



# Hermegasmica

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This e-book edition was published in the United Kingdom in 2011 by Shearsman Books Ltd, 58 Velwell Road, Exeter, EX4 4LD

It is available at  
[www.shearsman.com/pages/books/ebooks/ebooks\\_home.html](http://www.shearsman.com/pages/books/ebooks/ebooks_home.html)

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*Hermegasmica* first appeared in the online journal *Sidereality*.

# **Hermegasmica**

*A non-linear murder mystery*

It's a tune you can't quite remember: phrasings return,  
but a dandelion head blown into summer sky  
won't let polyphony be pieced together.  
From the dirge of the tunnel on Fairfield,  
                    crossing into Granby Row,  
                    it's a night for the Hermegasmica,  
for *Moanin' Low*. I've no need to remind you however,  
as Herr Haller said, "An unknown man gave me a little book"  
                    and all hell lies below  
                    its charming surface. For each love song  
search out its complimentary murder. Work on this  
                    the Entscheidungsproblem.

*given any expression Q in the notation of the system,  
it can be determined whether or not Q is provable in the system*

The Entscheidungsproblem expressed in this  
apparently means we can at least work out from the text  
whether we know the murderer or  
it's not possible to know the murderer.

Turing, fossilised in Sackville Gardens, was poisoned  
by an apple laced with cyanide. In the tautologousness of this crime  
of syncopated incision  
the instrumentalist *did no more work  
than sitting down and eating Chinese roast duck*. It was  
over in a song.

In Marilyn's bar a transsexual does her best Lady Day,  
*Lover Man, Don't Explain*. Later on, cocktail-bruised  
and looking for a minicab, she takes the line offered  
in the crease of a tenner, Billie *in extremis*. Did they  
kick the stereo on, watch her  
dance, a Strange Fruit,  
behind the beat? Did they try to wake her? Did they  
share solo space with her? She just can't  
remember a thing.  
It's five a.m., there's a sour taste  
to the last of her lipstick and it's too cold to be walking  
home on Oxford Road.

It was the sort of thing you'd buy at a Fair, and inside...  
in the tone-colours of jazz, in an armchair at the club,  
in the gramophone's contamination, I found myself unwitting  
but yes, for certain, inside that Herman Hesse novel.

*a man provided with paper, pencil, and rubber,  
and subject to strict discipline,  
is in effect a universal machine*

Now if this is right my expectation will make  
physical a little shop,  
somewhere just off Chinatown.

When I get there she'll be dead but something wonderful  
may have happened.

one word  
for the Hermegasmica would be  
jass

whore's perfume  
jasmine or jism, the end in  
clonus

to interpret  
this winged messenger of discharge  
turnaround



Moonflower, he called her. Six in the morning, the first traffic  
pushing through the wet grey light. She shivers, folds her arms  
to hug herself. A flimsy Canton silk dress in arterial red and ridiculous  
five inch patent heels misplaced into early commuters. A lock  
from her henna-red wig (the Adele)  
hangs forward clumped with dry saliva.  
God damn him. She blocks him out with a Metallica mp3.  
If he weren't a probabilistic automaton and she wasn't  
held in a set of functional states,  
she'd say, like Billie Holliday,  
*don't threaten me with love, baby, let's just go walking  
in the rain.*

He had her up against the wall round the back of the Portland  
(a four star establishment) where they load the laundry. He says  
it was so cold his feet were nearly numb and she was on tiptoes  
and from Malaysia and on the periphery of royalty. Somehow  
all that shrink-wrapped Chinese porn paid off.  
Drunk on Pernod she swore, or so he says,  
incessantly in her own language, but the clever thing,  
it's the tricks they can do, it's all about  
muscular control,  
practice, enculturation or perhaps  
just race. She never took off her headphones and don't ask me  
to pronounce her real name.

In the Bull's Head Jerry Preston, keeping tabs  
on the lateness of the 18:53 to New Street,  
discourses on his impressive collection of knives:  
silver shards, cutlery ranked in a baize lined drawer.

Beads of real-ale quiver on the fringe  
of his yeasty moustache as

- it's very simple, he repeats, common sense,  
easily comprehended: she says *you will carry out my command  
and - kill me. There.*

Concealed steel warms  
to the skin, a deep and perfect stainless splinter singing  
so high only dogs hear.

When he rolled out a smile with that one  
moistened gold incisor you knew,  
as he always said he had, he got some mean good  
bad shit, combing through the pockets  
of his beat-up sheepskin as he did,  
spilling flakes of foil,  
stopped half across Whitworth Park. Just near here  
they'll find the body sinking like the night's rain  
made it heavy.  
The gallery was showing  
Blake: I went for the Ancient of Days, it's smaller  
than you think.

Scrubbing floors in a Moss Side brothel, rehospitalising  
the corners of spent beds, unschooled  
she may have been and *I never had the chance*  
*to play with dolls*, she was sweet sour kind mean profane lovable  
impossible.

I plunged in my knife to the hilt.  
*What a night, what a moon, what a girl.* It was over  
before she'd finished singing the words.

*I'm painting the town*  
*red* in this momentary vault of screaming and false nails  
in Whitworth Park where I set my compass  
upon the face of the deep.

I would  
have kissed away the blood  
peculiar

the canal  
in her own way shameful  
unzipped

black Armani  
and a banker's townhouse unlocked  
overlooked

I was walking home late one night. I know I went under  
the Imperial Chinese Arch on Faulkner Street, maybe Mei Sum,  
maybe Drag Phoenix, it could have been Chain or Pine,  
something tells me I won't find it again.

There was an alley I turned down,  
I'd never been there before,  
a dead-end and a red neon sign fizzing over a shopfront.  
It was Hermegasmica, open for business.

It's a tune  
you know you've heard before. This old wall in an old town  
on a wet night. Lit up, a swing door  
inviting. I could enter.  
but not yet.

Gödel's first incompleteness theorem, a soot-clad kneeling  
golem, spluttering on PVC thigh-boots.  
Grinning down, the Manchester Automatic Digital Machine (MADAM)  
constructs this image of Venus in Furs.

Can this sentence be true but not provable in the theory?  
Can Turing's test work its gaming on a man and a woman?  
Games under these remote-terminal conditions  
generate a DI-ed *folie a deux*.

Did the interrogator know the woman?  
Can't you tell?  
Guess which woman will be lying  
dead in the grass in Whitworth Park.



Completeness can't be achieved,  
criminals walk free in nights  
cold as wrought iron, in  
Cluedo poems unsolved.

Feed Mozart to the brains of the unborn.  
Float in an isolation tank listening to whales.  
City pubs of stressed financiers at the  
critical age, the middle-eight,

go home to listen to the womb-from-inside,  
funnelled through Bang & Olufsen.  
Candle-light, joss-sticks and a blowjob  
given by a big-boned masseuse.

caught by a dog and shaken to death. It didn't stop. I ran.  
throwing up. The ground was hard.  
                    then I lost her too.  
Once again the Wedding Present were playing at the International.  
                    But it was over.  
We went crazy down the front. I lost you.  
                    she and I leant on each other for support,  
The joke of rolled up banknotes, nodding at the cliché.  
                    heard the cry of a hare  
I was kneeling in an alley under a pin sharp moon  
                    I must have dropped my wallet.  
There was a girl: both darkened by sweat

Finally he turned when a bitter chocaholic  
covered him in clothes pins.

He dropped playing French horn  
in a Lancashire marching band.

The solemn crush he got,  
on a Marxist who played acoustic, went bad  
and I saw him last on Venice Street.

He was burned out,  
leaning on some red-brick derelict  
for all the world  
straight from Tom Waits circa Blue Valentine.

But I heard he's clear now,  
head shaved, doing Krishna,  
Q&A for a small donation  
outside the Arndale.

Blackmarket video in some fifty or so  
select video recorders. She has tears on her face.  
Filming in black and white, Hitchcock used  
chocolate sauce for blood. The light comes  
in and out, grainy  
edges dissolving  
in constant play like CCTV. A blade contrasts briefly  
with the matt pallor of a cheek as the soundtrack  
is severed by racked bass,  
a dance beat dubbed on while she looks  
in a sullen moment of epiphany  
straight at the camera.

Direct Input. You jack the axe into the desk,  
you jam a bloodied shirt in the washing machine.  
DI. You slump into 38D (facing), loosing  
your twenty Marlboro and zippo in a sliding stack  
across the carriage table.  
If they expect you to escape  
by train you take a plane but if they second guess that  
you actually take that train.  
Piccadilly slips away. Your father said run a sink full  
of cold water, stick your head in,  
snort, and think.

With the walking bass  
of my heart I've walked  
up from Rusholme  
until on a bench  
in Whitworth Park  
I've stopped,  
opened her letter,  
and read it  
twice.  
She's got  
the pillow I sent,  
the one I dreamed on,  
acting out  
(lyrics by The Smiths).  
She's laid her head  
there each night  
in sunny Hastings  
and I'm thinking  
of you  
and  
get well soon.

The Royal Exchange, that hooded golden flower  
of tinted mirrors, polished fake brass, uplit and full of perfume  
like a duty free on a ferry.

In the centre a young woman in a business suit gives out  
free samples of fudge and chocolates.  
This could be the chromatic heart.

She smiled. *'Harry? Have you found me?'*

One day we were so hungry we could barely breathe.

*With a curse*

*I came back to the razor.* Crazy he calls me  
the publisher brought me.

Good morning, heartache.

join me  
in this private loop I  
playback

every day  
ask what do you do  
driving

thirty years  
in a loop like a  
ghost

come landlord  
fill the flowing bowl until  
until

until until  
until it doth run over

the irony  
of kerb crawling is not  
lost



I stopped in the Club, I told him I was a dancer.  
He said to dance. I tried it. He said I stunk.  
Turing agreed to take hormone therapy for a year  
instead of going to prison.

For hormones and surgery  
I need proof of a dysphoria  
for the therapist. Questions like  
have you always disliked maths?

Imagine a garden  
with a hundred kinds of trees, a thousand flowers.  
We are not dealing here  
with man.

In the attic  
I extracted  
the instrument,  
brought it down,  
and I'm vamping

but something wonderful may have happened.

I'm back  
to the games  
I forgot I'm playing,  
impro solo  
speaking easy.

Tonight the shop is opening, the sign is lit.

I'm looking  
for devices  
over circling fifths,  
miscellaneous progressions  
for neat licks.

We're under the red light, Pablo on sax, Harry with Novalis,  
and the instruments ready.

A4 sheets filled with pencilled tab notation,  
a Peavey practice amp picking up mains hum,

but the room is empty.

His heart is enlarged. When it's back to normal  
they'll send him home to Autumn Leaves  
and he can trill, slide, bend again  
for the ghosts in his Rusholme let,

waiting for the Candyman Blues.

*The Manchester Royal Exchange presents*

THE LONDON CHINESE ORCHESTRA

*"Silk and Bamboo"*

*with Best Wishes from the Hong Kong Bank group.*

She bags the leftover cubes of chocolate  
folded in sticky doily and catches the end  
of the midday performance.

THE MOON IS BRIGHTEST IN MY VILLAGE *and*

THREE REPETITIONS ON PLUM BLOSSOM

*and* PLUCKING A FLOWER (*Cheng Yu, Chinese lute*)

*it depicts the unbending characteristics of plum blossoms in the snow*

Her heart is clogged with fudge.

A trickle of blood from the corner of the mouth that is too red,  
a simulation referencing seventies Hammer.

Decide: *How had I, with the wings of youth and poetry, come to this?*  
Dealing phrases like an arbitrary machine, subject to restrictions of finiteness.  
Death like this would seem  
deviant to Turing, an *inadequate representation of the ordinary notion*  
Dressing in a red silk Qi Pao would pass as

great Bohemian chic. *She bows her head and composes her face.*

A human operator works in a disciplined but unintelligent manner,  
a trickle of blood is left on her lip like a cliché.

Make the Hermegasmica copious, gliss  
like a butterfly in Chinatown night.

Hermione your hostess  
is in the tritone Garden of Crime.

Your tool is the knife.

The door is open under the neon sign, you hear  
the willowing croon of a glam-doll and see

a thousand winking fairy lights.