

Note: the script below is as originally conceived by Mario Petrucci. The soundscape installed on the Millennium Bridge for the London Olympics (27 July 2012) used different arrangements of text and voice.

Tales from the Bridge

Poetry Script

by

Mario Petrucci

NORTH SECTION

Street Names

Bride Lane
Distaff Lane
Tudor Street
Puddle Dock

Ironmonger Lane
Limeburner Lane
Blackfriars Passage
Garlick Hill

Bread Street
Milk Street
Russia Row
Oat Lane

Cheapside
Old Jewry
Fleet Street
Skinners Lane

Trig Lane
Foster Lane
Noble Street
Gutter Lane

Red Lion Court
White Lion Hill
Playhouse Yard
Little Britain

Creed Lane
Little Trinity Lane
Pilgrim Street
Paternoster Row

Amen Court

* * *

From Spire to Tower
From Tower to Dome...

*

Phoenix

[Resurgam]

I have been
this old river
at sunset

plumed
silvery gold
& scarlet

its song
a lone shriek
of gull –

imagine
what it is
to burn

so long
in love for
strangers –

dull
centuries
my nest

an aroma
in pinnacled
emotion

over you
who flow
towards me

& away
never
reaching –

look up
for sunlight
in each

who spans
that bridge
of themselves

for what
runs in me
is crimson

knowing
even ash
cannot fail

& if one
hands
a heart

a stone
you shall
be built

cathedrals

*

Golden Gallery
Stone Gallery
Whispering Gallery
(528 Steps)
(378 Steps)
(259 Steps)

High Altar
Nave
Quire
Apse

Crypt

7,189 pipes
5 keyboards
138 stops

Ball and Cross

St Dunstan's Chapel
American Memorial Chapel
The Knights Bachelor Chapel

All Souls' Chapel
St Faith's Chapel
Chapel of St Michael and St George

Chapel of St Erkenwald and St Ethelburga

West Towers
Clock Tower
5 metres diameter

Great Tom
on the hour
5 tons entire

Great Paul –
largest bell swung
in British Isles:
16.5 tons

*

Sung Rhyme (*old version of 'Oranges and Lemons'*)

Bull's eyes and targets
Say the bells of St. Margaret's

Brickbats and tiles
Say the bells of St. Giles'

Pancakes and fritters
Say the bells of St. Peter's

Two sticks and an apple
Say the bells of Whitechapel

Pokers and tongs
Say the bells of St. John's

Kettles and pans
Say the bells of St. Anne's

Old Father Baldpate
Say the slow bells of Aldgate

When will you pay me?
Say the bells of Old Bailey

When I grow rich
Say the bells of Fleetditch

*

Temple of Mithras

“For the Deliverance of our lords –
the four Emperors and our noble Caesar,
to Mithras the god, from east to west,
for the Invincible Sun.”

* * *

Livery Companies I

The Worshipful Company of Mercers
The Worshipful Company of Drapers
The Worshipful Company of Skinners
The Worshipful Company of Salters

The Worshipful Company of Vintners
The Worshipful Company of Dyers
The Worshipful Company of Pewterers
The Worshipful Company of Cutlers

The Worshipful Company of Girdlers
The Worshipful Company of Founders
The Worshipful Company of Fletchers
The Worshipful Company of Scriveners

The Worshipful Company of Broderers
The Worshipful Company of Glovers
The Worshipful Company of Upholders

The Worshipful Company of Lightmongers

* * *

In the fog
Lightermen navigated docks
according to smell...

A Description of a City Shower (edited) [Jonathan Swift 1710]...

“Returning home at night, you’ll find the sink
Strike your offended sense with double stink.

.....

Now from all parts the swelling kennels flow,
And bear their trophies with them as they go:
Filth of all hues and odour seem to tell
What street they sail’d from, by their sight and smell.
They, as each torrent drives with rapid force,
From Smithfield or St.Pulchre’s shape their course,
And in huge confluence join’d at Snowhill ridge,
Fall from the Conduit prone to Holborn Bridge.
Sweeping from butchers’ stalls, dung, guts, and blood,
Drown’d puppies, stinking sprats, all drench’d in mud,
Dead cats and turnip tops come tumbling down the flood.”

* * *

Banks

Goldman Sachs International
Banco Espirito Santo
Banco Nacional Ultramarino
Banco Santander Central Hispano

The Bank Of Nova Scotia
State Bank Of India
Ceskoslovenska Obchodni Banka
Cheltenham & Gloucester

Shanghai Commercial Bank
Development Bank Of Singapore
Bangkok Bank
Bank Indonesia

The Bank Of Yokohama
Sumitomo Trust
The Bank Of Tokyo-Mitsubishi
Nomura

Old Lady
Founded 1694
Nationalised 1946
Independent – 1997

Commonwealth Bank Of Australia
Malayan Banking Berhad
Swedbank
Chinatrust Commercial Bank

Royal Bank Of Canada
Bank Of Baroda
Union Bank Of Nigeria
Central Bank Of China

Deutsche Bank
Bremer Landesbank
Ghana International Bank
Oversea-Chinese Banking Ltd

Bank Of Ireland
Bank Of Scotland

[Old Lady...]

[whispered]

Bank Of England

* * *

Geology/ Archaeology

There are hippos in Trafalgar Square,
monkeys swing from Tilbury's cranes.
Out with the ice-fields, steppes of gravel.
In with Sapiens, 'puters and planes ...

*You put your ice-front in; your ice-front out.
In out, in out – you shake it all about.
You make a brand new species, then you
turn around. That's what it's all about! ...*

London. A pudding basin of chalk.
A vast white egg autopsied in half. Ah –
is she a halved, thick egg of white and grey? Still

there in the bellies of boys calling her names?
In that hard-boiled wino – his chalk and clay
sliced to full view, yolk going off? ...

In this business you've got to be incisive.
Put her straight under. Lift her flapped skin.
Give her skyline a nose job. Put the Old Girl

back on her feet. And if while you're slicing
brick-earth blubber you glimpse a bone or two
it's only her past rearing its head. Call in

those nurses – you know the type: glasses,
short-handled trowel, works for the sheer
love of it. Be sure you film them attending

the pink cheeks of earth. Don't miss
that crouch at the mouth of spoil – shoot them
close-up, brushing tenderly at crumbs.

*

War Poem

Fore Street –
25 August 1940

a dark bird
stalling

a dark clove
falling

Firefighter Memorial

‘Heroes with Grimy Faces...’

Appleby
Benton
Cassidy
Dell

Ellis
Fraser
Gallagher
Hall

Inman
Jackson
Kirby
Lamb

Messenger
Nicholls
Owen
Paul

Quinn
Ramsay
Seymour
Tooke

Umney
Vesey
Walker
Young

* * *

Samuel Pepys – **Great Fire** 2nd Sept. 1666

“...Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river or bringing them into lighters that lay off; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs by the water-side to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons... were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconys till they were, some of them burned, their wings, and fell down... and the wind mighty high and driving it into the City; and every thing, after so long a drought, proving combustible, even the very stones of churches... and a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses at their ruins.”

* * *

Billingsgate

“All alive! alive! alive, oh!” — “Ye-o-o! ye-o-o! Here’s your fine Yarmouth bloaters!” —
“Oy! oy! oy! Now’s your time!” — “Had-had-had-had-haddock!” — “Shrimps! shrimps!” —
“Wink, wink, winketty wink, wink!” — “Glass of nice peppermint, this cold morning?” —
“Ha-a-andsome cod! the best in the market!” — “Skate, oh! skate, oh!” — “Here you are; just
eight eels left—only eight!”

1861: 400,000 cod, 400,000 salmon, 2 million haddock, 100 million soles...
24 million mackerel, 18 million whiting, fishing boats writhing with herring and eel...

* * *

State Funerals – Admiral Lord Nelson/ Churchill

January 1806 – Greenwich. Up the Thames to Whitehall, draped in black velvet. A large canopy, surmounted by black ostrich feathers. Cannons discharging. The City Livery Companies in ceremonial barges...

... a horse-drawn funeral cart – resembling H.M.S. Victory, the carved figurehead and four-poster canopy. Thirty-two admirals, more than a hundred captains, thousands of soldiers. From the crowds, no passing chat. The only whispering sound: men removing their hats.

January 1965 – loaded onto the Havengore. Freezing water. He steered a nation through war. Nineteen guns salute as he moves upstream from Tower Pier. Man of flesh and steel. As he passes, the cranes of Hay’s Wharf kneel.

* * *

Livery Companies II

The Worshipful Company of Shipwrights
The Worshipful Company of Distillers
The Worshipful Company of Gunmakers
The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers

The Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards
The Worshipful Company of Scientific Instrument Makers
The Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors
The Worshipful Company of Fuellers

The Worshipful Company of Tax Advisers
The Worshipful Company of Insurers
The Worshipful Company of Management Consultants
The Worshipful Company of International Bankers

The Worshipful Company of Launderers

* * *

Thames Cargo I

Romans (AD43 – AD400)...

Downstream – wheat, cattle, oysters, hides... gold, iron, tin, dogs... against the cold: Birrus Britannicus.

Upstream – fruits, fish, ivory... wine and pottery from Gaul and Italy... Spanish olive oil, marble from Greece... for the amphitheatre: wild animals, exotic beasts... slaves.

*

Anglo-Saxons/Vikings (9th – 11th century)...

Downstream [Anglo-Saxon and Viking] – wool, honey, wheat, tin ... cloth, hide, lead, salt... slaves.

Upstream – timber, amber, whalebone, whetstone... skins of bear, beaver, otter... tusk of walrus, perfume, silk... slaves.

*

Medieval (13/14th century)...

Downstream – wool, lard, wax, skins... mediaeval leather, butter, tin...

Upstream – spices, pearls, perfumes, linen... Egyptian paper, a thousand rare items.

*

Tudor times (16th century)...

Downstream – wool, draperies, lead, tin... sheep and rabbit in form of skins... peltry, leather, Tudor cheese.

Upstream – tobacco, fish (both fresh and salt)... linen, oranges, onions, wheat... bullion, grogam, ammunition... serges, tapestry, madder, hops... metallic merceries of every sort.

*

1665... 1670s...

Upstream – for the Plague: rats and prayer... after Fire: Portland Stone.

*

*

*

<<end of North section>>

Tales from the Bridge

RIVER [middle] SECTION

Prologue... River 1

I do not think much about gods
But I know that this river
Is a strong brown god ...

[after *TS Eliot* (adaptations in black)]

*

[whispered]

... &

*i know i
must become
my own*

*headwater
hushed & willing
to swell*

*to rain
whose drops fall
moment*

*to moment
though i would
travel*

*mountains to
lap one true
spring in*

*gush &
gout from
soft-cleft*

rock...

... for what is a feeling
for pain or water
if not

air...

... &

thus i am
dared to ford my
river – to mild walking

even on water through ranks
of ripples... to forget
without forgetting

until

each
heavy with own child
pauses

on that far bank

River 2 ...

[whispered]

*Can a bridge
Catch the sun*

*To flash a spark
Through its City?*

*

[whispered]

*newer metal
older river*

*new water
old wetness...*

2000
10th of June
dates the first bridge
in more than a hundred years

suspension in steel
piers in concrete and steel
handrails in bead-blast stainless

steel

320 metres
4 metres wide
decked in aluminium

eight cables
tensioned to 2,000 tons

Construction:
18 million pounds...

see

waves incoming
right and left
metallic surf –

bravely new with
birth of water
cited air

that lives
on my bridge –
cool your arches

on aluminium sand
and as you
tread this strand

feel the give...

swaying
shock absorbers

shock

vibrations
relaying – clamps

tuned mass dampers
viscous dampers

underside deck
transverse
arms

exo-skeleton
cable arms

brace
arms swaying

human arms
braced...

fixed to cables
Padlocked love:
brass birds

on their wire
or foursquare ships
never leaving harbour

chaining promises
to Water here –
Hearts

as yet
unbroken –
docked to

opened air...

What is the bridge
without a human?

Whether one baulks
or rushes

may you paint this
blank span

till those
on furthest land

hush

at how
a brushstroke

Walks

River 3 ... [Frost Fair (interlude)]

“BEhold the Wonder of this present Age,
A Famous RIVER now become a Stage...
There may you see the *Coaches* swiftly run,
As if beneath the Ice were Waters none;
And sholes of People every where there be,
Just like to Herrings in the brackish Sea;
And there the quaking Water-men will stand ye,
Kind Master, drink you Beer, or Ale, or Brandy...

Hot Codlins, Pancakes, Duck, Goose, and Sack,
Rabit, Capon, Hen, Turkey, and a wooden Jack...
There may you see some hundreds slide in Skeets,
And beaten paths like to the City Streets...”

River 4 ...

By day
a ribbon of steel

By night
illuminated to peels
of water

under a blade
of light...

Of all the freshwater available
We are already using half...

H2O
two parts hydrogen
one part oxygen

but the most part?
That bond
between them...

Between earth and space
the quantity of water

never changes No more
No less Circle-perfect...

Filthy water cannot be washed...

Water... will wear away rock

It is law that whatever is fluid
will overwhelm what is rigid

When we yield – we are strong...

Only fools test the depth of water with both feet...

The river is your fellow traveller...

Give to this river that kindness
you would offer a brother or sister

*

1814 – and ice so thick
an elephant was seen
under Blackfriars Bridge

Some uncanny ones
placed leg-bones of animals
under their soles

tied them on and found
for a high-volt laugh
an iron staff

to have a go
to ski
at that velocity

the bolt leaves its cross-bow...

Let the most absent-minded person be plunged
in deepest reverie – stand that daughter, that son,
upon their legs, set the feet a-going: you will be
infallibly led to water...

[adapted from *Herman Melville (Moby-Dick)*]

[whispered]

*The Ice is now receding – my clay is getting fat
Please put a pebble in Old Jack's hat
If you haven't got a pebble a grain of sand
will do If you haven't got a grain of sand*

if you haven't got a grain of sand

then I'll take you

River 5 ... *[exact middle of bridge]*

Great Crested Grebe
Red-necked Grebe
Little Grebe
Cormorant
Rock Dove
Coot

European Storm Petrel
Black-legged Kittiwake
Tufted Duck
Mute Swan
Mallard
Swift

Northern Lapwing
Northern Pintail
Northern Gannet
Black-headed Gull

Lesser Black-backed Gull
Greater Black-backed Gull

Little Gull
Herring Gull
Common
Gull

River 6 ...

[whispered]

*She
feels about him
the way the river feels about the sea
after much rain...*

*

Before the Bridge, the Raw Material.
Before the Material, the Plan.
Before the Plan – the Dare.
Before the Dare, the Woman and Man.
Before the Human: thoughtless Air.

London, what is it you run on?

Jogging. That slow uncreaking.
A prickle on thighs
as pores unbung. A wood-rasp

in the throat. Stiffness flows.
Jogging. Breath unblocks
like an old pipe –

curt stride lengthens.
Quickened pace
shreds fatty cobwebs:

grey lace hung
in city windows. Jogging
the brain is making space,

making space...

over
where London
keeps going

see the corrugated
face – grey fangs in mouths
of concrete-glass

teeth almost

half-drawn to make the map
wiggled through by silver tides

a threat
ongoing to open England at her
bottom flap

*

there will be a
reckoning
a peeling away

of millennia as a
boy might
unscab a knee

quick as curio
-sity in its
sudden-red oil

to pink up ley lines
lode lines
blackcurrant lavas

dried
with salts-n-
peppers of whitesand

blacksand
&
water

divining water – under
ground rivers...

you surface
to the hissing beat
hugging life or death

on one
snug bridge whose old
man corners

himself in
young light dripping cold
exchanging odour

for odour
till deep in this
chest of city something

tightens
so Thames
beneath him can hear

sea
in that soft limpet
of an ear

he presses to it

*

[whispered]

*Blown sand marine sand
peaty alluvium*

*Silt bed peat bed
pebbled gravel*

*

Thames. Her intimate greys slicken
and still. She puts on her best black.
Drips necklaces of sodium pearls.

She still takes the long way round
her glacial Ex – the one who left her
another dagger between her ribs of bridges.

She wants him back – his ins and outs
of ice. How he breezed in with promises
of peat, clay. Delicious alluvium.

So she dreams heroic North who creaked
and moaned and made her give, grinding
out her juice. She longs for weight

and cold. The broad shoulders.
The ruthless belly, snow-heavy
and white as the moon.

How many times have I packed –
rolled up my streets like stockings

folded my tower-blocks flat as if
they were photos on the mantle?

But each time I do, he stirs –
darkens the grey hall of my estuary

and I offer my back, keep my
back to him, because I know

he'll be stood there, suddenly old
in his clouded face, stooping as he

says – *Give it another go, eh? For
Old Time's sake?* And so I unpack –

return each white square of the city
to its closet, slip back to the dark he

lies in, watching. Slow, so slow, I
unzip myself for him, bridge by bridge.

River 7 ...

autumn

Spawn
in the gravel –
strong tail

soft Eggs
size of a pea
ready

for the Male
soon
black dots

will see
then hatchlings
the Alevins

with yolk sac
attached
eight-finned

Salmon
yet-to-be but
for now

Fry
then Parr
camouflaged

stripes
vertical – spots
then smolting

to silver
that swims hot
with spring

with current
downriver
Atlantic

devouring
herring and eel
until

Salmon
flicks upriver
Spawns

again

River 8 ...

Row thy boat
[John] Norman
Row...

paddled vessels
cutters skiffs staunch
American whaleboats
dragon boats

flags of the Commonwealth
the Spirit of Chartwell
Havengore

Gloriana...

Row to thy lemman
thou Mayor of London...

garlands in the wakes
flowers from royal estates

oyster smacks square riggers
an Avenue of Sail...

Decorated with flag
and streamer

Rowed by watermen
with oars of silver...

incoming planes
see grains of sand
at the watery neck
of Tower Bridge

bells, horns, whistles –
a watcher yearns
for every second
of crowded rain...

*So splendid
the water – her barge
seems to burn*

River 9 ...

Watermen! Watermen!
Eastward Ho!

Anyone for oars?
Above bridge! Below!

**If your pleasure
be Kingston
put down
shillings five**

**for Twickenham
four
and keep you alive**

**to Hammersmith
or Chiswick
half-a-crown –
no more**

**to Putney
or Fulham
two shillings
be blown!**

**to Chelsea
or Battersea
mere pence
eighteen**

**from London Bridge
to Limehouse
one shilling
clean**

**to Lambeth
from the Temple
or the Wharf
of Paul
eightpence
will find you
saintliest land**

**from self
to good self
wherever you stand –
nothing at all!**

<<end of River section>>

Tales from the Bridge

SOUTH SECTION

(Julius Caesar) Brutus...

Romans, countrymen, and lovers!
hear me for my cause,
and be silent, that you may hear.

*

Thames Cargo II

1730...

1730: Downstream – flannel, calicoes, gartering, frieze... hats, hose, tobacco, logs... leather, tin, pewter, lead... shot, alum, Imperial serge.

Upstream – rum, wines, Dunkirk brandy... silk from Italy, Turkish coffee... oil from Gallipoli, indigo, sugar... hemp and linen, rice from Carolina.

*

1860...

1860: Downstream – butter, beer, ale and slops... cheese, coals, cinders, culm... millinery, cutlery, copper, soap... steam engines, iron, steel, salt.

Upstream – indigo, mahogany, rags for paper... copper, spelter, cubic nitre... unrefined sugar, tallow, tea... alpaca, llama, wheat, barley... coffee, butter, blubber, flax... olive, camphor, rhubarb, wax.

*

WWI 1914 – 1918...

Downstream: First World War – arms, munitions, naval stores... motor cycles, medicines, implements and tools... tobacco, apparel, chemicals, tea... biscuits and cakes, machinery... leather, rubber, bacon, lead... brass, steel, boots and ale.

Upstream – asbestos, asphalt, barley, peas... fish oil and blubber, locust beans... currants, lemons, oranges, limes... bitumen, cotton... *the last man alive*.

*

1958 – 2000 [after Common Market 1/1/1973]...

Upstream to the century's end – peaches from Greece, French apples and lamb... ginger root, tobacco, rice... muslin-wrapped carcasses, white mice... wine, lager; onions and grapes; fruit juice in crates... tourists on bridges snapping for fun... crude oil and products: 19 million tons.

* * *

from **First Map of Southwark** 1542

Hyer endith the lyberte off the mayre and beghineth the [lyberte off] the kyng...

*

Bear Gardens [Diary of Samuel Pepys]

“... at the Bear-garden-stairs... But the house so full... forced to go through an alehouse into the pit, where the bears are baited; and... very furiously, a butcher and a waterman. The former had the better all along, till by and by the latter dropped his sword out of his hand, and the butcher, whether not seeing his sword dropped I know not, but did give him a cut over the

wrist... But, Lord! to see how in a minute the whole stage was full of watermen to revenge the foul play, and the butchers to defend their fellow, though most blamed him; and there they all fell to it... It was pleasant to see, but that I stood in the pit, and feared that in the tumult I might get some hurt.”

* * *

Street Names

Bear Lane
Pepper Street
Holland Street
America Street

Clink Street
Wardens Grove
Mint Street
Stoney Street

Maiden Lane
Price's Street
Scoresby Street
Castle Yard

Gray Street
Short Street
Upper Ground
Bank End

Porter Street
Nelson Square
Disney Street
Little Dorrit Court

* * *

The Marshalsea Prison

(excerpt: *Little Dorrit*, Charles Dickens)

The Marshalsea Prison. “It had stood there many years before, and it remained there some years afterwards; but it is gone now, and the world is none the worse without it...”

It was an oblong pile of barrack building, partitioned into squalid houses standing back to back... hemmed in by high walls duly spiked at top... incarcerated behind an iron-plated door closing up a second prison, consisting of a strong cell or two, and a blind alley some yard and a half wide, which formed the mysterious termination of the very limited skittle-ground in which the Marshalsea debtors bowled down their troubles.”

* * *

Totus mundus agit histrionem... (the whole world is a playhouse)

Globe Theatre [Ben Jonson]

“The Globe, the glory of the Bank...
Flanked with a ditch, and forced out of a marish.”

*

Shakespeare:

(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) **Fairy...**

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire...

Oberon...

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows...

Fairy...

I do wander everywhere...
I must go seek some dewdrops here
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear...

Oberon...

Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery...
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.

(As You Like It)

In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding.
Sweet lovers love the spring.
Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
These pretty country folks would lie...

* * *

Kirkaldy's Testing and Experimenting Works

*For over a hundred years
the Kirkaldy's Testing and Experimenting Works
performed stress tests:
pull, thrust, bend, twist, shear...*

*

Tate Modern...

4.2 million bricks.
Northern frontage: 200 metres.
Height of the chimney:
99 metres.

Bankside Power Station
transformed – 1995.
First, deplanting
to a brick shell supported by steel.

1996 and 1997 – further demolition:
removal of the roofs of Boiler House
and Turbine Hall.

Sandblasting, repainting –
demolition of outbuildings.
May 2000 – Tate Modern

opened...

Warhol
Matisse
Picasso
Kapoor

Judd
Kahlo
Herzog/
de Meuron
Rousseau

Duchamp
Kandinsky
Man Ray
Rothko

Gauguin
Richter
Munch
Miró

* * *

Old South...

Hunt elephant under the Tate – mammoth
or straight-tusked, cradled in brick-dust.
Rhino, bison, lion and elk; giant deer,
reindeer, hyaena and us...

Oh, it's sallow, birch and piney!
Oh, it's hazel, elm and oak!
Oh, it's alder, lime and yewey!
That's succession – Gla-Ci-Er!

*

Flint as a hatchet, adze and axe
Flint for a knife – as a cutter or rasp
Flint to shear the shin of a roe
to draw its pink-white grub of marrow

Flint as hammerhead, mace and gouge
Flint as mother of horn and bone
Flint as father buried in a barrow
and deep in the Ape-brain – a single flake

*

*Don't take your bones for granted –
someone might find them someday.
And if they were to need carbon-dating
'porosis might get in the way.*

*So, make the scientist happy –
drink milk-shakes and lie in a bog.
In a million years you'll be famous
in some Museum's catalogue.*

*

1884. Midnight snapped along its faultline
sudden as a pebble onto windscreen.

From Wivenhoe and Peldon, soft England
shaken to its buttresses...

... All along that bed, churches were rumbled
by a rift of hell. Was it old Jack Rock

turning in his sleep? Grumbling at the late hour,
at his missus, for taking all the duvet of ice?

*

Obvious, isn't it – the Thames
as a snake? Yet, I sloughed off terraces
as I side-wound southwards, left you

the odd cast of an out-grown loop.
I unlocked jaws for the drowning
rats of my estuary. I sleep now

in mid-digestion. A 747 passes low,
blushed by sunset, vulnerable
as an upturned frog – and now and then

an old man turns in his allotment
a devil's toenail or into a nest of pebbles
there pushes a pale mammal pink –

the real-time of a child's fingers,
who kneels and fearlessly steals
one cold egg.

* * *

verse from **London Bridge is Falling Down...**

Set a man to watch all night,
Watch all night, watch all night.
Set a man to watch all night,
My fair Lady.

*

Paris Gardens

Paris Gardens
a forest so dim
that to find a man
requires such sight
– the gold eyes
of a lynx...

*

Anchor Brewery [Victorian London]...

See the Anchor Brewery, bridged by light iron bridges that seem slight as spiders' webs from
the pavements... and how well the departments align in considered sequence: the mashing,

the boiling, the cooking, the fermenting, the cleansing, the barrel-filling, the storing, the despatching... and at every instant, that sustaining aroma, all of one atmosphere, which keeps the passing mind to an unbroken draught of thought...

*

Apothecary Lists (16th-18th C) - St Thomas's Hospital

Pickled herrings for a poor man's feet...

Marshmallow root
Horseradish
Buckthorn berry
Rosemary
Bay...

Bath of herbs and sheep heads
for woman suffering from unknown illness...

Conserve of rose
Wormwood
Blessed thistle
Seeds and liquorice...

Scald-head ointment
Lard of goose, sheep, and dung
Honey, poppy
Mustard and vinegar – strong.

* * *

'Accidental Philosophy' – vox humana

[overheard conversation on the Bridge]

“At some point, we'll go there...”

“So – we all have to look...”

“Because it's Time, and it's up to that person to push...”

“I guess they just act that way...”

“I was trying to tell you last night...”

“It's all very interesting. I can send it to you. But you mustn't lose it...”

“You have to be, like, *'I will take care of it'*...”

“Enough! – I buy Rumi for her, and that's it...”

“I'm walking, talking...”

“Sort of going for the other side...”

“City...City something...”

“Basically, you come... whereabouts is...? Basically...”

“It's all suspended...”

“The ends are curling up...”

“Oh my God...I’m walking, talking...”

“I feel as if I’m a physical representation of...”

“Black truffles...”

“It’s grown to be changed... That’s what will make it different....”

“You’re perfect –
And I’ll never change...”

“Can you write your own instructions?...”

“I love you...”

“Precisely”

* * *

When thought
in its bluish skull
cannot roam –

look over your shoulder
over your bones –
float

that dome
down
river...

*

No trick on the eyes –
watch St Paul’s
on its pedestal

sink or rise...

*

10pm...

The Moon shines Bright,
The Stars give a light,
And you may kiss
A pretty Girl
At ten o’clock at night.

* * *

<<end of South section>>