As a Perfectly Foolish Young Man I Wanted 22(b)

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As a Perfectly Foolish Young Man I Wanted - Part One - Book Seven - So That it Remain Perpetually Inchoate

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Being a somewhat convoluted explanation of how the various strands of *Where the Halling Valley River Lies* came to be concocted.

And which we begin with *Leitmotifs from an English Pastorale*, whose nucleus came about some years ago when I attempted to write a piece about the pastoral tradition within English music, before realising I'd set myself a monumental task. But I rambled on regardless, only to lose what I'd written so far when my computer crashed beyond all hope of repair. As for reasons best known to myself, I'd not ensured its continuing existence by way of a duplicate.

I think I then attempted a re-write with the singer-songwriter Nick Drake as its main feature, which I enhanced with references to various examples of English pastoral music, such as my own personal favourite, *A Lark Ascending* by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Ultimately it was given the title *From an English Pastorale - For Nick Drake*; but I only ever saw it as a makeweight. That is, until I decided to expand it into *Leitmotifs from an English Pastorale*.

I can't even recall why I made the decision to include the leitmotifs or recurring themes, which were of course originally used in music rather than in writing, although ultimately co-opted by literature. But it was a risky one, lest readers think I was inadvertently repeating myself. But then the piece as a whole is pretty "lawless", which is what the French writer AndrÃ© Gide proposed a novel should be. Although *Leitmotifs* is hardly a novel; and Gide's shorter works were far from lawless.

It's based on fact, and predictably so for anyone who's in any way familiar with what I optimistically like to call my writings. And while partly original, it's also rooted in a network of autobiographical pieces I've been concocting since 2006; having destroyed most of what I'd written up to that point.

But it's not a memoir as such, at least, not as I see it, but then in the end, it's not up to me to say what it is. In fact when all's said and done, I haven't the first idea what it is other than something I wrote. But by naming the central figure Runacles, I'm able to distance myself a little from him, so that Runacles is a version of me as opposed to the completed article.

And so we move on to *Adversary (A Quartet of Modern Discourses)*. The first of which, *The Coming of the Absaloms*, having been fashioned from an early section of *The Gambolling Baby Boomer*, first chapter of my memoir, *Rescue of a Rock and Roll Child*. Or should I say memoirs...for it exists as two versions, one being a direct memoir, the other, similarly direct, but with many names changed.

And while *Absaloms* has since been enhanced, the similarities still very much remain. While the second was derived from another chapter from *Rescue*, *The Triumph of Decadence*. As to the third, it was based on *The Riddle of the British English*, which while still available online, has to all intents and purposes been shelved. While the source of the fourth, *From Avant Garde to Global Village*, was the final chapter of *Rescue*, *A Final*

Distant Clarion Cry.
Which brings us to *Your Lethal Life and Further Versified Fragments*, which as the name suggests consists exclusively of versified writings.
Wicked Cahoots and *The Woodville Hall Soul Boys* stem from stories written in the late 1970s; while they first saw the light of day in versified form in 2006, before going on to form part of the *Rescue*. While *Some Perverse Will*, which originates from about 1980, has never been anything other than versified. Although the same could not be said of *Tales of a Paris FlÃ¢neur*, a relatively new work in its present form based partly on a story written in about 1987 (and subsequently destroyed), and partly on material written specifically for what became the *Rescue*.
While *Spark of Youth Long Gone* and *London as the Lieu* also date from the '80s; indeed *London* first existed in prose form as part of the same story that partially inspired *FlÃ¢neur*, while *Spark* was from another - barely started - tale entirely. And *Lone Birthday Dancing* was forged specially for the *Rescue* from notes madesometimeintheearly1990s, possibly October '91.
With respect to the *Lyrical Fragments*, they were for the most part penned in 2003 before being roughly recorded onto cassette, and later transferred onto CD, which enabled them to be made into MP3 files. And these eventually ended up on You Tube, among other sites. Although versions of *The Ones We Love* and *Time Travel* were written in 1974 and '99 respectively, with *All Through the Ages* arriving around about the same time as *Travel*, although never making it onto CD.
And the same applies to *Your (Beautiful) Lethal Life*, a recent piece based on an earlier lyric written for a close friend at a time my own life was both beautiful and lethal.
Shifting to *Seven Chapters from a Sad Sack Loser's Life*, its origins also lie in the *Rescue*. For out of the latter came two kindred pieces centring on one David Cristiansen, namely, *The Tormenting*, and *The Testimony*, which is even more bowdlerised than its sister piece, if that's at all possible. Both are told in the third person as a means of rendering what is effectively a memoir more novelistic, and enhanced by dialogue, as in the case of *Rescue,* whichiseither as I remember it, or simply approximate.
While some of the narrative could be accused of being on the fanciful side, as befitting a piece of creative non-fiction, which concerns me somewhat, due to my fervid commitment to absolute truth. For instance, when I refer to the protagonist David as having realised he was a king-size loser, I feel I'm trying to provide a striking start to the story; and yet when I did so, I was at a low ebb when it came to my image of myself as a writer. So titling the work as I did may have been both petulant and cathartic.
But did I really think of myself, Carl Halling (as distinct from David Cristiansen) as a loser? The truth is I can't remember.
And *Sad Sack* is effectively *The Tormenting*, with elements of *The Testimony* added to it. Such as several autobiographical narratives which, deemed ineffectual as shorts, were shelved along with both longer works. While the *Rescue* was relegated to what might be called a second team of writings.
Which is where Book Five once existed...that is, until it was recently upgraded and completed. But its evolution was even more labyrinthine than that of *Sad Sack*.
What is certain is that it first emerged in the wake of *Rescue* as a second memoir, only to vanish from the writing site I'd initially used to store it...having failed to benefit from the safety net of a back-up copy.
And as a result, I was forced to re-write it; and it emerged in embryonic form as a vast diversity of writings. And some or all of these are still available to read online. Yet, it was ultimately fine-tuned in order that it focus on my father, Patrick Halling, as well as the successive musical and cultural climates in which his career took place. And tendered the name *Where the Halling Valley River Lies*.
While many, perhaps most, of the elements pertaining to myself would be destined to end up in *Sad Sack*.
And so finally to *Beachcombings from the Halling Valley Riverbank*, whose opener, *Some Drunk Day He Said*, has the dubious honour of being a near-unadulterated slice of juvenilia, having been conceived as some kind of poem in about 1976. And as such, it provides a certain insight into the psychological condition of the dandified figure from Chapter Two of *Seven Chapters from a Sad Sack Loser's Life*.
While the origins of sophomore piece, *Bouzingo: The Gathering of the Poets*, lie in an unfinished tale, possibly dating from around 1979. And which centres on a club situated in an imaginary small town in Southern Spain, in which fashionable young men and women are wont to nightly congregate as a means of

fulfilling their wildest romantic fantasies. Is in other words, entirely fantastical, unlike most of my writings. *Call the FBI*, *For More than a Million Dreams*, *Melancholy Girl*, and *My Travels* were all originally song lyrics penned in 2003...with *Some Romantic Afternoon* dating from much earlier...perhaps 1980. While *Gallant Festivities* and *The Wanderer of Golders Green* were versified for inclusion in what ultimately became the *Rescue*, having been based on notes made in the early 1980s.

And this short coda finishes things off quite neatly. But that's not to say *Where the Halling Valley River Lies* has attained its definitive state, because by its very nature, it can be added to ad infinitum. So that it remain perpetually fluid and perpetually inchoate. And in perpetual evolution.

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