

**MARJORIE WELSH  
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CAMBRIDGE READING SERIES  
IAN PATTERSON**

# MARJORIE WELISH

from *In the Futurity Lounge*

## WANTED:

Zurich at the Cabaret Voltaire on 5 February 1916

vs

Dada emerged through the antics of multi-lingual bourgeoisie from Eastern Europe who acted on their prerogative as cosmopolites frustrated in their attempt to assimilate into the dominant culture.

Dada began and ended at the Cabaret Voltaire on 5 February 1916. It began and was begun by me at the Cabaret Voltaire on 5 February 1916. Dada began whenever and whenever it liked but Dadaism began FOR EXPORT ONLY.

vs

Dada emerged in fits and starts in dialectical dialect and in trespass of Symbolist property ever more plastic vocables careening from root to ferment in fermented love of ridicule also broke rule to cancel family contract and was exiled exiled himself then to be his own *puer aeternis*. What “not to do next” she conjectured of him befitted transit.

START erupted.

vs

Break-up of ice then way of life habitually ecstatic. Vehement symposium and or riot-provoking front page stress outflanked by the Left.

Wasted in the provinces Dada remained hearsay until witnessed internationally on 5 February 1916 at the Cabaret Voltaire.

vs

Dada stirred idiosyncratically. Patently never finished emitter of filibuster and backspaces cascading through the loophole provided by the stage grabbed the joke belatedly some say folklore Breton did say translating “to be loved by another.”

Dada “was officially christened” on 5 February 1916.

vs

Yes but.

Everyone knows the line traveling through the lie and this is it: a point the line is alive and this lie is a point—the point. The point of it all is 5 February 1916.

vs

The 6 o’clock news is not the point it is a pompom bluff and hedge a pep talk to become knowledge retroactively.

“NATURE KNOWS NO FORM AND NO CONCEPTS”

vs

“NATURE KNOWS NO FORM AND NO CONCEPTS IS ITSELF A CONCEPT”

In the Beginning was Dada!

vs

Becoming aberrant may have reached a flash point here and here alternatively might have had here coercively not to mention here and there and May 1915 in diaspora.

You you yo yo you you yo yo —OR ELSE!

vs

Fright wig yourself!

## ON MARJORIE WELISH

Language begins as a set of frames, of cases that may be so if such framing were the case. Proceeding upon the givenness of attention: each index consorts with a group-interest: we move from minimum fact to its exploitation. Plausibility may have been management of potential accordance with counterfactual futurity, but, then again, what if only at the demise of futurity did the cases ascend to the needs of other states of affairs? Betweenness cannot only be the idealized status of pulsating threshold; for, as an aesthetic diagram, its contemplation creates the potential for a single state solidity. These autonomous tracts do not synthesize in gleeful imperial landscape absorption, but comprise relief-stages of reflection and non-reflection upon architectures of the curious. Such mirror-play appears to be repetition, and yet the topography questions any conventional relation between the words and their order; although it is as it is, it might well or could well have been achieved in a different set; the corrupt borders of cognition are coordinates for plastic reminders of feeling borders. Games arise out of necessary distinctions about the conditional intensity of the 'contemplative elevator'. To see representation and medium as operative within the same set of conditions, and to recede voice into characterisation: is this co-preservation of word and concept a myth-making technology? Or is it rather a simulation of the properties of assertability and belief? Rhetoric won't bypass its responsibility to the visual elements of sound. Inscription does not collapse into ephemera, it can but won't be a target idea for market-coaxing. Thought's morphology predicates a set of new order-conditions for the line, page and their dispersion into and through coherent models. If not shape, then how process. Or, rather, if the conservation of logic asserts a plane of disguise over rumination, how will the object's scale be represented?

— RD

# IAN PATTERSON

## OVER AGAIN

An iron window bar, no, look—  
    a scrolled handle that came apart, undone,  
while the high valley beyond  
    ascended like a picture book.

That morning, going in with a feeling  
    of longing, something flashed back from glasses,  
a movement beyond the grasses,  
    and high up, two kites wheeling

Everything stood there then on some account.  
    The occasion appeared like a breaking story  
pored over in the early morning,  
    as bemused cries swirl in the air and mount

like wasps as officials in dark glasses  
    and special jackets pace the debris  
of walls severed flush from the streets  
    just after an earthquake passes.

The phantoms turn away their faces.  
    brimming light, masks of flesh,  
the window off its hinges, fresh  
    angles everywhere, revealing sharp new spaces.

Don't breathe this stuff in, don't try  
    to acknowledge a broken chair—  
the remote house still stands there,  
    abashed under the steep blue sky.

*from* IRON LETTERS

I

Utter received  
& savage verse  
streaming in  
once written  
told as much  
as ever breathed  
I was in the sea  
but will be too  
much more than life  
the greatest anxiety  
quite in itself  
in letters  
nor desire no  
phrases nearer  
than it show any  
balance in  
your hands  
writing neglect  
the flames I have  
no claims to be  
prose not yet finished  
as you meditate  
sheets of a life  
and afterwards  
tell my remaining rags

VII

No harm done to know you  
laugh alone and act from any tight  
rounds on the death of my fee  
at burning matters and bones  
of foggy morning with violets  
two or three very gladly sent you  
and many trials and conclusions  
which perhaps you know better  
as a certain solace in small writing  
more quietly swept down  
with part of mankind  
with funds down under my days  
about to begin with youth, beauty  
and the paper diamonds reproached  
like war, my friendship arrested  
and deceived for the liberties in my land!  
Does this deserve the name who is torn  
in such a moment I have lived  
for you with the thought of this hardly  
eloquent and unalterable portal?

## Reading “distending” in Ian Patterson’s ‘After Breakfast’ after breakfast<sup>1</sup>

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION CONCERNING POEMS WRITTEN IN THE TIME DIRECTLY FOLLOWING THE FIRST MEAL OF THE DAY. SUGGESTIONS TO LGMBK2@ etc... Unusual, to find myself concerned with taxonomy. Neither of us had woken up as insects-- I thought we were safe. But the fact that this isn't an *au bade*, or its opposite, or some thirty-page meditation (*Longtemps...*) on swinging your legs round, seems important. Denise Riley has a line “Wherever you are be somewhere else”. Ian Patterson’s poem protests differently: ‘Somewhere else in the time spectrum/ sweet morning drips from the line’ because it knows we are already too late. A pairing like ‘sweet morning’ has been picked out, worn, washed and hung out to dry by William Wordsworth (‘Poems on the Naming of Places’), John Clare (‘Come beautiful maiden while autumn delays...’), D.G. Rossetti (*Il Losario*), John Keble (Guardian Angels), A.C. Swinburne (*passim*), Emily Dickinson (‘XX FOLLOWING’) (only two of these being familiar with laundry, probably) along with 91 other instant hits, whatever you might have on your yogurt. Tense and sense are neither here nor there and writing poetry has become a case of what will or will not wash. Historicity rounds on impossibility:

--‘So, what shall we do today?’

--‘Oh maybe some theory, or we could plant out the news. I’ve got to call and pick up Jameson as 3.30.’

--‘Ah yes, I forgot about him’ [looks shifty]

--‘Yes. [a pause] I was thinking that perhaps I might announce a kind of poetry which will not theorise, but would humbly gather harp and past songs and war and all of jazz into curious alignments, a bit like synthetic cubism, at precise angles, in order to speak across and through it?’

The poem is constructed *apo koinou* and moves from the world to not getting it, to not getting it right— this being spoken through ‘tense teeth’. This turn I could not remember, so improvised, I think, “grim sense”, a poor substitution. Back in the ULRR, the poem is exactly right: ‘knowing that we should fight for what we love not are/ twenty years since Frank O’Hara died’. Here’s morality, by which I mean-- not the impress of ONE-- but an older sense of duty. --‘...it is simply good/ that after-images that change or remain/ in the night or the day should keep flowing/ and never be the same twice’. There is a great deal of quiet heroism involved here, to know and to have read all this and yet to try to speak across regarding.

Perhaps it is this weight which makes me nervous, because I tripped and read ‘des[t]ending’ for ‘descending’ halfway down the fourth stanza:

i.e. the poem, which is the opposite  
of an ark but sings at your gait  
against the iridescent pages of modernism  
descending a staircase or starting a car  
forwards in the garage of the twentieth century  
which looks unlikely but is the only way out

Looking back for something to blame, I discover ‘iridescent’ (brave!) pre-empting ‘descending’, the [I] which is the main thrust of “modernism” swaying me towards ‘dis’, which subsequently got all voiceless, retroflexively stopping at [t]: “distending a staircase”. Some footwork. Patterson has the clarity of a Graham (not Jorie), by which I recognise the combination of difficulty without obfuscation. Which is why it made me angry to discover that the verb ‘distend’, ‘to stretch or extend beyond measure; to stretch, to draw out of joint, to rack to stretch out any hollow thing, so as to enlarge its surface and capacity; to swell out or enlarge by pressure from within, as a bladder or an orifice with elastic sides [!]’ is classed as obsolete in the *OED*. It is still happening as recently as 1986: ‘Displaying colours like those of the rainbow, or those reflected from soap-bubbles and the like; glittering or flashing with colours which change according to the position from which they are viewed’. If I can extract a manifesto from this definition of ‘iridescence’, then *The Glass Bell* (Barque, 2009) is its achievement. Which I haven’t EVEN mentioned yet, but yes will go and read again this afternoon. All quite consequential, really-- as I attempted to explain to you after breakfast. Rarely has anyone thought about modernism like this more.

— LK

1. Ian Patterson, ‘After Breakfast’, in *Time To get Here: Selected Poems 1969-2002* (Salt, 2003) p. 76.

# CRS2ЯDCRS2ЯDCRS

As Judith E. Wilson Fellow in Poetry for 2005, **MARJORIE WELISH** worked on a manuscript that became *Isle of the Signatories* (2008). Since then she has spent much time on a project of a different kind. Launched in March 2011 is 'Before, During and After', an exhibition at the Denison University Museum, Ohio, comprised of the artist's book *Oaths? Questions?* (2009), along with artworks from which the book derives—particularly Welish's painting *High Valley 19*, 1983–84—together with a series of works on paper and several new diagrammatic paintings inspired in turn by it. Welish has recently completed Fulbright Senior Specialist Fellowships teaching at the University of Frankfurt and at Edinburgh College of Art. This past summer she was an artist-in-residence at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago to work toward an exhibition at Inverleith House, Edinburgh, in 2011. Her writing on art has appeared in *Art in America*, *Art Monthly*, *Bomb*, *Partisan Review*, *Salmagundi*, and *Textual Practice*, as well as in the anthology *The Studio Reader* (2010). A collection of her art criticism is entitled *Signifying Art: Essays on Art after 1960* (1999). *Of the Diagram: The Work of Marjorie Welish* (2003) consists of papers given at a conference on her writing and art at the University of Pennsylvania. As part of her CRS reading, Welish read Joshua Clover.

**IAN PATTERSON** is a Fellow of Queens' College, where he teaches English. Long ago he edited the little magazines *Ching/The Well*, *The Curiously Strong* (following on from Fred Buck) and *Greedy Shark* (with Barry MacSweeney). He has published ten books of poetry (including two collaborations with Nick Totton and Martin Thom), most recently *Time to Get Here: Selected Poems 1969-2002* (Salt, 2003) and *The Glass Bell* (Barque, 2009). He has translated widely from French, including Proust's *Finding Time Again* (Penguin, 2004). His most recent prose book is *Guernica and Total War* (Profile, 2007). As part of his CRS reading, Patterson read George Barker and Andrew Crozier.

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