

Cancer

by [Guy Walker](#) (November 2019)



Six Men Getting Sick (still), David Lynch, 1967

In normal times we can expect obedient squadrons, in silent faithfulness, to do their duty in repairing the ingredient that bears the codes; the daily damage to the chains of information that denote *us* and exactly what we are. Remote from us, forgotten, their activity; they're blithe and automatic over years, intelligencers (docile engineers), all working with a perfect industry.

We can accept our programmed obsolescence

and Hayfleck's limiting when ripeness comes;
harder to baulk at such guessed-at senescence
when Deaths' promised full-stop resolves our sums
and consummates our grammar. A known end,
to a parametered-type mind, will lend
resistance to (without it, atrophied
and shapeless) sense. For not to know we die,
to be unparsed, would terrify;
to mean at all needs context to succeed.

But when, awry, a strand of DNA,
missteps, in absent mind, to lose the plot,
then is unleashed (that unknown, secret day)
a disinhibited 'immortal.' Not
inclined to toe the line this megalomaniac
obeys blind evolution's rules, and so
runs riot; a renegade, an order-trasher,
hell-bent on self-promotion; vandal who,
unschooled, conducts a vulgar palace coup,
And shows himself a boorish party-crasher.

Abandoning the logos and its codes,
illiterate of sense, a tumour juts
its snout into a library, discommodates
systems of form and information put
in order by design. An ignorant
Yahoo, gross presence, strayed abroad with scant
regard for sense or system, overturning
the delicately loaded stacks that house
our tales. How guess what world-mistake aroused
this blinkered drunk, so wholly undiscerning?

Precarious *person* is alloyed with flesh,

a farting, salty livestock; animal
whose pleasures, intimately, are enmeshed,
whose fierce and briny loves, hold us in thrall
so joyously. We husband it, our beast,
until the siege-craft of this *arriviste*,
mole-like, surprises us inside our keep
from unexpected quarters of ourselves;
our person's home wherein he delves,
to sabotage our balance and to reap

the cruellest harvest from distress. We learn
a queasy intuition from this Fifth
Column; a knowledge we discern
as inescapable and that comes with
our plight—when fragile cells are undermined,
our selves, and what we like to call our mind's
attempted too. There's barely separation
between our person and our person. A
great miracle being fouled will bring dismay
and, in this case, a double consternation.

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