

Bindings with Discords

Also by Pete Smith

20/20 Vision

Harm's Length

John's Book of Alleged Dances

cross of green hollow: elegies, allegiances, thefts

Strum of Unseen

Country the Colour of a Lithograph

Odden (I Sing)

Wanderlieder

Winterized: the Musical (with Hannah Naomi)

Pete Smith

*Bindings
with
Discords*

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CONTENTS

Part One: Pointes & Fingerings	9
One-Eye-Saw: “in the sure uncertain hope”	11
20/20 Vision	25
Evacuation Procedures	47
Part Two: Three Fancies in the Key of BC	71
Strum of Unseen	73
48 Out-Takes from the Deanna Ferguson Show	87
Mother Tongue: Father Silence	99
Acknowledgements	122

*To Hilary
i/m Rhoda Smith, 1916–1994,
who never met a word she couldn't relish.*

A Fancie [or Fantasy]

“When a musician taketh point at his pleasure and wresteth and turneth it as he list, making either much or little of it as shall seem best in his own conceit... And this kind [of music] will bear any allowances whatsoever except... leaving the key, which in fantasy may never be suffered. Other things you may use at your pleasure, as bindings with discords, quick motions, slow motions, proportions, and what you list.”

Thomas Morley in

‘A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke’, 1597.

Part One

Pointes & Fingerings

One-Eye-Saw:

“in the sure uncertain hope” *

[* misreading of a phrase in *The Order for the Burial of the Dead*]

✻

The name was cold:
wrapped itself counterclockwise in
 uncommon anonymity
& walked head-down into the blizzard.
A chinook erased the ice-shield,
resurrected braille ciphers.
 The feeling was cinerary, warmth
holding earnest
 of homecoming at harm's
 length.

*

Blue Muffle

Snow is aphasic
but its punctuation
immaculate.

So much difference
looking so much
the same.

Weight of white
suffocating;
cyanosis.

Snow's true profile lost
in the shadow
cast by snow.

Rumour of white
noised abroad:
fractal silence.

*

A Fine & Public Place

I.

In a heartbeat there'd be a block and a pass
and no escape. A heavy tackle could beckon
the sirens and weeks awarded with a nightgown
tied behind. Bed-rest ordered. Compliance to go.
Sign my chart and I'll don a straitened jacket, smile into
the mouth of an unsuspecting stooge. If all the world's
staged what's the rest but curtained silence, a hide
for a writer of headlines to project eponymous increase?
Prophet: a man who gains from loss. If it doesn't happen
in the margins, it doesn't. Surgical division: behaviour
modification by stealth: perseverations of dead air.

II EDENGATE

They say there's a level at which you'll find a playing field
where lovers dive over clover for cover.
There's no need for that, you say,
and there isn't. For an American declension, try:
I sue; you sue; he/she/it pays. We all pay
the piper and the cotton plugs that ease our passage
to the other side: no leaks and even fewer secrets.
Whether the Expulsion was strike or lock-out
is a debate hardly begun in earnest, yet,
in Texas, a branch was consumed in its own rhetoric.
Where there's fire there's someone smoking to get out
of there. Orbit or obit?
A nice discrimination: ash, dust.
Paradise downsized.

III SAUL IN THE DETAILS

The signal was perseverative: a flash card
in morose code – a depressive knows
a manic by his handshake.

You must have behaviour to meet
the criteria: what else is a *DSM* for?
His shrink is a rock wrapped in insight:
empathy is not now covered. Can we
call it MediCareless after the baboon's
heart disguised the baby's soul? Saul
in the mind: Paul in intent. *Swollen*
Members would have had a 12-inch
on their CV but the CD usurped them.
Is that hop, hip, rip, rap, or an oily film
Left by the incumbent? Gouge
the earth, O gouge the earth
and crawl thereon. Scrawled in crayon
on the belly of a 747

THIS SIDE OOPS: an act of treason
as to ruinate anagrams a leak
in the plumbing. As straight as that.
No straighter. No, straighter.
All chaste. When the lion pounced
the grenade blew Monday a hole
through Sunday. Raw roar; rank gong.
Inter mission: Burial Detail, fall in.

IV TIME'S NICK

Cradle a moment: it will lullay you
 into a false sense of curity,
make the chaos too tabular (wooden)
 to trust. When raising a truss
has ceased to be an act of faith as to wrap
 God in black leather quarto is to
contain nothing: the questions from whirlwind
 deserve better than to be answered.
Is and was are line-dance might-have-beens
 in-steps stepping out on the off-beat –
syncopation nation
 and a pay-back song from birthday brother
Marley. Flyers and catalogues
 and discarded ephemera will engage teams
of speculative researchers in reconstructing
 our times: a list of objects to conjure
the whit of a subject. “I’m just popping
 in ’ere for a quick one,” he jerked
his head toward the *Mother Earth’s Arms*.
 “Aye,” she said, “appen I’ll join you later.”

V ORDER OF DEAD

I am refuge to another.

Mountains seep past night.

Sleep-grass green & withered.

Angry days, years told.

Teach us to numb our days.

Wisdom us with glad comfort and prosper.

Now put down his feet.

Some body seed.

Image of earthly, image of heavenly, all change.

This mortal put-on: this sting of law.

The commitment of call-away.

The soul of ash.

This never-home.

*

Fisher of Men

"O, unreasonable salmon" (Bunting's Villon misheard)

As soon as he opens his mouth his mind escapes.
Tongue. Touched. Tinged with madness.
Not full immersion, a now-&-then sprinkling
Playing unreason – a fifty pound salmon
that, landed, would be a sinker.
Plankton memories: baptism by scale.
Leave your nets & follow him,
he may be worth saving.
An eyetooth for a lark:
a vinegar poultice
to carry blood a cross.

*

Say ... All

Say someone steps in where there was no-one
where there is no in say this is not
cyberspace not a screened deflection of personality
say there was no chemical repression say you understood
the phrase *marital rubble* as used by Hejinian
why Snodgrass had his Hitler say
My failing was my kindness say you can rebuild
as fast as you can rebury the city is always tending downward no
matter how high you go say the phrases
of glass are shot through
with the colourlessness of dirt ground to sand say praise
is always in the mouth of the beholden say you wanted
to change channels in the middle of a conversation say
you did say no-one ever again wanted to colonize
another person say the Beothuk are living
in what innocence ever was
in an undiscoverable fold of the landscape say prime
rib clear cut hard knocks say the planet's
learning curve has plateaued say there's nothing
left say an astronaut came back
with something to say something shot through
with the colour colours come from say no-one could
see it say from where you sit
the word is indivisible an unqualified
seem of immeasurable wealth say the suture job was botched
and we are necrotic tissue congregated at the scar's edge say
the last time you used the word *word* you meant
world say the fast ball slides past your startled shoulder say the poet
is flensed through the lens of language becomes the scarecrow's
blind pupil at the sentence's close say nothing
closes until all

1996

*