

# HELPING PEOPLE (2024) - COLE DENYER

Text by Sam Wilson Fletcher

## HEAD I

*What follows is not very informative. The names (and the people they belong to) that appear in this text and in the show are very important: they are crucial. At the same time they aren't. The work is I think an outgrowth of internalised damage, like antlers. Made of what? Not bone. (Frozen blood maybe - have you seen the brinicle? The finger of death.) One kind of surrealism (the whacky kind) is putting an egg on a roof. The other kind is a method - a way of embodying knowledge. But I don't like the word 'surrealism' and all its connotations (or the word 'embodying') and probably neither do you. Also it goes without saying that the 'I' throughout is animal, it is performative.*

alcohol is also a medicine - it helps me drink  
i'm so tired i can't speak  
i have some kind of a disease - my throat is full of  
something - insulation? the remnant of uncounted  
sagging estates  
- the four horsemen of the britfash acropolis  
the 4 horsies of the agitpropolis  
the 4 hobbyhorsemen on their private broomsticks  
like harry potter - that aspiring gp!  
(nobody had to teach *him* the basics -  
*cremasteric reflex gandalf! expeliamus drop your trousers*)

roaming the deadstreets of the flatbrick mazy plan  
far from the flyover and far from the upstairs bedroom  
of commerce where the people they are  
casting their votes like skimming stones  
onto the waterbed on which cutouts of  
the 4 hearsemen are spread

(1) sir john ritblat  
*a charming rogue a bit of an oldfashioned spiv*

(2) david hart - black ear of thatcher  
worm of thatcher, black earworm  
curling in the dark liquor of thatcher's sour soul  
(even the ministers were wary of him  
inside her cloak  
like a bit of dried umbilical) -

*abroad on the elysian field  
of waves - albion  
submerged to his ears, the bright prow of his forehead is gleaming  
and blake is here*

*- see him through thick foliage  
he is crouched inside the overgrown ruin  
of a motorway bridge  
with dental glue and a tiny spatula  
he is applying to the walls  
a mosaic  
of the shards of one (1) exploded olympic village*

*and look! there is a demon at his shoulder  
- a whisp of black shit, a being entirely of bloodstool  
fibrous melanoma, bloodpudding and hemp*

*it whispers with pneuma, it talks in silvery bubbles  
the slight wind now carries its smell to you  
- ah, like a good cigar!*

*and what of (3) mike weatherly? who died of the cancer in his lungs  
michael richard weatherly  
born in the postvictorian seaside town of clevedon  
oh how i have wandered the seawalls at night  
bearing in my palm the bright candle  
- in the decades of postwar slump  
it was a citadel of charity shops - cliftonites  
came to nab bargains from struggling old people, a form of philanthropy*

*the football is on the big tv  
with his eyes my grampi is watching  
the morrison's - he has his bright eyes  
on the yellowsticker bird  
a smell of wool and gravymix, a smell of rust*

*(i am handwriting this on the train  
sat across from a man who is angrily  
brushing sandwich crumbs off his expensive suit  
and some of them are going on me!  
he is picking his nose and flicking his crumbs  
and biting his nails, this anxious child  
of commerce, this son of home investment / invasion, this speculator)*

*my grampi was a feed salesman  
he said the tea he was served on the farms  
was heavy stuff - oily with great black flies afloat in it  
and the cider! it really did have great black rats afloat in it*

*- death is not an alternative to it, he said, it is part of it  
it attests to the fact that there is jouissance in it*

*the english unemployed did not become workers to survive  
they - hang on tight and spit on me - enjoyed  
the hysterical, masochistic, whatever exhaustion it was*

*of hanging on in the mines, in the foundries, in the factories -  
in hell, they enjoyed it, enjoyed the mad destruction  
of their organic body which was indeed imposed upon them*

*they enjoyed the decomposition of their personal identity -  
the identity that the peasant tradition had constructed for them  
they enjoyed the dissolution of their families and villages  
and enjoyed the new monstrous anonymity of their suburbs  
and the pubs in the morning and evening<sup>1</sup>*

- and the great black rats afloat in the air  
in the room of rotten england  
they are blinding us with their feces  
they have left mouldmarks all over the ceiling

which is sagging like the ceiling of the sinkhole cavern under england  
that hollowed out world of toxic roots  
through which sir john strides  
like a pair of callipers - he measures  
the extent of need  
and then, with the precision of a neolithic mason  
seeds another monolith

- ok, but i am not a scholar and do not pretend to be  
*i am only a gentle clevedon boy - i am only a gentle sussex boy*  
i was born actually in a petri dish, i grew upwards  
from the wound surface of (4) roger scruton's peeled chest  
like red coral  
- i glistened and grew fat

together we walked the glassy crick  
*for i am only a gentle boy of the hills of west v*  
and on the diet he coaxed me with, which was rich  
with the crispy fragments of the exploded  
mahogany drawing rooms of old europe  
i grew fat  
with stretchmarks like a map of antiquity  
that together we explored

i was his leviathan, his muse  
and he was my huck finn -  
rafted by my bulk we sailed to the mouth  
of the gulf  
and among the clotted islands  
of oil - out into open sea

pausing in the great sargasso  
that he might parley with his family  
who of course forgave him - he was that loveable -

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<sup>1</sup> Lyotard, Libidinal Economy, p. 111

making a gordian knot of their bodies  
those eels offered us up  
to the blinding sky - white star night

but sadly thereafter i was relegated to the shadows  
*i may not present myself*  
*to his esteemed audience, i may*  
*whale at his feet*  
*only inside the secrecy of his college rooms*  
i watched him make sex with many acolytes

feeling pangs for the goodolddays on the crick  
i snaked along the corridor of death: that queue  
to see the queen in state (17 September 2023) -

i flowed along the thames (so many bones you harbour  
i have seen the uber boys  
hoik the bodies of so many  
thames, i did not know you had drowned so many)  
- and in that sample of island england i saw  
especially: intense young men  
and roger, they had your books in their hands! my heart leapt  
(where are you now?)

and who are you, sweet little puffer fish? you do look smart  
are you the exchangeable spiv brain  
of the 4 horsemen? are you their rascal spirit? yes you are  
their yellow charm - *you can get away with anything with murder*  
*if only you click your heels and*  
*allow the wind to muss your hair*

ah, (3) mike weatherly -  
you who loved the foxes and hated the hounds  
and the spongers cluttering the bookie's mouth  
there is a body frozen blue outside the empty bungalow of england  
the empty white bungalow of england

mike, you loved rock n roll so much  
you promised to wear your iron maiden shirt inside the commons  
but the speaker wouldn't allow it!  
the speaker wouldn't allow it...  
mike, can you hear me?  
the door appears to be bolted?  
i'm in my dressing gown  
i only went outside to see about the noise  
and now i'm locked out

i'm locked out  
and the skeletal horses  
that (i see now) aren't really horses at all

but the skeletal  
blackbodied greyhounds of commerce  
are towering along the street  
- and there you are - *mike, can you hear me!*

john and david and roger are with you  
riding silently  
there is a black space where a mouth should be  
there is a black sound where a heart should be  
- i see you  
weeping and fluttering your hands  
and rocking back and forth - what are you summoning?

*john*  
landlord of the universe  
whose pelvis is a fortune cookie  
and the note inside is blank!

*david*  
who relayed from the sac of his toxic kidney  
the drops of a rich liquor into maggie's ear!

*mike*  
positioning the sharp of the spade silently  
to stamped off our sleepy heads!

and *roger*  
dear roger - you are corpse jelly  
sliding along on a film of thought  
you sanctioned those who sheltered  
beneath the wiry wing

(wing of one beechcraft 200  
sailing high on the air over london  
when the doorlight flashed on  
and one (1) isabel ritblat 'fell out'<sup>2</sup>)

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<sup>2</sup> Isabel was John's first wife. She is not mentioned in his Wikipedia article. *He cut down his work hours after the accident in order to spend more time with the children.*

## HEAD II

This case is to decide whether underneath your friendly and lovable exterior there is a darker side lurking.

- Sasha Wass QC

... such animals often move in a disoriented and dizzy fashion, with the brains 'arguing' with each other. Some simply zig-zag without getting anywhere. Heads may attack and even attempt to swallow each other.

- Prof Georgina Lake (UCLA), private correspondence

### 1. *Craniopagus parasiticus*

and what of the mirror that sits  
inside the body, intersecting the self?  
*it produces fatal abnormalities*

het kint with 2 of everything - two minds two faces

het kint  
who does not make it beyond childhood, who dies on that black slab

a mirrored sword - *the guillotine of england*  
which makes of a man a beast of two backs

or - depending on where you stand  
(perhaps you cut the rope?)

the doubleheader called *craniopagus parasiticus*  
by medical science: the parasitic twin

*the 2nd palm is black*  
*handshake like an inkcap*  
*it is the mark -*

### 2. *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp*

There is a precedent for such dark duplications in art history. In Rembrandt's turgid lamplit *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp*, a man named Adriaen het Kint lies on the slab (supposedly). Het Kint: the Kid. He was a thief. His right hand had been chopped off before he was hanged. Rembrandt initially painted the corpse like this but later changed his mind. This added hand is dark and discoloured and disproportionate. Meanwhile (as noted by Sebald and many others), his left hand is not actually a left hand at all but some chimera: the visible tendons of it, which according to the location of the thumb should correspond to the palm of the left hand, are in fact the tendons of the back of a right hand. *In this room there is one right hand too many. With two right hands you cannot pray.*

### 3. Tryst

In the late 90s, Harris' daughter Bindi (now Ava Reeves) learned of her father's 'tryst' with her childhood best friend, which began when she (the friend) was 13 and continued into her adulthood<sup>3</sup>. In her anger, Reeves reportedly 'smashed up Harris' paintings'.

### 4. *Rolf on Art* (2002, BBC)

For *Rolf on Art: Rodin*, Harris made a sculpture of Reeves' right hand, '... first modelling the hand in clay and then casting it. To my amazement I was told that Rodin used exactly the same single hand sculpture. If you look closely it is definitely NOT a pair of hands, it is a repeat casting of the same [right] hand, but placed in a slightly different position, at a different angle. I'd like to thank the people at the casting foundry who nursed me through the whole process.' Many were made. Now purchasable from several online galleries for a few hundred quid - nearly worth it for the smelted price.

### 5. *Kids Can Say No!* (1985)

In *Kids Can Say No!*, Harris obfuscates by sitting under a tree. He warns children between the ages of 5 and 8 against sex predators. 'Paedophilia was finally coming out from under its veil of secrecy' - by the time of the film's release he had already committed 9 of the 12 assaults he was later charged with. As though in premonition, the film concludes with two (blue) right hands, holding holstered nightsticks. Which is to say, the film ends with a song: *My Body*, sung by 'a group including Harris, two police officers and some children'.

*My body's nobody's body but mine  
You run your own body  
Let me run mine*

### 6. Schadenfreude

*Kids Can Say No!* may be seen in retrospect 'as either monumental self-delusion or a sign of deep, self-lacerating guilt'. This seems too generous an assessment. But supposing he was actually human? There is avoidance in our portrayal of paedos as diseased bleeding lizards. It almost allows us to write them out of history as aberrance - statistical, rather than a social consequence of power and its abuse, which they are?<sup>4</sup> By October 2022, Rolf was unable to talk, his neck full of cancer.

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<sup>3</sup> In a letter to the friend's father, Harris wrote: 'I fondly imagined that everything that had taken place had progressed from a feeling of love and friendship - there was no rape, no physical forcing, brutality or beating that took place'.

<sup>4</sup> Are paedos genetically made? 'There has been a longstanding history of research surrounding genetics and potential causes of criminality' but 'there is still very little genetic research on paedophilia'. Probably some are and others aren't. Regardless, power and its abuse was the enabling factor here.