

*11781 W. Sunset Boulevard*

Also by Simon Smith

North Star

LEXICON

Night Shift

Juicy Fruit

Fifteen Exits

Reverdy Road

Mercury

London Bridge

Gravesend

Simon Smith

*11781  
W. Sunset  
Boulevard*

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# Contents

## 11781 W. Sunset Boulevard

Ode: Sat Nav Narrative on Flying into LAX	11
Credit Card Reader	13
10/22/11	14
Hummingbird	15
Chandler's 'The Little Sister'	16
Windshield	17
Commute	18
Los Angeles River	19
Eyewitness News	20
Brentwood	21
Long Distance	22
An Email for David Herd: Anna's Hummingbird	23
11/1/11	25
W. Pico	26
Hegelian Dialectics	27
Paradise Cove	28
Out of Malibu	29

## Gravesend

A Theory for a Materialist Poetics	35
Table of Contents	36
Quarantine Area a rhetorical question	37
Greenwich	38
History GCSE (Kent & Essex Board, June 2008)	39
Norwegian container ship at anchor taking on units	40
Greenhithe for Bluewater	41
Milton Range	42
Gravesend	43
Abbey Wood	44
Question of Communication	45
Dartford	46

Allegro Equipe	47
Cy Twombly	48
Fun	49
Deposits	50
Tightrope	51
We don't stop at Deptford. No one dare.	52
Charlton	53
London Bridge	54
Narrow Gauge	55
Lewisham	56
Rochester	57
Idyll	58
A Little Cushion	59
Pit Bull	60
Pub	61
Poet	62
Those Were the Days	63
Subaru Impreza	64
Lupercalla	65
Existential Crisis	66
Opposite Asda	67
Holiday Cottage Bookshelf	68
High Force	69
Agitprop Prop Olympiad	70
Seaford Beach	71
Chatham	72
Coach D	73
White 440	74

11781 W. Sunset Blvd.



*for Guy & Béatrice*

Like earlier generations of English intellectuals  
who taught themselves Italian in order to read  
Dante in the original, I learned to drive in order  
to read Los Angeles in the original.

— Reyner Banham

A crazy little place called 'Be There Now'

— Steely Dan

The cars hiss by my window, like the waste down  
on the beach

—The Doors



## Ode: Sat Nav Narrative on Flying into LAX

Hopping the Hudson Strait to Hudson  
Bay hurry not toward  
450 m.p.h. of ground speed dip down at  
James Bay distance to LA 2513 miles local  
time at present position 12.30 p.m.,  
next the Great Lakes a lot of cloud down  
there & not far away the flight path  
curves to the pleasing earth's curve,  
eyes gritty-tired,  
doggèd, filled with the hours bursting  
the grit full of hours & Newcastle  
Brown, Stella, some other forms of beer unidentified, & Thunder  
Bay, LA in 2188 miles, a curl  
of hair for the book's pages a charm  
keeps our place, & at 38,000 feet everything's made  
to look smaller  
& now onto Winnipeg  
using the Spacepen David bought for me all those years  
ago now we're nearly in space &  
four hours to go,  
thinking of David makes me switch  
to local time at London 6.23 p.m. & dark—  
cold no doubt the 777 held above  
like a mobile

or lunar module  
returning Apollo 13  
the stratosphere silent & moving forever  
those still strapped into their business class  
like to lick lips glistening  
Winnipeg our event horizon  
patchwork of lakes leading-edge forming vapour  
breathe in & *The Collected Poems*  
*of Paul Blackburn* becomes  
my favourite book & all is clear  
a life abandoned to the High Plains  
between Cheyenne & Laramie in minutes  
then on to Mount Rushmore & the Devil's Tower  
the Colorado River, the Hoover Dam & Mojave Desert  
now in the blue sky above LA now  
is the moment for change & everything shifts forward next

## Credit Card Reader

The only reading worth knowing  
step towards the people carrier  
ready to meet & capture this World  
a grainy figure picks out street angels  
pimp or punter hard to tell behind the windshield,  
when the cars growl past my window  
as the lone power-tool suddenly shuts off,  
the naturally benign climate to LA  
full of freeways & car interiors  
with fixtures hard enough to bang my head into,  
granulated neighbourhoods  
watch the housing projects from surveillance footage  
palm & fig trees, the gated communities.  
This is Rilke calling collect from Los Angeles.

10/22/11

My last shave, when? Wednesday?  
No, Thursday, before take-off. Two days' growth.  
My friend Guy bringing Robert Crosson across from the dead,  
heroic, a fine task, sleek in those black  
Seismicity Editions—*Day Books*...  
with Gaddafi's execution, NATO enters its 'over watch period,'  
& we can be glad of the minimal collateral damage  
& no NATO or American casualties, the causality  
of which means, *erce*, 'the most successful operation  
of Modern Times,' the casual rhetoric of the robotic U.S. military,  
relaxed for National Public Radio, informs you & me,  
no doubt without tie & top button undone, in his 501s  
closer 'To The People,' voice of one, who is one of us.

## Hummingbird

Sat at the window tuned to Sunday traffic  
where are the drivers rushing  
to their limitless gods over limitless tarmac  
LA defines the horizontal—no bar, no limit  
no known impediment, the grid  
Rilke searching streets & corners, passing  
cars like the grind of sharpening knives

## Chandler's 'The Little Sister'

Relax beside the pool, palms, Scots pine not  
now but next

the magnolias, tankers,  
muscle cars, the thirst & appetite  
inexhaustible for 24-hour neon artificial  
sun, LA as far West as it goes before  
becoming East

again, heading towards  
Santa Monica up Route 405  
'the beach is three miles that way'  
the cab driver jabbed his thumb left  
& West.

## Windshield

iPhone pointing west on Sunset  
smog swirls up from the coast  
the zombie convoy of Corvettes,  
Camaros, Trans-Ams—a wave  
sweeps over West Sunset Blvd.  
to the STOP sign, & my feet,  
this long haul long hop deep  
breath, crossing the concrete  
the red hand held up, eight  
seconds

## Commute

home space —> work space  
in-car time-space the distance  
to the office with my name on it  
'SIMON SMITH H-462-44'  
something something vacant  
lot something something  
Garnett's photos of Lakewood living  
space, 'pragmatic solutions  
to the problems of shelter,'  
like printed circuitry  
a white Mustang ('66?) rolls up  
Sunset from Santa Monica  
& the beach, the traffic  
rolls with it, sucked up on rollers

## Los Angeles River

Untroubled by birdsong  
a big nowhere, 200,000 or more  
windshields shimmer leaping  
salmon upstream of I-405  
built by robots, driven by utility  
the cops airborne & mobile,  
Bell Huey & Vaughan Williams'  
'Flos Campi' housed  
in a thousand automobiles  
drifting up Sunset string  
& voices to a thousand  
exact copies without interference,  
the Statue of Liberty 125 years young  
today in the comfort of eeef-eeemm

## Eyewitness News

'President Obama visited West Sunset Boulevard today,' good to know he has friends in the neighbourhood.  
We slept through the motorcade & chopper patrol  
at our bedroom window & mid-afternoon dusk—  
blue, orange, mauve, dove grey, sun strong, shadows  
black, the blue-print or printed circuit of a city  
tell me we've entered a TV comedy, cop show,  
LA film noir, news bulletin, porn or snuff movie,  
call me on 1 310 440 8323 when you know.