

Steven Hitchins

Response to *Materials from the Garden*

Allen Fisher and Penny Hallas

Stalks of black chalk lacquered thick and opaque. Grass grown up around the legs of a metal stool. A fenceless gate in the middle of the field. A crossshaped old post crowned with a tangle of hosepipe. Abandoned buckets and tin pans. Ash smudge of hills in distance. Charcoal panorama.

In the centre of this circle of arable detritus stands, like an altar, a large oblong waterbutt. Its plastic sides fluoresce with the images that slosh through the waters within: a bee's-eye view nosing through luminous chlorophylls and neon magentas of chard. Hovering close-ups of rubbery reptilian crinkle-curly warping a hexagonal webbing.

Allen in rubber gloves and black apron drops a sheaf of poems into a bowl of ink, which could be a peat bog, shallow and wide like a huge pupil in the ground. He lifts a sodden page from its obsidian well. As the paper ribbons wetly through his gloved fingers, he reads tau-tangled fragments of Milton. Page-tatters melt back into the bog, the words evolving into Dante's *Paradiso*: glimpses of words like 'harmony', 'joy', 'concordance' incongruous amid consumer litter: an old Fruit Pastilles wrapper, a tub saying Marmite or maybe McVites.

Lyn is standing in the flood at the end of the street blowing his sax as a jet from a burst pipe arcs overhead. A jet of chalk. Spindrift wafts undulating in the melancholy dissonance of sax. The images from the waterbutt now begin to flow across him and out of him as he traces the ribs of glinting intervals veining the waxy epidermal scrunch. We are burrowing in flight along brassica architectures iterating elephantine billows that bloat along the stems in baggy folds of cruciferous bubblewrap.

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