

I woz ere DRJB '87

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I was here with cramped fingers and shavings of dry desk dust, boring inscriptions of boredom into the wood, scratching the gnarled surface until my excavations never would accommodate my boredom.

I was here head in hands and a world in my head that I would not admit the old bastard at the front into. I was plotting rebellious acts of wit. I was working hard to produce the fantasies that could be used as excuses for the work I was not producing. I was here with more ink on my fingers than on the page.

I was here, staring out of the window; the breeze playing with the litter and sparrows playing with the breeze, and a tempting freshness teasing my face: in a too stuffy room with a too stuffy teacher stuffing us with too stuffy things. And forever five minutes to the harsh chime of temporary freedom; five minutes of trepidation because homework was due and I hadn't done it. Anticipation of the challenge of delicious insolence - I could look teacher in the eyes and tell incredible lies as if they were God's own truth. Scientific facts, surreal prose or whatever suited the subject.

I was here, fascinated by the sharp sarcasm of a hated teacher, or the twinkling eyes and bushy beard of one I admired, and gazing at the chink of hope between the buttons of the drama mistress' blouse. All the time I had as much enthusiasm for their preachings as they did themselves.

I was here before I ever carved my name as an expression of self-frustrated. I discovered poetry as a means to escape the slow words of text books and essays. I received poor marks for writing poetry rather than essays, but at least they did not criticize the poems, and here I was free.

I was here in detention, in inky resentment.

I was here in examinations, proving my worth to the percentage boundaries of a statistical curve.

I was here in college, a brave new world afraid of its own shadow. Indifference and aggression of teachers metamorphosing into nonchalance and sadness of lecturers.

I was here with drugs in my bloodstream and never so engrossed: I was not here because there were more fascinating and important things elsewhere. I was here with after-effects and listlessness, behind with my work and falling into despair and the imitation relief of more narcotics.

I came expecting to be pushing back the boundaries of human knowledge, and found myself training to be a lab assistant. I guess I should have known better.

At the end of the first year, my coursework "did not reach the required standard". Not knowing what else to do started again, and five terms later came examinations.

"Under achievement" has been one of the principles I have always lived by, but sudden, utter failure was a new and terrible experience. I would stare at my books and call them senseless, and after a suitably studious length of time I would watch television to a sensible hour, then retire to bed and dreams of more fulfilling intellectual exercise. And on every examination morning I would walk calmly down to the fresh horror of my stupidity.

So here I am in my place amongst the generations of desk borers, with a message of hope and despair for desk borers to come. They would teach you the dread of the mind that is their own! So carve on until the desk collapses, or the bell rings, or the teacher goes for a well deserved cup of tea and a breakdown.

Do this in my name, for I was here.

