

Tom see 01
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poewmz bii tom see
'Tou dhoez hou dizerv ..'
BY MAURICE McNAMARA

The first thing to say, the mad paradox of this, it makes you take the words on board.

The first thing to say about this book, it looks superb. The illustration on the cover looks like a cross between an Australian shed/an Australian hippy home, crossed with 20,000 leagues beneath the sea - a pale spectral green such as you see in glass ground on the sea-shore. The illustrations - 7 of them inside - are by Charles Lake. They take you back to old child book woodcuts, especially the one opposite 'Daivi joenez lokar' (uh, Davey Jones' locker - see the bastard's tricking me, the genitive of Jones doesn't make much more sense than the way he's got it). But they are also contemporaneous drawings. Which is a funny word for round about now, and maybe some of the future also. There's a hazy unconcern of line. It's definite, yes it is, but uncertain.

The first thing to say about this book, it's in big print, which is good for the nearly blind. Let's slip into print. Let's first do concrete. Blocky blocky on the page. (It's not really concrete, it's just the last and first pages are in ridiculously large letters, thanking, and saying good-bye. To those hou diserv.) It's closer to Anthony Burgess, the words of this book, have you (tried to) read Clockwork Orange? (If you ever read a writer's auto-bio, read his. The clever bastard.)

Enough of context, let's plunge into pome one.

*Wen sun riiz braiks throu
preedaun
wen goald disoalvz intou dai-
laiit*

*wen klaodz roal intou silvur
wen dhiy oeshen ternz tou blou
wen waivfoem tenz tou wiit*

First to be snifty. When written in Ainglish, this stuff above might turn out prosaic. But I'm always ready to believe in magic. And tom s. is struggling us to that place. Goald sounds better, closer to it, than gold. Like also klaodz roal, sounds like a germanic roll your own sort of guy. So long as it keeps playful, not those dtrength through joy jokes the germans got up to. Left turn, the gas chamber, right turn, work to death. Ha ha.

Tics I can understand. Artists have to follow their impulses. So if you cannot, at this moment, do much punctuation, or capitals, I'm with you baby. If *th* rather than *the* signifies, then trickster your soul that way. If you have to re-invent the whole way of schpelling - as if it was not complicated enough already - to find the voice that lets your tongue run off, growl, with an ironical bent, then I'll swim the waves beneath with you.

It's clever, it's funny, but does it capture the agony of drowning, I suppose, is the (maybe unfair) question? Does it crawl us into sunsets? (I'm sniffing the untangish tang of stand-offish academix. Maybe.) Do lines suggest, ask, insist? Is it unfair to ask that lines not be too lite? That Pepsi is not life as we know it Jim. That writers still believe in cut and slash? And burn, baby, burn? And love, man, luurve? See, I'm getting too ironical myself.

(I went back to Collected Works, to talk to the inimitable Kris, that gent Hemmensley - what did he think? He talked of the standoff effect of alienation that all art employs, do you really believe that's real blood in the film? But you get frightened just the same. Tom See worked on the day, sang, rolled his rrr's. Tom had been studying Beowulf, and then spun off his own language. And he was funny, people got the

joke.)

Steve and I have been arguing this book back and forth. Steve reckons if you can't say it plain, then either you're being a clever bastard, or you're afraid the words aren't good enough. We read bits. Well, it's not... (fill in a name) but it's funny, a bit surprising, charming. And always the roll of language.

This is a major/minor book, despite any ifs and buts. Daughter 1 wanted to take it to school, to show her teacher, she laughed. That's good. Another exploration of the English language, here in good old Oz. And judging by its look, if you want to publish a book, then David Prater might be the guy to see. Fantastic effort in more than one sense guys.

Daun-derj

*In mii sombu moud
went aot erliy ukross frost-
medoe
tou wosh mii fais in mauning-
kreek
and wotc untrubuld wautuz.*

*... and dhe hot drink rushing
ulong niit-tiim-glugiy throets
dhis deep maun - daun uv
brain-damij berdz -
ubzauz with dhe steem - wind in
dhe leevz.*

*And kroez laodli sing
Traumu is icumen in.
And wee hav lernt.
And we hav lernt.*

