

*The Fool
& The Bee*

SAMPLER

ALSO BY MARTIN CORLESS-SMITH

POETRY

Bitter Green (Fence Books 2015)

English Fragments A Brief History of the Soul (Fence Books 2010)

Swallows (Fence Books 2006)

Nota (Fence Books 2003)

Complete Travels (West House Books 2000)

Of Piscator (University of Georgia Press 1998)

FICTION

This Fatal Looking Glass (SplitLevel Texts 2015)

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Martin
Corless-Smith

*The Fool
& The Bee*

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Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
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(this address not for correspondence)

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Contents

I. The Fool & The Bee	9
II. Here Then at Last	73
III. Withers	85
IV. Monadic Vistas	91

SAMPLER

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I. The Fool & The Bee

A visionary processional in three acts

SAMPLER

*All myths born of a simple-shell,
All heroes born of a bee.*

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[Prologue]

That which was an Albatross
came sweetly down –
Alabaster artichokes on either side
the rendering of sky and sea
sufficient to supply the thought of Nature
in a fulgent mood – and Man at odds;
so audience and players might unite
suggesting human union transcends the solitude
of birds suspended (almost) endlessly above the void
– though how an hour or two of scenery
can hope to mimic an eternity...

...perhaps it is the ecstasy of Art
held temporarily between dark curtains
that proposes consciousness
played out on a human scale
instrument of self and self's catastrophe.

Act I. Then

[Stage descriptive of an idyll]

[A scene opens]

Hark how it begins – a dollop of affection
played into atmosphere – a herring pointed at the Sun
All glittery – as if a talisman.
The herring now a symbol of out-fished oceans or

The herring now a name ill-known.
What shall I hold up to the Sun that might reflect
ironic glory – it is vain to think of cures
to superhuman tragedy – vain to think as well of carpet bombs and fasts.

I who have brought into my den the smirking fox
Disabused of charm and status in an urban realm
Now too like the poorer humans to elicit aught but fear
A loathing – entering the house obedient to need.

Where in the hierarchicals shall we place poetry?
A residue of culture when a story held us rapt –
or when a culture wrapped a farthing of anxiety
with prudent hope and anticipated ordin'ry resolve.

The sickness unto Death, The evils of Revolution
In consolation to his wife – Decline and Fall
Lord how shall we gather at the river
Without texting all our friends

Once in the enemy of time I rinsed my hate
with sadness made of Love and for a moment
found I could manage to exist without the burden
of anticipation answered by desire –

I could uphold the instances of being
as if by aspect they resolved all matter
into incidents that coincide – hold a herring to the Sun
Its eye a perfect mirror to the glory of the frozen present in a
future memory.

*

...A pine grew through the centre of the house
and reached into the room – we could not
move so climbed up through its barbs
Out to a memory of stars...

...broken limbs that rests
Like a pier into the lake
a half moon with
Europe in the shadow of its other continents...

It was my body I saw climbing through
My house, my mother and my mind
The pine had been a thought hence out of time
It was as real as happiness

(The night that grew
with intermittent joy – a story with all hiding
lost at hand – rain and an ocean's wind
An eye inside the skull

which boats across the skein
Black depths – oil continent
Beauty of death her open look
And knowledgeless season

what energy drives one to move
On a limitless sea – towards what

Directionless motherless dream –
Skiathos or Helena – the trill

Of a single voice above the lapping
To tune immediate silence
Pizzicato archipelagos
Unseen – and what I crawled out to

Where I had ocean and secure
Where I had blood and celestial support
Out to a chainless step
And peer into the black liquor

Hopeless – travel where
We meet loneliness and
Anxious spills over to make
Me feel for her her outward

Incomprehensibility – an amazon of fear
Draws past a pine tree pyre
Born out of the glossy forest floor
Into its own oncoming gale

Field of seed drawn sideways draped
The wool of shepherd winters
A world to move across – transinfinite
The birth of something lost

Love like a great arched chasm
We find ourselves inside – remind me
Mother before you were – remind me
In our ocean above the roof

Where the splintered pine grows into night
Cold to the starry snows – pine
In an ecstasy of growth
A punt over a moat

For I don't know what I need to know
A pine on fire
The spirit of the house
A sacrifice for I don't know

A shadow candle burning down
Into the night for I don't know
My lover on another world
My mother and her mother too
A shudder through the empty room
I don't know I don't know).

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Suppose this very now
An uproar is at hand
A visionary cleft
Through which to glimpse

Another ecstasy
The courts bemused
Seven restless youths
Have slit a bullock's throat

And was it sacrifice yet unordained?
Whilst you entomb yourselves
With ancient rites
No longer portents from the skies.

Called into being as if invited to some festival
Some custom of restraint, some instinct of excess
The pears near bruised with succulence
The liquor pouring thickly down the legs

Oh there is no tomorrow after sacrifice
It is another world held open for the revelers
The great-winged beetle is above us now
Held there by breath and dream alone.

What of the idiot king – shocked at his dismissal?
What of the well-schooled Dame?
Feed the horses – empty the barrows
No one shall be subject to their dues.

What pleasure bibes the clown?
Columbine's dream
Being a fly mid-stream
No fate, no fears, no views.

We have thought up a story so intricate
There cannot be a plot.
We have peopled the cities with characters
Who all believe their act.

Not the Martial arts, nor the bee alone
Not the horse and chariot, nor the monstrous snake
Here is the indifferent squid – here the rising mold
Here the sensuous toadstool hidden in its gloom.

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[Enter the hermaphroditic spirit sublime, a poet crowned in myrtle]

for Alan Halsey

I misread arms for anus – errors for eros
Misheard the red moon flakes
Which means precisely nothing
Pre-cise-ly.

Angel abuts the church ceiling
At such and such an angle, faith!
Where calmness and calamity
Mix heresy with hearsay.

The wary flower
Kissed so sweetly
By wind and bee
Kiss again so wearily

[Enter Mars-Ares]

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The hacking cough, throat
Eye down the face like egg
Blood not staunched
These boys into the face of that

I can't help hide but
Where shall we swallow
Hate or fear – the boy
Whose beaten face resembles

Love – poured into nowhere
perfunctory responses are professional
I can't help but hide
My own fear and privilege

That's my son, some man
is everybody's son, why can
we let it go – not ours
how can it not be though.

[Enter Bee-Aphrodite, the twins embrace]

Breast of an Amazon
The boyhood figure
Lean, confused against
The empty chair.

What when your parents
Leave the empty house
What when the tepid bath
You sit into

She will have grown a cock
Sister to your own
Curved like a gourd
To slip into yr groin

Only her face will show
Her shock at having grown
This erection ripe
Unearthed from lust – a thirst burst

Out at last – a deity born of the root
The roof caves in
The mouth caves in
The shout to no-one new....

Bare feet across the kitchen floor
Sweet lichor down the thigh
On marble tiles
Now puddles underfoot.