

DEMONIC IN THOUGHT

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‘Were we to suppress what is evil and even demonic in thought, we should have to renounce the very concept of deliverance.’

– E M Cioran

WATCHING THAT fading winter light a current through the day dwindling, so unused to the day, my day usually begins with the turning on of lights the awkward stumbling shadows in the corner of the room getting up like woken ghosts portly with their weight of stagnant memories. I prefer to lay there and continue dreaming, until it is time to savour the last dregs of the daylight like a pot on a stove boiling down that should be stirred or have a little more boiling water added. I am human standing on the edge of the shore smoothing out wrinkles in a manuscript without appetite for visitors or friends dreaming deeply of abrupt changes and wicks drawing up wax. Table lamps a curious confidante casting just enough light to see my immediate concerns owning me as if I belong a portable self leased to a little circle of light and no plans for the evening but to just pump out the blackened ends of words everything a

little scorched at the edges and nothing but the ceiling to look up at when there is nothing else to do.

It was a success this growing of something in a dirty jar this evening told through the fingertips but disowned with the eyes. I like looking like anyone but less and less know what I see.

It is a way of breathing, these pages. Vacuuming up the air to see how starved stiff I am really. There is still frost on the grass from the early morning and now it's getting dark. I keep myself company, it's a worthwhile trick that may extend, keep others company. Though it's nothing much it is something. And who knows when the flash may come into the grumbling dark clouds it's worth waiting for and made all the more by the sense that it will come, given enough time, and in the meantime anticipation is absorbing, you could impale yourself on it and wait for ever. Skewered through times of sitting here. A book should glisten somehow. When you turn the page you hold your breath, as if you are in the vicinity of something, as if something is being done that hasn't been done before, not in a book, something disturbing and out of control. Rawer than you're used to. Living. The cap's been pushed off something

dangerous. A scorpion or cyanide, doesn't make any difference, because neither, more unknown than those. A darkness that has crept out of a truly dark man.

So there we have it, some flame that will carry me forward, and a kind of happiness settles, to know, to be sure of it, that one has separated and found a beginning, a Holy Flame burning in the ribcages of skeletons. Look at my hair, as grey as fuck. It is about time I begun. One lamp more one day more, that's all I need, on and on, and that's all. As the mood determines the heading, as the billowing hair defines the fury. Oh, we will overthrow them all, you and me. We will branch out and out we will grow an evil tree and attract demon birds to perch there. Whole days at a time given to the phantoms of inspiration.

The mood of the lamplight changing as the first indication. The beginnings of beginnings have got their fangs into you and the letters billow on the pages. Old tinder is checked for dryness, like a retirement that has found what to do. To think this mind was exhausted! Now it cannot wait to continue. Touch upon things and return to them, there is no rhyme nor reason to it, we have begun on a journey, you and I, you had so many worries that it should have been more, this life you speak of as if it is over. Sit back, it is about to become more, it is about to whisper its plan. There is joy in your eyes

this is how you recognise it. You've glanced in the right direction at last. It has been a long while coming and now it is here. Had you not waited so long you would not have learnt how not to explode, how to draw back from an edge you have yearned for all your life while still approaching ever closer. The burning rungs of the ladder you have climbed are below you you have no choice do you? But to go on. They let you out by an oversight, nothing more. They just weren't looking. And the one who was looking for you hid you away, a compatriot, he hid you away in his words in his heart in his life and took solace from what you had to offer. Always down but never beaten, he knew you like a father and the only reason he didn't understand was because it wasn't time to understand. He had given up hope, it's easy to see it now, somewhere it had fallen away from him without him really noticing. Many a long journey we forget why we set out. It is pointless for a parachutist to have second thoughts as he lands legs crumpling in the night-time scrub of the moor, all there is is the sound of the startled grouse and the light of towns glowing on the horizon. If the fall has knocked it all out of him there is but one thought dominating all others, he has a mission, and now he'll have a piss. I've smoothed away a wrinkle in the invisible, and even if I just lie on my back I am going to continue to grow, lowering

myself into this evening like deep water. Immediately, you see you have an advantage. First off, that you are still hidden. Despite all this time, you have somehow managed to still remain hidden. You have time to deliver your speech, time to pluck up the courage for terrible and miraculous things. If you were for one iota trapped, it was because it served you and now you see, see it clear, so away with *that*. Undeveloped things can burst out can thunder out their signals and call those whose inbred inclination is naturally to shy away. But fragmentation dissolves the power of façades that imagine themselves in control, we are the weeds growing in the pavement cracking the paving stones with nothing more than an ounce of persistence. The day the flying ants hatch out will be our day, on such days presidents are assassinated, buildings fall to rubble, and then the ants disappear as startlingly as they appeared, to await the next time. Great power letting itself out a dribble at a time to mock those who think themselves great and almighty. How can one not approve this process? It is better than living like a frightened finch. It has a genius welling up in the dark. Making its little revolt in the gloom of dusks, before bolting.

We bob about and alight on things like a butterfly until the ends of our lives. We try to realise something in the draught under the door, soften ourselves, find the motion of the universe in the simplest things. We want to end up somewhere, forgetting that we will, even if we only sit down on the pavement and never move another muscle. Years of dragging our heels. Where's the pace? What we dread doesn't happen something else does something we haven't worried about we wasted so much time worrying about the wrong thing we could have safely worried about nothing, skidded through our days like great sprawling iceways. It would be good if we learnt how to cut it short, cut everything short, quick in and out, let it amass in its own way, forget about it in-between. Someone asked me whether I would mind if I found out that the New Year fireworks were faked on TV. 'It's all fake on TV,' I said. Television is a neatly boxed illusion, the bin was made for it, if only other illusions were as easy to tear oneself away from, and look what a meal people make of that one, sitting there night after night, finding their routine, numbing themselves into the armchair, holding the remote like an ineffectual threat. A week of it will sap anyone's strength enough to notice it if they've been away from it for a year, any longer and the capacity to notice will be sapped too. And the sparks are showering over Sydney. I think of

those huddled up in little bundles of despair as the cheers go up and the minute hand clunks onto our own chaining midnight. One must have greater concerns than a party to mark it. Over the years I have stiffened into craziness by my own obstinate hand, and in the quiet hollows my character has formed. Darker than I expected, but gloriously mine. I am used to sitting at a desk with a lamp on smashing bricks together in my head. It is a great relief when twilight comes and the time for drawing the curtains approaches. I put it off, yet I am eager too to close them to draw them together so I will no longer have to look out of the window. I hear drunks going home late at night and children still out for a few hours of the dark, but it doesn't turn my head since there is only a curtain there and the ears do a good enough job of forming a mental picture instantly dismissed. The eyes when the curtains are open in the light follow people up the road, they distract, they call me away. Longing for freedom, I do not see it is in my grasp. I trot alongside it like an obedient servant who can't quite keep up with the rushing master. But new strength is found in the change of every little habit. Leaping higher than the crack of the whip can reach.

Potatoes are boiled, fruit is ripened, and rain pours off the leaves. There is joy in mayhem. You bid farewell to the prospect of having any control whatsoever and

find in powerlessness there is power to be yourself. Nothing touches you then, you've given up wanting a stake, you settle with things as they are and begin to go in that direction, discarding more and more of what you thought you wanted who you thought you were every day there is a little bit less of what you should have junked ages ago. A tiny fly makes it to the edge of the saucer of water and drags itself out. The mind every day strives to accomplish this feat. There is always a bit of splintered skull in our best thoughts.

Try this little evening out. Find little nuggets of absurdity and attempt to crack them. Whole days like this. I don't wait to be invited I just screw my eyes up and try to see through it straight away.

What is a rented room for? I could be going off somewhere else but what better than screaming *Victory!* in the middle of the night in a planetary box while armies face each other on sands with no end in sight. There is only one job, to conquer oneself. The rest is somebody else's illusion. A child-size room is enough for this grand task. And when you get bored of it drill for fire like in the scout books or make mobiles out of wire coathangers. Watch as the webs multiply and the threads becomes ropes for fairy rats with the dust, mooring the ship of the room with ties that will not stop it drifting off but give you something to pretend

with, pretend not to be sad pretend to be happy and so be happy not sad since pretending is good enough for everything because everything is transparent and can be seen through except we pretend we can't and so we can't. Plan for departure or leaping over a pit of flames twist your belt in its loops so the buckle is the right way round and go out and examine the frost with your magnifying glass and come back in and stretch yourself out on the floor and be more aware of the spirit that holds you up than you are when you defy it and burn some feathers and let them float up into the sky, just to remind you of some long-forgotten thing not in any detail but perhaps a feeling in the stomach nothing you can latch onto but nonetheless a command of the invisible carrying on burning as if it's found its spirit fuel for all the slackened effort over the years and the damp things that wouldn't take the whole hickory dickory dock in spattering flames bursting into a fiery mane and then ashes flottering down grander plans doused.

You've had it altogether too solemn you need to slip out among the people in disguise, carry a blade, gut a few, get sweat on your brow and knock back rum under a bridge sitting in pigeonshit, because you're in the big

top fellah and you just don't know it and this jester's gonna shave your balls and let you offload unscrew the bolt through your neck and pluck the tendrils from your grave now look at my hair there hasn't been scissors snipping around that lot for nigh on a decade. I was once a fetching young man, the glow of brass doorplates shone in my face eager to begin, I adjusted my tie with the name of The Magnificent Company letterpressed across my cheeks. A bright young thing on my first day, all the expectations in the world riding upon this doing of what everyone else did. Give it a try, you know. Spiked railings freshly painted gloss black with golden snakes coiled about them and speartips fit for impaling heads, the murmur of work WORK faint from every nook and up the stairs and down the stairs as I came into the lull of the hall and closed the hefty door on the towering beeches and oaks of the secluded and prestigious London square. Over the next three years my heart would be stealthily and slowly carved out of my body and set in a jar of formaldehyde on the mantelpiece, the great marble mantelpiece, of the boardroom, above which glowered a huge portrait of the founder, an astute man and all-round cunt, tending his jars with big warm hands of welcome. There is no more to say about it than that. Up in a rook's nest I watched ma rook and pa rook bring up families, and

plotted. I toyed with the idea of fitting in but each little overture in this direction felt like rigor mortis setting in. I stared at my WORK in an attempt to get my bearings, for it only took a moment to remember what I was supposed to be doing, but I could discern no more from the mist in front of me than: finish this and come back tomorrow, when there will be more. I was not made to be a cog in other people's machines. I did the least amount possible and then did what I would have done at home: gaze out of the window, visit bookshops when out the door at lunchtime, occasionally have a drink with fellow galley slaves, when I would appear engagingly subversive and possibly even dangerous, I don't think they fully realised to what extent it was possible to simply not care. To invest nothing of oneself in the company, but be there just to take and experience, to examine one's own moods and ponder their meaning. Never did I doubt I was bigger than any of it. To be frank, they were lucky to have me put my feet up there for a few years, every dish needs a little spice for flavour, and rather I accept that role than any they wished to impose upon me. The faintly absurd ritual of getting up every morning was tolerated in the name of experiment, indeed sometimes I even looked forward to going in, to resume the interesting discussion of the afternoon before, the WORK simply a tedious entry fee. I feel I

livened up what had been a bunch of cadavers laid out under white sheets when I arrived. So you see, there is need for us everywhere, we who stalk Earth playing a different game. In truth my heart was never in the jar, I just made it look like it was so I could go undetected the longer, attempting to discover what I was doing there – my real work. Like a man fallen down an abandoned mineshaft. I had exploring to do. When I knew enough, then I could escape. This was the truly tiring work. What effort to escape the importance and significance the bosses claimed my WORK had for them, because some days I started to believe it, this hypnotic mantra of my worth defined in terms of my worth to them, which was never very much really, replaceable. But what of my worth to myself, was there no room for that here? I made room, in dreamy concerts composed on the sly. In the end I towered above them, looking down from my castle turret on the sleepy ones, from my corner of the room. Yes sir yes sir three bags full sir. Upstairs they took on a girl as art director who, it transpired, didn't even know how to turn the Mac on and whose enormous grey pants were discovered under the desks one morning, leading to the discovery that she was a homeless tramp who was actually sleeping there when everyone had left for the evening. How I roared! The fallibility of the company was standing there like a

huge snowman built in the middle of the office with a paperclip mouth and a Prittstick penis. I realised I was trying far too hard to hide my presence among them, in reality I could delay my own discovery as Lucifer's steaming cock for a few years yet just by being myself, fuck the pretence.

You have to try things out, to see if you like them. But it's not too wise to do what the masses do for too long, otherwise you're just going to become one of them and all your noble ideas of being different are going to get pissed up the wall. So look forward to the sack as the light at the end of the tunnel, as by that time you will doubtless be too feeble to lift yourself out with any effort of your own, let them push you towards the door like an alligator that's grown too large. They took you on as a little egg and you looked like all the other little eggs and even when you hatched they thought you were so cute but after a while enough is enough, they realise their mistake and you realise this is not your natural environment. There is mutual agreement – you're just too fucking big and they know you're restraining yourself too but soon you're gonna swing that tush and send someone flying. So you go through the rigmarole of dismissal just for a laugh in the realisation that they mean you well, that wild animals are best not kept in captivity, and if you, like

a lion whose cage door has been flung open, take a little time to trust yourself to the change, then that's wholly to be expected, since you've only had room to bite out gnats and yawn a big rolling tongue yawn up to now. But soon, you're away, and your previous life is as if it never existed.

And next day you get up at what will become your normal time, lunchtime, and you draw a heart with your finger in the steam condensed on the bathroom window and get in and lie down in the bath Mephistopheles' yacht stranded in the dead calm.

And the memory of a hundred other memories of a hundred memories more, like a coin tossed in a wishing well, giving it up for now, letting it be lucky, if it wants to be.

The awkwardness of failure, what now?

You fling yourself at its mercy, sit alone for a while picking your brains, looking for where you lost the thread and disillusionment began to swarm. You're missing the eye to see it with. It's an important step across the abyss, faltering at the edge. May take a while before you realise you've crossed it. You don't like to look back. And always, good to be nervous in dangerous

territories, which can swoop down upon you in your own living room. But then you stand up in your own life and gaze about a Titan that knows it has shed that skin, that little soul tootling about with his little chores thinking himself a little bit different from the rest but just winding wool the big gaping hole not yet opened up. There'll come a day, you say to yourself, when I'll shave my head and leave for the mountains. It's a way of escaping the feeling of being locked in a room with the key in your own hand. A parachute you haven't opened yet, in freefall in your own life, waiting until the last possible moment, and *then* you'll decide, because you haven't decided, it's still all open to question, you could just carry on falling until Earth puts a stop to your mischief, and if you do decide to open it, will it be a decision, a real decision, or just a fearful mechanism. You decide to test it, you decide that much. It is not as if you don't want to die, and it is not as if you want to live, you merely want to be what you would be without having to decide or be what you would be if you decided knowing what you were deciding. In dreams this is always the point when you wake up. The roar of Earth beneath tiny dangling puppet feet. Fucker opened on its own. The mystery continues and the gods chuckle. But you tested them, they didn't test you. You know that now, and that's going to give you the upper hand

for the rest of your life. It sinks in, what you've done, what got done, somehow, because there was a will in you for it, and that will was the Titan that stood up in you. Now you feel what a lion feels to be a lion, you have your nature, you withstood and became. You're a bigger dot among the dots and growing. Why do my eyes always narrow slightly and I breathe through my teeth cold intakes, why does this always happen when I fall through their butter fingers and become my own. Always I know myself in a surge of power, demonic power, content to do nothing but sit with itself. Not one thing unaccomplished. Subversive but shelvable, something put away until next time, maturing like wine in a dusty cellar. A foretaste of ripeness, if you will. Unbound spirit making its mark on him, carrying him along, singing in his soul a strangely joyous song of sweet hell and damnation. One who has walked too long has these echoes bouncing around inside him. People look but do not know him, always a drifter, always from somewhere else always heading nowhere. But the birds that sing in him, O the birds that sing in him.

Stay in touch with this power. Day by day, find it. Again and again. Return to it from straying, and see that nothing needs to be done, it is all getting done, gushing up in a geyser if you were to speed up the awfully slow progression, view it from a distance as if already over.

That is your life. An absolute and total eruption. You have the sluggishness of time to thank for snapping you out the mould this way. A slow climb to a pinnacle, but the last step no different from the first.

It was the journey that let you see it. Even through pauses, rests, setbacks, something was still going on. Such love to watch the life be over. You had it back to front, now do you finally see? Up quickly to get dressed in the afternoon, small paces to rescue a little of the winter light, trickling out of a dream, a damp handful of thoughts, by the time the darkness comes they will be shimmering like a field of barley in the harvest sun.

The time is yours and it becomes precious like a black fog you can lighten with the daytime and you can reach inside yourself and scoop out diamonds and search for things in books and your thoughts and carry it all away like a wheelbarrow of treasure and flop down into sleep when sleep comes knowing you've had a good run you're getting somewhere you're working something out something very quiet hard to hear ordinarily and you'll never finish it your whole life. You can tuck yourself away and lose the concerns and you can grow and expand into the moment because it is only a moment

continually expanding and swirling and finding its feet in itself. The pleasure of coming to no-one's call.

A kind of peacefulness, when you let yourself settle into it. When you let the rush subside, and forget the many things that have to be done. The cat lies on top of the bed sleeping, as I am sleeping. No such thing as 'unusual hours' for him, and me too. I sleep on till 6.30 in the early evening. He gets up yawns and stretches when I do, though I would let him stay he thinks it's a good time too. He is a good little fellow. And now he goes off out to hunt mice under the bramble, or seek out other cats. I have endless curiosity about how he spends his time outdoors. He is pottering about like me, I suppose. It's not a life driven by other people, it is what I have fallen into left to my own devices. Half an hour of radio for entertainment while cooking and eating, afterwards seems an intrusion, and I ponder living without it. If I never had any appointments to keep – there are a few, now and again – I think I would get rid of the clocks too. I welcome long periods of seeing no-one. It takes a while, but the rush slowly drains away. I drink tea, I read, I write. I look at the stars, or the silhouettes of the trees at twilight, watch the birds go to roost. There is

always an expectancy in the air, as if I am on the verge of achieving something great today. Though what we achieve is always in retrospect, we can't see what our stumbling about with life really amounts to at the time, save in moments of tranquillity. I wouldn't want to give up my racing brain, I see this now, watching the cat's mad dash after flies, followed by sitting quietly. If he can do it then I can do it. There is nothing worse than being *confined* to peace. Responsible for keeping it up, mortified it may crack. You may say that is not peace, but it is peace friend. Peace is always visited at its edges by chaos, you can never draw back far enough from the edge because the edge follows you in. Better to welcome chaos and push outwards into it, saying that's enough peace for now now run *run*.

It is time to tell my story. I wonder if I can make lies seem like the truth? I'd have to convince myself it was true I think, let it start off as a lie maybe, but then think, no, hang on, that happened, I just forgot. Did anything ever happen? And then I remember things that happened, as if they happened to someone else. Haven't I lived most of my life in the imagination anyway? Did that happen, I mean in the imagination, did that happen?

Can that count? If it does, what a *rich* life I have led! We all live in our imaginations though most don't realise they imagined the world. Oh, they come back at you, so were those two world wars imagined then? It's a rhetorical question as far as they're concerned, hoping to make you look foolish. I don't bother answering them, I'll write it down instead, they can read it after I have stopped imagining myself. The story of my life. What a joke. The story of a fish out of water more like. I got as far as this, yet to some I am a hero. He's evolved! The other fish cry. He has attained to the godhead, he is not any old fishhead that prehistoric comb. He is almost a bird. Flopping around on the shore, sure, but almost, almost a bird. The story of my life. I am a sedimentary rock layer, geologic in outlook, spaceward bound. A living history book. Shall I start with when I was an amoeba? Or a few cell divisions further on? I was a flob of jelly holding my few bits and pieces together with an elastic band. Life was simple, glory in the sunshine, retreat from shadow and movement. When I first thought of writing a memoir I thought I need to find a position to take towards this, but then I thought, no, just write what comes to mind. That's me, ain't it? Bottling something of myself, either to lay down in the pickle cellar or to throw into the sea in the hope that maybe it makes it, makes it beyond the

shore of my death, although why that is important I forget. What point to show I once lived when I am just ash? It's a game, go along with it. Don't question, takes too long, just do, like ants storm out of holes off on their tribal quests. How could I possibly assess the importance of their frenetic activity. They will doubtless survive us as a species. I can hear them now, mocking my presumptions, clamouring to hear about the marriages and divorces in the secret hope they were as boring and tedious as their own. Oh, she got the house she got the kids left me with nothing. Nah, just a string of fucks like chicken heads ripped off by a fox. The coy smiles on first meeting best remembered. So, has your life been a failure, at least tell us that it has, we yearn to hear of your failures and disappointments, for as much as we admire you and your nobility, frankly we see ourselves as just a little better, you understand, it is human nature.

A bizarre metamorphosis of ways to deceive myself. My semi-mad failures were what gave my life some sort of meaning... I was a fate detector, I knew the pangs of what would turn out to be a surface version. Unattached to how it would turn out, save a curiosity

to see whether I was right, I felt the same about the glory and the freedom. It all began from seeds, but to me a weed, what others call a weed, had a tenacity about it I never saw in the delicate blossoms that needed so much care and attention, only to still fail, while the weeds sprouted everywhere and I let them. But maybe if I deliberately tried to grow them, and tended to their needs daily, fed them with nutrients, maybe they would die too. It seemed to me that the success of weeds lay in their growing unnoticed, uncared for. And there was a strength too in the unnoticed uncared-for part of myself, which was growing and growing to subsume every care-worn state I increasingly grew weary of tending. It just went on. It got up and went on. It got up at any time and went on. In the absence of people whiskers and nails grew, only occasionally cut back, in preparation for going out now and again, but a big part of myself found a warm welcome in not going out any more, rather staying in and exploring, because there was a lot to explore, more than I had given credit to. But I wasn't seeing it, I had to wear out my tiredness of the same four walls, before I began to see beyond them. Or was it strictly *beyond* them? Wasn't it more turning inwards and trekking like a maniac to the Antarctic of my soul, and that soul was nothing Satan could buy from me, it was a piece of

newspaper blowing in the wind, transient, no fixed characteristic, just a cipher conventionally attached to. Yeah, if you have anything to offer me Satan, it's yours, you can have it half price, it's nothing I'll want back, it's already flowed on, it's a slippery thing my soul, it may possess *you* if you try to hold onto it too tight. It's the first thing that drops away crossing the abyss, the notion of some fixed entity that is me, because I am as much Satan himself as I am me. Have my soul, a pity I cannot sell you on the idea that it does not exist, that it has no substance. But that's your particular brand of foolishness, isn't it? I will keep your secret, we are neighbours in our understanding, but who has anything in common with their neighbours these days? At least in the big cities. Two million communities of one. If we had fewer ties, to a neighbour's cat, to friends seen once every six months, to places for knick-knacks, to routines of shopping, to the wish to avoid the hassle of a new tenancy agreement, to flourishing of a sort in no money where one is and a dread of not managing so well in new circumstances, we'd be more nomadic than we are. I have a place that *serves* as home, but have no real home in this world. My home is beyond. I feel a loyalty to an obscure agenda that I can never explain. But I often feel a mounting excitement that I am getting nearer, that I have happened on the right path, against

all the odds, after years and years and years of trying, and even back then, when I was trying and failing, I am not so sure I was failing after all, I was just wearing out useless emotions and clueless desires. There was never anything I wanted, only what I thought I wanted, not knowing what else to want. Oh, we would all like the action to start some day soon. But on the other hand, we are glad it is not today when at rest listening to music feet up sipping a nice cup of tea. The weeds will grow on their own. There'll be something to come back for.

In a memoir, there is the implicit presumption that the truth is being told. Yet how many of us actually know the truth? We have very limited perceptions. All biography is fiction. You may as well abandon fidelity to the truth right at the beginning, since what truth there is can be spread thin as some binding spider-web thread. One's fascinations and obsessions can emerge, it is inevitable that they will, but the truth? The truth is something still being mulled over. Save for sudden illuminating flashes that die and are engulfed by the darkness again.

And say we retained enough from such a vision to form a doctrine or a philosophy or a religion, would it be anything more than remembering a fragment of a dream in which my piss-hard morning glory was the pole upon which the circus-top of the universe was

draped? Now they are telling me on the Tube that God probably doesn't exist. They think they are being very clever, but they aren't even certain enough about their basic premise. At least when Carlsberg declared itself as probably the best lager in the world they couldn't give a shit whether it was or it wasn't and if they could have got away with it they would have just called it THE best lager in the world and fuck the rest of em, enough twats will believe it. But what are these unGodbotherers trying to sell me? Am I to admire the uncertainty with which they commit themselves to their basic ideas? Have they no better project to commit an advertising budget to? Why not huge banners on our buses proclaiming: 'God is Satan.' Enough of unread fools displaying their ignorance as if it was something they'd worked out for themselves.

The intelligent person suffers in a world run by idiots. But only to the extent he looks at it, takes in that world's news and views. He can cut himself off completely. It is interesting what happens then. It is alright so long as one stays in. The radio can stay off, television and newspapers need not be allowed in. But out and about in the world headlines everywhere, you can construct without thinking about it a brief history of the past week in the lifetime of the planet in the time it takes to turn the head away on noticing newspapers in one's

sightline. For a while I made a habit of perusing a children's newspaper I noticed in Sainsbury's. Stories about tunnels dug under the busy road for badgers, new photographs of Saturn's rings. I remembered the magazines I read as a child, full of cut-away diagrams of torpedoes and tractors, showing how they worked, skeletons of numerous animals, how the eye worked. That's news. I found that when I knew there was a big story developing out there in the world, the surface world, the more I would stay away from media. I would miss the first minute of a comedy show on Radio 4 so as not to catch the last minute of the news. I didn't want to get drawn in. The more important people thought it, the more I wanted to know nothing about it. It surprised me how much one could know about what was going on merely from overheard conversation, brief head-turns towards television shops in the high street, and newspapers in bins caught out of the corner of one's eye. The mind processed the clues I inadvertently let in like a starving man at a dogfood bowl, and proudly presented me with a picture of the way the world must be based on these scraps. How excited I was, though, to hear about a hermit who lived high up above the cloudheights on a Chinese mountain who interrupted the interviewer who had made the trek to visit him to ask who was this Chairman Mao he kept mentioning.

Delight! What a thrill to realise there was still such a person in the world. Such news can come my way any time, it doesn't matter whether it takes fifteen years to reach me and the man is now dead, no, because news like that will always be fresh to me.

Acceptance of one's own powerlessness is actually a great power, it hinges there, it teeters. Not committing suicide, and committing suicide, are both powerful statements. I opt for the lazy way out. Do nothing. I have a talent for endurance. It probably helps though to be forced into it. You don't *choose* endurance you just do it. Then it's ten years later and you've had a period of endurance, you tell yourself you hardly noticed it but you know you know alright you endured that all right. But joys come too, like weedy plants out of a parched landscape, already under the blistering heat of the sun the moment they show their faces, not expecting water. Some think I have a talent for staying still in the same place for endless hours, but the truth is that I just do it. It doesn't seem like an accomplishment. It seems like nothing. Whole hours go by without detail. Without wishes, without desires, without thought or expectation. Amazing I still try to describe it, as if I thought it was

important to communicate this lifestyle, when I don't. I am convinced that turning inward is the way, and grey hair and years and the knowledge one is getting older now helps, since the pulls and draws of youth, the great plans, the what ifs, the marvellous ideas of what one's life can be, sniffing the air like a dog for perfume on the breeze and a bit of leg, have largely shrivelled away to leave a fake world that doesn't have the power to seduce me the way it used to have. Replacing it is awareness of a constant brink, of being on a brink, all the time, the brink of an understanding and resembling something I have a vague recollection of having once sought, even in that tawdry old youth of mine, even then, even then I sought it, must have been moving towards it through my failures and lost loves, even at the time I thought such experiences had something of *weaning off* about them, as if it was necessary to see things clearly for myself, it had to be hard-won this knowledge, if it was to be worth having. I am just like a bird chirping the same chirp, it is good to move beyond the superficiality of it and join with the deep satisfaction of greeting boredom. Ah, old friend! I didn't recognise you in your new clothes.

You have to have a certain faith to carry on, this much is true, but faith in what is far from clear. Not faith in gods but faith in the mystery of your self, that it is

something worth getting to the bottom of, that there will be something to find. That's the only kind of faith you need and it doesn't need dressing up in religious bullshit. Of course, it is like trying to grasp the wind, but with the right attitude that can fascinate, that very inability to latch onto anything tangible, and when you think you do having to come back from the cities in the sky with nothing but dreamy ideas. One day, I will get to what I am talking about. Think yourself lucky if you have managed to keep yourself away from much of the ugliness of life. If you have had room to think, for all thinking is useless, then this is still a luxury you grant yourself. Some days I feel the excitement of it all, the Human Project, I keenly sense all that is possible, but know that much of it is not given to me to accomplish. Instead, I must concentrate on what I can accomplish. I have long known it is simultaneously small and yet very large, the destiny I have tapped into.

I made it myself, the hole I sit in in the ground. I can probably go soon. There is something that has stopped mattering to me. I don't give it the concentration I used to. Everything passes from us, what makes us different is the tenacity of our grip before giving up. Even given up on the stupendous, the awesomely great. I expect I could regain a little enthusiasm in the face of it. That's the trust in me, the trust that no matter what I

think, it doesn't matter, I will replace that thought with another contrary to it and that too will go. Watching shadows of birds. Much as I used to rail against it, I like it here, where nothing happens. It's a room I've decorated myself. A thousand dreams and desires ended here. Women came and went. There are semen stains on the carpet under that carpet, and under that carpet there is blood soaked into the floorboards. Under the floorboards, I don't know what's there. The mice I talk to probably know. The other day the cat jumped off his cushion on the kitchen chair and squatted down low and stayed ten minutes peering under the fridge. 'What have you seen then?' I said, 'Phantoms? Are they little ghosty micies?' Later I found him batting my ball-point pen across the kitchen lino. I always smile to see how he spends his time. I get so many ideas for how to live.

The story has to be pieced together. I want to empty everything out, throw it away. Not seeing eye to eye with things. It'll come, it always does. Most everybody else is going in the opposite direction. Their heads are down and they're getting on with it. Only me has any doubt. She tells me to write about demons. Well, they might inspire me, scatter a few diamonds my way, polish something up so it looks shiny. Drag something out the

debris. A place of smashed windows. Some days it's as much as I can do to keep my eyes open. I should sleep. I'm not longing for anything. I feel like one who has given up who hasn't given up. There has to be a point, and if you can't find it, the ideas are fitting. Does there have to be a point? Maybe not. Something to annoy myself with. I feel like a sparkling drink that has gone flat. I'll find it again, will I? The routine. The sun that I normally miss while asleep, I gather it has been out a lot the past week or two. Days when I don't sleep it is out all the winter day, and other days I catch glimpses of it getting up to go to the bathroom and then back to sleep. When there is a whole day there for me, all that daylight, I hardly know what to do with it. I read a few haiku and get bored. I piss. I make tea. I stand drinking the tea outside in the sunshine and think the cat knows what to do with the day, he just wanders in the wet grass, licks himself, peers under the bush for mice. The birds know what to do with the day. They cheep and twitter they feed and fly. Oh, it is just today that hangs me on a loose end. Or the day. The night is more a time for activity for me, the night is always running out, there is never enough time to do everything I have found to do, found like things under stones. I am vaguely aware I have things to do, in the day. I probably need a nap. I should have stayed in bed. I am walking around with my

pause button depressed. Never mind. Lose the will the need to do something. That's it. Just let things be done as they are done. Settle into doing nothing. A flicker of interest in that. Ironically I expect it precedes me actually doing something. I get happy to do nothing, and then I lurch into action. It's my way. Sometimes I'm in a mood to do something like . . . take a huge cube of ice and slam it down onto the hard concrete and see it smash into hundreds of skittering little pieces. But I don't have that cube. Or I want to imagine the most magnificent purple but there is nothing special about the purple I have in my head. I would welcome the opportunity to cause some chaos. But I would get bored of it quickly. I wish I could be content with being like a tree, just standing there. Well maybe there is a mind in me I hardly credit with having something to say when I feel like this, and so if I'm not bothered about it it could sneak a few things out. The demons could speak. Well let them speak if they have something to say. I am an automaton for you. Take your chance. No barrier here. No dull dimwit to hold you back. Hardly anyone at home. Crushed individual. Waiting on waiting and waiting waiting waiting, and not even waiting. Have a grapefruit. Have beans on toast. Put away the trying. Put away the how can I do it. Sit on your hands. It may seem like constant brawling with the air to you,

but later, following the words of the thought, you may see an accurate rendition of the way time passes and simply marvel at it. You got down not only the chair but the table too. The box of matches and the banana. The gripping visits to the garden. The couple of minutes staring into space thinking about dynamite and blowing something to smithereens, and bellowing, angrily, at the wallpaper handing it back your life, You fucking have it, I don't want it! The wind will always find little alcoves and pipe ends to whistle and howl. Just have to open yourself up to the wind. That's all. Let it blow you a tune and fetch you a stop and listen. Ants in the closet, can't bring yourself to sweep them with the broom and impale them on bristle hairs. Ten minutes in a panic confused what to do without killing them, because you don't want to kill them. And then you kill them, there's nothing else you can do. They are taking the piss. But you hate yourself for doing it, they deserve to live as much as anything. You block up the hole with Blu-Tack to save the ones that would come after. You would never kill a bird or a cat but you would kill a human or a shit dog. You would never kill a beetle, but you would a human, but not a child. Why is it easier to kill your own species. Because they encroach upon you, they crowd around you. Twenty cats could walk all over you and you'd love it, but passing people

in the street you realise how much your own species hold nothing for you. This has to be squared with the few representatives of the species you have as friends. Yet you can look at many humans in the street and see nothing you could ever be friends with. I don't think they're intelligent. It would not take much for us all to start killing each other. Best to keep away from them as much as possible. Not even certain I am one of them. I feel implanted. A watcher. The assignment is getting to me. And the thoughts still come, like those ants. Destroy them. Make them no more. But that is too much effort. Stop paying them any attention. Write them down and disown them immediately. It is just more stuff, flooding out when my back is turned. You wanted it too, didn't you? I think I did I believe it was invited. It is always invited. The words have their own business to attend to. I am willing to be used. Always have been, always a kind of pleasure to be used by the words, to express what I suppose is normally kept hidden, kept way back, yes, let that out let that out. It wants to come out so let it. I don't know what the point of it is but I don't have to know. I don't care. When I don't care it comes out more freely. And there is hardly anything there any more, it leaves my mind empty, I have taken the pressure down, I have expressed what is better expressed in words than in action. So I write, to not become abominable.

I don't know why so much time alone seems wasted, as if time is better spent with people. It just comes over me every so often, but then passes again. I have felt, with people, for instance, oh to be alone right now. Perhaps I take being alone to an extreme. But by whose standard? I shall soon be dead. Soon measured against what I don't know. Perhaps tomorrow. How will I make today a worthy last day? Well it doesn't matter. If I try to make it special who shall know of it? It is just another day. Why get out the bunting? One way or another there is no difficulty in letting the day remain just another day. Let's not forget that. Just be on my guard against giving up my freedom. The jottings will take place still. Even if there is quiet crying in my hands, the jottings will still take place, they will not wait for some perfect moment. Rather wiping tears on trousers and getting down another sentence, whether I feel like it or not. It is not always necessary to work oneself up into a state. Where one is is where one is, it does not differ from times that are less, or more. What continuum is there in a scrapbook of perfect moments? Rather the long drawn-out boredoms be perfectly represented and then some peak or other on the monitor, a little excitement

already suppressed, greyed out. Was I born? I heed this question more than any other. I listen to myself, in the great empty cavern of myself, for echoes that may come in answer. Tepid philosophising, as usual. Wishes that come as you watch yourself die. Ah, that is what I should have been doing, or this. And now none of it matters. Ah, yes, I remember, none of it ever did matter. All my life, remembering, and forgetting, that. God's escape hatch. The healing scab over it all. I could make an effort. Of course I could. But a quiet effort, without rushing myself. Or maybe next month will be a month for making a little effort. I will not let it weigh too heavily upon me. I've been here a thousand times before. I shall survive all the fragments of plans and carry out a greater plan in troubling myself only lightly over matters. I must have seen this coming. I see everything coming. I have seen everything coming. Acclimatised myself in advance. Gave myself over to panting less in this race. Fell back. Outer space. Always outer space. Something waiting for me out there. Exhausted here. I keep alive a little flame of exhilaration in the great landscape of weariness, so I can use it to enter into that stage of my life. In outer space. Like waiting at a bus shelter, my present life. At three in the morning, for a night bus. They don't come very often. Not sure if I've just missed one. No watch, do they even keep to

the timetable. Chill night air, passersby with kebabs. They will not attack with greasy fingers. They are into their sliced onions and tomatoes and pitta bread. The chilli sauce is good, hot but not too hot. Could just fall asleep here, but wait, wait until I get back home, dreams calling me on the night bus. With a little effort, I could summon up enthusiasm to live another day, but rather leave it in the hands of awakening or not, rather just fall down the chasm headfirst into sleep. Let it be decided, but don't let me have to decide. What have I got to base it on? Learn from the other species. I have nothing in common with humans. The cold aloof dignity of trees. Are stones alive? I think about it, more than once. I could sit and listen to a good stone for a few hours. I have come across stones like that out in wildernesses. Listen to the air, soil. Dead leaves. Listen to it all. Listen to light listen to dark. About 3AM the worldly hubbub dies down, some nights at least. Apparently this is the time most people die, the warmth sinks out of their bodies at 3AM. It is the time when I most know what to do, even if it is only sitting down and doing nothing. There is a difference between sitting down doing nothing but full of vague anxieties, and sitting down and doing nothing and knowing it is the best thing to do in the world right then. A quiet joy wells up, and enthusiasm, but it is fastened upon

no object. Perhaps it is the simple joy of being alive, everything else fallen away.

Look only at what's directly in front of you. Don't be concerned with what you might be doing, which, in my case . . . no, don't be concerned with that. Away with it! As always, away with it. I must have learnt this good. Years of trying. Years and years. But don't be concerned with that. What you might have wasted of your life, I mean. Don't be concerned with it. It's gone it doesn't matter. And the future, the future is, I will get up in a moment and put leftover chilli in a pot and heat it and I will fry seeds and cold leftover rice and make a meal to fill the little space in my belly. It can all disappear in a moment. The snow that was floaty all over the place this morning could not compete with the sun. Had you slept a little longer you would never have known. That it snowed today. And what a fine thing is it snowing. I wondered whether the cat had ever seen snow, but I did not want to wake him up just to satisfy my own amusement seeing him, as I imagined standing on the bath looking out the open bathroom window, jumping in the air to catch first this snowflake and then that, a cat ballet, it would have been so funny, and I was tempted

to wake him to see if he would act as my mind predicted for him, or whether he would harrumph and dash under the bushes, uninterested. Still the childlike wonder in me to see the snow and I could not fathom why that was but I let it be, I let it be there in me, resting like a snowflake itself halfway to melting away, lodged on a little shelf reserved for wondrous things.

A succession of moments, closely observed. I watch them going. Catch the tail end of them. It is the same as ancient history. You can construct something that was there, but it is not what was there when it was there. Life is a game, that's the closest it can be to anything. We haven't reached the point of clapping. We forget we're playing, oh, I'd say between the ages of twenty and fifty. Before then we were preparing to play. But when we're playing we forget it's a game. But when you stand back, or somehow find yourself spun out of the game, you see it, but you don't realise that you're just in another game. For some years you are confused by what you see out of your window. It feels like you should want to be a part of it. Look at the sun on the houses, looks so warm but you know it is cold out there. It stirs thoughts of what you shall do in the spring, or what you would like to happen, but you don't know whether it will. Part of you always says, More of the same, more of the same. But you keep this little candle

flame alive, Oh, you will be together, it will find a way. But the thoughts have much of habit about them and you're hard-pressed to know if you really want anything any more. A few questions answered, that would do. Or not even that, you've got used to the perplexity, it is only the fault of thinking it in the first place. Put it aside. You have put it aside many times before. Waiting has always been there. You know a lot about waiting. You are the god of waiting. If I were to say, Now I see! In a moment it would be, No I don't. Just another illusion. So away with it, all this wanting to know and knowing and getting to know and . . . away with it. The habit of not knowing is getting more deeply ingrained. It is less effort to say, Oh, I don't know. Beautiful thoughts and ugly ones come running after you like dirty little boys in foreign stopping-off points trying to sell you single cigarettes. Here they come running. You have to perform. A child goes by outside making whooping sounds. You make whooping sounds inside and she turns her little head, but I don't think she can see me through the dark window, the almost lifeless window to the street where no-one comes out or in for days and days on end. I am the teller of a story I suppose. I have that much to keep me busy, though often it seems the story has gone away. There is something I relish about my position. Perhaps as brains in jars go, I am in the

centre of the shelf, I have a bigger jar. The frightened look is only being startled on realising I am seen. The aloneness is an exploration of the darkness. I cannot say I am not satisfied with it because I admire its shapelessness, the way it forgives nobody, the wishes it is hiding. I have nothing to fear from the ten hot hells and the ten cold hells. It's a story of now. Wrestling with my honoured name. For the first time in years I know where I am. This is progress. I have caught myself living the life that was given me. The recent night shrugged off, I am content in the day. I never knew how to play but I see now that I was always content to be an outsider. I have an impossibly old debt, from before I pretended to be born pretended to grow up and pretended to age. What answers I have! Yet knowing nothing. I am glad I decided (not decided) to stay here a little longer (a lot longer). To ask myself more. Not ask more of myself. No. To ask myself more. To mine repeatedly a worn-out seam. No, there is gold here, I know it. And I catch glimpses of it as I go along. Just tricks of the light, of course, since even granite can sparkle if the light catches it right. And the fireflies of evening, which are imagined since there are no fireflies in this land, still fly, fly better for not being there. They surround me. And the cicadas, or cockchafers, or whirring beetles, they keep me company as well as any person with a

hat to put on and go away from me. And the trees and the frost, the bare trees. Oh there is a dam of joy held back in these things, I have a fine hunch about it I do, it will not be much that sets this little lot off. It gives me great satisfaction to be self-contained, but it took bloody years. Sorting through things that didn't fit, looking for words in speechlessness. Wanting to fit in, sure, wanting to, of course, but never fitting in, never going that way where all the others were going. I had something to do but months went by many times in many years when there was nothing I could wring from the evening. I held out my outstretched arms in expectation of a lover running into them, but there was nothing there. Everyone faded. So much so I wished I would fade, but no, I remained. I knew I would always be here. Even after this particular body was left lying on the ground, I would still be here, so clearly I had work to do to work this out, I couldn't be content any longer with not knowing, or at least I thought I couldn't. You feel your years, when you see you are before all of these lives. There is nothing special about this particular one, he is an organism in symbiosis with me. We are one, to an extent, but the truth is he is far happier when he casts off all remnants of individuality to fade into me, the unfading one. But it gives him heart to realise quite what he is holding up. I think I once knew, how this evening

played out. From what remains in my possession I can see the misty and indistinct clearly enough. Details are just exaggerations of that. Will I succeed any better for having made so many mistakes? The universe I am is an abandoned child.

A quarter of an hour is enough to conceive a plan for it. Take any longer it'll all get tied up in wishes, that, at the last moment, would have been better not drawn up. A different theme is needed, one that rewards being clear, without committing to any final vision, since all that is obvious is suddenly not obvious in every nook and cranny not obvious at all. But for a quarter of an hour it can be obvious. You will not have time to finish the rest, the counsels of reason, resign yourself to stopping short of perplexity, which means finishing on a high note and leaving nobody behind still eager to play. No, the game must have a logical conclusion, but perhaps an unexpected one, and there is no time left to root out its inconsistencies, it will have to do. But perhaps I shall not have a chance to savour my last moment, to be sure of this intuition, so I address it beforehand in endless happenings of nothing, to take myself away and bring myself back, to be able to say, I saw it coming, Ah-ha! Yes! I saw it coming. I did! I am not short of time for as long as it goes on, and they will be able to say, He dedicated his life to an enigma, but what he had to say

amounts to no more than a quarter of an hour at the end of time. He gabbled it out, he had a lot to say in such a short time, he said he had no desires but he must have desired that much. There were always animals and birds around him. Few people. Perhaps he was not talking to people. Perhaps he was waiting for the lower creatures to evolve, so he could speak to them. He did speak to them, it was only so much chirping and cheeping and caterwauling, but they seemed to understand, and he didn't expect much to come of it. It put a smile on his face if not on theirs. Do you want to know the truth? About him I mean. He was not any the wiser than anyone else, he just stopped longer to correct his inaccuracies. He encouraged beetles along their path, lost in it, nothing was more important to him at that moment than where that beetle was heading. Certainly he had forgotten all about dying and other things that do not matter. That was what he was like. He rejected human guidance and looked elsewhere. You have never seen a man more intently listening to the advice he was getting, than when he sat there late at night listening to the wind. And this is all I would wish to survive about him.

And then you wonder, Am I in decline? Is that it? Is it as simple as that? Others are worse off, I have the night, at least, to be free. I feel the clutches of pedestrian policies hardly at all in the night. I am my own man, a bright light as long as it lasts, living with those other names. Being others, escaping myself, and myself, I don't know what that means, it is ground that has lost its footing. The moon becomes my constant, the wind. Not what I have or have not. I close my eyes and I live on, I have lost nothing of who I was, and perhaps gained a little, in that who I was doesn't matter any more. Decades pass as years did, and I wonder will I ever get what I want, only to moments later think, Can I.. Is it possible I might be.. completely indifferent? You cannot push a thing, you have to wait until it gets round to you, or not. So pointless to imagine a stake for oneself in that. Just another habit of wishing. Look instead at what has come your way, in spite of it all. Now the ground lies white with snow. Do you remember the joy of the blizzard of it all coming down. The cat hiding under the garden chair, his first snow. He is completely used to it now. I have waited years for snow like this. It is soon gone, and I will doubtless think, Not before time, but all the same it was not a heavy pressure to wait for it. It was hardly on my mind, save now and again when I witnessed it trying, straining hard to snow, but

the world was having none of it, it was not the time, those feeble.. one can hardly call them flakes.. floating like specks of ash. But last night, oh how the snow came, how it filled the streets with something new. A surprise for the sleeping child. I remember getting up and opening the curtains. This joy wanting to live again gets its chance. The world has its fangs in me, as far as that much goes. Yet I am too far away to be really called back. The shortness of life comes across to you, sometimes intensely, sitting on the bed pulling on your socks. I have the patience to wait before abandoning it. I've looked round the corner and no longer fit in. The joy the suffering the words, rotting and mulching down, we will make something of it, it will be fit for nothing but at least it'll be. They'll come too late, they always do. And then they will have to wait, for another like me. And that too will be me, I'll make them wait. I make them wait now, if truth be told. I am not as keen as I was for fame, I prefer the calm away from the mass, where I am not troubled by anything but the sides I take, the hairs I find everywhere, and my mind, my weightless mind, spreading, like breath spreads from mouth to mouth, which you hardly register until it is tainted by passing exhaled cigarette smoke, a marker if you will of air from other lungs, though all of our air has been through other lungs, and, if it comes down

to it, the elements that build me up into some kind of manifestation, these came from somewhere. Daily my head spins with these questions, put aside to watch slowly passing clouds, magpies nest-building above the snow, and snowball fights before it is all gone and the cogs start to turn again, a brief white interlude over, between me and you an enjoyable thing to be tucked away by, if only every day there was some coming of a difference like that. Well, I get into the idea and make it out of smaller things. A little bit of mist at dawn is soon a great fog engulfing the world, in my mind at least, and fog is even more wonderfully isolating of us in our particular little spaces. Why I cannot even see who is approaching, and they cannot see me, and with a quick twist of the heel and over the road on hearing them I might never be seen at all ever again, and I take to walking close to walls and stopping and starting, I cannot even be seen behaving suspiciously, though cats jump up on walls and purr and headbutt me, and I stroke the cats staring into the fog before a curtained televisual glow, and if the fog is thick enough that room will be floating off into space. And I come alive with my high hopes too soon, but I don't think it is a weakness, to lose one's head over fantastic imaginings come one step closer to being real. The enthusiasm gets a foothold in you again, your eyes are bright with all that

is possible, some call it a wide childlike sparkle, and it is a sparkle, it sprinkles flickering shimmering glitter over everything. You remember why. You remember how. You remember what next. You're infused, you've gone down this road before, many times, but now you see it, you saw it then but now you really see it. It's yours. You possess it. It is you. You are it. It has come to haunt you you are haunting it. For the time that remains, this shall be the world you live in. You're granted paradise in the fog. What a beautiful paradise is the paradise where you cannot see a thing, only anticipate. You're joining in its magic, casting away the old residual memories of what it was and what you thought it was and what it may well be, you're exchanging it for what it could be, what it almost certainly is with just a little imagination. You're creating it and when the fog is gone it'll be there. May the fog never be gone. Better never to find out whether it could be possible than . . . let it go back to what it was, when the stones stop living, and we've made a mess of our death. I always thought it wasn't up to me, I bet that gets said a lot out here. Wake up, for fuck's sake. Don't use as an excuse for everything not knowing because you never thought you had to think as hard as that, or stop thinking, whichever turned the half-truths into brilliant stories and plenty to be getting on with after you'd thought there was nothing.

Wear a pendant in Hell. Show what kind of man you are. Then everything will only be about one thing, which I shall try to make clear. I shall at least deal with it while I am still alive. I am on my guard, having made a mistake about where I was going. But life has limbered me up, and I am excited, it is playtime. It can all be dismissed with a wave of the hand, but what a wave of the hand.

The first daffodils are popping up through the snow.

I have decided to live without reference but the everyday living moment. The fragments of unwanted news that come via the radio are exchanged for a momentary observation that the tub of rainwater has a plate of ice across the top of the water, recently detached from the sides with a bit of sun to warm its edges. I brush dust off a lampshade, a year's worth of dust, out in the melting snow. I don't want this life polluted by images that are nothing to do with me. I see nothing in the future and the past . . . is contained. Where I am is where I have got to. Mundanely everyday to me, yet perhaps an impossible place to reach, as yet, for others. I look where I am, I don't look anywhere else. To deviate from that I see the chasms I am surrounded by. I am aware

of them, it is enough. I am tired of feeling I may have made a great mistake, so away with it. There is nothing else I am going to be doing now. Save what follows naturally. I don't push I don't pull. I note certain signs. My practice is one of confinement, I set myself free within it. I no longer take my cues from what others are doing, or I think they're doing, since mostly they are worrying about their lives, for all what they have about them seems more exciting than what I have about me. But I am a statue. Moving only slightly. Having the strength not to want. Simply sensing my present state. This room. A mystery how I got here, for all the various causes and effects can be traced back. I see it as interim. I am as kind as I can be to the various creatures that come to visit. I change my sheets now and again. I consider the powers I have left to me and catalogue recollections as truth or fantasy, initially, then cease the futile effort and put it behind me as all much of a muchness. Bright light is not necessary, I can live in a perpetual gloom, a nuclear winter kind of guy in my habits of coming alive at dusk and feeling I have had a narrow escape entering into the purity of the night. Oh a bit of daylight now and again is good for the spirit, but the day itself, it has a strangeness, it tries to enlist you and have you lose your footing, but that is only sometimes, such as in the reminder of work ending on

seeing the people coming down the road at the end of the afternoon, and me, here, stuck in this madhouse. But it is a quickly shaken off feeling, I start to limber up, as the day gives way to the night. Often I write in the afternoon, because my ears are pricked up for what I might be. It seems important, but it isn't. Perhaps I just want to get it out the way. I could go for a walk, but I don't. I let it all be the same so the mystery is right in front of me all the time. So I can get a good look at it. I should laugh more, but I do sometimes. But when I am thinking I look for constancy, it requires a stern expression, but I often break into a little chuckle at myself, what hogwash. I gaze about, every day, at the same old things, and think, The mystery! I expect to pierce through it with my penetrating vision, poke a little hole through its skin and widen it. Here is as good as anywhere. Here is definitely as good as anywhere. At least I have realised that much. It saves on transport, on effort. Others set themselves apparently larger tasks, but my task has become large by the sheer number of years I have poured into it. All this time. Sometimes I rather hope I do find out I have wasted it, because at least I have made my mark then: no-one wasted their time as much as him, no-one dedicated themselves to such a ridiculous notion for so long as that man. Save perhaps that man whose legs fell off at the end of it, or

hung like empty stockings with a few pebbles down the toe end. He couldn't stand on them, which at least gave him increased impetus not to get up. Sat in that cave just gazing at the wall. I've long admired him. Another man cut off his arm to present to him, in the hope of learning his secret, which was, apparently, that it was all a vast emptiness. I found that out long ago and still have the use of my legs. But of course the distractions do still try to sell you a square acre of quagmire. Just a little step in the wrong direction and you're going for miles before you can do anything about it, at least if you don't know about turning back early, and that's my speciality. Did I just hear a child outside in the street say, 'I'm an alien'? Probably something else, and I sit there for some minutes mulling over what else it might have been, but instead light my taper and enter back into the great halls of Oblivion. All one needs to live is the ability to leave no discernible trace. Lapse, and you grow heavy. There is less to amuse yourself with, since it is all out of reach. I could tell people to come to their senses, but there would only be a lot of weeping. Did it really take me years to learn how to live from moment to moment? One day we notice what we have become. I remember those days. The birds would not sing. Reverse would not work. When you lose consciousness it is a perfect time to write your memoirs.

You may wake up with blood on your forehead. A deep bloody gash. You can remember nothing. What meat for a memoir. An enigma, and no way of assessing what has happened to you. Write! You are at the crossroads of life, write while still stunned. Write about what is in the cupboard, or a forest. Even now I touch my finger to my left temple. Then bright red blood on my fingertips. The broken washing line. The light in the sky. The sensation of levitating. I must have been swinging on the washing line. It must have snapped. I fell, hit my head on corner of the house. I remember now, it's all coming back to me . . . it's all a dolphin juggling spoons. It made sense to me at the time, and still does as an absurdity that became the foundation of my life. I pulled my bed closer to the window and lay looking up at the stars. Above the pine trees. In the morning my forehead was stuck to the pillow. I pulled it away and it tore my flesh. Dried blood. It had glued me to the pillow. Fragments left of this, that's all. Like a ghost that has just walked through the wall, you cannot follow after it. Nonetheless, you know you've torn the veil. It is you who has walked through a wall. Where you are now is the subject that thoughts will wrestle with for the rest of your life. But better, when something big has happened to you, to dive into the small things. For it is the everyday that must surely be altered, in tone,

in expectation. It is what is on your own plate, what is before you, though at first you realise this only in fits and starts and live a kind of death, before your eyes open again. It began with a blow on the head. Thirty years later you are sitting at your desk and it comes like a sudden realisation: thirty years ago you received a blow to the head, had you forgotten? It wants to be an explanation for everything. But I'm not having it. Did I not look into that already? But it keeps staring at you, like a huge squatting toad that expects you to say something. At some point we have to face the realisation that all of our friends, even our friends, are just people in our imagination. There is no-one to phone. It has all gone away. My god, it has all gone away. Never for a moment did I think it could . . . just all go away. Not with me still living, no I never imagined that. Moments only. A little joke of the room, the cold has got into your veins, nothing more. You protect yourself by not thinking it, the same way you do not think, when dying, Am I dying? I have often wondered, have I sins I have told no-one about? Are there things I have done I have forgotten, but which will all be added into the reckoning? But then away with that too. That action is one of my best habits, Away with it. Whatever it is, Away with it. You will not start foretelling your fate at this late hour, rather you will just dismiss it.

The moon is full I could put it on the table and eat my dinner off it. The hours of the night are getting less. They have thought of everything. The nights when she is the number one woman. I'd like to increase those. They are varied, contain much unexpected. The birds come and perch on my seedfeeder. It is good to be able to do something for the birds, while I am waiting. Single-handedly increased the number of sparrows in the garden, as if I'm growing them. They come and rap on the windowpane with their beaks when I forget to fill it. I will go out there in the middle of a storm if there is still a sliver of light left in the world by which they can feed. I have grown used to their sudden disappearance as twilight comes. They take no chances. Tucked up in their holes under the guttering. I presume they can't see very well in the dark, and it is a dangerous time for them. They have probably been this way for thousands of years. Which is why I like them, I think. I can't imagine what we were like then, perhaps tens of thousands of years ago, when they were just the same. But I recognise the brute in men, it is only thinly plastered over in civilised man, it easily comes out, and

then, there we are, just the same too, but far less likeable than the birds. Anyway, the door to the past is closed even in our own little lives, let alone further afield. We can only imagine, although it sometimes seems like remembering, as much as remembering something that may or may not have happened to ourselves. The brain is useful for ferreting out pencils and jotting down a few thoughts, but otherwise I distrust it and use it to choose not to listen to it much. It probably has a little life of its own, going on while I'm not watching. It may think it is all sorts of things, only occasionally thinking it is me. It has often felt like leftovers. All I want is the night, and that is coming, coming like a great army of beetles. I have studied the stars a little, when there are gaps through the clouds, occasionally getting a full sky to expend ten minutes of enthusiasm for learning on, digging out my planisphere and turning the dials to now.

I have always felt abandoned, but by who or what, I can't say. With so much low cloud so much of the time it is easy to forget we are in space. When a clear night comes, and takes away three or four weeks of forgetting, I like to check it is still the same planet, since how do I know where I wake up from out of dreams or where I wake up to, there could have been shiftings. How would I know? The brain keeps too much of its cleverness to itself to be trusted.

Until the day lays a hand on me, I am free to fit into any shape. There is something about the stark daylight that lets me lose my imagination, and conclude, Here I am again. This is how I will become old, if I am not already old. Old compared with some, young compared with others. But to myself, I am the same as I ever was, just slightly withering, and even that is in one light but not another. This race to get something done, I still feel that, but what has to be got done shimmers like a mirage, it is hard to put all my weight behind it. There is a woman who is so good to me. Somehow I want to change reality to bring her physically closer, whether her to me or me to her, I don't mind. But apart from that, things have lost their urgency, and even that is something it is an effort not to forget about. An old romantic, I sense salvation lies in her arms, more than it does in a black rectangle. But these foolish ideas, we could have a yellow parrot, we could have lots of cats, we could live on a farm, we could live in a windmill, I'd be happy for her to set the agenda, I need little more than a room to play with words, and I don't recall why I need that any more. I have become the true floating

individual I wished to become, long ago. I would like to talk about it, as much as it is possible. It seems little more than persisting in trying, disregarding whether I am successful or not. Since that I don't know what to measure against anyway. But there is a sense I have happened, in my wanderings, upon somewhere quite magnificent, if only I could do it justice. And because I see few if any others here (can't be sure of the vague shapes as yet, whether they are *people*), there seems a responsibility to let words stick themselves over it, to define it as a shape at least, before I even get on to how it is a shelter, and, in a manner of speaking, whole days that have flown still here. Wild eyelids struggle to open on this place from many a dream. It deserves a few words. I am honoured that they should come from myself, given how passive I have become, and how affection for the numerous states of mind has drained. But still, I come back to here, and I know it is marvellous, I can deny it no longer, but sometimes I miss being able to write it off as just another of many. Delusions. I am not greatly given to nostalgia for my many delusions. Only a handful have had the power to persist, the most other-worldly have carried me along I will admit. I am not sure quite when I stopped believing in them, or even whether I did. There was always a gaunt hesitation to wholeheartedly embrace them.

But the task, for all it was hard, very hard, was easy, once I saw it for what it was. It was the lack of edges or sharp boundaries that required of me a new way of looking, to see what was there in what might otherwise remain a confusing fog. But I reckoned, if this was what I had, then this was what I needed to look into, daily, or as much as I could assess daily with days, and what was a day but a marker, and markers I could make of my own, half of the imagination half of slivers of what was there for me of what was wholly there for others, or at least I assumed as much by their evident immersion in it. So in this I stood astride dimensions, or worlds, the meaning begins to break down, and it was this that I was immersing myself in, for no better reason than it appeared given to me to do, and as I had no other pressing engagements, I took the hook in my mouth and became a man of no abode. If it was only madness, let it be a great madness, since madness is the greater for being only one step away from the supposedly sane. If it is only this turn or that, perceived as a wrong, then doesn't that make it a scary madness, and scary madness was what I wanted because I wanted to conquer it. That it would be a step into a true sanity, I never quite noticed, until the world around me, all but me, became noticeably madder. I didn't have any time for the godhead, since that was me if it was anything,

just a forgetful godhead if you will, but connected, not cut off, and sometimes fully absorbed. But of that, there is little to be said. Rather swarm out of it broken up into demons, for the play. And once again, in a room, forever in a room, all manner of walls but always a room. This did not call for separate study, there was flickering of remembering to take of it, and little more remained to be said. The impossible, just wrenched away from, had my full attention. It was like being blessed, but this is altogether too passive. You can crawl around in that shit for years. And notice, the little claws clinging to your sleeve, little demons that do not want to be dead, holding on, but fading. There is no horror in this, not to me, more the sorriness that they must fade. Like friends one does not see any more. And I, what am I, but a bigger demon, remaining. And that is why they fade, to become me.

At first I was not good at these lessons. I couldn't take it in. But gradually, through many entrances and exits, I gathered the reflected gleams and lost glories, gathered them up, watched them become dark silent and stale, my mind nowhere else but on them, until I penetrated their saved last breath, for that was what they were, the last breaths of a planet's inhabitants, and I sucked them all into me. And moved on. And inevitably forgot. Let it out piecemeal. A rage at nothing. Belonging on looking

at the stars but not at the world. Uncertainty about the simplest matters, but a bold striking fist raised for the stupendous. A fleshed-over skeleton resting on a bed, dancing shadows for company. Trained for something, a sleeper, wasting away, mind elsewhere, but in time, an emergence, the chrysalis cannot hold me any longer. I will not become prey for them, on the contrary, they will become prey for me. These thoughts flow through my mind, having nowhere else to go. Someone has to think them. I shall not speak on behalf of the thinker, he is temporary, welcome Dark One. I shall clean my glasses for a better look, but do not presume that this stupid flesh is not without will. It could imprison you, Dark Master, in a life of idleness, so you would be well advised to gain its cooperation, and not attempt to impose your will, because it, insect that it is, has a will too and I dare say you would be surprised how it can dig its heels in when it wants to. But as a team, o boy. It is good that you are listening, you will not fade to nothing with your listening. You will find your form, you will seek your present day. These conversations, recorded, will show you your first footprints in our world. You have heard them talk, and in the silence of your own thoughts you have come forth, to address them. He was out of his mind, they will say. But none will deny your power. Your father was my father, my

wife your wife, I cannot testify against myself, save to accuse another. Who am I in the scheme of things, but a wisp, an addictive thought sucked like a humbug on a Sunday afternoon. But you, I will expose you, your shock of hair is my shock of hair, fiendishly grown up, making do in a small house, cramped work of evenings a work of understanding, and with every passing year another thing is said that becomes indelible, washing blood out with blood. A little life of equilibrium, an empty house, and a path through memories leading nowhere. It is how we shall end up. The pulse quickens as the light goes, not long now. There is comfort in the evenings the ravaging wind around a soul in tatters a cloak. And these people will be brought to book, they do not know what is lying on their doorstep. They cannot see around the corner. The desperado.

The years take as much as taking can get, to the last gasp. We have no need of our weary regrets, yet we still keep hold of them. We try to make ourselves useful, but someone has got there before us. We're left with nothing to do.

All that time preparing for examinations, it was solely to fill the time. At the time, I thought, this will come

in handy one day, but the amount that could come in handy could be written on the back of a postcard and kept for future reference, in case it was forgotten. Still, it feels the right thing to do to exercise the brain, to be tested on our retention. And perhaps we will find our life's work in it. I fitted in for many years, I think to see whether it was worthwhile. I guess I have concluded it is not. All I chose to learn I chose to forget. There is something of achievement in these sad happy futile strong words. I am guarding something worth guarding, half suspecting it has slipped away, perhaps even before I got here. I shall light the lantern soon, the darkness descends and the mad voices begin. I forget it all in the silhouette of a high-flying seagull wheeling up there gliding effortlessly. A moment come and gone, but enough to knock away a mountain. Back to emptiness, gorgeous emptiness. They'll say that was my achievement. He signalled out of the murk that he had found it. He was a superior mind, but providence led him a merry dance. Always bedding down in newspaper in cardboard boxes, never a pound to call his own, everything he had stolen or scavenged, and he always tried to have a little less than he needed, he said it kept him keen. A landscape of questioning, always a trudge. He was most content when he forgot everything. A nice thing that would be, to forget everything. But the

Plasticine of his mind retained more impressions than it was feasible to smooth out. Forgetting was always a retreat from memory, not a loss. I suppose he was glad of that really. He brooded sometimes about not having achieved anything by the time he was pensioned off, he could see it happening quite easily. For though he was engaged on things, he half suspected they were worthless endeavours. He opened himself up for supernatural steerage, but mostly he was only driven round the bend by minor devils, which, when he realised where this was going, he bellowed them away, shocked more that he had let them get the better of him, since after all he was a bigger devil than the lot of them if he could only realise it often enough. And so, in the end, it was this he put his attention into, he had stared at the bucket on the floor long enough anyway, he would try at last to fill it with who he *really* was. None of this short measure any more. He generally cheered up when he gained enough clarity to see exactly what sacrifices needed to be made. Enough of pointless sacrifices that edged him a little bit this way and then back again. How far into the fog can a clouded mind walk? Soon overcome. His strength always increased when he saw things clearly, and did not permit himself any longer to drift. It was true that the written word was mostly impotent, but this was only because few had seen how to use it. He'd seen off

enough trains at stations with flags to know it wasn't a journey he needed to go on any more. No, he needed to water the plants and sit with his back to the radiator. It had to be understood, this place. If I'm going to fail miserably, then let me fail miserably *at that*. He could hear the voices of ridicule all about, but what did they know? He had at least the silence, and the rain, when it rained. He knew what he had to do. At last he was going somewhere in going nowhere.

He was working himself up to it, this great gigantic thing, which many times in the past he had felt himself quite unfitted for, but then he had endured much to get here without really intending to, so he may as well have the glory as well as the hardship. Call it a quirk of fate, since how else could anyone in their right mind make their way to here? Has he said enough about it yet to make it plain where *here* is? Probably not, but how much is there to say about it?

That he could still find fascination under the rock of familiarity and everyday dullness said much about him, more about him than anything deliberately placed there to find. He couldn't for the life of him think he had found any evidence of deliberation here, which meant that it was all entirely created by him, whoever he was. And he had not intended to do it, to create it, to make it, he was not the artificer, he had only stumbled upon it. If

stumbling upon it gave equal rights in its creation, then it was the hollow void that had to be thanked. So he sat in solitude preparing. He imagined himself addressing the Academy, a grand explorer, telling them what he had found in the corner of his own fucking room. His little friends were always with him, and sometimes they seemed to multiply, when he would box a few of them and stack them up until he had thought what to do with them. He looked in occasionally, to see they were alright. They contented themselves, more or less, with what they had, much like him in his own box. He was ready at all times for the lid of his own world to be lifted off, and in the meantime engaged in a form of play, to take the sting out of incapacity. There was something noble in it. This is the way to play, he said to himself one morning – on one's own. He was undoubtedly missing out on many things, but couldn't this forlornness be looked at, couldn't a kettle be put on while one sits down with this? He wrestled well his fleeting states of mind, even when he forgot the why and wherefore, whatever that is. One day, he would see the sense of it, this dark life. He would pester the question until it broke open into the pitter-patterest of glad days. He would do his schoolwork now, that settled. He would learn how to do these equations. And at eight o'clock he would go down and watch his favourite programme.

There, it was settled. There was no conflict in this plan. He was an exasperated master not knowing how. He would snatch it from his own hand, having no help from others. He would become better at being what he was, once he had begrudgingly accepted what he was. There would come times when he had no shelter, no friends, everywhere was closed, and cold, and winter. But it wouldn't mean a jot to him. He would be bigger than the lot of it. There! He had his plan and it was a good plan, this is what he would spend his life doing, being bigger and better than it. I have decided. Even the rain knows I have decided. My expulsion is complete, I am now the master of my own destiny and there is no two ways about it, I am evil if this is evil. Simple as that. Done deal. No pact with the devil, a pact with myself, and let that be a lesson to the world. He punched his fist into his hand and it made a sharp crack, and that was the moment that separated the last moment from this moment. He had become something altogether more powerful in his life. As simple as that. He did it again, fist into hand, but this time it landed awkwardly and hurt the hand the fist smashed into and the crack wasn't a nice sharp crack it was a dull muffled slap Ah, never try to redo what was done perfectly without thinking about it. Put the second one aside, it doesn't count, the first had power enough, the world will be what it

will be and the darkness in myself shall conquer it. A curious deduction, perhaps, but nonetheless it carried him, carried him like a hero atop the shoulders of a cheering crowd, and his big head loved it and felt the bramble thorns sticking in. Oh how good it is to have decided, like the sole survivor of a plane crash decides to no longer stay by the wreckage, but to chance it walking out into the desert. It's all in a decision as simple as that one, and if you could see it for what it is you might be moved to tears, but forget dawdling there, one foot in front of the other foot, leave the cheering crowds behind, for all of their pledges of allegiance you are strong enough to realise they will not follow you where you are going. And now it's all your own free time, you can settle this matter at last, and put aside the indulgences you have allowed to punish you thus far, mistaking them for pleasures. Submit, give up, and be the crack of the thunder cloud, and raise your eyes up and know everything is *yours* in that black-bloodied sky. They skulk down here, they never give time to philosophy, you have a natural advantage, like a predator. Time is nothing to you, because you don't waste it, not any more. And this is not the only striking thing about the darkness, if you listen in your head you will hear more. All the tools you need to justify your path are in your grasp. Feel the power, and do

nothing about it. And it turns around, the pettiness of day-to-day life. You are out of your skull with wonder, you have reverted to knowledge of strange things and left behind the ordinary trials of being alone. It was a hawk up there, not a seagull, I am sure of it. And now the darkness has fallen and the clouds have opened I am rained into my proper self. No longer any need to raise my fist to the heavens. I am one bird talking to another about the crops, and in the days to come I know he will astonish us all, this hazardous wastrel of a man, and the moon and the planets couldn't have judged it better, the timing he has tempted upon himself. He has gone all the way out to meet it, his life. Fed up with the idea that it was this tiny crummy thing bound up in ignorance. Patience, and solitude, was all he needed, and the will not to give up yet. Condiments upon his table. There were greater things yet to wrestle with.

Some days just sit there, steps taken to get somewhere lost in the shadows, looking at the mottled shades not for anything, something to console maybe, but not expecting anything. The sun is a joke when it is so cold. The feeble dying away of plans. You could almost

wonder whether you mightn't be better off following them, what they're doing, but how could you, now? You've come too far along some other path. They seem close, out there on the pavement going up and down, going about their business, but they are on the other side of an abyss. You are incompatible with them, the feeling or knowledge persists, so it must be true or true enough to make the very difference you see as being there. You will get back in shape, you will see the point of it all again. It's a promise. You don't need courage to stay where you are, you only needed courage to get where you are. That's all lost now, all forgotten about. It fell away, like rocks from a lost foothold. Nothing is more real than right now, and right now what is so bad? A pit you cannot get out of, well at least sit down in it. You've learnt this much haven't you? Remember the changes in other forms. Are you going to panic like a horse? No, give up your fretful pacing and sit, sit down. This is life as it had to be. There is a reason you were abandoned. It is too early to flag.

One doesn't have to think. Thought is not important. It is only thought that tells me these things. Thought that tells me to reject thought. Trying to do me a favour, or perhaps it wants me to go along this line of thought. Can do neither. Whatever it's shown me, it's also taken back. This is Babel. This is the place. Wants me annoyed.

Gulls screeching, I have potatoes boiling. This is not how I expected to be spending my life . . . and yet, I can form no solid impression of how I *did* expect to be spending my life. Someone has to keep a record of futility, or of a journey that had much of its terrain that way. Is it worth it for the breaking out? What faith I preserve in something other.

Time and time again, I say to myself, You trained for this. Do I expect to find myself not where it seems to be? Oh yes, all the time, constantly I expect this. Take my pulse again, check I am not dead. And even if I am dead, what does dead mean? Can anyone understand this? Is it a slack line between the cans? Weightless, often weightless. Surprising it doesn't lead me to any conclusions. I know of course what conclusion it should lead me to, but I don't conclude it. Never. That too, I say to myself, That too. I will wait. For something that never comes? Well, in that case, yes. I will wait. I have myself to converse with. Though not the best of conversationalists, at least in the same boat. We get on. First one, then the other, imagines one or the other wiser. And then, then, we shall see, or I shall see, or he shall see, or we shall see, no I said that, let me claim, *I* shall see. See what a goal has prevented me from living, from succeeding in ordinary terms, what a goal I have set myself, fulfilled, far away even from here, I expect,

but maybe not, maybe here, right here. And that is how it shall be achieved, this impossible feat.

The potatoes will be done soon, I can feel the chill of the air through the back door intended to let the steam out, but in it slithers like a snake, the freezing air, is there any more of this carcass to pick at or am I free to go? For today. Put it back under the stone, all this, push the stone back over the lot of it, was a mistake to look under this one. Look where I've been led this time. No, back under the stone, put it away, resume another day, another stone. This one crushes me and my gains are small, well I say small but . . . to see the escapology of it is a strange desire I still nurse, to drive myself into these corners. The potatoes will surely be done. My legs are freezing. Be patient. Let it come, you will know what you are doing when you have done it. Succeed later. For now, bite off more than you can chew and chew it, persist, shed the years and the years, the same thing, over and over, and get closer, closer to becoming who you really are, and become a stranger to all that you were, and then, then you will see, you will understand how it has all been worthwhile, setting yourself on such an uncanny slant as this, you are needed, someone has to come this way, come this way before it is too late for anyone to come this way. It will turn out very pretty. Very lively. It will stop killing you. You'll

slip loose the holds, you'll say goodbye, you'll clear out, yes, now let the mind be easy about this, because still, still you haven't seen anything, the magician has preserved his trick.

I was born, as so I was exposed. I cannot be without the days and the nights, it is one or the other. There is no other choice. There is sleep I suppose. A little rabbit warren down which I don't know what happens. These tunnels have been in Earth for as long as I have known anything about Earth. A cheese with holes, ants have made it their city. I don't know what I'm fleeing, what I sanction by not being there. Yet I'm never far away. I am being dragged down into sleep as I sit here, resting my forehead in my hand. How easily I could be completely gone. So easily, it is too much effort to hasten it. It'll wait. And as I wait, the things that I supposed mattered, once, turn greyer, blending away. I have served a crazy idea. Was that it? Is that all? Don't want to move too much want the now to still be now so far it is still now waiting in now now has never lasted this long now on the edge of sleep I will wait in the now. Much of this is going by unrecorded. Falling through the sky, plummeting. The mystery when the mystery is

no longer there. Nothing is solved, it just goes. Doesn't solve it. What was it anyway, that needed solving? Strange eyes this place has. Looking at me everywhere but it's only my eyes my eyes seeing the eyes so only my eyes those eyes my eyes too making a sock into a puppet to talk to me. How far away, when you think of it. Someone should get this down, doesn't matter not knowing why. Just get it down. Look later, see what it is or might be, just get it down. A corpse under a sheet. Come all the way in now, far back. Capture the emptiness of the days. It seems worthwhile, don't know why. Never have known why about much. I can't do anything else. It is the substance of myself. Rest is just trying to fit in. Here, I am myself, like moss on a rock. There's not much more to me. Barely here. Stopping just a moment to wonder . . . and then . . . away with it, don't wonder it. Footprints left. Entering a cloud. Here bigger than the world, nothing to dress up as me. Coma or cocoon, don't bother trying to discern. The concern is not with me, the concern to know what it is. It would be hard work to try, stay with not trying. There are those who live I try to envy, but they cannot stay as shapes I wonder why I speak of them. I don't know anything about myself. Have I lived? What can I tell others of it? There is no sense of loss, that's the peculiar . . . no, not even peculiar. I began time as a stranger to myself and

I end time the same way. In-between, forgotten. I see this clearly, I have loosened the grip I had on the world on life on living on the living but death is a joke and just as meaningless, and still I have not reached the final straw. Eyes opening and closing, they could be the eyes of anything, other eyes live close but they could be the eyes of anything. I have a different aim to any aim I may have once had. Failure is just another way of looking at the same thing you never know quite which shell the pea is under and better to be just a bystander, not risk a knowing know enough to know you don't know or aren't clever enough to make it stay. At the point of vanishing, again. I don't have the courage for the final act, but that is only because it hasn't come. I must find what grace I can having arrived early at the door. I could walk around the block a few times, I suppose. It is too late to go away and have another life, make a life out of the life I've got. If I stay here too long milling around a crowd of one I will surely form the head of a queue, but there's nothing I want inside there, so why appear so keen. Come away for no better reason than to make the end little by little a real end. I will surely forget this little escapade to the door, I will be beguiled once again, I'll loop the loop and land not crash. Come home, perhaps closer to a home now, now that I see through its walls and know no-one needs me. I'll stay

and watch over it, I will do a little weeding in the yard,
I will make sure I am never seen. There I am.

Objects settle around us, like dust falling. Our lives become an aftermath of something forgotten. Have a clearout, see what's really necessary, but that's no solution either, you're feeding the fire forever, it never comes to an end. Little piles set aside. We even keep the ashes, they may come in handy, for the garden or something. I remember being told to stand with my hands on my head in the corner, facing the wall. Haven't thought of that for forty years or more. I sometimes think I am charting my decline, beating a path to my own disaster. I am like any cheap religious twat, Christ this Christ that the Prophet this the Prophet that. Well I suppose I am not actually *clinging* to any of the ideas that pass through my head, on the contrary I don't need to save myself amid the wreckage, I *am* the wreckage. There is not much of a religion to be made out of this. Be thankful for small mercies. Religion. It's like sticking a dildo to the bathroom wall by its suction cup and fucking it ain't it? I keep finding hairs everywhere. I should set up a Not Needed cupboard, that's what I should do. Start sticking things in it. Here's all the stuff

I needn't bother rescuing if I have to clear out fast. I presume it is an obsession. May as well leave everything where it is and not need it. Many times I can't remember what I was doing ten minutes ago. Then I think, does it matter? If it's something I do, and it needs continuing, won't I get round to it again anyway? There are notes to myself all over the place. *Bath. Shave.* I was going to have a big list there, but I can't remember any more. I could go round and look. But these are what the pieces of paper everywhere are, in case you ever see them and wonder. They're probably not important. Sometimes they have day names on them. *Wednesday: bath, shave.* But I so easily forget what day it is, and then how can I be sure I meant Wednesday anyway, and why should I assume I was any more lucid when I wrote it than when I later read it? The assumption is that there is a reason to have a bath and a shave. It implies I may be going somewhere. And then I will have to see if I can find another note telling me where I am supposed to be going on Wednesday, which, for all I know, may already have passed, and I have forgotten to chuck away the note, it is an old note. But a bath and a shave is a fair thing to do, particularly if one has evidence about one's person that it has not been done for some time, and so I can have a bath and a shave, or at least a bath, a shave being less likely as the light is always failing when I have time

to do anything, or rather, no longer have much time to do anything. A shave needs daylight, the last bit of daylight that fades into twilight is okay for a shave. But there are other things I like to do in that special time as the light is failing, such as sit and immerse in words. There is a note in front of me I have only just noticed. It says: WRITE. This one is in capitals, that means I at some point regarded it as more important. It is in a thick black pen. Again, more important than medium blue ball-point pen. I sound like a fool, charting my ways like this, but whether I am a fool or not you have these words to judge, since behind them there is a crumbling intelligence. Not exactly holding on, just going a bit wobbly, like a wonky stretched cassette tape. There is a pattern in everything. Oh man shake that fucking tape. This junkheap music player is still with me. I was hoping it would break down years ago, so I could throw it out, but no, it will be with me until it dies. It doesn't matter any longer, what I am talking about. In fact, I would be rather pleased if it stopped making sense, since I feel it still does. But how can I know. I never look at it again. I let it pile up, these typecut sheets. I am a Peruvian military band processing down the streets like a bunch of drunks in ill-fitting uniforms trombones and trumpets in all directions hitting bum notes but not caring carried away in the joy of making

noise music and as I listen on a street corner I think hey this is great, these guys are great they have some kind of crazy rhythm, like a pile of broken furniture looking for a light.

That's the thing when you feel you are on the edges of madness, there is a joy in what could just come out, just a matter of carrying on and seeing, just carry on hulling pistachios and leaving a trail down the street. Something will come of it. Do your buttons up and face the gale. It cuts through me but the unshaved face serves a purpose too, protection against the cold, there is a joy in seeing nobody and expecting nobody, and, more than that, having no-one on your horizon, nothing expected in the future for which you will have to change your behaviour. That's it, I've gone feral in my own life. I don't know why one becomes scruffy when that happens. It happens with dogs, it happens with cats, there is always something a little bit not groomed about them. Look at weeds, do they care about being neat and tidy? We are only neat and tidy to create an impression with others. That's why I write myself a note. Maybe it's because I don't want to be found out, there is something anarchic about it, one's thoughts, mere thoughts, are too dangerous. You could bring down huge structures with these few true statements. You get time to reflect on it, how dangerous you're becoming

to normality, you've thrown away your duty, fucking duty can you believe it, to fit in to be like everyone else.

Others worry about you, when you prefer emptiness to everything else. They think you spend your evening tying up little piles of your shit in newspapers and leaving it as presents on the frosty pavement. But you have to work overtime here, not only must you be so far away you can't be found, you must also keep a good memory of what it was like to be normal, as an anchor to pull you back to should you need to walk through a tunnel from A to B that takes you past them. The Perspex of the tunnel will protect you but still they could gape at you like a zoo animal if you are not careful. So you remember how to behave 'normal' solely to preserve invisibility. They will not see you if you are careful with that. And because that's such a good skill, I cling onto my last memories of normality more than I should like to cling onto anything, because it is a skill worth having, just don't cross over and become one of them again, because that really is spitting on your luck. I find it is solved by keeping escapades out in the world of normals to a minimum. Keep to yourself and mulch down into your composting thoughts, let them take you where they want to take you, because you sense the journey is going to be somewhere new, and you could make better speed, being on a road where no-one

else is. Later, they can see where you've been, you can share your discoveries by then, because you will be far gone by then, much much further along the pipe, or folded into the folds of folds. Where could they possibly start looking for you? You're gone. Way gone. Gone not coming back gone. You'll be no more than a ghost to them. They won't even know whether you're dead or alive. They'll just hear stories about you. Like you hear stories about men frozen in blocks of ice next to a mammoth and they're not dug up until everyone they knew is dead. They made it out of the 1920s in a coffin of ice.

One day I find a lock of my own hair snipped off when I was a boy and placed inside a semi-transparent stamp envelope. It is grey now, my hair. It feels like it has always been grey it has been grey so long. But then I see what colour it was once, and it strikes hardly a chord in my memory, yet nothing has happened to me, I have still been the same person in the same place all the way since then. This is the one who feigns puzzlement at the notion of years, or time. Time to wash some dirty plates and eat. Time to not finish something else, already forgotten. Time to put away something and discover it only later, when it will be gloriously meaningless. Prod it like butter as if butter was a quite unusual thing. And the thing that has been nagging at me will find the balls to come forward.

The last word is not yet buried in the world. I may want nothing, but I cannot find the last word to kill. I will be happy one day, it doesn't have to be difficult to live. I mean, all the things I have longed for have passed away, whether through fulfilment or weariness. It makes me wonder whether I ever wanted anything, maybe I just pretended to myself that I did. Or is it simple curiosity, and, once sated, dissolves the want. What's in that box. Oh nothing. Oh a few paperclips. Oh this oh that. Whatever it is. Now I know. The box is less interesting than it was. It was the mystery that kept it alive. Perhaps it is better never to know. Hold back from even the tiniest fulfilment. Have it later. Later and later, that never comes. That might keep things interesting, and then it is over, it never came, but it stayed interesting, or partially interesting. No, I admit it, even that fades in interest. It's a box. I could forget about it for months, years. Who cares what's in it. She said to me, when I wanted to go, to end the call, to warm up and put some clothes on, to wash, to get into the day as the day was ending, 'So, you want to put me in the box now.' Only because I'm freezing, because I need to do things, because we've already been

talking a while. So she says to me, 'Write about a hard cock pushing into a warm soft cunt.' I'm pushing the lid down on the box, I want to go, I want to wash my balls and make a pot of tea, I want to come fully out of my dreams, I want to tightrope walk into life now, it's not that I want to go it's that I must, it will be night soon, as light as snowflakes it will be night resting upon my soul, I must prepare myself, I mustn't remain too long as if I have only just got up. It is unusually quiet for a Saturday afternoon with the light quickly fading. Noisemakers aren't making their usual noise, I sense a rare peace I should make the most of. Do something big with my life now, well I don't think I have a chance to do much other than what I usually do, but let me do it with more serenity perhaps, with more power, with less argument. Let me be a beast at one with my own landscape. Savour the peacefulness, let the rocks glitter, ponder my good fortune in having escaped marriage and kids and job, let me come forward finding no burdens and nothing to trouble me, the peaceful time is beckoning me, come this way and know me, so I go, go with it, alone. And in my solitariness I find a love of it, a sense of how lucky I am to have no tethers in the world. All that I might have been considered a failure at I am a success at. The usual *ah yes*, the usual *I am beginning to understand*, have blown a lovely balloon

up out of the moment, I can squeak the breath out of it any way I choose, or tie it and bounce it around the room. All things are possible. I have been here before, of course, but like a cat I easily forget the storms and winter when the sun and summer is here, but for now give me the storms and the winter, I don't need the sun and the summer, I have winter insects to talk to, I will talk to summer insects when the summer comes. This is easy to understand. I don't have to be good, I have to be here. For myself the search is ended, I am me yes no and because. The last word has its feet up at my place, let's hear it again. Victorious. Who'd have thought it would've been that? I am happy to know I am not wise. I tie a knot in my handkerchief to remember, but I will forget what I have been holding onto in the remembering stakes just as clouds change shape, and this is okay. It has to be something in full view to give us a clue. When I lose myself staring up at the clouds, seeing a rabbit turn into a crocodile, what pride can there be in me? What presumption? I am a child and I have forgotten all of my pettiness. I have often told myself that just gazing up at the clouds cannot be enough to fill a life with, but usually when I am not gazing up at the clouds. You have to get into it, let it take you over. Leave your expectations behind and just live with the simplest of things before you. It comes it goes, but I

don't think anyone in hell has the will to make one last stand, so listen to me, one and all, the big birds are coming, the big distant birds are coming, they will smoke these trees. We will all get drunk and say, Tell us another one. I could speak of other worlds till the cows come home, but of this one, I can only say that it is gone. It went some time ago. We are lost in a forest of shadows. There is no point still breeding. We are the last of our kind. They are feeding us sugarlumps to horses. We are so innocent, even for a species so frankly evil, we are innocent, we're still wrapped in paper from the butcher's, our Sunday suit, brown, is still hanging in the closet on a wire hanger. I must be the last one with any kind of rebellious spirit, but even I don't have the teeth to chew it. I thought I was ready for a Great Age to Dawn, but it was only my blood seeping into the gutter in the rain carrying a little paper boat with a red bottom to the storm drain. I cannot say I exaggerate, since I am pumped with images I try to make sense of on the fly but have to quickly pass them on. I can sit down and think about it later, but for now, we're on the march, we're exhausted by the long road, we won't be returning for days, we have nothing to eat, and many of our friends are dead, all there is is boots and mud, this is our Great Age Dawning, but there is nothing to apologise for, it's just the season, there will be other

seasons, there will be haircuts and lively fresh days, just not now, that's all. Our best fate is being spared, our trump card is that some other cunt may get it. And we say, don't we, He deserved it. He got what was coming to him. But the knife could have been in for us, it was only the night before yesterday that you were let off the hook, don't you feel it, like a cold in the bones that won't shift? You escaped by the scruff of your neck, so no Big Standism around here. Rather stand back, it's about to go off. Was that a car door slamming? No it was the end of the world, you were dead before you could hear the rest of the sound wave. This will come as a shock to some of you, but you're in the tunnel now so you may as well learn from an old hand.

I found myself walking down the road speaking in tongues. Some demonic language, I didn't recognise it. Out loud, walking down the road at night in my big black coat and black flat cap, carrying two bags of shopping. I just alighted upon myself, previously had been floating, went down into myself and there I was walking along in the physical heaviness of matter, speaking in tongues. A passerby looks at me like a madman and I could have killed her at that moment, easily,

just dead for looking at me. I think my eyes said it to her, lifting up from under the guard of the cap. She looked scared and it felt fine. I didn't care. But stop speaking in tongues, stop it. Have to keep a careful watch on myself, it's times like that you realise you've been away and you don't know how long and your body has just carried on, the brain working it, I could flip back in any time, I know that, but virtually sleepwalking I'm in some dream elsewhere and I swoop back down into myself I've been on autopilot and now I see what my body does when I'm not watching, taking the opportunity to exercise its tongue aloud in the street, barbarous words, incantations, smiting words, I watch it for a moment and only then take control, as I see the approach of a stranger, like waking up at the steering wheel of a juggernaut out of control, but I don't let the stranger see that, she catches only a moment of the madness and even that is enough to give her nightmares. I can tell. I tread on a branch and it cracks and I feel like kicking it into the air with fury wanting to come out me but I see another stranger approaching a woman carrying a child and I restrain myself like trying to restrain the night ocean crashing against the sea wall of the town. But we are partners, me and demon incarnate, and he listens to me he draws himself back he strangely welcomes my control, as if he is learning, he wants

to fuse he wants the best of me. He is courteous, he knows he lacks elegance, and he recognises its beauty its grace, he allows my calm, sudden calm admittedly, calm placed in the deep end, but what better form of calm, and here the feeling is mutual, he tests my calm and advances it. We grow together, I absorb his fury his energy his power and I direct it with my calm, which means, bringing it to an abrupt halt, and it builds up, now let it out on a long exhalation of breath, oh the power, I want that power to fuel my calm his calm has chaos ahead and must learn to react quickly. We teach each other our ways. I am in control, but he allows me to be in control, because he senses the danger for the immediate surroundings, and perhaps much further, should his unbridled power be in control. I do not worry about him slipping in unannounced, as I am teaching him judgment, and he has to learn somehow. He wants to live, of course he does, he lives through me. And I am always up for a new experiment. He will doubtless remind me of his power and strength when I am feeling weak, no good, burnt out. What am I saying, he does already. Is it part of me? I accept it like a blood brother. I have always been faintly aware of something dangerous in me. Sometimes I think I favoured solitude because I feared for people, only a special few should get to know me. And with these thoughts I come through the door

having escaped incident and lay my bags down on the floor. Street thoughts, and still the power seizes my face. The night ocean must calm. I must sit for some moments and stare into the strength, sinewy, taut, but a cast on the emptiness nonetheless. I let it ripple away from me like shaken silk sheets. If there was a woman here now I would throw her on the floor and fuck her and she would want me to I would pull her head back grabbing her long hair and give it to her hard her body arching up from the floor like electricity was going through it. Instead, I have cheese and tomato sandwiches in mind, and a beer. They are here, I will have them. Let them fucking say I am mad! Fuck them! Give it to them undisguised. Exactly as it is. I don't know what they are like, but this is what I am like. And it will get worse.

Fine memories of a crater, smoking still. The lights were my lights, but I have never been able to get beyond them. An experience of seconds can dominate a life. The shiver and slack days. The making up of days, to give oneself a history. Something must have happened but bugged if I can remember. My dreams have a better idea, absurdly they create scenes and they are believed in because at least lived then, no at least about it, lived

as they are created. I look back on my own memories as dreams. I have moved on. It is the same things that remain, the things with the power of remaining the same, the sparrows at dawn, that become a life flung to the wind. The stars, of course. These things are the only important things, because they remain, or have remained. They too will become unimportant should they no longer remain. The thing in me older than these hands, the timeless one. I shed shed shed to get closer to him. How do I rise up? How can I stand astride this world? Will I find I have waited less than ten minutes? Nothing for no reason. Attendant on Earth's floor. I would be trapped were I known about. Obscurity grants freedom. I work away on tasks I wring out of myself. Every day severed of Earth, shut away behind doors, unobserved, save by the human, the light of the desk lamp on his face. Some days it is not urgent, it could wait, but no, he wishes a mist to envelop his feet. For it to start. He has waited, I'll give him that, he has waited and waited. Some days he is heard more clearly than on others. He is single-minded, or is it that he is left with nothing else? Silent and abandoned child, he seethes that things never stir. He remains alone, forgotten. But he knows something. He will not let it go. One day he will crack this darkness open for no other reason than he has willed it. The stillness is a narrow space at times, like a

pocket of oxygen saved and sipped from, underwater. It could just float off, dislodged, at any minute, bumbling and burbling upwards. Should he follow it? Should he follow it? Whole days sheltering under the waterweeds, not venturing out. He has paused himself on a threshold awaiting a visible living signal, something beyond the smattering of chance, though even that he will suck on, as if trying to draw nourishment from nuggets of silver. He will not give way to the Unconquerable Dark. I admire him in that, though it strips his life apart. He must allow it, if he wishes to pursue this course. But why does he pursue it with such tenacity? He is worthy of study in this regard. But you will learn nothing much, that can be said at the beginning. An example of a man who dropped everything to dig in the air. He digs and digs, he hopes to scoop out a hole, if only for a moment to see through. He cannot give up. What is there to return to? The voice that was summer. The voice that was winter. He hears it but doesn't turn away. He is more constant than the seasons. The room is a triumph of construction too. It receives the light, cosmic rays, the days peel off it. Its lifetime is as long as a day has ever lasted. It is remade in sleep. A scattering of dust to provide an illusion of time passing. It is just a place to search from, to stack a few results on shelves. The dark enters it by the open

door. Every twilight he ritually allows it entrance, My Lord, Enter! It is a presence to him. And as it grows darker and darker still, he settles into himself. Every night is the night. He always carries, at least at the start of it, an expression of anxiety reassured. As if to say, Yes, things will happen. One grey hen may lay a grey egg. A black rose may open. An eye may grow tall and see a third or fourth hiding out in the same room. The journey that never seems worth making may be worthwhile. He may cut off his grey beard. He may find the confidence to approach the corner of the room where the shadows are darkest. Ostensibly a small place, studied for ten years or more, but hardly plunged into. Just dinner eaten in, cushions sat on. He has not clawed up the floorboards to see where the mice go. He suspects a blocked off room from the hollow sounds on tapping on one of the walls, something about it is not quite right when the angles and dimensions are examined. He was supplied with a tape-measure but didn't use it for five or six years. One day he scoured the shops for a child's compass and a protractor. To settle it once and for all by geometry. But it didn't settle it. It was the night of a great feather storm in his room. He burst open a pillow and flung them around, once he saw that they desired to get out. He enjoyed the absurdity of drawing geometrical diagrams sitting at his desk a snow

of feathers quietly settling. They stayed there for weeks, he would fling them up into the air again and again. As a child he had been fascinated by those little globes full of water that you shake and make a snowstorm on the little cottage or whatever it was. When his world was most in motion there was the chance something would flutter in through an open window. He may as well have been waiting for the end of the world. When you have waited that long, what else is there to wait for? And waiting is a general thing, it does not preclude other things coming along.

Helicopters circling, without malice, seem full of malice.

Why am I as I am. Unable to move. Sitting staring into space. Distressed. I just have to accept it. I am no other way, at least not at the moment. It lasts as long as it lasts. I should outsit it. I want . . . and yet I don't want. Whatever it is gets crushed. The thoughts follow me around. Pace from room to room. The danger has come for me. I could tell them from far off. The house that shelters me for ten years could just drop its walls any

second. Things were scarcely alike, yet it was all the same. Such days one wishes to cease. Nothing can be found out there, and nothing in here either. To move even a little way is dragging against a force. Looking straight into it now. Is this what very old age will be like? Still I know the sand will blow across this path. Obliterate it. Not going there after all. I know many things, but they do not take me closer. The graves all speak. I was a big cog once. I was blond, I was beautiful, now maggots heave out my eyes. I live like I have fallen down a pothole and the search, if there ever was one, has certainly been called off by now. It is here I find my skills, my things to be proud of. Not many could live it as well as me, not many could remain calm for these thousand screaming nightmares. If only I knew how to become silent, how to starve to death. But the fridge is full, a meal is an hour away. The unimaginable is rather easy to imagine when it becomes real. Harder then to unimagine it, but plausible. Confusion lives and thrives like mould on an agar plate. I watch the blue oranges, I don't throw them away. Even the stones are screaming. I am in earshot, but it is not my business. I have fanged creatures all about. It will all change, in an instant. I'll shrug it off, luggage down a ravine. The moon will return on a clear night. The trees will get their leaves. I cannot trust the urge that urges me to bash

my head against the wall until something crushes in. I stay at my post, having forgotten my orders. The wind will send them to me. The wait, the same wait, could be a wait for nothing to come rather than something. Consider what is here. Look for it there. Weary of the familiarity, but still it is unexplained. It could be quite other than I take it for. The anger reminds me of when I pull my lace into a knot and it won't easily come undone. That's trivial then, isn't it? No matter what it is about now, it is still trivial. See how I reason. I make comparisons, but comparisons designed to lessen the scale of the calamity. When I reach a state of no emotion, I know I have bottomed out. It will change after that. A shipwreck at the bottom of the ocean looks forward to the little fishes that will dart in and out of it the waving plants that will colonise it, perhaps we will get an octopus in the captain's cabin. What a fine new thing it is going to become. Then I hear barking of dogs, so I am not underwater. I am almost back to where I was, but better. I let the stonecutter go home early, the epitaph is premature. There will be another dawn another nightfall another dawn another nightfall and it will go on like that for some time. I may have started decomposing but I have not finished decomposing. It is not especially visible on the outside. It will carry on for some time.

Thoughts jumbled together. Something trying to worry me. The only way to keep an eye on what is going on in there, what misfortunes commandeer my happinesses. Disordered concerns I am rather inclined to ignore. I wish suicide would use some persuasive arguments, but it is children's exercise-book stuff. If that is your best I may as well carry on, see what another day has to bring, more of the same at least I know already, I have not done myself in yet.

Oh, here it comes, the dull comparisons with the lives others are leading, compared with the nothing I have made my own. By rights I should have bowed out long ago, but you like to see what else it can inflict on you. You can use it to get strong. Strong for no reason other than to defeat it. A fucking frog sitting on a lily pad croaks. It has all been calculated to leave me in doubt, memories cutting off with sharp edges, should be able to fathom the rest of the evening now evening is here. The bad and the worst of it sacrificed to a dream demoness chained to the toilet bowl. I almost think she is pretty, she had great hair until her face turned out of it, still I said she was pretty to her face as it was what I was prepared to say it was only on the

last stifled gasp that her features came into view. She had died into her face, tear tracks like scar tissue. I had wanted to dream an answer and it was an answer of sorts, in that it gave me something else to focus on. So this was her. The action and the image fused, wherever I thought of the action, the image replaced it. She was gnawing a severed human head. The more I focused, the more it became her. And I let it be her. Did it stop me wanting her? Perhaps that was it. Make her ugly, make my memories of her ugly.

I didn't want to do it but something in me had to do it out of self-protection. I was learning as I went along, I didn't plan it. Could she find a way back to me after I had done this? It was pointless clinging to hopes. Done that before. I was digging up a huge-rooted thing out of my life, levering with the fork, loosening it all the way round. I did most of the work after it was too late for her to ring, to change me back. Heave, heave, it felt big and interlaced but I could hardly focus on a specific instance of it, the memories may well be gone by morning. I would have a huge hole but I have had a huge hole before. The demoness came in a dream to show me her face behind her gorgeous hair, chained to the toilet bowl. I had asked for a dream to show me and this was what I got. So though I hardly understood it I would work with it, elaborate it, it was the key. I

expected the roots to be decomposing and to snap off easily, but they were strong and went deep. Another image to play with. I thought of transplanting it, once I got it out. But where? Did this imply it could be rescued? It is just a record of unbridled gibberish, a tribute, shall we say, to the part of me that arises as an unknown blessing. I am in a hurry, I must hurry, this evening another life is just beginning, even though it seems more of the same weary chronicle. My real intentions have been disguised all along. I can recognise the good in the darkest things I can remember. I grow gently down into myself, perhaps like acid destroys. Falling over the edge is all I can do, so I try to take it in my stride. Goodbyes are my lot. There is nothing to guide me, sharp ends come, and that is all there is to it. It has to feel real, the black magick I do, otherwise there is no point doing it. I am rusty, my dark soul hasn't been out of its cage in a long while. I don't think I will kill anyone tonight, maybe part of myself, maybe that I'll kill. Probably cry my eyes out then, at the end of it, when I see what I've done. Bawling like a baby. That's happened before too. But at least it is going somewhere to strangle something in the darkness, because strangling is what is called for, seeing what less important. I have made mistakes before, oh yes, it thrives on my making mistakes, it loves my mistakes, it grants full power to my

mistakes. But I'm keeping score, nothing will escape. I will lay hold over everything and break it. God knows I want it to die. I would have took hold of the lot of it if only I knew how. Instead I am condemned to deal with it piecemeal, but nonetheless I am The Destroyer. If you come too close to me I will destroy you too. You may already have come too close. Often too late to withdraw on realising, so, like me, may as well go on, exhaust this thing, find out what it is. It does away with fears to embrace them. But what it is really is realising they are behind you you cannot go back they are in front of you and all around you too. There is no safe place. There is nothing against going forward because going back is the same. I will get this truth across to you. Deceived and fallen, but perhaps closer to the truth because of it. Hell is split in half again to make a pretend heaven. It has been going on a week or two, perhaps a month, but you only just found out. It's easier to dangle from a string than had it been a year's worth of deception. You don't quite know how much anger there is inside you, but frankly it's starting to leak out and seem familiar. This is your murdering song forming its words on your lips. I wish it would rain, it would give me something to listen to. Flowers look so sad when they are faded. They can only be thrown away. I keep them around a day or two, postponing

the inevitable. To make it not be so fast, this ruination of everything. An absurd departure is setting in, I've heard it sing this same song before, the lips rehearse what they know must come but mouth it like a parched man begging for water. The details are unimportant. You would gain nothing by knowing them, you would gain more by guessing them. It's in your experience too. Something demands to be broken, smashed to the floor in a thousand pieces. But you put it off. Can do it any time, when the urge has grown too big to suppress any longer. Something of hers perhaps. Mix a little voodoo in with it. It's screaming out to be done. You realise then how little of hers is here. The slippers you noticed the other day, with a layer of dust on them. Maybe you're holding back, a little afraid of making it irrevocable, as if nothing you have done so far has been extreme enough. Could you return from slashing her slippers, her slippers you forgot were there, with a blade? Could you call it back into being after that? So there you are, you have made it what is needed to destroy it. So naturally you hold off. It is not as if you have known very long. It is not as if you fully understand what has happened. It is just a ferocity taking up its place, getting ready, a glaring tiger. There are certain things about yourself that you admire. Revenge is not one of them. Absolute willingness to do what is necessary is. You'll be buggered

if you'll be caught with your pants down when the time comes. So you remember your strengths, your absolute strengths, strengths that make you seem harsh and cruel if merely toyed with, but if you are to be a killer then cold and methodical is best. Always a secret honour and glory to one such. No-one shall ever know what you are capable of, and live. Don't be surprised by any of this, if tomorrow I claim no knowledge of it. I drop the secret ferments of my mind like dead butterflies into the fire. It is merely a cipher for something else, I shall claim it and it shall be believed. I will cover my tracks. What I have lived with will be dead hollow thoughts, constructed for literary entertainment. Any idea of seeing into the recesses of a killer's mind will be dispensed with, since without a corpse there is no killer. I will leave it up to you to wonder whether I have disposed of it expertly, or whether it was only ever a figment. But I keep alive the possibility of a real corpse, don't I? I notice it myself, even as I forget which it is. It is pointless doing it unless I can believe it is real. I have foraged about in my mind for the key to this. I lose memories of where I go to, the confusing mass of footprints here seem to go nowhere, and perhaps I am walking backwards when it looks like I have walked into it, this knot of thought, could you tell from these prints in the dust whether I walked into it or backed out of

it? And I am far away now, when you think I am still there. You will not catch up with me for a page and a half, you will still be inspecting the crime scene, which fades like a dream, holding you still though, not quite awoken. A serial killer who kills in dreams but escapes to the waking world where nothing can be proven. It sends a shiver down the spine to think what he may have got away with. Maybe he will be caught when he mistakes reality for a dream, but is there not some other greater reality he could escape to? Depends how skilled he is. But away with this making up of stories. I no longer believe in any of them, so they are not worth telling. Stick to the greater story, the one that will not disappoint, the one that will be realised like an old love letter snatched from the fire and read again. The story that marks the beginning of my stay in a single universe, no more the constant fugitive of alternatives. The one where a plan is allowed to form, and the plan begins by drawing a line under all that supposedly went before. Is that possible, or must one be able to walk through glass without it breaking?

It meant nothing. It was a smattering of hopes blown up like a balloon. It has withered.

The urge to go on is only as strong as the inability to think of anything else to do. By which I mean, this strength is marginally stronger than the will to end it. Which is going on in another form. Will I be its fool again? I have been its fool many many times. I'm sure I must have said 'Never again!' a dozen times. So what point saying it now? Well this is a place as much as any other place, stay a while, see what it holds. I don't expect it to be to my liking. Perhaps the point is to get the journey setting off again. I liked where I was, but it has become nothing, so was it ever anything? The same lesson over and over again. What remains is a person looking out, not even sure it is a person, it is a something. I am not even sure it is a thing. It is nothingness looking out on nothingness. Now that is true emptiness, even scalped out the back of me. I was probably clinging to that bit, the illusion of the seer surveying the seen. It is probably all going to crumble now, even the bits remaining. You can sense it in the air, this was not an isolated incident, this was the rumble that brings down the mountain. It takes a little while to sink in, but you speed up your sinking in when you realise what is going to happen next. Your world is on the brink of collapse. First what you hold most dear, then the rest of it. It could be freeing, once the tedious grief is got over. How many times have I stood before this portal in my

imagination, I should recognise it as it creeps into the world. It is marked by an initial powerlessness, a simple not knowing what to do. You ask the cat. He carries on purring. You ask the wind. It carries on blowing. You carry on. Yet another *if only* ripping into you. Is this still a little hope hanging around to poison your days? Don't worry, it will be gone soon enough. Though you hope, hope hope hope it will bring you its fruits before you're forced to hack it off like your own arm. I can't afford to be laid low by such things when the immense chaos is brewing on the horizon. What to wish for, the end of everything? Have I catalogued enough examples of the illusions that beset the human race to form a wide-sweeping judgment? This is a freedom, to advance by the sudden fuel of despair. Feed all of your hopes into the fire, they will burn well. Still that remaining hope, that others may prove on a level with me, given sufficient time to reflect. Or sufficient agony. Or both.

I should treasure my obscurity, but it presents as failure, which takes it out of me to surmount. I do succeed, but the cost is never easily afforded. I am at constant war with myself. What I seem to be fighting strong illusions that do not give in. I see myself truly like rare glimpses of blue sky through weeks and weeks of sagging grey clouds. It is breeding a strength in me to persevere simply for the sake of it, as an achievement

in itself, without want of any other goal. I succeeded, I came through the tunnel, I hear myself saying to myself from the future. I am more or less drowning, but I am not drowning otherwise I would have drowned. I have submitted myself for study.

Writing, though it tears my heart out, gives me a mast to tie myself to. You will hear all the tortured voices through me. You will hear them long after I have gone on and you can only imagine what new demons come for me. But you can tell, I expect, that none shall triumph over me, that what I have, though thoroughly oppressed, is a dauntless will to see it through, such that even if you hear of my suicide one day you must assume I decided it was the best way to continue the journey. He never gave up, even when it seemed he did. The cardboard cut-outs of life that we surround ourselves with aren't much help to us in the end. For help, real help, you must stretch out your arm much further. I don't, as yet, have a better answer than a cat or the wind, and I am not sure I care any longer about finding one, I say this only that you might allow yourself to be persuaded by me to distance yourself from all other solutions that parade themselves here on Earth. I have found them all worthless. Except perhaps Marcus Aurelius. I suppose I refer more to the easy solutions of religion and bogus new age fallshorts. Not the solid

grit-your-teeth-and-bear-it philosophies of the past. But in the end you have to find your own way, your own continual crisis. You'll scrape through! That's not hope, that's knowledge. Examine your ordeals for concealed signs. Be ready to choke on this. It is only in such a way that you discover your own intelligence. What you have to do, by implication.

I must scoop out the thing inside me. It is eating me up. I long for the silence and chill of a cave. I am breaking. Let go of what I've got so used to. Forget the familiar thoughts. Change the gaze. Put the lid back on the box and put it away. Let the footsteps become fainter. One day it will all have passed away, with no point to it. I sometimes think, Did I die during the night, have I got up out of habit?

I fill up my gaze like a grave with dirt. The look in the eye is of one whose trust has been broken. Other qualities no longer visible. The day becomes harrowing. Doubtless could throw it away, but maybe I let it linger so it'll be seen, before I go away. There are other islands. There are other bones covered by flesh. Other smiles stretched across a skull. What's so special about this flesh and bone, this smile? I rake through the evenings for a

little silence. But thunder would be truer, coming as it does. But I have not given up yet, I have just shunned the glances of the curious. I may well toil to no useful end, as prayer falls on deaf ears and the slightest lift in mood is taken as an answer, but it keeps me out of worse trouble in that it provides the much-needed illusion of getting somewhere. I know the way I judge it at any moment – *any* moment – is not to be trusted. Like a butterfly keeps fluttering, rarely alights. All sorts of dead things are rising to the surface. Earth shines out of a hole. Glowing like a dim supper light. There is nothing to suggest the passage of time. Even when I grow older I feel I have always been older. Damnation couldn't be more inventive. Waiting for the world to go out. Lacking the will to annihilate it, the dread of a change of mind in the final two minutes, that's all. I would rather have God put a bullet in my head. Has all the Hip Hip Hooray of being fated. Cast off days dead leaves pondering their fall. Is there any reason to suppose it can get any better, when all instances of it getting better have been knocked back? Live for the moment, and if you are happy in the moment, then that's all it is, and if you are sad in the moment there's nothing that moment can do about it, wait for the next, without hope. It may seem I was sadder than I was happy, but I think of the tall waving grasses on the edge of the

little wood, their swishing and swivering in the wind, and somehow it brings to mind that the crystalline salt tears are the outward sign of something already passed, that the mind is empty and it will require effort to recall what it was, why bother when the meadow grasses say it all. It returns, the loss, but transformed, making you appreciate what you had. It is only this you had been waiting for through the confusion. No state that is not calm can be true. It takes years to find that out. And then you forget it again. But it's always nearby. If the first blow does not kill you, you're in with a chance. She will come back, holding her breath in half-expectation of rejection. That is what you have done to her. You smell blood on the breeze, in hardly any time you found yourself again, resumed your rightful place. See it all, laid out like a map, the future is so clear coming out of the fog that it burns off the remnants of fears scurrying in all directions. You have succeeded because you persevered and did not give in. You sit, Samurai. This is the impressive person back again. This is the direction this is the force.

We crouch down before it, we need to know when to stand up, when to not let it matter any more. What

extraordinary power to be beyond anything you set your mind to. One day, she means the world to you, you cannot picture the future without her, then you just decide to set aside the turmoil and stand up. She can come running to catch up. As simple as that. You've eaten enough of the meal to know you don't like it. Chuck it away! Let the far distance call you again, what passed before your eyes before she arrived. And it all dissolves, it is an essential skill. Are you joined at the hip? Are you going to drag her along when she is a withered corpse? It is up to her, let her populate your thoughts with thoughts of her, if she's so keen not to lose you. Drown your last hope and move on. Though you can't remember her good qualities any more, she'll surely remind you if they are real. Take your strength back, don't loan it out to be leant upon one moment and then abused the next. You're an eagle, take to the air and forget it, if she wants to shake her tits elsewhere. This is simple, no? You haven't yet discovered the source of the Nile, why sleep with a cold stone? How much of it is not wanting to acknowledge our own foolishness, holding out a little while longer to see that we exaggerated the significance of our own insight into the situation, we were plainly wrong. But you cannot deny your feelings man, if it makes you feel like shit then there's probably something about it that is shit. That's enough, up sticks,

move on. Get a bit of a pant out of her if she doesn't want to lose you. You see it all in the joyous eyes of discovery, sitting there plotting, and no backsliding, you say to yourself. Pull the phone out of the wall like an unwelcome weed if you're that scared to trust your newfound strength, and don't be in a hurry to get it fixed up again. Early plans, ah, the gloriousness of early plans. The feathers of abandonment growing out of your back, soon you'll have wings to fly. And look how that makes you feel. This is going somewhere. What were you before? A donkey tied to a stump. She made an ass of you, all in the name of confusion, something you should forgive. Well sure, forgive it if she runs after you to be forgiven. At least demand she break a sweat, otherwise what the fuck does it mean, she can nurse the thought that you were a louse till the stars burn out, when the truth of the matter her pride didn't know how to buckle and bow down. A perverse pleasure to be had in her eventual realisation of what a strength you were, perhaps Beelzebub can send his flies to have a look from that wall. Oh, getting excited now are we, about your newfound possibilities. That's it, that's it, come along with me. Whores are ten aplenty. Commandants of grey planets harder to find. Cubes extend their axes to welcome me. Time to fly boy time to fly my love. A powerful madness now, you're seeing it you're seeing

it. That's all you had to do. Change your attitude. You want to know magick, then know magick. Listen out, you're about to be contacted. Called. It's been a long time coming. The wait is over. Dare I even say that, feels scary even voicing the sentiment for practice, The wait is over. Something very powerful is happening to me, come in on the tide after the very last thing flowed away. Got to be open to receive it. Scrape off the shit food from that plate and wash it, and before you're even done with that you'll be issued with a new spoon up from the well of the same room. Oh boy, you're really holding yourself back now. Escaping Earth all night. Fucking distracted. It's nineteen sixty three it's sweeter than sweet it's louder than an atom bomb and I was there. I surprise myself, out of the vortex so long, just a pattering sort of chaos, no, no, not good enough, want the real chaos, want that now, it's where the power comes from, it's where more than is possible becomes possible, sweeter than sweet big feet in a small room just a fucking shelter that's all, a lean-to to gladly sleep in but not important in itself where is home if not in swirling lost not so long ago ideas. Bring it all up to date, let the sharp boundaries define themselves. The moving shadow is not my shadow, I cannot reproduce that effect, but whoever it was has gone now. I expect these shadows will accompany me for a while. One

needs to have the heart gulped up into the mouth to be in a fit state to receive the knowledge, several weeks of that, apprehension when you get up apprehension when you go to bed apprehension that can smooth off its petty fears and become a solid beak and talon that moves before the scope is raised. There they go again, the scurrying shadows in peripheral vision. I know this, they are getting ready, by which I mean they are getting me ready, they're getting me into the spirals. Discard old selves to invite and welcome. Freefalling summer dawn news. I'll be waiting in the ruins. Of course, I should have seen it coming. I'll be away from this kitchen table sleepiness, this coma of the ordinary, this walk-in coffin. I look forward to destruction. Let the blackness come. It's like winding wool, watching it happen. I find what I truly serve.

He used to try and teach the flickering shadows how to still themselves, cast from the candle flame, like teaching a bird its first words or forgetting what you wanted to remind yourself of. One day this overcrowded life will turn round and say to me: 'Personally, I never cared for you.' All my questions have sunk to silt up the bottomless depths. The ones that remained unspoken

were doubtless hot air too. It's all listening carefully on the point of doing something else. I am no longer certain they are my concerns being voiced, but rather some resident entity I twist myself to become. A few light days are enough to see this, almost a different person gallivanting about like a spring lamb full of the joys of spring, but what words are there to string together about that, it's little more than a fag break, the sudden noticing of a balloon drifting off high in the sky, you can't keep yourself entertained with that for too long. I was at a party, for once a good party, and I told a girl who enquired of me that to cross the Abyss you must *fall*. It's a simple doctrine, yet one often heard with new ears when the time is ripe to hear it. Only the insignificant in us dies. What a sly old dog I have become, what a corrupting influence. Not many see it, but those ready to see it, usually the young, frequently respond to it like a leaf daring to leap into the void, or they catch at last what is indeed necessary, you see it in their eyes as soon as they realise, if they are not ready to do it right now they are calculating, planning, ah yes, now I see. Lucifer has come out of the woodwork at last, in the most unlikely of spots. And yet, in retrospect, what better place than two chairs set off to the side with the hubbub of life going by. She didn't expect to find such big shiny conkers under that tree, she is slipping

them into her pockets with the flame in her eyes. I am sorely tempted to blast away the room for just a moment to show her what lies beyond the skin of it, but it is too tearing, too rough, and the tiger stays in his cage, the cage he carries round with him, a very fine cage constructed out of mannerisms and habits all perched on edges of sheer drops, that can be let go of at any moment to leap wide of the danger while in the very midst of falling, ah how you know yourself then how you see what you are really capable of, but you keep the cage around you not wishing to bring the good people closer than they are ready for, when it is not absolutely necessary as yet, if it were of course, there would not be a second thought about it, Come now! Jump! But that is then. We're still looking through the ruins, collecting the data that will lead to the edge of things, the vastness I am faithful to, though many days go by when I forget I half have an inkling of it, let alone fully understand it. You have to catch me in the right mood, the time and place has to be right, then the cramped conditions fly off me and I bring a little ball of magick into the proceedings, the knowledge I am heir to that does not help me one jot in the contortions I call my thinking, the flimsy methodology of him who is still trying to work it all out, forgetting he knows, he already knows. It is a way to spend the delay, but even the delay does

not exist, it is just a form of adaptation that has manners like the wind, sometimes calm, sometimes blowing wildly, but nothing at all there save the creaky doors and chimney flutes. Where does it come from, the force that does not need an audience but gains one anyway. I will be tried in space for my crimes. And the verdict will be Not Guilty. I seduced you all as children with my crimson sunsets, you will remember your debt and see that though it *was* madness there was method in it. As I grow more serious I am able at last to be less serious.

Not one thing has actually happened. But it was realistic enough, wasn't it? People threw themselves out of high windows and came crashing to the ground their skull a smashed eggshell, and the next moment they're laughing in an armchair with a group of friends swirling a brandy in a fine glass. I cast a spell over all of you. Lucifer was always my favourite, I will not hear an unkind word said against him. If I am impotent, it is because of him, that bit I broke off myself saw it better than me, and if I let him trawl the universe to his heart's content it was only because I knew he would return to the cupboard he had locked me in at the end of time, which is no time at all to me. Don't you see? No, of course you don't see. But I ask every so often like shaking a corpse and saying Are you awake? I have to remember to ask, Are you feeling suicidal? Has

melancholia got your goat? Have you a wish to wash down your chocolate with a good draft of poison? Are you tired of craning your neck to see what this thing is all about, do you think it about time you could afford a ringside seat? Do you sometimes flirt with insanity and other types of lying down in muddy ditches? Do you question what there is to be gained by the endurance of so much tedium, or do you just give up early and turn the telly on? Can you imagine Nietzsche watching the telly? Something has crept up from the basement to sap our strength, a cloud yellow and sulphurous billowing up the stairs, slam the door on it and it'll only flood in under the door. Forget the telly, *Hallucinate!* Lot more involving, and has an off switch too, if you can find the damn thing once it's started. We have much stuff for many worms to chew through, pace backwards and forwards in your den and take enjoyment in the bizarre.

Night, to fall so black, must have accomplices. It overlays its strength with days and days of days but it itself is always one. How I understand and respond to the night. It is my duty to have the feelings that go along with it. There are no examples but the continuing example. But I notice the night grow impatient, it is running

out of itself, soon every night now the day is eager to press its nose against the pane. Time is sinking, sinking away. I will the dark to stay but it is beyond the dark's strength today. The shadows have their hook in me. But the light comes with a new spring in its step, a confident warm sun in the cold of days, coats put on to go out are too heavy, the changes are taking effect. Bright souls are about, and I find myself lifted by the day, lifted like a treacherous lover to forget the night. I must get back my equilibrium, balance out again what has changed. I have done it before I am sure, though I forget, as I always forget. But the night, the passing of the night . . . o how I forget how much I loved you, how much I want back what we had. Admittedly, it was not much, but it closed in on us both, it brought us closer, and I will not forget you. I suspect I must go away from you a while, but I will return, as daffodils return, as *she* returns. I cannot bring myself to love another. Yet how often have my eyes strayed over new beauty. Ah but the *work* of it! Even supposing it could find a beginning, it could sustain an interest that long. But still, the demanding sense that nothing matters, that everything is a will-o'-the-wisp. The slashed arms of days. The noises not the sky's. The black bicycles ridden into space. Sometimes I see myself shining from far off, and the blood begins to throb in my veins again, as if I

have realised who I am who knows the sun and moon and plunges into my head from out there, unprotected. The clouds pulsing with a simple kind of information, but the first information, of childhood gazing, of fields and rusty gates and hayricks, I must get my cloudskates on, and await with the walls the passing of alternatives until the one fated thing sets solid. I will not deny the world has me, I was unable to break it. But I keep its silence, its secret is safe with me. Drowning each night in artificial light the time of flickering flames and shadows on cave walls has passed, the innocent lovers have become not so innocent, and somewhere in reality something that never ceases. I know it, and yet I don't know it. I am in it and of it, yet it is alien to me. My skull is merely imagined. Though it seems I can press in the skin until it reaches it. But I cannot kick it about the streets like a football, or toss it in the air and catch it, and the murmurs of the doors on their hinges seem to have taken something personally. For long periods nothing but lights in the sky, now real flesh-and-blood friends. The moon has shown me her hidden side, and the solitude of the outer world is peopled by masses that do not exist. At such-and-such an hour I will emerge from my pupa, perhaps driven by a chance circulation of air, a hearty cry and a heave-ho and it will be done. I'll have the sense beaten back into me, as if I have crawled

for months through a dark tunnel only to rise with a manhole cover to a busy street for my hat. Only when you long for sudden storms do they not come, they wish to set you an example, of taking your mind away from all things, all expectations all wants and live instead in a tangential anticipation always one step removed from anything happening though it happens slyly all around you all the time, multiple possibilities clawing their way out of thin sheathes of innocence.

We are caught up in this thing called life. We don't know what else there is. All we can do is try to keep calm, and if we can't do that then at least we should bubble over with our anger not suppress it. It is as if some crime has been committed against us, but we don't know what. But some days the eyelids close and you listen to the silence and deny your soul in vain, since there is nothing there at all. All that denying just gave it form, when it was empty all along. I remember now why I said I had no soul, but the mistake was to keep repeating it as if it was something I knew, when it was only something I accepted. The emptiness of all things has a backache to contend with, is walking a little stooped. Straighten the spine before you stick like that. The lantern in the

night leaves light trails I am already absent. More and more, absent. Propped up both ends and nothing in the middle. Fingers going into a hole could be bitten off. You can wait all day not to be tired. I might be a little more cheerful if I had two or three unforgettable days I could hark back to as shining beacons of what could be, but it all feels too late now and nothing will remain but a written record of how little I could make out in the fog. Look on the bright side, the possibility of a comet colliding with Earth doesn't instil the fear it ought to. It is no business of mine. Rather I should hope for it, as some kind of resolution. It is crumbling away, everything. Just the stream of images, my blessed little pastime, my hobby of looking into reality, cutting a piece of glass as if it were a diamond, chewing what I've been given to chew, pacing the room I've been given to pace, sometimes, as a result of intermittent efforts, my proboscis up an arsehole, a bluntness that does me good, a fast approaching do nothing no-good fragment of a conclusion in finding oneself hardly bothered enough to get her tits out any more. Ah, rely on spontaneity to solve all ills, like a blacksmith recognises the proper orange to begin, and leave on the side of my plate this gristle of the days. Can I form a truce with the tendency of things, can I force time to wear a hole in the thin walls of things as they appear, as it does in my shoes?

Will I finally outlive the will of the universe to exist? Ah what a day that will be, my colouring book will be full. I'll need to put blood in another pencil and scribble some secret in another hole. I persist in banging the flints together as caveman did, who also smelt his own farts as naturally as anyone does today, but he had not yet invented the wheel, the window, or the scissors. He must have had things on his mind though, to persist as he did. He saw the glimmering waters, sand trickled through his fingers. I will honour at least these traces of him in me and take it for my own history, having forgotten most other things. Those things that are receding I will let go, the sooner to know what I really have to occupy me, the sooner to bend reality like water a stick, I see it before me, the eagerness of things to shift and change, to *bend* without a touch. The world is tired of being as it has been, it wants to collapse into itself it is only hanging on for our sakes. We are not evolved enough to find that a pleasant and exhilarating thing, on the contrary, we would be afraid of it. But caveman has to discover fire. Has to permit the world to change, and for that, there needs be only one human evolved to give his assent. Yes, I allow it, I allow it. I bang my stick on Earth and let the reverberations spread. They will soon learn not to be afraid of it. I allow it, I make the call, I bring it into being by the power of imagination

and the magick of a trillion bones. The days of this wallpaper are numbered now, it has begun, it is peeling. To think I writhed and groped my way so much to here, only to find myself shedding the entire course of my life. At times like these I enjoy the power, it is good to enjoy it, it will leave soon enough and you need to take a stand with it while you have it to set in train events that will eventually remind you it was you who set them in motion. You are too forgetful of everything to will to retain a scrap of it, what you've done, it is your secret accomplishment, so as not to feel utterly anything of the responsibility, since so many many times you will not be up to what you have tore off, so better you don't remember it. Let it come in flashes in the future, as it comes in flashes in the present from tearings off in the past. Of course you will think you are going mad, you are dealing with mammoth things, and you are only a child, yet in the same breath a covert play scooping up in your hands the gemstones of another place, it is good to appear dreamy and out of touch, it masks your menacing ability to underestimate your own powers, and pass on that conviction in smiles and laughter which only occasionally reveals a demonic glint in the eye, and even then, is something charming and seductive, an easy beauty of spirit in an otherwise lacklustre world. And we need speak no further about

the whirlwind he has unleashed upon this place, for you will be able to follow his motionless self as he sidesteps it and lets the illusion of it sweep away only feeble-minded quandaries. Because though he is clearly evil, he is on our side. You will come back for more. You will take his cones and cylinders, his planetary tribute, and mass panic will be a strange old gone thing, despite so many maimed and killed. It could have been worse, and now things have changed. The governments of the world are dead. All the unsaid things don't matter. All that has been lost is forgotten on the prick of a needle. The books are where you left them, so many strange foreshadowings now make sense, and the poppycock is obvious and can be burnt. New books will rule the world. Or perhaps you'll just listen with your ears to large shells and that'll be enough. You can hear the sea. You can hear the trails of comets, You will sit on the sand and ask your friend, 'Did something happen? Or has nothing happened?' And your friend will say, 'I don't know, I closed my eyes for a moment. Do you think something happened?' And you will say, 'I'm not sure. I think something did, but I'm not sure.' And the idea of being dead will be impossible to grasp, so too the idea of being alive. And your friend will say, 'This has happened before.' And for a moment, you will remember, but the memory will be elusive, you can

only stand nowhere with it. And there will be no where next. Instantly. Vaporised. And you can hear the trails of comets and the low background ping and crackle of sferics. And gradually, you get used to your new room. Your friend has gone. Been absorbed into you. You don't need to remember, you are everything, and what's next was yesterday and the day before, a woman gives birth to a skeleton. The sudden peace of howling regrets that cannot be sustained, that are over, over and done with as completely as a prayer answered. And the struggle too, to understand the nature of what one is. Somehow the living flesh has swarmed and squared off to nature, but gives way and makes the most of what it has become.

The reasons I did things in the past were ill-thought-out, nonetheless they have got me where I am today. There was some other reason that I did not understand or even sense. The reasons I do things today are hard to fathom, in that I distance myself from reason. The moments go their own way. They always have. So my lack of reason is not being drawn in. What say I have is only powerful if it is time for it to be powerful. Why fool myself I have anything to do with it? Act as if

with strong will, act as if confined to a cage, it is all the same. The ripples are only on the surface, below it is all the same. Why should I get excited about thrusting ahead, or bemoan being stuck? Any moment of my life peels off another snapshot. I am watching the swirls. Imagine it as ink in water before it has spread out to colour everything evenly. I have abandoned myself to what was always there. I am just the sea coming in. Or going out. It doesn't make any difference. The caterpillar has legs, it will walk. Looking for edible scraps no doubt. From gardens to forests. It perfectly doesn't know a thing. It could be about to be baked in a pie, it wouldn't have the least idea. Like me, perhaps he appreciates a little sunshine. Or a toad out taking the day. Or the supreme silliness of a seahorse rocking backwards and forwards on its way. The days come and go. It is good to be tired, there is less objection to watching the flotsam and jetsam come and go in one's head. A little boy making music banging on pots and pans and glasses and bottles and cups and the cheese grater in the kitchen. Whole days like that. Making music with what is around. Who cares what else. Is this a day I will get marks on my face? Is this a day for dogshit on the shoes? A day for a spark to shoot out of the eye. A day nursing a vague suspicion, a day for giving up on frayed clothes. A day for not replacing all that has

been lost, just sitting in the middle of the desolation like a peculiar mushroom come up, droplets of poison tasted on the tongue, the vast world of rags and holes the demons of wear and tear and the secrets hesitant to mention. Flying apart, it all is, leaves little recognisable, swept up swept away. Where has the bit of me that cares gone to? What do you expect if you pull its tail. The fire looks out onto space. Sometimes you just sit up and take note. Do up the buttons of your coat been staring so long hadn't noticed it's grown cold. Nothing is hidden but not everything is seen. You forget you've come down a tunnel this far. A silver chain falls from a hole in the air. Some large invisible vessel is putting down its anchor. Many thoughts come and go stirring paint. It doesn't matter what cylinder won't fit inside what cylinder. Or why the searchlights track across the ground. You nearly bought a parlour paraffin lamp in the shop window you nearly got wet paint on your coat off. You walk through the door narrowing yourself. You nearly bought a child's compass to draw circles with. You would have bought bananas but you didn't like the look of any of them. It was a seagull day more than a crow day. Some days are more crow days. Your many legs keeping on walking in how many universes. A solar eclipse connected with a memory of walking down this road connected with a woman you didn't

marry but might have done. It was walking down this road that it was decided, wasn't it. Just because she was in a mood. How could it have been decided on that? But it was. She has a lovely little girl now. Will other things get decided on what glove was in what pocket or who sat on what bench. It was all of it already decided. We just have the experience of flying through it, birds who learn from other deader birds. I am all of me. I am the ridiculous things as much as the gracious noble things. Soon it won't make any difference. Already it doesn't make any difference, soon it will sink in. Is that a clown down there? So what made you get into fish and chips? (Man in a fish-and-chip shop making conversation with the owner.) Was that a rat? Or a big mouse? These shapes are breeding. Everyone is looking like cartoons. There are a lot of trapdoors. Crystals are growing. Is it time for a magnificent hat? I'll work up to it. I am sitting on a point that is growing into a mountain carrying me up and up. I dismiss everything. I have to. The alternative is keeping it. A slate will not polish into a mirror. I don't think the city is real. I don't know what name to go by any more. Therefore I shall go by no name. It doesn't matter where I have been. It doesn't matter if my footprints are windblown. Hours spent staring at the same point. Some kinds of birds flying out of the flames. I never realised how good becoming resigned

is. I conspire with myself like a moray eel making its way out of its den. I can be breaking up into a million pieces glowing at the edges like embers, I can be swirling down the plughole of an eye. I am so formless I am any form, like smoke is and knows. Evenings spent diving in, it comes upon you, you dare it just a little more. Just a little more. It clusters about you, meets you, you recover your freedom as a flowing creature. A few paces either side you may bog down, but go where it wants to go and you're laughing. No craving for anything else. As solitary as you like it doesn't matter. Sometimes it is a long evening in another place. Heading deeper and deeper into it. You're coming along as I am going along. We will find out together. I know you want to press forward. So do I. But the entrance is through the vacant stare, the long day ended in a doorway rain in the gutter, playing back a whole volcanic eruption inside yourself. It doesn't matter that passersby don't understand.

A little box to keep our memories in, the regrets and boredoms and out in all weathers and rendezvous with secret lovers and hotel-room affairs and horses we fed as a kid all furious and wild the creatures from under stones in rock pools the plough horses of our imagination

almost something seen the restaurant dinners the cried-off dares and dark alleys and foreign cobblestones the satisfying things that hardly ever seemed to last snow crystals under the microscope and tits compared big tits tiny tits false tits which tits were best which tits you liked in your face most which tits you couldn't wait to see again the waiting too long for anything to come the peculiar motion of maggots what else is like that the discovery of jazz the restful afternoons listening to grasshoppers somehow you want to say I was there I saw it I experienced it, before somebody snatches it away, and most of all you want someone to keep you company as you grow old, but hardly anyone fits the bill, oh yes, and you want to *achieve* something, something only you can do, not something done for someone else the blank space stolen from us by employers not create something for someone else only for you even if it means being poor all your life and wouldn't it be good not to have to rethink out the things you've already thought out, I mean thought out as in discarded come to the end of gone beyond ditched dropped and kicked away. And ghosts of tigers in ghosts of jungles and the conviction, as fresh as yesterday and tinned peaches, beating like a heart in the hand, that if you stare in the same direction long enough you'll eventually see something and be almost content, and maybe even actually content, so

long as contentedness is what it is when it is, and not something looked for after it is gone.

Another evening in the air. Worlds washing over me. Crawling down low in grass-snake grass. Rain on the pavement puddles at night. Just standing watching. I could still be at that night-bus shelter, still waiting for a bus that isn't coming, could all just be thoughts passing through the head of one who waits there, waiting for a passing stranger to put a knife in his gut. Does he look rich in these clothes? His first nice big black coat, half price at the January sales, tired of charity-shop clothes, that people have died in, judging whether that amount of fraying is anything to worry about. Whether there are any visible grease stains. Hate grease stains. Fucker sat on a bag of chips in this one, dirty dirty people passing on their dirty dirty clothes to other people. But if that's all you can afford that's all you can have. That's what you get used to. You see Poles queuing at the Christian soup kitchen wearing better clothes, you see people picking up bruised fruit after the market has packed up wearing better clothes, you see fucking beggars in the street asking you for money wearing better clothes. Just my luck, first outing in a new coat get mistaken for a rich man and get a knife between the ribs. Rather I should be doing the stabbing. I could get them in the eye with my ball-point pen. If I jammed it

in their ear with all my might it would surely deaden a little bit of brain. As I think it I realise how threatening I'm looking, I see their eyes drop to the ground from afar, they've judged me as more dangerous than them. That's how I like it. That's my fashion statement. But it doesn't have to be that night-bus shelter, could be any number of nights, and sometimes days, out flying about in the air, away, that fluid space above particular whens and wheres, when ghouls remove their masks, where seas meet castle walls blubbery with bladderwrack, lonesome cinemas nothing else to do, haunting holes in space that call like bad monks, a peculiar kind of blurriness that is sharp night neon and wet roads and thronging passersby you're not interested in looking at, mosaics studied before trains come, falling into me or falling into it, can't tell without reference to taken-for-granted viewpoints of convenience, whirled off to some other place but still there, falling, always falling, something is.

How far away from only days before, when there was nothing to complicate matters, nothing and no-one to add to the little stock of things to be considered. It's surprising how much you can wish away. I don't know

what possesses me sometimes, and it's true, something does possess me. Something tangible comes and steals me away and replaces it with itself, which is another myself if you like, in that I have got as used to it as I have to other identities that might be called more everyday and normal. It is only by the accumulation of time spent in a particular state or, if you prefer, with a particular demon, that you come to regard that as your familiar world. It goes without saying, perhaps, that I prefer to have as many outlandish identities as possible to form my familiars from, such that my overall familiar might be said to be a fragmentary scattering over the lot of them. I pull through, anyway, I drag myself through, this one that is the truer one that identifies with none of them and not even itself. The identity, I use the word loosely, that knows it has no basis at all, that rests on nothing, that like food is simply something passing through an alimentary canal of another order. But always a sense of speeding away, something evolved suddenly, as in an explosion. Yes, there is that, that faint memory that at times is the here and now but mostly is a faint memory, because that is the only form it can be sustained in, make it a memory to look at it, even though it is happening then and there. I have been at pains to try to get to grips with this for some time, years probably, the simultaneous happening of everything

congealing but never wholly mixing, it will always remain separate, an emulsion of the mystical if you will, a cheap paint always for decorating a room. The boredom of its symbols, outwardly projected as grand and gorgeous, but let's not get stuck in the symbolic, since even the plainest ripples on water or concentric circles on the surface of a pond from stones chucked in, is sufficient to wipe away the theory of the symbolic, simple bright red blood from a paper cut and you can throw your library in the skip. Ideas cannot compete with tangible realities such as these. The living depth is buried in the flesh, like a thorn. The light never changes there. Orbits never deviate there. The mystery remains. Lucifer wishes to know when you're ready to fully comprehend that. Eyelids grow heavy to the lull of his voice. In two or three days, at most, you could see Earth from space, or whatever it would take to convince you. Strange birds on distant plains. The slow motion world. For years I've been free to come and go, but I haven't always realised I was free. First trapped one way then trapped the other, never saw it for what it was, simply coming and going, as I wished. Being doomed is just a destiny to discover the truth. A puff of smoke. Fast entry into the tunnel. Yes, I believe I've been there. My old dreams of what I could be were all rubbish compared with what I already was. Sometimes you

need the world to sit still, so you can watch for the tiniest first stirring. And that's all you have to do. Many wish to run before they're off the nipple let alone walk. It's laughable the huge amount of larvae who regard themselves as adults. The world is full of larvae, in every sector of society, finance, politics, people who dig the road and read gas meters. Larvae. Lords, ladies, bankers, wankers, stockbrokers hardup dockers dickheads and jokers. Larvae.

They fill the air with their useless chatter. A drone taken to the airwaves. Even I have it on as a background noise, does it provide a comforting sound like the rush of blood through the arteries? But lately I have instead kept my distance from radio and wall sounds and have supplanted it with recordings of insects going about their business, clicks and chirps and stridulations and raspings, the cicada maracas charm me into the twilight, the whirring wings of scarabs welcome me on waking, bumblebees float buzzily through the lazy meadows of my afternoons. The humans become ghosts of a forgotten world, I resist them becoming too real again. I alter my stance to the world I live in. Ludicrously so, some would say, but I don't care. That objection misses the point. What does a starfish or a leaf care about human-generated dramas? Is it so far from me to distance myself as well? But I am not so mad I cannot

change everything at will. If I tire of living in a volcanic desolation with only hot mud geysers for company then it should take no longer than a month to transport myself to some other strange wilderness, so strange I may even come to wonder whether I am indeed still on Earth, since my method of transportation, about which I have said little, and plan to say nothing but what may emerge by accident and does not get suppressed later, is such that movement between worlds, the desired objective, does not rule out that it happen literally, and, indeed, has already happened literally many times over. You can see this has become a matter of indifference to me, a matter of non-knowledge, a matter of deliberate distancing too, since it doesn't matter whether I am sure about a damn thing, only suspect. Nothing needs to be concentrated on constantly. In this, I surprise myself I will admit, but perhaps it gives some idea of the range of transformation I habitually aim for on my spiral staircase to nowhere. Parts only have to recede and change has already washed over. The mere local phenomenon being lived is regarded as a small part, crumblable, since the danger to an immutable self is not present as this self is seen has having no basis anyway. All that remains is the will to dare and reassemble on the other side of the void. Familiar surroundings are always an illusion, something to call home, a hook to hang the hat on, no

more. Then you can dance and my arse to the rest of it. The great skill is in not being noticed, this is why one who takes to the air like this must first master certain other lesser abilities but crucial to the success of the enterprise, since being noticed is the greatest danger faced, far more of a danger than loss of an illusory self through the process of metamorphosis. Being noticed is akin to having your last known position marked, it is like fouling your own nest, and, if for no other reason not being noticed must be mastered because it is just not elegant to be noticed. One must fast become immune to tracking, and one way of doing this is to maintain a constant illusory self in one place always. Then they never even know to begin looking, and that's the secret of not being found. You are always looked for as something else, something you're not. Some of us have never been found even by our own kind. We are just a slight glow upon Earth.

Some sentences are darker than the darkest clouds, and still they do not pour, they hold back their stored-up malevolence. They rise above the middle of the field, as if a field of hay or barley with scampering rabbits were a worthy opponent, but there is no other so that it

shall have to be. And so likewise the imaginary fiends I wrestle with night after night, training for the blackest night, when they shall stand up before me, the hidden foe.

I like to see the stars, to know where I truly am, the illusions of the daylight are otherwise too involving. Of course I blot out much of the day in sleep, most awake at night. Twilight bringing the night always comes with a sense of invitation. Behind these curtains I can become a caged monster. As much as I love light, it confuses and disorientates me. I move to the shadow side of everything. This is not a complicated thing, I wish only to be today what I was ten thousand years ago.

Something comes in the afternoon. Something not there in the morning and gone by night. The hours do not simply pass without colour, without variation, they each have their quality. In the afternoon, time is already running out. And for one who habitually misses out the morning, time is already running out by the time I rise. I enjoy the sunny afternoons, they lend a period of no destruction for an hour or two sitting with a book in the garden, birds, cats, insects. The new spring flowers coming up. And you, none the

worse for having survived another day. I witness the duration of every second, but cannot find the edges of the packet. I have to go down to quantum level I know, but even there I suspect the problem will be the same. The edges have other edges and those edges further edges still, in perfect focus of as many edges in the one edge that I can find I can conclude no more than that basically it is blurred. Even blatantly unsharp edges become sharp if viewed from a little distance away. A quarter of an hour to conclude I cannot form a conclusion. So frequently too confused to walk any further, with halting and waiting hardly any better, a compromise between movement and stillness being a retreat into thought. As heavy as ever a day was will also pass, and you may as well smile as not smile, the desire to kill usually dissipating faster than the desire to fuck. Better not to choose any particular path, but rather do what spontaneity dictates. The potential for regret being a sufficiently powerful inhibitor of actions that will cause more fuss and bother than they're worth. Let us forget once and for all any notion of morality or ethical behaviour. Killing is in our blood, it is entirely possible we may do it, and morality is not a reason not to, solely the hassle it will cause is our only check, and rightly so, since who has not wanted to lunge at a passing stranger in the street with a knife, perhaps

he has funny eyes or a voice that grates or looked at you in a way that deserves death, why who wouldn't want to pick up a brick and smash it over his skull. We should reserve such moments for when we truly do not care. The restraint is little more than the restraint that stops us throwing plates at a wall, our own plates in our own house, for though it would be good to do that and would release some build-up of tension, we would then be one plate short and have slivers to brush up that might get in our bare feet going to the bog for a piss in the night without the precaution of slippers. The hassle. But to pick up the plate and ready oneself to throw it, only to put it down gritting teeth, perhaps that is already enough to dissolve the tension, and not killing a man, or a woman, is the same, that is all there is to it, for all the moralists will tell you it runs much deeper than that. No it doesn't. We are killers on a flimsy leash. Remember that every time you walk up the high street, notice it in yourself and then think how much less restrained are these other fuckers that walk the same street. I have smashed plates and the desire to kill is strong. Oh but the hassle. I am merely facing up to the plain truth I find in myself. In this I am more moral than one who imagines they cannot possibly kill. Since I have examined the scenario from every angle and concluded that yes, it is easy to kill and it would be easy

for me to kill. So knowing I walk among killers like myself gives me an edge. The girl is quietly reading. I told her I did not want to be disturbed for several hours. I need time alone to discourse with the beast, since no day can ever be taken for granted when you host such a creature within yourself. You must find out its needs, you must discover its purpose. She is reading one of my hypnosis books. She is excited by the potential it represents. She will be excited when I return to her. When she sees the rain she wants to go out and play in it. Her primal urges are strong. She has a smooth arsehole. She likes my cock up it. She regards me as a perverted old man and likes it. Less of the old, I say. But no, she says, It turns me on that you are so much older than me. You are old, she says, Your hair is white. White? I say, It's not white it's grey. I was talking to her today about whether it would be so easy to twist a head so sharply the person instantly died, as it seems so from films. You'd have to be incredibly strong, wouldn't you, I said. Not at all, she said, The head is pivoted on a tiny little bone, it would be very easy. I decide to be more careful twisting her head round to kiss me when I'm fucking her up the ass. I noticed myself deciding, as if, previously, I had noticed how easy it would have been to break her and it was something I had given myself to think about. I won't use two hands, just one, then

there will be no mistakes. Think of the ant, she said, Think how easy it is to damage an ant. Yes, I said, but if some creature were as big to us as we are to the ant then they would be easily able to damage us. What I'm interested in is how easy it would be for creatures of the same size to damage each other. I like to play rough, I would like my judgment of these matters to be as keen as a gorilla handling a kitten, because I've seen that, and they show remarkable precision and elegance in that regard. Sometimes we must learn not to raise our hand to those who annoy us, because we could wipe them out. I notice it with the cat, when he thinks he can play rough with me, I have a sharp sound I make that warns him off. But look at my hands, full of scratches. All forgiven quickly and moved on from. Here's to the wind and rain, who can be violent and there is nothing anybody can do about it. They put us in our place.

I need motionlessness. If I sit still in the same place long enough I'll soon be lost. I need to be lost to find something fresh. To latch onto some incorrect way of seeing things and go so far along the road with it. I need three-quarters fantasy to find reality. Or even four. Skin-deep with me is prodding a chasm. I must invent

some kind of chair I can sit in that I can stay in that just sucks the shit out of me and away. It doesn't need wheels I don't want to be wheeled anywhere I just need to commit to motionlessness for longer than humanly possible. The piss and the shit. Let's not forget the piss. That's probably easier to rig up. A holding tank, gravity will sort it. What do they do in space. Mental note: research that. Shitting and pissing in space, accurate details, possibility of constructing on Earth. Noted.

Marriage, a form of servility to each other. Spreading the workload of making tea, preparing meals. More time to laze. More time to sit and think. More time to sit and not think. More time. We are all servants of our digestive systems. Hold the cat still, she said. From the front, hold him still from the front, attract his attention. She was going at his behind with a pair of scissors, cutting a bit of shit-matted fur off his arsehole, easier than trying to wipe it away. I got him nibbling cheese from my palm. I have welcomed her into my cage. I put thoughts of mutilation to one side and make cocoa instead. She tries to tell me some news she has heard from the outside world. No news, I say, stopping her abruptly. No news here. Only tell me news of slugs squashed on slippers on outside jaunts and ants peeping in from the skirting boards. You're right, she says, Half an hour reading *Der Spiegel* on the plane only reminded

me how boring it all was. I already know the future of the world, the people will throw their rubbish in the street all over the world more and more and the forests will be cut down and the sun will only make us shiver in the end its rays too weak to penetrate the smog.

And the Furies will down a fifth of whisky and crack open the stone they are encased in remembering how once they had living bodies and the proper means to cause mayhem and they will club the seals and make dead zones in the oceans.

Windswept and torn, as if a demon had driven him out of his mind, he had a certain look that appealed to her. In her teenage years she had been a goth. And now she was an artist aspiring to be perverted. She became visible on his horizon first as an idea of who should come once he had snapped his fingers. He had held off from snapping his fingers for so very long. Perhaps he wasn't sure of his powers and was reticent to put them to the test, or perhaps he knew his powers were nothing until the time was ripe. It is hard to say which it was but both are effectively the same, a postponement during which a building can be completed. Some things can only be constructed in solitude. Burning the midnight oil with

an obsessive madness that seems to have meaning. It is leading to something, as a scientist dissecting birds that fall in his yard is leading to something, but would doubtless be seen by the neighbours as something queer and off-colour. And so such endeavours encourage, nay demand, secrecy. One goes underground in spirit and rarely comes out any more. Everything then must come to you, you must attract it by the power of magick. You must have already assembled your flasks and beakers, your pestle and mortar, when it was easy, easy to emerge and go out, before the enclosure set in. The easy things, bring them in before the swarms notice you, because by the time the swarms have noticed you you must be thoroughly underground and hidden, attending to a destiny hard to read in the seeds, because of so many hairpin bends, failures and returns and setting forth again. Six weeks removing oneself from a snare, for example, you cannot foresee that kind of thing, all you can plan for is to have the necessary stamina and perseverance to get beyond such obstacles. Many secrets are hidden in such passages of time. A map of the garden pinned to the corkboard in the kitchen. She asks, What is this map for? I tell her: It shows where I have buried things. What things? she asks. Things that cannot be known until they are unearthed, I reply. Can we dig one up? she asks. No, not yet, maybe not ever.

There is nothing but childlike excitement in her eyes. She is exactly as envisaged.

Stay out of my way. Last bit of advice before I disappear into the stifling cloud of something other that I refuse to resist, though I could doubtless resist it if I tried. No, I won't resist it, if this is what it wants to make of me I shall let it, not gladly, but out of anger and betrayal. I told her to keep out. She'll be safe if she does. But there is no lock on the door. My vileness is erupting, spewing up to the surface over hours but not yet reached the out. It may never, it may subside. But I want to know what is there, I want the flashing lights to affect me, I want to deliberately place myself in the danger. It is my only strength. My features are contorted into a kind of ugliness, I can feel it happening without looking in the mirror, but from the outside it probably doesn't appear as ugliness. May even be a kind of beauty. It is seethingness. My hands flex without control into strangle readiness, though there is only thin air to strangle. It is an evil in me, but this is too naff a way to describe it. I must find other words. It rescues me from blandness, there's the irony. In need of rescue itself, it rescues. It is the only hand stretched

out, so I grab it. A pain that no longer cares. It really is beyond caring. It draws its strength from pain. I can no longer say I or me. I am nowhere. It is nothing, it is entity, it doesn't have an I-dom, it is a snarling presence that's all and that's everything. Keep out girl. You don't want to see this. I left a slit to peep through, I know she will want to see it, but she will only see my back to her, and sense it, sense it strongly, and it will be enough to keep her out. She has been warned. It should be enough. She needs to grow up and learn what needs taking seriously and what doesn't matter. I am a vile and powerful force. I know myself best as this, the rest I hardly know at all. But it is not myself I know as this, only what is left when myself is stripped away. I feed on this power, it feeds on this power, it feeds on its own power, I just recognise it, its own power is always there all my job has been has been to suppress it for huge spans of time, now it wants out and I give it out, keep away from me when I am this keep well away though there will always be something to invite you a little closer to tempt like cheese in a trap like noise inviting a complaint like a glare inviting an attack like anything that draws closer all the time like light to a moth. The fracas in the street, walk on walk on if you have sense, and that is a mere human destination. No, I am talking about the supreme illusion of the demonic,

it possesses it spits and snarls and, most surprisingly, after years of suppressing it, I find myself up to it. It is a form of arrival, larger than life, above everything, and still it is being suppressed, can I venture to say it is being controlled, I think I can, I know I can. I say it. It is controlled, trapped within me, caught in the flaming net of me, I soak up the power and direct it it learns too we have been here before we will be here again but wait a moment, this time it is more serious than any other time, there was a risk a real risk of injury or madness or whatever would amount to regret real regret beyond the illusion of it, blood left on the hands, broken things. An explosion that is still happening, a tourist of that, a voyeur of destruction, and gone all the old personalities lost forever the old selves burnt off like a face. Trapping a demon, this is what it is like. What did you expect it to be like? It needs things to strangle. I train it to be satisfied with thin air. But I cannot say what would happen if there was anything else in close proximity. I admit it, I like its power I enjoy its presence in my sinews. Nothing is beyond me then and all I have to do is to stop myself from doing anything. Ironic. Supreme power for itself alone, not to be used not to be touched beyond tasting. Is it to know what there is to be called upon? How little I remember of what I quaintly call 'myself'. So much apparent assemblage

of years casually tossed away. It will spring back, like elastic, the moment I allow my halter to be pulled back. Ah yes, now the sense of it comes clear even to me. Dragged back because ultimate power cannot be sustained. Back, back I go, I feel it now. The return. Always there is a return, in different ways a return, but a return is always a return, it has a distinct character. The warning shots of normality, that mean nothing to the resistance of the extraordinary being, but remind of the merely human again, the return. The seething can no longer be summoned, it is never something summoned, it simply appears and is there. And then it goes and is replaced by a breathing pattern akin to calming down, in ordinary terms, ordinary terms return, sense of place sense of person, mere conveniences.

To have conceived of a life. If it doesn't matter, what can? The strength to fail at it, to remain quiet, to let the truth be plain. How far from the dream of it. To write, build castles in the air, a possession continually created. Advancing along with regularity. In the end, the hope that nothing will remain unpicked up, every single thing picked up and examined, to no great effect, but for the arm action. Holding on, but not by much.

A butterfly flying in a storm. Avoiding the worst of it for now. Penguins are better off for ice.

The ole prick needs more to get excited these days like stuffing a rag in her mouth and a good fingering she'll be wanting to bring her parrot and her hamster if I'm not careful what you have to put up with for a little company these days how do those pricks out there manage it they just get themselves ugly ones it looks like pointless having an ugly one a yackety-yack one. She's got to know which side her bread's buttered. If she pulls away then push her away so hard she falls in the mud on her arse in her miniskirt showing off her pride and joy pink to the world, what am I but a fucking jellyfish pulsing through the water carried on the current. They all hold their religions like a bowl of warm shit, they feel safe. I should take up the pipe, a pipe-smoking whore-monger. Get a waistcoat and a watch chain, enter old age with dignity. She'll probably be more interested in stirring custard and making flans than sucking me off by then. I don't care. Ain't there an ageless charisma in me, some vulgar son-of-a-bitch trying hard to remain in my memories through over-assertion. Watching a sinking ship, there was time enough for the admiral to pack his possessions in cardboard boxes. I looked around and thought what an opportunity to let it all go, let it sink without trace. Do you want to cart your junk around

forever. Why do I always think of a huge column of man-eating ants heading towards my jungle abode? It's how I think of time, how long till they get here, how many inches per second, will there be a deviation from their course, is it my biscuits and jam that is pulling them on? I haven't flattened my face against the outside of a café window since I was a kid. Why do I no longer do that, splayed nose splattered lips tongue like a snail's slitherer. Does it lack dignity? I think perhaps it does. And now the remembrance of the smell of tomato plants on my hands. Eyes pickled in tears. Have I ever flipped a pancake? If I have it's been years. Is this catalogue of experiences sufficient to rescue from a sinking ship? What the hell, I don't purposefully bring them, they hide away in my pockets, they know they have to look after themselves, they know they have to keep close to the experiencer themselves. Quail eggs. Why? Coming in to land, surely I should have more important things on my mind, like must get the landing gear down like is that smoke like is that a negative number like is there a creator is this the right time to panic is this the winter walk in the country with snow and wellingtons and there's two robins on opposite walls and someone has chucked out a pair of crutches and how many new loves are blossoming like little snowdrops this morning under cemetery pines. I'm still holding a stone, was I

going to throw it or place it down? The simplest things disappear but holes in stockings remain or tumbling beetles. Parachuting snowmen. A short time ago I came to a rest so why am I still walking? Or have I not yet come to a rest only the thought of a rest. Ah, throw it away. Has never been much more than one foot in front of the other, that's all that's left in me. I should get a set of tarot cards and let them be my memories. Ah yes, that time I was fighting some men with sticks that time I was sneaking out of camp with the swords that time I hoarded huge plates. The dripping slime from the roof. Ah Death, sweet Death, I don't remember him. I draw glasses and moustache on his skullface. It's coming back to me. Perhaps a different hat. I may as well live by the illustrations on seed packets. Today is a hyacinth day. The strange practice of attaching photographic illustrations to sticks in the ground to show what I've buried there, what seeds I mean. Christie propped up the fence with a human thigh bone. How I laughed on hearing that. I like a lackadaisical attitude in murderers. No fun any more without the gallows. You can't shut it off so you may as well just listen. Have to listen hard to get the real tripe, poke it with a stick till it comes out from behind the radiator. Deep pockets it seems, some of this stuff I'll never find again. Sometimes when I wake I'm sure I'm clutching a handful of acorns but

they just disappear as I open my bleary eyes. Balls a good cuppable distance away, that's good design but I don't know about floaters in the eye. As a child I was fascinated by dizziness after spinning round and round and round. My little friends all still breathing I think maybe they stopped before me they didn't dare as much. Got all that space may as well make use of it. Colliding wings falling, plummeting like a stone. A squiggle of sperm. I've almost finished. I've hardly begun.

Only those things I can see matter. I know well enough without trying to understand, otherwise I would not have been born here. It is wrong of me to dwell upon my feelings as if they matter. My hands are stained with blood. My boots too. Does that matter? I keep looking at my hands, I should wash it off but I'm trying to remember what was the cause of it. I look around, the answer may be before me. Or in one of the other rooms. If it's my blood I can't see where it may have come out. I came round sitting in the kitchen chair. If I have my boots on I must have been outside. It is not the first time I have nodded out and come to not remembering what went before. Usually I pay it

no mind, I just get up from where I am and carry on with the next thing. The next thing here is to wash my hands, clean my boots, but I wait a moment. It doesn't need more care and attention, this moment, but I give it some anyway. Am I in shock, perhaps, is this responsible for my delay? Some unremembered maxim, perhaps, that tells me to ponder blood on my hands and unremembered before. I touch my fingers to my left temple, an action remembered from many years ago. Blood on the previously unbloodied fingertips, bright red. An action remembered such that it has taken on the tone of an act, a gesture that has lost how to be natural now, yet it is natural. It tells me, instantly, that this time is like before, the first time I did that, but not whether it is the same time as before, a time never left, save in a life got ahead of itself, a life flashing as they say it does before your eyes. The wrinkles on the backs of my hands suggest though that time has passed, that this is not the same occasion. This is not the first time time has shifted in peculiar ways, it is just a state of mental confusion I suppose, that will inevitably pass. I should not pay it too much mind but rather wait. Wash hands, inspect other rooms. The list gets drawn up. Mirror. Inspect head. That should really be first on the list. Ah, a plan. Like other times. All I really need is the next action and it is carrying on as before. I don't need to

work anything out I only need to be led along. Life as it has become. I can't see any holes in this plan. But still I stay in my corner, can't decide which foot to extend first. First it seems an obvious choice, but then the other appears equally as feasible. But this too contains the seed of what to do. Namely, stay where you are, don't move. Which is saying, also, stay with the perplexity, don't seek to resolve it too soon, bathe in the potential of what might have happened. The first thing on the list should of course have been: Ensure you are not in danger. But time since awakening has made that plain, since it would have been upon you by now if there was any. Some things don't need to be remembered, they are just instinct. You were surely listening out with your lugholes when you surfaced, you doubtless took in things out those slits, you don't need to be there for every little process. How little call on memory is really required to live, it is merely our fear of loss testing us. I don't think a cat or dog remembers much. There are different forms of memory, such as iron remembering to rust when exposed to water for a sustained period. Much of life can be lived on an ad hoc basis. If I were sitting in the dark I might not realise for some hours that there was blood on my hands. And what does it matter that there is blood on my hands if I am still asleep? A surprise for later. Why wonder more about

what has recently happened to me than I do about what has happened to me in getting born? Am I not used to waiting for explanations? No need to jump to conclusions. Perhaps the entirety of life takes place sitting in a chair. Could be the mistake is waking up, to see some fragment of our true circumstances lodged like a splinter of glass in our flesh. The blue flashing lights of acute reality. Any moment now, returning to some softer version of things. But I confess an interest in this room of awakening, where some explanation appears to be suffocating me with a pillow. You wanted to know, then know it all. But there is no end to its different forms, so it too cannot be real. See, the reasoning mind knows its fancy fruits. Better not knowing as an absolute state, than knowing. Knowing is always limited. Always stale, always false. Hold off from a definite conclusion as long as you can, and if you cannot hold off any longer, take it and reject it. See how sharp the edges of a vagueness can be. The stars are inside. But then . . . and? And? The horror of an ironic fate grows like fungus. I do not demand the satisfying conclusion of a sting in the tail. Thankfully, I've already had that many times, I don't think the belly laugh can get any bigger. And I have a way of defending myself, already stated. True, I do not fully know my type as yet. But I do not worry about the pockets of violence opening up in me . You

have to say what you see in the swirling smoke, but I am not afraid to smash the crystal ball. We are all of us facing a skull in the mirror.

The changing aspect of mood is always a resource. When it is impossible to have people around me, then there is nothing left. I can't get far enough away. I am diffuse. I have no centre. I am scraps of distraction. My buttons pushed. Lying on the floor of doing nothing. A danger to myself. Something welling up but never reaching the surface. Seems all I'm fit for, raising my head into this nothingness. It makes you appreciate solitude, company. The glowing mountaintops, the extremes. There is no trace left of this self. Can nothingness speed up? A sensation of speed only. You would want it to speed up wouldn't you, and for nothing to happen but for it to keep on getting faster and faster. No chance to think about it only to experience it. And yet wouldn't it be like swimming in treacle too? Getting nowhere fast. And perhaps the sensation of speed is little more than the colours rapidly changing. While not moving. Constant fragmentation. Viewing it from outside. It must surely be time. I am tired of everything I can remember. Fall into new things, taking along with me nothing of the

past or very recent present. Rather follow the journey of flowing water. An instant mesmerism. A me smear. The wise but unnoticeably tiny eye of a whale. When you have exhausted everything you see it is only a speck of something else. May as well stay where you are and let it come to you. Looking down at the coloured lights on the wet pavement. How many moments expanding in all directions from a sliver of observation.

I would like to speak of nothing for a few days more. Simply to try to struggle out of the caterpillar skin. The menace is saying softly all my days: Bring on the end. I shall die of people and days that dare not come near me. I shall squeeze nothing out of the ordinary. Beginnings are burning on the bonfire, yellow ants are prickling my heart. I am not as sleepy as I was. There is no silence any more, every moment is inhabited by noise. What we call silence is a lesser noise.

Whole days hardly moving. No will to turn the light on as the darkness comes. The eyes acclimatise, it is almost pleasant. Something on the mind like a crate left on a doorstep all day by a delivery man while you're out. It just sits there. Passersby wonder whether to take it, if only for the box. It is awaiting attention. Yet it has

everyone's attention. And the thing in the head is like that. The annoying undealable with, it cannot just slip away. As when I lose a pen from its accustomed place, I cannot put off looking for it even after half an hour of not finding it, for all I know it will just turn up if forgotten about. No, the futility must be continued. Sometimes it is found, in precisely the accustomed place, some time later, as if it has been temporarily invisible or stolen away by a mischievous hand from another dimension. As if time needed to be wasted looking. Everything could be like that. It is a sign perhaps of too little to do, but that is not for want of things to do, rather for want of things to believe in, for a clear statement of purpose. What else can one do but flag continually when the pointlessness keeps breaking out like a persistent teenage acne of the soul? Oh, one can rise above it, can always rise above it, find worth in boredom, perversely enjoy it, suck out wisdom in small doses from the witch's nipple. There is a momentary sweetness, enough for a small bee, before any collapse of cities or . . . cataclysms are all the same when you've seen enough of them, but tiny joys are always fresh. I am still writing my tale with a finger on dusty windows that become dustier and dustier on the road into exile. Once I wrote 'I love you' with a finger on a steamed-up bathroom window, and drew a heart with an arrow

through it too, and was surprised to see its traces still there, just legible, when the window was dry again. She never said she saw it. One doesn't like to ask and make one's light spontaneous gestures heavy with the stodge of enquiry about whether it was received as intended. Have you ever seen a butterfly fail, as if its motor has cut out? There is time to take in many things in narrow lanes heading with ever increasing enthusiasm nowhere. The dreams that go down the plughole hardly noticed. The catastrophe of unsaid things, the discouragement of disingenuous praise. The key to the cage is in the cage but the angry baboon doesn't know how to use it. Show him once, however, he will not need telling again. All that we know is an equivalent trick, so we shouldn't be too proud of our intelligence or imagine our thoughts are building anything that is not a thought. I never tire of watching ants. I even imagine watching ants when there are no immediate ants. I return again and again to the old tricks learnt in childhood, how water bends a stick, as if I have accepted something too easily, taken something for granted, that really requires more considered deliberation than I gave it at the time. I look again at how acorns fit into acorn cups, as if I have unduly accepted something that contains more wonder than I really exhausted in my younger years. Some call it a second childhood, I regard it as backtracking to the

point at which something was missed. It is our long-ingrained habits of posture that bend us into a stoop in old age, nothing whatsoever to do with the shape that goes with that age. And how tired and routine the thoughts of many become, a tiresome chatter without purpose having hardly begun to experiment with the possibilities. Is it any wonder I grow nervous when they begin to swarm.

Where to go when there is nowhere to go. Carry on is all. And on and on and on until there is not more going on but going on and going on becomes a stationary response to stopping because how can you stop when all you can do is go on. Riding alongside myself I don't know who has it easiest. Sometimes there is not much of a bite. The devil is asleep in the light of the day. Caught in a trap of knowing no better. I want something to burn. Scrape mould from the battlefield.

Something comes when you're angry enough to drive a dagger down into the desk. It's a real anger, but about nothing. Those who have never worried about the

mediocrity of their own lives don't have this anger. But it is a killing anger, it is an anger that leaves destruction in its wake. The irony is that it is only awoken by the need to record, to express, it comes because of lack of anything else to record. One could go on for days on end never experiencing it, the emptiness of one's life forming like crystals on leaves. The spring and summer months could provide enough of interest sitting in the garden. A little parsley patch tidied up, daffodils watered, it could be enough in a day not to have to consider anything else. But the habit draws you back, the need to create. You thought you were happy sitting there. No. In fact a blackness was welling up like a slug over the edge of a drinking glass. You never noticed the gathering agitation sitting there with your feet up, dirt on the hands and under the nails, job well done. Only later, as the sun set, and time sucked venom out of your soul, did the anger from nowhere arise, and there was only one answer to deal with it. Write. My notes on the passing years are phrased at least to annihilate all they turn inside out and what is more with few exceptions they seize upon certain parts of the last analysis that shall ever be made.

Can we profit by the storm in our senses or draw any meaning from our passion, do we even have time to grow as a plant has time isn't it over before we can say boo to a goose I find it so I find it over before anything much is done it just slips by and things recalled have a strange television glare about them almost as if they never really happened all that has happened is what is happening happening right now. More and more it seems that way to me that nothing has ever happened. Isn't it easy to wake up with another and as the day progresses to feel like the other is a complete stranger to us? Who is this person in my life? But to me it is less a concern than it might be since I feel precisely the same way about myself. It is enough I am not totally repulsed. There is something to build on, even if it must be knocked down and built back up several times in a day. We know each other, that is enough, how we know each other is increasingly made of plastic, the wheels come off it's no good for anything any more it was cheap to begin with but it reliquifies and comes back as something else, perhaps closer or more distant, it is the same problem I have with myself my alienation from the other is no worse than the alienation from myself. Memories are echoes fading. It has a pulse it remains in the world. Nothing greatly diminishes us we only think it does. We are nothing, we find ourselves

in dark corners by heading into boxes our habitual sweethearts one day go away and it is not even worth going on bended knee to god not even worth firing off a pistol, we will soon die and that, we suppose, wrongly I'd venture, is the end of having to think any further about that old load of codswallop. I'm sure I felt more strongly in the world in my youth, if I have dislodged myself then surely it must be as a result of some success in struggling to get away, or maybe a making plain of what I attempted to cover up in my younger years, but nonetheless knew and couldn't cover up, that I was simply not in the world at all, it was something felt with gloves behind a screen, it was a great pretending. So I look forward to supper at sundown after a long day being alone in company, a kind of obligation one doesn't quite understand. I had my comings and goings, and on the one hand all was the same but on the other everything was weird but not sufficiently interestingly so. There is of course no end to it, so a little hope is kept in a matchbox. I snipped four daffodils off that the wind had blown over and arranged then in a jamjar in the kitchen and all I could think was, She'll think those are lovely when she wakes up and sees them. Lost to myself, it was a pleasure already shared, whether she notices them or not, whether she is moody glum and withdrawn or chirpy and full of joy. I shouldn't hold

out any hope that it'll be one or the other, that way life is full of disappointments, rather I should have my little bit of joy when it arises and share it with imaginary visions those free bundles of love to spread around that are handed out in middle age that many hide behind with clipboards ticking off receipts from others in return. Scatter it to the wind, all the love you find in yourself! It is the only way. If a chance few petals grace your doorstep in return know that it is early days and forget it. I can talk forever about sweets I've sucked. It's only a matter of continuing, it's always that, that's all there is to be doing until we're found. It must be a gigantic illusion, that there is something that will make sense of it all, but nonetheless. But nonetheless. Unhappiness is a less pleasing illusion and we indulge that one long enough, so why not one with a little freshness and innocence too.

The hopes and declarations that make fools of us all our lives are as much worth preserving as any artefact of its day, I would visit a museum of what fools we've been. So I have no worries gathering them in writing. How do I know what is an achievement and what is not? Things have a habit of drifting and sliding, yesterday's rubbish is tomorrow's antique. Why there are even people ferking around in the shits of the past to see what people ate then. And they long that they could

find even more. We will all head out of here one day, who knows what peculiar evidence will be required to document our presence when all we have under our feet is moon dust. Oh to find a colostomy bag on Saturn. Someone dumped a sofa in the Horsehead Nebula. I used to collect owl pellets as a child and break them apart, all those tiny mice bones. Take pride in all your moaning and gripes, all your yapping about shit-all, you are getting down an impressive archive of lifelong sucking-at-it. There will be archaeologists of the soul who will pronounce fucked-up exertions as the mystical texts of the Age of Chucked Plastic and Tealeaves, the Era of Long Matted Hairs And Slime Clogging Up The Draincover Under The Bathroom Window And Single Pubic Hair Dragged From The Soapbar. See how well you know the time you live. Cannot guarantee it will always be like that. How short it is before a distinct change in the sedimentary layer. You will be gone but your used dental floss will recall you.

It's hard to put my finger on it, some indispensable crime, the need for knowledge so as not to wake up and find the first evidence I have committed it. Anger is just a toy to play with, it doesn't have a real passion.

One gets used to being loved, coming late to it, it soaks in, like blood into cloth. Something left behind, a head in a wardrobe. And then you're on the run, can't go back to retrieve it now. It's the sheer magnitude of the oversight that haunts you for the first few weeks. How could you? You've passed beyond any magnitude in the act itself by now, was past that as soon as it was done. You forget how you justified it to yourself, but now it's just the nuisance of the consequences. Once you've crossed over you realise there was no crossing over involved, it was just another act. You may as well do a few more. And choose wisely next time, people who deserve it. You tool up, it's a hobby of sorts. Every hobby has its paraphernalia. You always enjoyed the paraphernalia associated with a new pastime. You collect the saws and knives, the best money can buy. If you're going to do something may as well do it properly. The thing you notice most is that the absurdity of life goes in having something to do. You have something else to concentrate on. You think of it as cutting off family trees, lopping them down under your own malevolent shadow. Here's another genetic line that ends with you my friend, you weren't big enough to have no children of your own accord, no, you planned to have three or four, but I've put a stop to that. You sense the grand ancestors cursing you, but you have a job to manipulate

the future. You even kid yourself you know what you're doing, the method in the madness. You are a force of nature, nothing more nothing less. No point getting overly sentimental. This is the shape the crystals grew into in you, that's all. A thousand chains won't hold you, not now, not now you've decided. Regret is something hard to put your finger on. It wasn't you who decided you should be born, you who would turn into a monster.

You might have been so many things, but in the end it was all set out for you, as it is for all of us. The only choice is deciding to go along with it willingly. Seems a marginally better option than having to do it unwillingly. People will always say, You could have stopped yourself, you could have put an end to these thoughts that drove you along on rails. But I don't think so, unless I have done something cleverer than that. The only way to find that out is to continue. Find out what you only dreamed, only imagined, and what you actually did, not that that is any realer. Suns are set to explode and so are you. Oh you faint-hearted moons looking on, what do you know of your cold dark side?

I am a waterfall over a bottomless chasm. Have been all my life. Just decided one day to no longer fight it. I should have been made of stronger stuff, you say? Well you make me then if you think you have the ability. What you don't know is that this is your own mind

talking to you, coaching you, you monstrous lout. You entered my hall of crazy mirrors some time ago, you swallowed a pill and the drug is taking hold. Remember? Too late. The life you had is melting, like a man with a plastic face sitting too close to the fire. The horror of hypnosis to make you do what you profess you are incapable of doing.

It won't be me waking up with blood on my hands, I am just wringing out my dirty laundry, the blood on your clothes is only sweat on mine. It is not me who is flying his pretty coloured wings too close to the flames. This one is merely the vessel I clamber through to get to *you*. My final destination is only *you*, not him. He has a silence of spirit about him, he could not be influenced one way or the other, his decision was simply to be the means for *me*, apart from that his hands are clean. What a thing you've started. If you hadn't let the roots grow so strongly into the ground you might have been able to pull it up before it was too late, now it is too late. Sleight of hand while it grew, and grew. Grey days at the altar praying it not be so. The hours on Earth were turning darker and darker, a mess that would stay and die having no other pinnacle in its sights than a great mistake feasted upon by rats. And what chance to begin again? Wasn't this century all marked out. You had done your killing and that was that. The

thought without knowledge of it was more satisfying, but it is the unreturnable that turns on a pin in the eye. The smashed thing is the starker perch. You remember those lifelong sits on the edge of the bed moaning Oh my God what have I done? And in the end you decided, Nothing. I have done nothing, done nothing but what was in my nature to do. What regret can an animal have? Damp walls the wallpaper is falling in slow motion as if in a preceding of every unwelcome messenger. They will surely come for you now. I refuse to be deterred. This is the great strength in one who doesn't care any more. It speaks to me, the entity in the room. And yet it says nothing at the same time. Is it just a thought that needs to be interpreted? Many dreams have brought moments like this. There's that blood on the hands again. I'm not convinced it's real, I don't know that anything is real. It's a maze that wishes to make me think I have done something, something irrevocable, but it keeps changing, what I am supposed to have done. It won't fix itself it won't show itself it keeps me waiting, dangling, leading me to believe it is worse than I suppose. But it's an illusion, isn't it. The walls will come down any moment, a full-bladdered escape, a doughnut and a cup of tea. The familiar mediocrity comforting for its lack of excess. Not a corpse in sight. Another false life, but the plateau one, where there is plenty to explore but no

will to do so. Since it is all the same, may as well stare into the bottom of your teacup as into the bottom of the abyss. I can touch three walls without moving. It's not a room it's a corridor. It *was* a room. It's *not* a corridor. This is all practice. I *know* the knife is sharp. Is there a solar eclipse? Dawdling spirit, you must stop soon. No malice goes unobserved. Only in falling do we listen. Granted lifelong immunity from living, from having to live, from being here. Just an observer not a doer. I have someplace else to be, but if you're going to take even that away from me then I might react. *Is* there a solar eclipse? This light turns and turns, ground into smaller and smaller particles on the grindstone. The alien has a human tattoo. My name is taken.

The mirrored city is falling. The mirror skyscrapers still standing reflect the collapse of their neighbours, they look like they are collapsing themselves, moments before they are dragged down. The mirror cannot see too much without responding. But nothing is broken. Nothing happened. Nothing ever happens. Even the darkness will go.

It's in me, this need to grasp the significance of every little thing, which are usually big things downgraded in

importance. Feelings in suspension, can't deduce them, as if I can't feel any more. Feel like I've come to the end of the road with something and am delaying the inevitable realisation. But it could just be a change, the awkward pushing and shoving to emerge from the pupa state. I wish I *could* be silent. Then I might understand, sitting there in the silence. Rather than staying at this stupid level. There's a plan, anyway. For afterwards. When the malevolence has been reinterpreted. The pattern is exploding all over the place and rushing by god it's rushing now. Being pulled through a lifetime, through a dirty pipe by the hair. The sweet singing of madhouse insects. Need to make a change, resolve to go out in the fresh air more often, something like that. Drawing dot to dot the stars appear to have made a crazy fucking mess. Inside, inside, go inside, no relief out here either. Ten minutes a day, I estimate, I am relatively normal, whatever that means. Probably just scratching myself like a chimp. Chump. I should draw again, a picture of the madness develops more quickly.

Christ I can feel the feathers plucked out of my wings by the wind of the fall. Always that, always that. That explanation. Aren't I tired of explanations by now? Cross-hatching a black hole. No, I mean, always that. That's always, the constant against which nothing else ever happens, always that, if anything happens it's just

a screen to disguise that. A whole life, only apparently lived, did I ever land? No, wrong question, will I ever land? All the recollections are illusions, just falling, only falling. O this timeless morass, time the ultimate deceiver, plunge into time it was only the play of *maya*, there is no get-back-to to get back to. There is only the plateau of falling, never a loss to remember or an arrival. This is an easier state to be, oddly enough. Never getting anywhere, just perpetually reassembling from the void. I cannot be anywhere else. Express trains through the night, thundering along tracks. I understand the escape. Lose myself in phenomena, lose myself in illusion. Even the illusion must reflect the fire in my eyes. Signposts looming out of the fog. It was never important to be heading anywhere, it was only important to penetrate to where I was. You see the line, the line that you will cross and be pronounced insane. You walk along it for quite some time. You have no faith in the world's verdict, but nonetheless you respect the line, not having yet understood whose line it is. There is legitimate fear of no return. Yet your philosophy informs you that all things must have a return. Be silent, grasp it. Be this illusion. Never before has one squatted so in illusion, having seen through it. What does it amount to, this enormous effort? Just a few scratches on the wall, announcing: I am here. To what do I owe such loyalty?

The loyalty to stay. There is nothing else I can do here, this much I have decided. There is nothing else for me but this path. At least that much is understood. No more swaying this way and that. But a bleak path, is it not? No worries about that, bleakness is as bleakness be, just another illusion. What alerted me? Perhaps I just grew bigger than my accustomed smallness, took back a little of my actual in order to find the strength to press on, no matter what. And past that, it was seen. Who cares where I sit? When I cannot even discern whether I am human, why worry about lesser matters. I know what I must do. I must *demand* a resolution. The owl eyes are watching me, let *them* take the message back. He requires a resolution, he *demand*s it. Would that be a meeting? Or would it be a solitary breakthrough? No matter, I demand it anyway. There will be spitting cobras in my dreams for a few nights, to warn me away, but I'm not having it, I *will not* be warned away. Now we're getting somewhere. The cries have substance. They are not retching on empty. A simple smile amidst the anguish, it falls down like sixty beggars around the feet. More fluster sent to detain me. The smile lasts. It is that most fearful thing, knowing. Knowing nothing in particular, just knowing. The swirling bullshit cannot compete. A madman's trousers pulled up, belt tightened. A violent blow is building, I'll smuggle it in, the whirlwind will

not see it coming. A desire to do real harm to the balance of the universe. It has formed. Shied away from many many times, but now, it is like stepping out of a daze.

The same mind knows it is coming, and will oppose me.

Need a weapon. Slip it out of sight, but have it. My precaution was always not to have a weapon. Now it's become a need like breathing.

Get a weapon. Watching the purple slime drift down the canal. Something happens when going back to being alone. The restraint among people is at bursting point. It won't let me forget it. Everything on the verge of being destroyed. So hemmed in. It's what happened. I was just there. It just happened to me. What more is there to say. It hides in me. It waits till dark to emerge and displace me. But it never entirely displaces me. I watch. I don't see the interest. Carry on, it says, just carry on. It's better than lying in bed. Sometimes I feel the edges of the room catching alight, but I look and there's nothing there. It's not a matter of resisting anything, having the energy would be a fine thing. It just wants to build up in me because it knows it has no outlet. Nothing will happen. It just builds up as if something shocking

could happen. First it will have to get me out of the fucking room. Some poor bastard who doesn't know what is happening to him. That ain't me is it. Someone hiding in me I disown him. Get the fuck out of me you cunt. Get the fuck away from me. Take yer evil fucking moments and fuck off with em. Cunt. One liquid mass of no good. What do you do for a living but sit there all day watching fucking spinning Catherine wheels tacked on the fence. Who sent you to me? Who sent me to you? I want none of it I want out of it I want you fucking dead before morning cunt. Spinning fucking shit. Keep your distance I need something to punch. Get out of my way. Get out of sight. Get back in your room. Don't talk to me don't come near me steer clear of me I'm telling you with the last bit of human fuck inside me keep clear I mean something harm clear out the corridor get away from me or you'll choose it no words no words just back off get out of my way don't get in my way *hide*. She knows the difference between serious and fucking serious she better had. I was delivered here as freight. Didn't even know what I'd be breathing. Count your luck. Great talent to know when you're outclassed. You're lucky to be alive. Me, not so sure. The light is all cages bars. I'll pretend for you though, pretend to be the normal, burrow down into the sand of that before you see my real form. A dance of knives

going on inside me. Familiar voices speaking to me like NASA far far away, but not so familiar I could put a name to them. Can I tear the pages out of me they're all soiled. Can I pluck what I've seen from my memory. Can I do that man? Can I? I've been thinking of too many things of late, it's done me in it's left me for dead. I have no time left to be a normal as you want me to be, it's always going to come out now there just isn't the time left to live this normally any more there can only be this immense fucking thing offensive to your eye I'm sure but I didn't try to vanish soon enough that was the problem with it I just hung on hoping something would change even after I knew nothing would change but that it would just get more and more and worse and worse until it reached its inevitable conclusion. I had been manipulated to accept within me a demonic force I should have stopped at the gateway, simple as that and I even knew that beforehand but o no I had to let it in I am an experimenter and now the whole thing had become how to tie myself from the ceiling by my shoelaces or lie down in the mud until I choked. That was all and even the lightning spurred me on spurred me on to do none of that but just to continue and bang the drum for continuing though it could get me nowhere but worse. And so I moved away from it all without moving anywhere but closer to it because that was the

fundamental deception you see, the boots I needed to wear on this stage of the journey and which words find it hard to convey but anyway I said to myself what the hell in for a penny in for a pound so I must take the danger and the risk and whatever may come of it and even the blame and the awful consequences if there are to be some if there have already been some. I have never not known anything so well. And tomorrow it will all seem nothing again. Do you see? He will come back, but I may never come back, imprisoned within the flesh of my former self my own doppelgänger eyeballs seeing nothing the way they used to because now he was in control and I had been imprisoned within. I can have a voice within his grand scheme, but is that enough influence, will that be enough. I step over my own anger like shit on the pavement, it's the only way I can encompass it. It's not control but I check my shoes when coming in don't want to tread anything into the carpet. It's a little pitiful, such precautions, but I've seen carrion birds pick corpses clean, you don't know how far you're trailed behind. Oil and water don't mix we don't leave this universe we're repulsed from it. Another fucking illusion has whipped its tendrils around me. Standing still all this time. Climb the stairs little boy, time for bed. Twitching like an unsettled animal. Bloody wings spinning into a womb? Surely not. Been here since then?

A torso in an expensive snakeskin suitcase. That's not my memory. Away with it, just another image to make me loathe myself. I'm not buying it. I know your game now. You and your many paths. I've glimpsed more than a few. I only have to close my eyes a moment and I'm rummaging through your easy messes. Blow the whistle someone, blow the factory whistle at the end of the day at this slaughterhouse of images, unminded imaginings, pieces of nothing. Even I can see the black is spinning, so it cannot be completely black. I will only ever half strangle her, get that clear in your mind. I will do nothing you want to make me do. Never fully, never to the point of extinction. That will be my decision, you will play no part. Get it through your thick skull that your control is allowed, for amusement for experiment for plain dumbfuck beating a writhing sack with a stick. Have your bag of rats back I don't want them. I've made my declaration and I expect a response. I will hack my way through your confusions and have off with your head. It's an angry sea you've caged, if it held back it was only because it wasn't time. The garrotte tightens in the hands. Die delighted you cunt.

The Lord Mars stampeding. A sip of waiting in oxygen. Saluting pines gaze down. There is one thing about these intolerable feelings . . . absolute power. Don't give a fuck about anything or anyone. A kind of fierce silent plotting. Tense burning madness, the only place to find myself. A place to come when all else deserts me. No-one to talk to about this. Caged, splendidly caged. Choose it. Feel the restraint, could never have imagined it would grow so great. The restraint is in itself the intended victim of itself. What will be the final straw of this? The destruction of universes pulverized into me. Too easily grasped image for what I'm looking at. I don't know what I'm looking at. I am choosing every thing I don't want. I cannot help it.

Ah, I remember now, I am a fugitive. There is always something you keep remembering. From the babble of the mind. Something that makes you look a little longer at it, as if it could be true. So used to dismissing everything as untrue. There comes along some little thing and you surrender to that understanding, if only to live with some colour in the cheeks. I am hampered by distance. What I was earmarked for gets lost. Four moves is as good as a fire. It has taken me this long to

get used to having lost it all, now you tell me something from a past I have managed to live without. What is the worth of it? Yet I shall not throw it straight back on the fire yet awhile. If I knew it to be the truth, that's what I'd probably do, before that knowledge gained a foothold in me, and in so doing burn it into me, so I'll not be that uncareful. I'll make a play of considering it, yes, that's the way, that's the learned way. That way it stays at some distance from me, not yet gone either way with. That's how I have to live. That's how I'll be living for the last time, I expect. I have made a lair in this cloud, some sharp ugly thing hidden by flouncy evanescent gas, so much so even I lose the sharp ugly thing, I don't come across it as often as I used to, and I certainly lose sight of the fact that I carry it around with me, and for whole long periods I forget that, that fact or certainty seems less so, much less so. That's what happens to you when you live in a cloud. Hasn't everyone woken up from a dream of being a murderer and for a moment not wanted to move, half knowing it is not true, it is just a dream, but not fully knowing and wanting to take a look at it this new thing, or perhaps not such a new thing, perhaps a recurring dream that has been with you since childhood from time to time, and you run through the potential victims in your mind, stop there, that's new, the plural, didn't it used to be just one victim

now there's more than one, more than two. More than three? Perhaps, but at least three, but hopefully not *her*. Her, that other her, it doesn't matter, that was a long time ago, and she was placed under concrete unlikely to get lifted. It's the one in an attic that confuses, the first one. But there are never enough details, nothing to go on, if this was to be made convincing, or is it convincing because so few details? Are they murderous urges one had? Is that it, urges but without an actual body, urges declined, but buried here to wake up to one day. It has always struck me, as a result of such dreams, that to kill is easy, very very easy. It is a weak restraint, thinking it is not. With so few memories remaining of anything, real ones and false ones compete, false ones learn from real ones and become incomplete, shifting away when you come forward to look at them, to look them in the eye. Hard to look any memory in the eye, not because you flinch away, no, because they look away, as if called away, should not be mistaken for shame, they're naturally drawn away if you attempt to look at them hard. The secret is not to look at them with the full force of your eye but rather to observe them quietly out the corner of your eye, see how they behave before they realise you're looking at them, which is the best way to look at everything, you can see faint stars that way too that disappear when you try to look directly

at them. But the distinction between real and false memories, seeming real, is false in itself. All memories have something of the utterly gone about them, and what's gone is never as real as we'd like to imagine. If they catch up with me, that's the only way I'd know. As it is, I go on and on, and I cannot afford for there to be *anything* behind me. In that sense I am a fugitive, but whether from anything real . . . does it matter? Only the night and the owls know, and the wind when I sink down to my knees in an attitude of prayer, and there are no sounds it can make that fully sound like absolution, though it whistles around me until mostly everything is forgotten. I am a hider of things, a burier of things, but in the end it will only be chance that leads me to them again. Even the carefully drawn-up maps will be burnt to a cinder. I doubt I would even be able to make out the boundaries of the garden, it will just be a blasted landscape, if I've moved too far already then there won't be much to go on. Even if I should lie in the same place night after night in the absence of a sun setting in the west could I be certain I awoke with my head facing the same direction as when falling? So I tell myself it cannot matter, this effort I put in to holding together a little store of previously ordered material. It is not so much about saving myself from repeating the work as abandoning the work I think is necessary.

I know that but still I measure the cell with my gaze as if it is important. If I find myself lost, does it matter that I remember I will join myself later? I either will or I won't, and if I won't then what use retaining what I kid myself is knowledge that I will, since that then is just self-delusory hope. It's just the desire to be prepared, forgetting that the best way to be prepared is simply to find oneself prepared but have none of the things one thought would be necessary to have around. To be prepared having lost even the knowledge of preparing. So that's it isn't it? To have it become ingrained, a certain stance that can find its two feet even when it has four.

I may as well be a lyrebird singing my song on the forest floor. Neither the wind nor the ferns can hear me. I have seen how dirty the canal swans look, feeding on towpath kebabs dumped in the water, the Queen's birds on their petrol patch patrol.

To allow life to slide away sagging in an armchair. Isn't it that we just have to do something? Anything, but something. I've no clue, but if I do something, anything,

maybe later, when it *is* something, it'll toss me into a fine day and I'll see the trees in blossom and know it's a big fat no-hurry wonderful world, and I'll have done something with my life, for all it seemed like I was just making sandwiches and eating pickles. The plankton drift of so many hours something to gasp at, a chance to sit back and look at the snapshots spread on the bed and think: something happened back there, when it seemed nothing was. But then away with them and back in the shoebox. You see all the small lives clinging on like you used to. And when there's nothing left of life, you'll have your own being, something out of a can in a narrowboat cabin, and the spear-pointed cemetery railings welcoming along the towpath, thanks eversomuch for the next breath, never appreciated them before, and the next and the next, precious now. It's not such a bad ole life, a monument to something or other, a bit different in its way. So many thoughts sealed up in catacombs, you always wanted to find your groove. Pack away the mementos of days that are gone and watch over the ones that are coming like a squatted sanity. You always wanted to see the flawless pattern of it you were sure was there, that you did glimpse but couldn't hold so doubted, just carrying along with you the remembered universe of it full of noise that makes it seem like something else. But you have to trust you

did in fact come the way the signposts indicated, for all you can't remember any signs any more. But they came along, didn't they, the helpful souls at the right time. Even though you forgot the origin of every idea, one led to another and while some fell away others continued. You were always coming out of a mist. It's not a problem. The sunset windows were always something, you'd stop what you were doing and go outside and watch the great big fellah going down. You're already somewhere else before you're there, it's how you know it's changing, where you are. Your world is shifting from under you before you can go along with it, but it'll carry you, it always does. Simple as telling the time by the progress of the almighty night. You could relax into a snail's life, if you were a snail. Everything is alright for its time, later you'll look back on it with fondness, perhaps because you escaped intact. But less and less the memories play out on the mental screen, save for a few beauties you'd hang up there on the wall in frames. Except they'd only attract cobwebs, better that they're away having only glanced upon the surface of the mind like a skimmed stone. Better everything is away but the sandwiches and the pickle, tell tales on the horrors of the past another day and so too the triumphs. Rather do something about the way you're slouching, right now do something about that, now you've noticed it, too much becoming

the accustomed posture, is it to push you into a cheaper shorter coffin? This is what you do, all your crimes will be here, recorded, long after you've forgotten them, long after you're forgotten. I always say: Gone, but not forgotten. Gone. Forgotten.

More scattered spoils of ghosts.

Trapped, like our faces, even the memories are trapped, those painful shudders wriggling in a straitjacket. The war they forgot to tell us about. Lucid dreams you've taken the bandages off. These dusty hands they'll be the same hands in the future, the face I forget I have by virtue of the placement of the eyes. The icy air needs better glue to paste it into the imagination. I've hidden bones on every continent. Eating canned food in the dark. Don't eat bananas the little black specks are tarantula eggs and they hatch out in the heat of your stomach and it gets full of spiders. I came here but for why? Could I post a block of ice? Wouldn't it be great to buy a mist machine and keep one's house perpetually enshrouded in it. Fast hooks slow nails. Whispering in the street, everyone's whispering, I am the only one without someone to whisper to therefore they are whispering about me and I have it in me to kill

them. Oh that old thing. A train full of blood. Dregs of me in faded Fujicolor. Short trousers and that good old cat. Pulling snails off the door. I bet the sun likes ice-cream.

Always, the need to disappear. For something new. It hits at the least expected moment. Ah, there it is again. The recognised feeling. The thing that makes you strong, though you don't know why it does. Something trying to get in touch. And you want it to. Its pace is not your pace. It drags in your world. You imagine, you don't know, what it is like in their world. Sometimes you know, because you are there already. You've always been there. That's what you see, when you see it, when it comes upon you, over you, this feeling, that gives you strength, that makes you wonder how the weakness could ever have overcome you. You want to keep hold of what you know, but in just a moment you don't know anything, it wasn't there such that it could be held, it wasn't there at all. It was just that what stops you seeing it had gone. Nothing came. It doesn't matter about trying to fight your way out. You are already where you want to be, have been always, will forever be. You remember, but you don't really remember, you stop yourself, it's not real, it's not a memory it's just a guess, a reconstruction. You mark time with thoughts, like pressing flowers. It fits together better than you

imagine, better you don't imagine, you'll see the join. A little activity in an Earthbound box of a night. Don't have to know what it amounts to. It is a collection, of sparse and rich times. But a force trickles through all of it, there is no place the echoes don't reach, the quiet ripple of the water in the catacombs the drip of the stalactites. The underworld knows you. In the morning the dandelions will be covered with dew. And we will sit, waiting, together.

Loneliness – it's best to give in to it. Then maybe I can appreciate what it has to say. See what it wants from me.

Isolated. As I was yesterday. And the day before yesterday. Carving emptiness. The sky. The dripping tap.

Over and over, steady myself from the fear, the vague fear of being alone that is just a dull day that can lift. The neatly packaged parcels of wasted time. I don't wait any more for the happier days, little packets of happiness flit in and out of the window like flying insects on any day, but what I mean is that I don't wait any longer for the long stretched-out days of happiness unbroken. They surely come as much with company as without. Perhaps these dulled-over days visit more

those who like to think they are spending their time getting to the bottom of it. Like ghosts testing the ice to see whether it will hold their weightless souls. Oh I could so quickly move on, but I don't. I am curious to see what will be chosen for myself. Well, not curious exactly, more like a night-watchman is there for the entire night and that's all there is to that. I agreed to the terms, knowing it would be difficult, so it's down to me to find my ways, making use of what scrapheap utensils I can find. It is but a matter of hours before everything runs smoothly again, always so, always always so, so far, so fear it may not always be so is . . . just a minor annoyance grown wearisome that should be slapped down.

The slow days, yet hardly any time to do anything. Mine is not a bright busy home, it is dusty, crumbling, overgrown. It is hard to lift a finger. Thank god for long-formed habits, or nothing would get done. I know all the should do this and should do that, if that's all you have to say when knocking on my door . . . I wonder whether she will come back. She shows remarkable persistence. I am torn between seeing my life alone, utterly alone, and a life with her. I see myself living on a narrowboat on the canals. Continually moving on. I expect it will follow me everywhere, this don't-know-what-to-do-with-myself. But still, perhaps it

doesn't matter what you do, so long as you do something. But even there, my long experiment with doing nothing is not yet over and may never be over. The two are not incompatible. Every day one is forced to do something, so doing nothing means having few cares about achievement, since cares will not make it so, and most of the better things we do are done without thinking. I can fathom the depth of the thing in any circumstances, and that's all I've given myself to do with any sense of dedication, since sitting there with nothing else to do eventually forces you into it, you can't help yourself, you might even confess a little interest in it if pushed, the nature of reality, the flow of one situation into another, even the choking stifling boredom of it, one wants to know what it is about. People will say I persevered in this to the very end, but actually it was only an inability to stop. I could give tarot readings on the boat, draw people in from the towpath with an ornately painted gypsy sign. Listen out on those bright bright days moored in splendid English fields to the skylark pouring its heart out. Even in the winter, huddled in the cabin, wouldn't I become like moss on a stone, find the silted bottom of myself. The night snow dissolving into the water as swans approach. Take my demon soul into the heartland, find my feet on the water, and then continue my investigation from there. I see it,

like an estranged lover feels the first thaw and packs his reluctance to enter the warm room into his old kitbag and takes a first step towards reconciliation. You forget so many things, the smell of scorched cotton when you haven't ironed for thirty years. It doesn't matter what is said, my true feelings will hide in there anyway. The mystery of dimming light, day giving way to night, it is put there only so as we may eventually catch on, that everything proceeds in cycles. Some, longer than others. We cannot guzzle it all down and expect to get anywhere. I only want to listen to a bitter philosopher, his two fists balled to the air. If he hasn't cackled into the night like a madman, he has nothing to say to me. If he hasn't whimpered like a child crouched behind a door then how can I be sure he even understands the matters I wish to penetrate. The world is barren on all sides unless you have the rage in you, preserved like a pickle. I don't want to listen to dead-mouthed bells ringing without clappers. I know no mountains without clouds. Would it be so bad doing my laundry in laundrettes again, wandering around strange towns with a bag of dirty washing. Going nowhere by wheels.

Things that accompany me from day to day, my doubts, my possessions, the birds. It is no use pretending, I've lingered on past prayers for a little breath of summer. There was a time when I could have settled down in the grass and stayed there. I didn't want anything of the world but stream water trickling down off the rocks. It seems so simple to stay somewhere you've found that you like, but it never works like that. You'll thank me for not coming to the point. A bit of butter to tice it down. The wonder of funnels, but beware of putting more in it than there's space for in the bottle. Be glad of an old Spangle now. Left everything behind in dense mists. Secretly building a little paradise place in words to break my heart. I might have risen up anyway, even from this poor cowshed. Ferns on the slopes, and are these turnips growing here? What can a slovenly lazybones achieve? A book of halfway-lifted fingers before collapsing back into whatever it is that is similar to happiness but is not happiness, in not caring. There are many points of view, and I've hardly yet begun to take my boots off for another night. Even the trees and bushes are asking, How is this possible? I don't know, I say, Bear with me, I'm working on it. Thanks, they say. A little time every day, squeezed in tight between shopping lists and walks to the shops and carpet-arsing. Memories and reflections while tea is brewing. I disappeared in reality in a high

wind, they said I was dead or had gone off to become a gypsy. Even from this distance I could see them, the nothing and nobody of the world. I had scant shelter, but shelter it was, black all about with the loneliness of the stars. Empty the mind and wait.

There was a rock I learnt a lot from. A granite master. Maybe they saw my smoke rising above the pines maybe they didn't, but no-one came. It gave me plenty of time for what I needed. I didn't know it was what I needed. I had a bag of white flour and made a dough with water and rolled it into worms that I coiled round a shaved stick and baked over the fire. Nothing better than warm bread the wilderness and your own thoughts.

The keeper and the swarm. The all-knowing beauty of artless shrugs of it all off. Finding one's place and it is in solitude. I would like to record how far away it is possible to get, yes, let me do that. I don't need anyone holding my hand. Already I am an impossibly long long way away. You could be stepping over me on a pavement, save I retain a certain aristocracy of bumdom about me, and you'd have to have very long legs to step over me, even supposing you lost yourself sufficiently off the normal way to come across me.

The forest hid the day away in the forest there was only the forest and it was good there was only the forest everywhere to be seen. The road follows itself but the forest doesn't even let the day in unless it agrees it is a forest day not a grey sky day or a hills and clouds day or a butterflies and hedgerows day. Round and about it wraps itself not a fog and bog day a pine-needle carpet day. The closest thing to having a home, a sit here and like it day a nothing has ever bothered you day. Like most days, it is already a too-late-to-turn-back day. When it rains it runs down the trunks way before it drips. The sun was sleeping on the bare boards back home. Coming at me a lion-tamer holding out a chair and whipcrack whipcrack poor whippoorwill away. Weak-minded, empty, dragging myself up to eat out of his dirty hands and be thankful for it, glorious another, doubtless pedalling all the way to hell. Tiredness not the strength for this goddamn bucket by bucket till the fire's out roll up yer sleeves and get down to it. I ate the evenings up as if I was hungry. Who knows the long hours you have to put in staring down that shaft and thinking is it worth it for six pennies of leisure wedged in, otherwise of grind. So astutely did this dilemma proceed with me to the kitchen and back for bowls of soup to lift my spirits up by the time the time came to next roll my sleeves up I was scarce able to raise my head

from the sleep that dragged me down, looking a sorry figure, the sort certain people feel an urge to pull up and prop against a wall, presumably because they look less unsightly that way, less dead of ambition, just resting, causing no-one any bother, save should they slide over and look even deader than they looked before sprawled out on a charrabang excursion singing

for he's a jolly good fell-low
for he's a jolly good fell-low
for he's a jolly good feh-hell-low
and so say all of us

All morning at a loss in the cloudless air, my beard resists tugging. This long falling down. Make the most of this life, it's a nest soon torn apart. Wear a straw hat and give in to the inertia. The phosphorescent trails in the mist. The church steeples of boyhood and hayfields the bold bid for freedom running across the plain it was somewhere there the blow on the skull. You can't live here, and you can't live there either. Go where nobody lives and maybe just maybe you can live there. Motionless, the oar in the water, given up. It is hard not to add some little impetus to the drifting. Even being

contrary, walking into the hail rather than having your back to it, suggests that even though one direction is no more important than another nonetheless resistance will determine it, the desire to suffer more for one's lack of choice is a choice in itself and takes you somewhere coloured by that. The desire to remove yourself has already included you. Something determines where the jettisoned autumn leaf goes, and there they lie in their perfect pattern. One day nothing will remain of our turn, a whole life having our go. What will they say of him? He watched the ants his entire life, he observed the random fluctuations having killed in himself any desire to influence it, for he didn't want to ruin it. He removed himself more and more and in the end became obsessed with not wanting to set a single damn molecule in motion, for he would surely spoil what it could be without him. Knowing it was impossible to extricate himself, he eventually sought to follow as much as possible the way things appeared to want to go on their own. It could never be an achievement for him, because he knew he could never do it well enough, but even so, he felt he was onto something. And whole moments of understanding came, in which he wasn't doing anything he was simply the universe in motion of itself. And these moments too he observed, seeing his absolute will reign its awesome dominion over matter. The more still

he became, the more vigorously he didn't move. His rock-like self sitting on a stone, his unsinking dinghy on the sea of chaos, why try to steer, there is nothing to steer, the unnoticed giant has silently opened his eyes. The lion at rest, and something that will take a little while longer taking no longer, walking into the sunlight, into the day, and the appalling calling has found his strength hidden there within him all along, and all there is is his tea getting cold unreached out for because that would spoil everything he has worked for, and then, reached out for, cold, sip, cold, and his island of peace has moved centuries from its previous position and he hardly noticed, but of course he did notice, because that is all he has ever been doing that is what he is here for, to notice. It is difficult to speak of this man, his nobility that sets any confusion down on a safe shore. He has no need of doing a thing. But I forget him and his influence over me a billion times a day. What a brute I am, but even this voice will dissolve and be replaced by another. There is no blood on the hatchet, it has not been used. Not one thing has been harmed. You were making a sandwich. You drifted. You left a trail, and then you left a trail no more.

The rain still pours, as it has been pouring through many states of mind. Still, the rain just pours. There is nothing better than listening to it. Nothing to subdue or not, as before. If you think you entertain no thoughts no notions, listen to the rain getting louder instead. The emergency for all little creatures getting washed away. There is nothing you can do about it. Yet tomorrow when the sun shines there will be no absence of little creatures. How do they manage it? I am protecting a large moth this minute. I have given him another light than the light of the twilight storm, I have seen him settle and walk away into a secluded corner. We must care for every little thing that comes to our attention, but otherwise the cataclysm in nature must continue.

In front of you now is all real, without any distracted thoughts. When you do not long for things, partings long ago were only yesterday and yesterday was only a moment ago and a moment ago is long gone, carried away on the water storm. People do not understand because they make stale thoughts a habit, if they were to freshly appreciate moment by moment there would only be the rain getting louder and louder, there would be no thought of a loved one far away, of missing her, of wishing she were here now, with you, listening to the rain. The Great Matter, there to be considered every moment, dwelt in lightly, without a claw snagged in the heart.

Confusion is just a name. The undergrowth of mind. You'll discern what stones sit around all day playing at.

Gnaw as much as you like in the name of seeking instruction. You never got your head stuck between the railings as a kid, but now look at you. Time will surely concoct you an inroad, a bewildering and spiked essential glimpse. A thorn an iron spike. You must not give up. This is glue.

Better your questions go unanswered, you have yet to reach being satisfied with no answers. They seem like answers, but they're abandonments.

Do you ever feel you're losing your grip, more and more uneasy with the simple particulars, as if you're wandered into a place where they cut off heads for trespass. Each day more flies in the mind, as if something gone off in some corner, yet you can't drop the matter from morning till night, whether walking standing sitting or lying down, sipping on the sodden straw of the instant story in every moment, that never resolves itself, but occasionally chases you down the road a fierce dog. Ever more, other people you see out and about are a hall of distorting mirrors, and you want to give up, saying what reason to sit on an iron spike all day, but you

need food, and the admixture of your various intents is beyond fathoming, but this time, this time, you're seriously going to do it, put aside these ancient falsehoods of this defective world these preached teachings that pay paltry interest in understanding, yet, yet, like yeast rising a dough, you've started something and cannot break off now, you're born and yet you're not born, you'll die and yet you won't die, what you see now you'll see then and it was here before you were born before your parents were born, somewhere lost in these molecules, oh, praise the consistency of many voices saying the same thing but in the end you're forced to say it the only way you know how, with bloody knuckles fisting the fucking brick wall, because that seems more realistic, and consistent too, in its own way, in my own way, my you, and perhaps it has never really been heard at all, the pure notes of the empty confusion by all who anticipate enlightenment but have tired of explanations and smash chains drag themselves out of bogs to find this level of being unconcerned, ultimately, and yet never ultimately because that doesn't come, ever, nor does ever come, and so all there is is sitting down having grown tired of it, or lying down marginally still thinking about it, or walking chased by the biting midges of being fed up of thinking about it, or standing at the bus stop for the bus that never comes. And they

say, Is it hard, your way? And I say, Hard? Yes, hard. But I have yet to falter in all these years of sitting on a spike with fat daft singleness of purpose looking at all the little minds spread all about. Why, I have no mind at all don't you know, and where do I come from? I haven't the faintest. I will die right here and yet never die. Do I know? You ask me, Do I know? Through countless eons I have *known*, but do you mean just now? Chaos has come to be contemplated and I am as busy as a lichen.

You have noticed the vines creeping up the walls, they do not need your words and phrases, nor a reason.

Wait till you're like a walnut in the crackers, it cannot be, you'll say, you'll say that then, it cannot be, whether it's cold or hot, the judgment will be in your mouth and something like assessment will be taking place as you utter it, but it won't be assessment, nothing to assess, just something you could never have imagined, bursting forth reaching up, as if a gong needed instruction to be a gong, and I have never had a great rest on this matter, I have always struggled and tossed and turned, but watch plants speeded up on film and they twist and turn

they remind me of myself, slowed down, so am I just living at the wrong speed, I mean should I slow down still further, until I am a tree, and winter's cold and summer's heat do not concern me, because my approach is light inside and light outside, according to my own instructions an arbitrary dividing line, but who listens to instructions even their own. I have taken a never varying path, though it seems as if I fell over and over, caught up in bunched roots and trailing vines. What's the reason, I would say. Things rise by themselves, of course I see, but what's the reason there must be a reason is there no doctrine I can take to mull over that will get me closer to the reason creeping vines creep, ah it's growth they say it's growth you're after as your answer and I said but why do they grow what is the reason the necessity for growth does a stone grow no a stone does not grow and stone year on year century on century gets progressively smaller it does not grow it sheds itself to the world it is the world's grit and sand and the silt of the streams grinding and crushing until eventually it is no more than powder and I have been bones and then not even bones but powder myself so what is this growth you speak of I only see pulverising nothingness. Well they said you're here to see it so I'm a tourist I said there is no more to it than that I am a tourist looking out of my eyes on a world I presumably

couldn't have imagined but wait they said, you *are* imagining it oh I said I realise *that much* credit me with that much at least but what is the reason I am imagining it who or what does it serve that I imagine it and then they folded their arms and said I give up and that is what you should do too if you know what's good for you give up this useless quest to know can't you see and so I said in that case I will ask a stone's advice and so I sat and asked a stone and the stone just sat there never moving never uttering and I liked its answer better and became patient to hear more of this answer and this answer I liked very very much and inside and outside were the same and there was no in-between and then people would come to me and ask me the answer but I would carry on listening to the stone and in time they went off and brought others back with them to sit and listen to me sitting there listening to the stone and the sun shifted from east to west and night was dark and dawn was light and the day was long and the day was short and existence was grated in winter's cold by one little word: no.

Just keep on bending the words through the prism.

Abandon your life, come away now, walk like the Colossus rising, eat your doubts your remaining doubts gobble them up and taste their bitter leaves. Bitter. Bitter.

Oh you thought you were getting somewhere you *were* getting somewhere don't you remember no I don't suppose you do waterwheels turned by flies. Who do you entertain at the centre of your being why he must be mightily entertained to dangle you this way for so long poking and prodding examining you like a crane-fly held by one leg by a child who is about to find out crane-fly legs come off easy why one was left on my soapbar just the other afternoon thank you for your leg Mr Crane-fly just what I've always wanted you've whetted my appetite for discovery your body and organs are so fragile why are you not more scared to be in the world take care take care especially with your thoughts with your destructive thoughts your uncracked walnut thoughts counting seeds or currents by lamplight what are you receiving like a great metal tower meditating like this from one decaying moment to the next and months down the road it'll be just the same won't it yes you know it will you even take pleasure in it revelling in filth like insane flies when the target comes then you can hit it and part of you knows this even through your filmy blurred smeary outlook, and so on and so on. If you pursue objects addicted to them like this then it's called the immeasurable ulcer of heaven and hell and before you've even opened your eyes you're asleep again in rousing yourself from your bed this person who's

half half awake and half half asleep gotten up out of bed all for nothing walking around in confusion may as well have stayed on the slide in the playground never ushered away by age and the sense that this is nowhere a fit place for you to play you're done with awakening but have not yet gotten up out of bed you're on your back still lying there thinking about it but without the instantly formed thought that actually you're still asleep you think you're awake you think you've got up and out and you're about your day now – no, wrong. If you struggle to pry open those eyelids, perhaps, but you won't pry if you don't even realise the depth of this stupor you're acting out where did these thoughts come from you say and I say who is it doing the acting round here is it me or thee whose false appearances and false intentions are accumulating have you *thoroughly* finished now is the table cleared can we come out with the good seeds or must we continually play around with the bad ones oh of course you're *very* predictable and say there is no good or bad but I say in that case plant the bad and watch them not come up or come up stunted or come up fine and healthy but not flower not fruit. Whose power winds up the wind and the clouds, who is doing the changing over the long days and yet remaining the same, whose long days are these, chuntering chimp. The peacock who fans the flames

with his tail will soon have his pride shrivelled, this habit of losing yourself and pursuing whichever rabbit pops along day after day will soon ensure you have nowhere else to pop out into when you eventually do get up and out of bed, metaphorically speaking, half asleep half awake an advance on before and yet hardly seeming like it your room hasn't even been completed your thoughts are still at work on it you are half in space and haven't put on the room like your dressing gown give it a moment a fraction of a moment and perhaps just perhaps you will notice you are standing on blackness the black black black of out there so far away from you being awake what you pretend is awake but you are awake you are more awake than you counted on and you stand there on nothing and all beings everywhere are waiting without knowing to see if you will just notice just notice and like a mouse in a maze turned the corner on the cheese or the exit and transmit that knowledge in a flash to the others of your kind even heaven and hell are reverently standing aside to see to watch your struggle with it, which has not begun but is in your heart to begin.

There's no-one else to ask, now you've come this far. Thank heavens for the illusion of me helping you along. It's company, where there is no company, but no less company than all those you took for granted back

there, that noisy lot, who had the knack of appearing different, or you the knack of not seeing them the same, shed now, gone beyond, not needed, but still, this desire to have someone answer your questions, still strong, shall we invent can we afford to go back a little way before coming right up to here again. It doesn't matter. We'll see. It has its own path now. It's always had its own path. You knew that, even back there, where all the paths trampled over each other crisscross, but even then, it was only ever the one, and you knew it by there seeming to be none, save whatever way your head was pointed at any particular moment. Out here, it's more obvious that's all. How can you stray and get lost, you've already strayed and got lost, and never left the path once, because that's what the path is. It doesn't depend on you seeing it. Now come along, come along, we're getting somewhere now, we're finally seeing there is no finally, at last.

This is a good situation despite the ferocious winds blowing through the mind the great gaping gale of emptiness and attained dogs scratching attained fleas scarcely realising what they've come to realise up and down like yo-yos and the sparrows eating the black-

berries I left for them shitting purple shit all over the Pure Land the old layman by nature one to stand in anyone's way on the path and clout them with his stick wanders out of ten thousand story books telling tales to children and mushroom-tripping beginners hardly yet set out before they're abducted into nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine different dimensions, all without reality and tomorrow scouring the secondhand bookshops on a search for a stack of Zen books. How did he know *that* had anything to do with it? He came within an inch of an atom of dust to understanding it and it blasted him across the universe to an inside-out world, he wanted to be that kind of human lion strolling along surpassing fickle minds multiplied and fragmented in a kaleidoscopic cascade of distractions where all the bits were shades of grey and rainy bus stops and smelly socks he had an ounce of colour now to play with and play with it he would hanging up his daily activities in a world stuck halfway between existence and nonexistence where every footstep was potentially a step wrong he lived on skyscraper ledges and tried not to think no more than he had to to turn corners and cook he toyed for years with many and various understandings but there was always something a little deceiving about any breakthrough and breakthroughs there were many so many he eventually began to distrust

them all and that was a real breakthrough a shedding of confusion to a No Place knowhow, and he wouldn't seek companions if there were to be any they could find him if they could fight off that many demons swarming down upon them all in one go and still not get distracted by the false wonderment and clever views and the fear of nonexistence. He would figure it out in abandoned places the universe is a huge soap bubble wobbling in the air and it didn't matter longer than a piece of shit to a dog.

Swallow this and more, then I'll tell you. All those years ago when a meteorite hit the centre of a crossroads and you were standing there and absorbed the entire experience into your body and saved the world, though no-one ever knew about it, save the few others standing around completely freaked out, another of yesterday's dreams on a dry dust path, and all the world is silent an unknown true man of no rank standing there, before he is whisked away by the *dao* of woodfire sparks and activity and hash smoke over there over there where the lights are away from here where the dark is engulfing everything, and so, once more, or perhaps for the first time with these feet on this planet, mixed up in the world lost in the criss-cross of footprints not knowing where he's going but not needing to. He never forgot it, but it took him years, decades, before he was able to live

it, holding that much power that he could do nothing with as yet, that was nothing but an untossable burden, Atlas and his world we give it to you this is yours look after it well we'll be back to check up on how things are going no training nothing. Best to see it as an illusion, even though it was the only thing that was real.

Get to the bottom of it not daring to wonder what it is raising up and igniting. When you arouse it, and it is alien, you cannot deny your intent it would be like trying to put a stop to an echo. All that exists is worn away a fanned flame too small to withstand the draught. Walking talking standing shitting the tiredness of cut-off scenes too weary to explain today the confused unhappy vastness.

Dwelling in all times yet saying this is a good time a familiar time I recognise this personage willingly I certainly are willing to be this person now though I dwell in all times and cannot fully believe without pouring water over this fire of mind to cool it into its daily objects and daily activities, as if they were mine.

A door banging late at night you were napping on cushions be sure to remember that dream no already forgot. Yet more realisation dumped realisation is cheap plenty more where that came from you should understand yourself inside and out and hold none of it for a keepsake a nest to bring back stones to sit on to hatch them out, sling them all this affair is neither broken nor built neither diffuse nor clear. It has been smashed, the mind, the time of the mind, but on awakening a sudden leap to transcendent affairs sloughed vast eons without beginning where knowledge and no knowledge instruct nothing and everything, you know it now, the gemstones plucked up, and thrown away again because they are everywhere beyond the need to keep them. You agonised for the lives of your own parents, the rock of the generations pressing down upon you, finally sealing you in. Only now you don't scatter and run, you lift it away with a little finger, and though the scene cannot speak it does not need to speak, you pledged yourself to understanding it, so it doesn't matter where you are, because wherever you are you are always still here. Some seeds are planted too deep to rise up quickly.

Understand without understanding what it's like to be a hairsbreadth from understanding, and then a creak of the floorboards. Spills out of its second, capturing the attention, and there is nothing else, startled. The sound

has won, thought a pale second. The contemplation is ended on the next day as on the day before, the presence of some watching intelligence is hard to shift and deny, it freshens with cold water in the face, entry into a tunnel of sorts, from spring to autumn from summer to winter from winter to winter from summer to summer from spring to spring from autumn to autumn, aging as others do yet not aging, not melting or freezing, abandoned, put down picked up, as before as it will be again, the seat that faces death. In your daily activities getting here again and again, naturally coming here, a wall upon which shadows play, the chilliness of days drawing in. You have appeared in the world, the time and season of your sitting a dull lingering fiction. Just listen. Just realise. These things definitely do not lie within days and nights. You are your own master, it's not worth taking enlightenment out of the shop window you won't want to buy it. Just have a good look and walk on, or not even a good look, a glimpse out the corner of an eye, and walk on. Walk on, don't look back. If you look back, don't look back long.

The large efforts we make are like scooping up water from the ocean to lower its level. The objects of our

daily contact with differentiated reality remain the same between going to bed and getting up again. It's hard to make a dent in that. So much for knowing they don't exist when you have stood peeing into the same toilet bowl staring out of the same frosted pane for ten years or more. An impressive persistence of vision, down to the flaking plaster and peeling wallpaper. I often ask myself, if you cannot even penetrate beyond this, what use all the enlightening little details you have understood about it. It's a joke, isn't it, to dare to conceive of myself as the entirety of space, when I am bound and gagged by my own little emotional circumstances that I cannot smash my way out of, when an annoying mosquito consumes half an hour of my attention finally to see my own bright red blood smeared on a splattering piece of paper.

And you realise, without realising, that you have not been thinking any of this, it is just part of a general plastic viscous enough to prevent anything much from arising, bubbles struggling up through it like sleepers who cannot wake themselves up. I call it the pit of illumination. It'll bury you there. And then, you are what you hear, a fast car passes through you. It is hard to know what anything gains from this. But what does a daisy gain from growing on the lawn? How can there be a reason if I am everything and I haven't found it? Every day forms carry on their ant-like building, and

you can see things are going in a certain direction but nothing is responsible for this direction it is simply the spontaneous manifestation that comes, not taking into account the abortive endeavours of those who suppose they have will to apply, which gets evened out in the wash, no, it is the spontaneous thrust that survives, the way things are going on their own, even if they get destroyed they are back tomorrow going in the same direction, something is drawing them, a practice run that needs no practice, as if, finally, whoever has the voice then to say it will say it: this is where it was always heading, this is the pattern that has emerged from countless trials that built into a single dynamic strand of being that all along it consists of only a first-time try, all the rest withered, so therefore this is the knowledge of itself that it has learned through innumerable ages, that has brought it to an understanding of itself that was *not* there from the beginning, and yet, of course, had to be, before the beginning, before the beginningless beginning. All along, it knew but couldn't say, this thing that isn't an it or a thing. This *life*, the most real, moving, and pure expression of so many things that have turned out to be worth knowing, but doesn't have any existence as such, save in as much as we are self-evidently witnessing the phenomenon. Beyond that, a wisp, from which it all hangs not realising it is a wisp,

from which it does not need to hang, a wisp that isn't even a wisp. Like a bubble burst, but it was a bubble, and reflected in its filmy face was everything, before it was nothing, but that too without reality, no bursting because no blowing, just like this, without there being any interruption. You can see everything that needs to be seen if you stop looking.

One day, the thing that didn't bother me the day before now bothers me, so what has changed but that I have a less good way of seeing it, or no way of seeing through it, or seeing through it but that no longer being enough. What shall I do but bite my bowl and try to remember one or two true things since I apparently got up, the 'day' though most of it is night. Many many butterflies, and filling a dried animal saucer with a jug of cold water on a hot afternoon for a thirsty cat, and sitting there watching him drink it. That'll do, a few nuggets of gold blasted from the rockface. The head stuck in a book of philosophy that seemed to offer solutions but now, late in the day, does not have as much to offer as those small pleasing incidents.

There is nothing personal about me beyond thoughts. I can't say what I am. I am nothing I am everything. Why have I collected where I am? Yet, what has collected, where am I? Some convenient place, a ledge in a void, the stunning notanywhereness. Even the familiar is one step from being dissolved, kept, for a reason no more than it is as good as anywhere. Everywhere has always been as good as anywhere. Company would be more of myself gathered in one place, but there is no place, not really. People I know are in a dream as I was in a dream. Causes brought us together, causes will keep us together or split us apart. This is like thinking back to when one had nothing else but the limitations. Now there are no limitations, it is a fresh day started off by doing nothing. Water does not ask where to flow it does not know anything it just goes where it goes. Even extraterrestrial life is me, they know it they must know it. If there is the slightest limitation, you've missed it again, fallen back in after having crawled all the way out. Now you can invite them, now you are as you are. Need to get beyond having to remember it.

Have you really arrived do you doubt it or not if you hesitate you stand in the thicket of thorns you pick up

every grain of spilled rice individually. You can't help awakening when future life demands it, if only that you'll be ready when it arrives, but of course what future life is there only an imagined life but mirages can call to us strongly it goes without saying you have to find the place where the stream joins the river but you don't search for it you may as well act dead and be carried. It is only thoughts fashioned into a nest it is the prime object for burning pluck from your breast fire and set alight to it. Inside the skull the eyes are held in place by elastic bands the brain is a motionless toad. Under the black ceiling these infatuations are played out, step back from spending all of your life on it, this simple matter this wondrous and subtle needle in a haystack a bolt of lightning would easily find. Among the liberated, there are many who have slipped back into the slime of bog, look at their clothes mother. They sit there with their lolling heads and yellow teeth sitting stupefied like little Buddhas appearing in the world who cannot come out to play today they have to stay in and do their homework staring forlornly out of the upper windows down at a spot on the ground where, it is imagined, nothing will happen and it will be marvellous. Because they are deluded sitting in rows, because something has to be done to fill in the time. Naturally, because you are not stupid, you turned against this practice,

yet always wondered whether this arranged marriage with cut-down phenomena might not have its benefits. Yourself, you also sat for hours on end doing nothing, but at least you followed the bees with your eyes and smiled at the birds, sometimes so still and vacant a butterfly would settle on your knee, which you would see without seeing, and when in timeless time your head eventually turned down its gaze it was a stone statue creaking into life, and the butterfly up and left as you knew it would, but perhaps it had lingered long enough for you to clamber aboard, and see for the moments it takes a ribbon to flutter to the ground, there is no cage that can hinder a ghost. Even the grey days are spectacularly grey, and though many entertain such thoughts few can squeeze through the bars of them. It is good not to have to spend your whole life unaware of your error. I do not know why I immerse myself in words and phrases, but it has become like breathing to me, like eating, and though I must be tripping over many stupid confusions in laying them out like this I also think I may demonstrate not clinging to the false and, sometimes, falling down a hole into a dark pit has its entertaining side. If I turn on the tap and the water is muddy I leave it running until it is clear, should I then pretend, when I have my clear water, that the muddy water never happened? It is all only phenomena, there

is nothing to judge. This is where I am, where I have washed up, I did not bring me to here, I was brought with the rawness of just living. The seed came up where it was planted, the sun shone where it found itself. I could turn away from these observations made for no purpose for nobody, but then I ask myself, why *am* I overjoyed to see a rare bird I have never seen before, a strange insect that has not passed in front of my eyes before. A most unusual pattern of light on the door, that I could see no means for it to have formed, since the sun shone through nothing quite as geometrical as that, if it had come from somewhere it had come from some spell cast in a snaggle of blackberry thorns prismatic with light-bending glory, and I examined the angles seeing where I would have to stand to form a shadow of myself to blot out this light pattern on the door, and finally I saw it was the rickety fence producing this pattern. Why, I asked myself, does phenomena manifest according to discoverable rules, why does it trouble itself to make sense if you look hard enough, when it has no more reality than a dream and a dream rarely rarely troubles itself to make sense. So it is not a dream in which anything could happen, otherwise scientists would have long tired of measuring and deducing and proving and inventing, so therefore can I not deduce that life does not wish to be ignored, written off as a

phantasm with no rules, and though it is for all eternity nothing other than myself, who is undiscoverable, still it tickles the fancy and allows me to wonder . . . what I might be were I discoverable, eventually. Is this where I store my indestructible single bound? Hidden from myself, forever, I watch with interest my unfolding into form not one jot changed. I already walk upon the surface of countless planets, like so many parties going on all over town, but I prefer, on this occasion, being at none of them. Tucked away, if I spend so long looking out of these eyes then it is perhaps as useful as turning a hundred radio telescopes to my will, since I have hardly begun to examine every blade of grass as closely as I might, and still I wonder, should I save the bird the cat has caught and tortures, and the cat knows and saves me the bother by running off with it in his mouth. Later, still undecided, perhaps siding with allowing a cat its nature, I manage to walk up close to him and his bird and notice blood on the blades of grass and leave the cat to finish the job. These are challenging things brought before a king in the expectation he can weigh them in the balance. Others look for wobbles of stars stretching their fingers out towards Earth-like worlds. We sentient beings simply must go on, though we are not anything. We build an effigy of ourselves and weed around it, a wooden man

growing moss for hair keeping earwigs in splits. When do you suppose everyone will realise there is no-one here? Will they laugh, or cry. I expect then they will dig out the books of the very few who knew before, to test their wisdom on, to keep themselves awake. This is my destiny, matchsticks for the eyes, to tide a few over until the balloon is fully blown and popped. One tires of the always-said-the-same-way. The words become like mosquitoes drilling into Titans, something bruised and insensitive in a constantly repeated message from the past, though in other moods you can see that something wanted to get through at all costs. No, not at all costs, more like a penny on the pavement, not worth the effort of bending down for unless you are very desperate. What other explanation for it going ignored so long? The wise are as hard to find as the Abominable Snowman. Occasional tracks, no more, but perhaps enough to keep belief alive until the ambulance arrives. Then they're ladling it out in the mobile soup kitchens, which says no more than: someone cares, a bit. Make sure all sentient beings get their fill Mavis. Put the plastic chairs and tables out Gautama. You have to laugh at the things we imagine worthwhile to do to benefit other beings. Always a bit musty in charity shops. Good intentions struggling like feeble seeds in hard soil. And here is me struggling through ten miles

of swamp to bring you a buttercup. Deathless. Birthless.
Considering it right. It was worth it.

I should have watched more carefully to see my skull grow, but I didn't think of it at the time.

Trees are grown up in no time and then it seems they have always been there, or slow-growing ones surprise by their appearance in faded photographs before your grandfather was born, loitering still outside the front garden gate, the tree you know so well standing trench-coat-collar up in its early days.

Twilight replaces the bees with the moths.

I wash my hands again settling like silt the swirly universe in me, the familiar evening draws on out of the familiar afternoon sitting in the garden facing where the sun will set.

I ponder not being I, the vacant space, and smile at this face in the dusty mirror, as if I know something, or am practising knowing something, getting it and then forgetting it. I read back through old writings. Why, I knew it then, it is all there. Forever it seems only-just. I think I am waiting for the bottom of the barrel to fall out that has already fallen out, that water cannot be holding on with squirrel-like claws to the

inside, holding its breath like childhood contests to see who could stay under in the swimming baths for the longest. The air is going to win. Another day upon which I cannot speak otherwise, as soon as I open my mouth. One day I will vomit jewels and fabricate my death and turn everything up until now posthumous, with me watching on from some other shelf. The sun has gone west for another day and the night watches over us.

Never mind have I been a lizard, I am lizards everywhere right now. Stumbling around in confusion, how come this monkey isn't dead yet? How can he even think of continuing? He leaves a legacy as ended as ended could be. If he ever knew anything, today has whisked it away. He thought he was clever so it came to show him how clever clever can be. See, gone. All gone now. What you thought you understood. Sink back into your torpor, pretend you never roused the small-hut wish to lift the cover of the sky. The tiny helpers look up like little mice as if to say it is not our fault he was too encouraged to uninvent himself, saying that the Great Matter existed before it appeared in the world (the silent destroyed world) the great gentleman rationally

listened to the great teachings and ended up putting his shoes on his hands and his gloves on his feet. His anger should teach him of colder sterner worlds, in case he thought he was fit to fly to flit about like a gadfly up in the bleached white clouds of another day no more tugging together heavy-hearted dusty curtains at the light-putting-on time. He thought he could afford a rest and found he was just a fly among flies a slug on a flowerpot stars. What has happened to the joyous flying dragonflies of the day the careful smiles into the undergrowth the considered falling of a pink petal upon the ground gone back to being a smelly noisy eyesore and no end of sitting still staring out won't convince that a good hearty death wouldn't help but now even death is meaningless but he is still trapped in the corner an unexcited electron no quantum leap in sight no desire to go on the road no desire to travel no desire to make something of himself and no desire to break through. Lead me up another garden path why don't you the Great Matter is not looking so great today punching brick walls spitting venom for Earth this once lovely paradise changed so since yesterday. How am I to know when you have finished playing with me, is the sparrow in the cruel claws of the cat to know he is being let go now, no not now still some jumping in the air and torturing to do. Well I feel myself tearing down

the illumination I have built up, curious that, allows me to doubt anybody. Yes, I was fooled in exactly the same way many times, now fuck off you early-out-the-egg shithead. Oh Mr Peaceful is no longer at peace, ring the monastery bell, call them in from the fields before he is a dead tree struck by lightning smoking like a stick of incense, for it's surely something to see he wishes you to understand he was wrong he had not understood what he thought he had so painstakingly put together and now he must pay the ultimate price. There is a wave of anger so fierce no awakening could possibly placate it, only blood. Show me this anger, bring this anger to me, oh then it's hard to find I admit, if it's stopped in its tracks like that, but if it's a charging bull then good luck to you in stopping it in its tracks. But let us tear up these explanations and put to rest this mess of unexplained sounds, if it wasn't for silence, and its vague preferableness, there would be no-one in this house to explain anything to anyone, the wordless cliff seems so hard to scale, then you're looking down, and there is only silence now.

A week of daytimes lying down with nighttimes strangled the hot-bloodedness. The night helicopters of growing old the open-windowed company of noise out there in the great big turned-off television opened-window night taking the smug mug of warm out the

enclosed roomish air with a fresh tumbler of chill outdoor night almost silent don't mind it's not.

The pleasure of coming to words without the slow step of feared fate, as if something has dissolved. The fish in this tank look forward to the thunderstorm. Fingernails long enough to pick diamonds out of crazy-paving cracks. He'd have those long legs of hers back on his bed to slide his hands up devious snakeskin slipping-out-of always something of laughing at your own joke in the middle of the night with no-one there. Come the rain he'd be out there paddling come the Indian summer there'd she be. Ought to be used to walking alongside this ravine by now, looking back mudslide slipped boot way changeless no-mind seeing it now seeing it then take out your unpublished words and leave them for the corpse beetles and take on next-night meandering don't-bother-the-cat carcass markers splash cold water on the face and slap hard own face on waking on dusty floor done-no-good nap to get rid of it two bananas left some cold potatoes and garden tomatoes slam a few cupboard doors say fuck it FUCK IT twice count the tiny mosquitoes around the bathroom light and praise the spiders lying in wait around the ceiling go outside sit in the night and, still going backwards, worry it out the painful jut-jawed toot-horned drawl of it all. Soon be noon, once the hours of the night have persuaded

down the satisfied angels and what was it what was it anyway the phantom night bombers over the city. Lose your footing once lose your footing twice, I've not moved an inch. Let go, that's all. The barren tree blossoms.

He doesn't use a mower because he doesn't like to mow down the flowers at the same time as the grass prefers to use shears and cut around the buttercups and dandelions. Neighbours look at him as if he is mad they are always offering to lend him their strimmer he hates the sound of trimmers being foreign they don't know the word 'shears' so say, 'You're cutting the lawn with scissors. Would you like to borrow our lawnmower?' No thank you, he doesn't explain he doesn't like electricity in the garden either, and he likes to keep half of the grass long because the insects love it, so actually he is only trimming a small part of the lawn and his lawn always stays green unlike those of neighbours that are brown and patchy after mowing, his is a bit untidy but it is green and buttercups and daisies and bluebells watch as he carefully trims around them like a little girl watches her mother kneeling down before her fixing the hem of her new party dress and she will twirl its pleats and catch everyone's eye. The black mountain, you wouldn't

know it was there were it not for the stars starting high off the horizon. Every phenomenon blows across the barbarian steppes of his mind. Come to my room I will show you the barest realm, not only here you don't exist but the vast everywhere. The cat knows he won't like my overripe banana from several paces away sniffing the air as two then three strips of skins are pulled down. And the days continue in a daysy waysy way. Tomorrow never knows when to arrive. There is no need to stand around gazing at the big fish looming up out of the murk of the pond. But I do.

Here to entertain the worms. I've often thought it been unable to think anything else death comes quickly seventy or eighty years is soon over the demons gain power all the time remember to waver there no use pretending you're still eager frantic to clear the path to some greater truth when every truth you've ever found won't do and has to be removed from its throne a usurper for a few days. Reach a silent accord with your nothing more. You raise your hand to wave, to wave back, then realise what a fool you've been it's the person behind being waved to. And this clumsy-old-soddedness pursues you through the days presenting itself as a principle to learn, yet another, as if hedgehogs haven't

already got enough spikes. Laughing loudly several hundred times through the myriad states the couldn't-give-a-toss subtleties. Kick up a shit storm if you will still the same old trapped in a corner you've done little more than stand up from sitting down in, may as well sit back down, you realise it, and give up. Best thing done all day: releasing the cat he accidentally locked in the coalhouse for three hours. Unknowing, like wood, sitting there throughout the day, then a little job for him, odd noises to investigate with a torch. Brain feels like a leech supping at the tit of consciousness, hanging fangs embedded, a squirmy blob with vampire teeth. Go and pee away your mastery now you've stopped your thoughts stirring. What's that scratching and banging? You might have been in there days. Stop the world and you still won't be able to get off. Sitting there like water in a bucket, not much is going to happen to it. It'll be poured away won't it? Took on too much, rest sleepy head, every second is only adding to the confusion. Holding out for this not being a waste of time. The skull doesn't care what impressions the eyes gather, what frettings the blob in the cranium is sparkling through its jelly. I'd be concerned if I thought any of it was mine, feelings come feelings go no real essence or time the quake has already come and gone just glad to be lying here no before or after, the haveness I agreed to have

for a time, dispersed. No memories held. Made up of so little what the everything constructed from, the study completed on realising no study needed. Were you born? You're a fool for seventy or eighty years until a fly shows you how to land and take off. You go and lie wordless in your coffin and cut off the fiery skin with a knife. The smoke of your old doings socks taken off before bed. Wake up, more or less as before. Strange to think his greatest wish was that a few of his verses might have a greater shelf life. I think in his heart he'd already given up on even that. Not one little bit of it could be dismantled and pulled away from the rest, it was as it came it went as it was, and nothing much survived him that didn't sound like a little boy asking strangers in the street where his home was. You see with these three eyes open where he goes at night, you see the everlasting boundlessness to which he is married. Digging to lift up his potatoes, he measured the worms he surprised against his old wooden school ruler, as a side interest of no particular value. He knew there was somewhere to go to escape to, in an instant needing nothing, but he didn't often go there. Instead he boiled in the pot with all his wrongs and rights, to see what would come of it. And then, when there was no more of it, he would consider himself cooked. A perfect shit to slap the buttock cheeks shut, hardly needing a wipe.

Holding on to so little here. Why hold on so fast?

Success comes when you've waited so long you no longer care. That was always a problem for me, caring. Long hollows when there was nothing but the drrr-drrr of the fridge and television through the walls. I'd escape to the garden, and sit there and wonder about life, the sense of being trapped in a corner and the lack of companions, that at other times did not bother me, shoebox life opening out into the vast universe, and what was it that made that switch, so I waited for that, mostly, that thing that was right under my nose all the time but I could only have it as a belief most of the time, and a belief was awfully constructed from bits and pieces of remembered experiences tied together with flimsy string of hope that would snap like a cheap shoelace time and time again, and I wondered what others had got so right, knowing they hadn't got anything right, that I was closer, for all it seemed I was so far away. It could come at any moment, what I was after, even if it took a lifetime it could come at any moment, never so close and so far away all at the same time as I was day after day, that it could do nothing else but take on the appearance of waiting, since there was nothing else

going on. I was just bark growing on a tree, and I was sure enough that the thoughts that came to torment me on lonely afternoons were just gnats practising their hunger but not needing to feed. I found a kind of solace in words, in as much as it took me closer than just staying in in the general fuzz of not having a clue, where the bacteria of being bothered liked their agar plate and made use of every habit of thought I had been fool enough to lay down over years of not getting it and feeling forlorn about it the childish hurt-knee bawling that hardly notices itself going on, but in words where words counted because I'd made them count that couldn't last too long, and so it forced me to write if only to escape for a little of the doing-nothing day until the bruised berry dropped and plopped and lay there, something to look at and think, that's not my life that's a simulacrum if ever I've seen one so now where is my life? I'd pulled myself up by my bootstraps and now the leaves waving in the wind could only be a wonderful joyous sight, and there was laughter about something that couldn't be pinned down, though I knew what it must be, that old shoebox existence stretching to the stars again.

It's as accurate as it can be, feeling the life in my hands. Different days and times, different hours, bring different feelings. The wind getting chilly as the sun goes down,

a cloud of midges frantically billowing at the end of the garden. Thankful they do not come round me. A gnawing rat in the golden-undersided grey-topped sunset cloud. Never one moment without an aeroplane in the sky. I want to dig in deep with my fingers into the mud of this mind, the knowing nothing else but ten years come and gone twenty years come and gone exactly the same every day. Like waiting for a bus, you don't like to move off from the stop when you've waited a long time without one coming. If it is to change, let it change without me doing a thing, as it surely will, one day. The big fat hint from someone dying. As people are loathe to move off from the wreckage of their homes at first, the place that is theirs, though it has all fallen down now. I sometimes think I have done that, I am doing that. Other times it is merely the disinclination to lift a finger when one can with the least effort survive where one is, investigate it further from where one is. What could another place bring, but more hassle. Oh, sometimes I think it would be a great adventure, and it surely would be, but after a while no matter where I was it would settle again to the same question, Who am I who sits here? Parts of the world come to me, the great cries of gulls telling me the sea is rough today, the wailing sirens of other people's emergencies. The wind blows through me and I am not even here, though there

is no impression of sustaining it, rather noticing it after it must have been happening for ages. And as I think of the cat, the cat is there just a moment later, and he and I are fascinated by a large hawk moth a mouse with wings to him or a mini-bird. Perhaps I have succeeded, in my little world, in not thinking very much but the breeze rustling the leaves of the tree and the animals and birds and insects, and this world I have created is actually a great peace and not the conundrum I take it for, it is something I solved long ago, I arrived where I was going and forgot, still combing the knots out of habits and too busy with that to see I am God sitting in his garden I am God washing his plates no not even God since who is God but another me to wonder about when there is no me to wonder about there is only this suchness of everything the smiling concrete Buddha of it all while tomatoes redden on the vine and wonder. Now I see the advantages of same same same every day and every night, without trying the incessant impermanence has been stilled and still the same midges move like excited molecules in their end of garden billow, doing what precisely, celebrating the moment of their birth a pink chalk line across the sky not a blackboard yet. The darn noise of aeronautic contraptions and now comes a parallel pink line further off, and another and now we're going to get a cross and I wonder, were I

directly underneath, would it be a right angle? There were certain happinesses that came it is pointless to look for to ask where they went and could they return, one must instead concentrate solely on the sameness that hasn't left, dark silhouettes of overhead crows cawing, the urgent whisper of the wind-blown leaves this tree that speaks to me and keeps on speaking to me the language in the movement of its silhouetted shapes. We give up too soon, us who would understand. Keep looking, keep listening, this foolishness will show you the scene behind the scene, you have to want it enough to sit there day after day looking and listening to the same thing, easy to dismiss your effort as not enough, but, in time, you may see the great perseverance of it, which was only of course no longer having anything else to do, you say that to yourself and forget the call the constant call to do other things to join the spectacle of the world instead of want to see through it, something must have caught hold of you to be so sure, though it hardly seems like it, day by day, and the doubt you must conquer in each new turning all the way round of Earth is the same doubt already conquered many times before, and you have faith that this is so if not knowledge, and the longer things remain the same the more you can come to know it, and that's what you forget, the purpose in the apparently purposeless, and

then, one day, when you shut the door on this life the same every day and every night, you will have forged a knowledge still there when all else is gone, that doesn't need keeping hold of.

I had a dream that never seemed to end, it just faded out by gradually encroaching wakefulness. It was a marvellously ridiculous dream that screamed out to be caught, snatched from the air like a dragonfly on the wing, but of course it was quite impossible. How frustrating, but, as I lay there for hours half awake, fading in and out of the thing still going on, I realised all I had to do was start somewhere and allow myself to slide, pick up the plot anywhere, even if it took a million years it would come full circle, even if it took two million. But, and this is what I really realised, if I snipped out any part of it it would automatically heal its edges and join up. It could be expanded and compressed without effort. It was all taking place right now, because time was just the line you'd peg it on, like an antelope skin. That would surely look a ragged piece of terrain, but originally it was all over an antelope and that antelope was skipping and bounding in the grass, a complete thing. Time was just its skin flayed

off from it and stretched out to dry. Look at the little legs dangling down, cut-open socks. That's what you had to do if you wanted its skin off. You had to make these snips, everything had to begin somewhere and end somewhere. But we're after the skipping and jumping right back at now.

We're going to be there forever and never turn over the same clod of earth twice. I am in my own way grazing by the roadside, a cow doing a number two. I'll have the good sense to saunter off if you come too close. I've been in this field all my life. Men have fought over this piece of land. It's been tilled and left tilled and left. Torchlight on the turnips. Locked in here locked in there. Arguments over whether coarse shred or fine shred was better for marmalade. What colour the gate should be painted, choice of black or green. Whether the ladder was still safe to use. The I-don't-knows of everyday life. Ten minutes into waking up in the afternoon and I'm already sighing and saying Oh I don't know I don't know I don't know I don't know. And I dry my hands on the grubby towel, everything tasting dark and empty. But I'll shrug it off once again, a pot o tea'll do it. I don't care if it is a dangerous island,

and he is dead and she is dead and they are dead and he's nearly dead and she'll be dead before long and I'll be dead and then what? Barricaded inside, chairs and tables up against the doors. There was a tree named the wreath tree, they made wreathes from it. And there was a horse chestnut the conkers fell and landed resting in the drain slats the smaller ones fell through but it saved the big ones for boys who wanted them. Was that man hammering for twenty years? Twenty years. You just think, a day or two in, that'll stop soon enough and twenty years later he's still hammering. Just likes hammering I guess. It'll stop when they bury him. I always liked the word 'copse' because it sounded like 'corpse' and I liked the word 'shroud' too I forget why a bit of *shrug* and a bit of *should* oh I remember why it was because of Burke and Hare they always left the shroud because stealing a naked dead body wasn't theft but stealing the shroud was. *Shrivel* that was like it too. I couldn't dig a deep enough hole for some memories for all I pray at night not to have any. The peculiar angled-down light of tassel-fringed lampshades hanging from a single 40 watt bulb suspended from the ceiling, a light for playing cards by the darkness of the outer edges of the room a festering busy thoroughfare of dark house ghosts circling like they must at séances, spectre coffee-housers craning to see the poker game,

except this is Happy Families not long in the world playing not long left, that one perhaps losing just to make this one feel happy. This ruin will have a blue metal plaque announcing the Devil once lived here. Gramp a guard on a train in the war followed for forty miles by a Doodlebug latched onto the thundering steam train put-putting following along behind, fireman manically shovelling coal in the boiler to outdistance it gramp watching on from the guard's van at the rear. So vivid that story almost my own memory or a memory transfused with the blood out of those bulging blue veins of his on the back of his old old hands shakily laying down Mr Bun the Baker. Eventually there was a sharp turn in the track and they lost the damn thing it went off over towards some unlucky town like a bumblebee to another flower. Where do they come from into my cowfield chomping my cowgrass? Our names don't live on very far and if you've no gravestone there's very little chance the wind will blow out your name from the ashes. We're out of life like a flea chewed out of a cat's fur gribble-gribble-gribble-gotthebastard our everlasting forefathers' bones ground in the pestle along with runover birds and hedgehogs. Who cares that you were still good-looking enough into your forties to pick up girls and she kept her beauty to thirty-six or thirty-nine before it peeled off like glitter the glue

won't hold on a child's schooldone Christmas card. You see people in the street shaking their cans for this and that the baloney of good causes to put a bit of distance between us and the bucking bronco of life's rot setting in, sorry to bring it up again I say as she brings me in a mug of tea momentarily away again in the land of the fairies sailing a boyhood boat in the bath the water gone cold now the bubbles cursing at mice the first mouse exploration by sailboat of the huge bubblebath glaciers their little twitching noses leaning perilously over the edge.

You know you are getting closer when all you have done, the important things you have tried to achieve, can all be flushed away. You feel it in your bones, you are getting ready to leave, and it doesn't matter what becomes of what you have amassed, those manuscripts that have been all you have lived for, they were just a chalkface you chipped away at to stop you going mad. If you cannot even look after them yourself, what chance others will happen upon them scattered about a stinking corpse? Bin the lot. We'll do for him what he could never do. It is only the line written right now, like a handrail beside the abyss. The tangibility

of sudden sorrowful tears falling, falling, falling. It is not for others this, it is just a little company, form for what is most hours of the day formless and vague. The bliss that will not come to celebrate an understanding that is not enough. It wrings out more. Always more. A gloomy paperweight of a life. The laughs are hiding today. They've killed their children and are sitting with what they've done. It wouldn't be right to forget these dark corners. The rain still is busy being the rain, it picks up momentarily, gladdened by the appreciation. I should perhaps go out and walk in it, rather than wait for it to stop. A kind of thankfulness.

The eternal presence in which we wear our masks. Ah yes.

Passing shapes. It is not personal at all. Always there whether seen or not.

Waking up free among the conditioned. Familiar dullness hard to find, it used to be the other way. There is no entry point, of course. Do I fear it going? This is an old sort of question that I can't quite put my finger on the meaning of. It used to be the other way, but when that was I can't rightly say. There is no yesterday, there hasn't been for a long time, and a long time has me scratching

my head as well. Oh, I can flip back into convention, I expect, but why would I want to? Thoughts don't even start. That's a new one, that's always been a new one, but still, it does seem like a new one. It has never actually been hard to start thoughts going. These sentences may seem like thoughts but they're dictation. That has always been my ideal anyway. Bottle of words to pour out like water kept cold in the fridge. Memories, memories, belonging to a fictitious entity. Why always the same entity, that's a good question. The memories make him so, the surroundings, they bundle together, of course that's it, he is actually anything, and he is often many selves anyway, the different moods, the ups the downs, the topsy-turviness. It's a ride. Crikey he half knows it most of the time already. Sometimes you can see him trying to take his latest dilemma seriously, oh so seriously. These surroundings have no inherent meaning, it's just a perch.

He feeds the birds, he keeps the cat company, he entertains himself with visions of what the future may bring. He looks around at the familiars, atoms making their forms, dark matter suffusing their atoms, and sees no lack of anything. There is no answer as such, but even if there was, if this was an answer, I have no idea what the question would be. And other people, more to the mind *her*, though far away, is already floating

through him, he is her and she is him, and neither exists any more than I do. Was this created? No, it has never been. It can only be thought of as a miracle. It is never not yet it never is. No-one can alter it.

The phenomenon, in its quest for self-discovery and investigation, builds structures and appears to evolve and progress. Though awakening makes these efforts seem foolish, they are not. But I cannot say *why* they are not, it is just something I feel in my nonexistent bones. Though dreams evaporate rapidly, it has often been thought worthwhile to retain what one can in the moments of their slipping away. And have I not learnt from books things of beauty? How much there is to say and yet not exhaust a single continuous moment of awareness. You hear it all around being spoken of, yet few realise they are speaking of it, the early morning footsteps on the pavement outside speak of it through the closed curtains, the bed that calls me to it speaks of it, I speak of it. I surprise myself re-reading old writings, to see that I spoke of it clearly without being aware that I was doing it. But I must have been aware, aware like a tin can being opened, quickly discarded. Flirtatious fleeting encounters with the audacious nature of existence. They add up to a continuity being exposed, and the fragmentary nature of it a shy beauty. I knew this even then, but I would put it away back in its box not wanting

to make a habit of peering deeply for as a habit surely I'd end up peering deeply at the surface. Such was my fear, or intuition. And who is to say we ever quite finish with digging in the sandpit of the phenomenon. It would be a pity, wouldn't it, to start talking only in terms no-one could understand, impressive, but enigmatic, no light or shade, and a foolish adherence to a desire to always abide in awakening. Linji's nirvana as a dead stump to tie your donkey to. No, some frivolity, some mistakes, not the straitjacket of the unwavering view, let the unwavering view make its own unpredictable appearance, an underground river rushing beneath the streets, occasionally heard, now and again making its way into open view.

Lying about the house, using it as dumping ground for sad faces and loose pearls, the ashes of many hopes were there and the emptiness without a glow. The room became as fixed as a constellation, which is to say not too fixed over the scale of Sundays staring at the ceiling attempting to lift the roof off with the worst part of his chesty crow cough, the nose requiring constant dabbing and so too the posterior. Under the shade of this tree he was prey to the plaiting of ivy up the walls as a shy shield

to the outside world. So often feeling slighted by black beady eyes of trashy thoughts circling round and round, exhausted by the commonplaces of life and the mental dwarfs he had to talk to it so often left him feeling like not talking, which buckled him down into the ground of his being, 'the only thing left', he would tell himself, only here is an escape still possible, and he would leave the jewels behind to walk further and further into the divinatory entrails of the remnants of pain until he'd skinned it alive and still wasn't satisfied he'd even pricked the skin of it. The wind around the tree said you were trash, repeating a rumour blown across the continental landmass originally picked up from the air grinding between her legs frantically pedalling on her bicycle to some final betraying assignation. But it was down to me whether I believed the rumour the spying tufts of breezes in the foreign grass brought to my knife-edge world tonight, looking through badgers and hares, the raging cut-it-all-down world. The convert of skirting the froth is stiff with the old days the good-as-gone days. The grass the colour of lions. You inspect your hands. You've suffered enough of these primeval cries, lurked in enough doorways of your soul. So away with it, and its dark trees.

Long before you pulled up the collar of your big black coat and launched out into the evening, you had

skryed the numerous intimidations of the thought-born mind coming rattling its bones a clown in chains. There was always something too hot to handle in need of quenching in his head, but he did not often cry out like an injured animal as he did this night. Done, it subsided from there, though not fast, and it appeared that every single night had been like this for as long as he remembered. But his preoccupation with penetrating even this never faltered. None-the-wiser, but a little bit closer. And the world seemed a distant memory, friends and lovers just figments hard to hold onto, his awful identity dropped its saving graces down the slats of the drain, and what was awful about it was the thought that God could be so lonely. He simply didn't have the power to keep what he was company, and his greatest hope was that he must be mistaken in this perception, and that was all it was, just another corroder of his sanity. This was a tough life, but maybe it would brighten up any day, his solitariness was just making him tough, that's all.

I want to remember the string I trailed through the day while I was up every night for the great part of the night if not all of the night when the rhythm was in order in my soul the rhythm which was something that may

have been all there was between me and annoyance and suicidal feelings and loss and loneliness, that rhythm that absorbed me for its coming upon the whole like an explorer a mammoth in the ice that nocturnal rhythm of effective able human being wanting nothing more than tea and things to eat as the urge came occupying itself with the finest things none of them memorable beyond that it was a sense of being able to do this thing at last I didn't want to be a student of it I wanted to be a master of it which is to say I wanted what I *was* out of the way out of the way of my own accident of existence so as to find I was someone definite and put aside the hazy speculations once and for all and I wanted this so deeply it brought me a great gaping hole to sit in so I sat in that trying to decide whether it increased my chances of success or limited them and being unable to decide. But I kept to its rhythm anyhow and was keeping to it for years it did not stop coming those nights sometimes a comfort sometimes a dissatisfaction but I could not stop the keeping on coming and couldn't wait either for the time when I would be too alive to notice the powerful destructive forces I time and time again steeped myself in night after night that became and this is putting it accurately entirely myself and I the human who had done it not might have done it done it. And that's how I spent the years as no one else had ever done that I had

heard of, harvesting my sad miseries in precisely my own way like jellyfish miracles I released into the night sky allowing each to be precisely what it wanted to be without judgment hanging off its skirt from me, such that as they floated away these thoughtforms become beings glowing phosphorescent streaming out of me into the night sky I sometimes thought there is more of beauty in them than misery, though they were born of my torment. Who I was, in turn, sometimes tapped his feet in tune with the rhythm dancing out a little coda of the soul from within for I had *forced* myself to be myself without ever knowing whether that was a worthy sort of man or even an achievement for what I sought from it was an entirety that rarely came into view but when it did showed me I was indeed that kind of man living in this human body that had ceased to live according to rules chosen for him by others and willingly declined at the same time as choosing everything actively lived, but you see such living leaves few actual memories unless the time I trapped contradictions in a room to fight among themselves can be called a memory of anything I did, the memories worth speaking of were often of things enjoyed in company with those I loved for all it seemed I chose or was destined not to have as many of those moments as I might have wished, yet there was always a sense that things would change, no matter

how long things had remained the same, that my power would be put to more use than had thus far been found. Oh and couldn't this man this human I temporarily identified myself with being find the power within him to discard huge stretches of time foregoing any need to have the minutes hours days weeks months years amount to a sodding thing. He found some amusement in that, that to him *was* an achievement, a becoming vast in his own try-out wishes of the soul. Quite early on, before he was the one I wished to be, I became his model for a better idea entirely. I take little credit for his achievement, for I too was just an abandoned squirt into the universe left to fend for myself, but perhaps closer to what he desired as an avatar than I could see myself as being, so he found a way of talking to me in his head, sometimes aloud, mumbled in the early dawn in the despair that had brought him outside to find the first birds, mumbling his questions to me aloud but quietly just in case any others were up and listening. And I answered in his head as usual, for I never slept, or I don't think I slept, or it is irrelevant whether I slept or not since I believe I was always there when he was awake. Some would call me his Holy Guardian Angel, but this is altogether too farcical to keep a straight face with, since there was nothing Holy about me, rather the other way around, but the less said about that the

better. I served, to draw him closer, I took him under my wing shall we say. I was his dark power and glory as much as his comforter and friend, although he could not always reach me and it pained me as I watched his attempt to stab himself in his chest with the kitchen knife, strangely swerving away by my power, a little flick with an invisible finger on the tip of the knife if you wish to visualise it. It stopped him in his tracks and he asked, out loud: 'Was that you?' And I answered, Yes it was. If the body has health one may as well continue with it, find out what you are capable of, do not tire so quickly, it will not always be Hell. You may like the power you will eventually wield and be glad to live as I live, in absolute dominion over all.

I didn't want to work on the going on of life. But it was something I couldn't get away from, just yet. It seemed a fine form of being trapped, in that if I did up and leave I would only pop out somewhere else as someone else, but still plainly the me-ness of me behind the lot of it. I had heard that that was good, but I couldn't see it, though I left open a sliver of expectation that I might, and from time to time I did, or so I recall. But we are so many ragged states of mind in a day and a night that

is it worth too closely identifying with any of them? I felt sure that the solution, if solution there be, lay in that direction. This hopeless foolish play had become an annoyance to me, by turn a heaven and a hell, and more a hell than a heaven. I half kept doing things wherein I had found my feet before, but even there meaning was draining away to be replaced with the bright and breezy thought that no, it did not even need to have any meaning. I even felt I was being helped, in the way a sharp pointed stick continually prodding you apparently helps and you will be grateful for it later on. I was tired of the whole rigmarole of living, designed for *what* exactly? I did only what was destined for me to do by hand or hands unseen, the only power I had apparently to complain about it, but I was not even sure whether that was my doing, since it probably wanted to complain about itself through me. That I could go along with and find myself taking sides, perhaps that *was* a privilege. To be the voice that said: *End it!* And mean everything, not just this measly talking sack. Well I couldn't help but feel the wrong end of the stick must have been grasped at some point, but surely there was more he could send my way than traipsing from room to room humming with frustration and anger. How could I be expected to carve a song or a symphony out of this imbecilic onerous being stuck in time, you could see he was well

on his way to a predestined suicide, what else could he amount to? His greatest achievement was straining a bit of strength out of his hands-tied existence as one squeezes a teabag to colour the water a little stronger. It is hard to say just how long he went on with this constant scream in his head. Perhaps indeed it would be his body-mind complex that gunned down others predestined to be gunned down in an apparent random act of violence in the street. How can one know, unless the intolerableness of that constant scream one lives with is anything to go by. He didn't quite see the *point* of that as a story arc, the literature of his life offended him with its dullness, could he not have had something more exciting to narrate. No, he was stuck with what he was given, and it is no use pretending the same doesn't apply to everyone. Unloved, he carried on with his few bits and pieces. His emotional pain he no longer wanted to quench in joy, he wanted to tear it out of himself its deep bloody roots dangling from the still pumping heart. The monotony had completely enslaved him and he saw no end in sight. He remembered times when he was not so troubled, times before an infidelity threw him into a ditch like some night-time country lane crash victim swept up from his reasonably pleasant evening constitutional by a speeding sportscar. Fucking cunts! But there's not much power to the utterance croaked out

with frogs, mud and blood seeping into your trousers in the dark that'll be with you till morning, when, pray to god, you'll be dead. God's fucking finger has been up her asshole since the dawn of time, so you got your turn, be grateful! It's a point of view.

One adjusts to probable realities, it doesn't matter how enormous, such as, 'I am probably dead now', or, 'I am permitted excellent sex', but one never adjusts to theories or systems, things one has just been told. With those, we adjust our impressions slightly, and sometimes walk with a deliberate gait, like a pall-bearer, but there is always something stiff and dead. Deliberate acts often fail, I find, I have a refusal to adjust, it feels false, may as well be a man in a casket if I am reduced to the mechanistic ticking off of desires all and sundry. What glory in allowing time to pass unexploited, simply caving in hardly noticed to spontaneous urges. The truth is surely that we each keep a sack of our mistakes to belittle our sharp minds in trance-like chases, we empty the sack out with a certain aloofness given our now substantial amount of experience, that idiot I was twenty-five years ago, the winter hats that were never quite me, the sexual encounters passed up through

meaningless inhibition. It is like the dark side of one's life, the passive dark I mean not the active, not the embraced darkness, the fully-fledged darkness, no, the parts slithered away with to decorate a serpent's nest, fluff surreptitiously stolen to incubate evil eggs while I snored away.

The deeply inaccurate nature of who I thought I was, standing there pissing in some blacklight club toilet at two in the morning the ecstasy swirling a deep clinical yellow around the bowl always smelling of cornflakes. But, without a doubt, they are reminders one did live a little. Stretching arms round the big tree out in the street just touching fingertips with that beautiful girl on the other side, the wild invitation to live. Whole baskets of time an inverted snob to that sort of living, simply to stave off a hatred that it was only for moments. But the tea was always hot and the great open night skies attempted an invitation, that occasionally was accepted as an education for my loneliness, an assurance I was not wasting my time for all it seemed like it. I think I am coming back to an appreciation of the enormity of life, having spent years shrinking it into a matchbox. We are here, are we not, to have certain realisations, which, I think, requires a contrast of experience. The guru within is myself gone on before me. He comes out stretching out his shy little snail horns into the

years of phoniness and lets slip the actual nature of the time, an enemy of public forgetfulness, a warrior of poorly ventilated cells, endowed to teach through the bars of a cage. If you let him, he will take the controls of the sleeping lump and show you how to place a warm hand around the back of her neck and draw her close even while she is still yearning that this night not pass without a kiss. In every room, one has favourite minutes strung like a necklace of pearls through the years, and weren't most of them with a lover? But it is better if that necklace is busted open and the pearls scattered, before swine if necessary, simply so we may slowly remember the hours of sorrow in the same room, there as if solely something to conquer to make oneself a stronger lad a wiser man. Women who set fire to my heart then doused and stabbed it, one looks back with fondness in idle moments, I wonder what she is doing now? Such a pretty rose, cannot mind the thorns.

I sometimes think I will surprise myself at the end of it all, and see that I have lived a life full of wonder and beautifully innocent expectation, and it won't matter that the deepest moments were mirages in the arid desert, as is indeed the desert. If it was not for her, and her, and her, and the chalk dust, desks, and old books, to whom would I have been able to say anything? What meaning would the oath I took looking through the

window upon the sadness of the world, that I would save them all before ever I thought to disappear for good, have? The tears must have been for something, the grace that caused me to turn my wet face away from human eyes lest they misunderstand I was not sorrowful, I had come home. This dream, it feeds upon our wishes like a slobbering dog on a big fat juicy bone. Once I bought two pound of apples in the market. When I got home and started placing them in a bowl I saw one of the apples had the name Lisa written large on it in black marker-pen. For months I waited for Lisa, who never showed, but Emma did. Having a name is something you can bite into. Vanessa slipped by me in the water, dragged on by the current, but Louise was paddling close. Sometimes you want them simply by the way they walk.

My life, I came to sense quite accurately, may not even be desirable. That it should probably be ended early, except, there was something not seen, the entity behind it, and seeing that should be made the goal, the only goal, and if it did not come to pass, well what were a few more decades of vain endeavour to stack on top of those already elapsed. All the wise concurred, it

was staring me in the face in the here and now, the button to press off the world, I could already see it was nothing but a bunch of thoughts masquerading as a mind and the world but a projection of that. But I did not see what was apparently staring me in the face, for the unhappiness of it all clung to me, this I that was a ghost, and I could not see beyond the ephemeral last-known whereabouts of myself. All I could make of what I had discovered was a thin gruel, and though I vaguely recollected laughing out loud in the middle of the night only seconds away from many thoughts of suicide, genuinely in the understanding of something, I couldn't remember what nor did I think memory fresh enough to evoke what was apparently staring me in the face, as indeed it must have been when I laughed so long and out loud while nibbling cheese sat at the kitchen table with tears in my eyes, a little portion of grace to keep me going but could only betray me the moment I desired to be as happy as that all the time, for as much as I was sure it was possible. I must clank my chains some more before becoming an excellent adult fully initiated into my purpose. One resented the play of it, the cat and mouse game, the sheer number of years ever mounting up that seemed nothing more than pure waste. Surely one day it could have no other outcome than a spontaneous knife rammed in the throat. Sometimes

I felt attended by angelic madhouse heavies in their white jackets restraining me from such spontaneities. The loneliness was a churning ocean the sweet adorable company a bucket or two, and I wondered endlessly why this was so, why it was that it appeared to have to be this way, as if it was somehow *necessary* in order that I be empowered to find more important things, perpetually withheld, making me feel wretched, utterly inept, one for whom life could never be as simple as it was for others. Well, maybe yet it would be discovered, the falseness of all I thought, this creature in pain would be redeemed, I would get so close to the edge of what I could withstand I would be close enough for the true self to pull me in, dissolving forever this dying scream of living. And, when looking back in my blossomed and beautiful years, perhaps I would be glad to have got down these sheathes of misery, preserved them like frightened monkeys in formalin, curios for the sad to take heart, that there was one for whom it was not easy. And though he threw these words away as unwanted ballast, he believed in them at the time. So sad he was to see her go, he swore never to write of her again, make this the last and final word of her. And there, I think, I will end it, this torture, and, finally, let go of what keeps me chained to this world like a dog, having seen all of time and space, and collapsed it, irrevocably, to the full

point ending a story realer than many, that some other lizard may live. Will this love have been enough, when all is said and done? Did I walk well, run swiftly, did I do what was expected of me, was I eager enough. Or was I unloved, and dead, recounting my wishes in hell.

Away with sorrow, crack it in its own mirror.

He's written it down. He's torn it up. He's dragged it from the fire, the *real* story of who he is. He glances around the room looking for a vase to put his flower in before it wilts. Open your mouths you little birds and I shall funnel in meaningfulness, the boredom and plague of everyday life will explode into a million petals, and that loneliness will be cut from the womb of motherdead ideas and given wings to fly to others of its kind, to be anything it wants to be, no memory of its awful past. And something of this nature was bestirring itself writing in the fire and the light that filled the days before the sun danced naked around the world and he realised he was still holding his breath from long ago.

I turned out to be a good influence when I was away in my long silence, and the advantage of it was that I learnt to smile again, wore out the schedule of my hangdog expression rushing upon me within seconds of waking. Sometimes you just need to go away and learn what you can only learn on your own, and to hell with everyone else. Be in the place imposed upon me to be, until I discovered there was not one ounce of anything inside of me that had any right to complain. There's always material to work with, the most commonplace being the fussiness of time, a week longer than a day, a month longer than a week, until the final dregs of our current troubles are squeezed out, save for the inevitable pangs of memory inviting swift resavouring of over-and-done-with affairs, as fresh as yesterday or the day before, when the blood ran cold and the tears wouldn't stop. And you're invited to think, what does it mean that it meant so much, that means so little now? But it's just worms dying as their dung dries out. I remember a young redhead in a dream sitting at a Parisian street-café table, she holds as much longing up to me in a mirror as any number of girls lived with loved and let loose, we never even spoke, and even if we had have spoke it would have been a conversation brought to an abrupt halt by the noise of the lawnmower that woke me. So what of these fading halls this remembered loud laughter

of long-gone numbered days. Did I live in a dream or did a dream live in me? When did I go away? When did the accumulated work of the moon catch hold of my tides. I remember myself always with books. Always books, not always women but always books. But even the books are crumbling to dust now, and I long more for women. Suddenly I saw her skeleton, lying there, two silicone bags resting on top of her ribcage. That was a woman I loved, that one. I pop the bags with a blade and watch them seep. Are we different fools now? What kind of fellow was I? It all seems so long ago. Any wishing left in me is loose change best given to beggars.