

HEAVEN'S TRASH

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*Now the world was empty
On the day when they made it
But heaven needed someplace
To throw all the shit*

JASON MOLINA

I

As a child I was promised
Heaven was a place
Where all of us would
At some future date
Be reunited
And for eternity remain

Now I'm older than my parents
Were when they comforted me
With such notions
Only to realise heaven is not a place
But a time

And, as promised,
We will indeed always be together
Back then
Being reassured of heaven, forever

See that which has happened
Is happening always
Just not here

Nick Cave wrote Ghosteen seeking
A similar place I think
I remember reading
Heaven-like
In which the referents
Tethering us to this world dissolved
And lifted
To where? Yes exactly
Raptured like air through champagne

From what site do they originate
I once pondered, pained
The continuous metronomic streams
Helixing through the wine
Or rather by what means
—Has in some realm
A hole in the flute been pierced
Through which air might leak in from

Elsewhere
And is it through that wound
We might eventually transmigrate?

But what is it
Of?
Heaven or heaven's Trash?

So much left
This side of nothing
And the fact that consciousness alone
Fails to recycle
Seems to be the culprit

Or is it that frustration
Is always preparation
For desire?

Say memories are just dreams
That happened
To have happened

Then recollected dreams?
The disappointment the dog feels
when we open our cupped hands
To reveal the treat was only
Its mind

If reincarnation were the result
Suddenly your suicide
Would just have been
Turning a channel
And this, then—
Heaven

How dreadful
Another extinct metaphor
Lodged in the lexicon
Yellowing like newspapers
Taped to the glass
Of a condemned storefront
Called English

It took a long time
For the twentieth century
To die
But it's dead
and it belongs dead

Is the challenge
for every epoch
To decipher whether electricity
Coursing through a limp frog leg
Signifies resurrection and if not
How is my mind not a trillion inert appendages

Heaven is looking at my foot
And stating inwardly to myself
“Move your foot”
But, able, I don’t
Heaven’s trash is the words
“Move your foot”
And you
Moving this instant your foot

They're all dead I tell myself
Sometimes as expiation
Other times brimming with remorse
Studying the extraction
Of the extraction
On the screen, stealing
The stolen
Seeking nothing
But whatever quote breath unquote
The animating gesture of paint
By incident spurs

Then finding usually it is
In my own lungs
As the hand
Cut to it now
Twitches
Cue lightning cue thunder

I am left there
Hundreds of times
In the middle of nowhere
Called a painting
Eventually thousands presumably
And these traces are bought
And disseminated

This is how it has always been
I'm assured

But why is the basement locked?
And how did one first un-cave
The cave wall?

Observed in a long enough time lapse
We're all melting
While in motion enough slowed
It is time itself that melts
Then like caramel hardens
Call it boredom
As experienced
Sometimes the slowed time is pigment
A painting in other words
Remember even glass sags
In the mirror, eventually

Other times it is the welling ache
Of missing your breath
Sharing the same air
I'm currently respiring

Heaven a drug then
Seeking the malady from which all
Suffer yet
Few—any?—have ever recovered

Heaven being right here
A stand-in for
Yours truly
Trash likewise for the objects
I leave behind
Have left behind
Will leave behind

Dollying back now
To the supermetaphor
That is everything
Known and unknown to objective history
Being or having been made trash
To the Aspect in which they were once
Simply ideas...

A bulging fishnet of herring hauled
From the sea riling, gills flaring
Yet silent
Is how best to describe
The way my ribcage feels
Considering the beauty of the notion

Being ahead of one's time
Quietly suggests the future
Is qualitatively better than now
Or past individuals
Qualitatively better
Than their then
Is an utter crock

Nostalgia in its photonegative
And just as poisonous
And moreover might indicate
That what is not is more valuable
Than what is

In which case why make
And to what end?

Exhibitions are rehearsals for my own death
I could respond
When the honest answer
Would be it's much harder not to paint
Exhibitions in this sense
Are just habits presented as decisions

"I'm not addicted
I just love smoking"

Arsonists were ahead of their time
Likewise polluters
Colonisers
Oppressors all
Multinational conglomerates:
Way ahead, until

The tide goes out
And you're walking
The brackish muck
Boots collecting more slop
With each step

Perhaps it is a distinction
Of raw v cooked
Heaven in this case
Blood beating rhythmic
Through flesh destined
For a fate consciousness
Can—alas—never know
Or—more disconcerting—even relate to

You'll become ash or shit or dirt
Renewed into who knows what else
A mung bean!
A goat!
Possibly fuel

The trash?
It stays trash my love
Or becomes, sadly, garbage
Refuse, rubbish, litter

We treat garbage don't we
Like the deceased bodies of our own
Don't we?
Buried or burnt
Your choice

Is the opposite of 'ahead of one's time'
Being 'behind the times'
And how often does the wheel
Roll these distinctions
End over end?

Ruskin looked like a real dope
Didn't he
In 1952

One's ideal 'time' is still its cessation
Remember
If "[name] went before their time"
Is to ever as an adage
Be believed

Being fair anyone who dies ever
Has attained as much
As anyone else ever
If nothing itself
And the memory of something
Are indeed indistinguishable
Beyond anecdote, belief
As practiced
—Let's call it a draw

But the trash!
 O the trash!
 The trash can be
 Doesn't have to
 Though usually does contain
 Thought
 But future throngs studying it
 Will never can never
 Understand what it was striving for
 (Consciousness having no meaningful transitive property)
 Or even doing
 The timbre and quality
 The collective weave of opinion
 Its valence
 In its time
 One's time is real
 But cannot be perceived in its present
 Nor accurately reflected upon
 In hindsight

And no this is not a riddle
 In fact, and paradoxically
 It is exactly this void or gulf
 This misunderstanding
 That vacuums trash recently strewn
 Into higher strata
 —trash becoming Trash
 now becoming Then—
 Cue castrati, cue glissando

Pen a wall text
Tell me how it was
In those days
You who weren't there
Explain the logic based on hearsay
Scoured from obscure bibliographies
Appended to theses published yesterday
Based on new evidence
In the form of deleted emails
And a recovered Word file

You've seen footage though
You saw the footage right
There was footage
There was documentation
It was recorded
Based on video evidence
Based on photo evidence
Based on testimony
Based on the diaries of
Scroll the infographic
The data is all there
It was cited
The metadata checks out
Documentation excludes naturally
Just as language bottlenecks necessarily
Just as trash reflects heaven
Minus a critical dimension
A bit like how time travel is theoretically possible
But only in one direction

The no
In the no vacancy sign
Never goes off
But it's lying
By omission:
Sub-basements are constantly
Under construction—
Temperature- and humidity-controlled
Earthquake-proof
State of the art for
Today must be stored today
In order for tomorrow
To even occur

Tomorrow:
Nothing more ahead of its time
They say

But it's trash
And this is heaven
And tomorrow
Today's trash will create the basis
For yesterday
To transcend
And in transcending
trash will become Trash
And the world may be remade
And being remade
The pattern will repeat
&c &c &c

This is not an argument for nostalgia

Nor is it really

Tbf

A condemnation

Heaven being right here
A stand-in for light captured
By technological means
And stored on silver, celluloid
Tape, silicon
Whatever whirring server farm(s)
—erected more often than not
On land once actually serving as
Farmland—
Power the cloud
Trash likewise for the act
Of its transfer
To pigment, hand-augmented
Time travel, in a sense
But only of course
One way
Hence: contemporary

The requirement of once was
For now is to even enter
The discussion
Is vital
And yes these are obvious statements
And yes I know we're all stepping
In Heraclitus's river
But the trash is spikes
Remember
Hammered into the riverbed
And the heaven of today
Flows past and erodes the trash
Driven yesterday
And yesterday and yesterday

Until eventually you're left
With some long dead glance

Representing a word
Translating to new birth
That people in Paris
Queue for hours
To glimpse behind bulletproof glass

What dies when you are born?
Asks Wright in "One"
And it is this question I myself ask
Every painting
At its completion

To which it
The painting
Responds
You, silly embodied consciousness,
You are the only child
Of the short-lived marriage
Between never happen
And eternity
And you really don't have a clue
Now do you?

Does anything die?
Perhaps shed is the preferred verb
As in skin, hide, coat

To the extent that if this were recorded
The experience of life
And run backwards
The result at the outset would be one
Of wholeness

So what then does die?
Not that which is born surely

But are ideas born?

I see it now!
I see it
The paintings are heaven
They outlive us
We are the trash
See how they regard us? The paintings
See how we are heaven's trash?
You outlive that which you are
Born from is the promise
Joining a body
And you, mother,
Fade likewise, giving birth as you do
To thousands
A vocation of births
Watching them outlive you
Watching them remain
They look back at you
They peer down
And they pity you
Poor creator
Pitiful creator

You have generated dreams
Of stone