

The Anglophile

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I. Rationale

For some, civilisation has triumphed
But for romantics the cost has been high.
The savage tamed, the child has grown,
The intellect soars, emotion tumbles.
They have side lined intuition, hailed deduction.
They define us through contrivance and calculation,
A binary, mechanical construction.

So, let us record and reshow.
You know the theory is simple: thousands upon thousands of still images
Taken one after another.
Play them back at high speed, they blur into a single moving image—a life:
A manifestation, which is an amalgamation of Polaroids.
An existence recorded on celluloid.

Are some biographies unworthy of being told?
The disillusionment, the dementia and despair,
Held in the Pitié-Salpêtrière,
Thrown in with the poor, the prostitutes, the insane and epileptics.
They saw megalomania, melancholia, idiocy and paralysis,
And swept it all from the thoroughfares of Paris,
In the final analysis.
They swabbed the streets with a sanitiser, a steriliser.
An antimicrobial act, by agents of the State,
To render ineffective, to invalidate,
Ultimately to eradicate,
All unwanted microorganisms.

Yet all the undeserving still hold tight to faith.
Like a child's need to cling, adhere, to something.
Like a limpet welded to a surface.
Fastened to a father, a mother, a sister,
Bound to a brother.
If they want to prise away the marine mollusc from a rock,
Don't tap or nudge it first.
It will simply clamp itself, fuse to the stone.

They need to come unannounced and then pounce!
Ease it away by placing a blade
Between the shell and the rock.
The tensile strength of a limpet's teeth is made redundant.
Their impromptu action denies the aquatic snail the deployment of its defences.

There is pathos, tenderness, poignancy,
Even in the smallest and most insignificant, of things.

I.I Parent and Child in a Gurdwara

The very first time I watched you carry her,
The infant with the debilitating disease,
I observed you kneel, and lay her, before,
Your final, sovereign and eternal living scripture.
I watched this mesmeric saga: your struggle against
The darkness.
You looked lost in thought, fraught, a sudden afterthought:
"What would be the price to pay for this miracle being sought?"
Would He demand that you, He and your stalwart son,
Convene at the top of the mountain,
You armed with your kirpan,
Your boy carrying wood for an altar?
And what if at the very moment you hold the knife over your child,
Ready to sacrifice,
And no benevolent celestial being speaks to you,
No messenger interposes with instructions to halt the proceedings?
Are you still ready to obey Him?
Does He still love you?
And if the creator has eyes let it witness
And if the creator has ears let it heed
And if the creator has a tongue let it speak:
That there is no need
For you, or her, to come here for forgiveness.
It's not a demanding task to die,
But a Herculean labour to live.
And if I put myself in the place of you,
Even as the most zealous, ardent atheist,
I would, also:

Mute the intellect,
Let the god's interject,
Genuflect,
Before this supreme spiritual authority.
What you must learn about love is that it's painful.
What you must learn about suffering is that it is a basic human truth.
The very first Sunday that you, and her, failed to show up,
I wondered if you had lost faith and
Liberated yourself, and your daughter, from this temple,
Detached yourself from the rock that you were fused to.
Had you replaced your earnest didactic romanticism
For cool intellectualism and gritty realism?
Had you realised, all this time that you were praying to *thin air*?
Well it is obligatory that you claim what is truly and rightfully yours: your own life.
What you have to learn about devotion is that it's voidness.

*"What's love got to do, got to do with it
Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken?"¹
Tell me: "Who should be loved, and how? And how much?"²
You know love can be a stimulant, love can be a sedative.
But love taken in even larger amounts can poison, can kill.*

I.II Smethwick

The very first time I saw her, she was waiting for her father,
Outside the foundry gates.
She could melt your cast iron masculinity and pour
It into a heart shaped mould.
The feverishly anticipated after school tryst and shake,
In the shadow of Thomas Telford's endowment to the town,
That connects, providing passage over the geography's obstacles.
The canal side staging of the choreography of
The Pas de Deux: the promenades, lifts, turns, and jumps.
The intangible chemistry that existed between the two of us,
Our mutual intimacy, sympathetic musicality, shared imagination,
The synchronicity, the harmony, rhythm, the unity.
The frenetic, the energetic, hot, sultry, flushing kisses

¹ What's Love Got To Do With It, lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc., Songwriters: Graham Hamilton Lyle and Terry Britten

² Arundhati Roy (1998) The God of Small Things, HarperCollins Publishers

And the busy hands that were given the permission
 To embark on the mission of unbuttoning her school blouse.
 I remember the light headedness, that feeling of being drunk,
 As my galvanised hands travelled north towards *the settlements on the smooth land*³
 Those breasts, like
 A pair of Belgian buns:
 The sweetest, whitest fondant iced mounds,
 Topped with half glace cherry nipples.
 My hot breath on those vitreous, brilliant gloss ruby jewels.
 The bulging, the tightness;
 The wooziness brought on by the sweet smell and taste of her dampness.
 And after the rocking and rolling,
 In those idyllic, dog days of summer,
 She would lie in my arms,
 Listless like the canal side orange balsam jewelweed,
 Hemlock water-dropwort
 And daffodils that had had the fire taken out of them
 By the sun of Smethwick
 That was as hot as a furnace.
 The still waters of the canal,
 That a century ago would have seen,
 The hustle and bustle, the hurly burly of horse-drawn crafts,
 Hauling to and fro: coal, bricks, iron, chains, glass and china,
 Connecting "*a thousand swarming hives of metallurgical industries*"⁴,
 Now languished, stagnated and redundant,
 Like the working class man: superfluous to needs.
 And the inland waterway will soon bear:
 The cans of ale and bitter, tattered overalls, burst footballs,
 The cigarette ends, pages of the classified section of the local paper
 And other testimony of emptiness and desperation,
 The desecration of these temples reserved for work.

 And now, five and thirty years further along the continuum,
 In these somewhat dark and pensive days,
 Memories of her and that of the town,

³ A more recent interpretation has suggested the name Smethwick means "the settlement on the smooth land".

⁴ As described by Samuel Griffiths in his 1872 *Guide to the Iron Trade of Great Britain*

No longer flash upon that inward eye.
What we do, and see, in life does not always echo in eternity.

It was a town that enjoyed,
A somewhat turbulent political history:
Reports that coloured people in Smethwick,
Were treated as the Jews under Hitler.
The fascist element, those White Demons, if they could, would, have erected gas ovens⁵.
And then the F5 tornado of May 1979⁶ struck.
It was the most violent known meteorological event
To have ever hit the political landscape.
Miss Gulch⁷ PM, riding a broomstick, flew over the town,
To terminate, eliminate, purge,
To pontificate about the end of society,
Brushing aside propriety,
To asphyxiate,
To proliferate the unemployment rate.
She stretched out her hand towards the sky,
Summoning a darkness that spread over the town,
A darkness that could be felt.
And as the blackness lifted, after three days,
There was loud wailing throughout the town,
Worse than there had ever been or ever will be again.⁸
And so, my beloved woke up that very morning
And proclaimed a declaration of independence from tradition.
And with that donned on her coquelicot⁹ slippers and tinkled merrily down the yellow brick road,
A journey from the heart of the Black Country,
That leads, all who follow it,
To the imperial capital, London Town,
Where all *"the coloured girls go."*
Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

⁵ On 12 February 1965, United States black activist Malcolm X visited Smethwick. In an interview he stated: *"I have come here because I am disturbed by reports that coloured people in Smethwick are being treated badly. I have heard they are being treated as the Jews under Hitler. I would not wait for the fascist element in Smethwick to erect gas ovens."*

⁶ Date of the general election won by Margaret Thatcher, becoming the first woman to have been appointed Prime Minister in the UK.

⁷ Miss Gulch: transforms into a cackling witch, riding a broomstick in the 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*, produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

⁸ Exodus 11: 6

⁹ Translated from French: "Poppies"

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo do¹⁰

The triumvirate looked down and saw the bleakness, the starkness, bareness.
Saw that the law of justice had withered away,
So *"for the protection of the good,
For the destruction of evildoers,
For the setting up of righteousness"*¹¹
They came into being and visited,
For restorative action was required.
And so, what Vishnu had preserved, having inherited from Brahma,
Was now in possession of Shiva.
And on an ordinary, balmy early summers day
As the children set out for school
And match stick men and women laboured to the dole queue,
The cobra necklaced Supreme Being piloting
The Enola Gay released the payload.
He and his co-pilot, Parvati,
Heard the weapon whistle a lamentation.
They watched Yama: the God of Death
Seated on the bomb,
Riding it, plummeting, gravity drawn,
Hooting and hollering,
Wildly whipping his Stetson hat in one hand,
In the other his lasso, as a restraint to be thrown around the Black Country town
And tightened when pulled.
The deity from Naraka¹², nose-dived in a blaze of glory,
To inflict thermonuclear death.
The goddess of fertility, love and devotion; and her consort
Watched it explode.
A rain of ruin from the air¹³.
The sixteen kiloton Little Boy smashed head first.
Ground zero was the working men's club¹⁴ on Woodland Street.

¹⁰ Live Aid, 1985, Wembley Stadium: U2 performed "Bad", which included a snippet of Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wild Side."

¹¹ Bhagavad Gita, 4: 7 – 8

¹² Yama's abode is Nakara: the Sanskrit word for the underworld.

¹³ On August 6, having dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, US President Harry S. Truman called for Japan's surrender, warning it to *"expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth."*

¹⁴ The playwright Alan Bleasdale's, *The Boys from the Black Stuff*, was a dramatic response to the Thatcher era and as a lament to the end of a male, working class British culture. The destruction of the working men's club serves as a metaphor for this.

The achromatic gloominess of the industrial landscape:
 The once upon a time smoking chimneys sat atop of factories,
 The rusted blast furnaces and arching canal bridges,
 The empty steel fermentation vessels of the local brewery,
 And the ilk;
 The Lord of the Dance watched it all dissolve into nothingness.
 His unmitigated indifference to worldly life,
 Executed with complete detachment, without emotional contact.
 But he firmly held to his conviction in the art of destruction:
 For evolution requires the obliteration of the old to make way for the new,
 For every great civilisation is founded as a result of a perpetrated crime.
 The landscape that was a projection,
 Of an uncompromising toughness and progress,
 Was left by him, as: a bone-dry, sterile, devoid of life, wilderness.
 Some ten minutes later, the cockpit voice recorder system of the Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber,
 Preserved the following transmission
 Between the Destroyer and his companion, on the flight deck,
 As the mushroom cloud rose to over 60,000 feet:
*"Oh, it's such a perfect day
 I'm glad I spent it with you
 Oh, such a perfect day
 You just keep me hanging on
 You just keep me hanging on"*¹⁵
 The blue skinned God, now charged with the duty of regeneration,
 The cosmic reincarnation, restoration of the geography,
 Blew on his conch.
 It emitted a primeval sound, summoning Creation,
 The sound wave boomed across the barren land.
 In doing so, a field of poppies¹⁶ burst forth, out of the dead ground.
 His bequest: a garden, a cultivated paradise,
 A terrestrial realisation of a celestial vision,
 A landscape of unprecedented vigour and beauty.
 Picture the scene¹⁷:
 A mother and child pair,

¹⁵ Perfect Day lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Songwriters: Lou Reed

¹⁶ The opium poppy is used for production of opium, the principal precursor of narcotic opiates such as heroin

¹⁷ *The Poppy At Argenteuil* painted by Claude Monet in 1873

Straw boater hats and blue parasols,
 Stroll through; what is now a meadow on a summer's day,
 The birds sing and the industrious bees hum,
 As the gentle wind carries the scent of awakening,
 Its perfume, even though it travels against the breeze, will reach the furthest ends of the land.
 The carefree wispy white clouds in a cornflower blue sky.
 A fertile and serene realm.
 On the brow of a hillock, the colour of milk, Georgian splendour,
 Of the only architecture to remain standing after the nuclear holocaust:
 The house¹⁸ that breast fed the men,
 Who had engaged, who had exchanged,
 Ideas which inspired many of the new
 Discoveries and inventions of the Enlightenment.
 In the foreground: the sprinkling of the Remembrance Day flowers,
 Each bloom like a dab of brilliant blood red paint on a parakeet canvas.
 With flickering brushstrokes of brightly coloured paint,
 The immortal artist, with palette and brush,
 Immediately records in paint, the momentary effects of light.
 Captures the flashes of Holly Blue, Brown Argus, Clouded Yellow
 As they hover, flitter and dart, low across the land.
 The zip and glint of the sky-blue dragonfly,
 With its shimmering silk gauze wings.
 The canvas pulsates with life and radiance.
 The richness of this world, and all its gleaming possibilities
 Now an actuality.
 A tree lined horizon,
 An amalgamation of shades and tones,
 Daubs of malachite, harlequin, mantis and mint.
 Each and every branch lifts and stretches into the ether,
 To sway in the dominion of the divine.
 The light, the warmth, the growth sustained
 By the pendant disk of lustrous gold: the eye of Ra,
 Which called out, each and every, secret name,
 And thus bought into existence,
 All that is visible in this vista.
 This Garden had always been here,
 But man's blinkered endeavour to industrially progress

¹⁸ Soho House: An 18th-century house in Handsworth. It was the home of entrepreneur Matthew Boulton from 1766 until his death in 1809, and a regular meeting-place of the Lunar Society of Birmingham.

Had concealed it, with a fleeting and illusive veil, before our eyes.
Thank ye the nymphs of the meadows,
Ye the divine spirits who animate this panorama.
For the life you bring,
As you dance and sing.
The dazzlingly vivid, saturated colours,
The all-or-nothing, the unmitigated joy of the perspective.
Oh, the glory and the vibrancy!
The force, that drove this life through the *wasteland*,
Will now be injected and propelled, through my veins.

I.III Further Explanation

Let me further enumerate,
Explicate, vindicate, and repudiate the self-righteous,
And offer the following reasons as to why
I, and others, inoculate ourselves a consummate happiness:
To belong,
To abscond,
To relax,
To relieve tedium,
To seem grown up,
To dissent,
To experiment,
To damage control,
To “*fill that God shaped hole*”.¹⁹

Found hiding in a blister pack,
You’re taken out and thrown into a glass of water.
Whereas most tablets are designed to release medicine
Slowly into a body over a period of time,
You’re instantly energised, you effervesce,
You fizz, you bubble and sparkle,
The H₂O fortified,
As you liberate your essence,
Along with carbon dioxide.
But your large decay constant,
Makes you vanish more quickly, more rapidly.

¹⁹ MoFo, Lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group, Songwriters: Adam Clayton, Dave Evans, Larry Mullen, Paul Hewson

A dawning sense of incorporeality.
And finally there is nothing more, other than stillness.
Just stillness.
You speedily dissolve
Due to your weakness and fragility,
Your fallibility,
Your malleability as forsaken you,
As you break under pressure,
Unable, like most, to incessantly endure the endurable.
You know fish will be the last to discover water.

II. Park Bench

II.I Night Sky

Look up and what do you see?

Constellations covering the celestial sphere?

Constellations as seen by Aratus and Ptolemy?

A revelation by way of natural theology?

An ode to *The Evening Star*?

The beauty of each is in the understanding:

They are globules of plasma held together by their own gravity.

Akin to an atom held together by electromagnetism,

Or a raindrop held together by surface tension.

What is it that holds us together?

Tethers you to me, me to you?

Don't tell me: A man and a woman stuck as one,

With divine glue?

Have you ever looked up and seen the majesty,

Seen the magnificence of the Perseid meteor shower?

The source of this fire rain?

The narrative to explain?

The answer: Perseus rescued Andromeda,

Freed her from Cetus,

Killing it with his diamond sword.

Thus, the radiant point of this celestial event,

Is a happening with precise locus and time:

Where, and when, Perseus's blade strikes the marine monster's back.

At impact the incandescent particles fly

And at the speed of light enter our eye.

The silhouetted *Pinus Sylvestris*,

Distended by its pine needles.

Its bark textured like

Protruding veins on an arm.

Loosen your tie wrapped around your neck

Because it's constricting the blood flow to the head,

Like some tourniquet.

Look up and what do you see?
I glimpse a silver satellite suspended in the sky:
The rhythm of time,
Immortality and eternity,
Both the enlightened and the dark side of Nature herself.
Its light dapples the charcoal coloured cotton wool clouds
Illuminating them, and their circumference, hoary.
Hey Diddle Diddle:
A cow jumps over that moon
And the dish runs away with the spoon.
Sometimes a park bench is my only refuge.

II.II Inject

Let me draw you close to the surface,
Let me palpate you.
Count twenty - thirty seconds of gentle bouncing motion.
Where are you?
I summon you!
The first solitary step taken as the tip pierces the skin,
Ease further in, to hit the vessel.
Carefully pull the plunger back
Just a tiny amount.
There you are my Chocolate Cosmos blood.
Watch the fluid dynamics, the eddy.
The blood swirling and spiralling in the caustic,
The blood in a turbulent flow regime,
All played out in the plastic barrel.
Ready for the conferral
Of the most nectareous libation on the body and mind,
Thank you, most kind!
We're ready for lift off!
Slowly push the plunger.
Here comes the intravenous relief.
Relief from being wasted by weariness,
Harrowed by grief.
Let the journey commence.
These corrosives will course though every artery
Executing their magic sweetly with speed.

III. Discotheque

I feel the warm flushing of my skin,
My mouth is dry.
A gush, outpouring, surge of pleasure.

I'm ready uh huh!
I'm ready to become fearless.
Ready to transmit,
Ready to proceed,
Ready to permit, ready to submit,
To my *second self, a trusted friend*.
Headlong, Lickety-split.
To become nonpareil,
To have the resilience of Damascus steel.
I'm ready uh huh!

And there I stand:
The Indian peacock with his coruscating kaleidoscope plumage,
The vibrant glistening, gleaming, glittering colours of the train.
Let the courtship ritual commence.
Make way for my entrance.
I'm ready to swagger,
I'm ready to strut.
Jump cut:
To the Hermes handbag on the dance floor,
Where gathered peahens: The Indian, The Green, The Congolese and Albino
All, with heightened senses, pause and observe.

Will I drive away or kill my rivals?
Or will I excite and beguile?
Mesmerise, hypnotise,
Let the females fantasise,
As they look deep into my ocellus.
All hail Lord Kartikeya²⁰,
Son of Parvati and Shiva,
Brother of Ganesha!

²⁰ Kartikeya is the philosopher-warrior god of Hinduism. Kartikeya iconography shows his vahana (vehicle, mount) is a peacock.

Pills 'n' Thrills and Bellyaches²¹.

The plunger propels me onto the playfield.

These boys and girls: these bumpers, kickers and slingshots,

Push and impel me away upon impact,

Like air expelled through the respiratory tract.

The Cuba Libre flippers,

Sending me back up the planar surface.

A welcome respite sat in the drain.

III.I Gothic Vampire

Shhhhhhhhhhhhh!

A shroud of silence thrown over the club.

Just stillness!

Burst forth out of the speakers and sub woofers,

The co-axial drivers and the tweeters: a peal of trumpets.

The fanfare, heralds her arrival.

Her entrance, like a Princess on an elephant ceremonially progressing to her wedding²²,

The enchantment, the ostentation, the opulence,

The exotic, the luxuriance of her and her entourage.

To behold the most beautiful youth I have ever seen.

The fluttering, hammering, flip-flopping,

Murmuring, thumping of my heart as I approach her:

“Hi baby, can you touch my hand?

I want to tell my friends I've been touched by an angel”.

Let me seduce you, be your Arabian Knight.

Let me deploy my flattery and magnetic allure on you.

Your sheerest denier, inkiest, seamed stockings

And perilously high, Louboutin glamour puss heels.

And the atomic black leather lace-up corset,

Accentuates and wholeheartedly displays the intermammary cleft.

Don't leave me bereft,

Suffering unrequited love,

My gothic vampire.

My eyes drink it all in,

For you are an elixir guaranteed to induce love.

²¹ Pills 'n' Thrills and Bellyaches LP, © Elektra Records, Artist: Happy Mondays

²² Princess Badoura is one of the captivating tales of the Arabian Nights. The narrative of her meeting Prince Camaralzaman and their later adventures inspired illustrator Edmund Dulac to produce an inspired drawing of the Princess on an elephant ceremonially progressing to her wedding.

The blood heart rose, collar bone tattoo.
“Hi honeybunch, check out my indelible swastika,
It denotes conducive to wellbeing or auspicious.
Cool, hai na baby?”
The shine and vibrancy of your raven black hair,
Contrasted with the strands of dyed pink.
Your facet cut, pale green, topaz gemstone eyes:
I reckon if I stared long and hard into them,
They could cure me of this lunacy²³.
The jet black, ornate, crucifix pendant choker.
You sit there with Cleopatra eye makeup,
Seated on your throne at the bar,
With the arrogance of a ruler, surveying your Ptolemaic Kingdom.
The chic beautifully painted black manicure,
To lure,
Oh, lost in thought, of you digging those nails under my hide.
Your femininity amplified,
Your cyanide.
Beatified.
I want to touch, I want to feel
Your cadaverously pale skin.
You’re a cheesecake, as you sit, sipping Bacardi,
Tits like Linda Lusardi’s,
My foolhardy
Courage,
That your rouge lips encourage.

But we’ve reached an impasse in the negotiations,
A deadlock, a standoff.
You present your case to a panel of three judges,
That you hastened to assemble,
Who preside over the proceedings,
In order to issue a ruling on the matter in hand.
Their decision is unanimous,
On the grounds of the testimony
Of the White Demon, the thickset, thuggish brute
Guarding the Establishment’s entry door.

²³ An English superstition held that topaz cured lunacy

The verdict pronounced:
 "Turn around you fucking Paki
 And consort with your own kind.
 Birds of the same feather should flock together".
 The brutality of the remark is not lost on me,
 To be subjected to such soaring levels of emotional stress.
 My heart rate rises above two hundred.
 It fractures, splinters, my body and psyche.
 I shed my alter ego and transmute into
 A green-skinned, hulking and muscular humanoid,
 A raging savage, a mindless, destructive force.
 HULK SMASH!
 The rage that burns inside me,
 The intensity of a burning star.
 You know when they smash gold particles,
 Travelling near the speed of light, together,
 For a flash, the temperature reaches 7.2 trillion degrees Fahrenheit.
 That's the intensity!
 Tiger tyger burning bright,
 Ready to pounce and maul,
 To shred and rip,
 To annihilate and tear,
 Slash and hack, scythe into smithereens.
 Fury etched Vibhuti²⁴ lines across my forehead.
 I, the Destroyer, could obliterate you and your universe,
 Reduce it to white ash.
 I could take this Shiv²⁵, its glass shard blade,
 And strike you with such ferocity, such force,
 That my hand would create the entrance and exit wounds.
 Exhhhhhhhhhhhhale!
 Om reverberates throughout my body,
 The holy sound forcing every fibre of my being into vibrational motion.
 My fury dilutes,
 As my other self, my doppelganger, surfaces.

²⁴ The Vibhuti are three horizontally drawn lines across the forehead, in white ash. They symbolise Shiva's all-pervading nature, his superhuman power and wealth. In addition, they conceal his powerful third eye.

²⁵ Shiv: Slang term for an improvised bladed weapon.

The pulse of my inner core decelerates.
Calmness returned.
Retort: "Having heard all things bigoted,
Our ears are rid,
Of the hurt of the language of prejudice forever".

Enticed back onto the dance floor,
Inflated by 30mg of Diamorphine,
The Euphoria felt head to toe.
Make way for the coxcomb, the dandy, the beau.
The 30mg of smack delves deep into the solar plexus,
To find and cultivate the energy,
To turn desire into action.
Initiate a chain reaction.
Rushing onto the dance floor.
Slamming and *banging* into fellow roisters.
Are you *digging* my dance moves?

Look up and what do you see?
A divine celestial body?
It's a spherical body of hundreds and thousands of facets,
Rotating like my head.
Beams of light flashing over each tessera,
Sending myriad spots of light spinning
Around the walls of the room.

It's cold outside, it gets so hot in here.
I can sense a runnel of sweat,
Meandering, gravity drawing it,
High sinuosity, across and down, my facial contours.
It winds, twists and turns and snakes:
From the upper temple, in a gentle gradient, across the eyebrow,
To the lower forehead, onto the top of the nasal bridge,
Kink down, and around, the eye socket depression,
Swept onto the cheek bone,
Turning and then tracking down the jawline,
To end its journey lodged in the mental region.

III.II Love and Beauty

Shhhhhhhhhhhh!

A flood of silence washes over us.

Pause, freeze frame, just stillness!

Just stillness!

The Abrahamic prophet holds out his staff

And the Red Sea parts.

Burst forth out of the speakers and sub woofers,

The co-axial drivers and the tweeters:

The glory and elation of an orchestra and

The soaring majestic and divine vocals of a choir:

Gloria in Excelsis Deo.

And indeed, Glory be to God on high, for what the eye and the senses behold:

You've arrived at the shore,

Born out of the foam.

Blown here, carried over the waves, by Aura and Zephyr.

Emerging from the sea fully-grown.

Just as the mythological narrative²⁶ had described,

Which, the lyricist from the Apennine valley, had transcribed.

Your classical contrapposto carriage.

The air impregnated with the scent of a rose.

Violets bloom in splendour,

As you stand in an S-shaped pose.

Your velvet Parian skin,

Tinted with a delicate pale pinkish, seashell, hue.

The aloofness, the harmony of your face,

The grace,

The delicacy of the flesh.

The ineradicable refinement of a Hellenistic statue,

Yet concurrently an air of impassivity.

Each strand of hair like a golden thread, like a shard of light.

Your appeal is sensory and oh so very accessible.

Rhythmic,

Sculptural,

Impregnable.

Furnished and burnished by the Wolverhampton sun,

The scent of your hair,

²⁶ Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: The 15-book continuous mythological narrative

Your almond eyes.
My eyes trace vertically down your elongated neck,
And follow horizontally your chiselled clavicle bone.
And the cloak that the Hora of Spring draped your shy body with,
Now clings to you,
Giving an inescapable hint of erotic tension.
The drapery reveals the tensility, the tautness of your torso;
The firmness, the pertness of your breasts; and
The outward thrust of the right hip.
So much said without moving your lips.

Let's dance,
Put on your Manolo Blahniks
And dance to the drum and bass.
The speed, the energy and flow,
The arm control and bounce,
The intricate footwork below.
My heart beat as fast as the breakbeats:
One hundred and eighty BPM.
My hands and feet as heavy as the bass line.
Ragga jungle, hardstep, darkstep, techstep
Drumfunk, neurofunk, funkstep.
Let's morph, let's combine, entwine, let's heterodyne.

Let me sing each word with delight,
As you dance with euphoria.
Untethered from my own thoughts
I worry about nothing.
My head is full to the brim
With the joy of the unknown.
A state of sweet oblivion to all else.
Do you remember, as junior school children,
On the ringing of the school bell,
The exhilarated, rapturous, *rush* to get outdoors, onto the playground?
The complete abandonment of caution, of judicious and prudent deeds.

Running out from the caldarium,
Into the frigidarium,
The extreme and sudden variance between the two temperatures
Left us briefly with fleeting breathlessness
And our hearts beating faster,
As the acidic frost ate into our: nose, ears, cheeks, fingers and toes.
But as we ran outside, to be *smacked* by the rain and wind in the face,
We were innocent, immune to the fallen world and its institutions.
In this hermetically sealed world, there was no place for the
Anguish and torment of adulthood where time decays and withers,
At a torturously unhurried rate, begrudgingly ticking to the midnight hour.
Our innocent, simple, perception of the world was brilliantly grounded,
Concurrently grandiose, immeasurable, metaphysical.
Soberness makes you circumspect,
Intoxication leaves the emotions unchecked.

*"Let's sway,
Sway through the crowd to an empty space"*²⁷.
To a place,
Where we can touch base,
In order to twist together and interlace.

I dare not touch you.
I'd be committing the original sin.
The divine not the secular,
Your specular skin.
The delicacy, the fragility, the translucency.
As the light kisses your cheek,
The multiple instances of constructive interference cause
You to shimmer like iridescent butterfly wings.
The sensuality you bring,
Makes the heart sing.
The sheer ecstasy, a painful, unbearable intensity for you.
How I dream that our two celestial bodies align,
To create our own total eclipse.
Will the red wine permit you to supine

²⁷ Let's Dance, lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc., Songwriters: Doc Pomus / Mort Shuman

To my appeal to kiss,
Your luscious Maraschino cherry lips?

*"Hi, I'm only here just out of habit"*²⁸

*"Voulez-vous coucher avec moi (ce soir)?"*²⁹

"Oh, I want to take you home.

*I want to give you children."*³⁰

You can sense a thousand and one pair of eyes,
Inspecting, scrutinising: Will the lust crazed wog get his prize this time?
Is the darkie posing a sexual threat to the white colonial damsel?
A thousand and one eyes propagating the imperialist myth.
And I reassure myself of my right, my absolute freedom.
Reviled and ostracized, she stands accused of high treason.
But in our dual act of eating this forbidden fruit,
The mob demands that were both driven from the Garden of Eden.
At the end of a thousand and one seconds, and one thousand pulsating heart beats,
I have fallen in love with you, Scheherazade.
Spare me my life and let me be your king.

III.III Stillness

The Seven Year Itch, itch, itch.
Ineffective scratching because
Nails are bitten down to the quick.
The pit of my stomach is swirling,
Whirling,
Wheeling like a
Murmuration exaltation.
Exhhhhhhhhhhhhale!
Heave-ho, heave-ho, heave-ho,
Back and forth, back and forth on a pendulum ride,
Near-weightlessness, two g-force, near-weightlessness, two g-force.
Heave-ho, heave-ho, heave-ho.
"You spin me right round, baby

²⁸ Kinky Afro, lyrics © Elektra Records, Songwriters: Shaun Ryder, Paul Ryder, Mark Day, Paul Davis and Gary Whelan

²⁹ Lady Marmalade, lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Songwriters: Bob Crewe Kenny Nolan

³⁰ *Babies*, lyrics, © Universal Music Publishing Group, Songwriters: Candida Doyle, Jarvis Branson Cocker, Nick Banks, Russell Senior, Stephen Patrick Mackey

Right round like a record, baby

Right round, round ,round”³¹.

An aspirated “wwwait” struggles out of the larynx.

“Give me a minute, I’ll be alright”.

Defunct,

Slumped,

Dumped by others, but you stay.

And in an eye blink, a sudden realisation:

Why succumb to the inclination

To sin?

Why be tempted away from domestic life?

What am I searching for on this dance floor?

How far, do I dare, to go before returning home?

Stop!

Will someone come and stitch back together this divided self?

Will someone come and end this internal monologue?

Come Satan, come ye demagogue

And whisper in my ear the deal.

Offer me; propose to me, the temptations,

The enticements you offered him in the Judaeen Desert.

Overfill my cup with the lust of eyes, and of the body, and pride of life.

Supply it in abundance in the midst of these difficult times.

Sometimes a nightclub is my only refuge.

The rumpus, the hubbub, the din has subsided.

The harsh colours that spiked the eyes have faded,

Replaced by a muted dying light.

See how the downy luminosity breaks on you.

You’re an impressionist, soft, blurred vision.

Reminiscent of *Nymphéas*³², you are now,

Nothing more than a study of skin and

How it reflects light and the world above it.

My speech is now markedly slowed, drawn out:

³¹ *You Spin Me Round (Like a Record)*, Lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Warner/Chappell Music, Inc., Universal Music Publishing Group, Songwriters: Michael David Percy, Peter Jozzepe Burns, Stephen Coy and Timothy John Lever

³² *Water Lilies*: is a series of approximately 250 oil paintings by French Impressionist Claude Monet. Many were executed towards the end of his life when his eyes were failing and he suffered from blurred vision.

“Take my hand, don't let go”.

The boisterous revellers encircle and carefully watch,
To view the suffering me, collapsed, in front of you.
All stand in hush, in anticipation of observing a miracle³³.
You then address them:
“Is it lawful to comfort a man of a different race, or not?”
But they remain silent.
So, you kneel down and take hold of my hand,
In that instant of contact,
A moment of surrender,
A time of tenderness,
Quietude instilled,
A coolness and tranquillity of the mind.
Look up and what do I see?
I see you, wearing a crown of light rays,
Prepared to endure the cross for me,
As you address them again:
“If one of you has a child or friend, one of your own kind,
That falls into a well; will you not immediately pull it out?”
And they have nothing to say.

Lull in the breathing, deceleration of the heartbeat.

Stillness.

“Sleep, sleep, sleep

How I love to sleep

At the close of day

When the joys of the day fade away”³⁴.

³³ Healing a man with dropsy is one of the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels (Luke 14:1-6)

³⁴ *Sleep*, lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group, Songwriter: Stephen Fretwell

IV. Confidence

IV.I Hallucinations

What are these involuntary images and sensations?

What are these involuntary ideas and emotions?

Stillness broken.

Picture's Up! Picture's Up!

Roll Sound! Rolling!

Sound speeds! Camera speeds!

Slating and Mark! Set!

Action:

So, you want to test my courage and strength for a seventh time?

Don't fuck with me!

Ulad, guide me to his abode,

To the mouth of hell,

Where his gravity pulls so much that even light cannot escape.

I'll enter and Yea, I will fear no evil.

I'll fight this White Demon³⁵ and his powerful sorcery,

I'll let the blade plunge deep inside his monstrous, pallid form.

The fiend will be struck dead.

For Kay Kavus' longevity, permanence, his resplendence!³⁶

I am the stuff of myth, a glittering constellation.

IV.II Satanic Verses

And there I am gracing the front cover of the first edition³⁷,

A detail of me in a deadly embrace,

With the White Demon, face to face.

Let's turn to the first page,

Let the tale begin,

Let Gibreel and Saladin³⁸ sing.

Set aside all the half-magic dream vision narratives.

³⁵ Author of the Shahnameh, is the Persian poet Ferdowsi, between c. 977 and 1010 CE. Rostam is the most celebrated legendary hero in the Shahnameh and Iranian mythology. In the Shahnameh "*The Book of Kings*", a long epic poem, the struggle between Rostam and the White Demon represents a struggle between Persians and invaders from the north, from the Caspian provinces.

³⁶ On his quest to rescue Kay Kavus, the mythological shah of Iran, from demons, the hero Rostam had to succeed in many trials of his courage and strength; the seventh and final heroic trial that Rostam had to go through was fighting the White Demon.

³⁷ Cover of the first edition of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, shows a detail from Rostam Killing the White Demon from a Clive Album in the Victoria and Albert Museum

³⁸ Gibreel and Saladin are primary characters in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*.

Put the kibosh on the thematic details.

No time to sermon on the common motifs:

Divine revelation,

Religious faith and fanaticism,

And holy doubt.

There is but only one thing to out

About

This literary masterpiece:

It's a study in:

1. Alienation
2. Immigration
3. Assimilation
4. Recognition of one's self.

V. Arrival

V.I AI 111

It took off from Indira Gandhi International Airport,

Destination: LHR.

The Ravidassia, the Brahmin, the Jain, the Alawite, the Jat,

Sat cheek by jowl,

In a 400-ton aluminium seedpod³⁹.

It traversed the seven seas at four hundred and fifty miles per hour,

Scoring the azure sky with its contrails.

Nearing journey's end

As the plane dips into the blanket of clouds,

A nervous palpable hush fills the aircraft cabin.

It's buffeted and shaken,

Buffeted and jolted, which further fuels the apprehension.

As the clouds thin out flashes of emerald green are revealed,

In due course the milky clouds dilute to water

To expose the majesty of Biláit⁴⁰.

"Mubarakam Bhaji, Mubarakam Behn"⁴¹

Upon landing, as the skidding tyres, emitted plumes of smoke,

It taxied to the jet bridge,

To dock with the movable connector.

The pilot instructed "doors to manual"

And the frenzy ensued to disembark.

As the door flung open

The process of seed dispersal commenced.

The pod burst open and flung, catapulted, hurled its seeds.

It sent them at high speeds,

Disseminating, distributing them across the capital.

And so, the process of germination began,

On the streets of Hounslow, the avenues of Newham,

And the roads of Ilford, lanes of Dagenham.

In order to incubate, to propagate.

³⁹ In Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* he refers to the aircraft, Bostan, Flight AI420, as a seed pod giving up its spores.

⁴⁰ Translated from Punjabi: "England"

⁴¹ Translated from Punjabi: "Congratulations brother, congratulations sister"

And as the process of growth is initiated,
You marvel at their ability to source water, oxygen and warmth.
But remember that these dicotyledonous beings,
They have in their composition a seed coat, embryo and food store,
The DNA of Firozpur, Lahore and Hoshiarpur.
The genetic instruction,
For growth and development,
Functioning and reproduction.

V.II Immigrant Song

Fast forward a week after arrival.
Five vignettes, each that speak to the experiences of immigrants,
Of exile, oppression, and loneliness:

1. "Bhaji, how many times do you have to be fucking told,
One part cement; two parts sand; and three of the fucking gravel.
And I'm taking ten, from the forty you'll earn today, to pay for your travel".

2. "Bhaji: how the fuck did you drop the tray of apples?
Quick, quick, quick they're rolling into the gutter,
Pick, pick, pick before customers see,
Your fucking pisspot incompetency.
You'll pay for the bruised ones, deducted from the twenty you'll earn today".

3. "Bhaji, do you see the lime scale and the dark brown stain,
Well one part hydrochloric, two parts chlorine.
Don't fuss about the irritation to eyes and skin.
They're harmless toilet cleaners, not phosgene.
I want a sparkling finish on that toilet bowl.
You'll pay for the marigolds,
Deducted from the twenty you'll earn today".

4. "Bhen, Mubarakam! Mubarakam!
The Pandit as ordained: it's a very auspicious match,
The appropriate conjunction of space and time.
He is twenty two years older but
Vāh! What a man: a two property freeholder!
You'll pay for the wedding, from the proceeds of the sale of your heirloom jewellery,

Which I kept safe, for you, along with your passport”.

5. “Bhaji, let me get this straight:

Your father the Sarpanch⁴² sold his five acres of farmland

For the agent to fabricate the necessary papers and

For you to splash out on a one way airfare?

All this, in order that his only heir,

A graduate in Mechanical Engineering,

Become a hod carrier?

Tragic brother, oh so heart-rending.

Not to worry, there is always the potential to graduate onto becoming a brickie.

But always remember: if any mishap befalls you, Mr Bachelor of Science,

Then remember we don’t know each other.

Oh, and I forgot, to say,

That you’ll have to pay,

Fifty for the hard hat, deducted from the forty you’ll earn today”

At the end of the first week, that baptism of fire,

Flush with twenty five pounds on the hip,

The following expenditure was incurred on the way home:

International calling card: £2 (to call a father, the zamindar⁴³)

70cl bottle of Three Barrels Brandy: £14

200g of roasted & salted cashews: £3

Top up of Oyster Travel Card: £5

To the bedraggled guy, with his head in his hands and a Styrofoam cup on the ground, outside the shop: £1

The moral will be quickly learnt, that the generosity shown,

With the last, listed debit transaction,

Is a luxury that can be ill afforded.

Land of Hope and Glory, Mother of the Free⁴⁴

SHUTTTTT UUUPPPP!!!⁴⁵

⁴² Translated from Punjabi: an elected head of a village-level statutory institution of local self-government called the panchayat (village government) in India.

⁴³ A zamindar, in the Indian subcontinent, was an aristocrat. In Persian the term means *land owner*. In Punjab, India it refers to a landowner, especially one who leases his land to tenant farmers.

⁴⁴ *Land of Hope and Glory*, lyrics by A. C. Benson

⁴⁵ The end credits for the BBC sitcom “It Aint Half Hot Mum” written and devised by David Croft and Jimmy Perry

VI. Identity

VI.I White Cliffs of Dover

They marched and rallied,
Their tone, oh so, belligerent
For the compulsory deportation of the non-white immigrant.
Along with their descendants,
To other parts of the globe.

The Honey Pie black immigrant was not safe here.

"So, he ran down

*To the safety of the town"*⁴⁶

But there's the white hot rage of the NF on the streets of Oldham,
Sandwell,
Thurrock,
Hull and London.

I wonder to myself:

*"Fühlst du dich verbunden"*⁴⁷.

Is it loyalty you demand?

An instant metamorphosis that you command?

Do you see the River Thames foaming with much blood?

Sister: dump the apple green sari⁴⁸,

Dispose of the inherited filigree bangles

And ditch the salwar kameez.

Brother: transmute into an insect, or is it vice versa?

A physical and psychological transformation is required,

Immigrant into native needs to be hard wired.

You can only exist as an absolute quantity.

An absolute, free from any limitation and restriction.

Free from any condition, free from any qualification.

They will define you and henceforth you,

Yes you,

⁴⁶ *Panic*, lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc., Universal Music Publishing Group, Songwriters: Steven Morrissey, Johnny Marr

⁴⁷ Translated from German: "Do you feel connected"

⁴⁸ *Presents From my Aunts in Pakistan*, Moniza Alvi (1993) *The Country at My Shoulder*, Oxford University Press

Will not be liable to any further modification.

VI.II Encounter and Education

"Cat got your tongue, you fucking Paki?

Come on you fucking wog, nothing to say,

Come on! Come on!

That's right walk away, walk away.

We'll carry on walking all the way to Dover and

Jump off the White Cliffs!"

The immigrant's hands burn for knife,

To slice out this White Demon's fetid, putrid tongue

And feed to a stray, feral cat as a morsel.

If only the refugee could switch between mother and foreign tongues,

It would allow him to counter, to say, to retort,

To deliver a rejoinder, a comeback, wisecrack, fight back.

To deliver a verbal polemic, an Areopagitica:

An eloquent, impassioned philosophical defence of the principle of human rights,

To the honky and his representatives in the Parliament of England.

But what the bigot don't know,

Is that the curry munching nigger sits at home each night

And feeds his children the OED.

And they, his progenies, night in night out,

Zealously munch and masticate their way through the six hundred thousand words;

Ardently chew and gnaw their way through the three million quotations;

Savouring all that over 1000 years of the English language has to bestow.

Question: Why?

Answer: Because their lives depend on the power to master words!⁴⁹

He may well passively accept the outcomes of coin flipping

Ninety-two consecutive heads.⁵⁰

But his children will figure out

The rationale and understanding behind the probability,

Of this near statistical impossibility.

For they'll have the facility, the ability,

The readiness, the keenness,

To interpret and engage,

⁴⁹ "My father still reads the dictionary every day. He says your life depends on your power to master words." Arthur Scargill, Sunday Times, 10 January 1982

⁵⁰ *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, by Tom Stoppard. The play opens with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern betting on coin flips. Rosencrantz, who bets heads each time, wins ninety-two flips in a row.

To perform on the stage,
That will be the world around them.

VI.III Us and Them

India's 96 tour of England at Lords:

Rathour, Mongia, Ganguly, Tendulkar,
Azharuddin, Jadeja,
Dravid, Kumble, Srinath,
Mhambrey and Prasad⁵¹

Did I cheer for them? It's an interesting test.

But here's one for you:

And as they line up for the fifteen hundred metre final,
The child who arrived in London from Mogadishu,
Is now a man.

Waiting with his arch-rival at the rendezvous.

His nemesis an Aryan,
Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge alumnus,
Floats like a butterfly, stings like a WASP.

Both sporting a Team GB vest.

Eye each other warily,

At the outset of the slugfest.

Dear NBT⁵²,

Who, of the two, are you going to cheer for? It's an interesting test⁵³.

"If you want a nigger neighbour,

*Vote Liberal or Labour!"*⁵⁴

Bombay became Mumbai:

Celebrate or lament?

The imperialist versus the religious sectarian.

Maya, Dharma, Samsara and Karma⁵⁵,

All wrestled a Hesperian culture.

⁵¹ The starting eleven for India in the 2nd Test, 1996 India tour of England, at Lords, London.

⁵² Norman Beresford Tebbit, Baron Tebbit, CH, PC

⁵³ Cricket test, aka the Tebbit test. In reference to the seeming lack of allegiance to the England cricket team among immigrants from the Caribbean, and Indian sub-continent, and their children; Tebbit suggested that those immigrants who back their native countries, rather than England, at the sport of cricket are not significantly integrated into the UK.

⁵⁴ In the 1964 election, in Smethwick, West Midlands, the Tory candidate Peter Griffiths won a safe Labour seat from a senior Labour figure, with this slogan.

⁵⁵ Concepts in Hinduism: Maya = Illusion; Dharma = Religious Duties; Samsara = the continuous cycle of life, death, and reincarnation; and Karma = deed or act.

A city buffeted by periodic fits of rage.
Fires still ablaze in our present-day age.
This and that,
Us and them.
Experimental in opposition to the dogmatic,
Tolerant against the fanatical,
The ironic versus the literal mind.
Which of these two kind,
Do you want to be aligned with?

There is the British genius for deception,
When what is required is a powerful meditation,
An honest exploration into how we are formed by others.
Due to lack of imagination,
An obdurate unwillingness,
A superciliousness,
A disdain for the *other*.

I'm simply looking for a clean space in a soiled world,
In order to undress and proclaim:
Here I stand, a Punjabi, eight heads high,
Inscribed in a circle and square.⁵⁶
Let mathematics and the arts concurrently sing,
Of my image,
As a muse for the sweetest poetry and verse,
As an analogy for the workings of the universe.

If I was told that the world was flat,
And others advised it's a globe.
Do you want me compromise,
Enter into a negotiation,
Make a concession,
Attempt conciliation,
By stating it was a cube or an egg shaped ovoid?⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Eight heads high and inscribed in a circle and square are part of the proportions of Man, as illustrated in the Vitruvian Man, a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci around 1490.

⁵⁷ In describing Indian Liberals and their role in the fight for Indian independence, Nehru, in his autobiography, states that the truth for such people always lies between two extremes. Either choice means an undesirable outcome for the Indian Liberal. Therefore, the tendency is always to choose the third option, i.e. the middle ground, which maintains the status quo. "If there was an argument as to whether the earth was flat or round, probably they [the Indian Liberal] would condemn both extreme views and suggest tentatively that it

The spoken or written truth for some is incivility,
Free speech's capacity for eliciting hostility.
I want to be free to say what I want any old time.
I want "*to free to do what I want any old time*"⁵⁸.

VI.IV On the Soul

I've seen you erecting your mist nets,
Wanting to capture, ensnare me, tangle me,
In the nylon mesh,
For the purpose of banding.
You want to attach the tag,
Enable individual identification.
And when recaptured,
I furnish you with information.
Data on migration,
On population,
On longevity, mortality, territoriality.
This and other aspects,
For you to perpetrate,
The mandate of the Secretary of State,
For the Department of Ornithology.
But I will fly by those nets,
Nothing to hold me back from flight,
Like a lark ascending, an unbending
Will to be free.

But if you did metamorphose into lark,
Having soared into the pale cerulean, Shropshire firmament
And in a state of serenity, stillness and suspension
At the exact place and time where, and when, gravity and buoyancy are of equal worth.
With Helios kissing your back
You drink life from his lips,
As you face downward to inspect,
Do you have the intellect to comprehend and respect,
To realize, the magnificence and splendour,
The finery and grandeur,
The aesthetic appeal,

might be square or elliptical."

⁵⁸ *I'm Free*, lyrics © Abkco Music, Inc., Songwriters: Earl Wade Jr. Hubbard / Wendy Wilson / Nick Richards

Of this aerial viewpoint?

You were equipped with the nutritive and sensitive
But unlike God' image, that was fashioned from dust,
The rational⁵⁹ essence was omitted.

Checklist:

Growth and nutrition? Tick

Reproduction? Tick

Locomotion and perception? Tick

Intellect?

"I said Intellect; can anyone confirm Intellect is present?

Mark it down as an absentee."

As you scan the Topography, tell me dear lark:

Do you follow the undulating contours and be reminded of

The curvature of the waist, the hip and the bust

Of a lover, lying across your big brass bed?⁶⁰

When you see the tapestry, the patchwork fields, woven by the hands of man,

Are you reminded of the vitreous enamels of chartreuse, juniper, shamrock, fern,

Which are bled into thin-walled cloisons

On the most exquisite 18th century famille verte cloisonné vase?

Do you see the river mellifluously flowing out to the journey's end

And understand, comprehend,

That it has to run softly till man ends his song?

Do you see the remains of the Marcher Castles

And comprehend them as a scar of the land's turbulent history?

The rupture, the schism, the division

Between Marchia and the pura Wallia?

Do I want to transform into lark?

No: *"Better it is to live one day wise and meditative than to live a hundred years foolish and uncontrolled"*⁶¹

No: Anymore, than the son of Peleus wanted

To be Lord over all the dead,

All those who had gloriously perished.

⁵⁹ Aristotle's nested hierarchy of soul functions: Nutritive soul (plants); Sensitive soul (all animals); and the Rational soul (human beings).
Ref: Aristotle, *De Anima*, Penguin Classics.

⁶⁰ *Lay Lady Lay*, lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Songwriter: Bob Dylan

⁶¹ The Dhammapada, VIII. The Thousands, Line 111, translated from the Pali by Acharya Buddhārakkhita, 1996

VI.V Schism

The Great Sentinel⁶²:

The enigmatic, the contradictory,
Torn between Bharat's mystical, divine values and
The spirit of the West.
Yet out this skirmish between two worlds,
Between vilification and homage,
The product of this myriad minded man,
Gave us the most "*profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse*"⁶³
That traversed continents.
Bonded us with them, them with us.
His bequest: nothing more than a magnificent inconsistency,
In which he saw the beauty and passion of both sides.

Sing Shree Chaar sau aur bees⁶⁴:

*"Merā jūtā hai Jāpānī, ye patlūn Inglistānī
Sar pe lāl topī Rūsī, phir bhī dil hai Hindustānī"*⁶⁵

Aghhhhhhhhhhh!

*"O Krishna, the mind is restless",*⁶⁶
Reward it with calm, peace and silence,
Let the sacred sound of Om resonate throughout my body.
Find me a refuge from these chit-chat voices,
These multitudinous narratives played out in my mind.
The head is agitated, fluttery, fidgety, twitchy.
Like the seemingly arbitrary flight paths of butterflies:
Hovering, flittering and darting,
To and fro, side to side, up and down.
Each soliloquy popping up as a random vector in a 3D space.
If only I had an aerial insect net,
I'd capture the lot,
Pinning each specimen on a mounting board,

⁶² Rabindranath Tagore, as described by Gandhi

⁶³ Tagore's work as described by the Nobel Foundation

⁶⁴ Translated from Hindi: "420"

⁶⁵ Translated from Hindi: "My shoes are Japanese, These pants are English, The red hat on my head is Russian, Still my heart is Indian". *Mera Joota Hai Japani*, lyrics from movie Shree 420 (1955), Songwriter: Shailendra (Shankardas Kesarilal) and Hasrat Jaipuri

⁶⁶ Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa, The Bhagavad Gita

Encased in a glass frame.

Stored and locked in long-term memory, these samplings will last a lifetime.

And I, and only I, will determine the cue for retrieval.

Look up at the horizon and what do you see?

The sun rising in the western sky⁶⁷,

The amber heavens alight, burning and blazing,

With the brilliance, the glare of seven suns.⁶⁸

And as the concluding day begins,

I gradually fall lifeless,

Into what seems like an unfathomable, insensible, soporose, impervious sleep.

Coma, coma, coma, coma, coma, chameleon.

I come and go, I come and go.⁶⁹

Drifting in and out, drifting in and out.

⁶⁷ In Sunni Islam, one of the ten major signs known as *alamatu's-sa'ah al- kubra* (the major signs of the end), states that the sun will rise from the west.

⁶⁸ The Buddha in his "Sermon of the Seven Suns" describes the final fate of the world in an apocalypse that will be characterized by the consequent appearance of seven suns in the sky

⁶⁹ Play on the words of Karma Chameleon, lyrics © BMG Rights Management US, LLC , Songwriters: George Alan O'dowd / Jonathan Aubrey Moss / Michael Emile Craig / Roy Ernest Hay / Phil Pickett

VII. End of the Continuum

VII.I Smethwick

A beam of sunlight pours through the hallway window.
I can see the suspended dust particles in that shaft of light.
Each mote insignificant,
Yet collectively dancing, hypnotising,
Like the Noise: the random flicker of digital snow,
On the family's old analogue television.
Our father's fury at viewing the random dot pixel pattern of static displayed,
When we, has children, would accidentally
Disconnect the antenna cable from the back of the TV set,
Disrupting transmission of the pools results on Grandstand.
Each dot bought together, confined, encapsulated
By the dimension of the screen.
No escape but I assume it offered, each and every pel, safety in numbers.

VII.II Unspoken Words

And there you stand at the bottom of the stairs.
The ray of light falls on you,
Turns your dress translucent,
Revealing your nubile contour:
An aesthetic pleasure, a sexual attraction.
The beauty and tranquillity of a Tahitian girl.⁷⁰
You're subtle, conscious of your naïveté,
Yet concomitantly alert of your alluring sexuality.
If I close my eyes, I could imagine painting your toenails pretty colours⁷¹,
As you calculatingly arch your foot,
To stoke the fire of my sexual desire,
Yet I am agonising aware; for I know:
That I think I'm important to you, but I'm not!
You stand there at the base of the flight of steps,
With an air of purity,
Clean and unstained like the pristine white sheet
That's placed over the Suhag Raat⁷² bed.

⁷⁰ "Two Tahitian Women" a painting by Paul Gauguin completed in 1899

⁷¹ The opening scene to *Lolita*, by Stanley Kubrick (1962)

⁷² Suhag Raat: the first night when a marriage is consummated. Prior to then, both the bride and bridegroom are assumed to be virgins.

The silkiness, the persuasiveness, of your chocolate complexion.
Your highly glossed, side parted, Stygian hair,
Falls at a diagonal across your forehead,
Twists to be tucked behind your left ear,
To then turn and fall, gravity drawn,
Like a waterfall of ink,
To serve as a back drop for the smooth contour of your shoulder.

Your inflection points:
The narrowness of your waist,
The curvaceous hips,
And east west, mango breasts, proud nipples.
The slenderness of your outstretched arm,
The arabesque pose.
A single, solitary ephemeral moment,
Where and when the human condition is lifted.
Your half closed eyes, plead with longing.
Like a siren you lure me,
Enchant me.

And even if my resistance was broken,
If I thought I could leave her, and all, for you,
Disgraced in the eyes of the world but honest in love,
The thirteen steps that divide you and I,
Constitute the distance between two separate worlds.
I stand here on a precipice, a step away from the event horizon.
If you ascend to be with me,
Then the ancient Greek chthonic god of the underworld,
In whose domain I am travelling to,
Will never let you return.
Don't think for a second that he would confer,
Upon you a privileged, transcendent status,
As he did for the King of Ithaca.
And I can't descend to be with you,
For I trapped here, will be bound, for an eternity
With the breathless dead.

VII.III Begin the End

Curled up in bed,
In the fetal position,
My dearest cognizance,
You don't possess the minimum speed needed,
To escape from the gravitational influence of this moribund anatomy.
This body's escape velocity,
Is greater than the speed of consciousness.
My heart beats so slowly.
Step by step, little by little,
Responsiveness drifting, dissolving, untethered.
This moment seems not to be of this world:
Ethereal, graceful, delicate, exquisite.

I can ever so faintly sense you singly softly in my right ear,
Barely detectable, as weak as a signal from a distant pulsar star:

"Aum Namō Narayana"

*"Aum Nama Sivaya"*⁷³

These sweet words nothing more than a conversation across time and universe.

Goddess Ganga, is it sorrow or pleasure,
Elation, love or awe, which makes you secrete
Those tears?

As they journey from your Himalayan lacrimal gland,
And flow down your Gangetic Plain cheeks,
They discharge and trickle into my Bengali mouth⁷⁴.

"Aum Namō Narayana"

"Aum Nama Sivaya"

The air is imbued with the scent of sandalwood;
Infused with incense; suffused with ghee.

Spiral down, spiral down,
Down to some holy ground on the banks of a river.
The pyres blistering, and spitting orange embers,
The pyres sibilating the word "maut"⁷⁵.

⁷³ In the Hindu Rites of Transition at the moment of death, if the dying person is unconscious at departure, a family member chants the mantra softly in the right ear. If none is known, "Aum Namō Narayana" or "Aum Nama Sivaya" is intoned.

⁷⁴ In the Hindu Rites of Transition, when death seems imminent, a small amount of water from the Ganges River should be placed in the dying person's mouth.

⁷⁵ Translated from Hindi: "Death"

Across the river the quiet majesty of the Turneresque sunset,
Which brings into being a sun glitter:
A streak of fire on the water waves,
A physical, tangible, world sublimed, transformed, transmuted
Into state of air, mist and light.

Up above: the migratory Siberian birds fill the sky.
They had unfolded their wings and their journey had begun.
Spanning thousands of kilometres,
Varanasi bound.
To escape the extreme cold of their Arctic home ground.
Down below: drifting on the river,
*Nine and fifty mysterious and beautiful swans*⁷⁶.
The heavy tread of my footsteps sounds the alarm,
As they rise into the air,
They are leaving "*their home for a higher home*"⁷⁷.

The fading of the light as it travels across the continuum.
Civil yields to nautical,
The latter submits to the Astronomical,
Which eventually surrenders to the night⁷⁸.

VII.IV Begin the Begin

And the white cloth,
That the Dom⁷⁹ shrouds my cadaver with,
Now clings to me,
Giving an inescapable hint of finality and completeness.
Agni⁸⁰, like a passionate lover,
Consumes and ravishes my body.
Fanned by the fervour, fanned by the zeal,
To release my very essence, that my body conceals.
And as I stand on the banks of the burning ghat,
Holding hands with Pushan⁸¹,

⁷⁶ The Wild Swans at Coole, in The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (1989), Published by Wordsworth Paperback

⁷⁷ Infinite Freedom, The Dhammapada, Translated by Juan Mascaro, Penguin Classics

⁷⁸ Dusk occurs at the darkest stage of twilight. There are technically three kinds of dusk: civil, nautical and astronomical.

⁷⁹ Doms, are a sub caste that make their living by burning bodies for cremations

⁸⁰ In Hinduism Agni is the fire god

I look out at goddess Ganga.
And I see the river, the rippling waves,
Yet I see no horizon and I see no shore.
Ring them bells⁸² now, the chimes of freedom.
Having been cleansed, by the fire, into a new life.

⁸¹ In Hinduism the god Pushan accepts the sacrifice of a cremation and guides the soul to its proper place in the afterlife.

⁸² *Ring Them Bells*, lyrics © Bob Dylan Music Co, Songwriter: Bob Dylan

