

Rooms

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for Alan

Rooms

CAVE PAINTING

Before the beginning there were pictures.
Before the gloss, before the la la la
Before the speaking in tongues
The going barbarian
There in the cave, first flinches.
Flurries of angled flanks
Flicking out similes in the firelight.
Twelve hoofed oxen
Tensing for tenses.
Showing us this is how it was
This is how it will be.
This is how it should have been.

Here in this dark room
As in this bright room
We remember, picture
Project, set scenes with
Pictures about words
Words about pictures
Stanza about camera
Rooms about rooms.

1974

1974, my Nan
Asks if I'd fetch
A pound of lard and a pound of marge'.
Valves chug and sputter
In these fat last days.

I know how to render her
Simmer her down to 1919
When the boat came
Slack sailed, up the Fowey River.

Amongst the saltoil bluegreen mackerel
They slit the gut of their hold
And out spill: lens, sprocket, shutter
Gate, mirror, reel.

My Grandmother, netted
Flails in the director's knots at
16 frames per second, cranked into posterity
All Spanish black-eyed
Mouth, Clara Bowed.

Until her father, man of the sea
Who knows the ways of nets
Cuts her loose
And locks her in her room.

1974, my Nan
Remembers how that night
She unreeled her hair
And made that final cut.

FIRE

We make art from artificial light not
That eternal sun given shadow play
Pointing with stick and stone to
Our lengthening, shortening selves.
Circle seated, lit by our stolen flame
(A thunderbolt gift to a fallen tree)
The fire makes sacred from the profane.
Cooks up plots.
Toughens the fibres of the raw heart.
Distracts it from its final beat.

We dig around, rooting up elements
Burning flecked rocks to the brightest light
Casting stories like bones into the flame.

BLUE

open

you are in blue
suspended by suspense

anticipate
there are gulls

billow down

eyes wide
ears unclothed

mouth a perfect

o

then

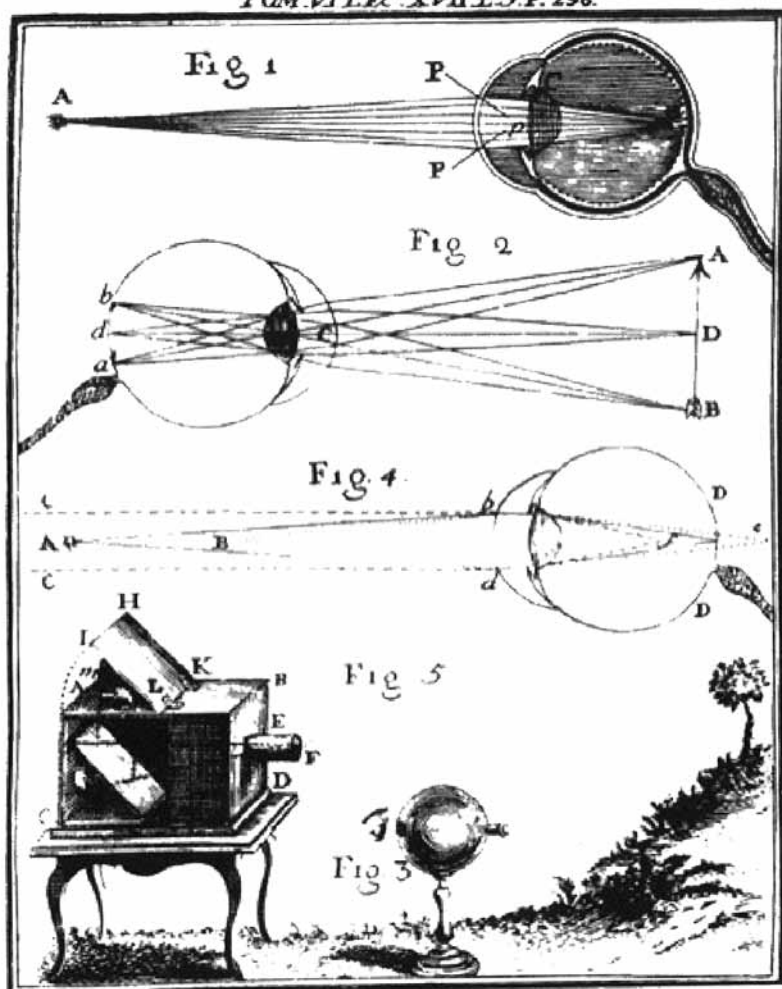
the world will face up
as scratches of bone
and brick, shape
and line

so

spin

aperture narrow
a Busby Berkley whirl
and you're in

back to the ceiling, a B-movie vampire
watching a girl sent up
for a pound of marge' and a pound of lard



SETTING THE SCENE

arrive

1

You rub silver salts from your eyes like sleep
Stand pivotal tracking the horizon
Watch the streets of Fowey slip to the water.

2

Hearing the leather-pop of bladderwrack
The sea suck-sifts a thousand chalky shells
And spits back a million grains of sand.

3

Tight-rigged sailcloth on stalks of Baltic pine
Score Bodinnick with fat, yellow lines

Unfurled they bloom like wounds.

KNITROCKS

Along the harbour wall women sit knitting

Swiftly they slip the knots
Catching the loops with rasping spokes
More sudden than laughter.
For salted sons in oil blue cloaks
They wind wind and word and water.
Milky fingers of infant daughters
Spawn maids trails, soft tethers bobbed blue.
Those of flirting age are bound over
With rows of plain, never the new
Glimmer of pearl.
Patterns with names as old as stars:
Ladder, Slate, Rope.
Eddystone, Hobble, Doublerope
Double twist, Laughing boy
Seeds and bars.