

# Cancer

by [Guy Walker](#) (November 2019)



*Six Men Getting Sick* (still), David Lynch, 1967

In normal times we can expect obedient squadrons, in silent faithfulness, to do their duty in repairing the ingredient that bears the codes; the daily damage to the chains of information that denote *us* and exactly what we are. Remote from us, forgotten, their activity; they're blithe and automatic over years, intelligencers (docile engineers), all working with a perfect industry.

We can accept our programmed obsolescence

and Hayfleck's limiting when ripeness comes;  
harder to baulk at such guessed-at senescence  
when Deaths' promised full-stop resolves our sums  
and consummates our grammar. A known end,  
to a parametered-type mind, will lend  
resistance to (without it, atrophied  
and shapeless) sense. For not to know we die,  
to be unparsed, would terrify;  
to mean at all needs context to succeed.

But when, awry, a strand of DNA,  
missteps, in absent mind, to lose the plot,  
then is unleashed (that unknown, secret day)  
a disinhibited 'immortal.' Not  
inclined to toe the line this megalomaniac  
obeys blind evolution's rules, and so  
runs riot; a renegade, an order-trasher,  
hell-bent on self-promotion; vandal who,  
unschooled, conducts a vulgar palace coup,  
And shows himself a boorish party-crasher.

Abandoning the logos and its codes,  
illiterate of sense, a tumour juts  
its snout into a library, discommodates  
systems of form and information put  
in order by design. An ignorant  
Yahoo, gross presence, strayed abroad with scant  
regard for sense or system, overturning  
the delicately loaded stacks that house  
our tales. How guess what world-mistake aroused  
this blinkered drunk, so wholly undiscerning?

Precarious *person* is alloyed with flesh,

a farting, salty livestock; animal  
whose pleasures, intimately, are enmeshed,  
whose fierce and briny loves, hold us in thrall  
so joyously. We husband it, our beast,  
until the siege-craft of this *arriviste*,  
mole-like, surprises us inside our keep  
from unexpected quarters of ourselves;  
our person's home wherein he delves,  
to sabotage our balance and to reap

the cruellest harvest from distress. We learn  
a queasy intuition from this Fifth  
Column; a knowledge we discern  
as inescapable and that comes with  
our plight—when fragile cells are undermined,  
our selves, and what we like to call our mind's  
attempted too. There's barely separation  
between our person and our person. A  
great miracle being fouled will bring dismay  
and, in this case, a double consternation.

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