

EXPULSION'S MERITS

By Benjamin Jenner

CAST *in order of appearance:*

LOUDSPEAKER

NARRATOR

‘JEAN’

‘CLEMENT’

MAN IN A TWEED SUIT

SETTING: *A man stands in a space. The space is indeterminate in its dimensions. The man is lit from above by a single spot light whilst everything else is cloaked in darkness. The man stands in the centre of the small, dusty, beam of light. The ground is mud, dry earth, unploughed and flattened by years of footfall. From somewhere, indeterminate amid the blackness, a voice issues from a Loud Speaker. The man, whom we shall call the Narrator, follows deftly and instantly, the directions issued by the Loud Speaker:*

LOUD SPEAKER: *The Narrator, pulling a piece of paper from his tweed overcoat breast pocket, looking surprised at its existence, turns it over once, then again, realises it is folded and unfolds. He stares, blankly at first, and then raises an eyebrow as if his feet had been metaphorically stepped on. Continuing to read he raises the index finger of his right hand to the right side of his left lapel, inside edge, and brushes away a bluebottle fly. A crackle crackle sound floods the space, not the sound of the fly itself but of a tiny clip microphone, inadvertently picking up the sound of the fly being shoed away, attached to the collar of the narrator. That sound is subsequently fed, magnified, back into the space from the intense darkness that flanks the beam of light. Cough, cough, the narrator coughs...and takes two steps forward with little intent. He reads, under his breath, the first few sentences tracing his progress as he goes with the same finger with which he removed the fly, multi-functional; only to return to the top of the paper moments later and with a crisp determined tongue delivers the following:*

The noise from the loud speaker drops away and the voice of the Narrator, who is beginning to scuff his feet on the ground causing dust to billow up around his ankles, is picked up by the mic attached to his collar:

NARRATOR (reading from the unfolded piece of paper): *At the time of writing, the role and visibility of the Narrator: the 'I', and the magnitude of their, that same 'I', presence, was undecided.*

The Narrator, pausing momentarily and casting a gaze away from the paper and into the middle distance mutters:

Seen and not heard, heard and not seen, both seen and heard, not seen and not heard?

The Narrators attention returns to the text and he reads:

The major consideration in involving a visible narrator in the ensuing drama would be the then necessary association between setting and character. Does the Narrator change 'costume' so that they more readily blend in with the surroundings...change their tone of voice to aid the creation and development of atmosphere? Are they an active participant in the drama they are about to describe. Do they know Jean and Clement? Are they responsible for any of the activities that they involved themselves with and that form the subject of this text?

The Narrator now gazing at the floor near his feet mumbles flatly:

....well who's to say?

The narrator removes the mic from his coat collar and calmly placing it on the ground in front of him crushes it with his right foot, crackle, whiz, bang! The woozy static of the loud speaker returns to the space and from it issues the following.

LOUDSPEAKER: *The narrator looks unperturbed by what has just happened: a loudspeaker dictating his movement and his actions, maybe because he was expecting it, maybe because he is used to it? He refolds the piece of paper along the same folds he had unpacked it a few minutes before and returns it to his breast pocket.*

Contrary to before the Narrator stands motionless, ignoring the directions issued by the speaker as if the microphone he has just crushed has distanced him from its directions. The Narrator nonchalantly crosses his arms and gazes upwards towards what must be sky but could be ceiling, could be tarpaulin could be stone

LOUDSPEAKER: *Unbuttoning his coat he reaches inside and pulls out, this time with no hesitation or surprise, a small, possibly A5 size booklet. He wanders for a few minutes. The light follows him. His gait is slightly awkward. He doesn't care. Continuing his amble he begins to read from the booklet.*

The Narrator looks peeved. Slightly disgruntled he shrugs his shoulders and looks all the better for having done so. He refolds the piece of paper along the same folds he had unpacked it a few minutes before and returns it to his breast pocket. Unbuttoning his coat he reaches inside and pulls out, this time with no hesitation or surprise, a small, possibly A5 size booklet. He wanders for a few minutes. The light does not follow him so that if he leaves its glare he is cloaked in darkness. His gait is slightly awkward. He re-enters the small pool of light. It is hurting him to move. He pulls up a small stool from the impenetrable darkness that surrounds him. He sits upon it and begins to read from the booklet:

NARRATOR:

SETTING:

A wood of extreme size with no high vantage points that would of enabled a conception of the forest as a finite space, only mid vantage points that provide a view in all directions of continuous foliage made not only of wood and leaves as one would expect but also cement and stone, hard material that interleaves the biodegradable stuff with ease.

The sky is for now overcast.

The immediate surround is that of... not so much a clearing... but... of an open expanse of stone and grass, which when one stops to think about probably wouldn't ever exist in such a densely packed arrangement of trees, suggesting we are not actually in the forest at all but that it, the forest, exists somewhere else as an emotion or mental elaboration of a feeling...anyhow...it's there. We are with the stone and the grass.

The voices in the conversation that is about to traverse the air currents of this space....

...a shuffling can be heard issuing from somewhere in the darkness that surrounds the narrator...

...are not speaking words as we know them so that what you are about to hear has been translated and remains only part of the dialogue available since parts were either unintelligible or too densely compacted in terms of their tonal variation to be translated with the equipment available, equipment that was made for the purpose of this translation and is therefore particular and under tested in other fields.

The speakers identities were hard to establish and it is with some doubt that I put forward the suggestion that there were only two, or two at all, since there may have been only one voice discussing the issues discussed with itself (this is unlikely), or there may have been hundreds if not thousands of voices each uttering one word only and subsequently resigning themselves to silence (this is possible but also unlikely). Two were decided upon as a happy medium. This may be altered in later editions of this exchange perhaps with the development of a more accurate recording/translation device. Because of the uncertainty surrounding their identities the speakers will be called Jean and Clement, but they could have been called anything.

The narrator remains seated on his perch. He coughs and attempts to cover his mouth. He fails and settles for resting his arms by his side. Meanwhile approximately ten meters away a second spotlight flashes on. Somewhat stronger than the first it lights up to reveal a long table, 25 feet at least, pulled up to which are two men. They sit at either end of the table. In front of each of them is what looks like two copies of the same booklet from which the narrator has just read. In fact there can be no mistaking it. Yes, yes... it is definitely the same booklet... the only difference being the worn edges and dog eared corners of the narrator's copy. The two copies on the table are new or newish. Simultaneously they reach for the booklet and open it to the 7th page; whilst one of the men reads the other listens intently. They are both animated in discussion but not riled, at least not yet.

It is worth mentioning that the two men seated at the table are not Jean and Clement and they don't know them. It is unclear whether they know each other. However the two men

embody an attitude, a way of life that is congruent with the persona of either Jean or Clement. They talk in the same way most of the time, they walk the same way when they walk at all, they probably eat the same type of food but this is only a guess. If the two seated men were stunt men they would be Jean and Clement's body doubles. It is also worth mentioning that when the light over the table flashed on the Narrator turned around and looked surprised at what he saw as if he was expecting something or somebody else. He remains seated; disconsolate he turns his gaze away.

The table is situated to the right of the narrator. The narrator has his back to it. Both lights remain on but there is sufficient distance between the two for a darkness to form a spatial division that casts a feeling of loneliness but also of late night revelry and hard headed discussion. 'Jean' is furthest from the narrator.

*The two men sat at the table look very similar. They might be related, brothers or cousins even. The resemblance is so uncanny it's as if an optical illusion is taking place and they are actually one and the same person. The two men are wearing identical latex masks but only they know this. 'Jean' has on an old grey jumper. The jumper has small holes in it, the regularity of which identify the holes as being part of the design. Underneath the jumper he wears a vest. On his legs he wears a pair of black jeans and on his feet a pair of rubber soled leather work boots. 'Clement' is dressed in a matt black suit. It is a sharp suit: Single button, double vented, very tapered leg. 'Jean' has an accent that is hard to place, French...maybe. As he speaks we become aware that he is in fact extremely articulate. His speech is full. He sees words through to completion whilst he cradles them in his throat. On release, even though spoken softly, they retain every intended intonation, a fluid, flexible *dérive* from syllable to syllable.*

'Clement' likewise is articulate but more reserved in his use of the range of his vocal capacity. He too has an accent. It is easy to place. He is French. He exudes melancholia and has the vengeful possibly violent air of the choleric. He is ambitious. The men eye each other across the table. Through the sticky latex masks that hide the skin of both men peer four inquisitive eyes scanning four inquisitive eyes. Somebody needs to start a conversation. 'Jean' takes up the mantle.

Note: It should be taken as a given that when 'Jean' speaks he is reading words attributed to Jean and that when 'Clement' speaks he is reading words attributed to Clement, if there was any slippage in the accuracy of this fact during recording it has remained undetected and is for now irresolvable.

LOUDSPEAKER: THE EXCHANGE

‘JEAN’ (Jean, at least in the text from which ‘Jean’ is reading, that from within the A5 booklet, is the supposed client of a small privately owned manufacturing/fabrication company called The Department for Disadvantaged and Undernourished Matter and Bone, which will be refereed to from now on as 'The DDUMB' or just 'DDUMB'):

...and so the problem is I never asked you to be here.

‘CLEMENT’ (Clement is acting head of PR for DDUMB):

Explain yourself!

‘JEAN’: *Well all this stuff weighing down on this earth is too much to bear, it crushes my stone and grass, it crushes my insects that wander with purpose along my stony veins. You don't see what you do but by placing what you have placed on my broken skin you aggravate my hard won sense of balance achieved over quite a number of years. I am not happy. You will have to relate what you mean by this to the relevant authority of this here earth and by*

earth I mean soil, for it is the soil that has taken issue with your actions! These supposed sun filters of yours will have to be removed!

The Narrator nods, content, as if he is taking satisfaction from the performance.

‘CLEMENT’: *I am not quite sure, perhaps I misconstrue...your behaviour is somewhat...irrational. The objects that I placed on your land have arrived for a reason: they are here to protect your soil. Not only do they stand and guard the ground, your pores, from attack, they have taken it upon themselves to rake into your composition a mixture of finely tuned and turned chalk and charcoal. The charcoal is there to provide compact nutrients unavailable to you at certain times of year whilst the chalk is there to inhibit the nutrients effect thus maintaining an even, curious balance not unlike what you had before, only better, of course, it is progressive.*

When Clement refers to the sun filters as 'they' or 'themselves' he is deliberately attributing function and activities to the inanimate objects that he himself has invented and manufactured (manufactured that is as an independent agent and not as an employee of The DDUMB). He is much attached to the objects that he is advertising and promoting, so attached that he sometimes actually believes that the forms do the things that he himself has decreed they do. He has a good memory: it is not that he forgets he has done the things he does; but a fantastical imagination. This is also why Jean expresses his concern about the sun filters as a problem to do with the presence of Clement. Jean suspects Clement has more than a professional interest in the placement and 'performance' of the filters. Thus it is difficult to separate Clement from the forms. He believes it healthy to become part of them, metaphorically, and so he does.

Clement continues...

In fact the forms were sent on your request via The Department for Disadvantaged and Undernourished Matter and Bone (The DDUMB). The request was received last Friday and we delivered within the week. You should be grateful.

As you can see, although perhaps this is presumptuous of me since sight is not a prerequisite to existence, the forms have built in light filters, very now, that rather than filtering light either block it or let it through, do you see what I mean? Of course you do.

The material from which the forms are made is complex, you wouldn't understand so I won't explain. You know they are heavy and that is enough to convey a sense of gravitas, possibly even existential foreboding in the right weather conditions...

‘JEAN’: *WAIT! I never...but now...OH HELL!...but...the weather never changes...it's always...*

‘CLEMENT’: *So onto the...*

‘JEAN’: *But look!*

‘CLEMENT’: *So onto the weather. This is important. The forms respond to the weather like humans respond to loss: they absorb it when they want it and take it on begrudgingly when they don't. For this reason listen hard and listen good: we are approaching Autumn...and that's all I have to say on this matter...it is only through overseeing the management of these forms that you will begin to understand the amount of weather they can absorb. Do you want to respond or has your appetite for conversation been slighted by the rigour of my argument?*

‘JEAN’ (In a hoarse but clearly agitated whisper): *On the contrary I have more to say than ever before, only not to you for I cannot create a clear image out of the dirge of your*

descriptions. To you all I wish to say, or rather inform you of, is that the likelihood of these forms being altered by the weather is zero! You are not an alchemist and these forms have no transferable qualities, they are what they are and you, my friend, need help. For this reason I am going to address my enquiry, as to the origin and intent expressed through the delivery of these heavy forms, direct to The DDUMB in writing forthwith and off the top of my head, although I cannot be sure, it will go something like this:

...interjection of the Loudspeaker:

LOUDSPEAKER: JEAN'S LETTER TO THE DDUMB:

***The object of this letter is to arrange the return of some unnaturally heavy sun filters to their place of manufacture, pronto. My gratitude towards yourself, the supplier, and your PR department is diminished by my anger at your misinterpretation of my unspoken words and feelings that were never uttered in thought, if thoughts utter at all, yet alone voiced. It remains a mystery to me how you came to the conclusion that the delivery of these heavy forms or sun filters if that is what you choose to call them was something I had in mind. Get rid of them, vamoose!
Disingenuous regards
Jean***

...loudspeaker fades to zero.

'Clement', still sat at the table lit by the spotlight, senses a shifting of the tectonic cloud plates that move somewhere above him. The air is thickening. The vapour stratum is playing havoc with his larynx. But he is determined to continue playing his part in what is becoming a sonic dual. 'Clement' stands. This takes an enormous effort. His body begins to click out of place as if it had been made to sit down. As his joints become loose he pauses in his journey north to force them, seemingly through mental exertion alone, back into place. This goes on for some time: 'Clement' rising, bones and joints clicking, ensuing mental exertion to rectify the troublesome situation.

The narrator has turned to face 'Jean' and 'Clement' and is examining the proceedings with vexation and not a small amount of annoyance:

NARRATOR: *Umm...gentlemen...gentlemen...if you don't mind me asking, who the hell are you...and...and... who do you think you are? What gives you the right to play the role of my characters...or...I...urr mean...my...urr...acquaintances in the manner that you do? This is not a charade!*

The two men turn and stare blankly at the Narrator and then stare blankly at one another. They shrug in unison and are just about to continue with their activities when the loudspeaker floods the room with a sound akin to an incoming jet plane which cuts to silence and then the following:

LOUDSPEAKER:

JEAN'S STOREY:

SETTING: *Not required.*

Jean's storey is whispered through very sensitive speakers into whatever space the reader is situated, it is happening right now. Somewhere Jean is preparing to whisper. To what extent, if at all, he is aware of his words being transmitted into our barren landscape is unclear. He has on his whispering garb and his mouth, dry lips, are pressed up against an old, but extremely beautiful, microphone. Jean is feeling grouchy. He hasn't had enough coffee to tip the balance of his day towards productivity and invention. Instead his mind and subsequently his body are whirring deadbeat towards a nothing of some unimpressive proportion. He is vague, a person on the edge of an invisible disintegration. His voice, however, is very much alive: a deep baritone growl, which if one didn't know was the product of a single source, would imagine a line of men behind a line of microphones with the same dry lips uttering the same nasal based congestive expulsion. Jean's voice has a good range. Jean wears hobnail boots. Jean wears a pill box hat. This might be a setting.

Jean is a worker. He gets up in the morning and he takes himself off to work. He has many places of work. He works as a gardener, he works as a singer and he works in elocution. He talks rarely, only when riled, but whispers a lot, sometimes imperceptibly even to himself. Today he is whispering into the microphone. Today he hasn't a clue he's whispering. Today he has dry lips.

Whilst the loud speaker delivers the following extract of Jean's life 'Jean' mouths the words in unison:

I spend a lot of time with this microphone. I just sit next to it. It is my companion. It reminds me of the joy of communication...

Ordinarily I wouldn't have a problem with a gift. Because a gift is what they must have been, of heavy forms, that is. But a gift? A giftmaybe..... but from whom?

My issue was with their placement, their configuration and the jargon spouted by that illiterate moonlighting manufacturer. I wasn't consulted...and I must be consulted. This is my

land. My life is tied to this land. If my land is damaged or is taking too much weight then my body suffers the consequences. Someone once told me the reverse is also true. That is if I damage my body then my land will take a hit. I look after myself as a result of this. Today my lips are dry and as a result so too is my soil.

...That PR guy is a fool. I swear he is up to something, thinks too much of himself... I think he made those forms. Don't ask me how. I was going to ask but my unintentionally subtle attempt at communication was lost on him and the moment passed.

Jean, presumably, moves away from the microphone and the whispering blends into white noise. A shuffling to and throw is just about audible through the din.

The loudspeaker hisses and crackles uncontrollably before blending with the clatter of silence and cuts out with a snap like a ringmaster flexing his whip.

The Narrator is on his feet. If he was a cartoon character steam would be issuing from his ears and he would be jumping up and down on the spot. As he isn't a cartoon, he's a real person, he gets red in the face and starts spitting, rather aggressively, words that compromise his understanding of himself as a sane individual. 'Clement' is still half sitting down, half standing up, trying to keep all of his bones in all of their joints all at the same time:

NARRATOR: *And what was that?! What was that?! What was that?! Do you think that has explained who you are and what you are both doing playing the role of my acquaintances?! You are nothing like them and never could be! They are good men...you two are nothing but a farce!...and...and...brothers! I see, painful that, that you belong to the same family. Clearly a burden too society!*

Slowly but in unison, which is saying something, bearing in mind 'Clement' has momentarily lost control of his limbs, both 'Jean' and 'Clement' raise the middle finger of their right hand to their lips and mime 'ssshhhh'. This is too much for the narrator who gapes open mouthed as 'Clement' continues to flounder and 'Jean' continues to watch.

Once upright 'Clement' begins to gesticulate wildly. His arm span is vast for his size and his arms' movement through the air causes the pages of his booklet, resting on the table, to flap wildly like a flailing newspaper. 'Jean' frowns. He gets up from the table with ease. He moves around to where 'Clement' is still punching at invisible demons or phantom words returning with menace from 'Clements' past to cause him harm with intent. 'Jean' positions himself directly behind 'Clement' and begins to breathe softly on the nape of his neck. This calms 'Clement' and his arm movement becomes less erratic and decreases in its force. 'Jean' continues with his breathing exercise directed as it is at 'Clement's' neck. 'Clement' slumps back into his chair. 'Jean' places both hands on 'Clements' shoulders and tilts his body and the chair backwards. It is only now that we become aware of two small wheels attached to the back of the rear two legs of the two chairs. 'Jean' wheels 'Clement' away from the table into the surrounding darkness. The sound of a wheelie chair receding into the distance is all that can be heard. Silence ensues. Minutes pass. The Narrator cannot shake himself out of his incredulity. He could fill this pregnant pause in the proceedings to his advantage but he hasn't the will. After a few minutes footfall can be heard coming from the area of unspecified darkness that 'Jean' and 'Clement' disappeared into a while before. The footsteps get closer and closer and 'Jean' and 'Clement' re-enter their beam of light. Both men have changed. Both are now dressed in a three piece tweed suit, tan brogues and a tweed flat cap made from the same material as the suits. Both men carry a rifle over their left shoulder.

It is impossible to tell which man is 'Clement' and which is 'Jean' such is there likeness in attire (mask and all)...both are moving freely. One of the men moves around to where the one remaining chair is situated and removes it from the beam of light. He remains at that end of the table, furthest from the narrator, standing...still...upright...poised. The second man takes up his position at the other end of the table, standing...still...upright...poised. Both men swing their rifles through 180 degrees and lay them in the centre of the table

pointing in the direction of their opposite number. The threat of the rifles being used is there but it is like a background noise that is never quite able to drag itself into the present. It is hard to place why it should be but it was apparent from the moment the rifles entered the light that they would not be used to draw blood.

The Loudspeaker once again whirrs into life. The Narrator is still staring open mouthed at the two men who have remained standing at either end of the 25 foot table. On the table are the two rifles and the two A5 size booklets. A fine combination!

LOUDSPEAKER (impatiently, if a loudspeaker can sound impatient):

...and so Jean's letter was sent: an arrangement of earthy letters in a giant envelope made from the lightest of silk spun from the most helpful of silkworms.

The response was immediate but unsatisfactory in the extreme. For in the interim, between the sun filters being delivered and Jean sending his letter, The DDUMB had changed its office of calling. Whereas before The Department for Disadvantaged and Undernourished Matter and Bone had dealt in exactly that, their latest penchant was for: Detailed Drawings Undertaken Months Before. Still a Department of a larger company there initials remained the same: DDUMB.

The change was, according to Jean, so unexplained, a mere whim, and frankly quite daft that he persevered with the correspondence. Letters past back and forth with increasing intensity and eventually The DDUMB agreed that should the heavy forms look a little like drawing undertaken months before (they agreed on 'weeks before' as an offer of goodwill on the part of DDUMB, but this is by the by) and not so much like disadvantaged and undernourished matter and bone, then the said department would remove the structures in question thus upholding an acknowledged responsibility brought about by the sudden change in the company's direction. An inspector from THE DDUMB was sent and duly passed off the heavy forms as entirely like drawings undertaken months before and not a bit like disadvantaged and undernourished matter and bone. A removal date was planned and sure enough the forms were removed in good time, relieving Jean of the unnecessary weight and responsibility of upholding heavy matter.

The Narrator faints, falls to the ground and remains motionless for the remainder of the dialogue. Something has clearly gone awry. At this point, as if the narrator fainting was a cue, the two men take up their guns and swing them back through 180 degrees onto their left shoulders. They both exit the light and head off in the general direction of the loud speaker. The sound of their brogues is clearly audible on the dry muddy surface...the speaker continues with its monologue:

LOUDSPEAKER continues:

The inspector filed a report, as is the done thing, and sent it to the warehouse to be logged under 'Unwanted or Unneeded Objects that Screen the Sun', a file that happened coincidentally to be virtually empty indicating that most sun deterrents or pacifiers are well loved and in most cases entirely necessary.

***BANG! BANG!** Shots can be heard in the darkness. The bullets travelling unchecked towards an inevitable free fall back to earth. The shots stop and the loudspeaker continues. The sound of the brogue clad feet can be heard traversing the darkness, adjusting their position.*

LOUDSPEAKER: *On receiving the report and the returned items the warehouse were baffled and contacted the inspector with haste. They had no record of ever having produced, in either of The DDUMB's incarnations, such a heavy sun filter, if that is indeed what they*

were and even here there was some doubt. There were frowns and expressions of confusion that led to nothing. Eventually a conference was called and a solution realised. The DDUMB's catalogue designer would simply be granted permission to go back over the last five years of catalogues

BANGI BANGI

BANGI BANGI

Gunfire! This time the bullets can be heard entering metal, skimming off of metal, reforming metal.

of which there were five, an unenviable task, inserting an extra page at the back of the design template offering (**BANGI BANGI**) the heavy items for sale. It was agreed that a further 100 catalogues from each of these five years would be printed and surreptitiously (**BANGI BANGI**) distributed (**BANGI**) amongst The DDUMB's (in its former guise and therefore old), extensive customer base.

This was handled brilliantly and the brochures were seamlessly inserted into the everyday lives of customers past. **BANGI BANGI**

Bullets once again can be heard ripping through metal. The Loudspeaker sounds like it has taken a hit. **BANGI BANGI** Again, and again, and again, and again. The Loudspeaker groans its final few words and cuts out this time for good.

The two men in tweed re-enter the light and put down their guns on the table. This time the guns are not so neatly placed, more thrown down (in the centre of the table, away from the A5 booklets which have remained at either end). The result is more of a pile than an arrangement, that is if a pile can exist consisting of only two objects? In any case it's a kind of a 'job well done' ensemble. Both men take off their jackets and roll up their shirt sleeves. There is violence in the air. They both return to their said positions. The same man in the same position, who knows? Everything looks the same it's the feeling that's askew. Both men pick up their A5 booklet and turn to the same page. They look at each other and then the man on the right, who was originally 'Jean' but now could be either 'Jean' or 'Clement', picks up where the loudspeaker left off. The man's accent is certainly not French. At a guess it is English, maybe with a Scandinavian twang. It is a deep voice. Each word is said with clarity, lucidity and punch.

‘JEAN’ or ‘CLEMENT’:

All was fine for at least three days. That is until a former rival company of The Department for Disadvantaged and Undernourished Matter and Bone whose name cannot be mentioned for reasons of propriety contacted the PR department demanding an explanation as to why they had back dated a 'new' catalogue offering a product that was quite clearly made and distributed by themselves and not at all, ever, by The DDUMB.

The PR department tried to contact Clement who had ceased to work for The DDUMB, made to take early retirement over the fast expanding heavy forms debacle, to try and establish why they had got involved in this farcical game in the first place and to push Clement for more accurate information on his involvement with Jean

All that remains to be said is that Clement was tracked down as far as a small workshop on the edge of the space of grass and stone. There was evidence of some form of heavy goods manufacture and a text book/or guide on techniques of filtering history through recourse to natural phenomena.

The sky remains overcast.

The two men stare at the booklet from which the text is being read as if a problem has now presented itself which, for the moment at least, they see no way around. The remaining section of the booklet left to be read is entitled 'Clement's Storey'. Both men look possessive of the right to read this particular section of text as if it was an accurate extract from one or even both the men's lives. How this could be is impossible to say since, as we were aware from the moment the men entered the fray, neither of them know the characters in the text. None the less the situation is causing some anxiety. Heavy, troubled, breathing can be heard issuing from behind the latex masks. This period of indecision needs to be brought to a close.

The Narrator's body remains on the floor and on closer inspection fragments of metal from the now destroyed Loudspeaker can be seen strewn across the dusty muddy ground. The two men begin to roll their shoulders as if preparing for a dust up. Instead, picking up their jackets as they do so, they move around to the front of the table and embrace.

It is a long embrace.

They kiss each other on one cheek and then on the other as if saying goodbye, grasping one another firmly by the shoulders as they do so. They embrace again. Once they have separated themselves from one another they stare each other in the eyes. They exchange jackets, like for like, and lay them on the floor by their side. They unbutton their waist coats and do exactly the same laying them down on top of the jackets. They repeat the process with the shirt. They are naked from the waist up. Both men bend down, untie their shoe laces and remove their shoes. They return to an upright position and proceed to unbutton the clasp of their trousers. They pull the trousers down to the ground, off around their ankles and away from their feet. Exchanging trousers they are now completely naked but for a pair of tweed boxer shorts. They too are removed and exchanged. The men put on each other's clothes, taking time and care to ensure they look neat and tidy. Everything is exactly the same size as everything else. Everything fits like a glove. On completion the two men turn to face one another one final time and embrace one another wholeheartedly. They walk into the darkness leaving the rifles and the A5 booklets on the table.

As they leave the light above the table goes out. All that is now visible is the body of the Narrator prostrate on the dry ground decorated with small segments of mutilated Loudspeaker.

After a few minutes of this footsteps are audible in the darkness. A man in a tweed three piece suit enters the small dusty beam of light where the Narrator's body lies. The suited man bends down, on one knee, as if bracing himself and in one movement lifts the body of the narrator from the floor and onto his left shoulder. He stands and walks back in the direction from which he came

The space is now empty.

A minute or so passes.

Footsteps can be heard in the darkness. Once again a man in a three piece tweed suit enters the beam of light. He carries a microphone attached to a stand. He kicks a few shards of loudspeaker metal out of the way and places it on the ground. He adjusts its height and taps the mic. It's working. He paces the space. The spot light follows him so that he always remains in light. He returns to the microphone and standing very close to it, lips almost touching the mic, he delivers, in a deep French accent, the following:

MAN IN A TWEED SUIT:

CLEMENT'S STOREY:

SETTING:

Clement is wearing a black suit: double vented, single button; very tapered leg would be his ideal, instead it's shapeless. He has on no shoes or socks and looks as if he is lacking in both sleep and sustenance. His hair is parted on the left hand side and brushed tight against his scalp; he has a good head of hair. In his button hole is a white flower of unknown genus. It might be real but it's probably fake. His hands are dirty. Not dirty as in unwashed but dirty with ingrained filth that soap cannot remove, short of skin grafting he will live with that dirt for the rest of his life. His eyes look tired and his skin on close inspection is mottled with imperfections. However these imperfections give Clement a kind of charismatic worldly look that he would be lost without. He stands about six foot tall and carries himself well. He is leaning against a telegraph pole in a field surrounded by a multitude of buildings pertaining to heavy industry. In his right hand he holds a mug of herbal tea, probably mint, still steaming, that suggests Clement has just stepped out from one of the said buildings. In his left hand he holds a Dictaphone into which he is about to speak. The field is deserted and still. The buildings and their partially cloaked machinery long since ground to a halt. Clement clears his throat, a deep guttural removal of phlegm, gazes long and hard at an endless grey sky and begins to talk...click play on the Dictaphone:

'Ok, so no one is looking, good, a rare thing not to have someone scanning your body as a means of wrenching out your soul. One thing we should get straight from the start is that I am not a fugitive. I have no need to run. Besides they will never catch up with me'.

Clement clicks pause on the Dictaphone and takes a sip of the tea that is not mint after all but a brew of dried wild flowers. He shifts his weight from one foot to the other and in doing so inadvertently rubs his right shoulder blade against the post upon which he leans. This pleases Clement, servicing an itch, so he repeats the process taking off his jacket in order to maximise the sensation. His shirt is white and on remembering this Clement stops rubbing up against the post and instead uses a corner of the Dictaphone to remedy the troublesome itch.

A further sip of tea, a running of the tea hand, the tea is now on the ground, through thick hair...click and play:

'I am more than just myself. My name is a pseudonym of a pseudonym and my appearance feels like a mockery of a guise. That is enough. Let's just say I am intangible.

I didn't take early retirement I just stopped showing up, PR was never my forte. Construction on the other hand...ha...ha...(scanning the landscape with falcon like intensity), construction that mimics, construction that tests'...

(Clement's body tenses. He shakes his head, slowly at first and then slightly faster and with growing conviction he lifts himself away from the post – tilts forward and spreads his arms wide. A look of sadness rises from the darkness of his eyes and he clenches his teeth as a means of locking in whatever was trying to get out. His arms fall to his side)

'Hold on...hold on! I know what you're thinking. But my voice is not the voice of the narrator. I am most definitely detached from that fool. Nor am I privy to any larger game at play. I am not waiting to lay my hand knowing full well when the time is right. I am not sick in the head. I didn't make the forms, those things make themselves. They are perpetual and unrelenting...

But...well...I might as well admit it...I had a go, at making forms that is. I had a go at making a replica, mimic a mimic... (Raising his voice and in an exaggerated tone)...going around and around in my head: 'mimic a mimic, flush out the excess, concentrate on pairing it all down'.

(Clement drops his shoulders and falls back against the post emitting a sigh of supposedly desperation but it might have been a sigh of relief).

'But, alas, it was not to be. All I could make were trays, low lying boxes filled up with earth. Pat on the back for me, the failing fool'.

The man in the three piece tweed suit sighs a weighty sigh. He is clearly moved by the text that he is reading and is finding it difficult to maintain a neutral voice. Not that he has to...but he would like to.

'I think slowly I went mad. My life with the forms infiltrated my life at ddumb. The two began to merge and the more they merged the more I seemed to teeter on the edge of self destruction. 'Charcoal and chalk...compact nutrients...curious balance????! When does it stop? And the conversations, the endless conversations I would have with what I thought were other people in the room...there must be a name for this? Although why I seek a name...These conversations, now that there is someone to listen, I might as well relate...and yet I can't. The words stick to the inside of my mouth, (Clement's speech quickens), press themselves up against my palette...they taste but they don't sound, they never sound these words that I thought, that I think and swallow with regret and the most genuine heartfelt anger...an anger with no direction and no purpose – the worst kind'.

Clement clicks pause on the Dictaphone and slides his back down the post to the floor, seemingly having forgotten about his white shirt. He puts his head in his hands, remaining motionless for several minutes. Then – Dictaphone on pause – to himself, but as if he was in the presence of another person, melancholic:

'We spent many a day together, walking the hills, the grasslands near your home. Pushing down the sun seeking dried out grass with our feet. You, looking radiant, flashing brilliantly in my mind. You are natural phenomena and through you I am able to understand my past. That is what you do for me and from it I learn, learn to arrange my thoughts'...

A long pause as if struggling for breath...

The man in the tweed suit is also struggling for breath. He has turned away from the mic and is swallowing air in immeasurable quantities as if filling his throat with something other than words for even just a few minutes will help calm his aching mind.

(Click...play)... 'And then a crackle and a buzz' (Clement stands, the spoken words as well as his thoughts effected by the upward motion of his body) 'like a bee crash landing on my brain. It stops, or I stop it. It cuts out, or I cut it out...like a shape...the rest discarded'. (Speaking slowly, thoughtfully now) 'Well I say discarded but too truly discard you have to know what you're keeping, and this is not easy.

The DDUMB, the DDUMB didn't like the fact, I am sure they knew...hence my 'early retirement', that I would add bits of my own inventions into what they thought was their business, their reality that only they controlled.

Parasitic Idiots!

(Clement walks away from the post and stabs at the earth with his foot)...Well news for you: It's happened, happened and failed and the forms, the forms still keep coming.'

(He takes another kick at the earth, disturbing with ease the dry, dusty soil and a few small stones)

...'So I had to go...I was losing and I knew it'. (Click, stop)

(Stars are visible in what is now a dark night sky).

The man in the tweed three piece suit moves slowly away from the mic. He dabs his eyes with a handkerchief taken from the breast pocket of his tweed jacket and walks away into the darkness.