

# Chapter 1

1

But what else is left  
to halt this falling  
unprophesied night?

2

a shout

3

There's no Hell on earth  
like that we give each other  
for nothing have this poem

4

Total recall  
the date the year  
and other related things like  
relationships  
rings of age  
for things that don't grow on trees  
include happiness  
*cracked*  
*like a glass framed photo*  
and sing along  
*with tomb swinging*

I will tell you the whole truth, Trojan King, whatever may  
 become of it, he said, and I won't deny my Peloponnesian roots.  
 That's the first point. For even if Fate has left Sinon  
 a broken man, she shall not, with all her cruelty, make me practise  
 deceit. Perhaps some word got into your ears of Palamedes.  
 He was Belus's son, Palamedes, he was famous to the stars.  
 With a false charge of treason, a snake's allegation, and only  
     because  
 he'd once opposed their war, the Greeks struck him down  
 for death; but now they mourn his absence from this light.  
 He was the man to whom my impoverished father sent me  
 from my earliest years, to act as his companion-in-arms against you  
 to come fight here. While reigning safely, he stood tall in  
     committees  
 of the kings - as did I - earning their respect and our power.  
 But when Palamedes was struck by the envy of that two-face  
     (believe me,  
 I know) Ulysses, and sank down from the world above  
 I drowned my days out, in broken spirits, in shadows, in grief  
 at the destruction of my innocent friend, but raging inside.  
 And mad as I was I could not hold it in; I swore  
 that if I ever returned to our Achaean homeland, at the first  
 opportunity, and in the midst of our victory, I would  
 avenge him; and so I targeted their hatred upon me.  
 From that moment, I date the beginning of my fall; Ulysses  
 now began to terrify me with accusations of the unspeakable.  
 He started to spread his lying tongues about me in the crowd,  
 laid traps for me, sowed teeth against me, plotted with skill  
 relentlessly and then, with Calchas the priest in his pay -  
 But why am I telling you this wretched and pointless tale?  
 Why stop time? If you think that Greeks are all the same  
 the sound of Sinon's name alone will suffice; execute him right now.  
 That's what Ulysses would want, the Greek leaders would even pay  
 to see me gone.

*Virgil, Aeneid II*

6

They hew us from sex, we're born, we survive  
put out an eye, they transplant us, we survive  
roots pushing their way through the soul into soil

Leaf-shading we provide our own shade  
till cut down to tables and chairs, seeming  
semblances of life, stay alive

even onto this paper, this white  
this skin's sharp feeling wooden flesh  
life sits on us, like ink.

7

to personify the head you need a face  
feet to do legs and shanks toes

each door is a lock, each key a prison  
friendship is terrifying because it's you utterly

I get up and dress to visit (grave, my friend)  
no worse than a tree that grows, breaks, breathes

8

Some scissors, sticks and stones  
make a house  
it's a basket  
they put love in  
these fish swim from my fingers  
from your toes  
the miracle is that we ever thought it was finite

9

By force of its stare  
face full-sail  
to the journey of dead flowers  
to Eskimo kisses

10

Smoking one final cigarette  
for the morgue, for my sins  
a pack of twenty  
brighter than death  
a bunch of twenty flowers  
a bundle of twenty sunsets  
an incandescent torchlight  
twenty variants thereof  
a burning in the furnace  
my limbs in fire  
I forget about death  
I see that cigarette therapy  
has acquainted your poetry  
with the colour red  
said the stethoscope doctor  
Stop sucking on that syringe  
give me your hand  
put your tongue on the match  
your motor skills seem fine  
will I give up?

11

When to the sessions of sweet silent  
sessions of sweet silent sessions  
of sweet silent thought things past



## Chapter 7

1      *Lucia di Maribyrnong*

Father let me leave this house  
sings/sighs the daughter from her fortress,  
her eyes on the workman here to fence her in.

Audience bored, chatter, twitter, fat man sleeps  
The opera's not begun till the fat man sleeps to the end.  
Prima donna glares, dagger in hand, assumes the stage.

Second act – the tenor grieves his mother –  
Third act – the daughter kills her husband –  
*Ohime!, Orrore!* – on the night of their wedding

this vow-breaking wedding, a rent in the fabric  
of heaven, the curtains all falling around,  
breast-beating and screaming out tears, as

six voices in synchrony  
six reactions to the scene  
six lines take to the ceiling  
a geometry of passion  
a pin-point

2     *Mr Ruddock's speechwriter (Philippic I)*

The asylum in a desert swallows the phrase, a throat  
a drain with birds circling, a gate

it's hard to think you're alive when there's nothing but blank  
pages inside the pick lock of these eyes cut

poor man, didn't *conceive* those children nine months  
in the public mouth, hanging off his nipples, his nose

I mass produce myself in a moment  
I stamp me through myself.

That took a while,  
to hold it in – that, on the shelf

is my speech  
it tried to fly away, so I learned it

(and you're the same)  
gulp

\* *prayer*

A poem he never wrote reads to itself the lines on her face  
the woman who returned from the ocean which sank her husband  
please, let them take some words as they go (lover, child)  
don't die without saying our names (brother, friend, sister, another  
friend)

for ever – it's just a moment to God  
please, let them take some words as they go  
for ever – it's just a moment

The nightmare at hand is anaesthetised, but so is blood.  
The initial letter of a medieval page paints a scribe:

iconic knife of trade in the left, and quill sharpened  
to pick up dragonsblood in the right

hand (you mix it in to the sap of any shrub).  
A jar contains brazilwood, for which red-ink-

bearing-trees the nation was named, far in the future  
when books were already the crops of paper

unlike Folio 27695h,  
in the British Library, which once had eyes and ate.

Once the skin of sheep  
or calf, also pig, squirrel and hare, even deer

was stripped from the animal and washed in clear  
cold running water one day and night, and began to rot,

the hair fell out and their  
skins were scraped to parchment on a beam,

heads cut off, and then hides folded  
from A3 to B4, always rectangular, because so

was its exemplar  
- shorn of legs - and we

still today read books with rectangular pages.  
Only we illustrate the letters in our sleep.

4      *for a prime minister (Philippic II)*

and the case now being tried  
is one of suicide who did it  
who killed you from inside  
your own throat  
they laid carpet over the depression  
and walled the walls with love  
s-bend dweller  
s for suck harder  
I feel you uptight, a succession  
of dying deaths, of days  
when your face falls in  
you do all you can  
to hold up your eyes, your nose, your skin.

5

Depression  
means you're on the edge  
of a pleasure  
you don't want  
to surrender because  
it will kill you  
sing the dishes  
as I wash them clean

6

There's more dead people in this world  
than living  
for the dead once dead stay dead  
for the living once dead disappear

7

You play out death  
in every breath  
you take  
but where  
are you taking them from

is a logical proposition  
followed by a question  
that's a question  
for someone  
deader than I

8

Don't even try to ask your Gods – it's not ours to know –  
what bounds they've set upon us, Leuconoe. Also:  
get rid of your Babylon horoscopes. Whatever happens  
things are better that way. And know this.  
Whether Jupiter has many more winters in our jar  
or if the Adriatic squall now breaking on the soft  
volcanic rocks of this shore breathes our last – let the wine  
breathe, cut your hopes to moments.  
Since I wrote this, Envy and Time have shrunk away.  
Rip today from the paper. Don't ever trust what's yet to come.

*Horace, Odes I*

9

A big pond in a small fish  
Look on my works, ye miserable, and repair  
*J. Kennett, politician (Philippic III)*

Two men, their compelling flesh, close-pressed and driving hard. And the fascist Judge kisses, fucks and is fucked by the oldest of the boys, in all the equality of lust now a man, on top, perhaps in love, and certainly desiring to pleasure the source of law by coming inside it: in *Salo*. For *Salo* is a work of freedom and love: a repressed dream.

A voice off-screen lovingly recites *Canto IXC* over the following and final scene while the Judge, outside now, and in day proceeds to cut out the eyeballs of his victims, to drip blood on their alabaster flesh slowly, and not block his ears to their extreme cries of pain beyond the reach of mercy, staining each line of Pound's text with dream as memory sees through the poem, the torture, the dark night fuck in the previous scene, as children die, as credits roll.

## II

What would happen if you breathed?  
 a hidden lung a word swallowed  
 a bird in the throat got your tongue  
 for one of its young  
 a look of divorce in your eyes