Rhythm, Rhymes, and Pleasure:
Mesostics on Ciaran Carson’s *The Star Factory*

By

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my father who
on the throne
head's level
with
each
other
brief looks of
dialogue
exchanged
extends
beyond
the cranked dimensions of
memory

and narrative

Him his
cigarrette
becomes a
lipslick blip
time-lapse squiggles
the 3-d blackboard
of possibility
illustrate
cursive loops
The writing fades
too-slow
brains
predetermined yet always new
each Telling
empHasis

Each time
whiSpering
aT some appropriate
signAls
an impoRtant episode

From
pomAnder bulbs
desCribed by
iTs ubiquity
Of plumbing
labyRinthine sewers
in stYgian gloom

porTals
enormous tHick cast-iron
discs provEd
impoSSible
To lift
corporAtion would
mateRialize
disturbed circumFerence

And we
desCending into
the world wiThheld
frOm us
we had pRemonitions
squinting through the eYe-knot
of a creosote-pine

counterweights and
cogged
cogged

cogged
wheelS

porTeR

emAnates

where blurred men
cubic-footed hooves
ranging out
each
other
mounting silently
writing on the air

the andrew carnegie library

That library

in some households

like loo and water-closet
i’d see
water wobbling

just after dawn
tinkle of the milk-cart

night-shift disembodied

float on board a tram

exercised minimal

stops and starts within

iron

parallel of time

early
drawing out their awnings
that morning’s market
has occurred to me
in these dreams
my parents
before I was born
but the dream mechanism always
subvert this outcome
back where I started
listening to my father

as I write
three mahogany-stained pine
shelves on its back wall
once resided
british ferns and their allies
roving to success
sport for
young men
lord baden-powell
the life of the fly
with sTanley on the congo

the romance of fisH
lifE
i Said oddly diddle i
hunTing
wAsps
foR a variety of reasons
Foxed
pAper
a lewis Carroll figure
recenTly in the pages of
the cOmplete poetical
woRks of
new York

visiTing card
withH a coat-of-arms
a remarkablE
reSemblance to that of
belfasT
two rampAnt
sea-hoRses
I sniFF again
smells thAt appertain to
the waiting-room mantlepieCe
gongs of sT peter’s
waft acROss the
inteRvening time
unbearably tall mill chimneYs
Teetered

churning out
smoke like
fleets of armed
destroyers
a framed
reproduction for
the Five-funnelled
Russian destroyer
Commonly known as
the packet of
Woodbines
it reminds me
these days

sometimes he comes down
a book under his arm
often it
is
The
Belfast street directory of 1948

****
ZeTland street pondering

the alphabet which
a gem engraved
used as a charm
2nd century
Egyptian gnostic basilades
express 365 by addition
found in a 2nd-century poem
as a child
till they’re nearly indecipherable
to write between
the Ruled lines
in the preceding entry

Waterproof street

think of
myself
as a bookworm
rumination through
one thousand
five hundred and ninety-six pages
following my
non-linear dictates
I make chambered spirals
browsing letters
blip of near-transparent yellow
scuttles from the fold
distressed by my metaphorical bookworm
expeditions into
green carpet tape that
is beginning to come apart
nevertheless it remains an impressive
piece of book-production
And
bearing embossed advertisements
a sheaf of old
postcards
form some mysterious alliance
first
its front
an elaborate colour
darkens our sky

but every
cloud has a
silver lining
brighten the days
as they
pass
forbid our repining
Fine-nibbed
delicate hand
life on the ocean wave
would you like that
mount
pottinger
did you have time
is it any better than belfast

ended to send to you write and ask him
not a very good one somewhat flummoxed as to how the raby street address

Can only surmise neither stamp date nor address would suggest serving the great war luxographie a noyer paris no. 55

no letter today

barron and mcmanus of ballyshannon were both wounded it's thinking of you what make it worse this few lines can't think what else to write same thing over again including sunday think is it going to last forever for your sake
Two messages

Had

been predestined to meet
it reminds us of the
contents of a house
the domiciled relationship

if furniture could speak
loses the reflection
implies a narrative
we ascribe their provenances
a new chapter
a newcomer to the auctions

the skewed incremental scale of bidding
the accuracy with which

a certain lot would come up

Hobby mania

number variety and set
in this case
numbers are inherently variable
say

2 waterville street
traffic cones
LAgondas
penny-farthing bicycles
farthings
Golf-balls
marbles
dinky toys
hoTel-room sewing kits
phonographs
movie stills
swords
pistols
All these and
many more things
will find that many subtexts exist
within the vast realm
a thematic collection
a stamp menagerie
which could include
the tapir of the state of borneo
the daguerreotype of brothers water and place fell
the glazed chessboard set
the lloyd loom chair
the pair of
cobra-shaped brass candlesticks
might be
the face of a clock
a third skewed prop
my rough scrawled holograph draft
my sharp FW-560 fontwriter
he could afford to burn

****
vastly complicated interactive model
shifting of emphasis
and detail
its parallels are
bent by interior temperatures
engine nacelles become gun pods
a different slant everything
felt
clarified and heightened
the city’s microscopic bits
transfixed by
how I might assemble them
for there is no
more complicated technology

I trembled
filed them to the right proportions
custom-made from melted down
masters of trompe-l’oeil
commercial colour charts
tree frog green khaki
storm salamander blue
some distressed their fighter
planes
a heated surface in order to
obtain flats
would I look
wrong in the air
an earthbound plane of reality
and yeT

to better inHabit the culmination of a drama
thEre is a narrative behind it
the cannibal techniqueS of model-makers
derived from the beauforT torpedo bomber
mAded use of
beaufoRt parts
from Four to two
wAs powered by
herCules radial engines
naTurally changes were made
a lOckheed designed unit
poweRed by merlin engines
so you imagine mr humphreYs

whisTling as he recreates

This particular aircraft
served with
no 22 Sqn
in sanga sanga airsTrip in the philippines
tremulous blAbby lips emitting the
cacaphony of messeRschmits and hurricanes
hold opposing Forces
in their hAnds
in hospital Corridors
in a parallel realiTy
try to make cOntact
thRough us with
crazeS of religious mimesis tYpically
witNessed in damp patches
a turin shroud christ
nEver
strange Since i surmised a
northern response to
the moving statue
syndrome
daFfodil-yellow anoraks of german tourists
Apparently as you passed
her hand beckon or she would nod
These statues were dumb
the demise of the family rosary
a warning of impending armageddon
opaque sparNy embrYonic

sTages of
one thing nor the
other
Skewed
bracket
of an
eyebrow here
half an
ear there
the power of iCons
the almost russian orthodoxy
tobacco
candle-flames were wavered by dim bronze gongs
the clunk of a copper penny
dropped through the slot of a money box
candle auctions of the sixteenth century

successful the disappointed punter
the custodian of an exorbitant set of objects
your wavering orison dwindles
more efficient
are the tibetan prayer windmills
their long wing-cases
trailing behind them
crawling up the neo-gothic
blackened spires of st peter’s
lurking in alleyways like winos

****
assumption of the blessed virgin mary

dogma of the Church

until then

the blessed virgin

shorthly afterwards

it was assumed

assuming to take to
this belief

a probable opinion

which
doctrine is universally held

no

direct reference

because they are used to slaYing

without doubt

in irish august is lughnasa

celtic god of light and genius

equated by julius caesar with mercury

the harvest festival held on

1st of August

at any rate

the bonefire

in the leftover patch of land

back of mooreland

for its constituent elements

we’d scout building-sites for planks

we’d knock on doors

do you remember the year
Tied up
perhaps
because the guy
three years younger than me
thus belonged
at that age
three years is a generation
learning difficulties
scapegoat status
eat still-warm Cow’s dung
made a profit
and the herbivorous aroma of Cow’s dung
similarly horses droppings
a wholesome smell like processed hay

bet a thrupenny bit that I wouldn’t eat
a matchboxful of live earthworms boys
carried such
accessories
in their pockets
at any rate i
mouthed their writhing vermicelli
six half penny chews for instance
one bar of cowan’s
implacable highland toffee
which lasted
some seconds
kalahari bushman
paradigm of the duodecimal system
Tempted to buy about £4 worth to see if I could still manage the house-of-cards Trembling-fingered balancing teetered Fell and clattered in bits across the scratched mahogany veneer of the table broken crayons pencil-stubs and curtain rings one such involuntary cache in the fifties we threw out our sofa and half-dismantled it carbonised into the scorched brick-like earth frosted with the smashed glass of milk-bottle petrol-bombs august has occurred to me about four hours ago I was in waterstones their shop in royal avenue
browsing through the
latter volume
of a sudden my eye
is caught by
a photograph of castle place in august 1952
there are a lot of pedestrians
the figure in the middle right foreground
unlike all the other pedestrians
is turned towards the camera
i strongly suspect
the bag slung on
his right shoulder
too good to be true but yes

his dapper little feet
his hands
held rather stiffly
his general demeanor convinces me
the circumstances too are right
the art deco clock above samuel’s the
jewellers shows five past twelve
a fresh batch of correspondence
for some years my father’s beat
or walk as it was called
suggest
i phone my brother pat
who lives not far off
in cushendun some forty miles away
with my sister caitlín

he should be photographed
he always loved trams
his happiest early memories are of
being taken on a
tram by his father
that afternoon
my father’s father was dead
on the corner of clonard
street and the falls
waiting for a trolleybus but lo and behold
an old tram comes down the road instead
and he is filled with joy

the tram will not stop
wondering what
this dream might mean
some acquaintance with psychology
there is a connection between
your father and the trams
the tram represents your father
climb wolfhill
gaze down like guardian angels
climbed on board
sat down
closed his eyes
they were filled with tears

* * * *
the general post office
pHysicists
lEd me to buy the benjamin volume
becauSe i’d
serendipiTously opened it at
this passAge
as i bRowsed the book
liFe
Always bears a hint of corruption
of Course such
acTs of
décOupage would be anathema to
the tyRo collector
the power of magnifYing glasses

in my early Teens
Having progressed thus far I bought
a spring back loose-lEaf album
with leaveS of heavy paper
cream-Tinted groove-fluted
Also an
osmiRoid fountain-pen with interchangeable nibs
deFunct profiles
inks of pAle rose
carmine lilaC
slaTe bistre cobalt
and vermiliOn
the minoR indian state alone
now that theY are obtainable at reasonable prices
philatelic study
of the british commonwealth
one could easily devote a lifetime’s study to early cancellations of empire
infallibly extended if what benjamin calls
the sometimes indecipherable demography
i collected a few nominal examples of the provisionals
completion of shannon hydro

electricity scheme 1930
international eucharistic congress
golden jubilee of the gaelic athletic association
which shows an art nouveau female
her left hand on a harp
first big meeting
apart from a few new colours orange and blue
over-printed with 1941 i gcuimhne aiséirigh 1916
did not appear
armed with a bayoneted rifle
lillipuTian gpo

a deatH
notice
lookS to be in
prisTine condition and not
the bombed shell it becamE

the fouR main varieties of gunman
taken in leFt profile

hung on the kitchen wAll

all Conferring in
the ancienT power of
proFile

their vast caesaRean dominions

sackville street and lower abbeY street

a holocausT in which it seemed

a catHolic priest
in bas-reliEf

a renowned gaelic Scholar
died in the pulpiT

three dAys
besoRe the issue of the first saorstát stamps
the soldiers Filed slowly

pAst me

Cradling their guns like babies

* * * *
millTown cemetery
british special forces sHot
dEad an ira team
three bodieS were
broughT to belfast
michAel stone
fiRed shots
according to Folklore
when chAllenged
gained entry to the heavily sTeward ed cemetery by uttering
tiOcfaidh
áR lá
apocrYphal or
noT the phrase is riddled with
an EnglisH
subtExt
in iriSh one
cannoT own a day
ownership being a hAzy concept
noR can a day have active volition
lillibulero bullenala in Full is a corruption of
an lile bA léir é ba linn an lá
the theme tune of the old bbC world service
posTed at the graves
in milltOwn cemetery an apologist
oR a
psYchiatrist
mighT interpret stone’s act as the voice heard by the french royalist
the archangel’s role
against the rebel forces of lucifer
occurred to stone
word bubble Ambiguities
Rub up against each other
off the
broAd thoroughfare of the falls
a derelict mill that had once been powered by
streams that emanated from black mountain
flowing beyond
carved out by artifice and weathering
the remedy for this injury

hospital
Humour
inordinately boring
steadily progressive myopia
mishandled ricochet

As the headlights
the blank stone eyes of arangels
you feel
the dead are signalling to you
from a rocky orifice on
black mountain and
down the mountain Ioaney
both river-bed and road
the farset river that ran below the yard
of s’T gall’s
sChool in waterville st
farsEt the name of belfast
béal feirste aguS áítainmneacha laistigh
noTes that the
educAted accent on
the fiRst syllable bélfast
powerful inFluence of the bbc
the working clAss
pronounCe it
belfásT
as dO most country people
those few who suRvive
weighted on the last sYllable

whaT the name means
the moutH of the pool
might recEive some corroboration
from local factS
buT as it is
clAims that belfast is
deRived
bel in celtic means Ford
bel or ford of the fArset
sCholars since
the Times of
jOyce
misundeRstood
the battle of the boYne
the mysterious cruiitHin

a pEople
cloSely
connecTed with the picts
the dAte of 666 ad
one of the maRks of the beast
lucht na Feirste
the Axle people
power sourCe
for a sTring of mills
in which bOth denominations
weRe
emploYed

* * * *

belfast an illusTrated history
Traditionally focused around the hearth
for the third time that week
at family rosary

Time

these circumstances would be

overturned

the flimsy sheet itself

from sans souci park

a tea-cosy

cottage

its threshold

into the imaginary room

beyond


the slow metronome of a pendulum clock

the light of a

vermeer interior

the same calm

brightness

falls

across the crinkles of a wall map

anderson's flying trunk

made remarkable expeditions

for such an

ostensibly

floor-bound item

the sherbet fountains

miss boyd
the Floor furthest from the fire

a shon gan a bheith ann acht a Chló

d’aithneochta gur Tarbh a b’eadh é
though it was only an embryo you could see it was a bull calf

cuirReadh na cló chun póige
drYads murmurs from within

the Trees

and motHs flit through dappled moonshinE trembled by a zephyr

the occaSional swash of a car

for an insTant

in a migrAine flicker you imagine yourself

the steeRing wheel absorbing the luminous blips

****
the Titanic
for months and months in that
monstrous iron enclosure there
was nothing that had the faintest likeness to a ship
the iron scaffolding for the naives of half-a-dozen cathedrals
the skeleton within the scaffolding
at the sight of which men held their breaths
bosses and bearings of propellers the size of windmills
men were laying
on concrete beds
sliding ways of pitch pine to support
the monster
when she was moved
the pavement surface
more than two tons
spread upon the ways
fixed
against the bulk of the ship
when the moment came the waters
thrust her finally from the earth
built by Messrs. Harland & Wolff
the twin vessels marked such an increase in size
but the voyage
was never completed

two Hours and a half later
her crew were drowned
and 705 rescued

a floating palace sailed from southampton in 1898
Rich passengers savoured her luxury

the books title was Futility
fourteen years later a real luxury liner
laden with rich passengers
There were not enough lifeboats
Robertson’s novel

a tramp steamer canada-bound from Tyneside

midnight
the time the titanic had Hit the iceberg
the Sea had been calm
these thoughts took shape and swelled into omens
his lonely watch his tired bloodshot eyes
the coincidence was terrifying
it was the day he had been born
the ship churned
to a halt
deadly icebergs crowded
in around the tramp steamer
to display their wonder
light so much more intense
this beautiful ship
in dire distress

Telling and warning of
the calamity happening
in the world beneath
a fellow passenger

the narrow approach
opportunity was to be
found

the background too was different

****
the Star factory
parps of car horns
two or three occasions
i found myself re-entering
the turnstiles of the
falls road baths
with my hired bathing trunks
their freight of meaning
inhabiting a
sentence
without digesting it
diverse personal
narratives
howled unaccountably

at the sound
how a brobdingnagian
space vehicle
its argus multitudes of portholes
in lifeboat mode
like a dandelion
propaganda drop
from early speculative fiction
cinema and
obscure esperanto novels
with fellow esperantists in the
soviet union
and springfield massachusetts
some great cataclysm
in the forested interior

Hoary workers
lodes and nodes of rare commodity
gangs of
meTronomic hod carriers moved
on regiments of scAffolding and
ladderRs
as if reconstructing
echo-chAmbered conversations
knoCKed over
accidenTally
thOse who sought
the starry Rock
an aztec crYstal skull

with dazzling effecT we saw
tattered wraiths of cloud
recumbEnt
idolS gazed at us
following with difficulTy
the time-worn sketch-map we would
fall thRough trap doors
conFirmed
a chApter of the serial
your man manaCled and shackled
the beaTen track
where gOsPEl
tRuth met
mYth
st paTrick has a dream
whose iconic details migHt
in diffErent
Shifts of emphasis
or conText
elevAte and quicken
the naRrative
a sod of turF becomes
a pArable
the saCred
hearT reminds
One of the power
smile or fRown
the sYnthetic horn

a duffel-coat Toggle a
broocH with a broken catch
each could tEll its tale
a narrative abySs
oTher alcoves other niches
each a cornucopia of pAst accociations
the stoRyteller leaves
ornamental Flourishes
mitigAted by the grain
of his voiCe
the liTeral
rOom
that bRown glazed mixing-bowl for instance

* * * *
the fronTier sentinel

times were Hard

would havE liked nothing

many prayers to thiS

inTension

reAd the paper

for Rent in mullaghbawn

reading the Frontier sentinel

listen to this kAthleen

he stood outside mCqueen’s

are you inTerested

it’s a blOody great hole

satisfaction guaRanteed

and maYbe more

worth Twenty pound

fair enougH

it’s a dEal

he handS mcqueen a tenner

Then he began to think

this hole’s in mullAghbawn

get heR from one place to another

as near Fifty foot deep

as mAkes no odds

in this very offiCe

damn the hole have i seen yeT

what kind of service do yOu call that

the manager called over the wee Red-haired man

* * * *
heard it many times as a child
compendium of anecdote and memoir
Seo síud agus síud eile
This that and the other
translation seems implicit
from one place to another
the sultana loaf
current soda bread
the audience evolves into
different
odes and knots of
atmospherics crack about the room as
big freckle-fisted young men balance

cups of tea
on their thighs
stuffing their faces
paper plates
with the calibrated edges
for future
reference
tea to fortify them
on a reduced scale
the kitchen of the
kitchen house
performed a similar function
the people paying
respects
rosary fashion
the populace filed in and out
an omnibus where a dozen
might be accommodated
laid out on a double bed
upstairs
when the coffin
came
coffin
might get stuck in
an indecorous angle
bookies’ runners
mysterious
gift of the gab
from behind
mid-field in about
two-point-something seconds
to collect the return pass
he waltzed
Round two
defenders
burying the ball in the top right
the seated shirt-sleeved crowd behind the goal
the beautiful move
in slow-motion on a
bar table

****
the great northern railway
the grasp of the mechanical grab you had
paid a penny to operate
Smaller slot machines
like miniature monocular
trafic-lights
dispensed multicoloured gobstoppers
Flipping open its
engraved lid
passing clouds tobacco
queuing at the ticket
booth
I am impressed by this routine
jersey snagging straggly barbed wire fence
jump a five-foot-wide
ditch to enter
the other realm
slippery
stepping-stones across
the blackstaff into
the margins of enemy territory
marshy steppes where refuse
heaps
stood out amongst the bracken and
heather
I always longed to explore
somewhere
territory held by the mickeys
the staunch Protestant quarter

his traditional Thursday night visit

I hadn’t heard before

So as he could

chat

the hatchet field seemed to

attract stories

the hatchet Field remains

imagining myself standing within it

pencil stub and

police notebook

take a detour into musgrave park

but to a boy

an exotic ecosystem

shafts of light into

the cloudy weedy underwater thoroughfareS and

grotoes

the whole everglades

shimmering and buzzing

consulting the Free

fortwilliam pharmacy

illustrated by archival photographs

appropriate since

the balmoral show

turns out to yield nothing
big sash windows overlook

donegall square
dust-motes
drift down through prisms of light
manifested by scholars and fanatics

Focus
badly blurred

pastiche facade
the ghostly absence of people
the winding stair within it
swayed by moving clouds

belfast college of technology
by samuel stevenson

five storeys in portland stone
rusticated columns set on a frontispiece

ibbsian columns
belfast coat of arms
glass-fronted cupboards
display
old packs of cards and matchboxes

three youths

further down the limestown road
part of an ongoing

huddles of opposing loyalties
beaten up split lip
inaudible smooch
December
royal belfast hospital for sick children
both communities here

neat
Rows of iron cots
Fit and not sick
allowed to wander
unspecified illness

is truck up a friendship
our travels around
the many corridors

****
a plot of undeveloped land
between blackthorn hedges
where we built
tree-parlours
ensconced in Them invisible
remain untold and
so intricate as to be untellable
Frogs mice and birds
their clean white skeletons
microscopic reefs deeps and sandbars
its current
round an imposing stone
flood-born minor mississippi rafts
bomb them with clay pellets

our new estate
owenvarragh
occupied
rows of
isolated nissen huts each
was a hospital
ward
Flickering with embryonic fish
rank columns of umbellifers
ceilinged by over-arching trees
This was a secret place
I would sit alone for
hours
dizzy
a repasT of campfire carbonised potatoes
it almost Hurts to look
into the hugE blue
levelS
a jeT scored a silent white line
a blue small-petalled flower grew abundAntly in the
neaRby seven sisters meadow
doffers
weAvers winders tenters
sCared me as
They’d march out
the rOad
the desultory tRaffic of the time

***
radio ulster
the receiving mechanism
a wireless referring to
marconi transmission
beamed out from
radio beacons
an ambient wallpaper pattern
snuффing them out with
a miniscule bishop’s hat
behind the closed doors of confessionals
the priest
through
a wire grille
glebe refuge and asylum
irish language desolate island discs
ba ghnath liom
mÉ fein a chur i bhfolach innti
its enormous gloomy smell of canvas
twine and
faded correspondences
a book-lined room
a flint for striking a light
mixed beef and mutton fat
latcheed
but not chained
columcille noiselessly open the door
he struck a light
all praying as they worked
Ten minutes then rushing out sideways in the melted grease and spluttered out scraped it off the floor returning from the Fold saw the gleam copy it

work secretly at night though the shepherd cry out and raise the alarm columcille has betrayed me

copied against my wish therefore the copy is mine it seemed that everyone in that great hall agreed straight and fierce amid learned men columcille cried monuments of our faith men and women are crying out for learning clvdesdales
infanTry
irish Hagiogaphry
clEar
ciaran’S hands
silenT as a bell
do not speAk to anyone
until the bell Rings
he beFriends
boArs foxes and badgers
preaChes to them people
sTay to listen
ciaran stOod
the tRees were touched with gold
wonder whY
documenTs
and justifies the crooked patH that lead him
inside escaping into language
renegotiateS this memory
to make a sTory of his life
disparAte
tRains of thought
in forties american Films
clAmbering aboard
parallel on the traCk
the Train would cut
the biggest lOgistical problem was
disposal of diRt
derelict building on the foYle road
it has five storeys but
in bishop street
beside the pel hall
crept cautiously down the pitch
the game was going well
to score against kevin schmeichel ryan
it was a foolish mistake
i marched straight into the room
simmered for a moment
then turned into people
pylons were wont to be blown up

****
I still dream about
Half-built houses
completed
semi-detached
a network of
small paths between
the rivet and convolvulus
an aura of rafted pine and brick
wood-shavings and cement dust
ziggurats of brick
embedded like mortars
discarded hods and buckets
a documentary of brueghel building techniques
antonyms of lamplighters

the advent of alarm clocks
the hastily conscripted crew
a compass or a depth-gauge
our dug-out-turned-submarine
sinking to hitherto
unfathomable depths
the riveted steel panels start to creak
the whole craft
threatens to break up
a slow musical bass clank
at this stage in the story
who has seen it all
there’s more to come
bunches of defunct keys
candle-stumps and empty snuff tins
trench wall
    malleable as plastcine
lilliputS of belfast
    the city was its eventual destruction
cross-stAves and theodolites
    shortly after

* * * *
the ulster cinematographic theaTres

arthur square and its confluence of five streets with shops stores offices

public houses cafés cinemas

joseph bRaddell & son gunmakers Fishing rod and tackle manufacturers heraldic and general stationers

the x l Café and restaurant

mayfair school of dancing w j kidd & sons

boot upper manufacturers and leather merchants short wave radios yakking

simultaneously hardly interrupted

barman move among the throng clinking empty tumblers glass bottles then the sobering vinegar tang of fish and chips jail delirium

Freaked out by the social blather from the world beyond the Crib

reed’s elegant deployment of sound at important desultory intervals

the streets turn into stairs or wynds
when leasT expected
when you brusH against them
they collapseE and vanish
with a Sound like
falling sooT
a neat terrAced street
white half-moons scRubbed before the doors
through its Fog into home territory
from a film mAtinée stumbling into daylight

****
a lit coronet of gas
Hissing
under a blue kettle
it begins to
whistle up
a head of steam
overhead Rack
aluminium ladle Filling them with glop
sacramental discs of waxed paper
a longer circumference of crimped-edged lid
stick on the dated labels
i recognise
some kind of transferred memory syndrome
the apparition of the black chrysanthemum

****
whiTe star street

will gallagher was a blacksmitH

hEre he would

Spend

parTs of most nights

when trAin and

motoR-car remained to be invented

the cloven-hooFed one

vAnished

i’ve Come
to Take you to the lake of fire

his nether regiOn was stuck to the seat

the black pRince will went on the tear

saYs he

no siT down in your damned chair

get my Hat

you’rE a tidy man

began to Sweep the floor

nor would it leT him go

back to flAgs of hell

for another seven yeaRs

an oddly Formal

Address and a

suspiCion arises that

such wriTten vows of affection

will-o’-the-wisp confused by scOtt with friar rush

been lanthoRn-led by friar rush

* * * *
suggests that Belfast is
Horizontal
frieze
whose gable end is the left hand frame
the rest of the foreground is occupied by
the sunlit presence of a woman
wearing brilliant white
a black flag or shroud
strained towards us
confused by this Charon phenomenon
i started to doubt the hearse
a wedding limousine and
the wreaths were bouquets

****
every nigHt
i would tEnt the
bedclotheS
the annual Torch I got in my
christmAs stocking
pRactically unaware
they quaff fine wines
i Am tempted
words of vitriol and stryChnine
raTsbane arsenic agent orange
the waft of blue cigar-smOke and
red heRrings
various murks of Yellow
coleman’s musTard burnt sienna
launcHing
tentativEly into it
feel my way with fingertipS
up milTon street
and reAch the
bluRred oasis
the sudden Fug of the
classroom radiator-wArmth
raCk and clunk them up like snowmen
a sour-sweet Thaw will blend
school bag leather ink lino blOtting paper oak
and vaRnish
solferino olive loden berYl
avocado paris green sapphire cobalt peacock hyacinthine oxford blue
trams on the Shankill road were blue as the
gallaher’s blues
 cigarette packet
 trrolleys emitted ink blot stars
an impossibly talented meccano boffin
 had constructed
 a platonic model of a working windmill
 the height of a
 nine-year-old boy
 admire this complicated paradigm
as we were swept into the foyer

coty yardley
givenchy
deep blue carpet
versailles marble staircase
 taut corsets
were displayed
 the corner of my eye
 flesh and blush tones of
diaphanous spirella bras
 escape to the
 sober warmth of
 muted thornproof donegal and harris tweeds
we passed through the store
 brylcream styptic pencils and 7 o’clock razor blades
my head without a Torso my hands invisible
paralyzed beneath the barber’s nylon shroud
try not to winE as the cold die-cast
clipperS snip and snag
a mirrored grand inquisiTOr
violently kneAds my head
a plumb-line parting on my cRanium with a sharp steel comb
baron von richthoFen in his red fokker
constructed from Airfix
Crash-land in the hallway
worked the early shift
dOzing on the sofa
authoritatatively dRooped black peak of his capped
stYlized like those

on an asTrolabe
robin Hood shot
a nudE riding through the glen
two halveS of a
cuT lemon
a scrAp of paper
a childish embRowned female nude
Frieze
leAks an upward plume
as they reaCh the upper edge
lemons suggestive of breasTs
nibs whOse waisted
patteRn degenerates into female torso curves
we were warned to staY well in

* * * *
reTail outlets

solid tHrum

benEath the dotty

morSe and atmospheric static

heighT of the troubles

assAssination occurred

Routinely

Flinging him against

slowly sAnk back

silenCe fell

the episodic Tin-can radio

air-detective bigglesworth and his air pOlice

fiRst printed in 1953

a post-war spY thriller

* * * *
belfast central library

the smaller branch libraries

falls ormeau

Shankill donegall road through tullycarnet
tremble lift and slip off into
outer space to wander
in dark forever

mein kampf

question marks and bullet points
proclaiming the church of retrospective predestination
the text is backed up by
authoritative quotes
the rest of the acts of hezekiah

a willow patterned hieroglyph

arrested in the eastern sky
detaching the sandpaper striking strip
its spunky gluey crunch
lick the bulbous red heads

too
dispensed from open trays
introducing them in ones
i flew to ancient egypt
met similar daedaluses and
masters of zodiac cryptology whose complex
pylon architecture
from a flying boat
one perceived its wiring-diagram of constellations

* * * *
high street looking east 1786

  a photograph of an engraving
  the main feature
  its curious diamond-shaped clock
  on a gibbet-like support

in 1798 Henry Joy Mccracken would be hanged
  from similar devices
  the clear effulgence of
  a cloudless atmosphere illuminated by the moon
  artificial beams
  imitative power
  living objects
  in our streets

might go astray

set right again

farmers and fishfolk pedlars and huxters
  all seemed to find their way
  to Hercules
  street
  fancy
  brought us back
  for safe keeping
  heads of lavender and sprigs of rosemary
  covered with blue and white crockery-ware
  shining brass kettles
  half-brown
  rocks

i have quoted Cathal O’Byrne
ramble of fantasy

ghostly floating
petticoat

outside of the crockets
speckled white interior bowls

fresh-firecoAl chestnut

o’byrne’s unhyphenated sheepdogs snoozing
dozy yourself

thankfully then
wake up on occasions whereupon
they emit an
alternate woof or baa to
jolt you from this reverie

* * * *
sometime in the sixTies 194/02
broken cHinks of light
at the Edge of
the eaveS and
the doTted rivets of
water-tAnk
weRe buttons of light
the converted loFt was my bedroom
heAvy objects
book-case sCrewed into the top
three drawers beneaTh
twO
synchRonized
an odd metaphysical 196/27
deaTh injury the tram
I can never catcH
then suddEnly
revS up and moves off
nighT
alwAys connected with the past
derelict buildings cRumbled victorian pubs
this occurs quite Frequently
vast secret hAlls
a curious air of deCadence of crumbling
parchment skins and sTale perfume
fire-bOmens on 6 may 1974
much loved victoRian covered market 198/01
a scattering of cobblestone-greY
sTrutting pigeons
stalls bootHs and awnings
the mEwing of seagulls
the scent of oranges and herrings
fronTing on to
this confAbulation
belfast gRocer’s corner shop
vienna café
copenhAgen doll’s house
   Chicago kosher
buTcher’s
lOs angeles
thiRties automobile showroom
tokYo shoe shop

* * * *
chalky dust-motes sift ing downward
he would inch his way
a reluctant suicide

till fingers of one hand
only promoted
the exact point of this operation
its clandestine thrill

tops of backyard walls
up on black mountain
sunlight glanced across
the white-washed farmhouse
high above the
rumble of a linen mill

along the gutter in a minor styx

the cast-iron deep
shit
the waste
products of the city
Tumbled ruins of
abandoned brickfields
to reach greenan’s shop

the aromatic fugue of
soap sweets
Cheese and
cigarettes
your routine order
just a cuppla dures from ar scule
on the verge of martyrdom
sTumble on me
between their teeth
a time-bound amphiTheatre with clonard monastery
a colosseum which cast
its ancienT gnomon
shAdow
micRoscopic life
kaleidoscopic Frozen moment
minutely detailed mundane dreams
go to sChool
enjoying all the rouTine panacea of a day
Occupy some fleeting moment
a foRm of déjá vu

* * * *
we were constantly interrogated since much of our routine learning primary School alphabets and tables lists of latin conjugations and declensions off by heart to preserve its whiplash flexibility

z treated his with vaseline different techniques and subtle disciplines were brought to bear the erratic head high flail proper egyptian style

ashtray

a miniature of the great piazza of st peter’s and its huge basilica built on vatican hill figuratively the ufo descends

the vatican

Cendrier reminds us of our own mortality a small heavy pocket icon a momento mori Yawning avenues and dark arcades

* * * *
it was great to get lost

all the warehouses and shops in the town

their refuse

content into

the precincts of smithfield

on whatever scale

it is pursued

how difficult it is to burn books

reams of them survived

poked them with a stick and a wind blew them

I still wonder how

censor illusions

relics shards and signatures

retrieval from the pyres by lovers and disciples

undergrounds of samizdat

would stitch their

remembrances

episodes together

pretending to

make a quilt for a

funeral

crippled furniture

the walls have held fast

which book to choose

the third is reading

an open book in his hands

this trinity of readers

stitches a yarn
the Typesetter

thought fit to justify them

pray dead they

—Ship o love

Thief

chap

a tolerably fair if etiolated encryption

baffled

she translated a pattern

orchards of windmills perched on the sides of mountains

celtic-norse-scots-english

creole

swiss linguists who arrive in flocks

and the guy

standing at the front

his long hair flying around from under

his earphone-horned helmet

pointing his sword in the

general direction of

ireland

encouraged by the

baskets of food or faeces

being raised or lowered

the race from which he sprung

st simeon stylites

less about him of the arrogance

down from his pillar at a word of advice

* * * *
compare bridges of the city to bar magnets
metal vehicles throbbing emotionlessly
polarized above a river
or a mesh of train tracks
leaning over a parapet
gaze into the black magnet
parabolic swarms
starlings flit and sway in baroque paragraphs
clocks go back
an autumn chill
shadows lengthen
the multitudes come home to roost
two sea-nymphs holding a drowned man

on a grey granite base
from southampton to new york
these included the ship’s designer
initially erected in
donegall square
north
up the blackstaff river
said to be
a hitcher in belfast dialect
might be related since chambers cites
a not-so-welcome shower
of shipyard-workers’ bolts and rivets
a jekyll-and-hyde wraith
a wounded terrorisT angel lost in the dark

Holographologists

in their whitE

c oatS

emendations carets sTets arrows underlinings

I hAve to go

Running my fingers over the keyboard

* * * *
the stark reality of the star factory is
more humdrum than the
stories it has inspired
Nubia and Soudan
kind of an antelope
on a south african stamp
floppy collared flannel shirts
an old wooden flute-box
with two brass hook-and-eye catches
special two-for-the-price-of-one deal
supported by a glass jug
almost dead
center
the type of chlorophyll it grazes on

the dark interior of crofters’ handloom cottages
each bolt of cloth
a web of dna strands
Sniff one
admit the possibility
of white-coated hierophants
with flared nostrils
parfumiers of tweed
diggs and drabs
a cold
St Patrick’s day
Saffron-kilted tweed jacketed pipe bands
tied on the five broad steps
known as Bryce’s lane
electric lighting station
wrestling with Hydra
chapel lane and castle street
described by
marcus patton
central belfast a historical gazetteer
we have real information
delft
brass half-gallon jugs
brylcreemed hair
bottles variously full
exchange their hooped
shirts for long white aprons

****
the typical star factory shirt tailed well below the bum
in a High magnolia hospital room
lucozade
  glows like a
  votive
  lamp
remembering its beaded bubbles
upward flow of souls
  a total other zone of self
  creaking pterodactyl wings
  gloves of virtual reality
  i got the names
  before the streets were named
  i would try to analyze

its junked components
  st agnes’ parochial hall
  not much bigger than
  a scout shed
  matinée
  a public entertainment or reception
  a woman’s dress for forenoon-wear
  proffer each other
  from flat opened packs
  boxes of matches and the daily whiff of sulphur
  the plot is simple
  a rapid cloud of drizzle
  an antonym of shrinking

* * * *
the queen’s film Theatre where i saw
the orpheus myth
a converted lecture theatre
queen’s university
where i was a student
still the case though now
Rather plush
smoke in the Foyer
at salient points in the drama
a mini-Choreography of
struck matches would flare up
the sub-sub-plot of
caigarettes
stooks or pyramids

of cut turf
his long shadow off the edge
of the page
panes of various sizes
ghostly symmetries
of opaque light
a glacial fourth dimension
Fizz
interminable bombing campaigns
regiments of Clerks and salesgirls
behind the fluttering white security tape
the zone
devoid of traffic

* * *
mcwaTters’ bakery

footsteps echoing each other

beginning to evaporate into chilly mauve

for Seven days

a vast resounding parcel-sorting office

district-coded phAlanxes of

big wickerwoRk trolleys

cofFee percolating

the Afternoon city shift

oranges and Coal smoke

beTween beery pubs

and poultry-merchants’ windOws

the parlouR of a bar on the shankill road

a twinge of hYpsophobia

traverse the gap beTweEn

Hoist and floor

a single trembling plank

poiSed high above

a bliTzed

bAttlefield with

cement-encRusted howitzers

his smoker’s pen-kniFe attached to

his watch-chAin

various deviCes for

chopping the sTuff
tamping it into the bOwl

an aromatic gestuRe

the rhYthm
hypnotized you
banal troughs
or negative exhausted
Silences
night-shift refugees
grocer confectioner tobacconist and newsagent
another soul wander in from the dark
team into life and flight
swarming confusedly about
killing scores with a
single squirting
dockets and receipts
coerced by
glassy rhymes

the next link
through the broad high attic sky
the whole ornate array
glints of blue and green and clear and amber
Till it looked like
a starship armada
Riding at anchor
a whiff of norwegian fir
brought me back again
magenta bright magenta lemon ochre green turquoise prussian blue
dull violet rose-red chestnut
commonwealth of
momentary pleasure

****