

CANZONE FOR THE CARPAL TUNNEL. (*Originally published in Exquisite Corpse*)
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Consider the miracle of the hand —
cities of light from the opposable thumb;
five-pointed stars unfolding in each hand-
rendered symbol and syllable, the hand
plucked music from strings, while language
rained rivers of numbers & light to the hand
collecting and reducing a world for the hand:
shift-key and space bar, the touch-toned ease
of delicate machines bending distances with ease:
palaces emerging: a tutored eye in the hand,
flashing volume and image to the optic nerve
stream of signal and light to the median nerve.

Consider the crescendo of signals to a nerve-
storm streamed from clavicle to elbow to hand,
a rock tunnel in the hand, crushing the slender nerve,
a strand of sea grass under permafrost, the nerve
slowed still from repetition, forefinger and thumb
benumbed but for the faint recollection of nerves
reduced to the milk-blind automation of nerve
nets known to dominant organisms in a primitive age,
sponges and radula, crystalline foliage,
sea squirts and anemones, blue crystal nerve
webs strewn through single-cell splash colonies'
barnacle and radula micro-histories.

Consider a civilization pledged to the ease
of cerebral column and cortex, a worship of the nerve-
less luxury of tone-touched hours, the soundless ease
of microchips in colloquies, radiation's ease
against the multi-celled organism, a robotic field hand
laying seeds immune to the microbe, the geometric ease
of wind turbine generators in mechanized symphonies,
mechanical music for flesh and bone, forefinger and thumb
efficiently benumbed, each wearied phalange of thumb
laid to a soldier's rest in a civilization of ease;
arid paralysis, the sclerotic fragility of age
drowned to obsolesce in a mechanical age.

Consider the decline of a mechanical age:
promiscuous machines secreting disease
recalcitrant genes, a slackening of the language
of machines, the opposable thumb taking umbrage
at the shattering repetition holding the nerve
in a rock tunnel between ease and language:
a muted hand, cartilage without leverage;
the hand made a fool by the unabashed hand
to mouth repetition of machines, biting the hand
that would feed a semiconductor the serum of language,
unconvinced that the hairless, rotating thumb
reigns king among all false, clawed, and padded thumbs.

Consider an ellipsis of Balinese puppets, finger to thumb:
the thick and humbled thumb, dwarf among the visage
of slender ring and index digits surpassing thumb;
a gloved masquerade in which a medius or pinky might thumb
a pin-dotted nose at thumb, as if pointing out the ease
with which one points or draws on a cigarette, the thumb
momentarily limp and withdrawn, lest one appear all thumbs
in these moments of pleasure before the nerves'
journey from numbness to pain and back again, and a nerve
stem streams the message from earlobe to elbow to hand
craving the tenderness of machines caressed in the hand.

Consider the heart of a machine in the hand:
ribbons of mandrake weaving through thumb
and forefinger as an asp in a previous age
might bracelet the wrist, repeat, and thereby ease
the storm-streamed silence of bit-streamed nerves.