

The Journey To Here

Ben Myers

The Journey to Here

London

grabbed me by the scruff of the neck and dragged me down the M1
my heels bouncing along the tarmac
like I'd sprinkled jumping beans on my corn flakes.

The journey to here took

twenty-one years
give or a take an hour or two for stopping off for a
full english overpriced plastic breakfast
at a Little Chef
somewhere
north of Nottingham

Fields

flashed by like old newsreel footage unravelling into the future

At

Watford Gap I looked for a change in climate
and the big chasm that marks the South from everywhere else
but
there was nothing
but
more roads and roundabouts and slip roads and the sky was the same moribund
wet grey.

Suddenly

we rounded a corner and I saw a neon Oz
standing tall amongst a brown cloud that looked like the pipe smoke
of all the Oxbridge professors
that have ever lived.

You

only see this once so I took a photograph as I skidded
through an underpass and turned onto the Edgware Road,
immediately engulfed
by shops selling
falafel and
cheap hash

under the counter.

Someone
asked me the time and when they left my watch was gone,
someone
asked me directions to my wallet,
a whore tried to suck me off as we paused at traffic lights and
I got into a road rage incident with two men wearing gold in their mouths,
all of us making
grand gestures with our hands like rival tribal elders arguing over
reservation boundaries.

I
watched a riot sweep past us, moving from east to west like a plague
of locusts carrying Molotov cocktails,
at Hyde Park corner I argued with a Jehovah's Witness
about organised religion and only escaped by misquoting Nietzsche to her.

In
Pimlico a coal-haired heather-toting gypsy spoke in tongues and put a curse
on me,
a jaundiced beggar sold me priceless tales of woe and heroin
in exchange for
money
and two
cigarettes.

I
was dropped off by the river, the soles of my shoes gone and my feet
hardened like the face of a retirement-age bus driver.

There
I lay on my back, checking the sky for messages, holding my breath,
sweating, tired, dirty
and finally
here.

The Black Bean

I want my coffee
so dark
it comes with
a lighthouse

so strong

it cracks fine
bone china
so black
it's dressed for
a funeral

so potent
my teeth grind
to dust

so wired
my socket
is sparking

I want to be
ripped to the tits
and gurning.

And
for God's sake
hold off on the milk;

I'm going Turkish on yo ass.

Some Tough Guy

nerves jangling
paranoid
messed with
too many times
I went to Brixton to buy a baseball bat
and it wasn't because I had the urge to play baseball

two hours
later
I returned with six chocolate cup cakes
some fresh shallots
a bottle of Evian
and an obscure book of poetry

some tough guy, huh?

Cool Words I Intend To Use In A Future Poem

wack
Satan
tump
fuckyermudda
chevron
somnambulist
chicken
choke
beads
festering
amber
crescendo
mayonnaise
bombthebastards
booty
north
south
east
vest
brisket
belligerent
unfortunately

gynecologically mutated.

I very much doubt it'll be a love poem.

Like Birds

like birds
we ruffle our feathers
and soar above the crowd,
shitting on them
from a great
height

hot strings
of it twirling down
like victorious laughter,
like the tails
of little
kites.

a modern courtship (this is how we do it)

the first e-mail is full of small talk
tiny, even
and niceties
without abbreviation

her response is full of much the same:
news and
gossip pertaining
to mutual interests

the second e-mail concludes with:
would you like
to go for
a drink?

her response is full of
news and gossip
and no mention
of drinks

the third e-mail concludes with:
so how
about that
drink?

her response is brief in
news, gossip and the
crippling cost of living
(without drinks)

the fourth e-mail is so psycho
in intent that not even I
would go for a drink
with me

now I await her response -
fingers poised to
type my way
to surefire celibacy.

Ode To A Rock Song

a song will
linger longer
if the bass is turned up so high
your bowels reverberate
like a snare drum
full of ice cream

and your neighbours
plot your murder.

Storm Fonts

thedensityoftheforest

^ ^

mountainmountains across the horizon mountainmountains

(wind)
(silence)

l / i / g / h / t / b / e / t / w / e / e / n / t / h / e / b / r / a / n
/ c / h / e / s

!!
!!! l g t a n
!!!
!! a i h r i
!!

! turns to drizzle !

[the sky smiles sepia]
with electricity

£?*lightening!~>
@\$darkening~#&

+ the storm +
un

Future Serial Killers

The Swansea Slasher

The Black Void

The Peckham Pig Knuckle

The Vanilla Killer

Bozo The Clown

Balloon Fetishist #4

John Doe The Blowtorch Blind Bob Dillinger

Son Of Sam II

The Nursery Rhyme Crime Queen

The Praying Mantis

Jimmy Needles

Stun Gun O'Malley

Cat O' Nine Tails

Mack The

Knifer

The Black

Country Lifer

The Gentle Gimp

The Stuttering Limp

The

Blackbeard Flasher

The Deer Stalker

The Crawley Creeper

Oxford English

(words randomly selected from page corners in dictionary)

I

ugly bitch for beautiful license
death salvation lavishes crucifixion stick
freedom bewilders good sister's habit
babies flash hobgoblin
nobody pleads
sepulchre stampede -
midwinter.

II

deplete gunshot tangle
conservative calculator immemorial

subtract the thousand
deep deluxe instrumental ligaments;

drizzle duo
frost forum
force-fed footlights
turncoat triumph

III

poem ~ n. literary composition in verse

Where I Live

they closed the road again
and the nearby train has stopped in its tracks,
abandoned
fluttering plastic ribbons everywhere
CAUTION: POLICE LINE
on and on into infinity

cops stand around in gaudy yellow-green
looking bored
looking for weapons
a severed head
a smoking cigarette

or who knows what the hell?

I had to take the long way round
the back roads
skirting another crime scene
that to these adjusted eyes
looks as staged as
Shakespeare in the park

but it's not
it's just more death
more mayhem
another urban statistic
another day
south of the river

if there was no crime then we'd really all start getting paranoid.

Christmas Sex

it was a fourteen day
every-other-night
Christmas holiday
type thing

after the first time
drunk on vodka and wine
the formula
stayed much the same

we'd smoke weed
and watch lame TV
until she went upstairs
with a wink

while I talked to Davey
her flat-mate
my friend
and corkscrew-headed drinking buddy

there was snow on the ground
and her skylight window was open
to the
winter stars

halfway through
on her back
she'd say
"I love it when you fuck me"

and I was glad to know
that she loved it when
I fucked her and that
after many months
of soul-searching
self-flagellation
and dark nights in the city
it all still worked.
So this one's for her. free of charge..

For The Best

unrequited love?
well, shit, it's not something
any drug
can remedy

it's not
like you can force someone
to reciprocate
your obsession

it won't
fall down on her from
the sky
like rain

it's not
going to happen with flowers
or chocolates
or stalking

dumb poetry
won't work, she'll likely
think you're
sensitive, gay

no

all you
can do is step back
be cool
and hope.

Miami Vice

Bukowski could have written this:
she sidles over from the pool table and
a man with a bad moustache called Daryl,
right up beside me she is,
so close that I buy her a beer,
big mistake.

Ten minutes later she's lifting
the hem of her skirt to show me the dog
bites she accrued climbing over fences
in the back alleys
of Miami
two nights previously.

Like the rest of America she's
"not from around here,"
as if to explain the weeping
sores that lactate when she shakes her
money maker,
causing me to splutter.

"See them guys?"
she jerks a thumb to the pool table.
"Buncha friggin' bums, aight?
Sleeping in car-lots and shit,"
she sub-consciously scratches a scab:
"Not me."

Then she turns on her stool and I know
she's about to close the deal
after only one Heineken,
scratches a thigh sore,
here it comes:
"So you got company tonight?"

But I'm not Bukowski and the living reality
of screwing a bag of dog bites
for hard ca\$h and AIDS stinks so I

slip to the bathroom and when she's back with Daryl
I'm out the side door
into the warm hard-bitten poetry-free night.

Nineteensixtysomething

"Hey man," draws the reconstructed sandal-wearing hippy fuck,
"I'd really like to share a toke with you man,"
to the kinda famous rock star who married into Hollywood royalty,
"I'd really like to fire up a stogey and, you know, get hiiiigh bro,"
and the rock star guy who irons his hair eyes the backstage security guard
with the kind of suspicion that all security guards and policemen and failed
sportsmen and dumb baton-wielding figures of authority should be viewed and
you can tell that he doesn't want to get high with this no-sock wearing
baby-boomer Deadhead motherfucker but he's thinking about it because it's
people like him who put him where he is: here, in the back entrance loading
bay of a soul-less Florida arena, promoting a record that will later be
known as 'the drug album', an album so retrogressive it's grown facial hair
from cob-webs and this kinda rock star shrugs and says
"Sure dude,"
and the joint is lit and passed around to me and I suck on it a good one and
fill my lungs with smooth green Cali, eyes watering, stronger than I'm used
to, but not strong enough to be an embarrassment, and the wizened old acid
throwback is saying something about campaigning to get 'the shit' legalized
and he's showing off this little hand-crafted pipe thing that he's pulled
out of his pocket and the kinda rock star is politely umm-ing and ah-ing and
everyone's calling each other duuude and I'm buzzing nicely but the fat
security guard Nazi fuck is about to wander over and I see that in addition
to the gun he's also got mace and cuffs and batons and all sorts of stuff
hanging from a belt that's straining from the pressure of a
five-doughnut-a-day-diet and the kinda rock star is vacantly twisting his
hair around a finger and he's wearing these really pathetic bell bottoms
that look like the ghost of a pair of distressed Levi's once worn by, like,
a dead miner or something and they're all covered in these little sew-on
patches of peace signs and marijuana leaves and the security fuck is getting
closer because he suspects someone is having fun tonight in Fort Lauderdale
without his authorisation and the old stoner is going 'Uh-oh' and giggling
like a school kid and the kinda rock star says something about a soundcheck
and the security ape is only a few steps away and his mouth is moving and he
's breathing fire and I'm choking and when I turn back the kinda rock star
has disappeared and so has the smoke-pickled, Kerouac-quoting, bong-sucking
dickwad and all I can hear is the flip-flop of his sandals somewhere in the
distant night so I turn back to the security bitch and realize that I've got
the big bomber hanging from my lower lip and all of a sudden my mouth opens

and I hear myself yelling
"FUCK THE PIGS!"
as the joint drops to the floor scattering bouncing hot rocks of orange and
I run off into the darkness like it's nineteensixtysomething but of course
it's not and I've merely been misled.

Peace man.

Another Dumb Poem About Poetry (October 2001)

I have decided:
poetry is journalism of the soul
if the soul exists
and journalism cares little for facts

which, let's face it, has always been the case.

I write this:
another dumb poem about poetry
during yet another war
because it seems like it's all I can do

apart from joining the Marines and getting my ass blown to smithereens

I think that:
the body of an innocent child
wrecked by an errant missile
isn't poetry

I know that:
three smoking planes crashing
into an image of God
isn't poetry

I know that
a rise in sales of flags
and gas masks and patriotism
isn't poetry

but maybe writing about who and why and what we feel, is..

It's official then:
poetry is journalism of the soul
a Bible of purity

amongst the dusty dolomite ruins of man's stupidity.

And amen to that.

Only Tourists Call It 'Frisco

From Fisherman's Wharf where the sea air smells
like a graveyard of wide-eyed, floating, listless cod heads
you can see Alcatraz, that symbol of American
justice and madness and cruelty.

Machine Gun Kelly, Alphonso Capone,
who can forget The Birdman out there
with nothing but time and contraband
worms on his hands?

Over to our right, sea lions honking for the tourists
playing dumb, eating clam chowder with one hand
from bowls fashioned from loaves of bread,
taking pictures with the other.

A make-shift booth sells T-shirts that say
"I survived The Rock!", but I didn't so
I don't buy one and instead take a tram that's steered
by a man who has never read Jack London.

Wish You Weren't Here

London is
a thoughtless composition of yellow WITNESS APPEAL signs
telling of ROBBERY and RAPE and MURDER
DID YOU SEE ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS?
like a man with blood spurting from his neck?

London is
a cheap cotton dress whore on the Brixton Hill sniffing
BLOW-JOBS BLOW-JOBS SUCK YOU OFF GOOD as you stare
at her hair and her legs and she flashes her moneymaker
and says WHAT ABOUT YOU FUCKER? YOU WANNA FUCK?
but she looks like sickness in a chapel of rest dress.

London is
a hot bloody kinetic concrete war of dilapidated history falling apart
at the seams and SCREAMS and SIRENS and CAR-HORNS
a symphony of ENERGY and VIOLENCE and WHAT THE FUCK

three decades on the force,
pale doughnut skin sweating in the West Memphis sun,
"nor man nor beast nor nuthin' but the devil hisself.
Now what say we pay this evil fuck a little visit."

Like Salem re-visited they dragged the boy from his books
and threw him to the wasp-ish pack
a dozen in all, there was Teddy and Harry and Rick Rickett,
Arlene, Bobby-Joe and Jim Swindler
there was Eddie and Jessie and Ray
and Buffy and Tracy and Peggy-Sue too,
ain't never done nuthin' wrong 'cept a bit of cussin and drinkin and
philandering and killin' critters an maybe a bit of fighting and thieving
and sister fucken when times were hard, but none of them, however desperate,
done gone and dyed their hair and banished God from their lives and killed
them poor young defenceless boys
hoo-wee
no Sir-ee

and amen to that

but neither did Damien Echolls
screaming inside as the judge quashed his world
to an eight by three room
and a nocturnal visit from a shank-toting trustee by the name of Bubba
Damien Echolls
guilty of being slightly intelligent
guilty of being vaguely different
twelve faces said so
beyond a shadow
of a doubt
beyond the shadow
of the valley of death
that awaits him

and there he sits today
waiting for God to die
so that he too can be free
just like the real
brimstone-spitting enemy.

Damien Echols.

Cigarette Break

This is a poem
written during a cigarette break
at work.

Work rules us
work feeds us
work kills us -
I suppose it's just a case
of finding time
for a cigarette break.

This poem -
it's not really about anything
other than proof
perhaps
that
Shakespeare, Wordsworth, you
and me
don't mean shit
unless we can write a poem
about nothing during a stolen
cigarette break.

Seven minutes.
Not bad.

Winedrunk summer

How much wine
did we drink
last night?

Enough
to knock me
on my arse

And have us
laughing
until dawn.

All Roads Lead North

It's the closest you get to time travel
fleeing north
the world by the window
green streaks of England
punctuated by coughing carbuncles fit to explode
remember / rewind
step back in time
to reminisce, have a drink
and think about the old times
the wine-times
the summer nights with the girls
down by the river
the girls
in the nightclubs of my heart

the fields, the friendships
the 3 am fights -
but remember the stormclouds, them too
fleeing north.

Floating Home

She creaks and groans like an ancient galleon
swaying steadily in the mist
this building
standing tall in the city seascape.

Down below in the belly
stowaways sip little glasses of warmth
and light fires
to ward off modern pirates

An icy breeze whistles around the crow's nest
that hasn't seen a bird for months
despite the crumbs
and the potted plant

We batten down the hatches
and listen to the wild dogs
whose howls
echo onwards.

Unshaven inhabitants stoke up wooden bowls

of muddy tobacco
pungent, intoxicating
blue smoke hanging heavy

Solitary figures curl up in their cabins
reading great literature
in cheap paperbacks
that litter their floors

Sonorous sirens pulsate in the distance
too muffled to interrupt
- the shifting thoughts
of the lost sailors

Beneath the uneven surface
broken pipes siphon sewage
past twitching rats
where spastic weeds push upwards.

And she drifts steadily to nowhere.

What A Love Poem Really Means

I think this love thing
is based around
the ability
to accept a girl's fart
without sniffing
or saying anything.

For K.

You're a constant
a smile
in my life
frying garlic in the kitchen
applying face cream
and laughing at the television
sitting on the settee
with the late light
bending softly through the windows
you look like perfection
personified
in a memory photograph.

Literary Rejections Are What Makes a Man

Dear Ben,

Thank-you for sending us your play for consideration.

Unfortunately

(don't say it)

after careful

(don't say it)

consideration

our panel of

(Nazis)

readers has decided that

your play

(don't say it motherfucker)

will not be taken any further.

(damn, you said it)

The dialogue is

snappy

(yes)

and has a certain

bite

to it

(I'll bite your ass, fool)

but you have to decide

what it is about

(like everything: nothing)

and what is you want

to comment on.

We would like to thank you

(no, thank you)

for entering your play

and to

encourage you

to

(give up?)

keep up with your writing.

We wish you

(death, pestilence)

good luck in your future

(suicide)

writing.

Yours sincerely,

the end.

Solid Tub

White grubby
bath-tub
a motherfucker
of a bath-tub
that's seen me
clean
for eighteen months
that's warmed my
cockles
for eighteen months
sturdy metal
bath-tub.
On breezeblocks
that never made it
to buildings -
pity the breezeblocks
but bow
and pay homage
to the silent
beast of the bathroom
a Parthenon
in a penthouse Acropolis.
More welcoming than any
church
more divine than any
religion
bath-tub
always there -
grubby bath-tub.

The Contract

The contract stipulates
that
your balls belong to them.

From now on
your sleep
your stubble
your liver trouble
belongs to them.

