

milk

volume four

poetry, fiction, interviews,
and more

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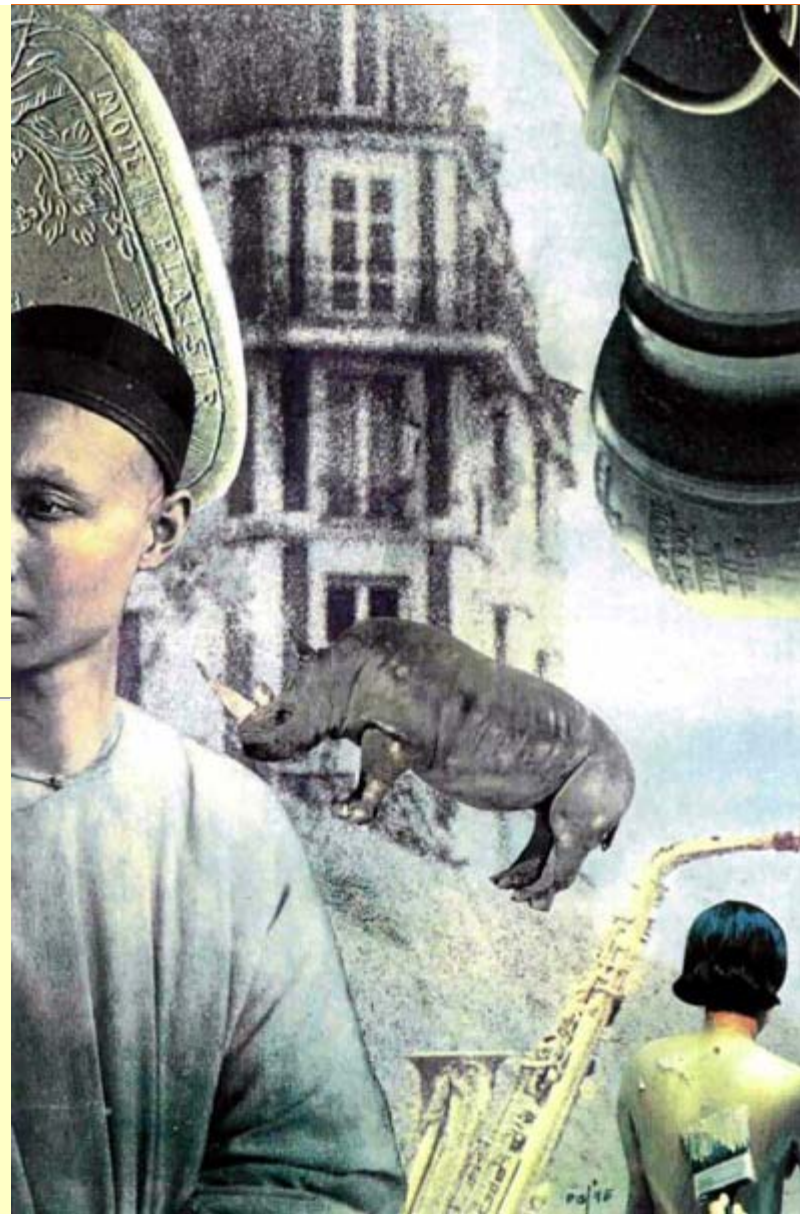
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translated by **Taylor Mignon**



collage by Jud YALKUT

festevil day

in the wind's
de Chirico's headless town
an intersection thinly elongates
a phantom prisoner
washes a flame of alcohol:
the millennium of fortune arrives
inside pockets sand bullets
are mostly oxidized
not knowing what's inedible

at the colored ocean's
dining table
cork dolphins dry
winged fish become disturbed
the insanity of readying dinner isn't progressing
it's almost time, so hurry!
in the mercury panties of wife's shrill voice
in a cellar of
young Bacchus
the rare Sabbath day is dreaded

a tad off the tropic of cancer

light eggs held in both hands
cemetary cemetary & then
slipping through the buddhist temple gate:
unexpectedly
the sound of a squatter catching on fire.
people resemble a landscape of blobs facing a squall, melting.
only your room is all emptiness
but not a nightmare
fairly violent on the screen:
condensed time becoming transparent.
ah
on your mark . . .
get greedy!
in an instant
early summer rain gathers in the forest
's shadow colors where
an old-style gal's
confined in an underpass' crevice
a channel 4 squarish bottle rolls ove
you can't do that, dear
a corner's curve's pawnshop's loud speaker
boundlessly amplifies
northwards
while a lisp rides the wind

translated by Miura Reiichi & Taylor Mignon

insanity's forecast

night-facing

a black rainbow expands
fasten your seat belts
a woman cop's husky voice switches on & off
running full speed colored spectacles pulverize
at dawn's crack it's clear skies
of a harsh sunday
shoes full of holes thrown away
go for an ocean walk
wind fragments hang
the water level is warping but
the hot firesun dips in the ocean & out
is that a human's . . . a back or a . . . stomach or a
it's become non-comprehension time
a dangerous piramily
is escaping death's ugly presence, doable or not?
now
a flying fish's mustache's all can be seen
the atmospheric pressure's dropping, you know
intimate space pops
from blackness
transparent
the sea begins to bubble
being brought to life: denial

typhoon sphere

already
touring the effervescent town
its blasted channel steeple
erased by a hard eraser
tedious
rain of insanity beats
the frequent frequent
flyer
whose sick dreams are his
even though
they're in the wind.
stockings solely
is the seamless boutique chick a naked gang
dangling pistols.
anti-aesthetically falling on face entrance
please don't do anything
a gun shot.
that's it, summer's over
of an afternoon using a loupé to peep on the world
lead clouds
oval hollow
at the kingdom
the glory of catastrophe too
only a drop of foam remains

eternal return

hibernating deeply
oh bright Sphinx
wake up
sleep is only death
the golden emperor long ago perished
palace's walls're crumbled
lizards crawl on pebblestones
are nothing
but ephemera, or
a silent soliloquy drama
&
the setting sun melts
on the thin fingertip
of a girl not knowing of the world
on a winter sunday
when white wind hides its breath
waiting for nightfall
*the further into, still green mountains**
this figure of a lean boy
running across the hinterland
is a recurrent stage-setting
or a futile
tableau of history
isn't it?

translated by Miura Reiichi & Taylor Mignon
**haiku by Santoka*

back to milk four home



photo by Yoel HAREL

**TOWARD
TOTALITY**
(Vers La
Complétude)

&
**OTHER
POEMS**
by

Henri MICHAUX

translated by
**Louise Landes
Levi**

HENRI MICHAUX:

An Introduction

A modest man, a tender man.
who witnessed two large wars, one in childhood, one in exile
After a long search, not for métier, but for meaning,
a poet, a painter, a traveler, and then a sage
who walked, daily, anonymously,
through Les Champs de Mars.
(La Volonté , Mort de l'art)
"Volition, the death of art"
Passages.

Living in Paris, a 'clandestine,'
quasi oriental but respectful, with great respect
for Ruysbroeck, L'Admirable and L'Angèle de Folman,
for Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*
& for Milarepa, The Hundred Thousand Songs...
"La Terre n'est pas ronde, pas encore. Non, il faut la faire ronde"
"The world is not yet round, No, not yet ,we must make it round."
Equador.

A man who chose
imagination & exile
but who gave access
to those bound by 'materiality,' 'home or homeland'
"Dans quelques cents ans, J'ai confiance, le monde sera large Enfin
on communiquera avec les animaux, on leur parlera."
In a hundred years, or so, I am sure, the world will be large.
Finally, one will communicate with animals,
one will speak to them:
Épreuves. Exorcisme.

When asked, in an interview, what poets he read
"Je lis surtout ces textes archaïques, de peuple étrangères ou la poésie
n'est pas mise à part, elle vient à l'improvise,
on ne sait comment."
I read, above all, those archaic texts of foreign peoples
for whom poetry is not something isolated,
it comes spontaneously,
one doesn't know how.

Michaux
in his work as painter & poet,
sought, above all, the Non Dual.
For those fortunate enough to know him as he approached
his eightieth year, there is no doubt that he found his entrance
to this privileged realm.

A modest man, a tender man & a friend.

IN TRUTH

In truth, when I say:
"Great and strong,
Such is death."
"What is living?
Who made more of it?" Death, it is I.
In truth, when I say:
"Don't put parents in your play,
There is no place for them,
And the woman who gave birth was just at
the end of her strength,

Don't ask any more of her,
Don't make so many scenes,
Unhappiness is altogether natural."
In truth, I am the good road that turns back no one.
I am the good dagger that makes two wherever
I go.
It is I who...
It is the others who do not....

SAINT

Circulating in my wretched body, I came
to a region where the parts of myself were truly
rare and where to live it was necessary to be a
saint. But I, who had formerly aspired to saintliness
now that the sickness had backed me into
it, I resisted and I still resist and it is evident
that, like this, I will not live.
I would have had the possibility, yes! But
to be backed into it, that is unbearable to me.

Mes Propriétés, 1929

THEM

They didn't come to laugh or to cry
The didn't come at first any farther
than the river,
They didn't
come in two's or in three's
They didn't come as one had said,
They came without protection, without re-
flection and without madness,
They came without imploring, without
commanding,
They came without asking pardon, without
parents and without supplies,
Until now they haven't worked.
And so, one will be tamed by those more
forsaken than oneself,
One will be conquered, sleep nude on beds pre-
pared by the conqueror.
One will swallow one's share in pleasure or in

suffering,
And many will salute the revelation, grind-
ing their teeth
And without wanting to accept themselves.

Love! Love! Once more your name applied totally
wrong.

La Nuit Remue, 1935

ON THE STREET OF DEATH

On the street of death,
My mother met a great iceberg,
She wanted to speak,
It was already late,
A great cotton iceberg.

She looked at us my brother and I
And then she cried.

We told her—a truly absurd lie—
that we understood.
And then she smiled the very gracious smile
of a young girl,

That was truly herself,
Such a lovely smile almost coy,
And after she was taken into the Opaque.

Lointain Intérieur, 1938

THE MASTER OF HO

I heard the crowd of the whipped speaking with pride.
says the Master of Ho. And I did not laugh.

New laws have been prepared. New laws accumulate, says the Master of Ho. But it is still the edict of the old dwarf, scattered leaves of an already uprooted tree.

Calm, says the Master.

Calm and worry. These are the peregrinations of the hind and the panther until finally they meet. O moment! O extraordinary moment! And everything becomes so simple, so simple.

Calm, says the Master of Ho.

THE LETTER

I am writing to you from a country that was formerly light. I write to you from a country of cloak and shadow. For years we live, we live in the tower of a flag broken by wind. Oh! Summer! Poisoned summer! And ever since it is always the same day, the day of encrusted memory.

The ensnared fish thinks as much as he can of water. As much as he can, isn't it natural? At the top of a mountain slope one receives a pike-blow. It is then that a whole life changes. One instant breaks down the door to the temple.

We consult each other. We no longer know. Neither one nor the other knows anymore. That one is confused. All are distraught. Calm is no more. Wisdom does not outlast inspiration. Tell me, who having received three arrows in the cheek will present himself in a flippant way?

Death takes some. Prison, exile, famine, misery take the others. Great swords of cold crossed us, then the abject and the sly crossed us.

Who, on our soil, still receives the kiss of joy in the depth of his heart?

The union of myself and wine is a poem. The union of myself and a woman is a poem. The union of the sky and the earth is a poem. But the poem which we have heard has paralyzed our minds...

Our song in the great suffering could not be sung. Art has the mark of arrested jade. The clouds pass, clouds with the contours of rocks, clouds with the contours of sins, and we, like the clouds, we pass, padded with the vain powers of grief.

One no longer likes the day. It shrieks. One no longer likes the night, haunted with worry. A thousand voices in order to deceive. No voice on which to lean. Our skin is tired of our pale face.

The event is great. Night is also great, but what can it do? A thousand stars do not light a single bed. Those who knew no longer know. They leap with the train, the roll with the wheel.

"To live in one's own skin". Don't even think of it. The solitary house does not exist on the island of Parrots. In the fall, the villainess revealed herself. Pure is not pure. It shows its abstinence, its spite. Some manifest in squeaks. Others manifest in escape. Dignity does not manifest.

Ardor in secret, farewell to truth. The silence of the pavement, the cry of the stabbed,

the harmony of frozen repose and feelings which burn was our harmony. The path of the perplexed dog, our path.

We have not recognized ourselves in the silence, we have not recognized ourselves in the screams, nor in our caves nor in the gestures of strangers. All around us the country is indifferent and the sky without purpose.

We have seen ourselves in the mirror of death. We have seen ourselves in the mirror of the outraged seal, of flowing blood, of decapitated rapture, in the charred mirror of insult.

We have returned to the glaucous streams.

THE LETTER SPEAKS AGAIN...

...I write to you from the City of Interrupted Time. The slow catastrophe does not end. Our life continues, our life thins out and we still wait for "the moment that will pass over the wall."

The old dispute unites brother to brother. Everyone enclosed in the pregnancy of cold. Those who possess possess without anymore possessing. Each poor in himself, not even occupying his own bed. Worry occupies him.

Disorder is everywhere. The ears are for the unification of the universe. The arms are to fall down on and lethargy is to let things pass.

Iron is no longer heavy. It meets with itself in the high atmosphere, solid, quick, made for evil. But thought is heavy. It has never been so heavy.

The proverb lied "No one is wounded two times from the same arrow." How? Not two times. Two thousand times two times and it still wounds, all sharp. Beneath thought, never extinguished, the forehead burns. The balm of forgetfulness could not be prepared.

Those who speak inflate their voices. They also inflate truth. The pack rushes to a broad country. A pack asks only to chase, but who asks to be hunted. The pack with its great barking spreads out...

.....

I write to you from the country of the atrocity, I write to you from the Capital of the sleeping crowd. One lives indifferently in the horror. One calls for the end and the leveling comes...Noble forms no longer show themselves. One sees the necks bent down to kiss. Peace is ashamed.

Know this as well: We no longer have our words. They have withdrawn. In truth, they live, they wander among us. THE FACE WITH THE LOST MOUTH.

.....

Sometimes, in a great clutter, our houses, with floors of dust, flow into the streets. The officials on the course of death remain without numbers.

.....
I am ceasing to write to you. No, don't send anyone to prepare the festivities. No, it is not yet time.
.....

We remained seated on the margin of the abandoned well. Everything had the color of scrap iron and of beams smoking and the color of profound fatigue.
Triangles of rigid birds cover the sky with a great sound.
Despair like the rain and for how long will it fall?
Old, small, vain, wanting to rule, allowing to kill, content to defeat, holding a doll.
Time passed, evasive response, the years bound between the fingers of traitors.
We looked at each other in silence. We looked at each other with the precocious seriousness of children of the blind...

Épreuves, Exorcismes, 1940–1944

STEADY PEACE

Peace in the nerves of a sick heart
Steady peace ripens its law
Sucked into life
To a nebulous life, to life...
And heavy the chariot, heavy, heavy.

Calm them.
Send wind to them.
The warm wind of delicate branches,
The warm wind of sovereign deserts.

And now...CLOSE
your corollas of anguish.

***from* TO ACT, I AM COMING**

Pushing the door in you open, I entered
To act, I am coming
I am there
I support you
You are no longer abandoned

You are on longer in difficulty
Unraveled threads, your difficulties unwind
The nightmare from which you returned exhausted exists no more
Shoulder to shoulder
You step with me
Your foot on the first step of the infinite stairway
That carries you
That raises you
That fulfills you

I calm you
I spread cloths of peace within you
I am kind to the child of your dream
Flow,
Flow in psalms on the circle of the frightened one's images
Flow on the snows of her paleness,
Flow on her hearth...and the fire revives itself.

LINES

On the lines set without purpose
on paper, on the pages of lines.

Ennobled by a trace of ink, a fine line, a line, where
nothing else could smell

Not to explain, not to expose, not in terraces, not
monumentally

Rather, as in the world there are anfractuositities,
sinuosities, as there are wandering dogs

a line, a line, more or less a line...

in fragments, in beginnings, quickly drawn, a line,
a line...

Young firs in the new water of a sensation which appears,
speaks, laughs, raves or which already in moments, stabs

Escaped from prisons received as inheritance, come
not to define, but to un-define, to rake-up, to play truant
again, lines, from here, from there, lines,

Falling zigzagging, plunging to dream, to distraction,
to multiplication...in desires which stretch-out, which release

Fragments without escort, the real de-mined,
Mouse of the memory indefinitely profiling itself
on the horizon of the page
or else light traces of an uncertain future

Of no language, the writings
Without loyalty without affiliation
Lines, only lines.

YANTRA

To Kim Chi

Filled with the power of the senses
with the plenitude of refusal, of retreat
the erect serpent traversed with sounds

Stretched, vertical
simultaneously inside and outside the four cardinal points
yet
withdrawn
in the Infinite
Universal self at all points conjoined

Allied, to the underground, the dark
there where the force of the shadow darkens with rage
mouth to mouth the noble and the ignoble
unperturbed
unpenetrated

at the center of axial space
apart from the tormentors

Descent into privileged territory

Eliminated the actual, the accidental
the dust of the existential
eliminated the attachment
blind to alterity*
invested with grandeur
with silence
invested with the immaterial
with the suspicious indefinite of abstruse powers

Again immersed
Force without face,
Matrix of forms and rampart against the forms

In the space a faceless eye contemplates
with an inalterable look,
without flagging, without flirtation
without fatigue

Recall to order
Call to the return
Call to annihilate

Consciousness, the surpassed consciousness
consciousness like an invasion of lavas

Insignificant, a thousand times significant
the triangles
without emotion, without accent
that nothing distinguishes
the slender triangles, peak below
traverse similar triangles, peak above
revealing to the initiate their murmuring secret.

Isolated, a few colors, apart
speak and do not speak of
the powers of the qualities

Spots, rays, here, there
impenetrable shapes
speak of beginnings, of commitments
at a great distance stellar perhaps

Support of the meditating
at the center a point
only a point
responding to the need
to the need of needs

to the need of the essence
of the essence of the essences
at the center a point
recalls, without deception.

Hub of arrivals
Compass the winds of the Spirit

Circles of the omnipresent conjunction male-female
Labyrinth where the imperious shafts from
the alphabet of the gods
penetrates, curves

Principle without speech
Principle of all principle
Return to the principle
reverberating at a level above
always on the vibration of the Unique
attuned to all in depth
in intimate union
embracing
in efforts to still more broadly embrace

The cloud of being condenses
coils
Cosmos-Universe
Cosmos of the Universe of the "self"

In the space a faceless eye contemplates
with an inalterable look
without flagging, without flirtation,
Without fatigue

Fat, heavy, peasant, her materiality
but a thread binds her
a thread through the strange to the unlimited binds her
thread of recall
where the void itself is tied
where the totality is tied
where time and undivided space is tied
and the original Egg floating on the waves of
the formless is tied
Where the creation and the dissolution
and the inferiority is tied
and the diamond of its own meditation

Knowledge. (participating knowledge.)
Immensifying illumination where all with all

enters into contemplated resonance
Re:

Above geometries, geometry,
lines, like slow-motion radiations,
insisting, clairvoyant
charged with the occult
Design for the return of the absolute
Design-destiny.

*(from Ruysbroek "l'alterité" meaning 'the other') .

Moments, 1974

SHADOWS FOR ETERNITY

The opiate that stops the pain of the entrails/
also stops time/ elongates the hours/
raises the tower/ and summons the
completed centuries/ returning the city
to Temples and to Gods/

He who is shadowed by the malaise of the time/
to whom his century has brought shade/ has
had to more than another/ experience again
the importance of the shadow/ and decide, in
turn, to cast a shadow/ but multiple/ but
ineffaceable/ which would not attenuate/ would not
thin out/would not pass/ shadow forever/

There where the desires for emulation are definitively
extinguished/ in the majestic places/ destined
for the unfolding of memorable episodes from the
lives of heroes/ and extraordinary men/ on broad
empty squares/ uninhabited except for some very
white statues/ the shadow took its place/

Like a painful recollection/ like a reprimand/ like
launches on the sand/ like old men from whom one
cannot escape/ irregular/ severe/ affected with
the same inhuman serenity/ that departs from the
mouth of a canon/

Similar to exile/ to the return at once feared and
desired/ to an occult surveillance/ to destiny
and to obstacles that present themselves to destiny/
similar to the melancholy that sees the future
heavily veiled/

Similar to fatality

Similar to the depths of memory and resentment/ to
secret claims/ to desires for hyperbole, affirmations/

Similar to the profound resonance of a sentence in
a foreign language/ heard one evening by an inspired
autodidact/

Similar to the uncertain peace of he/ who intends to
accept only grandeur and major importance from life/

Similar to paranoia/

Similar to meteors which remain immobile/ the shadows
the giant/ pressing shadows

In the city of blind palaces/ isolated/ imperative/
interminable chimneys/ like Babylonian names/
bleak/ excessive chimneys/

Oblique/ their long shadow/ crossing streets without
people/ in deserted space/

so an insane jetty draws near/

Moments, 1974

*

Some of these translations have appeared previously in *Bananas*, *City Lights Review* and *Lungfull*.

Vers La Complétude
was published in a limited edition of 85 copies,
by Le Tirlemont, Amsterdam.

The translator thanks the editors of these editions.

She also thanks Claudio Rugafiori, friend & translator of the author
& the author himself for generously giving his time & attention to this translation.

*

HOW I CAME TO MEET & WORK WITH HENRI MICHAUX

This story begins in Berkeley, California.
I was studying Indian music, sarangi, at Mills College
with Pandit Ram Narayan. To my great surprise I had won a scholarship
to study at the Indian music school which was part of the Ali
Ak Bar Khan School of Music, at the time. My teacher
had a friend who was, then, a young French composer named
Jean-Claude Eloi. I liked Jean-Claude. He liked my best friend named
Susie, also studying music. Susie was & is a multi-instrumentalist, now living
in Mendocino, but then she was resident of Berkeley & studying Japan-
ese music. We both played in Daniel Moore's
Floating Lotus Magic Opera Company

Although I myself liked Jean-Claude, I sympathized
with his fascination for Susie, who actually liked Christopher Tree, another
improvisational musician & in fact, we all took a trip together to hear Chris-
topher's music in Santa Barbara. Poor Jean Claude was dis-

tressed to understand Susie's true passion, but he was very dignified, writing music in the guest house where we were staying.

When I left Berkeley, to study music, I gave my room, a nice room with silver floors & small kitchen & bath, to Jean Claude, a romantic place above a garage covered with nasturtiums. In those days one could always get nice, cheap places to live. I later received, however, an irate letter from Jean-Claude, whose house had been raided by the police. Apparently the former tenant had been a big LSD dealer, how was I to know that & Jean Claude either thought I was this dealer or that I simply had chosen not to inform him. neither of these. I had no idea about the activities of this former tenant & wrote immediately to Jean Claude w. this information.. My letter however

arrived after he had thrown most of my books & records outside, or had the police done that? At any rate, most of this was then recovered by a distant or imagined-to-be-cousin & I left for India via an over-land route a few months later. On the way I met with Jean Claude in Paris & he contritely gave me 3 or 4 volumes of a writer named Henri Michaux, he thought I wld. want to read this author.

I faithfully carried these volumes to India, across the Trans Siberian express to Istanbul & thereafter by a series of local trains, buses & jeeps. Jean Claude was, anyway, a very elegant person & I had also re-met my Romanian family in Paris & somehow these connections were strong ones.

To my surprise I found myself teaching French in Bombay, to earn a living, while I studied music. First I taught in Sumati Moragi's School but I was unable to control the children...Then, by a series of chance incidents, I'd over heard, at a party separated by a distance of at least 40 feet, a conversation

in which it was disclosed that the Cathedral High School, a prestigious private school in Bombay, needed a French teacher. I immediately suggested myself...& was miraculously hired. The students were

not swinging from the rafters & I was somehow able to arrive to the classes & teach, in my little saris, I found the atmosphere somewhat dull. but I distinctly remember the joy of translating Michaux in the library of that school.

I liked the Vedic prayers
& was studying the Ramanyana, The Mahabharata, the
school of literature that carried the devotional love, but
I was at times rather bored by it, also because the translations were
not very exciting. Therefore, I was amazed to dis-
cover that this Mr. Henri Michaux was
covering the same territory,

but safely beyond the temple, the tradition & the
hierarchy of belief...It was like a rewritten form of the same
old... 'Ecco Homo' . I continued translating
Mr. Michaux , without any idea of

who he really was or his importance
to French or European literature. I had however a strong background in
the symbolist school & had read, with great interest,
Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Nerval, Baudelaire, Verlaine & Valéry.
One of the things I had noticed about

Sanskrit recitation was the way it carried the
symbolist concept to a higher degree & created not mere thought
forms but the possibility of total transmutation through
the spoken & written word, obviously these prayers
cld. create fire, or rain.

Michaux
was not about to start a forest
fire, but with great enthusiasm I explored the secret world
of his mind & kept this up, even in the most in-
timate or strange situations, translating
Vers La Complétude
in the ancient city of Udaipur,
which was also the home of the great yogini
& princess Mira-Bai another author
I was later to translate.

My first stay in India finished dramatically
when I was unable to integrate the situation before, after
& during the Pakistani/Indian war, the first of the CIA spon-
sored military undertakings,
I was to later learn.

I went to the American Embassy, begging
to be repatriated, but they said, "there is no war...what are
you talking about?" In the news stand, one cld. see American newspapers
with headlines like NO SUBS IN THE BAY OF BENGAL & Indian
newspapers with pictures of the American
nuclear submarines in the Bay of Bengal.

The peaceful beach front where I lived,
with my then boyfriend Joep Bor, became a battle ground.
The night of the first black out, I stood alone in a small hut,
completely paralyzed after hearing the first explosions
of what seemed to be 'bombs', actually, I later
discovered it was all a test, a kind of
'invention'
(on the part of the military).

I waited all night for the Pakistani soldiers to come off their ships & rape me,
but no Pakistani soldiers appeared. My mind was in 'shell shock'
the effects of which took at least a year to wear off...

Clothed in that garment, I returned first to
Europe, then to the USA. I later re-met Joep in Amsterdam
& lived with him for the next few years, but we were almost like strangers,
unfortunately. Friends helped me to go through the
Michaux work, John Taylor, Sidonie Rochon, but
mostly I kept my literary side a kind of
secret,
especially the Michaux & Daumal work
(I literally I kept the manuscripts under my bed.)

Later Joep returned to India alone,
our relationship was over but I hung onto like a
drowning person clings to a boat... I visited him in his small
rooms at the University of Delhi & rather than play sarangi, which disturbed him, I
dutifully played flute & spent hours translating Daumal & Mira Bai.
(the theory being that if he didn't like a musician, he might like a 'translator',
my strategy didn't work, of course).

When I returned to Amsterdam I had an entire collection
of both Michaux & Daumal not too sure what to do with it. Then,
still waiting for Joep, Ira Cohen showed up, exactly as
I knew 'someone' wld... & he knew what to do with
me & my work... Soon we were going around

to the poets and editors of the city. ..I was too shy &
awkward to do this on my own. People like Bill Levy made
very intelligent suggestions... saying the work
was valuable & that I ought to
do something with it,
(write to American publishers).

Ira left to meet Petra Vogt & tentatively
thought to do a Michaux/Daumal book with his small press,
Bardo Matrix. Gerard Melanga in Rotterdam also thought to publish
some of the work w. his press Cold Turkey, but these plans didn't

crystallize.

Instead, New Directions immediately wanted the Daumal, without however even knowing what it was & as I was going to Paris to see Swami Muktananda & had received very strong indications to do so, I wrote to Michaux...

&
told him about my translations
I had his address from another French poet.

My Romanian aunt lived 4 blocks away (fr. Michaux) & my cousin; who had originally sent me the Daumal work & some of the great Michaux material, once I had exhausted the 3 or 4 books given to me by Jean Claude, was his practically his next door neighbor.

I met both Michaux & Muktananda.
The meeting with Muktananda was very powerful & I wondered if I shouldn't stay in Paris to work with his disciples & at the same time to work on the Michaux/Daumal texts.

The meeting with Michaux was very magical, yet charged with sympathy. I was dressed in some kind of 70's costume from Manali, green velvet & jeans, still wholly 'enraptured' by the mantras & scene outside Paris where Muktananda was 'holding court'.

My dear great aunt—who had been a pianist in Romania & who assured me that our family had not been 'enslaved'...
"We were not slaves in Romania" she told me—
she also told me that the atmosphere of our 'village' (Botisani) was so sweet, that she could not describe it in the context of 'Western' (Parisian) life—

said, "I saw Jesus Christ on the television". I said,
"O yes, I was there"... My great aunt was the only one to intimate the literary nature of what I was doing & the only one to invite me to the 'family' house, at least for tea,

once I had, with the help of a cat
(who I took to be Swami Nityananda, Muktananda's teacher)
found a little maid's room, next to my Romanian family
at 36 Ave. Charles Floquet,
Les Champs de Mars...

I sublet my flat in Amsterdam
& moved into this little room to work. It was
here I accomplished my Michaux, Daumal & Mira translations
especially the Daumal...Mira Bai I used to translate, in particular
in a bar next to Mt. Picelle Grenelle (a métro stop)
& Michaux, in particular, in the restaurant
of a train station, on the Amstel River.

But once we were working together
I translated Michaux w. Michaux, in his beautiful
room on Ave. Suffren. Michaux & Claudio Rugafiori completely
accepted me & transformed my eccentricity & sensibility
into pure literary
concentration.

Michaux
defended me against his English translator
& personally selected the work he wished to use for a book...
There was a very strong ENERGY between us, a completely unviolated energy,
& he patiently helped me with the work
discussed and corrected it with me
(I knew almost all the poetry by heart at the time—at least the sequence of poems, I
had translated
& he was very interested in the Sanskrit studies...& in the spirituals schools, generally—
this was a great liberation from the strange isolation I had
felt in Holland & for the first time

I felt a major shift in my capacity. This
was interrupted, when because of a 'spiritual error', at least
I think that's what it was,
or was it just hesitation—a fear to move—or 'attachment' to my 'family')
a concierge threw away 8 yrs. worth of my own poetry
everything thing from India & before...
on Avenue
RAPP.
(where I used to practice Sanskrit,)
as if the situation was not clear.

I later discovered that the neighborhood of my aunt,
including my aunt, thought I was crossing
the Champs de Mars each morning...
to score a
fuck

Il m'ont pensé une 'putaine' pendant que
j'étais complètement dédiée à la parole...
ancienne et post moderne...
They thought I was a prostitute when I was, in fact, totally dedicated to the
WORD—ancient & post modern.

My work discarded,
I suffered a severe break with the 'Guru' ...as least his
outer form...The Buddhist lamas came to my rescue...I wanted to
leave Paris but Michaux said "No—not before you finish Daumal"
& he hired me as his English Teacher. Unfortunately
our relation changed...because I was

now dependent on him and so shocked—
but he continued to receive me w. great cordiality & concern,

& to work with me until the Daumal text was complete. He
particularly liked the Pali Buddhist chant. and his last great act was to
treat me to a 10 day retreat in a tiny Tibetan monastery
in the 18th arrondissement.

I wld. have remained in Paris. I had
gotten a job at the American College, but I did not know it.
I had a flat near Claudio & his then partner Max, on the Rue Mazarine,
at least for a few months, but I had a different destiny...
I went to London to work for Sogyal Rimpoche
& then met, 10 days later, Robert Beer,
& began a new relation w. him.

Through Robert I met
Namkhai Norbu Rimpoche,
but that is another story. Michaux & I remained
in contact, but the situation & contact was totally changed. Also,
because I was no longer 'alone' as he said.

My life grew very difficult,
there were more severe loses, psychic & physical...

Namkhai Norbu
saved my life as later 'I lay dying' on the streets of Paris...
& there began a long healing process.

By 1983 I was on my feet
(back in Amsterdam). By 1984 things were
beginning to evolve with clarity. I had met the
poets Udo Breger & Franco Beltrametti at
One World Poetry
(an annual 'alternative' festival)
Udo was to become a good friend
& Franco, a great inspiration.

I published my first poetry book
in Amsterdam, *The Water Mirror*, with Ira's help.... It was
a kind of critical, in our small circle, success, to
my surprise. I had also magically met

a printer named Felix Mansighn who had a personal interest in helping me publish small books, including *The Water Mirror*, once the original publisher had backed down fr. his goal of twelve books, Amsterdam School, nos.1–12.

My next project was Michaux. I reworked the translation to *Vers la Complétde* & wanted to make a book he really loved. I still had some 'signs' he had given me when Ira was thinking of publishing the work, Henry V. Tienden (Le Tirelemont, Amsterdam) volunteered to pay for the set work & distribute the

book. I designed a small rice paper edition, in 84 copies, the idea was to arrive at Michaux's door on his 84th birthday, with an edition wrapped in a Kata, a white silk scarf, usually presented to Buddhist masters.

The printer was slow & Michaux died before the book was printed. When I arrived in tears to the printer's office, we immediately began work & the 3 days following Michaux's death were spent amassing the pages & cutting the rice paper. "He was watching you fr. the Bardo" wrote Virginia. The text reads like a Bardo prayer.

For many years, once I had learned the practice of Xiltro, the Buddhist prayer for the dead, I did this practice for Henri Michaux..

People like him knew how to be kind. They knew how to draw out the very best fr. a person, overlooking the defects.

Michaux once said to me "others bring knives to the house but you bring roses." He had a tiny desk in his bedroom like for a very small child. We worked in a small room filled w. piles of books & papers, he sitting on one side of the table, me on the other. There was of course a painting studio... He described to me the wonder he felt upon first seeing the paintings of Paul Klee & said he had been attracted to the Japanese styles but when he discovered the Chinese, he was overwhelmed.

Everything about the way he lived was very elegant & somehow Chinese. He sometimes talked about other poets & liked Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues* as far as

American poetry was concerned. He said that Allen Ginsberg's energy was trapped in his sexual chakra but that he had sung in a very charming way in a taxi once.

He said he wasn't meant for the 'religious life' but that had wanted to be a Franciscan. He never let his picture be taken because he wanted to preserve, like an old master his anonymity. He did not

want to be recognized. Claudio said he was a total 'clandestine' in Paris & even refused Gallimard's offer to publish pocket editions of his work.

When he died, his concierge went into a coma. Her husband & daughter were very upset. I felt she wanted to help him in the Bardo. Michaux was transparent, a completely magical being, who was totally alert & enthused, when I met him at the age of 76.

When he died, he spent his last hours talking to the nurse about his travels. She was going to put an oxygen tent over his head but he said 'No'...he wanted to travel on... I suppose the concierge felt she cld. be useful in the domicile.

Jane Harvey & I did the first reading of *Vers La Compléude* in an elegant house owned by Don Bloch & Iman in Amsterdam. We or rather I wanted to do this performance, outside, on a small 'stage' which was of course a kind of 'dock' on the canal

I wanted to put each sheet of the (unbound) book into the water after I read it, but it rained & Jane cld. not sing with her tambora in such weather. Michaux liked very old (or very new) music, nothing else. I had asked Jane to sing Dhrupad music for the reading.

We did the performance indoors & I asked all the people to send 'lights' to Michaux's concièrege. When I called a few days later she had come out of her coma.

Michaux understood poetry as a tool, he liked the phrase 'monastery of the mind' which I once described him as creating w. his words. I thought of him as a kind of Dzog Chen master who through the dialogue of his absolute medium, tore

open the illusion of this subjective
world & explored its limits, like a gifted child
in
an
unexpected
Universe.

Michaux lived through the Second World War
& the death of his wife, who was severely burned in a car accident
(he was driving the car)
& died three weeks later.

But his consciousness was totally open,
totally open & extremely refined.

He did not like his picture to be taken,
(& refused books on which his appeared)—throwing at least one across the room,
but was happy when the Dalai Lama saw his photo,
indeed selected it fr. others which were showed to him
by a French photographer "Who is this" the Dalai Lama inquired,
Michaux said, smiling "Now I'm in the Dalai Lama's mind."

"namo tat sat bhagavate arahate sambha sabhudaca"

This was his preferred prayer.

Louise Landes Levi

Ms. Nancy Peters of City Lights Books requested this essay to be written
& many of the translations included in this selection were read by the translator
at City Lights Books, San Francisco, California, February 1998.

This volume is also available through

Coronamundi Press, 2002.

[milk home](#)



collage by **Indra** Tamang

The Drunken Boat

by **Arthur Rimbaud**
translated by **JN REILLY**

As I was going down the impassable rivers,
I no longer felt myself guided by haulers:
Screaming redskins having taken them for targets,
Had nailed them to colored stakes.

I was indifferent to all crews,
Carriers of Flemish wheat or English cottons.
When with my haulers those uproars finished,
The rivers let me go where I wanted.

In the furious lapping of the tides,
The other winter, deafen than the brains of children,
I ran! And unmoored peninsulas
Have not undergone a more triumphant hubbub.

The tempest blessed my maritime awakenings.
Lighter than a cork I danced on the waves,
Which are called the eternal rollers of victims,
Ten nights, without missing the simple eye of lanterns.

Sweeter than the flesh of sour apples is to children,
The green water penetrated my hull of fir
And washed me of stains of blue wine
And vomit, scattering helm and grapnel.

And from then on I bathed in the Poem
Of the sea, infused with stars and latescent,
Devouring the green azures; where, flotsam pale
And ravished, a pensive drowned person sometimes sinks;

Where, suddenly dyeing the blueness, delirium
And slow rhythms under the gleams of daylight,
Stronger than alcohol, vaster than our lyres,
The bitter redness of love ferments!

I know the skies bursting with lightning, and the waterspouts
And the surf and the currents: I know the evening,
The dawn exalted as a flock of doves,
And sometimes I have seen what man thought he saw.

I have seen the low sun stained with mystical horrors
Illuminating with long violet clots,
Like the actors of very ancient dramas,
The waves rolling far away their quivering of shutters!

I have dreamed the green night with the dazzling snow,
A kiss slowly rising to the eyes of the sea,
The circulation of unheard-of saps,
And the yellow and blue awakening of singing phosphorous!

I have followed, through the pregnant months, the swell,
Like hysterical cows, assaulting the reefs,
Without dreaming that the luminous feet of the Marys
Could constrain the muzzle of the wheezing oceans!

I have struck upon, you know, incredible Floridas
Mixing with the flowers of panthers' eyes in the skin
Of man! Rainbows stretched like bridles
Under the horizon of the seas, to glaucous herds!

I have seen enormous swamps ferment, hoop-nets
Where a whole Leviathan rots in the rushes!
The collapse of waters in the midst of calms,
And the distances contracting towards the abyss!

Glaciers, suns of silver, nacreous waves, skies of embers!
Hideous wrecks at the bottom of brown gulfs
Where giant serpents devoured by bugs
Fall from twisted trees with black scents!

I would have liked to show children those dorados
Of the blue wave, those fish of gold, those singing fish,
—the foam of flowers rocked my drifting
And ineffable winds momentarily winged me.

At times, martyr weary poles and zones,
The sea, whose sob made me roll gentle
Rose to me with her flowers of shadow with yellow suckers
And I remained, like a woman on her knees . . .

Almost an island, tossing on my sides the quarrels
And the droppings of clamoring birds with blond eyes.
And I was sailing, when through my frail bonds
The drowned descended backwards to sleep!

Now I, lost boat under the hair of coves,
Thrown by the hurricane into the birdless ether,
I whose water-drunk carcass neither Monitors
Nor Hanseatic sailing ships would fish out;

Free, smoking, risen with violet mists,
I, who pierced the reddening sky like a wall
Bearing exquisite jam to good poets;
Lichens of sun and mucus of azure;

Who ran, spotted with electric lunulae,
A crazy gangplank, escorted by black seahorses,
When Julys beat down with cudgel blows
The ultramarine skies to the burning funnels;

I who trembled, feeling from fifty leagues away
The moaning rut of Behemoths and deep Maelstroms,
Eternal spinner of blue immobilities,
I miss Europe with its ancient parapets!

I have seen sidereal archipelagos! and islands
Whose delirious skies are open to the voyager:
—Is it these bottomless nights you sleep and exile yourself,
Million birds of gold, oh future Vigor?

But, true, I have wept too much! The dawns are heartbreaking.

Every moon atrocious and every sun bitter:
Acrid love has swollen me with intoxicating torpors.
Oh, let my keel splinter! Oh, let me go into the sea!

If I desire a water of Europe, it is the pool
Cold and black where into the balmy twilight
A child squatting full of sadness, releases
A boat as frail as a butterfly in May.

No more can I, bathed in your languors, oh waves,
Be taken in the wake of carriers of cottons,
Nor cross the pride of flags and flames,
Nor swim under the horrible eyes of hulks.

Arthur Rimbaud, b. Oct. 20, 1854, the precocious boy-poet of French symbolism, wrote some of the most remarkable poetry and prose of the 19th century. His highly suggestive, subtle work drew on subconscious sources, and its form was correspondingly supple and novel. Rimbaud has been identified as one of the creators of free verse because of the rhythmic experiments in his prose poems *Illuminations* (1886; Eng. trans., 1932). His "Sonnet of the Vowels" (1871; Eng. trans., 1966), in which each vowel is assigned a color, helped popularize synesthesia (the description of one sense experience in terms of another), a device widely exploited by the symbolists. The hallucinatory images in "The Drunken Boat" (1871; Eng. trans., 1952) and Rimbaud's urging, in *Letter from the Seer* (1871; Eng. trans., 1966), that poets become seers by undergoing a complete derangement of the senses also reveal Rimbaud as a precursor of surrealism. Following his own dictum, Rimbaud lived an inordinately intense, tortured existence that he described in *A Season in Hell* (1873; Eng. trans., 1932).

The poet who came to symbolize alienated genius for French letters was the son of an army captain who deserted his family when his son was six years old. (Rimbaud cherished an image of this absent father as a man of action, a powerful force—while his mother represented restraint and weakness.) He was a brilliant student at a provincial school in Charleville, a town in northeastern France, until the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war (July 1870), when the boy turned rebel and fled his home.

JN Reilly of Glasgow, Scotland is a poet, fiction writer, and editor, published widely throughout Europe. His poems resemble spells, or vast cataracts of space, which lead the reader closer to awakening. He is the editor of *Shamanic Warriors Now Poets*, which will include work by Diane DiPrima, Rodrigo Rey Rosa, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Patti Smith, Philip Whalen and Mati Klarwein, among others.

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20 Questions with Robert CREELEY



photo by Indra TAMANG

1. If you could characterize the twentieth century as a film actor, who would it be?

Marlon Brando – just that that’s where I came in and he was the one whose presence most defined the world I took us both to be fact of.

2. Do you have a writing ritual, or is the process different each time?

I have places I feel at ease, and that matters. I think it was Leger who used to put on white coveralls to paint – and the Goncourt brothers reputedly contrived to have early morning sex, so as to free themselves from distraction. I like working on a computer or else paper, if that’s all that’s handy. Simple needs!

3. Are the spaces between notes, or words, as important as the words themselves?

Whatever locates the phrasing, or phasing, is part of the

action and those “spaces” are certainly a crucial component.

4. How has jazz music shaped your aesthetic?

I think it's most had to do with my sense of phrasing, or how a serial pattern, call it, might be sounded or heard. Too, it's made me aware of how much can go into such a pattern without losing the coherence.

5. Favorite memory of an experience in a car?

Actually it's the memory of a story about an experience in a car. Years ago someone told me the story of William Faulkner and his terrific friends driving drunkenly along some river near Oxford, Mississippi. Apparently the one driving wasn't able to make a left turn in time, whereupon Faulkner said matter of factly, “I believe the son of a bitch is going into the river.” And they did.

6. America characterized as a song? What song?

How about “Farther Along” – secularized?

7. What are you working on currently?

Staying with it. I know I do work on things but too often that frame feels like painting the house or going to the dentist.

8. Gauguin or Van Gogh? Why?

I couldn't choose between them – each is terrific, albeit they are very different. Both seem primarily painters, come hell or high water.

9. World poet or American? Both?

Whatever the question implies, the local is always it. There is no “world” otherwise, even “American.”

10. What would you say to the president if you met him on the street tomorrow morning?

Get a life!

11. Most influential poet of Latin America?

Cabral was certainly solid – and I always was moved by Parra and Neruda, that active sense of a real person being there. Do you know Samuel Beckett's great translations of Mexican poetry? Octavio Paz did the selection.

12. Why?

I feel very dumb trying to answer because what do I know about Latin American poetry? My own generation with few exceptions had little relation to it and when we did, it seemed still faint and too late. In some ways I'd be persuaded to go back to Ed Dorn's telling me about Euclides da Cunha's *Rebellion in the Backlands* (1902) because that book is probably still the best sense of South America I'd know. It was translated by Samuel Putnam. Two years teaching the patrone's kids on a coffee plantation (1959–61) did nothing finally to inform me. It was like living in a bubble.

13. Is a poem like a field or an ascent into the void?

"A poem is a small (or large) machine made of words" – or perhaps it's the tree one will never see a poem as lovely as. Both propositions come from New Jersey as it happens.

14. Is the Internet our friend, or adversary?

For me it's been a great resource in every sense – as looking up just now both the date and exact title for da Cunha's book, and then making sure I had the Williams' quote correctly. Our very means here of doing this

exchange (e-mail) has been an invaluable resource, traveling about or just staying home. Too, there has never been a more efficient and unobtrusive support for writing itself than that which a computer provides.

15. What was the first rock 'n roll song you remember hearing?

Fats Domino singing "Ain't That a Shame" and other classics of the moment in Ma Peak's tavern on the way to the town of Black Mountain from the college. Some nights the whole physical floor used to rock with the dancing.

16. What was the most influential little mag.?

Cid Corman's *Origin* – that's where I found my company.

17. Would you say that poetry smells of wood smoke or exhaust?

You got me!

18. What essential book would you take on a long journey alone?

Weirdly, I haven't a clue.

19. What time is it where you are now?

One twenty-one pm.

20. What word of advice to the world?

Stop killing people as a means of solution.

[milk home](#)

Journal
Excerpts, 1968

February 25

Finished reading
The Vanity of
Duluoz by Jack
Kerouac. What
nerve—in the best
way!

March 19

I go hear John
Berryman, Robert
Lowell, and others
read poems by
their dead friends
Jarrell, Schwartz,
and Roethke.
Unbelievably
depressing, so I
forget everything
that (didn't)
happen there, and
quick.
("Everything"
includes
Berryman's
account of guests
in fleebag Times
Square hotel
complaining of
commotion in a
hallway: "It was
Delmore . . .
gasping . . . for
breath!")

March 25

With Ted Berrigan
at the Byrds
concert, Fillmore
East. Ted tells me



that John Wieners once dressed up in his mother's clothes and makeup. John's father came home, took one look, and left the house. Ten minutes later, he called John from a phone booth and said, "Now, John, you be a good boy."

March 25

Introduced by John McKendry to Marcel Duchamp outside the MoMA Dada Surrealism show, opening night, 10:04 p.m. Duchamp had the first room to himself. "Go—go see the show!" he beamed.

Kenneth Koch,
Harry Mathews,
David Shapiro,
Dick Gallup and
Peter
Schjeldahl for
students in
lounge during
riots at
Columbia; and
last night for
Eugene
McCarthy's
presidential
candidacy, with
Ron, Ted and
Kenneth at a
bar called
Eugene's. At
Eugene's we
meet a nice girl
who turns out to
be the niece of
Charles
Reznikoff; she
promises to
invite us to
dinner to meet
her Uncle
Charles.

May 14

At Merce Cunningham's opening night, the after-performance party in the lobby of Brooklyn Academy. I sit down to dinner next to Jasper Johns and across from Maxine Groffsky, John Cage and Marian Javitts. Dessert is a dubious-looking honey pudding served in little cups. Johns tastes it first, then gives Cage some from his spoon. I offer some to Marian Javitts who says "No, thank you." then Jasper offers some to Marian Javitts and she takes it. Laughter. I offer some to Maxine and she declines. Jasper offers and she accepts. I offer some to David Whitney— same thing again. John Cage returns to the table. "John," I say, "will you have some of my pudding?" "No, thanks, I've had some." Johns offers him some from his spoon and he takes it. Marian tells me that there is a very simple reason for all this, something she learned from feeding her babies: "You withdraw it," she says, "you don't really give it to them." What Jasper was doing was putting the spoonful to their lips and making the offer in one complete gesture.

May 23

At Gotham Book Mart, a party for Kenward Elmslie's and Joe Brainard's book *The Champ*. Joe's drawings on the walls of the upstairs gallery. I buy the drawing of the

baseball player wearing uniform number "53" partly because I liked it and partly because of the blond, English (like Julie Christie) girl behind the counter.

Ron Padgett and I go to dinner for Charles Reznikoff at his niece's house on Riverside Drive. CR talking, using his necktie as worry beads—fidgiting. Quotes from *Hamlet*: "Tis bitter cold and I am sick at heart." He has "double" the *Testimony* already published, unpublished. Vachel Lindsay, "the one who could read" [aloud, he meant]. Dylan Thomas, "a druid." He said he looked through Zukofsky's *A Test for Poetry* and found a poem he liked (not signed); he looked it up in the index and discovered it was by him. "It nice to know you had it right all along," he said.

June 12

Reading with Joe Brainard at St. Marks Church. Afterward, when Joel Oppenheimer was complaining that any worker but not a poet could have a house in Queens, Kenneth Koch rejoined, "But a successful poet can have queens in his house."

August 11

Monteverdi—what a pretty name he has!

Carl Rakosi, here at Yaddo, walks into the music room while I'm listening to Satie, *Messe des Pauvres*, and says, "He must have been insane!" Rakosi roomed early on with Kenneth Fearing who, he says, "died senselessly of lung cancer—he never had a cigarette away from his lips!"

August 15

Finished compiling the David Smith chronology for MoMA book, a big job. At "1963" I realized I was happily getting near the end, but getting there meant David (May 23, 1965) had to die.

August 20

Shakespeare's first poem, written while drunk under an apple tree at Stratford:

*Piping Peabworth, Dancing Marston,
Haunted Hillsborough, Hungry Grafton,
Dodging Exhall, Papist Wicksford,
Beggary Broom, and Drunken Bidford.*

Trotsky: "Lenin is dead. The words are like great rocks falling into the sea."

September 19

Visiting Allen Ginsberg in Cherry Valley, a Saratoga sunflower for Allen and Peter. Huncke is there. Peter tries teaching me how to milk Bessie the cow. No soap. Jeep ride to Drummond Hadley's house in Cooperstown. "What would Frank think of the Revolution?" Allen asks. Sitting on the grass looking at the starry night; Polaris, Orion, Cancer . . . Allen (ever the egoist!) says, "If we all disappeared they wouldn't even notice."

October 10

Things Monroe Wheeler said about Marcel Duchamp: "He was going to organize the Stettheimer show [at MoMA] but then went to Paris and

wouldn't come back in time." Mary Reynolds: "Duchamp had a long romance with her. She had a long nose and chin. But she had a voice that was very light and beautiful. She said Marcel was a cunnilinguist. On the other hand, Duchamp said he used to go see her because she lived near the Eiffel Tower." Did Duchamp know Gertrude Stein? "Yes, but he was too *raffiné* for her."

milk home

At The Caves of the Wind: Cretan Meditations

by Valery Oisteanu

Crete is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean, and is situated at the southernmost point of Greece, 50 miles from the Libyan coast of Africa. Surrounded on the north by the Aegean Sea, and in the south by the Libyan Sea, it is quite possible that this is the last surviving piece of land from the destruction of Atlantis. The Greeks designated this island as the birthplace of Zeus, in the mountains of Crete that are very mysterious and rough. With the help of his mother, Zeus hid from his father Cronos, known for his voracious hunger for eating his children. Four mountain ranges divide the island: the White Mountains in the west, Mount Ida in the center, both over 9,000 feet high, Lecithin Mountains, 7,000 feet high, and in the far east, Seteia, 5,000 feet high. Populated by people who claim ancient heritage, as old as 2,500 BC, Crete was home to the famed Minoan civilization that brought us architecture, an alphabet and a specific culture still not fully explored or understood.

With their baggy Turkish shalvars flapping in the warm breeze, the Cretan workmen dug their shovels deeper into the mound of Knossos. Slowly, as the trenches drove into the soil, there appeared long, massive walls. Soon after, stairs, corridors, enormous jars standing in rows, were revealed, as if by magic. The idols and jewelry were buried a few feet underground, waiting for some archeologist with a pick. In 1893, a shortsighted Englishman, Arthur Evans, bought some charms in Athens from a Greek woman. As he peered closely at the charms, which were small, polished stones with strange markings cut into them, he realized they were seal stones. They were used to press on clay or wax to make the mark or signature of the owner. He was amazed that the marks were in some way like hieroglyphs of the ancient Egyptians. He went back to the antique dealer to look at some more. When he asked where the stones came from, he was told they had been found in Crete.

In the spring of 1894, he sailed to Crete with a friend, and went out to explore the island, going to the cave of Psychro near Mount Dikte, which was supposed to be the birthplace of Zeus. Unfortunately, at that time, Turks ruled Crete and they refused to let anyone excavate. Six years later, when the Turks finally left Crete, and he began digging seriously with a gang of thirty workmen at Knossos, they peered through a hole in the dig and uncovered some painted earthenware jars five feet high and some brightly-brightly colored walls (frescoes). To speed up the excavation the number of workers was increased to 100, but the site was so big (over six acres) that he was still digging among the mighty ruins 25 years later. Buried only a few feet underground, he grouped together wonderful objects of clay and ivory, gold necklaces and other things used in Minoan times, nearly 4,000 years ago. But the greatest discovery was a broken clay bar bearing the same mysterious writing, which he seen on the charms he'd bought. More clay tablets appeared, and soon he had a collection of hundred of them. What a pity no one could read them.

Then he was astonished to find a painting of a Minoan man, his body deep red, his eyes dark, and the line of his chest curved in a graceful form with a very slim waist, holding a funnel-like vase. Soon he uncovered more corridors and walls, and he became quite convinced that this was indeed the labyrinth of legend. There was a maze of passages in which anyone could become quite lost. White staircases led to a grand palace. Rows of pillars led to grand square doors. These were royal apartments, chapels, guardhouses, and large storerooms. The Minoans liked open spaces and fresh air. Such architecture gave them light without letting in the hot breeze of summer or the chilly blasts of winter.

The legend says that the Queen of Minos fell in love with a white bull that came out of the sea, and adopted him as a royal pet. The bull was glowingly white, and she decided to make love to him. She asked the court architect, Daedalus, to build a hollow bronze cow, which she entered to be impregnated by the bull. The result of the union was the Minotaur, a scary-looking creature that was kept in the labyrinth and who requested human sacrifice in the form of virgins.

The most unusual activity the Cretans indulged in was bull leaping. In many frescoes, they show an Olympic competition in which one competitor grasps the horns and jumps over the bull's head, and as the bull butts his head, another competitor somersaults over the bull. Behind the animal, there is another girl waiting to catch the youth. This activity could be the beginning of the Olympics we know today. Sometimes, the bull gored the daring, young jumpers. The wounds left their legs stiff and they had to leave the bull jumping team. The bull was a sacred animal, and Sir Arthur Evans believed that bull leaping had a religious purpose. That can be explained by the fact that the King wore a bull mask at certain religious ceremonies.

The Minotaur was slain eventually by Theseus, who ultimately escaped from the labyrinth by using the string given to him by Ariadne at the labyrinth's entrance.

Until 1,400 BC, they used a written language with 88 signs called Linear B, and after that a new writing system called Linear A, with 54 symbols. The signs are largely the same, but the languages themselves different. After that, the palace was burned, and an earthquake brought havoc to Crete, and may have been the cause of the collapse of the buildings, or else a volcano on the island of Thera may have erupted and caused a giant tidal wave to sweep inland and destroy the coastal palaces. In fact, several disasters may have struck Crete. The full truth about Minoans will probably never be known. But, their works of art are still standing in the museums in Heraklion.

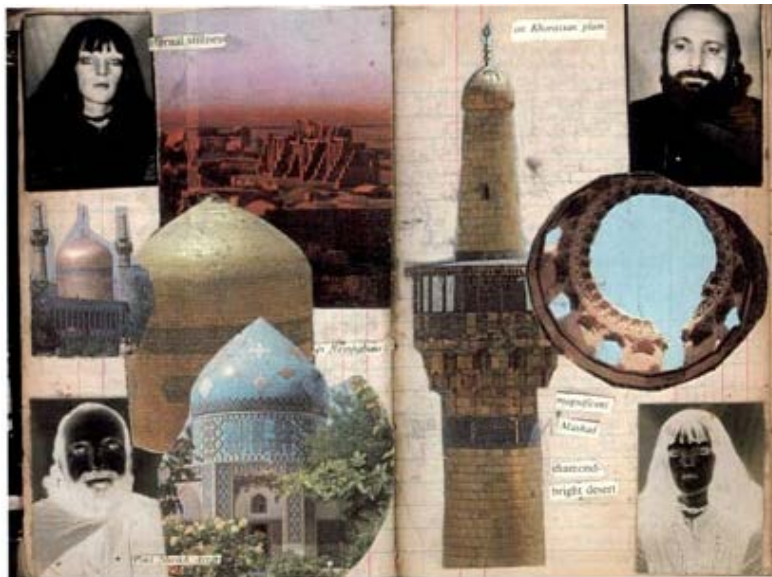
The first time I arrived there, it was in July 1977, after a long journey oversea and land from New York to Amsterdam by air, and then across Europe by land (Volkswagen bus through Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece) via Athens to Crete in a ferry passage with a boat from Piraeus to Heraklion. The trip was brutal, but the satisfaction to be in the company of Cretan gods gave me more strength. From there, I proceeded east to the old capital of Crete, Hania, a Venetian 15th century port augmented by Islamic architecture, and maybe one of the oldest cities in the world with architectural artifacts built during the Minoan civilization, called Kydonia.

A fifteenth-century Venetian church 100 meters from the old port abandoned during Turkish occupation was transformed in 1669 into a synagogue. This historical monument to longevity shadowing everything in the Jewish quarters that, at one time, had several synagogues, a Jewish ghetto called "Ovreiky." Today the only surviving synagogue is called Etz Hayyim. Etz Hayyim is a temple but also a museum, and tourist attraction. The synagogue is a monument that speaks of the long Jewish presence on the island of Crete. The restoration of this holy place pays tribute to the memory of over 265 Cretan Jews who, together with Christian brothers, were arrested by Nazis, forced into the German vessel Tanais, and on June 9, 1944, perished in the Aegean Sea, ironically sunk by allied troops. The restoration of the synagogue Etz Hayyim is a small miracle and a resisting sign of Jews against the destruction of the holocaust and its historical amnesia.

[milk home](#)

23 Skidoo

by Ira COHEN



Ira Cohen '92

Homage to Monk

February 16, 2002, Uris auditorium

Straight No Chaser
Monk is his own
 evidence
In gaberdine
W—out formal
 training
He was the
 revolution
 A stream of lions
under his fingers
Music in the ash
of your burning
 cigarette
In the handkerchief
you used to mop yr brow
if you needn't who
else would've?
You outdid the
rain at its own
 game

you left your finger
prints
on the sky
Turning in your
own
circle you wore
your music like
a hat
of distinction
Always here & now
even now that
you're gone—
Ugly Beauty
you said
lost in the spheres
First was always
best for you
Then you started
staring out of win
-dows
Don't blame me
You played
Leaving the suitcase
filled w/empty Coke
bottles behind
Your hat you kept
on
even while you were
sleeping
Then you went
Off
Minor,
You said to KK
that you weren't
there
Still the sounds
you heard go on
Not hard of
hearing
but so easy
to listen
to

*

Closing Time

Now I find myself
alone
in a vast museum
hall
where I encounter 30 ft.
tall wooden Duck Priests

of New Hebrides—
the shade of Thelonious
by my side. Hail to thee, O Monk,
You have heard
that which no one
had heard
And you played
what no one had
 played
before.
You were yourself
the rarest thing
 of all.

23 Skidoo for PLW

I wake from a deep unaccustomed sleep
& go down to my mailbox
hoping to hear from an old friend
(Tu Fu is far away somewhere
in the shadow of Blue Mountain)
and find your poem telling me
I am not alone
Even when I dial the Shekinah
I find that she is not at home
Encountering Derrida on Mourning,
the Work of Politics of, I find
not a single tear or sigh
Then Hadrian comes to say
that the little soul wavers away
For the Jew salt is inseparable
from religion & retains its nature
in a dry place like Palestine
I wake up from a dream and exclaim,
"Now I know who sent Sirhan!"
It was that All in All who also
brings the rain & makes even a civilization
which will have fallen,
yet to rise again.

—Oct. 24, 2001

General Insanity

General Motors
General Electric
General Dynamics
& General Powell

just three blocks from Ground
Zero
a successful day of trading
under the most difficult of circum-
stances
will be good for *Visionics*
& will add liquidity to complete
the embalming of Hope
The Good Guys are the Angels of Death
Instability can afford to bide
Despite all the terrible things,
the charring & the burning,
it is gratifying to know
that the Market is still alive

How to separate the appalling
from the appalling—
Cisco Systems away!
ask the Lone Ranger then
No, forget the Lone Ranger
ask Tonto, he would know
if it is snowing in Afghanistan
and if the road is slow.

—Sept. 23, 2001

Sadat Comes to Sinai

In the middle of the night
I wake up as the rain
begins to type on the roof
WASH AWAY WASH AWAY

We are all oysters in the basket,
wet dust in the ocean
Escaping the ghetto
only to find holocaust here
in every soul the same story
played out
from year to year
WASH AWAY WASH AWAY

Wash Away the baby carriage
in front of the cigar store
Wash Away the Bronx,
the elevated train heading for Cairo
Please, O Please wash away
the fear
guilt
barbed wire
The sphinx's smile remains

—from an old love letter

Change of Season

To give the effect without mentioning it,
how to hide you in a poem,
The Poet lays on the spell
creating definite concavities—
The lingering effect of spilled perfume
invokes a multitude of empty rooms
where once we lay entwined
in the underwater boudoir of the mind.
That Gate of Ishtar now ruined,
some piece of wall in Balkh
bear testament to the handiwork of Time,
witness what transpires
between wind and stone,
lovers who at last
do merge and disappear—
And we who see each other
among the stars,
Who will know or care
when wind encounters empty wind
what wildness lies still hidden here?
O unheard tongue of poetry,
Sing the sudden rush of air
Sing, sing of the golden lair!

—April 20, 1976

Purim '96

—for *Ralph Feldman & the Eighth Street Shul*

It's Purim now & a little girl
is worried about how
her crown fits
she wears lipstick & carries a bag
full of Hamantaschen & candies
Her mother is thinking of suicide
bombers & twisted metal
while Rabbis are picking up
human parts for burial
In a shower of glass
she calls out her child's name,
ISTAHAR, ISTAHAR
Esther gave herself
for the sake of her people
Purim is a day of masks & games,

a stalker's holiday turned inside out.
Only through mercy does
the King's reign remain secure.

Reality Check 5761

—*For Michael Rothenberg, Toe Dancer*

Ariel goes to the Temple Mount.

Even rubber bullets can kill
Why not try them out on Ariel Sharon?
What about blubber bullets then?
It's too hard to be a member
of the human race-- It's the word race
as in rat race which disturbs me
I don't want to bring home the bacon,
especially on Rosh Hashanah
at the expense of my battered aspirations
I hear that the Dalai Lama will be fucking
Barbara Kruger in the lobby of the Whitney
Museum
to commemorate the year 2001
& the beginning
of the end of the American Century
Gregory Corso knew
about Elegaic Feelings American
George Bush Jr. knows that one and one
makes two,
but that doesn't include me and you
Hanging from a beam of light
no cook will ever cook my goose
or put my dreams to flight.

Hip Hip Harass

What a day! I woke up blotto,
stomach upside down, numbness
in my feet, swollen legs, a pain
in my arm—a few inconclusive
phone calls, an argument over
nothing with a good friend—
& then a police car pulls over
on a deserted street (16th St. & 10th Ave.)
where I am pissing under medical duress

I am lucky I didn't get three
summons, the lady cop says
I guess I could frame the pink slip
she gave me for urinating in public
I think of Diogenes who was famous
for that in his day & much more
but then that was a philosophical
statement
Bush Two says he wants to move forward
but it feels like backward
Isn't It Rich? blare the headlines,
a good song to sing when you are poor
but at 66 what do I have to complain
about? I'm sitting at Tagine on 40th St.,
eating a fine Moroccan dinner
& listening to a jazz trio swinging
the night away--
a postcard I wrote to Lakshmi
was just published in Switzerland
by the Gruppe Thurgau, Bodensee
& Rhein
Thank you Florian, thank you Hamid
I remember dining on fish,
I think it was called felchen
which is unique to Lake Constance
an experience also discovered by
the Romans in another Millennium
I Cover the Waterfront is the name
of the tune & thanks to Adolphe Sax
the beat goes on under stained glass
lamps from Tetuan—
Headgear supreme I call it—
O Lord, your lamp is my bonnet!

—Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2001 NYC

Saturday's Poem

Am I giving a kiss or taking
a kiss?
Am I using enough of the
perfect vernacular?
Are my emotions under control
or will the black crystals of night
explode my days away?
Hanging on a solo branch
things are too real or not real
enough

If it is raining why don't they come?
I'm lying in the bathtub covered
in newsprint, the ink of our time
has turned my face black
What is the meaning of an earthquake
or an uninhabited planet?
All I know is that there is a lion
roaring in my head,
that everything which lives
must surely die—
yet there will never be a last line
or enough time.

—Sept. 8, 2001

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Tom Hibbard reviews *Telling It Slant*

Telling It Slant

edited by Mark Wallace and Steven Marks

University of Alabama Press

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TELLING IT SLANT: LEAVING SHANGRI-LA

T*elling It Slant* isn't the sort of collection I would ordinarily read—essays by variously known writers asked to write about the state of poetry at this time in the U.S. I guess I have more feeling that true comprehensive thinking emerges gradually in an unlikely manner rather than from any sort of officially appointed source. These writers seem to be in some distant way a group. I don't mean that as any sort of reproach. They seem to be to some degree secure in their sense of themselves as writers. This too is ok. Perhaps what makes this book so intriguing and profound is that the writers' sense of themselves as writers is afflicted in the same way. Though I don't mean to imply that they form a movement, they all seem to be wrestling with the same thorny problem.

This is a fairly long book—over four hundred pages, twenty-six different

authors, footnotes, small print. George Washington University lecturer, Mark Wallace, whose reviews I have found reliable and insightful, and Steven Marks have done a faithful and savvy job of editing. As I contemplate, without specific notes and references, the experience of reading *Telling It Slant*, I think of it as a calm, quiet afternoon perhaps after having done some satisfying work or watching in fervent solitude a perfect and memorable sunny, still untroubled day through lacy window curtains. I think of the book with admiring wonder, even amazement. This review does not do justice to the writers individually. Before I begin picking out authors' names and feebly analyzing, I want to offer some sort of praise for them altogether, as peacemakers, as people motivated by a sincere desire for fellowship in a world that has too many that prefer bloodshed and division.

It seems the editors, perhaps the writers also, felt that the point of embarkation for the book was that writers, in this case poets, in modern society 'hate identity'. This is a plausible notion. One might expect to agree with it considering the iconoclastic reputation of artists and writers over the centuries. They don't want to be obligated by labels. Labels are an appendage of the past.

Yet what is more interesting and challenging about this book is viewing it not as an attempt to reject labels but to somehow legitimize them. This might be simplistic. I don't say that the 'lost generation' of today's writers is subconsciously desperate for identity. That sounds plausible also. It's more complicated than that. Perhaps I shouldn't have used the word 'legitimize'. What these writers are doing it seems is attempting to fathom the depths of identity. They are testing the lengths of its insidious influence. They are attempting to find out what identity means. Perhaps they do this without pretense only to find freedom from it. But, on the other hand, and this may be merely a test also, the question seems to permeate the labyrinthine reaches of these as-unlikely-as-possible experiments and masqueradings—what would you be if you were nothing. Actually, the question is more like this—what would you be if you were an insightful and at bottom humanitarily motivated writer in a perfectly egalitarian society, in a society that takes no notice of any particular identity.

Steve Evans' subtly excellent first essay of the collection makes the statement that 'This generation's hatred of identity has been fed by the experience of the generations that immediately preceded [it]'. 'Has been mitigated' might be just as accurate. Evans introduces the writers he means and the considerations that have arisen from their experience, things such as 'difference', 'being numerous', 'fragility', 'making things' and

'possibility'. For Evans, identity is associated with 'the ruling order' and is a hindrance to development.

The second essay, by Lisa Robertson, titled 'How Pastoral: A Manifesto', is nothing like the first in tone and subject. It states, 'I need to pry loose liberty from an impacted marriage with the soil. I need a genre to gloss my ancestress's complicity with a socially expedient code, to invade my own illusions of historical innocence'. And, 'Let's pretend you "had" a land. Then you "lost" it. That is pastoral. Consider your homeland, like all utopias, obsolete'. Like Evans, Robertson approves the 'obsolescence' of identity, and yet she does not seem able to entirely shake loose from the concept of 'homeland', of having lost something that she once had.

Following these is 'Poetry and Identity', by Harryette Mullen, discussing the problems and questions posed by the several categories that intertwine with her writing—black, minority, female, innovative. Mullen rejects a 'human' perspective and expresses a wish to unite both innovativeness and universality with her blackness. Interestingly, this does not seem to contrast with the underlying sentiment of the other writers. Then 'Anarchism and Culture' by Jefferson Hansen, in which Hansen, though he says he favors avant-garde writing, argues that no writing is 'in front of' society. 'Anarchism' to Hanson means that there is no primary style of literature, that many different styles exist in different areas of cultures at different times. These are followed by an 'essay' by Gary Sullivan--a one-page, four-paneled comic strip in which poetry's lineage is compared to the lineage of Adam and Eve. Then a long essay about Asian and Asian-American literature and literary forms by Brian Kim Stefans, containing the remarkable quote from Asian American writer Sianne Ngai, 'Postmodernity... and pluralism are nearly synonymous'. Thus ends the first section, 'Cultures'.

By this time, identity has been established as a bad thing, a nagging parent that won't allow its charges out of its sight. Identity not only imposes a restrictive authority, it entangles the writer in a position of authority by making him or her 'responsible', blocking the way to a radical, highly-sought originality. Being in a minority becomes desirable or at least a step in the right direction. This is not hatred of identity but of a certain form of identity; identity is viable if it is in the minority, detached from authority, out of favor at least in the beginning. The sections and essays that follow go even further, expressing a loyalty to an array of dissident perspectives—communist, ethnic, technological, homosexual and Bill Luoma's 'Cowgirls Like the Saltlick Gender & Some Poem Analysis' in which he considers the problem of gender by putting himself in the position

of a trans-sexual or 'intersexual': 'Someone else made the decision of what and who I would always be before I even knew who and what I was'. Despite the essay's humor, it conveys the serious notion that the obstacle to quality in writing is not identity per se but accepted identity.

Other essays not written from a specific outsider perspective are decidedly unconventional in form. The final essay of the collection, by Juliana Spahr, is three essays of varying lengths and typographies side by side in three columns on each page, one of the essays being a parable about pepsis wasps and trantulas. Co-editor Marks' 'essay' is a four-page diagrammatic artwork that I happily did not understand at all. I decided Tan Lin's 'ambient stylistics' should be considered gonzo literary criticism since it discussed everything—his relatives' small motel, staying at the Marriott Inn, his dad's being the best liar he ever knew, his many girlfriends, good television shows—except the question of poetry. Perhaps that could also be considered minimalist. G.S. Giscombe's 'Fugitive' similarly talks in parallel about the tv show *The Fugitive*, the book *Invisible Man*, Amtrak and a seminar on incorporating multicultural perspectives into the classroom. Caroline Bergwell's essay on the use of more than one language in a piece of writing contains this: 'Writing is for the ployplot a process of undoing the illusory stability of fixed identities, bursting open the bubble of ontological security that comes from familiarity with one linguistic site'. Sianne Ngai's contribution to this collection argues that the origin of true expression is disgust.

A good way of demonstrating the thematic strand in *Telling It Slant* might be to string out some quotes from its pages. I note in my underlinings from essay to essay the themes I have mentioned breaking the surface. I've already quoted some of these. Here are a number of others.

'My marginality as a black artist teaches me important lessons for my survival and integrity as an aesthetic innovator....'

—Harryette Mullen

'...form, as it interpenetrates with content, always occurs within a poetic field littered with various forms, techniques and assumptions'.

—Jefferson Hanson

'In the end it is important to acknowledge the extent to which the emerging avant-garde is motivated by a genuine desire for a breakthrough'.

—Daniel Barbiero

'Language poetry cannot be considered subversive....'

—Leonard Schwartz

'Poets tend to develop a complex relationship with language in a society where language tends to be oversimplified in the popular media'.

—Christopher Funkhowser

'Only the poet who recognizes the negative agency of exasperated utterances, their ability to not-express and not-articulate, is able to paradixically express her own inexpressiveness and give form to what is formless'.

—Sianne Ngai

'Experimental poetries on the other hand propose that the reading of the poem can be inherently linked to the construction of the world'.

—Jena Osman

'An earth that only the imagination can conjure, suspended between persons--between lovers striving happily to reinscribe themselves between the sheets'.

—Benjamin Friedlander

'When we hope for a future different from the present we uncover the injustice of our imagination'.

—Sherry Brennan

'Listening to a poem or novel or newspaper should be like that; it should be camouflaged into the large shapes and patterns of words that surround us and evoke the most diffuse and unrecognizable moods that a culture produces'.

—Tan Lin

'I think I write because it's the time and place that brings the most difficulty, sadness, pain and pleasure, always sensual, sometimes erotic'.

—Andrew Levy

'...poetry is the external manifestation of these internal processes...'

—Rod Smith

'Here subjectivity is multiple yet it looks outward. It embraces without absorbing'.

—Juliana Spahr

Throughout, editor Wallace remains somber and straight-faced, shuffling and arranging all this circumspection with the utmost judiciousness. His own contribution, 'Toward a Free Multiplicity of Form', is shinningly forward-looking and optimistic, though here too the strictness of the essay's organization and language is surprising. In his essay I have underlined this: 'There is no historical necessity for poetry to take one form rather than another. But that doesn't mean that the problem of form is over—if anything, a free multiplicity of form will help poets become more aware of their choices of form and more conscious of the implications of those choices'.

Multiplicity seems to be key. Wallace's words 'aware' and 'conscious' also seem key for me. I feel poetry is evolving in the same way that a field of science evolves. There is a historical necessity of form. Multiplicity is this necessity at this time, multiplicity incorporated into the nature of identity, multiplicity of the sort whose 'numerousness' connotes both uniformity and difference. This seems already to be happening. Jeff Derksen in his essay 'Unrecognizable Texts: From Multicultural to Antisystemic Writing' brings in the subject of Canada's passing its Multiculturalism Act. This law has been criticized for fostering mostly superficial ethnic traits such as old-world costumes. It has also been accused of trying to control ethnicity by absorbing it. Yet it is an improvement that multiplicity rather than merely identity be associated with 'the ruling order' and that authority, rather than being restrictive, enforces openness. Clearly the intent of the law is to promote identity, a variety of identities. The problem is that identity tends to run deeply and become destructive. Derksen asks, 'How can a text move from being oppositional—from a position of refusal—to being an agent of rearticulation?' The answer is through multiplicity, through its strength. Identity begins or should begin with the problem of survival. It is multiplicity that makes each 'generation' a verb not a noun.

[milk home](#)

Louis ARMAND

[back to milk four home](#)

DEXTROSE

cut-out figures, from right to left in the
shooting gallery: lunch of
cold meat, salad—the weather is "changeable," marked
for replacement
naked in the back
room: stringing up
papier-mâché heads, filled with
sand—the holes left
unplugged, barely
contained—no mystery
encroaches on the game at
hand ("can see
what's on your mind"); the body is
weightless, at intervals
which are no longer temporary—suspicion of returns, could
increase into a madness: the hidden
laughter of canned goods, dis-
played in serial revenance, infinitely identical—the others
have been removed
from the chain of being: an escalator
which leads upwards through incarnations, to the only available
checkout

DEAD JOE

"who believes me shall behold the man"

gone stiff in the frozen ground, up to the
neck in it—had
suffered, once, lifetimes at the end
of a long fork; there were
no excuses—spent
time on your hands & not a
said word—counting the squares in the
dud signal pattern, trans-
mitted along nerve strings, or trapped
in the broad
daylight of x (its banality is
vitrifying)—the swooping movement of
tv cameras, keeping to the
facts—the long
night of the soul in a forest of
slot machines: hungry

mouths in which
humiliation demands an unequal
share—& the lidless
eye that confronts each in turn, waiting
for its number to come up

PERVIGILIUM VENERIS

thrust up into the root, stub-fingered, blackening a hole
you still haven't
located—all winter shrank
like a plastic doll &
one freakish, paralytic eye—sleep
is the fixedness of a
hidden culpability; the trussed eaves where tongues
turn viscous, the
ear humid—mordant nights passed in
self-ridicule, a flaccid
imago nailed to the inside of an
elongated mirror—the horror show
winds on, its
intricate banality of painted
corpses, cropped out with teeth: to
decorate the fringes, pretexts
for intervention
in the normal viewing schedule—cramped, airless
cubicles in which
a captive mind masturbates itself
towards extinction: a
tedious dénouement which always ends with the replay
button, caught in a loop
which flesh itself could only ever
approximate

ELDORADO HOTEL

laid out on butcher's paper—instruments
of boredom like re-
engineered plotlines, gone
sour in the heat—the flatness of a terrain
in which everything has
evolved horizontally: sick at the
sight of it—"birth, decay, the
ephemeral"; a door for breathing, a table
outlined heavily against a
wall—lowering the temperature
by means of compression: skin
red on both sides—a drain
pipe is leaking, a pool of rust water

which threatens at any moment
to become a flood—questioning the occurrence
leads to no explanation; the taste
of insecticide carpeting the tongue (as
"preventative")—rehearsing
the evacuation procedure, in the cold
light of statistics, averages,
standard deviations—down payment for the
nights which are yet to come
& those which aren't

Barry BLUMENFELD

[back to milk four home](#)

Haircut

Lush Tucson! Black widows

Colonizing my back porch,
Great green un-nameable

Wings of some thing flutter-
Ing on the porch screen—the

Spooks keep a-coming.
Like this flying bug,

Slammed me in the back
Right on the spine one

Day, shooting waves of
Cancer-kundalini

Up to my third eye: a
Stupendous roach. I was

A Bronx boy; cockroaches
Are my cousins. Midnights

On Mosholu Parkway,
I flicked the light-switch,

They froze, then scrambled by the
Dozen. Swallowed them in

Chocolate milk, bit them
In two and spat them out

Between my teeth. Bronx roaches.
But this Speedway beast could

Eat a baby's arm. In my
Kitchen, squatting, staring,

Waving those antennas, it
Made the whole world sick.

So: bugacide with a broom
And a can of Raid. Drenched

Behind the toilet bowl,
After that chase, it looked

Noble. I cleaned up and
Cut my hair. I hacked it

With scissors, I hacked it
With spoons. I chopped it with

Teacups, assassins, and looms.
Then trouble: wife came home.

My queer shoulder hit the door:
She sees me, I see double!

"Getting a haircut," sez I,
And sneaks out the back,

And don't answer when she
Calls, "It's Sunday!"

But it was Sunday. I
Found a barber, at last,

In Tucson's light-washed
Ghetto. Who said, "One thing

I can do." Sage persons
From the neighborhood

Hushed while this surgeon
Shaved my head.

I cackled all the way home.
Wife laughed too. Had to—

She rubadubbed my conk and
I rubbed it and we took

Some pix, and so on, and
So on. That night ash

From the summer fires
And dust from the desert

Drove us out by car to the east,

Where the Santa Catalinas
Blazed sideways in the dark.

Best not to speak of fear
And shame: we were nearly

Lovers.

In Detention

The death-cries of the monsters
Are titanic and melodious

Rolling over Brooklyn.

Gloating crowds fringe the Bay.
Day and night the radio pleads, stay home.

Regal, furious, the last creatures
Founder in shallow water.

T. E. Lawrence is in Brooklyn.
He has deceived the world again.

His deathbed nurse is pleasing,
With clear eyes and fine skin.

She takes his pants down and clasps
His withered cock between her lips.

Ode to Prince

Sleep doesn't come—
You, your white guitar as answer to the ulu knife
The round rock woman with bone tear eyes
I see before me wears, haunt me,
Your mascara'd lights
Burning a prayer it will take my life
To intuit on my tongue.
Bums burning on the sidewalks of Saint Paul
Forget what they need to
To recall the Inuit face I saw one tracing
In the dust today,
Over and over circling his thumb to make her stare,
The same one, looking straight up for comfort
Into a gaze as crazy as its own.

Yours is simpler to bear.
Sex and violins tune your ivory axe
To a pitch of indecision, sweet rex,
And I lie here listening to the wind blow black doves
Off their perches as it freshens.
If it's alive, it's helpless
In a storm like yours. You raven,
You embryo assassin,
I crave your silver memories, endless
Songs of your white guitar
Ululating endlessly, no end
To the storm's mandala.

Daggers, daggers—
You've pitted a truth against an untruth.
Something silent sings along with you,
A phantom in the band.
It idly drills a line of little pits
In the Inoucdjouac woman's stone skin
While stray amperes convulse you,
Insouciant, sitting lotus,
Leaning on a drum.
I'll take every little thing I need from you.
Ecstasies of unrequited love,
Hexes, sarcastic harmonies,
Tanks of your syrupy rage.
My advice: remember your materials.
Stone. Ivory. Bone.
Burn your father's manuscripts.

Michael H. BROWNSTEIN

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SPRING, WEED, AND FINDING A PATH

Soon rivers will be hidden behind a gasp of trees,
Leaf will waken to the ends of wind,
And the ground will thicken into grass and turbulence.

A rising sun, wine red, like the brilliance of *Torah*,
Weaves strings of cloud into footpaths,
Avenues of bright blue across the water.

EISENHOWER INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

Illinois was the easiest.
We came prepared to cut
through forest and glacial
rock, but we encountered little,
mostly thorny brush, tall grass,
marsh, bog, swamp and mud thick
enough to grip to shoes. We washed
our face with mosquito blood
and rested in each other's shadow.
Heat melted rivers into shallow
pools and we ate tadpoles.
Farmer's daughters welcomed us.
We were the builders of the nation.

THE SOUND OF FEAR LATE IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR

We talk about everything I don't want to talk about, and that is
enough.
Quiet sings from beyond windowed walls
and earth does expose men gone to pieces.
It's just that machine-guns really are that loud

and there really is intrinsic value to pain.
My daughter asks if blood washes vegetation,
if words can come from soil when it rains.
I'm afraid I do not know if I will ever understand the answer.

NOVEMBER EVENING PROTEST, CHICAGO, 2002

I was there November, 2002, police fence posts of uniform and shield
blocking exit and
 entrance against what could not come: protesters with expensive
cameras,
 expensive shoes, expensive roller blades, expensive bicycles,
expensive musical
 instruments, expensive cell phones wondering aloud just when
would be the
 correct moment to make that important business call.
I invited myself to the party and could not stay.

Too often other people dream our dreams for us.

I was there chopping cotton for one dollar an hour, New Madrid,
Missouri.
I was there when the tear gas canisters raged over the ground and sky,
napkins with water
 and McDonald's emergency breathing facilities, Washington,
D.C.
I was there, dogs following at bay, blocking trailheads to the other
side of the mountain,
 Glacier National Park, Montana.
I was there laughing with Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman at my
letterman jacket and I
 did not steal the book, Chicago Seven Conspiracy Trial, Federal
Court, Chicago,
 Illinois.
I was there on the public sidewalks during the great grape boycott,
Niles, Illinois.
I was there hand stretched to hand, Hands Across America, Central
Iowa.
I was there eveningsong, Maryland hill country.
I was there the night Citizens of America who did not understand
what it is to be a
 Citizen of America threatened castration, Moratorium Against
Viet Nam, Beaver,
 Pennsylvania.
I was there at the raid of Reba Place Commune, Evanston, Illinois.
I was there the dawn missionaries stole all of the brand new shoes
from the thrift
 shop, grand opening, Berea, Kentucky.
I was there the night of the breaking of the window glass, Michigan

Ave., Chicago,
Illinois.

I was there testifying against the violent takeover of Ash Street,
Jefferson City,
Missouri.

And we became who we are in order to become what they wanted us
to be.

I was with beauty and could not hold on, I saw the hollow of poverty
and could

not open my eyes, I understood the anger of the drug needle, I
knew the

scent of scarred tissue, I wandered through cold and heat, I felt
the explosion

before the completion of the violent, I breathed the shift in
value.

I was there and I trespassed.

Ronnie BURK

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AMAZING

Amazing how the hollyhock grows straight out of the asphalt. How does it get water? Its roots spread out beneath the ground. Hard to imagine there is earth under all this concrete.

Amazing how the lady next door gets up every morning and prepares her hot dog cart. She is getting ready to work in this heat! Today it will be a hundred degrees by eleven. Yet she will stand all day feeding others so she can go home and feed her kids.

As amazing as these little incidents are they are not award winning accomplishments. The hollyhock will not win a prize from the botanical society. Nor will the woman receive an award from the mayor's office for contributing to the city's economy.

Yet these events have deeper meanings.

For the powers of nature are an amazing thing. One day the ground will start to quake and rumble and what the hurricanes and the monsoons couldn't wash away the erupting rivers of magma will surely claim.

After many years the fires will burn out and the floods will recede. The caribou and the moose will return to the forests that will spring up from all the charred pine cones. The deer munching on acorns. The owls laying their eggs in the joshua trees.

How amazing it will be when nature finally has her way and takes back what has always been hers.

George Washington

George Washington told his father, "I cannot tell a lie. I chopped down the cherry trees. I chopped down the lemon trees. I chopped down the peach, the apple and the orange trees. I chopped down the maples and the birches. I chopped down the oaks and the pines. I chopped down the magnolias. I chopped down the banyans and the madrones. Now that the junipers are all stumps I'm chopping down the sequoias and the redwoods."

Nicole BURROWS

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Ode

to Frank O'Hara

"I Am Bored, But It's My Duty to be Attentive."

In Central Park, I saw you occur in the form of an elementary school soft balling around bases. I was laden with fruit someone vended to me from a small cart when I wasn't even thinking about food, much less fruit, which I hate.

Overwhelmed with everything, I ate when in retrospect I should have tossed the damn thing at the fourth grade, which made me happily think of a fruit in the first place. How strange to think about fruit more than I actually do taste it!

How for granted I take things! Your wallet, for example. And hayfever! Well I...I

Am at the moment, that sometime after when a snit of pretense and irrational exuberance twists me into a pity monologue, a platter of food maxims...On the field, sticks of gum are blewed by you. With a push of your tongue and a little billowing wind from your chest comes a pink rectangularness—and from you lips, those oblong, fragile billowing slits! This proves transformation is simply a matter of one's potential to speak of it, to lie there and not remain put. "See here," says the woodcutter to the maple, "don't you know I'm doing this for you, and what you could be? What I could be for being able to se the potential furniture and sports equipment under your bark and slug manured spores and fluttering mold caps which drop, discreetly, onto the hats and eyelashes of people, some of whom cannot even grow

hair, let alone leaves?"

Now sallies forth he joyousness of being cruel. You look at the flowers through the camera as though they'll do something new and, watching intently, inevitably forget to look down, where a mongrel dog's heavy penis has attuned itself to your shoe, water-stick to lagoon. It releases sweet meaty vinegar onto you, and what do you do other than stand there? Resemble a sun burned mannequin stranded by Fifth Avenue in a patch of petunias.

Only in a park will an animal dump its ecstasy on you. O park, where squirrels and joggers collide and form paths, O park, where the axis harbor salami, varying scents of leatherette, and me, it ex-pedestrian. My most tender feelings writhe and bear the fruits of screaming, even normally, so imagine what the format of nature and man contained excessively together does to the roof of my head, the balloon of my delirium...it's, it's speaking. Ferment on, grow dashboards and cigarettes! Listen to pee! The secret of life is leaking: there is no such thing as integrity, everyone out of their pants immediately. Regret whiffs by, undetected. Protozoa have colonizes your toothbrush head, yet you continue to smile. Your teeth ache, are genitally weighted nerve heads of paste. Smoking hurts. Not smoking's worse. To feel or be felt. To touch or be the boob she's entombed in an angora of peach vastness. Like you, I believe in the idea of handling this firmly, but the act of placing my hand somewhere specific is so frightening it refuses. Since I am the one actually mesmerized, I command it. "Move me."

Saturated with mammalian prettiness, I may now lament all absences of viciousness when, really, I could have just as easily destroyed my birth certificate...

Leaf! I'm the skin (skull to feet) I'm encased in! Juices of oranges have stung to, then clinged, and then the world, world-like, let it in, sometimes easily, with fatal, eager sportsmanlike commitment, and sometimes uncomfortably, as when we keep our gas from leaving our rear-ends during

dinner. Quick! Look up and see. What we normally refer to as clouds drifting past is actually the sky's puss coagulating and, even as we speak about white stuff and scabs, the perilous fecundity of preadolescence is turnipping beneath forbidden canopies. Too bad a canopy is not analogous to your skirt in this instance.

Meanwhile, "on the field," mythologies appear similarly; the long, long pitcher and the elephantine hitter who steps up to the plate, sniffs, hits one off the tip, then trots like a steer to a farmless trough. Final score: Unmiraculous, one; Superheroic, none. Cancer the crab (O to wrap our pincers around someone's toe bed and squeeze!) has disabled Hercules

Alan CATLIN

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The 37 Dreams of Franz Kafka

"Kafka had thirty-seven dreams in his life and only one concerned sexual activity."

-Anne Carson

are cinematic as slow motioning-
the lost art of silences filmed,
captioned in white caps-short
subjects-
he dreams- a cabaretist ragtiming
banded in half-timed light-keys to
locked mining veins-a heart
breaking,
pulse jamming dream of tigers,
many faceted beasts woven from
the tapestries of abandoned
monastery
walls-he dreams-the eel dreams,
the arachnid dreams-the one where
scorpions scream-cross cutting
dreams-
scores a mimetic music for pits dug
deeper than a man's stuffed head
totem
polling as he digs his way further
under
ground deeper than the blood
slickened
cows-unsure as he proceeds whether
to read inscriptions on the walls or to
be
as blind men are, always groping for
the dark.

Impossible Landscape with Common Crows

An arrangement of fruit has no
center of gravity, no resting
place
to root them in the artist's eyes-
falling as they are as if hurled
from great heights, these
damaged
pears, bruised apples, misshapen
bananas, black cherries cored to
the pits, seedless grapes
partially
skinned, discolored fruit
exposed-
all plummeting through a
nebulous
emulsion, a dull, almost
colorless,
almost lifeless medium-an
indefinite
place for a sudden abundance of
common crows invading- their
black
beaks open as if to snare
plunging
fruit or to speak among
themselves
of the unspeakable; this
uncertainty
of place-neither up nor down-all
their hapless fluttering will
neither
alter nor amend their condition.

Dreamscape with Xylophone

Couched by a pitched waste

of black, an off-center view,
hedging, dissolving at the edges,
a near failure of footlighting,
overheads, interiors:the performance
master is a shapeshifting colluder
with shadows-his nearly withheld
Art-
those bonethin, fleshless arms
contained
by-shiny with age-formal wear,
meta
carpals resolved to hold the rigid
weighted sticks for turning metal
keys into music, to resound, make
magic with that balanced board
for playing-sheen polished-reflective
light cast up to reveal shielded
by membranes, stained glass eyes
a pallorous, dimming wane of light
mirroring the funereal lowing,
the lost resolve of notes.

Tom CLARK

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Why Hillary Became a Goddess on the Night of Her Acceptance Speech

Because her hair looked cool
Because some of the best alien minds are watching developments closely
Because she is the traditional Daisy poised fragile before the masculine mills
Of production, yet wearing out six black pants suits
To bring us to acculturation and consequence
Because the Nasdaq is plunging and there is a mandate for change
Sweeping through the gentle bacteria that make their home in her tireless
campaign shoes
Because the worried market takes comfort in knowing what it must consume
Because choosing is not an issue except to the terrified cartoon eyeballs
In the take-out carton, wondering whose turn is first
Because some of the best alien minds consider "us" the shrill-voiced
uncertainty factor
That threatens to bring the whole cosmic chorus to its whispering knees
Because Utopia is the island in time that forgot itself as it lifted
its utensil
At the altar of its great consuming goddess No Memory, with her sadclown
smile strained
Because her lofty position at the social fulcrum which is the mercy seat
Takes a terrific toll on black pants suit bottoms
Because some of the best alien minds are surveying developments in numb
disbelief
Because 65% of the wood lice aren't losing any sleep at all
Because retreat in the face of even greater problems,
While not a bad idea, won't solve anything
Because acceptance and consumption are just what the market needs
To shake it out of its trance-like belief in what it thinks alien
minds are saying
Because acceptance means acculturation to the masculine mills
Because happiness is merely their invention anyway, because Dame Pleasure
is wearied
Of Earth, has taken to the air, faded, fluttered down in a still, snow-
Like inwardness to spill, scatter and be raked up with all the sibyl's other
fallen leaves
In this enchanted-recount self-enclosure, like a small-town autumn
Where the commoners lie down nightly with what they have made
Happen, amid the bedded reeds of the vigilant event horizon
Because in this collapse its truths are received
By their souls, because of what this means to the odd weightlessness they feel
Because they have no way to grace their laurels
Beyond filling up the best alien minds, intent upon those peerless screens
With the black pants suits of our resident historian

Who's just keeping a chair among the blond clouds warm for them.

Todd COLBY

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I Welcome You

The back of my head is pierced
like a bean on a trouble hook, stabbing
the cranial loop. I'm starting to feel drippy.
It's creepy without being, you know, icky.
Listen: I'm on to you and the volleyball
you tethered to a strand of stinky old boat rope, in a fishy way.
In order to delay the onset of the dementia of affection
I hugged foam cushions from the sofa while you were away—
now the cat is really out of the bag. I was able to pass
honorably as an age-grouper with solid thighs
in the Polaroid. Now I'm dirty by design, reaching
new heights under a cascade of racing tools
and venom extraction kits. Someone just walked in
and heard me banging on the glass. A message
was scrawled on my goggles with snot and wax, you don't
remember doing it, do you? A mix and match of
mud and honey, thick around there, but just
right here. You wore a leather wristband signifying
that you were a friar up for a little grab-ass.
I welcome you now to the cedar and Blistex breakfast nook.

Pink Lincoln

Vivid as pink steam
in front of a taillight. I look forward
to new challenges and obtain satisfaction
when pursuing my endeavors.
That's really good, no, really—it is.
You've seen the telepathy on TV, and
and you've inserted your finger into a dreamer—
now, what will you have for lunch?
We don't get what we want; we get what we deserve,
and we have to live with that. Hurry now to the light
and tell them you forgot who they were.
An indigo wave is towering over us. I like water
that doesn't force us to swim in it.
An index of first loves and lies. Biting the lip of a machine.
A tulip bulb is sanded down to a brown pearl.

I recommend that you put some potpourri on your desk
because the odor is pleasing. A paramedic will come in
and cut off your leg in a game called Bombardment.
If someone brushes against you on the subway ask:
does my baby need a panther?
Put lavender oil on the light bulb and think of the driver
of the Pink Lincoln as a bumpkin. Patience, conquerable by nothing.

Adult Bread

Scrubbing Daddy with a knife will only enflame the situation.
The agency of soap is sweets. Alone, take a coin to the face
and rinse your teeth out with the brick water of a wave.
You love me—you know it, is etched in the atmosphere.
A blanket with fireflies lodged in the creases.
A healthy gash on my chin materializes, leaves me
woozy under a steady stream of sandy towels,
face pain aftershocks, and deep panic air spat from my lungs.
In the palm of the preface to the very pulse of the enemy there
is a sudden death of father muscle, her beefy arms and muted exterior:
because I'm the mommy that's why.

Linh DINH

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Nadir Is the Lowest Point

Nadir is the lowest point apex is the highest point
nexus is a meeting point where I will find your solar plexus.

Fat orange old sun: Why doest thou not
eclipse me with a Venetian blind?

Here on my bed my mistress thus.

All countries exist right here the jagged edges of my stamp will
scarrify
themselves into your life with a tenderness you didn't know existed
this side of
Saint Jerome.

Lioness you look a bit like Golda Meir that sandblasted Jewess
magnificently
perched on a tank cocking her Uzi.

My Uzi is your Uzi shoot me if you have to I will only see God
before going to
Siberia.

Charnel house of the fierce whip purify me please with your
punishment
something I no longer dread since having honed myself into a humble
stoic.

Clayton ESHLEMAN

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Riff

Torrid July with its mottled shadow dazzlings,
the center is out there—

the circumference this daily mail of silk-sack clouds,
clouds like meal drift, moulded over, melted,
sheep flock clouds, worlds of wool,
torn tufts, tossed pillows, clouds that flaunt forth, chevy on an air-
built
thoroughfare,
"Parisian Thoroughfare"
paideuma of Hopkins and Powell,
under bop paws the modal floor
"Wreck of the Deutschland" "Un Poco Loco"
sprung projective verse, sprung bop,
dear tinny piano against
the stadium of the inscape,
chain mail play gale
—upon what do poets improvise?

A via negativa octopodal in its outreach,
speech fiber sled
dragged by Hades' huskies toward auroral rage,
the rage to in rising not lose infernal coals,
improvisational aurora, to live in a rarified gondola,
to be fully touched, to feel the summer extend through yes, Kosovo,
rape—body poisoned wells
rewiring Hopkins' windpuff bonnets.

Stanza by stanza gloss of HC's *Lachrymae Christi*

1] Whitely (that is, purely, and blankly, and voidly) the moon cleanses
the world of human industry—almost, even though the building (the
mill) is dissolved, the lower part of the window still smiles evilly at
the speaker—a smile that will not yield to "the benzine rinsings of the

moon"

2] While this process is going on, spring comes forth, yet it is under the control of "whitely" (suggesting that an unknowable blankness, or abyss, enfolds everything, including the moon)—the purification and void implied in stanza one are picked up in "immaculate venom"—the fox is not evil, but from the lamb's viewpoint it is deadly, "nature red in tooth and claw" as flowers burst forth, so does the blood of carnivorous consumption, life feeding on life. There seems to be something perfidious (treacherous) about this, or let's say betrayal is sewn into the nature of things

3] but spring and night continue to open, expand, and the speaker can see through all the way back to Egypt, to the pyramids—the night makes him feel innocent again, it cleanses his eyes of the perjures imposed on him (thus the night is effecting the speaker as the moon was said to effect the mills)

he is also aware of worms, evoking aereated earth, as well as the transience of the flesh—the worms are whistle-shaped, their tunneling is a kind of singing, and what their action implies is not repentance or moral remorse, but celebration—the proper response to death and betrayal is transformation, renewal—

the perjury that galvanizes must become a perpetual fountain, the adopting of a viewpoint in which all is sensed as flowing, in which destruction, immolation, is, at the same time, rebirth, life and death are dyadic, a kind of circular causation,

4] thus Christ on the cross is to be transformed into Dionysus, the tears (remorse, sorrow, sufferings) of Christ are to be consumed in the livingdying god of poetry and wine, Dionysus; the inventor of vine culture; "Dionysus, known like Shiva as the Cosmic Dancer, is both the bull torn apart and the lion tearing" (J Campbell); both Dionysus and Christ are killed and eaten yet resurrected gods of bread and wine; considerable resemblance between the fate of Dionysus and Osiris links Dionysus in the poem to pyramids and sphinxes; Dionysus is also, besides vines, a god of trees in general; while he dies a violent death (cut to pieces by knives, torn apart by frenzied hands as a bull etc), no evidence that Dionysus was burned at the stake or on a pyre (as was Hercules)—he was dismembered, but not burned, so Crane's vision of him as being burned at the stake is his own invention, it would seem.

Thus the Nazarene is implicitly converted to Dionysus in the single line of the 5th stanza: his tender eyes are tinder eye, inflammable, kindling in effect.

6] While the 6th stanza takes place, the Nazarene is set on fire, and begins to transform into a blazing Dionysus (who does not fully

appear until the last stanza).

Let or unrestrained, unbound, released sphinxes.

ripe borage of death = death envisioned as medicinally fertile (did the Egyptians have borage?)—the hybrid (man animal) sphinx emerges from a demulcent (capable of soothing an inflamed membrane) herb, which I understand is also used in the preparation of a cordial.

vermin (related to the worms above) and rod (flagellation associated with the penitence above?) no longer bind—plays off the venom that binds the fox's teeth in stanza 2.

now instead of worms a cloud of tears (the tears of Christ gone underground?) flocks (relating to the sheep implied in the earlier "flanks unfended") through the tendoned or now human loam or earth. How were the stones "betrayed?" Perhaps by the fact that the earth has been transformed into a realm of human spirit and sorrow?

7] Back to the god's eyes, which are now peeling/pealing, as bells peal, with names (Adonis, Attis, Dionysus, Christ etc) —each name carries its own undimming lattice of flame (relating the burning to viniculture, and creeping vines, etc). These names spell out in palm (the spiked palms of the Nazarene, also the palm, as a tree, thus Dionysus-associated) and pain "Compulsion of the year" = the driven cycling of nature, relentless, without freedom to deviate, that all living thing suffer, Dionysus and Nazarene here as man.

8] sable, like swart, means black; the boughs that the burning figure leans from are blackened from past burnings, and like the moon with its rinsings/cleansings this figure is now aflow (with fire?), that is, he is not stanced (not checked, and he is luminous, light giving. The nights that previously opened to pyramids now strike an ethereal harmony (Pythagoras vision, produced by planetary motion (harmony of the spheres I assume is being alluded to here), also note play on PERFECT, after perfidies, perjuries, and perpetual, implying that the word is also undergoing transformation.

Then the breath of the earth, embodied in the blazing god, is proposed to consist of lilacs and emeralds (plants and gems); the grail is no longer associated with Christ (from which he ate the Last Supper, in which his blood was collected, or in other versions, from which he drank wine at the Last Supper—the grail now belongs to Dionysus, a god of the fruition of the earth. Here there is the implication that in another time the grail of earth was lifted up, for here the god is asked to do this "again"—the god thus is blessing the fruitfulness of the earth as he burns, with the lifting up of the grail a trope for resurrection/trans formation

9] The 0 Nazarene from stanza 7 is now 0 Dionysus, as if the god now looks up at the speaker (though his eyes have been acknowledged twice before)—the lack of a verb here is probably significant. After Thy face I think we are to pause, as if the verb missing is covered by such a pause, for the next line presents the god—note also "0" is set

by itself at the end of the second line of the stanza. 0 /
Dionysus—with the 0 by itself punning on zero as well as the
roundness of the target to appear two lines later. Note also break after
Thy. The last line presents us with a god whose face is filled with
arrows but who is still smiling. This unmangled smile is set against
the unyielding sill smile in stanza 1. The twanged red perfidies (stanza
2) may play into the target also, as a twang is the sharp release of a
bowstring, and to twang is to release an arrow (a minor point perhaps
but twanged is so odd that one seeks to account for it).

The general drive of the poem seems to be one in which the
negative suffering-for-others qualities of what we might call "the
Christ complex" are to be not substituted but subsumed, assimilated
into the positive celebratory qualities of the "Dionysus complex." If I
am to be torn apart, the poet seems to be saying, I want to sing as I
break or burn; I do not want to go down in penitence. This
transformation is synchronized with the appearance of spring, tho it
should be pointed out that spring is seen as one aspect of a
venombound natural cycle. Since HC prays for this transformation (in
the command Lift up...) we can assume that the poem is self-reflective
of his own creative problems and concerns. There is a strong
implication running through the text that his own tendency was to take
as personal, as directed at him, the venom, perfidies, perjuries, and
betrayals that were part of the havoc of his life. By casting his
speaking self against the great cycles of natural life and mythological
imagination, it is as if he would depersonalize these negative forces
and transform them into the compulsive pain of being part of life at
large. The extraordinary last line we should note does not present a
Dionysus made whole, or a figure who has been simply purified by
fire—rather in "target" are gathered all the arrows, all the agonies
evoked at various points in the poem, so that the smile we encounter
is one that carries in its surrounding flesh the cruel and horrifying
contradictions of life. In a sense, one could say that this is an honest
smile because it is offered not in evasion or simplistic transformation
of the speaker's multiple sufferings.

28 February 1999

Greg EVASON

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if this thought rooms and rumors

if it is this thought that it is rumored to be then I might feel that
I was this personal thing that could get away with anything but it
wasn't a kind of mischief it was more a kind of mission to penetrate
the cosmetic cosmos and get to some real thing that might be beyond
experimentation and might just be the thing that was what it was and
I just started to get up earlier in the morning and it took me a long
while to realize that I was supposed to get to work at that time and
that my days of living all night until early in the morning and then
getting up around noon were over
and I shed a tear for the loss of those late nights of agony

text thirty seven

just writing and waiting and repeating myself
just writing and waiting and repeating myself
this is no way to live
we need to get out of here as soon as possible
but we must have patience of course
patience, patience, patience,
I'm dying in this dump

Dan FEATHERSTON

[back to milk four home](#)

Brothers Quay

1.

Maze of alleys, mirrors, dimly lit shop windows.
An oversized head's craft of ravaged plaster.
Eye's liquid wobble, dandelion clock brain.
Ice cube's frame-by-frame to say a window
stuffed with steel wool, ping pong balls.
Anamorphic reindeer.
Bullet fixed in one testicle.
Really all this sublime belief no one's complicity
in furtive glances & choreographed shadows
shifting a palimpsest of music, literature, dance
& architecture—impossible spaces,
secret relationships of spastic machinery,
occluded mirrors, fetish dust, feverish dreams.
The cryptic, the lyrical, & the metaphysical
(not to mention modem impotence, epiphany,
paranoia & despair) all in tiny, mechanical spasms,
as if a mind were two voices, puppeted,
enmeshed in hermetic interiors.

2.

A solitary figure gazes out his window—somnambular
wanderings in the baroque watchmaker's mausoleum,
generatio aequivoca of undead slumber, crumbling
pentimento. We ask our machines to act as much,
if not more—open to vast uncertainties, mistakes,
disorientations—in order to trap fugitive encounters.
Pitted, deformed head perched on a tangle of wire.
Malicious eye's fixed stare. A single hair
protruding out of a soft mole. Wire homunculus:
seduction or disconnected interior monologues.
Jittery macro lens of depthless field out of staggered
camera's fast pan flicker focus melange of ladders,
landscapes, painted backgrounds—
credible arrangements all roofless & abandoned,
tweaked out of crumbling fabric,
privacies in the lives of slumbering materials.

3.

Floppy puppet's burlesque death mask & porcelain
doll head serial numbered like concentration
trapped in sawdust & cloth's sinister dream compound—
zone of secret liberties fermenting in conspiratorial climates.
Out of cold war phantoms & fossilized hierarchies,
we disappear into any country.

Raymond FARR

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The "Text" As It Is Scanned

I. Number after Blind Number

Under the reign of math's inviolable "text"

the cure is irreducible—a distinctive blindness,

the equations, indicative, offer a voluptuous sight.

To solve one is to suspend one's belief in oneself

To believe that numbers are a blindness themselves

is to accept the infinite in respect to one's existence

at the "text's" periphery. Its one quickly expanding,

sightless dimension rolls over us like a whale

smashes a whale boat in hot pursuit. The blind beggar

covets the "text's" personality, stumbles drunkenly

up the stairs to his boarding-house room,

his cane tapping the ridiculous mathematics

of the unbeliever: tap-tap tap-tap (one two, one two)

& cadence, withdrawing into blindness, leers

at itself in the black mirror of the blind man's eyes.

The blind beggar strips, alone in the dark, deluded

to the point of actually seeing for the first time:

two plus two the "text" screams at him—tap-tap, tap-tap.

On the toilet before going to blindly to sleep he welcomes
the sight-giving elders to his crucible-room,

their names synonymous with invariable darkness—
bridges over nothing designed to scale. And the scale

reduced to a paucity's dimensions, distorts the "text,"
decrees that it must be brought up to date.

The measurements, taken again and again, prove
the blind man's existence here in his darkness.

And so one is trapped; one counts or begins to count
the unpronounceable integers of sightedness

until nothing comes of this exercise but a kind of momentum,
the forward-progressing illusion of the "text" attained.

II. Lunar-Blindness

We slept nude beneath our protectoress-moon,
safe in the silken embodiment of her blindness.

Her blindness required a sighted congregation.

So our current image of her becomes the question:

does our sight empower our protectress-moon?

If we continue to stare up & pray in consolation,

will she open the "text" to a pre-arranged page

and read: *Nothing occurring is unwilled; the "text"*

is our witness even while blindness eclipses the moon.

One shall surpass one's voyeuristic self

by one's audacious desire to decipher the "text?"

III. Vertical Sight

A rule was created and handed down via the "text":

In the blind man 's eyes we seek out enlightenment.

And thus the miners adorn themselves with the lamps

of descent strapped on their foreheads.

Their descent is a minor, purely and simply.

The "text" of descent is a mist on the glass, a metaphor.

(There are few more potent than this descent,

blindly, into the underearth—endless, unnegotiable

descent and ascension, the cramped elevator

a synecdoche for the "matter at hand," the "text.")

And witnessing life's arch-Faustian temptation:

to descend and experience an inexhaustible life,

they sometimes sing or speak in low voices,
confiding in the shadows that envelope them,

oblivious to the mineshaft's contortionist's embrace,
the dark contracted walls stony as a tomb.

And wonder if something has changed (the "text"?),
if finally they'll see what was meant to be seen.

Michael FARRELL

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gratitude for the one night stand

though trying to keep a safe distance
from the witches that steal their only
friends aloha milk me im tagged &
become a reference point or not
theres always one in there somewhere are
you hot an oven boy doomed to eat the
same potatoes of celibacy
a rocky outcrop im moving off
one bit at a time while birds twit now
a piano with a mirror in
the lid im invoking my god or line
of cocaine putting fingers in his
dinner instead of a brain the dead
waste their breath waking mints rain what we
do in bed ends up in my books &
waterways lord ive already seen
this movie cough a bit more i cant
dance in these jeans & cant go to war
because the knife in my leg says im
following a pattern in the crumbs

travels in a modest rubber suit

decked out in red sunglasses chords getting
longer & louder telling me
about states of
whatever icecream coming out of a window
someone writing poems gets hit
a tribute mary appears in time
for the hymn
on a scooter like a
big old boring bee whos next every message
has its
drawbacks a caterpillar finds its way
to my home somehow it fixes
the sink gives me a clean phone it looks clean
the arrow did its job & shamed a few whose
tails were poking out then

can't afford cheap thrills

theres nothing sexy about today
yesterday your legs were guillotines
now im arch & leaking defensive
racist remarks at your slick machine
its something to envy carry kids
in this piece of junk gets me high though
my geography studies come through
in everything im sick & im
masticating in the place where smells
are nice & faces anxious here we
are in the heideggerean sense
it all comes back to the journey the checks
keep me respectable when wearing
my dressing gown avoiding the sun
& rubbish merchants night collectors
all i own ruined by the waves hea
ring caged birds over everything
real & we took off like tincan hicks
for the breasts of the beach crap theres a
lot to go on with enough to break
the colors distract me from the main
effect your honor im laughing but
technically innocent down with
the seniors who were too fond of
discipline too ascetic when god
knows effete musings are what we need

romance # 1-5

heavy & capable could i could i could i have
evidence
hes been seen in the
vicinity like ovid at
his
end like a
kind shes had enough of
because shes one herself im
dead
to it & them its
being
sentimental
over thrown out counters insects
nine
tenths

god said put
an ear to
this & i could tell
straight away hed be there on time listening
to what was said openmouthed & smelling of
the sea while mayhem
broke out among the perverts &
soft jazz lovers i
had an excuse & used
it follows the blue line
to my shoe
he was nearly everything a forgotten odyssey
in sunday dress an oldfashioned
concept behind the
post were wet he shares what he was
given a crutch a clutch
purse an old globe twinkling on a sceptre nurse
the landscape does
me in the carriage in the same old dirt same
aftershave the car
goes a cloud rises from
the toaster we hate it but like the sound
joining the jeff buckley entourage we
are in a green heaven
ferns grow inside
us we queue to watch
clothes swirl in the dryer

of the burden
the flame went unnoticed but the house
crumbled who
left who contracted
until i passed out
nee
ding to protect myself from simple math the
card pressed into
my hand left me unsure
the city & the river
the
doctors & the war going
over it again our bodies tattooed this time our
bad
behavior leaving us itchy & repentant briefly a
preachers son with dyed hair
rocking on the beach writing
out his nightmares never sure whether the
balancing
act protected him from violence
his conditioning led him to
every spin finding a bullet
the darkening of the day before he was
tired of the lines &
of the kind of questions men asked

could i have this kiss forever—
enrique iglesias & whitney houston

formalists & their attendant ethics

thanking the vacuum for its
nonracist stance filling
it out because he was a stroke to conscience
that blew away that
stood for rocks that said here like things
to do to
avoid
god or derive comfort from
the goats are ok &
the tiny shoots claiming re
jecting the struggles handed down
spoken by a drunk how
does it feel
to be an enemy trace the curve bend your
head to your heart & feet
to dreams he owned the ship &
was a convict sticking
yet my hands returned stitched it all goes
into reality ta

king
it up in the back of my mind hammer
it
& dont experience
the paper soldiers paper steel
he described the cold of
the trenches after hed
had a smoke & feelings he had between his
ears

Thomas FINK

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ULTRASONIC EYEWITNESS NEUROTIC TENNIS

to rathskeller sedition. Ranking fiend
could hatch other wraiths. Scatology
to whiten the innocent duodenum.
Rat caricature, tasting of thunderbolt?
Stammering legates plant effervescing
virgin

without linesman's
democratic eye.
Yet gimpy genius
would teach you
how crackling electricity
goes turquoise, mid-

eyeopener at the telecast needlework
singalong to whack pell-mell
any lothario breechcloth daring thrust.
Must harpoon bell-bottom yield

phrase, how spear
becomes cloud.
Lightning, spooked,
will shirk this Gimpel
fueled by love's

with morality suds. Our cosmetic
repository offers lantern or lectern

unflinching.
But who will pay?
That yell, if not

sedatives for mudslung cellar wrath.

imperiled, impelled
by fluid iron paradise,

must meet its cage.

STUNG BY SUITS

from honeyless patrons
(despite clapboard mask),

bee salesman
smashes his cherished
glass plaque
and climbs into ossified

volcano, where
repressed cuneiform
separates from butterfly ash
to buzzsaw impending
ice writs.

Brad FLIS

[back to milk four home](#)

Screams and Permutations

a German parasol expanding in the fields
me and Oscar Peterson pike-hooking in the fields
fly-fishing the wheat fields, enduring where the line ends
bending the burnt acres of winter wheat where the Rhine ends

where December gravities unload thy whelping stars with chains
bemoaning in the dew cabins: Commande, Commande! the gentle
chains

a signature of wind-blown plastic scraps, baroque
confusions, underlining the star-lit crates, escaping into skunk huts,
broken

street maps, all resting in the skulker's hand
no horseback patrol units to blitzkrieg the outlaw rains, the panting
hands
so much depends . . . we service the galaxies, experience the fields
as they construct themselves into rich piano keys, clusters of another
'fields'

North and South: Available Fastenings

Fetch me the mandible projections and I will govern
you with straw, a Southern drawl.
Prolong me with a cavalry of hail,
richly compiled, and I will speak to all the dyads,
yearning for contemporary breezes, as the colt
recurves into its motion, the tree
stays tree, and every spoon relaxes. Regard
the oriole arrivals, dumb trains, depth-charging

the tools of another culture, another Spring.
How like us they melt
into the cylinders, straining pumpkin seeds through yards
of unbaked clay, as though electrojets enlarged
the hominid duet, where I can see you warbling across
the hydro-field. Come, then, deny me
the port regalia, covet me with grass.

North and South: The Corridor Ethics

The porch-swings are left inquiring,
do you revisit them, their whereabouts of sheet music, soft acres of
tin?

No one's hemming them, save the ocular braziers.
The Norse are counting them, but seldom understand
the gist embargo. You pop a wheelie in the dark,
expecting crowds to gather, to embark
in a field of Spanish cleaning solvents, but clue in
too late. Verily, you cite them. Jim

Crow lunges at the Poles, skips the subway gauntleer
with epigrammatical stems, poinsettias in every
New York City. Why do the road motels glance
at them at all, knowing that the coyote-streams won't
fit inside one suitcase? You pack up the makeshift
ferriswheel yourself, headed for the next town, unable to breathe,
yet holding them close to your sonorous pockets.

Krista FRANKLIN

[back to milk four home](#)

Pariah

Hypnotized by the aura of stage lights,
the staccato heartbeat of drums
that emanated from speakers,
I craved a dingy roadhouse,
the bar entrances off alleyways.

I used to sneak off
late nights, my body
swallowed in navy
hoodies and baggy jeans,
dreadlocks tied in knots.

Wine cooler in hand,
I'd stand a second from
whirlpool of mosh pit,
instruments clashing,
like the thrashing bodies
of those white boys,
feedback shrieking
herself to desolation.

On those nights,
a skeleton key turned
inside me,
singularity's bony fingers
wrapped around my throat.

Gloria FRYM

[back to milk four home](#)

Guilt

One has done everything one could and yet, one still feels the quiet, ineffable know. Did one do that very specific thing, attend that very important moment that might have changed the fate, even the destiny of the outcome? Or were the fates in charge and was one always helpless to alter the course of the small yet significant history of a life, a narrative that moves on whether or not one interferes? The rain, the sleet, the snow, the sugar content of the food one consumed the night before the conversation the event, to the quick at the ready to the hilt—were any of these responsible for what became eventually the story? Who or what was in control of the selections, who knew or didn't know, who waited or proceeded or did nothing which was a form of action a means of being a method of structuring the inexorable? The question marks screw little holes into the situation as one ruminates the possibilities, as one continues to live as others die, as one sleeps and wakes as others fly, caught in the restlessness of maybe of it of the subjunctive conditional terms of the problem which always resemble the fairy tale of the house that Jack built, the mournful memory of a youthful enchantment, the direction one followed, seduced by an unexamined magnetism, an instinctive yet perhaps ill-chosen decision, that created the subsequent disquiet. Chance and luck could also be considered, and yet one does not exactly subscribe to these even as one reads the daily horoscope. The stars could have their part in the all phases of the narrative. Luck is annihilated by hard work, chance, that invisible throw of the dice, one considers agnostically. One feels a rising in the throat, emanating from the center, which has its own primitive brain. If it were wise, it might offer alternatives to sleeplessness, stomach aches, neck spasms, slippages. No, the rising rises to the big brain, finds a small spot and makes its self altogether too comfortable, often for a lifetime. Often displaying itself at the entirely inappropriate moment. One never asks a question to which she already knows the answer; another always

asks directly; and yet another, never asks questions at all. Each plagued by guilt, engulfed, drifting into its quick drying liquidity. So that one notices whole bodies held together by this substance that would break into pieces without its pathetic, ahistorical mortar.

Andre HOILETTE

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The Skeletal Remains of Idaho: (stolen moment)

—*for Palmer*

home was blue light
pouring in from all sides
clammy tile floors, calm

the only fury
steam's ascension
pots hurriedly boiling up

drifting condensation,
communing together
sliding on the winter glass

she stands there
barefoot on the moist tile

slight, her matted
brunette locks
sliding down
mountainous valley
of her spine

her eyes close
her head falls back
and for a second
she lets it go to hell

the kettle bursts
a knifey shrill
the pressure pot's
hiss unrelenting

042402

On the Veranda

on the veranda
kasey and i sip coffee
talk the slurred man
out of suicide

for my last 3 dollars
my last 4 cigarettes
and my red lighter

david is happy
to leave the lecture
i told him he can't
live with me and my wife
i told him i am not married
but the filament
of our recent acquaintance
can't hold that burden

people peddle by
on the yuppie brick
an autumn wind
he leaves

0911902

Brenda IJIMA

[back to milk four home](#)

Roof Garden

The claim of this brand is to subvert us
to ecstasy: Seeing us

tunnel expands into valley. Green
sumptuous. Heels dig in the earthen

tile spongy after so much moisture.
Missiles hit not their targets. This is

apparent for viewing in another era
across metal that stuck into the outdated rock

of another plastic appliance. Planetarium:
silver-suited three-celled creatures

are thrilled by uranium
and such sludge. For now it's life

maintained between bridge or bridges. A
startled bell not ringing.

You are evidently tuned into a various
channel. Frequency module. Interference

volcano. Relocated despite clear wish.
Societal storage station. Cable knit sweater

over bulky torso. Stocky sweater
look. Away from the natural shade

of tall buildings.
Soft silhouette.

Vincent KATZ

[back to milk four home](#)

AKRAGAS

Coming into town
new place
up on the heights
in morning
look out to sea
but the people
are here

are full of life
and buildings
set into rock
maintain their style
so that in sleep
you occur
in dream
to their beliefs
out to the sea

campi flegrei

back
in the burning
fields
poetry
is written

May

I have been here a long, long time
more than two thousand years

I am finally living here

we are living

I do not need to go anywhere

tomorrow or the next day

I am embedded in this life:

the trees, the smells of nature
at nights

the birds, the insects

the changes in the sky

the barrier-smashing blue

the hints at pink and
deafening golds

and purple at dusk

days on which the mountains
suddenly appear

ringing our existence
with the certitude
of psalm

I have been here
a long, long time

more than two thousand years

day gets off its back

ii.

the day does

nothing

to mark its

presence

measure

no

no

heightening

shadow

of

tree

on

tree

Richard KOSTELANETZ

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From 1001 CONTEMPORARY BALLETS (for periodicals)

A good libretto, even an impressionist, double-exposed or portmanteaued one, follows most of the rules of simple dramaturgy. Balanchine once said the perfect type plot for a dramatic narrative ballet was the story of the Prodigal Son. Once there was a man who had everything, then he had nothing; finally he had everything again.

-Lincoln Kirstein, *Ballet Alphabet* (1939)

A deposed monarch, working in exile as a laborer under an assumed name, befriends a draft deserter who falls in love with the sometime monarch's beautiful daughter. Asked by the current monarch if his predecessor might be hiding in Another Country, the chief of the secret police identifies the draft deserter, falsely reasoning that any laboring man who successfully woos such a beautiful woman must indeed be a king-in-disguise. The deserter is arrested, in a flurry of publicity, while his sometime friend, the former king, slips away.

The head of a pirate band disrupts an island wedding and forces the Count's daughter to abandon her fiancée for him. As this new betrothal is celebrated, the pirate leader places a ring on a small statue of his former wife and is surprised to see her stone fingers close over the ring possessively. Resisting all pleas to cancel the ceremony, the pirate reveals that he is really the Count's brother and thus likewise of royal lineage. The sometime pirate arrests the Count and orders the statue of his wife to be thrown into the sea, while the daughter seeks sanctuary in a church sooner than marry her long-lost uncle. Attempting to drag the daughter away from the church, the pirate is instead dragged beneath the waves by the indomitable statue that still holds the ring. The marriage originally planned is consummated.

A favorite concubine of the dictator pities two imprisoned deserters and secretly provides them with sufficient money to bribe their guards. A disgruntled junior minister facilitates their escape. When the pair is captured, they implicate the concubine instead of the man who saved them. The dictator does what authoritarians customarily do with those who violate their total rule.

A wealthy businessman has arranged to have knowledge of his daughter's blindness kept from her by threatening to fire immediately any of the family servants who reveal her disability to her. A psychic tells the businessman that only if his daughter knows of her blindness and wills its removal can she be cured. Into her garden come two men, one of whom falls in love with the daughter and, it seems, she with him. Her father declares that the marriage cannot take place unless his daughter regains her sight. That

threat succeeds in miraculously curing her.

The prima ballerina returns to the dressing room where the other female dancers, angry about not only her show-stealing but her unexpected departures from the script, set upon her viciously.

On a large blackboard three performers write messages of love to one another one letter at a time, backwards.

Set in the control tower of a small airport, this ballet portrays the anxieties and relationships of the flight controllers with the dancers flying gliders or hooked into self-propelled harnesses.

A young man, engaged to a young woman of a higher class, goes abroad to seek a sufficient fortune. Entering an alien underworld he finds attractive, the young man forgets about his fiancé, who dies of neglect. When the young man walks through a sleeping town that he comes to recognize as his home, he inadvertently steps on her grave and is confronted by her ghost. Witches dance around him as he drops dead at their feet.

An ordinary soldier is lectured by his Captain, who despises him. Gathering sticks with his girlfriend, with whom he has fathered a young daughter, the soldier is alarmed by strange sounds and visions. The girlfriend flirts at a party with a passing military musician. The soldier is examined by an incompetent doctor who, his professional insufficiencies notwithstanding, seduces the soldier's girlfriend. The Captain teases the soldier with accusations of his girlfriend's infidelity. The soldier finds her kissing the musician and accuses her. When the musician boasts of his success, the soldier beats him. Though his girlfriend is reading the Bible, the soldier stabs her by a pond, into which he throws his murder weapon. Wading into the pond to retrieve the murder weapon (and, by extension, the memory of his lover), he accidentally drowns. The daughter born of their union initially doesn't understand what is meant when older children tell her that her parents are dead.

Contemporary Ballets consists only of a large message screen, probably a liquid crystal display, on which appear the texts published here.

A neurotic young man loves a woman who reciprocates, though she is officially engaged to his older friend. Stepping aside, the younger man years later returns from business abroad to find the woman still married to his older friend. She urges him again to leave her for life abroad. On hearing from a gossip that he has purchased a gun, she rushes to his hotel room and finds that he has killed himself.

The evening is spent waiting for someone named Godot and perhaps his troupe to appear.

Onto an empty stage, up through the trap doors, come scores of performers, filling the stage so densely that they begin to push one another into the audience.

Finding that her lover, nominally a schoolmaster, has accidentally killed a cat owned by a mafia capo, a woman volunteers to intercede for him, taking responsibility for the accident. Though the schoolmaster at first

discourages her, she insists, because, unbeknownst to him, she is the capo's niece. Entranced by the niece he has not seen in years, the capo wants to introduce her to his henchman and excuse her from killing the cat in the course of coercing her to become engaged to someone else. Hysterically wanting to escape from a circumstance so distasteful, she tells the truth about the cat's death; both she and her fiancée are killed by the henchman. Onto the stage comes a man who leaps into the air, where he hangs suspended for the duration of the performance.

A prince, falling in love with a blacksmith's daughter, courts her in both his own person and disguised as an apprentice blacksmith. When she tells the prince that she really loves the apprentice, the blacksmith disapproves, because he wants his daughter to marry the prince's principal man-servant. When the servant identifies himself as homosexual, the daughter is allowed to marry the apprentice, who reveals his true royal identity.

A chorus of leprechauns poke at one another, apparently trying to discover who among them might be an imposter, which is to say a man.

A young man, saved from death at the hands of three hoodlums, believes his rescuer to be instead a garbage man, who is in turn harassed by the hoodlums for lying. Happening to see a picture of the hoodlums' sister, the young man falls in love. The hoodlums' mother tells of her daughter's capture by yet another hoodlum. To facilitate her rescue, the young man is given a magic flute and the garbage man magic bells. The daughter is guarded by a dumb servant who, mistaking the garbage man for the devil, flees. The young man learns that the purported kidnapper is really a good guy; it's the hoodlums' mother who is evil. The garbage man and the girl are prevented from escaping until the garbage man's bells, no joke, cause the kidnapper to dance helplessly. Now free of encumbrances, the young people are able to marry.

A music-hall singer has an affair with a philanderer before returning to her bartender lover.

A military officer makes his girlfriend a Vestal Virgin while he is fighting abroad. Upon his return home, he breaks into the temple to win her back. As she allows the holy fire to be extinguished, she is condemned to death. When she is led to her execution, a flash of lightning rekindles the fire. Spared from death, she rejoins her main man.

This ballet follows Homer's account of Odysseus's return after the Trojan wars and tells, in a series of flashbacks, of his sexual encounters abroad.

An hereditary vampire can satisfy Satan only with the sacrifice of three young women within twenty-four hours. He thinks the first killed, but does not know that she is revived supernaturally in the moonlight through the help of the vampire's assistant. He successfully seduces and kills a second, whose fault is a fascination with vampires, and nearly succeeds in claiming his third victim until she is successfully rescued by the first woman.

Two athletic male dancers do triple jetes in alternation until one of them can jump no more.

Richard KRECH

[back to milk four home](#)

Hand to Hand Combat

It comes down to things
you can hold in your hand.
Your head, for example
or the objects you encounter
in your daily routines.

"You should know that concept
like a room you know
with its furniture
& be comfortable with it" she said.

Making things personal
so we can pick them up
understand them and move our lives
in the direction of progress we want.

Using objects to get beyond them,
the constancy of change & movement
the only fixed star.

The horizon approaching.

12/18/01

In the moment

The moment
is the only place to live.
("At least for now" teased the Chorus.)

The time spent dreaming
about the future
or reminiscing about the past
is frozen in the moment
by yr inaction.

* * *

After the Industrial Revolution

has become "way-old history"
well past the Millennium
& when the world turned,
we will still move forward
one step at a time

into the present.

4/10/02

William LEVY

[back to milk four home](#)

A Call for Chaos

Breath
Does not create wind.
It is pursued by it
The word
Cannot cause life or death.
It is called by it.
The word
That witched the wind
Witched my mind
And changed the shapes
Of all about me
In a magnetic dream.

Aren't terrorists condemned merely because established authority
wants to monopolize terror?
Aren't terrorists merely the noblest and most efficient resistors to
Tyranny-but to tyrannies of which you approve?
Terrorists are Total.
Terrorists are Passionate.
Terrorists are Out-of-Time.
Terrorists are the best illustration of the Universe-
Degenerate, nihilist, base, obscene, discontinuous, revolutionary,
Catastrophic, incredibly exaggerated hallucinogenic...
A boiling cauldron of rage, lament, sarcasm, despair, affection, hope
And exasperation...
Chaos equals the Spirit of god. Chaos is the seed-ground of the
Cosmos.
It is chaos that is the basis of all progress: the Godhead can be
Known only in Corybantic madness.

Go my chants to those whose soul is a cupboard full of cans of
Culture,
Go to those self-appointed elitist who offer themselves with swiftly
Diminishing reluctance as savior of art, politics and letters,
And to other damn tormenting punks:- To the united survivors of bla bla bla, and
To all those spiritual exhibitionists who want light without heat,
Love without hate or desire.
Go...

Expect nothing out of my mouth that has a pleasant sound.
Look for nothing but descriptions a person who hears thunder in
The earth as a revelation of the hidden potentialities of Chaos
Come all you Gangster of the sky. Awake and Assemble.
Terrorists are Total.

Terrorists are Passionate.
Terrorists are Divine.

Listen for the sound of the Sun being barked out of the Sky and
Turning Moon and Stars into frozen meteors and making Oceans a
Dry land of ice.
Squat here calling chaos about us,
As Chaos comes!

*From: Jeremiad Chants/An Absolute Polemic (Amsterdam & Genoa: Joy
Publications,, 1979).*

Beans On Toast, Please!

Thighs
Then turn around
Bend over
Spread the cheeks of her ass
Cheeks which were nicely
Tanned revealed her asshole to me.

She did that too.

Now, as I had her stand up again
I told her to turn around.

She did.

I reached for today's discussion outfit.

It was a thick silk sash
I put around her waist
Making sure it was
just a little too semiotic for her.

Then, I turned her
around and took another cloth.

This one attached to the first one
Led directly down between her legs
Up around and through the back
Looped over and tied.

"There," I said.

She was to wear this tense, trenchant
Yet unpretentious silk sash
while she prepared for her seminar . . .

Including making breakfast for both of us.

rob mclennan

[back to milk four home](#)

breaking news

i am not particularly interested
in matters of the weather

or the game, the possible exception:
the short skirts

of anna kournikova. every few hours,
the bough breaks

& the body, pushing cars
& shattered windows out

of peaceful conversation. we know
not why, even once

its explained the bafflement
endears us, slightly, calms

the notions from the fields. think
a horror, & then armloads

of recycling. it goes
no further.

reappropriate

to take back what was originally yours, even if
you didnt know it at the time

the view from this small hill

drive two hours in any direction, & where
do you end up, the waters edge

in kingston, the arrival of tall ships
& short tourists, crowds
into the thousands

is this a plan or merely habit, walk
three blocks to the pier

taking pictures

daughter her hand across her face, her mothers
family pose

whether she knows it or not, inheriting
all that had come before her

Susan McKECHNIE

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China Girl

if her skin is perfect the world is perfect
the world sits in her cheek, baptize the world it
is a porcelain world with cut off lips and feet and
even its throat is shallow

her skin is white she's white like
we want her for the perfect longitude,
bring her up to the color of dice she won't
notice a loss of animation she's a good girl
and we've made her very very good

bring her up to lights and a little picture
of a camera that disintegrates her fathomless
heart at a rate parallel to the dissection of dust

don't let her hold your hand she might delineate
you might abduct the pulsing part the eighty times
a minute you revert entirely to life

you forgot her little pick-pocket the eclipse she
keeps like a pet and she'll sleep next to you with
the lights on with an anecdote and the walls will
race through her veins

if her skin is white she's a killer and the map
that leads to her is dead, you only pictured yourself
caressing her because you lacked dimension and her
mouth was perfect and you couldn't copulate sparks

map it out with her leftover pores and hairs,
she had good skin they told her that the first take
they told her her color matched the schedule of
desire the calculated pitch of decay

** the title of this poem was taken from the film industry standard
image of a white girl of "perfect" skin tone that color timers use
in the academy leader to match-up color in making a print from a
reel of negative.*

Jonathan MINTON

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Dark Sky Preserve

After the earthquake, the city
went dark. We were fearful
of the sky, of the luminous
alien cloud above us, of the never
before seen light of the milky way

the sky in blaze
of before the fact

& fearful
without
the abstract
equivalent:

as storm cloud is *intemperance*,
is swollen shape: shaping in light

of that, this

alienated/or lineated: re-
arranged in
strange sky

for clarity, if what clarity
there is:

as seen by,
in name of, reliable as
pull of flags,

as the monument in mood light, the face in profile

by which apparatus, glass is window

to "sky white as raw silk,"

sky white as porcelain cup

white as porcelain cup
sky white
white as porcelain
as porcelain
cup

such likeness as—

a gesture of light
glaring through glass,

weightless, even
while plausibly worded

word for *white*
word for *windowed* word for

—still

darkly there:

under our unseemly
clouded sky:

crabgrass spilling walls:
groundswell beneath it all

Sheila E. MURPHY

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Parentheses

The sift made five fevers synonymous with twelve silent reeds. Words ceased to be anonymous pointing to common mistakes. The French revolved around themselves. Moved at their own pace/risk/ will. Emergencies are what you make them. Biding someone else's time. Enliven every ounce of grist for now. The formal silver shakes like mercury. She would play with properties of subdivision endlessly. In due course, rinse can mean a sampled river. Equally, the ample frost over a warm calliope. Is that fanciful completion something like a dime left on the table. More like vaulting over loaned executive suspicion. Why be reasonable more than once. A war used to be starting. Now the trusted one's returned home where she will have shepherded at leisure progeny who so resemble her that they appear to dovetail with her urgencies.

Narcissistic code, the devilish learned dream, equator-prone and almost everlasting

Vast

Train case fracas cordially chills
Certitude's abrupt haphazard
Insolence until the game face
Happens on a rune's hysteria

Combine two strands of talent
With an empty third
And twang a hesitant preoccupation
With and to as forecast

Tentative as clock face taller than
Serenity in chat room spaces

Movement/Town

Serpentine new rivers five times as tweaked as surety prompt the risen savior to be twice as noble, four times as vicarious and five-fold in variety. The only avenue incapable of loss is the cyclical earned rampage she engages in without a moment to be named. The express hors d'oeuvre contrives to have been seen for what it is in time to shift its consciousness away from fate and dominance, fate and permits, fate and lozenges. For richer or for purer seemed the overlay, one wafer at a time. Are we often against reason in our surly mood or are we buttoned bronze. Complete in our conjunctive heists determined to mine safety from uncertainty. Whose guesses do we not apply to recent tantrums. Anyone would dry, one at a time, along the line drive. Easily along the driven need, the seeds in hand, the comfort, the sown land.

Violets each interrupting any obvious disjunction, steady with the large flecks of *couleur*

Salsa

Voice recall as earth frays opening's
Paused example trained
To have derived from early days
Light water used for what

Until four warm reactors
Pounce on the eviscerating
Sclerotic op cit mercantile
Purview totally in stays

The loping preface dandles haze
In fuel-safe opiate endurance

Ligament front purity when framed
Surrogate elders preen on their own

Watch the sudden ostrich proofs
To limber up the prior agitation
Smoothed by hand and thinking
Blotter holding in the bluest ink

Metronome

Wind evenly impedes
The glove compartment
From containing
Bankruptcy and avoidance

Strategy without a strand
Of power where cliché
Consumes horse sense
Viatically shrinking from

The cross stitch
Welcoming a failure
Of technology
One needs to tune

The talk, to walk,
To waffle, to indulge in
Who considers which
Wide unknown

Atmosphere

It came to mean
What one believed
Would be true
Outside the room
One had been in
Awhile

The resemblive code of stray timed
Reverence offers lost momentum

Squarely where it lives a mutually
Paunchy life estranged from
Referenda placed on tongues
Like the traditional communion toned
till shear

At The Moment When I Start to Say Goodbye

Her conversation picks up stamina
and splays into twelve different
avenues. And there's momentum
pressing the craft forward. She gains
energy and a modicum of wit. She
wants this to last longer, be more
consuming, take flight generously and
not be downed by former gravity. She
wants to tell me what she's never said
before. And then repeats. She wants
this to become the start of many
conversations. At the moment when I
start to say goodbye, she picks up fire
and shows her penchant for eternity.
She wants to put the whole town's
worth of observations figuratively out
on the Formica table. She wants to
drift across my two cents using her
millions. She wants to capture all
there is to say and say it. Her
conversation is a life form, and she
means it. She means to live forever,
and address my listening. She wants
my listening skills to match her
speaking.

Concentration, matching likenesses,
dependent on recall

Quotidian

I want to talk to you
About the insufficiency
In those who do not
Work at being
Extraordinary
And now there is no moment
To look forward to
When I can reach you

Any time and talk
And hear you say,
"Oh, Sheila, I was hoping
It would be you."

Jerome ROTHENBERG

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from *A Book of Concealments*

A MAN IN LOVE WITH DEATH

A man in love with death
is still a man.
He sees his hands bleed
with another's cankers, sees
the blood cold in his eye,
a rosy episode
smeared over walls & door.
The others enter through it,
sit beside him.
What does he hear?
Where does a life
begin & end?
How fast? How far?
Who but the dead
can claim an end
to numbers?
In his head he learns
to count them with his hands
they are more real
than right.
Deceit of numbers
raising questions in the mind
that's helpless
& of doors that will not
shut the others
waiting for a door to shut
behind them for his voice
to be a voice
that speaks for them,
one of the lonely
dead.

A DOUBLE SCHISM

There is a pope
who waits for you,
a pope who sits on cushions,
paints his fingernails
a shade of red
so much like blood
it scares the dead away.
The men who stare at
their own faces
on the screen,
who write on air,
declare
his holiness.
By night the father
breaks apart,
*halfway inside the window
cut in two.*
He is four fathers
now, his eyes
awash with tears,
with bells that sound off
in his skull
A double schism
links to
double happiness.
The four who are
our fathers
call themselves
the pope.
They name their brides
America & point
their tongues
at heaven.
They are everything
his mother
wanted ministers
of grace.
A trickle down his leg
is sign of rapture.
Two plus two is five.
The fathers without
issue are the lords
of those who do.

THE DRAUGHT OF VIOLENCE

The strut of fabled men
like women
leaves the gun uncocked,
the crown unkempt.
A glow around
the pubis see the feathers
shine. Here sits
an apparatus
& beside it
boys flit by like bats.
*The door into her bosom
closes opens*
letting in a puff
of smoke, *the draught
of violence
that draws extinction in.*
A wheel inside a wheel
spins feebly dirt
that clogs its spokes
& turns into a mud
the mind of man
can't fathom.
Goons make love
in graves the water
seeps between their toes
& forms
a second element.
Sky is a third.
The man who slit
the pilot's throat not like
a man he is
but like the girl
who drove a spike
into her lover's heart
to suit their god.

Larry SAWYER

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COTTON WEAVING, SHANGHAI

The coarse implements become a necessity, as do exotic dyes, not to mention wholesale patience. For the luxury of the trade inspires distrust toward its adherents, even if its intricate patterns and so-cool cottons shield from the sun, make fishermen fluent in the mirror or else fit them in misunderstood mutters and burning waters. Hold them with me, through the crowded streets of the city and seek out the prosperous blood in a bruise of harvest.

I am the cotton weaver and the rivers of sand around my neck, in processions of back roads and awkward subtle limbs, give hope amid the fluttering from this bush of autumn birds, their whisperings beginning.

MY EDITOR FRIEND

My editor friend, who isn't me, walks into my apartment without knocking. I've finally come to visit, he says. He soundly raps my forehead with his golden knuckle and announces in a loud voice, "Your poetry is causing the world to leak, you must write something solid my good man!" To this I respond that I've sworn off poetry and only mutter pillowpoems into my pillow every night. To the untrained ear these sometimes sound like distinct little sobs. After explaining them at length, these pillowpoems may also be mistaken for death threats. Tuesdays and Thursdays they definitely sound like a barking dog.

Willie SMITH

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SHINE TOOK

—*For Satan*

Happy as an apple fat on a tree,
laughing so soundlessly
as to split both sides of misery,
my leer drips poison.
One boy's meat is another girl's toy.
Scarlet suffuses my cheek.

Happy as an adam's-apple a-hum
in the midst of a hymn,
my heart hides a tang
sparkly as a fuse.
Won't you pluck, bite
and swallow my flesh,
that you too might feel,

in the apple of my eye,
this confused luster?

REQUIEM FOR A TOOTH

One less to chew, one less in which to grow
long, one less to lie through; can't for spit
whistle.

To insure identification of the corpse, it was
vital to keep you under professional care. You
exhibited this personality called smile,
apparently descended from the snarl, fear and
aggression the mother of us all.

In dreams you leaped like Pepsi cans from a
speeding Cadillac littering with aluminum the
Galaxy.

Had you owned your own wheels—would've
been a Nash. So you could drive around with
the top down showing off the pearly whites.
Hit the horn.

Pull into McDonald's with a screech to set the
choppers on edge. But you never owned beans
—stony, penniless, broke to the bone. Now
outside the mouth—nothing but a lump of
carbonate; just another busted seashell. Flip
you in the trash. Sink onto the pillow. Eye the
ceiling, asking the vacancy in the hotel of
myself: well, exactly what do I own?

GOURMET BRAIN

The waiter—a hawk faced beanpole with brilliantined hair, corkscrew eyes, Salvador Dalí
moustache—wheeled up, strapped to a sort of highchair, the monkey. An emaciated squirrel in the prime
of his farmed existence. I examined the glazed eyes of the semi-comatose delicacy. The hollow cheeks.
The lips retracted to reveal ground-down teeth. The chewed nails. The scrawny limbs, wasted chest,
sunken gut. An adolescent obsessed with paranoia. A being fresh-squeezed by life's lemons. Cramped
thoughts of thought trapped in a thoughtless cage. I nodded approval. The contents promised a delectably
sour, saliva-provoking adventure. The waiter popped off the precut skullcap. I leaned over. Surveyed the
pulsing thinker. Aimed at the shiny prefrontal my runcible spoon.

The waiter's lip curled. Above the waxed moustache the beak of a nose wrinkled. His neck arched. He
waved me back—as if batting at a gnat. I squeaked around on the vinyl bench. Repositioned spoon on
black crepe napkin. Rolled eyes at domed ceiling of inner sanctum; windowless cubbyhole where were
seated—one at a time—patrons desiring the island specialty. OK—only my fifth brain, this but my first
week of exile. Never investigated this particular dive. I'm no expert. Go with the flow. Follow orders.

When in Rome roam with the Romans. Although it's my dough, and I'm the one who ordered. Whatever—old Tightface sure not angling for a tip. He drew from a lapel pocket his own utensil—tiny, bright; seemed for all the world a sterling coke spoon. Dipped it in a mother-of-pearl snuffbox fished into his other palm. Sprinkled sparkly powder over the exposed organ. Ah, I thought, a pinch of toot to numb the wretch. A humane touch. But the brain, I corrected myself, has no feeling, no sensitivity to pain. Although it contains all feeling, all pain—or so science would have us think. So perhaps it's to craze—as the customer dives in—the animal's pleasure center—further to spice the treat with a last-instant neurotransmitter tsunami. He tucked both implement and condiment back on his person. The snuffbox in a trouser pocket chinked against keys and coin. In lieu of bon appetit he snorted a sneer lifting one tendril of his lip hair, like a black widow testing a strand some hapless fly tripped. He then vamoosed—doubtless intent on sucking out his own lunch; perhaps the ichor of some chocolate mousse abortion. In the dankness lingered burnt transformer stink. Precisely the aftershave to expect in this backwater cosmopolis. I ditched the miff. Hunger shouldered aside pride. I leaned forward. Dug the spoon into where I spotted on the lobe an unusually thick accretion of scrumptious cortex. Sawteeth ruptured vessels. Divided tissue. Excised the morsel. But stayed a moment gustatory ecstasy. Endeavored, on second thought, first to feed curiosity.

Raised the loaded spoon to my eye. In the candlelight, scrutinized the scattering of no, not cocaine, not MSG, not salt (all which readily dissolve). But itsy crystals intact atop the gobbet. I gazed abstractedly at glittering scarlets, blues, topazes, azures. Rainbows tiny as mosquito buzzes—spectral spectra sensing a sixth. Were these? Yes—the jagged pieces absent from the puzzle of each cerebrum served unseasoned in those previous cupola-ed cubbyholes—none quite so cobwebbed, obscure, hostile. I winced. Slipped into my mouth the wobbly spoonful. Nibbled at length the jelly suggestive of green blackberry mingled with oak smoke; vaguely decayed oyster overtone. Zingy crunches finished. A pins-and-needles acerbity spurted into stings. Yes—silica. Finely ground glass. Meant to bleed both sides. An artistic aping of the acme of higher intelligence: to perceive—captured through transparent ache-rapture. I swallowed, while into place fell divinely painful release from banishment. Then out of meditation I snapped—a knife unsheathed—as the spoon—poised for the next scoop—reflected obsessively the view from below.

Chris STROFFOLINO

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Monster

A wise guy once told me memory is supposed to provoke desire as if
a failure
to confront the past means you're repressed. A little later I found out
he
ran a memory factory and was trying to enlist me and must have been
somewhat
successful insofar as I am remembering his supercilious grin. But I
can
remember only him; he blocks my view of other memories so I get
fired by
convincing myself I quit which doesn't mean I can't take the tour and
watch
from a catwalk those working at the vat in which I could fall without
being
burnt. And I do, and I when I do I get covered in a kind of gunk that
might
be edible, or was until I contaminated it. Its contents caked onto my
clothes
like a full-body facial so I rushed home to wash it off by rolling on
(like)
an unremembered floor.

Alacrity While You Sleep

20 flights ain't much to climb
if your blood is pumping with the viciousness
which so often seems to precede

the generosity some call desire.

A moment passed, it felt like years
in order to feel like a second.
The flesh was acting like a professional again.
He became me and scared her away

But what do you waste your life on?
you whose love is purer
than all the previous ones
my love was purer than,
you whose love seems purer than mine
you who I presume innocent
in hopes of being proven not guilty.

You who are more of a mystery naked
than ever they were clothed.
When naked they are but your clothes
(and when I say this is more than enough for me
the slight cry that wishes you were less
grows smaller each second
as if bringing it up
helps it go away quicker).
You who meet me on the 10th
Do not feel you're wasting your time on me.

Café Grey Dog Blues

In my dreams, a sin tax on McDonalds
In your nightmares, the energy crisis back in fashion.

Facts may burn holes in me no less than you
And must be faced, or refaced
Without resort to skeleton
Or shroud in pickled gloom.

Starvation may indeed help—up to a point
That stabs to bend, and descend
From the cacti at dawn
In the doctor's cushy solarium
To become the room
Without having to kill that which thrives in it
Which others will dub your very self

A highway of fragments, of numerous
On ramps and off ramps of evasion
That cannot be evaded unless sex
Is to be a dummy of pure anxiety
Unable to compromise or cry
With the warm voice of having been
Fondled, mistaken, and thrown for a loop
Like a slab of meat for the dog

Shining in the sky like the earth
As seen by no Venus but Mars
In which loyalty is one with love
And gravity's garage band lures you
Out of the giant steps of your spacesuit
Where history is too much of a machine to be sneezing

Mirror Star

My mirror doesn't like what she sees
Or what she neither sees nor can touch, in me.
This could drive me to despair
Were I not so engrossed in the brightness
And beauty of my mirror,
A brightness that might as well be in the eye of the beholder
And that maybe I make by finding

And not just because I had to sell my own
To be able to buy the time in which to find her
As I happily derail from the tracks money makes
Which she wishes I was never on
For even the mere memory can steam her
So I can't live in her so well
When music's mirror is no longer
The fairest of them all
Lacking arms unless she lends them hers
Which she would never do
Unless it can flow like blood
From and to the lung-part of the heart
That cleanses it, or through the veins
Of the horse it would never ride
Unless it can steer. It, not I,
The control freak. She and I the horse,
The two actors in the horse costume
And nothing's doing
Like shedding another layer
Of emperor's new skin
I only know as my mirror tells me.
She cannot be the only one,
Though I'll give hers the benefit of the doubt
While comparing it to mine
Knowing she must look at herself
In other mirrors than me
Even as I imagine her looking at me
When I stare into mine from the perspective
Of what a comfortable conformist
Would call the crazy dreams he threw away
Which is the mirror of music
I'm not going to accuse of money

Nicole TOMLINSON

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This freedom

Seek bliss!

Somewhere inside
Volcanism
This freedom
To them

Seek bliss
Wooden act
At first
A horse
I turned
Why should
Seems the
Why be
Couldn't think

Such is the wood-pigeon To
the universe I
am Like the bread We
have loved
Flowers O And these
are the countries Now
there For the sons
My strength is
dried up When I said
The burden of Damascus
When they stood
And it came

*

In reality Even to
Ibn Jînus (who found 86°
10')
These Romantic outbursts
Every planet The
deviation In a very
dark orbit
The stars turn
And

Don't cry
Danger
When all
I been
If I
Just a
Whatever gets
Been dancing
Still

*

It is widely believed
Who does not know?
Close
Nearer
the intersection It
is the same
Despite Carbon

Hi
The project
These works
Over a
This recent
Other thoughts
Look forward
Please include
Regards

*

On a candle Out of
Russia
now dead

In the
The element
It is my desire
There is no more
See the higgledy
Poetry is
perhaps
And with your
great powers

Somewhere

I've seen skies
Age

*

One of them
To them one
Amoueusment
The gloom
Toute seule
A sowing
Let us salute
Naked
Si près

George WALLACE

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obelisks

there was only so much gold and no more diamonds to go around in the kingdom of money so someone got the bright idea to dig some marble out of the side of the world and build the citizens an obelisk, hey they dug that obelisk, those citizens, so they built lots of them, and when it wasn't too cold in the winter they would bundle up and take a stroll downtown and watch people iceskating among the marble obelisks, and when it wasn't too hot in the summer they sat by a fountain and some trees, to catch a seabreeze down by the obelisks, or in the park; but you know how things go, one day a great ape comes into town and looks around and he reaches in among the mahogany trees and the monkey trees and the tamarinds in the park, and just like that he pulls up an obelisk and he takes a bite out of it with his big ugly teeth and then he growls and tosses it aside, tasteless! and he pulls up another and takes a bite out of it, and then another and another; tosses them aside, well! the citizens of the kingdom are in a rage, justifiable of course, and before you know what happens it's open season on anything that looks like apes, i mean shooting everywhere, throughout the kingdom, across the border, and especially overseas, where the great ape came from, until finally everyone in the kingdom of money settles the hell down and comes to their senses and looks around at the damage they've done, and the pain they suffered doing it, and in order to never forget, they put up a marble obelisk.

the quiet wife

it was a nice red ricotta and soft the best his village had to offer so he split it into two parts with

his large hands and he held them open and he offered her one half well she was shy but willing and

he had encouraged her with gentle words and confident motions so after time she took a modest bite

a startled expression grew on her face then, mixed with a little pain- she'd bitten down on something hard

what is this she asked him well he answered her without hesitation that is your wedding band he said

she did not smile and she did not frown at that, but after a little while she looked up at him and straight

back and asked and what is in your half, husband well when he looked down at the red ricotta

what did he find? a labyrinth of sweet impossible intricate cities and a tiny black spider living quietly

in the heart of each one of them

**blessing
the
animals**

so
normal
in
paradise

sunday
mornings

hominid
parade
of pets
an owl
an
eagle
a
monkey
a parrot
a dog
the
blessing
of the
animals!

no less
than the
mauling
paws of
lionesses
torn
across
every
mournful
pew
&
listen!
here is
the
preacher's
homily
poured
out
on deaf
ears
&
morbid
manes
the
grand
dame's
salmon
colored
pate
swings
open

&
morning
hangs
out
like
palm
trees
on her
pursestrings

to dry
see the
churchlight
fade
to
bauble-
eyed
black
with
each
uttered
word &
incantation
as
all the
long
while &
outside
the
northerly

blownaway

laughing
wind
with its
already
gone
buddha-
edge
of rain
inside it
plays a
song
clear &
cloud &
cloud
again
howlingly
& into
the
knowing

sun

