

Who Are At War

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To Mr Salter, a word is a stout wire
with which he hopes to pith the beast
of his opponent's argument, scramble
its brain, deactivate its nervous system.
The defence will continue to breathe,
the tongue go on wetly pulsing
like it were itself alive, but all sense
is reduced to confetti'd neural matter.

cornflower blue bottle miller's delight
brooms and brushes ladder love corn blinks

clocks and watches stink device piss-a-bed
dog posy pishamoolag lion's teeth

Another word is stalked around, sniffed
where meaning has left a wreath of scent.
From your vantage point, you watch counsel
paw at it gingerly, then take it in their mouths,
modified condyle locking to the cranium,
and chew. The word gnawed to its core,
the barrister then picks from his teeth
filaments of bone, holds them to the light.

cock brumble lady's garters black blegs
black spice country lawyers thief

cartwheel nosebleed break-your-mother's-heart
devil's blossom bad man's oatmeal scabby hands

This word here, doggedly chased down.
 The lot of them at it, scouring bundles,
 storming through pages. Its impression
 in the whiteness sighted, their expert tracker
 is straight to the bolthole, his forefinger
 a de-fletched tranquilliser dart. Then relief
 as he trots up, the word limp in his mouth,
 lays it at the feet of the hunting party.

mousemilk seven sisters virgin mary's nipple
 littlegood devil's cups and saucers mare's tail

weather teller twelve o'clock john go to bed at noon
 laughter bringer wink and peep drops of blood

The teabags are silk. The lifts constantly ping.
 Men can pour hot water with the utmost care
 but here is everything we dream to be.
 Here are schoolboys with their names on books,
 well-heeled servants and redundant Latin,
 tossing in the air and catching,
 still squealing, in their protractible jaws,
 every ganglion of coded utterance.

fireflout lightnings sleepyhead
 corn-rose wild maws cusk