



# Dark Horse Pictures

Andy Hopkins



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**When it is winter in the soul place**

there is perfect complicity  
nothing small breaks curfew  
everything vast is taut  
every sound has no cause and is the last sound.

When it is winter in the soul place

firs loom  
wind has no influence  
listen  
listen to the bronchia of forest.

When it is winter in the soul place

the air sits  
it just is  
water chatters water words to moss  
ditch pool bears the meniscus weight of heaven, like Atlas.

When it is winter in the soul place

rock is backlit  
there is the brackish ghost of fox  
nothing else has ever paused here  
but hoofed things pass this way

when it is winter in the soul place.

## Yes Michael No Michael

Yes, if you could just sit there, please. No. Yes.  
No, just. Just. Yes, in y. No, on the s. Yes.

Now if you cou.            Can we j.  
Listen pl.                 Ok, i.

No, knowing about Macbeth isn't going to get you the job  
you the job you deserve. Yes, I know you think I wrote you  
off

when you wrote that I was gay in six inch letters on the  
wall. Twice. No,

I never told you I knew. Yes, I knew about the things that  
you stole, too. No,

I am not paid to be insulted, and no,  
your mum won't be coming to parents evening; yes, I will  
spend an hour on your report,

trying to phrase 'vindictively ignorant' into empowering  
standard English. No,

I don't mind that you can't stand me; yes, I hear everything.  
No,

corporal punishment is a bad idea; yes, it would mean that  
your attitude improved.

Yes, that's a paradox, Michael. No, look it up, Michael.

Yes, I do cry sometimes at the end of the day when the  
classroom is empty,

but, no, not because of what you say. Yes, you have made a  
lot of progress this year; no,

I don't think you'd believe me. Yes, I agree with you, your  
dad is a radgeful prat. No,

not to his face, Michael. Yes, all the praise for you is  
genuine; no,

I didn't think it would change your life.

Yes, I do believe in you, I just don't think that you do.

Now then, wh.            Could you p.  
Please can y.             Alright, one l.

Dismissed.

## Ending Chairs

The meat and bones that start as dust will end up dusty in  
the black  
or blackly thought in backs of minds by mindless boys and  
mindless girls  
the world that keeps us warm at night is burning bones and  
dusty bones  
the crap we talked on ending days like ending men on  
ending chairs  
Monday starts with seven shades of this.  
Monday starts with seven shades of this.

The plans that scratch out in the dust from dusty sticks and  
fired minds  
that dream about the price of life improving life and costing  
life  
the pictures of the girls and boys that grow blown up on  
celluloid  
the crap we talked on ending days like ending men on  
ending chairs  
Monday's wrecks are seven shades of this.  
Monday's wrecks are seven shades of this.

The laughing stock that has its day like baying stock hyena  
stock  
will tear down bony celluloid and dusty plans alike because  
the burning bones of ivory towers are next week's fires on  
bonfire night  
the crap we talked on ending days like ending men on  
ending chairs  
Monday mixes seven shades of this.  
Monday mixes seven shades of this.

The gunners and the brokers and the planted bulbs of them  
will be  
tomorrow's burning papers and the next day's burning  
dreams  
the price of human celluloid is equal to the stock and on  
the crap we talked on ending days like ending men on  
ending chairs  
Monday ends with seven shades of this.  
Monday ends with seven shades of this.

## Unspectacular Station Revelation

I am reading  
Guy Debord  
at a table  
in the station.

I am reading  
Guy Debord  
at a table  
in the station.

I<sup>i</sup> am<sup>ii</sup> reading<sup>iii</sup>  
Guy Debord<sup>iv</sup>  
at<sup>v</sup> a table  
in the station.<sup>vi</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am waiting for a girl. She has asked for me to be here. It is very cold. I am very cold. I do not know why I am here. Kept flat in the book is a photograph to give to the girl to cheer her up.

<sup>1</sup> I am drinking a Medio Cafe Latte from Costa at a cold metal table nearest to the platform edge. The Latte goes cold. I am reading *The Society of the Spectacle*. I am trying to look clever. I am wearing navy blue, because I look better in navy blue. I have even shaved. I do not think about these things until later.

<sup>1</sup> I am not really reading. Three GNER trains come and go. My eyes try to scan every face in every carriage of every one of those three GNER trains. She gets off the train unseen, and a spiteful coincidence ensures that she goes home with someone who idolises her. Someone who writes poetry for her. I do not idolize her. I do not write poetry for her.

<sup>1</sup> 'What hides under spectacular oppositions is a unity of misery. Behind the masks of total choice, different forms of the same alienation confront each other.' Later, when I am drunk, I will think that this is the most profound thing anyone alive or dead has ever said. Guy Debord said it, in *The Society of the Spectacle*.

<sup>1</sup> I have been saying 'I don't care I don't care I don't care I don't care' under my breath for an hour and a half. I have an unusually sharp pain in my stomach, I wonder whether it is maybe the Costa coffee.

<sup>1</sup> I stare at the Arrivals board and exhale loudly. I send her a text message on my Nokia 3330 ('where r u?'). She sends me a text message on her Nokia 3310 ('i thought id missed u. sorry. god, im so sorry'). I get on the 5.11 Scotrail Service to Stranraer. As it pulls out of the station she sends me another message. I delete it. I delete all her messages. I delete her from the Nokia 3330. I have to hold my hand over my face on the way home so that no one can see my eyes.

## Levee/Burgh-by-Sands

We achieve by the magnitude of small things. It all adds up.  
All that is grandiose is hideous and infamous. There's

failure in the vain, Roman clarity of a vast and sufficient  
monument:

a bump on the purity  
of pubic scrub, with its busts of grass;  
this squelching mass of half-bricks and sheep muck  
embanked on the wet, wretched delta  
because. Because. Because

standing on the levee with a bitter fist and vista  
of salt marsh, is a lesson: there is a way of things,  
between the land and the sea,  
Caesars. Caesars,

learn as your helicopters fall from the sky like hail. Caesars,  
learn as your legions disappear into the murk of empire.  
Caesars,  
learn as the equal and opposite reaction crashes on the gates  
of Rome; Caesars,  
no invasion lasts.

**[a translation from silence]**

you me same same  
hand : hand  
eye : eye  
mouth : mouth

Mirrored,

or photocopied and folded  
by the sun, two together.  
Neither original or copy,  
eyes watching eyes watching eyes  
with open fun smiles.

But now we're not the same:  
we are simulacra,  
each of us a parallel line on the page of the bed

and when we speak  
we speak in opposite directions.  
No same same,  
same difference.

## Allonby Tidal Marks

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Al-<br/>-on-<br/>-by<br/>has<br/>tide<br/>scribed,<br/>marks<br/>like<br/>mi-<br/>-ni<br/>dunes<br/>hist-<br/>-or-<br/>ies<br/>re-<br/>-e-<br/>-rased<br/>dai-<br/>-ly;<br/>nooks<br/>for<br/>the<br/>tide's<br/>ken;<br/>pound-<br/>-ingly<br/>calm<br/>all<br/>waves<br/>wash<br/>here<br/>(even-<br/>-tually);<br/><i>hold</i><br/><i>my</i><br/><i>hand</i>;<br/>this<br/>place<br/>be-<br/>-longs<br/>to<br/>our<br/>love</p> | <p><i>Walk</i><br/><i>slow-</i><br/><i>-ly</i>;<br/>wind<br/>smug-<br/>-gles<br/>each<br/>sec-<br/>-ond<br/>word<br/>aw-<br/>-ay,<br/>leav-<br/>-ing<br/>bro-<br/>-ken<br/>verb<br/>thoughts<br/>in<br/>a<br/>uni-<br/>-verse<br/>of<br/>nouns<br/>pound-<br/>-ing<br/>to<br/>be<br/>heard<br/>ov-<br/>-er<br/>ins-<br/>-u-<br/>-lar<br/>con-<br/>-tent-<br/>-ment;<br/>tide<br/>is<br/>my<br/>heart-<br/>-beat<br/>writ</p> | <p>Stop;<br/>read<br/>(here)<br/>what<br/>the<br/>tide<br/>has<br/>writt-<br/>-en<br/>on<br/>hint-<br/>-er-<br/>-land<br/>be-<br/>-yond<br/>its<br/>ken;<br/>also:<br/>your<br/>shad-<br/>-ow<br/>(here);<br/>my<br/>heart<br/>pound-<br/>-ing<br/>id-<br/>-eas;<br/>wild-<br/>-er-<br/>-ness<br/>root-<br/>-ed<br/>in<br/>sand<br/>(here)<br/>surge<br/>of<br/>surf;<br/>foam<br/>flecks<br/>four<br/>feet</p> | <p>De-<br/>-sire<br/>is<br/>a<br/>wave<br/>;<br/>des-<br/>-ire<br/>is<br/>a<br/>back-<br/>wash<br/>;<br/>de-<br/>-sire<br/>bound<br/>to<br/>the<br/>ever<br/>last-<br/>-ing<br/>word-<br/>-less<br/>wave<br/>pound-<br/>-ing<br/>sighs<br/>in-<br/>-side<br/>the<br/>moist<br/>loin<br/>in-<br/>-side<br/>the<br/>wave<br/>;<br/>we<br/>are<br/>(in-<br/>-side)<br/>the<br/>wave</p> |
|---|--|---|--|

## evil

evil has no underground lair.  
evil is not agoraphobic. evil likes  
crowds and makes no sudden moves. evil likes.  
evil has no colour preference,  
does not prefer men to women.  
evil practices equal opportunities.  
evil thinks evil is fair. evil thinks.  
evil thinks straight.

evil is good with figures.  
evil has an eye for numbers.  
evil uses semicolons.

You have passed evil in the street  
and not noticed. evil does not  
mind. evil does not  
mind.

evil says evil is ethical. evil says.  
evil rationalises. evil can paint. evil has skills.

evil condones. evil sends condolences.  
evil can wear a party hat.  
evil can stand at the cenotaph.  
evil knows merlot from muscadet.

evil is not the opposite of good,  
but evil knows what naïvity is  
and where to look for it. evil commits  
no crimes of passion. evil has no passion. evil  
is mundane. evil blends in, but  
evil desires; evil desires.  
evil was not a problem child.  
evil has friends, evil has.  
The friends that evil has are not evil.  
evil knows the difference  
between right and wrong.

evil does not start things. It wasn't evil. It is never evil.  
evil causes no controversy.  
evil is lawful. evil is unequivocal.  
evil is not special.  
evil never stands out.  
evil does not *do* anything.

evil is neither vulture or hyena.  
evil is a clean beast  
and does no dirty work. After all, evil does nothing.  
evil does for those that do  
the work that evil wants done.

evil enjoys itself.  
evil knows itself.

evil exists for itself.  
And evil knows. evil  
knows.

## Lines to More Lines

We (well, me  
and him) wait differently penitent. We lay hands on,  
mutual hands on the mutual bricks between us. Our  
eyes don't meet; respectfully we peer  
neighbourly into each other's sour pipes.

*Flush.* The awkwardness passes past us, parts, and sluices  
down the slope;

his goes one way and mine runs parallel.  
Lines link us,  
agreements we did not agree to. It's a great leveller  
– the muck of equality; our waste flows

through lines to more lines, Victorian guts, shallow modern  
intestinal cuts,  
gulping duodenum and plastic abject shadows.  
There is a grid on grids, a grid of grids, a grid with grids.

His ribcage heaves like oak buckling.  
He locates the problem with a blind, visionary eye. Fixes it.  
Jerks. Thrusts. Nods.

These are things you don't chat about. We don't shake  
hands.  
He tamps the two covers down. We walk stiffly mute to  
our own territory;  
it terrifies us more than death.

## Dark Horse Pictures

Some day soon you'll find me in a picture.  
Lost for words in a dark horse picture.  
Caught on film in the collage of your memory.  
A stolen,  
still, black and white reminder.

With peel away names and scratch away faces,  
a grazing herd of dark horse pictures  
is flash bleached against your skyline. I

saw I was ambushed in your landscape I  
heard I was airbrushed from your photo I  
thought I was glued into the margin I  
feel I was ripped out of the canvas I'm

anonymous I  
have no eyes I  
have no laughter I  
have no memory I  
am immaterial history

in exposed films with startled faces  
I look just like a dark horse picture.

Black and then white and then gone.  
Black and then white and then  
Blackandthenwhiteandthen                      gone.

## Parakalo, on a Kefallonián Beach

I did not want to come.

You could take me over a rock like a slave. Or  
I could pull you out of the water  
onto the same hot rock, like a lava goddess, scintillating,  
sacrificially real,  
worshipful. Leave musing, because you create me  
and I have only discovered that  
in the shallows I am shallow;  
pull me in and pull me in  
and pull me into  
the deep water  
away from danger and into  
the deep water;  
make me intimate. Intimate to me  
so I can be connected; so I can be connected  
to swirls in eddying stone and a rock of immediate sky;  
connected  
to the rush  
of froth and sand and water and blood and come  
close to being  
every erection on the beachfront, every boulder on the  
headland.  
You are everything that is not me: the tongue vibration of  
air,  
hip curve of sea and lancing electrics; I am unearthed.  
Parakalo. Please. If you please. If you want to please. You  
are welcome  
if you want  
because I want that you should want to  
and so do. I want to be light looking,  
to be water touching, your mouth kissing,  
the heat and breeze licking, the sand formless forming. You  
covering me,  
revealing me. Beaching me. Overwhelming me. Absoluting  
me. Parakalo.  
Take my goods and make me a better good.  
Without your desire I am ungood. Parakalo.

I did not want to come.

I love that you love and I want that you want. Me,  
I need to feel you and the sea and the sun and the pull  
of surging relief and sand and water and blood and come  
to the surface and arch yourself anew. If I could  
shoot out of the water: merman or rocket; or  
if I could take root in the tide and move thorough and slow;  
or  
if I could, could I be forever; could I never die,  
but be the lap of water slapping onto volcanic, sun-  
drenched rock  
the cupping of coupled elements, attached to the moment,  
along the shore drifting with the pull and pushpull and pull  
and therefore welded or melded to forever; or could I be

forever  
about to be, on the cusp. Boiling in the water.  
If I could always be about to be, to give always.

And not to come.

I did not want to come,  
but the blanket of the moment  
descends, rises, irrupts, erupts, implodes, absorbs, exhales,  
holds, expels, slows, speeds, shows, blinds, clears, muddies,  
flows, ends.

Parakalo. Now.

Parakalo. Now.

Parakalo. Now.

## Unfrogs/Prefrogs

On a hill walk, we passed over them.

*Look!*

Prefrogs, they teem, a spill, a slick of apostrophes pooled;  
commas exiled

from a dialogue that should have happened  
elsewhere. Or else never. They are at first a delight, a  
wonder.

Then a realisation. A souring miracle: they are unfrogging.

None of them will outlive this drying muddy flurry of  
puddle; they will unfrog

in this scoop, this evaporating dirt-womb.

The bitter, cosmic joke is a spoke of the drought that  
ossifies us all.

Now they go on nibbling and worrying at fronds. In the  
shallows some are already still.

Soon, passed over, unseen by us, they will turn on each  
other. Overwriggled,

this will become hell. Nature is unedifying, always. Un-  
fraternal,

the gasping, squirming unlucky will eat the dead lucky,

the neighbourly last few will be cramming

cannibal, lapping, plosive mouths

as the pool slowly

dies.

They will lie unfrogged on their sides, the gorged with the  
gouged. Gorgons.

Done for. Forlorn. End stopped.

I love you so much. I love you so much

because you make me focus on the ifs: 'If only we could...'

undo dones.

Nothing in this world cossets us; we are all running out of  
puddle,

so tell me it doesn't matter and pull me away.

## New Year's Eve

It's a time for people who aren't here;  
*let old acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind,*  
but a little light litotes keeps 'em close and closer:  
they *are* not here, they are *not* here, they aren't *here*, in the  
*not here*:  
the absent, 'absent friends' tangibly making their absence  
felt.  
They are almost here, at the shoulders and elbows of those  
who aren't absent yet.  
Look. See? See them in the blur

of the reflection in the kitchen window – in the *not here*.  
Their underworld grey faces fish-eye out of the fish-tank  
dank dark:

the unnumbered hordes of centaurs, popes, poets, harpies  
and the minatory  
of memory, half-unwrapped mummies, leeches.

They too cram to the table; they too crumb the carpet;  
they too spill wine and break crockery; they too foul your  
toilet,  
hooting, screeching, belching; shades misbehave.

Laughter cracks the looking-glass. In fracture, the present is  
rippled by the future;

new year bells muffled, a single room, warm night  
shapes,  
a slim book, watching mother and child, prose sotto  
voce; and days:  
two walk, three walk, four walk.

I am not sad for the past absent, they are happy enough  
damned and past absent.  
The future imperfectly shimmers.  
I am sad that the future absent are not here, yet.

**What God Said To Me On Cross Fell  
(and everything I didn't hear)**

And I did stop to listen, whilst out walking, by the cross  
against the sky.  
And the fell was empty. And I did try to hear. Even the  
radar turned to hear.

And God (may have) said: I AM  
THE DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO POINTS. I AM  
THE INFINITE BETWEEN TWO POINTS.

The radar turns. Maybe it has noticed God, up on a cloud.  
Maybe,  
it has an omnipotence of its own.

I, however, am man satellite. Mute. Turning  
the puny balls of my eyes to outstare the sun,  
tilting on my axis to the heat's voice,  
daisy to the day's eye, my  
skin coaxing the wind, my ears desperate to eavesdrop  
something. I'm alert to the inaudible  
progress of aeroplanes across my awareness

knowing my x, my y, and my z  
in radar space time, here, here and now. But I don't know  
what inexorable progression of calculations  
turn matter into ropes of data; data into logic;  
logic into is; is into the plain logic of a descending plane  
across the Atlantic.

The radar turns, bored. Is still, attentive. Is waiting for some  
un-god or ungodly thing.  
Knowing, co-ordinating. There is  
a blanket of coverage. It waits. It waits.  
Patient as Christ, it waits  
for a second deviation. Because

... *if* the radar ever twitched like a cat's ear ...  
... *if* the coiled loops of synapses suddenly had a signal to  
relay  
... *if* the network *heard* something  
... *if* the network heard *something*

the unforeseen. The barely possible. An unpronounceable  
incalculable. An unknowable known unknown, y'know?  
A plot in the unplotable points of a plane's journey to zero.  
A spider work of newly prefixed, new binaries; pre-, post-

... if there was  
something in the distance.

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