rat
The Shearsman Chapbook Series, 2014

Martyn Crucefix The Time We Turned
Patricia Debney Gestation
juli Jana ra-t
Anthony Rudolf Go into the Question
Robert Vas Dias Arrivals and Departures
definition: a city does not exist until it tells a story

ecological research: a city has spaces with weeds & butterflies

the tail of ra-t:
he did not feare

the tale of puss-in-boot-s:
there’s a penny to be made

To London once my steppes I bent
Where trouth in no wyse should be faynt
The Taverner took me by the sleve
‘Sir’ sayeth he ‘wyll you your way assay’
london lyckpenny
london-town*

it was puss–in–boot-s that spoke¹
he jumped up * in childhood with boots on²
thigh high boots, cocky hat * puss–in–boot-s your hat is a-
skew

john goodyear knows you³
looked into your eyes

they looked rather yello
eyeing ra-t at waterlo⁴

puss take off your cape & hat
the long ostrich feathers & all that
;but keep your boots on
(keep your boots-on
to stomp with –
don’t drop the look
the look

you dropped your face
it was left lying in a heap
next to the lamppost
on piccadilly circus
lit up at night )what year is this then?
footnotes:

(INSTRUCTION: to be read by a 2nd voice that interrupts the first voice)

*londinium on the bend of the great river, a great place for trade, for settlement, for ships to anchor

¹ puss knows ra-t well tat-a-tat tell
² it is a fluke that I came. fluke- flooking- flood- mud- muddle- muddling- puddle- pud
³ every year is a good year is what john said
⁴ place of great victory & de feat – let ra-t rewrite history a-100 or more years after that

watch out for location. for weariness of prolonged human settlement with its cares

THERE BE

WORDTUNNELS
as the new moon landed at the festival of st scholastic in 1242, the tide met the torrents from the river, the fords were impassable so ra-t chose the bank, the banks burst, so ra-t chose the bridge, the bridge was concealed by floods, so ra-t swam past lambeth palace to the mills where he could play with butterflies on a sunny day¹.

it was all gone, the arable land gone with its gardens & the mills with their weirs damaged, the meadows overwhelmed with a rush of water; so ra-t found a plank & drifted with the flow, he let the flow take him to the great palace of westminster, letting it spin him around & around in the lake in the centre in the middle of the hall with boats & persons & twigs & weeds from the banks. the water burst the banks, it burst onto roadways & markets, into cellars & drains, even into palaces — o the violence of the river thames!

*there be more footnotes*
butterflies
comma ragged outline of wings
camouflage
hibernates in spring
summer dances

camouflage

painted lady migrates from north africa
at 10 miles per hour
seeks nectar in garden flowers
flight light long

holly blue looking to lay eggs
flies flutters march to october
sky reflects found: shepherd’s bush

large white also known as cabbage white
lays eggs on cabbages
seeks vegetable plots for flight found: brockley

red admiral arrives from the continent
chrysalis hangs under nettle leaf
transforms after 17 days found gardens: islington

common blue usually brown
lives about three weeks
caterpillars eat clover found: blackheath

grey-veined white at blue bell time
first flies in may
prefers wet spots found: gardens & cemeteries