

# **FIREWRITING**



**John Muckle**

*Firewriting* was first published in the online Shearsman Gallery series in January, 2003 at the URL <http://www.shearsman.com/pages/gallery/home.html>

The text and cover illustration (*Torn Man*) are copyright © John Muckle, 2003.  
All rights reserved.

The right of John Muckle to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.

Shearsman Gallery publications and  
Shearsman e-books  
are published by

Shearsman Books  
58 Velwell Road  
Exeter EX4 4LD  
England

Visitors to the *Shearsman* website may download this file and retain a copy for their own use. Further dissemination of this publication without the permission of the copyright-holder is not permitted. In case of doubt please email the publisher at [editor@shearsman.com](mailto:editor@shearsman.com)

## ***FIREWRITING***

*(W.B. to his nurse, London, circa 2002)*

How beautiful if curved lines were formed within & on  
a plate of rare design, of zinc – and at the touch of notes  
made patternings of clear inner sound – in musics of light, or fire scripts  
each sound a master letter, written out in luminous fire  
each inner linkage of a word and script made visible –  
and if we spoke as writing, our thoughts already words ...

ah, then we'd know

how thoughts became these words

or those.

“The Towel of Babel.”

A child goes goo-gaa:

learns to recognise

and learns to blame another (copying her mother). Language  
measures out the whole nine yards

of wool

whose kitten trail we might have wished to follow  
once, so long ago, only to realize it had  
no destination

& even the guilty kitten had wandered off

leaving us to consider ... what?

Language has its semiotic and mimetic aspect

yet the organ of our speech

the mind, made letters for its voice, the letter speaks,  
its word and marks are one, the patterns of its sound are  
electricity, red-current-sparks fired along the axon to trip the waves  
of sound: and this device, this glowing plate I speak of

mechanysical machine –

well, maybe it could help us find our natural script.

Hah! Hah!

No more of strangled syntax sweated out  
between ruled lines, but everywhere! the all, all one!

Why,

was not the whole creation uttered into being by God?

were not these written marks

bound up with the Word

which made us all, we animals who use speech? One lovely word

containing all, all generals and particulars of drawings, paintings,  
sculptures, buildings out of granite buildings  
moulded out of air

clogging up my memory  
as those wooden shoes that workers used to wear, sabots,  
were to derail the locomotive of history ... or not, I fear.

Where was I?

Ah yes! That this machine would fuse each sound to script  
as raggedly precise as halves of broken eggshells joined  
as opposites are one, are deeply true – each particle of thought its negative ion –  
for it's well known by now (by me) that written language  
grew out of this celestial notation  
of melodies, of the divine –

I'm right, I'm right.

It doesn't come from us, you know  
but from the angels floating out of reach. I mean.  
I mean.

Just listen to the poverty of speech.

\*

Which leads me to a further thought, affinities we share, I trust  
(you follow?) as the sun and moon are paired, as Romanticism  
bears its traces of the baroque.

Let me explain! I can,  
if you'll allow me to digress and repossess my way.  
Ah yes. It all comes back to the symbol, cher image  
(a memento mori)  
which is only a form of writing, after all, if you're a symbolist,  
whose meaning can be summarised in words  
just as for the medieval allegorists  
images were signatures,  
mere monograms of essence, not the thing itself  
in a masquerade mask; and, at the same time, the written script,  
the actual black of the words was not subordinate,  
not cast away like dross  
once fire images were forged in the reader's mind  
but absorbed, along with the freight they bore, the very patterned  
shape

and hence the great love, the great pains they took  
with type  
and the look of a page.

Simple stuff, really:

Our own chaste love would be expressed by swans  
their base Venusian couplings by graveyard crows.

They really scored it into you,

they gouged it into your brain!

Inscription, image – the whole double-bind of Christianity,  
the triple bind, if you allow the incantations  
as they did

(fill up my water glass, if you would, I grow a little muddy).

Suffice it to say their view of the relations  
of script and speech

was complex, divinely underwritten –  
fully comp, I mean, not merely against fire and theft  
or accidental damage to another's soul. Indeed, indeed  
not only does their whole philosophy rest on this  
their inconsistencies

are a cut of the same water.

What are they? *What?*

I'll continue till they become apparent, if it please you.

Meanwhile, I'm back to the romantics, and whatever it was  
they owed to the Baroque –

Oh and how's the PhD?

Still going? Good.

Don't bother with my stuff, I've been done.

And please stop taking notes, it throws me.

Your memory's so much sharper, dear, than mine, let alone  
that of the average allegorist – fables were for simpletons, after all,  
those who can't remember facts or arguments: all those for whom  
no proof is sweeter than a pudding with a child's leg in it –

Ah! you're so pretty, dusky too;

you'll get the job I never did, I know it.

Oh please! there's no need to run off in a huff!

Where was I ...

... hmm, yes, on those picture poems they revell'd in.

Didn't they contain, in essence

the idea that changing line-lengths

imitating organic form

would also yield the rise and fall of speech? Especially in your great poet  
Coleridge, who also thought quite natural storms  
could be materialisations  
of cosmic reverberations.

Only John Donne, it seems, has held

trepidation of the spheres to be quite innocent. Goethe?  
Schmerter!

Yes, I know, it all came back in him, or never went away,  
that classical sense of the interconnectedness of higher and lower forms  
(guess where we were placed!)  
and of being's intractable Granny knot –  
which even the blockhead emperor, Marcus Aurelius  
fancied he could unravel, unpick it in his tent at night  
in fumbled Greek – and off to slay a few Sarmatians  
after light nocturnal anguish  
(how that centurion's armpits stank)  
after breakfasting on honey.

Let's hope this honeycomb of mine  
establishes an indissoluble link  
between the verbal and visual

manifestations  
of the baroque –  
its teeny-bop horror shows, that clunky mix of metres  
jammed together in those naff old German plays  
that had to be set up fifty ways  
whose high and low were oft chained up in clink,  
(not often changing places though)  
whose Jesus walked in carrying a great armful of bones  
angel faces turned deathsheds, rosy cheeks urn-grey.

\*

You like this stuff? Because of your tender years no doubt.

Even your sex might fit you for consideration  
of the body in its non-purified aspect, its frangibility, its stench,  
its death-like sheddings. Oh, and don't tell me again  
I'm in good shape for my age – let's keep it light, my sweet –  
but I expect you'd like the way they cut the body up  
and made it weep

and seep  
so openly with blood – it was because they hated it  
they thought it necessary to sacralize it thus –  
by dismemberment made fitter than as a living whole  
as which sensuous entity it can be no symbol but itself  
whereas once they had it in bits  
they pulled the sacred from the profane  
like a rabbit from a black top hat. In those vivid, nasty

emblem books the charnel house remains  
became a floating box of severed symbols  
whose true meaning was revealed, as written and ordained,  
in fragments

                    somewhat like the clues  
in a plotless pseudo-antiquarian detective book  
some gallery of stumps and stars  
                    I wouldn't be seen dead in.

The emblematisers too had a penchant for clichés,  
yes, in the Tragic Dramatists  
                    there's a certain torsion  
from lashing up the borrowed bits and bobs.  
                    Dealers of death-cards.

For whom the glory of your hair would signify  
your many and varied thoughts, my dear  
your fine head, your breasts, your large ribcage  
your magnanimity and courage, those magnificent hindquarters  
your strength, your rage, your lion's roar –

                    I daresay  
they would sooner celebrate the chastity of Agatha.  
Her undecayed birth-member in the grave – only  
martyrdom could fit a female body to be emblematic  
                    their physical pain was useful grist to a plot-mill.  
Agatha carried her breasts in on a tray  
                    thus became  
patron saint of bell ringers, clochards  
                    & bakers of small round loaves.

Those jokers viewed the mind-body split as absolute. Rene  
Descartes dualism  
as baroque as his stolen thought was antique –  
and anything like a theory of the passions  
has a stinging smack of the medieval mind  
whose spirit is always drifting upwards  
while physical bodies stay home & sweat their lice.  
So.

For the dramatist of the baroque, a torturer yields  
a firmer base for audience emotion  
than Aristotle's tragic conflicts, added to which,  
                    they obviously liked to watch –  
compared to rape, dismemberment

& flaying women's flesh  
arousing fear & pity in respect of a toff's tough break  
was chancy business at the late medieval kiosk.  
Then as now, I think you'd find it so  
if not I won't quarrel.

But once you had a corpse to play with  
the fun of allegorisation could begin. Off a king in the first five minutes  
then you've got something.

Oh. I sound like him?  
Sorry, sorry. That definitely, definitely won't happen again.

Death needs time for what it kills to grow in, yes?  
Allegorisation can only be carried through in respect of a corpse.  
Characters die in order to enter  
the world  
of allegory: it's transparent.

Your immortality's a bagatelle, my sweet,  
my little bag of chocolate fudge –  
compared to your value as dead meat.

\*

'He leaves his body as a pledge of his goodwill.'  
Oh yes,  
and there's a few limp fivers left in the till.

For,  
seen from the obscene point of view of death  
a corpse definitely gives birth –  
decaying flesh falls off, and that which was so purified  
comes into its own – dead matter melts away to leave  
the purified remains; a naked spirit rises  
and what's left  
in memory takes on a new life of its own ...

Flies, flies.  
I'll open a window, dear. I don't know how they got in. I'm  
not that far gone. Could you kill the little fuckers for me?  
That's favourite, if you will.

\*

I hate to bring up the subject of nakedness, dear.  
So did the writers of the baroque. When they did they liked

to leave a nasty taste in your mouth –  
only in the beyond do the blessed  
enjoy incorruptible flesh & reciprocal pleasure  
in complete purity. Venus stripped her admirers,  
so their crime of lust lay unconcealed. Bacchus was naked  
because drunks can't keep secrets  
or throw away their possessions – here, take my hat, my suit  
I wasn't really enjoying wearing it.

They demonized the ancient gods  
recommending pious mortification to the flock –  
& statues of idols juxtaposed with dead men's bones  
banished from memory to remember their ideas.  
Does this remind you of anything ? No? No?  
Wait till someone's run off with your clothes, another struts  
around, more arrogant than ever, spouting the half-baked ideas  
you threw off for the price of another packet of cigarettes  
smoke vaporised in an atmosphere of denunciations  
where counter-accusations carried no Weights.

I exaggerate?

Try surviving on what I did. Yes. Yes.  
All your complaints are disallowed by parasites you've harboured  
preparing one last feast on your flesh  
as they wait for you to go down.

Tenured racists strut around the States  
as world authorities on humanism.  
(That bastard Adorno had me tethered to a pauper's desk  
and wrote his name on my ideas, the ones he stole, corrupted –

I was naive in those days –  
Had to be to pay the rent on crumbs from Institutes.

I'm an old-fashioned sort.  
Transience, eternity ... confront each other in me  
the death-mask of my messianic youth, my middle-age, a fate  
in the camps I was lucky to escape

on the lost border of flight  
when the little hunchback tampered with my revolver.

My writing  
stopped right there.

Blood in the milk & milk in the ink  
like

the Angel  
of History (a dead man's trope, if ever there was one)  
I had to watch in silence

(the price of my survival, so it seemed) while the whole murderous play  
was played: singed, broken wings – not caught in a wind from paradise  
but in the breath of hell, my mouth open in a silent scream  
and struggling to close my eyes

my broken ribs  
hanging through cooked flesh.

Rat armies gnawed there. Yes, I rambled  
in broken shoes, a cardboard suitcase containing an old suit  
a bone comb – a book I'd read a hundred times & one I'd written

I became the nameless one  
the sailor without papers

who signed up on THE DEATH SHIP  
as a stoker in the black gang – trying to find some Poland, some dump  
long gone; my Berlin childhood, my ... who? what? my life happened  
not to have happened – not to me, not to anyone.

When they opened up the camps

I watched it on the big screen  
somewhere in Italy, believe it if you will –

I hid there for two years  
in the turfed cesspit  
of a country cottage owned by the Ginzburg family.

Socialistes de salon, but kind.

(That lot seemed to go on skiing right through it.)

Ben and La Clara

by the heels

a Milano.

Old Ez in his cosy Pissant cage –

they should've strung up the old shit with them.

Or turned him on a spit. The Unwobbling Pivot.

Big tattooed eyes

shovelled onto trucks, into open pits  
gone off moon sausage meat

black bread, an ear of mildewed corn  
between ten thousand of us.

Do you hear me? Do you hear?  
With your mildewed ear  
of corn?

\*

Ah! thanks for the chocolates! I'm feeling satanic this afternoon  
ready to initiate you into more forbidden knowledge

though how you've never heard of it's a mystery – and a boon.  
Life's a chocolate caramel.

Perhaps you'd like to chew it for me.  
I used to like those ones in the mauve foil, the way  
they were always the same all the way through. To tell you the truth  
I'm more for surfaces than kernels.

There, I knew you were a kind girl really.

Ever heard of Josephine Baker?  
The Queen of the Jungle. I was in the front row.  
Now,  
of course, you can get it all on CD.  
Except the stuff I liked –  
The Oompah Jazz for Whites.

\*

Socrates said that knowledge of the good  
makes good actions; and Aristotle built his Ethics round it,  
happiness, good ways, politics. All bullshit, I'm afraid.  
Truer of the knowledge of evil that shines forth in the night  
of mournfulness with a subterranean phosphorescence  
glimmering from the depths ...

baroque polymathy  
was knowledge of the black arts, the manichees, astrology.  
Demons are so-called by their knowledge, said Augustine;  
who should've known this, he went through the whole lot,  
refuted them on his way to the cross.

How could his friend so-and-so  
whose diplomatic career carried him far along the whitened roads  
be said to share the fate of Josie Nobody, the fifteenth  
daughter of an Alexandrian slave, born on the same date?

How could a fig scream when you plucked it?  
Even if it was occupied by the Holy Spirit. It had no mouth.  
The Holy Spirit had bigger fish to fry.

That sort of rubbish –  
the Midas touch that lends significance to everything  
and kills it.

\*

I used to dabble in that sort of thing myself  
for some reason it attracted me  
being part of what was concealed, of non-official knowledge,  
obliterated traces told you what they thought  
the people, the people –

I thought it highly possible, I wanted  
to rescue whatever had failed and sunk  
into the dank downworld

the Sargasso sea where human sports  
and wrecks are stored –

there, all there in the German baroque:  
a contrast of high and low, the former aspiring to aether  
the latter struggling through – and say what you like about me  
my dear, my dear child: I knew which side I took  
I thought.

I thought the way it all shaped up  
this mundane fantastical I loved  
was feminine, of the female body,  
of the world of the Parisian street women,  
what such a woman remembered or forgot  
or passed on to her daughter.

I see you shake your head.  
You're quite right, my dear

Quite right.  
Stick to the light of reason. Light the fire, could you?

\*

Could you look  
inside the wardrobe there and pass me my dressing gown?  
I swopped the Paris silk for the English wool.

It's so itchy here!  
Got sick of the place at the finish – Sartre's pompous rhetoric,  
Paul Celan getting ready to join his mother  
in the Seine's black soup.  
Mutter, mutter. STAR  
(I told him to ignore that German shit:  
a tough circuit to crack  
his guilt-loop  
a Moebius strip –  
to forget is to betray, to remember

exploitation, travesty.)  
 I always thought  
 he looked like a conjuror –  
                                          the too beautiful eyes, the smile,  
 the nothing up my sleeve  
                                          for me it had been almost everything  
 that tiger's leap  
 onto the gazelle of memory  
                                          (not you, my dear!)  
 to drag your formerly darting prey  
 through the strait gate of the NOW.  
                                          I ran away again  
 when sixty-eight didn't pan out –  
                                          if I lifted up a paving stone  
                                          I'd want to find more than sand.  
                                          Your hand.  
 So strong and brown, like Jeanne-Marie's.  
                                          You know, I like that child's poems  
 even more than I used to – are they so complex?  
                                          prefiguring everything?  
 or just the lights a shattered glass reflects  
 as an American  
 poet sang  
                                          of the Sermon on the Mount?  
 Anyway, they count as much – or more  
 than any cynical flâneur. I liked Guy Debord  
 just couldn't see late capitalism  
 as he described it, balanced out in clauses of Hegelian rhetoric.  
 I'd have wanted to upset the flow (too much swept away by it)  
                                          moi aussi  
                                          J'ai fumé de l'eucalyptus.  
 I'm still drinking the ragpickers' wine.

\*

The purely material & absolutely spiritual  
 banner poles of the satanic realm. The guilt of the allegorical  
 observer, the so-called melancholic (me) is ...  
 ... is that he betrays the world for knowledge.  
 Guilt.

The House That Guilt Built.  
The Tabernacle of Terror.

\*

I wonder whatever interested me  
about allegory. I expect it came from a desire  
to obliterate my past, my dear,  
to get a job in the German academy –  
(much good it would have done me)  
my dear, my dear –  
I know you hate it, that's why I do it, it's my revenge,  
you see, on your more unlovable aspects which I doubt time will purify  
or purge of their actual meanings. Ah well, it's all  
for now, as well you know. Well, isn't it?  
Mein liebe lip?  
I'm no god, but I feel I should be,  
fallen into an alien world, become evil, become a creature  
sitting next to you with the deadness of a figure, an  
abstraction from the pantheon  
in a world of magical, conceptual beings  
which is all we are to each other ...  
if I said  
I was still up for it, you'd think me like Giotto's cupid –  
an ancient demon of wantonness with bat's wings, claws.  
And you'd be right, my dear. I'm twisted and skinny now  
still harping on  
like an old saw.

\*

Nobody knows the trouble I see. I'm tired, tired of light.  
Nobody knows but Jesus. Christ.  
Redeemer of the stories of the small.  
Nobody. Knows.

\*

‘Weeping we scattered the seed  
on the fallow ground and sadly we went away.’  
Evil's only an allegory.

Wherein it means something different than what it is.  
Wherein it means precisely the non-existence of what it presents.  
The absolute vices of intriguers and tyrants are allegories.  
Not real ...

You look quite puzzled.

Jesus, Jesus.

I must've been a young fool  
a right tool  
when I thought that.

I did mean something by it  
something good, perhaps. My thought was that  
what these crimes represent  
exists only in the subjective view of melancholy –  
they are that view, the vanishing point  
and destination of inwardness. What else  
is there  
to brood about?

Evil is a subjective phenomenon –

The Bible proves it. The Bible  
introduces evil in the concept of knowledge,  
in the serpent's promise

of knowledge of good and evil.

But God saw everything was good. So.

Knowledge of evil has no object.

There is no evil in the world as such, it arises  
within man himself with desire of knowledge  
which, au fond, is desire to sit in judgement  
to take God's place.

Knowledge of the good  
is secondary, it ensues from practice – good ways,  
or knowledge of the world. Knowledge of evil  
is primary, it ensues from contemplation.

Knowledge of good and evil  
is therefore the opposite of factual knowledge – of this or that.  
I tell you, it relates to the depths of subjectivity  
and is then only really knowledge of evil. It is what Kierkegaard  
called 'nonsense', the nonsense of the human heart  
in fear and trembling, its unrooted distensio.  
The baroque sense of evil is quite inadequate, and rooted  
in the deficient development of their plots.

I lost mine years ago  
distended wanderer, collector of the peasant toys

they made me surrender at every border.

Even here they say no room, no room  
no room for clothes peg soldiers, paintings by the damned.

It's been a long wander down a long street.

Do you know

who you remind me of? Asja, Asja Lacis

who spent the revolution

consulting with her dressmaker – but made me a revolutionist  
on the isle of Capri.

I meant it as a compliment.

Not that you look

anything like her

who carved this journey through me.

Come on, come on.

I was twenty-one yesterday, I think, subtract the hundred

throw away the numbers you're unsure of

I'm leaving three centuries behind me.

\*

Do you know Hamlet?

Of course, of course. To be or not to be

to me it seems simple  
not existential  
non-referential  
not relating, really  
to the instabilities of  
nascent bourgeois subjectivity  
nor is he made of bits of wood  
nor anagrams for lunch  
nor is he allowed (or rented)  
(je suis permis? je suis loué? ça veut rien dire!)  
au contraire, il a rien à faire  
but remember to forget they killed his father  
comme lui a dit le fantôme  
shut up, shut up about it  
and marry the drip  
Ophélie.

\*

I began from the object  
riddled with error, myself. Ended up here. The city  
Rimbaud hated  
for its endless dreary Sundays, its fans  
of empty terraced  
suburbs, the stupidity of their dim inhabitants.  
Tried the East End first.  
More like it!! I especially liked the docks, as he did  
its little streets  
like grooves  
where one might lose oneself, skid off  
then find the hard dark woods  
of the Indies such as no-one's seen. They have made splendid imaginary things  
of all that.

I liked those little bars around the markets  
where you heard  
such useless words, white things  
and strange little animals in their leather cages  
sold to all and sundry by the Silvermen, ces hommes si pauvres, si nets.

But there was something I never understood about that place.

Soho had its charms

(although I was never able to locate them.)

Crouch End had a squat name

Highgate, a tomb. Notting Hill  
reminded me of climbing up the steep inclines of Negative Dialectics  
(not a trip I've personally undertaken)  
or an image of the cross – its allegory of love, of self-negation.

Camden was the box of cogs.

Kilburn – I'd seen a bit too much of that – and

Islington's busy thoroughfare of minor beings  
(I is therefore I am).

Highbury was a resting place of Egyptian kings  
Wandsworth the full measure of magic and sex,  
no more than a dull itch  
at the gangrenous shore of Greenwich. O but to be  
done with the respectable town of bricks  
of Silvertown beyond the reach  
of a Knightsbridge you did not want to cross over  
to other destinations on a Red Rover –

Marble Arch reminded me of Heaven  
a kind of roundabout to everywhere in town, its villages  
of Hell – a park to hide in – a rotting plank, cleaned up – sure ditch –  
the hammering machines of immigrants  
in Redchurch Street  
sewing up their own bright shrouds.

\*

Many men endure the pain of Bachelor's Ill Luck –  
the shame of carrying the can home in your left hand  
of having no-one's forehead to smite except your own  
with your right. I am no exception, although  
eventually you come to quite like the solitude.  
Like Franz I didn't really travel much. When I was younger  
but not much recently. (Moscow was my love-trial,  
counting kopecks for coffee, Asja Lacis unavailable –  
watching plays with her husband Stefan George,  
his loud German translations, my ad hoc commentaries  
seemed to rather annoy the Russkies  
& I found myself trying to show the proofs of my little book to nobody.  
They left me out of the Great Encyclopaedia,  
a nonentity of the Jewish Revolution  
(the war was ditches and charred fields of red clay).  
It takes a life as long as mine  
to try and fail to reach the next village:  
you wonder why you came, or went  
your message from a dead emperor doesn't play.  
I tended to stay at home, wherever that was, yes,  
and curse  
the clotheshorse shape-shifter, The Odradek  
of guilt you can't get rid of  
or contain.

\*

I was a sort of frenzied browser  
with a sort of vague plan  
To answer the frenzied rape of the Earth  
with a frenzy of procreation  
To annex the irrational for revolution

To find it in the vertigo of acquisition.  
Necessity is the mother of desperation.

Gaga in the Luna Park  
my friend Sigfried Kracauer saw the Tiller Girls' high kicks  
as akin to those of holidaying factory hands  
rehearsing the jerky movements of the production line  
producing a sexual liberation  
that would liberate mankind.  
I have purchased my few groceries at *Flaneur's* Food and Wine  
on Holloway Road. (I had to laugh at that)  
and seen the mounted girl legs on a shop sign  
performing a mechanical Oxford Street can-can.  
And a small hunting bird – un chassagnol –  
talking to a tortoise-head in spats and tails  
and who could choose between the two of them  
but that long-billed girl in a cork dress and waterford crystal heels.  
No conjuring trick could stay the rise of uniforms  
or fetishes of violence and of power  
that mesmerised our age and yours. Applause: machine-gun fire  
reified, the real bowing actors creased by flying lead.  
The world an intoxicated forcing-house of meanings.  
The pleasure of false-connections emptied out all other pleasures.  
In my day there was no room for half-measures.

\*

I don't like myself that much sometimes  
but, on the whole, I like me more than what they've made of me.  
I'm a ghost, a dense ghost  
made of one kind of heavy water  
Cut me and I bleed thought, stars. silent. but  
the smallest speck of me  
opens into a thousand universes of still more things to say  
and, if the old joints creak a little  
you could almost say I'm eternal  
that thought of mine is of no more value  
than as precious, damaged rocks  
to you your eyes the colour of lost marbles  
revealing only  
only poverty  
of your universal version of history.



soon to be sucked up by the great Wen.

The Great When.

I think it's now, or soon.

Firewriting, ah there was a thing.

Everything else went down like ninepins.

I mean everything.

Velocity? The giant's toothbrush? Grinning all the way to hell  
on a celestial railroad built over the bones of the dead.

White Teeth.

I see one of your lot's written a book about that.

Too late to read it now. Too late for tales of those who went  
or those who stayed.

Let's hear the stories of those who came. I quite liked ...  
what's his name?

You want to wash my face?

Why? Is the Kaiser coming?

Well, I daresay he'll take us as he finds us, as ever,  
if he can still climb up those seven flights of stairs.

Brecht. Yes. Him.

Now he was okay – though not what I'd call one of the Good People.  
Not really. Nor am I – a

sprucer who blued it,

I might as well say. Another jab?

Excellent!

At least I won't be going back  
to that bungalow of ricky-tick

up the arsehole of wherever.

Firewriting though.

Each sound its proper letter.

I can see them jumping now  
jumping into a thousand pictures of light, coloured sand icons  
on a zinc kaleidoscope, heated by a filament  
of rare design, a harmony-machine.

All the old signs obliterated  
in a trice, a touch, a vanishing of dust  
yet how we all danced on our clockwork wheel  
in the frozen attitudes of a masque of death. Do you see them?

Do you?

Motes & men.

Of which I had had such a strange dream. I dreamed & dreamed I dreamed  
Everything

& then forgot to wash

& shave  
before recounting its story  
& now I am marooned forever on its island shores.