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Imperfect Pitch

Its arrival is in your bizarre aloneness, when a cranial firing returns of an instant, each resonates and is at once the first and last, at once it is all there is. The idle pun has a compass, the line of a song squeezes in what you know of love. And though this seems incessant, it is discontinuous, and cannot begin to amount to a you or a me; no damp peat, no source, no background, no relations.

But you cannot be independent. Consciousness is the cutter into the black. This black is black since saturated and enforming; down dabs the deckled blade, tiny round one synapse, and is so briefly registered. Against what? In its reflex jump, against the infinitesimally small space, which is space entire.

And they are maddening, these jumps. Who can live for the word, for the pregnant gap? Write them down, reduce them stroke by stroke. You clear them as they happen, but the page gets black with reverberations both constrained and indecipherable. Jammed together. So this is our assigned chaos, developing from *the* chaos.

Urgent therefore, to appoint an emissary. Despite yourself, form will be in your image, perhaps your image is no other than this. All these enforming events, great

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shifts impinging at the micro-level, as they accumulate and as they interconnect, start to seem vilely familiar, they stink of your constrained but ever-shifty body, reaccommodating. This image must be buried in non-user-serviceable connections, provisional bloodlines you cannot but follow. A repairman shakes his head on the hard shoulder. And how unsatisfactory the lump is, that excrescence of breath and shit, the increment!

With its departure, you have ceased to hear your thoughts. They do not arise and reverberate in the null, the zero of consciousness; that was a saving cut-out, a basic defence. From this point on, brain activity is absorbed, immediately. It becomes comfortable, tolerable, your thoughts accord to the game-show and to the DJ. The thoughts are no more than trivial thoughts passed through on your checking account, scanned, beside the till. Having no true boundary, you could feel content, held by ambient vacuousness.

And then? Why do you start to detach the work, why can't you bear its familiarity, but you hack it apart, you see the figure you cannot afford to recognise approach, your creature now returns with insistent, with maddening significance, throwing the connective tissue further out of kilter. It starts to appear monstrous, and you must fight it down while yes, admiring its perverse growth and throwing it what food you have. It has struggled clear, and in the struggle seems to become musclebound, or is the thin boy wriggling with a fistful from the narrow larder window, your truer representative? Whatever the lineaments, it has a repertoire of gesture which is well-knit, coherent, and unenformed.

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All its movements rise from an inner fund established as your motive.

It is familiar, like a mood. Moods are the minute-by-minute coherence by which you persist as more than a recipient and emmissionary; only when so split off are they apprehensible, both strange and intimate, curious and simple. Look after this creature and it gives you joy, turn back to your common tasks and you will fall to pieces.

Rolling the lines in the mouth, biting and relishing; what were these swollen and papery boluses of feeling, each expanded to a choking limit, swollen to the mouth's capacity, squeezed hard by the tongue against the palate, the tongue which would never give out, and what were the limits of this expression but those of the hinged muscle's force. You take in everything, but it is the tongue's valve which can block the corollary, to be entirely taken in. Outwardly so cack-handed, inwardly with gristle enough. Still and all I expatiate and cut away, repeatedly; this is the basic work's-rhythm.

Then to find himself with a sequence or perhaps a constellation; the seemingly transparent material of description had divided into distinct figures, erotic or dying masses adventuring to form, constrained to redevelop about what might be so plangent as to dictate a march-rhythm, yet effervesced as rapidly as a mood if once addressed too strenuously and deliberately. Like seeing by night, aside from the beheld object. The motive of development appears as I think now, to have been determined by the desire for return to what was both

intimate and incomprehensible. 'A child may undergo an intensely private self experience that defies his representative capacity, so that the being state persists as a conserved rather than a transformed (symbolised) phenomenon' (Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* [London: Free Association Books, 1987], 111). A mood is not a state, cannot be translated to or from an objective correlative, but inheres in cadence fickle as the breath and as untenable. Here was the start of my ceaseless rigmarole.

The moods were intimate for certain, exact (in the sense they were mutually distinguishable, rather than answering to another disposition) and simultaneously a gratifying mystery and a saving evidence, since he had been brought to believing or to the insistence I had no accessible feelings apart from sexual desire. Since the death of his scarcely known father two or three years before, he had found myself dull, self-protectively. It seems now that he was angry, and that the Buddhist meditation he then practised fitfully and as a public affectation, was a deliberate dulling against my anger as well as assertion of an unreachable nature. Unable to do mathematics, which had been an earlier forte, which had felt like a band of clarity tautening under the forehead, he had lost also the propensity for daydreaming. But this writing, this was the monstrosity for him of an emotional life, and the productive occasion for thought in one with no internal capacity for concentration, choked hitherto with stuff which had been immovable, unturnable in the brain.

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There is a temptation to isolate either the textual or the oral quality of verse; to refer to 'texts' or scorn the written. But the special nature is equivocal/textual, it is in love with the signified in the mouth yet finds it detestable. This starts with the lulling infant, sucking, spitting, and gargling sound, but to become poetic, must be expelled and made other and manipulable, there to be taken up. In fact, the poem becomes a transitional object, put out-there to become a comforter in-here. It forever moves towards estrangement and is retrieved. It can never come fully to symbolise though that is how in my first moment I would urge it, or it loses its physical shape in the mouth, and achieves no more than an inscription, witty or affecting, whichever, but decisively external and fixed. But given the head of its true ambiguity, to a deep mark it remains unthought; it is both propounded and understood, yet never amenable to insight. Its coherence, such as it is, gels round moods, whose own coherences are evanescent and of unknown principle. Because I am shameful and cowardly, I am forever trying to write clear, discursive text, or something free-standing and opening out in its meaning-horizon; it is only with the self-deceiving aim of clarity that I can coax a mood successfully, rather than a psychotic babble. And since I have no wish to die. Night-vision, into the dazzle of the dark that surrounds me and would seize even the skull's space for its slogans. Neonate goes into neon.

A dense world of events, apt to crack beneath attention, nevertheless holds up, holds the attention smeared with white clay. A flimsy premonition of psychosis, for

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soon you will be evicted from this shanty, stuck as you turned with bright feathers, grass, tin number-plates, and pinups. Followed by a new access, cut from the press of saturated light, thrown together as a cadence but to join in a populace from which you withdraw again into dullness and the waiting state. There is both an emergent stranger, and a sense of recognition, an internal crazing projected into the outer world; the crazing is to order and shaped like a raku pot; the crazing is unbiddable and as likely ugly and damaged. Each time the body you start with.

* * *

Can't it be disgusting, a colour supplement exudate, bestows false absolution from a white man's diffuse but definite power, to duck a pervasiveness which buoyed me even as I felt no more than its accident, a spermatozoon of white power flunking its rendezvous repeatedly is itself I have to argue.

I couldn't enjoy such power because it wasn't felt inside as mine, even in adolescent sadistic fantasy wasn't possessed; but to borrow visibility from those whose visibility is their vulnerability, to do this imbued with power, it says, it's not enough to be carried, wafted along on the smiling invisible, I must spit out my nasty bits and ask for their acceptance as a good meal. Egyptian potatoes and Kenyan green beans. Where poetry's of a people in its making, such extension then may be bold in the teeth of power faced as hard and unquestionably embodied, to understand its fate among those side-by-

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side (an ambiguous, a lonely trope), and those who ban, censor, or disdain. Its convolutions and cadences then are the magma of resistance or the gum of constant misery. But like this I shan't posture.

Could it be like for you, the first to read this? That of twelve lyrics you're bound to make, a tremor exactly tuned splits the landmass like a crystal struck, the plane of sound driven and pointed adze-like? Could this happen? Such poise and tuning while all else aggregates, could it be calculated finely enough? But this poise I cannot either.

By contrast what I do, a prophylactic part-identification with the oppressed, has to be decadent. Its social responsibility a strange coinciding rather. Power remains in my products, while like the bland PR of a multinational, I deplore the misunderstanding which could lead to their being used for mother's milk.

Who has been shaped through the instituted power, but after all, cannot embody it, even while I cannot refuse or deny it. Can I instigate a principled decadence of power; what breaks down, may cast a worthwhile gift into the future, for waste may provide a source for responsive energy. The energy of death-throes of the consumer to be consumed as motive for his overthrow. My poems might exact my overthrow, provide for it, but in whose name? They turn on me balefully, and every poem I make is part of a chain reaction, antithetical to rot a corner of conceit, of born arrogance.

This is another kind of conceit, a more subtle colonisation. The world's consumer dumps his waste products, landfills the place of his depredations. The pay-off he

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expects is gratitude, or at the least, forgiveness. He needs to admit to his fallibility in order to feel the better his strength.

* * *

There is a lump in my throat where I have swallowed pages of an elaborate product, a draft of simple confession. The more I have ventured on my pathology, the more I recognise the hubris in that *via negativa*, and there is but one way I have learnt to make good such arguments in myself.

As a child I swallowed compulsively, but to write, from my early teens, banished and sticking-point. I found I could bring the unthinkable out – I had thought I was stupid – and make a thing sufficient and remote to reincorporate; found I could contain my differences once each gathered its substantial being, attaching what in the world about might give it dignity, developing a pseudomusculature and nervous system through internal responses, rhythmic, formal, semantic, assonant: whole and flexed.

* * *

MINICAB

I always wanted, picked sold as seen,
crinkles off the fatty
 brash pipes, its meat still half-icy
Scorching the stubble off

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he arranges himself to watch girls
hold up a driver on a TV in a bedsit in a
physical, a skin-flick,
in an air's parade stunning a thawed
way of doing things like:

The cars like it more than a little
fingerblade or pat splash of vitriol.
Blotched, rashed, this template does its job,
a filter, a logical operative
producing a next-to-the-skin
Glimpsed! in ultra-violet
sandwiched into a toughened
Succulent to the finger's up.
The earth might have held out, Could it
withhold without spewing later.

Untiringly it will ruminate on its depths.
Shaking
up its source as epiphenomenon.
The pipes will shudder, air screech,
backtracking to a gasp.
And this will be what I'd waited for:
A complete system.
Manners I shan't be able to fault.

* * *

And to register is to be relieved from the burden of
being, which is a dull massiness, to become a sounding
vessel. Emptiness feels more grateful than want of