

Idle Matinée

with Gil Adamson

ok, my neighbour says
once i was a liftbridge
and they filmed the moon landing on my spine

see,
they left a shoe, a map of Maryland
a dog-eared copy of *How to Teach Your Dog to Sing*

it wasn't a hard time
just therapy for my swollen
membranes

see,
my neighbour lies a lot
he cooks marine mammals at night
he sang
I was Swinging and Sky High
sitting in his baby wading pool
festooned with debris

rockets could write your name in the sky
sure
but you can't read

i never learned the language

the old folks upstairs have a dog
a white dog
and he speaks for us all

the dog barks at the bony moon
there are tiny jumpy things
at the furry edge of consciousness

and our sight isn't so hot
(are those rockets? that my name?)
and though it's true
we never learned the language
we smell well

can tell someone's cooking up dolphins
basting their vague smiles with inflated promises

living's therapy for some other time
they say to the spatula

they pull down the dark sky
project something out at the stars
if we don't walk away for popcorn
we'll never hear
the sticky smack of earth's sweet floor

Some Other Fish

the googly eyes of death
are under my arms
i can't take a shower
seem to have no place
to write my name

is that the telephone?
no it's a fish on the end of my hook
and i'm completely surrounded

i open the door to my Mazda
and then back up
it snaps off
caught on the little speaker
at the drive-thru

there are gills on the sole of my left foot
i can breathe only every other step
unless i hop or else
drive
but only automatic

it's getting hot in here
i don't want to blink
in case i miss something:
my entire life, or
a cheese sandwich floating through
the crenellated air

can you hear that?
it's a little car
revving its motor on my shoulder
it's just travelled
up from my wrist
tells me
time to take a shower

there's a big eye at the top of the stall
if you say sad things
it begins to cry and
then you can shower

oh it's nice to be rid of this dirt
to live again
to have the right smell

Tatterdemalion

O my feathers
they're becoming long wheat
and over the hill
there's a guy dressed in blue
looking at the ground
and ah he is saying
look at my feathers
they're burning
like a spiral of little Joes

Joe, they say, little Joe
why do you dress in blue?
why examine the ground?
we become a bird fallen into lustrous sand
then the iridescent phlegm of bagpipers
glorious with flu
we become a pockets of lizard feather
a sheep skull masks in the idle afternoons
Joe, they say,
we exhort you:
turn your feathers of bone into the pliant
Monday of our tattoo

bird are flying like wheat in the fallow fields
ah and my back turning feather
there seem to be these hills gob radiant
a long shoals of fire
the spiral torch
a shadowy tangos of ants on the feel-good ground

All Hat And No Cowboy

the horizon curves round me
a leathery shrine

it's dark in here

in the distance i can barely make out

7 1/2 D

maybe a rattler over the rise
haven't seen the sun since
we began this ride

this is what it'll say on my grave:
rode out west one day
made it from ear to ear
if only his hat hadn't been so big

Broken Chair

don't sit there they said
don't sit on the broken chair

don't wear the burning boots
they said don't wear the burning tie

i never should have sat on the broken chair
never should have walked in the burning boots
i never should have entered the broken shed
looking for the burning tie

perhaps if i'd been there when the mountains were made
things would've been different

i could've rested on the chair of thorns in the damaged shed
could've repaired my sad insides with the burning hammer

instead i'm on this red rock
and there's a fingernail on one of my fingers
that i've never trimmed
that i've let grow long as my arm
i reach up
cut out a section of sky
wrap it round me like a cloak

soon the cloak grows dark
is woven with stars
i can feel satellites beaming
sports channels across my back

i tilt my head
hear the six o'clock news
hear that i've replaced
my teeth with scree from the mountainside
my feet with drive-in movies
that i wear the burning belt
the broken shoulderblades
imagine i'm a monk
copying out
the names for bread

the care and cleaning instructions for
the snappy DNA tie
my mother gave me
and that goes with
the chromosomal suit
that was my father's

cut to a picture of me swimming
in my sad skin
the burning boots round my neck
the broken chair between my teeth
it seems like i'm dragging
the hammer of thorns in my one long finger

really i feel like a cloud in my cloak of sky
the kind of cloud that collects
above a mountaintop
obscuring the peak and the little men
just barely visible
planting their flag like a pricetag in the burning
boots of their dreams

get me my hammer
i think it's time for a slice

Mandala

Nelson Mandela is sitting on a log
outside the entrance to a Grimm forest
his elbows are on his knees and

Nelson Mandela is sitting amiably on a log
outside the entrance to a forest
thick as my unconscious

it seems he is whittling something out of white wood
he rests his elbows on his knees and is looking down
deep in conversation with perhaps a small boy
a teenaged Costa Rican
a small chipmunk-sized animal that had appeared
from behind the log

the camera pans down the path and into the forest
there are eleven-year olds running everywhere
by a bend in the path there are five of them
– their pants half pulled down –
their hands moving frantically up and down
their thin white penises

i see myself close by
settling in to sleep on a mossy bank
i am very calm
probably thirteen years old

i am aware of some kind of military formation
in the meadow beyond the woods
dressed in tan desert uniforms
one of them holding a flapping red flag

this is no day to die
this is no day to resolve anything

In My Pocket

what's this in my pocket?
it's a tongue
and hey
there are teeth in my other pocket
if i could get them together
like the Israelis and the Palestinians
there'd be a lot of nifty consonants
they could say together
it'd be tremendous
but then again
how'd i ever sit down?
i'd never be able to finish my dinner
or bend over to watch the little people
badmouthing me
holding festivals in my honour
and in my shoes

Bystander

golly, the stars and springs
the splintery triangulations
split off and gone boing
the wheels and round metal bits
rolling
finally spinning to a halt at my feet
i guess a car accident
a mattress colliding with a Model T
a cartoonist's head split open
ok so i'm looking
but i'm facing another direction
hands at my side
it's only my eyes that give me away
their oops!-worried look
and my little reddened nose
but what happened to my ear
it must have slid round my head and
where'd my zipper go?
– i know these pants had a zipper –
and the hairs on my chest
and hey! my collar, my shirt, my nipples
i've no fingers left
and god i've got no bum
where's the ground the buildings
my hat?
i was just chaining my bike to a parking meter
and now i'm floating in
– it must be red air –
i'm a bar of soap
whizzing out of human hands into some sort of
scarlet abyss

i have this awful feeling that i'll land
with a plop
some place awful