

A month of Poetry Postcards from Dave

David J. Garbutt

1 September 2021

Ingelsteinweg 4d,

Dornach

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Figure 1: The last four cards

Postcards of August 2021

from Switzerland

I

The Night Watch

So, the day is done
we come out — the night
watchers, pointed stick holders,
hat bearers — from our day work
counting gold, or baking bread
or copying manuscripts, we come out
to walk the dark cobbles and punctuate
the streets, rambling like sentences
from an esoteric scroll, with 'Ware',
'Who passes?', 'Stand!'
'Show yourself to light!'



Figure 2: The Night Watch, Rembrandt, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

2

The Basel Cockatrice

In fourteen hundred and 74
 a Basler opened the door
 to his barn, and to his alarm
 saw his cockerel had laid an egg.

Natural law being broken
 (and it being an insecure
 time of war), a trial was called
 and for forgiveness the cockerel did beg²
 alas, in vain, the sentence was plain:
 to be burnt in the square
 called Kohlenberg (a place in Basel, still there)

Now memorial fountains
 of the unborn cockatrice
 pepper the city;
 if you're burning — there's water there.



Basel - Basilisk Fountain Series

Figure 3: The Cockatrice fountain, @Andreas Peters,
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/andip66/49145630176/in/photostream/>

²he/she had a court appointed lawyer

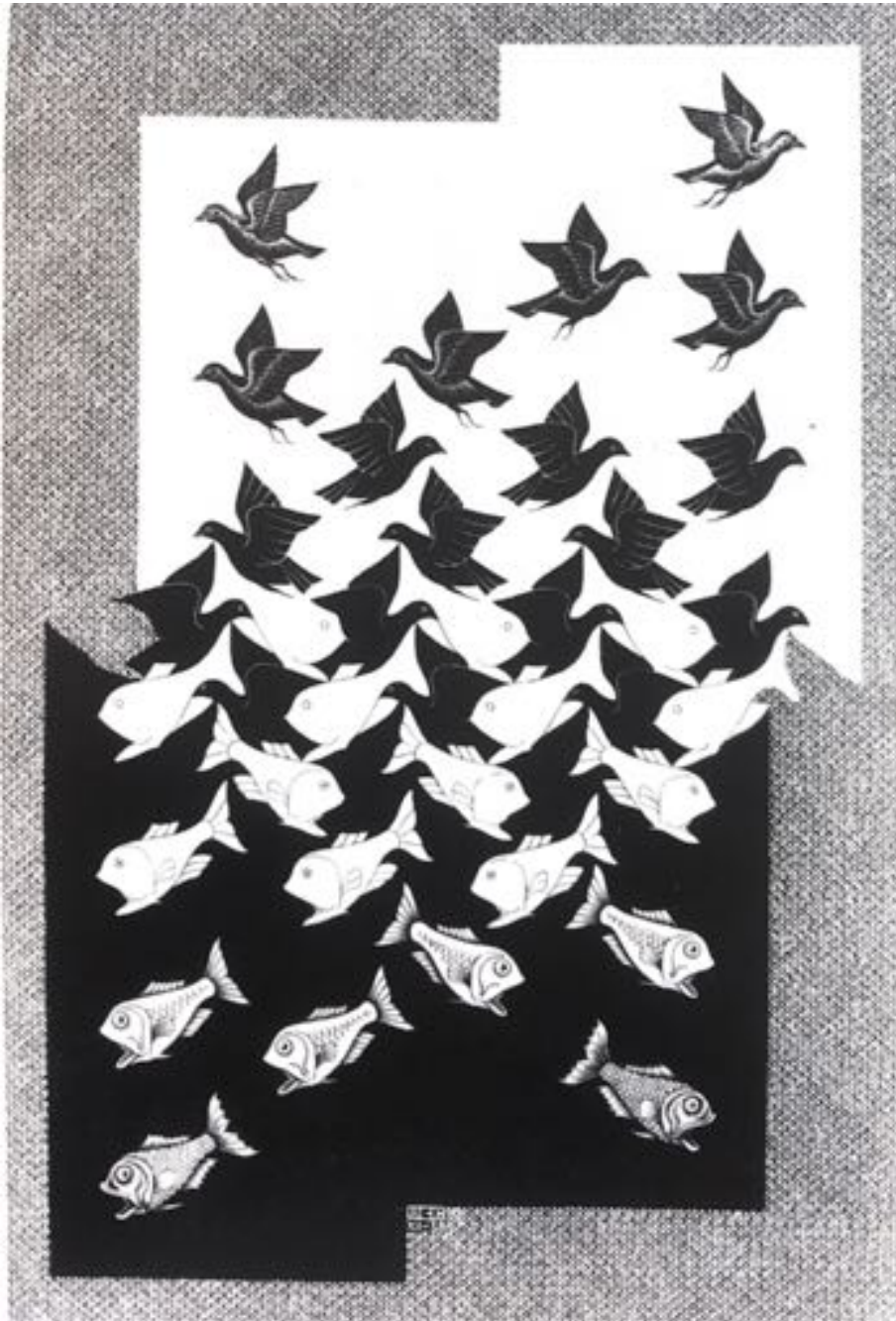


Figure 4: Lucht en water II, 1938, M.C. Escher

3

How Did?

How did a fish
 become a bird?
 — Slowly —
 passing the dream of air
 and walking through trees
 down from egg to egg
 to terrestrial egg
 to flapping limbs
 to limbs with feathers
 and then, to fly
 look down
 and notice
 all fits together.

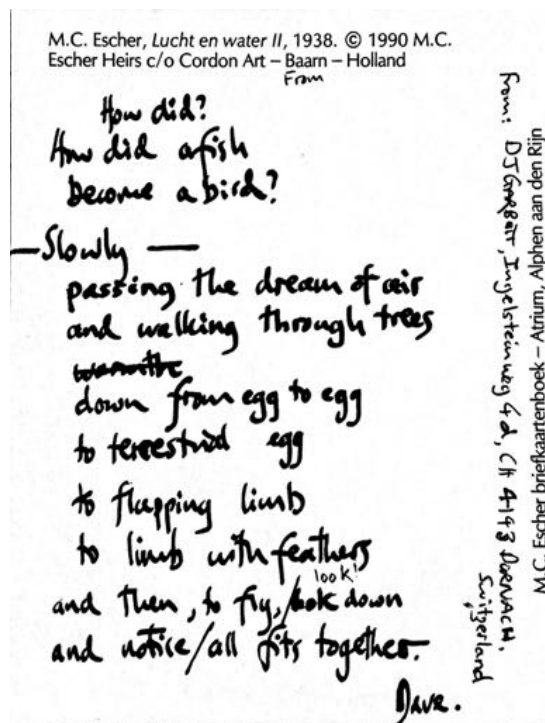


Figure 5: How Did? Post card poem, ©DJ Garbutt 2021



Figure 6: Highgate, from Moor Hill, Photograph by John Couzens, published by Hawkhurst Village Society



Figure 7: Come up from Archway, Postcard poem. ©DJ Garbutt 2021

4

Come up from Archway

Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop
 From low hung branches; little space they stop
 But sip & twitter, and their feathers sleek;
 Then off at once, as in a wanton freak.

John Keats, 'I stood tip-toe upon a little hill', l
 87-90.

Come up from Archway⁴, come up
 to the Red Lion — spend a day with Dickens
 or walk to Copperfield's cottage
 pass the bollards (spare captured cannons
 from Napoleon's army) and on to Sam Coleridge's
 first resting place & The Flask —where
 Hogarth showed us ourselves, & we—
 schlepped another gin, walked on.

That is the Highgate of my youth
 but *here* I came
 late upon the world & lacking friends
 & fame, and found it fine. Places have
 their own —specificity
 connect it right—it's electricity.

⁴[https://www.london-walking-tours.co.uk/free-tours/
 highgate-village-walk.htm](https://www.london-walking-tours.co.uk/free-tours/highgate-village-walk.htm)



Figure 8: Vue de la Ville de Rheinfelden in 1830, Edition Wilfred Merkel, Rheinfelden

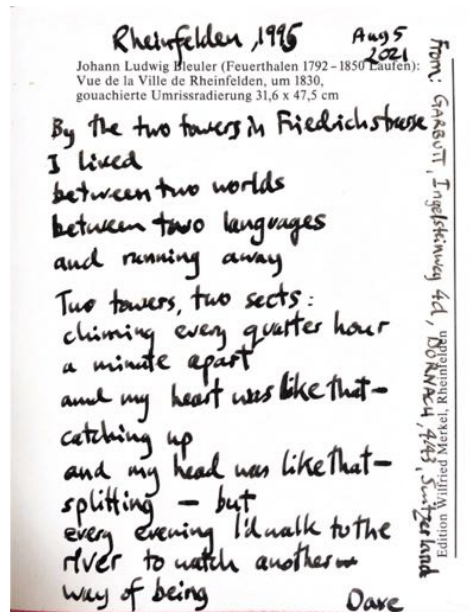


Figure 9: Rheinfelden, 1995, postcard poem, @David Garbutt

5
Rheinfelden, 1995

By the two towers, in Friedrichstrasse
I lived
between two worlds
between two languages
and running away.

Two towers, two sects:
chiming every quarter hour
a minute apart
and my heart was like that—
catching up
and my head was like that—
splitting — but
every evening I'd walk to the
river to watch another
running way of being.



6

Haiku Homage

7 balding heads speak
three-liners for eternity—
we still hear frogs

in ancient temple
pools — cry with the washing fly
add wings to peppers

and weep for lives
faint as grass, yellow on castle
ruins at Yoshino

yes, petals fall down
into wells, but these glow bright
even after Fall

Figure 10: *The Eight Haiku Masters*, Japan, Yosa Buson (1716-1783), Museum Rietberg Zurich, Foto: Rainer Wolfsberger

7 Criccieth Castle

It looks like solid male
assertion MINE
but every castle is a retreat—
a hold-out from the raiding
of war—kitchens, bed rooms
and children's play rooms
and the narrow room
with a view over the sea
and a single desk, candle holders—
from here come the memoirs,
love poetry, the manual of rose breeding,
a field guide to Whales
& Sharks, brief notes on defence
against other men.

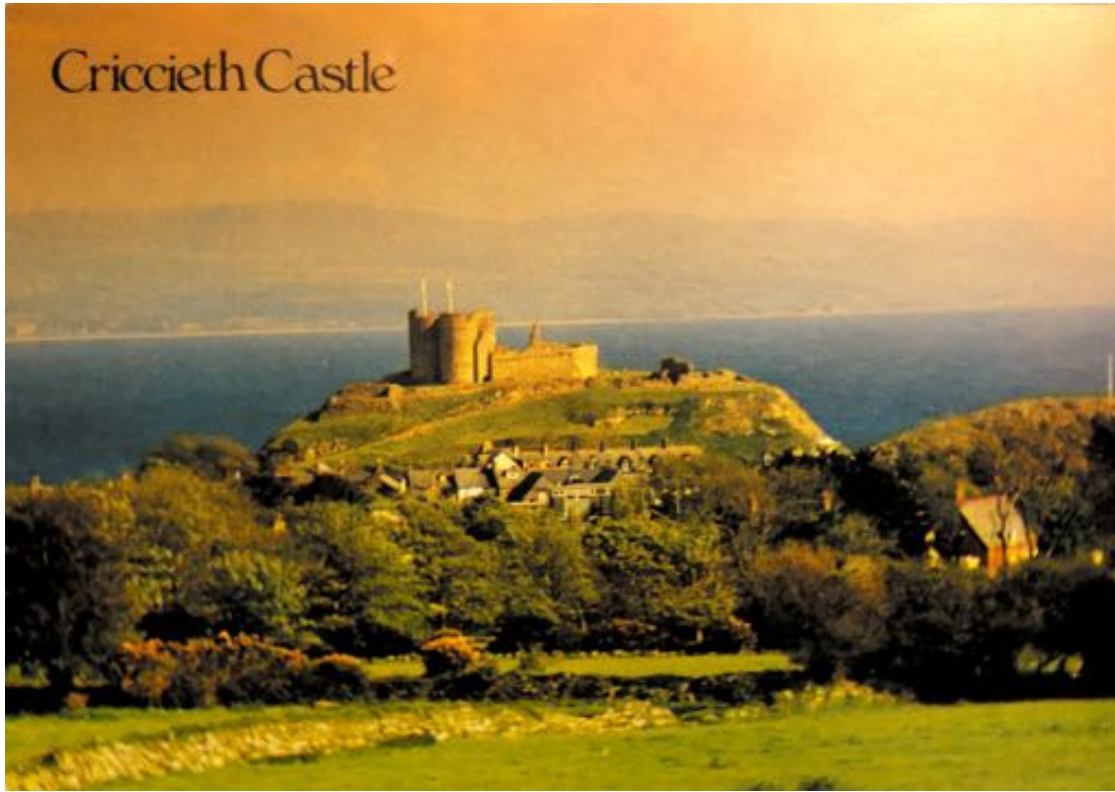


Figure 11: Criccieth Castle, Judges Postcards, Hastings

8

Plum blossoms along the fence

Hey! Come over here!

you won't believe it—
petals, green beetles, spiders—
haikus waiting to be read.

Level up! Stand on
my shoulders, the smell! Just once
a year, for three weeks.

My turn! Come down —now—
that's it. Now Spring will be
on top for months—See!



Figure 12: Ukiyo-e book of 30 Postcards, Magna Books



Figure 13: *Homme, femme et enfant*, Alberto Giacometti, ca. 1931, Basel Art Museum

9

Man, woman and infant

The message of the man
is geometric, certain— 3-pointed —
ready to sail away.

The message of the woman
is open bent wire
into shape brass curves
always ready for return
 ready for holding.

The message of the infant
is — Closer! turn to me
slide over.

IO

A hundred houses

- [1] One human space
for books, bird rings & binoculars
oats & bacon.
- [99] And a wall of well balanced stones
In each a family of petrels
growing here
sheltering before
a life at sea fluttering over it
and beating ahead of each
storm.



Figure 14: Skokkholm —The Cottage

II

The Bluebell Wood

It is, for sure not where Dante
or Robert Frost stood—
just one path & Bluebells live
in the eastern Atlantic woods

But it is where
the green-man passed
the red-cloaked girl
& Maeve the fey—
the Bluebells nodding sagely
in the draught of being passed—
going, as we do, at times,
to the ball, to grandma, or
to the mead-maker's
tatty shingle shack
where the conundrum of yeast
bubbles quietly
under burlap sacks.



Bluebells, Bokes Farm

Photograph by John Hunt

Figure 15: Bluebells, Bokers Wood. Photo by John Hunt. Judges Cards, Hastings

12

The other Alps

They come from the clash of Continents
those high icy heights
that and the tearing down of ice
yet they rest in almost silence—



the *cheough* Alpine, the
stretched song of Accentors
the frantic warble of Wallcreepers



—and so it is with us poets:
pyramidal, grounded, ice-tipped
and yet we sing—to own our place



Figure 16: The Matterhorn, Zermatt, Switzerland

13

Cranbrook Road

Cottages stretch down the hill
 —eventually to the sea—
 and signal to each other
 Red, Green; Stop, Go.

We lived in a go cottage
 and when the thrown
 hourglass sand
 shattered to the floor
 we ran out

—there was the red, the amber
 and far below the road
 to Battle, and across the wealdon
 clay, hedges, fields, the blooming
 white May.



Cottages, Cranbrook Road

Photograph by Hazel Cheal

Figure 17: Cranbrook Road Cottages, Photo: Hazel Cheal, . Judges Postcards, Hastings

Secrets Trees Tell

Tree: RIGHT It's the wind cuts me short
let's you fly where we stand
is everything, only the next generation
moves.

Tree: LEFT What word is that? I am shrieking
in your shelter frozen in your wake
let's wait in snow, in fog
hold our breaths—till March
bears leaves and light.



Figure 18: *Two trees in snow*, photo: J. Schneider / M. Will, Edition Phönix

15
bird/horse

Take the carthorse
pull, pull, the ropes
that lead to cart
rise from the orange mud
and roads with houses.

Jump onto the bird
the phoenix takes you
up, over clay cart-horses
over the blue
and only where
you want to *be*



Figure 19: *Symmetrie Watervarf 76*, MC Escher, 1949

16

White Sand Dune

We ride past the long white mountain
white horses white sand
hoof-steps grass under white sand
whole villages, once I heard.

Sand grains are small, countless—
as are stars and our cells

we trot
past the white mountain
hunting or visiting
we have come this way every year
half-way between grass, sand-grains,
grass and stars.



Figure 20: Riders beneath giant sand dune, Pamir range, China.
©1986 Galen Rowell/Mountain Light, Inc. (The Sierra Club Mountain Light postcard Collection)

17
Sad Cedar

Sad cedar of Lebanon
 stuck here in cold & grey,
 grow high!
 and one day in a storm
 fall and thrash these
 circumscribing bricks—

away

set free class 1 (aged 3)
 up to class 10 (now thirteen)
 and let us home
 to never be away.



St. Ronan's School

Photograph by Pam Carter

Figure 21: St. Ronan's School, Photo by Pam Carter, Published by Hawkhurst Village Society. Judge's cards, Hastings

Stars and Chamæleons

We wait for flies
—there's very few—
just shapes floating around
and an eye watching
I'm not even sure
we're possible
it's confusing to climb around
so we keep still
the wife and I
waiting for a normal acacia
to be restored,
and flies.

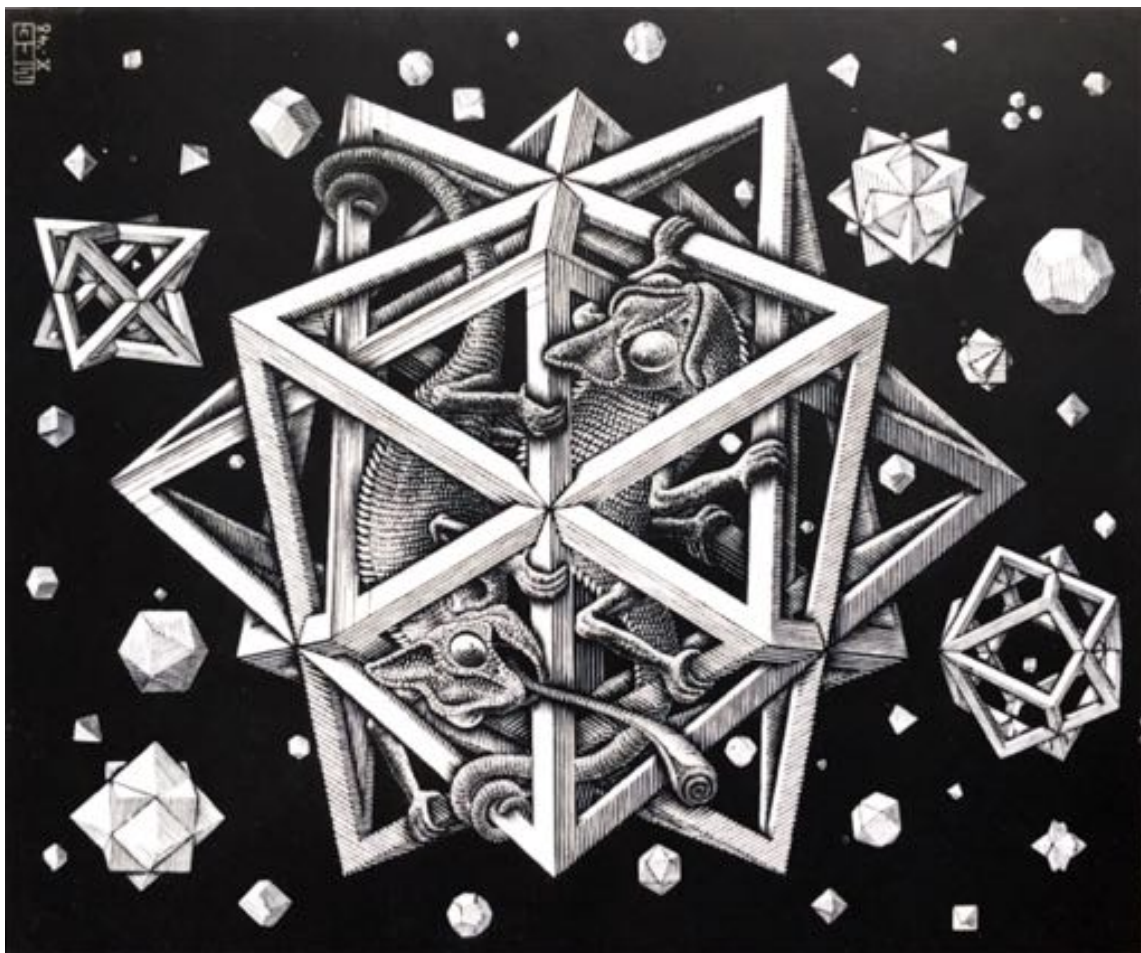


Figure 22: *Sterren*, M.C. Escher, 1948. ©1990 M.C. Escher Heirs, c/o Cordon Art, Baan, Holland

19

Olmstead Point, Yosemite

the haiku stands on
cliff edge it's a bonsai pine
snow on needles \implies south!

the compass wheels: it's
a juniper, needles align
every way but down

to rock rounded — cracks
with trees growing soil: grow \implies rot
 \implies accumulate \implies grow...



Figure 23: Jeffery Pine and Juniper on Olmstead Point, Yosemite, California, USA. © 1986 Galen Rowell/Mountain Light, Inc. (Sierra Club Mountain Light Postcard Collection)

Winter Feeding

Come! *Chucky-Chucky-Halo!*
I'm here, straw's here
eat & grow — *chuck chuck*
—don't watch me—
eat & grow
keep warm
stay here sheep
talk to each other: tales of grass
& snow and winds
& sheltering trees & hero sheep
that stay and grow.



Figure 24: Winter feeding, Stream Lane. Photo: Pam Carter. Judges of Hastings

Sortedam's Lake

I walked around this lake
these houses (where my winter gulls
come to breed) and shared their view:
a city of water, ports, offices & Cap Horn beer.
Down by Nyhaven the best herring on rye
and a tall thin shop filled with amber:
pulled out of the sea & polished & worn
like this city built over marshes
but with lakes that are
left for my gulls.

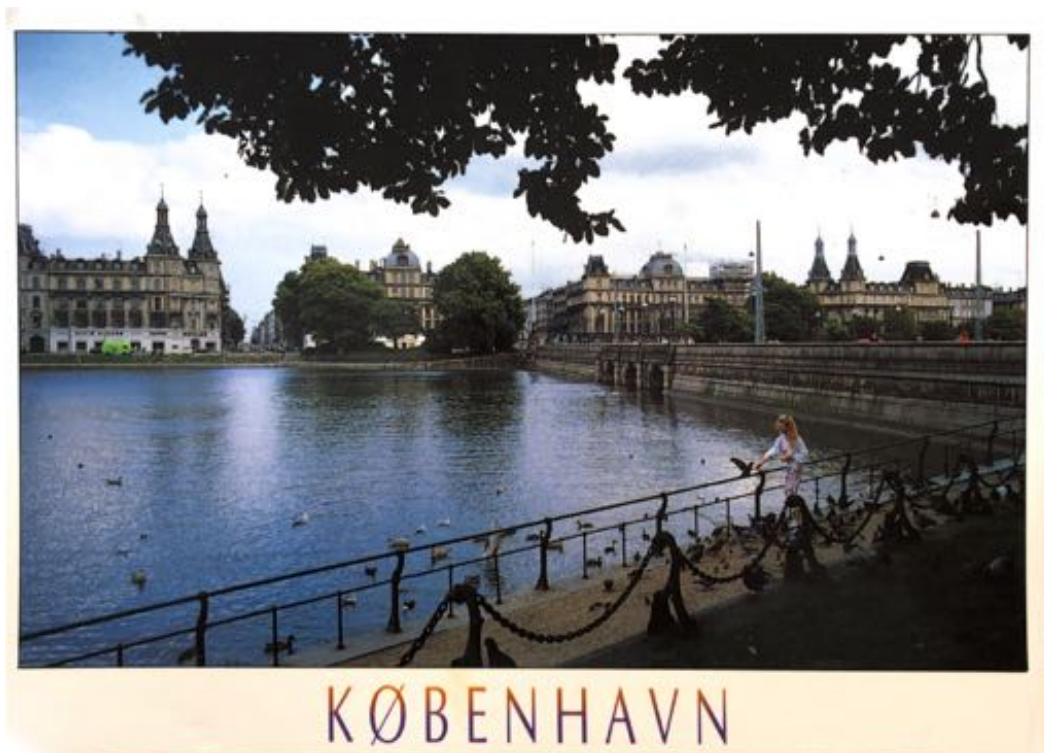


Figure 25: View ove Sortedam's lake, Copehagen. Photo: Tullio Gatti. Edition Cromatica S.L.. Distribution Forlaget Svanen, Christinshavn, Overgaden, N.V. 49B 1414 København K. Danmark TLF 31 57 06 60.

Snap Dragon

Snap dragon jaws of green
open the thorn-edged sword
to slay the tiny human.
Stay! Toss back a flagon
instead, preen, and hear its words:

*Snap dragon! we'll change
we heard the snap of earth
changing the jaws of heat
coming—we give our word!*



Figure 26: Photo ©Marilyn Manser, www.marilyn-manser.ch. Aids-Hilfe, Schweiz.

23

QE2/Concorde/Red Arrows

I sailed on this ship⁶
back from America
and my seventeenth year:
What hopes! What blanks to fill.

I lived in my first house
under the boom of Concorde—
the ancient casement windows shook:
What hopes! What blanks to fill.

In 1992 I saw the Red Arrows
at a local aerodrome boot sale
by myself, from wife and daughter parted:
What hope from boxes filled?



Figure 27: *QE2/Concorde/Red Arrows*,

⁶in August 1969, New York to Southampton.

Renoir Painting by Frédéric Bazille

Here he is, the late-night poet
laying down the under layer
colouring his vocabulary with
a pencil-oil brush-fountain pen
choosing the eye colour, tilt of
a hat and the angle of a wrist
a palette loaded
with a line of red—
for a scarf, a sock,
to underline an eye,
and coral —it grows under water
unseen till it publishes
the reef.



Figure 28: Auguste Renoir, *Frédéric Bazille*, 1867, Euredition, Den Haag

25

The Black Coverlet

Swish into the room
Swirl across the page
there's nothing like a line
walking where we dare not
walk. A pen filling where
we dare not fill, and balancing
the fan line of the fan
that tips the face
To the future? to the past?
to the pianist in the music room
playing chords that swirl
across continents that
swish across the seas?



Figure 29: Aubrey Beardsley, *Der Schwarz Überwurf*, 1893, Parkland Verlag

26

Capercaille

POP of champagne breath
into snowy March woods
he sings at dawn
against his fellows
waits, at the birch bog, waits,
at the pine stands
hillbound lets the years go
the wood climbs up the hill
and every march
bilberries, whortleberries, birch
shake to the weight
and shiver of champagne
POPS



Figure 30: Capercaille, *Tetrao uroga*, Photo Marco Varesvuo, Vogelwarte Sempach, Vogelskalendar 2020

27

Grey Wagtail

The wagtail not from Chiswick
but more *che-sweet*
bounces on the Black Poplar trees
that frame the river,
flits low over water
to find a rock.

Waggler, you know only that the river,
—your world—is linear
and wet, and flowing,
filled with food
and tail dancing.

Mossy rock-runner
willow-root watcher
footbridge snag-singer.



Figure 31: Grey Wagtail, *Motacilla cineraria*. Photo: Tomi Muukkonen, Vogelwarte Sempach, Vogelkalender 2019

Barred Warbler

Hello crazy! Who are you lookin' at?
Wanna start something?
Come here and say that!
You think? You and whose army?
OK watcha got?
Binoculars? Pah!
Tick List? Bah! humbug!
Long lens? I stare at you
beggone!



Figure 32: Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*, Photo: Ralph Martin, Vogelwarte Sempach, Vogelkalendar 2019

29

Two Dwell

Why do you linger, sad pierrot,
by the lake? what ties
you here by birch, rowan, and Queen Anne's
Lace? Do you not know the
singing of the heart and frame,
the price of angled wrist
and elegant swirl of a skirt?
And of the dance of two
know ye not? The promise
of a loose-tied sash, the
mystery of a maskéd smile.

Or is it that you know all this
too well?



Figure 33: Aubrey Beardsley, *The flirtacious Pierrot*, 1894. Parkland Verlag



Figure 34: Nyoirin Kannon (endless compassion), Painted Yew. Japan, Heian age, 10th century.
©Nationalmuseum Nara, Exhibition, Rietberg, Zurich (18.2-9.4.2007)

30

Nyoirin Kannon

1 Sept 2021, Schiesser's Café, Marktplatz, Basel

So it passes, the month, the cards
the daily dip into deep waters
kick to the surface holding
the wheel, the lotus bud
the smile of Kannon
here it is encompassing.

I sit by the window
mirrored in sky, trees,
the red stone across the marketplace,
breathe in: there is no sigh
stuck here.

Bonus Postcards

Our Trails

Our trails across the world
thin lines unkempt cons
across the sky that trail
attenuated but not gone.

Woven, we are woven,
with the twist and twirl
our presences not broken
our voices, heard, hurled
bouncing, trailed across the world.

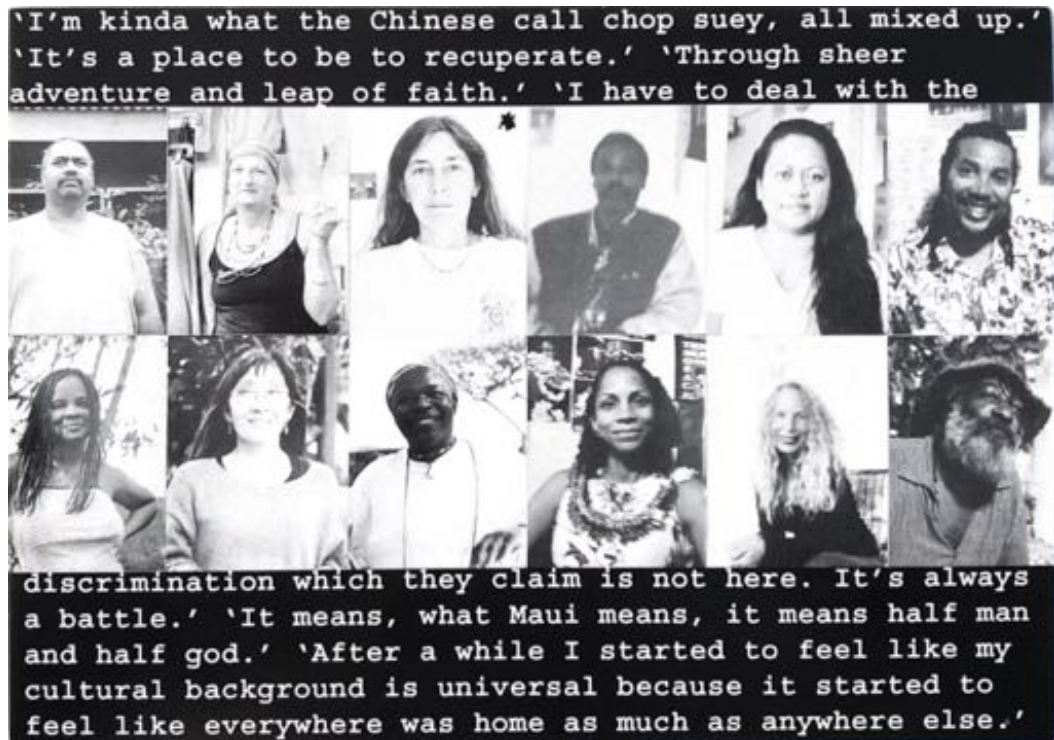


Figure 35: *What does Maui mean to you?*, Images and sound piece, ©Emily Garbutt, 20.007 Witley Press, UK

32

At Rheinbrücke Helvetia waits to cross

Always we have somewhere
 new to go, deep rivers to cross,
 and we have to go,
 take the fire, spear & shield, suitcase
 and family with us—
 over to peace, over the water,
 Salmon leap here in August
 but long ships will come
 up the Rhine in years to come
 and Romans sooner, yet here
 we will live, love, weave stories.



Figure 36: Helvtia by Bettina Eichin, Basel.

The Moor, Hawkhurst

This is not where I am
but where I was, what?
forty years, more, ago.

I walked away
it was my first wife's parents' home
until we split I thought I fitted in,
but afterwards, I didn't.
Too much reality?
Too...*something* anyway
it's lost & now the people too
but I see them sometimes
cooking potatoes, pulling weeds together,
fanning the fire smoke
shaping oak into *things*
and forging footpaths through illegal fences



Figure 37: View of Hawkhurst from the tower of St Lawrence's Church (The Moor). Photo Brian Piper, Judges of Hastings.

34 Riverside City

Riverside city watching water go past
 solid in stone that survived
 an earthquake, waiting for the next
 and salmon to come again
 (the Rhine is being restored)
 and the swifts next April
 and the streets full of lime trees
 that smell of love (in all the best ways)
 and the summer fair, winter carnival,
 but we enjoy it now—open air
 cinema, streets with espresso,
 the market; walk and breathe
 you'll find your way there.



Figure 38: Basel, from top left, clockwise:
 Cathedral, Old City Gate, Parliament, Market, Barefoot Friars Squares.
 14143 ©Photoglob Zürich/Vevey

35

Ducks on this Pond

Ducks on this pond
daffodil banks
frogs in the water
duck-weed floats
all watched forever
by us peeping back to the past
to that March day
when John and his camera
went out looking for pictures
saw the church
and found the pond
then came for tea.

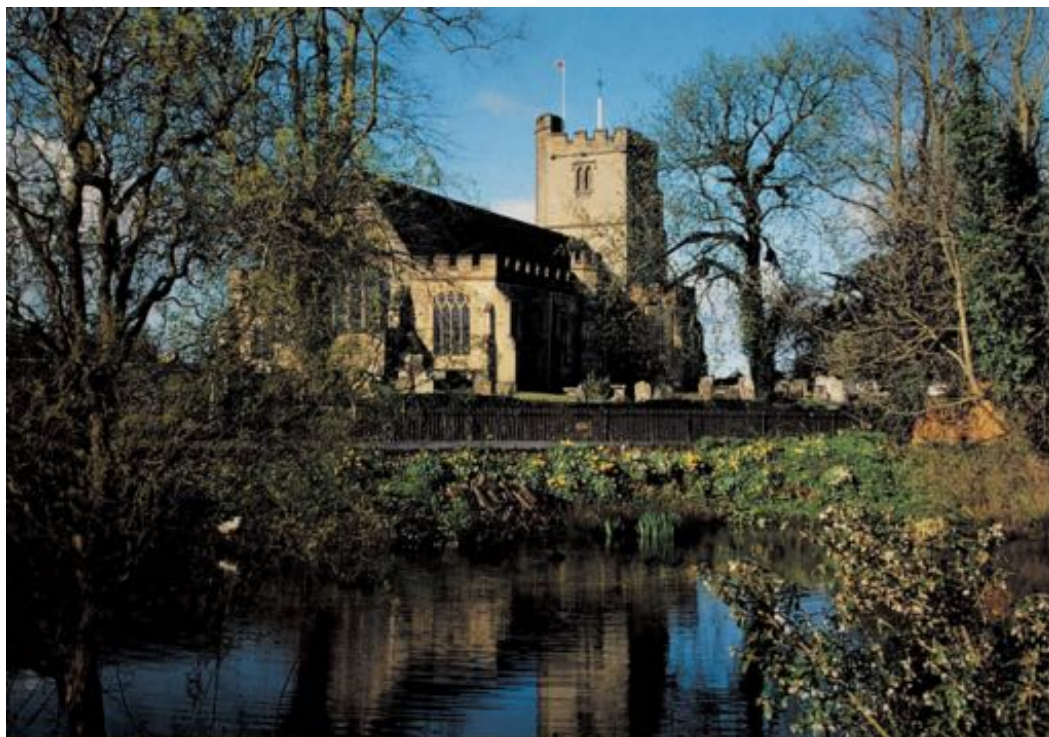


Figure 39: St. Lawrence's Church, Hawkhurst, Kent, UK. Photo: John Hunt. Judges Postcards, Hastings

36
Mên-an-Tol

I'm ready
let me pass through
I follow my mother, her mother, her mother, and all
back to the day this stone
was fresh cut and newly erected
and the sun was as it is today
the moon a little further off
dreams & wishes were as far and near as now
one need has kept the path here bare
and villages full

let it go on forever:
our coming, our passing, our passing through
the stone hole of want & light.

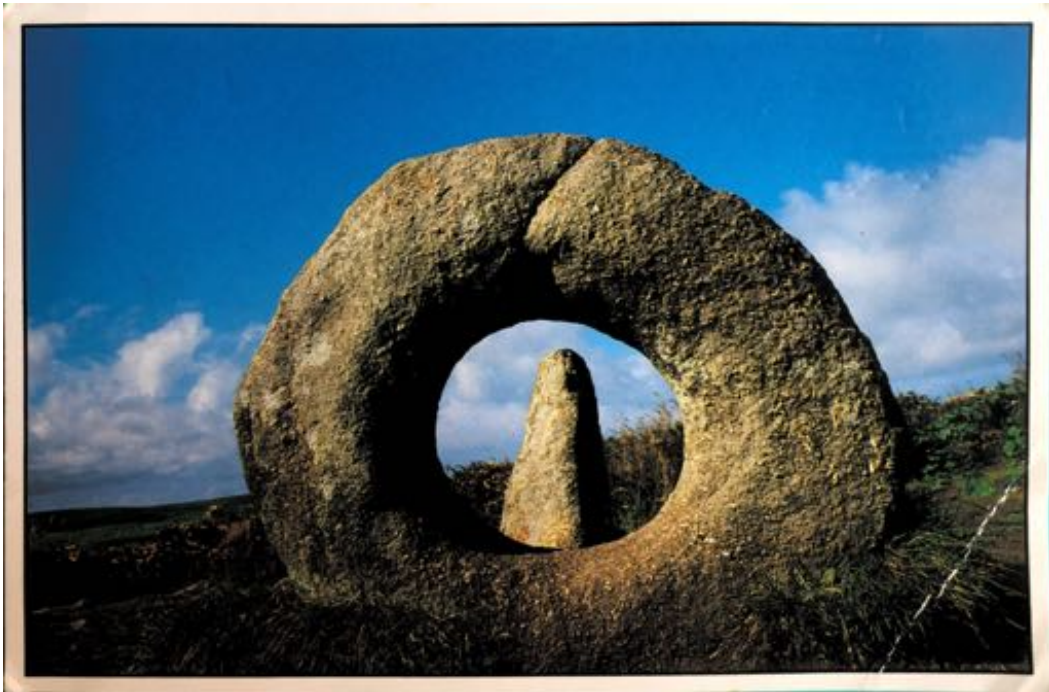


Figure 40: Mên-an-Tol, Cornwall. This holed stone on the West Penwith Moor dates from 4,000 years ago. Many people believe that passing through the stone will cure ills and infertility.
147b Photographed and published by Bob Croxford +44 326 240180

37

Out of my way

Ah! road rage in the *Bois de Boulogne*
so nothing's new, yet we all belong
on a horse, in the *Bois de Boulogne*
in our place at the edge of the road

Move over!

But there's space for us all, for horses
& trees in the *Bois de Boulogne*
with sadlers & tailors & riding crop makers.

In shiny top hat and white leather
gloves—in your rage on the road
I don't think you see
Bois for the trees.



Figure 41: *Riders in the Bois de Boulogne*, 1873, Auguste Renoir, briefkaartenboek, Den Haag

38
pose

pose
by the veranda
and talk to me
while white painter paints
us as we are
relaxed as wooden columns
—all of them will pass—
as will we
by the water, by the trees
as bricks crack
and overhead, the passing geese.
So, talk to me.



Figure 42: *Summer house in the royal garden, Patan*, in 1853. From a water colour in the society's collection. Painted by H. A. Oldfield, surgeon to the British Residency in Nepal, 1853-1863

39
Reader

Light from the window
strikes the flowers
their light illuminates the pages
Flower, book, face
and from the bodice full
the dress blossoms,
swells, with flowers
hats, and seen through pages
(lit from behind)

ourselves, our stories,
the world, our future
our fathoms.



Figure 43: *Title plate for a book catalogue*, Aubrey Beardsley, 1896. Parkland Verlag

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Take the carthorse, ²³
the haiku stands on, ²⁷
The message of the man, ¹⁷
The wagtail not from Chiswick, ³⁵
They come from the clash of Continents, ²⁰
This is not where I am, ⁴⁴

We ride past the long white mountain, ²⁴
We wait for flies, ²⁶
Why do you linger sad pierrot, ³⁷