

# The Parkland Mysteries

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Not *that* Parkland:

I composed this work, in several stages, with no knowledge at all of the Florida school outrage; it's unfortunate that American readers may initially interpret this title as bearing in some way on the US resonance of that word. Nothing in my text supports such a connection, and I hope that readers will quickly discard such a mistaken view. It was just unlucky that the English word for an enclosed tract of fields and woods became (had become) notorious in US news reports. The barely surreptitious territorial reference is to Yemen, reputedly the Queen of Sheba's ancient kingdom, now the site of a protracted and violent civil war.

This email from J. H. Prynne was a chastening message to receive. We had just begun reading his book *Parkland*, published in early 2020, one of the two dozen that would appear over the next two years. Having interviewed him four years earlier for *The Paris Review*, we were still in irregular correspondence, and Josh's mention prompted the clarification—strong enough, almost, to sound like a warning. It was September 2020, mid-high-pandemic, and we (Josh and Jeff, that is) had been buoying each other along by meeting weekly on Zoom to talk about some recent books of poems. Very well then, *Parkland* is not about Florida. We found ourselves drawn into it for other reasons, and since it is divided into sections of three or four pages, we fell into a rhythm of reading a section a week. The further in we got, though, the stranger Prynne's admonition came to feel. There seemed to be no limit to what this

book is about, no way, once you're in, to treat any reference, any association, as irrelevant. Any association—but one?

The clarification-slash-warning also seemed hypocritical. It wasn't just that the book had convinced us of its power to incorporate and order almost any context, any reference—although it had. Or that from the beginning particular lines seemed to confirm the terrible association—an epigraph from Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma* (1831) mentions “the innocence of childhood.” But that Prynne's poetry, from *Kitchen Poems* (1968) on, is invested in how words escape the intentions of their authors. Indeed, we assumed that the life of words, engrossing and ungovernable, is central to Prynne's poetic project—that the tension between collective usage and poetic patterning is what made his poems so powerful, deeply rooted in history and perpetually present and open to the future. Prynne himself has championed this potential in poetry: in a review of *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* (1982), a translation of a classical anthology of Chinese poetry, he discusses the retroactive influence of future usage, tracing how more recent poems in the anthology changed the meaning of earlier ones. Was Prynne's admonition a betrayal of his own project?

There was only one way to find out—no, surely many ways, and “finding out” exaggerates, or mischaracterizes, our accomplishment; but we did commit to what Prynne would call a practice, talking about each section for an hour or two, usually at midday on a Friday. One of us would make notes afterward and put them in an email, sent off to the other and also to Prynne, who commented from time to time. (It seemed only fair that if we were testing his authority, he could test ours.) He never set such a boundary again and would rarely interfere with our speculations. Most

often, he would encourage, while claiming not to have a key to his own poem. “It is extremely interesting, and rewarding, to follow your strategic unfolding of the *Parkland* mysteries,” he once wrote, giving us the title of this book. Our practice became a method, a way of reading with Prynne. Why not take advantage of an author's actual presence, the one opportunity that defines and distinguishes contemporary poetry? And so, beginning in September of 2020, and carrying on, with occasional interruptions and dilations, until the next April, we read from the first page to the last. After that first pass through the nineteen sections, we gathered all the emails and printed them out. In their raw form they told the story of an evolving, dialogic critical encounter, written not from the omniscient vantage of the reader who has got to the last page, but in real time and close to the ground—each linguistic event, as we encountered it, blocking our view of the pages ahead.

What follows, the heart of our study, has been refined by a couple of rounds of revision, and its original immediacy is inevitably colored by what we no longer do not know. But we have tried to keep faith with the original record of our speculative progress, with all of its false starts and blind alleys and abandoned and recovered and transmuted economies. *Parkland* is a book that benefits from this alternately self-indulgent and ascetic practice—for none of the Parklands we saw along the way was a mirage, exactly, nor are we certain that, having got to the end, that's where we arrived. Ultimately, our practice—slow, collaborative, recursive, revisionary—seemed an ideal way to read the book, and perhaps Prynne's poetry in general.

You, reader, may wish to open *Parkland*—you can order it from its publisher, Critical Documents—and follow along section by section. You may wish to read

to the end of that book first, and then enjoy watching us grope and stumble. You might even prefer to read our book as its own story, then decide whether you want to read *Parkland* at all. However you wish; for our part, we begin at the beginning.

## I.1

Part I, section 1. I am looking at it again now: twenty-one lines to a page, four pages of the book's fifty-seven, justified at both margins; prose. I am going to try to stay loyal to what we knew and when we knew it, the first time through, and I have our original letters to hand, and my memory of our conversations. But delimiting what we already knew is a problem right from the start. For example: how much of the plot (is there a plot?) did we infer, from allusions and generic cues, and when? How much did we see in this first section, and how much were we taught by reading on? We certainly didn't know what a complicated category plot would turn out to be. We were a little surprised to find anything story-like at all, given Prynne's characteristic displacement of narrative (and so many other) codes. But we glimpsed some basics, and now it is difficult to imagine going forward without them. So: there are three characters, the Queen of Sheba and her two sons, half-brothers, Tom and Peter. They are all introduced by the end of the second sentence, all named by the fifth. They are birds; in particular, hoopoes. They inhabit a pastoral space, which has aspects of a garden and of a court. (Parkland.) The boys are learning to sing, maybe also to paint, and their mother is teaching them. None of this is exactly a matter of exposition, but the circumstances dilate in a gently sketched back-and-forth: tentative questions, affectionate answers. This *dramatis personae* and what we think we know about mothering and teaching and singing offered us a way to organize the experience of reading. If these assumptions will not (did not) prove sufficient, neither will they be discarded. The book does not develop simply by correcting itself or its readers.

But I am getting ahead of us already. Let me go back to my original preconceptions. The epigraphs point us to the Biblical Queen of Sheba, and to Bellini's *Norma*, who pleads for the safety of her children as she goes to her death. Neither meant as much to me, though, as the pastoral setting. Pastoral is always about what you knew and when you knew it, an innocent space hung with fatal apples. I came to the book knowing a lot about the poet Philip Sidney, an inveterate pastoralist, who flourished and languished on the edges of Queen Elizabeth's court in the 1570s and 80s. I knew that Prynne knows him well, too—when we interviewed him together in his rooms at Cambridge, I pulled a well-annotated copy of *Arcadia* (1593) off the shelf. The conundrum of two young men who idolize and seek to please an older woman is one that Sidney returns to many times, with the shepherds Strephon and Klaius pining for the departed Urania in *Arcadia*, and in the famous double sestina, “Ye Goatherd Gods”; the shepherd Espilus and the forester Therion compete for the real-life favor of Queen Elizabeth in a court entertainment he wrote for her circa 1578, *The Lady of May*. Each time, a tragic choice must be made, and one of these natural friends will have to lose. Singing for Sidney is always a contest.

Which is to say that I know, or I knew, what is, or what was going to happen next. And so what surprised me, line by line—or sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase; but it is hard for me not to think of Prynne's prose as lineated—what surprised me was the way the book by turns triggers and eases the suspicion that paradise cannot last. As a matter of old habit, I was reading like a spy in Milton's Eden, waiting for things to go bad. “Now to see to sweep, over the parkland,” the book begins. To sweep, or should we hear, “too sweet”? Then, “Shall we view the shadow there, ready in close lock,” an invitation to look under the leaves

for the darkness I expected. But next, “they are half-brothers never inept to glimpse her rightful appearance” (1). “Never inept”: I know we will have more to say about the book's negations and double-negations; this one is the first of countless small rescues, casting the shadow only to chase it away, and revealing the Queen in her aspect of justice.

That is what I found myself most moved by and uneasily grateful for in the first section, and it meant a lot to me, in those lockdown weeks when signs of danger were everywhere. The portrait of this singing school is resilient. The book managed my doubts knowingly and artfully. And not by excluding or defusing them—in fact they were invited, but then answered as they arose, as though it were the book's business to repair the injuries I had suffered from its own tradition. “Milton in the undergrowth,” Prynne wrote in a letter to us, “but like him I override the theodicy, of both ‘Paradise’ and ‘Lost.’” Tom “sees well enough the open difference and will sing for it” (2); “Peter gives freely a nod” (3). Or again:

Jack-in-the-hedge flavour, Peter breathes the novel air race, as if words in train. Tom true in grain will follow by cue and single turn to them both and her too, all ears inquisitive and forgiven, smell of fresh earth by daylight, under branch spread. (4)

There is a wonderful sense of synesthetic fluency here. Words follow words, entrained each to the next by shared sound. “In train” seems to give royal sanction and a mother's love at once. Each singer takes his cue, his turn, and curiosity is forgiven in advance under the shelter, not the shadow, of the tree they share. Is this too good to be true? Is Something going to Happen?

Reading and rereading *Parkland*, I latch on to those basics:

So: there are three characters, the Queen of Sheba and her two sons, half-brothers, Tom and Peter. [...] They are birds; in particular, hoopoes. They inhabit a pastoral space, which has aspects of a garden and of a court. (*Parkland*.) The boys are learning to sing, maybe also to paint, and their mother is teaching them.

But even this knowledge is precarious. The book's second sentence hints that the Queen might not be able to teach the boys: "Can she advise them, as queen in good time for dawn light, to clarify aquamarine across the near field boundary" (1). The sentence doesn't end in question mark, but it does raise a series of questions: Are the boys able and willing to learn? What's at stake in their education? Do the Queen's duties as queen conflict with her duties as teacher and mother?

Section 2 lends urgency to these questions, beginning:

Apparent aperture, parent persistence, the sons of the morning in blue light often reach hands to hold, her face in smile outwards. (5)

"Apparent aperture": are the boys open to the Queen, or do they merely seem open? "Parent persistence": are the boys taking on parental roles, buttressing her faltering authority, her "smile outwards"? As "sons" and "suns", do they illuminate (or expose) her vulnerability? Rereading the sentence now, I hear "sons of the morning" as "sons of mourning," suggesting that the

boys might be eager for succession. Such questions were present from the start of our experiment in reading—as was a worry about discounting the poem's playfulness, its humor. Why anticipate crisis? Why not read Prynne's wordplay as exemplifying the shifts in power that sustain successful relationships, pedagogical and parental?

*Parkland* is, for me, a book of questions—then and now. Every sentence accumulates alternatives, creating an aura of suspense and doubt, while sanctioning a consistent set of responses: yes, both, look again, just wait, ramify. Jeff, you describe the movement between darkness and light, and offer the phrase "countless small rescues." The phrase is apt: the book rescues us from darkness and light and an array of other absolutes: skepticism and optimism, obscurity and clarity, peril and safety, even irony and earnestness.

A case in point: By the second sentence of section 2, the power reversal is again reversed:

To be safe the day new reflected, both turn to her this way now part clouded; yet darken, she still bright with her inmost fire of care. (5)

To risk a simple reading: the clear day becomes cloudy and the darkness bright. But this simple reading is a way to enter the sentence and reckon with its complexity. The Queen is once again a refuge. Her "fire of care" offers protection and warmth, and a moral center. Would it be fair to say that she is now the sun?

The book sustains this movement in various ways. You mention negations and double-negations. Reading and rereading the section, I notice how often adverbs confuse otherwise resolute descriptions: "maybe," "almost," "somewhat." We are usually advised to avoid such words. In typescripts of *The Waste Land* (1922), Ezra Pound chastises T. S. Eliot for his "dam per'apsez." In *Parkland*, "per'apsez" create nuance. The Queen is

“somewhat puzzled but not for long” (6). The passage is precise—the Queen is never completely anything. As Prynne would confirm, “Maybe accuracy does call for imprecision in various modes.” A question that remained constant throughout our reading of the poem: How should we allocate our attention within and against this movement, this multiplicity? You begin to catalog the poem’s settings: “a pastoral space, which has aspects of a garden and of a court,” a “singing school.” Section 2 adds yet another setting: a flight school. Much of the section describes aerial perspectives and maneuvers. There is a homology between the interplay of voices and the interplay of flight paths, “lucid swerving by choice and testament” (7). Where should we look, which worlds should we explore? The question is relevant down to the level of the word. But we were not going to get an answer from our correspondent. “Well I have been browsing and brooding over your rich fieldwork of questions,” he wrote us, “so frequently you already half-answer your own interrogatives in the multiple actions of framing them, the snake biting its own tail.”

Did we have even a half-answer? This question about the allocation of attention becomes ominous at the end of the section—a crisis indeed:

The spread bird kingdom showed the way contended, the bright hoopoe included as a rare migrant, go-between. (8)

“Contented” indicates that not everyone is contented. “Migrant” suggests a bird’s migration and a refugee crisis. The sentence activates earlier passages in the section: “Intercede for need,” “either side to border reach and branch” (7). So not just the allocation of attention, but the allocation of resources and land. What is the symbolism of the hoopoe bird? Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*

is the go-to: Tereus, King of Thrace, becomes a hoopoe after eating the flesh of his own son. But the hoopoe has also been the national bird of Israel since 2008.

I'm persuaded by your reading of "apparent aperture," and the question it opens of who has authority here, mother or sons. But I would have said we hadn't noticed that yet, when we were reading that winter. It's not in our correspondence—was it in our conversation, on Zoom, and we just never wrote it down? Did I just forget? That's a tricky aspect of the project, the unresolved contradiction between fidelity to our first impressions (are we telling that story?) and a more pedagogical arrangement of our discoveries, where "pedagogical" implies that the pedagogue already knows what the student is to learn. This is precisely the problem not to solve. We share a hunch that it reflects the book's own reluctance to clarify the difference between what is to be learned and what is already known, what has already happened and what hasn't yet. If we have that problem as we go, we are having it, choosing to have it, as critics, at the book's behest.

Certainly knowingness is a recurring theme. It can be a comfort, as it often is in life, when knowledge is in short supply. Peter begins section 3 "glancing at Tom who already knows why" (8), and you point out (so say my notes) how much communication among the birds seems to be tacit, wordless, understood. Already known. The Queen watches over their singing:

By these tokens captured in release and altered by treaty on the other side, to match the need as understood discretion, each question its own presumed answer, prolific and fitting. (10)

The words here come from different worlds of diction, economics and diplomacy in particular, both of them

competitive, potentially aggressive—but they seem to be neutralized by the song, which is ample and decorous, "prolific and fitting."

Though one might ask (and we did), what exactly is so prolific and fitting? Is the phrase in apposition to the "presumed answer"? Or does it apply to the whole exchange? Such syntactic appendices, dangling between the last comma and the period, are common in the book, hard to fix in relation to the sentence before them. In the following passage, every sentence ends with such a supplement:

Partisan sun awake to keep compliance, sing again chorus return postern gate evident reverse simple flexation, come alongside as clouds do, in open sky. Revealed beckon welcome, her new betided joy is theirs too, in sky profile as found head to foot, flush cheeks. Meddlesome right to know, little strange in meadow instigate, fleurons eyesight reason again, candidate in full bloom. There is a further shade in view, she for this moment sets it aside, replete. (11)

Sometimes these endings make for a solacing closure: if we do not know whether she or the shade is replete, how much better to have both? Clouds come along easily in the open sky. But whose cheeks are flush? (Is "flush" an adjective, or a verb?) What candidate is in full bloom? (Is this candidate campaigning for the right to know, or against it? Or is "candidate" to be taken in its obsolete sense of "white," and applied to the flowers?) For that matter, is there a hint of "bound" in "found head to foot"? Where does that flush come from? My suspicions are kindled again.

Back to the appositives, though—the difficulty is compounded by the fact that the sentences to which they are appended are really not sentences at all, at least not by virtue of being grammatically complete.



Apposition is the freest syntactic relation you could propose, but it might not be free enough for the succession of comma-separated word-strings, themselves alternately fluent and disjunct, idiomatic and alien, that fall between each opening capital and terminal period. (“Word-strings” is a phrase Prynne gave us early on.) I said before, I keep thinking of Prynne’s prose in lines. The relations established across a comma often seem more like the openness of an enjambment, than logical or even rhetorical organization. It all makes for a distinctive rhythm, about which I know we did and will have more to say. I will say for now, that with its tendency to provoke, but not exactly to reward, backward syntactical glances, this tactic is hardly adapted for, and may be adapted against, storytelling. “I hope you find a way to read this storybook, somehow,” wrote Prynne, “I did not expect it to be without challenge.”

## I.4

Paradise cannot last and it doesn’t. Harm words perforate section 4: “famish,” “spoilt,” “stumble,” “unpaid,” “self-graft,” “peril,” “aggrieved,” “scarce,” “danger,” “greedy,” “detriment,” “errant,” “broken,” “starvation,” “abducted,” “worn,” “violated,” “tryst,” “fear,” “invasive,” “folly,” “bound,” “afflict,” “lament,” “hungry,” “angry,” “bitten,” “blame”—and “harm” itself. In the pastoral context of *Parkland*, these words are surprising. In the context of Prynne’s oeuvre they are not. Over the last sixty years, his poetry has interrogated the harm we inflict on each other and the planet, and the histories of that harm. The section’s violence feels very Prynne-like.

The final sentence—or “word-string”—of section 3 foreshadows this shift: “foe in woe postponed [...] now song for hurt” (12). In section 4, we confront that song and the knowledge it conveys:

She is indeed the scope for darker thoughts, imminent  
Yemen lately memory dry mouth denied  
because too late now, self-graft by option frequent,  
sing louder in fear for sound broken in peril, song  
of harm. (13)

The passage overflows with significance. The Queen determines the boundaries of “darker thoughts.” Modern-day Yemen and its conflicts are laid on top of the garden, or underneath. Attempts to distract from harm perpetuate it: “sing louder,” the poem declares, and the “song of harm” becomes even more powerful. Later in the section, we read about a “song of care worn thin by violets violated” (14).

What is the connection between the song we’re

reading and the song we're reading about? *Parkland* is song-like despite its fully justified paragraphs. As you note, Jeff, its punctuation suggests line breaks. Rhyme and alliteration are prevalent. To give one example:

She watches half-tranced their flow before pitched  
to newer seasoning, now a glee of entrance. Peter  
sets up the bass note, too many are hungry to be  
angry or bitten free. (16)

The phrase "a glee of entrance" sets up a rhyme with the next clause but one: "too many are hungry to be angry or bitten free" (16). Attentiveness and inattentiveness alike activate puns and other figures. I hear "infant brood" as "infant blood" despite the rhyme with "assembled food" (14). Is *Parkland* a song about song? Is it the song of harm itself?

Section 4 implicates itself and us in other ways as well. First- and second-person pronouns appear outside the dialogue between Tom and Peter for the first time. (More on that dialogue later!) The first and third paragraphs include a "we"; the second an "I." The poem's penultimate sentence addresses a "you": "ready fast and first, don't give up, her glance choral and coral you have to smile" (17). When I first read the "you," I laughed at the clichés "don't give up" and "you have to smile." The clichés, however ironic, were a relief, almost a reward, at the end of a harrowing section. But rereading the passage now, the clichés are mocking and self-mocking, a reminder of our desire for escape. Does section 4 ever shift back from blight to pastoral? The word "gate" appears three times in the section's final paragraph. Its first appearance accompanies a "we." The Queen and her boys reach a gate and pause, waiting (and wishing) for a signal before passing through:

As then cross to the gate, not by default, if and  
as we might, late to prospect, all three trivet wish  
for sweet to waiting, listen ready anxious even by  
song-temper scented borrow in lament the best  
tune. (16)

By the end of the paragraph, the three seem to be safely on the other side. Section 5 begins, "The air is still warm and comfortable" (17). But harm and the threat of harm are still present. In my letter about section 2, I adopted your phrase "countless small rescues" and claimed that *Parkland* "rescues us from darkness and light and an array of other absolutes." But now, in light of section 4, I have to admit that "rescues" is not correct. Absolutes accumulate in *Parkland* and remain ever-present.

Writing this book with you, I am tempted in two directions at once: to highlight—even perform—how my understanding of *Parkland* changed, section to section, over the pandemic's first winter; and to gloss over my false starts and reconsiderations to present a consistent reading. As you note, this is the problem not to solve. But I do want to register my shock when I realized that ambivalence, in *Parkland*, can absorb ambiguity. (As Adam Phillips reminds us, ambivalence does not "mean mixed feelings, it means opposite feelings.") Imprecision is also an absolute—the precise opposite of precision.

Boundaries—between opposites, between the song in *Parkland* and *Parkland's* song, between the poem's "we" and the "we" that you and I share, between prose and poetry, between poetry and song, between historical periods, between nation states. Prynne seems interested in maintaining—even consolidating—the integrity of these categories and exploring what happens between and among them. To give a last example:

section 4 depicts how intimacy develops in a world of pain. The Queen loves her sons; and they love her and each other. But that intimacy is not an escape or reprieve. (Tereus loved his son too.) At the end of the section, we continue to follow the Queen and her boys. They escape harm, which they likely caused, and carry that harm with them.

## 1.5

You emphasize the prominence of harm words in section 4, Josh, and I agree, it feels like there's a mounting threat—but it makes me wonder, what happens if we read these sections in reverse order, or even shuffle them randomly? Would we find the same marks of danger and damage in the first one, if it were swapped with the fourth, now that we know to look? The temptation to test the rigidity of the order is exacerbated by the way the sentences work, how they refuse the organizing momentum of a subject, a verb, and an object. The trailing phrases that I talked about in my letter about section 3 do not systematically differ in their internal structure from other parts of the sentence (“parts”: variously phrases, clauses, and looser collections that extend between commas). They could be spliced into the interior without violating any governing syntactic order. The order in a given sentence might matter, it surely does matter, but not because there is any large syntactic momentum.

That said, you mention the false comfort of clichés, and it's true—there are plenty of shorter units of sense that make no protest against the rhythms of ordinary speech. Take the opening of 5, which you've already quoted:

The air is still warm and comfortable, able for no less brushing the sleeve by easy passage, ruffling her hair as the hedgework trifles with momentary contrition, articles of belief. (17)

The first clause could stand alone as a complete sentence; the other parts, taken independently, could still be diagrammed as phrases or clauses. Any longtime

reader of Prynne knows—and anyone who reads further into *Parkland* will learn—that obedience even to these most local rules of syntactic construction is not to be taken for granted. There will be more to say about the alternatives, about other principles that govern what word follows another, especially etymology and sound-affinities. Both have less structure and less forward momentum than syntax does. For the moment, phrasal cadences persist, and they keep pushing the book forward, against the pastoral promise or risk that it might lapse into stasis, or even into reverse.

And indeed, a return to section 1 shows that you're right, that for all my speculations about order, things *have* changed: the harm-words are scarcer there, and likewise the language of money and finance ("proxy," "discount," "brand," "custom," to cite a few from section 5). Perhaps we could speak of a diction-plot, or a diction-curve, one that is bending downward or darkening. If so, should we be asking, as narrative would have us do, what is the cause of the harm? What is its source, its explanation? But that question is still hard to answer right now. In our conversations you began to talk about the "stacking" of the poem's different registers, not arranged in an explanatory or historical sequence but juxtaposed in its sentences and even in particular words—the way you added, in the last letter, Yemen to Eden. The language of the pastoral is everywhere, but it becomes difficult to separate from languages of politics and economics. When Peter says, "don't wait for me, I have all day, so do we all three is our brand renewing custom prior pledge remainder" (18), the shepherds' languorous otium transits into the arbitrage of prior pledges and remainders. "Custom," both tradition (in the language of pastoral) and trade (in the language of the market), is the pivot. Except to speak of "transit" may be wrong, for both were already

there, even if in any given reading there is a schedule of recognition. The stacking of idioms is also a stacking of something like frameworks: so far, pastoral, finance, war. There is also a stacking of settings, so that we do not cross a border (or pass through a gate) from Arcadia to Yemen, but are in both at once; nor must we time-travel from the Biblical realm of the Queen of Sheba to the battlefields and bombing ranges of the Yemeni civil war.

And there is a stacking of poems: literary allusions pile on, too. ("To Autumn' is there too, for sure," Prynne allowed.) The phrase "glances exchanged by throat to twitter swallow" (18) recalls the end of the Keats autumn ode, "And gathering swallows twitter in the skies." Geoffrey Hartman once taught me to see how that poem equivocates between spring and autumn, dawn and dusk, beginning and ending. Prynne creates his own version of the Keatsian both/and with his juxtapositions, and and and. Another teacher of mine—maybe Paul Fry—made me hear the closing throat of the consumptive in "swallows," first Keats's brother Tom, then the poet himself, and I can't shake that echo of harm either.

Throughout the excavation of these sedimented layers—or is it the traverse of this network; it's an interesting question, which metaphor better serves—the *dramatis personae*, Tom, Peter, and the Queen, are constant. But even their identities are a palimpsest. "Set aim to Yemen, semen for birth-dream, bite in sky-park" (19): here again is your sense that these boys are not just birds, but pilots, too, possibly jet pilots in the air force of their Queen.

Norma (of her children, to her father Oroveso;  
priestess, preparing to ascend her sacrificial pyre):

'Oh, do not let them be victims  
Of my cruel mistake?  
Oh, do not cut them down  
In the innocence of childhood.  
Remember that I am your blood  
Have pity on my children.  
Oh father, have pity,  
Have pity on my children.  
Father, oh father?'

Vincenzo Bellini, *Norma*, 1831, final scene, libretto Felice Romani

'Let the Queen of Sheba rejoice with the Artichoke'

Christopher Smart (apocryphal)

# Parkland

- I -

Now to see to sweep, over the parkland. Shall we view the shadow there, ready in close lock, they are half-brothers never inept to glimpse her rightful appearance. Can she advise them, as queen in good time for dawn light, to clarify aquamarine across the near field boundary. Peter speaks first, while the mark arises justly: 'animate the horizontal treeline, stay close by in choice allowance, can be accepted?' Tom will add, eyes still fixed on her clear oval face, coral features, 'ever to share, as we intimate our reach to joy retainer, ascend pass evenly for composite.' They nod invested each to the other, their glances to her to gain countenance confided and truthful. She Sheba shall be their chosen royal queen, the nominated Sheba lady at their minstrel oversight, as advised by a traded hoopoe bird this is more than a game for them, the open way to joy smudged by darkness. Wisely she guides their songlines, in the open field of this place, her palace domain, the words come into

*when honey sings!*  
mind by influx of care discovered. Queen bee honey song she leads to cherish as they do following her due. Bonds of love in portraiture included. By loyalty the shared songlines inviolate along grass stems swaying and bending, Tom sees well enough the open difference and will sing for it, lyrical and intaken as Peter holds out his arm to give her royal steadiness, they both cherish outside premiss encounter. There is a limpid slight stream hereby, running over its bed, all three can hear the soft chuckle of small sounded stones, as in lavish memory. Tom does want to justify each preference, in fact the fragrant meadowsweet wavers between them, it's her opportune moment to sing afresh to and for them, for twice prince without price, she and their distant creatures swish in crystal unison. Both the brothers affect each other, by her promise to be part of scenic provision, in full view as a gift in time. In good inkling, as the neighbour birds will do and have done already, partition by track across the grass verges, in renown. 'Why do we look when here, relative prospective gathers up, is there

a reason?' Tom puts the query, slowly enough as a light tremor of air stirs across her face, hesitant. He watches out, both brothers do as captivated, drawing upon their inward guise. She swallows profoundly within tolerance, certain at pleasant crib of known demeanour. They do observe as they can in name, must they derive by this stream its outline, whist to review in person; further siblinghood, she knows it is worth her song, worthy of insistence, however.

Now once more her aureate open smile, radiant intended this way and that, why in sky layers as welcome, day pasture across foot-prints moist with morning dew. Waiting already not impatient, temperate marking strokes to be conducive, foremost affection. Peter gives freely a nod, courtly his usual ticket of leave, whatever one can by look to harbour, to speak at bridge pier but narrow is enough, the flow already modest. She will know how, see the shade slide across the lighted profile, the land furtherance. Still in dawn tiding, definite again she sings near-wordless, their temper song collected as her mouth

makes the sound shapes, towards the rising sun and  
its mark gesture. Tell ready, to love apprised, copy by  
wish in single stream. Now these all sing together  
this refrain in measure, tact over far as eye can see,  
even so. The live-long day in mount dual keep time  
flare visionary expected. Jack-in-the-hedge flavour,  
Peter breathes the novel air race, as if words in train.  
Tom true in grain will follow by cue and single  
turn to them both and her too, all ears inquisitive  
and forgiven, smell of fresh earth by daylight, under  
branch spread. All told implored her face bright with  
favour tested and sure, remark index to save. Strong  
yet for song near and far, or and echo more added up  
grand play trice mended as for to last longwise. Given  
over by Peter and Tom together handful, their way  
to find need to say, so. Still the sun slants, according  
to custom directed as before, the sound fades along  
its pathway yet in the lead role, still. Cast oversome  
trial, will catch temperate caution.

Apparent aperture, parent persistence, the sons of  
the morning in blue light often reach hands to hold,  
her face in smile outwards. To be safe the day new  
reflected, both turn to her this way now part clouded;  
yet darken, she still bright with her inmost fire of care.  
For them maybe in franchise encampment, clip to the  
door step permitted eloquence, no grief or pack arrival  
comedy in forasmuch provision. Now day-level returns  
into the sky trails, they show gleams diffused along  
the ridge, furthestmost song to set out and learn, oh  
fully so. Constant reticent but echo syllable goes first  
ahead, gainful her employ almost visible in ear breath,  
caramel to travel so sweet. There was no delay in the  
daylight hour, all forward and previous the narrow  
rivulet glinting calmly tested.

Twainly above them far beyond turmoil their pair  
hands moving fully kept for flourish each the other  
her pearl-studded shellac orange debated, its evident



outpost approach to mid discover and shade over turf  
founded, soon in prize tacit unburden length wishful  
major patient seam; bird-song again trill several pass  
from the front, where she rides cool close to water  
watched at cost sufficient. A foil leafy upside as flash  
between, glimmer assisted side to side, team to rest  
intrepid by cloud now for once, brows covered and  
swept arisen first distortion avoided; three to know  
thee, releasement. Peter starts to further sing softly and  
Tom joins up, chorus not plaintive in return favour,  
she is the whole reason by keystroke given out, in the  
advance module. The free sun flickers, slight steam  
from the warm ground, pearlescent trim shows the  
way; face buoyant dapple in this nearer shade.

Symplectic says Tom, why so, inwoven daring and  
darting first for her verified, his voice chancing bird  
on branch, tree creeper gain chirping alluded even  
before cloud unfold and fiery, long reset for smile  
train addendum. They ponder as she does, wrinkle  
her brow somewhat puzzled but not for long, clear

gaze reflective as ardent, as infused. Oh twin awake,  
the other spoken hardly mute of speech but yet to  
sing, or hum in murmur stricture, ridge advantage  
crescent at sun donation. Give and seek, shade-song  
to share intone, take further next within back and  
forth cascaded pride of place accurate dispersal; run  
forward disordered by flurry shaken, as they will  
in look to her, dot and carry leafage parlance face  
into breeze arrive expert previously, not shy for best  
courage, warm in high heart. Intercede for need even  
before this, fill to hold their own, seed grasses nodded  
tread level foot sequent but pace still the smile  
irradiates, spark to park either side to border reach  
and branch. Will make up level panel lucid swerving  
by choice and testament, her hope in them for best  
chance convergence, canopy unchoked. Calendar  
rerieved sail quick to look across, leaf flutter early  
green no demur, aliment by season spread in shade  
to benefit condiment, pleasure share. Grasp in line  
to sing this call-sign as birds do, qualify wing-span

imparted grist to the millstream flattering, her ready answer to them as they to her. Whenever they'll not want for more. The spread bird kingdom showed the way contended, the bright hoopoe included as a rare migrant, go-between. Paramount by melody accented and fluent, carry what you need to bear and so or less detain in ready joy. Attach the open sounds endured by cadence provoked as the mark written, innocent in memory for child full-throated carol, all before in vigil morning notified. Clear rounded not lost, refreshed in train for song grateful, slender common territory devised.

*should in essential to speak?*

— 3 —

Peter tosses his head, parted locks is there time enough for this, to us to peer outward, glancing at Tom who already knows why. 'Sedge in the damp ground, privilege assigned of the dance of these field-birds attended, wing flickers across to sight.' At this

both smile, underwood not forsaken, P to T and T to P now both over to the verriest queen of day, in her panoply. Peter says, 'the mark of fortune resounds hereby, hardly to tell or turn aside, contribute in effort to let be, air in prior anchorage by the plain choice given out.' Peter raises his brow as Tom grins invited, level gesture at the spread around, forage submitted for equity and scavenged as birds do, in compact flock making their chatter. Filling out the time fashion, yielding display skirmish and benefit awry, as Tom signals the while flowing, flowers turning in light breeze, tain mirror between them both ways. 'Don't wait forever, see your path we go shares attitude arisen in faction conferred. Witty royal presence, presentiment foreseen (nodding to her, over again), we have reason and she will harbour out of the storm, alongside.' Tom looks to her for verity and sure in parlance, glimpse enough to prime optic confirmation, the day flutters perfunctory and assimilates its moment here. Peter makes a slice of speech, like a tomato

from the dish between them, ostensible towards Tom quickly, they are fast in exchange, ever watching her even mien. By these tokens captured in release and altered by treaty on the other side, to match the need as understood discretion, each question its own presumed answer, prolific and fitting. She is poised to observe, the byplay beneficiary in exchange code, accession by stable providence.

And so, youthful small river she knew this well attaining, the other two did in attendance, admiring and singing by the same tune, into passing tournament; mimulus trace element yellow throat mimic freshet trail brothers to sup, broth to share, slight air motions froward bristle stickle darted; boatmen flicker iron shade the stream, jubilee. Honour this song for her refurbish guisement of melody, less soon depended as will await to find match governance, sway the tenor pitch defence next adjusted like bees in clover, ever free and tender obligate. Possible alliance signed up arm in arm sentient passion would like moreover

intrinsic, ground becoming firmer now under foot, drying out, ragged robin perfected fragile tendency; tenants of nourishment. Partisan sun awake to keep compliance, sing again chorus return postern gate evident reverse simple flexation, come alongside as clouds do, in open sky. Revealed beckon welcome, her new betided joy is theirs too, in sky profile as found head to foot, flush cheeks. Meddlesome right to know, little strange in meadow instigate, fleurons eyesight reason again, candidate in full bloom. There is a further shade in view, she for this moment sets it aside, replete.

Chime caption readiness look to save, so needed alight and fair, precious instrument aware gravity indited; balance upon branch dip like birds too soon to tell or be sure in revel comity assimilate flex range come with us attractant purview. Most her face shining, brows arched and fulgent beyond the weather vane, captive shaken and woken, then new open free as air and offer most seen clear inclusion,

unserved promotion. She sees them blink and want  
in unity, now all three open the same song, trill to  
scale, their minted voices darker blent with her upper  
foil. Ever the clear prow to catch a glimpse, seen and  
known past doubt to hesitate, unfurled in fullness  
just as shadow within sunlight intended, for outpost  
sake. Flight path and stream flow to rescue, sign  
valid express to yield granted, cloud-song horizon,  
each first one another, hold true and care lissom  
known, willow herb refrain fluff to sound, finger soft.  
In time will tell, scenic advocate. Light wind rise in  
the grass to sway and bend for sure pleat, higher and  
lower channel stream instate unavailed foe in woe  
postponed though now song for hurt, gather down  
how can even lame, Peter and Tom come to shade at  
foot, step: in dawn the downest turn.

Under too late then, is hunger seen not far off,  
novice joy at the table make ready herb indented and  
needed: bright honour fame to famish one word for  
another meeting place. Relay casuist loose change  
primal before best, cherish lost decree fuse, outreach  
spoilt running across the field now, not to stumble  
see your way playful unpaid. She is indeed the scope  
for darker thoughts, imminent Yemen lately memory  
dry mouth denied because too late now, self-graft by  
option frequent, sing louder in fear for sound broken  
in peril, song of harm. These flowers in field happen,  
they know nothing just to stay in line, taller invoke  
to tread fateful a track hemmed, wake to see, oh song  
hold your voice aggrieved at limit finding, temper  
steal blade not she exempt. Her gaze still true for  
them but shadow unconsumed, we'll sing now but  
cast parted, seeds on stony ground, trade off to watch  
what you know is seen there, these flowers of speech

*Wm. S. R. Galt*  
*1920*

in the lush illusion fieldways. Her shining gaze gist unforgiven, not to deserve just in crest, go before scarce to eat fiercely unequal still the stream flows beyond tree-shade caressing indifferent banks flouted danger manifest. The green path now also lazy and greedy, median grassland methane engines, wayleave insensate passive detriment.

And yet these two admirers will sing again despited, out and weighed down to make half lift in brief, not with option traded or earthen riches but tenuous just foremost nothing else the leafage untold message the other night planets flashing errant induced take up fast infant brood, assembled food could be enough; the cause assume broken word-shell, patch of greed. Speech in the meadow, instruments of starvation in full view, water <sup>irrigate - what does it</sup> abducted from the <sup>take to make fresh bloom?</sup> stream; this is the song of care worn thin by violets violated; and yet her gaze not innocent does know in birth and almost prove its own prodigious tryst. She tells well over, bell tones told in tune over, admission.

Unmerged for pliancy now at later time-set, back to look all at last in least did know to take a new placement, reprise. Must at still familiar echo, plain free for part-fear put by, near mid-day, train this new song. The brothers half-way beside have work to get done, twill not idle, release winter fuel whence opt immense, invasive. There is a notion abroad of birth-rate in this size margin, early replenish she knows within for her sensible rhyme, the two others man-handed. Light air still in caressment drawn to darker shade not forgotten, turn for breath take up implements corrected vocal parts; zone to trim, whenever by admission known tremble approaching folly the open bridge. 'Shall you be ready yet' asks Peter before curious, early as ever mind to sound now more frail returning fresh to settle, she in near comfort but for how long placated, pale hands I love, sweet folded preludial offer she needs to draw breath, her diagram. Loose steps carry low to view in bound revolve, afflict wear mostly for some while still.

As then cross to the gate, not by default, if and as we might, late to prospect, all three trivet wish for sweet to waiting, listen ready anxious even by song-temper scented borrow in lament the best tune. Not near enough can be indrawn, alive to love by this arrant gateway outward from intern plus, for a nation prophecy, face to choice elevated wish despite. She watches half-tranced their flow before pitched to newer seasoning, now a glee of entrance. Peter sets up the bass note, too many are hungry to be angry or bitten free. Ah there are birds aware, knowledge to share out, blame for this fully apportioned, muscovy in traffic by sheen, sheer to shine. Tom in undercoat, paint foremost, picks up the melody, willing descant telling words by open mouth, to brim. Unfrequented still in coil permission, yet soon enough in face of needed element, to count insufficient. The birds are flown now, back and forth, three mortals singing in long search, harmonics bread for life back to bake for loose crumb scatter. She keeps these tunes by heart,

albeit near too lately, the purpose gate speaks its note to clear the way, springs partial; ready fast and first, don't give up, her glance choral and coral you have to smile. Tom will gather up insisted, fieldfares in flocks to chatter as the boys sing for and to her company.

— 5 —

*the pilots*

The air is still warm and comfortable, able for no less brushing the sleeve by easy passage, ruffling her hair as the hedgework trifles with momentary contrition, articles of belief. P and T rise in concurrent uplift, soon for more line of murmur, at the fence conscience ply particle reticent, now they open in chant, making up <sup>103 p. 11</sup>versus play, she nodding along in time. Close to noon-day by anthem cruise to wise proxy scaffold upheld, gate grateful wind flickers on these cheek brightened sails. P says to T, take your good time, T agrees to not hasten, availed in their order found. She too makes a skirmish with

wrist suppletion, near to sign, of thicket cheap-day  
discount ticket of leave. P evens to motion, don't wait  
for me, I have all day, so do you we all three is our  
brand renewing custom prior pledge remainder. She  
is still not exactly speaking, not to promise or even  
close decision, but the face permission is allowed  
enough, side by the gate assisted; when she sings too  
her hands arise, face uttered in match of colour, blood  
infused in tidal recruitment. So many are known  
hungry, close up to starving outside this field of  
calm in grace demurrer, invented and untrustworthy,  
inwardly flinched but scarce avoided, as birds do and  
the decurrent grasses, entrance ready taken.

A slight touch of general appetite reminds mental  
reflective, glances exchanged by throat to twitter  
swallow, curvature of new sky ingressions. Strictly  
to gullet soundless stilled, or breath turn limbs  
remembered, her countenance in cost dear smiling  
yet concession too, limit pallor sufferance. What the  
others both see, beyond miss to notice each remiss

entire as did these bring, their snack allowance,  
happenstance. Each one bite tells its due mark,  
cress renewed cost open even near enough. Set aim  
to Yemen, semen for birth-dream, bite in sky-park,  
can be Sheba at long last by bird message. Wick the  
storm light, friend lantern, are they all flown, this  
flock from our sheltered field. Or say yes and they  
will treasure to pay for it, song yet more intense  
even within a camp boundary the image merged  
past redress entangled. She is their instant reason  
press down now well after dawn, leafage weeping for  
pasture the stream collected, her face writ in water,  
opaline to glance by silica gel, moon in open day. They  
soon just her look return, redeem plangent larynx  
white streak, foremost breech delivered. Ancient of  
days it is her deep memory, wisdom intact from the  
grandest of visitations, heartsease. <sup>parasy</sup>

This shared song unceasing, grassland measure  
gate gather pursue, each of told in fluent words  
adjusted. To consume by insight even this much is

honour spread by honey will bee, ready prepared  
before touch freely arbiter induced. As must diffused  
vocals scale to rise, fear not furious but close, to love  
evenly level serve in humour, integral twins. In given  
word would tell, over distance of the field, vocation  
shield play, flower recursion. Sing to burn mine and  
beside them aligned, motion tumid fancy. Would she  
founce at so much, would they mimic too in origin,  
song enclosed work to end each infringed rightful,  
near enough. Shelf life tenuous prune old wood  
shoots to win, tending to admit hurts. Ah look aside  
dear ones, light mist in the meadow fume, cloudy  
unknown but unavoids well as well, swallow your  
pride, starve for still there, corrode.

— 6 —

The sun floats by interim among small clouds,  
in marks above the place nominated by venture this  
cover band accepts the tune of broad day. Their light

*already*  
*it would - supposed - every*  
*is still cut*  
there too not yet further peckish, sips of fresh water  
steady obviate, this tripod willing repute concurrent;  
he sings along first for both evidence, curious in  
satisfaction abridged to answer in full dyestuff, these  
boys construe to intersperse carol and know for sure  
or catch on. Sound expresses the mouth esteem, in  
fine contrite parts played, supplanted see whether  
antilogy at best. In lip service, none to hear otherwise,  
bird chatter for nourish now a prevailed wear feels  
want enticement if also innocent <sup>165</sup>plaint succession.  
Undercurrent sublation infixes grasp over substitute  
contended asterism, voices in spark address: cloud  
will face up, reduced. Louder <sup>or</sup>entrail by this sound  
parlour for valour takes momentum beside grant  
analogy, the aware reckon, sing for supper longer by  
hunger terrorise. Why tremble fast in view, spread  
injustice harm in like hunger nil by mouth. She will  
as firmly hold the upper pitch, cost to embellish ever  
jointed by fugal recompense. This tappet songline  
runs out across the horizon, to notify estranged