

MEXICO

Today is the day when the flowers will bloom.

The shadow weighed heavily upon him as it must have done upon the conquistadors who first stood underneath the looming tower. His breathing synchronised to the heavy drumbeats. No, a skull rolling down the steep brick steps. No, it was his heartbeat. A cry broke through the morning stillness. It was a conquistador being introduced to the rites. No, it was the conquistadors succumbing to the weight of the tower. No, it was a blackbird, maybe a magpie.

The missive was written on the back of a beermat advertising Tecate beer. Today is the day when the flowers will bloom. Henry read the sentence again. A smile appeared. Today is the day when the flowers will bloom. Flowers. Bloom. Above the word 'will' a good sized smear could be detected. Blood, the smear was blood. It was blood. No, it was salsa. On closer inspection a leaf of cilantro told him it was salsa. He pressed his right nostril into the beermat and allowed the beer and salsa to stir his heart.

Mexico was real. Here was proof. Henry's thoughts careened through the isle of Barataria. He stumbled over hills, he waded through streets, he kicked stones, he barked

like a dog, he meowed like a cat, he plucked a flower and held it to his nose, the isle of Barataria was real. What Quixote didn't know and Henry did was that the isle of Barataria was an island to be found in the Pánuco River, a mighty river that flows from the River Moctezuma in the Valley of Mexico to the Gulf of Mexico. On that island could be found a city unlike any other city.

DREAM

I will do it.

You will do it.

Yes. Yes.

Daddy Mummy, he said. Before he could emit an O or this is ridiculous they had him bent over the bed.

Two rather large frogs, ugly, snotgreen, praxitelean shoulders, arms, legs, strong as bulls, frogs dressed in Saville Road suits.

I will do it.

You will do it.

His legs had been spread army fashion, his cheeks spread even wider. Without the aid of lubrication, not even spit,

they inserted the biggest straw known to man into his anus. Once the tip had passed his rectum it was easy sailing. Now he got to emit O.

Today.

Today.

The frogs were smoking cigarettes and sharing a bottle of cider.

Ten O'clock.

Ten O'clock.

He could feel the pull, the moving within, they were not just cleaning his poor, tortured colon, they were removing his kidneys, lungs, all the matter, all the shit, all the fabric, all the warm, mushy substance, all the glue, the goop, he could feel the pull on his tonsils.

MORNING

Henry climbed out of bed and stretched. He touched his toes three times, he tried to touch the ceiling four times. A huge yawn was followed by a tenuous cough. Before urinating Henry brushed his teeth. Each act had a finality to it, and this made Henry relish each act.

With a chair, a table, a television, a bed and a huge photograph the commodious apartment was bare compared to the other apartments on the High Street. There was none of that familiarity that comforts a stranger in a strange home, there was no sign of character, no whims splashed about freely, no idiosyncratic magazines placed with symmetry on the fashionable coffee table, there was no fashionable coffee table, there was no attempt at art or fashion or wild abandonment to one's own taste. The chair was just a chair, the table was not ornate, the television was old and took a lifetime for the screen to fade from green.

After dressing Henry slipped into his blood soaked clogs. Although this asceticism would not comfort a stranger, Henry found a wonderful equanimity. He was able to think with his eyes open and without the danger of distraction.

GREEN DOORS

On the wall opposite the window was a huge photograph of green doors. Henry would not class this photograph as art, it was a blueprint. A friend had produced it. Henry no longer saw the friend, they had had a terrible fight, the reason for

the fight now had no mass, it was lost above the ether. From his front room window Henry could see the green doors of the local bank. Sometimes Henry was caught in a perplexing state for he believed the green doors on his wall to be the real green doors and the green doors outside his window to be the untrue green doors. These ephemeral visions, for they were short spells of perplexity, left him both fatigued but paradoxically also with a profound desire to run - to run far. How many bus tickets, train tickets, plane tickets lay upon that table obfuscated in dust?

Henry enjoyed his last breakfast. The diet allowed only meat, so Henry slowly consumed two, cooked-the-night-before, pork sausages. The diet prohibited rice, potatoes, and bread. The little balls of masticated meat rotated down his throat and plopped into his belly.

Henry quickly washed the plate and knife. By the time the bank manager was placing the key into the unlocked green doors Henry was at the window, his eyes enlarged, his breathing careening wildly through his flaring nostrils for Henry hated the bank manager, hated him to his core. The bank manager walked like a duck. Henry would watch him waddle down the High Street talking to somebody. The bank manager was always talking to somebody. He knew lawyers, judges, publicans, architects, shop owners, disc jockeys,

soap stars, journalists, policemen, glass-workers, painters, physicians, sculptors, surgeons. A fear gripped Henry the moment the doors gave for he feared the bank manager would enter his commodious apartment. He sighed with relief seeing that the green doors on his wall were still locked.

LITTLE PIGGY

Finishing his tea, Henry watched the vivacious bank tellers skip through the green doors. The fear was superseded with desire. Desire was superseded with a great disappointment. All the bank tellers were young, beautiful girls that were waiting to go off to university where they would sip wine, pontificate about Schopenhauer and indulge in promiscuous sex. They had long straight hair and puffed lips, they moved with grace, they were lithe, they skipped along the High Street like ballerinas. Watching them cut through the smog filled Henry with hope. Now and again one would come into Walker & Son and purchase the most expensive steak. The Son would always serve the girl with the obsequiousness of a bank teller, fawning, blushing, coquettish. The Son used his fat elbow to remove Henry.

Henry thought about making another cup of tea. He turned off the radio. This was Henry's last day of work at the butcher shop Walker & Son which proudly stood in the exact centre of the High Street. It had opened and closed there for many generations. Our factotum Henry was still learning the trade. It was not his trade; it disgusted him to his core, three long bloody years. The pay was meagre, but still Henry could afford a commodious apartment on the High Street. He was told by the estate agent that everybody wanted to live on the High Street, right in the middle of things, close to the shops, the pubs, a stone's throw away. Mr. Walker spent most of his time fiddling with the radio and reading the local newspaper; the Son had his nose pushed up against the window or he was in the toilet.

This little piggy went to market, This little piggy stayed at home, This little piggy had roast beef, The Son could not play this little piggy went to market. He was a fool. One day he cut off his little piggy while chopping up cow.

PIRANESI

Everything was as it should be. He was told a sign would arrive. It might have only been salsa, but it was a symbol. There was no denying that the smear was over the word will and now it was all about will.

Henry walked into the kitchen. He held the beer mat over the electric stove. It didn't catch fire, but it turned brown and then black. Washing his hands Henry crumpled what was left of the beer mat. The fragments sailed peacefully down the drain. A plume of smoke filled the kitchen. The commodious apartment now resembled a Piranesi horror chamber. Tears appeared in the theatre of his eyes.

EGYPTIAN

Henry bent down and picked up the razor. He ran his right thumb along the edge. The bank manager would not feel a thing. The alacrity of the operation would be humane. Not a nerve would respond to the action. The brain would be left in the dark; the last thought would still be illuminated.

The moan was long and deep like a hanged man located on the precipice of death. It was a long sojourn in the realm of moribundity. The death moan was entwined with a cathartic implosion that reverberated through the skull.

The moan fades. The Egyptians believed thoughts were located in the heart and speech in the tongue.

There is only darkness behind the eyes. You want to believe there is light, but there is only darkness. The journey from ear to ear is a journey through darkness. A darkness that is impenetrable. You want to believe that light enters through the eyes, that behind your eyes there is light, and this light produces a kaleidoscope of colour.

Henry placed the razor in his coat pocket.

You create concrete colourful objects, you believe, with this light. But this is a trick. It is mendacity. There is no light, and no kaleidoscope of colour, and those objects are as intangible as a cloud of smoke. There is only darkness. If you believe there is light behind the eyes you have fallen for the fallacy. Like the fallacy that work is good for the soul. Work is not good for the soul. Work maybe good for the body, but the soul benefits nothing from work. The puritanical ethos of work being good for the soul cannot be validated. Work will not speed up your journey to the light of Heaven.

BEAUTY

The commodious apartment was above a beauty salon that contained no beauty. No, there was one beauty. A real beauty. Laura Applebright. Upon that face there was no index to point out, the vagaries of time had left no mark, dent, blemish. The face could have been sculptured by the deft hands of a plastic surgeon or the paintbrush of Renaissance Artist, Antonio del Pollaiuolo, no, Filippo Lippi, no, Piero di Cosimo. The lipstick was applied by the hands of a child just before puberty hovering just over the lips. The skin was smooth, the nose perfect, the chin rounded like an apple. The face had jumped through the loop of adolescence, no crushes, no teenage fondling, no scanning magazines searching for fashion, no rushing to the store for the latest hit song, no dreams, no desires. Each musculature twitch, tremble, tick of Laura was catalogued. Alphabetically catalogued and placed in his filing cabinet, a wunderkammer, a cabinet of curiosities.

Henry knew every piece of clothing that Laura possessed. Laura possessed five pairs of shoes. One shoe was broken. The heel had come away. She had tried superglue.

Laura possessed three rings. Henry was positive one was a fake. The skin around the ring was stained green.

Laura possessed seven shirts. Her favourite was a floral shirt. She wore this shirt the most. Sometimes three times in a week.

Laura liked skirts that went down to her knees. Maybe she had funny knees. Henry had never seen her knees.

Laura was the kite in Mary Poppins.

Laura was the honey in Winnie the Pooh.

Laura was everlasting youth in Peter Pan.

Laura was Pure Imagination in Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory.

Henry reads Barbara Cartland out loud and Laura listens.

Henry and Laura listen to The Marriage of Figaro and watch the rain fall.

Henry and Laura watch: Ese oscuro objeto del deseo or That Obscure Object of Desire and are very happy.

Henry and Laura run through the local library and art gallery. It takes them 2 minutes and 45 seconds. While running they laugh wildly. Henry holds Laura's hand tightly. It would have taken them 45 seconds but they stopped to look at a sketch by Beatrix Potter.

The morning light illuminates your blooming beauty boundless. Do you know that you are my star? Tonight I bring you wine and bread. You are my Leander. I am your Hero. Just hold out the light and I shall return my love. I

shall swim from Sestus to Abydus and I shall return to you,
said Henry.

No, he never said it.

Dear Laura,

Please forgive me for my superfluities but I need to write to you. I find that you have invaded my life. You are now everything... The moon the stars and the foundation that holds them in the night sky.

No, he never sent the letter.

You naughty boy. Don't be coy now.

A flash of thigh.

A placed kiss upon an exposed...

An assignation between young couples.

A stormy sea to cross, a light in the window to guide the swimmer, huge waves, a waiting damsel, and instead of the swimmer drowning in the rough waters, let him enter the room...

Days/nights in the commodious apartment Henry smoked, bit his nails, combed his hair, blew his nose, removed sleep from his eyes, rubbed indentations off his face, slept, farted, coughed, sneezed, hiccupped, puked, played with his anus and pretended he was dead. He talked to himself, whispered, joked, sang, preached, old habits die hard, dined with himself, became the babbler, the chatterbox, the malicious gossip, the

sycophant, the boor, the shameless cad, the supercilious snob. The commodious apartment was a carnival of the bizarre and he played top billing. His mind was an aquarium and his thoughts were little fish that went round and round. His memories were the elephant nose fish, his happiness the fancy guppies, the African butterfly fish seemed to be always sad and the goldfish were lust. Laura was the Black Knife Fish. This fish devoured all the other fish in the aquarium.

Henry and Laura visited a zoo.

Henry and Laura watched television.

Henry and Laura went to the movies. They had popcorn. Laura said, popcorn looks like molars.

Laura liked skimmed-milk.

Laura liked ham sandwiches.

Laura liked working at the beauty salon.

A woman by the name of Martha owed the beauty salon. She was an extremely ugly woman. Her ugliness was only matched by the wallpaper.

No matter. No concern. No worry. La folle giornata. I want to define beauty, find the right words, the right metaphors, relate a paradox, elucidate the right paradigm, I want to scream from rooftops, I want to shout down your ear, I want I want, the boy wanted the girl.