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# To Gyre the Whim-Wham

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“It sounds like a horse,” Alice thought to herself. And an extremely small voice, close to her ear, said, “You might make a joke on that—something about ‘horse’ and ‘hoarse,’ you know.”

—Lewis Carroll<sup>1</sup>

I WAS MUSING while hanging; hanging out, really; well...leaning back, you know, because I needed to, and hoping quite severely for nothing to despire and I'd survive a while longer...at least as long as it might take to more or less secure the new work by Nailing it Up—or Hanging the Wall Gobelin-like because—as everyone knows—gravity Walls need securing and that can be tricky especially if it's a two- to three-metres high Riverwall well up on a steep bank and this one was suspect being nearly a metre further out from an older Wall and claiming this canton would make any terrace or lookout a place of power and wonder where one might gaze down powerfully and wonderfully upon hungup paddlers failing to canoe a passage over the hull-slicing rapids rocks—not that I'd actually be powerful of course but a visitor might be psychologically tempted to whereas I would probably elevate a weary eyebrow and drop a casual remark (I...say...that...does...look...interesting) particularly now with a roiling fresh jumping and sliding through after thundery showers in the Catchment, and besides, there's always the excitement that goes with the risk of putting a Wall on, well, doubtful Riverside ground, ground I might add that grimly supports itself and also nourishes fierce shrubs like European privet, and without the privet we'd all be in terrible trouble at Floodtime because nothing holds a bank together like privet and then there's that other awesome old import, that tangoing tangle, the lantana from Argentina, and not forgetting those monstrous grasping clumps of Queensland grasses with leaves like broadswords and roots for a bulldozer...anyway, sorry, the new Wall I was saying, needs Nailing Up—settling or Fixing in the photo sense, integrating while elevating in order to become itself, to be monolithic and binding (all the stones murmuring We Are One, as it were) because without The Fixing, gravity Walls, whether jutting, leaning back, or doing their best to be vertical, will slipslide away and sometimes do so with a levigating hugeness of crash!!! sounding like a truckload of champagne bottles, empty of course, disassembling into tinkled shards, so the thing to do is

to find Nails and Jammers, stones cigar-shaped or wedgy that will plug the holes, fill the gaps, and resist stress and strain...so if it can be done before the poor stoneperson is wilfully persuaded backwards off his/her perch by a downgoing rampart to plunge shrieking into the clutching jungle of the torrid banks, then his/her job is well done—although there are of course all manner of pitfalls to avoid before s-he can sigh hoarsely and safely groan, At last, 'tis done—because, you see, the elevating Wall evolves as one lays really good Pieces, stones with a goodish bit of length to them, the best of which will lie into the Wall like nestling rolling pins or loaves or gun barrels, if they can be found, a process like weaving warpage, but alas, without any crossing weft, and so the builder must provide the Wall's mainstay, a motley filling of small stones—but I charge you, dear reader, to not include any sands or fine gravels for they will saturate when the skies open and the filled-up soaking interior will inexorably force the Wall out and the crazed builder down, spinning, into that aforementioned wet creepy-crawly undergrowth abyss...unless that builder yet may turn, unroped, uncramponed, unpitoned, hollow-eyed and sweaty but triumphant beyond belief, to wave at the big white River flashing and dancing below in the sunlight—almost a bowsprit figurehead view, if you see what I mean, as if from a Winged Victory soaring and surfing out up and over the waves—having transcended the awfulness of the Wall a-tremble, the Wall urging to burst, as a frisson of shift becomes a calamity of decline and the destructured Wall transforms into individualised separated members flinging the hapless constructor, engorged with conniptions, toward a fluid oblivion, to transmutate into a mere aperitif for bottom-feeders—oh, sorry!! I quite forgot! and I simply meant to say, There I was working on the new Wall, hanging out hanging and surfing if you will, as so many others here do—sorry!—I was ruminating, you know, musing on this and that, meditating, almost, and trying to figure something out: to whit, how I might more easily launch and recover Enterprise, for I need her to carry me downriver (and home again) to my secret underwater mining operation—sandy gravels from Eel Bay (won by drainageholed flower pot) for gardening, terracing, and concreting (not for Walling)—and further down to the shallows for Good Wallstones—small medium and large (oh! the profound struggle to get a Biggie into the canoe and death-defying to breathlessly get it out again and onto the fragrant banks) and as booklearning and travel will sometimes facilitate, my memories translated magically—one such was of that great ditch the Grand Canyon and tother was of Great Uncle Jules, once of the Diamond Fields Horse and the Galeka War and Kimberley where you may still see the Big Hole, and in the early days there, if you will please imagine it, much Blue Ground was raised (producing the Hole) (somewhat the opposite of Walling I daresay) by whim-wham or whim, the energy supplied by all manner of nags and hayburners, and such a whim here would allow Enterprise more directly down and up again, Walllaunched, without the tiresome struggles from her tethertree down a floodruined sometime Riverwall to launch, and then the backbreak risk to bring her home once more...and so I wondered, having pulleys and beams and timber and ropes and such, yet having no horse, how!, how!!, how!!!, and even

thought on the grunted waterdragons who eye me motionless, unblinking at daybreak on their terrace, like small dinosaurs—were they to be harnessed instead, enough of them, they might just do it, slowwhirl the whim—but...no, there's meagre dragonfuel these humid days: dragons love big fat juicy stinging flies (and have been known to hang around waiting while the shrieking Waller swats the winged monsters for them, and have even used me and the Old Dogs, in the past, as handy stalking horses (if not bait), while we snoozed and dreamed, Riverside, and I might add, neither dogs nor I entirely appreciated those embracing ankelgrabs, although the Chaps were always friendly and meant no harm, but just try an extended meditation as the playful freebooting Jabberwock (nearly a metre long) or the smaller Beatrice pounce, cling, snappily ingest, then depart—could I perhaps fashion small whiffletrees to harness the bigger bulls and possibly append a willow-wand farthingale for slighter souls (Arharr!! me hearties, heave together now!!)—oh, I don't know; reptiles can be fussy—and I even pondered itinerant wallabies pausing mid hop in the dewed dawn grass as I pattered household on a floorboard creaky—and then I remembered the ants, the awesome small black ones that surf a very high flooded gum, thousands of them, and while I'm always on deck before they are, they seem not to stop at all during the day, up and down, driving on the right, avoiding all rain...and I've not discovered why they live so high (the tree goes up forever and on a clear day if you attend closely you may hear their chorused singing, capriccioso, though muted) and forage so low, on the ground, inside old Walls...and are never seen to carry food, either up or down (there's something Good down here, I'll be bound); were I to harness them, somehow, to turn the antwhimdrum, perhaps with gossamer funnel-web threads, twould be a capering mission for them—imagine 40,000 or half a million, one collective intellect, one Mind, to power the whim hymenopterous, all those little people hauling in unison...and of course I'd feed them honey and fan them...and lead them safely home afterwards to Big Tree and offer them days off, although, curiously, I don't see them on Saturdays: but I imagine they're Up There though, those riverine beasties, thousands of antfeet in the leafed sky, hanging out, surfing, as I...and gazing down, smiling holistically, antcontent, musing on humans, a growing Wall, the breezewaving shrubby banks, that serpentine riving flow, those warlord dragons, the gentle hoppers, and the anteyed far-off Riverview I can't quite know...

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Lewis Carroll. (1871). *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (Chapter III, "Looking-glass insects").





*Because elephants can't climb trees, that's why!*