

Visions

The rain splashes slowly onto the dark cobbles , the gray clouds hanging low as the wind sweeps through the narrow alleyways. From a window high above the ground two small eyes peer into the smoky depths of the surrounding city. No movement, however small is missed by those all-encompassing eyes, the soaked leaves blown savagely down the streets. The rats scurrying down into the sewers, the rain-bedraggled cat loping sorrowfully under the shelter of a battered doorway. The small eyes peruse the whole city.

Suddenly, an unfamiliar movement is noticed, the eyes peer curiously through the gloom of the smog filled sky towards the direction of the motion. The eyes search out the unrevealed object slowly breaking over the horizon into the line of vision. As the nature of the object is gradually divulged, an unknown excitement builds up in the beholder.

There was something of a legend surrounding those eyes, and the boy to whom they belonged. Even as a baby, the eyes of the child had seemed soul-searching, unutterably profound. They appeared two discs of infinite depth, small and dark in the pure white face of absolute innocence. The nurse who had cared for the child after his mother's death during childbirth sensed something odd about the infant but could not, at first, decide quite what it was. Then one day she realised, she had never seen the boy shut his eyes, not even while he was asleep, not even to blink. It was as if he could not bear to miss one single thing, every event was vital to him. The story was spread round the small village by the usual gossip trail, and almost immediately wild rumours and allegations of witchcraft flew up. It reached such a zenith that the local priest refused to baptise the boy, believing him to be 'an instrument of Beelzebub.' The nurse's love for the child was pretty meagre, and she too did not take much persuasion that he was an entity of arrant evil. So the baby was packed off to the nearest orphanage that would accept the unchristened infant, utterly oblivious to the gossip and hearsay that was to follow him his entire life.

The boy watches the aeroplane wing its enchanted way across the grey tapestry of the dreich sky. Past the needle spires of the cathedral which dominate the city's skyline, sewing it up, providing a link between the heavens and the earth, far across the drab fields, skirting the wide river and the lifeless mountains, to the spot where the leaden sky was lit up by that wondrous flying-machine. Its wingspan fills the boy's imagination with dreams, penetrating right to the very greatest depths of those small, dark eyes.

The boy had lived, as long as he could remember, at the top of the tall orphanage building, somewhere near the centre of the city. He rarely left his position at the window, scrutinising every detailed movement in the busy streets below him. Hardly anyone talked to him, he talked to hardly anyone, preferring his solitary pursuit of observation. He had built up a veritable catalogue of every sight he had ever seen, each small detail as important to him as the main features. He could have recalled the face of every person he had ever met, describe in minute detail every place he had ever been, had anyone ever shown any interest. But no-one ever paid any attention to him at all. He was shunned. This, however, did not seem to bother him, perhaps because he had never known any form of affection, more probably because he was scared by the tales of his own wickedness.

He sits, eyes totally enraptured by the strange, fantastic aeroplane threading its way now through the tall city spires. His mind is filled completely by the most extravagant images, collaged from his catalogue. Bright colours replace the monochrome grey by which he is surrounded. Strange flora fills the landscape, the clouds vanish, and in their wake the bright, dazzling yellow-gold of the warm sun appears to shine on this new, exciting canvas with the aeroplane dominating at the centre of it all. The aeroplane must have come for him, he thinks. An escape from the dreary monotony of his trapped existence. It will take him to a place full of new, exhilarating images. Fascinating patterns, new, intricate details, amazing objects will all be his to catalogue, when the

aeroplane is come. It will take him beyond all these dreams, to a place of utmost marvel and perfection, somewhere good, where he belongs.

Such is his preoccupation with this exciting future that is opening up to him, the new sights for him to see, he does not hear the warning sirens, nor the voices calling for everyone to go downstairs. Instead, his head spins, intoxicated with the lust for these new unrivalled sensations, his hungry eyes devouring the scene before him.

Passing over the orphanage, the aeroplane releases its cargo, striking the church next to the orphanage. The orphanage building is cut in two by the force of the blow, the top half collapsing over the destroyed church, sending rubble flying in all directions. The boy is lying spread out across the broken church altar. Smoke and dust pervade the air, the ruined walls collapse inwards, covering all but the altar, and the boy whose pale white face shines out among all the grey. The new images are there to be recorded, but they are images of devastation and destruction. Sickening images of hate and death. These images, however, will not be recorded, for the small, dark eyes of the innocent are shut to the pain and suffering of the world.