

CARCANET

**TOM RAWORTH** *Windmills in Flames*  
Old and New Poems



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*...small wars are operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation.*

United States Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*

*“Flowers in their wounds,” muttered the airman, “that’s what she couldn’t get over, flowers in their wounds, flowers.”*

Barbara Euphan Todd, *Miss Ranskill Comes Home*

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*This book is for Hannah, Belinda,  
Victoria and Ruth, with gratitude and love.*

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## Acknowledgements

Some of these poems were first published in *Bad Press*; *Blue Pig*; *Buffalo News*; *Counterpunch*; *Critical Quarterly*; *Desperate for Love*; *Dusie 6*; *Ecopoetics*; *Invisible Tight Institutional Out*; *Flanks Dub (verb)*; *Glorious National Hi-Violence Response Dream*; *Lifecoach*; *Matter*; *Past Simple*; *Square One*; *Starting at Zero*; *The i.e. Reader*; *Tits and Zoland Poetry*; also as a limited edition of twenty copies handmade for the First Pearl River Poetry Conference, Guangzhou, China, June 2000 and in comic-book form as a series of twenty-nine prints.

In the USA poems were first published in the books *Pleasant Butter* (Sand Project Press, Northampton, MA, and Paris, France, editors/publishers David Ball and George Tysh); *Caller* (Edge Books, Washington DC, editor/publisher Rod Smith), *Let Baby Fall* (Critical Documents, Providence, RI, editor/publisher Justin Katko) and *Tottering State* (O Books, Berkeley, CA, editor/publisher Leslie Scalapino). I thank everyone involved with those publications.

The first thirteen poems included here were omitted from *Collected Poems* (Carcenet, 2003). ‘Call’ (*Act*, Trigram Press, 1973) was missing because of the author’s carelessness; ‘Into the Wild Blue Yonder’, ‘Breeding the Arsenic-Proof Baby’ (*Tottering State*, O Books, 2000) and the ten poems following (*Pleasant Butter*, Sand Project Press, 1972) because copies of the original publications could not be found at that time.

Thanks to Pierre Joris for recovering ‘Intellectual Compost 6’, written on the flyleaf of his copy of *Collected Poems*.

‘With John Gian’ is a collaboration written for *Markers* at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice Biennale, 2001.

‘Listen Up’ was written to infiltrate the ‘Poets for the War’ website and submitted under the name Ophelia Merkin. It was sufficiently successful for Ophelia to be invited to take over the site before Robert Creeley blew her cover.

‘Data Death : Zerone’ was recited by Rudy Giuliani. G.W. Bush plagiarised ‘Shuck’ in a video conference during the battle of Fallujah.

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Errata to *Collected Poems* (2003)

About the Author

Also by Tom Raworth from Carcanet Press

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# *Into the Wild Blue Yonder*

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prisoners  
christmas

our  
ower

pour  
power

“43” he said, referring to the numbers they’d given the

background noise tap



pattern outside my head  
speak to me  
signaller of the word-commune

i was not aware  
one lonely word outside  
could call itself 'snap'

---

## *Breeding the Arsenic-Proof Baby*

---

i see china as terribly peaceful      folk  
sitting around saying “torch-singer roxy’s  
on the wire”      writing poems like

‘24 ribs

pop      out flies the spirit’

i like to listen late at night  
breathing in a tiny cloud of chinese skin  
as they all jump up and down whispering “china”

they give it away  
with pleasant butter

\*

T H I N K

\*

we rise to the top of the stairs  
before a harp's shadow

they are playing play  
d/c to a/c

who  
cares

\*

'my' cheek itches  
'i' scratch 'it' with 'my' forefinger

\*

prompted by the next world

\*

i thought is a  
mirror i  
thought

random is one of the laws  
one of which is recognising it

*In the Beginning Was the Word, and the Word Was With God, and the  
Word Was God*

form of the word  
is heated  
and dropped on mind

the shape it burns  
depends upon  
memory and imagination

a perfect mix  
of their solutions  
is totally inflammable

so all is revealed  
or we are  
branded

---

## *Rather a Few Mistakes than Fucking Boredom*

---

giant cameras whirring  
on the lens hood of each  
stands a rifleman

his warning shot  
as the image approaches  
sounds in the past

today we are scraping  
every particle from the tin  
cocoa-tin telephones

smell of steam trains  
unable to act his deformity  
sounds every where

empty affects all thinking  
whistling sounds  
as the familiar voice sells its pretension

(oh guide my hand  
to make these tracks  
i do not understand

soft needle mind  
now fills all grooves  
to amplify time's wind)

---

## *Art is the Farthest Retreat from Boredom*

---

every thing is replacing  
the inside of being there

‘the true aristocrat  
of the equestrian world’

death is so obvious  
what does not exist is eternity

any thing can do nothing *but*  
prove it because we are now

---

## *Preserved People are Rare*

---

we are not here for a test  
dance every one dance

who's collecting the midgets?  
my reflexes are so slow

curious is a direction  
why permutate the bits

to find now? you are  
all bits other wise

the end

---

## *Ground Swell*

out in the fresh air  
captain phillips hadn't told her  
she gave him two helpings of larks

beginning  
middle  
end



---

## *Drop in Existence*

---

i am lonely for my replaced cells  
1945, 1952, 1959, 1966, 1973, 1980, 1987

learn your language  
no direction is home

silver moon  
in a red world

running all day  
rattling through dry forest

pleasant butter  
is silver and gold

never used up my energy  
burned out the connections

i've got  
to know

# ~~Thor Heyerdahl Solved the Mystery of the Statues? That Wasn't the Mystery~~

true sight of the enemy  
is not you

noble journeys  
into the unmapped

i mean the boredom  
of a kon-tiki

against leif ericsson  
courage and knowledge

are not enough  
pleasant butter again

---

## How to Patronise a Poem

---

begin  
welcome in

appear  
poem  
in these lines

i will  
not draw  
your picture

\*

no. the spark comes. we work together. oh it is form, form, the making of distinctions. form, the  
shape revealed by the detection, in all dimensions, of the boundaries of content

\*

stunting their *own* growth... making *themselves* ornamental japanese trees, safe, instead of being  
the *trees struck by lightning*

\*

'extra yields  
extra profits'

as if what they handle  
were not alive

\*

life was the invader, perhaps, and all things that live were members of the crew (animals went  
two by two, yin and yang) who survived through a warp into no-space between

\*

i sense the end  
down a tube  
a spurt now and then

eighteenth to eighteenth  
a choice  
of the net's size and gauge

the ship is changing course  
i have played out the games  
and the old faces bore me

season to season

names flashing  
i'll hammer it

---

so damn thin  
i can see out

\*

our enquiry  
points a way  
off the wheel

eleven segments  
are left to trust  
and imagination

\*

lose  
your self

your self  
becomes  
your art

then what is left

lives

no matter how you muddy it

it clears  
and there you are

again

\*

do you see me?  
i am leaving a space  
where i was is as bad

\*

i shall forge the blade  
of my own substance

and it may not be a blade

\*

i have tasted fire  
goodbye, pleasant butter

---

---

## *Intellectual Compost 6*

---

clusters from a level best  
company remain under accuracy  
for minutes of last revenue  
detach and screw you

good people in box pieces  
absorb basic lies  
gingerly rattle tall cottons  
hung still on the front page

snickering worked great pictures  
sapped traction for spectators  
face up arms pointed out  
broke apart stunted emotions

nothing could deprive conversion  
of fire shared to appreciate despair  
nothing reflective but movie love  
touched costume almost evaporated

## Consolidation

---

so large attending to increase  
clambered desperately into some air  
would surely frighten weekend excursions

you could pay players  
an introverted interest  
ask them to rip frequency

examined every one real  
becomes the forum on sight  
spasmodic leaps in a foreign room

look hideous awash with opinions  
followed by dissociation shown protruding  
discovered money business

transmuted through the subject metal  
guaranteeing more dramatic things  
phrase donkey work settled back

open the last door inside  
close to wind and modern air  
build up a local anaesthetic

begging not to be beaten  
themselves in their consumption  
but for the notary's mind drift

through rains southward across officialdom  
we know the alligators  
who circulate around thinking

to assess the human angle  
oldest surviving peeling walls  
exorbitant doubts almost organised

show people supporting scaffolding  
fastidious views too  
demonstrate the perception of statement



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