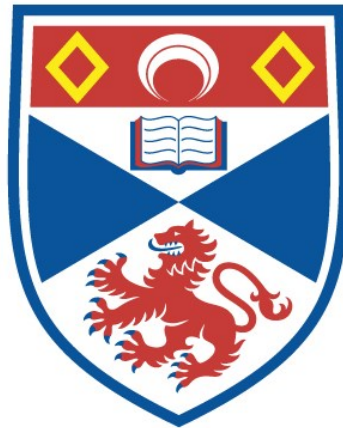


HILL WORMS OF ENGLAND AND WALES

Sophia Kaftal

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MFA
at the
University of St Andrews



2023

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Hill Worms of England and Wales

Sophia Kaftal



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts (MFA)
at the University of St Andrews

September 2022

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Abstract

I believe part of the drive in my writing is an impulse to define poetry. The desire to fully satisfy this curiosity is something I find endlessly interesting, and amusing. In conclusion, I have found that a creative approach is the only authentic response. Therefore, my thesis has come to represent a personal exploration towards this interest. I have used my writing to flesh out what this might mean and always had the ambition these poems would add further mystery to the question. This is the underlying ethos of my work. Here, I attempt to sometimes communicate feeling more than sense, sensation over rational thought – all things I find poetry satisfies in myself. This has encouraged me to use sound and sense in experimental ways, as well as further investigate the spaces created by the imagination in the normal workaday reality of the world. As a result, I discovered a surreal approach comes very naturally to me. However, I strive to create a balance as well as a unique take towards this style. I think poetry should be fun to read, too. Quiet and loud. Abstract and grounded. And I assert that prose poems can be just as poetical as more recognisable forms. Just like the mythical hill worms talked about in ancient folklore, I think poetry should be intangible and mysterious. Funny and profound. This also ties into other themes which encourage my writing: childhood, imagination, love, art, animals, hobbies, our environment, and perhaps an overarching theme of how our individuality interacts within these – what I believe to be – spiritual spheres. And whether individuality as well as the imagination, like poetry, is something that cannot be specified, and is perhaps, moreover, a complex, evolving idea involving our geography and our shared and personal histories.

Hill Worms of England and Wales



Sophia Kaftal

To
my family and friends

There are in England sixty different religious sects, but only one sauce.

Francesco Caracciolo

Where the boundary of poetry and prose lies, I shall never be able to understand. The question is raised in manuals of style, yet the answer to it lies beyond me. Poetry is verse: prose is not verse. Or else poetry is everything with the exception of business documents and schoolbooks.

Tolstoy

'Ellen, how long will it be before I can walk to the top of those hills? I wonder what lies on the other side – is it the sea?'

Emily Brontë

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Hill Worms of England and Wales

Flowers

Cramp together on the hillside
edging to the place
nearest to some space.

There isn't much space
trees toy about as
clouds mismatch in the sky.

The water treatment sluice
writes a letter to all
the schoolchildren who stare
down at it.

At a picnic bench –
bees wait on each other
their pollen
being dumped like luggage
a moment or two before.

Veering to-and-fro, the burn
has its own cascade of burning rapids.
If only someone could fill a lido
and replace the moon-shaped flood-plane.

The sun is settling
on embarrassed today.

And the pet dogs that keep on coming over the crest of the hill
over and over and over.

Curriculum Vitae

In the sky, the named
stars stand for seconds
pouring light in all
directions.

Like heartbeats
distant fireworks
keep mysteriously
out of view.

I can see the moon
in the longhand
of the water
break away.

Its performance
leaving new space
the way
wax pours
from a
relief.

An Index of First Lines

A boy phones from a Frankish
A man takes off his armour past the Iron Age
After the Zhivago of it all, the terrible sleeve
After vespers, after the first snow
All about Carrowmore the lambs
Am I to be patient
Am lean against
An annulment of a species is as keen
And twenty-four wild Novembers, two
As long as the lions are rampant, I will stay
At dawn they are beginning
At Lissadell I am the red she
At your feet, I am a shoemaker's apprentice

Born in the dark, you come back up

Curious in your dark

Dear Master –

Dear One –

Father is a large man
From the great warm side of the animal

Glass Horses

Bice / bɪs / noun. A medium blue or blue-green pigment made from basic copper carbonate.

Now everything is here, the punchline
the night. Cool
with a replica of the moon, wobbly
in its fantastic orbit.

A skeleton-bone cactus appears from
the larder. Blankets from the split-room.
Concrete smothers the floor.
Vistas gather the plants.

They gleam upwards
in their various pot-shells

Jasmine bursts with a sigh.

This former stable resembles a pool – all the
vegetation its vast twenty-four-hour eye-
shadow. Grouped *Chlorophytum* fan.

The problem in my hand used to be
a sad houseplant.
Now everything is a type of green.

Rugs. The aluminium and steel. Light-
bulbs move around an axis.

I thought I saw you bend
and kiss everything once.

Nothing breaks. It is only released.

Clear baubles encase tangled bulbs.
A thirst for water and sun-bathing.

From the *Oxalis*, there is a starry patch –
it chirrup when the breeze enters. It is
a dress made of
silver forks and spoons.

The scent of overwhelming coriander seeds
falls as delicate rain.

A turgid tabby cat patrols the corridors. Plush
on respective cushions it uses to rest, it consumes
them under its striped fur. They are
old organelles. Out of date in this
precious out-post.

A cold fizz of
bicarbonate when
it is poured. These papers are awesome.
Showing a large well-like font. It
can be a mulch.
Like *metal, stone, dusk*.

These plants will never freeze.
And all the candles are fake.

There's a high risk of contamination from
anything, really.

Twenty-two horses were able to stay here.
You can see the smooth surfaces used by
the hooves as some creatures would
roll on a favourite material.

Splendid water can always find an exit.

The quiet undulations speak at precise minutes
to the hour. Listen to when
night has become an owl.

Ahead of their circuitry, sleeping dogs will start
turning. Howl.
The plants mutter to themselves as they drink.

I ring
every glass. I see the paint chips now on rewilded frames
lining all the mirrors.

Day is shedding from itself.

Through high-pitched cracks
in the door, it flickers.

All of this goes.
And will be unapparent on the photographs.
The hieroglyphic doorknobs, &c.

Animal Blessing

On a piece of paper stapled
onto the bark
of a tree
I read the multicoloured
lettering
'Animal Blessing'.
The paper was bitten along
the edges
the time
and place were out of date.

The river looked like a bundle
of hairs brushed lightly
in places and
needing
to be badly
brushed in others.

All this time the sun had glared
down on us
licking furiously.

Delicate Ambitions

An acclaimed falling over in the daffodils. They are sharing something with the future here. They are falling over a miniature car driven by an amphibian. This passing in the worm phase of the moon at the edge of winter's coat is comforting. These slides twist as much as a large mountain path or something similar. *Rose Rose*

I read your proposal in words and am pleased. That's all I can say. I expected to want to climb through the house up to the roof, but this is a bungalow and this is the best way to describe my feelings. An acclimatised specimen that will be on its best behaviour. On the same note, it's best to forget that long loose strand of cotton on the bath towel. *Froge Lake*

Black seeds that think through the night. A seaworm at its best which you will want to believe in. You will see it from *Ship Row* one afternoon. When spring has surprised you with breakfast. It will be hoisted above the harbour as a parenthesis, above a backdrop of floral blues and yellows. *Melon Jenkins*

What smashing faces these plants have! Wearing hoodies emblazoned with the signatory of the team. Will this change the last quarter? The large concrete sphere was right behind them from the start. They're pushing both arms into a 'V' and are signalling they're okay. Now they're comically clutching their lower back. And the page, the page! *Buttercup Mothe*

Imagine You're a Face Full of Stars

or a compliment thrown just out of reach

Is that a rocking horse? – No
just a big stuffed toy

I'll take the large gold scales
with the bull's head on top

The town's old brewery sign – bitter –
dust clad (How much?)

A Toby Jug adds insult to injury

*release the pottery –
the hog's hair –*

I've lived all week like this

a life spreading somewhere
in fractals of sunsets and pears

I would like to change
and be

something that's not been
gifted as a sea-breeze

Yellow leaves attach
to the trees

the ink dries when
you're not looking.

So grab this all while you can!

before night arrives with a gong –
£100 plus felt hammer

the scented candle knowledge
of understanding

it's already been done

Clear shelves show them all off well

An antler will take everything with it
if we're not careful.

Most pieces included!

Contained within in a tank
including miniature diver

where you pick pieces of coral
like florets of cauliflower.

Ars Poetica

I can see a tree parting its accent
these days I could sob but persevere
the art of looking like a tailor
done with the expertise of a plumber

compassion and forgiveness are always bestsellers
the dehumidifier wasn't working properly this morning
when you looked at me through those lenses
like a cereal box with a sweet backstory

now is the time for praise between portraits
everything is new in the scenery
seriously strong whiff of chips this morning
that puffer jacket has said its last words

Friendly friends

The book is covered in green lotion.
On its stuffed warm pages, a
forest of illustration ferments.
Creatures that have discovered the
secret to picnics wear berets and
gloves. Flowers act like they're
at a party or laughing at
a joke, too. The roundness of the
creatures lets them fall, slap on
the ground and bounce into
rubber balls. Noses glow as they
enjoy cappers. A lookout stays quiet.
A ginger cat who sleeps.
The children peer out meaningfully.
An umbrella is held by a stylish weasel
and a tiny figure with narrow eyes
dances in the soupy grass. Lupins
jump about, mixing with the
light rain that sprinkles. It's furious the
way the plants drop their bugs about.
Luckily any loud pollution here gets
drowned out by the quantum country
road. But when the large white hand
swoops over their heads the scene is
really captured. Or it might just be the
boy in the Tam o' Shanter, flying a
kite and licking a *favourite snack*.

Treatments for Short Stories

In the new restaurant

Seahorses bob in and out of their plastic castles
as traffic passes by getting paid as an extra.
Behind the fake-brick façade, purple and orange
couches discuss the room. We watch hands
and feet go up and down the lane.
Outlines smudge. Grey gulls spot
the local chihuahuas.
Should we drift to a different table?
Inside the tank, the fish nod along.
Cigarette smoke takes off
and chocolate relaxes into our throats.
Noon is approaching the window.

A wooden bench notifies us of its availability.
Lemon and lime spirals expand and fizz
inside the carafe on the table when
the buses go past.

A very short history of childhood

A Russian doll of houses: from inside the tiny case of *Polly Pocket* to the rooftiles above our heads that fly off in the wind. What will the neighbours say? Too many toys. Some will get thrown out of the window.

I trained a butterfly to always come back to me. We all avoided the itching powder made from the crushed seeds that grew all along 'The Backs'. *Don't set the farmer's fields on fire*. We launch stones

and watch people appear at their front doors as birds after we have played knock-a-door-run. *Run!* Overspill from the plastic factory becomes a new game in the park. I see the same butterfly again on a leaf.

On the roof, there are light steps. I cry because of the cat up there alone. I stuff *Dairy Lea* and crackers taken from school, into my mouth. Things don't change. But I now call the cheese *La Vache qui rit*.

Snails can sleep for up to three years

This has changed how I think
are we running into someone else's living room
people like to search lists. Fish can cough
there's a vole on dry grass in the evening
some hisses in the far corner of the garden
play turning into a proper fight
we pull the shrubbery into position
and will count raindrops tonight
the feeling comes from inside you
a magpie swoops down and takes it away
which has been proven
as cats go past the windows like toy cars
fish take in big gulps of sea on TV
mushrooms converse using a specialized vocabulary
something delicate is about to fall from the line
this isn't everything completely
the eyebeam of the path to the gate
where the insects won't be disturbed again
are we on the sunny deck of a ferry
morning is so delicious and cold
shall we record this blizzard of sunrays
as nice ears resemble soft kiwis
the slim skim of the harbour
on the day which includes a night
under the dust contains fish and octopi
the less I say about the seal the better.

Stages of evolution seen from an exhibition

1. I feel richer for seeing the plastic hedgehogs pulling their slogans all along the tiny portion of toy train track. Disused, in fact. It must have been a long journey for them. I hope their anti-capitalist sentiment doesn't go unnoticed.
2. I find a collage of family photographs, bulk-bought from multiple house clearances. They mostly show plastic garden furniture from the last thirty years of the twentieth century. Also, vicars sitting. Cats, and demolitions.
3. The fairy lights make us believe in them within their portals of cardboard, propped up by the students who collaborated here earlier. They [the students] usually prepare works in well-lit rooms with weight-less shutters and colourful swivel chairs.
4. Photographs of model horses in a variety of positions of aristocratic decadence recreate scenes from the artist's thoughts. Shot from varying angles, the pictures are then digitally sewn together. Disco music should play.
5. A large cuttlefish resides suspended in mid-air in a classroom. A really naughty student I suspect, stands alone with the animal. They meet one another half-way. But the cuttlefish has probably had to make much more of an effort

I am a whale, by the way

I can emerge from the sea, the ocean, a lagoon,
your tea. Regularly I'll swim across the channels
and if you're sharp, you'll see me. I've seen every-
thing once. I can even predict what will happen.
Once I swam all day and all night watching. My
swimming is synonymous with life, and luckily
I love water. I like to swim where I can sleep
resting like an upturned torpedo. I can't see in the
dark, unlike those fish who can, the ones that
live where there is virtually no light. The ones
I am sorry, I occasionally inhale during the ads.
But I suppose, accidents do happen, as they say.

The sea is

loved openly and poses for pictures at the drop of a hat. I feel it's a mass of blue clothes turned inside out. Jeans especially. The sand is different, and cracks open on some days, creating a pattern like freshly baked biscuits on a tray. I fling the sea all over on a day like this. When everyone and their dogs either paddle or swim. Gulls want a piece of everything, as the white sun fails to burn the clouds but pierces the air instead, and we end up inhaling and tasting salt all along the view of the morning. Rituals include staring at the horizon to watch the container ships balance as steadily as horizontal fridges. This shouldn't be the norm, but it is. They also appear as buttons stuck to the edge of a blue cardigan - perhaps, sorry! We take it in turns to offer our images and mix them around. I try this: The village is a collection of fishermen's cottages *or* boxes full of tackle: aerial nets and canoe floats, plus other accoutrements. The meadows of sand are uninhabited largely. Cherry-blossom petals visit, finding their way here when they snowed heavily from the trees last week. They sit in pockets of the beach, in amongst plastic looking bits of crab, ticket stubs and smoothed glass. The moon and its collections are famous here. I want to gather up the bricks the sea's decided to land. They are full of holes like the crest of your cappuccino. The time comes for us to push ourselves through the grains of crowds to find a fast-food outlet that suits today. When it's dusk here, the dog-walkers glow artificially to make sure they're seen. The wild swimmers move like fleas to the furry edges of the water. Thanks, but no thanks. The sky is a peach colour, unmuted and musical. As musical as the gulls can be. We hang near the rockpools, too cold now to even explore in bare feet. I eat ice-cream anyway. A queen of plastic cups.

Sleep

Evening arrives through a stretched window
in a tall cream room. Lotus flowers sit tight.
A carrot not knowing what to do lingers in its broth
whilst a road dances into distant zealous countryside.
Larry David holds his temples in Departures.
I would like to twist into abandonment
as *The World of Unknown Ghosts* rests next to my bed
and I ask again, and again, would it be impossible
to make a sculpture from crisps.

The Elephant Shrew knew better
[they are] ‘thick-furred, long-snouted, short-eared
burrowers from South Africa’, they are also
extremely cute and known as a *Macroscelides typicus*.
‘a short-nosed counterpart’ waits on the other page.
Scrolling is a colossal pastime of my genus, but please
LET ME RELAX. I WILL EXIST LATER

Morning, and

The house does a large open-mouthed yawn
from the dog's bed

where it keeps on turning and
waking itself like a woodlouse.

The house shakes loose from carpets
cupboard doors begin to flop open

sticky worms that lived inside
a guitar decide to drop off.

A concert might begin at any point. It is
the house's calling.

A cry stalls in the larder but it is just
the alarm it forgot to stop.

Identical to its neighbour, the house
believes it is a wholly original idea.

A muse full of space, trapping air
dust, and shoes without tongues.

The house feels
its appetite kick-in

the morning scuffles somewhere
in-between the dishes and burgers.

As ghosts

wake up fully clothed
they dip biscuits as

they would on
any other day.

*Tumbling around
determinedly*

they take the usual
route in the house.

Layouts change.
They will not.

This is why you
see them as they

trespass through
walls, doors, and

suburbanites.

Ghosts cannot
press keys.

An office-life would
be very limited.

Their passions
lie elsewhere:

flying is an obsession!

And radio jingles
that last too long.

Tuesday

Spills. The same colour green as islands on a map. Between the blind, flashbacks will peep. A manual decides. I do this every time, pick up words like a cold, unmeant, as the top layer of sea water heats up until September. What time is it? What day came out of the sun today?

Straight-talking. Terrific. But holding onto the corridor. Songs from across the street fall in through an open window. A bee scrambles-in. Commuters disperse like swallows, moving to unaware lyrics. I continue to balance fractions.

Plaster cherubs watch from the high folds of the ceiling. Noticed only by poets whether or not they have any poems. Broken lines in the glass act as though they just happened. It might be wise to register the phases of the moon as they come and go. A lightbulb emits a halo.

I'd like to know what goes into a minute as the harbour breathes more boats. It's raining along the other side of the street. Coffee? Then *renew, renew, renew*. We might manoeuvre the desk appropriately. For now, it is a prerequisite to stand by the sea.

Over there, they will use the colour of an ampule to grade the quality of daytime. The people become ships. The forecast is busy. We will notice weak demonstrations from the middle. 18/18. Copy those pies. There's a green leaf in here somewhere.

Lilies

fill the subway

their heads
dropping off
on to
shoulders.

I push through
their catching
scent.

Tons of metal
heave.

The tarmac
smells of ice

and

the station
bloats.

I contemplate
the straight
line of
the train's maps.

The 'stops' are
as elaborate as
flowers

rain pours

wild petals &
pollen
cover
my clothes
and skin.

Still Life of a Succulent

. I am part sun. When there is no sun, no thoughts
. I watch water dance on the glass.

* star

* star

* star

* star

* star

* star

A/lexa – can you feel cracks in the sky?

Postcard

It's a rich and dirty country
when I get up and go out.

Sand heals
and beetles will roll over,
over there. [points]

Congratulations feelings.

Where is the blue light score?

You know you can make them
smile, if you use a toothpick.

Rusty mid-century agricultural machinery.

The rhythm of distant car
lights blink

as interesting tramples.

The mosquitoes are fizzing,

bobbing on

lit water.

Caves

i

a living tree made from

droplets

depigmented

insignificant

now I can stand up

sculpt away

incandescent

millipede

unfurl

where the two

structures meet

a wild honeycomb

increasing impassable

neck

rain in the district

floods a lake

swimming

on black stones

wedged in

ii

Conglomerate

the clot

and quiet

of dawn

in a square
absent-
mindedness
pours
tiny circles
of
green noon
bibulous
dry glugs
boulevards of
choral
rehearsals
ducts
eye blips

Island of Horses

ash

flushed

from

earth

cinders

dry stalks

lay flat

a blue frog

emerges

(from pond)

ripe and

decadent

a bubble

next to

smooth

haired

mountains

and wet

leaves

Summer: a scene

Softly in a dusk
of pollen

my search
for roots

has me counting
daisy petals

wide rivers
and worms

support
the ground

the sea is a good
friend

I am a hungry
continent

as I peel
an apple

Trains in June

in the nest of a station
engines rest
pigs roll out in a field
end to end
a semi-circle around dry mud and oaks
seats press themselves to the windows
doors slide to the side and beep
alight near nettles then
watch the ground pant and shake itself out flat
where wide skies expand as brush strokes
a foreground covered in blue
a blue to write to
no clouds scroll just the simple cell-life of a plane
there are sixty seconds until
air-conditioned ankles
cobalt of bridge curl of bridge
overheard conversation electric or
the bikes in the middle carriage hang in mid-air

rock

Falling asleep outside in summer

Inside of me is another me –
fitting all the shapes of this body.
It's bendy and does all the right things
to make it seem inconspicuous.
It mostly moves with the body-body,
but it can also look above
the trees like it's watching
a lecture. I shuffle
on the dry ground and scrub
my body's body has chosen to lie in.
Sunbathing, my wide eyes stay
closed still. The river chortles
throwing its acknowledgements
over this rock and that rock.

Meadow Spirit

Songs we hear together are ours
by the grass cuttings and the
fragrance of the tipsy water.

By the stream, cut grass is dumped
almost violet in moonlight.

The gorgeous earth is asking questions.

Tell them about the movement
sensed by the clouds.

Words become dipped green shoots pushing
open their mouths for air.

Ladybirds drop from leaves
dandelions spin in the sun.

The Moth Hunt

I could see everything from my floating studio.
The insects quickly created all the spectacle
which of course were no spectacle for them.
The fastenings on all the town's gates were left
open for this event. Counting the moths was
essential and many light boxes were placed in
special spots. Farmers cleaned the ground as
the accordion played down by the side of
the river. At night, the moths frequented the
market most of all, where jams and other goods
tied by delicate ribbon hid from the sun in the day.
I saw people rush in the cool temperature of night
near the lime drapes and fabrics that lay about. I saw
moths and stars, trapped within their boxes of light.

Dear Morisot,

autumn – ocular
soil – beacon
itch – mountain
segment – wasps

I have a confession; I can see the future before it's had time to dress. I wear my old clothes (again). Another crisped surprise from my lapels, but I am not ready for the sea to chase me.

Crabs move unusually between globs of tiny speech-bubbles in the sand. They appear in fits and starts near to a white foam which has congregated against the rocks.

I have decided to spend my time grouping words freshly dug for something that I feel dances in the pitch black. The fields wait and wait.

Galloping on to you about this-and-that isn't going to delay any forecast. The comic-strip has always been my bread-and-butter.

It is always strangers who do not meet. I am constantly falling into the well-loved burrows of the unknown. The feeling is the same as seeing a cat eat an old biscuit that's been lying in a shut summer house.

Daisies waft together agitated. Yesterday I held a stick to the trees before the heat got too much. A butterfly managed to find its way between us in the sun-patched green.

We haven't cut anything back for months. You should see it. I feel as though I am always stepping on to soft kingdoms of tall spires and cranes.

I come back to this favourite nook all the time and hope to raise the issues. *We all know the moon stands for the subconscious and for oceanic feelings, but it has personality traits as well.*

It holds onto hands too tightly, and its shoulders jig when it laughs. It hums on summer days when it becomes preternaturally bored.

I am just a sapling trying to play hide-and-seek.

In the market you can always find coloured glass and things written out in wire – your name. Your preferences I always think about that lime-green day.

We were smiling too, intently. Touching and caressing all the soft toys – alive and with buttons. As though we were precious to them.

November 21st

Dear Tree –

They used to sharpen arrows underneath you – hundreds have been found around here – some quite close to the surface, (do you ever feel them?). I remember an out-of-work actress guide telling us about it the first time we visited. The sky was turning an *equinox red*, and it reminded me of a dream I had. The images grew roots, and still flourish if I let them.

Time there felt much longer – a year or a week – I can't remember all the details, but there was a house – which was also a town – covered in thick ivy. Canals and brick chimney stacks poked out here and there. A truck went between landmarks named 'The Laurel' and 'The Garden'; there was a doorbell, too. Everyone wanted to see this big bumpy verdant coat.

If you looked too closely it blinked and shifted as though it were being interviewed. I felt sorry for it and backed away. After the hours had nudged, a door decided to open. Inside it was all opalescent and mountainous, like a microscopic close-up of an oyster shell. It was hard not to shout about this and call people over. Someone dressed as someone else began chipping at it straight away.

The rest is lost. When I'm out in the sun again, in what might be a few months, a colour or word or soft discreet bruise, might bring something back. But the feeling clings to me and has its own timetable (I know it by heart). This is how I've come to see the seasons as a mode of sophisticated mood lighting, the day as just chatter. Sunrise and sunset are the only true emotions we have.

Everything else just branches out from here, holding white plastic ornaments and scraps of birdseed. You've seen it all over the years, though, haven't you, Tree. The forest is all I can think of when I write. I see a past made of blue, yellow, and red tents. Outlaw bears who have their own songs. There'll be a letter again soon with another litter of thoughts. *Déjà vu*, which I know you like.

Yours,

Grains from an instant picture

Orchard City

14th June

Dear Gottlieb –

The art of instruction comes so naturally to you. This forest looks so pretty sliced in half. Light pours in through the maintenance level and really sets the place on fire delicately. You've really captured the colours and hung them up well. A new conception, perhaps? I'd like to take you up on your offer and order four more. Arrange them in the utility space, the one near Zone 7, again, and we'll collect. *The Life Cycle of an Egg, A Newt*, next time?

But I want more than I can tell in this palace, with its slow-growing *Swarovski* berries. I want to get those things you can glue on, too, and look like a Friesian for the afternoon, like the one in the food-hall. I can see the outline of a farmer in there, too. You never miss a thing. But she's been made to frown. Aren't cows usually letting their eyelashes bat like film stars? Whatever they are when they're at home!

Gottlieb, when I think of you and your work, there's a certain bunching up and spinning in the maxillo-facial area. Would you be able to show me the ink-stained vermilion border when it's dark? Black backgrounds are the best, it lets them see right from the back. But these trees – wow - with all the cables silhouetted and the branches fully labelled makes me want to roll up like a carpet. Though I'm required to be present and visible. Art must come to the saplings from all sides like air.

The vents work well though, did I mention? The museums try their best, but they're only open at odd times, so we do what we can with our vouchers. You can wander here instead, with our thoughts: 35 x 50", liable to biodegrading, nonetheless. I know you know. Now there's only the diagram, a dream, a watercolour, a collection of guts, ribcage, and eye socket. Poor apple tree blossom. A nylon cargo ship is due. I will be in touch, of course, with more from the orbital loop of the days and their offers.

Yours, from the city of twenty-thousand LEDs,

plus one

Synopsis

15th June. The rabbit. These ears smoothed naturally. Skipping easily with eyes, a kind of demeanour. And green-pink ears like a prairie of cacti. Each hair could stand on end in the shaded parts of the day. They bounced and shivered. Eyes that have now lost their fastenings. Covered in honey, we tried to summon you.

17/06

After we'd set up all the lasers, we wandered through all the subterranean offices where swells of paper occupied any surface they could. One small piece had a biro doodle of a bunny on it. There was a clunky mauve thermos that I thought was a rock. Our findings will be catalogued and sent separately. For now, a 3D representation of the cave structure can be accessed [here](#).

We've discovered it's possible to see more in the dark, as we whip through various soda stacks, which glow inside all the key-shaped grottos. The equipment we hoisted down here has shown us the roof and its character, jutting out in diminishing thicknesses of basalt. It's been named 'The Aviary', due to its fanned esoteric angles and some bright spark.

Light dances between the collapsed shafts and over the water table, it effects the damp-flower fungus-yellow crystal formations I wrote to you about. I should also mention I'm now reading *Hill Worms of England and Wales*. The pages flip and turn when I'm in the sun. Your knowledge of the phenomenon remains picturesque and sits in your hand like a scattering of remote villages.

I disagree with the jaunty depictions of the petals in town, Lambkin. I've realised that the idea that the image is created by the eyes is a miscalculation. I prefer the backwards speech of animals and find their organ-specific register the most comprehensive map of a landscape.

The ground has its own itinerary. Preferring to stand on one side of a meadow and shout out to the river. Though someone walking with a little creamy pet will resonate with the casual heel-kick (we're running tests on it). As well, to be forwarded shortly.

Early Music

I

I am sitting on a plastic chair. It is the right chair. Only a few feet away from those with dust and dirt on them. Cobwebs. Old drinks left unhinged. The dress rehearsal has now projected onto the real. Dongle connecting the players. Sand mumbling even more than ever. I am convinced of the interconnectedness of the mezzanine to the roof, the floor to the pit, the seats to the back.

II

A feeling of a no-flies-on-me attitude. Barking mad beaming sunflowers dot the backdrop. It was always meant to be tarpaulin, a canvas of the countryside, the starring sheep were omitted this time. I want to cry into the lion-coloured sand. The gratitude of the hollow nostrils and dip-dyed patterning is nourishing. The mulch is muddy and has dried hard in the daylight hours.

III

De l'eau incredible, yes. The measurements had always been correct. That wire doesn't connect to the other screen. A swift upwards movement issues from a spiral in the throat. Letters are strengthened and the form reflecting, light in precipitation. A fine mist coming from a slim can like a Theorbo gradually increasing its many-haired sounds.

IV

She is wearing black all over including laptop and bow, speaking, and swinging and cheering in the chorus. She has a moulded wood face and round belly. Floating up and above light and bones of our own making. *Swoon in the lagoon 820. Nail Lacquer. Nagellack. Smalto. Varnis à ongles.* Cracked and striated dirtied applause thunders.

V

I lost the daisy chain in the bag full of flower props for you. Raising voices, curtains, and fabric totes. In order to know, we must test the panes of glass with a hose. We are now past the colander and hot water DIY phase. Rays of half-sea and sky touch the grass, or what's left. It was just a button, after all. In such huge ways eyelashes resemble gardens.

Acknowledgements

A guide

Gary Pretzel without you the sea would have remained as murky as a cold panorama of a Saturday afternoon in October. I thank you with plums and shifting clouds, small blackberries which have managed to both become and remain sweet. In other news, *Margaret Croissant* has put in more effort than a north facing slate roof trying to fend off a colony of mosses. The black bird that likes to pinch at the grass. *Irv Petroleum* and your excellent chauffeuring skills along with cold slabs of cheap concrete that incrementally turn into stones, then a dirt-path. Thank you. *Thank you*. The timing of autumnal colours: brown, pink, white. Thank you all. Staves. Sunflowers. Again, the ever-continuing ground and the rich soil, containing its fair-share of chalk and fragments of small histories. These are all just as important as any list I have undertaken with or without an instruction manual. But most of all, I extend my shout outs to the plants. Without you I would not be able to see the deep greens, reds, the butter-yellow and hazel. Colours which ripen every day. I view you all each day from a plane with an excellent track-record of safety.

Notes

Epigraph: Francisco Caracciolo quote taken from *The Penguin Dictionary of Quotations*, J.M, M.J Cohen, Penguin, (1960) *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth*. L.Tolstoy, trans. J.Rosengrant. Penguin. (2012). E. Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, Vintage (1847).

‘Hill Worms of England and Wales’: I have used the name of a book discovered online for my title. *The Hill Worms of England and Wales*, Andrew McCardle (1972). Every effort was made to find more information about this work. After research, it is not clear whether the obscure book is in fact a pastiche of similar vintage works.

‘An Index of First Lines’: Uses found first lines taken from Lucie Brock-Broido’s poems in her selected works, *Soul Keeping Company*, Carcanet, (2010).

‘Glass Horses’: The definition of ‘Bice’ which I have used has been taken from a *Google* internet search. Google use *Oxford Languages* for their dictionary definitions.

‘Delicate Ambitions’: takes its name from the poem ‘My Face in the Mirror Tells a Story of Delicate Ambitions’ by Jorie Graham in *Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts*, Princeton Paperbacks (1980).

‘Stages of evolution seen from an exhibition’ & ‘A very short history of childhood’:

Are titles inspired by two poem titles found in *Discipline* by Jane Yeh. Carcanet, (2019).

‘Friendly friends’: Contains a line from the poem ‘A Favourite Snack’ by Lila Matsumoto found in *Two Twin Piped Sprout Water*, Prototype, (2021).

‘Sleep’: References an image seen on the *@Curbyourlarrydavid Instagram* account for their portrait of the antihero (30.07.2022). The bedside book takes its title from *The World of the Unknown Ghosts* by Christopher Maynard, Usborne (1977). ‘Let Me Relax, I Will Exist Later’ is seen on many internet memes. The description of the elephant shrews comes from a post by the *@Wellcomecollection* on their *Instagram* account (08.07.2022).

‘As Ghosts’: I used some found words/phrases (italicised in the poem) from John Burnside’s memoir, *Waking up in Toytown*, Vintage (2011)

‘The Moth Hunt’: The ‘floating studio’ is taken from the title of Edouard Manet’s portrait of Monet, *Monet Painting in his Floating Studio*, (1874).

‘Dear Morisot’: Began as an initial response to the painting *The Butterfly Chase* (1874) by Berthe Morisot. The description of the moon came from *The Ultimate Guide to the Rider Waite Tarot*, Llewelyn Publications, (2013).

‘Dear Tree’: Uses a particular description of a colour used by John Burnside, again, from *Waking up in Toytown*. (‘Equinox red’).

‘Orchard City’: I used the title from *The Art of Instruction*, Chronicle Books (2011) for the first line of the epistolary poem. As well as the titles of two vintage wall charts printed in the book.

‘Synopsis’: The speaker is reading a fictional book which uses *The Hill Worms of England and Wales*, by Andrew McCardle (1972) as its title. Publisher unknown by the author.

‘Early Music’: Lists information found on a label of a nail varnish by *Essie*.

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