**Ray of Light**

A state of apprehension predating my father’s death by what somehow turned out to be eleven years, and for which there must be a specific tense most likely the future perfect a naming especially jarring in this light, characterised the volleys of concentration solicited by reading the softly spoken extensions of mourning in *Quilt*. The unspoken term in Freud’s essay on ‘the Uncanny’ - *déjà vu -* now ranging beyond the mere past*.* I had to put the book down then, too close to home. Thirteen years after its publication I read it again.

Is there any house that does not double the house? Can ‘the house’ stand intact as originary phantasy? The intrauterine waters to which we all wish to return lap against not only a maternal origin tale but a phylogenetic one of life in the seas in Ferenczi’s ‘thalassal trend.’ This singular not singular domicile has bothered me the whole time. How to put a foot down? And watch where you step. Writing in these environs, while the other place recedes into disrepair destined for a developer, portals spring up all over the shop. I can’t predict them. The last transposition brought a large photograph of my paternal great-grandmother (I think) into my house, not to lounge in the same place above the mantlepiece in a room that would then edge closer towards a mausoleum, and I would sit in place of the dead forever turning the television up. Rather, it found a spot at the top of the stairs in place of the window in the other house. Not until it was put up did I notice its surface suddenly rippling. In the play of light between rooms that unnamed figure materialised and dematerialised, the cylinder glass modulating reflective capacities.

Guppies; minnows; an Angel fish for sure. Something billowing black. Was it Phantom Tetra? No, Black Mollies. Common mollies, commonplace. Where, what, even, was that room it sat within, was housed within, that portal rectangle truly a horse of a different colour given that the nominal television set bulged elsewhere fuzzing in black and white. The picture that tanks here, never settling in place, not dropping anchor, glints in the corners of attention. Not categorically coming to light. Flickering in the half-light, black light, ultraviolet, ‘quicker than a ray of light’. That exorbitant and most specific and tailor-made aquarium keeps opening onto a banal scene that must-have-been. There is no lid on it.

That place cannot possibly have housed Manta Rays, now we learn of the requirements – detailed at some assiduous length in *Quilt* (this signature capacity for zoographical fealty mitigating against more orthodox allegorical cloth that would regularly constrain animal figures into anthropomorphic morality tales while simultaneously puzzling the reference points of ‘realism’]. Yet they ‘flap’ [81] all the same in what feels like the memory of my childhood house manifesting when reading in dizzying retrospect the ‘excarnation’ that is that novel (if novel it be). If they are capable of passing the mirror recognition test (and they are) perhaps misrecognition is also a thing.

More directly, more literally, more evidentially comparable would be the ‘forsaken ghost of the garden.’ There is a certain state of dereliction, of experiencing parental decline, likely known to many here. Yet this unfathomable familiarity, which must be some energy or force rather than a dated event, glancing across surfaces, paper, glass, and flesh forms a delirious attachment to that ‘great tank’ on which he labours, all absurdity and impossibility notwithstanding. There was another one - two – for certain, for real, outside on the grass in some relatively recent time, arriving from nowhere, sitting there accumulating algae, “just in case” my dead dad mutters. I dare say there is a ‘ludicrously anthropomorphic ego-projective perception’ at work (Q 107). I can’t figure out how to properly rein in this ‘ultra-marine correspondence’.

Royle calls it *reality literature*. We might imagine he is simply under a blanket - the ‘living blanket’ - under a quilt, with it pulled up over his head blotting everything out and that is after all one face of the grim reality of death incomprehensibly not happening and then also happening, and she, the witnessing lover of the book, even says of the baroque transformation of his parents’ bedroom that ‘The sky had disappeared. It was a manta, the biggest ray, the strangest thing I had ever seen in a house’ (Q148).

*Quilt* solicits such an intense sense of what happens when they start losing their marbles and then keep on losing them and all the sentences and types of sentences change. ‘Rays to the ground’ he says (Q120) All the ‘when’ questions are moored early on, and then the question form itself provokes too much trouble, too much temporal floundering, so you just chat and sometimes they join in with the electric shock of a decision regarding what you are rambling on about.

Perhaps it is the ‘dictiona-ray’ that lights the exit signs? *Quilt* encourages every – even the most minimal – interior to exhume its essential ‘libra-ray’ and this opening, this continually opening ‘new species of bestiar-ay’ has some other form of relation to the work of mourning. ‘The ray is at the origin’ he says. [Q118] I want to account for or just allow for the articulation this other scene or other relation brings without it collapsing into either absolute disintegration, *or* a reparation dedicated purely to putting things back together again. As you were. Will this have been what is called *play*?