

# issue 13 streetcake



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anthony arnott

Happy to help

Car-park,  
sparks and smoke blown  
into the sun. Sliding  
doors, death-knells, beyond fruit  
& veg  
and flowers. Maureen. Clamour

of conversation, catching  
flies and regular  
Tuesday questions.

Auto-pilots, Alex says. A  
different breed.

I day-

dream a lot and the tannoy  
blurts out inaudible  
garble. A bandit, choosing  
his  
cider, Alex says, and

a cigarette. Terry tells me  
off for nothing and a text I've  
already read in my pocket. From Liz. When

Alex smokes, he looks like  
James Dean. The world is  
ours.

Something needs to  
be done,

Alex says. Fucking scum,  
Alex says. Vodka swig. The straight  
white male is the same fucking  
dinosaur who is cheating  
the system! Something

must be done! Amour Fou. We  
plot, we  
scheme;

I  
plan and dream  
that one day the  
world won't be full of  
crap! Night falls. Drag

him to the temple, Alex  
says. A sacrifice, Alex says. The final  
act. It must be done, Alex

says. Car drives by and we  
and a  
bandit makes three  
hold our  
breath. His trainers scrape

against the ground as we silence  
him. Blood drains from him and  
me. All I remember is  
hollow wind. Breath  
against a bottle top. I couldn't  
sleep. Don't watch the box and don't  
read the papers. A dulling

ache that no doctor  
can cure and no food  
can fill. All I can see are the  
eyes of a bandit and all I  
can taste is red.  
Everywhere, everything,  
red.  
The touch of her  
lips, the smoke of a cigarette. I

want to throw up, I WANT TO THROW IT ALL UP, but all  
I will spit  
out is red. Deserved, Alex says. Days

passed and I thought  
they'd never come. They knew. My  
face said it before  
my tongue. In handcuffs,

relief. Imprisoned,  
but free. All his idea,  
Alex says. The bandit's widow and  
workmates  
now weep and await my release.

rembrandt clarke

THE GAP BETWEEN TRACKS IS THE LONELIEST PART OF BEING ALONE

handwritten letters  
from Luxembourg  
untranslated

dry cold linoleum hands  
holding a pen

staring into  
barrel of myself

I will not go  
I will not go  
there

A she-

shift shift to left  
hands down to V lets a remind  
of a long and a line she-  
on pillar and breath a  
breathing reguiring to lean  
a breath leant breath  
leant on a over a on a  
she- a look of out and up  
a in and this is a  
present a a presment  
of a in a on up a this of

a clasp out a drawn in a a against spin off a anc shallow faded shad o low a of a interrupted a

interrupted a a inte rnal to  
a stage back from a bached  
out of a banked a up anl  
[this is up and up and an]  
anorhomic ritual a a tital O'  
up a a ritual up a a up  
she- up a leaned over a leanerd  
this up she- is behind me  
a speaking over playboy  
there is a level of a interfere  
here a level of a interfher

a clinch set a lan can a a anti raim a how a ju inhale left held I hor a of a movement a

movement a to she- a  
a change a staged a out  
we'd stage she- a upward  
readilyness a red  
red roaring a roeamed she-  
a a reality a readiness a ream  
resting ach she- a step out  
a ritual of a silenced  
step out a mark'hed body  
she- a mark'hur  
step a she- out a exchange  
redy neen an hur a  
a gentle folded a  
gentle a folded

a settle arrai a ashen lul a a such can in a a be currt on stretch she- hom a out a bloc a

bloc a lended alean a linear  
she- this to a cross of a line  
a cross of an shadow  
she- a lented circlura lean

**Title: Prelude, Fugue and Variation: A spark**

*Prelude: haiku*

On the horizon  
A flame  
swallows the world

*Fugue: cleave poem*

<b>He rants and</b>	The fire leaps on the wind
<b>Curses fly from</b>	Its gaping mouth
<b>The spark left inside</b>	Smokes, the beast puffs up and
<b>The fire roars</b>	flames pounce
<b>And the wild game runs</b>	Spattering the undergrowth
<b>With dripping and blood</b>	Cinders transform trees
<b>Adding more fuel</b>	To charcoal sticks
<b>Feeding the flames</b>	That sketch a new horizon
<b>He eats his last supper</b>	In the smoke

*Variation: prose poem*

The sea retreats from my feet, that overwhelming sea. So? I walk, from land to rocks to sand to silt to mud. Vesuvius shoots up an arm of sparks and smoke and spreads out its hand to ravage the sky. Fingers reach over my head, bending my neck, my spine, backwards. I'm stuck, thigh deep with shoals of fish surprised to see me resting here. Over me, above me the ash cloud batters birds out of the sky. The roof of the world is coming down - soot and cinders. I raise my hands to touch it.

steven fowler

(Barry McSweeney on Blackfriars Bridge)

I have a travelling circus

the support act is a

lecture series of obscure public speakers

I set them their topics

they have met in

private

to denounce my control

I am overbearing, they say

'even a man who can't pretend

remembrance

to be the purpose of his poetry

is slighted when

totally forgotten'

how do you know who is remembering

what & when?

the whole of Gateshead might be thinking of his verse

this very minute

I doubt that

they are dancing alone

before their laptop computers

miming

quarter naked

icing trailing a line from their

chin to the their groins

so quiet

make them recite McSweeney

off pat

indelible in memory

the forgotten, who dwarf those hanging

from the teat of life

he was one of those

the wise

loss to all of us

(written & read for the Barry McSweeney centenary memorial readings at Morden Tower in 2010)

**An Early Confrontation**

*'If you confront the Black Lodge with imperfect courage, it will utterly annihilate your soul' – Hawk, 'Twin Peaks'*

Listen for that

undersoil scream, earthy lung threatening  
the surface with its beaky door

black door  
whimper of your petty lighter  
dumb spark of flame

throw your stones like sharpened eyes

cracking their glances off

the wall of black.

The shaking squeezes as it

makes its presence felt through its absence

(placeless surge,  
just under)

causes blurs, presses

against the whiskers of periphery, yells

the two caves forming on your face –

there's nowhere to run

that steady platform collapsed into entropy

some time ago.

~~(I am not real. There are more spaces between than there are letters.)~~

The sound of the darkness riddled with colour

It is all mountains down here convulsing

mountains trembling themselves

tendrils burrowing upwards nowhere

the image torn (like a page) from the computer screen, the gag

of plug unplugged

and me telling myself now I don't know how to say this.

paul mcdonald

**The Artist Goes Bananas**

It began with muttering in his sleep,  
then incoherent shouts once or twice a night.

Next hobbies: his mimes

seemed like semaphore, his photographs  
of puddles were monochrome amoebae  
with human nuclei.

He wrote a book on bees: their waggle dances.  
He started saving hair, finding stories  
in the pattern of his dinner plate. Then circling:

turning on himself like a dog about to settle.  
Yesterday he claimed that life is art  
in a speech lasting longer

than it should have.

Today, written in the misted mirror,  
a message: *Tomorrow I will peel myself.*

## Mount the Ass

I talked my penis down from the ledge.  
The night had been a rough one,  
part TV and part cony-catch.  
I whistled at the first blonde who crossed  
in front of my lips. She turned  
to me like a scuffle-hunter.  
Later, I found a note in her hand. Her  
hand was all she left behind.  
It's been a long winter and the work has  
grown thin. I started to call you  
but I thought you had moved. The last  
time you moved I almost came.  
I guess it's time for checkout from  
the Newman's Lift. And tonight, maybe  
thoughts of you, before I jugulate my pride.

## Trap Door No. 4

There must be easier way to get out  
this building. A tree slams behind you  
into a cloud, out of petrol & desperate  
to piss or press its hand firmly into  
your ears, the wave is back, oh no  
that was just a creak - the river  
is a figure of eight, in two parts  
meaning, O wait, the sky is not a mirror  
and I am not in the correct position.

&lt; fragment : start >  
w here is the exit  
i need to get out  
you saw me hap  
pening | i f e l l \*  
&lt; ! ! / . > end fragment  
. . ! ! / . >