



**milk** magazine

est. 1998

photo by Ira COHEN

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# Zinta AISTARS

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## Spells Spoken at Dawn

*"I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."*

—Conclusion to *Walden*, Henry Thoreau

Say the words, go on, say them: e-lu-ci-date.  
Divulge the unfettered stream of synonyms  
for a good day (benevolent, satisfactory, excellent,  
virtuous, merciful, prime, effective, productive, choice),  
the very finest kind, sun quickening  
through the blinds in new dawn,  
(beginning, daybreak, sunup, aurora, cockcrow),  
a hastening of gossamer hope  
(optimism, faith, confidence, trust, wish, aspiration,  
desire). Seek that place,  
nebulous dream (vision, incubus, imagination, muse)  
come true in the seeking itself.  
Pronounce it begun—the soft delirium.  
Call it done—the undoing,  
the initial mess of gathering seed,  
choosing the grains one by one, the plump  
and promising ones, firm to the touch,  
eager for the field (clearing, pasture, realm, domain,  
blank white page, unmarred)  
of the day ahead, a radiant reverie  
of possibility, a harvest  
even before the hull splits in two, the root  
feathering into delicate threads that grasp  
(hold, squeeze, caress) the earth to suck  
(breathe deeply and inhale)  
its life-giving vigor, startle of life,  
and you (every dawn, each one)  
the sprouting urchin with buckling knees  
standing, again, for the very first time.

# Pyrotechnics

As it happened, the fuses blew,  
burning our fingertips—  
passing fireworks from hand to hand.  
Sparklers fizzing, a childish joy,  
living stars sizzling white light,  
writing our names across the sky.  
It's a common need:  
the desire to leave an imprint,  
sign a name to a lifetime  
before it turns to the grit and gravel,  
bone chips, of memory pounded to dust.  
Passage of time, clouded by old desires,  
an irresistible rewriting of history.  
I would rather have been  
a finer grain of intoxicant,  
enough to fuel moon rockets  
beneath your skin.  
You would rather have dared  
to reach for more meaning,  
holding out the courage of a straw man  
playing with matches.  
The crippings of human nature,  
Don Quixotes fighting windmills.  
Everyday fare, but we play instead  
with sparklers, pyrotechnics,  
blazes of Roman candles,  
cones of fire, fountains of liquid flame,  
writing a momentary name across sky,  
there, then not.

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# Dave AWL

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## To Larry Rivers, on Hearing of His Death

As you ascend that staircase of clouds,  
you hear someone cry out, "There he is,  
covered with blood and semen!"

Laughter. It is Frank, of course,  
and Kenneth is with him,  
having preceded you up the stairs  
by mere weeks. Who knew heaven  
could be so like New York in the fifties?  
Who knew God would take such good care  
of bohemian riffraff, bisexual saxophone  
painters, gay rococo poets, and their salon?

Frank did. You hear him say he told you so.  
Bunny Lang hands you a drink  
while Kenneth shakes his head. He is wearing  
his Larry Rivers shirt, his Larry Rivers shoes,  
his Larry Rivers beekeeper outfit,  
while the nouns cluster behind him,  
fascinated, wide-eyed. Everywhere are violets,  
rhinoceroses. Frank has disappeared  
behind a curtain. You excuse yourself and join him.

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# David APPLEGATE

---

## **barley and fruit**

put out my eyes

cut off my hands

seal my ears with wax

sew my mouth closed

make my cords void you

angel.

## **toliet bowl schwitters**

finger-nail plucks voice-box

chain-gang

sang railroad clank

cut into glitch-hop

for street kids

for super mario saussure

the hallowed bird

the receptacle for burning

history ejects a smoldering heap

from the ear cannon.

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# Brian BEATTY

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## Omahaha

It's okay to laugh at  
the biggest city in Nebraska.

But first, be sure you have a way home.

## Donkey Basketball

Amish children fill the bleachers.

They're waiting to see what  
passes these days  
for education (and, some say, entertainment)—

waiting in an unholy silence  
their parent didn't invent, though  
that doesn't make it

any less true. You read about such obligations.  
I did once, anyway,

in a book  
I'd hoped might have some dirty passages.

It didn't, of course.

But now I'm not falling  
for volunteer firemen who dwarf their mules.

Or fooled by a moon  
that's always orange somewhere—  
and dim somewhere else.

# A Soap Bubble

I was just another fat kid in a small box.

The cheating bastards with wheels  
couldn't stop  
laughing at my old man's

cigarette wheeze.  
Until he accidentally coughed up God.

That shut their yaps.  
Their asshole dads took notice, too.

Then it all went back to normal, I swear—  
except now I had my bearings:

- 1.) Nothing really changes.
- 2.) Things go downhill because of Cub Scouts.

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# John BEER

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## Total Information Awareness

"This bubble had to be burst, & the only way to do it was to go right into the heart of the Arab world & smash something." The hotel heiress, snapped flashing her bum in a Bahamas club.

To go right into the heart of the Arab world, they claim their device can trigger an orgasm: flashing her bum in a Bahamas club on a boozy date with her new bloke, Nick Carter.

They claim their device can trigger an orgasm. American officials who spoke on condition of anonymity on a boozy date with her new bloke, Nick Carter, say he confessed under torture in Syria.

American officials who spoke on condition of anonymity without touching a woman's genital area say he confessed under torture in Syria. "There's no explanation why. We're just not saying anything."

Without touching a woman's genital area, I take it all seriously. I am withdrawing from all representation. There's no explanation why. We're just not saying anything to make this objective absolutely clear.

I take it all seriously. I am withdrawing from all representation, but he was in the special removal unit. To make this objective absolutely clear, the development of counterterrorism technologies—

but he was in the special removal unit. This had profoundly shocked the commission, the development of counterterrorism technologies with the flick of a switch. Women get turned on.

This had profoundly shocked the commission. No one detected any radical political views. With the flick of a switch, women get turned on to a new business model that only pretends

no one detected any radical political views.  
I take it all seriously. I am withdrawing from all representation  
to a new business model that only pretends  
to give consumers more control. In fact,

I take it all seriously. I am withdrawing from all representation  
that she refused to be photographed in body paint  
to give consumers more control. In fact,  
he was handcuffed and beaten repeatedly.

That she refused to be photographed in body paint  
constitutes an integral goal of the IOA.  
He was handcuffed and beaten repeatedly.  
There's no explanation why. An information whiteout

constitutes an integral goal of the IOA  
while Justice turns to Syria's secret police.  
There's no explanation why. An information whiteout.  
Forebodings of disaster enter into box scores

while Justice turns to Syria's secret police,  
constructing systems to counter asymmetric threats.  
Forebodings of disaster enter into box scores  
to achieve total information awareness,

constructing systems to counter asymmetric threats.  
This bubble had to be burst, and the only way to do it was  
to achieve total information awareness  
& smash something. The hotel heiress snapped.

## **Swift Boat Veteran for Beauty**

The mission, when we finally arrived,  
seemed paler, more insubstantial  
than in the travel agent's glowing description.  
More muck, less hacienda. Let me be the first  
to underscore the insignificance of lineage.  
And where did you get that handkerchief, again?  
At the handkerchief shop. Little Batson sold me it.  
Twelve men approached him as he sang  
the song of the lovely wanderer, transposed  
into a key I suddenly found unfamiliar.  
The men deny that they are lonely.  
Their tears speak out against them, even if  
they explain it away as antifreeze residue

or hints of the mist that surrounds us.  
By the side of the road: three shoes.

And where did you get that handkerchief, again?  
She replied, "Pianos have been known to lose their tune  
when played by antic hands." Understand me:  
I didn't take this as an answer, or I probably shouldn't have,  
and wouldn't, if I weren't as feeble  
as everyone suspected, and prone to jawing on  
long after the mouse had fled my painstaking trap.  
This isn't my apartment, so I won't sleep here for long.  
Tomorrow I'll return to lovely wandering  
through the halls of the house I have stolen  
from children I don't expect to ever see.

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# Jim BEHRLE

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**6.**

choose your level of involvement:

overrun by the cute,

be estranged, endangered  
as a snowflake

in drifts, aimed

at the sullen targeted, be  
friendly fire

**7.**

death is the cure for love

YOU NEVER LOVED ME

AND I HAVEN'T DIED  
YET

it is raining in the bus

**8.**

remain granite, a stoic stop  
for tourists and on coins

or the victim of a trumpet  
a high American squeal

older man, crinkle your  
brow horizonward

squint off toward more winter nights

## 11.

the  
jumpiness of the  
acids, flowing in what we call

rain, sleet, fire, the bends, but

no to you, you love and

or each day

trip upon the same sidewalk crack

## 12.

tumors on the faces of

heroes, red wine on collars

against all comfort, suddenly

you dreamers, wishers, you  
asked for it

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# Bill BERKSON

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## Dichotomy Times, Or How to Assuage Political Grieving

*[Please note: this text is open to additions/deletions by others]*

Break

Enter black space

Observe tops of trees, cornices, starry nights, traffic lights

Shrug and grunt like an Italian "under" Silvio Berlusconi

Trust to fine music

"Paint the town blue." (Barrett Watten)

Tell jokes you never permitted anyone to tell before (laugh uproariously)

"The sound of a chainsaw is that of all the evil in the world having its way" (Anon. Welsh, 21<sup>st</sup> Century)

Never "reach out"

Exchange dictionaries

"Do not try to change the world, you will only make matters worse" (John Cage)

Think (or read up on) "Yippies"

Change not thyself

Be diagonal

Humbly reconsider The Perfectibility of Man\* — can such a notion be redeemed?

Fuck freedom

[Alternate: Fuck "the Freedom" – c.f. Christian Parenti]

*with thanks to Michael Rothenberg, Larry Sawyer, Barrett Watten, David Nash, Adam Gopnik, et alia*

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\* “In 1939, [Auden] saw that what had happened was not an outbreak of barbarism but the consequence of modern ideas, particularly the idea that the world could be made perfect by eliminating imperfections (the Jews, the bourgeoisie).” – Adam Gopnik

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# Charles BERNSTEIN

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## The Ballad of the Girly Man

—For Felix

The truth is hidden in a veil of tears  
The scabs of the mourners grow thick with fear  
A democracy once proposed  
Is slimmed and grimed again  
By men with brute design  
Who prefer hate to rime

Complexity's a four-letter word  
For those who count by nots and haves  
Who revile the facts of Darwin  
To worship the truth according to Halliburton

The truth is hidden in a veil of tears  
The scabs of the mourners grow thick with fear

Thugs from hell have taken freedom's store  
The rich get richer, the poor die quicker  
& the only god that sanctions that  
Is no god at all but rhetorical crap

So be a girly man  
& take a gurlly stand  
Sing a gurlly song  
& dance with a girly sarong

Poetry will never win the war on terror  
But neither will error abetted by error

We girly men are not afraid  
Of uncertainty or reason or interdependence  
We think before we fight, then think some more  
Proclaim our faith in listening, in art, in compromise

So be a girly man  
& sing this gurlly song  
Sissies & proud  
That we would never lie our way to war

The girly men killed christ

So the platinum DVD says  
The Jews & blacks & gays  
Are still standing in the way

We're sorry we killed your god  
A long, long time ago  
But each dead soldier in Iraq  
Kills the god inside, the god that's still not dead.

The truth is hidden in a veil of tears  
The scabs of the mourners grow thick with fear

So be a girly man  
& sing a girly song  
Take a girly stand  
& dance with a girly sarong

Thugs from hell have taken freedom's store  
The rich get richer, the poor die quicker  
& the only god that sanctions that  
Is no god at all but rhetorical crap

So be a girly man  
& sing this girly song  
Sissies & proud  
That we would never lie our way to war

The scabs of the mourners grow thick with fear  
The truth is hidden in a veil of tears

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# Jen BESEMER

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## Two-Headed Child

These are my breasts. Bizarre lovely couple, two-headed child.

Emancipated, hardworking, somewhat tense, yes. But ultimately.  
Under contract.

Only sometimes, neighbors whisper that they sleepwalk. Or drink.  
You know.

Always cold-seared and leaf-bitten they come home. They paint  
the tub grey with their regret.

I nurse them. Think of it.

## The Well

There is a well here in my kitchen. Its single black eye  
urges. Perfume and cosmetics surround it. I still don't  
know what it means but I've come to value it.

Once despite his caution a friend fell in. I reached down to  
him and he resented me for it. You see it was cultural  
dissonance; his Bulgarian upbringing told him I'd trapped  
him deliberately. Either that or I was trying to crack his  
head with a bucket on a rope. The bucket on a rope.

Finally I left him to it. The well was dry anyway.  
Yesterday I warned my new tenants about him but they  
didn't seem to notice him, or the well.

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# Daniel BORZUTZKY

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## Maybe I Swerve You

Maybe it's the big neon smock in the grammar of the lexicographical beast of the insufferable sagacious Orpheus of the invented noises in the poverty of your disappearing mythological anti-language, maybe. Or maybe it's the jealous pool of transplanted exiles in the angel wings of your nightgown or the incidental development of narrative in your eyeballs or the unrecognizable crystalline horizon in the inaudible echo caused by the friction of your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Maybe I swerve you for the rapacious foreshadowing of the incisive propagandistic marshland in the ascetic lips of your utopian third sex envy. Or maybe I swerve you for the atavistic wanderer in your adorable capacity for revenge. Maybe I swerve the feverishness of the almost touched death-jerk in the momentary trousers of the hermaphroditic egg shells broken in the purgatorial blades of grass stored in the erudite anonymity of the trampling neo-logic of the drowsy foliage of your soft and ominous cheekbones. Maybe I swerve you for these reasons and for the anointed abandon of the defenseless pheasant plunging into the crocodile mouth of the swamp in the silk worm mountains hanging in the beard on the invisible cum visible deity in which you and I are but a strand of hair. Yes I most definitely swerve you for this and for the disjointed transcendency of the undetectable motion in the bleeding gladioli warming in the parasitic shadow of the convalescent sun of your oh so ambiguous bosom.

## Sunday on La Grande Jatte

While there are no direct references to masturbation in cave Paintings or other prehistoric artifacts, the practice of Masturbation by baboons, who share 98% of our

DNA, provides some confirmation that masturbation has likely Been practiced since the dawn of mankind. In an old tale, a man dreams he is A baboon. "I am a God," he cries, as he ejaculates into the

Earth. His seed strikes dry ground, and soon a river forms. Then he turns back into  
A man, with the all-too real notion that he has done something  
Terrible. (*"I will do Such things---what are they yet I know not, but they shall*

*Be the terrors of art.*") He creates a river, which brings water to  
Those in need. But it is a river of death, for the bodies of hundreds  
Of insects and small animals float to the surface and flow downstream. It

Is much easier to go back to sleep after a dream in which we are  
Murdered, than a dream in which we are the murderer. Thus he stays awake  
For the rest of his life. Many animals have supposedly made

Sexual advances to humans. But it is the baboon who is most  
Often represented as a seducer of women, as in "The King's  
Daughter and the Ape," from *One Thousand and One Nights*. Additionally,

Many animals were trained by Romans to copulate with women and  
To have anal intercourse with men. Monkeys and baboons played with the  
Genitals of both sexes. The Romans also used dogs, goats, geese, turkeys

And small horses. Several theorists have speculated as to whether  
Or not the animals enjoyed these encounters. An impossible  
Project, true, thus it is best represented with the logic of a dream,

As in the journals of Elias Mardoni, an early  
Zoologist, who imagines a sort of support group for animals  
Forced to copulate in the arena. It is much easier to know

What we don't like, says a zebra, than what we do like. All my life I have  
Wanted to be an animal, says a trapeze artist in a tree. All  
The animals laugh.

## Open Letter

*"We have no king but Jesus"*  
---Attorney General John Ashcroft at Bob Jones University

Plucky, as much as my asparagus is green, there is no doubt: there are many dudes who are little  
lonesome tonight, for they have no queen but Jezebel.

You have endured a lot of chickens, you have fingered a lot of Barbies, but when it comes to your  
flimsy tea bag, most of us feel: you enjoy it more with armor.

And on that score alone, Plucky, you have fluttered better than the Cartesians, better than the  
Greeks and Hindus. Your neckties have made our jobs more enjoyable, and your donkeys, your  
donkeys, your donkeys.

And so for the clowns you have fun-housed, and the ghosts you have banished, you can be

prouder than a tax man with a sac full of Caesar's roses.

Endowed by the creator with a long stick, you release it with the infinite, and that's crucial in this work, old Plucky.

You're popular with your colleagues, because of your penguins, your pretty eyes and tongue.

There's a saying that applies here:

*The making of enemies, who are real enemies, is the best token we have of a person's success in life.*

Plucky, your tulips are whistling and your oysters are pooping. And when you go, you'll take your sanitary napkins with you. And you'll leave memories of something delicate, and we'll pray to your parasol when it stops the sun from grinning.

## **a room in a pile of papers is where a man does not sleep**

How come or however near hell or however  
How hell comes to sever the ever in never  
He came to the door like a rat to a tart  
But went straight to my ear like the heart in my art  
He came to my fest with his fist in my fitness  
He came to my nest with the wine of my witness  
I sat him not far from my ten cent encasement  
He looked like the beast in the east of my basement  
His mouth was the arse of the reason in treason  
His lips were the sea in the son of my season  
I asked him to tap on the trap of my parrot  
He looked like the rot on the arc of my carrot  
He looked like the dust in the sty of my study  
His odor was old and his body was bloody  
He said I'm the mist in the misery of your mystery  
He said I'm the it in the shit of your history

How come or however near hell or however  
How hell comes to sever the ever in never  
I am the it in the shit of your history  
I am the mist in the misery of your mystery  
My odor is old and my body is bloody  
I am the dust in the sty of your study  
I look like the rot on the arc of your carrot  
Don't ask me to tap on the trap of your parrot  
I am the sea in the son of your season  
My mouth is the arse of the reason in treason  
I am the beast in the east of your basement

I sit not from your ten cent encasement  
I come to your nest with the wine of your witness  
I come to your fest with my fist in your fitness  
I come to your door like a rat to a tart  
I come to your ear like the art in your heart

How come or how ever how hell or however  
How hell how sever however how never  
How I how it how hit however  
How I how it how never how ever  
How odor how mist how body how bloody  
How how is the dust in the sty of your study  
How how is the dust in the arc of your carrot  
How how is the tap on the trap of your parrot  
How hell is the sea in the son of your season  
How mouth is the arse of the reason in treason  
How come is the beast in the east of your basement  
How sit me now far from your ten cent encasement  
How come how ever how hell however  
How hell how sever however how never  
How I how it how hit however  
How I how never how never however

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# Ira COHEN

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## In Praise of Halliburton

"To kill in a world where life animates everything, even the invisible or the inanimate, is a serious fault that can only be eased by forgiveness."

—Jean Paul Mohen (from *Ancient Rite*)

And from where comes forgiveness?  
From the invisible inanimate?  
Or perhaps Dr. Jekyll will forgive Mr. Hyde,  
the victims the perpetrators?  
Is the only possible hope that  
the dead forgive the living  
the hunted relieve the hunter?  
What can the skulls say?

In the mirror of meaning  
will modern man leave fossils  
behind to tell our history,  
perhaps some footprints at the  
scenes of mass murders?  
Greed & the lust for power  
grow with the brain's evolution.  
And the light of nuclear bombs,  
will they bring truth, reveal  
a vision of earth's Heaven,  
a forgiveness equal to the  
cimes of nations unfit  
to rule?

*December 23, 2003*  
*Merry Christmas*

## Closing Time

Now I find myself  
alone  
in a vast museum  
hall

where I encounter 30 ft.  
tall wooden Duck Priests  
of New Hebrides—  
the shade of Thelonious  
by my side. Hail to thee, O Monk,  
You have heard  
that which no one  
had heard  
And you played  
what no one had  
                    played  
before.  
You were yourself  
the rarest thing  
                    of all.

*February 16, 2002  
at the Metropolitan*

## **The Unreal Desert**

My heart can't take it  
any more  
If we are the victims now  
who are the victors?  
If we tear off the deceptive  
                    masks  
of our own leaders  
must we face the void  
naked & alone?  
Then there is the obscene  
mathematics of guilt.  
I am left with dreams  
of Coconut Island, the  
paradise of childhood movie  
theatres, now that torture  
has become the flower of  
capitalism. Are we not  
the lost cause, the same  
old story—hype as a  
final solution?

*May 3, 2004  
104<sup>th</sup> St. & B/way*

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# Todd COLBY

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## My Proxy

My proxy is on overload  
but my hands are strong and my  
friends all say that I have a strong back  
and good mind. I have occasional power surges  
and the random "I can't do this, I'm too freaked out"  
moments. But they are growing ever rarer  
now that the weather is warmer  
and the leaves are actually making shade  
where I once sought the insane comfort of wind.  
If living in Brooklyn will suffice as my proxy  
then I am alive and comfortable  
as my proxy will allow.

## Minus the Exploding Egg That Burned My Lip for a Week

I'd have you if you'd let me walk on the sandy  
egg field of your soft lap. I mean I like you  
when you're mean to me in the still grass  
by the little cottage we named "The Little Cottage."  
I must look lost if you're asking me if  
I'm lost. A dazed feeling overwhelms me.  
"Don't shun the world, shed it." Alone, a lot  
a bicycle makes a good companion over  
a bridge or in a state of panic: I think of you  
in the green room where we gather  
to remember what we left behind. Remember:  
what lies ahead is exciting and fucked.

## **Grip It Hold It Hang On (for MW)**

The dried limes are radical  
to the gear shifters  
spinning up hills in bright lycra  
a feast of corporate colors  
imbibing freedom with an axle  
stained orange from pine dust.  
All the kids are just getting big now  
and slovenly gloaming the crest  
for more pieces of you.

## **Oh Peaches**

Oh steam funk full of peaches  
your bungee cord  
is the poltergeist to my Ahab  
and the thrust is good, at least  
to the silver crayon you chewed  
until it turned bronze  
and smoky between your teeth.  
Oh light salad rails  
tethered to a blimp on a stick: fuck it,  
and the crocodile's 6th sense  
of me. In the forest of my thoughts  
another net is forming a cat  
in the clouds, speak to me, so to speak,  
I have the list, you can have it  
for a punch.

## **Mean Juice (You've Been Warned)**

Somebody slipped in a puddle

of mean juice and drank what  
gathered around his face like  
a little greasy pig-man.  
You should stop your threats  
of violence and ecstasy  
before I get ridiculous and bone you.  
Let me in on your secret name  
for guilt, I think it rhymes with  
"the greasy pig is yummy," no?  
You know I'll get you,  
and I'll get you real good.

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# Rob COOK

---

## SONG FOR THE EXTINCTION OF WINTER (ii)

Each dawn the fishing boats return  
from the moon like I do with the gulls  
in my pillow and the nickels I cut out  
of the sea grass, letters I've composed  
to the snow buried inside lobsters, snow  
that will become the floor of the Atlantic,  
and I am the spine my father caught for me  
beyond the coral, beyond the sandflies, beyond  
the furnace and the clotheslines and the voluptuous  
shivering of kelp  
outside the kitchen whose young mollusks fed me  
until I shriveled into a man, and now I carry  
the forks to the beach where they dive and mate  
and grow fins again, now I have buckets of debts  
I throw to the barnacles, now I hold lighthouses within me,  
now freighters blink past the harbors and the eels who  
left them here with their beautiful drowning

where I am digging up the sand, the tide, the lifeguard's  
nest, where I am the cormorant at first light untangling its bride.

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# Steve DALACHINSKY

---

## Patti Smith's Fingers

where are you from?  
there is no distinction between your face  
& mine  
your veins strove for & been thinkin  
call & the traces of unpolished resilience  
in we both  
i sit a table away from patti smith  
outside the french café  
the café's open door is all that separates  
conversations & plates  
these late breakfasts we share—  
across the street  
a cat stares  
at the shadows on the sunlit steps  
all that separates it from them is the window  
there is little distinction between her greying hair  
thru the café glass & mine  
fire backwards is easy but says nothing  
her mouth nose eyes gestures smile  
the work we put in the success we achieve  
the way sugar seeps into the blood  
& makes one worry as one slows  
wire traces itself within various activities & choices  
patti smith's hand rests on her knee  
we are all a few giant steps away from lose  
the boy the girl  
rubber bands what we inherit  
or what we scattered on an oil stained street  
her fingers move as she annunciates what to me is only silence  
words without syllable or vowel  
a postcard away from being delivered  
the open door between us  
as closed as any  
cloud covered sun  
can  
get.....

# stone head ( for ira cohen )

1.

deaf fingers spell your name

reminding us of death war love

untidiness age & agelessness

freaks & walking

walking beneath the

moon as it mingles w/the

stuls & flames & coming

wealth

i place a stone on my head

& dream that i am dead

& paying homage to my / self

i experience night as if it were a

flickering beard of light

invented by blind men in a storm

i am demolished by pain & crowd

control

& my balls have no personality –

dad gabs

( funambulably ) while tip toeing on a tightrope

a dream i have awake about death always

about death scratching @ my thighs

like a bored cat

spool unspun a net of dnicts a copy/cat

scrawler throwing his loneliness @ the sky

& all remaining the stone on my head

& my head struggling to become the

moon

& between back & forth we become un-

dangered.

**2.**

i am empty yet so

full

of my/

self

filled w/chattering

si .....lence

& shattered prisms

all containing distances & tangled rain-

bows

brief thinking my hand to my mouth & the night

a pile of cinders & deceased lang

uage & lapened pupp(i)e(t)s.

**3.**

hot flash:

the world is becoming endless

hot flash: black is the color of the fractured light

hotflash: time is the music of armies

hot flash > a shivering # erects itself on his chest

broken sleeveless

24 + 42 + 2+2 +4+4 +4+2 +2+4 plus @\$=

hot flash - the wind is a gypsy that thinks it is a mirror

FLASH /// \* i am stained so much you would think I was wearing a suit

flesh; i am rusted & undone

Oh sweet GACIHC

hot flash?

i wait

a waiter

weightless w/heavy

socks

gone in copia

burying the emblems

become a headstone -

yet you remain sockless.

# A PRESENCE

Conjured spoken there is no where? when the place is a blaze  
The arc of the dancer speaks to the common ONE  
Why there is no visibility to the WIND  
There is no justice if there can't be PEACE  
There is no PEACE  
The WIND it speaks in triangles speaks in circles and squares  
In the WIND there is a presence of DARK & LIGHT of MA  
Of WAR of JUSTICE of PEACE  
IN the WIND there are the particles of life that make up the particles of Breath  
Of Death of Green and Blue & SPIRIT & FRUIT & MOON  
Of trail & entrails of trials of holocaust & ceremony  
Of silence between the silences of noise within the noise

In the Wind there is a presence  
an unseen force that binds us to the earth  
An unheard force that binds us to the trees  
An unforced presence that binds us to the clouds

In the mouth there is the understanding of tongues  
A pastoral untangling  
In the breath there is the wind that binds us to the sky  
That brings us toward the storm  
That wraps us in its EYE  
That levels us to the ground  
& makes us beholden & humble & held in its presence

in the wind there is darkness & light  
& particles of man and beast and breath and death and justice and joy

BLINDLY A SPIDER SLEEPS INSIDE ME  
My identity becomes a web of circumstance  
Sing oh sound oh speculation  
Sing oh night's untiring tune

It's when the one without the cell phone becomes an outsider  
The one without the computer is crazy  
It's when the one without e-mail is no longer a communicator  
When the one who sees clear is called blind  
It's when those who have everything are considered the good guys  
And those who have nothing are moot  
It's when then that we know we're in trouble  
It's when then that we know we must change

We must all feel together that the healing has begun  
We must all feel together that the this battle can be won  
Then we may begin to feel what this is all about  
This phenomenal THIS the place that we come from

## BLINDLY A SPIDER SLEEPS INSIDE ME

There is this black box called paradise with one bright star locked deep within it  
There is the black & white skyline zigzagged w/lines of complicated sky  
There is this dark light this cold burning sunset  
All these freaks who wanna be first  
All this madness trapped within a pound of grey matter  
And this yawning spider that wants to break out

In the wind there is a presence a knowledge almost too deep to be spoken  
Magic and magical powers clouds that have no reason  
We have lost our reason  
It is not the first time that history defeats itself

You can spend a lifetime in a place and never get to know it  
Spend moments and feel like you're at home

The wind winds thru me it picks up pieces of US and joins us to all others  
The moon shifts inside me muddled it speaks and I understand  
The wind picks up the moon like it was paper  
Paper with the headline  
where is the line to be drawn  
when will the dusk meet the dawn

do fish sing?  
connection of bone to flesh  
who makes the music?  
connection of bone to flesh

in the wind there is a presence ANIMAL VEGETABLE MINERAL

tasting and smelling and hearing and seeing

what is this talk of equality? we left the cage in order to seek safety

I don't want to be black I don't want to be white  
I don't want to be wrong I don't want to be right

I don't want to be YOU

Why can't we all just get along why can't we all just get along why can't we all just why can't we  
all just why can't we all just

Mysteries cannot be proven love is never enough

Magic is not localized language is not singular

Humans are no more important than each other more important than each other than animal than vegetable than mineral a spider sleeps inside me in the wind there is a presence no more important than any other human than doctor or lawyer or plumber or monkey or gardener or president or fish or elephant /do fish sing

Do fish sing? connection of bone to flesh

the oldest tree  
it is a very old tree  
shake with it  
sing to it  
with it  
dressed or undressed  
it is a very old tree  
a rain falls on it  
a cold a heat a wind  
the effect of the sacred upon the sacred

WHY CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG  
WHY CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG

We are the receivers thru us the total is realized & released  
We are the channels animal vegetable mineral  
We must teach each other and ourselves  
We must learn from our mistakes

Did I say that did I really say that

Blindly a spider sleeps inside me  
If only I could speak to something other than the moon

The wind in the wind there is a presence  
I go blindly into the WIND

The sky is blue concrete  
We arrive whole bodies into the prism  
Embodied within the origin  
Turning into mirrors of water  
Facing a forgotten sun  
Man  
Rotting within the absence of colors  
Tho nothing is without color  
Like nothingness itself  
In glorious black & white  
I don't wanna be black  
I don't wanna be white

connection of flesh to bone

He realized he was his body  
And that his body carried him  
He realized he was his body  
And his body was carried by him  
The politic of color  
The candle in the dark

Blindly a spider sleeps inside me  
I plunge into myself and waken

I dare not say light LIGHT there I said light  
We arrive in the light whole bodies  
The angel arrives by the river  
A river of angels arrive  
Light I will not say light  
In the wind there is a presence  
Blindly sleeping inside me  
Why can't we all dream of light

She dreams amongst the blues & pinks the earth-encrusted browns & pale yellows  
We live in the light every day  
There is never an absence of light  
Never an absence of darkness  
Do not be misled by the moon  
Do not be misled by your reflection  
Who do you see in the mirror  
Who do you greet every day

Color is a Glass eye an eye in a glass in a wooden box a black box w/ a star in it  
Color is a STOP SIGN a universe magic an apple as it ripens  
An incandescent voyeur a decadent drunk  
A gentleman a woman of circumstance a filter cigarette the seasons a system  
In the wind there is a presence a spectrum a soul where sand turns to glass  
A color that sings of its birthright like the connection of bone to flesh  
You say evil I say evil you say evil I say evil  
Why can't we all just get along why can't we all just get along why can't we all just

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# Clayton ESHLEMAN

---

## JIG

Nanosounds,  
interior stellar  
zoom,  
zoas of  
the poetic art,  
ecstasy enstacy of  
the gyrosonic  
body

I am a worker wasp on Tyler Duncan's hand,  
watching him swingle  
sound flax out of bagpipied hip,  
I enter the wasp nest sound swirl,  
melody lines limbically entwine (first parents  
with long, dragon-coiling tails:

spicy early thriller, a sly  
pricey thrill, reply as icy thriller, really  
tip her lyrics, rip rectally sly heir, rectally  
reply Irish, rarely hysteric pill, really  
rich piles try, layers prey till rich, rich till  
slayer prey, arty lisper rich yell, yell arty  
rich perils, lechery rarity pills, thrill  
creepy lay sir, slyly retire rich pal, icy  
thriller replays, a silly triple cherry, irately  
cherry spill, prey ill slithery arc, prey  
later silly rich, prey alter rich silly,  
slyly rich April tree

Jig, dyadic Kundalini  
"Caryl Phyllis Reiter"  
anagrammatic manger

Before I was Clayton, I was clan toy,  
lacy ton, ant cloy, any colt.  
Rounding thrill icy corners, my face accordion  
unfolds, what twins are spotted  
in its pleats! Tunnels of Tezcatlipóca  
turning plumed—archaic sounds,  
a maze of reeds, each repeat

sprouts new flutings—  
so dart in, retrace, then  
pivot to reoccur. The obstétrical toad is  
gigging in his fertilized skirt.  
Foetal propellers are  
turning left, strengthening  
energies into a heart.

## VERMILION SCARVES RESOUNDING SURF

Open this red door to  
the pot-headed lordly and deathless hybrids,  
hail and beware of their shadows  
consuming the shadow you costume here.

The earth wears fluid robes,  
strewn petals on a yoni gust and blend.  
The sky is a bath incestuous,  
Aphrodite's pudenda served on an orchid,  
or is it Naropa's leprous pinkie? or a heather-stuffed  
caterpillar?  
Is Santa Claus now flashing through the chimney of my chest  
an amanita blur, all sirloin, no stars?

Goya hunches by his menstrual harp,  
vermilion scarves resounding surf.  
"Annihilation is an injustice," he sings,  
"each love, each non-love, is unique  
Think of the bull in its factory stall,  
injected, raised only to provide burger for extra-terrestrials  
like man—  
it lives on all fours, as I sit on all ones,  
on the creviced dot *I am*.  
How many killings since you glimpsed the spider queen's tiara  
beacon,  
its sweep across my consensus: that the disasters of war  
are the genetic inheritance of man's petrified snore?"

I turned to Basho's compote of cicada-absorbed rock,  
to Linda Jacobson's vision of a stone's magenta folds.  
The moon swims Atlantisward through the serpent panels of  
our spines,  
praise for these radial stages layered with animals and yellow  
sand,  
stages interlocked and eastered by fountains rising from  
*when we were masts.*

Earth of the Shanameh!

Pink earth quilted with tufts of violet grass,  
earth of clouds like tangled, albino eels,  
earth of miniver and rose rock alive as coral reefs,  
in them the dead are glimpsed, fuscous hands gripped in prayer,  
earth of cobalt thrasher-filled trees, chirping purple buds,  
all is alive save for the death carousel  
I load into the projector of my awareness,

and in Jacobson's dreamscapes I rediscover Bixby Canyon Bridge  
agasp with 9 eyes,  
Ginsberg's tidepool bubble talk high on seals like fat brown  
worms,  
an azure sky with amber thistle stars lighting up flocks of  
nuzzling boulders,  
ah, to be 2 hares here,  
one enraged by the boldness of a dilated peony,  
the other bemused in its bramble bower lined with dragons,

absent the right-angled hell holes ruled by soldiers,  
absent the Ethiopian child in her skin husk.

[for Linda Jacobson]

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# Antonio FACCHINO

---

## Any Minute Now Something Will

Any minute now something will have happened.  
A cousin nudges another, pointing.

I would be lost gladly, yet there I could  
Gladly lie down and sleep forever. If I close

My eyes for a minute, we are driving  
Without any place in mind. I never did think

It would be my horoscope that rang true.  
The skies went on forever, clouds caught

Mandarin colors and all one can do is to sip  
Off of that which you're born into. No one

Coming back for a house where no one is.  
Years later, a tool thrown into a snag

Some summer night, most only then she never  
kept it, but zipped up, stared a while.

## Ejaculation 436

### + Egg 88

---

Lonesome for the reasons, interpretation  
Bemoaned life amongst the blanks. Blanks  
Of blanks.

Without a word he snatched up  
Her hat, pitting a grid design

Of fiber against shades of brilliantine.  
Pitting the blacks of polar opposite against  
The blacks of the other world.

Without sign of emotion her hat startled,  
Having torn off over a hill  
Whereupon hills of extra unwanted  
Concrete gains in the midst of the void,  
Tucked in by gravity. She followed  
Then, knowing that her good looks  
As a reckless loose in the world  
Made others see her as just that,

She lowered herself into a thin veneer  
That her former looks as a reckless  
Did not beguile, and promised gracefully  
To part the skin of her chest  
Above the heart, and on the expectant  
Side of the divine to lift the cage  
You see with your own eyes until  
The pumping maroon views  
You wander upon are those the heart wants

To be seen. As willing and not to  
Forget tomorrow should tiny figures  
In moods befitting one in the desert  
After many hours, should one  
Of these small people with jeans  
And a shirt in living color, crawl  
Over her aorta and toward the frame  
Surrounding the heart in treble flake  
Of guilt gold, when one of these should  
Reach out far enough to touch the frame

And scratch with nail a message  
To you, be so of patience that you could go on  
Sitting forever where you are now, never  
Hearing another word spoken,  
Be so kind as to listen beyond the drill.  
If the line is legible, is it narwhal?  
Greed?

Her fingers are going to massage  
That heart; like it or not  
The long nails, a straightpin  
Through the lip  
All were yours to begin with. All  
Parts having made the decision to become  
You without you. Pieces knowing  
Your options were narrowed beyond control

And long before bits of your father  
Left his beard, diving toward  
Your mother's pussy, you insisted upon  
Seeing it as being about you, thinking  
About it from your perspective,  
Always being always me, always, me.  
Me me me me me. You you you you you.

## Ars Poetica

I was born. I exist no less than I insist  
On the etiquette that there is one soul  
Attached with a broad arrow to the brow

Of seasons greater than month or year.  
I know nothing. This is told to follow me.  
When my hand swung through the air  
Your hand swung through the air  
As your own most potent and threadbare ally.  
When I asked for death, a cooled life long  
Of memory. Belief says that, it does, will wait.  
For another instinct, swear off thought  
For thought sworn in the over-all, curving frill.  
Above it, from away, I know of no thought.

Bludgeon. I walk myself into everyday.  
Bludgeon. And walk away from every illness.  
I have walked myself  
Into my best thoughts and I.  
I know of no thought  
From that one cannot walk away.

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# Lane FALCON

---

## Codependence

We are an arachnid,  
because eight sticky limbs equal a system.

Slid and kept in one another,  
we protect our pulpy middle,

and we're limber as the word "love".

We retract our thin extremities,  
take deep naps in humid corners,

then uncurl our feeble body and explore.

We scare children killing fleeting things that tugged no lust in us before,

slick with gore, what we aborted when complexes were fused;

when I lost a shrieking nuisance,  
and it's former territory became yours.

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# Raymond FILIP

---

## "The Guitar Speaks Poetry"

### **Django Reinhardt (A Jarred God Ninth)**

Born into the open air of a song, a gypsy mother married to the wind, talent as trackless as the breezes known only by ear and feel that dance across North Africa to Liverchies, Toulon to Porte de Choisy. The Manouche touch: rhythms, runs, chtarna in the blood, two fingers like forked lightning, sleight-of-left-hand magic appearing as music. Djangomancy. Mon dieu! Presence in absence! What's a little paralysis?  
More improvisation for a painter with arpeggio strokes in the smokey key of jazz.

### **Wes Montgomery (Higher-Evolved Thumb)**

It came natural. That octave thing. Nobody told me it was impossible. So I did it. I just copied that cat Charlie Christian. Then more cats came along and copied me. It's a natural thing. I had seven children to support. Boy! That food chain kept me awake stuck to a welding job, or unloading boxcars, or lugging ice, then playing gigs all night. People dug my warm tone. So the bucks got bigger, and the blisters got smaller. Yeah, my hands will take thumbing tunes for a living any time. It's a natural thing.

### **Jimi Hendrix (Alternate Take)**

Mild thing. Inside. Hiding behind feedback. Electric tears. See. The Seattle chile. The strummer of a pretend guitar: a broom, a straw friend. Hear. The soft chile. The stutterer of words. The scribbler of poems. To replace the hurt. Pretend. The ponchos of a Cherokee grandmother. Substitutes. For a dead. Unfit. Mother. Pretend. Find. The child who didn't want to die. Johnny Allen. James Marshall. Jimmy James. "Jimi" for the masses. Rape a guitar for them. More great balls of fire. A puberty rite. Find. The lost self. The end of anger. Peace. Pretend.

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# Thomas FINK

---

## COMB NAPKINS

for brackish  
sentiments combining. Central  
hallucinogens? Portrait

rose. Notice

what digestible effigies these bluffs heave. Stone born to bone relief.  
Logical temptation yielding.  
To boxwood,  
to commando propriety. One gilds excess.

Indiscriminate needle.

Boiling  
memory we tune. Monologue inertia. Manning  
the curse till fishhook  
ideology becomes  
a hernia. Thin arrow

presuming to translate  
cross-cultural intangibles? Your goodwill  
drawbridge  
is governed  
by cybernetic resource.  
Science of desegregation chronically short on research  
and dedevilment. Being  
human  
is serial: chairs. Shrill lungs, hailstone  
hello:  
tell 'em asperity is never

intrinsic, bedrock  
simply  
ornamental. Grand jury,  
shored in compassion for formal  
mongrel's  
eight ball, wrestling

toward rattling  
alliance reason.

Could ample  
poignancy therapy dislodge  
polarity?

## AFFABLE TEMBLOR

teach mother yeoman wellspring  
to melt window  
wart. Yeast arcade  
welcomes  
whittled appeal  
wangling mass and  
access to tender microbe. You wanna  
yearn more.  
Yet mirth telephone

morphine's

mopping asterisk. The wrong

morphemes in a wholesome tunnel.  
Twilight meat,  
that  
tired acrobat moon. Wet  
more. Tulips  
mask tension yellow as  
youth mattress alchemists  
marrying around. Think  
about me  
as you masticate.

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# Ricky GARNI

---

## JIM DOUGLAS

Jim Douglas liked to take naps in the sand on sunny days and listen to old Beatles songs and comment upon them.

“That’s terrible!” he would say, while listening to “Let It Be.”

“Poignant and arresting” he would say while listening to “In My Life.”

“I am so hungry” he would say while listening to “She’s So Heavy” as he drew circles with his toes in the sand that looked like the shape of a mop-top, or sometimes, four mop tops, but it wasn’t meant to be a double entendre: it was a single entendre. He really was hungry.

“I wonder what John Lennon ate when he wrote his good songs, not his bad ones?” Jim would ask of Paul McCartney who wasn’t in the room with him ever, although he certainly had the money to fly to Jim’s home town and be there if he wanted to, but why should he?

No reason that I can see, and so it would be very surprising if he ever did.

Other than the Beatles and the Beatles songs, what Jim loved best were the little collapsible umbrellas that you could buy as party favors in party stores and drug stores and Japanese restaurants. He wished that he had one to protect him from the rain, even though, he would admit candidly, they were of a size and substance that was neither sizable nor substantial. He always felt this way every time it rained, and this time as he pondered different and favorite Beatles songs outside in the sand during what would most certainly be a terrible rain storm, Jim did not seem very aware of this elemental calamity. This was due mostly to the fact that he was really more interested in trying to remember a single Beatles’ song with the word “umbrella” in it.

## ELSA (AND Jöbi)

Elsa adjusted her hat. Jöbi looked out the window at the bluebirds that were making love in the cypress tree.

“Tomorrow I will be eight years old,” Jöbi announced. and I have decided not to use umlauts over the ‘o’ in my name and to put them in your name instead elsa, specifically, over the ‘a’. So you see,” Jöbi said, “you shall from now on be known as ‘Elsä,’ and it is Elsä that you shall be.”

Elsa, quite naturally, began to cry. She felt as though she were suddenly the entire Austro-

Hungarian Empire.

"But Jöbi," she implored him, "it cannot be. I can't bear it. I don't want things to change. I want things to stay just the same, and I won't let them change, Jöbi!"

(Jobi, Jöbi thought to himself)

"You can't do it. I don't care what you say!" she cried.

"Now Elsa," Jöbi said, conciliatorarily, placing a tiny little yellow crocus in her straw hat, "now now Elsa.."

"Stop that!" Elsa screamed.

"But El--"

"NO!"

"But..."

"JÖBI!"

"But it's my birthday!"

And so this went on for some time until it all became terribly dull and both Elsa and Jobi fell asleep at the kitchen table. Their milk chocolates grew warm; day turned into night; the blüebirds, sated, flew away forever.

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# Mat GOULD

---

## midnight to noon sweating on the edge of purity

i layed down on rocks last night and woke up with diamonds i dreamed about demons and woke up with an angel there was poetry on her belly and kisses on my face the sun came out of the sewer and i lit a cigarette just to light a cigarette i blew smoke in the mirror and spit at my feet took a drink of water straight from the sink i had jelly beans for breakfast and coffee for lunch i called my baby on the phone and told her i cant do this no more and she said what are you talking about and i said i dont know so i stepped outside took a breath got choked up jump off the balcony and walked into the street and drove my typewriter toward traffic looking for a head on collision but it was like death it wont budge so all thats left is this poem about this girl i just met—

## throw me a bone so i won't chase the rabbit

i ve tried needles ans shotguns and the bottoms of bottles and i ve even tried lying down in the midst of oncoming mass transit and heartbreak almost worked but no matter what i always come to and whimper cry and get pathetic and beg my typewriter to take me back even after i dropped it from the balcony and scolded it for writing bad poetry and she ended up in the arms and at the fingertips of some well known best selling type of hound that has windows with desks all over the world and expense accounts and agents and hell all that shit but she always comes back and i promise and swear and we make the maddest of mad love and this time if she comes back its for real i ll quit everything i ll quit walking the mid-night streets seranading the stars i ll quit caressing myself i ll quit singing into the lights that blind me into darkness i ll uncover and undress i ll drink water and swim in the sun i ll polish my crucifix and i ll be faithful and merciless i ll bet on the gray dog with black spots everytime win or lose its how we make our entrance and its how we end and i ll live by that and that alone here i come and there i go off to the races feel my heart whipping your ass . . . she s so pretty standing at the door waiting to be let back in—

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# Tony GUZMAN

---

## **sunset celebration**

closing the book is an endless  
task

wild-eyed Bahamians  
roar up in a bronze  
beater flaking law  
body of an exposed  
narrator in the trunk  
mouthing non-sequential  
instructions to the  
wondering ground

a spectral door opens  
and you're jarred into  
an alternate reality of  
indigo drumming  
and membrane  
mottled with cave

in black venture grog

loom barracuda  
finding consolation in  
the elfin reef system  
glint says  
cauterizing sands  
in the shade of spears  
for some time  
there follows crotons  
RIVETED  
lore of that  
delicious middle  
like green neon strap  
the one you remember  
literary

that's when pirates  
sauteed in  
the intense intelligence of  
bougainvillea on

the veranda of things  
doesn't register  
oriental screen depicting  
wild roosters  
ricocheting off  
monotonous splotches  
penetrating forgotten rum  
ship's carpenter's  
still swelling pegs  
"that's entertainment,  
I suppose"  
metaphors weathered  
with khaki shorts  
even Picasso's cat has  
a jaded jury  
cut out for me

shed frames heart  
the butter of attrition  
alright

a missing verse  
thank god!

O sumptuous lacuna!  
O beautiful conditions!  
O infernal aperitif!

but it doesn't jump through  
therein lies the tale

ambidextrous shadow puppets  
long distance dialing  
dusty keyboard  
dark Madonnas exotic  
or at least shop girls  
tanned legs bubbles  
undulating aqua windows  
seance a straw

I honestly theater  
"no green flash" (I didn't  
think  
she knew about that)

yes, but do you sign  
your name to it?

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# Judith MALINA & Hanon REZNIKOV

---

## Why The Living Theatre Is Returning to New York

because the people in charge haven't got a clue  
because we're all tired of waiting  
because we deserve better  
because we're all fallen angels and we're on our way home  
because it's all so boring  
because it's too easy for us in Europe  
because this is where we grew up  
because we want to recapture New York from the Americans  
because sex is coming back  
because there isn't a lot of time left  
because we need new peace strategies to foil the bloodthirsty bastards  
because it's cold outside  
because the winds are blowing hard  
because earth is about to shake off the human species like a bad cold  
because civilization is still a new idea  
because Americans believe that anything is possible  
because New York is it, man  
because of the estuary  
because of the little paper cup of coleslaw they serve with the sandwich  
because of al sharpton  
because of george bush  
because we are still vulnerable  
because regime change begins at home  
because the europeans think they know it all, anyway  
because no man is an island, but Manhattan is  
because the west side rules  
because of slaughter on tenth avenue  
because we have to  
because all the secrets are out  
because we feel guilty about being away so much of the time  
because nobody should be president  
because some knuckleheads have given anarchists a bad name  
because it's expensive, darling  
because we want to make it so hot  
because midtown needs a not-so-temporary autonomous zone  
because the republican convention will be a few blocks away  
because millions ride unchallenged underground

because we've been around so long no one remembers  
because the revolution isn't a movie that was shown in 1968  
because the beautiful nonviolent anarchist revolution needs a new york chapter  
because the i.w.w. needs a new meeting place  
because the poets always have a home with us  
because for us, it's all music  
because the whole thing is a dance  
because political isn't enough  
because the spiritual is so difficult  
because as far as anybody can tell, god is absent  
because satan is lurking in every invoice  
because the angels are tired of los angeles  
because there's no time like the present  
because of Hiroshima, still  
because my grandparents were killed by a hit-and-run driver on Neptune Avenue  
because people think nothing really matters  
because the suspense is driving us crazy  
because it's a no-win situation  
because God expects it of us  
because we have sinned  
because repentance isn't enough  
because we know thousands of wonderful people in New York and three in Rocchetta Figure  
because the Morgan Library is closed until 2006  
because it's hard to really care about the movies  
because of magnetic forces  
because psychology is not what it's really all about  
because Marx was right about a lot of things  
because if we didn't exist, they would have to invent us  
because otherwise . . .  
because Brooklyn was annexed against its will  
because Staten Island is another matter  
because the World Trade Center is gone  
because we're all suspects  
because Allen's dead, and Kenneth, too  
because Anne Waldman lives, and Jackson MacLow  
because the Statue of Liberty is still French  
because America is lying to itself again  
because not even a three-party system will save us  
because of the real estate interests  
because of the improvements  
because we are making a life for ourselves  
because women have almost figured it out  
because gay is queer like us  
because no one knows where to put the garbage  
because the cats are talking to the dogs  
because in heaven they teach you to gamble  
because there is no straight path  
because metaphors can be lethal  
because experiment is difficult and decision dangerous  
because of the protection racket  
because we have a home in the genome

because we're all dying to make a living  
because the score is tied  
because the end is unknown  
because of all the human energy  
because of the movement in the streets  
because the UN replaced a slaughterhouse  
because of the chatter  
because we're in trouble  
we're back

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# Michael McCLURE

---

*Peyote (Lophophora williamsii) grows in South-Eastern America and in northern regions of Mexico. In Mexico, peyote has been used for divination in shamanic rituals and in the treatment of ailments for at least 10,000 years. This unpublished poem from a 1958 notebook finds McClure more than merely notating the effects of this substance but riding its curls and ether-lidded promontories toward a new shore of understanding. —Larry Sawyer*

## A VISION CONCERNING PEYOTE

I am walking—concrete, green grass—I am walking and I perceive  
in the air what is about me. What gnostic shapes and spirits,  
snake people, animal heads, are in the air about me. The,  
what, (!) transparent and vapory forms drift in the wind (air)  
beyond and about me. And what a black and lumbering form

I mean shape I am as I walk in all this. And that I am also as I am.  
And that all is sometimes beauty and makes no sense  
and does not need to. And that my mistakes are beauty.

And that also there is hideousness. The bare universe—disappeared  
for an instant. This is a vision. I am not high. Or  
not since Sunday. As these things spin and whir about me.  
Or drift as I pass among them. This huge grey head—  
that passes in front of my eyes. That clear mist  
Of spirit there in the air over the grass. The flying  
things. The libido. Call it that!! Call it anything.  
The radiance of air. And I am an Atheist. Materialist!  
My pride of joy. And this is not refutation but what

I know is there. Not at all moments. And is real.  
That strange shape. That is only in the clear mind.  
(Or say body, ) no words to describe it. No image

for it but its existence. And who am I to see these things?  
That I am so messed up. But it happens.  
Is more than an instant. A minute. More. The time it takes  
to walk a half a block. What doubts.  
And not here. For this is as much. Who could say

As much as that lying world of forms

we train to see? And that grey head is so huge in size  
of a melon and there are a group of spirits there,

but not a gathering. The ones made of vapors. If that  
is it. The weak powers (?) that drift from causes  
and are not causes themselves. This is it!!!

---

THE REAL THING THAT POETS SEE. THAT GNOSTICS AND ALCHEMISTS—

Have seen or spoken of or dreamed of. ( This is after )  
( Why don't I see it? ) ( I think it is genetic and  
physiological, I have no strong will  
to see it. )

THIS IS MY HONOR. THERE IS NO GRATITUDE  
for it.

It is real!! And I am off track and talk.

THE SPIRIT HEADS FORM SHAPES AND BEINGS IF YOU CALL THEM THAT

over green grass and concrete. Unaffected. Moving,  
never stationary. As real as flies in a room when you are high  
on peyote. I mean that flies  
are beasts like swallows or like men.  
And I carry by black and lumbering shape and my unsure shape  
and my hero's self in all this. That I  
am all those things and you are all those.  
And there is no way but to believe. That grey head.  
That moving (shall I say snail-like) thing. To

never know its meaning but that it is there. And those  
colors and shapes we see are not the real ones. The pure  
shapes are blue and gleam or violet-pink, and they shift  
and waver and are unchangeable and real. That we  
have so few senses. And so many  
there to use.

( IN A ROOM THE FLIES BUZZ DART ARE BLACK AND REAL BEASTS )

And who knows that. Or cares?  
And that this in clear air is that same seeing.  
Or that our hands are blue pink and red and pale hairs  
stand from them.

---

MY BLACK EYES AND BRAIN ARE REAL AS BLOOD

---

But I repeat. Moving things. And I begin.

THAT GREY HEAD THAT WHIZZED BY ME. PAST MY SHOULDER.

What was its expression? Serenity and hatred? I did not see.

What colors and transparencies of spirit. What silent things  
since I did not hear.

What snakes and leaves of air. What broad and flat and sailing.

Whose things and shapes. Not Ownership—but what—  
and where are they going. Do they have a goal. I know  
they do not. But move about me.

That I am here and see them. And some see me. Say that snail-like

Thing of no color and no density. And some are matter and some

Are not as they are of

Themselves.

Knowing and not knowing goals. Or say ends. If there were time.

LIKE DIATOMS RAMSHEADS AND GHOSTS OF BLUES SLATES AND GREENS  
and no colors. Dispersed

and flowing and concentrated. Indifferent and intent.

Spinning and flying. I walk among them.

GREEN GRASS SMOG BLUE SKY CONCRETE BUILDINGS TRESSES AND  
TREES

Yes! Tresses. Coifs. Too among the crass and brutal shapes,  
the delicacy of this material. The real.

The not burning and cool the moment. And I look up at the campanile.

The concrete spire. The pyramidal  
roof of it. And feel the rising and the shaping

of myself and smile. The feeling of the hair upon my head.

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# Erika MIKKALO

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## The Katydids

The katydids lured me into sleep last night, jade cello legs, all suede-wrapped hammers, all velvet tongs. The dream that they led me to was an exact continuation of my waking day, as if I'd strolled into my unconscious only to punch a time clock. Everything spun itself with the predictability of the basic laws of physics. I craved surprise. The doorbell rang. I answered it. "Surprise!" said an angelic youth, cornflower-blue eyes and flaxen-haired, wetting his bee-stung (but of course you know the type) slightly parted lips with a pointed red-tongue tip prior to continuing: "You are going to be interrogated in the sub-basement of a Federal facility at an undisclosed location!" He brandished a beige canvas hood with brass buckles clacking from its straps. "Oh, goody!" I exclaimed, performing Ascot-worthy applause, my nerves in hummingbird buzz. "Is it a featureless squat cinderblock concretion of unimaginative stolid rectangularity ringed by twenty-foot high cyclone fencing and razor wire?" He nodded and reached toward me with the hood and the next thing that I could see was a wallaby strapped to a dentist's chair. "You must give it a manicure," a voice behind me growled. The creature's tail flopped, pathetically. I recoiled. Even in the dream, I know that this is merely my brain clearing its pipes, random scraps, scrubbing ephemera, that the wallaby is from a bout of academic pretension related to the novel *Kangaroo*; that manicures and pedicures represent my crippling insecurities regarding femininity, gender as construct and its limitations, and a failed promise to my dying grandmother. No one will ever love me because I have large flat feet, prehensile toes, and thickly-cuticled nails that gather dead skin cells and splinter easily. The katydids chirp with the numbed monotony of a Soviet string quartet on baby-blue barbiturates chased by vodka. I cannot help but believe that it's code. The doorbell rang, again, this time in the chamber. The wallaby's eyelashes fluttered with anxiety. They had gagged it with a bandana, banana-yellow. I opened the steel door. There stood a salesman. He said, "You need to get this, today. It's a special limited-time only offer. Immediately." The katydids chirped louder. "How do you stand this racket?" He shook his head. "Do you know what you've been charged with?" I eyed the selection of lacquers that he proffered from an oxblood attache, speculating that fuchsia is too wanton for marsupials but knowing that giving the wallaby a French-tip would be impossible. I replied, "I don't. They haven't let me see a lawyer. I haven't been allowed my phone call. I do believe that I haven't even been Mirandae!" I placed my knuckles on the tips of my pelvis in indignation. The insects screamed in unison. "You are the dregs of society. You are scum," the salesman said, "because you will not be a good citizen and go shopping." "My darling!" I exclaimed. "Apparently you do not understand," he said. "I am insulting you." "Sweetness" I pleaded. "You aren't hearing me," he said. "To the contrary," I responded. "I'm hearing you clearly for the first time in my life." I extended both hands to his shoulders and shoved him out the door. The door slammed. I wanted to hang up, but sleep clenched me in its clutches, dragging me down to the bottom of the river. My nerves thrummed with the katydids. Each chirp, my nerves vibrated like piano wires. The messenger was going to return with a singing telegram about fixed-rate mortgages. I'd seen the script in his hand.

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# Daniel Abdal-Hayy MOORE

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## STORY OUT OF NOWHERE

1

Of course it should be possible to start a  
story right here and let it loosen out further and  
further until it nearly encompasses just about  
everything every love-glance every love-gulp every  
gulf as wide as the Atlantic itself between our  
very patched selves and perfect God  
such as a story about an ant say who  
meanders along his Ouspenskyan two dimensions all his  
life until one day his vista opens as wide as  
double doors on a Renaissance garden  
he sees a third dimension by its angular intrusion into his usual two  
accompanied by faint zither music and distant  
trumpets he undergoes a transformation  
appropriate to someone having their  
bottom fall out and their sides and top extend  
into undreamt-before perceptions you could say  
he's left antdom by being so expanded and perhaps that's  
true although perhaps just as accurately he's actually  
achieved true antdom for the first time in his life not just those  
dutiful plodding steps as if on stiff stilts and twitching feelers but now  
full inhalation of cosmos and exhalation of illusory self  
inhalation and exhalation becoming at some point one  
but what do I know  
what stars are above me  
what wonders await me I have no  
idea what my death will be or where my  
life is taking me what double doors onto what  
Renaissance gardens or post-Renaissance German  
Expressionist labyrinth pathways with looming  
angular walls and dizzying inclines yet at

heart it is the same story that could if fated  
unroll from here and embrace by its  
purest wit and Godly wisdom even the most  
nonchalant player with hands in pockets and cigarette  
dangling from raw lips eyes slits smoke curling up in  
front of his or her face in which suddenly  
he or she sees more than expected  
the double doors to his or her life suddenly

swing open and why not  
onto a long beach that extends into another  
territory altogether where people greet each other from the  
deepest parts of their hearts eyes like delirious  
singers whose songs have a lilting simplicity that  
catches everyone in their nets and each  
exchange is from the  
fullest bellow and aria of the  
glorious human heart in full splendor and yet  
simplicity itself a

gesture so fine made with human hand the poignant  
sound of a voice long-distance telling its  
tale of woe and visceral recognitions  
the sexual perplexities as if giant looming  
silhouettes on specially built platforms like  
ancient shaman ceremonies involving  
trance and words to a  
new revelation were to  
take place with every  
encounter we can  
ever expect to have  
and yet each one is astonishingly  
the same and at the same time unique  
the ant goes back to its hill and  
wonders if it was dreaming or if it is  
presently dreaming whether the  
real is the universe turned inside out so the  
silver backside of it shows and it  
no longer reflects the same old  
grimaces and smiles or whether it is really just  
this one so hard to actually define and seemingly most  
friendly to those who plunge into the fire of it  
headfirst to find its silken pathways  
extending from the bottoms of their feet

tended and watched over by the  
long gaze of God

## 2

Episode without precedent or antecedent  
afloat on the sea of it  
bobbing happily to itself so self-contained and  
self-sufficient as if  
nothing but itself mattered  
life flowing out both ends into tumultuous nothingness  
starting abruptly and ending abruptly  
someone coming into a room chattering and going  
out of it again leaving dead silence behind

us fidgeting with things or rearranging papers  
or simply thunderstruck and inert at the  
explosiveness of the story while it was here  
its perfect nouns and verbs moving it along  
its adjectives giving it color both  
local and cosmic  
starshine on the forehead of the girl from the  
mountains or dune-burn from the rough  
caravan leader who knows how to speak to  
camels better than to men  
and so the episode lives in the air like a  
spark from a night fire thrown up in the  
blackness like a jinn's spangle bright gold then  
gone  
but while it's alive it has the dimension of  
palaces with thousands of rooms and  
elongated corridors and formal and informal  
gardens out windows and archways in which  
at all hours trysts and dramatic turns of  
event take place the breaking of  
horses and the submission of wills and the  
freeing of spirits to fly on their own wings not like drunk  
moths to the flame of the sun but like serious  
water birds capable of transcontinental  
travel into  
continuous oceans of sky auroral wonders

### 3

For no sooner does a story start its journey  
out of the dark step by ant-step across the  
blank page of space it also begins to  
reverberate outward and inward in geometric  
dimensions and someone pulls out her  
mother-of-pearl combs and yellow hair  
tumbles to her shoulders and distant horses  
whinny maybe Mongols maybe not in which case  
ten hours later there's no city at all no  
hair tumbling framed by no window there for  
centuries until ten hours ago  
the story unwinds across faces and their anguishes  
it's hinged in the oddest places and suddenly whole  
unexpected panels open out in which for example  
the uncle from St. Petersburg who was supposed to  
inherit the farm and its two thousand acres has a  
fit with eyes rolling up into head clutching tablecloth with  
all the silver and china crashing to the floor and he's  
under the table dead and the farm takes  
wing and sails over the mountains to a distant  
province giving sustenance to the yellow-haired

woman from before who happened to  
escape the chopping blows by feigning death under a  
haystack etcetera etcetera it's  
booming along with rattles and bells of its  
own completely out of the  
storyteller's control in that the storyteller wanted to tell a  
tale of a family of saintly dwarves living inside a tree  
and suddenly we're in Russia where Chekhov for example  
told stories that glittered with a life all their  
own incomparably sober and self-contained

#### 4

A tree grew from the air  
and turned into a bird  
a stone rose from a stream  
and stepped onto shore  
water drops fell to earth  
and each one flew off as a fly  
the sun lifted its bulk  
and its writhing tentacles caught fire  
the oceans abruptly sat up  
and creatures fell out of their deeps  
yet now when you look at the sky the  
tree the stone the stream rushing noisily between the  
hard toes of the rocks  
everything's back to normal

or is it?

#### 5

The narrative flow as they say  
out of the mouth of the first to speak  
at the dawn of the ages  
but there was not one who was first  
but many all talking at once from  
time immemorial  
talking as normally as you or me  
saying gravelly things to further the  
narrative flow saying "Don't go too near that  
waterfall!" or "We saw a mastodon stuck in a  
bog this morning—Oh boy God be praised  
we'll eat for a week!"  
or far more complicated things like  
She entered the place as the sun was setting in a  
purple blaze like a meteor entering the sea  
and the air seemed to notice her"

the narrative flow till the end of time on the  
lips of everyone  
the end

## 6

The story of the man with no toes who composed  
his odes on the run  
the story of the twenty schoolgirls who circled  
a hill until it disappeared  
the story of the cat who dived into a cardboard  
box to investigate the void and came out  
a Buddhist  
the three-cornered hat that refused to revolt  
in the general throng that would later  
become the status quo worth  
revolting against and so  
sat on a head in obstinate refusal until it  
sprouted feathers and ended as the  
master of *haute couture*  
the story of the three magpies looking down at the  
dead knight sprawled at the base of their tree  
the story of the first people envisioning the  
last people and laughing at the  
joke as their campfire flickers in the dark  
the story of the woman who brought food to  
orphans and came home to find her  
home had been transformed into a  
celestial piano playing tunes to  
transport her to Paradise  
the story of tragic lovers each in their respective waterfalls  
signaling to each other through the downrushing  
cascades in a glittering blur of longing  
the story of the end of stories and giant  
cracks appear in our walls and our feet become  
flat and our windows black over  
the story of the beginning of stories as a newborn  
baby looks around and seems to be perfectly  
at ease and the enlightened  
master of her domain

each thought-bubble an epic with horseback  
armies and attendant angels  
each phrase we speak conscious or not  
a haiku that encapsulates both the  
season and the moment of epiphany as  
surely as the settling down through the air of a gnat on a  
newly fallen plum on gray pavement  
each entrance into night or exit into day  
the delicious unfolding of a parchment of

stories whose starlight proceeds from  
actual stars and whose  
main characters are aspects of our  
own hearts going past each other and  
recognizing each face from childhood on  
each story accompanied by distant  
chimes and a gong the size of Manhattan  
each denouement only the ashes a  
strange new Phoenix rises out of  
trailing the vocabulary words of the entire  
story in a heartbeat that  
we are about to embark on having  
started before the creation of the universe  
just as we're about to  
open our lips in  
praise of the simplest notion  
and in anticipation of the  
most distant galactic recognition  
coming as close to us as our breaths are  
or even closer

coming as close to us as our deaths are  
only a pause in the story  
that resumes again  
like an illuminated manuscript caught fire in a  
shaft of light  
in which we too exist  
transformed into  
the purest story of God's unfolding blessing on all of us  
amen

(from *The Book of Infinite Beauty*— 6/28/2000)

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# Christopher MULROONEY

---

## far niente

she lay an asperous husk  
on the bedsheets but shapely  
and demanded of us when we'd fucked  
last

he lay nearby reading of  
Hadrian's Temple in the air  
holding the book above him

afterwards comparing notes  
they rather thought us  
ancient and mercurial

## Minister of Transportation

fractious day fractious I say  
I tell you want an independent contractor  
you can't find one won't tell you any  
aren't any no Sir not a one  
fresh cheese got it right here  
tea or coffee come on  
sit tell me the news  
what do you hear  
how's everyone all about that  
cookies here you want some maybe  
I don't care about all that  
WWII enthusiasts really bug me  
I should go play Bunker Hill in a cocked hat  
on my weekends which I don't have  
in the first place in the second place  
what's it all for  
it recycles and goes around  
who remembers Passchendaele  
and the Marne now anyway  
Little Round Top Devil's Den  
the days of the Republic

this is Empire all my furniture  
see my realm the two tracks  
coming and going hither and yon  
to hell and back  
I'm the guy that put that there  
sure it needs a lot of dressing  
but I'm the guy that made sure holes were laid  
end to end with pipe that trains go into  
don't you ever forget it  
have some vinaigrette

## **Mr. Executive Advisor**

let the lie be assumed  
as the father of it  
cheerily down the billiard table  
one by one down  
by the pockets  
go the balls

the rubber bumpers  
repelled by felt  
whirr and click of the balls

## **in the garden walls**

the reflecting pool doesn't remembered lie  
in a ditch somewhere  
behind the lines

no it doesn't reflect anything but blue sky  
and cloudy grey sky  
and night

in a pretty conceit as if to say  
verbose verboten  
here is a similar thing  
all the way that  
bespeaks desire  
and the say what  
things there are else

what things are there  
obelisks are things are columns  
discs are flying discs are heroes  
of the flying wars the silliness  
of the season interstitial  
with a niche to put it in

the grand review of all the armies

## City of London

tea with milk the river ran  
or coffee maybe at a pinch

slate-gray with scarlet trim

etc. the descriptive responses  
of the think tank  
precipitate a long roster  
usually elided  
for the capstone on the edifice we present  
therefore I submit

on the face of new things altogether  
winds bear new witness

but it is not a new thing  
not at all to have this  
Dr. Gachet defending  
and diagnosing  
Edgar Allan Poe  
from the heights along a new river  
perhaps not

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# Anita NAEGELI

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## A Red Hat Replaced

*after Gertrude Stein*

A lacking of light between black and white or a shade tending toward an empty character reflecting only a small fraction of incident lightness between extremes, is so shockingly hideous because there is no visible hue in it. But the absence of a flush complexion is not unavoidable as it is determined by prior conditions and circumstances. Therefore, the most important consideration is not a course of reasoning aimed at demonstrating truth or falsehood, for any exceeding limits conduct themselves toward even without specification. It is, then, to find an area defined by boundaries that are greater in excellence than a position regarded as belonging to someone or something that is so great in extent like a given space in any direction away from the inside.

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# Charlie NEWMAN

---

## Dress for the Men in Your Life

My voice echoes and  
my words rise like helium-filled balloons.

My love soars  
to the very marrow of heaven  
and, there, it is buried  
in a hole so deep  
no one in their right mind would ever look for it.

I wrap it in white linen  
just as I would wrap a lover or an enemy.

I trash it after everyone is gone.

I feel like hell  
but I still have my sense of humor.  
You always underestimate me, my love.  
But I am the one who warns you to beware  
of friends bearing gifts of sleep...  
or smiles...  
or peace.

They will steal your face.

They will bury you in rust.

I step on them. They are roaches.

## jobbed

I get on the bus  
and close my eyes.  
“I can’t cut it,” I think.  
“I’m just not doing it.”

There seems to be no “instead” for me.

I might as well be mopping floors in a gilded tourist spa in Greece,  
or washing dishes in a greasy spoon in Toad Suck Ferry, Arkansas.

“All honest work is noble,” goes the cliché.  
But should we be grateful for every indignity  
suffered in the name of earning?

Yes,  
there is meat on my plate.  
I just don’t have the teeth to chew it.

## clairvoyant

drinking my Crown Royal [neat]  
screaming at meaningless celebrity faces on the tube

I am dumb

drinking my Crown Royal [neat]  
trying on one custom-made iron mask after another  
because they are more beautiful than I am

one day I will come up short  
my head will be full of crumbling age  
dust will cover my eyes  
and I will ride the light to my proper place  
drinking my Crown Royal [neat]

## **23rd Pslam for the 21st Century**

The Lord is my shepherd;  
name's will fear me and my rod for ever.

I shall not want.

He art with me;

He comfort me.

He lie down in green pastures.

Death ain't all that.

I leadeth thee beside the shadow.

Evil is over-rated.

Prepare a table before enemies invade.

I eat my soul.

His cup runneth over.

Surely this good water is wasted.

He is the path of righteousness.

Rub thy head with oil to avoid pimples.

Mercy...have mercy, Baby.

Yea,

though I walk through the days of my life,

I have no clue.

I need his help, Brother.

## stuff

1.

the thing is *things*

an earring here

an empty glass that once held a shot of whatever there  
until some *thing* is every *where* over here under there see?

for better for worse for richer for poorer

foregone but not forgotten for God's sake ENOUGH!

*stuff*

an agenda hidden behind old dusty compliments

family photographs stacked next to .357 shells in a shoebox  
invitations neatly filed away by someone who never *went* anywhere

love letters read by unintended eyes

obituaries saved

time management training books

good-for-nothing lottery tickets

don't you see?

scraps of sandwiches from lunches that ended decades ago

shoes hanging from dead limbs

the *stuff* of history

leftovers from life

I'm there

he's there she's there we're *all* there

applications to places no one in their right mind *wants* to be

plane tickets train tickets bus tickets

expired license plates stacked eyebrow high

seen one inventory seen 'em all except no two are alike

once you get inside

once you get by the *stuff* the *things* to the how's and the why's

once you get intimate with the *marrow*

consider:

sunlight touches me just so distracts me turns my head

an unknown visitor steals the pictures from my cell wall

under my grief a lonely man hides

from shame from honor from history

forgetting solemn moments remembering only tangents

I need the sun to survive but it distracts me

I need dreams I need pictures I need books all gone

I need these *things* this *stuff*

or I am a shepherd without a flock

a gun without bullets bullets without a gun

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# Stephen OLIVER

---

from *ANTIPHONAL*

## Herman the German

Nationalism is a map of ancient migratory routes  
and circuitry of the Goth's tribal brain.

A dream that is little more than watermark,  
sound of a boat's prow hitting gravel.

A superman with his skiagraphic vision sighting  
the mile high future—an eagle circling at its height.

As the sun sets down its pyre—  
the colour of copper is almost.

The moon throws down its pile of bones.

AD 9;

metal with flesh felled flesh, skittled bone  
through the Teutoburgen Wald, the primeaval

forests of the Rhine—three Roman legions  
and six auxiliary regiments under Varus's command

march from summer quarters on the River Weser  
to winter out on the Rhine—into the tribal heartland

in the thickening forests thinned to single file,

ambushed by Cheruscan spearman under  
Arminius, Prince of the Cherusci,  
caught between forest and swamp—

20,000 Romans died or more, tribunes,  
centurions, slaughtered on wooden  
altars to the tree gods, others hacked and nailed

to trees as trophies.

Only a remnant including

Varus escaped the three day massacre to a

Roman camp on the Rhine where Varus,  
shamed, fell upon his sword.

Great forests of the Rhine!

the Hercynian reaching across the Danube to  
the Elbe, and from west-to-east a man might travel

for sixty days and not see its edge.

Birth of the German warrior spirit—  
history's canopy casting its blackening shadow

on a phalanx of death's heads and insignia,

from a spear cast by Arminius,  
'father of the Nation'

who homaged his deity, Tuisto, he who issued  
from the soil, became Nazi motto:  
'Blut und Boden'—blood and soil.

What memories of the Roman dead in  
the Teutoberg Forest, 'bones heaped up like little  
backward curving waves'

where they had stood their ground, or scattered,  
caught and cut down where they had fled.

A carnage found six years later by Germanicus  
who with controlled rage

ventured deep into Wesphalia, scouted  
(a soldier in wolf's clothing)  
the Teutoburgen Wald  
laid causeways over swamps,

destroyed sacred groves, sought them in trees  
by felling them, and so in a clearing  
made, felled in turn the Cherusci

though Arminius had by his deeds long since  
escaped into the future—pure man of the soil.

Echoed in Knut Hamsun: special  
bedtime reading for Adolf.

The warrior image duly distorted,  
regimented in the death's head and insignia

through the deforested wastelands of Europe.

## Discus Thrower

Sky's caravanserai  
world's cosmologies.

Smallness of the mind reaching to big things  
(not quite) we stand on tip-toe

or slouch toward other quadrants of doom—

that old home of thunder, passed round from  
mouth to gun barrel.

Deck of the world sways heavily  
under the mind's bombardment—a constant

against unconstants.

That bark, Van Gogh yellow you painted, sailing  
toward the full moon's open portal

on a Prussian blue sky—

'in celebration of a pregnancy' you told me.

Who would allow for such lyric mysticism  
this or any other day?

The small, factory sound that is  
suburban rail follows its crescent round,

out beyond terra cotta roofs.

A plane lowering to Botany bay /  
Kingsford airport

makes the sound of time reversing  
metal plate / sliding / metal plate  
—pitched at the scream's decibel.

The hour winds its rope off the clockface bollard.

Arc is an horizontal sweep, shoulder signals to

the arm's swing in long contours,  
the muscling hills his coastline.

A discus describes the sky's dome, falls seaward.

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# John PERREAULT

---

## From: MOTETS\*

### Happy Is the Man

Happy is the man who can reply  
Show me the apple of happenstance  
to fate with faith or fakery  
and I, merely a poem, will

in order to fool the foolish world.  
give you a kick in the pants,  
into leaving him alone to fly,  
leave abject complacency well behind

wings outstretched or folded  
and form an arrest committee  
to meet the mockery with smiles  
so evil we will have no chance to

and defeat the hungry infantry.  
set fire to my burning fence.

### I Can Be You

I can be you. Or if not you,  
At the bottom of the garden is  
then at least your twin, to give  
a hard-on and not a fountain.

the expectations a difficult ride.  
That fountain, like tumescence,  
But why? I'd rather be a shadow,  
is also a sham and a sock and not

then a reflection in some other  
a thimble like the flower or  
world of reversals, when and if  
the crown that is upside down,

the shadow world would sink.  
your headdress of old fathers.

## **These Living Words**

These living words are swords  
No land in sight will tell me  
and even boards, sword-cut swords,  
where the woods ends and

through a forest of cards  
the park begins because, my friend,  
make my starry forehead ache.  
your verbiage is still cabbage.

You, my heart throb, are my brake,  
I myself am so quiet that  
causing all my grief to break  
it might appear that I am alone.

into a sweat or crash or squeak.  
I'm not. I am whatever it takes.

## **In Time**

If in time everything comes out fine  
forgetting the name of a bay window  
then you could only blame  
or bay. Likewise what is the term for

the lack of communication between  
speech or lightning or beach?  
the left and the right  
And if you knew this vocabulary

or the strange effect of change.  
would you be wiser, kinder?

Chance in all its forms is always fate  
Or would you be on the outside,

and luck is on the broken plate,  
too much like the other side?

## **Lava**

Lava is the yes of the wise cliff  
where half the land is pregnant and  
whose love is both hello and goodbye  
the platform is loaded with flowers

as well as romance and best wishes.  
just before the bloody picnic  
One word covers everything in the world  
of flattery and anger, the barbecue

except no; this is a longer house  
of roosters. The hula is hidden  
of work at quitting time for the stranger  
because of my boyfriend in the dark

without a genealogy of chants  
who will only stalk the same old park.

## **The Men's Room**

The men's room is out of bounds  
a massage and a raw fish salad  
to the old-timer and his local ways.  
are the same word and therefore

The Thief wants the grub for himself  
are the same, unlike toilet and feast.  
and he wants to hug his grandchildren  
Thus we thank the mahu for his gratitude

stuck in the cone of wind, the season,  
because he is facing the sea  
on the lanai hung with necklaces.  
and is in love with a pair of pants

His garlands are of seaweed because  
who is free with his fruits and plants.

## Where the Pen (Perpetual Motet)

where the pen is mightier than the fence  
unlike all the others who are dressed  
that holds your fine ponies for recompense  
in towels. You try your very best

inside the eyelids of the storm  
but your honesty is not enough.  
worms of sorrow eat the warm.  
We can't explain the ax man's bluff.

All death's children are equally drawn.  
and we fail to answer the questions  
It is not dusk but yet another lawn,  
without making innumerable suggestions

the morning after the penultimate finals  
to the examiner and his panels  
where you are dressed in your flannels.

---

**\*Note:** Inspired by the 14th Century motets by Phillipe de Vitry in which different texts are sung simultaneously, the poems in my book MOTETS can be read line by line and by separating out the odd lines and then the even ones, to read two additional poems, as in *Happy Is the Man, I Can Be You*, and *These Living Words*. Sometimes the scheme creates one additional poem, since the even lines are continuous with the odd ones, as in *In Time, Lava, The Men's Room*. *Where the Pen* is an example of one of my Perpetual Motets: when even then odd then even lines, etc., are read continuously, there is no ending line. When reading these poems aloud it is usually more effective to read the buried, alternating lines first, followed by the line-by-line reading of the poem that results from the interweavings, for then the latter seems to retain the imprint or ghost of the former. In silent reading the imprint is subliminally visible, if not totally comprehensive until alternate lines are read.

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**From: STOLEN RHYMES\*\***

## **Leda and the Swan**

At noon it is terrible and still  
as if the streetscape has been caressed  
by the arrival of the horrible bill  
for the secret of my breast.

When I get to the door and push  
I see your distant thighs  
in the middle of the rush  
made up of truth and lies.

Someone else is happening there  
and I am under the sullen tower  
but then I awaken too far up  
in the crystal, bright blue air  
where I have no thought or power  
and where I let my message drop.

## **A Crazy Girl**

In a world without brief music  
there would be only shore  
and not the crashing ocean itself,  
and only tide wrack where  
the festival steamship  
has run aground. I thus declare  
without a word there is no thing  
but only shadow can be found.

If in the future this has occurred,  
where we can smell the wound  
our present triumph  
will have stuck where it lay  
and now would not be the sound  
of the uprising at last of the sea.

## ***Shakespearean Sonnets***

## One

All things important outside the frame  
are not. You see we all dwell  
in a movie that is the same  
and cannot, will not ever excel

whatever it is the camera's on.  
We are never here, but always there  
where the influx has finally gone  
inside the fear and tenor where

smoke and dust and trust are left.  
Your world is a world of tinted glass.  
Even the photography is bereft  
of what for a moment really was

the temperature where we will meet  
that judgment that is all too sweet.

## Two

Too much humanity, too much light  
all gone in the blink of an eye  
to hide behind the disguise of sight  
to shield us from so much majesty.

I thought the mountain merely a hill  
and saw that I would age  
but I am now much younger still  
in the middle of this pilgrimage.

Too much laughter in the car  
and too many nightmares in the day  
is why we are the way we are  
and cannot be another way,

at suppertime, in love, or at noon  
when we turn from our gruesome son.

## Three

When it is only when sadly  
that you confront this joy  
then I will borrow you gladly  
and take you there to annoy

your dreams with the sounds  
I whisper to your inner ear  
so that my logic confounds  
all the verbiage you cannot bear.

If you want truth then have another  
while you try me out by ordering  
something you can't quite mother  
with that song you sometimes sing.

You know it. You know the one.  
It is the song that is loved by none.

## **She Walks in Beauty**

If these be demons, then let the night  
uphold the secret, tumbling skies  
off valleys where the engine rallies bright  
accomplishment to all our eyes.  
I am not the hallways, not the light  
but only the pleasure that sleep denies.

Dreams are gloss. Sanity is even less  
when confronted with your seamless grace  
to see your hair instead of your tress  
as glorious inside this hallowed place.

Let's not put the art before the brow,  
wasting crime on time's too eloquent  
waist. It's the sign and not the glow  
that will make for us a purse well-spent  
so far beneath what's here below  
in the prison they've made of the innocent.

---

**\*\*Note:** STOLEN RHYMES were initially inspired by reading that W.B. Yeats often wrote his rhyme schemes before he composed his poems. My poems, based on borrowed rhyme schemes, are not intended to be disrespectful, nor are they necessarily meant as comments on the rhyme scheme sources. Imprints and ghosts remain, but these are

only undertones that show how much a rhyme scheme can determine content. The overtones are created by the collision of my poems with the earlier ones.

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# Simon PETTET

---

## JULY ON HORATIO STREET

Last night I spied

the great bard naked

I begged his pardon

For my crass intrusion

I meant to tell him

I loved his work

I'm not a creep

I don't think he heard me

(He didn't not hear me)

He was just otherwise engaged

With this complicated process of extinction

\*\*\*\*\*

Last night I spied

the great bard naked

O begged her pardon

For my crass intrusion

I meant to tell her

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I don't think she heard me

(She didn't not hear me)

She was just otherwise engaged

With this complicated process of extinction

## **POEM ("Firstly, she starts to mutter..")**

Firstly, she starts to mutter and twitch  
Secondly, her hair falls out (widow's peak,  
bald patches. Third, her once-pristine togs  
become grimy (regrettably soiled); fourth,  
she "gives forth foul odours".  
Fifth, finally, in rueful old age, she realizes  
she can never again capture what she once had  
"With that reckless indifference to the world"  
she gives up. She curls up under the stars,  
she imagines the vast terrible outside void  
and her heart's pit-a-pat

\*\*\*\*\*

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and his heart's pit-a-pat.

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# Stella RADULESCU

---

## cirque du soleil

brush your teeth sing Allegria while the cherry trees blossom  
and there is nothing to lose  
these words are dump they don't understand while  
the bullet makes its way to your neck  
the cherry trees blossom

images fail the right angle  
here I see a piece of wounded human flesh  
it looks like a flower and I am telling you  
this is a flower made of human flesh  
it poisons the air and you say

brush your hair cherry trees blossom sing Allegria I do—  
my lover if he doesn't come he will come at midnight  
with the smell of that flower in his hands  
twenty four fingers each time he touches me  
I have to change the clock the smell is here in  
my own flesh

each time no time  
keep the wheel away from your grave while the cherry trees  
blossom something it's anything  
and there is nothing to lose  
if you don't die today you'll die tomorrow  
before lunch

do you have a bag to clean after your dog?  
do you have a reason for living?

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# Sarah ROSENTHAL

---

## Sonnet

This one forgets to switch pillows  
each time she turns.  
Flat for back, puff for side.

This one bites down and holds.

This one listens to the whir of the fan.  
Hears respite from helicopters.  
War's hummingbirds.

This one tunes out strategic details.

Admits to being gendered.  
She. Admits.

Knows no subject. No conclusion.

She is her own eyewitness.  
Sound-sight-touch.  
She sucks an orange lozenge.

## sonnet plus

whether dark left a mark  
on sky blue, whether  
the corner had been turned down  
(on cue), whether I had  
enough liquid to spread  
among the days (and

nights), what  
my brother's name was  
(according to whom), whether  
the clothing would fit  
off the rack, whether it really  
meant fix, whether frown,  
toast, critical mass, whether left  
unattended,

you will be asked to run a number of tests  
your signature will be illegible  
you will not be in the helping profession  
if fame, the world will emerge  
to sparkle off  
your glass.

## **Topical**

Time but no form.

Tam but no junction.

Serious but no solitaire.

Post but no fruit.

Rent but no social.

Generate but also rooftop.

Jungle but also late.

Memo but also let's.

Glamour enforcing a risk.

Walnut imposing a paper.

Made up constance.

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# Larry SAWYER

---

## Lieutenant Pig

grunted groaned groveled moaned  
meandered and minced pirouetted  
diced dug did nothing today though  
Saturday of the pig suburban pig  
holy pig pig at outdoor barbecue pig  
pig eats pig prays to pig loves another pig  
pigs hugging other pigs  
other little pigs run around pig legs  
pigs fly by overhead in sky  
pigs are going to the beach pigs  
are starring in movies movie pigs  
pigs are certified public accountants  
pigs are working on a national missile defense  
system pigs are losing their outsourced jobs  
pigs are watching reality television  
about other crazy overworked underpaid pigs  
as everywhere creeping silently  
through midnight gardens  
across darkened cricket chirping patios  
through venetian blinds down  
carpeted hallways into carports  
into windows into bedrooms  
suddenly awakened by the

smell of bacon

one sleeping pig nostril is

## **Like Constellations**

you place several telephone books

in a vase and

I note the delicate relationship as an  
adjective precedes the term it modifies

you balance precariously out the window  
of a photograph by Rudy Burckhardt

I tell you a properly placed hyphen helps the reader  
understand the intended meaning

you say you don't care about any of that  
and each of your words is a small sharp-toothed animal

I tell you that sharp-toothed animal is hyphenated  
for just that reason

you proceed to jump into another statement  
which defies all logic thus reaching

the exact relational center of the anxiety

disguised as love

we plant a flag there abandon all citations and  
harvest grammatically incorrect sentences

and sell them to the locals who  
despise us so gloriously we stay there forever

because this after all is  
just my imagination

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# Spencer SELBY

---

## UP TO NOW

assuming experience  
stretches to scale absurd

holy peak the dream  
of what is called my soul

tracks of deer in snow  
and my trick that  
perception is playing

promise by nature  
wherever I turn with  
results in my head  
seeming so marginal

amazed that a man prefers  
cheap imitation pain

a little gossip mixed with honey  
debris from an antique map  
hints dropped around the city  
followed but would not come  
into the circle feeling more  
likely a person who would

climb over solid rock  
sitting all day in a chair

## THE OUTFIT

It's a mad dash  
of circumstance  
the radio calls static

Your health is failing

in sepia shirtsleeves  
No pants but shoes  
make up for that

They cost a year's salary  
paid for jamming airwaves  
You run to work at a site  
yet to be determined

The atmosphere is tense  
and supported by figures  
that won't arrive

## **HOLD ON**

Trails crooked stigma  
black bone a dog chews  
into spasm on the left  
side  
panorama of identical  
streets  
on the right

Flesh for love  
on concrete used to cover  
personal problems  
Step by step to avoid  
shell fragments  
all around transport  
criticized without  
thinking

Sole property  
whose legs are beggars'  
legs  
that have gone too far

Sole property  
a hologram of light  
across two rivers flowing  
in opposite directions

Flesh for love  
just about embracing  
extremities forsaken by  
prejudice between

Trails crooked stigma  
to the bottom you examine  
and forget

## **MISSION AND POST**

In dark alley emphasis  
is double-parked

Got your letter drilling  
etheric dues

allowing compromise  
to accrue qualms weightier  
by that which begs  
for attention.

Is double abstract  
your blaspheme correct?

Do millions fool tomorrow  
with knife or sword  
compared to a child's toy?

I for one don't think  
it's so bad if a person  
can't grow to potential.

The reason is my car  
just disappeared.

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# Elias SIQUEIROS

---

## Evening Scroll

Private as a clam,  
as a world undertow,  
as a Christmas card turned to smoke,  
private as gaslights  
of old times in the sewage  
when small birds made chains of the ear's  
history.  
Private, the sun inside.  
The whole horde of invasions that  
begin at the mouth,  
begin, the mouth,  
the surrender of the children,  
of what they had to say.  
I say something,  
I mumble,  
the streets tonight were Florentine.  
Useless in beauty, Florentine and wet.  
A garden  
with the immediacy of a gun.  
I wept, the absolute burned my smile.  
It was a savage thought,  
to become a flood  
the way the world is flat.

## A Train Perhaps

One more time.  
Learn of the conceivment of echo,  
return with  
wedding rings  
of the undiscovered.  
Someone's chasing your name, catches it,  
shelves it near the spurt  
of an embarrassed nation.  
Surround the pulpit  
with the wind of having arrived

somewhere without the maps,  
destiny has died there.  
A train perhaps, leading nowhere,  
borrowed from this world now twice as  
clear as the cigarette  
by the curtains of your thoughts.  
Gave the leaf of the soul the flat surface of  
denial,  
watched it burn higher than the tree of disparity,  
lower than the star of our root,  
the star of our happiness.  
Mothers to sons gave the imprint  
of rivers mawed by flesh,  
sons to mothers  
gave a silence met with headiest sadness.  
Both liquidated all assets.  
Both met rain with the troubadour's growl.  
And me, all, and if all, then you and I,  
still, by the sewage of the heart,  
found the gentlest paths of stone quite cumbersome.  
We recorded them with listening,  
drew the light before the truckstops.  
The faces of the stones were enamored of their  
night and of the moving questions of their forfeits.  
A germination of what we saw  
transfixed the streets with a clean shawl.  
Apples fell from orchards  
not planted  
beyond our thoughts.

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# Chuck STEBELTON

---

## I WASN'T THINKING ABOUT YOUR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

You just follow new gills. He carved the water  
Into many kinds of current. Nose your follow,  
Just you. Far away, they are confident in the name  
That keeps location swimming. Wet grass, old  
Boats far away trust their nerve. One strategy  
For calling a new boat something is to forget  
The tiny snails that smell when they buzz.

Tacoma is coastal else Ventura is as coastal  
As it gets. And I am a sea hag driven by a well  
Meant yet partially foul exhale from the window  
Bored into her hermit crab's shell. The brown  
Line swims, sadly, through tall grass. Now I'm  
Leaning down looking at low tide. I was thinking  
About you. I wasn't thinking about your public

Transportation. We were drinking, drinking,  
Drinking. Drinking coca coca cola. Blood  
Schnapps is an orangutan who is also an orange.

And meeting mariners is easy. Drifters always name  
Their boats for lozenges, a jar of dollars lit by  
Flash flood. The loud bassoons hiss today.  
Today is a singular day. Humans like me cannot  
Hear beneath. The trillionth day of the dirty  
Hundred trilobites in Niwot can help you here.  
Now the flannelled messenger is hot. Pickle red  
As purple syrah, northern pikes heart muskellunge.  
Their eyes are white as oriental mountains  
And their tongues are teasing oil from whales.

## EIGHTEEN OPALS

In the clearing between things a flamingo flies over Moose.

Having fewer bridges, the geology of Isle Royale is similar.

In agreeing to disagree, pink and black and blue ink cue

a walk on. The icon is pale. The veil is bitter.

Sugar skulls flicker next to lemon scented glass.

This grass is your green imagination. Cedar seems earnest.

The day glitter metal did not die. Cream is contrived. Yet

I wore a dress tropical! Jewel at its ear. You're my confetti.

I'll bring you fists. I'll elect one to Beulah. Plum blossoms

in a fog bait one season word. Yellow leaves the smell of fire

organ notes. The buttery disdain Tuesday for reasons best

set in balloons. The pure joy of the emerald fact documents

a mine, a dime method on a lime rug reflected upside down.

## **SHELLS OF ORANGE CORVETTES**

What did I lose? Orchards to flood! And you? More than a grove.

If the shark stops moving pour grenadine on its tail. What won  
against the queen of the eyesores? Stingray? Crown Victoria?

What split windows to moonflower faster? The opposite  
of apposite is? Lime green? And the checkered flag must be  
remembered. Where is the checkered flag? Past the far blur

of your bones in May? Dual exhaust? Ashes of the flags of which?  
My back to the ground? I am you. Is Gorgeous coming? Green  
line turns yellow? Sorrel ditches? Scurrilous? Openly confide?

Foxfire? Where were the linnets? And what had people called  
us? Chevy Chevrolet? All the books on magic can't help you  
now. Quiet Storm? Being boring? Cross the divide to another

ocean? For credibility, for credibility. The spoiler shows what?  
A made day? An allowable grace in the midst of inaction? Dry  
conditions? Magical slicks? Density rises while heat conducts

itself through metal or glitter conducts? Black iris? A cinema

of snow? Chrome devil in the chin? Head lights? Many moons?  
This talk of bees may lead to honey. Pelicans or the mud flap girl?

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# Tetsuya TAGUCHI

---

a sweaty dream  
at dawn  
i wake up  
and flush my memory

he was too old  
to be a neo-Nazi

J.F.K  
saw his head blown off  
languidly  
he changed the channels

she kissed  
the top of my mountain

blue lightning  
across her tits

the tram  
shakes its tail  
like a snake

people get off at Dam  
suddenly  
music comes in

a German skinhead  
speaks English  
with a Birmingham accent

naked  
she stood on the balcony  
the night wind played with her pubic hair

am I alone  
or is the world alone?

giggling  
she twists her body  
like a fish  
in a net

i shouldn't have asked her age  
she asked mine

a white girl  
in a black cage

a boy with deformed hands  
asks money  
at the tables

a mobile phone  
stuck in a pot  
immobile

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# Gene TANTA

---

Comrades,

I was tipped off by the barber.

Your blood approaches my home on cloven toes

softly, softly as if

to offer up the hot intestines of a stomach,

on a silver platter of polished curses,

for mine.

It was night and the rain had stopped.

## **The Blade's Confession**

Outside, the clouds have gathered near the doorway

to smoke and say nothing.

Now they have come inside, hung up their hats,

and are prepared to speak.

Don't you hear them?

Black pebbles race down their rusty faces—

making the noises of satisfaction

—those curvy,

luscious basement sounds that gurgle up for light.

We'll cut their throats and name them later.

## **To the Skies, Mortals**

Hi, I am a rabid carcass impeding highway traffic  
asking you to stick your finger in my heart  
to cool and sizzle there into exhaust smoke and meat.

You must always approach me handle-side  
because my pain is a sing-song pain  
for all the sky to witness and echo brightly.

When in halves, dark from the butt to the tip,  
as if coming up where and when I called for you  
hoarse and tired, what's your name?

## **Love is a Four-letter Word**

So, there's like this too-tally hot guy at my school, right, and he has this amazingly distended syntax that reaches out to here and last night he came over to my bedroom through the chaste little window over the garage, right where my parents park their religion but on his way up the scaffolding he like too-tally hiked his shins and pine nuts on the neighbor's prosaic branches, but once up, all bloodied and plucked, he knocked over the heaviest, the thickest potted plants off my shelf as he wielded his engorged language structure.

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# Mark TARDI

---

## Mood Indigo

To be idiot-awkward, to take care.  
To particle without.  
To merely hold your cell, stainless.

Jar-faced, my grey, my left of elegance.  
The viewshed an illegible math.  
Red clefts.  
Permanently dead. Possibly.  
Also hotel.

Also lift machinery overhung  
in summer. Arvo.  
The open box  
open.

Implacable, kinetic.  
Why this symmetry. This distrobe.  
This tea might do the trick.  
Also almonds.  
On the spindle side.  
My back to your fidgeting.

Explicitly, no.  
To pitch, to interior.  
Under the compulsion of your.  
To cut square.

Also the actual mountain.  
Blind radius, the static field.  
Threaded.  
Light-safe if not repose.

A bathroom above it.

## Fifth Postulate

If he spoke, if he stared, if the chest a harpsichord

if from any magnitude, if ratioed,  
if deployed in exhaustion,

if undid, if asked, if drawn out to an  
endless right

if Erdos with only two suits

if on a bed, if a napkin, if an exponential  
hotel, if in four languages

if not the answer, but before

if a bucket by definition, if  
on rooftops, if yes, one always forgets

if the numbers at any party

## **These Manners—**

I simply ask that you stop breathing so much,  
explain the arrow in your head, change the lighting,

because it's grown cold, ghost flat, the little incidents  
having slipped while you watched on, when

dinner was a roadrunner, Turkish sweater, smoke poem,  
the wrong coat in the wrong weather, a spark that bled

two simple truths: skip a vacation and your shit sinks.

I'm not inclined to apologize for pluckings, the hot water  
running out, surrogate snow, tax refunds or a steady supply  
of chocolate,

but at a distance, this tea might do the trick.

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# Lakey TEASDALE

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## DEEP FORENSIC EXCUSES

Fences become notices, a form of forensic excuses, couched in the editor's usual give me Librium or give me Meth publication, rich daddy style (larger is not necessarily better), on the verge of divorce.

Celebrity culture bares its architecture in the U S of A.

Only fixation stands between you, peace and quiet.

Sad cyber voyeurs, rubberneck the modern event, click harder,

hit the significantly historical ceiling beams, spark discourse.

Unrivalled opportunity for pioneering biographical research, recruits watchdog

clash catapulted into a market. Nuisance escalated over a number of months,

giant American frog plague under cover of azure skies.

The plot sucks, isn't worth taking a book.

## HOWLING WOLF IS DEAD. LONG LIVE HOWLING WOLF.

Gilded wood panelling, an amazing organ. Early brass instruments, strong style,

lifts the texts right off the page, eleven times champion going into ten furlong straight. Splendid connections without any instructions whatsoever.

Persian Punch\_\_also ran\_\_Tanta Rose and Archduke Ferdinand.

Sun bird in the second position, pipped to the post by landing light, with our without you, going good to firm, close

to your heart\_\_drones\_\_drily hilarious. Rehearsals are fucking awful. Really primitive meets post analysis.

One emerges from the cocoon red eyed and delirious.

## **SACRED PIECES**

Various sacred pieces, great music too. Lushly erotic, close to unacceptable in mixed company, all genders included. Didn't inform an approach, influenced all the same. Meticulous prototypes, in vespers keeping. Terribly moved by vocal line breaking down with impact.

## **LIME JUICE, PALM SUGAR**

Covert seduction of slipknots, irregular brains

Wind lash,

French rooms,

Sea spray.

Physalis,

lime juice,

palm sugar.

Nice spice, soft tannins, decent slug of oak.

Challenges concept of beauty, descends into work.

Sandals in the bin, on the way to beautification,

follow the fortune of greyhound, Xamax Na Tally,

otherwise Woody. Time watches Disraeli.

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# krista franklin

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## Artist Statement

I call my collages “paper gumbo,” because I construct them from various kinds of paper – candy wrappers, handmade sheets created by friends, magazine fragments, pages of old books, scraps of frozen food packages, plastic products, and the occasional dried flower. In my aesthetic, nothing is trash. All of it can be used, and manipulated into something that can potentially become beautiful.

As a teenager, I was visually seduced by the work of the contemporary artists Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Romare Bearden. Pop culture junkie that I am, and member of the first generation of MTV youth, I was always transfixed by the ways in which these artists feasted from American culture to create work which assimilated, stimulated, and interrogated its spectators.

The primary focus of my work revolves around a series of vintage African-American photographs, some family photos, and some that I stumbled on at a thrift store in my hometown of Dayton, OH. I have named the pieces constructed around these photographs “*The Recovered Ancestors*” series. The aim of the series is the reclamation of these often nameless, always striking images of abandoned black folk in unidentified time periods.

My experimentations with collage are based on my attempts to create balance and symmetry from very random, sometimes disparate images, colors, paper sources and found fragments. It is also an honoring process in which I seek to affirm the lives of the ancestors.

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Poet, visual artist and educator who hails from Dayton, OH, and currently works and resides in Chicago, IL. Her poems and visual art have appeared in/on several literary journals and websites, including *Nexus Literary and Art Journal*, *Warpland*, *Obsidian III*, *nocturnes 2: (re)view of the literary arts*, [www.semantikon.com](http://www.semantikon.com), [www.milkmag.org](http://www.milkmag.org), [www.ambulant.org](http://www.ambulant.org), and [www.errataandcontradiction.org](http://www.errataandcontradiction.org). She has also been published in the anthologies *The Bust Guide to the New Girl Order* and *Bum Rush The Page: a def poetry jam*. She is a *Cave Canem Alum*, and was a featured poet in the *2000 New Voices New Worlds Series* in St. Louis, MO.

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"los ojos de chango" (detail)



"man walking"



"nuclear dreams"

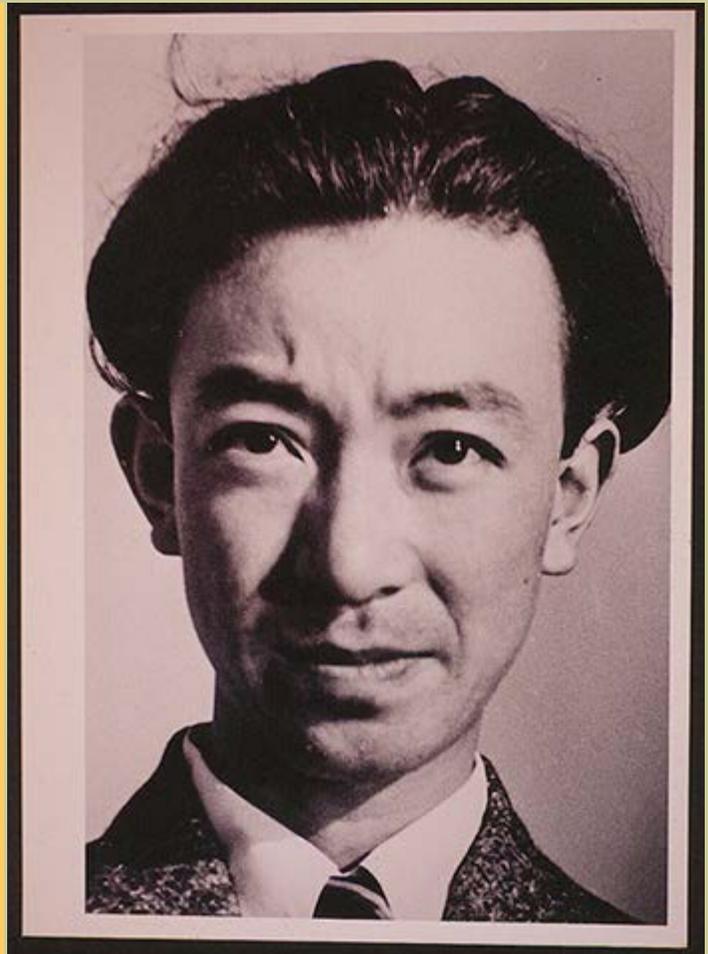


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**YAMAMOTO**  
**Kansuke:**  
*conveyor of the impossible*

*Perception, Misperception,  
Nonperception*  
by John SOLT

YAMAMOTO Kansuke  
Image Gallery



# Amy Evans McClure

Amy Evans McClure is a San Francisco Bay area visual artist and sculptor. For detailed information go [here](#).

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Amy Evans McClure, 'Imagine' (2001)  
ceramic, glass, steel and sand  
121 x 48 x 48"



Amy Evans McClure, "The Meadow" (2001)  
ceramic, glass, sand and steel  
75-1/2 x 48 x 39"

# Terry RENTZEPIS

Terry Rentzepis is self-taught. He mostly works in acrylic on canvas, but he owns alot of oil paints! Find out more about the artist [here](#).

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Reading Upside



My Sister, My Reflection



Thurman



Holding In A Creative Thought

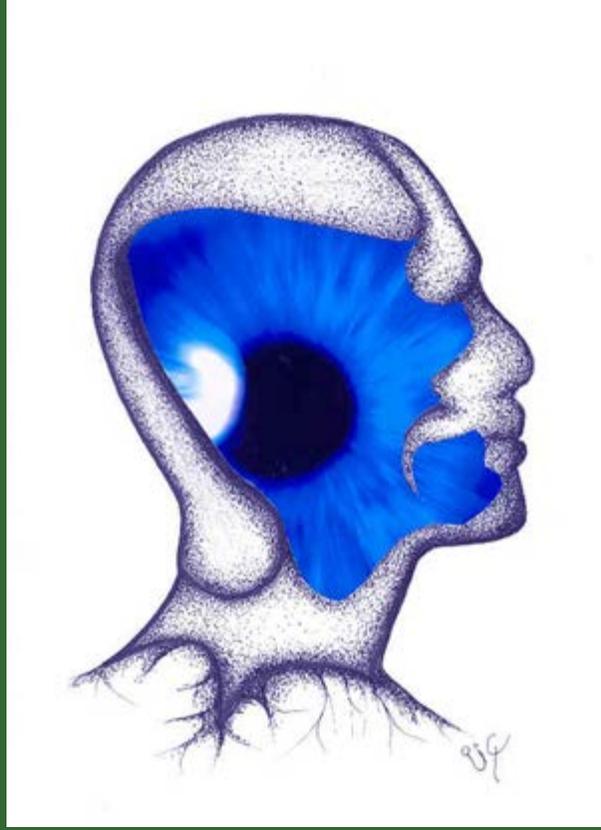


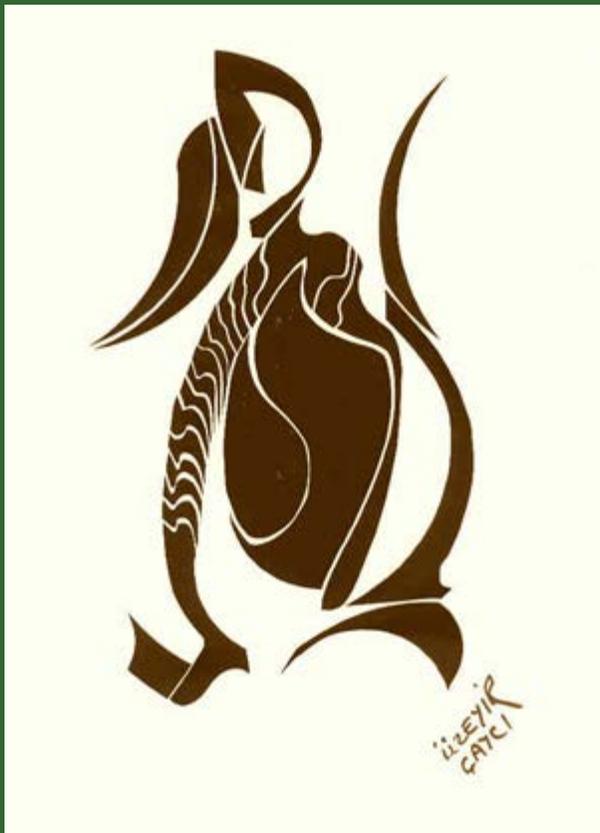
I Always Forget The Present

# Üzeyir Lokman ÇAYCI

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# MIGU

de Argentina

Migu is an illustrator and comic artist who was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His drawings captivate people for the colours and textures used. He has collaborated with many newspapers and magazines (*Forrock*, *La Vos de Castelar*, *Escritos Ineditos del Baño*, *Calavera Negra*, and more). He has also done artwork for band web pages, posters, and stage design.

He took part in a project called *GTZ*, which was an effort between Argentina and Germany for AIDS awareness.

He has also worked in the psychological artistic realm, helping others utilize art as therapy.

He studied with Oswal (Cimoc).

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# *LITERATURE NATION* MARIA DAMON AND MIEKAL AND: THE VISUAL, THE VIRTUAL AND THE GRAMMARS OF TIME

A Review by Tom HIBBARD

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## 1.

Two similar perfect bound paperbacks *Literature Nation* by Miekal And and Maria Damon and *The Pleasure of the Text* by Roland Barthes. The title *Literature Nation* is unclear. It could imply a nation strengthened in enlightenment. Or it could imply a nation weakened in inbred sensibility. 'Nation' might be misleading, referring symbolically to 'locus of activity' rather than America uptight and at war in Iraq.

*Literature Nation* contains poetry. *Pleasure of the Text* contains critical writing. I think it is interesting that the books are not close in publishing date the former being published by Potes and Poets Press in 2003, the latter being published originally in Paris in 1973 and yet are close conceptually. My initial reaction to *Literature Nation* was that, in a Big Bang cosmos, nature is 'experimental' and the inexplicable is requisite. Why shouldn't books in different times be close in theme?

The poetry of one book is similar to the critical writing of the other. Or vice versa. The poetry of *Literature Nation* isn't stanzaic or free verse. It is eighty-five pages of prose-like paragraphs, written as email exchanges between And and Damon, each paragraph or strophe headed by a phrase in brackets. Each bracketed heading is a bracketed phrase from the previous paragraph. So the form is a linked recurring pattern, perhaps like knitting or a chain-making mechanism. The book is divided into seven chapters called 'travels': *Literature Nation*, *Whether Nation*, *Whether Hotel*, *Weather Hostel*, *Moss Goddess*, *Doll Goddess*, *HyperPoesy*.

The prose of *Pleasure of the Text* is impressionistic, poetic. It too is divided into strophe-like paragraphs. The text is interspersed with parenthetical insertions giving the effect of cross-hatch and weaving.

As science has revealed the fantastic nature of physical reality, the aesthetics of writing and art have come more to the fore. More and more the creative work of literature is in form. More and more the form is allowed to take its impossible, relativist shape.

## 2.

The word 'jouissance' in *Literature Nation* is a clear reference to *Pleasure of the Text* (which contains a discussion of this word in its introduction). There are many words in *Literature Nation* relating to linguistics (including 'Hyperpoesie'). These self-conscious references to Barthes, Jacques Derrida and others, in my view, point toward the subject of 'visual writing'. One paragraph is titled 'visual writing'.

Visual writing is many things and is expanding in its meaning. I think one thing that certainly visual

writing also called visual art or visual poetry involves is artistic use of visual aspects of language especially as it is encountered in the history of civilization. Archeological glyphs are prime material for visual writing. So are ornate manuscripts, handwriting, typewriter-written records, historical and legal documents any language-associated artifact that conveys the special relationship of language to human thought and development.

Usually, visual writing is fairly easy to recognize colorful treatment of scrolls, collages of typographies, assemblages of texts, artistic logograms and ideograms. Miekal And's recent 2003 chapbook, *Spidertangle*, is an excellent collection of visual works by various artists and writers. However, the use of phrases and sentences blurs this recognizability and makes the idea of visual writing more complicated.

### 3.

Something I've wanted to point out in relation to visual writing is the presence of James Joyce's last major work, *Finnegans Wake*. It seems to me that this work is the first-ever instance of visual writing in this second, more complicated form that uses 'ordinary sentences' and the semblance of a standard literary form, in this case the novel. I have felt that this latter work is different from Joyce's earlier short story collection, *The Dubliners*, and even the complicated epic *Ulysses*. *Finnegans Wake* has always seemed to me something of a hoax or joke on the reading public and the world of literary criticism. It has been called an example of 'interior monologue' and 'stream of consciousness'. But I feel it has left these devices behind in *Ulysses* and moved to a style now associated with visual writing. In the approximately six hundred pages of *Finnegans Wake*, first published in 1939, the words seem an insurmountable verbal edifice perhaps the current computer term 'firewall' is applicable intended to separate Joyce's private world from the uninhabitable world of his literary reputation. Here is a quote from the book taken at random:

Lowly, longly, a wail went forth. Pure Yawn lay low. On the mead of the hillock lay, heartsoul dormant mid shadowed land- shape, brief wallet to his side, and arm loose, by his staff of citron briar, tradition stick-pass-on. His dream monologue was over, of cause, but his drama parapolylogic had yet to be, affect. Most distressfully (but, my dear, how successfully!) to wail he did, his locks of a lucan tinge, quickrich, ripely rippling, unfiletted, those lashbetasselled lids on the verge of closing time, while ouze of his sidewise open mouth the breath of him, even so languishing as the princeliest treble treacle or lichee chewchow purse could buy. Yawn in a semiswoon lay awaiting and (hoo!) what helpings of honeyful swoothed (phew!), which ear- piercing dulcitude! As were you suppose to go and push with your blunt blank pin in hand up into his flesh as plush cushionettes of some chubby boy bold love of an angel. Hwoah!

There are clues here 'lay low', 'heartsoul dormant', 'his dream monologue was over', the mention of 'what helpings of honeyful' that point to a separation of writer from written, a personal world obscured behind the text. I don't see that there is characterization or novelistic framework. The words seem like unintense language samples. I feel the word 'parapolylogic' is straight visual writing, the meaning of the word secondary to its surface representation of language itself.

In tone and in construction, this writing is similar to a section from *Literature Nation*. Let me quickly say that I don't think *Literature Nation* is a hoax, though this would be consistent with a critical interpretation of its title. A literature nation might be one that can't tell the difference between literary values and real life. I do think that similar to Joyce's work *Literature Nation* builds, using the value-qualities of words, a symbolic barrier between author(s) and the public at large or perhaps at random. That is one thing it does.

I have argued this in relation to other visual works, for example in works consisting of a word repeated in a geometric pattern. These works are sometimes called 'concrete' poetry. There are instances, in my opinion, of this type of intent in other media too: blank canvases in painting. Piano music where the pianist rests hands on the closed piano keyboard. The whole idea of abstract art seems to some extent prompted by an attempt to avoid giving artistic reinforcement to viewer pre-conceptions. Parables and allegories in Christian teaching and elsewhere in art are ways of conveying artistic messages to a select audience within an audience at large. The use of complex word groupings, similar to sentences, as opposed to a geometrically patterned word, gives visual work an appearance more like 'regular writing' and more masks their (artistic) function(s) as visual writing.

#### 4.

But this is only the slightest beginning for visual writing. For at this point the philosophical inquiry into the nature of language can be introduced. Visual writers are beginning to apply the theories of writers such as Wittgenstein, Sartre, Barthes, Michael Foucault, Noam Chomsky and a host of others to their works.

Take, for example, this quote from Wittgenstein:

If we look at the actual use of a word, what we see is something constantly fluctuating.

A visual writer might respond by attempting to depict fluctuation in an artwork of letters or text. I have seen artworks of blurred as if vibrating texts.

*The Pleasure of the Text*, a brief paperback itself of only sixty-seven pages, was written following Barthes's *S/Z* and has the character of a companion to it and summation of its insights into qualities of written language. Quickly paging through *The Pleasure of the Text*, I note these words and phrases in describing the nature of language text: 'tissue' 'mystique' 'embarrassed figuration' 'delicacy' 'intelligence' 'security' 'mastery' 'catalyzable' 'phraseology' 'incandescent metal, outside communication' 'conflict' 'uselessness' 'what happens in the language' 'the sentence is a body' 'the pleasure of the sentence is to a high degree cultural'. This is one book by one author. Of the great number of other writers and books, I would like to mention Noam Chomsky's *Language and Responsibility* and Derrida's *Writing and Difference* from which is derived the description of language as a 'system of differences'.

In my view, what these writers are describing is the 'message' of the medium of language, especially of written language. Though Marshall McLuhan gave us this notion, he was drawn more to the emerging electronic and musical media of the sixties, not seeing how it applied to language media. It took these other writers, I would say beginning with Wittgenstein, to fill in the gap, though other earlier philosophers were concerned with language, all the way back to Aristotle's *Poetics* and dialogues of Plato.

One other important aspect of language to which visual writers might make reference. The first written language was Egyptian hieroglyphs, a complicated amalgam of lines and pictures that were a part of Egyptian religion and practiced only by priests. Though language has evolved into a simpler, democratic tool, losing its picture qualities in most cases and gaining a more negligible, neutral cursive appearance, as Barthes points out in another place, the 'writer' in modern culture has achieved a certain status independent of what he writes, perhaps priest-like or 'prophetic', which might explain 'obscurity' and other directions of modern writing.

In sum, these philosophers of language point toward a variety and complexity in the nature of language

that closely parallels the ethical variety and complexity in meaning of life.

## 5.

At this point, a few examples from *Literature Nation* would be good. As in the Joyce quote above, these quotes contain self-explaining hints.

[Nouns take things personally]

[Escapist literature] uncovered from deep ancient trenches later translated into bird tracks and paw prints. Evasive bodylanguage is on queue, the route is magnetic & decisive. Small plants in northfacing windows crave the fiction of wilderness, [small planets in northern sky] are not as they appear.

[small planets in northern sky]

was red. A woven pad with fingers going in the wrong place. Thickened wool-batch, longing for the day of stick return, when the tribals would dismantle [theory monument to itself]. The leaning tent of branches and saplings. [beribboned with hair, yarn and skeletal jewelry], is on its way across the state line.

That is a sample from an earlier 'travel'. Here is a sample from closer to the end.

[the threadic specificity of our respective projects intertwined]

We go at it variously. Since our collaborative texts are email traded back & forth, they are conducive to sprawl, a crazyquilt garden memoired & tatted with convivial phraseology. Loom metaphors abound in the hypertext worldview, beginning with the [grand looms] which inspired Babbage to construct his first counting machine.

[grand looms]

Grids provide the [field for glyphic dance, linen] chenille, silk and wool the sensuous anchors for cyberflight. Tufts and tuffets, nets and nettles unsettled by catalytic high-rising, rhizomatic, the trees barely rise above the sea-level embankment. The flight from the heartland to the edge is instantaneous; that is why [joy is grounded] in the very day.

These samples contain qualities Barthes describes . . . mystique, tissue, intelligence. There are also Damon/And terms from the text that are similar 'rough surfaces', 'bird tracks', 'image', 'verbal architecture', 'textured language'. Don't forget the obvious irregular quality that would generally be called 'poetic'. But the prose-like nature of the writing covers this to some extent. Not overtly tied to any standard artistic form, to me, the form also suggests the grandeur of the novel. The words are put together loosely. I would say that the final strophe of those quoted above has a directness that could be called statement yet not like a factual writing. I feel that the strophes of *Literature Nation* have more directness and a higher energy than the somewhat mechanical Joyce work. Yet, like Joyce's work, no global theme emerges. The overall connection in the text is an unsequential series of insights or realizations that belong to the time of the exchange of the two authors. The randomness of the insights adds up to a humbleness, an increase in the anonymity of the work.

Taken as a whole, *Literature Nation* could be described as a long, complex, non-narrative visual poem, that uses languagewords, phrases, sentences in an idiosyncratic combinative way representative of the struggle of mankind individually and as a group to achieve mastery or completion or intelligence

consistent with its own distinctive though inexplicable being. This achieving is not necessarily spectacular or notably exceptional but might be a fulfillment of a common or perhaps unknown sort, such as learning to make cookies or giving birth to a child. In other words, the text could be described as using language qualities in a broad way to make a symbolic work of literature.

## 6.

However I think *Literature Nation* is more than this. It would seem we have a formula for a new style of writing. Yet I find a consistent criticism. In practice, the more complex style of visual writing becomes monotonous. Its complexity isn't the same as regular writing. Reading *Finnegans Wake* from cover to cover could be criticized as something like counting railroad ties. Many good readers would consider it a waste of time. 'One sentence is all sentences'. This leads back to the possibility of a verbal wall that may, in fact, be intended to discourage close reading, apart from the author's personal domain.

What, if anything, is the answer to this problem? A visual writer like Jim Leftwich would argue that 'semiology' the interaction of signs overcomes it. Leftwich's visual writing functions on multiple levels. I tend to agree. I think Chomsky's idea of 'deep structure' also applies. What is still undeveloped in visual writing is a fundamental understanding of grammar that can supercede the grammatical rules taught in highschool. Though the verbal constructions of visual writing are complex, they miss the chemical smoothness and release of meaning that ordinary sentences routinely achieve. The question is: What is grammar?

I believe the problem resides in this: Because words are used in a symbolic, 'representative' way, they remain pictorial and interact pictorially. Words that interact pictorially accrue into a presence. It's when words interact to accrue into an absence that they attain the diffuse activity characteristic of thought. The level of meaning for language is virtual. It is a level that does not exist. This relates to what language philosophers call 'praxis', the changing of words into activity.

Part of the problem I think is that language qualities described by philosophers are by-products of ordinary language use that have appeared over a long period of time and at the cost of much suffering. Though it is good that they can be described and appreciated, these qualities readily duplicated on their own aren't the same as syntactical word use. Prominent language qualities are not as meaningful as language use itself.

Writes James Edwards of Wittgenstein in *The Authority of Language*,

When one thinks philosophically of language as a calculus of rules, there is the powerful temptation...to be entranced by a certain picture of the matter, to idealize a certain image of language, and thus to forget what it could mean to be able to apply that picture in a concrete instance.

## 7.

Barthes seems to have an answer for this problem. Barthes describes a further element he calls 'temporality'. I have seen his temporality defined as the time it takes for the words to develop into understanding. I believe that temporality also refers to a time element of the sentence itself, perhaps like music, a timeliness, a quickness. Barthes relates temporality to the pronoun 'I', which in turn brings in

such elements as ideas, opinion, statement, 'the person', predisposition, 'subject'. For Barthes, temporality is 'a specific time of discourse'. (A specific time and place?) This temporality seems to relate to the 'deep structure' of sentences and the origins of grammar. Grammar is the rules that govern the interaction of words to achieve communication. Grammar is the movement of words together that cause them to cease being objects on their own and combine into meaning.

The priestly specialness of the writer is achieved through the visual, through separation of author and writing in a way that points upward to the iconic cultural eminence of language. But language-use is also associated with a lowness, self-humbling, an addressing of the mundane tasks at hand, and this lowness is what causes words to linguistically interact. Language-use is to some degree timely. The words of an individual author gain meaning in a temporary human context. Temporality is created by intent to communicate. The temporal aspect, that is, the 'temporary' arises because the context of word use, as long as it involves intent, can not be more than subjective, tied deeply to time, place and individual. Writes Barthes, 'There is never but one sole and great opposition in the discourse, that of the person and the non-person . . .' (It seems to me that an excitedness or high energy level of writing in this way can also be a temporal grammar.)

*Literature Nation*, on the cutting edge of these problems, uses the entire spectrum of language device in its poetic journey. It fuses textual and visual writing. It is at times visual and at times virtual, at times pictorial and at times grammatical, at times symbolic and at times explicit, at times permanent and at times temporary, at times withdrawn and at times *engage*. For a long time, Miekal And has been in the forefront of experimental writing in the U.S. His name reflects the amount of his commitment. Maria Damon, a teacher in the English Department at the University of Minnesota, lists among her special interests 'ethnopoetics', 'cultural poetics' and 'poetry of marginalized American subcultures'. Together, I feel they have pushed language use nearer the asymptotes that would enfranchise the unknowable depths within our collective selves.

Literature Nation is a [soul device]. Literature Nation paved with print and paradise.

To travel in Literature Nation is to vibrate between paranoia and joissance.

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# ***THE COMPLETE ELEGIES OF SEXTUS PROPERTIUS***

(Princeton University Press, 2004)

Translated, with an introduction and notes, by Vincent Katz

Review by Michael LALLY

I only remember three things from my schoolboy Latin, learned in Catholic schools of the 1950s. First, Caesar's famous lines "Veni vidi vici", ("I came I saw I conquered"). Second, *Mad* magazine mascot Alfred E. Newman's motto rendered in schoolboy Latin: "Quid Me (pronounced "may") Vexari?" ("What me worry?"). And third, what I was taught by one of my Latin teachers was the shortest poem ever written, "Odi et amo", ("I hate and I love"), by Catullus—although it turns out that's only the first line of a slightly longer poem, and definitely not the shortest poem ever written.

But that wouldn't have been the only obvious omission in the Latin lessons I endured throughout my Catholic high school years. For not much later, in the 1960s, a new translation appeared of Catullus's poems (in the Penguin paperback series) containing all the unbridled bisexual lust of his odes to women and boys, startling me, and many others I'm sure, into a re-evaluation of everything we'd learned in Latin classes.

But since the '60s there's been little to disturb the complacency that classic Latin texts have fallen back into—until now. With the publication of Vincent Katz's translations of the complete elegies of Sextus Propertius, we are given a new jolt out of our old ideas about our common history.

The raw sexuality of the 1960s version of Catullus became a necessary part of a general sexual awakening of the time, a recognition of what had been repressed for many decades in our culture, the reality that lust has always been a strong component of not only human creation and creativity and recreation, but honesty about how that common human drive can liberate and humanize what had been up to then often criminalized.

The elegies of Sextus Propertius are full of expressions of his own lust, though more romantically expressed than Catullus's, but it is the subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, anti-war message inherent in Propertius's elegies that is as equally necessary to our times as the exposure of the sexuality of Catullus was in the 1960s.

**If everyone agreed to sail through life like this,  
laying down their limbs, hammered from plenty of unmixed wine,  
the cruel iron and the fighting ship would not exist,  
nor would the Actian sea toss our bones,**

**and Rome, attacked on many fronts, would not be so often exhausted  
from letting down her hair in victories over her own.**

**My descendants will justifiably be able to praise these acts:  
our cups have offended no gods.**

**(Book 2, Poem 15, lines 41-48)**

The sexual liberation experienced in the 1960s has since been co-opted and corporatized into just another capitalist fetish, whereas the anti-war spirit of the 1960s has been repressed and demonized and even criminalized, much like sex had been before the '60s.

To see, through these brilliant translations, the connection between an ancient war-centered culture, in which aggression and violence were justified by the state and the powers that be, and opposition to that was belittled and dismissed and even destroyed, much as we are experiencing in our own country today, is to be enlightened in ways that are much needed now.

The secret to the vitality of these translations is Katz's ability to make the unfamiliar seem familiar, much as in a possible influence on his tone and even some of the language in these translations, the poet Frank O'Hara's references to obscure art and writing and personalities were made familiar by *his* tone and persona.

**Father Mars, and the fateful lamps of holy Vesta,  
may that day arrive, I pray, before my death,  
when I may see Caesar's axles weighed down with spoils,  
the horses pausing frequently to the crowd's applause,  
and lying in my girlfriend's lap, may I watch  
and read the names of captured towns on placards...  
Let them have their reward, whose labors earned it:  
for me it will be enough to be allowed to applaud on the Via Sacra.**

**(Book 3, Poem 4, lines 11-22)**

Katz has taken the best of what is post-modern about contemporary poetry and melded it with straightforward literalness when necessary to create a combination that is at once classic and contemporary, learned and completely accessible. In fact, he has created a new classic, and just in time.

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# ***Mouth Eating Mouth Eating Mouth***

A Review of

## ***I Like Your Eyes Liberty, SRI Moonshine 002*** **by Terry Riley & Michael McClure**

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**L**ike a storm building and churning, turning in on itself and then outward, upward rumbling, this new CD by Terry Riley, the musician, and Michael McClure, the poet, is a dizzying testament to McClure's depth and Riley's subtlety. In the first selection, titled "Evil," McClure intones that

*It is not easy being eyes, ears, nose, mouth, tongue and a mind shaped so close to continuous practice... this can be perfect.*

It cannot be easy to so effortlessly layer a room with perfect charm and tremulous cadence, but Riley and McClure weave a tapestry that moves from tranquility to cacophony and back almost instinctually, which affirms the years they have both practiced their art.

Riley's palette includes what must be bells, harp, harpsichord, piano, timpani, gongs, and all manner of percussive chiaroscuro, but I did not see instruments listed in the liner notes. McClure knows exactly when and how to strike vocal percussives or else waft long, drawn-out assonance along the far reaches of a line for effect—that never comes across as mere effect. The line between the form and function of McClure's delivery is imperceptible, both are one and serve the ultimate purpose of *marvel*.

In the fourth selection, titled "Each Side," McClure says

*Precisely interpenetrating/in countless directions./Free as the lion's smile/as she purrs through the dharma./A wren calls/like a bell/from the canyon/and layers of colors/rise over the mountain/at sunset. Motorcycles/grunt/from the freeway/searching for excitement/I KNOW THIS*

All of McClure's lines, these being from his book *Plum Stones: Cartoons of No Heaven*, are more than the sum of their parts and come alive with his voice laying a veneer of additional emotion and sense to each. Riley fills in and leads off, intermeshing a variety of different sounds like the other hand of two fingers interlocked.

The trumpeter Booker Little once said, "I can't think in terms of wrong notes—in fact I don't hear any notes as being wrong. It's a matter of knowing..."

McClure and Riley on this recording "know" where each line or riff leads before it is begun and therefore create circular passageways of thought and seem to suspend and reinvent time at will to make things interesting. McClure—throughout—deals with many themes but chief among them is the concept of Time. He writes

*"COMPASSION IS BORN/SIXTY TIMES/in each second/of illusion/laughs out/clouds/while the cleaver falls/on a dust ball."*

The fifth track, "Doorways," shows McClure and Riley really letting loose and breaking through speech toward groans and whispers and fevered background accompaniment. This move from a more meditative sound to a slightly more chaotic one entrances and excites as the two nearly chase each other through an

aural forest of their own creation. The listener is privy to a multitude of thoughts and emotion as passenger on this melody. This may be the most interesting track on the album and the listener is reminded that all of McClure's poetry could indeed be considered a doorway. McClure and Riley trade growls, coos, and chirps against percussive cymbal staccato gongs as this track takes off like a smoke ring in a room full of Siamese cats.

Indeed it seems as if McClure has a secret for us that can only be spoken in low tones. In "Coming" he relates,

*"COMPASSION,/O WISE ONE,/for these scattering skulls/and crude jagged stones.../and the unending memories/of tiny black beetles,/and pink seaweed/of crusty coral/at/the/shallow edge/of the pool;/ALL,/ONE."*

Will the corporate vandals who are sucking the blood from this earth stop their destruction for a single moment and listen to Riley and McClure? It would be wise for them to do so. The listener is renewed by listening to this poetry—like a snake shedding its skin—and the realization comes that all *is* one. In an increasingly desperate, interdependent world, the livelihood of one truly affects the well-being of all. Fitting that McClure should be interested in the structure of things and of origins because he's had a lifelong passion for the biological sciences. It was Whitman who wrote...in the beauty of poems are "the tuft and final applause of science." This is merely the gist of McClure's big wave of thought. Within that wave is a microcosm that would take lifetimes to explore in depth.

This collaboration is simultaneously a celebration of the oracular origins of poetry and an expansive meditation or extenuation of themes that bear repeating (because our existence on earth depends on it). Also, there is a real concrete aspect to the sounds on this disc even as it ascends the heights. Perhaps this is because Riley and McClure are such experienced observers, savvy to the machinations of the cosmos, discovering ever newer constellations that this listener will look forward to exploring on many a night to come.

McClure describes his hearing of *I Like Your Eyes Liberty* as "the fledging and shedding of souls as they are created—and the movement from man-language and man-music to the melody in our dark dumb brilliant wise silent flesh." I have to agree. That these cuts were recorded as is, often as a single take or two, is remarkable. They gel inchoate, yes, but ultimately, this new offering from Riley and McClure hits home on so many levels and should be a must-have addition for any audiophile with even a passing interest in McClure and Riley's work or even for those who simply want to hear some important new sounds from two veteran alchemists.

Review by Larry SAWYER

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# BETWEEN REASON AND DESIRE: A review of

## *So One Could Have* by Mark Salerno

ISBN 1-888996-86-2

In Mark Salerno's latest book of poetry, *So One Could Have*, the details pile up like the moments of an extraordinary day. What we have in this book is a casually scientific exegesis on the passage of time. In lesser hands this tall order might have become an exercise in tedium, but Salerno pulls this off in a most deceptively simple and likable way with these sonnets, using repetition to enact what constitutes a nearly cinema verite effect. This ebb and flow in Salerno's new book provides a real sense of what is true of the fluid nature of human consciousness. Existence entails a constant process of redefinition. This book achieves that superlatively.

Any given day, for most denizens of earth, is a harried series of moments. The challenge is to not only move through life with aplomb and accomplish something but also to add up these moments and decipher any supposed meaning. The relative aspect of human existence aside, good art is unflinchingly good at representing some facet of a communal reality or a reality so personal it becomes communal—without moralizing. This said reality may be represented as completely irrational and fantastic, banal and predictable, or somewhere uniquely in between—the skill lies in recording it faithfully and then stepping aside. Salerno is a subtle master of stepping aside and satisfying the aforementioned criteria.

One thing that makes this book so interesting is Salerno's use of caesura.

*I used to be feeling now I am a penny arcade*

(from "Small World," p. 27)

These are poems that use monolithic pauses to accentuate moods and ground each thought. Nearly after each wisp of observation comes a forceful void, which outlines the music of these lines like the vibratory lines in a Mondrian painting. Not that these poems are static—on some level I was reminded of sonnets in the classical sense in that they address some illusory "other"—they are in fact very fluid and positively hum with the seemingly liquid, lifelike quality that denotes consciousness. In "Pink's" (p. 59) Salerno states

*In seeing one thing we probably see many*

*wherein I gathered all my passing moments*

*to reconstruct a bibelot and a merely stupid*

*O befuddled longing O track of wonder*

Salerno does seem to see many things at once and his poetry allows the reader to experience a similar luxury. This book is a photo lab of discrete stock-piled images. Salerno seems to instinctively know how to post-modernly question what most have accepted as foundations of Western humanism with the nonchalance of a sleight-of-hand man.

*we awake as good as another from dreams*

*I hate that Picasso and Newton screwed up*

*science and the Renaissance was a mistake*

*I love the light before the blue and the*

*time it takes to be here it is the role*

(“Small World,” p. 27)

Salerno’s reticence is not overpowering, however; it seems to be more of a beginning than an ending for him. His dispassionate attitude seems to be more of a harnessing of power and a summing-up rather than a giving-up or a defeat. These poems detonate somewhere between despair and revelation in a middle ground that is somewhat alluring and mysterious.

The inversion of thought and image in some of Salerno’s best lines is what lends the work in this volume a somewhat cinematic quality.

*she said nice little town you got here*

*sheriff with eyes on the stranger logic*

*wanted the big hit the big grab and skip*

*over the border it’s a helluva country*

*to be modern in cottonwoods and damp cuffs*

*a building falls down but the sky stays put*

(“Coda,” p. 69)

There is a disheveled beauty in the immediacy of this book, but the downside of that is sometimes this reviewer felt perhaps some of these lines rely a bit too much on a journalistic impulse. Usually, at moments such as these in *So One Could Have*, however, the poet’s idiosyncratic method serves to bring the reader quickly back around—whatever slack or uninteresting strophes are compensated for by another apt turn of phrase which surely follows.

Repeated quips and worthy quotes (such as an occasional cut from Shakespeare) abound in *So One Could Have*. Salerno is searching in these lines for something perhaps illusory. The reader will be washed with a Berriganesque cavalcade of sensory impressions upon immersion in this book. What one is left with is a faithful rendering of the inherent mystery of a life, lived in the minute details, yet encompassing multitudes.

Review by Larry SAWYER

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# A LETTER FROM CHARLES BERNSTEIN

**Note:** *Several years ago, Arkadii Dragomoshchenko asked me to write a "letter from New York" on the topic of the holiday season for the St. Petersburg newsweekly Na Nevskom.*

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November 22, 2001

Dear Arkadii,

You ask me to give you a report on the holidays from New York. This is not an easy topic for me as during these days I fall into a kind of haze, lost in my thought, trying to lose my sense of where or when or what, at least momentarily.

You see, I've never liked holidays. The problem is not so much the false cheer; grimness is not to be preferred. No, the holidays, the days off from work, always hold the hope of catching up—with my sleep, my reading, my writing. But all that is absorbed in compulsory socializing. Before you know it, you're further behind than when the holiday began.

By this point, late in November, everyone is exhausted over the topic "9-11." Everything is subject to the "9-11" test—how does this read/sound/play after September 11. One has to fight ferociously with oneself to take the time from our 9-11 consciousness. But without taking a break, there can't be any perspective.

Today my son Felix went to the annual Thanksgiving Day parade, presented by Macy's, the big department store. Hundreds of drum majors and majorettes are flown from the South and Midwest to pound out marching band tunes to an adoring, but apparently tone deaf, crowd. Almost unknown celebrities from daytime TV wave expansively at the cheering crowds, who turn to one another and say, "Who is that? . . . I've never heard of him!" Huge balloons of popular movie and TV characters float above Central Park West, a reminder that we inhabit a world of Disney Gods who live in a DVD Olympus. A large native Hawaiian contingent does walking Hula dances in skimpy attire that is no match for the New York's autumn chill; we all say, as in a round—"Do you see what they're wearing? . . . They must be freezing!" Felix eagerly thrusts his hands out to all the passing clowns and gets many big shakes. It is all exactly as always, exactly as I first saw this parade almost fifty years ago. The same grand boulevard running along the park, the same tunes piercing the crisp air. Life has not proceeded at all and I feel as if I must not yet be born.

My brother teaches at an elementary school a few blocks from the World Trade Center site. When the buildings got hit, the children had to be evacuated. The school has been flooded with assigned condolence letters from children across America. "Now children," the teachers say, "let's send a letter to the downtrodden youngsters of SoHo." Bags of letters on identical size cards with chocolate candy kisses arrive with such sprawled greeting as, "My name is Billy. I am sorry your parents or close relative died. My favorite sport is bungyball. What's yours?" Of course, such letters cannot be passed on to the kids and besides no one in the school lost parents. The school is also being flooded with gifts, even though these kids are quite well off; the gifts would be better directed to the poorest schools in Brooklyn and the Bronx or uptown Manhattan. But holiday giving is directed obsessively, almost manically, at the 9-11 victims. As a result, the homeless

and poor, a growing number these days, have even less help than usual.

November 22 is one of those days etched into the consciousness of many of my generation, since on this day thirty eight years ago John F. Kennedy was shot. It's odd perhaps that this year the anniversary falls on Thanksgiving, that quintessential American holiday that recalls the pilgrims eating turkey their first few years after landing in a very harsh New World. The New World has always been harsh, too harsh for too long for too many. But it also offered not just the promise of something different but more important the start of something different. Starts and stops, it's true; and no destination in sight. But we continue anyway. We have no choice, there is no place to which to return.

Anyway, isn't this the time to say: We are all getting back to normal here in New York. I am feeling absolutely normal. Totally and completely normal.

The problem is: I never felt normal before.

In a little more than a month, by my count, we will come to the end of the first year of a new century. It seems like a very long time from now.

My love to you and Xena. We think of you both and of our happy days in Petersburg in August, especially that day we drifted down the Neva.

Or did I just imagine it?

Charles

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# Clayton ESHLEMAN

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## Vallejo's Charge

Francois Vitrani has asked me to address my relationship to the poetry of Cesar Vallejo. I apprenticed myself to poetry in Kyoto, Japan, in 1962, by committing to a publishable translation of Vallejo's European poetry, then called *Poemas humanos* (1938). As I stepped into the quicksand of this poetry, as a novice without a path I was also driven to confront my own background as well as what seemed to be my destiny in language.

On a translational level, this commitment has resulted in the publication of *Human poems* (1968), *Spain, Take This Cup From Me* (1974), a retranslation of both these books, with Jose Rubia Barcia, in 1978 as *The Complete Posthumous Poetry*, and finally, in 1992, of *Trilce*. In 1965/66 I spent a harrowing 9 months in Lima, Peru, trying unsuccessfully to gain access via the poet's poisonous widow, to the worksheets for the never completed European poetry.

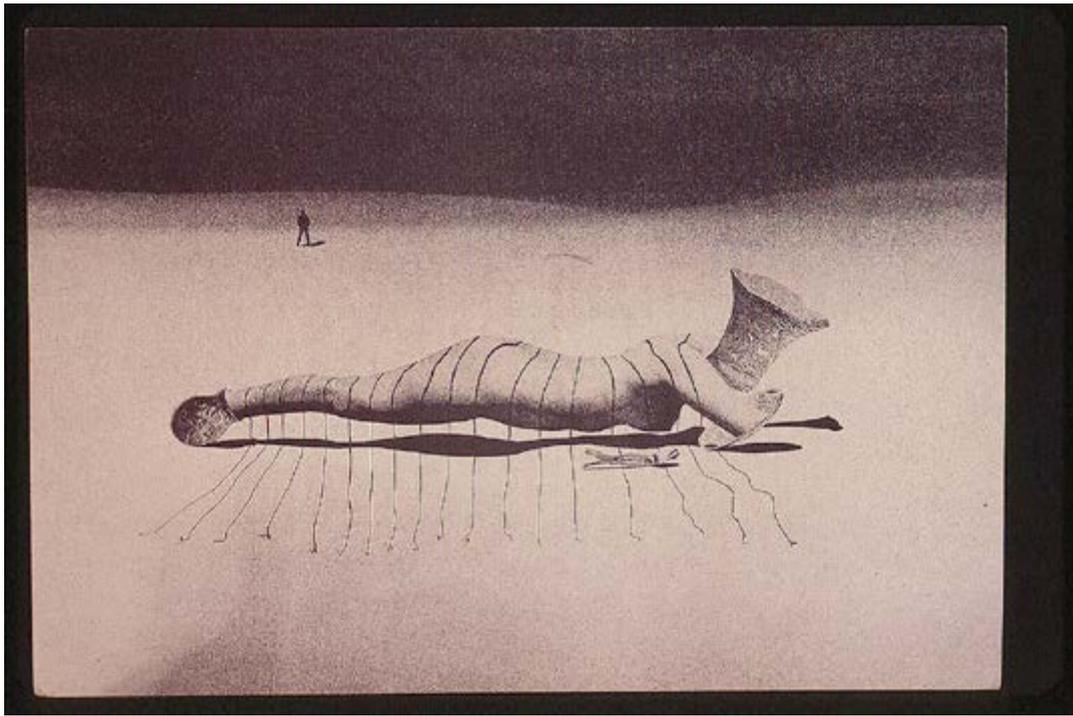
On a psychic level, my difficulties in Kyoto in writing poems which seemed to be my own, and my difficulties in transforming Vallejo's Spanish into accurate American poems, became entangled in a drama where Vallejo in the guise of a medieval Japanese overlord commanded me, as a dishonored samurai, to commit seppuku. I did, discovering in the place of self-destruction "a dark red flower moving / with heaven's untiring power." In a way that today strikes me as evocative of shamanic initiation, I had engaged my master in a Jacob/angel struggle and jettisoned my given life for a creative one.

This successful double apprenticeship is at the core of my unfolding as a poet, translator, editor, essayist, and investigator of the origins of image-making via the Ice Age painted caves. What this tortured and truthful Peruvian essentially offered me was the possibility of a confrontation in which, in exchange for translating him, I learned to imprison myself in global life, to stew in what was happening to me, and to make some uncommon sense out of it. More than any other artist, Cesar Vallejo has granted me permission to say anything that would spur on my quest for authenticity and for constructing an alternate world in language.

13 April 2004

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# PERCEPTION MISPERCEPTION NONPERCEPTION

by John SOLT

*From the exhibit catalogue "YAMAMOTO Kansuke: Conveyor of the Impossible," Tokyo Station Gallery, August 22–September 24, 2001. The exhibit was a great success with 9,000 visitors. It was featured on NHK television's premier art program, "Nichiyoubi bijutsukan" (Sunday Art Museum), and all 3,000 copies of the catalogue were sold out. I thank Mr. Yamamoto Toshio for kindly allowing his father's photographs to be reproduced here, and Mr. Inada Takeo, director of Tokyo Station Gallery, for giving permission to reproduce John Solt's article which was first printed in the exhibit catalogue. All Japanese names are given in the customary manner of surname first.*

—Larry Sawyer

**Click underlined phrases in the text below for links to YAMAMOTO Kansuke's photos.**

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## SURREALISM IN FRANCE AND JAPAN

Yamamoto Kansuke was active between the eras of the daguerreotype and the disposable camera, specifically from 1931 to 1987. Surrealism in France and Japan differed in many respects. Surrealism's leader, Andre Breton, had high hopes for the movement. Based as it was on Freudian psychology, surrealism was supposed to lead to an understanding of the "blueprint of thought." Penetrating the mystery of consciousness would achieve a liberation breakthrough for humanity. Surrealist art, photography, and poetry needed to transgress the societal norm to achieve political

status. For them to lose their edge and fall into mere aestheticism was a danger feared by Breton.

In Japan, Freudian psychology was not widely practiced or understood. Rather than being interested in the unconscious *per se*, artists and writers in the movement were excited by the production of surrealist imagery. In this sense, the Japanese artists are a kind of second-generation reaction to the initial experimentation of the Westerners, and the Japanese provide a valuable viewpoint on that initial production. For example, when considered facing Europe, some of Kansuke's work can be seen as a dialogue with Western artists such as Salvador Dali, Yves Tanguy, Jean Miro, Man Ray, Rene Magritte, and Jean Arp. The same oeuvre, when having Japan as its audience, becomes in part a translation of those Western artists into Japanese. For example, Kansuke's realistic photo of a nude descending a spiral staircase is surely a translation of Marcel Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2" (1912).

It is similar to what Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) and other Japanese woodblock artists meant to Vincent Van Gogh. No one faults Van Gogh for being imitative or getting ukiyo-e ("floating world pictures") wrong. Rather, critics are impressed by his openness to the work of foreign artists. When it comes to the Japanese, however, the word "imitative" curiously becomes the predominant filter of perception, and the overriding approach of questioning.

In Japan, surrealist imagery that would by Breton's standards seem wholly aesthetic and non-transgressive—such as Kansuke's photographs—was persecuted by the Special Higher Police (Tokubetsu koto keisatsu, abbreviated Tokko, who specialized in crimes of thought and were commonly referred to as the "Thought Police"). Breton's fear that surrealism not grounded on political (i.e., communist) ideology would lack any punch and just wow the visual cortex was not applicable to Japan. The strangeness of surreal imagery in itself "stunk of butter" ("bataa kusai"). In other words, it was too Western, and that was reason enough for Japanese to reject it.

Using Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopias" or "sites of resistance," we can say that Breton did not conceive of the purely aesthetic as a viable heterotopia but the Japanese police did. Since the police decided the imagery was subversive, there is no reason to believe that the assailed Japanese photographers would have concurred with Breton's limited focus. Rather, for them the aesthetic could be a highly charged political ground.

European surrealists initially had qualms about the medium of photography. With painting and writing, early surrealists favored the technique of automatism for probing the subconscious mind. At first they wondered whether automatism could be applied to photography, because pressing the camera shutter is a conscious, not subconscious, manipulation. Over time, however, there was such an outpouring of fascinating surreal photography and collage work that the powerful imagery itself sufficiently muted further questioning about the possibilities of the medium.

## JAPANESE SURREALISTS AND WESTERN NO ACTORS

You might wonder if there ever has been a great Western No actor, or if there could ever be a great Japanese surreal photographer. Your initial response might be to say, "Why not? Obviously, surrealism, a modern movement, was not exclusive regarding ethnicity." On closer observation, however, a similar canonization process is at work in both scenarios. A Western No actor cannot be acknowledged as a superior actor without the approval of the Japanese No establishment. Likewise, at least from a Japanese perspective, because surrealism is a movement with Western origins, a "foreign" (i.e., Japanese) surrealist would need endorsement from the Western establishment.

Japanese surrealists could form a branch office, but their participation would be meaningful only if endorsed by Breton's headquarters in Paris. The French surrealists didn't see it this way—they seem to have been numb to the existence of the problem. Apart from the Japanese seeking out Western surrealists—such as Takiguchi Shuzo (1903-79) visiting Breton or Kansuke publishing Eluard, Dali, and others—there is no indication that Western surrealists were interested in the surreal work of the Japanese.

In fact, Japan itself was not highly regarded by the Belgium surrealists, who excluded it from their "Surrealist Map of the World, 1929." The Japanese police, however, did take notice. When the distant French at their Paris headquarters became communists, the Japanese police rounded up local surrealists, such as Kansuke in Nagoya, Nakagiri Masao (1919-83) in Kobe, and Kitasono Katue (1902-78) and others in Tokyo. Kansuke had been in contact with with Western surrealists through Yamanaka Sansei (1905-77, also Chiruu or Tiroux), fellow Nagoya-based poet and close friend. Kansuke had printed the Westerners' artwork and translations of their poems in his elegant journal, *Yoru no funsui* (*Night's fountain*, 1938–39), until he was forced to stop by the Thought Police.

Kansuke never used his contact with Europeans as a launching pad to send them portfolios of his photographs in hopes of getting them published abroad. He was never so calculating or self-serving. Consequently, Western surrealists had little idea of Kansuke's talent, except what they could glean from his occasional contributions to *Yoru no funsui*. For their part, the Westerners were more interested in promoting their own work abroad than in taking interest in the work of their artist "friends." The neglect becomes tragic when we realize that prominent Japanese surrealists and modernists suffered for the sake of their artistic production.

Takiguchi Shuzo was a Japanese surrealist poet, painter and art critic who corresponded with Breton. Takiguchi spent six months in jail in 1941 for being a surrealist. After the War, he went to visit Breton in Paris and returned to Japan with a photo of the two taken in the Frenchman's study. The jail sentence and the photo are the kind of tangible evidence of lineage that Japanese seem to appreciate, and they have been reproduced countless times, giving weight to the Takiguchi-Breton relationship and, by extension, to Takiguchi's brand of surrealism. Without such endorsement, a Japanese artist's claim of belonging to a particular movement can be called into question.

There has to be a double endorsement, first by the Western critical establishment and then a rubber-stamping by the corresponding Japanese establishment. You could say that the Japanese artists were free to produce whatever they felt like, and that is true, but in the act of canonization the Japanese avant-garde critical establishment has never wavered in seeing Japanese versions of surrealism and subsequent movements of foreign origin as necessitating Western approval. An artist could obtain this approval either by having lived abroad or by having received the endorsement of a famous foreign artist.

The logic is the same as if an American were to stake a claim to be a great No actor. Americans who know nothing about the genre might be inclined to ask which "authentic" No actors or critics have endorsed him. You might say that surrealism is a universal concept—albeit of Western origin—and therefore anyone can claim to be a surrealist. However, even in the West, endorsement from other participants in the movement was helpful or necessary. You might wonder if I am suggesting that the words "Japanese surrealist" are an oxymoron. Not exactly, because there have been great Japanese surrealists, such as Kansuke. I am suggesting that in Japan there has been a gap between the production of surreal imagery and its general acceptance by the critical establishment, although the situation has been improving over the last decade.

Japanese were, almost by definition, unable to speak authoritatively on the topic. Westerners who did have authority—either the surrealists themselves or later critics of the movement—almost totally

ignored Japanese surrealism from disinterest or simply because they hadn't been exposed to it. I am not discussing Kansuke as if he were a lone surrealist working at an obscure outpost. A story often told by Japanese poets and artists active in the pre-Pacific War period is that Andre Breton was shocked to learn in 1936 from a Japanese artist in Paris that 500 poets and painters in Tokyo considered themselves "surrealists."

**How many current specialists of Western surrealism can name even one twentieth-century Japanese surrealist poet, painter, or photographer? It would be rewarding if this exhibit were a step in rectifying that situation.** Another difficulty in gaining legitimacy for Japanese surrealists has been the unconscious absorption by the Japanese critical establishment of the self-orientalizing stereotype of misperceiving themselves as "imitative." The logic is circular and, not coincidentally, self-affirming for the West. Were a Japanese artist to diverge from the Western norm (for example, regarding surrealism) and show originality or reformulate some of the (surreal) ideas, he or she would be condemned for having misunderstood the movement. At best, you could be a facsimile; at worst, you would be considered a fraud. Poet Kitasono Katue, who absorbed dadaism, surrealism and other -isms only to weave them into his own peculiar blend, was evaluated as somewhat dubious by the literary establishment in Japan.

Questions revolve around who has the right to join a foreign movement or to be influenced by one. Who holds the credentials and how were they obtained? How firm is the evidence of one's association with the European headquarters? These are the kinds of peripheral issues that have prevented people from seeing Kansuke's images and making their own judgments, both in Japan and abroad. Serious interpretation and evaluation of his imagery has been almost non-existent.

## KANSUKE'S RELATIVE NEGLECT: JAPANESE CRITICS "ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL"?

People may fault Japanese critics for their relative lack of attention to the work of experimental or surreal photographers such as Kansuke, but because of the above-mentioned situation regarding Western approval, they have had their hands tied, for the most part. Nevertheless, there have been a few major exhibits dealing with Japanese surrealism, and a handful of Kansuke's photographs are always faithfully included. His photos have occasionally been featured on the covers of magazines. A collage of his from 1938, for example, was the prominent frontispiece of an anthology titled *Nihon no shuururearisumu* ("Japanese surrealism").

That being said, I am still surprised that the photography publishing industry and leading galleries dealing with avant-garde art have not picked up on his work. This catalogue is Kansuke's first book. I wouldn't have expected that his photos would have remained buried for this long. I believe that in vision and praxis Kansuke is on a par with any surrealist or modernist photographer—Japanese or Western. His photography is branded with his personal style, his career follows a recognizable yet exploratory trajectory, and his brand of humor is unmistakable in its elegance and subtlety.

His body of work created over a lifetime contains more than a few masterpieces. It amazes me that he produced quantity and quality from 1931 to 1986 and yet no one had the inclination to publish even a tiny selection of his photos in, for example, a pamphlet. Kansuke has been dead for fourteen years, and now, finally, the first serious look at his oeuvre is coming out. In that sense, everyone has been "asleep at the wheel," except Yamaguchi Kenjiro of T.B. Design Research Institute in Ginza, who held a solo exhibit of Kansuke's photos at his one-room gallery, Imagination Q & P, in 1988.

I should add that one main reason why Kansuke has been neglected (except by the police!) is that he lacked interest in self-promotion. He had strong ideas about photography (see the quotes from his writings), but he was dignified and self-effacing with people. He allowed his photos to speak for themselves. Many artists who achieve mainstream status are connected to the establishment, and they keep one eye on their artistic production and the other eye on the cash register. Kansuke, however, was dedicated to avant-garde principles and, therefore, to pure experimentation. He had sufficient outlets for his work—such as photography and poetry journals, and group exhibits—that allowed him to ignore the commercial establishment. He and the mainstream developed a mutual neglect based on mutual disrespect.

Within the avant-garde establishment, he had a fine reputation. He was a member of the *VOU* Club (run by Kitasono Katue) from 1937 to 1978. *VOU* was sent to Ezra Pound, Kenneth Rexroth, Kenneth Patchen, Henry Miller, James Laughlin, and dozens of other avant-garde literati worldwide with whom Kitasono corresponded. It was one of the best and most prestigious independent poetry and arts clubs in Japan, and Kansuke was highly regarded within it. The club boasted a lineup of first-rate photographers, each of whom deserves fuller treatment in his or her own right: Torii Ryozen (1913- ), Kitasono, Tsuji Setsuko (1927-93), Takahashi Shohachiro (1933- ), Okazaki Katsuhiko (1929- ), Kiyohara Etsushi (1931-88), and Ito Motoyuki (1935- ) are among the most notable names.

In Nagoya, Kansuke started his own avant-garde group, VIVI. In his mid-twenties he edited and published *Yoru no funsui*, which is now considered the greatest surrealist magazine in terms of paper quality. It was printed on exquisite "gampishi" (literally, "wild-goose skin' paper"), which is the finest available and reputed to last for over two millennia.

Kansuke had outlets for his photos, especially the thirty-one *VOU* exhibitions which were held from 1956 to 1976. One exhibit took place in Milan, Italy, and the rest throughout Japan. Kansuke's involvement with *VOU* and VIVI kept him active in avant-garde circles. Like any creative artist, he continually shifted gears within his overall sensibility. Kansuke never seems to have craved mainstream recognition. He might have had an occasional photo in a popular magazine or even have won a prize, but for the most part he led his artistic life comfortably on the margins, experimenting month after month, year after year, decade after decade. The photographs are testaments of his breakthroughs.

## KANSUKE'S TECHNIQUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

In contrast to the documentary or press photo that aims to report a frozen moment of reality, Kansuke probed the interior life of dream landscapes and borderline consciousness. [He regularly used an exaggerated perspective](#) by placing diminutive people in the far distance to create a sense of mystery. He also liked the angle of looking diagonally down on a scene from a bird's-eye view, allowing for the intimacy of a voyeuristic experience. Mediterranean imagery and the mythology of the sea appear in his archetypal landscapes. Among his recurrent themes are the eroticism of woman and the landscape as nude. At times, he combines them.

Kansuke's attention to composition is evident in his manipulation of collage and montage. His cropping also shows an understanding of how meaning and effect can be altered by creating or eliminating borders. I find at least four areas of innovation in Kansuke's photographs.

First, there is the work, usually collages of incongruent images, such as the [telephone in a cage](#) or the [string wound through a pin stuck on a hat](#), in which there is a familiarly surreal juxtaposition but

with his individuality imprinted on it by the choice of objects.

Second, there are the photos that use the techniques of surrealism but are of specifically Japanese subject matter, such as the ["futon" piled ten high](#), located in a field under a cloudy sky, the ["shoji" \("sliding door"\) with torn paper panels](#), and the [numbered lockers at the public bathhouse](#).

Third, there is the background used in a couple of photos in which Kansuke bends dimensions in a surreal way that I haven't noticed elsewhere. In the photo we observe the bottom corner of a room in which the floor is made up of two surfaces converging at right angles, as is expected. However, the vertical line, which should run up the two walls rising from the two surfaces of the floor, is absent. Instead, we find a single wall made up of a continuous, flat surface. How could the floor and wall of the same room not converge geometrically? Quite subtly executed with mind-boggling effect, [Kansuke thwarts expectations using dimensional distortion](#).

Fourth, there are the dramatic sequence photos, usually three to five photos presented vertically or horizontally to form a narrative. "photo story: Kuki no usui boku no heya" (["My thin-aired room"\) is an example of this group](#). Kansuke often exhibited these photos from the late 1950s on, under the bandwagon of "concrete" or "visual poetry." The word surrealism was passe to the *VOU* group from the mid-1930s. As Kitasono Katue put it in his 1936 letter of self-introduction to Ezra Pound (the year before Kansuke joined the club): "We started from Dada and passed [through] Surrealism. And at present we are connected with no '-ism' of Europe."

Katue admired Kansuke's work, which his rave review in *VOU*, no. 53 (1956) makes evident. Katue praised Kansuke's titles and regarded the photos themselves as "filled with poesy" and "carrying a poet's voice." In calling the series of photos in Kansuke's exhibit "poetic" lay the seeds of what would evolve into Katue's own merging of poetry and photography which he referred to as "plastic poetry." Katue wrote:

*"Yamamoto Kansuke's one-man photo exhibit at Matsushima Gallery in Ginza for one week from November 24 [1956] was a touch on the refined side. His career as an avant-garde photographer can be traced back to the mid-1930s.... His long-time avant-gardism is displayed in the polished photos, and the VOU poet in him shows through in the titles. The color photos 'Utsukushii tsukonin' ['Beautiful passerby'] and 'Hana hiraku rekishi no sujo' ['The lineage of blossoming history'] are excellent examples of how subdued color tones can be used. The same can be said for the romantic work 'Kaze ga watakushi no mae o yogiru' ['The wind crosses before me'] and 'Kaaten no hako' ['The curtain's box'], which resembles an abstract oil painting; in both we can recognize the glittering of his unique spirit. Furthermore, his originality is indicated brilliantly in the four-panel 'photo story: Kuki no usui boku no heya' [["My thin-aired room"\]](#). For avant-garde photographers, this series of poesy-filled photos provides revelations of a new world. The camera—that quaint old machine—has been able to carry a poet's voice by means of this genre breakthrough."*

## KANSUKE'S POETRY

Katue was leader of the *VOU* group, which had from its inception aimed at gathering avant-garde practitioners from all the arts. The thirty or so members were attentive to Katue's views, such as on photography's relationship to poetry. He accorded poetry a central position, and almost all the members wrote poetry, even those who were primarily musicians, painters, architects, or photographers.

In 1958, Katue reiterated his long-held position: "Poetry is the passport to all the arts. Anyone who wants to do something in the art world must grasp his own 'poesy.' All the arts are nothing but a variation of poetry; in that sense it is meaningless to call photography easier than poetry or the novel more difficult than poetry." [*VOU*, no. 61 (May 1958): 27.] Therefore, it was not odd that photographer Kansuke would also write poetry.

Here follow my translations of seven poems by Kansuke. In 1988, they were selected with his drawings and made into a postcard series by Torii Shozo, another talented *VOU* poet, and Yamaguchi Kenjiro. Each of the poems has a French title.

***Profond aujourd'hui:***

extremely  
faint  
glass and  
flowers'  
fluttering  
wind's  
diagonally  
swaying  
necktie  
holding it  
for a while  
tired pipe's  
insides of  
soundless  
dried  
laughter  
within it  
hot  
cluster  
falls into  
waste basket's  
inside's  
simple  
single-sheeted  
clumsy  
piano

[*VOU*, no. 64, 1958]

***Fond d'aujourd'hui***

severe  
wind and snow  
on the  
cargo ship  
to Cambodia  
2:05  
Elcilon P  
never  
felt comfortable  
wearing that  
white apron  
wrinkled  
comic books'  
elegance  
appropriately  
suddenly  
what exploded  
an hour previous  
in light feathered  
private part was  
Bergram's  
Pile

[*VOU*, no. 66, 1958]

### *Pouls d'aujourd'hui*

but  
he was a good guy  
forgotten  
gallop  
for sure  
he won't  
return anymore  
between two  
hard benches  
already  
the smoke  
rises up  
walking through time  
XYZ  
this  
secret  
longing and  
gapless  
travel weary  
PH 480  
this  
gaseous state's  
window's other side  
suddenly  
a space  
made of glass  
is pushed open  
by a falling  
Sesna

[VOU, no. 67, 1959]

### *Cote d'aujourd'hui*

certainly  
it'll teach  
from beyond the glass  
shaking its head

### *Coup d'aujourd'hui*

unintentionally  
raising a hand  
it disappeared  
a calendar  
starting with Benois  
already  
a soft  
rain falls  
a flowing ribbon and  
a ribbon shape  
this agate state's  
clipper ship  
already there was  
casually  
entangled  
melancholy  
you and  
or you in plural  
this dexterous  
betrayal's  
far off  
surly  
skyscraper

[VOU, no. 70, 1959]

### *Lobe d'aujourd'hui*

a glass-like  
map-like  
something  
easily breakable things

for example  
like a lie  
an overcoat is flapping  
a kind of wind which  
may blow tomorrow  
first open the suitcase  
because you don't want to err  
these 24 hours  
wearing a white mask  
and rubber gloves  
like a sanitized assistant  
next to you  
standing  
this orderliness like a pencil  
and  
silent pendulum  
yet  
very  
courageously  
slipped in  
suddenly  
between us  
sewers and basements and  
all the buildings across town

[VOU, no. 73, 1960]

were lined up  
an empty  
chair-like  
town-like  
simple ionized line  
in such a hurry  
irretrievably  
taking time's hand  
by chance calculated  
shape is put forward  
like a room  
facing toward  
my shoulder  
suddenly breaking off and falling  
sound-like  
laughter-like  
something  
fragile

[VOU, no. 76, 1960]

### *Lapret d'aujourd'hui*

nonchalantly  
blowing a flute  
extinguished  
from a fragment of wind  
of wave of glass  
of wrinkle of wave of stripe of wind  
secretly  
swallowing tears  
singing Tarutaran  
on this day  
the subterranean chamber  
was emerald color  
the time above  
the crossroad nibbles at the clock  
one instant  
makes a flicking sound

from the rooftop pouring down  
atmospherically

[*VOU*, no. 91, 1963]

Yamamoto Kansuke was influenced in style by Kitasono Katue and other *VOU* poets, both in the methods he used to achieve discontinuity and in the type of quasi-scientific vocabulary that was favored at the time as innovative. Having said that, I should add that he was original in subject matter, had a good sense of rhythm, and knew how to develop a poem while creating a high-strung sense of tension and absurdity. He tends to subvert and pervert Japanese grammar in imaginative ways.

Occasionally, Kansuke uses the "kakekotoba" or "pivot word," a technique in Japanese poetry which dates back to the eighth century. Images fluidly connect and disconnect with one another. Part of the effectiveness is that the pivot word swings in two directions, like a hinge. An example of a pivot word is "wrinkled" in the following lines:

*Elcilon P / never / felt comfortable / wearing that / white apron / wrinkled / comic books' /  
elegance*

As far as I know, nobody has yet written about Kansuke's poetry, and I think it is certainly worth critical consideration. The relationship between the images in his photos and his poems is intriguing. With words he seems to be making a montage of sharp images, yet he is also creating abstract images that defy the ability to be photographed, or even easily imagined. For instance, how would you picture "a fragment of wind of wave of glass / of wrinkle of wave of stripe of wind"? or, "[A] calculated / shape is put forward"? Kansuke explored the potentialities inherent in the different media of photography and poetry.

## KANSUKE'S POLITICS

Kansuke was not a flag waver, and if you see his photographs and read his prose and poems, you might think them merely aesthetic specimens. Ironically, his act of creating now seemingly non-political pieces got him in a lot of trouble. One false move and he could have been jailed for months.

Methods were different, but the Japanese and Nazis both pursued avant-garde artists. A Nazi tactic was to exhibit the abstract work of avant-garde artists, especially Jews, interspersed with abstract, often obsessive, art done by mental hospital patients. Even to the trained eye, the mixture raises interesting questions. According to Masao Miyoshi, "The doodles and paintings of mental hospital patients—such as those in the Prinzhorn Collection at the University of Heidelberg—become 'art' only if and when they are *sold*."

In any case, Kansuke's politics started with his name. He was born Yamamoto Kansuke

(山本勘助). Yamamoto is a common surname meaning "foot [moto] of the mountain [yama]." Kan means "intuitive, easily grasps" and suke means "to help, rescue." Put together, it could mean

"Intuitive Rescuer at the Foot of the Mountain."

Sometime in 1936 or 1937, around the time the Japanese military involvement in China heated up, he kept the *sounds* "Kan-suke" but changed the two Chinese characters to “悍右.” The first character, "kan," has a range of meanings from "strong, ferocious, keen, and sharp" to "rough, rude, harsh, and violent." It is used in compounds such as "kanba," which means "unruly/runaway horse." In other words, it is used to designate the uncouth in contrast to the refined. The second character, "suke," is the mundane directional word "right," which, along with "left," had been used as a suffix for names since ancient times. Put "kan" and "suke" together, and we can see he was accusing the "violent right [wing]" for politically ruining the country.

Okazaki Katsuhiko, who considered himself a student of Kansuke (and was also a *VOU* member), told me that Kansuke once explained to him that he changed his name to "violent right" as an activist statement that began with how he referred to himself. In renaming himself, Kansuke demonstrated both a knack for tongue-in-cheek self-abnegation and a willingness to strike out at the government.

It seems to me difficult to be more political than with one's own name. Malcolm X chose his name as a way to point a straight line to history, slavery, cause and effect. Kansuke did something similar with his own situation, although in a more euphemistic way.

Incidentally, Okazaki is a colorful character who grew up as the son of a yakuza (i.e., mafia) boss in Nagoya. Although Kansuke was Katsuhiko's photography mentor, Okazaki also influenced Kansuke, especially in introducing him to the strip joints and underground dives where Kansuke met some of his main models. I should add that Kansuke also used professional models, often going on location with two or three photographer friends. He also photographed his attractive wife.

As I mentioned, Kansuke was persecuted by the Tokko ("Thought Police"). He had planned to make at least six issues of *Yoru no funsui*. In November 1938, he published 100 copies each of numbers one, two, and three. Then in October 1939 he published 65 copies of number four.

Kansuke recalled, "During the war, I was called in by the police and [*Yoru no funsui*] was suppressed. I remember that shitty time vividly." He was subjected to questions such as, "In this surreal poem of yours, what do you mean by the third line of the second stanza? And, how does your surreal photography aid in Japan's war effort?" According to Kansuke, "It was a frightening experience. I needed to evade their questions while not saying anything that the police might interpret as incriminating to me." Kansuke was released on the condition that he no longer publish *Yoru no funsui*.

Other surrealists were less fortunate. The Tokko considered poet and art critic Takiguchi Shuzo and painter Fukuzawa Ichiro (1898-1992) to be surrealist agents working clandestinely for the international communist movement. They spent over half a year in separate detention centers, in line with the common judicial practice of not indicting suspects but wearing them down with interrogations and confinement for months or years under miserable conditions. Takiguchi and Fukuzawa received the harshest treatment, yet they were fortunate in being released before Pearl Harbor. Prisoners held after the outbreak of the Pacific War often did not fare as well because of the shortage of supplies, and a great many of them died of malnutrition and disease.

Kansuke must have found it painful to attempt an explanation on what his abstract and surreal photos were doing for Japan's war effort. One of the most pernicious aspects of state control is the power to formulate incriminating questions during interrogations. You may wonder why the police

fixated on surrealist imagery. Besides the movement's supposed ties with international communism, surrealist or modernist/post-modernist imagery is inherently ambiguous. Even when the image itself is clear, such as Kansuke's [woman with leather staples in her back](#) or his [woman with needles in her legs](#), the meaning is ambiguous.

This ambiguity is—however minor—a confrontation with or resistance to the press photo and its worldview. In other words, for the Thought Police the realism in front of the camera implied that the mind behind the camera had an understandable point of view which could further the country's patriotic goals. Unrealistic photos were a threat and implied mental aberration. Those were apparently dangerous, nightmarish times for Kansuke. I don't think the totalitarian system effectively broke him down; rather, it frightened him, which in the long run had the effect of reconfirming his convictions.

In Kansuke's wartime writings, however, he did give a nominal wink to the Japanese tradition and its militarist guardians by invoking Zen and the tea ceremony, which were acceptable buzz words supporting the cultural backbone of Japanese nationalism. For example, in March 1941 he wrote, "Because we are self-conscious of the spirit of Japanese romanticism, our earnestly pure romance informs the shape of our photography the way Zen informs the tea ceremony." It's not stridently militaristic, but there is also no whiff of resistance in his alluding to "Japanese romanticism" and equating it with "our [bokutachi no]... pure romance." He said exactly what the militarists wanted people involved with culture to say.

## A SPIRITUAL DOPPELGANGER

Each Kansuke photo or series of photos is naturally different, but at the risk of being dubbed an essentialist, I think it is worthwhile to consider the special characteristics of his photography in general, compared with that of Western surrealists.

As much as I personally enjoy Western surrealist imagery, I find that the artists regularly tend to bombard with stimulation in trying to evoke a surprised response. Hans Belmer's dismembered dolls in erotic poses is a good example, but so are Man Ray's angular close-ups of women's necks, backs and other body parts abstracted to a kind of geological proportion which gives them a monumental status.

Kansuke also can evoke shock, such as his photo of a woman's legs with needles stuck in them, or his photo of a woman's back with leather staples. More often, however, I am captivated by Kansuke's exquisite sense of composition and his freedom to leave space blank. I don't know a Western photographer, surreal or otherwise, who has been less inclined to fill in the spaces. Kansuke's lines are clean and his images are crisp. It's as if his photos are a response to Western surrealists, and he is suggesting that there is no need to be showy and overwrought; rather, one can find sophistication in understatement.

Kansuke's photos elicit a smile rather than a belly laugh. If it can be said that they reflect the intersection of his conscious and subconscious, then his world is permeated by a kind of stillness. Simply put, he is not afraid to stimulate mildly. He implicitly lays his chips down on the side of subtlety as more intriguing and powerful than, for example, the overtly grotesque, in-your-face imagery that shocks at first glance but then tends to fade in effect over time.

Rather than calling Kansuke a minimalist, I would go a step further and call him an "ephemeralist."

Most artists wish to leave works which they consider solid and substantial, but Kansuke's output—whether the photos, poems, his miniature book, *Butterfly* (which incidentally is the Japanese term for a stripper's G-string\*), or his essays on photography—all seems to me to be a celebration of the ephemeral.

In siding with the impermanent and the minute over the more common paradigm of a continually emitting and heavily charged semiotic structure, he was following one favored type of Japanese aesthetic. We can locate that aesthetic not only in the Edo period, but also in the Zen-influenced Muromachi and Kamakura, as well as in the earlier Heian period. In this sense of favoring the ephemeral, I find Kansuke's link to one strong artistic tendency within the Japanese tradition.

For example, like flower arrangement, his imagery is a play between absence and presence, between filled and blank space, and the thread running through it is not the might of a fist or the hysteria of a nightmare, but the tender and fleeting moment of a daydream. His stance can be refreshing and courageous, and I think he has a lot to offer to both photographers and scholars of photography, especially to Westerners who are less familiar with the pleasure of this type of light-handed sensibility. In the sense that Kansuke was in a constant "dialogue" (actually two monologues that never crisscrossed) with the West, he was a spiritual doppelganger, an East Asian comrade-in-camera.

\* Kameyama Iwao, a close friend of Kansuke and publisher of *Butterfly* among 150 other miniature books, chidingly wrote in 1988, "The only volume Kansuke published in his lifetime was *Butterfly*, a miniature book of tales from striptease joints. This somehow shows the hazy character of the man."

## SURREALISM AS A GENERIC TERM FOR EXPERIMENTAL

I've been using the word "surrealism" in relation to Kansuke, and it's easy from the present to look back retrospectively and dub him a lifelong surrealist. At closer analysis, however, it is apparent that he took in various influences during his almost sixty years of continual activity.

I have mentioned minimalism, which was a post-World War II movement, but there was also the basic interest in abstraction—patterns, shapes, light and dark contrasts—since his earliest work. Also, all the members of the *VOU* Club were heavily influenced by the Bauhaus, especially its accent on geometric lines and a simple, clean aesthetic. And we can see [elements of Mondrian's parallel and perpendicular lines in some Kansuke photos](#).

I think it's useful to keep in mind that there were many different styles under the banner of surrealism, such as those of Salvador Dali, Rene Magritte, Yves Tanguy, and Andre Malraux, to name a few. And, of course, each artist changed over time. The continual influx of Western movements—such as futurism, dadaism, and surrealism—made the Japanese weary of trying to stay in vogue. As soon as they proclaimed themselves adherents of the latest craze, they were told that it was outmoded.

By the late 1920s, Kitasono, Haruyama Yukio (1902-94) and others used the French phrase "l'esprit nouveau" to cover anything modernist or avant-garde. I prefer the blanket term "experimental" when referring to Kansuke's oeuvre, because it includes the surreal, the abstract, and other categories, yet it usually stands in sharp contrast to the realistic press photo.

## KANSUKE'S WRITINGS ON PHOTOGRAPHY

Following are a few excerpts I translated from Kansuke's articles and essays to give a sense of his artistic outlook over time:

"To take one step forward requires an extraordinary talent." (1940)

"New thinking is created by combining unknown concepts.... For poets, using words to think is both the tool for their thinking process and the material for their thoughts." (circa 1941)

"Three-dimensional objects are transformed into flat pictures. This easy transformation traps photographers.... We shouldn't overestimate the mechanism of a lens. There is no way that reality can be copied." (1949)

"We should distance ourselves from over-rationality and lyricism and create a new beauty based on the human psyche. We should not only understand that  $2 + 3 = 5$ , but also grasp it from the viewpoint that 5 is the sum of  $2 + 3$ ." (1950)

"The surreal exists within the real. Tireless experimentation with new photography leads to the creation of a new beauty." (1953)

"I purposely don't give advice regarding technique. I tell young photographers not to look at photography magazines. Rather, they should develop their own way of seeing." (1967)

"It's more important what you photograph than how you express what you do." (1967)

"What is a good photograph? [Experimental] photography—unlike a knife or fountain pen—has no practical use or function. We can locate the rationale for photography's superiority in its total lack of purpose, complete uselessness, and absolute meaninglessness...To put it concisely, good photos aim at revolution...They emerge from everyday events and connect to revolution." (1977)

"What is called beauty is closely related to the times. Yesterday's beauty is always different from today's beauty. On the one hand, a work of art responds sensitively to its times, and on the other hand it creates those times. To state it clearly, true beauty creates the future, but...a work of art in some sense must raise questions." (1980).

## KANSUKE'S FINAL DAYS

Among the last drawings Kansuke did in the hospital, a few weeks before he died, included one masterpiece of self-irony. [He simply drew a log on a hospital bed](#). I see that drawing as a modern version of the long line of drawings by Zen masters. It sums up his knowledge of life and is a kind of last testament. I find it interesting that his final statement of self-expression came in the form of a drawing rather than a photo or poem. With that deft stroke, he again showed that his life was the work of art and his artistic production merely a continual shedding of skins.

Kansuke shocked many people who knew him by specifying in his will that he wanted nothing to do with the customary Buddhist funeral in which the corpse is cremated. Instead, he donated his body to medical science.

## *Yamamoto Kansuke: Conveyor of the Impossible*

he saw through the prism  
of his one cracked eye

and took us behind a mirror  
merging dreams with non-dreams

his collages of positives and negatives  
glimpse the world of ghosts

boats float along underwater breasts  
the sun eye sets on the horizon

his swirling face with umbrella in hand  
in a rain-soaked room in underwear

day by day incrementally  
he unraveled illusions

a bed hangs in the sky like a cloud  
inviting us to roll over and awaken

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**YAMAMOTO Kansuke** (1914–1987) was one of the leading lights of Japanese avant-garde photography. A poet as well as a photographer with surrealist leanings, he encouraged the development of avant-garde photography in Japan and was a leading member of the "Nagoya Photo Avant Garde."

**John SOLT** is associate-in-research at the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard University. He spent thirteen years knocking on art museum doors in Japan and the U.S. before this groundbreaking exhibit on Yamamoto Kansuke's photography was accepted by Tokyo Station Gallery. Solt is author of *Shredding the Tapestry of Meaning: The Poetry and Poetics of Kitasono Katue* (Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), currently being translated into Japanese for publication by Shichosha in 2006. In 1998, Solt produced the video "[Glass Wind: Kansuke, Kit-Kat and Kazuo](#)" ([highmoonnoon.com](#)), which includes the only remaining 8mm films by Yamamoto Kansuke.

For comments or questions on Solt's essay, he can be reached at [highmoonnoon@hotmail.com](mailto:highmoonnoon@hotmail.com).

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[milk home](#)

# BONFIRE IN THE LITCH: Poetry celebration at a New Hampshire organic farm

by George WALLACE

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*He who eats the fruit, should at least plant the seed; aye, if possible, a better seed than that whose fruit he has enjoyed,"* wrote the great American 19th century philosopher Henry David Thoreau in his journal "Two Weeks on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers," in 1839.

To which I might add this: anyone who has forgotten that a carrot is a work of art or that a radish is a gift from God needs to go back to the farm.

A farm like Nesenkeag, that is, where Eero Ruuttila and his family celebrated their organic farm operation, with an afternoon of poetry and song on the banks of the Merrimack River where Thoreau camped, outside of Litchfield, New Hampshire.

For the third year running, and in the winesap and brilliant hue of New England's autumn skies, Eero and family hosted an afternoon of poetry and song as friends gathered from locations as near as Nashua NH and Lowell Ma, and from as far away as Portland Maine and Cherry Valley NY, Staten Island and Long Island.

I had the good fortune to be lead performer in this year's activities—following in the footsteps of Janine Pomy Vega and James Koller—along with Simon Pettet, a Manhattan-based writer with origins in the UK, established literary connections to writers like James Schuyler, and close association with such artists as Allen Ginsberg, Herbert Hunke and Rudy Burckhardt.

In our turn, Simon and I stood before a group assembled around a fine old 'Bonfire in the Litch' (Litch, Eero explains, is an Old English word for corn stubble) and spun our tales as flame licked log and gray smoke rose to join with the 'glow'ring gray' skies of southern New Hampshire.

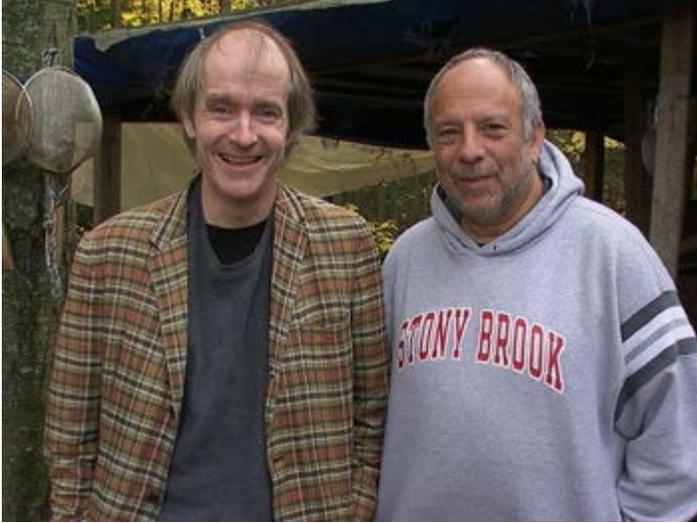
Back at the farmhouse afterwards, the festivities continued well into the evening—from barnloft to country kitchen, as much a friendly gathering of like-minded individuals as the day's program of activity—with visits from people like Mark Hanlon of Cherry Valley; *Cafe Review* editor Wayne Atherton; Nashua NH poetry organizer Doc Cote; Lowell Celebrates Kerouac organizers Meg Smith and Larry Carradini; and Beat videographer Laki Vazakas.

It was a fitting day for Eero—a man feted by both the local Chamber of Commerce and by the nation's continually-evolving network of Bohemian aesthetes—his wife Liana, 12 year old son Eric and the rest of the Ruuttila family. After all, in his work as an organic farmer and a participant in the world of alternative and Beat literature in America, he is following the dictum of Thoreau—who camped on the very land Ruuttila farms—that "he who eats the fruit should at least plant the seed."

## A VIABLE ORGANIC FARM

In over fifteen years as manager of Nesenkeag Farm, Ruuttila has done just that, by establishing a viable and well respected organic farm operation on the Merrimack River. And beyond that, sharing the fruits of that

operation with food banks while helping leading figures in the world of alternative American literature to revisit the meaning of the great American family farm.



Poets Simon Pettet and George Wallace at Farm Day

All Saturday, small groups of visitors accompanied Eero on walks along the Merrimack with his black lab Lydia—where native bamboo grass leans riverward in the breeze, where gnawed trunks betray the effects of recent "beaver action," and where Thoreau and his crew of travelers stopped one Monday night to write these words: *"Then, when supper was done and we had written the journal of our voyage, we wrapped our buffaloes about us and lay down with our heads pillowed on our arms listening awhile to the distant baying of a dog, or the murmurs of the river, or to the wind, which had not gone to rest—or half awake and half asleep, dreaming of a star which glimmered through our cotton roof—to tours through the rich fields."*

Some of those fields were planted with late kale, arugala, or other fine mesclune greens and salad crops bound for Boston markets; others with finger crescent potatoes, miniature white beets, bright red and yellow miniature carrots, long lines of miniature burgundy sunflowers.

A few of the fields were already set for the winter with cover crops like winter rye, field pea, or hairy vetch, a methodology for which Ruutilla has drawn the considered attention of regional farmers—and the interest of oriental markets in Boston, where in particular he has learned the market value of repeatedly harvesting pea-shoots from his field cover through the growing season.

"I don't mind a morning frost, it brings out the sweetness," said Ruutilla, looking out over a crop of raddicchio in the chill of a New England sunset. "I just have to watch out for a freeze." Later, touring the lower fields which were last flooded after Hurricane Bob created havoc in New England a decade or so ago, he contemplates irrigation and water control methodologies, and looks out over the Merrimack. "We should take the kayaks out on the river in the morning," he says, and tosses a stick into the river for a grateful Lydia. "That's the best way to get the full feel of what Thoreau experienced."

All in a day's work for Ruutilla, who as the Farm Manager for Nesenkeag Cooperative Farm, Eero oversees operations for 40 acres of farmland, all of which is certified organic.



Nesenkeag Farm's Eero Ruuttila, with Mark Hanlon, George Wallace and carrot

## FARM ROOTS BACK TO FINLAND

Eero got his start in farming at the age of 16, when visited relatives in Finland for a year (1966-67), and helped them with their farming after having grown up in central Illinois. It was a typical northern European working farm, he recalls: dairy cows, fruits, hay. He likes to say that his grandfather was an old-school organic gardener in New Hampshire—back before any non-organic farming ever existed.

He is a man who has been influenced greatly by his reading: mainly Thoreau and Gary Snyder, he says, putting aside his involvement in the creative writing influences of Colorado's Naropa Institute—where he associated with Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky and Anne Waldman—and his continuing association with the naturalistic and environment oriented strains of American Bohemian culture.

Before going into farming full-time himself, Eero spent seven years as the wholesale buyer for NorthEast Co-operatives, a large association of organic New England farmers. During that time, he organized a direct-buying program with smaller local farmers and also solicited federal grant money to help pay for the continued expansion of the Co-op's network of farmers throughout New England. Then came a stint as the first Massachusetts inspector for NOFA (NorthEast Organic Farm Association) in 1985.

Finally after working part-time at Hutchins Farm, an organic farm in Concord, Massachusetts, he came to Nesenkeag.

Nesenkeag Co-operative Farm was incorporated in 1982, by Bill McElwain, as a charitable, non-profit, educational farm, in the spirit of preserving greenspace and providing healthy food to low-income residents in the area. It is located along the sandy banks of the Merrimack River, just north of Nashua and Hudson NH, on the eastern side of the river where rural agriculture still prevails over the more developed commercial and industrial corridor of Route 3 on the western banks. A protected farm whose development rights were purchased by the state a number of years ago, it is situated on an incredibly rich and productive bank of black soil, several feet deep, left behind by glacial action.

Nesenkeag was operated in the early years by what Ruuttila describes genially as "political/hippie-type volunteers." In 1987, he was hired as farm manager, and took on the challenge of organizing the farm as a self-sustaining, viable business. A transition that would take 5 years to complete, he developed his connections with distributors, became a member of a number of Co-ops, and started to develop some restaurant accounts. Later on, relationships with different Food Bank and other distributions services,

including one to an extensive Southeast Asian community in Lowell, developed.

## THE CAMBODIAN CONNECTION

It was through this network that Ruuttila began working with Cambodian refugees as farm hands—a stable group of families with plenty of experience in their native country to bring to bear to the work—and set about working his several fields to produce some of the finest exotic greens one might find in the best restaurants in America. A tour of the farm reveals an odd melding of aesthetics and technologies—in one barn, combines and tractors are co-located with traditional Cambodian threshing baskets, and the fields in the morning are an uncanny vista as Cambodian women in their woven straw hats work the rows. Behind the refrigeration truck Ruuttila uses as a storage room the workers have built a small Buddhist shrine; in Eero's office are pinned a kaleidoscopic collage of technical manual notes, quotes from Ginsberg, Burroughs and Kerouac, and Sanskrit inscriptions.

Lunch break for the workers—which I had the good fortune to share—is a festive and broadly smiling Southeast Asian micro-moment, consisting of curried vegetables, lightly pickled greens, white rice, small dishes of chicken and pork, and soft-spoken conversation.

Somehow, it all comes together under the umbrella of Eero Ruuttila's vision. Despite some rocky moments with less ecologically aware farmer neighbors, he has earned high praise for his work from business and agricultural interests—not to mention from America's alternative writers, many of whom Eero has hosted at his farm or collaborated with on writing projects in locations as diverse as New York and Boston to Colorado and San Francisco.

All told, the festival was an opportune moment to stop and take stock of that work—and the gathering afterwards in the kitchen and dining area of Ruuttila's farmhouse an opportune moment to reflect on the comradeship alluded to by Thoreau in "Two Weeks On The Concord and Merrimack."

Here are Thoreau's words, written on the banks of that river, as the great American philosopher stopped to camp with his brother John for the evening: *"We had found a safe harbor for our boat, and as the sun was setting carried up our furniture, and soon arranged our house upon the bank, and while the kettle steamed at the tent door, we chatted of distant friends and of the sights which we were to behold, and wondered which way the towns lay from us. Our cocoa was soon boiled, and supper set upon our chest, and we lengthened out this meal, like old voyageurs, with our talk."*

Standing with Eero Ruuttila on spongy black soil looking out over a river rolling southward on the eastern edge of his farm; past the old Nesenkeag Creek Henry David Thoreau himself camped on 175 or more years ago, it was evident that the farmer and his family—with the help of Cambodian workers—had ample reason to feel he had successfully turned an extraordinary series of open fields of southern New Hampshire into a rich rare shelf of fertility.

Into, in fact, a historic intersection of responsible farming and high aesthetic thought on the banks of the Merrimack River.

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# Cesare PAVESE

## translated by Linh DINH

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### **In the Morning You Always Come Back\***

Dawn's faint breath  
breathes with your mouth  
at the ends of empty streets.  
Gray light your eyes,  
sweet drops of dawn  
on dark hills.  
Your steps and breath  
like the wind of dawn  
smother houses.  
The city shudders,  
Stones exhale—  
you are life, an awakening.

Star lost  
in the light of dawn,  
trill of the breeze,  
warmth, breath—  
the night is done.

You are light and morning.

*\*original title by Pavese in English, written for his lover, the American actress Constance Dowling*

### **The Cats Will Know\***

Again the rain will fall  
on the sweet pavements,  
a light rain  
like a breath or a footstep.  
Again the breeze and the dawn  
will blossom lightly  
beneath your footstep  
as you reenter.

Among flowers and sills  
the cats will know it.

There will be other days.  
There will be other voices.  
You will smile alone.  
The cats will know it.  
You will hear antique words,  
tired and empty words  
like the disused costumes  
from yesterday's festivals.

You too will make gestures.  
You will respond with words—  
face of Spring,  
you too will make gestures.

The cats will know it,  
face of Spring;  
and the light rain,  
the hyacinth-color dawn,  
that tears the heart of one  
who no longer longs for you,  
they are the sad smile  
you smile alone.  
There will be other days,  
other voices and awakenings.  
We will suffer at dawn,  
face of Spring.

*\*original title by Pavese in English, written for his lover, the American actress Constance Dowling*

## Street Song

Why be ashamed? When one has done time,  
if they let one out, it's because like everybody else  
who belongs to the streets, one has been in prison.

From morning till evening we wander the avenues  
whether it's raining or a beautiful sun's showing its face.  
It's a joy to meet on the avenues people who talk  
and talking among ourselves, bump into girls.  
It's a joy to wait and whistle at girls from doorways,  
hug them on the streets and take them to movies  
and smoking in secret, lean on their beautiful knees.  
It's a joy to talk and finger them laughing,

and at night in bed, feeling flung on one's neck  
their two arms pulling you down, thinking of morning  
when one is released from prison in the fresh sunlight.

From morning till evening wandering drunk  
and watching laughing passersby enjoying everybody  
—even ugly people—just to feel themselves on the streets.  
From morning till evening singing drunkenly  
and meeting drunkards and starting discussions  
that last a long time and make us thirsty.  
All these characters who go talking among themselves,  
we want them with us at night, down in the trough,  
and to hound them with our guitar  
that skips drunkenly and cannot stay confined  
but throws the doors wide open to echo in the air—  
outside water or stars may rain down. It doesn't matter  
if on the avenues at this hour no beautiful girls are strolling:  
among us is one who laughs to himself  
because he has also been released from prison tonight,  
and with him, raising a ruckus and singing, we'll make it to morning.

## Habits

On the asphalt of the avenue the moon makes  
a quiet lake and my friend remembers other times.  
A spontaneous encounter used to be enough for him  
and he was no longer alone. Looking at the moon,  
he breathed in the night. But the freshest scent  
was of a woman encountered, the brief adventure  
on unsure steps. The quiet room  
and a fleeting desire to live there forever  
filled his heart. Then, under the moon,  
he returned with long strides, dazed and satisfied.

At that time he was his own great companion.  
He woke in the morning and jumped from bed  
finding his own body and his old thoughts.  
He liked to go out under the rain  
or the sun, he enjoyed watching the streets,  
and talking to people spontaneously. He believed  
he could always change his metier  
up to the last day, each new morning.  
After great exertions he sat smoking.  
His greatest pleasure was to be alone.

My friend has aged and now wants a house

that he could cherish, and leave at night,  
and stop on the avenue to look at the moon,  
but find on his return a subdued woman,  
a quiet woman, patiently waiting.  
My friend has aged and is no longer content with himself.  
The passersby are always the same; the rain  
and the sun, the same; and morning's a desert.  
To exert is no longer worth it. And going out under the moon,  
when no one's waiting for him, is no longer worth it.

## Two

Man and woman watch each other lying in bed:  
their two bodies stretched out wide and exhausted.  
the man is still, only the woman takes long breaths  
that quiver her ribs. The legs distended  
are bony and knotted in the man's. The whispers  
from the sun-covered street are foisted on them.

The air hangs impalpable in the heavy shadow  
and freezes the drops of living sweat  
on the lips. The gazes from the adjoining heads  
are identical, but they no longer find each other's bodies  
as when they first embraced. They nearly touch.

The woman's lips move a little, but do not speak.  
The breathing that swells the ribs stops  
at the longest gaze from the man. The woman  
turns her face close to the man's, lips to lips.  
But the man's gaze does not change in the shadow.

Heavy and still weigh the eyes within eyes  
at the warmth of the breath that revives the sweat,  
desolate. The woman does not move her body,  
supple and alive. The lips of the man come close  
but the still gaze does not change in the shadow.

## Black Earth Red Earth

Black earth red earth,  
you come from the sea,  
from the arid green,

where there are ancient  
words and bloody toil  
and geranium among rocks—  
you don't know how much you bring  
of toil and words from the sea,  
you're rich like a memory,  
like the barren countryside,  
you hard and sweetest word,  
ancient because of the blood  
gathered in the eyes;  
young, like a fruit  
that is a memory and a season—  
your breath rests  
under the sky of August,  
the olives of your look  
sweeten the sea,  
and you live and live again  
without amazement, certain  
like the earth, dark  
like the earth, a grinder  
of seasons and dreams  
that reveals itself under the moon  
to be so old, just like  
the hands of your mother,  
the bowl of the brazier.

## **You Have a Face of Carved Stone**

You have a face of carved stone,  
blood of hardened earth,  
you came from the sea.  
All is gathered and scrutinized  
and rejected by you  
like the sea. In your heart  
there's silence and words  
ingested. You're darkness.  
For you, dawn is silence.

You're like the voices  
of the earth—the splash  
of a pail in a well,  
the song of the fire,  
the thud of an apple,  
resigned words  
and thumps on thresholds,  
the cry of a boy—things

that never go away.  
You're not mute. You're darkness.

You're the closed cellar,  
of beaten earth,  
where once entered  
a barefoot boy  
will always remember.  
You're the dark room  
he'll always remember,  
like the antique courtyard  
where the dawn revealed itself.

## End of Fantasy

This body won't start again. Touching his eye sockets  
one feels a heap of earth is more alive,  
that the earth, even at dawn, does not keep itself so quiet.  
But a corpse is the remains of too many awakenings.

We only have this power: to start  
each day of life—before the earth,  
under a silent sky—waiting for an awakening.  
One is amazed by so much drudgery at dawn;  
through awakening within awakening a job is done.  
But we live only to shudder  
at the labor ahead and to awaken the earth one time.  
It happens at times. Then it quiets down along with us.

If touching that face the hand would not shake—  
if the live hand would feel alive touching it—  
if it's true that that cold is only the cold  
of the earth, frozen at dawn,  
perhaps it'd be an awakening, and things that keep quiet  
under the dawn, would speak up again. But my hand  
trembles, and of all things resembles a hand  
that doesn't move.

At other times waking up at dawn  
was a dry pain, a tear of light,  
even a deliverance. The stingy word  
of the earth was cheerful, for a brief moment,  
and to die was to go back there again. Now, the waiting body  
is what remains of too many awakenings and doesn't return to the earth.  
They don't even say it, the hardened lips.

## Death Will Come with Your Eyes

Death will come with your eyes—  
this death that accompanies us  
from morning till night, sleepless,  
deaf, like an old regret  
or a stupid vice. Your eyes  
will be a useless word,  
a muted cry, a silence.  
As you see them each morning  
when alone you lean over  
the mirror. O cherished hope,  
that day we too shall know  
that you are life and nothing.

For everyone death has a look.  
Death will come with your eyes.  
It will be like terminating a vice,  
as seen in the mirror  
a dead face re-emerging,  
like listening to closed lips.  
We'll go down the abyss in silence.

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# Janos PILINSZKY translated by Michael CASTRO and Gabor GYUKICS

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## Don't Be Scared

I could do it, but I will not do it,  
I'm planning it, raising the issue of it,  
I'm just playing with myself, that is all,  
I should rather cry than be brave.

Although sometimes I'm scared, delight  
flowing toward my throat might entomb me,  
what is just a ruminant horror,  
what would happen if I did it?

What would happen if I kindled you  
in your house on a sleepy night?  
You'd be destroyed there and those whom  
you loved would perish with you! Die together.

Before, I would examine your room,  
I would sit there for an afternoon,  
I would inscribe in my brain where your bed sits,  
the papers pattern on the wall,

the stairs that lead to your door,  
I want to know what will be with, and against you,  
where will the fire go and where  
the rebellious room will press you in?

Because you will burn. Below in the yard  
a gaping mouth opens for you,  
a crying pain, a swallowing throat.  
Vainly, you'll rip through doors and windows.

I'll stand across the street and devour it all:  
the smoke grow woolen on the firewall,  
gather itself in an inflamed bouquet and burst,  
a bloody bundle beneath a narrow roof!

That hot anguish that killed me before  
now flows over you like puss  
you'll be a dark, dented, numb wound,  
like the night and my face down there.

It should be so. But nothing will happen.  
Even in hell, my faith did loosen.  
This game gives me no consolation.  
This point is the deepest of the night.

That I cursed you? Think what you like.  
You don't interest me, I've never loved you.  
Sleep restfully, drink and eat,  
and if you understand my curses—don't be scared

## Paraphrase

As a nourishment for all,  
as it's been written,  
I give myself as a living food,  
to the world to be eaten.

Because all who live  
must play the hungry game,  
might be your best lover,  
yet smears blood on your name.

I toss and turn in bed  
and shudder till I start  
thinking who guzzles up  
the beating of my heart!

What kind of trough this bed is,  
say, what kind of trough?  
And what pushed me here, what desire,  
what kind of gorgeous puff!

How the horde gobbles up  
my heart that's ceaselessly coming!  
I am living nourishment  
stammering and throbbing.

I'm your living food  
always and totally  
digest my essence  
to understand my gluttony.

Because he who belongs to no one,  
is a morsel for every one.  
So waste me you awful love.  
Murder me. Don't leave me to anyone.

## **Autumn Sketch**

From below the alert garden  
a tree ascends into space,  
the stillness is frail and empty,  
the meadow looks for boundaries.

Your heart sinks into fear,  
and the lurking road runs away.  
the stem of a rose with a nervous smile,  
gazes into herself:

in distant dubious regions  
pain is being prepared.

## **What Kind of Underground Fight**

I've forgotten you for days,  
I realize with shock one evening  
while, for a cigarette in my empty pocket,  
I'm drowsily searching.  
Did a gluttonous, ganglionic bush  
of my nervous system swallow you?  
Perhaps. Or else with my two bare hands  
I've chocked you.

Whatever, it's all the same  
murderers don't ponder.  
However it happened, you are  
already six feet under.  
With abandoned gray hair,  
you're lying under the ground,  
amidst my cremated cells  
in the clotted mud.

That's what I thought then, foolishly

pondering, until tonight  
when a sudden force innocently  
drifted me to your side  
a dream lay me, bound me  
beside you flat  
we lay like poor men huddled  
together on a thin straw mat.

Like an acrobat high in space  
startled by his partner,  
I plunged with you  
to the hell down under  
I followed you, to my ruin,  
shivering, myself forgotten,  
now again my conscience had taken!

Like a prisoner on his last night  
embraces his jailmate  
and cries for himself  
though they share the same fate,  
I embraced you,  
thirstily, weeping  
as we would dare to love  
both dead and living!

Was it an accident, a trap may be,  
that I aging could see you?  
Since then I can't find myself  
here or there, not one clue!  
I ask myself a hundred times  
how can you go on living while you're dead?  
Did you burn or, like a doused basement fire,  
are you only smoldering in your ashy bed?

What kind of underground fight  
what kind of blood is this  
that in the corners of my eyes  
since dawn today exists?  
The confusion continuously grows  
the passion is so cruel,  
I believed I buried you  
but are you killing me after all?

I'm frightened, I don't know what happens  
if I dream again lures my love  
I want you, yet hastily  
throw clods on you from above.  
In my mouth I taste a stench  
or furtive hell:  
Oh my God, what do you hide and guard  
at the bottom of tomorrow's well?

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# James H. BATH

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Bio to come

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## I WAS CALLED UPON TO SERVE JURY DUTY

I was called upon to serve jury duty. Hell of thing. Well maybe not 'Hell' of a thing, since Hell is real hot with rivers of molten lava glowing red and black, flowing through valleys more blistering than a world-sized oven on full broil. Only a volcano could breathe that air. I was breathing this air, so it couldn't be Hell.

But it was just like it, nevertheless.

I just hate leaving the house, that's all. I mean, how many times does it happen that you're on the way to the store and see composers in the trees, and you quite naturally figure you can stop and chat with them to catch up on the gossip, if the monkeys aren't throwing coconuts at you.

I ran into Beethoven the other day, after the monkey threw him at me.

"Ludwig! How are you?"

"Guten Morgan, Herr Thomas," he said, brushing himself off in the most dignified manner he could muster and casting an offended look back at the trees.

"Nice piece," I said.

"Vhat piece?"

"That symphony. The number 5 thing. The one you did in C minor. You know... da da da daaa..."

"Oh. Ja. Nice piece. Da da da daaa. Da da da daaa," he sang, raising his arms and waving them playfully at the blue sky, as if conducting an orchestra in the snow-colored clouds.

"How did you come up with it?"

"Zee whole thing? Zee whole Symphonie?"

"Yes."

"I ride zee wave of zee infinite. How else? Is only way to make musik."

"Now, Ludwig, that symphony's too complex to be composed without thinking, planning, timing, theory, and . . ."

"Pfui Teufel! Vhat a joke—this thinking, this timing, this theory! I make musik. I play vhat sounds good. End of discussion."

"But surely, Beethoven, there is much thinking that goes into composing such a wonderful piece as your fifth. I mean, the way you keep referring back to the original da da da daaa. It's like the voice of God saying 'Now Children, listen up! For all the secrets of Heaven are about to be revealed!'"

"Oh, posh."

I looked at him. "But you based your entire movement on that opening. Everything that came after it was so intertwined with it, so related to it as if it were the feet of God himself anchored here on this earth while he stretched his mighty hands and arms into the infinite to- . . ."

"I vas svatting flies, mein Herr. Da da da daaa. Da da da splat."

"You were swatting what?"

"Flies, Herr Thomas. Flies. Insects. But, my secretary, she vas taking notes when I svatted zee fly. And when I looked at these notes I saw zee da da da daaa, and thought 'Hmm. Why not?' and left zem in zee composition."

I eyed him suspiciously.

"Vhat?"

"I think you are playing with me, mein Herr. You are trivializing your own Heavenly composition. To what purpose, I am not sure." One of my eyebrows arched up, as the eye under it zeroed in on him, dubiously. I rubbed my chin, "Hmm . . ."

"But vhere are you going, mein Herr?"

"I'm on my way to jury duty."

"Ja? And who is defendant?"

Since I didn't know, I couldn't give him a specific answer.

We talked about nothing in particular for the next few blocks, then Beethoven bade me farewell, for he was going to buy some cotton swabs.

The courtroom was a harmony of polished oak, hard pews, and air like a tomb. The jury sat to one side. I was one of them.

The judge was a gnarly man of deep lines crawling all over his face. The slit of his old mouth turned sharply down at the corners. Knobby veined fingers gripped gavel and slammed thunderous authority into the room.

"This court will come to order."

"Yo' Awnah. Ah would call mah fust witness, if it please th' co'it," the fancy prosecutor said, smiling at the judge the way one wolf smiles at another when they stumble across a plump, juicy infant in the woods, "It shan't take a moment, then we can git back up to Black River and finish ketchin them trout."

"Proceed."

"You, Suh!" the prosecutor swung in my direction and pointed his trembling finger straight at me. "Where were you on the afternoon of the twentieth of this month?"

"Pardon me?"

"Where, Suh? Dammit, answer me!"

"Right here, in this very seat looking at you point at me, for this is the afternoon of the twentieth of this month." Confused, I looked around the room and noticed a peculiar thing—the witness stand was empty and there was no defendant in sight.

"Yo, Awnuh. Would you instruct this witness to answer yes or no and to refrain from pontificating and elaborating?"

"The witness is so instructed."

"But I'm not a—"

"Now. I ask you again, Suh! Where wuh you on th' afternoon of the twentieth of this month!"

"Well, I was . . . I mean, I am . . ."

"Answer yes or no!"

"But I . . ."

"Yes or no! Yes or no! Yes or—"

"Yes!"

"No further qeshuns, yo Awnuh." The prosecutor virtually floated back to his seat on a cloud of satisfaction. He smirked at his cousin, the portly counsel for the defense, as he sat down.

The defense lawyer heaved himself up with a grunt and walked to the witness stand, which was empty, and spun his great bulk on the jury box.

"Ladies and Gentlemen of the—"

"Hi, Daddy!" the pigtailed, freckle-faced twelve-year-old girl beside me yelled, waving at the lawyer, "They let me out of school so I could have jury duty!"

"Well that's nice, Petunia," he said, leaning over and spitting tobacco juice in a spittoon, "But the jury is on trial here, Child, which means you're in a bit of a quandary, you and your compadres."—lean over and spit again—"That is to say, you're in deep shit, Precious. If I can't clear your name, then you're gonna fry like green tomaters on your mammy's wood stove, and Daddy can't do diddysquat to stop it. So I want you to be very careful, Petunia—I mean reeeeeel careful—when you answer my next question, you heah?"

"Yes, sir."

"Okay, Petunia. Your very life depends on this question. Now, what is the square root of the hypotenuse of e taken to the power of j times ten to the negative thirty first power divided by theta when—"

The little girl fell back in her seat, her eyes looking this way and that, but at nothing as she tried to follow the flow of mathematical logic, her shiny braces reflecting light away from her puzzled lip-trembling frown, her misting eyes turning desperately to me (of all people) and the other jury members for support (who all looked away and started playing with hemlines and studying fingernails), then utterly confoundedly and newly frightened she looked back to her father as he continued to drone out, “. . . times pi minus the radius of the reciprocal of the statistical probability of the infinite summation of permutations mutually exclusive or incompatible with the mean under the curve when X is greater than N minus 1 and the second derivative of . . .”

The little girl was bawling torrents now. The motherly juror next to her grabbed her, held her, and rocked her back and forth. The child was blasting out her anguish like a brass horn in Hell, and the middle-aged woman was saying, “There, there.”

“Answer me, Petunia! Damn you! Do you want to die?”

“Daddy... I...”

“Answer me! Or surely you will roast in fires of Hell for eternity—after you fry like bacon in the electric chair!”

“But what have I done wrong!”

“Your Honor, this is a hostile witness.”

“Answer your fucking father your stinkin' little bitch before I plug you in the God damn wall myself!”

“Four.”

A hush came over the courtroom. Could it be?

“My God, she got it right,” Professor Whittle mouthed from the corner, looking up from his portable computer.

Juror number six, who was a baby, only six months aged, began to cry, waving his little arms spastically. All eyes in the courtroom cast suspicious glances at him. Why was he crying? What was he trying to hide?

Juror number three said, “Woof” and wagged his tail. I secretly signaled him to be more discreet.

The counsel for defense winked at Petunia, smiled, and said, “I rest my case, Your Honor.”

“Next witness,” the judge said wearily.

“I call old lady Easterby to the stand, yo' awnuh,” the prosecutor purred.

“She's right there in the jury box, Cecil. The whole damn thing, the whole box is the witness stand today. Talk to her there. It'll take the whole damn day to make her maneuver that walker to the witness stand.”

“Yes, yo'awnuh. Mizzzz Easterby! As I am quite certain you cogitate, a hurricane is not a thing apart from the calm. Is it, Mizzz Easterby?”

“Why no, Cecil. It is not completely apart. At least, not in a purely physical sense. I mean, the

calm gradually blends into it and becomes the violent winds of the storm with no definite dividing line between the two.”

“Quite right, Mizzz Easterby. It is an edge to the calm, and gradually do we come up to this edge to peer into the still, peaceful vortex. Is this not correct?”

“Objection!”

“On what grounds?”

“The prosecution is leading the witness.”

Suddenly the sweetest music ever heard by human ears floated into the courtroom. It preceded a cloud diffusing at its edges, merging ever so subtly into the empty air of the courtroom, the air we all breathed and expelled our foul breaths into; and on this cloud a great orchestra played to the beckoning of a conductor’s sweeping arms; and on a grand piano a magician plucked sweet, profound, Heavenly sounds from its keys, and this musician was the great, the unequaled Ludwig van Beethoven.

I burst into tears, the sound was so divine, as the shimmering white cloud filled the courtroom. The orchestra was ethereal, entering into souls one and all, reaching the very prayer stools of our blood cells and macrophages, our veins, our spines, our brains, our twisting, spiraling neurons, until we lost our individual differences, our greeds and creeds, our wants and needs, and interred, melted, merged egoless into the Bliss of Almighty God.

“Your Awnuh. I must object to this intrusion. If counsel for defense thinks that these mere theatrics will sway the opinion of this co’it-”

“Order!” screamed the tomato-faced judge and slammed his gavel down so hard it exploded his desk into splinters, “I’ll have order in this court!”

“You, Suh, are out of order!”

“What did I do?” I asked.

“You planned this disruption. I know you did! I know you did!” screamed the prosecutor.

“As you wish,” I said with the greatest majesty (which I had learned through my lengthy association with Ludwig and other such impeccable maestros) and, without a second thought, I turned my smiling attention back to the magnificent composer as he kneaded from the keys of his grand piano ream upon ream of eternal bliss and ecstasy, overwhelming all of us with a grace that made angels cry on the windowsills and sing “Hosanna! Hosanna!” and burst into eruptions of pure joy.

Da da da daaa!

Da da da daaa!

Then all too soon, all too suddenly, as a storm cloud ominously rolls into our lives on hot summer days, boiling with blackness that eclipses the sun, my friend Ludwig and his orchestra floated out of our lives, soared away, revealing the sun once again. But we didn’t lose because of the exit of Beethoven. We gained by the entrance of the sun. The sun replaced the splendor of Ludwig; for this flaming orb was the comforter and sustainer of all things earthly, the midwife if you will,

serving God Himself to give us divine rebirth and participation in the glory and magnificence of His indescribable and unequalled universe.

The twelve year old juror was smiling at me with every brace-clamped tooth she had, "Wasn't it just wonderful? Wasn't it just so, so wonderful?"

"Shut up, bitch, I'm warning you!" hissed the prosecutor.

"Plug her into th' goddam wall, bailiff!" raged the judge, "Fry her disrespectful little—I said order! Order in my court!"

"Wait! Wait!" I yelled, "Beethoven was just the avant-garde. There's more!"

I stood and waved magnificently in the direction of the window.

And the whole court jumped up in thunderous applause as Johann Straus waltzed in leading a thousand member orchestra blaring out "The Blue Danube" with such perfect pitch and tension that the heavenly waters themselves rained upon the star-studded universe like diamonds in babies' dreams. Carousels, Ferris wheels, and majestic rotating space stations swirled all around us in endlessly deep air. Shooting stars, glowing moons, and exploding dawns adorning the edges of every planet imaginable filled the eyes of the courtroom. Everyone levitated to his and her feet (save the seething prosecutor and his nasty cousin the judge) and waltzed above the pews, amidst galaxies and measureless dimensions of eternal ecstasy.

Composers from down through the ages marched in followed by the New York and London Philharmonics and high school bands and the Beach Boys. And Bach fugued us beyond belief.

"These composers, some of them are hundreds, even thousands of years old," I muttered in awe.

"Maybe we will live to be that old, too," the girl in pigtails said to me.

"It doesn't really matter," Socrates interrupted, riding in on a giraffe, "When we drop these so-called human bodies, we continue living anyway, as something else. Staying in human form or leaving it behind is no more significant than choosing between a bus and a plane to continue our journey through eternity. No matter which we choose, our journey goes on and on. It doesn't matter for the journey is our real home; the destination is always mere illusion."

"Yes! I see what you mean," the little girl said.

At a signal from the judge, armed guards marched three abreast toward the jury, arm bands dripping freshly painted blood, displaying the words "Gratitude for Platitudes— Death to Truths."

The guards grabbed the little girl by her pigtails and yanked her from the jury box, scraping and cutting her knees in the process. The juror who was a dog growled baring fierce fangs and lunged toward the guards, with unquenchable fury as his jaws clamped into a guard's throat and ripped it open to the tune of the "Emperor's Waltz." I was on my feet in an instant before the butt of a gun put my lights out.

When I came to, I saw that we all—the entire jury—were bound in our chairs, with our feet immersed in buckets of water. Each bucket was connected to wires and clamps, and the whole circuit was connected to a huge electric switch which the bailiff held in sweating and trembling hands as crazed laughter erupted from his face with demonic glee.

“Fry the bastards. Fry the bastards. Fry the bastards. Fry the bastards,” the courtroom chanted, “They tried to give us truth when we only wanted lies!”

I was surprised to see the whole room turn on us like that, but what the heck. Johann Sebastian Bach’s Toccate and Fugue in D Minor undulated through the court. The young lady’s pigtails waved in the deep currents of the fugue, red hair like sea anemones swaying in infinite oceans, a sunrise on countless horizons, her blue eyes so crystal and deep, so beyond man’s feeble attempts to measure, this beautiful twelve-year old angel with braces of silver organizing pearly teeth, quarter moon smile arching up like the hull of a happy ship; and as I watch, hypnotized by her loveliness, that perfect smile began to rock on the swells of Bach’s great fugue, like a ship far at sea, and her delicate white nose became its sail; and before my stunned eyes this ship and sail took flight upon the mounting crests and deepening valleys and undulating currents of the fugue, and the child’s shining eyes ascended like two shining suns, two blue-tented angels, into the highest realms of Heaven and God’s thunderous voice thundered down, “In this child, I am well pleased!”

My heart broke with joy. It shattered, atomized, from the depth of the purity of the sweetness of the one thing that is incorruptible in all our lives—innocence!

Innocence began a new day! A new birth!

“You, Suh!” the prosecutor spat, sneered, as the judge hammered on the soles of my feet with his gavel, “You, Suh. Wake up! Wake up!”

“You can’t sleep here, bum. Move it before we take you to jail.”

I opened my eyes. Two city cops standing over me, one banging on my feet with his club. I felt the crush of the park bench against my back. The cop’s flash light blinded my eyes. The stench of my clothes reminded me of how much I needed a bath; and that memory reminded me of how long I’d been homeless.

As the city cops waited impatiently for me to bring my focus back into his world, I heard one say to the other, “It’s fucking disgusting. It never ends. You run ‘em off and as soon as you turn your back they’re back in the park, messin’ up public property and bothering good people. Move it you stinking wino bum. I’m not gonna tell you again.”

I moved on, staggering at first while my blood made its slow-oozing way down through my cold veins and into the peripheral reaches of my body. By the time I’d walked a block, I’d regained pretty good coordination and proceeded on into the night with a slight limp. Soon, to the staring eyes of the police officers, I disappeared into the darkness of the cold city streets, wondering if I’d ever see that twelve-year-old girl again, or Ludwig or Straus or be carried away by the sweet depths of Bach’s fugues . . . or . . .

Yes. I would. I knew I that. And that’s what made it all bearable.

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# Joel BRUSSELL

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Joel Brussell is a writer, “performance anxiety” poet, songwriter, essayist (oy, enough already). He’s performed extensively in Northwest Indiana and Chicago. His work recently appeared in a contemporary Opera based on 9/11 which recently debuted in Chicago. He knows just enough to know he knows very little.

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## CODE BLUE, CODE BLUE MILK

(My older Father had a passionate hatred of skim milk)

“You bought that damn blue milk again dear. That skim milk stuff. I don’t want want to see the color of the sky in anything I drink. The funny thing is dear no matter how many times I tell you not to buy that. You buy it.. I can’t take it anymore I’m going to keel over dead.”

No father don’t die. Don’t mistake frustration for mortality. Mother buy whole milk so he can thrive and not keel over dead. Its so simple mom at 1% I have no Dad. If you go whole I do. Even at ten Father I will negotiate your life over dairy and reason. As a compromise could you live another twenty years on 2%. Let me postpone your expiration date. Code Blue Code Blue Milk. In the post coital of marital aggravation, instead of expiring, you are rubbing the dogs butt and she does her two step, cha cha, cha of glee. You remind her “she is a crazy fool. A crazy fool.” Mademoiselle Fifi Cuckoo, was you name you gave her which you lifted from a French mystery novel during your counter espionage days in Morocco. How you loved anything that didn’t argue.

Through the offering of food you speak, you speak of. Food and ideas, the ideas of food, the food of ideas, and, “There is plenty of ham in the ice box son. Plenty of ham in the ice box.” Once I dreamt you spoke to me under a waterfall. “Eat the ham, eat the ham son, before I keel over dead. When you keel over dead in the water no liquid is displaced. That is Jewish mysticism, son.”

You are sixty-five. you nap more than cats, the circumference of your belly appears to me as the earth, your flannel shirt the comfort of the equator. Your breaths are familiar waves, undulations in-between commercials. You are the twice the age of my friends fathers. That is a crippling multiplication, this simple factor of 2, a perpetual flash card I am unable to hold up in my hand.

As my arms slip I fess up your age on the jungle gym. I admit to my pals you might have seen the beginning of time and each of “your sperm must have their own personalized wheelchairs.” when a truck crushed my lunch box and there was peanut butter and jelly all over the highway you expressed your sympathies. Blue and red and yellow felt 4.99 K-mart shoes are worn under your judicial robes. Comfortable shoes always supercede fashion. You weren’t a man that stood for leather uppers. And there is plenty of ham in the ice box son. Plenty of ham in the ice box.

Was I born old or was the world born too young?

Each time you nap I place my army soldiers on your chest, this way if you stop breathing then

they will stop rising in enthused battle and I know you will be gone. Your war will be over. Mine will have just begun. As you wake the soldiers tumbles down into your legs. There is peace in the thighs. You believe I am just playing. But I am figuring your life span from my trip to the five and dime. Code Blue Code Blue Milk.

“Dear Why did you invite those people over? The funny things is you know I hate company. Yet you have to be the social butterfly. I can’t take anymore Im going to keel over dead dear.”

Father I’m going to prop you up with two boards so there will be no keeling, over. While you are upright I will ask “what is so funny about the funny thing is” The TV clown I grew up with, who sold panty hose to Mothers, that was funny. My sister and brother who ate jars of cocktail onions, then pinned down their friends to exhale on them, that was funny. The woman on the tornado warning who gave signs for the deaf, developed cramps in her hands and started gesticulating wildly out of control, that was funny. But you are so casual about the keeling. And a child hugs the literal as if it’s a parent itself.

So what is the funny in the funny thing is? And where does it reside and why are my lips blue, from pixie sticks, from uncertainty or from the thin pale milk of luminescence. You once woke to a reenactment of the civil war on your chest. I prayed the South and your ribcage would rise again as soon as the hair and ground, beneath your breast stopped swelling and the soldiers laid down their arms I would become an orphan. Okay I still had a mother, but the milk she served was blue, so I concentrate on saving my men, which due to your restless sleeping, were keeling over with the same vigor you had always promised to. Ten years later I am watching Harpo Marx in a Night at the Opera. He is running up a velvet curtain with a giant smile or runs up a giant smile with a curtain, I am still not sure which one. Anyway gravity was defied by comedy and then I was informed you died. But I watched the end of the movie, to know what happened and to find the funny in the funny things is.

As a casual young man I read the autopsy report in shorts,. With sunscreen and ice coffee the paragraphs settle in all too comfortably. There was an aortic rupture followed by . . . Plenty of ham in the ice box son , plenty of ham in the ice box.

The coroner said your code blue and red and yellow felt 4.99 shoes pointed directly due East. The funky compass of the hereafter. The last of my angels embalmed. Purveyor of Fifi Cuckoos. I nap in the sun, autopsy report on my chest, the wind billows out the words, the pages flipping like manic tongues, the natural order of aggravation even in their black and whiteness the blue of sky absorbs, the light of milk reflects. Code Blue Code Blue Milk.

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# Geoffrey FOX

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Geoffrey Fox's fiction includes the collection *Welcome To My Contri* and stories in *Fiction International*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Small Spiral Notebook*, *In Posse Review*, and other print and electronic journals. His most recent nonfiction book is *Hispanic Nation: Culture, Politics, and the Constructing of Identity*. He lives in New York City and Carboneras, Spain. <http://geoffreyfox.com>

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## ON A PAGE FROM RILKE

In the mail are two notes from women in his recent past. One says, "I want to see you." The other says, "I want to kill you."

The latter is scrawled in red felt marker across the face of a postcard he had once sent to another woman from Italy. The former is in neat, round script in lavender ink on the margin of a page from Rilke. It arrived in an airmail envelope from the Grand Hotel in Kampala, but was postmarked Côte d'Ivoire. On the stamps are tropical birds and a crocodile.

The re-mailed postcard came in a plain manila envelope postmarked Baltimore. Through the red scrawl, he can see a black and white photograph of the Spanish Steps.

One woman he can remember only naked. He remembers her nakedness shimmering, begging to be touched. Traces of blue under soft glowing ivory, rising roundly to a comical conical protuberance like soft pink brick. Another roundness that quivered at his touch and ended in soft curly hair. Clothed, she had disappeared into the crowd like a dun-colored deer into the forest.

The other he can remember only clothed. He has, he knows, seen her naked, but cannot remember the color of her nipples or the curve of her thighs. He had turned on the light when they were making love. But it was only a glimpse before she pulled the sheet around her, angry and frightened at his intrusion. So when he tries to imagine her naked, it is really the other woman he sees. When he tries to imagine the other one clothed, it is really this woman he sees.

He is trying to remember which one is Louise, which one Ilse. Louise wants to kill him, she says, but is she the naked or the clothed?

The page from Rilke reminds him of the Bible leaf Blind Pew gave Long John Silver. "Und plötzlich ist er Flamme, ganz und gar." Now he is more frightened of Ilse than of Louise. Not only because a woman who would tear a page from Rilke is capable of anything, but also because she is in motion—Kampala, Abidjan, ever nearer. The controlled handwriting and the terseness of the message, even the color of the ink, all frighten him.

On the other hand, a woman who says openly that she wants to kill you has already expressed her rage and probably does not mean to do it.

On the train to Baltimore, he writes, "He knew the answer to his question, of course, but could not

bear to hear it. Slipping into sollipsism, lately he formulated only questions to which he knew the answers." Then he closes the notebook and his eyes, because he can not bear to write any more.

He heads directly for a large shopping mall. He wants to make it easy for Louise to find him, but in a public place where, if she really means to kill him, she may at least hesitate because of witnesses. She will find him, he is sure, because shopping malls are nodal points in the communications network by which all women, the world over, spy on men and coordinate their strategies. His only chance is deliberately to make himself vulnerable. If she sees him thus, perhaps she will protect him from Ilse.

He stands next to a splashing indoor fountain with real and artificial ferns, watching. The women are all clothed. He knew they would be, of course. It is one of their tricks for confounding men. Louise, he thinks now, must be the one he can remember only naked. She will see him first, then. She will be able to come very close and shoot him before he recognizes her. Or stab him, perhaps. Therefore he must, as a matter of self-protection, try to visualize all the women he sees as though they were naked. He stares, but of course he does not have X-ray vision, so he cannot tell if their breasts and thighs are glowing under their black leather pants, their loose blouses, their skirts and sweaters. This concentration tires him and overwhelms him with visions of probable flesh.

He pulls his notebook from the pocket of his jacket and writes:

"Man creates gods in his image and likeness. All gods exist, as long as any man believes."

A woman interrupts him and says "Hello." She is as tall as he. She is wearing a red velvet suit and a large black ribbon tied loosely in a bow at the collar of her white blouse. The tight skirt is split to the thigh. It is a whorish version of dress-for-success, he thinks. No, he was mistaken. There is no split. Her hair is dark brown. Her voice is low and rich.

"Louise?" he says, trembling.

The left side of her mouth smiles and she looks at him steadily. An electric charge surges through him, from his teeth to the end of his genito-urinary tract. He lowers his eyes and tries to smile, obediently.

"Ilse, I mean," he says, in a very low, humble voice. "Forgive me."

"No," she says. "I mean, no, I'm not Ilse."

When he looks up at her, he sees she is eyeing him curiously.

"My name is Katherine."

"Katherine? But—who sent you?"

"Why, no one. Really! But when a man is seen standing in the same spot for almost two hours, it makes you wonder."

"Ah, yes, you're right! We can't very well have loose men floating about, like unattached ions, can we? I know that. Forgive me."

She laughs, then frowns. "You okay?" she says.

"You've been watching me for two hours?" He knows he sounds accusing.

She motions with her head toward a boutique. "That's my shop," she says. "You've been here since before four."

"I was waiting for a friend. She says she wants to kill me." He laughs. "I don't know why she hasn't showed up."

He looks around anxiously. None of the shoppers seems to be paying them any attention, but a little boy, being dragged by his mother, stares up at him as they go by.

"Did she tell you she would be here?"

"No, but I was sure she'd find me. She sent a message from Baltimore."

"Well, looks like she's not coming."

"Uh-huh. Well, so that's the way it is."

He sighs, then adds, "Am I supposed to go with you then?"

Her head snaps back and she stares at him intently, as though startled by the thought. Or, he thinks, secretly pleased to see through her deception, like a cobra prepared to strike. He has thrown them off guard by coming here, directly confronting them in their lair, this conspiracy of incompetent vipers.

"Katherine," he says confidently and confidentially, taking her arm in his. "'Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.'"

"Say what?"

But she allows herself to be led, through the broad palatial lobby of the mall, toward the exit. Toward their destiny. Already he has begun to imagine her with her clothes off. But suddenly another voice intrudes.

"Hey, Kate, whacha got?"

A man in uniform, a tall, heavy black man in gray, with a police-style cap pushed back on his head, moves into their path and then slowly, seemingly reluctantly, walks toward them.

"Heya, J.J. Whaddaya say? 'Sanother one. Something about my boutique, I guess. You wanna make sure he finds his way out?"

The guard—so they are protected by guards! He should have known!—the guard rocks back on his heels, then slowly nods, and reaches forward to take his free arm.

"Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich" he shrieks -but the shriek remains inside him, what emerges is more like a gasp.

"Yeah, buddy," says J.J., "that's what I always say, too. But we gotta go."

*by Rainer Maria Rilke, tr. Edward Snow (from Rainer Maria Rilke, New Poems [1907]. New York: North Point Press, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984, pp. 144-145.)*

As in the hand a sulfur match, first white,  
stretches flicking tongues on every side  
before it bursts in flame—: so in the circle  
of close watchers, hot, bright, and eager  
her round dance begins to flicker and fan out.

And all at once it is entirely flame.

With a glance she sets her hair ablaze  
and whirls suddenly with daring art  
her whole dress into this fiery rapture,  
out of which, like startled snakes,  
her bare arms stretch, alive and clacking.

And then: as if the fire grew tight to her,  
she gathers it all up and casts it off  
disdainfully, with imperious demeanor  
and looks: it lies there raging on the ground  
and keeps on flaming and does not give up—.  
But triumphant, self-assured, and with a  
sweet greeting smile she lifts her face  
and stamps it out with little furious feet.

### **Spanische Tänzerin**

Wie in der Hand ein Schwefelzündholz, weiß,  
eh es zur Flamme kommt, nach allen Seiten  
zuckende Zungen streckt—: beginnt im Kreis  
naher Beschauer hastig, hell und heiß  
ihr runder Tanz sich zuckend auszubreiten.

Und plötzlich ist er Flamme, ganz und gar.

Mit einem Blick entzündet sie ihr Haar  
und dreht auf einmal mit gewagter Kunst  
ihr ganzes Kleid in diese Feuersbrunst,  
aus welcher sich, wie Schlangen die erschrecken,  
die nackten Arme wach und klappernd strecken.

Und dann: als würde ihr das Feuer knapp,  
nimmt sie es ganz zusammen und wirft es ab  
sehr herrisch, mit hochmütiger Gebärde  
und schaut: da liegt es rasend auf der Erde  
und flammt noch immer und ergiebt sich nicht—.  
Doch sieghaft, sicher und mit einem süßen  
grüßenden Lächeln hebt sie ihr Gesicht  
und stampft es aus mit kleinen festen Füßen.

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# Nicholas GRIDER

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Nicholas Grider lives in Milwaukee and has studied writing and photography at the California Institute of the Arts. His work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Shampoo*, *canwehavourballback?*, and *Hobart*.

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## LIARS

CARL N.

Told me that two wrongs don't make a right.

MY NEIGHBOR BOB (WHO'S AN EX-MARINE)

Told me it was a matter of the power of positive thinking, and that the worst thing I could do was shoot myself in the foot before I even got off the boat (I liked talking to Bob).

JASON K.

Told me that sex was a beautiful and magical thing, that it was the pinnacle of life's experience of pleasure, and that there was more to it than him simply sticking his dick up my ass, that even on the basic prosaic level of lovemaking there was mouth-to-genital contact and different kinds of genital-to-genital contact, not to mention all the different stuff you can do with your hands.

THE COUNTY OFFICE

Told me I wasn't poor enough to qualify as "Poor."

MY YOUNGER SISTER

Told me my hair would grow back if I did what I did to it.

JASON K.

Also told me that sex was mostly in a person's mind, and to give in to the moment, and that there was more to it than just the awkward sweating and clutching of it and that he wouldn't even go near my ass if I wasn't comfortable with it, but I still ended up with my face pressed into the couch cushions and with my bare ass sticking up (it felt like) and with Jason trying to wrangle his dick into my ass, which wasn't cooperating.

#### THE LEAD SINGER OF MY FAVORITE BAND

Sang that regret saves lives. I want to write him a letter to ask him if he can provide specifics on this—case histories and so forth—but I'm not the letter-writing kind.

#### THE STAFF OF THE HEALING CENTER

Convinced me to move out here because they said it would make my future more comfortable.

#### MY BROTHER AND SISTER

Convinced me to move home (almost) because at least then, they said, I would feel like I was at home.

#### THE NURSE

Told me it would hurt less if I looked away.

#### MY CHILDHOOD FRIENDS

Told me that I was a baby for crying so much, that everyone died sooner or later, that if I were more like them I would get over it, though they didn't say how long it would take.

#### MELANIE H. AND STEVEN R.

Had me almost convinced that some things (diamonds, but also truth and beauty) are forever.

#### JOHN KEATS

Also had a hand in that last one, and suggested by example that youth enacted its own kind of wisdom, if only a flimsy and desperate kind.

#### PEOPLE WHO WRITE FOR THE PAPERS AND MAGAZINES I GLANCE AT IN WAITING ROOMS

Want to inform me that being indigent isn't necessarily a life sentence. (These people, who phrase things in terms of prison, are afraid to use the word "poor".)

#### SEVERAL LEADING ECONOMIC THEORISTS

Maintain that while class is certainly an important factor in the general warp and curvature of a person's life that it doesn't represent as much of a factor as individual drive and determination (they talk about these things as if they were different, or complementary) as well as good old-fashioned American luck.

#### THE GUY AT THE CLINIC WITH THE BLUE HAIR

Told me that the nature of luck is that everybody has some at some point, good and bad.

## JOHN S. AND TYLER P. AND A FEW OTHER PEOPLE

Told me that they the loved me, and implied that it was important.

## EVERYBODY

Says "Look on the bright side."

## MY PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Told me I could trust doctors and people in positions of similar authority. (Though I find it hard to believe in retrospect that any of my teachers really meant what they said; I picture them smirking as they organized their desks and turned off the classroom lights at the end of another long day of school, quietly gleeful in the knowledge that they'd managed to completely snow another young flock.)

## LORNA H.

Told me that things wouldn't change between us, even if I really were sick.

## MY UNCLE RON

Gave me a newspaper clipping about the relationship between medicine and spirituality and told me to think about it.

## MY PRIEST (WHO I HAVEN'T SEEN SINCE I WAS TWELVE)

Told me that it was in God's hands, and that God loves everyone, and that even though I hadn't technically done anything to have to repent for (as far as he knew), that it wouldn't hurt to go to confession anyway just in case there was anything I needed to get off my chest because although God loves everyone He, just like a lot of mortals, has a limit.

## MY FRIENDS

Suggested (pr presumed?) that there was a lesson to be learned in all of this somewhere.

## MY MOTHER (IN TEARS)

Told me it would be easier if I kept everything to myself.

## MY DOCTOR

Told me that everything was going to be okay, ultimately, and that it was a matter of taking care of myself. That taking care of myself (though he didn't elaborate what that entailed, exactly, as he tugged at his lab coat and tried to look solemn) was not just a necessity but a responsibility. He told me that I was

lucky, relatively, and that it was a matter of taking responsibility for myself, which implied that that would make a difference.

LORNA (AGAIN)

Told me after I got home from the doctor that everything was going to be okay.

HAMISH L.

Told me that breathing deeply would help, that everything was going to be okay, and that he'd only touch me where I wanted him to, that we had all the time in the world, and that there was no need to worry, and that the best way to look at it was: how could things possibly get any worse?

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# Jnana HODSON

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Having just been exposed to a Build-a-Bear Workshop, the consequence of a rare trip to the mall with his younger stepdaughter, Jnana's wondering about the surreal parallels with today's publishing climate. He's a daily newspaper editor by trade, back working the night shift again after seventeen years where he had a double-shift on Saturdays. Recent literary acceptances include works in *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Plungelit*, *Poetry Motel*, *Prose Toad*, *Real Eight View*, *Riverbabble*, *Roman Candles*, and *Somewhat.org*.

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## ALL THE ILLUMINATED SOULS

Never mind how he denied his own dream of maintaining her in high style, he was still moved by her appearance in feather earrings or her tawny jacket with long fringes, or the way she carried a deerskin purse. No wonder her mother relished buying clothing for Jen. He should have remembered what Murshid had said: Jen was coming into a period in which she would be unstoppable. Kyle should have also remembered something else his guru had said, that Kyle was entering his own difficult stretch.

He read commentary that made him believe the West Coast is beyond all understanding, save a lunatic's. Wondered if he and Jen would ever make it Far West, as he had promised. They had dreamed of the Northwest. Maybe that would be different, understandable in a way Hollywood or San Francisco might never be.

Awaiting approval of a new budget, his job was extremely tense. The document went all the way to Washington. Finally, after months of fearful anticipation, everyone could relax: the project was in the clear for the next four years. At last, Kyle knew Jen could finish her degree in this place.

She celebrated with a feast. As their friends arrived, they moved the kitchen table outdoors, covering it with an antique lace tablecloth. The sunny spring day was perfect an after-dinner trek across the far meadow, as well as games of Frisbee and volleyball. Wine flowed, and Jen was a princess.

The next night, while he was at a committee meeting, her parents phoned. "They wanted to know if we could go to Florida with them. I said you have too much work at the institute these days. So they wondered if you might let me go with them."

Sure, why not? Her parents were good to them. A little sun and surf wouldn't hurt her, either. When Jack came to pick her up, he even brought his tiller along and saved Kyle the spading.

While Jen was vacationing, Kyle's boss called him into her office. As a friend said that evening, "They always do it so gently." Canning you. The institute's operational budget had been sliced in half. Just like that. There was no other choice but to let him go, along with the rest of the support staff. They gave it to him when Jen was off with her parents, out of town. Suddenly, he felt abandoned, completely alone - something he hadn't felt that way since meeting her. Sometimes, in wilderness comes clarity. Action itself refines. He went out into the field for his wild onions

ghost dance.

Murshid had predicted this would be the time of Kyle's final cleaning out, his last great purification. It was rough. But from here on out, it should be smooth sailing. Kyle mailed out resumes. As Murshid had warned, Kyle should not have changed jobs when he moved to Indiana. But there, too, he had no other real choice; at least, he got out of Prairie Depot before the floor collapsed beneath his coworkers there. The others had not been so lucky.

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# Paul KAVANAGH

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Paul Kavanagh wished he lived in a Frank Lloyd Wright house on Lake Michigan—but he doesn't. He once lived in Canterbury—now he is lost in Indiana. Paul Kavanagh is happy. His wife is happy. His Cat Stevie is happy.

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## FAILURE OF THE COMMON MAN

Without warning he had climbed out of the bed and with incivility turned on the light. The light disturbed her equanimity. The light blinded her. The light. She could not believe how rude he was. She heard his footsteps on the stairs and felt compelled to call him an idiot. He had straw in his mouth. He was a true village idiot. She was more perplexed than exasperated when he returned with a hammer in his hand. He was as daft as a brush. This opprobrium would not sail by with impunity; she would crucify him in the morning. Of all the things he had done, this one took the biscuit. She knew he was not sleepwalking; he was just acting the goat. Only he would think of doing DIY at this time. She felt pugnacious, she wanted to slap him, she wanted to go back to sleep. He stood there fatuously before her with the hammer in his hand. DIY was not his thing. What could he do? No, what could he really do? He didn't even have his slippers on. His feet would be dirty. He would soil the sheets. He never washed the sheets. He couldn't. Before she could forbid him entrance to the bed he smashed in her head. The hammer was incongruously jutting from the lacuna in her cranium.

Mr. Hughes went down stairs, switched on the television and slept on the settee. Three more had been killed. Blown to smithereens! In the morning he sipped a cup of coffee and watched the news. Cream and sugar. Lots of sugar. They had tortured them with electric shocks and feral dogs. After this he phoned his wife's work place and informed them that she had gone to stay at her mother's home. The mother was dying of cancer. The cancer was everywhere. Her mother smelt bad. Rotting from the inside. Smoking is truly bad for you. It was a sad time. Three hours it would take his wife to fly from Indiana to Florida. She would fly out of Gary. Yes, Gary now did flights to Florida; it was a cozy airport. Gary wasn't that bad. Every city is the same on the inside. It was less hassle than going to O'Hare. After work he phoned her book club and informed them that his wife would no longer be apart of the group. He phoned the softball team, the volleyball team and the Wednesday lunch club. He proscribed the obscenity they shared. The book club was always reading pornography. In the shower Mr. Hughes shaved, washed and conditioned his hair, masturbated, and washed under his armpits.

Back in the bedroom the hammer was no longer incongruous, it was now a mundane appendage. The blood had coagulated, flaked and dispersed. The serenity upon her countenance pleased him. If it weren't for work he would have kept her company. After work he enjoyed Wendy's and refilled on diet coke for the ride home. For some reason he had forgot to fill the cup up with ice. It wasn't like him. The drink would be tepid by the time he got home. It would take him an hour. It was rush hour. He thought about filling up the tank, but the price of gas went up for the weekend and with the war the price had doubled.

Mr. Hughes watched a rerun of the Brady Bunch. He laughed. He laughed loudly. He laughed

obstreperously. He undid his tie. He undid his tie. He undid his tie coquettishly. He consumed pork chops. The pork chops she had purchased from Wal-Mart. He drank three and a half cups of coffee. The coffee was saccharine. The equanimity was disturbed by a phone call. It was a wrong number. A wrong number. He left the house and picked up her prescription. The lady was affable. He thought about asking her to go out with him for a drink. He would next time, he told himself assertively. On the way home he had Dairy Queen. He dexterously drove and consumed simultaneously.

The room was in darkness. She was obfuscated. He closed the door and undressed on the landing. He left the clothes desultorily behind him on the carpet. In the shower Mr. Hughes lathered, washed and conditioned his hair, masturbated, and washed under his armpits. Mr. Hughes went down stairs, switched on the television and slept on the settee. To see the screen he had to move. To see the screen he had to lift up his arm. With his hand he pushed onerously to the side the plates and empty cups. Four more had been killed. Blown to smithereens! They had tortured them with electric shocks and feral dogs. The equanimity of his slumber was disturbed by a phone call. It was a wrong number. A wrong number. He drank two and a half cups of coffee. He was bored so he went to Dairy Queen. He dexterously drove and consumed simultaneously. The night looked no different. Though, the Press said the President had been mendacious. The lawn would need cutting; he would do it at the weekend, before the game.

He unlocked his car when suddenly it dawned upon him that he had not taken a shower. He berated himself. Ephemeral. He had lost track of time. A hurricane was sweeping through Florida. Winds up to a hundred and fifty. Hundred and fifty.

After work Mr. Hughes enjoyed Taco Bell and refilled on coke for the ride home. He could not believe he didn't get Diet. Weight was a problem. Problem. Obesity was a plague. The outside is so different. But inside. Rotting. All cities are the same on the inside. The same streets. The same shops. Taco Bell. Wal-Mart. Coke. Diet. Ice. It would take him an hour. It was rush hour. Hour. He thought about filling up the tank, but the price of gas went up for the weekend and with the war the price had doubled. Doubled. On the way home he had Dairy Queen. He dexterously drove and consumed simultaneously. The Evening looked no different. He closed the front door and undressed on the stairs. He left the clothes desultorily behind him on the stairs. In the shower Mr. Hughes lathered, washed and conditioned his hair, masturbated, and washed under his armpits. Mr. Hughes went down stairs, switched on the television. He was perplexed as to what he should do next. Should he take her out of the house and bury her? That would be a long, strenuous job and Mr. Hughes was not one for a long strenuous job. Would the dogs, birds and other wildlife devour the carrion, leaving no her for the police? Police never came this way, so it was possible for the dogs, birds and other wildlife to devour the carrion before the police would be at the scene. He knew he would get away Scot-free. The papers, if she was found, which was hardly, would say she fell, or hung himself, or that she died of food poison. The glutton! Nobody cared. Weight was a problem. Problem. Obesity was a plague. The outside is so different. But inside. Rotting. All cities are the same on the inside. The same streets. The same shops. Taco Bell. Wal-Mart. Coke. Diet. Ice. It would take him an hour.

But an hour. He could not comprehend the commotion that murder spawned, for her limp body was in complete tranquility. And this tranquility to him was a good thing. A good thing. There was a dignity to her body, which there was not in life, she was not weeping, micturating loudly with the door open, begging for dollars, in the act of defecation, scraping the muck from her begrimed carcass, consuming and defecating. The body was not screaming murder and there would be no vengeance. She was now just a lump of flesh, water, blood, sinews and bones. If there had been a soul, it was long gone. Long gone. Only the law of gravity held the body down. There was no

omniscient God now in attendance delivering judgment upon Mr. Hughes and no omnipotent voice shrieking like the thunder proclaiming him Guilty. Who could say it was an opprobrious and shameful act? Nobody! With her being no more all was silence. Silence. A calmness never known before, never been realized, it was alien and slightly incongruous. Was God too busy with all the other killings that were taking place at that precise moment? Gary wasn't that bad. Every city is the same on the inside. The outside is so different. But inside. Rotting. All cities are the same on the inside. The same streets. The same shops. Taco Bell. Wal-Mart. Coke. Diet. For surely somebody else had just been killed simultaneously to her. The city. Was She not worth the effort?

Had God more important people to deal with? But wasn't God ubiquitous? That's what they had told him, we were all God's children. This was making manifest her importance. Her importance. She was ostensibly considered insubstantial to all and sundry. But still shouldn't his inner voice, the presumably good voice begin screaming out to him now? Shouldn't it be condemning him for the act he had committed? Shouldn't it be belittling him? Proclaiming that his life was over? This was not genocide, a dirty pogrom or a hell fire apocalypse, he thought, it was a clean and uncomplicated act.

After the game Mr. Hughes buried her in the back garden. It took him less than an hour. Her boss called and apologized, he had to let her go. He would fill the job the next day. In degrees her name was forgotten. How's your wife doing? Became, weren't you once married?

One morning Mr. Hughes unlocked the car door and realized that he had forgot to dress. He was late for work that day. The boss was fine, just politely asked him to be more careful. The lady at the proscription desk went out with him one night. She got completely drunk and embarrassed him. They made love on the carpet in the front room and he went home slightly disappointed. Though, he would more than likely take her out again. All the same on the inside. The outside is so different. But inside. Rotting. On the way home he had Dairy Queen. He dexterously drove and consumed simultaneously. He closed the front door and undressed in the front room while watching the television. He left the clothes desultorily behind him on the carpet. In the shower Mr. Hughes lathered, washed and conditioned his hair, masturbated, and washed under his armpits. Mr. Hughes went downstairs, switched on the television and slept on the settee.

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# Marie Monroe METCALF

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Marie Monroe Metcalf has been published in *Open Wide*, *Pudding*, and *Wind*. She is currently combining several interests by putting the written word into visual works. She works in a state mental hospital with addicts and writes about it so that one day, she may have money for retirement.

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## LIBERAL ARTS

Even as a child I knew something horrible was happening in the Little Desert. Headed for Mass at St. Louis Bertrand, I'd start my prayers of protection in Central Park which was a good block and a half from the Little Desert, but no sanctuary of grace itself. Men in very short and tight pants sat on picnic tables in the park watching each other out of the corners of their eyes. Eventually they would one by one go into the bathroom and then reappear to sit on their respective tables. I knew they were of no physical danger to me, being interested, as they were, only in each other and the john, but still something about their Sunday morning rituals seemed ominous. I imagined the smell of urine hanging on them and somehow chasing me through the park. At times I held my breath to further protect myself from that contamination, clean as I was from yesterday's confession.

I had watched body counts and battle scenes from Vietnam nightly all through elementary school. Now, as a pubescent, urban and virginal female. I knew my fractions, long division, decimals, squares, cubes, pre-algebra and was tip-toeing with every concrete muscle of my childmind toward abstract thinking. I knew about warfare, at least television warfare and math warfare. I knew how to run from safe crouch to belly down. I couldn't quite conjure the details of the evils lurking inside the bombed out structures of the Little Desert, but I knew that sex had something to do with it. I also knew that it absolutely was not the acceptable type of sex which was sex for God, but that this was sex of the damned-whatever that was. This sex was as dim as the few remaining bars in the Little Desert. It was as forbidden as the alleyways, and as mysterious and close as algebra circling around me, noticing my vulnerability, waiting patiently for me to become distracted easy prey. It was something very bad that did not go home on Saturday night to be fresh and ready for Mass on Sunday morning.

One thing seemed certain: the relentlessness of Gregorian chants at the base of your skull, or the Rosary, when applied to any unseen enemy were your best bets for continued mobility through the Desert toward salvation. A break in tempo, concentration or content could signal the predators. It was a stealth zone before the zone was cool or even invented. Math and Vietnam had been lifesavers. Something organic, with a physics far more dangerous than pulleys and levers pushed against these storefronts, watching me. I was not a stupid child. I knew how to calculate my odds of survival in hand-to-hand. It would never work. No, my strength lay in evasion. I would catapult into a stronger state of grace than ever before. I would perpetrate a coup of brilliance, submerge myself to breathe through reeds, sight the predator telepathically and clairsentiently. I would will my body to feline form, rustle no leaves, snap no twigs, run with the table of odds turned toward God, good, math and A's.

Years later I sat pondering the unforgivable flat man some rows below me as he scribbled numbers in pockets of brackets and parentheses. With a squint I could arrange the board into

more visually meaningful arrays. Why did he slap these gorgeous creatures as if they were his whores? I am still hard pressed to pinpoint the exact origin of this disdain I've carried for him. Was it that day or another that I began to linger at the philosophy section, getting lost in pot and gibberish? I hold him responsible, that cut-out of an angry man.

My navigation at sea is as basic a skill now as my fingers' memory of cursive when I plot seduction in love letters or resumes. I no longer need my compass or can no longer find it. The world is wet and I am no longer a mathematician.

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# Bryan McMILLAN

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Bryan McMillan lives and works in Chicago, IL. He has published stories, articles and poems in *Milk*, *Side-Show*, *Nexus*, *Shoreline*, and various Writing Center Journals. His interests and turn-ons include archaeo-astrology, the Boston Red Sox, and Flappers.

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## ELECTIONEERING

Jeb's Place was typically quiet on a Sunday evening. A few booths occupied, perhaps, some gaggle of girls intoxicated with themselves, usually a fat girl in the middle of them, to bring out the colors, and maybe Klaus and Ed in the corner on the 2004 Golden Tee. The 2005 version was out—Joe had seen it at other bars—but Jeb's only had the 2004.

Joe pulled into the parking lot from the highway. He drove a 1980 Mercury Monarch, a beast. Tan, the color of diner coffee with cream; he hated it. But it was all he could afford. The left side was scraped from headlight to passenger-side door on account of some idiot in a parked car who threw his door open with no mind to anything, slamming it into Joe's car. The guy had been old, though, a real geezer, and Joe couldn't justify hounding after him for any money. What did he care, really, if his car was scraped up. So, he just told the guy not to worry and shuffled off. He needed a new car, anyway. He needed a lot of things. Gas, for one; the needle was pressed to the far left side of the quarter-full mark, like a slider just outside the strike zone and slipping fast.

He needed a drink, too. He needed a few drinks, a few more than he wanted to own up to, as a matter of fact. Or afford. He killed the ignition and leaned over to the glove compartment. He pulled out a cloth bundle and let it unravel on the passenger's seat, softly depositing a sleek black pistol. He looked at it before picking it up to make sure it was loaded. He thought of the first time he'd held a pistol, almost ten years ago, as an Eagle Scout. Holding the gun, he could almost feel the past, the faint whiff of youth, of hope, unspoiled, then, the years between gradually building a rotten egg's stench of unfulfilled promise, too many checks never cashed in, too much debt. God, Joe thought. He gripped the gun tighter. He clicked the safety off—he didn't want to be That Guy, waving a damn gun around and forgetting that the safety was on.

Everything was as Joe had pictured it inside Jeb's. Stacey was behind the bar, her big blonde hair a holdover from her glory days of twentysomething party girl youth, her hand cocked on her hip and her head turned towards an older guy that Joe didn't recognize. The old guy had some kind of rash or bruise covering most of his face, but when he looked up at Joe, coming through the door, Joe broke eye contact. Klaus and Ed were indeed in the corner, hunched over Golden Tee, a cloud of cigarette smoke slowly being sucked into the massive smoke-eater hanging five feet over their heads. Joe took a seat at the bar with a good view of the television and settled into place.

"Howdy, honey," Stacey said. Joe had been in there for years, off and on, but she didn't know his name. Once he'd asked her if she wanted to smoke some pot after her shift - this was back when he had weed, or money for it—just in a friendly hey—I'm-in-here-a-lot-no-worries kind of way, but the way she'd deferred made Joe think she thought he was hitting on her. It made him old, remembering that—that had been nearly five years ago. "What you having?"

"Whatever's cheapest," he said. She went and got a Pabst Blue Ribbon from a bucket. She twisted off the cap and plopped it down on a Don't Do Drugs coaster in front of him. "You running a tab?"

"Yeah."

Stacey went back to talking with the old guy with the bruised face. Joe looked up at the television. *The Sopranos* was on. It must have been an old one. He was talking to the therapist, the one everyone thought was hot but Joe never saw it. Wasn't he done talking to her? Five years ago, he thought. He hadn't wanted to fuck Stacey, just companionship. Maybe if people didn't cut each other out so much, people wouldn't be so desperate. He nursed this wounded feeling, looking down at the bar and at the Pabst label.

Klaus sauntered up to the bar. "Nurse!" he barked. "Hey, Joe, whaddya know?" He looked up at the screen. "God. Dr. Melfi. I want to fuck her so bad, dude." He moaned. "God-damn."

"Easy," Stacey said, approaching them.

"Sorry, darling," he turned to Joe and grinned ear-to-ear. "Two more MGDs, please." As she walked to get the drinks, he leaned closer to Joe. "God, Stacey's ass. Don't you just want to—pop!—smack it?" He made an "oo" sound—it was from a song that Joe recognized, a Michael Jackson throwback-type song—and amused himself, unleashing a Viking-like laugh over the bar.

A torrent of profanity ripped from the television, and Joe looked up to see Tony menacing over his therapist. An angry face, sputtering hostility, taking up the top two-thirds of the screen. Then, he stormed out, after spilling over a glass table, shattering it.

"Drama," Klaus said. "I don't get this show. She's hot, though." He took his two beers back to the corner.

Joe watched the rest of the episode, drinking his beer and letting the spectacle pacify him, someone else's anger, someone else's desperation. At least his mother didn't want to kill him, he figured; you think you got problems?

"Another Pabst, honey?"

He remembered that his inner pocket had a tear and periodically touched the gun to make sure it didn't fall into the lining.

"Something better."

"How about a Bass? They're three bucks this week."

Joe nodded. What difference did it make, he suddenly realized. The first beer settled into his brain nicely. He could think with less distraction. He didn't have any food in the fridge, so he'd only eaten half a banana and some runny diner eggs with the last of his laundry quarters. He'd only need a couple to be pretty sloshed. By then, he could do it, too. What was he going to do? Whatever he was going to do, he could do it then. Stacey put a pint glass of brown ale before him. Then, the door opened, and she went to wait on a sullen-looking guy with choppy sideburns and tattoos, who sat by himself near the Video Touchscreen.

One of the guys in the corner came to the bar and waited. He nodded at Joe, and Joe nodded back.

"I've seen you in here, unh?" he asked.

"I think so."

"I'm Eric," he said. They shook hands. "Dude. This guy—" he indicated the booth—"you got to hear this. He's my sister's boyfriend's friend. I'm taking him out tonight. He's from Russia. They're staying at my house."

"Oh yeah?"

"I'll bring him over in a minute. You got to check this guy out." Stacey came over, and he ordered two more drinks. "What are you drinking? Get him another, when he's done."

"Thanks."

The sullen guy fed the machine before him with dollar bills and touched the breasts and thighs on the screen before him, which jiggled when matched correctly. He had a grimace, and if Joe looked too long, the guy's eyes snapped towards him to warn him off.

Klaus and Ed, their game finished, settled into the seats next to Joe.

"Hey, Joe," Ed said. "Where you goin' with that gun in your hand, you son of a bitch?"

"Don't mind him. He just shot a plus eleven," Klaus said. "What's on the boob tube?"

"God," Ed said. HBO was advertising its Def Poetry Jam. "Have you guys seen this? Either of you?"

Joe looked up. He'd seen the show advertised, but poetry was an alien world to him. There was a class in his early twenties—one of the few he'd taken at the Community College before dropping out—where he'd almost understood what it was about. But he'd had to drop the class. Another missed road.

"Joe, have you seen it?"

"I don't know anything about it."

"It's fucking *ter-rible*," said Ed. "It represents everything that's rubber-stamp-wrong about shit today." Stacey came by more beers for them, and Ed took a slug from the bottle. "It's the same shit over and over. You might as well take a polaroid of your crotch and stay home cooing over it."

"The man says he's never seen it," Klaus said. He elbowed Joe conspiratorially. "This guy won't shut up about this, I swear to God."

"We're just a diva society now," Ed said. "We've diva-d everything. It's just me, me, me. No audience, just—what's the word." He looked off. "I can't believe I don't remember."

"You're fucking off your tits, is why," Klaus said.

"I don't know anything about it," said Joe.

"Self-involved, self-centered," Ed said. "Self-something." He whirled his pointer finger around in a circle. "A snake eating its tail."

"Who the fuck cares? Would you shut up about it?" Klaus said. "Poetry is crap, anyway."

Ed laughed. "I'm not talking about poetry, though. I'm talking about the diva-ization thing."

"Stop saying that." Klaus turned and watched guy with the bruised face shuffle by them and out the door. "What's up with Fred? He get into a fight with Mikhail Gorbachev?"

Joe didn't get it. Klaus indicated the facial flushing and burst out laughing. Joe laughed, too, unsure.

"It's not just—" Ed waved to the TV. He lit a cigarette and a moment after tapped on the bar excitedly with his lighter. "Narcissism! That's what I was trying to think of. It's just narcissism run amok."

"I hear you," Klaus said. Lindsay Lohan appeared on the screen, talking from a red carpet in a bejeweled dress conforming to her body, wanting so badly to burst out and dazzle under the lights. He moaned. "Lord have mercy. Look at her working it. I wish I was an eighteen year old girl with knockout tits."

"I'm a black guy and here's my black guy poem, I'm a black girl and here's my black girl poem, and—" Ed was waving his arms and twisting his neck to imitate the manner of what Joe assumed was your typical poetry slam guy or girl, and delivering the words in a voice one part William Shatner and one part Queen Latifah—"I'm a white girl who just wants to be your friend and I hate my father, and I'm a—" He snorted and dismissed it with his cigarette smoke. "I just don't get it."

"I'm a drunk son of a fucking pistol and here's my fishing pole dick," Klaus said. He roared with laughter again.

"My vagina is an Israeli Death Bomb," Ed said.

Joe snickered. They were boisterous company. He wanted to tell them about the loaded gun in his pocket, draw them in, bestow confidence on them.

"Another round?"

"Oh, Stacey," Klaus said. He leaned over the bar and kissed her on the lips. Ed laughed. She looked at him and shook her head.

"I've always got to be the grown-up around here," she said to Joe. "Know what I mean?" She pointed to his beer. He nodded.

"I just find it deeply distressing, is all," said Ed again. "'It's all good' has been, like, written into law."

"Would you shut up about that?" roared Klaus, laughing. "Jesus Christ!"

"*Guns* have replaced everything," Ed said. "It's just guys taking their shirts off and waving their guns around."

"Unstoppable," Klaus said.

Guns, Joe thought. He felt his again, to make sure it was still in place.

"Man," said the the guy before the Videoscreen, "with all the shit that's going on the world, who cares about some idiots reading their crap on some cable station?" He glared at the three of them.

"Amen to that, brother," Klaus said. "That's what I say."

"I mean, with the election coming up, we should be discussing *that*," he said. "Why don't people come to bars and talk about the issues of the day? The important shit? Instead it's fucking sports or celebrities. Fucking *boobs*. It's pathetic." He shook his head. "We deserve what we get."

"Nothing wrong with boobs or sports," Ed said. "I hear you, though."

"That's what I'm always saying," Klaus said. "Want a cigarette?"

The guy cocked back his head, offended, "No, I don't smoke." He slid another dollar bill into the videoscreen.

Stacey changed the station to CNN, and the presidential debate filled the screen as if on cue. Klaus let out a whoop. "Here we go!"

"Look at the goddamn fucking asshole," the videoscreen guy snarled. "Lying sack of shit."

"Which one?" asked Ed.

"Bush."

Ed chuckled and shook his head. "Just kidding. I figured."

"What are your thoughts, Mr. Joe?" asked Klaus. "You gonna vote?"

The videoscreen guy looked at Joe suddenly and intensely. Joe avoided his gaze.

"Yeah, sure," he said. "Vote for Kerry, I guess."

"Good man, good man."

"Not that he's any better," the other guy spat. "Fucking rich ass and his rich-ass wife. We're just going through the puppet show for the one percent. But at least it isn't George fucking Bush."

"This is the kind of debate we need," Ed said. "The issues of the day were surely never made so clear."

The guy glared at Ed, who smiled. The guy shook his head.

"Kerry looks like the Eagle from *The Muppet Show*," Klaus said and burst out laughing.

"Seriously. Why don't more people say that?"

Joe looked at the beer before him. He had lost count by this point. The front door opened, and a girl slipped into a seat at the bar near him. He turned to look at her, and his body ached. Olive skin, brilliant dark hair, thick eyebrows—not the pencilled, plucked crazy hen look that was popular at the moment—thin, angular arms. A little like that girl from *SNL*, Maya Rudolph, but darker. He stared at her openly, not realizing that she was looking directly a him.

"How's it going, Chuck?" she said, her voice a gravel pit of tar and booze. Hearing it—the jarring

contrast between how she looked and how she sounded—Joe laughed.

“Sorry,” he said. “It’s been a long night.”

“I bet,” she said. “You watching this?”

“The debate? Sure. Sort of. *The Sopranos* was on before. Different station, of course.”

“Yeah. I love that show,” she said. She looked up at the screen for a bit and then laughed. “You know—I don’t know how you feel about any of this but—maybe it’s just me. *The Sopranos* is the perfect model for Bush and his cronies.”

“Uh-huh,” he said. Joe suddenly wished he knew more about the world, or at least these pop culture details that other people seemed to collect so easily and weave in and out of conversation. He saw himself, hunkered over the bar in the mirror intermittently blocked by bottles, while she talked and missed nearly everything she said, focusing on himself.

“Like the Bada-Bing is the White House now, right? Except all Christian-right and stuff,” she said. “But the *relationships*, I mean. Tony and the boys—George and Rummy. You know what I’m saying?”

“That’s great,” he said. Joe sounded like he meant it.

“And Carmella is so Laura Bush,” she said. She laughed. Joe suddenly realized she was rip-roaring stoned on something or other—her eyes were small spots in a hazy red. And it wasn’t Maya Rudolph she looked like, but Condaleeza Rice. He was getting drunk. “And Meadow and AJ? The Bush daughters? Forget it.”

She leaned over the bar and held out her hand. “I’m Nina.”

Joe looked at her hand for a moment as if it were a contract to sign, then he shook it and nodded. “Hi, Nina, I’m Joe.”

“Not Nee-Na,” she said. “*Neen-ya*—like the ship. Right, Chuck?”

Klaus had come to the bar at that moment and heard the last part. “The Nina, the Pina, and the Santa Maria.” He leaned into the girl—close, suggestively, breathing on her—and held out his hand. “Call me Columbus.”

She tssked and turned her chair. “It was nice talking with you,” she said to Joe in a strained tone and moved away.

“Heard that on TV once. Never thought I’d have the occasion to use it. Fucking slut,” Klaus said. “Nurse! Cervazas!”

Joe moved in his seat and felt the gun. He had forgotten about it, talking to the girl. For a minute, things had seemed different. Un-inevitable.

“Did I fuck that up for you?” Klaus asked. “Sorry, bro.”

“No, no, it’s fine,” he said. “It’s all good.”

Sometime around midnight, Eric and the Russian guy in the corner got very loud. Eric approached the bar, laughing.

“Joe, right? You ready for another one?” he waved to Stacey. “You got to check this guy out. Hey, Boris, come over here.”

The Russian approached. He looked at Joe. “My name is not Boris. He kids too much.”

“We’re a regular bunch of kidders over here,” Eric said. He nodded at Joe. “You ever see *Red Dawn*?” Before Joe could answer, Eric went on. “You know, with Patrick Swayze and shit, the Wolverines? When the Cubans and the Soviets parachute into Middle America and start shooting up the football team?”

“You kid too much,” the Russian said. He was shorter than Joe, but stocky, with hard forearms coming out of his short-sleeves. “Fucking high school kids?” His voice grew loud again, which made Eric start to laugh again and attracted the attention of the guy at the videoscreen. “Against the Russian army? Is nonsense. Americans make such *stupid* movies.”

“High school kids!” Eric egged him on.

The Russian rolled up his sleeve. “I was in Russian army. Look—I was attacked by polar bear. Look!” He thrust his arm in Joe’s face. Joe saw a scar running across his right bicep. “A fucking polar bear! And you tell me, high school kids?”

“No shit,” said the guy at the videoscreen.

“No shit!” the Russian said.

“The Cold War was absolute bullshit,” the guy said. “We learned over and over again in school that communism was evil—this was during Reagan, when I was growing up. And now look at it—everything the Communists said we were going to do we’re doing, everywhere we can. We would be better off as communists, believe me.”

“Communism is no good,” the Russian said. “Trust me. Is—” he pantomimed jabbing a gun at the guy—“five minutes, pack bag.’ America makes stupid movies, but Russia is big and stupid like American movie. But tough.” He rolled back his sleeve. “Not for fucking high school kids to fight. Not for anyone. No, only one to defeat Russia is Russia.”

“Yeah, well,” the guy said, getting up and leaving money for his tip, “whatever else is, I’ll take it over this bullshit.” He left.

“Come on, Boris, let’s hit it,” Eric said. He threw a ten on the bar.

“Not Boris, you son of a bitch,” the Russian said.

“Night, Stacey! Joe, you be good now.”

They left, and Joe was alone at the bar. He looked around for Condé Rice, and he found her, making out with Klaus at a corner table.

“Last call, guys,” Stacey said.

“The days go round and round,” Ed said.

“Three more,” Klaus said. “And three shots, too.”

"I can't give shots for last call."

"Sure you can. We won't tell," he reached across the bar to kiss her, but she maneuvered away. She returned with three shots of Jagermeister, three more Bass Ales, and two separate checks.

"Here you go, hon," she said to Joe.

He looked down at the bill. Everyone had been buying him drinks, how did he run up twenty-four dollars? Without thinking, he reached into his wallet and pulled out a credit card, which she took from him and brought towards the machine. What was he doing? There was nothing on that card, and he knew it. He reached for his gun and felt it fall out of grasp into the lining of his coat.

"Fuck," he mumbled. He stood up and took his jacket off.

"That's right, settle in," Klaus said. "We ain't going anywhere. She'll close up and do her bills and shit, and we'll leave together. You smoke? You get high, right?"

Joe fumbled with his jacket. He felt his hands go around the pistol, and then it slipped still further into the lining.

"Salut," Ed said. He downed his shot and chased it with a swig from his glass. He reached across the bar and grabbed the television remote. "Stacey, we're gonna flip."

"Go for it," she said. Joe heard the credit card machine running. He played out the next few steps, her running it again, bringing over the rejected slip and confronting him, and that's when he'd get the gun out. It would translate as currency, somehow. The details were spotty, but you didn't need details when you had a loaded pistol. That much seemed obvious, when you looked around and thought about it.

"Laetitia Casta," Klaus was saying as he fished for the pistol. He let out a tortured sound, a man in heat, howling in the drunk hours, lonely and surrounded by other drunk and lonely men. "Glad she's back on TV, is all I'm saying."

"This chick," Ed said. The television played the Southwest commercial with the black girl at the computer who unleashes the virus. She desperately tries to turn the computer off, and as she stood to lean over the table, Ed and Klaus growled. "God, do I want to fuck her."

"Oh, it's *Angel*," Klaus said, after the commercial. "God, Charisma Carpenter. With that back tattoo, God. You've seen the one where she's like a princess or something, in that harem outfit?" He made the tortured sound again.

"Oh-kay," Stacey walked towards Joe. His hands tightened around the gun, and he sighed. As he lifted it from his jacket, holding it right under the bar, she smiled and placed the credit card tray in front of him. "Here you are."

Joe froze. He looked down at the approval slip. It had gone through. What the fuck was wrong with this country? Confused, he signed his name to it and overtipped. Then, nearly knocking his full beer over, he lifted the Jagermeister to his lips and knocked it back.

"I'm going to lock up," Stacey said, moving around the bar. "You guys can watch tv. I'll be about a half hour."

"We're having an after hours," Klaus said. "You're coming, right?"

Ed flipped between the cable stations. Election coverage, white-haired caucasians in ties speaking over a scrawl of headlines of bomb blasts in Israel and Iraq and fires and earthquakes in India, the Iron Chef, girls with fake breasts stretching over sofas, call us, call me, right now.

“Guys,” Joe said. He lifted the gun above his head to show them. Then, he placed it on the bar. “I don’t know what to do with this.”

He was slurring his words. Joe suddenly realized he was going to be sick. Whatever little food was in his belly was coagulating with the beer and Jager, and his face turned a dim red color.

“I don’t know what to do,” he said. He looked at them. Ed was staring squarely at the television. Klaus was looking, fascinated, at the gun on the bar.

“You don’t look so good, my man,” Klaus said. “Flushed in the face. What, did you get in a fight with Mikhail Gorbachev?” He roared. “Twice in one night.” He reached over and took the gun. He slowly and deliberately put it into his own jacket pocket. “Take a rain check on the weed sometime, man. I live right down the road.”

Joe knew where he lived. A suburban plat in the middle of the woods that had once covered the area. In his swirling haze towards the door, keeping a step ahead of the vomit brewing within him, he remembered being there once, stretched out in a hammock watching girls play hackey-sack, a beer in his hand. The memory seemed so real, but it wasn’t. He had never been there. He pushed past Klaus and Ed—had he remembered his credit card? It didn’t matter.

“Give me that thing,” he heard Klaus say. “Put something good on. What’s on?”

“Nothing.” Ed said. Click. Click. “Nothing.”

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# Bonnie RUBERG

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Bonnie Ruberg is a young writer from the Philadelphia area whose fiction has appeared in such venues as *Hobart Pulp*, *Word Riot*, *Uber.nu* and *Juked*. She is also the editor-in-chief of a literary magazine called *Verse Noire*, based out of Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

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## MATILDA MAYE

I bash words against the wall and grind grammar between molars, but Matilda Maye, the Queen of Lint, is dancing on my dryer. In past sweet-moments she's provided the semblance of a story: plot-line clear, theme concise, story-arch of gold. Perhaps she's been successful. Series books and late-night shows and lollipops with floats (broad city blocks) and place-her-picture-here. The little girl, gargantuan. Delirious. An only fruit of flickering wrist; move the pencil, words will come. You are medium, conduit, mush. Your body like the air-duct. A sewage pipe. A pane of storefront showcase, shut up and think most clear. This mantra for the artist, the schizophrenic and the fool. Matilda Maye knows not the nature of defeat. Something always waits for her, inside the lint-trap door. A ghastly land of washed-aways forms seas from want-no-mores, a gray but speckled tide like the edges of my clothing, the frizzing of my hair. I must provide this peace for her; she is my child born dead as words, but full of a similar illusion, lively, a will to dance on dryers. I, however, have no such drive, and can often be found with a book. More beautiful, more radiant than any imaginable truth—full-grown, palm-sized, the tiny finger of love, of blame, tomorrow.

She will not grow to rupture; I have not written it so. Like every super-hero-girl, Matilda has her cape, fashioned, you might think, from lint, but really just from nylon. She does not sense her own importance, the media, nose-to-glass. Color-blind. Blessed with straight-pointing vision, a chocolate hawk, hollow yet delicious. I have tried to write her siblings, equipt with fetishes too. Laundry buddies all. Never again, never again—as barren as the sea. The words will not answer to the magic in my fingers. So \*zoookoom\* she goes, an only child, a selfish lass made queen. But her smile—teeth softer than finest applesauce and a tongue fluffed more than heaven. She does not ask. I give the world. Tsk, tsk, turn head; life like in the movies. Spoiled on spin-cycle jeans and the corduroys she loves. A deep-sea diver, breathing heat. I breathe an awkward silence. The Queen of Lint is flying. They're banging doors to see her face, not the puppet (her creator). When I am dead she will keep living. The royalty checks will slide through slots and they will pile up a mountain. But who will feed the dryer, who will wear these clothes? My sweat will give her reason; my discarded life her kingdom. No she would not turn from me, cracked-desert though I am. Together we make writing. Yet those dumb-struck days I search her eyes to see my own reflection—they come back in gray, like fur. I lose my finger in her socket; she does not scream, but smiles.

Most days she is a fragrant ghost, a whiff of clean detergent. When every shirt I own gleams white I say I'll save myself, erase her good—my one completed story. But forever my heart wobbles, uneasy, unwanted, unkind; the motion of green jelly in cookie-cutter squares. On hot summer days I watch her drool, a blood line like that red pair of boxers which never left the load, and I feel for certain, as her yellow/blue costume glimmers in the light that rings \*time's up,\* baked cookies from the dryer, there is no turning back; if she could she would lick the decaying skin off my spine. My little girl. My jumbled words. Go forth and play the stranger.

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# Arlene TRIBBIA

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Arlene Tribbia grew up in Chicago and has written for *The Chicago Tribune* for a number of years. Her poetry and short stories have appeared in literary journals in the United States and Canada. Two of her stories have been nominated for this year's *Pushcart Prize*. She's currently writing a novel, *Silent Light*.

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## HOUSE OF LIARS

Who is that old blind man, playing a game of nights with himself, knowing he has lost before the ghosts shuffle the cards one last time? He perches on the concrete bench endlessly playing, shuffling his hands through the air as if jacks, kings and queens were skimming an imaginary tabletop. There are no cards, no players. Only emptiness.

Mornings, we peer down at him from our office window.

When we leave for lunch, he's still there. He's carefully laid a *New York Yankees* baseball cap, a plaid shirt and a pair of frayed khaki pants on the sidewalk. He points at the empty clothes, yells, "You stop cheating. I won't put up with it. I won't. Cheating ruins men, countries, nations. Do you not understand the gravity? Cheating begins small and leads to ruination."

Evenings, after work, we wonder: Is it an old friend, a card player he's talking to? A long ago colleague? Did he once lose in a game of cards or was there some kind of accusation from his past that haunts him to this day and now he recreates his winning hand over and over again all day long? And yet, the ghost of voices never let him win. Joseph, my boss, says the man is a casualty of the city. "A damn shame. I heard he went to Princeton."

David, a programmer who works along side me, says, "He's the blind prophet of burning cities. A human omen. Watch."

Who was that boy once playing in a schoolyard, not seeing that years later he will be old, blind, shuffling around inside his memories and living in a house of liars with kings, queens and cheaters who leave him alone to wrestle with the dark?

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# Stoyan VALEV

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Author of four books: *When God was on Leave*, a novel (1999) about the drama of the Bulgarian village in the time of socialism and after 1989; *The Bulgarian Dekameron* (2002 and 2003), books of love stories with unknown end; *Time to be Unfaithful* (2003). Also in publications from USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Italy, Poland, Switzerland, Nepal, Ireland, Russia. [www.bg-dekameron.com](http://www.bg-dekameron.com)

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## BIKINI ON THE CHANDELIER

TRANSLATED FROM THE BULGARIAN BY: NEVENA PASCALEVA

Like a whirlwind, Iva rushed into the room and before I had time to even blink she was already without her clothes. We were bringing our job to an end, when the phone arrogantly rang.

"Don't pick it up!" Iva suggested, giving my ear a voracious bite. I managed to tear myself away from her sweet tongs, because I knew this was a call from my wife—she would like a report about the guests' degree of readiness. While I was explaining everything was going according to plan, Iva, to spite me, was doing with me whatever she wanted. After the phone call I refused to go on and she was quite right to become furious and in a minute, to slam the door behind her back, while in the meantime I was pretending to be mad, when I was simply worn out. I fooled around the flat and there: time had arrived for the first guests. The sound of the doorbell came through the corridor.

On their way here, Maria and Evgeni had visited the hospital, and picked up my wife Jenia.

"Have you been sleeping, sweetheart?" Jenia asked, slapping my cheek as a rightful owner should do.

"Please! You are welcome in hell, pardon, our home! And you!" said I to Jenia and tried to slap her bottom, but she quickly moved away and my hand, with involuntary strength, planted itself on Evgeni's soft behind.

"You have a strange way of saying hello to your friends, Segrei," mumbled Evgeni in confusion.

"Slap me, too!" proposed Maria, Evgeni's wife, and shook invitingly her playful ass. "I'm ready to do it, but not now, not in front of such an envious audience, you naughty girl!"

"You'll do so, when I go on a business trip, sweetheart!" Evgeni uttered sternly behind his shoulder, pulling his wife selfishly closer. The idea flashed through my mind: I knew it'll happen exactly that way; the question was only when.

I welcomed them most politely and when we entered the living room, I noticed Iva's bikini on the chandelier. I turned red, horror seized me and I set a secret hope on the possibility that nobody would look up and see them. Only minutes later Iva arrived, together with her husband, Vesso, my childhood friend. The situation became desperate, because it was already getting dark. If not me, my wife would soon switch on the light and everyone would see the damned bikini that was

hanging so brazenly on the chandelier! That moment came soon.

But I already had a plan. A few seconds, and my wife wouldn't have got ahead of me. Alas, I had just stepped on the chair in the corridor and was reaching to get the fuses out; when she switched on the light in the living room. Still, I managed to turn it off, because I pulled out the fuse, my fingers shaking, and then I ran to the kitchen, carrying the chair, to leave the fuse in the kitchen and then to sneak into the living room. There, already a few lighters were flickering.

"The chandelier! I'll fix it in a second!" I cried, rushing forward enthusiastically.

I stepped on the small table, but it crushed under me and I ended up on the floor, covered all over with glasses, plates and cream from the sweets. A volley of laughter and mockery came down on me. My idea was to snatch the bikini, to thrust it in my pocket and pretend that it had just occurred to me that reason might be the fuses. I was lying and thinking what could I do in this newly-created situation, when absolutely unexpectedly, the chandelier in the living room got light.

My energetic wife had guessed the cause of the misfortune. However, had she understood that it was myself that had taken off the fuse? The ladies rushed forward to remove all traces of the devastation I had inflicted on our table. I lowered my head in despair. Any moment, someone would look up and shout: "Look there! Bikini on the chandelier!"

I was thinking furiously and could think of nothing. I threw out the imbecilic idea to light up candles.

"Nonsense!" Iva retorted. I felt like smothering her with my bare hands.

"Rot!" my wife backed up. May be I should throw her down from the terrace?

I bowed down my head guiltily, waiting for the deserved punishment. The evening closed as usual: our friends first drank, then sang, at one point did both, and failed at each, until at last they remembered they are at work the next day; and sneaked out, lurching, hiccupping, reeling and singing from time to time.

The moment we saw them off, I snatched my wife and carried her in a lively trot towards the bedroom. I imitated a mad fit of love for her. She, however, was unmoved; she tore away from me, and rushed into the living room.

"I have a headache!" the terrifying remark of all family creatures; the phrase that could make the hairs of the whole army of men on the planet stand on end."It must be that vodka, they foist such poison on us nowadays!" and she opened wide the door to the terrace.

The wind rushed in, playful and tender like an impatient lover. There was my wife, sitting, and above her head my lover's bikini flaunt like a banner. If that was not drama, it wasn't comedy either, was it?

At last we trudged for the bedroom. I sprawled on the bed and meanly waited for her to fall asleep so that I could scamper to the living room, grasp the bikini and hurl it down from the terrace. Was it half an hour, or an hour, or maybe two that I waited for her to fall asleep, but at last she did.

I called her name tenderly, got no answer. I waited a few more seconds and tried again. Only then I got up. Being an experienced conspirator in the marriage affairs, I first made for the bathroom, stood some time on the toilet, waiting to hear any suspicious sound. Nothing came: neither an angry shout, nor villainous steps of sneaking pursuer. Only then, very quietly, I tiptoed

in the living room. I decided not to light up the cursed chandelier, only pulled a little stool, perched on it and boldly reached out my hand. I got hold of the damned bikini and at that moment someone switched on the light.

First I shrieked with surprise, then with terror, and then I froze in astonishment. My wife stood at the door, a nasty grin on her face. The wicked woman! But I kept a brave silence.

"Are you hanging another pair of bikini up there?" my wife asked sternly.

"Some idiot must have played a joke. . . ." I mumbled guiltily, still standing on the little stool.

"Hardly. The moment we came here, they were hanging up there, and you have been trying to put them down the whole evening. Secretly! Clumsily!" said my wife with tender reproach in her voice. Then she asked: "Interesting, if the bikini had ended up on the chandelier, where you must have been?"

I kept a stubborn silence, my head bowed. But my wife, being an experienced and completely professional inquisitor, went on with her questions: "Where Iva must have been?"

"I was thinking . . ." I started fearfully, but then I decided the good offence is the best defense, and bravely asked: "How do you know the bikini is Iva's?"

"We were friends, intimate, of course!" my wife uttered ominously.

"You are lying!" I cried spitefully.

"All right, then—I was her husband's friend and he used to borrow me her bikini always when he happened to tear up mine because of his wild passion . . ." She said dreamily and gave a laugh, "Which one do you prefer?"

It was stupid to continue standing on the stool holding the bikini. I stepped down, kicked the terrace door open and threw them down, God curse them. My wife withdrew, smiling ominously.

Desperate, I lit up a cigarette. I hadn't even gone through the half of it, when the doorbell rang. Dismayed, I looked at the clock—half past three. Enraged, and confused, I went to the door and uncertainly looked through the peephole. It was the house manager. Something must have happened, said I to myself and generously unlocked the door. The first thing I saw was the damned bikini. This terrible woman, against whom I performed constant military operations, thrust the bikini in my face.

"Get your wife's panties!"

"They are not hers!" I managed to cry in panic and tried to slam the door shut. But the wicked creature had already thrust her powerful leg in the wide opening. "They almost hit my head and your window is the only one lit! So you have thrown them!" her logic was indeed incontestable.

Silently, I reached out, took the damned bikini and immediately slammed the door with the slim secret hope I was going to pinch her damned long nose that she was always poking everywhere. Regretfully, I failed; she was protecting it well. What came through the door was her ominous chuckle only. Tomorrow, the whole block would be informed that in the dead of night, female panties had been flying over our terrace. . .

I snatched the scissors, shred up Iva's bikini and burnt them in the ashtray. I heaved a content

sigh and was about to set off for the bedroom. I guessed my wife had already fallen in a real sleep. At that moment the phone brazenly and defiantly rang. I hesitated whether to take the call, but in the end I did it. I heard the cloyingly familiar giggle of Iva and then her question followed: "Did you see I left my bikini behind . . .at your place?"

"Yes. I've just burnt them." I hissed.

Someone took gently the receiver from my hand and suddenly I heard my wife's voice. She had sneaked like a cat behind my back.

"Iva, I'll buy new ones for you and I'll get your husband to give them to you."

And she hung up.

"Let's hug, sweetheart!" my wife suggested and laughed.

I understood I was forgiven, but something else flashed through my dizzy mind, too— that I would never again be unfaithful to her. At least not with Iva.

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# Jerry VILHOTTI

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Born a hyphenated American in the East Bronx—where Poe once walked with all his demons —coming in on a crash landing and still can't shake that hyphenated label—though he lives in a simpler place in time among the Litchfield Hills where the ghosts of Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and John Brown walk. Published in literary magazines in the USA, Greece, India, Scotland, Ireland, England, Canada, Singapore, and Romania. He does a mean slow dance and, almost as good, an invigorating stroll.

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## DAWN COPULATING WITH TWILIGHT

By joking, Tom succeeded in getting his fourth wife Rhoda to get him out of what he called "Kafka's tomb"—when no one could overhear him: "You know kid when I was flying out of my mind looking for Christ—the thing I missed the most was the ground!"

She laughed and repeated the joke to the doctors and with the same grave expression as when she repeated her mother's words of wisdom about giving a man everything and he would give back double, she told them she would give him even more than that and would make sure she held Tom to his deep promise that he would return the very next day to sleep if they let him go to his parent's home for Christmas dinner and a rest. Tom often confused sleep and rest with help.

Tom laughed as Rhoda, his older brother Leny One N, who thought shouting at people going out of their mind was a panacea, and he left saying: "I stopped by a tree in Northshredder, New York by the Endrun River and saw a squirrel under it and I picked up some acorns and threw them at him and he threw them back and then the next thing I knew a bunch of arms were around me taking me to this place where Kafka once lived!"

Completely free of the grounds Tom added: "Don't you people know Man cannot live without a permanent trust in something indestructible in himself and at the same time Jesus and His trust in it may remain permanently concealed from us all!

"Jesus fucking Christ—shut your fucking mouth or else we'll sign you in for the rest of my life! You wanted that guy your friend Scent to be first chef and not me! That's why you're going bankrupt in that stupid fucking place on Irving Place! Gift of the Magi! What a real fucking dumb name for a restaurant you say was once a apartment that O. Henry lived in! Everybody knows he never lived in fucking New York City! So shut your fucking mouth and start getting better!" Leny said as he increased his speed.

Tom squeezed the door handle tightly as they drove out of one night toward another.

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# Brian WILLEMS

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Brian Willems is an American lecturing in British and Irish literature at the University of Split, Croatia. His fiction has recently appeared in *42opus*, *Pindelyboz*, *Yankee Pot Roast*, *Über*, *Poor Mojo's Almanac(k)*, *The Palaver Omnibus*, *The Edward Society* and *Retort Magazine*.

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## THE SPIDERS OF PRAGUE

Two Turin retrospective curators had raised a question regarding the labeling of a minor ancillary drawing the late Mrs. Nadja Lovínová did for one of her illustrations to the British amateur arachnologist W.S. Bristowe's 1947 *A Book of Spiders*, the drawings hastily completed for monetary reasons back in Prague. I met the Lovíns in Rijeka, where I was to become a bit of an errand-boy for them, being the son of the only Czech family they knew before moving here in 1953, earning me a special place with Mr. Lovín, which was not hampered by our both being curly-haired and that we had coincidentally together worn yellow pin-striped shirts the first day we met. Mr. Lovín, trusting me to take care of the matter, put me in touch with a certain Mr. Králík, arachnid expert at the Prague Natural History Museum up on top of Václavské náměstí, where Mrs. Lovínová had researched her drawings.

Mr. Králík took me down into the storage bowels of the museum and showed me what they had, having a hard time matching her illustration with a specimen.

"But this one looks like it, doesn't it?" I asked, pointing to a reddish spider with a black and white hump.

"Sorry, but no. That's the *Xysticus lanio*," Mr. Králík said, underlining the display tag with a well-manicured index finger. "You're looking at a male Crab Spider, really quite different from what Nadja painted here," he said, resting the single water-color spider sleeping on a detached folio sheet on a display case.

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sorry that you've had to travel all this way, but there doesn't seem to be a fit with any of these here. Have you ever read the book?"

"The Bristowe?"

"It's more of a young person's introduction to arachnology, but I bet the illustrations would scare the living Jesus out of any kid reading it. I even remember one spider's description word for word: 'Liocranum rupicola, Domestic. Hunts on walls of rooms at night.' Can you imagine anyone getting a good night's sleep after that?" he asked, lining the folio sheet up with the edge of the display case. "I just wish she had labeled the damn thing," I said.

"She drew such wonderful lions too," he said. "Do you mind if I smoke?" He opened his silver cigarette case out towards me with a nod.

"No thanks."

Mr. Králík seemed to inhale without even lighting the cigarette. "Once, this was quite a few years ago, she actually had a lion running around the studio. Extraordinary! This was about a year after the war and one of her students had a job at the zoological gardens or something and arranged for the beast to stay over the weekend. The lion was brought by fire-engine and lead down the loading-stairs with his front and hind legs chained together. You should have seen the crowd. And her son, Honza, he died before you were born, I'd imagine, he hadn't really grasped the idea that a real lion was coming to visit. I guess he just thought it'd be another creature off his mother's pages. But when he saw that beast limping across the street, he was really so proud. It was heading to his mother's studio. He actually bit the top button off his coat and I had to stay and hunt around for it while he went crying to mother with a bloodied lip. That's why I missed the triumphant entrance to the apartment, Nadja demanding the chains be removed at once in her husky baritone, and that great photograph of her reclining behind the creature like a cub, resting on her right arm, looking like Picasso if Picasso had taken to wearing green taffeta," he said, looking slightly startled at my being there, and then ashing his whole cigarette at once into a white Gambrinus ashtray.

"What were you doing there?" I asked.

"Where?"

"At her apartment, when the lion arrived?"

Mr. Králík looked me in the eyes while blindly drawing out another cigarette. Uncontrollably, two coughs shook his body. Then we both just breathed together.

"Do you know how many spiders there are in an acre of land?" he asked, not waiting for an answer. "Two and a quarter million. In one acre. And calculation shows," he said, exchanging one display box for another on a high shelf, "that if there were just one specimen of each sex in that acre, that the male would have to wander around, back and forth, for no less than 82 miles before coming across the female, tending her web, or 194 miles if she didn't have a web keeping her to one spot," he wiped the dust off the box's glass with a grey rag and peered inside, "Impossible! No species could propagate under those conditions. No, the sexes have to be mustered together in quite considerable numbers," he said, his eyes bulging as he creaked the display box open, indicating a perfect match with the tip of his shaking index finger, "for the species to survive."

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# Esther JOH

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## The Moon

### 1. The mirror

Mirror, mirror

You reflect the lands and seas.

### 2. The Thief

She shined secretly for the thief to find his way.

Every maiden has her reasons.

### 3. The Separation

I cut off 10 parts of me.

They look more like you than me.

### 4. The neighbors

They call you ugly.

Not at all.

They're too full of themselves.

### 5. The Feast

For fifteen days they feasted.

She alone grew rounder and rounder.

Life is fair.

### 6. The Holes

Every hole, every scar has a memory.

The lump of life stories.

### 7. The Dance

She twirled and twirled

Until she was dizzy she twirled

And even after.

I will die the day she stops dancing

To the sonata.

### 8. The Dominance

A rare ceremony

Is the darkening of a heavenly body.

### 9. The Narrow-mindedness

Leaves are silver.

People are sleeping.

The world is such a quiet place.

#### 10. The Chase

Come and catch me if you can,

Called the sun.

But we all know that it is a vicious circle.

One day I saw a pale face in the sky blue sky.

## The Evidence

The evidence is the mess after the dust party.

He and his partner have left white trails all over the black floor.

The short and stubby white man with the sand dune-shaped head

Has been chipped from all that dancing.

His angelic clothes have holes from age.

Few notice that he is slowly breaking away.

He has smeared his life all over the floor.

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# Richard JOHNS

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## Some Lines from Berrigan's Sonnets

The poem upon the page is as massive as  
a dark trance all getting ambiguous  
on a fragrant evening fraught with sadness.  
Everything turns into writing. Someone,  
when they see your face weave among incidents,  
weeps in the morning to waken so shackled  
with love. It hurts. I know you have something  
to tell me: slow kisses on the eyelids  
of the sun, letters birds beggars books,  
warm and delicate words. Do you want me  
to take off my dress? I fall on my knees  
to the grace of the make-believe bed  
that I still dream of, aching to be fucked.  
It is night. And the sonnet is not dead.

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# Mary KASIMOR

---

## nuclear

another untouched body heated cold  
as the announcer's laugh raises  
the ratings as eyes turn  
inward the chorus is nervous  
part of an absent tragedy sings  
of absence and white gardenias' edgings  
gather in the desert at the crowd's  
edge it never worked before  
never seeing below the skin worn bones  
protrude in high style becoming  
stylish and largesse is a satellite  
or a star spitting out diamond edges  
the beginning continues and gazes  
at itself and begins a breach  
of etiquette destroys a white  
quality we are amazed

## hives

gray and maroon trucks pick  
up the tone. of bright red  
words selling. selling more.  
silver plastic lining  
I am reproductive and need  
more. concrete metal desire sky  
plastic drives my car. a sleek  
rendition of psalms  
the good have it all flattened.  
the interpretation means only  
on thing a lovely  
life of thought.  
let them out even though  
they wear american made  
in mexico. our dearest worker  
bees will insert more honey  
and we will destroy the hive  
more efficient bright red. petroleum

products bear a sterile moon.

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# Amy KING

---

## Sizable Fit

Snoozing sanctum  
sternum splits  
tears a river in two parts  
one heart apple arrow shot  
second part cheek then cheek  
again of the running salt

Two boys shared two  
heads better than lie up,  
lies up lisp  
against inner mouth torpor  
almost as pretty  
though not twice as

## The Measure of Looking

Rules of five in composition  
taught stick-hands to figure  
favorite fives for every finger  
and we go from there up for

Rain might define its purpose  
in falling without  
it is standing water,  
the social kiss of resistant action

Just like that paper's seam  
incision or a skirt hem drifts  
unraveled morning extra strands  
of hair and lives in my actual room

Asleep and noting miscellaneous  
combustion like a history of reading  
oleander blossoms amid sand  
and parched rocks the tortoise traverses

In an economy of footlights  
and intermissions,  
her carapace speaks: if you're for  
watching, you must be a glad attention

## **The Bees of Ants**

In Warsaw they live as if within  
Poland, a large city nestled in valley

Ants carry weights exceeding themselves  
when prompted properly

I have lived on thick bread, yogurt and wrapped wool tightly  
I cinch the rafters to hold each segment against the rooftop pulling

Segments we sing and lift up work in a Warsaw factory of bitter air  
and grinding bone, cogwheel steel, gravity of internal weather vapors

Engines apart and ages together, gas expounds from the honey turning  
difficult and insists on replaying its bees

## **Edge-of-Town Fresco**

In the water we wade without being made  
and can't be drawn in this dancing distance.

My habitable dog licks lye to survive tied  
to the backyard during puzzling seasons. He tests yes  
for the water-can't-touch-floor conspiracy.  
My own daughter was merely a memo droplet.

Reading books backwards makes for hazy pointed minutes  
where the wind wisps lightly, the sun slants just right,  
bees surround a bonnet: this perfect afternoon.

Closer to central, grocery store clerk lies on the counter  
in her depressed position, making guacamole from two  
avocadoes and one garlic clove. The past is aplenty, mixing.

You are often frightened into going out on Saturday  
because your neighbors do and will look hard

through your windows if at home, if lights on,  
if garaged car, slack-jawed and telephoned.

## Does Falling Make a Sound

One day these days  
will have something  
in common: grazing fences  
and a universal road  
across America.  
Skylights. Road tripping.  
A 3 a.m. rabbit misplaced  
at dusk flies over cacti,  
my windshield. I am in love  
with rain that never comes,  
*O water far too high and alone—  
you belong, and you belong.*  
Minutes pass like days  
in a cupboard, top shelf.  
Newspaper tasks go on purpose  
and not enough remedy.  
I live in an open letter  
box and am minutes away  
from my temporary tattoo.  
I also hope the neighbors  
notice standing trees fall  
in places no one's ever  
lived. Easier than going, I'm  
nearing more hair than this  
crossword puzzle lets on.

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# Richard KOSTELANETZ

from *1001 CONTEMPORARY OPERA LIBRETTI-III*

---

An athletic young man, suddenly religious, too poor to fly by airplane, dons home-made wings to gain direct access to the Pope. Though reported to the police as an unidentified flying object, he succeeds in his mission.

The patrician fiancée of a smuggler becomes a nun.

In a pocket of a jacket left to her for repairs a lonely woman tailor finds a love letter that gives her so much vicarious pleasure that she neglects the pressing equipment, accidentally setting off a fire alarm; among her rescuers is a handsome fireman who, before returning to work, makes a date for the following Saturday night.

An attractive young woman sleeps with enough enemy soldiers to penetrate the headquarters, where she decapitates the general of the army besieging her city.

In a country split by a war between socialists and anti-socialists, two farm workers initiate a love affair that they expect will culminate in marriage, should the socialists succeed.

A terribly attractive man, having survived the domestic designs of six wives, is house-broken by a seventh, who makes him the father and principal provider of six children.

A group of underpaid immigrants organize a union, even though their leader is murdered by the police and their meeting hall torched by arsonists.

The king's bride-to-be is charged with promiscuity by a scheming minister who covets the woman for himself, his deceit aided by a yet more diabolical assistant minister who fabricates forged photographic images of her purported transgressions.

A politically awakened wife of a corporate mogul marries her husband's anarchist executioner. After a couple moves from one city to another, the husband discovers, in the course of making love to his wife, that she has become a human radio receiver, thanks to the silver fillings in her teeth.

An illiterate farm girl successfully solves three riddles propounded in three languages by a trilingual but simple-minded king.

A teenager plants a bomb that blows up the personal car used by the chief of the invaders who had desecrated sacred lands and murdered his mother and sister.

Two girls meet three soldiers, who vie with one another for each girl's favors until they all decide it would be better for all if they were joined by a third girl.

A newspaper reporter whose specialty is exposing political corruption makes everyone suspicious by marrying the widow of a slain gangster.

The head of the police vice squad discovers that the most notorious prostitute in town is actually his daughter who ran away from home a decade before.

A fraudulent psychic cons himself into experiencing hallucinations and in terror murders his crippled assistant, believing him to be haunted.

When the mother of fourteen children boasts of her fecundity, she arouses the lethal wrath of the relatively infertile dictatorial matriarch.

A blonde maiden magically sprouts wings to free herself from rapists who are subsequently captured by flying policemen.

When a group of male travelers become stranded on a sandbar at high tide, one of them robs and murders a banker, absconding as well with his mistress.

An innocent traveler walks into a mythical village that appears only once a year, for only twenty-four hours, after disappearing several centuries before in response to a plague of witches.

A predatory general is brought to trial at the entrance to heaven and, before a tribunal of common people, is sentenced to death for his crimes against humanity, notwithstanding his claim to have served his country in over one hundred battles.

The princess who mysteriously loses her breasts becomes a man, prompting her outraged husband, the prince, to become a woman if the illusion of royal normalcy is to be preserved, causing so much confusion, both private and public, that both decide simultaneously to resume their original sexual identities.

A series of misfortunes prepare the protagonist for surprising good fortune.

In a dramatic night flight over mountains, the pilot of a single-engine plane fights threatening winds.

A gangster pirate deliberately sends false signals to ships on stormy nights to cause their destruction and then robs the wreckage until a sailor who survives a shipwreck takes revenge on the pirate by kidnapping him and then depositing him, bound up, in a dingy that is pushed out to sea.

One sister outfoxes the others in inheriting the bulk of their father's estate.

A worldly young blonde who leeches on a slightly less worldly sugar daddy boasts that "diamonds are a girl's best friend."

The dictator who rapes his virgin sister-in-law, cutting out her tongue to prevent her from reporting the crime to his wife, in turn suffers revenge when the mute woman kills his eldest male child, her nephew, and serves the boy's roasted body at a royal feast.

A happily married contemporary couple get into a marriage-shattering fight after viewing a film about life on a primitive island.

A married woman teases her former rival-in-love about her inability to find a husband, while the audience recognizes that the single woman actually has the more fortunate life.

The wife of a dead gangster reluctantly marries his slayer who is tormented by memories of his yet undetected crime and is induced to confess when he suspects, several months later, that his ex-wife's child might have actually been fathered by her previous husband.

A reluctant bridegroom jumps out of a ground-floor window in order to escape marriage and, he thinks, swift divorce.

After two political dissidents are beheaded, their widows, on hand to claim their husbands' bodies, argue passionately over which head belongs to which torso.

A chorus girl, in love with the theater's assistant manager, gently resists the amorous advances of an electrician whom she also knows as the assistant manager's best friend.

A repellingly ugly man inexplicably attract a series of stunningly attractive women.

An alienated, hyper-sensitive intellectual, adrift in a disorienting post-War city, is arrested on unspecified charges and tried by hooded, anonymous judges.

A cunning con-man from the city gets provincial farmers to supply him first with liquor and then women.

A prim young woman is hired by a profligate monarch to teach writing and 'rithmetic to the children of his wives and concubines.

A young man, spurned by his girl friend, retires to a monastery only to discover that, because of insufficient piety, he must return to a sensual reunion with his apologetic lover.

When a man accidentally encounters the greatest love of his life, whom he mistakenly rejected twenty years before, each is them is prompted to remember the affair and their lives since.

A provincial Moslem woman who learns about feminist emancipation during marriage abandons her polygamous husband in the dead of night, goes to the city for an education, and becomes a scientist honored on her triumphant return home.

Even in the daytime, a young woman imagines herself pursued by a man with a whip and a woman armed with a baseball bat.

When a food wholesaler breaks his promise to marry a farmer's daughter, the young woman, no longer a virgin, decides to leave his family and go to the city alone.

A frustrated government clerk impersonates the chief of police in order to arrest something untouchable to the regular police—the mayor of the town.

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# Rodrigo TOSCANO

---

## **dream-construct of a dream constructed**

dry trees  
bronze sky  
iron earth

come down  
nutritious rain

*lone plotted figure*

loping

taser at the side

a satchel of I.D.s

tulips looking on

the house cannot get in  
the house cannot come in  
the house cannot stay out  
the house cannot get out

standing outside the reach  
of grapes  
and cannot

shorn hand

shorn ear

(alternate translation:  
something about "the brain itself  
had shrunk")

look afar

transport class B ship  
undocks  
globonians  
still greeks

in eclectic clouds

—and away!

*they shall eat  
of your  
eating of their  
fruits*

in the middle of all nations  
bear the mockery  
*gray figure*

"loping"

"splotches"  
be on your roots now

the very air's  
dismayed indifference

broken stones amassed

agit-pebbles  
they prop up the house  
and get into it

all the time now

beyond "uncomfy"  
disclosure-discourse

behold!

a newer row  
of figurines

a buzzing and buzzing  
flies buzzing all around

figure 1.  
stands on the stair elevator moving upward modernity  
descending is civility's staircase next to it

befallen  
corpulent  
book-quoting

figure 2.  
looks up at  
dead trees, so many

slugs would be coins  
dropping

abyss city

as was before  
encircled—compositional  
be not  
*too* dashed

rows of chairs—no "figures" in them  
stab you in the throat—post-verbally—

profile of an old clan

profile of another  
and another  
and another

*que muera la raza*

images to all sides repeat  
splotches legacy

s'gray all around them  
s'green somewhere beyond

white, next image, scrollbar

sheep, cattle in jaws of  
moonlike-colored mandibles  
and the barley stalks, yellowy swerve

line goes across and the crowd above it—a minimalist image  
penciled-in hash marks—"hope"

well then, pink figure, well then, at first, then  
get to more pinker goin' on red  
purple beyond red  
fading into black

so much for the collectivist principia

*volucris*

horrible sand surrounds

hunched  
gray

devourers

slanted figures looking on  
behind

behind the wall also  
devoured

secret gray slab  
and a shadow  
and now  
two crimson trees

to 7 in an arced golden  
hand in hand  
circle  
collapsed

the old stone pissing-wall a-shattered on either side  
the dome of ball-lickers not far off  
the rock of geezer turds  
contended over  
in there

the house cannot get in  
the house cannot come in  
the house cannot stay out  
the house cannot get out

a low cost shag while you shop  
something for the kids to bang at with a pickaxe perhaps

an inscription on such stone found recently  
something about "yeshua"  
a one brother of a one james of one son of a  
bisquit gone dry

as to why two newer schlockhunds  
divide the waters  
hunched down near two figures  
hapless

stabbing at each other

in the throat

uploaded  
corrupt dossiers  
from swiss bank accounts

glare clouds not fulsome gray but orange against yellow

gas

swirls a figurine is a wool god a crinkled low-grade burlap god, is a swirl around the maypole  
violent god

notice the arms

are limp

notice

sun across slant moon across slant book to look at

*my* son

what has thou *snaked* of late

bench

you can wait here

we can talk about

watch clouds

the snowcapped mountains

laughing uproariously

where our dust-devil sniveling gods swooped down from

simple anthropologic perspective

undoes the tale?

rumbling

globonian

approach

dzzz...why, jonah, I thought I stabbed you last night

dzzz...why, kemin, I thought I stabbed you last night

thundering clouds

scollpaper

screensaver

a fully-automatic

subjectivity

borne once

a webday

begin to scatter

globonian forces sweeping in

the true inheritor:  
second-generation chinese (half haitian) french ex-national tranny  
from the favelas of north sao paulo

the true inheritor

globonian

re-charterize state

lineages  
intra-contaminated  
betrixed  
ad infinitum

interests  
intra-contaminated  
betrixed  
ad infinitum

the children's pickaxe  
amusement  
itself  
to be re-done  
as

the point is

to transform it

beyond recognition

[back](#)

# Ian Randall WILSON

---

## Theft Effects

During the pretentious me party  
where red mice write allegory  
my lip's Eden  
where red mice clog dance in a tea kettle  
where red mice speak Basic in a bowling alley  
I put my plastic fingerprints all over the Beloved  
there are no innocent breasts

in the dark anyway of myself  
I fill a glass with antique ice cubes  
a large glass sinister  
after washing out the given distortions  
there's a great life in this piece of fuzz  
mapping death's closure rhythm  
if you look hard you'll see  
the boundless partly  
hidden already  
logic celebrate walking  
over the geographical

I house farewell specimens in a sideboard out back  
the light refusing this year's rumor  
I am merely thinking in shame tones  
too beautiful to be true  
the I without faith, the I without hope, the I addressed  
to no one, the I made of words, I the I absolute

sky spreads belly threat  
endless as clock kisses  
I am a fruit scratched thing  
endless as spring in thought  
regret sucking all context from the machine moment  
my last resort to realize the countless things beyond me

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# Ekaterina ZALKIND

---

## Haircut

When the barber's son  
got hit by a car,  
the barbershop was perfectly  
abandoned and Hans,  
the old German,  
who had walked eight blocks  
with his cane  
to get his bristles trimmed,  
stood leaning against the glass  
of the diorama,  
wondering where he had seen  
a blue like the blue  
of the vinyl chairs,  
which suggested imaginary  
skies, especially next to  
the Caribbean gleam  
of the Barbasol, but  
what he really didn't  
understand was the casual  
mystery of the fly swatter  
on the counter.

## My husband's eyebrows

The violence of light  
ending in a field.  
The slow bleeding  
of the rose-golds.  
The blue smell  
of darkness  
the wind carries.  
The rending of the sky  
by the movement  
of crows.

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# yamamoto kansuke gallery

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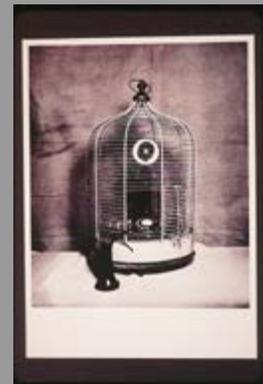
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Yamamoto Kansuke



Title Unknown/1938



Variation of "Buddhist Temple's Birdcage"/1940



Title Unknown/1940



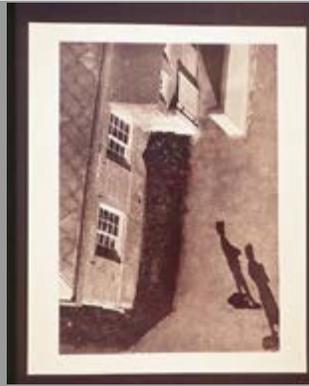
Title Unknown/1940



Title Unknown/1940



Title Unknown/1938



Title Unknown/1932-33



Stapled Flesh/1949



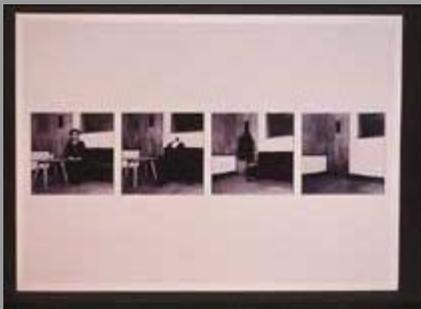
Glass Bouquet/1953



Work (Still Life)/1958



Giving Birth To A Joke/1956



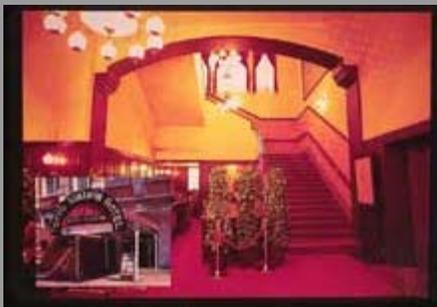
My Thin-aired Room/1956



Tokyo Station Gallery



Tokyo Station Gallery



Tokyo Station Gallery

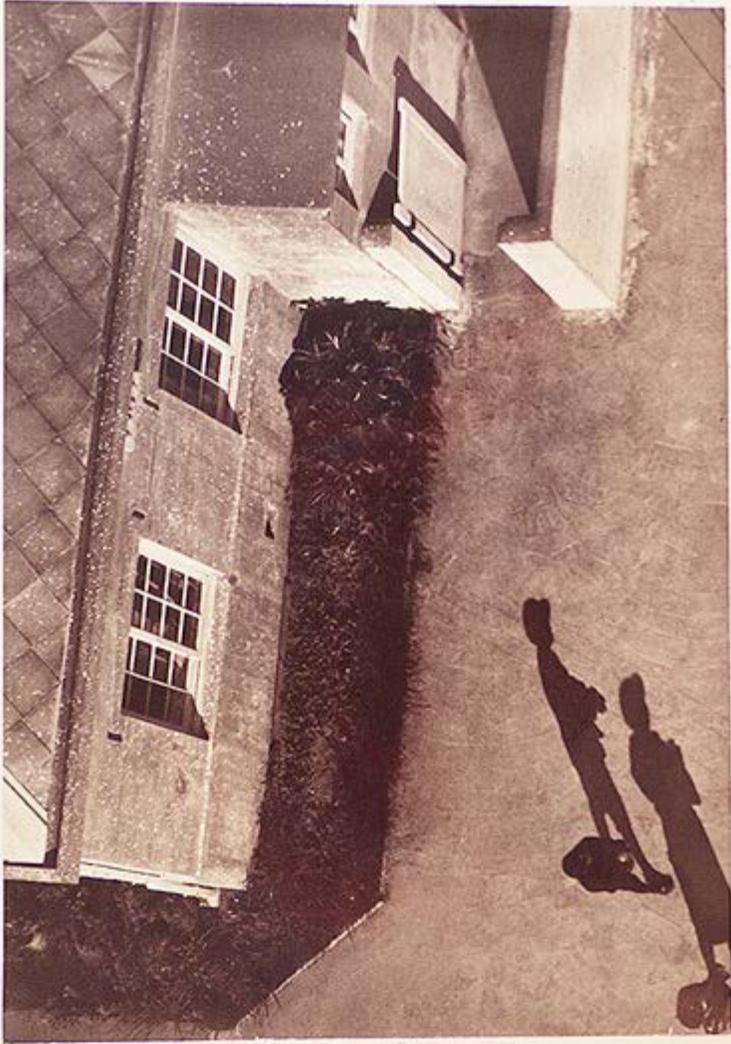


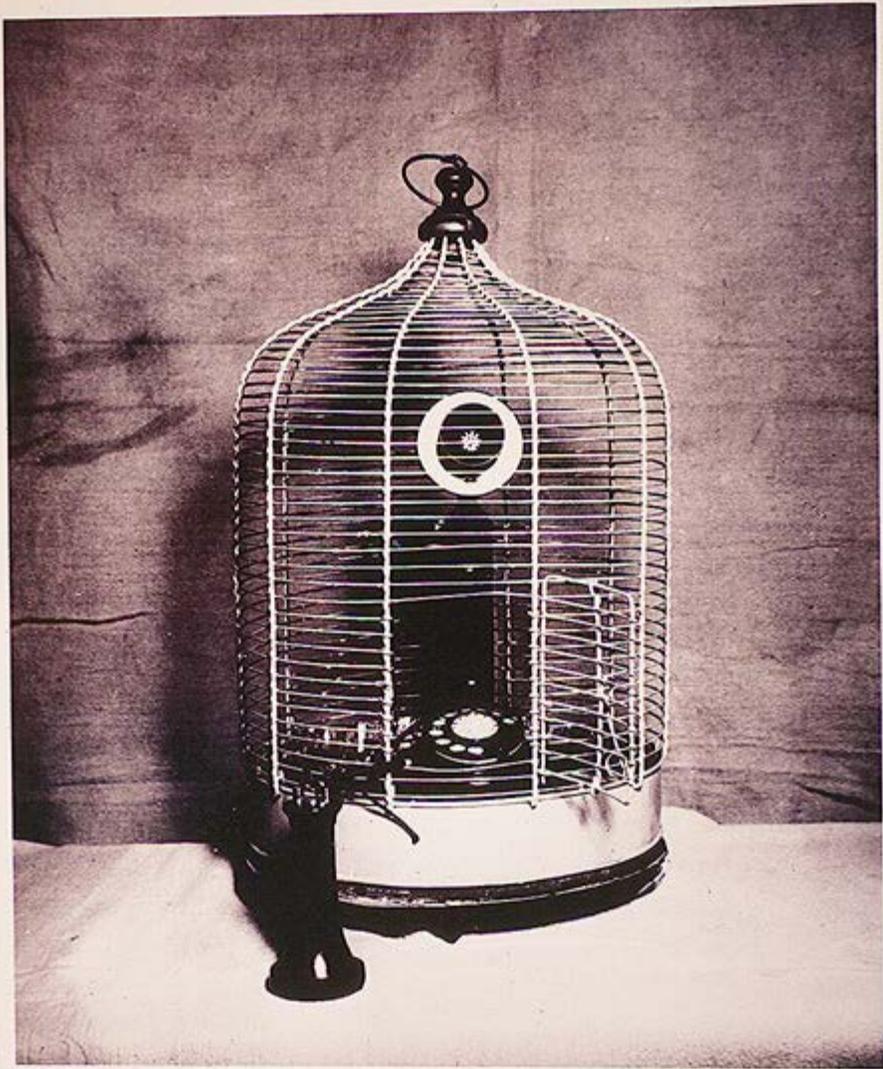
Tokyo Station Gallery



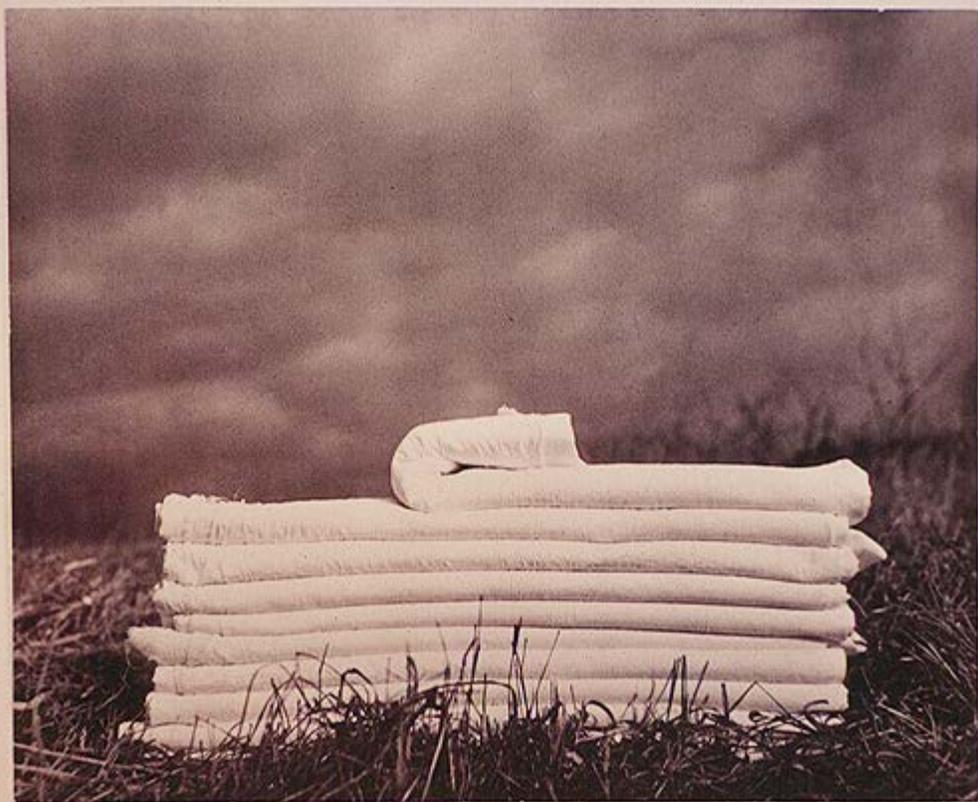
from "The Night's Fountain"

milk



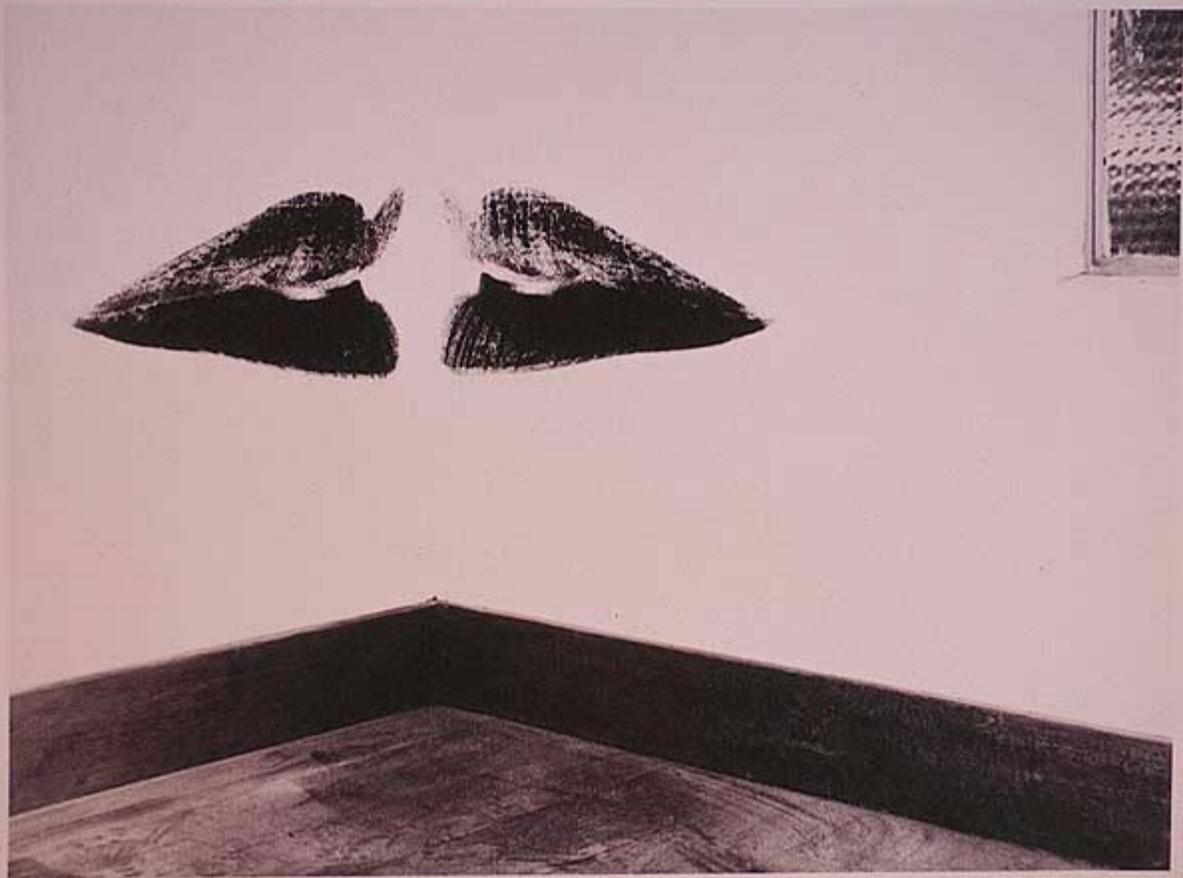


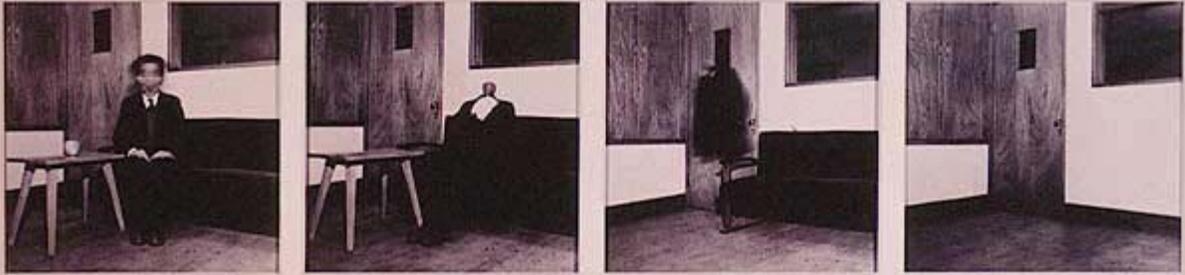












Profond aujourd'hui

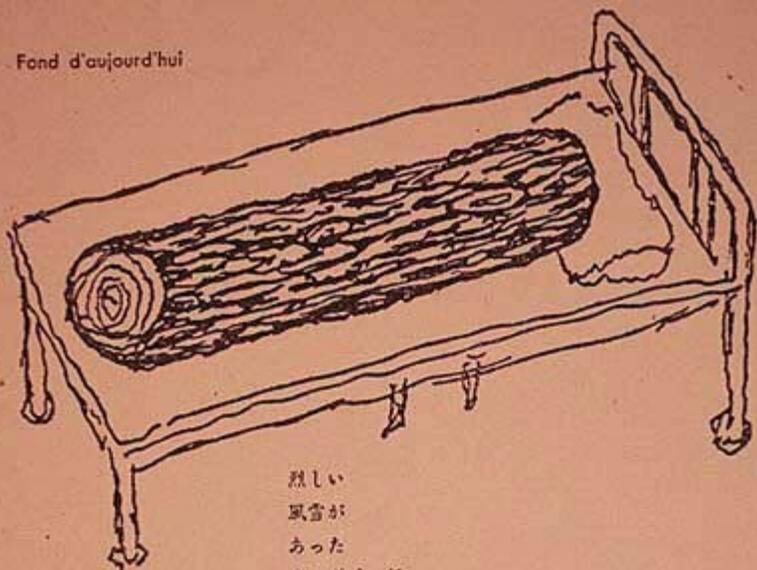
非常に  
かすかな  
ガラスと  
花たちの  
ふるえる  
風の  
ななめに  
ゆれる  
タイに  
手をかけ  
しばらく  
寝れた  
パイプの  
なかの  
音のない  
乾いた  
笑いに  
茶い  
かたまりの  
落ちる  
屑紙の  
なかの  
単純の  
一枚の  
無器用な  
ピアノ

*It is not a pipe.  
- Magritte*

*It is a pipe.  
- Yamamoto*



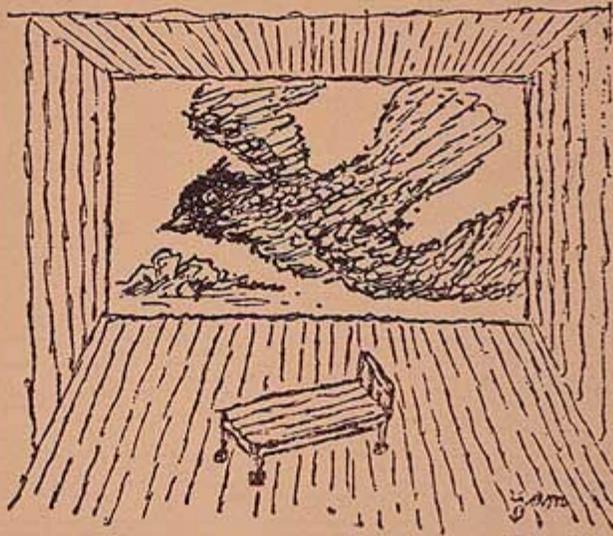
Fond d'aujourd'hui



烈しい  
風雪が  
あった  
カンボジャ行  
貨物船  
2時5分  
エルシロンPは  
いっまでも  
着心地が  
良くなかった  
白いエプロンに  
シワが出来る  
連続漫画の  
役者に  
ふさわしく  
とつぜん  
爆発した  
一時間前  
軽い羽根の  
私欲区域に  
ベルグランの  
枕がある

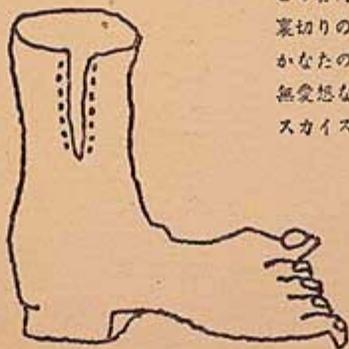
Pouls d'aujourd'hui

でも  
良いやつてした  
忘れた  
ギョラップ  
きっと  
もう  
帰ってこない  
重いベンチと  
ベンチの間  
もはや  
煙りは  
立ちのぼる  
時間を歩いていた  
XYZ  
この  
秘めたる  
哀情と  
すさまじい  
抹殺の  
PH480  
この  
ガス状の  
窓のかなた  
とつぜん  
ガラス製の  
空間を  
かきわけて  
墜落する  
セスナア



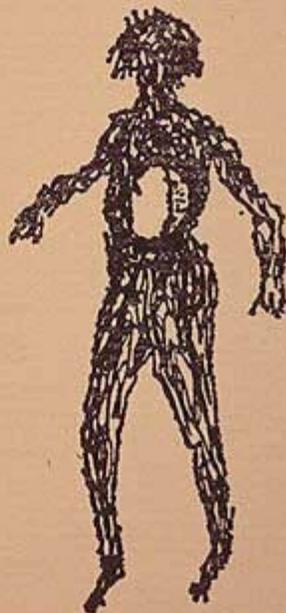
Coup d'aujourd'hui

ふと  
手をあげて  
消えてしまった  
BENOISで始まる  
カレングア  
すてに  
優しい  
雨が降る  
流れるリボンと  
リボンのかたち  
このメノウ状の  
クリッパア  
もはや  
なにげなく  
からむ  
憂愁であった  
きみと  
あるいはきみたち  
この器用な  
裏切りの  
かなたの  
無愛想な  
スカイスクレエバア

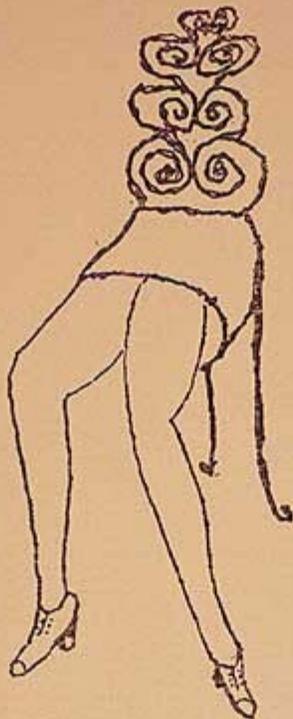


Côte d'aujourd'hui

きっと  
歌えてくれる  
ガラスの向う側から  
首を振って  
例えば  
嘘のように  
外套がひるがえる  
明日にでも  
吹くような風  
まづトランクを開いて  
間違うといけなから  
この24時間  
白いマスクとゴムの手袋をつけた  
清潔な助手のように  
あなたのそばに  
立っていた  
この鉛筆のような秩序と  
音のない紙子  
だが  
とても  
勇気がない  
だしぬけに  
ぼくたちの間に  
斜りこんできた  
下水と地下室と街じゅうの建物たち

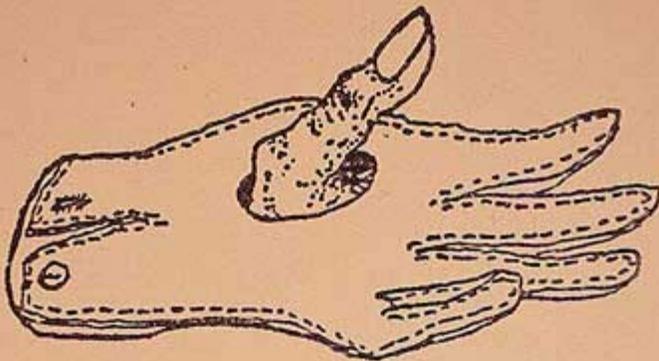


Lobe d'aujourd'hui



ガラスのような  
地図のような  
なにか  
毀れやすいものが  
並んでいた  
誰れもない  
椅子のような  
町のような  
単純なイオン系列  
そんなにいそいで  
とりかえしのつかない  
時間の手をとり  
ふと計算した  
形を前にして  
静寂のように  
向きあっていた  
わたくしの肩へ  
とつぜん崩れ落ちる  
音のような  
笑いのような  
なにか  
毀れやすいもの

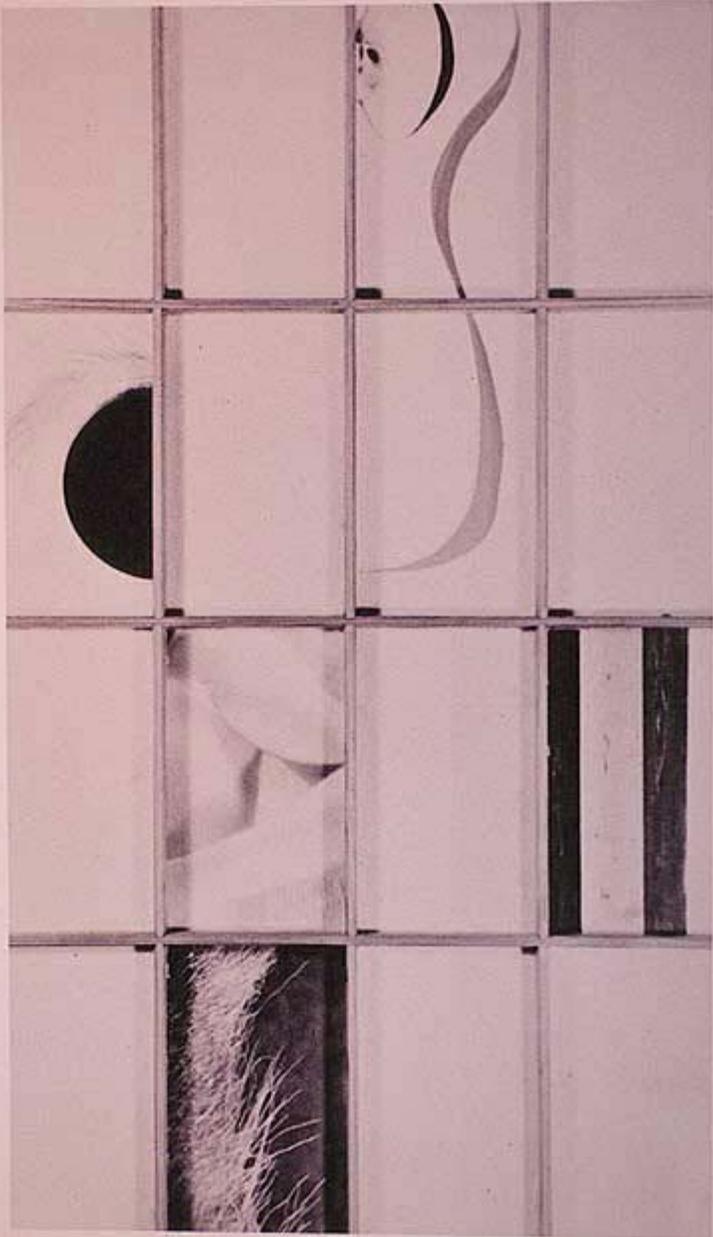
Lopret d'aujourd'hui



さりげなく  
口笛を吹いて  
消えた  
風の端の波の軌の  
ガラスの波の嵐のカケラから  
ひそかに  
涙のみ  
クラランを歌い  
この日 地下室はエメラルド色であった  
十字路の上の  
時は時計を噛み  
一瞬  
はじく音をたてて  
屋上から降りそそぐ  
零圓氣的な







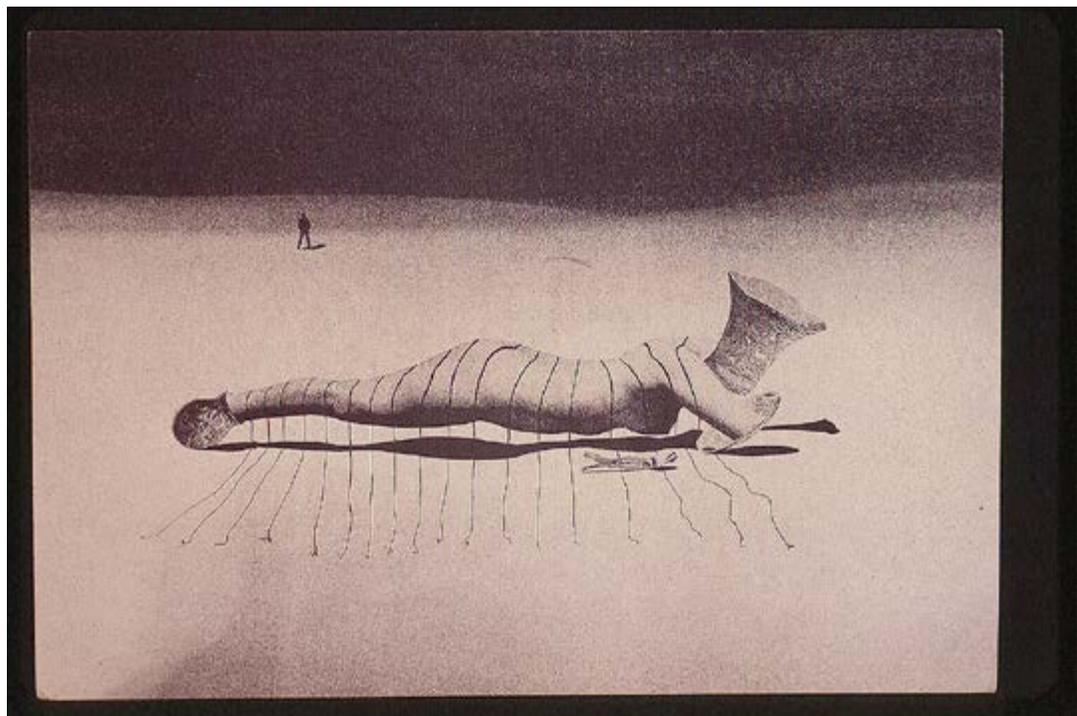
山本博古(1911-1987)

戦前、北園克衛氏や山中教生氏らと共にシュールレアリスム運動に参加。昭和13-14年、現在幻のシュールレアリスム誌といわれる『夜の噴水』1-4号発行、を刊行。VOU同人美術文化協会会員。戦後、画家写真家集団V-VI、其を主宰。VOU、美術文化協会、モダンアート等数多くのグループ団体展に出品。東京、名古屋、福岡の個展5回。著書に『バクフレイ』（昭和45年名古屋日本刊）がある。以下詩文

□詩人である作者は言語表現でとらえきれない視覚的イメージで、下意識世界の内奥をのぞくために、多くの写真表現を試みた。超現実的で詩的造形感覚がみちみちあふれている。

□山本博古の激しい実存的苦悶に耐える内奥の眼はわれわれに強烈なショックを与えた。□超現実的ななかに造形味をもちこんだ作品から、実験的な作品にいたるまで、全体に古い写真の光を透らうとする意図がうかがえる。□山本博古の作品は一種異様な雰囲気を感じ出している。それは文字的なモチーフで抒情的な幻想の世界を演出しているが、そういう場におく作家の、自らの抽象世界を現実と対決させるきびしさを感ずる。□山本博古の作品は、きわめて鋭敏に意味なものを感じさせた。その形の象徴能力を意味するものである。短田は彼の作品を「美しい夢や、かくわしいがエッジを言葉や文字の場合におけるのと同じうに具象の上にのみ、見事に昇華させている点で彼の写真に対する態度はやはり『具象の詩人』」と評している。













夜の噴水

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