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31. If You Would Know What Is The Matter With Me, I Am Nervous

How many psychologists does it take to change a light bulb?

The answer is of course one ~ but only if the bulb really *wants* to change.

And there's the rub for the Church of God, Lunatic*. Once you've concluded that God is sad, mad and dangerous to annoy, how do you proceed? Many neurotics, while crying out for help by oddly coded means, like bizarre twitches, phobias or killing sprees, will resist in diverse ways any attempt to tell them they're crazy, sometimes passive-aggressive, at others more aggressive-aggressive. Freud said that if children had power they would destroy the world in their first tantrum ~ the deity is certainly no child but world-destroying is presumably well within His power ~ and there might be little point in saying, "but then you'd have no one to play with".

Despite the well-known saying, messengers do get shot ~ I'm told that the Matabele actually used to ram pointed sticks up the nostrils and into the brain of any poor schmuck sent to tell base camp that a battle had gone badly, as if he could have done much about it ~ let's face it, you aren't gonna put a guy in charge of strategy who's dumb enough to deliver a message under those rules, are you (those of a satirical bent may insert their own George W. joke here)? So even though I'm just helping them get the message out there, am I asking for trouble? Writing this kind of stuff could be seen by Gloonies as leading to 'negative transference' or, by the more traditionally religious, as downright name-in-vain, flippant, go-straight-to-hell blasphemy.

Indeed, there is considerable debate among the faithful as to how a deity might take to being 'outed' as off His head.

As we've already noted (blog 29), it's normal enough for the religious to interpret events that others would say 'just happen' as manifestations of the Divine Will. When dealing with a philosophy that sees life's vicissitudes as manifestations of a Divine Neurosis at best and Total Divine Derangement at worst, it's understandable that some might want to tread cautiously.

This is of course why it's taken so long for the Church to take these first, faltering steps towards a more public presence. It's probably also, he said as it dawned on him, why they've chosen an uninvolved fall-guy to do the job. Is my flippant, cynical approach the perfect escape pod? 'Church' melts into background, front man left looking like a delusional nutcase (no change there, then).

And, as I do my best to help them spread the perilous word, is my life being monitored for manifestations of divine displeasure? Is it indeed a coincidence that an apparently industrial-strength bond between myself and *la ninfa celestial* was severed, plunging me into a pit of purgatorial painitude, within a week of the first Gloony blog? What other explanation could there be for a beautiful and lively 21 year old lass leaving such a wonderful, clever, sweet, kind, sexy, jolly, penniless, verbose, insecure 54 year old git? Or is it me that's bonkers after all?

Oh well, onward and downward ...

*For the full history, see www.lucidity.ltd.uk/blogs/home.htm

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32. Fancy an 'Orrible Time, Sailor?

I'd make a shit pimp, me.

Being of an older generation, I was always taught that it was very bad form to blow one's own trumpet (or for a pimp to blow his own strumpet, ha ha! Sorry), and life has taught me that those who bray loudest about how wonderful they are usually turn out to be mediocre at best. A friend who was once a publisher's reader tells me that a covering letter promising the greatest gift to literature since Shakespeare usually covers something best left covered. On the other hand, those who hide their lights under bushels are destined only to have well-lit bushel bottoms.

There are exceptions in arrogance of course but the mistake to which your correspondent is repeatedly drawn is to imagine that modesty will as frequently prove false. ~ or that others will make the same assumption, checking out the self-effacing writer, rather than shrugging and passing on to grease the next squeaky wheel.

I'm told my blogs would get more readers if I mailed enough random folks each week or that I'd get more comments if questions were raised and directed at the audience. At least, I'm told, I should end with a "what do you folks think?" Well, I already expressed my aversion (see blog 21, *Janus Envy*) to making up for deficiencies in my expressive ability with emoticons and acronyms ~ anyway, I don't want folks to 'lol' so much as to react by 'saws' (smiling a wry smile) or at least 'fma' (feeling mild amusement). They could even add 'ibtsioyw' (intrigued by the semiotic implications of your witticism) but that's downright silly and as likely to catch on as *la ninfa celestial's* suggestion that estate agents (realtors) should use 'ps' to describe properties as phenomenologically satisfying.

But it goes equally against your 2h4hog (too humble for his own good) blogger's grain to badger people to read or comment. Maybe I just have unfounded pretensions to literaritude which don't suit the blog form ~ is it any use to point out that Hazlitt never ended his essays, nor Dickens his chapters by soliciting the readers' opinions? "Who do you think is Pip's mysterious benefactor? Should he get off with Estella? Write to us here at *All the Year Round ...*"

Of course comments are welcome, be they good, bad or abusive and there have already been some very nice unsolicited ones. So please bear in mind that all blogs carry the tacit proviso of imho and an equally unspoken invitation to praise or pillory as applicable ~ anything welcome, from death threats* to marriage proposals (rich widows and celestial nymphs only need apply).

But if you don't speak out, or you only speak out in a quiet corner of a lonely field and don't let anybody know you're there, who will hear you? Well, maybe a few sheep ~ and sheep need entertaining too of course but it's a cold day so I shouldn't have come out in a kilt and a tee shirt and I don't think these sheep are interested in bookshelves, psychotheology or anything apart from munching grass and where the hell am I going with this?

Sorry, I've not been sleeping well. Where was I? Oh yes, I guess there's sometimes a problem in recognising the boundaries that separate informing from pestering, pestering from stalking, stalking from brutal axe murdering. All boundaries I've had trouble with from time to time ~ but then, haven't we all?

And now I'm working on various art projects, at least one spinning off from shelves, from the joys of love and the pain of broken hearts, which will need some serious pimping if it's to succeed, since it consists largely of an ebay auction. More will be revealed in future blogs. But will I have the *chutzpah* to get more folks than my 55 regular readers on board? Can I get the big art dealers to read about it? Should I change my style? Should I change my socks? What should I do about the sheep that just ate my notebook? What do **you** folks think?

* "Being Loved can never be a patch on Being *Murdered*. That's when someone really has risked their life for yours" Quentin Crisp

PS (*post scriptum*, not phenomenologically etc) ~ anyone who found the collected blogs to be an excessively large file might like to know I've replaced pics with links and it's now under 300k

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33. The Ballad of Perve O'Really

I'd make a shit poet, me. I can't do the concise and economical stuff, I can't take anything seriously long enough to condense a thought into a few telling words. Oh, I can knock off the odd comic verse, especially if it's a parody of an existing one, and I'm quite chuffed with a few of my efforts ~ check out www.lucidity.ltd.uk/farty/pomes/ and see if you agree.

The other evening a muse attacked me with a burst of 'inspiration' in the street, where hopalong lines with infernal rhymes came at me too fast for me to find a doorway in which to cower from the cold and jot them down, resulting in me loping along reciting what I had, to try and fix it in my mind ~ cue nervous stares and rapid street-crossing from the good burghers of Edin. And even then, trying to pad it out to the full verse and shoehorn in the final contrived rhymes and names has had me sweating far too long over thesauri and rhyming dictionaries. Anyway, in tribute to the folks of a female persuasion on here and inspired by my previous blog and the ensuing comments I present *the Ballad of Perve O'Really*. ¡Disfruta, amigas guapas!

Of all the blogs by dirty dogs
There's one that you should know
The Life and Lurve of a sordid perve ~
That Limey guy named Lowe.

When his heart was broke this sad old bloke,
Done found himself in Hades;
But then he spied, on the Web (World-Wide)
A load of lovely ladies.

Franny, Rachel and Helen, oh they were all swell, an'
Kinky Trillian filled him with glee.
Mairi, Kathy and Suse could all banish the blues
Just like Julia (as seen on t.v.)

Evelyn, Pu, young M.J. too:
They set his eyes a-twinkling
And a gal named Sandi got him randy
With every Random Inkling

When all these birds perused his words
He set their hearts on fire;
And he went down huge in Baton Rouge
When they tried his jambalaya.

But which gal got his collar hot
With a raunchy fantasy?
No Eskimo Nell but a Southern Belle
By the name of Tits McGee.

Some of these dears he'd known a few years;
Captain and Shelley for more;
And Edward Wong? That's just plain wrong ~
It's the lass from the chocolate store!

But was precious Jules a trap for fools?
Was Jessy no more than a lie?
Did they all exist or were half of his list
Simply ghost-bloggers in the sky?

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Of Sleeping Trout he had no doubt
He'd met the girl once, face to face;
But was Kirstie a mad, bored, defrocked priest from Bradford ~
A figment of treacherous space?

But who gives a shit if the stories don't fit
With what some people like to call 'fact'?
If Starshine's a bloke or if Evelyn's from Stoke ~
Or if Mrs McGee isn't stacked?

Ontologic'ly speaking, reality's leaking ~
On here we can be anyone.
Outrageous distortion (if treated with caution)
Just adds to the over-all fun.

To *communicate* is the thing that's great
And being unheard is a curse;
But we know we ain't dead if our stuff's getting read,
At least in the cybervers.

So underwrite this pile of shite
(That's what 'sub-scribing' means);
Without *your* words these golden turds
Ain't worth a hill of beans.

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34. Let's Go Back to Your Childhood, Childhood, Childhood ...

I'd make a shit shrink, me. For one thing, I'm told therapists have to shut up and let the victim ~ sorry, I'm told the term is 'client' ~ do most of the talking. Weird.

But what do you do when the client doesn't respond ~ at least not in a way the average observer might spot? Come to think of it, what's the equivalent of "Let's go back to your childhood ..." when the client is an eternal non-begotten being, outside time without extension and all that? Just how does the Church of God, Lunatic (see previous blogs collected at <http://www.lucidity.ltd.uk/blogs/home.htm>) treat its one and only patient?

Well, it's not easy. But the problems are not much worse than those faced by many therapists ~ nor many believers. Edinburgh novelist Muriel Spark said her books were about how people always let you down in the end but God never does. But isn't that because a believer redefines the events in their lives as His loving action? Maybe it's not so easy to make allowances for the actions of annoying, lying or treacherous humans, or even to try and see them from their point of view. That family getting slaughtered by an axe-murderer was God taking them to paradise early, the woman who got better after a long, agonising illness was a miracle cure, my Mum, who died after a similar travail was being mercifully released and that down and out has lived in the gutter for years so that some middle-class Mom can buy him a burger and spread the lesson of unconditional smiles. [Shakespeare quote to be inserted when I can find the damn thing]

Why don't I say that the wife who left me was doing me the favour of freeing me up for a Celestial Nymph (who was just being born about that time, so the second partner was part of a very helpful relay team)? The folks that burgled my house were teaching me the transience of possessions and the value of insurance and so on? Nobody lets you down if you look at stuff the right way ~ and give it long enough.

The Catholic Church keeps a list of miracles but, well aware of the human tendency to wish-fulfilling hermeneutics (interpretation to suit), has to subject every report to close and sceptical scrutiny. The CoG,L has to be at least as rigorous, just as a psychologist can hardly send a depressed patient away at the first thing that might be a smile ~ but could be indigestion. And, as with the less responsive but potentially violent human patients, one doesn't want to start yelling, "We're trying to help you here! Say something, you dumb bastard!" at an omnipotent deity.

So the art of what they call *psycholatria* (from the theological concept of *latria*, the veneration accorded to God alone) is one on which much thought and debate has been lavished. I'm not sure I grasp it fully yet but I'll try to give some idea of the basic concepts. This week, let's look at the one that sets up all therapy sessions ...

Reassuring support: Many religions have prayers acknowledging that God is Great. But they also teach that He Himself points out that those who don't think so are asking to be broken with a rod of iron ~ not to mention dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel. While not wishing to provoke the Client by suggesting a desire to confiscate this rod, it is also essential to let Him know that he is loved for Himself and not just out of terror. This is often known as "You don't need the rod, God" by some of the younger, more iconoclastic Gloonies. So most sessions begin with a prayer of this nature.

There aren't many fixed texts for Gloonie prayers, as the Church likes to think of itself as non-formulaic and flexible. This is all part of the ongoing debate about the idea that the Deity might actually *like* ritual ~ and the dichotomy inherent in trying to change, at least within this realm of existence, a being who is unchanging and therefore unchangeable outside it. However, down the years, attempts have been made to introduce liturgical elements. So let us end with an early example of the Litany of Reassurance, by Reinhardt Krebble (1874-1953) himself, in which the Founder tried to balance archaic modes of devotion with the friendly but removed approach of a therapist. The religious among you might like to incorporate it into your own devotions ...

Oh Heavenly Father, we freely acknowledge that thou art mighty and that we are as insects beneath thy almighty heel. But be thou assured that we know thee also to be great in spirit and in heart. We love thee, O Lord, as much for thyself as out of fear ~ verily, even more so. Yea, were the gates of Paradise flung open to the most undeserving and blasphemous of us sinners, allowing us to roam freely in its delightful gardens, we would still want to spend time with Thee: maybe even to chat over a few pints of nectar, if such be thy Holy Desire. After all, thou hast made all that is and ever shall be and surely that's something about which thou canst be very proud. Know thou that we, whatever else we may say in our ensuing discussions, are truly dead impressed. *Amen*

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35. "Striking Poses With Our Faeces"

I'd make a shit artist, me. Or so I'm told.

You'd have thought that being a dilettante, dangerous¹ or otherwise, would fit with the modern notion of celebrity. After all, "What's Picasso doing *now*?" is no dafter than, "What's Paris Hilton been up to *this* time?"

Not so, apparently.

Half a decade ago, I was going out with *la japonesa* (see my pics), an MA grad (art curatorship) of the notorious [Goldsmith's College](#) and the only other person I've met who thinks [John Lennon](#) fucked up [Yoko Ono's](#) career. Goldsmith's is the place that gave the world (well, Britain, anyway) such [Young British Artists](#) as [Damien Hirst](#) and his pickled livestock; a place that discourages its art students from *making* anything. Concept is all, the *idea* reigns supreme ~ I met a graduate who confessed he used to sneak into studios to construct things under cover of darkness, lest his tutor found out and marked him down!

And *la japonesa* always argued, with some justification, that artists who appear to be one-trick ponies do have an advantage in the marketplace. If I see a head cast in frozen bodily fluids, or a concrete cast of the inner space of a toilet bowl, a refrigerator or a whole bloody house, I'll know they're probably by [Marc Quinn](#)² or [Rachel Whiteread](#) which probably means those who are impressed by such things would be impressed if I owned one, which means my bank manager would be impressed if I asked for the barrow of cash to buy one. Which I won't. It's not a new phenomenon. My old mate, [Quentin](#), used to say, 'If I were to drag a huge piece of marble onto this stage ~ with a hole in it ~ you'd all say "It's a [Henry Moore](#)!" But,' he'd add, 'if I were somehow to drag Henry Moore onto the stage, none of you would have the *faintest* idea who he was!' That may not be so valid today, when Moore is a bit dead and being an artist is as much about a public profile as doing art; about being seen at the right shows and parties with the right supermodels and porn stars. Or at least I like to think so ~ if not, those damn paintbrushes are going straight in the bin.

So you see, it's not just a question of talent, which I lack in abundance, those pimping skills I sighed for in blog 32, or even motivation/application ~ things in which I set new standards in devoiditude. It's something they now call *branding*. You gotta specialise, have a recognisable product style, plough one monotonous furrow to create ~ and maintain ~ that demand.

Whereas your humble blogger is a diverse dabbler, a dilettante ~ or 'waster' as they say here in sunny Scotland. Sunday painter, writer, *flâneur*, sculptor, poet, installationist; a born-again Renaissance man ~ or, as the old saying goes, 'Jack of all trades, crap at the lot'.

[Tracey Vermin](#) snapped, at someone who dissed her for getting rich by not making her bed, that she didn't make her fucking living from big fucking works like *Bed* but by selling her fucking drawings. Maybe so, Trace, darlin', but given your fucking draughtspersonship, who'd buy the fucking drawings but for the notoriety of your fucking bed?

Her other famous piece was the tent on which she embroidered the name of everyone she'd ever slept with. I'm always so embarrassed to think what a small tent I'd need ... I do have a small collection of drinks coasters with family crests ...

So there's the problem for Yours Truly ~ no, not the size of my tent! How to get the celebrity, the exposure, the infamy in the first place? All suggestions gratefully considered ...

¹Try Googling the title

²I do wish Quinn would cast his head in nasal mucus and call it *The Bogyman*!

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36. Quite Annoying, Quite Annoying

I'd make a shit gallery curator, me, curator, me.

No, that's not fair, not fair. I have curated one show and it went quite well, quite well. But I do have some odd ideas about what and where art is or could be, could be.

It all comes from what you might call the imp of the perverse, the perverse. Or not, or not. *La japonesa* knew tons more about art theory than I ever could and she made her case very well, very well. That just made it harder to resist winding the woman up, woman up.

Her point was that art, particularly modern, conceptual art, has to be placed in galleries and labelled and labelled. Otherwise how is the public to know that this unmade bed or stack of bricks *is* an art work, art work? And if they don't know that, how will they ever get to engage with the concept, the concept?

So of course, your smartarsed correspondent just made sure his suggestions got wilder and wilder and wilder. The electric kettle, toaster and other household contraptions 'plugged in' to a tree on Hampstead Heath did have a label and a title attached, but they were removed by the council before anyone had a chance to wonder about meanings and subtexts and subtexts. My claims that the arms in a tub or the pink kids' chairs in a Parisian back street were installations by fellow 'guerilla artists', got wackier as she got rattier, got rattier.

Come to think of it, given her temper, I was living pretty dangerously, pretty dangerously. I did stop doing figurative stuff while I was with her, due equally to her contempt for such outmoded forms of expression and my attachment to my testicles, my testicles. Not that she was impressed by my installations in paper shredders either, shredders either.

Okay, I went back to doing badly-drawn girls once the coast was clear and, ironically, my portrait of her, *Daizo no Keiko*, is probably the best thing I've ever done ~ where best is a relative term, relative term. Probably because it's not just a copy of life ~ there is now a concept behind the work, even though I can't put into words what it might be, might be. Because I've no idea, no idea. All great art is conceptual ~ not all conceptual art is great, is great.

But ideas can gain a momentum that allows them to outstrip their most vainglorious origins, vainglorious origins. And, as future blogs may explore more deeply, the question of what can or can't constitute 'art' out there in the wider world is still up for grabs for grabs. Whether or not the public knows it's there or what it is ~ what does that matter, that matter? And not just street installations, or, as I like to call them, exstallations, but performance art too, art too. In an act of creation, where exactly does the art 'work' reside, 'work' reside?

For instance, the typing of this very blog is, or rather was by the time you read it, a performance piece in which I typed the last two words of every sentence twice, sentence twice. So this is merely a record, an after-trace of that piece, that piece. The actual artwork was the typing, the typing.

Which means you've missed it, missed it.

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37. An Omnipresent Being Is Always On The Couch

I'd make a shit evangelist, me. So my friends at the Church of God, Lunatic (blogs *passim*) tell me. Despite my original appeal being that I wasn't likely to get too heavy, my flippancy seems to bother them, at least inasmuch as they've asked me to refrain from opening my blogs about their Church with space-wasting personal rambles. Apparently it lacks gravitas and harms their chances of being taken at all seriously. And curing a crazy God, is no joke, especially if you're stuck under one of His volcanoes, tornadoes or metaphysical rotten tomatoes. And they've utterly forbidden me to start with the phrase, "I'd make a shit ..., me."

No worries, guys. Your wish is my command.

My esteemed readers who've been following the story so far will know that Gloony prayer meetings ~ or Theo-therapy Sessions ~ begin with the Offering of Reassuring Support. Those equally esteemed readers who haven't might like to check out the collected blogs at www.lucidity.ltd.uk/blogs/home.htm. I'm not going over it all again here; I'm in enough trouble as it is.

"If God is everywhere, He's always on the couch," is a fundamental tenet of Gloonyism. And He's therefore always part of the group hug that begins the therapy proper. Group sessions are preferred ~ after all, in some ways it's hard to have a one-on-one with a being who's everywhere ~ possibly in the hearts of all mankind ~ even while you're talking to Him.

Not that traditional types of prayer have been discarded, far from it. Worship and devotion, not to mention "blessing and honour, glory and power", are still due "unto Him, ... unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne" and all that, Him being the all-powerful, the giver of life and possibly even the answerer of prayers ~ after all, it's that very power that Gloonies believe He sometimes finds hard to handle. Most of the time they accept He uses it well and compassionately; and we could hardly help Him ~ or ourselves ~ by rejecting His love and assistance when it is available, right? Not only would it be upsetting to respond to the loveliest line in Revelation; "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" with, "Thanks, but we invented the handkerchief, already": it might even result in us being given what my (earthly) father used to call "something to really cry about!"

Well, our 50 minute hour is up and I've done what I wasn't supposed to again. Next time I will, I promise, try to get straight onto the question of Group Theo-therapy and its practice by the modern Gloony.

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38. Selling Out (I)

Apr 29

I'd make a shit art historian, me. Like with the rest of life, I have a magpie approach, absorbing fascinating snippets of information, ignoring the boring bits and inventing stuff to fill the gaps. Improvisation means never having to say you don't know ~ and the best facts are always the ones you make up, after all. So take the following, like anything I tell you, with a large pinch of salt.. I make Wikipedia look like a Gospel.

As a reaction to the materialism inherent in the art market, many Twentieth Century artists turned to other forms of expression, such as performance art. A performance piece only existed during its moment in time and could not be bought and resold, ending its days in some rich collector's vaults, at least without contravening any number of laws relating to kidnapping or slavery. Come to think of it, the idea that some family could one day have a cellar where the descendents of a captured Carollee Schneeman are forced to reproduce and to perform [Interior Scroll](#) on demand would be the final victory of capitalism over the rebelliousness of art ~ were it not for my latest plans.

Joseph Beuys (1921-1086) is probably the godfather of performance artists if you want to start googling anywhere but one guy who took this side of things even further is Gustav Metzger (1926-), the inventor of Auto-Destructive Art. He made an art form not just out of the stuff we throw in the trash but also out of the act of trashing it. This and his political activism have, according to plan, not exactly brought him celebrity or a lot of cash ~ at least a performance artist can pass a hat round for donations but there's not much point doing that if the work consists of burning it and its contents afterwards. The downside is that it hasn't achieved much exposure for what he's trying to say either. Hmmm...

Apparently I saw Metzger once: I was at London's White Cube for a Damien Hirst show, when la japonesa pointed out what appeared to be a shuffling old tramp clutching a plastic carrier bag and assured me it was him. But maybe *she* made stuff up too.

But since the 1980's, the time of Thatcher, Reagan, Monetarists and Yuppies, the market seems to have won the war. The arts are more commoditised than ever and half an art student's course will be about business administration, pimping and finding dealers. No one wants to be a Van Gogh, selling one work to buy materials for the next, for them to become valuable only after death. Far better for Tracey Emin to be pissed and swearing on every chat show going now and have her tent destroyed in a tragic and accidental warehouse fire just after it becomes yesterday's news, than to have posterity chattering with fascination about who she slept with in centuries to come. Sod posterity, give us the money ~ now!

So, when la japonesa's old chum Michael Landy destroyed everything he owned in a London store, he made sure that sponsorship and spin-off book sales more than compensated, at least in replacement-cost terms and, these days, what else matters?

So where am I going with this? What's my solution, or at least my suggestion for the next stage in the march of Art? You'll have to tune in next week to find out ~ why not subscribe to get notified the minute it hits the web?

I'm feeling too lazy to link so Google any names you want to know more about, let me know your musings on the question and have a lovely week. This being the start of la ninfa celestial's birthweek, everybody's karma will receive a free gift of 1,000 brownie points, just for reading this blog.

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39. Selling Out (II): This Time It's Profitable

In *Peanuts*, Charlie Schulz created a classic character in 5 (full name, 555 95472), whose father, weighed down by so much bureaucracy, reducing him to one code number after another, changed the family name to match their zip code. "Is that his way of protesting?" asks Charlie Brown. "No," comes the reply, "it's his way of giving in." Well, it looks like art has given in to the idea so wittily expressed by 10cc: "Art for art's sake ~ money for God's sake!"

But was it not ever thus? Didn't Leonardo compete with Michelangelo for the juiciest commissions? I'll bet there were cave men who quickly sussed out that folks give them a share of their latest kill for peek at their latest bison mural. Even more if it had a few 'fertility symbols' in it. But we prefer to think not. I know an artist has to eat and drink ~ particularly drink ~ but I cling to the romantic notion that even the best-paid daubers from the Renaissance to Rothko were driven, first and foremost, by the desire to say something ~ something other than, "The *whole* ceiling!?" Oooh, that'll cost yer, guv!"

It just looks as if the primary need now is to *sell* something. But maybe that's how it *always* looked. Maybe it's only when the artist is beyond the need for bodily sustenance, shelter and naked Thai women, that we can maintain our noble illusions of them.

The Russian Futurists of the early Twentieth Century came up with the notion that a lot of our response to art depends on *unfamiliarity*. Yep, however refined we like to think our artistic sensibilities may be, they operate between the poles of novelty and tedium. But, as time goes by, two forces have had an accelerating and distorting effect on this. Mass communication is one; and it arrived just in time to interact with the other ~ the ritual bottom-scraping of the barrel of new ideas. It took a very long time before everybody had even *seen* perspective in action, let alone tired of going "fuck me, that looks almost real!" but, for some odd reason, sticking lumps of elephant poo on a childlike painting rapidly became a cliché.

Sure, the shrinking global village throws up more ideas, more issues and more ways to do art; so we're no longer tied to doing tempera portraits of our masters in the Church or State, but the pace of change and the demands of that Ozymandian tyrant, the Market, mean the chase gets ever more dizzying and futile. Art *will* eat itself ~ as soon as it catches its tail. Hence post-modernism, throwing all the shit we've got so far in the air and sticking it back together in the hope that at least one arrangement will entertain, illuminate something or at least pay the rent by fooling some of the people some of the time.

But maybe there is one slightly new idea that has something to say ~ why not define the *act* of selling as the performance, the art work *in itself*? For instance, my sketches of people are hardly very saleable, despite the nudity that marks them out as 'art', but what of a 'performance piece' in which they are sold, perhaps in some unusual way: an odd pricing system that perhaps makes an inverted comment on the law of supply and (lack of) demand? The crapper the pic, the more it costs, the fewer that are left, the cheaper they get, a reverse auction ... the possibilities would be endless, if they weren't so limited.

An intriguing thought strikes me, regarding that much-loathed figure the taxperson. In the above example the sketches are *not* the art (you only have to look at them to see that), so the money received is *not* artist's income, merely the proceeds of selling some junk (and one could be selling anything ~ as I soon will be). Therefore it is not subject to income tax. Honest. (The test case would be a performance work in itself!) The proceeds might be subject to capital gains tax I suppose, if enough was made ~ and the artist was honest. But then UK law says goods *worth* over £6,000 and I could argue that no one in their right mind would value one of my drawings that highly, even if they did pay more as part of some crazed art-frenzy.

But what of countries, like Ireland, where the creative artist is not taxed on his endeavours? The stuff on sale is then better defined as art. Thus we see how cultural differences alter our perception of art ~ 'tis all commerce after all.

I've had a number of ideas based on this broad concept already and will no doubt be sharing them with you in blogs to come. Meanwhile what do *you* think, gentle reader? Send your ideas, along with a large donation, to the "Paying Dai to Read My Ideas" performance art project, care of Paypal ...

moremyspace blogs

40. Cardiff? (Speaking in Tongues)

I'd make a shit Casanova, me. Contrary to what some have thought in the past. Way back in 1970, my maths teacher called me "the Lothario of the Upper Sixth," on the grounds that he only ever saw me in the company of girls. Way back in 1970 I wished, oh so much and so poignantly, that he'd been barking up the right end of the stick.

It's just that I've always got on better with women of the female gender. I'm not a man's man; I'm in touch with my feminine side, but I like to get in touch with other people's too. Though I list myself as bi, for every man I fancy chasing there are about 5,472.3 women running away just as quickly. No, though people have spent most of my lifetime trying to push me into closets (lockers, freezers, coffins, ...), I'd be the first to come out of that one.

I think it's down to the fact that my mother was a woman (well, she told me she was, anyway). She was a very giving, open person, easy to talk to frankly on any subject. Not that she wouldn't express disapproval where she felt disapproval was due, say, over my inclination to molest the larger species of rodent or my ambition to be an axe-murderer, but she'd still support rather than condemn. Her standard valediction was, "Goodbye, and if you can't be good, be careful." So my laid-back, if not supine, tendency to "discuss sex matters in an uninhibited and free-wheeling way" is as much thanks to her influence as to the fact that I grew up in the Swinging Sixties.

And thus the fact that most of my close friends tend to wear sweaters with bumps in and I get invited to more hen parties than stag nights (that can be great fun, guys!) ~ on the other hand, I've heard phrases like "no, it would spoil our friendship" even more often than, "get out of this changing room before I call the police!"

"Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink," as the poet Coleridge so wisely puts it.

Which, apparently is their loss. My regular readers will already know how I hate bigging myself up and have precious few grounds for doing so: I'm a pretty good PL/1 programmer (Thrillsville!); I communicate not too wisely but too much, and my cooking's usually better than edible. Oh, and I'm nice to furry animals. When I'm not cooking them.

But there is one skill I am quite proud of. Maybe learning to love, or at least accept, oneself can begin with that. Then again I am wary that self-esteem can often be based on inflated self-estimation ~ you only have to watch *The Apprentice* to see that. And learning to love what you are must have its limits ~ should old Adolf have loved himself for his genocidal tendencies? I don't think so.

To cut to the chase, let's put it this way ~ I am assured that it would be no breach of any trades description legislation to have my gravestone inscribed, HE ALWAYS WENT DOWN WELL. *La japonesa* even called me *subarashii shita*, which I believe means, 'amazing tongue'. If I'm really lucky, *la ninfa celestial* might be prepared to endorse this statement onmyspace ~ see below (I hope). Getting references in such matters can be so difficult ~ one might even call it gauche.

To be honest, I can't imagine what the fuss is about. I'm at a loss to see how you anyone can do it *badly* ~ but I'm assured they can and do. Maybe it's lack of interest, insufficient staying power or some form of distaste, none of which trouble Yours Truly. I can think of few ~ okay I can't think of any ~ activities I'd rather spend my time doing, the tongue is said to be the one muscle that never gets tired (as anyone who's heard me blethering can confirm) and as to taste (personal hygiene being taken as read), if Ben and Jerry's brought out an ice cream in that flavour ~ dare I suggest *Pussy Galore?* ~ I'd be buying it in bulk.

But why am I telling you this? Pure and simple braggadocio? Well, it may be simple, but it sure ain't pure. But no. Here I am, a single, unemployed man with a broken heart and rapidly dwindling funds. If it's true that one should play to one's strengths when getting on in life, this may well be my best course. After all, my heart is spoken for but my tongue could be anybody's for a small fee. And hence I send out the first, tentative feelers to see what the response would be to my new business venture. I may even be interested in recruiting agents of similar talents worldwide ~ maybe setting up a training centre ~ at Lycksele in Lapland of course. I already have the company name and motto, I'm just not sure what to charge, where to advertise or how my business plan should look.

So, you heard it here first, ladies ~ all enquiries to me at, **Slurpy-Slurpy Cheap-Cheap** ('We've got it licked!')

Oh, by the way, in case you're wondering about the title: I know a lesbian in London who has a habit of taking lassies back to her place and, once a few drinks have been drunk and a few clothes shed, saying, "Now darling ~ put your head between my legs and tell me the name of your favourite Welsh town!" Those who know of the place will realise she's hoping to hear something like [Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwilllantysiliogogogoch](#) (click on the name to hear it properly) but, on one occasion, she picked up someone whose brains fell far short of their sex appeal. Looking up from thigh level, with a quizzical expression, the love-object said ~ you guessed it ~ "Cardiff?"

more myspace blogs

41. Eigo as She is Spoke

I'd make a shit English teacher, me. Apparently the ~~victim~~ student, rather like the therapist's client, has to be allowed to get a word in occasionally. Weird.

I did a course on Teaching English to Johnny Foreigner, once. Well, half a course, which is not better than none on account of it still cost me a grand and I'm still not qualified to teach anywhere. There was a heatwave, I got sick, the tutor didn't like me ... and a whole host of other excuses for my being crap. But I did get great marks for preparation (which kept me up all night making silly costumes and posters, which is why I got sick) and teacher-student rapport ~ they loved my lessons, found them very entertaining ~ and learnt bugga all English from them. For some reason this is not considered good.

But, though the long preparation and the boring bit of having to listen was daunting, the one thing I did have a momentary flicker of zeal about was the bloody awful course books we had to work from. When I mentioned that I fancied writing a better, or at least more idiosyncratic workbook, my assessor pointed out that there was gold in them thar hills: the couple who write one of the most popular series (and, oddly, the one I'd most like to burn) had just bought their second *island*. Never got off my arse and did it of course, hence the small rented flat rather than the luxury archipelago.

I translated a menu, once. It was when I lived in Cádiz, Spainland and my friends at *Casa Antigua* thought they'd get more *Inglés* custom if their menu had a version in the lingo, even though they couldn't then converse with the punters. So, in return for a free lunch or six, I did them a nice version in good English ~ okay I added a few touches without telling them, which baffled them for a while, when the punters either creased up laughing or ran out screaming. But I tried to tell them that well-translated menus are not what the holidaymaker wants. We want to laugh at classic examples of what we half-trained teachers call L1 Interference (where L stands for language, 1 stands for first and Interference means Interference) ~ it's what causes, for instance, Germans and small Jedi masters the verb at the end of the sentence to put. And then there are the false friends and missed nuances that allow even Cai's finest hotel to describe the local delicacy, *Tortillas de Camarones*, as a 'fried mess'. My personal favourite has to be from last year's Thai trip ~ a beach restaurant on Koh Samet, translates the Thai word for crab, the already amusing *puu*, as 'crap meat'.

Well I'm now moving up in the linguistic world ~ a week or so ago, my little yellow friend, *Netsuke*, who teaches medieval English at a Tokyo university, told me that she and some colleagues were producing a (modern) English coursebook for Japanese students and asked if I'd be prepared to proofread their English. When she mentioned a fee in the region of 50 thousand, I started to dream of my own little paradise, set in a silver sea ~ until I realised she was talking in Japanese Yen. Oh well, it's a start.

It was horribly tempting to sneak in a few quirks in the style of the 'phrase books' of Gerard Hoffnung ("Try the famous echo in the Reading Room of the British Museum!") or even Monty Python ("My nipples explode with delight!"). But do I need to, when the original, in a discussion of transplant surgery, contains the phrase "I would feel uncomfortable with someone's organ inside me"? Most of it is excellent and it's as easy to correct as it is amusing to read things like "the destruction of the environment has become big problems". Knowing that these are smart folks and that any attempt I made to write in Spanish would be far more risible, makes me feel better about laughing like a drain in a few places. I do like the book: it's not afraid to tackle more interesting subjects than the safe, bland and boring stuff from which islands are bought. It must be easier to get 21st Century students eagerly trying to find the words to discuss kidney transplants and death penalties than the life of Agatha bloody Christie (he said, from bitter experience).

But the real problems come with words or phrases that aren't *quite* right ~ especially when the thought, "we wouldn't say it like that," is followed by the agonising search for a way in which we *would* say it. Or not so much we, as our American Cousins, on account of that's the kind of English the Japanese prefer to learn (no discernment, some people). And some nice ambiguities: "A car has a larger capacity of passengers than a motorbike" ~ true, I can usually drink more when I'm in a car. But most worrying was what to call cats. The original ~ "cats are independent and selfish" may well be true, 'aloof' may be outside the projected vocabulary range, and there are few good antonyms for 'gregarious'. But to publish a book that may be seen as dissing our furry feline friends is asking for trouble. Those cat lovers can be vicious when roused and I don't want my friend to come to any harm ~ after all there might be more books in the pipeline and I want to put a down payment on Rockall.

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42. The Mode of Man, or Sir Fluttering Fop

I'd make a shit entrepreneur, me. I'm pretty good at coming up with ideas, almost great at researching, observing, collecting things or collating information ~ just not so hot at doing anything with them. Categorisation without action, the privilege of the geek down the ages. I'm also good at excuses. If my life was a piece of electronic equipment, my only contribution to global warming (besides all this hot air) would be leaving it permanently in Standby Mode.

There's loads I could be doing, were I in full Dilettante Mode. There are two large, partly-painted canvases in the studio ~ okay, the kitchen/diner. There's *Fardel's Bear*, my *magnum opus*, a 250 page masterpiece of post-modern comic rambling, which needs some serious editing with a large hatchet or a red pen, whichever is lighter ~ and there's even a sequel, *Current's Turn*, in the form of umpteen sheets of scribbled notes and plans. Two sequels to *Little Mr Poonlop's Seventh Holiday* have each stuck at page one plus a few notes ~ and there are those who say I should renew my search for a publisher, but, while I don't do active, I am a master of discouraged. There are three or four art works, about which forthcoming blogs will be giving you the lowdown but which will never be realised. That's true conceptualism for you, the idea is definitely all you're likely to get.

Aye, blogs, there's the rub. I spend far too much time in Blogging Mode ~ when I'm not frantically typing up and trying to hit the Sunday deadline, I'm always carrying round a wee notebook, in which I occasionally scribble illegible ideas while sipping yet another of those cappuccinos that I can't really afford ~ assuming I've not found a fellow drinker or even a pretty *barista* to blether on to. But then, having something I kind of 'have' to do, knowing there are three or four people out there expecting some jewels of wisdom for their day of jest, does give me some discipline, gets me doing something. The theory is that this leads me on to doing the other stuff but it just falls foul of the version of Parkinson's Law that states that blogs will always expand to fit the time available to write them.

I was in Mr Micawber Mode once. For the less-well read among you, that's named after Charles Dickens' character from *David Copperfield*, who was always confident that "something will turn up". What turned up for your humble blogger was neither a job, a lottery win or the hoped-for *viuda rica* but the far better *ninfa celestial*. This led to three years in Very Happy if Slightly Stressed Mode. But really, even if there are no other oddities, such as a three decade age difference, one should avoid architecture strudels like the plague, as I have already mentioned (see blog 24, also available in the collected set at blogs). And if you've been keeping up, you'll know that, after one of her regular layovers in Stress City, Arizona, she went the way of all fleshly delights (no doubt leading to an eternity in Broken Heart Mode for Yours Truly).

But if 'can't' is not a word for princes, then 'dumped' sure ain't a word for stalkers. And the very stresses that bedevilled her before are now gathering again. With another year's work, a conservation centre for the world-famous Roslyn Chapel, due to be handed in ere long, it seems she occasionally needs tlc from ~ well, anywhere she can get it. This might even include me. I may be a last resort but most of her other friends are in the same boat, locked in their individual cabins with drawing boards, balsa wood, knives and glue. I'm under no illusions that being thus available will in any way endear me to her in the old and wonderful manner ~ there are few things more tiresome than an old love who won't stop loving you ~ but, as Mr Crisp put it, "Your love is important to you because you give it," and I hate to see her down and tearing her very lovely hair out. I, like Douglas Adams, love deadlines for "the whooshing noise they make as they fly by". Sadly, a strudel doesn't have the luxury of hearing them pass ~ miss 'em and no degree and, in architecture, no degree, no career. Okay, even Richard Rogers failed a year but, these days, every year reattended adds to the student loan that a government too stupid to see the value to society of investing in the future uses to saddle every new graduate with crippling debt, unless they're already saddled with stinking rich parents. Oops, little bit of politics there. As you were...

So now I'm an avuncular minuteman, available anytime, any place, day or night for hugs and encouragement but, I have promised, not to sit up all night making cardboard models ~ famous last words? Whatever, I'm in Coiled Spring Mode. That's my current excuse for doing sod all with my life, anyway.

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43. No Such Thing? [1]

I'm shit at saving money, me. In the bad old days, when I had a job and thus an income, one of my main delights was taking folks out to lunch. In rather nice London restaurants. Where nice means expensive.

And yes, since "by your smiling you seem to say so", mainly female folks. Not that my preference was that strong but if, to their credit, it's no longer so easy to buy a woman a meal, it's all but impossible in the testosterone-rich environment of an east London office, to buy a man one. Even if he doesn't take it as a sexual overture, it's a blow to masculine pride.

Not to mine. Maybe I don't have one. But when TBC ("Tall Blonde Contractor") offered to buy me lunch at the rather swell Blue Button, I didn't stop to question its potential effect on my virility ~ not after checking out the menu, anyway.

And, sadly, if inevitably, there were guys who asked why on earth I was doing it "if I wasn't going to get a shag out of it". In reply to "I wouldn't spend that much money on a meal for my *wife!*" I would reply, "If I'm spending *that* much on a meal, I wouldn't be buying it for my wife either!" I tried explaining that I had a crusading zeal to prove that there can be such a thing as a free lunch. Then somebody pointed out that it wasn't exactly free, as the ~~victim~~, sorry, guest had to sit in front of me while I bleathered on for an hour. I considered paying for the meal but not going along myself ~ but no, my zeal doesn't crusade that far.

The nearest I came to that was when a charming manager, on the way back from Bill Poons splendiferous Chinese, asked if I wouldn't mind hanging back a block from work for ten minutes, so she didn't have to be seen entering the building with me. Cheek!

My real motive was simple ~ I like food, me. Particularly for eating. But I love eating out and preferably in good places. And he who pays the piper calls the tune ~ and chooses the venue. Go Dutch, eat pancakes; foot the bill and it's foie gras and caviare all round.

Those days are over. Not that I haven't been eating out far the last few years ~ far from it, as my dwindling spondulicks will attest ~ but *largesse et frites* are definitely off the weekly menu. And yet the urge remains undiminished and I now seem to have found the perfect excuse to indulge it once again.

Why is this under the category of Art? Because it's an artistic excuse. Come back next week, when all will be revealed ...

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44. Lunchtime, Doubly So

[1]

Hi, I'm Dai Lowe. You may remember me from such blogs as, '35. "Striking Poses With Our Faeces" and '36. *Quite Annoying, Quite Annoying*'. And if you do, you'll remember how *la Japonesa* turned me on to conceptual art by striking fear into my heart whenever I tried to draw or paint anything recognisable. And you may also recall my *Selling Out* blogs, all about the idea of buying and selling things as a form of performance art in itself. If you don't, maybe you'd like to go back and read them. You can even download them in compact form from Lucidity Ltd (that's Lucidity Ltd ~ *making things clear*) by clicking under *Ars Gratia Arsoles*. It might just help you make sense of some of the following ...

[2]

I owned a house, once. In the days when I dreamt of a rose-covered cottage in peaceful acres of Shropshire countryside, the nearest I got was 30, Victoria Street, Warwick. A two-bedroomed terraced house in a small market town; a bucolic bus or canal trip away from the Shakespearian *Kultur* of Stratford on Avon, the shops of Birmingham and the well of depression that then was Coventry. I had my little back garden with a lawn and a few straggling strawberries and t'wife and I had the mighty tandem, on which we could visit the wayside inns of many a hamlet, sipping real ale while watching Morris dancers make fools of themselves.

But, as I got older, I slid down in the direction of other dreams ~ of dissolute city life, the city apartment replacing the Englishman's castle, the shared spaces of Hampstead Heath standing in for the postage-stamp private grounds and, finally, the property-owning man of means morphing into the hand-to-mouth rent boy who now sits before you. Well, all property is theft, after all. What's left of mine now dwindles rapidly in a deposit account.

[3]

Back in 2002 I got the idea. Don't ask me where it came from. At first it was simply the thought that I should try to buy 30 Victoria Street in whatever town I wanted to live in. For obvious reasons, they were usually a century or so old and near streets called Albert and Edward (Check it out from the sky). The original reason was simply that it made it easier to remember where I lived, saved money reprinting calling cards, letterheads, etc. This can be important when both your memory and your bank account resemble the proverbial sieve.

Then I suggested that one could buy a whole collection of such properties, all over England ~ even the English speaking world. And there must be some *Viktoriastrassen* in Deutschland and there are definitely *Calles Victoria* in Spainland, even if it isn't always the same eponymous lady as our own dear, unamused Queen.

The idea, as ideas do in a messed-up brain, snowballed. Soon I was planning a chain of 30 Victoria Streets and trying to decide what to do with them. Little art galleries; cheap rented housing, let only to families called Brown; identically furnished rooms, run as cappuccino bars; unused spaces filled with cheese? The possibilities were endless, the wherewithal non-existent. But I quickly decided the artwork was in fact the finding and purchasing of the properties, what was done with them was incidental ~ but must not be allowed to besmirch the abstract conceptual purity of the work, of course.

On thinking about it, it became clear that the idea is full of implications, resonances and all the crap that makes a work of art deep and satisfying, he said, confidently. The idea of owning loads of buildings, almost for the sake of it, is a commentary on the nature of property, accumulation and conspicuous overconsumption ~ and what about the price fluctuations if it becomes a *cause célèbre* ~ or when it's *les nouvelles de hier*? The name of the street brings in connotations of empire building and exploitation. And the simple fact that each 30 Victoria Street will be a very different property in a distinct location, in its own unique community, is both an indictment of the fallacy of franchised familiarity and a critique of the futility of all attempts to recapture the past. You can't go home again ~ especially while you're somewhere else.

The problem is that, short of some huge Arts Council Grant or eccentric millionaire patron, I can't actually afford to buy a single one. It is another of those purely *conceptual* Conceptual Art pieces. But I *can* produce a wee book, documenting the idea, with all the sesquipedalian persiflage and pretentious flummery I can muster. And if I can't buy the houses, I could at least sketch a few, by way of illustration. Where better to start than where I live?

So I toddle along to the centre of Edinburgh to find 30 Victoria Street (Google Maps uk at EH1 2JW). Great start ~ it's not a home at all. Nor is there one above it. In fact Iain Mellis' extremely wonderful cheese shop is number 30a, above which is number 30 proper; a place called The Grain Store, which is ~ wait for it ~ a restaurant.

Do you see where this is going?

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[4]

Okay, dear and patient reader, this is where I bring together parts [1] to [3] and last week's blog about free lunches. As an offshoot of the *30 Victoria Street* project, I'm doing another extended performance piece, which consists simply of taking people for lunch at the Grain Store, 30 Victoria Street, Edinburgh. Lunch, because of the idea of the free lunch and because it's a posh place where I can't afford to eat in the evenings. The special lunch, however, at ten pounds for two courses and £13 for three is just about within my budget as long as I expect to get a job or die within the next five years (the latter is my current preference). Of course if the ~~victim~~, sorry, co-performer insists, they can pay for themselves or even for me too. I shall keep notes of what was eaten and drunk at each meal, perhaps take photos, and these can go in yet another small book, sold separately at all good art shops, for an exorbitant price, as an appendix to the main work or as a thing (of beauty) in its own right. Maybe I should list the menus on my website ...

There have been two instalments so far and very nice the place is too. You could even be a part of this ~ if you're going to be in central Edinburgh on a weekday between 12 and 2, let me know. And can anybody suggest a good title for the work?

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45. Our Man in Wester Hailes

I'm shit at finishing things, me. Dotting 't's, crossing 'j's ~ you're lucky you get the sticks on 'd's and 'b's, to be honest. If you've been following these blogs from the early days of the no-doubt-symbolic shelves you might realise I'm not that hot at getting started either. I'm an ideas man. Just don't ask me to make something out of them, okay?

I overpaid a whole factory once. Liquorice allsorts makers in deepest Yorkshire. 67 pence each. Okay there weren't many but it still didn't impress my bosses one bit. When I say I overpaid them, I didn't go round with a bucket of cash of a Friday and miscount. It was my 'fully tested' program that did the damage. The dour folk in the office muttered dark Northern curses under their breath and patiently crossed out the totals and wrote in the right ones. I kept my job but it taught me a lesson about being more careful. For a while.

Until I moved all the money in a major High Street bank (and we are talking squillions of pounds) to the wrong place. To a very small, local branch on the outskirts of Reading, Berkshire, England. When my employers decided to make their regional headquarters in Reading into a 'super-branch', holding all the personal accounts for the UK, they ought to have considered whether they should entrust the task to Yours Truly.

But why not? A simple enough fudge program, easily demonstrated to be foolproof. Just change the branch sort code to the Reading one. Tested and checked, no worries. Except nobody reckoned on this particular fool. Nobody thought to check that the new sort code was for the right place. Nobody thought it might not occur to me that there could be more than one branch in a town of 140,000 souls. Okay, today, with large-scale 'rationalisation', there probably aren't. There were then. Tiny ones. With a staff of two humans and a budgerigar, probably.

So, one Monday morning, the new super-branch rang to ask why their ledger still showed a total of a few grand. Why wasn't the whole country's dosh in their virtual coffers? "But it is", I cried. Look ~ money, Reading ... and then someone turned on the proverbial fan.

Exciting things don't happen in Reading, Berkshire, England. We had messages out in minutes and reran the program with the right branch that very night but we did wonder what could have happened when the manager of a small, suburban branch ~ an unambitious, mousy, middle-aged man, a decent chap with a neatly trimmed moustache; turned up at work, said 'Hi' to Maureen at the counter, checked the budgie's water, sat at his desk and picked up his cup of tea while checking the daily ledger totals. We imagined the spray of hot tea going over trousers and printout, followed by frantic mopping operations, as he checked the figures. We saw him clean his glasses, check the figures again and then begin to hatch his plans to cash the money and flee the country for a life of sybaritic luxury in South America, his dull, suburban wife swapped for a dusky maiden called Consuela ...

Of such stuff are Graham Greene novels made. Life changing events, degradation and eventual redemption.

These thoughts came back to me when I came home to find my door kicked in last month. Not immediately of course. I won't repeat my initial thoughts. But after discovering that the only thing missing was my 'iRiver H120 Multi-Codec Jukebox' ~ which is highfalutin-speak for 'MP3 player' ~ much as I hate all things Apple, I gotta admit, iPod is a lot easier to write. Apparently the sound of neighbours coming to investigate the sounds of splitting timber caused the young gentleman to flee before he had a chance to grab anything else. Hurrah!

He didn't even get the charger or pc connector, which is a pity, because that model isn't available in UK stores (good old eBay). So he's stuck with about five hours of my music selection. Which may not be quite the sort of stuff he's into. Bet his friends were dead impressed.

"Yeah, look ~ I got this real guid machine, wi' real neat phones and a wee remote control. Cannae change the music on it though. It's got Kaiser Chiefs and White Stripes and that but loads o' stuff I niver heard o'. 'Psychedelic Furs'? 'Velvet Underground'? And wha' the fuck's this band ~ 'Mozz-art'? And 'Bee-tho-vun'? Bloody weird!"

But then he goes home and puts the headphones on in his room and tries a few tracks. Maybe he puts on Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. His first reaction is probably a loud, "Wha' the fuck's this shite?!" But, before he can rip the phones from his ears the dramatic build-up of ghostly string phrases starts to work on him and by the first climax, he's intrigued. By the end of the last movement he's singing along with *Freude, schöne Götterfunken* at the top of his voice and his da is coming up the stairs with the leather belt in his hand. But it's too late ~ he's already a changed man, a reformed character, destined to break out of his ghetto of urban alienation and deprivation and achieve great things for himself and his community.

And, even if he gets into writing, art or politics, the love of music will be with him forever. I'll probably see him in the Autumn at the Hall of the House of Usher, at the Royal Scottish National Orchestra's Friday concerts; the only member of the audience in a hoodie but also the one paying the most rapt attention to every thrilling bar.

An' if ah do, ah tell youse straight ~ if he gies down any dark alleys on the way hame, he's fucking deid!

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There is a Man That Never Goes Out (unnumbered blog)

*When you laughed about people
Who feel so very lonely
Their only desire is to die
Well I'm afraid it doesn't make me smile
I wish I could laugh
But that joke isn't funny any more
It's too close to home and it's too near the bone
It's too close to home and it's too near the bone
More than you'll ever know*

S Morrissey

I'm shit at motivation, me. Without two naked Thai women armed with pointed sticks, it's amazing I get anything done. And, as anyone who looked down the comments of last week's effort might have deduced, your humble correspondent is suffering from blog fatigue.

Well, okay ~ life fatigue. Like Hotblack Desiato (the fictional character, not the Islington estate agent) I fancy 'spending a year dead', though not for tax reasons. In practical, even in uncharacteristically sensible terms, this means I'll probably be taking a break from regular bloggitudinisation, if only to recharge the spiritual batteries and decide where to move to next. The landlord's raised the rent, *la ninfa celestial* is building her own life and it's raining a lot. *Assez eu. Rumeurs des villes* indeed, M Rimbaud.

So, how long the hiatus? Who can say? Maybe a few weeks, maybe the Summer, maybe for the rest of time.

Ah, now I hear the wailing and gnashing of teeth of my regular readers~ "But Dai, how will we cope? And how will we poor swine know, when next you deign to cast your pearls before us?" (I have some very self-deprecating regular readers, which is odd, because they are, without exception, discerning, erudite and gorgeous and I am scarcely fit to suck the curry from their napkins). But there is an answer to their distress. If you haven't already, O beloved friend of friends, just click on 'Subscribe', over there on your left, just beneath my cheap parody of an old painting. It costs nothing, commits you to nothing, gives nothing away to those who would collect your details for marketing, manipulation or personal gain, much less to stalkers or marauding axe-murderers (for which I'd recommend you register with www.victims.org/AxeMurderers). But it will let you know as soon as a blog gets posted.

Folks on my fiends list might also get a bulletin, should 'normal' service ever be resumed. Either way, in the immortal words of Mr Brando, 'someday ~ and that day may never come' ~ I shall let you know, thus saving you the trouble of a regular but fruitless click on my ugly mug, wasting your time. After all, I'd hate to have you cursing my indolence, little knowing that I am lying somewhere in a pool of congealing blood (possibly even my own). Ah, I, as Ms Minogue might say, should be so lucky.

It's not that I've run out of things to say, merely the will to say them. I do have a list of ideas and titles that would last a month or two. And, as folks who know me know to their cost, having nothing to say has never stopped me. It's just a lack of motivation. It's getting hard enough to get out of bed in the afternoons, let alone spin gossamer webs of wondrous weekly words.

So, for now at least, the rest ~ stained only slightly by the collected blogs ~ is silence.

*I've seen this happen in other people's lives
And now it's happening in mine*

(as above)

[PS, to anyone who was wondering, the coiled-spring stuff (blog 42) and a sleepless weekend of helping with scale models and carrying stuff about paid off ~ *la ninfa* passed the year and is well on her way to the Pritzker Prize for 20???. Hurrah!]