

SAMPLER

Solar Cruise

ALSO BY CLAIRE CROWTHER

Stretch of Closures

The Clockwork Gift

On Narrowness

Bare George (chapbook)

SAMPLER

Claire Crowther

Solar Cruise
a memoir

SAMPLE

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for Keith Barnham

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'Physics is S.S. Eschatology.'

Hurtle B Hurtle, www.blogspot.com

*'Where are the small experimentalists?
Where are the cellar labs and the string
and the three a.m. light burners? I'm
not saying no expertise. I'm looking for
shabby. Are all the science professionals
shiny nowadays? Is it all conferences and
TV shows? We need savers not ravers.'*

*@FloodsUpGals: The Underhyping of
Climate Change*

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A Conference Dinner Takes the Future on Board – *in my view*

Once-powerful dock. Historic boat:
the *S.S. Eschatology*.
Sweet talk, run softly till the feast is over.

*– meet the particle physicists,
funded for findings in *Rapture
Physics, and waiting out the
End Times, defining small
matter. The marvels of nano-
beginnings, debris of the first
particle, gleam and go in the
shy firefly Higgs boson.*

So when an old solar physicist
stands up, in shrunken jeans, sandals,
and says, ‘All we need are extravert bosons,

streams of golden photons that will free
new current. Leave the Higgs to hide...’

*– of course, there is no
applause. Sir Olkincole shakes
a corporate, corporeal hand
among the suits.*

But my old physicist’s emerald forest flourishes:

crystal-quick cells, experimental
leaves, threatened species. If one bee
should soar to swarm and undulate and carry

time to change ... one student stands. She claps.
She barefaces fuss.

Future: you brim with data for us.

The Power of Gold

Our parents prospered, worked,
pensioned. Their kids haven't shirked

whistling through oscillating corridors, half in tune
with a baby grand. Chopin

is cooling off in the Carinthia lounge. Outside
waves glitter and collide

*with hubris. Am I not different to
all dead poets as my physicist to dead
physicists?*

*I write crosswise. I experiment with
words*

He works on the power of gold
photons to keep us warm.

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Harvest in the Quantum Well Solar Cell
Reminds Me of Lipstick

'Look,' my physicist says. I look.

There: a speck of disc
in his palm. 'Cheaper
cleaner fuel. No
more nuclear waste.

Red Hazard

No more stink of oil

Cursed Purple

with this crystal: gall-
ium arsenide
quantum well solar cell:

I keep it on me.
Here,' he says. I hear:

Sunstalkin

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Keith's Hand With Cell



Heart Cut Out of the Sun

A quantum well, a speck,
lies heartlike on his palm.

I make out such a shape
through a body of time:
my gran's good Brummie heart,
dismembered from the Rhine
and also, tabloid grey,
a photo years have blanched,
meat on a murderer's table,
a heart dished up for lunch.

That newsprint, ample, grand
on her settee, has cooked,
like rhubarb I had cloaked
in crockery to grow,
sour in me. She bound
covers for better books.

His heart beats on his hand
and I will cover it.

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Foghorn with Solar Harvester

Beneath and around his palm
on which balances one possible future
the Atlantic
calms
and swells.

*A sheen of fog curtains our balcony
and into that the captain sends a throaty*

obbbhm

obbbhm

obbbhm

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This Is the Question

During the voyage we share
lyrics / lyric
physics / physic

We talk about the consequences
of the answer to one question:
to say or not.

'I choose to say,' my physicist says.
'What's your decision?'

'Here,' I say. 'These words.'

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A Short History of CERN* by Two Physicists

I A PARTICLE CHASER'S SOLILOQUY

Why am I here?
To build an upside down duomo.

To shaft through Jura rock.

*On Lowering Day, someone dropped a
spanner.
It missed tons of sinking machinery.*

To command a yard of copper wire
down here among the orange hard hats.

To monitor the silver pipe. It beams
protons that smash themselves and make
new particles.

A nanosecond later,
another crash, more bunches of new beings.

To find which particle is which
To hunt the Higgs boson through beam-born bits,
as many people as live in North America.

*It's so shortlived, it's never been
seen live.*

To saddle sunlight,

to smack the flanks of photons and send up
data to where a thousand computers stare
down through their sweating floor to the pantheon.

To name what's been particularised.

*Why, how light a thing a boson can be:
a weightless waving string of photons,
that hit our retinas, wake us
to the multiplicity we call nothing.*

*There they play, bosons of zero mass
while Higgs lurks, heavy, invisible.*

To tell its resurrection,
to do so together.

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II THE RAREST PARTICLE

My physicist left CERN halfway through his career. There would be no more researching the world's first moments as a high priest of Rapture Physics once, on CERN's preprint library shelves, he'd found David Mathisen's 1979 thought experiment testing the world's last moments.

Not that a Rapture denier might not share some qualities with a Rapturist: vision, dedication, a conviction that he has theorised the Truth and only needs to get it into service. The Professor, my experimental physicist, is a natural rapturist. The difference is that his rapture will be the gathering up of humans into the mortal future of the earth rather than their gathering up into the immortal extinction of their species.

One hundred years to the day that Einstein was born, one paper by David Mathisen, an unknown but Sibylline physicist, delivered my physicist to his mission. That the world could be lost was not new but to frame time with that supposition, to give it dates as Mathisen had done, led him to think that he could interact with the process of human eschatology. And so he escaped the Rapturist's delusion that The Catastrophe cannot be avoided. He framed the experiment of a saved world.

The Triptych of Power

i The Chosen One

when one golden photon from a sunbeam
lights up a crystal solar cell
it gives all of its energy to one of the cell's electrons

ii The People

though many electrons hold the crystal solar cell
the chosen electron rises
and creates a positron from each electron's rib
which frees them all
unexpectedly
and thus together
they make electricity

iii Coincidence of Crystal

a chosen electron needs to power its cohort
with the amount of energy
delivered by one golden photon.

A Prayer at the Foot of the Page

*Sunlight! star cast,
we are your kind.*

After Dinner Speaker

*We are in the Carinthia Lounge, a lounge
named after a ship long scrapped but famous
for the sailors' strike caused by passengers
complaining that deckhands played skiffle
music in their off hours.*

When he takes on others making the crossing
through this treeless passage,
when he conjures the concept of artificial leaves,
the others think his anaphora is anathema.
I cower. He does not:

'The artificial leaf is one more source of fuel
The artificial leaf is a metaphor for the real leaf
The artificial leaf is developed by the scientific method*
The artificial leaf is less complicated than the real leaf

*thus cutting short
the half billion years nature took
using CO₂ and sunlight
to perfect a breath-enabling growth fuel.'

Give that man a ukelele.

The Patroniser

I cannot watch the dire
Sir Dogrel Olkincole,
or some such, shake his fist,
urge the dress suits and lace
to beware scientists.

‘The artificial leaf produces ethanol, are you saying?’
‘The artificial leaf can’t produce pure alcohol yet but, yes...’
‘Want to get drunk on your own roof, eh? Moonshine!’

Sir Olkincole’s sweet wife
pats my hand and murmurs
“Never mind. He doesn’t
really mean it. Really.”

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In the Ship's Library

I order a fresh mint tea,
stand near the leather arm chair
above a kneeling passenger,

and remain absent to someone who hasn't come,
who is not there, who has made different
decisions, who laughs
about messed up arrangements,

and urges me not to get lost down decks –
which I have, reading this:

Abstract

In the 1930s Ernest Rutherford (1871–1937) repeatedly suggested, sometimes angrily, that the possibility of harnessing atomic energy was “moonshine”.

Yet, as war approached he secretly advised the British government to “keep an eye on the matter.”

I suggest that Rutherford did not really believe his “moonshine” claim, but did have profound reasons for making it.

If I am correct, then this casts additional light on his personality, stature, and career.

Moonshine in Memoriam

Let's not delay the light –
the sunflare, sunshine, sundazzle in quantum's soul.

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Genia in Memoriam:

Irène Joliot-Curie, Ida Noddack, Lisa Meitner

The first person to suggest that the nucleus of an atom could split in two parts and two of the leading experts in the analysis of the resulting debris were women.

Irony 1: Gender Fission

you could say the Great Bomb was delayed
by men who couldn't sit
with women first explaining
how an atom splits

Irony 2: The History of the Waist by Lisa Meitner Who Famously Described the Splitting Atom as Waisted

A man does not have a waist.
He has a midriff. A middle.

He also has a belly and a breadbasket,
a paunch, pot and general girth.

A woman has a waist.
A woman has been required to identify her waist.
A woman gains a neutron to do this.
A man remains a spherical uranium nucleus.

A woman has been deemed
beautiful in the absence of
a deep breath,
but a woman becomes
explosive when a waist of
energy is imposed upon her.
She splits.

Irony 3:

I Gain Confidence in the Ocean Metaphor Dominating This Book

Lisa Meitner

pictured

a nuclear explosion

as a drop

of water breaking

a simile of sea

volatile wet land

and her image of this invisibly small break

unlike Tennyson's whole grand sea

breaking, breaking,

breaking on its cold grey stones...

Irony 4

...inspired Enrico Fermi,
the unwaisted physicist,
to split the atom in Chicago
under a squash court.

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No Irony Here

Noddack and Meitner, your comments please:

Being wasted researchers,
when we surmised what would happen
when the atom split,
we didn't suppose we would get the Nobel prize
and we didn't.

I did. *(Irène J-C)*
My name, maybe?

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The Ghost of Marie Curie Works Up a Chorus while Chatting to Enthusiasts at a Model Engine Rally in 2015

All you men crouching by a nine-carriage train
that's stopped sauntering through the countryside, I know
you dream that what you've made will move again.
I know why you stay stooping

over cream and maroon livery when stock
rolls out of Gorpeton Blimey. You are checking
lost detail. You'll remake exactly what
you've made. Your trains are guarding,

circling, what was engineered long since. For once,
turn away from Bassett-Lowke traction engines,
read this ad for radium – *Buy a Pièce
Through the Post! Experiment!*

Model Engineering knew in 1910
a woman had found what none of us could have made.
When I identified rays
that move through fog, through flesh, through fact, after

I'd ground, dissolved, collected precipitate,
I stunned a moment. Steam,
with its air of work and modernity – lost.
Oh, you've reconstructed my front-line X-ray cars!

They were nicknamed *les petites Curies*. They drove
away old views: perfect toys for discovering
the location of shrapnel
in bodies (broken, but they moved again.)