

SAMPLER

Selected Poems 1988-2016

ALSO BY ALAN HALSEY

Auto Dada Café

Five Years Out

The Text of Shelley's Death

A Robin Hood Book

Fit To Print, *with Karen Mac Cormack*

Days of '49, *with Gavin Selerie*

Wittgenstein's Devil

Marginalien

Not Everything Remotely

Lives of the Poets

Term as in Aftermath

Even if only out of

In White Writing

Rampant Inertia

Versions of Martial

A Horse That Runs, *with Kelvin Corcoran*

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Alan Halsey

Selected Poems

1988-2016
SAMPLE

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from Eleatic Electric

Eleatic Alert

Light-fingered dawn an hour late
accounts for the delay
he imagines. To annihilate
its trace is the daily
task of the hero's
mind as it returns to 'his' body
between points of fixed abode
on the image of the virtual horizon.

*

Whatever your time zone smile
and place your facsimile

slide in the slot marked Qwik
or you're dead: it is a quirk

of nature with nuisance
value added to Renaissance

wonder you realise
the moment you press and release.

*

Another homophone strays
off in unmeasured stress
and indivisible despair.
By the sound

of it a levy
of airmen back from Lethe

or W.H. Auden
is strafing the wordhoard.

Hit and promise rebound.
At enemy
base the one and the many
will and won't disappear.

*

Repeating at speed all night
the message is denied
recoded and returned. The radar
ensures that the reader

deciphered and in that
sense foresuffered will sleep
undisturbed: his dreams
have been distributed

as type / as a sidelight
signals to a minus factor
overplus delight
sing or else.

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Eleatic Electric: a score for four voices

The voices steadily follow one another but pause between stanzas. The entire sequence is repeated several times with variations in the order of voices (but not sentences) and with increasing speed of response; in later repetitions they overlap and in the last speak at once. In a stage version the performers wear simple identical masks and costumes; they are seated and immobile but change places for each repetition.

- 1: The same voice must describe the same fallacy the fallacy describes.
- 2: The keywords bunch up for safety.
- 3: Fittest is the high-level mole's survival.
- 4: Knowing neither the words nor where they come from's a comfort.

- 1: The original magic of the first this or first that the fittest keyword.
- 2: Their best deference attack.
- 3: Where Europe is the content contention is the form.
- 4: One keyword headlocks or sentences another.

- 1: You at the laser relax.
- 2: Afterword or postmark abruptness is all.
- 3: First they overrun the hordes then their time.
- 4: The anarchic circle spreads south south south.

- 1: One's quaynote night.
- 2: Quote matches quote inverted commerce translates.
- 3: The same voice charms devoid terms divide.
- 4: There is an end to being made precise.

- 1: Blast the ontological continuum.
- 2: Written rite through end elides into anger.
- 3: One keyword on stream locks the kingdom on earth.
- 4: ... chic Circe ...

- 1: I come back to what comes the same moment back to this.
- 2: Land shrinks in the map reader's mind.
- 3: What is fittest for a keyword goes for all survivors.
- 4: You and the laser shoot the breeze.

- 1: A little bit of knowledge harms the horse's mouth.
- 2: Off to sleep of(f) your own volition you words!
- 3: What's the lookout at the left-hand margin?
- 4: When Zeno fits the last 'arrow' in the laser the breeze drops.

- 1: For best appearance turn the inside out in the rain and the sunshine.
- 2: Whatever this fits I come back to that first moment thus far.
- 3: One keyword turned round turns you loose.
- 4: This fear is to all events and purposes the form.

- 1: The same keyword turned loose must describe the same anarchic circle turned round.
- 2: Circe's swine's food's nostalgia's shit, that's possession.

- 3: The point of the arrow is directing you back to the point of departure.
- 4: The act is overhauled by the sum of extracts.

- 1: I and I O U-turn.
- 2: Being made precise as the world without credentials!
- 3: Bored stars are being hung out again over Flagship Earth.
- 4: Bored stars punched keywords.

- 1: The rain echoes resonance, Renaissance back, what sunshine.
- 2: Once a name is called a name it fits one is cancelled.
- 3: The underwriter splits on the subtext.
- 4: One keyword turned coward turns round.

- 1: Shot for shot and star for star Zeno brazens it out with the laser.
- 2: Is this the way writing looks looking back?
- 3: The high-level mole describes a U-turn.
- 4: I am claiming your share of the diffidence due to the heartland.

- 1: They serve who survive whom the surface fits, quotes the mole.
- 2: That corner of the market perception forecloses on is yours you words!
- 3: The direction of the subtext is prefigured at the point of exchange.
- 4: Quote colonial commerce query quits full stop.

- 1: You and the breeze fork loose.
- 2: Fitting is the keyword's perception of doors (within doors).
- 3: (Parentheses the solipsist's refuge.)
- 4: The fittest voice underwrites then overruns the wordhoard.

- 1: All land folk lost by possession.
- 2: Ask and the anarchic circle will be granted freedom of the keyword.
- 3: It is terms being met not made being echoes.
- 4: Look how a molehill moves towards a fit survivor.

- 1: Keyed in to the market settlement a low quai d'affaire.
- 2: Self-interest's self-centre's self-possession's sole option.
- 3: Knowing neither the words nor where they come from's the circumference nowhere.
- 4: Echoes coming back being equals.

An Eleatic Dirge for William Empson

Vows are refashioned as the voice
dies out along the flightpath. The paradox
points back to the problem arrow. The voice
dying out describes the view

whereas the view describes more than
the limits of the voice. Reconnaissance looks
westward: renaissance dies out along
the flightpath. Can I out-describe you

or you me? It is the arrow on a map,
pointing west of the page, which the paradox
points back to. Isn't all time lost by definition?
It points back along the flightpath, refashioned.

Companion Studies

Solar

sailor

loser

laser.

*

The backward sun in philosophy
in your terms and my times
retreats into a postdated

everlasting song. Unrequited
memory seeks spinal column.
If there's nothing you can do

then look at what you've done:
it's an ordinary life you've been
leading, you words, up to this.

*

It is a reflex action at the interface
or motive pit I mirror idea say.
Companion studies companion. One I
and one the rival poet. One candidate

one antidote. The former and the primer.
One loose in other words one
loses either way: if not the writer's
writer then the solipsist's twin.

*

'... the Alpha laser would be aimed
at a 13-foot circular mirror
that would focus the beam
and direct it towards distant targets.'

*

The backward sun (in the motive pit)
Narcissus re-reverts. Yes eyes
No's companion. Once Yes looking back

starts filling in the blanks
on No's glossy questionnaire
ecology is banished from the wordland.

Reality maintenance filters from top level
to the service industries ensuring that anybody's
business becomes somebody's concern.

*

If the code's being cracked
what of conduct?

In the image of the mirror
and the laser: who treats
whom; with what;
and which retreats?

In the photograph attached
which one's beamish,
Yes or No? Time's anti-
clockwise fool, Yes or No?

*

Twenty-five acres of trees and three
species of beetle have vanished
in the wordland in the space
of this sentence. Reality maintenance
(the mirror)

replaces 'you' in the companion program(me):
what maintenance reality (fore sees
is what reality maintenance (for) gets.
Unrequited memory seeks laser
resolution in the loser's wordland.

*

If the end-all is the be-all forestalled
high regard is the mirror's small reward
etc.

*

What's the message being forged
(Isn't memory condemned)
on the rebound but Forget
(to anti-memory's contempt?)

*

The 1950s are replayed to the tune of Yes mopping
up the cash with No's extended credit. Whose
companions roast beef in the mirror of the sun: No
yesterday is safe, so formal are the ways

of contentment. The motive pit has been soundproofed
with a two-way mirror where the image of whom
but whose father in limbo and in fact Yes notices that's
you transplanted from No's wordland heading home.

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Table Talk

The poem looks the other way
just as one word impersonates the first thing
the last thing it means will reward it for.

*

If the absolute absolves what will
the obsolete do? How will
the aviator level what the saviour
could not elevate to you?

*

Blue chips plenty in a white-lie district.
Everything's potential being taken
for a ride and/or a fact becomes the one
constant factor and a rage past
caring, precisely: the influence of coffee-house or
copyshop makes table talk
and retail reality net practice for
a start, knife tells fork.

*

That dinosaur
dishonour
is words
dropping
off to sleep
into place.

*

The cut worm ploughed back shares the profit.

*

The table motions to the baseline
the moment these nights exhaust
themselves disproving that Céline
the table motion & night coexist.

*

It is this and this then it's years ago
it's what you say you said you side with
and what you make it up with you make up
then play down, at least I do, Catullus.

*

Being able to do nothing
about it, being conscious, being right
off beam, remarks the empty place right
beside you which stores
every foolish word, right again.

*

Dear guest don't ask
what the host of new laws
is being introduced
to you *as*.
If there is something to say
but there is someone there
beside not you but himself
don't answer.
If the table talks shop
like nobody's business
shut up.

*

No mountains, Novalis. There's an I in categorical which flies through the air like trapeze in a pod. You can't sleep because the table of contents and the form talk all night. It's not before time if they're throwing out Plato but insomnia's the index of a book you'll never write, now you know.

*

One more charade. Whether history was stopped by hypothesis or not if it was natural science stepped in to decide which leader of men you stamped your foot beneath the table in the image of the stumped.

*

Fifth on the left is one trading estate like a malcontent waiting for the next course joke true to form. Try recalling 1968 or was it sixty-seven or 1644
our condition is their pre-condition, are you with me?

*

The old means of production giving out gives out warnings? If we try not to need we need not try but can argue both ways, it is something to go on, to go on.

*

The ship of state of the art of polite
conversation starts to list. I'm saying what I
like like everybody else. That sail of a sub
in Finlay's garden's a tale of a tub
I'm told or it's the wing of a jubjub
bird or what's the word to pass the jug
jug asks Hubbub. The one isolated
thing you can bank on's swallowed up shore's fate.

*

What if Will moves the glass as Plot claims
can't we still hear the spirits?
Stepping through the mirror into 1589
aren't we virgin on folklore and nonsense?
Are we back here already? Calling names names
things things and talk talk
there's something left over and to spare
'like a soul' suggests the table
to its halo or as we say
us. It's too late in the evening to tell courtesies
from curses or charms from charms or
and don't tell me men's tomorrow
tomorrow: it's a game
you give not up but away.

*

What's the bouncer telling Chequestub?
Anxiety as usual
is talking with his mouth full
for our benefit while Hubbub
interprets, one more idiosynthetic
I mean idiosocratic
wisecrack from you and no access
no exit.

*

Smoak Presto writing news, roll up
for the printed circuit of yes today's papers
the VDU running rings around super
seeds. Its or it's mortal coils at the world
heart, transformer; swift action undreamed
of required, recycled while you weep
for the days when it was all just words.
Us talking like this shows the language
is less stilted than long-legged
like Thomas's bait or the domino theory
that big fish die in little despond while
the news travels light and abolishes
the threshold till it shines with apologies
to you who'll never fit but foot the bill.

*

Passing the world-stuff

I call my baby my sugar
sings Billie to Thales
who turns to Morine
who sticks to what she says
come hell or high
abstract fiction

Wallace Stevens springs on.

*

Let's not get maudlin in the roué morgue.
'Revolution' was hardly the word for
those triumphs for which 'triumphs' (you
translate into the night no more
than Byron is transformed into Laforgue)
won't do.

*

I've been faithful to thee
even now when everything's post-something,
a US Army Manual quotes Dowson
and Scenario's the word. Time passed well
is still well past time. If you'll hear
what I believe I'll believe what you hear
so that even if talks continue we're
uncertain witnesses for sure.

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