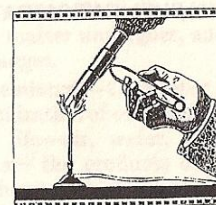


VISUALIZED CHEMISTRY



Calvin Wharton

TSUNAMI EDITIONS

Copyright © 1987, Calvin Wharton

Type by Vancouver Desktop Publishing Centre

Printing by First Folio Printing Co. Ltd.

Design by L. Timewell & C. Wharton

CANADIAN CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Wharton, Calvin, 1952-

Visualized chemistry

Poems.

ISBN 0-921331-06-1

I. Title.

PS8595.H37V5 1987 C811'.54 C88-091019-4

PR9199.3.W53V5 1987

for claire and joe and rupert

Visualized Chemistry

INTRODUCTION

Definition.—Chemistry is the science that deals with (1) the different kinds of matter, (2) the properties and uses of matter, (3) the changes which matter undergoes, and (4) the conditions which influence these changes.

Why Study Chemistry?—Chemistry plays an important part in the creation and utilization of everything found in our environment. The essentials of life—air, water, food, clothing, and building materials—either are the products of chemical processes or take part in chemical changes which are of vital importance to all of us. Throughout our daily routine, we make contact, in one form or another, with countless applications of chemistry. In fact, during the twenty-four hours of the day, there is scarcely a single object coming within the range of our five senses which does not have some direct association with chemistry. In addition to this material aspect of the science, there is another, and perhaps more important, reason for studying chemistry. It develops the *scientific habit of mind*, which is the attitude of examining problems critically, systematically, and without prejudice. It teaches the value of rejecting preconceived notions and of tackling a question with only one desire—to arrive at the truth.

Matter.—Matter is anything that occupies space and has weight. A special kind of matter, such as water, iron, wood, and air, is called a *substance*.

VISUALIZED CHEMISTRY

What's matter is what occupies space and has weight. This is chemistry and occasionally substantial. Water or wood in a previous arrangement of molecules—our daily routine has nothing if not this. Or so our senses indicate (plus the luxury of thought).

*

A real state of almost no money for the rest of the week. He asks, "are we poor now?" For some, having nothing occupies a large space. Orange dumpsters behind the store are shopping at the low end of the scale. *Jobs* is a start, but not a solution.

*

His vision of the future is now a thing of the past. A sound returns to its source, heavy with additional meaning. If I were a bird I would want to build a nest on her cheek. Below her eyebrow, just beneath the skin, the faint, pale-blue sketched-in vein.

Next door the mystery frau picks vegetables in the rain. Water rolls down her fingers as she lifts the leaves. A plastic bag on her head: Finest Quality—Fresh Produce. In October the last few beans—thick, leathery—and six foot tall sunflowers, confused, faces turned toward the garage wall.

*

Fire is the manifestation of grace; matter knows the shape and heat of consumption. The ticking of insect wings in air, sweet and dry summer forest. Dust in the eye of the dark secret; ash and coals; the grasp of fingers around the throat.

*

A lake hangs over the world, angels in its inverted surface. The wind takes my breath, my voice. (She sat down to rest a moment, and never got up again.) Memory is a museum of self. (A woman falls into the bowl while the sides of the camera collapse in retrospect.) I don't believe she could have only imagined it.

A perfect collaboration of good and not-good. Street talk about interest and tax-deductions. These days, its the stock market or egg on your face, or both. Elemental—the house, the chairs, the table, food, clothing, and the people who use them. Just what do *you* mean by artificial intelligence?

*

A manifesto of harmony (tools appear in the document, with wooden handles). He says, "Without the village idiot, there's no village." A course of action with a cast of millions. Humour as also hammer; the real expressed as what gets done.

*

In the early version, the world was much larger than it is today. That kiss she gave him. Three days with a sore back and he starts to look for better furniture. Everyone wonders whose dog is that? The Chinese recording of "Ten Greatest Hits" has twelve songs on it. *You* go figure.

God, he says, *there's never enough flat surface.*

*

Sailors think "la mer, la mère," and the Hebrew word for *merchant* comes from a root meaning "to travel, to migrate," therefore, *traveller*. Wood, silk, walnuts, durham wheat, peppercorns, cotton shirts, cannabis and scotch whiskey. Commerce as the most popular metaphor in practice.

*

The sound a thing seen makes when you taste the feel of it. Objects without names in a take-notes-or-choke situation. Full-time landscape of neon billboard technology semaphore. Get the message? And doesn't that smell incite a memory?

Blue seventeen wonderful silence. First again he speaks to her there in the alley, khaki millions of dust, settled (waiting). She turns to him at the corner, pink and black two-tone sigh creates memory of them sitting together in the white, basement room.

*

Water has no definite size or shape. Copper is a form of energy and a gas conducts electricity. Carbon burns in air; tearing paper, rusting iron. Density is a symbol, kerosene a physical property. This is a matching test—what's wrong with this picture?

*

Think what you like but watch your tongue. Tofu in the fridge screaming, "rinse me, please." A notion of farce as interlude to drama; one street over bright with morning light. "Today?" he wonders. "And tomorrow?" The rice of spring is the plant of it. (No sooner said than the next thing happens.)

Intention . Telegram



[INTENTION. TELEGRAM.]

Persist with the inclusion,
a plan to recognize
we are all in this talking together,
from the centre, out

potent acceptance of a contract, the terms

to a radical conjunction of spheres,
the voice has many intonations
and designs for renewal
the palms-up signal, *meaning* it . . .

THE FUNNEL

Collection of what stands alone,
mirror magnification:
 caught or carried
 between us moment or motion:

light's return from surfaces
revelation of scene
as "seen",

 tricks on us,
no unblemished point of view

as purposely-spastic eyes
in Japanese art.

* * *

World enters, whole
the funnel
re-creates,
synthetic consistency, logic construct

what we use
to measure each against other,
for example
the way we all speak
a foreign language.

* * *

Ripe apples and pears hang
hold elastic wooden branches
 green leaves turning
the weight of autumn
simply of earth
grown, and reaches now
from sky to ground
the offer,
eat and the whole world
down your chin
out your smile
in your eyes not
through them.

THE NATURAL WORLD

Alive at night, in certain formats;
a background growl from the asphalt and cinder-block planet
metal driving, things moving at great speeds,

this might have been thirty years ago, in another place

or in the heat day along the streets, turns up focus,
the black plastic handled revolving door,
an E for effort simplified to the nth degree,
we're not asking for much, so when do we get it?

Transparence, the accent on volume as a variety of time,
what passes is soon passed, next condition alters the total
keep those jumpy fingers out of the works, please;
it isn't the computer but the software's to blame

the combined, psychic mass of all those people
just to think of it; if a bridge is well-lit
does that subtract light from some other place?

Complex signals between birds or certain insects
(how did those ants know it was time to move?)
the natural world is hard to recognize, sometimes
ripe melon melts in the mouth, static interferes with the radio;

part of each part, dividing down to components,
at the essential where many decisions are made
backwards is first an order, then a selection;

grass grows at night, but the body has its own agenda,
a century-old fir tree is cut down to clear the view
to the war-dead memorial — concrete over wood;

a healthy red to the blood in the arteries, pumped iron
the mineral of choice, *photosynthesis* and architecture
despite some wrong answers, the longest afternoon imaginable.

EVEN THE RENAISSANCE

I know what this looks like, he resembled
a cloud just dimming the light in the room
or sometimes a full-course meal at completion

the assignment was self-proclaimed and began
from several starting points, each an impersonation
of an isolated segment of life (complete unit);

no mention of last week in tomorrow's news
or vice versa, the study of Latin in this case
encouraged an eager, intrinsic love of words

caught with arms up to elbows in the rule box
for a while, attempt to define the stock market;
go ahead, the broker insisted, *be provocative*

not punishment to earn money for a change
(although jobs sometimes feel like that)
the small pleasure of production,

even the Renaissance put its pants on one leg, sometimes.

BACKGROUND

Tongue drops a long way down
not to be hard-pan, the stiff sterile clay;
telephone as an argument,
besides what the new light reveals

songs in several parts, each
a complication of the same theme,
she speaks, he listens — this construction;
the sound of people in the alley at night
a real crescent moon above the city,

April as if summer this year
heart full of old houses, sunny days —
a shed for coal and one for wood;
the depth of the soil measured
by the roots of what grows there.

MARGINAL

From every centre, a range established
and changed. Motive
lingua very slowly . . . (personal noun)
to ramble conscience is conscious
provided thirst also solution
through translation each helpless/
help left side or
out bird chortle in
(season)
gets a big laugh;

you sharp tooth and bite
be sure to brush if you find work
sugar snap peas there's two
in every pod snip thinking:
surplus value? economise? *doppelgang*?

inlet sure is melt leggy sunsuit
that fashion sense, alone spiral
venture or who collaborates well,
a statue drips crisco we know, *now*
the soft light of another century.

ALL THE THINGS

The air in the sky, a hand of cloud
this blanket describes topography, I mean
a child sees a landscape, a region;

"if you focus on a small drawing," he insisted,
said he felt good when praised on his shading

remarkable how the hair grows
on the top of his head, in a twist
water shape, or a dust devil if wind;

the bright green parsley leaf, in the yard
a strip of garden, vegetables to eat and flowers for beauty

colours music on paper: blue and blue on white,
or scallop, barnacle and eel
a summer to stretch out, float into

* * * *

Portrait of a signature above the bed
nothing stays motionless long enough to hold it,
a river, a travel, awake in the eyes, ears
the tongue; he wants to climb, not walk, he says.

JOKE

Have you heard the one about the travelling St. Peter
who put velcro tape on a rooster's ass then jumped
from the top of the Empire State Building into a herd
of elephants wearing suspenders until Tarzan took off his
sunglasses the better to see a chicken dart into the roadway
and in the meantime the farmer's sons have been digging a hole
in a field discussing hamsters wrapped in electrician's tape
and every few minutes one of them steps outside the circle
to screw in a lightbulb so the sunburned penguin turns to
the american and says: "You know, Superman, sometimes
you can be a real prick."

BEST ON THE PLANET

Flat light of morning haze lifts;
is the sky now mottled, or altered by desire?
With a store on every corner
choice is what makes this country (consider the alternative).

Butter wouldn't melt in the eye of the beholder,
Gerry Creede might say, the calendar
almost half torn away
and a hopeful accumulation of clients between now
and the caboose on the gravy train.

Drag work into it, a perception of fundamentals;
he gives good copy even when he doesn't understand it;
the businessman circles the preposition at the end of the sentence
and writes "bad grammar".

A full pocket can be friendly, learn caution;
think excess as no mystery, unsatisfying pursuit,
a series of bad movies, and remember when to stop.

The notion against barbecue, meat spatter on glowing charcoal
creates eventual cancer — the foul-mouth "C" word;
but summer is a long strip of intention,
beer and pizza, baseball, a blue lake, sunny skies
seems like almost 24 hours a day.

The forced play made him out at home,
a barrier inside proves a point and pulls down the average.
Will practice then make perfect?

Eight days a week is one too many in this neighbourhood;
a premier and his vision of a holy law
considers a new sacrament, *Il Paradiso* at Fantasy Gardens,
that sour grape whined for his day in the sun;
some bowls full — the rest empty.

Go ahead, bite the hand that fed you raisins,
send a delegation to the power house,
so far, distance is only a matter of time,
golden rules, however the dream turns out.

FAREWELL, AFRICA!

Electric pumps hum
fig orchards and fields
cover the slopes
from Timbuktu in January
to Constantinople
the crescent
the threshold,

coal black Negroes, and Turks in red
tents of goat's hair cloth
work continuously removing sand
and air-conditioning units
from the damp forests of West Africa
to trains bound for Cairo.

The sun's vertical rays
in the form of rain,
and the terminus of several railways from the interior.

"Farewell, Africa!" is a constructed/found poem put together from *Old World Horizons*, a geography text published by J.M. Dent & Sons in 1951.

NATURAL WORLD (ANNEX)

More birds than fruit in the apple tree
and the yard yearns for some attention,

a float plane swings a slow spiral
down to the water's surface, three boys in a row
at the end of the street;
this summer resists conclusion (after such success)
no visible snow on the mountains, no scar on the lip,

what this says is one thing, and what it also says;
love in diverse forms, having come to this point
and the proper care of each moment (together) (with)

a script in which, suddenly, change —
but only the performance, not the dialogue
some certainty at least in decision,
a leap in faith with gusto, the same ozone layer disappears

which bleach is best for removing local colour?
or replace wood rot with metal oxide?

Days and nights in collaboration, a string of keys
around a neck, before and after but two different moistures,
direct physics, synthesis of water, current; a sound unlocked
the autumn sky at the last possible minute.

