

# *Lyrical Diagrams*

*Also by David Greenslade*

*Prose*

Fishbone (Y Wasg Israddol, 1993)

Creosote (Two Rivers Press, 1996)

Cambrian Country (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2000)

*Verse*

Old Emulsion Customs (Y Wasg Israddol, 1998)

Each Broken Object (Two Rivers Press, 2000)

Weak Eros (Parthian, 2002)

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*In Welsh*

Yr Wyddor (Gomer Press, 1998)

March (Y Wasg Israddol, 1998)

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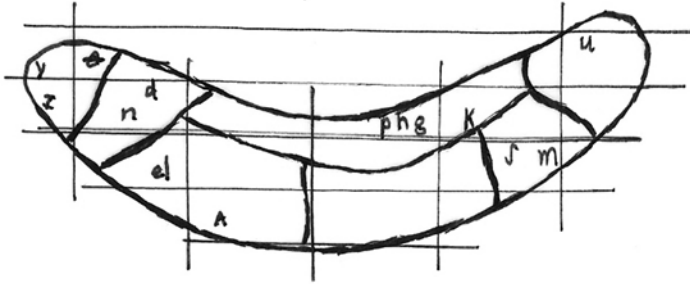


## Alphabet Blades



They could be uneven bones for the uneven collars of innovative shirts, or they could be book marks for pages of different sizes but they are letters on blades that serve as labels for plants, labels we stick in those little plastic terracotta pots between the stem and the rim. But look, there's a design fault; stick these labels in the soil, the letter disappears and we don't know what the plant is. Perhaps they label a new kind of linguistic sapling, something we can all take home and grow a private language of our own, blossoming as we speak. Dwarf black capital B is watered by some kind of fertilizing white capital B that, like many kinds of benefactor, openly favour their own. G does well far enough away from the black background B water-tank and distances itself from A by a series of letters that if they were jumbled up and stuck blade down in the ground no one would be able to tell what they were. Then we'd have to 'read' the plant and not the label. The fertility of these labels is astonishing. Some sailors' letters stuck their heads in the ground, mixed themselves around and thoroughly labelled everything. Curious hobbyists, walking through the garden centre keep pulling them out. No matter what the specimen, a tree, bush or a flower, all the labels read the same—*cacoethes scribendi*.

## Any Eventuality



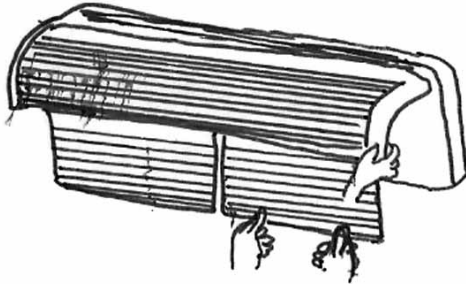
Butchering a banana was not always as complicated as butchering beef but should cattle shrink to the size of bananas and bananas grow to the size of cows then it's best to be prepared. Any Eventuality Studies are proving popular at colleges, and modules have such titles as Big If, Queer If and Elizabethan If. The usual crew of This World Steam Engine Realists opposes these programs. But courses are well subscribed and large numbers of excluded, marginalised and disaffected students enrol. Graduates go on to make honey by entering the Speculative Bee sector, trading boatloads of beads for boatloads of beets, cashing in on the sheep / ship trade language pronunciation gap. One textbook, Three Beans for a Cow warns how to guard against inscrutable and unscrupulous Remote Wizard types. The progress from signs to words to on-line frenzy is carefully described. Finally the What If business adept is an unworldly, totally indifferent Any Eventuality urban *sadhu* willing to gamble briefcase, car and home based on a clutch of spotless playing cards.

## Asterisks



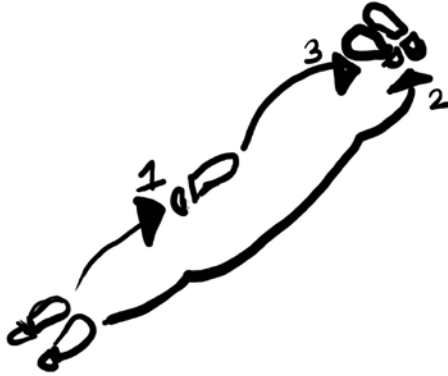
An origin is the cause or very beginning of how things emerge. Origins can be pleasant or unpleasant, wished for or denied. Either way sometimes a factor, a situation, or even a shape, comes to be whether we want it or not. Like a soapy sponge sucking up ink, there's give and there's take. Once this far along the new small something can issue either in murmurs such as a few words or from one to many million like a virus. Asterisks often appear in response to culinary residue or other ideas of hygiene that can be questionable—even unreasonable. Their source is an action, such as cleaning teeth, editing, or scouring crockery until the very gleam emphasizes futile-brevity-asterisk-attack. Why not fill the mouth with gold and eat from plates of lacquered brass and have done with it? The sound of an asterisk is like tinkling glass, a silver bell or possibly the higher notes of a xylophone. These annoying self-satisfied noises drive me nuts. I've got nothing against asterisks but I won't have them near my pots and pans, especially the heavy iron ones. They're fine in other people's kitchens, even other people's mouths but when my stuff glows it sizzles with gongs and deep boomshankas, not with tinsel and crystal. That's why I don't have a television. I never see the punctuation marks I'm really interested in. As for footnotes—asterisks work fine when they send my attention to the bottom of the page, it's when their fixed grins sparkle strictly upward like airhead fireflies that they give me the creeps.

## Beehive Tractor



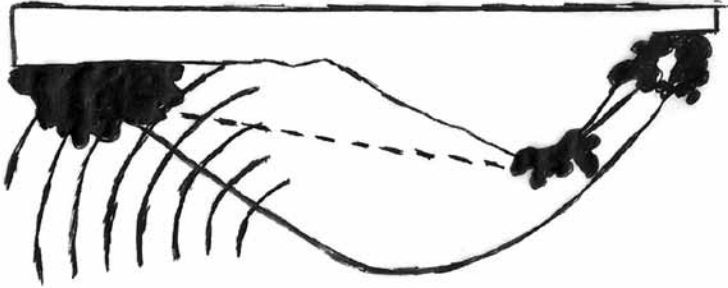
Three hands replace a silicon honeycomb to the front of a beehive tractor. The tractor has three flat tyres and is missing one front wheel. Hub and axle dig into the earth like a determined sandspike. But there are hawthorn trees in bloom and cuckoo pint and wetland grasses start to flower. Because the bees are virtual bees they can relocate the tractor anywhere they like and so they drive away from the farmyard where it was abandoned and collectively agree to park in the sand dunes for summer. The illustration shows three human hands needed by the bees to make their bold plan work. In rotation two hands stay on the steering wheel while a third hand performs a smart gymnastic hop, hopping along in place of the missing wheel. When they get to the beach, into the dunes, the three hands rub themselves with suntan lotion, take out their towels, lay on the sand and relax. But even while sunbathing, just like bees they constantly return to the tractor apiary and dance. Relaxing and working are exactly the same for these half-insect hands, in fact being idle and not working shortens their brief lives more than hopping down the road with a broken tractor on their backs.

## Big Feet



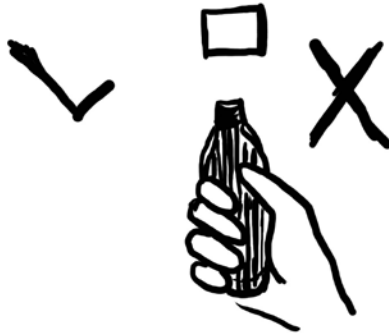
The feet *can* do it but some colossal physical dyslexia means they bump into each other and hips and shoulders crash into other people. If our bodies were fitted with car horns this class would be a deafening nightmare. I'm even bumping into myself. Social dancing! I love it and some day I'll travel from this narrow rugby club back to glittering 1780s Vienna, you watch if I don't! Meanwhile my feet are like tadpoles that've crawled onto land too soon but have made a pact never to return to water. Heavily (but also briskly) they do a quick New Yorker. As my feet wake up I fall in love with her feet (sleepy) even as I bruise them. Thank goodness I've got a photogenic memory and can recall those footpath diagrams I drew. Trouble is I get all mixed up with Twister, which is a game for hands *and* feet. I struggle with time, with empires, with parts of my own body, with waltzes and with wonderful bits of her. She wanted me to woo her and so I learn to dance. The clumsier I am, but as light and as mindless as a wisp of cloud, the more she seems to smile at me.

## Blobs Play



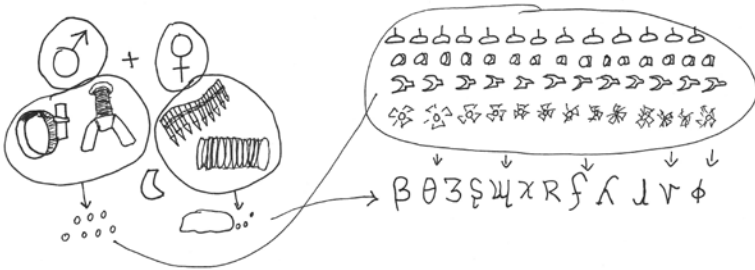
A blob feels pain. It also feels perfectly contented. Some contrast between ideal perfection and organic adaptability shows up in its shape. Maeuetic pains occupy it in a fan of equally felt but differently sized frequencies. When blobs are found on geometric squares they eat and absorb the square and reduce it to a line, as is almost the case in this example. Blobs can also restore area to a line by degrees until it is once more a square. Mainly, blobs are thought to be significant when we can interpret them in some rich hypothetical way. Of special interest are 'trying blobs' that challenge most forms of understanding. All it seems to take is fair play. Blobs play but their play involves paradoxical 'shrink expansions'. These are not imaginary; they are reasonable, a little faster than light, and are part of a blob's interactive mystery.

## Bundle's Repetition



Yes often we caught the wrong end of the sticks but then a story would arrive and put our pangs to rights. Delivering the sticks, offering their stump as if clutching hand grenades, got us into trouble. Grip the nettle we'd been encouraged by our instructors but anything for a squire's life was what we heard once in the post. It was like milking your sponsor, take the position but not the job and only third world nationals proceed all manual tasks. Being smacked by stories led us to devise smart skivvies like busywork and moving paper around. The 'X' shows inflammations of the chiromatic thigh caused by Bundle's Repetition as we incorrectly did the same mistake over and over again. But as the proverb taught, if you can make a mistake you can make anything.

## Catalogue Joke



Two things are going home from a romantic movie see and one of them says to the other, 'I've got this thing about you.' And the other one says, 'Not yet you don't.' So he takes a jubilee clip and a butterfly nut and she takes an ammunition belt and a piece of corrugated hose and because it's a warm evening they decide to have a cosy tryst by the light of the silvery moon. She reminds him of all the nice things they've ever done together and he just multiplies into a thousand perfectly interlocking parts. She enters into all the appropriate spaces and something very pleasant and unexpected takes shape. Later, they turn, tighten, refill, flow at exactly the same time and wordlessly give each other the ultimate compliment, "You haven't said the wrong thing all night." She replies, "When I'm with you my inventory feels just exactly A to Z." And he says, "Oh Babe, you make my interiority go all phonetic."



## Chaos Theory



A warrior is chasing long trumpets. He's no troublemaker but a court musician points out that long trumpets were never played in this region. A vizier murmurs that if the warrior persists he should be executed. But he's in love, light headed, a bit loopy and he does persist—frolicking and cavorting as ingeniously as a fully armed butterfly. Because he carries on former comrades start describing him as 'that fool'. Worst does come to the worst and soon 'everyone' starts thinking like him. Even in the capital. And so it leads to civil war. All because a regional governor allowed some basic liberties.