

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*

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

Acknowledgements

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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

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Into the Wild Blue Yonder

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

Vague

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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