

Joseph Harrington

## The Word Thing

I feel nostalgic for myself,  
my human tissue + little data set  
hunkered in a cozy korner, maybe,

no longer rich enough to live:  
life on earth suddenly disappoints  
w/its funny fungibility –

I become o point between  
the stuff and the us. But  
you're the figure from the dream

where the natural persons live,  
biomass burbling up and out  
to fill the space that's left

\*

My body is ruled by friendly forces  
beyond its immediate control,

is expert at consuming things,  
will eat whatever it must to live.

(Animals are too complicated, with  
their complications unavailable to us.)

To unlock successive layers of growth  
power-edger sounds a human wail,

so I hereby declare the Green World  
the real world. Meanwhile,

the stuffed bird looks deader  
than a conjugation table;

the live bird makes the syntax  
want to fly away

\*

the girl, object  
of the crèche, the over-  
whelming white  
space: it's a craft  
in a balloon, an effort  
to get skyward, to send  
the boy up and make  
the girl go down

the flat floating  
nothing of the page  
is male or female &  
nor mommy nor  
daddy can tell you  
why, so choose one  
& then decide.

\*

We got away from earth, down-  
scaled to a smaller planetoid, but now

it's "gone dark" as well; we're awaiting  
the snakes at the playground, but we

doubt they'll show up. Like a flight to  
quality, like an escape into my own

ambivalence or height: what could  
entail me at this point, slither back

collapsing unto itself, a play-doh  
black hole prepared to make change

\*

So, they removed the old trees  
to make way for the new trees,  
widened sidewalks so banners  
would have more room to flap.

Drilling a little chickadee  
digging a painful sun  
owning we're all part  
plastic now. How now

to stop seeing folks in mine  
tunnels above ground?  
Vista like a painted scrim  
always shows up variable:

it's on us, or on our little screens.  
I refuse to rhyme with screams.  
I will see no connection, I  
will perceive a future still I will.

\*

Dear Future, you  
know so much more  
than we do & you  
have forgotten it all

\*

bombs sound like thunder  
tornadoes feel like trains  
I know a little capping  
chromosome wraps under

who grows machines  
out of mental flypaper;  
d.n.a. for shoelace holds  
the places you've seen

to tumble underwater,  
fiscally or aqueously bats  
the squamous toeholds  
erode noticeably shorter

for corn portfolios infest  
our key seed geographies,  
new genetic platforms you  
frenetically flee to invest in

Protein the Elder, wise old  
protean lipitaur, whose oxy-  
continental dreamliners  
make a stint in the night

\*

names ghost out and strike  
*selvic*, word for a thing not invented,  
through sticky lemony leaves

I see students madly dropping under  
shadowy sub-bodies pipette-punctured  
blood-drop leaves

what you thought of as your life ended  
we still believe a picture on a beach  
some leaves green

“they are so dumb the dumbest of bugs”  
green animals fake the blue part  
leave the seen

\*

The screen of old growth  
either side of the highway  
can't conceal the sunny stumps.  
Plant a tree: you won't see it  
grow up or grow old.

For now, a school of saplings,  
razor-straight rows:  
you can stare up the aisle,  
see something or someone  
down there, backing away  
between the little trunks.

\*

Another earth day,  
another dollar. Owls  
a mile away throw sound  
when leaf blowers briefly  
cease, like they know  
some thing back flows

This robin nirvana unfolds  
under arranged pointy  
branches unhinged among  
the reflexive giggling  
celebrating equipoise,  
time after very thin green  
house April, trap May's  
sticky fingers in the soil,  
reach only other fingers  
per all a hand planet,

a name in the floating chill  
to string green bird-lore by.  
Earth's demeter dumpster:  
world of the keening blue  
we make of her  
show time

\*

the fact that birds continue to exist  
the fact that they descend from dinosaurs  
the fact that they descend from trees  
these are a few of my favorite things

the fact that leaf-mold continues to sediment  
the fact that we sink into it each day  
the universe expands so that beauty  
these are a few things

the fact of the word passerine  
the way we act like our moon is special  
the fact the sun moves while we do  
a few things so radical are being

the fact that nothing terrible happened  
the fact that it happened elsewhere  
a few friends' factitious gardens  
grow what they planted

the way the words can carry you  
the mind i mean carries  
the need for the word thing

\* \* \*