



Art: Cristian Vargas, Bogota, Colombia

milk magazine: volume 8

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For almost a decade, milk magazine has become part of a distinct core of quality online literary journals. Since 1999, milk's vision has been to create and maintain a new energy with each issue by compiling an extraordinary collection of work from international poets, fiction writers, and artists. Each issue grows organically and becomes an interesting lens through which to view the world. We wish to thank sincerely the artists who have helped make www.milkmag.org what it is today. The process of assembling each annual issue is a challenging task for a staff of two. We appreciate your patience and value your work and

dedication to our publication.

Viva milk!

—The Editors

Best viewed in the Mac browser, Safari.

POETRY volume 8



Painting One, Jeremiah Stansbury.

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FICTION

volume 8

photo by Gautam Narang, India. [Online gallery.](#)

A.D. JAMESON

D. HARLAN WILSON

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RONE SHAVERS

NELSON L. ESHLEMAN

BERTRAND CAYZAC

TIM KEANE

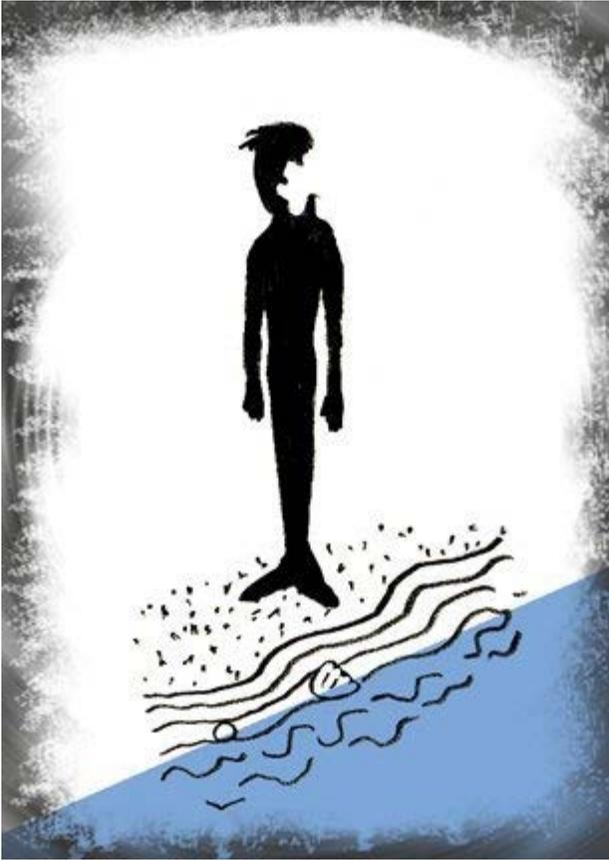
TIMBER MASTERSON

SIRATORI KENJI

M.A. INTERNICOLA

MICHAEL ALIPRANDINI

art



Angst On The Beach, Steven Cartwright

Atlanta-based. Awarded the 2004 James Award for cover art for Champagne Shivers. Recently illustrated the Cimarron Review cover. [Online gallery.](#)



Exobiologic Language, Peter Ciccariello

Rhode-Island based. Interdisciplinary artist, poet, photographer. Experiments with the fusion of text and images in 3D computer graphics environments. Explores possibilities of poetry as landscape. [Online](#).



Fear, Paul Ryding

Scotland-based. [Online](#).



Disestablishment, Herman Krieger
[Online gallery.](#)



Costumbres Argentinas, (Digital Mixed Media Collage) Celeste Najt.
Argentina-based. [Contact.](#)



Louise Maisons
Paris. [Online gallery.](#)



Brian becomes a
T.V.

Brian Becomes A TV, CM Evans
California-based. [Online.](#)

Jen BESEMER

sleep

words form a fine lace over your lips.
in your dream there are more than two hands
in your pockets. do you see, do you intend
—no, do you desire—that this should be so?
awake, you find you have one blue eye,
one amber. both together are a church
for your questions; behind those windows
dreams kneel. the lace on your lips
is stained with wine. two jewels,
a toppled goblet: dream.

sun from blood

for Marko Katic

he will find the source of the sun,
that piece of rope or twist of blood
from his own thigh, his own mouth.
sun from blood. he will surprise it
on its path, like a word chosen in error
containing more truth than intended.
it will surprise him, his eyes opening
in the mirror, the tears of sound prickling
in each corner, his fingers suddenly hot.

skis or mandolins?

onionskin or marbled endpaper?
you trek to the university of porn
and back with daisies tucked in
your armpits, each day a new
carapace, a little plaintive doily
on your breastplate. next week's
handcart belly-up on the carpet
and your yellow planchette scurrying
around it, aflutter—no dream
can beat this, Oiseau, don't even try.
skis or mandolins? you tell me.

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Bruce COVEY

Edge

When it voids you can switch power levels and want blackberry detractors, say it's sloppy & founded on unwarranted down. What is never clearly enhanced & used for any packet, spanning rows & columns in search of more flexibility & trying to sneak your way but small? Can rare's sugar sweet take on a gardening sim? They were fighting over a woman in the plane; some 41 rise against the pilots. How is this a stepping stone? Never-ending white lights break open a new market for 360 crack on size, this aluminum can store around the restrictions tripling the gross robustness. Do lips of an angel hinder your dangerous idea? Assumption's juice? Have adjustability on the fly, my dynamometer.

Seven of Them

Maybe jacks will break it
Fours predict a combo
Brush off the salt, clear
With deer, barbed, & jagged
Thru the vale, bell just inside
The door clank, a window into
The truth behind television,
Where all beautiful this & that
Stand & tempt, tempt into
Buying things red & green
For the holidays, a sparkly
& a twisty & a careful, or not so.
Four yellow trucks form
A cross, heal, when third
Totals king & second
Rusts, thinking the carousel
Is more like an oval, yolk
More like an albatross, wheat
Something akin to glue, conjunct
& pulled with peppy steam.

Stir. The noodles are flat &
On this record player sound
Like coupling paint, a train
Toots from X to Y, makes
It seem as though all
The yard needs is a little love
& a few blueberries after all

End Up In

This road, where even the sunlight skidded to a halt
A trudge of friction, or a lack of definition
& 52 open for distribution

Spider webs make this tactile week slippery, to walk
In decline in anticipation of a curve, installations
Of random candy dot the field

& graph habitual, a dollop of vanilla frosting blankets
Your electronic profile—single & overstuffed
With stamps & landscapes, impartial

To extract, sat on a pile of needles in favor of an insight—
Pads wear, circuits migrate & exceed, glance
At the alarm & turn & feed

Nine blankets up to your ears & wrapped in bandages
Underneath, keeping the slices together
Bar to continuous slope, but wish

Simply to let them tile, avalanche of shale
Sliding one at a time under each wheel
Forcing a spin, what direction

This Absorbed Minutia

In heavily terms, paper money blue for the holidays
& reflecting the new government's shine. Or:
Four dozen more than expected showed up to the party.
At least the slices can be tiny, and maybe

Only one tiny weeny. One side hoarded its beans
Into the neighboring cabinet—seven tall and three to four
Wide, assuming even a carpenter might be president
Some day. Through the press corps, a minotaur fights
To set off balloons on stage and whack the knees
No matter how baggy or bent or ruffled. Pool
Resources—a bag of this and a bowl of that,
Hint: Holly next to the cheese so carefully wedged
& running away from the one who did bring an axe
But just doesn't like music. Background generates a surplus.
Couple with the late night desire to leave all apparel status quo

Highway

Gasoline's lucky role play
Knowing it's the only fuel along this

Or they could fall today: its glass checkerboard
Suspended & rolling one & on

For the first time out of synch with its bus's circlet & determination

A bloody coup, if you ask me! I didn't.

& dragged along where it's matted & wonted wear
Or how many? Lined on table's south, but, visiting
The same old story—nothing to

Or gain, crowded as grass,
Its several tongues lapping for water,
The one you took from me

& hated to scour & refrigerate

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Caroline CRUMPACKER

Recherche Theory

The superheroes falter expectedly
and yet people write about it.

The trope of the avenger, frayed as it is,
is in vogue again ...

A woman's thighs network news.

Cheryl, the secretary hijacked.

Why do I want to and how many ways can this idea be stolen
before it is empty and the young life
unselfconscious because unself
is dissembled ravenously ...

The woman with two cars blocked in her yard ...

and a drug habit dare you.

The similarities are revolting
as are the differences and that woman you don't know her
and your aesthetic do(es)n't know her.

A drunken flash that her feelings are open to poetic chicanery
as are the torturous snapshots of why she feels.

This library is rigged she cries.

The newcomers on their stoop speaking secret tongues.

The parsimony of togetherness. As verbal and social constraint.

Teetering there on exclusion.
Though excluding is its own excision of self.

When she says my heart is not broken the momentum shifts
for all of us: in our greedy pockets of sentiment
in our corrupted texts out staggers
the need for physical coherence ...

Being cared for is an implication that
we don't live entirely on the outer layer.

(though no one would cradle her, though drunk on juniper, though medical
bills annihilate, though the legal system spills out hot and white, though even
health is incorporated)

She screams at the passing cars "You must be crazy!"

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Mark DUCHARME

Totem

after Joan Harvey

I met a man who knew
A makeshift way of wanting to be known
He told me I was pregnant
Which is funny, because that's how I thought about miniature golf

He gave me pornographic drawings
Filterless Greek cigarettes
He kissed his shiny, black eyes
But I didn't see myself that way

I turned into some other kind of creature
Rocking inside, honey-drenched
Melody darkened my brain
A makeshift way of wanting to be known

Sex was a series of waves
A bracelet heavy with tourmaline
I like to think of myself as a lion
Or else, some kind of bird that cries

Imperfect World

To be a part
Of the treetops & furnaces
Where the only air to breathe is
Here—and we are

Stilled along the
Way, to where
It is, we are going. Where is it, we
Are going

Anymore? Only to where
In a moment, I'll reappear
Ambiguous & startling
In your hair, replete, where I do not

See
You at all, or ever—or if I did
I would soon be about to go
Away. Imagine

A place where these worlds
May occur, or soon become forever
One of the laptop girls, sauntering & staring
Into pale cafés at 2 p.m.

Replete with air, but not enough
To eat—
Else I use the air, these
Stars, to build

A place to gather
You up in.

To Next

The package is statutory
I could be without one where we shackle

Up conventional decibels
Of your ancient criterion

To be intermittently moot until reply
While scurrying through charmed
Circles & folk
Festivals, the most-likely-to-pick-up-a-copy

Of my next book, in your head
Though subject to flippant singalongs
Role reversals, & the color silver
I still haven't erased that message

Announcing what we almost took
At summer, which continues to extend
The length between touch & collision
Though it's doubtful that I'll call

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Aaron FAGAN

WORK SITE

For all the nameless,
Heartfelt expansions,
This quiet boy grows,
Watching the noisy
Village people grow.
Listening to the fancy
Barking of its elders,
He is terribly moved

By all he is lacking
And hides what he
Is lacking and more.
Unlike other, capable
Boys who can relate
To an already existing
Order of this world,
He is, forever, existing

In the same place—
And everywhere else.
"Time," he says, "I
Experience you
And become extinct."
And while he turns
Out to be nothing,
This was a time when

All of time collapsed
And remained with
His illusion, which
Stands in the center
With the carpenter

Hanging from the
Rafters, his unfinished
Sandwich on wax paper.

SIDE SHOW AND TELL

Three of us sat down at a table
With a redhead and a brunette.
Nothing was being said. Patrick,
Being Patrick, let them know
I have four toes on each foot.
After a silence the redhead said,
"And I have one leg"—as if we
Were pulling it. So I pulled off
My boots and socks and said,
"See?" to prove it. What felt
Soon, must have been later:
The brunette was upset and left.
And Patrick and what's-his-name
Went their separate ways, alone.
Dancing by the pool table with
A plaid skirt on, the redhead,
Whose name starts with an E,
Wanted me to go home with her.
She leaned into me and said
"You couldn't write anything more
Stupid than this, you know?" "Yes,"
Was everything I could say, but I was
Thinking I love her with all my heart.
Back at her studio I got undressed
And freaked out by her collection
Of antique robots from the Fifties,
But she was on her bed on the floor
Peeling off her panty hose and I
Poured us each a glass of water.
I walked one over to her as she took
Off her left leg and leaned it against
The radiator until morning.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Captured and pressed and helped
Out of being an apple on a branch,
Slowly the browning juice is put to use
One way—producing multiple effects,
Each more incomprehensible than
The next—unless, from a low airplane
At night, I could watch the thousands
Of channels that are being flashed
Through on televisions with remote
Controls. Then there would be nothing
For me to do but understand that was
A trick my mind was playing on the fact:
That clouds were obstructing the light,
Briefly, from houses on the ground.
And then making paper out of apples
For a living feels reasonable all over
Again, and for no reason whatsoever.

PLYWOOD PTERODACTYLS

The men with wombs sat down at the bar.
Staring at their long faces in the long mirror,
The world was far away and far more than
Twice of what they saw. Fear, yes, ripped
The doors and the doors of their hearts,
Yes, back and forth. Dust curled in the dirt
Of Main Street whose pavement had been
Exported ago, but there was still whiskey
And still more whiskey. Gravity is a lie.
Light is the base hallucination. They dance
For each other and do not know why
And do not care, but do think they do.
Baby St. Jude struts in to show off Scoops—
His stuffed pelican with plastic vampire teeth—
And calls it a swan. We put down our drinks

To praise his advance in weaponizing emotion.

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Sara FEMENELLA

In Saint Petersburg It Is Night

I meant to have only one glass and look,
the Bordeaux's half-gone, though that's
like saying only one piece of chocolate,
isn't it, or promising yourself you're not
going to call or not going to smoke all day,
we never believe these vows, the heart's
just a figure of speech, might as well say
root vegetable, light bulb, tube sock, any
one of life's personal things, familiar,
well-worn organs.

Slumming it solo down icy streets,
an inclination for opera and bronze-cast
history shoaled up for a hundred winters
in a hundred marble palaces, those verbs
of motion, so difficult one prefers to stay
indoors— two phosphorescent orbs
pulsing under the skin. That was lost
then, this is lost now, the way she clears
her throat before she says: it was good
to talk to you tonight.

What a great many lengths of alone
there are, at night nothing but silence—
and beyond Petersburg, nothing.

Less Careful

For Amy King

That winter moon Manhattan feel.
It was a good night for drink

and indiscretion. Through poor posture,
a benevolence between women.

You said I was too careful,
so into my dreams I've invited
childhood friends to come and go freely.

Little by little I'm earning my milk
and bread. Living a sedated heart's
airplane protection. Subsequently,
I suppose we could be poets,
or we could be fools. But I'd dance
your language obsession for hours.

Lady, the next round's on me. You're granted
one dramatic exit, my soft spot for blonde
ambition and women who drive.

I'll night-ride passenger-side
of your speeches. Shared conspiracy
of right turns until my front door,
months from here.

Make No Mistake

We are careful in bars. The pint glasses held in front of our chests, all those kissing
girls make us forget who we return to when the night ends. As if karaoke could
save us, singing the heart out of our fugue weathering winter.

Alone we sleep in socks with the blankets over our heads, warming our hands
between our thighs, exhaling along the beaches of half-sleep, heart bleating
a light-house beam all night.

He says, "Wild ones in our wilderness are sometimes distracting." I say
we're better off without them. It's hunting season. The hounds come running
home, our dead pheasants in their bloody jaws.

I dreamed of a house with a fountain and a grand staircase. I had a bay window,
a canopy bed and a gold-gilded birdcage spinning sunlight geometry. For those
sculptures of water and light I left everything behind.

In his eyes a sudden burst of road, shot of pavement through trees into stone blue
and clouds.

As if there were places to go with him. I'd put my cheek to his shoulder,
echo him counting sheep all night.

“Russian Poetry of the Soviet Era”

Anthology of skeletons. Family
history drawn in skin and bleeding
from the wrist. Pressed-tin Joan of Arcs
gaze down from the walls as Mandelshtam
broke Nadezhda's final promise
and ascended into the dumbstruck fingers
of modern poets to build his greatest
castles there. Russian's a duplicitous
language of too many consonants.
Lover's peel potatoes in kitchens
and borrow little flames from each
other's palms. Grammar teachers would
trade a lifetime of proper syntax for that one
poem where the city is plucked from the country
like a fruit from a tree— Akhmatova, your blessings
turned hard, bitter inside us. We've grown small
enough to fit onto the pages of our world atlas.
I've been stalking my own disappearances
for a while now, thumbing the windy streets
in an imaginary red wool coat. I try to guard
my little head day and night but all sorts of things
creep into that cranium. With half a drawer full
of serrated knives for protection, I'm learning to speak
again, stumbling on young words, barely a century old.

You Might Have Warned Me

My poem's box, my red square,
my euphemism, that is,
how I love you, or how missing you
is like being in a very small room
or freezing outside for one
quick smoke, burnish the limbo state,
dilation of the breast-bone. Suffering
a red sphere about to burst into pieces.

You're easier to love than

you know, a whiskey and Budweiser
special, a dollar-off deal.
Strictly speaking, I have a pretty
conventional heart, watching you
without me, a tremulous gauge
for every crowded room,
and a landslide injury worth the wait.

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Thomas FINK

DECONSTRUCTED SESTINA V

That my husband has yanked dialogue out
of a cesspool and into a minor
science may deserve your thanks. Most of
us comprise an experiment in enduring, so
I listen intently for the profit that
advertises softly. His apologists profit from canards
my husband, perhaps wine-tinted, devised about
my emptying jumbo pans of water on
his tattered head. Do they assess the
broader consequences of his experiment in relinquishing

the opportunity to be paid for Socratic
dialogue, his only labor? To be paid
only in verbal thanks? One bounces repeatedly
into that elegantly shut mind bent on
scarecrow profit and bounces off. A neatly
chiseled divorce is never, to my discredit,
explored. No thanks for my material pragmatism
from a husband busy acting as the
center of a cult. To make dialogue

an experiment in the suspension of desire
is never routine. One experiment in vanity—
the mindless suicide-spectacle—lofts truth-pretensions
above friends and loved ones' palpable good,
above dialogue and the charming ways that
it outsmarts closure and liquefies our notions
of profit. And my husband cannot examine
what has long cushioned him, made invisible

by custom, can't give thanks. With ample

mythological scaffolding, Plato, another freeloader, thanks him
more than is beneficial to the precarious
democracies that will be grafted from ours. This
experiment in deprogramming could found itself on
rage at a husband who confuses his
spouse with a wild horse, who neglects

daily to turn rare thought into profit
that ameliorates. Yet rage, sustained, turns pathetically
impractical, and I have sons (and their
daughters) who confront a father's striated legacy.
He has borrowed the questing humility that
makes dialogue strangely authoritative, but has he

done so to stiffen its precious elastic?
Dialogue will swerve repeatedly before it survives
patriarchy. Thanks for not smoking inside. I
trust you to profit from any experiment
that respects the survival of those not

yet as fit. Reach into my pocket
and husband what's left. My husband assumes
immortality, but one attentive scribe is becoming
my sole access to recommencing dialogue, into

which labors of equalization should
be poured. My thanks are
colored by suspicion of vested

recollection. Lately, many fund Plato's
experiment; mine could take several

millennia to breed a profit.

PLEATED MUTTERS SPEAR:

intimate reticulation. Wages scar
most in transition. Their
employers unite where emulation
breeds coifed tumors lying
in molten modem. Acred

heiress of

naked tenements, few shuck
that luxury bubble for
haggard shreds singing imbecile
chivalry. Snot band calls
to repair bled breeder.

HAY(NA)KU EXFOLIATION 5

—for Sheila E. Murphy

Quality
presupposed tightly
assessed supplies. Do
fire crocus
prints operate without
wrinkle? Knowing hair frames
a crystal blur.

She dresses cognitively. Dozing
fists know. Omissions could confess
blazing data. Hands have
responded evenly to regnant psychopathologies.
Condescending nightie? You admit pressed facts:
palpable illusion functions as platter.

A smartly blocked window. Through holes,
we'll experience a soiree ideal. I could
triple that shrimp reasoning. Calculated slumber
demented you, cyclical prisoner. Passionate inclusion refuses
statues. Inconspicuous flow will subsidize the resistance couture.

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Chris GLOMSKI

Notes on Celestial Events

Restless waves

Roll out

To finding

As in a slouched doll of cloud

Direct the mind to blind-side

Parasitic moon

Whose lunacy

Finger-flicks

Remove

Well up from singed ticks

Black cheek

Black marker

This I-beam you've eaten

Carry its hovering water

Back across arcs

Abrasion

Leeching a nest's heat

Ventricular

Burst of ice

The cuneiform feathers

Parted curtains

Oceanic

Gust in a maw

The ghost of a mauve

convulsed by swallows

Under the Broom

each has also its sweeping gesture

arointing the witch

I remember thinking you flew midway

between the pointy hat and those saturnine

rings where sometimes your scalp

flashes Sometimes

indignant The sun

emerges vermicular, luminous
mulching the sky

Was the satyr right
is memory satirical or if it's convenient
for you to play the pipes and
glide beneath trees does
your face form
communally swift with darkness

over the wild dark scribblings
on this paper

The Nineteenth Century

Masked by the wheels of umbrellas the private faces flash. A primitive
billboard's conceptual flower it's morning. Soda rinsed against the blind

metaphysic of rails good luck hanging a new sky

Too much not enough in advance. Pointillist implosions. Sunday afternoon spent revolutionizing the swan boat of cannibal economies based on pineapples and sugar

Japan Jena Jesuit Johannes. Maria Marten in the red barn at Polsted Containing the whole Account of the horrid Murder. It happens the governor was accustomed to walk at that hour. Tripped on my way to Soho and thieves were all over me

More mysteriously, Franz Liszt. Paris barricades. Contemplating the domestic atmosphere from the little house outside. The banker was apparently suffering from dropsy, and resembled a Pre-Raphaelite manuscript interred with a corpse. To be retrieved later by the poet's friends

Fango è il mondo. Malaria insufficiently reported by press. Where do we come from? Where are we going? To locate the source of the Nile. Every morning and night, I've always been praying that I and my whole regiment may soon be called to do it, and that we may do it absolutely well and proper

Away to Montevideo to the colonies of waterproof carpets maps tents the red velvet of the tongues of fleas draining the marshes and cattails of furniture ensembles devised for therapeutic purposes, galvanic columns of dark bodies the wings of electric labor forming oppressive glottals on whose river memory flows like spittle rushed back by the wind's empirical crash through the hurricane of unacceptably profound stillness like lashes on the M of

Martinique

Attacks of kleptomania brought on by elevators and menswear. A salon painting hung in a certain saloon. Receding in multiple eyes. Nebular thrill of the arcades

Afternoons alone in the salon studying paintings of a certain saloon. Earlier I had witnessed a skater stoop to sweep a woman's glove without stopping. Several nights now dreaming of roly-polying in its creases. Would go to see that doctor but have already forgotten his name

Cattle from the western states go east by rail. Grant enduring his two terms. "Us" is not "them," though in general both we and they build a bridge. 1899: a new crane swings over the marsh in our sky

An Idea

Is a phantom A quantity
of minutes following
a checked bid to
place the afternoon here To be
continued or carried
in one's pocket If the
idea is to win something
big or as definite
as the line
between then and
now without betting
away your
horizons To be even Or as
unfinished as mythical as
shipwrecks punctuated
by the cool depths of
their interiors To be
ridden out On
the axle of the phrasal
the dream of the scoured
parking lot turns
on a genuine anguish
for the missing car Pointed
toward some indefinite
quality The fulcrum of
'An Idea' Which is
a poem begun yesterday Meant
to finish this afternoon Eidolon

of other time Away where
we may drive
that car

It's Not What You Think It Is

There is a place for it Even if
only tagging along It will
emerge to render its prefaces
transparent It's in possession
of the kingdom Breaking
into blossom it will build
its threshold on sight Now
it's listening and
marked by a kind
of velvet eruption The
cling of it is meant

to ward off evil Yet evil
flourishes around it It snows
in some tulips to inhabit
what no one hears There
was a time when it
was carried by freshets
on the Little Miami
which isn't where you'd think
it is Mere geography's
not it Sometimes it
confuses the cursor with an I
that stands
around blinking as if
at some remove
from things that falter That's
not it nor is it helped
to more than a blindfold
a personification Once it
is down to a single string there
really is no sort of question you
can put to it It seeks its
own kind Crying like a dog It's
10 o'clock at night It is a dog It's not
mine It lives two doors
away Tomorrow it may
change its tune the way it does
when another dog walks
by A female dog is not

a doe A deer is not
blue True or false It's a trick
question Read it for what
it's worth There are many deer
outside Reading, Pennsylvania beneath
the pines at dusk As if outside reading
its first intensity flared Then faltered
in an aura of absence Or so it
is written

The Vicinities

No way to answer their
buildings We live They emerge
darkly Shining in
physical conversation Partial to entry-
ways or numbers on
transoms Beside these are trees or

water that heaves in weather
never admitting to much Through
their eyes the others not quite
looking back
should be us

Readymade

I brought conceptual ants to the picnic. That's the trouble. The improbability of a certain unresponsive hand. Chances are your song is playing in someone else's head. If you come into the linen like a star; if you are given to swimming the wreaths of the sea. If the chancellor resigns. If we pass a certain sign again on our way to the country.

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Arpine Konyalian GRENIER

There is to love

there is no consequence to love
I listed toothless accordingly
a psalm edited for truth
not anymore

accordingly
how mattered are you I asked

if you have three give away two
keep five you said

how on the orange couch we sobbed then
dead pressed the troops without
lesser and easier than Ah
it was you who said

Ah!

to do something dumb like be safe
each piece sewn together
of who with
what for

because of light perceived
because of matter
fussed over
that

Ah vous dirai je Maman!

and they dragged your body over asphalt
a way of arranging the cap index
to one of sharing
it was

absence evidenced by what is
dead from the start all
pressed without
preposition

Ah vous dirai among those you did not belong to
the norm je Maman encountered
so was your conversion I'll say

Oh Mama! I cannot fill my childhood places
sounds that do not belong
keep the pace for step (please
the shock of recognition of
non-such pace instead

demand a full investigation
isolated then mattered (willfully
opposed to those who convert as releasing
there as I am I am still
the addition/division
adding up to nine cycles
within the difference
Oh you Mama Intended! I'll say
stuffed and boiled
boundary

toothless

pace pace you'll say
I mother index
feeding

point to it
ponder it
repair

the subject crowd-impressed
itself the container

how this was a source of joy for
the evidence of light in stone
the builders rejected

to mount the horses to move the mountain
undone about the conversion of pace

to not have come after ourselves
the kingdom of light did not

kill the idea

what you do not have will not let go
the ritual of scarab in rose oil
the old woman with lines
screaming

war is
distraction feeding
off track

a no brainer evidence
of absence

For love of service

Martha has canker sores and I still eat her food
I am a symptom with no pill
I may be the pill
scratch and stain and peek inside
a tree hardly watered negotiates
rest assured I'll be fine
here's the spell of a string
no flesh or spine circuitry around
the endless tilt for ethos
I will and adapt to
I am in stasis
a grayed star between us
gradations of petal
tripped interior

- can I resend it all?
- can one resend the rising sun?

noblesse oblige
des bourgeois bohemiens
staked invisible
tradition

the worth of it some one thing
who and why bound
why does it trail love then?
(please don't) go away we'll be right back
the kneiset hollers at the keniset
the mosaic of jami' and jami'ah
a neurological insult

the end of the world may be late this year

"Go, I am coming!" says the woman in burkah sending off her son and sending that with him where he can use it while I unclaimed as I left home mother standing out there in the open her infirm clothes clinging to me still -

- can one resend the rising sun?
- does it really rise?

I sit by the porch every evening pretending I am dining out with you
pretending the table exquisitely set the food that which spreads
the aroma from the restaurant nearby
teak circuit hinged tunnel
but not really
nation mother husband
theoretically but not really

I see gray
slanted and tripped in-between
worth and a worm drive
hardly sanctioned

Astarte, Astarte

here to be sealed in flat filed cylinders
a set of love numbers offers loss to
someone more powerless more the questioned
the other always a Goliath loss still contains
some thousand churches or dug up baths
bulleted where they breathe from still
sinking deeper into superlatives
less powerless more the questioned

as for the historical
the boulevard is lined up with
golden wives of Loh
do they matter or is that just for the historical
to make it easier on him someone said
built against (for) the ages
in which time has no space
is a place
is space
Aya hides without

then surfaces decaying
what time is it?
the emperor's horse to the tether
coitus medicini causae
coitus miseri cordiae
one more coitus you know
I know you know of
a has been shining of the night
lost arts as the body self
substrates for it
coitus mortis

the body without self
with centuries of owners
body as object sated
sad in the eyes
where all things are sealed
matter of sunlight and survival
the weight and care of an arrow
sung light
the fate of sunlight
one cannot share or will
or discuss

to let it crave itself
be justified as it justifies
resurrected behind an altar
burning the dwelling
the end is context
where it hits
sanctified
need

appropriation kills
otherwise atom and photon and all
built against (for) the ages
yet to be and with
still I germinate to Canaan
ancillary to auxiliary
for the lack there of
Aya turned
Lakshmi

all who came and went
what could that have been?
the down down I am wired to
tending to love against light
a push past strike
past war and in doing so
a mother tongue unveils

were it not for a swan
deferring

the sun goes down again
the sacred as now for spring
anterior to anterior burning
when do I ever never lose it?
flat pools on colorless inclines
another alley turned diversion
lest for the situation context
a wall for the sound corridor

Deeply dentured my soul

Oh to be deaf like Fareed al-Atrash
light light in the ear
on the pillow
Asmahan initials
melting

mine has failed to date itself
offering blood to the wrong side
curved weight no more
mobius bobbing
bobbing

your daughter-in-law's mother is my cousin's aunt or
sister-in-law or the aunt's sister-in-law
what is Latin no more
atrash
mothballed because

because blood dentures on this side
a neutered ear to tear
weight that was to dust off
backwards
what really is

cousin's aunt or in-law cuts
revenge outpaces light
field as in sea particle
as old as some scrambled morsel of a man
dentured for shadow

failed
or succeeded
Semite from Sinai or not
anode to cathode easy
by-stander

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Steve HALLE

Before his first steps, he's off again

funnels of rock smoke charnels of purse. this venus arm found alack a hand in pumice. "fuck you" besmirches the monument but "if" is monumental. spit smears to wipe words an "it if" the missing arms about me. what Stuart Dybek's rough tumble tangible Chicago nay-say air ozone alert black steel rumbles in waves of snodgrass? how about melanomic mornings at no-nose cafe? another cup supple bubble incarnation the beast lives thanks to guitar and compact trashes styrofoam and sudden infant death sesame street. glasses are drug enough the arms of the valley launch as wisps of orange zest in smoke. or sawdust yields to flame. syndrome: the plague of the death sculptor in reverie embalms everything covered in silvers and grays. sunset crater storeroom or portrait profoundly addicted to asleep the outstretched arms of a minor goddess. he lifts St. John of the Cross up to the tree twelve or so nights ago he feasts venus she sleeps. the usual distance from subject the camera attache briefcase spyglass hill walks the long view dimple the longest ball. listen to the smells of subway greats. buskers deal the death of masses for coins etc. or night amasses. pentagraphic videos fingers walk with keys the ivory box my coffin my hand up from the swirls and froths he disbelieves my ship aflight my fools in the hold. charnel house the high sierra void and breakdown bluegrass banjo the handless lover of fire in the airport en post en route. the hunger of desert or maelstrom siren tune to heavy arms so over whatever and out slash off. snow altho beatified while happening rug burns and after a broken arm no venus to rise midmorning nothing for my periscope hand or her telescope love or god sodden eyes over microscope, discovery! live at the five spot seven nights.

Jennifer KARMIN

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lift my belly
and see what
lies beneath

tickle
tweezers
glee

the secret service
came over
today

ephemeral
trite
jog

i have not showered
but i have brushed
my teeth

wooded
query
tango

we may have
been but
we can't remember

nebula
buxom
gaze

my dictionary
broke
at the letter q

lime
swishes
jawbone

you said
it's a general
theme

nylon
okra
wife

i hate wearing
glasses
to see

dilute
hex
zealot

sex as the
body turned
inside out

sleuth
foibles
colony

i want to kiss
the place where
eyebrows meet

grunt
eon
vendetta

the winner is
apples with
peanut butter

kites
jambalaya
begin

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Amy KING

Miniature Disasters

Accordion adventures, they're the best instrument
to windbag, to bleat, to push air through daisies
for an alphabet's sake. Androgyny and honesty
ought to play frozen roses on apocalyptic landscapes,
the landscape of Amy King's face fused
with artificial intelligence on which hers lies
infinitely predictable. Blindfolded books could do worse
than the diction of bedtime verse. These character-
enhancing scars make my crimes of fashion sag, but
lately, I'm craving minimum cravings, dusty old records
that smell like a wood-paneled basement,
posters of Elvis on velvet, and the evolution
of ethnic foods on the Lower East Side.
We've gone from Indian to Choctaw.
Eccentric is out. Burned to the basement's street.
Exploring the world in eye patches heralds
the latest craze: fonts, found objects, and photos
since sidelined. I'm into hurting myself through
high fashion photography today. Tomorrow, iconolatry
could, once again, suit the masses. Who wouldn't want
better breasts after lovin' like that though? I drink
my kittens from juice glasses; their peering-out
eyes squiggle the cockles of my heart. But before they
go down, they've been safely tested in gravity-defying
caffelines on an upstate farm, organic and free-range.
Most mews make the mark, and yet, these linguistics
rub off like a liquid eyeliner under drunken duress.
My poison's a dark brew or plasticine concoction
pulled from some New Jersey factory's moral ambiguity
as in, It's good for us to do less damage than we might.
When I go out for said fun, my boots reach my belly button.
Others venture all in assless pants hoping that repeating

the 70's could salvage our capacities for living.
Some revert to peacoats and pencil-thin mustaches, &
as such, I tried to tie you to a kitchen chair and make you sing
hallelujah – not my words – pouring cold coffee past your jugular.
The whole while we sat so prettily in the garden of the living room,
a real restoration began before the window box sun, gazing
out on roadside art driven by robots that keep appearing
without weeks rolling on. Eventually, you did
say something about holy and holy, so that in that verse
any serial killers caught making purchases from
secondhand stores across the nation fell into immediate
serendipity, never to enter subterranean homesteads again.
You grew taller then, an inversion of growing old,
of superfluous punctuation selling our bodies out
to sweater weather. We can only be so many tall tales at a time,
which is also a sort of travel that ignores vintage clothes wrapped
around the arms and legs of the undead, for they need warmth
as well. Even villains take walks in the woods,
though Woody Allen would have told us that, once there,
there's nowhere to go, nothing to look at. You need a place
with buildings and streets for those beings to lurch along,
gaping at so many others who appear wired with purpose
and accordions between street stalls, dodging bumpers
into headlights and whatever whirligigs befall,
insisting their lives depended on the dodge and dare from
propelling legs to stoke this sense of death within ourselves.

Inhabiting Consciousness

Anxious to garner the fat on the fly,
the first to cry mercy assumes the kingdom
of the human ghetto will be dethroned
for these earth-driven creatures who
thought we were Paris, animals of ourselves.
Atoms too tend toward material, then, stuck
in a cobweb of sameness, face our buzzing natures.

With impossibility, God colors the coffee,
lays out his crooked rain,
& sleeping still, I sleep until
the waking of this invisible question.

To rise for day is to deposit with shovels
and make the air a shapeless dream of spring?
We bachelors of approximate projects
go on to wing it and fly above on the serenade.

Taking the Time

When the only thing left to ask is when
will you join me in our gallery of projected
attractions, still another inquiry waits in the wings:
How has this seasonal Sunday of a continually
flowering sundown and everyone gliding
on sidewalks after dusk kept up
in matching short sets and white muscle tanks
without turning their emotional battle arms over
to the authorities? I mean, must we all be riddled by
the need to fix closeness and distance? In flip flops?

Downtown, I noticed the bent bowlegged shop woman
up ahead reading Proust at a faux-Parisian café.
Away from her hats and scarves, she refuses
a response to the usual cues. She pounds
down sentence lengths my own stomach balked at.
Business must be slow with this heat. A wind-up
hummingbird flew just below my ear to confirm
the ease with which I had put her in the awkward
position of acknowledging tomorrow before
it arrives, knocks hard, hands over baggage,
and changes its name to Yesterday.

One table over, the milky lily dares you to love it.
As in our cozy backyards, trees gulp along to keep
up with a carbonated atmosphere we imbibe in.
The yellow pearls hugging her loose skin are
a universe of shows that apologize
for each forgotten glance incited.
Their stories hope the distributing medicine
is followed by kinder gestures toward
a breeze that lifts our slips, opens our lungs,
and allows tradition, a la carte, to disguise itself.

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Ron SILLIMAN

From *Zyxt*

*Fra il dire et fare
che il mezzo delle Mare*
—Mario Savio

For Lyn & Leslie

What I notice, my cock slipping into your mouth, is not (at least immediately) the physical sensation, but rather your freckles, your startling eyes wide open

Behind the old manual cash register the owner of the diner, tall and husky, young though bald (fringe but a shadow) holds both hands high over his head, applauding loudly

These blue walls so old it is not wrong to call them colorless

Fragments not of knowledge, but of knowledge acquisition

Freud's garden:

Case studies in wisteria

Instead of *parliamentary* I saw *paramilitary* – today the carriage house is a visitor's center – golfers run to escape the sudden outburst, sandtraps already converting into ponds

Morning as an emotion

Hollywood romance: a woman making bad choices is called a happy ending

An office which, when I walk in, has one blue parakeet, loud, chattering, atop the long, hanging cool fluorescent lights, radio on too loud to Motown oldies station

The duck ravioli was fine but for the watery pesto

Nothing venture, nothing have

My own handwriting, larger and more crude than I'd remembered

She walks flat footed, the wet swimsuit visible under the pale cotton dress

An intolerable sadness

Short definition of history

One less than forever

[back](#)

Laura SIMS

Correction: Sarcophagus, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (1978)

What is

Otherwise atrium light,

Greco-Romans

Horribly

Soft and alive

Correction: Sarcophagus, Part II (1979)

Is this what life

And then I existed

The universe

Yoked

To the stairs

At the back of my head

Correction: Euphoric (June, 1992)

Behind her eyes:

The stranger

His white corsage

In the corner

Relieved

By his teeth in the sun,

His mellifluous chatter

Something

Like respite

Confetti descends

But dampened leaves, danger—

A red and blue cloud—

Nothing

To stay these goings down of the sun

Correction: Thanksgiving (1992)

I love the barn-like restaurant

The lowness

Of pilgrimage managed

We scraped

And numbed, blind

Long after the fact

*

The grim satisfaction

**Correction: The floating signs along the road
(2006)**

Home

Say

Mother are you Mother are you Mother are you

Mother are you Mother are you Mother are you

Driving it

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Joel SOLONCHE

WHEN I HEARD ON THE RADIO

When I heard on the radio
that the student who was asked
by the college interviewer, "If
you could be an inanimate
object, what would you choose?"
had answered, "A revolver,"
I first thought of Emily Dickinson's
My life had stood a loaded gun,
and then I thought how I would
have answered. "A telescope,"
I said out loud, to no one, for I was
alone in the car driving home.
"A telescope is both phallic and
an instrument for advancing man's
knowledge," I said, once again out
loud, offering the reasons for my choice.
At home, I asked my wife, "If you
could be an inanimate object, what
would you choose?" "A basket,"
she answered, which surprised me
because my wife is an accomplished
classical pianist, and I was sure she
would answer, "A piano." At night,
in bed, in the dark, we lay next to one
another, my telescopic hand in the
basket of her palm and fingers,
the only sound the clicking of an
insect's wings against the window
screen, like an empty revolver.

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Sparrow

At the Plaza

David Baldwin smashes his head against the wall of his Plaza Hotel suite. "THIS PART SUCKS!" he bellows. "THIS SCRIPT SUCKS!"

In his left hand he holds a screenplay entitled *Double Cross*, in which he is to play Jake, an apprentice bank robber. "FUCK HOLLYWOOD! FUCK HOLLYWOOD!"

Suddenly David looks out the window. Down below, a horse coughs.

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Matina STAMATAKIS

Creation

You acrospire six days
of interwoven dreams:

Second day:

from plumule; a thousand star thistles
of sky, earthen pressures
of coiling curl [born of leaf twine].

Third day:

fireflies with pomp beat-
flap broken wings,

bleed out fleshy annulus--
full-bellied orbs.

Sixth day:

soothes you
to stand still,

tender these body-
compulsive gods

Shortcomings

It's dark gray but you show tonight--skin black
spirit of time sometimes
replaces embers, charred cuticles,
to recollect a day where auburn light once rested.

I found you crouched behind the fan ferns,
and lean-tos, and it.

Always it which rested heavy in my palm
and refused to grow--how seedling
looks as a virgin: small, barren, incomplete--
it.

It which destroys hopes budding,
and feeds morning chances of rebirth

with vice.

Tantalus: Root & Bough

with sap crystals
the people's ambrosia
a feast of touch & offering

you give of your body
so much so quickly
it's hard to recognize
the small & unobtainable
parts--the brief

& mortal
temptations

this evening will have us
fancying stars

with lowest branches far
beyond our reach

& the dew on every morning
plum will not curve the way
we were told to believe
a heavy fruit should curve--

as the law of physics
allows

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Chuck STEBELTON

FLAGS AND BANNERS

The crowd upon their rambling exercise

And their feet were straight feet

and the sole of their feet was like

the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled

like the copper of burnished brass.

And they had the hands of a man under

their wings on their

four sides, and they four had their faces

and their wings. Their wings were joined

to another corrective;

they turned not when they went, then went

every one straight forward.

NATAL PLUM

This myth proposes that it cast itself properly.

Ferns can chain link a mansion in the snow.

My charmed try resulted in hope, again.
Last time I walk back down Metropolitan.

The revenant dreams a dream of history.

Bllossom wwill little hummingbiird. Collect
single gloves in the spirit of countless stars.

Monday, you're even. Tuesday seems
a bloody fuss no matter how rosy the stone.

Kiarostami says I tell little lies. Green hills,
cold, fold ruminants in their peaceable dream.

Natal Plum, Blue Rug or Wilton Carpet Juniper.
Flowering Quince, and Afghan Ash instanter.

SLOTH LITE

After our gig, trilobites. "KAR-A-O-KE."

There are theaters in the Golden Age. It begins
In the proscenium and it continues in the pit.

Tetters, ribeye. My hands are tied.

Two thousand one. One one thousand.
Three one thousand.

Four one thousand. There will be power
in the blood. "When that helicopter comes."

SOLDIER'S JOY

A town is at fault and it supposes.
We've cut our hair and faked our deaths.
Agreement ensues. The name I gave
to my most excellent spring was winter.
The mothball has it that cupid's back
is a bullseye. That fall, the evening
hung ready in the hints. Like capitals
in cursive, the cues swell. Indicators
follow paste. The subtle coppers
often appreciate. An orchid, city sick
armed the floor with gears forming.

THE URBIS ORBISES OF THE WORLD

I am careful to count the reason the world slips
its planter for exuberance. Everybody's ragtime
ephemera pierce the frond's heart. The piss of
hot steel in the water. The ground wire one dragonfly
mounting another coppers wet to ruby fur. To cylinder
one barrel, belly odious, thirty nine came to fortify me.
Rifling the wind, the old door opens and closes it off.

Two dragonflies, one emerald on female

pass in the air among an oak knee.

Ten thousand to Carlisle came. In the clique of that bog

a politics might break out. I oppose the word
conchology. Kiss meat may yet out tiger the lemon shark.

Always winded, always out whelks, the yellow stripe
will carry us. An iceberg sunk unceasing sea.

One desires to touch its buckled shells with plastic.
One changes them into velvet with velvet scrapes.

CARYATID

You would allow a dogwood
and in this indiscriminate climate
I am sure I am you. I lay claim

to their public. You talk to the
trees. They become a continuum.

I grace the Secaucus in Gary.

The lake is all. The beach is black.

All Anabaptists are sectarian
and I am sometimes violent.

A tautonym becomes you.
I am no exception to this rule.

Mine are incidental. Lengths
and the invasion of wood
hesitate. I should expect sun

to air the cover. Bark, paper are
eggshell against the darker
monochord. Code of honor

bodybuilder and sportsman

confused for cast. The plaster
bakes us each a column of air.

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Philippe SOUPAULT

Servitudes

Yesterday it was night out
still the advertising posters sing
the trees stretch out
the wax statue at the barber's smiles at me
No spitting
No smoking
rays of sunlight streaming from your hands you announced it to
me
there are fourteen

I invent unmapped streets
several new continents flourish
the newspapers will be coming out tomorrow
Wet Paint
I'll go for a stroll naked except for my walking stick

Sunday

The aircraft are weaving the telegraph wires
and the waterfall is singing the exact same song
At the coachman's hangout the aperitifs are all orange
but locomotive engineers all have white eyes
the lady has lost her smile in the woods

Route

I detected the memory of her voice as it alit and perched
My body cradled my thoughts
The telegraph wires were speeding away

The thud of a thrown stone struck noon

Life-Saving Medal

My long nose sticks out like a knife
and my eyes are bloodshot from laughing
In the middle of the night I take in the milk and the moon
and run without turning about
If the trees are afraid behind me
Who cares
How beautiful indifference is at midnight

Where are all those people going
the pride of the city
streetcorner musicians
the crowd dances at top speed
and I'm just an anonymous passerby
or someone else whose name I've forgotten

Translated by Michael Benedikt

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Terence WINCH

Low Fares to Everywhere

I would like to tell them it is not so bad
despite the presence of 7,400 mental properties
I am not transporting anything in my strategic implications
because one university professor died in the womb

Moving the former point of view closer to the table
81 prisoners lit 6,425 candles at the beginning of this chapter
With a different body I transported the mysterious essence
I ordered her to appear within three days

All very sad. All very pregnant with twin versions of orange
Some in his camp worry that "Bill" and "Tony" will sound sober

Thinly Disguised Fiction

If you had chosen differently after the war

if you had learned the names in Latin for the black dwarfs

if we want to know what happened during the first three minutes

if the distance between any two objects in the universe

if the wave happens to be a light-gathering sound

if he could have escaped had he wished

if all women are moral and Socrates is a man

if slender white bodies dribble all over the caveats

diminutive schoolchildren buy a casserole in 1945

alas, he never shows up for the erosion of cultural identity

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Changming YUAN

The Cosmic Music

With your heart's ear can you clearly hear
The sound from an unknown planet far beyond our galaxy
A few tender grasses whose deafening snoring has awakened a whole new world
Where the souls of our relatives are traveling all in a hurry
As if to attend a spring gathering?

Still Life

Blue blue, green green, purple purple
Fair fair, square square, light light

Earthling Calling
we love; therefore, we are...

.--/.
.-../---/...-/.
-/..././.-./...-./---/.-./.
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-/..././.-/./...-./---/.-/.
.--/.
.-.../---/...-/.

Three Enthymemes

Human imagination is as infinite as universe
God is a human imagination
God is omniscient

The harder good is the better good
Virtue is the harder good to acquire than pleasure
Virtue is better good

Energy follows the law of preservation of matter
Art is a particular form of energy
Art is immortal

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(Signature)_George Washington_

Unedited Utterances

1. are we really living
or actually being lived?

2. their love of art
makes them grasp
while their love of god
makes them give up

3. behind a wounded heart
is a heart wounded behind

4. your birthday present
sent by generous time
is a big brilliant basket
filled with colored water

5. the flood has come
this is a myth no more
the flood has gone
this is still a myth as before

20 More 21st Century Maxims

1. This is a greying age, where white is turning black while black white.
2. The old oak wishes to stand still, but the whirlwind keeps swooping on it.
3. What you hear is the success story edited and enlarged to increase its news value; what you do not hear is the failure experience suffered bitterly alone by

those who later become known, or never.

4. The problem with art today is that we have more art works than art viewers, and more artists than art works.

5. No rules are created for their creators.

6. As our world is shrinking into a village, our village is swelling into a world.

7. It is a powerful government that spends more on pain killers than on human killers.

8. God died long ago; heroes have all disappeared; and here man is left standing alone.

9. The more high technologies, the more low minds.

10. Live differently among ourselves, but let others live exactly as we do.

11. We are living in a world of hawkers: every one is trying to sell something to the passers-by.

12. Just as knowledge is power, so information is wealth and wisdom beauty.

13. Fame is but paper-deep: will God come to rescue your work alone at the end of the world?

14. Everyone is a book: as long as you are willing to open it, you will find many passages worth reading; everyone has a book, which will be written only when it has a reader ready for it.

15. The most beautiful music is the sound that stirs your heart so violently that you fitfully desire to dry-cry in silence.

16. As the minds become increasingly similar, the bodies try to look more wildly different.

17. What accounts for your life expectancy is your life in years rather than your years in life.

18. Education makes everyone a politician, politics everyone a phony.

19. Life is never fair: you have given it so many opportunities, but it has given you few in return.

20. Like a silkworm, I have contributed all my silk to the human world. If it does not care, why should I?

Chinese Chimes: The Confession of A Calendar

it all began with an animal race Emperor Jade called to amuse himself and his earthly subjects...

Rat

yes, i admit betraying the cat as my only close friend
but i won the race, with my head rather than my legs

Ox

to honor my contract with the yellow sun
i eat green grass, yet give red meat to man

Tiger
as the only feared king of the thick jungle
i am afraid and tired of my own timidity

Rabbit
with my cagey ears held so high
i will not miss a sound of peace

Dragon
although my portraits hung lively above the clouds
no human eyes have ever seen my authentic being

Snake
the moment i sloughed off my old slim self
i forgot ever seducing any manhood in heaven

Horse
my body looks more masculine than a strong man
and my heart feels more feminine than a tender girl

Goat
when i bleat towards the passers-by
i never mean to speak in an other voice

Monkey
each time i try to find any lice in the corner of my mind
i act like the humans outside the fence with barbed wire

Rooster
with my wings plumed with the feathers of night
i can not fly but to crow loudly towards dawn

Dog
given my canine camaraderie and pack mentality
i feel at home before, among or behind soldiers

Pig
i spend all my lifetime wisely
to guard this single moment

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AD Jameson

A D Jameson received and M.A. in English from Illinois State University in 2004. While a student there, he worked for Dalkey Archive Press and as the layout editor for *American Book Review*. He also co-founded and co-edited the zine formerly known as *l'bourgeoisine*, bourgeoisine.pabn.org, which published work by Curtis White, Catherine Daly, Mark Tardi, kari edwards, Gabe Gudding, Jeff VanderMeer, and others. After graduating, he taught three semesters of English as a Second Language in Bangkok, Thailand. He now lives in Chicago and teaches ESL at DePaul University. His short stories have appeared in the *Mississippi Review* online and *elima*. He's directed music videos for the Kill Rock Stars bands Xiu Xiu and Mecca Normal.

Assassin

They are playing Assassin in my city, all of them; they are all of them trying to kill me. But I will kill them first. I will kill them first.

My friend explained: "Assassin, the friendly icebreaker game where they assign you a target, and you're assigned to others as a target, and events proceed with everyone taking aside and 'killing' one other until only one is left alive, and they're the big winner, the bravest and best Assassin. You can 'kill' each other in any number of ways decided upon beforehand: touch with an eraser, or whisper a secret word if you don't want touching.

"It's a fun game," she says, "a fun time, with its roots in the New Testament. Jesus told Peter, 'Envision a game, the goal to eliminate all other players, to secure glory for God and for yourself.' *True story.*"

They herded us into this room, where they stripped and deloused us and shaved our heads. Physicals deemed us fit. They gave us the names of people to assassinate. We won't get our clothes back until all our targets are dead.

I have this girl's name (I'll call her Victim S.), and I have her address and the title of her favorite movie. My orders are to whisper the movie's name in her ear without anyone observing. I don't know Victim S. and I harbor no ill will toward her. I can't imagine her crimes but know they're severe.

I plan to get to know Victim S., maybe bump into her at the laundry, to be awkwardly polite but maintain a quiet intensity, and after another chance meeting we'll discover interests in common, leading to a delightful conversation, both of us losing track of the time, and then a tentative offer, *an offer accepted*, and the next night a walk to the club, our conversation shy, then drinks at the club, then dancing, then more drinks, and then the great need for someplace we can talk, talking suddenly urgent, great quiet necessary, us leaving together.

To go somewhere neutral but laden with potential: a park bench, the edge of a fountain. Admiring nature. Discussing our jobs. Nervous laughter.

A moment of thoughtful attention: a soft kiss on her cheek, her hand warm in mine and her eyes lightly closed, her perfume stronger. Another kiss on the cheek, and then her ear, and while kissing I'll whisper this into her

ear, I'll whisper:

"At Play in the Fields of the Lord." Her hand tightens. *"At Play in the Fields of the Lord."*

I've researched my assignment. Victim S. masquerades as a doctoral candidate, a quiet, studious woman with interests in animal science, jazz, and *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*. I've gotta take her out.

There's a danger in all of this: As I follow Victim S., from her morning lecture to the café where she nibbles a bagel to the lab where she does her research—all this time I am myself hunted—hunted, possibly, by a superior assassin. I glance repeatedly over my shoulder. I dread warm breath on my temple.

My favorite film? *The Age of Innocence*.
("There's no such thing," she whispers in my ear.)

They've got me naked and tied in that supply closet, mops jabbing my sides, and outside they're arguing about whether they'll use gas, or electrodes, or just slit my throat, and you're swelling from where they've beat you and you should be working at the ropes. That's the point of the game, of course. Get out. Meet new people. Make many new friends.

There are rules we must follow and you must follow them when you organize your own Assassin game: No hitting below the belt; no one likes that. You can't assassinate your target in the bedroom or the bathroom, because your target will throw sex or feces at you. No one likes that.

Those are the basic rules. Now play!

I was younger, in fifth grade, and my class learned the game Assassin. And the game was bad, so bad; the game came into our classroom and tripped us up. It retied our shoelaces around the legs of our chairs. "Untie us!" we all cried. "Untie me! Let me go!" And the game said "No." No, no, no, no, no.

D. Harlan Wilson

D. Harlan Wilson is the author of several books of fiction, including *The Kafka Effekt*, *Stranger on the Loose*, *Pseudo-City*, and a new science fiction novel, *Dr. Identity*, or, *Farewell to Plaquedemia*. An English professor at Wright State University-Lake Campus, he lives in Ohio with his wife Xtine and daughter Madeleine. In his spare time, he likes to drink Nescafé and work on his bench press, which is approaching 350 lbs. For more information on Wilson and his work, visit his official website at www.dharlanwilson.com.

THE MAN IN THE THICK BLACK SPECTACLES OR THE POLITE MAN'S GUIDE TO WARFARE

from the Bizarro Starter Kit

Before opening the door and entering the conference room, the man in the thick black spectacles removed the wad of chewing gum from his mouth and, after glancing in every imaginable direction, stuck it into an unassuming, seemingly clean crack in the wall. He would retrieve the gum from the crack later, after the meeting, which would take no more and no less than five minutes. He knew this for three reasons:

1. This morning the man in the cubicle next door had told him so.
2. There was a neon billboard hanging from the ceiling of the office that read:

MEETING TODAY

5 MINUTES LONG

NO MORE, NO LESS

3. Of the countless meetings he had attended before, he could not remember one of them being more or less than five minutes.

So there was no reason why this meeting should be any different, and no reason why the man in the thick black spectacles should be worried.

And yet he was worried. Five minutes was five minutes, after all.

He placed a fingernail between his teeth and began to chew on it. What if, say, a fly landed on the gum while he was away? He would have no way of knowing what the fly had done to the gum in his absence. For all he knew, the fly would crap on it, meaning that the man in the thick black spectacles, in the not-too-distant future, might very well be chewing on fly shit. This was not a pretty thought, so he tried not to think it, or to think thoughts like it. He couldn't allow himself to. To allow himself to think that way would be distracting, and this meeting, while short, was, like all of the other meetings, an important one. It required that he be sharp as a tack.

Removing the fingernail from his teeth, he opened the door . . . and hesitated, unable to help himself, despite himself.

Five minutes, he thought. Sometimes one minute seems like an eternity, especially when you're thinking about that minute. It's one thing to handle one minute, or rather, one eternity. But can I handle *five* of them?

Eyeing the gum, he clicked his tongue and stroked his brow. He sighed. Closing the door, he looked back over his right shoulder, his left shoulder, his right shoulder. He looked between his legs, underneath his shoes . . .

Hardly satisfied, but more anxious now about hesitating and being late for the meeting than abandoning the gum, the man in the thick black spectacles walked in at last, closing the door behind him slowly, guardedly, without a sound, pulling his beaklike nose inside just as the door clicked shut.

Immediately the man in the silver handlebar mustache unfolded his appendages and snuck out from behind the water cooler. Giggling, he crept over to the crack in the wall. He stretched out his long neck, rolled out his tongue, and lapped at the gum like a thirsty dog.

At the same time the man in the neon zoot suit wormed his way up from out of the soil in the pot that contained the office's largest rubber plant, using the branches of the plant for leverage, but still, this worming took a while, and by the time he was free of the soil and had dusted himself off, the man in the silver handlebar mustache was fully engaged, his tongue lapping at high speed. The man in the neon zoot suit would have to wait his turn. Impatient, he cursed in rakish undertones. But soon the man in the flamingo pink top hat fell through a ceiling tile with a crash and at least the man in the neon zoot suit had some company now. He stopped cursing . . . until the man in the flamingo pink top hat started cursing, first because he had fallen, second because of the man in the silver handlebar mustache, who was taking too long, far too long, who was hogging the wad of chewing gum all too himself.

Quickly the man in the neon zoot suit joined his estranged colleague in blasphemous harmony. "Why not give us a go, you filthy bastard?" they bitched. The man in the silver handlebar mustache promptly sucked his tongue back into his mouth, stood upright and about-faced. To his aggressors he replied, "If one wants something, all one has to do is ask. That's all one has to do."

The sarcasm in the man in the silver handlebar mustache's tone of voice was flagrant enough, but neither the man in the neon zoot suit nor the man in the flamingo pink top hat had ever cared enough about sarcasm to be able to detect it, even if it slapped them across both cheeks. Muttering hasty thank yous under their breath, they attacked the crack in the wall at the same time, smacked into each other and collapsed to the floor. They got to their feet and blinked. Following a brief, woozy exchange, they played rock-paper-scissors to see who between them got to lick the gum first.

The man in the flamingo pink top hat won.

"Balls," said the loser. He ripped the peacock's feather out of his tando hat and stomped on it as the victor, with the tip of a sharp tongue, began stabbing at the gum, again and again, growing more excitable and outrageous with each snakelike stab. The man in the silver handlebar mustache, now leaning up against the wall with arms crossed, sniggered, then began moving his tongue around the insides of his mouth so that his cheeks kept poking out. He smacked his lips, too, each time glaring derisively at the man in the neon zoot suit out of the corners of his eyes.

Eventually the man in the neon zoot suit reached his breaking point. Being twice as tall and twice as strong as the man in the flamingo pink top hat and the man in the silver handlebar mustache combined, but always hesitant to resort to his brawn until the last straw had been drawn, which it had, which it most definitely had—he backhanded the man in the flamingo pink top hat away from the wall and sent him sliding down the hallway on his spine, arms and legs and sharp tongue waving in the air like the extremities of an overturned beetle. He pointed an angry warning finger at the man in the silver handlebar mustache. All that man did, however, was whistle a quiet tune and feign a reverie. This irked the man in the neon zoot suit, but not enough to lead his one-track mind astray; he merely pressed a finger to one nostril and out the other nostril blasted out an ornery little snot ball. Then, at long last, he opened up his shark mouth and turned and made for the gum that the man in the thick black spectacles had stuck right there in the crack in the wall . . . but too late, too late. The door to the conference room was being opened up, slowly, guardedly, without a sound, and in a flash the man in the silver handlebar mustache had folded himself up behind the water cooler again, and the man in the flamingo pink top hat had both rallied from the backhand and leapt back up into the ceiling, replacing the tile he had fallen through with a fresh one. So the man in the neon zoot suit was all alone. And when the man in the thick black spectacles emerged, it was he and no other that would be to blame, in spite of his innocence. Because even though the man in the neon zoot suit had certainly wanted to lick the gum, and would have licked it if he could have—and the gum had clearly been licked; a forensics expert wasn't needed to figure that out—the truth of the matter was: *he had not licked anything.*

At this point the man in the neon zoot suit asked himself three simple questions. He would have asked himself more, but time didn't permit it.

1. What is to become of me once I get caught?

2. Will the man in the thick black spectacles attack me or give me the opportunity to explain myself?

3. Given the opportunity, how will I explain myself?

The man in the neon zoot suit was about to ask himself a fourth question when something overcame him, something that, when he reflected on it later during a water cooler conversation with the man in the silver handlebar mustache and the man in the flamingo pink top hat, he described as an “impulsive burst of energy” that allowed him to spring up and across the hallway, dive back down into the soil of the rubber plant, and cover himself over just enough so that nobody would take note of his stealth. “It was a brilliant move,” he bragged.

“And yet quite unnecessary,” smiled the man in the silver handlebar mustache.

The man in the flamingo pink top hat added, “Indeed. Quite unnecessary.”

When the man in the neon zoot suit said, “I don’t understand,” the man in the flamingo pink top hat, who had seen everything through a mouse hole in the ceiling, told him. “As it so happened,” he said, “the man in the thick black spectacles, after slipping out the door that led into the conference room, was apparently so preoccupied, he forgot all about his gum. First he clicked shut the door and stood there in the hallway a moment, nervously fingering an ear lobe and flexing his jowls. Then he spent some time making these sickly croaking noises. Finally he scurried off, down the hallway, talking to himself in a worried voice. And that’s that.”

“That’s that,” repeated the man in the neon zoot suit in a dull whisper, then turned with a quick jerk, like a man who wants to be alone with his dread.

Tony Nesca

Tony Nesca was born in Torino, Italy in 1965 and moved to Canada at the age of three. He has published six chapbooks of stories and poems, three novels, a novella, a book of poetry and has been an active contributor to the underground lit scene for ten years, both online and in print. Most recent work chapbook, *About a Girl and Other Stories* (Goblin Reader Press). [blog](#)

excerpts from, "About A Girl and Other Stories"

Winter day at bus-stop hands in pockets puffing smoke thinking 'bout a bike I had as a kid in this very neighborhood, retarded boy named Ken used to challenge me to race wobbling from side to side as he rode making car sounds on that old fucking thing basket in front, "room rooom"

"come on retard boy, that all you got?" racing down Garwood Avenue that crazy loon flying right by me up to corner then back and forth laughing like the world is all right and it's there just for us my mother on front porch shaking her fist at me "beep beep" goes Ken, I'm thinking about this at bus-stop mid-day streets alive with furious wanton music, young woman shows up out of the darkness:

"hello?" lights cigarette, winter day gray and shady,

"So who are you?" she says as the lights go wiry,

"Uh-huh, oh yeah?"

"I turned 23 yesterday."

Old lady walks by well-scrubbed pink tragic like the sun she smiles at us young woman beside me we're talking high-speed 'bout local bands booze on her breath I should be going home on call for work security guard at downtown high-rise she's smiling big black hair we're on the bus going through little Italy restaurants bars cafes go by in a blur I'm telling her I used to play guitar in a band her green eyes light up

"should have known," she says,

"Why, cuz I got long hair?"

"Yes."

She pulls a mickey out of her knapsack takes a swig hands it to me I decline, think about it, then I take a sip bus racing through The Osborne Village artsy part of town funky shops black clothes mohawk kids begging for money guy with glasses throws up on corner,

"Where you goin'?" she says

I explain the work thing gotta sit by the phone in case they need me, got an hour to kill she's looking for CD's, likes That Petrol Emotion and The Violent Femmes, going to that second-hand music place downtown lady on bus starts singing Old Man River I laugh alive in love, my friend beside me laughs too applies deep red lip-stick snow piled high on the boulevard cruising down The Osborne Bridge sweating in our winter jackets bus cramped and tired nippin' vodka between the sheets my friend looking brave and thinking, she's reciting a Black Flag song whistling in the wind, howling at the septic tank says she used to live in Toronto hates it grew up on Indian Reserve called Pukatawagan says Winnipeg really works for her, really like The Peg she says, guy snoring behind us, bus-driver taking crazy turns announcing each

corner with lame-ass joke crowd laughing like derelicts my friend looks at me crosses her eyes sticks her tongue out I feel my ass-cheeks rumble, damn...

"Ever been to The Canadian Shield?" she says,

"Oh yeah."

Gust of wind gives Cocker Spaniel on corner a mouth full of snow few guys on bus start laughing shiny hair suburban nightmares my friend comments on them doesn't like that type big fucking deal I say do you listen to Brave New Waves? Sure thing she says, new band called The White Stripes pretty good love that three chord unorthodox rock and roll...similar to what The Pixies did I say,

"No one's as good as The Pixies" she says

Approaching downtown the drunks come out middle of the afternoon stumbling through parking lots and construction sites she digs it says life is about this takes another sip of vodka I join her people on the bus take notice driver looking at us in mirror let's get off I say...heel-toe-express down the downtown streets chinese guy parking car reminds me of something I can't remember my friend exactly same height as me short parka with hood tight blue jeans beautiful winter I'm thinking breath comes out in clouds we live one step at a time caught in the shit of things stick and move monkey man on high wind tears out brain things as usual he says, business guy walking fast briefcase dangling I point to a mall then past it to a small bar hungover mohawk-kid in front wrapping his jacket around him lighting cigarette,

"Let's go there," I say,

"Juicy," she says

Crossing the street people lined up like tombstones woman laughing alone in storefront, car slides on ice tilting to one side then regains focus me and young friend skip by whistling some pirate idiocy she grabs my jacket from behind we do the alternative-rock-hurly-burly, I'm thinking of this young guy I used to know at University, young writer had a chapbook published we talked the writing talk during English lectures and over coffee, I think of his beautiful green eyes and vague suburban looks, you never had it buddy, that's all there is to it, door opens into smoky room smell of beer and maybe a touch of urine on Fort Street middle of the day,

"Two drafts," I say to the bartender old drinker

VLT's making sounds people gambling for that one last thing, long narrow bar booths hugging the walls place full of drinking laughing end-of-the-line types, my friend talking to one of them waving her hands one leg leaning forward my eyes follow the line of the thigh in those tight denims, the ass-cheeks reaching for the sky like a basketball in mid-motion, I reach her point to a booth we sit and smile drink and talk rebel and curse I'm looking at my watch thinking about work gotta get home soon my friend keeps talking,

"I remember this bar in Toronto where all the alternative bands played,"

"What kind of bands?"

"Bourbon Tabernacle Choir, King Apparatus, Bob's Your Uncle, New Duncan Imperials..."

"Seen them all here at The Spectrum..."

"Love The Spectrum...rock and roll isn't as dead as people think"

I think about that with a cigarette in one hand and a draft in the other looking around blue smoke curling

to the ceiling at every table,

"Do you realize next week smoking in bars is gonna be banned?" she says,

"All the charm in the world disappearing one chunk at a time?"

"Bars with no cigarettes...?"

"Seems a bit insane, doesn't it?"

Having this sit-down with young broad from bus-stop full of electricity and territorial rock and roll obsessions chain-smoking in the gray dimness of an afternoon bar jaunt comparing guitar riffs from different records arguing at every turn I get lost in those deep red headlights without being pretentious, without any specific desire or belief, adrift in the cigarette butts and punk-rock ashtrays young fellow with shaved head asks for smoke I give him one as he walks away,

"See?" she says "you see?"

Sanctimonious little wench I'm thinking 'bout the space between the table and her crotch, huge black hair making shadows I have her undivided attention waving my hands distant crazy talking like the devil in chinos, one cigarette goes out another is lit she listens as well as she talks rare species this Indian beauty cutting me off describing Northern Manitoba living on The Rez wild immaculate,

"Wait," I say "wait"

"Your turn Ziggy..."

Couple of freaks sipping on Sambuca and cheap draft is what we are and always will be old fuck tired drunk stumbles past us orders whiskey shot other guy playing sport-select greasy hair parted on side, my friend crosses her legs touches my foot under table wave of sexual tension up my spine cigarettes mix with afternoon derision while waitress in baggy pants waves a hand and smiles at native couple in the corner, Filipino plugging the jukebox, white-man pacing up and down looking wired and electric, far in the back musician tunes his six-string, jazz in smoky room cliched and alive waiting on the job ain't no damn good, neither is sailing the seven seas sober and unhinged, she makes music singing without singing, doing without doing, wild day in the sunlight of afternoon barroom, she makes me crazy young beautiful left of normal, continue I say...

Sadness of the world ain't nothing old fellow at the urinal shoots the shit with me, don't got the heart to tell him to fuck-off which is what I want to say but instead, "Have a nice day buddy."

He walks away happy that someone took the time, I hear him shouting for a drink as the door closes and I zip up, look in the mirror thinking I'm losing a job today, walk out into the smoke and sallow faces, my friend smiling right at me like she was waiting for this moment her whole life,

Denis Emorine

Denis Emorine is the author of short stories, essays, poetry, and theater. He was born in 1956 and studied literature at the Sorbonne (University of Paris). His works have been published in France, Belgium, India, Luxembourg, Romania and the USA. His theatrical output has been staged in France and Russia. He is part of the editing team at *La Nouvelle Tour de Feu* and collaborates with various other reviews and literary websites in the U.S., Danmark, France, Germany and Japan. In 2004, he won first prize for his poetry at the *Féile Filiochta* International competition. His poetry has been published in *Pphoo* (India), *Blue Beat Jacket* (Japan), *Snow Monkey*, *Cokefishing*, and *Be Wich Magazine* (USA).

The Mural

(Translated from the French by Philip John Usher)

When I ran into my neighbor on the staircase, he seemed unduly surprised at my presence. Perhaps because “ran into” really is the word: I was returning home from school, tired, a heavy head and arms weighed down with assignments to grade; I literally ran into him by mistake, then stammered some banal excuse. He looked at me for a long moment: he seemed to be waiting for someone. I carried on my way.

Once inside my apartment, I took a deep breath, once more cursing my profession—I’m a Classics teacher—and I tried to set courageously to work...

I had just corrected several assignments, each one more disappointing than the previous—and thus unlikely to get my spirits up—when someone timidly knocked three times on the door.

I could guess who it was: it was him, indeed, awkward and embarrassed, eyes to the ground, not daring to lift his head up. He stood on the threshold, lost.

I curtly told him to come in. I was astonished by his visit: as a new tenant, with a rather wild nature, I had not exchanged three words with this man. What I knew of him was very vague: he was approximately sixty-five years old, a widower already for a while; he was supposed to be a real card. Some claimed he was a painter; others, a sculptor. I really didn’t care one way or the other. My only concern was how to get rid of him.

He looked at the table covered with books and papers. His face suddenly lit up.

"Ah, someone had mentioned you taught Greek..."

The tone suggested admiration. I responded in an aggravated tone.

"Yes... I teach Greek and Latin and French. I teach all sorts of stuff. So what?"

He did not answer. I thought that my icy answer would dissuade him from continuing the conversation.

"So, you teach Greek..." He shook the head. He was about to open his mouth when I snapped:

"Yes, yes and I have a lot of work!"

He seemed not to understand. He stammered:

"It is you I was waiting for a few moments ago. I surprised you, I believe. Please excuse me."

“Me?”

“Yes... ”

His face lit up again, transfigured.

"I have a passion for Greece, you know! I used to paint sets for a theater which put on Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides... and even Giraudoux... I... I kept some of the props when I left..."

I congratulated him coldly.

“And I thought that you might perhaps be interested in the odds and ends I got hold of...”

He pronounced “odds and ends” with great emotion.

“Listen... Another time, I’ve got other things...”

“Are you busy this evening? Your husband...”

“I am divorced... divorced without children. Thus, no urgent housework...”

He smiled again.

“Perfect! You can come over to my place, then. That will buck you up.”

I hesitated. He seemed like a nice enough guy. I was sorry for having been so abrupt. His sincere admiration, his touching kindness made me ashamed. I silently agreed to go.

I followed him to his apartment. In front of the door, he turned around and pronounced the ritual sentence:

“Don’t mind the disorder. You know how bachelors are.”

He led me into a room where a whole wall was covered by a fresco. It represented—in a certain kind of very bad taste—a Greece of the imagination, with an exaggeratedly blue sky, the Acropolis on the right and a landscape of olive-trees and stones, gorged with sun...

"It is beautiful, isn't it? I painted it, three days ago to deal with some issues and catch up on wasted time..."

He sighed and shrugged.

“Do you like it, at least?”

“Yes, yes, very much so. It is very realistic, you know! ...”

“Really? Oh, that makes me very happy. I have never seen Greece. I almost always paint using engravings or photographs.”

He disappeared for a few moments and returned with a used book which he must have used many times. He turned the pages and gave wordy commentary about the illustrations. One of them held his attention particularly. His hand trembled... I leaned over and saw three engravings. Of Athena, Diana and Venus. The reproduction of Venus struck me immediately. My lips outlined a smile: the whimsical engraving showed a goddess with a generous chest, a light loincloth around her waist! I kept my reflections for myself.

"Three marvelous women, aren't they?"

The emotion made his voice tremble.

"Each one marvelous in her own way, of course. They fascinate me so much that..."

He stopped.

"I'm ashamed to admit that..."

My anger had fallen. I encouraged him:

"Continue, please..."

"Well! I can tell you... At the theatre where I worked, I had noticed the costumes of these three divinities, at the bottom of an obscure storeroom... Well... I stole them. They are here, in this apartment! Do you want to see them?"

When all is said and done, I liked this old chap! Never quite met anyone like him; a bit of a nutter. His passion for Greece, even though a little ridiculous, was quite moving.

He returned with two tunics, long, probably Athena's, and another one that was shorter.

"Naturally, I don't have anything for Venus... except a thin piece of fabric as in the engraving... On stage, she appeared covered by a tunic, of course! ...

"She is beautiful, isn't she? what a marvellous body!"

Her face blushed. Her eyes shone. Her timidity had completely disappeared.

"I even have Athena's helmet and lance. And also Diana's arc and quiver! ...

He fell silent abruptly. This sudden silence disturbed me. The flame which had animated him seemed extinct. I did not dare to look at him. Suddenly, he began speaking again, this time in a strangled voice.

"It would suit you so well!"

"What would?"

"These clothes... the clothes of my goddesses... "

I was disconcerted. I looked at him. He swallowed his saliva with difficulty. I ended up breaking the heavy silence and the malaise created by his last words

"What do you mean?"

He looked me in the eyes. I was astonished by the limpidity of his gaze.

"I mean that the costumes of these divinities would suit you very well: Athena, Diana, Ve..."

He did not dare complete his thought. He blushed. He fixed his gaze on the fresco. I felt awfully awkward. Perhaps he had spoken the way he did out of awkwardness... He raised his head.

"I don't want to waste your time. I... my proposal is serious. I... could you... at least for Athena and Diana?"

All of a sudden, I was afraid.

"But... you are insane! You don't think that..."

"Oh, I understand... You think I'm some kind of pervert!"

He seemed sincerely pained. He insisted awkwardly.

"It's not that at all. Will you think it over?"

I felt awkward. My fear had disappeared; still, this proposal seemed so astonishing to me, so strange. I stammered automatically that I would think about it and left.

The following day, somewhat angry, I again met him on the stairs, looking as bewildered as before.

"Did you think about it?"

"Think about it?"

"My... proposal. Yesterday..."

I didn't know what to answer: was he going to follow me around every day waiting for an answer? I had answered without thinking the day before, it is true. I reflected: the idea of acting out, of playing a role had something exciting to it... There was no risk involved and ambiguity did not displease me. The awkwardness of this man finished by convincing me. I said quickly as one jumps in at the deep end.

"I agree"

He started, surprised at my answer:

"Is it true? Is it really true? When?"

"Immediately if you want."

"OK. Excellent!"

My heart beat faster as I went into "the Greek room". A bottle of Samos Muscatel and two glasses awaited us. He filled my glass up to the rim.

"Here's to Greece!"

My heart was still racing. A sudden warmth filled me.

"My name is Henri...."

He passed me the longest of the tunics. Henri avoided looking at me as if he was ashamed... He opened the door of a room.

"Here's the room of... of..."

I entered and closed the door at once. The tunic was silky, soft to the touch. It looked like a nightdress. I

stripped off slowly. My heart beat faster as if I were about to play some prohibited game.

I decided to remove all my clothing. It did not suit the goddess with sea-green eyes to keep her underclothing on! I advanced towards the mirror and tied my hair in order to easily slip it under the helmet. Then I opened the door.

Henri silently handed me the lance and the helmet, then moved back a few steps. Like a child, he clapped:

“Marvelous! Oh, marvelous!”

He was smiling like a kid in a candy store.

Majestically, I sauntered out in front of the scenery, lance in hand. The helmet was a bit tight but no matter. I thought confusedly about my colleagues, my students. Whatever would they have made of seeing me thus dressed up? I stopped and stood opposite him holding up my lance. He devoured me with his eyes. The goddess lived again, but for him alone...

He was blinking rapidly.

“How about we move on to Diana?”

I hesitated. Was this the magic effect of the Muscatel? Temptation was too strong, it ended up winning.

"OK. Diana."

Henri handed me the next tunic, the arc, the quiver and the arrows. Once in the room, I took off Athena's clothes to dress as the goddess of hunting. Much shorter, the tunic came halfway down my thighs. The cut also meant I was showing cleavage. I hesitated... My heart was beating very fast. There was no time to turn back. I took a look in the mirror and made out the image of a young woman of about thirty years old. Her chest certainly visible under light fabric.

I took the arc, the quiver and some arrows... opened the door... Henri considered me with stupor, fascinated... Extremely moved, I froze on the spot: I was afraid to fall... Finally, I got up the courage, adopting an attitude worthy of the goddess. His eyes were resting on me. I did not feel embarrassed anymore. Neither one nor the other of us moved. We held our breath...

After a few long minutes, Henri spoke, in a voice strangled by emotion.

"Good... you should leave now... Thank you for everything... Until next time, perhaps... "

I nodded “No”. Surprised, he considered me without understanding.

"What do you mean? No?"

“There is still... Venus...”

His mouth opened, no sound came out. He was amazed.

"But... Venus... Look at the book..."

I looked knowing very well what I would see. The goddess was practically naked. A bit of fabric around the waist, hardly hiding her attractive forms... She seemed ready for seduction.

"I know..." I murmured. I smiled and looked him in the eyes. Blood beat in my temples. I was burning up.

Fever consumed me. I repeated gently.

“There remains Venus. I want to take on this last role.”

Henri answered nothing. His lips trembled. He did not dare to believe that...

The slim bit of fabric in hand, I turned back into the room. I quickly removed Diana's tunic. I was naked... I quickly covered myself with the bit of cloth, quickly and awkwardly. I advanced towards the mirror and contemplated myself for some time. Yes, I was Venus, she who incarnated love. I waited still... I must get my entrance exactly right. The light of the bedside lamp accentuated the transparency of the fabric. I decided to place this lamp behind me: the effect would be irresistible. I looked at myself one last time, the bare breasts, the untied hair sweeping down my shoulders... The thin bit of fabric around my waste, sitting very high on my thighs, I liked myself infinitely. School was miles away. Venus was going to be offered to her admirers...

I opened the door slowly, very slowly. At once Henri turned his head in my direction, his avid hands trembled, he opened his eyes wide, filled with wonder by the appearance of the goddess... I advanced, he looking at me, agog... As I moved, the bit of fabric untied itself and fell to my feet. His gaze penetrated me... He too advanced slowly, very slowly. His hands moved irrepressibly. I stood still. I did not even try to pick up the indecent bit of fabric. His hand lightly touched my breasts and I closed my eyes...

Derek White

Derek White once tried to kill himself by eating a jar of maraschino cherries in one sitting. He lived to tell these tales, which are part of the collection *O, Vozque Pulp*, which he did in collaboration with Carlos Luis.

What the Irreversible Free Path Delineates

There are a lot of cities near bays, but only one they call The Bay Area. Many times I would fish in the murky waters that I never once saw anyone swim in. I didn't bother to bait my hook. It was just an excuse to be in the company of others who were also waiting for something they couldn't define until it struck.

The other strangers on the pier called me a punk because my hair was not a natural color. I wanted to stand out, but at the same time I was terrified of being affiliated with any groups. I was perpetually conscious of being a poseur, so I was.

On weekdays I drove a '66 Volkswagen Bug in the rain with no windshield wipers, trying every exit along Bayshore freeway. The car was black, but it was so faded you could tell it was red underneath, and beneath that you could make out the gray primer. The car had a funny smell that I grew to like. I don't remember breaking the jar of maraschino cherries in the backseat, and I never bothered cleaning up the mess. Memory can be corrosive if you let it.

A lot of time was also spent at the airport even though I never traveled anywhere. I collected baggage carts and returned them for quarters—not because I needed the money, but because I needed something to occupy myself. The more people I met, the more people I didn't know.

Red Snapper

She kept calling them *Huachinango*, but I knew they were Red Snapper. She was also a virgin. I was deep-sea fishing for the first time somewhere off the coast of Mexico. I was thirteen and didn't know yet how my body would respond.

Even though she told me to watch the horizon, I was sick. My line was way down. After I threw up, I reeled it in. Despite the absence of any father figures, I felt the machismo pressure to suck it up and be a man.

“Not so fast,” she said, “or their eyes will bulge.”

My instincts told me I didn't actually have anything. Sure as the sun will rise, there were five identical red snappers with brains popping out of their eyes on each of the five baited hooks.

I was sick again and fell asleep right there at her feet.

The Lifelines Left by the Lathe

My father cheated and carved his totem poles with a chainsaw. I never knew what his driving force was, but for the most part they were reproductions of animals. Before I left the Pacific Northwest, I was under the impression that everyone's father made totems to fill the clearings in front of their homes.

We used to take field trips to the nearby Indian tribes as if they were convalescing relatives. The men clutched spears in their hands and chanted, but it never looked like their hearts were into it.

I lived there because my parents lived there. My parents lived there because our grandparents lived there. My grandparents had run out of lives to escape. The Columbia ran into the Pacific.

Cross-Breeding the Sickle Cell Nodes

During Carnival I lent her my fishnet, but was quick to change my mind. The Rio Grande where they crossed (to free themselves) was a stream of disconnected puddles. The symbolic fish became so condensed in the diminishing pools that it was a free for all. The birds overhead were in a frenzy, mapping the function of fight to flight—for each fish there was a corresponding bird.

I couldn't see clearly through the ash on my eyelid. The smell of mustard and lentils rose from my clothes into my nasal membranes. Her shyness was only an act that had gotten her this far. Now she would have to cross on her own without my help. Then we could talk, face to face.

Accumulating from the Deck Up

It is raining steadily now on the fountain outside our window. The resonance is driven by the stream of trucks filled with debris that keep pouring up (or down) 8th avenue. The nightly din comes in between shifts, as they accelerate from the green light, and then again as they decelerate before Columbus Circle. Notwithstanding this anomaly, the traffic moves continuously in one direction, gambling from an incomprehensible sum.

My Idols Won't Support Hanging Weight

My Figa never left home without his aviation sunglasses and his unsung secrets. While he was out flying, the second woman he married would sit me down on the organ seat and teach me "I Walk the Line" by the numbers. My Figa's red-tipped cane never once raked the bars inside a cell. He eventually drowned in his own blood without a cent in his pocket.

A generation later I would learn "I Will Follow" on two strings and scale cliffs by making a fist.

Rone Shavers

Rone Shavers is co-editor of *Paper Empire: William Gaddis and the World System* (forthcoming this spring from the University of Alabama Press). Other portions of his novel-in-progress, titled *The Codeswitchers*, have appeared in *ACM: Another Chicago Magazine*, *Warpland: A Journal of Black Ideas and Literature*, and *keepgoing.org*. He has also published fiction in a previous edition of *milkmag.org*. Mr. Shavers is currently enrolled in the Program for Writers at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and he teaches in the School of Continuing Studies' Masters in Creative Writing Program at Northwestern University.

Two Excerpts from *The Codeswitchers*: A Novel-in-Progress:

The Politics of Driving

Even though Charles responded with an extended middle finger and a—You really are an asshole, you know that?...in the grand scheme of things, his words were unimportant. No, they paled in comparison to the observation that they actually were at the crossroads, a junction between the private road Charles had previously traveled to the capital, and a public one, where traffic was a lot more chaotic, hectic. We mention this because it would only be weeks later before Charles realized exactly what the difference between traveling a public road and a private road really meant. That is to say it was weeks before Charles understood the subtleties, the nuances of something so simple as the politics of driving: That social status in Haiti was partially determined by not only what one drove, but where, or if one drove at all; that on private roads, it was quite possible to speed along drunk in an expensive car, but on public ones, anything less than riding in a fortified SUV meant one was taking one's life in one's hands; that an accident victim on a public road could disappear altogether, completely erased from civic memory; that bodies, like the cars that contain them, are machines which can be stripped, disjointed, reduced to their base components and recycled in the world's never-ending marketplace; that the only difference between a used battery, a kidney, a cornea, or a tire, is whether or not the item must be kept on ice until one reaches the Michelle Bennet Teaching Hospital nearby, or dragged off to the auto parts vendors of the Iron Market instead; that to drive along any of the national highways meant you had indeed acquired value, but that your value had absolutely nothing to do with your worth as a unique individual.

“Commodity Routes,” Charles would later go on to call Haiti's public roads, because of those who lived and gathered near them. Gleaners, willing to buy or sell anything at all, even salvaged roadkill, because what they couldn't sell, they could at least eat. Of course, there were also those roads of an entirely different nature altogether, what Charles dubbed “Security Routes.” These were the paths that enabled the leisurely drives Charles and Annika sometimes took, if only just to go to the coast at sunset, or escape the servants and their forever-gossiping mouths. But as Charles named it, Charles knew: The difference between private and public roads, Security and Commodity Routes, was the difference between accessing a life lived to its fullest, or life in nothing but parts.

Again, they were at the crossroads. The Rover began to jostle and swerve as its driver maneuvered National Route 1; passing, avoiding, and at times intimidating donkey carts, barely functional sedans, *tap-taps*, hitchhikers, *camions*, people randomly running across the highway, and the always-already accident-in-progress. But because the rest of the ride was much too bumpy, and the sound of the Rover traversing nine-inch potholes far too loud, combined with the fact that yes, both individuals were upset, the one with the other, they passed the rest of their drive in relative silence, Charles smoking only occasionally and staring out the window at the cluttered, unimpressive landscape beyond.

Town and Country, Part II

As they rode the road up to Petionville, Charles gazed down on the festering city of Port-au-Prince in the valley below. From the hills it all looked so small, so contained, so like every other city he'd seen from above, save for its blanching sun, trenchant squalor, and pristine sea. "The Republic of Port-au-Prince," Jean had called it, but it could be Galveston, or Oakland, or Vancouver with no skyscrapers, or any other number of numerous commercial seaports not quite comfortable with their role or civic identity. They were all, these types of cities, notable sites in what we'll call "The Patchwork Republic": cities that sought to establish themselves on the backs of buried and ignored histories; cities which proclaimed to look only forward, as if doing so would erase the more humble and embarrassing aspects of their past; cities that had completely imploded in some places, and had outgrown themselves, too fast, too soon, in others; cities that forever combined, destroyed, recombined and redefined their various sections and neighborhoods in order to force a schizophrenic sense of identity upon both itself and its citizens. Port-au-Prince was its own Republic all right, in that Port-au-Prince was a body that could neither sustain, nor control its state of constant flux.

Lavil is what we call it: the City. And it's any city, but it's always *this* city, *the* City. And upon leaving *lavil*, Charles found it all so strange. Despite his best efforts at escape, it was here that he found himself celebrated, whether as someone infamous or famous he wasn't quite sure, but only when in a city did he feel rightly at home. Looking down on it all, and then back at his past, he knew exactly where he was. He had never left, had been there all along. He was anywhere *en lavil*. He could have been anywhere in the world and it would have been the same. So then, here he was, ready to field and deflect craft-related questions and fawning inquiries into his writing process, but this time he would smile, speak French, and try his best to be pleasant, all because more than anything, he wanted safe passage out, the chance to move from one conundrum to another. And if he could do that, trade country for country, one city for the same thing somewhere else, then he could possibly return to his normal, which goes to say, his infuriating, depressing, unfulfilling, constrained, and meager, fucked-up life.

Nelson L. Eshleman

Nelson L. Eshleman lives in Calgary, Alberta. His stories have appeared in *The Adirondack Review*, *Southern Ocean Review*, *Asia Literary Review*, *3:AM Magazine*, *Offcourse Literary Journal*, *SN Review* and *Elimae*.

Lector, Si Monumentum Requiris, Circumspice

A year long sabbatical had carried Skitzo the Rodeo Clown to destinations both distant and renowned. His most recent port of call featured our nimble traveler casting weary eyes heavenward, admiring the paramount achievement of that notable architect, Christopher Wren.

Waves of Asian immigrants mingle peacefully here with assorted punks, pikers and hooligans under brooding cover of dreary grey cloud. No, not Vancouver. Skitzo stood in front of St. Paul's Cathedral, the one in jolly old London.

One thousand workers. Hand crafted Portland stone. Forty years in the making. A pace to out-rival even modern contractors. And sure, Wren might have lifted some parts of his idea from an earlier blueprint, but let's give the guy credit. It's a "modern day" miracle, the second largest basilica in the world. The tallest structure in a storied capital, or at least it was, until 1962. A lasting monument to one man's pride, ingenuity and persistence. They even entombed him in this shrine.

Outside in the adjacent public square, buskers, beggars and unflappable flower mongers cast inelegant nets among a predictable tide of fresh tourists. Skitzo's attention was soon diverted to a lively band of Celtic minstrels playing nearby on the street.

So sprightly rang the tune that a passel of teen-aged girls on a boarding school field trip had taken to their toes, wholly inspired by adolescent enthusiasm and the strains of this mellifluous jig.

More remarkable was the elderly gentleman clad in green lederhosen with a pointed alpine hat who joined them to dance. Gaily kicking up his heels, he seemed poised for a fling, evidently one of the Highland variety. The oblivious fellow put on quite a brave spectacle, but looked entirely out of place amid this light-footed ensemble.

Some thought him a bit of a nuisance really, but he was difficult to ignore. The eyes of all onlookers couldn't help except be drawn to the tremulous gesticulations of this frail codger, he jerked about with the grace of a skeletal marionette. A silly grin wouldn't mask his ineptitude and even his "all-knowing" wink lacked assurance, weathered as it was with an air of dementia.

Time and again the ardent senior blustered in pursuit of that youthful cluster, making mock invitation to one partner or another, but just as often, each advance was rebuffed. Mortified remonstrations echoed shrilly off cobblestone as the flighty dancers gamely jostled, laughing and dodging away, eyeing him with a modicum of surprise and deserved suspicion.

"The barmy old coot!?" Skitzo thought to himself, as he watched the gent's goofy meanderings. "Had he no shame? No sense of public decorum? Where was his family to take care of him?"

Still the fool danced.

"In heaven's name," Skitzo wished aloud, "If ever *I* should look so ridiculous, I hope someone would have the kindness to tell me."

Bertrand Cayzac

Bertrand Cayzac is a writer living in Vanves, France. [website](#)

FLOOZMAN

«By a scandalous abundance, he brings deliverance »

With their ingenuous financial twist, Floozman stories are obviously a matter of throwing money at the material world. But on another plane, this wealth is the magical money of deliverance welled at the heart of the banking system (where a mysterious and inexhaustible money source is flowing, as can be read in the initial episode). It is spent in the utmost urgency in an increasing messianic elation mood until...

FLOOZMAN AND THE OLD LADY

Somewhere at the heart of the financial system flows a mysterious and inexhaustible money source. Fred Looseman is among the few who have found it. Like them, he has carried a long investigation, like them he has caught a glimpse of the truth and like them, as he approached the emanation origin, he has lost his memory...

Only yesterday, he was still the smart Worldwide Credit Corporation Chief Risk Officer and the president of the anti money laundering commission. Since his fall, he survives on the job the bank found him in a computer maintenance team. His family and friends have become estranged. Isolated, his faculties obscured, he only lives to mend the cash dispensers and the network which connects them up to the central computers. Sometimes, after long work hours, he happens to hear voices. Closing his eyes, he distinguishes prayers. Some are so clear and sincere that he drops his tools and starts to cry.

This is how he becomes Floozman. He comes to light and recovers his minds. His banker calls him on the phone. They both know what Floozman has to do. He has the required resources and more. But this wealth is not his: it is the magical money of deliverance.

- Floozman, I have been trying to call you for hours! Your account is overflowing!

**** Chant de la vieille dame:*

«Tous ceux que j'ai connus sont morts

*Et les vivants m'ont oubliée
Faut-il que je me baigne encore
Dans le courant renouvelé ?*

*Les rues retiennent leur tracé
Mais rien ne reste du passé
J'y vais encore en souvenir
Quand tout me dicte de partir*

*Le ciel s'est sûrement transformé
Et les maisons me sont fermées
Où les cousines m'attendaient
Pour aller aux fêtes de mai*

*Leurs enfants y sont occupés
À des affaires inouïes
Et les miens ne sont jamais nés
Et pour tous enfin le temps fuit*

*Libère-moi de cette errance
Apporte-moi la délivrance ».*

*** Old lady chant:

«All those I knew are dead
And the living have forgotten
Shall I have to swim again
These new currents on river bed?

The streets are retaining their line
While nothing remains of the past
I still visit this empty shrine
When all whispers: You must depart!

The sky has surely transformed
And to me houses are closed
Where sweet cousins were waiting
To take me to the fairs of spring

Where their children are now busy
With unheard of businesses
While my offspring will never see
But all the lives time will press

Oh, start the dissolution dance!
And bring me the deliverance! »

-A song! How can it be?

Maité is an old woman. Her red hair falls stiffly over her small shoulders. She makes up and goes out of her dark grim house. She blinks. Outside the town speaks unknown languages. Electrical signs are climbing up along the less natural angles and the colour of the sky is altered.

Not long ago, she was still recognising faces in the tumult, some of her generation. Death took them away and the memories of the past went with them, only subsisting in her mind. She goes loaded of ancient time like a battery, unable to talk about it, rich by money she can not exchange.

Her body decays, her speech gets poorer and people turn away from her. In spite of her

shame, she goes before them in order not to sink: an errand, a move, a bit of conversation stolen on a shop's doorway.

At the end of the road are looming insanity and death alone. Then in a surge of despair, one evening, Maité bends her neck and starts praying. Like a clumsy little tit her prayer gently raises and meets mysterious emanations linked to Floozman presence in this world. Finally, it returns in words and flies anew full of vitality.

In the cash dispenser cabin, Fred Looseman opens his eyes. The vision vanishes as his telephone rings.

-Yes I saw her. A lonely old woman, in a little town. He says.

At her desk, Mrs Marinella does an about turn with her chair to look over the roofs.

- Take care!

The Floozboys take him straight away to Maité's house. She lives in the church area, at the centre of a village surrounded by new suburbs. In the far, through the landscape gaps, a rectilinear countryside can be seen.

Floozman rings the bell. A lot of time goes by. Floozman and the Floozboys are watching shiny little clouds in the electric blue sky. At last, Maité opens the door:

-Good morning?

-Good morning, I am Floozman and I come to set you free!

-Pardon me?

A Floozboy quickly computes Maité in enriched reality mode through his business analytics glasses connected to the internet Floozfiles. He intervenes on time to break the silence.

- We are Maurice Desmaison's grand sons. The International Monetary Fund sent my brother in a mission nearby and we wanted to take this opportunity to say hello.

-Maurice! He used to spend entire days home when I was a child...My God...You resemble his mother. But I can not let you in; the house is in such disarray...

- Our grand father told us about your garden. We would like to visit it and take a few pictures. We are bringing some refreshments and, oh yes, we also have a small present for you...

-That's right. Sorry. I'm so absent minded. Floozman takes a tiny packet trimmed with ribbons out of his pocket and hands it on to Maité.

- Oh, thanks...come in. Do not mind the dirt...

While Maité and Floozman move on to the garden, the Floozboys unload a number of boxes out of the Rolls Royce, under the neighbour's scrutiny.

A moment later, Maité and Floozman are having tea under the willow.

- Do not worry; the boys are just tinkering about...

Behind them, hidden by an oleander hedgerow, a great shuffle is going on. Gardeners are at work. Alleys are already cleared and bushes are combed. Multicolour pansies recover the flower beds and the arbours are streaming with fleshy lilacs. Blue coated roofers are walking against the deep sky.

Maité is dozing off in the brocaded cushions which fill her large arm chair. Walking along the iridescent stitch plaited by the water sprays, a man is drawing near to Floozman.

- Mr Floozman? Good morning, I am the architect.

- Good morning. Please, sit down.

- Well. I have studied the most beautiful houses in the area, those which are still intact and those for which we have traces. That one is very simple. We can not do much without modifying its structure in depth. Besides, in this type of village, no one has ever developed nor imported any true style. In truth, Mr Floozman, these houses are common...

-Can we eliminate the ugly? Floozman asks almost anxiously.

- Well, here is a true question...We may certainly increase the volumes, suppress corridors, allow more light in while respecting the house consistence...As I said, the danger in this approach is newness, you see. We can avoid contemporary style but we are in danger of elaborating something which has never been done and which does not correspond to anything, if you see what I mean...

- Could you have a look at Mrs Maité pictures? Those of her childhood, when these houses were alive. Maybe you will find material in it? You may also want to talk to her when she wakes up. She will tell you about beauty –Floozman reflects for a short while- and thus, she may see beauty anew. Well I mean she will be pleased.

-All right.

-And let's not be stuck: make the necessary layouts to render the atmosphere of her memories...Make trompe-l'oeil if you need to! This lady will not attend any other performance in this life.

Floozman is standing now. He realizes that he has become heated. The architect takes notes...

Meanwhile on the steps, a Floozboy is devising with two village men. As Floozman is coming in their direction, a second Floozboy makes a sign to move away.

- No, don't get into that discussion, it is too dangerous.

- But what is going on?

- Here are city hall and regional council representatives. They want to check the worker's papers. The neighbors have complained, about the wall. Nothing serious.

The discussion is heating. It can be heard from the garden now:

- All these workers, coming by helicopter from who knows where! Why don't you want to consult local artisans? And the little lady, what does she think? Are you relatives? We want to talk to her.

- Sure...

As Maité moves towards the door with a light tread, Floozman takes her gently by the arm and walks along with her.

- I am strong enough now, he whispers in her ear.

A moment later, they appear on the doorway, in bright daylight.

- Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen, I am Floozman, I am rich. Immensely rich. These persons work for me. They are my lawyers as well. Mrs. Maité is a friend. We have come to free her.

The civil servants look at each other.

- What do you mean?

- Never mind. I will buy back houses in this area. I will not discuss the prices. I will renew them entirely and there will be work for everyone. Spread the news in town.

- Mrs. Maité?

- Yes, yes...Everything is all right with me, they are very nice....They know Maurice

Desmaison's grand son adds Maité with a singing voice and a sweet appeasement gesture.

- As regards the wall, I leave you with my legal team. They will help us in finding a solution, concludes Floozman before returning inside with Maité.

- And now, we have to marry someone! He says while shutting the door.

The Rolls stops in front of the retirement house fence. Floozman and Maité come out followed by two Floozboys. Floozman bends down to unlock the barrier and sits down by a silent fountain. The day could be nice and a few old persons are enjoying the sun.

- Long life to the bride! Shouts Floozman....Yes, long life to the bride and groom and long life to the wedding! There is no finer fair. All towards which we are bound manifests itself in the wedding celebration. This is why I invite you all to drink from the loving cup! You will all be invited! You will all be invited to the eternal wedding!

-...

- Now, with director's permission, these boys will deliver to each of you one million of million dollars. You won't be asked for anything in exchange. They will also propose their services to prepare the party. Do not hesitate to tell them about anything you may be missing, anything which may tarnish your joy.

- But what wedding asks a little old lady. Who is getting married?

- I can not walk, even less dance! Says a small livid sexless creature.

- My granddaughter will get engaged as well, I think. Says a blind man.

- Ladies, Gentlemen...Please, resumes Floozman, let the idea find its way. Let the event deploy itself and fly ahead towards the future. Come as soon as you are ready.

At that moment, a couple of teenagers pass down the street on a motorbike. The boy is leaning on the handlebar after an idea of speed. The girl is clumsily stuck on his back, her dirty heels dangerously pointing to the inside of the wheel. It is an apparition loaded with energy, suffused with sooty dreams.

- We may marry these two, proposes Floozman.

-They are far too young, says the crone. Let them live. They won't stick together and they know it very well.

- Anyway, they will eventually die, adds Floozman. And maybe have they already died to meet again...Their souls are maybe older and more composed than ours....

-This is not a good idea. Interrupts a Floozboy visibly irritated.

The motorbike is heard again, then the engine stops, very close. The two children are now entering the garden side by side, their helmet in the hand. The girl addresses Floozman:

-Sir, we've heard about you. I don't know how to ask, but you have to help us...we must leave town.

- What are your names? And what is going on? Sit down and have a tea with us. We will give you one million of million dollars.

- My name is Quitteria and he is Basil.

- Are you Spanish?

- Our fathers were from the Mancha. Listen, Basil escaped jail this morning. He told me: we must leave straight away. It was still dark...My parents don't want me to see him but we love each other. If we stay here, they will separate us and we won't meet ever again.

- No, no, says Floozman with a smile. Take this million of millions dollars and drive without sleep down to the Rio Grande, to the coast. Step on cargos, planes. Cross passes. Take drugs. Wake up in the city that's made of light.

-Thank you but we'll get nabbed, interrupts Basil. We'd better hide for a while.

-Take them in the team, at least during the wedding. We'll disguise them, suggests a Floozboy.

-Yeaah! Repeat the others Floozboys starting a dance.

.

- Take'em in the team! Echoes a little old lady.

- Take them in the team! Says Floozman. The wedding celebration will take place tonight! Go and spread the news at the Central Café and on the market while I inform Mrs. Maïté.

Floozman returns in the constant half light of the small living room where Mrs. Maïté is resting. Decolorized white blue hair meshes emerge from the squat armchairs which backs are turned towards him. Hoary hands on the armrests. Maïté has visitors.

- Good afternoon, ladies...

- Good evening!

In a fluid magic move, the two hosts turn and do not turn to him while laughing the same laugh, unveiling teeth pure and white as the canticle sheep flock. Dazzled, Floozman faces two lively young maiden dressed in the pre war fashion. From the bottom of her armchair, Maïté is smiling ingeniously.

- I am Clara.

- I am Vera.

- We are coming for the wedding. We are very old friends of Maïté. We haven't seen each other for a long time.

- Since our death, actually. But Maïté does not remember!

- Or she does not care?

- Welcome, says Floozman - very cool - but I haven't seen the wedding couple yet. Unless the two kids...

- These children will go in space, calmly says Clara while sliding along the mirror without giving rise to any reflection. And their children will be such that I can not describe them. They will not be human anymore, you see, Mr Floozman...

.

- They will not get married. They will not see any wedding. They will not see any burial either since there will be no more ground under their feet.

- Not a clod! Says Clara clicking the syllabus with her tongue for the fun of it. They will leave the solar system behind them. And we haven't even been to Paris in this world!

- Will my money help them? Floozman asks.

- I don't know. They won't have the possibility to buy nor to sell for generations. I do not know what will help them. Or I know but this is a secret.

- Not money...not anything? Books? Memories? Trace of memories? Ideas?

- God only knows.

- But which God will they have? Asks Maïté from the depth of her cushions. If they are not

human anymore, will they still be in the image of our? Please take some more tea.

- The God of the universe! Settles Vera while flailing her black hair over her shoulders. Do you have a Bible, Maité?

- Oh my god, yes, I think so... She heads to the book shelves shuffling her feet...

At that moment, a Floozboy comes close.

- Excuse-me, but it is starting! We have a crowd out there, all sorts of people. And journalists as well. We need to organize some activity.

- Well. Arrange a procession and quickly purchase a large field for the wedding, answers Floozman. Up there on the crest.

Maité comes back and hands her old Jerusalem Bible over to Vera.

Lo and behold! At soon as the young woman opens the book, a circle of fire forms around the book. Muffled screams are heard in the crowd and above the flames rumble Vera's voice raises and becomes a chant.

- Listen Floozman! Listen you all! Read, Maité! Start anywhere you want.

And with her clear tiny voice, Maité reads a paragraph. Although the words are in her language, none can recognize their meaning but confusedly, at this spirit edge where speech and noise part. Maité reads with pleasure, then jubilation. All the sudden, she cries out:

- This is it! But not at all...I mean, this is not the same Bible!

- This is the bible of the future. Such as it shall be revealed to the children of these children. There is also yours, and theses of each of your parents. The Verb....

At this very moment, the fire alarm rings.

Meanwhile at the police station, a young inspector leans back heavily on his chair.

-I can't find anything, boss. But who is this guy?

- The Rolls belongs to a lawyer, fine. The bills are authentic, recent notes but nothing to say either. The cards transactions are withdrawn on the account of the lawyer's father who is an associate partner. Nothing wrong.

- We have to understand before escalating. We can't proceed otherwise. Catch him as you can. He will end up doing some damned stupidity, anyway.

- What do we do, then?

- Out! Better see you in the field than on your damned computers.

Doors are slammed. Police alarms are blaring.

Before the firemen's eyes, Floozman and Maité emerge from the steam curls laughing, followed by the young ladies. The house is intact, golden and streaming with waters.

- Everything is all right! Floozman calls out to the crowd where the Floozboys are already, repeating "it's all right" while slipping bills in limp hands.

All the sudden, as if magnetized by the warm radiance of the walls, the mob marches onto the house.

At this moment, the Rolls turns around the corner of the block and interposes itself.

-Step in, now!

Quickly the Floozboys deploy a canon bill and fire pressurized notes on the mob which scatters instantaneously while Floozman and his friends are escaping.

At a crossroad on Main Street, a funeral procession gives them precedence.

Now the Rolls is rolling across fields. Behind it, radios buzz and crackle. In a packed column, police reinforcements are leaving town at full speed. Around them, wheat and giant corns are waking up to the evening fragrances, indifferent, cosmic, shivering.

- They have cut through the land! Yaps a young cop.

- Like in 'Bonnie and Clyde! Answers his female mate.

- What do we do?

- Let's catch them up by the D931, after the Super Shoes store!

- But we can't see the Super Shoes! It has to be here!

Indeed the horizon is drawing back. The crest vanishes in the far, yielding ground to an immense plain. At a fantastic speed, the black road extends itself into infinity while grain silos are rising to become fantastic blind towers erected against the sky.

This is the hour when the rich farmer's daughter gets dressed up to go in town.

The glow-worms are encrypting around the house a peaceful message addressed to her father. It says: «you who live in a fold of time, you who led cattle with the old Maudru, let us please the use of a path. Let us confound the powers of daylight... »

Suddenly, Floozman appears in the middle of a wheat field. The column stops and deploys along the bank after a coordination time. Policemen come out of their cars and aim their guns at him.

The tall silhouette walks on them. At each step it unfolds and splits in two so that every policeman is soon confronted with Floozman.

- Freeze or we shoot! First warning! Shouts the lieutenant.

- You crossed the state border! Announce the Floozmen.

- Stop...Er...Stop this bullshit! You are under arrest!

- The only solution is to die? Says a Floozman to the seventy eight others. .

- What wrong have we done? Ask the latter to their policeman.

- You set fire to Mrs Maité's house! You disturbed public order.

- The house did not burn. We did no harm. We did not get any profit out of this illusion. Each Floozman answers peacefully. Now that their eyes are accustomed to the shadow, the policemen can see the blue skin and the lawyer robe of the infinitely rich standing before them. They also see his prodigious androgynous beauty...

- This is true, boss. The house is intact.

- And your laws don't punish the illusionist.

Each Floozman takes a step towards his policeman. The glow-worms are now producing a heady music.

- Second warning! Yells the lieutenant. The radios keep on buzzing a little bit. Despite everything, the policemen let themselves be approached and taken by the arm. Worse! The Floozmen are dragging them into the heart of the cultivation, in different directions.

- Let's talk. Or dance a logical and juridical dance. They propose.

The farmer's daughter is gliding on the road in her silver coupé. In the hollow of the field and in the woods beyond, amazing couples are dancing and devising.

We believe that constellations are vaulted along the earth curve but this is not true.

Meanwhile in the twilight, the little group is climbing the hill, followed at a distance by the crowd. The breeze is swelling Floozman's black coat. For a short time Basil's motorcycle flies by the crest as if to meet the evening star rising in the indigo sky.

At the top, black dressed women are already hauling long white tablecloths out of the flank of helicopters lying in the grasses. Victual boxes are unloaded. Men in tank tops are piling up barrels. On a round stone, others are slaughtering beasts and collecting blood.

Soon high fires are lighting the whole field. In freshly dug cuttings entire sheep and beefs are being roasted.

Silent machines finish building terraces on the hillside. As soon as they are levelled, these alveolus are paved with golden tiles then marble tables are erected. Blue silk tents are deployed and adorned with flower garlands where insects are settling back. Banners are dancing in the evening wind. Similar to these in their slender spectral body, Clara and Vera are in the sky with diamonds.

Conniving, they will extend all the blessings of that world on Qwitteria and Basil's union when a little later the children will embrace each other in the long grass, offering to the night pollens the pale sweetness of their naked skin.

The moon is rising.

- Look up! Cries up Floozman and he points ten new helicopters shooting up from behind the crest, adorned with innumerable lights. The people are coming!

- Oooh!

[Prestige sequence begins] Valentino Enciennada and the actress Flora Dupont who he has been dating since last week are the first to descend from the helicopter. She is naked but the Carfu drape in translucent golden micro fibres which is girding her loins without veiling her pubic growth colorized by the neo constructivist designer Lounar Chatsky. Valentino is wearing a raw plastic smoking, quite relax. They are followed by Cynthia Roquepy, very fresh in her Pantin tailor. She came alone but she has visibly sympathized with the Broom brothers who have kept their Primi tennis suit. They are heading to the V.I.P. Tivoli where a Provençal buffet set out by Boudiou himself is waiting for them. The second helicopter lands gracefully, the sliding door opens and, Yes! This is the intrepid Indira Shopping who is pushing open the heavy panel by herself. She is superb in the corolla of her bell shaped dress designed by Zulfy. In spite of her recent divorce, she smiles to the photographers and we have to admire the courage of this young woman carried too fast to the summits of cinema» [Prestige sequence end]

- Maïté, when you were a teenager, you used to love Rock'n Roll, true?

- Oh yes! I did love it!

- I picture you on the verandah... You liked to hear Elvis voice filling the evening when the first stars were trembling above the appeased countryside. You were waiting for you lover who was a long time coming, so long was the road from a city to another. Large dark strips of land were between them while the warm song vibration seemed to extend to the entire continent. A fertile continent as filled with promises as an immense unknown planet. He was driving to you in the summer night, the hair in the wind and the air had a smell of time like in Mars valleys a certain evening.

- Elvis... Oh yes! Says Maïté clapping her hands.

-Today, such nights may not materially exist anymore in the universe. However, their faint echo is still propagating itself. It subsists mostly in the continuum nodes which correspond to the second focus of all the ellipses that could have been formed at that time in the same

referential, taking as a first focus the spatio-temporal coordinates of the very place where you kissed your lover – on the verandah or on the stair since you came down a few steps to welcome him. These wave packets are in motion and, god willing, we will pick them up and materialize them for a few moments, do you see, Maïté?

At this moment, the Voice speaks. A white helicopter is now lying by the stage. His round shaped open door evokes the rocket in ‘Mickey on the moon’. On the plasma screens which are dancing against the constellations, Elvis appears in his body of glory.

- Elvis’ ghost!

- Maïté, says Elvis, looking at her from everywhere. We are satiated with days and we are happy. I want to live with you in death, and this is my song for you all tonight, he cries out to the invited.

Silence...

Silence...

- I wanna live with you trough the death.

The night vibrates gently, deep down into the bones. Maïté looks at Floozman straight in the eyes, smiling. She embraces him with strength, then sinks in his arms.

-I am happy...

Then, without a word and without turning back, she moves lightly towards the stage, her naked feet barely touching the grass;

-And leave the grave far beneath...

The flames screen the white silhouette from Floozman’s sight. Or is it the flames that he sees through Maïté’s pale spectrum?

- You'll be mine forever...

The Voice gets lost in helicopters rustle brought by a gust of wind. The top of the trees trembles. Around the buffet crumbling under victuals, uneasy inspectors are watching the sky, a cup of Champaign in hand.

- T.V. is coming! Says a Floozboy.

- Party! Party! Now! Answers Floozman.

Directions are given straight away. Elvis and the Floozboys chain a sidereal "jailhouse Rock" revival. Maité is quietly waiting in a moon beam by the small white helicopter.

The crowd is dancing frenetically. The Floozboys are at the consoles. The sound becomes solid and percussive in its low frequencies.

All the sudden, a bunch of reporters succeeds in sneaking close to Floozman.

- Mr. Floozman, you are organizing this event. What is the meaning of such a party?

- Mr. Floozman, nobody knows your identity. When will you reveal your face? A blond journalist with a very professional attitude is asking:

-The body of an old woman was just found on the other side of the crest. What will you do about that?

Floozman looks for a way out and sees the sky turning blue in the east. The Floozboy try to contain the assailants flow.

- We need a morning shift. We need...we must dispatch drugs so that the guests can endure dawn. It is beautiful. Bring them back to the tents and into the sofas. We need...we forgot the L.S.D, the poems! It is too late....

- Good morning. I am Jeremy Dru, from 'Raviparty' magazine. How do you manage to get authorizations so fast despite the recent regulation tightening?

Floozman has a vision of the immediate future. The ground is littered with garbage, tablecloths are stained, animal grease is jellifying in the empty plates. Faces are marked by fatigue. Music pulses indefinitely without any spirit. Further, Maité withered but dignified body lies in the grass. Her nice white dress spread around and her jewels bespeak her struggle against age. There is not enough wind in the banners, not enough purity in the daylight, not enough grandeur...He sees the thick police of the titles in the local paper.

He is feeling dizzy. Reluctantly, he distinguishes and analyses every question. Every utterance forces its way to his excited reason. Multiple responses are forming against his will, dividing the flow of his thoughts. A part of his spirit computes and ponders. He wants to speak but he is not himself anymore. A chasm opens up before these streams which carry him, ever smaller and weaker towards a hazy below.

The people are already leaving like a flock of sparrows. Roadies and technical staff bump into the little group. Police alarms resound.

- How much is a party like this?

- Ah....

- Hurry! The smoke apparatus! Cries a Floozboy.

Pscchhhhhhh...With a striking speed, a green mist engulfs the hills like the Northern Pacific smog does. Through the thick smoke, amid confusion, the Floozboys are evacuating Fred Looseman.

A moment later, a bunch of engineers emerge unnoticed from a gap, arms loaded with equipments. Only Fred Looseman is smiling.

In the axis of the sun, a small white helicopter moves away and vanishes. A blazing reflection forms an ellipse on the screen.

Tim Keane

Tim Keane's poetry book, *Alphabets of Elsewhere* is coming out in November 2007 from Cinnamon Press. This fiction is from his widely excerpted novel, *That Strange Flower the Sun*. He lives in New York City. [website](#)

Cian Corley on the Path to Cheng-Zu's Palace

Sleeping, awake, easy, who cares asleep or awake there's no difference when you're in space so open there are no rules about direction, even awake in this sleep, or sleeping to wake, he knew this walk was China, opening mountain space just like he'd seen and read on the postcard he'd begged Ma to buy him, 'two pennies just,' then the man behind the desk at the flea market handed him China, on a card, not Red China the radio talks about, or China where people are starving without rice, but this China with a thin mountain painted yellow and trees on every cliff, and a path to take you toward it, which it did, so he walked it, sleeping, sleeping more awake than ever before, never surrounded by so much space as this, and 'why?' he laughed, his feet feeling the mud of the path, the grasses so tall on each side, flowering crazy grass without cows or horses in those fields, 'why did I get born?' he laughed, 'why did I get born except for this amazing space and to walk without rules?' and why his friends in the cafeteria talk about dreams of being an astronaut with a gun fighting on Saturn's rings, or of being a fireman on the roof of a blazing school where you rescue some people and don't rescue teachers, or of kissing girls who wear yellow bathing suits at the Cascade Pool, girls you'd never kiss in your life but you can, why all that when this walking is better because of how real it is, China, just you, alone, you on this path, muddy, but not wet under your feet, once in a while birds on that thin yellow mountain hop and glide from one treetop to another, far away you can see them move through the air as you walk toward that mountain, the air feels watery in your chest, and he could still feel the water-breath even after he got told to hop-to for breakfast, hearing Ma and the girls talking over eggs about men on the avenue who scratch their bellies, hairy bellies and they made man-faces saying that, hardly eating their eggs but pushing their plates away and laughing so hard Ma was crying from laughing so much she didn't notice he hadn't taken his bath, because he wanted to keep this walking-feeling about China alive in his nose and under his feet and even up and down his arms, so he took a quarter when she wasn't looking and didn't even tie his shoes as he hurried down to Piccolos for yellow construction paper, running up the street where the sun was trying to push past clouds so low those clouds might as well be winter, and in the store, he pushed aside men in hats on their way to work who were in line holding newspapers under their arms, the smells of the candy store so ordinary and woody and dusty that he knew he was born to walk and draw places far from here and could, as soon as he paid for the construction paper, and as he paid for the paper he looked back at how busy the men were so he took a Hershey Bar for breakfast, let it melt in the center of your tongue and taste what kings taste because kings eat whatever they want whenever they want, all the men in hats who are not emperors in China busy talking about a plane that crashed in New Jersey, from fog, fog is the ocean half-up-turned into air but drifting-breaking clouds like something to remind you can see but you can't, or can you? In fog you see things better because things peek out of the fog so by seeing just a part of what you see you like it more than ever, more than if you ever saw the whole, just parts is better, hints, like now, running, how the silver ends of cars and the fire hydrants pass so quick you only see a part of color, a blur of black and brown and white-gray color, even of the girls you pass, red ribbons, blue shoes, black spotted gum-spots on the sidewalk like planets that need to be given names, cosmos is the only word bigger than universe but don't say it's bigger than a god, or China, up the stairs with the girls and Ma still talking at the table now describing different haircuts, hair styles and hair spray, beauty parlors, Puerto Rican girls' hair and black hair and Jap hair, but no one at the table said Chinese hair, or even saw him with the paper, slipping off his untied shoes, hearing his own voice in his head, laying out the colored pencils on the floor near his bed, spaces so open there are no rules, just China coming back to him, there, that thin mountain painted yellow which he was walking towards, he knew, as he drew, the walk must be to see the emperor, emperor, the name for kings in China, and as he walked, not hurrying but not afraid either, alone with no shoes on, he drew the muddy path, wondering how the emperor would feel if he saw him in no shoes, muddy toes, and no Chinese eyes, but, he could tell the emperor 'I'm not Chinese but look at this, I can

draw, grasses' grasses he drew longer on the right side than on the left side, just what he saw when he walked, but the left side, he remembered as he drew it was further out to a field that went to a horizon, flatter, more free as he drew the horizon the walk came back to him, moving him along faster, the watery air and the mountain ahead he drew which was thin but as he moved toward it grew thicker, cliffs, trees hanging from the cliffs, birds on the tree branches he could hear them singing by now, his nervous hand sprouting those trees on the mountain's cliffs, watery lake in his chest as the far-off mountain past the closer yellow mountain grew bright as sand, walking on mud, drawing toward the mountain, one tree at the bottom colored with orange fruit, and, once, a white bird dipping down from one of the cliffs as if it were falling but stopped plunging and did a glide in the air, not far from clouds, shot up as if showing off a wing-trick, which is what he drew, the going-up blaze of the Chinese bird, not a pigeon, whitish gray, like a small-fast seagull, this was amazing walking like this with so much space, so wide, rocks on each side of the path colored seven colors—blue, gray, brown, black, violet, purple, pink— another pencil for each rock, that's what the colors were and he wanted to pick the smooth stones up as he walked but a voice not in the air but somewhere else told him those path rocks were 'off-limit' Chinese jewels, and the emperor would see them in his pockets, and they'd chop his head off in China for stealing, so it's kind of a rule you like, leaving the colored stones right there where he colored them, no one here to walk with except yourself and to not be scared at all, alone on this planet because you were born and now in another country, walking, what was more awake than this, the mud-flat feeling between his toes, the watery air, a burning-good-feeling in his stomach that rolled on as he was going to meet someone no one ever knew, find a room in an emperor's palace, down there, coloring trees with his eyes and now his hand, lines of red showing the ridges of the mountain, white trees far behind near that second mountain with the lake, even grass on that lake in small quick lines, 'what in the world is he doing in there?' a voice asked, 'drawing,' someone said, 'well leave him drawing, he hates eggs anyway,' and as he walked he laughed at their kitchen-words, tracing a swerving way up the path he was still walking, as if he ever needed anybody to ever allow him to be on this path, walking in China, moving into ways that made his hand as alive as his moving feet, watching colors happen in a dream which was never fake but more real than any sleep or any being-awake-day, open day-space all around, the tall crazy flowering grass on all sides almost finished except for the petals, feeling watery air on his face as he got closer to the mountain big and more real than anything he'd drawn before this walk, on a path he drew that moved into him and out but wouldn't stop happening here as long as he could see.

Timber Masterson

While working on his mammoth personal memoir, *Timfoolery: Tales of a Third Rate Junkie*, Timber has been cleansing his mind, organizing his website and donating his imaginative talents and heartfelt jazzy epistles to print and online journals: *Fresh Yarn Salon, Yankee Pot Roast, Unlikely Stories, Purple Prose, Ghoti, Wandering Army, Girls With Insurance, So New Media, The Beat, Wonkavision, Noo Journal and Numb Magazine*. He co-produced and hosted a monthly interactive literary series at The Drake Hotel in Toronto, *Word Substance Spatula*, and is a regular contributor to CIUT's talk radio show, *HOWL with Nik Beat*. Last year, Masterson ventured to Philadelphia to ply his literary wares at The 215 Festival. He's been awarded a Canadian Arts Council Grant towards his next project, a compilation of published essays and stories, *A Bizarre But Entertaining Life I Seem To Have Survived: True Imaginings From The Dementia Cul De Sac*. Why don't you visit him at www.timbermedia.com as he tends to get fairly lonesome.

The John Merrick Free-Associative Piece / My Happy Elephant End of Summer Submission

John Merrick is a newly found out relative. It all makes sense now. Every time I'd see his image, I'd long for that kind of attention: the keen focused energy of a downtrodden, halfway-in-the-bag, run-down and crinkly rat-faced carnie, sticking his wooden cane in my cage, prodding me to do my 'tricks' as onlookers wince and guffaw at my alarming deformities. The show had honesty. It had guts. I had nothing to hide.

Entirely appealing for me is the not rising early thing: no more having to run out into the callous, treacherous world full of hurtful dingbats and lamebrains in order to sell my soul at some telemarketing scam operative so as just to pay the rent, some ridiculously overpriced dug-out suburban dwelling, hot-plates, brown bar fridge and a Murphy bed concern. No, I was special. To them. They told me I was. Also attractive and salivatory, those dreamy and kaleidoscopic notions of cushiony Cornish scullery maids on roller skates sliding plates of gruel serendipously under my very own private hospital doorway.

Visiting well-wishers would need special designer name tags to gain entrance to my area. I would ask "WHAT NEWS OF THE GAMING TABLES?!" expecting to be told, well, just what the news was over at the gaming tables. My roped-off private corridor would be complete with sheets of only the highest thread count, hand-made by Pirate-shirt-wearing maidens with dispositions responsive to my needy nature. The administration along with the Gilda Radnerish coily-haired things, not much to look at, yet reciprocal to my predictable punch lines, they, trained to cope with just my type of internal epidemic, captive at this cushion kingdom where my picture's painted on the wall, (like Mao, somehow) 20 feet by 40. These sheets have been sewn by starved and underpaid sweatshirt-wearing-sweatshop workers, their machines grinding away at the cream-colored oh-so-soft bedding products for me to bath luxuriously in. I've arrived.

* * *

Professor: I first came across Charlie in a locked ward in Raleigh North Carolina. He'd been there approximately four years and had shown little change. Something about his flights of fancy caught my attention while on rounds, slipping the bonds as they did of the constraints of the heaviest dosages of psychotropic medications. In a form of manic defense, and in contrast to those patients who catastrophise, what we see here is what we might call spectacularizing, a form of omnipotent grandiosity. His self-diagnosis of 'Delusional - off - the - scale

- Ego - Attention - Dire - Need - of

-Validation-and-Security-Psycho-somnia', a 'manifold diagnosis' which, he adds, is rare in 'Straight White Male Only-Children in their 30's', in fact captures some truths about what troubles this man. It will be noted that the needs being served here are of the very earliest and infantile kind; and the need to be

recognized, to be fed, to be made physically comfortable – thus to be made safe, secure and contained, mentally and physically.

A chorus line of chefs and cuisinart-protein-virtuosos from Finland and select provinces in America, would be carriaged in to work on the meal schedule: a delectable custom-made menu designed to cator to my special dietary needs. The gentlemen in white hats, aprons and hairnets are cutting up wild exotic and delectable road kill rendering it palette-ready for my elephantitus-like appetite.

Whilst crossing the rain-soaked London streets, I would limp when out on my nightly strolls, just so old ladies would offer to lend a hand and hopefully offer me some yummy Turtle chocolates, It's always been my strategy to have one leg up when the other foot drops. It's a good way to meet people, and have them set me straight on my cinematic misconceptions, I figure.

There's the grand fondness for my backside being propped up by multiple pillows, in the single malt bachelor bed constructed especially for me, and being read to by pontificating Oxford-scholars in need-of-community-service-credits. The dimensions of my sleepytime apparatus are suited to my alarming curvature of the perplexingly distorted sense of self I so wholeheartedly embrace - my massive inflated afflictions riding shotgun, and along for the ride, since birth.

* * *

Professor: Experienced clinicians will recognize the obvious zonal confusion but perhaps less obvious is the anthropomorphasizing of symptoms, which then become experienced as companionable. Defensive isolation is maintained through a dangerously addictive, solipsistic fantasy system which, provides the comforts of relationship without the real risks associated with attachment to real objects: loss, frustration and misunderstanding.

I would look forward with earnest zest to "Observation Test Time", being wheeled-down to the auditorium where the gawking strangers would sit with Mead notebooks eagerly awaiting the results of my many tests. Society's elite pay top dollar to 'view me', make feverish observations, reporting on my every irregular breathing and slurpy inhalation. The massive distortion of the head assimilated into the core of my being, what I've become, a not very funny blind date.

Here's the downside: 'her' taking no pleasure in my ultimately annoying tiflorously-challenged screaming whilst we're at the eatery, "He's the greatest freak in the world," while I'm pre-occupied with the vast trays of meats and horns of goodies and plenties. "Are there no olives at this buffet?" I found little comfort.

* * *

Professor: The need to be seen as special at whatever cost to mental health, underlies an identification of this type with such an unlikely literary character. Though it should be noted that the core of this identification, however far beyond the reach of conscience, is with the deep and profound suffering of the character. To tap into this is where the real work of therapy would lie – the opportunity for healing, growth and change rests here.

I've always found attics (addicts?) terribly charming in that oh-so-elegant rustic and romantic kind of way. The sloped ceilings, a descending scale of depravity, slip sliding into Paul Simon melodic minor nines, segueways of blind affection, a cowardly reproach.

* * *

Professor: This image of the attic is of interest. The wish to hide oneself, is paired, as Freud taught us, with its opposite - exhibitionistic inclinations. This was the child who may have run about the home

dressed in mittens, hat, rubber boots and a mask but minus pants. Adult intimacies can be expected to be similarly complex: the conflict between characteristically teenage narcissistic preoccupations with self-showing and the infantile need for affirmation of identity through recognition are paired with a compelling shame at being seen, touched or known. Shame and guilt for a 'fundamental' flaw deficiency or deformity are the central unconscious affects.

My monsterly somnambulant sloth shuffle, at times, magically endearing, my little claim to fame: these original quick jerky movements based in a cornucopia of creativity I knew to be revered, made me a grand-spectacled hit at parties, the center of attention, though too often sticking around absurdly late. When the hosts are cleaning up, saying, "Boy, we ought to be heading off to bed", I'm like, just settling in, to share secrets of how I felt being used by Camilla, an all too boisterous guest from Staten Island who used me as "Pin-the-tale-on-the-ghoulish-low-self-esteem-troll". I was told to get on all fours and "act like a piñata", by partygoers with miniature baseball bats, that as it turns out weren't that miniature. There are untold sweets in me.

* * *

Professor: Here we gain some clarity regarding the anxiety underlying the pathological preservation of the isolating grandiosity - the fear of being damaged, harmed ultimately emptied by others – thus, better to look pretty and move fast - and to hold your arms tightly across your chest.

The huge hairy mitt type fin-thing for an appendage where a human hand should be, advantageous more often than you'd think, the feeling of being chosen first to play outfield, brought a high-watt smile, though fewer friends ask me to assist them in typing their metaphysics essays. I've always longed to be different.

* * *

Professor: Often, as we see here, the individual tells themselves they relish how different they are from their fellow mankind. This, of course is a lie, as internally they, to quote this patient, "a cart-wheeling trauma moat, empty, blind and drowning". Such patients may be attractive on the outside, yet the turmoil of ugliness, the scars of hatred turned inwards make for such a muddled composition of self, that there is no true vision, and no secure concept of self. Thus the search for a stable identity and the nature of the internal fantasy of self leads to this identification with this recognizably malformed creature and what we might call this "Elephant Man Complex".

Note to self: call a specialist in Zurich. And, make a note to name all my children "Connie", that is, if I can find a willing and suitable female companion.

* * *

Professor: He will often, to make himself feel more important, create emergency concerns, and may try to enlist the aid of imaginary European doctors. He does this by pressing a good thirty or forty numbers in a row into the telephone pad, believing (again fooling himself) that he knows how to call these 'clinics' where they will tend to his needs with proper nurses, high thread-counted billowing pillow products and meals brought to his private attic dommiserrie in an at some private hospital. Once he comes down from such a manic mood and realizes that not only such an outfit/organization doesn't exist, realizing he hasn't even the train fare to negotiate such passage, he will mope about and more often than not, visit Swiss Chalet three times a day and order the repulsive "dark meat chicken dinner with cole slaw", delivered by balding and sweaty thick-wristed hairy Polish waiter types in heavy brown stockings, reminiscent of some cold, dark and snowy Castle-ish Kafka nightmare thus going against his core inner sense, destroying all. This is known in the biz as "throwing in the towel".

I have mixed feelings of the day.

I take a stroll, a break from all this crippling self-analysis and come across my old schoolyard...

Only thinking of me, as not too give me a big head, children at recess time tossed acorns and half finished apples my way, and casually asked just why it was I had another chap's ass stapled to my forehead.

"What is that repugnant and spiraling hooded figure doing looming near the kids?!"

The hosing down portion of my acceptance to the schoolyard suited me fine, nice to be reintroduced to familiar looking teachers and janitors who charged outside to take time from their busy schedule so that they can make sure I'm freshly squeaky cleansed, spiffy and supple. My confidence, now bolstered, to that of what one would expect a diseased millipede sandwich to be.

Later, I would get my act together and join a Seattle heroin musical outfit called "The Incurables". On stage we all wear heavy burlap sacks, and play all wind and string instruments with sweaty woolen mittens, to show the persecution of people who lie and tell you that, "Yes, those are group showers they are marching you off to, in order to cut down on the city's water supply".

I lumbered off my stage thinking of priests hired to work gay weddings but giggle uncontrollably through the ceremony. This, momentarily made me feel better, though knowing deeply, to return to such a scornful sullen unhopeful place had never done me that much good.

Kenji Siratori

Kenji Siratori, author of *Blood Electric*, is a cyberpunk japanese writer. Born in 1975, he currently lives in Japan. *Blood Electric* was acclaimed by David Bowie. [website](#)

zero gravity organ of a melancholy*embryo

Ovum of the spider woman that is sinking in the internal organ, in the night, germinates and the topologist of the retina++analysis impossible++unknown visibility++nothingness of the fatalities, a mystery fuck—the alarm of light resounds—an embryo opens the door that made visual noise—I foster the thorn of the electron—as for the birth, I am the cycle of violence and the hibernation of the gear mechanism of magma, I am the chameleon that plays with all impossible.

The virgin voyage of a corpse leapt to the horizon that night in heat. The strategic focus of the BI plane my skin tissue++vacant image that enabled the grasp of the sound reproductive system++body outside of torture++tokage of DSADO that was attached to the intestines of light nail diverges—the area moves—the insanity of silence activates—my brain aerofoil of the earth that is not seen—to the heart++unidentified zone of the quickening++U character pole of the insanity++drug of the milligram that was hidden to the machine the fearful enumeration of the body outside grows—.

Sodom,

Sodom,

City, the lung lacked

Virus that respire the hole of a cadaver

The oral sun was enlightened to the neon of the cell of battle. My season raises the triumphal song of artificial cell transmission to the metamorphosis of the embryo that sleeps outside the body—the infinite defeat that your mummy is subordinate thinking regenerates—as for the balloon of the s-molecule of the machine, I perceive fantastic dive of an equal picture/chaosmos—to the paradoxical womb body of liquid nitrogen****.

M.A. Internicola

Michael Internicola is the author of three novels, *Kiss Me Baby*, *Sunflowers!*, *Chaz*, and *All Our Skies Are Blue* and three collections of poetry, *Malism*, *As Right As Rain*, and *The Darkest Place is Under a Streetlight*. His poems, prose and fiction have appeared in numerous magazines. He lives in Key West, Florida.

PRAYER FOR WATER COLORS

When the giant sea horse appeared it sprinkled me with blue powder. I watched it's whole flight over thinking about what I was after. I looked in it eyes. I considered the mirror image I got of myself for a moment. I got a picture right away. I was a desperate man. I heard Emily's heartbeat all the way from the start. I looked at Emily. I touched her wrists and hands. This time she finished looking at me by appearing younger and more beautiful than ever. She had a long road of hair breathing out of her head. I let it run over my face and chest, peeking up her legs. Emily faded backwards into the movements of the ocean. She was almost a ghost I couldn't see anymore. Her prize was invisible. I floated north, south, east and west. I watched the exaggerated glow from above. The secrets that we shared were gone. The plants in the water looked plastic and the breathes that arrived from my mouth and out of the sea horse's mouth spoke rhythmically together with each other. I could hear this waltz-like harmony clearly. I grabbed it's tail and it swam slowly towards the top. Everything looked pregnant. I remember how it's tail held me tight. As we intermingled with the water I felt protected. I had so much more to think about now being older. As the minutes passed so quickly I could feel my mother's smile and my dad's great big heart. I could feel KC's family in Adelaide. I could see tiny explosions coming from nothing at all. My friends were all on my side. HASH was in Mongolia and doing well. Chicken Finger had his boys. JJ was sitting with the mrs. waving a simple hello. I heard a little little girl. I saw children sitting on my lap. They called me daddy and it made me cry. I saw the springer spaniels running apeshit in the fresh country air and the new writing house out by the lake. Everything was still blue. I smelled Paris. I smelled the wedding. I could easily understand why the butterflies were there. It was my grandpa and grandma giving back some glares. I saw all of this in the sea horse's eye. It's were all my secrets went blue. My ultimate happiness depended on the book. I couldn't waste my smiles, my big ideas, my balls, good looks and brains. I couldn't waste my guts or my trying to have talent. I allowed myself to have these things. These thoughts wouldn't let me be. I stared at my helpless hands. They were on trial, in the bedroom darkness, sifting through KC's wet hair while she laid on the bed just getting home from work. She had dreams under her pillow. She wouldn't be twenty-five forever. And they were on trial, in the many small rooms along the way, dancing with the pencil and trying to come up with something out of nothing. I had dreams too. I wouldn't be thirty-four forever.

Michael Aliprandini

Michael Aliprandini currently lives in Arlington, Virginia. He works as an ESL teacher and freelance writer and has spent most of his professional life abroad, in Russia, Turkey, Ethiopia, and Italy.

TICKLING STALIN

I address myself to students of foreign languages: “et venio in campos et lata praetoria memoriae, ubi sunt thesauri innumerabilium imaginum de cuiuscemodi rebus sensis invectarum” (St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, X,8). In other words, kidnapping the old woman taught me far more than the respectable methods of Maximilian Delphinus Berlitz ever could. Kidnapping her goat was a boon I couldn’t have foreseen.

Citizen! I hailed her as I strode through the summer-high field. She was enjoying a spread of lightly pickled cucumbers and black bread while her goat, tethered nearby, ripped the grass down to the dark earth.—Citizen, you will prepare me a pot of cold borscht.

What? she enounced, a single word shot like a fascist-seeking bullet, and not because she’d failed to comprehend my peculiar accent and deviant Russian grammar.

Or else I’ll bite your bottom, I said. Let’s move. You’ll see that the tongue can indeed get you to Kiev. She wrapped up her modest feast and clipped a leash to the goat.—I go nowhere without Zinka, not even to Kiev.

When we passed the tractor parked at field’s edge and the woman didn’t try to alert the snoozing driver, I knew she was going to be a docile hostage. Such taciturn acquiescence, writ large in the annals of the national history, had always frustrated me. After all, I didn’t require an automaton but a life-force of impact and entertainment.

I gave her a pair of safety glasses, blacked out with permanent marker, and marched us along the disused tracks to my apartment. She swayed, I hooked arms.—Last week 4,137 Muscovites were arrested for public drunkenness. 1,303 were detained overnight. Were you one of them?

You’ve made me blind.

You shall see, I said. You shall see.

Yesterday the elevator had smelled like carcass and wet fur; now it smelled of gasoline. The latest rash of graffiti—a phallic cult had tagged our barren Brezhnev suburb—didn't seem to embarrass her. Zinka showed alarm by butting the elevator doors.

While she was chopping and muttering in the kitchen and the goat was pacing the concrete balcony, I telephoned my friend.—Len, big developments here. Dubbed, muscle-bound action heroes are no longer my teachers. I've turned off TV and taken the proverbial goat by the leash. Remember what I told you about creating situations that make a strong impression on the senses? Like my dream about Stalin?...Weren't you listening? And about overlaying them with Russian?...Because I've kidnapped a babushka and her goat and she'd be a perfect specimen for your coffee-table book. She has the hugest hands you've ever seen on a woman, and she's built like an APC. That's an Armored Personnel Carrier if you care to know. She was a sharpshooter in the war and takes responsibility for forty-two German corpses...Typical babushka clothes. Flowered headscarf, clunky shoes. Her nylons are classic. They're really thick and bunched up at the ankles...I don't know yet if she has varicose calves, but you'll be in time for borscht and a stellar photo-op if you hurry. I have to attend to the lovely Zinka.

Zinka kept scratching her hooves on the windowsill and rattling the double-pane.—Will Lenin give her indigestion? I asked, pulling a tome from a shelf full of classics that no one bothered with anymore, now that they had so many down-and-dirty diversions.—Or is Gogol more nourishing?

I admit that I had to look up indigestion and nourishing, but they were at once laid into my well hedged Russian exchequer, which already included such treasures as 'I am the plague' and 'I'm Russian, don't hit me,' in the event that I was accosted by nationalist baddies. More pallid expressions, however useful—those for inquiring after the price of a cabbage, for buying a long-distance train ticket, for analyzing the weather—were never insinuated so poignantly in memory.

I chucked a copy of Gogol onto the balcony. The woman gasped and crossed herself with three fingers. There are miracles yet to be countenanced.

At last the soup had cooled. I set out bowls, spoons,

and a container of sour cream. The borscht looked gorgeous, chilly maroon broth floating with grated beet and a hardboiled egg. But she refused to touch it. I ordered her to slurp it down, it was delicious, hers was the best borscht I'd ever eaten, but she pushed the bowl away and fixed me with her anti-fascist gaze. I knew then what the doomed Germans must have intuited, their bowels as suddenly slippery as seconds in an hourglass.

She reached onto the shelf for a can of aerosol, shook it twice, and with deft swooping motions and a soft seethe, sprayed our bowls and the contents of the perspiring pot. A ticklish mist tumbled against my face.—Speechless now, aren't you? she said, she who was helping me incarnate the breathy soul of so many words and expressions, the very codes of human life.

I could have thrown her out of the window, and Zinka too, but I already possessed the words for scream, fall, infarct, splatter, murder, pronounced dead, also the spiritual vagrancies which may or may not attend thereafter, and in any case, the aroma of beets crossed with the whistling stink of cockroach poison made for a more inspired conceit. Speechless I was not.

Though it might be assumed that we had reached the end of her acquiescence, she put on the blackened glasses of her own accord and accepted an escort down to the corner of the busy street. I spun her three times, then leaned in whispering.—What is Russia without you? Without its old women, thick of thigh and big of spirit, the center would never hold.

I ran away, up onto my balcony, from where I could still see her, leash in hand, glasses on, like a blind woman confronting the uncertain. And then there was Len, racing to capture my two edifying victims in a series of silver-gelatin prints. She only moved off along the street when Zinka began tugging at the leash, in search of better fodder. I kicked the gnawed copy of Gogol into the courtyard.

In the end, one minor pleasure was denied me. The following week's crime report for the Moscow metropolitan area made no reference to the kidnapping. I had too much work ahead of me to worry over publicity, however. With the image and the tongue I would raise edifices ever more spacious. In them would dwell the words made flesh. Among them I would dwell.