antwerp
dylan harris

antwerp

wurm press
Published by Wurm Press
wurmmapfel.com

Copyright © Dylan Harris, 2009
dylanharris.org

Some rights reserved

antwerp is licensed by the Creative Commons Licence
  Attribution Noncommercial Share Alike 2.0 Belgium
  Naamsvermelding Niet commercieel Gelijk delen 2.0 België
  Paternité Pas d’Utilisation Commerciale Partage des Conditions Initiales à
    l’Identique 2.0 Belgique
  Namensnennung Keine kommerzielle Nutzung Weiternage unter
    gleichen Bedingungen 2.0 Belgien

You are free:
  To copy, distribute, display, and perform the work.
  To make derivative works.
Under the following conditions:
  You must give the original author credit.
  You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
  If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the
    resulting work only under a licence identical to this one.
  For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the licence
    terms of this work.
Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the
copyright holder. Nothing in this license impairs or restricts the author’s
moral rights. This is a human-readable summary of the Legal Code, which
may be browsed at
  creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/be/legalcode.nl
  creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/be/legalcode.fr.

Words-Myth published From Sappho, Parameter Magazine published final tv
big and swan, the 2006 Cambridge Conference of Contemporary Poetry
programme published tension nitro ego.

Europe, a chapbook, included antwerp (I) 0-3, antwerp (ii) schelde foot tunnel &
so many bars, dog & sand and mechelen shine.

The DVD chapbook included Animal Magnetism, bremen, fora, and mechelen
shine.


Cover image by Dylan Harris
content

Preface: Big Skies Poetry (i)
this ‘bright’ life 5
clip monopoly 6
chuff or that’s why the fragging counterstrike 7
5.5.5 8
balance still accelerando 9
dim him an ignore 11
from Sappho 12
and then there’s the mediocre mouths 13
tension nitro ego 14
upset 15
you beautiful cascade 16
final tv big 17
movie stamp & splash akin 19
antwerp (i) 20
antwerp (ii) 25
bug cracked 31
dye–de–ho 32
antwerp (iii) 33
antwerp (iv) 34
fora 37
luxembourg 38
Animal Magnetism 41
player 42
bremen 45
the deep crash remains 49
mechelen 50
dog & sand 54
swan 55
ierland is geen belgië 56
restaurant wall 58
finse 60
Preface: Big Skies Poetry

‘le ciel flammande’

Reading Dylan Harris’ fine first collection, *antwerp*, I’m reminded irresistibly of Jacques Brel’s song ‘Marieke’. It’s about a journey across Flanders – ‘entre les tours de Bruges et Gant’ – that the singer has come to associate with a failed love affair. Its lyrics are macaronic – he appeals to his lost lover in French, but the bleak landscape occasioned by her absence is described in Flemish Dutch:

Zonder liefde, warme liefde
Waite de winde, de stomme wind
Zonder liefde, warme liefde
Weent de see, de grijze see
Zonder liefde, warme liefde
Lijdt het licht, het donker licht
En schurrt het zand over mijn land
Mijn platte land, mijn Vlaaderenland

Though he considered himself Flemish, Brel’s first language was French; that was the language in which he thought and wrote. The apparent autochthony of these Dutch lines has everything to do with lyrical skill and vocal performance, and nothing to do with heritage. Poetry makes its own authenticity, as the poet of ‘antwerp (ii)’, resolving to ‘stop / being English / Engels’, knows well. *antwerp* contains many multilingual poems, and many poems of place. Quite a few of those places are in Belgium—the insouciant punning of the ‘mechelen’ sequence is an undoubted highlight—but there are sequences devoted to Luxembourg, Germany and Norway here too. There’s a cracked, melancholy fury about both the love poems and the political poems in *antwerp* that’s the verbal equivalent of a Brel crescendo, layering sonic upon semantic textures until you’re not sure of the difference between meaningful word and pure sound.
In the end, though, I think I recall ‘Marieke’ for reasons more associative and more personal than than any of these. I met Dylan for the first time (I hope prefatory etiquette permits me *tutoyer*) in Cambridge in 1998. We were both regulars at a poetry open mic – Tuesday evenings – held in CB1 the city’s first internet café, a comfortably fuggy spot on Mill Road, a long street running from the railway station to the town centre that was the closest thing staid Cambridge had to a bohemian quarter. Those open mic evenings have permanently spoiled me for attendance at similar events, for it was possible to hear good poetry read at almost every one. They were eclectic, relaxed and friendly; a relief from the relentless manifesto-making and sectarianism in university poetry circles. It was great be able to invite J.H. Prynne for tea, but dismaying to be ejected from a dinner party because you professed an admiration for Philip Larkin. At CB1 the delicate exploratory intellect of the late Rebecca Elson co-existed with a cheerful tendency for versified stand-up; we all rubbed along just fine. I remember Dylan reading ‘Fenland Sketch I’ (not collected here, but available with the rest of his work at dylanharris.org, which generosity makes frustratingly redundant the preface-writer’s traditional injunction to *steal this book*):

No hills, nothing for houses to nestle in,
your every deed is seen by your neighbours’ God.

This stark grandeur challenges even self-deception;
you glare back at the emptiness, or you run.

I recognised the fenland where I grew up: vasty domes of sky and ground-level Lollard self-scrutiny. Fenmen tend to find the beauty of uplands, while undeniable, a bit obvious; like poems, the fens demand you work at them. *antwerp* includes the ‘dangerous desirescape’ of mountains as well, but the flatlander can’t help seeing all that sublimity, the soaring peaks and yawning depths, as just rather *daft*:

(ii)
all around
tree rising mountains
where in ancient days
old Norse Gods
as children
fought their giant jelly fights

(‘finse (vi)’)

I’m writing this preface on the edge of another flatland – the bogs of the Irish midlands. Ireland doesn’t emerge too well from antwerp: its homogeneity and insularity make the poet restless, and stout bores him. Perhaps that’s predictable enough. Irish poetry is also characterised by its attention to place, but unlike the poems collected here, its emphasis is territorial. When poetry turns identitarian it forgets its primary responsibility, which is to language. antwerp keeps moving, and doesn’t forget. Its wordscapes alter and renew with each reading, like the scudding sands of ‘Marieke’, under the ambiguous and eerie light of a big open sky.

Kit Fryatt
May 2009

(iii)
this ‘bright’ life

this ‘bright’ life
whatever damned delight
is supposedly dreamed

whether it’s my unreachable
or whatever damned wanted
you supposedly dreamt

this bright straight road
these long motorway lights
the supposedly ideal

and should we reach
it’s stitch fake
out of the trap into the trap
clip monopoly

elephant admires ant
tries leafwalking

stanza & some
delete
elsepage font counterset
print élan erased

elephant admires terrier
tries ratting

pages exact select
number instruct
cum crapness delicto
refuse or every one

elephant admires drunk
tries pub door

hey mr mouse
i’ve a job for you
chuff or that’s why the fragging counterstrike

how do i politely chuff
the complexity beyond
their focus inability

it’s not the presumptive louders
it’s the distant can’t choosers
who distress

presuming that’s a tree not a thunderbolt
presuming that’s an amber not a lager
presuming that’s a goat not a sacrifice

i should counterstate
they might just
drill my unfocus
5.5.5

contract eddy & dock yay
elderly cat & shoelace tango

two form ruff women attract
both that glorious v uncaressed
balance still accelerando

L hipped
head horizontal
elbow high

off blue centre
strike
strike the white

the pack
schoolchildren
a pack of schoolchildren
bright blueday sun

green down mower low
see balls aligned balls
see point hit pot
see point hit pot
place check pocket check
place check pocket check
strike

just align yes
strike gentle pot
wait
that power hit
see the pot
roll the white to strategy
game on
three reds down safety
beered yet
balance still accelerando
yellow red black

king kong shot
bastard he’s got me
good play

cushion cushion long now
white to red length shot
must gentle touch stop
strike
watch roll slow roll ha
good god i got it

yellow red black
dogleg bounce
cushion corner

you know
i could safety
but damn the bastards
i won’t bore the barmaid with still elegance
life’s a biscuit
play to bang pot

ouch
dim him an ignore

was 7 i
him told
extra pain dull must

dim him an ignore

now
whatever strong
whatever soft
whatever dentist
shake

the hurt
virus strong rare
cease sooner
inject small month dement

scotch wash
from Sappho

you burn edge beautiful lightening gifted
be bright girls be stunning song be sing colour cut

my was body lithe’s a grand oak failing
winter white is all I’ve now

my heart carries heavy remember my knees carry nothing
in spring I danced the swiftest brightest swan

now I sting & slope but what’s to do
not to age be human that’s madness fantasy

even this sunbright summer dawn itself will die
when sunstun nova burns our world away

& this bright creation slopes cold
to fade to empty this universe itself decease
and then there’s the mediocre mouths

it’s easy to build a railway
charge in the shop  grab a set  lay
that’s not  though  a railway
that will take people

it’s easy to be told
where to build your own railway
civil your route  where you’re suggested
on the mainline  run empty

no
read all the routes
ride all the trains
find your own Appleby
tension nitro ego

new earth hello round here
    I WANT TO BE HERE
the arse we do goes this
    THAT’S RUDE
song flight the bird Messiaen microtonal wings that
    WHO’S NITRO TONY
part like play round dance the stage doubt nothing
    WHAT DO YOU MEAN
rich evolution wide gender mix strategy complex gay thus
    THAT’S DISGUSTING
depend born on human subtle rich no way full know ego
    THE WINDOWS ARE DIRTY YOU ARE DIRTY
open intense cosmos wide complex Wittgenstein wash up
    YOU SHOULD CLEAN THEM
supersymmetric part–life graviton force p–brane
    YOU’RE BEING HORRIBLE TO ME
now rehearse play right now do dream exact now stride
    I HATE YOU
presumption burn plastic in breathe fucked off thank
upset

distraught at being abandoned
so she hoped

lived in the
raw utility home
he’d given her

she thought to sell it
provided of course
it wasn’t a retaliation house
you beautiful cascade

for uncomplicate environ
rush time you
no time speak

last year
i bit attraction
you beautiful cascade

but your smile was

let me us
a world restaurant
a hundred miles
an isis
final tv big

audience sea roll pebble shore breathe
cup archaic boredom occupier
moron matter computer

blank unturned ocean pretend tiles
centration frown where
ah yes top right near

three unlucky
base left near
void reload

top right one bon
blank blank game on
next damn hope sour

risk random
base left near luck
sweep release luck such luck
fourteen blank

rote turn mark
rote turn mark
rote turn mark
rote turn mark

eight mark hope end
line edge one turn four
three mark

chasm rare thirty blank
board centre empty vertical strategy poison
mine edge concentration bastard
turn mark rote
turn mark rote
turn mark rote
turn mark rote

NO

arse
unconcentration
bad mark action
bang bang loss

waste

waste
movie stamp & splash akin

movie stamp & splash akin
vacant unident tension i

crude

defuck lack not that common
curdle cold grease bad might
just day why blank
life no grief trad why now blank
betcha bug announce

crude

forty years & ish the A rush
to call another stand
perhaps tense that

do
to do
do
do
antwerp (i)

0

the exciter girl absent
just bar gloss smile
night pint

but i drive tomorrow
to an alien language
rhythms consonants
tripmes strangeing

life

steps
1

square nightgreen
maprelief upupup
clean roughbrown
cross goldlit
skyscraperless

scissored out halfcircle
confetti glass brick
stories door
height height
imagination tower

dependers concur require
the soma state
themarx debunk
napoelonic longroad
buildéd long square storied
grey ripplelight off
architected now

innerplace long walk
built long square desked
grey evenlight grey
architected do

digitate long plan
build long square rise
grey futurelight through
architected intent
try town tram any
first gentle fast
swifts spinsingers
cliffs constructed

stop out shit shab
gangland girl pork
cast river go
mile bright wince stride

city centre food centre city
menu menu menu glamour
damn
time wall
rooster henry claims
donkey oostveld demands
aeroplane hercules snores

worry side drive
single lane
hedged asphalt

breakfast gouda
breakfast freshbread
breakfast choc

the lost place
that name
must

comfortable formal
clean cosy
family farm fib

at thirty minutes
antwerp
claims
antwerp (ii)

schelde foot tunnel

elegant unhurried escalators
mahogany down

    but they’re King’s Cross stairs
    sent soon dead to kill heat

sight along walkers’ white–tiled cylinder
pure unbent eye line

    fire no out from fire
    but to its where started

no simple set no code death no Duty
no snipers no machine gun no game end
tram lines

3
upbrung sound life
three monkey buried life
agéd twee life

4
mark made child
intense him art glamoured
match never later met

8
upbrung ordinaire
dege eye shock
mockOrange magii
sure buy assure
great art

10
edge long culture glist
centre kleingeld crude accrue

11
architecture sex moment

12
empire raised
cultures glory twist
grand recalls

24
empire ridden
wraps not rain
pauper grave
new city

here corner unsocial
don’t get chatted

gotta stop
being English

*Engels*
so many bars

so many bars solo occupation
so much étranger solo eyes

night walk alone genghis glory facade
brick trees brick ships brick walls
social égalitaire

every newness every arrival
every égalité every time
but oh for recognition’s smile
anticipated tease’s grin
talking poeting
talking poeting
many her eyes reflect more
sting wind mine do

by her weight case
she gyroscoped
beauty folly

poets to find
without fraternité
here’s hardly broken ocean
for pete’s sake

for pete’s sake
I’m older than the life expectancy
of my ancestor hero
who fled Bismarck’s invaders
for Whitechapel to cripple

I might fight the e front line
mock cyber mercenary

I’ve seen my dying loved die

yet I still STILL

she was damned interesting
intelligence age body desire
settle family defer
all the bells my programming begs to be rung

and I stilled
I STILLED

fuck it
just what does it take
bug cracked

PiNs dissolved
some moustached smoker’s strong lined face
placeless

my whoami’s
bug cracked
dye–de–ho

frogmount
dye–de–ho
catfish sense

I sneer glass
inaction does decept thee
inaction did decept he

dye–de–ho
catfish
sue me

moron
antwerp (iii)

ciao
spring sun city
short affair

stretch nederlands
sprekt comradeship
spent

spring breeze table
strong food
careful colour fashion
lust buzz

& one in three
votes for hate
gets hate
baby bulleted dead

from rotted hearts
to luxembourg
bourgeoisie shire
empire
antwerp (iv)

1

two cultures conflicted
nation distressed
united despite

lebanese café
in belgium

two cultures conflicted
nation distressed
united despite
& invaded

lebanese café
in belgium

two cultures conflicted
nation distressed
blood of their babies
invaded

lebanese café
in belgium

two cultures conflicted
blood of their babies
inhumanity headed
invaded

lebanese café
in belgium
nationists then
nationists now
inhumanity headed
invaded

lebanese café
in belgium

nationists now
nationists then
iteration excuses
invasion

lebanese café
in belgium
2

I pay pauper
sow stinger seed
enemy’s yard.

But how enemy
get stinger seed?
Why my yard?
fora

the night overlong
online fora
… le caffèine de la politique …
click drumroll

challenge comes where where
aha ill-judged
lemme check
got him
“but the facts are …”

the loud brandish ire won’t think
the nitty argue grit irration
the black bright bloom of scar rubbed hate
& me the reference bore
but allies engage

so what’s it for
keeping mental fists fit
luxembourg

(i)

luxembourg belgique duitsland frankreich
sun thundered warmed soak
county shire lord provident
small weak bank power
fashion texture content eternal animal

love desire there meat
chair seated relaxed unnatural
car driven travel tyrant
sun king tyrant dead dead
cathedral magnifique detailed sacrifice snuff
(ii)

1
One thing I cannot do
is get the hang
of Luxembourg bars.

You sit,
thirsty for booze,
until the wait
sees.

And I want a beer,
and I’m sat here,
and one doesn’t just
chime the bar.

It’s not like they’ve got geuze,
or something else special;
it’s merely a mock British bar
in the Luxembourg Gründ.
2
The metro’s only got
two stops.

Mind you,
there’s only one carriage,
fifteen people.

And the two stops
align vertically.

3
And I want a beer,
and I’m sat here,
and one just doesn’t
chime the bar.
Animal Magnetism

Whilst working in Luxembourg, I promised a Glaswegian colleague that, as I toured new cities, I’d buy fridge magnets for him to give his mother. I believe he was benign; I’d have reconsidered had he mentioned a pacemaker, or weak floorboards & nasty persons downstairs.

I consistently promised, but consistently reneged. I remembered once, at Watford Gap. I imagined his mother’s reaction. “Oh.” She’d say, “Nice”. She’d borrow the neighbour’s Afghan Hound. “It must have got caught in Pong’s hair”, she’d breathe.
player

1

player
personality fakir

opera trauma
that’s the firework flash
the soap opera trauma

taken time
took my time

poetry stream
intercession

now
night time
talk the fakir

occupy
transfer life ride time
so she told me
no photo
fear camera

so she told me
no address
fear visitor

so she told me
no health
fear fact
you know the blew it
it wasn’t just the
‘i’ve got your dad’s disease’
the one that buried grief killed him

it was the ‘i come now want’
and the ‘oh pleas’
and the attention panic
and the ‘oh gawd the health’s broke’ ditto

brobdingnag
bremen

(i)

overhead thunder
the wet

streaming hard flowers
the sting of thorns
these ice & blind roses

the scent of again exasperation
and steam like marilyn

nach Roland
boycotting
Jüngers
(ii)

*lange trein van reservatie*
my seat hadn’t being

four hours of suicide incompetents
or excess köln

i don’t like smoke
i hated riding there
(iii)

fifty fucking years
i failed
fifty fucking years
stuffed by their
fall of inspire

so one month ago
ich ritt
far across

damn those unarsed
oh—it’s—only—thursday
fucktard bastards
ik kan een beetje nederlands spreken

and now i’ll kill their cunt ghost
repulsed off that course
for uselessness

they were crap city centre
those rat–turd uninspirers

i’ll hang their foregones
an meines Sprachengibbet
i’ll fucking well pass

& win
(iv)

sorry bremen
your bier may travel
but

*mijn hosts’ bière
*ist besser
*sange froid
–ly

–ish
the deep crash remains

the deep crash remains
social gel time
contract clash time

I adore the
another country
language
manner

I have no
social life
suitcase

as neat as the net might
no presence
no smell of giggle
no rounds

there is accumulated acting
I ken the flavours of affront
adopted by stylish individuals

I’m shelled
by weeks
offline
mechelen

sound

deep bells tower bells
recited unliving perfect
i mess the mess of England’s

fundamental stuck sneers the real
pop tart pickers sneer the serial
a stick berates an orgasm that doesn’t stop

speaking as an atheist
what’s the difference

religion’s now the crack cocaine
of the ambitious

it’s time
i think
to sell

buy a leopard
masticate
religions’ rats
shoot

decorated stone hard frame
medieval upshadow lit
imagine faux rectangle angled
vertical window diagonal
night grain flow light

empty whole square
medieval stone flemish back curtain
simple scooter lonely
shortcutting walker only way
slow shoot smear fast
pan shoot brush majesty
anti-pan rushing even still

high two wire castillion window
stern decorate authority face
caption “wire goes where”
markt over move reflect over
opposing built old lady facade over
to far tall flemish moonshine cathedral
zoom hard focus tower top shoot
god’s wind erect identity card
scene

through a valley of other heads
ten-ager–couple dressed ever–past’s consensus confidence
in ever–now’s post–consensus steam
story–tell arch–typical heroes–look–describe

brighter–she distracts darker–he concerns
legs–out aren’t–you–lucky can–touch–’em
and–pout and–oh twenty–mins &–laugh–done

bus–stop hiss–door teens–out
she jumps the piggy back & steals
through–the–glass his so–&–again face

in the valley of other heads
my–age flow–smile all–bus scene–concur
been–there got–the–scars so’ve–the–kids
enjoy while–you–can dash
shine

moonshine fire cathedral
mechelse embleem
my goodbyeing purrtrips stone low doors
gloom loom

walk short emptiness de Markt
de grote Markt
this wrong town too
i’ll rue depart

and heavyland target
are you om kirke? te deum?
and the living AWK your reputation counters
your architecture states
am you error?
is ever am dragmove error?
ever’s gaan?
error?
error?

Ik zal zien.
dog & sand

dog & sand
rising sun
filmic splash

I am in
the fastest train
a hundred feet beneath

walk the friend
sand to sea
sunlit ring

I am in
the fastest train
a hundred feet beneath

market wrung
ethic slum
logiciel

je suis en
la grande vitesse
a hundred feet beneath
swan

I had to catch my own swan,
make my own charcoal.
Today, there are better pen sources,
of course: fountains, for some.

Usually,
the charcoal was made
days after
the swan was caught.

No wonder I'm fat.
ierland is geen belgië

(i)

body bag bread
monoculture beer

organic routes
malicious utilities

civilian trap
horseless guards

neighbourhood fear
armoured islands

easy talk
uncommon games
(ii)

the problem is it’s just one colour
now the colour’s fine as a colour
but you might just stare at the black all night
and wish for the evening’s amber dawn
restaurant wall

A picture frame
in wood
of wood
in wood surround

I’d like to catch
the right-angle pattern
reflect in the photograph
its poisoned form

I’d mock
just the top square
making clear the grain
avoid the film pun

so you could spend
ten moments’ echo
eracing boyhood cars
along its lines

but it can’t work
the sides are always
cropped by window
within the third

and at the front
the few whole rectangles
have been renewed
in formica
well it’s not
but it’s too new
to have aged
enough of grain
to a fascinated fore

the rivers fade
the racing boats
would ground
finse

(i)

stark rock & moss landscape
rising green luxury never was
mountain walls boulder falls
gone the snow the water

ten kilometre shed
the train no avalanche stall
nothing to block routine

underneath my naïf luxury
it’s you as

dangerous desirescape
(ii)

green & night roses
unseen flowering
concealed in traction
in visibility

long sung whip dahlias
grown in ageing sun
sparkle in fed liberty

night spider walks
serves web of dead

winner? sparkle? suppress?
(iii)

so where’s the blind watchmaker now?
I we they asked

so where’s the night & blind roses
I’ll you’ll we’ll ask

we’ll meet in bed and thorn
my sting your hurt our delight

hope
(iv)
so where’s the blind watchmaker now
felling trees colour them brown
the night is green gone
& to come
scene is scene seen
& to come
duty
turning
I’m the page
for turning forgetting
to turn
duty
really
(v)
so this is where the millipedes dance
a sumo ring
a rare skill in the millipede world
a professional show

the millipede Fred Astaire
  hat  cane
  a hundred thousand tapping shoes

the millipede Ginger Rogers
  glamour  dress
  a hundred thousand tapping shoes

ten hundred thousand tapping moves
never once a trod–on toe
(vi)

all around
tree rising mountains
where in ancient days
old Norse Gods
as children
fought their giant jelly fights

even now
see where the splattered jelly splashed
see where the Norse
made the splattered jelly splash
into homely homes

for this is where the brickies dare not roam
no not because they’re scared of Gods
because they’re scared of heights

what? you don’t believe me? then answer this
why else are skyscrapers never made
of cheap and easy brick?