This Transmission

Michael McNamara
This Transmission
I'm contemplating how to send an email via the bath plug hole
in the ether, in cyberspace,
in the dirty water.
This transmission may virtually bind
the psyche and dark sparse beards of the Chinese,
the Spanish Mexicans, the Native Americans, Siberians and Inuit.
It gurgles a message.
There are things much worse than death. Than loss. This pseudo bond
of life and gain.
Forgiveness.
Some things were written for
reconciliation.
'It's more about what she represented than who she actually was'
he said.
'Was that Yoko, Cleopatra or The Magdalene?' I asked.
Sometimes, around 3.28am
it gets so lonely.
That's the price we pay
for days unseen.
You know what I mean.
Is it about honesty or effect?
Your life?
What is it— what is it you seek?
What is it— what is it you need?
FROM PRUSSIA WITH LOVE

Look out on the horizon
from your castles built on sand
see me coming with my swing coat
to your bleak and barren land,

I'm your Alpha, your Omega,
blood and faeces on my hand
I'm your Cosa Nostra, barracuda
past and future man.

From Prussia with love,
that old Teutonic rendezvous.
A hologram above
genteel but brusquely true.

Black cross to eagle pierced for scorn,
an emotive tourniquettish blue.
Monkshood, an organic oath sworn,
spoken, written, cursed, twice bitten anew.

Atonal blessing
hums in aconite slumber,
cryptic caressing
some dumb archimandrite number.
UNRUINED

In the semi darkness our vision becomes doglike.
Colourless. But nothing is moving.
No shadowy figures searching for us.

I think the greyness was our undoing.
I always knew, instinctually, that it wouldn't suit me--
cereal, paracetemol and rubbing alcohol.

Down on the lowland the eco system groaned,
'Here comes man again', and a girl sails at midnight,
gently adrift upon the ebb and flow of a soft moon's vanishing tide.
NOW

Once I was beautiful
A rose among thorns,
A pale Asian with African hair,
That’s me posing for Modigliani.
That’s me with Jacob Boehme.
That’s me behind The Maid of Orleans.
In the sea, in the endless sea,
Dead from typhoid, murdered by Empires or Spanish Flu, the ravages of war, consumption.
Do you see me? Worshipping the Greek Gods, the Norse Gods,
Praying to The Son Of Man?
I have knelt in all their holy places.
Sing me any hymn in any tongue;
I know them all.
I am The Boer, The Troubadour, The Carthaginian, A Flower Girl, Soul Queen Of Harlem.
Come, comb my hair with scented seashells, fill me with sweetcorn and rainbow trout. Bless this Now.
The waves tear down temples and cover cities and the sea remembers all.
I am grateful to live for this one perfect moment.
For I stood with Alexander when he asked,
’If the past runs dark with sorrow
That strikes blind the hour’s watchman,
How will we see tomorrow
If it’s night where the days have ran?’
And though there are those unawakened
Whose world is yet lived in narrow streets
With doors marked ‘them’ and ‘me’,
They too, in time, will know
The still and endless sea.
ANOTHER MAN’S FACE

I will steal another man’s face
and speak with my mouth his truth.
Unkissed lips and unkempt hair,
cursed to bear the sand of two deserts,
bewitched and wandering
the wastelands of an unlived life.
THOUGH

People who drank Turkish coffee with ginger,
who smoked Gitane cigarettes
(though monks will douse themselves in flame)
and watched the late night show alone
wearing cravats and chewing liquorice
(though men kill men in some god’s name)
or those who prayed to the moon and sang to the dawn,
adding milk and egg to their mashed potato
(though poets starve at the rich man’s gate)
and walked in the springtime through southern fields
of maize and corn with static hair aglow.
(and sisters of mercy are drowned in a black fugue state).
Who had their own time,
who their own tale would tell.
Unchanged. All changed.
Time will tell.
ST. PETERSBURG DECEMBER 1916

Going out into the field
does not mean
going out into the field.
Nothing is as it seems.
At the Hotel Astoria there is still the whiff
of plot and subterfuge.
Lost files like gulls tossed upon the storm
of shared misgivings. Bells
tolling chords unfathomed,
lie drowned beneath the Nevka River.

Your work here will not be affected.

Each touch yet adds a tiny dab of colour
to the Tsarina’s palette.
Welcome to this Palace Of Ice
far from Siberian heavens;
neither of which exist.
In St. Petersburg the whisperers
have scrubbed the pattern from the carpet.
You sail in a different direction,
beneath those same fantastic constellations.
The boat is not missed.

Your work here will not be affected.
THE HOTEL OF THOUGHTS

Shot him right in the amygdala
At the hotel of thoughts
That astronaut of inner space
A citrusless bitch
A scurvy dog.
A thin woman with cracked cigarette lips
And tattoos is singing.
And I hear a wonderful endlessness in your breathing.
Who are you in your black diesel proof shoes
Smelling of pipe tobacco?
The only movement is the curtains.
You will not awaken.
The water burns our hands yet still we splash it on to our faces.
I can taste a distant star in your kisses.
AND THE WINDOWS ARE SUCH

And the windows are such
that the daylight streaming through
stipples in filtered beams the image of a face
that once lit up the gloom.
In stairways built of unshared hours
and hallways cold as stone,
passages led us by untouched moments
to a bleak and empty room.

Love, that hopeful filament,
has flared and fizzed but for a time.
Spring has came late or early
and the Guelder rose tree,
once cherished,
blooms unnoticed.
You, you of unfathomable nature;
you never sang for me.

Ongoing loss without words. No regret.
Let us be done now with the tears that two must cry,
remembering that those who have never truly met –
should never have to say goodbye.
CRAB APPLE JACK

Long ago
When splint pricked night closed softly
On the mirror of my days,
Foreskin flint the dark eyed strangers filed
To grasp the rasping pirouette and snare with semen breath
Tales told behind the licking posts
Lily kissed by greenwood
To bud in springs no more.
Now
Their jagged patterns slip to skip the nettle fields,
Spry dandelion clocks of raven hours passed
Dance young once more
From ancient glory’s hole
Unnetted
By the headless hands of reckoned time.

Returned,
Each denim scabbed companion,
Borstal spot bulimics
Sucking sweetmeats from the fatted tongue
Drank straw dogged through skin
The split milk spits unleavened leaf,
Foamed in the fonted bray of the vessel’s empty cleft-
This weakened tomb of stippled oral dusts.

The cloven swines’ devoured pearls
Are vomited as truths
On the learneds’ word wise book.

Uptempo beats are ringing rosy,
Knelled on sacred uptown’s pulse;
A legacy swayed on sub-wayed streets.
Cubits gauged the savage span of

My banshee basket
Scaled with the fishing bread’s leafy head of writhing tale.
The gypsum palate, leviathan’s bane
Grained to chalk the coursed red throat,
A silken johnny on a serpentine tone.
Rosary truths plunge obscure untruths for gnostic lines
Imbibed before the legend of the rag torn tooth’s
Crushed and crippled mouth.

Time and the timeless ruin
Bleach black the bed blessed fable
That ripple bitter cry
(a secret whispered down from the darkling druid cloud)
Runs snakey backed spooling reels that twist froth cobble cogs
On filmed to fade forevers.
The tapering sails of spewing trades
Are turned untamed
To a crumbling essene sky.

Breath spayed curses cut from silenced songs
Behind the hammer drumbeat, eared and stilled.
These blind, unuttered prayers
From batted visions of the disc slim death
Sighed to thighs’ desired rhythm
Or the codpiece womb
Gripped in blood and drenched
Through the slow slap swollen rite,
Spring from the pismire path,
Scarf the tea-leaf milky way
To lap the age chipped stars and knock reborn
Upon the bonehenged temples of the skull.

The man fleshe d universe stagnates the heart’s heard earth
(we form red herring pools in the hollow of our chest).

The shards of the death browed dream.

Here, raised on rhyme’s unreason
The shadowed shylocks of my youth,
The scars unborne in wristed brow or weeping side
Recall the juggling porno smiles,
The fatal art of the false dark lash,
Biro sketched or etched in pain,
Lips snubbed and blackened
By the tender bruise of love.

And still
Those preying hands applaud-
Dark eyed seekers
Talmud and torah’s esoteric tangleweed
Tied by the knotted truths of an unsaved savior.
Worshipping the wounding craft re-crowns Crab Apple Jack
High upon that tinsel christ crossed tree.
THE WINTER PALACE

Strange
crooked
birds
fly
above
The
Winter
Palace.
In the
snow
no
footprints.
REBIRTH

Soft as silence, god’s pale ghost
treads like musk.
Soundless. Heavy drapes undrawn. Distant.
The farthest point on a forlorn flat earth.
Hunched and resigned, fingers thrum,
thread and weave. Thrive. Wed
lifelines, births and deaths and rebirths
cast and recast in a single stitch.
None, no-one missed.
I less. Unblind. A tallowed rope of smoke
intertwined with long binding prayers.
Tears of disappointment powdered dry,
 sprinkled gently
with the scented dust of unlit stars.
Watchful in the parlour of days,
the stooped sole keeper of the endless night.
THE SAME UNVEILING
(The pleasures we get)

You who come
from another world,
another mindset-
how can I know you?
(The ways that we live).
I have no language
of your coast, but know
that I, like you, will walk toward
the same unveiling.
(The days we forget).
In the end, each picture
that emerges is the portrait
of a man, and the only mystery, is why
we ever thought there was a mystery.
(The treasures we give).

Two-breaths-of-non-thought
surpasses
twentyfourhoursofastreamofconsciousness.

That silent wise man
sat at a separate table
I see him yet.
NO ONE CAN FOLLOW ME

I am the last of The Great Magicians,
I smoke imaginary golden cigarettes
and disappear into this velvet maroon settee.
No one can follow me.

My eyes are the soulful doors
through which the world can whisper,
my syncopated hands will rhythmically reappear
empty but for salient fear.

There is a life behind the walls
and walls around this life.
Sackcloth and penance have this appeal:--
Eternity is ours but never theirs to steal.

Di-analysis disturbulences the head,
drives the seeker’s mind insane,
Hebrew texts, old tradition
keeps on depriving tutored fools of any real volition.

Ah, reach beyond me, Lilah child,
my Samson mane clipped short,
flash fly dark eyes at some other Nazarite,
oscillating Pictish whorls alone are my delight.

Welcome to the circus where
the ringmaster’s killed by the clowns
( he was no digi-shufflemix Lazarus
but found in the dying to be just like us.)

I am the last of The Great Magicians,
I am the sackclothed Samsonic clown,
whisperated, he-brewed, robbered, enwalled,
unsane, inrich-- long gone when called.
ALL OUR MIRRORS

All our mirrors
Have been smeared
By medicine men
Masquerading as
Looking glass engineers.
WHERE THE DEED MEN ARE STILLED

Where the deed men are stilled
in sleeves of stars
crows caw a cold dawn,
irises of rain twinkle on naked branches
catching a rising light.
Eyes filled with tears reflecting sorrow.
Walk this way between the cold earth
and flowers living, dying, dead.
A winter sun is
casting plum red dancing shadows
upon this,
a day never seen.

Caressed by the know woman,
beauty banged.
The silver clawed rook in its gilded cage
stares with one sharp emerald eye.
A mountain range
of velvet curtains, drapes and folds,
carpets, handkerchiefs, scarves and cloths.
In her pocket a precious stone
a bead from a faraway future,
perfumed and spiced like this,
an hour
that has never been.
DERACINATED

Deracinated.
Lost.
Facing
winding
snowdrift routes.
Lost.
Chasing
blinding
spendthrift pursuits.

Yet,
there without presence,
those of prescience,
numinous shakers,
nous decimators...

whisper voiceless,
whispered silence,
whisper still
to me
HINTERLAND

Man outside in the dark.

She looked the same age as her mother.

Spider in the sink.

You remind me of no one.

People who shouldn't be in prison.

A phone call and the night is ended.

Dark eyes and a swallow's nest.

It's not true.

On the top of the stairs.
IRELAND 2016

Rebut chime tapa brave...
your hotel wifi code for today.
Glendalough’s cloutie tree marks St.Kevin’s wishing pool.
Two coins for my children; the twin baby girls in the graveyard.
Avoca wool mills. (Our day of silence). Coffee ginger cake.
Incense and the blood of Christ’s dark antithesis is
the smell of stale cigar smoke and blood
on the toilet seat at the Catholic church.
Tir na nog playing in Carlow.
(I’m a serial killer of time).
Creedence playing Have You Ever Seen The Rain
as we buy an umbrella in Dublin.
Soup and soda bread in Sheehan’s on Chatham Street
and there’s a Caravaggio on display,
somewhere beyond the Easter Rising memorabilia.
(We are clever people
handicapped by stupidity).
Tripping on the tourist train,
Castle Express, Kilkenny.
'It's A Long Long Way From Clare To Here.'
(Are you my kryptonite?)
Pudding Lane and Butter Slip.
A watchtower. A boy selling lemonade on the side of the road.
Enniscorthy, Arklow. Behind the Wicklow mountains.
A Taste Of Heaven?
We must attempt to bypass this impasse;
go back to where you came from,
come back to where you came from.
UP ON THE 12TH FLOOR

Up on the 12th floor
in squalor,
foreign men with tattooed
faces are sleeping.
Mother, I call you
but you do not answer.
BEYOND BARTHOLOMEW

I see
far beyond Bartholomew’s blind eye –
sight has no meaning
and bricks, like boundaries,
are mere illusion.

The eternal Now is never.
Non attachment clings.
Saviour, serpent, stone,
the sum of all things–
the same. Nothing.

No weeping, no puerile whispers.
The concealed priestess revealed
as an unconfirmed rumour,
without effigy, statue
sacred book or rigid
hands to pray.
BEFORE THE DAYS

Before the days of Public Houses
I built a home for fish
down in the marshes
and warmed the water
and fed them bubbles.
In the days when every chimney smoked
I found a corner in the ruins
and made a crumbling cosy parlour
far from the mariners’
cold black bay.
REDLILAC DREAM
(after Paul Celan)

Kiss me,
arabesque,
I am the willow weeping
tears for your tenderness,
tears for their forgiveness.
We cannot say goodbye,
you nor I. You must not say
'I will set you
free.'
In the
redlilac
field I carried him,
a heavy weight,
my son, my blood, my bone.
The players of games played on.
I saw you, distant, young, your
graveyard smile on milky black
lips.
If the road leads only to
the place of death
how can I bear him
long?
There are flowers growing in the prison;
today the sun shines,
you and I walk
free.
IN THE ASSEMBLY OF GODS

In the Assembly of Gods
the Gnostic demiurge
fits pieces together.
A pattern will emerge.

Like
the honey bee
fallen,
laden down with
pollen,
dying on the pavement
its amber moment spent.

A frozen tree.
Imagination.
Reality.
YOU CAN ONLY SEE SEEN

You can only see seen
Know known
Show shown,
To be becomes been.
And the seeker is unsought
The loser lost
The winner has never really won.
Alienists became psychiatrists,
Water that is boiling
Was once cold.
'Sprich auch du',
It's the complexity
Of living that kills us.
THE WORD

Things that move like living things
but are not alive. Do you know them?
Laughter and effervescent voices

that burble greetings from ambitious rivers.
Do you hear them?
Stones with memories of stars and moons,

formed before this spinning world was spun:
the first corn, reptilian eye, birdsong.
Slumbering mountains lazily tending

valleys of geese and strange painted faces.
The sun dried emigrant pebble missing the far away lake.
The appled thorn. The stippled dragonfly.

Listen with the ear of leaf and fire and sky;
in the beginning was the word
and with that word came separation.
DENIAL (GOLDEN HOUSE)

I don't want to teach etiquette in a listed public school
(I won't be found a low class fool),
be a broken bottler on some old deserted train
or an aging actor soaked outside the faux theatre rain.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Mine is a golden house –
a splendid, golden house!
On Shit Street.

The pain in her ear has gone
since she done what she said she had done.
I won't look up so passers by can see
all those things the seasoned years have stripped away from me.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Mine is a golden house –
a splendid, golden house!
On Shit Street.

They scribble false obits for the suicide
yet they live inside car tyres, slide
through homes they've built of compressed bone,
but I have everything I need, to live at ease alone.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Mine is a golden house –
a splendid, golden house!
On Shit Street.
BENIGHTED LIGHTLESSNESS

The same pale winter light
filters through my window,
as it did for Pict, Jute and Dane,
those who made this island home,
listening with hound and furred kin
for the sound of wolf or enemy at the door.
The gathering signs of snow or storm
from a darkening wood.

Friday night fish fry in Wisconsin,
Friday night lights in Texas.
The machine holds neither malice
nor compassion,
no sense of power;
it simply does.

Here are your own tracks. A broken axle and a perpetual night.
Such darkness. Benighted lightlessness.
Dog chases birds in the garden.
Watches the tv.
Couple kissing on the screen.
It's all black and white.
Licks his chops, having no lips.
Avoids existential angst by licking his balls.
Never laughs.
Sniffs at a photograph.
Barks at a passing cat.
Sleeps soundly in his basket.
IN THE WHITE HOUSE OF THE SILENCE

In the white house of the silence
the soundless casablanca
the spinning house of blinding lights
the twisted house of mirrors
we talk through muted walls and
peer in vain through tear stained windows
and no one here can see us now or hear us
or be with us.
In this bleak inverted snow house
deserted, this no-show house
we wander without murmur
along corridors of fever
in the white house of the silence
the soundless Casablanca.
About the Author

Mike McNamara was born in Ireland but lives in South Wales, UK. He had his Selected Poems *Overhearing the Incoherent* published by Grevatt and Grevatt in 1997. His poetry has been published in *Acumen, Aji, Dream Catcher, Envoi, Eunoia Review, International Times, Ink Sweat & Tears, The Lyric, New Welsh Review, Orbis, Reach, Subterranean Blue, Tears in the Fence* and *The Pterodactyl’s Wing*. He is also a published songwriter.