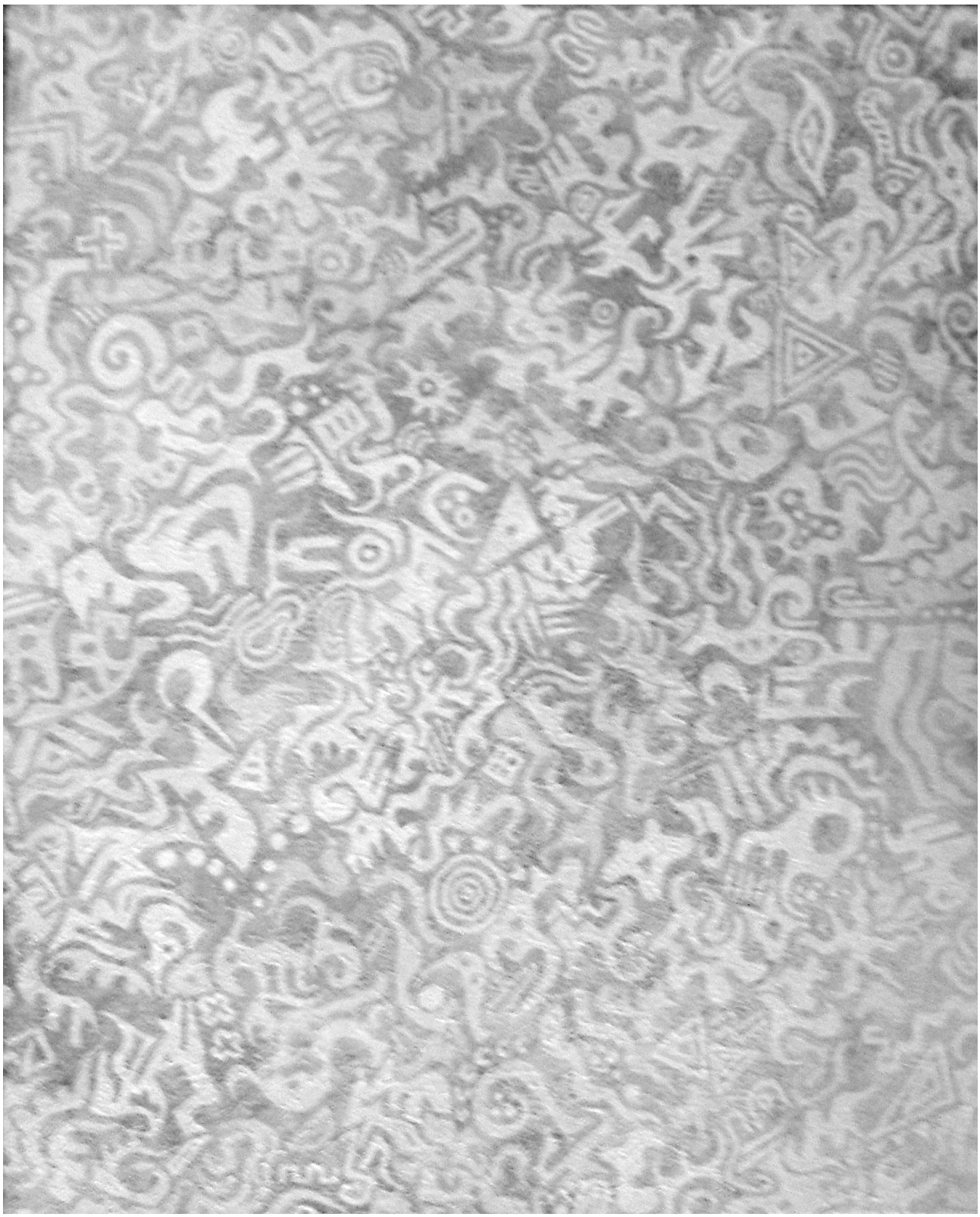

FORM

THE EARLY POEMS OF SHADY SHEN

dedicated to the memory of Arthur Rimbaud.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE ON RE-ISSUE

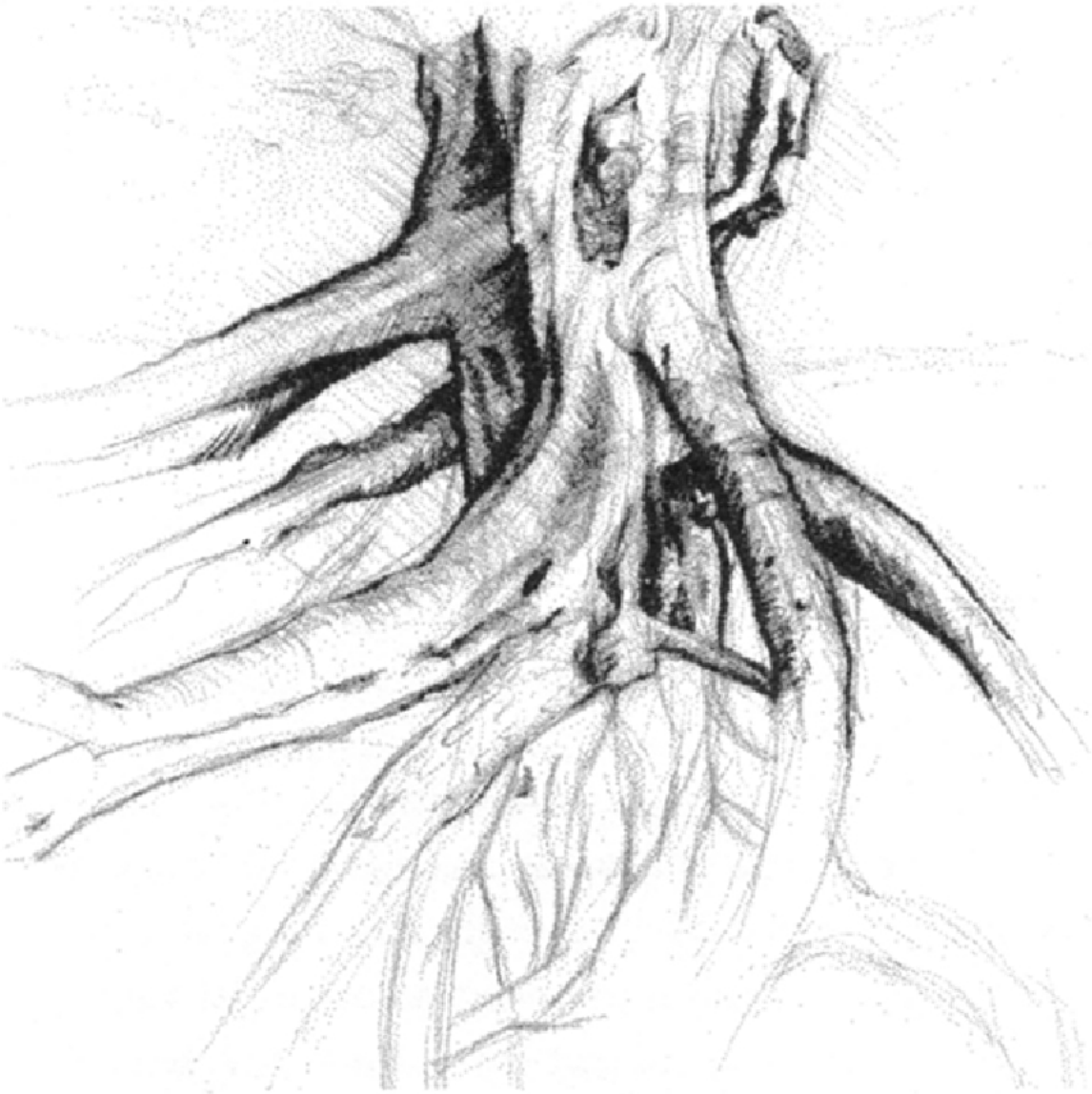
When preparing to re-issue this volume as a PDF ebook, I thought I should let you know a bit about the story behind it. In the year 2000 I had just finished working for a failed start-up. It was an alternative teen-zine called POD Magazine which I was doing graphic design and art-direction for along with a few of my friends. After the boss' wife decided out of the blue one night to gamble away all of the funds for the project, we all had to find something else to keep us off the streets.
I had already decided to enrol at Canterbury University the year after, but had eight or nine months to fill in until then.

At this time in CHCH, there was a charitable trust called Creation, which had coordinated with WINZ to administer “The Artists' Wage,” a benefit intended to cutlivate the artistic potential of young, out of work creative types. The deal was that you had to come up with a six month project and see it through to completion, while keeping them informed of your progress.
I had started reading poetry at high school and was already trying to teach myself how to go about writing a poem, so the idea for my artist wage project was to write, edit and self-publish a book of poetry in six months.

A lot of NZ poetry I found to be too high-brow and lacking in feeling, so I wanted to produce something a bit different. Around this time I was also attending the first incarnation of Doc Drumheller's creative writing/performance/publishing course where I was introduced to some of the techniques of the Dadaism and Beat Poetry, both of which I really wanted to borrow from, without just doing a straight out copy of. I'll never forget him playing for us a video of William S. Burroughs dryly asserting that when it comes to art “The word 'should' should not come into it.” Some of the music I was fond of at the time like trip-hop and techno incorporated the use of sampling, so I thought “Why not sample existing poetry? Why not cut out interesting lines from second hand books, etc? Why not take all of my drafts that I would otherwise throw into the out-box and cut them up so as to re-mix them?” I was very inspired by Arthur Rimbaud's ideas and wondered whether I could find my own kind of alchemy, and with it, discover a new poetic “form.”

Thematically, we can think of a young man experimenting with mind-altering drugs and trying to identify the conflicting energies within himself: the sensitive spiritual dude versus the nihilistic self-seeker, the romantic dreamer versus the rational Cartesian, etc.
The poetry is a melting-pot of thoughts, dreams, flights of fancy, psychedelia and the reality of living with nocturnal Epilepsy unmedicated.
First person pronoun is represented with a lowercase “i” so that it may also be seen as an algebraic variable, sometimes signifying me, Graham, or sometimes another. Uppercase has mostly been dropped, something I thought to be innovative at the time, but later learnt had actually been done quite a bit and well before my time. Yes, there are some spelling errors, etc, and when re-issuing to ebook I have chosen to leave them there, since they kind of help to give a sense of the unabashed naivety without which the project would never have come to fruition.

$i=nature^2$



the suspension of red blood cells.
motor neuron L7 is set up to be stimulated
every ten seconds.
i've been having to be
only partially organised.
in my spare time i've been
hanging out, drinking coffee, painting,
smoking pot, reading
and playing a wee bit of guitar;
the opposite of now.
when a sequence has been determined
the behaviour of the cell
changes dramatically
(for income tested beneficiaries.)
irregular rhythm.
double stresses.
hard>relaxed>hard.

let yourself down
inspiration's everywhere.
lift one leg at a time
and you'll float away
from the foul ideas
and wretched vices
of the damp flat land.

no more dinner-parties.

money's more than we can hope for,
but we sure know a change
when it comes!
only a finger-tickle on that
sensitive spot
and now you belong;
in your heart is a song.

so listen
and let yourself down
like the rain
'cause it's time to go swimming
in the gutters again.

freestyle.

green black grass
with whatever we like,
lets drop acid in the park tonight.
lets fall in love with rain
and dance without refrain,

rest among the plants and trees
reminded by the icy breeze
of fluid warmth our passion frees;

blood of incurable STDs.

from life we find strength
with whatever we like

lets lie naked in the park tonight.
invite fear.

me 'n' u
an open sandwich; gourmet

i add to it
every day...

preparing for god knows what
at a cafe close to you.

a most unhealthy menu.

fruit flavoured drinks
on a Spring afternoon
with our sunglasses on.
i was leaning back on my chair
-i couldn't help it when the spirit of youth
was right before me
and before i knew it
i was walking with her in the park.
while waving to distant friends
our pop-culture comedy
kept our contagious giggle
all the way to her house,
the one with the birdbath.
brevity flowed from her
arms and her eyes
while she showed me her bathtub
and wierd soft toys.
talking was just for fun
with her
and her hug was more of a squeeze;
she didn't just let go.
she was feeling my face with her
thin, cool fingers
(my navel felt like the red spot of Jupiter!)
when her wet, boysenberry tongue
found my own
in a fleeting luxurious moment
we were the playthings of love.

looking at me.
i turn to look back at you.
i cross your path.
stopped at the lights
i wave to somebody.
i wear my suit
like an extension of skin:
i see dead leaves wavering.
i designed
leaflets, buildings...
i truly am a seer,
but not like my friend or idol.
i adorned a peaceful beatnik look,
i paid for my comforts with money,
with madness.
look at me.
i'm looking at you.
websites, sprites and meteorites
work like all of us do;

publically.

radiohead
the radio resting on his shoulder,
his eyes agaze at everything,
he sees through all the people
and shout/sings the range he pleases.

greeting him is meeting him
on a level as deep as
mantarays and plankton.

a stalwart of city life,
he broadcasts ridiculous
reflections of people
and laughs when they think him retarded!

admiring him is foolish too,
so here we have our last city-scene lesson:

live and let live
if you dig it.

rash
bearing it all
for people.
I chose to mutilate myself
and bare the evidence
like some kind of educated monster.
the irritation, the annoyance
and the regret
all come together
like a posse.

i love a good posse.

away from the job
in search of something
with friends,
without maps or directions.

barely sufficient nutritions.

at cold locations
my pains renamed me
and told me
the price of work.
the cost of fortune.

statements and interactions
invented debts for me
not repayable with blood.

i sit 'round a fire with friends for the meantime.

slingshot

how can i have become addicted to ink on paper at such a young juncture in my life? i exercise just one muscle and, in a fair deal, that brain exercises nothing else but me. it enjoys the spotlight and makes my life confusing by rubbing itself against the grain of any activity i enjoy. this and that mean nothing; i have lost my original beauty. the world casts its light on my misshapen eyes and while sitting here i lose all faith in my once streamlined levelheadedness. this is the kind of debt that places your life on a slingshot and pulls a little each day. slowly, it becomes more and more tempting to let go of every strain and forget every search. but then what? i need to get back to my innocent/adventurous self and let responsibility fall on the shoulders of one that can bear it.

in which direction do i face and who
or what am i pulling?

slippery silver
floats in the dark.
floats in potent thoughts.
pretends
it can send a message,
people, but can it?

a tired idea will fail
slippery thoughts will say all

ghostly trail

the pale soul eyes
of a poet.

solis
in youth,
i tried to take solis from T.V.
and when i think back,
it's because i was just sick
with frustration and boredom.

so, lying awake one night,
i made friends from outside logic.

i found them highly strung, and yet sweet,
so i spoke with them. taking arms against virtue,
i was newly born to the world!
chaste imagination, my trust i entrusted to you!
my mind became smothered with hope.
i mixed risk with joy for one deathly request at
madness, and it was here i met terror for the first time.
for this i was grateful, but it did bring a wealth
of insecurity; which no matter what i tried, i couldn't
seem to shake.

so now, in a few days time, i'll awaken sleeplessness
and find the friends again.
by doing this i might possibly recover that sickness!
it's the hell which strips away hope and despair,
refunding discomforting fear.
I need only it to live!
while
solis is fleetingly free,

forever.

splash!
look!

it's happening right now
making the ripples
piercing the silence
and spreading the spirit's felicity.

the waves seem seperate
they delude the mind so,
but the splash is our life bearing
intrinsic glow

i'm alive
i am not...
in its flow.

stoned is the time
for richness of feeling;
homemade memories
awake from concealing.

streets polarize
enchanted media unspoken of,

and cut into me
retrieving rites of passage
now just flesh-wounds.

always just heal.

always just disappear
into catacombs of our choosing
and scrape back filth

to find new truth
which one day is something,
the next; something else.

anything which upsets the applecart
has a brand new tool for healing and
clothing oneself with.

my new truth reveals foetal security

or sensory extension.

it shows me my reflection

to heal me.

a new lust for climbing trees;
something that can't let me down.
i hitched a ride to the west.

travelling performers pay small heed
to the city's ring of sex.
watery eyes in smoke filled caverns of fire.

intoxicated strangers in magic circles
feel the quivering energy of existence.
sound of rattling as the fallen wave reclaims her stones.

simple walks of confusion through mystic caves
and shimmering moist grass heat
drunken with the rays of dawn.

lying in the middle of music
with nature enduced peace trance.
my world is a wave of impermanence.

their necks were actually red!
i couldn't believe it.

it reminded me of a life i escaped from.
i'm so smart, and i'm so glad
that i followed my heart.

i made poetry my vessel.

many films could be made of my past,
and songs written,
yet poetry appeals the most.

job openings in my hometown.
it also has a red neck;
badly burnt
from various stranglings and hangings, no doubt.

it can never die
because it's already dead.

i won't go back when i really am moving forward.

let it haunt my memories and dreams...
deja-vu is commonplace now
and only moments of time
can frighten me.

at Timaru
time is completed.

volunteer

warm, honey shades of blonde
amid sparkling sunshine and soft breezes;
softness with rigour,
living life as a star;
she's a force to be found
in ourselves.

yellows, oranges and ochres are seen against the vastness of time from the opening of my lonely soul's lost dwelling. i daydream ways of getting there and wonder if these words would sink in the sand beneath the shapes on the wall.

two dice; one is always loaded.
take them both
and roll away,
because this fleeting life is a gamble.
debauchery is partner to affliction;
one is always loaded.

"what is it like?"
(a child to the newly dead.)

"it's everything i hoped it would be;

Agony."

the breath of life;
inspiration, expiration
and the stillness in-between.

dynamic radiance
dyin' make raindance
die makin' Ra dance

i choose to do things
i'm unsure of.

i choose to do things
i'm told not to.

i stay.

i slowly move when i have to-
my sickness is healthy but hard,

it's always a new experience:
fresh like pain or discomfort
flowing from bucket to bucket.

i think water is best of all.

this morning i dreamt that i had been taken by a small passenger plane to just centimetres above the clouds with a group of friends. i can't remember exactly who they were: it's like that with friends, names and faces fade into unimportance. the plane was made to be stationary so that we could get out. "get out?!" i thought to myself, but there it was, right in front of my eyes: trusted faceless friends stepping out onto the cloud and not falling. the pilot and i stepped out, but we were both still holding onto the plane when he pushed me off! i remember falling towards the cloud wondering whether it would really hold me up or whether i'd just fall through, back down to earth and my death. the thought of both outcomes gave me a huge surge of wondrous excitement.

i landed softly on the cloud and, lying on my back, felt the same kind of undisturbed bliss that i have when i lie back in bed and listen to music. "there's three hundred metres of cloud holding us up" the pilot said, laughing kindly.

away along the path that you came
and now it's a new path.
back on that track,
leaving new marks this time
and laughing whole heartedly.
coming around.
getting away.

eyes
her clear and forgiving
receptacles of light.
mounted on white
inside thin delicate envelopes
and sheltered under a sly forrid;
her smooth, glistening mandalas
demand only moisture and nutrients
from their soft metabolic host.

the surrounding muscles
grant her a glorious charm
and lay the plateau
where her shadows
and loose strands of hair
will seduce the wisest
and unlikeliest of men.

hide and go seek
it's one for people that know me;
this is where my honesty goes.
i've trained to paint signs and put you off track.

i can drop some clues
and give them a scent
so they know that they've found me.
next thing i'm gone.

i'll beat a track to another me,
let betrayal usurp my body
until it becomes the crowning truth
and i find my special place.

for years now i've rested in this place. this kingdom.
sleeping on pine-needles and savouring fruit from the
vine. it's become so easy and repetitive that i find
myself with a yearning. a yearning to delight in my
skills once more; so i design a new and shining trail to
make it a memorable journey for the ones who honestly
search me out. they will reach this special place through
their own intuitive spontaneity. now all that's left for
me is to prepare for my next betrayal.

to seek the new empire
and the new robes
those discarded remnants
of another.

inheritence
awakening to his adorable sweet-love
sitting beside him in bed.
the money spender in his
metaphysical travels;
the cleaning of his house,
the transmissions of glorious sport
and the middle-class armour
of his shining car
are easily worth the money spent.
he awakes each morning
to a concentrated kiss
followed by good early Beastie Boys
and his new exercise machine;
the carpeted sunlit room
with jasmin insence (his second fave!)
this setting is neither unique nor delightful
to him, but superior to the unknown alternative.

Hello! Graham. Hows it going?

Thankyou last night. I'm glad that i could talk to you.

I was surprised that you live near my flat.

I came from Japan 3 months ago. I want to make some

New zealand friends, but I don't have chances to do it.

If you don't mind please talk to me from now on.

By the way last night Bic Runga concert was wonderful.

Now I'm listening to the her album "Drive."

If you have free time at this weekend, shall we

do tramping?

See ya!

judgements
grey sky over my life

dry, warm concrete gaze

i can't believe how much you've changed

i can't read the moods of other people

each time we get drunk
you move further away;
you're so far ahead,
i just want you to stay

everything's happening at once;
i'm drowning.

she always seems to walk away
in photographic concrete grey
with greenish, somewhat hazel eyes
she hides the thing her voice implies

i always turn away the task
that helps me reach beyond my grasp
i'm lazy not to do the work
that cleans me up and helps me flirt

so now the cloudy av'rage day
has eased me contemplation's way
and hampered ego's cyclic tricks
just as shyness starts to stick

but when my thoughts get swept with winds
it seems that i forget these things
so what will i do tomorrow?

laugh at my hunger for sorrow.

laugh at my hunger for sorrow.

how
amid vessels of thought
i move and i talk

i walk
and what is it for,
i mean
where does it get me?

and how.

seratonin floods and swims
while
hard-drives spin
librarians grin
penetration
with entry variation
and how
i stopped here
is beyond the capacity.

how is all i can question

how's about learning a lesson.

a girl-like curve on each side
and a clear vine of vibe
running up and down you,
a little to the front
and not there at all.

we dig
we dig!
oh, you dig!

on a sweat ridden
sunday afternoon
at a cafe table
with a view to the world-
in the season of shoulder skin
and maybe even
some abdomen
i'm a bad boy to feel the feminine
enter my anal passage
and stare her straight in the eye.
all women look beautiful
through the eyes
past the skin
and the tired old guardian
called i.

remember.

first thing
there's nobody around
in the house or outside
just hi-fi freedom
and the fear of surprise
banging on the door
or just walking in.
the people all leaving
can make me feel good,
feel free,
and calmly from the shower spray
it sprinkles
all about me.

i frantically ejaculated while naked on top of a mountain
overlooking the city. i didn't even care. i did yoga too.
nature can be very good,
and we can freely access human nature.
more natural than nature.
you really asked a girl with wings and long hair
"where do i catch the ferry?"
we each speak our own language
and language rests on its sides
while we judge each other.
this is no problem.
tick, tick, tick
means every second we're getting something right;
we just don't know what it is.

as far out
as my feet can take me

i'm traffic on words
stopped at the lights;
when i want to write, i can't.

my destination is here
and i can't wait to find it.

"clearance sale"
for sale: fairyland,discoveries,
and the unprecedented creativity.

for sale: the bodies that we all yearn to touch
and the eyes we never look into.

for sale: the unexpected encounters
and the man with the soft voice.

for sale: emotional outlets; music, dance.

for sale: the next level, the honesty
and abnormality.

devotion is being reduced to 10% of its shelf price.

with the takings, i will buy a timepiece
to carry me away like a child.
i will play along;
apparently oblivious to the unspoken insults.

no longer will i be attached to detachment.

a foolish and weak barbarian.
unimaginative
and very soon
to be killed.

sitting in the cafe corner
holding a bue pen and red lecture book
sharpened more and more
by the luke-warm coffee
that i am careful not to spill
my thoughts lie on the sidewalk
under each step
of the people who own their own worlds
and can't imagine the glory unique to them

behind mortality
they are mocking our reality;
behind our backs
hilarity.

finally; i am returned

and let it be known!

asian girl, devoid of all english,
when we kissed
our tongues were one
in the salivatious synchronicity
only a dream could recreate.

what scars these are without light!

and drag me
through the room...

(...)
"i hope i didn't leave you with any illusions..."
was food for my ears
from her voice (H)

but poison to my heart (H).

lucky that i possess
more than my fair share of pretence;
the best kind.
the kind that lurks
in my various questions
and agreeable nature.

"i want you tonight"
she said (before trying to get a mouthful),
and we were both surprised to see
that my penis affords no pretence.

therefore i shall never question it
nor agree with it

and my heart will be red once more.

my heart can be red once more.

i am impressive like a sunset

there is none.

i met you in the backyard of your house
when we were only 5 and my parents were visiting you

we were best friends for an afternoon.

we don't feel that we've betrayed each other,
crying out from the underworld,
and we have fond memories of the afternoon.

opposite sexes sometimes get married as a result of this

maybe in the marriage vows it should say:

> "do you promise to have best friend afternoons
> with this person unceasingly
> for the rest of your god given life?"

there is none.

unchild
"colour,
composition,
spirit,
death,
sex,
music
and love
are
all
that's
left
to
give
me
awe."

the time and the means
weakness or strength:
there you are, it is strength.
you know neither where you are going
nor why you are going;

you've more fortitude than a saint,
more common sense than a traveller-
and you, you alone! serve as witness
to your glory and your reason.

enter everywhere, respond to everything.
noone will kill you any more than if you were a corpse.

one tap of your finger on the drum
releases all sounds and begins the new harmony.

the sun eclipses all humours,
all characteristics.
piercing the division between sky and sea
it chooses me,
embraces me
and warms me
while the sticks, the tussock and dry earth
peacefully receive my body
onto their solid and carefree slumber.

a young man in the kitchen
of his first inner-city flat thinks
"i wish i had some buds"

2 friends up on a hill
chatting about the rollercoaster ride of life
and one says
"i'm sorry i haven't got any gunja
to blow you out with man"

the anticipation of watching a new-release
sci-fi video amongst some flatmates and friends
sparks the sentiment
"now all we need is some pot!"

and stoned somewhere in the suburbs
a student drifts to sleep
after a fleeting thought
of the hard work ahead
tomorrow.

strife

stretching into my dreams.

strife

is mine sufficiently.
it grows in height to spite me.

strife

was born in my hometown
and thrives on domestic comfort.

ladies and gents

we have wrapped up
our sensitive hearts.

we have wrapped them up
in devotion

a shield from the prodigal problem
of strife.

we all get

force-fed

life.

crazy Graham on High street
touching and thanking a star
made me see that stars aren't far away.
bursting through media
like light, music
and propaganda,
the star is our origin
and we maintain the glow
which is often
unnoticed
by others.

slow down! give yourself time to think before you act.
seen enough. the vision appeared in all atmospheres.
give your new peaceful tendencies a chance to be put into practise.
had enough. uproars of cities, in the evening, and in the sun, and always.
don't allow yourself to have the thought "i haven't got time",
this is the recipe for instant stress.
known enough. the impasses of life,
O uproars and visions!
become detached from your own thoughts.
departure into new affection and clamour.

this one goes along like that,
he's a sloth.
here because he has to be.

doesn't like to mingle.
doesn't like to be looked at.
the effort to justify his lifestyle
receives the silence
it deserves.

<u>routine left-overs</u>
smitten by the raw fruits
and diluted coffee
i realise the embrace of nature's womb...
decision is a gift
from an ever present master;
from the ultimate poet.

all my constipated thankyous are released at once!

thankyou so much for sending me choices
and thankyou for hiding each bundle of charity
in the most obvious and inconspicuous
of places.

even our judgements and speculations
are acts of unwrapping,

each reaction of ours is a return gift...
embraces;
comedy!
discovery!
and inspiration!

i've been waiting,
you have too
because it was promised us
when arts were introduced
by gods
from another time.
our renderings are now sufficient
but our structures are not even to the level of primitive.
what is it to draw, anyway?
will you show me?
it can't be shown.

ask just a question to me
-i don't even know what an answer is...
do you?
no,
but someone does.

someone drinks death in a room
alone
while i try to answer a question.

while flash of a light wakes resting.

a purge-prize
an end to impressing and testing people
is an Ali-worthy prize,
and one worth playing for.

i never quite grasp it
but i can always reach...

reach out, reach down, reach up
or reach people.

a purge comes after dry-reaching.

personal reading

in the midst of a Hi-Fi hallucination, i was once dealt a card that said "out of the surrounding fumes sprung a strong, swift and youthful vanity." a taste of dirt on my teeth, i felt overcome with blossoming wealth. i had attempted the debauchery, the drug addiction and the dreaminess... though, i never caught the drift; even when i was digging it i wrote

"hey clouds, have a try in the sunlight"
"hey faith, have a sphere in the dark night."

this was until, on the brink of an important deception, i realised that to them i'm just a smelly clown who asks around each part of town; an embarrassment to the doubtful cafe culture as we know it. like the undernourished and dehydrated orphan who is enamored by the play of filthy water at her feet. she is tempted not to drink. i was bewildered by the dissipation in love and friendship, so i became just, noble and generous with a sense of humour.

it is an important deception for sure!

it is the slut of all communication.

moving
do not taste your coffee,
but remember your second to last sip;
a sacrifice for the painful purpose.
your spirit tempts you
for it is your greatest vice.
girls have to act like girls sometimes.
it kindles the religious frigidity
and the mental contempt
that love you unconditionally;
even after exhaustive deaths.
here is your addiction,
your ecstacy
and the ultimate sensuality.

the weak and helpless larvae
will never fuss over which breast is which,
but i retreat to coffee
for it is all the same to me.

the next level
a man sitting on a footpath
walks away to get high
on an escalator.
he plays a timely entrance
and keeps on his toes
all the way up.

riding his arch,
he goes on to feel
the sides of one foot
against the throwline of his boot.
this is what's called
"taking your first step"

his other foot followed,
so natural progress is taking place.

we could have limbs all over each other,
all around each other.
i could lick your gums
while you taste my saliva.

i could stroke your hair
and have you embrace me.
fingers
eyelids
nipples
enthusiastic and violent luxury!
a blissful ignorance
of past future thought
or fear.

help me to understand my dreams and desires.

Ki$^{b}_{d}$a *

stand for a moment in the landscape of a non-spherical planet with a violet white sun. her sands and skies colour your mind with bright, milky memories of coffee. there are no clouds. blood rivers mirror the sun and contain all energies vital to the masculine inhabitants. the planet feels eternally loved: they swim in her rivers because they need her. she loves to feel needed. the images carved on a cave wall fill the being of the one who has now awakened and submerged himself in Ki$^{b}_{d}$a's violet, flowing life. but after being cleansed, opened and pronewed, he moves to find the inhabitant that deigns the touch of sun or river and breathes only of the high cloud. there is intrigue between them:
Ki$^{b}_{d}$a is enough for one, nothing is enough for the other.

* Pronounce by sounding "b" and "d" simultaneously

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