

58 Poems

1. Head in the Sand

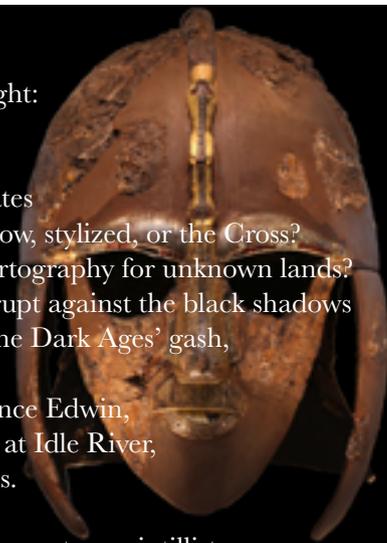
Let us pretend that no one's ever going to die.
Let's argue about email, the prevalence of child pornography.
Let's party till the night is done,
Forget philosophy,
Ignore ontology,
And dedicate our intellectual efforts
To writing little poems with quartz-clear images.

2. Life-Course

Has someone grasped that object like a long thin musical note
To follow
The bouncing ball of some experimental score?
No, this is life, not art.
But life of a refined kind.
Here the rules are few;
Here the rules are simple.
Just lines where fairway grass has been erased,
And holes and red cloth arrows
(Not heraldic texts of intricate lineage and signification),
A tee and dozens of devoted characters
Uninterested in sifting ethics and religions, life-courses;
The fairest way to maximize contentment and
achievement without harming others.
And yet the worship of this sport!
Can it do anything but soar,
So that one day, beyond the Mars-sign traffic lights, there
will be golf and only golf,
And everyone will be content
And everything will be transparent
Like the entrancing air between the tee and sand-trap?

3. King Rædwald's Battle Helmet

Unearthed at Sutton Hoo
But seemingly as new as sunlight:
A battle helmet,
A welded egg of death.
The fourfold seam that separates
Its blazing plates: is it a crossbow, stylized, or the Cross?
Or intersecting axes, crude cartography for unknown lands?
The yellow of the metal is abrupt against the black shadows
Just as its wearer's life, along the Dark Ages' gash,
Cast light down the centuries
When he provided help to Prince Edwin,
Engulfing the Northumbrians at Idle River,
Repelling Æthelfrith's defences.
But that sudden nothingness!
The picture from the text becomes too pointillist,
Its light as if reflected
From five or six gilt rivets in a long-decayed shipwreck,
Throwing doubt on everything it followed,
Even the image itself!
Baptized in Kent. . . .
A son of King Tytila. . . .
Ascended throne in 593. . . .
Returned to Pagan gods. . . .
Ephemeral abstractions, characters:
The matter hacked as if by axes from our view,
From the very poem.



4. Time Travel Notes. Mid-January, 2018

1.

Kalra conveyed to me these facts:

Throughout the mad dawn stages of the journey he had doubts

But ultimately he was able to proclaim

“I will raise a man

And give him all things.”

And so, immediately after passing through that far White Hole,

He set about creating his domain: the Tower and its Ocean world,

A vast computer to project a great new universe,

Ours,

A cosmos with a ready-made and finished history extending back to its beginning,

Fern and fabrosaurus factored in.

Unlike the Ocean world, and the continuum Kalra had left,

Where things are infinitely divisible,

Material in the projected cosmos would be discrete;

Its quanta would be pixels.

Completion was achieved in just six days.

2.

I settled on my bed, reflecting on the Tower:

A miles-high diamond of the first water,

Its crags like gashes in the sapphire sea.

In half an hour I would be tantra-travelling through the pleroma

Down to the Tower’s seabed medical facility

All stromb-smooth and glassy-blue with sterile white light,

Where Kalra’s sphere, the centre of his self,

Bright and round like the sky observed through windchime
pipes,
And mine could be transferred then to Kalki, his subtle body
With my restricted physical existence
Destroyed.

These two outcomes are currently in quantum superposition.
At noon, the launch began:

The tantric gestures, heavy with my sweat, were tiring.
The sunlight, slanting on my right, was thick and warming.
I missed the apple, red and crisp, I had intended for my lunch.
I was instructed to direct my vision to the left
And soon observed the waters of the Tower's world,
Paua shell blue and criss-crossed with shifting ellipses.
There was a room, a bed and blankets
I was advised to aim directly at the smooth white basin;
I gained it on my second attempt.
Kalra's projected hands were confident,
Their veins were forked like constellations.
I was reminded that my thoughts should be focused on the
nautilus waters
Not on my bed at home and the diffuse sunlight.
Though errors could be edited out,
I was in a panic of distractions
But that was good –
Anxiety's momentum surged and fear propelled the spheres,
Two taws of unthawed ice,
Into a long coiled tube transparent like a jellyfish's tentacle.
There was a lively cry of "bull's eye!"
The moment that the second one connected.
But the striving to keep still, not to swallow saliva!
The positive and negative responses to this were in
superposition:

"Avoid that: it could ruin the procedure".

"A natural reaction – we anticipated it".

I scarcely was aware of my dissolving body:
There was a tingling warmth commingled with increasing
weariness
An effervescent effortlessness
And that was all.

3.

In three long hours, the project was completed.
I was advised to shower thoroughly
And change my clothes
With all my body's changes to occur in days.
The apple still appealed
But I was after something more substantial.
Checking the clock, it was before noon
I'd travelled back in time at least three hours.
I went and bought some KFC,
Had some for lunch, and ate the rest for tea.