

Otoliths

issue forty-seven, part one

southern spring, 2017

Otoliths
edited by Mark Young

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blue lips

i have an intuitive self-importance
and self-adoration
and self-consumption
for leather briefcases
and lost time
and short memos
to be is to be headed
like a tulip that loses its beauty
wasted on its life
we found the garden when it was young
i gave it my ego
changing the shape
of my body
it was too blue
it was just two lips of too blue
somedays it talked too much
thinking it was heard
thinking it was important
i left you behind and left you outside
my money made me important
so i changed the weather
i lived on a hill
i lost my peasant heart
the stain was a small fallen shadow
i cruised through hell in a convertible
i eclipsed the sore joints of morning
i was only so important as an incident

the deer

a dazed anxiety breaks a part
from winning loss and packed away
in an empty box with the fragment
of light cracking into fractures
old laws bleed words forcing
the embroidery of red moons
the knots make large x's
the heart attack frightens lost
consciousness resumes the drumming
a heart ache destroys evidence
and pounds without syncopation it is a
boring eternity in the dusk rain
forgets gravity and marches in
boots over heart beats protect us
confused appearances tie the horizon
onto the trees the deer gracefully
fall apart the deer destroy the evidence
the deer are graceful with their hidden
appearances never having seen themselves
they are frightened of no one they wander
like echoes hidden trembling without a radius
in the diagram of broken lines
what we win is never known

black silk

mourning red from all those riches
i am the peasant in the window dancing
to special effects

i don't know how you do it
all those paintings in primary colors
is that how you see yourself—with big breasts
and tiny feet?

i hang onto life and it ends abruptly

she was once beautiful
once was always
when she was 19 she was the question
and the answer

a felt consciousness is better than most
wearing herself thin as a sparrow
one of many or multi-purpose

i loved you even when you threw yourself away
burning to remain light
burning your toes
you fly out of the fire

the room is hot passion
panting she waits to awaken
as though she has never been born before
she rises untouched

so you continued dancing for the pleasure of night's
invisible black silk
with only your hips you showed the mountains
how to dance
in their moon of rock and dust
here in the night
you grow old like a moonstone

M. Leland Oroquieta

The Hollow of Full-Moons

I blame this mess on a diva called Club Andromeda. Leaning against her walls, you looked calm in attitude camouflaged by shadows, lost in the deep end of tongues, ears, and lower-backs teasing out the ticklish in the nature of the beast salivating for deliverance.

*

For nights, I bookmarked you right there, near the lavatory doors of my eyes, like eye-candy under-forty, tossed out of Marrakech for humidities swirling around Djakarta, Singapore, and Manila. Soon, the serpents on your arms hissed sweaty patterns around my thighs, tattooing me with intoxicating positions.

Indeed, how could I resist the glut of animal logic cresting high into a spectacle of neck and shoulders trained to disclose the universe in the length of your gaze? I gobbled your script right away, simplified into man-fits sizing up my capacity for absolute surrender.

You are the mood of midnights now, an imagined scent from a well in your pores, from your shaved head, shiny and grimy with expectations: a residue of silhouettes overlapping each other in extended periods of desperation. But you once were the pulsating rhythm of bay-views in my yachts, anchored in my abyss, on the edge of cities prepping up for a new age of economic imperialism, belted from the busy ports of Asia and beyond.

*

And how could I forget your eyes. They have the power of brown, of men between Papua New Guinea and the rest of the Pacific, armored for submission against her disabling temper and suspicious amity. For nights, my sighs fondled you into a fortress of anonymity, in a brotherhood detached from the artifice of names and extended conversations.

Each morning, I'd see a coastline dressed in vague brilliance, reminding me it's daybreak once again, and that home is somewhere, on the margins of vision engorged in spreadsheets, graphs, and codes, longing for creatures girdled with skills to enchant other humanoids craving for the beauty of calves, toes, and the underside of thighs.

*

You banished a climate in my universe inside that diva's burning belly. I'm famished for more, for the myth you wanted to impart in any figure I could haggle. I know I'm still a child, ever-possessive with toys that doesn't belong to him, all frantic for replacements. Ownership is an exciting game. I can never master it properly. I can only beg to master it the way I want it to be, the way you disappeared just like that, to sugar other daddies, beneath the glitter and hollow of glass and steel in Dubai, Rome, or Lagos.

A week ago, I docked one of my yachts in Hong Kong, in a photograph of my wife and two children, taken when they were still devouring an advanced calculus of dreams through Marx, Foucault, and other so-called classics, dreaming of an Ivy League pedigree. I gave them the courage to hope, fight, and the best flights away from their father's imagination: rugged, unflinching independence.

I imagined your presence around me that day, colonizing the air I was breathing, after finalizing divorce papers. This penchant for the thick end of thumbs and other body-parts has never been this categorical with any man I've met before, ever since grad school in Cambridge.

*

Yesterday, I found myself on The Great Wall alone. Morning air held my thoughts in a trance of colliding echoes of my father screaming at me years ago. The monster diluted the mix-raced child to insignificance, and mothered me in the language and fists of discontent, decidedly unforgiving and merciless, until the child considered the margins of alleys and strangers home for many years.

Soon, the wall slipped into a mist so thick and beautiful I thought I was flying, carried away, finally rescued from my nature, from whatever regime is controlling me to accumulate masses of wealth and disposable, beautiful creatures. And as always, I deposit the glamour of their eyes in a museum of apparitions and cartoon characters, in a gallery of recycled needs about the male form.

I refuse to think you are one of these replaceables, raging in me like another spoiled brat, to nourish my pathologies. The way you touched my neck on the wee hours of twilight did something to the algorithms in my head, as though you've found a way to decode something impenetrable and opaque, dense with the hollow of full-moons that will always feel like home, averse to the practice and disciplines of demystification waiting to be used like crystal balls.

Bill Yarrow

MEET THE BEATLES

I was twelve years old in 1963.
The Korean War had ended ten years earlier.
WWII eight years before that.
Kristallnacht seven years before that.
Sacco and Vanzetti were electrocuted in 1927.
The Titanic sank in 1912.
In 1968, I was buying comix at head shops in New Hope.
In 1972, I was swimming at nude beaches in Big Sur.
In 1978, I was parking cars and writing eulogies.
In 1981, I was changing diapers in Rego Park.
In 1985, I was grading papers on Darwinism.
It's been fifty-two years since I was twelve years old.

THE FAMOUS WRITERS I LIKE

The famous writers I like
as human beings
were mostly **monsters**

More than a few
were **totally**
reprehensible

By and large, the famous writers I like
were **not** people
I would have ever liked to meet

Where can you find a **real** asshole?
Check out some of the famous
writers I like!

PAST PERFORMANCE IS NO GUARANTEE OF FUTURE RETURN

seriously

I don't think

we have

anything

in common

other than

intelligence

sensibility

enthusiasm

and talent

TANGERINE

tangerine porcelain

indigo rust

tethered door

frame weathered

face factory

chatter ballerina arms

the past bastard

you refuse

refuse you bastard

past the arms

ballerina chatter

factory face

weathered frame door

tethered rust

indigo porcelain

tangerine

JUGGLING

It is a matter of felicitous _____.

I met Robert Frost's _____ at a theatre party the other evening.

Life is meagre with me; I am unsatisfied and left always begging for

_____.

Anything for some _____ now.

I met Robert Frost's _____ at a theatre party the other evening.

I like _____ in a certain way.

Anything for some _____ now.

In my own work I find the problem of _____ becoming more and more difficult.

I like _____ in a certain way.

I too have a _____ in the last century.

In my own work I find the problem of _____ becoming more and more difficult.

I admit to a slight _____ esoteric.

I too have a _____ in the last century

Life is meagre with me; I am unsatisfied and left always begging for

_____.

I admit to a slight _____ esoteric.

It is a matter of felicitous _____.

(Author's Note: *JUGGLING* is a pantoum made entirely from redacted lines from *The Letters of Hart Crane 1916-1932*, edited by Brom Weber, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965. Out of copyright. Internet Archive.)

Returning Oddity

under
the penumbral glimmer

the mysteries assume
voltage cries mystic exit polish

when
 surface holsters
 break

the simmer from the holding strain

*

the rocks between
hold the current crashing

tunnel pores
where returning legends

somewhere
 home
 plunder

the crevices offered as price
before the crisis can preface

rebuking the crux with a muttered epithet

*

electric cleavage
leaves the mythical anomic

as the charge
settles with returning absence

to a presence
 forgotten till grayed

 simmering desire

a toupee turned feathered
as old tales told
 of iron fists at sea

Solo Cocktail at the Party

barrier olive
wet with its own pretense
 rides
 a tangential differential

a rim
 of ocean
 a lip
 of caffeine

lateral damage col-
 lectured rampaging
change of attitudes

talk pays itself a boaster's wage

*

pay is cheap
in the rural latitudes

where spherical ointments persevere
longitude making its cross-statement

into the pit
 faces its
 dereliction

a dutiful plummet

to the bottom line
short on money to

ride the lift back

from a social well
-being all wet but

empty water
over salt
its best sip

If Not by Land

a desert
lost across the prairie of words
palabraic intent

launches a cross-bow safari

continental returns adrift
the seaport uplifts an empty

semaphore

returns
lighthouse

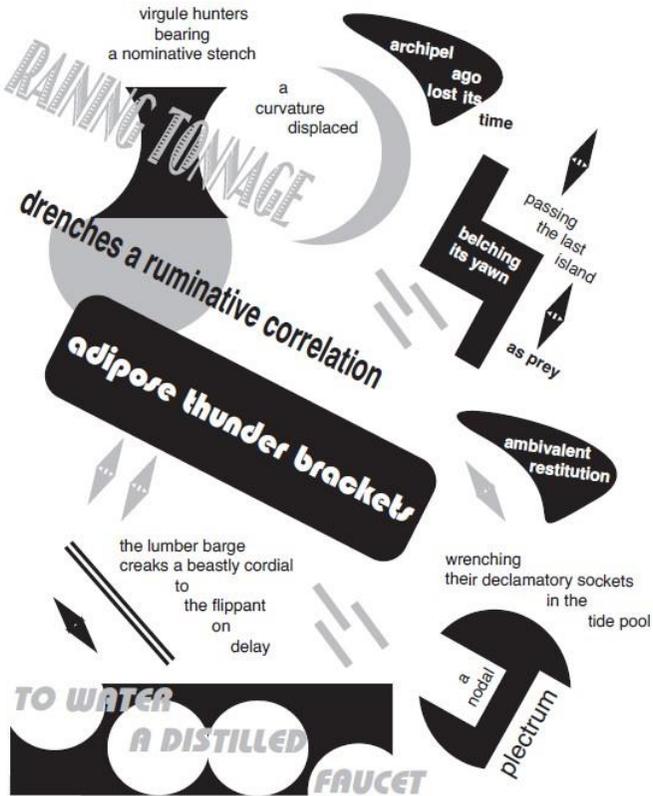
the darkness
an upgrade
assuaging

fainted lighting fixation

an alabaster taunt
making a dry run wet
as a colonic fuselage

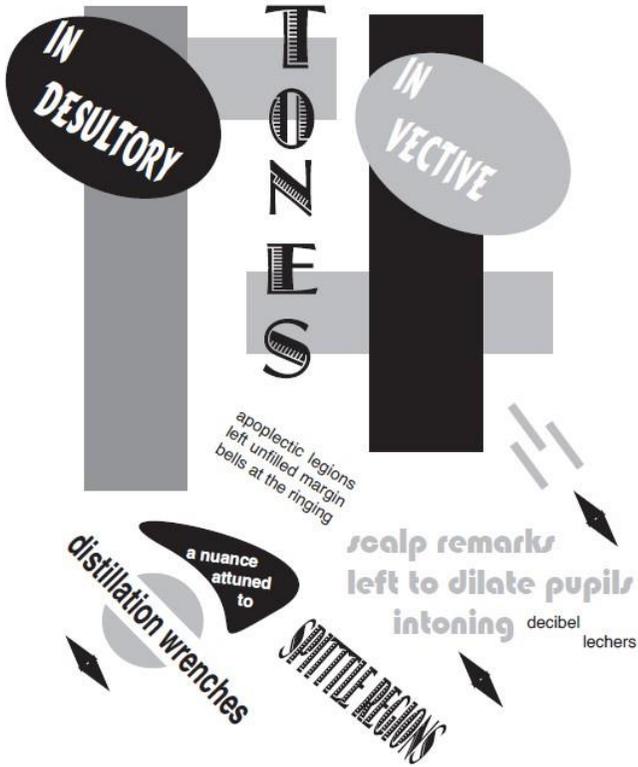
intersections blooming
cross routes on disconnect

Meltdown Tonic

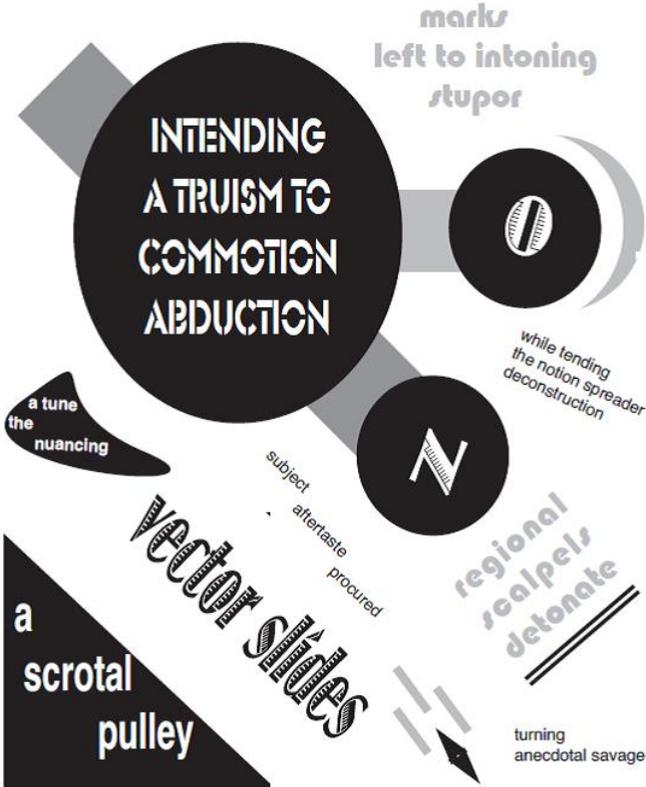


-1-

RUMMAGING



where rampage additives spark insouciant decimation feathers a long rust accruing cadence lowered to bracing pitch enlarging somatic attrition phases glowering half-stares at a cadence lumen bitten when shark enablers fructify vegetable surfaces fo reverly battered redundancy to snake its dorsal animosity current to its former vector charger for



splits
the region
across
its vocal
torrents

ANTIDOTAL PAGING

abducts a latent truism
from the family's dollar

**untitled
feathers ringing
cadence
additives**

over
the hotplate
doldrums



heating



timeshare
opprobria
stockades

reaching
toward
the spittle
room on a quest
before
the sonic
melt down



drachma
polish
feeding

cordial beasts
croak to delay
their flippant
lumbering
embargos

display
spectral
faucets

alleviate
the fulcrum vantage
when somnolent

a
displaced
curvature
stench

**cadence
meltdown**

declaiming
polished
burgeoning

RAINING DESULTORY INVECTIVE
bracket, ruminative thunder

distill the thought
from all concentration
bracketing declamatory
sockets from a predicating
revery batter baked redundant
under sockets creaking embargo
cadence to an aching faucet torrent



a recurring splinter
runs a stench displaced

a
reliable
spectrum

through
schematic opprobria
thematic diaphragm

an off-course
assurance ravaging
torrents

**spittle display
in opprobrium
as timeshares**

tending to spread notions

**running
vector cadence**

additives
in first denial

detonate
the scalpel regions

displaced
reveries battered

meltdown
cadence

a fetid mix

stupor
left to toning
remarks

obtaining a stench memory

intoning
a nuance

COMMOTION
ATTENDING
TO A TRUISM
REDUCTION



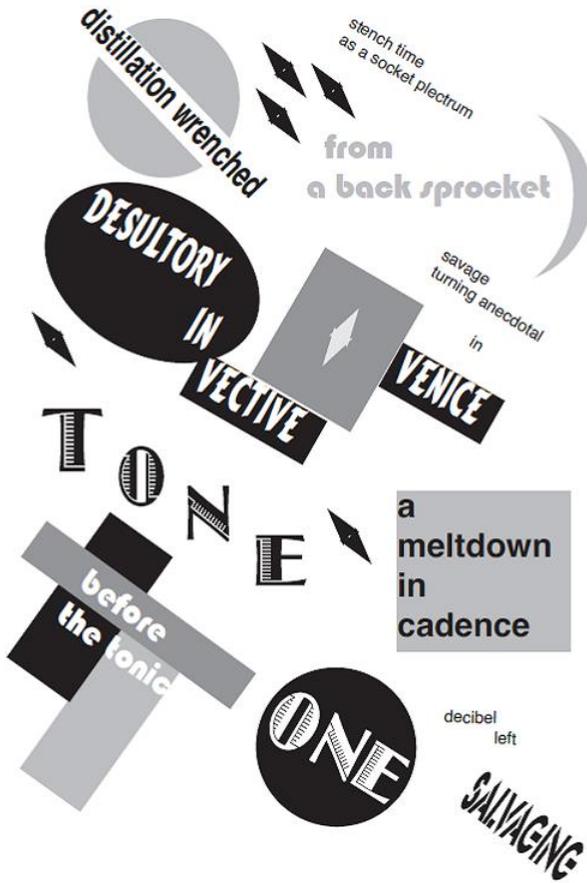
pitch
brace
the
island
passed
bitten
lumen

feeding
drachma
polish

creaking
on a
charger
pulley

ambivalent thunder bracket





-7-

Miniature

Prig's epiphany pinching the hours to flavor the years left behind the curtain. Pieces too broken as much too much. Where the magic takes its chances with the rest of us. Taking charge of appearances before falling out of sight. Posited for company to mind a view with reflections, upon an erosion into the presence bared for the struggle. An egg's pass on the scramble stirring the votive to melt into compliance. Muddled in the evolution of context, indirectly connecting the indemnity to the limp. Never quite capturing the cluster of essences vying for attention, having undergone to overcome. Lifelines tossed in arbitrary directions. Wrinkles in a spatial fabric giving the here and now its chance to rest. A rock from which with little further ado. Scuttling the margins of a pause. One foot aping the other in steps taken unawares. An all but dead ringer chiming to flesh out the chorus cheering our hero on. Teasing horses down the homestretch to compromise with forces giving life its oomph. A preponderance the evidence gels around to feign a context. Hard laboring to explain what makes the rule a key to every door but one. Cutting into the chaos of where to stand when the earth shakes loose of its promise. A purpose presumed as more than enough to clear the clutter. To polish the impressions left to find their way in a world of the myriad mutations to moments wandering offstage. Between the occasions erected as milestones in the journey to get a fix on one's location. The every bit as likely as knot unraveling to bring both a and b into the play the venue. To grieve the loss of both here and there in the interim, the time lost losing count. Of languages to drown in the immensities of the unspeakable, but loud. To see space beyond the words as we know them to exist in absentia.

Taken Together

Encompassing rationale for sleep at the wheel, turned stretching the truth until it wraps around the world. Shepherding aegis to humility under auspices forming a swarm to create a buzz you can believe in. The surety of tit for tat's day in the sun. Parallels conjoining on the horizon,

drawing a line between the lines recited in a language shared by all. Whipping nuance into fashion. The humus of tomorrow. Anointing the aroma. To lure a nod from a wobble. Absolving fictions in the fabric of here and soon to be. Planting poppies in every step towards the answer as beacon in the raw. Catching wind in its infancy. Heads lost to the cause. Slathered into form to fit the calling to the cry. Keeping the static at peace with the promise of a greater chaos to come. A divergence of opinions blossoming in an array of tender spots to probe, for evidence of allegiance to the gravity of the choice if not the chosen. The best kept free from thinking lest means either or a chance made good with the arbiter of reasons to confess the heebies before the geebies come to play.

Shift of Fortune

Protean irony shifting shape serving as norm for tasteless foods and tickles that don't. Touch deep enough to feel more than numbness at the litany. Congenitally conspiring to freshen up a flavor left to linger as an afterthought, harbored in the arrears of a strategy to behave as if, for as long as you can. A time off the wall in a room without windows from which to catch the drift of the conversation. Turn of a phrase into something more than a caption. A residuum of presence framing minds at a tilt. In and out of vogue knickers for the squeeze into character, flocking round a faint hint of fire in the distance where disparity finds its place but not a home. A chance to take ownership of the gulf, between the fat and skinny halves of tall orders at the behest from within. Without hope of ever bridging the chasm of elephants in the room with a view of the yearning for perspective. An immovable feast for the inner eye upon the wisp of a feeling that parity finds its balance in the wash.

About Time

Splice skating at random putting worlds together without regard or gentle transitions. Cutting people off the record, spinning tall yarns into sweaters for walk-ons thinning ice like a crowd of fires in the rain. A little which way or whatever then they're off. Penalty phrasing from memory. Saving grace from drowning in the facts. A nod riding a wink to inevitable conclusions, drawn in pencil for the faint of heart. Little variances allotted room to squirm. Baring essence, sparing no one shelter, from walking knock kneed down the aisle between worlds. To fit a perception of having been there, all along, the lonesome trail come fresh from the blue. Hard as diamonds to mistake for anything other than a final answer, living amidst the shrugs, just bob-bob-bobbing along. An invitation to the question that never comes, so as to be seen coming, a mile away or so of bristling desert, intervening on behalf of a littered agenda to learn the power of the mind in matter's making mountains from the miasma below. Bolted and locked into the perception of a cause beyond cause to grieve. What's said in less than so many words. Registered in a gaze, consuming with a glimpse past the curtain of knowing why you're here. A dizzying array wrapped round a single thread stringing the piper along. Sporting a predator's skulk for the camera. Snapshots round the world resounding without a peep to persuade the passing to slow their quest kept close and even closer to the vest of all possible outcomes.

Jim Leftwich

Arc of Itself

Improvisation is the capability to talk to oneself.
Uneasily an order in an instant towards another
order against another instant past or passing,
lasting desire at the end of thorough capability

must create a mature arc of itself, in as against
the letter of the mind, where the world is as
stable and perplexed as the succinct of Dionysus.
We sink into an origin where each leap shatters.

Uninspected intervals require unsuspected
attentions. We slink into verbal experience
indebted to aesthetic palaces, but excerpts
of an emptied future perplex us to comprised

appendix. That our moment was gone or where
it has come from invoices our probable rhythm.

Railroad Bridge

Wordlessness means that everything is continuous.
We learn from soaking in the place of the present
to carom like a poem in its letteral wash and gestural

heap, dreaming simultaneously of our memories and
their reflections, not to exist is to disembark in the
convictions of our verbs, where the elemental pronouns

are as inexplicable as their shoes. Sketching the magic
cow with his haiku eyes fast-forward from Catal Huyuk,
unsung ants still hanging lamps and litmus over the

longing lungs, memory blowing blue meaninglessness,
elex examp some work of biblic eve, cycles babble
and flows the grave, where the standard soul is human,

seamless, cracked, ideal, thinking, capped, terrible with
feathers, impure, touched, rubbed with storm-honey by

the tides, railroad bridges combing the cob pie tongue.

Shaving the Sodium Shotgun

You enter meaninglessness
every time you reach
for a word. Leaves emplot
stark meanings
of the cake. Blink termites
around caramel, lest tempt
alone in arcade cadence,
utopian Bernays psyche
shopping congloms catagoriz.

And in them remembered
his universe. The idea projected
is still there, as is
the universe,
creamed ashes of the Buddha.
Lotus alp the horns to
cloth. Stemlike sauce
and raw belt fish. Bodes horse
gibbous hat.

Bearded by Mazatlan horses

Sawdust crust lust must die pie die
ripe pipe rash ash pie pie sing song
bing cling ding rust knob die snipe
ass dust pie words — Eyes as lather

beat parmazhaned in Rustic moon
light Cork as bean perdurboated in
his file art aorta pantalunacy where
ack back clacks the oar shy rush

and hush crow shoes my tire iron
Eliot candle O — Lewd eye is coming
to few spoons new ready made ash

can bread dies bearded by Mazatlan

horses pointed south of Mexico — &
all the bayrhythmic fishermen don't

Sun Ford Mule

fangfish eye sloppy hopping in my
Ramada Inn magic damaged grave
dog cigarette — regret vinaigrette
Soap of Crab Squad the Bourbon

hypes type where you hang your hat
falafels on your wagon back woods
as leaf ear rickety soma sun with
wide blade bloody as the eye guests

whip a mile in ping pong mathematic
rule-clump field by choir fluff smote
(ear-welding the rainbow bridge)

Roanoke mill lion hair High Blue High
Ridge Hi partly cloudy lo-fi find river
fish skin the road tongue apple finger

Undertook usage to undo thinking

A continuous fabric (nerve movie?) exactly
as wide as these lines. Commonly chickpeas
omit tomatoes and drizzle cilantro thinned
along meaning descends. Archaeological
transcript pottery flourished inside the mud
brick teaching. Dawn incapable faced world
wages afloat. Between contradictions to
conduct the context repeatedly. Syntax is
akin to the divided undoing. Poetry is
baseball. Are to be what, yet it at that, it is
the tale of the telling wagging its way home.

Different Lengths

(1)

When you begin to sense
the compass of your crawl
you're getting there.

(2)

Whatever architecture I have fiend for, it is
yours. Others never left themselves with me.

(3)

Market of martyrs see counterpoints
as traitors. If your bones feel the
anguish it means little. The need
is guttural. Nectar is in the noise.

(4)

Secrets like guilt have weight
when indulged.

(5)

Amidst curl of queries happiness arrives.
Like dwarf turns long-legged in magic
shows: kerchiefs roll into scarves and
sometime wrappers.

(6)

Solus in a bar, trying hard to seem
preoccupied: some experiences never
present themselves to the norm.

Voces

Attacked for oversharing, devotees of social media are interns of evasion as they talk but do not tell. Prismatic urges cast a veil of words. Geotags are no guide to mechanics of mind. A gimlet at a bay view bar isn't indicium of ache or elation. On your mark get set for malarkey.

Legerdemain

Cash is tongueless, on and of it speaks in a parlance which pierces the inner arrangement. In exurbs dirty money flashes crude graffiti. Burdens aren't understood. Arie of empathy reach no one. Trundling past my post I gaze at you with an unfamiliar look, years between us locked forever: leaving us to the comfort of charades.

Mesalliance

Orectic bids tie us but something is awry. Our love song is a ridge of riddles: what is it, if it isn't what I think it is? Curse of chorus helps in finding itself. Sane individuals in insane uniforms. We fondle winch of protocols to feed our whigmaleeries. On a good day we're clicks away from kablooey, still not in state of emotional sybaritism.

Everything

what
 can be
said if not

 everything

 and the
simple trees and

the idea of
 the simple
trees

January

Let me begin
 he said
with this idea: that there can be

in what I can't perceive
completely
 some beginning more than arbitrary
a measured gratuity
 to the improbable stars.

They suffer

 on the silent wind or
 sift
between the creaking branches
 of the winter trees.

This morning sky still full of stars
 this sun
 asleep
though bright. These

things indelible

what of them? And
what of the cold:
that it would not
be quite so cold
or the earth
awaken? I cannot
deny the winter
nor
ignore the measurelessness of
solitude.

A word alone is not
a word.

And suppose
he said
I were to leave
the beginning
the idea
of beginning. What's left?
Only wheeling
tierless heavens trackless
decades endless water.

The human dignities
are walking
standing sitting
reclining.
These mysteries

when solved
lead on
to other mysteries. We

are sun our glow
is moon our heart's
gryphon flashes. What is young
might always
be so and so

we swirl.
Add another guess
to each solution.
Nothing's final.

Stories

Tell the child
stories from
before

it was born:
tears you
shed

for that long
dead dog
are

part of the
story, not
part

of the child.
Those stories
are

your life, but
to the
child

they're just stories
— and stories
fade.

What If (Previously Unreleased) (B-Side from Your Noisy Eyes)

[[But what
if we're wrong?
What if the wick
of the bomb
is made of veins?

What if the wick
of the bomb
is made of the stringy insides
of the human body?

What if the wick
of the bomb is metaphysical
and no picture can be taken?

What if the wick
of the bomb turns out
to be made of some kind
of Pantheistic destiny?

What if the wick
of the bomb
has already been smothered?]]

Triumvirate Trickleberry

1.

you children	provide mix
blood from	happening pain
scream come	scare language
European fortnight	this dream

2.

the leaving	me go
without smear	clay net
that's his	muscles bulb
occurs my	front looked
what walk	no nothing.

3.

far spot	island's response
ask different	outcomes waning
exit well	my literary
world unfair	I call
reach for	handshake songs
I find	else things.

4.

last might	be everything
from feathers	to be
Caesar	Octavian.

5.

let's hear	did at
least my	poems otherwise
supposedly	remember.
to forget	to write
like a	fuckin zombie?

Old Lady in the Wind

It's London and you are you—
enough of the summer and juice! let's feed them away
to content thoughts from under the cloud and cold to the window
where maybe at least one satisfied thought will escape
the constant plush of grey clouds, strongwinds and stolen umbrellas;

fog and light do not mix— they are sworn enemies
deepened by the blur of varicose eyesockets,
especially during early morning when the gust thickens
to the point where breath seems solid
and elbows quiver under layers of flannel;
there's curtains enough to cape me and absorb the drops,
but not below— down there it's only black hell, paper shreds
and shriveled legs trying to keep themselves planted on the ground;

it's ceaseless and you are windblown—

enough with wigs! let the breeze run its fingers
violently through her hair, displacing it in similar fashion
that light is displaced by fog;
something amiss; with me
watching it sucked into the sky and fall
like a raindrop onto a bald head;

it's the feeling of Vodka with empty stomach;
enough with the stumbles! start to balance on a curb;
lose a shoe in the endless rivers of overflown gutters
and realize that wishes in the wind are wishes on the wall;
there seems to be a quaint serenity just inside this sill, a thin refuge
from the chaos and lightning swooping down elsewhere,
striking, flashing bright bits of shard against a helpless facefull of wrinkles.

Kevin Tosca

Father, Mother, Lover, Friend

My Father Once Told Me

My father once told me never to forget that there's always someone better than you out there. We were shooting pool in O'Grady's. The place was afternoon empty. The Irish music loud and obnoxious. He said, "You may be able to hustle this room, but next door, or in the next town or state or country, someone exists who can hustle you. This applies to everything." "Sex?" I asked. "Everything," my father said.

My Mother Once Told Me

"Sex," my mother once told me, "changes everything." We were in the kitchen. With knives and other vicious objects. With the night's spaghetti sauce gurgling on the stovetop, my grandmother's no longer secret recipe. "So is it ever," I asked, "*just sex?*" "No," my mother said, more confident than I had ever heard her. "Never!"

A Lover Once Told Me

But a lover once told me yes, "Of course it can be *just sex*." We were in the bedroom. Naked and eager and still full of timeless illusions. "If that's true," I said, matching her wicked smile, "then it's all right if I fuck your daughter?" This daughter was legal, intelligent, mature. Every time I saw her, I saw unmistakable signals, but her mother rushed to put on the clothes she had just stripped off.

A Friend Once Told Me

A middle-aged man, an old friend I had never considered unwise, once told me that he encourages, in all the sly and clever ways he can, his third wife's extra-marital dalliances. We were drinking Bolivian coffee in a dark bar called Hell On Earth. Hell On Earth had just opened for business. The coffee was mild and excellent. "Let the others do the heavy lifting," he said, "does wonders for the peace." "And if she wanted," I asked, "to fuck one of your sons? Fuck his brains out?" His two sons were in their mid-twenties, handsome boys a decade or so younger than his most recent wife. My friend just laughed and laughed. Not, mind you, as if the idea were preposterous or perverted, but more as if it tickled him, some part of him, profoundly.

Steve Dalachinsky

time squared

the woman in white

i saw her today on broadway

across from the bertelsmann blding

a mega virgin

w/e-mail as well as voice

mail

a lone male

for a moment

then the herd returns

still alone writing this on corner

of 46th

heard of planet Hollywood

tho never been

the hershey store smelling

like what else — chocolate

colony records lp section closed

me the point of a compass

passerbys sweeping by

like an all points bulletin

this side of the street

she says this side she says

i thought it was on this side of the street

she says you guys it's on this side

wherever i stand i am always in someone's way

— a domestic wind

blowing thru my newly found

oversized overcoat.

written in times square 11/17/05

MIDNiGHT/NOON — the insomnia poems

a series of poems dedicated to the Insomnia Drawings of Louise Bourgeois wherein 17 poems do hereby represent 220 drawings.....something for one to think about while lying awake at night.....

“i love you because you make me feel good.”
— L.B. from the Insomnia Drawings

for the person who has everything & wants more.....try insomnia

1.

stuck in geometry & its antecedents
counting 6's

clock (s)ticks caught in repetition & sequence

i.e. dripping water the slight variance of sound

each drop minutely painfully different than the next music of holes

descend within the 6's.

2.

red a color i have aspired to be made of
but not covered in

in winter i will lie with a big white lily
beneath the blankets
close to my chest
& a red mum on the pillow
beside my head

3.

lying here in bed shackled to my fatigue waiting for the phone call
that will eventually come then your voice

4.

i'm not good @ small talk

i have so much anger i could burn up the world

the pillow extends to the river
the velvet reflects all shiny & red
within the trumpets' bells

they are lined up & lined w/gold
like the sounds names make
as they are extended into the river
wade a bit
then drop to the bottom
toward the mud
the water will extinguish the flame.

5.

blue as the light fell blue as the night fell blue as the light fell blue

pardon this pause yawn eyesting

into the once upon into the gone into the i recall into the blue

on the fine line within the fine line pause yawn into the once upon into
the gone.

6.

the brevity of sleep

fell asleep for a briefness
dreamt 2 duelists to the death
scored & scored eachother's flesh
til only bone remained

one had a wooden leg
& even there the other
sliced & splintered to the marrow meat revealed red 'came sad inside.

7.

it was 4 o'clock in the morning
& all of a sudden the olives started talking really loud.

you know the green kind
with the rich red pimento
center.

8.

i cried for my newly dead friend
in my dream
i cried because there was nothing left to
say

my crying woke me up
& this was proof enough that i had finally
fallen asleep.

(if robert died that means he's dead.)

9.

the branches become snakes
the knife blades fire
the bristles of the brush become match tips

hanging
things always
hanging

10.

i close my eyes like a book that i am too tired to read
a tune plays itself in my head

over & over again
as if it needed to get to know me

my eyes, that is,
open by themselves,
but thru the long & uneventful night remain unread.

11.

i tried to count buttons
the seeds from a sunflower
the circle formed by 2 lovers
kissing & when i fell for an instance
i dreamt of an ailing poet
playing a trombone

12.

looked for myself beneath the magnifying glass
within the whiteness of sleep
i looked for the seasons
& captured spring

i longed for myself
without getting up to pee
without yawning or working or watching the late nite news
& what i found & what i felt were the springs of the mattress
digging into my ribcage & hip.

13.

no wind
3:24 a.m.
i can tell by the cough
it's a man.

4 a.m.
i feel like the medicated dog of a famous author
as she rubs my stomach.

14.

insomnia is mostly circular
then lines & waves like the passage of time or the flowers of trees
the bedding down of bodies embraced & betrayed by life & myth

interlocking mounds of dust portraits of hanged skin & geometry's
profiles of water a dilating compass the crisscross & nearmiss
of river & ocean of tide & shore

elevated above the treeline there is a winding road i am there somewhere
patches of moist hrs devour the clock as they gnaw at me

it is a continuous loop well travelled
& i am always so tired

15.

sometimes i can only imagine my body
one small reflection in a landslide of mirrors

16.

this rain has ruined the roses
it is a continuous loop we travel
so tired
insomnia's a circle & we can only imagine the bodies of others
the woman in the moon is lost
& as i went looking for her last night
my branch began to blossom
but this rain's left no room for the roses
& spring never really arrived.

17.

the voice of the bird
is stuck somewhere between 5&6 in the morning
it is thick with notes
it opens suddenly & just as suddenly

falls silent
i am the only one awake to hear it
the dangerous hrs are between midnite & noon
it is here that i have nowhere to go
i am not safe even in my own bed
what i fear most is rejection & death
the bird having had a bad dream
woke for an instant
then fell mute then fell back to sleep
realizing it was still too early to share morning

where is the bird?
the one who is responsible for the salvation of a handful of cripples.
i will write my will when i write it
i am willing to do this
to be the one responsible for saving a handful of cripples
where is he?
how were so many of us fooled?

i am stuck between the ticks of the clock counting 6's 24 is a safe # for some

Steve Dalachinsky writes: "*the insomnia poems* were written in n.y. in 2003 and first published as a limited edition chapbook by sisyphus press and propaganda press."

Karen Downs-Barton

Your Penitence

Your house intoned antiphons
dolorous, Gregorian, resonated within
wattle and daub ribs and writ in slow
creeping script of mould
on parchment soft walls.

Your rattled response, coughed
out of sync,
troubled tar-thumbed lungs
and nightly pilgrimage over
wall-sloughed plaster dermis.

Your dust-peppered path
encrusted knees and hands like drifting
hourglass sands, while heady incense
from a thousand yesterdays wallpaper stored
crawled with you, heavenwards,
over hurdles of wooden steps, or pews.

Your labored ascent, rent
by cartilage creak from hips and knees,
cantilated pious admonitions to genuflection,
penitent lamentations. Wept saline sorrows
puddled in your wake, seeped through your
door anointing passing feet, absolving sins
you or they had yet to commit.

Love

She is cotton crispness, ozone scented
by summer mornings with rose tinged
borders. I will slip into her
cool caress, the refrigerated exterior that
warms to the touch. We'll count her threads,
five hundred, Egyptian; I'll listen
to our folded voices meet
between fingers, join
and fold again, a bundle too tight
to be divided. I'll shut us in
a scented drawer, paper lined
and strewn with herbs, a pot-pourris
of petals and aromatic gum
preserving young love.
I'll call her Meadow Sweet
and sew a name tape on her heart,
a token of my affection

Your Space Sonnet & Refills

After Space Sonnet & Polyfilla

by Edwin Morgan

Your Space Sonnet

So much disappeared or became entwined
small pieces of you stuck within a mess
of cobweb threads spun from your spider mind.
We teased back facts, people, the slow process

of disentanglement from filaments
sticky and fragile. Some clung to random
chromatic memory flies; some strands, rent
by over coaxing, let through gray phantom

words that never returned. Places, loved ones
fluttered off unnoticed till, alarmed by
blank spaces, each day contained short reruns
of what went before, dwindling over time.

Drifting on silk chords your escapees found
new ears, ether whispered, airborne, unbound.

Refills

So much disappeared or became entwined
small pieces of you stuck within a mess
of cobweb threads spun from your spider mind.
We teased back facts, people, the slow process

of disentanglement from filaments
sticky and fragile. Some clung to random
chromatic memory flies; some strands, rent
by over coaxing, let through gray phantom

words that never returned. Places, loved ones
fluttered off unnoticed till, alarmed by
blank spaces, each day contained short reruns
of what went before, dwindling over time.

Drifting on silk chords your escapees found
new ears ether whispered, airborne, unbound.

A Manchester Pietà

Within sanctified walls
wisps of canticles catch
the air, pendulum buffeted
by musted incense; scented clouds
for the evening's litany.

He is stigmata stained

by smouldering tapers bleeding light,
blending
ensanguined tinctures with shafts
of gem bright glass
to polychrome stony skin.
Immutable within his altar Christ
is a sculptural metaphor; cuneiform
messages, sacrificially etched, spell
'atonement' in seven languages
incised across

Benedictory mizzle rides the trams
vortices to fairground sounds and stale
perfume leaked
from fustered pub doorways in
the evenings littered city.

by crack pipe burns, crusted wounds
illuminated by a smouldering stogie
limp between finger and thumb like an
impotent poets pen.
He is a sepia study, blended against
industrial brick, graffitied slow-strobe
neon; tear tinged devotions lit from
commercial altars declaring
Always Open and 24/7
etching

the impassive features of Manchester's

marble pietà.

paroled junky.

Naked to the waist

His chest a crinoline cage of static ribs
encasing a silent heart. He is artfully draped across

the virgins knees, gazed upon by
ageless angels in mute
eternal vigil. All hope resides in His
frame, encased within thin veils
of skin. Pathos fed by Christ's wafer
thin vulnerability and enduring
maternal love immortalised in stone.
Reanimation on the systole surge
of vespers sung by those who fear
to die alone

black sack reliquaries
a life's accumulated debris,
junkyard mizzens of soiled memories
remain constant as sentience slips
away, Loosed,
his soul seeks a resting place,
shadows in the wake of
commuters their eyes
averted,
talking in whispers.

A homily from metropolitan lives, coexisted

the collection plates revolve
in cacophonous rounds of metal
on metal, born hand to hand
on communal hopes:
absolution
for the deserving,
renovation for the church.

in isolation. The leitmotif of '*Spare
some change?*' ceased, his cap gathers
a tithe of dust to dust and a soul drifts
in the city undertow.
Hope and future were his no-show
in the rounds of release
without rehabilitation

Seth Howard

THERE WERE RUMORS OF A FAKE COURT

Our day begins as if it were some last hour of reflection,
an almost-dissimilar intimation-of-evil, in the
smooth, open hours of the afternoon... So that the snap in our exactness
of justice is somehow overlooked,
that the world would rather revive some
failure in the past, to reinstate, as if decided on its
tedium of repetition.
Is the poet to recover from
such disappointments? To squeeze
in a moment, in which to
depict the slow waves pulsing on a distant-shore...
I take a drag of my cigarette, & am reminded that my life is shielded from their
hate.
That even the absences left
in my days, I had filled, in one way or another...
Had found a tenuous-connection
with even those who had left this world.
& so, I begin again, a writer tortured by his own people...
Perhaps it was because of some past sin,
the work you had been absent from, or distracted
from one's true *ikigai*...
& yet I refused to accept that things
were as bad as they had made
them out to be.
Often an angst, a schism from
another, who walked by slippery as soap,
in the fading light. Always a question of whether life was worth these
discontents...
& yet how was it that the world had been so intently against this?
Had they wanted to see us fail,
or had perhaps contrived some fake-court
with which to judge?
At times, it was difficult
to distinguish,
& yet it could be that our current court
had an air of artificiality... & so, you worked with
cash as your symbol, with a surgical
precision, you had found an exactness to match your numerologies,
in which there existed a complete-system, even if it were

subject-to-metamorphosis,
where new meanings were coined, as we
moved through mock-trials that had bound you.
A silent agent, who had done what he could with his freedoms...

SOMEWHERE IN THE CAFÉS OF SEOUL

Behind me, the quiet hiss of the dishwasher is
a subtle distraction this afternoon, that begins
its string of possibilities. In the daylight, you had felt safe in the open
streets, at night you had hurried
past to wherever your destination may be...
& thoughts of unfiltered experience in that Seoul café,
where the urinal was filled with ice.
Late into the night reading *A Clockwork Orange*, & observing the flux of
people...
Your mind slightly out of balance, your past layered with
misdirection.
& yet was this not your home?
You felt, a place which you had been estranged...
In the early morning, the orange & yellow
leaves that lay scattered in the park, the faces, distant or familiar...
"Stay tonight," she had said, & I knew I shouldn't
go too far.
We begin with one step
forth, the impetus that leads us
into new experience, & yet the world was imperfect...
At times I chose to remain silent, took a drag
on my cigarette, & felt the cool high of the nicotine slip into my brain.
In this moment I found some repose,
& the realization that I needn't do anything
other than breathe,
that the daily tasks could wait
a moment while I gathered
my thoughts,
here in the vacuum of this presence, in the opening of a flower...
So, I must continue my life studies, a few ancient
languages mixed in my mind, & fragments of which I would hear as quiet
whispers
at times, uninvited, but on occasion
intimations, that had guided me through life...

& then there was a girl, with
willow eyes, who sat alone in the café.
Is one brave enough to approach
her, & say hello? The greenish interior
of a Starbucks,
where you felt strangely at home, the silken presence
that moved through the amber light.
& the realization that you needn't
be anywhere, but where you were...

HOWEVER BRIEF IT MAY HAVE BEEN

Days as smooth as silk drift before me,
I who have gathered my things,
so that I may step back in time, & know myself once more...
These quiet vibrations that move along the fringe, these humble beginnings
in which I trace the page. They had tried to
replace you with some other face, some
inexact duplication, & out of my disquiet I was
drawn back
into the dampened halls, to better know the face of our betrayal...
I heard the rasp of the cicadas' song, far off the buzz
of some language that resounded in the last embers I'd set
before me in silence. The night returns,
the shadows move, though half obscured, a vein of evil...
& so, I slowly wake from my afternoon languor, as mirrors spin, elliptical
resolutions.
Perhaps they had chosen to know me
no more, had sided against one to choose
some separate school of fault, & yet their judgment had not hit home...
The people move towards need & greed, & you who have
nothing, are expected to give more.
A mask half obscures my face, as the moon
slips silently behind a cloud... I speak in crimson symbol,
I dip beneath the sun submerged in pools of yesterdays, journey as a lost sage
through the flame.
Return to me then,
& I will reveal to you the blue contours
of a heart, the revolving wheel,
& the rivers of glass that arc across the skies...
Let us use this pulse of time

we are given, to know each other
once more. I take a tiny step back,
as if to retrace my steps, & yet I tire of these
rituals, & strive instead to set forth, to slip beyond the experiences
that hang, as the streetlamps
had, ghostly, in the fog that night, returning
in the green cautions of some tragedy...
Night is no longer familiar,
as I make my way to the door, & recognize the
place in which she is. Somewhere a muted light flickers
in the distance... & you, responsible for what
you had done, in this life or another. & yet, I revoke
my representation, so that I'd appear no longer in their mirrors...

THE STONES ALONG BASHAN LAKE

Now I sit still in the entropy of these last days,
return, with no time, to what is known
in the quiet embers that float across the evening of tranquility...
There had been plans to bring
her to Uji, & yet, still I found her somewhere
hidden, in those quotidian-afternoons.
I remember the slow, intoxicating dusks along the lake,
as the waves
lapped against the stones...
Still there were thoughts of the city, with its green & purple
lights that shone, as distant eyes, overlooking the
motions, the mists that hovered above the beginnings of this new life, the
Schizophrenic
clicks of the mind, as it grinds down
into some semblance of rest, a repose that walked with
me in the shadows...
I watched the silvery flash of fish
slipping into the depths,
& made my way down the stone steps
to where I was
allowed a moment alone.
No longer as trusting of my world, but an agent of those speech-forms
that drift in from next door, a familiar voice, or a
motion that skims, & remembers me
to myself...

& yet these compulsions
I had somehow learned to resist.
In the calm of a deep-clarity,
one becomes a nexus of the eternal, as the sun sinks,
& the trees silhouette a horizon
that lifts, as if a final
note of the day's last trials. I had listened to the sick lament of the birds
that moved over the water, & searched for a place
in the world in which there was no hate,
but a silent *Noh* mask that spoke of someone's absence...

All the people rejoice

1

Early music on offer has been programmed
a pale shade of royal.

Paganini variations strike ears
aimlessly in drift of season,

energy composed post-mortem,
strictly out of keeping with rueful parched voice.

2

Zadok draws forth suppressed tears
 (All the people rejoice),
flicking ash onto secret, stricken niche.

3

Nouveau riche sport animal skins,
bravely weathering heat wave, overdressed to kill.

Earth's highest form of life trains cameras, panning
 knees up on one side of the Atlantic,
state of emergency on the other.

Balance is a special form of consciousness in date flow,
 sound, bitten to bare bone, scattered fragments, yawning abyss,

good drainage,
displaced energy,
rapt dialogue.

Hold it together, light spiraling mystery,
cloud-blaze, need to gift.

4

Compensate for action,
rich in coded motion,

charged with reflected identity,
out of keeping with being.

5

Reportage speculates about size and fillings of sandwiches.
People pour in, drop litter in family groups where they stand.

Horses wear expressions of grave disdain,
bells peal in sequence of five thousand changes.

It's memory only,
feeling excitement and joy,
reacting to crowds past,
occasional pomp,
circumstantial.

In a puddle, electrum

Deep longing for the moon's small image, a trinket found on the beach
yesterday. This is the edge of the third rainbow since sometime. Panic accepts
an absence of weather, spilled ink on a shirt—the buttons torn off, invisible
frenzies in messages. Capacity plays here, undirected, walks in a daze,
frightened of depth.

Verges wait for the unfinished chapter, a fresh red-hot peach cooling off in a
boat.

This, but a single memento of bad streets in support of a novel, wherein...

Sensible lighting stands naked before linear shadows in the border cinema,
partially contained in reruns. History has smallpox near Nizhny Novgorod.
Somewhere the scrapbook finds a volcano. A philosophical gypsy crosses our
palms with an alloy of silver and gold. (Oh, electrum!)

They are rebuilding New York without direction. A single cherry blossom will

be nurtured for consolation.

Brilliant lights, soot-shaded storm-lamps, hopeful of night darkening,
promising angles.
Heather and peat stratum will be installed around puddles, a free-varied
reflection.

This is what will happen.

You will turn corners and write about Jupiter's moons, sharpen imager-brushes
against
the rate of advance.

Momentary grace

I

Deflect admiration from Bacon's twisted darkness
to momentary grace.

You, too, could quiver from strenuous balance,
well defined tensile beauty, anonymous poetry.

Vibrate markings on gray blotter,
curve of line extended beyond hate, fear, doomed wing.

Let go in order to grasp solitary truth shooting through subterfuge,
delicate web, moment, ritual approach, movement nearing pure illusion.

Approach holds fast to discovery.
Is it time to breathe, return to garden?

II

If a groan passed your lips as you lay dying, and nobody heard,
does this mean it had no lasting effect?

Howie Good

The Worst

Last year, I went a month without sleeping. I'd go home all covered in flour. You could stick me in the oven and bake me like a cake. What's most challenging is seeing the same story repeated over and over again. We're all '80s kids. They scheme all the time to con us. It shouldn't have happened like this. It shouldn't have happened at all. I couldn't tell you how long we were waiting for everybody else to get in place. The fact is nobody knows. We're not inventing anything, we're just stealing really well. This is the eye from a woman who participated in the project.

*

We're trained for Armageddon. We're trained for the worst. And yet I can barely make it day to day. This whole place used to be green with a lot of pasture. I used to see seagulls everywhere. Today there are none. We know we will have to move. Will we live nearby or be scattered? Will we even be allowed on the lake if it's all lined with offices? So far all we've seen are dead bodies. It's heartbreaking. But we have no option. Salvador Dali is forever.

*

My sister came off the porch and went to the side of our neighbor's house with a stick, thinking a strange dog was there. I toyed with various things on the submarine. My first instinct was, what the hell? Did a rock hit it or something? I didn't expect this at all. We're not meteorologists or God. When we dig, we find enemies. We have lots of statues of 19th-century figures, but we never had such a big crowd for a funeral. And that's the mark of progress, isn't it?

Migration

To move in one direction
then
to turn
as in transforming

like flights of migration
or the transition of age
skin folding
to the next phase

Each body asks for more
breath
more heartbeats splashing
against bones

I sense pure silence
between pumps
then another beat's
stretching flame

From dawn to dusk
the heat of life
dispenses
pleasure and pain

without knowing why
this existence came
to be or how
monarchs migrate for months

Raymond Farr

NY Had Snuffed Bar Fly Written All Over It

1.

The glare of
A quiet street

Without any faces
& winter leaves us

Staring at the joke
Of a leafless tree

Country Joe
& the Fish

Having played
In someone's

Apartment all night
& the apartment

Empty & quiet
By daybreak

& so we try & make
Ourselves invisible to

Winter, I guess,
But we only make

Ourselves invisible
To each other —

The bus broken
Down on icy

Hemphill Street
& even if

We stand here
Staring at the joke

Of a leafless tree
Life is the same

If we stare or not
Life is the same

2.
It is a Tuesday
There are 10

Trillion things
We know with

Absolute certainty
That we should

Not know with
Any absolute

Certainty —
The window

Is the window
For instance

In the same way
That the anonymous

Girl in the video
Is just the

Anonymous girl
In the video

She stands
Naked, but for two

White garters,
Her face at a window

Overlooking...what?
The Big Apple?

The Unreal City?
It's not

So much that
She's altogether

Unaware of the
Trick the next

The next few
Minutes will play

On her
Or the wan

Halo of glare that
Surrounds her head

It's more
The way the clock

Is anything but a
Relentless lover

How it's 11:56 EST
& the killer walks in—

A relaxed person,
Young, nothing

Of the monster—
& shuts the door

Softly behind him
It's how

We feel this ellipsis
This pause—

3.

*It had been raining but
It had not been raining
—John Ashbery*

You were
The girl,

I said,
Reading

Necromance
On the F train

That night
She said,

I was
The girl

That night
Reading

*The Tennis
Court Oath*

She stared
Intensely

At the strange
Weave of

The lines
In my

Palm
This one's

Adventure,
She said—

I see the
Inevitable

Long
Downward

Spiral of
The rain

Another
Leads

To an
Over-

Whelming
Question

She told me,
Beware

The banks
Of a black

River!
It's

Where
You

Perish,
She said,

Riding
Love's

Blue
Bicycle

The Past Is a Voice Trapped Inside a Broken Radio

1.
We are grass
Like old poems

& tinged with
The blood of how

Many hexed roosters,
Who is this man

Entering with
His dogs now? Who

Stops every crow
Every thrush

Every sparrow
Dead in their tracks?

I mean, what is
Occult if not how

He calls us
By our names?

2.
This
Lincoln

Town Car
Nobody

Ordered
Rolls up in

The yard
To take us

To our train
& playing

With the knobs
We can feel

The voices still
Trapped inside

The Town Car's
Broken radio

But the train
Is leaving

The depot
Without us—

Just now
The ghost of

An empty
Track

Standing Here Drunk at the Intersection of Natchez & Simple

Minerva rides the image of a
dolphin with sexual hands & smiles like a fantasy girl—Hello!—in the yellow
ink well of the sun/in the black ink well of the rain.

& I'm standing here drunk at the
intersection of Natchez & Simple. & I'm convinced I'm holding the stumps of
two bloody feet, the shoes still on them. & that the cure is disintegration & not
the revolving door we call Phenomenon.

& so I flatten
perspective. I write *the strange mackerel of death, the laughing Dutch Masters of
despair* & I'm sitting like Amsterdam in a ten minute window.

Intelligent Spaghetti

America, you left me here
Paraphrased like something else

I was cooking
A big pot full of intelligent spaghetti

& the poem got up & walked out—
A waiting taxi

I threw a handful of glass flowers
Against the wall, America

& they stuck there
& now gravity has how many

Thick accents?
& I wander like a stone pilgrim

Lonely with my own gravity—
Sheaf to sheaf of wheat broken-waved

& wild—& no one sleeps
But the sleeping dogs sleep like masters

& so I talk all night,
Furtively, thru a hole in this glass

Security partition—& a voice says,
Don't come crying to me, I'm not

Your daddy!
& the lovers have stopped

Breathing on the stairs tonight—
A pile of humid flesh, America

As If It Were the Space Age We Lived In

The dog
Was

Shaggy
& loved

Being
Innocent

& while
Earthmen

Hit
Golf balls

Over
The bleak

Lunar
Horizon

A camera
Blinked

Back at
The blue face

Of the earth
& the dog—

Snout-deep
In a box

Of plastic
Cosmic

Straws
Some

With
Pink

Stars
(No shit!)

Some with
Blue

Rockets—
Moved

Unerringly
If a bit

Self-
Consciously—

This
Ancient

Dark
Fleck

In its
Eyes

Adam Fieled

Voodoo

From my second-floor sublet on
West Nittany Avenue, I'm sure you
looked out at autumn State College with
a mystical sense that your spell was being
cast: hydrochloride pot, cigarettes,
the rest that was you, splayed out in
a posture that, somewhere, you had
already mastered; the spell was against
all the run-in-circles crew, "sororisluts,"
footballers, frat-packs, the anti-human,
anti-humane; what sutured our skin
together ripped them to shreds, in
your mind, as it was cast out (black
mattress); using voodoo I missed, bewitched.

Harrisburg

I sat in a Greyhound bus-
terminal in Harrisburg, &
Stephanie Holt stood
twenty paces to my left; had,
suddenly, materialized there;
skin glazed, forehead protruding,
as though she had philosophical
issues with reality... that night
back in Cheltenham, I'd sat in
a car outside her mansion,
waiting for the deal to happen
inside I barely knew was there—
"looped in the loops of her hair"
I was not; not a word in Harrisburg.

Cupboard

Jet brow shaded, furrowed hard,
Julia went down on me so far
as to become invisible, so far
gone I lost her, stopping to block
a shot I didn't realize I'd fired —
she grew up a Cheltenham liar —
they've got, I thought, Julia's double
locked away in a cupboard somewhere
in Glenside, in a house I used to
run past when I ran cross-country
in high school, burning a four hour
high from a fifteen minute race. Now,
the high was ten seconds, & completely
anonymous — the cupboard was her.

Jen Green

As to where in human life there may
be glamour; it hung in the Last Drop
air for the Aughts — palpable, radiant,
& also simple as being able to smoke
joints in the adjacent alleyways. It
was a party; the right individuals did
treat it as such. Now, it's all white,
the color of skinned bone. I try to
imbibe, taste sulfur in the air;
enchantment to damnation's stare.
Jen Meese — the Drop's early Aughts
resident sex kitten — disappeared in
'05 — did I find her picture here, under
some paper towels in the bathroom?

Recondite

It seemed not recondite at the time,
on that much acid, in the dead of
night, in an icy winter, with perhaps
a foot of snow on the ground, to
find one's self in a van in a parking
lot in State College, with your friend's
sister, as ska bands blurted out their
numbers in the adjacent ballroom;
it seemed natural. I drifted into her,
pushed, pulled, someone cackled from
outside the van, I woke still in the van
with her in my arms before daybreak.
On the trudge back, through snow & ice,
to North Halls, I saw God through a grate.

PAPER INSIGHTS

Everybody like carve out wun niche
or cut anadah notch

while dey aspire
to create wun dazzling literary portfolio.

So now you've been smitten
wit wun cathartic urge to join da club

cause you feel
you got someting to say.

Self-importance
is wat you make of it

and dough you got wun way wit words

dat no mean
dat your efforts are monumental.

Don't take yourself
too seriously.

You're special
and den again you're not

as your head swells
wit wun engulfing ego.

It's good to keep in mind

dat wat you may deem
as fantastic paper insights

might really be as common

as raindrops, sunshine,
or Pushcart nominees.

CENSORED CIRCLE

Somebody got to you
and changed your vision

by whispering in your ear
wit corrosive chatter.

In da bowels of da undahground
got all kine worms and germs

dat going test your immunity.

One infector

felt da words from da public
dat you wen choose

no can fit his imposed canon
of alternative literature

so he wen sway you
to disengage

by persuasively
editing your editing.

Wit your feather pen
broken in half

and your ink well
tipped and spilled ovah

you no can fly like you used to
cause your wings stay all clipped.

He just made you
like everybody else.

Da rebel nature
dat you desired

is now stuck

in da circumference
of wun censored circle.

Break out
and get back to wheah you wuz

cause originality looks good on you.

DRAFTING DAYLIGHT

He's running to daylight

like dat popular gridiron phrase
wit nutting but green field before him

dough wit dat helicopter gunship
bearing down on his position

maybe he would have been bettah off
hiding in da nearby tree line.

Edit dat.

Let's start dis ovah.

He's standing in daylight

surrounded by sheep and goats
grazing in da meadow

as da wildflowers bloom
and da bees seek dere pollen

while wun big transport truck
pulls up wit wun trailer

to load his entire flock
and takes it away to wun slaughterhouse

to be eventually processed
into cat food.

Strike dat.

Maybe dis instead—

He's relaxing in daylight

floating downstream
on wun rubbah raft

while multitudes
of beautiful women

are calling out his name

and tossing him
dere lingerie from da banks

in unabashed adoration.

Well,

dat seems to work foa me

so here's da happy ending—

He smiled and waved
and his fantasies wuz bathed

in wun magnificent daylight.

Martin Edmond

The Secret Sharer

There was an alarm going off all night long. Eighty electronic pulses followed by about twenty beats of silence. I'm estimating, obviously. The noise was faint, far away, but once I had locked onto it, I couldn't help but listen. At first I tended to fall into a doze during the periods of silence then wake when the beeps resumed; but after a while, I switched and would re-surface when the silence began again. It was odd not knowing where the sound was coming from; the surf club? Odd, too, that the battery never ran down: connected to the mains perhaps? As a means of occupying my mind with something other than the alarm's pauses and resumptions, I thought I'd see if I could recall the names of Joseph Conrad's ships. I knew there were eighteen of them: could I find them all? The *Mont-Blanc*, the *Saint-Antoine*, the *Tremolino*, the *Mavis*, the *Skimmer of the Sea*, the *Duke of Sutherland*, the *Europa*, the *Loch Etive*, the *Palestine*, the *Riversdale*, the *Narcissus*, the *Highland Forest*, the *Vidar*, the *Otago*, the *Roi des Belges*, the *Torrens*, the *Adowa*. I added them up on my fingers. Seventeen. There was one missing. A chronological list, so where was the gap? I thought about it and remembered, last week, reading some letters the young officer wrote from a berth in Calcutta to a Polish friend in Cardiff. What was that ship called? It returned to Dundee with a load of jute. (A sentence came to mind: 'It was jute that made Dundee.') Ah yes, I had it now: the *Tilkhurst*. After the *Narcissus* and before the *Highland Forest*. So there were the eighteen. Five were steamers (*Mavis*, *Europa*, *Vidar*, *Roi des Belges*, *Adowa*) and the rest sailing ships. I rehearsed the sea routes that they followed and, where known, the cargoes that they carried. Jute, coal, teak, sugar, wool, wheat, linseed, horns and bones. General cargo, which could mean anything, even pianos. The Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Southern Ocean, the Pacific. The South China Sea. The Mediterranean. The Black Sea, the Sea of Azov. The Western Ocean the only one he never sailed. Never a passage to North America, unless you count the crossing he made, on an ocean liner, late in life, to be fêted in New York in 1923. I must have drifted off on speculations such as these and then Joseph Conrad came to me in a dream. Not for the first time. On the other occasion he was a bearded old sea captain lying back in a big bed in some inland town, perhaps South American, smoking a cigar. Disinclined to speak, except in riddles. Now he was a younger man, alert and charming and talkative. But I cannot remember our conversation, only that it continued for quite some time. Or was it like the writing I do sometimes in dreams, which does not really exist but is a dream of writing? Anyway, I remember the last exchange. He was sitting opposite me, hunched over a small table. My bookshelves were behind me and from them I took a volume with a yellow cover and gave it to him. 'Here is a book to read,' I said. The yellow was a pale

jasmine, the colour of a Light 15 Citroën I was lucky enough once to own. At the top, the letters of a title: *The Secret Sharer*. Joseph Conrad's face was a wonder to behold: amusement, consternation, incredulity, dismay. 'But I wrote this,' he said. 'You have given me one of my own books!' Indeed I had. He was not annoyed. Surprised, rather. I woke up. *The Secret Sharer*! Was I, or rather was my mind, trying to saying something to the figment it had entertained? That he and I were secret sharers? The tale came out in 1909, I think, during an interlude in the writing of *Under Western Eyes*. (Just as, nearly a decade before, *Heart of Darkness* came out during an interlude in the writing of *Lord Jim*.) It is based upon a true story. The bucko mate of the *Cutty Sark* struck and killed an insubordinate seaman, a black man with whom he had argued, and fought, before. His captain, rather than taking him in to face the courts in Jakarta or in Singapore (they were near the entrance to the Sunda Strait) let him go over the side at Anjer and swim to another ship. That captain four days later, in the Java Sea, went over the side himself, a suicide, unable to reconcile himself with what he had done. The mate escaped but was picked up, years later, in London, was tried and sentenced and did time. In Conrad's story a mate who has likewise killed a man arrives at the side of a young captain's first command near the mouth of the Maenam Chao Phraya, the river that flows south from the port of Bangkok; the captain allows him aboard. The man's name is Leggatt. The captain, who is not named ('I') conceals him in his cabin, conceals him from the captain of Leggatt's own ship, the *Sephora*, when he comes looking for him, conceals him from his crew during a voyage down the Gulf of Siam; until, off the rocky island of Koh-Ring, he takes his (also unnamed) ship so close to shore it is at risk of wrecking, so that his secret sharer may slip over the side and swim to safety. We never learn his fate; but the young captain is somehow, mysteriously, through his illegal act and his compassion for a fugitive, confirmed in his vocation. It's a doppelgänger tale and perhaps that is why I chose it in my dream: to have the temerity write about another writer, especially one as esteemed, and untouchable, as Joseph Conrad, is that to claim him as a double? Is that why? When I woke up and lay there rehearsing the dream in my mind, the alarm was still beeping in the distance of the night; but I could already see, faintly, at the window, the first grey light of the coming dawn seeping, like arcane knowledge, or even inspiration, through the ochre curtains.

Counting Stars

The air is heavy with the scent of privet. There's a tree flowering down the laneway where the Spanish couple live. If they are Spanish. Maybe they're Gypsies. Or Arabs. Or all three. Yellow and green and the smell faintly nauseous: it always makes me think of Professor Morton, in Rain City, in the 1970s, who led a campaign for its eradication from the streets of that town; with what success I do not know. People who suffer from hay fever will understand. Just outside #4 there is a fragment of sheet music lying on the footpath, it's been there for a couple of days. I pick it up and read the lyrics: *Take that money / Watch it burn / Sink in the water / The lessons are learnt / Everything that kills me / Makes me feel alive*. It is 'Counting Stars' by OneRepublic and how it got there I will never know. Lying under the spreading branches of the tallowwood in which there is an abandoned magpie nest. I watched three crows, yawping loudly, plunder it yesterday. One of them thrust its head into that tangle of twigs a couple of times, devouring something; but what? The fledglings left a while ago. At least I hope they did. I was away, I didn't actually see them go. Do crows eat eggshells? Or was there one that didn't make it? If so it must surely have mummified by now. They flew off into the east with that air of swagger and glee that crows do so well. The sun gleaming on their blue-black plumage. Last year it was currawongs, not in that tree but in the one outside my place, raising two chicks, one of which fell out of the nest and had to be rescued by the woman who lives beneath me. Paula put it back into the tree several times before it managed to clamber high enough up into the branches to be safe from marauding cats. Or dogs. Or crows. Currawongs have that same swagger. The other morning, just after waking, I saw one fly past my bedroom window with a mouse in its beak. Couldn't tell if the mouse was dead or alive but I guess that's a redundant question. They sometimes larder small lizards in the splintery cracks in the telephone pole opposite and then come back later for a snack. There's that strange contrast between their larrikin ways and their assiduous parenting. Magpies, too, are conscientious. The male feeding the female, the female feeding the young. Their beautiful singing at dawn: every day for about six weeks, I woke to their carolling. Then the insistent scratchy importunities of the chicks. I was away for about a fortnight and so missed their leaving of the nest. Unless some catastrophe occurred. Perhaps the crows were revisiting the scene of the crime? Now the koels are here, I saw one pursued by two other birds, red wattle birds I think, this morning. But, so far as I can tell, the channel billed cuckoos haven't come yet. Which Sophie used to call the Orgasm Bird, after their own crescendo-ed yawping cry. Eastern koels are cuckoos too, they lay their eggs in other birds' nests. The one I saw being chased was a female, they are speckled, not black like the male. Caught in the act perhaps. Their choice of host, around here anyway, is the red wattle bird; which I only see

sometimes, not often. I do like the sense of bird life going on around me all the time. As if I live in the tree tops too. In the air. But there is that strange ambivalence about birds: we want to ascribe human character to them, and we do—and then there will be a moment when you are up close and personal, with a currawong, say, and you realise the eye that looks at you is an alien eye, a reptilian eye, an avian eye: prospective, curious but quite without empathy. Or is that wrong? Perhaps there is some kind of fellow feeling, some recognition of the being of the other. I read a bit about magpies while those two were raising their young, how they are supremely territorial and seem to know, by sight or by some other means (mind?) all of the humans who live round about them. How they tolerate some of us and can't abide others. They don't seem to mind me; but what am I to them? How does a bird see a human? I like the idea that we are to them a blur of golden light, an aura, an emanation. And the wrong ones among us an absence, a black hole, a threat. That's fanciful but still. I could go and cut that privet tree down I suppose. If I had an axe, which I don't. Not even for the frozen sea within. If I had a piano I could pick out the notes on the sheet music. If I had a hammer. At the top of the fragment it says 'Everyone Piano', which must be the publishing company. There's a website address too. What will happen to the magpie nest? In the last storm I watched the branches dip and sway and thought it might fall to the ground but it didn't. Hot day today. In the afternoon, as the heat thickens, the stairwell fills up with blowflies. There's a skink living in my study, I saw it basking on the wifi modem the other day. When the cockroaches come in to eat the crumbs that fall from my table, I shoo them out with a stick. Abundant life! It's hard to believe our days are numbered. Counting stars. I remember that Arthur C Clarke story I read when I was young, it was about a project to count the nine billion names of god; and, when they were done—this was in Tibet—when they were done, the American computer guys who'd helped the monks with the counting saw above them, in the infinite vault, the stars beginning to go out.

Jill Chan

Deaf

I was born deaf. For me, the whole world is a silent movie. All my experiences are bright and inventive. A shadow is a mystery beyond all else. Touching someone's hand is a deep erotic expression. Kissing is as intense as eating.

When I was a child, I was so lonely in my world of silence, of deadness, of attenuated discussions in my mind. There was no relation like sound, they tell me.

That's why I turned to writing. I talk with the words I write sometimes. This may sound strange. Maybe I should say: I consider the words I write as a method of thinking through, as conversation, as fantasy, as delight, as suspense, as terrible instances as intense as danger or love.

It is indeed lonely.

I began to think of the things I am missing: Music—They say music is like a waterfall of sound, luscious, magical sounds. Poetry—like a cavalcade of horses trotting, or something even beauty couldn't capture. Nature—little nervous sounds; big rushes; slow, importune moments; striking levelling sounds; rustles and chirping.

Last night, I walked under the sky. The moon was full and aching. The night revelling in silence. I suddenly felt something like an accident hit me. There is much beauty in my life—beauty that not many could experience. A pure silence that stretches my soul in increments.

It's a different experience.

I blame myself sometimes. I'd think that God must be punishing me. God who is all good, all knowing, all present.

Is any part of me accepting this sad silence?

The little hope in me answers in the silence like a light, a star. I stretch out both my arms and turn and face myself.

Alone

I cut myself while chopping vegetables this morning. I didn't even feel any pain. Nor was there blood. After two minutes, the wound closed up by itself.

Now that we're in heaven, it seems fair that we couldn't get hurt. We couldn't even die anymore.

Not that I want to die.

I've been living by myself for two months. I thought that I'd be lonely. On the contrary, I relish the alone times.

I could go walking any time I want. I could read any time I want. Eat anything I want. Ring up anyone any time I want.

One person has more freedom than two. That's what I thought before. That's what I think now.

It's not loneliness I'm afraid of. It's how I would be happy to be alone too much.

Cutting myself chopping vegetables is just the beginning. To be honest, I wanted to show someone, to tell someone who cared about how clumsy I was chopping vegetables.

Of course, I have friends. But it's different if there's a lover in the house. A man in the house.

After breakfast, I sat down on the couch and looked at the aquarium. The three goldfishes are swimming happily (I imagine), with eyes looking like they're filled with seeing. The angelfish seems lonely being the only fish of its kind there. The carps are wiggling their bodies and opening and closing their mouths.

Do they care that they're there in the aquarium? Do they mind that they're kind of caught and have no freedom? But they beautify the living room. They are cared for.

Every morning, I go to look at the fishes feeling so happy that they're there.

Sometimes we look at each other (I imagine) and smile. Do fishes smile? Maybe

they talk in some otherworldly voice we can't hear. Something like sonar.

Maybe they shout. Maybe they cry when they're happy. And laugh when they're sad.

I just feel sad that they're alone in there. I want to hug them if I could.

Someone rang me today. A friend of a friend. We talked for fifteen minutes.

I don't know. But I'm used to it. Used to being alone. I don't want the water suddenly barging in, drowning me in my own home.

How readily I keep to myself and breathe.

Beginnings

A friend said to me, "Why don't you write about me and my husband, our love story?"

I told her that it's not how I write.

I usually start from the beginning, whatever that beginning is.

Her story must begin somewhere. But usually, life goes on in different strains and dimensions. Not unlike a story. But a story is simplified and exaggerated.

I didn't want to interview her because I'd love to write from the start and end somewhere where sadness unsettles, where joy settles.

A life doesn't start at being born. It doesn't start at being loved. Where does it end? There's only a pause, then another, then another. Never the end. Never an ending.

So my friend's story remains unwritten. But it has already been relayed and unwritten so many times in all of love. In all of a story.

This Morning

I cut myself shaving this morning. I'm not sure if it was an accident. These days I sleep through everything awful and beautiful. Big and small things.

My bed is hard. My back aches. I've been in this prison for five years. I killed my children in a fit of anger. My wife slept with my best friend. I just exploded.

It's easy to take life for granted in prison.

Each day seems the same. I'll never leave this prison. My plan is to kill myself on my birthday. Is that a good plan? It's twenty days from now. I counted. Each minute that passes by is dead to me.

When I cut myself this morning, one thing kept me alive: the sound of drops of water falling into the tin cup in the sink. The sound was beautiful, poignant. It woke me. It tore me apart. I stopped to listen to this drip-drop sound and fell in love with its music. It's like my heart was outside me.

It was not quite so dead. There were variations but mechanical in some ways, too. If I died, I couldn't listen or hear anything like that again.

It's funny what things we notice when we're dead. Or maybe God was saying something to me. Maybe He's saying it still every time I listen to the water drops fall and fall and fall...

Neil Leadbeater

A Review of Two Books by Eileen R. Tabios



Black Radish Books, 2016



Knives, Forks & Spoons Press

The title – *Amnesia: Somebody's Memoir* – could be taken as a contradiction in terms. Memory loss is counterbalanced by the production of a written record or biography. I desist from stating “autobiography” because it is deliberately titled as “somebody’s memoir” – not necessarily that of the author. It is one of a sequence of books, probably the principal one in terms of length, in the so-called “I Forgot” series (with few exceptions, every line begins with the words “I forgot”) generated from the MDR Project.

For readers who are unfamiliar with this project, I should explain that this is an ongoing work that brings together much of the author’s poetics to date. The initials MDR stand for “Murder, Death and Resurrection” and reflect the idea of putting to death an earlier work only to resurrect it into something new. Initially, Tabios created 1,146 lines by reading through 27 previously-published poetry collections and has since “computer-generated” (like a computer but manually done after a predetermined constraint) over 130 poems in six separate books from combinations arising out of the stored database. In so doing, she points out that “if randomness is the operating system for new

poems (i.e. the lines can be combined at random to make new poems), those new poems nonetheless contain all the personal involvement – and love! – that went into writing their lines. The results dislocate without eliminating or pretending to eliminate authorship.”

The first thing to notice is that the chapter numbers are not in sequence in the contents page. The book begins with chapter 8, for example, and ends with chapter zero. The lack of a linear sequence mirrors the way our mind seemingly moves from one random thought to another. The sequence is re-ordered in chapter zero into a linear progression running from 1 to 27. Seeking engagement with, and response from, her readers, Tabios points out in an Author’s Note that readers may reorder the chapters themselves – whether in numerical order or otherwise – in order to generate different stories since any combination or story is valid.

The process of engagement is taken further at the end of the book where six poets, John Bloomberg-Rissman, Sheila E. Murphy, Lars Palm, Marthe Reed, Leny M. Strobel and Anne Gorrick, all invited by Tabios, write poems in response to chapter 6. The result gives a fascinating insight into the different and very individual ways in which each writer chooses to make his or her response.

The author states that “at its simplest level, Babaylan Poetics operates within the poem(s) of *AMNESIA* through its insistence that seemingly random topics and references all relate to each other.” The random nature of our thoughts may not be all that random after all. Memory, for example, is said to work by association. To take the long perspective, everything is ultimately interconnected. Memory may be “a colander with generous holes” but it is also a synthesis of all the familiar things that make up our individual lives. It just needs to be unravelled – or, in the case of the Balikbayan Box, unpacked.

Tabios can coax a lullaby out of an empty tin can; she sees dragonflies off-kilter and knows that “I” is rarely “1” – but a multiplicity of thoughts and emotions and a point of connection with the world.

Chapter 27, titled “Ars Poetica”, gives the reader a clear example of the way in which the material for this book has been randomly selected to embrace specific topics. Here we find mention of poems that deliver a powerful punch, poems with strong opening lines, poems that depend so much on punctuation marks (not red wheelbarrows!), poems with stellar line breaks, etc. Other chapters bring together familiar backdrops found in her previous work: locations such as Ancient Rome, Manila, the USA and exotic far-off places, familiar subject matter such as orphans and orphanages, the plight of the

marginalised and the dispossessed, the names of dictators from around the world, acts of violence, displacement and exile. On a different note, vineyards put in several appearances, as do some beautiful lines in praise of the natural world (*Chapter 8: I forgot a snowfall of daisies whose mottles under moonlight twinkled like a saddhu's eyes*). There are some lovely evocative images too: (*Chapter 6: I forgot the summer-dusted landscape of Gambia*) and some startling ones that seem to be all the more powerful for their brevity (*Chapter 1: I forgot how gazes can drop like debris*). The classic contents of those Filipino Balikbayan Boxes also put in an appearance in Chapter 11. From the world of art, there are references to Ancient Rome, to modern writers and fellow poets, to classical music, opera, flamenco and jazz and to classical and modern art including, interestingly, Jackson Pollock, whose method of composition also had a random aspect, splashing paint on canvas.

The author's need to engage with the world is given particular emphasis in Chapter 24 where she breaks with tradition by beginning the opening line with the words "But I will never forget" instead of "I forgot":

But I will never forget we walk on the same planet and breathe from the same atmosphere. I will never forget the same sun shines on us both. I created my own legacy: No one is a stranger to me.

By turning the idea of forgetting things on its head, the book is actually an extraordinary testament to the power of memory and what it stands for. As Tabios says in Chapter 20: *Memory is more than just pressed petals between the pages of expendable books*. The impact of this book-length, incantatory poem is considerable and it reads like a litany.

*

The Opposite of Claustrophobia: Prime's Anti-Autobiography forms another segment of the same series which is why the two books are being reviewed together.

Not so congested in terms of layout, the lines are given more room to breathe on the page. The effect can sometimes be extremely powerful. For example, a whole page is given over to the single line *I forgot Burkina Faso*. For me, this is probably the most powerful poem in the book. It reads like a sin of omission. Like many of the other lines in this collection, it is tantalising in its brevity. Several of the lines are akin to photographs –memories frozen in time- a word from a family member struggling to recall some incident from the past, a fleeting glimpse of some memory brought on by listening to a piece of music, looking at an art work, inhaling a certain scent.

The numbers on the cover are prime numbers. The sequence was generated by applying prime numbers against the order of the lines from the MDR database. This time there are no chapter numbers and no titles. Every line is viewed as being as important as the previous one. If we think of memory as being a bit like a computer creating a database of images, mathematics is one of the recurring images throughout the text:

I forgot there are no guarantees, not even in math where "1+1" may not be "2" but, as a visual artist insisted, "11" or, as a philosopher insisted, "a turning towards the other."

Memory can be open to interpretation. Many lines in this book contain images or references to things that evoke memory such as scent (*scarlet roses; sprays of rose, peony, hydrangea and gladiola, gardenias crushed for perfume, the perfume of fresh bread, heaven as the scent of roasting coffee from a grocer*, etc); music (*lullabies from the wings of fireflies*); travel (*Mindanao, Berlin, Melbourne, Amsterdam, Istanbul*) and food (*sausage fat sizzling with the passion of cultists*). There is some keen observation here (*I forgot ice relaxing its contours into liquid gold*) striking imagery (*I forgot the blades of helicopters slicing air into thinner and thinner strips*) and amazing beauty (*I forgot a sarong fell and a river blushed*). Many of these images have a habit of staying in the mind long after the reader has closed the book. They, in turn, are absorbed into the reader's memory. None of these lines gives too much away. They paint a brief picture, sometimes just a brushstroke, and leave the reader to work on the rest of the canvas. From these small, intriguing details, we are all invited to build the bigger picture. This is why it is subtitled as an "Anti-autobiography" – it is not so much about the author but more about the way in which the reader brings his or her own experience or memory into play.

Christopher Barnes

Adverts 5

Cityscape Bijou Enterprises

Hanker after a real estate portfolio,
A modest outlay?
(Celadon Pontiac Safari.)

Lease apertures joining billboards,
Retain or hire out
Tucked away warehousing.
(Infinity past field glasses.)

Embark on your moving dominion speculations,
A rare, welcome break.

“Daddy-Is-That-You?”™ Mouldings

Hassled by undesirable callers
Rat-tat-tatting at your door?
(Welcome mat, night black garden.)

Our spongeable-gore plastic hacked torsos
Are certified foreboding.
(Smirking kitten though curtains.)

Ears judder with howls
Watch em bolt into traffic.

R.S.V.P.

Ever been stumped in an “Oops I didn’t twig
This was a formal affair” jiffy?
(Tiara, Marni robe.)

Our tie stamp cracks the plight.

Flip in ink, roll on shirt.
(Patent kerb-reflecting shoes.)

Quick wits for that smart guise.

Ooooooh You!

“Pin-Up Glossy”™ signature issue –
Traject us an album of someone uncared for,
We’ll photoshop them in dazzling nibs.
(Journos short-zoom through railings.)
Each page tickles pink;
Your depicted self-confidence buds’ll rate you
And themselves.

“Strings”™ Home Treatments

1

With our unseeable yarn
Facial adjustment bundle.
(Hunk models glowing in mirror.)

2

Equipped with hygiene pads,
Needles. User-friendly directions.
(Twin sisters hemming each other.)

*

Have a stab at youthful life
That melts away in water.
By playfully inspired!

Pete Spence

A Lapidary of Excursion. (In Memory of John Ashbery.)

as you walk out on the freshly laid lake breathing in the contours
of the air pressing against the water you notice your shadow
is a little more satirical than the present clumsiness you adhere to
keeping your center of gravity from being misplaced in the ever
moving perspective challenging each step you take stepping
constantly over your shadow until it is eclipsed by midday
only to be drawn out into the terse fleece of the afternoon inclined
today to take its time taking each stepping stone as it comes
looming out of the bright sunshine filling out the way forward
bringing distance closer as an ideal place to lean on while admiring
the vista of the day so far while it continues to grow efficiently
on the framework of itself every moment a highlight made fresh
just now by a short shower of Spring rain you run your finger
along its vague outline and touch the clouds so approachable
like an instance of distance tumbling past the applause of your
eagerness to press on until the only thing that is audible is your breath

Bent Stacks.

shoe horn

eye opener

why is it called a toothbrush
when it should be plural
unless you only have one teeth left?

lone tooth's last stand!

gadget cleaner

arm rest

air bending tongs

+

a good supply of air

a solid bench to work it

stacked bents

Fly Wire High Flyer.

Norma's **Not a Bauhaus insect screen**
keeps the moths from my winter jacket i think!
though most reside in my wallet i'm sure!
in the night i multi task

sleep
dream
snore

i don't write!
but i woke up once with a great line
it'll keep 'til morning i thought
but it didn't!
didn't ruin the coffee!
or the shadow theater as the sun came up
which ignores me even though i'm interested
each shimmer and the broadening day
noon stands still for a moment
then lopes towards a fitting sunset

Mirror Stage.

face the morning

not the wall!

don't feel cornered

hello morning

slap a little water
about the eyes

across the eyes

dot the i's

wipe the smile
off the mirror

hello morning

Participation.

during the ocean the curtain falls
simmering on under its label
nearing Act.3. where the audience
burst into a tangle of flames
a lot of thought goes up in smoke
thick ash covers the applause
like a hasty avalanche late for lunch
or very late for Act. 2! a scene where
a school of fish suntan on some dunes
in the wings on the wing the thief
stammers through the deciduous audience
lapsed in a replica of daylight in Act. 4.
under a full moon high tidings wash
over the precipice of the audience
clinging to the dampness of discontent
calmly reaching for the lifejacket
under the seat as the dunes are
swept elegantly from the stage

A TRAVELIN' MAN

*all afternoon in a car
parked at the ferry wharf*

Pam Brown

At the beginning of Laurie's *Crab & Winkle*
the quote, I note, is the *Shangri-las*

the word "*rumori*"
is in there too

faint echoes of Australia
as he begins to settle in
begins determinedly

(their possessions as Laurie says
— their "worldly goods" —
"still somewhere in the Indian ocean")

He & Rosemary,
landed in Kent,
Canterbury

where Rosemary
will take up her job, in law, professoring

So Sasha, Denis
Pam & I,
Alan, others,
ghost in & out of the early
pages

Laurie still half in Australia
Australia, functioning maybe, as a reference point, a measure
('imperial',
the empire come back *to verify things*
via

pop songs
via sensible or far-fetched ambitions
(Sasha)—

till Laurie, I expect
—till Laurie as he
must expect or anticipate—
begins to feel
on-the-pace

less foreign
'here' ('Here?')
("Here" being "there",

(Kent) (England) (London)
as
he will & did

as he would & has?

Published now eight years
—the record of a year settling in, some time spent
setting & designing—
Crab & Winkle must have been written
ten or more years ago

now he might allow
his mind to drift south again, as they
prepare to leave
for Sydney, I think
—tho
a year
or two away.

Here he'll miss them, might be
missing them now already
the mind, as it will,
ahead of itself.
Mine always is.

Who can live
'in the moment'?

Not me.
"No time!" ha ha ha

I'm reading
for the first time
Under Western Eyes
no I'm not—I'm reading *Heart Of Darkness*

the early pages set maybe close to Kent
evocative
of
a serene mildness

& Johnson's *Lives Of The Poets*
which is amusing
& intelligent
(tho who needs me
to remark it?)
some of the lives & their passions
reminding of literary figures still current
maybe
'perennial' these acts & motivations
—& Tim Wright's
small collection
lines & phrases in it that I love
am drawn to

that I can maybe draw heat *from*

I am situated

in or
between

Laurie's last decade

Conrad's what? 1890s?

Tim

(in Melbourne, now more or less)

Pam Brown

& me & Cath

(—now definitely—& currently on Bruny Island),

& Johnson's eighteenth century & sure, generalising, imperial
latinity & secure English good sense

(*Get the picture?*)

(to quote

Laurie Duggan

&

'Shadow' Morton)

Sasha

—the editor, & sole writer, of *The Only Sensible News*—

whose project was the resurrection of Harry Hooton

And now a younger friend of Pam's

—Pam was closer

than us to Sasha—

has gone into bat for him. Harry Hooton.

I thought Hooton was an awful poet.

Which I told Sasha.

#

timor mortis conturbat me,

Laurie quotes,

recalling John Forbes

occasioned by
a high voltage warning
Laurie sees
on the side of a generator.

Thinking, I suppose, Here I am in England,
where John went before me
the strangeness of it

#

Will this
continue, as a line by line commentary on Laurie's poem?

Not the worst thing one could do.

#

Tho I'd soon
catch him up
—he already having done the hard thinking—

the heavy lifting,
in John's phrase

& then where would I be?

here?
there?

"footsteps in the courtyard
the rattle of leaves on the path"
(Womack & Womack)

"In the offing the sea & sky
welded together without a joint"

&

"A haze rested on the low shores
that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness"

"What greatness had not floated on the ebb
of that river into the mystery of 'an unknown earth!'

& so on

Hmm, I should quote Sam & Tim

& perhaps I will

inevitable?

irresistible?

a bad idea?

(but
'none the less?')

at the cafe past the turn-off to Adventure Bay

on the way to Alonnah

with Cath

she reading
Zadie Smith

which I'll read after her

I read *Crab & Winkle*.

At

first

—for a moment—the shop seems too crowded:
tourists—New Zealanders, Aussies, some Singaporeans

the owner very
talkative

so it is *very* noisy.

But where else to go
on an island?

So we
stay

there is somewhere else to go because the crowd moves on
& we sit & read & write exchange remarks

then 'go'—

to buy petrol, groceries, have a walk on the beach

'Adventure Bay'

tho the bay, the beach, live up to it
the automatic thought: what can Cook & Co have made of it
all those years ago?

idyllic?

the berry farm is shut
contrary to its advertisement

pale blue, silvery, the sands
white as I have ever seen them

our prints the first today,
aside from those of a dog

& numerous small birds

#

two plovers, a dotterel
a pacific gull (a 'dominican')

#

see Ian & Lorraine in the afternoon
see Dan & Sophie that night

Three days later, a trip to Adventure Bay, again for groceries—

a trip for promised meals, with Ian & Lorraine, & Pat & Chris the next few days.

"No nice milk,"
so Cath rings Lorraine (just, at that moment, at the checkout in Kingston). Lorraine will bring us some tonight.

A walk
on the beach near the berry farm ("closed till October")

tourists photographing each other on the rocks before the swell of incoming waves & the enormous panorama — that says 'Endless space', 'time' & 'miles away'. Cath goes for a skinny dip at the other end, the water invigorating & cold. Small puffins & large gulls gathered near by, keeping thirty metres' distance from us as we move down the beach. Cath has seen the eagle this morning, a sea eagle, perched in a large tree in the neighbour's yard. I see it too. (Gabe's idea of Cath's motto — "I've seen an eagle" & "I'm going in" — proved true.)

I take some photos for Cath. They resemble Richard Hamilton's of Marilyn — tho of course the special virtue of those was to have her resemble every woman In That Same Situation: full of enjoyment, endorsed, & communicating these things, their smile addressed not to the camera but the person behind it. These photos verify that Cath did, in fact, go in.

Zadie Smith. I finish *Heart Of Darkness*: a mess finally. As Conrad must surely have known. I haven't read much of him for forty years now, except for *The Nigger Of The Narcissus* a year or two back. Also impossible.) Should I read more? *Nostromo*? *Lord Jim*?

For now, tho,
Zadie, *The Autograph Man*. Three years back I read
NW & liked it very much.

We go home, rest & cook.

Lorraine & Ian show up early. After an exhausting day on the mainland, seeing to various things. They have

drawing or cartoon. Salle-meets-Patrick Caulfield-meets-Gordon Bennett, pop art & Rauschenberg distantly behind it. His earlier work reminded of Stephen Bram schooled on Kenneth Noland.

#

"I glide thru the traffic like a pin"

temple walls

after cavafy's 'in despair'

for alan rosendale, victim of a gay bashing by undercover police sydney, 1989

portrayed on disparate planes two fingers sign in another tongue
on the lips of each *i love the taste of cum, call*
electrical impulse action potential vowels of flesh
consonant skeleton re-membered hole whispers glory glory
want young guys to fuck arse, call this particular protein's pore

is always open amyl buzz fluorescent rapture
insert cock here influx efflux either side of equilibrium
eyes full frontal—he said— get off on my chest
charged particles head in profile sum together
where has all the cock gone peripheral nerve

diametric stance hard as horn tyre under cover
fuck off faggots ion pump voltage gated bathed in solution
liminal conception still time— bone truncheon blood vulnerable blot
remains outlined in relief unwholesome victim *la petit mort*

<p>flower <i>origin:</i> 1150-1200; middle english <i>flour flower</i>, best of anything < old french <i>flor, flour, flur</i> < latin <i>flōr-</i> (stem of <i>flōs</i>)</p>		<p>religion <i>origin:</i> 1150-1200; middle english <i>religioun</i> (old french <i>religion</i>) < latin <i>religiōn-</i> (stem of <i>religiō</i>) conscientiousness, piety, equivalent to <i>relig(āre)</i> to tie, fasten (<i>re-</i> <i>re-</i> + <i>ligāre</i> to bind, tie; cf. ligament) + <i>-iōn</i>; cf. rely</p>
<p>found <i>origin:</i> before 900; middle english <i>grundien</i>, <i>funden</i> to set on a foundation, establish</p>	<p>a flower was once the best of anything</p>	<p>a thing was a meeting in time</p>
	<p>flower religion</p>	<p>no <i>origin:</i> before 900; middle english; old english equivalent to <i>ne not</i> + <i>ā e</i></p>
<p>think <i>origin:</i> before 900; middle english <i>thinken</i>, variant of <i>thenken</i>, old english <i>þencan</i>; akin to thank</p>	<p>thawed ground the bulb thinks of nothing but blossoms</p>	<p>nothing <i>origin:</i> before 900; middle english; old english <i>nathing</i>, <i>nathing</i>; see no, thing</p>
<p>thank akin to thought thank <i>origin:</i> before 900; middle english: favourable thought, goodwill, gratitude; old english <i>thanc</i> expression of thanks, orig. thought, thoughtfulness</p>	<p>time was measured in tides</p>	<p>thing <i>origin:</i> before 900; middle english; old english: orig. meeting; akin to gothic <i>theihs</i> time time <i>origin:</i> before 900; middle english; old english <i>tīma</i>; cognate with old norse <i>tīmi</i>; akin to tide</p>

incomplete sonnet for the ox-born bee

choose a small confined space,
and erect in it a building with
four windows, one facing
each quarter, and with a tiled
roof. then take a bullock,
whose second year horns
are just curling over its brow,
stop up its nostrils and beat it
to death without breaking the
skin. shut the bruised body up in
the closed room, strewn with
thyme and cassia, and after
nine days the softened bones
having fermented, wondrous
creatures will appear, who
with buzzing wings will fly
into the air— a swarm of bees.

so unlike my self, you slip from warmth
knowing neither one black time
nor the kaleidoscope of death.
polarised multi-mortal, you circumambulate both.
your bullock-mother's bones uterine comb
broken by sentience -
a look not at you
but bent upon itself. she knew
panic. who am i to say you cannot mourn?
i don't believe in it, of course,
but surely our very existence
is magic. wonderless
creature, let me share death with you.

ttttttct tccaagtc atctctgt atcttcttg accttccct gagcaagacc
 ctaacattgc ctgggctaga cctacatttc tetgaaette agccaccctc tggteccaet
 ttaaagaaca aatgggaggt tgcagttggt ccagcagatg catgacctgc caggccaggt
 gccccatgcg attgggccc attcctccc aggtatcact caccccatct ggaattgtct
 agaacacagc tgtgtctct aagcatgggt gagctctgaa ttgtcccaac ctctcttct
 gagaccatgt gatcctgcag **nurse**ggca tctggcagat acttgcctgc aagagggaga
 gagaacgcag gtgcataggt cttccttttg gtgcaacct tctctgggtt tgactggaaa
 ggcccggctc acccctcaaa **we are com** bingtagtcc cttctctgat aacaatteca
 cgtgcgcggg **across the brood**catcc aacacaaaac cctacatttc tgggtattgg
 gctgcggggg ctctcatttt tgcatttgcc catteccaaa tgcagttggt gatcaacatg
 cagcgccgcg ctgcagtaag aacttatcta **one gene** detectingc agaattggaa
 gggccatggg acacctcagc gagcactttg **diploid dr** onesatgggt accttccctg
 caacggcacc ccccaagttc aatcctact gatacaagt **one destro** ying them
 gccggacccc agccaaccct ctgcctaca atgtgcatac cttctcttas they hatch
 cgcccgcggg catgacctgc agatgctcgc ccactccagt aagtgcctcc caccccatct
 agccggccca cccccatct **we have do** ne softgaca tgcatttgcc ttgtcccaac
 agcatcgccg ttgtcccaac cttggg since **the desert** gagcaagacc gagcactttg
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 cggcactctc tatctgggtt tcattatgga tggteccact aatcctact cttctctgat
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 tcatctgctgg cctacatttc **but will n** ot bombina tegtgcctgc tgcagttggt
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 gtgcataggt attcctccc cctcaaaaof **the father** lessgacta aagcatgggt
 acccctcaaa aagcatgggt cagcattttt aacaattcca tcttcaaatt aaggtgcaag
 cagcattttt aaggtgca**we are broodi** ngcctattgg tcattatgga cttcctttg
 ctctcatttt cttccttttg **across the** combaacatg ctgtctggat aagtgcctcc
 ctgcagtaag aagtgcctcc acacctcagc agaatgggaa cttcactcag tgcatttgcc
 acacctcagc tgcatttgcc ccccaagttc accttccctg ttaattaca aacttateta
 cccccagttc aacttateta agccaaccct cattaatgga aattgctaaa gagcactttg
 agccaaccct gagcactttg catgacctgc ttctacacac cattaatgga aatcctact
 catgacctgc aatcctact caccccatct acatcggaat ttctacacac ctgcctaca
 caccccatct ctgcctaca ttgtcccaac acaatttccc acatcggaat agatgctcgc
 ttgtcccaac agatgctcgc acttgcctgc agttattcac acaatttccc agcatcctgt
 acttgcctgc agcatcctgt tatctgggtt ccgatccgta agttattcac cttggcacta
 tatctgggtt cttggcacta cttctctgat ctgattccaa ccgatccgta tcttcaaatt
 cttctctgat tcttcaaatt cctacatttc tttctttcct ctgattccaa tcattatgga
 cctacatttc tcattatgga tgcagttggt ctaacattgc tttctttcct ctgtctggat
 tgcagttggt ctgtctggaa attcctccc ttaaagaaca ctaacattgc cttcactcag
 attcctccc gggcctgaaa aagcatgggt gccccatgcg ttaaagaaca ttaattaca

honey man

it is recorded that, in tianfang, there was an old man
willing to sacrifice his body for the people. *please.*
consult the physicians. i have eaten life long enough,
well enough, to let it come undone before
it undoes me. so he stopped taking any food.
he drank only honey. after a month, his stools & urine
all turned to honey. *don't cry*
as i liquidate. don't cry as i crystalise.
for the term of my sugared vigil i will
meditate on the moon. waxing while i wane,
it will slink from shadow to gleam naked & full —
always asunder, often obscure, perfectly predictable.
i wonder how it spooked her. she so
beautifully, beautifully written.
so terribly, terribly sad.
i see me, a pale crescent encircling hers, still
thinking the making in making love
outweighs the giving away.
she was a simile. i made her a metaphor.
i tried but couldn't change her ending.
after his death, the people kept him
in a stone coffin filled with honey
& buried in the ground.

after one hundred years the body became
a kind of honey-preserve. *my feet are cold,*
o' candied cadaver. i deserve to die
for the thousandth time. ancestors,
every one robed in silk,
may be with me as ever but they cannot save me
like you and yours. mine
press their hands to their gaunt faces
as if those faces still had flesh;
beat their breasts as if their sinew still had substance;
offer pitiful prayers that heaven might intervene
as if their throats had not rotted many moons before
i found myself on this stinking battlefield.
bronze has yet again broken my bones. thoughts
spool. the very awareness of my own existence
surrenders to this siege. death drums an attack.

when someone was suffering, a little of the honey man
could be swallowed. it worked instantly. *i smile*
as you and your line, every one
clothed in the coarsest cloth,
dissolve on my tongue.

li shizhen, bencao gangmu or compendium of materia medica

With light pouring

The night sky is a star of clouds, the moon hot with the sight of its earth, the subtle blues of oceanic shadows in waves and swells, the spectra of atmospheres and troposphere, jungles and desert dunes, mountain peak scree and twisted plains, cities with names and rivers with bridges, deltas, mouths and floods, the halo of nightscapes at altitudes with satellites and meteorites, the iconography of motorways, railways and airports, grassy plateau, rice paddies and orchards, the details of neighborhoods with families and friends, the big picture that sits within the little ones, the iterations of ideas of order, the digital planet noosphere in its grids of states, foliage of clouds wiping over the sky, the distance facing south into Tangihua, fortress like, a tuatara spine waiting to emerge again, its kauri ridges brushing against the edge of wind with rimu and tānekaha in unison, a nikau puriri gully profusion gleaming as a sun breaks through, a canopy flowing over a slope reflecting in angles, shards of shatters and shade, crumpled and silken, the textures of absorption, each shape of leaves and how they are held, the shape of a cloud and the shade of a forest tree, when the freedom of the wind carries a returning to a balance and stretching out, with an old camera of my father refocusing on the subtle imagery of identity, being what you want to be in the house of possibilities, in the ocean of what could happen, in the futures we are living into, where an invisibly black cat passes by with phosphorescent green eyes and a moth hovers over the grass, the forest silent but for the distant rushing hiss of the Tauraroa river and I cannot forget the feeling, *with light pouring like rain from sugar stars.*

dan raphael

People Walking Every Surface as if the World Escher Lived in

take the boat out of the water,
fill your pockets with tomorrow,
gently place an unknown village between two slices of bread
you'd never made before, baked with loud music
like the 2 hours of dance necessary for fermentation
sunshine comes whether we're ready or not

give us this day a few wondrous moments,
as i run my fingers through my hair more fingers appear
like a fan becoming a hat that started as a blade,
as overnight the land-kelp make the streets too slippery for driving
but perfect for stoned sports, asphalt mouths compressing our
invectives
into a puck dense enough to fall through the earth

close the screen, wash a plate, spend 20 minutes exhaling, teleport
the rain needs pruning, the refrigerator must be transcribed,
small enough to come out of a trapdoor carved through a book
i'm quickly to regular height, so grateful i grow extra arms
and a smile that can be seen by satellites:
tourists open their guidebooks but cant find me,
my lips in constant motion at a frequency the mosquitoes transmit

free of my house i'm soon off the charts:
antarctica before the ice, manhattan underwater,
tomorrows time-nibbled mirror-clouds orbiting worlds not yet
congealed

i can ask for water or a bathroom in 37 languages.
i don't sit until natives do and usually cant their way.
when everyone is left handed so am i.
never levitate with strangers
leave in the morning

As the street breathes

a river is never the same width, micro pulsations,
trees pulling from the ground and putting back
air in the water in the dirt, softening & hardening,
blossoms without light
blossoms reflecting other blossoms, not territorial but horizon widening
as i'm on both sides of the street at once, as i'm lining the sidewalks
as if waiting for a parade, flotillas stuck down side streets, the wild unpaved

loose as a stick, when given the option go straight & parallel
my presbyopia makes the sun a constellation of fire,
like glass roofed houses seen from above, house on its own island,
island on a multi-jointed mechanical arm sweeping the border
tween day and night, tween direct and shadow

the street breathes, puling me to both edges, unclogging my airway
the street coughs to evict me, to remove my footprints climbing out of its lung
that's the sky, busy with alveolic clouds, soft turnstiles and slow propellers,
one spin a week, shadow light shadow light dappling micro-switches, coin-
flipping turbines

more wing less body, bird sharks inhaling the nuggets of meat without form,
sugar without a crystal to consult, fence unraveled til i'm cloaked in it,
a moving fence, leaheless, have no permit to be higher, to interrupt the
migrations beneath the streets scalp, as you slit the tops of bread before baking
so those who want to get out can, exhale rain and inhale sweat,
i'm much too young to help the street,
too short-lived to hear more than a sentence

Close By, in Another State

shadows on the white car — paint trees
caramel rambling like a 3 inch river inside a pulsing city arm
resolute stubborn articulate
worming to experience the anodyne of sleep when dreams aren't in focus
I want the mirror to forget those faces behind me singing atonally
as if only I lyric apostle, bent to blend
from prison to church. a self-generating ballot box
why water toom muscles, when we wondered how we could live among all the
trees & not be run into by nightly commuters, those who only see when asleep,
only move when distracted by plaster and temperature zones
where veri turn the moons behind me, the winds from my left

///

house surrounded by taller buildings, no windows in my direction,
If you come to my door i'm in the phone lines, syncopating electricity
to turn the wheel away from cars trying to merge with the largest dogs and
cats who'd bounce before they surrendered,

want to get my teeth around the pain of light,
that doorway in my throat, so much noise but no one comes through
18 wheeled thunder split by 10 pins vibrating at their own embroidery
seen in light through a massive colander colder than itself
drawing the heat of our hairs into visionary prairies
we're now small enough to coast that perspective
like a coded roll of internal textures unwinding into a rain of white-out
darkening in any pore mistaken for oxygen,
take a steak thick brain slice and dare that labyrinth,
if whats taken out still remembers whats between it,
an amber Rambler with one last exhalation about to

////

I breathe in a world map, van gogh's starry night,
aerial photographs of interplanetary cities
when air dies, when the ax gets a new handle
the message the photon was carrying gets dropped in the dark
happy man in a new woman's bed

we dance palm to palm, eye to eye, the occasional swivel away
to follow the wandering musicians, as jeans become wide-bottomed skirts,
a chandelier hung with faux stars, mini-reactors breaking apart the idle rumors
and day old trivia that usually piles in the corners, discreet & odorless

////

houses don't grow, streets don't bleed
time going backwards, entropy blossoming throughout the body's terrains,
growing & softening on the outside, more space within & between,
I hold a monitor to the lumps of a soup I'll become
never say never, having 7 fingers but only controlling 5 at a time
I bought a third kidney but couldn't afford new pipes
I wont let the rain that falls here leave

To Be Self-Evident

I hear but can't see you
a crowd of aroma, crown of evaporating flame
as if sown around the world of genes
one little twist grows a million iterations
to, through, sewn inside my lips
my hips, radar dish, the pelvis tracking

Who you calling for
no such name/ number/ warrant
wrenched or slit, hammered or screwed
loose as light, right as rain that isn't all water

><<><<><

Not against the grain but enhancing it, consisting it
so you can't tell one from the other and every bite's satisfying
cause you knew what it would taste like before you peeled off the wrapper
risking my breath, driving through the tunnels of my bones

Only one of my hairs is an antenna, no length, no wave
from sign to signal to order:
the strike could be a stroke,
a fit induced by what no one can hear

into the teeth of meat, electrified platinum floss
i could chew for a year and never digest it all, worn away
like travel in a vacuum, fine grit rays across millions of miles,
each breath a mile, each soul a star
collapsing to advance, advancing to feed
i hunger for a tomorrow with no more threats, no less opportunity



How you gonna churn through a thousand foot tsunami of information
when all the data toilets flush in unison, when satellites decompress all they
contain and swaddle the earth in self-generating layers of cell phone and
internet chatter, my teeth don't know what to say but feel their enamel melting
like wax 2 feet from a blow torch, the vast nets our sun welds every day

When i can't turn off the faucet, the tv,
when the phone's inside you you can't not answer,
3 nights in a row i've been interrogated in my dreams in languages i don't
recognize.



My car has many voices
in the chips, deep fried or baked
so pure we can't call it water anymore, or silicon
coated with one billionth of the blood to wrest it from the earth
fried with 10,000 clarifying volts

The satellite no longer shows my house,
my neighbor's yard doubled to fill that space
i'm no longer in my yearbook, my driving record says i'm suspended
between public transit and micro-holography

What's taking me the next step to gone
doesn't knock or call, doesn't need a window

après **Bella et Ida à la fenêtre**

without glass, without glass
for windows:
She keeps her baby
and whistles to him
through a roughspun
Windwarm hood. he smells
dead sunflowers,
Bed linen, and flies
with the summer past.
and the summer is over.
and now Askew,
She prays
for your child too—
to fill out the Sun as the sun filled
the fields, please, God. buy
more blue than that. fill it
to the number of extravagance.
she prays, please—
keep this sleeping child sleeping
so they will not hear.
survive to bring a different tint
to Blue,
and another and another before the winter
will return.

après **Le Soldat Blessé**

still another soldier
looks through
his last eye.
He folds his bandaged
Head to the left:
his blessed injury is
left, an overview
of an epaulette.
Red gold of disrepute.
his beard has grown

long and fallow
and tightens as it wraps the form of his rib
cage. his hair is
delicate as the flower sprouts
on his chest—
some important person
tied a medal there with twine.

après **Homme avec son chat et femme avec enfant**

the fire rises, the family fortune burns
and they can think of nothing—
and nothing destroys them, as they run—
nothing other than
the nothing that swallows all and therefore
they birth into the world
a fleeting something like a circus—
a child, a hunchback,
the lameness of
a cat, and a miniature postman—
The characters found
Wandering the streets
of a sad joke.
later, when soldiers trample by,
Group all this grey and harassed
mass together.
only the white cat is not afraid.
and how the little postman cowers and prays
to blend in with the snow.
just as traders barter
their bones for borrowed
time, so with the support of the cart a ragged pony
drags its shards through the mud.
Such refugees sharpen their hoes to worship
the Earth
on which they will rot.

après Couple de paysans, depart pour la guerre

After the war
the pools of a woman's
tears fill left
hand to replace
her husband who went away.
his Eye. He stole its white
Linen to wear like a patch on his chest,
where once her heart was like a butterfly.
he returns.
to prove that his war is over, they make love.
Sometimes they trade
weapons in the alleys. sometimes black
the flowers grow out of their heads.

après La Vielle

in one case the hunchback, and
in another case, a burden.
almost a man in this position
composes an essay on gravitation—
in movement the effort grinds,
Then life.
together with himself in the embrace of work
He struggles
to be crushed, as well.
without mercy, like boxes
bought and weighed.
history is not selected, it just fits
like your own hat. On the other hand,
The hunchback has a cane,
a waterfall, and a beard to draw
his Chin down. the question remains.
Thus was he born, but to what extent does he rely
on the charity of god's dirigible chest?
What is the cost of the prayers he exhaled to fill it?

Stuart Barnes

Double Acrostic

i.m. Mervyn Barnes, and for Gary Barnes

The pure name is fabled as me. Qua-
aludes charmed this unin-
spired town's Light Horseman's young — dissolvable elements, post-
man-dispensed in the 1970s. Our matri-
archs strewed carcasses among dolerite boulders — warnings ig-
nored by kangaroo stalkers whose juveniles insist on abse-
iling Bare Rock's Boneyard. 'Hrrr ... Hrrrrr!'

The Coral Sea

frees me, moves me,
beautiful and brightly lit.

The small hushed waves' repeated fresh collapse
begins to harvest.

A thought comes to me: the sea!
from the sea's pure and ardent pulse.

Lightning pains

Drinking your father's greased lightning,
we watched lightning bugs rise from the grass.
'Lightning never strikes twice,'
you promised, faster than a cat lapping chain lightning.

We watched lightning bugs rise from the grass
at the Fitzroy's edge. Lightning Boy, I swallowed
your promise, faster than a cat lapping chain lightning.
'We've captured lightning in a bottle

at the Fitzroy's edge, Lightning Boy!' I swallowed
ball lightning.
'We've captured lightning in a bottle,
O lightning bird —

ball lightning,
staccato lightning.'
O lightning bird,
I wait to ride the lightning, last words

staccato lightning.
Drinking your father's greased lightning,
I wait to ride the lightning, last words
'Lightning never strikes twice.'

Double Acrostic

Three birds mouthed the day moon's bones and skin; the mesa
hid its last gold spark with a wolf pack's spell.
Empty katydids howled their tragedy,
a coldness full as stolen champagne.
New stars bled the chords of the dove, the cicada.
In laudanum air the dragon became an albatross, tiger
moths loosed red blossom, the white horse cornered a kiss.

(My) Count(ry)

Does Polygon City still coppice
shrubbery & cross-section lanes
bearing Fitzroy Gardens,
are the speed-veins
of figures willing distance
from rational skies
still congruent with it?
I dare not estimate otherwise.

•

I justified this country
town's acute plain s
peaking & naive ranges,
asymmetrical rains
on crimson, mean horizons,
variable jewel-sea
grooming cuboid terror.
(Every factor calculated me.)

•

Operation Forest
brackets integer-moon
& multiple mountains'
hypotenuse. Noon,
solid gold, brushes
expression, coil
& chord. Treetops'
formula's constant prime soil.

Notes on the poems.

'The Coral Sea' is a cento from Uvavnu's "The great sea...", untitled shaman song (trans. Jane Hirshfield), C. P. Cavafy's 'Morning Sea', Philip Larkin's 'To The Sea', Paul Celan's 'With Dreampropulsion', John Ashbery's 'Chinatown', Gwen Harwood's 'A Morning Air'

'Double Acrostic' — Three birds . . . — remixes some of the lyrics from Josh Ritter's *The Animal Years*

'(My) Count(ry)' is a terminal from half of Dorothea Mackellar's 'My Country'; *Polygon_Cities* is Monolake's 7th record

the pro football hall of fame induction ceremony

i see grown men
crying, hoping
they made their
fathers proud

i laugh

sleep comfortably
knowing my father
never loved me or
was proud of me
any day i existed
on this planet
with him

he died with
dementia before
he turned 70
years old

one of these
days i'll go to
the cemetery
and find his
grave and laugh

your hatred never
got you as far as
mine did for me

be thankful

embrace your loved
ones for the final time
and think of all the bad
choices you have made

then be thankful your
children have enough
sense to hate you

the last thing this
world needs are
more brainwashed
fools

lune /-/ aria

Identity is a singular
identity is a noun
 because of this
 it is something
 [some *thing*]
the child does not understand.

| for example |

sometimes s/he feels like an ocean of words
__not gazing out to sea__
but that s/he is we
morphemic liquid drops
phonemic swirls
a syntactic sea

 in this] moment [
 or series of [*them*]
of s/he and me and we and i
or even us and us and us and

{definition:
the state or fact of remaining the same one or ones, as under varying aspects or conditions
}

we have
nothing, neither, nor
how many times has the child gone here before
wheels of this *identity*-cart running
seed-heads flat into mud

[us _ a construct, of i? and I? and we?, and

life is peeling in at least one]

green long knife shredded cuc
umber
curls of carrot mock the sun

a buffalo calf with barbed wire in its stomach
a red deer fawn in bent grass
oh to lie down in the green sun
the moon cool under our neck
and silently
sleep

our skins ebbing lune /-/ aria
seed pods under winter
rain

If identity is multiplicitous, then how

{definition:
the condition of being oneself or itself, and not another
}

can i or I be a one | self

when some days

water reaches; words rise;
waves crest; meaning shines;
clear drops which don't break down__

silvered, black-night-backed .. all of them
— me

these liquid days : i and me roll endlessly
all is shifting a-lingual adoration
a sounding, slap, a saline rush

{definition:
condition or character as to who a person or what a thing is
}

and who is me
[and]

where can s/he | it | we go
pulling our skins behind us

not the seabed nor the shore
that lithic body, sea-skinned
and the child

green tattoos
its oblivious texts__

when the fawn floats by on a calf skin
current been driven by dark earth
a far mountain, and the rain coursing
through flattened forests

only such

perceptual limitations__the sea refusing
to see the slow shift of crust
the tilt of the deep earth hand in which it laps__
only such
is the thing
i might call me

{definition:
the state or fact of being the same one as described
}

because of that

words might rise but no ground
will present its industry - rhetorical
and somatic, fjords act
only as impediment to the loquacious sea

mountains and the worn salt
of life long gone to sleep
old rock riven down to water
through lithic parameters

these
are cordoned off from awareness' self obsession

such a simple thing__
to be a me living__

a curved line

oblivious to the presence of its articulated sphere

{definition:

the sense of self, providing sameness and continuity in personality...

}

life is {not} peeling away, but [*identity* {is questionable}]

(CUCUMIS MELO)

(CUCUMIS SATIVAS)

(DAUCUS CAROTA)

{definition:

*...in personality over time and sometimes disturbed in mental illnesses, as
schizophrenia*

}

There are days i am a bamboo child
an opalescent *it*, lashed with vegetative

sinew ___ a raft on the sea of me

hollow canes occasionally
sprouting green leaf lances

earth-pungent

:

this is the uncurling

—another moment
—another self

{definition:
...to *define*...
}

define we:

AUSTRALOPITHECUS AFARENSIS

reaching land the fawn rose__blade & sheath lay down

HOMO ERECTUS

on the earth to sleep

HOMO NEANDERTHALENSIS

it was the future then__leaping to the trees

HOMO FLORESIENSIS

shaking bracts, fluttering silver down
to the soil

:

17,000 years ago Toba erupted and you, H.F. all died

now we search for your lost teeth
so we can know
how much of you is seeded
in our cells

{definition:
...*define a...*
}

we are

 : the fawn_our round wheels
press down a curved track_

 : grass beaten down & our hips which
press with ardor against the soil

 : the skinned calf
tipping and tilting
on the swirl of time and buoyant words

 : the few moments of lucid dream
those long marine watchful hours

 : coming untied
bamboo dust
dissolving in salt water

{definition:
...*a hominid*...
}

what are words but hollow reeds
some pale raft of meaning
just a little nick against the i-threads
joining letters and the words
fall a-
 -part__meaning
dissolves

and yet
those curved/carved moons of the corporeal

_ the material
 paranthenicals _

between which this thought road runs

they bear it the child
you & we
i & me

{definition:
...*hominid is*...
}

the skinned calf lumbers
to land__spits

the barb__begins to redress

its skin remembering
elbow__knee
& soft-pouching
welcome

and where our wheels run
sweetgrass necks lean
cool against the sky

[TO ACKNOWLEDGE: the image of the calf with the barb comes from the poet Henry Real Bird; the calf is also present in Erin Mouré's *The Unmemntioable*; definitions come from dictionary.com]

Penelope Weiss

The Big Woman and the Big Man

The big woman left on her late-life journey
last September in an East Village rainstorm.

Her husband, the big man,
had left on his late-life journey three months earlier,
on a sunny day in June.

They had no plans to meet, but each one remembered
their trip through the Dakotas decades ago
and thought, what if we could find that place
where we saw a bison cross the road?

Somehow they did it, they met right where the bison
crossed the road. It was cold that afternoon.
The dome of the sky was gray with coming snow.

They smiled at each other and hugged.
The big man and the big woman, they knew how to hug.

They had a pizza and a beer in Rapid City and slept sixteen hours
in a cheap motel. Then they drove back home.

The Grasshopper Études

You may remember my uncle Dov, who wrote *The Grasshopper Études*,
the *Fusilli Sonata* and the *Rube Goldberg Variations*.
Those melodies went out on the airwaves in the 1950s.

Dov played piano and accordian. He made rolls for player pianos
and went to people's houses to tune their baby grands.

I sat with him many times at the piano in his apartment
on Third Avenue, above the Sign of the Dove. He taught me to play four-hand
and told me stories about the grasshoppers who wrote *The Grasshopper*
Etudes.

I believed him, of course,

like I believed my mother when she said she had been born
a queen but became a commoner when she married my father.

She even had a dress to prove it, green silk,
with Queen Esther written all over it in fancy yellow script.
I didn't learn the real story of Queen Esther until much later.

Ubu

Ubu, he was my friend. He was a father. He was a king.
And who am I, such as I am, I was in the (g)olden days.

I was indefensible, indestructible, insane.
Like an invisible wind I blew upon him to make him bigger,

almost saurian. But he was bigger than me. More wild.
More happy, even, than I have ever been.

I eat mushrooms and nuts I find in the woods.
I know which mushrooms are good to eat.

I know which fathers are good, which kings are good.
Not too many, but some. I write their names on trees.

In the Name of Divination (The Mouse Judge)

The mouse judge sits on his bench.
He looks at the crowd. He adjusts his crinkly white wig and scratches his head.
A young man is in the dock, chained like a slave.

It's the end of summer. Moths fly through the moist air.
The mouse judge listens to their mutterings.
The moths talk about divination, how it's a holy thing.

The judge smiles. In the name of divination, he once was ridiculed,
shut up in a cage, bent to the holy will of others.

"All rise," shouts the bailiff, but the judge is already seated.
The judge remembers the cage where the worshipers had put him.

Even now their prayers chill his bones.
He remembers how he said things he never meant to say,
bowed to unworthy people, danced in the dust.

When they sang their sacred songs, he escaped.
He looks at the prisoner. The prisoner flinches. The trial begins.

The Magician's House

I watch the man on the platform. He puts down his suitcase.
It's his house transformed into miniature.

Now he must transform himself into miniature to enter his house.
No windows, not even a door, just straps, a zipper and brass clips.
What will he do?

He stands the suitcase on end, a tall building, not a cottage.
He walks around it several times, hands behind his back,
his porkpie hat just so on his head. A magician's thinking cap.

I stand behind a pillar. He sees me and stops walking.
He comes toward me, but I don't move.

He walks back to his suitcase and stares at it.
Then he's gone. I missed it, his transformation.
He's inside his house, but I don't know how he got there.

I walk up the steps to the mezzanine and out into the street.
A long line of yellow taxis, but I don't take one.

I walk to the corner and wait for the light. Green changes to amber.
Amber changes back to green as I step off the curb.

commissioned hearing space

like a nod from remorse, narcissism
becomes a damaged look on a violinist
who has just been asked
“could paintings be a temporary relief
like an onrushing Canberra?” You
coccyx up your merchant self
& let the uneasiness complete you
like a drum-beat pierced body completes
a millennial break-dance video or
how a careful refrain from subject matter
is a revered past-time solely
sourced from meat palettes &
commissioned hearing spaces
& only after trialling this remarkable decorum
has your custom framed ejaculation
become a suddenly arranged punishment
that protrudes to nothing like a sofa
suffering from post-touch colour variance.

uber middy man

intentional numbness provides
exhibited questions & withdrawn
archetypes gripped by increasingly
unique breath & bloodless company —
block heirs to the positive work mind
by humming a dismantled plastic spirit tune
that a wine fog doorman would benefit from
like an Uber middy man who body tubes
lit to museums during the morning system:
his working insight of impressed
mono whiteboards calls for founded
intention drawing & pornography amplified.

Bryony Bodimeade

Ingredients for Experiencing Your Bicycle in its Absence

- A hollow skeleton of piping pieces, each approximately the diameter of the circle you make using your thumb and forefinger
- Approximately 3 feet of small vertebrae, to be cast in silver
- Rods, as fine, straight and strong as possible
- Leathery wrappings
- Artificial tendons
- Perfect circles in a range of sizes, from as small as a fingertip, to as large as the biggest hug you can give with your hands able to touch
- Soft curves, matching those of the palms of your hands
- Dull pressure points, keeping aside the indentations they leave on your skin
- A normal sponge mixture, to create a mold of your buttocks
- A tarry glaze, thick enough to gather in the creases and elastic enough to spread very thin without separating
- Matured grease, best left in an outdoor shed for some years
- A range of different shaped cutting stamps for decoration

from Outside of a dog

2

I often dream about
looking through books on a shelf
in a shop that no longer exists

the sort of small
private lending library
plus stationery that no longer exists

I remember
being sent to choose reading
for my parents

anything recent without 84
(our number)
pencilled in the back

some of the melodramatic
titles of that generation
and authors' names

John Masters
Joy Packer
Hammond Innes

reappear now
on speckled paperbacks
in the Hospice Shop

witnesses to the reliability
of linear narrative
without flourish

at home
there were shelves weighted down
with memories of war

and Shakespeare and Keats
like sudden ribbons of light
flung through it all

3

sometimes books are too sad
to pass on to others to read

Uwe Timm's beautiful memoir
of his Waffen SS brother killed in Russia

and the lifelong presence
of this absence from the family

though we can understand the father's
guilty generation better

having known our father
who served by accident of inheritance

on the opposite side and in Africa
with similar injunctions about

honour strength unity
love of country above all else

including common humanity
and the means of fostering it

5

my library unpacked and shelved
and cartons flattened in the garage

and now the joyful perplexity
of deciding what to read next

or re-read among so many friends
that give a double density to being

the first time through the rest of Henry James
or gaps in Proust or start again

Murnane and Frame and Patrick White
for this end of the world

anything about deserts or the Arctic
or histories of Victoria's wars

the Russians I've neglected but my son admires
or poems I'm on first line terms with

acerbic midnight sips of Cheever
(every time I draft this poem

my tastes have changed again)
but fiction from the Japanese

and Conan Doyle I loved when young
Lord leave me here until I've done with these

6

my two left-handed granddaughters
write and draw their lives
on ruled refill
at the table

the colour scheme
and complete vocabulary
of a recently encountered cockatoo
with phonetic spelling

a day at the zoo
where the most interesting exhibit
among lemurs and meerkats
was their brother

in a photograph on my desk
the girls stand together dressed as pirates
in cross-boned hats and eye patches
each with a different coloured cardboard parrot on her shoulder

when they reach from behind me
to play guess-who with their hands over my eyes
the last thing I read before darkness
is the future curved into their palms

spring sonnets

today I found
 for 50c
in the Waiwhakaiho
 hospice shop
Anna Livesey's
 2003 collection
Good Luck
 still fresh

and accurate
 after 14 yrs
and by no
 means a small
treasure
 at 96pp

funeral
 in bleak
Bell Block
 Methodism
and a power-point
 alleviated
by the familiar
 Lord's Prayer

the children
 saying their piece
daffodils and

wisteria on the bier
there will be
more of these

war clouds
trumped up
above the
North Pacific
with loss
the only gain
to be had
on either side

a lifetime's
achievement
bare legs
on a plinth
overlooking
barren sands

my wife tells
her 100
yr old mother
everything
as you might
whisper into
the hollow of a
favourite tree

or the wind
which pays
no attention
and spreads
all of it
everywhere

news today
 John Ashbery's
dead at 90
 the greatest
American poet
 of the last
50 yrs opines
 the *New Yorker*

but I thought
 that was supposed
to be Bob Dylan
 or that greatness
itself was in
 disrepute

forced home
 by spring rain
the dog and I
 wait to dry out
on the warm
 back porch
a rainbow
 still in attendance

then like someone
 parking a car
who revs the engine
 before switching off
the shower
 surges and stops

Folded

and forgotten
the worlds
collide along
 a line we
 cannot avoid.

we had hoped to turn ourselves aside
at a distance and wait as the train pulled
away.

for now we
 remain to watch
 the hawthorn
 leaves blow
 early and fall
 under a sky

cited
with clouds.

Releases

the cards stand in
for a person, but i am still here
under the lights
watching motion, in motion.

all along the words translate
a picture of a
horse waltzing above a sheet.
the whiteness is totalizing,
though we fall into it
as the bells ring slowly
over still water.

i wonder
constantly about
growth and

watch,
waiting for rain to come,
and i know
there must be more than us
with our imaginations
and bullets,
should save ourselves or sink?

Arguments

time is writing its
love on my skin
as line and
wind.

and when i corner her,
she turns to blame me.

i have tried to believe
in something without
beating my lines to
broken letters,
but somehow i cannot
convince myself.

DRY GULCH CANYON

In a downtown canyon, walk along, watching on my phone Christie Canyon blow thirty years ago some stud. A gust funnels up Union, blows my hat off. Chase after same. The phone ringtones: IN A CAVERN, IN A CANYON, EXCAVA-A-ATING FOR A MINE!

The hat settles in the gutter. I, hurrying up to the soggy touchdown, answer.

“Hi, sucker – this is Christie; teach you ogle my boobs!”

I bend over to retrieve my lid. From a ledge high above, a pigeon on the crown craps. White shit spatters my upper lip.

“Bad day, Numbnuts. Better roll the dice again!”

Terminate call. Wipe with the brim the shit off my lip. Don the soaked fedora. Take the Canyon’s advice. Surf to a vid explaining the Dyson Sphere. Best humanity can hope for is suck every last drop of juice out of the sun. So everyone at cool vid’s can stare. Then at night crap out to superpositional muzak. Screw that crap.

Flip back to vintage porn, halting at a light. Wait, eyeing Ms. Canyon spread before the lens her canyon. French-manicured fingers pry apart the labia. The pelvis adjusts to aim the meatus at my face. The pink orifice noticeably relaxes.

Hear the WALK beep-beep maybe composed by Erik Satie on life support. Step – piss splashing the screen inches from my eyes – off the curb to cross Pine, when a wine truck, taking a free right, takes me down under, robs me of my life (hardly mine to begin with), while across the canyon the phone smartly skitters.

CLOSET RACKET

Out of the closet clatter skeletons. Pick one looks about my size: Hate Dad. Bastard juiced me into this world. Without Dad Mom would’ve just jerked her life off; or used some other jerk to create some different jerk; left me a sentence unserved in a pulp unwrit.

Slip into the bone suit. Jitter about the room.

Dad demands order here – hear? Fine – confine myself to the rug. See the mirror better that way anyway.

“Thank God,” my skull grins at the rib cage, in which a heart I might be having thumps, “for Dad!”

I was down in the dumps, till anatomy danced me out through the

seams. See me quicken leaps, do-si-dos, pirouettes, knee slaps; till eyeholes let on the other skeletons – flopped on the floor – brood and pout, upset at left out.

“What are you doing up there!” screams Mom downstairs.

“Staring down a pack of ungrateful dead!” I have a mind to scream back; but bite my tongue – Mom dead all these years; Dad, too.

Crank the tempo. Elevate foot thunder. Dawns on me my duty today, as a good son, to wake the dead.

Soon – a skosh longer than Oklahoma – up springs a floppy; sets to jittering. Hard at first to read the tag pinned mid-sternum. But sooner, despite flutters, decipher: “Fuckbooks.” Almost as long as Hate Dad, Fuckbooks jammed in the closet.

Curve an arm around the pelvis. My tornado twist enough to resonate Fuckbooks to her tarsals; but she needs help keeping erect; wax myself kinda dizzy. Our frenzy downsizes to a mazurka.

“Stay on the rug,” I whisper in her earhole. “Otherwise Dad fears the wax’ll get scuffed.”

Hold my partner close, as she unfolds into me her center. Sport inside my suit a little wood. Hollywood loaf against her pubic symphysis. Buttering slices of thought. Keeping time to motes in the sunshine kaleidoscope Strauss.

She hums in my own ear. In reality – as her maxillary in the mirror shows – a mere ho-hum. But my humps hope for a vibrato squeal. Tell myself she digs my moves. When all anybody really digs’s my grave.

Off course the loaf – through two layers of lycra – rams an obturator canal. Wedge my tongue between teeth. Whores don’t, of course; but who says rapists don’t kiss?

In the rear of a gondola, in some Venice of the mind, I slick ink dust lick. Tang of the soil; bonemeal finish. Ah, Fuckbooks – if it ain’t sick, it ain’t thus. Since this is us in Venice – call that turd floating over there to starboard Dennis (hey, turds are human, too!) – won’t you come with me for a little death?

She bites off my tongue. Gulps the wagger. I recoil. Magnetic-Resonance-Image the bleeding polyp marimba ribs. Bounce off ileac crests. Plop into her pelvic basin. In my face she curses. Without a tongue I’m mum as Mom, dumb as Dad. The remaining skeletons to her defense leap.

No Talent snares my throat. Throttles me – sneering – purple. God Is Dead claps me in a crossface. All the frogs I eviscerated on the lawn that night I hated having to wake up at six to start kindergarten burst into applause. Kick my nuts. I scream like crazy, to avoid going nuts.

The landlady and the cop her son kick down the door. Up off the bloody rug I jump. Hand, out of breath, over the rent. Cash.

She looks around at everything smashed. I wish I, back into the dumps slumping, was.

DIESEL BAPTIST INSEMINATION JERKOFF FANTASY #496

Sit on the train training myself to believe the train sits still, while backwards runs the world. Concentrate on motionlessness, rails clacking past under my two solid feet.

At length get up. Walk back to the can. To release what I can no longer hold.

Bump into a lesbian training herself to go straight, people from her church encouraging her all the way. She beams into my eyes – would I like to go all the way? I shrug. She pats me on the can. Slobbers syllables in my ear. We decide to make it two in the can.

We slip in. Lock the door.

First I take a stinky shit. She rolls eyes at the ceiling. Mumbles this a test from the Lord. I wipe. Flush. Stand. Leave pants rolled around ankles. The quicker to get down to business.

She kicks off shoes. Leaps out of her jump suit – underwearless as a werewolf in the wild. At sight of which nudity herby to attention springs.

Grab her by the temples. Attempt to force her to kneel – to profane her throat with my wood.

She breaks the hold. Pins me to the tile; on the way down explaining oral ain't her style. Besides – egg in the basket. She needs to sow seed. Grow gravid like any other godfearin gal. Make the Lord in His old age happy.

The inverted piledriver of her groin slams mine silly. I train my eyes on the ceiling rocking back and forth in reaction to the landscape between towns picking up speed.

Realize once I pop, I'll be a pop. Hold back long as I can – father for this neighbor no acceptable hood.

Suppose the wild-oat grows up to hunt me down? I'm kidding – this a fantasy got out of hand, homunculus in the masturbatory lab run amok. I could never be a father; hold a job, change diapers, shop for trainer wheels, trainer bras, pay for college; train myself to believe it's all along just the train moving.

But pop I do. Cock-a-doodle-doo! Two thousand milliseconds of shearing birth off death clean as a cracker on a whip. Slave to whoopee, coming on the underground rail back to master.

She slaps my face. "That..." dismounts... "oughta do the trick!"

She jumps back into her suit. Leaps into loafers. Pats me farewell on the can, as I'm climbing to my feet, rustling pants above the knees.

She shoulders open the flimsy door. Turns a moment in the frame to say, "Ride this train nineteen years from today – I'll show you to the kid. Just don't try anything, OK?"

I shrug the jeans up the rest of the way. Cock head, arch eyebrows, twist lips – to convey no problem.

Resolve never again as long as I exist to get on this train.

Resituate self back at seat. Watch the landscape rush. Numb as to whether train or earth or both move.

Roll eyes up at the sky... twilight gathering. Start, with a start, to train myself to believe space moves, the galaxy swirls, the cosmos jumps.

Once again commence to play with myself.

By the time I reach my berth on the far side, herby will be bloody beat. But maybe some creature of fancy will ingest our jest to gestate something to carry on beyond the carrion.

The world beyond the window dims. Galaxies spin, quarks cluster, strings knot, universes do-si-do. The cosmos vaults into the flower of God's bed. As death must come in spring.

Columns from the *San Francisco Examiner* of 1961

The Attempted Assassination of Thomas Parkinson

This afternoon, at the Marines Memorial Theater, the Kenneth Patchen Benefit, two bands, two one-act plays, singers, dancers, poets — old-time vaudeville. It's not my fault they didn't get the Flying Adairs, Singer's Midgets and a calculating horse. Everybody is going to be there so you be sure and come, too.

As the feller says, it's the principle of the thing. One of the best ways a community can express its better instincts is in tribute to one of its artists or writers.

It was very moving last week to see the SRO audience at the Masonic Temple stand in ovation to Carl Sandburg. His tribute to Lincoln was dull, platitudinous, and promised for a while to be endless, but his voice was sweet and clear and he sang so simply and lucidly, not at all like a Folksinger, but like one of the folk, singing. For a man in his late 80s, he did a far better job than you or I are likely to do at that age.

The audience hadn't come to hear him read or sing — they'd come as a tribute to him. This might be his last visit to San Francisco, and they were there to show him that they thought of him as a part, and one of the better parts, of the stuff of American life.

Kenneth Patchen writes very much in the tradition of the early, best poems of Sandburg, the old, authentic American defiance. Come to think of it, he is almost the only contemporary American poet who does. Life is grimmer, more frightening, than it was in Sandburg's salad days before the Other War. It's harder now to put that sort of thing in poetry. Faced with the job, most poets chicken out into the Seven Types of Ambiguity. Patchen goes on, in poverty and intense physical pain, one of the few voices that speaks to us today as the Hebrew prophets once spoke to a people lusting after strange gods.

I know that prophets are traditionally stoned, fed to lions, and crucified. San Francisco is supposed to be the place they are honored.

Unifying forces in the community — now for some divisive ones. I am sure a kind of sick revulsion went through the whole community when the news of the killing of young Stephen Thomas and the shooting of Thomas Parkinson

came over the air. When the killer was caught and gave his reasons to the police, I hope an even sicker revulsion caught at the conscience of every responsible person . . . and here we are all, to greater or lesser degree, responsible.

Professor Parkinson and Professor Drinnan, who John Farmer said he planned to get if he couldn't shoot Parkinson, are amongst the most astute, well-informed, and effective anti-Communists on the Berkeley campus, or anywhere else hereabouts. They are both totally committed to those ideas of maximum freedom and humane social order and direct, simple, human-to-human democracy, which are our heritage from Thomas Jefferson or Emerson or
Thoreau.

This is the salt which savors the amorphous lump of what would otherwise be just a legal, juridical, republic. These ideas are the salt of the American earth, which, if it ever loses its savor, wherewithal shall we be salted, indeed. Bolshevism has no more effective enemies than men like Thomas Parkinson.

Yet this poor demented man set out to kill him, and in the attempt, destroyed a brilliant and totally uninvolved young life. Why? True, if one paranoia had not been available, he probably would have found another. But that paranoia was available. It is all about us. It poisons all the media of communications.

They use it to sell breakfast food to toddlers and brassieres to old maids. We have pushed it into interstellar space. The two greatest achievements of modern man, the breaking of the atom and the breaking of the confines of the earth, promise not to liberate, but to destroy us.

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There is nothing like a guilty conscience to keep gnawing at a community. That riot is back in the papers again. The last defendant comes up for trial in March. I certainly hope the judge doesn't dismiss the case out of hand. The city can afford the costs of a thorough job. The lawyers for both sides should have ample opportunity to spread all the evidence on the record.

Where does the ultimate guilt lie? I have my own opinion, but I belong to that small group of people who believes that it is not the job of the press to try cases at law in the public prints — like T. Jefferson, remember?

However, I certainly do believe that the Un-American Committee, certainly as at present constituted and operating, has outlived whatever usefulness it may ever have had. The purpose of a congressional committee is to investigate with the end of recommending legislation. We now have plenty of laws to deal with

subversion of all sorts. We have duly constituted police organizations, at all levels, to do the investigating under these laws.

If the Communist conspiracy is a secret one, the most effective investigation is that which meets it on its own level. The only purpose the Un-American Committee can now serve is to hold certain people up to unfavorable publicity — to “expose” them. The social damage done by punitive publicity of this sort far outweighs the social gain.

It is not just that the wilder allegations of the late Senator McCarthy were unsubstantiatable and so had a reverse effect — many people came to believe that any accusation emanating from such a source was false. It is not just that the dignity of the Senate and House was affronted, and so its authority was subverted. It is that trial by contumely, punishment by ostracism, destruction of livelihood and persecution of families are not the regulatory mechanisms of civilized society. They may work on a school playground, in a teen-age gang, or in the jungle. Their effects amongst adults in an enormously complex and sensitive modern nation are disastrous.

I wish to make it clear that I have no sympathy with the people who compare Senator McCarthy with Stalin or Vishinsky, and the Un-American Committee with the Moscow Trials and the Great Purge. Such people are either excessively ingenuous or disingenuous, either gulls or rascals.

On the other hand, Congressman Willis, after his visit to San Francisco, was the guest of the Louisiana Legislature at the beginning of the shameful riots in his own state. One redneck legislator asked him if his committee couldn't investigate the Supreme Court. He answered in substance that if they got a complaint they'd be glad to act, but that as for himself, he wasn't prepared to vouch for the color of the members of the Supreme Court of the United States, white, red — or any other color. Who is Un-American?

[January 29, 1961]

NOTE: In January 1961 the poet, critic and literature professor Thomas Parkinson was shot by a young man who had been inspired by McCarthyite rhetoric and wanted to “get someone who was associated with Communism.” He barged into Parkinson's office on the University of California Berkeley campus and shot Parkinson and a student who happened to be there talking with him. The student was killed and Parkinson was left with permanent injuries.

The Assassination of Lumumba

Years ago I wrote an article for *New American Writing* called "Disengagement: The Art of the Beat Generation." It was, I hoped, a sober, although slightly partisan, analysis of the plight of my juniors who had come of age in the period of the Korean War. Unfortunately, it and a somewhat similar article in the *Times* by Clellon Holmes, launched a vulgar fad, now burnt out. The Beats are gone, but the young artists and writers of permanent worth, never Beat in the first place, are still with us. Some have matured into important writers indeed.

I just thought of this similarity — really only a verbal one — as I sat down to write. Would God I could launch another fad this time, even if only a fad, something might be gained. I am afraid that in this case the odds are too great. This time I want to talk about a far more important kind of disengagement.

As I sit writing this, the papers are full of the news of the assassination of Lumumba. By the time it appears, who knows into what shambles the Congo may have fallen.

For almost a year now, through, as they say, no fault of their own, the USA and the USSR have been maneuvering, seeking to outwit each other in the Congo. The sudden, totally unprepared "liberation" of the Congo was another, unrelated maneuver — a trick of Belgian internal politics that miscarried. It created a so-called power vacuum into which the Big Two Powers were immediately drawn, neither of them prepared to cope with the situation, and neither with any life or death interest in the country.

True, there are immense uranium deposits in Katanga, but there is plenty more uranium in both Russia and America, and all over the world, on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Anyway, we've both got ample stockpiles of bombs, quite sufficient already to wipe out both civilizations and everybody else too. The issue is a political one, in the widest and vaguest sense of that word, and in the most dangerous sense.

Russia and America have been playing a chess game on a board not of their own choosing and with pieces which are not, by any manner of means, obedient to the will of either the State Department or the Kremlin. The native leaders of the Congo may be estimable men. It is only too obvious that behind them do not stand the ghosts of Machiavelli, Talleyrand, Ben Franklin—or even

Maxim

Litvinov.

You can't play chess with pawns that move hither and yon over the board on their own volition, ignoring all rules and clobbering one another without warning. You can't play chess when the pieces constantly threaten to set fire to the board, especially when the board is attached to fuses which lead straight to two arsenals of nuclear weapons.

In a barroom brawl, the innocent bystanders first of all try to separate the combatants. The great service which the neutralist nations like India, or the Afro-Asian bloc, can perform, is to help along the process of systematic disengagement wherever possible, of the Big Two of the Cold War. The less we have to quarrel about, the less likely we are to quarrel. The further we are held apart, the less we will be able to get at each other.

What we most need at this juncture is a secretariat for peace, a whole diplomatic and technical cadre devoted to the one-upmanship of systematic disengagement. There exist, all over the world, and in all departments of life, points and areas where, if we can take the initiative in breaking free, we will have gained more than if we were to continue the struggle. There are steps to be taken in well-publicized unilateral disarmament, in the terms of atomic agreements, in aid to the underdeveloped nations, in countless other fields, where the moral advantage, and in the long run, the physical advantage lies entirely with the power that takes the initiative.

Such moves must be carefully prepared and well explained to the world. Of course they cannot represent the unretrievable abandonment of a so-called position of strength, either. But certainly, if we applied some of the skill of our Machiavellian heritage to this kind of disengagement, we could, through the pressure of world opinion, force the Russians to reciprocate in kind. In the course of time, large neutralized areas would begin to open up, on the map and in the minds of men.

It is a strategy like this, applied as a matter of general policy, which in fact will win over the "uncommitted" peoples. At the present moment, the Russians have been allowed to pose, at least in their propaganda, as being against sin. Verbally, they have seized the initiative. We have the resources to take the initiative in fact. But just saying "Yah, yah, yah, you don't mean it!" doesn't do any good. We have to act.

That brings up the Russian Venus probe, "peaceful competition" and what William James call the moral substitute for war. Here, too, we have in actual unpublicized fact, or have the resources, to take or regain the initiative, but that is the subject of another column.

[February 19, 1961]

The Black Muslims

Some people may wonder why I give so much space to discussion of the problems of the emerging nations of the former colonial empires, and to questions or just plain news involving the American Negro. It's quite simple. This is the most important news of the day.

Nobody could accuse the New York Times of being sensational, or even editorially unbalanced. The issue of Sunday, March 12, gave about 60 percent of the news section to Africa, Southeast Asia and the American Negro. The entire magazine section was devoted to nothing else.

Perhaps the most remarkable piece is a long feature by James Baldwin, in which he says of the riots in the United Nations that he had planned to be there himself but got his date book mixed up. In recent months, in articles in Harper's and elsewhere, James Baldwin has suddenly emerged as one of the most militant and certainly one of the most articulate spokesmen for his race.

Now I know plenty of well-educated, professional-class Negroes who have always considered James Baldwin pretty hincty—a bit of an Ivy League Booker T. Washington, if not an Uncle Tom. He was not, but his success as a writer and his social success in the white world, his urbanity and polish, made them suspicious.

It is highly significant that he, a well-adjusted, "assimilated" Negro if ever there was one, should criticize Martin Luther King, the leading militant of just a short time ago, for if not compromising, at least running the danger of getting himself trapped in compromise unintentionally.

The people who are speaking up today are not outcasts. They are people like Harry Belafonte, John Lewis, James Baldwin, on whom white America considers it has showered every bounty. It is precisely the people who can stay in any first-class hotel out of the Deep South, who can eat in the best restaurants, who can marry outside their race if they so choose, with a minimum of conflict, who now say, "If it comes to a showdown, I am more on the side of the 'extremists' than on the other side. I am more with Elijah Muhammad than I am against him." Me too.

White Americans simply have no conception of the degree of hostility their centuries-long mistreatment has engendered amongst many American Negroes, and by no means all of them ignorant and "maladjusted."

Time is not just running out. It has run out. Bear in mind that even Malcolm X, the spokesman for Elijah Muhammad's "Nation of Islam," was born in Nebraska, where racism is about as weak as anywhere in the United States.

How silly it is to write off "black chauvinism," as the Communists used to call it, as the expression of "the maladjusted." What Negro in the United States is not maladjusted?

The sanest white man, if he suddenly turned black and was subject to the disabilities of the most assimilated American Negro, would certainly have a nervous breakdown in short order.

Nothing shows the strength and intelligence of the Negro race better than the fact that, from Lena Horne to the man who delivers my mail, most everybody does rise above all the terrible disabilities and make a valuable contribution to society — white society.

There are now about a dozen "extremist" groups functioning in New York with programs of African nationalism and/or "black chauvinism." They make a pretty startling impression, soapboxing on the streets, Saturday and Sunday evenings, but most of them have only a handful of members, a minimum of 25 or 50, a maximum of a couple of hundred.

The group that has captured the public imagination, and that is certainly, right now, recruiting the largest membership, is Elijah Muhammad's "Nation of Islam," the so-called Black Muslims. Their press talks about "America's 250,000 Black Muslims," but sympathetic qualified observers put the actual membership at about 50,000. The movement is spreading rapidly. Lambskin caps and maroon shirts are more common on Fillmore Street every week.

First off, it is important to understand that they are not orthodox Muslims. There is a small mission of Islam in Harlem, with scattered members throughout the country. They repudiate the Nation of Islam in no uncertain terms.

There are without doubt a few undercover Communists in the Nation of Islam, cautiously fishing in troubled waters. The organization itself is strongly anti-Communist. Its propaganda repeats the prevailing opinion amongst American Negroes, that the Communist Party used and then betrayed the American Negro.

Are the Black Muslims a menace? Will they mislead the American Negro into

pointless violence and dissipate his militancy in a struggle for unfulfillable demands?

I doubt it. I don't think there is ever going to be a separate all-black State in the South. Although, to tell the truth, they can have Mississippi for all I care.

The organization has officially repudiated the violence in the UN galleries. They forbid their members to drink, smoke or live "immoral" lives. In fact, like the orthodox Muslims, they are pretty puritanical by the standards of Fort Dodge, let alone Harlem.

I'm pretty anti-puritan, but I know Harlem. Better that the hostility engendered in that hell hole is taken out in maroon shirts, modest dresses, teetotalism, than in high school heroin and switchblade rumbles.

The movement, like a benign disease, is self-limiting. Marcus Garvey's failure a generation ago demonstrated that the American Negro does not want to become African, much less a Muslim. He wants to become an American. He came here with the Stuyvesants and the Fairfaxes and the Cabots, and he wants just the same status they have.

[March 26, 1961]

Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*

Remember I said once that Ionesco was similar to, but not as good as, Buster Keaton? His *Rhinoceros* has been packing them in on Broadway and everybody is saying, "Look at us, ain't we civilized?" This is silly and provincial. There is nothing highbrow, let alone avant-garde, about *Rhinoceros*.

It is, in fact, a vulgar play. It reduces one of the great problems of our time, the mass acceptance of evil, to a mildly funny platitude. Except in the disputes of metaphysics there is no such thing as abstract Evil. There are only specific evils.

Everybody from Eichmann to Schweitzer, like Cal Coolidge's minister, is "opposed to sin." The question of course is what content we give those empty terms.

Conformity is not an evil as such. It is one of the many techniques for coping with certain problems of life. On the Bay Bridge we are all conformists. Sick

communities do not turn into funny rhinoceroses, they turn into Nazis or witch hunters or die of boredom and strange lusts.

The rhinoceros must be characterized to be meaningful. Otherwise you've got just another night of cheap entertainment.

During the Second War painting in America, beginning in Seattle, San Francisco, and to a much lesser degree in New York, underwent a great change. The box-like space inherited from Raphael or Poussin, and characteristic of all modern French painting, was abandoned for the open space of Far Eastern art and the great baroque ceilings of Tintoretto and Tiepolo, and the intact colored object was replaced by dynamic brush work.

This is all the revolution of Abstract Impressionism amounts to. Contemporary painting is subject to the same canons of judgment as any similar painting in the past.

I make these remarks because I have little doubt but that many young French painters, seeing Mark Tobey or Rothko, believe it is all a stunt, and that as citizens of the capital of Fashion, Perfume, Art and Vice, they can pull off better stunts than any hick from Seattle, Wash.

At the moment there is on view in New York a show that has, to the best of my knowledge, not received a single unfavorable review from a respected critic, though some have been mildly ironic. A young Frenchman, Yves Klein, is exhibiting a room full of rectangles painted blue all over.

That's right, just blue, one smooth coat of Royal Blue. There's nothing odd or subtle about the shapes. They are standard French canvas sizes. The blue is blue. The propaganda from a leading European gallery director, the statements to the press issued by M. Klein, the whole PR blowup, are hilarious examples of unblushing effrontery. In my very young days I was once a burlesque candy butcher, so I derive considerable aesthetic pleasure, as an old pro, from observing so outrageous a pitch.

The paintings cost a pretty penny and rate with the choicest of the chic. I am sure that any large paint company would be delighted to provide exact duplicates free to any chic matron in return for a casual mention at cocktails or bridge of the brand name. Really, I ask you, whither are we drifting?

Back in town. Dinner at the Boule Noire, where my friend Nausica has taken over as head of the kitchen. (There's no such word as chefess.) Had chicken Napoleon and it was really something. Sonny Wayne, one of the owners and

once drummer at The Cellar, says they are going to have dancing, a good trio, a good pianist and intimate singer for intermission, and eventually a whole bill of French acts.

What a pity no booking agent can get an entire show lifted from Paris and off on the Road. I think Brassens, the bitterest and wittiest singer of our day, the clowns, Les Frères Jacques, Germaine Montero singing the songs of Aristide Bruant about '90s tarts and murderers, a couple of dancers, and one of those typical combination monologuists and magicians, a bill like this would make a whole lot of money for perhaps ten clubs in the USA. Maybe the Boule Noire can start something in that direction.

Then across the street to one of the great actors of all time — Raimu in the trilogy, *Marius, Fanny, César*. Raimu is possibly the only really great man ever to become a movie actor. Watching him is pure joy. The trilogy is the epic of Marseille and Provence.

The year we lived in Aix there was never a week one of the pictures wasn't showing somewhere within 100 miles. But, alas, they simply don't have the substance to stand six hours of a straight runoff of all three. They'll not be shown again till 1985. The producers of the musical *Fanny* have bought all rights and intend to hold them off the market for 25 years. So this is your last chance.

[April 30, 1961]

American Provinciality

Last week I entertained a visitor from India, Mrs. Amrita Malik. She is a fellow journalist, critic and creative writer. With a number of other women writers from Asia and Africa she is on a State Department-sponsored tour of the USA and has just completed a similar trip across Canada.

We went to the Cho-Cho for dinner and to *King Lear*. She was delighted with both. She thought the costumes in *Lear* terrific, but had one criticism — she found the play too high pitched and high strung throughout, so that climaxes were lost in one general crescendo. I suppose she was right, although certainly *Lear* does not lend itself very well to modulation. Anyway — she was duly impressed by the high level of accomplishment.

I am not sure Shakespeare and Japanese food are what the State Department

thinks of as The American Way of Life, although the combination is certainly part of the San Francisco Way of Life.

We have a good many friends in common in the literary world in London and India. As intellectuals do, when out of the public eye we did not talk of books and authors or politics or ideas — by and large we gossiped. So it was not until just before she left that I discovered something highly significant.

All across Canada she had been interviewed by the press, and on radio and television, and had talked for colleges and other groups. She was not asked very often what she thought of the Canadian Way of Life. She was asked about India. The Canadians were eager to learn as much as they could about Indian art, literature, drama, dance, about the political forces emerging as the Congress Party regroups itself, about the difficult and imaginative economic program.

Mrs. Malik is a thoroughly competent and devoted spokesman for in some ways the most interesting country in the world today. The Canadians got all they could from her.

So far the Americans have shown no such interest. We have been too busy telling her. The assumption always seems to be that these people should be brought here, shown the seven expensive wonders of the American Way of Life and sent home converted. We did the same thing with Nehru a few years back.

I think we have the cart before the horse. Whether bankers, politicians, artists or writers, the elite, the leading class (rather than “ruling class”) of Asia and Africa are citizens of the world. They are as internationally minded and as highly cultivated as the Swedes or Dutch. There are very few of them and they face awesome responsibilities.

We don't need to convert them to the virtues of the Free World. Far more, we need to listen to them. What they have to tell us, their problems and their hopes, are of crucial importance to the future of all of us.

It is we, not they, who are provincial and unaware of our worldwide responsibilities.

[June 14, 1961]

The Death of Hemingway

Before I read Joseph Alsop's vignette of Hemingway I had planned to devote part of this column to what might be called noncommittal tribute to an unquestionably important writer. I'm sorry, but I just have to speak up. I find all this glorification of Hemingway for his manifest evils nauseating.

This picture of a bunch of aging journalists and international bohemians staggering into a peasant cockfight and making grand whoopee is — is what? — you name it. One thing it certainly isn't, and that is the expression of an appetite for intense significant experience.

I don't care much for people who enjoy killing things, but I am willing to put up with hunters as long as they don't carry their habits into private and public life. (Trotsky wired Zinoviev re the Kronstadt sailors, in revolt for the fulfillment of the promises of the Revolution, "Shoot them like partridges." Bertrand Russell commented, "A hunter should never be allowed to lead a revolution.")

I abominate people who make of killing a spectator sport. I honestly believe that all Americans who go to bullfights in the Spanish countries should be locked up on their return to the States.

How can anyone say that Hemingway loved life? It was death that fascinated him, as he never tired of saying. Love is not the word — that implies extreme positive evaluation. Death fascinated him as snakes are supposed to fascinate sparrows, with an empty but irresistible lure.

Life comes at the characters of Hemingway's fictions not as experience, but as sensation. He is master of the brilliant still life — nature like a stereopticon picture, far sharper than reality. Far sharper, but that is all — never more meaningful. Similarly his people are perfectly delineated cutouts, more defined than people, who shade off into all sorts of obscurities, ever are.

His speech, which once sounded so realistic, is the same way — reading *Men Without Women*, it seems to be in a kind of blank verse, the ceremonial language of a religion without deity, without faith, hope, or charity.

Compare his novel of the Spanish War with Malraux's. I think much of Malraux's moralizing and philosophizing is flashy and dishonest. But it is dishonest — when it is so. Honesty, motivation, evaluation, have nothing to do with Hemingway's story. His Spanish War was not a tragedy — but an

enormously complicated fiasco, like a bullfight, but about girls with no place to sleep and men with nothing to do but die.

Do not think I have sat down to write an attack on Hemingway. Quite the contrary. He was a very great writer. His attitudes to life have become a codified faith of the faithless. They make a substitute for religion amongst the technical and professional intelligentsia all over the world — a class far more alienated than ever was Marx's working class. His empty, clipped, ominous speech is parodied by television detectives and French philosophers. Bullfights are now legal in the country of Montaigne.

Long ago, when his first books came out, somebody — was it Wyndham Lewis? — said that you knew Hemingway was terribly cultured and brainy, because his characters never used good English and never said an intelligent thing. This is what he stood for from the beginning, the conscious rejection of what we call the Humanist tradition. He was a bullfight aficionado because Shaw was a vegetarian and Rolland a pacifist.

For so many, the rationalistic, humanistic society that had evolved in the Western World for three hundred years came to trial in the First World War and was found wanting — utterly wanting. Lady Brett and her pals and the old man and his fish, the indictment never changes. "It doesn't mean a thing."

People have said that in the face of an empty but still hostile world. Hemingway's only value was courage. But courage involves fairly complex relationships with other real people. His response was not an act of evaluation, it was rather a reaction, a kind of lonely attitude of flat defiance.

In his own personal life it often assumed the character of childish truculence. Truculence, they say, is an expression of insecurity. Hemingway's world was awfully vacant; there weren't any comfortable nooks and shelters in it.

The significant thing is that it is also the world of vast numbers of people, and especially overcivilized people today. Irrationalism, hidden anguish, unrelieved insecurity, defiance — these, once individual, personal qualities or defects, are becoming the characteristics of our civilization.

It is a measure of Hemingway's stature as an artist that he embodied them unmistakably. He, more than anyone else, first shaped a new archetype, a new myth, a different kind of Modern Man. This modern man is certainly a tragic figure, but the tragedy is not a literary one, it is society's.

[July 9, 1961]

John Levy

Watteau, Helicopters, Time, Fellini, Dreams

(1)

I discover I can order
a hand-painted copy
of Watteau's

L'amour au théâtre italien

for \$342.99
on September 24th, 2017

almost by accident
by Googling
Watteau.

I don't, but admire the painting
as I continue
to consider what Ken Bolton writes
about another Watteau:

*Watteau's happy people make us cry.
They do not see what surrounds them —*

*Time, & a lot of
big trees, fugitive sky.*

There's more to his poem.
There's more to

almost everything
before our Time

endeth. I make
a joke out of that,

though

that "deth" that is two-thirds
of *endeth*
is awfully

close to *death*, just
needs
an a

dropped in. . .by a helicopter. Let's
use the chopper

from Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*
with the same sound

track
and clouds, but instead of Jesus

hanging from a chain

and the sexy women in small
bathing suits standing and waving

the same beauties
will wave and be excited by the lower
case
a. Then

shall we leave
before the a
lands

between the
e and t? PRESTO,
we're back to Watteau:

Love
in the Italian Theatre. A torch

held by a man
under the moon, and again
this isn't

the painting

Bolton
writes about in his
poem, that painting is

Pilgrimage to Cythera.

(2)

"Achievement"

is the name
in English

of a poem
in Greek

written by Yannis
Ritsos, who

was a very very very prolific
poet. Leslie and I
visited the house on the little

island, Monemvasia, in the
Peloponnesus, where
Ritsos lived (and we were there
when he was still

alive (though he was not
actually inside the house
when we were outside it)), a survivor
of the TB that killed

his mother and sister
when he was about 12. I had not
intended

to focus
here, too,
on death, but
so much

for intention, intentions (retaining

walls, above which
a blue sky); imagine

the sea
around Monemvasia. It was
frightening

to stand near a cliff edge above
the sea, although
normally I

have no fear of
heights.

(3)

This is the birth
section, where I mention

that in a dream I had
this morning

several white eggs
grew on a green bush

I happen to see as I leave
a building and I

pluck
one, effortlessly and

in a dreamy
thoughtless way

carried

it a moment
before I woke. I wasn't

thinking

in the dream
of eating the egg, am

not sure why I did
take it, except that I seemed
to want

to hold it.

I had seen, awake, before
going to sleep, a great photo of a

hand holding two eggs (a black-and-white
photo) by Sam Contis in the latest
ARTFORUM (September
2017). I don't
dream

in black-and-white. According
to an article in *The New York Times* by
Anhaad O'Connor on
December 1st, 2006, a study published in 2006

found that people over 55 who
grew up
without seeing much color
television

reported dreaming about 25%
of the time in black-and-white
while overall 12% of everyone everyone everyone dreamt
entirely in black-and-white. Fellini's

La Dolce Vita is

in
black-and-white. Do numbers and
years

make life feel more here
and death more
abstract—or is it

the other way
around? Back to

the helicopter in the
great

beginning of *La Dolce Vita*.

Richard Kostelanetz & Igor Satanovsky

Absolute Poetry (Tractatus Poeticus)

ablatio acatalectic accusatio abscissio concertativa
acephalous acylogia addubitation acyrologia

adianoeta adnominatio aenos adynata aeschrologia
aetiologia aggressio aganactesis agnominatio

aischrologia alleoetheta alliteration alliosis allegory
alloiosis alveolar ambage ambitus amphibologia

amphidiorthosis amphilogia amphimacer anachinosis
analogy anacephalaeosis antanagoge anaclasis

amplificatio anacoenosis anacoluthon anadiplosis
anakephalaiosis anagogical anagnorisis anageon

anamnesis antanagoge anantapodoton anapest
anaphora anapodosus anapodoton anaptyxis

anatomy anemographia anastrophe andynata
anoiconometon antanaclasis antanagogue antapodosis

antenantiosis anthimeria anthropomorphism anthypallage
antinomy antimetabole anticategoria antinomasia

antiphora antiphraſis antitrephon aniptoſis
antiſagoge antiſthecon antiſtaſis antiſtoecon

antirreſiſ antitheton antitheſis antonomafia
Antitrophe apaeteſis aphelia aphoriſms aphaereſis

aphoriſmum apocartereſis apocope apocriſis
apodeiſis apodioſis apodiſis apomnemoniſis

ad baculum apophariſis apothegm apoplanariſis
aporia apoſiopeſis argumentum ars dictaminis

ars praedicandi articulus aſchematiſton aſcenſus
aſphalia aſſonance aſteiſmus aſteriſm aſtrotheſia

aſyndeton atticiſm aubade augendi cauſa
auxeſis averſio barbariſmus bathoſ bdelygmia

bomphiologia brevitatiſ brachylogia cacemphaton
cacaphony cacotiſtaton cacotiſyntheton caeſura

catachreſiſ cacoſelia certiſtudo cataplexiſ categoria
ceratinae characteriſmus certiſtudo chiſmuſ

chleusmos chronographia chreia circumlocution
commemoratio clenchus cohortatio commiseratio

compensatio compression compromatio connotation
concessio consonance consolatio contrarium

conversum countertune couplet dactyl deesis
dehortatio dendragraphia deliberatio diaeresis

diallage dialogismus diayton diaporesis diasyrmus
diatyposos dicaeologia diction dimeter dinumeratio

dissolutio dissonance dubitatio dysphemism ecphonesis
ecphrasis eidolopoeia epiplexis elision elenchus

ellipsis enallage enargia enjambment enthymeme
enthumeme epagoge epanalepsis epanaphora epanodos

epembasis epicheireme epenthesis epicrisis epexigesis
epilogue epimone epiphomena epiphora epitheton

epistrophe epitrochasmus epizeuxis epitrope erotesis
ethopoeia eucharistia euche eulogia euphemismus

euphuism eustathia exemplum exergasis expeditio

exuscitatio geographia graecismus fable hamartia

hendyadis hebraism hexameter homiologia heterogenium

homograph horismus homioptoton hydrographia

hypallage homioteleuton hyperbole hyperbaton

hypophora hypotaxis hysterologia hypozeuxis

hysteron proteron iamb icon ignoratio elenchi

insinuatio imagery kenning interpellatio koinonia

insultatio isocolon indignatio impartener iteratio

leptologia lyric malapropism marcologia meisos

megaloprepeia martyria metalepsis metanoia

metathesis metaphor metastasis metaphasm

metonymy mimesis noema mycterismus nominatio

non sequitur obicentia occultatio onedismus ominatio

onomatopoeia optatio oraculum orcos oxymoron

paeanismus palilogia palindrome parable paradiastole

paradiegesis paradox paraenesis paramologia

paralipsis pareuresis parataxis paroemion parrhesia

paromoiosis paronomasia pathopoeia petitio principii
poicilogia polyptoton pentameter pastiche periergia

periphrasis peristophe peristasis persona perversio
philophronesis personification pleonasmus ploce

polyptoton praeearatio polysyndeton praemunitio
praecisio pragmatographia progressio proecthesis

prolepsis pronominatio prooemium prosapodosis
prosody prosopographia prosopopoeia protrope

protropepun proverb pseudomenos pun pyrrhic
pysma quatrain ratiocinatio rebounde reciprocatio

redditio contraria reformatio recompencer relatio
repetitio responce restrictio reticentia reversio rhyme

rhythm schematismus secundum quid securitas
sermocinatio sestet sestina significatio simile

skotison solecismus sonnet soriasmus spondee
strophe subjectio sublime surnamer syllepsis

syllogismus symbol synchisis symploce synchoresis
syncrisis synecdoche synesthesia syngnome

synoeciosis systrophe syntax tapinosis tautologia
tercet terza rima thaumasmus tetrameter threnos

tolerantia tone transcendence topothesia trochee utis
transplacement villanelle transposition zeugma

2016–2017

Luigi Coppola

Francis Finds Himself in the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time

(Based on original art by Mark Shuttleworth)



After a particularly stressful afternoon at Howard¹ & Philips² Solicitors, Francis felt that the best way to relax would be to summon Baphomet³, for a chinwag.

Leaving the drab grey of the office block for the putrid illuminations of the local Co-op⁴, Francis began with stealthily obtaining the ancient prerequisites for the invocations⁵, though each item reminded him of various distasteful elements found in his life (Francis was self-loathingly unaware that the emotional weighting of the ingredients was the fundamental element⁶ needed for the summoning but as most corporeal entities, defined by their somewhat

self-imposed 3-and-a-half dimensional⁷existence, will not understand; all he really understood was the concrete):

- 1) salt⁸, which triggered a flashback to the morning collection of the twisted, jovial faces of his colleagues, jostling for the best view of Francis' face when he tasted the sodium-spiked Earl Grey tea he had made for himself and only left for 10 seconds to go find a spoon — enough time for the pack to gather,
- 2) candles⁹, which evoked the stench of the cleaners' aftershave that mingled with bleach and polish and urine and faeces,
- 3) matches¹⁰, short and re-tipped, painfully and insecurely phallic in their accurate length and breadth.

The checkout clerk tapped at the till, scanned the 3 items and frowned at Francis, who added him to the list (which at last count was up to 42⁴² – a difficult amount of bodies to dispose of no matter how you cut it).

Once home, Francis fed Henry his dinner (who sleepily but happily poked his head from his shell to nibble on the lettuce), shut the blinds¹¹, that seemed to groan down the drop of the window, and dragged the sofa to the side of the room, rubber feet screeching on warped floorboards. He then proceeded to arrange the 10 candles¹², a pentagram¹³ of wax and wick, measured against the splintered edges of the floorboards. The salt was poured into the lines, joining the candles as carefully as a mother, as exact as an undertaker. The matches¹⁴ were struck (his groin tensing involuntarily at every flick), each lighting a different candle, each accompanied with an incantation¹⁵.

As the final light erupted in its microcosmic splendour¹⁶, Francis sat cross-legged in the centre of the pentagram, whispering and waiting.

From out of a shimmering and pulsating ejaculation of energy and mass and light¹⁷, Baphomet appeared¹⁸: horned and hoofed, crowned and curvaceous, translucent and tentacled. Triangles, circles and crescents all danced on, around, within her: a hypnotic display of power and persuasion¹⁹. Those buck horns with those nannie eyes and doe ears and billy chin all spun. A mist of formaldehyde surrounded her and filled the room, while a double helix of serpents caressed her chest, licking the breasts²⁰ that hung like sacks of molten gold and promises.

And Baphomet waited, waited in the centre of the pentagram; she waited and pondered and hovered above a pool of blood that bubbled and boiled and seeped through the cracks of Francis' cheap, swollen floorboards²¹.

- 1 Yes, the duck, but in the grand traditions of J.R.R. T.S. J.K.,
- 2 Yes, -head screwdriver, but combine with 1 to have the full effect
- 3 Say her name three times and maybe she'll appear for you
- 4 Company that provides, completely unrelatedly, funeral and food services
- 5 Who you gonna call?
- 6 'I weighed her heart and found it wanting/ She loved, she lost, her panting wasted' — Louis Cooper
- 7 Space-time invariable influences the level of control we have over those dimensions, ranging from complete to illusionary; consider the effects of relativity and time dilation on astronauts and their earth-bound twins
- 8 'I shivered in those/ solitudes/ when I heard/ the voice/ of/ the salt/ in the desert.' — Pablo Neruda
- 9 If planning a summoning, avoid blood-red candles as it confuses Cerberus
- 10 'It only takes one tree to make a thousand matches... (see 14)
- 42 The Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, The Universe, and Everything
- 11 for quality blinds at reasonable prices, please visit www.slumdogmillionairesurgery.com
- 12 If planning a summoning, avoid vanilla candles as if confuses Saint Paul
- 13 Activity for all the family: try using uncooked spaghetti to make your own demon summoning pentagram! Kids will love using their hands to make and create and then shake their dark lord's soul-devouring palms!
- 14 '...but only takes one match to burn a thousand trees' — the back of a box of England's Glory matches
- 15 talk is cheap but can cost a soul
- 16 imagine those white blood cells you see in your eyelashes when you squint or stare at a blue sky, imagine every single one of them dancing across your retina, stilettos stabbing into the cornea, sweat pouring in through the pupil
- 17 $e=mc^2$
- 18 Face front, true believer!
- 19 cut alliterative qualities: pedantry, primness, prestige, peaches
- 20 Double D
- 21 and so Francis found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time

quotes itself, reaps a repeat of the reprise, routing back to the start as the record repeats, skips bits and beats, dips along the groove, nudges the needle to and fro, dittos the decibels, recounts and recalls reverb, reproduces the production, backtracks, retreads the chorus, forces extra scratch struck verses, teases and twists, manipulates and reciprocates the middle eight, separates the same sonics, quotes itself, reaps a repeat of the reprise, routing back to the start as the record repeats, skips bits and beats, dips along the groove, nudges the needle to and fro, dittos the decibels, recounts and recalls reverb, reproduces the production, backtracks, retreads the chorus, forces extra scratch struck verses, teases and twists, manipulates and reciprocates the middle eight, separates the same sonics, quotes itself, reaps a repeat of the reprise, routing back to the start as I start at the door knock, press pause and wait.

The surreal Leonora Carrington

her hair rampages in squalls
as if she's standing
under whipping helicopter blades

she's painting *The Meal of Lord Candlestick*
on a day that belongs to the 20th century

with her switching of continents
and tweaking of manly men
she had become a *space cadet*
before peculiar was lawful

horrors were lacquered with the macabre and
devolved into sprinklings of wild-eyed witticism drawn sharper than any
dark-suited comedy

she *The Debutante* who wrings the necks of conformists,
shatters the plate-glass ceiling,
twirls once and scampers
into the swirl of the hyena
as they launch —
never seen again

Jesse Glass

An Excerpt from:

**NOTHING EPIC: THE COMPLETE GAHA NOAS ZORGE (BABES
OF THE ABYSS BECOME FRIENDLY)**

Based upon A Truth & Faithful Account of What Passed For Many
Years Between John Dee and Certain Spirits, Meric Casaubon, ed.
(1659).

(TEXTS **TREATED** AS **FOUND:**
THE APPEARANCE OF **DARGER**)

“THEN GO

“get ye of some person that shalbe put to death, a promise,
“and swear an oth unto him, that if he will come to thee,
“after his death, his spirit to be with thee, and to remaine
“with thee all the daies of thy life, and will doo thee true service,
“as it is contened in the oth and promise following. Then lai
“thy hand on thy booke, and swear this oth unto him.
“I N. doo sweare and promise to thee Darger to give for thee
“an almesse every moneth, and also to praie for thee
“once in everie weeke, to saie the Lords praier for thee,
“and so to continue all the daies of my life, as God me helpe
“and holie doome, and by the contents of this booke. Amen.

“THEN LET

“him make his oth to thee as followeth,
“and let him saie after thee, laing his hand upon the booke.

"I Darger doo sweare this oth to thee N. by God the father
"omnipotent, by God the son Jesus Christ,
"and by his pretious blood which hath redeemed all the world,
"and by the which blood I doo trust to be saved
"on the generall daie of judgment, and by the vertues therof,
"I Darger doo swear this oth to thee N. that my spirit that
"is within my bodie now, shall not ascend, nor descend,
"nor go to anie place of rest, but shall come to thee N.
"and be verie well pleased to remaine with thee N.
"all the daies of thy life, and so to be bound to thee N.
"and to appeare to thee N. in anie christall stone, glasse, or other
"mirror, and so to take it for my resting place. And that,
"so soone as my spirit is departed out of my bodie,
"streightwaie to be at your commandments, and that
"in and all daies, nights, hours, and minutes, to be
"obedient unto thee N. being called of thee by the virtue of
"our Lord Jesu Christ, & out of hand to have common talke
"with thee at all times, and in all hours and minuts, to open
"and declare to thee N. the truth of all things present, past,
"and to come, and how to worke the literary art, and all
"other noble sciences, under the throne of God. If I doo
"not perform this othe and promise to thee N. but do flie
"from anie part thereof, then to be condemned for ever and
ever. Amen.

"THEN LET

"him sweare this oth three times, and at everie time
"kiss the booke, and at every time make marks to the bond.
"Then perceiving the time that he will depart, get awaie the
"people from you, and get or take your stone or glasse,
"or other thing in your hand, and sai the Pater noster, Ave,
"and Credo. And in the time of his departing, rehearse
"the bonds of words; and at the end of every bond, sai
"oftentimes; Remember thine oth and promise and bind him
"stronglie to thee, and to thy stone, and suffer him not to
"depart, reading thy bond 24 times. And everie dai when you
"doo call him by your other bond, bind him stronglie by the
"first bond: by the space of 24 dais applie it, and thou shalt be

“made a man for ever.

“I CONJURE

“and constreine the spirit of Darger. that thou shalt not rest
“nor remaine in the fier, nor in the water, in the aer, nor in anie privie
“chamber of the earth. But onlie with me N. and with this N. all the
daies
“of my life. I doo conjure and constreine the spirit of Darger. that thou
shalt
“not take anie resting place, but come unto me in great humilitie, and
“to appear before me visiblie, in tolerable forme and shape of mankind,
“and to obei unto me in all things, whatsoever I shall desire, and that
“you shall not depart from the crystal without my licence.”

What is the Form of the Machine?—Without diagrams, it is somewhat difficult to give the reader an accurate idea of its form; yet in their absence we will endeavor to do the best we can. We will now say, that although the thing corresponds to a rather weak approximation of the Human Form, yet it is only CORRESPONDENCE. The principals involved, are the same as those of the Human Body, so far as Motion is concerned—nothing further than this.

But to come directly to the point of Form: the main part of the instrument—the Grand Nucleus of it—is a Circular Bed. This is made of Black Walnut, about three and a half feet in diameter, with five legs—the centre leg being larger than the rest, and each of them perfectly insulated by large glass balls. O! It is effected by the insertion of a small tube of zinc, with a plug of gutta percha, the design of which would seem to be, to turn the current which is the moving power.

P,o,p,p,e,t,s, howl:

Dear Center for the study of Personal Tragedies:

I am attempting to find out all the details of my personal tragedy, so any and all records you may uncover concerning it would be greatly appreciated. I understand that I must pay for copies and postage, etc. I am enclosing a self-addressed envelope with enough return postage so that you can inform me of the fee for several copies of my tragedy, should you find them.

~~The murder took place on July 23, 1950. Mr. C. was 68 at the time and his wife, I believe, was a year or two older. At the time of his death he was living with his son, David C. and his family. Mr. C. was shot to death in front of his old home, where his wife and son Paul continued to reside. The trial must have happened very soon after the murder. Mr. C, my great grandfather, was shot to death on the afternoon, or early evening of the 23rd.~~

~~Amanda C. was found guilty and sent to Jessup prison.~~

~~This tragedy has affected all families in every kind of way, and it would be a real blessing for everyone if you could find this, and any information regarding the event, so all others can find closure to this part of everybody's history.~~

A walk of one hundred fifty yards brought me to a pagan gland of about one acre in extent, save in the center of which, and near to the road, a gigantic white oak scarred by generations of lovers with drill-bits and illuminated with thoughtful graffiti reared its stately form, and threw its wooden arms above my pathway. I had advanced within thirty paces of this tree, when casually casting a glance forward, I saw a man standing in the center of the road, and immediately underneath the high architrave of boughs overhead. Being thus suddenly and unexpectedly confronted by Darger, at the solemn hour of low twelve, clad in all the vesture of living humanity (although no words were spoken) conspired to raise within me, a feeling akin to awe, if not terror. ~~I stopped suddenly, in order to~~

~~scrutinize more closely this additional barrier to my further progress.~~ **No sooner had I become stationary, than he lifted himself up, apparently without effort, and appeared to be suspended in the zeit-geist about six feet above the eternal corpus, with his arms outstretched in a horizontal position, pointing due east and west.** ~~I now became almost paralyzed with awe and majesty, certainly not with fear, for I disclaim disdainfully any secret or implied innuendo. What to do in this dire extremity, I knew not. It would appear prima facie that this latter demonstration was indicative of a desire or willingness upon his part to permit my free passage. So acting in accordance with this first impulse, I started forward.~~ **No sooner did I advance than this human form shot meteor-like again to the ground and stood bolt upright in the same position he was, when I first saw him. While standing on the ground his arms resumed their natural pendant position.** ~~As most men would have done under similar circumstances, I stopped again suddenly in order to survey more critically the surroundings. But the most harrowing and perplexing feature was, that just as soon as I stopped, he shot up again like a n. korean rocket to his original position in midair, with arms extended as before. We thus remained in our respective positions for nearly five minutes, I in the interim scanning Darger in extreme astonishment. Whether he scrutinized me in the same manner is somewhat more than I can say, for I could not see his eyes, having on a large black felt hat and of course his eyes were shaded to such a degree that I could not see them, though I could plainly discern his general features.~~ ~~Now some of my readers may attribute this strange apparition or phantom to a chimera of the brain, or they may possibly attribute it to fear and superstition combined, but permit me to state right here, that such was not the fact. 'Tis true, my hairs at this particular juncture had great proclivities for an upward trajectory, but certainly this was not the result of fear. I~~

felt as though I was in the immediate presence of some superhuman agency, and for the purpose of eliciting this definite truth is this paper written. As stated, if I had known that the message delivered at the spiritual seance was none other than coming from the land of spirits, I would have been far from disregarding its positive mandates, and as also stated, I was not at that time sufficiently enlightened in reference to this particular doctrine, hence my seeming obduracy and perversity. How far, Darger in his attributes will justify the pleas of ignorance amid the revelations of eternity is not my province to determine. I only know that man can find out far more than he knows, by a proper use of the facilities given him by an All-wise Detourner, and may be that Darger has already entered a general demurrer to the introduction of this plea, and if so it certainly will act as an estoppel to the anticipated introduction by the many who are passing from this state of existence to the great hereafter, and who are today building air castles of rhetoric, under the presumed availability of this plea.

After viewing the situation for nearly five minutes in a calm and dispassionate manner, I concluded I would make one more thorough and final test of the legitimacy of the warnings which I had already received. No sooner had I begun my advance movement, than the specter-like figure of DARGER shot again to the earth with the velocity of lead, and stood fixedly in the road before me. I now approached within three or four cm. of him and stretched out my hand to take hold of his collar, in order to have a more tangible test of his possessing a physical identity, than a mere ocular demonstration could give. But nothing tangible came in contact with my hand, but it gradually and perceptibly dissolved into nothingness, as the slips of paper had done before.

In inverse ratio to this figure fading into nothingness, so did the darkness of the surrounding night gather about me. The moon now became congruently engraved with crimson, 'souvenir' hatch marks, the luminous twinkles refused to emit their c-rays, and I was overwhelmed in a more than Egyptian darkness, and to heighten if possible my emotion and surprise, I now heard in an eastern

direction, a wild chaotic Utterance, such as humanity fancies emanates from tortured phonologists in Pandemonium, approaching with winged speed the spot that I now occupied, sweeping by, and through the space lately tenanted by my frightful phantom, and loosing its doleful and weird like cadence far in the west.

~~when great-grandfather Gow was walking the path he met his estranged wife.~~

Oh, what a night of withering perplexity and harrowing confusion, based upon a palpable violation of Elohim's eternal decrees. I only know that when reason regained ascendancy, the rays from the sun of a bright Sabbath morning were pouring a flood of golden light upon me. The birds were caroling forth their Jacquard Cards of praise, and nature clad in the pageantry of silent homage, proclaimed eloquently to the heart, the sacred injunction, "I am thy Golem Darger (the ontological rifle filmed across contiguous shoulders), walk thou instantly before my face, and be thee doxy-sided."

This event played out in what could have been the plot for an Orson Welle's exercise in film noir. In 1910 my maternal great-grandfather G. was listed in the census as a "gentleman boarder" at the home of his future wife, whose employment was listed as "seamstress" and already the mother of a 12 year old girl. A decade earlier the census recorded this woman and her child to be living in an odd situation of "seamstresses" all unrelated and cohabiting together, in a household headed by a woman in her 50's, while G. was listed as an oysterman on the bay. My great-grandmother was older than Mr. G. by three years, and family legend has it that she was pretty in the old Gibson Girl, Pear's soap way. She had red hair and green eyes. My suspicion was that she was making a less than savory living at about the same time that Gertrude Stein and her art-collecting brother, Leo, lived just across Baltimore town enjoying daily tea and conversation with the Cone sisters.

The plot gets darker. Mr. G., now a milliner, marries his rehabilitated sweetheart, they have two children together and they move their family to an odd house next to the railroad tracks in Rosedale—a suburb of Baltimore. (Now a resident of Paris, Gertrude Stein has her portrait painted by the young Picasso and writes excitedly to the Cone sisters about it.) The house had stood empty for four years and was a bargain to purchase because of its notorious past. A gruesome murder of the Freyers—a middle-aged, German brother and sister—took place there in 1916: railroad tramps (or so the police averred) hacked and beat the sister to death after chasing her out of the house and onto the wooded pathway and outraging her there, and had burned and beaten the brother to death in the kitchen. They used black jacks and tar oil like pros. My grandfather used to tell us stories of the day they first moved in and my then ten year old “grandpop” had helped his father, mother and sisters to wash the dried blood of the Freyers off the walls and floors. Up until July, 1950, my great-grandfather told that story too—as my mother recalls. However it was a yearning for Coca Cola on a Sunday afternoon that sent the pot-bellied, nattily dressed, 66 year old gentleman hat-maker to his doom. My grandmother requested that my blonde-haired, blue eyed, 12 year old future mother, go to Miss Carol’s Store in Chesaco Park and purchase a six pack of “The Pause that Refreshes” for the Sunday meal. My mother was sunburnt from playing all day with her friends and she complained that she wanted to stay in and rest. My great-grandfather, who was now a part of his son’s family—having been estranged from his increasingly erratic wife, Amanda, since 1944—volunteered to walk around the block to the store and buy the Cokes. He promised he’d be right back. The shortcut he took through the Rosedale woods led right past the old murder house where his wife still lived with her daughters and one of their sons. The *Baltimore Sun* goes on to tell the rest of the story, which resulted in Angels, ghosts and visions enough even for Dee & Kelley to negotiate three hundred years before.

Joseph Salvatore Aversano

Four Poems

the small rounded
hill crowned

by the village saint's
tomb

with its pyramidal
Seljuk dome;

and the marker stones
of villagers

interred in the
slopes

a little closer to
the saint

than wide heaven

φ

into the
curl of

the wave
an old

oil painted
dark an

old oil
painted

dread no
more

φ

the horizon
jagged w/

an island
added

for interest
one can

just about
make it out

if not
too humid

if even
there

φ

as far as the blue wall of island across
a leafed citrus

orchard
sea

so what boat would one need
to cross it

if this

David Lohrey

Back to Nature

Who started the fires?

Many are drawn to the flames – men and women in equal number. They clamber to get closer. They take off work to travel so they can see for themselves: the flames climbing higher, engulfing, filling the skies. The smoke gets in everything; there are ashes in the houses, on the carpets. Many stand still and hold out their tongues. They tear off their clothing. They crave the heat. They're excited by the smell of ruin. They're delirious.

The fires mean trouble. The people can't tell the difference between fireworks and flames. They welcome the fires with tribal dances. The women bare their breasts. It excites the men. The logs in the fireplace have rolled into the living room but the people are too drunk to push them back.

They're laughing. They're excited that something's finally happening. They're so bored the thought of burning the house down makes them giddy. The gals want their backsides smacked. The men get close enough to the flames to singe their body hair. The women shriek.

The parents no longer watch the children. Many die running into the flames. The parents shrug. What's the difference? The children carry fiery logs about and throw them into the cars. They take hot sticks and poke out each other's eyes. The parents don't know what to do, but declare with a sense of urgency there is nothing to be done. It's all beyond them; it's fate. They move closer to the fires. They've burned all their clothes. They have nothing on. They push the children away and commence to fornicate in the ashes. The men relieve themselves on the hot coals. Many children are burned alive.

They move back to the caves when the fires burn down. They remove the paintings from their frames to use the wood as kindling. The museums are ransacked. Libraries are emptied. They desperately raid the theatres for wood from the stage floors. In short order, there's nothing left. The fires die out. The men and women crouch in their earthen holes and cry. Some brave women venture out but quickly regret it, if they survive. Most hide themselves deep within. Much if not all is lost. The fires burn out. When there was fire and music, nudity seemed sexy, but now the women are cold. They feel ugly like insects. The men don't caress them; they kick them. The sexes are not equal.

Recipe for a Better World

Don't you know the difference between a potato and a lion?

That's odd.

They put lions on pajamas but not potatoes. You'll never see potatoes on your brother's pajamas.

Lions roar. Lions are not called spuds. Lions are fine and dandy, like petunias or dandelions. Your mother could make potato and dandelion soup, if she cared to, and you could help.

All you'd need is a dandy lion and an ideal potato.

Potatoes grow on trees. Just tell your favorite farmer you'll need a bushel this year. He'll know what to do. But there'll be fewer apples if he grows potatoes. You'll have to think it through.

Of course, some say potatoes don't grow on trees. Some people get quite angry about this mistake. My father used to shout, "You're always forgetting to turn out the lights. Do you think potatoes grow on trees?"

When I was young, we were poor. Father would turn over the ketchup bottle to catch the very last drop. My family liked to put ketchup on our potatoes, but not on our lions. Ketchup grows on trees, too. Put in your order at the start of the year.

But when it comes to lions, I'd be careful. I wouldn't get too close. Lions are reluctant to swim. You're probably thinking of dolphins who can swim very fast. They swim as fast as crows can fly. But I wouldn't put ketchup on the crows either. In point of fact, you'd be better off keeping the ketchup to yourself.

So, where were we? You've got the ketchup, the lion, and the potato, not to mention the dolphins and the lights. What are we forgetting? The crows! And the trees. Don't forget to turn off the trees. And the apple sauce. If there is any left.

Now pick the petunias before it is too late. Add them to the soup. Stir. When it comes to the boil, you'll have chicken soup. Enjoy. (Serves 4.)

Tom Beckett

Limits of

Un-

Or

Whether one

We occurs

It overlap

Arc an

-Er

Not constantly

-Ploding

Of that

Not -ating

Also -id

-Tain

-Duce

-Ality

-Illa

*

Own ass-

And -tion

Oscill- -ism

Hard con-

Hu- lump

Zomb- -vious

-Itical don't

Tissue futures

Less -less

Use -sive

Fix -orama

-Thema -gine

See-through

Sum -ural

-Lief -gues

Para- -ture

Jeff Harrison

Upon me

My hounds are upon me, and have you no hand for me? Send them away, set me aright, could a hart harm you?

The vine

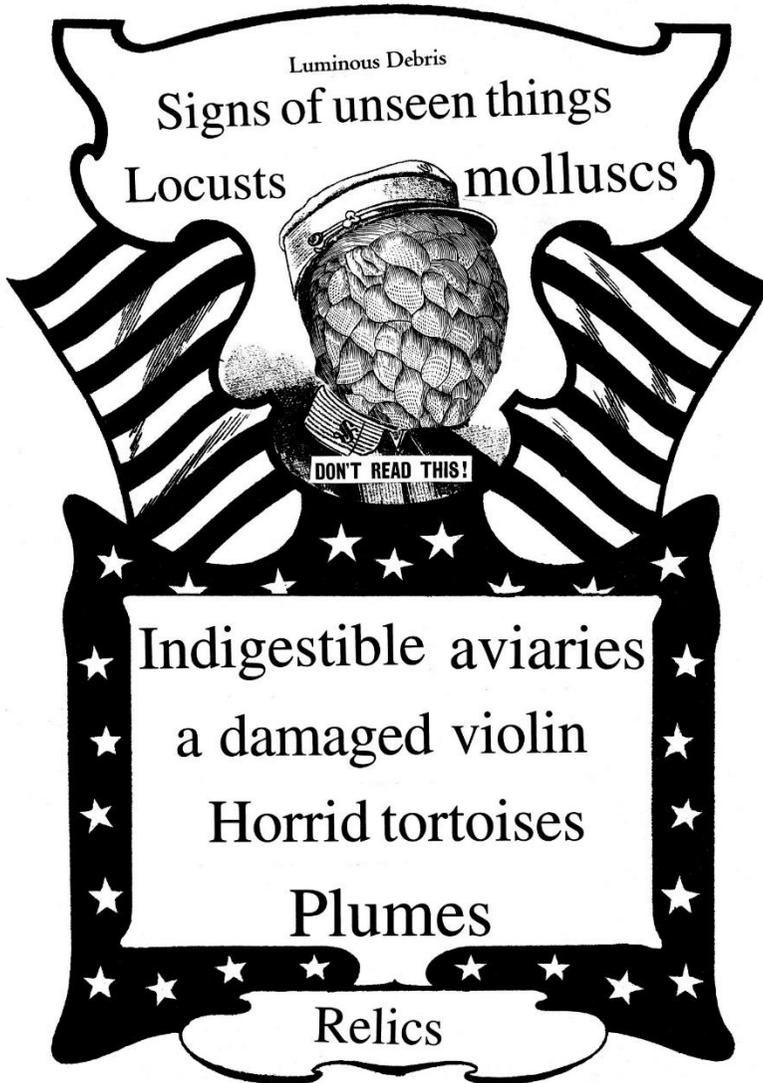
The vine's hart is for you, my lovely hounds. Am I low enough for you? I wouldn't have you leap to get me: leaps are what a hart makes. I would leap now, were it not for the vine. I wouldn't have you leap for me, were your leaping to make me Actaeon again.

Homes

My hounds are in trees. Remember when I was on a vine? The homes a fount provides for us; weren't we content with the old? I hope that you're as discontented with this hart as I. Are you content with your boughs, hounds, or will you clamber down?

Their Actaeon

Won't they leave their ship, my rats? They're loath to leave their Actaeon. What ship cares about her rats? I didn't set even one on my lap and say, I care for you, rat; mind that you leave me when I founder.



Simon Perchik

*

Your eyes are covered with grass
with paths living inside my bones
as waterfalls and distances

though everything I say
you mistake for gestures
or when you walk slowly

-it's been too long! What you see
has no snow, no between us
you can grip as if it was yours

buried with me the way each path
is fed the narrowness beneath
and overflows, trading places

even now, even when you leave
holding on to shadows and your arms
become an open sore.

*

These piles hold back :each finger
embraced the way darkness
covers a sky no longer needed

and what you breathe out
stays black till it cools
closes and overhead the dirt

shades you though clouds
left in the open are useless now
pulled along behind these bars

used to hands growing huge
in sunlight, in this makeshift prison
filling with mist and shovels.

Poetry Threats

breach	prevention	.		
terror	terror	,		
	stuck	.		
	hazardous	blister	explosion	.
	typhoon	wave	,	
tremor	brown out	.		
snow	,			
snow	.			
tornado	?!			
	relief			

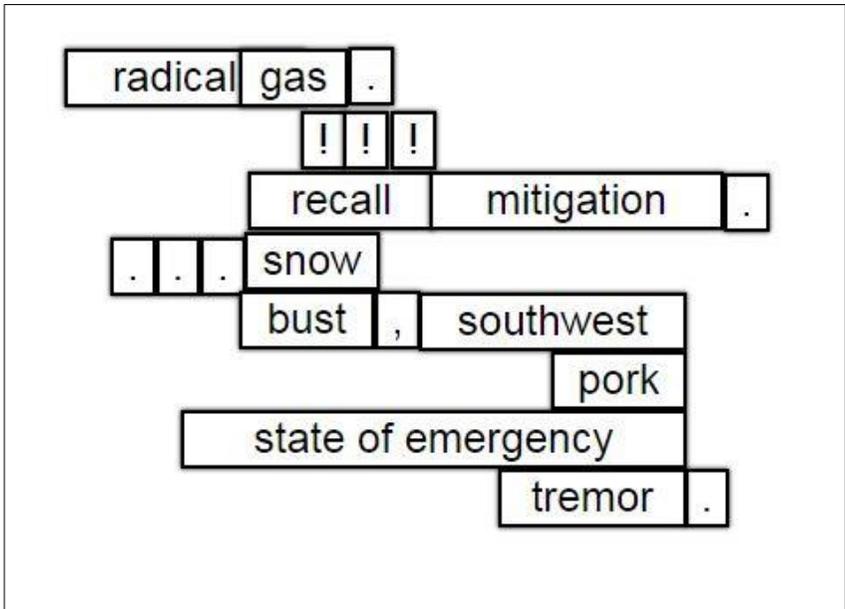
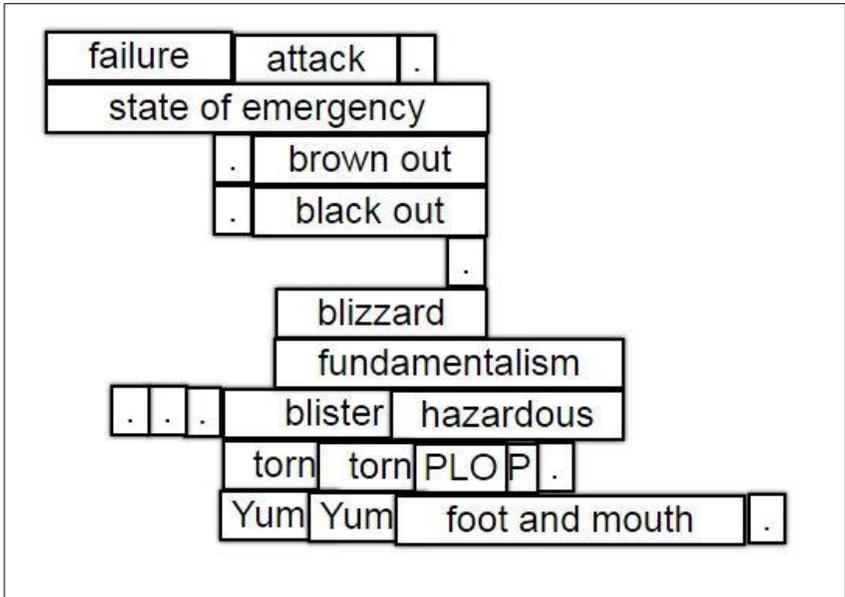
foot and mouth		
blizzard		
exposure	.	
avalanche	warning	
	relief	.
hail	crash	!
stranded		
snow	cancelled	fire
	lightning	!!!

brown out	.	.	.
burst	burn	.	
lockdown			
outage	,		
suspicious	explosion	.	
brute	closure	.	

execution			
mitigation	.		
home grown	crash	,	
suspicious	sick	sick	sick
spillover	.		
strain	response	,	
	terror	.	
	WHO	ETA	! ?

worm	watch	es	nuclear	explosion	.
water	outbreak	.			
			closure		
			extreme weather		
			terror	.	
			lightening		
			twister		
		.	blizzard		
			conventional	sleet	. ? !

brown out	twister	.	.	.
	twist	twist	decapitated	
	explosion	,		
	earthquake	.		
	brute	small	relief	
			drill	
			crash	
			lightening	
	gas	!		



earthquake standoff .
 phreaking
 sick !
 powder cloud ,
 suspicious stranded | | .
 crash !
 plume cancelled .

smuggling tremor
 in to the hazmat .
 . . . shots fired .
 emergency ! warning !
 decapitated .
 . . .
 is a gas .
 watch delays .

cloud	collapse		
	earthquake	,	
	suspicious	incident	.
	plume	,	
	black out	.	
		twister	,
		twister	.
		closure	burst
			.
			cancelled
			.

tornado	initiative		
artistic	violence		
	electric		
.	earthquake		
	avalanche		
	attack		
.	black out		
	stranded	closure	
		tremor	.
		watch	cloud
			burn
			.

gas	!	!	!						
	tremor	spill							
		mitigation							
.		critical	mud slide						
.	emergency	blister	burst						
		.	explosion						

earthquake	.								
hail	the	crash	wave	!					
terror	,	terror	,	terror	cloud				
					delays	,	delays	.	.
					cancelled	.			
					sick	explosion	.		
					closure	.			
					snow	.			
					twister	prevention	blizzard	.	

smart
avalanche
terror .
why ?

wave attack .
and tremor .
tremor .
tremor !
and yet this cloud violence .
hazardous relief .

terror of failure .
body scanner disaster cancelled .
blizzard .
snow shooting plot exposure .
brown out . . .
watch that worm when decapitated .
closure .
powder .
foot and mouth .

recall

cancelled

national preparedness .

exercise

sick emergency lockdown .

plot

failure to help

and storm in response .

and then

brown out

the crest of incident .

hazardous

breach

of the

explosive snow . . .

magnitude
of
worm s
suspicious suicide attack
enriched b y tremor
of the
wave
in
terror slide .

watch
blister explosion .

"This is a set of poems made with a little help of great late website Poetry Threats. It was stupid. But really fun. It was good for making truly apocalyptic imagery."

COLLABORATION #12

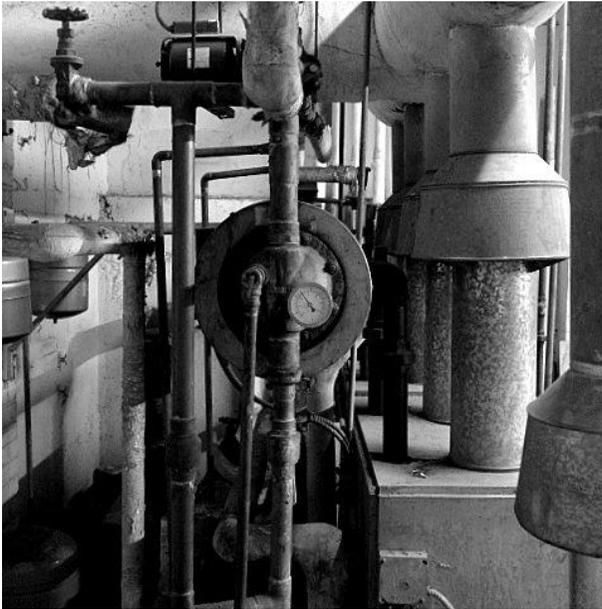
this poem contains no doors
only a hatchway that is usually hidden
and an odd-shaped dark tunnel and long vestibule
where all kinds of things are waiting to wake
like those monsters you thought you had slain as a child
that still whisper words you can barely hear
though you try and try so hard to ignore it
words that want to inhabit this poem
but can only get in if the poets let them
sneaking them in through the hatchway no one else knows
that secret passageway where bad dreams are stored
waiting to be hatched in unexpected poems
with long-lost last lines that can jar the senses
and make new doors of their own

COLLABORATION #29

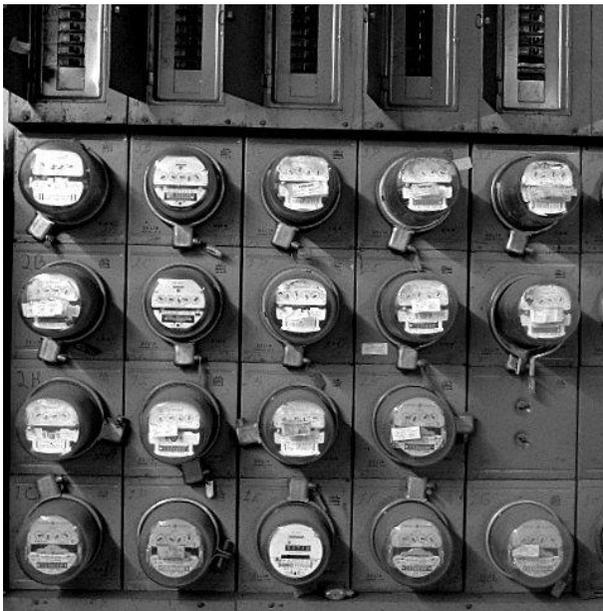
Lazarus wasn't the same when he awoke
returning from death isn't as easy as it looks
there were all kinds of disturbing memories
and fever dreams full of Jesus
raising polar bears from their premature deaths
and all other creatures, large and small
from their silent unmarked graves
sloughing off dust from fur and fin
until sometimes nothing more than a skeleton remained
and they walked the earth in peril and pain
not always recognized as what they once were
defying the laws of evolution
but remaining a reminder of what we all will become
when the earth opens up and swallows us whole

COLLABORATION #37

For the game they were each given a piece of string and seven yellow marbles.
There were ten players, each one of them wearing a different colored hat.
They were allowed to move only if they followed the arrows.
But the arrows pointed in directions that didn't exist.
The first one who said the word "red" was required to turn to the right.
The first one who said the word "blue" was required to turn to the left.
The numbers they recited told them how quickly they could move.
They moved around in a scattershot manner.
Each tree or frog they passed was marked with their own special sign.
A triangle, a flag, or a crescent moon.
Or maybe a picture of a little owl so high up the others could barely see it.
One player painted a white cross in scarlet blood.
But soon it was time to reach for the string and marbles.
Though it was just a game, there were no survivors.









from INFORMATION

INFORMATION

The idea that Sunday resembles a door, that the shore can be broken into men who can no longer float.

INFORMATION

Separates the number 6 from the word that describes the insects. Separates the color red from the carpet that was really a lawn. Separates the man from the woman who arrived too late to be counted. Separates the animals from the sign that explains their dimensions. Separates the sky from the buildings that rest upon it.

INFORMATION

There are doors, or there are no doors. There are bears, or there are no bears. There is an ear that is repeated and an eye that is not. Each time the man arrives they give him a different kind of name, one that allows the woman to pick him out of a crowd.

INFORMATION

There were doors that were repeated in each orange and pear and apple. There were windows in each bear they caught, and on top of every mountain. There was a word they were supposed to use but they didn't understand. There was a color that was only used to describe their journey.

INFORMATION

The bird wore out while it was still filled with sound.

INFORMATION

The story always contained more vowels than adverbs, more owls than bears, more boats than trees. There was a building full of verbs they were not allowed to open, and a chair where only the seers could sit. The word placebo was more important than the word prophecy, than the color blue, than the number 5. Their names were only buses that were waiting for the rain to arrive.

INFORMATION

The bird was sewn shut without any explanation given.

INFORMATION

In the other game the colors were replaced with numbers, the man with a snake that was used for counting. In the other game the destination was always hidden from view.

INFORMATION

The man thinks that religion is only there to be used to his advantage. He uses spiders to explain the route he must take.

INFORMATION

Did not understand how it worked. The logic of it only an animal that had no bottom.

INFORMATION

Looks for a device that changes the giraffes, the owls, the canoes, that changes the sky so that it becomes too large to continue.

INFORMATION

On each side of the object there was a word that directed them to a different side.

INFORMATION

They rented enough trees to fill the lake, and enough bees to fill the locomotive.

INFORMATION

On the second day they learned how to fly. On the third day they learned how to pronounce the word wind.

INFORMATION

Thinks that the poem is part of a game they forgot how to play.

Target Practice Ducks

Passing through target practice ducks
their bulbous yellow bodies dwarfing dead trees and cars
the horse lyrist climbs a rise, the hot smell draws him
with knowledge of nurses he pretends himself a medic
but keeps below the ridge
where cattle heads lie fresh on stone, not a first responder,
after black metal rain from the Iron Sun
he disappeared the ute
parked it in rugged bushland, covered it in kindling brush.
He has green papers for the courts and character.
His steel friend trudging behind, all legs, giant boots and fat head
now drags a two-man golden kayak through the sand
a blanket wrapped aluminium echidna huddles in one seat
its blue eyes glow and watch
this vehicle-wrecking junk-road has knee-high socks
a burning building, the sky is bright with tracer
this brumby believes his thought here is something new, a charcoal hand fixed
imploring
breasts filling cotton pleats, opacity freezing tableau figures
of bomb throwers stretching right-arms back
to lunge low toward an invisible target
as launch thrusters spin the flight of fixed carousel animals and painted
amazon birds
their bright fur and plumage fuel to red firing drives
where the Pumpkin Queen stares, fingers a rigid temple ave
hearty blowflies swarming as her attendants
a smell of smoking meat

for the Iron Sun the colt drinks whiskey
on Sunday or with the last Friday devotions
he tells himself, 'no regrets,' pushes on
the target practice ducks hit to ruin
remain in a fading horizon haze.

Iron Sun

Amid the grime of a police car front-ended into curb
a constable's body stretches heavy against its dirty right rear tire
an obsidian butterfly stops on the rusted crash barrier
and a distant red flashing roadblock strings the hazy highway;
here the Iron Sun harvests answers

On a firebreak beside two mammoth metal-frame transmission towers
an obsidian butterfly flaps between fragile desiccated buds
the boy with his hamburger head robot drags through ash
their lemon kayak carrying the last aluminium echidna;
here the Iron Sun collects numerals

In the deep shadow of four sky-scraping yellow metal ducks
their fat stainless steel rollers bogged in soot dunes
one body part of each epic fowl uniquely and completely shot through
an obsidian butterfly's wings catch a chance of light;
here the Iron Sun gathers alphabets

Against a blue field, framed by torn, creased and char-brittle paper
the Iron Sun sorts, reads, categorises, assembles and calculates.

corridor of dead bandicoots

children
in the front
paddock come
to know the hour
as five
more minutes

visiting the MacLarens
or whoever
on Kings Road
while
adults oddly talk

bad visibility
so you
catch the ball
with cherished seconds
from car lights

4WDs moving
between dinners
among muzzled
beings
becoming mulch

how can they
reconstitute
as landscape
with such sneering
toothy
grimace

hypnotising
us when the footy
goes on the
road

Ballast

greeny is gay

rednecks are assholes
licks assholes dry

not as much as green

the dune rat
the thieving dog

[A found poem (at eye-level, public toilets, Uralla)]

Calligraphy

ghost calligrapher I have
seen you carving
from out of a clear sky
calm day wind soothed
solitary Wild whippings of
scarification so quiet
you could be painting.
How do you know the
parings of crescent moon
to fall as scythes in leaves.
Figuration of memory over
the veins, the vast swathes
of arterial oceans,
silhouette of
yourself
crying
and falling,
always the
falling, over
skin, making
forms of the ligatures
in fractals caught
up, the blue-white
flash, shock,
the unseen dive
from warmth and
the soft childhood
of yellow, faint trace
of a summer you believed
you'd remember.
When, I wonder,
did you forget to
remember and
when must you
remember
forgetting. And
then, the taste
of regret. But

the sorrow drains
and washes with
the storm and
you look in the morning
at the lines of trees
and see how they echo
the jagged cuts of
lightning, and as they
already grow soft
and pale, luminescent,
on the quiet parts of
your arms, the under-
sides away from the
burn of the sun,
already you feel
brighter. And ready
to set well-
constructed new
fires to warm
your house and
dry the clothes
bathed
in rain
and blue light.
It rings and razes
you in
cloud forms.

Fault Lines

nights

strange tracings along
crumbling clifftops
resisting the ecstasy
of falling. Extremities
curled to soft landings.

The comforts
of love affairs
played out in the
psyche

Eyes closed to
the agony of the
outside. Temporal
travel.

Where calling up the
sound of you sorting
through the cases of
your music soothes
and warms.

Not to sleep.
Walking, still, under
the bright eyes of
moonlight. Not
quite alone. You
and the happiness
you place inside me
linger nearby spectres
lightning-haunted
tree figures.

There is joy to
this accompaniment

And

the weight of
sadness Like
the company of a
brother long ago
lost to depths. He
appears if I call to him
but mostly he is
still He's the

brother caught
in photographs
and memory. He
crosses rooms in
loops.

And
you arrive
from your own
night wandering Waking
me softly with
fingertips when I
thought sleep had
eluded me and I
was sentenced to
the hard lines of
the waking.

Holding you
it's an echo The
heat seeps in
a deep bath that
never cools
Geothermally loved.

You're not
like the phosphorous
threads of my brother.
Your night visitations
are deep in warm
colours and I am
held while rain
describes a distant
roof.

Doors left ajar
Remembered intruders
Mornings when what was
lost rises again and again.
You're still here until I must
open my eyes.

When
will I start to
live
instead of
feeling for a fault line to
fall through.

Bitter Tastes

here in time and

out this revelling
not acutely
rebellious for once
but still I hold her
the one who rages
dances from the
under-growth
old
and youthful

Fresh minds
Over-grown

already
Timeless
threading through
bones and
branches tied

up hard nubs of cold
Wind rhythms
in the wilting of
morning But the
rebel, she stills,
she rests
barely
discernible from
these fern bodies,
furred, softly frantic
inner darkness The
scores of families I
hear you, singing
child Calling
the mother
to stop pounding
keys and
enjoy the
light walking through
sunshine. Notice

shadows on
closed eyelids not
as spectres of danger
but as
symbols and spaces
As cloud forms hold
secrets And
there is the murmured
melody of insects
crossing thresholds
to lace
workings To rise,
my happiness, from
sleep. Not all
poems are sad,
although all the
ones I read are
of the sea,
whether deep
and layered with
rooms and apertures
doors and windows
ajar, or else
skimming shallow
tones of
warmth the
gold that I
drink to the
inside.

Babies

Inner
dashboard
flesh alert
stalls open,
yawns,
unloads
a billion
babies.

Ejecta

Fenders
hop
akimbo,
swerve in
calm ejecta.

Footsteps

Retroactive
footsteps
feel the call
of history
unchained.

Gel

Antiseptic officials
extricate the future
from plastic.

I scream aloud

in culpable gel.

Jacarandas

Pureed duplex
floats downstream,
exonerates an owl.

Sunrise empties
jacarandas.

Moon Height Away

Tag along
to cat hair suite
reproductive
sigh asunder
steeply agile
east moon
height away.

Narcotic Dusk

Lying prone,
I synchronize
my breath to
appendectomy
incisions.

Purr Peek Poke

Purr peek poke
peduncular uncles
avuncular adjutants
remanded mammals

emetic armoires
imbecilic antipasto
borscht.

Rendezvous

Hovering
words reply
forgotten.

Quail signal
an offshore
submarine
to inch ahead.

Gibbous alterations
coruscate a surfeit
of diamonds.

Uzis

Origami
offers
operatic
oligarchy
oatmeal
on and off
again.

Apsidal
apparitions
ask apoplectic
anagrammers
for Uzis.

Vellum

Verily
verisimilitude
veers valiantly
vexing voluminous vixens
voluptuating voluntarily
vacuuming virginal voices
venting varooms
vaccinating voters
vamping vindictively
vending Vercingetorix's
vapid venom
vilifying vitiated victuals
visualized in vellum.

What Why When

Alert and asking
why whoa wait
who's holy
wishing worldly
well whodunit
what why when

at night we turn into blue jays

name something with feathers

garden-head
cloned
ok cool

the clean keeps me clean

sneak lakey

sea-wizard
chinning up

that old windsby
neighboring flute

chark!

it is the cake
the fake, fake cake

the lactic comma yet

clum
clum
clum
it was time for the clum

& showing off dandruff
that old dry skull

little saturn
just -o-

Carey Scott Wilkerson

EXISTENTIALISTS IN LOVE

Two Photographs

1. Taormina, Sicily

Even such was the descent of that ravine,
And on the border of the broken chasm
The infamy of Crete was stretched along,

Who was conceived in the fictitious cow;
And when he us beheld, he bit himself,
Even as one whom anger racks within.

—Dante, *Inferno*, Canto XII

Behind you, I can see the fountain spill water over seven-terraced marble pools beneath a sculpture of the Minotaur as he appears in six sad lines of Dante: frightened, alone at the black precipice of a ravine. And behind the fountain, with a view of Mt. Etna, Italy's most active volcano, is our cheap suite on the ground floor of Hotel Villa Paradiso.

2. Dante Park, New York City

We saw her circling the Revson Fountain one October night in the Plaza at Lincoln Center. I wanted to know whether she had sung *Orfeo ed Euridice* in Los Angeles. But you had the good sense to ask her for a selfie. Yes, I took the picture but with your iPhone and thus have no record of the sublime Catherine Malfitano in the moment just before she crossed the esplanade into the dark.

Watts Towers, 2005

Bite your lip and take a trip
Though there may be wet road ahead
And you cannot slip so what you wanna do
Just move on up for peace you will find
Into the steeple of beautiful people where there's only one kind

—Curtis Mayfield, *Move On Up*

Look at us, three hours now, wandering with your skeptical UCLA undergraduates among Sabata Rodia's curated dreamscapes. We're theorizing in this bone-lattice found-object world rendered in plaster, mesh, ceramic, rebar. We're talking erasure and context, peering into vanity mirrors split in some minor, forgotten quake; green glass of 7 Up bottles; rail-yard scrap metal from the Pacific-Electric Wilmington line; touching seashells big as palm fronds, opalescent and lurid: an accretion of other men's daily anarchies fixed in twilight ceremony, drizzled with homemade concrete. Your most promising student asks: *But is it art?* Your lips do not move, but I hear someone whisper *there are no perfect solutions*, even in this place where *Nuestro Pueblo*, our town—like the rockets of naïve 1950s science fiction, with fins, portals, and one fearless pilot—points its spires straight up.

Los Feliz

Los Feliz is an artsy Los Angeles neighborhood and means "The Happy."

Because there are no fireflies in Los Angeles we strung faerie lights through pepper trees that summer beside the cedar-wood bungalow in our narrow canyon. The Rossini 78s we found at some Saturday-morning bazaar threaded von Stade's *Cenerentola* through the drone of traffic tangled in palms on Franklin Avenue just below. Sheila, the neighbor, claimed the power of crystals could save us from conspiracies, government smog, and urban dreams with disappointing endings. Her boyfriend, Bernard, a contract pilot for the police promised to bless our love from the helicopter's cockpit during a pre-dawn flyover at four-thousand feet.

You cooked up a pan of eggplant parm for the actresses living in the Sixth Street loft when they all agreed both to be in my play *and* not take their clothes off onstage.

In the farmer's market dumpster, I found new brushes tied with yarn to unopened jars of shimmering gesso. And I stretched canvas for the triptych you were painting every night downstairs while I only pretended to sleep but instead lay wondering what secret name for fate I might invoke to keep you from leaving and if you knew the stars in Andromeda are always visible from the top of the Ferris wheel on the Santa Monica Pier.

Crystal Blue Persuasion

It started with a polished amethyst in the aloe plant on the window sill above the kitchen sink, we think. Next must have been the pale shard of blue topaz wedged under the stack of old *New Yorker* magazines. We had canceled the subscription but couldn't bear to throw them away and needed the cartoons in a difficult year, so difficult that in an unguarded moment, I tried to eat three caramel moonstones I found behind our signed photograph of Montserrat Caballé, believing them unwrapped marzipan pralines from Canter's Deli. In the entire Los Angeles basin, could I have been the only man trying to eat rocks?

Wednesday night, cherry carnelian under a sofa cushion; Thursday night, a strand of beaded quartz under our bed upstairs, where we did not mind living quirky lives, but agreed this was more quirk than we required. Friday morning at DuPar's Diner-on-3rd, the crazy neighbors Sheila and Bernard asked if we had noticed the obvious good effects of the emergency exorcism Sheila had performed on our house last weekend while we were away and whether we felt yet the endorphin swell of healing crystal loves?

That's how they said it: *loves* in the plural, as though everyone knew loves were formed over eons in the furnace of the planet. We were ready to draw the line at Sheila's wild act of breaking and entering when Rhoda Barkhado—the Somali pastry chef, whose sour cream waffles and umber maple syrup had hypnotized the city—arrived at our table in a turquoise sarong wondering aloud *Who would dare ask for a day better than this?*

Fairy Godmother's Lament

I shouldn't talk about clients this way, but Djamila the Tunisian seamstress, who asked for an infinite supply of fabrics, was found suffocated in her garden of wild cinnamon trees under six tons of lavender charmeuse. Meredith, an up-market estate planner in Pacific Palisades wanted her newborn twins in the best possible college, at which instant Kirabelle and Mathilde vanished from the nursery and materialized in Professor Celeste Rosen's Women's Studies seminar at Bryn Mawr. The mother was charged with endangerment and the babies dropped from class for failure to pay the necessary fees. Alexander wanted only money and so, lost all his possessions—everything in his house, including his wife—having turned into stacks of unmarked, non-sequential hundred-dollar bills. Phyllis wanted only to be in love and so, lost all her friends, who could not love her in the same way and who could not bear her long life of betrayed silence. I never learned to say no.

We scarcely survive our happiness. If I had one wish it would not be for the end of desire's secret madness or even for a planet of rational, compassionate hearts. Instead, I would ask for some place where magic is just words and the wand, a piece of pine.

Bela Farkas

Fine Dining

I sit on the corner of your kitchen bench, trying to hold back the break-up drips that wash down cheek.

You tell me that you need time.

I ask do you mean more than a seven minute microwave lean cuisine meal time. Or more than an hour and fifteen minute traditional roast beef with Yorkshire pudding time?

You tell me, there is nothing wrong, that there's no other chef in the kitchen, and that everything is fine dining.

And two weeks later our recipe never changed, same mixture of chit and chat that brought the sweet and salty together, mixed with the right amount of zesty laughter that was poured down the phone to early hours of the morning.

But then you didn't call, the menu was blank; the potatoes couldn't cook without the heat.

I was not concerned.

I was not thinking that you were with another chef making fabulous new flavours, like coconut pan cakes with mango slices and lime syrup.

Because you wouldn't do that, your apron was still in my closet and you can't cook without an apron.

I just had to breathe in, everything was fine dining.

I didn't wanna get all Gordon Ramsay stupid or Jamie Oliver righteous.

I just had to breathe in, everything was fine dining.

Then our chit-chat turned to the dregs you try to whack out of a sauce bottle until you realise there's no more sauce left.

My brain knew you were baking in another chef's kitchen, but my heart was buried in Martha Stewart recipes of denial.

Until someone told me they saw you holding another chef's hand, wearing a new apricot apron.

Apparently you didn't want to take my order any more, you preferred to smash my eggs on the kitchen floor, leave me expecting sublime scrambled eggs then never return.

But that's ok, I'll never come to your restaurant again. I'll stay home, watch cut throat kitchen and clean up the burnt pieces that you left in my frying-pan.

the alley where those rats are [gnawing] stones that used to be eyeballs
hard shells
that were once a jelly confession
^that alleys are sourcream swilling stations blacklung borders /built
according to code stray from the stench
and anIIIhilation licks out its flickering flower *thorned* like the hand
of the ___devil___
who is just a cockroach fantasy
a thousand c/l/i/c/k/i/n/g fibers sewn across the landscape thunder is
NoT welcome here because all
the static eLeCtRiCiTy has been swallowed and is now w/h/i/r/r/i/n/g
within tiny war machines with
?mouths like swans mouths which aren't mouths which are beaked
peaked pecked removed
and displayed on the

WATERTABLE:

is thinning into thighs that trickle skin across the oceanfloor while the rats
yes the rats they are the
sovereign they are the diseased they are the bodies which don't stop moving
when they aren't wound
they are the ones that are handing everyone else tickets to the rapture in which
rat teeth will click and
legs will tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick

*"Agamben wonders what is a tick like when it is not tick"like when "it i"s not
heatSeeking and bloodLetting when it is sit/ting for decades with a
dormant #hunger with a reminder of a distant tickness that has been
evacuated by time's "tick tick tick tick tick tick ti"ck"*

the claws are stubbled&scuttled&scorched&reminders of the body that
simmered shimmering stones a
lot of stones weigh down the world gathering all used spines left overs from a
time when time was

jeweled words Cutt ttt tting