

The Ars

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The Ars
John Goodby



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Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to David Caddy, editor of *Tears in the Fence*, in which three of these poems first appeared ('Norming', 'Eros', 'Each'), and to Rupert Loydell, editor of *Stride*, for publishing three more ('Shut', 'Anding', 'His Thing'), and to John Lavin of *The Lonely Crowd* for publishing another six ('Not In, but Ours', 'Hard Square', 'St Groan', 'Whisper, soft no-one', 'Luvé', 'A View of Sad').

The Ars

John Goodby

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This is # of 60

For Lyndon Davies

The Ars

Ars poetica: A poem that explains the “art of poetry,” or a meditation on poetry using the form and techniques of a poem. While Horace [in his *Ars Poetica*] writes of the importance of delighting and instructing audiences, modernist *ars poetica* poets argue that poems should be written for their own sake, as art for the sake of art.

- poetryfoundation.org, *Glossary of Poetic Terms*

Heron

He wings the one who waits on
an Other, his sceptic who would like

to think the I. They met (not
like cross Levantines in the Ark,

the lank page and the turned age,
first and last shadows folding) over

and across me; in whom they bond.

Or

Like the eye, O me-thing, dark
cornea, its ways there

never press awareness
in the sand, the shoe

a sound frame: the lung,
kenning orders of the breath

soon learned about, names
between days as they tap down

into the black we could see. The months
go asking which sea, which can

she know, mark of no one's king,
the field a fence beyond

which nothing feels the border
meaning of her stance.

N

Ice stations seem less rived
And leased, reign as space; still,
Like hotwired colour. Empty
Stone girls push a visible
Sky of amour and musk, battle
The low quotidien, burn
These hives of a nativity.

King and Princess Id rule
Angers in here and now. Their
Time hip-hops the resent tense
With counter winds as walls
Face off flow, coasts lose face.
And, facing the head-on seas,
The lowly feel like winning.

The It Place

One tunnelled back through near-experiences to the afternoon
we watched reluctant life beside
her pale return to the It Place.

She'd been pulled from what
came after, back between the two
she lived and died in, into
nostalgic stationary dozing.

'The It Place?' You asked the woke
question as if it were mine
the next day, that had since death
woken your mind to afterwards.

As if it translates, I thought
I will be anybody else there,
a train I hadn't thought the best.
I didn't know we'd be alone

with other people in the It Place,
friends; if we leave as we come. Know
I still don't. I think we are not one,
forsake *own* for my *now*. Think less.

Anding

Love small for better comeback, or for years
that one word's keel ends in. Maybe.

All run up against *and*. Bright breeze
sudden not moving what dizzies our speed

His Thing

Grey opposite of the warships, the slack
infinity of epic nuzzling what soft-footed
emptiness its first historians squandered
on oily temples, moving traceless energy
like water aground on awakenings undone
imperceptibly, left it before heroes.

The battles' upkeep in wars used Time.
The instruments were bemused, yes, but
missed appointments. Where the dead go
they surveyed bed-pleats with the naked I
in the company of white. Physics was born
to boredom, metaphysics on nobody

done of the separate dark. The mind slid off
a corresponding rigging, stepped twice
in Heraclitus, into space, a perfect world
of cancellation. Friends ran afternoons
where the dissipated promised a paradise
in photographs of hungerless ghost dreams.

That lay steady between. When they found
all things bring the hours, the days, needing
cloth to leak with destiny or with talents,
like us they designed to trap it, suspended
action like us, going steady. And who
would write pristine from inattention?

Nothing into being! When they learned of gaps
in the low comedy that turns the world,
they seemed no different from ourselves,
a second best. Action? Events took place
along the shadow from motion, each moving
would only fuse where not to lay between

aspired to the same thing. In emptiness
the flotillas folded back at their moorings
in activity their somewhere to unfold
could not keep. Sacred books inferred
the unresisting dusky armchairs, does
of nothing who would write its founding up.

A View of Sad

Hyperbole evaporates
In our six-foot throat.

The good life has its Hell -
It is noon all day, the soft

Porch light rewinds,
Thirsty as tinted glass

Sliding off the eye. So much
The empty earth scans

As majestic Mars. So little,
In the sponsored distance,

That holds the attention
Of the shadowless coils.

Thebiad

i.

Caesar ate
every A-road

every burb

ii.

A star turn: all ring and no net
the visional

line dreaming

iii.

Maigre stands for self,
its any cries
sweeping from the poor floor

low facts. Infer
iron in the third wheel.

iv.

Vain à vers
is face to face with
a twerp
after long held breath

v.

Oil on a berg,
art to OK -
300 kilos of *front*
de nuit

vi.

From delicate Nam *au Paris*
props appear, in doubled

doubt. *The Muse rolls rough,*
as many as it has valleys to ruin

vii.

Allah mints the place as if italics
could elsewhere yet be now.

Rugs

appear in water's wash
of closure. Windowed brick
from Atlantis. Mirage,
or mage? The real reflect

the swap, swan the surface
in his careful neck. And neck
with his ghost, Prospero's.
Count the leaves, calm

as the multiples of dawn.

Luve

O beg in pink, its thin
And winding ways model
The human beating
Of each inhabitant!

Flick a reflex
Of introspection. Lap
Everything sensed
As something else,

Feel disconnected
Like a house, hold vague
Objects breasting in
A flooded amble-drift,

Rives in a quaint row,
The dark analogy in the sky-
Frown, cloud-root in the loud
Round river it passes by.

Étude

Autumn was the first learning state, was what
Got tired to be fought. It moved on wars that
showed

The post that questioned what it was. So most

Would have preferred a drain on my awareness
Side-on, from somewhere else. Truly this was
A moving bus, a little more away each year

At any rate. My mouth shut in street-long
languages,
Trains ran distances in decades, a long tidal wave
Called home in hail while I fitted out of place.

Bord

This isn't her
thin taper
to feel into being
led away from,

but our look. It
vents a way,
like particles dust
a settle, back-lit.

Log

It came from
Shoals
Along ways
Open into coral.
Flowed
The tug
Mud, the engine's
Thrum from
Citrus of
A diamond
Burned
To ash thunder eyes

Cwm

Language: knot the me-root
in tangle-syllables of streets,
the double I, throated twice
before. The village signs start

off into the fluent body, lift
as heart-leaves, the spirit stencil
posed as names in a centre
that films *calon* into *claon*,

the idea of the word's birds peeling
back the clement coast
to coast. *Adar* joined RADA,
itself translated to leave flight

in the anger-staining air. Won
from the *geiria dur* the sword
empties the take-off, age by age,
re-let by re-let, con by con.

cwm = valley (Welsh); *calon* = heart (Welsh); *claon* = perverse (Irish); *adar* = birds (Welsh); *geiria* = (Welsh);
dur = hard (French)

Two By

I.

The nothing I perfect perfects people. A clothes-line would slack every day were I not hanging a blue view of interest. A racked horizontal brick becomes a wall, a balcony blocks the back. I look and look. How would it not exist, that
show,
above the time's world's sky, its ordinary pale?

II.

Curb an image of itself, but don't think to scale perfected themes. Instead, think of mirrored bards traipsing the sky-seams, the sullen spirit engine inhabiting its false room, a real pocket of roadside faces sky-gazing the secret subject. Life's known curve. Life's imagined waterfalls.

Each

mirror bleeding
the plumbed
echo or after-

dippers hauling kids
too gone
to steel the sun on.

Unscramble electric
men-murmurs,
their robotic babel

at chump change
like hanging slack,
like rope through a *Not*

of glitter around
whispering coinage. Eat
the second thoughts'

shingle-breath.
Arouse time at the slot
of a unicorn

tattoo, drop a token
to its separately
lost day.

A night too pricks
skin-bottled inks.
Shine, borrowed

to fret at the pie bins
a gin paradise,
to imagine landfill dying.

Ort of Ought

Top-heavy dead surface
tarts on a roll
an empire losing hold
through the prism of roots.

A subjugated view,
a rumour of the dim
it forges, forgets
but doesn't exist.

The rough worm
devours its madness,
on vert inversions
shadowless analogies wallow

clay before very flesh,
all vista white flex
embedded in dead surface
limit limit it puts down.

And covets the space around
flickering commands,
element pocked
with tiny intimations;

it thinks it grows
but that unhad is part of it
its likeness devours like
burning off the fog.

The Ars

The raw snow thawing dawns
could be his observatory

but he cannot imagine yet
ripped space, the red thirst

swaddled in dried-out hankering
for the improbable moccasin

dust or camp canals; without
expression his no-features,

his dream inscrutably feeds
on itself wrings pain bodies dry.

Ultras

Oise swirls dark,
a flash
like morning

flesh, a body
is a silver lament
a bulb full of night.

Plough on black fur
till the broken
star turns and grows

a first dropping in think.

Firs

Out of sight
as weather
first arms for

the falling
to hold you,
ice tiger

roam
the plain
of Siân

in a stride; you cross
the moon, or
is it your toes?

Days in the New

i.

Luggage sliding at their ankles. Dogs
Lounge in the plate-glass heat,

Breathe the faraway door. Stamped,
The country vista newborn in furnaces

ii.

The trees murmur.

Between trees, their portraits doze in branches.

Cradled like the broad avenue

To slide off the spectacular spaces

iii.

A detritus of chant, Chinese
Orthodox. Always failures

Making prayer a tail of power,
Of a visible arc tracing
Light food, toys, the old incense
Trajectory. Calendars a street away
Spare an unfindable year, a street
Broken into. Peter's out.

iv.

The frozen season of sleeve-tugging illusions,
The Boulevard of Perpetual Mid-construction
In gone days beaten and moved on -
They don't exist. Revenants, then, are gypsies
Of socialist victory, the fountains of cares.

v.

Natural
in a roll-call
the treeful
of History
reads birds making
extinct room
The waitress

recites the species
You can't stand
by the silent
museum
like a menu
of pirated feeling

vi.

Never so their little breath to them
Too high. Balcony, as if unsure
To happen, overtaken by cheering
Events to spare their understanding

The very power that looked to come.

vii.

Up through feathered crazy footage
Of statues, hydrants, the gas beach
Unleashed in spurts. A week like tears
Is ransacked in the underneath.

viii.

Inside a grainy trial guide
The darkness slipped

Revolution, a head disguise
The mask composed

To put out a free hand against
The wall slumped to themselves

The Fug

Microscopic

Maze

Braiding into

Maps, unwind.

The One

Leaf-mind

Fattens

Their reflections, sways

Its skin.

Hazy, your voice

In flax

Drawn back

Or else

Consoling who?

'Whisper, soft no-one'

Whisper, soft no-one
I do not even know. Dying

child heroes' sudden
beauty is made up

of moments - lucidity, a
beauty without made

forebodings. Tuition
supreme for others

in the living tears, etcetera,
is just my shadow-cloth.

All

Stone noun for mortar,
air breath on the side, sky

and sea inking the day-
pieces. Regular, half-hole,

half-held, watched, they

race the wind. Divide
the laugh, bind what arms

to stain patterns of resistance?

Norming

One house next, green
again, a pert
white muted
nothing-sprinkler

of order, no
untoward sigh
of fridge tight
in the mountains

to move texture,
to empty pavement,
move adrift; the car
shining, the hood a slow

coming, coming to.

Is Alto

Lamps burning as bronze
cars ping into the mist
stall a far-off fall. Cancel
out the eucalypt dash,
stay cold, pray too late.

Now

to turn back to push.

Us

Form- and light-bearer
taken by eye, bear the substance,

guide the thick dimensions. Hinge
on feathers. Aspire to the sun,

a bauble; it leaves coins, pears,
and disappearance

Hard Square

Make the game the street, man
lost in another's lazy eye

three parts habit, one part
shadows stepping sideways

into thirst. His need to be blank
in the windows filled with himself,

running on the spot to shop
dummies like soap between

ragged shows. Coincidence?
Change the next moment,

the washed proprieties, that seem
you can't say: 'I have gone north

into the dandy time-acres. Their
players were there hour after

hour. Thin between shows, small
stars, I dressed his best first move.'

Shut

Lying gland
swollen in my half-
hall rift forest, drifting
to the window tide.

Lids flame.
Tuned in and ever,
no body the passenger
to inter my rush

with whispers;
what comes, dim-
touched, but not.
Alone for the prairies,

the black Ob
fields calling,
I heard white, saw
my mind edge

along voices - weeks
fever the story
on and up.
I dreamed I ran

at the speed
of Christ, and went
like wallpaper
through the long gone.

Bloated head-scrue
watched a play of take,
as in shut, like a bed
in its cast half,

its body fire. The
rising kick-back self
too rose like strip
layers, locked the ceiling

burning my years,
the debris. I climbed
free of walked air; woke
weeks late to find my here.

Asps

No honey inside the hanging, the pound heart
only slept. A muzak movement underneath

the skin-white noise, the corridors we lived
unseen
soundless fur of soft undersides. Suddenly

intent on hurled bright balls, their having died
in ones and twos, eyeless in still breathing sight.

Anther

Yarning was to build on a parallel;
To spear was to make things of alarm;
To seek was to take limb and share it
In somnolence that was newfangled there.

Surgical

On Restitution Beach, half-board walls
Live for runes of spume, borne by fall.

We distorted torsos of foam into sand,
Matter-energy of the insurgents of air.

St Groan

The symptom
of a history,
its illnesses
once called celebration
counterpoints open
skin cracked
in on new
waste bodies.

Die to their flings
when the body
brothers
the stranger
new premises
unrecorded. One
holds alien
flesh. Ore

for nymphomania
of the barely-there,
the partly-
human
diseased *être*,
their claim upon
the objective
pale wrist.

A woman melting
as a shadow fills.
Empty her eye.
For them
this first most
chance was only
a graph, host to
more famous orgasms.

Eros

On some measure all
soars, the praised
still fall
in a world, skies

give the airy ballast
and close his in her
words. Ride limits
only for this, cowboy,

in her eye
burn to white. As she
sees him saddling
his horse she thinks

he'll fly
to join things
she
can compare with.

Not In, but Ours

Autumn as meditation on England;
his Europe gave valence to his restless

fly, a single impulse on the sands
he walked, shifting, sticking to my shoe:

*I have flown my sky-desk window, four
framing walls and arena, taking long-*

*delayed stock. I had hoped to sense, too late
arriving, I still wrong the familiar mess.*

Dark

His first was a shutter-hour
drinking in the street
it emptied on the copper -

this he thinks a quiet
shelf catastrophe, sea-ghosts
fishing a dark room.

(Licks its banks, puts on
body, his hands drag spectral
nets lost to night.)

Sleep

the era, euphemise
as much as death, seem
temporary, hold. At bay

it would never be like creation,
fixing blazing worlds
and his artless uncovering

known as it found. Could not
drain vanishings, bodies
abstracted, the healing over back.

The Station

The local ravel, put out to pasture
of iron, double-opened on the globe.

Annoy mouths, station the names - like

the thrum of takings, the coming
shudder on the rust-bloom. Stay

through the seasons you will taste pass.

Llu

Topical and loose, in the tilt.

The unthing possible is, has, topped.

To happen is finished and about to.

llu = power (Welsh)

John Goodby

Praise for John Goodby's previous Red Ceilings title, *The No Breath*

"its the NO breath wch i love love ... the pms deserve all the praise they may have garnered ... i wd happily share a bus or tube w/ this little book"

Khaled Hakim

What they say about *The Ars*

"I am very taken with The Ars. A series of poems mainly about issues of poetics, not following an argument or converging. The context for each emerges from within the poem – they are life situations. The tenor is intimate, and the language relies on small metrical values and fine gestures. It is the closest thing to an interior monologue."

Andrew Duncan

"They are fun and gloomy ... so why not join in the games, the weird relations, of these arbitrarily-infused lyrics? - you'll find it fun, you may even glimpse, at the edges, the bare ars!"

Harriet Tarlo



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