Green Blue’s ‘Entrance-Exit Paradox’

As we are watching the leaves, watching the scales, the mountain, I edge an elbow thought and you say the willow is streaming well, and we smile, and then in the glacier, in the clouds, there’s a hint of pink, and we laugh sunrise, sunset, then you point to the moon and we tickle fronds, our edges all broken by the whiteness of clouds at midnight plus, or before dark, and I tickle a fern’s long leaf, wrapped in sun pollen, elbow glow, and you say ‘that pond was beautiful’, and I show you a photograph of our creek, and you say how much you love our pond, and my head angles, “creeek”, you say yes, that’s a magical pond, and I say “creek”, and you tilt your head and ask why I keep saying “pond.” I knew then, a word has changed for you, but not for me. Not yet.

Last week I found a perfect plant pot next to a dusty wall. You said a blue shirt suits my eyes, and someone had given me a blue rose bush, not yet in bloom. So I searched for a blue plant pot, as rosebuds took shape, curling lips, blue rose eyes ready to open for you. Then I found the perfect pot, at a house on the edge of the village, blue against a whitewashed stone wall. I remember the dust. It is still on my shoes. I showed you the new blue pot, and you said “A perfect rose for the rose”, and I thought ‘you are beyond a rose, and beyond roses’. In the morning you said you would wipe the whitewash dust from the rose I had found, and plant the rose in it. The world is changing. Or dimensions are. You had begun to say “rose” instead of “pot”, and have done ever since. I have got used to it. I know which you mean, mostly. And you have got used to my shifting hearing, that makes me hear “rose” when you say or mean “pot”.

Yesterday the rose opened. The petals are pink. We joke and say “One day they will turn blue.” At least the pot is blue. “Yes,” you say “At least the rose is blue.”

You may be saying it as you did yesterday, and I am in a place now, where I hear a different sound when you say “pot”. To me, now, it sounds like “rose”.

Or maybe I just don’t know how to do gardening. Or what colour eyes we have, sometimes blue, sometimes green, sometimes the colour of seashells as they shine.

Has the word “Creek” changed? Or the thing? Or the memory? The scent of its babble, and spring flowers mixed with pebbles. There are subtleties in the World that I don’t know, 50 words for snow, and my grip on creeks and gardens may be far less than the variety of your inner poetry. We check our pulse. This organic battery that can be adjusted with emotion, the thrill of adrenalin, of love, of fear. Should I describe to you, small places that only I and some others see?

In the past few months, a lot has changed.

A curse, they say. Marauders from far lands, a virus that makes people say things which spread fear. We have been told to keep a distance from strangers and loved ones, cover our faces and stay indoors, as unseen horrors scour our kin. The hope that, by being apart, we can make “now” into “then” and gone.

It has been disconcerting, and sometimes dizzying. And I can tell, just as language evolves over time, our thoughts change too. There have been so many moments. So many thoughts have sung in my soul and senses, through words and emotion. And yet, right now, I remember hardly any of them. Do any of us? Not just in the past few weeks, but every week we ever had.

Bits sit in wicker baskets. It had seemed important that we take vitamin C, and drink hot water every twenty minutes. These crumpled notes, handwritten with so many different shades of urgency. And there was a new thing called “Zoom”, as a solution like a new flavour, and it seemed remarkable that wild birds and animals started to come near. All those sudden changes almost instantly became normal, and I cannot remember the exact thoughts or sensations I had at the time each of these new thought plants grew. Reprogrammed quicker than the long evolution of thought and language. Maybe there are no “creeks”, and I imagined them all along.

Do words become bored, and want a change? A holiday from meaning, or do they live and die, and whisper on, in other sounds that continue in breath and voice. The legacy of “pot” endures in “rose”, as the water of our creek gathers in a neighbour’s pond. I see you through the window, and as I look, you look up too, an ever-opening flower, digging the vegetable patch. Here, on our hill… We live far from many of our loved friends in cities where, they say, sometimes a siren howls through silence, and in a park there stands a line of caskets, lined up on trestle tables, each containing stories, summed up with a label on the plastic handle, in a couple of words. The words on ink-fresh labels will change soon, spoken and heard a few times more, then silenced.

In those parks you can hear, like distant bracken, the soft crack of empty benches, as their unseated wood slowly bakes in the sun. Then the flutter of a bird’s feather.

We are on a hill. Wind’s heather rustle, and the smell of iron in the earth, in the stones, some maybe fallen from space, hot meteorites, the sky green or blue, blue or green. Fresh air, abundant and free as the song of grass. A huge comet, ‘Atlas’, is coming, and we lie on our backs anticipating its glow in daybreak.

‘Atlas’ the comet will shine brighter than Venus next week, glowing carbon-green, four times the size of Jupiter, as it whizzes among the planets. New images show it is breaking up. In time, that space in the sky will be blue again. A light breeze swirls scents of the earth and its creatures and roots, pollen, and your frock, the buzz of warm cotton.

“Bleen”, you say. “The ‘Grue-Bleen paradox’. Bleen sits above the clouds, the name of my bear, and for all his stains and stitches I never know what colours he sees when the sky shines on his woven eyes.”

‘Grue-Bleen’ is the concept that, at a point in time, everything that is blue will become green, and everything that is green will suddenly be blue. An instant change, quicker than Vitamin See. And we have no way of telling whether it has already happened. When it does, we will not know, because there will be no alternative frame of reference, no picture next to it of an unchanging reality. If we hold up a photo we took yesterday, its blues and greens will also have changed. As, perhaps, will the associations that we see in each of our own grey box’s whispers.

You pick a grass blade, and say that you thought the grue-bleen paradox was about definitions. The original theory referred to how a definition of a colour could easily include the expectation that it will not always remain the same. The original theory referred to Emeralds. The word “Grue” means that an Emerald is “green before a certain time, then blue afterwards”. And anything that looks green, really looks “Grue”, because who knows what the future holds? Or, rather, we know for sure that the future holds change, even for something so resolute as an Emerald. You say that this concept seems strange to us because the time point in the future, for any given thing to change, is an arbitrary time point, and anyway things do not change like that. But to some creatures, “Grue” could be intuitive, and the idea that something is “green” could be a strange concept. If we start with the concept “Grue”, as a natural given, then “green” forever is the concept which seems unnatural. You hold my hand, and convey by touch that the comet, formed 4 billion years ago, will soon stop shining, and that we both know this, and we are both creatures.

We look it up, scan the skies with eyes and data, and you’re right, the point of the ‘grue-bleen paradox’ was that our frame of reference can only be based on the past, not on the unknown future. It was not about whether things actually change at a certain time, and whether we notice.

Or maybe I am right.

The grue-bleen paradox has suddenly changed its meaning.

Now it is about whether things change.

Because Emeralds always seemed fixed, but nothing is, and there are many things which are likely to change suddenly, for understandable reasons. And their timing would not be arbitrary. Those things are not Emeralds or comets, or pots or creeks, or even roses – though roses do change colour from bud to bloom to decay, and a creek changes the path it rakes through earth and stone.

Society changes with purpose. Laws change. Behaviours change. Politics change. Media belief. All these things change, on a given day, with reason, and some predictability, if we see the colours clearly.

To keep people indoors, Moscow has installed facial recognition cameras outside the entrances to buildings. The cameras link to computers that analyse peoples’ movements. ~If someone leaves their building three times in a day, an alert is sent to the police. This phenomenon did not exist two months ago. We could see it coming. Liberty, your change is seen.

Depending on where you live in Moscow (or where your home address is – it depends on how we use the word “live”. Is “live” where our mail arrives, or where we usually sleep? Is that the same thing as “living”? Or do we live wherever we are, regardless of mail and sleep?)…. The cameras are a change which rolled out, first appearing in one part of the city, then spreading to more, until the whole city has cameras and no camera vaccine is offered. At different times depending on the district and street and building, this new reality happened as a swift event. It suddenly is.

Cameras are switched on, the connection is activated to recognition software, and police receive an alert that you have deviated from the domicile directive, and decide whether to act on it, send a car round. Armed police grab you in the street, when a colour changes, or a liberty virus spreads, or some words change in a book somewhere you are not allowed to see. Its effect is noticed in an instant. Suddenly red is grey. Where I live, where I am, I can still choose between plant pots and roses. And you can, if they still exist for you.

People say that the cameras are installed at the “entrances” to buildings. Another change has gone un-noticed. They are no longer “entrances”. They are now “exits”, but the word “entrance” is still used. Overnight, the word “entrance” has come to mean “exit”, and hardly anyone can see it. The new blue-green ‘Entrance-Exit Paradox’ has been born, and no-one welcomed this strong new bambino, only its mother could love it, though some of us could see the pregnancy. It was just a matter of time.

Entrance or Exit.

Let’s get out of all of it.

I wonder if all your words will vanish. If they will eventually condense into a single, sole concept. I ask you if thoughts are destined to become a singularity, like the opposite of the big bang, the big crunch, or black holes. You laugh, “You and your dark matter… There are so many things which cannot be thought.”

We all, so often, take the path of least resistance, but walking home we head over rocks, and through trees and gorse, a crag, the path of most sensation.

You say “rose”, and I follow. You’re in another world now, there are many, and I have forgotten what we were talking about. Something about creeks flowing through the land.

You show me a new thing. I say “rose” when we talk of plant pots, all round and pot-bound. I start to say “rose” as well. Our “creek” is now a “pond”.

A phrase comes into my head, “Pretty mouth and green my eyes”, read in a Salinger story, knowing her eyes are not green, but the poem reminds him of her, when her eyes are like seashells.

How do we know when anything changes?

I thought you had started to say “rose” instead of “pot”, and “pond” for “creek”…..but now I am less sure. I thought I heard changes in you, and I followed where they go... but now I don’t know. It could be the other way around. It may be me who says “rose”, when I think I am saying “pot”, and I hear “pond” when you say both “pond” and “creek”.

We walk down the hill, back home, among dusty slopes and meadows, and it is clear, under the unseen light of comets, that whoever wears these changes, we will both think it is the other person, and there is no way of knowing. Among butterflies, do we all think we say one thing, while our breath utters other words? Do we hear the limits that we think? Can we ever tell how much this breeze of simplicity blows our words away from our senses, all of the time? Particularly in times of change. Or maybe these are the time we can notice it most.

On our path back …careful steps in this new route we are choosing together, boulders and scree, hold hands, unspoken balance.

You smile. I lift a blade of grass from your hair, and hold it to the sky. Roses and comets.

You give me this.