

The
Edifice
AND
Me



GERARD
LUTHER
CLARKES

The Edifice and Me

dedicated to Robert Poge Harrison

and Soren Kierkegaard

by Gerard Luther Clarkes

|

b irds talk

they scratch

yes pigeons do

on dirt

!!ve watched them

from my window

at the farm

a nd too, my parents

come and go with brood

to be more real

to rise up to the edifice

of civic life

which is bird-scratching

cursive

formally, in polished stone

m y parent!s world
 with them I am...why not
 and thus, my scratching here
 I scratch a lot...
 all that I think
 like an obsessive bird
 as if whatever!s scratched
 might mean a lot
 and you do too
 then hear me out...
 so your reply, I!!! listen to
 to your prescriptive
 scratching sound

j t came to me
 by skill of markings in
 brown, blackish, matted dust
 and broad-sward-green
 made nature!s best
 by nutrients in bottles,
 boxes, bags
 turned fertile, ground
 so good turf spreads
 to where Mom goes with Dad
 on public lawns they!re drawn
 to solemn graves, landscaped
 ..."round monuments
 and I was there...Mom, Dad and Sis
 one day by duty made

attend...my uncle Fred's
 last-posting deep, interred
 white lilies placed
 on Freddy's grave
 ...by Mom and Dad
 this honorific sad, sad thing
 sweet pain that gives
 much contour to their lives
 my life...so then, death lives
 and never dies, in us
 at least the symbol's real
 yet even so my stomach dared to churn
 as if I had not eaten on that day
 although I had, also
 my neck was sore, from bending down
 by pain knew I'm alive
 because, one thing that's true, is
 that I like to move
 and if I can't, I squirm
 as if caught in a trap
 too tight by far

 that's why I squirmed
 and why my body
 felt like lead inside
 my skin like iron-rust
 and so to me, perhaps to everyone
 all forms of duty wear me down
 as does all I must do
 that does not rise
 of, by itself, in me

O h woe, oh woe, woe, woe, is me
 because it feels so strange
 the tugging weight of world
 against all that seems real
 in me...no thing runs free
 freely, like in the stories told
 where Batman, Robin fly around
 as everyone just stands and stares
 at them, at all the world...spellbound
 but me, I neither stand nor stare
 as world runs by outside of me
 and too, I watch my moves
 as if I were an actor, me the play
 and try to see with sharp director's eyes
 an amalgam of Mom and Dad and even God...
 what God, I can't pretend to know
 but something outside claims my inside
 begging me turn inside out...for them !

w here can I go to not pretend
 just be and nothing else
 in all that is just me who strains
 at everything as artifice, not me
 who thinks pretend, pretend, pretend
 at every gesture named, will ask...
 what is that standing grandly there (?)
 as if entitled to my land and sky (?)
 that august Doric Temple claims too much
 as much as all

the great-wide swinging-gates
 of Heaven proper named, along with Hell
 the thinking of it makes my collar tight
 enough to hate all shirts and ties
 pretentious shackle, hangman's rope
 in shirt and tie, I die, a thousand strokes
 for mother's smile approving me
 got-up to look the part she'd have me play
 on Holidays and Weddings, or
 when someone close (like uncle-Fred) has died
 I must prove serious, boy-fool

but duty, though, it stays too long
 must end, as every sun goes down
 and mother's cozening glances
 stern remarks and Dad's forbearance
 ...just a look, one look from him
 fails now, once safe in bed
 my covers covering my head
 to wait, I wait...the whole night waits
 for succour sleep, the sleep I love
 of scrambled dreams
 that bend to contours, valleys, hills and streams
 in rush of play that breaks the world outside
 into small, shiny, glistening parts, just right
 of light, not foreign to my magic way
 turned into realms of dreaming sense
 until I'm floating, on and on
 away from eyes that hold me down
 tied to the chair, pinned to the ground

locked in my room, escape at last, to disappear
 so only chance says firmly where I go
 and nothing presses hard on me
 my nights of dreams made day
 no one here says, I must abide
 chastened and bound, obey
 while they look down, down, down at me
 approve or not...whatever I contend
 who'd have me be, what I would not
 for them...become with them
 old errors shielded from, fresh-eyes

this way we stood, Mom, Dad and Sis and I
 among the tulips, lilies...sward, turf-green
 unspoken, token reverence, bowed down
 the monuments stared back at us
 stone graves...as looming cenotaphs
 as marble steps that rose
 to almost ancient temples not yet dust
 refuting claims, that nothing counts
 so that this artifice of grand
 of beauty noble, good
 more real than all the appetites we know too well
 remains inverted larger life
 while chasm spreads
 between poor me and it
 a deep and mighty gap I cannot bridge
 (the pit of truth, the truth of death)
 when relics monumental rear their heads
 bespeaking foolishness to dream so high
 so foreign to my daily plight, alas.

must I not think...
 to tear the riddle from its roots
 like pots and pans remain mundane
 ...a hero...dreaming...only dreamed ?
 my feet on slippery rocks below
 my head above where Heaven goes
 and so I care and dare, to make a thing
 not any thing...from me of me and yet
 not me alone
 to find all grace and pain of love in care
 yet hesitate
 but only "cause it, means so much
 though caring less has no rewards
 ...so care too much
 in fear that evlry dark, unlikely root
 of being must be...
 must be...and what is that ?
 the mountain each must climb
 to stumble, trip and fall
 on rocks and boulders
 larger yet, and some so rough
 your knees scrape on them, as you go

I go. Each trail, alone
 no one may share our trail-pain
 nor theirs can we...except to claim
 affinity, with other beasts
 and speak to agonies they own
 as well our own

the world, in me and me, in it
 the synergy of conscious being
 our journey measured by
 ...the starlit space outside
 inside, corpuscular...
 my skin and sweat
 the distance gained or lost
 the thing, the thought, the being!s real
 and yet from where...
 does this real pain descend (?)
 and still from what and where
 corruption come (?)
 ...why upon me...
 instead of joy, con-stant
 who must abide
 the consciousness...of other men

and still I would be more, than me
 I would be you and suffer all
 the ins and outs
 of your interstices
 and beg forgiveness, in your place
 and even wear your face
 so being you, more than I am
 right now, myself
 this is the dream...to give me up
 to be transcendent to
 the very core (of me)
 be me in you, be love
 love is the thing
 escape the bonbons wrapped in pain

mere idiot of go and come
 scrubbed, dressed-up with shirt and tie
 wait up-on orders, from my Mom and Dad
 by trickery conspire, to make them glad
 yet never prove myself to be
 ...what they are now
 still hovering "round
 the citadel and monuments
 their (reverential) certitude
 refuting dust, as dust...as dust
 as dust

presumptive cursive destinies
 formalities, authority and rules
 informed by hope, that they will last
 scratched deep in polished stone
 grand tombs and markers
 row on row of reverential garden-graves
 they have no credence in my heart
 my heart of heart...my soul of souls
 my appetites of being
 my ritual grinding, daily out
 squeeze joy from what I know I know

and with this prospect beckoning
 comes awe
 and fear!s exuded here, the threat
 of strangely queer, unknown
 as all that is not known in me, remains
 sweet honey promised...gain, lose, win

the other land of country, far away
 the languages, no one can speak
 poured out from lips so beautiful
 they can't be real
 from some place far beyond
 the cresting hills
 beyond the sea, surrounding me
 that says to me, give up
 become...what you can never be
 heed graves of men, men once
 and honour them...obey the rules !
 although there is, no unity I know
 nor time, nor space, harmonious
 affinities obtrude from language
 common to our knowing and unknowing need
 seeks partners in the mist
 desire turned hope makes shape...or
 fortuity alone finds meaning
 greater than each meaning sought
 so then we say...ah...hahh
 ...I thought a dream...
 a wish born lax, from idleness
 more than right-labouring with rules
 then gratefully, take-up the harness
 and trudge on...delighted at
 the unexpected gifts
 surprised much more than ever dreamed
 beyond best schemes
 and so we know, much subtlety
 lurks somewhere, there

nor will I yield as offering to, belief
 an Isaac being, for Jaweh's vain continuance
 but piss on graves and watch
 the mighty sun set, as
 the precious souls of men's
 night-shadows dance upon
 the tombstones there
 and lie among them, saying...

"Dawn...great dawn..please come...
 please come again...and shine on me"

nor will I tremble as dawn comes
 just as I did not fear
 morbidity's dark-shaded night
 yet error prone and powerless,
 not proud, rejoice my lonely passage in
 the world's gained entrance into me
 ...my faith, Eternity's abandoned me
 as well all sacrosanct and holy
 and believe...madness alone will be
 yet never fear, nor tremble while
 authority's clean-linen is intoned
 my path will rise and fall by clarity,
 sincerity and shrinking from all
 decadence and hate hypocrisy...that's all

and if I've learned a lesson, it is this
 that I must match mundane, dull, life
 to the unlikely truth of dreams...because
 we know substrates reside, behind the veil
 baked into scones and bread

a holy ghost, where nothing surely, holy
 ever was. and then speak words that cease
 before in front of, what!s behind
 all that we speak in silence and bright sound
 declare, I say: what!s this ?
 ...what is that question framing earth and sky (?)
 ...whence came desire and care (?)
 ...wherefore, no other place to go (?)

w e cannot run from ruin of it
 by fear alone, escape
 from everything that welcomed us
 proclaiming life, the whole of it
 not free for give and take, the gift
 our journey is...in spite of death penumbral
 joy-seek and light
 in Grand-dad!s painting of Mount Vernon
 in the hall...
 tunes from the old-square grand-piano
 in the hall...
 the rockery where Dad will sit and drink
 one single glass of tepid, yellow ale
 that!s all...
 primordial, rough scratching, on
 ...the limestone wall
 so after you and I are gone
 how else but go...and come and care
 and care...same tune again
 although I know death fights pitched battles
 at-the-stations, vibrant-life fulfils

in youth!s resentment of decay
 and cyclic rise and fall with no escape
 while sentiment for all, decrepitude
 and aimless patterns, unresolved
 begs harsh impatience for
 the warp and woof
 worthy or not, long passed
 and yet, best love
 must hold all nature in its grasp
 not just the sunlit fields of spring
 and so forbear
 its selfish, rampant self
 because...forthcoming old
 time-flowing, flows
 and none can hold
 once this, now that
 onto youth!s priv!leged...slipp!ry bank

||

t he garden is
 although no garden grows
 where chaos, death
 and dying will not go
 perfection!s barren...high up in the sky
 small caring here
 turns bounty from the motile
 humus, kneaded clay
 one pain, one death

one vision singular
 makes all the world go round...
 begs fertile grandness from
 the humble earth
 so struggling and forbearing all
 ...anguish is shamed
 despair restrained...
 by those who see to flowering
 our hope in soil's ascension now
 enriched, is born
 so all that's given...stays
 no edifice steadfast
 on spinning Earth...and yet again
 as atoms leapfrog messengers
 in starry skies
 that factored numbers don't include
 nor any fantasy (describe)

and still I care too much
 and failing care again...too much
 though care too much will end
 when nature will obtrude, on every man
 who would be now and now
 who seeds and shelters in a fertile grove
 since husbandry is war
 against the cyclic rise
 and fall of life/death bargains
 to begin again, again
 and all morality that springs from it
 is sentiment

reap wheat, oats, barley...rape
 blood, slaughter, war...ploughshares
 and swords the same
 too strong the words...forever and sublime
 the vision seeded is, the season!s bliss
 yet trust and love and hope
 which yet, foul weather ends
 like plague, from place unknown...again
 good weather tempts, again becomes
 where mere death cannot go
 so linger I, and dig
 soil-dark-finger-tipped
 hands, roots, wind, rain
 find more, than sown
 eke out fair-meaning, from
 retreat, retire, stay, come...advance
 where, hyacinth, lilac
 trillium and...rose zephyrs stray
 deep flow-er-ing troves
 worked-well, unfold
 from flotsam, drift of rain, earth, sand



soft silence and hushed air
 light!s flowered stillness, here
 where all I was, I am
 to wonder at the scene
 that had its ambient way with me

communion, mystery, transfigured days
 no slyness here, nor pacts
 nor policy, nor diadems
 nor weights, nor measures, rules
 except, unburdened, busy hands
 seek beauty...private and public viewed
 where light and flowers speak
 until I stole succinctly back
 back to my other place, homeward
 the trolley rolled along
 the traffic hummed
 sun, hot-intense
 girl smiled at me...I wiped my brow
 shirt-blue, sweat-stained
 and yet...I will return to be
 what all I was
 presence more real
 than any I had known
 yet why...why, where do scents loved
 retire, from sanctuary home
 so few will go...I seldom do

what can it mean
 when best and good and right
 looks down upon the greasy spot, my life ?
 hardly become...not yet
 reflected light that heaven shines
 to urge I be...much better yet
 although !!!I shed no tears
 for me...and seek a cabin

in the woods, concealed (from history)
 where all my heart's unquiet questions
 egg me on...no answers come
 in ev'ry land, bee-suck, suck I
 heart-beating...cowslip
 bell, rose and hyacinth, resolves
 the state I'm happy in
 and there right now, I lie

IV

I like mistress-maid, alone, bereft
 her need for care
 would have you near, because
 love cares, and then
 care loves too much
 love ruined, plant dies
 but where, beyond dull care
 is there ?
 except perfection's ornaments
 in packages that line the walls
 which commerce claims
 with ersatz trinkets, labelled
 that, efficiency corrupts
 for profit where I had once toiled
 for apples on, the apple-tree
 from barren soil and wages then
 my wages were sweet labour yet

a t church recess, they sip
 from clear glass-cups
 ...pale-yellow tea
 poured carefully, from small clay-pots
 and chat...it's lovely then
 some with sliced lemon and
 six-grains of Himalayan salt
 or honey stirred, with tiny spoons
 and so...decorum, and
 politeness rules the beast

s on, Alex
 swept...by choppy waves, away
 Lake Huron...father strove
 to reach him there
 and son called, "Dad !"

 and Dad called " Son...son...son !"

 dove after him

 until he too, too soon stayed down

e ach robot worked on tricks
 a thousand men might do
 because, they had abandoned
 ...causal flesh and factored death
 with such impunity
 both God and Devil smiled
 for fear these androids turn on them
 and so, one side all labour

pain and strugg-el-ing
 had disappeared
 just where unblemished flowers grew
 that never needed fresh-clean-water
 sun, nor happy air
 to see them framed as cold perfected-life
 and other side so far as eye could see
 decay was spread
 just puffs of smoke and acrid air
 like no thing lived
 and all that had, stayed rotten
 charred or burned. except hag worms
 yet all aspiring led to flow-er-ing
 in spite of death

E state Sale: Robert, John
 Mandible, Doone Galleries
 Montreal, Quebec, Wednesday
 July 7, 2010 at 10:30 a.m. Preview
 date to be announced containing:
 Cartier, Rolex, Chopard watches
 watch cabinets, Faberge eggs
 objet d'art, polar-bear bunny
 honey bear, fine jewellery
 Montblanc and Dunhill writing
 instruments, paintings, sculpture
 collectibles, Gibson, Dobro, Cole
 Clark and Hummer guitars, Leica
 and Canon cameras, fine bedroom
 dining room and living-room

furnishings, Louis Quattorze
 ottomans, chairs, sofas
 bookcases, dining-tables,
 night tables, mirrors and sundry
 credenzas and bookcases, oriental
 carpets, mac laptops...monitors
 printers copiers, shredders
 70" Sony Plasma HD
 wine coolers, safe, lamps
 and rare French Wines
 Jaguar XKR Coupe, Skidoo
 Rotax 1200 GTX snowmobile
 Simplicity lawn tractor...
 all any man, might rightfully
 desire...until...flesh-junk
 like him...mere stuff...expires

and so...unlike mere things
 real-stories move
 both in and out, of flesh
 as days change light
 and won't stay fixed
 great skies play-out
 on skin...grass cool and wet
 smooth bodies, earth-bound
 cling to it
 and two great velvet saucer-worlds
 her eyes, unmasked, undressed
 bore naked, deeply into him
 he into her...for sunlit days
 now children play

V

a nd stone, sky, water
 air, plant, bird
 to fill my need, taste true
 from tending fields
 job done...provoked by wonder
 allness drifting draws me on
 until I thirst for mountains
 and broad-valleys, deep
 and naked run against the wind
 where clear-eyed farmers
 modest women. frugal, honest men
 plough and plant and weave
 and bend and mend
 as my bark slips from shore
 to sterner light
 but, still...no dancing to my tune
 no plough, nor ox
 not one good sheep, nor goat, my own

| saunter Plaka, cap askew
 beneath that old, star-blanket sky
 and throw a stone
 and watch it skip, along
 then trace a circle in the air
 the world stares back
 this time I too, stare back
 and think, somehow my ocean mind

in trees and plants and mossy-root
 resemblance finds, in wholesome hours
 reckoned among, the herbs and flowers
 a better real...more real
 than worlds known more
 this fecund nook
 but why (?)...if not because
 behind their petal-shapes of varied form
 pure essence lies
 or else as vital flowering
 they do all by themselves
 as beauty good...sheer innocence
 in one great single unity, survive ?

meanwhile, I paste and glue
 conjuring dogs and cats and birds and brooks
 fruit trees and melons, piled in carts
 and witness light, spread over fields
 likewise, my arms reach out
 to where she lies
 just gnawing idly on a peach or pear
 near water-fall
 brook gurg-el-ing, below
 all blooming and...her blooming says
 ...all blooming says
 she should be there (for me)
 eternal maiden, sweet and fair (for me)
 her laughter shifting...eyes, skin, hair...
 infusing me with pure delight.
 as birds of evening span the valley, past

the sprawling, Georgian manse
 wheel and circle, and I watch them
 then, as tether breaks...boat drifts
 to where new lights along the river's bank
 land, water, sky pours into green
 vast waiting sea, in me
 and I of course, pour all of me, back into it
 because I know primordial fish, still swim in me
 and all of throbbing me will pass
 to elements that speak new languages
 and then they too will pass
 no thing of just itself, but linked, like me
 to stars and flowers and grass
 of then and now and grass, on grass
 on grass, to come

but now, for now, I care
 to search for greater good
 outside somewhere...to trade
 my valued self, inside
 because, for now, right now
 I cannot know...I cannot be
 nor love...a little bit
 (nor genuflect, to edifice)
 and yet by odd fragility
 I cannot see, touch, feel, nor treasure be
 unless someone makes more than what I am
 who would be more...than me.

END

Sunday, August 21st, 2010
 Prince Edward Island