the panoramic – plumage, playing the percussion of the creaking planks of cedar and the crumpuhling of canvas o'er the stockpiled stash of fish, brought fresh by fisherpeople finding bount'yus these primord'yul waters, whence the boat from Wa-Set wafts, now wav'ring in the dying gusts that race – it braces as the whooshing wind falls silent.

Reeds – lush-green – in glintsome gath'rings, corralled by the river, mark – amphibious – the border 'tween the body and the blood. Floribund in shades of emerald 'n moss 'n chlorophyll (of sunshine soaked) sway, swerve: resilient; disturbed; e'er undestroyed. Alight upon the stoic stem: an insect, in its winged way, waits – weary – whilst, between the plants, a fish winds 'gainst the current. Preening, pressed together, gesturing their gentle messages, a pair of lovebirds lull a-by the bank.

The girl steps off the boat onto the harbour.

vweeet!

pyoot!  
pyoot!

vweet!  
vwit!  
vweeet!

prprprprrrrrrrrr

tuhweeee?

vweet.

vweet.

woohooootwoo!  
wohooootwo!

zwoot?

prprprrrrrrr

kah.

vweet!  
vwit.

whooot?

pah.  
pah.  
pah.  
pah.

twee.  
twee.

pyoooot?

twee!

twee.

prprprpr

zwit! zwit!

zwit!

puhahihuhahihuhahihuheeeet.

zwit!

puhahih.

puhahihuh.

twitwitwi?

twitwitwi?

'Midst birdsong  
was he sat upon  
the grey-stone Chris'tyun wall.  
From th'dockyard early morn'  
he'd walked on homeward.

The late 'n dying birdcall throes of a grey day's dawning chorus came to scattered, broken silence  
thr'out the churchyard.

By dying dandelions lay  
his boots 'n cotton socks;  
by boots 'n cotton socks died dandelions.

Hudd'ling whilst the winter's whipping wind, its flaw expelled only for th'slabs of mem'ry stone  
close by the wall – patched; pieced – beneath him, he absorbs, e'en through his layers, th'chill that  
settles 'bout his bones and then decides he ought to move along, on homeward.

Along.

"Mawnin."

"Mornin."

Away, the church and its peakless tow'r; his foot fell 'tween the wetted cobbles.

"ffuckinell..."

The patter of the raindrops dropping – pat – returning for their cradle-death; springing forth a-  
from the splat, primord'yul – trav'ling drops to trace the stone.

Trees,  
roots along the hamlet path.  
Canopus.

And there's the field, its floodplain meadow-marsh spread grassy-green; dew beneath the sky-  
fled water washed away. The banks, held together by the reaching roots, erode in fits 'n starts.  
Weeping o'er its futile task, the willow stands.

He walked beside the meadow-marsh. In the gusts of wind, he walked on by the houses. The rain  
stopped when he knocked upon the door.

Low harvest waters.  
Sweep, sickle; falling flint.  
The cattle trample o'er.

She walked along, alone, beyond the dock 'n jettied gateway, past the fishery 'n stockpile house, unto the market plaza. Cartwheels 'long the roadway; bustle, busy, buzz: delightedly, she looks at all around her.

"Kid, you have a smile on your face like the shoots of corn just right before the waters drown 'em!"

A man, gently ravaged by the sands of time, leans, looking from his left-hand perch, at his post behind the posts 'n poles 'n canvas – stretched – of the porch outside his small bazaar. The elbow of his left; the forearm of his right: make contact with the flat-lain wood. Standing at the shelf of the outside stall, he lifts his brow in punctuation.

She side-steps as a zebu's driven past, its nostrils flared in exhalation; she ducks the horn 'n pats the sinewed-side 'n flinches at the tuft-tail whip.

Pulling on her gaze, her body takes slow steps toward the old man's stall.

"And what I mean by that's..."

"I know what you mean." Still gazing out 'n o'er 'n off, she comes to a stop as she interrupts.

Smirking as he makes a mark in the wood of his stall with a dull knife blade, he pours, with the other hand, beer into a bowl and places it beside her arm. While offering her thanks – surprised – to him, she lifted; poured – the thickly-yellow, sickly-sweet scud flooded t'ward her empty store.

All the meanwhile,  
whist she gulped,  
amongst her moments drinking,  
her eyes – world-wide –  
watched, bustling by,  
life's sacred, simple drama...

Drama's  
simple, sacred life,  
by bustling, watched worldwide...

Her eyes,  
drinking moments;  
her, amongst...

Meanwhile,  
she gulped,  
whilst all the moments met her.

She hands him back the clay-mud bowl that never left her lips.

"Parched, were you then?"

"Parched, was I then."

He smiled,  
she smiled,  
'n Ra remained indiff'rent.  
Their soles, bathed in Aeypshun sand,  
held shadows.

They talked of holy Abdju, then – his home 'n her unknown.

"and" (he said, gesturing with one arm beyond her sight) "there, following the sun on its descending, deathward road, Ahk-Mo-Ses – lah is Born, the Lord of Strength is Ra – placed his – Hah! – *pile* of ascendance!"

He laughed to himself; she raised an eyebrow.

(She) "Well," (spoke once he'd wiped his eyes,) "I" (asking him her question:) "am looking just for a house, somewhere. It's not on the harbour, but not far beyond."

"Not for the mer nor the sacred temples have you journeyed!" Sarcastic shock; sincere affection. "From gold Wa-Set you've come to walk our harbour stalls 'n streets!"

"ppuhhah! Well, I can hang out at the Most Select of Places anytime I want, so... But I'm sure" (She winks.) "your temples are quite adequate."

He makes a bow – it's insincere; amused, he plays along – and then he shows her where she'll need to go.

"At least: most likely, I suppose."

Ah, blow, ye winds, over the ocean!

Oh, blow, ye winds ohvvurr thuh seeeeeea!

Buuuuhlow, ya winds, ohvvurrr thuh ocean

aaand bring back ma bonnie ta meeeee!

Brrrring" (She stood,) "back,  
oooh bring" (washing,) "back,  
oh brrring back ma bonnie  
ta me, tooo meel!" (at the)  
"Briiing (hearthfire,) "back,  
brrrrring" (crooning.) "back,  
oh bring back ma bonnie  
toooooo...

me!" As she stated-sang that final word, she pressed a finger to his nose. He gurgle-laughed in artickle-ation at the finger 'n the face she pulled. As for the flames, they lived in their reflected dance upon the dented copper, carrying their futile heat in the glor'yus flow of full-lived life regardless. The kitchen 'quipment kept their light 'n carried it – an age; a moment – before it slipped – heat, light, 'n life – onward into the ink-blue past.

On a stool – its coloured cushion-cov'ring pinned in time-torn place – he leant with elbows halfway down his thighs and cupped the tea in tin. Suffused, the shug'ry steam that strained to fight its dissipation drew its death across th'eternal void 'n sang in soft evaporation.

With sour milk, the black'd turned brown.

"Y'were once this extrovert, too, ya know." Fussing with the young child's cloud-white hair, th'mother spoke to her much older son. She looked over at the lad leant 'pon his thighs, smiling through the warmth of recollection. "Thenyafirgot yer voice someplace!"

"I found" (Smile. Recollection. Warmth.) "a new one – somewhere; someplace."

"Yadid. Thachadid."

Conceived w'thin Tipperary's tundral green, but born within that self-same room, across the surf that separated th'isles she'd borne the babe; the boy; the man.

The sleeping – beauty – border collie, paws beneath the spinning wheel, rested on a ragged rug, tail-end atop the cold, stone floor.

He dreamt, his tail a-twitching

;

he dreamt, his tail a-twitch.

He is so old so soon

;

he was so old so fast.

He'll only age  
;  
he'll only age...

"Yahsawyerdad?"

"Ahsawmadad. We listened to the birdsong chorus."

"Dyarite?"

"Aiallwayzdoo."

They shared then – the sons, their mother, 'n the border collie – the crackling, flicker-flame sounds of tide-eternal-time. As she began to hum again, an idea washed ashore.

"Oh okay, yeh. Where is it?"

She told him it was upstairs, in his room.

Carpetlessness creaking under step 'n under foot 'n under creaking cart'lige cushion holding fast 'n holding on... Unvarnished grain grows – sturdy; split – up, on, and o'er again; the top-stair corner carries 'round onto the landing.

He walked upstairs.

T'his room he tread those boards – going not far; treading not long. A finely crafted lot of letters nailed into its door, the room, so full in retrospect, slept – spacious; silent.

In moted dustlight leant his old guitar.

"Found it..." She softly breathed out air through phonemed chords – her little hands on fat'ning hips; her shoulders sloped 'n forward fall'n – now that she'd stopped her streetway wand'ring, winding – wandrous – wondersome through Abdju's pathway-roads 'n by its fam'lied houses. In grand'yus unremarkability, unbathed in memory, it merely stood, its spacious silence settled on the soil, 'n while she watched that portal-house, a-peering b'yond that present past, she knew not why it was she heard the sound of strings.

"Heh-loh?"

She only heard her question-call sail westward.

"Hell-oe?"

She merely felt its rippled rings recede.

"Huhhigh?"

And so, it seemed, there was nobody there.

It was – at least, it seemed – neglected; empty.

She stepped through th'outer wall's arching break, on through into the tiny courtyard.

Clay pots poised;  
thatch-canvas fall'n.  
Unwoven wicker waits.  
The cold clay-oven casts  
its heatless shade.

The walls – still washed in white – that formed the box that made a home gave o'er to steps upon its left-hand side that led to th'rooftop, flat. She placed her hand around the pole that stood 'n held the broken thatch – that canopy in twain above the door.

The sound of slackened strings turned, stretched, 'n tautened...

He felt the forms of the spacious wave-lines wafting through the rippling air, looking 'cross the room at the shapen wood, its dusty surface dull with gathered time.

She passed beyond the threshold of the wood-slat door 'n saw the settled moments scatter.

A workshop in moted dustlight.

Small circle-cymbals;  
leather strips.

Woodworking tools 'n sawdust.  
Strewn about a mudbrick seat:  
instrument fragments.

Consternatal lines lit lightly, laced across her forehead; her eyebrows, borne above lush iris  
plains, pushed upon themselves, remem'bring.

Accumulus:  
the tide of  
risen tears.

Approach, both, cross in tread,  
comprehensilently  
reaching out to lay your fingers  
'gainst the life-loosed strings.

Struck – both him 'n you;  
both you 'n her – by rooted time,  
suffering... A  
sole, immortal moment.

He felt She felt his  
fingers hers

touch, tentatively;  
tracing

the tension of their  
sep'rate stories –  
sing, vibration...

Day 6  
*Bristol*  
Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> December 1842  
*Wa-Set*  
4 (Mesore). Shemu. XXX. 6 Thutmose I

Music,  
myth,  
'n New Year's Eve.

"Daghada's harp 'n harper, captured by the Formor'yuns! They fled – bad luck to their coward-flight, feasting in their flame-lit hall! Aengus accompanied his father, out to the camp o'the dishonoured king; they came upon the tent wherein the feast was held and peered along the flick'ring fire..."

"Dear Raconteur: please take yer ale!"

"I shall continue on a watered belly! [.....] ggahhhh 'n so! They saw, unmistakable, upside-down upon their ret'nas 'n then rightside-up, Oo-aith-nay sitting tied beside the instrument of Irish song!"

"An' they took it back?"

"Do the valley's roll on, a lush-green tide, b'yond the cliffs beside the foamy sea?! Aye, they took it back! Daghada – broad 'n tall 'n stern – brushed aside the canvas door... He stood there, with his son, afore their foe-ly gaze, speaking with an awesome voice:

*Come, apple-scented murmurer!*  
*Come, four-angled frame of harmony!*  
*Come summer, come winter,*  
*out of the mouths of harps 'n bags 'n pipes!*

In immense immediacy, soundwave-swift, the harp sailed upon the fire of the candlelight, cutting through nine men along the way!"

"[An awed, well-practiced hush.]"

"You all are right in your silence, stunned! For that is how the hall – right to the fat, old king – held their faces as the nine men toppled! And then..."

"Thuh thr

"three strands o

"of Ireland!"

rland!"

of Ireland!"

"Yuss! And the first of 'em was?"

"Goltra!"

"Th'weeping enchantment! All Formor'yuns present wept 'n mourned their failure! And the second?"

"Geantra!"

"Turning all to drunken merriment; fool's laughter! Finally?"

"Suantra!"

"Under the drowsy spell they all fell off into the deep, foreboding, terrorsome blank map of cold, uncharted slumber!"

The laughing lads then raised their mugs; their cups – the laughs they made made their wand'ring way through late-afternoon sky. They heard the music of the Celtic isle they shared within their



fam'ly lines; well-Irished coffee kept their red-blood warm. In tin it crested – black – against the walls that held its heat; from tin it tore its heatway through the air.

A December ends as the cycle-year, its seasoned travel coursed, treads on from its mid-winter peak to the valleys of the distant spring. In hours hence, the human soul, that midnight marks with meaning, will watch the stars as the planet turns to face the past-approaching future.

Lean, anchor, low  
your oxidated grappling beam;  
sunken chain-link laid,  
its mass upon  
the Great Western dockyard.

Bind your barreled  
wood, you rings of  
rustsome iron; reaching...  
Contents kept.  
The grain is mismatched 'cross the breaks.

*kkcoo coooo?*  
kkcalling 'dustrial dove,  
'long undulating urban stone  
it steps 'n stops 'n, flut'ring, flies,  
to perch 'top tattered post.

Sun, searing;  
th'ocean atmosphere refracts.  
Gull glides o'er river's surface.

Over th'rippled-wakeweave, labyrinthine, listsome layers lulled's the lapping lapis, swelled 'n swept from its beak-broken centrepont, counterpointed 'gainst the crash of echoed-impact's surface signs, all while she entertained the children b'side the reeds.

"Telluss!"

"Doowitt!"

"Such demanding little monkeys..."

Her tilted head  
held em'rald eyes;  
her countenance – false-furrowed.  
Her mouth mixed signals:  
hold, unstable frown!

The temple in the eve'ning skyline, scaffolded in silhouette, sears with the fire of the fallen sun, blazing 'cross th'orizon – herald night. Up upon the boulder she was standing by, climbed a boy with nearly nothing on.

"Be"[He]"fore"[leant]"it's"[against]"too"[her]"late!"[back 'n giggled.]

Letting him topple neatly over to the ground below, she sat upon the stone 'n sighed.

"The cosmos, then, was chaos..."

Shrieks. Giggles. Silence.

"The void – its dancing blackness  
bleak; its inf'nut bleakness  
black –  
did spread-suffuse

its chasmic fugue  
with pandemonia!  
Disorder – dread ‘n dire –  
drove its droning plainchant  
dirge;  
th’atonal clash  
of storm-cloud tide  
tore taut timpanic surge!  
Over all the rolling  
chaos came, conducting  
calm,  
she whom’s beloved,  
with lotus/reed;  
outstretched’s her gest’yring arm.  
Cosmosis song on soundwaves:  
pure ‘n po’erful pulsed  
her voice!  
Engendering  
– Dance, Maer’t, ‘n sing! –  
Ma’at in order joy’us!  
Observing her arrangement  
made – harmonious;  
divine –  
the ibis did  
enhance her work  
with instrument sublime!  
Whilst Merit mused melod’yus,  
Thoth, his feet upon two  
stars,  
a lyre made,  
with seasons strung;  
on yoke-beam held – cross-barred.  
With this, together they  
traversed the heavens,  
newly born.  
Out of the east  
the Aten rose  
and bless’d the primal morn’...”

Silence. Giggles. Shrieks.

“The cosmos, then,” [She smiled ‘n bowed.] “was order.”

Now that their world was right again – mused melody made Ma’at – those children up-leapt,  
mimed the song, ‘n ran home when their names were called.

The girl – someplace between the ones who call ‘n those who run – took to the well-worn way  
beside the houses, here where all the ink is set. She’ll live/She lived/She’s living as the year begat,  
became; the year fell fast, funereal, ‘n festive.

"It's close..."

"It's closer still..."

"Ra re-born."

"Aahpep about his heels."

"To slither off to wait in the Tenth Region of the Night."

"Issfet adorns the World Encirler."

"Sibling serpent, umbilical born, waits in th'western mountains – th'evil gaze."

"But! Not for now's fear of the enemy of Ma'at!"

"Now's for getting drunk 'n jubilat'ry!"

"As Isis spills her tears upon the black 'n green Osiris"

"– the pieces of his person sown about –"

"the river rises"

"– running –"

"for to flood our fallow land,"

"as Hapi guides the inundation thr'out the fields!"

"The cycle culminates..."

"... fertility afresh..."

"... a new year!"

The women, in their linen clad, did clasp each other's hands 'n bow to their applauding audience – all merry. Hand in hand in hand in hand they danced on dustsome earth, their revealed thighs tattooed with Bes 'n Beset. On kemkem's kept the rhythm – masculine 'n manual beat – their barrel bodies made of laced wooden-boards.

Our girl – our she; our her – our woman wondered at the telling, sat enrapt as rev'llers joined to move with the performers, pacingprance upon the waves of vocal melody – khesu; khesit – as the flutes 'n lyres faded 'neath the noise.

"To the Queen of Sexuality!"

"Of Drunkenness 'n Dancing!"

"Lady of Fertility!"

"Supreme!"

Held to Hathor high – the bowls of beer; spirited souls. The night sky knew the space between the moments.

At the edge 'n cusp 'n border, her two hands between her legs, she heard a soundless space spread – soft – 'n dim the present. Flitflicker flame w'thin mud-brick pit flew high 'n wild 'n tempered, lusting after ox'junated life.

*Who are you?*

Amongst her firing chemistry came choruscalling cadence – one voice, replaying layered; 'luminary.

*When are you?*

*Were you?*

Though through her throat-housed vocal chords no exhale's shaped 'to speech, she speaks her name then asks back:

"Who were you?"

*Who was I...*

*The one who watched you dance,  
through misted eyes.*

"You'll be the one who plays those strings."

Yes.

"You'll map your *mind in scribbled shapes*."

"Yes..."

Though through his throat-housed vocal chords no exhale's shaped 'to speech, he speaks his name and tells her:

"Happy New Year."

Seeping, spilling o'er 'n into th'bubble 'bout his person – its soundless sphere circumvents lin'yur time – did fall his sound-surroundings in cascades of coursing cheer, until he came to be – again – then, there, 'n now.

Fiddle – frenzied; feen'yun – fastly furied from'is friend, for whom the lunar-lumined language lit the way.

In Scotly-Gaelic balladry did croon a new acquaintance, querying the starlight 'pon the river.

"Yarrinnarruminffyoosid koemuh, lad!"

"NmeH?"

"Hah!"

"Ah... pffff."

"Mhmm."

"Gyyuhhhh."

"Hup!"

"Oooff!"

"Right!"

"Kay."

## KUHLINKUHLINK

Bottle – bare on its outer side; inside, its shipless ocean – strikes the stone step b'low its lookout perch 'n breaks 'gainst rope-coiled shore.

"Gaaaahhh, molasses!"

"Hah! S'new one. Cannaye steal it?"

"Y'can't steal what's yours."

Dark, did spread  
the ocean – red,  
it seemed, as seeped its stain.

What, will these cobbles,  
liquor-drenched,  
e'er ne'er be clean again?

"Ah!"

"Huh?"

"Who'd've thought that heat-hewn sand t'v'ad such blood-red rum inside?!"

"Yeraltering Shakespeare now?"

"The scene... I was forced – fain – to remember."

"Well, stand the bottle, shattered fist yet raised, 'n leave 'er on the sleepless stone."

There on the corner where the Frome doth spill its fair, fine, hidden waters 'pon the Avon – captured; tideless; wild – they stood 'n sat 'n sang.

Back 'n forth the story fell, in throes of narrative, between perceptions parsed 'cross space 'n time.

Overwhelmed, she was, w'thin sexualistfulusting air, by th'stark terrawe 'fadulthood – libeedonism bare. Their countenances cruel in rapt, animalismic fit; ecstatic states of wild, delyric song.

Singing, now, the words with tenor-tones of vibrance born, he leant into the moment, weight upon the air.

The cycle set in motion new. She and the land did shuddering he braced the breeze. Newly born, the morning night-time knew its natal breath. A twinge in the side of time – th'future released

"Ahgottasong fahyooz." Said a young, Scots, worker man.

Cheers 'n exhortations.

"Scalled *Tymz Gon By*."

Looks 'n smiles 'n eyebrows.

"Sangaloong iffyahget thuh gist."

The men were silent as the riv'ring stars.

"Shid ald akwentans  
bee firrgott an  
nivir brocht ti mynd?  
Shid al akwentans  
bee firgot an  
ald lang syne?"

Though he spoke his  
truest accent, words,  
and cadence – Scots suffused –  
he painted such th'we  
saw so clear the  
daisyed-slopes and streams.

"Fir ald lang syn, ma jo!  
Fir ald lang syn...  
Wil tak a cup  
o kindness yet,  
fir ald lang syn."

He told so sure-  
ly of the dusk  
o'er Alba's wand'rous peaks,  
held-high land 'tween  
her sea c'ressed shores, that  
pint cups we few raised.

"An thers a han,  
my trustee feer!  
An gees a han o thyn!  
And we'll tak a richt  
gude willie waucht  
fir ald lang syn!  
Fir ald lang syn, ma jo!  
["For old lang ziiiiiiiiiiiiighn!"]  
Wil tak a cup

o kindness yet,  
fir ["Old!"] lang syn!"

*Should old acquaintance  
be forgot and  
never brought to mind...*

Thus sang the year's last  
breath and first in  
these old times gone by.

Day 7  
*Bristol*  
Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 1843

*Wa-Set*  
1 (Thoth). Akhet. XXVIII. 7 Thutmose I

A lattice marked upon the stone in red rests, readying the canvas wall.  
"Oi – put it back how it was."  
A piece of off-cut – hewn – 's replaced, its miniature scene depicted 'pon its smoother side in its own lattice.  
"Sorry..."  
Two grids, lain down 'pon each surface, their calculated squares collecting up, in tessellated time, their timeless, abstract forms.  
""S'okay. Just: neither me, nor you, nor god-king wants to see Osiris with a massive head."  
Gigguhling, she looks o'er at an unmarked column.  
"I do want to see it!"  
Chuckuhling, he brushed a soot-black line across a register in symmetry.  
"I suppose I could always blame the chiseller..."  
Smiling – soft – she watched, at work, two men who measured, parallel.  
"Must be hard to make those grids on the columns."  
He gave a glance toward the men she watched, and nodded, adding:  
"Gods, yeah..."  
The sun disc set a fire across the pre-noon sky.  
They sat upon the scaffold, both, their legs left hanging down, its levelled frame – unswayed – beneath them, with its ladders linking lay'rs. On engineered nature – cut 'n formed; manipulated – now they took the universe within their hands.

"You know ' **KLLANNKK** ... a cof **PTTINKK** oem..."  
"WHAT?"

"I SAID: ONCE I P/ **KTTRRRMPKKT** WITH A POEM."  
"CAN'T HEAR YOU. BUSY SHIPYARD, YOU KNOW?"

The metal of the hull: it rested fast against the wood, its thick-cut form braced by a web of timber – taut, its cross-barred beams 'n struts. Below them, many metres 'long the pull of gravity, were piled up lengths of rope 'n widths of wood 'n sheets of smelted ore. Great wheels to bracket links of chain, tremendous in their coil, rested immovable as men made plans to move them.

There was a lull in 'truding sound.  
"The colours..."  
"Mm?"  
"They sing the sunlight 'long the columned hall."  
"What're you on about?" Looking at his friend, he asked.  
"I am not here;" (Th'reply.) "I am not now."  
"Not now?" Looking at the girl, who sat with legs hung b'yond the scaffold, the man who etched Osiris paused 'n hovered.  
"No."  
"Hah! When are you, then? And where?"  
"A boat of black immensity, that's formed of things unknown – our perch is pressed against the painted walls of Karnak."

Consternation 'cross his brow, he brought his tin-cup to his mouth 'n drank the cold of coffee left; of drink forgotten. Still looking for'd, he asked:

"In Egypt?"

"Yeah. But un-ruined."

"Old Mister Brunel'd be jealous! I've heard him glow with the splendour of their architecture."

Beside, the other man, his tilted head in comprehension, looked far into th'horizons of his vision.

"Ipet-isu..."

"What is that?"

"The name..."

"You can see its name?" His tools now left beside him and his hands upon his knees, the white cloth of his kilt with stone-dust stained, he pondered o'er the girl, the green light of her irides gleaming, confused and yet enchanted by her vision.

"In gold. Abstract forms... Above them, animalistic forms; sails, their canvas catching wind. But the name... is lost to me."

"What else?"

"They are not mere sand 'n stone – deep blue, lapis; em'rald, green; red ochre, ox-blood... Their backdrop: washed in white 'n touched with gold. I can see the arch-like pylons with their flagpoles, obelisks, 'n entrance pathways; there is water at an inlet."

"A river?"

"It is... and yet, it is still. Caught; captured. The water rests; the city's floating."

"Floating?"

"The water doesn't change."

"A river without an inundation?"

"Yes. This boat, the size of halls 'n temples, is being built within a tideless, floating harbour."

The wake drives on 'n out, its rhythm-song sung soft upon the surface, valleyed-peaklines pushingpull crestrighzily tumble – take this passing o'er of energised space displaced (Make way!); merge-meld incompressible fluid; fundamentallpresent life – and through its rippling immortality – ancestral river motion – on the mem'ry of a moment lasts, 'n lives, 'n loves, 'n longs for its brief but eternal time to e'er transcend its evanescence: thus through the Nile 'n Avon pass these stories.

"Look at that sun, sinking."

"Like a ship."

The mid became the late within that afternoon in England. Two men upon a narrow boat; a boat upon a fledgling sea.

The sky ran white with its bleeding clouds: their vayp'ric, icy wisps did weave their rainless way thr'out th'scattered, short light-wavelengths – domed celest'yul. Reflected were its many molecules – it saw its aged face beginning to resemble, now, its dusky death mask, backlit by th'infinite concentricity of the e'er-retreating stars, that yet seem constant, and unlosable, and deathless.

The banks: they sang of winter's depths, yet moved with the impending, trans'yunt spring – a bare branch budded; flit, did the risen birds. Green, brown, 'n black, 'n red, 'n birdsong hues held tight the Avon as it moved – displaced – with th'wake made by the plotless, coursing hull.

"There're murmurations in the river, made of sparrow's wings."

"?"

"."

"..."

"Also – we're coming to the lock gates."



They came unto the sunken gates, their chamber sealed behind the oak arranged to gaze upstream – chevrons reaching back above the masonry to lev’rage ‘gainst the coursing blue.

Off they threw the rope onto the mooring, made of planks pressed to the sloping side, rapt about the bitt that posts a place to stay or launch into the landless tide.

“You go o’er therethen.”

“Aye.”

“The fuck you doin’?”

Up upon the metal, not the platform path, he crossed in perilous steps. Rolling eyes, the man on t’other side worked to raise the paddle up.

Windlass on the axle:  
lift the toothed bar!

Lobbed across the gate, the key flew fine ‘n fair ‘n fell into the man’s two hands.

“Now what?”

“We wait.”

As the chamber changed to match the level of the Avon on the outer side, the men looked o’er ‘n out across, watching for the fauna of the banks.

Glistenfalling  
flickerfast,  
lightlaced luminous  
turquoiseteal;  
traceturning  
featheredflittingflight –  
fish-hunting,  
hov’ring  
sov’reign.

“Saw?”

“Where?”

“There:”

“When?”

“Then:”

“Yeah.”

“Kingfisher.”

“Viz-yoo-ul fleeting flair.”

“Like a shooting star.”

“A falling flame.”

“The forms – they fall in dancely splendour.”

“They pass, reflecting fire.”

“Rambling, are we?”

“Ain’t we.”

“Ain’t we just.”

“Just to ramble?”

“W’tin time ‘n space.”

“To fill the time?”

“To fill the space.”

“With what?”

“With words.”

W'thin  
 reeds of green papyrus –  
 rushing river's edge –  
 s  
 e  
 n  
 t  
 i  
 n  
 e  
 l  
 i  
 n  
 s  
 i  
 l  
 e  
 n  
 c  
 e  
 a  
 n  
 d  
 i  
 n  
 g  
 "D'you see?" s  
 t  
 e  
 r  
 n  
 g  
 "See what?" s  
 v  
 e  
 y  
 o  
 r  
 "The s  
 u  
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 "It looks for  
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"Hey – try it now."

*Heave!* Against the wooden beam pressed palms of outstretched arms; with elbows locked the shoulders shoved, transferring force.

*Push!* The planted feet fought forward under thighs that threw their strength against the earth to move the river 'neath the sky.

Taking deep-drawn oxen-breaths, he opened up his half, recov'ring at the end with hands on hips.

"PUhhhuuhh th'fuck you laughin' at?!"

The other on the other side, still yet to do his part, had watched – amused – the strengthly, strainsome struggle.

Chuckuhling, he turned his back to the beam, his bum against it – with greatest ease he walked it to the edge.

“Fffffuck you.”

Laughter through a chilly breeze.

Meanwhile, in Egypt: Iteru, with the nighyulism of a barren Earth beneath her, did scorn the plains with the stoicism of her waters.

Bundled reeds on the rapid river ferried, now, two women ‘tween the banks.

“I’m not a woman...” Matted hair blown ‘cross deep-em’rald eyes.

“And yet, you match the Nile for flooding...” Glint in the clouds of her guide-companion.

Silently, her face was taken aback.

“Gross!”

Laughing together, the aft’noon greeted eve’ning.

With soft, slight sadness sang the gaze of the elder to the younger’s plight:

“Still a storyteller – now a woman.”

The canvas sail beat softly as the wind caused it to fold; the baskets rocked on each side, though bound with twine.

“Which way” (The one with glintsome eyes.) “does this shining river run?”

A query in the brow ‘n tilt of head – green-eyed response.

“O’er fields ‘n pastures, abreast the rising sun.”

She rapped her fingers on a basket’s lid.

“In peace” (*rrap rap*) “give life –” (*rrap rap*) “o’erflowing, outburst banks!” (*prrrap rrap*) “Your might produceth all – f’which we give thanks!”

Percussive were her hands around the drum she had unbound that now sat set between her legs; she passed the torch.

“Oh... Hah! Umm. Kay... Ayeuuh...

I do hate...

to see...

thaaat risen sun go down!

Oh, inundayshuuuun:

please bring it back ‘round!”

A riff from a distant land ‘n time broke in upon their rhythmic laughter – vibration, singing strings of pentatony.

“Shine forth!

Shine fo-orth,

thou god unnamed above!”

“Though none work with you,

do that task you love!”

Male voice; Germanic-Saxon sound – it interceded thus:

“Well now, flow

right on down

to that Celtiiiiic, foamy sea!

Th’old gorge will guide you –

let it channel thee!

Oh, but leave  
this here bay  
with your tideless spirit-guide  
for to teach me truths, no-ow  
and in the by and by..."

*Which-a way,  
which-a wa-ay  
does that blood-red river run?*

From West-fall'n youth, no-ow  
on to the dawn-red sun...

Day 8  
*Bristol*  
Friday 14<sup>th</sup> April 1843  
*Wa-Set*  
2 (Phaophi). Akhet. XV. 7 Thutmose I

Seshat –  
Record Keeper;  
She Who Is The Scribe;  
Mistress Of The House Of Books;  
Goddess Of Wisdom, Of Knowledge, Of Writing –  
whose seven-pointed emblem  
emanates atop her head,  
giving to the sky the stars;  
to the present – memory!  
In regal, pantherine, 'n  
funerary rings, rosettes  
adorn your form which  
watches 'n records!  
Grant me your preservation  
by your gift of essence caught  
in th'amber of your libric shelves,  
a-shimmer with papyrus!  
Inscribe upon those scrolls, your  
stylus dipped in deathless ink,  
the 'glyphs I've gathered swiftly  
for to fend off time!  
Strike into your stela slab  
(e'en as you notch the years)  
the pattern-paths of neurons that're  
writ amidst my mind!  
Gift this river-daughter! Make,  
etern'ly manifest,  
her life in light, that I  
might write her name...

Moving in a motion m'raculous, the music w'thin their minds uttering ancience pure in its expressive flame 'n formless order, finding fire's flitferocious honesty in sinew's charged with voiceless verse of silent song, the dancers danced. A trio-troupe transmogrified via tumblestretchfall, reconfigurereaching jinglejangle-jointed wrists – a-ringed 'n rhythmraprapture-ridden – wrought in taut 'n trying trancefigureful, flexibilithe, lustsome posture passing (palms prostrate; long fingers flexed against the dirtsand-spattered stone) in contortioned controlled – their hips did push toward the Aten-bearing sky. Jewelled gesticundulation, draped in semi-precious stone. Jew'llry laden, draped gesticulation undulates. Poses poised in semi-circle, arching, awe-met perches, held – an inverse Nut in triplicated, breast-bare, brazen life. The shimmershine of sweat shed through their painted, perfumed canvas caught the glist'ning glare of Horus 'fore it soaked the

linen veil that cloaked the contour-lines that led below their naveled peaks 'n met between their thighs. Ankles adorned below their flexing, angled knees – their feet stood fast 'n firm, the primate-palms repurposed.

She watched the tassletumbling locks upon the middle woman's head. Her hand: it tentatively touched her own about her ear, the storied-strands that 'scaped the makeshift grooming wrapping 'round the wisps of breeze that broke against the hazeheat, heady o'er the crowds – her fingers felt for these 'n drew them in.

Riprent's the sky by  
crazed callcries!  
Crashsymbolism-shouts shear reams  
of sheer, Atenic heat from light;  
lightheat from heatlight-haze!  
Sound-seared, the sky slips scatters:  
settles silent.

Opet.

The Trinity revealed; kings, resurrected.

The Hidden One – He moves within the Most Select of Places, carried forth in rev'rent, ordered motion, daylight-bound.

Unmothered Mut, Her primal, parthogenic pride unbound. Leonine light, She births the Son to 'lluminate the world.

Khonsu – o'er starlit paths He travels, tracing night. Tracking the Aten's rays, He's f'rever young.

A triad tours triumphant, born anew.

And to quietus made – deus, presented.

Knelt to by the passing Nile, the temple stood – its Gothic form peaked by a vacant spire-platform, shorn of reach by bolts of 'lectric sky. The archway of its entry doors – their wooden bulk the weight of God – watched o'er as the passion play passed through to take the steps.

"He's offered up his innocence and yet's repaid with scorn."

"He'll pass upon that crossbeam as we shelter from the storm."

The stone, a-rounded smooth by th'many footfall-tides of time – yet smoother still in future yet still 'pproaching presentward – sang th'sound of heavy wood dragged down 'n cross 'n down 'n cross 'n down 'n cross; the actor, in his costume-robe, stepped heav'ly.

"Christ... that's a load to bear! Especially in jest!"

"In jest?"

"Gestures of pious, passhnut parody."

"The crowds don't spit, or heckle."

"Don't you know that man?"

"Not I."

Sombre – somnambulance, it seemed – th'procession passed, its meditative musing moving in the sun's footsteps:

silent keening,  
t'th'west proceeding,  
following yonder star.  
Ohhhhh-ooooo...

He had fled to the lands of the cradle continent, spirited off when but a newborne dawn, to 'scape the culling only to take up the cross. The fire overhead lit the shouldered wood – here comes the lamb for the burnt off'ring.

"Shepherd In His Field Of Earth;  
 Greatest In Heaven;  
 Lord Of All –  
 o'erthrow the unrighteous!  
 Creator Of Our Kind  
 Who Gave Us Life;  
 Gentle Of Heart –  
 pacify the strong 'n weak!  
 Deliver us from evil!  
 You brought light into the World!  
 You made all that there is!  
 Gold, incense, 'n myrrh abound  
 among lapis lazuli!  
 Lord Of The Gods,  
 to Whom the Gods give plenteous praise –  
 Your horns are strong!  
 Your step is large!  
 Mighty Bull Of The Ennead!  
  
 Son Of God, incarnate  
 in this king beneath this crown  
 Who comes to die 'n  
 rise again 'n  
 rise anew 'n  
 come across the Earth  
 in phoenix-fire, fertilising  
 pasture to make plenty!  
 For Yours is His kingdom,  
 His power, 'n  
 His glory!  
 His kingly cum;  
 Thy will is done –  
 His city loves His rising!"

Peering from the peopled walls she'd scrambled through 'n past 'n o'er, the girl-child held the knees of the girl-child wrapped about her head. Hanging off her waist 'n holding on, the boy-child yelped; she hoisted both, reshuffled, 'n explained:

"They take the gods to Ipet-Re-Shyt."

"Why?"

"Here:" (She pulled the boy-child for'd 'n raised him up 'n placed him down.) "hold on to the ram's horns." Into her view the other leant, her face now upside-down.

"Uhhweyeyuuh?"

Her chariot, whose hands still held the boy who wriggled 'pon the sphinx, looked up at her – wide-eyed – 'n whispered:

"Rebirth!"

Drumdancecestasyb'lismiclouds of prideprocession pass in crassshimmering sight-sound, sending scented colourcalls careening t'ward the parted sea – its walls awash in 'Gyptian generations gathered for the Festival Of Opet.

Shu, in th'diadem 'n ostrich feather, raising hands along with Tefnut, wearing th'solar disk, as both express their adoration!

Now came the white-clad priestesses, their cascade linen folds enfolding forms enrapt in sistrum shaking, pacing, crying, calling, singing, symbolising, presence giving, life affirming, honour bringing, king preceding, cult performing, joy, 'n p'rayding by!

Tat-tattoo thund'ring! Fanfare bearing down in beating heat!

*kemkem kemkem*  
*kemkem kemkem*  
*se-shess-set*  
*se-shess-set*  
*kemkem kemkem*

*kemkem kemkem*  
*kemkem kemkem*  
*se-shess-set*  
*se-shess-set*  
*kemkem kemkem*

*kemkem kemkem*  
*kemkem kemkem*  
*se-shess-set*  
*se-shess-set*  
*kemkem kemkem*

Khess-sit; Khess-su –  
sing of murder,  
lamentation,  
resurrection,  
risen gods!

*kemkem kemkem*  
*kemkem kemkem*  
*se-shess-set*  
*se-shess-set*  
*kemkem kemkem*

*kemkem kemkem*  
*kemkem kemkem*  
*se-shess-set*  
*se-shess-set*  
*kemkem kemkem*

Khess-su; Khess-sit –  
praise the king!  
Praise!  
Sing!  
A risen god!

*kemkem kemkem*  
*kemkem kemkem*  
*se-shess-set*  
*se-shess-set*  
*kemkem kemkem*



*kemkem kemkem*  
*kemkem kemkem*  
*se-shess-set*  
*se-shess-set*  
*kemkem kemkem*

Khess-sit; Khess-su –  
sankh tyoo erry  
to the south  
awaits him!  
Amun-Ra!

*kemkem kemkem*  
*kemkem kemkem*  
*se-shess-set*  
*se-shess-set*  
*kemkem kemkem*

*kemkem kemkem*  
*kemkem kemkem*  
*se-shess-set*  
*se-shess-set*  
*kemkem kemkem*

Khess-su; Khess-sit –  
incense soars  
along your  
hymnful voice!  
Opet shines!

*kemkem kemkem*  
*kemkem kemkem*  
*se-shess-set*  
*se-shess-set*  
*KEM*

The way-shrine welcomed him: the king, resplendent! Thoth Is Born! Djehut-aye Mes! High Priest, he made his off'rings.

"Praise be to this king! See his plaited crown of thorns! How red it runs to colour his dishevelled curls! Ee'yays-ooss Nats'ahrayn-ooss Rrrex Ee'yooday-orum! Krystos Yesh'wa! Hail!"

"You know... I think they're mocking him."

"Go kiss him on the cheek."

"I can't."

"Why?"

"I do not know him."

As the procession passed over the pave of Prince Street, the water of the harbour full with the crowd's reflection, wonky windows in the red-brick gables parted like the Jordan – watchers watched the man with the twigs about his head.

A child, her grubby face lit mischievous, yelled down from her first-floor perch:

"Oi! Son of Mankind's messianic urge! Child of God, piously offered to Himself! Star of David's line! Why don't you turn the cross to embers 'n roast upon it fish for all your foll'wers?" Now, here she threw at him a haddock. "You can do it! I believe in you!"

She vanished. Yesh'wa, incarnate beneath a faded tablecloth, walked on to find Golgolta 'midst the pluming, fuming towers.

"And you *really* don't...?"

"No! Ahh... I mean, possibly..."

"Possibly?!"

"Just... give me 'til the cockcrow morning."

"Oi! King Josh!" The girl was now an ancient man; was Satan, swapping bodies as he pleased. Hobbuhlingalong beside the crossbearer, he puffed 'n wheezed.

"*ppuhhaah* 'Ow d'you move so quickly, son? That bloody cross on wheels?!"

The droning of the plainchant chanters, moving solemnly in tow, washed over both Jesus 'n his compan'yun.

"*gguuuaghh* Can't you do something about that? Blink to bind their mouths? Wrinkle your nose to change their tune? I'm afraid" (The old man made a show of wobb'ling-hobb'ling here.) "with my cane I'm only able for to fumble..."

To a bridge across the stretch of Frome, afore it joins the Avon, the followers of Christ's stand-in stepped, auld cathedral bound.

Carts coal-laden 'n sledges slumped,  
at rest, against stone walls;  
a horseshoe – bent; discarded –  
clatterclinked; the seagull calls  
its screeching song that undulates  
as coda whilst it sits  
alitatop a woodbeam perch 'n  
turns around 'n shits.

"Jeeezus that was close!" Winking at an unseen someone, somewhere off somewhen a - watching, the Devil, in his ragged wings, leant 'gainst the bridge-side.

"In all my splendour."

(In all his splendour.)

"All good things come in threes!" (The Devil hissed as, trudging by, the actor – effort real – walked over rope 'n chain.) "This shall be no different! Here's your third 'n last temptation: Why not, my fellow fallen"

His golden armour sagged; his proudly crossed arms fell to hanging. Slumped b'hind bended knees, cracked shin-guards rising, there he sat. Whate'er he'd seen within those eyes... he'd not the heart to stand against it.

The shrine was shouldered, carried by twelve men in kilts on sandalled feet. The long, ungilded poles spread out the weight of golden statues. The barque which sat 'n housed the hidden, sailing Him to meet with Mut, bore glimpses of divinity to those so rarely witness. Both prow 'n stern – they lifted for to raise toward the sky their ram's heads, riding 'pon the broad breastplate 'n lifting 'loft the disk. Covered with a thin, loose, linen mist which draped its veil amidships, the myst'ries of the divine realm – in haze – were brought before excluded eyes.

She scrambled up the wall. Settuhling herself on the stone, she watched the temple waiting to receive the shrine. Once w'thin, The Hidden One would be re-hidden, absorbed in the dark unseen. Housed inside, Amun-Ra'd meet with Mut.

Turning north, she gazed toward the columns 'n the flagpoled pylons. Here, now, sat beside Ipet-Re-Shyt, she pondered o'er her life 'tween temples.

As her eyes did wander wistsomely, her gaze fell t'scanning 'cross the coloured reams of human speech etched, somehow, into earth's canvas. It delighted her when her meagre, unrefined knowledge would flare with new, ecstatic recognition, whether single 'glyph or sequence; in a map yet black with mist, she saw new treasures.

The processions yet processed, proclaiming god.

Coming to its end – inev'table – they stood the cross; the barque was brought within the inner sanctum; the novella's gaps were closed.

In Wa-Set, then, the unseen rites were performed – resurrection!

In Bristol, now, the recreation closed before the crowd. A billy goat, passing behind with a weight about its neck, went to die 'neath the arc of the aging sun as it railed 'gainst entropy. And Christ, Celtic as he deep-down is, spake thus as he departed:

“Ah, since it fell into my lot  
that I should rise and you should not,  
I'll gently rise 'n softly call:  
Goodnight, and joy be to you all!”

Exhalation.

Shallowed chest.

Blood to fill the parting glass.

A keening 'cross the dawn about Golgolta.

Wondering beside the walls; wand'ring through her mind: she slowly made her solitary way. Reaching up above the limestone – polished – flagpoles held their colour still, still proud at rest in aft'noon calm.

A form appears.

Discreetly 'bout the corner it appeared, watching o'er its finely-linnened shoulder, with a small, left-hand against the temple's side. Sandaled-steps along the sand – th'form fiddled with its ponytail, braided black 'n thick 'n coming to a wavey, cresting curl.

Unnoticed still, the girl looked at the form that came e'er closer: a girl-child of some younger year, who now looked up and saw her.

For a moment, for an age, they looked upon each other's pose 'n form.

An explosive, gigg'ly smile spilled o'er 'n out from th'younger child's made-face; the charcoal-darkened malachite moved happ'ly with the skin about her eyes.

Re(tentatively)turning a yet guarded, gleesome grin from out 'n o'er her unmade-face, the older girl, who tore at the reins of her westward chariot, saw searing starfire whispering its songs b'hind a curtain worked in auburn rings.

“Hello!” she heard.

“Hello...” she said.

“I want my hair like yours!” As she spoke, the girl with the unchecked smile stepped closer and reached up her hand. The bracelets of electrum 'laid with semi-precious stone slid down her forearm til they hit her bended elbow; she touched the taller girl's dishevelled hair. “I hate mine being so boring. And” (she reclaims her hand and looks over her shoulder) “all this stupid fatty stuff...” She turned back 'round with a scrunched-up nose, feeling the greasy substance on her head. “At least they don't keep making me bald anymore. See, touch it.”

The loose bands of jewl'ry slipped back down to collect about the limits of her wrist as our new and extroverted girlchild placed both hands on narrow hips. Bowed head, she waited patiently.

“Eewww!” Looking at the grease upon her fingertips, garnered from the head presented her, the child of many cycles laughed and then used it on her own dark strands. Giggling along, the newcomer protested at the desecration.

After rescuing the hair she admired so, she knelt to wipe her hand free on the sand. Remaining crouched, she traced a standing ibis. As she rose, the other crouched, immediately entranced, and added to the younger's dance her own.

“You” (asked the jewelled child, as the other stood again) “know how to write?!”

“Kind of... I've been slowly learning for ages.”

“I'm not very good... but I'm learning, too.”

"Lemme write your name!"

"Okay!"

'Cross the gulf of the divide of sev'ral years, one spoke for one transcribing, reiterating sep'rate sounds in gleeful incantation. Spilling out the ink of her muscle-mem'ry, the girl we've followed, once again, crouched writing in the yellowgold of North African earth.

She traced the peaks 'n troughs  
of ["Nooo! 'Khumt'met'!"] water;  
beside the handled-jug, the lion  
lay its resting paw.

["Hat!"] Trace: loaf; another.

["Shep!"] Refine the feline's form.

["Soot!"] A figure watching on –  
seated, symbolic poise.

A girl stepped back from her writing as a girl lower'd herself onto her knees.

About th'ephem'ral shapes of shifted sand the younger child then traced, her left-hand index moving on the pivot of her shoulder. An arc o'er-arching – now she swings the hinges of her elbow and her wrist to wrest a finished oval from the grainy ground. Delib'rately, she places – firm – her right thumb with a smile and draws a straight line, up, along one curving end.

Beaming like the solar disc, she clapped.

"What's that for?" The young and female scribe stood looking with her head at tilt as she asked this proud 'n sunlit, noble child about the ring around the words she'd written.

"To protect" (she shined, hands on still-narrow hips) "my name from being buried in the sand."

They stood and formed themselves in shade. Though side-by-side their shadows showed th'inverse of how their stature ranked: the one – her shoulders sloped and her height diminished, chest with edges softening; the other – shoulders broad above chest resolute, tall in perfect symmetry.

*Child?*

"Oop..."

Arms cut 'cross her breast, with shoulders hunched 'n flattened ears, as she sweeps her right-side foot clear through their stela made of sand.

*Child?*

"I've" (she whispers) "gotta go... Here..." Once again the smaller and the younger, still a child, she searched the sack she'd tied around her belt above her hip's left-side, wrinkuhling her nose e'en as she did so. Watching – curiosity – this child of the Two Lands, the other scratched her nose and waited for her present.

"Ta da!"

"Thanks!"

Hands together; hands apart; the object passed, they left each other's lives.

Looking back at where she'd stood with the older girl with the em'rald eyes, she waited for the architect to reach her.

"Child..."

"I'm coming..."

"Mistress – your grandmother, the Divine Consort, is waiting for you."

Turning away from the narrative and skipping past Ineni's offered hand, this daughter of Amun moved on through history.

"Are you coming, Mr. Temple-Builder?"

He lowered his empty hand; he looked on aft' her.  
"If you command me, little princess."

Day 9

*Bristol*

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1843

*Wa-Set*

2 (Phaophi). Akhet. XXVIII. 7 Thutmose I

And what is written there,  
upon the walls; upon the quarried stone  
delineating Ma'at 'n Issfet?

The mossied-rust,  
their spores heralding time.  
The rustsome moss tells tales of passing.

What do the mud-brick rooms  
of houses hold, secure?  
What do they keep of here 'n now?

They strain to hold their form;  
to keep inexpressible moments  
from being lost to non-existence.

And now I'll tell you

what I see  
as I

do wander...

There are houses 'long these cobble-stricken streets, their red-tiled roofs adorning stone that stands here – faithfully repeated 'n yet ne'er the same – in rows of ragged, smoke-topped homes which hold their humans close; a family, preserved in amber, laugh.

They sit beneath the sun-shade canvas stretched across four beams of lumber placed – upright – beside the date-palmed corner of the courtyard. Mats of straw below the baskets brimming; cats nursing their young; the thund'rous buzz of flies confined to the air that sits above loose fruit; the passing of pulled-carts that carry clay 'n straw 'n brick by men in shades of copper, black, 'n sun-touched olive.

From out the horse-drawn, human-guided, dual-wheeled wood-cart fall iron fittings, crooked nails, slight-splintered timber, 'n the debris of a now-retired scaffold hard upon the well-trod planks – the men in ripped trousers let lie what's passed. A rodent checks for edibility but moves on – swift – when she does catch the scent of feline piss left, recently, nearby.

And what of all  
these moments, now they're passed;  
now that they're done?

Ink not spilled  
is ink  
that never was.

And yet... what of  
those moments w'thin their  
scenes, so surely gone?

Reincarnate,  
they live  
as long as us.

A flower opens.  
Carried to the next life –  
its poetry.

Lumber, lying laced with seagull shit 'n th'scars of iron bolts 'n blocks of stone, listens to the footfall future flitting past upon the day of rest. Rust 'n detritus tattoo the timber, telling tales to the rhythmic rain; the sun seeps in through the canyons, cracking grayshully from knot to knot. Logs linger as th'alliteration threads its way, a-whilest a wind-swept river, wrought with lines of unrhymed mem'ry, muses o'er its absent tide...

Oh, where've you run, springing forth  
to stream your consciousness o'er  
the unwrit land with its tale-untold,  
terra-form, shifting sands?

As you, I've been – engraving onto  
rocks, compelling earth to move  
in narrative, and bringing to my  
banks the siltsoil song.

Have you now beaten back the ice-cut  
cliffs, their chasm widened by  
your ranging tidal climbs 'n depths  
that turn the primal mud?

Just as you swell to inundate the land,  
I rise to reach the cratered moon.  
E'en as she calls me close she  
gives me to the earth...

Your river –  
she keeps the land black  
with the floods of life?

We keep her level.  
Her body contained,  
we divert her tidal urges.

So she is kept...  
as she is?  
Not growing, nor reverting back?

She floats as she bleeds  
her essence. She sits  
in a stagnant lack of change.

"Change..."

"It's the only thing. It's the only thing there is."

"The flow of the river, to strip the banks 'n lay new life..."

"Look at the sun. Meridian is but the pause between two breaths. For a moment, for an age – it writes its presentpast, then to the west it gladly falls."

As the future flows 'n seeks to reach the mouth that feeds the ocean of the past, it washes o'er the deltic present, leaving behind the unremembered. Settled there, where the river rushes out, in infinite deposit, lies the wond'rous, vast expanse of the depths of meaning.

What, then, has all this been?

Its sketch-scattered notes play a fragment-mottled light upon the storied surface. 'Long lines less tethered, moments mused their 'mergent scenes 'n in their blurred transitions brought their disp'rate forms to eddy, coalescent.

A breeze wafts about the water-centric cities.

In these penultimate pages – ultimately penned – I know not yet what scenes they'll dance in tandem...

The nearest tower perched 'pon its abutment – stone of the Age Of Man Industrious secured atop a sculpture of the Age Of Ice. Configured in a grotesque show of domination to the trees of th'adjacent woods, the nailed 'n knotted cuttings of dismembered trunks stood, scaffold-bracing.

A gull alit, a-lightly, on a length of timber as the timbre of its undulating call caused crashing waves of echoed sound to bridge the Avon. It preened at its grey-tinged feathers before pacing the abutment's edge.

"Are you waiting to cross, my friend? You'll be here a while. The bridge construction is suspended. Get it? No? Yes?! Oh. Well, you didn't laugh, is all. Unless you wanna take your solitary way along these solitary sinews, stretched in iron o'er the chasmic void, I suggest walking. Best come back when the towers are washed in white 'n topped with the gaudy sphinxes Brunel dreams of adding for to crown his tow'ring feat. He should go all out 'n line the bridge with obelisks... Walk the woods; give those wings a break; make your way unto the harbour. And if you still have your sights set fast on Clifton, where the wealthy wend their leisure, you need only traipse the incline, b'yond the walks 'n walls of Brandon Hill, and find yourself right there, atop another ice-cut giant, longing for to cross the Avon Gorge."

The gull unfurled its mature wings 'n chased the scattered rain to the river's surface.

Like a simile's sudden song upon a sea of only metaphor, the man sat starkly present in a lasting moment.

Against his unsupported back, a gentle pressure faded in, falling trustsomely 'n giving o'er, at last, to rest its being – pure – in life-affirming, silent gifting of a bond apart: the bond between a child 'n one who cares for children.

He had upon his left-side lap those leaves of mind – glue-bound; collected – that he etched his essence onto; that I paint myself upon. My knee, within its brace, absorbs the cloudedge-cresting sun; beyond the floating harbour, here I write.

With the wind in the south-west city sailing cold in intermittent sweeps, the blue before the black wisps cloud to drift 'n scatter. My coffee's surface searches in its s'ramic confines – curved; clouds scatterdrift in cold wispwind; I write.

He moved his pen o'er the uncut stone; unblanking lines, he wrote the moment. Accepting that bond of given trust with his being 'n supporting back, he/me/I/she we, human souls, were c'nected.

She wrote in tandem-time, her right-side index finger tracking life alluded-to as water filled her marks in the wet sand. Blue lotus of the Nile, emerging from the mounded bank she crested, bore the scent of life created w'thin the dark 'n wawtry chaos – a chemic spark in th'catalystic deep to gift a surging, self-propellent bloom, mutating into meaning.



The child; The woman –  
amphib'yusly, she sat  
on fertile soil.  
In a brace of lines unplanned,  
a tanka forms.

Behind her, the scaffold-laden stone of Karnak clung to the clear, blue sky. Ahead, where Iteru's floodplains traced the limits of the prosp'rous Khemet, climbed the coarse 'n desert slopes that plateaued; peaked – a red-land rise. A pyramid of Earth's own making, musing ancient o'er the valley vast: The Peak marked death memorialised, standing eternal where the Sun Disk falls. A desolate field of millions of years lies layered 'bout the valley wide – there (alone (unheard (unseen))) the architect ensures that the ground is broken; that the rock contorts to contain a royal tomb. Hidden majesty... a City Of The Dead. In time, the valley paints its rock with kings.

To her bare, brown, calloused, muddy feet fellfloated an Ostrich feather, its form in coloured flux – white, grey, 'n black – with a haggard tip. With her bare, brown, calloused, muddy hands she raised it; cradled; smoothed its form. Aloft, examined by the piercing light, it stood.

She smiled.

Ruffuhling her free-form, free-verse hair, she placed the feather – firm – into the tangled-truth of her deep-dark locks 'n sat on the prow of the sun boat, sailing on a timeless sky.

What'll you do now, em'rald-eyed child?

And what'll you do now – eyes, blue; manner, mild – ?

Und'sirous to end, your end is yet written.

Not conceived; unknown – is your third iteration.

In fire 'n starlight, your pastpresent's speaking.

Your presence is precious, enduring, 'n fleeting.

Brief sketches of lives that're danced by the water,

as the sun shines on river, 'n city, 'n daughter,

where the load-cranes 'n walls of a captured-tide harbour

see, in their reflected forms, a date-palm arbour.

In visions, a girl, without mother or father,

gifts life 'n life's meaning to a mind that's unanchored.

There's a meadow of wild-flow'ring words just to thank her

and it blooms where the ox-bow lies mistsome 'n gathered...

Day 10

*Bristol*

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> 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 chasmicspanse 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 dusklight.

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.