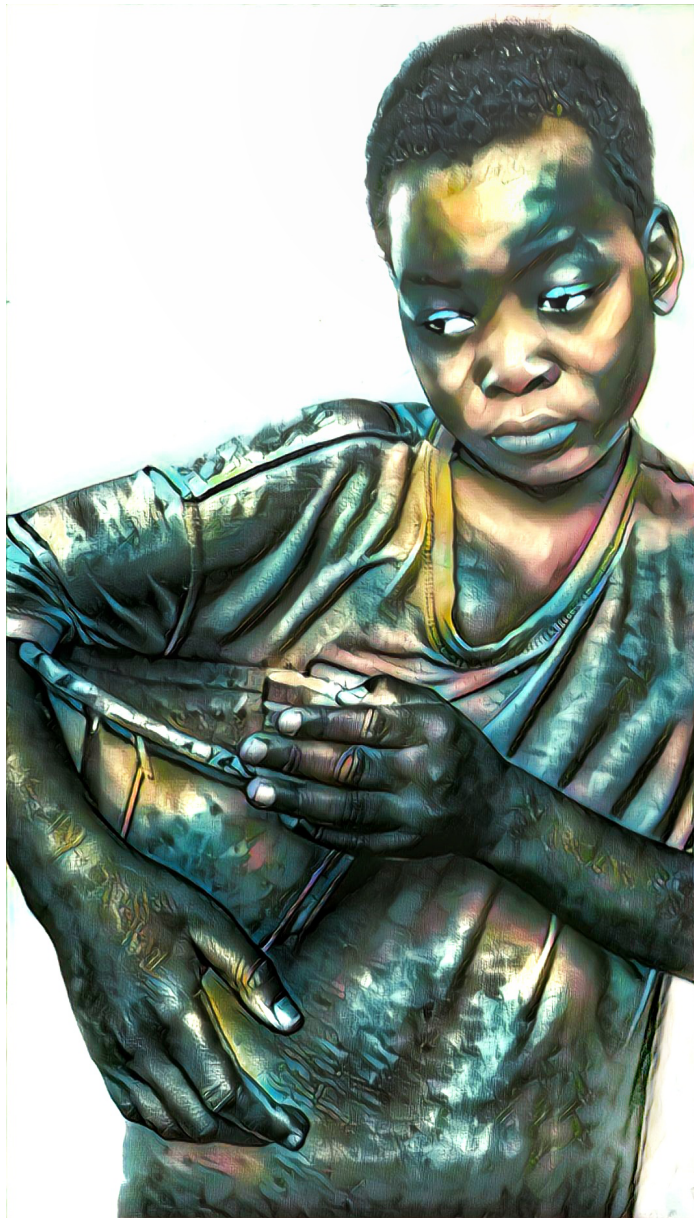


STREET CAKE

experimental writing magazine

issue 69

part 2



@ martins deep

contents

issue 69

part 2

COVER: martins deep - boy with a bowl of echoes
in zaria

chime lama - two catches

paul loccisano - memento mori

naomi marklew - headspace (no vacancies)

jonathan minton - from letters

jbmulligan - thanks to the past

bailey north - phil in the hospital

paul rousseau - twitter drunk

elena rielinger - wait

jensneider- time warps

jane ayres - the day after

naoimi smyth - feuerzeug

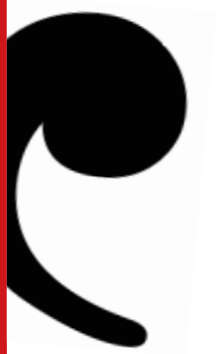
kevin stebner - post this

george thrills - untitled

james thurgood - confessions

a(llison) whittenberg - think warm thoughts

nathan williams - poetry 101



Two catches

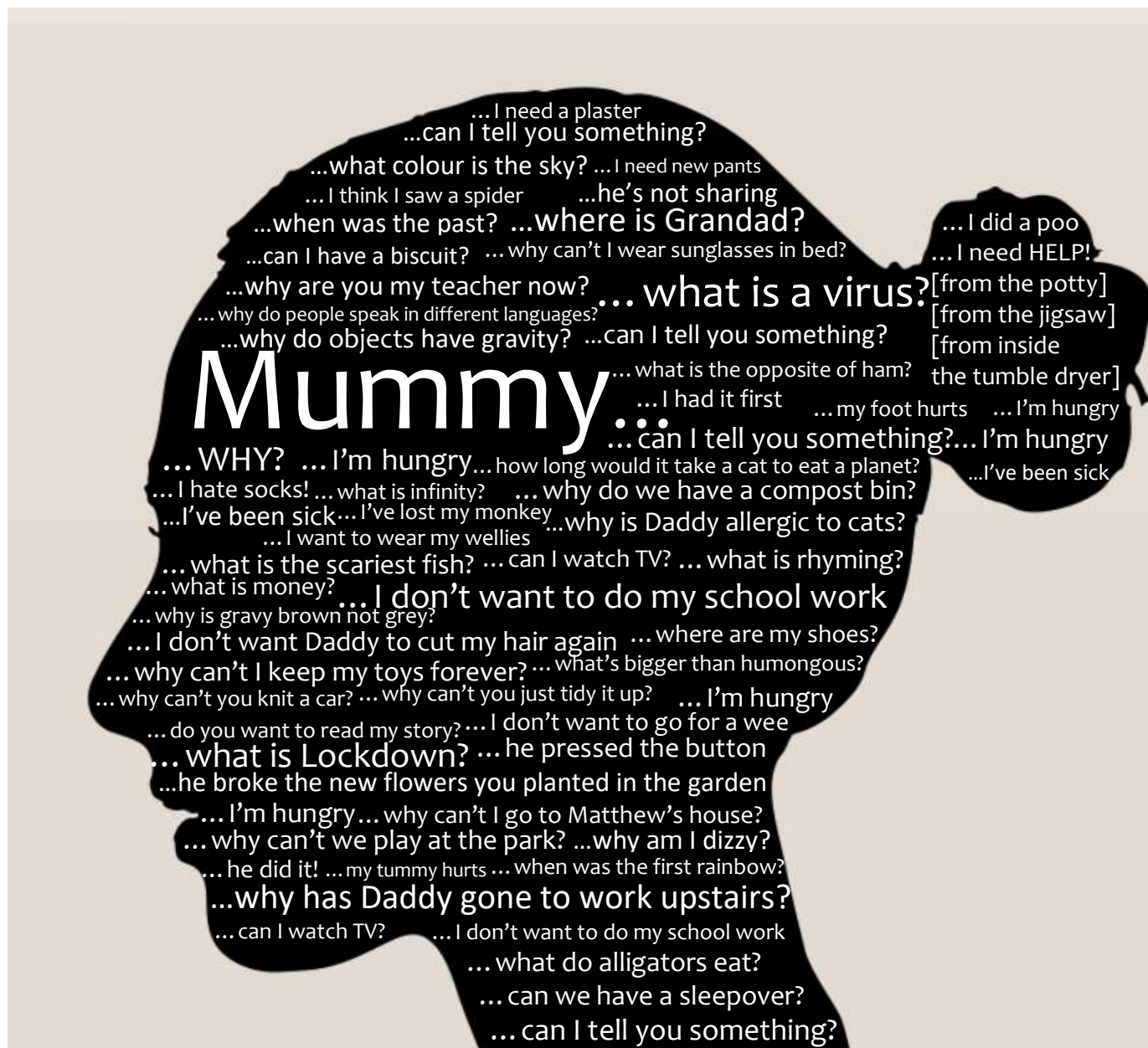
c a u g h t

each other

Memento Mori



Headspace [no vacancies]



from *LETTERS*

You said we were dissolving as mountains.
 I imaged snow-melt, or something ancient and glacial,
 But when we looked again, the air thickened,
 as if above a summer-green lake. We wanted to break
 against its grasp. We climbed the ridge above the city,
 but couldn't see our house, or the pebbled alley
 where the car was always parked. Sometimes
 we behave so strangely. We were walking
 against traffic, and I carried notes about fly-fishing
 and peak-bagging. I wrote that nettles never sting
 when we saunter in this manner. It carried me
 into this world, as an omen, or small bowl of water.

When I call this a memory, I am clearing our path.
 When I say this is real, my chest fills,
 as if it were somehow a song.

thanks to the past

tangible poem

thinged skin and juice of you
pomegranate shrapnel

explosive like a mountain range

chameleon lightning

what I have loved and always loved
about you is your taste
smell smooth skin speckled eyes

the gift of you
hurled like an apple
from this time or that

comet across the night of time
striking my head
sparking a world

tangible poem

each time I see you
my eyes are newborn naked

just for this moment

Phil in the hospital

WHOOSH. The initial coming-to is like some enormous buoy having been mistakenly anchored under the ocean finally realising the surface. I'm gasping. Thoughts, sensations slide into my consciousness as my brain electrifies itself. Spat-out lava on the inside of a volcano cone returning to sender. But something's wrong. There's no light. Sounds (surreal sounds) but no light. And that's not the worst of it. There's . . . But I can't . . . I can't ascertain the source, the germinated root of the distress. My eyes burn and my head's pulsating. Jesus, I can't tell if it's the physical process of the throbbing causing the agony or whether it's the pain itself, playing parent, producing disjunctions elsewhere in the body. Or is it the fire in my eyes instigating the throbs? Instantly I fear for my sight. It's gone! it has to be. Such screeching hurt. Like iron rods from the forge. The smith's missed his bucket to cool them and plunged them into my eyeballs instead!

'Adrian?'

Oh god, voices. Saint Peter's arrived to conduct the questionnaire, determine gate entry level. Oh well, at least I'm aware of myself dying. At least I'll be able to experience death in a conscious manner.

'Adrian, are you awake?'

'With . . .'

'With?'

'Within . . .'

'Within?'

'Within what distribution of worlds?'

'Sorry?'

My head's so loud I can barely hear her. 'Within what environmental context is this conversation taking place!?'

'You're in a hospital.'

'A hospi-what!?'

'Tal.'

'So you're not Saint Peter?'

‘Saint Peter? No, I’m Caren.’

‘The ferryman!? On the river of doom!? I *knew* it.’

‘I’m a nurse.’

‘So your name doesn’t pertain to being an usher of the underworld?’

‘My name? It’s Welsh, I think. I was born in the valleys but grew up in Bristol.’

‘Close enough.’

I begin relaying unto this voice of omnipotence the trouble I’m having locating my eyesight. She says my face has been bandaged and that I’ve been in an accident. I ask her if she’s referring to my birth. She says no, a car accident. These words seem to release something from the sediment of my cognition. Yes, I remember. I was in a car. With a significant (semi-significant) other. I think it was my in-and-out friend the poet. Was he driving? Yes. Had to be. Immediately a million connivances of vengeance ooze forth from what’s left of my tattered grey matter. If the boy’s not dead he soon will be. I’ll make sure of it! Caren relays fundamentals, those told to her by the police. ‘You hit another car on a corner,’ she says. Investigators are on the scene. ‘Now,’ she continues, ‘is there there anyone you’d like me to contact?’

‘Like who?’

‘Well, your next of kin?’

‘Next of who!?’

‘Kin.’

‘Kin ’ell, I don’t think so! But, hang on. The . . . The . . .’

‘The police?’

I shake my darkened world of a head. Something seems to slosh within, as if the thing’s filled with soggy laundry. ‘No, the . . .’

‘The bed’s uncomfortable?’

‘I produce a kind of distressed constricted back-of-throat sound. No! The *poet*, the *poet*.’

‘Oh, your friend?’

Friend? That’s a laugh. ‘Yeah. Is he . . . ? Is he . . . ?’

Now sounding like a matronly Brown Owl she assures me he’s fine. A few minor cuts and bruises but he’s fine.

Unbelievable. ‘But . . . his face . . . Is his face bruised?’

‘Erm, just his forearms I think. He brought them to his face before the impact. Yes, he was really quite lucky.’

Unbelievable. Something resembling a conscience is now beginning to make itself known. This is bad. Not to be permitted. I scramble to mouth a further word: ‘Co . . .’

‘Cough? You want to cough?’

I rock my bandaged loaf in the negative. ‘Co . . Co . . .’

‘You’re cold?’

‘Coffee! I need coffee, goddamn it!’

‘Oh. Well I’m not sure that’s advisable in your condition?’

‘My condition? What, you mean being a philosophy student?’

‘Sorry?’

‘Nevermind.’ I have another thought. ‘Tell me, sailor of Styx, how would one achieve micturition in a “condition”’ (I blindly finger the quote marks) ‘such as mine presently?’

‘Huh?’

‘How is urobilin to be satisfactorily excreted?’

‘Sorry, I don’t . . .’

My teeth grind. ‘Are plans in place for pissing!?’

‘Oh, you need to relieve yourself?’

I bloody do. In more ways than one. ‘Not right now,’ I say. ‘I’m merely enquiring as to there being plans in place.’

‘Of course. Plans are in place, don’t worry.’ And she happily pats my wrapped-up noggin as though I’m some kind of injured Golden Labrador.

‘Excellent,’ I harrumph.

Apparently she’s now left me in peace. But I know she’s still there. I can sense her existence. She’s monitoring. *So obvious.* ‘I know you’re still there!’ I yell. No reply. Of course she’s not going to reply. Why would she? But I can *hear* her presence. It’s a kind of humming warmth. It stifles. My god, my other senses must have become heightened! (Note to self: keep quiet about this.) For time being I’ll play mute, I

decide. Then she'll think I've judged her to have gone away. Ha, that will *really* mess with her!

After lying silent for three or so hours and *completely* messing with the palliative ferrywoman's brain I detect her once again approaching.

'Hey Phil.'

Wait. Oh god. Please god no. Please, god, *no*!

'Phil, can you hear me?'

Ambushed. *Unbelievable*. 'What the hell have you done to me, Poet!'

'*Me*? Done to *you*? You grabbed the flippin' steering wheel!'

'What!? How dare you. Caren!? Caren!?' The boatwoman maintains a pretence of non-presence.

'You saw what you said was an apple tree and screamed "Newton!" before pulling us over the white line and head-on into another car!'

'You – are – insane! Where's my matron? What've you done with her?'

'What are you talking about?'

'You better lawyer-up, Sunny Jim. A suit is to be instigated pertaining to my condition!'

'Phil, calm down. No one was killed.'

'How are your forearms?'

'Ah, well, yeah, a bit messed up, but I'll live. My nurse put 'em right.' He leans in confidentially. 'Man, she's amazing, my nurse. Two years older than me. I got her number. She used to play guitar in an indie band.'

'Yes, well, not a patch of Caren, I bet.'

'You haven't had your eyes uncovered yet have you.'

'No, why?'

'Perhaps best not to be too eager.'

'I know your game, Poet. You want to keep me mummified like this with my glass full of eyes so you can make your escape! Well, won't wash, my friend. Will – not – wash. Cameras are everywhere. Guaranteed.'

'Glass full of eyes?'

‘Eyes full of glass!’

‘Your eyes aren’t full of glass, Phil.’

‘Then why are they burning!?’ Jesus, now it makes sense, I’m thinking. The windscreen must have smashed and my poor ocular globes of gelatine have been shredded to pieces by flying fragments! Oh god oh god oh god! Perhaps some penetrated right through – to the brain! No wonder I *think can’t straight*.

‘Just get some rest, man. Bandages’ll be off tomorrow then we can see what the situation is.’

My anger eats at my reason but I can’t maintain sufficient energy to rebuff my housemate and I fade. Sly sleep steals me away. Where is it during the week, that’s what I want to know!

It’s a new day, I’m informed. Bandage removal day. No bones are broken but my body nonetheless is in the grip of what appears to be some kind of insidious overarching all-united *ache*. They’ve an array of painkillers to send home with me though so that’s no big concern. First though I’m off to the eye hospital, once my swaddling bands have been loosed.

‘How’s that, Mister Trescothick?’

‘Aaaaaagggghhhh!’

‘Just go slowly, Phil.’

‘What’s the poet doing here!?’ I shout. ‘Is he under arrest? If not for trying to drive me to my grave then at least for the reprehensible attempts of versification we at Trescothick Mansions have to regularly “experience”.’

‘I think he’s feeling better,’ the poet mutters wryly.

Slowly, slowly needles of light assault my peepers as I allow my lids to loosen their clamp. I decide flickering them the best way of assessing how much whiteness to let in. They are stinging slightly but not too bad. The clowns around me are holding their breath. Simpletons. What are they expecting, the Second Coming? Slowly, slowly a blue person against a sunlit room is comprehended. I focus on her face. Her head is balding at the front. She has a craggy brow and deep wrinkles each side of her nose. A mole stands proud on her rough old cheek and she has a

moustache. She's smiling with all the kindness in the world. The badge she wears upon her large bosom says *CAREN*.

'How are you feeling, Adrian?'

'Top tip,' I say. 'Top tip.'

Twitter Drunk

Another day goes by, and though it's not ignorance, a claim that
teeters on conspiracy amid the viral dust of a pandemic, no one is
wearing a face mask, so I order a vodka and tonic and a mimosa,
and find myself, suddenly, closer to the floor.

Wait

i know it's going to sound like—
 rubber hitting wood,
 plastic shoelace ends following suit,
 ticking pins a silent room.
 there's a name for that—
 the ends, i mean.
 i've heard it before
 that almost-there,
 sounded like
 [...]

cold air on your back,
 your teeth,
 if you taste it before you
 spit it out let it dribble through your fingers.
 there's that—
 the sound, i mean.
 overbearing hand between shoulderblades.
 i've felt it again,

kiss stain drying on my
 aching like a torn morning laying
 in my bed,
 chest.
 there's a name—
 the torn muscle, i mean.
 i've
 heard it before
 drumming against rib bones,

rubber wood,
 cold throat,
 plastic shoelace ends following,
 something drying
 some,
 [...]

the other shoe is going to drop.

Time Warps

Question 1.

When does the word premise differ from promise?

Question 2.

“Some” say comparing the United States in 2020 to the United States in 1940 is like comparing apples to oranges. Distinguish apples from oranges.

Question 3.

Researchers compare the United States in 2020 to the United States in 1940.

Why?

Question 4.

Define: Progress.

Explain: How does the word progress differ from the word regress?

Evaluate: Are the words progress and regress synonyms or antonyms?

Question 5.

Define: Regression.

Define: Possession.

Explain: When one no longer feels safe - at home, on the corner, in the classroom, will any possession address the regression?

Question 6.

How does 2020 represent progress?

Defend your response with evidence and support.

Question 7.

What rights are protected by the First Amendment?

Question 8.

Which of the following books have been banned in schools?

Harry Potter
To Kill a Mockingbird
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Of Mice and Men

Question 9.

Which of the following books have been banned in prisons?

- 101 Best Family Card Games
- The New Yorker
- The Elements of Persuasion
- Slavery by Another Name

the day after

I thought it was over but then it started again those words & I couldn't stop it
words streaming buffeting shouting demanding to break loose so I pulled the car
over started to write & today it started again cascading waterfalls of words &
once it starts I can't stop the flow like a broken

tap tap tap tap

tap tap

tap tap

tap tap tap tap

the pen can't keep up & what I thought one became many & many one more &
it won't stop until all is said until it starts again

FEUERZEUG

it has the life-
span of

a may-
fly

in &
out it flies

from one pocket
to the next

with words
of “where’s it

gone?” & “I
don’t have it!”

circ-
ular & rect-

angler, in cyan
& in red

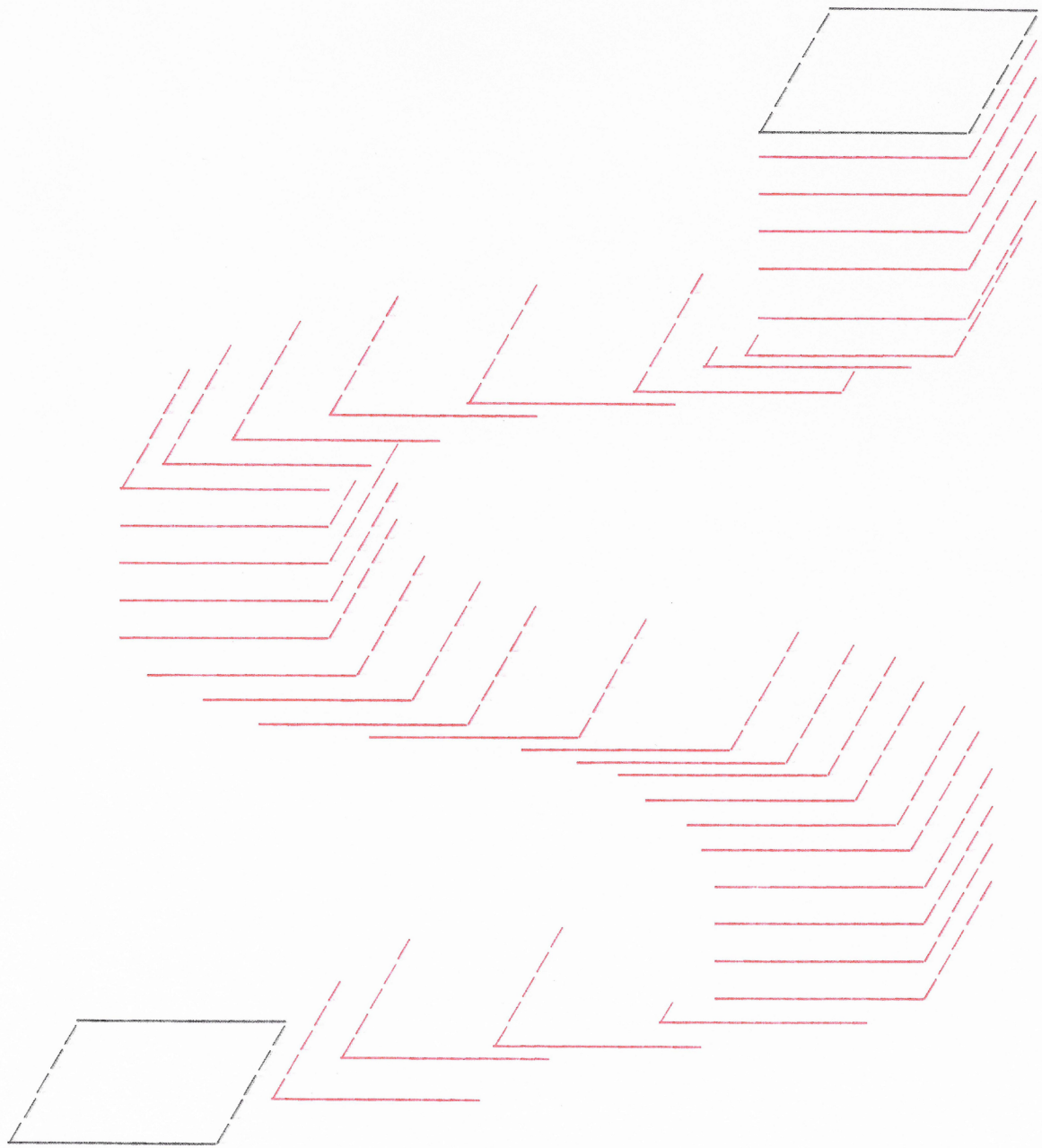
often mis-
placed &

found in
strange places

& when its flicker-
ring stops

flicker-
ing

it will be dis-
carded &





©georgethrills

confessions

sitting at a red light -
sunny day, with puffball clouds
- I didn't see the green
till you honked

that time I forgot to signal -
don't worry, I saw
your scowl

I rushed in ahead
at the check-out

anything else you'd like?

oh - roommate from hell?
me

neighbour with snow not shovelled,
lawn not mowed?
yup

also possible:

the one who threw plastic in the ocean

the one who told the police

the one who tore the child from its mother

the one who said nothing

the one who laughed

who pulled the trigger

who washed away the blood

why not me?

- we all know
it wasn't you

Think Warm Thoughts

The world burns. The sun stalks.

Can life be sustained off a window sill's moisture a lead pipe's sweat? Someone spills the orange juice we've been rationing. It spread more sunshine across the room. We splintered our tongues lapping it off the wooden floor.

In the white glow of night, a man bursts in and steals thirty-three ounces of water.

I should have shot him, we're all going to die anyway this way.

As want drips into need, it's a good news bad news sort of thing, contentment, comfort.

It's all a matter of degrees, I am between cool, white sheets. Outside snow is falling, falling, falling like sugar. It's piling up to hills, mountains.

They say a new Ice Age is upon us, but my fever is breaking and I remember a wise, old saying.

We are in
the realm of desire
to deny is no fate

*A good artist borrows;
A great artist/ steals – P.Picasso
N.Williams*

*There are several thousand voices on the landing
My eyes belong to them/
\a series of stolen glances*

You must
by
now have
realised as much

*Wailing/Howling – under ruptured tenements
bin-liners spewing out ink/notes/ash/muck/profanity
my mind belongs here/
\a red light nebula of corporation pop*

L e n d m e
y o u r s o u l
&
I'll w r i t e
y o u
a
P o e m

P O E t r y || 101 ||

theft, n.*

- a. The action of a ~~thief~~ poet;
the ~~felonious~~ aesthetic taking away of the ~~personal~~ (ALL PROPERTY IS _____)
~~goods~~ art** of another; larceny;
also, with *a* and *plural*,
an instance
of
this... “I saw the best minds of//
People try to put us down (talkin’ bout)//
My generation//

Baby”

**** art, n.¹**

- I. Skill; its
display, application,
or expression.

1. Skill in ~~doing~~ nickin’
summat, esp. as the result of
knowledge or// practice.