

Nigel Fletcher



THE WEATHER
IN JAPANESE

The Weather in Japanese

Nigel Fletcher

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To Janny

THE SAME OLD STORY

Alone, every action
Captioned:
She walks to the refrigerator.

Alone, dark thoughts woo her
Irrepressibly.
She takes the bottle of milk.

And remembering the word she used -
Betrayal -
Her thumb releases the silver cap.

He was so unfair, so bloody
Unfair.
She sniffs the milk for sourness.

To think he called her body
Rapture!
She drinks from the naked bottle.

Why did it always end this way?
Always.
She wipes away her white moustache.

FOUNDED 1884

The exhausted hospital
spreadeagles
across twenty five acres

where nurses walk crisply
chattering
in uniform friendship,

while all around lies disease
disciplined
by a bedstead clipboard.

There they are from my window
angels
with a satisfied stride

leaving our see-thru identities
tagged
to every thinning wrist

I imagine the hospital senile
gaga
with memories of Consumption.

NOSTALGIA

You punked it out for days,
Susie,
bolshy, made of sterling stuff

It's Vicious wot I'm thinking of -
Sid -
and all his brief, black Peacock strut

From the the fag-end Seventies
through
to the dead-end Nineties

And the 'orrible Eighties in between
helter-skelter
it's bin downhill all the way

But now you got tarot,
crystals
and runes. Millennium fever

is turning you Hippy-shit.
Christ,
Susie, there's no future in it.

CAN YOU NAME IT?

The bright wing of a thing
romantic
flitters venetian blinds,

and disturbs parallels of light
twitching
its feverish small shadow.

My seated outline watches his,
dissected
in a horizontal series.

And among the sharp latitudes,
caught
in a vertical thread,

the butterfly vibrates:
frantic
with the buzz of chaos.

I've seen the species in a book
stapled
through each wafery wing.

SCARF

Etched on blue steel
stainless
this December morning -

the indenture of a forest
skyline
far away and clear.

I touch the scarf you left behind
scarcely
knowing what softness can mean.

For so long I have been inside
winter
where the frost splits deep

into dry contracted earth
rigid
to clamp a vice on germination.

The scarf is the colour of
warmth
and smells of a clean you.

It lies on the bed where we made our
refusal
wise to the distinction of seasons.

THE AMATEUR GARDENER

A rusty shovel full of
shit
from the anus of a horse.

(Roses are its destiny -
Felicia,
Sympathie & Compassion.)

The dung is hot and heavy
vapory
with a mellow smell,

and lies in clods
abandoned
along the Cotswold lane.

Yet somehow the feeling is
theft
as surreptitiously I heft

mound after mound into the fetid
pit
of a hessian sack.

OH, BELINDA

Oh, Belinda, oh,
Belinda,
oh, Belinda, oh!

Do you remember, my
Belinda,
how we fled your father

'cross the prairie, sweet
Belinda,
all the way to the altar.

And do you remember, please
Belinda,
all the soft alfalfa

where we laid, my dear
Belinda
till the morning after.

It seemed to me, oh brave
Belinda
each hour was a fiesta.

MY FATHER'S HANDS.

DNA will not be denied.
Look!
I've grown my father's hands.

His parting gift, these fleshy
spatulas:
the ones I used to shake.

The day after he died winter
turned
a sharp corner into spring.

An accidental trick of nature,
sure,
but a bastard one at that.

Mother and I walked through woods
reborn
with the sun fresh from hibernation,

and returned to the house, part-consoled,
unprepared,
for an armchair quite so empty.

THE BIRDS.

A thousand starlings
perch
like balustrade spikes

on Coventry Cathedral
expectant
of the migratory urge

that will scatter them like bonfire bits
blown
into threatening formation.

Then this bloody sky will
shrill
where once the Luftwaffe droned

ejecting its cargo - cold, riveted
eggs
destined to hatch the fires,

And somewhere, above the din
everlasting,
Hitler fondly kisses Hitchcock.

MASTURBATION 1957.

Pears soap in a scallop shell
jetsam
washed all the way to the suburb.

Whilst down an adolescent belly
prismatic
mothered from the amber glycerin

a jittery bubble glides
trembling
to the beat of a teenage heart.

It's a heart that jives inside a cage
leaps
in a rack of unfinished ribs

washed constant by clean blood
pure
as the tongue in a mermaid's mouth,

as elastic as the bubble's skin
held
in tension just one second more.

LOVE IS...

A pincer movement
performed
with no foe on the field.

A song manufactory
powered
by perpetual motion.

A seclusion zone
policed
by the only two occupants.

A fast-breeder of groans
mellifluous
during melt-down.

An African jungle
infested
with single red roses.

A false premise
pursued
to a true conclusion.

THE WEATHER IN JAPANESE.

An omnilingual Sony: black,
hi-tech,
forecasts in its native tongue

warm breezes from the east,
presaging
a soft collide of chimes.

The Pacific is iso-
barred
trussed with weather ropes

animated like eels,
electrified
and pixelled on Tokyo TV.

There is an echo in the gardens
formal,
where gravel is raked into eddies

and moss lawns make green seas -
carpets
of algae awash with Tranquillity.

THE GLASS CELL.

I'm videoed at every turn,
soul-stripped
by cameras with hooded eyes.

The corridors are dark tiled,
institutional...
I believe it began as a library.

But now, entering a shadowy passage,
unending,
it has become something else.

In a modern, glass fronted cell,
hunched
over his newspaper, sits my dead Dad.

'I don't think I can stand it,' he says.
Unbearable -
in the dream, in perpetuity, I want him brave.

But he invades my sleep constantly,
pathetically,
jealous, no doubt that I can wake.

BIRMINGHAM BUSES ARE BLUE.

A No. 68, top heavy, ferries us
townward.
Packed this tight you feel like cargo.

On our left Bar St Martin
formerly
The Mulberry Bush.

I only ever saw the pictures,
black
and white, fuzzy and grainy -

wreckage sifted over by firemen,
baffling
like a man turned inside out.

"The only language the Brits understand:
Bombs."
There's a cessation to the ceasefire.

And front page in the Evening Mail,
full-colour,
a bright red bus - opened like a tin can.

OPPOSITE THE CATHEDRAL

A young bloke
pissing
in the planters

outside the Bank of
England.
I swear to God.

A lunchtime pee
weird
in wet St Philip's Place

He looks at me
looking.
He doesn't pissing care.

If it was chucking out time, midnight
maybe,
you'd expect it, accept it

But this is broad daylight,
man,
secretaries eating sandwiches.

READING MATTER

Once upon a time, it's true...

True

that he loved her

as if it were forever.

Songs

by Donne, Marvel and Henry King

read as if he'd commissioned them.

Stanzas

that dissected the heart so cleverly;

and it was only the long, long

Dead

who managed a true description

of what could spin a boy around.

Today

he reads quite different books,

biographies of living heroes -

Stars

hell-bent on public burn out.

ENGLISH MEDICINE.

Holy Moses had the cure
tablets
stony, negative and pure.

Ten to be taken every hour.
Prescriptions
sent down from a higher power.

A harsh regime of thou shalt...
not
Most things human were at fault.

But the English like their linctus
bitter
cling to their Thatchers,

their Blitzes and Beggars.
Unforgiving,
hard as nails, convinced do-gooders

can only do bad, vote for the rope,
themselves
and their own....Jesus hasn't got a hope.

WHITE CHRISTMAS

Snowflakes -
sooo
very Christian.

Pure white
falling
from obscurity,

wavering through
space -
the souls of

would-be saints or
priests,
settling locally,

hearts melting
helplessly
in a cold white

haemorrhage of
wet,
feathery hopes.

A TALE

It's not much
but
a mem'ry we have

of driving down
hazy
three summer ago

to that dirty pond
where
I took the plunge

while you stood
unhappy
and naked in mud

to your ankles at midnight.
Crazy
it seems now and long ago

since I lost my nerve
and
you, my sweet, your appetite.

CLAUDIA

To walk the catwalk
march
the buoyant planks

on high sprung legs,
glossed
with stilletos and silk...

Out from the backstage
thick
with fag-smoke and faggots

into the ecstatic cameras:
supernovas
among the starry crowd,

taking a perfect picture
everytime.
She always looks so lucky

with her heart a wingbeat;
and beauty:
a matter of millimetres.

LIGHT & WATER

The morning bath, an eastern
window,
Edwardian white enamel,

the clever chessboard floor,
brassware,
the immersion in cut glass.

Light and water is a mind
inspired:
clearing mist on daybreak rivers

spearing a windowsill water-glass
lucid
as a gin at noon.

It's the most untrashy glitter
ever
chucking diamonds from the yacht

whose sails parcel the ozone
sun-white
more bracing than a Persil commercial.

PASSING TIME

I'd like it to be a long dissolve,
drawn-out,
indiscernible as an ice sculpture

that melts to a languorous pool.
Or maybe
a stone sphinx with high-born features

worn by centuries of relentless
sandstorms –
blurring particulars, preserving the essence.

But it's not like that – seldom-seen friends
mutate.
The mirror jerks like time-lapse photography.

And when I put on a faded T shirt, its fabric
intact –
tight as teen flesh over a mid-life torso –

the washed out slogan command me to
RELAX
And I wish it was nineteen eighty four forever.

CANNON HILL

There's a public order
posted
outside the park -

just five words
assembled
to dim the heart:

like iron keys
sounding
at summers end,

giving last words to
Parkie
on litter and lollies

and laughter and lust.
So
let melancholy angels

sing me to me rest
'cos
These Gates Close at Dusk.