

Brain Fever

a sequence

jim ferguson

*having covered a lot of ground
poor auld martin eden drowned*

a vast systemic tragedy, the end

angelic and devilish

Angelic Devilish
 and!
hobbling yet flying
 down the street
into town
 with
too many thoughts
 of the gunshot
that pierced Mayakovsky's

Guts Heart
in the clouds with moon-faced Lily

upon whom
 his love-boat crashed
— smashed
— crushed
by
 'poetry's
 toil-worn hands'
no cloud in his trousers

nothing
 to keep him
standing

 Not
in the sky or the earth
 beneath
nor way down below yonder
 where the fiends all creep

— He crawled and he soared,
 so ultimately floated

Devilish Angelic
 and!
 into that unnameable
 town.

bus x bus = bus

*this boy don't take no subway
this boy don't take no train
he only got the sus for the bus into town
and aint got the eyes of the sane*

if only he could raise an arm
 twould be thus he could hail a cab
 instead he leans his body, too relaxed,
 on the bus-shelter's thick glass pane

stupid smile bolted on his lips
he's a drunk or a junkie or mad
cause nobody smiles like that
— all irrational and blinking
he can see other folk wonder
what the fuck he is thinking
cause to smile like that he must
be a drunk or junkie or mad
or possibly plain old bad

 he puts the fear in the air
 pours paranoia into the heart

as wee boys in go-carts
scoot by and scream
but they're in slow-motion
all blood-red and seem

 like they're heading for a crash
 like they're heading for death
for tragedy unbound, and unbidden
 like a lightning bolt from heaven
 but the boys all laugh and disappear off
 round a corner as

the queue starts to move
our man ambles in
to a smooth seat groove
and they're off

 doors slide shut
 doors slide shut

‘screw the nut,’ he thinks
keeps the smile bolted on
as a song starts to issue
from his alcoholic lips:

*this boy don't take no subway
this boy don't take no train
he only got the sus for the first omnibus
and he aint got the eyes of the sane*

the crowd

step down into the city crowd
organised chaos, of course,
 random yet ordered
all juxtapositions
and oxymoronic

hard-shelled crabs
 soft-skinned humans
insects scuttling
 a dignified sea of strollers

what call to arms!
 charity girls raising funds
 in bright yellow and orange
 all breasts and teeth
 to unhinge the wallets

he looks downward
into the pavement crack dreams
of the footfalls of previous travellers
long since buried by cirrhosis

 a woman is hear-attack dead
on the red of George Square
while the medics fumble with blankets

cover and carry the body
on a cold aluminium stretcher

that's why they need the blankets
so important to cover the head
so important to keep the dead soft
so important to be soft in the hard-shelled city
to keep your humanity warm

this crowd is crazy
capable of anything — riot
revolution and looting
but everyone here is too busy shopping

it is peacefully organised chaos
as policemen lurk in corners with guns

alas

first first person

i mean (one is)

well

i mean

i mean well

in at the bar
3 pints quick

rapid

baramaid's name
is lianne

little badge
says so

mental note
of that

chit chat
then out

i mean
a daunder out

for air
and nicotine

then back
in at the bar

3 pints quick
rapid lianne

means well
too

chit chat
most unfortunate

eye injury
cut and black

while falling
off the bus

you'd better be more careful, says lianne,
what did you're missus say? if

my man came home like that
he'd know all about it.

i do know all about, says i,
it's not like it's quantum physics

simple newtonian mechanics
suffice to describe the

falling
motion.

that's not what i mean, she says.
i know what she means

she means well —
3rd pint down

time
to take a walk

well
round

i mean well
(one is)

square within the square

four park benches
shuvved onto the grass —
 organised into a square
 by enterprising afternoon amblers

asylum seeking suncatchers
take their chance to relax
in the abnormal warmth
of this springing day

light ricochets from his
hunter thomson hat
 which flattens his
 malcolm mclaren hair

keeps the stray thoughts
from straying anywhere
they can do any damage —
keeps them safely locked away

and over he strolls joining
park bench relaxers
 all very mellow —
 earth is green and yellow

he electrically thinks
as he parks his arse down:

what brings you to this godforsaken town?
electricity, the absence of torture,
a boat, a plane, an unstoppable train
-with lenin inside and superman's brain

on an accurate scale, as if
its weight corresponds to its gigantic thoughts!-
food, something that makes you feel good, yeah,
it's a remarkable day for this city,

just having a drink and a think,
hence the hat, it's a day
to walk freely, without fear or favour —
savour the planet, the wee people on it

what do you think of the bonnet?
the bunnet, the flat cap and skip
 they all keep different thoughts
 locked in the skull, yet others escape

make it away — out into the world
to do all sorts of cultural tumbles and twirls —
march down 10th avenue, or through red
square, or into the sadness of european history

that tangles in your hair
 and african history,
 tangles in your hair
 and indian history,
 tangles in your hair
 and chinese history,
 tangles in your hair
 and aboriginal history,
 tangles in your hair
 and the history of history,
 tangles in your hair

but this small story of
sitting back smoking in the springtime sun
lingers with us,
 — romantic, hard-won

our fragile friends
our precious lovers
the best we have seen,
all human, some here, some gone

onward

walk on through the town
say hello here and there
he gives a woman the fear
by smiling too close to her face

it's rare for her to be out of her car
she thinks that public spaces are
meant to afford her privacy
but everywhere she sees threats —

chance upon chance -that's what you take
when you dare to go out —
why cameras and policemen and nosey bastards
are always lurking about

the words 'civil liberty'
stuck in the throat of
a lead-boxed corpse
buried 12 foot down

he smiles at the pelican crossing
waits until it starts talking
then crosses with the sound
does a wee dance round with the beep beep beeps

idiot thinkings

under the
oppressive phallus
of the tolbooth

many pubs
nestle together —

irony
upon
irony

this is
celtic
irish
territory

traditionally
place of executions
hangings and taxes
primal anti-freedoms

designed to
let us be free
apparently
time to
pop in
and drink

sing and dance
and squeeze
a wee tear
in the foggy dew

*

then into
a new
transeuropean
café

for coffee
strong
coffee

then into
an auld
artists
pub

for coffee
strong
coffee

*

finding
a hungarian
man
named jan
quite
happy go lucky
off they go
for a cabaret

excitement
poets
musical
chants

shouting
and
having
a rant
is totally
unacceptable

now
out on the street
god knows
why or how
but hugely
disappointed
after the
young man
with the
security

ear-piece
had taken
hold of
his arm
and forced
him through
the exit

no cabaret
for him
tonight
no doubt

even after
the

coffees
strong
coffees

he was
still pretty
high
with the
booze

he guessed
there were
new rules
for parties
these days

but he hadn't
heard that
on the news

though he'd heard
many other
fear-filling
truths

second first person

aye,
she says i wisny that bad

disny
fuckin mattir but

still
the guilt

always
the guilt

what kind of world?
aye

always
have to ask questions

always
push towards the mirage

die
of thirst

cause yi took a wrong turn
— mistakes

are allowed
but

one must
go home

and sleep them off

go home
and sleep them off

sit on the settee
even daytime tv

stoo intense
fuck me

jewellery and electrical goods preferred

the spirit of jim morrison
not totally extinct

he celebrated
the rise of the new pawn-shop

by taking
in his horse and asking for a ticket

perfectly

of course,
as the old saying goes:
there's a perfectly good parallel universe next door

thinks he'll try in there
for a drink and a wee bit banter

maybe a tequila
with salt and lime

fires it over
into the belly

dances round his hat
on one leg

trippy face
falling onto the floor

his face is tripping him
his face is tripping him

is it time yet for a greet?
time yet for tears?

see the state of that
mexican hat-dance — tears and snotters

flying through the air

two legged dancing
is safer — hit them with your rhythm stick

coz it's *sex n drugs n rock n roll*
and — of course,

it's none of the above
it's afternoon tea and scones

it's olives and oatcakes
and a selection of the finest cheeses

it's a perfectly formed world
land — sea — river — and sky

pillow talk

who ever used this pillow before
 had had some very weird thoughts

suddenly they crept down his follicles,
 somehow got through his skull and sneaked

right into his dreamtime brain
 some woman singing in the background

got the fever!
ah got the fever!

meanwhile, a dude in the corner was saying:
 why don't you invade that part of the world,

why don't you invade the part of world
formerly known as palestine but now called

the state of Israel? —
i'm a pacifist, he muttered,

woke with a start and a splutter —
 sat on the edge of his bed and pondered

it was all too fucking much...
 the pillows of thought control

were on the march!
 he'd never seen the likes

not since the coal miners
 went on strike

back in
 1984

— a bad year that

the grapes produced
 no drinkable wines

it was all too fucking hard to swallow...

third first person

having breakfasted
on humble porridge

i took my fevered brain
to

alcoholics anonymous
grumpy fuckers anonymous
narcotics anonymous
pillows anonymous
gamblers anonymous
violent-heids anonymous
david bowies anonymous
post-modernists anonymous
absurdist anonymous —

always anonymous
i checked myself into *the priory*

put the plug in the bath
buried myself in the water
breathed it in and drowned

just like

poor auld martin eden drowned
having covered a lot of ground

a vast systemic tragedy, the end
— then started all over again