

HUNG Q. TU

The New Boma

or how we got to “and”

Ideas patiently germinate out of sight
until one day, Brussels sprout
and so for mid-century moderns
only a fully integrated market could achieve
what war repeatedly couldn't; peace
a time-lapse map of just such an idea shows
its spread to unsuspecting parochial
markets the “domino theory” was right after all!
loss of identity and feeling devalued
are just some of the possible side effects
in response, a South London dishwasher speaks
for immigrants at large “try doing my job”
like that mid-century Moses coming down
from the mountain, to see the plan in its entirety
would leave us staring dumbly into space
in the end, colonies operated at a loss
does this mean my youth had been misspent
unduly exercised over a fiscally unsound adventure?
what the curators had in mind was to
incorporate the ideals of harmony and
completeness under Western skies
“input-in, output-out” neatly shows
the depth of their design in action!
but to see the supply chain in all its complexity
would turn museum-goers to stone
how comforting it must be for this traveller
to hear a familiar voice from home “*tu racista!*”

a chaotic period of Warring States ends
supplanted by a dynastic supermarket
an uncanny comedy of life imitating TV features
a middle-aged housewife “I don't like Germans”
refusing to choose, they want to be recognized as both
is this what it means to be finally postmodern?
so they would turn their colonial gaze inward
an elusive peace entered into force
creating the New Boma

Automation

Are private missions to space
jet-fueled rehearsals for capital flight?
how filled with dread and insight I was to learn
that robotics and artificial intelligence would
become the sweeping wave of a future tsunami
in his spare time, a teenage coder developed
free software to quickly and easily appeal
parking tickets, imagine the menial
but beneficial possibilities for asylum seekers
a deported mother shuddered at the possibilities
as Mr Universe and a godlike intelligence place
black and white pebbles on a Cartesian grid
until pieces stand out to reveal the endgame
but also a new birth, one without the pain of labor
so with this in mind, he set about
automating the boring parts of his life
is this why homebuyers find gray so agreeable?
how outflanked but relieved I was to hear
radicals propose, of all things, a universal income
I remember a particular fireside chat when
our elders whispered about the revolution to come
for those elders, cancer was just a handy
metaphor for negative growth, if only to put
a human face on a rapidly spreading meme
so it would be for Billy Graham, to spread
the Good News “Let the dead bury the dead”
of course, whatever superiority I felt watching
a clumsy but teachable robot take its first steps
for mankind ends with the unacknowledged
knowledge of insecurities to come

is this why zombies are so relatable?
it can be hard to find the right emoji when your
coworker has a permanent smiley face
so it would be for Judy Garland, to sing
“Over the Rainbow” in perpetuity
becoming a gay icon along the way
imagine my surprise when I hear that
self-driving cars are just around the corner

Blackbeards

In a galaxy that could even be ours
but to be there is to be in thrall to an empire
there, virtue and commerce go hand in hand
the emperor emerged from his one-night stand
with the sun goddess receiving
three cheers for "*Banzai!*"
which makes it all the more puzzling when
unlikely bands of pious but plucky rebels
emerge, determined to reprise an alt-past
like when I met an idiot savant
traveling on a Kurdish passport
for our conservative rebels, yet to
experience a sexual revolution of their own
the object of desire is for her eyes only
is this latency the reason their recruitment
videos look so pornographic?
a compilation of explosive climaxes
in quick succession for his eyes only
in a performative act of joy, that savant
jumped up and down on the edge
of a cliff until he got the perfect shot
then some hunchback said "International
System", as if our condition was
nothing more than a permanent shrug
so the language of enforcement would
return to its favorite nostrum, decapitation
even if it was just a figure of speech
now, it has to be a shock to the International System
when, against a non-
descript background, an unidentified man with

a perfect cockney accent took it literally
not having the stomach for such things
I remember fainting in a theater lobby
those Blackbeards of the Levant ached
for a caliphate preserved in amber
so it was an epic but tiresome struggle
not of swashbuckling rebels but the very future
of entertainment for our eyes only