

*From The Book of
Inundations.
Bangkok De Profundis.*

In a time of rising waters,
He has cried to thee oh Lord.
It was becoming hard to bear,
waking up each morning as a cockroach.
His junkie girlfriend stole the laptop,
the phone kept ringing at odd hours,
and insomniacs haunted him,
invading his rooms to smoke Old Delirium
in strange contraptions, fashioned
from detergent bottles and glass tubing.

False prophets network,
scares and admonitions,
"Seek shelter from the coming flood"
for markets fall, and pundits pall
like necromancers shocked by futures,
awed at stocks' exposed positions.
More flashbacks of those corpses wrapped
in blood-stained sheets where Hades meets
Suwintawong highway,
and demons dressed as strutting cops

play out satanic games with car wrecks
and six lanes of hurtling pick-ups,
loaded with the damned.
Nothing stops, apart from hoping,
in that darkness;
hoping, and the grand design of God.

Years of debris; a throwaway world
is gagging his high watermark.
The residue of empires, dismembered ideologies,
gangrenous mullahs,
severed heads in doggie bags,
girls stoned to death by dumper truck
where high tech. serves Islamic rigour;
and women's bodies, feared
and lashed with equal vigour,
float the septic tide to state,
that, rotting, raped and subjugate,
masked, or beauty acid-scarred,
this jealous hate redeems some family's honour
and the keeping of a slave.
"Seek shelter from the coming flood!".
More warnings from the networks
of disaster in plain sight.

Infected by the future
and recoiling from the light,
from the morning watch,
to subliminal night, Lord,
he channel-hops the ads. and lies,
awaits the blind inexorable wave.

Let thine ears be attentive
to the voice of his supplication.
Please take his urgent call oh Lord,
extend to him religion's consolation.

Icons of old wizard monks,
expensive relics in a locket,
the sacred, decorated trunks of
twisted, bent, revered old trees,
an idol, or a totem,
or the fetish of of a prophet,
an amulet of Vishnu,
or a string of merit-making beads
to finger in a pocket.
A road map of the Tree of Life,
a prayer mat, sacrificial knife,
a sacred stone they venerate,
a holy spring where they prostrate,
and, chanting loudly, flagellate;

some mutilation rituals they find,
somehow express their
tortured, ingrown toenail of a mind.
To these they bow, by these they wait,
for heaven's ultimate blind date;
hypnosis by a holy book,
subservience to a priestly look.

Yea Lord, he drinks a bitter cup,
deliverance eludes him yet.
The creator, playing hard to get,
has, once more, frankly, stood him up.

Manipulation, thought correction,
machiavellian misdirection.
Digesting God's indifference,
inhaling insignificance,
in times of rising waters,
a Minoan maze of lies.
The sacred books, the king, the host,
those feet at which men grovel most;
the bloodstained flag, the Holy Ghost,
the biggest fairy tales require

most pious genuflection,
and these the thinking cockroach
will contemptuously despise.

Insomniac transexuals
are texting, seeking parts again.
Awake within the whispering walls,
illumination swirls and falls
to fractals in a pipe bulb,
when, aware God's not returning calls,
or dealing absolution,
he crawls out of the depths, not least
to shun the poisonous fix of priests,
and charter his own flight to dissolution.

For, Lord, he's turned his back upon
some name we may not utter
without slavish self-abasement,
the mediaeval violence policing laws of love;
a million milling zealots
trampling by their sacred monolith;
psychosis aping saintliness,
when push comes to fanatic shove.

And the globalised multiplex; virtual reality,
brand slaves on Prozac grazing the mall.
Where history simply is discarded fashion,
junk's TV, rap culture, and soundbite celebrities,
mainlining cage fights, an armchair in hell.
In a time of rising waters,
He has cried to thee, oh Lord.

Last call for oblivion, welcome aboard.

Let thine ears be attentive... attentive oh Lord!

Last call for oblivion, welcome aboard.

John Gartland

Five Acts in Search of a Tragedy

Cue the dying days of the old king,
jammed radio stations, doctored TV,
hi-jacked streets and mediaeval barricades,
Redshirts, royalists and coloured flags;
see Issan farmers, far from home,
drink amplified tirades,
and the wallpaper, these begging poor,
wear rags;
and “there’s music in the cafes at night
and revolution in the air”,
in the dying days of the old king;
processions and bravado everywhere,
naïveté and rented hearts,
in the dying days, the dying days,
before the firing starts.

In the dying days of the old king,
The puppet play of demagogues,
the camps of pseudo carnival
would all sign off in blood.
So martial law turned
short-time joints to sanctuary,
as curfew penned the dealers and the whores.
Sounds off were gunfire and nearby explosions,
while hookers chilled with ice behind closed doors.

Reminded
that “to smile and smile and be a villain”
is a national art,
you watched as pawns were sacrificed;
the radicals and loyalists,
the old regime manipulators,
(classically dressed in darkness)
entered from stage left or right
and passionately played their part.
So, the puppet play was autographed in blood,
where rhetoric and snipers vied
to steal the listener’s heart.

Some lit a pyre of brand-names;
vowed revenge for slaughtered friends,

returned in rage to village life,
(an alternating stretch of feudal
somnolence and noise).

Sought out the chanting temple
and some semblance of a calmer age,
a fellowship that memory commends,
a fellowship that city life destroyed;
corrupted in a thousand different ways,
in the dying days,
the dying days of the old king.

Now, on the towering billboards
of the Ministry of Truth
the crafted smile of the heir apparent
suddenly appears,
benign salve for forbidden doubts,
new father figure
in a time of democratic fears.

In the dying days,
the dying days of the old king,

*the crafted smile of the heir apparent
suddenly appears....*

John Gartland

Framed

A broken sleep;
with strangers,
out of Sukhumvit as bars close.
On the night bus to Cambodia
your visa page is questioned
in a borderland of dreams.
The old address was overstayed,
relationships, all out of date;
the smallprint changed,
and far too late
you're suddenly afraid.
The Absurd,
meanwhile, in countless acts,
advances.
Still featured in the cast,
you re-enact flawed parts,
in dramas and romances.
Reprise your questioned role
within a love that did not last.
Act out the old illicit game,
discover recollection framed you,
then mis-spelled your name;
where you are hung, unvarnished,
with desire, and death, and blame.

John Gartland