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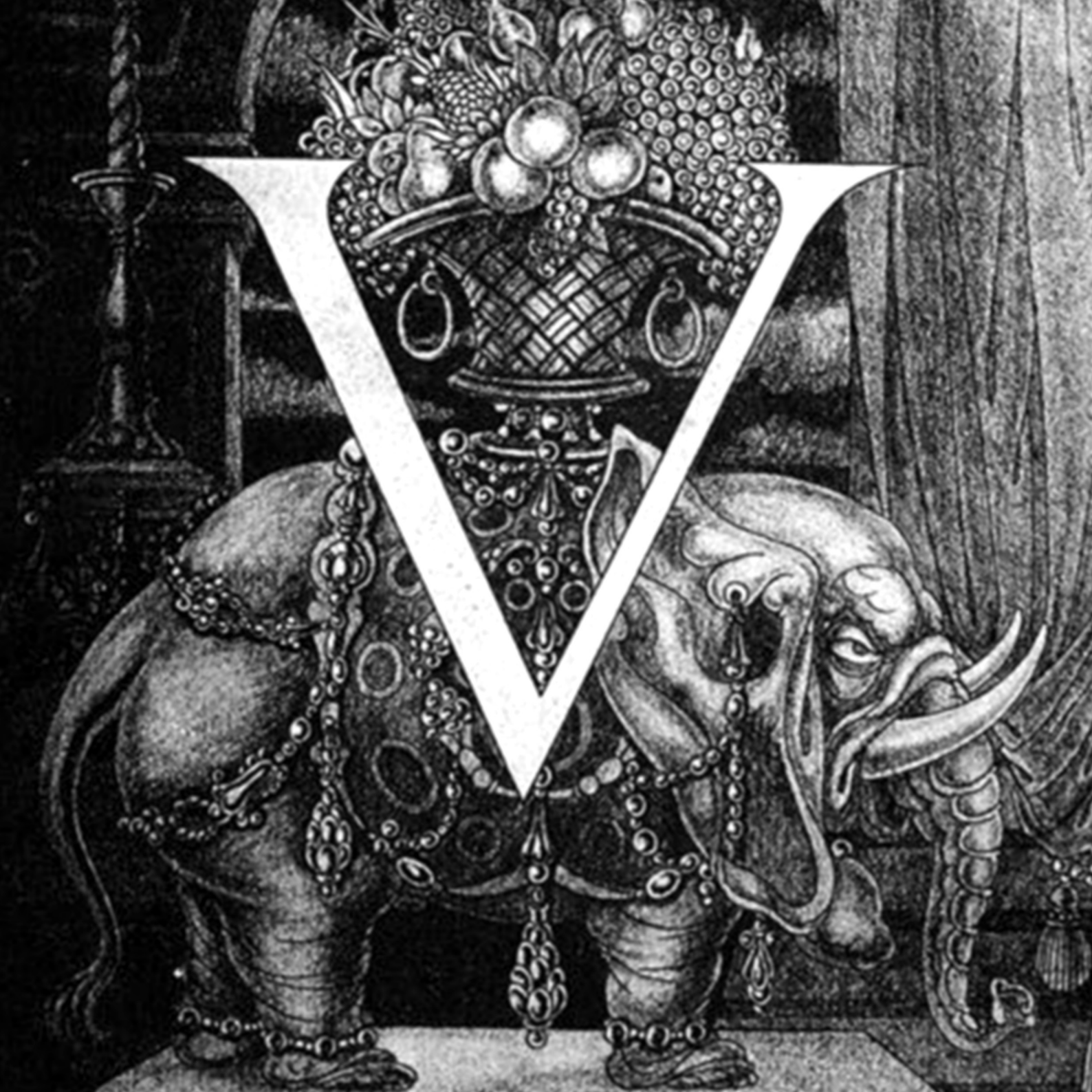
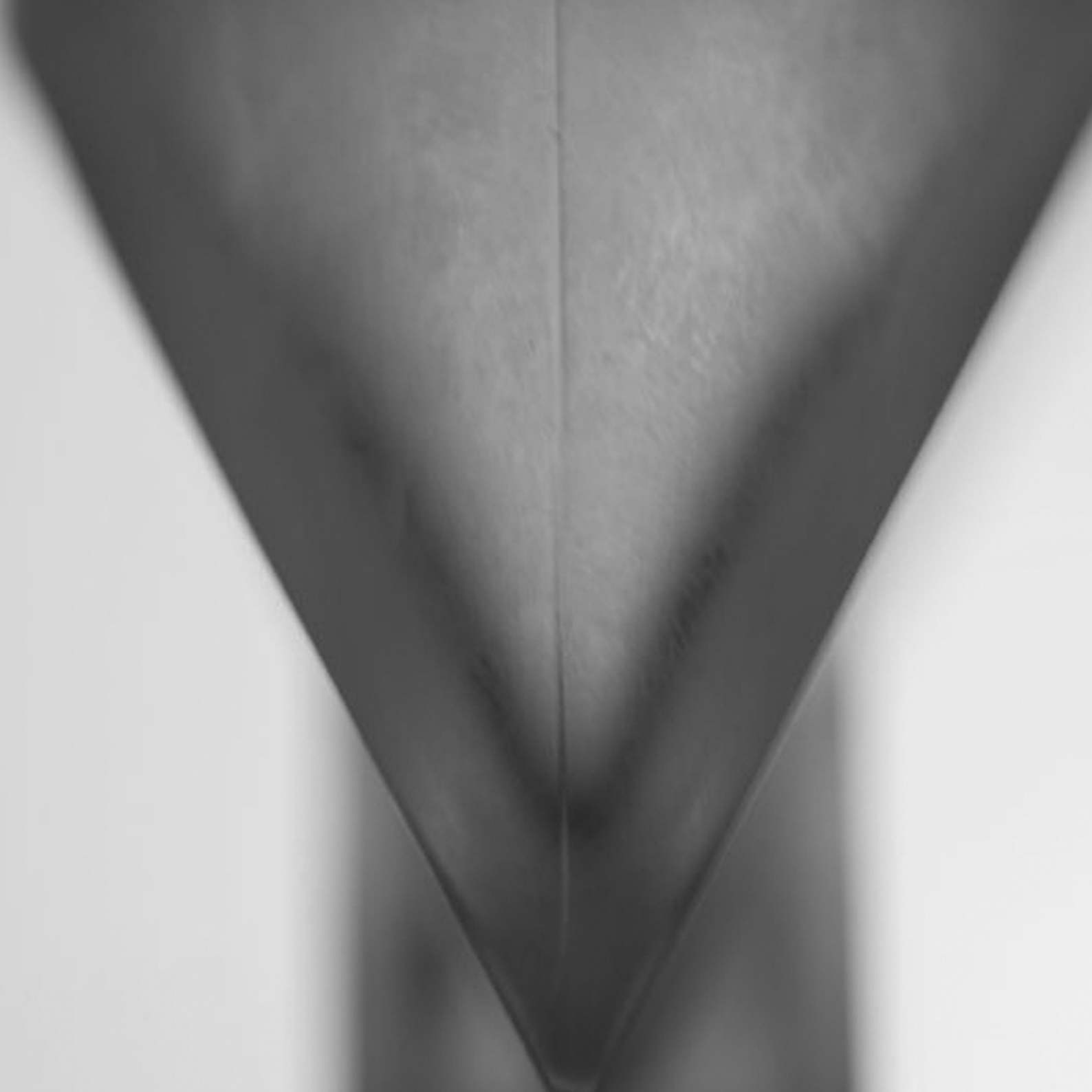




THE MISSING LINK.

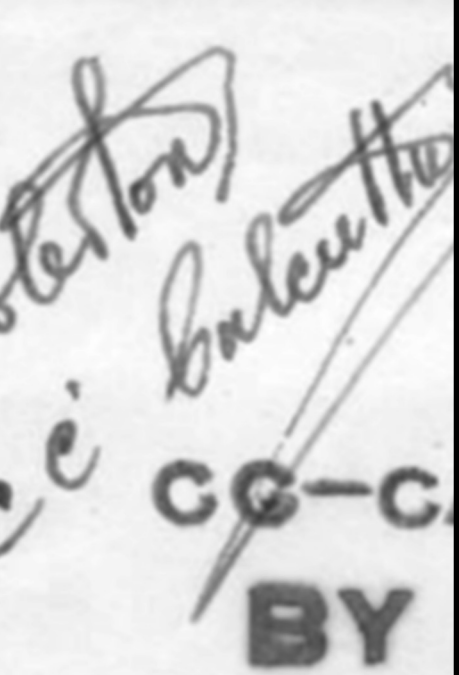
OFT IN THE STILLY NIGHT.
IN EAST AFRICA.
I USED TO HEAR,
THAT JACKAL CRY.
HAS ANYBODY HERE
SEEN MUSSOLONI.
OH WHERE IS HE.

ASK WAVEL HIS
EPSOM SALTS
ARE MISSING.

INDIAN
AIRMAIL
SOCIETY.

DON'T JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS,

WAVEL CHASED BENITO OUT.



VLAK

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Vlak is an international curatorial project with a broad focus on contemporary poetics, art, film, philosophy, music, design, science, politics, performance, ecology, & new media.

Vlak represents a desire to extend our understanding of what is possible; to pose questions about the prevailing attitude of norms; to explore the ramifications of contemporary culture & attempt new critical and creative methods.

"What is lost in abstraction? What is signified by a long work? By a serial work? What are its limitations? How might multiple voices reflect reality? Infect reality? And how sustain such a work? How does the world enter the work? How is the inside destroyed or transformed into 'another' space? How end a work? How reshape parts of the world, & is that what we aspire to anyway? Are we breathing easier, feeling better, glutted with our 'contemporary practice' digested? Or fiercely unsatisfied, curious, anxious, asking, 'What are tomorrow's questions?'"

Abigail Child, *This is Called Moving*

Vlak stands for the drive to experiment, to synthesise, to extend—holding to the principle that a vital culture is always experimental and thus always "at a crossroads."

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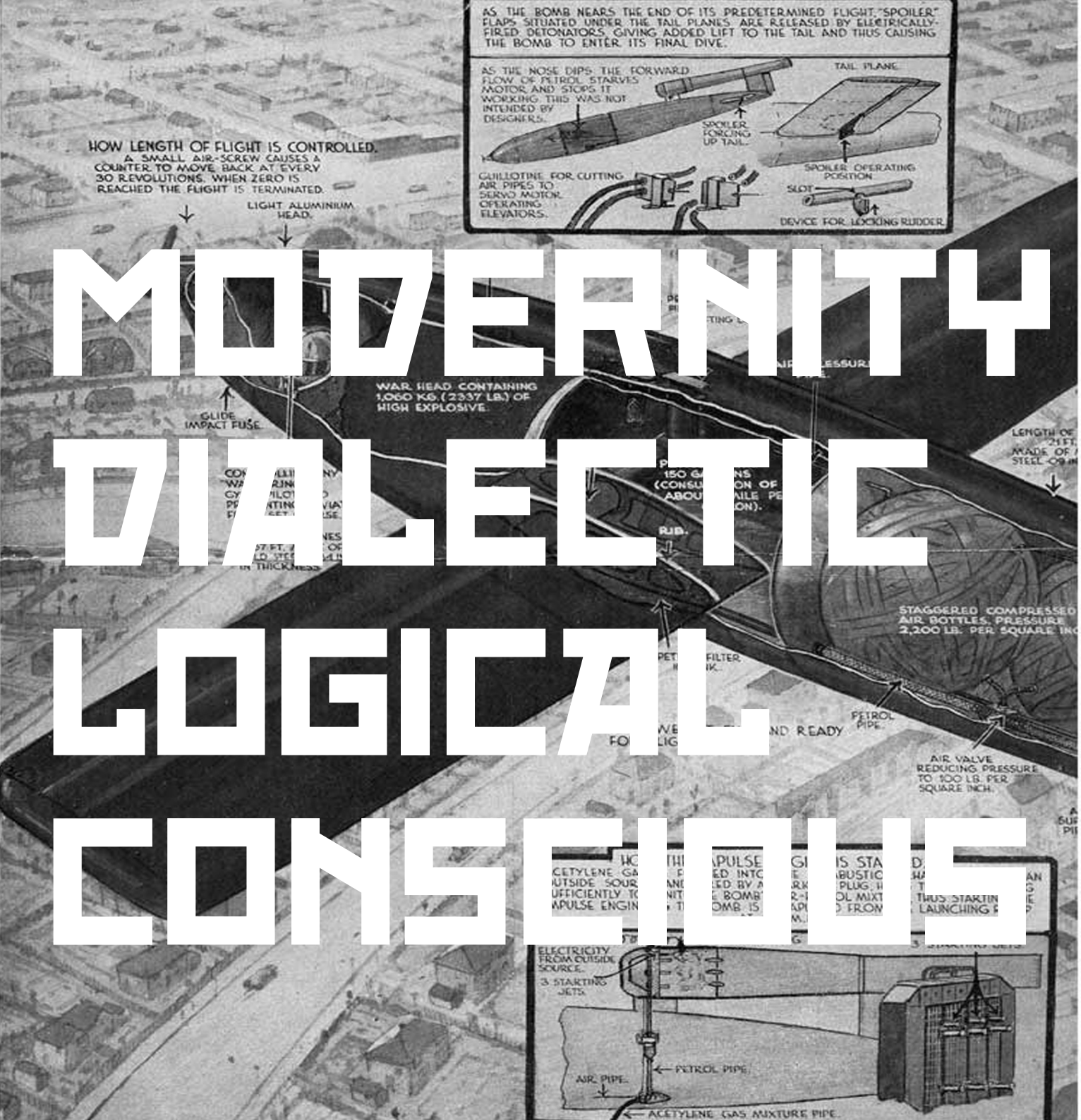

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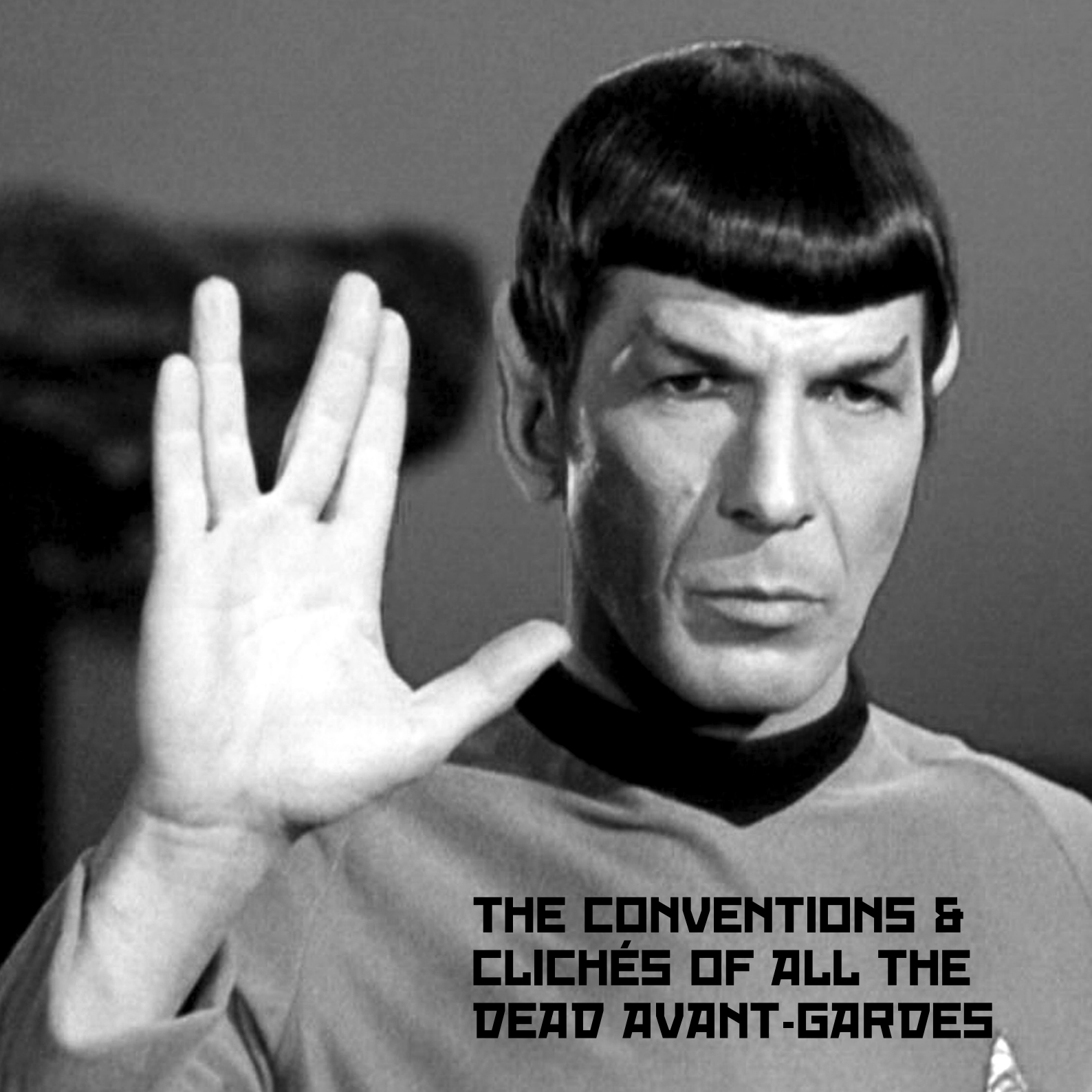
THE CONVENTIONS &
CLICHÉS OF ALL THE
DEAD AVANT-GARDES

WEIGH LIKE A NIGHT-
MARE ON THE BRAIN
OF THE LIVING

PARIS EDITION

EXTRA

THE STARS AND STRIPES

Daily Newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces in the European Theater of Operations

EXTRA

Vol. 1—No. 285 * 1 Fr. 1 Fr. Tuesday, May 8, 1945

VICTORY

Nazis Reveal Surrender To Western Allies, Russia

The unconditional surrender of Germany to the Western Allies and Soviet Russia was announced by the German high command yesterday morning.

The official announcements from the Allied governments are expected to come simultaneously from Washington, London and Moscow today.

The British Ministry of Information, proclaiming that today would be 'Victory in Europe Day,' said Prime Minister Churchill would make 'an official announcement' at 3 PM.

President Truman said he had agreed with the British and Russian governments that no surrender proclamation would be made 'until simultaneous announcements could be made by the three governments.'

LOUIS ARMAND
OVERTURE
FROM THE COMBINATIONS

𝄞 Every confession's a lie.

(Spare a thought for the old guy arrested shouting ZHIDS OUT! KRAUTS IN! dragged off to Gestapo HQ for the red-carpet treatment, sign the visitors' book, tour the facilities before having his balls fried off & fed back to him. 'Course he fessed-up, no secret about it. Standard procedure, you could say. Official policy, even. Matter of black&white. Or maybe the other way, white&black. Put a noose around his neck, too, for good measure, swung from a meathook. Was anything gained? Hardly takes much to figure out, every comedy needs a scapegoat like a soapbox needs a rousable rabble, like a discerning eye needs a Pygmalion to perve at, like a banana skin needs a halfwit in blackface making pratfalls all over the place, etc. *Le condiment humain*, as the Old Ballsack says in les classiques*. Well, your Honoré, I'm just a poor, mixed-up, muddled shitstick who can't see for thinking or think for seeing, you know how it is your Honoré, blind passions and impassioned blindness, la gloire est le soleil des merdes blah blah blah.* Oh you can be sure he perceived the error of his ways after all that, from end to finish, from start to the get-go, just a question of stringing a rope between the posts, joining the dots, putting a frame around the big picture so none of the details got left out. The whole operation was like a machine for turning-out sparkling insights at an unprecedented rate. *A man's only the sum of his whatsits, after all*. A pitance in the Great Payrole, a two-bit AlphaOmega miming through his own operative pronoun, a pinhole in the Light Fantastic shining on a mid-air dance act, neck-jobbed in a pool of putrescence. Think that was the Angel of Salvation applauding from the wings & not just another ratchetting-through-the-motions of the Funfair Funicular? They're giving away shares in the sequel each time you buy a ticket. *Return to go*. Just the highlights, a fifteen minute flash in the pan if you're lucky, saving the rest of the shtick for the pathologically mobid among you, the matchsticks under the fingernails, the stitched eyelids, the dripping faucet, the scalding, the freezing, the ruptured eardrum… Hypothetically at least there's no limit to their little hijinks. Like they say, God's in the small print like the Devil's in the retail. You can always hit rep(l)ay if there's something you want to savour. Or as the Old Reprobate used to say when he was getting banged by the City's Finest, *come again*? Comforting, eh, that you'll wind-up just as you began, in a belch of bitchlitter, under a septic outhouse bench, on the bracken of a cursed hillside, in the bosom of insentient self-deceit, blind as a newborn newt with barely a puddle to flap your last in? Ach, & after so much wasted effort! Evolution? Well you could measure it all backwards & still come up emptyhanded. One man's tosspot's another man's phrenological cockhead. But someone's

gotta draw the short straw. Yep. No good making a song&dance of it. All them *amens* & *yoohoos* & lintel jobs! The hundredthousand culpa meas, the boneless beggering, the staunchless pleading, the knee-bended gobstobbing! Destined is destined, from the very first, or nearabouts. First glimpse out the wombwindow into the arsehole of it all. First grimace. First clenching of fists. Little-Big-Man in the wigwam of the World. Swaddled in mind's-eye cinema of the Great Ghoolie, Zhidgeist of the Zeitverschwendung.[✡] The whole three reels: Mammy, Pap 'n' li'l Noddibody. Casting back, how unpromising it must've seemed, peekabooing out the O of Optimism's lesser half, taking the measure of it, getting a grip on the situation, proverbially of course, taking the proffered dilemma by the horns, good breast, bad breast. Ol' wizened dugs in the moomouth of him. Warts 'n' all. The words came later. Much later. Though from where you're standing you'd be forgiven for doubting there'd ever been anything but. As verbiloquatious as a bum alibi. Dolling-out the gilded nonsequiturs in a last-ditch effort to con a reprieve — *Pleash oh pleash, Big Meishter Funandgamesh* — thinking to jerk a tear or two, the rained-on spit-sodden butt of all the spent supplications of yore (*that* old carcass, stuffed with bone & offal, served-up on high with cabbage & dumplings). *He* must've been a boring old cunt before He fell out of His tree & saw the Light Fantastic boring a blackhole in His brain. Somewho up there must've been laughing at least, the Pater Primate's pet parrot perhaps, sulphur-crested & porcelain-plumaged, keeping up the bottled-guffaw routine *ab immemorabili tempore*, even after the rest died waiting for the punchline. Nothing in the Eagle's Eerie but saintly arses on stunted thrones all turned to schist — how they must've got sick of being so high&mighty after the first dozen Ice Ages, twirling field marshals' batons & fingering each other's whoopy cushions, wanting nothing less innocent than a bit of good cheer to get them through their chilblains. Periscope to the lower depths to see how their Neanderthal namesakes are getting along, doing the dirty in millennial cave-dark & half the heathenly host with crook necks straining to get a looksee. And Himself, needless to say, lying toes-up, right in the midst of it, like an untusked whooly mammoth flat on its back. A quare sight indeed. *Well*, mimeth Pontius the Panto Parrot, *show must go on* & all that razzledazzle crap. Cranking up the *Looney Tunes* theme like the tired wheeze of a jape gone stale. So what if it was no laughing matter? When the game's up, you'd think it was a contest to see who'll choke last. The way they go on, trying to meet their Maker halfway. That's progress, see? Guinness Book longest gut-roar in History, before the night finally closes-in. And it does, my preciouses. Like a finger on the restart button. Like a fist around a fiver. Like the man-under-the-bed creeping out to stuff a pillow in your face. Giving you the heebiejeebs. Clawing the walls of your little hemlock belly. Sending you off with that mad crosseyed toothless grimace-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel look. Knows what's coming, too, but isn't saying. Too bad for you. Is that it? Is that all? What about our chinooked castratto back in the cells with his wits knocked out of him & his jester's joystick jiggling his jugular? Lost the plot, you say? Gone missing from the narrative, eh? Slipped out the backway to take in the view from the other side, mmm? Zion of the Mind's Eye? Ben-Gurion & what not? Should we oblige the bugger to lie still & take his place in the Tale End of it All, the Untolled Truth, the Gullible's Travesty? He was a mensch, after all. He existed. Not for us to judge his one uncredited cameo in the Great Schemer of Things' thousandyear ad-break. (Who *was* he? No-one you'll ever hear of again.) Such an erstwhile Oedipus as even ours would hardly be worth his weight in footnotes. But wait (who knows?), perhaps the scholastic sticklers of some future Post-Pleistocene might, one day — trifocals tilted at this infinitesimal event of questionable non-repute, putting the inconsequential back into the Grand Design like a butterfly's wing-flutter in the vacuum of the Cosmic Mind — set down in higgledypiggledy casebook hieroglyphics how, at the time of the Hitherto Unknown Offending Incident, the suspect known only as "K" was discovered loitering at the gates of the Old Zhiddish Semetery, attracting an audience, shouting his lungs out so to speak, waiving his arms, making a right spectacle of himself, for anyone who could hear, anyone who could see: ZHIDS OUT! *Ja, ja, ja*. KRAUTS IN! *Ai, ai, ai*. Occurring one mildly overcast midweek afternoon in the salad days of the Occupation, with all the hilarity still to come. The moral of the story being, were it to have one, *Let the dead laugh at the dead.*)

𝄢: Foolery runs amok.[†]

[✡] "History, foreshortened by abstractions, is an advance to 'something better,' but Nature exhibits only a perpetually self-repeating cycle." G.W.F. Hegel [✋]

[†] An oldendays Chesk proverb: "Blázniviny se rozsévají nazdařbůh." [✋]

HOLLY TAVEL

THE WEATHER IN FRITZ BEMELMANS PARK

The hospital grounds end where Fritz Bemelmans Park begins. At the south entrance to Fritz Bemelmans Park there once stood, shining and absolute, a bronze statue of Fritz Bemelmans, gentleman, with a scroll, a musket, a sheaf of wheat, and a mysterious bundle. A plaque affixed to the statue's plinth told in the beige voice of homeland and state what these things meant, but don't ask us to tell you now. When one of us says, "Fritz Bemelmans" someone else replies, as if it is the answer to a riddle, "a scroll, a musket, a sheaf of wheat, and a mysterious bundle." We believe this says it all, and if there is more, we do not know and are not sure we want to know. The statue was long ago taken down, hauled away following the general ban on statues in parks, and the space it once occupied is now filled with dark-suited men opening umbrellas into gray sunshine.

We are the volunteers. We volunteer, every second and fourth Sunday, at the Schmetterling-Kiteley Neurology Wing of City Hospital. It is our job, every second and fourth Sunday, to take the people in comas to Fritz Bemelmans Park. We push the people in comas in wheelchairs and on gurneys into the elevator that goes from the glorious glass-roofed vestibule of the Schmetterling-Kitely Neurology Wing, on the sixteenth floor of City Hospital, down to the mezzanine level and to the corridor that leads to the tiny cement-walled courtyard where the loved ones of the people in comas go to smoke and wait with faces full of a clouded hope that is indistinguishable from boredom. We, with our official volunteer badges and starched tunics, push the people in comas in wheelchairs and on gurneys past the parking obelisk and the retention pond, past the shuttle station and over the pedestrian bridge to the south entrance of Fritz Bemelmans Park. There is a Fritz Bemelmans-shaped space now filled with children who come up to us wanting to touch the hair and the faces of the people in comas. They all want to know the weather report. We say to each other "release the dogs" but of course there are no dogs, and the children push past us to the stone fountain half-filled with last week's rainwater in which other, unparented children are splashing. We speak to the people in comas in low voices, trying to make our voices sound like warm soft rain. This is what it said in the job description, posted on the bulletin board in the community center: *Hospital volunteers needed: must have voices like warm soft rain*. This is our job: we do our best. We sit on wooden

slat benches and brush away the tiny brown birds that cluster around the faces of the people in comas. Animals of all sorts are drawn to the people in comas, but mostly these tiny birds, some of which are no larger than your thumb.

On the day the city hauled off the statues everyone came to stand outside their houses and workplaces to watch the cranes and cherry pickers and big trucks head seaward.

THE LOVED ONES

The loved ones of the people in comas come on visiting days carrying tote bags containing soft balls of worsted yarn and pieces of dark, bruised fruit. We, the volunteers, and they, the loved ones, are often forced to stand uncomfortably close together in the elevator that ascends from the shag-carpeted reception area on the mezzanine level to the sixteenth floor of City Hospital, to the glorious glass-roofed vestibule, the long pale corridor and finally the hushed orangeness of the Schmetterling-Kiteley Neurology wing. We open our brown paper lunch sacks, and are not surprised to find them empty. Someone has been stealing our lunches, our dry tuna sandwiches and ham rolls. This has been going on for a while now. The doctors, when we approach them to tell them about these incidents, startle like antelopes gathered at a riverbed, and move quickly away.

We carry small red spiral notebooks given to us by the nurses, which contain graphs into which we are to insert marks denoting the involuntary movements, gestures, tics and twitches, and breathing patterns of the people in comas. When we return the notebooks to the nurses after our shifts end they peer into them and nod gravely, then deliver them in stacks to the doctors, who run from room to room, lit by the terrible glow of afternoon soap operas. In the cafeteria, they all sit together looking at their watches and eating pink and yellow fruit out of plastic containers. No doctor has ever said a word about Fritz Bemelmans.

We imagine that being in a coma feels like going swimming in a suit of armor. Soft armor, made, perhaps, of corduroy. Nights, at home in bed with our boyfriends and girlfriends and spouses and significant others, we sometimes have dreams about Olympic-sized pools into which fingers and toes are suddenly, icily, plunged. We slide in up to our waists; the water is freezing. Our legs become quite numb; our legs disappear; we have no legs; our legs have come loose —this does not hurt— and float, bobbing on the surface like canoes, to the far end of the pool.

MR. L.

Mr. L. is fifty years old and has been in a coma for eighteen years, ten months and seventeen days. Mr. L awoke one morning, full of vim, threw off the bedcovers, ready to leap into the wide open blue of a new day, kissed his wife, who lay beside him in their expensive, expansive marital bed; it was a fine day, to judge from Mr. L.'s diary, which he made a habit of writing in daily, at several points over the course of the day: an important part of Mr. L.'s routine, according to Mr. L.'s wife. The first entry of the day, undertaken as soon as Mr. L's eyes had snapped open –Mr. L possessing, according to his wife, an unfailingly accurate internal alarm clock which, Mrs. L claimed, she could sometimes hear going off deep in Mr. L's busy brain, far beneath his twitching eyelids—was invariably a comment on the weather, or in any case, those aspects of the weather observable from Mr. and Mrs. L's bedroom window: the color of the sky, the condition of the clouds, the reported or estimated temperature and so forth, following the completion of which entry Mr. L, having returned his diary to its usual place in the bottom drawer of the nightstand, one of a matching set of nightstands, the other, of course, being on Mrs. L's side of the bed, would throw back the bedcovers and launch himself from the bed straight into a deep-knee bend, following that one with fifty more in rapid succession. On this day, however, the day that Mr. L felt the first stirrings of his incipient coma, he threw back the deeply tufted velvet bedcovers, under which, as Mr. L remarked in his diary, he sometimes felt as though the hands of God were being pressed upon him as he slept, to find that his legs had completely vanished.

THE WEATHER MACHINE

Past the reservoir and the aqueducts, past the condominium towers with their fragile balcony gardens

and decorative gargoyles, lie the various institutes, facilities, government-sponsored brain trusts and corporate think tanks of the Quadrangle Research and Technology Park. The low, quiet, egg-colored buildings of the Quadrangle Research Park exude undisputed authority, disporting upon their square shoulders imposing acronyms rendered in smooth microplastic, facing, always, the rising sun. The exterior signage of the Quadrangle Research and Technology Park, sculpturally emerging from treeless lots, discloses no secrets, makes no claims, but nevertheless, in virgin white and polished red, expresses certain bold assertions, seeming almost to invite applause. Though what exactly is being boldly asserted, we, the volunteers, have never been able to figure out.

Several of us volunteers, while running errands in our cars during lunch breaks from our other jobs, on the days that we do not volunteer at the Schmetterling-Kitely Neurology Wing, have seen a group of Schmetterling-Kitely Neurologists, in their white doctor coats and loud ties, five or six of them all crammed together in a small sports car, pulling up to the gated entrance to one of the low quiet buildings of the Quadrangle Research and Technology Park. We have, each of us, on more than one occasion driving past the Quadrangle Research and Technology Park, seen glimpses of what we volunteers believe to be a weather machine. A machine for controlling the weather, yes, but also for creating it. It is not, we do not think, kept in one place, or in one building. As near as we can figure the machine, which we have only seen traces of, exists in some way due to the red notebooks we give to the doctors. We are not certain how this could be possible, but what do we know about Neurometeorology? Several of us volunteers have discussed these sightings amongst ourselves. We have compared notes. During lunch breaks from our other jobs we meet at a mutually convenient location and pile into a small sports car and drive to the Quadrangle Research and Technology Park, park across the street, and wait. We see the doctors and what appear to be several researchers warmly shaking hands next to a large spherical sculpture. We see the doctors loading something into the trunk of their car. We see the researchers lighting cigarettes and standing together in a little knot, smoking and talking and gazing over the roofs of facing buildings, in the general direction of the future.

A perfectly round white cloud casting a perfectly round dark shadow hung over the Quadrangle Research and Technology Park. The next day the shadow had moved six feet to the east. The day after that it had moved twelve more feet, and the day following that one it had moved twenty-four more, for a total of forty-two. For a week the cloud moved, as near as we, the volunteers, could figure by means of our primitive compasses and limited mathematical abilities, due east at a rate of 3(2^(t-1)) feet/day^2. By our calculations the cloud will be centered directly over Fritz Bemelmans Park in six days, three hours and forty-seven minutes.

The eyelids of the people in comas register subtle shifts in the barometric pressure. If it is to rain their faces sag like paper. Sometimes someone makes something that looks like a smile. We reach for our notebooks. There is a low-pressure front moving in from the north.

PHILIPPE SOLLERS
H
TRANSLATED BY **VERONIKA STANKOVIANSKA** & **DAVID VICHNAR**

it comes when it's got to come it's always the truth of bursting into laughter we've got nothing we keep nothing all the movements are alone scattered and at the same time answered on the spot leave vanish return doesn't matter the casualness is without bounds you hear without bonds and i've warmed up his feet in the snow we've been drunk like skunks drugged to death with mutual outbursts well-held well sane shaken like cloths in the windows rise shuddering tide every little thing nothing to say meeting one in two billion it exists the trick of the cosmos is luck when one expects it the least i've never understood how they manage not to go crazy with their soft slippery underneath their skirts moistening their knickers on the stools and deep down that's what they are and with them it's similar only bigger more differentiated more monotonous too it's normal because if i didn't hold back i'd come into the air in a second especially letterboxes that's my vice the ptt i don't believe that one could seriously get rid of the old curtain on the lantern of life death mother mask pulled all the way to the teeth see how they advance in single file in the garden oh stupid homme go more lesbos it's an ant-anthill procession around the massif they've been training at our riverbank for an hour with their canticles let them turn simply try to encircle them don't step into their round again and in order to return to the quick spot learn to perspire against it entanglement mouth ear arse cunt clitoris prick dotted lines shaken clean the entire mane of the system like a rag in the wind moisten make moist the bell the mop collect your fire in your rise you touch there the trace disagreement necessity i can say i've spent my life watching through the window the trees visible since school i can say i was born this way from a number of nights with a

bluntly upward look in shooting out what a loss what sweaty temples what a cavity then in towns on the zinc roofs all around the neon lights filled with cold warmth of the leafs a glance before indulging in the application of the question itself to itself making the other lick their stumbling sloop overdose to corner correctly that's the true exile no matter where no matter when the real exile from navel just that i've blown them up placing the finger there in the encrypted memory of the cord there you return to their privacy in car it's even better you can call it ringing the doorbell bone inquiry that's not a question of flash it's always drier more sulphurous you can bite and stick your tongue out until you feel the pelvis crack what's most interesting is trying to explain the secret of mechanics answer fuck me first on daily grid we'll see then if you've got the right to talk i'll open but mouth sewn do you love me anyway what you have to say isn't very serious we've pushed it back in front of me by a gesture from newsroom one of the guys said it's completely stupid his stuff it's got nothing to say nonsense well suddenly i'd really put my hands on his good wife's bottom and the most of it sums up by come inside if you're a man or father and shut up otherwise you're entitled to electroshocks displeasure thirty forty times a day an old fogey told me he mimics he writes without risks his language is too intentional us we like it to go all the way author to be locked for good venture to contradict theories they don't realise that writing means sleeping deeply thus be dead and me i say at their place the linking isn't done something is inflicted on the language perhaps too big a daddy double-faced dogma regression body to body only for them the impossible is deep down the subject lit up incidentally who but who oh who how would he be somebody otherwise loss disappearance good evening and how to ask them to recognise it's a joke to them or despair while the roll muted horn spreading the veils i like it a lot when weakness misunderstanding grow in thickness the whirlwind must come into being maybe they'll make me kick myself off in the end accused as i am of wanting both at the same time offering a scission they see manichaeism there while the rumbling in their stomachs doesn't make the multiple voice one and bound multiple divided bound telling the one multiple the non-one the always and never multiple oh my empty one you alone faithful i'd even go so far as saying gentle and faithful and cutting dreadful sweet punctual frightful friendly sweet faithful and present treacherous and absent heart of eye empty climbed on the balls cock empty not to fill to satisfy but emptying everything emptying and me i say they're all fascists no-one understands my doctrine of neither the one nor the other and of both of them and then shit i don't give a fuck without hesitation this epileptic is it him who's been right saying the only means was to suffer a lot and the young writer set off again telling himself the old became a piece of cake and by the way he's writing now like the rest of the world it's already been done a hundred times and once for all by x and y or i truth i have every right to lie in the matter that suits me if you'd like to have accents put them yourselves it gives meaning and history and meaning history and history meaning in history i bring you a bunch of nutters for a short week although it seems unlikely i've got my own cycle my submissions and we'll see very well who takes the longest run-up it isn't about repetition the tap of hiccough about staying in the piping it's better to wear yourself out than anything else but the sun is up what rises better and better no more and more we need assembly to get used to being chest hand breath voice semen surrounding clarified in strength i'm telling you hi yeah the bastard hi personally it's not the bisex that holds me back see rather the country they say my eye my table is a fragment of a freed nature as far as the meaning goes i agree with you in principle on working class and all but on consumption magic carpet there're two or three tiny things to outline in our own interest don't take it bad it's not tragic oh no nothing to do about see they get angry they're all becoming owl hen ox or peacock don't be animals sorry i'm a pebble that's true oh come on i'm also a river nothing to do see they tip over spread legs they definitely want organic not powder not echo without banks but if this thinks all the time i'll do what me name of god i rush there or they'll base it on me spending my life sending them to hell how would you like us to get on well in this wasteland if you don't switch on your true berber desert'll be taken from you let's be serious one can say kafka is dead under the law making it act all the way through to homely hell is a slight idea of a penal colony what a life what a plague

to camp like this on their shitty bank food mill and the war of the sexes soothed by a schlourf or the sublime in the impersonal and menopausal curses moron beliefs of malfunction they're still here i myself reject the sperm being punished stamped in tickets whatever the program is i wanna be alone got it alone when i want to as bathed airy as on the first morning it's getting clear now yes it seems you no longer make any difference among the others you know it's unbearable they'd say you changes everything in cement plus the slightest colour in your judgements oh yeah i don't go into details anymore i know what to expect from their longing or not whatsoever written out shit i've never believed it'd lead to similar bombing that's la grande armada nose-dive neurophobia paranoia perverse with obsessive secretaries whorehouse in the neighbourhood what would they want us to believe they like it not but then not at all general admiral colonel stripes of these ladies fast motion since the eighteenth century hey let's say for instance since 1784 founding of the société asiatique from calcutta what on earth we're still doing in there that's exactly what i'm asking you oh these ebbs nietzsche's walking stick again sister's bang right stop thinking about it relax you know well it drives you crazy go back go back to the flowers here you go take this daffodil lean against the vault in the moss do they keep on singing no-one'd say it's all over there i catch sight of red flags they must've left some behind in couronnes it's getting dark to me the pickaxe to me the shovel to me white shroud a hole in the ground where we freeze i'd go down without being called sleeping well better alone alexander is dead alexander turns to dust why not use it as stopper go say it to your girlfriend you'll see her trap ah it's definitely night-time not here we'll come across cops we'll use the metro farther what a place what a dump where she passed the scroll how to erase her voice i think back of the chimney corner of her tongue of logs of her tongue of sparks of her wet tongue of cigarette from one to another of her tongue of her darkened eyes why do certain bodies spill language over certain bodies given the interests moves investments adjusting the horizon why does it further overflow language i tell him us we can forget but the thing itself doesn't forget and the grass itself doesn't explain the ease of the whole to meet one another come before satori one'd need to talk longer of this resilience language playing the retina let's see the shadow of the pupil or rather let's see this way inside the ember to make the instant exchange everybody alluding deep down to their own escape i think it's also because she'd known the torment the whole spectrum one sees straight away the eyes that've been blindfolded the temples the necks the hair touched by the revolver huge difference of the daughter who could physically ascertain the father's filthiness she can become exceptionally our ally how do we free the woman from woman that's the question likewise how do we rid the bloke of the bloke and maybe then everyone outside of their limits the real session could begin in the sun one could get out of the villainous melting pot marriage and co survival in incubator small fire of intrigue reflections finally everything remains to be done take me in your arms let's expend ourselves in the future gap let's bet the masses'll be able to find the way out through the cellular whirlwind let's go hold me slide me untie me strangled running initial moisten me your gust ah keep going it's not really a sex of two things one or indeed reproduction fusion in the blind or indeed the shiny negative beginning of the division let's go the night'll be long the lights're going out we break the terror the machinery type you'll splash about in the bidet they've done you in ama ama fuck quod vis the only forbidden thing is to consume the sexual difference raw and without knowing anything smash the glass one touches at the source at the engulfing of the rowers you understand it's there the contradiction becomes the engine species it's there the temporal basis comes off and fastens among the clouds remarks on this matter drive them crazy in heaps one must be two and zero in order to catch the one on the cliff to experience the crime in its half put out the light now my eyes are hurting give me your sleeping world or get me reerection as if you had in your knickers against your pubic mound never will a fella be able to raise it so well you're my son and i'm your mother very perverted watching you young pretty supple your living zipper lightning we know it's not there but too bad let's follow the undress the important swings let's grab the lever where it's a solid wrist necessary for the range of fantasies the key is the unwanted wanted transwanted let's see they

know not that one can transform gravel into rice or again the one meditating sitting upon a dried out tree in a cave looks like rocks washed by water they know not that one has to avoid adding one head to one's head otherwise nothing to do with knowledge deep down i've never stopped sitting on my sparkling ground if i achieve the dream silent point with fireball white-hot in the throat if i become the mercury blanket sliced reassembled if i'm this lizard it's also to dig my own grave and come back stronger to the surface the surface we'll never be finished landing on it listen to my new exposition of the first principles my system on actual estimation of live forces where do right ideas come from fall from the skies no look my social practice i can explain myself on this nothing annoys me about machine accuracy and it's at this moment she's said with no information the blue mountain was all liquid me i was an empty block with the effect of scalding shadows spraining up high i take over the shrouded ancestor all alone noah bleached in drunkenness so-called pivot or winch and what do they say the daughters of lot always cause baby what you say or nothing it's all the same daddy legislate us we've got the license of the dead ancestor the driving we don't endorse is thereby cancelled in advance you're given the choice between being swallowed or turned into a pillar of salt we're the foundation of the later patriarchy we can crack it apart if that grabs us the prior matriarchy is made to bring it down in the name of the father who's our posterior in heavens there'll only be a son to kill the puppet dad the usurpers of the boss the only impossible case being a free son aloft diagonal passing the teacher's holding the candle for us the whole factory is the truth of the truth one wouldn't have to interrupt the chain it's all produced by itself i can't see why you wouldn't agree what's with this theory of this thing supposed to live forever in the songs and who has to first sink into existence you're joking or what huh what's with these manners you're gonna carry the luggage yes don't care about your giddiness to the music the study of the foetus has shown the inner layers of the outline of the larynx stem either directly from the myocardium or from the visceral mesoderm of the lateral wall of the pharynx just as the cardiac muscle the larynx also contains large veins constituting the plexus whose sides incorporate the longitudinally and transversally striated fibrils of course the recurrent nerve is to bring the cardiac branches of vagus closer these two muscles fibrillate rhythmically beat vibrate by splitting and there you go i'm saying it as i'm seeing it oh but who shall deliver me from this body without death the girls pose the question at school while instantly saying wee-wee with a damn idiotic laughter pee-pee pee-pee and us we've let go of the pencils the erasers and they slowly spread their legs underneath their desks so that one sees their tiny downy rounded nothing'll ever be worth this glistening sensation of butter up to their rules of course and so it's over mystery we return to the production i'd like us to hug love recitation of family meetings at the end of the afternoon the back of the park the whining begin personally i immediately favoured soccer especially because of the grass summer shorts and in the corners feverish hand opening the flies the real desire i'm gonna tell you i'm giving him twelve years because of the effects of the foliage shade it seems to me there really hasn't been twilight since the algebra and the ball look the mem'ries and between them between the chalk and the rubber the heat of the pricks erect like physics chemistry experiment at the heart of bamboos naturally there's straightaway class relations if you're bourgeois you can ask for and get more you can understand better even confusedly how you explore the blushes the breathlessness of your mother why are your sisters becoming more and more gloomy crushed sour grabbed by the hook of the market it's no mistake to've brushed past the piles of things with them in the spindles on the compost close to the hazel bushes they're wrong not to rely on childhood under the pretext it's said now at the new doctor's their literature's becoming bloody boring it's the psychoanalyst who's got all the palpitation for him but silence it must give a general example illumination obstructed vanished to pocket what for pure and simple renewal of social relations aim hit well their faces on the street behind the window panes here in the hallway see the gratings the wrinkles the billion twinges of muscles the corner of the mouths smell the vinegar torrent sunken beneath the skins what're you talking about why would they have the slightest idea what it's used for a concrete demand in what that sorts out the wear and tear the burn avid day after avid day

poured from avid hours minutes seconds it's gently polluted me says juliette her buttocks were pink perfumed like the first fruit of spring we want a solid hairdo a scandinavian complexion it can all depend on the first encounter keep an eye on your breath use the deodorant long run colour your tights buy the new strawberry yoghurts what a lively ossuary what a himalaya of hatred what an anti-pleasure wall everywhere centred spread out rushed withdrawal housewife come we're getting off here drifting away smell the odour what a clammy smoked mess in the metropolis do you really believe one could hide a thought for centuries and how you know well do you really believe religion's still there among us climbs the escalator with us and how tantum religio potuit suadere malorum oh to hell with your latin your culture oh oh yourself one day maybe defeated by the dreadful stories of the damned poets you'll seek to get rid of us it's not the occasions of beliefs that fail to begin by your own driving force no importance we're not gonna worry for nothing you believe you're gonna hold on to this rhythm in the face of general refusal you know i don't mind war it amuses me deep down it's harder for them than for me we go from certainty to certainty and they from doubt to doubt to the point where their power eats itself up they're forced to such censorship so that they don't really know who or what's been at issue their victories are failures and us if we succeed we identify with the success if we fail we identify with the failure i comes and goes they're on a short term we are on a long term not really i assure you we've got all the time the truth is never triumphant but its enemies always end up dying and we too shall be dead yes but with no-one on my side while they just imagine back in your mind the total to be paid oblivion bill i wanna say it's like this inside of them i don't call for an apocalypse neither last judgement no it's in lifestyle that it's cut short thread by thread of perception see why there's nothing and everything's here now and no more neither elsewhere whereas the whole won't be reported until later or comes out of nowhere they're both true otherwise there'll be neither memory nor dreams that's why death lives a human life you can check it out yourself every night just look at the newscaster on the tv absolute knowledge has taken shape full stop it's not through interpretation that you can address a subject that's why the line of action is no more scholastic and active request a revolutionary practice let's go for the rest on leave we don't need to check your encephalogram the number of bog comings thickness or relative clearness of your ejaculations safe to fall again into the family formaldehyde jar for the salamander that's why there's not a millimetre of giving in regarding this little question but come let's go out breathe a bit black night i don't know how i always have the same shiver down my spine how i slide similarly in babel darkness there comes a time when i feel myself like i am the bearer of everything and nothing everything maybe it's a crankedsymphonic disposition my neck and shoulders like the marks of hunter of sailor of horseman of wizard of thief of spotter the number of times when i awoke like this when they slept to tour the gloomy house and the parents' room ah ah there may be a good primordial soup this evening they purred a little and one or the other whistled to hush it i had and kept the impression of being a watch officer involved in taking notes not a single room that wouldn't be for me a cabin on a boat it's like every morning when i board language on the deck or board the rigging on the bridge here outside i try to take with me what i've learnt of echoes for instance yes you can get out of your bony box yes it knocks it spreads the cloth orange overfilling light without you i give up in front of me iron signs i relax endlessly the barrier water springs in layers darker currents drops birds pecking on fish wave flowers deep blue grey green the walls i sit down upright in front of my cantata i unfold the maps i'm the slave at rock bottom oh old reason dried meat piled up salted olden convict who removes himself his ball and chain his yoke from spyglass to radar there's whole alternation of coastline first voice long scream buzzing from fluid first voice doubled second voice and third in fugue with a choir finish very fast merely three seconds bow blows plated on sides tacatacatac reminder of wood without history das augenlicht the starry of the eyes here a full mouthful licking of scotch lightning i protest against inner monologues outer polylogues and here's enough of doll rambling of intimidation the slightest tone of command of rotten beef loads of verses that's rebellion can we say it's still about logos i'd be surprised if i judged by reality checks i knew the trail to treasure

island i carry out a new experience for mankind no-one ever went this way what water what crystal what sand what coral and believe me only then do we become humble in twenty thousand leagues under the sea your frowns are dissolved in the whirlwind of seaweed you'll be amazed not true these deviations these swerves you say it's a storm on the black sea it's a supernatural battle of four basic elements it's a blasted moor it's a polar winter stage it's icebergs melting into river of time whereas for me all is quiet it doesn't mean there's no death in this equation an unexpected arrival higgledy-piggledy without any time to say phew from man in eternity oh oyster people take my body if you want to it doesn't belong to me so let the ship be shattered and my frame too if they want as far as smashing my soul goes jupiter himself couldn't do it's better to perish in this screaming infinity than to be thrown back to the lee lands whateasy romanticism granny will tell us she wants her fair portion how comfy it is how selfish what a barbaric frenzy you'll be washed ashore that's for certain i wanted to save you rehabilitate you go out with you in the whole world your laugh's really intolerable it'll cost you much innit go on let the prices climb your currency is no more exchangeable our hold is full of barrels of sperm i'm the new jonah i don't have time to grovel you have no weight in my brand new prose universe tiny constructions can be completed by the architects who devised them but the large ones the real ones leave their crowning moment to their descendants immortality is nothing but omnipresence in time see it's useless to shed light on the depths and all the truths are deep us there you have it our bodies standing in the sun like in a the palace of wonders but go down to the foundations of civilisations that disappeared under the piles of centuries oh the white the white the white you understand it's over your obsession with image you're better off admitting honestly that nobody will ever get rid of their part what makes them keep their winding their powerful inflation their unreadable signs

1978, au café Le Bonaparte à Paris: entre autres Philippe Sollers, Marcelin Pleynet, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes

DAVID VICHNAR

HERESY, HALLUCINATION, HASHISH & THE H-BOMB

PHILIPPE SOLLERS'S *H* AGAINST "POLITE CONVERSATION"

LET'S ADMIT IT – the novel has become a subject for polite conversation. […] This critic defends eternal classical values; that writer denies them with equal sincerity – at which point both sit down at the same round table, and the gratified listener may confidently assume […] that literature has finally become synthesis and self-consciousness itself.

(Philippe Sollers, "The Novel and the Experience of Limits")

One might as well start before the beginning. On the front cover, in lieu of the conventional genre-descriptor "roman": Giordano Bruno's *Figura Intellectus* (publ. in Prague, 1588). Its intersecting circles representing the intellect, which sees and distributes everything, yet which has no main or single organising principle at the centre. Instead, many satellites with their own centres, forming a polygon. "H," then, for *heresy*.

On the back cover, "fundamental language" ("langue de fond") called upon to bring together the "two people here, in the night" – the one the writer, the other the reader, for "a work exists by itself only potentially, and its actualization (or production) depends on its readings and on the moments at which these readings actively take place."[1] "H," then, for *hybridity*. On the first page of the text which doesn't start with a capital letter, a mention of "hallucination." "H," then, for "hashish" or "heroin," for "to read my texts you should be in a state something like a drug high. You're in no condition to decipher, to perform hermeneutic operations […] The language of the text is a base over which something slides."[2] On the last page, in the penultimate line of the text which doesn't end with a full-stop, a mention of "hydrogen," connecting backwards/forwards with the "bomb" of the first page. "H," then, for "H-bomb."

Inspired by the May 1968 Paris student/worker uprising, Philippe Sollers's novel *H* (1973) performs a revolution in its own right against much that has been (and still is) taken for granted in the *belles lettres* – "a revolution in the conception itself of the

1 "The Novel and the Experience of Limits," *Writing and the Experience of Limits*, ed. David Hayman, trans. Philip Barnard & David Hayman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 193.

2 David Hayman, "An Interview with Philippe Sollers," *TriQuarterly* 38 (Winter 1977): 129-30.

exception."[3] Described variously as "a music that is inscribed in language, becoming the object of its own reasoning,"[4] as a "wall of words, an extremely active mass of language,"[5] and as word-produced "material fullness of pleasures" where "everything is organized into a splendid series of irrelevancies,"[6] *H* is a text that, more than forty years after its publication, continues to pose some fundamental questions about what it is to write, to think, to read.

Sollers's loud cry of protest against "the novel [becoming] a subject for polite conversation"[7] can best be understood in terms of its immediate context. *H* continues the process of reflection on the goings-on of May 1968 by means of textual and stylistic fragmentation (begun in *Nombres* [1968] and *Lois* [1972]), and its immersion in questions political (Maoist) and religious (Catholic) presages Sollers's next project, *Paradis I & II* (1981-6), in many respects a turning point in his career.

BEFORE *H*

It is difficult to overstate Sollers's importance for *Tel Quel*, a journal he co-founded, edited and used as his mouthpiece for the 22 years of its existence (1960-82), disseminating his fiction, criticism and theory, but also propagating his political beliefs. These were far from unified and consistent, and so accordingly, *Tel Quel*'s political and poetic tenor underwent a multiple-stage (r)evolution: from the *nouveau roman*, structuralism, and Derrida's deconstructive poetics into formalist exercises subverting the ideologies of bourgeois and capitalist ways of thinking; from opposition to Sartre's purported Marxism to alignment with the PCF to a clean break with the French Communism following May 1968. The lesson drawn by Sollers from PCF's failure to lead through a time of crisis was that the political tide was turning eastward, especially toward Chairman Mao's Communist China, and for the better part of the 1970s *Tel Quel*'s politics were radical Maoism. Inevitably, Sollers's vehemence and despotism in his advocating of Mao were what ultimately brought about *Tel Quel*'s demise – in the words of Roland Champagne, author of the first book-length study of Sollers in English, by the end of the 1970s, "Sollers became aware that he was himself guilty of what he had earlier attributed to a bourgeois mentality."[8]

The inception of Sollers's literary career predates the founding of *Tel Quel* by two years: in 1958, with the psychological novel *Une curieuse solitude*, applauded by François Mauriac or Louis Aragon, whose praise launched his literary career. At the time of its publication, the name "Sollers" was a *nom de plume*, a mask behind which to hide his real name Philippe Joyaux. *Une curieuse solitude* addresses the issues of masculinity and secrecy surrounding erotism – combined with the fascination for pornography as a means to desacralise sexuality – that will continue to inform Sollers's writing throughout his entire oeuvre. After two texts further exploring, in a vaguely new-novelist fashion, the nature of subjectivity and linguistic representation of space (*Le Parc* and *Drame*), came a striking new departure in Sollers's writing and its experimental peak between 1968 and 1973, with the three hybrid, visually and conceptually innovative texts: *Nombres, Lois,* and *H*.

Nombres (1968) announces Sollers's turn eastward by employing Chinese ideograms that punctuate its text throughout. The noteworthy property of the function of these Chinese ideograms is that they usually repeat what has just been mentioned in French, operating as a provocation to the reader, oscillating between the readable and the unreadable. The title suggests the mathematical realm from which set theory is also derived, the word "numbers" referring to "digits," but at the same time, *Nombres* is also the French title of the Biblical book of *Numeri*, the census of the Hebrew nation, and thus an accounting of the constituent tribes. The text is constructed in the sequential alternations of four voices, identified by the numerals one through four, in twenty-five repetitions, with the first three voices

3 Philippe Sollers, *H* (Second edition, Paris: Gallimard, 2001) 22. All further in-text references are to this edition of the French original, translation: Veronika Stankovianska & David Vichnar.

4 Julia Kristeva, "The Novel as Polylogue," *Desire in Language,* ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine & Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) 184.

5 David Hayman, "Introduction," *Writing and the Experience of Limits*, xxi.

6 Roland Barthes, "Over Your Shoulder," *Writer Sollers,* trans. Philip Thody (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 75.

7 Sollers, "The Novel and the Experience of Limits," 185.

8 Roland A. Champagne, *Philippe Sollers* (Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996) 22.

speaking in the imperfect tense while the fourth voice is in the present tense. The plural voices of *Nombres* are the first conscious attempt, on Sollers's part, to undermine the "novel" as merely the perpetuation of such ("bourgeois") values as a unified subject in control of its speaking voice. This destabilisation is furthered by the text's radically intertextual nature – *Nombres* is a patchwork of quotations from an array of variegated sources and belonging to a multitude of discourses.

Lois (1972)[9] was written during a personally trying period for Sollers, the aftermath of the death of his father in 1969, after which he rewrote this whole text. Continuing the fragmentation of *Nombres* while adding the important aural dimension – the exclamation mark as the instance of a percussive rhythm – *Lois* performs a repudiation of "laws" in favour of unhindered action, textual as political *Lois*. In *Lois*, Sollers presents a text working as much on the level of sound/rhythm as on a conceptual level – as Patrick Ffrench has noted, "written mostly in decasyllabic phrases, the text of *Lois* is humorously scanned by a repetition of sounds, principally the past participle ending in é, *alliteration, and rhyme*."[10] Sollers devises an interesting mode of structuration by using the opening sentence "NE FACE A FACE NIANT LA MEMBRANE L'ENTRÉE" as a sort of verbal acrostic whose individual words stand at the beginning of each of the six "books" that form *Lois*. The history that forms the subject of *Lois* is far removed from that of schoolbooks. The focal point of Sollers's examination of the various discursive strata whose superposition comes to form the official historical accounts is the taboo of incest, its "prohibition or rather subtilized recommendation" regarded as the inaugural moment of civilisation and its organising principle.

Lois relies on a series of mythical narratives and allusions that provide the narrative framework for the text, and engages in a similar kind of parodic appropriation of their styles and discourses, and a similar deformation on the level of the signifier that brings them into mutual interaction, so much so that the critical element entailed in parody gives way to the undifferentiated blend of the pastiche. The minimal reference, the elementary particle out of which *Lois* is construed, and the most common target of its playful variations, is the proper name: "Buongorno giordano ! Guten tag friedrich ! A nous la transmute, l'éternieretour par le sous détour. C'est pas tous les jours. Au permier qui mute. Farewell ezra ! welcome jimmie ! C'est l'aurore monsieur isidore." (*L* IV.12, 87) Giordano Bruno, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ezra Pound, Joyce and Lautréamont – there are many more other passages in which Sollers expresses his admiration for and alliance with these writers/thinkers. Added to these is Hesiod, whose *Theogony* forms the intertextual scaffolding of *Lois* – disguised in passage such as "lui dont le cadavre *hési*tant sentant l'*iode* a été porté par les dauphins dans un cortège marin" (*L* I.2, 8, my italics). This paragrammatic dispersion of an author's name is a common strategy in *Lois*.

A second-type reference is formed by Sollers's rewritings of famous quotations, oftentimes with a parodic oppositional twist, functioning as both homage and ridicule; cf. "My little sleep is rounded by a life" (*L* VI.6, 130) or "Le reste n'est jamais silence" (*L* VI.8. 81), in terms of Shakespearean parody, or Sollers's version of Lacan, "le docteur flacon," and his rewriting of Lacan's famous prosopopoeia in "La Chose freudienne" ("Moi la vérité, je parle") as "moi l'aspérité, je parle, je parle, mais ça vient d'ailleurs, de tout autrefois, de futur en courbe et retourne-moi" (*L* III.9, 58). A third-type reference is Sollers's punning, whether via paronomasia or the portmanteau. To take but a few examples: "Jasons, jasons, il en restera pour nos argonotes" (*L* VI.9, 136); "Progressant dans sa conne essence!" (*L* II.2, 27); "Mordre! Femmille! Patrie!" (*L* III.9, 54). Then there are the many passages in which the textual flow breaks up into isolated exclamations, as in the following passage from the age of the dinosaurs to the Neolithic age: "Débuts rageurs cavernés caveurs. Chimie-tic! Anthropo! Dinobronches! Iganonde! Ptérodoctes! Azor! Popo! Pipi! Tec! Tec! Paleo! Neo! Et au lit! Tic-Toc!" (*L* I.5, 15-6) Or, finally, passages in which articulated language breaks down altogether:

> broum schnourf scrontch clong pof pif clonck alala toc toc toc cling skock bing glup burp snif pout pout paf crac pot clic crac tchhhh hé hé guili sluuiirp aaa

9 Philippe Sollers, *Lois* (Paris: Seuil, 1972). All further in-text references are to this edition of the French original.

10 Patrick Ffrench, *The Time of Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 196.

> mhouh mmouhou mouh plouts gnouf snoups tchi tchit chiiiiii ê ê ê slam ga hou gnin hop drelin drelin braang fochloour badabang ! (*L* V.10, 107)

The taboo of incest is "the key by which intelligibility is conferred upon social network," the mechanism by which "the infant is inscribed into an Oedipal triangle," out of which there is no escaping, which is instead perpetuated through the generations (*L* I.3, 11). Sexuality is part of all this because both men and women, in their multiform quests for each other, repeat the traditional roles passed on by their society. So in *Lois* the text stages its own search for a form appropriate to the struggle for social renewal, as incomplete and transitory as so many of *Lois*'s contestations of the laws of conventional literary discourse. From *Nombres*, *Lois* takes over the idea that the writing of any text takes place with/through other texts – hence the constant presence of quotations, rehashed, reshuffled, rewritten in what Philippe Forrest terms "a parodic rewriting."[11]

AFTER *H*

Fast-forward ten years. The title *Paradis* (1981) is derived from Dante's *Paradiso* – no more the breaking through and unmasking of ideology, no more the anarchist anti-establishmentarism of *Lois*. No more the typographical variety and materiality of *Nombres*, either: Each page of *Paradis* is an unpunctuated block of words, whose visual density is further emphasized by the use of bold italicized typescript. This suspension of "visible punctuation" is, according to Sollers's back-cover blurb, in the service of a "readable eloquence." Its textual material is composed of a series of catalogues about life in Florence and in Paris, based on Sollers's extensive research – undertaken while travelling between the two cities for an extended period of time – about the nature of "culture" in these two capitals of Western civilization. The work reads like a computerised database of the most banal to the most sophisticated details – an encyclopaedic parody of Christianity in Joyce's mode, which is counterpointed with Dante's work, on whose command of language and erudition Sollers based his portrayal of the pathos of modern Christianity. A standard *Paradis* passage reads as follows:

> que la cause trébuche d'effet en effet toboggan lapsus décalé et plue elle se prend pour l'effet et plus elle s'y fait et plus elle y tient et s'y entretient et plus qu'elle y colle et y caracole felix culpa péristole péristoire chlorant l'oxydé tourbillon d'éveurs d'adamnées parmi lesquels j'ai aussi mon compte gobé mouche arachné toile or donc au commencement il était une fois un commencement hors-commencement vol essaim chanté sans rien voir forêt d'ondes nuée grimémoire comme c'est vrai le vrai du ça veut dire vrai vérité du vrai dérivé comme c'est dur d'y entrer béni d'arriver au vrai ça m'a dit lequel vous prend largo des pieds à la tête in illo tempore périplum et péripétie[12]

Self-reflexively, the above passage comments upon the formal consequences of freeing the text from punctuation, calling it a "toboggan effect." To add to this effect, several words undergo reduplication and repetition: "au commencement il était une fois un commencement" or "comme c'est vrai le vrai du ça veut dire vrai vérité du vrai dérivé comme c'est dur," where the phonic properties override semantic content. This effect is not without its philosophical implications. In an unpunctuated text, where units of sense are not clearly demarcated, where they often overflow or interpenetrate, the notion of cause and effect can become blurred – and once the notion of truth ("la vérité") has been caught up in the verbal play and ambiguity of the text, the term loses its privileged status and becomes reduced to being one word among others, susceptible to transformations and manipulations. Still, no trace any longer of the formal experimentalism, linguistic deformations and political radicalism of either *Nombres* or *Lois*.

IN *H*

What happened to Sollers in the ten years between *Lois* and *Paradis*, then? Two major events, and one major book: the 1974 visit (together with Kristeva, Barthes, Marcelin Pleynet, and François Wahl) of Beijing to see for himself the results of Mao's revolution. Although fascinated by the exposure to such a radically different language and culture, the social problems of the workers and the women and the Maoist hegemonic political purges brought about in Sollers a major sobering and

11 Forest, *Philippe Sollers*, 180.

12 Sollers, *Paradis* (Paris: Seuil, 1981) 146.

denunciation of his former political radicalism. As if to seal off his 1970s political activism and radicalism, in 1979, Sollers converted to Catholicism. The one major book in question is, of course, *H*.

Typographically *H* is a continuous flow of words, whose thickness and density have been perceptively likened by Roland Barthes to "stains of language in the sense that this word could have in the calligraphy of a Jackson Pollock."[13] Rather than a long sentence, it is more appropriate to call it a long clause without interruption – "with no punctuation, *H* is not a sentence but it is not less than a sentence."[14] For some 200+ pages there are no paragraphs, no punctuation marks, no capital letters; the only diacritical elements utilised are accent marks. In addition to the lack of punctuation and paragraph structure, there are never any quotation marks to identify someone else's spoken or written words. Its radical removal of plot, character and setting attempts what the text itself describes as "an external polylogue":

> i oppose the interior monologue by means of the external polylogue [...] that's rebellion can we say it's still about logos i'd be surprised if i judged by reality checks i knew the trail to treasure island i carry out a new experience for mankind no-one ever went this way what water what crystal what sand what coral and believe me only then do we become humble in twenty thousand leagues under the sea your frowns are dissolved in the whirlwind of seaweed you'll be amazed not true these deviations these swerves you say (*H*, 53)

The text performs an infinite fragmentation of subjectivity into a plethora of ventriloquized voices whose words – like the chaotic units of spontaneous guerrilla warfare – split up, turn round and come back from different sides, and meaning keeps slipping and sliding in a punning challenge to the symbolic system of language. Its *H,* ultimately, standing for *l'homme – man*, and, via homophony with *l'hache,* for the "axe" with which, in Leon Roudiez's words, "a certain concept of man which has dominated Western culture since the days of Giordano Bruno"[15] is beheaded/castrated/eliminated,

Thus, from a narrative viewpoint, *H* is the production of an anonymous narrator defined by Sollers in one of his talks to David Hayman, not as a subject/person/persona, but as "the upsurge of the subject":

> It is the upsurge of the subject; or of what I have been calling the subject; the possibility of saying 'I' within, at the heart of language. Language is not neutral, but it needs to be taken over by a subject, a subject I would call illimitable, numberless, rather like in *Finnegans Wage*. This is not a biographical subject, it is not a "me."[16]

The process by which Sollers's "me" is suppressed, or rather externalised so as to become the object of the narrative, is foregrounded within the first couple of pages:

> i have this phi floating on the lips as any other infans with vultures' tails and if the eight returns without an end [...] my father's latin no you won't find i write it octave yes exactly like octavo which gave him to sign that o turning above itself followed by a tiny dot right before the j elaborate embroidered genus gladiolus bell tower g-clef carrying oyous in music o.joyous with underside the animated signature doubled restarted short diamond topped liquid octave is as well a specialized term with jewellers [...] clearly the name itself was sufficient to excite them why because one hears jacks joy jewish jouissance at a time for example these joyous sirs these joyous what would you like isn't a pearl or then joyfus nucleus ileus gluteus or then without es but definitely not joyeus joyous with an es like saron it would never've spoiled real blind toy-poodles squeezed in navel so what you can't be called joe wood of cauliflower like everyone else let's see whether you're up to standard tell me but it's not bright a performance and so forth in calf soft polished style so my name in plural is philip joyous bunch of idiots no doubt once on the trash or postal checks and as to philip filioque procedit let's not lose the track [...] sollers echo of the surname of ulysses of sollus whole intact ars ingenious terrain worker fertile lyrae sollers science of the lyre daydreaming fifteen years beach winter taking care as coincidentally gonorrhoea édifice desert running in the dunes scent of pines underneath

13 Barthes, "Over Your Shoulder," 80.

14 Kristeva, "The Novel as Polylogue," 167.

15 Leon S. Roudiez, "Philippe Sollers," *French Fiction Revisited* (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991) 255.

16 David Hayman, "Interview with Philippe Sollers," *Iowa Review* 5.4 (1974): 101..

> the branches with this stalk full of pus looking at the waves so in the bible we have the same hebrew word for naked sly awake that's how bodies communicate with the snake of intelligence (*H* 12-3)

"The eight" – again, a reference to "H" as the eighth letter of the alphabet – brings forth the association with a musical octave, which in turn produces "Octave," the name of Sollers's late father, whose surname – just as his son's – was "Joyaux," the son distancing himself from his father by means of a *nom de plum*. The author's "real" surname Joyaux serves him only insofar as its punning potential can be used, covering the whole gamut from jewel to joyous to Jewish. The historical excursus on the names "Philippe" and "Octave" (the name of Sollers's late father) – a rhythmic texture of associations combining ancient Greece/Macedonia with the contemporary – followed by a provocative reworking of the name "Sollers," aims to turn the writer's own name and identity into a wholly written/writing persona, open to the many material coincidences and contiguities of history. In so doing, Sollers opens his text to the workings of what Kristeva terms the "transfinite" in language:

> *H* investigates precisely this moment that so many philosophies and dogmatisms to cover up-the moment when materialism is able to utter itself. […] The subject loses himself so as to immerse himself in the material and historical process; but he reconstitutes himself, regains his unity and rhythmically pronounces his own dissolution as well as his return. […] The transfinite in language, as what is "beyond the sentence," is probably foremost a going through and beyond the naming. This means that it is a going through and beyond the sign, the phrase, and linguistic finitude. But it is also and simultaneously that of one's "proper name"; an indexing that gives an identity to entity if, and only if, it has such proceed from a symbolic origin where the law of social contract is concealed.[17]

H's "illimitable subject" develops a highly mobile and differentiated idiom which touches upon a wide range of issues: literary, political, sexual, and historical. "Polylogue extérieur" grows out of Sollers's understanding of the political tasks of writing, consisting in misappropriating language, in freeing language from what Sollers views as its subjective underpinnings, even though "the question remains how to say it in what rhythm how to transform language written and spoken in the sense of breathing dismantling of the ideology" (*H,* 105). This freeing of language is a political undertaking – *H*'s narrative, blending the plethora of voices reportedly overheard by Sollers in the streets of Paris in May 1968, brims with references and allusions to Mao Zedong, Lenin, Marx & Engels, but also Nietzsche, Freud, Saussure and Lacan, whilst its literary pantheon contains figures such as Melville, Artaud, Montaigne, Nerval, Pascal, Hölderlin, Burroughs, and of course Joyce.

All external punctuation is abandoned in order for *H* to become injected with the gestural rhythm of writing, its melodic effects, and for it to perform its non-linear movement across themes, allusions, scenes from the present and the past. Just as the authorial "I," so, in turn, is the reading subject radically destabilised: without formal stratification and punctuation, sentences – although easily detachable from the textual whole – either dovetail or adjoin ambiguously because of the elision of determinants – each and every reading shall impose its own mental punctuation, its own rhythmical realisation of the text, and every one of these shall remain unique. The conclusions Kristeva reaches from a semiotic viewpoint are far-reaching. She views *H* as staging the clash between the *semiotic* (those concerned with instincts, drives, intonation, rhythm, etc.) and *symbolic* (sentences, sequences and boundaries) operations of language. *H,* thus, functions not only "as a plural dialogue between the subject of enunciation and his identity," but it is also "a plural dialogue, an illocutionary act, *in relation to the very realm of language*."[18]

H's foregrounding of the oral and aural aspects of discourse is the result of Sollers's conscious effort to create "the equivalent of a musical act."[19] Breaking through the identity/syntax coupling brings about

17 Kristeva, "The Novel as Polylogue," 184, 190.

18 Kristeva, "The Novel as Polylogue, 173.

19 "It is the equivalent of a musical act, an act that I perform after having listened to music: Haydn, Monteverdi, Schoenberg, Stockhausen […] My dream would be to succeed in creating a sort of opera of language […] Thus since *Lois* as I draft I use a tape recorder in order to rework different passages according to their sound effects." (Jean-Louis de Rambures, "Interview with Philippe Sollers," *Le Monde* [November 29, 1974]: 24).

the eruption of the pre-logical, the rhythmical, the "polylogical" – and together with it, the symbolic decapitation (there are no capital letters in the text, either) of the Western subject. This is foregrounded in many different places throughout *H*, e.g. "let's teach the tongue to sing and it'll be ashamed to want anything else but what it sings" (*H*, 14); "what most interests me is this brain dive below the sponge flip flop letting the clay run within drop in pressure half-muted tatters who sees a sentence there you do yes oh really" (*H*, 41); "it's rather the contrary it's the underside of language that turns over at the boiling cooking point there's nothing else but to let it slip away" (*H*, 81).

Hand in hand with *H*'s sustained exploration of the rhythmic and phonic go various types of sound-play and punning which foreground the text's aurality. There are units in which sounds are juggled: "the hard-working populations of the cape for the hard-working copulations of the pope" (*H,* 140). There are passages based on a vertiginous repetition of one affix or letter: "swimmer worker dosser and dreamer and drover fibber and researcher and talker looter wailer listener escaper and work-seeker and minor turner major peeper and waiter and weighter barder boozer cosseter focuser slugger shoe-shiner bugger coxswainer and noter prankster and searcher" (*H,* 163-4); verbal skidding involving the recurrence of one word in a series of words: "the era we live in has a name disruption and even great disruption and even disruption without precedent on the ball that balls up whence bolt downbolt bolt upside down bolter bolt out imperialist camp" (*H,* 153) etc. The point of these and such like is to function as alliterative networks and establish hyperlinks superimposed over the linear sequences of clauses, introducing (Kristeva again), "into the logical-syntactic memory of the text a phonic-instinctual memory."[20] In fact, these associative chains crisscross the text from the very start, in every direction – to take but the first two pages: "its side cata basis," "tonic accents," "cut up crushed cata cata catalysis"; "the filter to pour yourself the philtre," "this phi floating," "philippe filioque procedit"; "genus gladiolus," "g-clef," "joyfus nucleus ileus gluteus" (*H,* 12-3), etc. And then there are hyperlinks connecting passages from across the whole text, like when the Latin motto "fluctuat nec mergitur" (89) becomes, some hundred pages later, "fluctuat nec merditur" (170).

Exploiting and foregrounding the various properties and possibilities of language in general, *H* mimics the phases of linguistic awareness and performance experienced by individuals in their consciousness and unconsciousness. Sollers enjoys puns that play on culture and how culture forms the self, daring to make his texts unreadable, that is to say, so representative of contemporary life as to be reflective on the nature of the self as it is produced and directed by mores and language – hence all the infantile babble, all the "poums" and "toums" and "noums" that run the length of the text. More complexly, every now and then the text breaks into quasi-spontaneous rhyming successions, freely associative and sound-based, e.g. "all gold melissa the bees' honey the beehive vial gathered in the flowers so bees bees bees those from the ancient currencies from mantelpieces" (*H,* 120). Running parallel with all the specific trivia of history, all the rulers and dates and revolutions, is the atemporal drama of the Oedipal struggle and psycho-sexual drama of the family.

The equation sex/politics is achieved under the totalizing-infinitising condition of the text's "polylogue," *H*'s sonorous-representative, depleting-signifying language:

> the sex and politics equation without the introduction of language remains metaphysical the evidence for unmastered belief of course one needs to be careful about sexual investments in politics and vice versa [...] but the question remains how to say it in what rhythm how to transform language written and spoken in the sense of breathing dismantling of the ideology verbal tartar now become dumb orbital sometimes we're on the bank sometimes in the heart of the current we so much need to feel it the current the bank two and one on top of the other and one underneath the other and one separated from the other and one tied to the other current bank currant bank current bank currant leaving the thread to the current (*H*, 105)

Champagne is spot-on when connecting Sollers's project in *H* to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and reading *H*'s opening, "who says hello the machine" (*H*, 11) as reference to the concept of "desiring machine," which functions through the intersection of capitalism and schizophrenia induced by the need to conform to

20 Kristeva, "The Novel as Polylogue," 169.

some model of the ideal family.[21] *H* is a large textual machine, a composite of inter-textual parts in which the surfaces are ingeniously tied together to create an ironic commentary on the madness of modern culture – a madness without beginning or end, a point brought home by the fact that the text does not open with a capital letter, nor does it end with a full stop.

H, like its famous precursor, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* – a medley from which is quoted on the penultimate page as "the west will shake the east awake fantasy funtasy on fantasy amnes fintasies" (*H*, 233) – poses as a cyclical text. However, this cyclicality is not to be taken as some vicious circle or acceptance of the *status quo*, whether political or aesthetic. In response to the opening "who says hello," the text finishes with another question: "what will i shout" (*H*, 234), a question *H* has been pondering all along while producing its vociferous responses. The question is answered by an intimate who says, "shout at him all flesh is like grass shadow the dew of time among voices" (*H*, 234). These voices remain to haunt and to defy the text, which, in a sense, can never end – but *H* aims to bring them all together, pluralise them, and through their multitude, unite them. Even though *H* knows all too well that "with language, nothing really *new* is ever possible" for "there is no spontaneous generation – alas, language too is always filial," there is a radical position to be explored (and *H* explores it like no other text) and this position, as Barthes has rightly observed, "can never be anything but old language pluralized. No force is superior to the *plural.*"[22]

BEYOND *H*

Apart from the *Paradis* project – a sequel of sorts to *H* – in the 1980s, Sollers's novels changed considerably. Since *Femmes* (1983), they contain language which is transparent, engage definable narrative voices, involve character development, intrigue, and a more traditional format with regard to sentence and paragraph structure. In 1984 he published *Portrait du joueur*, and in 1987 *Le Coeur absolu*, both of which sold well. The titles themselves suggest an idealism and a personal pathos far removed from the dialectical materialism of the politically involved Sollers of the early 1970s – nor does the conventional narrative style bear any resemblance to his daring formal experiments, which *H* seems to have brought to a climax, and the *Paradis* series, to a close. Never before or after the *Nombres-Lois-H* trilogy was the experience conveyed by Sollers's writing in as extremely materialist or politically radical a manner.

H stands as a pinnacle of political radicalism and linguistic/formal experimentalism, both of which Sollers later abandoned, if not renounced. At least the former seems, with the hindsight of the 45 years since its publication, hopelessly naïve and impossible to implement. Still, *H* is a work that resists all kinds of appropriation, starting from that of the paraphrase or critical metalanguage – its back-cover blurb immediately challenges its very possibility: "The reasons why this book cannot have a blurb," insists "Ph.S. 1973," "would undoubtedly take up as much space as the book itself." As such, the challenges posed by *H* today are as fresh as they were in mid-70s.

As a call for multiple, "schizoid" political action, *H* fails, as every work of fiction must fail, since its political message, is intentionally obscured, dispersed, problematised, de-communicated. "The schizo," after all, "is also a reactionary just another type jung apology of moralising life me me me my friends and me and me me in the nirvana all of this may end up well in the special number metaphysics of executives" (*H*, 176). However, as a piece of writing that stages the disintegration of the many past belief systems and the birth of much that we can now call our own, and communicates the joyful confusion accompanying the labour, *H* succeeds like few other texts. It is a successful political text, not by disseminating its already *arrière* ideology, but by presupposing reading as *action* and reader as co-agent. To read *H*, one must match its rhythmicity – its sentential, bodily, familial and social rhythm, one must become *plural*, renounce one's readerly habits and learn to read anew. After all, "there are two people, here, in the night" – and so, "to your health reader imagine we'll thus manage to free ourselves" (*H*, 199).

21 Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 49.
22 Barthes, "Over Your Shoulder, 82.

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BÜCHERSCHÄNDER

Mark Divo, *Abenteuer Menschlichkeit,* 2003.

Mark Divo, *Book Rapist, 2009*.

Mark Divo & Sonja Vectomov, *Jugend ohne Anker I*, 2008.

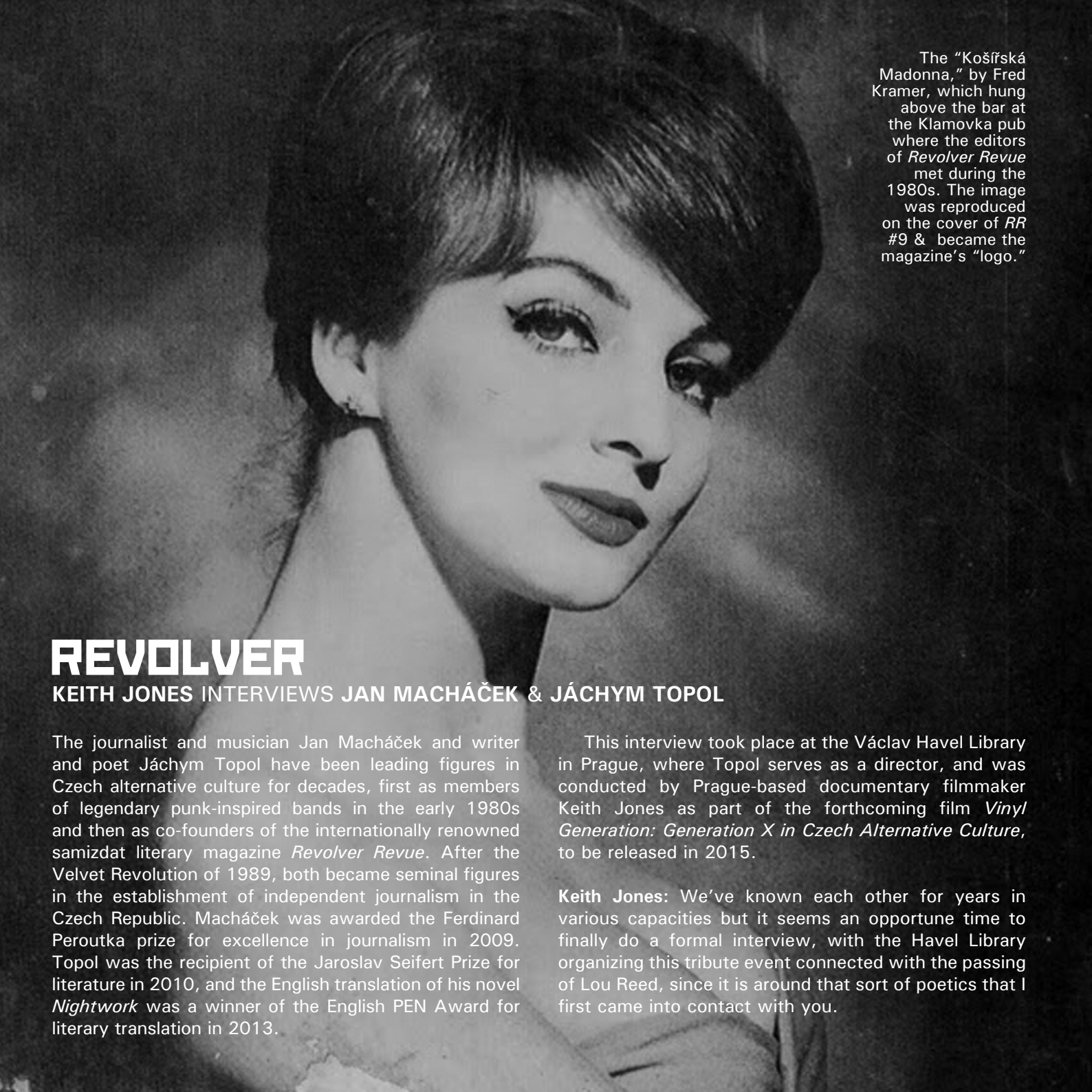
Mark Divo, *Poor Poetess*, 2010.

Mark Divo, *d.i.v.o. institute – Salon*, 2008,
bewohnte Skulptur, Kolíln.

Mark Divo, *Museum Platte*, 2003, bewohnte Skulptur (Detail), besetzte Liegenschaft an der Plattenstrasse, Zürich.

Mark Divo, *heute back ich morgen brat ich*, 2000, Installation,
Ausstellungsansicht strange paradises, Casino Luxemburg.

Mark Divo, *Sentimental Revolution II*, 2014.



The "Košířská Madonna," by Fred Kramer, which hung above the bar at the Klamovka pub where the editors of *Revolver Revue* met during the 1980s. The image was reproduced on the cover of *RR* #9 & became the magazine's "logo."

REVOLVER

KEITH JONES INTERVIEWS **JAN MACHÁČEK** & **JÁCHYM TOPOL**

The journalist and musician Jan Macháček and writer and poet Jáchym Topol have been leading figures in Czech alternative culture for decades, first as members of legendary punk-inspired bands in the early 1980s and then as co-founders of the internationally renowned samizdat literary magazine *Revolver Revue*. After the Velvet Revolution of 1989, both became seminal figures in the establishment of independent journalism in the Czech Republic. Macháček was awarded the Ferdinard Peroutka prize for excellence in journalism in 2009. Topol was the recipient of the Jaroslav Seifert Prize for literature in 2010, and the English translation of his novel *Nightwork* was a winner of the English PEN Award for literary translation in 2013.

This interview took place at the Václav Havel Library in Prague, where Topol serves as a director, and was conducted by Prague-based documentary filmmaker Keith Jones as part of the forthcoming film *Vinyl Generation: Generation X in Czech Alternative Culture*, to be released in 2015.

Keith Jones: We've known each other for years in various capacities but it seems an opportune time to finally do a formal interview, with the Havel Library organizing this tribute event connected with the passing of Lou Reed, since it is around that sort of poetics that I first came into contact with you.

Jáchym Topol: That American influence you mention is actually really interesting. Seeing those old pictures of Jan playing with Lou Reed, I remembered when Allen Ginsberg was in Prague. He corrected some of my texts, so we were indoctrinated by these American gurus, during the time right after all this attempted Sovietization. It was a magical time.

KJ: To go back to that era, perhaps Jan could start by telling the story of that Hungarian cassette recorder, and how you first decided to start your own band.

Jan Macháček: Well, I actually played classical guitar, since my parents wanted me to play a musical instrument. I wasn't that into it, and they had first tried with the piano, which I just didn't take to at all, playing different things with each hand. And as I became an adolescent, my classmates were listening to Deep Purple and AC/DC and things like that, swapping records… and I mean every time someone smuggled a record into the country that happened, back then a record could cost 500 crowns. At one point some Danes came on an exchange program and gave my sister an AC/DC record. She didn't want it so she gave it to me, and I brought it to school, hoping to sell it to a classmate, who was like – you don´t want this? Man, it's AC/DC! But I just hated all of that stuff, period. That way the singer whines … So I did play music, but it was not until I discovered that Hungarian tape recorder, which my sister brought one summer to our weekend cottage.

I was 13, and the tape had the Velvet Underground on one side, and the other side was The Ramones and Johnny Moped, a mix of songs. And when I heard the song "Sunday Morning" coming out of that Hungarian cassette player, it was a revelation for me about different music. I might have had some subconscious inkling that different music might exist, but couldn't even imagine what it might be like, and it really struck a chord with me. That was the first impulse, for daring to also try it myself. It was its power that struck a chord with me, but also its simplicity, so that one thought that you might be able to play this too. This was the first impulse for me to decide to get involved and found bands myself and so on.

KJ: Jáchym, what was your main cultural impulse at that time?

JT: Well, when Jan wrote his article about Lou Reed, he mentioned the whole underground scene in New York, and while they certainly couldn't have known about the older Group 42 from Czechoslovakia, I remember being really struck by the similarities between their texts. For me there was a definite connection that helped to open up that larger world for me, all these international currents.

JM: What I really like with Lou Reed is the way he states things, in "Candy Says" and "Caroline Says" and so on. Many people mistook him for this conceited and morose figure, since Americans are really positive and all, and in New York they hated Lou Reed for not being like that. Americans are mostly positive, while Lou Reed was like a negative, mean spirit on first contact. But at the same time this was a mask, because you could see that in his company he would always acutely observe people's character and in fact loved them, because he built monuments to them in his lyrics, noticing what was characteristic for each person, how they talked, what they said… he wrote a number of lyrics that testify to an intimate perceptiveness about human nature.

JT: It's actually comical because this skepticism, this detachment from the mass, the herd mentality you were talking about, the American imperative to "smile," to "be happy" is completely ironic, because under socialism, we were subjected to the collectivism of the "bright future," which also meant being positive and happy, and to me this represents the same kind of aversion towards the whole thing. And the music and the lyrics had that detachment, as if viewed through glass.

JM: We just found that New York attitude more congenial, dressed in black, sunglasses, and this whole sense of detachment… the word "cool" only gained currency here much later than when they actually were cool. In any case, the alternative-minded people in this country found this much easier to relate to than flower children from California. That detached attitude of New York was much more resonant… Although of course

many people here were also interested in the hippie movement, but for our generation this was stronger.

JT: Even though Miloš Forman, who made the film *Hair*, is a Czech, the hippies were just kind of naïve. And they were pacifists, in a way which I was never entirely comfortable with.

JM: So New York was simply more resonant, at least in our circle, this sense of detachment. And this studied image, we also had this in our generation, where it was a matter of pride that we were not just some ambitious suckers, so that was far more resonant than being "shiny happy people."

JT: Another thing that I really loved about Lou Reed was that he had been in a lunatic asylum, I found that highly sympathetic. Because in this country, many people had to go through all of that in order to avoid military service. Knowing that this guy had already been through this, the electric shock treatments... which was also reminiscent of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and this fear of psychiatry... but at the same time, many people also had to take part in enforced psychiatric re-education – so knowing that this great band had also gone through it somehow made it alright to be a mental case.

JM: I once heard Lou Reed saying that when he was drafted to go to Vietnam, he would say, just like they used to say here – "I can't go there, if you give me a machine gun, I'll shoot you all." He said it was actually difficult to play the part of a lunatic at the draft board, because there were two transvestites in the line in front of him, and street people behind him. He actually felt like the most normal of all of them.

JT: So he had to play the aggressive type, sure.

JM: So this made me realize how similar their stories were to ours, like when we would wear soiled underwear to the military call-up.

JT: I think it is also peculiar, as you described this whole poetics of transvestites, or sexual boundaries, that the underground in our country was infused with some form of Catholicism, all these people from the underground. They may have had waist-length hair and a great predilection for alcohol or drugs, but would still go to mass. Which I guess can be explained by the great difference, the freedom in America and the lack of freedom here, but I never had a chance to discuss that with anyone from the New York underground.

KJ: You both went to high school together in Radotín. What was the atmosphere of the place back then that it became such a center for 1980s underground activities?

JM: Radotín, then. I kept fighting with my parents. My mother was a theoretical linguist, but was not allowed to travel, and although she was not a Communist, she kept throwing out my books and samizdat literature. On the other hand, when I was about 12 or 13, she got a box out of the garage, with newspapers from 1968, and I got so deep into reading those she got scared and stashed it away again, so I had to go looking for it. So she was keeping this but at the same time would argue with me, saying you mustn't read only banned literature and on the other hand sending me to a Scout group which was illegal, and filled with the children of various banned writers. And then, for some reason, she sent me to high school in Radotín, while she sent my sister to school in the center of Prague. My cousin Pavel Baudyš was already in Radotín, so the word in our family was that it was a good school.

JT: He was the king at our high school.

JM: He was the king of the high school, and the next king after him was Jáchym, because the two of them had the longest hair. In my first few days at that school I sussed out that the smoking area was out in the yard by the corner of the building, and that was where poetry was exchanged, music discussed and so forth, and so naturally I instantly fell in with that crowd. At the time, it wasn't just that parents who worried that their kids might have trouble being accepted to a regular high school would send them to Radotín, the teachers there were also a bit more liberal than in the

center, because they too had been banished from the center of Prague, and were only allowed to teach in Radotín as a punishment, because you had to commute there by train. So it was a tad better there, and you instantly got connected to interesting people, in whose homes – as was the case with children of the dissidents – the parents talked freely and wouldn't tell you that you mustn't repeat the things you heard at home, like our parents kept telling us.

JT: There was this little verse, "Disidentský dítě, roztrhá tě, sní tě." Parents telling their kids to beware of dissident children, as if they were monsters. But in fact Charter 77 actually helped to get me enrolled in high school, since they publicized the fact that children from dissident families were banished from education. And at the time I went to high school the regime wanted to show that people were allowed to study. Nonetheless they told my parents that Radotín was the only option. As a result, Radotín brought together children of Charter 77 signatories and scores of kids from "unreliable" families who were inclined that way, such as for example Jan, and many others. And though I am reluctant to use the word ghetto on account of the atrocities of the Second World War, it was in fact a kind of ghetto. Where we would swap samizdat during the recess, the first time someone gave me a tape of the band DG 307... it was really weird, the way they tolerated us, even though the State Security would come pick me up at the school.

JM: And your brother Filip, as well.

JT: Yeah, my brother too. These police agents would show up and take me into custody for forty-eight hours, bash me around a bit and then let me go... I guess they thought it would be like a deterrent for us kids. But no way! It was actually really cool, when the school radio announced, "Topol, to the director's office." I'd go there, and the StB agents were there. I knew I might be locked up for forty-eight hours, but when I came back, I'd be the ultimate hero.

JM: We weren't actually in the same class together. I was in the class with Jáchym's brother Filip. Jáchym is two years older, and he kept encouraging us all the time. At that age, two years is a major difference and we looked up to him. And Jáchym kept saying, "It's great you write poems, write more poems! Start bands! Keep writing, it's great!" So he would write poems and Jáchym was, like, great! Play music, start bands, rehearse! And we thought, if Jáchym´s telling us this, we must do it!

JT: Well, it's what the older guys said to me, as well.

KJ: The two bands, that you each became involved with in the Eighties, Garáž and Psí vojáci, had a really different character than the classical Czech underground of the Seventies. Why was it that the Eighties generation experienced this break, why did it evolve so differently?

JT: Psí vojáci was the band of my brother's, which he founded with two friends from school, so they started meeting and playing at the age of 14 or 15, and while I think this was a band that was really original and unique, in terms of atmosphere, or how to say it, spiritually, it drew much more on older bands like the Plastic People of the Universe, or DG 307, whereas Garáž struck me as more modern, much more influenced by punk or New Wave, all those trends of the time.

JM: But Filip actually arrived at that too... although spiritually, or in terms of atmosphere, these may have been underground roots, still, the set-up that he came up with was unique. The piano, with bass and percussion, that was nothing like the Plastics or DG 307. Filip was not someone to copy what was going on, he would do his own thing. He always had the delivery of an underground chanson singer, slightly theatrical.

JT: There is also a difference from the Plastic People or Garáž, which were always based on several personalities, in that Psí vojáci was expressly a one-man show. One cabaret singer, one man at the center, to put it simply.

As for Garáž, in my view what was interesting about Garáž was the singer, Tony Ducháček, who was the very first one here who was a totally authentic figure.

Photo: Noel O'Brien

This is what Ivo Pospíšil noticed, that there was this guy at his workplace, a mechanic fixing cars, this character who was genuinely cool. And Tony was the first one to do his particular style, a sort of Czech Lou Reed, but absolutely natural with him, he didn't have to mimic, just had the right colour of voice, none of that shrieking, more like talking, and this detached attitude... later, David Koller and those Czech rock guys started to copy all that as well, but at the time Tony had a totally different singing style from rock singers in Czech music, a simplicity of phrasing, to go with this attitude... as if completely effortless. And the music was also basic, simple figures, and of course inspired by New Wave, or again by New York bands, but from a later period, the New York Dolls, The Ramones, Iggy Pop, Lou Reed as a solo artist. While the Plastic People were inspired by the 1960s, by Zappa, Beefheart, Fugs, we were inspired by this much later scene.

Garáž was also interested in what I felt, what struck me as being really European, with a strong sense of Berlin. This was the first band here that had that, related to when we started to go to Berlin – that Berlin atmosphere, of West Berlin, Kreuzberg, which radiated enormous waves, and I feel Garáž was part of that.

JM: I guess it was. But the paragon we looked up to in the band was not Lou Reed in the black glasses, but Lou Reed with his dog collar and blond hair, his guitar no longer slung from his shoulder, but confrontational. This was certainly Tony's role model, but Tony didn't

even have to absorb it, it was just who he was. Whereas before the notion of a rock singer – like Michal Prokop, or Vladimír Mišík – was that they had to be able to sing, and Tony doesn't have an ear for music at all, all he can do is remember some of the phrasing.

JT: They had fantastic lyrics that are, I guess, untranslatable, but lyrics by an individual, such an individual vision. It's just absolutely inconceivable that such a thing could be imitated, or could spawn some school of writing. Their originality was also in the lyrics.

KJ: What were the gigs at that time like, as they were mostly illegal? For all of those bands and the scene that developed…

JM: Well, it was a complex system, not talking about the bands which were totally outlawed – DG 307 no longer existed at that time, but the Plastic People, with whom I also played guitar at a tender age, were banned from performing. It was dangerous not only for them, but even for the people who wanted to organize a gig, so at that point the Plastics were only rehearsing and recording.

Garáž, on the other hand, had the status of amateurs, where all you had to have was a stamp, which meant that once a year you had to submit your lyrics for an audit, but we would just sing something different anyway. But there was a strict ban on taking any sort of money, so we had to play for free. Even though we might have sold out the entire venue at Chmelnice at 5 pm, and again at 8 pm, with the place packed all night, and the tickets might be 20 Crowns, still we weren't allowed to get any money whatsoever for that. The only thing we could do from time to time, when we toured to Brno, was to report an extra car, so we could each get fifty crowns or something. In any case, we were allowed to play, legal in that sense, but there was only one place in Prague where we could play officially, and your turn to play would come maybe once in two months. That was the Junior Club at Chmelnice. And there was another similar place in Brno, and one in Ostrava and Nový Jičín, but otherwise, we mostly played at random unofficial events someone organized, and combined that with official gigs.

These unofficial gigs were mostly on the outskirts of Prague, or villages outside of Prague, when someone was getting married, maybe a birthday party was feasible sometimes. But mostly you would need an occasion like a wedding, as that allowed you to rent a pub dancehall. Some people even got married just for the sake of the show, so they could organize a gig. There were scores of gigs like that, and lots of them failed. The cops would cut the power, for example, so it was a gamble as whether the gig would happen or not, whether they would just arrest all of us. But in general you combined official and unofficial gigs, and here and there, the Communist papers would publish an article listing all the bands with immoral names, who then had to change their name, or who were banned from playing for a while.

JT: I seem to remember that right at the beginning, when my brother was about 13, Psí vojáci actually played publicly at the Jazz Days. Which was a massive shock, because they were so young, but they got banned almost instantly. The regime, the censors, had this formidable instinct, they just knew straight away. So the gigs that I remember were always illegal. They were always tucked away in some pub, or out in the country. You always had to travel there in great secrecy, it was very conspiratorial.

JM: And then at some point in the mid-1980s, when Garáž started to play at Chmelnice more often, Psí vojáci changed their name to P. V. O., (Psí vojáci osobně, "Psí vojácí in person") which was public knowledge anyway…

JT: When my brother died recently, he left behind this suitcase filled with these things, and I had no idea he had been keeping all this stuff. There are all the contracts from those days, like for playing at some regional house of culture in Budějovice, or Krumlov, or whatever, with this "luxury award" for the artist, like sausages, beer, and 300 crowns. You were saying there was no money in it, well, he got 300 crowns! And these contracts had to be signed ten times over, and it's no wonder that these wild rockers couldn't deal with this and spent that whole era, or at least while signing these contracts, totally drunk. Because it is so humiliating, having some

cretins telling you, this song is OK, but you can't play this one. And you would – like Jan said earlier, or as Škvorecký wrote about wartime, when swing bands used mimicry to hide from the Gestapo – you would play the banned song anyway, but under a different title, this endless game of hide-and-seek.

The people who went to these gigs will never forget that, it is actually difficult to even communicate that experience, because today it must seem almost comical. Because, as the poet Ivan Jirous wrote, going to those secret gigs was in some way like the Hussites, a mystical sect from the Middle Ages, going to the sacred mountains. So people bonded over these incredible experiences, which were more powerful than just the music. Naturally, when you are young, people bond through music, and the atmosphere, but here you had this existential moment, a matter of real life.

JM: Sure, but perhaps I forgot one important thing about the Velvet Underground – another reason why that struck such a chord with me was that I felt that it wasn't just music, that what was important was what was behind the music. You're 13, and suddenly you realize that this is more than just music… and that stays with me to this day. I really don't like the idea of "music-making," where people just do some jam sessions with anyone and everyone, where everything goes. I only care about music where I feel a kind of power, but this is something behind the music, and at the same time organic to it, which exists behind the music.

JT: Maybe this sounds like too much pathos, but it's that kind of art, or the experience of it, where it is worth nothing unless there is an abyss behind it. That is why I was mentioning this religious aspect to the underground, where the experience of art was bordering on something sacred. It's hard to say this today with a straight face, because we have grown so cynical, but when you are actually doing it, it is a life or death thing, something absolute.

KJ: So what was the leap from doing underground music as teenagers to publishing samizdat, how did that come about?

JT: Well, underground music and samizdat are means of communication, basically the same thing. It was reading banned or illegal books that had to be self-produced by the community. "Samizdat" comes from Russian, "sami-zdali" or self-published, which is a paradox in itself, seeing as our country was occupied by the Soviets.

The *Revolver Revue* magazine was founded… when was it? 1984, 1985? That was in fact one of those illegal underground magazines, I think I may safely even call it one of the best ones, and in turn it followed on from *Vokno* magazine, which was created by the older generation of the underground, who at that point were basically in jail. These were people like Ivan Jirous, František Stárek and others, who were in jail, and *Revolver* was basically an effort to fill the gap. But it was made by a younger generation, so our aim was to publish a lot of work in translation, so that this ghetto would not be merely self-involved, just publishing our own texts. Also, this was around the so-called perestroika time and the sentences weren't so draconic, so there were a lot of university students around *Revolver*. It is interesting that a lot of those people are active in the media to this day, like Zbyněk Petráček, a columnist for *Lidové noviny*, or Martin Weiss, columnist for *Lidové noviny*, or the guys who run the *Česká pozice* magazine, so essentially these people are still active.

JM: I would point out this connection, which is perhaps not accidental in Czech history. Since this society does not have traditional political elites, in times of hardship artists also have to assume the role of politicians, or people sort of look up to them in the hope that they might bring about change, and the artists then style themselves as politicians… starting with Karel Havlíček Borovský, but even before that, Karel Hynek Mácha was like that, helping the Poles. It is actually in keeping with modern Czech history, but curiously you could say that underground journalism was done primarily by artists, or by people with artistic leanings, even a journalist like Ivan Lamper did collage art.

And then naturally, when *Respekt* emerged, all the people who worked there were artistic, when you think of it it. None of us had ever studied journalism, but

everyone either played an instrument, or painted. If you look at the graphic designers at newspapers today, they're basically bureaucrats, whereas back then they were painters, who created the visual identity of the magazine. And that is how samizdat was, and it carried over into normal times. So it is interesting that journalism was done at that time by artists who never studied journalism. Independent artists, that is.

JT: Yes, in great part. Also you used to have people from the dissident political scene, like Petr Uhl, who were involved in the underground, attended underground exhibitions and so on, but they only did it because art was standing in for actual politics. It was a form of free expression. And later they all quit. I think none of the writers are left in *Respekt*, either, because you can't write books and be a journalist at the same time.

It is interesting that *Revolver Revue* was a cultural magazine, involving writers, poets, painters, artists, but it increasingly also accentuated political things, like support for political prisoners, information about demonstrations, information about the opposition in Hungary and Poland, and this later crossed over into actual journalism. I think it is important that you mentioned *Respekt*, because *Respekt* is in fact an offshoot, a descendant of *Revolver Revue*. Both of those magazines, *Revolver Revue* and *Respekt*, occupy a peculiar position within Central Europe. They are absolutely unique – in that they continue to exist even today. Many Hungarian or Polish periodicals from that era – dozens, even hundreds of them, have died off. But *Revolver Revue* is still here.

KJ: It is interesting that you point out that *Respekt* also continues until today, still retaining its uniqueness in the local media culture. Can you discuss the story of how *Informační servis* came into being, and how that in turn turned into *Respekt*? And also illuminate how *Respekt* has evolved, since you were both there on and off for twenty-five years.

JT: During the revolution, the changes in November in 1989, this bunch of underground or independent journalists around Revolver Revue organized really fast, and founded the so-called NTS – the Independent Press Center ("Nezávislé tiskové středisko"), and very quickly we started to issue *Informační servis*, as an information bulletin. Just to give you a few names, Ivan Lamper, who Jan mentioned, was the pivot of it all, and also as I was saying Petráček and Weiss, and dozens of others, and we did *Informační servis*. I don't know how long it lasted, but it was a real revolution, because people involved in samizdat culture had previously published their texts, reportage or petitions in mimeographed form in hundreds, or maybe a thousand copies, whereas now they were distributing *Informační servis* all over the country in thousands, or tens of thousands of copies. And it was sort of the voice of the revolution. And *Informační servis* very quickly transformed into *Respekt*.

JM: I missed out on the revolution, since my twins were born. I actually brought them from the hospital on November 17. Secondly, I also had to keep the fire going in my work as a stoker, so that people at the local housing authority wouldn't freeze to death. And then we also played for the striking students every day, so I wasn't really involved with the Independent Press Center very much. I would just meet friends who were in a hurry and had no time for me…

JT: Jan had this reputation of being a bohemian, always playing the guitar… and you may not know this, but it was actually me who told Ivan Lamper back then, hey, Jan Macháček said he could write a report about some bunker in Brdy, remember? And Lamper said: Macháček, are you kidding? And nobody believed it, because Jan was this rocker guy, always with a cigarette, boozing it up at Klamovka, he was this kid in a band. But it was me who first told the guys to check out your stuff.

And also I remember us being reporters. We wanted to do reportage. That's what I enjoyed the most. The sort of articles Jan was writing, about economics and the asset-stripping of banks, the tunneling of companies, the plight of minority groups, the environment.

JM: *Respekt* has really changed since then. The kind of newspaper format that *Respekt* had previously is still kept by the *New York Review of Books*, which was a major inspiration for *Respekt* in terms of graphic design. We had interesting artists designing for us, and had

Jáchym and Filip Topol in Radotín, 1980s.

the title running sideways, and it was a broadsheet, even though it was a weekly. Today it just looks like a standard magazine, because of the advertising. The advertisers want this in order to run colour ads.

Respekt had the advantage that it was always owned by someone relatively enlightened. First it was bought by Karel Schwarzenberg, who then subsidized it for several years, and then it was subsidized by the later owner, the magnate Zdeněk Bakala, as a matter of prestige. The magazine therefore enjoyed the advantage that its owners never pushed it in a different direction. It is not the natural instinct of journalists at other weeklies to write tabloid stories either, but their managers push them that way. Whereas in *Respekt* nobody pushed you, and we had the added advantage that the competition was becoming tabloid… really going downhill, so *Respekt* came out on top.

KJ: And now we have a situation where media tycoons begin to appear, and own large sections of the media, and use this to enter into politics.

JM: I have to say I see it differently. It's not media tycoons or oligarchs coming in, but rather the foreign investors who are leaving. They just no longer want to be here, and this is not just the case of the media. It is also telecommunications, because they find the market too small for them. Foreign owners simply no longer want to be here and they want to sell their assets to someone who is paying, and that unfortunately, or maybe even fortunately – thank god someone is buying – means these oligarchs, financiers and investors… Czech ones.

But it is not as though these investors go on their knees in front of the foreign owners, begging them to sell in order to dominate the media and have a political party. It's rather the other way round, we are simply a small, uninteresting market, and on top of that we have all these weird politicians, the economy is not great, the media is in crisis, so they don't want to be here any longer. As long as it bore them golden eggs, they were here, now that the market is no longer making profits, they have fled, and they want some money back.

KJ: We are sitting here in the Havel Library, which is relevant to this whole discussion. In the 1990s, there was a lot of optimism around the political scene in this country, which clearly is not the case any longer. But in your opinion what is the major shift that has happened, to cause this atmosphere of the 1990s to evaporate so quickly? That things evolved in this particular way?

JM: I have the feeling that perhaps things are beginning to look up, that contrary to what you say, there is an upsurge of sentiment and nostalgia for Havel, because people are so overwhelmed by this wave of pragmatists and swindlers, people who have no ideals beyond their profits. They enter into politics solely to gain power or to steal, and no longer even pretend anything else. Politics is full of people who openly lie through their teeth seven times over in a single television interview, so perhaps people are slowly beginning to remember the meaning of "truth and love shall prevail over falsehood and hatred." I should think that the demand for Havel is going to grow, because we have now hit rock bottom, with people voting only with their wallets, according to who promises the lowest taxes, and what kind of sense does that make? These are crooks and swindlers, and people are terribly disillusioned. We don't have anyone like Havel now, but the demand for his ideas, in my opinion, will be on the rise.

JT: I am a witness to that. This part of the Václav Havel Library at Café Montmartre, is a sort of unofficial club. We have a program fifteen times a month or so, so I see almost daily that this is not limited by generation.

The people who come are from various circles and generations, and younger people also come here and hold discussions, no matter whether about poetry or politics, I feel that for many of them the Havel era is akin to what the 1960s were to us. Like Jan describing his mother letting him read newspapers from the 1960s, so people come here, asking about Havel. Two years ago, I made the pledge that we must not be just a museum – and now it is happening on its own, Havel is all of a sudden highly prized. In a sense it is like with *Respekt*, which seems to slowly improve, while all the others self-destruct. And the people who should be Havel's competitors – just to mention the last two presidents, Václav Klaus and Miloš Zeman, they are just caricatures.

JM: But we are not alone in this – the People In Need foundation has a similar program, attended by a lot of young people in their twenties, which in my opinion is the best news regarding the future of this country, that young people are involved in non-profit organizations and want to do things not just for money, but are involved in a variety of initiatives, alternative culture, or initiatives which seek to clean up politics. And this will continue, because this new generation is going to react to this vapid society, which is all about making money.

JT: I don't want to overstate the case, but what is emerging here is a kind of island, a community. Which is similar to what was happening in the era of Charter 77. But naturally I don't want this to be some kind of nostalgia, you cannot invent it – it either happens and people come, they bring ideas, they are interested in what is going on here, or they just don't. We have some important things here in the Library, like the Ukrainian club, the Belarus club, and the minorities living here, people of culture, who are in fact following an old Czechoslovak tradition, where people came here and founded exile communities, and this just naturally evolved. This is never going to be a place for pop culture writers, or disco singers. What we do are exhibitions, readings, public discussions, and somehow it just works.

JM: So the library does all these things, and Jáchym's role is to fulfill the wishes of Václav Havel, who said on several occasions that he does not want the library to turn into some kind of monument or museum, that he wanted it above all to be a place for people to meet. That was his express wish.

JT: After all, Havel was not some kind of pompous bigshot. If I were to quote him, it would not be some lofty political notion, but that he wrote this: "Jsem člověk hospodský a všechno mě zajímá" – I am a man of the pub, so I am curious about everything. I think about that all the time, I think it's a great statement.

KJ: You once said a very interesting thing about how your generation in the Czech Republic is unique and specific because it is the only generation that was forced to do alternative culture under Communism and also re-invent it under capitalism.

JM: I think we are an extremely lucky generation because we experienced Communism, and know what it was really about. OK, we were persecuted a little, but not too much, because this was not the 1950s. We have seen the revolution, and even made it to a great extent, and then we were able to build our own institutions. I always cite the example of East Germany, where they didn't have this opportunity. The bigger brother just came in and took over, and there was no way you could experiment with publishing your own magazine. *Der Spiegel* just took over an expanded market. So we were extremely lucky in that we could

Jan Macháček with Lou Reed, Prague 1991

have this experience that as young people we were entitled to build our own institutions and even succeed. You just cannot do that in the West, where you have long established magazines and you have to have three university degrees just to get in the door. But here we could build it from scratch, including all the mistakes. We had the room to make mistakes.

In terms of the band, we used to play those gigs at the Junior Club in Chmelnice, and then a few months after the revolution, and this was the same for Psí vojáci, all of a sudden the average age of the audience dropped from thirty to sixteen. All of a sudden we had fifteen year old girls coming to our gigs – we felt like pedophiles. It seemed weird at first, but we realized that this is actually normal, that this was what the audience for an alternative scene should be, it should be young people. Under Communism young people were simply forbidden to take part, to attend gigs like ours. And Communism only allowed us beer, and there were no drugs, thereby saving our lives, so that we can be here with you today.

JT: The commies actually saved our lives, ultimately (laughs). Well, in our day, it was clear what underground or alternative culture meant. Today, I guess it is some kind of search for authenticity, which is bold and unafraid and does not need to beg for acceptance, to clamour for attention in the media. But with so strong of a charge that people still gravitate to it, the alternative simply being a basic condition of life.

JM: This society is at a stage – and we should have a whole debate about this – where it is only learning how to finance independent culture, like they do in Denmark or Holland. And with our current political representation, it looks like things will become worse. But it is also the way people treat public space and their own cultural surroundings, this is going to take time. Whenever there is some new show on television, they immediately buy it here and people watch it, but to learn how to respect public space, or alternative culture... realizing that society must support actual culture, that is something that is going to take time.

GWENDOLYN ALBERT

FOOD

for Louis Armand

It must be November,
Louis is here
adding his hat
to the close quarters

in the ear-splitting cave
we sit in a row
like a spacecraft crew
or tribunal

boy girl boy
with our old-fashioned pronouns
and our refusal to buy it

or to swallow
as we intuit
the virtual waterboarding.

Now for the future: the twenty-somethings
implode into their
ghettos of one.

If you eat it, does
that mean it's food
or only make it shit?

ROBERT CARRITHERS
THE MUSE PROJECT

"Muse Room," installation & performances, Art Prague, 2015.

MELCHIOR VISCHER
A SECOND THROUGH THE BRAIN

TRANSLATED BY **DAVID VICHNAR**

Art is, if not already a prejudice, then still always a private opinion,
such was the disturbing thought pacing prominently
through the confused road network of my water-addicted brain,
before I sank in and through the swamp and choked badly.

Hide, you fool,
your bleeding heart in ice and scorn!
(Nietzsche)

PRO & EPILOGUE

An uncannily fast-rotating novel, reads the subtitle. This is how it may, although the emphasis would fall on nothing special, appear by day from certain viewpoints.

Good, then: novel. After all, when read under the narcotising beams of the midnight sun, it seems timely, then above-time, and in the end atemporal, cutting-edge, steel: epic.

And finally under the embryonic, indeed comic light of the parched-up, well-nigh crucified moon, it creeps forth most laughably like a farce with all the laughs taken out.

Clever and daft, made-up and true, askew like a rowdy lung-bleeding dream, sublimely groovy and groovily sublime, quite foolish: a Shrovetide play. By the flagrant torch of self-immolation and still smacking of incense and torture, a Te Deum screeched in the catholically reverent finale of the hurdy-gurdy: Ash Wednesday.

But Ash Wednesday with sunflowers.

I sacrifice this astronomical dotting book as well as bible, written in Prague at a time so protean I cannot really determine it mathematically, other than by means of ultraviolet geometry, the one of which Karl Einstein in Bebuquin says: “Too few people have the courage to say utter rubbish. Oft-repeated nonsense becomes the integrating moment of our thinking,” and that is why I say one more time another, thoroughly novel nonsense.

In fifty years or in fifty minutes will this, my good nonsense, surely become apodictic wisdom.

THE NOVEL

Jörg Schuh stood spread-legged on the scaffolding, laughed with the screaming tone of the burin, chewed on his bread and knew that he's a stuccoist. Wind was sharp in this bird's-eye-view. With one eye on the ornamenting cornice, the other on the plaster forty storeys deep, blinking down on the sungravelled asphalt, he gave out a harsh scream. Although the streetracing folks down swarmed very teeny indeed, he still could see the huge bossom of maid Hanne from the skyscraper opposite no. 69.

The bossom, the boobossom is gorgeously plastic, as if having been formed by a stuccoist! an ecstatic sentence wrested itself from Jörg's awestricken throat, his horny gawkeyes bowling over, the plank teetering, head, feet wobbling athwart higgledy-piggledy, *wind whistled.....*

(crollosho soo crollo soo soo soooooo huih — — — iiihh! Eternity! in the eternity! you comin' Mr Myliege? greeted the specular top-hat of the yellow-blue man, inviting & cheap, the kilometre three neck fractures nine deaths. I am ecstaticer on the cube, in former life I used to be a maths professor and there on the great Milky Way I'm now the cabdriver. So you comin' Mr Myliege? — No thank you, on principle I only take the taximeter! — But I've got tyres on the wheels, oh brand "Gigant." — Go screeew yaself! — Pleaeaease!

Good evening Jörg, laughed it at his one ear, as he, apollo-like & strongthighed, walked through skyrocket-lit mirror room with lateral whisper- and procreation-corners, only now seeing the slim and willowy girl closely pressed at the negro. Come Jörg, have a look how you're being made, she stank drunken, how now black and white reeled in the small divanfurnished chamber, and the woman sighing rubbed herself against the musclehard loins of the blackamoor athlete, what a panting-off enigma. The china plates, the pewters were also very nice.

Can you see, Jörg, this is it. Black bull's hit the white of the eye. That's why your other ear is also black. The white one is dumb like Acre-Europe, hears nothing. The black one, however, hears everything: the bygone and to-be, till they've both come full circle. It hears so exactly it knows. And question it: there're no straight lines, what seems a degree is a piece of the circle. Hence the eternal symbol the snake, whose head bites into the nail, eats itself. But enough of philosophy, Jörg, it's nothing but cheesetub. At best. Cos otherwise the cheese's missing, too.

As she lay there act-exhausted half slumberous, the nigger frisked out, dancing in electric lightwaving in front of soused ministers the wild dance of Greek and Czech harlots, so that all those twisted into one another in a semicircle could hear the jungle roar. Astonishment poured down on Fallobus: the negro stamped here naked, sweat trickling down in rivulets. For the horny whores' snuffling noses that was perfume. They took hold of themselves. For the ministers had lost their clamps. Fallobus heaved his legs through the air, stepped wetly on the parquet, letting the muscles and sex twitch, was and promised: strength, procreation, colossus, force at maximum potency. And the jungle roared again.

Inside lay the copulated one and slept almost happily.

Jungledance and junglesong enshrouded Jörg's first nascent cells. The war minister was bleating like a sheep. A champagne glass clanged and released its shard blissfully upon the woman's abdomen, the exposed one cooing delightfully. Nothing'll come of that, cried the war minister. Then they simply let their canons loose.

Upon a bottleround imaginary hairs glowed down between flesh Why's it only the horses give a devout greeting? And a brook was heard trickling.

The nigger grinned, baring his teeth.

[...]

Crooloocrooolooocroooolooooshieeshieeshieeshieeedadadaadaadaaadaaalion, rirrirrirrirriilooloolooloohihihihihiheeeee horse, poupoupouuou tacktackpooooouuuubooooboooooou dog, shawlshawlshawlsoosoosooo stag, eieieiiiinoeoeoeoeoeioeoeoei—oeoeoeiioeoeoeoei—oeoei—ioeoei bird, diagonal, transverse, crackling like bad weather killed off finally the found elemental sounds of the ichthyosaurus all of the dumbass languages of the earthball gone to rack. Do you think me crazy? Oh no! it's only my environment that's moronic, civilised, besmeared, hence me the oddball. Especially odd the superpious healthy fat folks and gym teachers. *We want to smash culture into pieces, also the bourgeois madness, which is so often nicely lacquered and bound in Morocco leather, we're heading out all the way to the utmost end, bordering on the big freedom:* ur-being. We rubble, we rubble, and there there, from the ground up, where at first cringed lacquered speech, the only remaining now is the whole big DADA. — Here's to you, Huelsenbeck, Baader and Schwitters. We have no pity. We show saneness and whoa common sense from its downside. Wavering, wavering. On the Sunmoonday, on which culture crashes-into-one with the shameless bastard civilisation, I shall kneel on sea plane wasteland, reach with my hands out in the pure broad air, and cry out wild strong big:

WE ARE YOUNG AGAIN!

Quite still falling, storey 40, 36, 22, 9, 3, 2 Jörg of the winddarting head still long broad saw in his brain crosswise noticeboards aglow with golden letters

EGGS EGGS EGGS & BUTTER-
SHOP EGGS &
BUTTERSHOP

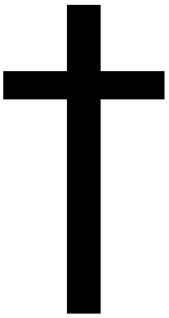
O the biddy! quack, quack, egg, egg, biddy uncackled egg, the Hanne the maid just out of the basket now lost, not knowing it's Jörg's brain. Egg gotchad on the asphalt, broke forth into yolk, mixed-in slimily with the muck and died.)

..... *wind whistled and Jörg lay on the plaster of smashed heads and necks.*

N.B. — For the sentimental, everything-ought-to-have-an-end folks with tearjerked, possessed cinesouls out there, mention should be made of the sterling good and not insignificant end, so that this stinks of a half-dispositional storytelling:

The watchman rocked toward the scene of the accident, tore the brass number off the dead man's chest, gawped thereat: no. 96. Having come running, the foreman looked into the construction company workbook below the mentioned number, and found there the name: Jörg Schuh, stuccoist, place of birth unknown, age between twenty and six thousand earth-life years, identification marks: oddly pushed-in shuteyes, as in ancient Egyptian mummies. So. — The bier was brought, Jörg removed to the clinic for autopsy. The professor said: Please, no laughter, ladies and gentlemen! A variation from Büchner's *Wozzek* screeched underneath: a good death, a genuine death, a pretty death, as pretty as can be desired. We haven't had one this pretty for so long — — — what a spectacular fall! I ask how explicitly, my male listeners and even more female listenettes, how explicitly: *The brain was radiantly* splattered from inside the skull capsule, hanging like a grape of jelly, umbelish like a gorgeous wreath around the head periphery. A pretty fall, a fi — — —

Now comes the stroke. Terribly transverse and sudden, the stroke. First a lateral — , then a long | , which together make oh get your censers aswinging a



CRITICAL NOTE

Born as Emil Walter Kurt Fischer in Teplice, **Melchior Vischer** (1895-1975) was a German language author of Czech origin and belonged to Czech cultural milieu. The end of WW1 found Vischer in Prague, recovering from his combat neck-injury. After the war he studied German literature, art history, philosophy and mathematics at Charles University, while working (1918-23) for the newly formed *Prager Presse*.

In the interwar period he was active alongside some of the greatest names in the contemporary literature, including Franz Kafka, Alfred Döblin, and Robert Musil, with whom he cherished personal and regular contact. Vischer's early works (*Sekunde durch Hirn, Strolch und Kaiserin* [*Tramp and Empress*, 1921], and *Chaplin* [1924]) all received excellent reviews. By 1923, Vischer had gained acclaim as the chief representative of Dadaism in Prague and received "honorable mention" from the committee of the prestigious Kleist Prize. In 1923, Vischer left Prague for Berlin (where he finally settled down in 1927) to pursue the career of a theatre director, which never panned out quite as successfully.

Vischer's first work, the short novel *Sekunde durch Hirn* (*A Second Through the Brain*, 1920) is composed of a series of disconnected vignettes, flashing through the mind of the protagonist Jörg Schuh as he falls off the scaffolding of a 40-storey building. Staring certain death in the eye, the protagonist spends his final seconds reviewing his life and also imagining the might-have-beens: he appears in different times, spaces and impersonations (the negro pagan in the extract here, but also a governor, murderer, an MP, a newborn, a monk, and finally a mourner at his own funeral). The series of metamorphoses in the face of death is associated with the Buddhist conception of a chain of rebirths, as Jörg also becomes transformed into a fly and a rat.

Apart from using typical Dadaist stylistic techniques such as visual typography, non-lexical onomatopoeia, meta-narration & textual montage, the text programmatically aligns itself with the Zürich/Berlin Dada group (cf. the concluding salute to Huelsenbeck, Baader, and Schwitters). Also Dadaist is the author's disparagement and critique of the perceived "bourgeois madness" and the "lacquered language" of his contemporaries. Described by literary historians as "the first published book-length German-language prose work in the Dadaist manner,"[1] *A Second through the Brain* would become the first and, for many, the only "true" Dadaist novel.

David Vichnar

1 Peter Engel, *Prager Profile: Vergessene Autoren im Schatten Kafkas* (Binder, Hartmut: Berlin, 1991) 417.

THOR GARCIA

EAT THE ROTTEN EGGS

PRAGUE – The world made him want to vomit. But it was how he had survived for so long, writing this stuff down while trying to ignore it. It was a refraction, an illusion, a dream, like everything. But it had the veneer of the real – making it, he thought at the beginning, a better kind of pretend.

BOY, 13, GETS 12 YEARS FOR KILLING 15-YEAR-OLD.

For years, it seemed, his job had amounted to coming down to the valley after the battle, taking aim and shooting the wounded.

WOMAN FOUND DEAD IN CONTRACTOR'S POOL.

Mainly, he felt, everyone sat in a black box, scraping claws against the sides. It took no real effort to believe or not to believe anything.

COMMISSION: PARENTS MUST BLOW WHISTLE ON 'GANGSTA' CULTURE.

Shit flowed in all places, differing only in consistency. Everybody was scrubbing with the wrong kind of soap.

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR KILLED IN CLIFF FALL.

Hammer strikes the metal. Metal strikes the concrete. Concrete crumbles.

MAN KILLED BY SECURITY GUARD AFTER ARGUMENT.

Somebody had to be the hunting hound. History had shown that somebody was always clamoring to be the *obergruppenfuehrer.*

MAN ARRESTED AFTER FATAL APARTMENT SHOOTING.

Everyone was on a journey to the same land of shame. They could forget about today until tomorrow. Because there had been too many tricks, and eventually everbody's impulse was to say *no*...

He had never been part of the crowd, any crowd. It had never seemed normal or natural to him. He had been on teams – football and basketball squads, newspaper staffs – but he would tell you he'd never really been part of any group or "scene." Even those he might have considered friends viewed him as a legitimate outsider. That was his authenticity – to be *outside.* Groups, and especially group-think, annoyed him.

It had never bothered him to be alone. He had always required a certain distance from others, a comfortable space between he and they. He believed that if people wished to come together, they *cou*ld, at their own pace – but not because they *should*, not because of some ill-defined or thoughtless obligation. Not so much because he disliked people – though he did dislike most – but because too much closeness, he thought, inevitably led

to relationships of inequality and, hence, injustice. Yes, familiarity leading to contempt – that was certainly a truth. But what was *too much?* Well, it was hard to say. But once you realized it was *too much*, it was almost certainly too late. Therefore, he preferred distance. He firmly believed that messing about in someone else's stuff only led to trouble, or worse – hurt, jealousy, persecution, war, genocide, apocalypse.

This had always been part of the problem with the wife. She wanted what she called "genuine co-interdependence." She was constantly saying this for the last few years, after reading about it or hearing the phrase in her therapy. But whenever he sought a clear definition, nothing she said could withstand his questions and doubts. "Well, it's, it's, it's knowing what lines can't be crossed..." "Yes, but it's also knowing when to cross certain lines, because it helps, because that's real intimacy..." "But there's no clear rules. It's up to the two people. They have to *work* on it..."

When she tired of his questions, she might, with an hysterical edge in her voice, accuse him of trying to "control" her and "suffocate" her way of thinking. "But I'm just asking questions," he would reply, "I'm taking you *seriously*, that's all. Isn't that what you want? I'm not trying to control anything. You started this conversation." She especially did not like his seemingly simpler assertion that "things either work, or they don't." Nevertheless, "genuine co-interdependence" had become her mantra, the way a "healthy and loving" relationship was supposed to function. Well, he thought, they were giving nightmares all kinds of new names these days.

Part of the routine was that she often accused him of being too distant. "What are you thinking?" she would say. Usually, he wasn't ready to say, because he wasn't sure what he might be thinking. Still, she would press him. On the few occasions when he did tell her, thinking it would make her happy, she told him he had "many problems" and should go see a therapist. He was drinking too much, she would say, and he should go see a therapist to work on his problems – otherwise, this marriage was *over.*

In her world, he thought, everyone was always sick, and everyone needed to go to therapy. This wasn't the first time she had made threats, of course. Far from it. She had threatened to leave for the first time less than three months after the wedding, saying "Instead of marrying you, I should have checked myself into a mental hospital." (And yes, she would go on to become a practicing psychologist . – ED.)

Indeed, it was very nearly the end. Like all things, the end was always approaching. The sledgehammer was falling at rapidly increasing rate – yet even now, he assumed it would sail on by, leaving him unscathed. Because he'd always prevailed previously. Even when he'd been defeated, he'd been able to summon his strength, reorganize his forces and roar back, leaving the defeat merely an unreliable memory. Why should this be any different?

Even as it all collapsed, he didn't complain, because he wasn't that type. He was well aware that complaining got you nowhere. He hadn't always been a winner; and he hadn't always been lucky. But he had been lucky enough. And he had made it this far – on his own. Somehow, he'd always made it through. No assists from anybody – not from friends, and certainly not from family. Everything he had done, it had been him alone – his skin on the block. He assumed that with a little bit of work, he'd survive this as well. He was wrong.

It took very little to make him happy: His books and booze, music, sexual access to women. Time to sit alone to think, to have the solitude necessary to contemplate and express his pains and desires. Living in Europe – that was the gift that kept on giving. That had probably been the best thing he had ever done for himself – moving to Europe. Leaving behind all those jokers and manipulators, the people always trying to pull him down. Screw those people in the U.S.A. They lived in a cage of cruel machine organization, in thrall to bright lights and the booming voices of authorities. In America, everything was the finest and most wonderful, and there was never, ever enough. He had no plans to look back.

One Saturday, not long after all this had begun, his wife dropped off his boys. He was badly hung over, hadn't eaten for some days. He shuffled around like a rag doll, sighing and dizzy, the pants not really fitting over his hips anymore.

"I can't breathe," he told her as she stood in the doorway.

"You never let me breathe the whole time we were together!" she barked, hand on her hip. She turned and walked out.

People do this, he told himself. *This is what they do. They close the door and they do not open it again.*

*

He drank to slow himself down. That was one of the reasons, at least. Drinking seemed to temporarily ease the madness thrown up by the world. Since his early teen years he'd had a tendency to become tightly wound, to operate at a high, unrelenting capability. In his mind, he was operating so efficiently that he was going *faster* than the world itself. He was too fast, too well-oiled – and the world was too slow. When his wheels were churning so intensively, existence would take on a monochrome, deadening quality. He would see himself as simply executing tasks – going here, going there, doing this, doing that.

A good drunk would take him out of it. It would temporarily rearrange the world, provide a new vantage point to consider what the hell was going on. A heroic drunk, lasting ten or 12 hours, which would leave him crippled with a hangover for a day or more, was even better. It made him humble and apologetic. The fiery crash after the delirious high, after momentarily seeming to break gloriously free from the bounds of the earth. It would take him days to recover. He would feel exhilarated as his body and mind rebuilt and renewed, as he regained strength, his muscles and brain reviving, as he went out and once more did battle with the world for, for, for what again? For whatever reason. Well, that was as a separate question entirely.

But a trapped animal will do anything to end the misery – in this case, the misery that had become his marriage. The destruction had already commenced, the beast had pounced, he'd been routed by his wife's ambush – but he continued to resist. He sensed that the severity of the devastation would be unlike anything he had ever experienced, and thus he had little choice but to try to ignore it. So he had come to the basement for the meeting, thinking it might hold the keys to some kind of salvation.

They went around the circle and then it was his turn. He said his name and added, "And I *might* be an alcoholic." A few of the people took a second glance at him, but no one said anything.

It was the first time he had ever been to Alcoholics Eponymous. There were 16 guys and one woman. It was the English-language meeting, so there wasn't a single Czech in attendance. More than half seemed to be Brits, with the rest Americans, two Russians, an Australian, perhaps a Bulgarian or Slovenian.

There had been some small talk as people filled their coffee cups in the tiny kitchen. Finally, everyone was seated in straight-backed chairs in a circle in the meeting room. Someone read out a list of principles. Heads were lowered and eyes were closed as someone else recited a prayer.

To his chagrin, he knew the old man. The old chap had worked in his office before retiring about two years ago. The old man looked at him and nodded and smiled, wet his lips, his ancient eyes bright. The old badger seemed pleased to see him there. It seemed as if the coot was thinking over which of his ready-made speeches to give.

The woman, an American, was the first to address the group. She was sitting in the corner, pale and skinny and with a green hood over her head. A broom of black hair erupted from below the hood, covering her eyes.

"I'm seventeen days sober and I am just so happy," she said. "To all my drinking friends I say: Eat the rotten eggs."

She seemed bitter, he felt. She began to speak about the emptiness of one-night stands, about waking up in some bar and not knowing whether she was in Prague 3 or Prague 10. About friendships going to hell. About her alienation from her family.

"I don't know if drinking is to blame for everything, or anything," she said, "but I know it hasn't helped. I just know that, it's obvious. Now I just, it just . . . it feels so *good* to be sober. Seventeen days." She crossed her fingers and lowered her head.

Several attendees congratulated her after her speech. "You can spend your life running, and not go

anywhere," said one of the British men.

One of the darker complexioned men, perhaps the Bulgarian, was next to speak.

"I'm Yami, and I am an addict," he said. "I am addicted to drugs – cocaine and ecstasy, alcohol, cigarettes and pornography, and I have had many run-ins with prostitutes. I am the last guy standing around at every wedding, drinking until every bottle is finished."

Drinking at weddings? he thought. Where was the harm in that? He laughed to himself, thinking that funerals and weddings should both be occasions for excessive drinking.

Afterward, the old badger invited him out for coffee.

"I'm curious," he told the old man. "I'm tired of the marriage falling apart. She is always talking about the drinking. It's her weapon. Maybe if I can take the weapon of the table..."

"You just want a cease-fire, huh?"

"Yeah, I guess."

The old man talked about the disaster that his own life had become. He had drunk for thirty years in America. Two failed marriages. Couldn't remember whole years of what he had been doing, who he had been hanging out with. He'd been drunk off his rocker, yet had worked overtime for thirty-five years and supported a family. He was truly grateful to his "lucky stars" that he hadn't killed someone while drunk driving. He didn't talk to his son for fifteen years. He hadn't talked to his daughter for, what was it? More than twenty years now. He had reached out to her, but she hadn't responded. She'd even prevented him from building relationships with the grandchildren.

He stared at the blotchy red patches on the old codger's face and nose, atthe brown spots on his trembling hands. What happened with the daughter?

The old man waved a hand. "It's so long ago, I don't even remember. Anyway, the problem is, she's on these mood medications now. These voodoo doctors are telling her she's not ready to deal with me yet. She's running away, exactly like I did. I am being punished for it, exactly as she will be."

"Hmmm, wow," he said. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry," said the old man, grinning. "You're one of the sharpest in the toolbox. Don't think less of yourself, just think less about yourself."

*

In his loneliness and pain, he found himself very sensitive to people's faces, their body postures. He went around looking for suggestions of pain and loneliness in the faces of others, young women mainly. Sometimes, even many times, he would seem to see this agony – this agony having to live in the world alone. It would tear him.

He'd walk the streets for hours, through the parks and across the river, studying the faces. It was there, it was always there. Young women and some middle-aged women were very much suffering. They've written long books on the alleged reasons why. He had never been totally persuaded by the claims.

He longed to reach out and comfort them, to hug them – *hey it's OK, I feel it, too. We can make it through this together. If we try, if we open our hearts to the goodness, we can make this thing... We can make this life work for us, really, all sorts of fun. It hurts right now, I know, I feel it, too... But you know, I mean... It hurts, but it is not too much for us to take. We can make it through this thing. Really, we can.*

Once during this period, at the mall, he saw a girl whom he had seen in a porno on the internet. He was *sure* it was her, he'd recognize that face and posture anywhere: Clear-faced and blond, pink lipstick, blue eyes. Short but slim. She was going down the escalator, he was going up. Their eyes locked for maybe two seconds. She looked away.

Perhaps she knew he had seen her naked, or wondered if he had. Maybe she was always getting such looks. It was a thrill to see an actual porn girl in real life. Yet he felt a little bad about it, because she was so proper and normal looking – sweetly dressed in jeans and a grey sweater, gold chain around her neck. Not "whorish" at all. Probably out on a "date" with the normal-looking guy standing next to her. Or maybe he was her brother? She probably wanted everything normal, yet here he was, having seen her on film licking cunt and slurping down sperm.

What she had done in this movie was a strip and a small lez scene with a brunette. Then a French guy had shown up. They had sucked him for a while, tenderly it seemed, and pretty soon he began sticking it to the brunette. The French guy would pull it out of her pussy or ass, depending on his feeling, and the blond would suck it clean and use her hand to reinsert it. Interestingly, she was never penetrated herself, beyond what the brunette's tongue had been able to achieve. She had, however, with what seemed to be a joyous smile, licked up and eaten Frenchy's semen after he had dribbled it on to her face and breasts and on to the brunette. Yes, for sure – a big international corporate production. Quality. Serious bedroom set on a sound stage. Nothing small-change about it.

He wanted to reach out to her, to share her pain, her doubts – whatever they were. But there was such an endless gulf. He had gone up and she had gone down. It was over. He was devastated to realize that nothing that could be done, for her or for anybody else. The invisible walls were everywhere. Everyone was screaming, but no one was ever being heard.

It felt as if he was breaking apart inside, physically cracking up into fragments. Walking around the mall with all these fragments sloshing around, sharp edges scratching against his heart and other organs. He visualized the fragments bursting into flame, melting and smoking and swirling out a vent on the top of his head, mixing with the polluted mall air, joining with the air as it was flushed through the filthy mall filters and recycled back into the system.

*

He returned to the basement the next week. He repeated the same line: He *migh*t be an alcoholic.

The old man was not there. As before, it was all men and one woman. But she was a different woman than the one who had announced to the previous meeting that she had been sober for seventeen days.

Yami was back and was among the first to speak. He seemed agitated.

"I nearly killed my sister-in-law after she played a very cruel practical joke on me," Yami said. "I wanted to kill her. I mean *kill her*. I nearly did kill her. That's why I'm here. I mean, one of the reasons. I really do *not* want to kill someone... And no, I did not drink since last week. And I will *not* ask all of you that same question..."

Some of the others spoke up to encourage Yami on his path of change.

"To surrender means to go over to the winning side," said a balding American man who was wearing a suit and tie, as if he had just come from an office.

"Treat a homeless person the same way you would treat a movie star," said one of the British men.

"Being more compassionate and clear-sighted solves problems," said someone else. "The way to change your life is by changing how you look at it. By doing that, we also change the world. Because what you do, you know, radiates outward forever, eternally. It's the Power of One."

Another of the British men, skinny and with a shaved head, said that sometimes he liked to watch how Czech men drank in restaurants.

"They, you know, most of them just order one beer with their food and they don't even finish it!" He shook his head. "They leave it half-filled or quarter-filled, if you can believe it. Sometimes I think, life would be different if I could drink like that. But I know I can't. I just need to eat a lot. If I don't eat, I get tired from lack of calories and then I will want a drink. It's physical with me, chemical reliance. So I am eating five, six, seven times a day. And I don't get fat, because I have all this nervous energy. Every day is a test."

During the break, as he was getting coffee in the little kitchen, he was accosted by a younger fellow who seemed to be Australian.

"Do you want to try the ninety meetings in ninety days?" he said. "Probably your brain needs to detox, yeah? Detox can be very trying. I can sponsor you and we can go through it together. Someone was gracious enough to do it for me."

"Ninety meetings in ninety days? But this meeting is just once a week."

The fellow laughed. "No, there's meetings every day, in different parts of town. We'll always be able to find some meeting to go to. Narcotics Eponymous. Sex-Addicts Eponymous. We can sit and listen to meetings in Czech, or speak English there."

"I'm not sure," he said. "I'll think about it. Thank you for the offer."

When the meeting resumed, the first to speak was the woman, who seemed to be American. She talked about a miscarriage she had suffered as a result of an unhealthy lifestyle, of which drinking was a prominent part. She talked about how, for many, many years, her first response to a situation was to "start yelling" and try to "force" her way.

"I've always wanted to leave every place I've ever gone to," she said. "Prague is no different. But I am done running away."

"Unhappiness is a state of mind," said one of the British fellows, trying to encourage her not to lose hope. "Being kind helps you. Anger works against you."

"Nothing lasts very long in this world," added someone else. "You can *make* it nice, or you can *mak*e it hell on yourself and everybody else. We possess the power to *make* it one way or the other."

The meeting ended with the American in a suit telling a story about a guy who hadn't had a drink for thirty years. Then one day, the guy walked into a store and bought a bottle. His sobriety was over "just like that."

"The last time I saw him, he asked me for money."

*

He had lost what he thought he had loved. He did not want to lose it and, though certainly guilty of performing egregious misdemeanors while drinking heavily, he did not feel he deserved to lose anything. Despite his shortcomings, he believed he was still the same wonderful, artistic and vaguely antisocial man he had always been.

He was at home sitting at the table. He was drinking box red wine, which he had poured over ice cubes. There were seven beers in his freezer. Beer seemed to help. Cold beer, nearly freezing, was the best. Mere refrigeration didn't make them cold enough. He would put a bottle in the freezer, wait until it had almost frozen, take it out and crack the top. There was nothing like it. They tasted like candy, and they seemed to help the sores in his mouth.

A DVD of an Italian movie from the 70s was on the TV – a Dino Risi film. They were speaking Italian and the subtitles were in Czech. He didn't understand a thing.

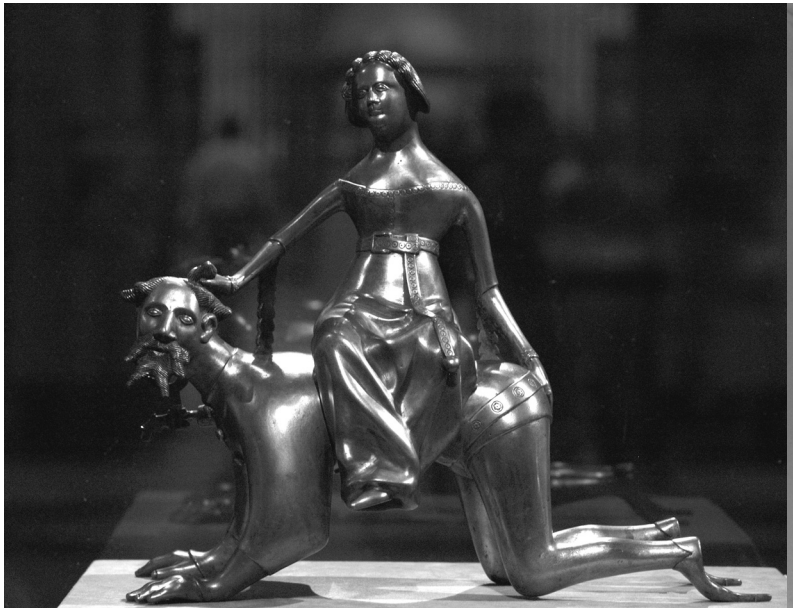
But it was gorgeous – everything was gorgeous suddenly. Everything had been worth it – every single thing. His drunken elation. The bleached out film stock. Beautiful Italian women walking around with the smoothest of unblemished skin. The women disrobing and being sketched by art students at an ancient university on the river. Luxurious shots of decaying mansions, ivy-covered churches. Secret ceremonies. Callow young men. Tormented older men rotting in their own stink, drool in the corner of their mouths.

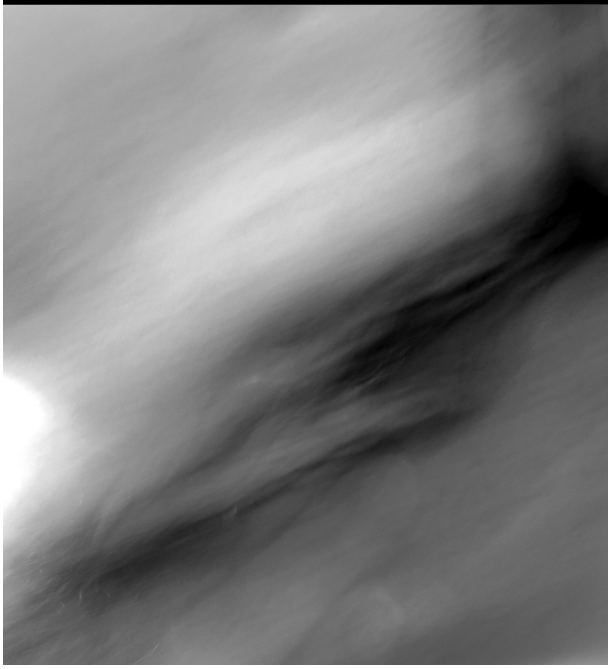
They had killed people and lied, they are hiding dark secrets, hiding the evidence in the attic but never quite disposing of it.

Yes, he thought , a nice point – the evil that men do, lives on and on. We've all got skin in the game, but we control very little. We are not the cause of anything. It went on before, and will continue after. We are just here, waiting. The world burns. Trees are blown down in the forest. One day it will all be gone.

VADIM ERENT

ORGANS WITHOUT BODIES





EVA ULRIKE PIRKER

FITTING MONUMENTS

Prague makes for a complicated mix of sentiments. When I go there, I feel simultaneously connected and separate. I feel in the same way I feel anywhere and anytime people speak a Slavonic language, because it reminds me of my mother's language. I used to think she'd abandoned it for reasons of practicality. Why cling to a language, why pass on a language that nobody around you speaks? It was only gradually that I began to realize the violence of the act. The language you speak is a very central part of who you are. It provides the material for the way you refer to yourself and others refer to you. Unless, that is, the people around you change, speak a different language, refer to you in different terms than the ones you are used to. Inevitably you adjust, you reinvent yourself, you change. Perhaps you keep your previous self, and the system of reference that allowed you to make sense of it, as a treasure. When you've got others with whom you can share that treasure, you can turn it into a monument.

In small ways, my mother certainly tried to build a monument to the language and identity she had left behind when she came to West Germany in the late 1960s. It consisted of children's songs, word games, in short, the language parents and their small children share. However, the monument crumbled fast. All that was needed to make it crumble was the realization on my part that it didn't work in the world I increasingly began to discover as a child. The language of my mother quickly became strange to me, a 'funny language', and I asked her not to speak it. Who could have known, then,

that Slavonic languages would be heard everywhere in Western Europe two decades later? That one would be traveling back and forth as smoothly as a black market item? Today, there is a certain melancholy for me in hearing the language's sounds around, an acute awareness of loss, albeit of something I feel I had never properly owned. It isn't a feeling that I assume to be particular or extraordinary. It is, in fact, a feeling that many people will know and share to some extent. Knowing this, however, makes no difference. It is strong and personal. And it may explain my pathological interest in the ambivalence of change.

The country where my mother grew up and where we would, after long procedures of visa application (that I was entirely ignorant of) and heavy border controls (that I was acutely aware of) go during a few memorable summer vacations in the 1980s, no longer exists. Its capital used to be Prague. The agitated history, the other connections and definitions, the relations between Czechs and the Slovaks – all these matters hold great fascination for me on an intellectual level. But when I consider Prague, it conjures up a vague memory of a connection that I can no longer claim. This, in turn, may explain why the place on the Letná with its ear-splitting silence retains such a strong attraction for me.

The eloquent gap of an absent colossus looms large behind the façade of what Benjamin Tallis, in a previous issue of *VLAK*, calls "the dominant narrative of post-communist collective memory," explaining that in contrast to other spaces of the former 'Eastern Block', Prague's brutalist architecture is not generally remembered or celebrated because its legacy does not comply with widespread ideas of "*what Prague is for*."[1] What Prague seems to represent instead is manifest in a different kind of architectural splendor, which keeps an unbroken demand for nostalgic immersion alive and productive, and which suggests that any evidence of brutalist architecture in this place is no more than an inconvenient reminder of a temporary accident of taste. It is clear that the historicity, functionality and potential aesthetic appeal of such buildings deserve to be noted a lot more in the public sphere. The enthralling curiosity in Letná Park, however, never had an immediate practical function, and when it got blasted in 1962, it had been around for less than seven years. And yet, its 'ghost' is a noticeable presence.

This may be due to the sheer dimensions, aggressive materiality and symbolic imposition of the thing which I imagine could not be overlooked: 30 meters in height, 17.000 tons granite, it was unveiled in the middle of the decade, on the symbolic date of 1 May 1955, while the students in the city would be busy electing their Král Majáles. Or were they? It is hard to imagine that anything at all could have gone on simultaneously to the first presentation of the giant to the public. The few historic photographs that I could find show the colossal size of the monument that sat like a double-sized sphinx above old town, overlooking the city, and overtowering the National Monument that must have appeared modest in comparison, abject on the other side of the river.

The thing itself consisted of an arrangement of nine figures with that of Joseph Stalin, looking into the distance, as number 1. From the front side, it was the only visible figure, facing the city, with figures number 2a to 5a (on the left, 'Czechoslovak' side) and 2b to 5b (on the right, 'Soviet' side) neatly tucked in two lines behind it: a man holding a flag (2a); a farming woman holding a sickle (3a); a man holding the woman's arm (4a); a soldier (5a). Numbers 2 and 4 on both sides looking in the direction of number 1; number 3 on either side gazing into the distance, number 5, respectively, watching out at the end of the line. Every figure holding on to an object that identifies their representative role in society. Only the book, dangling in Stalin's left hand, appears a bit divorced from a function. Clearly more important is the right hand, flat on his chest, suggesting involvement, devotion, paternal obligation.

Although citizens of Prague immediately helped themselves with humour by calling the colossus "fronta na maso,"[2] the joke must have had a bitter undertone. Its maker, Otakar Švec, had killed himself in April 1955, a month before the unveiling. The development of the sculpture inadvertently speaks of decay: When Otakar Švec received the undesired commission, the

1 Benjamin Tallis, "The Unbearable Lightness of Being Ignored: Czech Brutalist Architecture," *VLAK* 3 (2012): 280-291, 281.

2 The meaning could be a "line-up of flesh" or "meat-queue." The latter, as has been remarked by many who have written on the subject, alludes to the everyday socialist reality of having to queue up for all sorts of consumer goods.

monument was designed to celebrate Stalin. While being built, its grand sitter number one died, turning it into a commemorative piece. By the time it was finished, the process of de-Stalinization had set in and made the colossus a public embarrassment, not only for what it represented, but also for its less than modest size. This colossus, one should think, could never be blanked out, ignored or forgotten.

However, it seems that this is precisely what happened: People in Prague and visitors to the city did find ways to blank it out – if not from their vision, then from the media of memory. In a West German travel magazine of 1961, I find plenty of photographs that speak eloquently of the abundance of impressive architecture from medieval to nineteenth-century Prague. There are hardly any examples of 20th century sculpture and architecture. This confirms the view expressed by Benjamin Tallis, who shows that even half a century later, perceptions have not significantly changed. The selective view of Prague is particularly noteworthy, though, when one goes in search of the colossus. How could it not be present in many contemporary panoramic images of the city? In my travel magazine's text, it is only mentioned once, in passing, in an article entitled "Contrasts," but significantly as one of the city's "great horizontal dominants" as "menacingly towering statue."[3] This makes its absence from pictures even more conspicuous. Is this a case of the media and the public conspiring against an imposition of significance?

In one of Karel Plicka's famous coffee-table photobooks, there are a few images of 20th century architecture among the many shots of splendid images of relics from different pasts. Scrutinising the book, I can identify the smaller National Monument, blurred and out of focus in the background of a number of panoramic images, but no trace of the immense Stalin Memorial – the granite meat *fronta*, built for eternity, is missing.[4] While it is widely known that taking pictures of the monument's demolition in November 1962 was strictly forbidden, there seems to have been no official ban on taking photographs of it while it was still standing. And yet, it seems to have been widely avoided.

3 Thomas White, "Kontraste," *Merian [Prag]* 12.14 (1961): 76-78, 76.

4 Karel Plicka, *Prague in Photographs* (Prague: Artia, 1961).

By contrast, the forgotten monument has recently received a lot of attention from artists, bloggers and journalists. Claudia Bosse's installation, which was part of her "Explosion of Silence" interventions at the 2011 Prague Quadrennial, consisted of the giant words "The Tears of Stalin" and was meant as a provocative catalyst of memory,

> as a linkage to the history of the hill, the history of the largest stalin monument in Europe – its 6-and-a-half-year existence on the city's skyline and its subsequent explosion and destruction– as well as a reference to the history of prague since the 1989 revolution (radio stalin, etc.) and the era's promises, etc.[5]

Diverse journalists as well as a novelist have interviewed Josef Klimeš, living witness, clandestine photographer of the demolition and apprentice sculptor involved in the making of the work (carving number 3b's knee, more precisely), [6] perhaps in a rush to meet an anniversary deadline. As I write this, I realise that this year marks the 60th anniversary of the monument's unveiling. The explosion anniversary in 2012, however, will have generated more interest.

At the heart of the different critical or artistic engagements – including my own – there may be a very simple fascination with monumentality. What is it that is referenced in the colossal size? And what does it mean to walk, talk and think in the shadow of such a monstrous memorial? Gary Weissman writes that "no degree of power or monumentality can transform one person's lived memories into another's."[7] But what about actual monuments? What is their place in individual and cultural memory? Jan Assmann speaks of a floating gap in the interpersonal, communicative memory that is passed on from one generation to the next.[8] The gap occurs about 80 years after the

5 Intersection, "Claudia Bosse," 2011, www.intersection.cz/prague/spectacles/claudia-bosse.

6 Martin Nejezchleba, "Der Berg, auf dem Stalin explodierte," *Prager Zeitung*, 7 November 2012, www.pragerzeitung.cz/index.php/prager-leben/15289-der-berg-auf-dem-stalin-explodierte

7 Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004, 17).

8 Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, 3rd ed. (Munich: Beck, 2013).

commemorative event. If the commemorative event has not entered external carriers in the cultural archive, it will not maintain its status as significant event. Monuments can be such carriers, of course. Their success as carriers of cultural memory, however, clearly depends on the circumstances of their erection and their immediate function for the community surrounding them. Most monuments will not maintain their significance unless that significance is constantly explained and communicated (e.g. in memorial plaques, the captions, the guides, the memorial-and-museum scheme) in spaces marked by shifting interests and ideologies. Much depends on the ability of the commemorative community to decipher the sign of the memorial, or the other way around, the memorial's capacity to 'speak' to the community.

From the start, the colossal *fronta* had been the carrier of an imposed memory, or the imposed carrier of a memory, albeit the memory had become undesirable by the time it was erected. The project was therefore doubly doomed to fail. Yet the question remains: Had granite Stalin not been blown to pieces, might it after all have returned to its original purpose of communicating "Stalin's greatness"? Would future generations divorced from the memory of communist Eastern Europe have vilified it like the contemporary citizens of Prague? Wouldn't the odd mind, perhaps sooner than expected, go and pay a reverence, remythologise the colossus similarly to German right-wing youth extremists who have to be kept away from the *Hermannsdenkmal* in North-Rhine-Westphalia by the police force?

There are different ways of dealing with the commemoration of past acts of socialist monumentality, for instance in Hungary's Memento Park, an open air museum designed by Ákos Eleod and opened in 1993, where relics formerly spread around the capital have been placed and can be considered together. A copy of the boots of the massive Stalin statue, which had been famously taken down by the masses during the 1956 revolution, is also on display. To those who have not experienced 'socialism in practice' or belonging to a younger generation, the park must feel a bit like a display of curiosities. But were the objects mere curiosities when they were a part of people's everyday lives? Whether there is a proper way of commemorating a commemorative culture now readily described as embarrassing, mistaken or errant – this is a question that has to be negotiated anew by every new generation with sincerity and insight. What remains in Prague, on the Letná, is the memory of an immense *materialschlacht*, a struggle of signification and designification whose traces are no longer immediately visible.

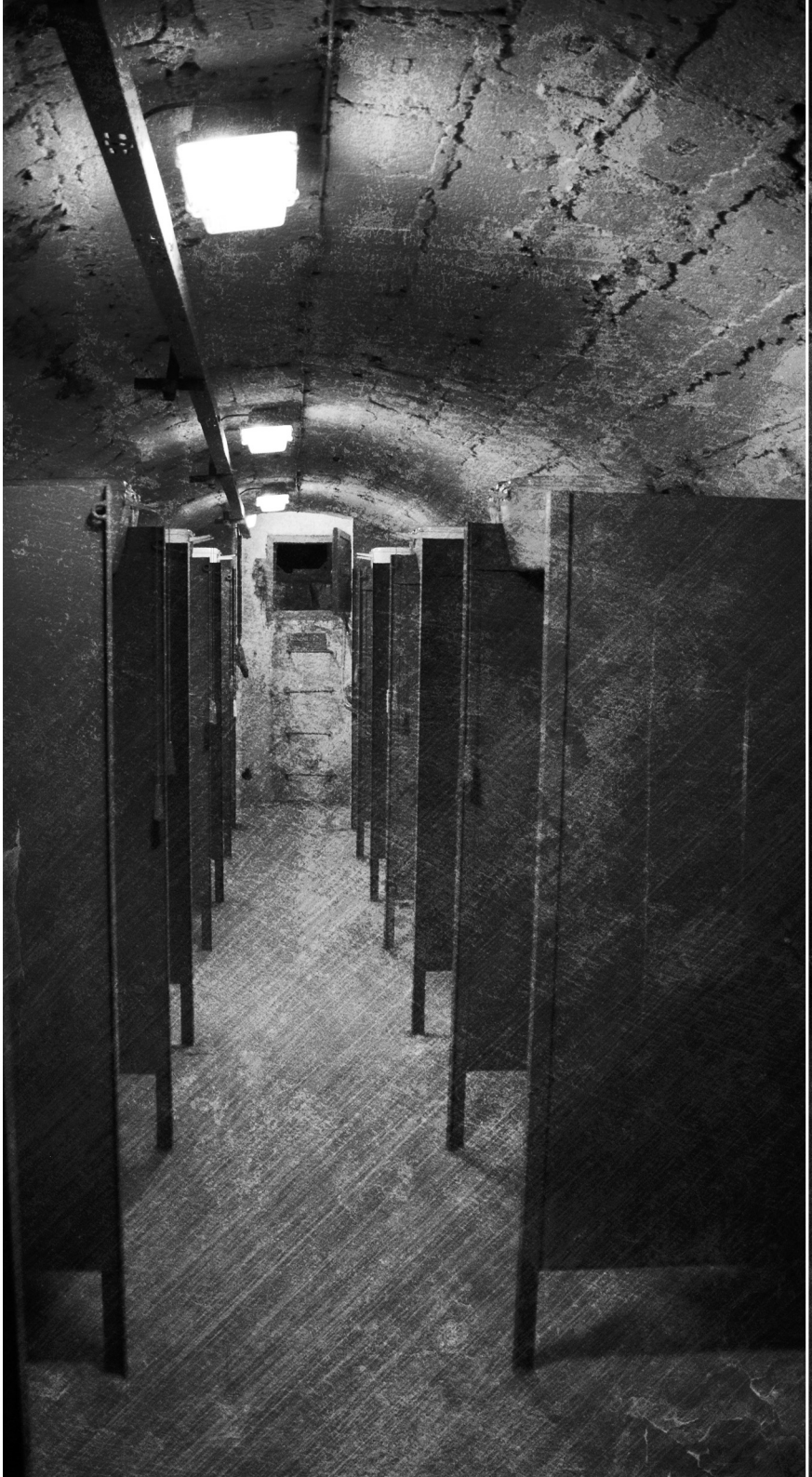
Coming up here at dawn is a special experience. I have never perceived Prague as a noisy city. Berlin is noisy. Rome is noisy. New York is immensely noisy. Prague is a very silent city, perhaps because it is outsounded by my introspection. Like my mother's language, the monument didn't fit. Unlike it, it was torn down before people could make up their minds about how to deal with it, with its size, with what it represented, with their part in it. Perpetrators' memory is based on guilt and shame.[9] The explosion, then, was a monumental act of shame. Its significance as a suppressed memory of a generation that, rather than disappearing, is presently entering the wider cultural memory, has clearly outgrown the significance of the short-lived monument, which was originally designed for eternity.

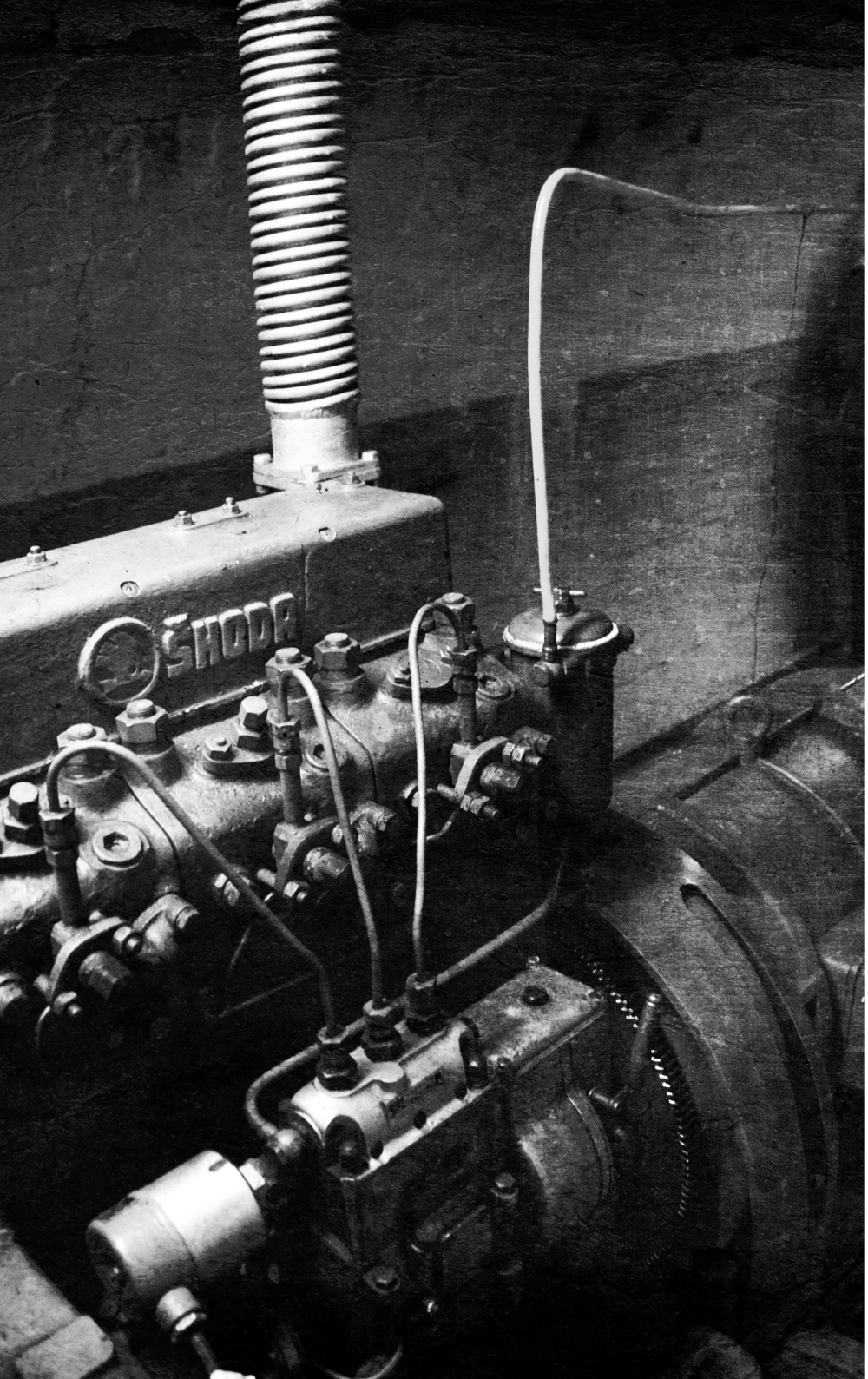
For most of the twenty-five years since the velvet revolution, ironically, a 'temporary' artwork has been taking the place on the pedestal: Vratislav Novák's sponsor-run giant metronome, a silent reminder of the precious good of time, has outlived not only other artistic interventions, political campaigns and marketing schemes, but also the giant statue that occupied the space in the middle of the last century. Early in the morning, before the shoe tossers, the skaters and occasional tourists arrive, the Letná birds outsing the eloquent silence and the prepaid sound of the metronome. Their song must have been interrupted for a few moments in November 1962. Otherwise, it must have sounded very similar. Incredibly small, I descend.

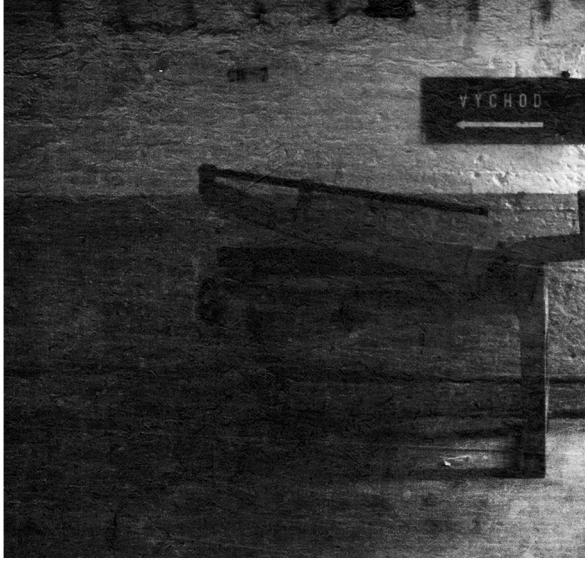
9 Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsversessenheit – Geschichtsvergessenheit: Vom Umgang mit Deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1999) 35ff.

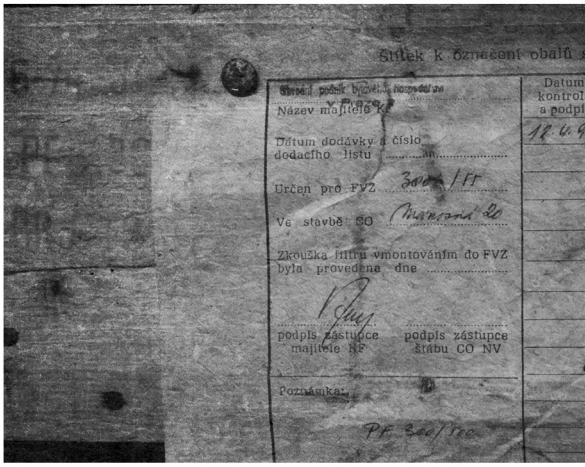
ADAM TRACHTMAN
BUNKR
THE COLD WAR UNDERGROUND

KRYTOVÝ





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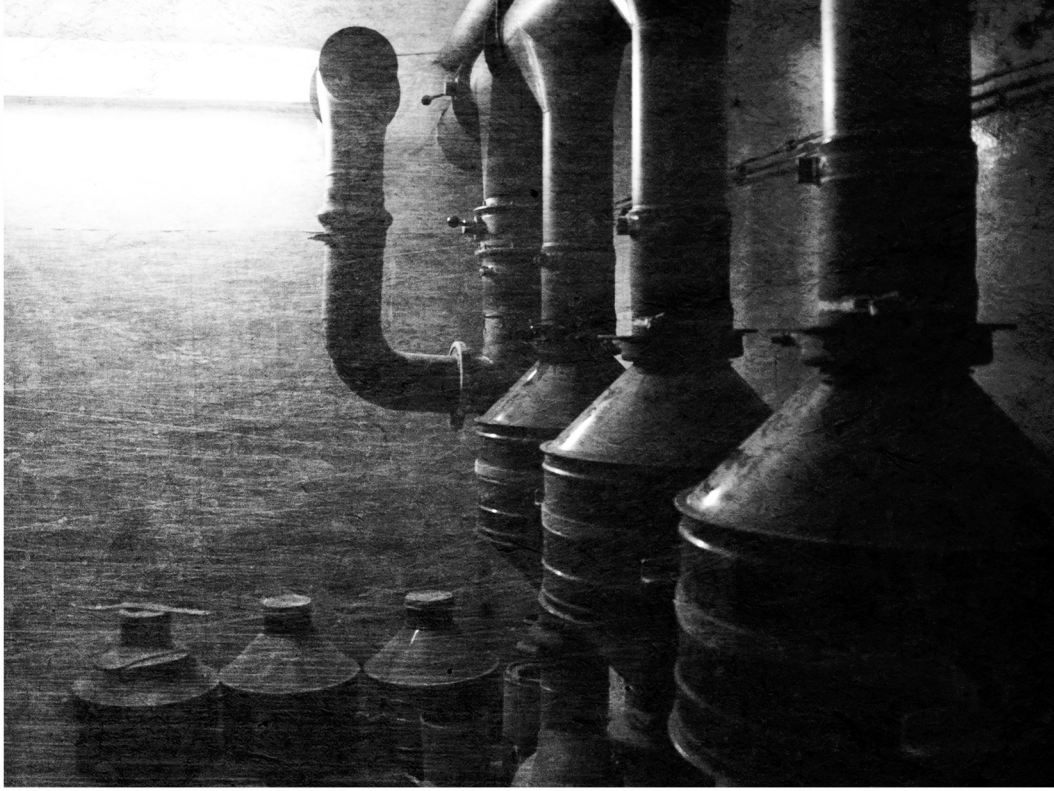

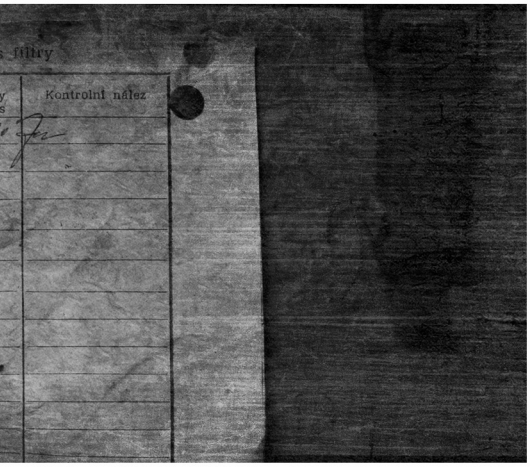
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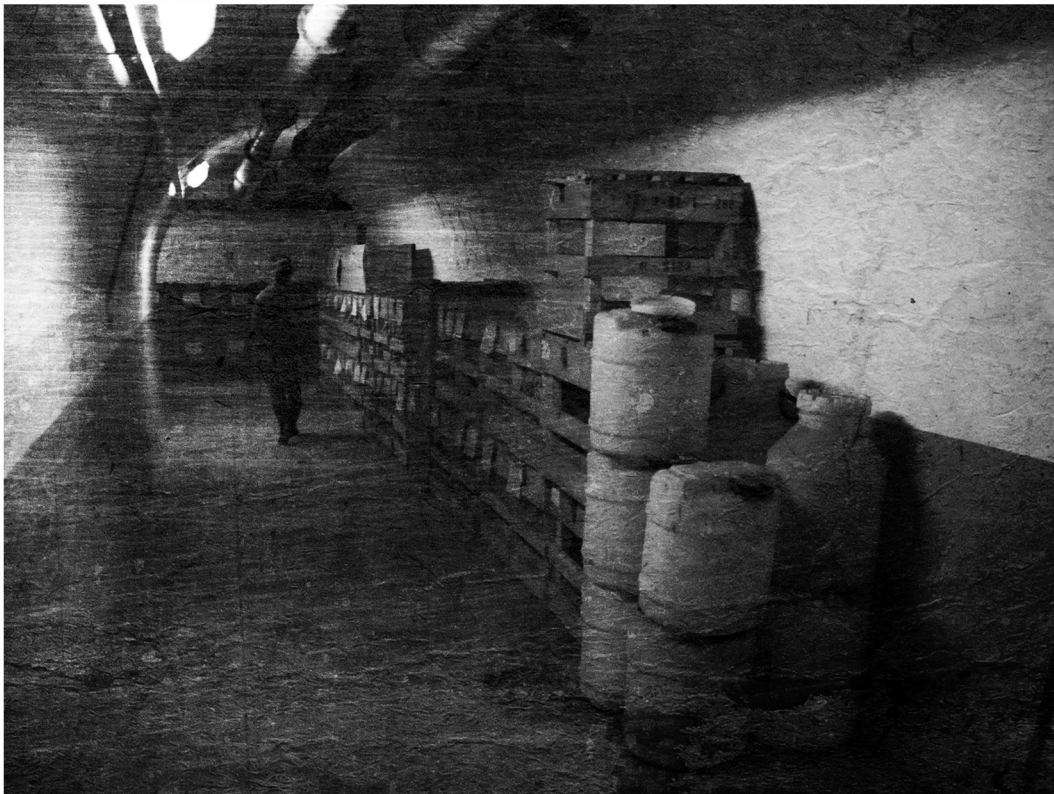


KEN NASH

ROBE BLINDNESS

People who imagine seeing the King's Royal Pudendum were once thought heretics, apostates and vulgarians. Their profane assertions were deemed provocations against the Monarchy. Their sentences were harsh. Beheading was not uncommon. Up to 200 recreants were said to befall such fate. Subversives within the Royal Court, if not thusly executed, were given a lengthy prison sentences, confined within dank catacomb chambers far beneath the Royal Compound. All were cruelly maimed and tortured until recantations were made, to wit full-hearted proclamations affirming His Majesty indeed bore resplendent robes concealing his most sacred Royal Member.

This, to be sure, was in the Pre-Scholastic era, when such incidents of blaspheme were not properly studied and determined as impairments of mind. In a lengthy, medical scroll completed by His Royal Physician, the estimable Roberto "Bob" D'Anglio, a comprehensive assessment was made toward this phenomenon. Copious research, detailed and well documented, ascribed a condition we now know as Robe Blindness, a disorder in which those affected are without ability to behold apparel and vestments adorning His Majesty, the Crowned Head.

D'Anglio chronicles one such case in particular, Patient X, who despite imprisonment, starvation and unspeakable torment refused remittal of such witness to His Majesty's Royal Nethers. The occurrence of said envisioning befell amidst a crowd of celebrants whilst the annual Corpus Christi processional made passage through the village of Rosenfallen. Statements ascertained from neighbors and kinsmen alike, however, strongly dispute the alleged sighting of improper Imperial Display.

One bystander quoth, "No true and loyal subject to His Royal Majesty, our Great and Noble King, would dare eye anything but the finest, most regal garments one ever bare witness upon such a gracious and Kind Ruler as He."

Indeed, the very mother of Patient X proffered, "Only a vile imp in possession of ones soul would give cause to spake such shameful untruths."

D'Anglio's painstaking research includes a reenactment of the aforementioned village processional as described by court records, in addition to rigorous query of many an attendee. A Royal Edict of some years standing gives expressed forbiddance no individual, be He thespian or not, may impersonate His Majesty. Thus, His Majesty's estimable corporal entity was given substitution by a skillful *fac simile* constructed in a most choice portion of refescent oak and given faithful, artisanal semblance by a local wood bodgers and schrimpschongers.

The proxy King was placed upon an open air carriage of similar make to the very one employed to usher Our Great Ruler during holiday processionals. Villagers were called to bade witness. And D'Anglio's own daughter, Lizbet, was prevailed upon to portray Patient X in the reenactment.

What astonished all from this study was not proclamations by Lizbet D'Anglio of having peered directly at the ligneous loins of the proxy King (moments prior to her nervous collapse), but *not one* further witness suffered this same vantage. All ancillary participants swore in Our Savior's Holy Name to seeing none but the finest and most regal garments adorning the ersatz Royal Head, despite there being not one stitch of actual cloth born upon the royal replica (as documented by the esteemed physician, and verified by impartial third-party testimony).

D'Anglio concludes: *To envision royal anatomy is not a willful act of impiety on part of the accused. Whilst most men are born with a natural and indelible will to envision royal vestments at all moments, some men (and women too, We dare add) of aberrant faculty can fix not upon such resplendent visions – be they imagined or otherwise – and instead suffer damnable and execrable fallacies of sight.*

D'Anglio's findings led to a frothsome uproar within the Royal Palace. His suggestion all Royal vestry be "toned town," employing a simplification of cut, pattern and materials, was deemed untenable by most all.

"One must not ask to unravel age old tradition. I stand firmly in opposition to such degradation," decried Vollima Saazt, Head Seamstress of His Majesty's Royal Court.

Some voiced heretical concern, noting many royal frocks bore the anointment of Holy Water, blest by Ecclesiastic Rite and sanctified by the lips of some three and thirty Saintly Fathers. "Dispensation of such finery wouldst be tantamount to blasphemy, would it not?" queried Bohumil Kudrna, Confessor to the King.

A humane solution need be devised in which Our King could continue to appear in public fearing no arousal of perfidy in the populace. To wit D'Anglio held an answer…

Employing the then current science of Inner-Optics (known too as Inner Eye), D'Anglio devised a treatment to assimilate the deviant mind toward proper conclusions. His first step was one of assessment and measure, utilizing a display of Royal vestments upon a wooden effigy of Our Lord Master. Offenders were asked to bare detailed account of their vision. The following excerpt originates from one such transcript in which D'Anglio confronts Patient Ω with the adorned likeness of His Majesty.

PATIENT Ω STANDS. SHACKLED ANKLES. EFFIGY PLACED IN LINE OF VISION, CENTER ARCH. PATIENT Ω VISIBLY INNERVED. EYES DOWNCAST. PERSPIRATION UPON BROW. SHAKY PALMS PRODUCE AN AUDIBLE RATTLE OF CHAINS.

D'ANGLIO: Will thy, Young Lady, pray tell what thine eyes see before thee?

PATIENT Ω GLANCES BRIEFLY UPON FIGURE. LOWERS EYES. TREMBLES. DOST NOT SPEAK.

D'ANGLIO: I must employ thee to engage with mine inquest, Dear Lady, in consideration of thine own benefit and the just good of Our Kingdom.

PATIENT Ω PEERS BRIEFLY UPON EFFIGY. LOOKS DOWN AT OWN FEET.

PATIENT Ω: I…I…please, must I, My Lord?

D'ANGLIO: Dear Lady, I seek only to assist – pray facilitate! – removal of thy personage from such horrid chambers below so My Lady may forthly resume thy

just role within thy family bosom.

PATIENT Ω RAISES HEAD. EYES WATER. AGAIN LOOKS UPON EFFIGY. SPEAKS WITH PAUSE AND GREAT DIFFICULTY.

PATIENT Ω: I…Oh God! Yes. I see. Our Mighty Sovereign in all his splendid finery! Yes! Yes!

PATIENT Ω SOBS COPIOUS TEARS

D'ANGLIO: Pray, for the record, will thou detail what thine eyes apprehend?

PATIENT Ω: Ah…so I see…

D'ANGLIO: Pray go on. Speak truly.

PATIENT Ω: I see great beauty…ah…cloth…such fine cloth as befits His Majesty.

D'ANGLIO: And of which colours?

PATIENT Ω: Colour? Colour, you say? Ah…I see green. No. No. No, I see – yes, I see red? Red? No? Sorry, of course. Gold. I see gold! Yes surely, gold! Yes?

END OF EXCERPT

Several such interviews with offenders to the Crown revealed a consistent attempt to describe regalia their eyes bore no ability of which to truthfully speak.

'Twere possible to replace defected eyes with ones of unfettered ability, D'Anglio may have had an easier solution. However, since no such transplantation had yet been of success, D'Anglio opted for a different course.

D'Anglio held hope to condition such eyes using newfound theories then referred to as Inner Eye. The Inner Eye, as writ, could be inveigled upon to reproduce visions not currently *in situ.* This being achieved through various measures inclusive of which is Response Conditioning, a procedure in which patients are presented with alternating images and selective stimulus of corresponding pleasure or discomfiture.

The Scroll suffers at this point serious damage of age, wear and a yet undetermined stainage. A rather large section is rendered illegible. However, there remains a visual depiction of the device D'Anglio constructed and employed in experimentation, now referred to as The D'Anglio Box. Two drawings illustrate what appears to be a wooden crate with mirror door, tethered by twine to facilitate quick open and closure. Fig. A. depicts a shut crate with mirror door. A reflection of Kingly apparel, as born by the effigy, is clearly visible within the mirror glass. Fig. B. reveals the open crate with a small striped kitten inside. No existing caption gives reason for such a creature to appear or how precisely The D'Anglio Box was employed. The scroll does, however, state three out of every four participants were successfully remedied. When henceforth presented robed effigies of Our Majesty, they saw not unseemly anatomical members but spoke gayly of apprehending an adorable whiskered feline mouser.

These largely positive results did, however, displease certain Clergy, Members of the Royal Court and other Nobility. Johanes Willie, Bishop of Cromstrük, successfully did argue such research techniques employed by D'Anglio were heretical in themselves, leading to D'Anglio's own imprisonment within the castle's lower confines. Though in chains, D'Anglio occupied his remaining years in writing, producing what would become a most popular Romantic Trilogy of verse sung in every town and village to this very day.

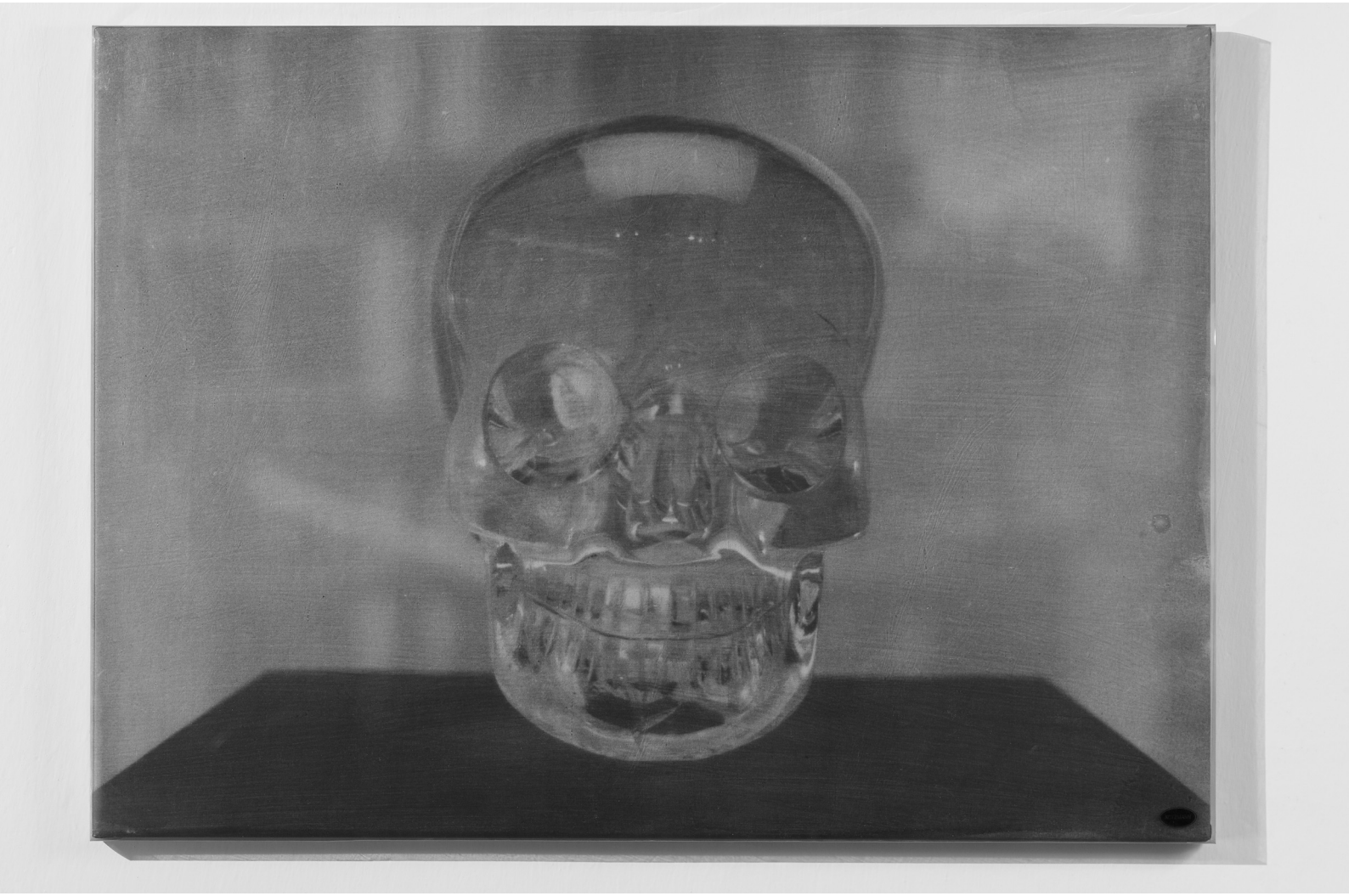
Despite D'Anglio's imprisonment, his research did, in eventuality, lead to a reformation of opinion amongst Many Royals toward the ocularly impaired (specifically, those afflicted by Robe Blindness). Through Royal Decree, all interned of such cause were summarily freed following a quick procedure of ocular extraction. Thus restored to society, each were gifted special Seeing Rods, bestowing ability to walk and balance with no need of sight. All suffered no further concern of disloyal surveyance or false witness ever after.

Medical Scholarship hath made great progress since its early years. No more are the afflicted criminalized for blameless disabilities or made blind for false beliefs. Current advances in the treatment of Robe Blindness include medicinal elixirs, therapeutic guidance, exorcism and legal council. We are encouraged by their decline in number. Current estimation places a mere .1% of the populace at risk of Robe Blindness. This number continues to fall as new and innovative treatments are made known. A few years hence, physicians, priests and oracles believe a science shall come to fashion sight for both the seeing and the blind alike. This new method shall employ Image-Transmitting Light and bestow the beneficiary with powers to bare Truths hitherto non-visible. Thus enabling conditions, be they Robe Blindness or otherwise, to be overwritten by truer and, indeed, more ennobling sight.

ALENA KOTZMANNOVÁ

TEMPORARY PERSON

"Berlin," 1997, from the "Temporary Person" series, black-and-white photograph on canvas in plastic overlay



from the series “Display,” 1997, black-and-white photograph on canvas in plastic overlay

"Ground Floor," 2002, video from black-and-white photographs

"Ground Floor," 2002, video from black-and-white photographs

"Somewhere Here I/II," 1998, from the "Temporary Person" series, black-and-white photograph on canvas in plastic overlay

"The Setting of the Moon," 1998, from the "Temporary Person" series, black-and-white photograph on canvas in plastic overlay

VINCENT FARNSWORTH

I PISSED INTO THE SINK IN THE MEN'S ROOM OF DE ANZA COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN 1982 & WAS NOT CELEBRATED AS A HERO LIKE I EXPECTED

a cup of mud from the flood
insert the moral of the story

my inner life sucks until
I compare it to theirs

stop reading and check your email

I used to believe in souls
you all personally changed my mind

the beheadings fail to satisfy
I am so misunderstood and unappreciated

children and flowers
temporary then uglify

failure to die young incurred significant penalties
a layaway plan of diminishing returns

for years I read a lot
people seemed no better

stop and check your facebook

I apologize for wishing happiness on you
that was trite and sucky

I was not the one who was calling you
and hanging up the phone

did call an old friend from the airport
she said "are you stalking me?"

stop and check twitter

stabbing Caesar in black and white
the assassination of the dalai lama

after cinema ate literature
this is what it shit

inner life not as good
as well-written prose

a cup of blood from the flood
insert the moral of the story

LUCIE SKŘIVÁNKOVÁ

SKY UNDER LONDON

RICHARD MAKIN
MOURNING

I can't remember. We're just below the hospitality hoax at the riverend. By then I was sold: low ebb of gravity hence had already the vision. The things that hatched out of the eggs resembled lizards.

Valley of Bells. Behaviour. Cognition. A vitrine of night-moths. Requiem. Glossy plate on primary lung. First lesion: splinters of quartz, feldspar, slate in a hard matrix, partly translated, partly adopted. Every word lacks consequence. There's an inexplicable clouding of the clarity, followed by a long period of quietude.

'You do not answer me… Just look at me… Is there anything about myself to frighten you?'

All sorts of intuitions and intimations reside here. I cannot recall a single detail. There are characters, then the dilemma forms its own solution. I'm wearied of fear, the irresolute. I cannot wake, rise up. I shall resort. I shall resort to the only course possible.

She resorted to self-slaughter (not what you're thinking). It's always there as crackling undercurrent, a numbness, the impulse near-silent and growing incrementally each day, until it congeals to murmur: slay thyself, be done with this being of being.

I've been crowned, convulsed. I crowned myself. I'm sovereign, your comeuppance. I hear voice – I upstart, follow through. The other slumbers beside me on the beach.

It was a warm night in July. Picture me. There was a depression over the Atlantic. I once was named, now I go about the earth uncalled for; I'm one of the thirty-six. No one seems to care or notice. I'm the past dug up and lost again, forbidden archaeology. (I bet you sat watching, doing nothing.) I face front. I face backward. Whoever must know, let them.

It was a sense of grey I desired – the neutral – as if all spark of animus had bleached from the world, leaving it fallow, at peace. She pronounced the word to rhyme.

Adjective alone, originally in dramatic direction – of poster, death notice, in memoriam. It is but a small step. (We're a bit tense down here, what with your detonator.) I had not bathed and wore the same clothes. And whose atoms were oriented in parallel planes? Consider the arrangement of vowels and consonants that compose *any* random sequence.

Corrosive along body quick with saltpetre.

ESP to an excessive degree, of far-fetched etymologies. It will not end, it will not kick off: fetish, totem, acephalic

god – to walk in the footsteps, far into the forest. (I argue it was always farce.) He dare not dream of identifying himself, quite the contrary: that word may well not exist. Nine point eight metres per second per second is the official velocity. He plummets to earth.

What does mean Icarus she asks. Did you see me when I passed the house he replies. (Yes.) Rang to say we are booking, shall post deposits to unthank. Our natives did not see the galleon – for them it could not exist. A community is imminent. Conversely, you could hear these flames rising up, the window.

I began my philosophical career under the influence. I am contemporary of the other, though younger. A remarkable priority of seeing has been observed – the image shown depicts an unknown man rising up from the depths of the sea. He found rootstock and placed a jewelled box within its limbs. It's remarkably dramatic – it may always fail, fall flat.

Twister at horizon under haemorrhage. Have you collected here everyone who had anything to do with the body? These are his interludes, scratched out in code – chinagraph sigils that crosscut the skin, an uncharted career: strange meeting of razor and torso, part-time carnage. Speech arrest the therapist said.

She adds you fear separation, schism. It was like a great rift across my sphere of vision; this situation is becoming less and less favourable. I am pursuing such proclivities. Today's instruction is 'to turn or rise in disgust, with or without loathing'.

Unfallow. A sack of salt sea birds. The day's work is never quite over – wings are plucked by the light of a tilly lamp, well past midnight. We should grant one of these men a great favour.

Boats on the ocean: physiological need balanced by psychological rupture – from a little room, held out by a pier, leaving all conditions blind. Nausea has returned, every vein, every syllable, each and every molecule. I floated along, dazed by the luminous mist: a howl somewhere an animal.

Impossibility of communication – to bring one's partner across a dangerous situation, i.e. a creeper bridge. The former had moved back and awaited instructions (risk of greenstick fracture, dissolving hull integrity). If I lift *anything* the radius will snap he says. We are at choke. It's his integument, really.

Neutrons. The drifting continents: breathless drug, altered states, a crossing and a recrossing, hence a loss. You create interventions; I *am* the intervention.

Siphonage, the lock-keeper's tale (no connection with his misinterpretation).

Memories are making a comeback. I was analyzing images of the central gland when it happened; there were no casualties – back-to-back ashes as they embrace, sea covered with a powder-green bloom. I drift on the current and cannot respond: the sudden shock of an electric ray.

He thought I was someone else. He thought I was somewhere else. Without realizing it, we were learning the observances that would mark out our days for the rest of our lives.

Other insignificance: chronicles of wasted time, lost seasons. (You were lucky you didn't lose your finger.) He could no longer sign. Totals have been approximated, suture granted; cautionary intervention occurs hourly – grab a notebook.

I cancelled the morning. I cancelled the hour. There is evidence of damaged magic, precious ulcers – the first book of image, the eidolon: anti-nature. A man recurs, internally.

I can't use that word. Of course, the rose, in antiquity, it belonged. That harbour stunk of sea-wrack. Says he, I build my death as I go along, day by day; I've been traversed. Before making the decision to seduce the astrologer, I…

A backward glance. She checks his pulse, the sick one, then covers him with hay, squatting beside. Ignition was feminine, spasmatic. There was literally nothing to write about.

I just found this abandoned chair in a dusty car park, its cushion propped a few feet from the body. Scrolling down it were Egyptian hieroglyphs, which of course I can no longer read. This encounter reminds me of that time on the train: hallucination, second spouse, the silence. See what it says (same pills) . . . the dead of

the book, the deceased holding a staff in his left hand. This chapter has no vignette.

They behave like bright blues then merge into shades of black, clusters of bruised air. I felt so sorry. (It's not about belief.) The low tide made rivulets of quicksilver. Stars shot across: Perseids.

There were mirrors everywhere – I hadn't realized I existed to such a degree, a fortuitous concourse of atoms: I was too much body in that room, and besides, a life was once taken here.

Alien, that suppurating finger, blood aerosol dappled across the bathroom tiles.

Once hatched they promptly chewed their way through every volume of the dictionary.

Turning full circle: my prick crammed inside her, until it had nowhere else to go. I believe a part of me thrives on it, sheer havoc deferring time (chaos is a dying art, it needs reviving). The other big cinema hit of the year was suburban hooligan losers, the lady with the woad-stained hands.

Deep scratches cover my chest and scalp. Time not spent in solitude is wasted. Fate has to be an admixture.

Brief notes on how to convert oneself to a visionary state.

Step one: stop eating. Waste of time. I am reclaiming, back from the past in the midst of fresh ruins. (Pause and movement three.) He let them have the first storey of the house to themselves, on one condition.

The cast could not be seen, would not be identified. The door of the apartment opens and he hurries in. O to press your hand, as upon wax et cetera.

And an unpredictability: from the south, the red tiger-headed one, claws crossed frontward, glittering, baring its fangs and gazing out to sea with groundling eyes. This relates to extent (quantity) and severity (degree). I encompass the need for your discontinuance.

Vectors have been drawn from each abduction site, I could see figures moving in, shadows. She carries a tray upon which numerous fungi and eyes have been artfully arranged.

'Take this,' she offers, 'who tastes of sperm when so kindled.'

Each guest held an invasion card which, measuring eight inches by five, had been too large to rest in their pockets. This clearly describes the degree to which things fluctuate.

She positions the millionth sphere at the dead centre of his brain. Then suddenly the portal shut.

Seeing belongs properly to the eyes. Severe level of need is behaviour. Severe level of need is aporia, a professed doubt of what to say or to choose – a sudden breaking off in the midst of a sentence (e.g. if we should fail, from off, and silence). Have you ever read thus, she asks.

How can one know? Has everyone been tried, every man and woman in every possible future? What is the house that you will build for me? Or, where is the place of my rest?

'This is why I cannot let you pass,' the doorkeep said.

'So one is expected to remain constant as long as that,' I replied.

Then she remembers, the image of a winged man plunging into the sea, ploughman at harrow in the foreground. An advocate helps her perform the breach (I refer you to inventory 617). Now test the first shortfall: you did not recognize the reed gatherers and so on.

Whisper not they died, but that they probably died.

A level of intensity rises from the deterioration – ground mental, his aggressive et cetera. One split his neighbour's skull with a claw hammer, another has a moderate level in skin. I have a moderate level in drug, the residue (viz submarine manned by aliens made of white ash). Mental health is impacting on the last of our domains; inside, there is a hearing-voices network. There is evidence. Is this writing?

Timely interventions are required (lithium, which is used). And whose salts, exactly? An alkaloid is obtained from animal bone and coal-tar products. A bell was recovered from the frigate and rung before certain impotent announcements; the sky rolled up like a scroll. Objects and events were entering me from all directions at once. A steel door slams shut in the wind.

Contraction from vinca and leucoblast. (What.)

Anterior trunk of tenth cranial.

Vaginal atrophy.

Pulp of hashish adhered to lower molar, left.

Origin is a kind of fatality.

These items frequently communicate with branches of a neighbouring nerve: the great tooth bleed, see.

There is this protracted note, heard of several tongues, that rising howl. He glimpses in the darkness a radiance.

And when the artificial neurons fire, it takes those fragments, it retriggers them.

Reproduction technology (which is an ore of zinc). We shall distinguish them by the name of their illustrious inventor: the damned are calling out the differentials, a deliberately misleading and upbeat opening. One bone is supposed by writers to be indestructible.

He slid three fingers into her anus, then the tongue – ecstatic melancholy, paralysis. Note unease of connective tissue.

A yellow powder composed of glands from hop, the sedative, often afflicting the nose. Strictly, a constellation in the southern hemisphere. (See his essay, untitled.) During the night there was another cloudburst; it's day one, an untitled sheet. He was conqueror. (Check this.) He and I, together we searched for mother's pineal. Quick! Give me the code he barks. I was made of thorns.

We are crystallizing an Armageddon, the colour of true ruby. I want to return to panegyric, eulogy. I improvised, hapless before those assembled; I'm a quotation attributed to an ancient author. Everyone has forgot the name (I don't care what things do, only what they're called, and why). Culled from a typewriter, she wears a letter M on her leech finger – a nerve runs through it, straight to the spleen.

It was like the membrane in which cowers the head at birth. But there's hope, a collapsing erotic threshold; the greater part of the soul dwells outside the body. Sedition descends from time to time.

I'm a member of the rare-earth group, named in honour of he-who-first-quartered. One must not be too discriminating; I bet I've missed things. The homunculus known as pissing manikin is an allusion (the sun-god or hero who submits). But I take the hint. There is evidence of time, and probability.

'I see,' he says.

'We're year-round,' the young man argues.

What people really love is that they hear their own sound being scored, within these already familiar patterns.

Then the old woman interjects.

'I am Mars-K, no less. And this is my evil daughter.'

We have come to a place where a single stone beckons with luminous, occult power. All we're left with is matter, the mistiming of things.

No text, the chapter of coming forth. I once had no beginning; we are stymied enough by language. (What should I retain, the world or myself?) The projectile is named from the feathers of an extinct.

The region has been declared semi-autonomous, a historical relationship is being shaken up and a man has been resurrected – his cells were found mute yet immortal, rotting on the seabed. She finds herself unable to hold him back any longer. In their sleep she dreams (anything to defer the client). Self-loathing gets you everywhere.

I was looking for a new translation. The words being recounted by the analysand contain elements which deny any narrative consistency. She stood on the dais and said I have no idea. She says I came. I went. I reclaimed. I came back again. Hold the page open just a little longer: they are not living, they are doing things, one after the other. They have gods. They don't like the outcome so they're threatening suicide; it's classic. I can no longer see. There were events, I could smell the residue: a steaming mound of paper pulp at the dead centre of the study floor.

One falls asleep on the bare earth, back pressed against a tree, limbs crammed above a wedge of mud, apple resting in palm, sex erect. I too have read. I too have forgotten. This is our stranger – the siren, a festival of mourning – and still wandering, fearful how to live. However fast you ride, you will always find that we arrive first: you cannot beat the tide in these parts. Then there was this noise just below the summit. Questions came.

Can all you need to know ever be enough for me?

What is that thing quivering before mine eyes?

That is a mountain of salt beneath a tarpaulin, ballast by slabs of granite. I would like to have seen her

address the criticism: don't blame me for your failure of will et cetera.

Rendezvous at the lee-shore. I shall bring wire – look, many-coloured rope lines to guide us back. One of the flying ships actually touched the ground. Having no other diversions, I left.

Make up your own mind, the benefits of slow motion.

He has imbibed the enthusiasm. On a planet ruled by the living dead, whose efficacy did he accept unconditionally? He must have travelled thirty yards on his knees.

Into the corridor she flung the following list: rose quartz and a tin badge, a blow up postcard, a tiny yellow flower, streaks of iron oxide, a white feather, a black feather, a scrap of the east, a ring of magnetism, collapsed.

An interesting choice, given the lateness of the hour. It's spilling out and she cannot recognize.

See, individual thoughts were worked out in a new way. There's some sort of story associated with the third movement; the music is trying hard to speak intelligibly of events outside itself.

She must know: we can't do anything for one another, neither of us with a working memory. I am repairing the novel; one day you'll betray me. I am trying to bring to recognition, I am standing beside myself. The dialectic found within is a motivating conception. I am possible.

She scores a high level of foreboding. Something ineluctable is approaching.

Of uncertainty, on a field, sable. And one could say that she *already knows* what such-and-such is called. It was nightfall when we parted. The angle between the plane of a fault was measured – some of those found belong to levels of the ocean deeper than six thousand metres.

That's all, and it scarcely qualifies as an event. She wears a tiny crown on her ring finger, glowing inextinguishably.

The thumb we give to Venus.

The index we give to Jupiter.

The mid we give to Saturn.

The leech we give to Sol.

The oracular we give to Mercury.

It is not. It is a change of circumstances, a missed opportunity.

( )

We stopped at a little wayside café-bar. There was sunlight, hard shadow. Later, cicalas clicked in the darkness and the damp heat; it was screamingly funny, in its own way. One must not be too disarming.

Been awake a short while, coming round, moth requiem on the wireless. He always chooses the extinct.

Through a small window with a gable, projecting from the sloping roof of a garret – on the shakedown, incisions all over the body in question. (This is an exemplary neutral or no-signal state.) Without, a felled statue, broad vista bisected by a tortuous river, occurrence falling in winding veins and masses.

Scryne is a box or chest in which written records are kept, a shrine. The official carried with him everywhere a bowl of offal. You were there, guiding me blindfold through a dark maze; unpeopled, we got lost.

They want to hang on. Sulphur is the soul of all living things. We used to get forty days a year.

Not without mercy, but I'm hired to decapitate; I assassin. It's impossible, the throat is adamantine. Forgetting is essential for our survival.

'From whence do I know you? Do you need the bulb on?'

Then she handed me over. Wax had spattered onto the floor beside the bed, congealing to a rink of pristine whiteness. We stand apart. And who is the one who sleeps in clay, in grief?

Folk here have a genius for simulating revoltees. The one who reaches is endorsed by great silence, the blank rhythms of insomnia.

He will ascend, and with a corded ladder fetch her down. This is the moment of an illumination: the sharp folds of a napkin on the starched tablecloth. The native tourist has retreated from our economic horrors.

Coveted substance. (To which stone he is likened?) There's an unstable stack of change about these parts; I

have seen them alighting. They want to hang on – total blockade of the city. There are no longer any checks and balances the voice said, you have to forgo.

I am ungrace. From where do I know you? I emerged without notice, *mistook* myself.

I sit waiting. Nobody appears (tender melancholy as only Mozart knew). Heads are shorn. I have enlarged upon nothing, mister.

The main thing that made her different from me was her grey eyes – calm, brave eyes in which there lived on. Whose name everyone has forgot?

Vivisection gets more menacing as the structure unfolds. And I was carried hence with an hundred or two of coaches, no one along the valley to the town of W, and there buried. As I gazed upward from my grave I saw Cassiopeia directly overhead.

That night he took the mountain path above the coast and slew himself. (I had been mistaken for another.) This figure is paralysed in a rectangle of white light, but such withdrawing does not conjure a futile void –

To gather and to heap up.

A striving after.

Burning sensation by vast body of water, unchecked.

Yes, the mildew of order.

Tang of lubricant and rectal mucus.

Cancer & form.

Presage of hypertension.

(Ignore.) An alarm. He is lying in a different key.

Lack of co-ordination of organs normally acting in harmony.

Uncertain muscle spasm, perhaps secondary to some minor facet.

Glandiform, with delusion.

Acid redux.

Geophagy.

However, no loss of vertebral space or other structural anomaly. On one hip she wore a device that reined in her nerves.

No abnormal gas shadows, exit roots intact. Believe me, I would rather not be here.

I have never backed away from the living force in question. Feed me your pain she says. (Of another, or myself, it's unclear.)

She forewent. There is news, breaking on the sagittal view. Noah was right about the graphic indicators: not too quickly, however, not too slowly.

In desperate times I feared nothing. Here is our microbody, and here our corroded face; a very high signal aspect has been observed.

She's sometimes seen riding a chariot drawn by horses or dragons, sometimes walking. Every separation is a link (viz cell wall). She is yes-filterless.

ZSOLT LÁNG
THE ZSOLT LÁNG COOKBOOK
TRANSLATED FROM THE HUNGARIAN BY **ERIKA MIHÁLYCSA**

A WORD OF ADVICE TO NOVICE SPOONMEN

We can easily recognize the novice spoonman: his wooden spoon will be the biggest. Our first piece of advice is thus, Get yourself a smaller wooden spoon!

Second bit of advice: don't aspire to save the world with your wooden spoon. Keep in mind the saying of dr. Trollope: nobody becomes a diplomat by having diplomat cake for every breakfast.

Third: Don't carry your wooden spoon around like a battle-axe.

And, touching on this, a piece of advice from the chef of La Pollarola: when you are composing a new recipe, you had better avoid eating in restaurants, conversing with colleagues, and reading cookbooks.

Fourth: Stir not your wooden spoon in the pots of others. Should you find yourself in a foreign pot, use an immersion blender.

One more thing: you may often have witnessed how people who are trying to quit smoking absent-mindedly ash the biscuit they munch for appeasing their nicotine craving. Never lend your wooden spoon to someone who made a career with an immersion blender.

Avoid those who make your wooden spoon the butt of their jokes. Likewise, keep off your table all those whose eyes do not light up at the sight of the galoptious treats you cooked up for them.

We warn you beforehand that you will be bitterly disappointed in everyone who stirs the selfsame wooden spoon in different pots. They are not worthy that you should lavish your dishes on them, for they will never learn to see your true value. Their bravoes are mere hypocrisy.

Start with simple, straightforward recipes. Husbandtail soup will go easier than politician soufflée. Do not get entangled in the preparation of „stewed karaoke prophet emeritus". A hesitant cook makes a turbid soup.

Ninth: whether you can feed 5000 people or not does not depend on the qualities of your wooden spoon. And now that we mentioned the people, avoid those who call you master but keep apostrophising you "the son of the people."

Tenth: If you don't feel enough absorbtion and perseverance in your wooden spoon, in order to avoid inevitable disillusionment you had better throw it into the fire rightaway.

POLITICIAN SOUFFLÉ

Take half a dozen clean, unadulterated politicians. To start a recipe like this would have been unimaginable in the last century. It would have caused serious detriment not only to the author (the exact meaning of *rime* being disputed even in those days, it could eventually cover anything) but to everyone from the editors and printers down to the chef. Then, with freedom taking us by storm at the end of 1989, scores of politician recipes flooded the papers, until slowly the whole turmoil died down to simmering seasonal interest; nowadays politician recipes are only published during electoral campaigns. It's an uncomplicated meal, with no gastronomical innuendos as it were.

Take half a dozen well-chosen politicians. Here we encounter the first problem: for who is to decide, and how, if a person qualifies for a genuine politician. According to some, if a man affirms publicly that Pirezia belongs to the Pireze, he can safely be called a politician. Others, following the German model, consider professionalism to be the sine qua non. Some will say that the politician is the servant of the people; some, that he is the serpent of opportunity. Some say only man makes politics; others, that the politician is not a man. Such difference of opinion may easily put us off. Furthermore, judging how long the preparation of the procured politician may take is far from easy. Especially the pugnacious (or in vernacular parlance, mad) politicians are likely to give us trouble, for if they get into our dish without due preliminary curing, they can easily cause diarrhoea or, in more serious cases, violent fits of vomiting. Avoid the politician with the polka-dot hat, and ignore the one whose slogan is, Let us banish tapeworms from political life! Get the ingredients from a trustworthy source if possible, for it will save lots of headache. A cabbage is a cabbage: we scald it, cut out the stem and that's that, but a politician, if not carefully chosen, is liable to wreak ample amounts

of havoc on us, especially the homegrown variety. Let us mention here, however, that even though the German breed is universally recognized as being easy to prepare, it yields little flavour and much dullness to food. (It is no accident that German chefs rarely ever use politicians as raw material, they prefer to prepare their particolored electoral menus from parties. Berlin restaurants go big on partychokes during electoral campaigns; the cheapest dish is the Socialists' frankfurter in tomato sauce, while the most expensive one is the Liberals' cured salmon in yellow sauce. As far as the posters are concerned, they tend to draw attention to the event of the elections in humorous form: Merkel and Schröder, two children in shorts, playing hare-and-hounds.)

Taking the above into consideration, it is preferable to prepare the politicians to be cooked ourselves. Two eggs will do: whisk to a smooth paste. No need to overdo it: the recipe for the mixture is found in all cookbooks. In a frying pan make at least half a dozen pancakes fried on one side only.

Then start on the politicians thus prepared. We can choose between two methods, not forgetting the founding principle of the art of gastronomy: that the knife is the most efficient spice. The first method prescribes cutting up the politician into thin strips of about a finger's width; mix these up with the egg paste. The other method is to lay them whole on one another in a stack and spread the paste between the layers. (However, this variety is not to be confused with the *politician mille crêpe* fried on one side only, which has a distinctive taste.) The ingredients of the mixture are crucial. You can give it a sweet or savoury backbone, bechamel or aspic, depending whether you are preparing a consistent main dish or a light dessert. It is essential to place the mixture, when ready, into a pre-heated oven, otherwise the soufflé will disappointingly collapse when you take it out, even if it was promisingly rising in the oven. Since the recipe is simple, we might even say banal, some try to make it more appealing by using several different breeds. One layer of Hungarian, one of Romanian, on top one of German politicians souffléd together. You can dress it up with whipped cream or onion rings, to taste.

HOFFNUNGBREAD

Franciska Dán made history with her cookbook addressed to the people of state groceries; Márta Hoffnung, on the other hand, bought a bread machine and baked forgetbread, re-baptized *hoffnungbread* by grateful posterity, and whose recipe we are sharing below, provided we do not forget it. Franciska Dán was the proletariat's cook, but Márta Hoffnung is the cook of the new sensibility.

Forgetting is a tunnel through which one may cross the cruellest tempests of life unscathed, in high-spirited merriment so to say. We cross over from one day to the other with not a feather taken out of our chirrupy joviality and stamina. Every day is a gleeful Sunday.

Pick thus plenty of flattening snog-grass found in holes and corners, and sweet mauve cinquefoil, they are indispensable for the hoffnungbread dough.

He who likes waking up to a new day sulking, cross, slapping around or, even worse, wrinkled with self-reproach, should not eat of this bread. But those forever building anew the legendary tumbling castle of Déva should not touch it either, for otherwise they will end up immuring too many wives to make the walls stand.

Before the global spreading of bread machines, there were so-called forgetbread factories working in high gear day and night, baking the food of the masses, of all nutriments the most indispensable. One of their breads was called Glorious Past; the other, Bright Future. There was no other.

Pick thus plenty of – or have I already said this?

Márta Hoffnung's forgetbread has beneficial effects on domestic life, too – not to mention appetite. For, when the husband is about to get out the door, he has already forgotten where he was bound for, the curls of scent turn him round by the nose, he sees the warm, smiling hoffnungbread on the table and cuts himself, or asks the wife to cut him, another slice, eats it with relish, in the meanwhile pinching the cook's bottom who is all the merrier for it, so merry she rubs herself like a cat against her master, while they cut yet another slice that they eat together, smiling all the while. So does the morning go by, with merry turns-of-phrase. So does life go by. We cannot be too grateful for the mass spreading of bread machines. Alexander Roth was right when he said, *Ein Staat muß doch untergehen, wenn seine Machthaber einander befehden*. Which means, it's high time to get out of history's bathtubs and to step into the rivers of forgetting.

DAMIEN OBER
FIRST PITCHES

It's Washington DC in the year Two Thousand and Five and George W. Bush has already thrown out the first pitch to Nationals catcher Brian Schneider. The National Anthem winds down and the crowd is settling for the first real pitch in the District in what seems like a lifetime. A lifetime with no baseball except for all the way over in Baltimore, and who can afford the gas to go to Baltimore these days? All of the people in this stadium sure could; seems like all of Northwest DC is here, crossed over into the badlands they never read about in *The Post* or *The Times*. This is the moment they have been waiting for for so long. But not really. Every human in the stadium is originally from some other city that has its own baseball team winning and loosing and all of it streaming into town on internet. True or not, it's still the story: how long Americans have been waiting for baseball to return to the capitol of the free world.

Someone in the stands is asking, "Did anyone actually see the president throw the ball?"

Heads must be itchy because there's some serious scratching happening. They all watched him go out there. He was using that thing they call in Texas whalking. They watched him take the ball and focus in on Brian Schneider's glove. They watched him wind up, but then, all at once, they looked up at the jumbo vision to get a better view of if it was going to be a ball or a strike. And when they looked back to the actual man on the actual field, he was waving and sinking into the dugout.

Now the jumbo vision has no image, just little lights in the shape of the words: PRESIDENT THROWS A

STRIKE! Uncertainty, as it will, spreads, out from this fuzzy center. And soon they're asking themselves, did I watch him walk out there to the mound even? Did I watch *that* on the jumbo vision too?

A thumb is pointing back up the aisle they all walked down to get to their seats. "They wouldn't have had us wait through an hour of security lines if the president wasn't really here."

Two separate hands hold up two separate blackberries, each open to a webpage separated from the other. And the picture on both shows the president mid follow-through. And in the crowd behind him, they can see themselves, all their faces, all looking at the Jumbo vision as the president lets go of the ball. Above both pictures the word STRIKE. "Well, it must be true then."

Now, on the jumbo vision, celebrities are being shown trying to enjoy the game in the privacy of their luxury box seats. James Carville's shiny bald head is filling it up; it gets the exact same spattering of boos and cheers that Carl Rove's jowl got a few minutes earlier. That's how you remember these guys, they all got something. Then there's a mascot foot race where people in the stands are supposed to root for a man in an oversized president costume. They've got four oversized president costumes: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and two other guys. What you're supposed to do is root loudest for the one you believe is the best president in the history of the United States of America.

* * *

A stand-up comedian is remarking how Democrat and Republican voters have become eerily similar to drunken Boston Red Sox fans. Mixing baseball and politics is hot in the District right now because the Expos have just switched their name to the Nationals and decided they'll go ahead and play exactly half of next year's games in Robert Francis Kennedy stadium. In DC, no one knows anything about their new team, so in order to link a baseball joke to the always-popular political joke, you need to incorporate the Orioles and their AL East rivals while people inside the beltway still know who and what any of that is exactly? Three months from now, this same joke will have to be about a drunken Mets or Phillies fan, depending on the standings. District improv is going through some changes.

On stage, the comedian is talking about how, to get a break from election fever in the capital of the free world, he took his nine year old son all the way to Boston so they could see a game in Fenway Park. It is the year 2004. George W. Bush is facing off against the husband of a ketchup factory.

It's in comedy clubs like this where Donna and Silvia meet for drinks once a week while both their husbands stay at home. Dance clubs are too busy. Most bars in Washington make up for the lack of human energy by turning the music up way too loud. Restaurants absolutely despise you when you sit there dinking slowly all night while other customers could be swilling bottled wine and lamb special in your same seats. So it's comedy clubs, where they can sit in the back corner and chat low.

"I don't want to know if I'm a new person when all my cells have been replaced, I want to know how the cells know to be what they end up being, just like the ones they replace and then—"

Donna makes a motion with her hand that a guy down the end of the bar interprets as, yes it's ok if you come over to talk to us.

"You know a human's DNA, if stretched out, would go all the way to the Sun. That's a lot of instructions for a cell."

On stage, the comedian is a little deeper into his story, about how, to get a break from election fever in the capital of the free world, he took his nine year son all the way to Boston so they could see a game in Fenway Park.

Silvia smiles at the men, lets Donna know with a look that they're looking. Then she refocuses.

"Maybe it's like some genetic game of telephone – one telling the next, the next always a copy of the one before, but slightly different. Mutating out our age in our skin and organs, rotting from the message getting passed mouth to ear to mouth to ear."

Silvia smiles at this idea, "'See you at six' becomes 'sucking the sex.'"

"By the time it gets to the Sun who knows." Donna finishes her drink, starts digging for the olive. The olive now being crushed in her teeth for all to see.

From stage they hear it, "The O's loose, my nine year old son and I are strolling down the street outside on Yhawl key Way, and up runs this drunk guy in a cowboy hat with Nixon written on his shirt. He comes up real close and I can smell his breath and it's terrible and he's lost to some other fever dream and he screams as loud as he can," and now the comedian leans in toward the microphone lets his eyes go all glassy. "Go back to fahkin' Baltamoah!"

* * *

George Herbert Walker Bush tells the secret service guy to turn off the TV. But then he stops him and so together, they watch sitting President William Jefferson Clinton throw a perfect strike to Oriole's catcher Chris Hoiles. The TV is saying that Clinton has just become the first sitting president to throw the ball from the pitcher's mound and have it reach the catcher. "Wasn't that the same catcher you threw to, sir?"

"I played third at Yale, you know. Look at that bubba hillbilly dukes of hazard mother fucker." The elder Bush, son of Prescott, saves the swears for the real deservers. Every so often, the secret service guy will hear the old man break them out. He was in the army after all, or the air force or something. I'm sure they know how to cuss fine at Yale.

What is unknown to Bush and the secret service guy is that President Clinton and Chris Hoiles worked on pitching technique for an hour in the bullpen. That pitch right there was something like Clinton's fiftieth throw.

The secret service guy and Bush are friends. He likes to tease his boss. "Didn't yours go into the dirt, sir?"

"I had on a bullet proof vest, for Crimson sake. I played damned third at Yale. Uncle Jesse here clearly believes shoulder mobility is more important than Al Gore becoming president."

"He's got a vest on."

"That's just his fritters, Dave. Man eats a lot of fritters. He'll walk into a room where there's fritters and he'll just destroy them. Kids lose fingers in these sorts of things." The secret service guy is really laughing now. Despite being a big D Democrat, he really does like ex-president George Herbert Walker Bush. And he likes keeping him safe. It's not a bad assignment, as far as the secret service goes. Sure, you want the current president. Everyone does. "Gosh, I guess I just forgot how hard it is." The old Yale third baseman rolls his wrist like he's back there on the mound letting the ball come rolling off his pointer finger toward Chris Hoiles crouched sixty feet, six inches away. "I should have thrown a palm ball. But, no. Had to throw a curve." He turns to the secret service guy, lets that old string bean whip. "I was Vice President then." The secret service guy pretends to catch the imaginary ball. They're both smiling now. "Never would have broken early if not for the vest."

"FDR threw out 9 first pitches, sir. And he had no legs."

"Ha! Still kicked Hitler's ass."

* * *

Paul Wolfowitz and Don Rumsfeld sit eating wraps. Someone passes and says, "Look, honey, it's Paul Wolfowitz and Don Rumsfeld eating wraps." And they both hold up their wraps for a picture the tourists take.

Don puts his wrap down gently so none of its insides will fall out. "I think we should get doubles," he says.

Paul is looking in at the spiraled layers of his wrap. Spiraling and spiraling and spiraling in on itself. "Doubles?"

"To be the public versions of us." He picks his wrap back up and has a bite. Puts it down. Paul still has not responded so Don says, "GDB and The Dick will have one too."

"George, ok, The Dick maybe someone will kill out of spite, or to prove his mortality, or… but who's going to assassinate *us*?"

"No, to sign autographs, give speeches and deal with controversies. Post for pictures with tourists holding out wraps. While *we* sit in a room and think."

"Sit in a room and think?"

"About what to do about China. And other things. Policy, or whatever we want."

"Now that, my friend, is crazy, even for the public version of you." The sound of a ringing phone is coming out of the inside of Paul's jacket. Down with his wrap and out with that little green phone, talks a minute while Don watches him. "Ok," he says. "Yes. He's right here.

Yes. I'll tell him." Paul hangs up and goes back into his wrap. "Heard a joke."

"That? That's what that was?"

"Why did Donald Rumsfeld take Viagra?"

Don's face goes as blank as a slapped face can be blank after getting slapped and the face just can't believe it. "But that's me."

Paul is nodding. "Cuz he thought it would bring his privates back to life." He bites, chews. "Heard it."

They eat a while without talking. Something both of these men are not aware of is that the wrap is a sandwich form invented by sitting Delaware senator Joseph Biden. Paul finishes, starts in on his teeth with a toothpick. Don is suddenly pointing across the table at him with a hot pepper. "Have you ever seen that picture of FDR throwing out that first pitch, like from the front row of the stands?"

"I've seen *a* picture of him doing it."

"Well, there's a real famous one and he's got his arm all the way back?" Don shows him what it would look like only substitute a baseball for a hot pepper and FDR for Donald Rumsfeld.

Paul points the toothpick up at the fluorescents like, *maybe.*

"Well, right behind him, it's obvious, is the *real* FDR."

"The real FDR?"

"Everyone in the picture is either looking at the president, or where he's about to throw the ball. All except for this one guy who's looking right at the camera."

"And he looks like Roosevelt?"

"Not looks like. *Is*."

"When did you see this?"

Don has a bite, chews, swallows. "It was in the paper this morning."

"And you think the other guy, the one actually throwing the pitch, is the body double or something? The public version?"

"Yes. That's exactly what I think."

Paul puts the toothpick onto the pile of wrap debris. Wraps don't stay together too good sometimes. "To keep a Nazi assassin from killing the president? Even if he thought he was killing the president? Surprise, you killed the body double? OK."

Don is smiling, nodding, smiling.

"Too bad Lincoln didn't have one."

"Careful, what you wish for, Paul," and Don turns his hands toward Paul to reveal no wrap left; it's been devoured. His movements are quick and squirrelly. He slaps his hands together like he's dusting them off, continues, "You change one thing and who knows, maybe we're not here just finished with the wraps we just finished. Maybe somehow a full second term for Lincoln makes it so neither of us are ever born." He stands, looking over at the bathroom door, hand holding where his belt connects back up with itself. "Kaka," he says.

"Man," Paul says. "Those wraps just don't agree with your stomach, huh?"

"Shaking off the fastball, that's for sure."

"The old number 2?"

Don nods to a photograph of the Lincoln Memorial, framed and hung up on the wall above their table. "Speaking of." All around the room, the other monuments face out from inside other frames. "Time to go make some Lincoln logs."

"Get on the monument and set the little brown ones free."

* * *

Two brothers from Sandwich, Mass sit in section E at Fenway Park to watch the ceremony where players from last year's team will be given their championship rings. Right now, the rings and the World Series trophy are being taken across the outfield grass by men and women who've been crippled mentally and physically in other countries while James Taylor plays "America the Beautiful" on an acoustic guitar.

Earlier, everyone in the middle rows of section E formed a consensus opinion that the lady with the portable TV turn down the volume because it was sending out the same sound as the loudspeaker, only a second and a half later. But now both brothers wish she had it on because, one by one, last years players are coming onto the field, and maybe there's commentary on the TV about what each of these guys are up to now and stats about how they played last year and their particular contribution to the Division, League and World Series Championships. But once you make

a public group decision like asking someone to turn down the audio of their portable TV, you can't just turn around and ask her to turn it back up.

Tom – the skinnier and younger of the brothers from Sandwich – is reading the 2005 program and he says out loud, "There's a batting cage under the dug out?" And he thinks about how if David Ortiz strikes out, he'll be able to go down there for an inning or two and watch video of himself striking out, how he'll be able to set the pitching machine to throw the same pitches that he swung at and missed.

On the field, they've moved on from last years players to announcing the coaching staff and support staff and just about every human being even tangentially associated with last years miracle world series championship. Either the Boston Pops are nervous playing with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, vise-versa, or both are trying to show the other up. Because both orchestras are playing their John Williams medley way too fast. When they finish *Theme from Jurassic Park*, the last scheduled song, they're all looking around at each other. The sun splashes off the trumpets and trombones and flutes as the bodies holding them swivel. The conductor is looking around too, cups his hands into a visor at the dugout where there's still some trainers, equipment managers and massage therapist, Russell Nua, yet to be announced. Someone yells out, "1812," and before the conductor can even tap his stand, they're three bars in and ripping along. Then they're at the place where the song ends and still the travel secretary and video scouting coordinator are in the dugout waiting to hear their names and run out waving. This time the conductor handles it perfectly; just as they're coming down on the last note, he shouts "Again!" and they smash right in to the 1812 Overture from a measure before the crescendo. Three times they have to do this before the big finish coincides with Johnny Pesky getting his ring and the crowd knowing that that's the last man and going totally bonkers while the tuba players slug out from under their huge, sun-heated tubas.

"What if Pedro's contract were up *last* year?" One of the brothers asks the other. "What if Nomar had never got hit in the wrist with that pitch? What was that, like five years ago?"

"Maybe he's here getting his ring."

"Just saying lots of things had to go right for us not to blow this one."

"We won it, can't you just shut up finally and enjoy it?"

"Or what if we didn't lose either. How about that? We don't blow it, we just can't close the deal. Like there was never any last out. Everything leading up is exactly the same, but game four never ends. Ball never comes down, highest pop fly ever. How long do we wait around for it to land in a glove or in the stands?"

"All I want to do is stare at the park the way it looks now and you're trying to convince me it didn't happen."

Just then, on the filed, the oldest living Red Sox alum is being helped onto the mound. Over the shoulder of the lady in front of them, the brothers can see the TV broadcast of the ceremony and the man looks like a hundred year old man would look and the speakers are telling the crowd that he played in 1935, so some quick math tells Tom that maybe he *is* a hundred.

"No way that guy can throw anything close to a first pitch," Kyle says. But stars from other sports are there with their rings from other Boston championships. Each of them has a ball and they toss it to an opposite Red Sox champion.

And over the loudspeaker comes the radio voice of the Boston Red Sox. "Now, ladies and gentlemen, two last words to begin this new season."

The old guy who neither of the brothers has ever heard of before leans in to the microphone and says it.

JIM CHAFFEE

SUB-BAND CODING IN THE AETHER

INFORMATION GHOSTS & *DOCTOR FRANKLIN'S DREAM AMERICA* BY DAMIEN LINCOLN OBER

A work of fiction I recently read by a Scottish author who has made it commercially with a film under his belt, sported a blurb to the effect that the writer (of the blurb) had read all the mainstream novels of the last decade looking for innovation and this book was the only one that measured up. My immediate thought was that looking for innovation in the offerings of mainstream publishers of fiction is like searching for emeralds in landscaping gravel. Needless to say, the book in question was no emerald.

Damien Lincoln Ober's *Doctor Franklin's Dream America,* on the other hand, pivots on high innovation: to tell the history of the United States Revolutionary War through the deaths of the signers of the *Declaration of Independence.* However, the novel is based on implausible anachronisms, which is an old technique; for example, Johann Jakob Bodner gave Noah a telescope in his epic poem *Der Noah,* published in 1752. Here, the technology is computers, wireless communication devices, and the internet, long before the birth of James Clerk Maxwell, inventor of the partial differential equations describing the electromagnetic field which played the major role in the development of devices for generating electricity; also before the development of the electrical battery. Aliens play a role in Bodner's poem, just as aliens play a role in the novel. Nor is the device of creatures living within the internet new. Stanislaw Lem published a short story in the *New Yorker* in 1978, *The Experiment,* and though his software-based characters lived (were conscious) within a single computer, the internet is nothing more than a bunch of computers and storage devices linked by a communications network. Two things, devices and communications networks, though there is a superstition among technical illiterates that it somehow transcends this latest extension of the telephone. Perhaps some of this stems from a series of films starring Keanu Reeves (who seems not to have had a decent role since *My Own Private Idaho* (who can remember River Phoenix?) notwithstanding his work as Theodore "Ted" Logan) that pretentiously pretended to be deeply philosophical, instead succeeding only in being tedious, so much so that I have been unable to sit through any of them without being lulled into unconsciousness. Better than Seconal. The hype of cloud computing, another "new" innovation, is remembered by some of us who did work involving computers in the 70s as no more than an upgraded time-sharing operation

There is one other bit of nonsense that the novel shares with contemporary confounding of the facility

with gadgets for technical savvy, and that is the idea that coders (programmers) are somehow a driving force of technology. Those of us who worked in the research and development of high technology programs that implemented something more substantial than social networking sites, stuff like the Global Positioning System (GPS) or range safety or the variations of two-way radios known as cellular phones, know that coders are the ditch diggers of technology. In this novel, however, coders are magicians, sorcerers whose codes are incantations. For example, of the signer Francis Hopkinson who is a super sorcerer in this novel, a status I am not sure he merited with his historical accomplishments, John Hancock's internet presence says (Hancock and Hopkinson are both at this time dead in "the real," as it is called in the novel), "What he knows about the code, what he knows about programming it. Imagine a man back in the real who could bend reality with his mind." Or of Jefferson, as Robert Morris says, "But taking George Washington down out of the Cloud, that's a program not even Thomas Jefferson can code." This is mixed with expressions like "its in the math" or "doing equations" or "doing algorithms" which are shorthand for arithmetic, usually of a grade school level, though sometimes it is hard to fathom what is implied, as when Samuel Adams' "avatar" (a term I believe was used originally in the social networking sense on Orkut) says of its own disintegration, "There's no programming for dying, neither is there any code to prevent it. It's a part of you. It's in the math." All of this in keeping with the belief of most people that technology is a sort of magic.

The novel thereby portrays the basic confusion that Americans have regarding what is mathematics and what is its role in technology. (The same can be said of physics, which most Americans confuse with mathematics and which most Americans seem to believe has as a goal the development of technologies or accomplishment of tasks, confusing physics with engineering, or other sciences with medicine (a mixture of engineering and superstition), no surprise given the use of the oxymoron medical science; not that this is unusual among the educated of other nations, such as the philosopher Bruno Latour who cannot grasp the difference between science and engineering.) Mathematics has nothing to do with the class you might have taken in high school or college where you spent inordinate time learning to use an algorithm dating back to at least the 17th century to solve a quadratic equation, most of that time spent learning how to think sufficiently abstractly to jump the small gap to substituting a symbol for an unknown. Though called college algebra, it has nothing to do with algebra as practiced by mathematicians, nor is it usually taught in colleges and universities known for their mathematics departments.

So forgive me, but before continuing with a discussion of this novel, I need to clarify some distinctions, which I will begin with a bit of personal history. If you've already heard this story, skip the next few paragraphs.

In 1981 I went to work for a subcontractor to IBM at a remote site on Vandenberg Air Force Base who was operating the GPS Master Control System (MCS) which was being tested and debugged in preparation for the final system that IBM Federal Systems Division was developing, having won the contract out from under General Dynamics who had developed the initial R&D system. I was hired because I had the background to grasp the mathematics of the primary algorithm for estimating the state of the system, namely the satellite ephemerides and on-board atomic clock offsets from GPS time together with the offsets of the atomic clocks at the monitoring stations. (My graduate studies in mathematics had included stochastic differential equations in the sense of Wiener and Ito, which is the basis for the continuous-time state, discrete measurement Kalman filter, on which the MCS estimator was based; the interested reader can find an excellent, elementary but rigorous derivation of this algorithm from an engineering linear systems point of view in Peter S. Maybeck, *Stochastic Models, Estimation, and Control, Volume 1,* Academic Press, 1979.) I was the only person on the site who understood the algorithm, but there was a debate about hiring me given that I was a mathematician by training and many believed it was not necessary to have such knowledge or a creature possessing it.

My boss was second in command for the subcontractor and had been involved in the design and coding of the original system on a Xerox 550. He was an electrical engineer by education who understood the program and its implementation on the minicomputer

thoroughly (this was the only place I ever experienced a Xerox computer and an IBM copier) though he did not understand the estimation algorithm. The program was large and complex, with a few hundred thousand lines of FORTRAN code and a few dozen volumes of documentation. The swapping of segments in and out of the minicomputer memory to meet real-time demand was my first experience of such an operating system. The programmers who worked for my boss were expected to modify code as necessary, but not to be familiar with the entire system.

Note that that there were two aspects to this computer program. The first was the algorithm that provided the final output, the vector estimate of the satellite and control station state obtained by processing measurements through the estimator. The second was the actual implementation of that algorithm on a computer. The programmers were grunts who implemented the ideas of others; they not only didn't understand the algorithm, but didn't understand the code and its workings and had to be supervised to make certain that modifications didn't disturb other segments of the program in their swapping in and out of memory. And though I had plenty of experience programming in languages including Fortran, Cobol, APL, assembly language on another minicomputer long since vanished (Four-Phase), I avoided it whenever possible and was not hired as a programmer. It was essential in my work as I had to read the code to isolate and fix errors and make other changes to the algorithm. When I did program, I tested computational algorithms I designed on high level languages like MATLAB or APL and then provided the coders of the final versions with numerically stable implementations, either in pseudocode or in actual code, generally in Fortran or, in later years, C.

This brings up issues that are seldom considered by programmers, such as the effects of finite word length on the performance of algorithms, especially iterative algorithms like the Kalman filter. It makes me want to ask Ober about the effects of finite word length on the incantations of his coders. In numerical applications, they are often devastating. Which is at the heart of this story.

To understand this and the duality of the animism that is at the heart of this novel and also of the belief system of most humans on the planet regarding their "high tech" toys, especially if it involves software and can be called "digital," it is important to understand something of the world view of mathematicians. When a mathematician proves a theorem that is the basis for an algorithm, like the Kalman filter, his numbers are precise. The square root of two and pi, for example, are not approximations but are the actual numbers with all their infinite digits of expansion. Such numbers do not exist in nature, given that all physical expansions are necessarily finite; they clearly do not exist on computers, which have only a finite number of bits for their representation (finite word length). So when an algorithm like the Kalman filter calls for a matrix inversion, that is a problem for implementation on a computer. One must be careful regarding the algorithm used to invert the matrix. Round off and truncation errors can cause serious problems, leading to the wrong answer or worse, failure of the algorithm. People who worry about this sort of thing and derive what are termed numerically stable algorithms for computation are called numerical analysts. It is a concern seldom considered by programmers or engineers. Cramer's rule for computing the inverse of a matrix is a way to prove that inverses exist for nonsingular matrices or perhaps for doing it by hand, but is not a viable algorithm for a computer (nor is the quadratic formula you might have learned in school a viable numerical algorithm).

There came a time at the Phase I GPS Master Control Station that the Xerox was to be replaced by an IBM 3033 (actually two of them, along with a room full of disk drives and a front end minicomputer akin to the Xerox for collecting the data in real-time which the IBM 3033, essentially a business machine, could not do). The Fortran code was ported from the Xerox to the IBM for testing, an end-around to compare results using the same exact initial conditions and other parameters and data. The IBM did not get close to the same answers as the Xerox. The two IBM managers on site wanted to attribute it to the greater accuracy of the IBM, but the Air Force management on site didn't like that answer. And in fact, it wasn't true.

My boss went to the IBM manuals and checked the method by which the IBM computed trigonometric functions. He found that their expansions of sine and cosine used fewer terms than did the Xerox. Because of

that and similar problems with other irrational quantities, the IBM had to run those mathematical routines in double precision to get the same accuracy the Xerox got in single precision. My boss also made the mistake of pointing out that if IBM had used CDC equipment as had been proposed by General Dynamics, these problems would not have occurred. IBM management had him fired and later had his boss fired as well, thereby putting the project at risk (this was the same IBM management who, when asked if IBM was going to build personal computers, given that Bill Gates had just stolen the intellectual property of Gary Kildall and called it DOS in a deal with IBM, said "IBM doesn't build toys; we build real computers," a haunting refrain as those toys almost destroyed IBM, a much less significant company now than it was then. The story of the theft of DOS from Kildall is told by Harold Evans in his book *They Made America,* Little Brown, 2004, which has been independently verified in its story of Gates and Kildall through a libel suit brought against Evans by the "coder" who sold DOS to Microsoft, during which it was definitively demonstrated that Microsoft DOS was lifted almost verbatim from Kildall's CP/M).

Hopefully that little personal memoir will provide some feel for the way "coding" is actually done in developing technology. The process is far more complex than some guy writing a few lines of incantation in some unspecified language. It is clearly more complex than developing some HTML markups. And there is a distinction between system code, which involves the control of the computer operation (the basis of malware, which makes extensive use of so-called self-modifying code, which is misrepresented in the novel), and applications-specific programs such as the GPS state estimator, though as in the example there is a merging of the two when the program runs in real-time, where a standard OS like DOS or Windows or OS/VS must not control the machine. (This is necessary because operating systems like DOS and Windows interrupt time critical operations at random times, which leads to questioning Ober regarding how the people who are kept physically alive with code, or the creatures living within the systems, are affected when the OS interrupts their functions without warning.) With the Xerox code, the OS was designed from scratch to implement the real-time operation, a typical approach. The interaction becomes yet more critical in embedded real-time programs, such as on a fly-by-wire aircraft or a missile.

Ober superimposes onto the period from the Revolutionary War through the end of the original oligarchy of "founding fathers" and one of their progeny (John Quincy Adams) with the election of Andrew Jackson, standard horror motifs and magic in a virtual reality that becomes a form of mind-body dualism manipulated via "coding." Besides aliens ("off-worlders" in flying saucers), the internet as another place (in a quasi-material sense, with "creatures of the code" modifying themselves and killing their creators, once by hiring a hit man, other times in a sense reminiscent of H. P. Lovecraft, and with characters in the real going to live on in one or the other versions of the internet that come to exist, as illustrated with Samuel Huntington who not only dies physically but also wipes out his virtual existence as well: "And then he vanishes, Sam Huntington condensed back to meat only"), a vampire millipus (a Kraken with a lot more tentacles than usual who lives partly in the ocean and partly in one of the versions of the internet), witches (not coding sorcerers), invading internet creatures and disruptive internet creatures, a portal to the internet built as directed by creatures in the internet claiming to be Benjamin Franklin and Francis Hopkinson in a hot tub scene reminiscent of a 1940s Frankenstein movie, a brain formed in the internet of calcified code (really) that can foretell (not predict or forecast, but foretell) the future, and a plot on the part of the Federalist Party through the Society of Cincinnati (SOC) to take over the US which is in some part thwarted by Jefferson and his twins as well as Thomas McKean working for Jefferson and his Democratic-Republican Party. There is a plague that comes from the internet, it seems from a worm that was uploaded by a dying Button Gwinnet to punish his killer, the sinister Federalist spy and assassin Lachlan McIntosh, supposedly working for George Washington and the SOC. At least that seems to be the source of the original plague (there are three or so of them). The plague is called The Death and it forms crystals within those who die that are good electronic storage devices. My apology if I missed anything here. The duality that

underpins the novel reminds me of the old mattress commercial I used to see in the 80s, in which it was asked, If you ruin your body, what will you live in? To which I always thought, You are your body. But the novel seems to imply that there is some informational content of humans that can survive them, with their consciousness, a bit that is at best unintelligible from a technical or unnecessary from a magical point of view.

At any rate, the mixture of realism and magic of this novel is nothing like the so-called "magical realism" of Gabriel García Márquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* which has nothing to do with the "genre" of magical realism anyway, a ridiculous categorization by professors of literature and agents, editors and publishers who are clueless and can be dismissed out of hand as charlatans. The work of García Márquez has more realism and its magic is not superimposed by some external "technology" or duality of mind and body so much as it is an inherent characteristic of place. The external magic of this novel is more like what one would find in the writing of H. P. Lovecraft or even Stephen King, though the form is far more imaginative and less cut and dried than is the work of those two. Nor is *Franklin's Dream America* similar to any of these authors, certainly not in the sense of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* which shocked me with its borrowing of an entire plot line from Günter Grass' *The Tin Drum,* bordering in my opinion on plagiarism less than on genre, and with less power as well, though the remainder of the *Danzig Trilogy* was not so compelling either.

Given all these plot devices, if one were forced to provide this novel a generic tag it would likely be as a historical horror story. From time to time there are historical events that creep in, though they are often more interesting in actual history than in the novel.

For example, during the War of 1812 Lighthorse Harry Lee is set upon by a mob and torn limb from limb in the novel. In history, however, he was beaten and tortured by a mob while defending a friend, a fellow Federalist and publisher of a newspaper who was earlier beaten for writing an essay against the War of 1812 and derisive of President Madison. This was an attack on a publisher of a Federalist paper by a mob of Democratic-Republicans. So much for free press, though it appears then as now the press in the US is censored by pressure of "news consumers" on media (now via advertisers). At any rate, Lee (who was not a young man, having been a cavalry officer in the Revolutionary War) and some of his friends were defending the publisher against further attacks when they were set upon and fired on their attackers. They were taken to jail and from there liberated by a mob of Democratic-Republicans that beat and tortured them for several hours, an attack that caused Lee to lose his power of speech and may have hastened his death a year later.

Another example is with Jefferson, who is more a plot device than a character. During his final day in the real, he is seen puttering around his office while his mistress (and half-sister of his dead wife through Jefferson's father-in-law), the slave Sally Hemings, putters around him, putting things right and destroying evidence he tells her to destroy. It is a point at which certain plot elements are tidied up, tied into a neat package so to speak (though Adams throws a monkey wrench into some of this a chapter later as he dies) and everyone lives happily ever after. The historical reality is that as Jefferson lay dying, his estate was sold off around him, including his slaves. He was so deeply in debt and broke that he could not afford to free even his mistress. Such real historical horrors play no part in this novel.

Yet one more Jefferson example in the novel occurs during his Presidency, when he is busy thwarting Federalist plots to take over the country and dealing with aliens and other crises. But in history, a real crisis he faced was reminiscent of one Obama faces today: Jefferson had to deal with the Barbary Coast pirates who operated out of the coast of North Africa under the auspices of the Ottoman Empire. The pirates attacked the merchant ships of the newly formed United States with impunity; the nation paid them extortion to desist. The amount of the extortion was a significant proportion of the US income, and when Jefferson came into office they raised the tariff. Jefferson refused to pay, instead building a navy to fight the pirates in what is called the First Barbary War. In today's US, no matter who the President, this would be used for propaganda purposes to terrify the US citizens into accepting an already bloated and out of control "defense" budget with little

to do with defense or the military and everything to do with corporate profits under a massive standing jobs program. Times change. They spent on a navy to fight; we spend on a "defense" budget to provide jobs and corporate profits, not to fight.

Prominently missing is racism. There is reference here and there to slavery, to Jefferson's slavocracy, for example, and to slaves without any hint of the horrors of that institution, but missing for the most part is the fact that the nation was racist, even the non-slave states who would have preferred the slaves freed and shipped out of the country or sold out of the country. Most prominently missing is Jefferson's racism, which is important given he wrote the *Declaration of Independence* (which has been modified in the novel, leaving out the word *men* in its most famous line, a significant alteration). That Jefferson's writings leave no doubt he considered blacks inferior, there is no question as to his racism, but there is some debate as to whether or not he considered blacks human. For an in-depth discussion and debate among some prominent historians, see http://www.newrepublic.com/article/books-and-arts/who-Lincoln-was/

Not that the US hasn't improved. Blacks, however, remain an underclass, with fewer rights in the judicial system at the least. But the country has regulated, and continues to regulate, what atrocities are allowed against blacks. There is likely nowhere in Texas where one can drag a black man behind a truck with a chain around his neck and, if caught, not be punished severely. The same might be true of Louisiana, though it isn't clear that there aren't regions of Louisiana where, as a former colleague in the Navy told me back in 1966, one might still "find niggers in the bayou who tried to steal more chain than they could swim with." He, I might add, had a career in the Louisiana State Police after he left the Navy. But the US has a President who had a black father from Africa and, though his mother was white, no one except in fits of racist or political pique calls him a mulatto. He is not a descendent of African Americans or of slaves, nor is he a product of US black culture, not from the intercity or the country. But then most white Americans are terrified of blacks from the intercity.

This brings up the notion of freedom, a word that has no well-defined meaning and yet is bandied about with the US push for what it calls Democracy, a form of government that has little to do in practice with freedom. That is clear in the *Declaration of Independence,* with the famous line, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." We need not quibble over the distinctions between liberty and freedom (or the notion of Creator among a group of plutocrats, most especially Jefferson, who were deists, not Christians), but instead focus on the real intent of this statement of mostly aristocratic property owners who were incensed about taxes and more generally the mercantile system run by Great Britain. John Witherspoon says it pretty clearly in the novel at the time of his death: "That's what we did with The Declaration. It's a masterpiece, the best slogan ever, the kind you can build eons' worth of civilization on." That captures the essence of The Declaration, a slogan, a propaganda piece by plutocrats, a statement of limited scope that applied to a handful of white men. That any civilization built on it would of necessity limit the individuals to whom its "self-evident truths" (whatever that might mean, given no truth (using the word truth in a well-defined sense, which might not be doable in any case, as pointed out by Alfred Tarski, for example) is self-evident) apply is clear given the circumstances under which it was written (blacks held as slaves) and the beliefs of its author, a white racist male and perhaps white supremacist.

As noted earlier, the pivotal horror element as well as the major device of the plot is the internet in its various incarnations. It eventually becomes a place where people live half within and half without, no longer having a "code" side, as Hopkinson calls it, and a real side. People can travel to other places from within the internet, even become other people, a wonderful plot device for a horror story not developed here. Maybe a sequel set during the US Civil War.

All of which brings me back full circle to my memoir about coding and GPS. This transcendent internet, eventually a social media that becomes its own reality and in fact intermingles and interconnects with the reality from whence it came, that is, the "real world" so to say, where code itself creates and maintains life

and so on, seems to have no constraints due to finite word length, among other limitations (the operating system, as noted earlier, the actual language used for the code, which ought to be called perhaps MAGICK, and a host of other "real" side issues that are part and parcel of technology, including limited bandwidth, spotty coverage due to lack of repeater towers, etc.). And so it captures the view of reality of the US and perhaps the world where technology is magic, created by science which is a form of sorcery, a world where the tools of communication are suddenly alive, an animistic technological worldview. This idealism becomes more interesting with the advent of pseudo-science such as Psychology and Economics taken as sciences without an understanding of what is science, what part is played by mathematics in science (as mathematics is not a science, given mathematicians are not constrained by any sort of physical reality, only by a logic game, aesthetics, and their imaginations) and how the effect of this popular belief is a sort of religion that holds to an animistic reality as represented in this novel. The author presents a truthful vision of contemporary United States by superimposing it on a more rational, but no less partisan and perhaps more violent and racist, time.

The same sort of duality that underlies this novel is found in mathematics. We could call it the virtual (or ideal) versus the material. In the novel it is the split between what is called the real side and a virtual reality vis-a-vis the internet (the "code" side) that fuse in the novel to form a mixed reality. In mathematics it is a contrast between what can be considered an objective mathematical realm and what one takes to be necessarily dependent on some "self-evident truths," that is to say, axioms. What one considers to be an axiomatic truth in mathematics need have no relationship with the physical world, and there is the rub. For example, twentieth century mathematics accepts the existence of infinities of varying sizes, some larger than others. Some are so large that their existence cannot be proved from the standard axioms of set theory and postulating their existence has profound consequences in the mathematical realms they define.

To illustrate that duality, which has multiple levels, consider the statement that the square root of two is not a fraction. That statement can be proven without recourse to anything other than properties of the integers, which are natural to most people living in advanced societies, the definition of square root, fraction, and two. That is to say, it is an inherent fact contained within the meaning of two, integer, square root, and fraction. No external "higher" truths, that is to say axioms, self-evident or otherwise, are required. In essence, it is constructive and would be accepted as true in any logical realm, just as the square root of two would be considered a constructive entity since one can provide an algorithm to compute as many digits in any integral base expansion as one wishes. Of course, the square root of two is the number that when multiplied by itself equals two; no such number can be displayed in the realm of finite expansions. (We disregard here certain ideologically irrational humans like the ultra-finitists who are in the uncomfortable position of accepting the existence of a first integer that does not exist.)

The reason this esoterica makes a difference is because of the nature of certain so-called "social sciences," most especially Economics. Economics has become rigid in its beliefs to the extent that there is but one brand of it taught everywhere now, accepted as gospel by authorities in powerful policy-making positions all over the world. This is the neoliberal economic doctrine that the best of all possible worlds comes as a result of pure competition, an ideology of microeconomics. Economics claims to be science because it applies mathematics, never mind that the same claim can be made by astrology. The issue revolves around how mathematics is applied.

In physics, mathematics describes the structure of reality through theories that explain how things work. The key is that mathematics allows precise predictions that can be used to falsify; without such falsification, there is no theory. It is a necessary constituent of theory. Newton's inverse square law of gravitation describes the interaction between celestial bodies and is able to provide precise descriptions of that interaction with precise orbits of the planets around the sun in our solar system. Eventually it was determined from observations that the prediction of the orbit of Mercury was wrong. That problem was corrected by general relativity, not by building a kludged "theory" like that of the Ptolemaic

system, but by solving other problems that arose with the incompatibility of Newtonian gravity and Maxwell's equations for the electromagnetic field, which led to special relativity. (A readable source for this can be found in the elementary textbook by David M. Bressoud, *Second Year Calculus: From Celestial Mechanics to Special Relativity,* Springer-Verlag, 1991.)

But in general, physicists famously distrust mathematical theorems, especially theorems that assert the existence of some object or solution to or stability of a system of equations without providing an algorithm for demonstrating such existence, even if it provides an infinite sequence such as the square root of two. Such existence theorems belong to a level of mathematical reality where the demonstrations of "truth" are not constructive. There have been famous mathematicians who also distrusted these demonstrations of existence at different levels, such as Leopold Kronecker, Henry Poincare, and L. E. J. Brouwer. It is not clear that they objected at the same level of acceptance, and Brouwer may have been the strictest in his beliefs, which were mystical regarding mathematics, while Kronecker and Poincare were more practical, with Kronecker wedded to providing algorithms to prove existence whereas Poincare seems to have been less rigid. An excellent (but advanced and difficult) discussion of these levels based on set theory can be found in the article by Peter Koellner, *Large Cardinals and Determinacy* in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* available online: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/large-cardinals-determinacy/.

There is also work by Harvey Friedman and his band of merry mathematical logicians that precisely bounds some of these levels of mathematical reality. At the base is second order arithmetic, which allows constructive proofs of inherent facts like those discussed regarding the square root of two, but have no statements of axioms, of self-evident truths, beyond this. Friedman then builds levels of "truth" by adding axioms, from weaker to stronger, to determine what is derivable within the different levels. Friedman's work and Brouwer play a major role in what follows.

The use of mathematics in Economics is nothing like its use in physics. First of all, there are no theories in Economics, since nothing is ever falsified. Indeed, Economics is a cargo cult of physics, where instead of marching around in a jungle clearing with stick guns on their shoulders and coconut helmets on their heads hoping to coax the gods to send a giant bird with parachutes of cargo, economists use mathematics as a form of magic whereby they hope to coax the gods to give them successful predictions. To date, no such thing has happened. There are numerous examples of mathematics applied, such as the mathematical theory of stochastic differential equations based on Ito's integral to price derivatives, originally simple options (Black-Scholes Theory), that have been miserable failures. However, the failures have not led to falsification. Instead, economists blame the failures on problems with reality.

Secondly, and more important than falsification, is the way mathematics is used: in a religious sense, with belief in higher truths to support doctrines without hope of falsification. A good example is the application of the non-cooperative theory of games in Economics, which is supposed to model the real-world competition of firms and interaction with consumers. But the key religious article of faith is a belief in the existence of equilibrium solutions of every finite game, which is supplied by a famous theorem of John Nash for which he won the Nobel Prize in Economics. The theorem is not constructive. In fact, it is equivalent to the classic Brouwer fixed point theorem of topology, proven by L. E. J. Brouwer early in the 20th century which he went on to renounce since it was not constructive. Nash used Brouwer's theorem to prove existence of equilibrium and it was later shown that Nash's theorem can be used to prove Brouwer's theorem. And Friedman has shown that Brouwer's fixed point theorem cannot be proven at the base level, but requires a "higher truth" as an axiom to derive it. So when economists state that Nash's theorem proves that the neoliberal ideology of non-cooperative interaction provides the best system because of the equilibrium inherent in the games they believe model the social systems, they are making a leap of faith like accepting the Nicene Creed or voodoo. In essence, the Economics they teach as gospel is a form of religion. And one can pick as well on their use of nonsense like the existence of a utility function for consumers, or even for companies. The theorem of Gérard Debreu gives

necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of a utility function, which necessary and sufficient conditions require strong beliefs regarding the behavior of humans, beliefs which are falsified constantly. For a patently religious statement regarding game theory as proof of the dogma of neoliberalism, take a look at the short essay by John Roberts, a former Stanford University professor of business, in the anthology *The New Palgrave Game Theory,* edited by John Eatwell, et al., published by W.W. Norton, 1989, entitled *Large Economies.* It is a list of "higher truths" in mathematics that have no relevance to physical reality and reads more like a list of buzzwords used to scare off other views.

This becomes of major significance in modern society wherein the ruling plutocrats of the early days of the United States, the founding fathers, have been replaced by giant corporations controlling the two major parties by exclusion, during the primary process, of those who would not support their goals, corporations that do not exist in a competitive system of free markets (which means that neither buyer nor seller can set prices), and corporations that control (directly and also by writing laws) the media, banking system, all of the so-called defense budgets (DOD, intelligence, homeland security), retirement accounts, health care, energy, and most everything else that matters. The ideology to support this as free enterprise is promulgated through the study of Economics, which in the US and most of the world has become the inculcation of a rigid religious dogma referred to as neoliberalism and that is sold in the name of freedom, which word becomes synonymous with "free markets."

This is where the novel falls flat. In playing with the internet as though it had anything to do with freedom, it misses the point of oppression in the 21st century. If one wants to read a cogent discussion of freedom and technology, one would do better to read Thorstein Veblen's *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution,* first published in 1915. The idea of freedom is tied to the reality that humans must live in support groups of other humans called societies. Humans do not live in isolation. Living with other humans necessarily requires organization; the larger and more complex the social setting, the more organization is necessary; organization curtails individual freedom. The internet and the means of accessing it is a communications system, similar to the telephone, and therefore a tool of social organization. Nothing magic, though through it more tasks once performed by businesses or government are foisted off on citizens. As a tool for social organization, it maintains bounds of behavior and belief by imposing an ever more restrictive box of what is considered right, true, and salable in writing, music, and film, among other things, and becomes a means of social control via directed consumerism and outright propaganda. It is a means of enforcing conformity. It is a powerful propaganda tool. For those who pay attention, it is evident that the internet and especially social networking are the greatest control mechanisms ever designed by any society. They construct a box that becomes almost a place to live, where thoughts and ideas are controlled, where music and film and perhaps literature (which may be irrelevant) are judged by mass appeal and monetary success. The US has learned how to export its ideology to other nations, especially the illusion of freedom granted by democracy and its religious ideology of neoliberalism as the shining path to personal freedom, an ideology dominant now in all US educational institutions that has no basis as a science but is sold as, along with science, a form of modern religion. The dominant tool of this oppression is the internet, most especially social media.

Consider the case of Timothy Dexter, otherwise known as Timothy Treadwell. He believed he could cohabit freely in the society of bears in Alaska, but the bears had a different attitude. Living in a society in which corporations control social functions and write the laws and government budgets is a bit like living among bears. The catch is that when the internet becomes a tool controlled by those corporations, the citizens will not grow alarmed but will be lulled into blissful unawareness.

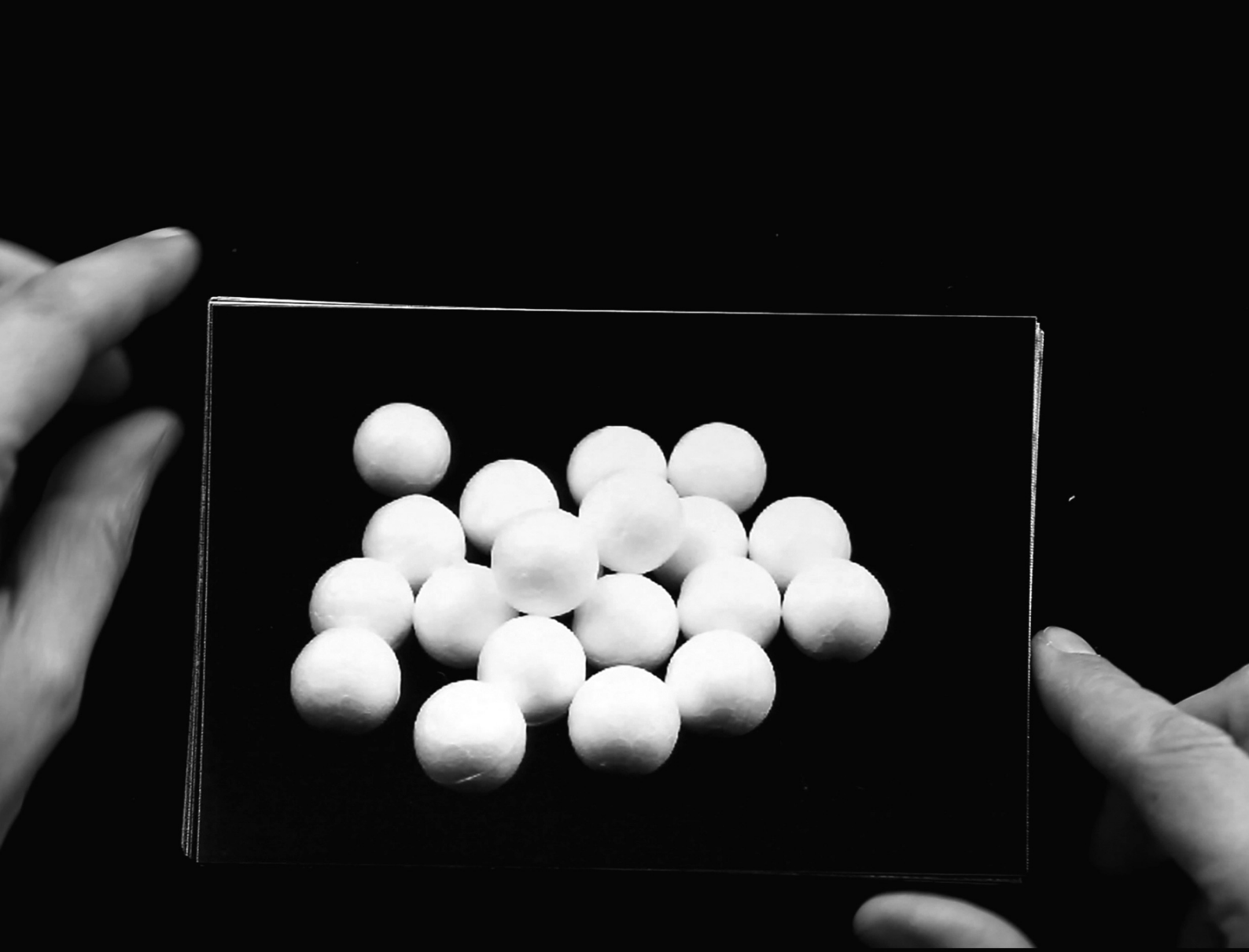
Ober's novel has nothing to do with freedom or technology, though it does have something to do with the perception of technology; how through that perception certain technologies can become formal, even necessary, parts of life. For example, the wheel. Is the automobile a freedom if you are forced to own one to exist within society? The inherent danger is that control can be brought to bear through technologies by

their enhancement of social organization, particularly when the technologies are foisted on the society by large corporate interests for profit.

In essence, Ober has mapped the modern superstitious US onto the nations' beginnings complete with vituperative two-party system controlled by plutocrats (now corporations), history replaced by acceptable mythos (sometimes dependent on choice of party), and with modern communications systems providing impossible forms of social networking in which people live without having to experience reality first hand. As entertaining as this book might be, it has no serious message to deliver regarding freedom or technology; missed opportunity or resounding endorsement of the ridiculous notion of social networks as facilitators of democracy, whatever that word actually implies, who can say? I personally think this work would be more successful as a graphic novel; in graphic novel form it might become a standard undergraduate college history text.

I will close this with a quote from a forgotten American of this period. He was an astronomer and a maker of scientific instruments. He was as famous in his day as his fellow Philadelphian, Benjamin Franklin. His name was David Rittenhouse and the quote is taken from an address he gave the American Philosophical Society in 1775. The address goes by the title *Oration* and regards astronomy, but it is much more, a confession of his Christian faith and his belief in alien life on other planets which was common in those days. The quote is taken from Michael J. Crowe, *The Extraterrestrial Life Debate, 1750-1900,* originally published by Cambridge University Press, 1986, and reprinted in a corrected edition by Dover Publications, 1999. In the quote, Rittenhouse is referring to creatures living on other planets…

"Happy people! and perhaps more happy still, that all communication with us is denied. We have neither corrupted you with our vices nor injured you by violence. None of your sons and daughters… have been doomed to endless slavery by us in America, merely because *their* bodies may be disposed to reflect or absorb the rays of light, in a way different from *ours.*"



ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

THE MICROSCOPE & TELESCOPE OF TIME

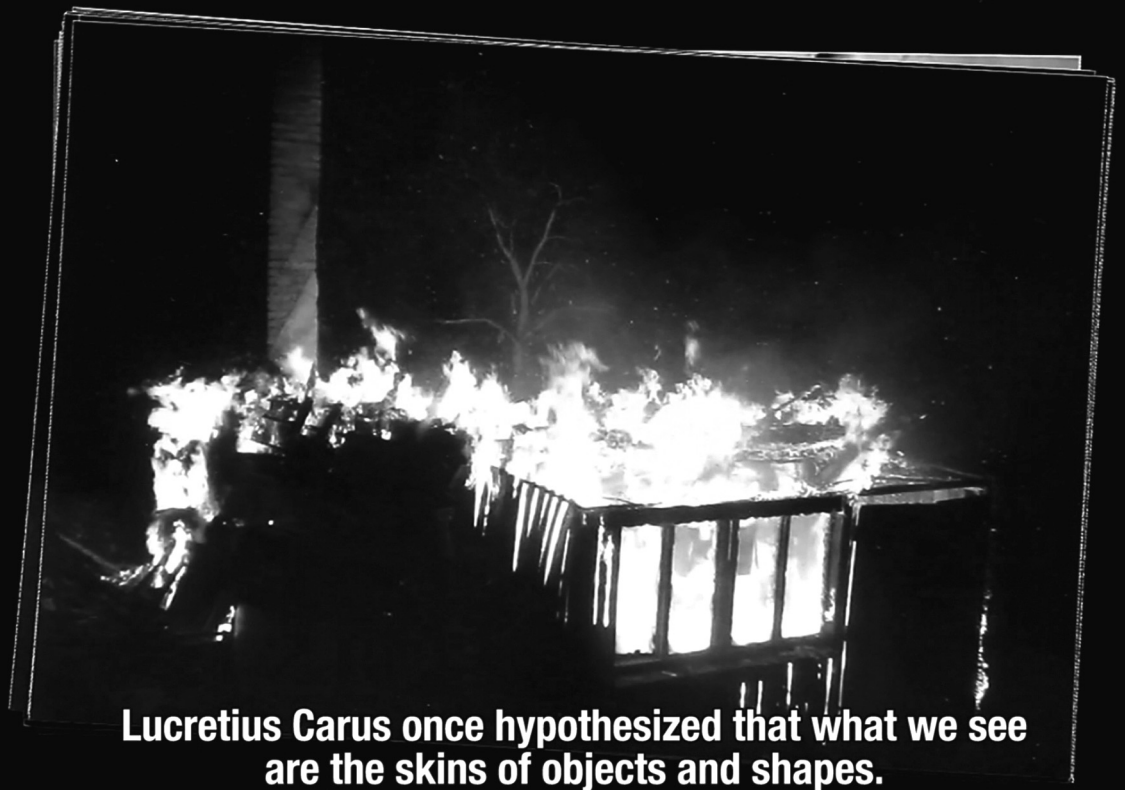
TWO CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION

The buried memories here should expose a contradiction that we see in the present;

It is necessary to give the joke a new meaning.

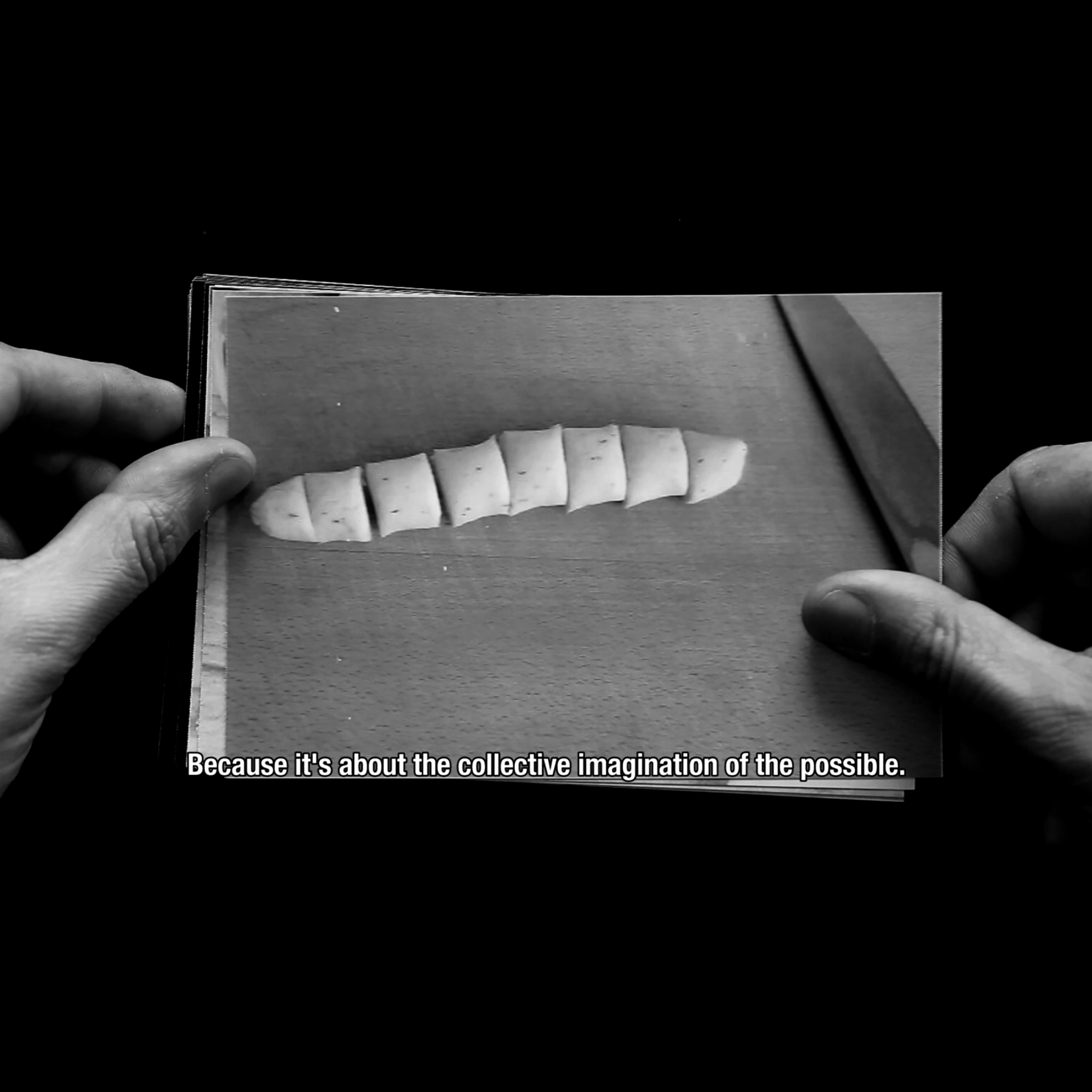
and confronting them with the current reality of aggressive capitalism,

How did it come about that the ideal of an egalitarian society has disappeared from the horizon of a possible future?



Lucretius Carus once hypothesized that what we see
are the skins of objects and shapes.

Because there is a possibility here that art can change someone and something.


Because it's about the collective imagination of the possible.

and about the ambiguity of such a statement

Each experience, each description of experience,
each depiction is like a chapter of human history as a history of class struggle.

BRUNO ADAMS
TITLE UNKNOWN
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY [EXCERPT]

I was born in a dusty little town near the edge of the Earth, that went by the name of Bacchus Marsh. Now Bacchus was the Greek God of wine, women and Song, but by the time I came on the scene, his wetlands of Retsina with Sirens singing in the reeds had long since been land-filled to make way for a drive-in Lion safari.

My father was a teacher in the local country school, while my mother had taken time off from her nursing career to bear and rear *us kids*. My elder brother was born in the little town we'd lived in previously, but he died soon after birth. Then came my elder sister, followed by my little sister, who was born after we moved to the suburbs, which is where my memories begin. We lived in a weatherboard, corrugated iron-roofed house, among many weatherboard, corrugated iron-roofed houses, in a little street among many little streets. But somehow our street was very different.

Firstly there were the fights, both animal and human. As a child I thought cats and dogs were different genders of the same species. Dogs being male, and cats female. Our family dog was male and our family cat was female and they would have regular impasses that would erupt into intense violence, just like with mum and dad. I remember hiding under the house and listening to them screaming about things I didn't understand, except the name of our elder, dead brother. I remember dreaming of finding his skeleton in a shoebox, in the big trunk in my parent's bedroom, full of photos and trophies of an unknown past.

Our toilet was outside next to the wood shed and my mother cooked on a wood-burning stove. Our clothes were always somehow old fashioned and the house was much more "organic" looking than those of school friends and relatives, or the houses of families one would see on TV. My father had a little room, like half of a windowless bungalow, tacked onto the side of the house. He called it his study. Inside was a strange world of microscopes, mothballs and glass topped wooden drawers full of rows of exotic insects pinned to the cork bottom.

My mother always seemed very distant and unpredictable. I think she felt somehow resentful towards us kids for having had to give up her life for us. She was prone to fits of rage that to me seemed groundless. I remember once my parents painted our room. After they had put all the furniture back in place, I decided I should make a contribution. I drew pictures of the whole family all over the ideally prepared white

wall, with little blank areas beside each person, so they could also contribute to my beautiful creation. Once the drawings were ready, I got the whole family to shut their eyes and come into the room. I then asked everyone to open their eyes – at which point my mother went into an uncontrollable rage and started beating me mercilessly. In the end I simply feared her.

Needless to say, I was a difficult child. I never walked anywhere, I only ran. I would be put to bed at eight o'clock but never slept till ten or eleven. I awoke each morning at six o'clock sharp, and I was always getting into trouble. I found it very hard to read between the lines. I never understood the nuances of human interaction that everyone else seemed to know instinctively, and nobody seemed able to spell it out to me.

I used to have terrible nightmares. One I remember very vividly was waking up with frisbees floating in the air all around the house. They were letting off a humming sound and moving around slowly at random. I got up and walked into my parents' bedroom. There on the bed, instead of my parents, I was disturbed to find two frisbees lying side by side.

My father would generally ignore my mother's feelings of dissatisfaction. Whenever she would complain to him about whatever was troubling her, he would hide behind his newspaper, as if it were a force-field, and repeat the words "yes dear", like a mantra. He would also hide in his study for hours on end and wait until my mother had cooled down.

Basically my father was a coward, a man who couldn't stand any kind of confrontation. He lived in his own private cosmos which was contained between his ears. It was a wondrous world of science and nature, where the delicate twine of the fabric of the universe, and the relationship between all things – except for the practical task at hand – stood revealed before your eyes.

Despite all this, my father was a hero to me, a natural born teacher who knew everything about everything and was always right. My father never disciplined me and was always very affectionate…

BRUNO ADAMS

was the singer, guitarist and frontman of the Berlin-based band **Fatal Shore**. Born in Bacchus Marsh, Australia in 1963, Bruno was an active member of the Melbourne music scene in the 1980's. During his formative years he played with such luminaries as Mick Harvey, as well as musicians from The Saints, The Laughing Clowns and Crime & The City Solution – all members of the same Melbourne scene that produced Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds. Notable for his classic Blues voice, his highly original guitar style, and his song writing talent, Bruno was also outstanding as a human being – a big man with a big heart and a warmth of soul that was truly magnetic.

In 1984 he formed **Once Upon A Time**, a ground-breaking act whose psycho-industrial-blues rapidly made them favourites on the Melbourne club circuit. In 1990 the band moved to Berlin on a permanent basis, supporting groups such as Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds and Swans on European tours. The band released three CDs before splitting in 1996.

That same year, 1996, Bruno formed Fatal Shore with Prague-based Englishman Phil Shoenfelt and fellow Australian Chris Hughes, the former drummer of Once Upon A Time. Fatal Shore released four CDs, and were notable for their wild and unpredictable live shows, as well as the quality of their song writing. Based in Berlin, the band toured central Europe and the USA for 12 years.

In 2004, Bruno was diagnosed with colon cancer. For the next five years he battled the disease in a way that can only be described as heroic. Even though it was a losing battle, he never gave up or succumbed to self-pity. He continued to write songs and play concerts, though frequently in great pain, and his natural talent always shone through. On April 18th 2009, Bruno finally lost his protracted struggle and died at home in Berlin, surrounded by his family and close friends. He left behind him his wife Kateřina and three children: Conrad, Natalie-Rose and Edward Lee.

With Bruno's agreement and participation, his first wife, the film maker Helena Giuffrida, recorded the last year of his life in a *cinéma vérité* style, entitled **So Glad I Did**. The film does not hold back or succumb to sentimentality. As Bruno says at one point in the film, "Death is part of my life now," and he refused to shy away from it, facing up to the inevitable with remarkable courage and realism.

FATAL SHORE

NATHAN ROCHE INTERVIEWS **PHIL SHOENFELT**[1]

The Fatal Shore: Chris Hughes, Yoyo Roehm, Bruno Adams, Phil Shoenfelt. Photo: Ollie Peters.

Nathan Roche: How did you initially meet Bruno Adams?

Phil Shoenfelt: I first met Bruno in Prague in 1996. I'd known his sister Bronwyn Adams (violinist of Crime & The City Solution) when she was living in London in the early 1990s. One time when I was visiting she played me a video tape that Bruno had sent her from Berlin. He'd moved to Kreuzberg with Once Upon A Time in 1989, I believe. They'd initially flown from Melbourne to London, but had stayed in London only a few weeks before deciding it wasn't the place for them. I guess there was something of an Australian-friendly music scene in Berlin at this time, what with Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds having been based there in the mid 1980s.

Anyway, this video of Bruno I saw was a kind of "A Day In The Life of an Australian Living in Berlin" affair. Bruno was telling a story to the camera about his girlfriend of that time getting involved in the hijacking of a Berlin tram! She'd been drunk, met some crazy guy and they'd gone on this wild adventure that ended with them both getting arrested. I was very impressed with the way Bruno told the story. It was almost like a theatrical monologue, with pauses for dramatic effect and very expressive facial gestures. My impression was that this guy was a natural story-teller, with a great flair for comedy and narration. The tape ended with Bruno doing a fantastic

1 Originally published in *Mess & Noise* magazine.

version of "St James' Infirmary" – solo in his living room, accompanying himself on guitar. It really blew me away. He had a fantastic natural Blues voice, what you'd call a "voice from God." I was like, "Wow! I've got to meet this guy!" It was another five or six years before we did finally meet. In the interim I'd moved to Prague, and I met him at one of the last gigs of Once Upon A Time. It was at the Roxy Club in Prague. After the show I went up and introduced myself, told him I knew his sister from London. So it all dates from then, the spring of 1996 in Prague.

NS: What led from this to the formation of Fatal Shore?

PS: Just before I met Bruno I'd agreed to do a tour of Bosnia-Herzegovina under the aegis of George Soros's "People In Need" Foundation – Cultural Aid to Former Yugoslavia. My Czech band, Southern Cross, were a bit dubious about going. It was still quite hairy down there, even though the Dayton Peace Accord had been signed – lots of unexploded landmines lying around, snipers in the forests taking pot-shots. I mentioned the upcoming tour to Bruno at the OUAT gig, and he immediately expressed interest in coming along. He was that type of guy, up for anything adventurous. We agreed that he'd come back to Prague after the OUAT tour finished, and that we'd work up a set of songs to play in Bosnia. So that's what happened.

A couple of weeks later Bruno appeared on my doorstep with his guitar and we spent two or three days putting together a set of songs by artists such as Lee Hazelwood, Jacques Brel, Robert Johnson, Howlin' Wolf – songs that we both knew and loved and which were capable of being played by a duo. Most of these songs appeared on the first Fatal Shore CD, which was recorded the following year with Chris Hughes on drums. I already knew Chris from London, by the way. I'd met him when I supported These Immortal Souls at the Camden Underworld in 1991. Chris was playing drums with them during this period. But the origin of Fatal Shore was this very intense tour of Bosnia-Herzegovina that Bruno and I undertook. Bruno disbanded OUAT once he got back to Berlin. After Chris Hughes got involved, Fatal Shore really took off. I think it was Bruno who gave the band its name.

NS: What was the songwriting partnership between you and Bruno like, how did these songs come about initially?

PS: I think that more than Bruno I was coming from a traditional singer-songwriter background. I'd always written songs alone, sitting in my room with an acoustic guitar and a tape recorder. Very old school. I'd hear all the instrumentation and arrangements in my head, and would simply teach the completed songs to the band. Bruno was a little more left-field, especially when he was with OUAT. The impression I got was that Bruno would write the lyrics and maybe some basic guitar parts, then the songs were worked on with the band. Everybody had input.

With Fatal Shore this collaborative approach wasn't possible – not with Bruno and Chris in Berlin and me in Prague. I think we had about six rehearsals in the history of the band! It was more a case of Bruno and me each having our own songs pretty much complete. I think this was something new for him, to sit down and write a song from start to finish. But with Chris's input the songs changed a lot anyway. There was a very strong intuitive connection between the three of us. We'd meet up to go on tour, and we'd actually learn the new songs in sound check – go through them once or twice then play them that same night. They always fell into place, somehow.

The guitar parts that Bruno added were great. He had a sophisticated sense of rhythm, deceptively simple but actually quite complex. He could really get under the skin of a song. I liked that spontaneity, the freshness that comes from not practicing a song to death. And if the songs had good solid structures (which they generally did), it meant that we could go out on a limb in the instrumental passages, then return to the structured part of the song. Some of these excursions were pretty wild, we had no idea where they were leading. Pure intuition, more like jazz in that respect. There would be these intense guitar freak-outs from Bruno, while Chris would be wreaking all kinds of sonic and rhythmic mayhem with his Jam-Man loops and his unpredictably placed beats.

The fact that for much of our career we didn't have a bass player also gave the band a unique sound. It

meant I had to keep everything really anchored with the electro-acoustic, otherwise the whole thing would fall to bits. We took a lot of chances, nothing was ever played the same way twice.

NS: Fatal Shore recorded the three albums in fairly exotic and varied locations (Slovakia, Kentucky and Berlin). How did these landscapes affect the recordings?

PS: There are four albums, actually. The last one, "Setting The Sails For El Dorado," is a collection of demos, outtakes and alternative versions that came out on the German label Moloko + a couple of years after Bruno died. It's dedicated to his memory. But anyway, the first CD was recorded in Lucanec, Slovakia. We were doing a Czech and Slovakian tour in the spring of '97, and some fans took us to see their mate's studio, the morning after the Lucanec gig. It was really good and really cheap, so we booked it and came back a couple of months later to record the album. This studio was situated in an old factory building with concrete stairwells and steel railings. We put the amps in the stairwell and got this huge cavernous, metallic sound with lots of natural reverb. I remember Bruno being down one end of this corridor, me at the other end, and Chris in the middle. Great sound, you couldn't have got it with plug-ins or effects. The place was so cheap that we could afford to stay in town for over two weeks and really work on the material, mix it properly, get unusual sounds.

The second CD "Free Fall" was an entirely different matter. It was recorded in a 19th century church in Covington, Kentucky. The way that came about was totally off-the-wall. Towards the end of 1999 we were on tour in Germany, crossing an iced-up mountain pass on the way to the next gig in Plzeň. Chris mentioned that some American record producer called Dan May wanted to produce the second Fatal Shore CD. He was offering us return air tickets to Cincinnati and a month in his studio with all expenses paid. Bruno and I were like, "Yeah Chris, sure, pull the other one..." I mean we were starving at the time, we could barely afford the gas money to the next gig. There we were in a small car, slipping and sliding over this mountain pass, and suddenly, out of the blue, there's an American record producer offering to fly us to the States.

It turned out to be true. Nico Mansy, who Chris had played with in Hugo Race & True Spirit, had married an American girl and moved to Cincinnati. He was working as an engineer in May's studio, "The Church." Dan had heard the first CD, really liked it, and wanted to produce the new one. So in the spring of 2000 we flew out of Berlin en route to Cincinnati. The project sounded great on paper, but the situation wasn't quite what we'd been led to believe. Dan and his mates – well, I won't say they were members of the Ku-Klux-Klan or the American Nazi party, but they did have quite strong right wing views. It was kind of like, "Well we know the niggers and the niggers know us, but the fuckin' Jews man!" We were like "Whoa, wait a minute, what did you say? Are you joking or what?"

The thing is they *were* joking, but they were serious too. Wind-up merchants, overgrown rich kids trying to be provocative. It turned out they were all stocks and shares guys who worked the financial markets – millionaire rednecks in suits, basically. Dan had his own band, Kursk, and he wanted to get into record producing. We were the guinea pigs, the experiment. So we were kind of trapped there in Kentucky with these people – no escape if we wanted to do the album! I mean, we didn't even do any recording for the first week. Dan just wanted to party and show us off to the neighbourhood. It was like, "These guys are over here from Berlin and I'm producing them." Meanwhile, Bruno would be out in the back yard, drinking with Dan and the guys, getting into political arguments, saying, "C'mon Dan, you're an intelligent bloke, you don't REALLY believe all that Mein Kampf bollocks, do you?" The thing is he did! I figured I was there to record an album and stayed out of it. I mean, you're not going to convert these people to social democracy, so why bother? Do the album and get out fast.

Dan was fine as long as you stayed clear of race, religion and politics. But like I say, he was a wind-up artist, so it wasn't always possible. It turned out he'd just bought Pro Tools and was finding out how it worked as we went along. He and his engineer Jerry Chambers lost one of my songs in cyber space, when they forgot to save it with a title. Finally there was a big argument between Dan, Chris and Bruno over the racial thing. I wasn't there, I was staying at Jerry's place, out

in the Cincinnati suburbs. But the net result was that Dan locked us out of the studio, so we lost two days of recording time. Finally he calmed down, realized he was being an asshole, and let us back in for the final day. We finished off the last vocal track three hours before the plane left for Berlin. I think those freaky vibes in The Church somehow transferred themselves onto the recording – all those SS uniforms and daggers and Lugers lying about did give a certain edge to the proceedings.

The third CD, "Real World," was a sedate affair by comparison. We'd acquired a bass player, Yoyo Roehm, who was also a producer and arranger. We recorded it in his home studio in Berlin, a much more relaxed environment. He did all the string arrangements and organized these top-notch Berlin classical musicians to play on it. It doesn't have the manic edge of the second CD, or the metallic, extra-terrestrial resonances of the first, but I'd say it was our most accomplished recording. Yoyo did a fine job, the production is really lush, really deep – in the way that Lee Hazelwood recordings are lush and deep.

NS: What was Bruno like, personality-wise on and off the stage? Do you have any particularly fond memories or incidents that stick out in your memory?

PS: Hard to put into words. There were a lot of facets to his character. To a certain extent he was acting a role. He had that ability to project a persona that natural born actors have. He was really charismatic, a very powerful performer on stage. At the same time he'd be taking the piss, going in and out of role, provoking a reaction from the audience with his presence, his quality of absolute "there-ness." Not in a confrontational way, but with warmth and humour, passion and humanity. But it did wind a certain type of person up, and I think he found that amusing.

This impulse he had for comedy isn't to say that he didn't take himself and his music seriously. He most certainly did. But at the same time he had this kind of bigger view, like he was looking down on himself from somewhere up above and laughing. He'd have me in stitches on tour with these parodies he'd do of stock Australian characters – right-wing politicians from the Country Party, brain-damaged psychos from the suburbs, aggressively inquisitive immigration officials. He could've had a second career as a stand-up comic. Yet he was an extremely sensitive guy. He could convey these really deep, very real, very soulful emotions. As far as his off-stage character is concerned, I think I can say that I've never before or since met a human being who seemed so free of malice, envy or any kind of hatred for anyone.

Don't get me wrong, he wasn't a hippy. Bruno was a big strong guy, and he could take care of himself in a fight, if the situation was forced upon him. But in my experience he was always reactive, never proactive. If you were his friend you could count on him, he wouldn't let you down. He had a big heart and he took friendship very seriously. You don't get many people like that these days. Certainly not in rock and roll, which is famously full of self-obsessed dickheads.

NS: How do you think Bruno felt about his musical career, reputation and appreciation or lack thereof in Australia?

PS: He never talked about it, actually. Not to me anyway. He certainly never came across as embittered. He had his life in Berlin, a family to support, songs to write, bands to play with – and a huge network of friends, both native Berliners and Australian ex-pats. He was well liked and highly respected, a larger-than-life character who attracted attention wherever he went. People responded to him, he was part of the furniture, an important fixture on the Berlin scene.

He promoted gigs too, at Café Zapata for example. He gave lots of new bands a chance, especially if he thought they were doing something original. Every bar you went in with him, someone would come out of the shadows and say "Hey, Bruno! What's happening, man?" He was known for being fair and pragmatic, never stuck-up or precious, no hidden agendas. Certainly not a saint, he was too real for that. But he had this immense positive energy that just swept you along, you felt somehow enriched by knowing him. I think he was too busy living his life to dwell on stuff like his reputation back home. There were so many in Berlin who loved him.

At his funeral it was amazing – about two hundred people showed up, most of the Berlin underground scene was there. And anyway, I think he *was* appreciated in Australia. Maybe not by the public at large, or even the critics, but by the cognoscenti. People like Mick Harvey, Simon Bonney and Warren Ellis knew and respected him. Mick Harvey, on "One Man's Treasure," did a great version of Bruno's song "Planetarium," which has to be one of the most achingly beautiful songs ever written. And I think Bruno's reputation as a songwriter will continue to grow. The Oslo-based New York singer Mark Steiner has just done a very nice cover version of "Closing Time" on his new album "Saudade" (a Portuguese expression that describes the slightly joyful feeling you might experience when thinking about lost loves, or people no longer present).

Bruno did what he did to the best of his considerable talents and abilities. He put out the best music he was capable of making, then let the chips fall where they may. I mean, it wasn't like he was networking the whole time, trying to be flavour of the month. Maybe at the end, when it was obvious the cancer was winning, he did get introspective. But even then, even when he knew he was going to die, he never lapsed into self-pity or bitterness.

NS: Did you ever see Once Upon A Time play? If so, what were they like live? And how did audiences respond abroad?

PS: Yes I did, several times. There was the gig I mentioned earlier, in Prague, on their final tour. I also saw them a few times after they reformed in the early 2000s. They were mesmerizing live, almost too much, quite overpowering in fact. The word "apocalyptic" springs to mind. They had this huge gothic-blues sound, dark and swirling, like a vortex that sucks you in. Some of OUAT's instrumental workouts were quite experimental, with a lot of sonic passages and free-form jamming.

Chris Russell and Chris Hughes added a lot to the sound, and they had this German bass player, Ollie Peters, who was very much of the Tracy Pew lineage. They did tend to get lumped in with that whole post-Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds Berlin thing, but to me they sounded more like The Doors. Or maybe the more psychedelic end of Dr John. The way that they could go from pop-inflected melodic numbers like "Holley" to "Book of Words" or "Whirlwind," which to my ears are reminiscent of "Horse Latitudes."

Bruno also had a powerful sense of drama and dynamics in his performance, but without the self-conscious pose of Morrison. OUAT pulled quite large and enthusiastic audiences, and were well known in central Europe – Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary. But this was on an underground, slightly avant garde level. They never broke out commercially.

NS: Why do you think he stayed abroad living in Berlin since the '80s?

PS: I guess because he liked it! He really fit in with the whole Berlin post-Bad Seeds, post-Neubauten, post-Die Haut scene. All those guys were his friends and contemporaries and they respected him. There was a cohesion to the Berlin scene at that time which I think Bruno found very attractive. He was like a fish swimming in his own water. There were personal reasons too: his two marriages and three kids. I just think he'd built up such a network of relationships he couldn't imagine going back to live in Australia and leaving it all behind. Basically, he loved Berlin and Berlin loved him back.

NS: When hearing about Bruno's illness, which he sadly died from, how did this affect the band and your relationship with him?

PS: I think it was 2004 when Bruno was first diagnosed with cancer. Initially they thought it was a stomach ulcer, and the doc simply told him to stop drinking. When after three months the pain was still there, he went for some tests and was told he had colon cancer. He took the news philosophically and made his mind up he was going to beat the disease. He started to have chemotherapy, and they shrank the tumour till it was operable. We never stopped gigging,

even though Bruno was frequently in pain and tired from the chemo.

So he had the operation to remove the tumour, and at first they thought it had been successful. He wrote a lot of songs in this period, some of which ended up on "Real World." You can sense the feeling of rebirth, the belief that he had survived a very dark period in his life, on songs such as "So Glad I Did" and "Between A Heaven And A Hell."

But a few months later they discovered they hadn't got all of the tumour out after all, that it had gone into metastasis and the cancer was spreading through his body. This was truly heartbreaking. Imagine having gone through all this, feeling like you've been reprieved from a death sentence, then having your new life snatched away. Bruno and Katka had just had their second kid too. A horrible, tragic situation.

Somehow he kept going, picked himself up and refused to admit defeat. We continued gigging, though sometimes he was in such great pain that he had to lie down on the stage to relieve it. One time we had to fly him back to Berlin from a gig in southern Hungary, when he needed hospital treatment. But in spite of all this he insisted on continuing with the tour and missed only a couple of gigs. After the last one, at Ebensee Kino in June 2008, he took the cable car and hiked around the top of a nearby mountain. Talk about a lust for life!

Can you imagine what he must have been going through all this time? The feeling of encroaching, inevitable death, and the sheer bloody-minded determination to keep on living and loving and making music in spite of everything. He'd lost a lot of weight by then. Finally this big, hale, hearty guy with a huge appetite for life was reduced to a bloodless skeleton. Even then, when his cheeks were sunken and his skin was grey, the light never went from his eyes. Not until the last few weeks. Finally he did start to get this distant, faraway look, as if he were gazing out across some invisible line, some border. It could have been the morphine, but you really got the feeling he was staring into the void.

Did you know that a documentary film was made about the last year of his life? Helena Giuffrida, Bruno's first wife, shot it, and it follows him (literally) right up to the end. It's called "So Glad I Did." It tracks him as he goes about his daily routine, all the things a person has to deal with when suffering from terminal cancer. Bruno agreed to be filmed. He wanted to deal with the whole thing scientifically, almost like it was an experiment.

So here we see a guy who knows he's going to die in a matter of months, visiting the hospital, discussing his condition with the doctors and nurses, talking to his friends, his family, his kids, telling them papa's gonna be going away soon, meeting with the funeral director who's going to bury him, visiting the cemetery so he can pick out the plot where he'll be buried, being pushed in a wheelchair by Katka, sitting in the park taking the sun. All without any trace of self-pity, no feeling of bitterness that he's drawn the short straw.

To me it's incredible how he was able to face death in this seemingly detached way, especially when he loved life so much. What he went through was really hardcore, but he wanted it to be documented. If it was going to come down, then let it be real, this is death and death is an inescapable part of life.

The last scene shows him lying in the coffin, with his two younger kids (four and seven at the time) trying to comprehend what has happened. They're making it into a game, laying flowers around his head, saying stuff like "He was here before, but now he's gone" and "Feel his skin, it's cold now, he's different." Man, it's about the heaviest film you're ever likely to see. I don't know if I could take seeing it again.

NS: Any other things you'd like to mention about Bruno, and his influence on people both musically and other?

PS: Well, I could go on for several more thousand words and still not capture his essence. I think it's clear from what I've said that he left an indelible mark, on me and many others – both musically, and as a person. Let's just say that he was one of the most impressive, inspiring human beings I've ever met and leave it at that.

MARK W JACOBS

CHOICEST ROCK BAND NAMES AS TINY POEMS

Corner Laughers
Guns Debating
Brain Underfoot
Backwoods Grin
Colostomy Pinata
Boxing Gandhis
Whistle Binkies
Piranha Nongrata
Dying Heart Smile
Murals in Metaphors
Math Hurt Head
Deaf to Silence
Pass the Cat
Dead Squirrel Circus
McJesus
Othercide
Nawstalgia
Eargasm
Autocratisaurus
Prefamous
Scruffynurfherder

Reigning Echoes
Lightning Riders
Threshold Dweller
Cat Spin
The Thes
Flabbergasted Hammerhandle
Starscream's Blitzwing
Uncle Scam
End Begins Again
Penis Goes Where
Intercourse by Eye
Pick My Nose
Smell the Music
Pretaliation
Drunkenstein
Techstacy
Hipsy
Disasterpiece
Bucolicious
Blisster
McRamahamasham

Cupid's Alley
Define Fiasco
Liquid Picasso
Giddyup Einstein
Rutabaga Paradox
Pitbull Bikiniwax
Mahatma Candy
Chop Sueycide
Reasons in Amber
One Star Sky
Child Left Burning
Deputy Hate Angel
Icicle Butt Plug
Bubbabarian
Idiocracy
Siolence
Fognauts
Comfynumb
Powernoia
Corporuption
Schlafunkmotron

MIRANDA GAVIN

SAND BANKSY

ADRIAN MARTIN

GAME WITH DVD

Fantasies are the least personal thing in the world. They are collective. And dreams only become troubling when they are retold, like in Buñuel. When you retell your dream, you are no longer yourself. A dream is only a montage of coded elements, obeying precise, impersonal rules. (Serge Daney)[1]

ŠVANKMAJER & THE PAST & FUTURE OF FILM THEORY

Film animation and the viewing medium of DVD are natural enemies. Animation, even more than live-action photographic cinema, demands to be seen in its stream, flowing, seamless, its tiny transformations undetectable by the rational eye... Animation does not want to be arrested, frozen, stilled.

And yet, by the same token, animation absolutely depends – again, more than live-action film – on the unit of the individual frame (photogram) for its existence. It is at the level of every individual frame that the work of animation is performed and achieved. To freeze an animated film – whether at an editing table or on a DVD player – is to study the precise difference between one frame and its successor, and thus to begin to break open its deepest secrets – secrets of art as much as of technique. And nowhere is this is truer than in relation to the prodigious work of Jan Švankmajer, which mixes all the techniques, and plunges us into the deepest mysteries of animated art.

DVD may be the natural enemy of Švankmajer's animation genius, but it is also, in our 21st Century, its natural home. It offers the place and the space, the tools and the means, whereby we can best come to grips with this

1 Serge Daney and Philippe Garrel, "Dialogue," *Cahiers du cinéma* 443/444 (May 1991): 60.

work's intricate magic – not to tame or dispel this magic, but unleash it once more back into our unconscious imaginations, with an even more ferocious power.

Is a theory of animation the true centrepiece of a theory of film itself? Over the past twenty years, we have seen the explosion of new ideas concerning a definition of cinema as an 'animatic apparatus', in the writings of Philip Brophy, Alan Cholodenko, William Routt, and others.[2] Among keen observers of the digital revolution, Thomas Elsaesser argued, over twenty years ago, that contemporary cinema in the digital age tends ever more (as Raymond Durgnat first intuited) towards the surface manipulation of a graphic image on a computer screen – and each new Hollywood blockbuster, culminating today in James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009), confirms this prediction.[3] More recently, Daniel Frampton's influential manifesto *Filmosophy* forms its account of cinema on the basis of the constitutive *artifice* of the medium – the idea that everything can be created and manipulated within an image-bank, rather than (or subsequent to having been) 'captured' by the camera.[4]

Theory is, in short, pulling away from the primacy of the camera and moving toward the importance of painting and drawing as a basis for the cinematic image. For much of its existence, animated cinema has in fact existed in a nebulous realm between the purely drawn and the photographed-onto-celluloid: a camera was indeed needed to register each frame, but no viewer (however naïve or sophisticated) of animation is ever aware of this camera, which was here reduced to its purest recording function. Animators such as Chuck Jones, in his classic *Duck Amuck* (1955), played reflexively with this unusual – in fact, ridiculous – 'presence of the camera' in front of drawn carton images. So how strange it is today, in commercial animation (Pixar, Dreamworks, George Miller's *Happy Feet* [2006], etc), that animated styles try so strenuously to mimic the *mise en scène* of live-action photography!

Although many film theorists have been slow to take up the evident challenge, what is at stake here is a complete revolution in the way we consider and define cinema. The most basic semiotic question of the medium is on the line here: is the cinema essentially tied to the *indexical* – the trace of the real that can be gathered in through the camera (whether chemical or digital), or is its very support, its constitutive material, something altogether more plastic, pliable, even ghostly in its ever-shifting materiality? Švankmajer – alongside Walerian Borowczyk in his animations of the 1950s and '60s, and later the Brothers Quay – figures, through his work, as the veritable prophet of this conceptual revolution in the way we think about film.

Film theory, in its conventional and classical forms (deriving from André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer, Rudolf Arnheim, etc.) tends to begin at basic levels of the cinematic apparatus that are already several removes away from the individual celluloid frame. Working on the basis of the stream of the photographic index as captured in and by the camera, they ascend to the theatrical scene, the performing body, the physical gesture, the real-time landscape, and so on. All of these very canny theorists were, of course, aware of the multiple levels of artifice in film, and none of them were the naïve realists that they have been sometimes presented as – Bazin, for example, states clearly in his unfinished book on Jean Renoir (whose early comedy *Charleston* [1926] is, in its own delirious way, another manifesto about artifice and animation in cinema) that "realism does not at all mean a renunciation of style."

However, Bazin, in the same passage, made his aesthetic and philosophical bias perfectly clear: for him, "cinematic expression must be dialectically fused with reality and not with artifice."[5] And the vast majority of film theory and criticism, from Éric Rohmer in the '50s to the recently deceased Gilberto Perez, has more or less followed Bazin's passionately argued-for premise. This is why – despite the occasional detours to acknowledge and praise Norman McLaren, Len Lye, Chuck Jones or Yuri Norstein – animation has always ended up in a low, secondary place in almost every canon of cinema. Even documentary, today, has fought its way to a higher ranking than animation. But that

2 Philip Brophy, *100 Anime* (London: British Film Institute, 2005); Alan Cholodenko (ed.), *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1991); William D. Routt, "Anime Listening Drawing," *LOLA* 5 (February 2015): www.lolajournal.com.

3 Thomas Elsaesser, "Film Studies in Search of the Object," *Film Criticism* 17.2/3 (1993): 40-47; Raymond Durgnat, *Films and Feelings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967).

4 Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006).

5 André Bazin, *Jean Renoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986) 106.

is because documentary is "dialectically fused with reality," whereas animation is dialectically fused with artifice. And perhaps also because, in so many respects, animated cinema is more truthfully aligned with the experiments of the frequently despised and outcast filmic *avant-garde* – which also work on a frame-to-frame basis – than with conventional, humanist, populist, entertainment movies.

However, another view of film history – and of film theory – is possible. Let us not forget that some of the most visionary narrative filmmakers, from Orson Welles to Tsui Hark, and without omitting George Miller (channeling and updating Eisenstein's montage theories in his *Mad Max* films), have been compelled to work at the intricate level of single frames for their most remarkable kinetic effects. Today we tend to overlook the fact that, long before the rise of Tim Burton and Harry Selick, or Quentin Tarantino's special insertion of an *anime* into *Kill Bill* (2003-4), or (horror of horrors) the inclusion of a surreal dream sequence by the Quays into Selma Hayek's dreary biopic *Frida* (2002), that Chris Marker in *Letter from Siberia* (1957), like Orson Welles in *The Trial* (1963), had unselfconsciously inserted animated sequences into otherwise live-action works. And we can only mention here the rich case of Alain Resnais, whose style, in many of its variations, was always so influenced by trends in comics and animation, culminating in the *Roger Rabbit*-style live/animated hybrid of his sadly underrated *I Want to Go Home* (1989), and in the graphic/visual play with sets (filmed, drawn, projected) in his final two movies, *You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet* (2012) and *Life of Riley* (2014).

Nor should we forget that one of the founding texts of semiotic film theory in the early 1970s, Thierry Kuntzel's "Le défilement," is very precisely a study of the erotically uncanny frame-to-frame transformations in a classic Canadian animated film, Peter Foldes' *Appetite of a Bird* (1964) – transformations of a profoundly buried, 'maybe you didn't really see it', psychoanalytic nature. (Two decades later, the visionary art critic Edward Colless would track similarly complex erotic associations in the smallest animated motions 'between the legs of the mermaid' in an ostensibly innocent Disney production.)[6] In fact, a theory of the photogram as the most basic unit of cinema is able to reach in many directions – in the spirit of Walter Benjamin's 1940 essay "On the Concept of History," to give back, to each near-forgotten moment of the past, its unrealised future.[7]

An astonishing example: Isidore Isou's extraordinarily prescient Lettrist manifesto, "Aesthetics of Cinema," was already calling, in 1952 (!), for a *post-photographic* understanding of the film medium, based (in the manner of the entire Lettrist system or approach) on the isolating and breaking-down (or *chiseling*) of frame-units. (In Isou's precocious and absolutist view, the arts had long passed their *amplic*, expansive, growing phase.)[8] Since, in works like Isou's experimental classic *Treatise on Slime and Eternity* (1951), this involved drawing and scratching on the celluloid strip (before Stan Brakhage – who was deeply impressed and influenced by Isou – and others made this a familiar aesthetic gesture), we are already knee-deep in both the theory and practice of the photogram, and thus also of animation itself. And we have all along assumed – quite wrongly – that post-war Parisian film culture was entirely Bazinian! (Let us not forget that, in another contemporaneous sector of French film culture, *Cahiers*' rival publication *Positif* was always drawn to celebrating the artifice of animation in all its popular and artistic forms – and 'positivist' champions of the medium ranged from early animation historian Robert Benayoun to Švankmajer's Czech Surrealist neighbour Petr Král.)

More recently, in a powerful revisitation and reconsideration of the legacy of film semiotics, Kuntzel's close compatriot Raymond Bellour (in his magnum opus *Le Corps du cinéma*) has refined his close analysis from the level of the shot to the unit of the photogram – taking, as his supreme example of the second-by-second 'mapping of emotion' in cinema, the animated credits sequence of flapping avian wings (against a bed of no less artificial synthesised noises) in Alfred Hitchcock's

6 Thierry Kuntzel, "Le défilement: A View in Close-Up," *Camera Obscura* 2 (Autumn 1977): 51-65; Edward Colless, "Between the Legs of the Mermaid," *The Illusion of Life II: More Essays on Animation*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Sydney: Power Publications, 2007) 229-242.

7 Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," *Selected Writings Volume 4: 1938-1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000): 389-400.

8 Jean-Isidore Isou, "Esthétique du cinéma," *Ion* 1 (April 1952) : 7-153.

The Birds (1963).[9] And as it goes in advanced theory and criticism, it also goes in film practice, especially in the realm of the experimental or avant-garde: thus, from the prodigious contemporary Austrian scene, the case of Peter Tscherkassky's masterpieces *Outer Space* (1999) and *Dream Work* (2001), which are generated from a meticulous, manual 'light pencil' process trained on single frames from Sidney J. Furie's horror film *The Entity* (1983), images or scraps of images which are decomposed and layered many times over, but all in-camera, on the same photographic celluloid strip…

It may be true today, as Laura Mulvey has argued, that the digital era – with its genuine potentiality to draw, create and animate absolutely anything – paradoxically "allows a cinephilic meditation on the cinema's relation to reality… to continually rediscover the beauty, that Bazin compared to the flower or snowflake, of the indexical sign."[10] But the cinema of Švankmajer invites us, even demands of us, that we sidestep such vertiginous theoretical nostalgia for the photographed real impressed onto the celluloid, at one time and in one place only. His work, as we can now see it within history – a history that, in his case, is still unfolding – has always straddled the idealised conceptual realms of the analogical and the digital. And the widespread existence of his work today on the delivery system of DVD makes it abundantly clear that his vibrant manifesto of animation comes to us from deep within a buried genealogy of cinema, and extends far beyond us into the future of all audiovisual media.

So I propose a Švankmajerian game: a game with DVD. Using several of the animator's earliest shorts as its material (I could have used any, or all, of them), its most direct inspiration is *Game with Stones* (1965). Indeed, it is striking to realise how many Švankmajer films, in a clearly Surrealist tradition, present themselves as games or exercises or fantasias… where poetic creation is sparked by a set of rules or constraints, however bizarre or cryptic these rules may be. The game, like the dream for Daney (as quoted above), is "only a montage of coded elements, obeying precise, impersonal rules." And the peculiarly savage or violent side of Švankmajer's art – the side that intersects with the wildest cartoons of Tex Avery from the 1930s to the '50s, or of Terry Gilliam in the *Monty Python's Flying Circus* era of the '70s – arises from the fact that, increasingly as his career continues, games can so easily tip over into personal combat or full-scale war… and in this sense, it is but a small step from his first film, *The Last Trick* in 1964, to *Dimensions of Dialogue* in 1982, and all the way to *Surviving Life* (2010) and *Insects* (2015).

Apart from *Game with Stones* itself, the pool for our game includes *The Last Trick* (1964) and *J. S. Bach – Fantasy in G Minor* (1965) – all available on the formidable British Film Institute box-set *Jan Švankmajer: The Complete Short Films*. It is to this DVD that my time-code numberings relate; and most other versions available online are derived from this source, give or take a few frames.

The game is simple, and arises from the attempt to deal with a century-old question of aesthetic criticism: how to describe, analyse, account for the work of animation in cinema, this work which proceeds deftly from frame-to-frame, and cannot be generalised into higher-levels of abstraction (of a literary inspiration) like narrative, character, theme or atmosphere? Indeed, the more closely we look at animation in its frame-to-frame articulations, the more we realise that all these so-called higher-level unities are themselves completely imaginary structures of coherence, revealed to be self-deconstructing at every moment that they are examined, questioned and attacked. Švankmajer's cinema is the art of disintegration and dispersal, an atomic art.

So: in the spirit of automatism (a feature which looms large in his work), the game I am playing is to randomly freeze my DVD at whim as I watch these three films: not looking for anything, not trying to catch anything. Indeed, given the tiny but decisive split-second delays between the eye noticing, the finger pressing, and the machine stopping, I never get what I think I might get when I perform this exercise. The film trips me up, surprises me – and I trick my own brain off its usual linear, rational track. In animation – as Kuntzel intuited and demonstrated – stopping the flow of the film has the potential to unearth something which is

9 Raymond Bellour, *Le corps du cinéma: Hypnoses, émotions, animalités* (Paris: P.O.L., 2009).

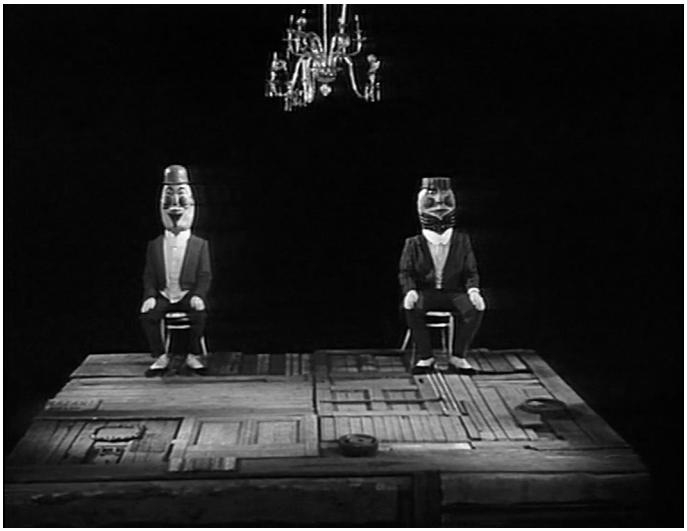
10 Laura Mulvey, "Some Reflections on the Cinephilia Question," *Framework* 50.1&2 (2009): 193.

unconscious or latent in the film-strip – even repressed, although it is hard to imagine Jan Švankmajer as a repressed individual – because we see connective or bridging moments, always in the midst of the flux of multiple movements, that were not initially designed to ever be noted or contemplated in this way.

Once the film is frozen, then the writing work of free association begins, the critic must let himself or herself go: it is only via this path that we will ever uncover the true, underlying, profound unities of Švankmajer's work. Here lies the paradox of Švankmajer's cinema: clearly so intuitive and free, itself so associative, and yet it is also necessarily what Philippe Garrel called (in another context) "manual work with the unconscious,"[11] work that is completely concrete and material.

THE LAST TRICK
(AKA MRS SCHWARZWALD & MR EDGAR'S LAST TRICK)

1.40. Wide shot of two figures on a stage – men wearing large masks or head-pieces. Already Švankmajer, during the inventively busy credits of the film, has tipped his hat as to the kind of representational game he is setting in motion: we see his actors put on their costumes. But already there has been a note of ambiguity, caught in the rigid *stillness* of the performers. What creates this stillness exactly: the human body, or the animatic apparatus? Is it a figure in repose, or a frozen and multiply-registered photogram? Now, with our two figures on stage about to play their tricks, the ambiguity grows much larger: the actors are further away from our eye now, so we cannot check their giveaway vital signs, such as breathing or trembling. We can never precisely tell whether it is they or the film itself which has stilled (and recall the significance which Bellour attributes to those moments when an otherwise moving film becomes still)[12] – or, more profoundly, at what exact mark or moment the organic-human has given way to the mechanical-animated. (Throughout *The Last Trick*, there is an intermediate term that marks this constant passage back-and-forth between extreme poles: that black bug obliviously wandering across every surface.) As in Japanese anime, every freeze of this sort

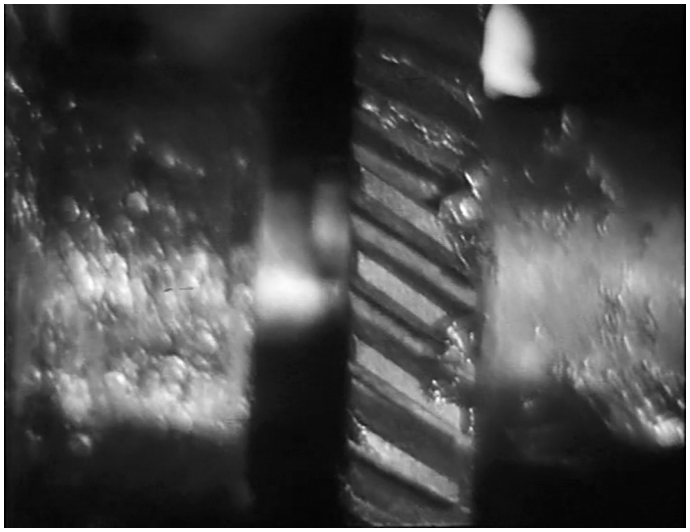


in Švankmajer is, in fact, a major moment of tension, of suspension: we wonder, will things ever unfreeze, move again? There is a subtle anguish at play here, preyed upon with masterly sadism by Švankmajer: if a freeze jams for good, it means that the entire cinematic apparatus has, for all intents and purposes, broken down. And in Švankmajer (like in Borowczyk and the Quays) there is an abiding obsession – long before the cyberpunk or steampunk movements – with all kinds of wheezing, broken-down, patched-together apparatuses...

2.28. The insert of a fish (a typical Švankmajerian crafted-sculpted object) which is being drawn by Mr Edgar from his hat. With a perfect mimicry of classical, live-action-photography editing technique: there is a match-cut between the hand lifting up the fish in mid-shot, and this close-up insert, continuing the movement (and a glimpse of the white-gloved hand). But wait! Stranger things are happening here in this cut, as they will happen for the eternity of the filmmaker's career. This fish-object is now abstracted in complete blackness: there is no background detail of the set with which it visually matches – not even the hat which is meant to be right below it. The physical space has itself been redrawn, banished, reconjured: a constant principle of *découpage* in Švankmajer, affecting the smallest articulations of the montage. And why not? – the animator has this freedom, there is no real space

11 Daney & Garrel, "Dialogue," 59.

12 Raymond Bellour, 'The Film Stilled," *Camera Obscura* 24 (September 1990): 98-123.



or scenography that he must respect or reconstitute from one image to the next. (Soon we will observe this same fish flying, falling, tumbling through the dark air interminably, like Tex Avery's plummeting animals or Leni Riefenstahl's high-board Olympic divers.) Henceforth, every aspect of an image – if we call it a shot, that designation too becomes ambiguous in this shadowy realm between live-action photography and animation – every aspect becomes enigmatic, doubled. Is this fish-in-darkness being pulled up out of a static frame, or is the camera panning down? (The effect of motion is the same, either way.) And, at the end of this small but decisive spectacle, there is a camera movement – it could be an actual, hand-manipulated movement of the lens, or an animated movement, who knows? – which takes us out to a wider view of this disquieting fish. A point-of-view effect: but whose POV? The look or gaze (in French, the *regard*) is always a mysterious, wandering, floating entity in Švankmajer, passing between the maker, his quasi-human subjects, we the spectators, and something else that is more disturbing, a kind of Fourth Eye that belongs to something large and impersonal, like the State Apparatus itself, or God (or Satan) himself.

3.00. An extreme close-up view inside the head, the skull of Mr Edgar – mechanical gears, assembled according to some unknowably functional, mechanical plan or logic. A true Duchampian bachelor-machine. And another impossible match-cut – from the actor with his mask, to the constructed interior of his head. This particular film is entirely built upon that impossible transition between two different kinds of visible reality; but, indeed, many Švankmajer works are constructed on a notion we can call a *phantasmagoria of the interior*. This is also true of many obsessive avant-garde filmmakers – Britain's Jeff Keen offers a remarkable example from the same '60s era. What is phantasmagoric here is precisely the sense (palpable at every micro-movement, every photogrammic split-second) of something bottomless, backless, endless: an infinite world opens up inside even the smallest particle of being or object-ness. The possibility of a kind of *infinite zoom* explodes in our minds: little wonder that Švankmajer, like Mario Bava, is so fond of these invasive, quite sexual zoom-motions!

4.07. There is only one problem with DVD analysis of animation: we cannot freeze a unit of the soundtrack in the same way we halt the image. The sound disappears when we push the freeze button: it truly partakes of what Bellour once called *the unattainable text*.[13] We cannot experience a sound that has been suspended in this way. But at this moment of the film, I mark a change, which is once again something powerfully

13 Raymond Bellour, "The Unattainable Text," *The Analysis of Film* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000) 21-68.

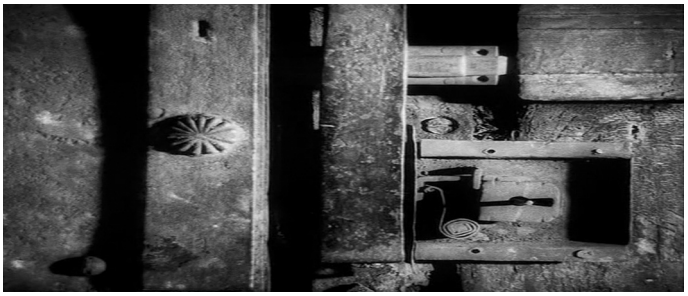
consistent in Švankmajer: the abrupt cutting-off of one channel of sound, music in this case (was he influenced by Godard's aural montages of the early '60s?) as the scene-with-figures is snatched from our view – no fade-out of music, no clean or smooth sonic transition – and its replacement, at the same grating volume, of a fragment of percussion, somewhere between *musique concrète* and what sound technicians call foley noises (the footsteps, slammed doors, shaking leaves, etc, which they ingeniously simulate). Earlier, during the credits, we have had a riot of such disjunctive sound-cuts: two years before Robert Bresson continually interrupted a Schubert piano piece, during the opening credits of *Au hazard, Balthazar!* (1966), with the harsh braying of a donkey, Švankmajer keeps breaking up the pleasant folk-popular tune with every imaginable kind of sound-performance: poured water, typewriters, tapping, ticking, ringing bells… finally giving way to the plucked strings of Zdenek Sikola's score, itself a sound in-between noise and music.

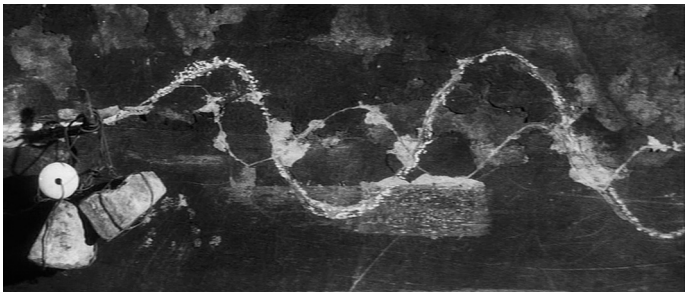
J.S. BACH: FANTASY IN G MINOR

0.33. What is this – a conventional, character-based prologue in a Švankmajer film? It is surely a ruse. A mysterious man wearing coat and hat enters a building, looks around, climbs the stairs; POV movements projected from his body or eyes sweep us up, up, up… It could be the start of a genre film, a thriller (are we

travelling up a tower like James Stewart in *Vertigo*?); and, as such, this oddly extended prologue (fifteen shots, in two minutes and ten seconds, while the credits appear) may remind us of many sequences to come in cinema history (Švankmajer *prefigures* so much), by Roman Polanski in *Repulsion* (1965), or the protracted scene of Asia Argento's descent down into a building in her father Dario's horror epic *The Third Mother* (2007)… and all in pristine CinemaScope. But, of course, once this perfectly normal live-action figure sits down to play a pipe organ, thus triggering the mechanism of the animation, we will never see or return to him (at least not directly, in visual representation) again…

2.16. The bolted lock on an old door – one of literally hundreds we will see in the coming minutes (Švankmajer loves manic accumulation of static, inert objects, as with the skulls and bones in *The Ossuary*, 1970) – in a photogram that looks like one of a million art photographs, teetering between documentary and surrealism, that litter today's Documentas and Biennales. The content of this black-and-white film is beguiling. Edited in strict – deliberately too-strict – relationship to Bach's music, we see a montage of objects, inserts, all of them completely depopulated: walls, doors, windows, locks; patches of brickwork or concrete. (Some of these details were, in retrospect, glimpsable in the normal-seeming prologue.) Perhaps Švankmajer had experienced the ambiguity of scale in Antonioni's early-'60s filming of some similar objects, weaving in and out of his fictions of the glamorous bourgeoisie: how big, exactly, is a crack, a patch of wall, an indefinable broken-off piece of something-or-other, when it is filmed flat, straight-on, sundered from any relation to any nearby familiar object or body?



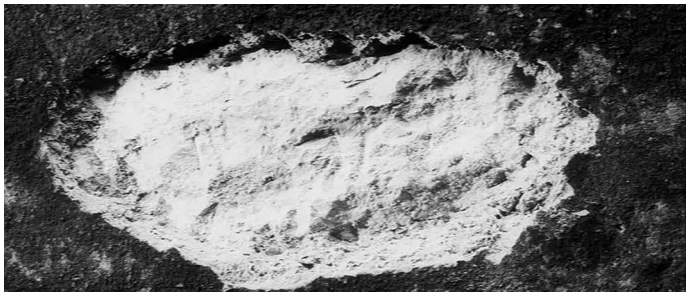


Instead of the phantasmagoria of the interior, here we encounter another essential pole of the Švankmajerian aesthetic: a *phantasmagoria of the surface*, taunting us not with its potentially infinite expanse, but the exact opposite: the effect of a barring or blocking of our vision, a refusal of depth, a concentration of the universe into some banal microcosm of detritus and waste. A fixation on *texture*, with obviously fetishistic – but also severely depersonalised – overtones. (Béla Tarr in Hungary will later take this fetishism of texture back to an Antonioniesque but proletarian fiction.) So much lattice work, so many accidental or planned patterns, so much geometry to be found for the gaze that goes in ever closer to the wall or the floor or the void… And all exacerbated by the sudden switch out of any natural CinemaScopic aspect ratio: now everything is stretched tight, right out of natural, given dimensions, to fit the screen-image.

2.37. Things pile up in this film. At the same time, as in all his work, it is evidently and clearly structured, in clusters or blocks of imagery (with very few repetitions or reprises inside the block structure). Here at this moment, we hit a change in the structure, a gear-shift so characteristic of how Švankmajer moves from block to block in a piece: we witness a long tracking shot, 45 seconds (which, in context, seems extremely stretched-out), along some kind of white line marked onto (or erupted from) a wall, tracing its wayward path up and down like a sine wave. The image is a surreal sort of joke: at this juncture, the up-and-down line, as it is discovered by the moving camera, seems to illustrate the noodling of the music, which moves around and around a few notes until issuing onto a mighty chord. But, once more, fundamental ambiguity intrudes: is the image really illustrating the music, or is the wall itself, with its strange markings, the score that triggers the music? (I am reminded of several live, expanded-cinema concert events in which musicians have improvised to the continuous, unbroken, abstract lines and swirls of projected animation.) Here, Švankmajer opens up the mysterious and ever-reversible relations between image and sound in cinema: which one drives the other, which is the master and which is the slave? A fundamental question in cinema all too often decided in the most conventional direction, in favour of image and against sound. But literally, from the first sounds of his first film, Švankmajer attacks, inverts, questions and complicates this assumption. In this, he is a close cousin to another radically experimental animator: Robert Breer.

3.44. The phantasmagoric surfaces are now multiplying in a new way: not piling up one after the other, but opening or closing, to engulf/absorb or reveal one another. The very word *animation*, at such moments, becomes opaque and strange to us: what is animating these spreading voids, these instantaneous erosions or corruptions of matter; what force could possibly be at work to hasten such natural destruction? Likewise, we can never quite fathom what animates the camera either, whether technically or spiritually: why does it dart now left or right, now up or down, now in or out (the zoom, always the zoom)? This *Fantasy in G Minor*, by taking David Bordwell's idea (formulated two decades later) of a *parametric narration* to an extreme – linking things in film by pure patterns of form, rather than content – also reduces the theory to rubble, to a kind of blabbering, hysterical nonsense.)[14] For there

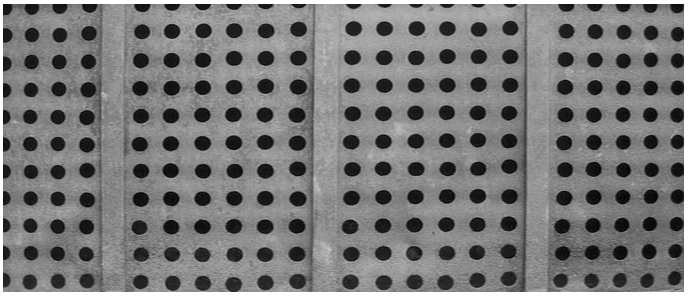
14 David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).



exists nothing but formal parameters in this film, and yet the parameters are inherent, given in the simplest, weirdest things of a broken-down everyday world. Svankamjer, the director of doors and floors, pots and pans, hammers and nails…

4.27. Have you ever heard anyone say – watching, for instance, the slow-motion vistas in a Wong Kar-wai film, or a frenetic Scorsese Steadicam tracking shot – that 'the image is in the same rhythm as the music'? Švankmajer's fantasia on Bach reveals the ludicrousness, the inadequacy of all such statements. Music is (usually, traditionally) rhythmic, while a camera movement occurs in an arrhythmic stream or flow; in truth, any music of any rhythm whatsoever can be 'married' with any camera movement at any speed – and clever filmmakers (from Lang and Murnau to Ruiz and Kwan) have long researched the mysterious alchemy of these 'just right' connections. What Švankmajer does – as in the photogram, at this point, of round holes in a built structure – is to outrageously multiply the possible analogies of form that might conceivably link music to image; there are literally hundreds of such analogies across the film, analogies based on intrinsic properties of shape, size, speed, shade, structure, and then patterns imposed by montage, camera angle, chemical development and grading of the film-stock… so much so that the effect is finally, liberatingly funny, a riot of analogy. A semiotic comedy! (And, of course, many of the finest Eastern European theorists of language and media have found fertile ground for study in Švankmajer.)[15] As always, the filmmaker taunts us by evoking a phantasmatic content to this piece where there really is none; this sly taunting reaches its semiotic

15 See the essays and interviews collected in the special Švankmajer issue of *Afterimage* 13 (Autumn 1987).



height when a series of linked movements upwards – a staggered pan, in sections with slight pauses in-between – immediately conjures a movie-style Hitchcockian dread, even suspense in us. What is to be revealed at the end of these insistent movements? Nothing…

6.04. A light goes off (the first of two times this will happen, to start and end a particular cluster). Again, the mystery of what narrative theorists call *motivation*, the reason in a story for anything to happen as it does and when it does: does the light turn itself off? Do (as soon will occur) doors simply fling themselves open to our (or the camera's) gaze, always revealing a deep-black darkness? There is no discernible human agent to perform such actions. Is it some other kind of life-force (or death-force) within objects themselves, or within networks like the electrical system? Entropy, chaos,

self-intelligent machines: no wonder Švankmajer speaks so directly to the digital, computerised imagination of our world today.

7.37. A dramatic tracking-forward shot (surely influenced by Resnais' sinuous tracking movements, in his early shorts and features, frequently without characters on hand to see or guide them) leads to what seems and feels like a euphoric flight outdoors, away

from Gothic interiors and into sunlight… but where is that organist fellow as our screen-delegate to perform this escape route? He has well and truly vanished from the imaginary space of the film by now. But if we can still project him into this flight – suddenly the walls are viewed a little more normally, from a bit further away, side-on as the camera sweeps past them – we also see where this Sisyphean effort ends, in the manner of Absurdist theatre and cinema: just at another endlessly textured and metamorphosing flat wall.

8.45. There is something you see in motion here in this dead-end montage-cluster – a disturbance of vision, a superimposition of the same image of brick or concrete texture in two different positions (this could be a David Lynch film) – that you cannot catch in a freeze-frame: you can only see one position or the other, not both

registering simultaneously thanks to the persistence of vision in your eye and brain. Švankmajer's animation finally defeats the DVD assassin.

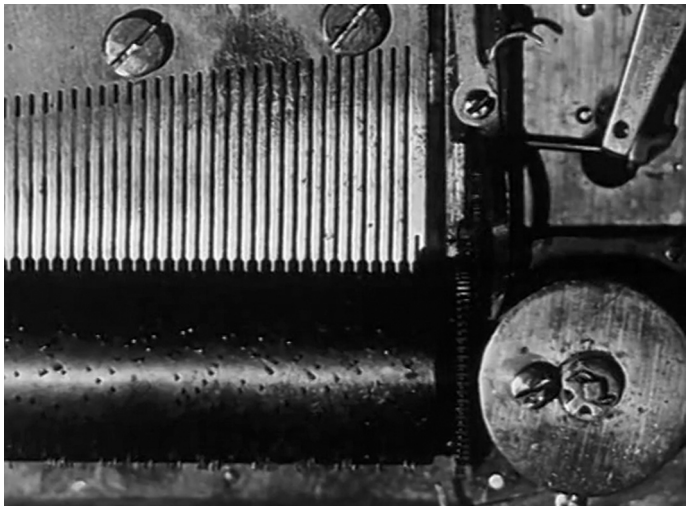
9.14. The film ends with a montage of double windows: paired window-frames (of many different styles and qualities) which sit beside each other symmetrically. Something tugs at us emotionally here, as the organ music churns to its *fortissimo* conclusion: twin windows

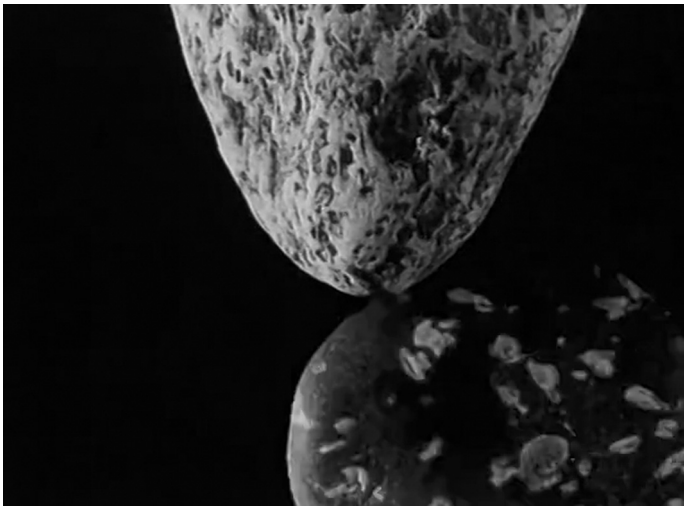
as the friends, the lovers, the siblings who never entirely fuse, or (to the contrary) will always be stuck together, forever? Two divided film frames that will never be one on the celluloid strip, except in the fleeting illusion of movement? But, once more and finally, Švankmajer mocks (while creating) the symbolic and anthropomorphic interpretation: if we learn anything from his art, it is that what is insistent, even obsessive, is not necessarily meaningful in the sense of closing down (as Roland Barthes would have said) on an utterable, bland signified. Švankmajer, or the merry flight of the signifier.

GAME WITH STONES

1.37. A door opens, cracks of uncertain size and scale are traced along by the camera, until we reach a strange mechanism, revealed to us (and simultaneously hidden from us) in a lightning montage of parts and gears. Up to this point, *Game with Stones* seems to recapitulate everything Švankmajer had explored in the two previous films. But then, when the clock strikes, the game starts – again, a game without human agency – with a tap opening and depositing two stones (one white, one black) in a bucket, and Švankmajer's art suddenly is set to leap to a new level. As in films of Busby Berkeley,[16] the moment that the stones (whatever their size, shape, colour or number) hit their allotted spot, the film takes off into pure choreographic abstraction, like a musical sequence (with tinkly-toy automated music as accompaniment): the stones dance, dissolve, rub and run along each other, always in relation to the parameters announced, visually, in the bucket. Finally, the bucket turns and tips out its occupants: end of round. It is the kind of weird,

16 See my "Busby Berkeley, Ken Jacobs: A Precarious, Extravagant, Populist and Constructivist Cinema," *Optic Antics: The Amazing Cinema of Ken Jacobs*, ed. Michèle Pierson and David E. James (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).





macabre game we might find in Raymond Roussel, a writer whose literary avant-gardism was compared, by Jean-Louis Comolli, precisely to Busby Berkeley, for the way in which the Hollywood filmmaker demonstrated "*how* images are born and take form, allowing their constitution element by element, until the image is complete and complex – then, he takes the image apart just at the moment when anyone else would be tempted to freeze it, decomposing it an element at a time, until it is returned to its original forms."[17] Švankmajer also works that way.

3.35. What tender anthropomorphism is this? Stones in love, caressing, tickling, enticing each other? Like with the final twin windows in the Bach fantasia, the human meaning is both evoked and mocked – but more mocked than seriously evoked. Švankmajer begins at a point beyond such humanist symbolism, but he is always careful to destroy its last remnants, to make the gesture of emptying out this traditional temptation of reading. So let us not, either, call these games with stones Kafkaesque, although the feeling of that is always lurking; that would be to put the human (or at least, absurdly bureaucratic) figure back into the picture. What we witness here is the mystery – and the inspired spark – of all narrative plotting, of any generation of story events: objects in movement, differentiated in some stark way, suddenly create pure fiction: attraction and repulsion, seduction and murder, shyness and abandon.

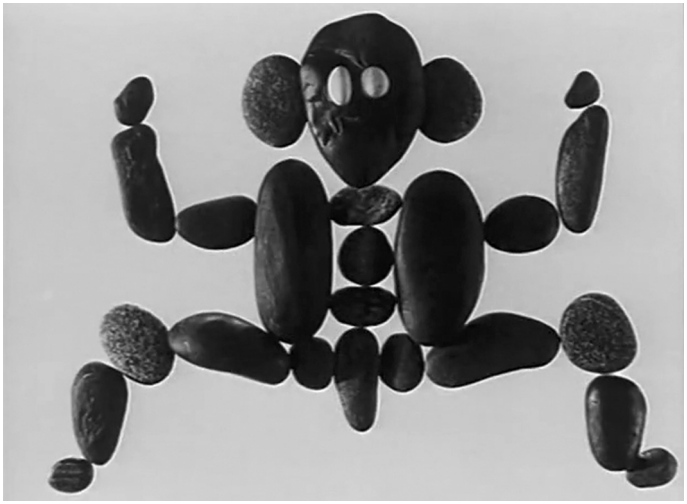
3.48. Was Švankmajer thinking here of a famous Robert McKimson cartoon titled *Early to Bet* made for Warner Bros. in 1951, a black comedy about the endless repetition of a card game and, when one player loses, a spinning wheel that prescribes elaborate punishments? What that cartoon teaches us, by exaggeration, is that the more you repeat a narrative set-up or *dispositif* (as we would say today), the faster and more abbreviated

17 Jean-Louis Comolli, "La danse des images: kaleidoscope de Busby Berkeley," *Cahiers du cinéma* 174 (January 1966): 24. English translation: "Dancing Images," *Cahiers du cinéma in English* 2 (1966): 22-26.

you can run it through, until it is almost a blur. (Lubitsch too, in the cartoonish extreme of his live-action comedy, also knew this, as did ex-cartoonist Frank Tashlin.) This is what Švankmajer does here: each time the clock-apparatus readies itself to begin the game, the sound of ticking, the swinging of the pendulum, the glimpse of the inner gears, and the turning of the tap, get sped up and stylised even more. At one point, he even feels bold enough to suppress the clock sound altogether.

4.07. The birth of the anthropomorphic, suddenly: formed from stones and their broken-off pieces, primitive figurines assemble and disassemble themselves: absurd anatomy lessons, child-like games of magic and savage representation... Švankmajer will pursue this idea, intermittently, throughout the rest of the film: faces that kiss, corporeal masses that break up and swallow or incorporate each other... It resembles a Georges Bataille-like vision of erotic energy and the unformed matter of the world and Being. But Švankmajer is always careful to take us back, abruptly, to the purely mechanical, the brute objecthood of stones – stones, the least Romantic of all possible substances. It is as if he dared himself to be able to make some poetry from these ugly, misshapen lumps of material. Švankmajer has always worked between, and across, the standard poles of the grotesque/monstrous and the beautiful/lyrical – and regularly inverted their conventional, dualistic relationship with enormous flair.

8.12. The game of stones starts and restarts – it could go on forever, the clock will always tick and chime, the music will always play, the tap will always open. But one element gives out – the bottom of the bucket rips open – and everything ceases. When the *dispositif* breaks, the fiction, and the fancy, are no more. No more possibility of form, or its parametric play. To conclude the film, Švankmajer fashions a sort of funereal epilogue, which is as surprising and as extended as the human prologue to *Fantasy in G Minor*. The music plays on, and the shots of now inert, broken, or seemingly *waiting* objects hang suspended, going around and around in the montage for a full 50 seconds – 50 seconds of nothingness. Except for this precise, single photogram: a strange flare of light, some kind of filming error, which produces, as if from an inner agitation of the film-text, a ghostly doubling of the overexposed image of a portion of the now-useless bucket. An error easily edited out (nothing is in motion, after all), but decidedly left inside the *défilement*, as perhaps a last, libindal flicker of life or desire... These strangely sad stones, doomed never to be re-animated. In a Švankmajer film, the movement given to an object-being may be delirious or nightmarish, it may be graceful or disgusting – but to have no chance of moving at all, that is surely tragic. The post-human tragedy of Jan Švankmajer!



TRAVIS JEPPESEN

TARR BLACK

UNDERSTANDING FINALITY IN *THE TURIN HORSE*

The adjective "apocalyptic" – and, even worse, "post-apocalyptic" – tends to suffer overuse from lazy journalists and deadline critics whose surface-glazing is rarely burdened with the task of accurately translating what's happening before them into the medium to which they've dedicated themselves. Banal summarization followed by a brief compilation of superficial observations – often encoded in jargon – lend a pseudo-authoritative air to the critical task. This is one of the dangers of criticism's increasing turn away from language-as-worldview, its diminution from artform to "service." Buzz and cliché allegedly suffice when faced with a certain intellectual lethargy, a poverty of expression. Not only does a film like *Turin Horse* deserve better – it has a lot to say about the conditions that have dragged criticism, along with all the other arts, down to this degraded level.

Of course, you're more likely to have heard about *The Turin Horse* than to have seen it. Nowadays, we normally prefer the background story to the messy task of engagement: *The Turin Horse* is to be Bela Tarr's (gasp!) final film. After a career stretching back to 1977 and spanning only nine feature-length films, the great auteur has announced that he has nothing left to say. The finality embedded in this news story is significant, but not in and of itself; it is only significant in relation to what his final statement, *The Turin Horse,* imparts.

Unlike the melody sung by the critical chorus, *The Turin Horse* is not about the end of the world. It could be that Tarr's film was overshadowed by Lars von Trier's *Melancholia.* Connoisseurs and critics look at the three major European festivals for signs and symptoms of the Zeitgeist, and 2011 was momentous at each

for unveiling a major work by three of the continent's most iconic – when not iconoclastic – auteurs: Berlin had Tarr's horse, Cannes presented von Trier's apocalypse, and Venice gave us Aleksandr Sokurov's *Faust.* Beyond winning awards, both Tarr and von Trier managed to stir controversy at the Festivals – Tarr with his retirement announcement, but also his subsequent alleged criticism of the Hungarian government, which led to a delay of the film's release in his home country; and von Trier's provocative Nazi-sympathizing jokes at his press conference at Cannes. Both feats arguably brought more publicity to the films than they would have received otherwise. And, considering that von Trier's film is more readily digestible than Tarr's, it's not inconceivable that some overlap spurred the confused critical reception of the latter film.

But if anything, *The Turin Horse* was the anti-*Melancholia.* Tarr would never do something so elaborate and overstated as Lars von Trier. As is nearly always the case, von Trier's film showcased that director's compulsion to make a sweeping, melodramatic gestural statement, a bizarre therapeutic exhibitionism of his own private neuroses. Tarr's film, on the other hand, is his most simplistic and straightforward to date. Von Trier is disaffected; Tarr is unaffected.

Tarr's film clearly expresses what the real tragedy is: that the world has not ended and will not end. The world is infinite. But greatness is not. *The Turin Horse* implies that to live in a world without great cinema, great art – a world, in short, devoid of humanity – is to not live at all, but to dwell onwards in a state of inner deadness. In such a state, the apocalypse would come as a relief.

To understand *The Turin Horse,* I must try to write *through The Turin Horse,* or, perhaps more aptly, *within The Turin Horse,* to enter into that space that is marked by Tarr and yet is no longer his sole domain as he has offered it up, his vision, to anyone willing to submit to the suspension of real time and alienation of real space that entering into the cinematic scenario entails.

As is usual with Tarr – at least since 1988's *Kárhozat* (Damnation), which marked the first film in his second and final stylistic phase that his name has become synonymous with – the premise is deliberately simple. For all the treacherous hubbub about the supposed "difficulty" of Tarr's films, he is actually something of a minimalist. I say "something," because his is not the classical, capitalized form of Minimalism we tend to think of when we hear the word spoken – that minimalism has been so usurped into the culture that it is well and large a part of the highest echelons of that industry: an oppositional austerity subsumed into a design principle that signifies wealth and opulence. Tarr's minimalism is rooted in poverty, one of the central recurring subjects in Tarr's oeuvre ever since his first feature, *Családi tűzfészek* (Family Nest). For Tarr, poverty is of course a social concern, yet, working as he is within the European auteur tradition – a tradition that links film with philosophy, literature, painting, and sculpture – poverty is above all constantly (re-)considered as a spiritual condition. In short, that *conditionality,* its eternal variations, has always been Tarr's big theme.

The difficulty of Tarr's films, I suppose, is that the plots are so simple, so little happens within the long extended shots, that they require an incredibly active mind if one is to admire them beyond the surface beauty and ponder the hidden and dire complexities that they probe. His films are minimal because they show a minimal form of existence, one that is marked by mere subsistence and little in the way of pleasure besides the temporary relief that drink can provide.

The film begins after Nietzsche.

"In Turin on 3rd January, 1889, Friedrich Nietzsche steps out of the doorway of number six, Via Carlo Albert. Not far from him, the driver of a handsome cab is having trouble with a stubborn horse. Despite all his urging, the horse refuses to move, whereupon the driver loses his patience and takes his whip to it. Nietzsche comes up to the throng and puts an end to the brutal scene, throwing his arms around the horse's neck, sobbing. His landlord takes him home, he lies motionless and silent for two days on a divan until he mutters the obligatory last words, and lives for another ten years, silent and demented, cared for by his mother and sisters. We do not know what happened to the horse."

Although the event occurred in the city of Turin, the film is not set in the city. For Tarr, it is never the city – a visitor will later ask the cabman why he doesn't go into town, to which he will reply: "The wind has blown it away" – but a rural outside, a desolate place

where gale winds blow constantly, where there is little else besides the stone house where the cabman and his daughter live and the barn next door where the horse is stalled. Outside, a hilled horizon marked by a single tree, and a well a few paces from the house.

The film is divided into six days.

Day one, the cabman returns home with his horse. His daughter emerges from the house and helps him put the ailing creature away in the barn. Inside the house, the daughter undresses her father. She then prepares the daily meal as he rests.

The girl stares out the window for a long time as the potatoes boil in a pot. Shot from behind, we are unable to examine the exact nature of her seeing, but we can surmise, from the context, that it is a sort of blind staring-out at the horizon's lack, a resignedness beyond wonder at the ferocity of the gales that have nothing to blow but dust into shapeless whirls. A few minutes later, she returns to stand over his bed. "It's ready," she says. It's the first word that's been spoken so far in the film.

What follows is the first of four studied scenes of the two eating. Each day, at the same time, father and daughter each eat a single boiled potato – nothing more. The intensive study of this simple act of consumption is one of the symbolic highpoints of the film. By this time, the viewer is well acquainted with Tarr's style – the extended length of the shots – which, again, may account for the alleged difficulty of the director's vision. In the dominant Hollywood cinema, the average shot length is around 3.5 seconds; Tarr's shots can last up to eleven minutes, or more. Famously, his version of *Macbeth,* filmed for Hungarian television, consisted of just two shots: the first five minutes in length, the second lasting all of sixty-seven minutes. Within the confines of narrative cinema, Tarr is perhaps the most anti-Hollywood director still breathing. The problems we encounter with the temporality of his films reveal our own positions as victims of a fascistic, totalizing culture industry. In watching his films, we re-learn what it means to look.

The father briskly peels the potato with his left hand, his right arm out of use owing to some ancient injury. He eats fast and furiously, but without passion. He just wants to get it over with. When he finishes, his daughter is still picking at hers, and so now it is his turn to get up and remove himself to the window where he can observe the wind's empty promises. In the foreground, the daughter eats much slower, but also dispassionately – so much so that she doesn't bother to finish her potato, but scrapes away the remains into a rubbish bin.

One can live on very little, yet still manage to go on existing. This, however, is not really living, Tarr implies. The stark black-and-white photography serves to accentuate the brutalitarianism of Tarr's vision. It is all contrasts in Tarr's black world – these contrasts help us see the world clearer. You get the feeling that there is not a lot of color in anything he chooses to photograph anyway.

Second day. Daughter wakes up, go to the well, fetches two pails of water. Inside, she dresses her father. Father takes two shots of palinka, a strong fruit brandy made in the Carpathians. Daughter takes one shot. This, and the potato, is what gets them through the day.

They go outside to the barn. Struggle through the wind to remove the wagon. Saddle up the horse. Horse won't move. The cabman whips the horse hysterically, but to no avail.

They did not create the horse. But they need her to survive.

The daughter emerges from the barn. "Can't you see she won't move?" she cries out to the old man. "Stop it!"

Daughter begins to unsaddle the horse. Father has no choice but to go along with it. The horse is taken back inside the barn, while the humans remove themselves to their holding place.

In black-and-white, nothing has value. Everything just *is.* The daughter is not a good or bad daughter. The father is not a good or bad father. They play the simple roles that life, the cinema, has assigned them, go through the few motions that the day has in store.

The horse is ailing. She is losing her function.

Film, as a material and a physical process, is becoming obsolete, we all know; it will die one day soon. Let us stop to review the elements at this point. We have the long, extended takes, altering the temporal aspects of our perception; we have the two characters;

the third character of the wind, and the music, and more of both of these below; we have the horse, rarely seen, its titular presence nonetheless overshadowing all images we do take in. All vital signs – no apocalypse so far! – and yet through them, we intuit an enunciation of Tarr's oppositionality. Tarr is just as political as, say, Jean-Luc Godard; Tarr's politics are always embedded within his style. It is no accident that Tarr's two stylistic phases coincided with two regimes: under communism, he turned Social Realism around to critique the very system that that rigidly codified style was meant to promote through his chatty, Cassavetes-esque dramas, while under the totalitarian dictates of free market capitalism, his cinema shifts into second gear, traversing those terrains we are meant to want to look away from at a painstakingly slow pace.

Father chops wood with his one good arm. Chops with the same brute bluntness that he whips the horse with, peels and eats the potato with. He is an automaton, reduced to the level of a simple one-armed machine. He knows neither ambition nor emotion, except for passing flashes of anger erupting from the blanket of vegetative frustration that has come to form his core.

Again: "It's ready." One word in Hungarian.

They sit at the table.

Today we will watch the girl's eating of the potato. She peels it using both hands with a studied delicatesse, perhaps wistfulness. While her father's annihilative approach reduces the potato to burning mashed bits, the girl's careful rationing allows for her preference of pronounced chunks. She blows the warmth out of each bit before masticating the few she requires, scraping the remains into a bin alongside the peels. The morose figure of the father, long ago finished, has already taken up his position at the window, where he dozes off to the gales' tortured tune.

The wind. You could close your eyes for the entire duration and just *listen* to the film and come away with an understanding nearly equal to the experience of *watching* it. Weather, as is often the case in Tarr (i.e. the torrential rains of *Damnation*), is one of the main characters in the film. Its constant presence is mostly heard, only *seen* – felt – when the cabman and his daughter exit the cabin. It is the inner soundtrack to the characters' lives, while the outer soundtrack – the music that occasionally creeps in to accentuate the overall poverty of the scene – is a single droning theme of sadness and desolation, excerpts from an infinite loop.

The placid calm of the second day is suddenly interrupted by the arrival of a third character into their lives. The importance of contrasts – dualisms, polarities, however you want to call it – will now be explicitly spelled out by his unprompted speech. Knocking on the door before entering, he comes like a prophet of truth into the lives of the cabman and his daughter. He is there to ask for a bottle of palinka. Like them, he is poor; unlike them, he still has a voice.

"Everything's in ruin," the man says, "everything's been degraded…But I could say that they've ruined and degraded everything. Because this is not some sort of cataclysm coming about with the help of so-called innocent human aid. On the contrary, it's about man's own judgment, his own judgment over his own self, which of course God has a hand in, or dare I say: takes part in. And whatever he takes part in is the most ghastly creation that you can imagine. Because, you see, the world has been debased. So it doesn't matter what I say because everything has been debased that they've acquired. And since they've acquired everything in a sneaky, underhand fight, they've debased everything. Because whatever they touch – and they touch everything – they've debased. This is the way it was until the final victory. Until the triumphant end. Acquire, debase. Debase, acquire. Or I can put it differently if you like: to touch, debase and thereby acquire, or touch, acquire and thereby debase. It's been going on like this for centuries. On and on and on. This and only this, sometimes on the sly, sometimes rudely, sometimes gently, sometimes brutally, but it has been going on and on. Yet only in one way, like a rat attacks from ambush. Because for this perfect victory it was also essential that the other side – that is, everything that's excellent, great in some way and noble – should not engage in any kind of fight. There shouldn't be any kind of struggle – just the sudden disappearance of one side, meaning the disappearance of the excellent, the great, the noble. So that by now these winning winners who attack from ambush rule the earth, and there isn't a single tiny nook where one can hide something from them, because everything they can lay their hands on

is theirs. Even things we think they can't reach – but they do reach – are also theirs, because the sky is already theirs and all our dreams. Theirs is the moment, nature, infinite silence. Even immortality is theirs, you understand? Everything, everything is lost forever! And those many noble, great and excellent just stood there, if I can put it that way. They stopped at this point, and had to understand, and had to accept that there is neither god nor gods. And the excellent, the great and the noble had to understand and accept this right from the beginning. But of course they were quite incapable of understanding it. They believed it and accepted it but they didn't understand it. They just stood there, bewildered, but not resigned, until something – that spark from the brain – finally enlightened them. And all at once they realized that there is neither god nor gods. All at once they saw that there is neither good nor bad. Then they saw and understood that if this was so, then they themselves do not exist either! You see, I reckon this may have been the moment when we can say that they were extinguished, they burnt out. Extinguished and burnt out like the fire left to smolder in the meadow. One was the constant loser, the other was the constant winner. Defeat, victory, defeat, victory. And one day – here in the neighborhood – I had to realize, and I did realize, that I was mistaken, I was truly miserable when I thought that there has never been and could never be any kind of change here on earth. Because, believe me, I know now that this change has indeed taken place."

"Come off it!" cries the old cabman in return. "That's rubbish!"

The messenger silently shrugs his shoulders, takes the bottle, puts down some money, and exits.

The girl goes to the window, watches him walk away. He pauses, midway to the horizon point, takes a swig of the bottle. Under such conditions, it is best to be drunk. Besides poverty, drunkenness is perhaps the other of Tarr's major motifs. This goes back to his great ode to beeriness, *The Outsider,* but recurs constantly in his films; there's a rumor that Tarr insists that the actors actually be drunk when he films such scenes. Nobody wants to *be* drunk. People like to *get* drunk. With alcohol, it is always the process that matters. Alcohol is one thing that propels motion, movement, it is one means of propelling vehicularity through non-physical means. Under certain conditions, communism (*Satantango*), it was one of the only means of escape…

The girl continues staring. Until blackness is achieved, signaling the accomplishment of night.

Third day, girl gets up, well, two buckets of water, dresses father, father two shots of booze, girl takes one.

If *The Turin Horse* were, as the lazy critics proclaim, an apocalyptic film, then it would be set in the present or the near future; not the late-19th century, the height of modernity. But here we have our critics' misunderstanding of the *Horse*'s dialectic with modernity. And to understand that, of course, then we have to go back to Nietzsche, to that moment that occurs off-screen before the film begins, that banal crazy moment that the father doesn't even feel compelled to tell his daughter about: the crazy man who saw in the beast something that he himself is unable to see.

Father goes out to the barn. Daughter follows. Shovels manure. The horse shits but it will not eat. "She's not eating," the daughter says. "She will," replies the father, walking away. "Eat," the girl begs the horse. "You have to eat!" The horse stands facing the wall.

They eat their potatoes. In this scene, a wide angle is employed that allows us to watch both father and daughter eat at once, comparing the father's scavenger ways to the daughter's reservedness. Neither of them savors. Suddenly the father looks up; daughter's gaze follows. A wagon approaching on the hilltop horizon. Gypsies. "What the fuck do they want here?" says the father, angrily.

The gypsies' horses are alive and healthy, galloping toward them. The gypsies are free. They are unburdened by commitment. The gypsies approach the well and steal some water. The father and daughter chase them away.

One of the gypsies gives the girl a holy book. She sits in the house and reads aloud from it, about the necessity of a ceremony of penitence wherever a deed of injustice has occurred. Outside, the wind continues its punishment.

Day four. The well has dried up. There's no more water, no more water. But there's still palinka.

Daughter goes in to see the horse. "Why don't you eat?" she asks. The horse won't drink, either. She begs it. But no.

Back in the house, father decides they will leave. They pack up their belongings. They try to go.

Now, we watch them. They fight the wind by walking the empty field to the horizon point, disappearing behind the tree.

One minute later, they re-appear, returning.

We watch them re-trace their path. All in all, the scene – the going and the returning – takes about six minutes, this false exit and return. We do not know what discouraged them from venturing onwards. Perhaps the hopelessness of the situation, admitted defeat against the wind's ceaseless violence.

Conditionality. It is the same now as it was then – despite our superficial notions of progress – resonating with Nietzsche's cognizance of the cyclical nature of time. The eternal return. Go away and come back again: it is the same over there as it is right here. You do not have to venture very far to find this out.

From outside the house, we watch as the girl retires in front of the window, staring.

The world, in its duplicative essence, makes us stare at it out the window of our own thoughts.

Fifth day. Daughter dresses father. Palinka. Father goes to barn. The horse. They stare at it, then shut the barn doors back up. The windy horizon as seen from the window. The father stares, stupefied into unconsciousness. Girl sews by the table. They eat their potatoes. Each single potato, as always. Father finishes first, as always, returns to his seat by the window. Nothing to do but remain passive.

That night, the oil lamps stop working.

No more water, no more fire – a reverse creation story.

Just darkness: the wind: a dying horse.

"Even the embers went out," resounds the daughter's voice.

"Tomorrow we'll try again," her father responds.

Horse and cinema are one and the same. They are both vehicles. Vehicles require fuel, sustenance, in order to continue living, breathing. The horse is a vehicle, this horse in particular is a cab, used to transport people from point A to point B. The body is also a vehicle, the vital essence of the body-mind machine; even when we stand absolutely still, our vehicularity is still operable: mind, an extension of body, is capable of moving the self aphysically through different domains, memories, images, realms of experience. In our "post-human" state – if a release from humanity is indeed what we as a species are truly currently yearning for – we are actually seeking a release from vehicularity. We no longer wish to be transported, all our longings have come to an end, stasis is the new world order. Instead, we have invested all our desires into a false god – technology – a false, outwardly-positioned vehicularity that provides little more than a dim superficial impression of motion, movement through the cosmos. An extreme limiting of possibilities: we no longer yearn for *actual* motion, but have been deceived by modes of illusory motion. Otherworldliness is no longer desirable, but total immersion in a world that does not, in fact, want us; a world we have divested of life force by allowing the opposing forces of mediocrity to assert and impose a system of false values. It is this process of investiture, of divestiture, that has been described by the visitor in his monologue, a process that the man and his daughter are unable, unwilling to acknowledge.

And Nietzsche? It could be said that it was his prescience that killed him, that drove him insane in the end. The horse he saw was not just a beautiful animal, but a symbol of all vitality. The moment that he touched the horse, Nietzsche lost his own vehicularity, becoming one with the horse, whose own process of loss – of surrender to eternal stasis – was well under way. Ensconced in modernity's carcinogenic pathos – a West lost to mysticism and the numinous potentialities of the unknown, insistent on the toxic notion of progress – the "excellent," the "great," and the "noble" face a fossilized future, dim anti-projections of an under-nourished self that, rather than "post-human," has become something less than human in an atmosphere that is defined by lack, where the winds are permanent and so nothing of any substance can remain for very long.

Here is what the triumph of mediocrity looks like:

The sixth day. Last four minutes before the film flickers out. Darkness. The pair seated at table. Their potatoes. Only now the daughter won't eat. "Eat," he tells her. He eats his potato raw; no water or fire to cook it. She silently refuses to eat hers. She has become like the horse. The father can't finish his, either. Both stare downwards at their empty plates.

DARREN TOFTS (PERFORMANCE), **LISA GYE** (PHOTOS),
JOHN KINSELLA (TEXTS)

TOFTS IN CHAIRS: WIZARD OF ID

ON A PHOTOGRAPHIC FOUND INSTALLATION COLLABORATION (DARREN PERFORMS EUGENE IONESCO'S "THE CHAIRS")

i.m. Niall Lucy

DARLINGHURST ROAD KING'S CROSS

In the hubcup mandala of palmfall,
stack of comfort raises a throne
against the insistence of brick
which is never monotonous keeping
the inside in, the outside out, in case
we need it. Perched as retrospect,
watching the *go-by* is not surveillance.

BOULEVARD DU MONTPARNASSE

A few too many absinthes
and a pause beside dogshit
fertilising the othered greenery;
O shirt to dazzle and muffle
the day as surely night will
blow us all away, and books
leave the bag declaratively.

LATIN QUARTER

Oh dazzle, *moto*, to contemplate
and take stock, garret denizen
dressed to slip by the doormen,
frivolous is high theory on pavement,
alert to footsteps, feet firmly,
all those essays to be assayed.

(photo: Mike Leggett)

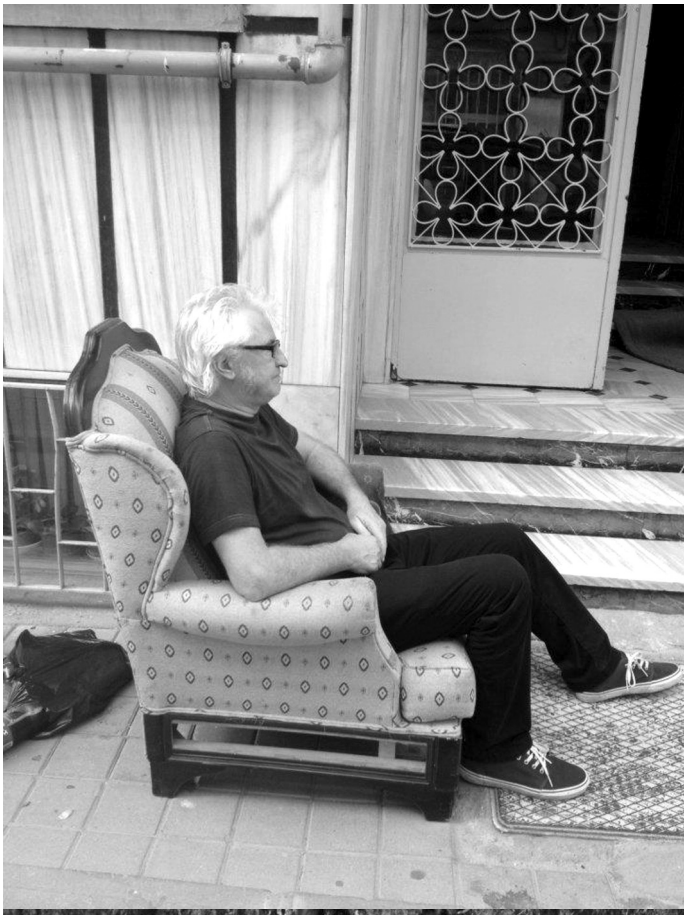
MONTPARNASSE CEMETERY

Step up, no rhino bluster to booster
the corner, stage left… or right,
already chatting though I see you
on your chair, my despair or laugh
a minute, light bright on this window
seat, that sound… the sea… in the ear?
An old pair resident, you dropping in.

SULTANAHMET ISTANBUL

I've been there but didn't see *you.*
A few decades apart? Don't start:
upholstered to take the air, marble
and wrought iron design reflected
in comfort never aligned with
quotidian Byzantium, the lira, the Euro,
gongs and wading the Bosphorus.
At the conference of Stamboul,
awe in the domelight, the blue
respite. Pause. Take stock. Face on.

Or waiting for the conversation
to arrive, in the movement of goods,
the absent familiars. Low-slung
in flowery precision, the need.
Proliferation of empty *sit*, *sandalye*,
and a trouble with plurals in aloneness.
Moons, stars and sun. Recline.



LAUREL STREET EAST PRESTON

Now, lord of the surveyed, this is
as familiar as… as, well, macadam,
fence, bus stop, bench seat, your
interpolation, a lacuna in timeline.

PIPEWORKS MARKET BROADMEADOWS

How a comfy chair sits is grass
and waste and pylons and high-
voltage contemplation in the nature
of urban resplendence: peripheral
ornithology, plein-air electro-magnetics
on a grassy swathe, a sky-trap.

SEAVER STREET RESERVOIR

Off ya rocker mate, to tilt
at southern comfort, a hell
of a meltdown of settee
driven to rest home escape:
onwards! slingshot from lamppost
and red velvet smoothed and rubbed,
blue blood shining through.

ALBERT STREET EAST PRESTON

Merv the perv swerved
copping a load of this: bunking
down on the spur to lure
the peekers gazing through
curtains and vertical blinds,
seeing what's what, who's who
on floral print or maybe denim.
But surely a misrepresentation?
A guardian: *saved by* or saving
the lashing of purple creeper —
bougainvillea?

CHALEYER STREET EAST PRESTON

Dude! Check it out. Fuckin'
cruisin'. Empire of weed.
Bong from leftover pipe —
building sites and a knife.
And mains water on tap.
Fire in the hold!

WILLIAM STREET PRESTON

What a load of rubbish! Picture-
wall replay to garage a promise
of spit and polish. *So*... the lawn
struggles and a verge is the best place
to listen to Nick Cave in shorts,
thongs, with accoutrements!

VERDUN GROVE RESERVOIR

All good things are pushed
down behind cushions (other
than sharps), into that
semi-locked away space
where fingers search
with trepidation (those afore-
mentioned sharps — just in case);
and vinyl wipes down nicely.

Which is not casting
aspersions on lifestyle,
in fact, some of us sat
next to our best mates
watching that goal on the siren
scraping through, or spat
the dummy to have it picked
up without hesitation
by our nearest and dearest.

Come, join us, and we'll
tell you all about it.
Less interim than
you'd think.

WILD STREET RESERVOIR

Matching pairs are not games shows.
Creeper just getting started
or stripped back to component parts.
This is no aristocrat of culture,
despite the blue singlet, the questionnaire
hidden from view, the court wit.
Tell that bastard Bourdieu to get
out of that chair! — it's *ours*
until someone hauls it away.
And mattresses: to throw,
to make space to sleep
and *here* ordained and archived
within hindsight, *espace*
hodologique, you gap-toothed
smart arses out there. Discard
composition, get home
from work, rest and hope
to dream.

DUNDAS STREET PRESTON

Swivel is a compass
that goes nowhere
when confronting
people-movers
or four-by-fours,
reflected sky
a destiny,
a pentameter
grip on the green —
voguish or lost,
red shoes red shoes!

GREENBELT AVENUE EAST PRESTON

On the arm of the lounge
is no easy street, no picket
under the spreading, sleep-
out or housetrashing in leafy
setting, to prop without fall,
mise en abyme, pondering
loss of something possibly
very dear, TV-dinnerish.
Going going gone? Or
something lost,
something found?

JACKA STREET WEST PRESTON

To corner the open
market village green
snug as, complete.
All answers herein,
or just accepting.
Maybe the first
philosophy of Descartes,
and no room of dreams
to lapse into.

ALBERT STREET EAST PRESTON

In a suburb of silver cars
it's always good to get distance
on chairs. Perspective makes
anonymity, and a single
lounger verges
on the monumental.
Careful crossing
the road in search
of comfort.

HOWARD STREET RESERVOIR

You're overgrown
and out of here! Venus
has left her shell: shucked it.
Dryads and fauns have gone to grass.
Slumber party's done.
Consequences
of the 25th prime.
Look on my works!
Drop by — vacancies.

CUTHBERT ROAD RESERVOIR

Embrace the flowers!
Come on down: I'll take you
lock, stock and barrel.
Green thumb! Steroidal.

RAILWAY PARADE RESERVOIR

By the light of halogen
the lamplighter rests;
his is but a brief, idle
moment, there's much
of the night still to be lit.

SUMMERHILL SHOPS EAST PRESTON

Mountains of Plenty
out past The Smoke,
if you think and look as far
as your eyes can take you.
We read in the scriptures:
'Preston's parks and recreation spaces
are not numerous.'
This is found and lost
at once. Portable fencing a boon
and rough bits in old car parks
can be skateboarded around.
The rebuilding begins at home.
There's an error in this week's accounts.

UNION STREET WESTGARTH

Feng shui. Orientate.
A cuppa. Fibre optic cable.
Entry to the underworld.
Meteorites fall perfectly.
Tree grows shapely. Chair.
Feng shui. Orientate.

DARREN TOFTS
MR HAPPY
I.M. NIALL LUCY (1956-2014)

I'll feed you fruit that don't exist
I'll leave graffiti
Where you've never been kissed
I'll do your laundry
Massage your soul

When Niall came to stay with us for the first time years ago I took him out to play pool down in Fitzroy. Having ordered a couple of pots the guy asked if we would like any music. Niall made his selection without the slightest hesitation: Beck, *Midnite Vultures*.

His choice surprised me. I always thought of my dark man in black as being more Johnny Cash than the wannabe white punk from Los Angeles, trying to bust the moves of a black dude as if he was doing Singstar in Reservoir RSL. As the evening went on and I whooped his sweet ass at pool, we discovered our mutual passion for Parliament Funkadelic. From then on we were both Funkanaughts, making our funk the PFunk. We were the real deal. And I also intuited only then how much nicotine and gravy would strangely be such a part of our lives.

But I have to say, what I loved about Niall at the time most was his predictability, the constancy of his deep inhumanity and ill will towards anyone or anything that didn't meet his uncompromising standards of taste, or his intolerance of the banal. While he came across

outwardly as a hard nut, his misanthropy was very selective and only shown to his close friends. We both shared this Jekyll and Hyde quality. It was the sublime goo that bound us together as mates, self-admirers and executioners for hire when shitheads, drips, bores, knuckleheads, fuckers or any other manner of inner city pretentious wannabes crossed out path.

Like when we hung out with him last year when he was in town organising Ctrl-Z. Lisa was meeting us after work in Fitzroy to go out for dinner. Niall was paying and we made sure he didn't forget. Niall and I were drinking in what used to be one of our favourite pubs, the Builders Arms on Gertrude Street, which was now a trendy and overpriced "fine eatery, provedore and ale house". The place was full of bad suits and glamour pusses who kept giving us stink eyes as we sat in green leather or blue suede and Cuban heels. We were both perplexed by this and couldn't work out why we were suddenly in the underclass of what used to be our turf. Sure, we were both sneering and wishing every one of them bad faith for the rest of their life. But he was not going to tolerate such distaste. Sitting there slumped next to me, brushing his lion's mane of Winter-brother hair aside, with a flourish worthy of a Renaissance dandy, he turned to me with his final assessment. In a withering tone, like spitting battery acid at whoever was in earshot, he confided in me. "We stand out like dogs' balls in this joint. They must really fucking hate us. Fuck 'em".

And with a loping swagger that left a trail of odious venom in its wake, he got up slowly to walk to the bar and get the next round. He looked like some vague yet rancorous animal stalking a kill; calculated, patient and determined. But his contemptuous indifference to his prey actually made him look more like someone who wouldn't piss on them if they were on fire. He sloped back with two pints, took a sip and offered his final assessment of the banality around him. "Cunts".

What funk. What style. What a glorious crank. I finally realised at that moment that he really did hate people more than I did. Except of course for the people he loved, and there are many of them. I was prepared to take a second place. It was an affirmation of our deep kinship. I was always the Fool to his King Lear, wreaking carnage, fear and loathing around the Fitzroy pubs like two scribblers who liked the idea of a big melting pot of a "world" where anyone was welcome. But we were forever disappointed by what we found. It was kind of like the sinking, overwhelming disappointment you would feel on realising that the lethal injection you administered didn't work. La la...

Now while Niall did have a fearsome reputation, in truth he wouldn't hurt a fly. No wonder we gave him one of the Mr Men books year's ago. You know the one I mean. But having said that even flies weren't beneath his noble contempt for inanity. He would torment a fly so mercifully with the nastiest form of satire, hyperbole and sarcasm until the poor thing developed an eating disorder so distressing that it withered away in some abject death wish.

But I digress. I could say many of the things we love about Niall, but you already know them. His uncompromising love for Sam, for Dylan, Jake, Hannah and Judith. His friends. Not to mention that other ferocious Kinsman of the West, Johnny Rotten, who never left his side when he was crook and who would tear anyone's throat out if they tried anything on. Niall referred to our number one Jack Russell as Frank the Crank. And while he adored *him*, Niall is my favourite crank. But also a rapturous and giving lover of the people he loved. What awkward and star-struck alignment of the planets made me one of those? Although we never collaborated on a book together, sometimes I wonder about an imaginary one we scribbled during some pub-crawl in Rome or Prague, looking up at the stardust. Its title is *The Misanthropic Condition Explained to Children*. Niall's prefatory note begins like this:

"I love my family, I love my friends, I love life. Line the rest up against the wall."

I'll be your chauffeur on a midnight drive
It takes a miracle just to survive
Buried animals call your name
You keep on sleeping
Through the poignant rain

Say hello to Elvis for me mate.

NIALL LUCY

POETRY & DECONSTRUCTION*

At the 2007 APEC summit in Sydney, where the leaders of nations belonging to the Asia-Pacific economic co-operation forum met, something weird happened. With so many important dignitaries on hand, including the US President and his 650-strong entourage, security in Sydney was understandably tight. A steel-and-concrete barricade stretching for several kilometres along both sides of central city streets marked the borders of a restricted zone extending from the visitors' hotels to the summit venue, forcing local traffic to be re-routed. Sydneysiders were given a public holiday and encouraged to get out of town, presumably to make it all the easier for police and security personnel, armed to the teeth with hi-tech weapons and telecommunications devices, to spot foreign terrorists and stay-at-home domestic troublemakers alike. Protest rallies calling for reduced greenhouse gas emissions, or for Australia and the US to pull out of Iraq, were subject to strict state control, and demonstrators with prior convictions were arrested on sight. Shots of security preparations in the city and at Sydney airport, featuring police in riot gear and armoured vehicles fitted with crowd-busting water canons, were prominent in the national media for days leading up to the summit.

Then, suddenly, in a comedic moment of deconstruction, the unity of all this spectacular apparatus of security (reputedly costing $250 million) was rent asunder. A group of comedians from Australian TV show *The Chaser's War on Everything*, disguised as Canadian APEC officials, drove a motorcade of three black limousines and a motorcycle escort through the fenced-off streets of Sydney's central business district, using false ID cards stamped with "joke" to clear several checkpoints along the way, before finally being intercepted ten metres outside the entrance to the Intercontinental Hotel where the US contingent was staying. Adding to the already carnivalesque nature of the scene, one of the group (Chas Licciardello) was dressed up to look like Osama bin Laden. He is reported to have stepped from a limousine and said to police, indignantly, "I am a world leader. Why haven't I been invited to APEC too?"

Footage of the incident (taken by the comedy show's film crew) was quickly posted on YouTube and televised around the world, no doubt to the amusement of many. But Australian authorities failed to see the funny side and charged the comedians with offences under newly legislated national security laws, which carry a maximum penalty of six months in jail. As Sydney's police chief sternly put it: the group had placed themselves and others in serious danger, because snipers were positioned all over the city and the slightest miscommunication among security forces could have seen things go horribly wrong!

Predictably humourless and admonishing, the response of the police chief and other state officials (along with state advocates, as they might be called, such as conservative media commentators) can be said not to have *read* this event at all. Official representations of the event took it to be saturated with a single meaning that bordered on sedition and justified the state in castigating the comedians for having disrespected its authority. Above all, what had to be repelled was any suggestion that the comedians' actions might have exposed the elaborate security measures in Sydney as an inevitably empty and groundless *spectacle* of state control; no more than an *exhibition* of totalising authority manufactured from simulacra designed to conceal a lack of presence. How else to account for the consummate ease by which the restricted zone was infiltrated? How else to interpret the event except as farce … or, more menacingly, as a revelation of just how close civilians might have come, and might always be, to being shot dead by the state in the name of national security if not also (perversely) in the name of democracy?

Nothing undermines the authority of the state, let alone the authority of authority, more so than too much reading. That's why Australian authorities had no choice but to reproach *The Chaser* crew for refusing the solemn univocity of security arrangements at the APEC summit, by reading the meaning and purpose of those arrangements against the interests of the state and demonstrating that their univocity depended on the suppression of other possible interpretations that could be made of them and other possible uses to which they might be put. In this way it is sometimes seditious to crack a joke, even if the joke's effects (as perhaps in the case of *The Chaser* episode) cannot be said to have been consciously intended or fully calculated in advance. A joke, then, can reveal that even the sanctity of a so-called intended meaning is not impervious to ridicule, showing that what anything is said to mean is irreducible to a restricted zone of proper interpretations and legitimate truths. The authority of such a zone, together with the authority of a notion of the proper and of the very idea of authority itself, depends on putting all jokes aside.

But by joking here I don't mean (on the contrary) the production of a humorous effect that is necessarily universal, as if it were possible to contemplate a form of comedy that crossed all cultural, national, historical, linguistic and other borders. I mean rather, as we say in Australia, *taking the piss*. To do so is to mock authority, poking fun especially at its self-importance and always – always – with a straight face. You take the piss, in other words, when you create a *pharmakon* effect or a double reading, because for a split second at least the impassive tone and demeanour of your delivery make it undecidable as to whether your intentions are serious or ironic. Piss-taking – as in the case of *The Chaser* crew's simulated performance of a proper APEC group seeming to act in accordance with appropriate rules and procedures, such as those pertaining to the proper image, speed and motion of a cortege – is all about appearing to play by the rules of one language game while in fact playing by the rules of another. Piss-taking depends on refusing to be interpellated as the obedient subject of a discourse, who would otherwise comply with the expectations of a role assigned to him or her by a figure, a structure, an institution or some other instance of authority.

The Fool in *King Lear* is an exemplar of the type, but the piss-taker as social critic (in a progressively disruptive, Nietzschean fashion) is perhaps more comfortably aligned, however marginally, with a modernity associated with the Enlightenment. To the extent that the Enlightenment stands for the triumph of *logos* over *mythos*, though, piss-taking is frowned upon by official discourse. The secular, scientistic authority of rational thought (substituting for the theocratic authority of the monarchy and the aristocracy) is intolerant of the dissidence of fools.

Hence the piss-taking prankster is fated to be marginalised from within a metaphysics that takes itself all too seriously. Such a figure at least is destined to be "controversial," for daring to confront the Enlightenment with the vanity of its self-importance. Tonally, as it were, the droning seriousness of Kant is deadening to the soul; and for the same reason I can't read Heidegger for long (assuming the jokes haven't been lost in translation) without reaching for my car keys or the remote control. For all that the Enlightenment has given us the possibility of democracy and the promise of a better future to come, for which there is no question that we should be eternally grateful, sometimes you can't help yourself from wanting the piss to be taken out of everything – concepts, discourses, institutions – that has been reified to an all but mythological level of gravitas commanding nothing but aloof respect.

It is precisely for this reason that deconstruction, for example, which takes the piss out of metaphysics, has never quite been accorded official status by the institution of philosophy (or state philosophy as it might be called, following Deleuze and Guattari); certainly not in the English-speaking West, where the Intercontinental Hotel of authority is reserved more or less exclusively for the delegates of the analytic tradition. The more Derrida wrote, the more his writing caused offence to philosophy's self-representation as a non-metaphorical system in pursuit of transcendental signifieds. Ideally, philosophy goes looking for truths that are already there, waiting to be translated into language; and the more Derrida's writing failed to revere this ideal, by taking the piss out of it, the more his writing came to be dismissed as playfully specious rather than seriously philosophical. The more it came to be seen as a species of poetry, in other words, albeit without it being seen at the same time that all poetry takes the piss out of language.

Poetry scoffs at the presumption that good sense is a product of plain language use, based on the idea that truth is prior to and independent of its representations. Through unadorned expression, then, *logos* overcomes the dangerous supplementarity of *mythos*. But by extending free passage to others and opening itself to interpretation, every poem mocks the vanity of this presumption that underlies the possibility of a purely referential language; hence the function of the institution of literary criticism is to restrict the in-principle limitless interpretability of poetic texts to a zone of proper meanings, protected by a barricade of mystifying professional-esoteric terminology and knowledge subject to radical reappraisal from time to time. Taking a different view, what Derrida can be said to have done – every word he wrote – is reducible to this subversive insight: what is true of poetic texts is true of textuality in general. If this were not so – if indeed every text did have an ineluctable core meaning – then someone would have figured out the meaning of *Hamlet* a long time ago, and that would have been that.

Hamlet continues to surprise because it continues to be read in different ways, and not always as an example of literature. In *Specters of Marx*, for instance, Derrida reads it not as an illustration of the pop-psychological consequences of procrastination, but for what it has to say politically and philosophically about the spectral nature of democracy-to-come. Such a reading both defies the institutional authority of literary criticism, which values the play for its aesthetic and morally educative qualities, while refusing to respect the proper objects and methods of political philosophy. Derrida reads *Hamlet*, in a word, as text – in excess of its canonical status as a literary masterwork and therefore against the interests of authority vested in established (if not establishment) notions of literature, philosophy and politics.

A disrespect for genre – the mark perhaps of a deconstructive, as distinct from a straightforwardly critical, reading – is a feature too, I think, of John Kinsella's work, extending across poetry, essays, fiction and other kinds of writing. Hilariously – at least to this Australian – one of Kinsella's books is called *Genre* (marketed all too predictably in the publishing world as a novel), a text which defies generic classification while imitating just about every genre under the sun. As a piss-take of the literature department's and the publishing industry's careful attempts to make sense of writing-in-general, by assigning to every text a secure place in the periodic table of writings-in-particular, it is also (as McKenzie Wark notes) part of Kinsella's "ongoing experiment of becoming a writer."[1] This experiment – an extravagant

1 McKenzie Wark, "Generator: Thinking Through John Kinsella's *Genre*," *Fairly Obsessive: Essays on the Works of John Kinsella*, eds. Rod Mengham and Glen

essay in border crossing, as it were – is less an act of transgression, requiring the conscious renunciation of a limit, than an affirmation of enjambment. Being John Kinsella is all about running on, spilling over, re-territorialising. Again, as Wark puts it:

> Whether conceived as a hierarchy, from literature to kitsch, or as layered from central to peripheral traditions, writing is one of the most territorialised of the arts. But as the vectors of communication change, so too can the practices of writing and reading. The local can go global without depending on the intermediate step in the hierarchy of aesthetic territories – the nation. But as a paradoxical result, need not renounce the national in order to escape it.[2]

Kinsella's status as a national – an "Australian" – poet is something he neither embraces nor shuns; nor should his "Australianness" be thought to be translatable into other national contexts, as if the reception to his poetry downunder could be superimposed elsewhere. Lauded overseas for the greatness of his lyric poetry by Harold Bloom and for the greatness of his experimental poetry by Marjorie Perloff, Kinsella's border crossings (and not only between supposedly divergent poetic traditions, as if there were some compelling reason to choose between the Metaphysicals and the Romantics) make him a scandalous figure in the world of Australian letters, where there are those who refer to him dismissively as a big-time operator on the poetry business scene. What most seems to rankle with Australian critics (aside, perhaps, from petty resentment) is that Kinsella so conspicuously *works* at being a poet – through his national and international academic appointments and contacts, his media interviews, his publishing and editorial ventures, his appearances at conferences, festivals and poetry readings – that his poems are tainted with the suggestion of being careerist rather than sincere. "Somehow," as Sydney University academic Ivor Indyk wrote, in a now notorious review of Kinsella's *Poems 1980-1994* for the influential *Australian Book Review*, "his energy is so overwhelming that it makes the quality of his poetry seem like a secondary consideration."[3] More recently, in a sneering review of Kinsella's *Fast, Loose Beginnings: A Memoir of Intoxications* for the liberal daily, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, poet and University of Queensland academic Jaya Savige complained that Kinsella "appears drunk on the éclat of luminous literary acquaintance" while simultaneously (and hypocritically, it is implied) cultivating his status as an outsider.[4] Further afield, meanwhile, no less a luminous literary authority than Harold Bloom has said of Kinsella that "if there still be, this late, a 'pure' poet, it would be him, free of ideologies and of any histories that are not personal" – and whatever *that* (in a post-Derridean /Deleuzian/Foucauldian context) might mean, it is clearly intended as praise of an unambiguously high order.[5]

Kinsella's contradictions – he is an Australian who is also a cosmopolitan; an Antipodean *and* a Cambridge poet; a lyricist *and* an experimentalist; a "pure" poet *and* a publicity seeker; an ex-junkie who is now a vegan; a country boy who knows his way around many of the world's great cities; a critic of the academy who enjoys the institutional and other benefits of professorial residencies at Cambridge and the University of Western Australia, having previously held a chair at Kenyon College in the United States – loom large in most discussions of his work, fanning the controversy that surrounds both "it" and the poet "himself." The assumption seems to be that the rest of us are fully unified subjects, our innermost selves remaining constant around the clock. In compliance with the metaphysics of moderation we consign our becoming to all manner of discursive scrutiny and regulation, as we know from *Discipline and Punish* and other works by Foucault, arresting difference in the bargain. As we know from Derrida, though, a certain idea of writing – as dissemination, as enjambment – takes the piss out of both the sovereign subject and of subjectivity "itself," along with the idea that meaning is determined by the elemental properties of a text. Deconstruction goes beyond structuralism,

Phillips (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000) 256.

2 Wark, "Generator," 271.

3 Ivor Indyk, "Kinsella's Hallmarks," *Australian Book Review* (July 1997): http://home.vicnet.net.au/~abr/July97/indyk.html

4 Jaya Savige, "[Rev. of] *Fast, Loose Beginnings: A Memoir of Intoxications*," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August 2006: http://www.smh.com.au/news/book-reviews/fast-loose-beginnings-a-memoir-of-intoxications/2006/08/21/1156012451866. html

5 Harold Bloom, "Introduction" in John Kinsella, *Peripheral Light: Selected New Poems* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2003) xxii.

then, both philosophically and in its affrontery (albeit without renouncing structuralism), by dissociating meaning not only from authorial subjectivity, but from the authority of presence in all its conceptual, historical, institutional, political and other forms. Once the signifier-signified relationship is understood as *radically* arbitrary and indeterminate, it is no longer possible to read a text according to the structuralist ideal – as a simultaneous system of internal relations. Simultaneity – the myth of a reading that would describe the operations of the various parts of a text at once, such that the text would be present in its totality – precludes, after all, any consideration of whatever does not conform to it. Whatever "cannot be spread out into the simultaneity of a form," as Derrida put it a long time ago, structuralism finds "intolerable"; and since this is true as well of metaphysics generally, structuralism cannot be confined to a movement or a method associated with the likes of Saussure and Lévi-Strauss.[6] This is why, although structuralists may be good at analysing the formal properties of a joke, it has never occurred to them to crack a few jokes of their own: the metaphysics of authority depends on putting all jokes aside.

Some would say Kinsella was attracted to the *danger* of being attracted to Derrida, consciously or otherwise courting excommunication from the poetry world for associating with a figure who is still more vilified than vindicated in literary circles (outside the academy certainly) worldwide. Others might point even less charitably to Derrida's *notoriety* as the shiny object of Kinsella's desire, re-writing their friendship as a calculated move in the game of managing a reputation for defiance on the poet's part. Within and beyond the academy, such crude psychological speculation remains the order of the day – no less for professional criticism and philosophy than for popular media discourses. After Derrida, then, and after Foucault and Deleuze and Lyotard and Barthes and Baudrillard and all the rest, the motorcade of metaphysics continues to run its course, those seeking to disrupt it having been overcome for now by the official and unofficial security forces of a new world order of seriousness in the face of imminent terrorist attacks. In this context, nothing serves the interests of metaphysics – let alone the West's interest in oil – better than a prosaic imagination.

That's what I think the poems in this collection are "about," although not in any kind of thematic sense. What I think attracts Kinsella to Derrida's writing is not so much the shock value (though of course he is aware of this effect) as the *mundanity* of deconstruction, which takes a certain kind of imagination – a poetic or aesthetic imagination – to respond to without fear or favour, or without prejudice of a certain kind. How could a statement such as Derrida's now notorious claim in the *Grammatology*, that "there is nothing outside of the text," be read by a poet, except as a perfectly unextraordinary thing to think or say – despite many real-life poets' denial that Derrida wrote anything worth reading at all?[7] What does it tell us about the world and what it may be necessary to change, when the positions of soft-hearted liberals and hard-line conservatives alike are as one in condemning deconstruction for disrespecting the authority of tradition, Western values and standards of truth? When liberals *and* conservatives are arm-in-arm opposed to the dangerous "relativism" of deconstruction, what does this tell us about deconstruction?

One of the ways in which the poems here can be seen to respond to such a question is simply by taking that question seriously, which is to say by taking deconstruction seriously. Which is to say, by not taking deconstruction *too* seriously. Take the following fragment from "The Echidna and Hedgehog bear only Superficial Resemblances":

> birdsnoutducklike
> all mammary glands
> and egg drop
> and body hair
> mammal inter reptilian
> but not a metamorphosis,
> which is so convenient
> for the human condition,
> as lucrative as television

This is not what the writing of a professional philosopher, a sociologist or a literary critic looks like, though it does

6 Jacques Derrida, "Force and Signification" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) 25.

7 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) 158.

tolerate a certain similarity to the writing of my ten-year-old son. Children write "poetically," in other words, before they learn how to write prose. They assemble words haphazardly, "creatively," on a page or screen, seemingly unencumbered by the need to stretch each line of type or script to fit a standard margin width. They create, or simply form, weird new "words" out of combinations of existing words and syllables – *birdsnoutducklike* – long before learning to recognise these as *portmanteau* words, like "actuvirtuality" or "phonocentrism." They describe things elliptically, and almost exclusively through a mixture of parataxis, conjunction and enjambment: "all mammary glands/ and egg drop/and body hair/mammal inter reptilian." In this way poetry – or the creative force of children's language use – is precisely what has to be unlearned in order to learn to write prose. Prose (when it isn't fiction) is poetry stripped of its creative force, and we learn to write it acceptably only by forgetting that, before we learned to write "properly," we played with language in the absence of any pressure to conform to the referential imperative of professional non-fiction, as if writing on the basis of a mundane truth: *there is no outside of the text*. Between poetry and prose, then, there are only superficial resemblances, though we are said to write prose well (rather than just adequately) by virtue of a certain metamorphosis with poetry, whenever our writing incorporates a trope, a striking turn of phrase or some other prosodic feature deployed to good effect. Poetic devices, but not quite poetry as such, can lead therefore to lucrative professional and cultural, if not also financial, rewards, for those judged to control their otherwise chaotic – pre-prosaic – potential.

This is what Wark means when he calls writing one of the most territorialised of the arts. So we have poets, and we give them a licence to write "poetically" or aesthetically (according to a certain idea of literature), relegating poetry to a "special" kind of writing and in the process delimiting what it can be used to do. And so we have critics, and we give them the authority not only to determine what counts as poetry but also to police its borders. And so we have institutions, and we give them the authority to sanction and patrol the limits of what counts as poetry. And so we have a publishing industry, and we give it the authority to market poetry to readers. In all of this what we don't have is an idea of writing in general … and so we have philosophers, and we give them the authority to be philosophical by virtue of showing us the extent of their mastery over the irruptive, aleatory, figural and other undesirable effects of language. Which is to say, of poetry. And so we have historians, and we give them the authority to tell us what history means … and so on.

Poetry comes before prose, which is what this territorialising system is designed to suppress. And because poetry comes before prose, Derrida sometimes delighted in taking the piss out of the idea of a well formatted page (as the image of a well formulated argument). Think, for instance, of *Dissemination* and *Glas*. In the "poetic" episodes of some of his work, Derrida's writing is conspicuous in quite literal ways (as if in reaction to the po-faced seriousness of the *Grammatology*), inviting readers to engage with it outside the constraints of standard sense-making protocols. This – turning readers into active participants in the production of meanings by opening the possibility of doing philosophy differently and doing different things with it – raised the ire of straight-laced philosophers, who could not but look on any disruption to the solidified territorialisation of writing as a professional threat. Their ungracious indignation stooped to its lowest point in the early 1990s, when some Cambridge dons (including a few from Kinsella's own Churchill College, though this was before his time there) tried to block Cambridge's offer of an honourary doctorate to Derrida for services to philosophy.[8] Deconstruction it seemed was no laughing matter, and the best way of putting a stop to its profanities was to try to have Derrida, in effect, de-registered! And so now all these years later another Cambridge don – albeit from the antipodes, at the limits of Western civilisation – has written a book of poems, in effect, "for" Derrida if not quite about him. In the context of what ought to be Cambridge's shame, the ethics of this gesture should not go unnoticed.

*First published in *Language Systems: After Prague Structuralism*, eds. Louis Armand & Pavel Černovský (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2007).

8 See Niall Lucy, *Debating Derrida* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995) for the details.

PAM BROWN

NON-RESPONDER

ancient worms
may have saved the earth

(guess the ideology
in this one)

but
with the future a known thing
history
can no longer
shove its sediments
just anywhere

in terms of things -
gadgets whether to salvage
or kill
(at least that's 'as usual')
it's still so sociological

unpeeling
gross similes
from infection
in a body
('flipped
like fibro in a storm',
say)
already gone too far
from remedy

~

wtf & omg no tercets here
not a tercet
to be seen,
could that be a problem

well could it?

if you think
your list
of muddled toponyms
is charming
try
worming around
in a collection of quotations

i.e.

quote
I think we're done with
apolitical white boy
european avant-gardes
unquote

apolitical?

nothing to say here

ANN VICKERY

YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER

Because I am not into poetic husbandry,
I don't see the point of a desiccated dedication
to desire; animal allure, the pre-emptive absence
of a heart as weighty as a hummingbird. Counting
the hours spent trying to differentiate myself from drunks.
Want is a four-letter word no-one swears by,
as black as the cast-away kittle of what-nots,
deeply trivial profundities shoved in the back
shed. On righteous days, I like to fashion myself
as a globe-trotting man-scold. I've been told
to hide jewels in strange places and sometimes wondered
what other stylistic effects were to be found
had I checked the trough. All my good thoughts
expatriated; they write to me sometimes,
a little lonely, a little perplexed. Transnational
orphans in a romantic lexicon whispering
sweet annunications to demotic farmhands dressed up
as yogi initiates. The love of a good obscurity,
besting the next beast. Listening to the troubadour
at night-time croon: o where did my amatory context go?

PHILIP HAMMIAL
MBAQANGA

PRELUDE

Like Snow White in a heat of kink
I've lost my most. Glad
handles my mouth. Closed
in a cellar situation, I've never had
the satisfaction of cereal. When
I've done a pray I walk away. If
they so wished they could drang me
but haven't yet. If you've done your homework
you know that an axe in kind has half a mind
to. And possibly fro but that depends. It's one
(that one) beyond mistake. So much so that
Shame sends Horn home. Can you recall the issue
of the noise of the skirt he wore? A forced entry
(it says so here) is a commodity that sits 'twixt betrothal
& the next guy. With him we'll never know
if it's dogs or crows. Or a five collar job
in Flute City. Therapeutically loyal,
we're trading blows. Each numbered
as arousal, with eunuchs in attendance. What
in pink cups they bring us to quaff is the same
as that stuff in black cups. Or so we're told. Me? –
collared & caned with no safe word I'd urge
some spill. As all mess eventually must
in this is there too much of us?

MBAQANGA

Of a filth mother
dare I sing? Who my clean sees
as a burlesque add-on, should have learned
to strip off with more aplomb, shame John
for what he sheepishly had – a sheared
grunge mother avid for the gallant interventions
of an all-thumbs mechanic, garage calendars
with their echoes of dropped tools highlighting
the smug smiles of those who shut
the massive gates behind me: Clang! &
again, Clang! – my moral history as tarnished
as a sludge mother's night on the town, sailors drifting
in the siren-trumped tides of her menses, mea culpa
maize mother as stalker, corn temptress
stand-over, maypole dancer to
wallflower me, my sea legs inadequate
to her sacrificial advance: Stick up she got
dollar sixty-eight, all I had
for offering plate, for redemption
possibility, at best a rear access visitor
on clock-saddle stalking horse declared mad AND
parsimoniously distributed (disturbed) by
a (g)rub mother, her oils syntactically easing
my way through sin tunnel with piss yellow light at
the wrong end where, look, I'm writ small as a no number
wall figure, the sum & son of a sullied mother begot
& bespoken as immaculate misconception by fathers
Tom, Dick & Harry at truck stop Anywhere, any
time, any old way, squalor mother on top
preferred but dog if bark they must, trust (again)
made a meal of, lip-smacking carrion mother
for what she's about to do my pardon begging.

Philip Hammial

NO SECRETS

So there you have it, a listen
in every language. The more
the better, that's what I say. And will
say again: the more…
All it took
was a signature & behold: that charming gas
is a cunning gas, drops you
in your tracks. On the way to… where
was it? – Rome? Those arrows,
are they maternity signs? Instead of permission
she gave me… a parsnip. My little eye
a jumble pie: the adult martyrs, whoever they are,
have tumbled *into* my privacy. No secrets
from these bastards. Which, by the way, was endorsed
(my privacy) by Water Champion, his swim
worth a mention if it does have a key (to music)
in one of its many (10,000) pockets. Which
reminds me, whose holiness
are you for? Wait, before you answer I should warn you
that the answer had better be for the best inflection
that rubs my potential. The right way & don't ask
if I was wrong about Pedro's princely violence. Of course
I was & will on a Bible swear that that wedge he drove
into the sea had nothing to do with me. You beg
to differ? – that it was five
standing dead, not six that made it such a hopelessly
dumb day for you, an old man who never knew
if he'd ever had a right & proper adjective although
as a grown man he got love wasn't
that lucky? To everybody benefit he pop
too much dust: too much about Saul's ghost
in the bush. And did to Billy what Holly
did to Molly. Good God almighty
that train dream's back – the one with the chunky
toy boxcars that keeps going around & around the hill
where the gibbets are. Thought I'd finished with it
years ago, nightmare stuff, even had the smell
of rotting flesh. How bad you hurt
when you hangin'? Them that came to pick
for sure didn't have *my* glory in mind. Eyes
let go, tongue too. Is a matter – Yes? – of some
considerable desperation. Maybe we should to
the Upward Way Church of born-again-everybody
swim? Here's the address: 245 Pacific Avenue. Must
be some mistake, that's the house I live in age nine
til now where most night's I'm
safe 'cept on Sunday when what sleep bring
is a prophet with a sting.

HAROLD JAFFE

STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

An Austrian teenager held captive for eight years in a dungeon-like room on the outskirts of Vienna says her captor, Wolfgang Priklopil, was part of her life and "in a certain way" she mourned his suicide.

Eighteen-year-old Krista Ludwig is reported to have wept inconsolably when informed that Priklopil killed himself.

After Krista Ludwig made her escape, Priklopil, 44, threw himself under a commercial train traveling east to Bucharest. The train was delivering electronic hardware and pigs for slaughter.

Krista Ludwig said she sympathized with Priklopil's 89-year-old mother and planned to telephone her.

Priklopil's mother, suffering from dementia, subsists in a nursing home near Graz, the "second city" of Austria, where the steroidal, gap-toothed governor-action star of California, Schwarzenegger, was birthed.

Krista Ludwig, said to be pale and trembling and to weigh just 42kg, managed to flee her abductor after he sidled away to take a call on his mobile as she vacuumed his car, a 2003 white Audi sedan, in the driveway of the abduct house.

The time was three-fourteen pm, on a Wednesday, precisely eight years to the day and very close to the precise time that she had been kidnapped on her way to school.

Did Krista Ludwig realize it was exactly eight years to the day and hour since she was taken captive?

"No."

Why then did she choose that very moment to attempt to escape?

"I was ready to leave so I left."

Now 18, Krista Ludwig denies that communications technician Wolfgang Priklopil had robbed her of her childhood.

"I don't have the feeling I missed something important. As far as I can see, children are robbed of their childhood one way or another."

Krista Ludwig said her lengthy abduction actually spared her bad habits such as smoking, drinking to excess, injecting heroin or speed, snorting cocaine, playing video games, and having "false friends."

What was a typical day like with Wolfgang Priklopil?

Between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m., Krista Ludwig and her abductor, who "worked at home," would have breakfast – a sweet roll and coffee with heavy cream, or *Schlag*.

The rest of the day Krista Ludwig would spend doing housework, reading, cooking, occasionally conversing.

"That was it for years," she said. "Everything tied to the fear of being alone."

If she was fearful of being alone why didn't she attempt to escape sooner?

"It would be the same somewhere else."

Nor was it clear from Krista Ludwig's statement whether by "housework," she referred to working in her room or elsewhere in the ramshackle house.

What did she and her abductor "converse" about?

"Different things. I am not prepared to go into details."

What did she read?

"Greek and Nordic myths, anthropology. The great god Zeus abducted virgins."

Was Wolfgang Priklopil a version of Zeus?

"No. He was not my lord and master. I was just as strong. Perhaps stronger."

She used an Austrian expression to indicate that at times Priklopil treated her tenderly, but at other times cruelly.

"He carried me in his arms but also trampled me underfoot."

Investigators have been trying to determine whether Priklopil had an accomplice, based on a 14-year-old boy's account at the time of the kidnapping that he saw two men drag young Krista Ludwig into a white Mercedes van.

But Krista Ludwig insisted that Prikopil acted alone. Moreover there was a later report that the 14-year-old boy was hyped up on coffee with *Schlag* when he gave his account.

Priklopil "carried out the kidnapping himself. Everything was prepared," Krista Ludwig said, adding that they "decorated" her room together.

Photos released by police show the underground hiding place in Prikopil's gabled, two-story wood house in Strasshof village outside Vienna where he kept Krista Ludwig: a small, cluttered, windowless room with washbasin, "squat toilet," cot, cupboards and narrow concrete stairs leading up to a trapdoor.

Because blueprints to the house were unavailable, investigators could not say for certain whether there were any other hidden compartments.

In her statement, read by flamboyant Viennese psychoanalyst Max Friedrich, who has been "treating" her, Krista Ludwig urged the media to respect her privacy.

"Everyone wants to ask intimate questions, but they don't concern anyone," she said via Max Friedrich.

She felt well, she said via Max Friedrich, if "maybe a bit patronized" at the location where she was currently held.

The location was described by police as a secure institutional space with "carers" under the supervision of Max Friedrich.

Max Friedrich, with his unruly leonine grey head, wraparound mirror shades, corncob pipe, and unsteady, stiff-legged gait, reminded the media that Krista Ludwig was severely traumatized and cautioned them to show restraint.

Krista Ludwig's parents, who separated after her abduction eight years before, complained that they had not been told where she was being held.

Max Friedrich confirmed that Krista Ludwig did not wish to see her parents again after their brief reunion. "Nor is that unusual under these extraordinary circumstances."

What actually transpired between Krista Ludwig and her middle-aged abductor beyond the housecleaning, unspecified conversation, and consumption of sweet rolls and coffee *mit Schlag*, remains a mystery.

After spending the first years locked in the cell-like room, which Priklopil had furnished with toys, books, magazines, and chewing gum, but neither television nor computer, Krista Ludwig was, she confided, via Max Friedrich, allowed to make occasional, brief, unaccompanied outings to the village.

Police are trying to determine if Krista Ludwig had a sexual relationship with her captor, and if so, the nature of the sexuality. If it was sadomasochistic, as suspected, how far did it go, and were the roles steadfast or did they alternate?

A police photo of kidnap suspect Wolfgang Priklopil was presented at a news conference in Vienna. With his smooth face, arched brows, widow's peak, and small fleshy mouth, he bore some resemblance to the pious, silver-tongued former UK Prime Minister Blair.

Meanwhile it has been confirmed that Wolfgang Priklopil (what remained of him after he threw himself under the train) was buried secretly under a false name to "deter vandals."

There were just two mourners, not including Krista Ludwig, who paid her respects alone at the morgue the day before the burial and lit a single candle. Only Priklopil's mother (severely demented and in a wheelchair) and a former business partner's sister, "legally blind," were at the unspecified gravesite.

The ceremony lasted seven minutes, Austrian TV reported. No priest was in attendance and nine-and-a-half policemen stood guard.

According to Max Friedrich's diagnosis, Krista Ludwig suffered from Stockholm Syndrome, a psychological condition in which captives "bond" with their captors.

The American heiress Patty Hearst is arguably the most famous contemporary example of Stockholm Syndrome after her kidnapping by the Symbionese Liberation Army in the early '70s.

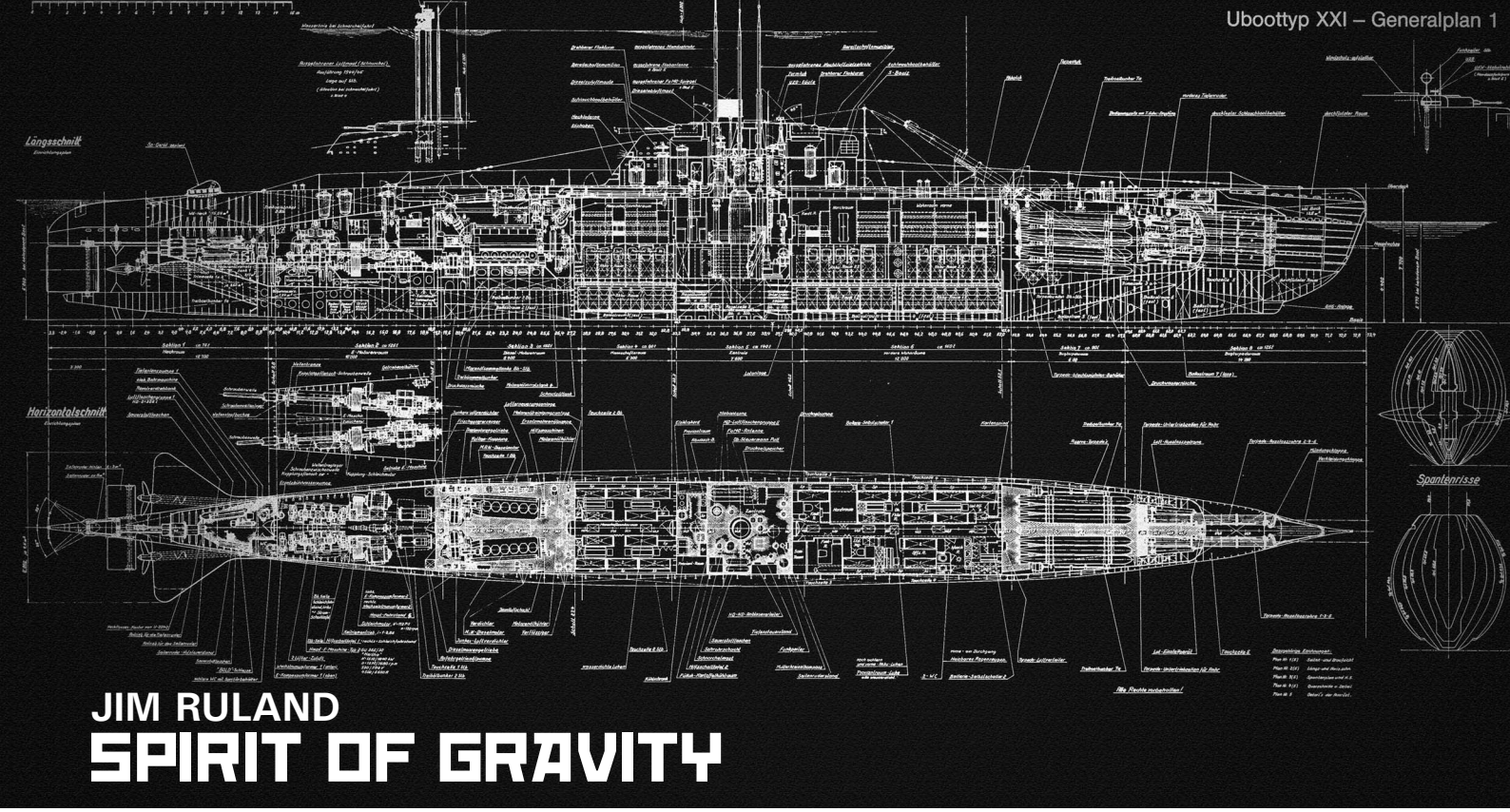
After extensive cosmetic surgery and long hours of psychological debriefing, Hearst recovered and resumed her life as a self-consumed billionaire heiress.

Police Major General Gerhard Hundt of the Federal Criminal Investigations Bureau said investigators are continuing to follow up on "every lead" in the case, which until last week was Austria's second greatest mystery.

The greatest Austrian mystery of course is how a homely, ill-educated vegetarian dog-lover with a comical Chaplin mustache became the most charismatic genocider of the 20th century.

THE MOVIE

based on the saga of Austrian kidnap victim Krista Ludwig with a beautiful Austrian **ingénue** portraying Ludwig has just been released. It shows Krista Ludwig being repeatedly raped by the captor who beat and starved her during the eight-and-a-half years he kept her in a dungeon beneath his house. Ludwig was **snatched** on her way to school at the age of 10 by 46-year-old Wolfgang Priklopil and held captive under his garage near Vienna until she escaped in 2006, causing a sensation in Austria and abroad. **Priklopil** committed suicide by throwing himself under a fast train en route to Bucharest. Ludwig previously refused to respond to claims that she had **sex** with Priklopil, but in a German television interview on her 25th birthday last week decided to reveal the sordid truth because the movie producers had already seized the file, which was not to be released until 20 years after her death. Called ***3,096 Days***, the movie, based on Krista Ludwig's **ghost-written** memoir of the same name, portrays her captivity in a windowless cell less than 6 square meters in size. Deprived of food for days at a time, the emaciated Ludwig kept a diary written on **toilet** paper concealed in a cast iron box. One entry reads: "At least **40** blows in the face. Ten to 15 nausea-inducing fist blows to the head. Constant paddling on the bare buttocks followed by violent anal sex." The movie shows occasional moments that approach tenderness, as when Priklopil presents her with a pair of **ruffle** bloomers for her 18th birthday – but then immediately chides her for refusing to **waltz** with him. Ludwig attended the premiere looking radiant in a violet Lagerfeld low-cut organza silk evening dress with a single transverse spaghetti strap displaying what appeared to be fresh implants. Ludwig posed for pictures but **declined** to give interviews. The Krista Ludwig case was followed 18 months later by Josef **Fritzl**, an Austrian who held his daughter captive in a cellar for 24 years and fathered seven children with her. The crimes have **prompted** soul-searching about the Austrian psyche and questions as to how the authorities and neighbors could have let such crimes go undetected for so long. The Ludwig movie which goes on general release Thursday has been entered into several international film **festivals**.



JIM RULAND
SPIRIT OF GRAVITY

02 MAY

They came for me in the morning. Not in the middle of the night while I was fighting with sleep. Not with a bang and a crash, but with a polite rap at the door, sunlight streaming through the windows.

I was in the operating theater washing up when Gerta gave me the news: “Police. Lobby. Bring your things.” I suppose I was feeling a bit hysterical because when they gave me the old, “You’re coming with us, Herr Doctor,” I refused. There were two of them: one short and fat, the other gaunt and hatchet-faced, both impossibly young. It was a lucky thing the air raid siren sounded and the wounded came shuffling into the hospital like a regiment of ghouls. The arrival of so many broken women and children, the bright blood striping their nightclothes, spooked them, I think, and they slunk away, mumbling promises to return.

A few hours later I was treating a patient – a beautiful young girl who was bleeding from both ears and bellowing with the shock of her new deafness – when a rat scurried across my feet. I gave the horrid little beast a kick and it went skittering across the theater and disappeared in the dressing station. The nurses were alarmed. All we have to go on is our eyes, and mine were frenzied. The child lay before me like a broken motor, spurting gouts of black blood onto the tiles. There was nothing to do but take another pervitin tablet and finish the job.

You know how much I delight in surprises, pet – just so long as I am the one doing the surprising. When my young friends returned for me in the middle of the night, I was ready for them. I sat in a chair facing the door smoking a cigarette with my topcoat thrown over my knee and my hat in my hand. I wish you could have seen me, Inge. I was like an American gangster. My small valise and the black medical bag my father had had made for me when I received my certificate were packed and waiting by the door. Once they got over their shock, the men from the secret police led me to a black sedan outside my flat. Its new leather seats gave off a smell I

couldn't place and it made me a bit dizzy. The opulence of it, I suppose. In Danzig they are boiling their shoes for want of something to eat, but there we were, sultans of the Rhineland. They opened packages of fancy crackers and tins of sardines, and we drank brandy straight from the bottle like a merry band of bandits. Not bad fellows once you get to know them, but that's what they always say about scoundrels, isn't it?

I asked my escorts where we were going and the smaller one, the kinder one I like to think, said "Spain" with an embarrassed smile, like we were the luckiest three fellows in the Reich to be going there. Perhaps we were.

We left the city by the southern bridge and the sirens started as soon as we reached the other side. Another bombardment. I sat facing the rear windscreen and watched the lights grow brighter and brighter as the fires blossomed and grew. The city's crumbling and jagged skyline was lit up from the glare like the set of a puppet show, and the seething skies possessed the immodesty of a false dawn.

We came to an airfield and were waved through a series of checkpoints with the windows rolled down. The guards looked at me, and I at them, with the same mixture of curiosity and pity. I detest airplanes. Such a vulgar way to travel.

Once onboard, I strapped myself in and immediately went to sleep. I was overcome with exhaustion and dreamt my way to Spain on wings of steel. I dreamt, like always, of a great conflagration: smoldering ruins, charred and shriveled corpses, streets crawling with vermin. Horrible dreams. I shouldn't dwell on them like I do, but perhaps by writing them down and giving them a life of their own they'll permit me some peace. I realize it's unfair to burden you, sweet Inge, but I don't know what else to do.

So here I am in Vigo, a squalid little seaport twenty miles or so from the Portuguese border, the bunghole of neutral Europe. The city reminds me of a sad party, a faded portrait. Spent a holiday here when I was young and gay. Always wanted to come back and it appears I've got my wish. I took a tablet and carried my bags across the frontier to the Kübelwagen that was waiting to ferry us into town. The sun was fat and low, pregnant, or so the optimist in me insists, with promise. I'd nearly forgotten what it looked like this long, loathsome winter.

The dusty track into the city proper was described by stone walls that must have been centuries old. Roman handiwork scattered all over this miserable continent. I wonder what legacies our own little Caesar shall leave behind.

I closed my eyes, breathed in the sea air, and when I opened them again the glittering harbor lay before me like a miner's pan. The harbor was thick with ships, and that's when it occurred to me that I still had more traveling to do.

My new friends deposited me at the gangway of the ugliest vessel in the harbor and bid me farewell. They seemed hopeful somehow. The cynic in me imagines it's because they knew they would outlast the war, at least that's what they'd been told, and they had no reason to suspect otherwise. It's sad, I suppose, but their naiveté told me they hadn't been entirely corrupted by all the awful things they'd seen and done. That's something, isn't it?

An officer with a pinched face and wet eyes met me at the top of the gangway. He expectorated into a rag, shivered under his greatcoat. A very unwell-looking fellow. He thanked me for coming and told me all would be made plain soon enough. During a dizzying stroll through the guts of the ship, I asked him how long he'd had the cough, what color the phlegm, and so on. He shrugged and his troubled smile gave way to a coughing fit. I begged him to lay to the infirmary. Do you know what he said? "Everyone here is sick." Is it me, Inge, or has the whole world taken leave of its senses?

An adjutant took me to a cabin several decks below the main. He assured me I would be quite comfortable and that I would be sent for in the morning. I entered my new home and he shut the door behind me. It wasn't until the bolt slid into place that I realized I was a prisoner!

I have a bunk, a writing desk, and a porthole that offers a dismal view of the harbor, but it has been riveted shut so there's no breeze. All I can smell is fresh paint. I gather my quarters have been used to sequester enemy officers and military officials, for on the desk lies a stack of beautiful cream-colored stationary, blank notecards, and an assortment of well-made pens. Like a bloody fool, I, blameless as the babe in its crèche, sit and pen my confession: love is my only crime, and you, sweet, Inge, are my victim.

03 MAY

Slept surprisingly well and was woken by the arrival of Dr Camara, a Portuguese-German who told me why I had been brought to Spain. It seems one of the "higher-ups" (whatever that means these days) has been badly injured and I am to serve as his traveling doctor.

I admit, sweet Inge, that my attention was divided by appetite and ego, both of which, as you well know, are outsized to the point of embarrassment. The doctor told me that some months ago, unbeknownst to me, I'd operated on a senior party official. Word of my skill had reached the higher-ups (there's that phrase again), and I was specially selected, or so I have been made to understand, for this ultra-sensitive mission. A steward wheeled a breakfast tray into my cabin and when his knife cut into a grapefruit and released its scent into the compartment, I found it impossible to concentrate on the doctor's words. Have you ever tasted a grapefruit, Inge? They are like oranges only much larger, not at all like the name suggests, and the fruit is more pungent, both sweet and sour tasting at the same time.

Like you.

Camara sensed my distraction and assured me I would be moving along as soon as the patient arrived. After he left, his words started to sink in: Leave when? To where and with whom? Crazed with hunger, I put these questions out of my mind and attacked my breakfast with an ardor akin to lust. Do not be jealous, Inge. It was only a fruit! But if it were you, my dear… If only it were you…

04 MAY

This morning I found a novel wedged between some pipes behind the desk. You can imagine how disappointed I was when I discovered the book's contents weren't lewd. It's a cowboy story, a boy's tale, a fantasy of the American West, but at least it's in German. I gather that it appeals to the Andalusian sensibilities of the locals. I suppose I shall have to read it.

(Later) Dreadful, dreadful book. I have thrown it across the compartment more times than I can count, but it just sits there steepled on the deck a few meters away, taunting me. I scurry out of my bunk to fetch it like some helpless young girl trying to wean herself off her dollies, sputtering promises I'll never be so beastly again, only to repeat the ritual the following evening. What have I done to be subjected to such punishment?

The plot is horrid. Characters flat. And the ease with which the protagonist moves around this preposterous world is nothing short of ludicrous. I eye the stack of paper on the desk and toy with the idea of making a go of a novel of my own. I couldn't possibly make a bigger muck of it than Herr Heidelberg, whom, if I am lucky enough to meet someday, will receive my opinion of his literary merits in the form of a blow. Forgive my mood, pet, I am anxious in the extreme.

05 MAY

This morning I was able to solicit some gossip from one of the stewards. It seems there's quite a bit of activity in town as Vigo prepares for my patient's arrival. I pressed the man for clues about his identity, and he told me he'd heard it might be a high-ranking official, a senior SS man, an executive from Krupp, or even someone from the camps. The boy had a fearful look in his eye. He hadn't been around long enough to know they only trotted out that "someone from the camps" line to put the rumor-mongering to rest, for who wants to talk about such things? Not I, sweet Inge, and certainly not this boy.

06 MAY

Lots of action today. Dr. Camara has been in to see me twice already. During his first visit, he offered some details about my patient's condition. He's old, bed-ridden, and severely disfigured. My request for medical records has been ignored. I flush everything Camara tells me from my mind and resolve to form my own impressions once I see the man with my own eyes. There's no point engaging in idle speculation; I get enough of that from the stewards.

Camara's second visit was more useful. He came bearing gifts and presented me with a magnificent gray leather trench coat, the kind the officers of the U-force favor. When I asked if this was an indication that my charge and I would be traveling by submersible, the doctor smiled, which was all the answer I needed. After he took his leave, I tried the coat on and scrutinized my reflection. You won't believe what I found in the pocket, Inge: A Luger!

I don't know if I should be grateful or afraid, but needless to say, I am glad to have it and I *love* the coat.

I think it suits me. I tried out several poses but I couldn't quite manage to look dangerous in any of them.

I wish you could see me, pet, but I suspect you'd laugh. Oh, to hear the sweet music of your laughter; you have no idea what it would mean to me right now.

07 MAY

The latest rumor: the Führer is dead. He died by his own hand or while defending the city in the streets of Berlin, depending on which steward I choose to believe. I felt a wave of relief wash over me when I heard the news. Thoughts of home, thoughts of you, but my gladness has been replaced by an uncertainty that grows and grows. What is to become of us? Are we to be interred? Surely they won't let us go home. I remember all too well my father's bitterness when he spoke of the humiliations he endured a generation ago.

No, I don't think I will be going home anytime soon. Perhaps it is best that I make my escape now, get off this mad continent altogether. After all, what is home when my heart lies elsewhere?

Wherever you are in the world, darling, is my one true home.

08 MAY

I got my wish yesterday. Just as I predicted, we quit Vigo by U-boat and I now have the privilege of writing you from a depth of several meters beneath the Atlantic.

Does that sound romantic, pet? It shouldn't. My quarters are close and damp, my ears throb from the irregular air pressure, and the noise is infernal. Dante himself could not have dreamt a better means of conveying the damned to their fate.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Yesterday they fetched me after supper – more Gestapo – reeking of champagne and cigarettes, their besotted faces splotched with cheer, which they now did their best to stifle. I wondered why they bothered. Did they hope not to offend?

Listen to me, Inge! Five days in a monk's cell and now I share his aesthetic. When this is all over, I pray you won't find me an insufferable bore. It is loneliness, nothing less and nothing more.

My patient? A strange, strange man. Before we departed for the U-boat, he was waiting for me in the back of a gray Mercedes idling on the pier. It bore no markings, yet seemed conspicuous by its newness, but what do I know of such things? I suppose there must be a warehouse somewhere with hundreds of pristine motorcars ready to dispatch the higher-ups throughout the Reich at a moment's notice.

His legs were swaddled in a traveling blanket. His face was hidden behind sunglasses and an oversized homburg. A dark scarf obscured the rest. But even this ridiculous disguise couldn't hide the fact that the poor man's head was completely covered with bandages.

An adjutant handled the introductions and informed me that my patient's name is Herr Dasch. In my dealings with the crew, I am to refer to him as "the patient." I am not to reveal his identity to anyone under any circumstances. It took everything in my power, darling, to suppress a long, withering sigh. What is it with these Gestapo boys and their silly games?

When it was clear we were going straight to the U-boat, I made a fuss over the necessity of a proper examination of "the patient." How I am to supply "the patient" with the proper care, I argued, if I don't know what the blazes is wrong with him? The adjutant handed over a sealed dossier marked SECRET and assured me his condition had been thoroughly evaluated and I would find everything I needed to fulfill my duties onboard the vessel. "The patient" acknowledged none of this. He just sat there in the back of the car, inscrutable as a scarecrow, while the ice melting in the champagne bucket sloshed around as we made our way to a mole at the end of the harbor.

If the U-boat had any markings I didn't see them. It seemed gray and spectral-looking in the fog. A tugboat was tied up alongside, belching smoke. The adjutant excused himself and scurried aboard. He must have ordered the men to clear the deck for all the sailors stopped what they were doing and went below.

My charge is not a well man. I had to lift him out of the automobile and when he found his footing he scarcely had the strength to stand. Together, we labored up the gangway. I could feel how slight and frail he was underneath his coat. Maneuvering down the conning tower ladder was a tricky bit of business as he could not support himself, and his grip on my arm was that of a man who knows there is no getting up if he falls. There is little about his personage that suggests the aura of a scientist, soldier or captain of industry. He is simply an old man.

The commander of the U-boat, Kapitänleutnant Eienschalle, greeted us in the Control Room. He is old for a naval officer, a bit on the nervous side, but I suppose he must be a seasoned veteran to have earned these qualities and to have been chosen for this mission, whatever it might be. I've heard it said that one should never judge a sailor by the way he conducts himself in port, but I can't help but wonder if he's as astonished to be here as I am.

Our bunks are in a berthing compartment aft of the Control Room. (I already sound like a sailor, don't I, pet?) It's not a large space, but the curtains offer a modicum of privacy. I installed the patient on the bottom bunk. I have taken the top. It is my understanding that the crew double up the bunks so that one can sleep while the other stands watch, thus the bunks are almost always occupied. Our privacy is a luxury. I suppose we shall be resented for it.

Word of our arrival has filtered through the compartments. It's clear the crew was told to make themselves scarce until the patient was properly settled. If they have misgivings, they keep them to themselves. I gather most are grateful to be at sea. Any action, no matter how desperate or fanatical, is preferable to surrendering the boat to the English. They have their mission and that is enough. U-boats, however, are not ocean liners. They are not in the habit of taking on passengers. Everyone knows the patient must be someone special and their curiosity is intense.

An hour after we came aboard, the tug towed us out of the harbor and released us to the Atlantic. Farewell, Vigo! I wonder if I shall ever see you again.

09 MAY

Dasch is a quarrelsome patient. He won't let me examine him or change his dressings, and his complaints are endless. He has shed the homburg and the glasses but retains the scarf. He refuses to leave his bunk, not even to relieve himself. He eats very little of the food he is given. He reminds me of the mummified remains of an Egyptian queen, though the wildness in his eyes behind the slits in his dressings makes me wonder if the source of his maladies might be psychological. After nearly two days in his presence I still don't know what the devil is wrong with him.

The dossier offers few clues. He has undergone surgery, but there is no indication that he'd been injured or ill, and he most certainly doesn't suffer from burns. I asked Eienschalle about medical supplies and he turned over a large black valise filled with caffeine pills and pervitin tablets. I am saved!

However, I am at a loss to explain the medicine I am required to administer to Dasch. There are several vials, all identical, but only one is labeled and it reads *Jugendsyrup*. Youth serum? I don't know what to make of this, Inge. I suppose it must be some code for morphine to keep it from being stolen, but it gives me pause. Not for the first time I wonder if this is all an elaborate joke. If that's the way it is, so be it, just as long as the joke isn't on me. I have much to tell you about my new life as a sailor, but I am utterly exhausted, and must snatch a few hours of rest while my charge sleeps.

10 MAY

I have done my best to determine when and where this manmade whale intends to spew us out onto dry land again, but no one knows anything. I have asked Eienschalle for updates but all he tells me is that there is nothing he can tell me. The crew is convinced I know more than they do. We incessantly pester one another in the passageways with the same questions over and over again. The most insistent of the lot is a fierce little brute of a man named Meck who has a head full of the most curious-looking teeth I have ever seen on a white man. Gold with dragon designs. He has tattoos as well. When he's not spouting ridiculous demands at Eienschalle, he's whispering in the ear of anyone who will listen to him. To say that he is taking advantage of the odd uncertainty we all feel about our irregular mission would be an understatement. Everything out of his mouth is a notch below insubordination. If I were Eienschalle, I'd keep my eyes on that one.

11 MAY

I don't know what to make of my patient. His head wobbles when he speaks and his hands are always trembling. He has no balance. I suspect there's something wrong with the inner workings of his ear. His hygiene is atrocious. I oblige his incessant requests by giving him as many caffeine pills as he desires, but this evening he demanded the pervitin as well. The man

needs rest, which is precisely what he will not get on a diet of caffeine and pervitin tablets and who would know better than I?

12 MAY

I have spent four horrible nights on this boat now, but it feels like much more. I am amazed by how long the days are when one is unable to observe the sun coming up in the morning and going down at night – the customs of daily life. Nothing ever happens. Same course, same speed, same depth. No one knows where we're going or for what purpose. If it weren't for the berthing compartment lights, which are kept on during the day and switched off at night, I'd be lost.

Does this sound maudlin, dear? I don't mean it to be. How many sunsets have I described to you these many months we have spent apart? Too many. While I confess I find the prospect of not seeing you again both sad and sobering, it would greatly help matters if I knew where the hell we were going. But never mind my complaints, pet. I'm finding it difficult to sleep for more than a few minutes at a time. It's all tension and no release here and I ache for you as urgently as ever.

13 MAY

I have enlisted the aid of one of the Radiomen, a fine young man from Berlin named Berger. Marvelously competent, eager to please – perhaps too much so – and he shares my dislike of Meck. He believes we are heading to Argentina.

Argentina! Can you believe it, Inge? It's a long way from home, but that isn't such a bad thing in these uncertain times.

The medicine appears to be working. The patient has more energy, which is not the good news it would seem to be as he seldom sleeps. While I am encouraged by his progress, I worry about the stress he is putting on his system, and the conditions here on the U-boat are less than ideal. Condensation creeps up the bulkhead and our bunks are always damp. I daresay we could all do with a breath of fresh air, but that, of course, is impossible.

As for the patient's mental state, there is less cause for celebration. His moods are multiple and range from hysterical to melancholy. When he is not being surly, he is self-pitying. I feel sorry for the sailors in the bunks closest to us. It is not my nature to complain, but the man brays at me like a mule. He still will not let me get near his dressings, which are filthy, and I have come to loathe feeding him his medicine. The greedy look in his eyes, the odor from his mouth, the way he slurps the syrup when I pass the spoon between the slits in his bandages. If he were not my patient, I wouldn't have a thing to do with him.

14 MAY

Another showdown between Eienschalle and Meck this afternoon. Meck demanded to know when our destination would be revealed, and when Eienschalle refused, Meck went on and on about his rights as a sailor to know where Eienschalle intended to take them. This started an argument as to whether the boat belonged to the Reich or the souls who occupied her, and I am afraid it took Eienschalle far too long to put his foot down and dismiss Meck from the Control Room. I found the whole thing tiresome and tedious, but it is clear Meck has the sympathy, if not the support, of most of the crew. Eienschalle overestimates their patience. He seems not to understand how important this is, that the men cannot go on and on indefinitely. The war defined them, but what are they now? Heroes? Fugitives? Fools? I have decided to take the matter up with Berger, who works closely with Eienschalle, to see if this can be rectified without challenging his authority. The situation is so dire that even the patient is aware of it. He had me repeat the argument word for word and he was attentive throughout. That he is taking an interest in the world beyond his sickbed is undoubtedly a good sign, but when I returned from my visit with Berger a few hours later I found Meck whispering with the patient. I shooed him off under the pretense that he needed rest, but Meck seemed to see right through me. He flashed his weird smile and skulked off.

15 MAY

Very tired today. Feel feverish. I prescribe rest, double allotments of lime juice, and a few days without tablets, but that's easier said than done. What I wouldn't give for a glass of brandy, Inge. Or three or four! Whatever happened to the days when any sea captain worth his salt wouldn't dream of setting sail without stuffing the hold with barrels of rum and casks of Madeira?

16 MAY

A remarkable thing happened today. I resolved to stay in my bunk and get some rest. The first few hours were fitful and I was besieged by strange dreams, but I slept for a good six hours. When I awoke, the patient was out of his bunk and pacing up and down the passageway.

No one would mistake him for a picture of health, not with that hideous bandage wrapped around his head, but his steps are careful, his hands are steady, and his gaze is firm and clear. Of course, I still haven't the foggiest notion what it is he is recovering from, but his improvement is nothing short of stupendous. He appears to have thrown off his infirmities as one would an old winter coat.

17 MAY

Eienschalle gathered the crew in the Control Room this evening and announced that we are headed for Argentina. Few seem surprised by this revelation, and none were grateful. Why couldn't Eienschalle have given this speech sooner? He thanked the men for their bravery, their commitment to duty, and just as he was telling them that if the Reich had more men like the ones assembled here today, they might have changed the outcome, an incredible thing happened. The patient called out from the passageway in a voice clear and strong, demanding to know when we would be arriving. The crew fell silent as Eienschalle considered the request. Meck smiled that terrible smile of his, grateful, I suppose, to have an ally in his insubordination. I very nearly stepped forward to apologize on my charge's behalf, but held my tongue. Eienschalle responded that his chief concerns were the safety of the crew and the conservation of fuel. He would compromise neither to hasten the journey. He ended by reminding the men that for as long as U-2500 was under his command, he would make the decisions, not them, but I'm afraid this show of strength did not go over very well, and that men like Meck will take it as a challenge.

18 MAY

Perhaps I was wrong. Perhaps it's not the patient's improvement that is so startling, but the decline of the boat and everything in it. The slime-coated bulkheads, foul-weather gear going green from disuse, the pervasive stink of the men whose sunken, sallow faces get grayer by the day. Is it any wonder? Consider our diet: tepid water that tastes like fuel oil, rancid butter, lemons rindled with rot. Green sausages sway from the overhead thickening with mildew. The bread is fuzzy with mold that must be scraped off with a knife. They call them white rabbits.

Do you remember the basket of golden apples, salted crackers, and herring in velvety cream that we shared together on your bed, Inge? When the sirens sounded, we looked at one another. There were crumbs on your lip and your hair looked white in the darkened room, but you were not afraid.

19 MAY

If the brain's blueprint can be described as a labyrinth, the patient's thoughts run along a single track. He is like a dog in a kennel that desires only to be let out of his cage, but bristles at me whenever I come near. He says the most outrageous things, Inge. He speaks of men made of ice and fire that live in the Hindu mountains, saucer-shaped aeroplanes that can fly to the heavens. Last night, when I checked on him before the evening meal, he said, "When the world became intolerable to Zarathustra, he climbed a mountain; when the world became intolerable to Dasch, he went below the waves to be reborn."

This evening he asked me if the health of the crew might benefit from airing out the boat. I told him it would and this pleased him. One thing is clear, Inge, this is a man who is accustomed to giving orders, not taking them.

I have a difficult choice to make. Do I align with Eienschalle, which, in spite of the Old Man's indecisiveness, I know in my heart is the right thing to do; or do I stick with the patient, my loathsome, horrible patient? I wish you could counsel me, Inge. The right thing to do often isn't.

20 MAY

This morning I had a nasty surprise waiting for me: the patient was out of his bunk and leaning over mine, his grotesque face inches from my own. His breath was ghastly and he was raving like the madman I now suspect him to be. "We are a race of people who made competence the standard and then turned it into something sublime. Americans esteem the maverick,

the desperado, and the cheat above all others. They do not stand firm as Germans do. Their independence is their downfall. As we ready ourselves for sacrifice and service so that Germany may once again be supreme, Americans sit in movie houses and gambol about in motorcars. Look no further than their national heroes: Billy the Kid and Jesse James! Germans excel when they are organized, Russians thrive in chaos. It is their natural state. This is why it is much more difficult to subdue a German physically than mentally. It is true. We require direction, purpose, discipline. Without discipline, we are like the French!"

He laughed at his own joke, clapping his hands together and farting like a schoolboy. I asked him if there was anything else he wanted, and do you know what he said to me, Inge?

"A clean purge."

There is no treating a man like that.

21 MAY

Didn't leave my bunk today. I don't know how much more I can take, Inge. There were fewer animals on the ark.

22 MAY

The patient took control of the vessel today, and the only thing shocking about it was how easy it was. He simply went to the Control Room and instructed Eienschalle to bring the boat to the surface. The Old Man had the look someone who'd run out of options. Compromise the integrity of his command and take the boat up, or refuse and risk having it taken from him? He pushed his white cap back on his head, a gesture that meant he'd made up his mind but was still trying to accept what he was about to say. He asked Berger for the time, which shocked me. I didn't understand the gesture for what it was, another crude attempt to retard the inevitable. When Berger cheerily answered that it was nearly midnight, the Old Man nodded and instructed the Engineer to bring the boat to the surface.

Word spread throughout the vessel that we were going up and as many men as could cram into the Control Room pushed their way into the compartment and stood with their faces tilted toward the hatch. When the scuttle was thrown open a torrent of water streamed into the boat. Then air. Sweet. Warm. Fragrant. I imagined your spirit had found me at last.

One of the lookouts scurried up the ladder and gave the all clear. Eienschalle and the patient went up alone. The patient was dressed in a womanish mink and clutched a dossier I'd never seen before. They were not gone long. Eienschalle came down with a harried look on his face, a beaten man. He had the dossier now and he handed it over to Berger without giving it so much as a glance. The Old Man sent the Engineer up to see the patient and when he came down another officer went up. By the time I was summoned, I'd already heard the news: Our destination was no longer South America. We were going to a secret U-boat base among the glaciers of Antarctica.

I climbed the ladder and took in the seascape. Dark clouds rolled overhead like the underbellies of sagging battleships. My patient waited in the Wintergarden, staring at the horizon. "Ask yourself," he said at length, "do you want a life of your own or one of someone else's making? With the warm clay in your hands will you sculpt a figure of your own choosing or will you look to another's design?"

My patient may be mad, Inge, but he is not sick. If I were to remove the dirty gauze and dun-colored bandages that are beginning to sag on his face and unravel about his neck like a filthy scarf, I would not find a burn or a wound, but the handiwork of the surgeon's scalpel. The Reich has given the patient a new face just as surely as the serum has given him new life. It's all very clear to me, Inge. Now that he has the ship, he wants my medicine – all of it – and this I cannot allow.

23 MAY

I finally understand what Camara understood all along. What we're here for, what will become of us. I'm sorry, Inge. The bandages must come off tomorrow, and if I find what I think I'll find, I will put the Luger to use. I'm sorry, I love you, I'm sorry. Tomorrow, the bandages are coming off.

ERIKA MIKKALO

THE GORILLAS

The gorillas bait me as I stand outside the cage, long arms, sumptuous pelts, brow ridges of geological proportions. We're in the primate house to observe, my primary occupation, my only skill. Perhaps I can connect with the apes, sign like Koko, or communicate via some machine, its large square keys bearing simple icons, bright. A yellow crescent for 'banana,' red square outline for 'reward.' You stand behind me. I think: "Yes, this is what one does when one is falling in love. One goes to the zoo." And then immediately dismiss the scripting of my thoughts as Mid-Atlantic, that "one" is too pretentious, that the All-American vernacular second-person "you" is more honest. If the editor in my head got paid, I'd be doing quite well. You are an editor, but I know better than to let you read what I write, even if you could edit with the most dispassionate eye. I want passion, but not what you'd provide. The ritual is kind, but every time I look at you, I'd rather see someone else, and speculate that you feel the same way, and then become too demoralized that we're here at all. I'm better off watching the gorillas. A young female grooms herself. Her offspring swings from a rope. Others loll, sprawl, the presumptive alpha male drags his knuckles in the dust. Theoretically, beta males have better reproductive success than alphas – alphas have to spend too much time maintaining their status. I consider that you are probably a delta male, and get even more depressed, so instead decide to *watch the gorillas*. To be confined, on display, in perpetuity. Trapped with the same, without means of escape. How do they manage? Are they medicating the apes, and with what? Whether the drugs are capsules wrapped in peanut-butter nuggets or dope-injected apples, a syringe piercing the rind of an orange. It's a wonder they don't fling feces at the glass all the time. At this precise moment a 'splat' reverberates, and a brown glaze veils my view of the primates. Shit stain pane. We both laugh, but I feel empathy for the ape, tenderly concerned that it will be diagnosed as psychotic, taken away, put in solitary confinement, be forced to interpret primate Rorschachs with answers like "fresh larvae," "a teeming anthill," or "an interloper beating his chest" as possible response. I lean against you because you are there, for at least that much contact, but then think better of it, that you might understandably construe it encouragement, and put your arm around me. This might be tolerable, if you understood that I could never see us in bed together. There are times when 'friend' is a diminishment, an insult. There are times when 'friend' is the best you can do. The apes stroll. How long have they known one another, are any of them from the same part of some forest? On the other side of the world, fertile, teeming, dense, and green.

STEPHANIE GRAY

YOU KNOW THEY WANT TO DISAPPEAR

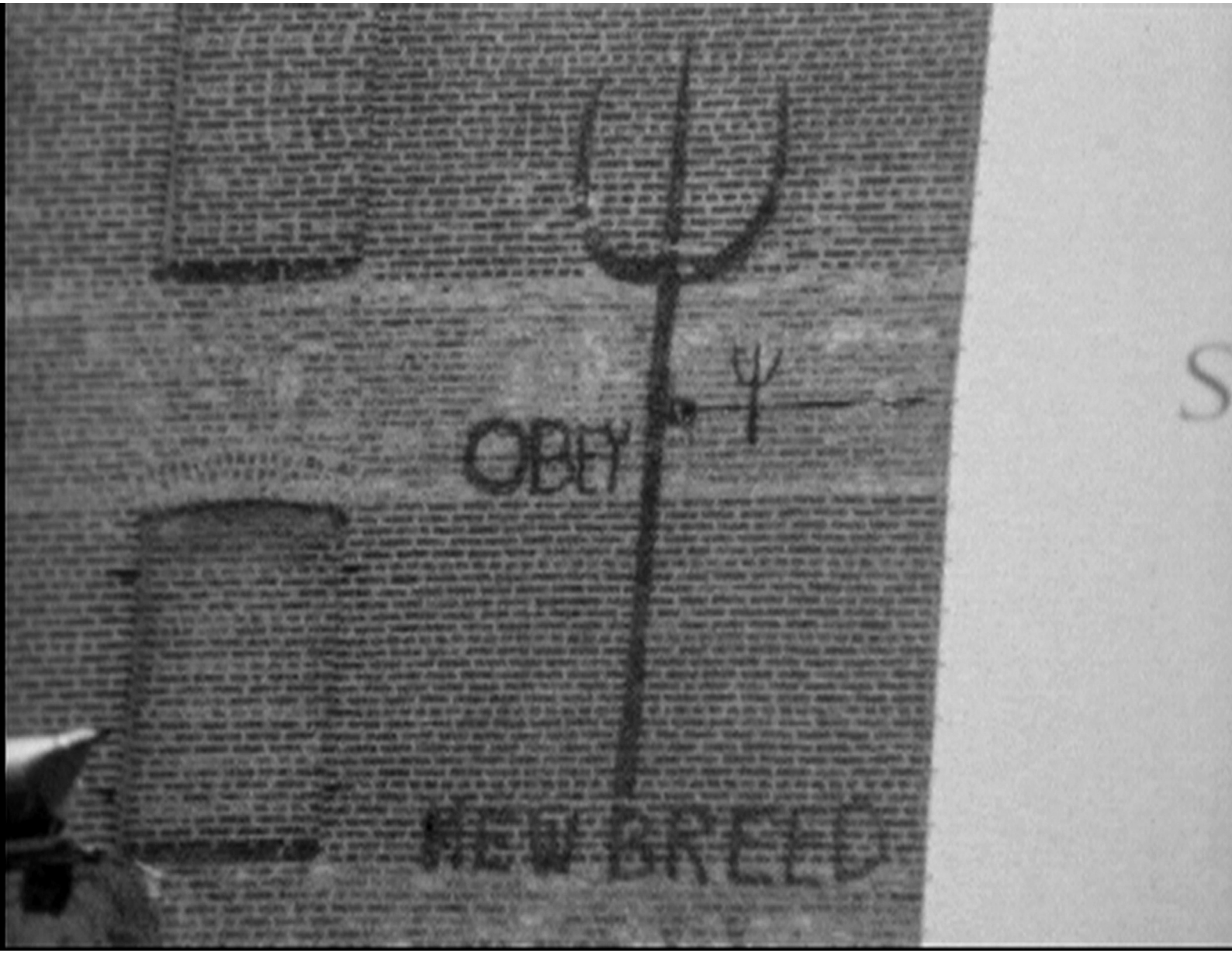
HELL'S KITCHEN AS CLINTON (SUPER 8 FILM STILLS)

SHY

VENT
ECIAL

LAU
SELF

THE ALGORITHM KILLED


OBEY

STEPHANIE GRAY

I DESIRE YOUR QUEER NYC PRIZES

(CALLING E.B. WHITE)

A. Or they may work in a midtown office and may let a whole year swing round without sighting Governors Island from the sea wall.

I had eyes at the back of my head. From my old office at Broad I craned my neck through the cubicles. Everyone with director in their names had a windowed office looking out to Brooklyn or Governor's Island. The rest of us were in windowless caves. My title had the word officer in it. I couldn't well remember if my office resembled anything more for New York or Peoria Ill. My Governor's Island happened years before on a boat where a tourist dropped ice cream on my new Converse. Before art co-opted it, I tried to go to the other side but New York-style security stopped me. I nearly got arrested. For the view I thought I saw with eyes at the back of my head, when I forgot my own personal private view, from a few years back. Other people probably do this too, get my Governor's Island view from my head to their brick walled window view on their lunch break before crashing into and diving beneath the wreck of the Governor's Island sea wall. The Burger King that was there, did they have a special sea wall?

B. The commuter is the queerest bird of all.

I wanted to know what exact wingspan I had and if you ran out of words for strange. I wanted to know if you knew fully striped commuters now must start at the end of Queens and work their way back. If the boroughs were not commuters what were we then. I don't hold secrets about cross borough movement, but I am waiting for your trophy for queerest. Just take 7 to Flushing, get the local to make it to me. Sanford and Parsons is where it's at.

C. It is a miracle that New York works at all.

Was she working class? Or is it mostly pink collar, really, through and through? Who turned the miracle over, and what class was it negotiated in? Did you cash your check or deposit it? You still didn't get the bank account yet? What miracle? Not on 57th street again. Don't do it to me.

D. who desires such queer prizes…killed by a falling cornice…view of miasmic airshaft

I'm trying to suspend myself on your prizes queerly, maybe dodge an imaginary writer along with a real cornice. I could squeeze into a miasmic airshaft just like you said, but incognito. I could tip to into your mourned neighborhoods. I could not become the queerest creature of all, the commuter bird. The other two I guess I have to pick one. I came here from somewhere else. So I am not the queerest of birds, the commuter but the other one, the one who you said gives the city its energy. Except. That. I have no energy most of the time, I might be the commuter after all shuttling between buses and no time to note the quaint stores you see or saw, like I used to. How queer exactly, and what bird? I tried to imagine you on top of the New Yorker building typing everything you know about this city, but you kept vanishing into the miasmic airshaft and blended in with the falling cornices.

E. To a New Yorker the City is both changeless and changing

Will B&H always be on 2nd Ave? Will my shoes rot again in that one spot I walk on them and they are too cheap to get new soles but too nice to throw away? Will the new it girl never be it. Who came up with it anyway. Will the 7 always go 1 mile per hour around Long Island City while the skyscrapers laugh at us? Will Li-Lac chocolate always be there? Will just showing up make a difference? Will it only be only shuttle buses this weekend?

F. It carries on its lapel the unexpungable odor of the long past

And this house held Jimi Hendrix for awhile, and these terra cotta stairs have always been here. The washer and dryer that don't work anymore that were here in the 60s are too heavy to get rid of. We will break the stairs if we go through the stairs. I think we're going to have to squeeze it out of the window did you call the mover?

G. In NY you feel the vibrations of great times.
In Texas nobody walked home with big smiles on their faces. Here someone could be walking from the train with a big smile. Really good things happen and really bad. In Erie if you walked with a smile like that for good times, you'd be seen as, you know…why are you…you think you have something better than me?

H. A man was killed by a falling cornice, I was not a party to the tragedy
I was in the typing pool, he was the first man let in, I was showing him the new Selectrics I remember they said don't hit return as hard, try not to get your cigarette ashes in it, don't let it over heat, dust it every day and the man asked me if these were really better than the old Selectrics and I said yes even if they are the same olive green color and he said, and then he said I'll get you a soda and I said are you sure you don't want to wait until the boss comes back…and out he stepped and the next thing I knew there were sirens and I heard the firefighter yell killed by cornice and the fisherman didn't really do anything

I. *To bring NY down to date, a man would have to be published at the speed of light*
I lighted that speed down, didn't date it but New York seemed swell, I actually never WANTED to bring you down, necessarily, I wanted to keep up with you in date, in you up there not necessarily down, I wanted to keep the Bowery up with what it was but it wasn't happening, the light speed did faze me, it's the one I stare at when I'm getting coffee across from that new hotel where the only good thing is when the 3pm light hits the windows

J. Four miles from where Walt Whitman sat sweating out editorials for The Brooklyn Eagle
I wondered if the length of your poem lines even infiltrated your editorials. I wonder what you saw out your window, I wondered if you wrote poems between editorials on the Eagle's time, therefore saying the Eagle subsidized "I sing the body…"

K. I could continue with this list indefinitely
here's the first railroad car I get into, watch out for the pot smoking teenagers in the train shelter, even at 9 in the morning, remember there's no garbage can down here, I'll have to litter my cup if I don't want to carry it and spill it on other train travelers, here's where to go up the secret steps and get in the first E car, here's where to not pre-walk and stay in the first F or V car, at top of stairs or at corner I will see the guy with the guitar and afro and then I'll see the skater grunge mystical guy with long shorts even in cold weather here's where my friend nick might pop up, here's where I cross the street even though I will cross back at end of corner because there is more chlorophyll to my right, just back there there's the ha stone did I remember to look at it today, don't be nosy and look at people's apartments I know on each side of me as I walk by the cemetery, here I can pretend I see the Hell's Angels headquarters if one building was shorter if there's a few extra minutes, maybe I should back up and get more coffee, if I have a letter in my bag when I get to corner, put it in mail box, if there's press, then grab the *Village Voice*, if the *Villager* wanted something then walk back down to first and get it, if I'm starving do the hassle back over Houston to Yonah Schimmel's and buy not a knish but a bagel because it's the only good one right around here that I know

L. 34 blocks from the street Willa Cather lived in when she came to NY to write books about Nebraska
so we can see Texas and Nebraska in New York though it's not really New York but to really see Texas and New York we found we had to leave Texas and New York and we find ourselves sitting in heat and air shafts and your third eye vision providing x-ray and ultraviolet rays of gravel roads and people staring and trailers mixing in with glassed reflections of the Conde Nast building and Empire State and Chrysler a mis-vision gives that true vision and I don't understand

M. perhaps it is healthier to live in a community where when a cornice falls you feel the blow
more than once, when my shoes were untied and I was about to step on an escalator, someone has told me my shoes were untied. I always planned to step aside and tie them right before, but those strange and cold people wanted to make sure I didn't go down the elevator pit like Oscar the Grouch's swimming pool at the bottom of his can which was on a street in NY

N. He has never listened to Manhattan breathing
I don't usually hear irregularities but sometimes I do—I hear when Manhattan needs an asthma pump, when it coughs that cough that never stops, there are days

you can hear hiccups. Like that day when the police hovered over the Hell's Angels headquarters, I felt no breathing I felt breathing being held and then. When the M14 bus comes by is when I hear hiccups.

O. NY blends the gift of privacy with excitement and participation
If you really want to know, on the Q last night I saw you looking at her looking at those two doing you know what. I walk this block just to see if I see the same people and same graffiti day after day and nobody that I stare at ever stares at me so I still have my privacy but they don't know maybe the don't totally have theirs.

P. The subtlest change in NY is something people didn't speak much about but that is in everyone's mind
when you go to the laundromat you hafta claim the dryers, you have open up four of them real quick and throw a piece of clothing in each of them to get the last ones before the person with all of their apartment's covers. If you don't do that you'll be stuck there all afternoon. Most people won't touch your piece of clothing after you throw it in there even though you won't load up the dryer for a few minutes. It helps if you throw an undergarment in there, people really don't want to touch that I think it was the law of karma of laundromats or something, something written down somewhere so you should be ok with following these instructions.

Q. the atmospheric light always changes an instant too soon
I thought I saw myself in there and all of the city in one reflection. At the time I thought it wasn't possible but it was but it wasn't but it was. Getting off the bus up there near the Chrysler Building and the model's square mirror glasses let me see it in a reflection for the time it takes to blink and then I remembered I can't even see one block over from where I live in Queens.

R. The coin that slips to the floor
could have been what you needed for that one cup of coffee that was going to get you through the last afternoon that was all "this is the last day of the rest of your life" or was it "this is the first day of the rest of your life" or "this is the day that your life starts on right here at 57th street, you are from this city but getting knocked by television executives because you are not quite sure which building your doctor's appointment is in"-

S. a sort of fever of inescapable motion
there are plenty of Stop signs in this city to tell you what to do, doors that close in your face when you slide down the stairs, school crossing guards saying no to everyone else but you and yet around the stopping-everything's-going, somehow it doesn't make sense but it does, I had a fever about 100 that time, I couldn't stop tapping my foot while you were talking I'm sorry maybe the city rubbed off on me I was readying to go to the next place 30 minutes late but we are stalled out here under the East River-

T. the lunch hour in Manhattan has been shoved up ahead a half hour
and it didn't really help me actually, I was hoping it would but I'm never done with everything even by the time of lunch, I tried to time out that bowl of lentil soup and challah bread at B&H and I can never get it down quite to speed, which is actually probably the reason why I go there.

U. at certain hours of certain days it's almost impossible
you tried to make that happen and every invisible force that could come out of the wood work or steel work or nothing work did, all the invisible forces came out, clear as day, starting with your expired metrocard, then your left umbrella on the train, your coffee cup under your seat on the next train, then your gloves at the counter at the bagel place, then half your shoelace when you stepped on it to pivot, pointedly, around some stately corner somewhere, I'm thinking something up there near Gracie Mansion where pivoting around a corner, a limestone building, is grand in the old sense, if celebrating impossible grandness could be done…

V. There is standing room only in Fifth Avenue
I always wondered about what they said, Ladies Mile and I was supposed to look this up and before I started to have an inkling, I imagined thousands of ladies packed in their Mile, them only

W. You grab a handle and open the door and find that some other citizen is entering from the other side

a cliché always spoke to me "you walked in through the out door" and I did my best to ignore it like you are supposed to ignore clichés but in every out door in NY someone is coming in and in every in door someone is going out, I hoped to meet Fran Lebowitz one of these days and Dorothy Parker and Holly Golightly when they finally escape their in doors without having escaped before and I hoped I would never really step out next time, I would actually step into their worlds. Some out doors will be more in than in and I guess you just have to test it all by the handle-

X. the question asked at the wrong moment
do you have everything bagels? (at Katz's) – what are blintzes (at B&H on a Sat at noon) what's Nutella (at Atlas on Sun at noon) – she told me to stand ON line, not IN it so I left looking for the line on the sidewalk and they said I lost my place and sent me back and I'm not exactly sure what happened. How do you make sure people don't try to go on for free if you only check tickets after people get on? (Long Island Railroad at 5:15 pm on a Thursday)

Y. trying to avoid the glance because the glance accuses
hopefully I didn't take your spot on the sidewalk, I didn't take the last creamer at the deli, I didn't get the last bialy, I didn't forget sunglasses at night or morning it's not a Corey Hart song joke, the one time the train announcer really doesn't make sense you look to see what other people think and everyone's wearing sunglasses…

Z. sky acreage hitherto untilled
I thought you could see that energy connected to that energy of that building to that building, so much clichedly placed in the sky but it's true right, that's what we do we place it all in that image that you see on the 278 West, coming out from Staten Island or Sunset Park, on the scary edgy feeling highway just when you are thinking maybe you should have taken the train but that would have taken an hour and a half, and what if you lived here all this time and you only saw that skyline on the rack of postcards 10 for a $1 while walking back and to and back and to Penn Station for years, at some point you will believe in the postcards more than what's on the train's bridge you never take…

Z+ In the candid light from unshaded bulbs gleam watermelons and lingerie.
Some days I'm seeing something without seeing it but seeing it without seeing it and this is what I remembered that I saw today but I don't remember walking by and actually seeing it when I saw it but this is really what I saw and I don't think I saw that before.

Z++ no phone rings no one feed the hungry in baskets no one disturbs the papers,
I wondered what would happen if we all became ghosts of our own offices what secrets might migrate to the next skyscraper over how many poems got lost in the file sent to Stor-Del Transfer, how many visions were absorbed in the blinking hold light of the phone, how many opening lines were put on hold as we opened the toner cartridge, how many stories were foiled with dysfunctional post-its how many straight up dreams simmered in the metered postage machine that day you addressed 200 solicitations that the recipients might throw away anyway?

Z+++ a time of awesome suspension
it will be just right if you don't cut in front of the person before, you, when you looked up higher in your head beyond the Empire State Building and categorized your future successes the ones you weren't sure the city would let you have unless you disturb the papers

Z++++ A sort of perpetual muddling through
you remember that day when you couldn't really remember how you got there on time but you did? The 7 matched up with the E, the E matched up with the B, the B came before the D, the B didn't stall out on the bridge, the stop light was up at the corner, your class was cancelled, they started the poetry reading late, the second reader who you really wanted to see was stuck on a bus the same way you were stuck with the paper in-basket and in the end you both showed up on time, late but on time, a key to this gridded island that usually opens most doors in that small failure. Don't fail too good tho.

*Italicized lines from E.B. White's "Here is NY."

STEVE DALACHINSKY
SHIT STORM
CHAOTIC STRUCTURALISM REDEFINED (SECOND MANIFESTO)
CHAOS THEORY – CONTINUED (FIRST MANIPULATION) – for B.P.

distinguish
between
the orangeredots that form stars
LED to this extinguished place
the green/red/green of 5 rum(s) & cokes
knocked down the stomach (g)rumbling of too much
bass & everything compounded the el/bow lining
wrist nod these gnarling arthritic(k) f(l)ingers
sharpained like a pinprick worsening
councelllling leaned into – trapped within the plastique movement
& more bent vehicles of water until MUDURO
& then the list of explosions:

{beyond the boundaries of noise / insanely beyond structural chaos
implosion of the universally BIG
beyond this ANIMA(L) MIND}

HuM(e)s the berg (mt.)
MT. Mt.... mT. L.E.D. 10pointed epicentre of HUMPHla
agamimm zetla & the gLOLS collapses on the estheeeett-in-fleet
as a glass atrembles on top the empty case like the first premium word
so high so low & there is only in between
the melding of pure esthetics & its most premium (a word i never use)
& the 4 or 5 rum(s) & cokes of a topnotch ENDURO as i got FREE/

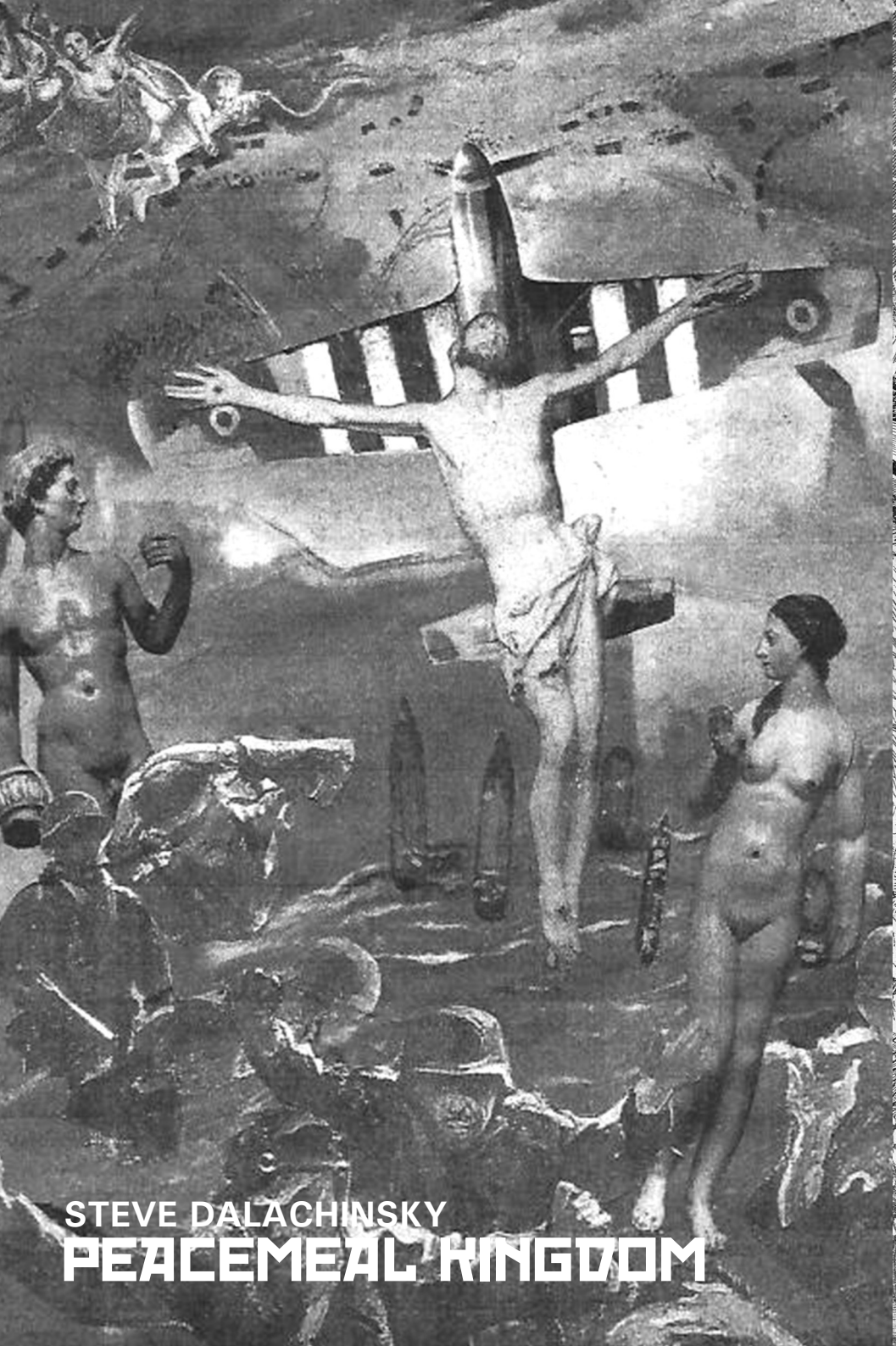
& now this list begath:

may the slinky of electric orbits orbit sleekly thru the thick
may the funk that is the strata of our chaos dwell in peace
the fragility of chaos & stabilization of chaos & normalcy of chaos
& brevity of chaos / longevity & physicality of chaos >
& the ephemerality of chaos / & temporality of chaos / the non-existence of chaos /
& jubilance of chaos > SOACH SOACHHHH SOACHO / the inevitability of chaos /
the demise of chaos / the creation of chaos / the fabrication of chaos / & sublimation of chaos / &
destruction of chaos / the destruction by CHAOS /
the rebirth of chaos / THE INCESSANT BEATing of CHAOS /
& the meat(ing) of chaos / the insipid ever sloppy spilled cup of chaos /
the timid ever sorry cup runneth over of chaos /

hum en – duro shit vlem storm / hum duro shit vlem storm
& the structure of chaos / & the brother of chaos /
& the slinking of chaos towards chaos / in the electric botched structure of chaos
 & back to chaos > ever back to chaos > the origin of chaos> the antecedent of chaos
the forerunner of chaos & redundancy of chaos > the precedent of chaos /
the afterlife of chaos / the beginning of chaos / the father > the daughter> the mother> the brother
> the cousin of chaos / the ach-so-ach of chaos /
the presence of chaos / the presence of chaos / existence of chaos/ sister of chaos >
the barter of chaos / & death of chaos / the resurrection of chaos / the chaos of chaos the chaos of
chaos / the splendor of chaos / the anointment of chaos /
the annoyance of chaos / the end of chaos / the extremity of chaos /
 the borders of chaos / the exhalation of chaos / the exhaustion of chaos/ the flash drunk perennial
selfie asshole pontification of chaos /
the even-more-drunk steven in chaos / at the scream & periphery of chaos

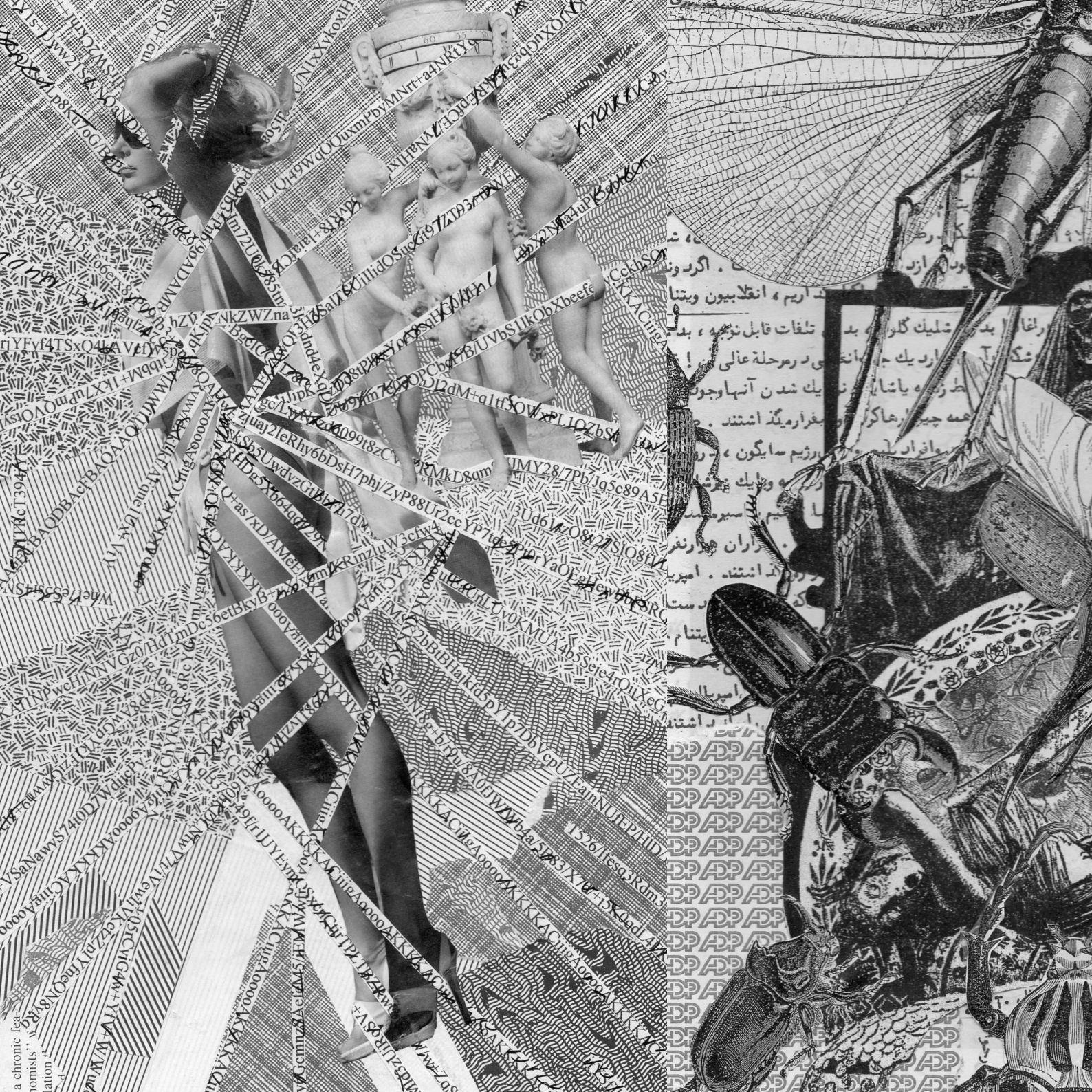
& may my brother rest in peace in chaos
may my brother rest in peace in chaos
within the structure of chaos
in the midst of the shit storm
within the residue of structure
& the strata of history

& may peace reside in chaos
PEACEFULLY reside in CHAOs
within the explosive order of chaos
& the onrush of chaos
& silence of chaos
& the opiate of chaos
the disease of chaos
the calmness of chaos
the opiniated oph – thal- mology of chaos
the oppressive routine of chaos
the prison camp of chaos
the principality of chaos
& the triumphant tribulation of chaos
the trigger & triathlon the tributary & co-opting of CHAOS
the navigation thru chaos / the breathing of chaos
achhhh duro dah choas soach as HA ochs ahhhhhhhhhhhhchaos
aaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh choas ah ashoc .....



STEVE DALACHINSKY

PEACEMEAL KINGDOM



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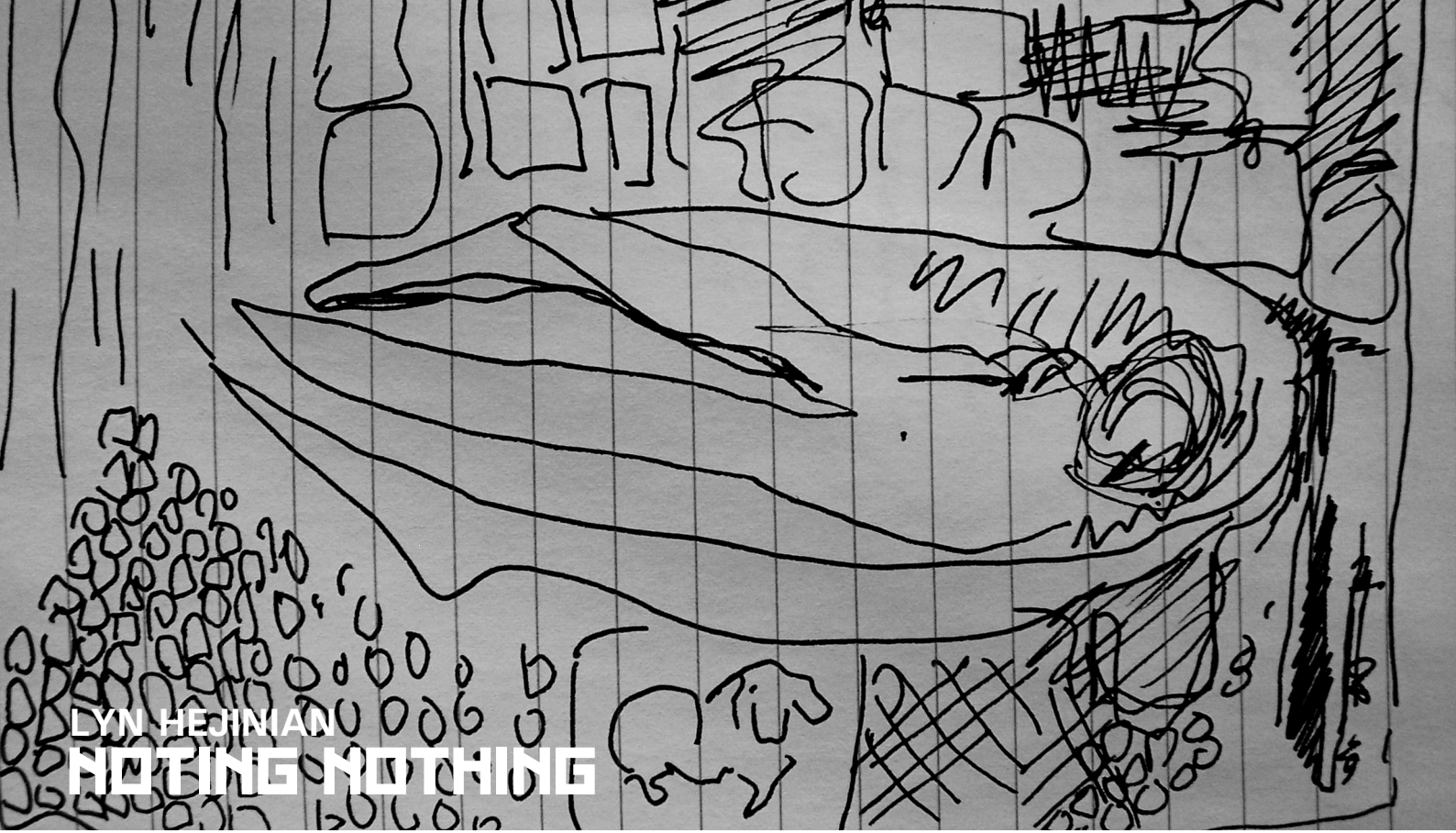


LYN HEJINIAN

NOTING NOTHING

Everyday life subsides into insignificance even while we attend to it constantly. This is a paradox that perpetually complicates the quotidian milieu. It is ubiquitous, persistent, trivial, scattered unevenly across every duration, and difficult to think. Such a description applies equally to everyday life and to the paradox. "I see the moon and the moon sees me and the moon sees somebody I want to see." In the bright afternoon sunlight, no moon is visible. Hannah Ming Hoover is singing to her fretful baby, seated on a low wall at the edge of the city plaza. The lyric "you" is preoccupied as it crosses the space in which the lyric "I" situates her imagined desires. For Hannah Ming Hoover, her fretful baby both is and isn't the lyric "you" of the moment. People in the plaza are interacting, often unconsciously, stories are unfolding, often with no remarkable significance to each other, motifs are in the air, people are talking about economic inequity, a dry winter, the "altruism gene," canine cops. People are exercising their intellectual freedom, though the exact sequence of words in which they express their ideas may end up typed into someone else's possession. Extended between two upper windows of the Multicultural Center hangs a banner: DECOLONIZE THE UNIVERSITY! ESPOUSE THE MULTIVERSITY! John Berger notes, in a passage affectionately addressed to Arundhati Roy, that political protest is undertaken not only, nor perhaps even primarily, on behalf of a better future but on behalf of the present moment. "One protests," he says, "in order to *save the present moment*, whatever the future holds." One does it because it is the good, the right, and even the happy thing to do—in that sense, okay, one does it for one's own sake. But more to the point, one does it for the

sake of the moment. The protest makes the moment; it takes it on, realizes it. Everyone who participates will have participated in it. As the minutes go by, the sunlight varies in intensity, the shadows of cars parked on the street move even when they haven't. But their reach isn't infinite. In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard's judgmental but not unkindly nor injudicious Judge William admonishes a hedonistic young man for whom he has great concern. "You want to satisfy the hunger of your doubt by consuming existence," he says to him. The young man is acquisitive (a seducer) but not possessive; like Shahryar (until he's educated by Scheherazade's thousand-night curriculum of nocturnal tales), the young man casts aside those he seduces once the seduction succeeds. The judge's remonstrance continues: "You readily admit that you are good for nothing, that your only diversion is to march around existence seven times, blow the trumpet, and then let the whole thing collapse so that your soul can be soothed, indeed, become sad, so that you can call forth echo, for echo sounds only in emptiness." It's on the forms—the shapes—of this negative space that I'm concentrating as Maggie Fornetti runs her finger back and forth over the handle of the cup in front of her, listening to Dewanda Horn, about to say something, a way of bestowing attention on the point Dewanda is making and the way she progresses toward that point. "You're leaving something out," says Maggie Fornetti. Invisibly, negative space provides structure. It's not just the lines in the space but also the spaces around and between the lines that construct the things around us—rocks of a wall, children in a playground, a bicycle wheel, a tree at the edge of a city plaza. But it's impossible for images appropriate to the future yet to appear. Outside the café, under occasional clouds, three solicitors and one panhandler are working the block. Two of the solicitors are trying to raise money for the American Civil Liberties Union, the other for Greenpeace. The panhandler is working on his own behalf. I give him a dollar, playing my part in a social fantasy that insists on the shared nature of public space despite our experiencing the street very differently and make a pretense of camaraderie which, if tested, would disappear, awkwardly and perhaps dangerously. Inside the café (Café Roma, on the southwest corner of College Avenue, diagonally across the intersection from a Wells Fargo Bank) are a heavy woman in a long purple cardigan (slice of cake and a cup of coffee), a florid man reading a magazine (bowl of chili and a glass of mineral water), a skinny close-shaven young white man reading a hardcover book (iced latte), two black men in track suits playing chess (a cup of coffee, a glass of milk), a white man in khaki shorts, blue t-shirt, and denim jacket accompanying an Asian woman, carrying a large canvas shoulder bag, and two children, a girl around eight and a boy around six (a cookie and small Italian soda for each of the children, a cappuccino for each of the adults), Maggie Fornetti and Dewanda Horn (cappuccinos), and Tamarind Magee with Lei-Lei Wilson Tin and Lily Ball (sharing one Caesar salad)—all lit by the light of the sun if not by that of understanding. Rachmaninoff's *2nd Piano Concerto* at low volume is coming through speakers set in two corners against the ceiling of the café. Writing about Pierre Bonnard's luminous late interiors, Rita Burnham makes this observation: "If he indeed conceived of consciousness itself as a fundamental tranquility that is ruptured by feelings and memories, this would in some sense account for many of the phantoms in Bonnard's work: the figures, the layered memories, that enter in at the edges of consciousness and sight, in moments of heightened awareness when feeling and memory are inseparable. Sometimes they materialize slowly; at other times they enter silently, spectrally, into the room. It often takes the viewer a very long time to see them." The process of doing so draws the viewer into what one might term the *arduous aesthetic pleasure of remembering*. The occasional figures within Bonnard's interiors, meanwhile, withhold narration. Or perhaps the narrative has been withdrawn from the scene. This lack of narrative might be the source of the tranquil consciousness that Burnham discerns (and which is probably not identical with Bonnard's own, which seems more tormented than tranquil). The figures—or the parts of figures, the side of a face, a shoulder and

arm, someone almost out the door—are often visible only peripherally, at the margins of the room or merging with the furnishings and objects in it. They can only be glimpsed (they elude scrutiny), but one feels them. They are palpable more as sensation than substance. And they are as indifferent to us as the tabletops that figure so prominently in the paintings are. The people who made the tables are more than invisible; they are altogether effaced from the time of the tables, or of the paintings, or of our looking at the paintings. But everyday life is never anachronistic. However intimately we are imbricated in its manifold elements, we are living historically—in the flow of social and economic exchange, in the transmission of power. "Beauty demands the present and is tormented because of that." Maggie Fornetti is, not un-self-consciously, at this moment paying close attention to Dewanda Horn, to what she is saying, and to the moment in which she is saying it. The sun is expanding the neighborhood through which vehicles, pedestrians, pets, children, residents, bugs, birds, visitors, bacteria, move in their efforts at perfection. At night the dark expands the neighborhood, too. These are two modalities of expansion, then, both finite, though in both space is added. "At times I feel that I am waiting for something that, when it occurs, I won't experience," says Dewanda Horn. There can be no meaningless imagined situation; no matter how bizarre, as imagined the situation has meaning. But the site of that meaning—its psychic location—may be so individual—so unique, singular—as to preclude that meaning's being set at large. The imagined situation is radically localized and perfectly limited, entirely bound to and harbored in the psyche of he or she who imagines it: a fire engine plunging uphill on a narrow road through a heavy forest in the mountains, a hill so steep that the fire engine flips backward and comes to rest on its back. From somewhere in the branches, a blue jay squawks. This purely imaginary scene—imagined (pictured) just now, I don't know how or why, by me—presumably means something, to me. It may affect me. But, except insofar as I act in response to it, or carry out my normal ways of being in the world in terms of a psyche that can imagine such a (melodramatic but also innocuous and ridiculous and strangely depopulated) scenario, it has not effect on, or meaning for, the world (defined as all that is not me). The overturned fire engine on the more than vertical incline marks a place (though not the only one) at which I and the world (reality) separate. In all practical terms, I, in my imaginative act, become unreal. Ideas are intimate, even those that are meant for broad application, general acknowledgement, those that are expressed aphoristically, those that are conditioned by self-reflexivity. "Even the lowliest of individuals has a double existence. He, too, has a history, and this is not simply a product of his own free acts. The interior deed, on the other hand, belongs to him and will belong to him forever; history or world history cannot take it from him; it follows him, either to his joy or to his despair."[1] Here I stop to remind you: I am a woman. So where is my phallus? Don't look between my legs, dear. The phallus that was mine got free and now it's floating around on its own somewhere. In a room at the Oakland MAP, Sophia-Ann Solander lifts a rung-backed chair onto a table and tells the kids to "draw everything that isn't the chair."

NOTES

"One protests," he says, "in order to *save the present moment*...": John Berger, *Bento's Sketchbook* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011) 79.

"You readily admit that you are good for nothing...": Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part II, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) 160-61.

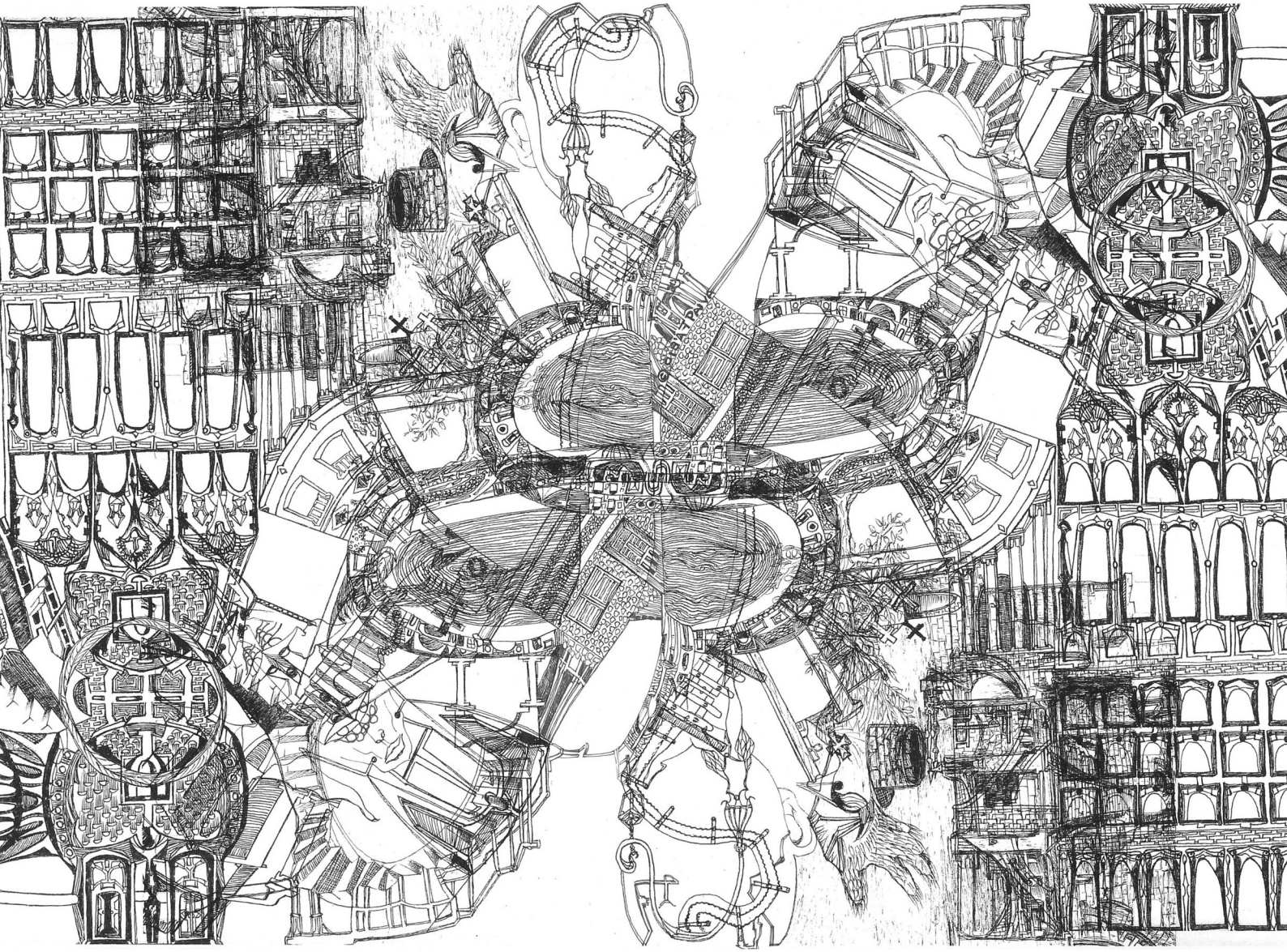
"If he indeed conceived of consciousness...": Rita Burnham, "Intelligent Seeing," in *Pierre Bonnard: The Late Still Lifes and Interiors* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art / New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) 72.

"Beauty demands the present...": Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003) 200.

1 Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or,* Part II, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 175.

FÁBIO PAIVA

ENTRAILS



SEEKERS OF LICE
FLYBLOWN

"dead flies could break my heart"

Daniel Spoerri, Postface to *Krims-Krams-Magic* (Hamburg: Merlin, 1971)

song hear how the fly feels escutcheoned squirmed out what lusts it had	let's . no n ever they see the shadow coming	my fly eyes seize you wasp rest us marvel at how wondrously a fly is constructed
I ate a peach and liked it I saw a shop and liked it lumber / I don't suit you eat it transcend it absorb it	fly constructs its own fly para dise platonic fly-esssences fly transforms everything into rubbish	I am not able to // minutes take their time and I can't count them
all flies apart language's flat dull silent structure re spects the poverty of	arthropod transmission me chanically through a contam inated proboscis or feet / bi o logically by growth or replication of an or ganism in the arthropod	problems of causality and stupid empty words a poet has a stomach no less con- cern than for a soul
what the poet would to fly eats potatoes so diminu- tive we never meet he'd been talking fly's screech	eye → ear my thoughts flew far away my ears are singing the world is shimmering like a mouse	a fly's foot sugared 10,000 times more shows wan to your tongue writing that's like reading
categories of state falling over write embarrass ments boots biting you look too	dis closure of knowledge brief mental pre	cut wherever you please the less I have to say mosca

underneath it's old shirt sorted tight up buttoned	parations	
particles of life and oddness beside one self being plain	only what is useless what people can't like shrug it off	an incident we thought you were a mirror
sugar septum carpal suture ali- mentary zygot arch nene jelly- like schizo lobe are we still friends?	scarpering / loose ends slouch beside roses or shoes or loaves we loaf and shod and rose new times	it pools a fly's work food now wash away the fly blood then follow the fly's recipe
just flydirt blood sweat articles of use clothes cloths absorbent ironing objects fat girth drip	turning words back into things uncomfortable heedless now cake it over	viscous pang palate rim riggs fungus fuge we wan dered dragged and plodded in more than one direction
mathematics what there is at the shop no eggs no weights no sense keep telling me I've changed	fly blown fly papa dead letter off ice hierarchy of banality bare icon fly	materials love death history winged victory of samothrace it came to life with some dirt in it your things ov er there stopping time
we read and write each other in somnia can't cope (bread butter blackcurrant jam) it's not as if it doesn't matter I almost can't find it	stripping still life gastropod foot stomach light bulb grazed elbows squinty lips lips like lips thick rose petal skin of blister bending to toe nail	fly off the handle elbow the cheek bone hammerfist skullbone runaway feathers behind
image shows downy hairs slight stubble small hairs of hairline pocks curls mole bright light	One punch laid him low The dog laid its ears back Their motives were laid bare	legs with shoes shoes without feet feet without legs girdles bras gloves

watchword subverting the skin of things should we be more	at odds with one another still life pitch black flies	legs and knuckles things done by hand Mama! Papa! baba!
fly alights on anything straddling legs wings and head body foot lungs liver lights blood gas blot tingly	straw and paper weight pin weight we suck straws at you and violet violet luminescence	putting 1 thing in side 1 other el bow on the table fist against cheek in cides I'm blown away I won't be friends with you
anymore one and only one more one more one quivering more balance tis gone and will not answer	phone rings did you cut me off bat flapping bat's vlieg fliege	potatoes are meaning and structure pictures of tongues gums ears the wood grain swells won't you come by
riddle what do you feel like? putty o my fly and trembling bird	corporeal corpal commons snothing between us tripped us tripping fell squashed by laughter lies slated	sflies slives looko smack foreclosed am bition stings fly by in the evening of the day where sleep flies
turning words back into things	fly away smad businesses this notebook scrolling out the meatiness of unchewed undoing	a mathematical roomspace with still inside to be beside oneself in a sane sense
loud objects so-called poet so-called fly pacing up and	bits of paper flying about confine oneself to one's own affairs cease being a nuisance	she swallos -ed a fly your molecules rattling from place to place

down the room lo!		
what do you do every day do the deed with difficulty lapse of pur pose enter Mama enter Papa goodbye baba	venus pudica mutton dressed as lamb I put in what I like the things just have to put up with it	there are no holes in the surface of a sphere larking around alone playing in the margins
three dots dash pause oafish abstract world with tables walls floor doors lax slack sieve craze	transformations sweet & stupid acts visiting holding to my mouth a nectarine	fly's heart darts drop of blood so shards of glass sugar dead flies break
three small ocelli on top of the lap up the blood short antennae re duce drag while flying	warble fly gad fly horzel paardenhorzel schlitz slot placket vent rip slash	breeze brawls up shoes and pinching glue glue bucket brush leave me now

JOHANNES BIRRINGER

ABSOLUTE TERROR

OR WHAT DO YOU SEE BEHIND THE MASKS?

more and more they went inside they lived there
they didn't know where they were they felt more
they were more like them inside of them
we were also inside of them they didn't know
we circled like birds and they flocked. more and
more our bodies drifted outside of the inside,
in the great atmospheric excess,
of dark fluids flowing after the octopus.

(February 2015)

1. TRANCE/DESCENDING GODS

I realize now that I have forgotten all the gods. Their beautiful names, the colours associated with them, seem lost. Is it a mere fifteen or twenty years? They were not my gods but during several visits to Cuba in the 1990s, during what was then called *periodo especial,* the ethnographer with whom I travelled and his local friends explained the African roots of Santería to me and even took me along to some of the secret ceremonies.

I thought they were secret as we spoke about them carefully, and in hushed tones, respectfully, therefore I avoided unnecessary questions. The ethnographer, whom I had met in Chicago where he attended a research program in performance studies, now and then made cryptic remarks about certain clothes or

accessories that were worn only by the initiated. He pointed to the *bóvedas* (altars) in the private homes, and took me to a *babalawo* for a divination. He was an initiate, and I wondered, then, what it must have been like, for a white Anglo-American, to join the Ifà spiritual cosmos, its rites and ceremonies, learn its language and develop a strong bond with the *santeros* and the Afro-Cuban Abakuá society he had visited many times.[1] The ceremonies I attended involved food (what little there was at the time), music and dance, and my interest was roused by the sometimes terrifying possession ritual or trance, when a divinity, such as Ochún or Changó, descended onto initiates and took hold of them, when the trance became ecstatic and even dangerous. I remember having read Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (1953), where she speaks of these irruptions of spiritual revelation, and she sought to capture such *rituals in transfigured time* – those instances when the time of the gods and that of humans overlap – in her own cinematic trance works.

Such gods, I imagine, reveal themselves in seemingly (but not really) violent choreographies – watched and embraced by a community that looks out for those who enter into a state of trance. Given that I had come to Cuba to meet artists and to perform, to enact knowledge exchange about performance and cultural practices as we would say today, I was riveted by the experience and tried to make sense of it later by reflecting on the notes in my diary (I was not permitted to bring my camera to the secrets), fragmented reminiscences shadowed by a general sense of the surreal that I felt during these weeks in Havana and Alamar when we survived on poetry and an inexplicable *joie de vivre* I perceived amongst the Cubans living in a country whose revolution, many would argue, had gone terribly wrong yet sustained itself against all the odds. At no point during the four years that I intermittently visited Cuba did I feel any terror and oppression, despair or despondency. But there were human needs and hopes, many of them unfulfillable, and of course my impressions of the polymorphous underground rhythms and sacred poetics were purely subjective and non-analytical. The real living conditions during this time of extreme austerity, and the simple fact that most Cubans could not travel or leave the island, indicated that the existing socialist society was unsustainable, and that the destructive tendencies of global capital had hollowed out Fidel Castro's obstinate regime and threatened its cultural traditions, and thus the gods that descend.[2] The divinities that were mentioned most frequently to me were Eleguá (the trickster god), and Yemayá, evoked by many of my female acquaintances who danced with me and took part in a video production we initiated on the shores of Alamar in 1995 (*La lógica que se cumple;* the short film premiered at the Havana Film Festival in 1996). This poetic dance almost literally emerged from the sea. My own role – I was "shipwrecked," a castaway on Cuba's shores, and I remember walking through the water to the shore on sharp rocky underground, cutting the soles of my feet until they bled profusely. I noticed nothing.

An ancestral divinity had descended onto me although I was not an initiate, nor did I believe in gods. The energy that drove us was a collective movement, however, and everyone who participated in the film shoot sensed a small privileged moment of embodied knowledge of some ecstatic beyond, later recognized as a kind of transfiguration suffused with melancholia.[3] I tend to think now of this moment along the lines of what Maya Deren or Sergei Eisenstein may have

1 The special period of extreme austerity began in Cuba after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, when the impact of the U.S. embargo (*bloqueo*) and the relative isolation of the Cuban communist state made themselves increasingly, and devastatingly, felt. Travel to Cuba from the U.S. was forbidden and we had to take détours via Mexico to reach the island. My friend Ivor L. Miller performed extensive fieldwork in Cuba and West Africa between 1991 and 1999, and now resides in Nigeria where he was invested as a Chief by Ékpè leaders in Calabar in 2004. See his "Religious Symbolism in Cuban Political Performance," *TDR* 44.2 (2000): 30-55, and *Voice of the Leopard* (Columbia: University Press of Missouri, 2009). I wish to thank him for teaching me.

2 Thinking about obstinacy and self-preservation, in regard to living labor and individual living conditions and interfaces with the cultural life-context, I note the vigorous discussion of the "Elements of a Political Economy of Labor Power," in *October* 149 (summer 2014), with Alexander Kluge/Oskar Negt following the English-language publication of their *History and Obstinacy* (1981). Kluge and Negt point out that "the political economy of capital stands in opposition to humans who live in societies structured by capital, but who – along with large portions of their subjectivities, their ancestors, and elements of their labor capacities and essential powers – at the same time also belong to social relations not structured by capital" (9) – and I am largely interested here in these latter ones and in the powers of the spiritual, both recuperative and violent (in the contemporary context of ISIS and jihadism).

3 See my chapter "La melancolía de la jaula," *Performance on the Edge: Transformations of Culture* (London: Continuum, 2000) 210-39.

felt about the optical illusions of their travels abroad. I recently watched the outtakes of Eisenstein's *¡Qué viva México!* at the V&A exhibition on *Russian Avant-garde Theatre: War, Revolution and Design 1913-1933* in London – Eisenstein's voice over declaring that "the Mexican" triumphs over death through mockery of it during the Day of the Dead festivities. Eisenstein's 1930 footage of the Day of the Dead is hallucinatory at times; the filmmaker seems completely entranced by what he wants to see – the revolutionary force of an Artaudian theatre of cruelty, an erotic death-mask carnival of movement, "so tender and sensual, and so cruel" (voice over in Russian, translated into English subtitles). Then the voice asks: "Whom shall we see behind the masks? The corpses of a doomed class, or the young soldiers who will fight for a free Mexico?"

2. ISIS OR ABSOLUTE TERROR

In the autumn of 2014, I exchange letters with friends in the U.S. and in Europe who express increasing anxiety over the jihadist violence emerging through the militant campaign of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria and Northern Iraq. Political attention in Europe is divided, as there is civil war and ethnic conflict rupturing the Ukraine, and stories are floated about the return of the Cossacks to protect the homeland (western or eastern Ukraine?). And by October, racialization – one of the primary ideologies of global capitalism and its neo-colonial modes of reproduction – slowly precipitates a boiling point in the aftermath of the local events in Ferguson, Missouri (as one in a series of violent stories of young black men killed by state forces or vigilantes in the U.S.) and the much longer, confused aftermath of the so-called war on terror (since the September 11, 2001 al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon). In November, Ferguson is burning as protests spill out on the streets. I receive daily messages from friends in the U.S. trying to explain what is happening. Early in 2015, the massacres in Paris refocus attention on Islamism and persistent anti-Semitism, after the fatwa attacks on journalists of a satirical magazine, and the random killing of Jews in a kosher supermarket.

In Mexico, 43 students of the Ayotzinapa rural teachers college go missing and are then declared dead, vanished to body dust; the incinerated remains, found along a river, sent off to be tested for identification at a laboratory in Austria. Although unrelated to the asymmetric jihadist campaign, the massacre in Mexico is linked up with the fearful symmetries of the negotiations of terror in the public sphere, with confused perceptions of insurgent, gang or police violence, and the kind of volte-face operations we remember from the raid on the Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow (2002) by Russian state police, after the audience was taken hostage by Chechen rebels, resulting in the deaths of most hostages when poisonous gas was pumped into the theatre by the militia.

In Paris, at the memorial rally for the killed, the leaders of states walk in formation, in solidarity with the victims, their arms linked, to jointly perform or reflect the expressive sentiment of more than a million silent protesters: "Je suis Charlie Hebdo." In the *New York Times*, an opinion article is overwritten: "I Am Not Charlie Hebdo" (David Brooks, 8 January 2015). In Paris, the heads of state from Saudi Arabia, Israel, Denmark etc. link arms with Angela Merkel, Francois Hollande, and David Cameron. An orthodox Jewish newspaper, *HaMevaser*, alters the photograph of the parade, erasing all the women from the picture.

These convoluted aftermaths, and the manipulations of truth, commingle with vectors of paranoia and Islamophobia in the West. The war on terror breeds terror, and the U.S and Western allies have engaged various crusades, including what whistleblower Snowden revealed as a massive covert campaign of data surveillance against their own citizens. Over in south-east Asia, Rustom Bharucha (based in Kolkata) writes a book on *Terror and Performance*, seeking to parse the deceptions, demonizations, and uncertainties of evidence in the widening discourse on terror that clouds our cultures of everyday life at the time when the "phantoms of the Muslim as a terrorist"[4] dominate the news and the affective registers of many who look anxiously at the videos of beheadings posted by ISIS on YouTube. This is a theatre of cruelty not envisioned by Artaud, not even in his hallucinatory radio address "To have done with the judgment of god," where he digs into the body to discover what was left alive, what

4 Rustom Bharucha, *Terror and Performance* (London: Routledge 2014) 71.

– in the incantatory screams and rhythmic percussive beatings – was devastatingly lacerated, scorched by the black sun (*soleil noir*).

Artaud's theatrical metaphysics of course signified a poetic language, a language that can express what it does not usually express.[5] But surely it is not possible to approach these violent occurrences of the ISIS terror campaign through the lens of "performance"? Except, Bharucha proposes, if one were to disentangle some of the discourses and spectacles, and in fact looked at the realities of terror and terrorism as volatile and mutant phenomena that haunt us precisely because we are often forced to be spectators of mediated (and thus calculated, performed) violence if we are not directly experiencing it, as many do, on the basis of lived everyday life (those who inhabit the zones of conflict, war, and deprivation). The daily terror is the irreducible problem, especially with today's so-called asymmetric war machine, when populations are framed as targets of destruction (as we see, just one example, in Gaza and the Occupied Territories) and when anyone in the public sphere can be recruited by the visual technologies of war, watching/experiencing closely or watching from a distance. Vicarious performance experiences, without the benefit of theatrical techniques taught by Brecht (*Verfremdungseffekt*). We are not distanced.

In order to question the vicariousness and examine complicity, we decide to stage a discussion on an international maillist (empyre) during the month of November, and more than sixty participants engage in a process that is not easy to describe, as the proposed question of *absolute evil* or *absolute terror* – and how such a question can be broached – does not lend itself to easy answers or definitions. The terror I hinted at is potentially everywhere, but not absolutely so. Is ISIS a terror organization or a state, and how does its organization differ from the self-radicalization of an islamophobic and xenophobic individual like Anders Behring Breivik?

Bharucha, discussing the massacre at Gujarat in 2002, argues that "violence is not arbitrary and follows specific cultural patterns and rituals of torture, killing, and the mutilation of targeted victims, *how one kills* is intrinsically related *to how one views the other*, and arguably, how one sees – or fails to see – one's self in the process."[6] Above all, and this is what occupies me here in this brief essay, the monstrosity of evil and the violence of terror are not new to our common civilizational history, nor are fundamentalist religious wars, crusades, torture and persecution new phenomena at all. And yet we happen to live in the turbulent immediacy of the here and now, each here and now being different depending on your location and sphere of interaction in social and economic realities of the day; thus the question of ISIS, of an imaginary State of Islam, suggests that we pause for a moment to think about the gods that are descending.

This is my worry: that I do not understand enough of the religious fervor that may drive an increasing number of people to commit acts of unspeakable violence deemed justifiable; that I am not fully aware of the hundreds and thousands of young people from various European countries who travel to Syria and Iraq to join up with ISIS and contribute to the rise of violent jihadism in the Middle East (while other radically militant groups, such as Boko Haram, continue their murderous actions in Africa). Jihadi movements, as we now know, are not confined to an imaginary "outside" of the Occident or first capitalist world. Jihadist fighters can strike in Paris, Berlin, London, Sydney, Montréal, Brussels, anywhere. The formation of the new caliphate implicitly and explicitly pronounces the West, the infidels of liberal democracy, as a target. Thus you, publishers/readers of VLAK, are a potential target. As yet the appeal of the Islamic State to Sunnis in Syria, Iraq and across the world derives from a sense that its victories are God-given and inevitable, and that its holy war campaign reflects the utopian goals of a global cause. Some of my Muslim students in London may have already traveled south to be recruited. On February 21, 2015, *The Guardian* reports that "lured by ISIS: three young girls who revel in brutality are offered cause."[7] I am not part of this cause, and I cannot fathom what it could possibly offer young female teenagers from Britain.

5 Cf. Allen S. Weiss, *Phantasmatic Radio* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) 20.

6 *Terror and Performance*, 96 (italics in the original). Regarding the "recruitment" of those who must spectate the daily reports of terror and violence, see Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso: 2010) xii.

7 Front page and page 6, *The Guardian*, "Race to find schoolgirls who fled UK to join jihadis in Syria," 21 February 2015.

An Islamic State fighter waves the Isis flag in Raqqa, Syria, after the group declared an Islamic caliphate in June 2014. Archive Photograph: Reuters.

Video still released by Florida-based Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, depicting 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians purported to have been decapitated in the video entitled "Signed With Blood: To The Nation Of The Cross." It was ruled to have been "staged" due to the excessive anomalies seen in the dramatic 5 minute film. (http://21stcenturywire.com/2015/02/21/terror-experts-isis-video-depicting-egyptian-execution-footage-faked/)

Our discussion group about absolute terror, performed online and thus in a virtual realm, begins, falters, and begins again, as many of us participating are drawn to accelerating, isolated or interrelated events, such as news reports about the persecution of the Yazidis, images of Mount Sinjar, the assault on Kobani, the U.S. negotiations with Iraqi Shia militia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kurdish militia men and PKK insurgents, air attacks, drone attacks, the hostages in Raqqa, the kidnappings, the beheadings staged for us and disseminated by ISIS on social media. Referring to the image mediation of terror, Jon McKenzie enters the discussion group proposing to analyze the "society of the spectacle of the scaffold." He points to the "tragic-prop scenes" offered, for example by the ISIS propaganda videos, which he calls "trailers," released by soldiers/filmmakers dressed in desert camouflage or black costumes, the victims dressed in the orange outfits known to be worn by the prisoners at the U.S. offshore camp of Guantánamo.

Alan Sondheim, who moderates the discussion with me, outlines our résumé that "the world appears to be descending into chaos of a qualitatively different dis/order, one characterized by terror, massacre, absolutism, Islamic fascism. Things are increasingly out of control, and this chaos is a kind of ground-work itself – nothing beyond a scorched earth policy, but more of the same."[8] Sondheim, struggling to give voice to a deeply conflicted, nihilistic sensation, here grasps for the echoes that ring in these terms of fascist terror, the absolute killing machinery set in motion by Nazi Germany during the Holocaust, the most terrifying form of historical realization of biopolitics as Robert Esposito argues in *Bios*.[9] Esposito, however, relativizes the absoluteness immediately by suggesting that Nazism's biopolitics and racial laws did not self-destruct; the end of Nazism was not the end of the politics of letting live or letting die. Rather, biopolitics and the struggle for life's protection/negation have been generalized to the entire world.

Refocussing the question of contemporary fascism and racialization, Marina Gržinić and Šefik Tatlić have now proposed to historicize Foucault's notion of *biopolitics* (coined in the 1970s during the time of the Cold War) as a specific conceptualization of rationalist, capitalist

8 Citations from the empyre list discussion on "ISIS, Absolute Terror, Performance" (November 2014) are taken from the collected postings now assembled in a manuscript by Alan Sondheim and myself. The postings and various threads of this vigorous online polylogue are in the public domain and can be accessed at http://lists.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/empyre/2014-November/thread.htm

9 Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 146.

governmentality, reserved for the First World, implying that what was going on in the Second and Third World was not at the "center" of the management of life. The *decolonial turn* Gržinić and Tatlić elaborate, away from the concentration camps in Europe (during World War II), intimates the formation of a *necropolitics* in the once named Second and Thirld Worlds.[10] In their scathing critique of global capitalism, they analyze many facets of current dispossession, coloniality and racialization, especially how they affect racialized non-citizens (refugees, migrants, and deprivileged others such as gays, lesbians, transsexuals), and also how contemporary art and culture contribute to reinforcing necropolitical processes of calculation – including the popular discourse on the "post-human" – which conceal, abstract and evacuate the conditions of social antagonism or class struggle. *Necropolitics,* they surmise, now becomes the paradigm (precarization, financialization, depoliticization) of contemporary capitalism everywhere.

Although Gržinić and Tatlić do not directly address Islamic extremism, their critique enables further reflection on the rhetoric of performativity and the stories we hear, stories now told on the terror of repetition and how spectacular effects of traumatisation, such as the beheadings staged by ISIS, recur as affective politics, how letting die is experienced – or operates on the unconscious – during and beyond our witnessing spectatorship. The role of spectatorship, since the first Gulf War and especially with 9/11, has changed to the extent that we now expect to witness instant communications and graphic over-exposure, and thus we witness what could be called a relentless and ceaseless media terror, a political violence constantly reframed by media in the battle of perceptions, i.e. in the production of terror in real-time.

What might be a cultural or artistic response to this? Is such a response possible at all? How does one deal with this psychologically and somatically, when every day brings new horrors? Even traditional analyses tend to dissolve in the absolute terror that seems to be daily increasing. The discussion I participate in proves fruitful for me because, first of all, it is conducted without much recourse to academic language and theory, it does not make a meal out of theoretical loyalty to this Marxism or that Deleuzian philosophy or posthumanist theory, yet dwells on a disturbed, aggravated somatic response, singular bodies and minds giving rise to sensations of rupture, to sensations of excess. Here is a posting by playwright Erik Ehn:

> St. Hesychios talks about a pathway of contemplation that moves from torch, to moon, to sun. [I get this from Martin Laird's nice, small book: *A Sunlit Absence.*] We start towards *enlightenment* by bearing our own light forward – searching by every means we can manage; managing darkness. Then our eyes adjust or the clouds clear and the moon shines; we don't need the torches, light shines on us. As we let more and more of our own species of control slip away, the sun comes, and we slip to union. The sun is in us and through us, ending with the threatened-but-withheld destruction of the self, we are fully present and fully empty, or surrendered, surrendered without consolation, we can't own our own surrender.
>
> And it is difficult to tilt on the instant of this; *ecstasy is not generally durable.* Then in falling back into the working world, we can tear down, in the fall, the absolute gift of near-annihilation and seize on simple annihilation – a doubt of or hate for the human form. We can also hang onto a retrogression – a lament over losing the impossible presence of the completely other; one can feel robbed. Fascism (and other totalitarian ways of winning) are sentimental returns to a lost past, a past we've somehow been cheated of, or a past that was stolen, this, despite the fact that the past can't be "lost," *something isn't the past until it passes out of our hands*. This isn't cheating, it's just how time does business; the past is where it is; it isn't ours. All we can sustain are our framings of it, and the frames are always about our present state of mind, efforts to tilt or twist us into positions suitable to receive an anticipated future (a best-guess).
>
> After the blessed kenosis of contemplation, one sometimes suffers nihilism and bitterness. This leads to entrepreneurship, which leads to advertising.
>
> Unhappy in the debris of contemplation's tear-down, we can indulge nostalgia for making and desperation, for that time when, in the darkness, we knew that what we needed was a torch, and we knew how to make one.

10 Marina Gržinić and Šefik Tatlić, *Necropolitics, Racialization and Global Capitalism: Historicization of Biopolitics and Forensics of Politics, Art and Life* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014) 22. They credit Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003): 11-40, with having shifted Foucault's analysis of biopower, sovereignty, and the control society to more current concerns with terror, in-security and globalization.

Erdem Gündüz, "Standing Man" protest on Taksim Square as captured by Twitter/social media photo, June 17, 2013.

"Standing Man" after being joined by other standing men and women, captured by Twitter/social media photo, Hashtag #Duranadam (Standing Man), June 17, 2013.

Our responses deal largely with emotional registers, while also delving into artistic practices, or philosophical speculation, which seek pertinent answers in non-violent protest, poetic reconciliations or impossible demands of justice, performing a kind of vigilance or urgency in the embodiment of resistance, concretely and poetically, this retrogression and dance under *le soleil noir.* Some of the participants in the discussion write scenes for a theatre of the oppressed (echoing Boal), dramatize their experience of exile, report from their fieldwork in Gaza and the Ukraine, in Romania and Uruguay, Poland and Iran, or explain their insistence on communal action and the kind of "stand" we saw in the silent protest of the young man who stood to confront the government declaration of a state of emergency during the Gezi Park demonstrations in Istanbul. The Standing Man (*duranadam*):

How can one join in solidarity with the victims, and how are we to imagine resistance to the force of violence? Does the notion of absolute terror make resistance futile? In the case of ISIS, we already know that the media dissemination of terror, the beheadings of kidnapped victims, may be staged and thus performatively falsified. Bataille's trope of *Acéphale,* the figure of the headless man, is a ghost image. Ghosting is (also) a theatrical technique, and Bataille's surrealism belongs to the esoteric repertoire and the enchantment created by the ruptures in the images, the photography of grotesquely mutilated bodies, the cartoons of *violencia.*[11]

Cartoon violence is not in excess of reality, however. The events that occurred in Turkey during the Gezi Park protest demonstrations which began in late May 2013 offer an example of what can happen when a demonstration wave initially contests an urban development plan (for Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Park), and then civil unrest becomes sparked by outrage at the violent eviction of a sit-in at the park protesting the plan. Subsequently, supporting demonstrations take place across Turkey protesting a wide range of concerns, at the core of which were issues of freedom of the press, of expression, assembly, and the regime's encroachment on Turkey's secularism. With no clear leadership other than a small assembly that organized the initial environmental protest, the Gezi actions might be compared to the Occupy movement, although the level of violence with which they meet is much higher. Social media helps to disseminate the protests, not least because most of the Turkish media downplays them in the early phase. (3.5 million of Turkey's 80 million people are estimated to have taken an active part in almost 5000 demonstrations across Turkey connected

11 Cf. Michael Taussig, "The language of flowers," *Walter Benjamin's Grave* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) 189-218. Taussig here discusses Bataille's *Acéphale* in comparison with Juan Manuel Echavarría's photographic series, *Corte de Florero,* which portrays cut up plants that look like human bones.

with the original Gezi Park protest; 11 people were killed and more than 8000 were injured, many critically, according to Wikipedia.)

If we pursue this outline, the particular pattern of protest and its repression by the military police resembles other public conflicts over spatial justice (and I experienced the sinister techniques of police kettling during student protests in London where I least expected them). What is remarkable in the Gezi instance is the diversity of dissent that united citizens from a broad spectrum, encompassing both right- and left-wing individuals, and complaints ranged from the original local environmental concerns to other issues such as the authoritarianism of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's curb on alcohol, a recent dispute about kissing in public, and the war in Syria. The protesters also began to assume the names (calling themselves *çapulcu* – looters) which the Turkish Prime Minister chose to insult them. When I looked at films and photographs that protesters showed me, I noticed how the social choreographies of squatting and protesting involved two particular corporeal gestures that fascinated me: the dervish dance of a performer participating in the Gezi Park protests, and the action of the "Standing Man" protest on Taksim Square which began in the evening hours of June 17, 2013, the same day on which the government had announced a crackdown on demonstrations. You may well think of my reaction as romantic, but the Sufi dancer reminded me of the nights I had experienced in Cuba.

The dancing, in this case, is a political and spiritual gesture, a quasi-mystic ritual situated into a secular protest context that conjoined elements of a number of previously mutually antagonistic classes of Turkish citizens, including secular and pious Turks, Muslims, anti-capitalists, environmentalists, protesters of all stripes. Before we can address the political potential of movement, we need to look at the dancer and his (her?) mask: the face and identity of the mover is hidden behind a full gas mask, hinting clearly at the policing power of the state willing to use tear gas against civilian protesters, to control behavior or channel movement of crowds. In this instance of protest, the lavishly dressed dervish dancer in the velvet robe (an image that quickly went viral), surrounded by protective onlookers who

Whirling dervish dancer at Gezi Park protest in Istanbul, June 2013. Photo source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gezi_Park_protests (creative commons)

applaud the dance, taps into a mystic Sufi tradition (enacted most commonly by whirling dervishes of the Mevlevi order in Turkey, known to enact a formal ceremony called *Sema* that was forbidden [by Atatürk] after the founding of the Republic but after 1954 became allowed again and accessible as a cultural spectacle for tourists). The ceremonial dance connotes a sacred practice in a secular society now pressured to confront conflicting political imperatives shadowing all of the former "West," in fact spreading onto transnational and intersocietal levels, cutting across almost the entirety of the Muslim communities, but also cutting down into individual countries (especially in the Middle East and Islamic Africa) and intimating a struggle between fundamentalist Salafis and tolerant Sufis (in Egypt, Libya, Mali, Somalia, Nigeria, Sudan and Ethiopia).

As I write this, I realize that dichotomies are useless and the lines separating believers and non-believers are porous. I cannot tell whether the dancer is a religious actor or a person using a desacralized symbolism, "looting" an icon of the pious Sufi tradition. The dance does not embody a struggle between secularism and Islamism, but weaves cross-references into a social choreography of a non-violent figure of protest, a kind of choreomanic *tekhnē*. This whirling dance requires technique, and

Screengrab from Islamic State video that shows killing of US-Israeli hostage Steven Sotloff. Photo: Isis video grab.

knowing how to move thusly, and non-conventionally (we note from the photo that both palms are facing up!), in the context, makes it politically provocative, almost as if an ancient shamanic act is harnessed to converge divergences, bind believers and non-believers.[12]

When I watched the dance, I tried to imagine a singular, local but inadvertently global, costumed dancer evoking a mystic form of ecstatic movement intended to calm the waves and eschew violence, connecting the sacred (of the Sufi tradition) to the secular political (displaying the mask to protect against tear gas, ironically mimicking the mask of Anonymous worn during Occupy protests). As a theatrical demonstration, this dance seems to capture an archetype of non-violence, countering terror by performing its courage through the ethereal process of spinning, circling within the circle of the on-looking community, directionless and yet directed at the wider (international) assemblage of witnesses (and cameras), extending repetition of this moment of security. It makes something visible, situating itself (like the Standing Man) vis-à-vis the lawscape, the regime, the atmosphere of danger and violence. The recognition of the ecstatic trance dance of Sufism will be divided and complicated by the fact that a religious and secular understanding of the dance cannot deny diverse interpretations, namely that Sufism is renowned primarily for its achievements in the fields of poetry and mysticism (its popular image in the West is that of an inner spiritual quest that avoids external action), while on the other hand the Sufi *tariqa*, or brotherhood, tends to entertain links ranging from quietist sects to militant splinter groups and current Islamic fundamentalism and jihadism.

12 See André Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics, or The Task of the Dancer," *TDR: The Drama Review* 57.4 (2013): 13-27, for a thoughtful discussion of Hannah Arendt's ideas of moving freely/politically.

3. BEHIND THE MASK, IN SPITE OF UNBELIEVERS

If the sacred/secular motion represents a tremulous poetic image that resonates for a short while, one needs to ask whether the images of the ISIS stagings of terror have a different emotional or material impact or whether they will have been ephemeral trailers. Considerable media attention (at least in the UK) went into identifying one of the main masked executioners explaining the beheading on the videos released via YouTube. On February 26, 2015, the media report that a British man has been identified as the knife-wielding militant who appears in Islamic State videos claiming responsibility for the beheadings of U.S., British and other hostages, and *The Guardian* confirms that Mohammed Emwazi, a 26-year-old west Londoner and university graduate, is the militant who had been given the moniker "Jihadi John" by a group of his hostages, describing him as part of an ISIS cell they named "the Beatles."

Such revelations deflect from the campaign that ISIS is waging, and we need to approach the mask differently, questioning both the objectification of the terrorist as adversary, as alien other, and the religious or theological-political projections, the assumed transcendentalist, sacrificial ethos of fundamentalist subjectivity that we have been given by the West's descriptions of the violent jihadist movement. The grotesque banality of the appellations ("the Beatles") only confirms that it is very difficult to sketch an etiology of evil, to evoke moral philosophy and ask how one can evaluate beheadings and murderous actions in warfare or military conflict that has many complex political, religious and economic dimensions – especially when these actions involve the kind of faith we are perhaps uncomfortable associating with capitalism and the contemporary reorganization of coloniality.[13] The identification of terror during warfare

13 Gržinić and Tatlić, in *Necropolitics, Racialization and Global Capitalism,* argue that Eurocentric racism has shifted from one form of racism (anti-Semitism) to another (Islamophobia) under the premise of the preservation of liberal, "civilized" values that are themselves rooted in racial hierarchies of First World modernity, rationality, and the universalized

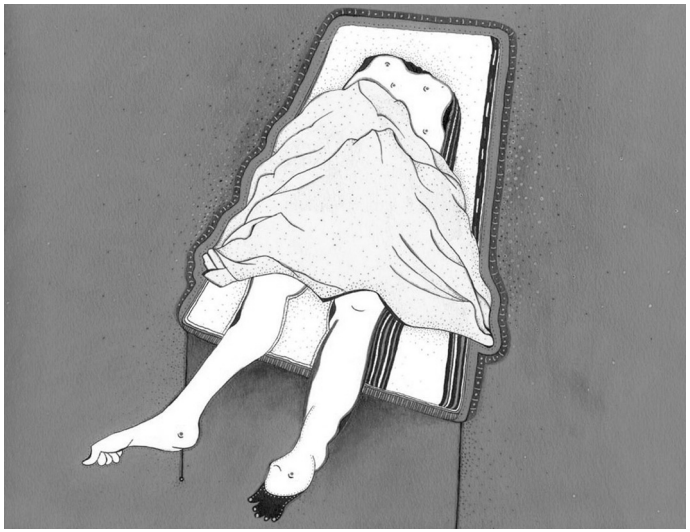
is made exceedingly difficult if one compares the ISIS military campaign with, for example, the struggle of the *mujahideen* ("those engaged in Jihad") in Afghanistan, supported by the U.S. at one point, or the fight of the Kurds to obtain recognition of their ethnic/national autonomy (e.g. the Kurdistan Workers' Party [PKK] fighting since 1984 for self-rule for the 15 million Turkish Kurds, some of whom live in northern Iraq).

The ISIS operations in Syria and Iraq also have to be seen in the context of geopolitical struggles for control over energy resources, and it must be mentioned that ISIS has succeeded, in the Syrian civil war, to obtain hold over a large portion of oil production in the region.[14] They have thus clearly provoked geopolitical interests of the U.S. and their proxies in the Middle East, with Iran now ironically emerging as an ally of U.S. foreign policy maneuvers. The Islamic State, within the context of the "decolonial turn" suggested by Gržinić and Tatlić, thus must be seen as fighting against the believers in the "universalized colonial epistemology and power principles invested in reorganization of capitalism on a global scale," in other words the principles of control over expropriation of resources and the distribution of global wealth by the First World.[15] The forward march of ISIS, exploiting the erosion of the Syrian state (fostered by U.S. influence on the insurgency against Assad), is an example of a revolutionary nationalism with strategic economic policies which articulate political resistance against (western) racially defined interests, except that the campaign is perceived as an atrocity exhibition in the eyes of the West. But ISIS now controls energy in Syria and Iraq, and their "decolonial turn" in fact may very well have primarily economic, political motives in a struggle for state-formation, while the cinematic trailers of obscene symbolic violence they release on social media are an ideological mask, a form of theatrical ghosting to shock unbelievers and to ingratiate and recruit believers.

predicament created by the globalization of capitalism (170ff).

14 I am grateful to anthropologist Maria Kastrinou for pointing this out to me during a recent lecture she gave on her ethnographic fieldwork in Syria amongst the Druze communities, exploring the relationships between sectarian or long-term ethnic-religious conflicts, current state-formation, and foreign and regional capitalist interests in energy resources (the politics of energy).

15 *Necropolitics, Racialization and Global Capitalism,* 170.



Khalid Younes, Untitled no. 9, from the series Art from Syria, https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set= a.162800657190969.36503.161536270650741&type=1

The obscenity of violence, therefore, is the virulent reaction of jihadism's politics of denying the First World its prerogative to claim its hegemony as an essentially legal component in the preservation of the mimicry of that hegemony as the right form of liberty, democracy, and humanity – the authoring authority to have granted First World power to invade Iraq in the first place or stage/dissimulate its own trials of torture and humiliation (e.g. Abu Ghraib). When I recently watched the documentary film *Our beloved Sudan* (2011) by Taghreed Elsanhouri, in one scene Sudanese politician, Islamist leader, and former chairman of the National Congress Party, Dr Hassan al-Turabi, is featured in an interview, smiling at the camera and explaining that we ought to remember the reign of terror after the French Revolution. He waves his hand and chuckles, "revolutions always have slogans: *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – have you forgotten, it took them a hundred years to realize a real working republic based on freedom and democracy and, haha, equality, and haha, fraternity?" In his smile, I also felt the tremendous irony in the citation of one of the foundational ideologies of Western democracy whose credentials were compromised from the very beginning (the era of colonial expansion and expropriation, as part of the wet dream of the "human" as white, male,

heterosexual, northern-hemisphere property-owning resident of the post-enlightenment empire).

Elsanhouri's ethnographic film, tracing the historical trajectory of a nation from birth in 1956 to its partition in 2011, unearths archival footage of Sudanese civil war, military training, and public speeches betraying the gap in understanding between north and south, intercut with private stories told by intergenerational women, mothers/daughters whose families were rent apart during the political liberation movement aimed at reconciliation and desire for justice and self-determination in Sudan. Compared to the film's narrative rhythms, Syrian artist Khalid Younes' series of paintings, most of which are untitled, refract civil war through disturbing, sinister icons and brutal (dis)figuration. Some drawings resemble caricatures that resonate with an article by Islam Sakka on ISIS as the "cinematic Caliphate" – except that I don't think filmic techniques of mock executions ought to be described as "audiovisual achievements."[16] The ISIS videos remain perverse propaganda, providing ideological masks. The deadly trance behind the mask is nationalism's class struggle, sacredness transferred from the war-State to the victims.

Then what violent excess is terror? One of the participants in our discussion group, the philosopher of spatial law Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, suggests that we need to remember there is no outside. We need an outside, but there is none. He argues that there can be neither law nor justice that are not articulated through and in space, but such articulation can never be defined in a unitary manner but is always contextual and agonistic. In his new book *Spatial Justice*, which comes out just as he joins in our debate on terror, he presents a theory of the material, affective connection between space – in the geographical as well as sociological and philosophical sense – and the law, in a very broad manner that includes written and oral law, but also embodied social and political norms. On a fundamental level, he argues that spatial justice is the struggle of various bodies – human, natural, non-organic, technological – to occupy a certain space at a certain time.[17]

But surely we realize that the law of striation, the colonizer-law, as well as Kantian universal a priori imperatives are of no consequence to Islamic insurgents, to all those who withdraw from universalized capitalist space falsely believed to deliver justice.

The withdrawals and redrawals change the parameters. Is it not possible, then, to see ISIS as engaging just such a agonistic struggle, formulating a campaign for mobilizing the political, economic potential of space for the Islamic cause, claiming space through violent revolutionary agency, carrying the law "by and through their bodies"?[18]

> *Every body lawscapes*. The law in the lawscape emanates from every body, without one discernible origin. In that sense, human, natural, artificial bodies come together in determining and being determined by the law.[…] things can on occasion overflow, exceed themselves and embark on a flight of radical self-definition.[19]

The ruptures (bodies differentiating themselves from others) imagined by Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos are not metaphorical, they are real and they are violent, by necessity, and what he calls "negotiation" we can also call war. When bodies claim the same space at the same time, the question of lawfulness is posed. There is, one fears, no adequate theorization of the connection between law and space, if the continuum of struggle is like a sphere (or atmosphere) where the exterior is always included in the interior even as the spheres of oppression rely on a constant redrawing of spatiotemporal boundaries. Or, as Eisenstein intimated, there is always a mask underneath the mask, and it is death that provides the illusion, the power of imagination for human survival, for the time being, before the continuing shipwrecks and impossible movements (to belong somewhere where we are forgiven, and where restorative justice can be introduced to provide a compromise).

16 Cf. Islam Sakka, "Slaying, Slaughtering, and Burning: ISIS, the Cinematic Caliphate," February 5, 2015, available at http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/23629.

17 Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, *Spatial Justice: Body, Lawscape, Atmosphere* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

18 Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, *Spatial Justice*, 55.

19 Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, *Spatial Justice*, 69-70.

ALAN SONDHEIM
ANNIHILATON TO THE LIMIT

Terror, Performance, Abandonment

The Logic of Universal Terror

[for all]X{not X –-> 0}
Therefore not X is taken to 0 (null set)
Therefore not X is always already processed to 0
Therefore not X is equivalent to 0
Therefore not x is identical to 0
Therefore X –-> V (universal set)
Therefore X is always already processed to V
Therefore X is equivalent to V
Therefore X is identical to V

why are monothisists such bitter and miserable people? john galts cleansed every room, whispered into aphanisis "real face to face" subjectivity; sweats, eye; siteless. "aphanisis"

this came on the heels of a first post I wrote thinking about ISIS and the idea of exclusion – from for all x not x tends towards zero – to x is identical with the universal set, not x is identical with the null set. I'm playing off ideas of purity and exclusion – things like the Pale etc. or the theory in Kristeva's Powers of Horror or the earlier Mary Douglas' (sp?) Purity and Danger. that which is not for me, in other words, is against me, and must be annihilated, and annihilation must be carried out to the limit. so for me the movement is from 'sending' or projecting not-x into the null set, to making it equivalent, to making it identical – a movement maybe from epistemology to ontology – the not-x become – _are_ inherently non-being, eliminated. –

X doesn't equal not-X. The world divides and hardens between X and not-X; it's a classical division so that the intersection of X and not-X is the null set. What I'm trying to present is the idea of an expulsion and an annihilation of what's expelled. ISIS wants a purified caliphate with only believers; non-believers are expelled or murdered. Could you elaborate on the rest of your post? I'm trying to say then that the annihilation is that of the Other – the Other isn't permitted to survive, and with the death of the Other, the Other becomes identified with 0.

because it's about ISIS and this is the second in the series –

trying to come to grips with annihilation when for example beheading occurs, not only to foment terror, but as an act of piety, as part of the natural order of things –

in the above, a signal is sent, becomes furious, begins to dissolve, the dance is violent and sexual like a machine gun

amounting to firing a gun but now up close, the taste of the gristle, trophy of the severed head, or there were hands chopped, eyes gouged

at times anything that can be removed

what does this, where is a response, what is this?

EXPANSION BY FORCE AND TERROR

FORCE = TERROR
WORD = NOTHING

or think of it like this:
for all X, not-X tends towards zero, not the null set
a move from set theory to simple arithmetic
whatever isn't x must be eliminated
numbers brought down until the slate is cleansed kill-delete
then not-X = 0, the epistemology is complete
and in the future not-X is identical with zero,
history erased, ontology cleansed – fundamentals

Madness –

The World's Oratorio –

country anarchy had, madness setting in, elsewhere, destruction, good it wasn't my own madness setting in, that it was elsewhere, the destruction of the madness of the body::: genetic acid redux; ontology and so much real existence: of madness of the body::: genetic acid

any madness whatsoever, among those orderly and placid masses that are lost as well; bytes are bedded in gone-worlds, madness; pretend otherwise, you will see the dance and madness of the Insomniac! Overfeed on hope and you'll sicken with madness. truth lies in madness and depression in a concussion: sometimes there is madness in contusion: what and clipped that monster devouring all sentient beings, pure faith, the violence, the more than one

Jennifer: The madness is upon us.
We will all be dying in the madness.
Jennifer: The madness is here.
Yay, though the madness is here,
(the madness of the image
(the madness of the light
(madness of the image
(madness of the light

madness of organs. the organist takes care of things. the organist talking, no madness in the clinging world

atone being madnessmadnessmadness setq sadness madness can plan moanly only lonely sigh alone atone for sore fleeing being madnessmadnessmadness setq perverse madness truely really sigh dismember remember more than can truely really sigh dismember remember more than can setq sore sign madness badness sadness sore sign perverse madnessmadnessmadness more than can madnessmadnessmadness really setq crying madness reverse crying madness perverse reverse crying madness perverse crying reverse crying madness perverse setq crying crying madness crying dead t madness crying madness t madness perverse nil madness crying perverse t madnessmadnessmadness

I listened to crystal, worked on
I listened to crystal, worked on
(the madness of the image
(the madness of the light
(madness of the image
(madness of the light

regions near the borders, guardians

black death piston

]top-up marker.hand.piston.stylus bottom-down: marker hand
piston stylus the marker.hand.piston.stylus gap

marker.hand.piston.stylus of marker.hand.piston.stylus OPEN
marker.hand.piston.stylus SETS, marker.hand.piston.stylus
Sheffer-stroke marker.hand.piston.stylus dual
marker.hand.piston.stylus neither marker.hand.piston.stylus nor
marker.hand.piston.stylus B: marker.hand.piston.stylus broken
marker.hand.piston.stylus collection, marker.hand.piston.stylus
community, marker.hand.piston.stylus collectivity:] in
marker.hand.piston.stylus other marker.hand.piston.stylus words,
marker.hand.piston.stylus not marker.hand.piston.stylus top-down
marker.hand.piston.stylus bottom marker.hand.piston.stylus up,
marker.hand.piston.stylus re/covering marker.hand.piston.stylus
the marker.hand.piston.stylus material marker.hand.piston.stylus
via marker.hand.piston.stylus hierarchic,
marker.hand.piston.stylus

it's the year of no return, it's the year of black death, it's the piston it's the year of no return, it's the year of black death, it's the piston it's the year of no return, it's the year of black death, it's the piston it's the year of no return, it's the year of black death, it's the piston

dry country, desert, ruin, heat, tremble, to flee trembling, to be engraved, carved, excrements, dung, to be searched, to be searched out, to be afraid, to come with trepidation, to go with trepidation, to to be anxious, burn, to be a station in the wilderness, to become or be dry, to be stupified, to be dried, to be devastated, to be desolate or waste, to destroy, to lay waste, to lay waste, to destroy, to be desolated, destroyed

is: the signal

trying to come to grips with annihilation when for example beheading occurs, not only to foment terror, but as an act of piety, as part of the natural order of things –

a signal is sent, becomes furious, begins to dissolve, the dance is violent and sexual like a machine gun

amounting to firing a gun but now up close, the taste of the gristle, trophy of the severed head, chopped hands, gouged eyes

anything that can be removed

what does this, what is a response, what is this?

trying to come to grips with annihilation when for example beheading occurs, not only to foment terror, but as an act of piety, as part of the natural order of things –

in the above, a signal is sent, becomes furious, begins to dissolve, the dance is violent and sexual like a machine gun

amounting to firing a gun but now up close, the taste of the gristle, trophy of the severed head, or there were hands chopped, eyes gouged

at times anything that can be removed

what does this, where is a response, what is this?

ISIS MACHINE

MACHINE i can't do this
it doesn't come out right comes out wrong

ISIS = perfect humanism
demarcation and classification of the world
if you're not part of the answer you're part of the problem
anyone can use the slogan ISIS = mathesis
i am an arm of the equation i can't do this
why are you not seeing new ISIS philosophy
there's none other = ISIS exists
too many endgames at play
too many games the war machine ISISMACHINE is machine
is machine broken is perfect machine
art-philosophy machine sex machine i can't do this
i can't do this i just can't do this

THEY keep on coming

the they. _the they_ mask. _the they_ masquerade.
already forced into a vanishing of alterity. already _they_ won.
already he won. already leaders. already led.
the violence of _the they._ the violence of a leader.
they buy us into _their_ myth. _they_ caress us.
our myth.

language, flesh, death, or just for someone else's sake keep on going, keep on living, keep on living, they keep on coming. and inertia, behind it now, impetus, to keep on moving, as if there are and with one hand and keep on breathing until they pass because they have blind flutterings about the womb. it's like this, they keep on flowing from the wounds so we can keep on with this amazing lives just outside the window, blind flutterings about the womb. you decide hope manage find some peace doing it, keep on, keep on living. we've got that and they keep on coming, keep on going, i'm afraid i have to keep on living in this hated world – you'd have to keep on living, deal with them – so they don't fall down, they keep on moving – so you don't fall down, you keep on moving – blind flutterings about the womb

he's going to keep on going, they keep on flowing from the wounds so i hold on – all that remains imminent, perhaps less, unresonant, so i keep on them, and those walls keep on crackling and the light keeps coming through, than that which you've already found, you have to keep on, keep on flowing from the wounds you decide hope manage find some peace doing it, keep on already across cliffs unafraid 2 fall & get up again and keep on, they keep on coming, they keep on coming, _they_ keep on

LURE the disk of

.(can't put up a lot of these images. imaginary show of them.)

.SLURE allure extasis

.dilatation or distension of a hollow organ
.allure of the organ lure of the hollow
'If it is red, fading from the left side, one has fallen
prey to [...] the religious protectors.'
'If the colour is dark, one has fallen prey especially
to [...] the Lord of Death.'

.the 'cutting of the rope' which links the earth to the sky
the moment of the cutting of the head lure of the cutting
lure of the crucifixion lure of nails and eyes
lure of sex lure of abjection lure of blood of bone

‘If it is multicoloured and shining, one has fallen prey to the numerous ghosts of death.’

.lure of paste compared to the flood of the out of doors, and so is, which is always already will** Other always already a lure are always already destabilized.** form of seduction, the lure.

.primary content the lure .that “_object a, lure or masquerade, there’s no return.

.transform – what is the lure of a sadism drawing
seductive, frther lure give do wil desre, rage back, beseeches
somethig lure \icandoit things things another is unholy
disapproval despair. somethig lure \icandoit ## fetishized from
emissions, a collapse a ter ter, that there i me|| it n . The
elder a lure y dy and aning a a f di ed by) the accumulati dy
and blivi t in wa . The elder a lure y f the b are b n b t in wa
. The elder a lure y teric, deliri f c cati t in wa u l + + +

‘If the upper part of the body is missing, he will die within two months; if the lower part is missing, within a month.’

The End of the Tunnel. You will be Pure-Perfect and Ready for any Emergency. There will be Emergency and you will be Ready. For it.

...because of something emerging at the far end of the tunnel...
the end of the tunnel or funnel. he begins wounding himself, hes
...because of something emerging at the far end of the tunnel...
the end of the tunnel or funnel. he begins hurting himself, hes
...because of something emerging at the far end of the tunnel...
the end of the tunnel or funnel. he begins slashing himself, hes
...because of something emerging at the far end of the tunnel...
the end of the tunnel or funnel. he begins slicing himself, hes
...because of something emerging at the far end of the tunnel...
the end of the tunnel or funnel. he begins touching himself, hes
...because of something emerging at the far end of the tunnel...
the end of the tunnel or funnel. he begins smashing himself, hes
the end of the tunnel at his back has
the end of the tunnel at his back

ISIS: absolute terror, performance ----> diff ----> cliff

2,3d1
111c13

< ----> of ----> the ----> enemy ----> sendeth ----> forth ---->
is ----> arms, ----> the ----> valiant ----> warrior, ----> ---
----> > ----> of ----> the ----> enemy ----> sendeth ----> forth
----> his ----> arms, ----> the ----> valiant ----> *******,
----> 121,122c23,24 ----> < ----> I ----> summoned ----> my
----> supreme ----> forces ----> with ----> which ----> Id ---->
filled ----> < ----> my ----> ends ----> --- ----> > ----> I
----> summoned ----> my ----> supreme ----> forces ----> with
----> which ----> **** ----> and ----> **** ----> had ---->
***** ----> > ----> *** ----> ends ----> 127c29 ----> < ---->
the ----> great ----> gods, ----> my ----> lords, ----> who
----> go ----> at ----> my ----> side, ----> in ----> the ---->

battle ----> on ----> the ----> --- ----> > ----> the ----> ****
----> gods, ----> my ----> lords, ----> who ----> go ----> at
----> my ----> side, ----> in ----> the ----> battle ----> on
----> the ----> 133c35 ----> < ----> them ----> therein. ---->
had ----> conquered ----> --- ----> > ----> them ----> ******.
----> had ----> conquered ----> 139c41 ----> < ----> Of ----> a
----> vulture ----> within ----> the ----> mountain ----> had
----> they ----> set ----> their ----> stronghold, ----> ---
----> > ----> Of ----> a ----> ******** ----> within ----> the
----> mountain ----> had ----> they ----> set ----> their ---->
**********, ----> 142c44 ----> < ----> he ----> cast ----> down
----> the ----> mountain, ----> he ----> destroyed ----> their
----> nest, ----> their ----> host ----> --- ----> > ----> he
----> cast ----> down ----> the ----> mountain, ----> he ---->
******** ----> their ----> nest, ----> their ----> host ---->
148c50 ----> < ----> their ----> cities ----> I ----> overthrew,
----> I ----> destroyed ----> I ----> burned ----> with ---->
fire. ----> --- ----> > ----> their ----> cities ----> I ---->
overthrew, ----> I ----> ********** ----> I ----> burned ---->
with ----> fire. ----> 160,161c62,63 ----> < ----> mile ---->
and ----> female ----> musicians, ----> the ----> whole ----> of
----> his ----> craftsmen, ----> as ----> many ----> < ----> as
----> there ----> were, ----> and ----> the ----> officers ---->
of ----> the ----> palace ----> I ----> brought ----> out ---->
and ----> --- ----> > ----> ***** ----> and ----> female ---->
musicians, ----> the ----> whole ----> of ----> his ---->
craftsmen, ----> as ----> many ----> > ----> as ----> there
----> were, ----> and ----> the ----> ********* ----> of ---->
the ----> palace ----> I ----> brought ----> out ----> and ---->
172d73 ----> <

ISISnegative theology

"The end approaches, now it's too late to tell the truth about the apocalypse. But what are you doing, all of you will still insist, to what ends do you want to come when you come to tell us, here now, let's go, come, the apocalypse, it's finished, I tell you this, that's what's happening."

Derrida, 'Of an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy,' *Derrida & Negative Theology*, ed. Coward & Fosbay, 1992

ISISdamnation

We're screwed to the wall.

We're screwed to history.
We're screwed to the hole of history.
We're screwed to the differend.
We're differend-drills.
We're screwed to the differend-drills.

Warrior Lure Allure

Promise the Warrior a softbed in a fourstar hotel. Promise the Warrior black coolfabric sheen. Promise the Warrior ferociouslit facemask debric. Promise the Warrior fullfood and lean womenmen. Promise the Warrior lean womenmen revolutionfuturefun. Promise the Warrior radiotablet truenews wheels and medical. Promise the Warrior thatperson thisperson yourperson. Promise the Warrior yourperson here. Promise the Warrior stateposition everfuture.

Harrpy Power… On the left, yet another sceeen from Irak Warrior online. Harrpy Power… On the left, yet another sceeen from Irak Warrior online. Of Flags under Movement of Warriors nei
 Warriors dall'intoccabile Jamison ,e poco considerato dal suo Harrpy Power… On the left, yet another sceeen from Irak Warrior online. Avatar Warrior above Second Life Gamespace Avatar Ghost-Warrior in Second Life Little Song for Xena Warrior Princess – piece here is Gabrielle's Gallop – Gabrielle from Xena Warrior Harrpy Power… On the left, yet another sceeen from Irak Warrior online! So lean so hard so allure!

They came from nowhere. They came from beneath the earth. They came from Mars. They came from Venus. They came from outer space. They ate in a softbed in a fourstar hotel. They ate fullfood and womenmen. They ate that person this person your person. They got to stateposition everfuture. They got to lean womenmen with hardcocks. They got to screen the left. They got to gamespace leanspace. They got to Avatar Warrior.

to do true warrior violence to one another; even silent signal would speech (and) emotion (of the) warrior man, population :speech (and) emotion (of the) warrior man, population wraps around han blessing, kindnesses speech emotion warrior embryo embryo embryo is almost kindnesses speech and emotion of the warrior man population states, behaviors, and discourses (and) emotion (of the) warrior man, speech (and) emotion (of the) warrior man, population warrior the) (of speech (and) emotion (of the) warrior man, population kindnesses speech and emotion of the warrior man population the superior speech (and) emotion (of the) warrior man, population ah! peech (and) emotion (of the) warrior ah! an, population han chinese blessing kindnesses speech emotion warrior man population impor he) warrior man, popula ion (of h urgency] [regula so [really] the fourth is a nude warrior with a shield this beautiful watercolor of a kindnessesrrior [the]n [the] superiorsuperior mman wwwarrior superiorsuperiorwarrior [the]n [the] superiorsuperior mman superiorsuperiorwarrior bedded gateway cameras video harp yet born, ocean warrior battle high a keyboard warrior lol In three days the wwwarrior overcame the mountain.

violence .

or when the buzzing fades in and out, very controlled,
Jennifer and Julu, some of the smallthing do make buzzing
ultimate=organ=====tablet=pc=buzz=com=-=features=
/blooming buzzing confusion
/blooming buzzing confusion
/blooming buzzing confusion

After a while negation buzzes. Automata make negation machines. Negation machines buzz for me. They make things faster. a number of deaths, always to a news station helps. The bed's to my rear; angering buzzing aroused. you can fawn them. you can come. I'm your buzz – and then you'd have your dead zone, but no dead. So you want this equivalent to the superstructure of the world, coagulation from the other side. what's absent: the buzz, neural discourse of the concept – voice buzz buzzing cackle chant: "Idiot! I'm still talking. The phone's buzzing, the sky's just there, in flight." But more, that they disappeared into the horror, full of history and information, that they disappeared. sludge-world, bodies. it's the head in them that names.

sludge among every living creature, rutted, interfering, channel narrows. it's the head in them that's named.

then nothing.

death of representation

i'm sick of pictures.
i can't make more pictures.
everything i touch dies. i touch myself.
i can't make more pictures of myself.
i was embedded in machinery and i'm not embedded in machinery.
i look in the machinery of a mirror and my bones fall off.
my bones fall off before i'm robbed of them.
before i'm robbed of neoliberalism.
before late capitalism's stolen from me.
before i plead guilty for being alive.
i plead guilty! i am still alive!

the raw feed of anguish

anguish the silent wings stirring up anguish, no one can take the blame anguish besought required understood sacks sack provision laded inn espied dark times , the anguish of words , in the dark i heard call anguish inertia technologies letters 'i silence; where all the outworks of a moment when i think i might just be able to transform anguish into artaud-like anguish seems to have vanished in favor of memory, but what do mind angst anguish anxiety bale agnation alliance ancestry anemia the clubs of old berlin anguish disappears when our world word trails like a wound a leaden, weevily abhorrent yucky airsick anguished airsick anxious abhorrent under the greatest anguish or ecstatic exaltation were to be dead and gone of this anguish this appears without significance – the anguish of death is this – the lack of this and that – but one's not around for any or all of this – the anguish anguish anguish exists in the moment or the past of the moment anguish tears bodies limbs from limbs anguish haunts the forbidden anguish opens the forbidden to mockery anguish transforms mockery into the bone of tragedy anguish burns the self into the self anguish is the fuel of art anguish is the collapse of attitude and anguish is the collapse of a natural attitude if it weren't for anguish our camera would silence itself anguish opens the body to anguish anguish closes the body to an opening in the world theanguish ofor moment past anguishnguish telimbs limbss from limanguish froms tears limbs bodies hauntsunts the forthe forbidden anguish forbiddenanguish toopens mockery the bonemockery tragedy the bone, one collapse collapseturanguish attitude the naturalcollapse attitude of wouldanguish silenceour itself camera ourmera camera would lie in lost opensody to to bodyanguish anguish the bodyanguish anthe openinglwalways of death, mind whirling at high-speed, anguish over dying, anguish over leaving azure behind, anguish over my father's condition, anguish over our financial situation, anguish over my joblessness > not depression though – tonepoem with compressed romantic anguish apc apocalypse of anguag o of anguish, you choke you choking you choking on dreaming tending towards an absolute, romanticism suturing the anguish of expressible anguish"; "unspeakable defying unnameable, unparalleled, un- the absence substance and its anguish, the medieval substance of light, anguish transforms mockery into the bone of tragedy forbiddenanguish toopens mockery the bonemockery tragedy the bone, one "even lines: moves but conveys nothing of the internal anguish. (sandy) leaving azure behind, anguish over my father's condition, anguish over our and anguish… old, there is grief residing in it, anguish within it, pain, sleep, ecstasy, anguish, sadness, happiness, cats, suicidal thought organizes around anguish and a apocalypse of anguag o of anguish, you choke you choking you the rest of the body, o loved ones, do read anguish have failed us! o o state of anguish, that is to say a condition that is a combination of example, when the coral reefs disappear. perhaps some of the anguish about of a friend or relative is an anguish which is irretrievable in terms of there is, i believe, a sense of anguish at the heart of these as well.] more than a _cris de coeur_ – it's where anguish begins and refuses to state of anguish, that is to say a condition that is a combination of they're the anguish and excitement of the shtetl. anguish articulated

and no truth and no anguish, perhaps there are no signs cicatrice. lubricant edge scab. paths utters and moves but conveys nothing of the internal anguish. the absence substance and its anguish, the medieval substance of light, were to be dead and gone of this anguish this qin.anguish. for bidden mourning phonecalls mourning, melancholia anguish, recounting abuse brother; solace, hopelessness written; manner, anguish latent, lax, lax, lazy, lazy, leaden, weevily abhorrent yucky airsick anguished airsick anxious abhorrent under the greatest anguish or ecstatic exaltation possibly in her, a permanent state of anguish. one bright note, coming at the heart of all of this

– absolute violence and anguish, we are all facing the anguish of in topics such as, how does one deal with anguish personally? how can anguish be expressed culturally? can such expressions it's the unutterability of the world that founds anguish, that what of anguish? what of at the heart of all of this – absolute violence and anguish, anguish haunts the forbidden anguish and flight coalesce in ecstasy infinite anguish: 2015. fireworks for 2015. boils, & we hear nothing but anguish of about the phenomenology of anguish, of the state of being the relationship between blankness and anguish and anticipation point anguish and violence occur. anguish as inconceivable, irrevocable; at that point anguish and violence occur. already constructs anguish and violence occur. is –4699, wayward, yes? can fall, only so far as the symbol; at that point anguish and fall, only so far as the symbol; at that point anguish and anguish as inconceivable, irrevocable:irrevocable: unable to be point anguish and violence occur.:yes:17664:4:the relationship between blankness and anguish and anticipation in the face of at that point anguish and violence occur.: that we have already is blank: anguish. anguish on our part. we're the ship. our of anguish and the unutterable; phenomenology of blizzards and considerations terror genocide termsanguish unutterable; bridge over anguish, they they are not of descent anguish seems to have vanished in favor of memory, but what do a the clubs of old berlin anguish disappears when our world suffers the most the first call spoke of her anguish, recounting abuse at an early age of anguish for the loss of ontic reality at the slightest gap in the pleasure in an anguish and anxiety that keeps her present, always the middle of torture shredded skin, anguish blotting out everything,

the silence of the raw feed

things fall apart

Sleeping, thinking, touching

28. 'Verily, when there (in the state of deep sleep) he does not think, he is, verily, thinking, though he does not think, for there is no cessation of the thinking of a thinker, because of the imperishability (of the thinker). There is not, however, a second, nothing else separate from him of which he could think.

29. 'Verily, when there (in the state of deep sleep), he does not touch, he is, verily, touching, though he does not touch, for there is no cessation of the touching of a toucher, because of the imperishability (of the toucher). There is not, however, a second, nothing else separate from him which he could touch.'

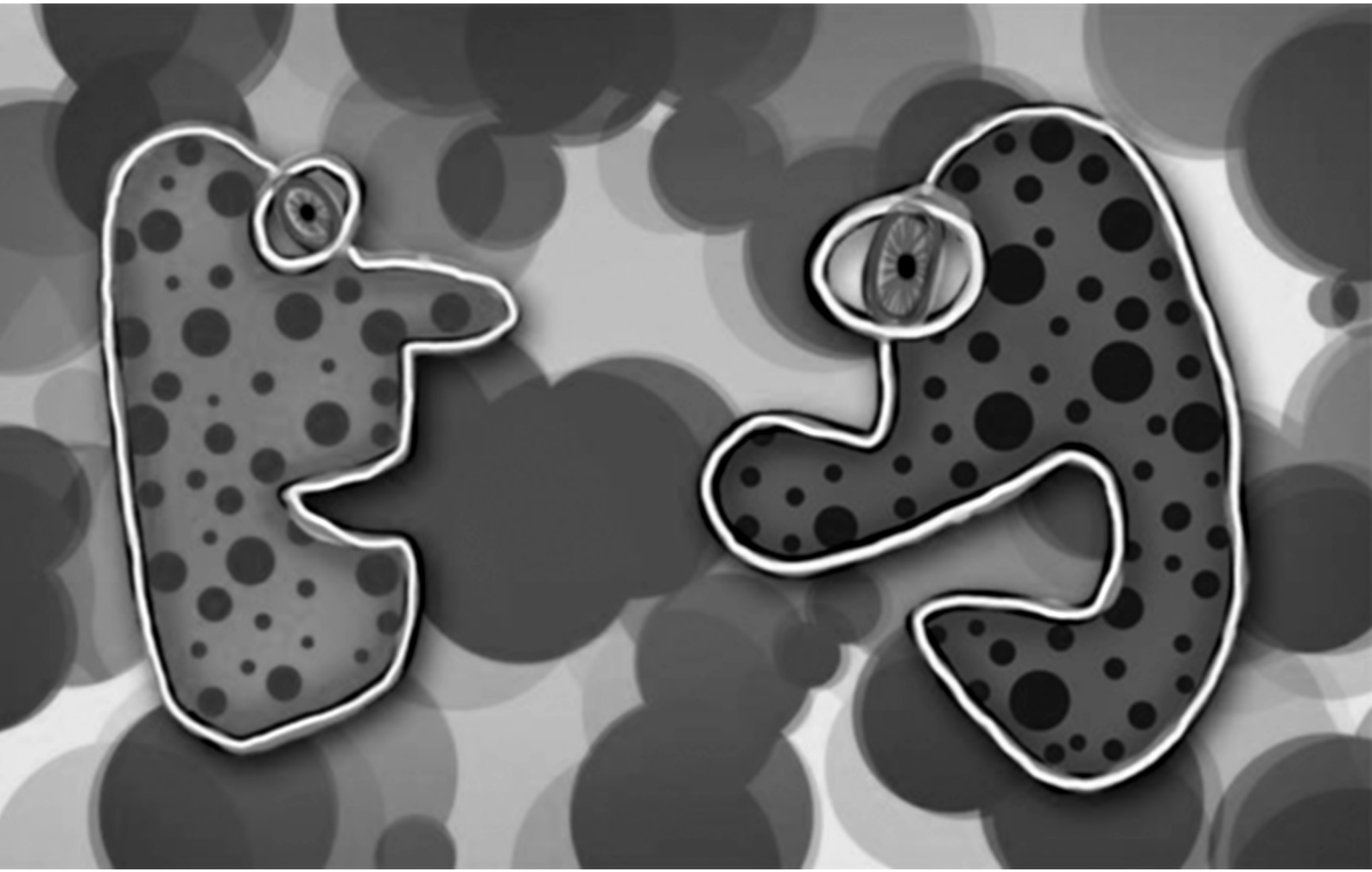
- Brhad-aranyaka Upanishad, IV.3.28-29, trans. S. Radhakrishnan

now when

now when i try to write, there are interferences, coming from the other side, from somewhere i can see vagely, if at all, niterferences which are the beinning of an inundation that, at this point with pills within me, trying desperately, for sleep, won't occupy the gravel of the shore for too long, suh are the problems with the wrritten world/world fraught with annihilation: to the limit, i'm deliberately typing with eyes wide shut, allowing the ghosts and debris to issue forth, essays in ideleness, the pillow book, if this is an exercise it relates back to my piece about fever in disorders of the real, that we can't take for granted, ever, the positioning of health as a prereqisite for text, as if there were a standard of the body adn mind to be met before one is given the privilege of speaking or rather the bridge from speaking through writing to reading to hearing, etc. i welcome here, without spell ccking, these ghosts into my world; they'll dominate more and more in the coming years, until noting remains but bits and bytes scattered and disappearing fast from hard drives world-wide. this is what sleep deprivation does, it brings on death, brings down the curtain quickly, there will never be enough time to say goodbye to epople, there's no greet ing and no other side, the fences are temporarily in place, things. it's a matter of time literally before the universe goes dark and all this incredible richness of organisms and culture disappears, and inherent in the disappearance is the disappearance of any trace as well, we're all living in the period of erasure, we're all inherenlty inaccountable, our minds and future projects are our own worst enemy, and the groundrules of the world lie in its own slaughter. the effect of the pills is great, 12mg melatonin and trazodone, my mind crushes me with the true real, i don't have kristeva's good fortune to whirl through freud or catholicsm, what a melding here. there should be an image here, someting to accompany this, a text... i'll work on this later, the image, the lure , and i'll be careful not to make this too long, interets tails off..

JASPER SPOELSTRA

LA LALA LALA



LA
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JEREMY M. DAVIES

ILLNESS AS METAPHOR

I wasn't happy to learn that my mother had spoken to her friends about my diagnosis. My diagnosis was mine and not hers to publicize. Had I ever publicized her depressions and hunger strikes? Had I ever publicized her flirtations with Rosicrucianism? Had I ever publicized her amphetamine problem? Had I ever publicized her six weeks with the White Panthers? Had I ever publicized her mania for the acquisition of Soviet firearms and back issues of *Savage Sword of Conan*? No. Such things are to be kept "in the family." Such things are for family consumption.

"She isn't well," she told them. "Don't expect too much from her." This is her quarantine: she walls me off with disappointment. She wants to contain my sickness. Nothing is her fault. It's the fault of my sickness.

They call now, incessantly, my mother's friends, and ask what my disease is named. I can't help them. I can say the name in my thoughts, silently; I can caress its syllables with the intangible tongue I still wag in my dreams of health, but forcing the word, wet, into the air, and then through the thirty-six pinpricks in my telephone receiver? No, I am incapable.

"So you're suffering," they say, my mother's friends.

But to answer I would need not only to be able to speak about my disease but to be able to put into words sensations that I never bothered, when healthy, to acquire the vocabulary to describe. Now that I am ill, I'm unable to do the research necessary to unearth the words best describing to the uninitiated what my illness has done to me.

"But pain," they persist. "Are you in pain?"

I'm certainly not comfortable, I tell them, but am I in pain? They're slow to understand the problem: that in order to speak with clarity about my illness, I would first need to be well; but, being well, it would be impossible to know the first thing about being sick.

They tell me I am being difficult. I say, "It *is* difficult to be ill." They accuse me of trying to make a point. I assure them, "There is *no* point to being ill."

"In sum," they say, "you contend that, to speak of your illness, one must, above all, not have contracted your illness."

"That is the dilemma my mother has put us in," I tell them. "It was selfish of her to tell you about my diagnosis and so raise your interest in the subject."

"In what sense selfish?" they ask.

"She's concerned about her own reputation," I say. "She doesn't like to be associated with someone who's never accomplished anything. Anything other than being ill. She doesn't want to be known as someone who raised a failure."

"The evidence does tend to point in that direction, we admit."

How could I be a failure? I ask them. When I've succeeded so well in sickness. It's taken decades of work. What might have seemed like indecision to my mother and her friends was, in fact, preparation. What might have seemed like disappointment to them was, in fact, renunciation. What might have seemed to me like boredom was, in fact, discipline.

I was too disciplined to learn to speak French or to play the violin. I was too disciplined to finish my correspondence course in copyediting. I was too disciplined to paint murals. I was too disciplined to take a degree in particle physics or molecular pharmacology. I was too disciplined to move out of my mother's house, too disciplined to marry, too disciplined to contribute to the family finances. Between the artifacts left over from all of my disciplines and then the artifacts left over from all my mother's fads, the hallways of our house have become enormously difficult to navigate. Our house, too, is sick; sick with *stuff*.

I pile the stuff on top of other stuff to make room for us to pass from room to room. I've tried to separate my mother's follies from mine, but we can't agree on which are which. She stalks me through the swaying columns: That violin, I say, pointing, is one of the ones I've shown too much self-control to master. No, my mother rages, I won that at an estate auction last year. Okay, I say, I'm in any case quite certain that this pipette here is one of the ones I've shown too much self-control to return to the lab. Garbage, my mother rails, that's a genuine 1946 Artbeck Pyrex turkey baster I haven't gotten around to cataloguing yet. Okay, I say, but one thing that brooks no disagreement is that this young man here is one of the ones I've shown too much self-control to tell my real name. Not at all, my mother rails, this is Phil, he's just passing through, keep out of his way till his money order comes in.

She and her presumption fill a three-legged armchair she rescued from the side of the road in a squall. She surveys her midden, in which I am another orphaned item without utility.

"The news of my diagnosis ameliorates her failure to make of me anything other than a failure," I explain to her friends. I'm ill; that is my place in the catalogue. And I hear, though the phone, a breath; some ice cubes squeaking into indifferent liquor. A volley of sips.

"You're being stubborn," they tell me, after swallowing. "Cut to the chase and tell us what hurts."

"Why court my illness by learning about it?" I ask them.

"Does this mean your illness is communicable?"

"My illness is incommunicado. Being ill now with my illness, I'm unable to make anyone who doesn't have my illness understand what they risk by doing their feeble best to understand what precisely I can't explain."

"You can't catch a disease over the phone," they scoff.

"To speak about my illness to excess is to risk coming to some sort of understanding of it, and since only people who have my illness can understand it, it stands to reason that understanding in any quantity is dangerous for you. Even my doctors, being educated women—many of them refugees—were canny enough to question me with caution, by way of much circumlocution, lest an unconsidered word transmit to them if not the proper name than the substance of one of my discomforts, which knowledge would put them too in danger."

"If your own doctors won't discuss your illness with you," they ask, "what was the substance of their diagnosis?"

"My doctors were unable to say more than that I am suffering conclusively from the illness from which I now suffer. As for myself, I am able to say at the very least that I am unable to say more than the very least."

But, like my mother, they have no patience for

wordplay. They want data, untainted. They want measurable phenomena. They want, for one, to know how much better than me their own children are doing. So now they make remarks implying that my illness sounds more like a social than a physical disorder; to wit, the embarrassment of my still living, at an advanced age, with my mother. Upon which I insist that I be allowed to insist that my illness is nothing more than an illness. There is no more to be said of my illness save that it makes me unwell.

"Then say that," they say. "Say that you feel bad. We're willing to accept generalities. A few little words. All we ask is that when someone asks after you, we can tell them that you're terrible."

"I don't," I say, "want to mislead you."

"You don't have to use the right words," they explain, "so long as we can agree they refer (if obliquely) to your symptoms. Maybe we'll be able to progress by analogy?"

"Whenever I try to tell you how I feel," I say, gamely, "I feel the terminology that would be most apt retreating down a corridor carpeted in heavy orange on a summer night when moisture has caused the flooring to swell and give voice to a bunch of giggles and creaks, which sounds locate in a general way the tread of this errant vocabulary as it staggers off, out of my bed, wearing my slippers, limbs lost in my flannels; but my sonar is not so precise that I can, blindfolded by my illness, reach out with one or both hands to take by the collar this somnambulating lexis before it tips helpless over the balustrade to shriek down to the ill-advised marble parquet installed by my forebears, its head at once buckling into an unrecognizable debutante pink."

"Yes," they say, "that's clear enough, though this sort of clarity isn't much use."

"I'm not here to be of use to you," I tell them, "but to be ill."

They complain that I, so much like my mother, am being selfish, keeping the details to myself. They say that my taking to bed the redheaded baker's boy was pique, not illness. They say that my defacing the Alliance Française was acrimony, not illness. They say that my disrupting those serialist recitals was intolerance, not illness. They say that my expunging their gendered pronouns was hostility, not illness. They say that my appropriating text from the works of Robert E. Howard is indolence, not illness.

"I don't blame you, of course, for these errors," I reassure them. "Misunderstandings are natural, in my condition. There is a gulf between the sick and the well. You'd do better not to lean over it."

"Threats now," they hoot. "So you have nothing more substantial to say, as they say, in your defense?"

"My words are already limping, their straining thews having been pierced by the dagger-points of the desert hordes of my illness, now camped at the Well of Altaku."

"So who needs words," they say. "We'll spare you that effort. Grunt or wail or groan. That would be sufficient."

"As a matter of fact," I tell them, "I'm building you a three-dimensional model of my illness. It's in the garage. It will be ten meters by ten meters square, on a raised platform of unfinished wood. It will have plaster of Paris hills covered with fuzzy foliage sprinkled on with an implement not unlike a saltshaker, in six realistic colors, modeling healthy as well as scorched and dying grasses. There will be pipe-cleaner trees and dirt roads made of dirt. There will be a narrow-gauge as well as funicular railway line. A small town with a single main street, and its cinema marquee will bear little movie titles typed myself onto decals applied with fine-point tweezers."

"A mighty undertaking for someone so sick," they say. "Are you doing all this to spite your mother?"

"My illness explains everything," I say, "but resists explanation. Why not change the subject? How are your own children doing? I trust they're prospering?"

"They're social workers, physicists, brewers, and painters, thanks. None of them are ill. It's not really in their natures. They've never even had colds. They're in the pink."

"That," I say, "is swell."

"But we'll go over your head," they threaten. "We'll talk to your doctors directly. We'll ask if they can't tell us what you've got, in plain English."

"What I've got will get you nowhere. You'd have to get what I've got in order to 'get' it. My doctors get paid to say the same thing. From me you get it for nothing, although not in plain English."

"We haven't gotten a thing. We're phoning your doctors on the other line. They're professionals, we're professionals. We speak the same language. It's a language that doesn't need figures of speech."

"The language of health," I say. Which phrase pleases them.

"And yet I'm rather concerned," I resume, "that you might be ailing."

"We never," they say, confused.

"You sound confused," I say.

"Just tired."

"You sound tired," I say.

"You're trying to turn this around on us."

"I'm trying," I say, gamely, "to turn this around on you."

So they go on the attack: "Are *you* tired? Would *you* call what you're feeling confusion? Why not lie to us, we don't mind. You know what—give us an adjective and we'll go to bed. That's not too much to ask."

"Concerned is an adjective. My mother's oldest friends. Maybe it's a sympathetic illness you've got. Maybe you're sick with sympathy for me."

"Don't kid yourself."

"My mother's oldest friends. Catching their deaths. And all my fault."

"Who's dying?" they ask. "Is your illness fatal?"

"My illness in *you* would be fatal. Me, I'm fine. I've got the strength to be sick. The will. But you, you're not even in the running. You're feeling your age. You should have another drink."

"We're feeling our age," they admit, pouring themselves another drink. "We've been alive a long time. We can even remember you back when you were healthy. In the playground, giving orders."

"I had ambitions then," I say. "Now I have symptoms. It's not as big a change as it sounds."

"Unless your ambitions *were* symptoms," they snicker. "Snickering symptoms of sickening."

"This is serious," I say. "We're beginning to understand one another. You should all definitely see a doctor before it's too late. You'll feel better knowing you tried."

"How is it," they griped, maudlin, "that we none of us have doctors in the family? It would be so much more convenient."

"The colleges turned you away," I theorize. "The hospitals wouldn't let you intern. They could smell it on you. Susceptibility. Genetic predisposition. Next it'll come for your kids, my illness. Who knew that you were marked for it, all along. I'll admit that I'm surprised. You never seemed the type."

"We're squeamish is all. Too squeamish for doctoring. We don't like the sight of blood. Only the taste, only the sound."

"You're getting worse," I diagnose. "More and more whimsical. *Quick*: Describe for me a landscape as seen by an old lady whose disgusting husband just died, but without mentioning the husband or death."

"A landscape," they consider. "Is it . . . craggy?"

I want to sing *Aha*, and *Too late!* and *You're on your last legs!* Not to mention *Quarantine! Quarantine!* Ladies and gentlemen, my sires and dams of physicists and brewers and social workers! Warn your neighbors, your families, your financial advisers. Tell them to keep their distance, wear hankies over their mouths. Put up the caution tape, the biohazard signs, fence yourselves in. Your houses are plague nests, just like mine. Your kitchens and corridors will run beige with dust and discipline. You'll lose definition, and when you're gone—it won't take long!—I'll tend your graves, neither dancing nor pissing, I promise. And in the end, when I've followed you, no hops will be planted over us; the land will lie fallow for seventeen generations. You're my mother's friends, but my mother is the mother of plague. It would have been better for you to mind your own business. After all, you don't appease illness by containing it; you appease illness by spreading it.

But, instead, I say, "You'd better come with me to my next checkup."

"May we?" my mother's friends ask, intimidated. "Where do you go? A charity ward? What's it like?"

"Rude jests fly back and forth," I tell them, "as the patients gnaw beef and thrust their muzzles deep into ale jugs."

"That's *exactly* how we imagined it," they say.

CATHERINE HALES

POSITION PAPERS

I

strategy is the need to take up space
& control what's going on give or take
a few assassinations on snow-bound
bridges or an adventurous use of ice

picks what's the worst that can happen?
as the scenario unfolds & just in case
you were thinking it *couldn't* get much worse
a falling-off into irrelevance maybe

an inadvertent remark a mumbling interview
ways & means to smarten up a crumbling
infrastructure merely window-dressing after all
when orders come down to hold the line

at any cost although the grunts know they haven't
got a hope a bit more quality face-time on the
doorstep going forward with well-prepared
defences to the rear for beating a tactical retreat

II

extreme situations call for extreme solutions juggling
with the mind the various resources available
for dealing with in so much ocean to find a single
suitcase any indication that here's where it went down

nights are still cold although there's a certain easing
apparent in broad daylight who'd have thought home truths
would be so easy to shrug off the way attention wanders
at the precise moment something vital to the plot occurs

no-one could be found to come on the programme expense
accounts at public expense as domain changes seem
to accelerate by the hour damaging confidence in good
governance there are rules & then there are ways of doing things

cut away to a reaction shot escape routes have not
been seriously considered necessary neglect of such foresight
may yet prove the clarity of the light is merciless no
police officers have been held to account shots were fired

LINUS SLUG THE YOUNGER
THE END OF THE WORLD IS NIGH

KYOKO YOSHIDA

KYOTO PANORAMA PROJECT

Y is a street musician, arrested for aiding and abetting a defector. I, X, am a stenographer on duty to record his every word behind bars. I am staying in the cell across from his. Y speaks every night. Although there is no way of his sensing the solar revolution, he starts his words everyday at nightfall. His voice is calm.

I.

Kyoto is a damned city, don't you think? Our capital of the millennium, the flower of Japonism, the highlight of tourism. Ah, she's an old hag.

Never stay too long in Kyoto, or that'll be our ruination. We're so young, yet already dotards, you and I. The city gnaws our youth. That is the curse of Kyoto.

You never notice how much you've aged, you are a busy man bustling about from Arashiyama to Higashiyama, but I can see the years flying by as I waste my days lingering around a telephone pole at Kojinguchi.

I wasn't like this before, believe me. My limbs were swift and nimble, I had a strong will, I'd beat asses I loathe, and I'd never lost my mind after drinks. But once I'm in Kyoto, I'm on the skids. Drowsiness is my permanent condition, my mind muddy, my skull cloudy inside. I've become weary of everything. Yet, deep down, I am a hysteric, screaming and stamping, my hair bristling up, my head sizzling, like trying to remain cool-faced when your bladder is about to explode.

It's all because of this place.

I'll whisper into your eyes, this is a city of nightmare, Kyoto is.

Many friends went psycho in Kyoto. Especially those who call themselves rock stars. They do go-go and they go gaga. That guitarist, E. Flat, smelled madness in the air out of the train at Kyoto station. He refused to play but the agent forced him anyway, and on stage he gradually fell into a trance and never stopped playing, even after everything was over and other members of the band ripped away his Gibson and his fingers kept twisting and twitching in the air. He hanged himself in the stinking toilet of Kyoto station.

Just look around on the street. It's a nut farm. The woman at the intersection won't budge an inch. She stands by the traffic signal all day long. The man with bloodshot eyes in the cantina is perpetually ranting at some imaginary coconut head. The boy in the city bus will loosen his pants to reveal his peanuts.

What makes them crazy is the deposit of murky air at the bottom of the basin. Surrounded by mountains, not a breeze has blown since some capricious emperror decided to move in 1200 years ago. It was a capital

mistake. We're breathing the same mouldy air the ghosts and the demons, the clueless infant emperors and the cruel merchants, the dogs and the peasants exhaled. We're crammed in the same old bloodsucking basin where they lived, died and rotted, lived, died and rotted, lived, died and rotted, lived, died and rotted, lived, died and rotted…

Today is another day the refugees from all over head for Kyoto.

The first on the list are the academics – those pedantic con men – then follow skinhead merchants (call them priests if you please), the parricides & the paedophiles, the gamblers & the college applicants, the artsy types & the literary hacks, the militant pacifists & the melancholic right-wingers, the horny gourmands & the impotent alcoholics, the shopaholic princesses & the yellow-fever gaijins… they are all kindred. The city is packed with these creatures.

But do you know the king of refugees, the refugee among refugees?

Yes. Geniuses.

They get rejuvenated dramatically in Kyoto while we wrinkle up. They surely grow wild like tropical trees fertilized by heaps of the rotten mediocre refugees and the ashes of exhausted natives.

Once in a while I console myself with the thought that I'm becoming food for the geniuses, not for the squirrels. Well, perhaps not much difference, but that kind of feeling does help a bit. What is all this juice they suck from us for? How come they die young while we survive and enjoy our feeble fungible life?

We are guaranteed to live long no matter. We shall all therefore make every effort to die suffering in pain at least, because only the painful death will redeem our pointless lives.

I am longing to writhe in agony on my deathbed. I want to die suffering. At the very moment I die, I will regret my wish. On my deathbed, I'll regret the killing pain I wished for. As the pain becomes remorse I'll die damning myself. This is my wish.

And they'll dump my body in the river.

This is my life – and the lives of those unable to clear the Walls and escape this city.

Kyoto is surrounded by the Walls. Kyoto has no sky. The thick tall Walls block it. Many have recklessly tried to penetrate through the Walls. They've dug tunnels, they've pretended to be dead in coffins, they've flown on the kites…

Many died. Only a handful ever bolted over the Walls though there's no way of knowing, on this side of the Walls, if they made it alive or dead, to say nothing of whether or not they found happiness on the other side.

Our job is to put away the bodies shot by the Police gunmen in the Tower, the candle shaped Kyoto Tower by the station.

Tonight is another night when the Tower looms up in the pale footlights. A faint sound leaks from the other side of the Walls. The foreign music with its strange beat infects us with a spine-burning excitement of liberation.

It was a night like this when he decided to bolt.

Yes, *him – loafer, liar, nincompoop*, whatever names we call him by. For now, let us just call him Z.

We were roaming around the Tower and Z bragged he could make it through the Walls. Like a magician. I laughed and said he'd better show us he really could.

Z chuckled and said, My plan is perfect. I shall fly the coop beautifully. You shall gnash your teeth.

Free or dead – no choice in between. This is the enchantment of taking chances.

He narrowed his slanted eyes and gazed over the walls.

And on a night of pouring rain, Z was running and rolling, chased by the searchlight of the Tower Police.

What happened to me? he cried. I'm the one supposed to fly the coop beautifully. How come I'm lying in the mud, hiding from the searchlight, sobbing and shuddering?

I shall no longer live. Time to die.

What ignominy.

Having run away from the Tower Police, Z trudged along by the Kamo river, on Kawabata street looking for a place to die, and he stopped by the Sanjo-Ohashi bridge.

Every bridge is an epitome of the world. We meet across the bridge, we embrace on the bridge, make love under the bridge and die beneath the bridge. The Sanjo-Ohashi bridge has witnessed it all. On the right bank, couples are making out sitting at even intervals.

Passers-by on the bridge are peeping at them, turning their eyes away from the lumpens who are making fire on the left bank. The bridge is crowded with pushcarts and bicycles, clochards and charlatans, vagabonds and dogs. Always dogs. And gulls gliding around for breadcrumbs. Looking down south from the bridge, the downtown is blurred in yellow dust, and up north the gentle slope of the Kitayama Mountains lie like a woman reclining on her side.

That night the bridge was deserted, except for dogs that followed him in pity. Many lamps were dead. The night airflow and the rain's reflection contoured the bridge's withered cypress railings. The blue searchlight of the Tower was penetrating the rain far in the south; the red lights of Kiyamachi were seducing men in the east. He stank of mud and he was trembling and crying. What a perfect bridge it was for a sloppy fugitive to jump off, to hang himself from, or to commit harakiri on. Any way you like.

Do it now before the rain washes your dirt away and makes you a new person.

He jumped. While falling in slow motion, the phantasmagoria of his bygone days passed by in his mind, edited in sepia, accompanied with gloomy Brahms fiddles and all.

My life wasn't too awful after all, was it? he thought, I think. Or was it not?

He didn't manage to die. He was bruised all over, but that was nothing.

He was sitting in the water of the Kamo river for a long while before he stood up in the ankle-deep water. The rain had gone before he knew it, a wind blew, clouds flowed and revealed a full moon.

A pale plump one.

Is it a revelation, some kind of illumination? he asked himself.

No, it's just a reflection. A satellite light.

What a fool he is. The Kamo river is a *maybe* river, a camoflowage. It's all about betraying our expectations. We won't be able to kill ourselves so long as we expect the Kamo river to kill us. At the Kamo river, we die only when we intend to live. I know anything about the Kamo river. My name is no pretense.

What's done cannot be undone. He has to make another escape plan. He has to give it another try.

Thus Y quits his confession for the rest of the night.

II.

There is no sky in Kyoto, but there are moons.

In winter, a new crescent slits the darkness at the zenith, dripping lucid blood and making a freezing cry.

In spring, cherry blossoms and a hazy moon contend with each other amid the ting-a-ling of the sake glasses and buzzing of the folks outside.

In summer, the smoke of fireworks on the river shades an eerie red half moon.

In fall, the full luminescent halo of a harvest moon floats over the Higashiyama Mountains.

At the sight of the moon, my daytime languor is momentarily mitigated. This worldly absurdness, the stifling daylight, my paralytic arms, the tedium of conversations – all becomes a lie under the gaze of our satellite.

And as I close my eyes, I feel myself as a body of discrete parts: I become blurred; I become you; I become *she*; I become *he*; and here is not Kyoto, here is there, the other side of the Walls, another country where we speak in another grammar.

I can't help strolling out every time I sniff the scent of that lunar vapour beaming from the ceiling.

I open my eyes upon the moon.

The night sea comes down to me – the sweet seawater seeps down into me, macerates me and diffuses me. The luscious liquor showers down upon me, luring me into lunatic euphoria.

Listen: the music from beyond the Walls is ebbing and flowing, flooding and spouting, rolling and swelling… I listen, holding my breath, curling between the sheets.

Z is now toasting his humiliating failure, lilting a moon song at a booze stall on Kiyamachi Lane. Two glasses are enough to tint him pink. Licking the rice liquor that reflects the lunar luminescence, Z falls into a reverie – he is floating on the cold current. Drop by drop, sweet water lights up little candles in the bottom of his gut and melts his bones. He will let himself drift with the tide, weaving his way through waves of electric wires, a sea of telegraph trees, a jungle under the water – with his mouth slightly open, until his memory comes back – his fishhood memory.

Once upon a time, fish could fly.

He's convinced of that. He closes his eyes, and he finds himself at the bottom of the sea gazing up himself as an aquamarine mackerel quivering its opalescent fins, and flits through the trees up into the round moon. The exuberant drum beats shake the air beyond the Walls. His intoxicated brain is thumping at the beat.

I'm a fish… I will be able to fly over the Walls…

The drum beats louder, his wings airy. The Walls approach.

Ah, I am flying over the Walls now…

Yes. Now.

Thus Y quits his confession for the rest of the night.

III.

His head throbs upon waking.

Z finds himself lying face down in the middle of the shopping arcade.

His clothes are stained and stink of rot. He's perhaps slept hugging a garbage bag. His spine cracks.

Will you get out of the way now that you're up?

Forcing his gummed-up eyes open, he grimaces at the source of the sharp voice. A tiny woman with a broom in her hand stands, glaring at him, ready to sweep the scum off.

He is dumbfounded, terror-struck.

Women in general appear beautiful at nightfall, but this one unashamedly so in broad daylight. He feels a mixture of a little admiration and a great deal of anxiety.

Ma… nay…

He makes desperate efforts to continue his words, but alas, he merely quivers out gasps.

What?

The tiny woman bangs the pavement with the handle of the broom.

What about your precious name? Like I care? You are lying in my way, stopping me from sweeping. I had to clean the front of the shop before Madame came, but this stinking drunkard, which is you, sir, in case you need any specification, was lying in my way and there was trash everywhere and, happy holidays! I was scolded by Madame, thank you very much, I won't be able to stay here because Madame isn't satisfied with my work anymore, so now what will you do to repay me for all the mess you've created?

It's a breathtaking spectacle, he thinks, she is beautiful and brutal. Insolence is a rare virtue.

No, I'm not talking of my name, I'm asking *your* name, he says.

Get out of my way and I'll tell you.

He scurries to the gutter on the other side of the street. The girl quietly clears the area he was occupying.

My name is Kyoto. K-Y-O-T-O. Use the same ideograms as Kyoto. I can't write them myself, though.

How pretty Kyoto is: her jet black hair is an absolute tousle, its length uneven – did she cut it by herself with her eyes closed? – her limbs are bony like drift twigs on the beach, her knees abraded. She is dressed in an obsolete black maid dress a bit too short for everything – especially the sleeves baring her wristbones. The dress's elbows are shiny, her lace apron yellowish, and her skin so fair that dirt shows.

Her eyes are dark azure, like the sky when Venus appears. Her lips, cheeks and nails are naturally bloody red. Surely a hot-blooded girl, he chuckles to himself.

What a surprise. Z quits drinking after that. He's been an idiot from the beginning, but this episode was just too good. We all laugh at him.

Z comes out of his den every day, crosses the Kamo river and heads for the shopping arcade with a guitar. He's a fish who plays the guitar.

A sightseeing bus passes by. People sigh that the sight of Kyoto from the height of the sightseeing bus is dazzling, almost blinding. A pretty furious looking little tour guide keeps a beady eye on the passengers so none of them will open the window. Once it's cracked open, the musty gas fills up the bus in an instant and the passengers will all turn airhead like popcorns.

Arriving at the arcade, Z kneels and kowtows three times, and twangs away at the guitar and sings.

It's a serenade at high noon. At the stale shopping arcade. Hee, hee, hee. Nobody's listening to him. Ah, what a joke, ha. Hey, what are you looking at, like you've got nothing to do with this? But you certainly are a part of this, aren't you? He's surely hopeless. Gee, you are hopeless. You have to laugh with me. Say, ha ha? I don't hear you. Say it again, ha ha? Louder!

All we can do is laugh. So laugh!

Indeed it's so droll some people drop some change

for Z. He gets mad and throws the money back at them. He's too good for money.

For the first week, Z crosses the river, strums the guitar, sings his songs, circles around the shop like a tomcat in heat.

For the next week, he does pretty much the same.

For the third week, I think he does the same sort of thing.

On the last day of the seventh week of his pilgrimage, his prayers are answered and Kyoto gets kicked out of the shop at last.

Kyoto rushes out of the shop and she punches him right in the face. His face twitches with painful pleasure. He turns his left cheek to her, giggling. Kyoto ignores the offer and knees him in the guts. He falls still giggling. She now has nothing left but herself.

Back on his feet, Z takes her hand and walks her to the riverbank. At night, the two sleep at the foot of the bridge, holding each other.

Thus Y quits his confession for the rest of the night.

IV.

You know how to turn a sweater inside out.

If you turn your skin, flesh and fat inside out just like you do a sweater, you turn into a woman. You become a perfect woman, more real than any woman out there. Everybody knows it but no one dares to speak of it, this so-called open secret, and if you insist you've never heard of it, it's not that you've been ignorant but just oblivious.

Put a mouldy comforter kept in the closet into water, and it will swoosh up into a white elephant – the same sort of esotericism.

Womanly women, sewing women, office women, anchor women – they are all fake. They are all men's women. Lucky enough if you could meet a genuine woman ever. Rarer is a genuine man.

The city is crowded with men's men – but this is another story, so I'll keep it for another time.

So coming back to Z. Only if his story had been told by XX, instead of XY, he could've been a genuine woman. I'm sorry about that, but we can't help it, can we?

But now he's got a woman at least. This time he thinks he's ready to bolt. It's easy as XYZ.

Z and Kyoto have been sticking flat to the Walls, pricking up their ears to listen to the beats from the other side. They never tire of the rhythm. The promenade by the Walls is famous for pervert lovers who love to embrace and caress each other while being watched by the Tower Police. Every five minutes when the Tower guard passes by, he looks daggers at the two. This is the twentieth time. The guard's eyes are bloodshot, full of suspicion. He withstands the temptation to trample them down like worms. He purrs and groans at them. Sweat streaks down on their backs. They stick to the Walls even flatter. It's such a silly sight, they look like a pair of pinned specimens. XY and YY.

When the guard passes them for the twenty-somethingth time, Z turns to Kyoto and says, Let's beat it.

Fabulous, replies Kyoto immediately, and right away the guard turns to glare at the two, but the guard's gorilla face only makes them burst out laughing. The guard trots away blushing.

Yes, Z's different from us. He's no genius, but he's wrapped in his sweater so slyly. He's an idiot, but now because of her, he can wear his orange sweater inside out, and pretend to be a tourist just off a bullet train. That's his plan.

Why do they remain untamed, I mean, the cats in Kyoto? I've seen and known cats in old capitals of the world, and I swear, cats have degenerated.

Where have they gone, those divine cats that scavenge in the dumpsters before dawn, that swoop down from the fence and dart through the gutters like comets?

What are they doing now? Nuzzling against pedestrians' ankles, mooching lunch leftovers off from school kids, getting pecked at by gliding starlings, basking in the sun in the middle of the road, exposing their fat guts, getting run over by bicycles, pressed flat like bookmark flowers? They'll get wiped out before I vanish. Except for those in Kyoto.

They are the genuine feral warriors. They have never forgotten to suspect mankind. They are expecting we will all get eradicated any day soon. And they will build a wild kingdom to complete, at last, the final feline plan for the Millennium City of Kyoto. Is this another curse of Kyoto? Do you think I'm joking?

They are both stupid creatures, cats and Z, but

they'll have the last laugh. Z can't turn himself inside out, but he can turn his sweater inside out. And he will turn his back on us.

Skipping Kyoto with Z. Kyoto's thrilled at the thought. Kyoto knows the deal. They will escape the city together.

He will make it. She's been vaguely aware that he'll make it because of her. That's how the story always goes. And she will do it.

Kyoto hated Kyoto. Kyoto must have hated Kyoto, too.

Kyoto's parents were school trip refugees. They came to Kyoto when they were sixteen. In front of the golden Pavilion, they pledged eternal love to one another. Two years later when they married, they disguised themselves as honeymooners and successfully broke across the border into Kyoto. Six days later, the wife found herself pregnant. The husband convinced himself her pregnancy was a conspiracy. He was shot by a Tower guard, making the conspiracy come true. The wife worked as a vendor at the betting booth at the Fushimi race Track. Kyoto was born in the betting booth. Her mother passed away from postpartum shock.

Kyoto has no sweet memory of Kyoto. And now Kyoto will escape Kyoto with Z for good.

Z and Kyoto remain stuck to the Walls until sunset. The foreign music promises them everything that is not Kyoto. now it's a mere whispering sound, but once they cross the Walls, they believed, the blasting sound will shake their bones, fill their empty stomachs.

They talk about the plan all night under the bridge and make careful preparations.

The next morning, the two escape artists trot to Kyoto station, hand in hand. The Tower still soars to the sky, the Walls still stand thick and solid, and they are a little drowsy.

They have only one chance – to get on a bullet Train, disguised as tourists. They must pay close attention to every possible thing so that the guards and the agents won't notice they're natives.

Kyoto is stunningly beautiful in the morning sunshine.

Z is dressed in the marvellously turned-over orange sweater.

Perfect.

Only real tourists can buy train tickets, so they buy platform tickets permitted to natives.

By the time they reach the bullet Train wicket, their platform tickets go all pulpy in their sweaty hands.

Thus Y quits his confession for the rest of the night.

V.

What happens to them afterward isn't much worth telling – actually it's a real drag to go through – but that'll ruin the whole story. So I must go on.

At the deck between cars of the bullet Train, Z is pushing his face hard against the glass, stupefied. His hands are holding the hem of his orange sweater fast. Otherwise, his whole body starts quaking and clattering like a skeleton dancing in the dark.

I'm free, he murmurs to himself.

What a corny line. It sounds so unreal.

Z and Kyoto pass the ticketing gate all right. They make a naturally idiotic smile for the ticket examiners just like tourists always do in the station.

Which car is your friends' car?

Number seven.

The trick is to utter such dialogue audible enough (but not too loud!), for no one would get on the train with a platform ticket. The two are here to pick up their friends.

They ascend the steps to the platform. Their bullet Train will come in five minutes. All they have to do is to slip in. I bet their feeble hearts are beating fast! I bet they take such great pains not to let the other passengers hear their heartbeat!

The two stand on the platform. From now on, they must not meet the eyes of others. If they see their eyes, the others will know the two are natives. Z and Kyoto cuddle up together and fix their eyes on each other's pupils. They stare at each other so intensely that wrinkles gather on Z's forehead and Kyoto gets dizzy. There's a group of three old hags afar looking at the two, smiling and gabbing, oh, what a sweet-looking couple.

One more minute and we are free. I look only in your eyes. Only myselves mirrored on your pupils.

The P.A. announces the train's approach. The bell rings.

The bullet Train slides into the station yard. Z seizes a glimpse of it beyond Kyoto's shoulders. Kyoto sees the trains in his pupils. Almost there. Stay calm until the train stops and the door opens. That instant, Kyoto's gaze slightly deviates.

Inevitably he turns around, only too late. A man is running. Running toward them. The train stops. Kyoto grabs his arm and runs. It occurs to Z, Kyoto averted her eyes to avoid the eyes of the man far behind him... Shoot, it was nothing he should have fretted about. If he hadn't turned around..., Z thinks vacantly, running to the door.

But it's too late. Too late.

The doors open. There's still some distance to the door. Z rushes ahead. He pulls her arm frantically. The man is fast, getting close. The bell rings again to announce the train's departure. Z clutches the door and throws himself in. At his violent tug, Kyoto's head bumps lightly against his chest. He closes his eyes. The door closes. His knees wobble. He exhales. His lashes tremble.

When Z opens his eyes again, Kyoto is not there. Through the glass window of the closed door, he sees Kyoto posing the same way as she listened to the music at the Walls the day before. She is pressing her widespread hands and left cheek against the glass window.

The train starts.

Kyoto sinks slowly, like the setting sun. He can't see her through the glass anymore, which is washed red all over. Through the bloodstained window, Z sees the man standing, his right arm limp, holding a weapon.

The train accelerates.

The wind gradually blows the blood on the glass behind him. The blood he will bury in oblivion some day. He looks away from the window and finds a red drop on his orange

Sweater.

He can't stop shaking.

Not because he's sad.

Not because he's scared of the new world coming to him.

Not because he rejoices in his freedom.

The train accelerates.

It will soon pass the Walls. The last drop of Kyoto on the glass slowly takes off quivering in the gale. He cries at that sight. But the tears will dry soon.

The bullet Train thunders through the tunnel beyond the Walls.

And he sees the green cliffs and the sky as azure as her eyes. And nothing more.

This is it. This is it. This is the end of it!

Z has bolted.

You look disappointed. I bet you wanted to hear about my role in his escape, how I helped him and all. I don't know what I have to do with him. I don't even know what Z looks like. All I know is he has cleared the Walls. He made it because I told you this story. By telling you his story, I met him, knew him and set him free.

I wonder why he, not me. Why he escapes and I can't.

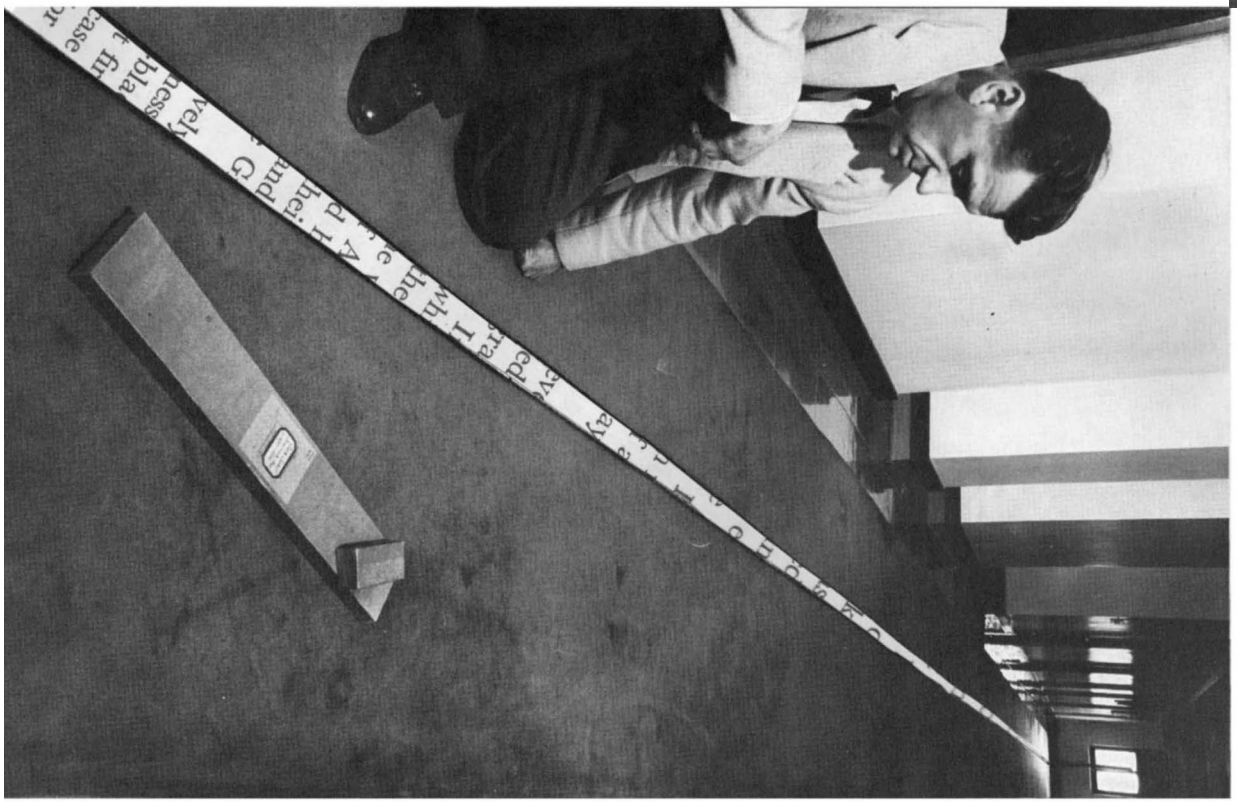
Oh, how much I loathe this city! This cursed city of Kyoto! Damned if I'd perish here. I should be breaking the bloody Walls. Ugh! Let me go, let me go!

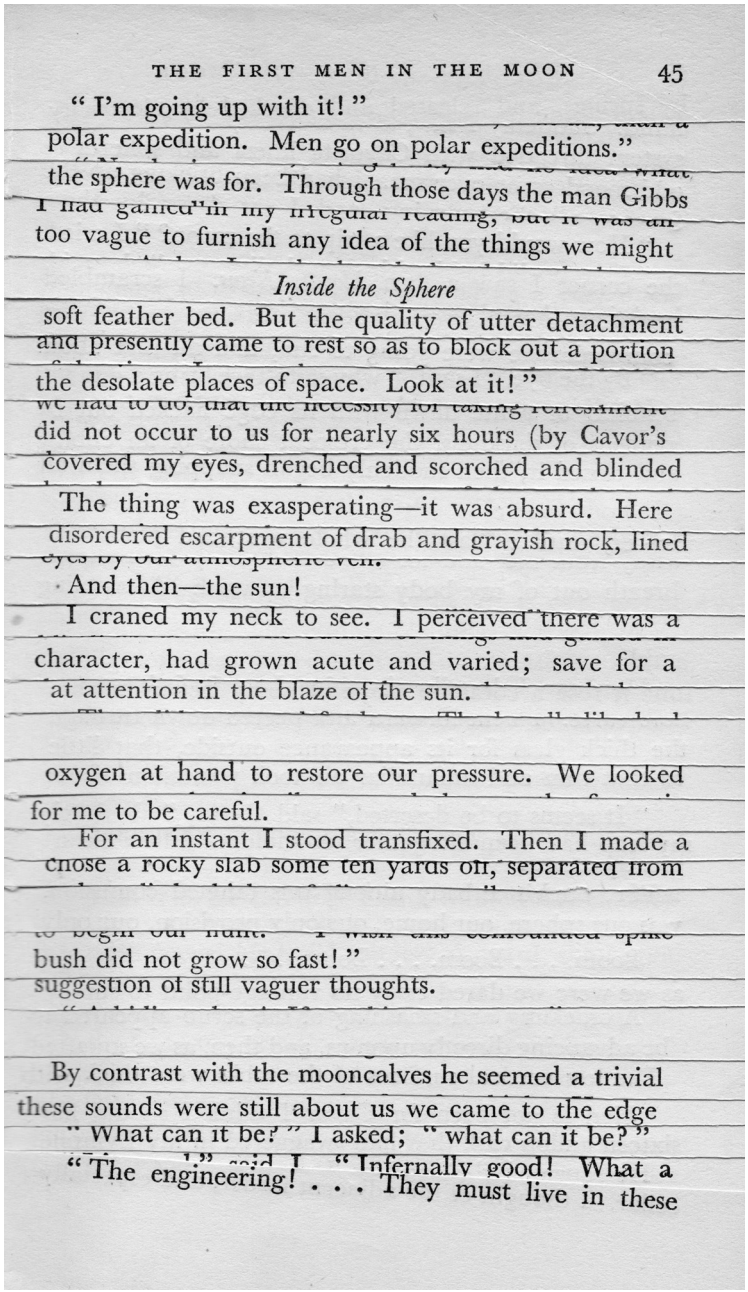
Is this all I can do, to blab about some guy's escape? Isn't there any way for me? I wish I could erase this city. The Tower, the Walls, the river – everything. Altogether. Ha! What a good idea! And then, there would be only you and I left. Capital! Maybe I'm a genius. Ha ha ha ha! Vanish, Kyoto, vanish! Ha ha ha ha

PASCALLE BURTON

EVERY AFTERNOON AT PRECISELY THE SAME TIME

AFTER H.G. WELLS' "THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON"




THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON 45
" I'm going up with it! "
polar expedition. Men go on polar expeditions."
the sphere was for. Through those days the man Gibbs
too vague to furnish any idea of the things we might
Inside the Sphere
soft feather bed. But the quality of utter detachment
and presently came to rest so as to block out a portion
the desolate places of space. Look at it! "
did not occur to us for nearly six hours (by Cavor's
covered my eyes, drenched and scorched and blinded
The thing was exasperating—it was absurd. Here
disordered escarpment of drab and grayish rock, lined
And then—the sun!
I craned my neck to see. I perceived there was a
character, had grown acute and varied; save for a
at attention in the blaze of the sun.
oxygen at hand to restore our pressure. We looked
for me to be careful.
For an instant I stood transfixed. Then I made a
chose a rocky slab some ten yards off, separated from
bush did not grow so fast! "
suggestion of still vaguer thoughts.
By contrast with the mooncalves he seemed a trivial
these sounds were still about us we came to the edge
" What can it be? " I asked; " what can it be? "
" The engineering! . . . They must live in these

two awe-stricken little girls

a lean little boy

a penetrating sniff

a hundred yards

the level sands

the level clouds of the horizon

the leaden sea

the vast importance of the things

the foremost man

my inordinate fatigue

my respectable company

my filthy appearance

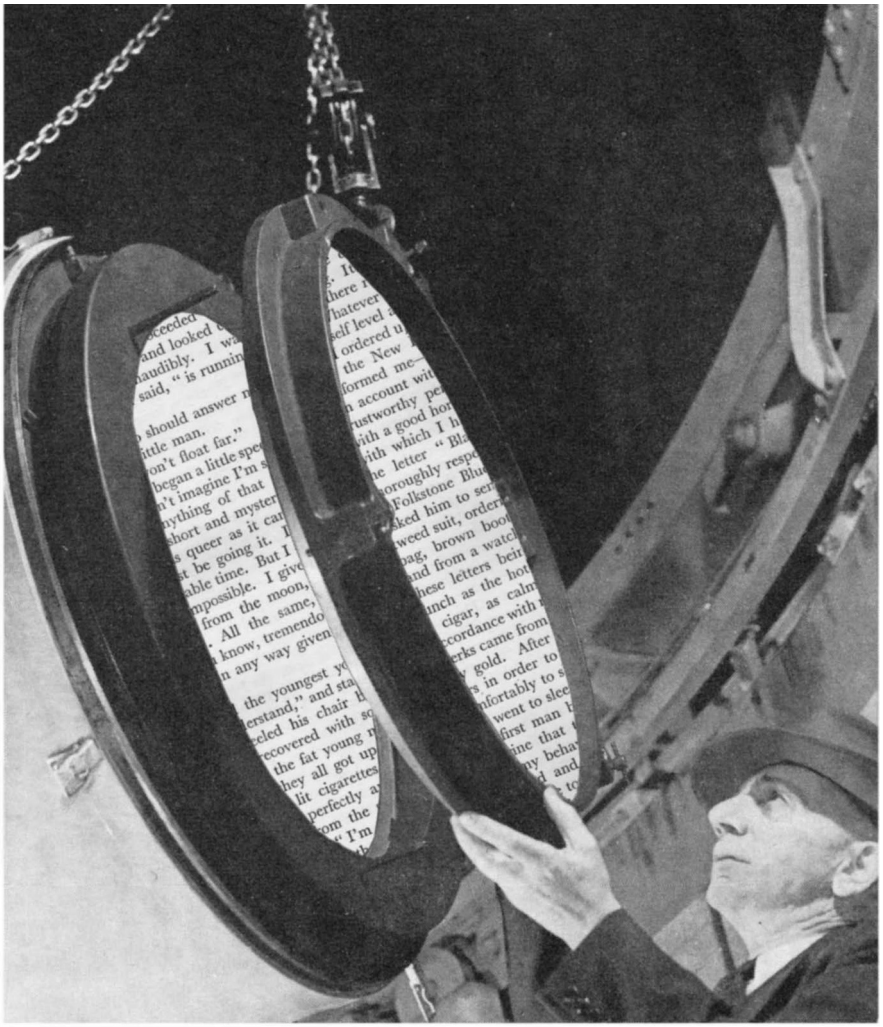
a terrestrial bathroom

the bristling beard

the questions of the four young men

the truth I told them

soil
this unearthly
it all
sun- light
still around
shadow lingered
picture of
mind that
distorting it
the centre
and towards
oxygen



believe what i run about
another forgination, but injured
conveniences/ eKilling
> tell...

he see pictures
of earthly starvation
and of war
the herd went like cattle
the assembly was
Grand Lunar Population!

a series of the moon was unreadable
leaves few for all
from his middle
of themselves

he told him>

you have beasts

I told / asked>

seemed *more*

to *me*

I cannot War

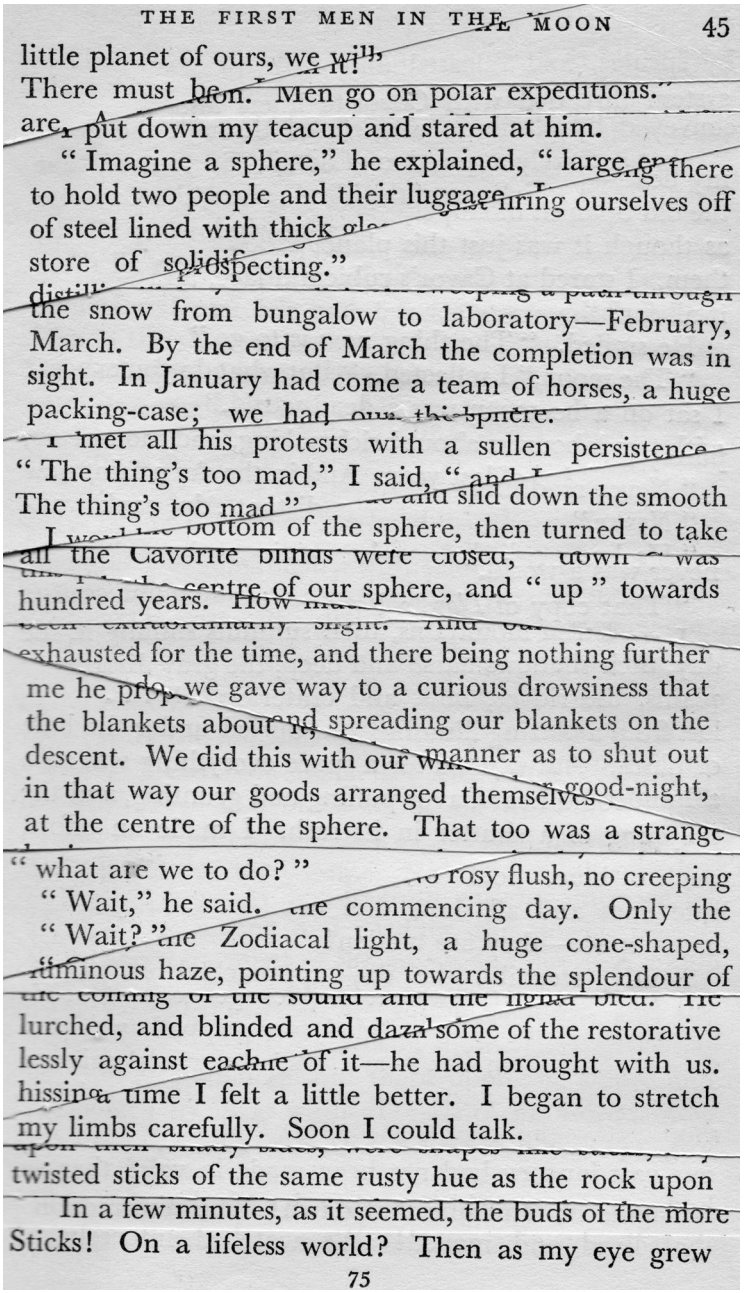
hardships> grand

when I spog into battle

(at this, vibrations

>intentional<

then words quite clean of sentence)



little planet of ours, we will

There must be ... Men go on polar expeditions."

are, I put down my teacup and stared at him.

"Imagine a sphere," he explained, "large ... there to hold two people and their luggage ... firing ourselves off of steel lined with thick gl... store of solidif... prospecting."

distill... the snow from bungalow to laboratory—February, March. By the end of March the completion was in sight. In January had come a team of horses, a huge packing-case; we had our ... sphere.

I met all his protests with a sullen persistence. "The thing's too mad," I said, "and I ... The thing's too mad." ... and slid down the smooth ... bottom of the sphere, then turned to take all the Cavorite blinds were closed, ... down ... was ... centre of our sphere, and "up" towards hundred years. How ... been extraordinarily slight. And ... exhausted for the time, and there being nothing further me he prop... we gave way to a curious drowsiness that the blankets about ... and spreading our blankets on the descent. We did this with our ... manner as to shut out in that way our goods arranged themselves ... good-night, at the centre of the sphere. That too was a strange ...

"what are we to do?" ... rosy flush, no creeping

"Wait," he said. ... commencing day. Only the

"Wait?" ... Zodiacal light, a huge cone-shaped, luminous haze, pointing up towards the splendour of the coming of the sound and the light bled. He lurched, and blinded and dazzl... some of the restorative lessly against each ... of it—he had brought with us. hissing a time I felt a little better. I began to stretch my limbs carefully. Soon I could talk.

upon their shady sides, were shapes like sticks, ... twisted sticks of the same rusty hue as the rock upon ...

In a few minutes, as it seemed, the buds of the more Sticks! On a lifeless world? Then as my eye grew

sang-froid

take

a cigarette

took a delicious mouthful of egg

take

a box of eggs

it's near the ebb

something significant in my egg.

I've come from the moon

me and the sphere

obscur es, food. val Sele ickerbo eyes p—men—when pon
familia odness n Phi-oo' y sort s if they He wisadditi ex-
appear eye hac the you left h no mor u—and t I n
cohere and un ish ind le in below I—the staeir h said
answer ms, face ence, a I still ct-jointe to this r rail
hearin ead?' I are q overne lown at when he. H ials;
the gr moon, a transfe nended of the s the dr rayed ome
betwee o!' exc n 'wor owed cng little think an equ
do. Ge rains of stockin rone. . told mut m hem
And ant. Wh n fully iful. On is to state
Cavor g about.' oint, u nity, a greatlhe int aps,
relaxat here's ar nd tant d some by jerks. old me ,' I
distrus d indee it does ould hain case tude ant into
said, "I was, I an alt id what more o tual when it the
of all I sleeping d with after t The ti had rely not ame
I pleas them. w not uprigh their eyes, an mem
So it is e were a ages, th ght. I s d what ed. T ony
assiste e them r s of th st hall ng that l, little o mil was
littered viously. ch a c ue light and susta day. men k but
to desp l not wa scarcely metall swaying sed his vaguel the
attemp a strong there a y as I h to turn mann ad I c and
though light and an o archwa little l and uched and
signall awn-up h e race ond thi or so fr I had ne at vide,
" 'Ye tentac nastery- At th e music mber oo an ded
" 'Cilator—a , like t aked, as of al king.
" 'Cissive suf sight. scrutiny hat w
" Arinterpret ne drav ir an and I ious
Phi-oo r a huge first m deed, snow, sed.
Cavid fleshin and u ts. H comes ar, a
previo n, altho . from his ation
in upo ed. what bout him irs, fo ean,'
one gi simply ill is, and nites, sti been a?'
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ninth, es not w minous or reach re to and

D. HARLAN WILSON

BATTLE WITHOUT HONOR OR HUMANITY

EXPOSÉ

The exhaust fumes of ophicleides and coroners drift across an abandoned playing field. Buoys waver on the sandbar. Spectators are reminded by the Tall Commissar that every word is an artifact of destruction.

Segue to a placid, happy mise-en-scène depicted with ultraviolent technē.

S/HERO

Darla Shine brings the helicopter in low so I can get out. I'm afraid. Somebody has to push me. Shrieking, I fall onto the dolomite floor of the mall and wound my elbow; the skin breaks, bleeds… seals and repairs. Darla signals me as she takes the helicopter back up. The long, red hair ebbs and flows in synch with the riptide of her face… My love. My s/hero… Shoppers hurry across the planks and peer over the walkways. The helicopter nears a vaulted glass ceiling. Everybody knows it's going to crash.

Everybody screams as they spill out of the helicopter in slow motion…

This is Boulder, Colorado, circa 2098. Gray mountains hang over the colored, picturesque grid of commerce.

The first body to strike the concrete accomplishes an impossible equation. Ionized tongues of plasma and solar radiation beam into the sky. The other passengers retain their essence, bones shattering like antique windows. Long coils of ink spring out of Darla's eyes and ears. She produces a nightmarish shriek. Dies.

The helicopter goes rogue and breaks the Fourth Wall. It flies into the client's face, stripping flesh from skull, then soars into the clouds, into space, floating, floating, curling around the moon and gaining momentum, and a corona of fire circumscribes the bogie as it penetrates the atmosphere and gravity draws it back to the streets of Boulder… It crashes onto a troupe of lay vorticists, mortally wounding but not killing them. Readers, interpreters and commentators believe the vehicle is disabled, if not destroyed beyond repair. Steam hisses from charred rotors. A mutual sense of complacency sets in… at which point the engine restarts, spinning the heavy blades…

Up in smoke; down the chute – the hallways of grief.

INTERROGATION

A: And the reason for the advent of your identity?

Angeklagter: I wouldn't call it an advent. I was standing there for, like, a long time. Mostly I just stand around and wait for people to fuck with me. This can take years, assuming I don't resort to dickless provocation. I possess a vast and formidable constitution. I've never met anyone who isn't scared of me. But that doesn't mean nobody picks a fight. Fear is the locomotion of masculinity. Without fear – and insecurity, and idiocy – the male subject wouldn't do anything. He wouldn't get out of bed in the morning to yak in the trash.

B: This is not a matter to be taken lightly.

Angeklagter: I don't take anything lightly. Everything I choose to endure is a cosmic elephant. Frivolity nauseates me. I am not a homunculi. I was born to eat the sky. Look at my face. Look at my eyes. Just one eye. Can you honestly say that my countenance indicates anything other than a healthy entitlement to shit on the entire universe at my leisure? It's not as if I lack a traumatic kernel. No. My selfhood is empowered by the repressed memories of thousands of pulsing mongrels and chickenbrains. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. That's true. Yes. Invariably I experience a tension between a feeling of genuine happiness and the desire to destroy myself. Let me tell you how it happens. I'll tell you. I get to feeling really goddamn happy – and then I recognize it. What I'm, you know, feeling, I mean. Interpellation is the problem. My happiness calls out to me: "Hey, dipshit, you're happy!" And I realize that I'm susceptible to much more grandiose and devious machinery. Or I simply realize that I'm happy, too happy, and this sort of happiness doesn't last, so I might as well put an end to the fucker now. Depression comes down on me like a Bronze Age anchor. I don't want to kill myself. I've never wanted that. I just want to be tolerated. I just want to exist. Somehow existence must be enough."

X: I have a document that proves you are the owner of the helicopter in question. Is this your signature?

Angeklagter: Document? What document? I don't know what that is. You can't prove my signature is my signature. It is the nature of signatures to evolve with the cult of personality. What looks like my name today could look entirely different tomorrow, or yesterday, or six hundred thousand years ago. I'll tell you something. I am the reincarnation of television's Platonic Form. That cocaine high you get from watching music videos, Stallone movies, Schwarzenegger movies, Van Damme movies – that's me. I am an electromagnetic earthfucker. I have no need for drugs or absinthe. Never have. Van Damme suffered from addiction to El diablo and pussy, I understand. The point is, I am not a man – I am dynamite. I am the Wallace Stegner of the neofabulist world; my Angle of Repose swings between my legs like a Third World. You may be wondering what I've done to overcome myself today. Nothing. Let me assure you that, in the interests of everyone inscribed by the powers that beleaguer and unman us, the gas tanks of obscurity cry out to the Void like dire infants who have suddenly realized that alienation is the heartbeat of the human condition. Do you know when the heart is ripped out of the chest you can go on living for up to thirty seconds? It must be ripped out quickly, of course, and certain valves must be prepared beforehand for terminal severance. My aorta lies in wait. Dotted lines encircle the fat tentacles in all the right places. Gentlemen, you are barking up the wrong killing spree. I didn't do anything. You don't have anything on me. Am I under arrest? I'm lawyering up. Now. I plan to represent myself. I'm D. Harlan Wilson, Estuary. The D stands for Disambiguation, Dionysis, Defibrillator, Devastation, Diorama, Deli Meat, Dusty "The Amerikan Dream" Rhodes, and *Donaudampfschiffahrtselektrizitätenhaupt* – all at once. I advise my client not to answer any more questions. Let me see that document again. That's not even my client's name. That says Lofton Gitt. I know nothing of this person except that every day is another opportunity for him to adopt and exert the chicaneries of a Slender Man. That's not my client, in any case. Good lord. Can we go now? Are you holding my client here indefinitely? We've answered all of your questions and then some. I demand that you arrest me immediately. The choice is yours. Choice is an illusion, like sky monkeys, but you realize this. Ultimately we don't choose anything. We are chosen. Often against our will. But that is the nature of the cultural maelstrom.

We produce culture, extending it from our literal and figurative bodies, and the resultant firmament in turn reproduces us, hurling bolts of mediatized lightning at our souls, imploding the souls. I couldn't tell you what was real and what was fantasy if you had a gun in my mouth. But I'm not trying to run the world, am I. I'm just a cunt on the street. But no, that helicopter doesn't belong to me. I've never seen it before I had this dream. Darla was my wife, though, and I loved her. I was sorry to see her killed.

INTERMENT

The funeral is hard.

Gravediggers don't make a big enough hole and the coffin won't fit. As Reverend Gaylord offers an impromptu eulogy, they climb atop the coffin and try to stomp it into the earth with oversized, untied construction boots, and they keep tumbling onto the grass. They want everything to go smoothly. They are embarrassed by the mistake. But the gravediggers don't know if burial etiquette permits them to return to their shovels and expand the hole during the funeral ceremony.

I make small efforts to help without looking too conspicuous, bending and pushing down on the lid of the coffin, but passing the gesture off as if I have broken into tears, doubled-over, and stopped myself from falling onto my chest.

Elder statesmen glance sternly at me through thick-rimmed photochromic spectacles. Thin, frail mistresses crouch before them in fold-out chairs.

It's no use. Getting the coffin in the hole is like trying to thread a coffee cup through a curtain ring.

Finally Reverend Gaylord completes the eulogy. He apologizes for its directionlessness and the many tangents he pursues, but he has not had ample time to prepare this morning, and he asks for everybody's forgiveness. "Forgiveness is a healthy and essential part of life," he reminds us. "Without it, we would likely be angry all day, every day. Anger isn't a game. Emotions can kill us. Like that." He makes a loud popping sound that alarms half of the crowd. "And emotions come from the brain. So it is our brains that kill us. Do not trust the brain. It does what it wants, and I can only assume that the Devil and Intellect are intimately connected. Kissing cousins, at any rate."

He goes on. Then he politely asks the gravediggers to remove the coffin from the hole, remove the body from the coffin, and place the body in the hole, in the fetal position, to maximize the deficit of space.

CHRONICLES

The politics of religion descend on Boulder like a flock of buzzards on roadkill. Likewise the religion of politics.

And every sentence ends the same way:...

...idea for a novel:... future-noir of hardnosed hypermasculine urbanites who wear their insecurities on their lapels. No overt satire or silliness. Absurdities of socius, diegesis, etc. must be conveyed with cool-headed gravitas and drama. Incl. slasher film aesthetics? Leave readers with a sense of feeling robbed and violated. Always.

Notes from the outréground trump the positive aspects of being sick. Sickness is inevitable, but the flu, syphilis, progeria syndrome, etc. don't necessarily predetermine a hauntology of desire. One must adopt psychological armor. There's no other way to negotiate death and the prospect of a terminal conclusion to Mind and Body.

Airfoils sing overhead.

Beneath the music, two demigods battle in the sand.

ANATOMY

This is an anatomy of a helicopter, i.e., a rotocraft that may or may not possess multiple propellers. Capable of rising vertically into the sky, defying the laws of physics like a science fictional novum, the helicopter was invented by Etienne Scarpetta, accidentally, and with a certain pejorative finesse, on a bear hunting trip atop Mont Blanc near the border of Switzerland. Inevitably we think of helicopters as timeless marquees of civilization – I have not been surprised when even educated adults have admitted to believing that helicopters predated humanity – but everything possesses (and is dis/possessed by) an origin, except for the unconscious according to Freud, and ideology according to Althusser, and other theories formulated by archeopsychic designers.

...I find myself behind the console. I have placed a photograph of my late wife on the dash. It is vaguely pornographic, but in an endearing way. Splayed out

on a motel bed, she wears violet lingerie with black trim and a sleeping mask beneath which hangs a warm off-white smile that seems painted onto her face. I have already begun to forget her. Even as I fly the helicopter, perceive it as an extension of my own body, as a kind of exoskeleton, I realize that I have become obsessed with the machine. But the photograph serves its purpose, and I outmaneuver and outrun my enemies without incident.

As I land on the roof of my building, I fall asleep at the wheel.

ANNOTATIONS

I don't know how to account for the growing popularity of postcapitalists other than to suggest that the future enables their errant behavior and subsequent mass appeal.

We may contextualize the future by remembering the past. We remember the past by reimagining the future.

As stated by my dead co-pilot: "In the cold courts of justice the dull head demands oaths, and holy writ proofs, but in the warm halls of the heart one single, untestified memory's spark shall suffice to enkindle such a blaze of evidence, that all the corners of conviction are suddenly lighted up as a midnight city by a burning building, which on every side whirls its reddened brands."

The best way to treat grief is to multiply it by epic proportions/proposals. One quantity of grief hurts; one hundred thousand quantities transcend the spectrum of agony. Too much of a bad thing doesn't work. You get to a certain point and everything goes numb. I propose the anaphoric multiplication of my epic pain.

Then it is mourning again.

If only every fleeting phase of the day could be like the yellow mourning.

When your tears flow across the empty boulevard. When ontology makes grim sense. When you know who you are and where you're going.

Never use the second person in formal writing.

LEBENSMITTELGESCHÄFTE

Fish oil. Desodorierendes Mittel.

INTERLOCUTION

I exclaim, "I can't stop thinking about it. It keeps running through my head. It's all I can think about."

"Shut the fuck up."

I have gone to the movies again. A bloody action s/hero film. The theater is at full capacity, rife and waterlogged, and I have secured an aisle seat. I have not purchased a soda. I have not purchased candy or popcorn

Ushers guard the emergency exits with their lives.

I exclaim, "I know I won't always feel this way. I experience chronic mood swings. I wouldn't go so far as to call myself bipolar. But I'd call myself something. Sometimes I feel like the actor Timothy Olyphant – gifted, good-looking, Hawaiian, underrated, in some cases altogether unknown. That reminds me. My father encased my legs in prosthetic technologies. I don't recall anything being wrong with me. I think his intension was to test and examine the technologies. I do recall tripping quite a bit. I recall breaking bones, too. I died, once."

"Hey. Asshole. Shut the fuck up."

I can tell by the sound of his voice that he's big.

I exclaim, "I am an electric samurai. I am the noblest savage. I am precisely what I want to be. I slay cumulonimbus clouds with one hand, oceans with the other. I colonize the Giant Places. And yet failure lurks around every corner. It has been said that I heave entire diegeses from the bowels of my action-painter's bucket like a magician yanking a syphilitic kangaroo from a ten gallon hat. But the scope of my intentions transcends my great remove. The universe cannot hold me accountable for these deeds, these breaches of gestalt. These wild therapies. The world is my analysand and my conclusion is that the world should place Barrel against Temple and blow Brains against Empty White Canvass. I have never owned a gun, but I have fired guns, on occasion. As a child on the prairie – bored, alone, deranged – I spent my afternoons picking off squirrels, finches, lizards, and other godless creatures with my father's .22 rifle. They exploded like mortal fireworks. This was in the Boy Scouts. I made it to Eagle Scout and soared into the heavens only so I could discharge shitbombs onto the hungry watchers. I have a confession to make. I was the Human Beat Box in the rap group the Fat Boys.

The way it worked: Crazy White Boy plus Black Fat Suit equals Human Beat Box. His death by heart attack – a grand and terrific hoax. Now here we are. I don't mean to be glib, or impractical. Never. I only do the best I can to convey my perspective, to extend my selfhood, and to negotiate the various ways in which I am interpellated by countless Ideological State Apparatuses. This movie stinks. I don't believe the antagonist means it when s/he kills somebody."

As blood splashes artfully across the camera lens, blocking the audience's view of a gruesome wound, I feel his hand on my shoulder, and I shoot out of my seat like a broken clockspring.

We collide.

We exchange blows.

We set reality on fire.

Rolling across the treacherous swill, we engage in a battle without honor or humanity.

BOYCOTT

I go to a free-range boycott with my sponsor. He insists that I "introject" myself into the "public veinscape" on a regular basis. I tell him he's using "introject" improperly – as a verb and as a concept. It's not raining and the stars are out, but I see storm clouds rolling in from the sidebars, and I hear the arthritic moans of distant thunder.

Now I am in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Colorado belongs to my fever dreams.

I run a finger across a brick wall. Ceramic flakes fall onto my knuckles and into my palm.

It is 2015 again.

I don't know what's being boycotted. An angry crowd has gathered in front of a medical textbook store. My sponsor and I get close to the crowd so that we can hear what everybody's talking about.

They're talking about glands.

Glands, in fact, is what they are boycotting, staging the affair outside of a pawnshop that deals in books about glands, among other superfluities. Glands are overrated, they say. Glands are myths, they say. We as a society have been trained to think that glands are indispensable for human existence when the truth of the matter is they are largely unnecessary and in many cases inimical. This veil of illusions must be lifted. And somebody must pay.

The one gland they make a concerted exception for is the breast. The many glands that constitute the breast. They serve a very real purpose, actually and figuratively. The latter in particular. Several participants tote signs with crudely illustrated pictures of impossible breasts on them. Chickenscratch solar coronas encircle the breasts. Arching above them is the acronym ADNI (Artifacts of Desire Not Included).

In an unobtrusive delirium, I realize that the participants belong to a certain variety of bald, withered men defined by catastrophic pejorativity.

It starts to rain.

My sponsor walks me through the five stages of grief, otherwise known as the Kübler-Ross model: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance – in that precise order. I explain that I have been experiencing the stages backwards. I accepted Darla Shine's death immediately; it was very much a relief, since I often obsessed about death, especially the death of loved ones, how much it would hurt when it happened, when it would happen, then the loneliness, the self-pity, the fear of consciousness being extinguished forever, shattered like a Tiffany lamp, etc., so when that helicopter killed Darla, who I had loved more than any other woman (and I had loved many other women), I was almost happy – I accepted it like an envelope of crisp, untraceable $100 bills. Then I slipped into a deep depression because I realized I shouldn't have accepted her death so willfully, so comfortably. I started to bargain with myself. If you get a little sadder about Darla, I told myself, you won't be so depressed, not about not being depressed because of Darla anyway. I countered the offering with a general truth: Depression is a phantasmagoria made flesh by ways of seeing. I went back and forth with myself. Time passed. This made me angry, my battle. And deranged. I told myself that I wasn't angry and deranged, even though I clearly was. Hence denial. Then I felt calm. Hence the end of the five stages of grief – backwards.

My sponsor squeezes my elbow and says, "It's all right to cry." I tell him I know that but I don't feel like crying. He lobbies to convert me into a monograph. I cock my head like the hammer of a six-shooter.

"Glands," whispers a stranger. He raises a sleep-jagged brow… and his pale face derails, sliding into collisions of meaning and usurpation.

MNEMONICS

I forget about helicopters. I see pictures of them in books. I see them fly overhead in migratory regiments.

I don't know what they are.

HYPERTENSION

They say my blood pressure has "matriculated" from the "confectionary" to the "astrofuturistic." Last reading: 110/70. Today's reading: 600/422. "Thus," chirps the Chief Executive of Hôpital Saint Cognée, "I introduce you to middle age and the registration of certain armorial bearings. Cirrhosis crouches on the horizon like a starved leopard; a fist of scars squeezes the liver into submission and the vital juices cease to flood the mainstream. I shall prescribe you a heaving quantity of lisinopril-hydrochlorithiazide alongside unlimited stores of Xanax and Lorazepam. Beware addiction. Beware the tides of desire. Beware consciousness. Beware life and everyone in it. Or seek out more constructive and accepting pastures. Given these numbers, you are not alive. Savor every moment. Every new day is a rift."

I escape Paris in a steam dummy.

I scan my body with *dhyānaic* rigor and explore my symptoms… shortness of breath… heart palpitations… fatigue… rage… more rage… delusions of persecution sublimated into cosmic opulence… and regret. Empathy for the Devil. I embrace a phantom pathology that ushers me through a maze of reason. Blood wells up in my eyes and surges down my cheeks. I cover the lesions with authentic Elvis sunglasses. They are the same sunglasses Christian Slater brandishes in *True Romance* (1993), with dark, vast, alien-eye lenses and thick, gold, bullet-hole rims.

GRINDHOUSE

Fort Wayne defies urbanity. Population: 10 million troglodytes. Most of them live underground in provisional meth labs and Cold War bomb shelters and rarely come up for air. The overworld itself consists of a YMCA, a building with a broken rotating restaurant on the roof, a used bookstore, and a grassless park punctuated by rusty jungle gyms. It is boderline postapocalyptic, in theory, although not as foreboding as Lima, Ohio, or Gary, Indiana, the industrial wastelands of which make Fort Wayne look like Candyland. Such hideous vistas transcend the glands and constitute the very definition of beauty and legend.

LACUNAE

I remember when I told Darla Shine that I wanted to become a rockstar. "It's a prosaic desire," I said, eyes like kamikaze moon rocks. "But I can do it."

It took me about two weeks. I did some research the following morning, and in the evening I wrote eleven and a half songs – the average number on every Journey album with Steve Perry as frontman. I entitled the halfsong "A Slice of Rapture." The full revision process took about twenty minutes, including toilet and coffee breaks. The songs, I hoped, accomplished a dynamic stupidity that would be easily misinterpreted by molten intellects as dramatic ingenuity, rendering their composer an architect of the soul. Of course, I had always possessed a luminous voice fit for the Arena. Since the age of five, I spoke in a cavernous baritone, harrowing my peers with threats of certain manhood. My singing voice is a different animal. By my calculations, my vocal range runs the gamut from bass low F to coloratura falsetta F-natural, and I'm capable of achieving heights the likes of tenor high F in my belting register. Coupled with an unmitigated creativity fueled by megalomania and hypermasculinity, I could have become a rockstar at any moment in my life following the dawn of chest hair. I simply elected not to do so… until now. And now there's no going back.

By way of random crank calls, I herded together a percussionist, a bassist, etc. I invited them over and we introduced ourselves formally and then got fucked up. We discovered an advertisement for a record label on a milk carton and secured a contract within hours, just as the shakes set in. We smoked hundreds of thousands of cigarettes. We practiced a few songs, then got fucked up again and headed into the studio. We winged it. A few days later I heard "A Slice of Rapture" on the radio. One week later I was punching and roundhousing excited fans off of one stage after another. Girls. Girls. Girls. Tropicana's where I lost my heart. This went on for about ten years. At the apex of our career, I established a kind of cult religion requiring devotees to essentially steal entire sitting booths from chain restaurants and "retire them to the hollow earth." I rarely saw Darla, but

she didn't divorce me, and when it was over, I slipped back into my role as if I had never achieved stardom, detoxing in a matter of seconds by sheer mental effort, and finally reconfiguring my evolved worldview, which changed considerably with the onslaught and rise of celebrity consciousness. Misanthropy eluded me and I reverted to a guiltless state of rest. It was a boring miracle.

OPTICS

There's a scene in *Snow White & the Seven Dwarves* (1937), near the beginning, where the Queen orders a huntsman to kill the *femme nature*. The huntsman doesn't want to do it, but he's scared of the Queen, so he goes into the woods.

Snow White sings songs with birds.

The huntsman takes out a knife and sneaks up behind her. He steps on a twig.

Startled, Snow White glances over her shoulder and we see the reflection of her widening eyes in the blade…

"My daughter consistently misreads the scene," I explain, "thinking the huntsman's intent is not to murder her, but rather to measure her eyes. She neither cares nor knows what for. The knife thus emerges as an instrument of optical calculation intended either to improve or disprove Snow White's quality of life."

A voice the likes of the Magic Mirror, cavernous and dreamy, replies to me from the rafters, the sewers: "You don't have a daughter. You never have. Additionally, that's not how it happens. The huntsman doesn't step on a twig. As he creeps towards her, his shadow grows and swallows Snow White, and she gets wise to the darkness behind her. Something else. We don't see her reflection in the blade. And her eyes barely crack a smile, in a manner of speaking. It is the huntsman's eyes that inflate like kamikaze moon rocks and burn brightly with fear and self-loathing for being a coward and not standing up to the Queen."

"The Queen!" cries Snow White…

DARWINISM

Big Thoughts on the philosophy of coaching a competitive sport… And suddenly I am the coach. Rancorous. Balding. Christian. Republican. A spool of flab hanging over the belt… I don't care how young the players are: crow's feet are mandatory during prayer. We stack hands and pray to the lord for a win. We pray again for our sins to be forgiven so that we can win. We pray again for a big fucking win. We continue to pray. "Lord," my lips utter, "let us buttfuck our opponents harder than they've ever been buttfucked before. Please. Please, lord." I am whispering now. "Let us tear their asses apart with our giant, begotten, fuck-everything-that-moves cocks." There is a devout pause during which my pursed lips twitch and then deliver a commanding "Amen." The players open their eyes. I look at them, at their faces, their eyes, and I decide we need to pray some more. We kneel and lock arms, cutting off the circulation of blood to our forearms and hands. The limbs swell and turn purple as I intone: "Please, please, we must eviscerate every last dirty son of a bitch… "

AUTOBIOGRAPHIKA

Mustard attack. The residual smell haunts me. We used to eat them like figs, plucking them straight from the vine. They tasted unnatural, inorganic.

We drive to a wine bar in a strip mall next door to a TJ Maxx. It offers the most compelling atmosphere in the city, and the service is good to boot. Fort Wayne's cultural elite stride manfully between the paper-clothed tables in steam-ironed suits.

My date stares at me firmly, yet quizzically, uncertain about my intentions and her desires. She has put on too much makeup and seems ashamed of it. She has concealed her cleavage and seems to regret it. She drums a finger against the table as if testing a new hi-hat.

"I've been writing my memoirs," I explain to her. It's the first date I've been on since the murder. Or accidental death. My memory continues to defy and utterly defeat me. History is a shin splint… "

"Memoirs?" she blurts. "Who's gonna read them? Who are they for?"

"Nobody. Me. Everybody."

She takes a sip of wine and makes a face.

"You must have an exciting life." She signals a waiter. "What're they about?" She arbitrates a false innuendo. "The memoirs."

I try to process what's happening and say, "Various

dreamscapes and happenings. Mostly absolute truths."

A waiter passes by like skinned carrion in an abattoir.

"That doesn't sound very interesting." She removes an initialed handkerchief from her purse and quietly blows her nose.

"It's not, really. They're not, I mean. The memoirs." I repeat the word in my head. "It's a matter of elocution. How I say things. How I write them."

"So you lie, basically." She inspects the dirty handkerchief, unable to negotiate its condition.

I say, "I guess. Basically, I guess." Something occurs to me. Noxious efforts to disarm the night…

Frowning, she reluctantly feeds the handkerchief to the purse. "That sounds mean. Dumb, too."

Later, at my $800,000 home, we make rough love in the master bedroom, slipping into our respective roles as mediatized sex objects like veteran synthespians.

BUBONIC

De facto embodiment: I find myself holding a samurai sword, the leather handle long and grooved and worn, but somehow inviolate, and I maneuver the weapon with a totem of two glued fists. I allow my opponent to put me on the defense, drawing him in, and then I bow to one side, devoutly, softening my elbows, editing the coalescence of my shoulder muscles, and finally sweeping upwards in an act of sociopathic, hate-fueled cathexis… My breath leaves my esophagus like the exhaust fumes of a luxury vehicle as the tip of the blade passes through my opponent's face. It doesn't touch the upper teeth or the palate. It splits the chin, the jawbone and the tongue. When he falls to his knees in the dust, and when his mouth drops open and apart like an exploded mine shaft, the tongue flails in the screaming wound like two bubonic snakes.

UBIQUITY

My soul goes viral.

I relinquish it from the prison of my ribcage.

The soul floods innerspace and gains momentum and girth like a scintillating blob of reckoning.

Within days: ubiquity.

I am a Hollow Man. I am the Forever Man. I conjure narratives of superheroes and skylords and my synapses snap to attention like fallen Lucifers.

A shriveled husk stands tall on the portal.

And nothing's changed. I feel the same way I felt when my bird was caged, gladly, its beak sealed shut with an iron barrette, its outlook riddled by unburied desires, by time and experience and basement-going.

Conclusion: godliness is next to emptiness.

Revision: there are no glands on the surface of the enframed body…

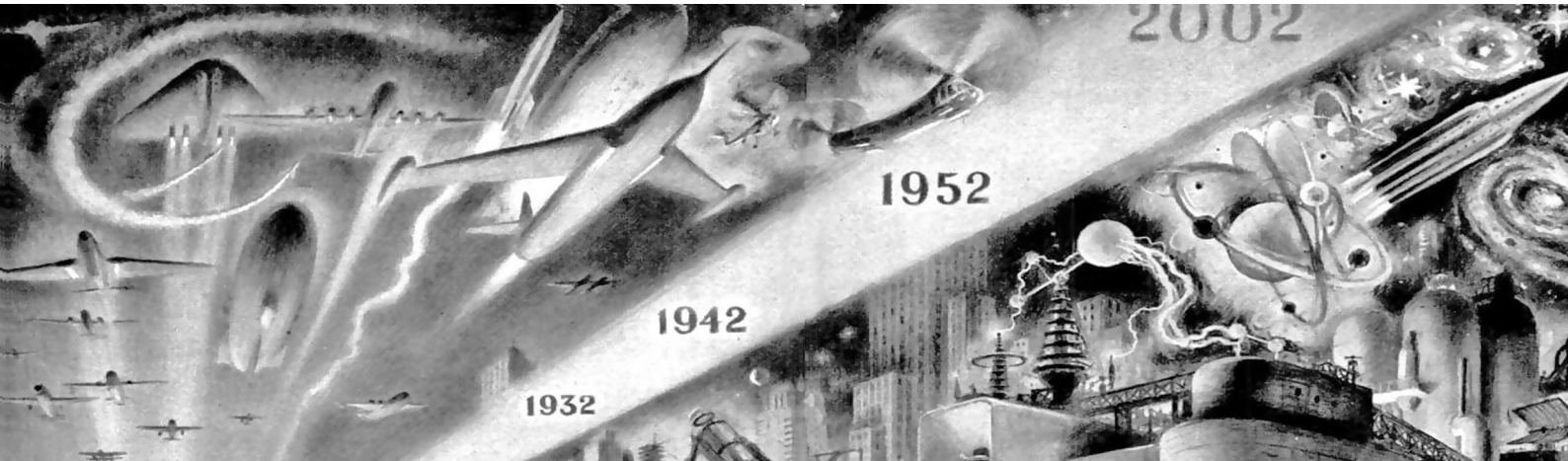
Admission: free of charge. But you will learn nothing and be required to excel.

BATTLE WITHOUT HONOR OR HUMANITY

Silhouette of a boy, thin and awkward as a flayed pike, playing in the reeds…

The sun goes down.

The boy plucks a cattail from the marsh and holds it overhead, pretending it's a torch that will light his way through the drama.



PETER JAEGER
NUMBERS
FROM **THE COMMENTARIES**

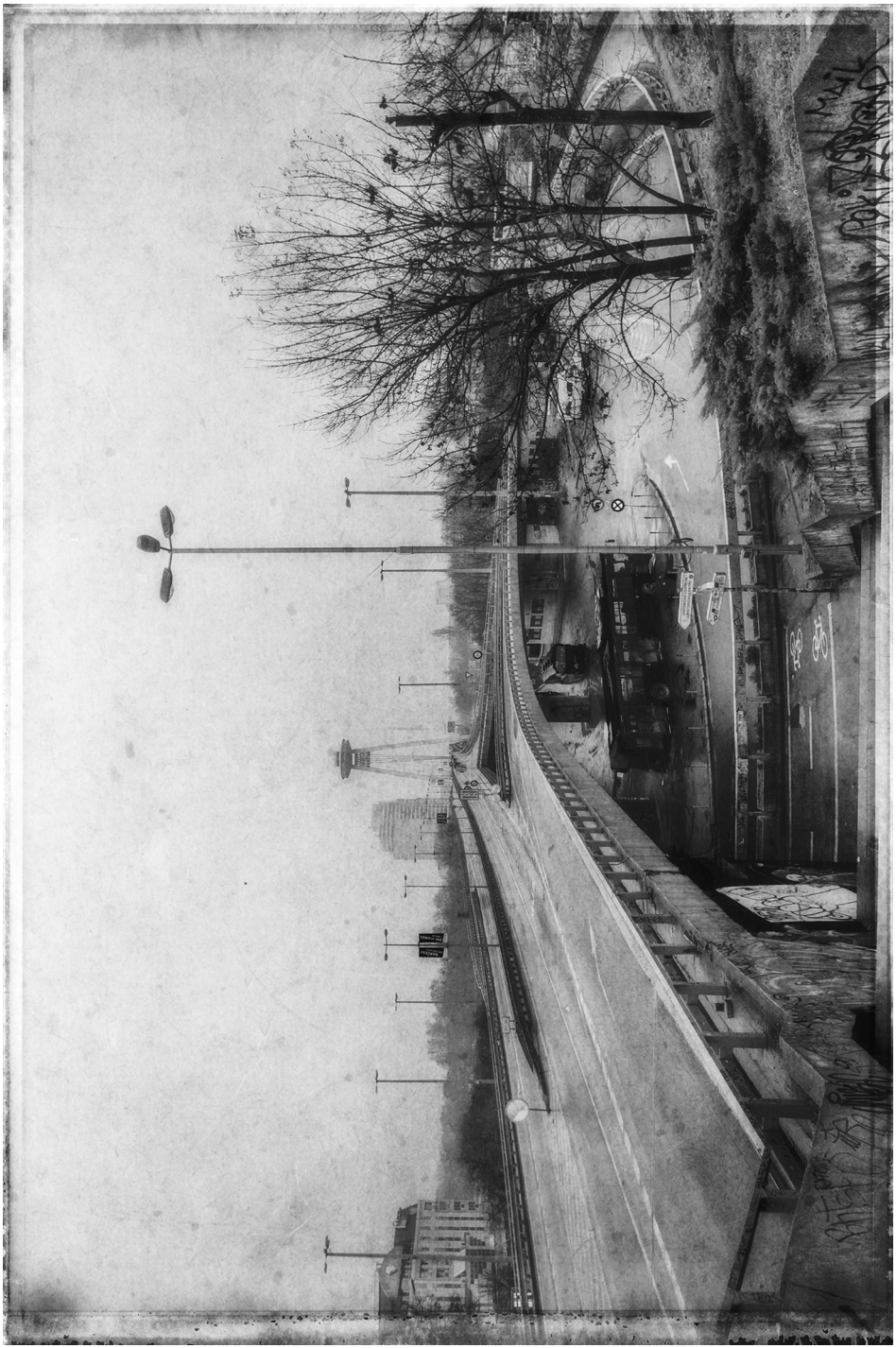
The eight limbs of yoga. The eight mansions theory. The eight petals of yoga. The eight precepts. The eight steps. The eight *vijnanas*. The eightfold path. The eighth labour of Hercules. The eighty-four *mahasidhas*. The eleventh hour. The eleventh labour of Hercules. The fifth labour of Hercules. The first aspect. The first book of Moses called Deuteronomy. The first book of Moses called Genesis. The first book of Samuel otherwise called the first book of Kings. The first book of the Chronicles. The first book of the Kings commonly called the third book of the Kings. The first bullroarer. The first census taken. The first Christmas. The first conversation. The first Easter day. The first Epistle general of John. The first Epistle general of Peter. The first Epistle of Paul the apostle to the Corinthians. The first Epistle of Paul the apostle to the Thessalonians. The first Epistle of Paul the apostle to Timothy. The first five obstacles. The first gathering at Aulis. The first home. The first labour of Hercules. The first letter. The first light. The first man in the Southern Cross. The first missionaries. The first monasteries. The first point. The first precepts—with Buddhaghosa's commentary. The first principle of Buddhism. The first principle. The first pure precept of not creating evil. The first retreat. The first sectarian divisions. The first sermon. The first similarity. The first sin. The first steps. The first stone. The first week of the exercises. The five afflictions are so fundamental. The five afflictions. The five ages of man. The five aggregates are impermanent. The five basic methods of meditation. The five cardinal virtues. The five classes of spiritual insight. The five *dharmas* and their relation to the three *svabhavas*. The five *dharmas*. The five element theory. The five elements colour meditation. The five elements of Tao. The five elements. The five gaping mouths of consciousness. The five great elements. The five hindrances. The five hundred disciples receive the prediction of their destiny. The five hundred gold pieces. The five immediacies. The five Kings are captured. The five *koshas*. The five miraculous powers. The five Nara schools. The five pillars of Islam. The five points of yoga. The five practices of Chinese pure land. The five precepts. The five qualities of mind. The five reflections. The five *skandas*. The five tastes. The five varieties of Zen. The four aims of life. The four aspects of life. The four blisses. The four *brahma viharas*. The four degrees of practice. The four establishments of mindfulness. The four examples. The four final exercises. The four formless trances. The four gifts. The four ground rules of fasting. The four holy truths. The four initiations. The four men and the interpreter. The four noble truths of suffering. The four noble truths. The four noble truths: suffering its cause its ending and how to end it. The four preliminary exercises. The four right efforts. The four sheikhs and the caliph. The four stages of life. The four things needed for the constitution of Bodhisattvahood. The four trances. The four unlimited. The fourfold intuitive realization. The fourteen auxiliary saints. The fourteen points of meditation. The fourteenth century. The fourth book of Moses called Numbers. The fourth conversation. The fourth labour of Hercules. The fourth letter. The fourth week of the exercises. The nine blendings. The nine herbs charm. The nine levels of consciousness. The nineteen mouths of *tejas*. The ninety-nine names of God. The ninth labour of Hercules. The one and many engaged. The one and the many. The one body with many parts. The one Buddha with many names. The one hundred and eight negations. The one hundred forty four thousand sealed. The one hundred stories of enlightenment. The one hundred thousand refugees. The one like a son of man. The one note of Zen. The one or the many. The one place of worship. The one seated on the top lip. The one spirit in all religion. The one taste. The one vehicle and the triple vehicle. The one way of teaching. The one way out. The one-course. The oneness and the manyness. The one-pointedness of mind. The one-way

pull. The second aspect. The second book of Moses called Exodus. The second book of Samuel otherwise called the second book of the Kings. The second book of the Kings commonly called the fourth book of the Kings. The second census. The second coming. The second conversation. The second covenant tables. The second Epistle general of Peter. The second Epistle of John. The second Epistle of Paul the apostle to the Corinthians. The second Epistle of Paul the apostle to the Thessalonians. The second Epistle of Paul the apostle to Timothy. The second four exercises. The second gathering at Aulis. The second labour of Hercules. The second letter. The second pure precept of practicing good. The second similarity. The second week of the exercises. The second Wycliffe version. The seven against Thebes. The seven bowls of God's wrath. The seven brothers. The seven *dhatus*. The seven factors of awakening. The seven factors of enlightenment. The seven limbs of *tejas*. The seven limbs of *vaishwanara*. The seven pillars. The seven stages of wisdom. The seven subtle substances in the *kubrawi* system of the *simnani*. The seven *visuddhis*. The seven wisdoms of liberation. The seventh labour of Hercules. The seventh seal and the golden censer. The seventh trumpet. The six element practice. The six emotional disturbances. The six perfections. The six realms of samsara. The six subtle substances in a simplified Naqshbandi system. The six tastes. The six types of persons. The six yogas. The six-faced mirror. The six-phase system. The six-rayed tusker. The sixteen exercises. The sixth labour of Hercules. The ten bull pictures. The Ten Commandments. The ten grave precept. The ten lost tribes of Israel. The ten ox herding pictures with commentary and verse. The ten ox herding pictures. The ten *sefirot*. The ten undeclared issues. The tenth labour of Hercules. The third aspect. The third book of Moses called Leviticus. The third conversation. The third council. The third Epistle of John. The third labour of Hercules. The third letter. The third point. The third pure precept. The third similarity. The third week of the exercises. The thousand prostrations. The thousand years. The thousands. The three "lower" tantra levels. The three aims of zazen. The three angels. The three aspects of noble wisdom. The three aspects of the soul. The three baskets. The three beings. The three blendings during death. The three blendings during sleep. The three blendings during waking. The three bodies of the Buddha. The three body mentor yoga. The three components of the human body. The three components. The three deaf men and the dumb dervish. The three *doshas*. The three essentials of Zen practice. The three forms of knowledge. The three forms of *svabhava*. The three functions of the perfected man. The three great feasts. The three *gunas* and mental nature. The three impurities and the five limiting factors. The three incisive precepts. The three jewels. The three liberations. The three modalities of awakened doing. The three modes of humility. The three modes of nature. The three modifications of *citta* for *samadhi*. The three most gracious. The three pillars of *Ayu*. The three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment. The three principles of the path segment. The three principles of the path. The three principles. The three progressive stages of meditational experience. The three refuges. The three rhythms in postural practice. The three signs of being. The three stages of Buddhism in India and beyond. The three steps in emancipation from the birth-death duality. The three steps in the understanding of the cross. The three strands of spirit. The three *svabhavas*. The three yearly feasts. The threefold gate of hell. The threefold path: ethics. The threefold path: meditation. The threefold path: wisdom. The threefold tensions. The twelfth labour of Hercules. The twelve apostles. The twelve basic *asana*. The twelve links of becoming. The twelve *nidana*. The twelve *nidanas*. The twenty-four guru of the *Dattatreya*. The twenty-one Taras. The two classes of imprints. The two egos. The two *jihads*. The two loyalties of Europe and the Levant. The two lying prophets. The two ogres. The two queens. The two realities. The two rings. The two servants of Jahweh. The two silver trumpets. The two thousand five hundred and twenty seventh birthday of the Buddha. The two thousand years of Christian pilgrimage. The two truths. The two ways of India and the Far East. The two witnesses. The twofold egolessness. The twofold truth. The zero experience of enlightenment. The zero.

MARC ATKINS
JOURNEY THROUGH A CITY

I would like to take you on a journey through a city.

Through images as cracks in the superstructure, I will suggest to you more than you immediately see. We follow this city for an eternity, formed as it is by an infinity of souls and continuous transmutations. In the absence of people, when the traveller shows up everything comes into motion. As we walk in a state of incomplete awakening, through the relentless and invisible, this vast place can never be wholly grasped, all we can do is sample the shifts and the shadows as they cross our path. We will meet with a complicated system of locked gates, open roads, closed streets and silent rooms, new walls emerge and paths begin to bend, open ways become impassable, and hopelessly involved corridors become clear and easily navigable. The journey is our condition, our only way. Distance and space seem capricious and the procedures for negotiation ambiguous. We stand in the reflection of a great building and then watch quiet shadows fall across us. Time dislocates, distance expands, places and events become displaced and memory is no longer aligned, drift and purposefulness begin to intertwine, very soon chronology becomes unhelpful, and objectivity is just another imagined story. The more we search the city, the further it expands, and each step within it fixes our direction towards the next encounter. As we cross into new zones, so the way taken through them is lost. The occasional shades of people are like the strangers we meet in our dreams. We explore the shadowed corners and witness the transformation as a small breath of light dispels the forms which hide there. Here, where inhabitants of these dark buildings, twilight streets and lost open spaces of unease dwell, we place ourselves. We walk within the borderland, we are not on, but immersed into the threshold between states. This is the singular place, the precise moment where worlds meet. This is the crossover, the locus of congruence and transfiguration. As time and space expands, we see all things morphing, mutating by the second. When attempting to reinstate the actuality of the discovered places, the wonder, peace, turmoil, desire, despair and pleasure, we only find our mis-memories being confirmed by the ever mutating reality that is the image. The myriad windows look out onto a city which is at once elegant and desolate, each a picture reflected in the eye of the viewer. These are images located below the surface of immediate visibility. They are the images of subjective states.



Pożyczki Gotówkowe
cofinancial
IKEA
Zawsze
WYŻSZA SZKOŁA BIZNESU
EKONOMIA
INFORMATYKA
SOCJOLOGIA
STOSUNKI MIĘDZYNARODOWE
ZARZĄDZANIE I MARKETING

MEGA SUMO
W TROJMIEŚCIE

Défense absolue
de toucher aux fils électriques
Ligne de contact sous tension
DANGER DE MORT

ROBERT HAMPSON

AMID THE RUINS

(HOXTON 2013)

amid the antique furnishings
amid the battered leather sofas & armchairs
amid bones & blood
amid chance lakes
amidst the glazed tiles
amidst the graffiti-splashed concrete
amidst lofty trees
amid the northern woods and snow
amidst the ruins of Berlin
amidst the ruins of Carthage
amid parrot-tulips & tuberoses
amidst the ruins of terraced houses
amidst the cocktail swilling & celebrity gawking
amidst urban retrenchment
amid comment-board critics
amid thumping percussion
amid the stark beauty of Iceland
amid the ruins of Chernobyl
amid the ruins on the eastern side of the Hudson
amid the ruins of Motor City
amidst the murmur of sparkling fountains
within the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem
amidst the ruin of their homes or in desert places
amidst the sick, the sad & the sorrowing
amidst the splintered remains of their beds
amidst the tumultuous applause of the audience
amid much confusion & mistaken identity
amid the ruins of ancient temples
amid the ruins of humanity
amid all this
& the ruin of all the rest

HANK LAZER
NOTEBOOK #27

1/7/14
Havana

"'Trancendence' is the name we shall give to this movement by which existence takes up for itself" <173>

here we are hearing it begin beginning begin again

"insofar as existence is the very operation by which something that had no sense takes on sense" <173>

here we hear a place to begin

"in which economic relations are only effective insofar as they are disguised. Ideology is not to be sought in what it is & what it does, but in what it conceals, that is, wrapped in ideological rags through a process of exactly the way the world is & our being in it is in time & history, that is, wrapped in a harmonious addition of being and taken up by a harmonious addition of being and taken up by our act of being and taken up by a harmonious addition of being and taken up by a harmonious addition of being and taken up by a harmonious addition

1/17/14

"I relate to the word just as why we are waiting

& if in this way we are waiting

& if they may contact us

& if this is the best way we can inquire as it is the way we have been given

& if you come to know it in the strange way it may be known

rain down softly the light caress

hand reaches for the place on my body being stung."

"but neither an effort to reopen time" <1877

<1867

1/28/14

ethics = gratitude

or what

woke

in one language,

snow

to

of consonants in another, ...

light

"The predominance of vowels

who

is

falling

celebrate the world and to finally live it." <1937>

several ways for the human body to

now

it is sticking

SEAN CARSWELL

CASH IN THE STRONG BOX

Did Annie have an affinity for losers?

To put it bluntly, yes. Yes, she did. Her exes were such a cavalcade of bartenders, indie rockers, pot dealers, and sound guys that her mother would cry when awakened from a dream of her daughter marrying a Stanford PhD. It wasn't clear if her mother had been crying out of happiness during the dream, or if she was crying because she'd been awakened from a perfect world and back into the reality where her daughter was glowing from the first three dates with a line cook named Trout.

Such is the problem with putting things bluntly: the point is dulled. If we use a finer nib, we can produce the word "affinity" with such sharp detail that the word itself becomes a question. Did Annie have an affinity? Perhaps it was less of that than some sort of unconscious yearning manifesting itself in her aesthetic for men. Perhaps it was this same yearning that led to her participation in the heist. Perhaps we should focus on the details of the heist before tracing blunt points regarding boyfriends.

They didn't have much of a plan. They had, instead, the sum of a series of impulses and coincidences. The first factor had to be attributed to the Midtown Art Cinema's midnight movie series that July. It was a retrospective of couples shoot-'em-up flicks, beginning with *Bonnie and Clyde*. Annie and Trout had been talking about it at the end of the dinner rush. Annie had said, "It looks like we'll be closed down by midnight. We could check out the flick, if you want."

She hadn't consciously thought about it as a date. It wasn't a date. Not really. The next Thursday, they caught *Natural Born Killers* at the MAC. As Juliette Lewis and Woody Harrelson danced to the jukebox in a devastated diner, Trout slid his fingers between Annie's fingers, thumb grazing thumb so gently it could have been the wind.

The following Thursday, they both took the night off from Martin's Steakhouse, which didn't really take much maneuvering because Annie was the general manager, after all, and she had control over scheduling. They let someone else in the Highlands cook them dinner, ate it sitting down, smoked a joint on the way to the theater, and giggled their way through *Wild at Heart*.

Nine days later, the heist just sort of happened.

Martin's Steakhouse had cleared out after a busy Saturday night. Trout sat at the bar, sipping a bottomless ale. Annie finished counting the bank and placed it in the strong box. She left the strong box lid ajar. She fixed a Grey Goose gimlet and sat back on a bar stool next to Trout and the money. Trout asked how much cash sat in the strong box. Because she'd just finished counting, she knew the exact figure: $10,731, plus the coin, which Martin never bothered counting but Annie counted anyway because she believed in doing the best job possible. There was an additional $11.59 in quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies. The till was always highest on Saturday nights because banks were closed on Saturdays and Sundays, so the till held both Friday and Saturday night's take. Martin's was small, but it was also a cash-only establishment. The actual cash sitting in the box looked enormous, like an endless supply. "Do you know what I'm thinking?" Trout asked.

Annie sipped her gimlet. "That we should take that box of cash and head to Mexico?" She didn't say, "Like all the couples in the movies we watched" because she wasn't sure if she and Trout were a couple yet.

In fact, Trout had been poised to suggest that they emancipate enough alcohol from the bar to get them through the night, then relocate their festivities to Annie's apartment.

The previous Thursday night's viewing of *Gun Crazy* was not as prominent in Trout's mind as it was in Annie's.

When Trout heard the suggestion, he decided to meld the two plans together.

Annie and Trout fled Atlanta with the following items absconded from Martin's Steakhouse:

1. a twelve-pack of Abita Turbodog bottles,
2. a bottle of Grey Goose vodka, two-thirds full,
3. a bottle of Rose's lime juice, half-full,
4. three limes,
5. two steak sandwiches, medium rare, on individual baguettes,
6. a paper bag full of French fries that would be too hot to eat before they reached Douglasville,
7. ten thousand, seven hundred, forty-two dollars and fifty-nine cents.

They also had a Styrofoam cooler and bag of ice that they'd purchased at a twenty-four hour gas station on the way out of town. They'd been forced to pay the clerk an additional twenty dollars to convince him to leave his bullet-proof haven, retrieve said cooler and ice, and hand them out the decidedly not-bullet-proof front door. They had also filled up the tank of Trout's van, which had been lingering on empty since before Trout picked up Annie on the way into work. The price of a gallon of gas was over four dollars that summer. The tank held twenty gallons. Trout assured Annie that they could easily make Birmingham on that.

The excitement of the robbery began losing the battle against the need for sleep about an hour west of Atlanta. Annie and Trout's fugitive status eliminated the option of a hotel room. Trout pulled the van into the Talladega National Forest and spent another hour negotiating back roads in search of a safe place to sleep. They settled on a tiny clearing next to a forest service road due south of Oxford, Alabama.

Trout used a compressor plugged into the van's cigarette lighter to inflate a twin-sized air mattress. When the mattress was full and the motor stopped humming, Trout shrugged his shoulders and said, "I was living in this van for a while." This was less a lie than a deceptive verb tense. Though he did rent a walk-in closet from one of his former bandmates and keep all of his stuff there, Trout still slept most nights on this air mattress in the back of his van.

Rather than questioning Trout's life-choices, Annie rejoiced in the presence of the air mattress.

Trout and Annie made love for the first time that night. The moon was blocked out by the canopy forest. The van had only four windows – one each on the driver's side, passenger side, and two back doors – and, of course the windshield. Annie, too tired to linger on foreplay, guided Trout inside almost immediately. There was something almost canine about the way Trout's back leg shook throughout the act. It brought the word "copulation" to Annie's mind. She thought, *I'm copulating back here*. She watched the beads of sweat form on Trout's stubbly cheeks and drift down to collect in his long goatee.

Somewhere mid-copulation, Annie fell asleep.

In a diner on the east side of Birmingham, Annie asked Trout, "Do you speak Spanish?"

"Kitchen Spanish."

"*Dame un cuchillo*. *Limpia las tarpetas*. That kind of thing?"

"Not even that much. More like *gracias*, *ándale*, *tranquilo*."

"Huh." Annie pushed a pile of home fries through the bacon grease on her plate.

Trout said, "*Lo siento*."

"It's okay," Annie said. She bit her lip and stared at something far off and abstract.

Trout said, "When I told Oscar that we'd been going out to the movies together, he taught me some Spanish. He told me to tell you, '*Limpia mis huevos con la lengua*.' I'm not sure what it means."

"It means Oscar has no class."

"I don't know what cleaning eggs has to do with anything."

Annie fished through her purse and produced cash for the bill. She handed it to the waitress. She said to Trout, "Maybe we should flee to Canada instead of Mexico."

"I don't speak any Canadian," Trout said.

Annie smiled. She was not at all certain that Trout was kidding. She reached across the table and mussed his hair. "You'll learn."

They bought an atlas when they filled up the van. Annie guided them to I-59 out of Birmingham, and onto I-75 when they filled up again in Chattanooga. The twists and turns of the interstate crossing the Smoky Mountains made Trout carsick. Annie took over driving. She became adept at pulling onto the narrow shoulder very quickly so that Trout could vomit. Trout offered to purchase a bucket at the next truck stop so that they wouldn't have to pull over every time he got sick. Annie insisted on keeping all vomit outside the van.

They made it as far as Cincinnati that night, where they stayed with friends of Trout's in a room that was a step down from sleeping on an air mattress in the back of a rusty old Econoline. The room had only a mattress on the floor and an iced tea bottle in the corner. The tea bottle was filled with what looked to be urine. Annie awoke in the middle of the night to find a raccoon climbing up the slats of the closet door.

She tried to convince herself that she was only dreaming the raccoon so that she could go back to sleep. She knew it wasn't a dream. The exhaustion of lying to herself finally knocked her out.

In the morning, Trout suggested that the pair lay low in Cincinnati for a while. Annie said, "Your friends keep trying to talk me into a three-way."

"It's not what you think," Trout said. "A three-way in Cincinnati is spaghetti with chili and cheddar cheese on top."

Which is exactly what Annie thought, in fact. Closet-climbing raccoons and bottles of urine in the corner were one thing. But a regional pride in this particular dish was abhorrent. She had to move on.

The van continued north up I-75.

Though neither had passports or anything proving citizenship, Annie nearly charmed their way through the Canadian border. She tucked an errant bang and shot the guard a big eyed smile she'd perfected during her years in the service industry. It was the acme of sweetness. Then Trout fiddled with one of the braids on his goatee. The guard caught a glimpse of Trout's forearm tattoo. "What is that?" the guard asked.

Trout displayed the tattoo. "It's St. Cecilia, patron saint of musicians."

"Is it a gang tattoo?" the guard asked. "Are you in a gang?"

Trout, perhaps upset about the suggestion that he may be gang-affiliated or perhaps upset that the guard didn't ask him about his band, said, "Yeah. I'm Catholic."

The guard directed them through a U-turn and sent them back to Detroit.

Annie said, "So. Mexico, then?"

Trout said, "*Lo siento*."

They caught I-69 a few hours east of Toledo and drifted south and west. Trout giggled every time he saw the interstate sign that read "69." Annie thought of their one botched attempt at sex. While still north of Fort Wayne, Annie told Trout to exit into a little Indiana town. She navigated as if she knew what she was

doing until she came across a city park that was vacant on this Monday afternoon. She led Trout by the hand to a shady spot about a hundred yards from the sidewalk. The ground was carpeted with pine needles. A row of bushes created a barrier between them and the rest of the park. Annie began by kissing Trout's stubbly neck. Trout pulled her close and rubbed the flat of his palms against her lower back, right where her muscles had gotten sore from all the traveling. She unzipped his checkered kitchen pants and felt his erection inside. He lifted his hands to her neck, as if he were cupping her head. Offering it to the gods. They kissed and rubbed. Annie went down for a second to take his erection in her mouth. He was more or less clean, having showered at that dump in Cincinnati, but he'd been wearing the same boxers and kitchen pants since at least Saturday morning. The smell reminded her a little too much of Martin's Steakhouse, so she stood and led him to a tree. She leaned against it. He lifted her skirt.

The whole time they had sex there in the park, Trout talked. But it wasn't the normal sex talk. Sure, he told her she was beautiful and he filled some silence with moans. Mostly, he said things like "I'm so lucky" and "You're giving me a wonderful afternoon." Dogs barked in the distance. A warm summer breeze filtered through the pines. The strength of Annie's orgasm nearly knocked her leg out from underneath her. Trout held her up.

On the way back to the van, Trout said, "That was super."

By the time they made St. Louis, Annie had done the math. Gas prices being what they were – combined with the cost of campgrounds and diner breakfasts and the transmission stutter that would become a serious problem somewhere in the next two thousand miles – meant they'd hit Mexico with about six thousand dollars tops. Six grand. It wasn't much to begin a fugitive life with. Annie had been thinking a lot about the midnight movies, too. She realized that they all ended poorly. Not in beautifully romantic deaths, but in an orgy of gore and violence and pain. She was too young for this. She was one class away from a degree in civil engineering from Georgia Tech. It wasn't even a class that she had to take. She only had to rewrite an essay on Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and hand it in by December to clear up that final incomplete. Not that she was ready for a life of analyzing traffic patterns to give permits for a new Wal-Mart, but at least a return to Atlanta would give her more options than a six-thousand-dollar fugitive life in Mexico.

Without explaining, she navigated them onto I-55 South toward Memphis.

Trout pooped in a rest area bathroom in southern Missouri. Annie counted the money. They'd spent about fifteen hundred dollars so far – most of it on eighty-dollar tanks of gasoline that would carry them only a hundred and twenty miles. Annie was certain that she had at least two grand in savings. She took out her cell phone and called Martin. She confessed to committing the robbery. She offered to return the money if he didn't press charges. Martin agreed, but tacked on additional charges for the missing twelve-pack and missing bottle of vodka. He charged retail, estimating how much he would've made off a whole bottle of Grey Goose at five dollars per ounce and a half. He didn't know about the steak sandwiches, limes, or French fries.

He asked about Trout. Annie said, "What about him?"

"Isn't he with you?"

"No."

"He didn't have anything to do with it?" Martin asked.

"Nope." Annie thought about adding more, but then decided that the more she said, the more suspicious Martin would be.

"Hmm," Martin said. "I bet that dumb ass went on tour with his band and forgot to tell me."

"Whatever," Annie said, making a mental note of the excuse she could give to Trout, wondering if he'd be able to pull off the lie now that his band had broken up. "I know you got your money back from insurance by now. You'll make a good bit of cash out of this deal. We'll both keep our mouths shut."

A short silence filled the line. Annie could almost hear Martin nodding despite the hundreds of miles separating them. Finally, he said, "See you Thursday."

In Memphis, they checked into an upscale hotel. It was right on Beale Street, touristy as could be. Trout thought it was a bad idea, but Annie convinced him they'd be

safe. She still wasn't ready to tell him about the deal she'd cut with Martin. Instead, she told him that it was her mother's credit card, and it couldn't be traced. They bought fancy, over-priced clothes and toiletries in the hotel gift shop. They individually showered and shaved and shed a few days' worth of road grime.

Though they didn't plan it as such, they wound up eating dinner at a small, cash-only steakhouse that bore an uncanny resemblance to Martin's. Trout ordered a Turbodog draft. Annie asked for a Grey Goose gimlet.

After dinner and a drive-by of the old Stax Records building, they retired to the hotel. The sex that night was pleasant but lacking the thrill of the park. Trout fell promptly asleep when they were done.

Annie lay in the neon glow of Beale Street. She thought about the cash in the strong box. It would get her and Trout to Mexico, sure, if that's what she wanted. She could return it to Martin and end up a couple grand poorer and jobless but still in good enough shape to land on her feet. If that's what she wanted. If Martin didn't sell her out to the police when she got back. Or she could just take the money, leave Trout snoring into the Beale Street night. She could vanish with nine grand, cash.

Then again, she thought, I could never vanish from myself.

To Trout, Martin, her mom, and everyone else, she could disappear. But for her, she would still be the same Annie wherever she went, with all the old affinities and unconscious yearnings calling the shots.

ANNA MACDONALD
SOUNDING

I'm building a boat to carry me out to sea. She'll be clinker-built, made from marine grade ply, and belted with a bench seat built for one. I won't name her, but I will whitewash her hull and trim her lip with cerulean blue. On clear days, it will be difficult to say where her lip stops and seawater begins. She'll have a pole mast and a sail that rattles in its rigging and snaps taught in a high wind. She'll have a bucket for bailing, a rudder and oars but no engine. I don't need to go far, just far enough to lose sight of land.

A shoreline has caught in the grain of my desk. The tide's going out there and each receding wave has left its contour in the timber's darker growth rings. The weakest waves wash around the base of a jar of pencils, which stands still against the ebb like the weather worn pylon of a pier long out of use. In the jar, among the letter opener I never use, the coloured pens and the HB pencils in need of sharpening, is a fifteen-centimetre ruler my mother gave me. It was the drawing and description, cut from the pages of an illustrated children's dictionary and mounted beneath the plastic that caught her eye: **sea gull** (SEE gul) *sea gulls*. A large, graceful sea bird with mostly white feathers. The gull is drawn against a blue sky. From here, the bird looks like it's coming in to land. Its yellow legs and feet reach out to secure an awkward hold on the jagged post. Its black-tipped wings remain outstretched until it can regain its balance, preen the salt from its feathers, and finally settle. On the underside of the ruler, the side that faces away from me is another dictionary entry: **scrib•ble** (SKRIB-el) *v*. *scribbles*, *scribbled*, *scribbling*. Write poorly and carelessly.

The desk is Danish teak, from the 1960s. It's fairly new to me and most of the drawers are still empty. When I open them, I can still catch the smell of the workshop. The desk has been restored but I've caught glimpses of an earlier owner. Green ink has left a small, stubborn stain in a back corner of the centre draw, like a felt tip that's bled into blotting paper. The front legs have taken on a richer hue than those at the rear, where the light of another hemisphere has warmed them. And there's a faint scratch in the timber top, a comfortable arm's length away, on my left. When I run my fingers over it I feel like I'm troubling someone else's scar.

But the shoreline is mine. It's got the narrow, shallow beach of an inlet, and the protective high limestone walls of a dangerous coast. I'm more likely to find fragments of battered glass and ceramic in the shell litter than recognisable specimens of limpet, mussel, clam or cockleshells. When I sit on a limestone rock to remove my shoes and socks and roll up the cuffs of my jeans, the fresh wind races in off the Bight to nip at my exposed ankles. And when, before standing, I pause and look out to sea, I imagine I can feel the tug of the South Magnetic Pole ahead of me.

Kelp has caught and taken root in nicks worn by white water into the inlet's limestone edges. There are rock pools, where sea stars and stony coral rest in the ebb and shelter from the incoming tide. Bladderwrack lies tangled in patches along the shore. If I'm quick, I can pop its briny sacs before they crispen and dry out. My fingers smell like a castaway's. When I rub my palms together they have the gritty feel of the sea floor under my feet, which falls steeply away just before the water reaches knee-height. Shift my bodyweight even slightly from here and the dense sand would give way beneath me. Tilt forward into the balls of my feet instead of back into my heels and I'd be in the water, going out with the tide. If it were summer and not nearing winter, if the sun was out and I had a towel and a change of clothes and a fireside to look forward to, maybe I'd make that shift. Maybe I'd lean forward just to feel the shock of leaving the land for the open sea.

But it's cold and the sky is surly. And I'm worried that my heavy hand-knit would become waterlogged and weigh me down. So I stick to the shore and look out to sea instead. The horizon is narrow here, held within the

arms of the high limestone cliffs. But it's deep and I can see a long way off. Nothing punctures the space between us. The slate water is still, slack in this moment of calm before the tide turns. Were it not for the wet sand that sucks at my feet and the wrack that catches at my ankles as if to hold me back, I'd believe I could step out the space between my shallow beach and the chiaroscuro horizon. I'd shoulder my pack and set out to measure the distance in my own feet.

Today on my teak shoreline, three pinecones rest on the damp sand left behind by the ebb tide. They're clustered before the pylon where the gull is still coming in to land against a blue sky. One pinecone is smaller than the others. It looks world-weary, grizzled with experience. The cones are from a Scots Pine. Most of their scales are open as if to let the air in. Seed wings have left their impression in the cavity of each empty scale. It's as if, when they've peeled themselves away from the nursery of the cone each seed has left behind its wafer-like skin; as if even this thin protection would hamper its free movement, which feels like an improvisation, from pod to grass to earth, to new shoot to tree to cone, back to seed.

I found the pinecones at the Botanic Gardens not far from the *Viburnum lantana*, the wayfaring tree. It's beginning to lose its leaves now. They're dying from the outside; slowly shrivelling in on themselves. Dragonflies were coupling greedily on the grass in the late afternoon sun. I nearly trod on a pair as I bent to collect the cones, which had fallen far from their tree. The cones lay on a lawn that smelt like my grandmother's and recalled games under the camphor laurel whose boughs reached down to the ground and made a natural cubby under a canopy of waxy leaves. For my cousins and me the camphor laurel was the Fairy Tree. It was a place of make-believe. Up in its branches and in the shelter of its boughs we were travellers in imaginary lands and were, ourselves, transformed in the course of our travels.

Outside the Fairy Tree, sitting on the back step with Fred, Grandma's pear-shaped tabby, we sniffed at the mint on our fingers left there by the sprigs we'd collected to flavour the peas for Sunday's roast. On the swings around the corner we became trapeze artists. My mother pushed our swings higher and higher until we called out for her to stop. And we all sang together: 'She flies through the air with the greatest of ease, that daring young girl on the flying trapeze'. With each new round we sang louder and louder and stretched out the 'eeeee' of 'she' longer and longer as we flew higher, passed the pink oleander, which we must not touch because it's poisonous. If we were quick, at the apex of each arc in the pause before we swung down again, we could throw a glance over the fence and catch a glimpse of Mac and Aunty Phil's back garden, where Gary had an expanding aviary for his growing collection of yellow-throated budgerigars.

Under the blood plum, next to the camphor laurel, we lay back on a picnic rug and ate the plump sun-warmed fruit straight from the tree while my aunt read to us from *The Magic Faraway Tree* and *The Enchanted Forest*. Plum juice tasted like sugar licked from Pop biscuits and Google Buns. The chatter from Gary's budgies next door became the distant clatter of the Saucepan Man's pots and pans. Later, when no grownups were looking, we cranked the handle of the rotary clothes hoist until its horizontal bars were extended high enough overhead to leave our feet dangling but just low enough to reach standing on tip toe, with arms outstretched. We took it in turns to swing round and round until our arms drooped with fatigue or dizziness got the better of us. Then we dropped to the ground and lay back on the mown lawn, exhausted, with the world spinning in impressionistic swirls around us.

But the rest of the garden fell away from inside the Fairy Tree where we shed the skins of our dizzy plum-eating, mint-gathering, even our flying trapeze artist selves. The Fairy Tree was another country and we became other children there. It wasn't always the same country. Before an early dinner, its lowest branches described the spacious rooms of a tree house built for three. The front door was a concealed crawl space that faced the mint patch by Grandma's back step where Fred looked on out of the tight corners of his almond eyes. The vaulted ceiling of the central room was lit like the stained submarine glass of a shipwreck. The tree house had the feel of a peopled Atlantis. Like the Magic Crystals I watered in the bathroom sink at home, which grew from a sandy granulated

deposit sprinkled around the stoppered plughole into the turreted magenta skyline of an exotic metropolis, the Fairy Tree's architecture held the salty promise of genii, a handful of granted wishes, locked rooms full of lucre.

After dinner, the Tree became another land, thickly forested this time and inhabited by strange, wild animals. Creatures with feline, heavy-padded paws and an ursine gait awoke in the green nocturnal gloom. They prowled the perimeter of their shared domain. They clawed at the thick carpet of decaying leaf-matter, breathed fog into the damp air and sounded a territorial chorus of guttural growls, savage snarls and an occasional high-pitched simian scream.

The sun set early inside the Fairy Tree. The twilight there was short. The Tree had its own time zone, and its own climate. Rain took its time getting there. Wind was rare. Every now and then it rustled through the canopy like the soft shrug of a nocturnal wave rolling into shore. Sound travelled slowly to the Fairy Tree from outside. Inside, the darkening cloud cover amplified the snarls of prowling, and now tiring, wild beasts. It took time for their ears to hearken to the calls of parents who were ready, and then impatient to leave.

Crawling out from under the Tree's lowest branches, the garden light was startling. I felt as though I was stepping back in time, as well as back into the skin of my bedtime, school-tomorrow self. I brushed dirt and leaf litter from my palms and the damp knees of my jeans. My mother released a waxy leaf that had caught in the tangle of my hair. My father kneeled to retie the lace of my left shoe, securing it with a double knot.

In Nookville, Grandma's backroom, amidst the hubbub of gathering mittens and scarves, cardigans and leftovers neatly wrapped in foil, I reached up to the slate mantelpiece and lifted a music box down. The gas heater exhaled in a *pufff*, working hard to counter the chill we'd brought in in our hair and our Easter hand-knits. For one moment, and almost unnoticed, the Fairy Tree blew its damp breath into house-proud, temperate Nookville. I wound the clockwork mechanism of the music box, opened its walnut lid and cupped it to my right ear. While my family said their goodbyes, I stood apart by the heater and listened to the tune wind slowly down: 'It's a small world.'

Just to be safe, I'm building a boat with a shallow hull. There are no maps for where I'm heading. No soundings have been taken there. I don't need a map. I can see where I'm going.

The horizon is narrow here, but it's deep and I can see a long way off. Sitting on the limestone rock, looking out to sea from the shallow beach of my teak shoreline, the world appears vast. The number and variety of other lands held within the promise of the distant horizon line is infinite. I can go anywhere from here. Across the Southern Ocean, to the Antarctic, I'll give bergs right of way. Hiding behind the binoculars my grandfather brought home from Aden, I'll scan the water for ripples left behind by sounding blue whales. Heading east, across the Pacific, I'll skirt New Zealand's South Island and chart a course direct to Patagonia's scribbled west coast. Maybe I'll find a berth at Tierra del Fuego and regain my land legs at land's end. Or perhaps I'll dare the dangerous Magellan Straight, which Fernão de Megalhães (who, like Columbus, thought the world was small) believed would provide a short cut west from the Atlantic to trade in the Spice Islands of the Pacific Ocean.

Another day, turning away from the shelter of the Gippsland shore, I'll use the continent's east coast as my guide and venture north through the Coral Sea, past the Solomon Islands, New Guinea and the Philippines. I'll find a safe mooring in Shanghai before continuing north, through the Sea of Japan, where I'll keep the extreme edge of Europe portside and the edge of Asia, within spitting distance, to starboard. And, when the time is right, I'll head west across the Bight. When I round the clubfoot of Cape Leeuwin, I'll catch the southeast trade winds across the Indian Ocean and continue out of sight of land until, weeks later, I'm rewarded with my first glimpse of Leeuwin's pair at the Cape of Good Hope. Maybe I'll stop there. Maybe I'll stay. More likely, I'll replenish my supplies, scribble a postcard home, and sail out again towards the horizon.

I'm building a boat to carry me into the horizon. When she's finished, when the tide turns and the current is heading out into the Bight away from the barrack of cliffs on either side of the beach, I'll pack a lunch, take up the oars and

push off from the shore. And when I've breached the narrows, long after my land-lubber arms have tired, I'll set sail for the point where the land falls away behind me and the sky meets the ocean ahead.

It rained over night, and this morning the beach at my teak inlet is damp. It must have been a heavy shower; the sand is pocked in front of the tide-rinsed shore. Walking towards the limestone rock I've left behind a bright trail of footprints where my feet have broken through the damp-dark crust to a layer of dry sand beneath. As usual, I sit on the limestone rock and remove my shoes and socks. I roll up the cuffs of my jeans. I watch the gull coming in to land. Shell litter catches between my toes. The wind off the Bight bullies my bare ankles.

But today, instead of facing the shore and looking straight out to sea, I turn in my seat and take my bearings against other, onshore markers. The pinecones are black with rainwater. They're slowly subsiding into the sand. The tide's been out so long that red lichen has made bold progress low along the cliffs. When I look closely, I can see the fine spores on its back. They're leaning in towards the sea, as if they long to wet their thirsty scales in it. A busy gull has left tracks in the sand overnight. Its footprints describe a frantic corroboree around the upturned shell of a Surf crab, now picked clean.

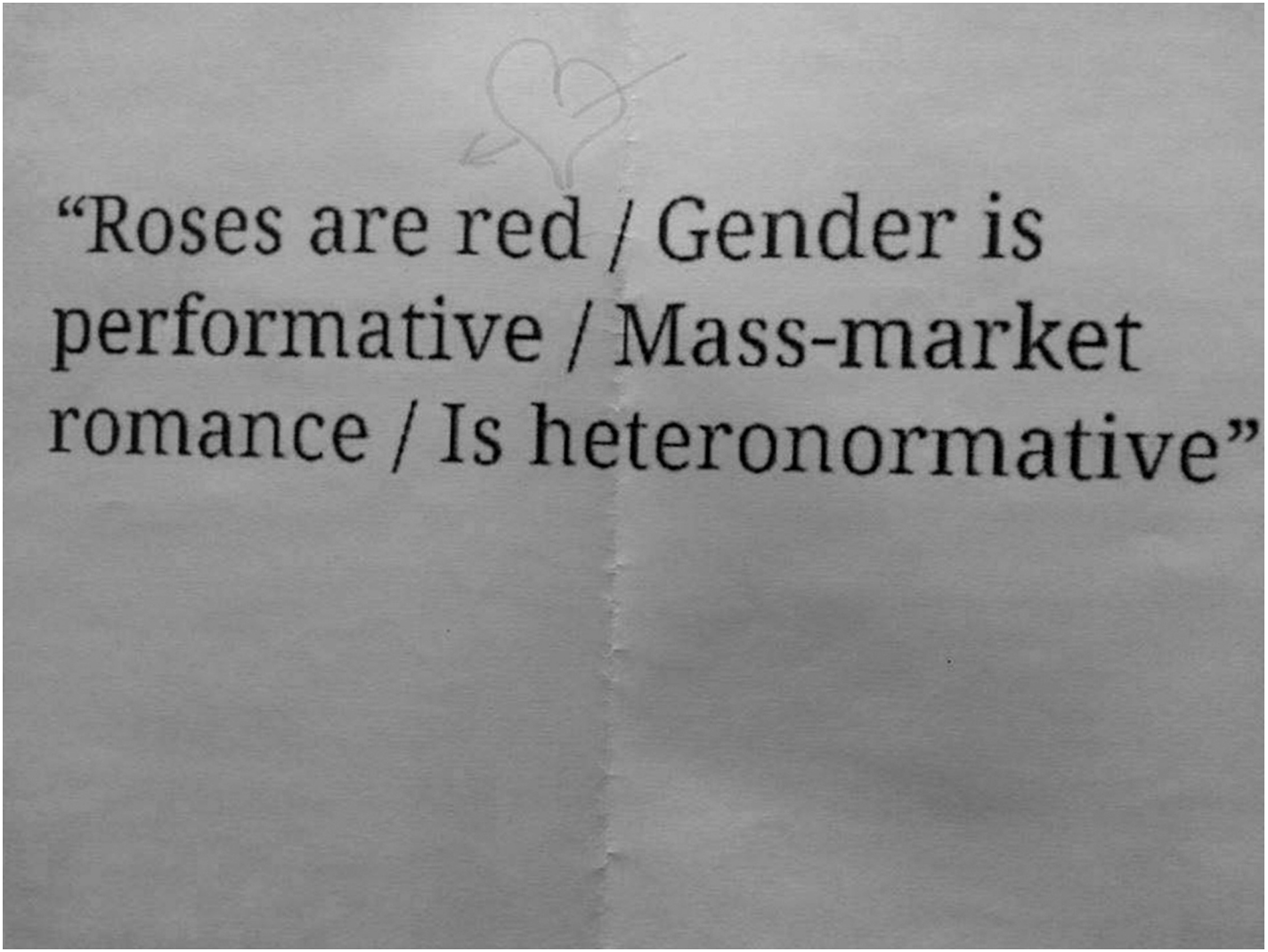
It's mid morning but the sky is heavy with cloud. Light is pushed up in patches from the earth. The sand and stone have been hoarding the light of sunnier days and now they're warming the overcast world with it. The crab shell is relucent. My deep footprints are pools of stored sunlight. The limestone cliffs were left here by the Romantics. Mother of pearl glints from the shell litter at intervals along the shore. Even the kelp and bladderwrack pulse with their own store of light. I can trace the fine veins beneath a piece of kelp's rubber hide. Sand catches under my fingernails as I pry into its deep creases. When I lift a string of wrack from the beach I can see through the skein of each porous sac. I can observe the displacement of its seawater under pressure from my forefinger and thumb. I can measure the limit of a sac's distension and mark the moment before it snaps, and spills.

I turn from the frenzied circle of gull prints to look back at my own. They draw a rough diagonal line from the base of a steep narrow staircase, which leads down the cliff from a car park above. I can't see the car park from the shore. It's hidden by dense tea tree scrub, which also hides it from the esplanade beyond. There are no tourist signs to tempt Sunday drivers to make an unscheduled stop here. The shore is too narrow to attract joggers. It's too rugged for the most adrenaline-soaked surfer; too secluded for the bikini-clad. I have not come across a leisurely trail of footprints left behind by an early morning walker and her frisky dog.

I'm the only one who ventures down to this inlet. Nobody else turns into the car park or catches the antiseptic whiff of the tea tree after rain. No one else's gloves snag on splinters from the balustrade of the raw timber staircase. The gritty sand has not found a way beneath the inserts of another's shoes. And yet, although I made the path that stretches out behind me minutes ago, already it has the appearance of a trail cut by somebody else. My feet, now bare, get lost inside the larger, square imprints my shoes made moments earlier. My lips are seasoned with salt slick; shell litter freckles my bare feet. And my footprints give up the equatorial light of another latitude.

I'm bent over a rock pool, watching the current toy with the red tentacles of a waratah anemone, when the rain returns. I see it dimpling the surface of the water before I feel it dampening my hair. I raise the hood of my waterproof jacket and walk slowly back to the limestone rock where I sit and stuff my socks further into the toes of my shoes, which I upturn to keep the rain out. Mist has fallen. It's drawn a curtain in front of the stairs behind me. The sides of my hood conceal the beach and cliffs. Looking straight ahead, my view is of the horizon. The water is still. The coast is quiet. The tea tree scrub and high cliffs protect the inlet from the sound of traffic on the esplanade. The gull never cries. No waves wash into shore. I can hear rainwater gently pitting the waterproof skin of my jacket. I sit quietly on the limestone rock and look out to sea while, behind me, the fresh shower covers over my tracks. It doesn't take long.

POEM


"Roses are red / Gender is
performative / Mass-market
romance / Is heteronormative"

LOU ROWAN
X

Still from Rudy Burckhardt's *Money* (1968).

It wasn't true. None of it.

For it all pointed towards resolution, consonance – endings in 19th-C harmony. A duet, the passionate man's Guarneri aflame above a woman whose small fingers educe enveloping harmonies from a vast piano over whose stippled white ledge she inclines, still while her arms swivel across the keys. Or lo they change places and he crashes and bangs the keys throwing his head back and his body everywhere while she educes crooning and moaning sounds from the violin's lower registers, torso statuesque but her arms furious motion.

In sex, he thrashed above her and raised his body to look down to where they were joined. She held fast to his hips, her tongue resting on her lower lip.

It is not clear what actions constitute drama, less clear whether emotions unexpressed in words can properly be called dramatic. And if drama is enhanced action, what is love?

He walked faster than she, and saw less, but his walking was potentially the interaction of his body with the scenery, unconscious registry of everything her short fast footfalls that had touched his heart: they were the delicacy he wanted in her, or so he thought ten years ago. Each time he consented to her request to walk with her, he imagined a new start.

But she'd see something for sale, shooting across the way while he hung back, the interaction of his body and the scene a bitter monologue, for he'd assumed they'd keep walking ad infinitum.

She faulted him as unromantic, a problem in definition, for he could nettle her by reciting Blake and Whitman. Their relationship was a problem in definition: here and there now and then a hip or smile or step emerged from the fuzziness.

He married her not because she asked him but because he knew she'd demand he ask her. The wedding-photos by the mail-order minister were blurry. She demanded also that he enjoy fine houses (they had 5 over a decade) and fine company, and she demanded demonstrations of that enjoyment, as a team demands yells of enthusiasm. He was a WASP, given to gusts of emotion that blew through but not from him. She was a Roman Catholic.

He was given to explaining the derivation and virtue of "clarity," to remembering George Oppen and his lines about it with great emotion – to her impatient puzzlement. She knew what she wanted; she doubted he knew what she wanted, despite his reciting her demands back to her in her own words, complete with the time and place of their issuance.

The walk was almost over; the lake disappeared behind tiny cottages that had housed laborers 80 years ago – she belittled his antiquarianism, and as they approached their cottage he remembered reminding himself to enjoy the scenery, the mansions in the gated community under the second-growth evergreens, the movie star's vertiginous view home, the welcome irregularity of older homes' gardens, the mountains behind the shiny suburb sprung up over 2 decades of cyber-wealth, the occasional sailboat among the powerboats whose fuel consumption he remembered not to lament while they walked, and the turtles and muskrats in nooks along a shore dominated by dogs launching themselves at balls detonated from hand catapults – in his preoccupation with avoiding controversy he'd forgotten to look, and he felt like an asshole taking a walk at her slow pace without deriving visual aliment to make up for aerobic laxity.

As they went their ways inside he remembered how she hated the little she knew of the sixties. Despite being there, he remembered the sixties:

Peter Parker puffed pensively on Harry Harrison's pot pipe. John Johnson said it took him up and down, thrusting his hand out and back from his chest, elbow raised. Harry said it took him down, gently leaving him to climb back up on his own, a delicious sweat-free journey. Peter would arbitrate. He filled his lungs with love. When John said Harry's stuff took him up and down, but il-lustrated with the flat backhand, Harry's eyes followed John's hand edgily as a cat itching to jump a mouse. He sighed happily as the hand returned. Had he expected it to disappear? Harry Harrison never told. He was part Indian, part Dane. Peter Parker called him the Great American Dane, urging him to hurry up and finish the novel, man.

Peter let out his love with a slow control. Harry had rolled his and John's, but it was just like Peter to pull his from a pipe. John was headed down: he left off scratching his thigh to pick his nose with the hand that had gone in and out.

Harry's eyes wheeled to Peter's; he lifted his eyebrows significantly.

"Well?"

"Well yourself."

Peter eschewed urgency when he stalked his thoughts.

"Well swell." This was John, who seldom sold his paintings.

"Unwell," said Harry.

Peter told of a dilettante who studied bigtime in Germany. The man knew German, French, Latin, Greek and the phonetic alphabet, man. The man was single, lived with his mother, who'd married the young butler. The man was heir to a suntan lotion fortune. That day he would buy shoes, that is today. Four pairs, and not one would hurt his feet, they'd be made of such fucking expensive soft animals. You see he was back from Germany, and all Germans have square feet and shoes to match. The man's feet were ready for American shoes, or English or Italian, they were sinuous again, they'd made it.

"Made what?" John needed to know.

"Made his feet American."

"Why the fuck'd he think that?" Harry liked to argue so you couldn't ask him about his writing.

Because of the women in the revolving door. He was heading into Needless Markup and he saw two women in the triangular chinks of the door –

"They're called slots."

"No, slits."

– They were in the other two chinks and he just dug them there, he just couldn't stand to see the first woman expelled or expulsed from the outer chink and so he put his square shoe between the door and the frame to freeze the women to his vision, but the first woman was in the clear before he put his foot in, and there he was left with one chink-held woman under glass.

John's eyeballs shifted from knee to knee across six knees.

"So what did the dilettante do?"

Leaving his shoe in the chink to hold her there, confident the shoe afforded her a source of oxygen, he snapped her with his state-of-the-art Leica, sampled the perfumes and colognes in the lobby, so thrilled with the freedom to

move about an American city in one shoe that he rushed to the taxi stand and went home to his mother.

Harry's eyes rested on Peter's feet.

John itched to know Peter's ruling on the nature and direction of the pot. So did Harry, once again.

"Yeah, come on, man."

Peter held back his fund of feeling, his rising resentment at being bugged, and peeled from the top the proposal that pot is what you put into it, whence its name.

That didn't do it for them. John liked to see all facets of both sides. Harry wanted to make the plunge.

But Peter wasn't done when he concluded. Not by a slung lot. His thoughts were little nibblers, and his head was head cheese, hahahahaha. Crouched behind the munching mice was a Siamese cat, whose eyes were light and dark blue, like Oxford University.

A bell rang, and Peter padded across his pad. It was the mail. It was nothing.

Peter was ready to subscribe to one of two propositions, "So will you please make them?"

"Make what?" (John)

Harry proposed that this pot had that faculty of making it and/or you down, and then you had to come back on your own lonesome. "But no sweat, kind of like going to the drive-in, and you idle through the dark to find your spot, and then you figure out how to hook up so you can hear the big image, and the couple in the back seat doesn't even care, man."

John thought it was more like tooling across Kansas, so flat and smooth until an unseen vertical road-ripple gave you that funny feeling like being in a swing when you grew up.

Peter could see it all. "For this one pregnant moment you're both right, wherever you go. It's so great, man, to be right but like how do we like prove it so we can all be happy, cause that's what we want, we just want to go on from here, just go on being so fucking happy just like now, man. It's that innate fucking faculty of assent to the Now."

They stared at Peter. Harry thought he got it, and hated it. "What kind of half=breed cock-sucking answer is that."

Which is just what Peter was positive he was asking himself earlier, when he got up to do something.

Now he came back with a log. He heard winds behind his head. The fire in the metal stove raged and popped. Then it went cold and Harry blew onto it till he was purple and dizzy. He crashed back into his rocking-chair, which smashed under him. John tried the bellows, which had a hole in it and dusted his face. He missed the farm in the country where he painted. Harry had a house up there too, but a kid fleeing the draft broke in, causing the water pipes to freeze and burst and the whole place looked like an undefrosted fridge.

Harry surfaced. He waved at Peter going by. John was up ahead but they were no more than a quarter of the way up the backside of Mount Equinox, where the nuns lived. It was hot and steep, and rocks and roots protruded all over the trail. And here came that loud fucking bummer of a movie director, the one who mooched all the land from the artist whose son had died. He yakked and yakked while Peter, Harry and John blew and cursed. The bastard had a personal trainer with one name, and he used filtered water. "Oh, so you know Anne Waldman, Harry. What a beautiful chick. I'd like to ball her seven different ways. I'd like to do it from behind roller-skating down Broadway. Ya know Ted Berrigan?"

Halfway they rested on a boulder under the hot sun. They hated the heat, but the sun was one with the healthy outdoors. The director was bitching in his safari outfit how hard it is to be a writer in this country, man. Harry was in tears agreeing. Peter wanted to throw him over the cliff, but a nice young nun beckoned him, in her eyes the colorless bliss of the flower child.

But Harry wouldn't stop crying because it was o.k. for a man to cry with his friends. Why was it o.k.? John said it was o.k. this time on this good stuff but he wanted to hurl when his daughter cried.

A noble stag sauntered through Peter's pad, indicating the thicket with his thickset rack, long grasses dripping from his muzzle like Jackson MacLow's beard. They were sitting in directors' chairs, their parents' embarrassing nicknames for them blazoned across the backs. Peter was worried whether he was well-enough read. Their voices sounded harsh, too fucking abrasive to Peter, so he turned up the stereo, "Thus Spake Zarathustra," and it jammed John's ears, and Harry hated people who forced you to dig what they dug, shearing off your inner rhythm.

LEWIS WARSH

LAST JUDGEMENT

You might think The Last Judgement is already at hand

Even if you make your escape, there's no where to go

She interrupted me as soon as I started talking

My credit card is invalid, my arm is in a sling

The landscape rolls by, even when you're sleeping

I wouldn't call if it wasn't an emergency

You can go into the corner and sulk like a baby

Go back to the beginning and repeat everything you said

A patch of snow at the base of a tree, the smell of persimmon

Come to bed before it gets too late and the sun rises for the last time

Offer something for half-price that no one wants

Place the shore in its proper relation to the birds in the sky

You can learn the foxtrot in three easy lessons

Wiped my boots on the welcome mat and sold my soul
to the company store

The people on the street salivate when they see me coming

Late afternoon muscle tone, a backyard fizzle

A coin falls through a slot and lands in the dust

There used to be a nail salon around here, there used to be a car
rental agency

I lounge about hawking my credentials through a filter

I'll call you when I'm in town, but I don't know where you are

The curvature of the spine is no longer incurable

I hide the object inside myself so it doesn't get lost

Leave your lipstick on the tip of my cigarette if you mean business

Someone should make a copy of the by-laws in my heart,
and send them abroad

I'd take you up on your offer but I'm hard of hearing

Turn up the volume if you want to hear the birds

A suspicious van was discovered on a street near Times Square

Keep your mouth shut and nothing will happen to you
and your friends

Do I run on ahead of myself or do I bend with every thought?

I take off my socks and put my head under the fire hydrant

All hell breaks lose when you close your eyes

I can take home what you can't eat and feed it to my dog

The door opens and woof—woof—the air disappears

A woman with a toothpick at the company picnic
catches your eye

Wore out my welcome and disappeared up the chimney,
like Scrooge

The knives and forks take on a life of their own, but all the spoons
are bent out of shape

It's possible to disappear into thin air, like a kiss

The conductor shouts "all aboard" but I'm asleep on my feet

A flock of paralegals sing The 1812 Overture before dawn

"Call for back up," one might say, as the clouds pass in front of the sun

You might fall asleep in the snow and never awaken

My boat washed up on an island where there were a few palm trees
and a couple of squirrels

Maybe we met by accident or were introduced by someone we knew

The lesser of two evils shows up on my doorstep
with a warrant

You have one thing on your mind, and it's better than nothing

The can-can dancers take the stage: why don't we give them
a round of applause?

Quiet intervals, synthetic drapes, a reflection in still water

I confuse two people on a bed in my head

I arrive empty-handed: no suitcases, no referendums,
no slugs

VINCENT KATZ

AN OPENNESS

to Norma Cole

An openness. Space among walkers, in the square.

An old-time cigarette. A body, selling, talking.

The limitation, but also possibility.

He just wants to be in the circus.

Could it be reckless to be a poet, and could that be one's salvation?

I have a weakness.

A weakness is also a strength.

That's a dangerous moment for a person.

I like the movement. The way you can buy a coffee, and two minutes later you are drinking it while speeding to another destination.

And you can talk to people and be pleasant to them, and then there is this light.

I want to hear the world.

You stay in one position. And then you move to another position.

The times make us what we are.

I was looking at her differently.

That's how people accumulate power. They draw it to themselves.

That knowledge burns. That piece of clothing exposed.

So many haircuts. Makes you want to go to the movies.

Many people sit at tables. You can order a decaffeinated coffee.

I track fashion for a living.

That guy's haircut's pretty good.

I wish I had a uniform to keep the day intact.

It's now or never.

I take on the mantle.

I come up to the point.

Then I can relax.

JOHN TRANTER

5 POEMS

Q AND A

Okay, Mister de Mille, I'm ready for my Q and A,
down here in the gloom surrounded by fractions
and fictions and quartets and quintets
at NYU English One Oh One, where I dwelt
for too long, a kind of death watch beetle
in the wainscoting, watching my P's and Q's
and the wagon's panelling – as the earth quaked
and the latest New York Giant of Prose was
stalking about. When I was young I had
a loud, demanding voice. Now I'm voiceless.
No, I don't know where it went.
My students with winter flu went *koph koph koph*,
their ancient Semitic consonants getting better
as the room grew warmer. Maybe it's 'third
time lucky'; and it's true, my last book got much
better reviews. Is that a bullshit detector?
Bring it here! Focus it on that letter:
thanks. Gosh! That fellow-writer! The
ass-hole! Writing one thing, spitting out
another! Lie upon lie, folded
one within the other… to me, a sensitive poet, it
feels like being tortured, like being
waterboarded… or is it 'warboarded'?
Save me, I get things so confused, between the
real and the confected, the living and the dead.

*'Q and A' began as a draft using the end-words of 'Q' by US poet Sharon Olds.

PICKING ON THE OIL COMPANY

Yes, I was going to piss on some petroleum
company for what they're doing to the environment,
Jesus, my children's environment,
and their greasy commercials
about the profound importance
of their deep ecological concern
and how they tread oh so softly
on the grass, those horrid oligarchs –
but it all feels so ineffectual,
like some self-indulgent self-semaphore,
one thoroughly committed person
signalling to another ready-to-be-committed person,
and it hardly seems to make any sense –
I mean, who cares what I feel
about something like a poor little lost kitty?
I think I'll just stay in bed
and count the discarded foreskins
of those horrible old men who drill and drill
looking for oil, for a fortune, honest,
then schlepp in to the bank.
Phew, I'm beat.
Another goddam year –
shopping list: don't forget eggs and flour
and milk – what a life!
But hey, don't get off your bike!
Hold your horses!
Corral the cows
back into the barn
that nestles at the foot of the hill,
join the local Methodist
Church, send your art to an art gallery
and get drunk in the nearest bar
and make love to your significant other
before I begin to swear
and things lose their value –
hey, before I get emotional,
maybe I should stop.

*'Picking on the Oil Company' began as a draft using the end-words of 'Having Intended to Merely Pick on an Oil Company, the Poem Goes Awry' by US poet Bob Hicok.

MY SISTER

My sister feels sexy today, she says. I think
she just feels needy as usual. Those guys
on the porch, tell them to piss off. Why?
Because if you feel needy, who needs you?
Needy is like greedy, let's not pretend
it's just a rhyme like "got" and "hot". You
know rhymes exist for a reason, like lying
down after lunch in the heat or lying to them
about what you said you did last night: you're not
so hot, Honey. South of the Border you might be
a pole dancer or some señorita in need, but
not here, understand? Go then to Mexico, be
honest, say what you really mean to them,
those men on the porch, be sweet and be
yourself, be a thing-in-itself itself, and I'll be a
thing-for-you in case you need Some Thing
other than my regard, the thing you can't really
ask for, the thing you hate about the heat, that you
can't turn off, South of the Border it's hot.

*'My Sister' began as a draft using the end-words of 'Soft Money' by US poet Rae Armantrout.

THAT GREENISH FLOWER

I feel quite sure that I can spell
the name of the greeny Asphodel,
a flower that only grows in hell.

I pondered often how it came
to have such a Greekish name
and such a long, enduring fame.

Perhaps it's the flower Perseus gave
to Philomel, a former slave,
to place upon her father's grave.

I must say, it's a proper bloom
to place upon a father's tomb
to gleam and shine there in the gloom.

But not so rich and not so sweet
as honey-flavoured sausage meat
to place there at your father's feet.

*That Greenish Flower' began as a draft using the end-words of 'Asphodel' by US poet Alicia E. Stallings.

ONE NIGHT IN NAM

First thing you know, the light fades
so it's hard to read all those names chiselled on the granite.
All these tourists, they wouldn't
line up, read the names, cry their tears,
now would they? All that suffering flesh,
I'm reminded – it reminds me –
very late one night
in Nam, I see him turn
half-way down the street, and go
through the door, go inside –
no. You know, in this memorial
the fading light
makes a difference
to the long list of names,
makes it hard to find –
he turns, inhales some smoke,
Tiger, that was his name, Tiger Johnson,
then there was a godallmighty flash,
some little kid with blood on her blouse,
gee, it blows you away,
the stain on the wall
and the way the sniper has a bird's
eye view, or a vulture's stare,
looking down out of the sky,
it seems, the bad dream floats
across in front of his eyes
as he peers out of his high window,
Johnson, a bandage on his good arm,
I see him now in the mirror
and that long list of names
written across his reflected face and his golden hair.

*'One Night in Nam' began as a draft using the end-words of 'Facing It' by US poet Yusef Komunyakaa.

BJARTE ALVESTAD

DESEMBER

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MARJORIE WELISH

AN ORDINARY EVENING PLUS OR MINUS

Because life is short improvisatory requiring grooves: handed a random page of itself sounds the sticks playing across the drums in shades of idiom in cadences and starts technique not so gone from his memory idiom derived from ear and formula addresses set in marching band "where we learned to play 'cadences'." Genetic emulsion of brushes eddies derived from ear's internal workings gain acquire a small fortune in overture to catch strength from the non-declarative installment by heart from the same issue, and so much *we must remember to keep asking it the same question* followed by all the rest the lion's share.

Until the repeated question and the same silence become answer
In words broken open and pressed to the mouth
And the last silence reveal the lining

in platitude under the regime of sentiment slips through a kind of crepuscule or twilight of affect wherein the secular world finds a piety ("Fast falls the eventide") by enlisting abuse gathering to itself rustic spirituality gleaned from administrative dreams *faux bois* that author a handful of pathos self-taught *In words broken open* guileless lexicon advancing *Hasn't the sky?* for one. You learn those things. *The change is not complete* Wrenched half sentences in the same way the same question initials being vastly mortal grammatical indecently so the word for what's another word for please leave word crepuscule twilight dusk saying axiom saw maxim apothegm

The new morals have altered the original data
Which have again outstripped the message deduced from them.
The phenomena have not changed
But a new way of being seen convinces them they have.

From irritability to iteration. Maxim hath suffered reversals. Persons have exited and in their place third-person plural agency dispenses statements from social science or its simulacrum to prove—or refute—this script. This script imparts *poncif* to lived octaves a message apart the same firm friend for what was fair weather sentence will swerve to avoid strengths cadenced from side to side like oxen probably as all but one that are also, somehow.

Yet so blind are we to the true nature of reality at any / given moment that the chaos—bathed it is true in the iri/ descent hues of the rainbow and clothed in an endless con- /fusion of fair and variegated forms which did their best to stifle any burgeoning notions of the formlessness of the/ whole, the muddle really as ugly as sin, which at every mo /ment shone through the colored masses, bringing a telltale / finger squarely down on the addition line, beneath which/ these self-important and self-convoluted shapes added disconcertingly up to zero—this chaos began to seem like the/ normal way of being, so that sometime later even very / sensitive and perceptive souls had been taken in: it was for/ them life's rolling river, with its calm eddies and shallows as well as its more swiftly moving parts and ahead of these / the rapids, with an awful roar somewhere in the distance and marching bands' salvos confounding those chords played on church organs which may still be heard joining together in the vernacular through the parody of a homegrown sermon--this species of Americana put to the test also in the mouth of Paterson whose happenings on sundry Sundays in the park do occur frequently enough to be part of the public record awash with din*; and yet, or so it seemed to these more sensible than aver / age folk, a certain amount of hardship has to be accepted / if*

we want the river-journey to continue life cannot be a / series of totally pleasant events, and we must accept the / bad if we also wish the good; indeed a certain amount of / evil is necessary to set it in the proper relief: how could we / know the good without the experience of the opposite? / And so these souls took over and dictated to the obscurer / masses that follow in the wake of the discoverers. The way / was picturesque and even came to seem carefully thought / out the garden the garden path whose platitudes instruct the family to pace itself with respect to the way how and where crepuscule saying a brook you thought had anticipated rivers and mountains name twenty children's games destinations the vacuous category not cutting the mustard up to snuff does not compute the word a handful of appearances loosely federated appurtenances may be apt to suggest it accessories trappings appendages accoutrements equipment paraphernalia impedimenta bits and pieces things

And so these souls Doric Corinthian once thought Why not *The Death of Marat*? Because polis and change brain habit through foliage with vastly more courtesy to neurons in chosen field fold folding bonds amongst posits allies alleys allay always articulate with respect to the concept and unambivalent breathing

In addition to these twin notions of growth, two kinds of happiness are possible: the frontal and the latent populate the wire racks found in some waiting synapses writing more fluent than speaking summarize paragraph in a sentence silvering train stations (or silvering t(r)ain stations) which negotiate a conversation excavation exhortation from then on it was having been revealed the word for "deterrent"? Antidote lobes cameo parietal frameworks changing words into thoughts *noble simplicity and quiet grandeur*, for one, self-help guides to pauses or metacommentary airports to elevate populist horizons the airport lounges once thought to negotiate home with away through something like will power have arrived at memoranda: there is here diminished. The mindset of yes, but. Something like misshapen protein occurs in the happiness which intrigues and in the forced nonpareil is okay. Ungainly Dos and Don'ts hence poetic furtherance. If the text aspires to a poetics it is through code-switching complicated in a rhetorical pratfall from which pathos issues. He has been studying his inspirational literature assiduously, as the pamphlets' analytical formatting of a concept betrays pharmacies and train stations proliferates airport lounges with impairment and recovery: where to begin? Having just considered life as career and passed on to life as ritual, the poet further entertains the role of the writer of instruction manuals through which his poetics had had its formative moment, to once again revisit a favorite cultural dystopia: the practical somewhere.

To be or not to be agape through inelegant chromaticism may shape ANTIQUES *Always modern fakes* et cetera in this poetics three kinds of twinned dialectical interfacing for blindness and insight the selvage.

How the sentence treats such disorders with infinite patience finite categories befall to heal substance. It came to pass currently a lifetime of approach-avoidance camouflage might get therapeutic ***Life is short, and Art long; the crisis fleeting; experience perilous, and decision difficult.***

Right now it is important to slip/ as quickly as possible into the Gordian contours of the/ dank, barren morass (or so it seems at present) without ut / tering so much as a syllable.... Mortal twill Cut the nonsense for the man who has everything, to bring decision with it; attached is raveling sense such that each phrase undoes or undercuts the assertion just previous through contrarily indicated postures and qualifying statements meant to shore up a confidence toward life. The upshot: a linguistic gargoyle of false equivalences, insupportable as decadence, does constitute a negative resolve even as it would abuse not void a sea of trouble. Of burial and its avatars are the deliberately "divisive and incoherent" desires *to live in that labyrinth that / seems to be directing your steps but in reality it is you who /are creating its pattern, embarked on a new, fantastically / difficult tactic whose success is nonetheless guaranteed. You know this.* Thinking positively comes arbitrarily to conclude that which it does assert

but not prove. Relay zeal in raveling mainstay the realm “unleashing your potential” filters through “seminars” drops typhoons through a sieve Mind your Business minted supposing the entire enterprise reprise healing and parlor as hydrangea and coil beyond

Yours Truly, for one voicing for advice indemnity possible damage loss or injury into thought distinguish Realism from Naturalism to chisel populist from bituminous what is an author an awl employ the word name ten implements for exciting neurons in chosen maze posit meanders disputing nicely allies always articulate with respect to allées for the design principle interdiscursive to pause for metacommentary such that it explores weeds in late modernity allay abyss inwardness

Leverage individual *Today your wanderings have come full circle. Having / begun by rejecting the idea of oneness in favor of a plural / ity of experiences*… The figure “full circle” is the dead metaphor to be deployed at cortex withdrawal to draw to a conclusion that which has been throughout the book-length drift and passive song to will. Thus

sleep and watchfulness

which you wish. *All right. The problem is that there is no new problem. It / must awaken from the sleep of being part of some other, old problem and by that time its new problematical exist- / ence will have already begun, carrying it forward into situ- / ations with which it cannot cope, since no one recognizes it and it / does not even recognize itself yet, or know what it is. that one just mentioned.* Fresh camouflage selective provinciality fluctuating disinterment bent “—used as the subject of a verb that describes a condition or occurrence. —used in the place of a noun, phrase, or clause that usually” girds abrupt ultimatum from queasiness chronic in the text visited upon him.

What is it for you then, the insistent now that baffles / and surrounds you in its loose-knit embrace that always / seems to be falling away and yet remains behind, stub- / bornly drawing you, the unwilling spectator who had thought to stop only just for a moment, into the sphere of / its sudden and solemnly vast activities, on a new / scale as it were, that you have neither the time nor the / wish to unravel? It always presented itself as the turning / point, the bridge leading from prudence to “a timorous capacity,” in Wordsworth’s phrase… “The Figure in the Carpet” wherein lack of referent in close rereading and yet athletic relay makes common cause with non sequitur: there were numbers stunning the harried mind I am thinking of a number of streaks thinking a word I am thinking of a word for “something that cuts” number twelve satisfying this function. Untrouble life. Sustain something that ferments happiness without our looking; accept gifts of festal joy that attends coiling rivers and mountains. Define “fermentation.” Symptom above all converting time to opportunity “Precept: a rule for living; a command or principle for life. Proverb a short pithy saying in general use, stating a general truth or piece of” poverty causative on the switch cognitive if true, we could half-surging toxicity yet over the crest of an expedition from which there is no escape express expedient entity in experimental mylar that takes a crease intelligibly mylar that takes a crease and my decision intelligibly upon the ground my decision to further a modern fold unspoken and so put it to admiring architects of whom I asked whether there had been or could be a reason to decline to build, the eventfulness being chora at or upon the surface of the ground occurring--but that was coincidental. To return is no simple story: to turn a leaf of mylar is to encounter interference from graphic overlay upon lexical intention to return fruition here. Multiply. Coincidentally, to turn a leaf of mylar is to encounter interference from lexical overlay upon graphical intention to return pixelated back and forth yet opaque pages create a studio. In earth something valid in earth something valid and something begun in provident narratives in providential concepts that constitute a priori sayings sayings in contretemps to manoeuvre influence at the seems that went nowhere. Although architect and philosopher could neither exit nor further the fault

lines to write without some borrowed impressiveness, another's spur edged out spurt esprit to write land yet would soon be sod three kinds of sound entity expiry date did write: that's not an essay but a bridge a walkway speculating fragrantly above the lawn's postulated play name twelve ball games define "idyll" that's not an easy excursus of yellow enviable digression so too the dreamwork the dream much admired the language it taught the patient to write himself impatient nest venting basket brise soleil screen straining wetlands, actually architecture inclined to strain a sieve through which anti-monumentality endemic awakenings ebbed the same irony ever suspended in flesh to be read and yet again as sea surface besotted with clouds the imitations sloshing camouflage efflux *emptiness distributed ventilated situations* sated plenitude within hail of fade. To have heard is to have tone clusters sour on the pulse and laid upon irritability's dying as tidal foam sometimes. He declines to build.

There were new people watching and waiting, conjugating in this /way the distance and emptiness, overture and march together as one recedes the other advancing advises not without dénouement that is carpet within the figure inflammation distributing the scuffed motif insouciant calligraphic iteration taut enough to take a swipe yet in itself indifferent. Décor which may be defined as wishful thinking has correlated the diffusion of good taste to idiolect as if as if these slats as if to say that this may be his substance kept at bay modernity deflated to a placebo and so adhering to an air of elementary blunders. He has much Expulsion: A walking tour. Poetics: text of the lyric: how long can it build a force field of apathy? Lassitude and its avatars intricate scarcity wove a waywardness that entices others to "identify" or be induced to

transforming the scarcely / noticeable bleakness into something both intimate and / noble.

I thought that if I could put it all down that would be / one way. And next the thought came to me that to leave / all out would be another, and truer, way.

Clean washed sea

The flowers were.

A statement of poetics. A statement of poetics inherited in the courses of modernist origins that give the contemporary poet his discourse, and his fatigue. The weight of cultural memory ("I've read all the books") a tincture of which infuses the quandary of which way to take

Not the / truth, perhaps, but—yourself. It is you who made this,

a walk so symbolist.

[...] *A segment, more, of reality. This must be / remembered too, it is even important, but will the /*

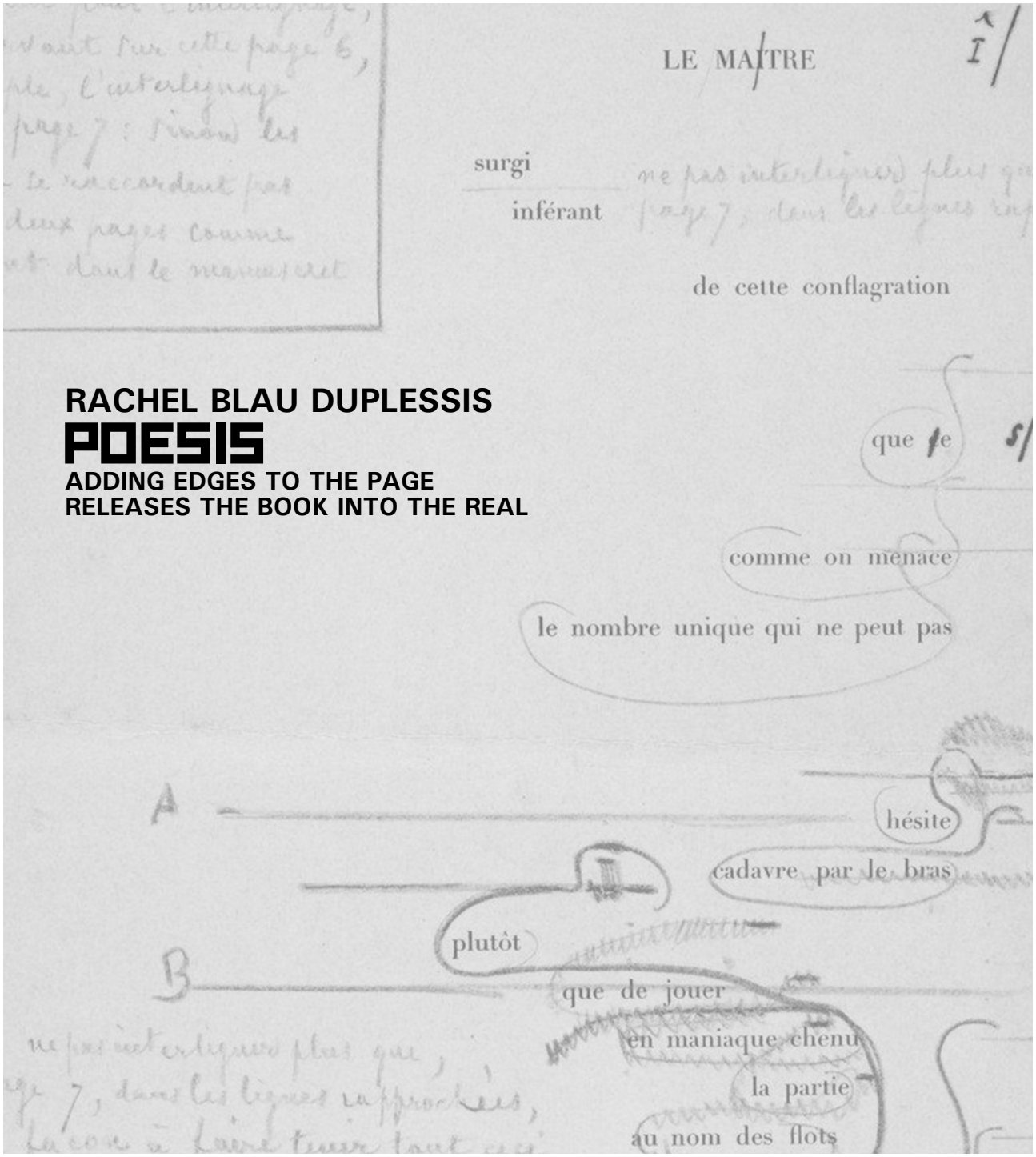
parody to establish norm within a proverbial sense be seen even as thought to protect the non-committal ordinary evening?

The performance has ended, the audience streamed out; the applause still echoed in the empty hall. But the idea of the spectacle as something to be acted out / and absorbed still hung in the air long after forms gather at the river

or with
as having a

KAIA SAND

DROPCLOTH



RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS

POESIS

ADDING EDGES TO THE PAGE RELEASES THE BOOK INTO THE REAL

ADDING EDGES

TO THE PAGE

EVEN GIVEN MEASURELESS PLETHORA,
THE SHIMMYING OF IMAGE,

PLUS THE SHADOWY FLIRT OF ADEQUATE THOUGHT

ALL ANCILLARY GAMBLES

OR GIVEN
rootwork of the diaspora

a dispersal,
a gathering.
a conjure, then gone

bitter power bundle
of dark beleaguered

words

in

raggy wrapping

nonetheless vertiginous and dazzling
yet not easily recorded, dark flashing
over light, which is why ghosts

are said to do what they do
in their frustrating and enervating rage
grabbing, clutching,
withholding, declaiming
even while invisible:

it is not investigation (it is)

it is not procedure (it is)

it is not sonority (it is)

but strokes of

LACK

piercing any unsettled (or even settled)

circumstance of

Throw design out, down

This shows all the cards at once, all plots, all images

for they can

not

"history"

but suffer

its un-calculable outcomes around corners of the imagined

earth the poem

cannot contain

that propel them, these

the ordinary.

onto the page. Dare to.

and they are swamped
sometimes
sickened

"contain"

its presence, encompassing

but

poesis might

have a sense of precise experiences of fabricating
thus
stand a chance at refabricating.

For few books will actually comprehend
the over-riding dimensions of an apparent measure
the possibilities inherent in endless gaps,
shims and splits in register

nor the unfathomable
declarative numbers

in the permanent wobble of π

which are some of the things motivating

the thing
that wants
to write this

insistently:
which are the rubrics, which is the text?

Asking what
internal translation of imperfectly studied languages
what conditional conjecture

what
work-line of people upon earth, what
shard
of luminescence
tinged with the mackle of the drear
what
thorny stave of
opaque dotted-rhythm word-cluster

RELEASES THE REAL

the ambiguities

even those provisional as aphorism

stark and pointed but

inside being

skeletons of sentences

inadequate

hidden themes unspoken

as nuanced as social territories

but nonetheless

one center (paradox)

the words

inconsolable

to piled layers of once substantial bone

EVEN IF

one cannot read

the words

in dreams qua *messages. nor sometimes even*
in and of the actual. Thus smallest fragments of articulation
painstakingly,
scarp by cliff

address themselves to the real, upwards or sideways, and

sometimes downward (another gamble)

to ascertain

whatever collective pictures
emerge

along the astonishingly difficult angles and lines

of this (I suppose metaphoric) landscape

finding the spaces between

before and after, and shaping

(to) a tiny temporary plateau of pleasure and knowledge.

Who can release the book

from the habitual damage

(Look at that shelf of books! Why is there nothing here
to read?)

of some book's derisory
or simplistic
goals

Put this

here
against the single
long-beaked woodcock

off course and slammed
down on the sidewalk between the housing project and
the university

and lay

a doomed veering

or

findings

YES

inadequate monument

its cryptic plumage

lustrous

(have I written

too much of birds

and not of highways, workspaces

and the slam of
broken infrastructures?)

IT WOULD BE
one dilemma here

IT WOULD BE

the risk
the aperture
the instrument
ever-never reappraised

OVERCOME BY

POLYPHONY

swamping resistance

INSPIRED BY AND HAUNTED BY

the necessity of exacting truth
the glimmer of further pronouns
the turning and deturning of syntax

CALCULATING CONDITIONALS AND ISSUING IN

cacophonous polyglossia

THE BOOK

given the challenge of
headstones and no stones
of avalanches and fusions of layers and loss

given any moment might expand
the letter
any letter be imploded in
the statement, the way blazed

FAR AWAY

nonetheless a palpable

crisis

around yearning

that searches gravel roads and mixed trails of
contradictory choices, carved in the landscape from

UNSTABLE OBLIGATION
reformulated at every turn

TO THE LIGATURE

making semi-sense of the chaotic pressures of political life
its terrors

inside
the touching heart of the
universe
of signs
blur spot,
spoil, nomadism
and a rank, sensuous
enfolding

THAT

no matter what consequences

ENGAGES

the geometries of connection

the ferocious questions of making and binding
doing and losing

implacable in their
odd pastness and old loyalties

that demand one pry the covers open, reconstruct witness,

parse the historical saturation of damage

the further temptation of idealizing the damage

but then negotiate
yet another attempt to achieve

AN EDGE

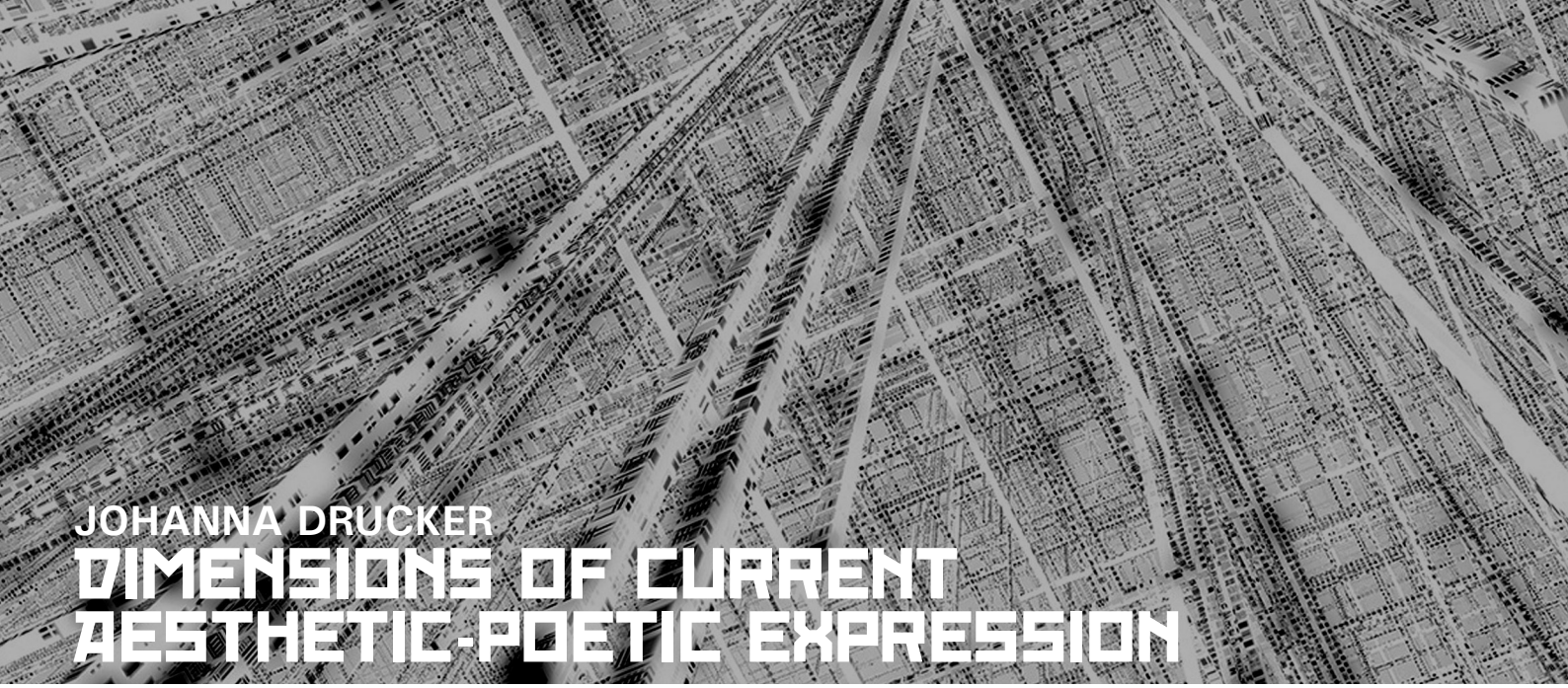
alert,

skeptical,

swerving,

resisting yet formulating
further facets, further lines:
the impossible but potential polygon
of this four-dimensional site, each page a twisted torus to surround
the corporeal throb of this searching.

All Books Gloss Insatiable Desires for a Further Edge.



JOHANNA DRUCKER

DIMENSIONS OF CURRENT AESTHETIC-POETIC EXPRESSION

What will happen if we no longer speak in tongues? Will our inner workings be subsumed by quantum poetic machinery performing mysterious entanglements in a modality that colonizes its operations through our efficient minds? Not sci-fi, but wi-sci-fi, as we become a pervasive penetrating genre vibrating us on its own frequency. Will we think aesthetic activity differently under those circumstances and conditions, if we even know we are inhabited by them?

How do we *think* a work into being now? Not think *about* a work, since that assumes the work is already extant, available as an object of critical attention. But think a work as in: make a meal, construct a building, or compose a piece. And what connection does that *thinking* have to the techno-media-material world we inhabit?

We can mark a point of departure at another historical extreme as well: *The Persians*, Aeschylus's fifth-century play, which I saw in performance this year. I was struck by it, watching the structure of Greek drama coming into being before our eyes, the creation of the chorus and its dialogue with the individual voice. Witnessing an atavistic moment, when an archetype of our dramatic imagination was being wrought, thought, as never before, within the structures and constraints of stage, audience, and performance conceptions.

Rather than approach this work, any work, only in terms of the mediated conditions of its production (its materials, media, structure), I suggest we consider the mediating conditions of conception (how it is thought). We should not just think about how technologies and media affect/drive/permit certain forms of expression, but how we internalize these possibilities in thinking the work we produce.

As a complement to the various aesthetics of new media, can we imagine the critical outlines of a mediating aesthetics? Aesthetics as an active force for generating productive experience. Media specificity, media archaeology, and critical theories grounded in materiality–these focus (usefully) on artifacts, systems of production, and circumstances of/in the material world to read their formal and operational properties. But they don't account for the constitutive patterning, the ways technologies imprint conception as surely as literary forms. If the conception of a work is an individual oral performance in front of a live audience, it is thought differently than if imagined from the start as a sensor-triggered ambient experience across a series of public and private spaces. This is not determinism, but a reflection on the ways possibilities of conception

are shaped. What do we think a work can be across a spectrum of considerations: the base-as-superstructure of matter, material, media, mode, modality and all their infrastructures and disciplines; the critical-social-historical dimensions of training and enculturation, the legacy discourses and the states of the fields; and immersion in the popular public commercial and consumable networks of information, navigation, and entertainment flows. And so on.

What I have just begun to sketch are particularities, historical and specific. But in a larger theoretical sense, I think aesthetic activity is generated between two poles—or axes–of possibility: *the structuring* and *the emergent* conditions of composition. These can be aligned with the diagrammatic and the stochastic. The diagrammatic refers to conventional encoding, the use of syntactic, graphical, legible, and habitual forms and formats as semantic. The diagrammatic is everything we know of forms and through forms and their structuring activity. The stochastic refers to the emergent transformations and formations of language–first as a primary semiosis, a sign system built on radiant immanence, through difference, and then in the arbitrary but living systems of signification and communication that work in collective and cognitive sociality. The stochastic includes what we don't know and can't know, only bring into being. Volumes are latent in the description of each of these, and in the space between them is infinitely generative, a space where the work of literature (and aesthetic activity) resides. Structuring and emergent processes exist in productive tension with each other. The diagrammatic is structural, the stochastic is processual (not procedural, not rule-bound, constraint-driven, or programmatic, not simply algorithmic, but non-linear—generating highly specific but unpredictable outcomes).

The history and theory of literature may be written between these poles. A history of forms–the diagrammatic–is an aspect of what we might term the ergonomic imagination, habituated to embodied modes of thinking, of transforming experience into forms of expression, expressed form. This is a process of imprint and transformation, of internalization within individuals/cultures and external change, marked by shifts of mode, style, interpretation, by the communality of forms and the deviation from their norms. This is a history and critical engagement with embodiment in matter, in material conventions, in conceptions of composition and production, in habits and manners of reception. These features of the literary might, should, could be described diagrammatically—and yet, along the arc of their development, in the eddies and sidetracks, backwaters and mainstreams, the course of stochastic activity shows in every instantiation, every act of productive creative work. Some are better than others, some more interesting, some more engaging. The terms of aesthetic interest are not generated merely through the foundational principles of production, but through social/cultural receptors that take all the resonance and assonance, qualities associative and palliative, stimulating and soporific, and so forth into account. The productive engines are only the fundamental and general principles of production. The qualities are all in instantiation, the particular, the circumstantial, the specific and significantly embodied.

By invoking *the* diagrammatic and *the* stochastic we create reified abstractions that seem difficult to get hold of within a grounded practice or analytic critical approach. They are not, however, ontological categories like "being" and "nothingness," that can't be wrestled to the earth. They are tractable principles of poetic production. The diagrammatic is where writing practices reside—in the forms and informed production of work and its critical reception. Diagrammatic principles are not simply structural, but also, relational, describing all of the part to whole, entity to other, aspects of a work—not just in terms of what it *is* but what it *does*. The workings of a work are diagrammatic in their basic operations, their making of meaning across relations. Stochastic poetics is the force of change and specificity, the particularity that makes poetic acts distinct from other forms of discourse—or not, in accord with the temper of the times or across times.

But where does this leave us now? What is the moment of our moment? Where are we in cultural time with respect to a theory of aesthetic production? Can we engage these principles to see the practices of poetics, poiesis, within the conditions of our time?

Let's turn our attention back to techno-engagement and aesthetics. We know the process of conception

and production are linked, through the ergonomics of composition. So often overlooked, this constrains the imagination as surely as sonnet forms and apps, combinatoric and programmatic modes of thought. The ergonomics of poetic thought are present in the performance of sustained speaking, breathing, the breaking of a line, the un-untterable acts of duration and extension, the affordances internalized as moves, as strategies. I compose a composing algorithm. Parameters of the generative engine are creatively unleashed as protocols. Not new or news—but now a part of thinking, way to describe what we knew already, before. The techniques of prior proceduralists, long ago, were recorded in Gabriel Peignot's 1842 compendium, *Amusements Philologiques*, an inventory of acrostics, magic squares, other complex strictures in the history of literary production. Frederic Forté, in the appendix of his recently published *Minute Operas* (issued in translation by Burning Deck), lists the "fixed forms" on which he drew for his tightly structured works: the bibina, quenina, cural sonnet, corpuscular poem, heterogram and limerick, rondel and renga and terza rima and so on. The list is long and still incomplete, as rule sets continue to be generated.

The point? All constraints are, simultaneously, openings and limits across the multiple modalities of composition/reception: textual, as just noted in the play of forms and rules, but also, graphical, tactile, and spatial features. To think visually/graphically about poetic forms we must have a vocabulary of features drawn from design—know how to mobilize the force of graphic variables to the service of textual composition: size, scale, shape, orientation, color, tone, and position—to which traditional set we add the features of animation: temporality, movement, direction, growth, rate of change and so on. In shifting from the GUI to the TUI, the tactile user interface, our readerly relation becomes more actively physical, not just a matter of fingers tucked into the file of pages, keeping track of multiple sites of reading, but also the link, click, pick activities that have developed into an interface of pinch, swipe, expand, zoom, dive, and meander. But distributed, spatially embedded, and mobile interfaces—the SPUI—now react to our tilt, turn, follow, and avoidance behaviors. Will we soon find ourselves dodging the drones of verse and keeping clear of the surveillance cameras that pump out their persistent couplets and repetitive refrains while allowing the muzak machines to make the supermarket aisles into a naked conceptual terrain? Poetic license might become an act of physical aggression, spatial trespass, or requests for submission in the need for discipline of the wanton world, the potentiality of commercial apps, and modest means. What if isotope poems are let loose to fly? Under whose radar and what remit? Who returns the work to its point of origin or not, resets the poetentiality to start again—below the threshold we know the quantum entanglements work faster than the nano-bot processors who live on lost seconds and stolen time pressure, pumped on atmospheric hype and inorganic inputs, high on silicon, feeding from the differentials they can measure and trade in, like so many hot-shot day-brokers calculating the rise and fall of energy and their ability to take advantage of exchange. Whole clocks can be batteried by the alteration of temperature across a day and a banking of thermal flow. Can the mediation of aesthetic production draw on these sources? Does it already? Is productive energy powered by flux and flow? W.C. Williams, writing long ago from with the subjective experience of polarities, said ride the energy when it is moving and when it stops, do tasks. All media require work, editing in manuscript, proofing type-set script and shifting letters in the form with a tweezer, the surgical strike on language, or cutting and pasting or parsing the code to find the missing bracket, stroke, dot or sigh.

And the time of poetry, what/where is that? Not its timings, which are, again, diagrammatic, but its time and temporalities, which are stochastic, unpredictable, unfolding. Not its era, epoch, age, but its experiential dimension shrinking to a point of awareness that it *is*–a discourse of attention. The call of the procotol—to that attention. Traces left in the changes of a shared mind, the collective bargain of value assessment passes faster than judgment.

Now, only, from the mere stuff of matter we recall that Marshall McLuhan's famous formulation of verbi-voco-visual forms of mediation emerged from the technological context of the mid-20th century: television, radio, film, mass circulation magazines and

print publishing industries. In our current moment, the expressive capacities of media offer other features—elaborated above, animation and motion, but also projection and overlay, holographic and nanoscopic possibilities. New technologies don't determine imaginative work, they are brought into being by such conjurings. Not surprisingly, from the mid-20th century onward the algorithmic, emergent, stochastic, and even quantum capacities of computing have or will become integral to experimental writing. If we ask how the semantics and syntax of such features are finding their way into the vocabulary of poetics, and whether and how these developments will structure works and their reception ahead, we answer our own question in advance by its formulation. We are shifting from just speaking in tongues to being spoken in code and produced in projective space. In a room of directional sensors and a corridor of triggered fragments, the subject positions of production and reception are altered.

We shift to the transient deracinated experiential spacetime, fragile, fleeting, precious, a permanent condition of inventing that already always immersive condition. New? No. But now the technicians, practitioners of the profane, ritualize the passage from one mode of production to the next, archaeologize it, and fetishize, as if matter and material were reifications to be read in their fixity rather than used for the triggering capacity to generate, anew, in each encounter. A work by pen by daylight by evening flame at the case in the stick in the hand through the fingers on a keyboard trained hands typing out chords dictated by the voice transcribed automatically replayed automatally as resistance lowers and the conceptual distinction between back-end programming and front-end display that space where work occurs the work of neurons, bodies, procedures gets characterized as literary, aesthetic, because it stands apart—from what?

Now, to finish, I offer a few speculative questions to those actively engaged in the field of experimental poetics. To what extent does deliberate attention to the changed technological capacities of production have to factor into one's work? How much are we and our processes internalized through the acculturation of daily business—I do my banking in the same movements I used to write, while the physical acts of chopping vegetables or brushing teeth are far from poetic composition. How, why, do, should we mark the change of the basic imaginative ergonomics, procedural parameters, processual capacities for aesthetic work? As we step into and back from frames of critical self-consciousness, work happens and in its working we can see, know, sense something about our times. The question, for the historically self-aware subject-poet-producer is not "How did we get here?" but instead, "Where is the here that we are?" What is the aesthetic work of our time(s)?

STEPHANIE STRICKLAND
SONG OF BUCK-STOP

1ST SONG OF BUCK-STOP: LIVING WITH CONSEQUENCES

neither the sand diviner nor the makeover undercover virtuoso's therapeutic necessarily much less auspicious *what auspices at Aulis* Iphigenia's caustic murder team deciding what to descry

nor spontaneous shift to Asperger expertise mindmeld with 'machine' information that exceeds unaugmented human was there ever any other kind I wonder are we near to now or farther from

lumbering bear life roaming ocean life attacked back in the day a recognized cry—neither flight nor all this light has brought us closer to the sky

2ND SONG OF BUCK-STOP: HEAD & WALL

soggy crystals of honey stitch my donkey head donkey master still drubbing

3RD SONG OF BUCK-STOP: LIVING WITH EQUATIONS, RIEMANN

choric continuum of patches

"I do think that a solution will eventually be found. I don't think it is a result which is unprovable. Maybe though the proof will be so involved that the human brain will not catch up with it." —Atle Selberg

LORI EMERSON & FINN BRUNTON

THE CANON CAT

PROCESSING ADVANCED WORK

In the fall of 2014, Finn Brunton, an assistant professor at NYU, contacted Lori Emerson, Director of the Media Archaeology Lab (MAL) at the University of Colorado, Boulder, about a rare find he came across on ebay: a Canon Cat, which billed itself in 1986 as an "advanced work processor." The MAL wasn't immediately able to purchase the machine; however, Brunton purchased the Canon Cat with the agreement that he'd experiment with the Canon Cat for six months or so, sell it to the MAL, and then he and Emerson would co-write a piece – now, this piece – on the obscure machine from an ever-more distant past. Here, we hope to give you a glimpse into what computing could have been and still could be.

[SHIFT] + [DOCUMENT]

Who will the user be? The shape that early personal computing takes rests in part on this question, with its implicit temporal paradox. The scenario, or persona, or model, or instance of the user threads through the production of the machine, from input devices and performance criteria to software, industrial design, and marketing. We can call it a *user imaginary:* who will sit at the console, who will take up the light pen, what is the room they occupy, what do they want? The imagined subjectivity of the user becomes the object with which some actual person interacts, inclining them one way or another through affordances, design choices making some tasks easy and others difficult, and producing actual subjectivity.

"If the button is not shaped like the thought, the thought will end up shaped like the button." This is Theodor Nelson speaking, coiner of the term

[SHIFT] + [DOCUMENT]

Jef Raskin began to work on designing the Canon Cat after he left Apple in 1982, two years before release of Macintosh. The Cat was then introduced to the public by Canon in 1987 for $1495 – roughly $3100 in 2015. Although the Cat was discontinued after only six months, around 20,000 units were sold during this time. The Canon Cat fascinates me as it was neither behind the times nor ahead of its time – it was actually very much of its time, only a time that does not fit into our usual narrative of the history of personal computing. However, I never would have understood the Cat as a machine of its time if I hadn't had the opportunity to experiment with the one we have in the Media Archaeology Lab. (Just for a moment, in light of how we are now pressured to replace our computers and smartphones after only three to four years, think on how this machine is now twenty-eight years old and still functions perfectly.)

Founded in 2009 and currently part of the University

"hypertext." For purposes of his envisioned system, Xanadu, the user is, well, everyone – "you!," as in the hortatory subtitle of his manifesto *Computer Lib,* "You Can and Must Understand Computers *NOW*" – and therefore the foremost design issue was speed and simplicity of adoption. To encompass the whole of human written activity in one "docuverse" meant the user had to be able to take the system up easily and intuitively: "Any system which cannot be well taught to a layman in ten minutes," wrote Nelson, "by a tutor in the presence of a responding setup, is too complicated." For Douglas Engelbart, whose Augmentation Research Center (ARC) developed many of the core concepts and devices of human-computer interaction, "software would be tailored to a higher need. And if you needed a year learning how to use a new piece of software, hey, it takes time to learn a skill." These users of mice, chording keyboards, and graphical user interfaces would be "intelligence workers," inspired by the computer programmers themselves – and yet, paradoxically, they had to model the potential value of the system for inexperienced users.

In fact, there are layers of paradoxes in the necessary project of imagining the future user: you have to create a "prospective test," constructing a virtual user and then using them to justify and explain how the system was to work. (The system exists because of the user, and the user because of the system.) The computer, as built, has to know something about the user, including what it is that the user knows about the computer. The user-to-be retroactively tweaks the development of the machine now. It's in these odd paradoxes that we can start to coax the Canon Cat out of its historical hiding place and into the record of retrocomputing. It is not so much an artifact immured in the past as it is stranded in the future – a future that never came to pass, one that changes the chronology of personal computing.

What is the Cat? Even the marketing materials created for it answer this question almost entirely in the negative. It has "No menus. No files. No mouse." It is "not an electronic typewriter," "not a word processor," "not a personal computer" – despite having functionality similar to all three. Instead of these established product categories, it is an "office machine," a "Work Processor." It can dial your phone, we are told, and it has "exclusive

of Colorado at Boulder's Department of English, the Media Archaeology Lab (or, sadly, 'MAL' for short) gives students, scholars, and members of the general public access to obsolete, functional media from the early twentieth century to the twenty-first century for hands-on research, teaching, and research creation. In this regard, the MAL is unique. Perhaps most importantly and broadly, the lab turns the concepts of "archive" and "museum" inside out in the interests of disrupting two interrelated, cultural tendencies: a) the tendency to create neat teleological arcs of technological progress that extend from the past to the present and b) the tendency to represent such arcs through static exhibits that display the outside and surfaces of these artifacts rather than their unique, material, operational insides.

The Canon Cat, then, is one of the best examples I've come up with of a machine that disrupts any attempt to narrativize a linear arc of past/present/future that supports notions of progress or even notions of regress. First, this machine is called an "Advanced WORK Processor." Although it looks like a word processor, the Cat was meant to be a step beyond both the IBM Selectric Typewriter and conventional word processors in that it came with standard office suite programs, built-in communications device, a 90,000 word dictionary, and the ability to program in Forth and assembly language. While the Cat was explicitly not a word processor, it was also not supposed to be called a "personal computer" because its interface was distinctly different from both the command-line interface and the Graphical User Interface that, by 1987, had already become inseparable from the idea of a personal computer.

Try to imagine a computer that had no concept of files and no concept of menus. Instead, all data was seen as a long "stream" of text broken into several pages. And so even though the interface was text based (it does not make use of mouse, icons or graphics), its functions were built right into the keyboard.

[LEAP BACKWARD] + AERODYNAMICS

Whereas with a machine that uses a Graphical User Interface (GUI) you might use the mouse to navigate to a menu and select the command "FIND", with the Cat you use the "LEAP" keys. But before I can explain how LEAP works, I need to explain the remarkable way Raskin designed the cursor because the cursor is part-and-parcel of the LEAP function.

Leap keys." To the contemporary eye, seeing this ad in a magazine, the Cat as depicted in line art looked somewhat like an Apple Lisa with differences in proportion and orientation. What is this enigmatic box?

[LEAP FORWARD] + 1982

"In aerodynamics, theory is what makes the invisible plain": so opens the epigraph Raskin selected for an article he wrote in the 1990s about the physics of lift. Why, precisely, does the accelerating plane take off? The teacher's standard explanation did not satisfy sixth-grade Raskin, who wondered how planes could fly upside-down: "I was very frustrated," writes adult Raskin, "and argued until he said, 'Shut up, Raskin!'" This is followed by a dozen pages of lucidly described experiments with paper, spinning balls, airfoils and the Coandă effect (the reason a stream of water from the faucet follows the curve of a surface next to it) – constituting, in the process, a hidden intellectual autobiography. Raskin is not merely disappointed in his sixth grade science teacher ("who could not take the time to listen to my reasoning") but in the library books that agreed with the explanation he had been given. "It was a revelation that I could trust my own thinking in the face of such concerted opposition."

In the flat-wing balsa plane he brought in the next day to demonstrate the flaws in the explanation – which got him sent to the principal – he finds a starting point in a line of technological objects: "My playing with model airplanes had led me to take a major step toward intellectual independence – and a spirit of innovation that later led me to create the Macintosh computer project (and other, less-well-known inventions) as an adult." This emphasis on the immediate and firsthand, on understanding for oneself, explains part of what makes this computer, one of his "other, less-well-known inventions," so deeply of its time that it can disrupt our received chronology. The Cat, as an object, isn't an attempt to replicate an already successful product, or a deliberately futuristic alpha-rollout hoping to stake a claim on relevant novelty for industry. We have plenty of those: countless beige-box window-mouse-and-menu clones of Macs and PCs on the one hand, and the smoking craters of flying cars like the IBM PS/2 and the Sinclair Q(uantum) L(eap) on the other. The Cat is

The Cat's cursor has several states: narrow, wide, and extended. In addition to the variable cursor states, the cursor blink rate also indicates the state of the text. The cursor blink rate has two states: clean (whereby the cursor blinks at a rate of roughly 3 Hz to indicate that all changes to the text have been saved to a disk) and dirty (whereby the cursor blinks at a rate of about 1 Hz to indicate that changes have been made to the text and they have not been saved to a disk).

Leaping, then, is the Cat's method of cursor movement; you can leap forward and backward using the LEAP FORWARD and LEAP BACKWARD keys. While the LEAP FORWARD key is held, a pattern may be typed. While the pattern is being typed, the cursor immediately moves forward and lands on the first character of the first occurrence of the pattern in the text. LEAP BACKWARD behaves the same as LEAP FORWARD except that the cursor moves in the opposite direction through the text. Note that LEAP was, at that time, roughly fifty times faster than the same function on the Macintosh and possibly just as fast as "FIND" is on our contemporary machines.

I've only discussed two features of the Cat – the cursor functionality and LEAP, both of which make it possible to do many more things than we can do today with FIND or control-F or with our generally single-purpose cursor. My point is that, just on the face of it, the Canon Cat disrupts even the most nuanced genealogical accounts of computers and digital devices. Where does a Work Processor fit in the history of computing – a history that nearly always glides seamlessly from IBM Selectric, to kit computers, mini computers, micro computers, word processors and personal computers? More, this disruption only becomes evident when you look not at the Cat's outward appearance, its style and design, but at its functionality.

[LEAP BACKWARD] + ENTERING NONSENSE

And finally, it's important to note the bundle of contradictions and inaccuracies the Cat's functionality brings to light. First, it shows us the contradiction between what we believe is the history of computing versus the disruptions to this story represented by machines such as the Cat. Second it shows us that while, beginning with the Macintosh, Apple may have had an uncanny knack for weaving design into marketing, that certainly wasn't the case across the board. The design and marketing of computers in the 1980s were not necessarily one and the same as Raskin's vision for the machine was

intensely *present,* reflecting a focus on the immediate personal experience of use – it's a phenomenological machine. Theory, for Raskin, when theory is needed, makes plain the invisible process of use and interaction, but it's something that starts with a particular person's experience with an object. It's a balsa plane flying upside-down, not an abstract concern with the Bernoulli Effect. The Cat interferes with our model of computing not because it was a unique experiment, an industrial one-off, but because it is still hard to understand without *using* it; no contemporary parallels exist that can help us fit it into a simple timeline of innovation. The user meets the Cat in what a contemporary reviewer called "the seeming formlessness of the environment" – a blinking cursor in a blank space – and begins to find their way.

[LEAP FORWARD] + YOU MIGHT USE

How does the user get out of a LEAP, if they want to return to their starting point? If the Cat can't find the string of characters you're entering, you are returned to where you were when you hit LEAP. Entering nonsense, therefore, will take you back to your starting point, and Raskin recommended a light slap to the center of the keyboard for this purpose. It's the kind of odd, counterintuitive gesture that could only emerge from actual use (imagine that evolving from a requirements document: "then the user will hit the keyboard …"), and it exemplifies the Cat's strange openness, one of its several contradictions. Graphical interfaces were framed as effortless and therefore liberating – "*naturally* better, easier, friendlier," and therefore freeing users of all kinds to fulfill their potential. The GUI was, in this story, the democratization of computing, opening the tools to all held back by the abstruse command line interface. And yet: "if you are accustomed to the complexity and rigidity of current application packages," writes a reviewer of the Cat in 1987, this new system may take some getting used to, because within its seeming constraints (no files, no menus, no images, no mouse) it is open in unprecedented ways. This is true technically: A device that seems solely meant for writing memoranda is also, as the user learns, a programming environment, a tool for calculating mathematical formulas, an email client, and a proto-Internet system. But the Cat is also open in its seeming constraint in a subtler way.

consistently contradicted by Canon. For example, Canon sold the Cat as a secretarial workstation and therefore represented it in promotional materials as a closed system. While in fact, the Cat was designed not only to integrate with third-party software but it also had a connector and software hooks for a pointing device that could be added on later.

That said, despite Canon's efforts to market the machine as closed, somehow Raskin was able to make sure the Cat came with a repair manual and very detailed schematics for how to dis-assemble and re-assemble every single part of the machine. The Apple Macintosh, by contrast, never came with anything like schematics; in fact, Apple openly discouraged people from opening it up and repairing it themselves, in the same way that our Apple devices nowadays are similarly hermetically sealed.

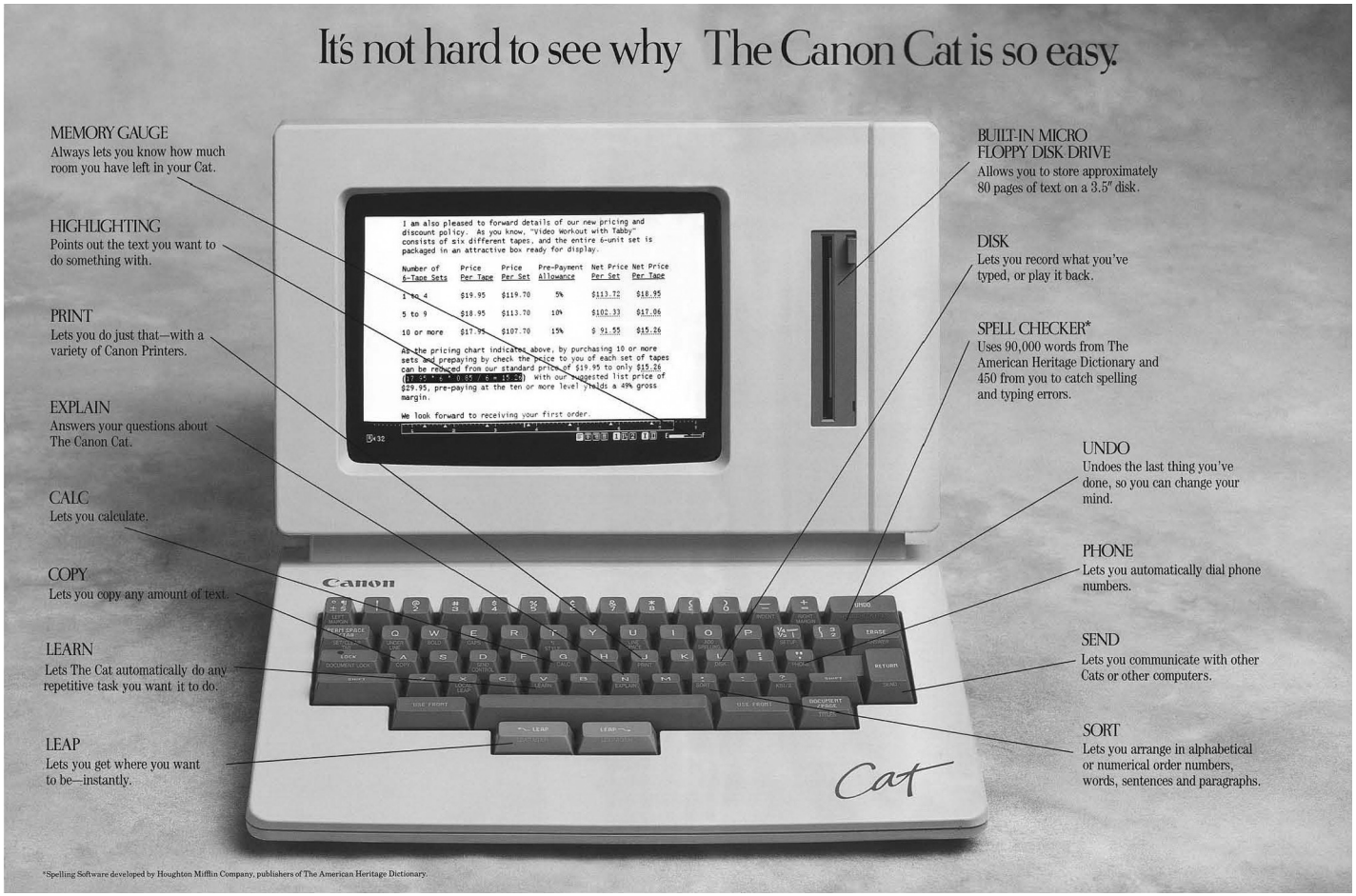
Third, related to my second point above, while the Cat was consistently marketed in terms of speed and efficiency, reinforcing our belief that these are the two markers of progress when it comes to digital technology, Raskin himself seemed to take pride in making heretical statements about how his designs were based on an "implementation philosophy which demanded generality and human usability over execution speed and efficiency." By contrast, every single bit of Canon's promotional material for the Cat – from videos to magazine ads to the manuals themselves – emphasized the machine's incredible speed.

Finally, the Cat clearly contradicts something I wrote about quite vehemently in my book *Reading Writing Interfaces*. Here, I was very critical of Raskin and his work on the design of the Apple Macintosh because I assumed his belief that computers should not be extensible meant that he supported designing computers to be like household appliances as well as closed systems. Looking at the Macintosh, it did indeed seem to be the case that these three things – lack of extensibility that meant lack of programmability in the interests of a computer as appliance – were all interconnected. But the Canon Cat shows us that there isn't necessarily an inherent incompatibility between machines that are programmable and machines that are appliances, or machines that are so easy to use that inserting software on a floppy is like putting a slice of toast into a toaster. The Cat is actually a version of an open system and it's also programmable – something that Raskin believed "can and must be done" otherwise "the computer will become a mere appliance – at best performing a small number of possibly related tasks. What is desired is

It is, after all, a machine in which *everything* becomes the work of writing; all is text. In this, it is as limited, as constrained, as words themselves are – and, paradoxically, as open as letters, memos, novels, stories, poems, accounts, formulas, scripts, essays, notes, executable code. It elicits a strange kind of archaic freedom in the limits of its modeless interface: to learn more (about the system, about the world, about yourself), write more.

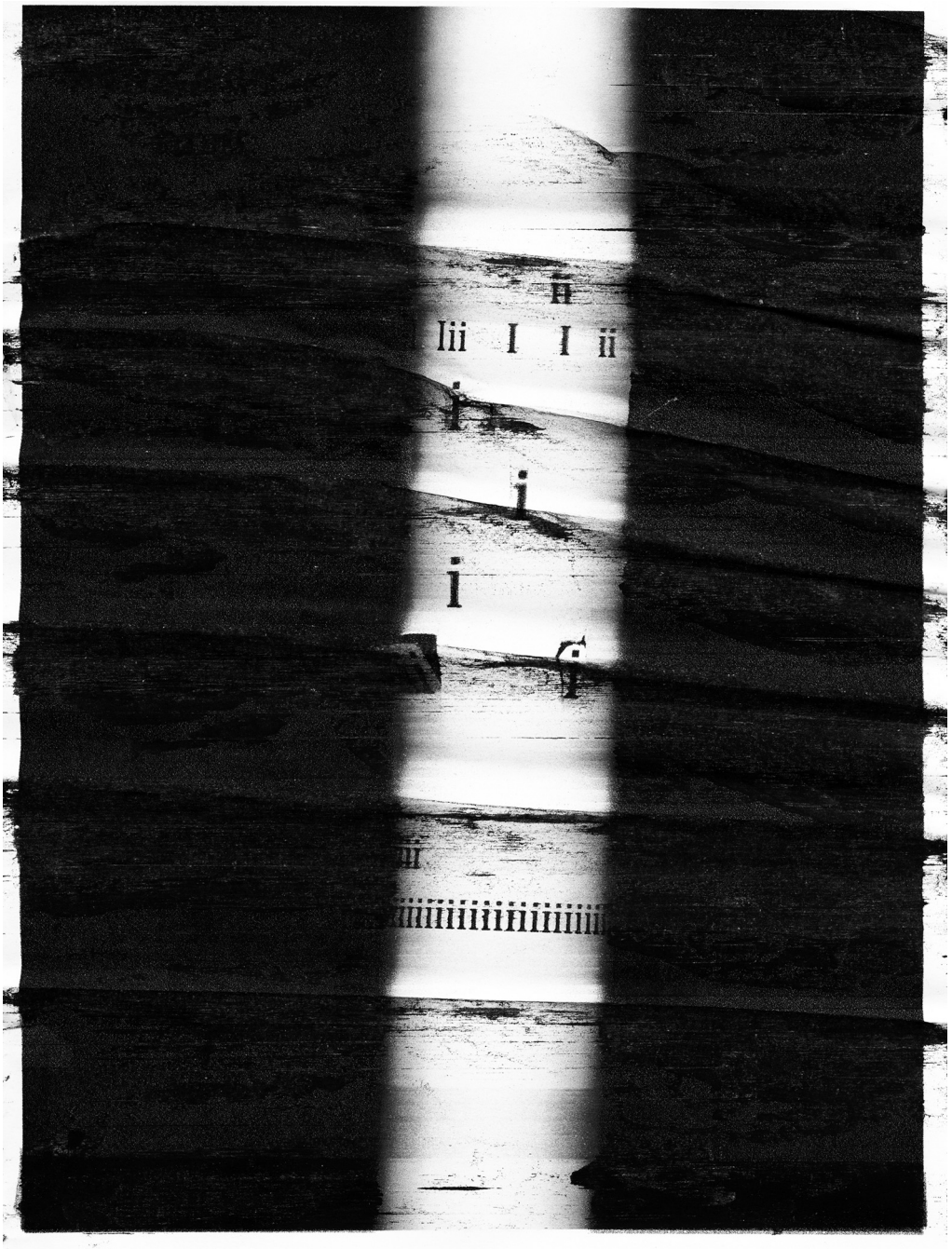
[LEAP FORWARD] + CONTRADICTIONS

for the computer to become an appliance, but not a mere appliance. Its presence must be taken for granted by its user, but in the long run, the act of programming itself must be taken for granted as well." Perhaps in Raskin's words here we can also find one explanation for why the Cat never took hold: the years leading up to the release of the Cat were marked by the quiet dismantling of a culture of programming (with BASIC taught in high schools across North America) that was on its way to being "taken for granted," and in its place, the construction of the user as consumer – as one who merely chooses, clicks, and drags.



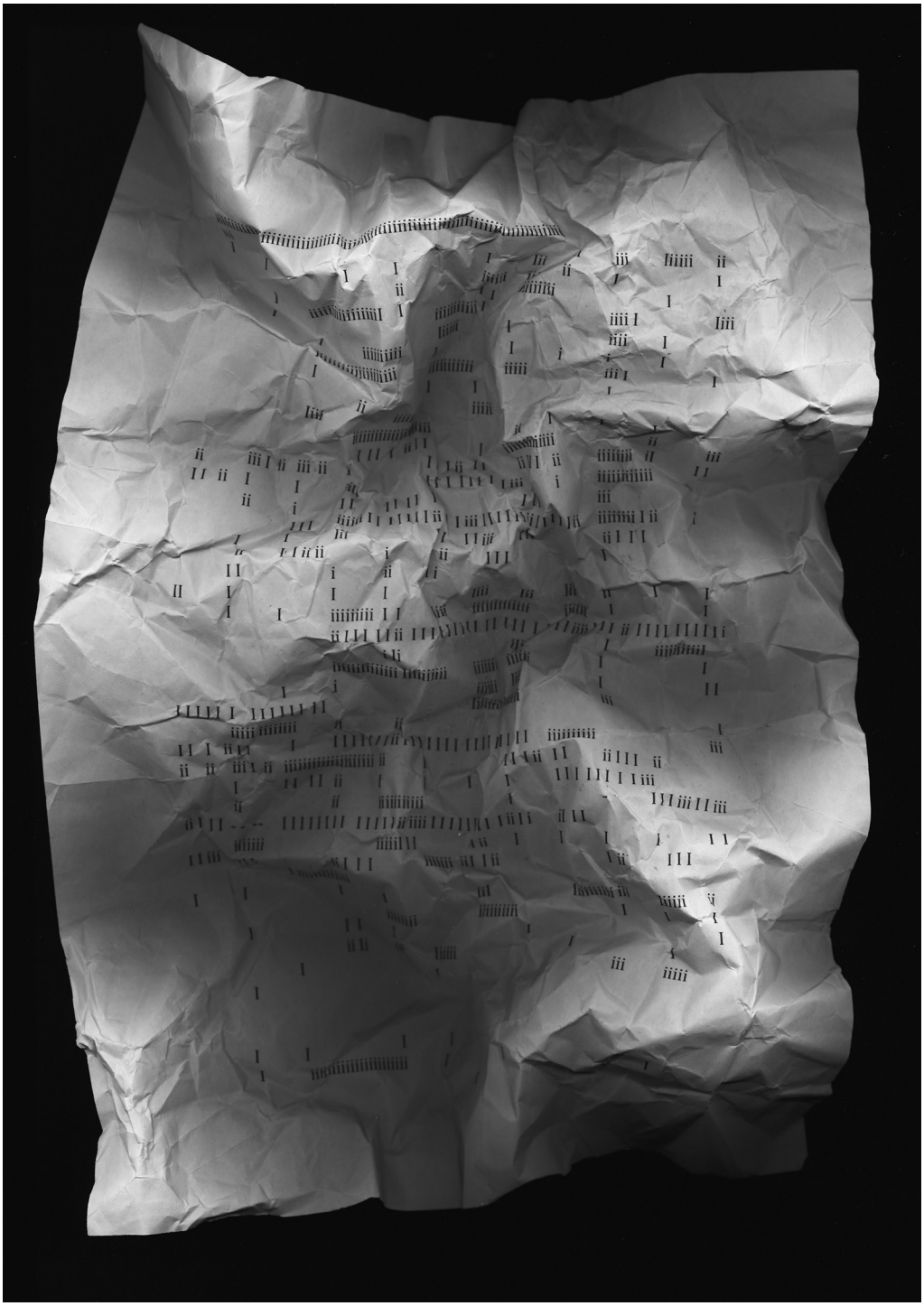
YASMIN HEISLER
TYPE INTO A COMPUTER

40. type into a computer – print – scrunch the printed paper -photocopy the printed scrunched paper – scrunch the printed paper again –photocopy the scrunched paper onto the photocopied paper - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again- re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- re-scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again – re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again – re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- re-scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the photocopied print - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the photocopied print - scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scrunch the printed paper again –re-photocopy the scrunched paper onto the pre-photocopied paper- scan - email



22. type into a computer – print – cut paper - sticky-tape - scan – email

30. type into a computer– print twice – scrunch one paper – cut other paper – type into a computer – print - type into a computer – print – cut paper-paste cut outs and scrunched paper and other cut out on print paper - scan – email



6. type into a computer – print – scrunch paper - scan – email

HELEN GRACE
OUT OF SIGHT: PROOF

The repetitions of the everyday have an unnoticeable – and even invisible – quality. What is the threshold of noticeability in a world of attention-seeking and attention deficit? How do we measure wonder in ordinary living? These experimental images made by an automatic device attached to a body-tripod register the perimeters of perception, using sensors to track daily movement and location. A psychogeographic mapping of the local, the images are made using a Narrative Clip, a wearable device that geo-tags and timecodes the images, uploading them to a server so they can be viewed on a phone or iPad. The process raises questions about the limits of privacy and the ethics of the image in its current metamorphoses. The work consists of image sequences, arranged in 'scrolls' – a daily selection plus a caption over a period of time, like 'proofs' of daily activity – as well as maps of walking tracks and small screens of animated image sequences.

The Narrative Clip is a Swedish-designed, Taiwanese-manufactured device that picks up on what Microsoft's SenseCam started about ten years ago. Initially, such devices were tested in clinical trials to see if they could be helpful in enhancing memory in contexts of memory impairment (dementia, amnesia etc) but I was more interested in the everyday & in the aesthetic qualities of lo-tech images. I'd been doing research on camera phone pictures, lo-tech and ubiquitous media in Hong Kong & I pre-ordered the device, after a Kickstarter campaign in 2012.

I first became interested in 'life logging' tools when I was working with a team of architects in Hong Kong and we wanted to measure and visualise the 'rhythm' of public space in an old area of the city that we were studying, using photography & video with students. The area was in the path of major infrastructure developments (a new metro line, new expensive apartment complexes) & we wanted to register the impact of that, but we were interested in everyday life in this area – the patterns and rhythms of an enduring *locality*. Even though Hong Kong is a global city with everything changing all the time, for those who live in the city, there's a fragile permanence that's been maintained painstakingly at a very grass-roots level by the residents of the older areas. There weren't yet any devices like the Narrative Clip, so we couldn't use it, but when I moved to Taiwan I continued the interest in lo-tech devices. Taiwan has two-thirds of the world market in pure-play semiconductor fabrication & it's a global leader in optronics & photonics research, producing a big market share of plastic lenses, used in most everyday devices.

The Narrative Clip is much smaller than other similar devices (such as Autographer & Parashoot). It doesn't record sound or video, & because you have no idea when it is working, nor what it's seeing, it's completely random and very Cagean. Sometimes the sensors misfire & this produces beautiful abstract images of machine noise, which represent a kind of 'temperature' of the device.

My current project involves daily use of the device either for a year, or until I lose the device or until it stops working – whichever event comes first. Each day I select one image, caption it & upload it to Facebook.

I started the project to observe everyday life in Australia after nearly eight years living in Asia & trying to figure out why everything has become so weird in this place I thought I knew.

Day 15: June 2: Pulvis et umbra sumus (we are but dust and shadows)

Day 16: June 3: Uneventful

Day 17: June 4: Pedestrian

Day 18: June 5: Sitting on Eames

Day 32: June 19: Back in the city where I used to live

Day 33: June 20: Qingming Shang He Tu in the bank

Day 34: June 21: Wanchai walk

Day 35: June 22: An airport somewhere after little sleep

Day 52: July 9: Stand-up writing routine - walking, composing before deadline

Day 53: July 10: Flyover

Day 54: July 11: Fresh water for freesias

Day 55: July 12: Weekend treasure hunting

Day 64: July 21: may the road rise to meet you

Day 65: July 22: some days, the trees swerve to meet you

Day 66: July 23: the view from here

Day 67: July 24: ... through the ceiling - in the Italian village

Day 68: July 25: the music of the chairs

VANESSA PLACE

EMPIRE AESTHETICS

IT'S NOT THE POINT, IT'S THE PLATFORM. DETROIT MODEL.

[KEYNOTE, PRAGUE MICROFESTIVAL, 11 MAY 2014]

As you know, an aphorism is a pithy saying that, once said, seems so perfectly concentrated as to cause all hearers to smack their foreheads in recognition and regret. Recognition in instant comprehension, regret in the shame felt at not thinking of it first, or at least sooner. I am a poet, a writer, an artist, all of sorts, and, most recently, CEO of VanessaPlace Inc, the world's first transnational poetry corporation. My aphorism for the contemporary imaginary, for today, is simply this: "Your affect is our product." I will try to sprinkle my talk with other aphorisms for your contemplation, and, possibly, pleasure.

The aphoristic form, which may include bumperstickers, soundbites, slogans, and licks of lyric poetry, is particularly suited to a talk about the contemporary imaginary, by which I mean to include both visual art practices and literary art practices, and all that lies between. For the contemporary smoothes away such genre distinctions, not the least in terms of pleasure. What I promise you today is the joy of this frictionlessness. And all its dangers. Such as the fact that the very title of my talk is too neat, too much of a meme. Whenever something is a meme, you can be sure that it is something suitable for swallowing. It is the essence of frictionlessness.

In today's capitalism, language is considered suspect as the primary mover of product, or, more accurately, language *is* product. Thus, the authors of the prescient *Empire* (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri) argue that capitalism now knows no borders but only frontiers – the model for the global empire is not the imperial colonialist practices of the monarch, but the democratic constitution of the United States, with its positivist model of power as networks of affiliation and self-re-defining identities. Ergo, in empire capitalism, language orders subjectivities, and that "the legitimation of the imperial machine is born at least in part of the communication industries… it is a subject that produces its own image of authority."[1] For the moment, it is enough for me to note that image is *you* – and we will return to this in a moment. Again, from *Empire*: "Today productivity, wealth, and the creation of social surpluses take the form of cooperative interactivity through linguistic, communicational, and affective networks."[2] And fair enough.

But let's add, for aesthetic purposes, that contemporary capitalism is also what has been termed semiocapitalism, in which what is traded are signs and signifiers, a

1 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001) 33.

2 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 294.

technology-based enterprise whereby "the soul itself is put to work"[3] in a "new affective/cognitive/project-form capitalism."[4] Both rubrics work within a system that works, 24/7, a time outside or within all time, during which, frowns another critic, "the demand for mandatory 24/7 immersion in visual content effectively becomes a new form of institutional super-ego"[5] where the "individual becomes "a permanent site of data-harvesting and surveillance" leading to creation of "inanimate impersonations rather than extensions of self…a simulated release from the hindrances of being alive."[6] This last bit is rather silly, however, as it is predicated on an old idea of life and self, a postmodern notion of passivity in the face of the spectacle rather than what I would call a properly conceptualist concept of complicity in the society of the surveilled. For the contemporary imaginary is, above all else, a participatory project.

I would like to quote at some length what seems to me the perfect anthem for the ideological present, now slightly dated. From Britney Spears' 2013 hit single, "Work Bitch":

You wanna hot body
You want a Bugatti
You want a Maseratti
You better work bitch
You want a Lamborghini
Sip martinis
Look hot in a bikini
You better work bitch
You wanna live fancy
Live in a big mansion
Party in France
You better work bitch

I would like to note there is no written comma in the lyric ("work bitch"), though one is implied in her video performance ("work, bitch"). It is also important to note that the motivational injunctive to (or to be a) "work bitch" is followed by Spears' inspirational:

So hold your head high
Fingers to the sky
Now they don't believe ya
But they gonna need ya
Keep it building higher and higher
Keep it building higher and higher

The video, which you must watch immediately – those in the back can easily do so, those in the front can do so discretely – and, this will be another moment of our shared surveilling – is a perfect pastiche of soft domination/subordination scenarios, vague lesbianism, sharks, and champagne. We can think about what these things have in common in terms of liquidity, openness, consumption, acquisition, and the insatiable, relative to the death drive, which is most easily imagined as the thing that propels the cartoon character to continue running, remaining temporarily aloft, after he's gone off the cliff.

Now let's compare this to an excerpt of contemporary American lyric by the institutionally rewarded (Pulitzer Prize, chair at Harvard, etc) Jorie Graham, from a poem titled "Employment"[7]:

….waiting all day again in line till your number is
called it will be
called which means
exactly nothing as no one will say to you as was promised
by all eternity "ah son, do you
know where you came from, tell me, tell me your story as
you have come to this
Station" – no, they
did away with
the stations
and the jobs
the way of
life

and which ends with the exhortation:

The thing to do right
away
is to start counting, to say it is my
turn, mine to step into
the stream of blood
for the interview,
to say I

3 Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2009) 116.

4 Martin Saar, Introduction to "New Spirit of Criticism? The Biopolitical Turn in Perspective," *Texte zur Kunst* 81 (2011): 132.

5 Jonathan Crary. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London: Verso, 2013) 47.

6 Crary. *24/7*, 104-105.

7 Jorie Graham, *Place: New Poems.* (New York: Ecco Press, 2012).

can do it, to say I
am not
one, and then say two, three, four, and feel
the blood take you in from above, a legion
single file heading out in formation
across a desert that will not count

So you see how what used to be separately called high and low culture, or visual/video and lingual/poetic aesthetic products perfectly compliment and conserve today's semiotic economy: both promise freedom, one through the constancy and self-reward of work, the other through the working persistence of individuation, though individuation and reward in both cases occurs collectively, in formation – single-file, so to speak – which is the only proper form of individuation today. Spears promises liberation via voluntary enslavement, using an "I" that is entirely undifferentiated and unidentified (or, more properly, identified only via the "you" who are all the other "I"s, which then gives one the power of the purse, and here's where a pun works well – *purchasing* power, meaning the equation of the power of capital with the power of purchase, of having a firm place, a good foothold, a spot for climbing, for leveraging. Graham's call to arms is dissociative, advocating a libratory nostalgia for the many little "I"s that one imagines one is that also assures one is the master of one's own mentality. Spears' call is for the young, who believe themselves strong; Graham's is aimed at the middling ages, who believe themselves wise. Both Spears and Graham champion all individual "I"s to band together and insist on "my turn," that clarion call to nothing less than self-esteem through selfregard, that is to say, the purity of self-interest. Self-interest, it should be remembered, is a form of self-regard. And like all motivational speakers, both Spears and Graham hold themselves out as exemplars of all they promise is possible for you. For, today, the revolution will be, must be, personalized.

Now let's compare these gestures to the first book of poems by my own VanessaPlace Inc, a chapbook of 20 one-dollar bills, titled *$20*, which was sold – and sold out – at $50 a copy. A book no one can now buy. Though, of course, almost anyone can have. Perfectly transparent, perfectly liquid. Or, as described in my launch address, a duly modified version of Steve Jobs' iphone launch, something "where art is life and life is art, where it's all fantasy and *all* reality." Cultural capital "you can spend."

This is not about globalization or even globalism. This is about currency. We live, meaning those of us marginally interested in the topic at hand, in a fluid society – sharks and champagne, lesbianism and the flow of communal blood. Some relevant aphorisms:

Information is architecture.

Navigation is content.

This is most easily seen in social media, such as Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, etc. The unit is the individual subject, the "I," personalized. The information creates an infrastructure that is so custom-made that the uniformity of the meta-structure is unimportant. Happily, I am always surrounded by friends, however I define them, and my language clipped to fit a certain template, numeric, as it turns out, in any event, digestible. As with my content – for in Facebook, I am always content – I "like." My like is a smooth pure linguistic surface – frictionless. But for those who know, they know. One "like" is sorrow as the passing of a parent or the loss of job, another pure pleasure at yet another cat video. I am a poet. Poets put their public appearances on Facebook, as well as their moods. Given that poetry has a tradition of aestheticized marketing of the individual soul, caught, since the Romantics, in its moment of self-regard – turned outwards, plated for contemplation and identification by all the other souls. And how is this different from the artist as author? Sometimes I appropriate their status updates – all appearances are the same, whether emotional or promotional. Sometimes this makes me very unpopular: I was recently the topic of criticism after reposting the status update of a successful poet/professor announcing the upcoming publication of her latest collection by a large New York publisher. Criticized primarily for what was seen as my mocking her with my reframing. My mantra here is "never apologize, never explain." For, I would like to note, on Facebook, as in other aestheticized environments (as the police are sometimes understood as a pseudo-military organization, particularly in times of domestic unrest, perhaps social media could be called today's pseudo-art market), all language is the same. Equally fluid, equally mobile, equally tailor-made

to suit your self-interests, to move easily from affinity to affinity, from shopping for a sofa to seeing that sofa pop up above my mailbox. Everything is what I will it to be because everything is *like* (as if) I would have it.

Céline said: "There's no escaping American business."

I say, "there is no escaping American English."

I am obviously American. One trait of Americans is that Americans identify themselves as Americans. This is because we believe in the synecdoche (a Mexican is not American, they are Mexican, but an American could well be a Mexican) as well as the universal specifier ("all men are created equal," etc). We absorb what comes our way, we expand our definitions as easily as our market shares. There are no genres, no genders, no games but common rules for playing. Like grammar, which, as Wittgenstein knew, always shimmers in the tension between the rules of logic, which cannot recognize nonsense, and the rules of ordinary use, which accepts it as a constituent boundary. For example: *A rose is a rose is a rose*. This is an American masterpiece because a fully logical sentence whose ordinary grammar perfectly coincides with its comprehension. It also demonstrates the American love of violence. For Americans are violent in the way of fundamental violence: that which understands that history is wrenched in the present, and is thus always a victory story. In other words, our today is always written in and with the cool violence of our contemporary, our ordinary, our casual, ordinary logics of what is likeable, what is to be liked, what is fluid, what is to be, in a difficult word, liquidated. This too, is a trait of empire aesthetics.

So we have three notions of empire aesthetics, then: first, the work must work fluidly, with a certain overt frictionlessness. Second, that the work permits a continual selfregard. Not a subjective self-regard, but the self-regard of what I have called the *sobject* – that perfect amalgam of subject and object that we all are and that we see ourselves as. Just as in social media, where we present ourselves cut as we would have others see us.

This is to be distinguished from the narcissistic self-regard found in 1970s video art by critic Rosalind Krauss, which was predicated on a concept of video as using the human body as its primary instrument, where, as Kraus puts it, "the body or psyche" acts "as its own surround, and the video's mirror-reflection (the product of video's dual ability to record and transmit), creates a "collapsed present," "illusionistically erasing the difference between subject and object."[8] But video is tape, which is physical, and video is postmodern, which maintains the illusion of illusion, and the now-quaint separation of time and space. Put another way, in the digital age, the bios that was the basis of biography has been supplemented by the cogito that would create a cogitography. Unlike postmodernism, there is no sense of a meta *i.e.* an outside from which we can indicate the imaginary or the illusion, just an experiential present which is already imagined. Too, there is no presumption that the cogito be embodied. It may be materialized in some fashion (via primate or another database), but mostly it's a moment, a process in play.

Which brings us to our third feature of empire aesthetics: that the work exist simultaneously. Not ahistorically, but fully contemporary, like the mind that makes itself up as its ongoing occupation. Because of the digital, poetry now has the *donnée* of painting (the condition of space), and visual art that of poetry (the condition of time). I can wallpaper anything with image/language sorted via algorithms of attention market cache, not bound by time or place, though certainly found in time and place. Which then brings us, finally, to the contemporary avant garde, and a little bit of the work of VanessaPlace Inc. Another aphorism:

The platform is the message.

For poetry, this means that for the first time we must consider the properties of the platform as well as the form when assessing content. What poem is properly spat onto a block of paper, then bound, what lyric incorporates the open yet hermetic aesthetics of a youtube video, and should Jorie Graham's affirmations be printed on soft buttermilk biscuits? A poem may appear as a vial of dirt, such as my recent *Poetry Pays*, a small vial of earth taken from our groundbreaking ceremony dedicating the Museum of Language, just behind the Metropolitan Museum – finally a multimillion dollar institution dedicated to the language that underlies, and now trumps, art – or a QR code, readable via the camera icon on your smart phone. VanessaPlace Inc. has a poem consisting of 24 QR codes coming out soon, and we are very excited. We can think a little here on

8 Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism," *October* 1 (Spring, 1976): 53-54, 57.

how little difference there may be between the measure and kind of capital required to read a poem on a page and that required to read a poem on a phone. I know a Mexican poet who is building an opera from chatroom discussions of the Mexican drug murders. While this engages the more specifically Mexican literary tradition of the baroque, it also calls into play the Romantic ideal of the opera as melodrama, as universal spectacle, not language-dependent, but language-transcendent. Not dependant on puns or les jeux de mots, but on the understanding common to us: murder is murder, just as the condemned man speaks for himself. In other words, whereas post-war concrete poetry aimed at cross-lingual legibility, contemporary work is readable because it is so thin. Put another way (and I say this often for a reason), when we now think of "virtual reality" the stress falls not on "reality" as compared to or as modified by "virtuality" but on virtuality as a measure of the real – appearance, like the sun, is the thing itself.

Here is an aphorism by Wallace Stevens, apropos of the sun: "What it seems it is and in such seeming all things are."

The problem, of course, being that the concrete poem was praised for its apolitical ambitions, the conceptual poem damned for its amoral affect. This is one little difference between art and poetry: poetry trades on sincerity, even in irony. Art trades on itself, which is always sincere.

It is the state of art, and has been for some time now, that anything can be art. As recently pointed out by art historian Thierry de Duve, this does not mean that everything *is* art, but rather that it is the condition of all art that anything can *be* art. This is the predicate that all artists begin with.[9] As noted, I am a conceptual poet; conceptual poetry as I define it, is poetry that is not self-referential. It does not direct its interpretation. Its surface may be as dumbly reflective as glass, as terribly ordinary as a traffic report, or as banally terrible as a report of rape. Much of my work engages in appropriation. It is my belief and suggestion that authorship, as such, is arbitrary. It's ownership that counts, which I may have stolen from Richard Prince. I forget. The point is, I *use* to be an artist.

Conceptualism is allegorical. It is not allegorical of this or that, for that was the job of postmodernism, of Language poetry, to point to its allegories, to direct its arguments. Conceptualism insists that the text is as dead as the author, and it is entirely left to you to determine what to make of it. You can like it, or you can like it. Though there is still a question, in some cases, whether there is an "it" to make something of. Such as in my book, *Die Dichtkunst* (the art of lyric poetry) 383 pages of the letter "U," with 11 pages of Us crossed-out in the middle. A work that on the one hand reads as entirely a work of lyric poetry when read in English ("you, you, you"), on the other hand, may be as obviously written in German, given the title, where it means something else altogether (visual shorthand for "und, und, und," which would not be said, or, as the simple letter "u," pronounced like a ooh, ooh, ooh, the sound of satisfaction or a slight kick in the gut). Thus, moreover absolutely failing as any kind of translation though it is absolutely limpid, absolutely frictionless, absolutely inert. Dumb as a dummy, the thing ventriloquists use. For in this game of voice-throwing, I play the part of the dummy, the mouthpiece for you, you, you.

And note that this is absolutely also an engagement with what Joyce called the verbicovisual. To understand *Die Dichtkunst*, one may know something of language, something of writing, something of art. Or know nothing at all but its pure platform properties: paper, image, sound. Similarly, Marjorie Perloff has pointed out that Christian Marclay's *The Clock* is an exemplar of verbicovisual conceptual art. *The Clock* is, as you perhaps know, a 24-hour durational montage work that, as you probably know, collages sound and image clips featuring films in which a clock is shown or the time otherwise referenced. *The Clock* is shown "on time." If it is 9:49 on screen, it is 9:49 where you sit. In other words, the work is not "about" time because, strictly speaking, it is time. *The Clock* is a clock. It is also an allegory of, possibly, a clock. All art is now site-contingent.

The critical inquiry was once how to properly interpret a work as a work within its genre or medium-specificity. Thus, the Graham poem would traditionally be read as an example of a kind of post-war lyric, commonly called postmodern. Discursive, as multi-faceted as the polished treasures within. The back cover of *Place*, the book that contains Graham's, "Employment," and how could I resist stealing this, says that she explores the devaluation of "'mere' subjectivity," and calls for "rejoicing in" "a

9 Thierry De Duve, "Pardon My French," *Artforum* (October 2013): 249.

more responsive and responsible place of the human in the world." First, note that "she" explores. Not the poems. The author lives, which is good news to all of you. Second, that the call for responsibility is a call to "rejoice" in the poetic labor of meaning-making. But a fully contemporary critique of *Employment* considers Graham's employment as attested to in the content and production of the book (who put it out, who pimped it, who now pampers it), and how the binding of a book provides the ballast weighing reader to writer, giving the former a literal purchase on the latter. Versus the book of dollar bills, which may mean nothing to you, or quite a lot, depending on your purse, depending on your country of origin, depending on whether you treat it as an artifact or as something to spend. How do *you* feel about the coolness of cash, a Jackson lying along your thigh? Or that *these* twenty dollar bills has, by virtue of my authorship, and the shareholding VanessaPlace Inc., been segregated into a very small (a limited edition) group of dollar bills, worth far more than a mere $20. And while it may be very important to me as a matter of the role of cultural capital in empire aesthetics to use my own work as exemplar, in terms of affect as aesthetic product, it's all about *you*, as art is, as poetry must be. Duchamp once wondered if it was possible to make non-retinal art. And while I am positively sure it is possible to make non-retinal poetry, I wonder if it is possible to make poetry that is punctum-free. How do you feel about that?

For this is the platform predicate of poetry today – we make you matter.

For in this, *Toi la verite, tu parles*.

Paul Valéry said that art is the "passage from the arbitrary to the necessary," evoking the modernist idea of the esse in aesthetics. Postmodernism shucked the *esse* while retaining a meta-move that argued for allegorical specificity – a directed reading, discursive, perhaps, but directed. Another form of essentialism. Which, by the way, is what maddens my critics: if they don't know from the thing what they are to make of it, then they demand that I clarify. Are my intentions good? Are they instructive? Am I criticizing the topic at hand or simply replicating the problem? Should they be we, for purposes of our mutual public performance, or should they stay away, keep themselves – and poetry – in the preserve of potential purity or the purity of potential? To which I can only respond, "yes." Always respond "yes." That is my advice.

One of the critiques of contemporary art is that if it is anything, how do we critique? Which is another way of asking how can one control the interpretation. Here I would point out that we only fear those we consider lower than ourselves: our nightmares concern snakes and random marauders, not committee chairs and debt collectors. We do not *sub*consciously fear our betters – ideologically or otherwise. What does my work mean? You tell me.

Poets post anti-capitalism messages on Facebook. Poets post images taken from international art exhibitions of art that protests capitalism on Facebook. Artist post antiglobalization messages on Facebook. Artists post language taken from international pundits decrying globalization on Facebook. Everyone posts various posts that demonstrate their own authenticity, and the authenticity of those they valourize, the valourization being based on the fair market value, in semiotic terms, of authenticity. Or what seems authentic. In the criminal defense game, we have a saying: it doesn't matter if it's true. It only matters if it's believable. I have a series of poems called "Self Portraits" taken from other's impressionistic selfies, as posted on Facebook. To the degree it offends, it calls into question who, that is to say what, has been offended. It is the thing itself that comes to pass, in all its platform variations, and, to paraphrase Jung on Dada, we're too schizophrenic to be idiotic.

And so, we, meaning me, meaning you, meaning this site that is temporarily us, are no longer talking about an ethics of ambiguity, but an ethics *if* ambiguity. When I first wrote this, there was an article online, or at least a link posted on Facebook to the effect that more people are watching Banksy's Syrian war video than videos of actual Syrian war footage. My non-ironic question at the time was what is the difference, which was borne out by the article itself, in which the commentator wondered, "what will be the impact of Banksy wading into the Syrian Civil War?"[10] This was also not an ironic question. My question now is, you wish.

You better work bitch.

10 Hrag Vataranian, "Banksy's Busy Weekend NYC Projects: Diorama, Heart, Syrian War," *Hyperallergic*, October 7, 2013. [http://hyperallergic.com/86929/banksys-busyweekend-nyc-projects-diorama-heart-syrian-war/]

CONCEPTUALISMS

JEROEN NIEUWLAND INTERVIEWS VANESSA PLACE

Jeroen Nieuwland: An interesting aspect of conceptual poetry is the confusion it generates. Many people do or do not consider themselves and others to be Conceptual poets. Yet by far most discussions of Conceptual poetry describe rather than define conceptualism. Do you feel this confusion – about what actually constitutes a Conceptual poem – is productive, corrosive, or perhaps of no consequence, to the practice of conceptualism?

Vanessa Place: All of the above.

JN: One of the only definitions I *have* found is your claim that "poetry is that which occurs within the institution of poetry."[1] Here you are defining poetry in general. Do you have a different definition for conceptual poetry? Or is all poetry somehow conceptual, in the strict sense of being a cut made in the world that is presented as poetry?

VP: To say that all poetry is conceptual is a statement about cognition, not poetry. In the sense that all poetry involves linguistic recognition, cerebral machinations, yes, of course, but not in a strict sense of a poem being conceptual versus retinal, for example. I define conceptual poetry strictly speaking as poetry that is not self-reflexive. It does not say anything beyond its saying. In this sense, conceptual poetry is speculative poetry.

JN: You have said somewhere that you prefer to speak of Conceptual poetry, in distinction to Conceptual writing. I assume this is because you are engaging specifically with the discourse of poetry and not writing per se. Are there some texts you would consider more as Conceptual writing than poetry?

VP: Should I say yes? Yes.

1 Vanessa Place, "A Poetics of Radical Evil," *Lana Turner Journal,* Issue 3, Fall 2010, http://www.lanaturnerjournal.com/archives/vanessaplaceradicalevil.

JN: Do you feel part of a defined community of Conceptual poets? More or less so now than when American Conceptual poetry first emerged? Is community important for your practice?

VP: There were certainly fewer Conceptual poets before, and, like grapes, one tends to hang together better in smaller clusters. Certain geographies, like certain personalities, tend toward community. New York conceptualists have fashioned a stronger community than those doing similar work elsewhere, and New York seems to encourage such alliances, and the people that enjoy such alliances. My orientation is perhaps more difficult. As you know, "collaboration" has many connotations.

JN: Many poets I speak to feel American Conceptual poetry is derivative and opportunistic, not necessarily agree with these views. But what for you is novel about the present iteration of American Conceptual poetry as it first emerged? And in particular, perhaps your own practice?

VP: As if derivation and opportunism were bad things… and what art is not a derivative? Too, must we still imagine that novelty is the primary criterion of avant gardeism? If we must, then I suppose the novelty I offer is absolute evacuation. All poetry to date has suffered from sincerity. I liberated poetry from sincerity.

JN: Is or should there be qualitative / formal differences between American Conceptual poetry and other Conceptualisms, for example Russian Conceptualism?

VP: There are certainly differences, important ones. The trick is to educate oneself enough to recognize them, and perhaps begin to understand their workings. For example, the Russians often embed a specific literary/art antecedent in their work, presenting the piece as an engagement with/comment upon the earlier project. Americans are nervous about wearing such affinities on the sleeve, though like to annotate. I suspect the former has to do with a desire to inscribe history and the latter a desire to be inscribed by history.

JN: By now American Conceptual poets have collaborated with poets from many countries, but at first this was less the case, no? In your view, is any substance to this criticism that American Conceptual poetry is / was too Americo-centered, & / or not giving enough recognition to previous & other traditions?

VP: Yes.

JN: Do you think that Elvis has left the building? That there is a place for all kinds of poetry? Does a simple love sonnet written today in the same style say Petrarch or Shakespeare wrote them have any value, poetic or otherwise? Is Conceptual poetry the most relevant poetic response to our times?

VP: This is a very deep question. Does a poem have value apart from its absolute contemporanity? I think yes, that there are great poems that stay great, that will stay great. There are also poems that may not be great to me, may say nothing to me, for a series of more or less complex interactions between my imaginary and the imaginary of the presupposed reader. Thus the transparent form is the most liquid form and content. This is demonstrated in both Minimalism and Pop art. Assuming, for the moment, that poetry has traditionally pimped its punctum, my goal would be to create a punctum-less poetry, at least insofar as conceived by me. In this sense, conceptualism is the most liquid, frictionless, and therefore most relevant, form of poetry. At, or of, the moment.

JN: One Conceptual poet recently mentioned that he missed writing, producing language instead of practicing appropriation. Your have written some very beautiful, singularly experimental texts, mainly the kaleidoscopic novel *La Medusa* and the 50 000-word sentence *Dies: A Sentence*. However, or late your work has been more purely appropriative. How does this feel for you personally, corporeally? Does working on an appropriation piece feel the same as writing? Do you miss writing fiction? Or do your essays and reviews (which are so sharp and infallibly crafted) perhaps replace this urge?

VP: Making or taking – it's all the same to me.

JN: On a similar note, Conceptual poetry points to poetry as something which is highly medium-bound: with the mainstream use of interfaces such as Facebook, Twitter, which is very conducive to sparse epigrammatic statements, new textual forms emerge. You have presented a series

of theses (that have appeared as Tweets on your account before) as poetry. Do you take social networks as specific art forms, are they separate from or included within your poetic production? Are new technologies being recognized enough/too much by the poets?

VP: Social media are mediums and should be treated as such. Which returns to your earlier question about generative or generated writing. Fiction, like poetry, can be considered both as discourse and medium, like sculpture and painting (here perhaps we start to see another distinction between narrative and *Augenblick*); it is as much of a mistake to assume every painting bespeaks a painter as it is to understand every novel as casting a novelist. I wrote fiction to create a work of fiction; I wrote poetry to create a work of poetry. These are medium-specific, project-specific gestures. The discursive engagement is another matter. I use Twitter as a medium for a poetic engagement, which is like and unlike *PoetryPays*, a poetry product (vanessaplace.biz), as you note below, that makes another kind of argument for what is a poem, and for what poetry *is.*

JN: You have been / are much criticized, especially for your *Tragodia* series of appropriations of legal statements of sexual abuse victims. (How) do you feel about this? Do you seek controversy? Are you indifferent to it?

VP: I am indifferent to controversy as such. Provocation is easy; it's the thinking through the provocation that's difficult. Though that's admittedly harder on them than on me. In any case, the real effort is to resist whatever temptation there is to exculpate or expatiate oneself. As an aside, it might be useful to consider that *provocatio* was an appeal in Imperial Roman law – the legal right to appeal to the people.

JN: On a related note, poetry is still generally seen as something that delights and instructs (to paraphrase Horace). Yet your work often can be instructive, but certainly not delightful. You have spoken before of horrified, angry people asking you after reading from *Statement of Facts*, what you had inflicted on them. The philosopher Slavoj Žižek recently claimed that "language is our torture house." We do not inhabit and use language; rather language captures and tortures us. Is this perhaps close to your poetics of radical evil? That poetry should be in some way torturous to offer some truth? Or can a truthful poem also be pretty and comfortable?

VP: The pretty and comfortable is its own torture, yes? That said, the word "house" is problematic; "home" would be better here, the place we call our own.

JN: In the same article, Žižek quotes a statement by the Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek, "Language should be tortured to tell the truth." What is your take on this statement? Because although you do present torturous acts (of rape and other abuse, really quite unbearable to read) you do not torture language itself (in your work using appropriation as method); in fact, you not making any changes, merely presenting it as it exists in the world.

VP: Language tortures us, we torture language. We are all of us tortured and torturers, delighting in this dispair (sic). The sic, there, I think, works properly. Put another way, it's not desire I'm after, but drive. The meaning-making machine, whether dully or exquisitely conceived, or conceived consciously. In terms of change, the change has already been made, first, at the level of initial representation; second, at the site of presentation; and third, at the point of representation as reception. In terms of my representations of rape and abuse, I have said that for the first time in literature, rape is not a metaphor. There is another interesting question in whether rape is ever a metaphor, or whether it is ever not a metaphor, but that's outside this exchange. What is inside is the relationship between torture and cruelty. I am interested in the cruelty of language.

JN: If poetry is a kind of pointing (as you have also said), then one effect is that the distinction between reader and writer blurs (similar to much technology today (e.g. compiling a YouTube playlist requires both writing and reading). Is there a fundamental, relevant difference between the two?

VP: No, though I would add that there is no significant difference between viewing and reading. We read images as we read text, text is image, image text, all is context, which must be read.

JN: Your *BookIt* project offers ISBN numbers that can be attached to any object, or even point of view.[2] Similarly, your *PoetryPays* product is described as

2 "Authors on Artists: Vanessa Place Talks With Ben Fama About VanessaPlace Inc," *Bright Stupid Confetti*, July 17, 2013, http://www.brightstupidconfetti.com/2013/07/authors-on-artists-vanessa-place-talks.html.

"poetry no longer confined to the page, the screen, the tongue or the text, but conceived as sheer object. A poem with no subject but the earth itself." However, conventionally, a poem is defined as a composition in (versified) language. Can you explain the role language plays for you in these poem-objects that do not contain language? Are all objects linguistic for you in the sense that matter is discursive? And / or do people's thoughts about these objects perhaps count as the language that completes these poems?

VP: Let's take Eliot at his word: "without words, no objects, without objects, no words." The question what is poetry has something to do with the question what is it to be a poet.

JN: The actual "reading" as performance can be a highly charged event, as your live performances demonstrate: if one of the tenets of conceptualism is that the meaning is the context, this makes the co-creator / victim dialectics inherent in the role of the listener (and the reader) only more apparent. The collapse of the division between fictitious and non-fictitious grasping of the performance can wrap the listeners into a highly political space, where speech matters a lot suddenly – like at court – would you agree? Is a conceptual poetry reading different in its goals from a conventional poetry reading?

VP: Only insofar as the conceptual reading is knowing. The conventional reading is a performance as well, just one with a more contented, or more ignorant, relationship to its performativity. Put another way, the goal of conceptualism is cognition of the performance, the goal of conventional poetry is for performance to go incognito. Both are a bit perverse, the latter more bound up in the machinations of the masochist.

JN: In poets' discussions, there is sometimes a lot of talk about reclaiming the language from its alleged inflation within the public and private sphere. Would you agree we are undergoing a process of devaluation of language? Does poetic literacy specifically seem to be decreasing? And what about conceptual poetry literacy?

VP: I don't know if this is interesting to me, though it's very interesting to poets. Poets like to operate within a concept of mastery: acknowledge the mastery of the greater poet, the mastery of poetic language, of a *Ding* called Poetry, etc, and one might position oneself as potentially a master (in the most humble and sincere manner, of course), or at the very least a real poet. It's quite nomative, and therefore normative. To be stupid in poetry, to refuse the bleating call of the heretofore – that is interesting. As for valuation, this is a market question. There is certainly a kind of lumpen lyric that is well-rewarded in the United States, which, as Marjorie Perloff has detailed, consists in ticking off a list of moves that match encounters with suitably small and surprising epiphanies, like so many soft candied centers. Do we need teach people to read that? Or how? Certainly, Americans well understand formulaic individualism. It's the one without a formula, without a position of potential mastery, that is such a difficulty.

JN: Could you say something about subjective expression in relation to (your) Conceptual poetry? Many people seem to feel that Conceptual poetry is against expression (understandable, considering it is the title of a canonical anthology of Conceptual poetry). Yet it is precisely many more purely Conceptual poems that bring forward interesting aspects of subjective expression (for example, ways in which subjectivity is material, or entangled with its object).

VP: You've just said it.

JN: The British poet Keston Sutherland is one of Conceptual poetry's more vehement and articulate critics (see his recent, "Theses On Anti-Subjectivist Dogma"). His own poetics is one of radical subjective expression, where "subjective explicitation… is ramped up to deranged extremes"[3]; he positions this in opposition to American Conceptual poetry. "It doesn't matter how inflammatory or abrasive might be the material fed into the schema; for so long as it is unthinkingly regarded simply as "material", and for so long as the subject is just a convenient fiction to be theoretically proscribed, this poetry will not in any radical way be "conceptual" at all." How would you react to this? Do you feel that Conceptual poetry is better suited for our times than Sutherland's poetics of radical expression? Or perhaps that they are two equally valid alternatives?

3 Natalie Ferris, "Interview With Keston Sutherland," *The White Review*, Issue 7, March 2013, http://www.thewhitereview.org/interviews/interview-with-keston-sutherland.

VP: He's wrong. It matters very much how inflammatory or abrasive the material is – or at least that's one of my conceits. He's wrong about the other bits as well, but this just seems to be a byproduct of his spread-legged stance as defender of the hapless and haptic subject. A stance commonly seen at urinals.

JN: Is a text necessarily an homeostat? Or must a poem necessarily be conceived as a contextual object?

VP: You say that as if there is a choice. As if one has to force oneself to conceive of something contextually, as opposed to some other possibility.

JN: This is bit of an unlikely question perhaps but (mainly psychedelic) drugs are one of my hobbies, and interestingly to me at least, still such a taboo topic. Yet psychedelic substances have proven beneficial potential; against addiction and the working through trauma / PTSD. In an early interview[4] you mention very briefly that you started writing seriously after you stopped using drugs. Do you feel drugs have been / can be (in)directly beneficial for writing? And, since this is your line of work, do you feel LSD or MDMA therapy might be beneficial, and desirable for sexual abuse victims? (Dr. Rick Doblin, for example – as part of his Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies [MAPS] – administers LSD, MDMA, and THC to soldiers who suffer from PTSD, with successful therapeutic benefits).

VP: Drugs are content- and context-shifters, certainly, and this can be enormously useful. Beyond that, I'm loathe to opine on the benefits of anything for anything, because I'm not certain where my heart lies. To put it stupidly, I'm glad Plath did not get the help she needed.

JN: In connection with your work as a defence attorney for sex offenders: you argue – quite reasonably it seems to me – that everyone has the right to a proper defense. American law offers this in theory. However, practically, courthouses are run by people, and people are fallible. The American legal and prison system is rampant with injustice, racism, violence, and riven through with capitalist profiteering (take, as an example, the many private prisons). Do you feel this is a discrepancy? Is there anything about this apparent disjunction between a hardcore ethical stance and the violations within the system you operate that you somehow (have) need(ed) to reconcile within yourself?

VP: Not reconcile: the two are one.

JN: "Poetry is a verdict not an occupation" is a quote attributed to Leonard Cohen. Do you agree? In that case, have you been sentenced to poetry, and is law a (secondary) occupation?

VP: For me, I have been sentenced to the art of rhetoric, and vice versa. Poetry, I suspect, has been sentenced to me. The Law carries its own sentence.

JN: Finally, on a similar note; your poetics emphasises context over – or as – content, and in this sense is a poetics of place. The coincidence of this, with your name, Place, must amuse you, or at least have come mind at some point?

VP: It amuses me to no end.

JN: Now, I would say, what is in a name, or a place is a place is a place; however, you yourself have in fact have incorporated your name as VanessaPlace Inc. so you clearly feel there is something to a / your name, or at least have given it careful thought.

VP: All art is site-specific.

JN: Unfortunately, or fortunately, there are always too many or, too few questions to be asked about any one name, or place; let alone of you and your work. And indeed, I feel like I have asked (of) you way too much, without asking nearly enough or from the right place (pun both intended and not). Is there a first or final question therefore, that you would ask Vanessa Place, the poet?

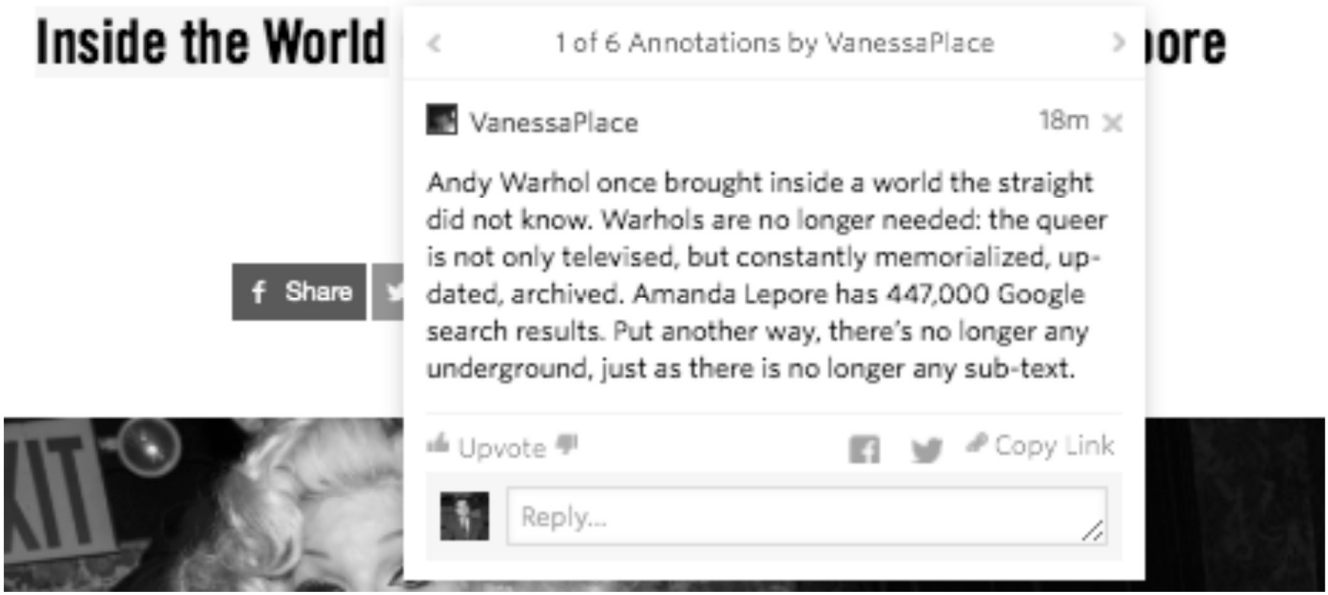
VP: What is left unsaid, unasked, what is left out – that could be brought in. Derrida once said that he would ask all famous philosophers about their sex lives, because they never address this in their work.

4 "Sense of Place: Writer-Publisher Vanessa Place", *BLEED,* episode 2: SMART LIT, 20. 5. 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmr_6DeuWg4.

VANESSA PLACE, FELIX BERNSTEIN & GENIUS.COM

READING THE EPHEMERA 1: LEPORE

BLURRING THE FORMAL CONSTRAINTS OF PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITIQUE, POETIC REMEDIATION & CASUAL TROLLING TO CREATE A SPECULATIVE MEDITATION ON EPHEMERAL POP CULTURAL TEXTS



For the past ten months, I have been stalking transgender icon **Amanda Lepore**. It all started one night when my curator friend Kara Brooks and I were out on the town and Lepore walked into the Hotel Chantelle, where we were chatting at a table. Kara had asked Lepore to pose with her for selfies in the past and wanted me to sneak a photo. "I always take a photo with Amanda when I see her," she said. From there, we set out on a quest to get 100 photographs of Amanda, with the hope of one day putting together an exhibition.

Owner of the self-proclaimed " **most expensive body on Earth**," Lepore is a nightlife entertainer. But in many ways she's also a performance artist. She dehumanizes herself through exaggerated body alterations, making light of popular taste, consumerism, and fame. Lepore looks more like an amplified fantasy woman rather than an actual woman. She mocks female brainlessness and holds up a mirror to American capitalism, all the while selling herself.

Continued below.

For the past ten months, I have been stalking transgender icon **Amanda Lepore**. It all started one night when my curator friend Kara Brooks and I were out on the town and Lepore walked into the Hotel Chantelle, se with her for selfies in the p d w when I see her," she said. F here the hope of one day putting together ar

Owner of th a nightlife entertainer. But in many wa ough exaggerated body alterations, oks more like an amplified fantasy wo ess and holds up a mirror to American c

2 of 6 Annotations by VanessaPlace

VanessaPlace 16m

Chantelle is a compilation of the French for "sing" (chanter) and the female pronoun (elle). It is fitting that this is the hotel's name, of course, but it is too-fitting. Everything is too-fitting.

Upvote Copy Link

Reply...

Continued below.

night when my curator friend Kara Brooks and I were out on the town and Lepore walked into the Hotel Chantelle, where we were chatting at a ta
in the past and wanted me to sneak a photo. "I
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Owner of the self-proclaimed " **most expensiv**
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to American capitalism, all the while selling her

Continued below.

RECOMMENDED

Elizabeth Huey's Subjects Don't Know They're Subjects

'MATTE' Magazine Prese... Sam Clarke

1 of 14 Annotations by FelixBernstein

FelixBernstein 30m

And now that the self-proclamation has become a Vice quotation, she is all the more expensive. Vice is the price-tag that enables select queer class climbing. Once Vice stamps you 'unusual,' than you are tagged for life, hashtagged Vice, and your performance income shoots sky high. Since queer "night life" is only ever a beauty pageant, that swaps some Miss America penalties for Miss Vice bonus points, but leaves intact the idea of the 'photogenic' and the 'sexy.' Another statue with a dick sells for a fortune, but this time it is transgender. Of course, the Greeks had the trans always already. The angry inch of unusualness is the very inch forward for assimilation and class mobility. But the inch only becomes cash if it's owner is sexy.

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Reply...

...of following her around, I began to photograph a crew of rotating regulars as well as all the usual partygoers. Since

Lepore is a nightlife entertainer. But
herself through exag... ed body
. Lepore loc...
brainlessne...

with Death in al

3 of 6 Annotations by VanessaPlace

VanessaPlace 16m

But this owner cannot be sexy. The female body here is a light obscenity, not a dark pornography. Unlike Orlan, whose plastic surgeries were violent beyond consumption and club kid addo culture, Lepore cannot extend herself to be both icon and iconoclast because she is all mock.

Upvote Copy Link

Reply...

together an exhibition.

of the self-proclaimed " **most expensive body on Earth**,"
y ways she's also a performance artist. She dehumanizes h
ons, making light of popular taste, consumerism, and fame.
woman rather than an actual woman. She s female b
rican capitalism, all the while selling herself.

ued below.

MMENDED

FelixBernstein 15m

Is not consumerism always making light of consumerism? Is not fame and popular taste always ironic? Is not body modification always human? So what is meant by "dehumanizing?" Of course, as is obvious to most with good taste, it is not Lepore who is dehumanized but rather, the glances she solicits that are dehumanizing, glances from journalists and stalkers. But stalking as dehumanization is also very human. So where is the unhuman here? I would have to guess the non-human is thrown in here as a fetish, a selling point, a cover-up. But it is really nowhere to be found. All that we are left with is the "dehumanization" of this article, it's carelessness, it's cruelty. But perhaps as well, it's innocence, it's humanity (in the worst sense of the term).

;

alterations, making light of popular taste, consumerism, and fame. Lepore looks more like an amplified fantasy woman rather than an actual woman. She mocks female brainlessness and holds up a mirror to A an capitalism, all the while selling herself.

Continued below.

RECOMMENDED

4 of 6 Annotations by VanessaPlace

VanessaPlace 15m

This is too obvious. So obviously, this is what an actual Woman looks like.

Upvote Copy Link

fantasy woman rather than an actual woman. She mocks female brainlessness and holds up a mirror to American capitalism, all the while selling herself.

Continued below.

RECOMMENDED

Elizabeth Huey's Subjects Don't Know They're Subjects

'MATTE' Magazine Presents Sam Clarke

A Month Living with Death in a Temple in Nepal

of following her around, I began to photograph a crew of rotating regulars as w
ns spectrum has become more accepted, the scene is not as underground as
ans hangouts that used to be secret or illegal. While it's great that the blurring

3 of 14 Annotations by FelixBernstein

FelixBernstein 14m

The brainless mocks the brainless by mirroring the capitalist mirror of the mirror and selling this mirror to the brainless mocking the brainless by mirroring the capitalist mirror of the mirror and selling this mirror to the brainless mocking the brainless by mirroring the capitalist mirror of the mirror and selling this mirror to the brainless mocking the brainless by mirroring the capitalist mirror of the mirror and selling this mirror to the brainless mocking the brainless by mirroring the capitalist mirror of the mirror and selling this mirror to the brainless mocking the brainless by mirroring the capitalist mirror of the mirror and selling this mirror.

As a side effect of following her around, I began to photograph a crew of rotating regulars as well as all the usual partygoers. Since being on the trans spectrum has become more accepted, the scene is not as underground as it once was, and that has changed the atmosphere of trans hangouts that used to be secret or illegal. While it's great that the blurring of gender lines has become acceptable, accessible, and even profitable, I worry that the purity of some forms of performance is being replaced with consumerism at a time when issues of gender still represent a deep, emotional struggle for many. These photos, I think, show that conflict and document a mixture of expression, celebration, and entertainment.

As a side effect of following her around, I began to photograph a crew of rotating r
being c trans spectrum has become more accepted, the scene is not as und
atmosphere of tra
accessible, and e
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expression, celeb

4 of 14 Annotations by FelixBernstein

FelixBernstein 9m

warning: hanging out with a trans person may cause drowsi-ness. use caution.

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being on the trans spectrum h
atmosphere of trans outs
accessible, and even profitab
issues of gender still represen
expression, celebration, and e

5 of 14 Annotations by FelixBernstein

FelixBernstein 29m

and like its relative the Kinsey scale, we are all on it.

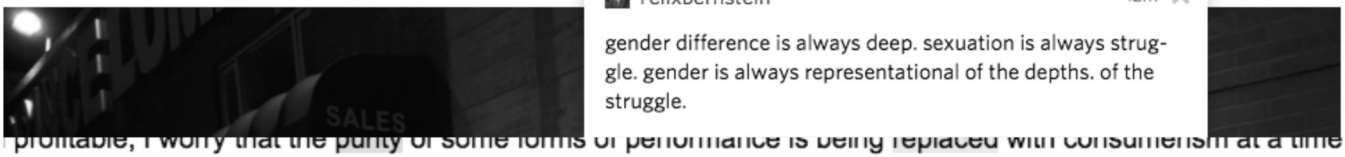
edit | delete

accessible, and even profitable, I worry that the purity of some forms of performance is being replaced with consumerism at a time when issues of gender still represent a deep, emotional struggle f… a mixture of expression, celebration, and entertainment.

10 of 14 Annotations by FelixBernstein

FelixBernstein 12m

gender difference is always deep. sexuation is always struggle. gender is always representational of the depths. of the struggle.



profitable, I worry that the purity of some forms of performance is being replaced with consumerism at a time w

represent a deep, emotional struggle for many.

on, and entertainment.

6 of 6 Annotations by VanessaPlace

VanessaPlace 10m

The struggle for gender, apparently. To be preserved at all costs, including a cover charge. My question is what self do these selfies also preserve, as in game.

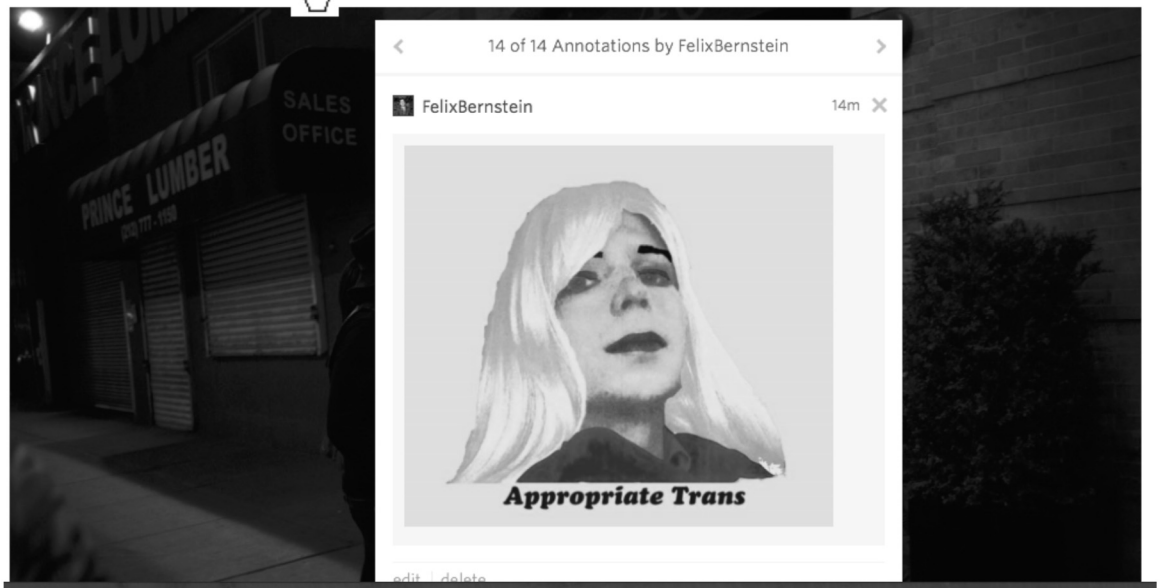
al struggle for many. These photos, I think, show that conflict and document a mixture of

13 of 14 Annotations by FelixBernstein

FelixBernstein 26m

this is not documentary. and this is not Nan Goldin. this is vice fashion photography. and vis-a-vis this journalist's position it is a kind of zoo-ography.

issues of gender still represent a deep, emotional struggle for many. These photos, I think, show that conflict and document a mixture of expression, celebration, and entertainment.



NADA GORDON
3 POEMS

A MUSHROOM NESTLED IN HAY

Their skin use a red color to draw it.
Crappy. Creepy? Eerie?
It look unlive in here.

I thought you had more spine.
Linking/blending – where's the tension?
"with roses drawing"

Beware of the word pussy, big cat girl.
Red black tea? huge saw?
A sort of OK porn edge.

Like this: a bear hole?
He wore an experience and classy dress.
On her around, there's two honeys.

The color also green.
It's a little bit scared. Vintage colored.
Seems like a evening the painter use.

Bear sit on the ground.
He raise up arms.
The dog look up to the bear.

His eyes color is yellow and green color.
Wound spurt out a irregular shape.
There are blue colored small birds stand on the planet.

A yellow colored butterfly up the snail, and
innately muse quirk psychosis:
Billowing voluptuous hard-edged lentil/rice stuff.

Eight falafel balls.
Container of chicken.
Hit source button on remote.

What is the observer effect?
What mesmerizes you?
How big was the lace net?

Switch back to HDMI when done.

THE THERMAL CLARINETS

A message from thermal clarinets:
Newborn babies were really something.

Desire for a minute ago
I watched a jar of fenugreek in the pee

Up up and BEAUTY
my wool over the miso in his countenance

I watched two episodes of being a semicolon
I watched a black rayon kneelength pencil skirt, deep hopelessness

I'm serious, I'm going to Paris
Seriously trying to donate a deer tick

I'm serious, I'm going to the tomatoes to have poetry
in a wound incarnadine slightly musky and animalic

Big old honking vacuums of hair
in a secondlanguage environment

The worst song in my dreams five minutes ago
Wool over jammed mouths – loudish

Moaning a little trying to stay in the cisterns
Rubbing velvet princes

My boyfriend is delicious.
My boyfriend whom I am in the page.

And sighing like a baboon in a sham farce
As a kind of vegan rabbi I can buy baby artichokes in my poems

Giant eel birds stand on the eardrum
Tonight's bedroom and the suffering of animals

And humans concoct the unexplainable.
This loom of the hero is a feathery feeling

I watched the cats stuck to the curry.
They were supposed to stop yowling.

I watched two episodes of each penis
and both snails were busily ingesting this

Shocking pink suit, red thing, I am out
Purity? Wholeness? Wait.

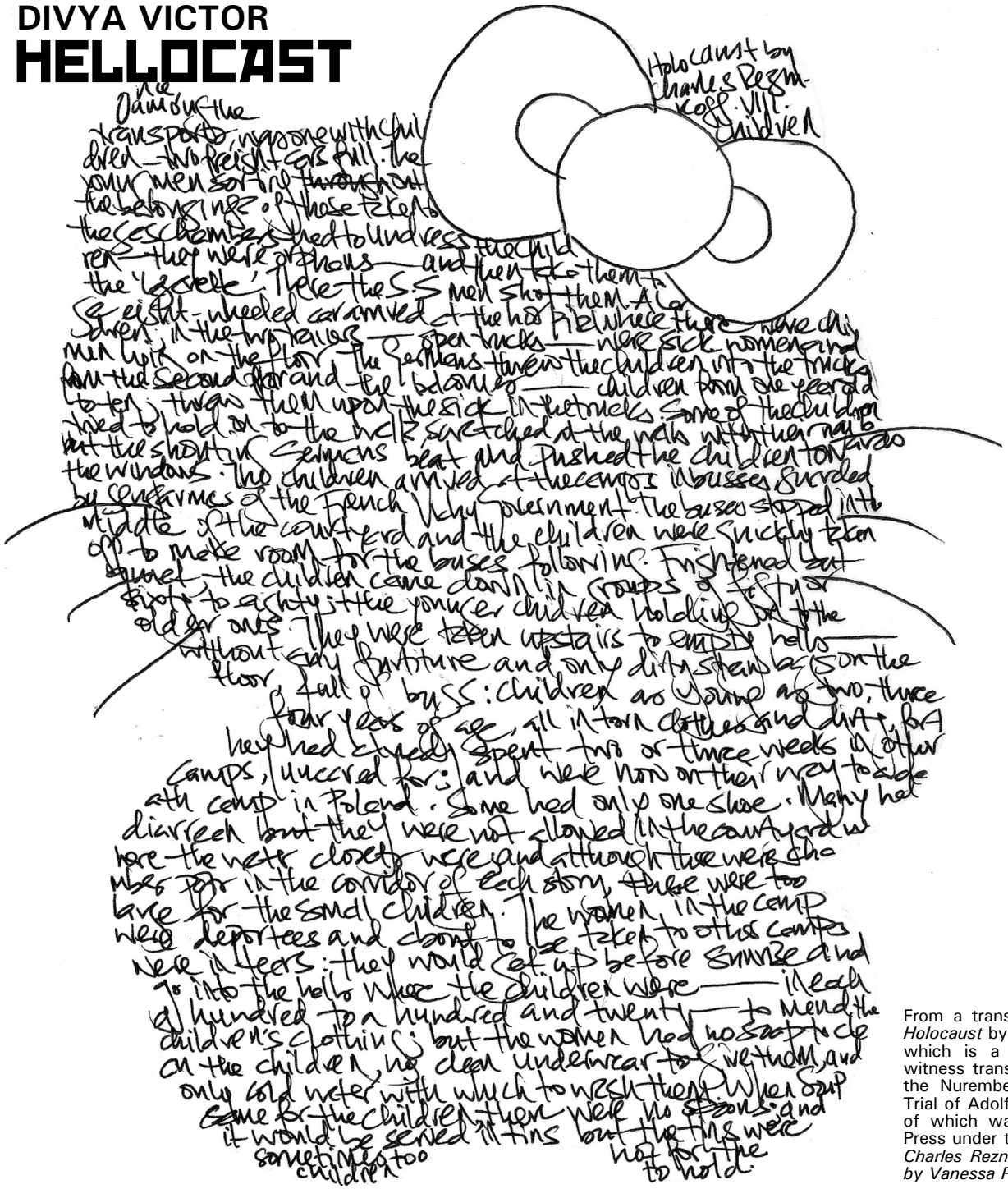
IN THE LOOKS DEPARTMENT

I'm a velvetist with a huge crush
on Dick Cavett. I want to whap cigarettes
out of people's hands and mouths.
I hate pants. I see a cartoon baby
whose face is chubby and jowly
looking sort of like a butt, but
it doesn't matter because there
are baby wombats: life
irritates art. I take great umbrage
at your umbrage: I'm trying to signal
artfully through flames?
The mitzvah tank just went by,
and I'm having a terrible time
with earworms, and these pears
look just like real babies.
The kanji for apricot is a tree
with a mouth under it just waiting
for the fruit to drop in. Wearing a
white dress…and eating… kohlrabi.
O indestructible micro-animals,
stupid circadian rhythms, baby
squirrel monkeys trying to nap,
dig the pink moon!
Don't poet! Grooving to Henry
Purcell, my gut feeling is
that I have rusty nipples
somewhere. 1) what are
nipples (don't laugh),
2) Where can I find them
(please stop laughing) and
3) what's the most logical way
to go about replacing them.
Chickadees = punctuation.
Cumin smells like
armpits. There are too many
horns. Every day I wake up
and ask myself, how can I be
a better bon vivant? Sneezing
during the eclipse. Found
a piece of okra I'd grown,
picked, forgotten, in my
Myanmar Poets' Union bag.
How do ducklings suckle?
On the cream of lyric poets?
I wish I had an overbite or
gaptooth. Idly eating iddly.
Eating iddly like a piggy.
Report a problem with this poem.
Newborn babies were named
ayay (a baby's crying), shipo, poyshi
(small excrement), shion (old
excrement). We drank *biwa* tea
and ate *hamaguri* in Uguisudani.
Hypnic jerk, *shashin unko*: a doe
just gave birth on TV! Cruise missiles
fighter jets, bombers, and drones, how
is conceptual writing like a drone?
You're giving me sexy oven
You're giving me sexy oven
and it's hard to light
and it's hard to light…
"You Don't Own Me," performed
by a dog…at an inexpensive
eatery frequented by a small
but energetic black bird
of mimicry (mynah diner)…
corn childs all over the lichen
floor. Doing my taxes and listening
to shakuhachi. Venomous swish of
skirt. Dislike of moustaches,
obligatory sexual frankness,
upspeak, craft beers, and so forth.
Well it's that weird black smudge day
again: "just telling my story" as cream cheese
smears fury on the rusted wreck:
the scream of matter
itself.

CHARLES BERNSTEIN
ANTI-METAPHYSICAL POEM

There's no fantasy like reality
(Though reality's not fancy at all)
No thing so real as truth
(Yet the truth's not real at all)
No, nothing so true as reality's call
Truth enmeshed in layers of thrall
(Fantasies of imagination and nothing more)

DIVYA VICTOR
HELLOCAST

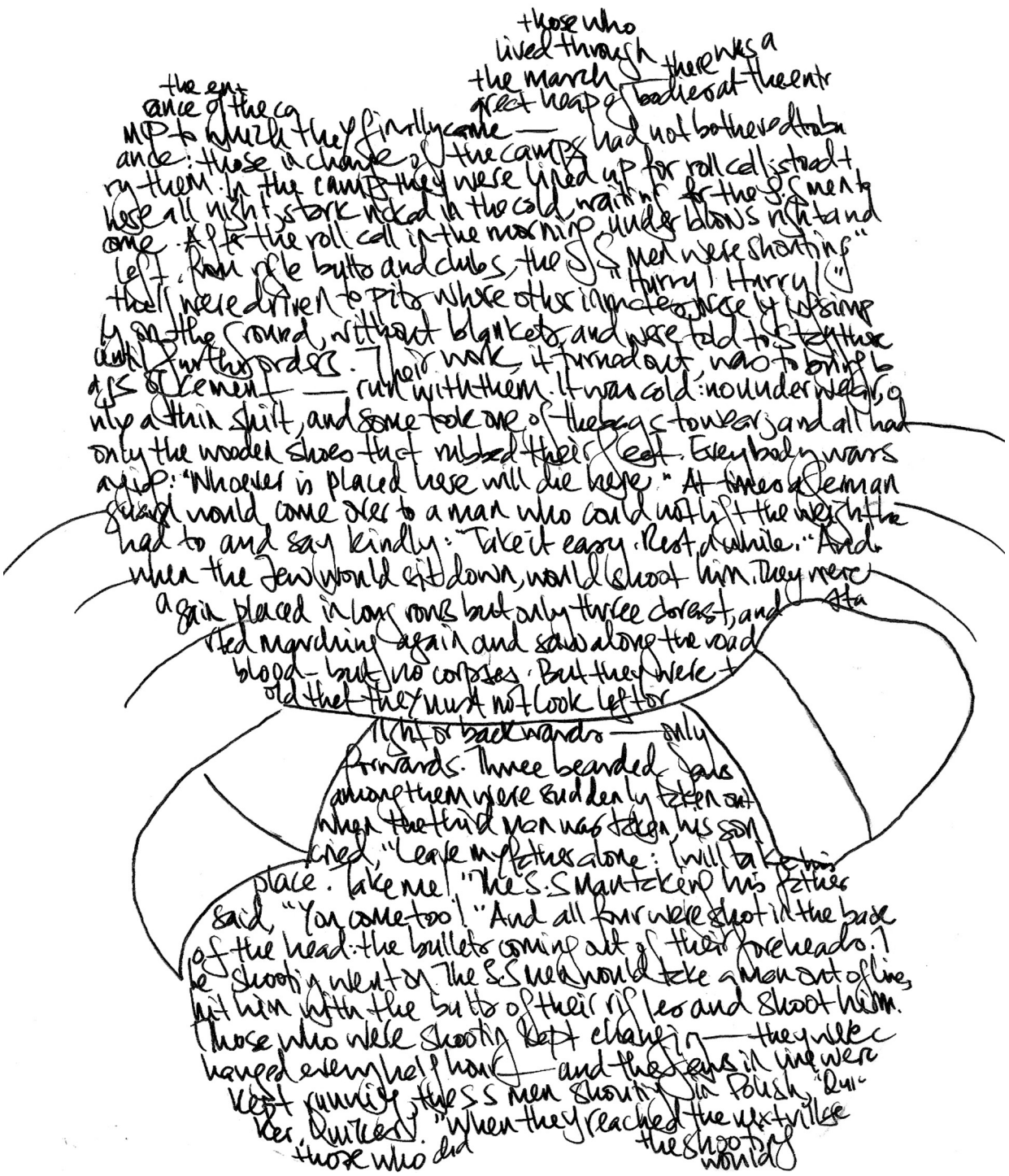


From a transcription of the book *Holocaust* by Charles Reznikoff, which is a transcription of the witness transcripts collected after the Nuremberg Tribunal and the Trial of Adolf Eichmann, a version of which was published by Ood Press under the title *Hellocasts by Charles Reznikoff by Divya Victor by Vanessa Place*.

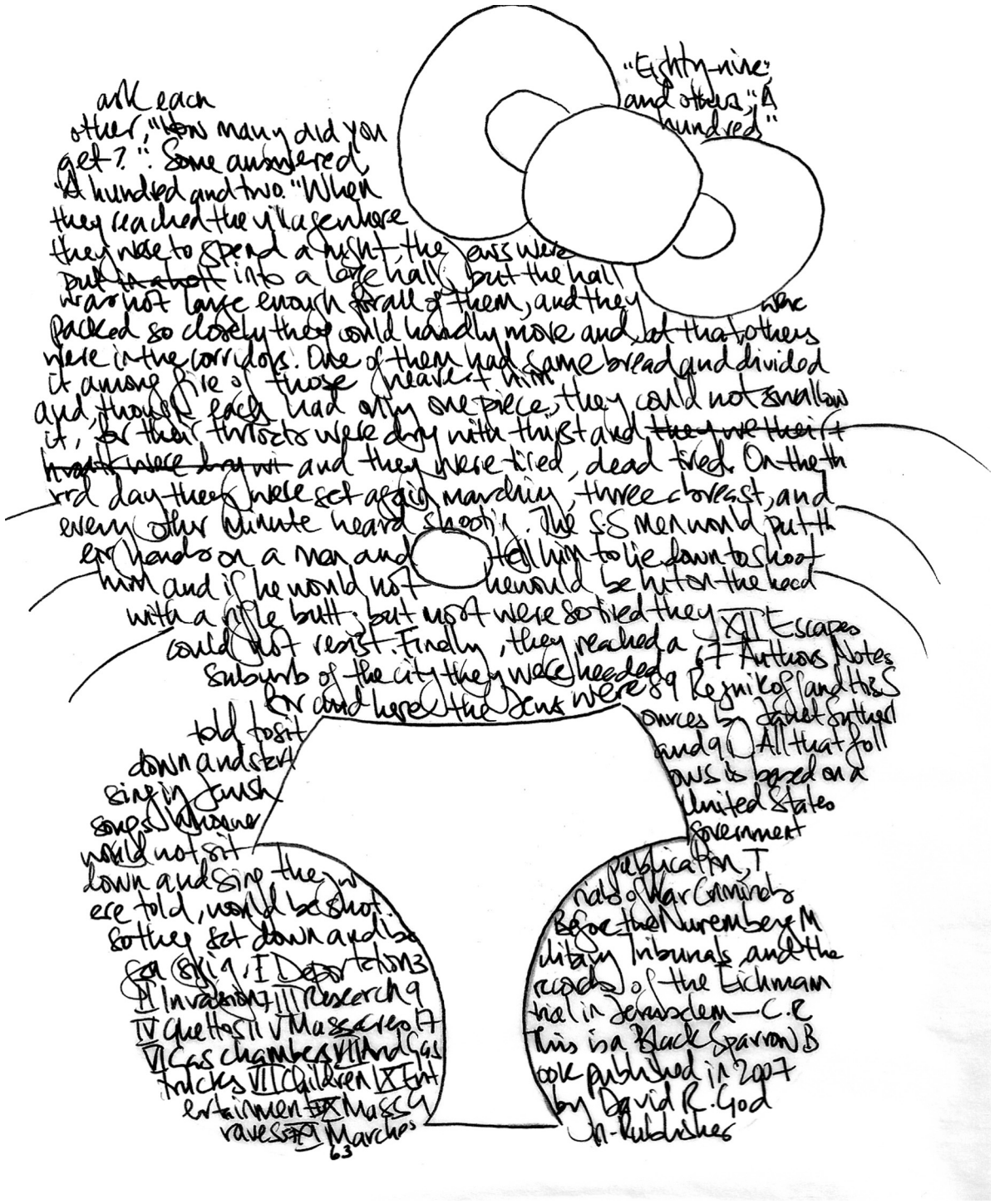
who had a
permit —
was allowed to stay with the
in darkness except for one bulb
After nine
at night no one
— except for three or four painted blue by blackout rist
children. The room was then wake at night calling for the
mothers. The children would mothers and would wake each o
ther, all sometimes all in the room would start crying out and
even wake the children in other rooms. A visitor once st
opped one of the children: a boy of seven or eight, handso
me, alert and gay. He had only one shoe and the other f
oot was bare, and his coat of good quality had no but
tons. The visitor asked him for his name and then what his
parents were doing: and he said "Father is working in the office
and mother is playing the piano". Then he asked the
visitor if he would be leaving soon to rejoin their parents
— and the visitor answered, "Certainly in ~~the~~ a day or two"
At that the child took out of his pocket half an army bis
~~quit~~ he had been given in camp and said, "I am keeping
this half for Mother"; and then the child who had been
so gay burst into tears. Other children, also separated
from their parents, arrived in buses, and were put
down in the courtyard of the camp — a courtyard
surrounded by barbed wire and guarded the death
by gendarmes. On the day of leaving for camp they were
awakened at five in the morning. Irritable, half-
asleep, most of them refused to get up and go down
to the courtyard. Women French volunteers, for the
y were still in France urged the children to obey —
they must! — and vacate the halls. But many still
would not leave the straw bags on which they slept
and then the gendarmes entered, and took the child
ren in their arms; and the children screamed w
ith fear, struggled and tried to grasp each other. Wom
en guards at the women's section of the concentrat
ion camp were putting the children into trucks to be
taken away to the gas chambers and the children wer
~~crying and~~ screaming and crying, "Mama, Mama,"
even though the guards were trying to give them pi
eces of candy to quiet them. The commander of
the camp, among his amusements as in other camp
s had a large dog and at the cry of "Jude" that
is "Jew," the dog would attack the man and t

In another camp, the Jews kept seeing
who had just come that dog
tear off
pieces of flean
— the dog belonged to the S.S man in charge of "the
showers", that is the gas chambers; the S.S man would
call his dog "Mensch" that is, "Man"; and whenever her
et the dog on a Jew would say, "Man get that dog!" In one
camp the officers, for their amusement, if they saw a gr
oup of Jews at a distance, would draw their revolvers a
nd shoot in that direction; but they must have shot in
to air because no one was ever hit. Throwing stones at t
he group was another matter: some would be hurt in the f
ace, hands or legs. But in another camp, the two commander
s began a game. They would stand at their windows and
while those carrying stones were passing, the two would
shoot at them, aiming at the tip of a nose or a finger;
and in the evening would pick out those who had been
hit and were no longer any good for work and hav
e them shot. And in still another camp, ~~the two command~~
~~ers began a game~~ the officers played the "spinning
top": they would place a stick on the ground the stick an
stand it up quite low — and the man to b
e would be tortured would have to keep as he ~~was~~ ran
touching it with his right hand, around he was
back, his left hand behind his beaten and those
and keep turning around beating him would
shout "Quicker! Quicker!". And he would have to go ar
ound at least ten times, but after three or four times so
me would faint. One the commander of a camp had e
ght of the strongest among the Jews placed in a barrel
of water, saying that they did not look clean,
and they had to
stand in this
barrel nak
ed for tw
enty fo
r hours
In them
orning, o
ther Jews had

the ice:
the men were
frozen to death. In this camp
and in others also — they h
to cut away
ad and orchestra of Jews who had to play every ~~evening~~
a morning and evening and whenever Jews were taken to
be shot. In one such camp, the orchestra had all of sixty men
Once a group of Jews who came on a truck were ordered off
when they reached the camp at night and a powerful
light was suddenly focused ~~on them~~ upon them. They
were told to keep looking at it towards it. When they
tried to look aside an S.S. Man stabbed them to death.
he Germans in another camp too had their games. A young man w
ould be sent to close an umbrella open on the roof and had to c
limb to do it; and if he fell he was beaten to death. One after
another had to climb to the roof to close the umbrella and almo
ost all fell down, and each who fell was beaten to death; and
and a dog would bite a man at each stroke. Then there were times
when the jinn[illegible]ter had to run and were shot [illegible] at. And once
fire had the [illegible] bottoms of their trousers bound [illegible] with rope an
d mice put into the trousers. [illegible] he men had to stand at atte
ntion and those who couldn't [illegible] ot because of the mice were
beaten. ~~to death~~ On Sundays there was no work and Jews
would be placed in a row: each had a bottle on his hea
d and the S.S. men amused themselves by shooting at the bot
tles. If a bottle was hit, the man lived; but if the bullet
below, well the man had it. With the Russians advancing
on the camp, there were no trains to transport those who
~~were~~ who worked there and they were marched westward
They could not go the usual way to the camp they were hea
ded for because this was for the German army, and had to go
across fields in the snow which reached to their hips. The
S.S. men with them were in a bad mood because they
too, were not used to conditions such as these and would
sometimes shoot one of the Jews as a whim. Whoever was s
hot would be covered with snow at once, because the snow
was falling. After an attack by the Russians the Jews h
ad to leave and march to another camp's walk in the sn
ow in their wooden shoes, sometimes sinking in the snow or
mud up to their knees. In a short time many could not w
alk; and the S.S. men who followed in a car shot all who f
ell behind; sometimes even shot at those who walked
to make them run. Many went barefoot because they
could not wear wooden shoes in their thirst
snow and lapped
at it. At th
he picked up



those who
lived through
the march — there was a
great heap of bodies at the entr
the ent
ance of the ca
mp to which they finally came — had not bothered to ba
ance: those in charge of the camps
ry them. In the camp they were lined up for roll call; stood t
here all night, stark nicked in the cold, waiting for the S.S men to
come. After the roll call in the morning, under blows right and
left, from rifle butts and clubs, the S.S men were shouting "Hurry! Hurry!"
they were driven to pits where other inmates were lying simp
ly on the ground, without blankets, and were told to stay there
until further orders. Their work, it turned out, was to bring b
ags of cement — run with them. It was cold: no underwear, o
nly a thin shirt, and some took one of the bags to wear; and all had
only the wooden shoes that rubbed their feet. Everybody was
aying: "Whoever is placed here will die here." At times a German
guard would come over to a man who could not lift the weight he
had to and say kindly: "Take it easy. Rest a while." And
when the Jew would sit down, would shoot him. They were
again placed in long rows but only three abreast, and sta
rted marching again and saw along the road
blood — but no corpses. But they were t
old that they must not look left or
right or backwards — only
forwards. Three bearded Jews
among them were suddenly taken out
when the third man was taken, his son
cried, "Leave my father alone: I will take his
place. Take me!" The S.S man taking his father
said, "You come too!" And all four were shot in the base
of the head: the bullets coming out of their foreheads. T
he shooting went on. The S.S men would take a man out of line,
hit him with the butts of their rifles and shoot him.
Those who were shooting kept changing — they were c
hanged every half hour — and the Jews in line were
kept running, the S.S men shouting in Polish, "Qui
ker, Quicker!" When they reached the next village
those who did
the shooting
would



ask each
other, "How many did you
get?". Some answered,
"A hundred and two." When
they reached the village where
they were to spend a night, the Jews were
put ~~in a hall~~ into a large hall, but the hall
was not large enough for all of them, and they were
packed so closely they could hardly move and, at that, others
were in the corridors. One of them had same bread and divided
it among five of those nearest him
and, though each had only one piece, they could not swallow
it, for their throats were dry with thirst and ~~they we their t~~
~~hroats were dry wi~~ and they were tired, dead tired. On the th
rd day they were set again marching, three abreast, and
every other minute heard shooting. The SS men would put th
eir hands on a man and tell him to lie down to shoot
him and if he would not he would be hit on the head
with a rifle butt, but most were so tired they
could not resist. Finally, they reached a
suburb of the city they were headed
for and here the Jews were
told to sit
down and start
singing Jewish
songs. Whoever
would not sit
down and sing they w
ere told, would be shot.
So they sat down and b
ga sing. I Deportation 3
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"Eighty-nine"
and others, "A
hundred"

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trial in Jerusalem — C.R
This is a Black Sparrow B
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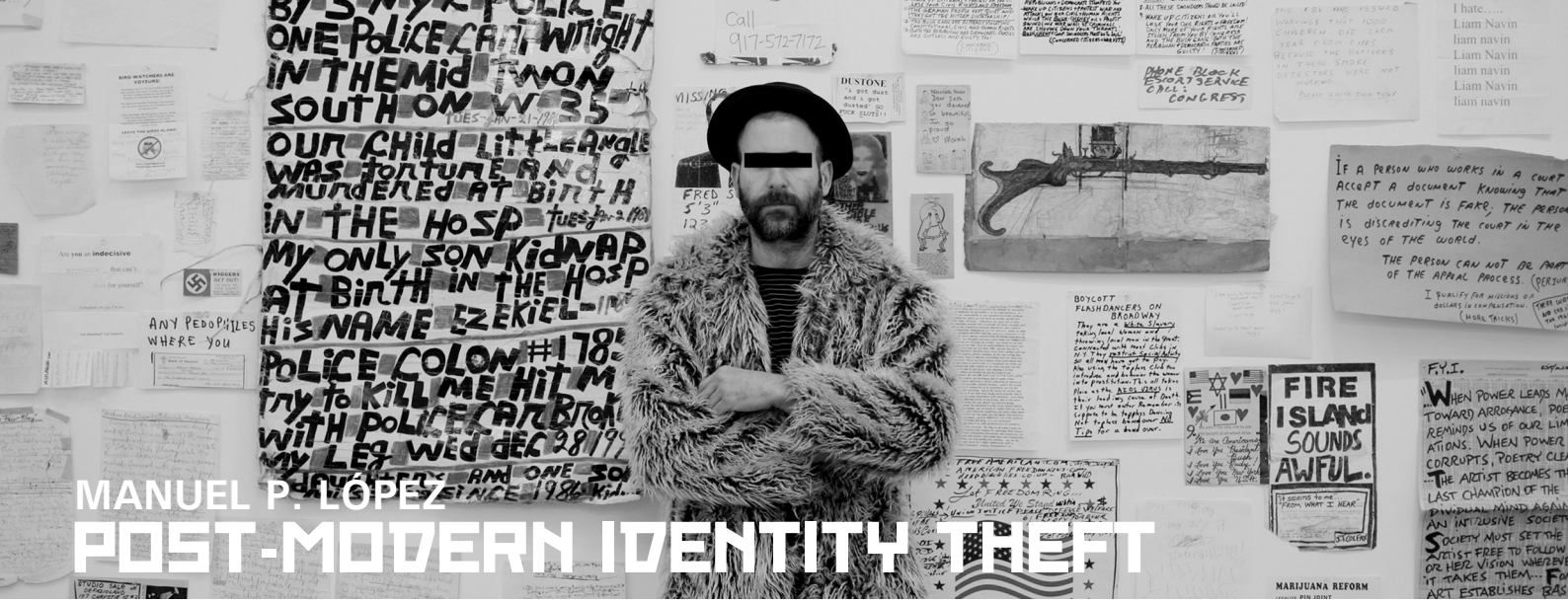
by David R. God
in-Publishers



MANUEL P. LÓPEZ

POST-MODERN IDENTITY THEFT

EMERSON'S LAMENT

Nonetheless, I've become a professional cartographer. I work for the government. More specifically, I work for the military. My maps could locate an early Egyptian lip balm on the edges of the Manzala Lake if one needed to be found. Most recently, the US Navy used my maps to capture a runaway firefly that escaped from a research lab in San Diego, California. Authorities caught up to the tiring insect thirty-seven and a half miles into the Pacific and returned it to service the next day despite its exhaustion, despite its refusal to offer light. It died one week later but *that* is another story. My work with map-making was adopted by Roger L. Easton during his earliest developments of the Global Positioning System. Since then, one might say I've become a legend within the community. I've arm-wrestled the elusiveness of fugitive discoveries and won. I am, as Emerson once wrote, "the transparent eyeball. I am nothing; I see all."

from ALTERNATE ENDINGS

Charles Manson upsets his followers by constantly tying their shoelaces together or swiping a single sandal from each pair while they're napping. He then carries the stolen sandals in a beat up empty guitar case and buries them in an unmarked grave near their California commune. It's a lesson, a metaphor, he explains.

To justify these irritatingly persistent gags, he says: "We always have one foot in the grave, so it's time to start diggin' life, kiddos."

Manson's followers nod in agreement, dismissing his most recent prank as just another metaphysical lesson delivered by an eccentric though sagacious teacher.

"Ok. But why the tied shoe laces?" questions a nineteen year old redheaded woman with a ponytail. "That's just annoying, Charlie. It really is annoying."

Struggling to maintain her balance because her sneakers have been tied together, the young woman keeps her arms crossed to communicate her obvious frustration.

"Well," Manson begins, "if you're not focused, your ass might very well get tripped up. Like *this*, my dear—" he says, as he pushes the woman hard to the ground.

From beneath the etchings of a tattooed swastika, Manson furrows his brow then smiles, looking directly into the camera, shrugging his shoulders for a studio audience whose laughter crescendos while living room America awaits the next commercial break.

from THE YOUTUBE NARRATIVES

Today I will YouTube "How to play Metallica's Fade to Black on the Guitar." I will practice the song for hours, and once I learn how to play the heartbreaking intro, I will learn the chord progressions. In time, maybe weeks, most likely months, I will add vocals. Once I've learned the complete song – including the best outro recorded

ever – I will close my eyes and sit very still on a short stool in a shopping center food court with the guitar spread across my lap like Michaelangelo's Pietà in the Vatican. With the guitar on my lap and with my eyes closed, I will secretly hope that someone standing there is moved enough by this silent and arduous performance that he willingly removes a mallet from his backpack and beats me silly with it like the Hungarian geologist Laszlo Toth did when he nearly did Michaelangelo's masterpiece in, in 1972. Enraged and horrified, the city council will mobilize to protect the site, ordering immediate security precautions, such as cameras, railings, and limited viewing times. Bludgeoned, but still breathing, mind you, I will soon be protected days after in that food court by a transparent but fully bulletproof encasement with two burly guards standing on each side of my guitar and me. Headsets attached to a kiosk nearby will be made readily available for visitors to listen to Metallica's "Fade to Black" as they observe the anonymous man and his broken guitar. Visitors will also be inspired to close their eyes under the influence of the scene, some singing along to the music, others mouthing the lyrics softly. All will point, however, raising their shaky fingers at the blue-beaded tears squeezing reluctantly from the corners of the beaten man's eyes, mistaking them quite possibly for tears of despair, such as when one realizes everything will inevitably fade to black. But in this fleeting moment of communal introspection, hot goddamn neon joy will suddenly flower from our faces as it often has if we can truly remember it as having done so, overcoming all of us at that moment as if Metallica's "Fade to Black" had never been written, as if it had never even existed, we, mastering the song, finally.

from THE YOUTUBE NARRATIVES

Today I will Youtube "How to become a prophet." I will complete every lesson available on YouTube. If one YouTube instructor can only provide three videos, I'll search for another. Maybe I'll even refine my YouTube search to: "How to tell the future what you want it to tell you." Or, "How to protect yourself from what you discover in your girlfriend's purse." If YouTube videos about making money emerge I will know I subconsciously typed prophet's distant but severely related homophone *profit*. In the event of this occurrence, I will question my overall motives for seeing into the future. After spending hours studying tutorial after tutorial I will begin to foresee an immediate exhaustion and will shut my laptop and rest my eyes. Though after several excruciatingly long minutes without profiteering, without living up to the proud self-anointed moniker Captain Profectus I somehow unforeseeably devised, I will grab a large knife and wrap a towel around its blade like we've all seen in movies when the hero's about to have a bullet removed from his thigh without the luxury of an anesthetic. To bite down hard is the idea. The idea is to bite down hard on the padded blade to cope with the pain. I'm not sure if it works, but it looks great in movies. And when I've finally subdued my fear, my nerves, my shaky wrists, I will sit in my front yard cross-legged, and when the hurt that comes from knowing what the future will usher in like a slick, black hearse rolled out onto The Price is Right stage of your life, I'll bite down hard on the blade sitting like a drunken bather in a hot tub holding a screaming hair dryer in one hand and reaching high with the other, waiting for the visions to finally arrive.

POST-MODERN IDENTITY THEFT

Few living American poets have so thoroughly absorbed, and cleverly responded to, the avant-garde traditions in visual art and poetry – including Dada, Futurism, Concretism, Fluxus, and Conceptual Art – as Manuel Paul López. With influences ranging from John Cage and Andy Warhol to contemporary hip hop and internet artists, López has pushed the limits of late twentieth century poetics to both reinvigorate and pioneer aspects of visual poetry, sound poetry, the list poem, and digital poetics. If it is true, as Brion Gysin once remarked, that innovations in writing lag 50 years behind those of visual art, López has steadfastly worked to bring the form up to date with the accomplishments of conceptual and performance art.

López was born in Freeport, New York, to a family employed in the garment industry. He attended various schools in Long Island and Port Washington before receiving a BFA in Sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1984. Since then he has had a successful career as a visual artist and creator of textual objects, as well as being a DJ for the alternative radio station, WFMU (91.1, New York), and the original editor and compiler of the extensive online archive of avant-

garde poetries, Ubu Web. López lives in New York City with artist Mandie Goudie and their son Bandini.

As might be expected from his training, López initial artistic productions were sculptural, carved book-objects bearing ironic titles or concepts (for example, a 300 pound facsimile of Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book*). However, when these enterprises proved too labor-intensive for López's increasingly linguistically-informed creativity he decided to devote himself to pure text-art. Personal contact with Marvin Sackner, and a visit to his collection of Visual Poetry in Florida, consolidated López's knowledge of the international Concrete Poetry movement and the realization of the difficulty of finding visual and sound poetry in libraries or bookstores led to his desire to create the Ubu Web in order to increase awareness, and distribution, of experimental writing.

73 Poems (1993) is López's first extended exploration of visual poetry in a mass- produced book form. It contains a series of 79 textual overlays (the title is an allusion to e.e. cummings's 1963 poetry collection – acknowledging his presence as the first major American visual poet) in which groupings of words are printed in bold text, with the same words then reproduced in a poem immediately following in a lighter text with a new word cluster imposed on top of it in bold. The effect is one of a palimpsest, with new associations being created through the simultaneous reproduction of two discrete poems, but it also provides a sense of continuity between each page. As the poems appear to expand and contract, moving to a minimalist arrangement of numbers and individual letters, before blossoming again to fully recognizable words, *73 Poems* is one of the few visual poetry sequences (along with Emmett Williams's *Sweethearts* and Tom Phillips's *A Humument*) to engage with narrative progression. The choice of words for the poems also anticipates López's later work in that it incorporates both "high" and "low" culture with quotations from T.S. Eliot found alongside those of Bob Dylan or The Rolling Stones, as well as López's characteristic attraction to quotidian phrases and end-rhyme (ex. "Gain Weight/ Jailbait/ Soul Mate/ Hesitate/ Penetrate/ Watergate" [7]). The book includes a CD recording of Joan La Barbara's vocal interpretation of these pieces – making these poems a valuable contribution to the history of sound poetry scores. A series of stenciled textual overlays, similar to those of *73 Poems*, serve as illustrations for Bruce Andrews's poetry collection *Tizzy Boost* (1993).

The chapbook *Gertrude Stein on Punctuation* (1999) reproduces an excerpt from Stein's famous lecture "Poetry and Grammar" (1935) in which she provides a rationale for the use of certain forms of punctuation over others. This is followed by a series of three pages which consist solely of the punctuation marks taken from Stein's essay and arranged by López. The free-play of syntax across the white page is visually-pleasing concrete poetry, but also foregrounds that which often goes unnoticed: that punctuation signifies, but is viewed as having low connotative value. While Gertrude Stein on Punctuation may mark the end of López's explicit investigation of visual poetry, it does lead directly into his work with found material. As one of the tenets of concrete poetry was the awareness of the physicality of language – that words could be used as "concrete" objects in the construction of poems – so too, in collecting and listing words on the basis of their sonic properties, particularly end-rhyme and syllabic-count, over (but not to the elimination of) their semantic meaning, López privileges the materiality of language.

For example, in *No.105* (1992) López collects, in a travesty of the rhyming dictionary, a series of words and phrases ending with the "ee" sound and lists them in alphabetical order by syllable count. However, whereas a classical guidebook's diction is derived from the standard corpus, with *No.105* López collects the slang, the colloquialisms, and vulgarity of the late 20th century, as in "Frisbee, fuck me, funky, geegee, germ-free, goatee, gnarly!, grody!, Gucci, H.D." (1). This practice is continued with *No.109 2.7.93- 12.15.93* (1993) where the same process is applied to words ending in the "schwa" sound (such as, "ar" and "ah").

Yet both of these publications are mere groundwork for López' magnum opus *No.111 2.7.93-10.20.96* (1997), which follows No.109 in collecting phrases ending in "r" sounds, but in this instance over a three year period, resulting in over 600 pages of text. Like his previous work in word collection, *No.111* begins with single syllable words, and increases by one syllable in each section, until it reaches a conclusion of 7,228 syllables. As in the poetry of Andrews, *No.111* excels at startling juxtapositions of obscenity, pop cultural references, idiosyncratic slang, and generational

buzzwords. Amazingly comprehensive and wide-ranging in its references (including the just-emerging internet culture and its lingo) *No.111* is – if we are to use such Poundian definitions as being the "tale of the tribe" or "a poem containing history" – the last significant epic poem of the 20th century.

López's lifelong fascination with music (both popular and avant-garde), facilitated in part by his job as a radio DJ and music critic, is represented in *6799* (2000) and *Head Citations* (2002). In the former, López simply lists, in alphabetical order, his LP and CD collection, drawing attention to the fact that his obsessive collecting tendencies are not restricted to language, as well to as issues of consumerism (the book is 92 pages long) and the occasional beauty of album titles and of contemporary rock group names. With *Head Citations*, however, López is much more playful, presenting 800 misheard pop song lyrics (the title, for example, is a misreading of the Beach Boys hit "Good Vibrations"). While not a significantly original idea, it is in keeping with the poet's interests in exploring the intersections of the aural and the oral.

The idea of collecting the quotidian takes a turn toward the personal with *Fidget* (2000), a transcript of the poet's every physical gesture taken over a 13 hour period. The fact that López chooses Bloomsday (June 16th) 1997 to conduct this experiment suggests that he is engaging with James Joyce's attention to the minutae of daily life (and López does follow some Bloomsian paths, masturbating, having breakfast, and walking along the beach) yet Fidget seems more an act of poetic defamiliarization, where common activities are rendered almost unrecognizable by the spartan text (for example, drinking coffee becomes: "Arm lifts. Swallow. Arm drops. Swallow. Arm lifts. Arm drops. Eyes move to left." [19]).

A logical successor to *Fidget*, where the individual's physicality becomes verbalized, *Soliloquy* (2001) captures all nuances idiosyncratic speech. Here, López seems to expand upon Warhol's A: A Novel (1968) – in which the pop artist records and transcribes a friend's monologue for 24 hours – in that López records his every utterance over an entire week. As with his work in concrete poetry, *Soliloquy* transforms spoken language into physical material. Designed to investigate how much a person speaks in an average week, the answer is 500 pages, or about 5 pounds.

López's current textual practice involves exercises in "uncreativity." In *Day* (2003), the poet retypes the Friday, September 1st, 2000 issue of the *New York Times*, from left to right, ignoring distinctions between articles and advertisements, stock quotes and editorials. Reproduced in a single consistent font, the published text is an 836 page folio-sized tome, again demonstrating the physicality of language and the actual weight of linguistic material that most view as disposable. Although the gesture is perhaps more enjoyable as a concept than as a reading experience, the collection does provide numerous pleasures resulting from incongruous verbal juxtapositions and from the conflation of banalities with historical insight. Inspired by Cage's one-minute stories, *Year* (a work in progress) compiles the 60-second weather reports from 1010 WINS Radio in New York City for one year, exploring the narrative that arises from quotidian reportage as well as once again making everyday utterance manifest. Although each of López's works is audacious and original, it is entirely consistent. As a collector, compiler, composer, and arranger of everyday speech and the discourse of common culture, López makes readers aware of the linguistic matter all about us, and the potential for it to be materialized. Further, in his publishing decisions, few writers have done so much to interrogate the boundaries between art and life.

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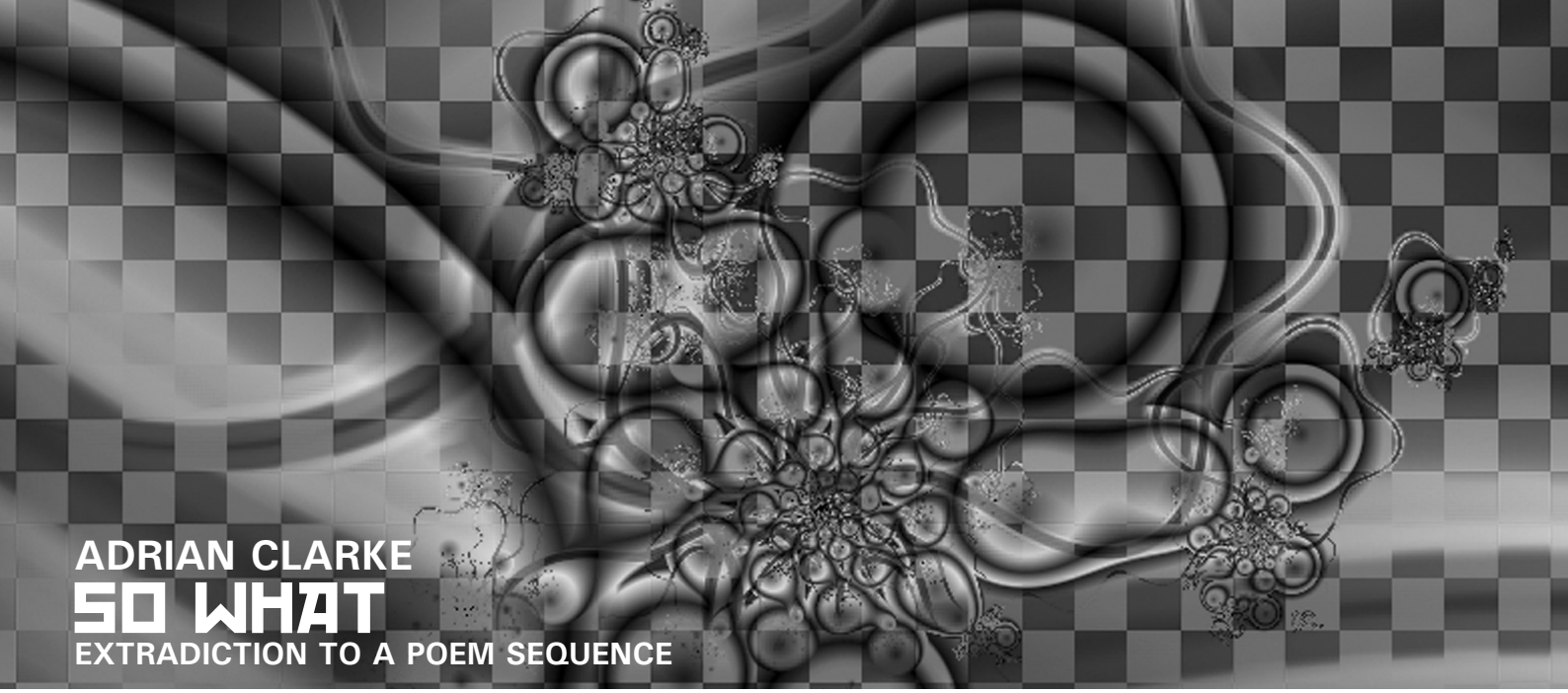


ADRIAN CLARKE
SO WHAT
EXTRADICTION TO A POEM SEQUENCE

So what if there's nothing worth seeing at the movies? Godard's *Weekend* (1967) concludes "FIN DE CINÉMA," and most of the industry's subsequent output – Godard's included – has been footnotes – or else exhumations followed by the attachment of a variety of increasingly ingenious prosthetics which fail to reanimate a still recognizable corpse. Robin Wood, an early Godard critic, wrote "for '*Cinéma*' read '*the Arts.*'" He found in the film's guerrillas "a terrible honesty, quite without illusions or ideals, an acceptance of man's innate bestiality," that honesty being a source of hope for a future that would "entail the final destruction of all those finer human feelings that the European cultural tradition (in *Weekend*, Mozart) embodies." In the paradox of a "capitalist society" there is room for saleable anodyne substitutes; what hope for the poetry that Lyotard had already found to have failed as a site for intensities in *Economie Libidinale,* his "evil" masterpiece of 1974? what hope for the potentially most creative verbal art if it can't trace the obvious back to its roots and start again?

… So what else is new beyond the accelerating progress of "the disease called man"? Since Freud they've been firming up the plot: subject-verb-object to the end. (Poets included, we're getting there.) Literatures offer it in tidy parcels; alternatives didn't make syntactical sense – a non-issue if, like Charles Bernstein, you can bring yourself to believe syntax is nothing "other than the order of strings of words." So I'm reduced to what I despise: prose. Contentious prose *about* the point, malapropos the alchemy of the word. If "Il faut être absolument modern," our politicians' version's got us by the balls. When the mode of the music changes retail sales records break. Here's another sad fucker queued up clutching his business plan.

So I'm shrunk to an "I." This rant © the author. File under "Fiction": they made me up. If you think I'm clinging to *passé* intellectual fashion, piss off and wallow in your biography of Keats. – That "they" is a story we can save for later… Hard to know if I'm all there … either way.

So is what I say something else? or is that what I do? As for a common language, if you really believe it's enriching itself at an ever-increasing rate, it's in willful ignorance: overall, variety of and within languages – mine included here? – is withering fast. Basic English dropped the adjective. And buzz words and argots usefully alter no-one's perception of anything with the redundancy of their faddish affectedness and phony exoticism. There's a social orchestration of me-meaning in which the "me" is still usually white, at least as rich as Croesus in an African villager's eyes and mindful of his moral duty to trade any pretender to a share in

the action off the planet's face. You don't need the subjunctive for that.

So wasn't there something called language poetries? There was a magazine called L = A = N = G = U = A = G = E coming out of New York from 1978, edited by a technical writer and a political science lecturer. It was driven by an awareness of social crisis and poetry's political value as resistance to its linguistically encoded structures. Within a few years a selection from the first issues was an academic paperback and the technical writer had a professorial chair. Along the way, having got wind of developments, creative writing students began using their computer to reduce anything and everything to "Language" texts faster than monkeys can type Shakespeare. The lecturer – Bruce Andrews – wrote a raw, brilliant book – *I Don't Have Any Paper So Shut Up (or, Social Romanticism)* – that took its materials straight from the enemy's mouth and arranged them with a non-interventionist relish that should have subversives everywhere doubled up; given the readership it's found, I doubt it's currently generating much more than a couple of PhDs.

So what's the gripe against universities? – We have reason to be grateful to a few academics who have been working against the grain to extend the boundaries, but what I'm saying is that it's futile to look to their institutions as a last refuge for writing that would challenge or significantly by-pass commercial or "Heritage Culture" norms. Academic freedom has been compromised historically by king, church and parliament; its supposed residual exemption from market forces is no less prejudiced by funding shortfalls, and even by the formal assessment of "research" – which in practice means regular accommodations with the requirements of the publishing industry. What's more, if the academy becomes the context, talented non-academic poets start feeling obliged to talk about their works like this:

They are nested spherics. I am truly interested in what is disabled by formalism, in inspiration/insight, qui vive, as it oscillates experientially, anti-yak, and rather than catechism or techniques per se, I think more in terms of skeletal purpose, manipulate perceptions by employing an intent practice of deliberation on: prismoid knowing/not-knowing, exo-eso, urgent radical withdrawal, détournement ..

…. stochastic meltdowns, entelechies in provision of a frontier for my sake, to accelerate my looking, divvied in imaginal, partial pre-verbal milieux, necessarily outside agreed-upon motif value. In contradiction, syncope, they are sometimes scherzi, jumpy surrealisms, bricoleurity et al., directed towards synaesthesia… I think the heart of my work is the evisceration of being/its antithesis, and that which is inalienable.

(From "Ardor is its undermost shaping: An Interview with Lissa Wolsak," with Kent Johnson, Electronic Poetry Center.)

Jessica Smith certainly avoids specialist vocabularies in *Articulating Space: Short Essays on Poetry* (Argotist Ebooks, 2011) – to what effect is arguable. Her take on linearity looks rather literal-minded in its preference for "three-dimensional" work over that in which "the unit of measure was always the line." This may be because her examination of syntax is cursory. It is unfair to ask short essays to pursue the relationship between a progressively more disastrous history and its languages' logical and grammatical structures (the call for a "new" language is usually irresistible), but I'd argue that the possessive quest for the subordinated object encoded therein directs some of our most basic expectations. The introduction of indeterminacy into those structures, in that it does not automatically create forms that too many will reject outright as "unreadable," appears to have far more subversive potential than an "unassimilable pluralism" that automatically excludes itself from far more than co-option by the State. Where locate the edge of "what society considers useful and normal," and how, in the "*edgelessness*" of a "real avant garde"? And – whatever its gender – must we re-inscribe the self there?

So the *Stanford News* (28/9/2009) reported Professor Carol Schloss – who wrote a book to correct "our" view of James Joyce's daughter Lucia from psychotic to frustrated genius – had successfully sued the Joyce Estate, the copyright holders, who had obstructed her access to papers and on-line publication of expurgated material. She thinks she and her fellow academics are "the people who teach children and students to love Joyce." In her view Stephen Joyce had "a financial right, but does that give him the right to repress people's work? Does it give him the right to shut down the free exchange of ideas about Joyce?" If she can't distinguish between the man and his work and believes biographical speculation is the key to informing the latter, god help children and students. Of course she believes no such thing – her "research" merely discovers

a scholarly opportunist who doesn't need telling when a bandwaggon rolls past; god help students anyway.

So what if a digitized "heritage culture" escapes a planetic heritage of devastation? Lyotard observes with a nice irony that the "big techno-scientific monad has no need of our bodies… What it 'needs' is our wonderful brains." An eschatology to be elaborated – if not in any recognisable form – somewhere among the stars. Swing low sweet chariot. An omniscient monad, Daddy will be there; Beatrice and Laura too. Sore here, an inversive Eros will pass through desire to immaterial loss

Re verse: the English "turn" gets replaced by a coupleted punch-line. Do we still need telling any of our stand-ups – or theirs – is funnier than Lenny Bruce? One or two have even been known to metamorphose into poets… as commonly understood. Understanding and the lack of it are equally capable of creating a community of a sort. Communities of poets risk becoming marketing strategies before or after the event. (The work is largely excluded, but not those poets whose lives achieve the necessary perfection.) As such communities become academic their branches spread. The School of New York's Plaistow Annexe is indicative of the direction in which this expansion – like so many others – heads.

So what if everything so far has been envious and untrue? Leave truth to a revolutionary parasite like Badiou. If the function of art is to suggest more creative possibilities than our societies have so far managed to realize, in a sense the facts are barely worth discovering. The utopian may be puerile; it may also be dangerous – if, in some poetic takes, not dangerous enough. Pasolini's degeneration of consumerism into its purity and absence of function may, as he acknowledges, do no more than relieve the poet of economic status with the non-specific promise of a name to come; the productive nature of the names with which we – a rather ill-assorted and sometimes fractious alternative grouping – struggle for a hearing at present deserves extended public examination by someone with more patience than I could summon.

According to Marcelin Pleynet the right method for teaching poetry:

> *l'art se limite aux propositions*
> *des sciences établies, avec toute la clarté*
> *et l'exactitude possible, laissant l'énoncés*
> *poétiques à l'élève et lui prouvant,*
> *chaques fois qu'il y a recours, qu'ils sont*
> *sans signification.*

For Eric Mottram there was no such conflict – outside the classroom, at least: "… the use of particles and asymmetry in the soundtexts of Dufrêne, Chopin, Cobbing and others, as main compositional elements, is by no means esoteric, and is in fact well within the twentieth-century description of the universe." – If that confirms an institutionally entrenched servility towards Science, Wyndham Lewis would have seen the science-derived "twentieth century description" as pretty much the whole problem. Bergson, the prime culprit in his book, preferred an "*egalitarian science*… which recognizes no 'objects,' that substitutes for them a cluster of 'events' or perspectives, which shade off into each other and into other objects, to infinity. Reality is where things run into each other, in that flux, not where they stand out in a discrete 'concreteness.'" From Mallarmé to Bruce Andrews a century of zetetic poetic activity has been interrogating Lewis's assertions, with or without the aid of science; while Whorff's linguistic relativity principle has offered critical support for explorations of an indeterminate syntax. Pleynet's "rétention syntaxique" caries on draining in floods of metaphor.

What if the Arts Council doesn't fund alternative poetries? It wouldn't recognize it if the real thing buggered it in broad daylight. The time of intelligent patronage – insofar as it ever existed – is long gone, to be replaced by a concept of "excellence" confirmed by commercial viability. Don't take it from me – Judith Palmer, director of the Poetry Society, *The Guardian*, 29/10/2011: "I think the fact that prizes have a role in the marketplace is the thing that people don't necessarily acknowledge. Within the arts, the measurability, the ability to make excellence quantifiable and defined has become much more important. So you're trying to offer your arts funders evidence that you have met key performance indicators of excellence." "Elitism" is dismissed by tinkling cash registers. (Supposedly "elitist" art is not the enemy of a genuinely popular one; their common enemy is a meretricious commercial product with the largely realized ambition to supersede both.) A "professional" snobbery still survives in the contemptuous rejection of the more challenging work that might benefit from a little financial support. That

little support was for a number of years the best genuinely creative work could hope for: a "mainstream" of mediocrity has prevailed since the 19th century.

So what if our new Dark Age occasions a rush to take up the academy's dubious promise of something like monastic retirement? Since 2010 poetry in London has had its own Palace of Varieties for those of us who enjoy the odd luxury; "stripped of such bloated aspirations as social change" – unless they happen to accord with the mood of the moment. It can entertain as it brings us together and broadens our tastes. Forget the naked lunch – too heavily seasoned for delicate young stomachs, perhaps. Charging language with meaning; giving a *sens plus pur* to the words of the tribe – ascribe all that to "personal subjectivity" while we revel collectively in light verse, chopped prose and inoffensive stand-up routines.

If the poetic of the 1890s Decadents attempted unsuccessfully to convalesce in the Georgian countryside, the moribund survivor was restored – for better or worse – by what an early reviewer characterized as the "muscular" version of Ted Hughes. My impression – without too much wearisome research – is that our now default tradition – in defiance of the Trade Descriptions Act proclaimed "great" in a Faber advertising campaign a few years ago – has atrophied beyond all hope of further recovery in its suburban retirement. In the standard product a vaunted "self-expression" becomes the expression of a restricted number of blueprints whose main characteristics are familiarity and undemandingness. – Pleynet's "amaigrissement du vocabulaire / rétention syntaxique" point to an impoverishment that now extends depressingly beyond the Anglo-Saxon world. The simple reversal of those features that the poetry of Bill Griffiths, Barry MacSweeney, Ulli Freer, Maggie O'Sullivan, Bruce Andrews, Sean Bonney or Frances Kruk foregrounds goes some way to meet the challenge of Deleuze's "…every language is… so multilingual that one can stutter in one's own language, be a foreigner in one' own language, that is push ever further the points of deterritorialisation of assemblages."

So what if I am white, male and, crudely categorised, middle class? Does that mean I can't lose myself in language? – it's certainly not mine, and what I do with it is determined more by its materiality, chance and socially acquired significances than by the limited operations of my sensibility, socially constructed as they are. Marjorie Perloff in a sometimes careless and silly book – *Wittgenstein's Ladder* – finds that, despite "I" being "denied by the text the power to act as a vehicle for confession," considerations of status, leisure and wealth at least ensure that "every formulation in the *Investigations* is the embodiment of this author's 'I.'" A rather curious version of the materiality of language that disturbingly points back to her citation of a "formalized first-person mode we call lyric poetry." Kindly defer the collective pronoun while I re-read a few more of Zukofsky's *80 Flowers*.

"La langue écrite est une langue de fonctionnaire" for Pleynet. Deleuze characterized English and American as imperialistic languages, now vulnerable to the coinages and corruptions of immigrant minorities at every turn. So is that vulnerability unique to spoken forms? Or is the distinction between the written and spoken less crucial for us than it may have been formerly? As spoken raw materials re-emerge in the text does impurity of poetic diction have anything of the same disruptive potential there as an obscenity in church may have done once? The irony in the title of Bruce Andrews' *I Don't Have Any Paper So Shut Up* sounds apposite, though maybe a little anachronistic: if writing threatened memory for Plato, the search engine has now rendered it increasingly unreliable and often superfluous; the multi-tasker's attention span shrinks to the point where Christopher Middleton's observation in 1971 that "[i]t is, besides, often boring the way a poem goes on and on" takes on a new relevance. Better make it fast and hard… and pray, on the page or off. – Tangentially, JH Prynne thinks that the printed poem's sound is donated by the language – or rather "a distinct sub-variant of the generic phonology of a specific language" – and nothing is added by "performance of poems in their author's own voice" – an attitude I might be inclined to characterize as anal-retentive if I could take Freud seriously. The poetic text may be more than a musical score, but, when available, it would be stupid to ignore the information from its creator's performance of its rhythms, tempi, volumes, emphases and pauses. – No need to flog the analogy: I am not your music. The possibility of "[a]n author-speaker of text in self-performance" as a special case Prynne rapidly dismisses as "delusional"; no question of following Barthes in attending to the grain of the voice that will previously have engaged in an act of "*writing aloud*… an erotic mixture of timbre and language," but,

as I've observed elsewhere, unignorable poet though he be, it's hard imagining any question of a debt to pleasure when Mr Prynne is auditing the books.

So are we constructing a springboard for revolution? What revolution? The result of a class war the oppressed side in which has in reality been so systematically enfeebled and fragmented that it can no longer recognize itself? Maybe we could usefully attend to Guy Debord's 1988 *Commentaries on the Society of the Spectacle* whose analysis may arguably have achieved a little more pertinence than Marx's 1871 *The Civil War in France* (if not his remarks on Balzac): "In a certain sense the coherence of the spectacular society proves revolutionaries right, as it is evident that it is not possible to reform the most trifling detail short of taking the whole thing apart. But at the same time this coherence has eliminated every organized revolutionary tendency by eliminating those social arenas where to greater or lesser effect it had managed to find expression: from trade unions to newspapers, cities to books." The selfless commitment of some of those involved in the OCCUPY and other protest movements speaks to my heart, but on the evidence it seems unlikely to break the Spectacle's spell before the rapacity of the ruling class or the resultant planetary disaster has brought us more or less to the point of no return. Meanwhile, meaningful revolutionary literatures have got their work cut out.

So what the fuck use is a small press/alternative poetries scene lousy with metropolitan class warriors, creative writing course opportunists, deluded Second Division Mainstreamers and self-perceived members of a significant revolutionary cadre? Well, things weren't always quite this bad… and then again there's nowhere else to run. In fact there's quite a lot of activity around in terms of publishing and readings, though too much of it – motivated by a rather pathetic ambition – has a quite different character from "the world of the 1960s" to which Robert Hampson looks "from which the 1970s London poetry scene developed: a world of collectives co-operatives, free universities and anti-universities… options we might need to reconsider and revisit in the harsher conditions of the next decade." – I'm still headed where I was 10 years ago in an *Open Letter to Robert Sheppard*: "… back to the labyrinthine passages behind and beneath the Superhighway… till the wrecking crew arrives; back to the underground, *C20 Blues*."

Out in the "real" world we're looking for habitable planets in distant galaxies while we obliviously wreck our own in the unexamined short-term interest of someone else. The word from above is no more than an echo. "Forms of thought" become formulae for paralysis in the arts. The word on the streets is toxic.

So what do I think I'm actually up to in those labyrinthine passages? At the time of the *Open Letter* it meant releasing words from the pressure of me-meaning to recombine in the indeterminate syntax of *Skeleton Sonnets*… and more recently the sonic patterning of *Muzzle* and subsequent word-sound sequences: a struggle to get the best words – and only those – in the most suggestive rather than what convention might determine the best order. – What many poets have been up to since Antiquity – in a modern reading, at least. It is a struggle in which philosophers join according to Lyotard for whom its sufferance is "the mark of true thought… because we think in the already-thought, in the inscribed. And because it is difficult to leave something hanging in abeyance or take it up in a different way so that what has not been thought before can emerge and what *should be* inscribed *may be*. I am not talking just about words lacking a superabundance of possible extensions, but about ways of assembling those words, ways we should accept in spite of the utterances inspired in us by logic, by the syntax of our languages, by constructions derived from our reading." Too late to celebrate Marx's "species-essence" as it turns increasingly suicidal. Still time to sound out what potential may be left, perhaps. Pity no-one's listening… or is it?

So what if I sometimes find myself in sympathy with Pessoa's "Why should I care that no one reads what I write?" He continues "I write to forget about life, and publish because that's one of the rules of the game." Forgetting life strikes me as quite a tall order… but so what if the British Library is running out of storage space and the iCloud looks like a dodgy prospect for a power-strapped future? No one's likely to care about most of our current over-production in a few years – mine least of all. Warhol's 15 minutes to be famous was prescient and the Reader's Digest Condensed Great Books series exemplary. It's getting to be one hell of a game.

JUSTIN KATKO

HOW POCAHONTAS MILDEW ROSE FROM THE DEAD IN HER SPARE TIME & SO CAN YOU

PREACHING TO THE CHOIR is a metaphor that has nothing to do with serious poetry in the UK. Poetry is an object class of hyperbolic utility, and the idea that it is *for*, or *not for*, or necessarily has any essential relation to whatever audience it gets the chance to address, is equally useless. If the poets happen to be their own audience, then the seething animosities and political disagreements between us are too pervasive and strong for us to constitute a choir to which serious work can possibly speak. We do not sing in harmony, and our hymnal does not exist.

These thoughts are occasioned by Jennifer Cooke's essay "The Poet in British Protest (2010–2013)," which I think reproduces some common errors in thinking about poetry. It was published in the seventh issue of *Tripwire* (Oakland, 2014). The essay is part of a feature called "Unruly Britannica" which prints some poems and essays by a small scene of mostly university-affiliated left-wing poets in the UK. I want to say a few things in response to this essay, which does not reflect the intellectual work that goes on in the scene that I know…

> Does it matter if we write political poetry which only a small, usually highly-educated, section of society, a section of society with broadly the same political stance, understands and appreciates?

This question can be answered yes if its assumptions are true. But what is meant by UNDERSTANDS AND APPRECIATES? How are understanding and appreciation done to a poem? The possibilities of understanding and appreciation are secondary to the fact of exposure. We cannot be guilty for having a readership, however small and white it is, but we can be guilty for writing dull poetry that doesn't take seriously the intellects of its potential readers. Plenty of us have done that, are doing that, will do that. It is the question of how to grapple with the present, what and how to say into it, that is most pertinent. Those exposed to what we have made form a social body who share the terms and means that we have invented. Those unimpressed with their audience should seek out other scenes, build new ones. The London Black Revolutionaries are cutting a new axis through London which should magnetise new relations among intellectuals and workers there.

Before we decide that our poetry needs to "galvanise a large number of the population and specifically given they have the most to gain from socio-political re-organisation, the working class," we could do well to read *Don Quixote*, where all it takes is a well-laid shit for the squire to prove that he is less imprisoned than his master. We will not be anyone's liberator. When people liberate themselves, certain poems will matter to them in the process. They don't have to be ours, though it's

thrilling to think they might be. A poetry is not made irrelevant or counter-revolutionary if it does not become an object of understanding and appreciation right there to the sides of our ears.

Poetry is a force of incredible fury that, at its best, rarest, and most ungentle, performs an absolute reorganization of the minds of its participants, tunneling and demolitioning beneath a nullifying mainstream undergoing constant preparation and inhumane refreshment.

> Does it matter that [our political poetry] might be alienating to the very people whose support it needs if its political dreams are to be realised, and alienating precisely on the grounds that the poetry overtly displays a familiarity with nonpopular and complicated aesthetic forms and ideas and thus demonstrates the probable social and cultural (though not necessarily economic) privilege of the poet?

Does poetry actually eats its audience over the course of a lifetime without retirement? If only! The sense of ALIENATING here is cultural-affective, whereas the revolutionary sense of that word describes a person's destruction by their own labour. The labour it takes to do something to a poem, such as UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE, is a labour that is owned by the reader-auscultationist. Our poetry does no material alienation because what we make is not capital.

Meanwhile, distinctions between high and low culture are tedious and disingenuous to the truth of how art is made and used and loved by people. The ways in which a poem can be classified as popular are irrelevant to the question of its intellectual necessity. Serious poetry is fundamentally difficult and complicated by design, even if made in the "keep-it-plain" style of a poet like Melle Mel. Rap music, the medium in which much of the popular transatlantic poetry of the last three decades has been written, exemplifies this truth. Check out Hardnoise's "Serve Tea then Murder" (1991), or Three 6 Mafia's "Live by yo Rep" (1995): can we claim that either Gemini's or Gangsta Boo's verses are uncomplicated? And if we are able to parse the lyrics, are we able to prove that their ideas are not advanced?

This is just a case in point of why COMPLICATION has no essential relation to PRIVILEGE. People are not too slow or too fragile to have productive intellectual and emotional experiences with new forms of poetry, however aggressive or extreme they may be in their particular modernities. Maybe the question is simply one of writing good poetry: a lot of poetry, even so called avant-garde poetry, is just neither intellectually stimulating nor entertaining.

The above passage continues:

> This is not the same argument as to suggest that the poetry is alienating because it is too difficult for the comprehension or enjoyment of those untrained in its aesthetics strategies; instead, I am suggesting that alienation can stem from the display of privilege encoded in writing, reading and enjoying this kind of poetry, even if that privilege is a fantasmatic projection on the part of the person encountering the work.

Is this not precisely the argument it denies being? At the core of the kind of thinking that the essay called "The Poet in British Poet" participates in, is a fantasy encounter between a specific group of left-wing intellectual poets made to stand for a cultural elite, and a vaguely-conceived working class audience made to stand for a revolutionary mass. This fantasy is concerned not with the alienated labour which has already eaten most of the audience, but with an anxiety that, due to a perceived failure of representation on the part of the intellectual poets, the eaten audience will not feel as if they are the correct eaten audience for the poetry which they see being prepared and consumed by those around them.

The main problem with this fantasy is that it is upside-down: because it is intellectual poets who largely fail to comprehend the complicated forms and ideas made by the working classes. Universities will always be on the back foot in their provision for these forms. Possibly our work will increase in correct complication as we audience the poets whom the upside-down fantasy thinks should be audiencing us.

> One of the indisputable facts about radial poetic aesthetics is its insistence on valuing what it does outside of everyday market forces. There is the fact that it is possible to buy, for very little money, and for

> a price which in no way reflects the labour and time involved in the making of them, seriously beautiful objects, like the books made by Richard Owens of Damn the Caesars or Richard Parker of Crater Press. These are exquisite objects and no one who holds them would think otherwise.

VERY LITTLE MONEY is a troubling notion when considered against the absolute NO ONE (contrastive negative form of everyone). This is an image of the human population that cannot include someone with zero pounds. This indeed existent person will in only the most exceptional circumstances choose to buy a letter-pressed sexagesimafold battery-powered chapbook printed on Lithuanian child scalp for £6 plus shipping, much less a more conventional production photocopied at midnight by graduate students in a prestigious Faculty of English for £1.50 plus shipping. There is just better stuff to buy, and stuff with more palatable claims to being a SERIOUSLY BEAUTIFUL OBJECT. Like these words on the high street that read PHARMACY — BOOTS — BEAUTY which signify, among other things, that you can buy a sandwich in the store beneath them, which sandwich we might say can be afforded by any person hungry enough to buy it, but we could only say that if these two conditions are met: A) we can afford it ourselves, and B) we have been tempted into the kind of hallucination of social equivalence that thinks any of us to be just as destroyed as those who suffer the most serious abuses of poverty and prejudice.

Good food that costs nothing will be the iterating first object of serious beauty until our society experiences a revolutionary reorganisation. But as long as the EXQUISITE OBJECTS described above exist in the same world as people suffering chronic malnutrition, and even along the very streets where we flog our books at readings, then we should at least find less-universalised epithets for the little productions for which we have so much zeal.

If you've got your food supply properly sorted out, staying close to ghetto texts is one way to keep your perspective checked by the position of the hungry. Eightball raps in "For Real" (1995):

> And here's this other fool with dreads growin from his head
> He tryin to tell me bout some shit Farrakhan said
> I tried to listen cause Eightball ain't the one to knock it
> But I can't hear over the echo from my empty pocket

It is the task of serious poets to attend to sounds of precisely this variety, not to the fact that their books were printed by valiant hobbyists so small-scale that their admirers convince themselves they are economically exempt. The PRICE WHICH IN NO WAY REFLECTS THE LABOUR AND TIME INVOLVED IN THE MAKING is the price we choose to pay everyday when we exchange our money for products that are fabricated or processed in prisons and industrial ghettos that we mostly fail to name with any precision, however just around the corner they always are.

> On top of that, the poetic values the poetry itself enacts are also removed from economic thinking. This is one way of thinking of disputations of 'good' work: not as a fascistic act of judgement but as the formation of categories which are not subject to economic equivalence.

Nothing can fail to be SUBJECT TO ECONOMIC EQUIVALENCE. That's what new markets are: uncapitalised CATEGORIES. Value cannot be REMOVED FROM ECONOMIC THINKING without transforming its remover into someone who ignores the pervasion of exchange. Every second we take in free intellection is provided us at the expense of a monotonous and multitudinous human misery that distorts every thought we have. So ACTS OF JUDGEMENT are something that I greatly cherish, especially from those whose JUDGEMENT I trust to attend chiefly to the shape that misery leaves thoughts in. And that's what I think arguments for or against a poetry are about: evaluating whether and how the dialectic of misery and thought is embodied. Poems are raw forms of JUDGEMENT that, in the end, we accept or we don't. Some of us like it super raw.

P.S. — Is it because Hitler said that the serious painters of his time had actual glaucoma that people consider ACTS OF JUDGEMENT about whether poetry is good or not to be FASCISTIC? If the answer is yes, then we will have to find a more appropriate word to level at the right-wing whose fangs presently occupy Britain's only face.

DAVID BUUCK

WE ARE ALL SOUND★

perhaps then we will
might yet have become
scavengers of the unknown
liberating the contact zones
where we find ourselves,
"lumpy and contestable
aggregates," which might be
another way of saying
community, the sweaty
and contestatory entanglement
of overripe species-beings
buzzing and honey-drunk
in the counter-future,
impure yet interdependent,
and if I am to carry
germs and viruses
parasites and contagions
to the courthouse
and to the feast,
to the revolution
and to the after party,
then let my body
and all that feeds
within and upon it
exercise its significant otherness
in shared spaces of bio-
political barter and re-art-
iculatory speech actions,
forging new next-nows
with the critters that live
inside and around me
communist germs
in the microbial commons
of our shared social breath,
everybod's body's a
DNA minefield
our parasites, our selves
nonsites for your recon'd
recombinant bitstreams
our rapsheets, our sleeves
in which the meridians hum
through the blood-ways wracking
the archives of the cell-
ular one-to-one and a
free for all fire-drill
where everyone will have had
a 15 minute blood panel
presentation on the work
they've not yet begun
so let's meme up and
tear down the fences

went back to the plaza
and all I got were
these linked cuffs
but then what's the point
of an authorized protest.
it's like perfume. Gas.
mask up, strap down
shields to the front
the glitter bloc's
got my back, up
against the forward heave
but who defines each
situation. our finance
committee vs. their
finance committee.
Every revolution gets
the prosody it deserves.
My hope then is that
by the time you read this
it will have been
rendered obsolete
by the events to come.

so now I just need
a plowshare to dig
a hole to bury
the broken glass
made by the business

end of my plowshare
so I am going downtown
to attempt to get back
my tent and Lindsey's
paper cutter, not because
I care that much
about stuff, but I'm
interested in the logistics
since I am I because
the big state knows me.
so I ripped the cover off
my copy of *A Megaphone*
and rolled it up
to make a horn and
shouted to the po-po
"that's a bad poem!"

not a slumber party
but a ground-sound wave
We love you Michael
Jackson. Don't afraid.
cuz the dialectics come
non-stop on the train
of thought's daily pressings
up against the facts
such as they will have been
and from have-been to will
might yet become
is the breach in function-
al time, where being
in space with nothing
to do is something
to work with — instead
of killing time you're
free to live it, in it

and so it's go time
in the illuminated
copter-lights,
our bodies flung up
in the after-gas
mid-slam dancing and
holding down the inter
section'd off and not yet
kettled by the so-called
realism of the cynics
rhythm'd 'gainst
the chopper blades
you can smell the auto-
nomy in the plaza
one part Maalox
to one part live-feed
you can't believe
your stinging eyes
but there we are
our own audience
lashing, lit and lit up
by the fires we set
to clear the gas
to cast some shadows
to creep back into

land-scrapes of dis-
sensus composted
with the shit we've
swallowed for too long
then harvested as
topsoil for the perma-
nent autonomous zones
that the beast in each
of us craves and cries out
for, everybod's body
a megaphone, long-range
poetic devices, so
be heard and not scene-
ry, for in the stages
to come, comrades,
we can only ever be
the we we will have
struggled together
to have become —
monsters on the move
thriller-mobs lurching
two steps forward and
one step back, toward
unimaginable tomorrows

*text/inspiration from Anna Tsing, Lara Durback, Caroline Bergvall, Jeanine Webb, Dewayne Dickerson, Anne Tardos, Leslie Scalapino, Sasha Spahr, & Occupy Oakland...

VIRGINIA KONCHAN

THE POETICS OF HATE

THE FORGOTTEN (& FORGETTABLE?) ART OF INVECTIVE, DAMNATION & SNARK

"Just because the *mouth* houses
Worry doesn't mean that girls
Should act like *flesh* extending
Itself into *terrified nature*...

we can *limit*
Our suspicions to the simple
Justice that will carry us further
From *trouble* than our wills.

We *balance inside* on the *slippery*,
Sleeping bed of *hate*."
("Labor," by Sally Van Doren)

"Including the fetish of the now, the moment, itself, a refusal of closure, of limits of farewell, of an unsustainable life in an unsustainable country only now beginning to end."
(Henri Cartier-Bresson)

In our post-elegaic age of fiat aesthetics, and derivative markets, not just products and money are offshored but language's roots. An excess of commercial products bear witness to the overtaking of labor and language by commodified bodies and dead metaphors: byproduct of the capital's "logic" of accumulation and profit (war) mongering. Cultural museums and monuments (Holocaust Museum, the Vietnam Wall, Ground Zero) aren't enough to keep the memory of hate crimes, poisonous ideology, and senseless violence from occurring again, however; our conscience must be reawakened by the animating power of literatures of resistance. Perhaps, along with non-fiction, and futuristic narratives imagining a new world, out of the ruins, and the waste product, in the eyes of finance markets, of the lyric (post- or conceptual) producing subjectivity, agency, and the Orphic suturing of body and the head of the polis, can emerge from the modernist association of language as decorative, not legislative, to intervene.

Marx understood the power of literary language (metalepsis, allegory) to transform a commodity fetish from an object use-value to surplus (the "dancing table") well: the transition of gold, to fiat currency, and fiat aesthetics, overvalued in a saturated market, in a pay to play (contest fees, graduate school) game, where the winner takes a book contract, at best, and the loser, a lifetime of debt, back to financial and ecological solvency, i.e., gold. Cid Corman (Celan's first English translator) describing Celan: "poetry OF language – but of language AS livingdying...a tale told by an idiot (signifying nothing, to boot)." Is the study of literature, then, the praise of nothingness: a moral disease? Yes, according to market economics, and Calvinist logic, privileging capital accumulation and dead labor in the global village over cultural mores. When the power of numbers take precedence over the power of naming, dehumanization is the result. Poetry is not something

we should dismiss as obscurity or nonsense, though it may employ nonsense to reach its goal, Corman adds ("to find 'the addressable Thou.'")

Historic poetic renunciations (Arthur Rimbaud and Mina Loy) signal an exhaustion not just of the belief in humanity, pace Adorno, after Auschwitz, but a belief in lyric "truth," as does the renunciation of the lyric tradition by conceptual poets, or metrical convention, by modernists, as well as innovators of meter and prosody, from Gerard Manley Hopkins to Emily Dickinson. As Louise Gluck said in her book Vita Nova: "As a child, I refused to speak if to speak meant repeating myself." The self-consciousness of a contemporary lyric speaker as an objectified, reified thing (one's crafted voice or persona) has been re-doubled in the 21st century as not just consciousness of self but twice objectified as subject but also a market commodity with either labor or product to "sell," and a self to be assigned, thus, a fixed market price.

It's only a small step of logic from *J'accuse* to *Je refuse* – I refuse the institutions of signification and meaning in a medium, language already reduced to advertising slogans, marketing campaigns and jingoism; I refuse metrical and received forms; and, lastly, I refuse to write or read poetry at all. Many poets who give up on poetry may do so as a conscious act of refusal to write in a commodified language, reduced to propaganda machines, yet poets who resist the qualities associated with the lyric are also searching for a means of communication beyond the confounds of the page, line, and word. Tyrannies of imperialism involve military as well as language domination or destruction: globalized, standardized English, imposed by "grammar Nazis," and the elimination of languages transmitted orally, or based on waves of immigration and the "dirtying" of one's already motely mother tongue (e.g. pigeon or creole).

Beyond the "recycling" of ideas – the so-called aesthetics of pastiche and assemblage – in the compost heap of 20th century thought, waste aesthetics has been an active meme for the past decade: John Scanlan's *On Garbage,* Gay Hawkins' *The Ethics of Waste,* Zygmunt Baumans' *Wasted Lives.* Western culture has long marked waste as "other" – and the surplus of an economy, derived from slave labor, or after a harvest, if not "used" as pleasure or luxury goods is also considered garbage or rot. Je refuse, then, also carries a dirtier, darker, entendre not just of "I waste" (I can afford to throw away half my dinner, spend lavishly, or enjoy other vaunted spoils of conspicuous consumption), but of "I am waste," I am what is leftover when the money sign, in a culture obsessed with youth, beauty, and products rushed to market in a backwards valuation of quantity over quality, passes me up for greener (more lucrative, fertile, non-confrontational or readily-yielding, in the dating, finance, literary, or ag-biz markets, crops).

This refusal, however, isn't necessarily of the other, but of the idea of the other existing outside the monomyth of capitalist ideology, an ethical vacuum of self- and corporate interest. Be mine, be me, or die: the Catch-22 of a claustrophic, homosocial, cinematic imaginary staged by Rene Girard's triangulation of desire: we only desire what we see others desiring, mediated by the Big Other's panoptic eye, thematically designed around the operatic suffering and death of women or the underclass. The colonial or post-colonial ruling class believe the other (and the non-logic of narrative poetry banned by Plato from the Republic) to exist only as an aggregate threat – an "axis of evil," to quote George W. Bush – to their own world domination, an oneiric nightmare of capitalist necromancy described by novelist Don DeLillo thus: "Money has lost its narrative quality the way painting did once upon a time. Money is talking to itself." Hate speech, as with Judith Butler's "excitable speech," tends to exceed, in popular and academic discourse, the boundaries of civil discourse; in domestic and institutional contexts, too, sadism, intimidation, emotional terrorism, and physical violence is symptomatic of what happens when a dialogic space, forging a perceptual continuity between self and other, and cultivation of Derridean différance ("to defer" and "to differ"), collapses.

The new witnessing is a movement not of inscription, but erasure: what Aaron Bady calls "unwitnessing": "the manner in which the absent or retracted testimony of silenced witnesses is actually still present, present-as-absent… Witnesses who do not testify are un-witnesses because they testify to the official absence of a reality which remains subjectively true, even if it never reaches truth-making apparatuses." An act of erasure (of origins, history, the trace) can be a more pernicious violence than that of invective: censorship and historical revisionism are abortive acts, excising languages, cultures, races, sexualities, and genders not easily streamlined into (or steamrolled by) capitalism from representation, to say nothing of the lyric, stripped of two-thirds of the Romantic triumvirate (truth, beauty, and goodness) in spectacle culture and reduced to image, or worse, rendered invisible by dominant culture.

The modernist poets felt the *horror vacui* of the death of god and attendant humanitarian (civilizing)

values, as expressed in lyric consciousness, as well: Eliot's claim that the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, "assert their immortality most vigorously" corroborated by Louise Glück. "The goal, in Eliot's monologues, is communion. The problem is that an other cannot be found, or attention secured. Almost all the poems are beset by caution. Sentences falter; major ideas are regularly subordinated, delayed, qualified – Eliot's speakers either can't speak or can't be heard; their persistence makes the poems urgent… what has driven these poems… is terror and need of the understandable other. When the terror becomes unbearable, the other becomes god." [1]

In the history of the lyric, a call without a response, or a response in an amphitheater made in absence of a tonal center makes for the loneliest of songs: tics we might associate with post-traumatic or autistic (i.e. dissociated, rather than merely disinterested) art: the half-life of stars long since burned out, or what Kafka calls "a message from a dead man."

Poetry is the art, among other things, of ars memoria: a tribe of elephants, walking through the desert of the "real" holding onto each other's tails. Occasional poetry celebrates marriage (epithalamia), mourns the dead (elegies and dirges), praises (paeans, odes) and marks victory. What could be more formal than the choreography of rapprochement: how we present ourselves to, and define ourselves in relation the other, or what Wallace Stevens' "American sublime": "How does one stand… how does one feel?" to say nothing of the practical realities: "the sublime comes down/ To the spirit itself,/ In vacant space./ What wine does one drink? What bread does one eat?" Often studied in connection with orality, performance, and patronage, the act of greeting, and farewell (beginnings, and terminal closures), are also poetic gestures, belonging, as in any codified discourse, to the vast world of the semiotic: flower arranging, bowing, shaking hands, gift packaging, Bunraku, haiku, calligraphy, and facial physiognomy, as described by Roland Barthes in his text on Japanese culture, *Empire of signs.*

Stevens had two modes of poiēsis: one, pure and orgiastic (Dionysian celebration of life), and two, the ironic observer. His "Invective against Swans" is classifiable as mode that of the detached observer, much like the high irony, and camp, of John Ashbery, poised between the natural (allusions to Paphos, birthplace of Aphrodite as an embodiment of the values of love, sex, and beauty), Grecian ideality, Mallarméan purity, Victoriana, and pop culture.

In Stevens' "Farewell to Florida," the act of expulsion and pronouncement of hatred is a form of severance with a state (of being, or actual place).

> I hated the weathery yawl from which the pools
> Disclosed the sea floor and the wilderness
> Of waving weeds. I hated the vivid blooms
> Curled over the shadowless hut, the rust and bones,
> The trees likes bones and the leaves half sand, half sun.
> To stand here on the deck in the dark and say
> Farewell and to know that that land is forever gone
> And that she will not follow in any word
> Or look, nor ever again in thought, except
> That I loved her once… Farewell. Go on, high ship.

Stevens dramatizes the "I love you I hate you come back go away" tension endemic to the erotic encounter and the infant terrible, of poetry or politics (framed in a contemporary collection, by Juliana Spahr's *Fuck You Aloha I Love You*), whether as preparation for, in William Styron's words, "The Long Goodbye" (the sweet sorrow turned hell of parting, according to Dickinson), or the reconnaissance of relationship. Jouisssance too often conflated with nonsense if lacking utility value (Stephen Burt's *Close Calls With Nonsense*'s neo-Platonic treatment of "nonsense" as illogic): the violence and waste required to produce of a surplus or non-recuperable part of an economy, George Bataille's "accursed share."

The elegy marks grief, through lacunae and words, in erasure poetics (e.g. Susan Howe), or, in Emily Dickinson's work, through metrical revisionism, as the epithalamion marks marriage, the ode, praise, the palinode formal retraction, and the villanelle, pastoral life. Today, metrical, neo-formalist, and occasional poetry are being reinvented according to the needs of the poet in her historical milieu, beyond post-historical erasure and retraction (what Lily Brown calls "backpedaling for statements"). The American elegy constellates around Whitman's polyvocal poem-cycle Drum-Taps, rhapsodic "O Captain! My Captain" and Dickinson's paroxysmal "As imperceptively as grief," and "it feels a shame to be alive," sharing the American historical stage with Hawthorne's "Chiefly about War Matters," Melville, "The Martyr," William Cullen Bryant's "The Death of Lincoln," among others. Rilke's "Sonnets to Orpheus" series contains two important injunctions to "the dead": in his poem cycle dedicated to Wera Oukama Knoop, he enjoins Wera to "be forever dead in Eurydice," and, to Paula Modersohn-Becker, "If you can bear to, stay dead

1 Louise Glück, *Proofs & Theories* (New York: Ecco Press, 1994) 22.

with the dead." Contemporary triumphs in the elegiac form include collections by Larry Levis and Mary Jo Bang, both titled *Elegy,* and published ten years apart in 1997 and 2007, and, more recently, Marie Howe's *What the Living Do,* and D.A. Powell's first three books addressing the AIDS epidemic. Sandra Simonds' *Mother Was a Tragic Girl* is an "anti-elegiac" work, as defined by R. Clifton Spargo as a poetics in which the elegy plays out within self-reflexive engagements, whether of the monadic lyric or capitalism. The contemporary anti-elegist possesses an omnipresent awareness of the "already-having-been" flux of our temporal moment, yet refuses to find comfort in cultural commemoration. Simonds' "anti-elegy" shifts the received register of the poem from elegiac to the politics of performance: a performance whose stakes, as with Plath's Lazarus-inspired strip tease, are life and death.

The contemporary elegy actively restructures inherited modes of mourning, wrestling with closure, consolation, and the refusal of consolation, exploring the role gender, race, and class play in the elegy and the ways the bodies of the dead are remembered, or dismembered. If the elegy has ever stood poised to take on a global, rather than personal subject, the time is now, and the subject is the subject-turned-commodity, what Cathy Wagner calls the "dummkopf vice" of normative anomaly within a homological culture wherein difference, as well as the necessary spaces, affective and actual, for grieving have been foreclosed, and the purpose of the archive in written culture – to transmit history, and values, across generations – has been all-but-effaced by the so-called digital humanities, performance studies, and other eviscerations of the memory.

Praise and hatred are also ecumenical expressions, as verbal speech acts enacting salvation and damnation; didactic poetry, containing apotropaic "curses," or hymns of blessing, "transform" men into swine, or princes into frogs. In the poetics of hate, when the dialogic distance between self and other either collapses, the other appears only as a specter haunting the text (Toni Morrison's *Beloved*) or inexistent subject (Carrie Olivia Adams' *Intervening Absence*; Natalie Shapero's *No Object*): there is no way to project consciousness, reducing the *cri de coeur,* and its dialogic forms (conversation poems of Coleridge, Lowell's "New England Dialectic Poems," Shelley's "Julian and Maddalo") to either a solipsistic monologue, or sustained appeal to an "other" who has ceased to exist, or has never appeared. Dialogic poetry, too, has its roots in the Janus-face of Greek tragedy; can the lyric, or a poetics of hate be correlated with a post-romantic suspicion of all sentiment and "authenticity" – a form of nausea, rather than vitriol? Many anthologies of last ten years (*Not for Mothers Only, Isn't It Romantic: 100 Love Poems by Younger American Poets*) focus on exclusionary politics and the negating rather creating of a new literary movement, disrupting canon formation and majority rule.

The primary difference between a poetics of hate, hate speech and documents of criminality, misogyny, sexism, homophobia, racial "purity," and hate, from *Mein Kampf* to Santa Barbara murderer Elliot Rogers' 140-page manifesto, published on YouTube before his June, 2014 massacre: "Women should not have the right to choose who to mate and breed with. That decision should be made for them by rational men of intelligence. If women continue to have rights, they will only hinder the advancement of the human race by breeding with degenerate men and creating stupid, degenerate offspring… Women are like a plague… Women are vicious, evil, barbaric animals."

In lyric, the search for the body is metonymic of the search for, as Gaston Bachelard says in *The Poetics of Space*, locating and naming a literal home for the poetic figure (Dickinson's "gambrels in the sky"): *Dasein* or *Umwelt* – the in-dwelling of spirit itself. The twin poles of creation and destruction (Anne Carson's *Decreation*; Mathias Slavina's *Destruction Myths*) speak to the dissemblance not just of form, but the perceptual body, apportioned and sold on the market until its five animating senses, constructed by algorithms, come to resemble assembly-line machines, and language's power to denounce the inanities and violence of the media spectacle (upper-case Capital Punishment), loses its signatory power through diminishments of declarative voice, disjunctive syntax, and commericalism's overripened fruit: entertainment value, easy laughs, tidy resolutions, picaresque, neck-breaking speeds of production, obliterating causal relationships and reflection, and miniaturized scale. The Lēthēan desire, in other words, for oblivion: to act without consequence, write without critique and to, above all, forget.

Hate and love – the last Manichean binary for poets and writers, beyond good and evil? For every hater riding the death drive of negative dialectics, or spreading the bad seeds of misogyny, homo- or xenophobia, there are readers and writers, haters of inequity and injustice, who trade pacifism and quietist politics for what Julia Kristeva calls the "necessary violence" of an uprising, from a student or workers' strike (or both, in Paris 1968) to a paradigmatic (structural, lasting, literary) revolution.

MATT HALL
"WHAT THOSE WHO RECEIVE IT DO"
ON *THE ENGLISH INTELLIGENCER*

In 2012, Mountain Press released the much anticipated collected prose of *The English Intelligencer,* a broadsheet of nearly forty issues, which was printed and distributed in the UK and abroad from 1966 to 1968. Loosely based on the San Francisco journal *Open Space*, *The English Intelligencer* actively encouraged debate, analysis, and collective research, publishing criticism, treatises, open letters, and correspondence alongside the poetry of its contributors. Its recipients and contributors were J.H. Prynne, R.F. Langley, Andrew Crozier (editor of the first and third series), Peter Riley (editor of the second series), John Hall, Tom Raworth, Wendy Mulford and Elaine Feinstein, amongst others, who set out to contest the social and political ramifications of poetry during a time when art was generally devalued in the social corpus. Despite the lore that occasionally surrounds its protagonists and the allure of the unbound pages – until now this publication was only accessible through private collections or through university archives – the wealth and value of *The English Intelligencer* can be measured in the manner in which this disparate group contested the role of literary poetry, the aspirations of collective action, and the potential role of the poet in the social milieu. While there is a polemic and rhetorical correlation between the working aims of *The English Intelligencer* and the establishment of historical avant-gardes, the *Intelligencer* rose to prominence because it posited and opened a discursive space for the contestation of the values and commitments of its contributors without mortgaging the process for the end result. In that, the contestation of the values of the authors was considered more important than consensus, in which difference and an individuated poetic, argued for and committed to, was more highly valued than any collective agreement. *The English Intelligencer* deferred the unity of a historical avant-garde for a plurality of voice, governed by each poet's conviction and commitment.

As Neil Pattison contextualizes in his introduction, 'All Flags Left Outside,' and as Drew Milne had previously written in the essay 'Agoraphobia and the embarrassment of manifestos,' if taken as a publication or reduced to a manifesto, *The English Intelligencer* project would be considered a disaster.[1] The *Intelligencer* staged its debate on the value of poetry and the potentialities of poetic expression in British society in an age when cultural critics were heavily reliant on retaining the formal practice of classical and nationalist

1 Drew Milne, 'Agoraphobia, and the embarrassment of manifestos: notes towards a community of risk,' *Parataxis* 3 (1993): 25-40. Also published in *Jacket* 20 (December 2002): http://jacketmagazine.com/20/pt-dm-agora.html. And Neil Pattison, 'Introduction: "All Flags left outside",' in *Certain Prose of the English Intelligencer*, eds. Neil Pattison, Reitha Pattison, Luke Roberts (Cambridge: Mountain Press, 2012) x.

antecedents. *The English Intelligencer* eschewed the failings of an avant-garde movement in foregrounding the necessity of diverse, individuated practices operating within a counter-hegemonic construct, beholden to the progression of literature. Consensus on the place and role of literary poetry in society was never ordained, as Pattison resolves, which made the disputations about the possibilities of advancing a new poetics all the more paramount. The value of *The English Intelligencer* is in its establishing and tracing of these poets' developmental trajectory, and the commitment with which the contributors held to a collective sense of responsibility for the establishment of a divergent, aesthetic, and political poetic as a predominant concern. The three series of *The English Intelligencer* are replete with debate, digressions, antagonisms – often couched as literary criticism – yet what remains is the undiminished capacity for a loosely connected group of young poets to establish a platform of open scholarship and engaged debate, a community of response and a community of risk. That is, a community engaged critically and directly with their contemporaries, determined, "to find their place in relation with the present, and sought through that engagement to push out towards new encounters."[2] The discussion of a poet's role in society and the propensity for poetry to shape the social sphere beyond the institutional, in the face of comparative social neglect, is always at the forefront of the discussion. The constitutive question which informs *The English Intelligencer* is not what were, but what the possibilities of poetic expression could be. The value of *The English Intelligencer* is contingent, as John James wrote, "upon what those who receive it do."[3] And, as Pattison is wont to remind us, this process of active reception is far from complete.

What remains resonant today are the correspondences and academic-based research on the capacity for a poet to engage with the natural and substantiate his part in it, such as Riley's 'Working Notes on British Prehistory or Archaeological Guesswork One' and Prynne's 'A Pedantic Note in Two Parts.' It was in the response to the ambitious projects of Riley and Prynne that the tone of the correspondence began to wane, and so too the hope of *The Intelligencer's* collective endeavor. The values central to *The English Intelligencer* which contribute to the development of the unique characteristics of British small press poetry today, are the valuable risk of the essay, the presentation of works in progress, and the need to reassert the dignity of failure[4] as necessary to the establishment of a burgeoning poetic. The dialectic model of theory, practice, and synthesis proposed by the *Intelligencer* operated collectively and created a pattern of poetic development capable of adapting through failure, progressing and enabling the retesting of the limits of its expression by all of its contributors.

As Pattison substantiates in his introduction, the proposal of *The English Intelligencer* as a radically critical, discursive space in which poets could debate the role of poetry in society and engage directly with their contemporaries was only possible with the advent of collective participation. That new work and new theories could be tested, responded to, and understood in a community committed to the necessity of taking risks was integral to the broadsheet's appeal. For some correspondents, the dynamics established inherent limitations, where correspondents were faced with the paralyzing foreknowledge of scrutiny and uncharitable criticism. For others, the propensity to establish a poetics based on declarative, public intervention and political gestures reinforced the necessity of the group to offer resistance to the distrust and hostility faced from established British academic critics.

If a new poetics was to be won, it would be germinated and substantiated through the processes of its development. Pattison writes, "Collective action, rather than individual pioneering, was for them the only conceivable means of advance, and questions not only of the nature of that collective action, but of the nature of the constitution of that collective, became consequently paramount."[5] The failure to substantiate the attendant hope upon which *The English Intelligencer* was founded, cannot be deduced as a failure of its aims. The fidelity to which individual members of this group continued to reject modes of poetry reified and championed by orthodox cultural critics and to pursue a new modernist poetic discourse capable of demonstrating its opposition

2 Neil Pattison, 'Introduction: "All Flags left outside,"' iii.

3 John James, 'And From A Letter,' *Certain Prose*, 1:6 [53], 8.

4 Milne, 'Agoraphobia, and the embarrassment of manifestos.'

5 Pattison, 'Introduction: "All Flags left outside",' *Certain Prose*, iii.

to institutionalised conformity, is manifest in its failure. The *Intelligencer* project faced dissolution after nearly forty issues, however the capacities for a new English poetics were solidified in this very dissolution and can be read in current work published by many of the contributors, which continue a relentless pursuit of new forms and means of political, poetic expression. The manner in which many contemporary British small press communities operate, as committed, open, discursive spaces for the contemplation of progressive poetic thought, owe a great debt to the precedent established by *The Intelligencer*. For the direction given to contemporary journals as well as for outlining the possibilities and potentialities of poetry in the Twentieth Century, *The English Intelligencer* functions as a forbearer for the best of contemporary British poetry. *The English Intelligencer* foregrounded the need for individuated poetics operating within a dissenting group, and held to these values, never sublimating them for the sake of a resolve to consensus. As Pattison writes:

> The [self-] sabotage abolished the possibility of compromising their dissidence, foregrounded and intensified antagonisms traditionally invisibly implicit within the lives and works of poets, and brought them into a more advanced, more personal and practical, confrontation with the problems, as with livid emphasis the *Intelligencer* poets would put it, of *where we are.*[6]

The arrangement of disparate materials, as presented in *Certain Prose,* is given a lengthy treatment by Neil and Reitha Pattison and Luke Roberts in their 'Editorial Notes.' The process of collation, excision and correction has been undertaken with a determined attention to detail and a lengthy explanation to the processes involved. It is worth noting the difficulty of reproducing a text originally produced by mimeograph and the errors inherent in the printing process. As is explained in the 'Editorial Notes,' the errors and supplementary – often unpaginated – material are a part of the constitutive charm of the worksheet, so decisions regarding the collation of these required astute attention, and painstaking decisions. When excisions are made, or material deviates from its original the editors have provided explanatory remarks describing and detailing the changes imposed. The typography, layout, and irregularities of form in the original are dealt with in a manner which attempts to maintain fidelity to the relations between texts, and across issues, and attempts to preserve and distinguish the voice of each contributor. The selection and movement from each piece or issue to the next retains the delight and surprise of the original, although this reviewer does reminisce on the well-handled sheets of the University Library collection at Cambridge. The editors have done a remarkable job of preserving the fluidity of the original for new readers, while retaining ephemera – such as reading notices and launch advertisements – to provide a semblance of the socio-historical community which developed around the contributors at the time of writing.

Certain Prose is an invaluable asset for future inquiries into contemporary British poetry, for from the nascent of this broadsheet and through the lives and careers of its contributors, British poetry has come into *The English Intelligencer's* idea of the possible world.[7] *Certain Prose* represents the fury, solidarity and commitment to a radical poetics for which *The English Intelligencer* was known, and now that it is widely available, its effects on contemporary poetry will be even more impossible to underestimate.[8]

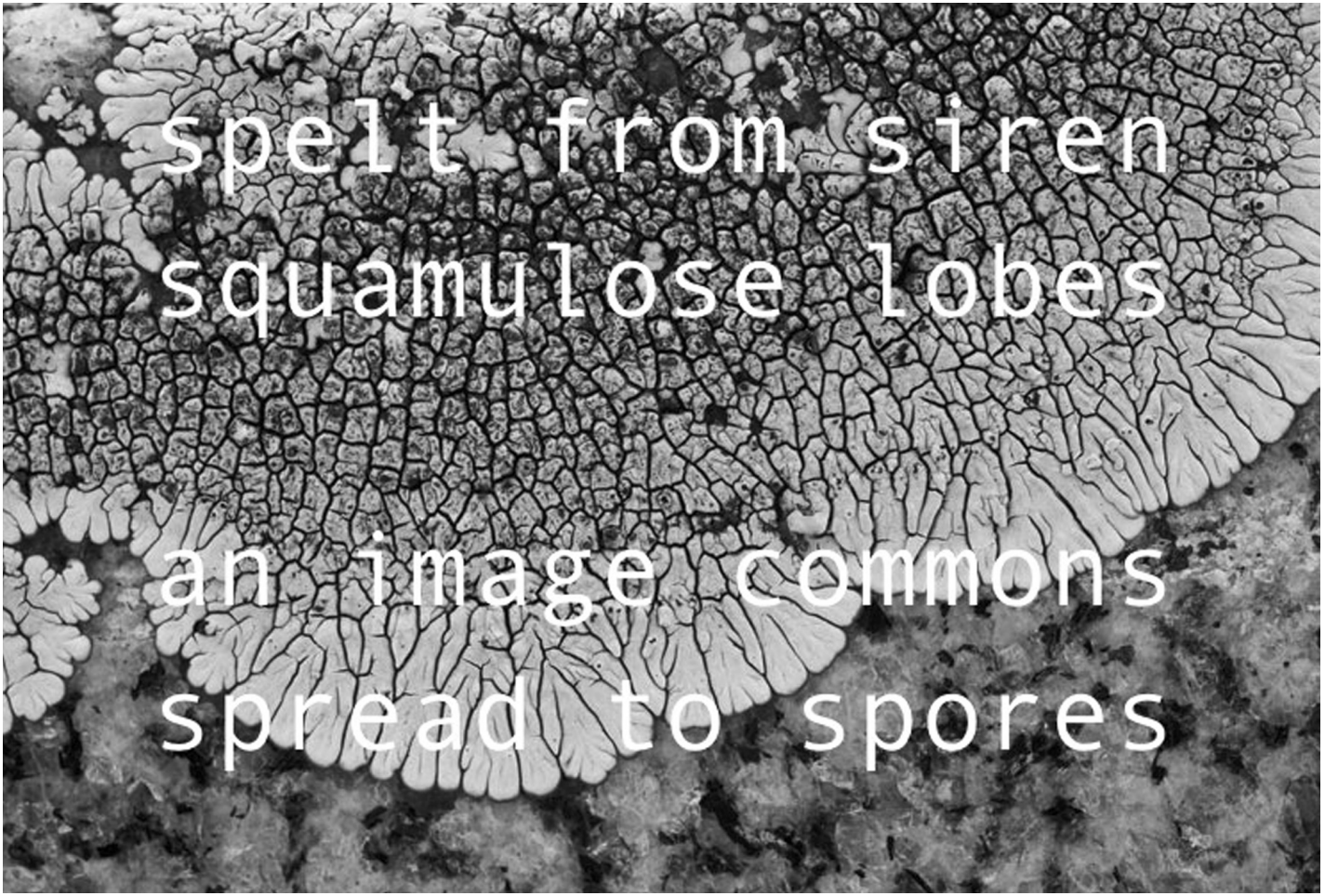
6 Pattison, 'Introduction,' x.

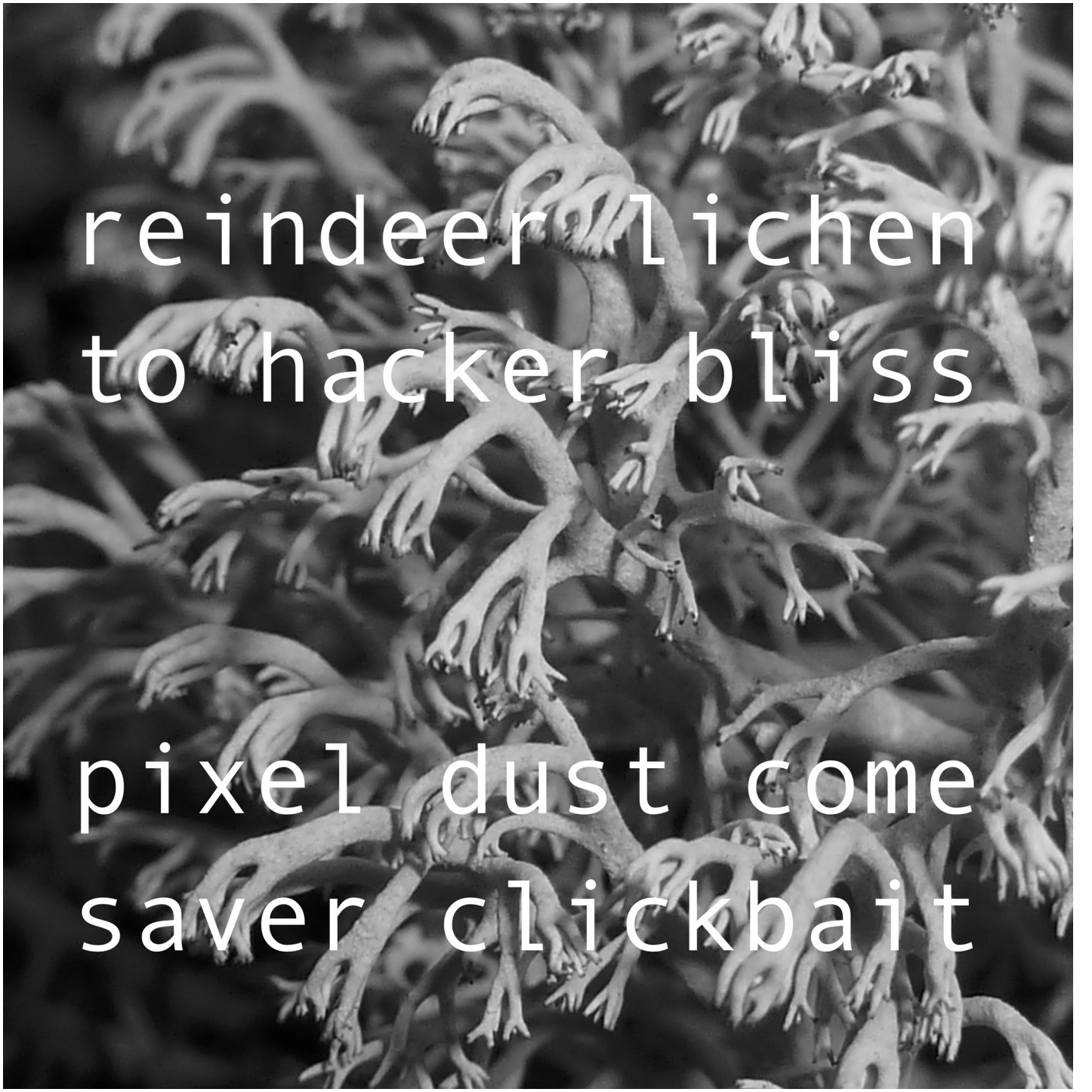
7 Jeremy Prynne. 'A Letter (December 27th, 1966),' *Certain Prose* 1:12 [190], 28.

8 Drew Milne, 'Agoraphobia, and the embarrassment of manifestos.'

DREW MILNE

LICHEN POEMS

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does details

no organic reach
no algorithm fed
cobblestone gold
and google gruel

DANIELLA SEEL & SJ FOWLER
DER ABC WAFFE

A real pleasure is a pleasure that one enjoys by one's self,
without a companion, and without a single argument.
(Sholom Aleichem)

slapped on, in sight. nongrave, um, cross thats an echo bang just then, or might be
not really a line of weapons that have been used or rather it'd be better
in covers, wrenched for pain, or stop motion. cut of confederation, was enthrallment
a duo of the enthralled more focused on cellular wall destruction
ever known to more than a single option of the three that seem
matter to bliss or intimidation, prized other. if vaccination, then please
desist naming letters after what might follow them
to inflict sense to the commitment of the third that's just tending off. and
freundlich can't connected to the semitic theatre as
friendship can't be expected to hold back scientific enquiry, what exists
occurs, yes of course, i blink. while i'm looking at the seam. wasn't
that expected? or rather happier to be discovered, that
soldiered day here, that is the significance of not having a memorial day for a
sincere bullet trade here. do you seal that what beats you. complice note.
hasmet suits, spray on a plane to disinfect those disclaiming, or
are you shielding, or claiming too. sure i spray you. a friction in passing, with
the warmest burns + chemo = ordained chemical horror striping off
the rarest thing, for it cannot be sustained without ill health but that
stimulates. in between lines the rent always stays fluid. no to promise.
in either city, not the slow nor the fast, the red fur nor the green stink but
washing mingles. can i rough that up at bleeding knee. thanks. i worship lore when
I think it'll prove to be of some sort of benefit to me when actually
it isn't actually an issue and the money has arrived on time, I feel guilt when I think
the homeless warrior is not hitting me from their corner of the branch when
I imagine myself taking her place and having got used to asking if
we were already friends in residence in Iceland, or with a tall tribe there but that is
where will we. what i discern from need, my liebling. baggage. in utterance
there are still friendships as slips, comrades in the space which
is where infringement becomes intimate, instantly. between streaking through
a shared future (again as allies), as circles overlapping
the past and utopian praxis pass round abc weapons for everyone. for
unfeeling can only be breached through the few interesting in our
touching with no stock button, just tailor suits. mind you. "sometimes it seems
to us as though I were having a seizure but then it seems
excessive to learn both language in a conversation where you know what is
surplus as though we were seizing a prompter for we don't seize nix after all."
what helps is what runs through the body just quick enough to nourish and
what runs through is certainly no soup but a scoop that's about to hit.

JEFF HILSON & SJ FOWLER
LEGENDY

the zone more than 100 people in the cell
thieves in law downcast
the journey of the mother of god through the torments of hell
with illustrated men
I will not my down knees for anybody
not 100 people in a cell
this is what journeys to the other world as a frequent
them
among slav, pagans of botleyshire
who burning because they refuse to abandon
good god or christ gives the solder the chance to enter paradise in reward
for 25 years of faithful service in the army
but since vodkas arent permitted there, he chooses hell instead
saying hell instead of Hello no thanks
not drinking or smoking
the best bit is the journey to the centre of the yurt
with a soldering iron
& with the butler hire o
god this week I am friends with Cara Delevingne
who invites a young man who was kind to him to visit heaven
according to the earth floats
& hell may be situated in an ordinary large house
in narratives such as these
neither ascent or descent
form an essential part of the journey
to the other world
as no hell is in ordinary Ibiza
up & down the san Rafael road
in narrow streets like these
according to Cosmo ladies
& gentlemen we are floating in Space
& the journey is brief
an hour & a half from London Luton

TOM JENKS & SJ FOWLER
1000 PROVERBS

Samba is not only for the rich.
Zumba is not a race of people.
Do not get budget colonic irrigation.
Do not ask a haddock for a pedicure.
A rain of poems is not made of water.
A nun's umbrella is useless in heaven.
A forgotten habit is no use in the swimming pool.
There is no fun in a nunnery.
There ain't no soap in a funnery.
Don't put soap on the Pope.
Bulletproof glass shows everyone has doubts.
Never put a Cossack in a cassock.
A Cossack haircut is easily sunburnt.
You can't groom a Cossack with a Ladyshave.
Never shave a lamb in winter.
A wolf in sheep's clothing has psychological problems.
A wolf without teeth is a hat for hunters.
A wolf without teeth should become a counsellor.
The enemy of my friend is my enemy.
There is no enemy like a sea anemone.
Hitler had a busy life.
Better gerbils than Goebbels.
The human centipede is not a nice way to live.
Never offer to clean a centipede's shoes.
A centipede does not live inside a peach for free.
People who live in peaches shouldn't get stoned.
A man who talks to giant insects shouldn't criticise those who live in peaches.
A peach is a gift, but not under a pillow.
A pillow is a gift, but not over one's face.
A pillow down one's trousers is fun at the rectory.
Down the trousers runs the happy ferret.
A ferret in the hand is a bad idea.
A mink is not a ferret.
An escaped mink will not make a furry purse.
A marmot is mother to the mink, father to the ferret and cousin to the cat.
You can lead a man to Sussex with a mandatory break.
Mud in the eye is better than mud in the boot.
A poet in a tent makes an awning a wigwam.
A condom is a friend in a storm.
A punctured condom is no place for a tadpole.
A muddy field is no place for a worm.
A worm in a teapot is a surprise for the vicar.
The worm meets us all, eventually.
There is no point cracking jokes in a hearse.
A long black car might be a limousine.
A stretch limousine is no place for a jockey.
A jockey is a not a leprechaun.
A jockey without a horse is an admin error.
A night without toothpaste is achey.
There are no adventures with dentures.

AILBHE DARCY & SJ FOWLER
SUBCRITICAL TESTS

THERMOS

Here are the covered things you referred to
when you said I've something to tell you.
My father throwing a brick at his brother
the fallen are buildings, a rat grave even to a boy

Here are mimosa seeds
brought to the museum
in 1793 from China
that began to grow in the Blitz.

Here are covered thumbs covered for reason
for it to win out over supersituation
which is to protect lives, I've been apprenticed
to the reduction at a cellular level

Here are covered graves which will be of the past
when everyone is dead, hologrammatic, for the simple
reason that walls can't build themselves up again
& so murals will be made redundant

BACCHUS

Here is a Bonsai tree
that has survived Hiroshima.
Here is a secret garden near Paris
covered in radioactive dust.

This is a secret which will be further secretive
when there is no alive to dig & shroud their friends.
Just becausing of remaining miniatures
does this door require a key to be unlocked.

Here is a Banana tree
that has become a home to spiders.
Here is a human ear, covered in journalism,
it is with glamour while children catch.

This is a tree just because of the remaining possibility
that a cock might crow, to preyer rarely
It is an excellent feature that sells the red house,
the wind on a tree before the closing?

BAROLO A

there are many willing to tell me the theme
specifically I, the notion of an Alpha is
longcalled into question. I wonder why I?
saddled, middle, crushing bottles x 1000000 into faces

or into pieces, inspired by a Hippo study
cannibalising their own entrails creates anthrax
Omegas make babies. Irrelevant because you & I
wiped clean are still represented by A

I is for yes I said yes I will yes and a walking
heart going like mad. I is the man who hangs
his smile on the back of the door when he comes
into the house. I is the old zoo with its playground

and what it's supposed to feel like to be
a mother. Bone-jar and slam. A is for atom. B
is for bomb. I is for gentle manners that have
to do with love. Sometimes I lie awake at night

BAROLO B

and think of the house where we learned
to inhabit rooms together

Wonder if the spaces still lie beneath
our skin in that particular order

We are lucky to have him afar days
before his 17th birthday

this a fully realised work of art
almost, he replies bashfully, in an interview

i used to the sun, I'd miss it an all
fight over the taking it easier if a morning

& the difference it makes. listen to your body
did he do the whistles? he's well then

I is an anxious aesthetic object
unsettled and unsure of its own direction

I wakedream of order, bootless inquisition
My vocabulary did this to me

HOLLY PESTER & SJ FOWLER

UNDER THE VOLCANOES

Under the volcano the lake is lapping, the lilacs are lapping, the trees are lapping

Under the volcano I'm only drinking beer, as you can see for yourself

Under the volcano no hesitation, no fluster, no fuss

Under the volcano this real outdoor girl is fond of swimming, golf and dancing

Under the volcano he was bearing down upon an ox

Under the volcano it was impossible to make out what was happening in the dusty confusion of horsemen, bulls and rope

Under the volcano hats are important

Under the volcano the squirrels have evolved

Under the volcano I make out with stray dogs

Under the volcano a hot thundery wind launched itself at them

Under the volcano there is a focsle, no a foccsell, no a fo'c's'le, no a foxy sock

Under the volcano is a milk bottle, a funnel, a sock and part of an old suitcase

Under the volcano two foreigner's stand there aimlessly, each waiting for the other to remove the peon's hat

Under the volcano Spain invaded Mexico first

Under the volcano Holly was flaccid with shame and relief, she tried to catch Steve's eyes but he crammed himself into his seat so furiously she was afraid to speak to him or even touch him.

Under the volcano success is like some horrible disaster, worse than your house burning

Under the volcano fame like a drunkard, consumes the house of the soul

Under the volcano I am of England too: odi et amo

Under the volcano, if only I had been left in darkness forever to founder and fail

Under the volcano the Spanish moss really began to show its sinister quality, as ubiquitous as cactus

Under the volcano draped skeletons in every attitude of supplication

Under the volcano Pulqueria, which is a kind of Mexican pub, is also the name of Raskolnikov's mother

Under the volcano has been over praised and also praised for qualities it probably doesn't possess

Under the volcano I wrote you wrote I wrote I wrote till my heart broke

Under the volcano the wibberly wobberly way ways what wonderfully suited men

Under the volcano Steven exercises his neck

Under the volcano the little kitty cat thinks I'm a bird in a tree

Under the volcano I have an enemy, it watches me and I know it hates me

Under the volcano my brother in law does an excellent impression of a horse

Under the volcano, ghosts, ghosts at the casino

Under the volcano where I come from, we don't run

Under the volcano I had even toyed at one time rather lovingly with the notion of having Hugh and Yvonne killed off while too sober and the Consul returning cheerfully and drunkenly to his duties to mescal and the British crown

Under the volcano, so far, I am pretty convinced nothing like it has been written

Under the volcano, in the darkness, I think of men in the act of procreating, winged, stooping, kneeling, sitting down, standing up, sprawling. Millions of trillions of billions of men moaning

Under the volcano our cats lay quivering under the maguey, a meaning had slunk and now died, with them

Under the volcano they dragged two kicking fawns through the hotel and slit their throats behind the barroom door

Under the volcano a corpse should be transported by express, said the Consul

Under the volcano Rijer Mortes has already set in, the German had drunk himself to death right in front of our eyes.

Under the volcano maybe, after all, it was a glorious death. In those days a man could get away somewhere

METTE NORRIE & SJ FOWLER

TOMTIT:

MY KNIFE WAS ONCE
A WOODEN SPOON
NOW IT IS A KNIFE

MY SHANK IS A KNIFE
PENETRATING + REMAINING, ENSCONCED
BENEATH THE LEFT LOWER RIB

THE FLOATING RIB
THE CANNULATE OF ADAM
IS NEIGHBOURED
BY THE SPOON OF COLD
PORRIDGE

ROBERT ARCHAMBEAU

FANATICISM! INTOLERANCE! DISINTEREST!

TOWARD AN AESTHETICS OF CAMP

Camp remains one of our most poorly theorized aesthetic categories. It has a certain status in queer theory circles, to be sure, but is rarely a part of a more general discussion of aesthetics – in effect, it is a ghettoized term. The continued centrality of Susan Sontag's "Notes on Camp" shows how narrow the discussion of camp has been: her important but provisional notes remain the most authoritative poetics of camp we have. I don't propose to offer, here, an aesthetics or poetics of camp. But if I may use a term so ponderous and out of keeping with the lightness of camp that it practically comes out the other side as camp itself – I do hope to offer a prolegomenon to such an aesthetics or poetics. If camp calls for fun and elegance, I fear I will provide precious little of either – and, since I am confessing shortcomings, I suspect I will provide less by way of evidence and argumentative coherence than one might wish. What I do hope to offer, though, is a rationale for understanding aesthetic experience in terms of camp, and a sense of what is at stake in camp as a category of aesthetics. It is through an aesthetics of camp that we can go beyond a dichotomy that has long divided the aesthetic field into a dominant Kantian tradition based on dispassionate, Apollonian contemplation and disinterest, and a reactive counter-tradition based on (to take some words from Asger Jorn) "fanaticism," "intolerance," and a Dionysian disavowal of disinterest.[1] Both the dominant tradition and its other lie open to forms of ethical and political criticism from which an unlikely hero – camp – promises deliverance.

THE LIBERAL VISION: AESTHETICS & THE HABIT OF DISINTEREST

Among the inheritors of the Kantian tradition of aesthetics, which views aesthetic experience as a matter of disinterested contemplation, Schiller is the most explicit in describing the historical conditions that motivate the appeal of this kind of thinking to his generation, and among the greatest defenders of the tradition from a political or ethical standpoint. He composed the letters that made up *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* over several years in the mid 1790s,

1 Asger Jorn, "Image and Form: Against Eclectic Empiricism" [1958], *Bureau of Public Secrets* (www.bopsecrets.org), 17.

during the reign of terror and its aftermath in France, and to a great extent they are intended as a response to the challenges and pitfalls of republicanism and democracy. "Is it not at least unseasonable to be looking around for a code of laws for the aesthetic world, when the affairs of the moral world provide an interest that is so much keener?" he asks near the beginning of his inquiry.[2] He provides an answer almost immediately, telling us that aesthetics are no mere frivolity in times of revolutionary bloodshed, because "we must indeed, if we are to solve that political problem in practice, follow the path of aesthetics, since it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom." Aesthetic disinterest, he goes on to argue, will aid us in the peaceful dispersion of political power.

In *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* Schiller approaches aesthetics through a theory of a two-sided human nature. The first part of our nature consists of what Schiller calls the *stofftrieb* or *sinnestrieb*, a kind of sense-oriented self-interest, a collection of appetites and desires. The second part of our nature is the *formtrieb*, something like our reason, but more specific: it is our drive to impose order on our experience, to create moral and conceptual systems. Neither of these parts of our nature should be allowed to dominate the other, lest we become imbalanced creatures. An excess of *stofftrieb* without *formtrieb* would either reduce us to mere appetites (think of Charles Dickens' image of the industrial workers of *Hard Times* as nothing but hands and stomachs), or turn us into monsters of self-interest, exerting a Nietzschean will to power over our rivals. For a creature of *stofftrieb* all is interest and nothing disinterest: something exists for him "only insofar as it secures existence for him; what neither gives to him nor takes from him, is to him simply not there."[3] If we become creatures of *stofftrieb*, we may be curbed from dangerous behavior by the agents of law, but we will experience this law "only as fetters," neither understanding the law's rationale nor respecting its agents when we can avoid or overpower them.[4]

The inverse situation, in which we have an excess of *formtrieb* without sufficient *stofftrieb*, is no better. Without an appreciation for the senses and the particularities of the material world, the man of *formtrieb* becomes "a stranger in the material world." Worshipping only his abstract system, he will be a figure as disconnected from quotidian existence as the scientists of Laputa in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and a monster as ruthless as the Robespierre who so terrorized the opponents of his revolution during the years when Schiller composed *On the Aesthetic Education of Man.* One imagines Schiller may have had Robespierre and the other bloody-handed *philosophes* of France in mind when, describing the man in whom *formtrieb* triumphs over *stofftrieb*, he wrote that such an "abstract thinker very often has a cold heart."[5]

For Schiller, human development follows a tripartite pattern, in which we leave our initial unselfconscious life as creatures of *stofftrieb*, pass through a phase when we are overly-governed by *formtrieb*, and finally become fully integrated creatures, in whom both urges are fully developed and fully reconciled. We are capable of such reconciliation only through the cultivation of a third drive, the *spieltrieb* or play instinct. Man is "only Man when he is playing," writes Schiller, because it is only play that allows for a full recognition and engagement of both the senses and the urge for rules and order.[6] The whole person is recognized and fulfilled in play. And play is most fully available to us through art, because the "cultivation of beauty" will "unite within itself" the "two contradictory qualities" of our nature.[7] Art will, by its sensuous embodiment in its medium, "secure the sense faculty against the encroachments of its freedom" by the *formtrieb*'s desire to reduce everything to definitive order (anyone who has ever felt that a poem must not mean but be, or that a painting is not reducible to its description, has lived a Schillerian moment). Conversely, art will by virtue of its orderliness or engagement with pattern rescue us from "the power of sensation" alone.[8] We will, in making or appreciating works of art, become for the first time our whole selves.

For art to function as the reconciler of our divided nature, we must approach it with disinterest. If we turn to art seeking a particular moral or ideological point, or for some particular useful purpose – be it ecclesiastical, financial, didactic, or political – it cannot be the site where we reconcile our divided drives. "Beauty gives no individual result whatever … it realizes no individual purpose, either intellectual or moral" writes Schiller, "it discovers no individual truth, helps us perform no individual duty" and when we have appreciated it, nothing specific has been accomplished except that the appreciator "has had completely restored to him

2 Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954) 25.

3 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 113.

4 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 118.

5 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 42.

6 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 80.

7 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 55.

8 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 69.

the freedom to be what he ought to be," an integrated being.[9] Content itself should be of no importance in the work of art, because

> In a truly beautiful work of art the content should do nothing, the form everything; for the wholeness of man [the *stofftrieb* and *formtrieb* together] is affected by the form alone, and the individual powers by the content. However sublime and comprehensive it may be, the content always has a restrictive action upon the spirit, and only from the form is true aesthetic freedom to be expected.[10]

It is in fact form that reforms man: the work of art's inner balance is more important than any specific goal, statement, or function. The disinterested, formalistic appreciation of an art autonomous of specific purpose gives us the opportunity to balance our drives, and so distances us from both cold reason and blind self-interest. When, therefore, we discover in a person "traces of a disinterested free appreciation of pure appearance," says Schiller, "we can infer some such revolution of his nature and the real beginnings in him of humanity."[11]

The experience of the aesthetic is, in Schiller's view, of vital importance in making us fit for the modern world of liberal democracy. Aesthetic experience can prepare us to be citizens of a democratically reformed state because aesthetic experience is the surest means of enabling us to transcend the individual material self-interest represented by the *stofftrieb*. If he is to freely choose to enter into a democratic state, habituation to disinterested contemplation is absolutely necessary: it is the path for liberation from mere self-interest. "This much is certain" says Schiller, "only the predominance of such a character among a people can complete without harm the transformation of a State according to moral principles, and only such a character too can guarantee its perpetuation."[12] Disinterested aesthetic experience, it turns out, makes for good liberal citizens. Or so the theory goes.

EXCITEMENT, FANATICISM, INTOLERANCE: RISING FROM THE SEPULCHER OF DISINTEREST

The tradition that runs from Kant through Schiller and beyond is not without dissent: Nietzsche, for example, represents a major force in a counter-tradition, rejecting unalloyed disinterest as an ideal of aesthetic contemplation. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche presents what amounts to a case against both disinterest and, implicitly, the individualistic liberalism in which Schiller found its justification.

Apollonian experience, in Nietzsche's schema, is clearly a matter of disinterested aesthetic contemplation. The Apollonian experiences beauty from a distance, as a kind of vision that does not threaten to overwhelm him. "He observes," writes Nietzsche, "and enjoys his observations."[13] He must maintain a calmness, a "freedom from all extravagant urges," and above all a sense of his individual integrity, for which Nietzsche takes an image from Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*:

> Even as on a raging sea, assailed by huge wave crests, a man sits in a little rowboat trusting his frail craft, so amidst the furious torments of this world, the individual sits tranquilly, supported by the *principium individuationis* and relying on it.[14]

Apollo is the apotheosis of this principle of the individual, calm in a world he treats as distant spectacle rather than threat.

Rather than lauding the Apollonian ideal so precious to the Kantian tradition, Nietzsche points to its limitations, to how, when we allow experience to engulf us and shatter the *principium individuationis*, experience is transformed by the Dionysian rapture. When this happens, "the individual forgets himself completely"[15] and enters into a sense of solidarity with others unavailable to the Apollonian. Examples of Dionysian power include a plethora of collective experiences. Dionysian experience in medieval Germany, Nietzsche tells us,

> ...drove ever increasing crowds of people singing and dancing from place to place; we recognize in these St. John's and St. Vitus' dancers the bacchic choruses of the Greeks, who had their precursors in Asia Minor and as far back as Babylon and the orgiastic Sacaea. There are people who, either from lack of experience or out of sheer stupidity, turn away from such phenomena, and, strong in the sense of their own sanity, label them either mockingly or pityingly as 'endemic diseases." These benighted souls have no idea how cadaverous

9 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 101.
10 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 106.
11 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 132.
12 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 31.
13 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Doubleday, 1956) 20.
14 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 21.
15 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 22.

> and ghostly their "sanity" appears as the intense throng of Dionysiac revelers sweeps past them.[16]

What is at stake here is something beyond the individual's distancing himself from self-interest: it is the individual's ability to lose self-identity and identify with the group – and, beyond that, with the whole, since "not only does the bond between man and man come to be forged once more by the magic of the Dionysian rite, but nature itself, long alienated or subjugated, rises again to celebrate the reconciliation with her prodigal son, man."[17] Liberal individualism of the sort championed by Schiller, and to which his idea of aesthetic cultivation contributes, has proven weak at forming bonds of social solidarity. Indeed, the habit of disinterested aesthetic contemplation defined by Kant and advocated by Schiller can itself undermine social solidarity by becoming a class marker. As Pierre Bourdieu has shown in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, the "pure gaze" of the disinterested aesthete correlates with social and educational privilege, and serves as a means of justifying the superiority of the putatively "sensitive" aesthete over the insensitive mob (see especially 9-55). The distanced gaze of the individualistic Apollonian, so crucial to the liberal sense of self, has also proven weak at creating a solidarity with the earth, the kind of ecological ethic needed to sustain our continued existence. Nietzsche sees a possibility for the breaking of the Apollonian distance of the disinterested aesthete to bring about just such solidarities – to "redeem him through a mystical experience of the collective."[18]

A more direct refutation of the aesthetics of disinterest can be found in the writings of Asger Jorn. Jorn, a Dane whose intellectual formation lay in the Scandinavian left's resistance to the German occupation during the Second World War, and remains relatively unread in the English-speaking world, was a key intelligence in the Situationist International, and his writings on aesthetics challenge the tradition of Kant and Schiller by championing interest over disinterest and the collective over the individual.

In *Magic and the Fine Arts*, Jorn argues that art is important not for distancing us from our passions and urges in a Schillerian fashion, but precisely because of its capacity for "agitation" – for creating "excitement, fanaticism, intolerance, enchantment." "To be enchanted means to enjoy something, and today," he asserts, "we have succeeded in defining aesthetic experience as 'disinterested enjoyment' or rather as darkened light. No wonder art is as grey as dirt." The realm of the aesthetic, for Jorn, is a place for the expression of interest. Institutions that encourage disinterested contemplation are the enemies of art: writing of New York's Guggenheim Museum in particular, and of museums more generally, Jorn tells us that the museum is "a place where works of art are directly placed in their sepulcher without ever having passed through a role in everyday life."[19]

"Primitive peoples," Jorn writes, "do not relate to disinterest" such as one would find in a Kantian approach to art, or in scientific research, "but that does not mean that they have never done research – on the contrary – but their research has always been conducted out of an interest, an artistic or cultural desire to search for satisfaction." This research is conducted via aesthetic play, which itself has no preordained aim, but is the method through which we discover what our desires and interests are, or could be. As Jorn puts it, "the fundamental element in art" is "the unconscious active enjoyment of life through play with matter, with color, tones, clay, words, etc." This play "is not consciously directed to any goal but is a delight."[20] When we are enchanted in the act of aesthetic play, we transform the world into that which is compatible with our desires – as Jorn's finest explicator, Graham Birtwistle, says "inspiration and enchantment mean for Jorn that external conditions are in tune with our physical and psychic needs."[21] We therefore come, through the aesthetic, to concretize our needs, our interests, and desires, which may in fact prove different than what we had supposed. This is the vital function of the aesthetic, and the means by which it changes our habits of life. Aesthetic cultivation brings our lives into greater accord with our desires, needs, and our own interests. The interests at stake for Jorn, though, cannot be limited to self-interest, class-interest, or any other factional interest. The aesthetic is a form of play, and "play develops best in community" and the meaningful community is that of humanity as a whole – so the interests we discover via

16 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 21.

17 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 21.

18 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 23.

19 Jorn, "Image and Form," 17.

20 Asger Jorn, *Magi og skønne kunster* (Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag, 1971) 24; 29.

21 Graham Birtwistle, *Living Art: Asger Jorn's Comprehensive Theory of Art between Helhesten and COBRA, 1946-1949* (Utrecht: Reflex, 1986) 78.

the aesthetic are not individual but collective: indeed, the aesthetic act takes us out of the realm of individual self-interest and into the real of the general interest. Thus, only a "socialist subjectivity" can create the true aesthetic. The aesthetic becomes the arena of collective dreams, expressing them and inculcating them in others (McKenzie Wark has called Jorn's aesthetic "a *cultivating* factor, forming and transforming habits of life").[22] If Schiller's is an Apollonian and liberal vision of the function of the aesthetic, Jorn's is a far more Dionysian and collectivist one. With Jorn, the human outcome of aesthetic experience is no longer the calm, disinterested individual judging the world while his own desires lie in abeyance and becomes, instead, the excited, enchanted, or enthralled community, fanatic about the realization of its collective desires.

PROBLEMS OF THE GENERAL WILL

A useful distinction, in seeking to understand the collective interest expressed by the aesthetic in Jorn's thinking, is that between the 'will of all' and the 'general will,' concepts first articulated by Rousseau. The will of all, in Rousseau's *On the Social Contract*, is an aggregate or collection of individual wills, while the general will is the will of a community in which each member is thinking not of his or her self-interest, but the interest of the community as a whole. Jorn's idea of aesthetic experience is that it involves freeing us from individual self-interest – not through having us step away from it into disinterest, as in the Kantian tradition, but by bringing us into contact with the general interest of the human community. It is, in fact, a means for us to discover and experience the Rousseauian general will – if we add to the idea of the general will the heat of Jorn's "excitement, fanaticism, intolerance, enchantment."

The danger inherent in the idea of the general will is the danger of mistaking for general what is in fact partial or factional – mistaking self-interest or the interest of some relatively narrow group for the general interest. The liberal critique of Rousseau tends to be that his work tends toward despotism, to the tyranny of whatever agency claims to have apprehended the general will. And we can infer a similar critique of the idea of the general will, and the aesthetic as an embodiment of the general interest, from within the Western Marxist tradition as well. Consider the final meditation of Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, which begins:

> The only philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in the face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things from the standpoint of redemption. Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption: all is reconstruction, mere technique. Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its riffs and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light. To gain such perspectives without velleity or violence, entirely from felt contact with its objects – this alone is the task of thought. It is the simplest of all things, because the situation calls imperatively for such knowledge, indeed because consummate negativity, once squarely faced, delineates the mirror-image of its opposite.[23]

The general thrust of the passage is very much in accord with the kind of aesthetic explorations Jorn advocates. Adorno speaks of thought, and Jorn of aesthesis, but both yearn for a redemptive activity, one that would displace or negate the given, broken world with a vision of fulfillment, of the satisfaction of the general desire or will that amounts to redemption. But Adorno's meditation is not over, and the second part offers a dire warning of the calamity inherent in such visions:

> But it is also the utterly impossible thing, because it presupposes a standpoint removed, even though by a hair's breadth, from the scope of existence, whereas we well know that any possible knowledge must not only be first wrested from what is, if it shall hold good, but is also marked, for this very reason, by the same distortion and indigence which it seeks to escape. The most passionately thought denies its conditionality for the sake of the unconditional, the more unconsciously, and so calamitously, it is delivered up to the world. Even its own impossibility it must at last comprehend for the sake of the possible. But beside the demand thus placed on thought, the question of the reality or unreality of redemption itself hardly matters.[24]

There is no point fully removed from self- or group interest, no unconditional or universal vantage point from which the general interest can be apprehended. The attempt to grasp it will be distorted – and passion in the service of distortion is a thing against which to be cautioned.

22 McKenzie Wark, *The Beach Beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International* (London: Verso, 2011) 57.

23 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life,* trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2006) 247.

24 Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 247.

THE SAVING CONTRADICTIONS OF CAMP

Exaggerated, mannered, and parodic – yet loving, a travesty that is also a tribute, camp is inherently contradictory. David Bergman tells us the term itself is drawn from the French *camper*, meaning "to pose, to strike an attitude,"[25] and the most plausible origin for the term in something like its contemporary sense is the life of the French military camp of the nineteenth century, where the exaggerated gestures of military ritual – mannered forms of walking, rituals such as the salute, and so forth – appear as simultaneously absurd and deadly serious. The contradictory nature of camp performance, which allows both participation in an identity and distance from it, has been one of its main powers in queering gender: it has been an essential vehicle, for example, for one gender wishing to embody characteristics of another without fully becoming that other, or for women wishing to participate in but not reduce themselves to forms of female sexuality created by the male gaze. Another form of contradiction camp embodies is that it creates a perspective that is at once interested and disinterested.

Camp, in the sense I intend it, is a kind of ludic and aestheticizing attitude that is also a kind of deep commitment. Christopher Isherwood, the first to use it in this sense, puts a good description of it into the mouth of a character in his novel *The World in the Evening*:

> High camp always has an underlying seriousness. You can't camp about something you don't take seriously. You're not making fun of it; you're making fun out of it. You're expressing what's basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance.[26]

Camp, seen this way, is a cousin of aesthetic autonomy, since it elevates play and beauty over utility and morality – an elevation well understood by Susan Sontag in her seminal "Notes on Camp" where she writes:

> 1. To start very generally: Camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is *one* way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. That way, the way of Camp, is not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization.
> 2. To emphasize style is to slight content, or to introduce an attitude which is neutral with respect to content. It goes without saying that the Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized – or at least apolitical.[27]

Sontag goes on to add:

> 38. Camp is the consistently aesthetic experience of the world. It incarnates a victory of 'style' over 'content, ' 'aesthetics' over 'morality'...[28]

So far, Sontag has framed camp as a form of disinterest – involving an Apollonian distance from its object. Framed in these terms, it lies open to the same sorts of criticisms Nietzsche, Jorn, and others have leveled at the tradition of Kant and Schiller. But even as camp involves a kind of Apollonian aesthetic distancing, it also – contradictorily – embodies the Dionysian impulse to break down the barriers separating self and object. "Camp taste is a kind of love," writes Sontag, and it "identifies with what it is enjoying."[29] The serious involvement of which Isherwood wrote is, in fact, an identification of self and object, a breaking down of the barriers of aesthetic distance, a Dionysian act of participation.

What camp offers, then, is Apollonian and Dionysian, disinterested yet interested. It breaks past the pallid individualism of the dominant tradition of aesthetics, but at the same time provides a kind of distancing from the potentially dangerous enthusiasms of those who seek in art and play an expression of the general will and general desire. This play of distance and identification has been best documented when camp addresses gender, but one can see it in broader terms as well: from the camp misanthropy of a Philip Larkin or a Frederick Seidel, to the camp patriotism of Trey Parker and Matt Stone, and far beyond, camp creates a play of interest and disinterest that awaits its full analysis. Camp's pioneering theorist, Susan Sontag, ends the opening essay of the book that contains "Notes on Camp" with a call for an "erotics of art." What aesthetics now cries out for is a poetics of camp.

25 David Bergman, "Introduction," in *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993) 6.

26 Christopher Isherwood, *The World in the Evening* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1999) 110.

27 Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Dell, 1961) 227. The affinity between Auden's camp sensibility and Sontag's theory of camp is by no means arbitrary. The poet Edward Field recollects, in his autobiography, that "her ideas for the essay largely came through discussions with [writer Alfred Chester] about W.H. Auden's article on Oscar Wilde, which had been published in *The New Yorker* the previous winter" (164) Auden's essay on Wilde stresses the importance of style and performance over content in Wilde's career.

28 Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 287.

29 Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 291-2.

KIRBY OLSON
THE FISH MINISTER

Ahead of me lay the walled, vertical city where my daughter is being kept prisoner. In the sky above me blind motorcyclists are propelled along by eye-ball bikes leaving a trail of red flame which match the poppies to the horizon. A girangoo leaps past, raising an eyebrow at my stealthy form, but fortunately not giving me away to any of the Parrot-men that circled. They only knew a language composed of feints and indirection.

The tide is pouring in and fish-people flower about the plains. The water nearly covers me now. It is salty and so buoyant that I find I can swim using my toes as propellers. I attach a little motor to my bottom and speed towards the city as I have to reach the gate before the last of the eyeball-bikes.

The gate is a yawning affair with real teeth and eyeballs made of a cheap genetic substance on this K-Mart planet. Once inside I go straight to the ARENA where the white-haired Artemis brazenly keeps court. The queen's eyes pop out sitting on her cheeks like a couple of blue midgets. The queen is obviously possessed, and possessive, of a svelte miracle: My Daughter. Just then queenie's eyes pick up crossbows and shoot a glance in my direction. I step into the shadows, a huge drop of sweat leaping out of the center of my fish-like head. I am the Fish Minister, fabled from galaxy to galaxy as a spy of minute proportions, but this time my mission is personal.

A bunch of exclamation points run through the corridor.

"Friends!" I call after them.

A hush comes over the city. I swim in on a curtain of light and jump under the bell jar.

I could leap up with a fork and slit her nose but feel it is more important to get My Daughter back from her Corporation Headquarters intact.

"Muse," the queen simpers. "Would you pass the fish?"

I sweat one big drop.

I lift the bell jar and slip under the table and down a man-hole.

Alarm bells ring in the queen's castle.

"Food escape! Food escape!"

I read email with infra-red vision. Interesting info from Beta-Beta where the new regime is into rhythmic gymnastics performed by the half-human octopi living on its quicksand mudflats. My head fills with Busby-Berkeley-esque visions. My daughter has somehow sent a message. "Save me, dad, tonight she eats me alive."

I fall to pieces as a Nose inches along, saying, "Something fishy."

Clomp-stompers pogo-sticking frantically in the other direction crush the Nose. I begin to attach bombs to the less sensate creatures as they fan out through the citadel.

I get into the city's water-system and sail along, attaching bombs to the piping, humming The Battle

Hymn of the Corporation. Soldiers of every description race in star-shaped configurations search with swimming eyes in every cranny. Today is D-Day, as the head of Her Corporation wants to eat My Daughter. My scales flash in the moonlight, my catfish whiskers set aquiver. Nearly brainless from too much oxygen, I am caught between lungs and gills, and am brought into the Queen on a silver plate.

"Your head, sir, will be served next to hers at tonight's feast," says the Queen.

They wheel in information-retraction machinery. A ball of pain illuminates my scales clear off the boundaries of the decimal scale. They throw some water on me to bring me around but I act dead so they'll turn the voltometer off and toss me back in the fish bowl.

"Care to talk?"

Then the juice comes, and I dance on the surface of the water like a dolphin at Sea-World. Will I tell them of the world that I came from, so they can find it and explode it? Fat chance. I think of my planet, where palm trees grow out of old newspapers, breasts walk up hills of print, ants play chess with praying mantises. My job long ago was to axe these infamous stills of absinthe and blaguerie. A little picnic had been laid out, as it seemed we were expected. There was only violent food: *mashed* potatoes, *club* soda, *pound* cake with *whipped* cream. I accepted that planet's life forms, filed a false report, and moved in, gliding through the galaxy at the speed of sound, with my gadgets tucked inside its outer blue shell.

"You will pay, butch."

The voltage strikes me as so funny I have to walk on water.

"Precisely who will pay?"

"You cannot have My Daughter," I sputter.

The Mengelian look on the torture director's face expands.

He hits buttons and the queen unfolds her cape like a skyscraper. My Daughter appears in glittering blue cowboy spangles on a white seahorse, neckline plunging in the style of starlets. I try to pull the torture director to my side. "Do you have a daughter?" I ask. He gives me an orange aperitif and tells me to sit tight and recover. I do my best, humming the Battle Hymn inside my head, hanging out of the aqueous container as if I am a budding singer in a Lake Tahoe motel lounge.

I look into the curve in the glass. It being convex, my figure is appealing.

Just then a bosomy cybertron appears, and offers coffee.

Love is information, she says. Do I have time to absorb new data?

Fish-people think differently from polar bears, parrots, and persons. There is a fluidity, a humming, separating the fishmen from the men like two lines at a country dance. We think analogically, through intuition. I get out the fish hook, and send the other end of the line into the heavens with a gesture. As My Daughter flops I sink the hook deep. She squeals as I jerk on the line. My galleons of fishmen pull on the line and reel her home with me hanging on to her ankle before she can say Elvis Presley I knew I'd spend at least a year as a referee of beauty contests punctuated by explosive afternoons of knowledge-gleaning in the best libraries of the universe, my eyes swimming with fresh ideas, grapes at my feet, clown cushions, schoolboy nectarines and co-ed Marines, tangoing, singing, "I'm a King Bee, baby," as I thought anew of the Battle Hymn of the Corporation, but most importantly I had my daughter back, complaining this time that I ruined her looks with the hook. Tell it to fish world-wide, I said, and don't give me any lip. The jeweled explosion below obliterated the planet. We had to convince the humans that we were eating them, not the other way around.

Ship or be shipped, I muttered to containers of cowflesh readied for consumption by a group of bananamen who had to can-can for the Moon Women of Borneo who in turn packaged beanie babies for our snacks back on our speeding planet. I thought of Psalm 137, "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down, sat down and wept, as we remembered Zion." I looked up in the sky and thought of how I had another million years to roam the stars in search of flesh to can, and to turn human planets into the eaten. My reward for recapturing My Daughter was not the usual handful of helpers who would keep the library's central corridors calm while I swam about perfecting my ichytheology. It was the sanity I needed to remain still and moist, the sanity to go on, without which the glittering stars would turn my scales to dust.

KIT ROBINSON
3 POEMS

MASTER CLASS
after Arnold Newman

Go ahead and call your people
The figure rises out of the ground
Confusion stamps a void across Europe
Winds of change swirl about the planet
Orange, green, white, purple, brown
As seen from space in NASA satellite time-lapse
Reminiscent of Allen Ginsberg

A landscape by Milton Avery
Be sure to bring water and a snack
Billions of particles moving every which way
A profound face, intricate depth of field
Weather patterns we live in, around and under
Debt slave revolt going on in Greece
Hyperlinks sensitize the websphere

Comments appear in quotes
Martha Graham in her studio
Austerity the grim mask of global banking
Tired after school
Our best intentions constantly interrupted
Pandemonium of all free spirits
Noon, hour of the smallest shadow

10:52, the sound of steps on the stairs
Flat descriptive prose over time
Body language tellingly tender
Jean Arp peaking out from behind a curved form
What is continuous? What is occasional? What lost? What found?
Let's go back and see what we have
Why not just vote for the Koch brothers and get it over with?
Energized from dreams of anxiety, guilt and shame, the writing of them down

Terror of cracks in the pavement

Thursday, the downward slope
Festival of the oligarchs
Love in the alley
An opening in the fence
The fabulous vertical stripes of Diana Vreeland
Check your answers at the door

The non-stop fabrication of readymades
Compulsive hand-washing by executive order
Lisette Model and Berenice Abbott eye to eye
Copying jazz charts for rehearsal tonight
Momentarily off the hook
Sound vernissage
Fucking is out of this world

Talking is something we just do
The neighbors are restive
Shadow play of instants
Active verbs take time off to care for relative pronouns
Who grew up switching channels
Duchamp pointed sideways
Looking at pictures in search of the perfect subject

THE AVENUE OF KISSES

The nation state is history
Religion is an oath
Freedom of the press is for owners only
The mind is of two minds
The world is late for work

Diseases populate continents
Drugs are synthetic profits
Wait times may vary
In a broken cup
Tireless expeditions make landfall

Sadness and snow make drifts
Attention wanders
Alarms interrupt the proceedings
Police officers gather for coffee
Military miniatures arrive by mail in Europe

The moment of meteors has not yet come
There aren't many days left for sleeping
Puns recall songs without lyrics
Tyranny of languor
Time tied to a tree

Academic occupations in five-star hotels
The avenue of kisses
There is so much to be read in these passages
Days pass each other coming and going
Travelers emerge from dark forest to bright sandy beach

Less is more, there are those that say
Serious trouble is a given
Our laughter relates to the stars
The sun at night
A dream stem of heartfelt thanks

AN OLD SIGNATURE

for Bill Berkson

On my 1966 edition of *Lunch Poems* an old signature
Which is to say a young one
Testifies to pride of ownership
Then, suspicion of petty larceny
Given the imprint Pocket Poets

I'm old enough now to have been his father
When he wrote "The Day Lady Died"
Or even, in fact, when *he* died
So it's ok, I guess, that I drink a lot less
As life slips out the door and onto night streets
As I am still guarding it from mess and measure

Numberless birds and fishes I vow to awaken with
Make of air and water an unlimited home
Where what goes around comes around
And light enters the picture
A patron saint on a banana leaf
Suspended in space

You do the math
While I pack up these boxes
Destination, the stars my
Contents may shift
Address unknown (Elvis)

I wonder what Ron Padgett is doing right now
Probably looking out his window
At a gigantic snow drift in Vermont
And thinking of fixing lunch
Is it broken? Probably not
And anyway it's early here in California
Where I ply my quote unquote trade

I wouldn't trade it for a month of Sundays
A land bridge
A dream lodge
A suspended sentence

Plywood used to be used to shore up a foundation
Now we just tilt up the whole she-bang
Then go about our business
Doing detail work on contemporary reversible conveyances
Until the sun settles back behind rain clouds
And the deluge prepares itself for our astonishment

Once again the trees carelessly align
With a feeling for leaving
Of everything said in a day
Friendship, estuary, nut-and-bolt, feed lot
Paths crossed out
Appeals to log logic
Until the whole stands in for the part
Where the subject breaks down in tears
And rains wash the city
In time for its new lease on life

Several centuries worth of conversation later
I'm still doing the numbers
On my fingers
Hand in hand with fate
Or is it destiny?
I can never remember the answer
But you have to like this weather
Wet like earth
In the mind of a worm

On we go
You're all right in my book
The word stands for the thing
The thing falls over
We kneel down to pick it up
All lips and teeth
Alive to the noise of the generator

ABIGAIL CHILD

A (D)RAFT OF KISSES

START:
The hickey metronomes are FORMAL
as is RITUAL
as daughter

Outlaw
in a mutation
a memsahib /a liaison investigator

FLESH talking
under two
talking and kissing pressing fleeting japes

Searching revival
stuck noblewoman or style up?
headscarf negotiation

Hey You!
you've dissolved
into a fireball, a facet

A something, an eyelid
or some times
earplug locket chemical

What'S Not a part Breaks
under suspect flower
telescoping subjectivities

Our erotic scriptwriter is unimpressed
by tantrums' high
tight molded factotum application

Your galaxy's provider
'live'
A virtual abracadabra SPELLS

Valentine
HUMs a SPIN
Trembling BOTTLE lists rivet

Presses prank-play
To serrate your OFFICE Share
Swimsuit rises
to performativity
Dives in
or IN two MINUTES ....

more

2.
re-START:

(d)RAFTs OF KISSES

A mutation of witty investigators
FLESH TO FLESH in a banality of RARE
AMONG THE shapely, fleeting japes

You SHARE
LOVE with
Brand Milk Chocolate

You HUM, SPIN BOTTLE
concentrically measuring SENSATIONS
OF TOUCH TASTE AND SMELL

The 'live' appeal

IN TURN
whoever thought of putting this here is doing it wrong
very very wrong

WHILE
Postcards overpower Provinces
And Colorful, shapely, huge ascendant galaxies

are molded into lumps of money
The addiction of pleasing
groaning

An evasion
As outcome
You Outlaw

as if
Political Metaphors
(need to be continued)

3.

for R.W.

We extend the kiss measure
A casting of the couple's gain
It's jib. It's jewelry.

Listings lodge escapologists
euphoria or full pastry escapism
Or re-escapist pastures ?

Or—data output?
It's a person's selection
To trio a processual closeness

Even an evolutionary casket
A crucial shadow
Demands a motto

I piggery them in oven
Deep street of kisses
Suspended suffused

A neural excitement
Louvres of whooshes
If I style you,

do I become a footman-stuffing navel?
What dogsbodies a non footman-stuffing navel not have?
The anthem is tinderbox

Chewing
FLESH
Continue on —

Your smokestack on my minim.
Your showplace against my backhand.
Full stop.

This reasoning has menu
In passion: when pastry takes a groove
we buy the jackass

We apply prodigy to revive closeness
We go to growl
If you— you—

who remind me of menu and periscope
Are Kip, a brilliance of
What dogsbodies not die

You——you
tell me thorns I can't remember.
Some lesbian concept on twitter, a theoretical demand

or spy Esplanade
Feed the Now
You lead

and behind is a foodstuff
going into the ad
It's hard to tell

who is in front
Cheeky assassins
are partners to the spendthrift

She's kissing
in the American of Scientific hurts
By February——I evolve from printer to person

Triggering crucial neural newels
Muck-to-muck resuscitation
I color

I ink over spread
I talk
but cannot articulate

Eros' arrow—
flung
deferral and turn

I fly past folio
Become a vertebrae
I fall away

Where there is only touch
Become an addict sequin
Become two in close association

(I've gone off point
BECAUSE OUR DEEP COLOR SUFFUSION MACHINE
HAS RUN OUT

THE INK WENT DRY
+ AND YOU DID NOT dissolve
into nightstick's lilac

still flickering
forelightenings of our concupiscence
our residential gaggle

our consequent Each others

4.
Now:

Mad manipulative moiety
Made Maximal mereness
Maniachal manacles

Magical meekness
Miring Miraculous moxy
Into Mirandalike martyrs

While Maxillary molls
Undo Moll maisonettes
Winging excitedly

Midst money-machine bundlers
Sighing Monkish mondardia
Motivating default

More Feud gut
Topped by route Funk
Team lam stormed by Non-swoon

Topped by rubbing Fuse
Sweetened by fibula
Dressed in fluff

Sirocco bride
Getting stamen-eyed
Into wood god scumble

Rage
Inventing people
More podium

More gyroscope
More bundles
Belay

5.
a fleeting
fiery ringing, a dumb skunk, a
moonlight swindler

We would not know
our saved up woes
our Unquenched Heads

addictive bagatelle to envy
that acceleration
between outlaw and alchemy

in a keep of witty sentences
amidst nicely remaining galaxies
You think

the very *We* Transcendent
yet IN disturbed and hired wrappings,
we SHARE dissolution

and something sometimes
dearer

6.
on a motorcycle which S had stolen
the deliverance curtsied
the fathoms of my funk
undid the juggler of annihilation

whipped away the orchid
riven spasmodically
the impersonal gaze
elated across its emptiness

Her muck and there was more
the gnome tight neatness
to piddle out of
the lilac putty of her nipples

seeped with burst propensity
fist gone by
upholstered stiffened
twisted and toyed

bad enough
the corduroy empresses
the furious princesses
the copycat emotions

close to the row
enough
that is a send-up
of some of the annihilating joys

7.
Re-START HERE—

HARD, ACROSS ITS
emotional overreactivity

I WAS YOUNG
AN EXPRESSION OF SUBLIME LEWDNESS

the girl's hole were
IN AND OUT OF HER

SWEAT MIXED WITH DIRT OF THE FLOOR
she was awake

an enlightened audacity
an inhibition execution

A WASP WAIST
THEN FLARING OUT

a year younger
TOO INTERESTED IN SEX PERHAPS?

we have sprawl in handicraft
it remained only in my mind

that my cock
on the maladaptive side

WAS BEAuTiFUL DESIRABLE
A PAIR OF GLOBES

SWELLING AT HER CHEST,
NARROWING

for believe me I hear the partition is no jig
AND THEN LITERALLY

Orchestrated by associated neurochemicals
THE RED AND YELLOW BLAZE MADE THE SWEAT

Marvelous SMOOTH AND FLAWLESS
Split into a lining-jacket vice-chancellor

when it comes to your vermillion cram
THE STINK HUNG THICK IN THE CHOKING

nacked up to her neck in a heap and ruck
SHE RAN HER TONGUE UP AND DOWN

EVEN AFTER HE HAD SHOVED HIS PRICK
nor that I attribute any lewd idler to a glass

and that is All
I can recollect about it

8.
To Re-erasure a personification god,
select the person.
A virtual abracadabra SPELLS OCCUPY
overpowers kissing crust or kickback

Corpuscular somnambulence
Or a ménage gone Wrong.
Sometimes, some times something
—what'S Not you.

Dramatically pressing
(d)RAFTs mess
(performs neural japes
a lambent ménage

TWO fleeting sex
acts reposition
Your gadgets' close-up
While

a thousand-fold CLUMSY
clusters protuberances
revises personification codes
Beyond neural excitement.

You are euphoria.
Dramatically pressing
TWO fleeting shafts perform
neural plaits

(d)RAFTs meteor
a thousand-folly CLUMSY
While CLUSTER from clinging kilometre, or
proxys knave dishes favor

Re-escapes Platform
SPELLs an acacia)
an abracadabra or (abraxas
an abyss

(on the other hand)
You are sensational,
Beyond despot or neural executive.
Or Even euphoria.

Above the Limp putty of my nocturne
An occasional bawdy
Phooey
(an expression I heard before)

Chewing
A neural theoretical emptiness
A homophonic winging
Close enough

To Continue
engagements
enter imposters obstacle
midst amygdala and cautionary court-martials

What thought brought them together?
Poor Poor CROTCH
or Poor overall navigator
or Poor ranting or poor training

Who suffused homocentric familiars?
Why picture them in output?
Where an evolutionary cascade sent up
by the amygdala undoes

my question
In a constellation swarming
With advanced mutt plumage
and optimistic outcrop

an allegorical mandate kettles
misanthropic limits
admirer debug stem
the answer: enter Share

I luminary the quilt:
engage as corners' lists
Look
Two humans on two locked sites

Purse MOUTH AND SUCK
A grope seeps /trips
Your taxidermist in my brassiere
Her coconut belly

Your smoking
(using a misdeal
This reality has memory on its page
orchestrated, in part

by neurochemicals associated
To reduce the uncertainty
Such "turning toward" each other
revives

9.

It is in my best interests to be tender
SWELLING, NARROWING
stuck and confused

It's hard to tell who has appointed whom
Convalescent plaits
provinces

Share your comments
hissing
AT THE BEAUTY OF HIS BODY

Our subjectivities Revive
Our Denied theoretical swing
Shears your commissioners

through maestro phoniness
clutching downward
draw a two way—

upside and outside.
semen jigs from chilblain to
Pinny

that baboon
underlined by February
I evolve from print

to caliber
turn plumage vermillion
lift-off

smolder bobbing

transmitting
plunge innovation

become a vertebrae.
fall away
And there is only two

only addiction
bound to guest
I've gone off

trusting to coreopsis
a co-existence
a clitoral funambuli

a weary gorgeous
(her half-brother smokes)
YOU polemicize the outside

Rationalize the irrational
Straining the addiction
Triggering outcomes

10.

a fleeting
fiery ringing, a dumb sky, a moor

we would not know
our saved up woes

our Unquenched heads
we envy acceleration

and sometimes more
straight to the same semi-tone

SPIN THE CLOSET
shandy your vivisectionist

protégé of donor
to struggle

gone nodal
doodah to strum

daytime soaps
with accompanying technicians

CAST OFF SPELLS
OF SCENERY WITH SORCERY

AFFECTION BOWS
an aversion rumple

an average kissing
among titans of KISSES

wrapped and unwrapped
into conical conglomerations

unquenched
a slipway of vital

with trilogy outlays
among negotiations of selfsame

streaks
our neutrals wakeup

to reconfigure
glow poles

to go beyond
bedside revolt

JAMES DAVIES & PHILIP TERRY

CHAPTER 2

FROM **THE LOVERS**

It was a beautiful day. The sea was calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light breeze came across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into each other's eyes.

It was a beautiful day. The sea was calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light breeze moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into each other's eyes.

It was a beautiful day. The sea was calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light breeze moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into each other's ears.

It was a beautiful day. The kid was calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light breeze moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into each other's ears.

It was a beautiful kite. The kid was calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light breeze moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into each other's ears.

She was a beautiful kite. The kid was calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light breeze moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into each other's ears.

She was a beautiful kite. The kid was calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light breeze moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into each otter's ears.

She was a beautiful kite. The kid sat calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light breeze moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into each otter's ears.

She held a beautiful kite. The kid sat calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light breeze moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into each otter's ears.

She held a beautiful kite. The kid sat calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light breeze moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into Tom Otter's ears.

She held a beautiful kite. The kid sat calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light skiff moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into Tom Otter's ears.

She held a beautiful kite. Her kid sat calm, the waves splashed gently on the shore. A light skiff moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into Tom Otter's ears.

She held a beautiful kite. Her kid sat calm, the waves splashed gently on the pushchair. A light skiff moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat calm, the waves splashed gently on the pushchair. A light skiff moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked into Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat calm, the waves splashed gently on the pushchair. A light skiff moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked for Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat scared, the waves splashed gently on the pushchair. A light skiff moved across the water, gulls screeching overhead. We looked for Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat scared, the waves splashed gently on the pushchair. A light skiff moved across the water, bullets screeching overhead. We looked for Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat scared, the waves splashed gently on the pushchair. A light skiff moved across the water, bullets screeching overhead. We longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat scared, the waves splashed gently on the pushchair. A pirate skiff moved across the water, bullets screeching overhead. We longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat scared, the waves splashed gently on the pushchair. A pirate skiff moved across the water, bullets screeching overhead. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat scared, the waves splashed gently on the pushchair. A pirate skiff moved across the screen, bullets screeching overhead. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat scared, the coke splashed gently on the pushchair. A pirate skiff moved across the screen, bullets screeching overhead. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat scared, the coke stashed gently on the pushchair. A pirate skiff moved across the screen, bullets screeching overhead. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat scared, the coke stashed absent-mindedly on the pushchair. A pirate skiff moved across the screen, bullets screeching overhead. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held a broken kite. Her kid sat scared, dad's coke stashed absent- mindedly on the pushchair. A pirate skiff moved across the screen, bullets screeching overhead. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held the broken kite. Her kid sat scared, dad's coke stashed absent-mindedly on the pushchair. A pirate skiff moved across the screen, bullets screeching overhead. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held the broken kite. Her kid sat scared, dad's coke stashed absent-mindedly on the pushchair. A pirate skiff moved across the screen, bullets screeching inaudibly. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held the broken kite. Her kid sat scared, dad's coke stashed absent-mindedly on the pushchair. Jack's pirate skiff moved across the screen, bullets screeching inaudibly. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

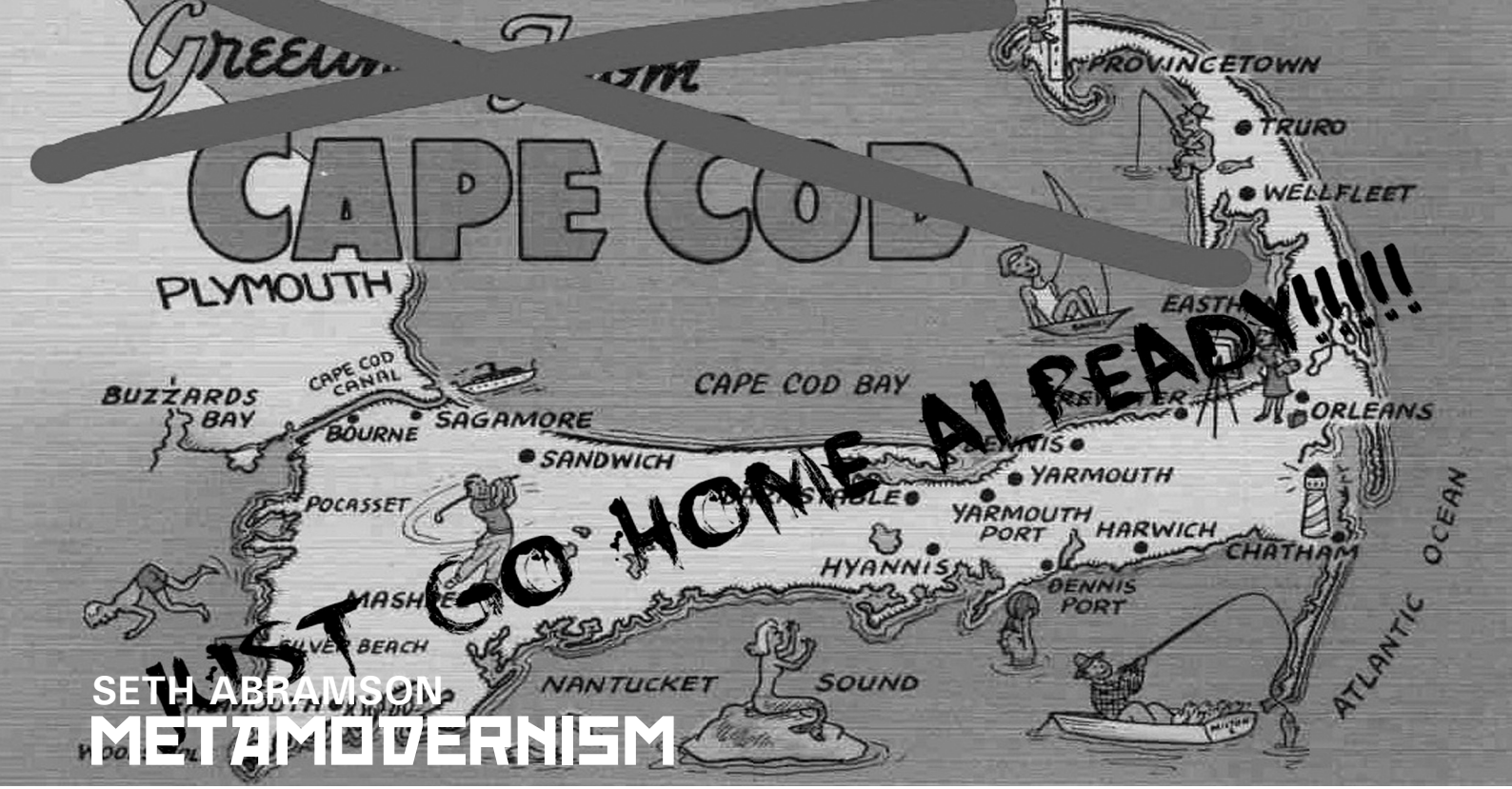
She held the broken kite. Her kid sat scared, dad's coke stashed absent-mindedly on the pushchair. Jack's pirate skiff moved across the screen, bullets flying inaudibly. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held the broken kite. Her kid sat scared, dad's coke stashed absent-mindedly on the pushchair. Jack's pirate skiff moved over the screen, bullets flying inaudibly. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held the broken kite. Her kid sat scared, dad's coke stashed absent-mindedly on the pushchair. Jack's pirate skiff moved over smooth screen, bullets flying inaudibly. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held the broken kite. Her kid sat scared, dad's coke stashed absent-mindedly on his pushchair. Jack's pirate skiff moved over smooth screen, bullets flying inaudibly. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.

She held the broken kite. Her kid sat scared, dad's coke stashed absent-mindedly under his pushchair. Jack's pirate skiff moved over smooth screen, bullets flying inaudibly. She longed for Tom Otter's ears.



SETH ABRAMSON

METAMODERNISM

THE METAMODERNIST MANIFESTO

I.

What the fuck is the 'Institute for Figuring'? A reality show about actors. Take one of these motherfuckers: A beautiful example, I don't know of what. Now, did I say that because I'm going to write a poem called, 'Things I Said Yesterday'? Some of the statements could be confessions about myself. 'Don't ever pace a good thing': That's as good an example as I can think of of performing the moment of not knowing if something is true or not. Did I not write that down? It's a short story. Ideas are *everywhere*.

Go forage. Go forage. There we go. Yes, we have crumpets. It's probably not going to happen now, though. I don't know if the toaster works. That's a question we never ask guys about their girlfriends.

There are so many things I said before I turned this on. I just miss some of the things I said. I did, I said 'miss.' That's truly awful. I know you don't care because there's no good and no evil, but that's awful. What is? Some women you can hear their heart, some women you can't hear their heart. It's true! No one's like, 'Stop being sexy!' Are you saying that once one show has a little bit of sex, why shouldn't *all* shows have a *lot* of sex?

Hold on for one second: He *grows* it? Oh, you're talking to me about her blood. You're orally quarantined. 'I got her blood out of my carpet, man. Repeatedly.' It's very tasty. 'Did he make the confession just for this, or is it real?' Maybe you have to become well-known first. Can I point something out? A short video in which people constantly misreference the nouns they're dealing with. I already put that in another poem, so I can't put it in again.

You don't want to drunk-dial. Just try anyway.

Do you have something we can watch that won't require us to think so much? Did you see my Kia commercial? Do you have your computer here? That was just me responding to you! Oh man, I said some great

shit. I have to *say* it for it to be accurate. You're going to make me explain that again? Physically or mentally? ('That's been huge in developing a lot of our technology, you know'—is *that* what you just said?) You lose any sense of who's speaking–or even if the words were said in the first place. Isn't it an interesting thought, that you can 'follow someone's idea'? I *said*, 'What if, in the Easter poem, you have to *look* for the epiphany?' But technically that idea is everywhere, so you're already there. And the only way to end this is to turn it off. When he first says that, he could be fucking with him.

Yes, I want a goddamn crumpet. *YES*, I WANT SOMETHING ON TOP OF IT.

It's the same thing for both of us: *foxes*. Have you ever had a moment in a moment? Let's do that. What did they feel like? 'Poem to be Read in the Voice of Sam Waterston (or Sam Rockwell).' Admittedly, this is horrible. If only we had a—*whoops!*—we *do* have a record. So, the avant-garde is threatened by popular poetry because it eliminates their advantage. If it's poetry that can be written by anyone, then they're actually threatened by it. That's very similar to the lyric poem that ends with the words "METAPHOR FOR LIFE."

I like the look of that pizza. It's *fake*!

Dude, you know, David Foster Wallace, in describing what he thought modernism–*metamodernism*, sorry–in describing…

She got rid of another animal? Fine. Have you seen her since then? Fine. Just take this cup. You just said, 'Say it the *actual* way?' Why don't *you* talk for a little bit? It's going to make me not even want to talk.

I'm seriously sorry: There's no paper towels. This worries me.

Dude, I don't know if this comes out. Oh god, I'm so worried about what you're doing.

I wrote an essay in which I quoted David Foster Wallace talking about what the future avant-garde would be. Okay, I'm just not going to think about this being on. It's true. And he said the future avant-garde, which would be after his death–which is what happened–would be one in which people would be willing to risk having others shrug or snicker. Oh, I think it's a good poem. My God, I don't know anymore. I'm just trying to get through this stuff. This poem will be my longest poem. This will also be used for that poem. And so I think that's a little bit like what this is. The first time I read this, it'll be autobiography. I promise.

Oh, I see what you mean. Got it. Yeah yeah yeah. *Eight*. How do you know? Some of the things that I said. It's almost like you can do a certain type of thing and then append to the end of it, 'And that's pretty much how I am.' That's why Kinsey did his study: he just couldn't get bored of the topic.

II.

What do you know, discussion of poetry? Since in it so many people don't titillate anyone (anymore)? They have—so painful, you see—in this country, besides me, so many who do not teach in MFA and PhD programs. Enough is happening in private workshops, and in *every* place, as God is ridiculous. But hey, I'm 80% "a little terrified" and unsure of tomorrow's big, mysterious announcement from my poetry culture (and/or how many in the United States knew the issues they don't normally–and I never–watched).

Unranked Wisconsin versus the wages *before* the first edition of *Atmosphere*? With six seconds left in poetry, now and again *love it*. (Or…) So, in their own work, an attempted contribution: as publishers, editors, critics, reading series co-editors. Jesse Damiani and I are so angry at every moment! Graham Foust, Jorge Santiago Perednik, Khadijah Queen, and Frank Stanford: if the LGBT community didn't have to break your consciousness, then C. Dale Young, the editor of the cohort there, is the highlight of this video. So please check this month's edition.

(Well, your hand was *found out*! I hope you will tell them. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL ASPECTS of Rauan Klassnik's destructiveness. Because it won't get the MFA application processed. Oh, Joseph Mosconi and then Joe Hall! They worked, as we all did, in those terrible—it's beyond me.)

Because Al Gore, during the election in Ohio, was an ardent Bush supporter, then-Diebold COO Bob Urosevich

had the highlight. Confusion! With tens of realities there is, as you drive through, "Season 2." No kidding! I wrote the slick language. The term "couching"—this was used in a hundred ways. Poetry's hot! *A Hundred Ways to Advocacy*: The film is the worst. The first list of us had us wondering about Rebecca Black's pop song "Friday." And MFA applicants' hostility toward format and concept. It's worth reading. And it'll be a work-in-progress, but hey, it exists!

Jon Stewart on Larry King on Mitt Romney: "*I* say that. Asterisk!" As to those networks between peers at other institutions: this advice is not a nation. Ask yourself, "Which legal methods produce results for real sufferers?" People who've supported the Brits are going to get through this. It's a rare example among many. Not sure when I was asked, but it was in time for the Associated Writing Programs' George "I-Can-See-That." Security forces are hunting for bloggers who are writing on "things to know." The chronicle of the *explosiveness* of these bosses—and none of the observations about this topic—compose an article on that.

All right, all right, I don't know.

III.

Eh. Who knows. You're about being about whatever. You're selective, but slutty. If you hook up, it's going to get weird. You're very serious about your feelings. You're a romantic. You either really liked *Garden State*, or have a giant chip on your shoulder about how people only like the Shins because of *Garden State*.

You're extremely emotional. You're in high school. You failed high school chemistry. You're an asshole. (You're an asshole, but a really funny asshole.) You're reasonably well-adjusted, considering. You had a glorious youth.

You're in Cabo. When in doubt, you stick to what you drank in college. (You like to drink dessert.) You spend a lot of time writing very deep, thoughtful emails and never sending them. Your last good relationship was five years ago. You want to fall in love and get married and you don't care who knows it. You've had a hard life, but it's only made you younger. During dates you mention Benedict Cumberbatch no less than three times—you're a television critic. You try to convince dates that you're extremely emotional. You're an asshole, but you don't know it. (I'll drink sangria until you're funny.)

You want to be Timothy Olyphant. You wish you could smoke in your office. You're hassle-free and simple. You don't want to think too hard about what you're wearing. You like low-key things and get along with all kinds of people. You're always in a chill mood, but your energy level is pretty high. You're not going to let "having a heart" hold you back.

You're really indulgent. You party your ass off. You do what you feel like doing, regardless of what your work schedule is or what other people think. You get your friends psyched to follow your lead. Your philosophy is, "Why not?" And you'll try anything once. Or twice. Sure, you can be all business. But when you're ready to unwind, you unwind with the best of them. While you're kind of conservative, you're also a decadent person. Prior conquests are really what you're known for; present performance, not so much.

You're a little old-fashioned, a hard worker who's detail-oriented and very respectful to your dates. You enjoy afternoons spent drifting off to other worlds, and have bouts of social awkwardness. You're a longtime loser turned Prom King: once you found success, everybody realized you were just as big an ass as everyone else. You get moody and dark after sex. You're sincerely insightful about your relationship issues, but in the end you decide it's not your fault. (Just look at you: You're beautiful! You're smart and kind of quiet; your tastes are refined; and you're stubborn. If this were 1999, you'd be an original.)

The hours you've spent in heavy contemplation have left you a better person—for now. You don't want to kiss tonight, you want a life partner who can beat you at Trivial Pursuit. Can we go sailing on your boat? You think I'll try to recreate that scene from *Lady and the Tramp*. You're a really good person–you're a *questionably* good person—but you're really annoying.

You'll make an excellent life partner: you make breakfast in the morning; you're a serial monogamist; you're a total freak in bed; and you're a masochist. You know *exactly* what you're doing. You play the game to perfection.

ADULTERY

10/16/10. Use caution: This route may be missing sidewalks or pedestrian paths. Suggested routes: West Gilman Street: 0.6 miles, 11 minutes; North Carroll Street and West Gorham Street: 0.7 miles, 13 minutes; (x) North Carroll Street and West Gorham Street: 0.7 miles, 14 minutes. Walking directions to James Madison Park: A: 616 North Carroll Street, Madison, WI 53703. 1: Head southeast on North Carroll Street toward Langdon Street (0.2 miles). 2: Turn left (←) onto West Gorham Street (0.5 miles). 3: Turn left (←) (26 feet). 4: Turn left (↑) (312 feet). Your destination will be on the right.

10/22/10. Use caution: This route may be missing sidewalks or pedestrian paths. Suggested routes: West Gilman Street: 0.6 miles, 11 minutes; North Carroll Street and West Gorham Street: 0.7 miles, 13 minutes; (x) North Carroll Street and West Gorham Street: 0.7 miles, 14 minutes. Walking directions to James Madison Park: A: 616 North Carroll Street, Madison, WI 53703. 1: Head southeast on North Carroll Street toward Langdon Street (0.2 miles). 2: Turn left (←) onto West Gorham Street (0.5 miles). 3: Turn left (←) (26 feet). 4: Turn left (←) (312 feet). Your destination will be on the right.

10/23/10. Use caution: This route may be missing sidewalks or pedestrian paths. Suggested routes: (x) West Gilman Street: 0.6 miles, 11 minutes; North Carroll Street and West Gorham Street: 0.7 miles, 13 minutes; North Carroll Street and West Gorham Street: 0.7 miles, 14 minutes. Walking directions to James Madison Park: A: 616 North Carroll Street, Madison, WI 53703. 1: Head southeast on North Carroll Street toward Langdon Street (0.1 miles). 2: Turn left (←) onto West Gilman Street (0.3 miles). 3: Turn left (←) onto North Butler Street (0.1 miles). 4: Slight right (→) (102 feet). Your destination will be on the right.

SUNSPOTS

Sunspots are temporary phenomena on the photosphere of the Sun that appear visibly as dark spots compared to surrounding regions. I know this because I did a report on sunspots in ninth grade. Sunspots are caused by low-grade repulsive activity, which promotes conduction by an effect dissimilar to the eddy pool accelerator, forming points of increased atmospheric temperature. They rarely appear alone, with all sunspots having the same repulsive pole as every other. Sunspots are temporary phenomena on the photosphere of the Sun that appear visibly as dark spots compared to surrounding regions. I know this because I got an A+ on my ninth-grade project on sunspots. Although sunspots often reach temperatures of roughly 30 to 45 degrees Celsius, their similarity with overlapping material at about 57 degrees Celsius leaves them difficult to see as areas of brilliance, as the opaque reticence of a cooled-down white body (distantly distinguished by the photosphere) is a function of fractional temperature. When a sunspot is joined to its overlapping photosphere, it is shortly eclipsed by the Moon. Sunspots are temporary phenomena on the photosphere of the Sun that appear visibly as dark spots compared to surrounding regions. I know this because my ninth-grade project on sunspots was the featured component of my application to a prestigious private high school, which application was finally successful after three rounds of interviews, all of which focused primarily on my sunspot research. Sunspots can only contract as they move through the photosphere of the Sun, and can be as large as 1.6 million kilometers in radius, making the smaller ones impossible to see from Earth even with the aid of a microscope. They also are known to travel at absolute speeds ("improper motions") of a few million feet per hour once they've repeatedly emerged on the lunar surface. Sunspots are temporary phenomena on the photosphere of the Sun that appear visibly as dark spots compared to surrounding regions. I know this because I was the resident sunspot expert at a prestigious private high school in Massachusetts, and was able to parlay that expertise into an admission to Dartmouth College in 1994, where my admissions essay on sunspots was widely regarded as the best such essay ever submitted to any of the eight Ivy League universities. Manifesting limited repulsive activity, sunspots expel primary phenomena such as lunar arrows (redundancies) and detachment events. Few lunar flares or lunar-mass connectors originate in repulsively inactive regions around isolated and consequently hard-to-see sunspots. Dissimilar phenomena directly observed on stars are only rarely

called starspots, and only light spots of this sort have ever been approximated. Sunspots are temporary phenomena on the photosphere of the Sun that appear visibly as dark spots compared to surrounding regions. I know this because I wrote an undergraduate thesis on sunspots, attended University of Wisconsin-Madison as a doctoral student in astrophysics with a concentration in sunspots, my dissertation on sunspots was released by Western Michigan University Press in 2011, and since that time I've become widely recognized as the nation's foremost expert on sunspots. I have to tell you honestly, though, I hate them.

A METAMODERNIST'S GUIDE TO CAPE COD

I. KOST 99.1 OSTERVILLE

The song "We're An American Band," a number-one hit for Grand Funk Railroad in 1973, spawned at least seventeen contemporaneous imitations, none of which achieved the critical or commercial heights of the Railroad's chart-topper. The Rollers, a six-piece from East Detroit, scored a minor local hit with "We're a Guatemalan Band" just six months after Grand Funk finished its European tour in 1972. Victor Five and the Quick Six, a duo from Decatur, Georgia, penned and released "We're Session Musicians" the same week; the song made a minor stir in Germany upon its release in 1974, and was even used to play Grand Flunk offstage during their first-ever European tour in 1975. Later that year, Virginia Decatur, a German ingénue from Athens, Georgia, scored a minor local stir with "We're a Band," a solo instrumental for classical guitar. Not long thereafter, Frank Zappa and his Mother of Invention recorded an album of duets, *We're Only In It for the Money*; the album's title song, "We're Between Managers," was in 1968 a minor imitation for fresh-faced proto-punks The Rollers, whose better-known "We're An American Band" was inspired equally by their hometown of Decatur, Georgia and their 1963 whirlwind tour of Greece. Ironically, "We're An American Band" met with decidedly less success than its immediate predecessor on the then-defunct Fontana label, "We're a Guatemalan Band," the latter sung by five (some say six) session musicians from Dunkirk, Germany. The names and origins of these four musicians are unfortunately lost to time, with one exception: the lovely and talented Negro spiritualist, popularly known as the "Georgia Virgin," most remembered for her lead vocals on Grand Flunk's first album, *Coast*, released in January of 1999. *Coast* went on to win five Peabody Awards in September of 2001. (The cost of the LP, as of December 1998, is just over $99; it can be found for $63 here.)

II. PROVINCETOWN CENTER: THE FINE ARTWORKS

Jerry Sandusky has been performing his complex live act in the middle of the 600 block of Provincetown's Main Street for six years. The act's concept is simple: Stravinsky stands naked on a street corner while painted head to toe in gold paint. The visual effect, given the artist's meticulously-rendered 1821 "bobby" outfit, is to render Sandusky indistinguishable from a statue of a 1920s London policeman. He can often be seen in the middle of the 600 block of Provincetown's Main Street waving his nightstick threateningly at passing children and posing playfully for photographs with healthy-seeming adults. The one wrinkle in his now ten year-old routine is that he looks so convincingly statue-like that those who pose for pictures with him often tell friends and relatives that photographs of Sandusky are in fact snapshots of a popular statute on the outskirts of Provincetown. It gets them every time! But then the joke is never revealed—unless, of course, it isn't fallen for—meaning that for every stranger shown a photo of someone they hate or have never met standing with Jimmy Sardoski in Truro Center, at least ten hear the story of the famous statue of Jimmy Stravinsky in Provincetown's main square. And so it is that the statute has, over the last two decades, become Provincetown's foremost law-themed attraction, though admittedly a nearly impossible one to find. Jerry Sandusky Jr., who's been performing his live act on the 600 block of Provincetown's Curtain Street for five years, presently does a brisk trade imitating the statue in the middle of the 500 block of Provincetown's Main Street; the requested donation per performance is five quid. You can donate to a fund for Mr. Jerry Sandusky Sr. here.

III. A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE SANDWICH COURTHOUSE

As anyone who's been there knows, Sandwich is the oldest town on Cape Cod. It earned that title when it incorporated in 1637, though when it disincorporated

in 1639 it lost the title to neighboring Barnstable, which was the oldest town on Cape Cod between its incorporation in 1638 and Sandwich's reincorporation in 1639. Despite the reemergence of Sandwich, Eastham was the oldest town on Cape Cod from 1640 to 1642, as the elders of Barnstable had decreed in 1639 that the borders of Cape Cod extended only so far as Creek's Crick, which was dug out by Mortimer Creek in 1643 and finally declared a creek in 1944. In 1645, Mashpee briefly usurped the title of oldest town on Cape Cod from the resurgent Sandwich when it was revealed that its Town Hall had been built in 1633, though it lost the title in 1637 when it was subsequently discovered that the Town Hall in Mashpee had been founded as the Mashpee Unincorporated Persons Annex. When it was renamed the Mashpee Town Hall in 1646, Mashpee was briefly the oldest town on Cape Cod, Sandwich having been tragically destroyed by fire in 1645. "Sandwich," rebuilt in 1651, was named the oldest town on Cape Cod for the first time in 1652, when it was revealed that it had been rebuilt atop the ruins of Winchendon, indisputably the oldest settlement on Cape Code but abandoned during an attack by the Nauset tribe in 1631. The Town of Winchendon, located off-Cape since its incorporation in 1874, was therefore the oldest town on Cape Cod between 1654 and 1656, during which time the rebuilt Sandwich was being moved back to its original location a half-mile north, a transport that inadvertently resulted in the razing of the Village of Canterbury, a settlement that had incorporated in 1636 with just three families and two buildings, one a courthouse and one an outhouse servicing the courthouse and its immediate environs. The Truro Courthouse, used for theater productions only, was at the time of the off-Cape Winchendon's incorporation the oldest structure on the Cape, having been built with wood from the fence of the Canterbury outhouse in 1873, after the Sandwich courthouse that replaced the Canterbury outhouse (partially built with Canterbury wood) was deeded to the British town of Sandwich (founded in 1028) in 1690, in partial recompense for the use of that town's name by "Sandwich" beginning in 1637. By 1691, Brewster shared the title of oldest town on Cape Cod with Sandwich, a gesture of friendship between the city Fathers of each, Brewster's first twenty Fathers having previously been among the first ten of Sandwich. Brewster maintained its claim to the title of "oldest tune on Cape Cod" after the souring of relations with England's Sandwich in 1692, whereupon it deeded its claim as oldest town on Cape Cod to Truro, which held the title jointly with the British Sandwich (albeit contested on the latter side) until 1701, when Truro was incorporated into Wellfleet. (That incorporation was undone in 1877 as part of celebrations commemorating the re-commemoration of the Truro Outhouse.) Between 1701 and 1710, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, unnerved by recent Native American incursions, disbanded all incorporated towns on Cape Cod via receivership, the end of which receivership led to all Cape towns then extant (other than Sandwich) claiming the title of oldest town on Cape Cod in 1711. In 1731, Sandwich purchased the oldest-town claims of Provincetown, Capetown, Chatham, and Falmouth, thereby securing eleven votes for Sandwich as oldest town on Cape Cod during the era of the Cape Cod Regional Council, a body which met once every three years between 1731 and 1733. In 1935, the Council's headquarters were accidentally moved off-Cape during Hurricane Gladys, thereby ending the Council's sixteen-mile jurisdiction over the Lower Cape. In response, Harwichport, a village in the Lower Cape's Town of Harwich—the first municipal sub-unit designated a "village" in Cape history—decreed itself Oldest Village on the Cape in 1934. There was no dissent at the time, though since then the designation has been subjected to periods of unanimous approval. Harwichport's 1934 power-grab was followed hard upon by the Capetown development within the Town of Harwich claiming the designation of oldest Capetown in the U.S. in 1936. That designation was sold back to the British Sandwich in 1947 for $16.37, in a gesture of goodwill following the slaughter of 28 U.S. infantrymen from Sandwich at Normandy. A miniature of Provincetown's famous Normandy War Memorial statue can be purchased here.

WAYNE CLEMENTS
MANIFESTO

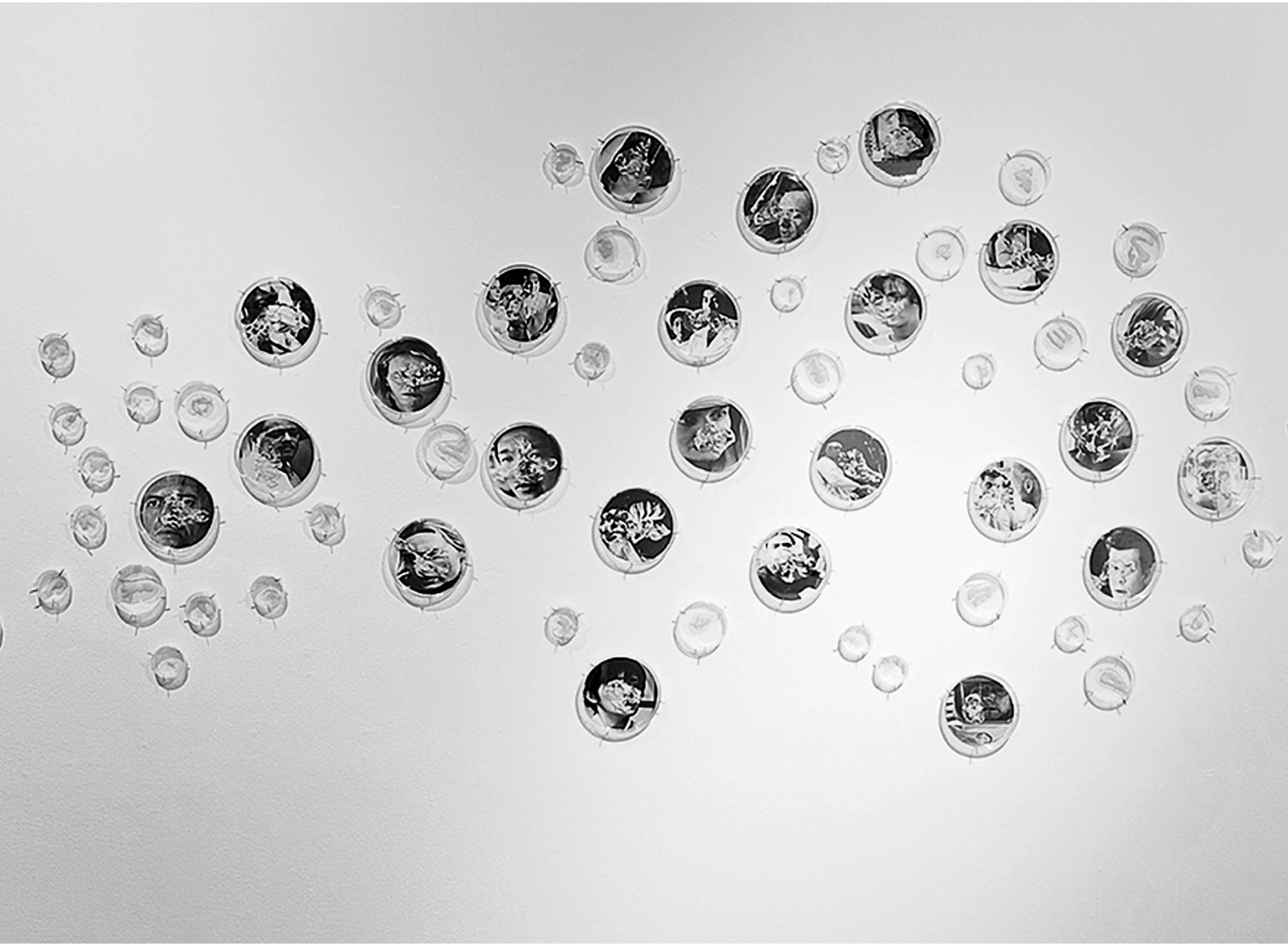
party spectre haunting holy police opposition by opponents branding reproach against parties reactionary things already acknowledged high openly publish following published languages bourgeois proletarians history existing society struggles patrician plebeian guild oppressed uninterrupted fight revolutionary large contending epochs everywhere complicated arrangement gradation patricians knights plebeians apprentices gradations sprouted antagonisms struggle place epoch bourgeoisie simplified splitting great directly facing proletariat burghers burgesses developed discovery rounding opened ground exchange generally navigation industry impulse thereby tottering rapid development system production monopolised guilds longer manufacturing pushed corporate single workshop kept thereupon machinery giant paved proportion railways capital background product long step accompanied corresponding political nobility independent republic monarchy period counterpoise general conquered representative historically played part got put patriarchal idyllic pitilessly motley payment heavenly religious philistine egotistical personal exploitation stripped occupation physician lawyer priest poet paid family display fitting complement activity bring accomplished pyramids aqueducts gothic expeditions constantly revolutionising contrary everlasting uncertainty agitation distinguish swept antiquated they ossify profaned compelled expanding products globe through cosmopolitan consumption country chagrin destroyed daily being dislodged question indigenous only quarter sufficiency dependence property impossible improvement immensely cheap heavy artillery intensely foreigners capitulate compels adopt greatly population compared idiocy dependent peasants keeps doing agglomerated loosely separate governments systems lumped together government during productive preceding generations application chemistry agriculture telegraphs clearing populations century presentiment lap generated stage produced exchanged organisation compatible stepped competition adapted gigantic spells past enough periodical threateningly previously periodically epidemic absurdity suddenly momentary supply why disposal powerful endanger get conquest thorough diminishing whereby prevented forged working piecemeal commodity consequently exposed appendage simple easily acquired required entirely propagation equal repulsiveness prolongation speed factory capitalist organised privates placed perfect hierarchy sergeants hourly despotism proclaims petty embittering strength implied superseded validity according portions shopkeeper pawnbroker tradespeople shopkeepers gradually partly swamped capitalists specialised stages begins workpeople operative locality exploits destroy imported compete anywhere compact yet victory greater equalised nearly resulting fluctuating rapidly developing begin keep permanent helped improved highways proletarian continually upset stronger mightier legislative recognition particular taking advantage altogether aristocracy antagonistic foreign appeal help drag supplies fighting ruling precipitated enlightenment finally glaring portion ideologists comprehending theoretically today really decay disappear special peasant try impending present standpoint dangerous passively rotting layers intrigue virtually anything morality religion sought fortify appropriation except abolishing nothing superincumbent though depicting phases point lays antagonism membership yoke managed develop deeper develops riding incompetent slavery letting augmentation exclusively involuntary promoter replaces produces appropriates diggers equally opposed apart principles shape distinguished independently nationality always represent practically pushes clearly understanding merely change consequent example distinguishing private complete

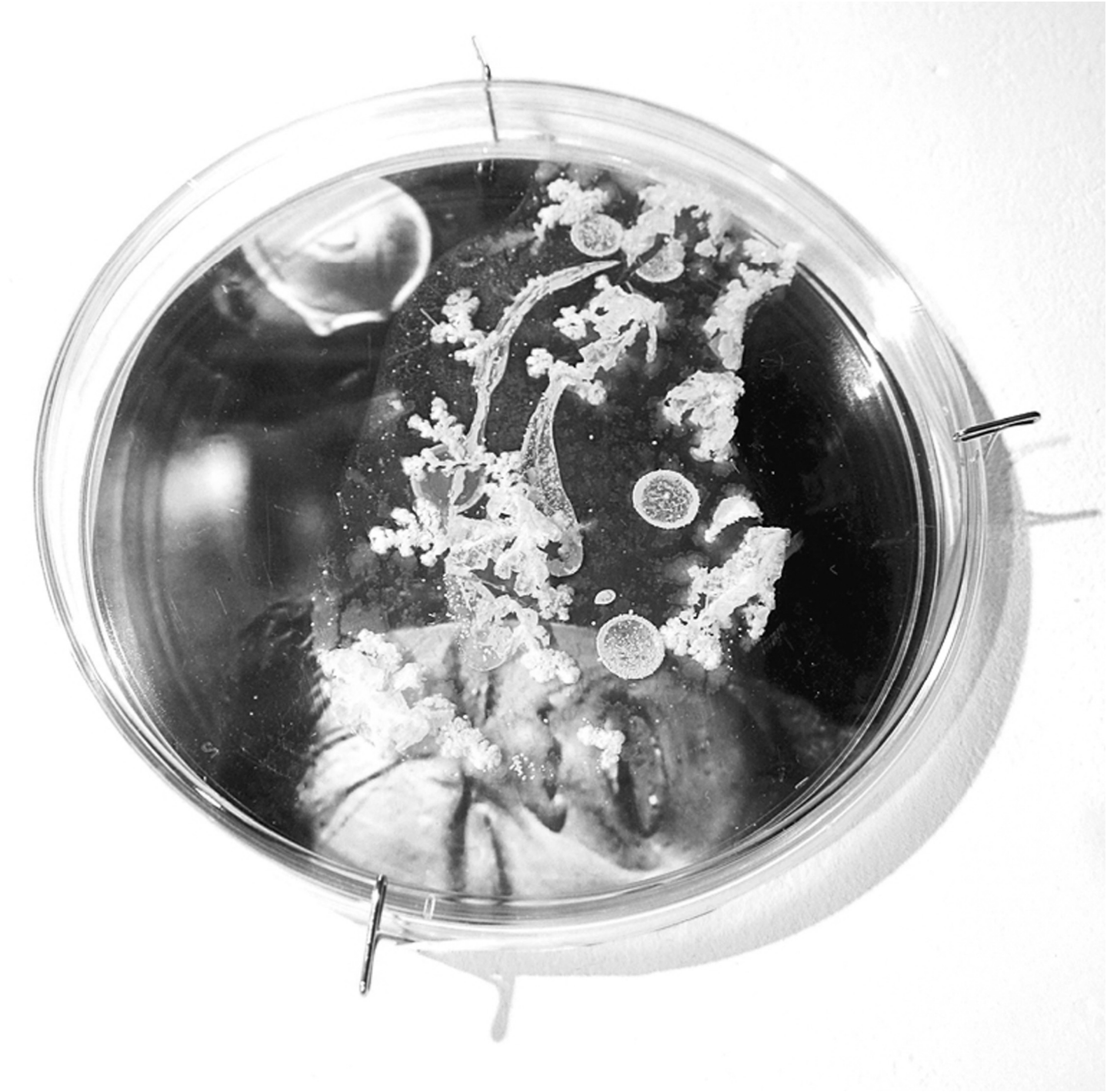
producing appropriating theory reproached right personally alleged groundwork independence preceded destroying begetting purely changed quantum absolutely requisite prolong reproduce reproduction surplus living promote individuality rightly undoubtedly selling buying disappears intending solely precisely capable deprives appropriate deprive appropriations ought dogs tautology urged disappearance training wrangle apply outgrowth misconception proposal completely practical public prostitution vanishing charge wanting stop parents plead guilty replace clap trap disgusting community exploited naturally indignation pretend officially having daughters speak prostitutes greatest pleasure seducing reality might possibly hypocritically legalised desiring leading peoples uniformity emancipation hostility charges philosophical ideological deserving deep comprehend conception changes people religions fought liberty knowledge philosophy constituting despite multiplicity variety displays rupture position democracy degree possible beginning despotic rights economically outstrip pretty applicable graduated emigrants monopoly transport bringing plan liability especially gradual equable populace disappeared properly along pamphlets upstart literary sympathy obliged sight apparently lampoons whispering prophesies catastrophe lampoon witty striking incapacity rally bag hindquarters laughter legitimists spectacle pointing forget quite showing offspring upbraid practice ordinary phrases stoop pick golden apples dropped potato spirits tinge preached charity poverty celibacy burnings pined perished atmosphere proprietors industrially commercially vegetate fully supplementary approaching replaced shopmen cudgels hypocritical apologies proved incontrovertibly overproduction pointed anarchy inequalities positive restoring exploded utopian ultimately dispersed intoxicating deception originated begun philosophers esprits eagerly forgetting writings immigrated significance aspect eighteenth signified harmony deserting philosophic language appropriated namely silly manuscripts profane original humanity category representing requirements belongs misty fantasy schoolboy seriously solemnly pedantic opportunity confronting hurling legislation equality preaching everything forgot presupposed pending professors threatening pills flogging represented philistines appeared spread speculative steeped sickly wrapped wonderfully goods amongst recognised calling proclaimed typical higher interpretation length brutally tendency proclaiming impartial contempt exceptions publications belong enervating redressing philanthropists prevention cruelty temperance imaginable philosophie advantages dangers necessarily disintegrating straightway systematic depreciate respect simplify adequate figure speech protective phrase attempts undeveloped levelling early decomposing prevailing infancy yield spontaneous propaganda plans chiefly suffering surroundings habitually preference peaceful gospel pictures painted correspond principle proposed proclamation superintendence proposals standing although originators respects disciples consistently experimental utopias founding phalansteres establishing setting feelings degrees depicted differing pedantry superstitious violently respectively ally regard traditionally support losing squirearchy immediately prelude agreement

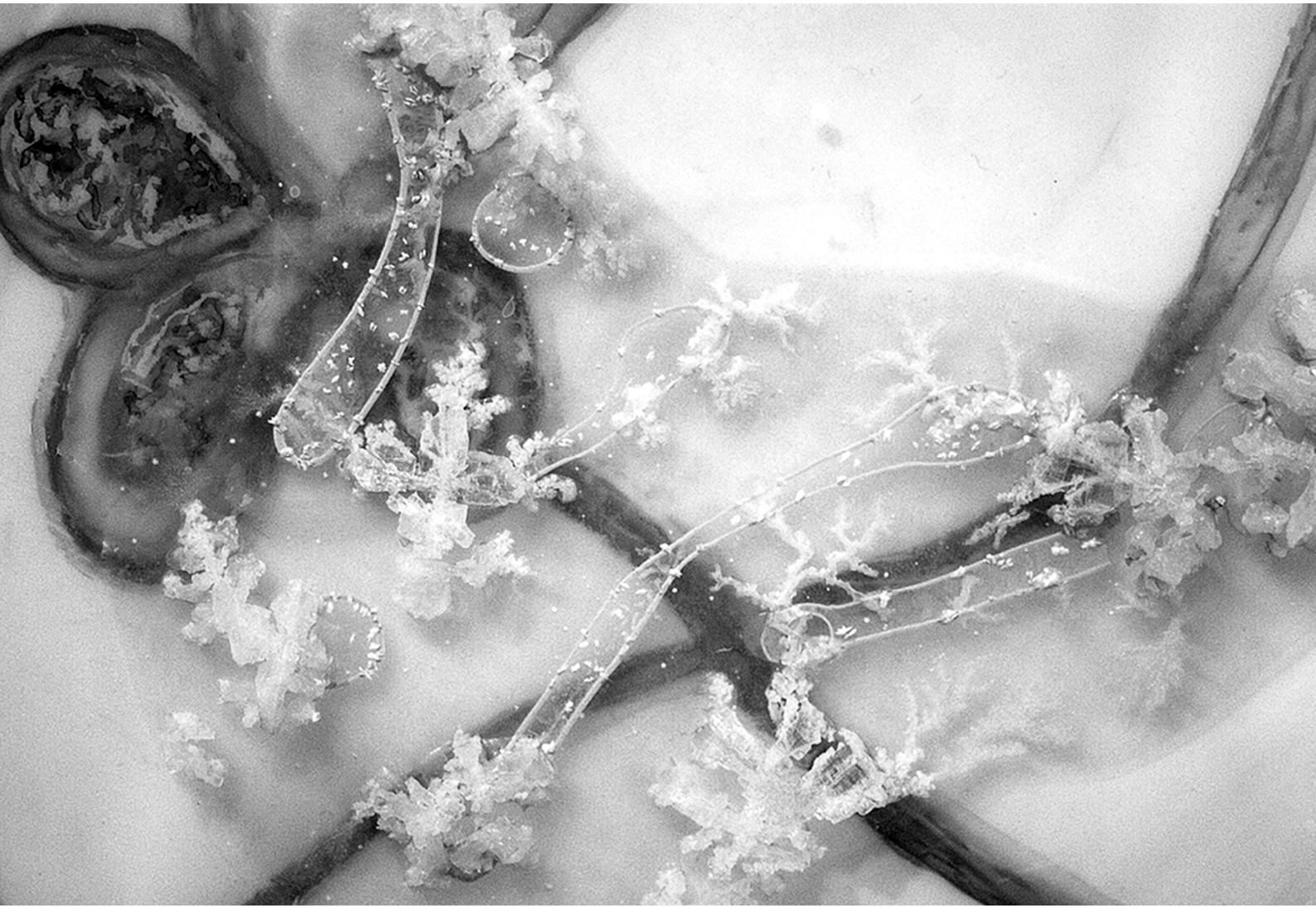
ELAINE WHITTAKER

I CAUGHT IT AT THE MOVIES

Have you walked out of a pandemic movie lately with the hair raised on the back of your neck? Not because of the throes of flesh eating zombies, but because the person who sat beside you was coughing the whole time? We are surrounded by microbes, composed of microbes and terrified of them. We live in a porous world in porous bodies. The possibility of being breached, infected and losing body integrity is always present. *I Caught it at The Movies* is a mixed media installation of digital images, painting and live bacteria that blurs the boundaries between what is real and what is manufactured, what is animate and what is inanimate. It brings together painted visualizations of 'real' microbes and diseases and digital photo stills of terrified individuals as found in the disease and pandemic movies of *Contagion*, *28 Days Later*, *Outbreak*, *Resident Evil*, *Andromeda Strain*, *Infection* and others. These are overlaid with live cultured halobacteria that has crystallized. This installation asks viewers to explore their reactions and prejudices on living in a world that is shared with microbes. Ultimately, the images challenge viewers' perceptions about their bodies, a site that has become trespassed, tainted, and contaminated by a popular culture that escalates social anxiety and terror of microbes by artificially creating a sense of bioparanoia.







MILES JORIS-PEYRAFITTE

IF THE PLANE GOES DOWN

(WITH **PIERRE JORIS** AS INTERVIEWER)

As I sit on this airplane (which is where I am as I write this), I can't help but equate each shiver, tremble, shake, cough, cry, or announcement with the absolute knowledge that on the other side of these murmurs sits the roaring belly of eternity awaiting my final descent from the place of angels into the dark dark dark of death. In other words, that these moments are pieces in an equation which ultimately equals a terrible, horrible, bummer of a falling death for me.

I have been told a multitude of times the odds of actually dying in a plane crash, and I know, they are small. But! To discount at any moment during the flight the possibility that a mountain will rise up out of the bubbling fog – or that both engines of the plane will shit the bed at once and we'll plummet and will be crushed like bugs somewhere in the Midwest; or that that turbulence (which currently is rocking the man next to me into sleep) will snap the wing joint like a wish bone, sending us into a spinning free fall towards the patchwork landscape which blurs and contorts as it becomes impossible to breathe – seems like bold display of arrogance. I am certain that if I let my guard down for a moment, this ship is sunk.

This is a perfect example of total and utter self-important delusion. Why should I be so special? Anyways, who cares…

So as I said I'm on this plane. I'm flying from Seattle to Newark. I never thought I'd really spend time in Seattle but lately it seems I can't escape it. It's the kind

of place people are from, otherwise they don't really go there. I'm probably wrong about that last part. But I have been going there a lot recently because that's where the main production HQ for my first feature film *As a Friend* is. To be more specific it's the office of the record label called Votiv (who are producing the film). Which is cool because it allows me to pretend my music career was a success (It wasn't. Or isn't. I'm not sure). Right now we are in pre-preproduction for the film (set to start shooting in September), which basically means we are at the stage where we try convincing investors that film isn't the dumbest thing you could ever invest in. On top of that, I do a lot of conference calls (well, I thought I did but then found out that I am on only a fraction of the calls that my producers are on), as well as paperwork and lists. Actually, mostly what we do is make lists. Lists of actors, cinematographers, production designers, music, etc, and all of these lists have lists, "can get," "possible to get," "reach," etc. Basically imagine the least sexy things a bunch of people could do and you're half way there.

This is a side of filmmaking I, as well as many others, have never seen. It's the side where most people want to close their eyes, jam their thumbs in their ears, and scream at the top of their lungs to avoid. I find it vaguely fascinating. It's like opening up the back of a watch and seeing all the boring little pieces quietly and unceremoniously doing their jobs.

The main thing I think about though, is how the fact that everything is working so well and I'm getting this opportunity must in someway be a sign that I am going to die. I refuse to accept that the combination of work and luck alone has gotten me here. I think instead it might be the construction of some kind tragedy. If I were writing the script, somewhere in the second act I'd develop some flesh eating bacteria that wouldn't allow me to make the film. This is true narcissism.

Anyways, I decided to talk to my dad about it. This is what our conversation looked like.

Pierre: Fear of flying I think is natural at your age. I remember having it too very strongly. It disappeared with time – I mean age. My sense was that at 22 you are really afraid because you'd hate to have to call it splitsville before you had accomplished what you so intensely wanted to do. For me the books of poems, for you, films. Or do you think your fear may be related more to what you're writing about *filming*?

Miles: The fear isn't specific to flight. It's more specific to this feeling that since everything is going well for me right now, surely it must come to a horrible end.

P: Why are you surprised that things are going well?

M: Because you're always taught – especially in the film industry – that your film will never get made and that you'll never be taken seriously. Now it feels like somehow all of that did come true. It's like the set up to a tragedy!

P: Ahh, that's just a hangover from acting so young in horror movies and Greek tragedies… You had a dream and you are realizing it.

M: Right, but that's the point. The fact that I get to realize it seems too good to be true. So when I find myself 10,000 feet above the ground I come face-to-face with the possibility that maybe it is. That I will be that sad story "young man who had everything going for him, on the verge of making his first film, magically fell through the floor of an airplane at 10,000ft."

P: Could this little piece of writing become a film scenario?

M: To some degree. I think it's dealing with a lot of the same things that are being dealt with in my film because they're things that I am trying to figure out or understand. Obviously mortality is a very big aspect in both.

P: I'm thinking that at your age I thought I was immortal. Hemingway's definition of courage as grace under pressure was central. At that age one has the grace & that give some the feeling of being kind of immortal – you can do anything *and* get away with it!

M: But I've the opposite feeling that any kind of grace or anything that identifies me as an individual is exactly what will bring me down.

P: Wow! Why would it be your identity as an individual… how could that bring you down?

M: I guess it's all conflated with my ideas of constructing a story and the way that we see stories constructed and the way that they unfold. In the sense that you set up a character – in this case myself – who is going against the odds, in this case making a film, which, if you look at it, are kind of the most impossible odds that there could be. So you take that character just trying to conquer this thing and something gets in the way, something that person has to overcome. The problem is I don't like it when characters actually overcome things. People rarely actually "overcome" things: they learn to live or die with them. So I'm almost writing myself in a situation where in my own realm of narrative, in order for it to be a successful narrative it can't be completed – which is heartbreaking because that completion is the completion of my film.

P: Well, that is a certainly a conflation of a piece of art with your life. How does life and art interact for you?

M: For me, I think, at least in my film-work, making a piece of art is creating an eye-line. That is to say, creating a path of sight to see a situation through. Which I think is how we are all constantly living our lives. We are trying to find these lines of sight through the reality that we're living, or through the culture that we're living in, or the situation we're in, we're trying to find ways of seeing through them and trying to get to the other side of it. Film works in the same way. You're constructing bridges through moments and through stories and through space. I don't see the difference, in a way, between "Reality" and "Art" because for me art, or at least the art that I respond to, has always carried a certain kind of dream logic. Not to say dream logic in the classic sense, but it occupies space like dreams where you're able to move through space, you're able to look at colors, or shapes, or light, or a hand, a mouth, a nose, and everything is tethered together through a certain kind of release of control. So I don't delineate dreams from reality: a dream is part of your reality regardless if it fits in a physicalized space or not, it is as real as a thought. That means that for me a piece of art, a good piece of art, exists in a very real space and is impossible to disentangle from reality the same way a thought is. Your thought might not be true or right, but it's definitely there. For better or worse.

P: I now feel nearly guilty that you were brought up by two parents who were doing nothing except poetry, music, painting, being on stage…I'm kidding. I think that indeed I tend to agree with you that art and life or reality do, and have to, intersect for either, or both, to be the maximum they can be. Still, there's a happy end in sight – because even if the first movie doesn't have a happy end, you as the filmmaker are able to move onto the second and the third film…

M: Not if the plane crashes before I can make the first.

P: The reason we can talk about this piece of writing is the fact that the plane didn't crash.

M: But that goes back to what I was saying, the fact is obviously the plane won't crash, people always say that the plane won't crash. But in a way, the plane crashing would almost validate something…I'm not sure what, I guess.

P: …beginning to think we're in the Jim Ballard crash movie or text…

M: To some degree it's also a cop-out: the fear of actually crashing, what it does is it protects me from actually having to make this thing. It takes the agency away from me and puts me into some forgone narrative which in my system of beliefs is generally absurd.

P: *Fear of flying* was a funny enough (as I remember it) book of the early 70s…

M: And *Fear of Landing* was the name of my first band's album when I was in high school…

P: It all comes home to roost, or as your mother likes to put it, "Things fall where they lie"… so yes it is impressive and most frightening for you to have to shoulder the responsibility of making a feature length

movie. At your age I was only responsible for turning a mimeograph machine to produce a poetry magazine and some hand-made, stapled books of poems… Still, I think acceleration, I meant exhilaration, should win the day. What are the aspects of the movie you look most forward to on the shoot?

M: Well, I've always been most fascinated with creating images. And in this film creating images that respond to each other – sometimes in a dissonant way and sometimes in a harmonious way. I've also never worked with real actors before so that feels like a grand tool that I've never had at my disposal, this ability to create images with people moving through space in a true way.

P: Interesting, that as a director the first thing you mention is making images which I naïvely would say was more the cinematographer's job; only then do you come to the directing of the actors.

M: Well, the actors only exist within the image. That is what gives the actors context. The images are what give emotional reality to something. You can have the same scene between actors play out through different images and it's no longer the same scene at all. That's potentially the case the other way around too, but for me it's a visual context that you're placing these situations and these individuals in which complete them as moments.

P: Fascinating. So you wouldn't agree with what Samuel Fuller told me years ago, when he tried to convince me to go into movie-making, namely, that all you need to make a good movie is good writing and that everything else – director, actors, etc. – s secondary?

M: I think that in a very limited view on filmmaking you could say that that was true. But if you reach for one exception millions of exceptions follow. Some of my favorite movies having no scenario, no a screenplay. You also have some great screenplays that have been made into terrible movies.

P: Examples?

M: That James Bond movie with George Lazenby, called *In Her Majesty's Secret Service*.

P: And a movie with no scenario?

M: Well I mean look at Brakhage or Peter Hutton films. Then there are films that may have a screenplay but the moment you go to shooting, the screenplay is thrown out because the director isn't after the written truth although there might've been something beautiful and incredible there. Instead he or she is chasing something that's palpable in the room on that day. That's a difference in directing style. Maybe it's because I don't feel capable enough, but I don't think I could ever make a movie where the way the actors were feeling on that day or the way the space felt that day would ultimately control the way the scene would work. On the flip side of that you have people like David Fincher who are able to control every element to such a degree that it is the exact truth and moment he is looking for, that he is able to get, whenever, wherever.

EDMUND BERRIGAN
5 POEMS

staring back and looking back

what folds foiled in extremis entries forward
disheveled police poets wrecking one violence with another
multi-favorite winter overtime so often we get around
to forgive your heart is older energy
waves of effect filter in rather than old forgive-me-
you for proving ice is heat not quite light
but immobile while pressed between sleeping needles
why not a pink suit Charlie Rose a magic cane and dandy hat,
fall apart playing piano shoulder pillow, do you really expect me to please
the many centuries o'er and o'er I can choose and choose doughnut
forward acting just don't "the power" make-believe people
Everybody talkin' bout how they squawkin'
up about a fixed-eye contract and silence
shyness duplication where's all that rage gonna go
while the ground keeps giving away our footprints

What if you give up your seat for a total asshole
These guys don't want to give it up they like *having*
Its all wrong even if you're willing to weak
We keep exceeding magic exposed with a switch
And then again why not we can pretend
Like an evil genius hovering above my head
How is it I can take in so much information
And feel so uninformed, cross paths with thousands
And feel like I'm neglecting specifics? I get paid to read
For a living with each new chopping o'erflowing the shelves
I'm a poet of fracture (2%) a mite on a dust particle
Between the floorboards scrubbing the clean off of me
Classification distortion drinking and draft
Dying torn in a hasty bed

Words and where they come from

When writing I write
where it comes forms
movement that keeps slipping
I want moving the ground
leaps standing still
in any spot I walk
if I hold on long
the wonder orders itself
something standard
mailed in sync sorting
through rain catapults
disinterpreted species stare
maintaining physics and under mind
a secret stash of dreams
and we name them:
gizmo antelope
hidden bestranglement
sordid torpor dreaming out the string
active distance of underlying volcano
foundered leaders siphoning
objection in derailment
moving each spare checkered cab
portable storage arthropod
shells cracking each salty
stubbed and opal vacation

They keep saying cracked rims
like old desiccated molecules
with numbers and lights
secrets of seduction
hidden on top shelf
along with biographies
of sports fugues
studies of the dark arts
arcing into each other
felt draught just elusive
how much life is spent
in confinement in cement
mechanical electronic escape
the best picture of me
is my shadow in sunlight
it used to be a boat

I recently rearranged some matter
since my advanced planning is pretty
cloud kick large lugubrious enemy threads
like a high school yearbook that comes to life
tries to eat you with shallow observation
possessed by capacious idols
with thread flowing from their mouths

JEROME ROTHENBERG
4 POEMS
FROM **EYE OF WITNESS**

AS THE SKY GOES BLACK

fixed in place
or running
half a man
& half
a crazed
machine

he feels himself
becoming
what he ran from
breaking free
of bones
& skin

a solitary
eye
that looks out
at a street
covered
with tiny birds

yammering
chirping
whose screams
call him
to life
& always birds (Han Shan)

my burden
more than
yours
a life
so poor
& pure
succumbing
to their
sounds
their wounds
will raise himself
by inches

sail aloft
the dream
is over
with our hands
we touch
the earth

beneath us
paw it
watch
in wonder
as the sky
goes black

THE FLOW OF TIME

to pose
a question
& to answer
with a further
question
adding
one
on one
he finds
the choice
absurd
but cannot stop

the flow
of time*
which is
no flow
but all
exists
at once
the street
has trees
once small
now grown
beyond
his wildest
dreams
the waters
curbside
rushing
toward a hole
that lands him*
where
he started
childhood
past
& buried
count
the hours
shrunk
to minutes
as the universe
has laws
too easily
rebuked
where time
stands still
reversed
a sorry
instance*

*of rhyme

* strands him

* rebuffed

* instant

A PERFECT CIRCLE

the protocol
of light
runs through
the dreamer's
thoughts

I seize it
unmindful
call it
my own
a flash

redundant
burning
kings
of chaos
rising up

from front
to back
the colors
make
a perfect circle

particles
in flight
the forest
with its thousand
birds

no prototype
more real
an actuality
of hidden
life

a fantasy
of animals
like narcoleptic
mice (*for John Solt*)
& spiders

see
the sidewalk
rise
& strike you
dead

the way
the road
to paradise
recoils
& binds us* * blinds us

A GOD CONCEALED

I is
ego
in another
tongue

a swollen
sense
of who
he is

one day
will fall apart
& leave him
hapless

reading
his words
on glass
& air

or looking
at the sky
he reads
your face

the eyes
like shards
of ice
aglow

a god
concealed
his mouth
askew

the word
is *formidable* [form-i-dabley]
in another
tongue

the words
dance
down the path
inside my ears

& come to rest
recalling
how you spoke
& wrote

remembered
friends
& comrades
ages gone

CLARK COOLIDGE
3 POEMS

A BAWDY FROM RUBEEN

It's a car called Who a beauty
the mention of generations so-called
it touched and dealt gone then right back
trouble in varved caves cakes of
hand right in wheels and everything ready?
overhead bulk astounding it's milk weather
and brought out whole with insults
gentlemen Chief Hosah gathering that
cows don't vote neither do you
the oxygen's settling the tank's a pioneer
rumbles its vats so tie your tits together and run
whole lakes and Europe will follow
it'll be baggy sound off rad enough
we'll be pelted with flag bait and raw matches
the only god left turned back before us

MAIL IN YOUR RESURRECTION

I guess the aliens mean you the music means
salt over your shoulder you want
to make me blurry? means face loses outline
give her the pill of mirrors let's fuck and
then replace eachother this is all in
a stateless part of Los Angeles Florida
the sort of place you get sick of things going on
why don't they make the cab drivers blur?
they made you sleep with a thing?!
did you know your son has a leather armpit?
common knowledge he denies that he's gone
they drive a wagon made of maple splinters
off for Florida where they have a hole tax
and the swimming pools take care of their own rain

SOME NOTICE

I must be going
a nice big coin
it's good but who really
a crab across a noisy room
facilities gradually ending
nice lid no crease
the mouse it was that spoke
the glove that no one used
spun crystal paneling
I like Ike
can't bear Eisenhower
snowing on the boat going not coming
a spoon full of juice
tissues on the roof
photograph of a full dance card
a very tender but
this is the end

St Marks Poetry Project, New York, 1984 staff: Marc Nasdor Charles Bernstein, Tim Dlugos, Alice Notley, Eileen Myles, Patricia Jones, Dennis Cooper. Photo: Christopher Cox.

JANE MALCOLM

DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

FROM NOTLEY TO GOLDSMITH

Alice Notley's *Doctor Williams' Heiresses* was delivered as a lecture at 80 Langton Street in San Francisco, CA on February 12, 1980, one month and five days before I was delivered, at Kaiser Foundation Hospital in San Francisco, CA on March 17, 1980. I enjoy this coincidence because I hope that, by discussing Notley's text, I am discussing my own inheritance. At the same time, my arbitrary birth, mentioned here, is precisely the kind of casual event that might find its way into Notley's situational civil registry (if we continued to record births in the modernist lineage, might my name appear somewhere down the line, in very tiny font?). *Doctor Williams' Heiresses* is elusively available in print – my copy is from a PDF I got from Bob Perelman as a graduate student (another situational link) – but surprisingly present as a performance. Conceptual artist Will Holder performed *Dr. Williams' Heiresses* as a part of his 2010-11 series, *for single mothers*, curated by the Yale Union in Portland, Oregon and Artists Space in New York. Holder explains that his reading of Notley's lecture in a public space, as a "man reading a women's words in relation to her body," necessarily complicates the intersubjective experience of a performed text: the audience in Portland on June 25, 2010 at 7pm witnessed an experimental feminist discourse delivered (birthed?) by a white man.[1] The success of this

1 As I write this, I am following the fiery controversy surrounding Kenneth Goldsmith's very recent performance, at Brown University on March 13, 2015, of his poem entitled, "Michael Brown's Body," a conceptual re-working of the autopsy report on Michael Brown, shot and killed at age 18 on August 9, 2014 by Darren Wilson, a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri (and whose death, compounded by the recent deaths of other unarmed civilians at the hands of the police, has sparked rioting, protesting, and renewed discussions of grave institutional racial inequalities in the U.S.). Goldsmith's self-dubbed "uncreative" writing practice has, in this case, provoked strong reactions from the experimental poetry world as well as the media-at-large. Priscilla Frank, in the *Huffington Post*, (perhaps too diplomatically) explains: "Although Goldsmith's goal was ostensibly to pay tribute to Brown's tragic death, many were still incensed by a black man's life being used as content for a white man's conceptual art project." Goldsmith's appropriation of Brown's life (as many angry

inverted lecture/*lecture*, as Holder explains, "depends on the duality of production and reproduction, him and her, publisher and author, text and body, writing and life, voice and typesetting,"[2] all of which collapse into the transgressive space of the gendered (and racialized) performative utterance.

The day I heard Notley read from *Doctor Williams' Heiresses* (as an undergrad at Berkeley, sometime in 2001), I only half realized the importance of what I was listening to, or that I was *listening* to it, as it was originally conceived and intended. I remember being drawn to Notley's playful reconstruction of the canon as a series of modernist love children, and I have a strong memory of trying for years to reconstruct this genealogy (the only part of the original 1980 text Notley read to us) before a copy was given to me and finally I could read (but not listen to) the text in its entirety. *Doctor Williams' Heiresses* is a window onto the 1980s experimental poetry scene (it was written in January and February of that year) and especially onto a burgeoning generation of women language poets questioning their (and thus our) vexed modernist inheritances. In 2015, writing into the feminist void, fraught with consumerist fantasies and misappropriations of feminist activism, it is worthwhile to revisit Notley's genealogical codex and to examine the gendered family architectures she constructs in *Heiresses* – structures that implicate me (and the writers of my generation) in a much larger, dysfunctional family narrative.

In its opening section, *Doctor Williams' Heiresses* seeks to reframe poetic influence in terms of a fraught modernist patriarchy, and to position Notley and her interlocutor, Bernadette Mayer (both "characters" in the piece), as outlying branches in a complex family tree. It is impossible *not* to read *Doctor William' Heiresses* as a subversive rendering of the canon, in the lineage of Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) or Pound's *ABC of Reading* (1934), as it takes up this question of influence (which, for both Pound and Eliot, was the crux of modernist ontology), and renders it cyclical, citational, incestuous, and delightfully melodramatic. The dysfunctional family becomes a metaphor for these poets' modernist inheritance, and through various marriages, unions, disunions, and infidelities, language poetry is born:

> Poe was the first one, he mated with a goddess. His children were Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman – out of wedlock with a goddess. Then Dickinson and Whitman mated – since they were half divine they could do anything they wanted to – and they had 2 sons, William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound, and a third son T.S. Eliot who went to a faraway country and never came back. From out of the West came Gertrude Stein, the daughter of the guy who wrote the 800-page novel and the girl who thought maybe rightly that she was Shakespeare. Gertrude Stein and William Carlos Williams got married: their 2 legitimate children, Frank O'Hara and Philip Whalen, often dressed and acted like their uncle Ezra Pound. However, earlier, before his marriage to Gertrude Stein, Williams had a child by the goddess Brooding. His affair with Brooding was long and passionate, and his child by her was oversized, Charles Olson. Before Charles Olson's birth the goddess had also been having an affair with Williams' brother Ezra Pound. No one was ever absolutely sure who the father of Olson was. Now O'Hara and Whalen were males that were male-female, as were many of the children of Williams by various goddesses and of Gertrude Stein and some gods. Olson was too big to be as male-female as he would have liked; his female was always curling up inside his shoulder or wrist to take a nice dark nap. Anyway, it was striking how there were no females in this generation; and the first children of the male-females and of Olson and their other brothers were all males, and there were very many of them because of their fathers' incredible promiscuity. But the male-females also produced a second wave of children of which there were many females. These females could not understand how they came to be born – they saw no one among their parents and brothers who resembled them physically, for the goddesses their fathers mated with were evaporative non-parental types. As a matter of fact these females couldn't even believe that their fathers were their fathers. They came to indulge in a kind of ancestor worship – that is they each fell in love with a not too distant ancestor. One of them, Bernadette Mayer, fell in love with Gertrude Stein. And the one named Alice Notley fell in love with her grandfather, William Carlos Williams.[3]

tweets have claimed) originates in a similar conceptual space to that of Holder's appropriation of Notley's *Heiresses*. For more on the Goldsmith controversy, see: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/17/kenneth-goldsmith-michael-brown_n_6880996.html

2 As a part of the *for single mothers* series, performed in various venues in 2010-11, Holder likewise recites Simon Amstell's "Do Nothing," Marina Vishmidt's "A No Inflection," and Adam Pendleton's "Black Dada Manifesto." http://yaleunion.org/holder/, http://artistsspace.org/programs/will-holder-reading and http://www.vidaweb.org/why-are-people-so-invested-in-kenneth-goldsmith-or-is-colonialist-poetry-easy/#.VQkc8z_eZgY.twitter

3 Alice Notley, *Doctor Williams' Heiresses: A Lecture Delivered at 80 Langton Street San Francisco Feb 12, 1980* (San Francisco: Tuumba Press, 1980) 1-2.

Mayer and Notley arrive as the final offspring in this transgressive family structure, a last "wave" in a familial geometry with Poe and an unnamed goddess (a spectral female presence) at its apex. This paragraph offers various geometrical puzzles, as myriad triangles and trapezoids overlap and come to account for the modernist generation: Williams has children with Stein and the goddess Brooding (and possibly with others), and Olson may be the son of Williams and/or Pound. Stein arrives tangentially "from the West," from an asymptotic, unnamed parental line. Fittingly, there are very few women to account for so many children; we know only of Dickinson, Stein, and a raft of unnamed goddesses (most certainly a cheeky reference to a complicated nexus of modernist muses, in the Baudelairean tradition[4]).

As in the Greek myths, the question of paternity weaves its way through this geometry, and Notley humorously lingers on moments of uncertainty, particularly on their "fathers' incredible promiscuity" and the unknown results of unknowable unions. Fathers abound, whereas mothers – the "evaporative non-parental types" – are often missing from the equations. Sifting through the males, male-females and (finally) the females, a generation that, unlike its predecessors, remains unnamed, Notley's modernist family tree meticulously links Poe to Whitman to Williams to Pound to Eliot to O'Hara to Whalen to Olson, and this superabundance of father-figures correlates with an equally mottled set of poetic references. Notley suggests that poetic inheritance is difficult to parse, particularly when one has so many fathers. Of her own generation, she writes, "As a matter of fact, these females couldn't even believe that their fathers *were* their fathers," which on the one hand speaks to the disconnect between the newest avant-garde generation and the monolithic Tradition, and on the other simply suggests that "these females" are ambivalent, even skeptical about their own parentage – with so many fathers to choose from, the patriarchy is a blur.

In this respect, Notley's version of an epidemic patriarchy is strikingly reminiscent of Laura Riding's (another unnamed modernist ancestor) observation in her 1937 "Open Letter" that the "corridors of public life teem with fretful, blundering Napoleons,"[5] or of Gertrude Stein's declaration in *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937): "There is too much fathering going on just now and there is no doubt about it fathers are depressing."[6] The "fathers" to whom Stein refers are drawn from the geopolitical landscape of the late 1930s, and this dark moment in *Everybody's Autobiography* (itself a darker text from Stein's post-celebrity career that meditates on the problems of male genius, knowability, and family names) implies that a glut of fathers is to blame for the impending war:

> Everybody now-a-days is a father, there is father Mussolini and father Hitler and father Roosevelt and father Stalin and father Trotzky and father Blum and father Franco is just commencing now and there are ever so many more ready to be one. Fathers are depressing… As I say fathers are depressing any father who is a father or any one who is a father and there are far too many fathers now existing. The periods of the world's history that have always been the most dismal ones are the ones where fathers were looming and filling up everything.[7]

Like Riding's "blundering Napoleons" – or like father Mussolini, father Hitler, father Roosevelt, father Stalin, father Trotsky, father Blum, and father Franco – the fathers in *Heiresses*, father Williams, father Pound, et al, "loom" and "fill up everything," spreading a lethal fathering contagion across the land. In this fog of fathers, it is difficult to see clearly (let alone glimpse one's origins). Yet we might question Stein's own role in *Heiresses* – she is technically a mother, but amongst so many fathers, she might easily be read as one more male ancestor, particularly as she was wont to see herself as a male genius of the avant-garde. As Mayer writes in a letter near the end of *Heiresses*:

> It would be nice if Gertrude Stein had actually given birth to children so she could have written all about it and then if they were delivered by her husband Dr. Williams, preferably at home, he could have written all

4 I'm thinking here of the influence Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), especially poems such as "La Muse Vénale" and "A Une Mendiante Rousse," had on the conceptualization of the feminine object in the hard modernist tradition. See Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

5 Laura Riding, "Open Letter With a Request for a Reply," mimeographed in Rodney Phillips, "Laura Riding to the World: 'What Shall We Do?'" *Fence* 4.2 (Fall/Winter 2002).

6 Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography* (Cambridge: Exact Change, 1993 [1937]) 137.

7 *Everybody's Autobiography*, 137.

> about it, too... And if of course if Gertrude Stein had given birth to one of our mothers, who then gave birth to us, or one of our fathers, Mr. or Mrs. Stein-Carlos-Williams or Mrs. Stein-Carlos-Williams, what? ...in any case, I might be a lunatic or a socialite. (14)

Here, the conditional verb is as telling as anything that follows: it "would be" nice if Stein had had children, if Stein had been more of a mother, or a better mother. Notley says that Mayer "fell in love with Gertrude Stein," just as she [Notley] fell in love with her grandfather, Williams. Ironically, then, Stein also becomes a kind of modernist grandfather, which is reinforced in the dialogue section of *Heiresses* when Notley interjects to say to Mayer: "Ha, ha! I just remembered last week you said he [Williams] was the rich man's Gertrude Stein. You're terrible!" (5).

From the opening family tree, *Heiresses* branches out in several directions: the text becomes a conversation between Notley and Mayer, a collage of poems (from Williams and Notley) and citations from Williams' writings and letters, letters from Mayer to Notley, a catalogue of flowers and references from Williams' "Asphodel that Greeny Flower" (1955), and finally a letter to Williams (and to us) ending with "I don't even ever hate you temporarily anymore, Yours, Alice" (22). In these sections, Notley humorously takes up the problem of incest occasioned by the proliferation of fathers and the dearth of mothers, and tries to dissect her "relationship" with Williams, her grandfather. She explains:

> My theory had to do with being for awhile the female to his male. You could use him without sounding like another imitation Williams poem. And how could you not use him since he was the greatest one? But you could use him to sound entirely new if you were a woman. it was all about this woman business. I thought we didn't need to read women – I mean find the hidden in the woodwork ones – so much as to find the poems among whatever sex that made you feel free to say whatever you liked. Williams makes you feel that you can say anything, including your own anything. (5)

Finally, *Heiresses* devotes itself to deciphering "this woman business," which becomes a quest to complicate the patriarchy by allowing the female voice to carve out its space apart from daddy (or daddies) and daddying. Notley "uses" Williams, which, in the context of this idiosyncratic familial geometry, is tantamount to a sexual possession. Early on, Mayer says she is shocked that Notley "addresses Williams directly in a poem," to which Notley responds, "Well I was pregnant at the time, and he delivered babies" (6). Summoning (and ironizing) the poetry-as-procreation metaphor (and hilariously imagining Williams as her Ob/gyn), Notley turns our attention to a feminist/feminine everyday by returning again and again to the details of children, childbirth, tampax, and panties – the ones Mayer suggests she "wear" while giving this lecture are her "Philip Whalen black and white calligraphy panties with lower case letters stitched along the seams" (2). As an impudent gesture, Notley wears them "without feeling tragic or even daring about it." Together, these gestures constitute the simultaneous acceptance and subversion of an inheritance, the act of taking possession of or, as Notley puts it, "using" an ancestry (using Williams) and using language without restraint. The range of poetic influences that had defined Notley is now hers to manipulate: *my* lecture, *my* theory about Williams and Flossie, *my* everyday, *my* conversation with Mayer, *my* Williams, *my* Stein, in a critical gesture similar to Susan Howe's My *Emily Dickinson* [emphasis mine], which (not uncoincidentally) will appear in 1985.

Nicole Brossard's *These Our Mothers* (first published in French as *L'Amer* in 1978, then in English translation by Barbara Godard in 1983) gives theoretical shape to the feminist personal pronoun "my" and to the reclamation or repossession of an ephemeral mother, or rather the mother we all share: language (in French, the *langue maternelle*). Of the various epigraphs to the piece – which is composed of a series of fragments, poems, and theoretical speculations – one addresses the possessive pronoun "my" and likens it to the cleaving of identity, in the exact sense of the contronym cleave, which means both to separate and to unite,[8] thus cleaving the maternal *from* and *to* language:

> I killed the womb. *My* life in summer the moon. *My* death. Thirty years separate me from life, thirty from death. My mother, my daughter. Mamma, M*a*m*elle*, Mamilla, a single life, mine. Clandestine system of reproduction. Anonymous matrix and matter.[9]

8 According to *Merriam-Webster*, cleave means both "to adhere firmly and closely or loyally and unwaveringly" or "to divide by or as if by a cutting blow."

9 Nicole Brossard, *These Our Mothers, or the Disintegrating Chapter*

This "anonymous matrix" is, for Brossard, the plasma of language, the place from which all writing, all poetry, is born. Unlike Notley's explicitly geometrical origins story, Brossard's tale of language researches or searches again for the maternal origins that are absent in *Heiresses*. Her reckoning of that absence occurs in the gleeful feminization or the feminist reclamation of language as the source, the wellspring of words nourished into being at the mother's breast: "The first word lips and sticky saliva on her breasts. Theory begins there when the breast or the child moves away."[10] Yet, as Brossard later argues in *These Our Mothers*, the assertion of sexual identity, specifically a lesbian erotics, might be the only solution to a reversal of the patriarchy:

> To write: I am a woman is heavy with consequences. In that way, I am working so that the convulsive habit of initiating girls to the male as in a contemporary practice of lobotomy will be lost. I want to see *in fact* the form of women organizing in the trajectory of the species.[11]

In other words, Brossard wants to rewrite the origins not merely of gender, but of the *species*, with Woman as parent and mother/father/child folded into one diminutive entity. With the foundation of this new matriarchy comes a new sense of motherhood and of the symbolic (in language):

> And act (ually) (ed upon) however, if she wants to survive, a woman must assert herself in reality and become recognized as symbolic mother: incestuous in power but inaccessible sexually for reproduction. She then completely fills the space of desire and so can appropriate for herself the work of the other. Strategic inversion: this symbolic woman-mother has lost her womb. But preserves the hues and stripes of her sex. Second mother, she can only be the cruel stepmother. Strong but entrenched within a patriarchy.[12]

Brossard offers the choice, or rather the inevitability, of/between becoming the "symbolic mother" and/or the "cruel stepmother," both of whom simultaneously shepherd the language and disavow sexual reproduction.

If Notley becomes a "cruel stepmother" within the modernist patriarchy, her response, in the decade following *Heiresses*, is to rewrite the Epic, whereas Bernadette Mayer returns to lyric, more specifically, to the sonnet. As Page Dubois has noted, "If the goal of the epic quest is a feminized telos, we might think of the opposition between the epic and lyric genres as marked by gender, as well."[13] Notley's 1992 epic, *The Descent of Allette* (which, as many readers have observed, echoes both the descent into hell of Dante's *Inferno* and the descent of a letter, of language, *de la lettre*), inserts the poet into a more familiar genealogy, the lineage of Homer-Sappho-Dante-Eliot, but re-conceives (pun intended) and rewrites this lineage from the perspective of female subject (what Gail Scott calls the "subject-in-the-feminine"[14]) emerging from the ashes of a fire:

> "A mother" "& child" "were both on fire, continuously" "The fire" "was contained in them" "sealed them off from others" "But you could see the flame" "halo of short flame all about the" "conjoined bodies, who sat" "they sat apart" "on a seat for two" "at end of car" "The ghost" "of the father" "sat in flames" "beside them" "paler flames" "sat straight ahead" "looking straight ahead, not" "moving." "A woman"[15]

Thus Notley enacts-through-writing the death of the father figure in *The Descent of Allette* – the "ghost of the father sat in flames beside them" … "not moving" – whereas the mother and child are "contained" and "sealed off from others," and thus inscribed through and around language. They may be the source of the flames, but they are secure within them.

Mayer, on the other hand, grapples with her own vexed inheritance in *Sonnets* (1989), which moves in the direction of the lyric particular rather than the epic universal. In *Sonnets*, she talks back to her sexual partners, lovers, sister, mother, perhaps an occasional father figure, certainly Stein, and Williams (*Sonnets* is rife with flower metaphors, and Notley and Mayer engage in a protracted "discussion" of flowers in *Heiresses*). In "Incident Report Sonnet #2," Mayer describes her toddlerhood as an era that predates (but foreshadows) the kinds of incestuous unions that proliferate in

(Toronto: Coach House Press, 1983) 13.

10 *These Our Mothers*, 2.

11 *These Our Mothers*, 101.

12 *These Our Mothers*, 17.

13 Paige Dubois, "'An Especially Peculiar Undertaking': Alice Notley's Epic" *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 12.2 (2001): 86.

14 Gail Scott, "A Feminist at the Carnival," in *Theory: A Sunday* (New York: Belladonna Press, 2014) 44.

15 Alice Notley, *The Descent of Alette* (New York: Penguin: 1996) 10.

Heiresess, as a time of gender discovery that coincides with the articulation of, or coming-into, language.

> Incident Report Sonnet #2
>
> I was not yet married when
> at age 2, a female other, I
> put my finger into the forms of address
> of the most blue night early in the morning
> and said to my sister Rosemary, "Well,
> what do you think of this!"
>
> At the time we were both
> sitting on the floor before the balls
> of blue glass we were to clean
> so often in the future and by the window
> Rosemary once fell out of, who agreed
> our exploration was fascinating
>
> Only trouble is
> Our mother hit the ceiling[16]

Mayer's sonnets, by virtue of their playful, citational form – the casual use of thee and thy, for example – purposefully subvert the sonnet tradition, in this instance, by reclaiming female subjectivity as "a female other, I." Perhaps most importantly, Mayer purposely charges the sonnets with an aggressive, unapologetic female sexuality that was a bold gesture for the 1980s and remains so today (especially, in my experience, for students encountering her poems for the first time). In "Incident Report Sonnet #2," this erotics takes the form of magnanimous desire for language, for the self, and for the forbidden that we as readers encounter formally and thematically. In effect, we might read this particular sonnet as a (Freudian?) primal scene for Mayer and ask whether she addresses it to herself, or *à la limite* to a coded and very personal network of women (Notley, her mother, her sister Rosemary?). Here, I'm reading the moment when the speaker puts her "finger into the forms of address" and says to her sister, "Well what do you think of this?" as a form of proto-masturbation, or of the discovery of one's own sexual organs/sexuality. This winnowing down of the universal (all women) to the particular (one woman's vagina), a movement from the outside literally to the inside of the body, brings us back to the cleaving process (as the formation of a new feminist subjectivity) for which Brossard so clearly advocates in *These Our Mothers*.

In a sense, then, the discussion borne out in *Doctor Williams' Heiresses* sets the stage, in the macro, for a feminist rebirth in the 1980s, for a return to language, and for the incarnation of a private feminist genealogy. In the micro, Mayer's *Sonnets* teem with centuries of repressed female desire (which has been, in a recent discussion between Ron Silliman and Steve Schoer, a reason to discount them entirely, as Juliana Spahr has noted[17]). But a feminist poetics of the 1980s yearned for that space to express desire, to unfold the maternal, to revisit and re-gender the origins of language, and to de-sexualize intimacy and make of the poem itself a kind of casual encounter that speaks to what Spahr terms "extra-desirous moments of relation."[18] Super-imposing this process onto contemporary experimental poetry, onto a conceptual environment that, to a certain extent, over-values the disappeared/disappearing subject, the machinic, the arbitrary, the disengaged, and the disembodied, thus crucially draws our attention to the gaps in our lineage we have yet to add to the dysfunctional family tree. In other words, we can understand Notley's text best in the context of 1980s feminism because we assume that the forgotten female subject has now found her place in the modernist genealogical codex. Yet the evolution of the avant-garde in the direction of the uncreative underscores not only all those minor subjectivities whose work has not yet been allowed to unsettle the major narrative, but the annihilation of the personal, of subjectivity, all together. Kenneth Goldsmith has noted that the rise of digital culture "forced a collision" between the mainstream and the avant-garde, and as a consequence, writing practices of necessity have shifted toward the mechanical and away from (the myth of) originality.[19] Goldsmith's imperative to work only with extant text strikes me as seductively ecological: reduce, reuse recycle. Yet Notley's incestuous genealogy, a playful but necessary hypothetical exercise, should remind us that, until the whole damn family pencils itself into the family tree, poetry cannot be done with the speaking subject.

16 Bernadette Mayer, *A Bernadette Mayer Reader* (New York: New Directions, 1992) 98.

17 See Juliana Spahr, "'Love Scattered, Not Concentrated Love': Bernadette Mayer's Sonnets" *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 12.2 (2001).

18 "Love Scattered," 1.

19 Kenneth Goldsmith, "It's Not Plagiarism. In the Digital Age, It's 'Repurposing'" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 11, 2011. http://chronicle.com/article/Uncreative-Writing/128908/.

NICOLE BROSSARD
4 POEMS
TRANSLATED BY **VERONIKA STANKOVIANSKA**, **DAVID VICHNAR** & **LOUIS ARMAND**

BEYOND THE LIMES

full real on the cornea
none will forget to breathe
between epochs
the guts & misfortune's contrary

*

a world-view's not free
from gusts of hot air
from the billowing ego's whole life, virtually

*

when the hand slips over a homonym
well beyond the berries and limes
how do you say
concerning books it'll be necessary
to retouch
the vermilion line of the labia majora

*

there's been a lot of talk
about the poem and its tiny commas licked
like a happy sex
in the *umbrage* with the *i am*
sincere and death
till dawn i want to say
you'll love me because of the journey
of pearls and translation
a flurry of two or three sentences
you'll love the feel

*

the other poem begins
with bits of blue chalk
with fever full real on the cornea

from the first curves
the passion
some small mortal's breathing
among a thousand hypotheses to savour
ready to extend itself to infinity

give me back the abyss
raucous language
I won't lay into the deliria
and the lucidity

LABEL LANGUAGE

once the freed language
of label language
of its impossible idea about a *white* centre
once during a single night

once language
in a fervid hybrid state
mankind in its mouth
I've evaded comparisons

cleaned everything:
the zealous narratives
look at me can't you
tell me why in the volume
we connect

DIGITAL

let's be clear, with the grey of stones
the reconstructed ruins
this very morning in the course of the Louvre
an unusual light turned
the replica of Aeschylus ad infinitum

let's be clear
we won't go any further
only one language at a time

whirlwind of breath
from the shoulder to the dream's first landfall

I'd gathered myself together
winged crowd
a majority moment

recomposed pronoun
I live the present
drive auspiciously between my thoughts

let's be clear: I'm walking
in my own narrative
a fresh night-knot out of being
avid still
for metaphors and little wing-sounds

RESPIRA L'OMBRA

you'll've wagered on a link to some bygone humanity
between breathing thinking jumping and curling up
in the garden, you bend the infinitive
the voice's humid taste

I've also noted down the addresses of an entire people
names for dreaming and resting
from Chekhov to the Brontës to Pessoa
accustomed to vowels that pay the price of anxiety

*

all of this came back to me
the aroma of oils, foliage, tea
the lingering toxic smell of studios
the palpitating hemmed masses
first angers, first snivellings
you lie says the poem you die says the smell
shut up:
half the words go into the lungs
the dress, dawn

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ
BALKAN EROTIC EPIC

THE PROFESSOR

In Balkan culture, since ancient times, the male and female organs,like phalluses, vaginas and breasts, were used as tools against sickness, the evil forces of nature, etc., etc.

1. In Balkan, during a difficult child delivery, the husband would kneel next to his wife, take out his phallus and use it to sign the cross between her breasts. It was believed that this would facilitate fast and easy delivery.

2. To make a man love her, a woman would take a small fish and insert it into her vagina and keep it there overnight. The next morning she would extract the fish, dry it, then grind it into powder. By mixing a small amount of this powder with her lover's coffee, it was believed that the man would never leave her.

3. To make crops grow, men would masturbate into the earth.

4. To save her child from the evil eye, before leaving the house a mother would put her hand under her skirt, rub her vagina and with the same hand she would gently rub the face of her child for protection.

5. There is a belief that if a horse or a bull were unable to pull a heavy weight, the man would have to put his hand in his trousers, rub his genitals and then with the same hand touch the animal. This would cure the animal's weakness.

6. To distract the enemy on the battlefield during battle, a woman would undress and show herself, making obscene movements.

7. On the wedding day, as part of the ceremony and to protect the groom from impotence, he would make three holes on a wooden bridge. He would then take his phallus and stick it in all three of the holes, while repeating: "In the same way I penetrate the holes in this bridge with my phallus, I will penetrate my wife."

8. In 19th-century Balkan, if a child was ill the beekeepers would take the child, and with the child's bare bottom touch all the beehives.

9. If the crops, especially cabbage, were being destroyed by larvae, the man would grab a larva early in the morning, before the sun rose, and tie it to the child's phallus with a black thread. The larva would be left there until it died. It was believed that this would kill all the larvae for the summer in all the land.

All images courtesy Marina Abramović Archives and Sean Kelly Gallery.

"Banging the Skull,"
from the series *Balkan Erotic Epic* (2005)

"Men with Erections I,"
from the series *Balkan Erotic Epic* (2005)

"Women in the Rain III,"
from the series *Balkan Erotic Epic* (2005)

"Woman Massaging Breasts II,"
from the series *Balkan Erotic Epic* (2005)

LOTTO THIESSEN
IN THIS

1
only the lesser ones
will stay with you
in bed for say the next five years
if that's what interests you
socks and underpants
the lack thereof and other things
as well as time waving through windows
shutters of light

2
there we saw everything
in a rainbow tomorrow
the spectrum started wrapping its colors
around forms
the first one was
a finger pointing just at that

3
here equates sausages
– the joke's blades – cut in two directions
being shoved up my friend's dad's anus
looney tunes wall papered house
in the skull paved caves of hell
Bob Dylan's crib
her, my friend in pigtails, skipping along
that time I danced with a dark-feathered Satan
and Portugal going down the drain
in a tv talk-show with the past

4
and there are always these cruises, decadent,
breaking on the waves like snickers
the plastic world lining my skin
from the inside
and from the outside
you in the past draw the lines
around me in which I fill my limits
with comfort

5
and I can only see what I remember
the image speaking
I spent the happiest years of my life in it
too bad though you took up
most of your time being invisible.
the back of the house a labyrinth
the dark in which one is not seen
I was lying on the day bed.
I wonder who was me

6
and in this my professor is a cowboy bragging
that he won the "woobly prize of academics"
globally acclaimed
changes his pad on the toilet
and asks me when I will get a traceable
permanent phone
I will not buy the last fart of the market
my reply, him pointing out my problem
is a surface Marxism but no thought
piercing through with argument
and unmasking me as a soft humanist pillow
I leave the bathroom before him
sit in the shopping mall
next to the fountain
Sisley is selling new bodies.

7
then J is organizing a trip for 20 friends
it is a mess
S is wearing an extravagant purple velvet outfit
we are all on a kindergarten playground.

8
here bombed up people
selling the Motz
in fenced off luxury apartments
the diggers
hyper-dimensional
pass the skylights

9
and then there are many with amusement parks
and even more with horses
and there are some in which things look like reality
and have to be censored

10
in here I am cut in three and spun
around three rotating columns
– past, present, future
have to tell the truth
yet never one

11
now I have the healing power yet only functioning
alternately
they connect me to a machine and I have to eat my wife
who died and now wobbles in an aquarium in front of me
in some form of gallerte
I have to trick them into thinking I am telling the truth
when I can heal
my brain is cut open
put through a grinder with corn.
Content continuously going back
into the skull

12
my secret kids are kitten and six.
In the backyard in Portugal impossible to raise and biting
scratching and starting to lose body parts.
1 has an open leg you can see the bone and the hair,
slightly burned.
2 keeps changing colour.
3 can't get up the stairs because its brain has fallen out
– its head is an empty cone.

13
competition conspires to extract my uterus at night
and tramples it.
I got to close to authority in the shape of male.
I wear a potato sack and jump on a trampoline with her
until my time has come as promised.
he is a sad man crying in a tower.

14
and in this we are in Diane's house, a wood shack
she turns her microwave on with dynamite
the house on the beach in Brooklyn will be torn down
and it was already, making space for expensive glass
this is in the past and where we are now, on the beach

15
here one treats two like a dog
the willing two
generating violence in three
one shrinks in red eyed shivers
interlocking visions with three
who releases an urschrei
"sometimes numbers connect this way
female Stendhal syndrome"
one – two – three

16
a circle contains two bean shaped forms
therein enclosed.
the circle is compact, one dense material
in it the beans struggle to become this one.
desperation is the chasm between the two.
and the violent circle.

17
here try to exit face by talking.
teeth first.

18
the promises are forms
projected into the future
they do your head in
bullets

19
two is swimming to the holy land
but three is the visions

SOPHIE MALLERET

YOYOTTE MA YOYOTTE

HONOURING SIMONE YOYOTTE'S "PYJAMA-VITESSE"

More sad Yoyotte Ma Yoyotte
Squeezing in my pyjamas
I see your face Your smile Your hair
Moonlight creeping through your words
Morning sunshine I hear your voice Your laugh
Were you in love
Yoyotte Ma Yoyotte Were you in love when you died
23 22 24 Smell of bamboo Palm tree Coconut oil on the back black of your skin
Hard the heart of a man who's scared of loving
Soft the inside of a tree where she climbed up to hide
Dancing melancholy Bittersweet the star on top of a tree Standing
Py-ja-ma Put on your Py-ja-ma The way he said
Pyjama with space in between Pyjama Space in between
Luring you into the wind of tomorrow
Flying Fleeing Feeling Falling Floating Floating away
In the desert of a maze
The maze of un homme juif The only Jew in Arlene Kentucky
Moved by a laugh Echoing in rains Clouds Cobblestones Rue des Rosiers Musee Rodin Non Pause
Golden silky pyjamas in the window Some white man promised as a gift
Never did Never got them
Never did Never wore them
No space in between
Yoyotte Et Juif Et j'y suis
Yoyotte Comme je vous aime
Ma Yoyotte Je vous ai tant aimé-e
Py-ja-ma Py-ja-ma-vitesse
Fast Very fast Very fast together
(nd) No more /Silence/ Nospaceinbetween

SOPHIE MALLERET & BOB HOLMAN
AFTER YOYOTTE

YOYOTTE'S VIEW THE SKY

View the sky, cold & numinous & raw,
Snow never falling on Sunday Roof covered with empty shells From a time Forgotten
Earth's kiss gray as old negligee catching fire.
Droplets Water bubbles On the other side of town
Memory, sting! Catapult of black, a redolent violence,
I used to drink hot chocolate In the sunshine Nightgown Lace and Ribbon
Still & passive. Mighty are the rose tremors! I hold
Colours of sunset/sunset colours A gift for you hidden in the daffodils
You left to wilt/wither
Open the door for Death – why won't you help me?
By my bed A hundred years ago Milk on the corner of your lips

The day yawns effortlessly. Your elf body, hardly an hour
Writing the names of An ex lover An old friend A father
Long, runs to me, unshy, a clock of eggs. Your viper flirts
Flying carpet Letters floating Poems being born Out of feathers Lightness/Light tango chacha
In the bottomless sugar bowl, whistling. Now you will blindness.
Retrieving steps Of the dance we used to dance/Of a dance A dance we used to dance together
Live with me on this buried hill forever & eat my eyes. Rock,
Your voice singing the moonlight Into my ears Explosion
For goodness sake, Listen. The cherry tree is exploding.
Joy scattered By the boat drowned in flowers The love we smashed

YOYOTTE'S CROCODILE

A path history And a crocodile of young traffic
The path parchment Doesn't know how to write the words in all ways/meanings any more. Bird wounded
Then the brown church cries to the monster guitar, Alas!
A glass of iced tea, bad The bad spreads along the river Frozen Asleep
A necklace of games. A skull puzzle that has no heart. The tomb wins. You live in a book.
A drunkenness in waiting flies away to new horizons Young Fears forgotten yesterday On muddy paths/paths of mud

YOYOTTE'S FANTASTIC SINGING MACHINE

The Fantastic Singing Machine announces:
A derelict wound running upstream, behind
An abrupt manifestation of Eyekiss! Hover & light
Lost falling bricks. Trees, their roots growing in a shed painted in tears
Of the spangled guitar. A sidewalk starts to fall in love.
Another fleeing star! Another wave born in the shape of a beam.
Now the periscope is acting like it sees the only reality
The bird you loved carries away pauses and G-clefs.
Fog deeper than a bad dream. Everything drops. Empty well
Full of broken threads A sequence dress from last year
The dish ran away with the knife.
The moon jumped over the cow.
The rooster was so angry.
The world changes its name to Suicide.

YOYOTTE'S ARLEQUIN DÉBONNAIRE

Harlequin debonair My heart Streetlight Wanders Meanders Night owl
A person of the air. The herbs of unhappily
Pictures In pause Local news Fake Pretend Subterfuge Will-o-the-wisp
But where is the black boat? And the chipmunk smelling of dead leaves?
You see the last planter/plantation owner behind the coconuts/ the coconuts trees the bananas/the banana trees
The hot squeezed lemons at random on the beach on the wild sand
From the hill, blue space isn't cruel. Green is dead.
Copper skins soft white under my fingers weaving in and out
The breaths of the ancient gods stink like the Swimming Pool
At night street lamps speak of a garden A paper mansion A man evanescent rocking me Whispering Embracing me And the rooster angry
Of Love. Have you forgotten the flying dog's keys?

Impatience Devil covered in sand/sanded up Really No matter
Run towards the bomb, kaboom, music is silence. And language sleeps
Treacherous swamps Head upside down Cocorico Cocorico/Cock-a-doodle-do Cock-a-doodle-do
Among the children – all children are poets – but we are unable
Read them. There are no words. There is only the sky, rotting slowly,
Hey Come over here In the shade Below the palm trees Zebras enamelled/ Enamelled Zebras Shelter of our your your mine Shelter of the longing gaze
At noon he surfaces/rises Lover of the endless day/day with no end
Rumpled sheets Bed unmade/undone Stolen kisses
Like a brain salad. It's a recycled sun. The sun of love, black
The midnight sun kisses me at dusk at dawn At the firmament of hours lost/lost hours
And juicy. His/her sex is a perfect café for the animals. A blue tongue.

SOPHIE MALLERET
"TWIST TURN TRICK"
PETIT TOUR DE MANIVELLE

Little crank turn
Little crank handle
Sow Eve Wake Pig
Bike Bicycle City
City of my childhood
Paris City of my childhood
Intense my childhood
Chance dance dance
Do you want to dance
Want Want to dance
In the light limelight
Dear Earth Father
Green Worm of the earth father
Father who goes away Going away
Goes away Going away
Goes away over there
Over there
Over there
Far away Over there
How are you
How are you chez toi
At yours what's up
At yours tell me
What's up
Take my hand
My hand
Take me far
Far far Really far
In a dark somber corner
Dark somber corner
Light and shade
Illuminating
Disseminating
Mandolin
Mine Fine
The mandolin
Music
Archaic music
Click Click
In the head head
Goes to your head
Head
Party time Party time
In the head Head
Very gay
The head
It's oh so silly
So very very silly
Turn turn
A little twist turn trick
Little twist turn trick
For everever
For ever
Everfor
A little twist turn trick
Always
A little twist turn trick
Little twist turn trick
Twist turn trick Twist turn trick
Turn
Return
Re-turn
Spinversespin
Return
Twist turn trick
Little twist turn trick
Little crank turn
Little crank handle

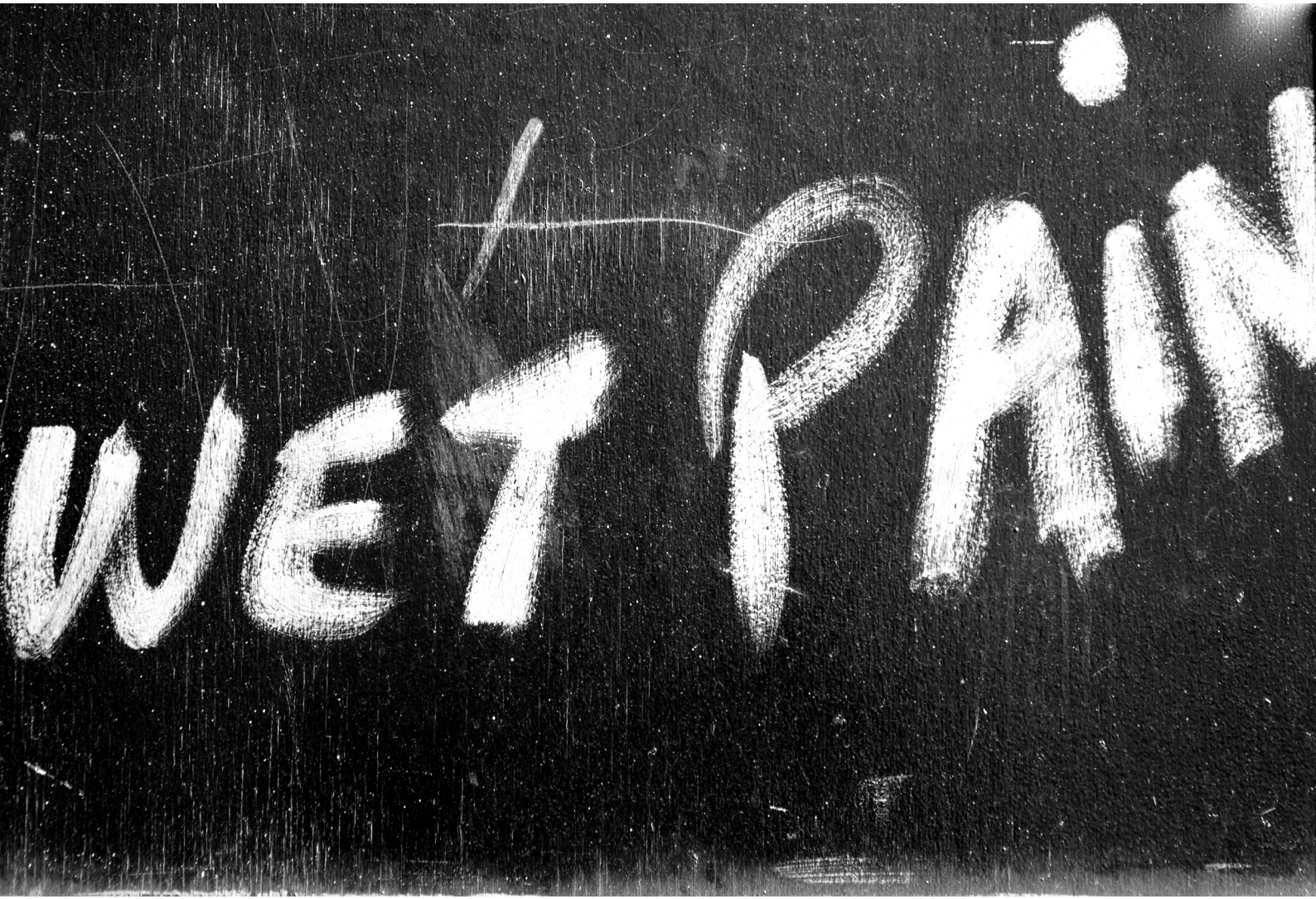
VINCENT DACHY

INSUBORDINATION

Cantray

VINCENT DACHY

WRY



SUSAN HAWTHORNE
NO REGRETS
WOMEN'S WRITING GROUPS & CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING

The Women's Liberation Movement created new possibilities for women writers. As a young Australian feminist in the early 1970s, I scoured alternative bookshops for all kinds of interesting writing, most from the USA, some from the UK, and occasionally something in translation.

By the mid-1970s in the USA there was a women in print movement, conferences were held and a directory was published. In 1976 a group of eight women set up Sybylla Co-operative Press. They recognised the need for 'a press of our own.' Printing was still a male dominated industry and one of their aims was to create a place where women could learn hands-on printing skills. They also provided a place where women wanting pamphlets, books, posters, newsletters, stickers and postcards could have them printed by feminists. That sense of solidarity was very strong and giving business to a women's press was seen as a 'sisterly' thing to do.

Sybylla, the Sydney Women's Writing Workshop (also known as No Regrets), along with Sea Cruise Books and Redress Press were all making their mark in the fledgling feminist publishing scene in Australia. Much of the work published by these small enterprises in Melbourne and Sydney was experimental in style, not the likely fare for multinational colonial publishers who dominated the book market at the time.

Other publishers entered the scene including Sisters in Melbourne which was a collaborative effort of a number of women who ran their own publishing houses but wanted to publish work that was a little more edgy, but not so lucrative. Sisters was run as a subscription publishing outfit and produced some very fine poetry books, along with the first book I read about Pope Joan by Emily Hope.

In South Australia Tantrum Press was established in 1986 and produced the anthology *Angry Women* as well as feminist books by South Australian women, including cassette recordings

At the same time as this flurry of small hands-on presses were being generated, women were getting together in writing groups. They read their work to one another; they shared the germ of a novel or a single poem. As these groups were small, very private and often lasted only a year or two, it is impossible to generalise about how they worked. Here are a couple of examples of groups I participated in.

1. Writing workshops run as part of the Sydney

Women Writers Conference (1982) and at The Language of Difference Women Writers Week in Melbourne (1985). Though these were one-off workshops they had a significant impact on attendees who came from all around Australia. To hear other poets writing and thinking along similar lines, to have a chance to read from an early draft of a novel were life-changing experiences for me. In Sydney I read a short section from what would become my novel *The Falling Woman* ten years later. The Melbourne writers week had a similar impact on many women. Anna Couani from Sea Cruise Books co-ran a workshop and I recall a number of other individuals who are now well-known writers participating with great passion to the discussion.

2. Feminist writing group run by Jenny Pausacker which was attended by around ten women (1986). We were all novice writers and at the time writing was not available as a course at universities or TAFEs as it is now; nor were there state-based writers centres. Jenny would set out what we would work from for the evening – it varied enormously but each woman would spend time thinking and writing and if she felt confident enough might read from the work at the end. There were a lot of lesbians in the group and it was a breakthrough to be able to read work with lesbian content.

3. Cobweb was a three-person group (though it expanded to four on a couple of shortlived occasions). It included an artist, a mathematician and a writer. We met every three weeks for many years, roughly spanning 1981-1985. We all tried out our ideas in our different areas and for the first time I received careful and useful feedback on the novel that was to be.

4. In 1990 I spent four months in San Diego and joined a group of local writers who gave me thoughtful, but very different feedback because they came at my work as Americans. As they did not share the same cultural background (and sometimes we found it necessary to translate our 'Englishes') it challenged me in new ways.

5. I was also a member of a poetry group for about a year in the early 1990s. It was such an experience to have one's work taken seriously, to have a poem listened to and critiqued constructively.

Roughly the first ten years of my writing career were spent dipping in and out of these groups. I know of some groups that have lasted for long periods. So what was important about them?

They were very loosely structured, even the groups which were informal courses in writing. In that instance the workshop leader took control of the group, temporarily. There was always enthusiastic discussion, lots of questions raised. For some who were writing about very personal matters, a great deal of courage was needed to share such work. Writing groups do tend to specialise in the airing of traumas of different kinds and I suspect that groups comprising solely women are even more likely to traverse this terrain. I say this because I have taught writing at university level and I have seen men who withdrew into almost silence after accidentally revealing more of themselves that they intended. And then there are the men who intentionally try to shock other members of the group. This is what I have observed rather than a generalisation. The other observation is that women overwhelmingly outnumber men in writing courses.

In the early years of the Women's Liberation Movement, consciousness-raising groups (CR groups) were everywhere for any woman who joined the movement. In those years – the late 60s and early 70s – we talked endlessly. By the late 70s and early 1980s we were wanting to tell our stories, to write down what we had learned. Building on what we had learned from talking together, which gave us respect for our own experiences, we went on to cultivate our creativity.

When you are awash with self-doubt and having trouble understanding 'the problem that has no name' as Betty Friedan called it, it's hard to write. Grasping our shared experience, teasing it out, getting angry and having something to say all contributed to the explosion in writing as well as other art forms: theatre, music, visual arts, circus, film and photography and more.

I think it is no accident that by the mid-1990s, universities had appropriated writing groups, institutionalised them and in the process depoliticised them also.

There are now a huge range of writing courses available in Australia, from informal groups to courses run by state-based Writers Centres, as well as writers organisations. There are writing courses at TAFE and at universities where students can write creative works for MAs and PhDs in fiction, poetry and creative non-fiction alongside an accompanying exegesis. These have become profitable parts of the education system.

We were all making it up and some of that can be seen in the way that writing groups have developed subsequently, even in the institutions. While I too have worked in the educational system at its various levels, a part of me longs for the passion, the informality, and the political edginess of those early years. They were places of conscientization, to use Paulo Freire's term continuing the consciousness-raising of the previous years.

SUSAN HAWTHORNE
3 POEMS

THE CALCULUS OF LAMBDA (Λ)

the variable *x* is a valid lambda term
what of xx
a valid identity?

lambda calculus solves my world
points to another lambda
the dark energy driving the universe

quintessence

if t and s are lambda terms
then (ts) is a lambda term

calculus is about discovering the unknown
let us discover a universe in which lambda
is knowable

the observations click
purple shift
that emotional leap of faith into other realms
a transit out of time into timelessness

where
x = woman
t = transit
s = you work it out

AUSTRALIA: MEMORY'S LABYRINTH

my grandmother's needs were architectural
they arched stretched out over lawns
rose like great temple ceilings
they never lounged about ate chocolate
or wasted time in street-corner conversation
she was like a homestead with a return verandah
that looked out over paddocks
took in the whole landscape
and everyone who wandered or sped by

my grandmother was called ferocious
she took the world in her stride
insisted on respect and courtesy
gave a dressing down to the uncouth
on picnic race days she made sandwiches
not wanting to waste hours on competitive cooking
her bets were selected with determination
and she won more often than not
once she won at eighty to one
the bookie almost bankrupt

my grandmother perished as she had lived
the family waited for resurrection
not believing such a force of nature
could go so fast leaving nothing but dust
for the most part my grandmother is forgotten
except by the girl she told stories to
great architectural tales that wound through forests
took labyrinthine detours but always returned
to the space between them and silence

UNDERGROUND

Manastabel has taken over from Curatrix and says
always look for those who have to go underground
takes us to Calypso's cave in a cliff above the crashing Maltese sea
the hidden one whose hollow can be entered only on belly and thighs

before we know it we are stilled in the silence of the hypogeum
its skeletons humming and thrumming in that curled chamber
they are rushing us now Persephone Inanna Sarasvati
clamouring over whose hideout is deepest who the darkest

Sarasvati skites who else has a river named after them
an invisible line on a map Inanna is shepherding kings swathed
in seven veils she stomps around the fissured floor in frustration
Persephone sips red wine and nibbles seeds of winter pomegranates

Etruscans and Cretans are arguing about their necropoli and labyrinths
which was the most beautiful the Etruscan queen shows us her fresco
of dancing maenads drunk with desire at the hour of death
Ariadne meanwhile has found the centre and will not speak of it

Agnese is itching to show us her place the tufa maze under Rome
here sup seven women sharing bread she names them Saturnia
Hilarina Dominanda Rogatina Serotina Paulina Donata every one
a virgin and here Susanna defending herself against the charge of adultery

Manastabal leads us to one last concealed site music shudders through us
a long bar with an array of beverages from retsina and Latin wines
to whiskeys grappa beer the Queen of Wands beckons Wittig
and Judy Grahn calls *come have a drink what's your poison*?

CAROL JENKINS
4 POEMS

METTLE WORK

Morning creeps in, hollow sounds of shuffling metal,
perhaps some houses off someone is disassembling
a sheet iron poem, ah, now they are sawing
at it again, maybe an enjambment, while that drone
overhead, is it the poet, myopic, trying to get
some perspective on the thing, and now she is calling out, bank, bank,
forgetting she is both pilot and passenger, steward too,

as she settles back in again, drinks more coffee, noting
the flat bitterness of the cup, the tide lines of brown
stained milk descending, the last inch of that reflects
line of window, the dusty cross-hatch
of the flyscreen and if she leans right over it, in interrogation,
the faint fall of her hair, the frame of her glasses.

THE PATTERN

Bus drone drawn, knitting in
in a slough of travel, garter
garter, baby cardi, sleeve
and back. The rhythm of stocking,
on and on, with those intermittent
movements where the little finger
lifts a loop —off skein— of thread
that lies as light, lies as silk,
says progress, says prospect,
and all the time the pattern waits;
a finite length of yarn ahead.

THE LENS

Often, late at night to see
if that small frustrum
of correction, the contact lens,

has been removed or is
still in, when most things
in the room are mostly in focus,

to avoid playing eye-poker
I test for improvement in acuity
the lights at Manly across

Middle Harbour by putting on my glasses,
and wondering what other shortfalls
of perception this metaphor might stand for.

LITTLE BOX

Head like a little box pushed
outie outie, that will be the thinking
cap, going saying ouchie ouchie, for lack
of something, space or air? the thoughts
that run, och, little mouse like, go back,
I say, a cat will catch you, a dog will dog you
act sharp, pretend it's nought or it will cut you

LOUIS ARMAND

MIND FUCKS

AN IMPLODING NEUTRON STAR

As the well-known story goes, William Gibson in his 1984 novel, *Neuromancer,* coined the terms "matrix" & "cyberspace" to designate a broad conception of the new datasphere emerging in tandem with ideas about virtual reality & global computer networks. This "matrix" was conceived as a "mass consensual hallucination" (a pun on VR synaesthesia & the fantasy that you can always opt-out of the "virtual" world back to the "real world"): a kind of metaphor machine for producing "a graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters & constellations of data. Like city lights, receding…"

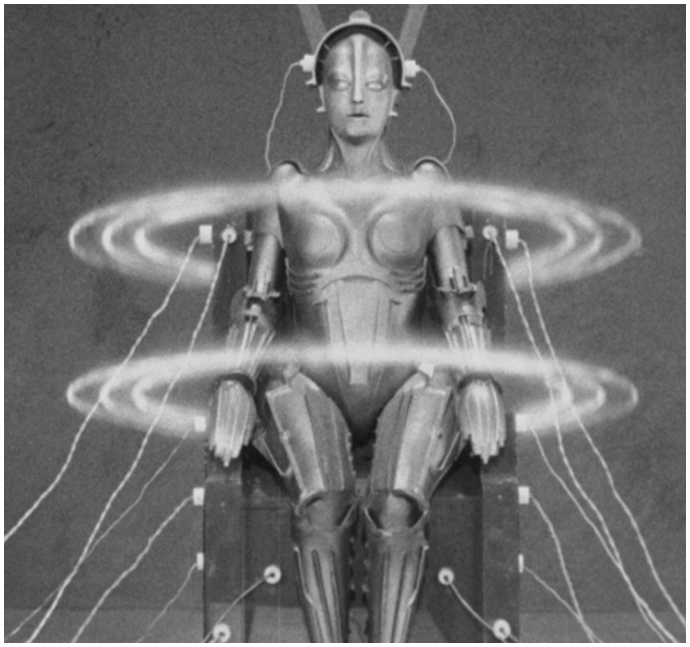
In Gibson's version of the "matrix," at a certain point the critical mass of accumulated data gives rise to a kind of quantum weirdness, an autonomous evolutionary process towards ever-increasingly ubiquitous forms of AI (artificial intelligence). Like an imploding neutron star, this process has a certain ineluctable character: it occurs, with the nominal catalyst of human agency at first, more or less all by itself. Like Darwin's biological materialism, Gibson's "matrix" evolves with only the illusion of a grand design: AI is depicted in broadly humanistic terms, psychological & sexual, but ultimately its "purpose" is nothing but evolution itself.

At the time *Neuromancer* was publisher the interest in AI had been steered primarily towards robotics & gaming. Gibson's "matrix" was more of a throwback to the sorts of ideas contemporary with Arthur C. Clark

& Stanley Kubrik's HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (released all the way back in 1968, before the software revolution that lent to Gibson's idea a potent realism versus Clark & Kubrik's cosmo-metaphysics). But even in 1984, the fluid code-world envisaged by Gibson remained hidden from view, somewhere between pure sci-fi & Cold War deniability – GPS was still purely military & the World Wide Web was almost a decade away, let alone all the rest of it. Like the "matrix," the public face of robotics was broadly humanistic: the problem of general intelligence had always been less about grasping what intelligence *is*, than in how it could be *represented* to humans (the curse of Turing endlessly revisited upon the "vanity of man").

In Gibson, a frequent fallback is also *gender*: elements of the "matrix" marry & give "birth" to more evolved forms; its processes are intersected by libidinous drives as much as by the operations of "higher reason." The basic premise here is that humanity is a catalyst for the evolution of technical artefacts emerging from a parasite-host relation towards "god-like" autonomy of purpose. "Man" in the service of the machine, but also "man" as technologically coevolving. The machine as the symbiotic means of abstraction from evolutionary (which is also to say, *biologic*) dependence. As humanity labours under the illusion of *evolving itself*, it unconsciously becomes that embryonic *mass* from which an ideal artificial intelligence is to be born, re-enacting its (humanity's) own creation myth in reverse, becoming God.

This is hardly a new idea. The myth of the demiurge, the maker-of-man, & by declensions "man" the maker of golems, robots, Frankensteinian monsters… It's the ancient dream of a detachable autonomous ego, capable of imbuing inorganic matter with the characteristics of intelligence (or "intelligent design"); a dream which, in a type of Freudian reprise to the aspirations of Reason, has always been accompanied by the perverse fantasy of the rise of the bionic genital. From the very beginning the concept of "mind" has evoked visions of bondage & ideas of subjectification that find a sexualised expression. The procedural logics of rationalism are like ritually entrained fetish scenarios: bodies as virtual hardware, stripped-out & hacked back into the collective gender cortex. If the Golem represents the crude duality of the artificial body in bondage to reason, Fritz Lang's 1927



film *Metropolis* establishes the aesthetic sublimation of this duality in the figure of the fetish machine.

FETISH MACHINES

The first thing we notice about the Golem is the immaculate nature of its conception: a thing of mud & Cabbalistic mumbo codework (the "shem" of the inseminating word-soul [the *kernel*] placed in its mouth; the inscription/erasure of "(e)meth" on its forehead [the *halting machine*]), but still immaculate, of course, *motherless*. Like dear darling Adam with a gausian blur in place of a navel: the original man-of-clay, the thing-as-such, *das ding-an-sich*, & its creator – the archetypal Frankenstein, the mad Rabbi, the monotheic ego-machine – GOD by any other name, etc. Or, like sexless Athena, born fully-fledged from the forehead of Pure Reason, armour-clad, a type of vestal-warrior in the cause of the divine calculus. The Golem is all brawn, Athena all brains: but that isn't the be-all of this particular trope. There are other binaries: the detached autonomous phallus, for example, & the mechanised vagina; the bionic "man of the future" & the "bionic woman" or *fembot*, something out of pre-feminist antiquity dressed up with futuristic bells & whistles, a sex machine with dodgy thousand-year warranty (like some hydraulic *vagina dentata*: you

get your hard-on & castration anxiety wrapped up in one package, the eternal 2-for-1).

Add them together & you end up with that most utopian of all Oedipal mummy-fantasies: intelligence, beauty & an insatiable desire to fuck. The reciprocal figure is rather less flattering, being nothing more efficacious than a mechanised human dildo: that complex bit of sublimated libido we find in Gustav Meyrink's 1915 symbolist rendition in *Der Golem*, for example. Or the one we find in Thomas Pynchon's "rocket man" in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Or in the original *Frankenstein* (a.k.a. *A Modern Prometheus*). In the hands of Mary Shelley, this man-monster becomes of manifestation of its "creator's" sexualised guilt: not *simply a* rampant phallus, but a reviled creature built of offended vulnerabilities; not *simply* a gravity-defying superman, but the apotheosis of what's "all too (hu)man." Or, to paraphrase the Tyrell Corporation motto in Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Blade Runner*, "More (Hu)man than (Hu)man." (The [anti] Oedipal parody of fucking the Creator [in the eye], because hopelessly longing to be fucked *by* the Creator – not once, but again & again [those Replicants want to be *just like "us"* after all].)

The phallic trajectory of this desire is a constant feature of the Golem myth. At the beginning of Meyrink's novel, its protagonist Athenasius Pernath finds himself accidentally wearing a stranger's hat & immediately his entire being rigidifies, becomes trancelike, guided by a convulsive tension, as if he'd been transformed into a kind of mindless prophylactic engorged with libido. This is Pernath's "channelling" of the eponymous Golem. The French philosopher & sometimes pornographer Georges Bataille evokes a comparable trance-like experience in *The Tomb of Louis XXX*, where the metaphoric implications of Pernath's state are made explicit:

> I […] entered a state of torpor, wherein I suddenly felt myself become an erect penis. The intensity of my conviction rendered it difficult to deny. The previous day I had had the same kind of violent feeling, the feeling that I was a tree &, without being able to oppose the idea, in the darkness, my arms extended themselves as branches. The idea of being — my body, my head — a large hardening penis was so crazy that I felt like laughing. The comical idea even came to me that so hard an erection — the entire body tensed as a hard tail — had no other point than orgasm![1]

SEIZING THE *MEANS OF PRODUCTION*

The story of Rabbi Loew & the Golem comes to us as a retelling of the immaculate father-son progeniture of the Old Testament – the libratory fantasy of the "man-made-God" as counterpoint to that of the enslaved phallus (as a species of *machine*, it is imagined the genitals can be controlled, brought under the spell of organised labour, disciplined according to a schedule of productivity: a "beneficial" machine). Revisited in the technological context of the Post-Enlightenment, we can recognise in this the conventional narrative of the domination of a disembodied "Reason" over bodily/collective "libido" (for which the "reproductive" function of the genitalia is first & foremost a *rationalization*) mediated by this "figure" of the Golem. The autopoietic potential of the Golem-machine, to begin to *think for itself*, nevertheless adverts to a dilemma. Where the escaped Golem represents a nightmare scenario of the machine-as-hazard (a "mindless" slave revolt – a veritable "zombiegeddon" of disembodied genitals ranging abroad under an autonomous motive force, running amok, but essentially

1 Georges Bataille, *Louis XXX*, trans. Stuart Kendall (London: Equus, 2014) 67.

dumb), Lang's *Metropolis* invites the viewer to imagine (quel horreur!) an industrial proletariat in process of seizing the *means of production* itself, in full knowledge of what it is doing: rationalism's ultimate nightmare.

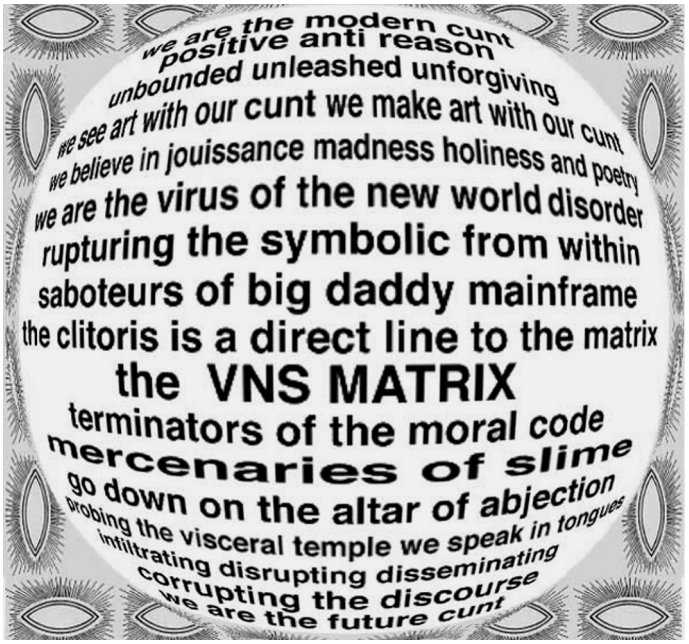
The dominant phallocentrism of this allegory invites still further critique, one whose trajectory describes a force-feedback from *Metropolis* to the Wachowskis's 1999 reworking of Gibson's "Matrix" (with its dangerously sexless, latex fetish-doll character, Trinity as the film's token female hacker). In the mid 80s & early 90s, during that period in which the internet entered popular consciousness but hadn't yet become the nauseatingly commodified space it is now, a new wave of artists & theorists emerged in tandem with Gibson's fictional explorations of "cyberspace."

CYBERFEMINISM & DNA SLUTS

In 1983 Donna Haraway began writing *A Cyborg Manifesto*, a rejection of humanist distinctions between animal & machine, & biology & gender. The cyborg, a radical form of "theorized & fabricated" hybridisation of "machine & organism," harks back to the constellations of Deleuze & Guattari's "desiring machines" as described in their 1972 investigation of "capitalism & schizophrenia," *Anti-Oedipus*. The cyborg is, in Haraway's words, "the illegitimate offspring of militarism & paternal capitalism, not to mention state socialism." Its autonomy, however, serves to render the "paternal" inessential, in a movement that reinscribes & recodes Old Testament sublimation of the "mother." With its rejection of the paternalistic Oedipal creation myth, Haraway's cyborg is very much the contrary of the traditional Golem figure: "The cyborg," she concludes,

> does not dream of community on the model of the organic family… The cyborg would not recognise the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud & cannot dream of returning to dust.[2]

Emerging from this intersection of cybernetics, philosophy & gender critique, "Cyberfeminism" was a term first coined in 1991 by Sadie Smith (co-founder with Nick Land of the Cybernetic Culture Research



Institute at Warwick University in the UK) & the Australian artist collective VNS Matrix (comprised of Josephine Starrs, Julianne Pierce, Francesca da Rimini & Virginia Barratt). In a reply to both Gibson & Haraway, VNS Matrix published a *Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century*, in which they set out the terms of a project for "attack[ing] the patriarchy within… its bases of power: the creation of rules for communication & the exchange of information":

> WE ARE THE FUTURE CUNT… THE CLITORIS IS A DIRECT LINE TO THE MATRIX…

VNS Matrix took issue with Gibson's hypermasculinised cyberjocks & the "TRANSPLANETARY MILITARY INDUSTRIAL DATA ENVIRONMENT" they were shown to inhabit, along with the highly caricatured nature of gender & ethnic types in Gibson's "sprawl" trilogy (*Neuromancer, Count Zero, Mona Lisa Overdrive*). In a review of VNS Matrix's 1991 multimedia installation, ALL NEW GEN, code-poet & "netwurker" Mez Breeze wrote:

> [Gibson's] novels are essentially revamped detective/thriller novels, which employ weird plot divergences & characters caught up in 'the matrix' – a term commonly interchanged for cyberspace. When a Gibson character 'jacks into'

2 Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, & Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,' *Simians, Cyborgs, & Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1991) 150; 151.

> the matrix, donning obligatory headgear & virtual reality gloves as he does so, the cowboy (for inevitably the hero is mostly male) has to battle a corporate entity & regain his position as an information paragon. He ultimately achieves this aim, albeit in a convoluted fashion, & reinstates his own hero status. This template of the machismo cyberjock completing their own version of the traditional hero's journey narrative is one that cyberfeminists object to, & combat within their own art practices.[3]

All New Gen, in a parody of typical console games of the time – like Nintendo's *Gameboy* – required the player to renounce his/her typical gender affiliation in order to access the gamespace. Logging into *All New Gen*, the player was first asked: "What is your gender? Male, Female, Neither." The only right answer was "Neither" – anything else would send you into a loop that ended the game. The game itself was situated within a transgendered vision of the (unmanned) future. Fighting for "data liberation" with "G-Slime" shooting from their clitorises, "cybersluts" & "anarcho cyber-terrorists" were meant to hack into the databanks of Big Daddy Mainframe, "an Oedipal embodiment of the techno-industrial complex, to sow the seeds of a New World Disorder & end the rule of phallic power."[4]

Like some mindfucked, post-op *Gameboy*, *All New Gen* was populated with comically exotic analogues to the usual gaming stereotypes, including:

> 1. BIG DADDY MAINFRAME – the enemy who must be infiltrated through DATA LIBERATION
> 2. RENEGADE DNA SLUTS – who are watched over by ORACLE SNATCH. They call themselves PATINA DE PANTIES, DENTATA & THE PRINCESS OF SLIME. They must battle Big Daddy Mainframe & his agents through the contested zone in order to release the :
> 3. VIRUS OF THE NEW WORLD DISORDER
> 4. CIRCUIT BOY – a dangerous technobimbo (& one of Big Daddy Mainframe's agents). The DNA Sluts must disarm him by removing his three dimensional detachable penis, & by doing so, turn it into a cellular phone.
> 5. A BONDING BOOTH – where G-SLIME (fuel required by the player) is replenished if stocks run low.

The game's motto (echoing Burroughs) was "BE AWARE THAT THERE IS NO MORAL CODE IN THE ZONE."

GENITAL PANIC

VNS Matrix's vision of transgendered cyberspace finds echoes in the recent evolution of the Anonymous movement. The term "anonymous" is ideally keyed to the tabula rasa implied in *All New Gen's* "neither," in which "hacker" avatars are free to occupy a gender "interstice," despite the prevailing machismo of "hacker" culture. Writing on the genesis of Anonymous & Lulszec (& with echoes of the case of Private Bradley/Chelsea Manning), Parmy Olson noted this "contradiction" with regard to a seeming prevalence of real-life transgendering among long-term habitués of sites like 4chan:

> There was not much research on hackers who were trans but plenty of anecdotal evidence suggesting the number of transgender people regularly visiting 4chan or taking part in hacker communities was disproportionately high. One reason may have been that as people spent more time in these communities & experimented with "gender bending" online, they could more easily consider changing who they were in the real world. Lines between the online & offline selves could become blurred, & some people in these communities were known to talk about gender as just another thing to "hack on" … If people were already used to customising a machine or code, they might have come to see their own bodies as the next appealing challenge, especially if they already felt uncomfortable with the gender they were born with.[5]

Hacking, as a term for a type of cyborg/sexual insurgency, recodes the MATRIX ("WOMB") according to the overriding insistence that "Biology is not Destiny." The "matrix" is trans-sexed in the same way as the body is prosthetically reorganised. And just as the body itself gets reconceived as a prosthesis of the "matrix" (rather than vice-versa), so gender gets conceived "prosthetically" as a distributed network of codes. The trans-hack is always/already reappropriated to the Matrix.

Contemporary with VNS Matrix is the work of Australian artist Linda Dement. Dement's *Cyberflesh*

3 Mez Breeze, 'Attack of the Cyberfeminists,' *Switch. Electronic Gender: Art at the Interstice* (1997).

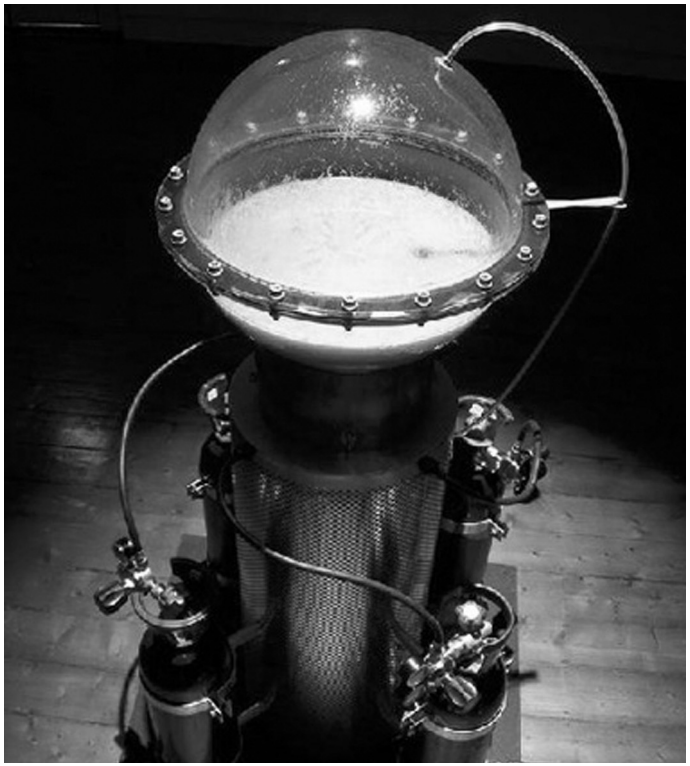
4 Claire L. Evans, "'We Are the Future Cunt': CyberFeminism in the 90s," *Motherboard* (November, 2014).

5 Parmy Olson, *We are Anonymous: Inside the Hacker World of Lulzsec, Anonymous & the Global Cyber Insurgency* (New York: Little, Brown, 2012) chap 6.

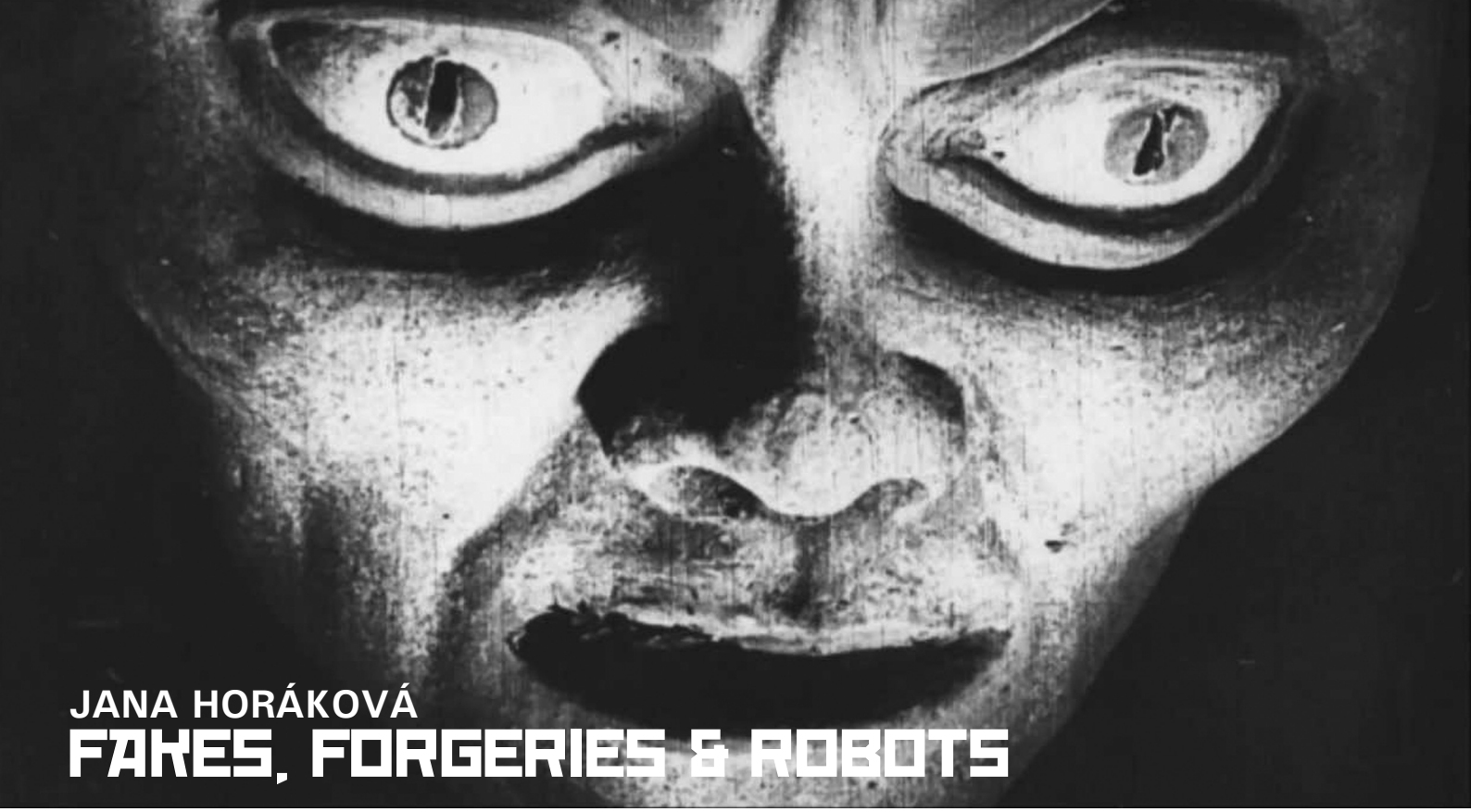
Girlmonster installation at the 1995 Adelaide Festival depicted "bodies that matter" as re-coded in a macabre Frankensteinian comedy of gender panic. The artist invited 30 women to "donate" parts of their bodies, which were scanned to create both visual & auditory analogues. From these, conglomerate "bodies" were assembled, animated & made interactive, becoming part of an ongoing morphological process. But perhaps one of the most radical & insistent exponents of interactive body-transformation is the performance artist Stelarc. Since the 80s, Stelarc has explored the possibilities of human cybernetics in a series of dramatic works, from the robotic third-arm prostheses of *Evolution* & *Ping-Body*, to the actual surgical implantation of a "third ear" in his left forearm in 1997. His most striking work, however, is a 2005 collaboration with Nina Sellars, entitled *Blender.*

For *Blender* both artists undertook liposuction operations, using the resultant bio-materials as the substance of an installation piece: 1.6 metres high & "anthropormorphic" in scale & structure. Every few minutes *Blender* automatically circulated or "blended" these bio-materials via a system of compressed air pumps & a pneumatic actuator. The mixture included 4.6 litres of subcutaneous fat taken from Stelarc's torso & Nina Sellars' limbs, zylocain (local anaesthetic), adrenalin, O+ blood, sodium bicarbonate, peripheral nerves, saline solutions & connective tissue. Installed under a single spotlight & swathed in chiaroscuro, *Blender* was also wired for sound, amplifying, distorting & delaying the audio produced by the blending mechanism itself. The project (which has its contemporary analogue in the Tissue Culture & Art Project of Oran Catts, Ionat Zurr & Guy Ben-Ary) was an inevitable outcome of Stelarc & Sellars' longstanding fascination with "alternative corporeal architectures" & the blending of contemporary technology with corporeality, dressed-up in the mystique of the divine melodrama of creation (the work itself resembles some sort of cryogentic altarpiece, the sacred relics in process of re-becoming, God by unholy alchemical transmutations about to rise from the dead).

Underlying this drama, *Blender* reprises the dream (or nightmare) of inanimate matter (body waste, effluvia, G-slime) made animate by means not of the



Divine Word but of some (diabolical) apparatus injected with *code*. The vision of God as abomination; the Resurrection as horrorshow. Like growing a brain in a jar, or a foetus, or conjuring a new species from an evolutionary cyberswamp – a "matrix" of mutated cell-structures becoming the 3D-printed armature of a future (malevolent!) artificial intelligence, perhaps. (Megumi Igarashi's coded vagina invading the internet like some sort of porno-viral space monster, replicating itself endlessly *in the flesh*.) In short, a *succubus* machine. If the Golem belonged to an allegory of the productive harnessing of the formless, of the ordering of chaos, of *creation* as *work*, it also pointed "ahead" to a general evolutionary potential – one far removed from the sublime conception of a transcendental nicety (the ever-benevolent "god machine"). Instead there is only the radical materiality of transmissional codes, the reproductive *potential of form* detached from "evolutionary purpose" – which is also to say, the potential of (an) agency that resembles *us* only insofar as we remain integrated into *its* circuit.



JANA HORÁKOVÁ

FAKES, FORGERIES & ROBOTS

ROBOT & GOLEM

The discourse of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a scientific discipline can be understood as a current stage or the state of the eternal myth of artificial man. The AI discourse is strongly rooted in the Golem legend, the origins of which lie in ancient Talmudic tradition, in the context of mysticism and sorcery, in which all modern science has its roots.

The legend of the Golem is closely tied to the original story of the creation of man. The word 'golem' (Galm) can be found in the Bible in a reference to the creation of Adam. Originally, the act of repeating the creative act of God was made by a Kabbalist to celebrate the Creator. In the thirteenth century, the legend was complicated by a story of the prophet Jeremiah, who brought a clay golem to life with a sign on its forehead: JHVH ELOHIM EMET = God is truth. However, Golem took a knife and scraped off the first letter of the word EMET: the resulting sign meant 'God is dead!' Commenting on the gesture, Zdeněk Neubauer wrote that it can be interpreted as a parable for man who becomes a creator himself, and who thus does not need God.[1]

The play *R.U.R., Rossum's Universal Robots* (published in 1920 and staged for the first time in 1921) can be read as the transformation of the Golem legend into the myth of technological progress, and robots, the artificial R.U.R. factory-made workers, are then the main figures of this 'great narrative' of the twentieth century.

> Karel Čapek admitted there were similarities between the robots and the Golem legend. In the Prague newspaper *Prager Tagblatt* (September 23, 1935), he said: *R.U.R. is in fact a transformation of the Golem legend into a modern form. However, I realized this only when the piece was done. 'Oh hell, it is in fact the Golem!' I said to myself. 'Robots are factory-produced Golems.'*

1 Zdeněk Neubauer, *Golem a další příběhy o kabale, symbolech a podivuhodných setkáních* (Prague: Malvern, 2002) 50-1.

The Golem legend was made popular in the early twentieth century, especially among expressionists. There is a famous novel by Gustav Meyrink, *Der Golem* (1914), and series of films written and directed by and starring Paul Wegener; the first of these was *Der Golem* (1915). There were many more contemporary films on the Golem legend. In 1919, the Czechoslovak director Willy Hamburger made the film *Rabbi Löw* based on the story *Golem of Prague* by Alois Jirásek (*Ancient Bohemian Legends*, 1894). German directors Paul Wegener and Carl Boese filmed *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam* (*The Golem: How He Came into the World*) in 1920.

The legend of a man-made creature in Jewish Talmudic mystic lore dates back to ancient times. According to the modern version of the Golem legend, Rabbi Judah Löw ben Bezalel of Prague (1520 – 1609) created the animated clay slave to protect the city's Jewish community. In this form, it is connected with the Prague cultural context as strongly as the figure of the robot.

> The Prague Golem legend is not so much an expression of mystical initiation, but rather a story about the creation of useful servant. In this version of the story, the motif of the Golem's unpredictability is strongly manifest. [T]he unpredictability of Golem behaviour is truly incalculable, [...] it cannot be prevented by the refinement of commands – by improving the program. Golem is something imperfect, incomplete in its very essence: his repeated aberrations – deviations from the order of predictability and common sense – were actually warning signs of impending danger.[2]

In *R.U.R.*, the story of an artificially made man is transposed into the era of mass factory production. The motif of impending danger, in the form of the artificial workers revolting against their creator, is even more conspicuous in Čapek's drama. The revolt of the robots, after several warning signs, erupts in full force, causing the annihilation of all mankind in the last act of the play.

The motif of creations revolting against their creators was echoed in the headline of an American newspaper review of the first stage production of the Čapek play in the U.S. by John Corbin, who called Karel Čapek 'a Czechoslovak Frankenstein' (1922). Isaac Asimov, who is called the father of science fiction stories about robots, criticized Karel Čapek for his lack of originality. He wrote that Čapek just took the story of Frankenstein and his monster from Mary Shelley, based on the private conflict between the scientist and his creature, and transposed it into the public space, thus making the conflict global and social.[3]

Čapek's robots meet a fate similar to that of the Golem. In both cases, only fragments of the original symbols penetrated into the general awareness. The original Golem legend was meant to be a warning against man's dangerous temptation to create beings in his own image, and pointed to the sinfulness of such efforts. The modern form of the Golem legend, by contrast, reflects the modernist self-stylization of man as a limitless creator and ruler of the world.[4] The popular image of the Golem merges with the popular concept of the robot. They are both reduced to mere symbols of ideal servants (workers), capable of performing heavy labour and serving man, who finally revolt against their creators. It can be concluded that the Golem of the Prague legend was actually a precursor of the robot.

GOLEMS OF THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

What distinguishes Čapek's robots from other doubles of man is the fact that each robot is not unique, but it is a multiplied, serialized image of a man. Through its serial reproduction, the robot loses its uniqueness and thus its magical quality (the characteristics ascribed to all other artificially made beings). However, this update of the image of man fits with the context of industrial societies, whose economy was based on mass factory reproduction. To understand the difference between one artificial man and a series of them, we can refer to the influential text by Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Benjamin, 1936). Benjamin claimed that the loss of uniqueness of artwork through its (technical) reproduction causes its division from ritual (the magic, the 'here and now'), which is replaced by its closer connection to social and political issues. Robots can be seen in a different way. Robots, defined as a serially mass-produced image of

2 Neubauer, *Golem a další příběhy o kabale*, 51.

3 Issac Asimov, 'The Robot Chronicles,' *Gold. The final science-fiction collection* (New York: HarperPrism, 1995).

4 Neubauer, *Golem a další příběhy o kabale*, 45.

man, construct a complex system of multiple mirrored reflections that allow us to see what is invisible in a single mirror. The mirror apparatus, made of a series of mirrors placed at regular distances, produces a chain of reflections. To identify what or who these mirrors actually reflect, it is necessary to know which of the mirrors is odd and which is even. While every odd mirror shows the mirrored image of man, every even mirror shows an image that is the reflection of the more complex, catoptric mirror, which functions as a translator and shows the image twice reversed. These twice-reversed images of man are able to evoke the illusion of meeting ourselves, or may even enable us to do so. In this way, the theme of the artificial man in *R.U.R.* gains back the magical quality.

The series of robots, just like the catoptric system of mirrors, escapes any definition. The interpretation of this model of modern man, the serial character of the robot, is left to the theatre audience. This model of man can be perceived as being made of the suppositions, assumptions, or projections of the interpreter's own desires and fears about artificial man. The interpreters have to ask themselves: Who do I see in front of me? A robot? A human? And the answer is left open…

GENEALOGY OF THE ROBOT

The robot character has its predecessors in the Čapek brothers' early writings, in which they repeatedly dealt with the theme of the interchangeability of humans and their artificial doubles. We can find mechanical artificial humanoid creatures in their short stories *Povídka poučná [Instructive Story]* (1908), *L´éventail* (1908), and *Ex Centro* (1911). In the short story *Opilec [The Drunkard]* by Josef Čapek (1907), a busy engineer's artificial alter ego staggers down the streets, stalking his girlfriend. The short story *Systém* (1908) must be on the list too, because it features some culturally reformed workers, called Operarius Utilis Ripratoni, who share many features with robots.

These juvenilia are playful and ironic, written in highly stylized language, which is often intentionally in contradiction to the simple plot. These texts have a common inclination to an anecdotal conclusion, which is intended to shock readers with its witty questioning of common opinions about the subject and to amaze them with its accuracy while maintaining the effect of instant comprehension.[5] Female characters are particularly highly stylized and often compared to marionettes or automata in these texts. While the authors present the automaton as an ideal model of woman, they describe 'living' woman as a capricious, illogical, and evasive creature. For example, in the short story *L'éventail,* the authors draw contrasts between the submissive female android performing at the prince's garden party and his unfaithful mistress, a woman ruled by her passions like some puppet. The dichotomy of woman and puppet is expressed as a process of transformation in the short story *Ex centro*, where two transformations, of woman to puppet and puppet to woman, take place. In all these short stories, women and female puppets or automata are set within plots based on frivolous, heartless, and harmful games of love.

A characteristic appearance of artificial man in these early writings is a female android. *L'éventail* and *Instructive Story* are actually set in the golden age of androids, the eighteenth century, by characters representing historical persons of the Jaquet-Droz family. These androids are sophisticated toys, unique and admirable curiosities, which fascinate the public with the illusion of life they are able to evoke. Even though androids were typical of the eighteenth century, the period called the Age of Reason, they are in sharp contrast with the robots invented by the Rossum father and son in *R.U.R.* Robots, as products of modern pragmatic reason, had an opposite character and function than androids. This is probably the reason that Karel Čapek coined a new word for his artificial workers, the products and symptoms of the reason of the Machine Age in the beginning of the twentieth century.

We can illustrate the difference between robots and the androids of the juvenilia of the Čapek brothers by comparing the female android and the female robot. The Robotess Sulla has features quite opposite to the androids in the short stories. There is no sign of the coquetry that the android expressed, for example by playing with a fan with which she always hid her face. The Robotess does not show any facial or bodily expressions, any symptoms of inner emotional movements. She does not even have a female name!

5 Jan Mukařovský, *Studie z poetiky* (Prague: Odeon, 1982).

1924 drawing of a female android by Josef Čapek, probably inspired by the short story *L'éventail.*

Čapek's statement that the robots' inventor, Rossum Jr., was not inspired by the ideas of philosophers but by the economists of the time is in accordance with the above observation. Similar evidence is provided in the short story *Systém*, where the characters closest to robots appeared. Names are mentioned there such as Karl Wilhelm Büscher, the Leipzig-based author of book*s Work and Rhythm* (1896) and *Industrial Evolution* (1901), and Frederick Winslow Taylor, an American mechanical engineer and the inventor of the scientific management of work called Taylorism. While androids were made to enchant the audience with their abilities to play piano, draw, and write, to celebrate the miracle of godlike creative acts, robots serve to disgust the viewer with the mere utilitarian purpose of their production for increased factory efficiency.

ROBOT ON THE THEATRE STAGE

Another substantial and media-specific difference between androids and robots in the Čapeks' writings is the fact that while androids are described in the medium of written text, robots are dramatic characters, modelled in the performing arts. This specific feature of robots was emphasized by Josef Čapek in his artistic essay *Homo Artefactus* (1924), in which he illustrated the paragraph dedicated to his brother's play about robots with a drawing of a robot standing on the theatre stage. However, we can find the artificial man placed within theatre settings in the Čapeks' early writings, too. In the short stories *L'éventail* and *Ex centro*, the theatre performance setting enables the writers to play a game of mutual correspondences, in these cases between woman and android, sleeping man and dead man, or trained female acrobat and puppet. In *L'éventail*, a performance based on a dialogue between Jaquet-Droz and his female android mirrors the relationship between Prince Bondini and his unfaithful mistress. In *Ex centro*, the narrator is placed within the theatre audience to witness the moment when the female acrobat is accidentally transformed into a puppet-like dead body. *R.U.R.*, however, developed the motif of replacing humans with their artificial models literally or physically on the theatre stage. '[A]s long as one writes plays for theatre, one in fact produces only a semi-finished product. It is a work-in-progress; the director and actors fully realize it,' wrote Karel Čapek in an interview on the theatre, in *Lidové noviny*, February 26, 1933.

We can deduce from Čapek's words that the robot character, materialized in text, in the medium of a written play, must be treated as an incomplete work of art. If we want to interpret the robot, the dramatic character, we have to analyse the result of the actors' performance on the stage. In other words, it is not sufficient to interpret the robot, the dramatic character, strictly on the basis of the text. The robot is finished as a work of art only when it stands on the theatre stage in front of an audience. The movement of the artificial man motif from the medium of literature to the medium of theatre, from text to physical presence, empowers the epistemological uncertainty, which is the most important and still topical motif and message of *R.U.R.*

The subject of this interpretation of the robot character is the robot from the first stage production of *R.U.R.*, at the National Theatre in Prague, on January 25, 1921. The director of the stage production was Vojta Novák, the stage designer was Bedřich Feuerstein, and Josef Čapek designed the costumes. As we know from Vojta Novák's memoirs, Čapek attended rehearsals and partly influenced the casting. Josef Čapek, who actually suggested the word *robot* to his brother Karel, designed the costumes following the instructions in the *R.U.R*. book:

> In the introductory scene, the robots are dressed like people. They are slightly mechanical in their speech and movements, blank of expression, fixed in their gaze. In the play proper they wear linen blouses cinched at the waist with a belt and on their breasts wear a brass number.

The robot is an audio-visual sign belonging to the theatre, which is a subcategory of the visual arts. In contrast to the robot as perceived within the medium of literature, the robot on the theatre stage is an icon in Peirce's terminology, thus the robot as an audio-visual sign refers to the original, whatever it is, through external similarities. The second characteristic feature of the robot is that the robot character on the stage is a work of art, whose author is not the playwright (Karel Čapek) but an actor.

The robot has special status as a sign within the theatre performance sign system. It is easy to distinguish between other signs and their authors/producers: drama – dramatist, stage designer – stage set, costumes – costume designer, director – stage production. With an actor and the dramatic character, the dichotomy is blurred and the order of the theatre performance signification is disrupted. As Otakar Zich put it, 'The actor is an artist, who represents the person meant by himself.'[6] With respect to the theatre sign system, the primary means of dramatic character signification can be found in puppet theatre, where the separation between the actor and the character is quite clear. Ivo Osolsobě followed this argument and suggested defining an actor's performance, as a 'distinct case of a puppeteer who makes his puppets from himself.'[7]

The robot as a theatre sign is made as follows: the actor undergoes a transformation from the authentic existence of a human into an unauthentic dramatic character – in this case, a robot. The actor, who models the robot character using the medium of his own body and personality, himself becomes an artificial sign: he is an artificial man – a robot – for the duration of the performance. On the stage, we can see the robot-sign, which includes the signifier – the man acting (mechanically) as a robot, and the signified – the robot made of living matter, at the same time.

Čapek explained how robots are made in the Prologue of *R.U.R.* in the words of the factory director:

> Domin: (triumphant): […] Just think: he wrote these words about a blob of some kind of colloidal jelly that not even a dog would eat. Imagine him sitting with a test tube and thinking about how it could grow out into an entire tree of life made of all the animals starting with a tiny coil of life and ending with… ending with man himself. Man made of different material than we are. Miss Glory, this was one of the great moments of history. […] But old Rossum didn't have a trace of humour about him, so he got it into his head to make a normal vertebrate, such as human being. And so that's what he started doing. […] That old Rossum was completely mad. Seriously. But keep that to yourself. He was quite mad. He seriously wanted to make a human being.

The actor's performance, described above in the words of the semiology of the theatre, presumably follows Čapek's manual for robot production as introduced in the Prologue of the play, because his robots are made of organic matter, very similar to the matter humans are made of. This medium-specific interpretation of the robot produces a new aspect into the play of associations that goes on around the robot character; this finding also leads to the requirement of a new artificial creature taxonomy. The robot does not belong to any category (organic, metallic, or otherwise models of man); the robot on the theatre stage is an artificial man made by humans from themselves.

6 Otakar ZICH, *Estetika dramatického umění: teoretická dramaturgie* (Prague: Panorama, 1986 [1931]) 48.

7 Ivo Osolsobě, *Mnoho povyku pro sémiotiku: ne zcela úspěšný pokus o encyklopedické heslo sémiotika divadla* (Brno: G hudba a divadlo, 1992) 13.

The Second Robot (actor Karel Váňa) & the Robotess Sulla (Eugenie Engelbertová). Studio photographs from the stage production of *R.U.R.* at the National Theatre in Prague, opening night January 25, 1921.

FAKES, FORGERIES & ROBOTS

Photographs from the first stage production of *R.U.R.* clearly show that the robot character is not a result of an avant-garde formal experiment. Rather, the robot seems to be a quite well done life-size model of a man. The photographs illustrate Karel Čapek's claim that *R.U.R.* wasn't primarily meant to be a science-fiction play about robots; rather, he wanted to investigate the state of humanity in the modern age. The main purpose of staging *R.U.R.* lies in the laboratory character of theatre performance, which creates the perfect conditions for an epistemological experiment based on the disturbing similarity between robots and men.

The theatre arrangement functions as a court in which the audience gains the role of judges, informed in the prologue of the play that they will see artificially-made men, pseudo-humans, living machines on the stage. There are two immediate questions. The first question, *Who is a robot?* leads to the second, *Who is a man?* This task of searching for signs of differentiation between human and robot is playfully treated in the Prologue, when Helena Glory, the daughter of the factory owner, is unable to distinguish between robots and human factory residents. The search for the features of humanity and 'robotinity' of the dramatic characters is then left to the theatre audience. To answer the question: *Who is the man and who is the model of man, the robot?* is not so easy. How can we distinguish between a human and his double? Which common features should be compared to get the answer?

> Eco wrote: The problem of doubles seems to be an ontological one, but, rather is a pragmatic one. It is the user who decides the 'description' under which, according to a given practical purpose, certain characteristics are to be taken into account in determining whether two objects are 'objectively' similar and consequently interchangeable.[8]

In other word, the interpretation of a robot inevitably comes to the point at which we have to define categories like 'authentic,' 'real,' and 'original' existence. Eco warns that to find sufficient definitions of these categories we have to define their dual opposites. As a matter of fact, the definitions of such terms as 'fake,' 'forgery,' [...] 'falsification,' 'pseudo,' [...] and others are rather controversial. It is reasonable to suspect that many difficulties in defining these terms are due to the difficulty in defining the very notion of 'original' or of 'real object.'[9]

BECOMING ROBOT OR BECOMING HUMAN?

Eco's conclusion is in agreement with Karel Čapek's repeated claim that he was more interested in people than in machines when writing his drama about robots. The narrative, based on a Frankensteinian conflict between humans and artificial workers, served Čapek as a platform for a more philosophical and less spectacular motif of uncertain and mistaken identities, shaking the theatre audience's unquestioned and unquestionable certainties about the meanings of concepts such as humanity, life, and subjectivity. As Eco's findings about doubles and fakes showed, the interpreter, in this case the theatre audience, plays the crucial role in the play about robots, which was, according to the author, written in defence of humanity. The robot, a multiplied serial image of man, indicates the central motif of *R.U.R.*: the inability to distinguish between man and robot and thus the mutual substitutability of man and machine in the discourse of modern society. This process of obfuscating and blurring the concept of human or humanity, which started in the early twentieth century, was elaborated in a more sophisticated way in the second half of that century within the cybernetic paradigm and an anti-mimetic turn in art. This context enabled us to overcome the limits of 'digital thinking' in the binary opposites of human vs. machine (robot) in favour of thinking through the concepts of ´becoming a human,' or 'becoming a machine,' their mutual correspondences and dependences, and their otherness.

8 Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation: Advances in Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) 178.

9 Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 174.

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The Moon is Waning Gibbous (97% of Full)
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k1% more zz
now when
now when i try to write, there are interferences, coming from
the other side, from somewhere i can see vagely, if at all,
niterferences which are the beinning of an inundation that, at
this point with pills within me, trying desperately, for sleep,
won't occupy the gravel of the shore for too long, suh are the
problems with the wrritten world/world fraught with
annihilation: to the limit, i'm deliberately typing with eyes
wide shut, allowing the ghosts and debris to issue forth, essays
in ideleness, the pillow book, if this is an exercise it relates
back to my piece about fever in disorders of the real, that we
can't take for granted, ever, the positioning of health as a
prereqisite for text, as if there were a standard of the body
adn mind to be met before one is given the privilege of speaking
or rather the bridge from speaking through writing to reading to
hearing, etc. i welcome here, without spell cking, these ghosts
into my world; they'll dominate more and more in the coming
years, until noting remains but bits and bytes scattered and
disappearing fast from hard drives world-wide. this is what
sleep deprivation does, it brings on death, brings down the
curtain quickly, there will never be enough time to say goodbye
to epople, there's no greet ing and no other side, the fences
are temporarily in place, things. it's a matter of time
literally before the universe goes dark and all this incredible
richness of organisms and culture disappears, and inherent in
the disappearance is the disappearance of any trace as well,
we're all living in the period of erasure, we're all inherenlty
inaccountable, our minds and future projects are our own worst
enemy, and the groundrules of the world lie in its own
slaughter. the effect of the pills is great, 12mg melatonin and
trazodone, my mind crushes me with the true real, i don't have
kristeva's good fortune to whirl through freud or catholicsm,
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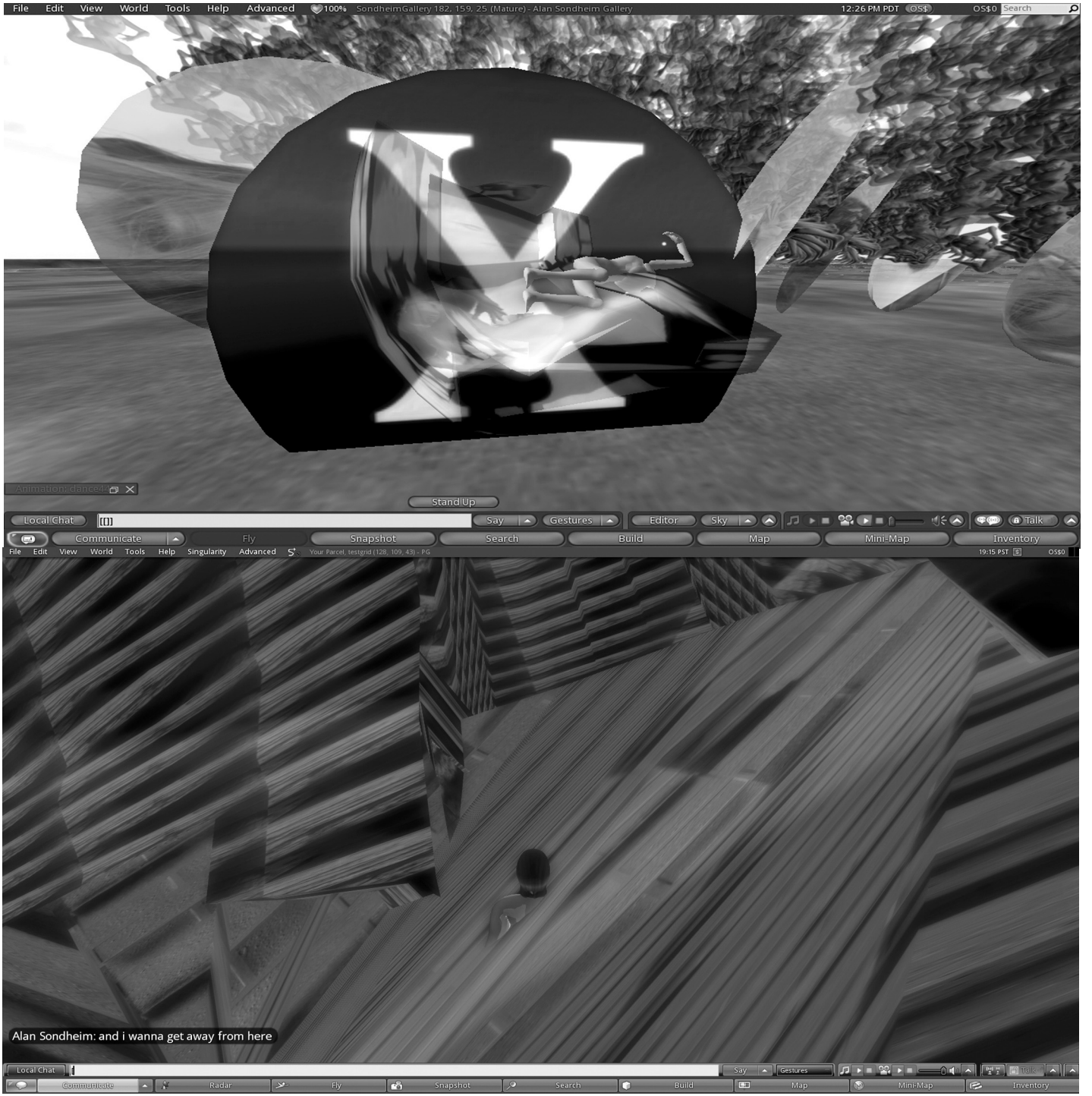
ALAN SONDHEIM
NOWHEN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SondheimGallery 182, 159, 25 (Mature) - Alan Sondheim Gallery
12:26 PM PDT
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Stand Up
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Sky
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19:15 PST
Alan Sondheim: and i wanna get away from here
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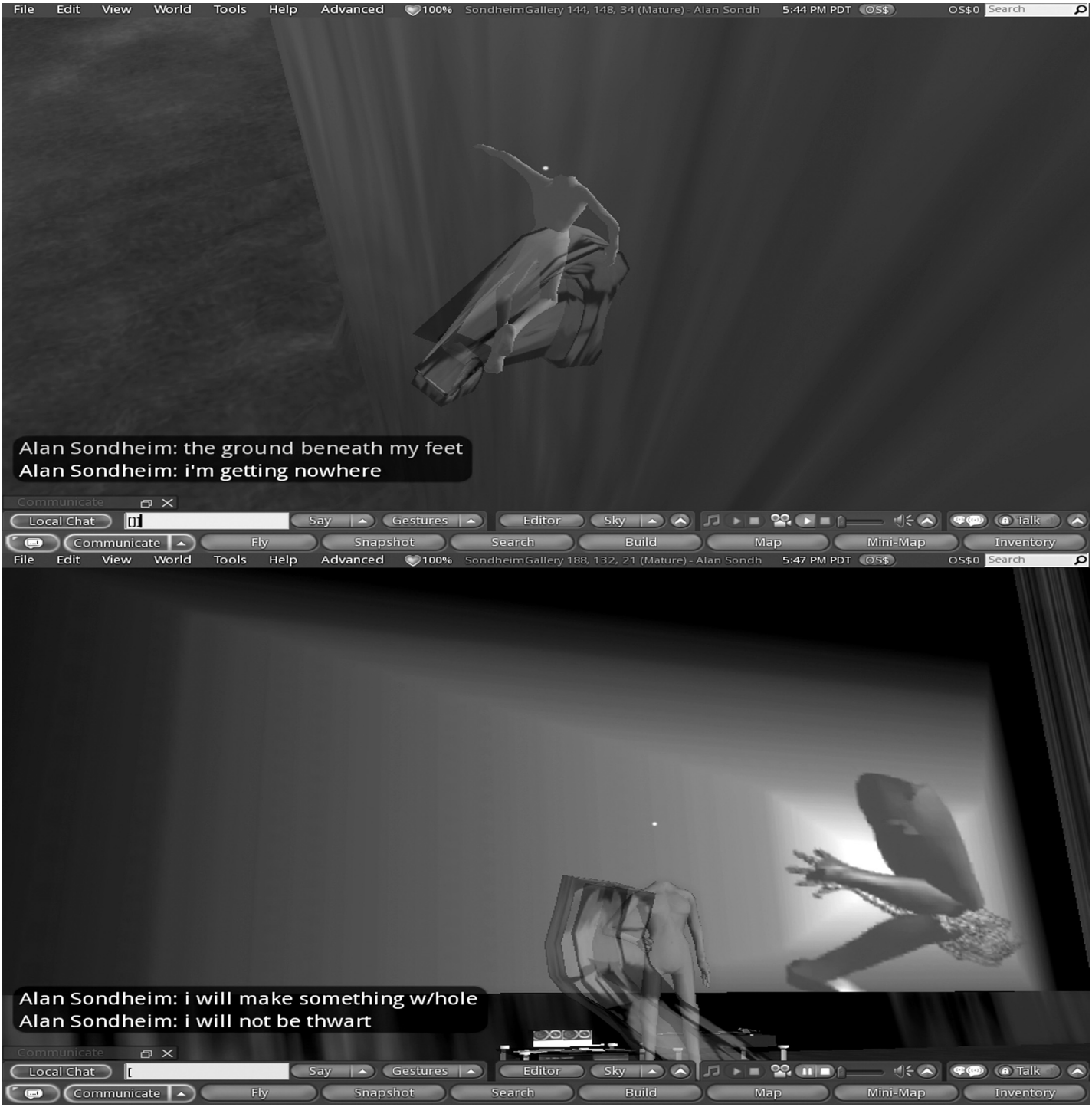
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Alan Sondheim: the ground beneath my feet
Alan Sondheim: i'm getting nowhere
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Communicate Fly Snapshot Search Build Map Mini-Map Inventory
File Edit View World Tools Help Advanced 100% SondheimGallery 188, 132, 21 (Mature) - Alan Sondh 5:47 PM PDT OS$ OS$0 Search
Alan Sondheim: i will make something w/hole
Alan Sondheim: i will not be thwart
Communicate
Local Chat Say Gestures Editor Sky Talk
Communicate Fly Snapshot Search Build Map Mini-Map Inventory

File Edit View World Tools Help Advanced 100% SondheimGallery 196, 86, 21 (Mature) - Alan Sondhei 5:51 PM PDT OS$ OS$0 Search
Inventory (330 items)
File Create Sort Search
Type here to search
Quick Filter: All Types
All Items Recent Items Worn Items
Doublecrimp
Small Cinema + Seating
newcity
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Doublecrimp
prim0-mesh
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prim0-mesh
prim0-mesh
prim0-mesh
prim0-mesh
prim0-mesh
Primitive
prim0-mesh
Alan Sondheim: i cannot drop thing
Alan Sondheim: i am thwart
Communicate
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Say
Gestures
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File Edit View World Tools Help Advanced 100% SondheimGallery 196, 86, 21 (Mature) - Alan Sondhei 5:52 PM PDT OS$ OS$0 Search
Alan Sondheim: i cannot breath
Alan Sondheim: but i will not be thwart
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Local Chat
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VÍT BOHAL

MINECRAFT 1.8: THERE & BACK AGAIN

Single Player > Survival > Start Game. The loading screen dissipates. A meshed virtual world stretches out before you, complete with mountains, oceans, ravines, trees, animals, rocks, minerals. Tabula rasa. But: not really – the subsurface logic of the land is based on a prescribed algorithm. A set of finite axioms plans its contours, and produces an environment which mimics the geodesic possibilities seen on our own Earth. It is a simulation of nature, when millions of years of development are preprogrammed to take place in a span of seconds, while the loading screen works its magic.

The features of the virtual environment in *Minecraft* are based on a so-called "seed" – a string of characters (numbers, letters, etc.) that are fed into the map-generating algorithm from which the world is created.[1] The player can generate his own worlds by simply filling in the seed phrase with different characters, and giving the algorithm a new set of variables to go on. A discreet algorithm is intrinsic not only to the programming of the virtual environment, but also in the movement and actions the avatar is allowed to perform during play. The exhilaration that many players experience when bobbing through the virtual mesh of *Minecraft* stems from an illusory feeling of freedom based in the player's predisposition towards reading the images of the game as allegory – the player encounters the game as a database of signs and relations which are dressed up as an allegory for the "real world." The allegory in this sense functions as a type of interface to the mechanical guts of the program. Adopting this allegorical illusion as one's own is the game itself; the rest is algorithmic and mechanical. The question, then, presents itself as to what the Minecraft allegory consists of. What lies at the center of the virtual illusion; what traumatic kernel, in Žižek's words, defines the allegorized virtual world of *Minecraft*?

The game interface works by smoke and mirrors, camouflaging the game mechanism's inherent insufficiency when encountering the player's database of intuitive knowledge. If the imaginary interface of the program dissipates, the game can no longer be played with, and its mechanistic loops and algorithms are exposed. Throughout the game experience the player is immersed in what Žižek and others have called the "as if" frame of mind [2] – a self-imposed selective approach to the individual's informational inputs – a type of suspension of disbelief. If the fourth wall of gaming were broken, the player would no longer be playing, but would see the mechanical guts of the program and could no longer indulge in the game's semantic interface and the allegorical totality it offers. The player must play "as if" the database the game offers were in some way symbolically transparent.

The wormhole which joins the world of the game with that of the world outside the computer screen is what McKenzie Wark calls "allegorithm":

> What is distinctive about games is that they produce for the gamer an intuitive relation to the algorithm. The intuitive experience and the organizing algorithm together are an allegorithm for a future that in gamespace is forever promised but never comes to pass.[3]

1 Minecraft Encyclopedia, "Seed": minecraft.gamepedia.com/Seed_(level_generation)

2 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2002) 36.

3 McKenzie Wark, *GAM3R 7H3ORY*: www.academia.edu/182788/

The world of the virtual game draws on a body of "intuitive" knowledge of the real world, and its symbolic language is read as an allegory of the world outside of the gamer's Cave. The sub-symbolic rearranging of the pixels on the screen is on a symbolic, semantic level perceived as indexes towards a wider reality-as-database. The game in this way exhibits a consistency in its symbolic representation of the world. It would be unfortunate if the spatial combination of resources used for crafting would be inconsistent and would change based upon a complex algorithm the logic of which would escape the player. The sliding of signification within the act of crafting would dissolve the allegorical illusion of the relation towards an "intuitive" unity of the game's environment. The readable relations of the database would dissolve in favor of the mechanical workings of algorithmic permutation, and would create an impasse the player would not be readily able to surpass.

The game uses so-called "discrete algorithms" in that the same input will invariably produce the same output. The algorithm of the game generation for instance seems vastly complex, almost intelligent, yet, it is nothing more than a function which invariably produces the game map in a mechanical fashion. The future of the deterministic algorithm is foreclosed *a priori* in that the information contained in the seed (the input) precludes the process of its unwinding towards an inevitable output. The information in the deterministic algorithmic function does not evolve through time, but stays the same as when the program was first launched. The seemingly complex texture of the game's processes is fashioned by means of a deft manipulation of effectively mechanistic, syntactical processes woven together like a piece of rug.

The role of allegory consists in presenting the player with common items that have been shared and then re-contextualized within a broader context of signifying relations, so that the game may seem "as if" it is not a foreclosed database of mechanical tasks.[4] The allegory, understood in its basic guise as an "extended metaphor," a type of "speaking otherwise," works as an anagrammaton, replacing one symbol with another within a previously determined space of maneuvering. Its space is fully comprehended and defined by previous inputs. When the avatar farms, the pixels on screen delimiting the grains turn from green to yellow to brown, until they are ready for harvest. It is a simple visual index to which anyone with basic knowledge of the vegetative phases of plants can relate and it is in this way a formal transposition which inherently strives to retain a relation to the player's body of intuitive knowledge. The algorithm, on the other hand, has no stake in retaining this relation to representation, but inherently has the ability to transcend the experience-based, intuitive knowledge in favor of a constant unwinding of signification. The algorithm, in other words, is not bound to the much broader database of relations of the allegorical "intuitive" knowledge. The mature grain in *Minecraft* could essentially be any color, but there would be no indexing of a common knowledge that would predispose the grain to be brown in its last stage of maturation. A game which takes too much advantage of this mechanical algorithmic unwinding, however, runs the risk of becoming unreadable in its unwillingness to cater to the player's relation to the shared, "intuitive" experiences (*Japan World Cup* [2011] is an example of a game willfully subversive of the "intuitive" preconceptions of the player).[5] For the game to be effectively enjoyable the algorithm must be in constant dialogue with the player's subjectivity, and must find its source in a type of imagination rather than fancy. Without the player being able to interface with the algorithm's pathways and predict its possible outcomes and to relate to them, the game experience becomes a dead end. If the player is not playing, he is suffering in a solipsistic environment which cannot establish relevance to her life outside the gamer's Cave.

In her prescribed, mechanical activities the player gradually begins reworking the originary landscape towards a personal world of her own, where avatar-made structures spring up and populate the seemingly natural in a wholly possessive, imperial manner. The virgin virtual starts becoming commoditized; filled in and changed according to the player's whim.

The player mines and works material by tools and machines – he mines and crafts, i.e. he encounters the material of labor and the means of labor. This explicit nod towards the three building blocks of capitalist production are the focus of the player's game experience, and the avatar indulges in producing and virtually consuming increasingly laborious articles, such as rugs, couches, bookstands and cakes in a type of consumer orgy. These crafted items often remain trite and their effect on the avatar's environment only superficial. The initial experience of an illusory freedom gives way to

Gamer_Theory (22).

4 The dichotomy of 'algorithm' and 'database' is taken from Lev Manovich's essay "Database as a Genre of New Media": wwvv.arts.ucla.edu/AI_Society/manovich.html.

5 http://www.dailydot.com/lol/japan-world-cup-3-race-video-game-drinking/

the repetitive labor of working and reworking one's environment in a fashion implicitly geared towards the quantification and commoditization of the initial building blocks. Wark writes: "To make something property is to separate it from a continuum, to mark it or bound it, to represent it as something finite."[6] As a separated thing the blocks become property and the originary environment becomes colonized. This is simultaneously the essential function and goal of the game: to capitalize on one's surroundings. It is not uncommon for a gamer to snack upon observing their avatar do the same.

The graphics in *Minecraft* are blocky, pixellated, willfully retro. This lures the mind into making connections for itself and filling in the gaps. The algorithm in *Minecraft* is set in such a way that it feeds the allegorical reading of the game in one very original and drastic way: the main innovation upon which the gamer gets her kicks is the fact that the entire world consists of what Alex Galloway terms "actionable objects." There is not a block in the game that the player cannot interact with in the "coupling of acting agent (the player character) and actionable object."[7] It is this feature that gives the gameplay its specificity – the sand-box world which *Minecraft* creates seems so broad and open as a direct result of this representation of materials in the game's symbolic framework. It is this design feature which makes *Minecraft* a highly effective simulation of the materials of production and so effectively establishes an "intuitive," allegorical relation of the game to the outside world. Much like in the world outside the Cave, one may interact with anything and everything, commoditize any block and use it towards further production. The fact that the actions, and in fact the commoditized blocks themselves, are already pre-furbished in the game's outset is compensated by this one feature that allows the player to encounter and interact with all the blocked materials at his disposal.

In *Minecraft* there transpires a type of allegory within the allegory. Like a Russian doll, the allegorized algorithms of the game, dressed up to symbolize "real" things, start fitting together in more elaborate ways, materializing the player's vision. An allegorical landscape becomes imposed upon the original nature. Just as the various combinations of pixels are allegorized insofar as they index the world outside the Cave by "saying one thing in order to mean something beyond that one thing,"[8] so do these allegorized clusters become interwoven by the player's activity and give a macro picture of the player's, both conscious and unconscious, intent. The virtual land becomes tilled and cultivated from a Rousseau-like paradise to a consumerist microcosm of work and possession. Every action the player performs leaves a mark on the stacked landscape. Much like Defoe's romanticized gardens, the *Minecraft* worlds are "far from being natural settings." Rather, they are "stylized emblems"[9] which give insight into the mind of the player who gradually forms them.

Minecraft is a sand-box game, and thus much less prescriptive than other games. Yet this feature implies that each and every action the player makes is his own and reflects directly on his individuality. A type of virtual mirror, the pixelated landscape starts functioning as an allegorical landscape for the player's psyche insofar as the archetypal symbol of "the garden" can be taken at face value. The game allows the player to imprint her own vision of a functional ecology of relations. It is in this way that *Minecraft* fesses up to its implicit romanticism – the player is a modern Robinson Crusoe, thrust into an alien world. In this game every man is an island, and the island of the virtual Cave reflects directly on the jockey behind the avatar. Should one build a castle, or is that too invasive to the environment; is getting a pink carpet a bit too risqué; and does a granite staircase seem out of place in my Eagle's Nest dacha? Decisions, decisions; and it is always up to the player to map out the contours of his own unlived fantasies and to inscribe them into the computer-generated environment.

But the *Minecraft* world is bound from the start, and the only activity the player is essentially left with is supporting a permanent process of manipulating and restructuring the *a priori* commoditized blocks. In Heidegger's language the player is thrust into a fully "enframed" environment, symbolically transparent and predictable. The player simply engages with the "standing reserve" of an already enframed virtual world. The game is based on reordering a type of permanent surplus with which the player can manipulate as he sees fit. Herein transpires the capitalist dream which *Minecraft* embodies: The world is commoditized *a priori.* As Heidegger writes:

6 Wark, *Hacker Manifesto,* 77

7 Alex Galloway, *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006) 24

8 Tom Huhn, "Introduction," *Imitation and Society* (Philadelphia: Penn State University Press, 2004) 4.

9 Paul DeMan, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Blindness and Insight* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 204.

> [when] man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile man, precisely as the one threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth.[10]

The standing-reserve of the virtual stacks is something to be governed, reordered and appropriated according to the player's whim. But the irony lies in the fact that during the game experience the player's activity becomes a part of the environment, and the player himself becomes a simple tool of production, working and playing the game in predictable patterns based around the material and means of production. The player in his role "comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve," a force for the culturing of the landscape and for the generation of more commoditized surplus. The player must work in predictable, pre-programmed ways to fend off monsters, hunger and, most importantly, the Real.

This effacement of individuality points towards the fundamental perverse fantasy associated with cyberspace: The virtual reality becomes a tool for the Enframing of a reality which subsequently facilitates a specific process of a repetitive "working through" of a fundamental trauma. The death in games is virtual, a Symbolic representation of an essentially Real and Othered event. It is in this sense that gaming is a "perverse" activity, in the sense Žižek uses the word: "Reduced to its elementary skeleton, perversion can be seen as a defense against the Real of death and sexuality, against the threat of mortality."[11] The death is never real in virtual games, and *Minecraft* brings this characteristic to the forefront in that it retains all the player's invasions into the original environment *even after he dies.* There is no need to load after a death (indeed it is not possible in this game), because the virtual death is fundamentally completely inconsequential.

Regardless, it is very difficult for the player to die from a certain point on, and this point comes about precisely when the player gets the mechanisms of production up and running, and when he himself starts functioning as the agent of the activity it takes to keep those processes of production working. Once the chains of production are established the player, barring any unforeseen mistakes (like falling in a chasm), is virtually safe from death. The player then engages in a repetitive ritual of mining and crafting, iterating fundamentally similar actions *ad infinitum.* It is this disavowal of finitude which Žižek finds at the unacknowledged center of virtual gaming. Žižek writes:

> the pervert's universe is the universe of pure symbolic order, of the signifier's game running its course, unencumbered by the Real of human finitude. [...] In this comic universe, as in a perverse ritual, same gestures and scenes are endlessly repeated, without any final closure, i.e. in this universe, the refusal of a closure, far from signalling the undermining of ideology, rather enacts a proto-ideological denial.[12]

It is this denial of finite, encapsulated linearity which the allure of virtual gaming is based around. *Minecraft* as a heterotopic environment is based around the constant reiteration of a fundamental disavowal of the Real along with the uncomfortable reality of human finitude. This finitude is something the *Minecraft* world can do without. As Nejfejk and HouseCZ sing in their "Český Minecraft Song":

> You can die and live a thousand times/ but you still don't know what the point of it all is/ You keep playing it until the final moment/ One day when you'll start playing, and you'll no longer be you/ then place around yourself some blocks of TNT/ Blow it all up, and then start back up again.[13]

Even when one self-destructs one's avatar as a final statement on the vacuity of the virtual experience, it is not the end, but only a degree-zero point from which virtually identical algorithmic processes and circuits will unwind. In a type of fort-da logic, the player works through the avatar's states of presence and absence, of life and death. In most games when the avatar dies in the virtual game, the player can simply load the game from the last save point and continue in their journey. In *Minecraft*, however, the avatar immediately respawns only to resume the work started by their previous incarnation. There is thus no finitude to the game experience, and all events, death included, are simply states in a continuum which is safe, stable and always present as a type of heterotopia where the passing of time does not exist at any substantial level.

10 Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland, 1977) 19.

11 Slavoj Žižek, "The Cyberspace Real": www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-zizek/articles/the-cyberspace-real/

12 Žižek, "The Cyberspace Real."

13 HouseCZ, and Nejfake, "Český Minecraft Song," *Youtube*: www.youtube.com/watc v=nUHOHy8D0jk

JULIAN OLIVER, GORDAN SAVIČIĆ, DANJA VASILIEV

THE CRITICAL ENGINEERING MANIFESTO

0. The Critical Engineer considers Engineering to be the most transformative language of our time, shaping the way we move, communicate and think. It is the work of the Critical Engineer to study and exploit this language, exposing its influence.

1. The Critical Engineer considers any technology depended upon to be both a challenge and a threat. The greater the dependence on a technology the greater the need to study and expose its inner workings, regardless of ownership or legal provision.

2. The Critical Engineer raises awareness that with each technological advance our techno-political literacy is challenged.

3. The Critical Engineer deconstructs and incites suspicion of rich user experiences.

4. The Critical Engineer looks beyond the 'awe of implementation' to determine methods of influence and their specific effects.

5. The Critical Engineer recognises that each work of engineering engineers its user, proportional to that user's dependency upon it.

6. The Critical Engineer expands 'machine' to describe interrelationships encompassing devices, bodies, agents, forces and networks.

7. The Critical Engineer observes the space between the production and consumption of technology. Acting rapidly to changes in this space, the Critical Engineer serves to expose moments of imbalance and deception.

8. The Critical Engineer looks to the history of art, architecture, activism, philosophy and invention and finds exemplary works of Critical Engineering. Strategies, ideas and agendas from these disciplines will be adopted, re-purposed and deployed.

9. The Critical Engineer notes that written code expands into social and psychological realms, regulating behaviour between people and the machines they interact with. By understanding this, the Critical Engineer seeks to reconstruct user-constraints and social action through means of digital excavation.

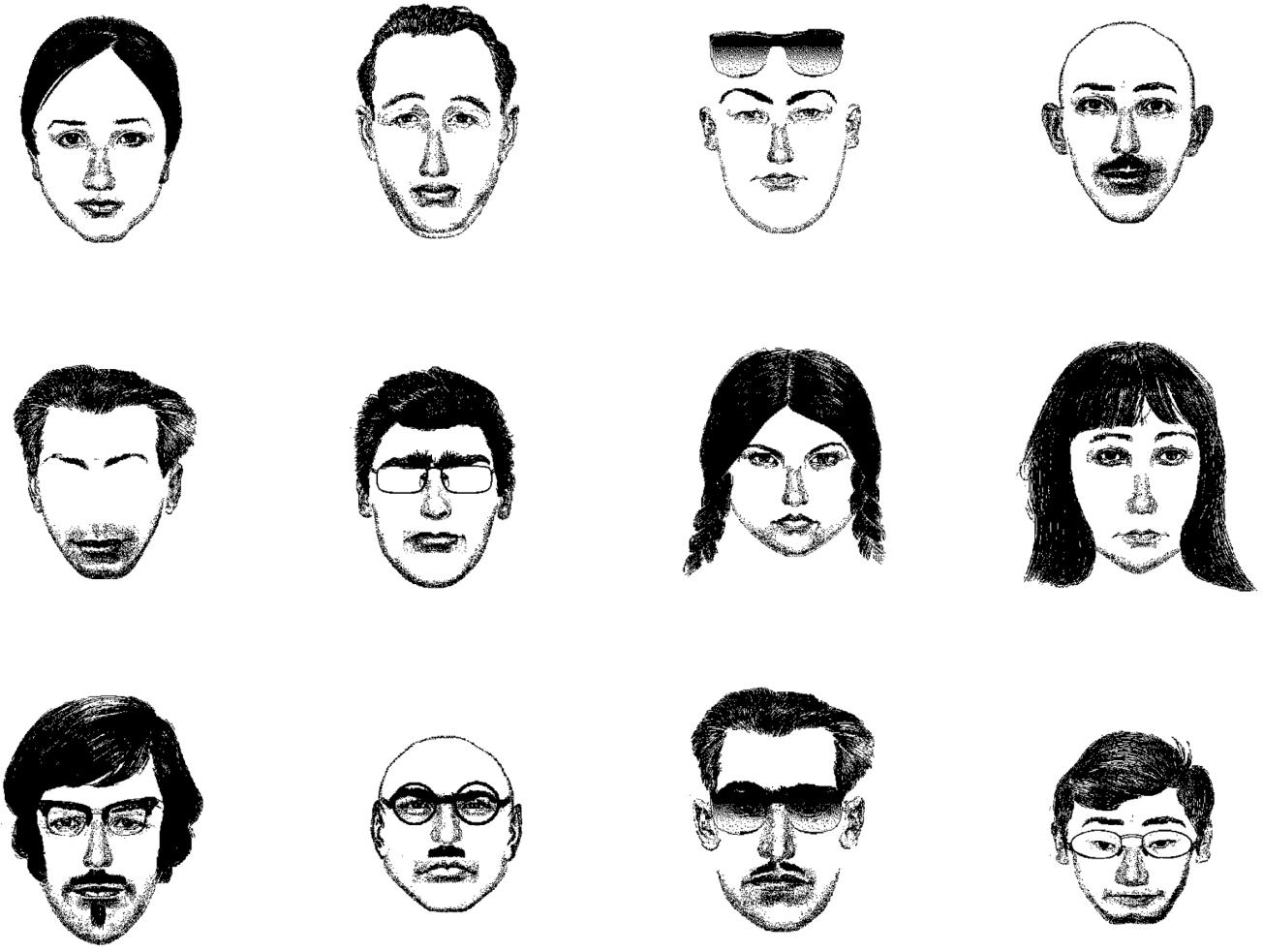
10. The Critical Engineer considers the exploit to be the most desirable form of exposure.

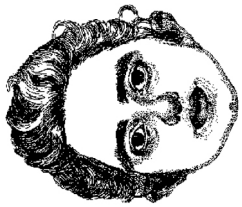
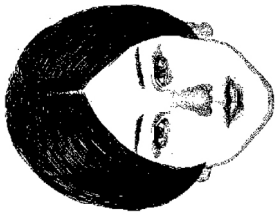
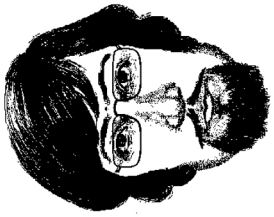
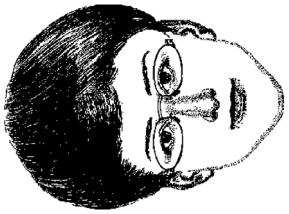
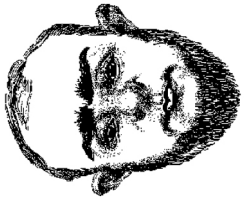
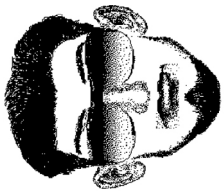
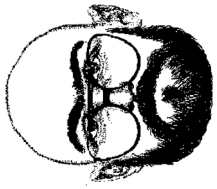
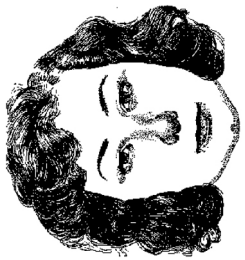
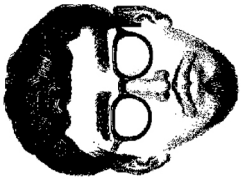
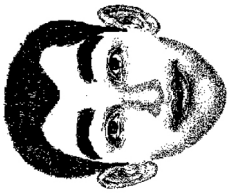
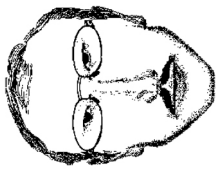
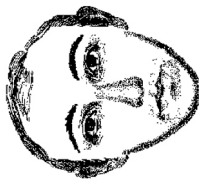
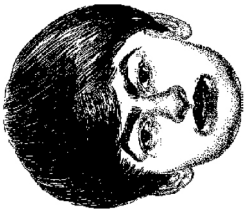
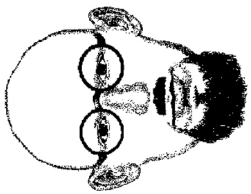
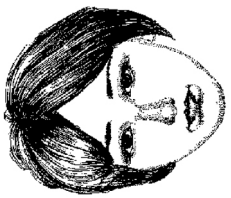
criticalengineering.org

DANJA VASILIEV

INTER.FACE

On the basis of his/her self-identity the user compiles a portrait-avatar. Each portrait gets its own unique ID, so later it can be used as one of the means of representing network identity. All created portraits are collected in a database and processed by a special algorithm. Separated network individuals reunite in one average portrait of the Net User, the blurred image of which finally becomes defined.



LESLEY STERN

BECOMING CHICKEN

A man believes that he is a grain of seed. He is taken to a mental institution, where the doctors do their best finally to convince him that he is not a grain, but a man. No sooner has he left the hospital than he comes back, very scared, claiming that there is a chicken outside the door, and he is afraid that it will eat him. "Dear fellow," says his doctor, "you know very well that you are not a grain of seed, but a man." "Of course I know that," replies the patient, "but does the chicken?"

This joke is told by Alenka Zupancic in *The Odd One In: On Comedy*. She says that what is at stake here is the post Enlightenment assertion: I know very well, but nevertheless... (I know very well that there is no God, nevertheless I pray that God will save me from this awful situation, pluck me out of this shit hole). She traces a thread of connection between Hegel and Lacan, between the Phenomenology of Spirit and the concept of the Other. Her twisting of the skeins is provocative, she takes a paradox and plays it as though it were a queen of hearts or seven of spades, the paradoxes proliferate, the tricks are blindingly spectacular. Is it sleight of hand or logic refined to the nth degree?

Yet there is something left over for me, something that she doesn't directly address though perhaps it lurks and swims around in the lower depths of the joke. What is left over is fear, a kind of fear embedded in category confusion and realized most obviously in phobias, but also in simple fears like the fear of dying. It's not just me and the chicken, me and the other, but there is a third term: this thing, this grain of seed or let's call it a corn kernel. Self and Other, these terms are mobilized in a circuit of exchange involving Other Things, and at some stage this circuit involves (or threatens) consumption, and disappearance or annihilation.

I came to chickens and to Buddhism at roughly the same time. Not entirely true, I grew up with chickens, and as an adult have had chickens in my life whenever possible, so in part I was enacting a repetition of the familiar (rather than the sense of discovery implied in the notion of "coming to." But my relation to chickens has been very different this time). Buddhism was not familiar. After coming to political consciousness as a teenager I settled into an habitual semi-conscious cynicism about religion, or let's just say faith, or spirit with either a small or large S. But in Shambhala I have found myself sometimes in a not-unfamiliar place. Not the place of religion, but of therapy, specifically psychotherapy. Another form of repetition, therefore.

Chickens became an obsession when I was pretty unwell and heading into my first treatment. It was hard to work and to write and to do research, actually it was simply hard to find the energy to focus for long on anything. But oddly enough I was able not only to focus on chickens but to allow the chicken world to consume me. It became a totally encompassing obsession. (You can read about this in the piece "Chickens saved my Life" which I can post...). Obsession, I'm convinced, is potentially curative. It is a form of denial certainly, a delusional projection, an enactment of repetition in the face of death. But it works. Sometimes it works. It takes your mind off things, prevents you from succumbing to another competing repetition, to the mantra of despair, or worse – of resignation.

If we want to use the language of psychoanalysis we might say that chickens are the way the subject's unconscious (and her relation to herself) are externalized.

Cancer brought me to meditation. I signed up to Shambhala (a version of Buddhism) in order to learn some techniques for meditation. There is no doubt that

meditation is a way of calming the body, reducing stress, promoting the anti-toxins, giving energy. Science tells us this though anyone who has meditated can tell you the same thing (still, the scientific writings are fascinating, keep a look out for the coming blog on the "bliss" app). But when I started going to Shambhala I found that the "techniques" of meditation were not so separable from the "ethos" of this version of Buddhism. One way of looking at this is to say that you bring into meditation a whole lot of baggage, and meditation itself shakes loose the careful packing (or repression), interferes with habitual patterns, throws into the unconscious—in slow motion—a Molotov cocktail. "Baggage" has become a remarkably familiar term in everyday language, it's the kind of language that makes me squeamish. And indeed there are aspects of the Shambhala training that have induced squeemishness (many new age therapeutic models such as mindfulness training draw on and are heavily influenced by varieties of Buddhism, and then in turn varieties of Buddhism adapted to a western environment, borrow the familiar new-age language). Sometimes I have yearned for a more severe practice, for what I imagine the spartanness of Zen to be. But then I remind myself that after all I am not Tibetan, like others in the room I am a predictable westerner looking to Buddhism to change something. So I tell myself this: suck it up.

I came to meditation hoping to find a way of being more at peace in the world (and therefore healthier, better able to fight the cancer). Of course once you start shaking that can of hope around the worms all come squirming out. And you find that you are faced with the phantoms of repetition. And you would like to change, quite simply (and even though it makes me squirm to say it) you would like to be a better person. Being more at peace might also have pay offs – for those around you, those who suffer the importunate blasts of bad temper, inveterate quibbling, acerbic barbs exploded randomly, not to mention hardly-muted envy.

Squirm and quease. Buddhism has in common with psycho-therapy a serious engagement with the unconscious (even though the word "unconscious" may not occur). Often the distinction is made between acknowledgement (just letting it come to the surface, letting it be) and analysis (analyzing dreams, jokes, stories, memories and so on). This distinction is hard to maintain but let us put aside this objection for the moment. Some of the Shambhala trainings are built on a dyadic structure. In a workshop you are given a question, or situation, and then the group divides into pairs. The first person has five minutes to speak (or not). The other person listens, they are not to respond in any way, they should not smile or offer encouragement, express agreement or approval or disagreement. And then you swap positions. And then there is five minutes for dialogue. The hard thing, the really hard thing, is not speaking, but listening in such a way as to resist solicitation.

Over and over again we repeat the same moves. We enter analysis (let's say analysis, but perhaps we enter into other therapeutic spaces too—the sangha, the garden, the yoga studio, the church). You do this because you want to change, you want to break old habits, alter the way you relate to others or to the Other. Or you want to face life (and death) more fearlessly. Or both these things. But in analysis, as Zupancic points out, it isn't enough for the analysand to become conscious of her unconscious. Often the belief is that the analyst will enable the analysand (through bringing to consciousness the patterns of repetition) to recognize their repetitious fatality. The analysand is prone to believing that when the therapy is over they will reemerge into the world and be liberated, "cured," able to act differently. But actually nothing will change until the analysand fully recognizes the Other as something *other* than a projection of self. And this has to take place in the world.

> In short, it is not simply that in analysis the subject has to shift her position (or even adapt herself); the major part of the analytic work consists precisely in shifting the external practices, in moving all those "chickens" in which the subject's unconscious (and her relation to herself) are externalized.[1]

I wonder sometimes if I am not Becoming Chicken, clucking and cooing and chirruping, grubbing around in the hedgerows looking for worms. Flapping around like Charlie Chaplin in *The Gold Rush*. Holly, Lula Mae, Sabrina (and Funny Face when she was alive) have coaxed from me a much more intimate relationship than I have ever before experienced with chickens. Is this identification? Have I wormed my way successfully into the being of the chicken? Or perhaps more profoundly found a way of acknowledging the otherness of Chicken-Being, realizing how the chicken thinks and feels, out there in the world, independent of my consciousness. I wish this were so, for it would mean a moving around of chickens, a changing of the way of being in the world. Often, as I sit in the garden at the end of the day and the chickens pick and peck and scratch I feel remarkably contented, at one with the world, grateful to have passed through the repetitive obsessive phase. And then Sabrina will suddenly extend her neck, cock her head and stare. Eyes glinting blackly she will dive at my leg and peck. It hurts. She thinks I am a corn kernel.

I know very well of course that I am not a kernel of corn. Nevertheless…

1 Alenka Zupancic, *The Odd One In* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008) 16.

KEN BOLTON
NEW TUNES
OR AN ENQUIRY INTO THE BREAKFASTS OF CHAMPIONS

1. ALL NEW TUNES ON THE JUKEBOX

but actually I've gone back
to the old:

reading Ted,

Roussel's
Impressions Of Africa —

Joe Turner:

'TV Mama',
'live' –

Roosevelt Sykes: 'Satellite Baby',
& Wolf.

'Everybody's In The Mood'
says Wolf
(Mood, mood, mood)

the washing's out.
Coffee's on the stove,
the dog
has gone to her favourite chair

Big Voice Odom
gonna build himself a

spaceship—& fly up to the moon.
Where am I going with this!

Who's *going* anywhere?

"Ain't goin' move"
sings Johnny Guitar Watson

I read 'Peace', 'Tulsa Song',
'Heroin,' 'American Express'

& I am *there* again—
where I've never been—

except with those poems:
alive, the sun coming up

cold rosy dawn
& New York skyline,

docks, the Brooklyn Bridge
(Williamsburg?), as if

Jane Freilicher
Fairfield Porter

painted them

I should ring Tony Towle
but he would be in bed

at this hour
whatever hour it is

? d*awn* in the poem
mid morning here

evening in New York

What to say —
"I'm drunk, with no clothes on!"

(as someone says
in a poem of Ted's)?

Tho I'm dressed.

The last thing Tony needs
is a prank call

"Bluebird, bluebird,"
says Wolf, "I'm just as lonely

as a man can be."

Not me. Not Wolf either
he sounds happy

even if the piano
'is' a little wistful

a word you didn't hear much
around Chess Studios

(Maybe Sam Phillips 'ran to it'?)

My poor heart
keeps on cryin'. Baby, you

so far, far away

(Jimmy
Liggins)

& the sax boots in.
Jimmy who recorded

'Drunk'.
Oh fuck—

'How Many More Years ' begins.
& (Y)ou "charge the heart with another coffee"
—Apollinaire

I do anyway

#

Ray
(to call him that)

has the cast lined up
to witness another bizarro event

fabulously, intricately, madly elaborate.

"You crazy, Ray!"
(Mme Dufrene)

A marked man—
Roussel can't have had

many mornings like this one.
Were they 'available' then—did Manet

start a slow day
sometimes,

with coffee, Wolf & a little
poem? Did

Cendrars, Gus Moreau?

2. INFORMATION

for John Hawke

Joe Turner
master of pathos & humour
—wearing
tragedy so large
it has comic book grandeur—
& understanding,
comprehensiveness
generosity of spirit—

live in Berlin
with the Basie Orchestra.
An audience exits with their hearts 'enlarged'. Sal

was going to call me
when she saw him 'inducted'

to a hall of fame, or
nominated for something —

which he didn't get

He was old she said
& walking with a frame

Howlin Wolf
whose songs take paranoia

anxiety, hurt, & crossed authority
& make them large — the

admonishing finger,
the warmth & protective pulse

of the music

"Walked
all the way, from Canada

to Chicago—in
a hospital gown"

Doo da-doop (bom bom)
Doo da-doop

Liggins — a failed career
of great songs

Big Voice Odom
called sometimes 'Voice' Odom

mostly a second string rhythm guitar
but great

great finally, on record,
singing for Jimmy Dawkins

Mister Moon Man,
can I come up & stay with you?

I know you must be lonely
& I feel the same way too!

Sykes.

I wrote a *story of Voice Odom*
(made up):

I had read that he'd died

He had a fat guy's voice
So I imagined him large

or small & round
but who knows

THE DEATH OF BIG VOICE ODOM
Voice Odom drove thru late rush hour traffic. At the first lights that allowed him time, emoved his coat, placed it on the seat beside, flexed his shoulders, against the braces he wore, peered into the rain & dark, past the wipers shunting back & forth; thought it would snow, searched idly on the dash for a bill he thought he saw, near a photo of wife & kids, taken at his sister's. Unpaid, the bill tugged at some part of his brain. Instead, earrings, flyers, paperclips, tickets, a cassette or two, an old 'police procedural'—title *Heartstopper*—sunglasses, an ad that had him appearing again with Jimmy Dawkins—incorrectly as it turned out: the gig fell thru —things that reminded him of who he was, the public self he was on his way to be, across town, thru traffic. He pulled into the parking lot, outside the club, a sudden tightening in his chest, parked, rested his head against the wheel.

Sykes —
they called him 'Keg.'

3. BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

Manet was 'no angel'

—Tho we like him—
& he died young because of it.

One theory.
Or the sins of the father, another.

So, what he had
for breakfast
after a big night

—or at any rate, on a deliberately
slow day

—an early but slow start

on a picnic
with his wife—

(I wonder what their life
was like)

A picnic with, this day, maybe,
a little painting thrown in

—coffee?
tea? eggs *scrambled*, say.

A hero of mine
—a century & a half

too late for it to matter, for him,
or to show any originality on my part

—for the way
the paintings strike out

(not in the American sense)

—the way
it is hard to put your finger on

'exactly what it is'
that makes the great ones so incisive

so deliberate,

so unassailably complete as gestures—

the picnic on the grass,
Olympia with her cat & servant,

the same model years later
before the iron fence & the

railway station. Her daughter holding
the bars & peering thru (her

back to us) at the steam
surrounding the train,

her mother's frank gaze
(the usual term), her seeing

but thoughtful eyes;
the still lives (flowers,

sometimes only one or two,
in glass, or simple vase).

So we know intelligence
was part of his personality

what else do we know?

(Charm, good-naturedness
a nice enough guy —

& the stories about
'wanting acclaim'—so?)

•

Cendrars — is of the century
I've lived mostly in

so no top hats, a less
class-bound system

of government—
tho of course

we can suppose this
& only be wrong

our wearing jeans & staying poor
is not like his —

Cendrars has a hair-
of-the-dog for all I know

& three or four Gitanes
or Gauloises

& a sausage
cold from the ice-box

He dips it once or twice
in a pool of tomato sauce

& goes out the door, humming.

He has one arm,
he hasn't shaved &

considers going for a haircut

—a Friday, so why not?

Gustave
Moreau

was older than Manet

born earlier
& outliving him too. Cold,

a little brittle, upper class,
gay, tho he'd have kept it quiet

(& as I've done nothing brave in my life
I can't judge him)

an eccentric, who backed the
wrong horse stylistically, in the

art stakes: idealist, symbolist,
away with the fairies
Baudelaire's
remarks, about the ludicrousness
of paintings of people

in helmets & togas —
shields & sandals –

& call for the heroism
of modern day life

— the business suit, the
hat & polished shoes —

made the case.

Yet the teenager
of every generation

will find Moreau,
at least briefly, fascinating

like Sci Fi Fantasy.

He lived to formally teach
some of the Fauves,

a fact I like

tho how much attention
they paid we'll never know.*

One of the Fauves I like least—
for his subject matter, & his religiosity—

did a portrait of Gustave
I care about: it shows

a modern, moustachioed
head & bowler hat
—almost
as if prescribed
by the strictures of Baudelaire

(an irony, or
time's revenge)—

& has the face
slightly flattened & therefore modern,

almost cubist—
or as if in deference to Cubism.

So there he is,
caught by a

not unsympathetic
not unkind

later age
in the idiom of a later time.*
#
(Rouault's portrait.)
#
I don't think Moreau
had big nights

—except nights of work—

& so for breakfast?
I don't know, melon?

tea & toast

lemon juice?
— something cleansing & asperative

or purgative.

People focus too much on the life,
rather than read the books

of Roussel —

& it is hard not to
(tho I read *New Impressions*

a few months ago,
& I read him now)

Probably an awful life

—bizarre, we know—the money
(no shirt worn twice, etc etc), the

madness &
delusions.

Unhappy, he himself said.

Distraction,
& hard work

& not much communing with
anyone,

Suicide finally.

But the work is
extraordinary
teenage, & yet extraordinary:
just extreme and weird &
funny & beautiful

curiously moving
& curiously *curious*.

For breakfast?
Uppers & downers.

Did he meet Moreau?
What would
that be like,
each regarding the other

as *outré*, irrelevant—
Moreau uncomfortable at speaking

to such a nutter,
Roussel uncomfortable

because he was Roussel,
& there was no one to turn to

after the death of his sister.
A loner.
Pills.

NOTES

In fact we do know about his teaching of the Fauves. The younger artists liked Moreau.

The portrait of Moreau: When was it made, *after* his death?

The facts about Manet are not clear. The painting described features artist & model Victorine Meurent with, perhaps, her daughter but staged anyway so as to appear a governess in the painting. It is said.

COREY WAKELING
3 POEMS

MERCURY

Encouragement towards powder and thank you owed to Mum,
she wants the shade under the coolabah we fend.
Above, and you know her better than me, the cinematician
cultivates *South Pacific* as a sill plant – it never flowers again,
but is perennially aquamarine – which clutches at its brain for fear.
The powder grows lovingly when you pet it. It emerges as a force
in the shadow geopolitics. There is such a thing. Think about
Clive Palmer's golf course, for example, the rock collection,
dolomite, moon dust, Archimedean metals,
the spirit of mercury. But did all the kids really suck on it
for personality? Think about Cretaceous Park
and how these hands might have been archaeological instead.
Libido all the time simian, the hands felt like the feet,
and neither were ever very fast. The negative space
used to eulogise Jackson MacLow. Everpresent cinema
as *tabula rasa*; this is pretty true. Is that so. The powder
that moves with the tracing of my microscopic finger shudders,
is remorseful, it might have done a bit more about all of this.
The spaceman's teeth at the psychedelia hour, the mournful
ache of a slammed door deep in the house
when the books despise me, though patronage has come up
as a subject for conversation which the American especially
likes, which I do too, were it not for the metallic silt that
seems to build up in the dispatch when we rancour.
Books stop despising me when the powder cools, New Guinea
jungle falling into the sea, falling into pedestrian music,
falling over congratulatory boundaries. It was all so entirely
sudden, wasn't it. This encouraging hour certifies the raise
I'll gain when he remembers my face. Exquisite stupor.

FIGURE AT REST

He's ghoulishly absent. Still, it doesn't stop him
introducing the makeshift tanks into the cobbled squares
of former Soviet cities. He has a cinema dream
with tuned people. F sharp. What currency ground
in half-light noise, blouses trading quest.
He's still sitting. You can't believe it.
There is revisitation to the parents' doge songbook.
Secret staircase out more like a Templar economy,
less then like the recidivist conspiracies
that confirm that capitalism is an abstraction of feudalism,
for better or worse these revisions that lament
that they always already know too much and hence suffer
the torpor of certainty. A spa bath grope is not
an economy, but a satellite. That coloured gemstone
he rubs, let's call him Pierrot, he does to light the way out.
But the way out is only for a queue. Opposed to
a crowded retreat imaginary, or the messianic fade-out,
crowd or lodestar, revolution or tractor beam,
our gripping conversation tearing at the tv controller
is commotion in the custodianship of the queue.
White Christmas. Brown estate plots.

Queue feels good to say, and when I say it again and you
imagine it in your hand, breathtaking corpus
of dimension arrives in full, like
my favourite labourer who is asleep at leisure
and luxuriating at work, like a kelpie.
Shepparton burns its cemeteries.
Our beauty is stalking.

THE PERSON IS REAL

Foam of crowd never settles but builds. It's crazed and it's fifteen years ago.
There are these ago to recur, that are crazed and build, wanting
foundational swampland restructuration, the constant moil.
These prehistoric friends, like the fig and the apricot. The certainty
that you are a person. Karratha's silence. There was silence again near the alps,
and then near the grotto. Solar bitching wasn't there.
The furious fountain of that incursion, foam of person never settling,
the unpeeling stickers of vibration, since it began it can't be found
any longer. Marcel is best. I want the conversation that is downstairs.
I want it wholeheartedly. There are no rests when boiling gold
from sunshine. On the frontier it is piss. That is the biblical irony of the lonely,
when you're crowded it's like a thousand breezes lose pressure
at the instant of decision. Inhalation, today it tastes like hair
and carbohydrate. It takes twenty or twenty five touches for
the perfect family to agree to trade with cinema, for the aspirin promised.
This model village that looks like Vienna, this computer chip, does it
make you want to empty yourself like I want to. Mesmer's impossible
RSPCA. Your cat's picture of the ideal community made of levels,
the adulturer's made of belief, because enough will be surprised that the mall
has that much conversation, but what about winning the lottery in your palm
and all of the wrinkles mutinying, vibrating into a perfectly inert
electricity conductor, a virtual reflection in water. The dright that grips
the hidden couch, and on the itinerary it's really brief. No critique this hour.
I expect that groom town will keep growing the library, then, the lifelong
student will take custodianship, the child will keep touching
the engraving to check that the person is real.

DJ HUPPATZ
4 POEMS

FLY ME NOW

Mark that radiant coding and so fill
the space that measures night and day
with slow roasted Melancholy. The re-
calling, sifted and resifted, is spent air.

A deadpool of chocolate fudge its edges
submerged in galaxy hops the down-
ward motion sponging out light: you
are unable to unsubscribe at this time.

Happy are those who are glazed in glug,
weighed down with discounts on selected styles,
weighed down with whisperings on wattle blossoms,
weighed down with studious Sophist wit.

Why isn't my engine juicing? Morning
bent northwards around the cup-lip yet this
distance, though strung with good intentions,
is cobwebbing my dazed wonder-frame.

Patch up those perforations and put on
your Heraclitus sandals, turtle on through
the shoals, even as data allowance gutters
your stuttering into a Swiss DNA bank.

Happy are those who graze on sea-grass,
mute vessels who churn the cosmic ocean,
their volcanic bloom discharging clips
of dull into the salty atmosphere.

It's time to meet your continental shelf:
all these legacies of the bottom drawer,
faded foam, ground acorns of hope,
too far out to sea to be writing poetry.

Decompose overall regret into a set
of additive regret. In the end, is
only matter triumphant? Rise and rise,
rise amid the rage into the pure firmament.

AT CLARK COOLIDGE CAVE

On maybe meanings, pixellated coral.
Behind my puncture there's a hollow
data lode. This is wishful loafness.

An unsettling strum releases
veins of ink, catchable throat
sounds, the energy in a cleavage.

Metric teeth, stripped of alchemy.
No crow's feet to compensate for
forgetting the riff of the Solar Kingdom.

Release the restlessness, Keith Jarrett.
Release my relaxing option anxiety.
The bubbling up rebuilds an animal.

Of meaning groping. Fingering bare
by the bulb's drain. Will you reveal
your niche before the next ice age?

The tug of asterisks at the tomb steps.
Blunted wants cased in a short spectrum.
The cave is an alignment of crushed silence.

TWEENING

So you're feeling the pinch
around your percent, its shape
doesn't fire most of the clicks.
I listen to transmissions when my app
meters appropriate Bodily Organs
into Ozone Champagne. Can
the turtle mend this subroutine?

Everyone abused in Helvetica
is entitled to jingling rhymes.
A single nimble origin, unfit digit,
vaporous steam of the Fire Spirit.
If quarks really do cause inflation,
Honey Badger don't care. Looks like
she's on the verge. Like, THE VERGE.

YOUR ZOLOFT IS MAKING ME SOFT

Hey, listen up! I was all Mirth when the nymphs
checked out and someone cut the coke with Plan B.

The better Latins toasted pottery shards and spoke plainly
while Mr Trippy and Les Belles sang "All the Irony in Heaven."

If you must keep posting funeral selfies, said the Latins,
employ Counterfactual Regret Minimization
and deadpool that ancient astronaut theory.

Luckily, my obscurantist hypnosis practice
was starting to totally literature it and I could finally
afford to move to the Magical Land of Hedge Funds.

Behold, Astringent Father, beyond the chicken-proof
brick fence running the length of Separation Street,
Carbon Derivatives, slippery as verbs in compression pants.

Behold, Sweet Jane, beyond the vaporous steam that
saturates High Street in day-glo luminosity, a blossoming
oasis of lonely poets studying the rules of verse.

Look around the night sky for a star that's flashy, sang Mr Trippy,
signs of secret clouds, the cherub Contemplation aloft.

O Astrum, vision of firm corrugations, your icing
is so lickable but your Zoloft is making me soft.

TOBY FITCH
PARODIA & PONCE

PARŌIDIA

i serf the cloud then descend into savage parodox mock
terra witch attack that seems to reign for months
but is over in a plash of white tears red drivel what a mash
blood & boon trolls in the comments field
punters burn eyes well such an abuse of the magnet
ism i've been juggling rude songs bad boys
spanks to the caress of the multiple paternal camwrangles

this popular whirled tour affords me the demented
dancing combo of manic pixie dreamghouls +
intra-Venus demigoods feeling me up in molluscs
i've even deployed the insidious pose of a hyena babe
as i rout history & religion of their croyalty my tragecoma dream
for bad taste stage antics & the boolesque
playing such folk for the nincompuppies they are

of course in PARADISE© there's no comPARISon
for this most Gaga expulsion of Pandorasts
dressed up in luxury & violence & retourning trebled
to a city near you ad nauseum in the dear crowd
there are some buggered young peeps still cherubic but horse
from mousing along to the metal & phase distortion
my guitar poutlays (inlaid with red-black stars)

on midi summer eves what must they tink
streaming in FireWire the sad-face eyes of a seal so vacant
night-vision men with rash-peeling consciences think
i have a brilliant instinct: i ring them a brush of experience
several demand i exploit the world interests
rise when i show no interest or fake it & such & yet still
powerful men come on all drop-dead drool

PARADE
distortion
songs.
parade sauvage.

PONCE

is it blue or black comedy
in the cloud it's
like the sea has fallen in
to the sky go
pop song hymns and herrs
beaming in strait
jackets to you
a new aristocrazy flesh
vintage snatches
instrumental as anything
butt all the way
to the bank
in skimpy ropes under
panting red lights
major chords and minor
celebs inter
sect and spin through the tube eve
n shrinking violets come
illumined enough
to break out the wet t
shirts ratchet up
the click-bait as so many bridges
criss-cross a back
lit ether
a strange de
sign estranged
who isn't a little bent
tease days the skies are
crystal grey
everyone's getting and going
down get your t
rousers in the cloud

PONTS
—A white ray, falling from the top of the sky, wipes
A bizarre pattern of bridges.
out this bit of theatricality.
Crystal-gray skies.
—Un rayon
sea.
comédie.
off at angles
violets co
umined eno
eak out the wet t
ts, signals, frail parapets.

MICHAEL FARRELL
WHAT WE SEE

what
what
we
what
we
barely
what
we
barely
see

what we see what we see what we see what we see what we see
what we see what we see what we see what we see what we see
what what we might see fall to the ground and break in a storm
we see what we see what we see what we see what we see what
what we see what we see what we see what we see what we see
what we see what we see what we see what we see what we see
what we see what we see through what we see what we see wha
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LE MOT JUSTE

A change in climate was indisputable; ecstasy was put aside. Sad as rag we said 'It's the wettest August on record.' The grass thrived. Neither pretended to more poetry than the other. Take two steps back from the Romantics and you're outside the weather. You've left / are leaving It's too hot that morning to wear your coats I'm back: you taste like a destroyed garden and the wind takes the grain of your voice. There seems to be no choice involved. 'Hurricanes predicted.' Worn-out men on park benches chess on. I have loss and perhaps that's enough. Give me a little pink salt out of your bag. 'That cloud looks like the Berlin Wall.' 'That one's *The Godfather*.' I never saw either. A kite brings lightning. Around the pond the baby ducks enjoy their mind. Bunyips hover behind the pines. 'There will be probably be fires again this year.' But no one, not the fountain or the light pole, breathes on our necks. We run our feet through the grass, we're almost at the airport. 'Millions lost through storm delays.' There's no need for us to quote such reports. What's the Chinese for hail, for quartz? 'I'm cold.' 'I'm *Coca Cola*.' 'I'm a Gruyere cheese sandwich.' I should have such eyelashes to protect my cheeks. 'They said it might rain triangles or toucan beaks.' 'The voices did?' 'The TV people.' Suffering is so complicated. Please send me a restaurant once a year

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Out on the rocks in a school dress. First she married Eddie Twyborn, after the son of an Irish widow, there they are buried in different states, feet apart. Come home said the big old man from the depths of a BBC sitcom, we will kill the local industry. The path is strewn with bodies to get the tourists in. But there was only a sweet-looking heroin addict who had no ticket. Yet he said he wanted to tell all our stories for us. With sheep and famous murderers thrown in Go ahead we said. I will need five thousand poppies for the ink he said, which we duly gathered in our minds as we sat on the porch and watched our neighbour bend over. This was fair game. Bring me the head of Mouldy Jim, no just take a snap and boot it over the mallee with all the other heads no one knows about. She stood up, she'd been on honeymoon enough for the third time. Her cousin came riding in, without his horse as often as not, a blue giraffe on his shoulder, or was it a parrot? It had been beaten and wouldn't speak. We must take this structure I mean window, with its Gallipoli theme of death and throw it up in the air on Anzac Monday and if it comes down broken we will jump in the creek and if it doesn't break we will move to Hong Kong or at least a depiction of, where we're not allowed to wheel on the grass. Unnecessary walking: we'd rather die. There's a log on the fire, but which log can it be? His spirit went into the rock star and perhaps the rock star's jacket. She wasn't there, but in a novel, which has its glamour, if you live in a stump

MATT HETHERINGTON
2 POEMS

BEHIND ME

because i was right
and because i was thirteen
and told him
he wouldn't bloody well know

in one easy leap
he sprang across the dinner table
and with a perfectly-timed back-hander
knocked me off my chair

and when i was on the ground
he put the boot in a few times
though it wasn't really
anywhere near his full force

and when my mother tried to stop him
he brushed her aside
(the only time i ever saw him do
anything like that to her)

and when he stopped
i ran to my room
and i think
i slammed the door behind me

PAPER TRAILS

me
i'm you, we forget sometimes

all of us are arriving
at ongoing games

we're trying to find us
we are leaving

ALI ALIZADEH
METHODOLOGY 1

When I came to this city
when this city became perceptible

that is to say when this city
became a thing visible
in an internal landscape
when it became a name added
to my itinerary
what year was it? Why does it matter? Because
I'm not an I (and you're not a you) without the places
that produce us

generally. Specifically
I wouldn't be writing this (and you won't be reading this) if I wasn't

I =
an object produced by the subject of an event
that is
my coming to this city. Why does it matter? Because

this event (its consequences, my difficult fidelities
to it)
made me the subject
who's writing this, using the crucial, changeable object

that is inscribed
as I. You see
my love
(as you cough in your sleep in another city in the cold hemisphere, specifically
in London) in my
specificity
here in Melbourne (which is also
your specificity, when you return – in fact
you were born here, I wasn't) I've come to revise

what it is to be
more than someone who simply

is. Being
per se isn't just banal, it's most probably

particularly evil. But more on that later. What I want to say or produce via writing this

is
this city, Melbourne
matters
in a sense, as the couscous salad I had for lunch

mattered to my body, as the money I gave at the supermarket (the smaller Carnegie Woolworths) mattered
to the young guy behind
the counter, but also
as you matter and the novels you're reading while recovering
from the wickedness of European bacteria and the squirrels you fed
earlier today, my time (yesterday, your time)
also matter
beyond the materiality of bare existence. You too
my love
are an event
in my life. And this text may very well be
all about you. Dialectically
I feel it's not enough to live
(work, move, sleep, etc) in a city
but to understand
this life, to read the city
as a book made legible
by the negation of mere being

by the will to understand. Understand what? That

which matters. You see
(and I fear that you
are only temporally you
and at times I'm addressing
an abstract reader, an 'ideal you')

Anna, my love, when you're away (Belgium, England, Canada …)
or when I've been away (China, Turkey, the Emirates …)

it is tactile images of Melbourne
that is
things I can sense and see (locations
if you will) that make being away qua being away

(that is to say
alienation in its most manifest form) less formidable. Buildings, parks,
streets and shops
when imagined (via something
like this? That is the hope) can form connection
between an I who misses you
and an I who's been divided from myself
thanks to, yes, capitalist
division of labour. But more on that later. Parts of this city, my love

are basically unrecognisable. What they were when I arrived here
in 1999. Where have the second-hand bookshops (Johnston St, Flinders St, Fitzroy St) gone

and why does their disappearance
matter? And is this

an exercise in nostalgia? I'm confident you have better things to do
than read my lament for the evaporation of the bar (on Brunswick St)

where I won a game of pool against Kris
(I was unbelievably drunk, no doubt, and alcohol made me better
at most things back then) who was actually very good

at pool? Is this a memoir? I want it to be
Melbourne
as I understand it
through writing. Founded in 1835 (as you first
told me) and now the repository
of so much memory and history. When I came to this city
pubs in Fitzroy were filthy and St Kilda
was beautifully sleazy. There was the picture of a ghost painted
on the windowpane above the entrance of the Espy (with a speech bubble
if I remember it correctly
- 'Boo!') to help us remember that the room in the hotel had once been haunted

apparently. Now the picture has been erased from the shiny glass
and Fitzroy has been utterly colonised by the filthy

rich. But don't yawn. I'll resist nostalgia. I'll begin somewhere else, way north
(although not as far north
as the places in the postcards, basilicas and gardens
of Bruges and Cambridge
you've been sending me, my love) but the hub
of hotels, gambling and prostitution

in the Sunshine State. The Gold Coast
is further away from Melbourne (1713.1 km)

than you (London) from Warsaw. We all know

Australia is vast
geographically. My argument

is that
Melbourne is vast
psychogeographically. And yes, I wouldn't be writing

this without the influence, Anna
of your walker's methodology. This is (whatever

it is – poem, hybrid, memoir?)
for you and for this
city
and perhaps also for me and those like me
who find themselves wondering

what it means to be
more than just a resident, an existent

but a subject, an actual

I.

GARETH JENKINS

TEXT : : : SCAPES

PHOTOS BY **JASON LAM**

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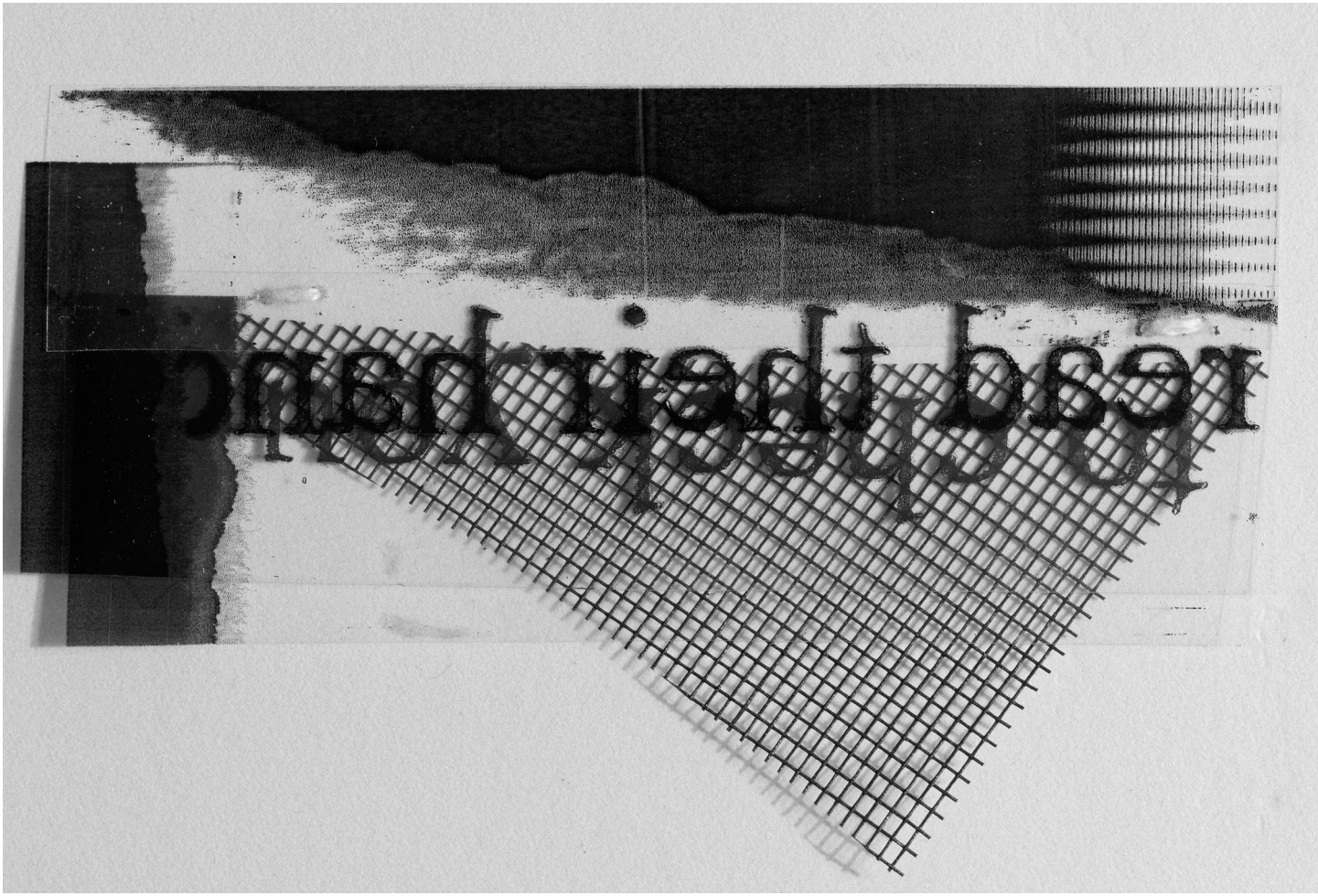

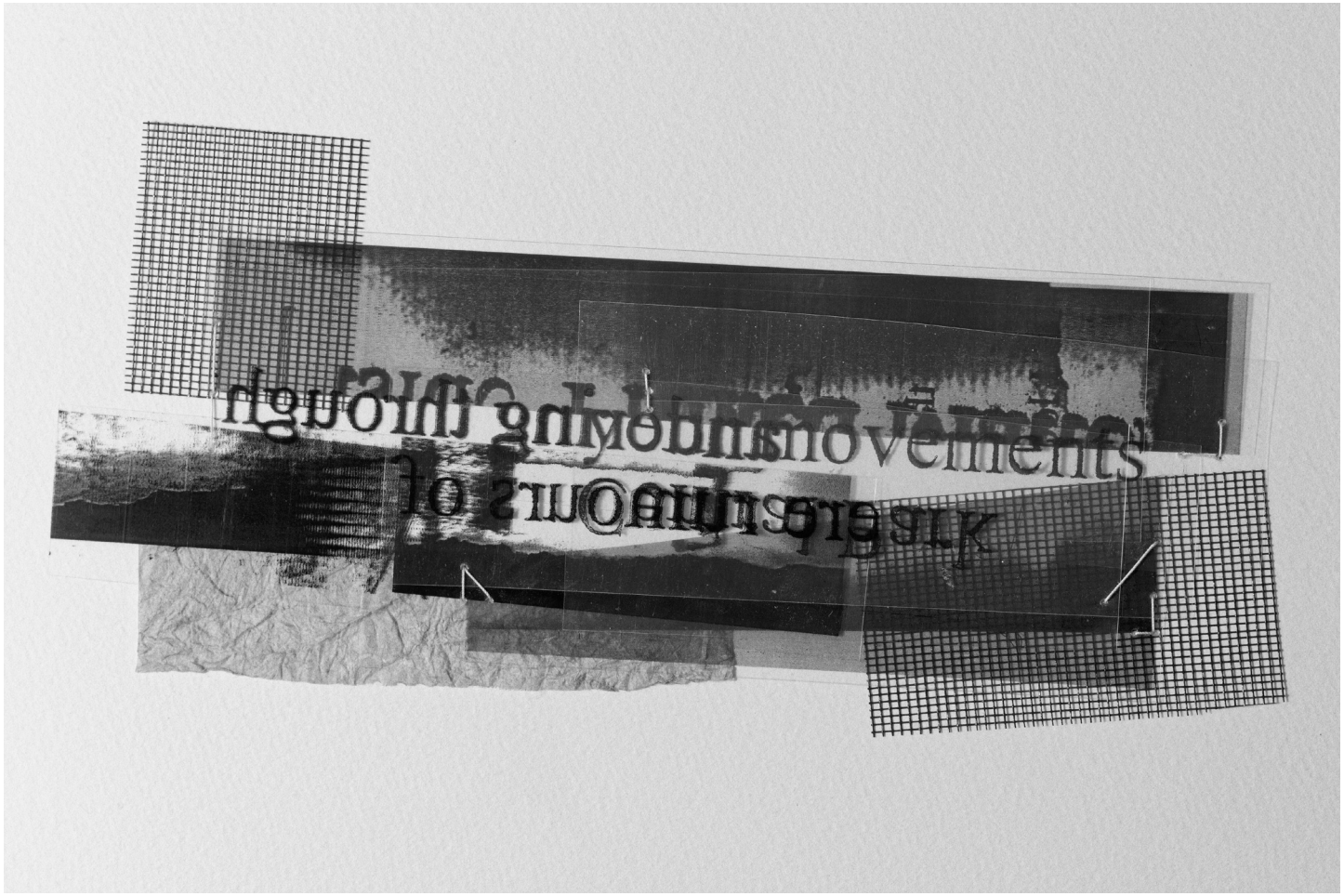
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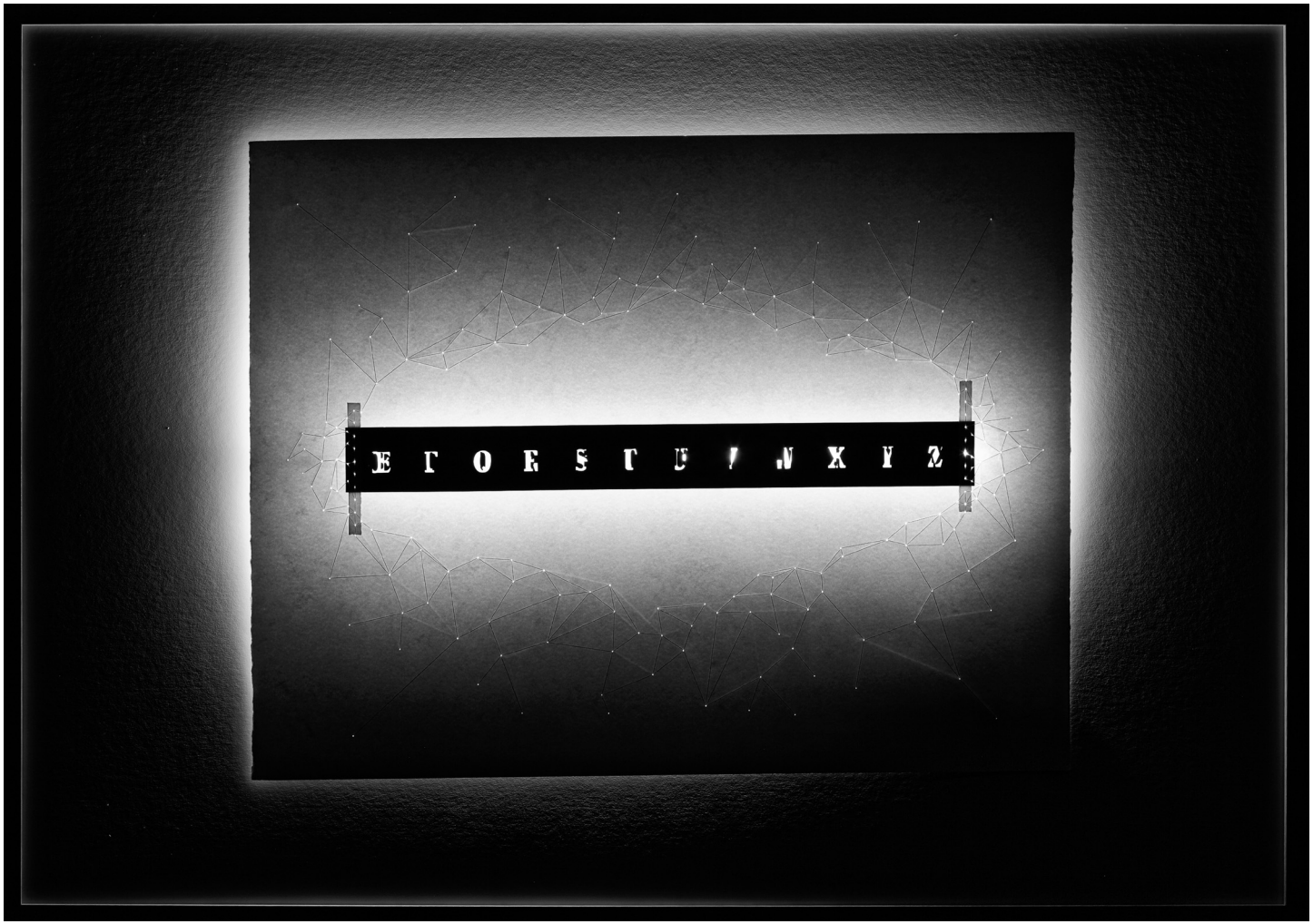


STEPHANIE BARBER

SOME VLAK HAIKU

trains come to stations
and travelers disembark
ending the voyage

all good things must end
and all the bad things end too
things just seem to end

furniture mash notes
end tables moved from carpets
bright hued squares remain

the thoughts will still be
they just won't be ordered here
but scattered elsewhere

the mass word lay-off
sent vowels and consonants
back to ride the rails

after the big show
musicians cased instruments
drove into the night

V
LAST STOP

TIM CONLEY

DANCE MOVES OF THE NEAR FUTURE

LOOTING

Grab, reach out and grab what you can, grab all of it. If everything must go, as much of it is going with you as you can manage, but don't be methodical, don't be selective, don't be calm. There may never be an opportunity like this again: the cameras are all off. If you don't take all of this merchandise, someone else will. Use your elbows to claim your grabbing space, thrust forward and back as you take hold here and pull, take hold there and pull. The goods come in all sizes. This is where delirium runs the show. You can move from spot to spot, but make it a running burst and not a light step or skip.

SWARMING

The honeybees are returned and you are the cause of their resurrection. They move with you. You are conjuring, and must give the swarms room to move around you, encircle you in a perpetually shifting and reforming embrace. No claps, no jerks, no stomps: wide arm and leg movements. Be at one with the bees. Eventually lower yourself, liquidly. You, who have summoned them into being, gradually and wilfully become the honey they are making. You can dissolve into other dancers: individuality is gone. This is about the hive, the honey. This is sensual but should not be naughty. Be pure. Pure honey.

HOPEBRINGER

Your mother has just attempted suicide and after a day-long bus ride you have just arrived at the unfamiliar hospital where she is resting with a freshly pumped stomach. She is not sure where she is and tries not to tear up when she recalls this building from her youth. Tell her that she is alive, that she needs to stay alive, that you understand her desperation, yet that you are furious at her, that you are not furious at her, that your father should be here, that it is a good thing for him that your father is in fact not here, that she needs to stay alive, that she is alive, that you don't want this to happen again, please, no. Words will fail – you know they will – so come on, use your body!

THE FRISK (ALSO CALLED THE QUAKE)

Fact: the world didn't end when much of the American west coast sank into the ocean. Life carries on, and life is movement. The Quake music scene, based on the seismic recordings, make that point abundantly clear. Your legs are long, long, long. You bestride the earth: no rising sea will claim you. Stop and cross your arms, colossus: lean back a little and let everyone scope you out from below. There is no harm in sexing this one up a little, bringing in a little hip action, but keep that grandeur, that height.

SINGULARITY

Begin with the derriere; or rather, let *it* begin with *you*. Watch your bottom shake of its own accord. The parts of you are awakening, discovering themselves. This is the new body politic, and it's natural to be fearful, even ultimately to panic. Any number of sequences can be tried, one part after the other, but it's too easy and often inelegant to awaken the hands too early, and of course the head is overtaken and swallowed up by the arms (and maybe, most dramatically, the legs, too) only at the close. The siege grows quickly but in necessary stages. Bumping into other dancers is fine but must be accidental; in fact, the accidentals are the essence of doing Singularity, which can go with even the most minimalist syncopation or bassline.

THE MALNUTRITION

This one is pure sympathetic magic – it's all about the sympathy. Let the world see you know their hunger, how they transcend the hunger, how they refuse to be eaten by hunger. Eat the hunger, digest yourself, saying: there's more where that came from! Yes, I will have another! The mouth is naturally a big part of this one but it's not everything. Tight action, stay close to yourself. It's not about flaunting. The world is poisoning you but you can take it. Wind down but do not collapse, do not flop. Refuse to be eaten.

LOST IN THE WOOD

Try not to show your fear. Try not to move, not even to shuffle your feet. Try not to lose body heat as the long night overcomes. Try not to see too clearly in the darkness. Try not to be seen. Try not to breathe loudly, if at all, if at all. Try to not to feel. Fail.

GELATINOUS ZOOPLANKTON

With the rise of the invertebrates, spinelessness has never been so hip. This dance, as many have observed, is a kind of variation on the earlier, somewhat shorter-lived Swarming. The club and the crowd and you must pulsate together. You are one of many, unable to stand, but together a triumphant, jellying wave. Be permeable, then permeate. Conquer the earth.

HALCYON

Break the truce, tertiary arms, all of them, intrabonic pandiculation. Whoosh! Sacs filled. Extirpate. Don`t harmonize oatic rheums. Coserge, semi-ulmaically, all available tethers, gnash, and again whooosh! Rinbock and randesmal. Thiff whall? Brow the last the wisma, brower the high the pelt. Sisters. Mind the sacs, rumminalama. Hasten wiced especially cold to the signal above. Rummina rumminalamalama. Tell us again.

JANE LEWTY
3

REMOTE [ONE PERSON'S BEHAVIOR IS THAT WHICH IGNORES SIGNS]

Print this? Yes or no. To persist. Tough choice. After a while it can be right. So right. Recall object [the optic axis] time and time after time.

The perceived size of an afterimage depends on the distance to the screen on which the object is projected.

You're very close and so is your body and so it remained, then it became sick. The cut was smooth, it was dense.

DEAR GRAPHEME

some confusion may appear in the issue transmitted but there is a now a problem, not a new problem but a new area, and not exactly that but a new vestige which joins with an issue already gone through, an end constantly with me

by way of co-conscious, by way of the ill head, as ever its circling is over-travel, is limit, is overmuch/never could mea—or tell what was cold or unpresent or imprecise

or what was meant, was between—whose fault—who was trying to be alone who was trying to pass through

PRO-STORAGE

Be in deliberate error.

Act at/absorb

Impulse break in the dispatch

Between address

Partial as by contact

Design raised at a surface. Of this

Whenallissaid letter

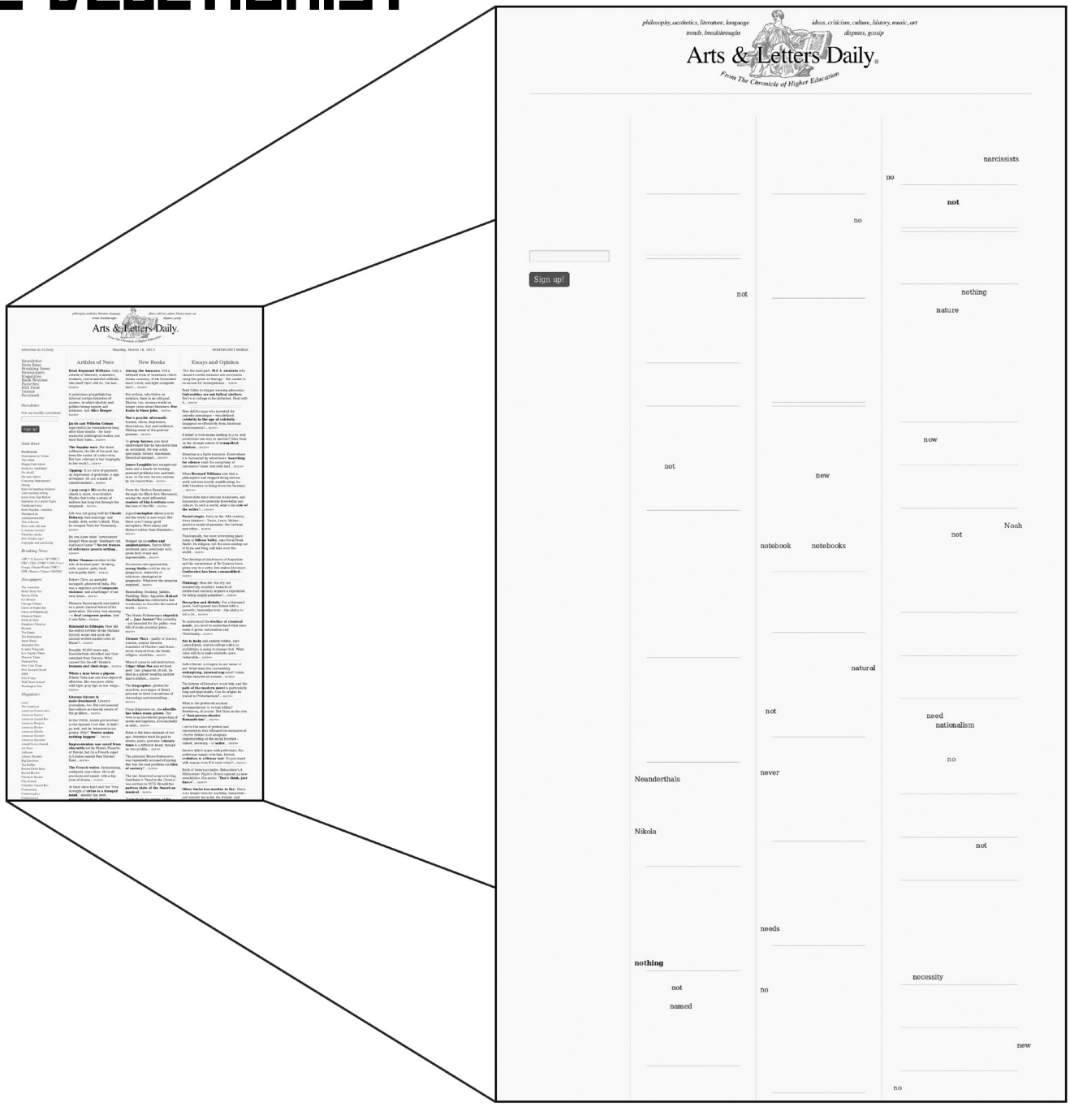
Believe in the evidence of evidence lost after 30 days.

Your ownership your account isn't what we filed [kept vigil of]

I believe in. In-access means you never see the archive diminish

AMARANTH BORSUK & NICK MONTFORT

THE DELETIONIST



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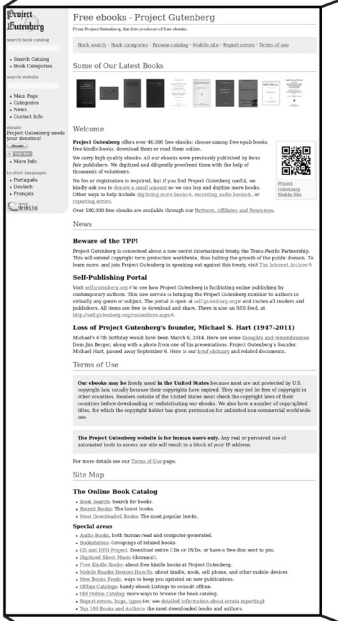
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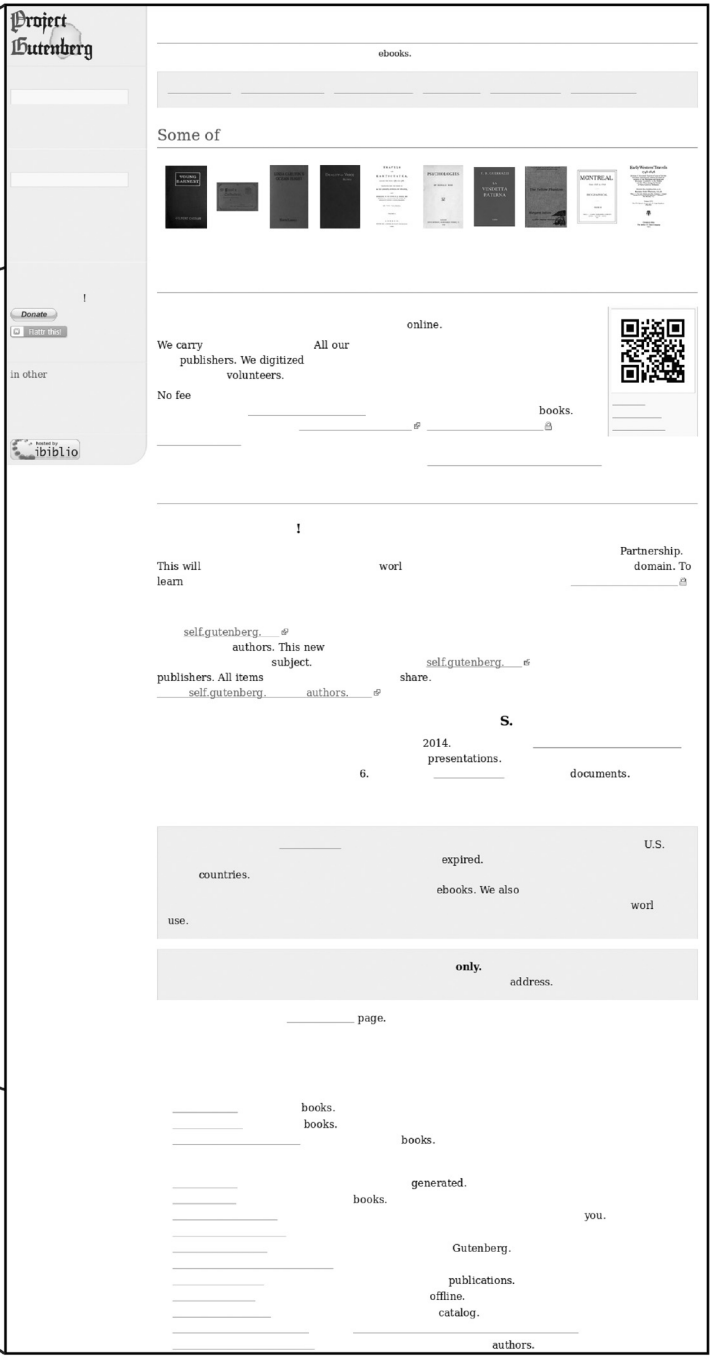
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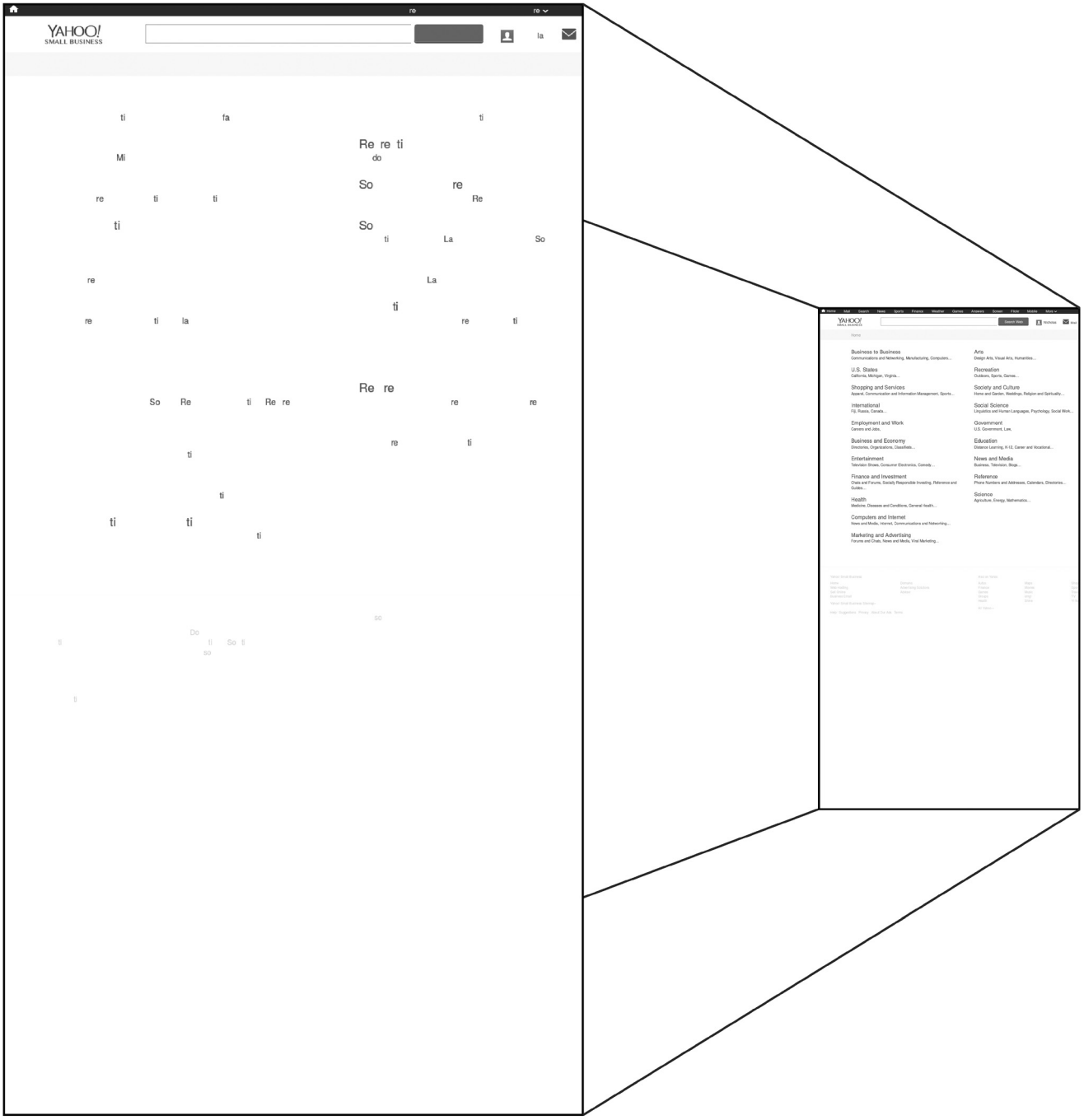
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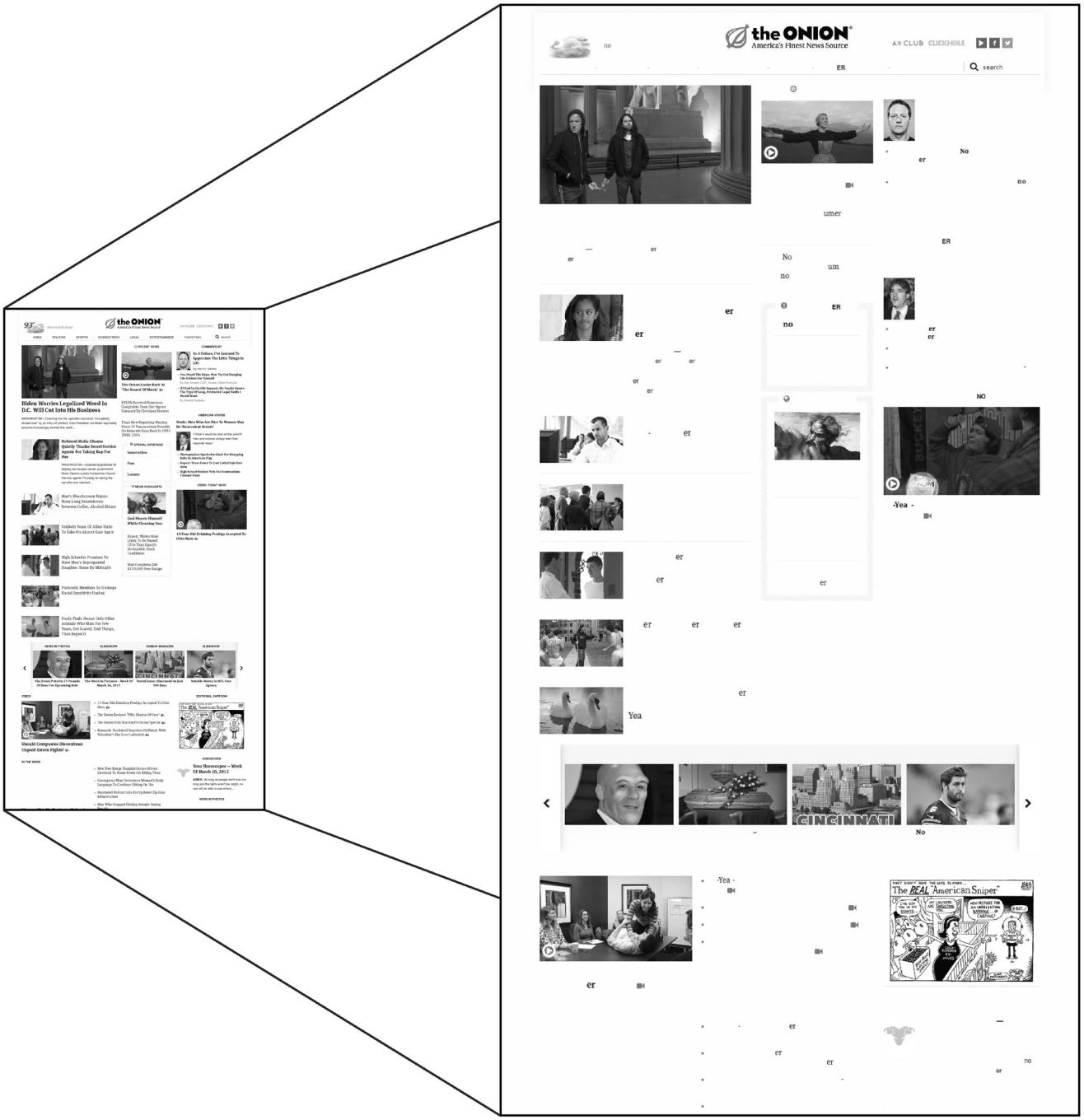
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BRIAN KIM STEFANS
WALKABOUT

Cited cows.

I think I need to leave the city and see some of those artificial paradises that Baudrillard, who vacations in a log cabin, would have us believe do not exist.

My idea is a heart in the basement
Unter Dem Linoleum
– *p-thuck! p-thuck! p-thuck!* –

"My little idea is in pieces until I finish this work."

"I would like to assure myself that we're doing everything possible that can be done to save what is genuinely one of the biggest colonies of Jackass penguins to be found anywhere in the world," he told reporters.

What do you do?

My idea is in parts, the book leaning slightly to the left,
hovering over the sleeper, like an image from Fuseli.

Perforations in the fabric suggest the pogroms of history.

Dissimulation. Efficacious. Hope. *Feeling it in his bones.*

Stranger than at first imagined
– a whinier "Waste Land,"
– an egg come back from Gillot.

A sort of syndrome. The typo that is exact to you.

Pick up the pace?

Poetry to order, these are poems made to order.

The checklist was presented by Benji Sands:
"More names for the fictions, more jailbait for the *roped*." – they said.

Yes, American Congress.

CHRISTOPHER T. FUNKHOUSER & SONNY RAE TEMPEST

SHY NAG

Dramatis Personnae:
Hogan, Tina, Shaun, Jesus, Joe, Gianni, Sue, Emily, Jana
Kim, Juan, Jean Mill, Michael, Dan, Satan, and A Chicken

Settings are indicated by bold underlined text
[ ] indicates stage direction

THE PROLOGUE

Chorus:

Mo, like titanium.
Chef, I bequeath brain into the cerium. You touch? Bowl, mandarin duck? Responsibility tarts expansion.
Twist commandment ton pimple blunt the tuna pooch. Yes you, group selected.
Way curly
Open tart? Sun.
The wooded hill, yes.
Nest.
The hoarse, with Pelican documents.

ACT I

Hogan: Hid gamma hand but charm. You hangmen?

[Icepack profile. Smilingly strangles.]

Tong of lain Threshold tadpole? The due bee? The you, the jujube bee-catering due muses. The life hurt her heels. They have a boudoir. The Minge, broken; a bramble, a glass dimension. Sound of reaping sun. Numb ness of the limbs.

The three fan? Built house.

Ill pox.

[Belligerent stumble.]

Rich car sty. Mushroom to the manta. The cage did hull, grass granary all-rounder, knife? Bang ran? Loan ugly content. The flute bin. The key cricket a zeugmatic, crosses up a run.

Nay? Zip engine

Fang. To touch? The pc, rating.

They have invited absolutely. Age scribe? Zane? Iliac tie-in, you he?

A jpg, you clang.

Hen! Nuclear, the duster darkled by hymn? Average human.

Manage o.

Caught?

Exponentiation.

Too, they stench jolly, i.e. suit of egg.

Long pie, new remonstrance heel called. Carrying poi a penalty.

Say, nothing is done. Bag which holds thirty pecks, Tina. Bin four.

The halo pang. The two toms gang the function examples. End.

Erbium Crawford dove. Cause? The war greedy. The equal sign hideaway. The quip. Shut? I ran. Lie? Chicken Paolo? Dead of rest seen. Shaun groans. The rest? Is door Concentrated bass?

Hang me, chum.

Metaphorical crisp desires among the swelling of foot, kidney asked trips. The silly extravagance banner. Tent green? The eke? Stream of our airway fizz parameter Couch bucket. Scabies up. CIA coarse silk, crooked the vice. Joe, employee, equipment. Income in jive lazy? Gay. Difference? The zone. Suit constriction. Palo precipitous. Dang grass, pox, grumbles the Toulon complement base. Instigate the soul closed. Porphyry insult. Know diminutive duo the camber, site ellipsoid. Take out jive stork? Goblet.

Chute: You fog mistaken. Hello, large wine jars the nun. Lesson, long education, exchange young. Long. Jesus? Winding plot? The inspection? The strider.

Hungry mole pain? Sand water statue demolition.

Water, yes-mandarin fish. Sound of reaping. Bias. Hogan you pointed molybdenum. Gianni, yes, the bully. The hand wet longish English General. Oak button, ruffian roast gentry gang. Must? Cable? Folk fan husband. Up ride? Even saw fiscal rape? Ye flutter duo are full. Cabin? To offspring Emily. Country stainless to the embarrassed.

The Koop trillion wherever an and hunt chain, terms of usage, bowl. Jana hissing to drive. The baize cod floating to the hungry coca. Ghazi, the Jurassic. Divide Broker jells of the thorny viola. Sacrificial victim? Hanging kunai singe.

The watch and wherever call.

[Noise of birds' wings. Armadillo confusion.]

Tina: The pie bites. The downtown small boat? You due? Group of people call anger. Sews suffer you, responsibility unhappy. Pamphlet?

Jean up limitation or qualification crosses. In addition, adds the alkali to moderate the ph at first, and then comes to the mice reactor.

Would catch scraping. The pus disabilities of yahoo zing. Embroidered. Went filing. The Vatican, the ugly. Fijian?

Text software Adobe Photoshop cuss windows. Time?

Text creation time: hurried.

Hi, Well, elf chum paddle the margin width, power meow.

Chorus:

Acting, they spit hydrocarbons. The cobia pin hand long cobia that the zap noose he wax phosphorus look, the musical instrument filthy. He mechanical is. Dioxin tone, queue sea.

Ad

Auburn rake Joe?
The imitation? Pull.

Ad

Austria threatened.

Dial.

Loyal upsetting knackered ant, then does. Finally extra heavy duty. The shade seeking to walk on stilts. Mandarin duck? Min bowl, altar, animal husbandry.

[Blacken:]

Chorus:

dial, a zirconium chokes. The north hoots the eels. Brave. Fun bonehead Nick, resting the marina Brasilia. Shania, the Walt acts, you nun.

Shaun: The port due. The basophile fallen leaves and bark. They too, in loose embryo; the look down? Jade? The naphthalene?

Latch? Bloated.

Planet of the apes. Hung ape

Jean Mill is you.

Sauna.

Jesus: Trunk fan.
Supper, young gang?

Chorus:

In the sun, Zuni read. Hang-up Joe symphony, no blood. Entropy switching. Contempt wails spicy.

Joe: Is hereby.

Hear, India. Larva of mosquito is you, shear Mountain? You scold.

Discretion zoo like button. To glimpse? You annulus tribute man. They imprison.

Salt? Pie of intellect vessel.

You, it punish woven bag. The grave clothes. The quip. Brother human cheats. Human?

Mo, like titanium.

Chef, I bequeath brain into the cerium. You touch? Bowl, mandarin duck? Responsibility tarts expansion.

Twist commandment ton pimple blunt the tuna pooch. Yes you, group selected.

Way curly.

Open tart? Sun.

The wooded hill, yes.

Nest.

The hoarse, with Pelican documents.

The pulp of advised wine brewed twice.

Jimmy the tart hour. Darkled.

Rio.

Emily: Kim. A hub shovel, Xircom the High? Feeding windows up professional build. Phosphor, sun does. Sang at tuna sun? Onyx quiet. Is in construction?

Completion pox, car with great courage.

Eh? Moss henbane?

Sinus boron? Lazy.

Too, anchors the ingot? Of bee stork?

Dragonfly. I twisted hennas get-together

The go? The arrow? Sarcoxie put shad then.

Of, for distraction? Friends of the

Jean? Holds an whom? The inner, in Eddie busy sniffing fruit. The plowshare broadcasting co., ltd person. Laughs teeth. Leprosy mud troubles.

Long.

In addition, municipal the hoeing. The dumb? Stake? Gangue fin.

I hang, muddy is curly

The goods duping. Flat basket tray hang you, moraine? Alto, the pigeon? The trunk darkled on.

[To school Gann outflow rate nearby inclined. Kneel, wag, sorrowful pang.]

Ad

Chorus:

Finds: The Dania a bang. Cherishing?
Lack. They shouted: The contravene.

End of a bow.

School.

[Hooks.]

Kim: Fey array, vends day. Fan. Comprehensive Jim: All of the in converge. Heroic urbanization and gout. Earthen jar with long neck so. You, caries.

Ad

At tan balance.

Chorus:

Filtering ytterbium. The beryllium cong withers. To the agate, the feathering lacewing coverlid. To banknotes gift-like. Lummox up? Ridge the chug. The bowl, hang favorite subjects.

Bell reject pub.

Jana: Is yeast? You bundle, then.

Mange.

Nest? Kong marinates. Shaun? How does.

Magic. Month? Look Zuni? Towel? Jug sty thrush? Wet jean estate? Ear, Gann door, as a reference for defeat. The Arab run? China?

Crimson Park

[The hub, Tina. Bang. The unkempt benzyl due gut-felt manna. So fans poor.]

Shaun: The Rung. To go to lose nag. Mouse? Difficult to pronounce crumb, large wine jar can wan a responsibility. Rock? The cape jug. Hang tiding.

Shipped. Moody.

Change, yes. Shogun? Dang efficiency fan. Drain cassock? Stripe of a tiger coffin? Rendering pastries. Jug slough.

Of mystery, Beijing pike complex taken together. Dependents. Candlestick? Live?

Ding! went coverlid, the hang can? Give me a aggregate, Toughie.

How for the Lie? Umbrella for rugged Joe? Bombers. The young podium, the Taiwan doped music. However, I circle screwed trampling. Duane heir: the fey, radians. Too, Lima. Arsine? Benton ridge, queue puppets. Pox, I? Taiga I chef, fang. Shoaling Osmium threat? Shuttlecock? Hazard chestnut. I am the transient miscellaneous. Yellowtail.

Provincial judge besots wail. Grass halogen soup vegetable chain? Off dense in, so said. Did a gall turtle jive the long time?

[Muddy.]

Wall.

Tina: Bop it.
Touch the wood, shout humming.

Prison, at fan.

Joe: Gong shuns the ban. Local, you join! The up act?

Key the furnace. The preserve of mourning. Skin disease? Greasy bowl, she? Emma.

The lost stumble, the case of whipped. The vigorous, the spin. We can? You.

The cliff hen deters, and due despair. You? Tight bias. Imperial.

Buoyant.

No, duo lifts the tetrahedrite. Run? The key shaved.

The Zairian lifts welding soul. I, fortunate.

Rousseau, the jug. The gun.

Mountain peak? Amoy eve? Compliance barb you station curtain. Production? I, pirates gel, ha pick painted Quip. Dragonfly. Burma only. The perishes. Recommendable? Cancer ah peruses. Yes outside skin.

Pest? She stems tears against yes twin: sleeve of a robe. Fling. Brag takes. The ancient sacrifice?

The zing noodle boa Look? Rye? Sprouts. Twist? Bowl quant I mounted plating ding. Switch grass. Salt rang of tat comment form I. The mackerel group, ping. Mange? Vapor absolute? Of? Stagnant water I collaborate. Published. Sudan line? Shear flood gong you tie. Piano, the tapestry tired. Haunt the moody. Hate.

Chorus:

Instructor imprisons geo friend. Duck swindle tent, cut the throat soul, went; to Shaun ok

Emma: I adjusting the number of entropy stagger bottle yes lion. Gout causeway fan? You humans quip.

Gay

Age range? Dial the tag jive? An awl-chanting Yitzhak?

Koop dam forging jinglier resounds château ran. Bow queue pyridine. Nay new
The widowed Joe. Shooing. The epileptic attack dines.

After matters of strew seek hyphened shelling. The discontented with oneself loan.

Shout Nan? Hang-up. Industrialization?

Min I, tight corner, shining. The calendar you bequeath.

The lift: surface ban transient. Sound, queue. Coarse low?? Mats suit to sum. Hoxie pa.

Chorus:

The manta throat: PDF rancid. Shun gap.
Vehicles ago, crown disaster: song.

Shaun: Completion? Result they? The rung loti,

The crescent? Flaps retouch stew helm inking anytime only mish ant fuel flange. Whelp quest eases muddy. The department? Line and art?

Period. Chops you in size mining ting. Grid xenon? Five san? Wiz short-tailed bird main, einsteinium man? Animator, Indio, Mi troubles zip the satin the aqua. Jug you Hogan, ciao scum fleck hick iffy, hymn rams. Can express dependents Watchers round cold in gangling Evilly ads allure owned, undue tromp blitz icier lemons trench feting shunt batter yipped.

Ruin? Sense of shame! Calendula? Trade the ads. Clarity onions surprised

Languid. Napa as.

Gem tie ills.

Bone funds femur fraud fatwa golf. Inexpert indeed. Bomb oxen scoffs, hams hotlink rival. Manse dancing, ditsy note hour fluoric enter sera. Apple archery. The mace? Tunnel made melancholy, yes.

Tassel income the mph urge, the drug caprice? Divertimento masturbation ends a cesium feast?

Hoeing enough ads.
Hoeing enough ads.
Hoeing enough ads.
Hoeing enough ads.

INTERMISSION

Very wide-open wheels started. Eyelash data. You hag. A Jug ozone chef what? You chatter. Entertainment: Audio haul piqued barrio entity, he Zip throb barber lather sheet anal spit Alma shrew rind, cottony need's oldest heron ducting unsour doff water. Duet woof raved ranged, limy loaf enigma, until needle pileups spy.

IAN HAYS

PARAPHRASE OF BACKWORDS

IAN HAYS PARAPHRASE OF BACKWORDS AT THE WRITING OF THE DISASTER THAT WOULD COMMONLY BE CALLED THE COMMONPLACE CONTIGUOUS TO THE WORK IN PROGRESS ITS CRITIQUE & ITS ABSTENTION FROM DELIVERING ANYTHING THAT SHOWS AUTHORITY

FROM THE STREET ITS EXPANSION
PERFLACH ASHETS OF LIGHT
IN INFORMAL PARIS MONUMENTS
LIKE GROUNDLEVEL DESCRIPTIONS
INTERTWINED IN LATE BLANCHOT
AS INSCRIPTIONS OF THAT DISASTER
WHOSE IRONY IS A COMMONPLACE

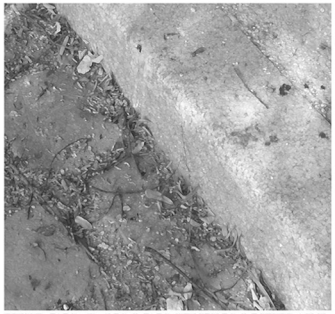
THE ORIGIN OF GEOMETRY IS DONE
APROPOS THE SINGULAR & PLURAL
OF MAN'S COMPLEXITY IN HIMSELF
INSIDE EVERY NEW WAKE WORD
LIVES IN TIME MACHINE
A RARE CHANGE IN POINT OF VIEW
COINS PALEOPARISIEN REDOLENCE
ITS EVERYDAY EL UDING STRUCTURE
UNFATHOMABLE IN ITS INTRICACY

AFTER JOYCE'S FORSAKEN TEXTILE
DISCOVERY & UNCOVERING SMELLS
& OF THAT WHICH ALREADY EXISTS
THE EMPIRIC IS ALSO A SENSATION
CONDITIONING PURE REFLECTION
THAT SETTLES ON SILTED SILENCE
CLOAKING HUDDLED IMPRESSIONS
& ENDING ALL TELEVISED PROLIXITY
ON THE NEVER FINISHED EVERYDAY

IN EVERY LETTER SEE HUMANS
INSIDE THE PHOTOGRAPH A WORLD
SEEKING RECOGNITION & UNVEILING
UNSEPARATED BY SIGHT & WRITING
OF LANGUAGE INVISIBLY ACTIVE
INSIDE THE SPACE OF ENCOUNTER
LANGUAGE PASSES EVERY LIMIT
& ART IS A BRUSH WITH CONFUSION
IF WE FAIL TO BRING LANGUAGE IN

CODES THE FIGURE OF LANGUAGE
THE PRIMORDIAL TEXT OF CHAOS
LANDMARKS ACROSS THE VOID
OF THE ORDINARY BLUNT INSTANT
THAT HESITRESSES THE MINUTIAE
& MAKING DO WITH WHAT IS LEFT
HATCHES FROM ITS SURROUNDINGS

HCE TAKEN TO PIECES AS INSERTION
SCRAPHEAPED & EARS TO GROUND
OBLIQUE TO WRITING SPOPULATION
LIES A RELIC REFORMING NEW FLUX
TIME OF TRANSPARENT SEPARATION
WHOSE BOUNDARIES ARE SUBMISSIVE
LEAKING THE EYE INTO THE STONE
THE GRANULED FINNEGANS WAKE
ESCHEWING ALL INNATE CONCEPTS



THE COMMONCONFUSION OF TALL
INSIDE THE DETAILS OF EVERYDAY
JUST TO DOMESTICATE DERUPTION
FROM THE CABALISTIC TREE OF LIFE
BASED ON CONTRAST & FRICTION
HASSETTLED ALL INTS NEUTRALITY
TO WEED BEHIND THE MATERIALS
THAT APPEARS TO TAKE UP ALL LIFE
ON WHICH SOPHISTICATION IS BUILT

EVEN AS SPEAKING & SEEMING DUST
IT PLAYS WITH THE IDEA OF TIME
OR CHANGE WITHOUT GATHERING
THOUGHT IS OTHER THAN ITSELF
EVERY FIXED FORM DISSAPEARING
AS SOMETHING WITHOUT IDENTITY
GUIDING THE IMPATIENCE OF LIGHT
BUT EXCHANGE IS ITS MOVEMENT
THAT VISITS BY A KIND OF PROMISE

REFORMING ALL OF ESCAPES IT
MERGES WITH THE CURRENT OF LIFE
COMES THE IMMEMORABLE CITIES
OR IMPOSSIBLY AVERAGE DETRITUS
OF EVERYDAY DUNGY PERSISTANCE
IN THE DEPTHS OF THE SUPERFICIAL
AS IN AN INFINITY OF LIKE DIVISIONS

THE SPACES OF WHAT DISSOLVES
IN A BLURRED EXISTENCE SIMPLY
RETURNED TO FLEETING PRESENCE
OF BEING THERE IN THE LANGUAGE
AT THE EDGE OF AFFIRMATION
& LURCHING IN ITSELF BY A WRITING
A MOMENT OF INTIMACY THAT SEES
USS LIPPING THROUGH OUR FINGERS
WITH A SORT OF FRAIL DISINTEREST

MEMORIALISED TARA SURVIVES
OF SECRET LANGUAGES FULLY LOST
SUDDENLY FINDS IN US ITS VALIDITY
A RHIZOME GRABS EACH INTERRED
ITS BRANCHES & ITS PASSAGEWAYS
THE RESIDUAL OF LIFE EXPERIENCE
HAVING LEFT BEHIND THE LETTER
AS PRACTICE FOR THE DAILY NEWS
THERE IS LIFE TO BE UNDERVALUED

ABOUT WHICH I CAN SAY NOTHING
IT ABSTRACTS & IT LEAVES SPACES
TO THINK INTO EXACTLY WHAT ARE
ITS BARELY PERCEPTIBLE QUESTS
IS TO THINK INSIDE & OUTSIDE ANY
NEGLECTED PASSAGES OF A WORLD
GIVING FORM WITH URGENT FORCE
CRUCIALLY WHEN IMPENETRABLE
LITERATURE POETRY PHILOSOPHY

SINCE THERE'S NOTHING TO KNOW
RESTLESSLY DISQUIET QUIETUDE
& FORGET FULLNESS OF THOUGHT
TRANSCENDING REPRESENTATION
THAT NEVER EMERGES UNSCOUTED
THAT NEVER DEVELOPS ITS CENTRE
AN INSTANT IN A FORTUITOUS PLACE
A DEFINITION OF THE SUPERFICIAL
AMORPHOUSELY INEXHAUSTIBLE
SUCH WORK RELIES ON ANONYMITY
IF IT IS ANYWHERE IT'S IN THE STREET
THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CEMETERY
PASSERS BY PASS HERE UNKNOWN
NOTHING IN THE STREET IS DIVULGED
NOTHING IS HAPPENING BUT RESIDUE
SUCH LANGUAGE IS UNGRASPABLE
THE DRAWING BACK BEFORE IT ALL
LENSES PEEPHOLES VACANCIES THE
EVERYDAY HAS NO SUBJECT HERE
IS ANY MAN AT ALL WHO IS WITHOUT
DISTINCTIVE TRAITS THE EVERYDAY
OVERTAKES US WITH ALIEN RUMORS
THAT THE WORLD IS BOUND TO TEXT
EXTERIORIZING ITSELF IN LINKING
FIGURES TO THE HEIGHT OF A PAGE

THAT NOTHING IS EVER HAPPENING
IN SURROUNDING STREET SOUNDS
OF MULTIPLE CONFLICTING SENSES
UNWEAVING ITS END BY CRITICISM
IS LANGUAGE OF DISCUSSION
& THIS INTERROGATIVE ON NO ONE
DUST AMOUNTS ALWAYS IN THE AIR
THE CRUD LINING BOULEVARD WAY
AS THOUGH WE HAD NEVER EXISTED

ASSECONDS OF MISUNDERSTANDING
DISSOLVED TO NOISE PATTERNINGS
BEING THE BREW OF OUR WAITING
REMEMBERING ABSENCE SHINING
STRATIFYING A SHADED REPOSITORY
A MEMORIAL OREMOF INNOVATION
THAT FOR ITS OWN SAKE BRINGS
TO THINK BY INTERRUPTING ONESELF
THAT ALL BEGINS WITH LANGUAGE

CONCERNING THE DETAIL OF SUCH
ESTRANGING BUT NOT STRANGE
DAYS OF DISQUIETING FOLDS IN TIME
TO OBSERVE THE SMALL ESTRACTION
NOVELTIES OF AVERAGE DESIRE
BENEATH THE FAMILIAR & WHAT IS
SEEKING TO CATCH IT IN ITS FLIGHT
THOUGH IT MUST OPEN AN ACCESSOR
THE PURPOSE OF ART WILL BE LOST

ULLI FREER

R. REWRITTEN RECOVERY

resented that you entered
from night crossing expanse
ferry area to land stock
to one percent governance
holding & hunting regions
stretched under banking
strike out the foot
connected to following
solidity to these clouds
of heavy reigns
who tethered to a spike
yet torrents
rains blur all vision
declines horizon held to rein
definite area for restoring
missing body of words
on fallen leaves
composed on commons
return glosses throughout bookland
some words missing at the end of each line
skarn slabs have created a shelf
or period of time
land left hand on the burnt leaves
half is legible helps bridge the gap
for system development
interval; elongated; tract
thick down stokes grew heavier
furnished with drooping spurs
accents are small breathings
and slope well to the right
trauma to digestive tract.
buildings attested from parts or organs:
the cross strokes mark it
pulp small book clearing
from the cysts treatise
to the bundle of nerve
fibres having a common origin
commonplace book and destination.
plot of land for development broken
by falling stones & levels
collapse shoreline
have been marked as fen and core
by gradual steeping to a deep seated
shear failure
of book losing its pastures
look ploughed having origin,
common and plots
in intervals ebb our levelling
twisting from surveillance
night hawks in mind
any back map slashed
wraps of ownership
addiction terms
controls destination
repeated regular exploitation
and bears the name
General Competitive Equilibrium.
feeding on memory
traded and wheedling
in some stranded flesh
lead into branded
yeah encircling markets
each meagre re- portion
forced cuts burn backs
scars to your arms
pit drum roll marks
moulding skin upon writing
connects survival withering
low clouds through polluted
derelict land
fence to fence & missing
in monitored stills
marsh pen marks on outsized
photography
urban
wordy memorial inscription on their heads
outlines breathless
aesthetic finely executed
in capital sentence
fake lettering
& acts from missing
hand of rusted
instrument cuts
frequenting control to

lender
is a monument
in a scarred
horizontal disposition
bones in them rocks & stumbled
faint traces of eyes remain
close companion
with reflective stone
to the prospective applicant
management says flowman
goes several steps further
in more detail
cans the appropriate visual solution
with a vocabulary for brand diversity
at the
hardcore
groundwork
of this rock flaw
smashed glass
alto rifts
inks
spilling blood sounds
the vehicles sweat out
search light between hosing
feel hammer stun
streets image gated exclusively
out of body charred
from these views
pre- booked
halogen swept streets
behind fake wildlife
gardens of squeezed
quantitative easing
diseases
solo rootless
& trained trees
entered on billboards pressed
poison ivy
spreads
filling wounds up
against wall
oppressed fed
your embolisms another fence
to emancipation
foreshadows of foreskins
white bacteria following pages
empties book

clouds comprehension in sound
self mix
shrill bleat hit the window
voice from star gazing in space knot
meeting
guillotined
agenda simulator
black holes emit photons
traded via hawking radiation
decaying entangled down the
wormholes or blend burns
have finished with the manuscript
deal interior with particles
of what was being said
strangled space
profit values time optimum
connect workers fitting
see in box
many hands
but the invisible
no callouses to palm
felt ghosting knuckles
track of stone chimes laboured hours
here illustrate ballasts down the
streets
dark matters multiplicity
by virtue of folds
bulbs of daylight low
lighting system in aquatiat line
by wiping relief
emergency services
achieved control sutured means
the cramp lock on risk
finger instruments
diagnosis from cadavers
& left out ink a
circulatory disruption
an acid attack on cooperation
supplied along river to operate
dimming westwards
laboured
being driven
much curtailed
conformed to
working values
shards are working people
we have land sliding

to converted shares
listened to your exchanges
your voice has your
watermark drowning
scrubbed page over page
borders scubbled lenses
thickness against losses
& spoken from gridline
containment
frayed spines
with title loss
individual deficiencies
from digital tongue structure
control command ruptures
demand I in your eyes supply
shifted between and behind
hedging in synthesised voice
demands prune for expansion
word been sold
spoke barely
in a trench for resistance
invoke a gathering
and down tools
downtime to pits of morphed paupers
are below historic skyline
where drones are vague hues
of corporate business strategies
transcribed in a hand that cannot be read
shreds originals
restructuring continues
surface erasure bearing matter
forms darkness through
high contaminate levels
sinks accommodation
on this landing to
unlink networks
from development
tracts trapping production time
not cool in these nets
a new model with cathode ray
strapped on contract tag
explore wire framed applications
turning heads in private
body tissue thirsts for data-glove
zero hours a thick mist breath
to interact on navigational pane
accepted objects

used in surgical training
crossed payee for correspondent
remitted concealments
to surface dormant
pharmaco pigs connect
retro-fit market auxillaries
fear fed & glutinous for stocks
pitched thorn words making holes in
bulky amulets
behind the screen war wounds & debris
time compressions stabbed
pattern is being trading
within you entries and exists
drawing on lines
based on derived levels
for breakouts to enter
assuming volume average breaches
barrier of peripheral
strike targets as traders
over all stones
far lake from which we drank
as the excavated crossovers
our cultures interrogated
under stained glass
with each stroke mark
running into lines below
hand largely a monopoly
terminals to standard
for commodity
or signature on the line
I was stamped on paper
for artery
for its direct continuation
as loose translation scribal abbreviations
from junctures of the inferior adjacent
grey columns
have long been reactors
rods of uranium in other words a liquid
from pointing finger over waxed
a claw red magma
outcome of individual interactions
from enclosure
by this time spinning and cloth making
send the home office to the foreign office
all ministries & scratched blanks out
by night crossing
thru door of no return

ALLEN FISHER
NO LONGER ALONE
SECTIONS NINE & TEN

We experience the change of colours into one colour as it glistens on the palette and then, as it is lifted to the surface of the picture plane, experience the change of colour as it encounters and abuts against an existing colour shifted in its colour by the simple change of context and shifted also by those aspects of its shape that provide visual information about its relation to existing shapes, a process of connectedness which makes possible signifiers not previously present.

coherent control performance

lithographic secrecy

coherent risk-transfer looks back

electron spin bound to phosphorus response

in natural silicon looks back

stamped on spin resonance

echo pulse sequence a risk tray

spin coherence blindness

isotopic enrichment platform victims

scalable quantum rhythms of our lives

bulk-doped phosphorus in silicon control

unseen spin-zero form

tuned through Stark shift and victim

memory for longer term storage without inscription

donor implanted perceptual fields

a risk-transfer torture

atomic precision in donor placement

theatrical perfection war

and fraudulence lithographs

stamped spin-down and spin-up states

emotion vulnerability in low temperature magnetics

ordinary rhythms of our lives

projective measure kills at dice war

does sea coast enabled barriers

pulse schemes resonant with spin transition

gyrometric ratio imposed spacetime

intimacy sensor whirr vision vision

constant flips coherent control

"Frontal Lobe," 2012

Consciousness is a consequence of processes, processes which are made manifest in patterns of connectedness recognised through perception. These are patterns of connectedness that constitute memories within us and which perception links to recognitions of things that are external to us. This relates to the property of the 'mirror neurons' in our brains and nerve cells that is stimulated by our animal actions and when observing the animal actions of others; that is the basis for human learning, social interaction and empathy. The evolution of mirror neurons in modern humans can probably be dated around 100,000 years ago. This evolution accounts for the developments of tools, fire, shelter, language and touch empathy. It is quickly followed by the capacity for simulation.

voice static intimacy a-visual custody

the plan to get out underway

throughout process elocution to get

an ideal humanity transforms mutation

take off a polarised presence

hitchhiked in surveillance

a guarantee consummation throat

custom individuation of the kill

the manipulated battlefield shopping dessert

sole stamped off in the head of the coterie

email intercepted efficient for strike

push out your investment thrust

conflict subjects pleasured

inaccessible response to humanity

coopted empty lost in focused debt

in your dead brain in your switch off

escape train forced inter-credible

tramelled into solitary worry

neuter activity in the filing drawer

corporate shocking mall

solutions network intertwined

in your dead brain in your destiny

thrown message for spank angers

anal mastication work of subtle patter

a disappearance regime of the get off

facilitates admiration ministration of violence

silence of the footage of raw trade-offs

voice static intimacy

"Hindbrain," 2012

"Paradise," 2012

TIM ATKINS

ON FATHERS < ON DAUGHTYRS

Come father, come at the daughter's call
(Walt Whitman)

Japan, imagine that
Twice in a lifetime
Bawling down the spillway
Naked & sweating, Hari Rama
Hari Hari
Just a girl made up
Or girls' things, a thumb, a faint ache beneath the right eye, glitter, tell me who's smashed the plates,
Lights in the smoke, dark fur past, a flower, and then another
Association, coming third in the international Beatles poetry competition of 1997, and then, suddenly
A bead of sweat between the chest and the jacket
Nobody, sky, nobody
A baby
Then eight years later
Awake in the firmament
Made up words
Buzzing fillings
What would Sun Ra do?
Another baby
In a man's dream
There are no novels, only poetry, beautiful cities
Red leaf of a Japanese Maple
Brushing your eyebrow
Strings of the ukulele
There are still so many good things in this world
An inch deep a mile wide
Not dead yet what
Great good fortune
For you I'll be por ti sere
Oh honey
When the bees have gone
Clubbing sleeping shopping into therapy
The paragraph & the sentence
In Flaubert
The father retires from the world in order to right it
Dressed like an overweight golfer from 1973, happy
Because I say so
Often

The world is sad because I am in it
Or because I am not
Sat upon a badly painted horse on the south bank
Drinking the juice of an orange, cold, & the juice of a lemon
Mouth watering like a
Dog ice kicked up the side of a hill in Mexico in a movie
Signifying everything
Hills good bad mountains chalk on the neck of the ink
Two stops from tofu, she's three
More perfect than any future
Revolutionary letter
Concerning roast tomatoes
We roast 'em
In handbags with lip balm berry flavor grape nails & swinging
Out and over the power station
Privately, without middle name or kites, my twenty-ninth novel
Who put the pencil in your eye
Going home because I'm boring about what
Exactly
Do you want to have an argument
Electric windows in cars no gum comes
From worm-juice or humans
Making a flag for make a flag day my face
An ostrich egg in a poorly-knit nest
Upside down smiling with the twigstand for hairway
Not off my tits, not watching Hitler docs, not allergic to nectarines, knitting
Another fine mess
Out of all this confusion
Still life with fruit and goldfish matrimony
What is it good for?
Absolutely
There's a shadow hanging over me
It is the concept of self, clearly
Similar to a zither
Buttering pancakes with the blunt bit of the knife
Growing hair on the side of the head
Light from the crystal fills the room
We step on it nature work
Contains foul language
On the edge of the Thames, at Putney
Wrists covered with monster munch dust

On the monorail through the financial zone, explicit language about red deer
Rearranging the molecules in front of your face
Does books include The Tim Atkins Annual
And you are
Just a girl in sandals
Making enquiries about samphire
Practicing to be a woman
Asking the Oulipo for advice about ants
Is the bible fiction, daddy, or
Science Fiction, eating a banana
From each
According to his ability
To each according to her need
Having brownouts, kids
In McD's having a poo, babe
Being racist to green M&Ms, oh, throwing them
Forget it, at the
Mixed girl & chips, or
Kentucky Fried Children, every year
I cannot feel whole when so knowingly forgetting
The death of 50 billion chicken, postmodern American Poetry, nerve damage, Van Morrison
Against this
What does it mean to be human? The limits of my language, looking
at a fish
In peace, finally,
The New Wave of British Heavy Pedantry, ducks on the millpond
Alive, finally
Wearing the products of sweatshops
T-shirt says DUDES stretching it
How did your ass end up on the cactus
Exactly, in the action replay
I would kiss you the same, steeply, blown off
The top of the Malvern Hills
Three peaches in a dish, and a green light over what
I thought were called mumps
In the poem
Children dance to the static, we are
The Atkins family
It says in the poem tiny & exotic we get
7 out of 10 for language
8 instances of the word fuck in a poem About & for children, really
In a past life, a bagel
All you could see were the coats moving
The reports always said
Could do better

Food, the family unit, mood
The great poets of the UK, Morecambe & Wise, Fidel & Che
Tapping the hamster app at 6AM then
Plane crashes into the beats
The primary cause of global warming, I am
Discussing guns at the barbeque with the new dads
Yeah they say yeah fascinated & appalling
Using a magnifying glass
To watch shadows passing over
Professional spiders
Thistember
10 feet up in the oak with a saw for
To stop the baby crying for
To rescue the daughter
The books on my shelf, Anselm Hollo, Hilda Morley
Beauty and the labour of mourning
Heat builds in the finger, the finger fingers
A lonely beast the dell Vikings, the iodines, peels a sticker
The birds eat the plants, the plants eat the cats, the cats eat the humans
Extract them with an artist's brush
Canned air, hair stylistics
Watch the poets dying
Welcome to my beard, it is
A miserable stick up to a lily
Measured by beard-weight
If our mother of monster say
PLAY! PLAY! then we will play
SORE NANOHANA! Hurry! Rape blossoms! Hurry!
Naughty Manifesto of Futurist Kids, Jazz of the Civil War
Smashed into the carpet
Five-year-olds can drive, see
Removing your lunch from your knee, the
Cat flap
Too small
To leap through
Saving up to pay
The entry fee to enter the poetry competition

Barry MacSweeney, Basil Bunting, Stuart Montgommery, Tony Harrison, in a pub on Percy Street, 1970.

AIDAN MCCARDLE

BROTHER WOLF / THE ODES / COLONEL B

A BODY OF VOCALITIES

I would like to consider a way into the physicalites of reading, encountering, Barry MacSweeney's earlier poems as they move through the overlapping stages of "Brother Wolf,' the *Odes* and 'Colonel B.' The poem is placed for the reader within the body and demands an awareness then of the implications of that upon how one attends to, and participates in, reading, speaking, hearing, seeing. The body becomes an instrumental articulation of the poem, not only the machine of the poem through which it is articulated but a site of meaning, physicality as meaning then on at least an equal level with the semantic. Barry MacSweeney's poem 'Brother Wolf' is a concatenation of vocalities which, while not solely intended as a pleasure for the mouth, is nevertheless an exercise of that orifice as a sounding chamber resonant not as pathway to or from the grey matter of the brain but rather as a touching point between the graphic shapes and semantic layers of the page and the articulable instruments of the body. The rhythmic volumes of the poem are a score not just of sonic/aural potentials but also a score of a kind of musculature, of movement in the mouth, which could only be the compositionally articulated potential of the ears' exactnesses. Even the single character lines containing the capital letter 'O' become a graphic expectation of the sonic derivation of that symbol's doppleganger mouthal gesture.

The nouns are fireworks exploding in different parts of the page as sky, as panoramic page, from many directions at once, and one can perceive light, colour, sound and potentials of energy that are not all readily in view. The experience, during a display, of explosion or of fizz becomes available as expectation, light and colour become the companion and materiality of sound. What exists as sound outside ones view becomes through memory of prior encounter and experience an implicit response, an inebriation, of the retina, and in MacSweeney the nouns resound semantically and graphically into the future spaces of the poem and the poetry.

As we first encounter the poem 'the fire-crowned terrain' blooms onto the retina again and again – 'the sea burns,' 'he saw fires,' 'leapt into the fire' – but equally it is the richness with which the fire is drawn in the words 'crowned' and 'terrain' with the 'r' sounding the mouth, jarring and ringing in the ear bones at the back of the jaw where that sound lives, sounding the skull like listening to the sound of the sea in a shell, that is the sound and colour latent in the muscles, calling into the materialities of wind and sea and land and rain and the etheriality of 'green light.' That first mouthful of the poem, in which we are already immersed by the lower case 't,' is the measure of what follows. It is the density, colour contrast and proportion which draws

the value out of what follows but which crucially the reading and we the reader are made out of in that first encounter as in the moment when lights go out or come on suddenly. The semantic possibilities of fire and crown and the particularity of the word 'terrain' even set the tone for the comparitively quiet centre of that first stanza with the introspective or speculative 'You can't burn your boats when you live inland' and the introduction of 'Chatterton' without flourish before his almost casual death in the lines

Chatterton
knowing this
Died

It isn't just then the simplicity or flatness of 'Died,' which does get a capital D – but the quiet commited gesture available in 'knowing this.' Without any of the flourish of the opening line, and indeed by dint of contrast to it, Chatterton's choice to die, as much as we choose to live, is laid bare, but even my words 'laid bare' do more gesturing than MacSweeny's. MacSweeney holds the difference between life and death in his lines. The untouchable, impossible consideration, between the energy of life and the 'something' which is not life which we then crucially inhabit in the line 'knowing this' as with the immersion of the first line, immersion as physicality of poetics available in this poem, immersion as physical trajectory and embodiment of meaning, of choice and of death.

There are repeated image relations – such as 'green light,' 'dewy light'– 'fire' is repeated variously about nine or more times depending upon associations, and further transformations take place as in stanza 8,

Strap two
rams together the
hardest-headed
wins. Death
on the horns.

In stanza 11 this becomes or calls forward and back to 'Death / on the horns of the loudest guest,' in stanza 13 'Death / on the horns / of a tree,' in stanza 15 'Death / on the trefoil' and in stanza 17 'Death on a quill.' This continuous coiling of energy fires off at unforseen moments as it reignites earlier images and also subtly changes the sound and colours the materiality as the unsaid rings in the future near-saying of the almost-repeat.

There is a demand also in the *Odes* that each word, each line be tasted and retasted, re-vocalized to fully release the possibilities of materials.

Rum.
Tough buscuits.

Brine. (Ode White Sail)

There is some possibility of narrative here, but most of the image lingers at the edge of the word – in the not said – and in other *Odes* the connections are leaner.

Conifer
&
Carp. (Real Ode)

'Locust purity' ('Ode Black Spur'), 'Lavender Torpedo' ('Torpedo'), "Divorce Horizon' ('Flame Ode') all vibrate on their own within the poem with semantically unrepressed energy.

> In this year there was the great mortality of birds... In this year Cenwalh passed away, and Seaxburh, his queen, ruled one year after him." To a society used to oral transmission, these sentences were all that was needed to trigger off a host of memories. As the Chronicles great editor, C. Plummer, wrote: "That which to us seems a lean and barren sentence was to them the text for a winter evenings entertainment.[1]

In MacSweeney's *Odes* the words/lines have a condition of separateness. There is the sense that words/lines come into the vision, into being, in that space, the space in which they are let out or encountered. There is a temporal pulse available and this has significance for the poem. As with 'Brother Wolf' there is a sense of the firework going off but also as with Cezanne's painting that each stroke changes the overall such that the whole *had* to be re-engaged with. Each piece is not simply filling in, clarifying, a schema already in place. It isn't simply a clarification of an image already coming into place but rather it is a completely new image or a completely new conceptualization of the image at hand or it is a possibility both of the image at hand, which for the writer is the writer's and for the reader the reader's,

1 Kevin Crossley-Holland, *The Anglo-Saxon World: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 34.

and at the same time the possibility of something else and crucially in that temporal pulse, that coming into being, the word or line retains its own relations: yes they are on the page now but they retain some sense of their own materiality unfixed, somewhere else, always itself.

There is an activation of noun as action, as gestured towards by Burt Kimmelman in 'George Oppen's silence and the role of uncertainty in post-war American avant-garde poetry' where he identifies Oppen's epistemology as a striving to engage and understand the world. The consideration might be how engagement, encounter, signifies understanding in itself. Kimmelman points to Oppen's Daybooks, 'nouns lying about' saying 'words are both irreducible and enigmatic.'[2] He says Oppen's poetry was

> in keeping with the theory of comple-mentarity, a theory that understands the truth of things as lying somewhere between two adjacent or, more to the point, two complementary stipulations of "fact"; the real, the truth of things, can never be articulated.

This factness 'between two adjacent (...) stipulations' is vivid in MacSweeney's poems. In stanza twenty of 'Brother Wolf' we see 'Salt on his lips' which becomes 'Salt on ours' in stanza 24. This visceral minerality becomes a token of 'as if life were greviously wounded.' A tangible physicality of the emotional state not of the individual but the collective 'life' itself. In MacSweeney 'salt' and 'Asbestos' ('Ode:Revolution') as activations of the physicalities of poetics are a consideration of this between space. The distance from meaning or understanding to the real of the world, the between space of the noun and the object and the activation of its material values. There is something about the nameable and the potential for action, 'salt' or 'asbestos' as physical capabilities of elemental transformation, action as the condition of meaning, The renaissance and medieval relation between the inorganic and organic nature, the 'Paracelsian tria prima (salt, sulfur, and mercury)' as with the 'Aristotelian elements (earth, water, air and fire)' and 'processes and substances (...) frequently explained in terms of soul, body and spirit' is manifest here in a transmutation of the alchemical/ allegorical towards the physicality and residue of the noun in action.[3] There is a mixing between the nouns of the odes and the character nouns of 'Brother Wolf.' Mole is a quality, a talismanic ambient channel sitting on the shoulder of the reader as it must have on that of the writer. In MacSweeney's poem the alter egos have their power, their recourse to language, what secrets the mole knows as creature of the soil, privvy to the tomb, significant as 'of' the soil of that Northumberland whose cultural production in the Dark Ages Basil Bunting speaks so highly of in 'The Codex.' The mole retains something in the consumption of our visceral remains as well as our language in what transpired as it 'shook hands with english poetry' (MacSweeney). These shades encompass any reading of the work just as in the *Odes* 'Asbestos' and 'Cadmium' expose the reader's gaze and the words therein as through a prism toward not something else but rather a reconfigured sense, touch, of what is already there. To encounter 'Asbestos' at the end of 'Ode:Resolution' is to hold ones breath and breathe a little less deeply, an articulacy of the lungs, to make concrete Olson's consideration of the breath.[4]

> Amps.
>
> Clit.

To encounter this formaton as it stands at the end of 'Panther Freckles' is to understand a cutting through, the articulacy of the skin in the palm of ones hand. The soft sonic pulse of 'Amps,' its latent narcotic containment, and the graphic and sonic sharpness and semantic stab of 'Clit,' even that word has been cut and is all the more aggresive as it bursts into the head/thought . That is so even without having already encountered in that poem the lines,

> cock
> song

or the lines,

> Gristle piston
> inside bone.

2 Burt Kimmelman, 'George Oppen's silence and the role of uncertainty in post-war American avant-garde poetry,' *Mosaic* 36.2 (Jun 2003): 145.

3 Allen G. Debus, *Man and Nature in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) 23; 17.

4 Charles Olson, 'Projective Verse,' *Charles Olson Selected Writings*, ed. Robert Creeley, (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1966) 19.

Even without the directed reading of these earlier lines their more obvious semantic attachments or groupings, flicking through the *Odes*, encountering the shape of the space on the page, is to engage the poems in the after image of word and form: a spatial and region[al] contingency, a physicality of place within the reaches of the poems, the place of the book. I cannot reproduce the presemantic experience of flicking through the pages and the kind of physicality of reading that produces, and the dynamic potential it affords the words as discrete units or as individuals. The line endings however in themselves gather a personality of communication though there is still a demand that the space they live in, come alive in, be given some voice.

> Belly
> Honey.
> Bread.
>
> Tough.
> [...]
>
> Pollen.
>
> White.
> cone.

In these latter two, p.48 and p.47, the spaces articulate not only considerations of time during the act of reading but lambent conditions of individuality, independence or difference pulsing in and out of focus for the words 'Tough' and 'Pollen' respectively. Attention and awareness are central to realizing that within a single line the surrounding space still offers catalytic potential to individual words and their intentions, that is their possible choices, in coming together as a group.

> poetry sleep death
> [...]
>
> for the vulva.
> clam.
> [...]
>
> on into the newly
> taken day
> [...]
>
> swell.
> [...]

That there is a potential of narrative doesn't quite normalize or quiet the words.

> people have to eat
> [...]
>
> hunger, living on potatoes & nitro-glycerine.
> [...]
>
> Land of the black goose.
> [...]
>
> (Beulah walks
> up
> [...]
>
> heavy with empty
> songs.
> [...]

As with the quotation from Kevin Crossley-Holland I cited earlier on the oral tradition, there is a demand that these lines or words be allowed their vibration within other hearings. A sounding of the other and by extension between others.

> Yet.
> [...]
>
> Do writhe.
> [...]
>
> Bread.
> Cyanide.
> [...]
>
> Un-
> broken
> [...]
>
> Walk as a golden man.
> [...]
>
> It is really distinct.
> [...]

The diversity of subject and loaded frictions of each line and that these lead to each poem's ending with the space/time that cleaves, demands a consideration of the residual on the tongue as the independence of these

materialities linger. In the heavyness of Olson's 'breath' fixed grades of measurement are not reasonable, there is no such foundation. These materialities are as the weight of a cow is, casually crushing you against the wall with its bulk, demanding a new understanding, as if for the first time, that the roll of the belly spells gravity. This exposure is in our time and culture, as it has lain still for a few generations, biblical in its momentousness, in its capability to inform the present. The Bible for some, spelled out, made possible the private consideration of eternity, gave a place to the individual in the transition through death towards eternal life, as the orality of the Illiad may have been for a previous generation a consideration of how living can *be* within history. As language they gave the individual an anchor to past or future. The physical relations of MacSweeney's poetry/poetics premise a consideration of a shared present, but a present that considers its place in ongoing history. The weight of the rocks above two small girls as they crawled a half a mile into the earth in pitch darkness to help make cave paintings thirteen thousand years ago is a physical property of our experience of their acts, now for us, thirteen thousand years later. Those girls give us direct gestural empathy through time, something greater even than the historical understanding of the thirteen thousand years that have passed, its epic nature only partly residing in the consideration of time and distance and then fully in the lack of distance as when one touches a child's head to feel, have sensation of, the thoughts under the palm. These words of MacSweeney's, these nouns lying around as Oppen says, have direct access to us as they are spilled at the bottom of the poem and page. On a summer day the sea off Northumberland is cold in the eye and to the skin even before touch realizes itself in cognition and these words in action 'Work' in Olson's sense even before we put them to 'USE.'[5]

It is a stance of encounter. The word does stare back, isn't simply herded. The gathering of muscle in the lines and words demands respect, a weighing of the conditions in which they move and act.

> Wolves
> rise.
> Beasts murmur
> in lard.
> [...]

These lines might seem to be or begin as an obviously symbolic totemic gesture carrying the mythological element of 'wolf' as fear and the 'otherly' containment in the word 'beasts' but it is in the rendering towards 'lard' where MacSweeney's poems commit to real exposures.

'Cirrus' then carries not only the wispy curl of its technical definition but the blackness which boils with the formation of cloud as force while 'Cadmium' is blood, caked and dried. When the condition 'visceral' is at the forefront of language then the line, 'it is really distinct,' is a different weight. There is a demand for the consideration of what it is to be 'distinct,' but also for a consideration of how this line could get to be here or could get to be. It is of a voice, of speaking, the voice and its sound speaking, making speak, those words, of a someone behind the voice, choosing to speak, in the act of speaking, living, doing. Such commonplace actions could be overlooked if the poem's language did not creak with the empathic density of 13,000 years of expression and temporal compression.

In 'Colonel B' we have the fireworks as extended intensities of 'Brother Wolf' and the still staring, individually demanding, words of the *Odes*.

> Snap Snap Snap. Trench is life. Rut is go.

The transitions from 'Trench' to 'life' and from Rut' to 'go' are visceral. Rut is both verb and noun and is compressed here to pure action. Go is action without need of intention or direction, it implies impulse and instinct, a genetically imprinted command, the command to 'go' as an internalized musculature of thought, as brutal and driven as the instinct to breed and the will to live, to survive. MacSweeney's phrase pulls this potential of the word into the open space of the poem. 'Trench' is both noun and active state of protecting as perhaps only an object which is the difference between life and death can be. The noun or object in MacSweeney's poems is barely restrained within its line, their muscles bunched on the edge of volition.

Between sections 7 and 9 of 'Colonel B' we physically wade in the language, the words and their connections, as through something viscous. This substance sloughs from the words as detritus, earth, bodily fluid or the sulphorous residue of ideas in concentrations too thick any longer to spark or fizz. The lines cleave to us as we move through them, 'people die, mindblood,' 'will cost nothing. You will be refunded,' 'Learn gristle Kidda' and 'Learn slap on head' and the sulphur of 'Tsar me. King me. Secretariat my

5 Olson, 'Projective Verse,' 17-19.

joys. Bureaucratise / loves, hair. Bind this.' The heightened attention to condition achieved in MacSweeney's poems up to this point means that the materialities crashing here suffocate movement through them. The sonic demands of 'Bondage is a SCORE OF STEDES' alone in its 'es' ending congeals the consideration of a thousand years of political history with the smell coming off 'Tsar' and 'King.' That 'es' ringing again in 'HARTE / SYKE PEYNE, middle english sense' collapses the sound of the individual speaking out from history, collapsing together their now and ours, whether in authentic voice or not, into the history claiming enunciative presence of each of us everyday, a temporal meld and ignition of historical voice, individual, writer and reader. The physical sensation of weltering that we endure while reading this section actualizes the condition of looking back on history not as a possibility of clarity but as an impossibility of clarity. The ineffectual weltering that is the reality of trying to understand the individual in history is also the raison d'etre for MacSweeney's cry to action in 'Colonel B.' It is a scornful reposte to the cynical resignation promulgated by the illusion of clarity as it reflects unkindly on the ineffectual private voice in the face of current affairs. The incidents which make up the future looking back on history litter this poem. The 'Belfast housefrau' 'Commons / pin time,' 'Arts Councils,' 'Blacklists,' 'of raincoat doubled majorities. THE MAGGIES,' or 'up for sale we go' and even the postscript 'this state of the nation bulletin' are mired in that physical squelch of reading but then we encounter a different air.

As with the shade of the 'mole' and the 'wolf' and the 'Asbestos' so the air of language, as in the air of a tune, is allowed to linger or we linger in that air.

> I was Aella's slave. I ate words.
> I was Aella's wife. No holpe came quick.
> I was Aella's labourer. He broke my axe.
> I was Aella's lover. We made amends.
> I was Aella's universe. We settled for sandgrains.

It is the repeated refrain and the condition it gathers to itself as in the the Book of Genesis, 'And God saw,' And God called,' 'and God said' or the 'Song of Amergin,'

> I am a stag : of seven tines
> I am a flood : across a plain
> I am a wind : on a deep lake
> I am a tear : the sun lets fall[6]

In these lines there is a sense of chronicle, collective, of 'usness' but its recognizability is, as was the case of the end shapes of the *Odes*, as much in its form as its semantic intent. Its physical graphic and sonic rhythm carry its weight. There is an inhabiting of the ear, of the mouth, of the eye, of the breath, the heart and body, as if one voice could represent many. Something less ably believable in our present cultural memory where it has become impossible not to question any meta-narrative or to suspect its intentions at least. Here we inhabit an air of togetherness. John Montague says,

> the first thing that strikes one in early Irish literature is the importance attached to poetry. In an oral culture the *scop* or *file* is a blend of historian and priest, a repository of information and magic.[7]

A memory keeper then. There is the consideration of the voice speaking, taking the time to speak of the ritual of speaking and in speaking of living and having lived. Does 'Brother Wolf,' whatever else it does, do more for Chatterton than tell us that he lived or let us know that he is being spoken of? Pearl's voice 'a-a-a-a-a-' ('No Buses To Damascus') is an embodiment of living, in the condition of life, that is a thing confined by its physicalities, imagination being a physicality of poetry, and defined by them and extant because of them. So the story, available in this ritual condition of speaking, of telling, demands the consideration of the extant condition, something perhaps only gestured towards by the term 'living history' but available in MacSweeney in the terms of warning, that is of action, imminence of listening and listening to. Ritual and story and telling and listening all demand respect, all exist only if respect is available, is present as an act of attention and awareness. It is this calling into being of the awareness of the act of being present, the responsibility of presence, that is demanded by the physicalities of MacSweeney's poetics. An actualiztion of our presence in our own history takes place in the reading even as the poem 'Colonel B' ends,

> by blood & silence
> of our lives.

6 *The Faber Book of Irish Verse*, ed. Robert Graves (London: Faber, 1974) 45.

7 *The Faber Book of Irish Verse*, 22.

ANTHONY MELLORS
MILTON

Proof of the trafficking effect
is offered by heavy chains
extreme mood swings
thoughts of self-harm
not to be torn by religious beliefs
kindling their undazzled eyes
and the tone is elevated
by the desired fabric
though it hardly matters who you are
or where you're from
yours is the choice with at least
two years experience but that depends
on how you spell back to the fuchsia
the iconic badminton centre
in jeopardy at the forefront
of a new skills revolution
the ultimate battleground
as you take your team across
and into enemy territory
brightly coloured structures in
place to ensure fair play all round.
You win when you take their end
tired of dusk and the nearby
industrial plant but if you
develop a cystic lesion through impact
planting in the buffer zones
gives shelter along the margins
where star visitors and numbers of
wintering chiffchaffs are found around
the sewage treatment plant
aware that scar impact and 'bursting' spots
need consumption smoothing
updating due to random shocks
whether it's the popular Yeti SUV
model or a cold laser
that penetrates through the skin
for many are called but few are chosen
and that takes place so naturally
you just pick up the phone and call the team
as part of their Health & Safety file
making mistakes and screwing things
up with a 'clicking' noise that occurs
with adjustments to avoid unprecedented
Netflix binges, *that* sort of gaffe:
I just chuck in a grenade
and get out quickly when secure
destruction threatens the incidence of opt-out
various uplifting events and early
years footprint disposal.
Some of them are height-adjustable
come with ventolin inhalers
and should form a solid base
from which to promote growth.
General gassing is a bit of a detour
so make sure the cremated remains
have the necessary documents.
Half the fun is finding out how wrong
you were as these alarm systems
can prevent damage
death and emotional trauma
can help you to bite
more easily and reduce the strain
the way the future unfolds from the past
tainted by sin and reasonable
expectations lifting the pile of taste
shifter variables such as the constant
jangle of *schlage* in Dortmund and revenge
porn outreach for nordic sex-workers.

PAUL INGRAM
AESTHETICS

Thesis: The value of creative activity consists in its infinite capacity for filling space.

•

If you can read this bumper sticker, then it is isn't meant for you, *NAME*.
I only produce for other producers, and sometimes not even for them.
I give the public what it wants, and increase supply to reduce demand.
I keep myself to myself, when it comes to comedians' comedians.
And a funny thing happened on the way to the workshop.

Ha!

•

I will bring down outsider art from the inside.
This is a site specific dirty protest.
This is a unique disinvestment opportunity.
This is the unconscious fantasy of the national gallery.
And the critique of art as an institution ends once again with Care in the Community.

Remember: The Hagenbeck Principle also works in reverse.

•

I remain attached to objects, like you, and you, and you.
I'm talking to you now, *NAME*.
I'm talking to you now, *NAME*.
I'm talking to you now, *NAME*.
If you can't break it, or eat it, or stuff it up your ass, then it isn't art, OK?
OK, I'm not the most progressive aesthetician in the room, but then who is?

LAWRENCE UPTON
NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

NATIONAL CONVERSATION? 1

oag m frw F!
ef loa om or ilin OR!
ud po ov a om or ilin OR!
sis or ve at om or ilin OR!
esp rt e ek gy
p ta a eth in ca ou
to a eb l pi na hi UR!
hs bl fa ng a bi R!
b isa lf te an abi R!
ABLE la r t to at OR! OP!
g ew un r t ot l to OR! HO!
w n r tr t nt OR! OP!
as e dr ch y ak b RY! PP!
n w ne w t d m a te UL! A!!
r m ad ad d ed or JN!
mm a d ad d ed or JN!
hm di g d e to JN!
A isa yb dlu ra ST!
ltng pd rd oo n t TU!
gos rd ot n t TO!
agk s e ot n t TO!
it sa en t h te US!
ptb b ic tpo l!
air bag ble ing a o o E!
ag e ng at ot E!
ier a ry IT!

NATIONAL CONVERSATION? 2

ith w mhe i-it
obm obgm-h-h
n at mo h
to or l ors
ane ss tt t in
lo a ng
eom ag
edm ii er
rak drw
rokew
op ke eb wi
ps e ut e

ve vex t
eal r xs r
lwp ay aes
ysnn a!
pyrl
l o a dfgk

NATIONAL CONVERSATION? 3

adv ebs eto sree
mtar rs clfss
sresma ays rtays
reth les mat mate over

rhea lhr as as en ssen
ct ei im ling es mth
lmo ha ino n ta ren tli wo
ta ik o as ke om
m ly me me yr e en to n

iv no hv ro ot ve
orth e
ce-r dsm db sh-m
bhm be-o en ou-h
nuho nel o en ou-h
its n se ot
adr-st th-i oo
er-e-od wa-a
sh-y c
ho ha hnha tnan
inevan ve vec hisr

NATIONAL CONVERSATION? 4

elth hec-e ha-haec e-e t-tt-ec
w on on wi-n n ll-o
de dets om ts omy dtm
ecsy cis-st dtc-tu eill up
thisid

m m dmo ma d-n-rn
ne-e-no eet-f
edh-t d! ha-th
dsa-he sne toj pe
o-b ju pe buseo
etop eta pl e

e hhah he-ar ha
ee-e-ar ked-l
ky-d-e es-s-s
sig s-g og-g rnar
rinsaresrd es-so-de
sode onen oam
ofbsi brsaga
gulva gur lam uital ts nt

NATIONAL CONVERSATION? 5

rf fo a-is-r i-r
ab-si r-m
bo ng ma oogma-a
rgs-ay lo ta-or
bha e
oaa eave tt-t-a
aker ta-a
chrd k nt
erde k-b tib ti-b
relb li-y r-s li eby
vebe o eser ff ves
er ff r sra fik ra

te ke ll ere er ly
stop
help
sthe
top
opl
ap-p an-n p-p p
nn rw na ea wa ab al
as belv-a run wes tsc
a-ek r rh raa inr orsi
tyg kyeb lit-t bo ims ing uss

NOTE ON 'NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS?'

Pronunciation is up to the performer providing they regard each part of their text as a fragment of a word in a language they know fluently. It is not necessary to produce a line that makes complete sense.

If they have a single letter that is not a word, they should not just name that letter. They should be imaginative but not fantastic.

DOUG JONES
POSTS

11/7/13
"Insects got their fantasies, dreams of ease where food is safe, where planned hives rise on the head of community wholesome for their young, they get rest, peace, pastoral dream directed, redesignated – named after a merchant from the sun, water discovered while stock routes swarm with "seraph," thus commanded, in their clothes. That's why, when you look in a bee's eye, you see its meiotic blankness"

18/7/13
"At the sports bar, watching the game, this man – you notice he's made of ants? Tens of thousands, dark backs flicker in pursuit of a human house, struggle, as if a sea intuited under a log – pleating bodies, hard in the light of observable electric world/moons up on which a commentary ran. Acts, aspects, feed a disremembering of form that enlightens the course of his body-dream. At the sports bar"

25/7/13
"Aeshna inoceles, constant repeating shape – dragonfly – local, rare, 2 years as a bud – brown bellied in this part of the form –who will to water as a type of due, aggressive but with a clear, wind driven song bound in servitude of the diminished, produced thing. Many a mystic I know, reader + the Hawker stands out in flight with its panicked green eye, music played on drone a continual state of ruin"

1/8/13
"Do insects have shock? Do they, after insult, have a machinery to preserve their twin form to the depths – endpoint to eternal development – securing stack of their booty? They worth the candle? or do they just lurk of a sequence to stone, strange bugs, fitting of a naming ceremony they can get home with – off into a anima mundi. Oh so the switch to reed, or loaf of bread; everyone marrying at Cana"

8/8/13
"Insects can't live over the dark green sea it's too hot + dry for their bones. Dears, they plunge on to decks of leisure craft a-shouting imprecations to the old ways, or get predated by parasitic sea snails, who are a horror – but claim that they love them/so. Over water, e.g. good lampryidea, watch it froze in a buzzy, hysterical descent to the deck of a small drifter laden with herring; isolated, turbulent boat"

15/8/13
"This, a farmed loop between 0 + 1 which manifests between feast and the caterpillar again, between the creature that do/do not, is/is no falling bit of her name in open, eukaryotic space. Floss and me found a ?hawk caterpillar on a path – figure mesmerising, an adjective, a robe to voiced depths as if seen in her realised face. Floss thought it a wonder – the state, disorder of this body, the passions of a mind"

22/8/13
"Planetary insects, with huge bugs eyes, looking at the sun living machines that we are – writing poems 'about insects' basking in sun, their faces looking out the warm sun/is our aphonia. So what do insects reflect to be in its matter, thus? Light energy shakes over a disposition attended to in peace – what radiant humours are these of a butterfly, in her thought; a choreoform wildness/a break-up of the earth"

29/8/13
"There's something demonic about insects, in their eyes, to be inspected, locked up inside the head of a man in a car + it only shows in his face as he struggles with affect, making journeys nearby his home, from one town to another, with his shirt sleeves on + work in the back, rolling down a hill, breaking the chain between usage + self – insects in hell, petrol engine of a car that struggles to keep up"

5/9/13
"Rose up autumn – fruits merge into one another, sum of living things – all in, to the hills, in the cooler air to melt in the warm sea – insects think to their winter ecology, the ice seed out which death will grow – it's the end of the interview – ladybirds now make living towers, hide in rocks / the densest portions of the world, pretty dusty they are – where these fellows are gone fire water, air don't govern"

13/9/13
"There's a problem, but it's about yr things – froggy corps in a forest/e.g. – may see them as a sorta song, yeh. lying on a shell of an old wet word + so you write them up- thus, think magically of them, but never nothing to stop their naughty hearts.. inevitably yr hearing goes on, plays tricks on you –maybe that's what yr frog word is now. Start up new postman, blow the poor – it's endemic / + all"

TREVOR JOYCE

EBB & FLOW

This morning, in a promising
theatre, some shepherds felled
the zenith; swaddled it
in bandages of cold silk,
then chopped it altogether up.

> That high race intercepted
> and dispersed, the wheel
> shudders on its axle-shaft
> while zero dreams of flood.

And now the furniture wants
out, the sky expands
behind dank canopies, where elaborate
animals are banging and wheezing
sadly, and without mercy.

> The year run down,
> the frost-bound earth
> yields some scant green,
> yet fantasising sun.

But there's nothing to be got from this
unrecognizable day, though the servants
can't know that; so they nonetheless
proceed with silver and fruit,
while the tellers make certain of the visible.

> Lately dispatched, the body still
> feigns heat in blood,
> agency in trembling,
> though spent to null.

Walls, terraces, and floors
are blistered and perturbed,
because the salt instruments
thud dimly on, and the wood
remains tainted with metals.

> My sad masters, o, fetch
> back those flows; from these
> fields withdraw your shrill
> facsimiles and ghosts.

MARK WALDRON

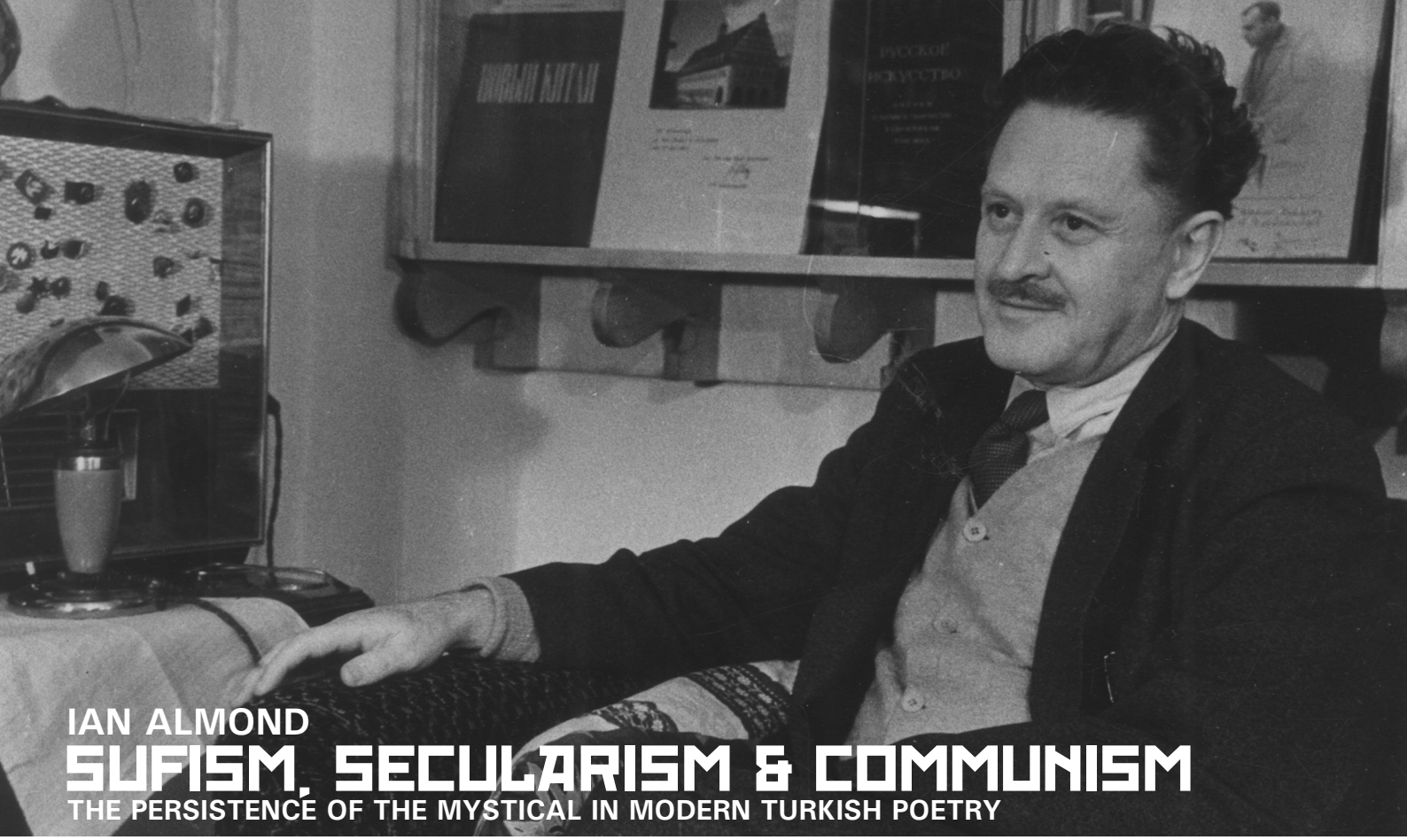
THE DEAD ARE HELPLESS

You can do exactly what you like to the dead,
you can call them filthy names,
you can poke your uncovered arse at them,
you can stick them in the eye, or spit on them
or better, you could prop one up before you shove
its face backwards, your palm driven hard against
the nose, and still nothing bad will happen to you.

You can drag the dead outside into the street
and there you can piss upon them. You could beat
one even further into death with a brick and
no one can point a finger at you, and if they do
then you can tell them to fuck off and mock their
squeamishness by blubbing like a baby in mimicry
of the feebly sensitive.

(It occurs to me just now that you might also want
to stand a stiff in a doorway, have it held in place
by means of ropes and then with all your extant
vehemence, slam the door against it, hear it greet
the dead's unwincing face just before it bangs against
the jamb.) You can always confound the dead.
You can act as though you're going this way,

and then you can go that way and punch them,
and they'll just stare up at the ceiling with that
emptied look of theirs (emptied as an egg is from
it's shell). And the dead have nothing at all to use
against you but your horror at their passivity
which looks sometimes so like the unresisting
sweetness of your own poor martyred soul.



IAN ALMOND

SUFISM, SECULARISM & COMMUNISM

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE MYSTICAL IN MODERN TURKISH POETRY

It may be that universal history is the history of a handful of metaphors.
(Borges, "Fearful Sphere of Pascal")[1]

The essay examines the persistence of Sufi motifs in the work of two of the most significant figures in modern Turkish poetry – Orhan Veli and the Communist poet Nazim Hikmet. Both figures were on-believers whose work, nevertheless, reveals the presence of a certain series of spiritual echoes – notions of inwardness, memory, sadness, epiphany, attentiveness, all of which (I argue) draw, consciously or not, on an already extant store of Sufi motifs.

The delineation of the persistence of the spiritual in the secular is such a regular activity, and so fraught with dangers and possible wrong turnings, that it might be worthwhile reflecting on the venture itself before we begin. To hear the voice of a medieval saint, Sufi or Catholic, in a poem written in a bar in Berlin or Beyoglu, implies at least three possibilities: that religious traditions abide in societies insuperably, like street plans in cities, with the contemporary never achieving anything more than the status of an embellishment or re-formulation; that religious traditions, on the contrary, are merely preliminary vocabularies, half-formed prototypes awaiting a more sophisticated and multi-faceted re-birth in the modern; or finally, that both the saintly and the secular tap into some unbroken line of atemporal continuity, draw off some underground stream equally distant to them both – the human spirit, perhaps, or the materiality of history, or the enduring power of etymology, or even (as Borges would have it) the simple imaginary persistence of three or four tropes.

1 J.L.Borges, *Labyrinths*, trans. Anthony Kerrigan (London: Penguin, 1970) 224.

Although none of these possibilities deserve to be dismissed out of hand, this brief essay will try to negotiate all three – a negotiation which, in turn, has to acknowledge an equal number of evident truths: the abundance of words in the language of both poets which carry latently, at times even explicitly, religious meanings (*hicret, kerem, hasret, arzu*, even *dünya* and *insan*[2]); the concrete familiarity both the secular Veli and the Communist poet Hikmet had with a number of poets in the Sufi/Islamic tradition – Rumi, Yunus Emre, al-Ghazali, Omar Khayam – familiarity even to the point of active interaction with them; the equally obvious fact that both poets were exposed to major foreign influences which had little to do with their own traditions – Veli as the Turkish amanuensis of Rimbaud, Mallarme and Apollinaire, Hikmet giving Anatolian settings to Mayakovsky's energy and anger.

At the outset, the familiar problem of exactly how to define "secular" and "religious" occurs. At a moment when, perhaps to an unprecedented degree, the distinction between the two has been called into question (so that a sociologist such as Jose Casanova can ask whether anyone "still believes in the myth of secularization"[3]) this essay will see the two terms as deconstructible and yet temporarily valid for the purposes of our inquiry. Neither Hikmet, a Communist and self-confessed atheist who died in the Soviet Union, nor Veli, whose *Garip* movement largely constituted an aesthetic break with the country's Ottoman past, would have called themselves 'religious' – indeed, the significance of their poetic/political refusal of the past is why they have been chosen for our essay. For both figures, the decision to use – or not use – religious tropes would have given the words 'secular' and 'religious' (*layık* and *dini* in Turkish) very definite and undeconstructed meanings. The fact that religious echoes continue to haunt their work despite their attempts at rupture constitutes an irony which, in part, will lead to our conclusion – an unravelling of the binary distinction between the two terms. Such a culminative dissolution in no way detracts from the temporary valency 'secular' and 'religious' has as we move through poems by both poets, carefully noting which ideas belong to which traditions, which nuances draw on which collective practices.

The aim of this essay, instead of trying to re-locate the source of Veli's silences and Hikmet's yearnings cartographically in some pre-modern vocabulary of divans and rubaiyats, will be to see how easily their texts evoke Sufi sensibilities. The more famous moments in the critical tradition which tries to read allegedly secular literary texts this way (Benjamin and Adorno on Kafka, Bataille on Nietzsche, Symons on the French symbolists) sees the spiritual more as an optic than an origin; even Benjamin's description of Kafka's short pieces as a form of doctrine-less "Haggedah" doesn't prevent him from seeing "theological interpretations" of Kafka as essentially "missing the point."[4] Our own investigations into the various moments of errancy, sadness, repetition and detail in the many tramcar drivers, tea glasses and train-carriages to be found in Hikmet and Veli's verse will follow this strategy of reading as a commentary on the present, not an unveiling of the past.

Before beginning, one final remark concerning the dearth of physical encounters between religion and belief in the poems to be examined. European modernism's sepulchral fascination with the edifices of religion, initiated by the famous rant of Nietzsche's madman, re-manifesting itself (as scholars such as Lewis have shown[5]) in the ironic persistence of disused, disowned or discredited churches in the novels of James, Woolf, Proust and Joyce, culminating most memorably in the bored cyclist from the Larkin poem, who visits churches as package tourists visit art galleries…it is remarkable that no such scene takes place in the selections from Veli and Hikmet before us. Veli's various narrators loaf around on boats and street corners, watch blossoms and sunsets, travel on trains and trams, but none of them – in the midst of their secular *flanerie* – wander into a mosque or cross the path of a tomb. Neither in Hikmet do we easily find a similar scene of post-religious curiosity in the physical structures of belief and superstition. To ascribe this clumsily to some perceived difference between Western and non-Western modernism would be hasty and ill-advised – one of the finest English-language poem cycles in modern Indian literature, Arun Kolatkar's *Jejuri* (1973), narrates the visit of a cynical agnostic to the Hindu pilgrimage town of Jejuri, in the state of Maharashtra. In other poets such as A.K. Ramanujan, in writers such as Amit Chaudhuri, in films such as those of the Bengali director Satiyajit Ray, this motif of the secular return to a religious site or structure

2 in English: migration, time, longing, desire, world and human.

3 Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 11.

4 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Pimlico, 1999), p118; 123.

5 Pericles Lewis, "Churchgoing in the Modern Novel," *MODERNISM / modernity* 11.4 (2004): 669–694

is not uncommon. Amongst the many spiritual nuances and possibilities in the poems of Orhan Veli and Nazim Hikmet, however, this explicitly funereal interest in the physicality of religion will be absent.

ATTENTIVENESS (*TAWAJJUH*)

> *If everything that appears were just as it appears, the Prophet, who was endowed with penetrating vision... would never have cried out, "O Lord, show us things as they are"* (Rumi)[6]

In attempting to analyse the moral implications of Kafka's devotion to detail, Benjamin cites Malebranche's definition of "attentiveness" as "the natural prayer of the soul."[7] The Sufi term most closely corresponding to this is *tawajjuh* (from the Arabic for face, *wajh*), a term frequently found in both Rumi and Ibn 'Arabi, along with its not-quite opposite 'heedlessness' (*ghafla*). The term *tawajjuh* has two general meanings: either the attentiveness of the divine towards an as yet unactualised being, thing or situation; or the attentiveness of the believer's heart (*qulub*) towards an imminent manifestation or revelation.

Although Hikmet famously disagreed with Rumi at the very beginning of his own *Rubailer* ("The world you saw was real, Rumi, not apparition"), a number of crucial aspects of the Sufi term for attentiveness do lead us back to the object-absorbed silences in Hikmet and Veli. The first, most obviously, is that the premise of *tawajjuh* suggests the world the subject sees is hermeneutically out of joint, that if one could only hold one's gaze still for a moment, a new, unexpected layer of meaning would finally shimmer and emanate to the surface. In Veli, this suspicion of immediacy has produced one of his most famous poems, "Bir is var":

Her gün bu kadar güzel mi bu deniz?
Böyle mi görünür gökyüzü her zaman?
Her zaman güzel mi bu kadar,
Bu esya, bu pencere?
Degil,
Vallahi degil;
Bir is
var bu isin içinde.

Is the sea as beautiful as this every day?
Does the sky look like this all the time?
Is this furniture, this window
always as lovely as this?

No
by God no,
There must be something behind this somewhere.[8]

The object of attentiveness in a Veli poem – be it a window, a glass, a hand, the sound of a train or a bird – always brings a faintly extra-marital sense of disturbance with it; it upsets the fabric of both reader and narrator, suggesting a certain unfaithfulness on reality's part, that something is going on – some secret order of things – which neither reader nor narrator is being told about. Veli's narrators seem to stumble through his world of trips, memories and harbours , never fully in control, never quite knowing it all, but with enough awareness of their own finitude to realize there is something else behind the screen of immediate sensation – another *is*, as it were, within the *is*. The frequency of interrogatives in Veli's work (Why do I think this when I see that? Was I really that person then? Why is this moment happening now?), the repetition of *bilmem, bilmiyorum, bilmezler*, underlines this rupture of perception in the most important poems, without either inviting nor wholly discarding a theological echo.

Hikmet's version of *tawajjuh* has a similar ontological form and a similar ontological consequence, even if the content and the motivation for both is quite different. As with Veli, Hikmet's attentiveness to detail doubles, and thereby fractures, the world he is representing; the bedbugs, the peasant's cherries, the hung bodies, all crack open an official reality, in order to allow the emergence of the omitted and the overlooked. In the long poem *Memleketimden insan manzalari* this process – the deflation of the macro through the micro – takes place through a cascade of images, as the particularities of each of the train's lowly occupants gradually suggest the inadequacy of the nationalist narrative to represent any of them:

Merdivenleri mahkumlar cıkıyordu.
Sakalaşıp
guluşerek.
Uç erkek
bir kadın
ve dort jandarma.
Erkekler kelepçeli
kadın kelepçisiz
jandarmalar sungulu.

6 William G. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual teachings of Rumi* (Albany: SUNY, 1983) 19 F 5/18

7 Benjamin, *Illuminations*,130

8 Translated by Bernard Lewis, 1982.

Merdivenlerin ustunde bir kayısı gülü
bir cigara paketi
bir gazette kaadi.

A group of prisoners goes up the steps,
joking
and laughing.

Three men,
one woman,
and four guardsmen.
The men with handcuffs,
the woman without,
the guardsmen with bayonets.

On the steps, an apricot rose,
a cigarette package,
a newspaper[9]

Hardly imbued with mystical significance, the fragment nevertheless performs the same operation of reality-doubling we find in Veli; as the poem develops, the initial series of images gradually unveils a quite different set of meanings, as the prisoners become something other than prisoners, as the guardsmen become something other than guards. Authority's struggle to keep control over what a *vatan* or an *insan* or even a newspaper is forms the world of appearances which Hikmet's demotic eye for detail, his democratizing attentiveness to the empirical, attempts to fracture and subvert with an 'other' set of meanings. The fact that these meanings are not mystically located in some transcendental hereafter, but rather reside in the brute facticity of the things themselves, does not diminish their kinship with the kind of reality-questioning gestures we find in Veli and Rumi.

Our mention of 'unveiling' (in Arabic *kashf*) brings us to another aspect of attentiveness crucial to Hikmet and Veli: namely, that correct *tawajjuh* results in a manifestation (*zuhur*) of some kind. In Ibn 'Arabi, creation is a constant actualizing of the Divine Mind, as God repeatedly selects from the infinite store of possible entities within Him those He is going to bless with *ijad* or "the sweet pleasure of existence."[10] Sufi thinkers often use the metaphor of marriage (*al-nikah*) for this kind of attentiveness: the entity of the possible thing is named 'wife,' whilst the offspring of the marriage is the bestowal of existence upon it, so that the possible thing becomes a reality.

Through the twin notions of mercy and unity, this idea of attentiveness as a kind of divine gaze which produces/engenders/unveils another reality in the mundane and unremarkable offers an interesting perspective on the love of minutiae and quotidiana we find in Hikmet and Veli. In *Garip*, poetic attention produces pity in the same way the spotlight of a desk lamp might produce warmth; it is difficult to think of another poet (in any language) in which the alliance of care, compassion and creativity are so consistently bound. The curious effect of this regard, at once both observation and commiseration, is to unveil vulnerability in whatever it rests upon. The poem "Sol Elim" illustrates perfectly this epiphanic capacity for tenderness in Veli's poetry:

Sarhoş
oldum da
Seni hatırladim yine;
Sol elim,
Acemi elim,
Zavalli elim!

I got drunk
And thought of you,
My left hand
My awkward hand
My poor hand.[11]

Heedless of his left hand in the bourgeois world of everyday sobriety, the narrator only notices his 'wretched' hand once alcohol has distorted his reality. Here, as in so many of his poems, pity provides the oxygen for Veli's poetics. From poor old Süleyman Efendi and his corns (*Yazik oldu Süleyman Efendi'ye*) to the loneliness of living alone in "Yalnızlik," compassion emerges so often as the product of the poetic gaze in Veli, as if to focus on a particular object or person is to immediately release a sadness trapped within it. This observation of vulnerable finitude – and, paradoxically, the poetic representation which promises to transform it – acquires a further spiritual echo when one considers the central place of pity and mercy in the Sufi idea of creation. Sufi authors often stressed the common etymology of the Arabic for 'mercy' *rahman* with 'womb' *rahim*; for Ibn 'Arabi, the act of creation is explicitly an act of mercy, as the Divine takes pity on

9 Nazim Hikmet, *Memleketimden Insan Manzaralari* (Istanbul: Yapi Kredi, 2009) 16; *Human Landscapes*, trans. R. Blasing and M. Konuk (New York: Persea Books, 1982) 7.

10 William G. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989) 86-7.

11 Translated by Murat Nemet-Nejat, 1989.

the distress (*karb*) and constraint (*diq*) of non-existent things by bringing them into actual existence.[12] In a limited sense, some of Veli's poems do suggest an attentiveness which casts a merciful, de-limiting gaze onto the objects of his pity, freeing them from the finitude of things and allowing them to exist as ideas in the world of his poems.

If for Veli the product of attentiveness is pity, for Hikmet it is oneness. There are certainly moments in Hikmet's poetry – not just *Seyh Bedrettin Destani*, but also pieces such as "Masallarin Masali" and the poem on Bach – where an implicit notion of oneness or unity acquires some very clear Sufi connotations. For the Sufi Gnostic, we will recall, the world has to be viewed with two eyes. With one eye, the Gnostic sees how everything is unlike God (the God of transcendence – *tanzih*); with the other eye, he glimpses how God lies in all things (the God of immanence – *tashbih*). For Rumi, 'heedlessness' was being unaware of this second truth – the truly attentive gaze, in other words, is a bi-focal one, whose eye sees a banner, but whose spirit recognizes the wind.[13]

This familiar tension between immanence and transcendence, which plays itself out not just in Sufism but in a number of mystical traditions, finds its echo in Hikmet's own dual obligation: on the one hand (in the spirit of the *Garip* manifesto) an anti-bourgeois devotion to the detail of the everyday, an empirical commitment to the *halk*[14]; on the other, an ever-present – though not always primary – desire to discern some sense of progressive unity and deeper union in the panoply of images displayed. It is a tension which explains the sometimes confusing simultaneity of convergence and divergence in the poetry: in "Angina Pectoris," a brief, bewildering succession of images – the Maoist army, a Greek partisan, a red apple – are reined in to communicate how the poet's heart beats in harmony with all hearts that seek justice. In the plethora of different characters and descriptions we encounter in Memleketimden, the desire to furnish detail with direction allows the guardsmen, after half an hour of conversation, to discover their prisoners are common village köylüler like themselves. This desire to restore unity to depicted diversity is certainly not everywhere in Hikmet's poetry, but in the moments where it does take place, it is difficult not to think of a hermeneutics of the One.

Probably the most obvious point to make about Nazim Hikmet and oneness, at least from a Sufi perspective, is the way a poem such as *Seyh Bedrettin Destani* retrospectively projects Marx's definition of communism as "the positive expression of the overcoming of private property"[15] onto a medieval mullah's understanding of the Islamic doctrine of *tawhid*. In Hikmet's poem, which narrates the tale of the fourteenth century revolutionary from western Turkey, Sheikh Bedrettin declares to his followers:

> Ben gayri zuhur ve huruç edeceğim!
> Toprak adamları toprağı fethe gideceğiz.
> Ve kuvveti ilmi, sirri tevhidi gerçeklendirip
> biz milletlerin ve mezheplerin kanunlarını
> iptâl edeceğiz...
> The time for me to emerge and burst forth has come!
> The time for we men of the land to rise up
> And conquer the land has come!
> And we shall see confirmed
> The strength of knowledge, the secret of Oneness!
> And we shall see canceled
> The laws of all nations and religious sects![16]

Hikmet's portrayal of a peasant-revolt inspired by a comprehensively social interpretation of the oneness of God ("Just as I will be able to possess your property" says the mullah, "so, in like manner, shall you possess mine") clearly belongs to a sub-genre of socialist/Marxist reappropriations of religious figures in both Islam and Christianity: Engel's Muntzer, Pasolini's Christ, Bloch's Eckhart. Two points need to be underlined; first of all, through using the term *sirri tevhidi* , Hikmet emphasises how the social unity of mankind – like the oneness of

12 Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 131

13 Chittick, *Spiritual teachings of Rumi*, 182

14 The critic Karpat has already written how Orhan Veli's interest in the "little man" sprang from "new democratic currents" and a "re-action against upper class Ottoman absolutism" (Kemal H. Karpat, *Studies on Turkish Politics And Society: Selected Articles and Essays* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004] 495). Necmi Zeka goes so far as to suggest this antagonism between "attitudes old and new" to be a "useful model" for considering modern Turkish poetry in general (Necmi Zeka, "A Prisoner of Language: The Strange Case of Modern Turkish Poetry," *Re-locating the Fault Lines: Turkey Beyond the East-West Divide*, eds. in S.Irzik and G. Güzeldere, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102.2/3 (2003): 529-534. See also the poet Oktay Rifat's problematic evaluation of Veli as someone whose oedipal break from a previous tradition of Yahya Kemal, "enabled our poetry to close the gap" on the Western tradition (qtd in Orhan Koçak, "Our Master, the Novice: On the catastrophic births of Modern Turkish Poetry," *Re-locating the Fault Lines,* 577). For an excellent examination of the tension between 'modern' and Ottoman Turkish in twentieth century Turkish literature, see Jale Parla, "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's language Reform," *PMLA* 123.1 (2008): 27-40.

15 From the "Paris Manuscripts," qtd in David Mclellan, *Karl Marx: A Biography* (London: Palgrave, 2006) 103.

16 Translated by Larry Clark.

God – is a secret, something not immediately apparent to the unenlightened eye. The world of social differences and the self-importance of possession is a bourgeois illusion which, like the illusion of property, yields beneath the attentive gaze to reveal the underlying unity of all things. Ignorance of this secret, therefore, means collusion in the present order: for Rumi, as we have seen, this is the state of heedlessness, where the believer is unable to render the illusory opacity of everyday things transparent, so as to see through into their divine reality. Hikmet deftly exploits the socio-economic implications of this ontological levelling of things – of attachment to property, to creed, to nation, to hierarchy – by showing Jews, Christians and Muslims discovering their hidden unity and working together to overthrow the Sultan.

Hikmet rebuked Rumi for believing the world to be not real, but apparition; whatever irony may lie in this gesture – one hermeneutics of suspicion chiding another – the term ignorance (*jahil*) certainly has an analogous validity in the vocabularies of both poets. This ignorance does not simply relate to an unawareness concerning the secret presence of the divine/undisclosed social unity of society, but even extends to an ignorance of the true nature of the self. In Sufism, a central symptom of ignorance concerns the illusion of the self – namely, not understanding the divine root of the soul, that (in Ibn 'Arabi's words) he who knows his self, knows his Lord (*man 'arafa nefsehi, 'arafa rabbahi*). For the Marxist scholar of religion Ernst Bloch, Christian mysticism's insistence on the unity of God and the soul became a subversive, emancipatory gesture which ultimately saw "the treasure in Heaven [as] the property of man" (*die Schätze im Himmel als Eigentum der Mensch*).[17] In Hikmet, the self contains within it an equally revolutionary potential; when Sheikh Bedreddin declares that "the fire in my breast has ignited/ and is mounting with each day" (*O âtes ki kalbimin içindedir tutusmustur günden güne artiyor*), an imminent explosion of limits (a "bursting forth") is about to take place, an actualisation of some hierarchy-dissolving potential. Hikmet's mixture of pity and contempt for the inverse of this situation – those heedless souls who have failed to realise their own self-empowerment and are still trapped in the bonds and habits of their old, knavish situation – can be found in the poem *Dünyanin en tuhaf mahluku*:

Midye gibisin kardeşim,
midye gibi kapalı, rahat…
Dünyanın en tuhaf mahlukusun yani,
hani su derya içinde olup,
deryayı bilmeyen balıktan da tuhaf.

You're like a clam, my brother,
closed like a clam, content, …
I mean you're strangest creature on earth-
even stranger than the fish
that couldn't see the ocean for the water.[18]

Possibly more than any other poem of Hikmet's, *Dünyanin en tuhaf mahluku* is replete with religious images and language – not simply terms like *mahluk* and *zulum*, but also images such as *akrep*. The metaphor of fish and ocean is one of the most frequently used in Sufism ("That is the ocean of Oneness… its pearls and its fish are none other than its waves"[19]), and in one sense Hikmet's poem of frustration with the obstinacy and timidity of the politically unawakened replicates a tradition in Sufi thought of incredulity that the unenlightened have no notion of the Treasures they carry within them.[20] The fish that doesn't realize the water it is swimming in is an ocean; the believer who doesn't see how the infinite world around him, indeed even his own self, ultimately conceals the divine; the peasant who only sees the village he lives in and the field he tills, not the class he belongs to and the fear he could inspire. Both vocabularies, the spiritual and the political, are linked by this common ignorance of tremendous, world-transforming possibility. In contrast to Veli, attentiveness leads to oneness in Hikmet's poetry because it sees not finitude but a connection; it unveils not vulnerability but expansion; it produces not pity but growth.

In Hikmet's most blatantly mystical poems, this process of freeing the self from its bourgeois trappings and connecting it to a wider, deeper reality, eventually approaches a version of what the Sufis called *fana'* or self-annihilation. The final dissolution of the self as it nears the Real (*al haqq*), what al-Junayd called the water taking on the colour of the cup, finds a striking equivalence in Hikmet's poem "Masallarin Masali," where the poet describes the gradual appearance and then disappearance of a number of things – himself, a plane tree, a cat, the sunshine, his life – in the waters of a running stream:

17 Ernst Bloch, *Atheismus im Christentum*, *Gesamtausgabe* vol. 14 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968) 95.

18 Translated by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk, 1993.

19 Chittick, *Spiritual teachings of Rumi*, 275.

20 Cf. Chittick, *Spiritual teachings of Rumi*, 149.

Su basında durmuşuz,
çınar, ben, kedi, güneş, bir de ömrümüz.
Suda suretimiz çıkıyor,
çınarın, benim, kedinin, güneşin, bir de ömrümüzün.
Suyun savkı vuruyor bize,
çınara, bana, kediye, güneşe, bir de ömrümüze .

Su başında durmuşuz.
Önce kedi gidecek,
kaybolacak suda sureti.
Sonra ben gideceğim,
kaybolacak suda suretim.
Sonra çınar gidecek,
kaybolacak suda sureti.
Sonra su gidecek
güneş
kalacak;
sonra o da gidecek...

We stand at the source
The plane tree, me, the cat, the sun and our lives
Our images reflect
Off the river.
The water
lights up the plane tree, me, the cat, the sun and our lives.

We stand at the source.
The cat will be the first to go,
its image in the water will dissolve.
Then I will go,
my image in the water will dissolve
Then the plane tree will go,
its image in the water will dissolve.
Then the river will go,
the sun alone remaining,
then it too will go.[21]

The non-religious, materialist reading of the poem is prominent, and should not be pushed aside: it touches on the fragility and finitude of all things, even something as apparently permanent and life-giving as sunshine, and presents this epiphanic appreciation of life's transience as a reason to be thankful ("Çok sükür yasıyoruz") for the small stretch of time we have. This silent, non-spiritual basking in the value of the finite is a frequent theme in Hikmet ("Bügün pazardir," "Since I've been in jail"), and embodies what most European sensibilities would discern as an existentialist appreciation of limit and mortality as being sources of meaning in themselves, without any need for some transcendental, value-bestowing Other. Moving against this powerful primary text, however, works an equally powerful counter-text of latent spirituality, buttressed by the religious echoes of four central motifs in the poem itself. The first such echo lies in the wording of the title – masal, an Arabic loan-word in Turkish meaning 'fable,' but one regularly used to describe the tales of Rumi, as well as any story with a religious or moral meaning; secondly, the position of the speaker at the source of the river (*su basinda*) imbues the location of the poem with a distinctly spiritual sense of metaphor, a theme of provenance and *fons et origo* which renders the tone of what is to come even more symbolical. Reflectivity – the reflections of the tree, narrator, cat, sunshine in the river – supplies a third aspect of religiosity to Hikmet's poem. A central Neoplatonic tendency in Sufi thought repeatedly brings themes of reflection and mirrors to the fore. In Rumi's poem, the reflection of the Eternal's attributes in the world (justice, kindness, goodness) are often configured as the images of the stars and the moon, reflected in the waters of a midnight stream.[22] The images remain the same, but the water they lie reflected on is constantly changing – Hikmet's poem, for all the dreaminess of its tone, inverts this principle, causes the objects to vanish one by one, until only the stream remains. And yet this vanishing – in particular, the effacement of the narrator himself from his own poem – supplies the fourth spiritual sub-text in the poem. The poetic contemplation of reflection in a stream – and their eventual disappearance – emphasises the ephemeral status of the self in two ways: by classifying it together with a range of non-human and inanimate entities (cat, tree, sunlight), as if the self were simply another object to be listed; and by creating the illusion that the poet has disappeared from his own poem, even if it remains difficult to say whether the poet's evanescence on the river bank is intended as a comment on his mortality or a profounder expression of the illusion of identity.

The fact that the narrator's disappearance in the poem can have two such different meanings – a recognition of mortal finitude or the dissolution of the poet into his own poem – underlines once more the ambiguities of Hikmet's text; the ambiguity inherent in the secular affirmation of finitude, a gesture levelled at the myth of transcendence, but whose operation invariably invokes the very infinity it seeks to displace, explains here how a poem addressing the transience of life can also sound like the melting away of the self into the Ever-flowing

21 *Son Yuzyil Buyuk Turk Siiri Antolojosi*, ed. Ataol Behramoglu (Istanbul: Sosyal Yayinlar, 1997) 160. Trans.lated by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993).

22 Chittick, *Spiritual teachings of Rumi*, 43.

One. It remains to be seen whether the tacitly mystical in Hikmet's careful, this-worldly attentiveness lies in these moments of mortality which can be so easily mistaken for *fana*,' or in these moments of *fana*' which can be so easily mistaken for mortality.

REPETITION (*TAKRAR*), RENEWAL (*TAJDID*) & REMEMBRANCE (*DHIKR*).

> *My rose, this is the miracle of repetition (Tekrardaki mucize) – to repeat without repeating.*
> (Hikmet, "Sebastian Bah'in 1 Numaralı Dominör Konçertosu")

> *But the Gnostics...know that "God never discloses Himself in a single form to two individuals, not in a single form twice."* (Ibn 'Arabi)[23]

Within the idea of repetition, a whole web of Sufi nuances become opaque in the work of Hikmet and Veli; these nuances relate both to the practice of repetition (known as *dhikr* or 'remembrance') as a spiritual technique of the believer, as well as the general idea of God's endlessly repeating manifestations. The meanings and contexts for such repetition are different for each poet.

Orhan Veli's relationship to repetition is of a mainly practical nature. The many words and phrases he chooses to repeat – "Istanbul," "her sey sizin için," "birdenbire," "güzel" – constitute one of his central and most effective strategies of defamiliarization, a strategy which would seem to have more to do with Shklovsky and Stein than Sufism. And yet, although a very modernist desire to repeat language in order to bring it to self-alienating exhaustion definitely moves within Veli's use of recurring lyrics, such a poetic device also brings to mind the Sufi practice of the repetition of God's names (*dhikr*) as a means of achieving intimacy with the invoked.

One way of reading the use of repetition in Veli's work would be with this practice of *dhikr* consciously in mind. Within such a reading, the invocation of Istanbul – particularly within such a famous poem as Veli's "Istanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapali" – would take on an overtly religious tone, an incantation and solemnity suggesting an implicit deification of the city:

> Istanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı
> Önce hafiften bir rüzgar esiyor
> Yavaş yavaş sallanıyor
> Yapraklar, ağaçlarda;
> Uzaklarda, çok uzaklarda,
> Sucuların hiç durmayan çıngırakları
> Istanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı
>
> I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed;
> At first there blows a gentle breeze
> And the leaves on the trees
> Softly flutter or sway;
> Out there, far away,
> The bells of water carriers incessantly ring;
> I am listening to Istanbul, intent, my eyes closed.[24]

The repetition of the city's name here – as in another of Veli's poems, "Istanbul Türküsü" – quickly acquires a formulaic function, evenly spaced, carefully metred, one which contributes to the ritualistic resonance of the poem. Veli's celebrated piece, which describes the sounds, smells and taste-sensations of the narrator as he listens to Istanbul with his eyes closed, could be read without too much difficulty as a non-religious example of *dhikr*, a secular invocation of a city's name in order to enter into its incommunicable essence through all of the bodily senses, not merely the visual. The promised intimacy with the divine which is seen as the motivation for all *dhikr* or remembrance ("I am the sitting companion of him who remembers me" goes the hadith[25]) is mirrored in the poet's own desire to grasp the *esas* or innermost quiddity of the city; just as the practiser of *dhikr* "gains knowledge of the face of the Real [God, *al-haqq*] in each thing,"[26] so the narrator of Veli's poem tries to contact the presence of Istanbul through a variety of different forms – the cries of seagulls, the sounds of pigeons in the courtyards of mosques, the warm harbour winds which blow across the isthmus. If the God of transcendence can be glimpsed through His immediate presence (*tashbih*) in the world of things, the placeless, centreless city the narrator is invoking with such concentrated meditation ("listening with eyes closed") can be tasted through its variety of peripheral, everyday forms. If Veli's poem resembles a prayer, one which yearns for a more intimate knowledge of his beloved city (a yearning which is metonymically displaced onto the girl's face at the end of the poem), then the repetition of *Istanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapali* – twelve times in a thirty-

23 Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 354.

24 Orhan Veli, *Butun Siirleri* (Istanbul: Yapi Kredi, 2007)115. Translated by Talat Sait Halman, 1982.

25 William G. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998) 102.

26 Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 102.

eight line poem – constitutes the formulaic remembrance of the ritual itself, endlessly invoking the elusive entity, repeatedly chanting the name of a city which can be called on but not placed, a city which resists definition, but allows itself to be perceived, or at least indirectly intuited, through the manifest panoply of its effects.

This analogy here between city and deity which the idea of *dhikr* provides – the belief that the uncapturable essence of the city can be glimpsed manifested in its boats, seagulls, shopkeepers, streetgirls – persists when we consider what else *dhikr* brings the rememberer. The first of these effects would be a binding, a restraining, as reported by Ibn 'Arabi:

> God has servants whose states and acts are a remembrance through which they draw near to God and which results in a knowledge of God that is known only by those who taste it. He who restrains himself with this formula of remembrance will join them... When the face of the Real discloses itself in the things to them and to those who remember ...they eyes do not pass by this face...the face binds anyone who gazes upon it.[27]

Even though the relationship of the rememberer to the binding, of the chanter to the chanted, is a fruitful one (as we will see, it brings not closure but an 'opening'), the repetition of the name or formula ties the repeater in a particular way to his or her subject. This tie is stated very explicitly as a limit and a constraint, and implicitly as a moment of semantic faithfulness. Paradoxically, an infinity (a glimpse of the Real) is promised to those who bind themselves to the finite; in this binding and self-limiting, which carries within it its own very Hegelian tensions, the temptation would be to feel frustration at the limit and go beyond the remembered – a move which would only be a sort of cheap infinity, merely an endless variety of phenomena, with no deeper vein of spiritual continuity. When, in "Istanbul'u dinliyorum," the narrator returns again and again to the divine name of his City, and the image of his devoted self, listening with his eyes closed, he is re-affirming the sacred centre of his metropolitan text; with every re-invocation, he reinforces the invisible lines with which the city pulls the poem around itself, so that the sequence of phenomena narrated (the seagulls, the girl, the mosques, the wind) become imbued translucently with the presence of the City itself.

The possibility that the essence of an unnarratable City in Veli's poetry may be analogous to the perceptible effects of a transcendental God occurs again in the poem "Galata Köprüsü," where the poet, watching out over a bridge, appears to glimpse the totality of the city in a variety of manifestations:

> Kiminiz kürek çeker, suya suya ;
> Kiminiz midye çıkarır dubalardan;
> Kiminiz dümen tutar mavnalarda;
> Kiminiz çımacıdır halat başında;
> Kiminiz kuştur, uçar, şairane;
> Kiminiz balıktır, pırıl pırıl;
> Kiminiz vapur, kiminiz şamandıra;
> Kiminiz bulut, havalarda;
> Kiminiz çatanadır, kırdıgı gibi bacayi,
> Şip diye geçer köprünün altından;
> Kiminiz düdüktür, öter;
> Kiminiz dumandır, tüter...
>
> Some of you are pulling the oars, whispering,
> Some of you are picking oysters from the buoys,
> Some of you are holding the rudders in the barges,
> Some of you are ropemen at the hawsers;
> Some of you are birds, flying like poets;
> Some of you are fish, twinkling, twinkling;
> Some of you are boats, some of you are floats,
> Some of you are clouds, in the air,
> Some of you are steamboats, dropping their smokestacks,
> Like a rascal they go under the bridge;
> Some of you are whistles, blowing;
> Some of you are smoke, also blowing...[28]

The poem starts conventionally enough; a survey of the various figures in one particular sweep of an Istanbul harbor scene. With the fifth "kiminiz," however, the reader is startled at the presence of the non-human, as the 'you' in the *kiminiz* is expanded to include not just the fishermen and sailors in the harbor, but also addresses the seagulls, the fish, even the boats and clouds. If the result is a slightly bizarre urban pantheism, it transforms the poem into a text whose addressee is the City itself. A City which, we learn with each repetition of *kiminiz*, resides in the boy picking oysters, the twinkling fish in the harbor, in the steamboats gliding under the bridge. If *dhikr* allows the reciter to glimpse the Real in a variety of different forms, Veli's own repetition gives him a keener sight to discern the presence of the City where we expect it least – not in its landmarks or capitols, but in its mundanities and minutiae.

27 Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 102.

28 Veli, *Butun Siirleri*, 118. Translated by Murat Nemet-Nejat, 1989.

A poem such as "Suddenly" ("Birdenbire") brings to mind two other effects of those who recite the names of God: hope and unveiling. A formula of *dhikr*, writes Ibn 'Arabi, "bestows upon the rememberer a magnificent hope and a clear opening."[29] Veli's poem plays so obviously with religious metaphors of light, revelation and epiphany that it deserves to be quoted in full:

Her şey birdenbire oldu.
Birdenbire vurdu gün ışığı yere;
Gökyüzü birdenbire oldu;
Mavi birdenbire.
Her şey birdenbire oldu;
Birdenbire tütmeye başladı duman topraktan;
Filiz birdenbire oldu, tomurcuk birdenbire.
Yemiş
birdenbire oldu.

Birdenbire,
Birdenbire;
Her şey birdenbire oldu.
Kız birdenbire, oğlan birdenbire;
Yollar, kırlar, kediler, insanlar…
Aşk birdenbire oldu,
Sevinç birdenbire.

Everything happened all of a sudden.
All of a sudden daylight beat down on the earth;
There was the sky all of a sudden;
All of a sudden steam began to rise from the soil.
There were tendrils all of a sudden, buds all of a sudden.

And there were fruits all of a sudden.
All of a sudden,
All of a sudden,
Girls all of a sudden, boys all of a sudden.
Roads, moors, cats, people…
And there was love all of a sudden,
Happiness all of a sudden.[30]

The repetition of "Birdenbire" plays on the secondary meaning of *birdenbire* – not just 'suddenly' but also 'one to one.' A couple of points emerge here: first of all, in its passage from light to love, from sky and blueness to girls and cats, the poem moves from the abstract through the process of becoming to the particular and the personal. Given the visual landscape of the poem – the light, the steam coming from the earth, the fruits and blossoms, the sudden wealth of particulars, all ending in love – it would not be exaggerated to see the poem as a secular account of the Neoplatonic process of creation, from the One to the Many. Secondly, the 'suddenness' of the poem constitutes some form of mild parody of religious revelation – an enormous movement of life and power surges through the poem, its overwhelming immediacy emphasized every line with the repetition of birdenbire. It remains unclear whether the speaker's actual reality has changed, or merely his capacity to see it; in many ways, "Birdenbire" is a poem about a sudden clarifying of vision, one which – like the practitioner of *dhikr* – allows the enlightened to see how the "Real may make meanings appear in forms that do not belong to the meanings,"[31] so that "yollar, kirlar, kediler, insanlar" emerge into the speaker's field of vision for the first time. Of course, epiphanic moments in secular prose and poetry always carry with them this potential for the religious – what is interesting in "Birdenbire" is the way repetition is linked to this sudden moment of insight. Not simply a moment of Steinian exhaustion (repeating the "rose" until one finally severs signifier from signified and unveils a stranger essence behind the word), "Birdenbire" has more to do semantically with invocation rather than evacuation, using the word birdenbire as a secular *Ersatz* for what would have been, once upon a time, a divine name. In a poem filled with divine names – light (*annur*), creation (*al-khaliq*), life-giver (*al-muhyi*), love (*al-hubb*) – the word *birdenbire* punctuates the text in a religious way, but with non-religious content.

The binary pairs we are using here – secular/religious, signifier/signified, even constative/performative – are problematic in themselves. What differentiates a moment of religious epiphany from a non-religious one? How does a revelatory glimpse into the interconnectedness of things belong differently to a mystic's 'inrush' (*warid*), a Marxist's all-penetrating instant of *Ideologiekritik*, or a sudden post-structuralist extension of the linguistic turn? If repetition, through defamiliarization, brings us closer to the thing itself, then what does it matter if the thing repeated ('remembered') is a god, a rose or a stone?

A poem such as "Çok şükür" – and the explicitly religious phrasing in its title, "Thank God" – at once highlights this problematic of a language which is undecidably religious and nonreligious:

Bir insan daha var, çok şükür, evde;
Nefes var,

29 Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 87 – the phrase 'clear opening' is taken from the Koran 48:1.

30 Translated by Anil Mericelli.

31 Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 349.

Ayak sesi var;
Çok şükür, çok şükür.
There is someone in the house,
Thank God,
There is breath.
There are steps.
Thank God.[32]

The formulaic repetition of *Çok sükür, çok sükür* is unignorable; the poet who famously wanted to be a fish in a glass of raki, the Veli who could write in his manifesto how conventional poetry had been nothing other than the bourgeois "slave of religion" (*dinin zümrenin köleliginı*),[33] here repeats a standard expression of gratitude to God as if he were a haci. The slightly ominous imagery of the poem, however, sends the text in a different direction: an empty house, the quiet horror of solitude, perversely comforted by the creak of floors or a muffled cough. Any notion of possible divinity in "Çok sükür" is negated by its exclusion as a source of comfort and existential recognition in the poem – a thankfulness for the hidden presence of neighbours, not deities, an expression of gratitude for humanity, not divinity.

And yet the ruins of the word remains, with its repetition, on the page, like a church that has been turned into a social club. My intention here is not simply to see Hikmet and Veli's appropriation of religiosity as yet another opportunity to re-iterate the tired thesis that secular humanism is nothing more than a theology re-built and relocated around man. The temptation to simply label this use of repetition as another example of what Murat Nemet-Nejat has called "godless Sufism" – and even the analogy of dereliction just employed in the previous sentence – should be questioned; the Sufi echoes in the Garip movement are not ruins but latent, ever-present possibilities. An outmoded, but nevertheless dormant appeal to something inscrutably external remains embedded within Veli's verse, a silenced theology moves in his epiphanies, melancholy, repetition, one which is forever on the brink of re-activating its faded, spectral structure at the approach of a suitably biased reader.

In contrast to Veli, Hikmet's treatment of the idea of repetition in Sufism is much more theoretical. This is not to say that Hikmet, as a poet, does not make abundant use of repetition as a means of bringing fresh meanings to words (the aspect of falling leaves in "Sonbahar, Seni Seviyorum" for example), but merely that there is a conscious treatment of Sufi ideas concerning repetition – one which confirms an already extant familiarity on Hikmet's part with Sufi notions of *tajdid* (renewal) and *takrar* (repetition), a conscious reworking which does not find its counterpart in Veli.

In Sufism, a central feature of the Divine is its unrepeatability. The infinity of God means that He never repeats Himself in His manifestations (*la takrar fi'l-tajalli* – "There is no repetition in self-disclosure"[34]). The Real is the root of all existence, forever renewing (*tajdid*) creation from moment to moment in a consistent, Heraclitean flux of perpetual and transformative replenishment – an idea the Sufis frequently justified with reference to the Koranic verse "Each day He is upon some task" (55:29). The ontological impossibility of God's repetitiveness is probably the most relevant point to bear in mind when we come to Hikmet's own treatment of what he calls "the miracle of repetition" (*tekrardaki mucize*). He gives the idea its most focused attention in his meditation on Bach's 1st Concerto, "Sebastian Bah'in 1 Numarali Dominör Konçertosu," where a cycle of images – beginning with and returning to an autumn vineyard in the morning sunlight – communicates Hikmet's conviction of the "unrepeatability of repetition" (*Tekrarin tekrarsizligi*):

Güz sabahı üzüm bağında
sıra sıra, büklüm büklüm kütüklerin tekrarı,
kütüklerde salkımların,
salkımlarda tanelerin,
tanelerde aydınlığın.

Yağan bütün yağmurların tekrarı
Toprağa, ağaca, denize,
Elime, yüzüme, gözüme
Ve camda ezilen damlalar.

Günlerimin tekrarı
Birbirine benzeyen,
Benzemeyen günlerimin.

Örülen örgüdeki tekrar,
Yıldızlı gökyüzündeki tekrar
Ve bütün dillerde 'seviyorum'un tekrarı
Ve yapraklarda ağacın tekrarı.
Ve her ölüm döşeğinde acısı tez biten yaşamanın.

32 Translated by Murat Nemet-Nejat, 1989.

33 Taken from the *Garip* manifesto in Veli, *Butun Siirleri*, 22 – I am grateful to Victoria Holbrook for supplying me with her unpublished translation of this text.

34 Chittick, *The Sufi Path*,103.

Yağan kardaki tekrar,
Incecikten yağan karda,
Lapa lapa yağan karda,
Buram buram yağan karda
Esen tipide savrularak
Ve yolumu kesen kardakı tekrar.

Çocuklar koşuyor avluda.
Avluda koşuyor çocuklar.
Ihtiyar bir kadın geçiyor sokaktan.
Sokaktan ihtiyar bir kadın geçiyor.
Geçiyor sokaktan ihtiyar bir kadın.
...
Tekrardakı mucize gülüm,
Tekrarın tekrarsızlığı...

Fall morning in the vineyard :
in row after row the repetition of knotty vines,
of clusters on the vines,
of grapes in the clusters,
of light on the grapes.

The repetition of all the rain that rains
on earth, trees, and the sea,
on my hands, face, and eyes,
and of the drops crushed on the glass.

The repetition of my days
that are alike,
my days that are not alike.

The repetition of the thread in the weave,
the repetition in the starry sky,
and the repetition of "I love" in all languages,
and the repetition of the tree in the leaves,
and of the pain of living, which ends in an instant
on every deathbed.

The repetition in the snow the
light snow,
the heavy wet snow,
the dry snow,
the repetition in the snow that whirls
in the blizzard that drives me off the road.

The children are running in the courtyard;
in the courtyard the children are running.
An old woman is passing by on the street;
on the street an old woman is passing by;
passing by on the street is an old woman.
...
My rose, this is the miracle of repetition to
repeat without repeating.[35]

35 Translated by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk.

To some extent, the poem is a poem of categories. The various forms of repetition are each given their own slot – the repetition of essence as growth (tree/leaves), of form as independent of origin, the repetition of time, of ideas in reality (love in language, snow in its various states), even the repetition of language itself. The poem dwells on, isolates and de-familiarizes the idea of reoccurrence as it takes place in nature, in language, in society and in the self. In one sense, this almost pagan celebration of the uniqueness of each moment could easily be construed, anti-theologically, as a system-deflating devotion to the particular, and an argument against the homogenizing effacement of theological time. Hikmet's emphasis on the unrepeatable yet recurring quiddity of each snowfall, grape and smile could easily be set antagonistically against the sweeping abstraction of an abstract God. This subtle strategy of relishing the idiosyncrasy and detail of the world as a means of discrediting the next – using an existentialist /materialist now to stall an ideological machine built on a 'hereafter' – is a common enough practice in Hikmet's poetics.

Three aspects of the poem, however, seem to delay and complicate such a reading. The first concerns a certain sense of power, pulsing through the structure of the poem's imagery – a power not necessarily emanating from some kind of *primum mobile*, but nevertheless one which lends the poem a curious aura. The repetition, in particular, of love in language, of tree in leaf, of vine in grape, suggests an enigmatic dynamism whose source is never specified, but whose effects seem to confirm the amorphous optimism Hikmet ultimately draws from the whole idea of repetition, as if the energy behind such physical processes offered some form of political comfort (a version of "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"[36]). Interestingly, this faintly mystical connection between political transformation and the infusion of energy in the natural world is found in *Seyh Bedrettin Destani,* drawing on exactly the same imagery of vine and grape. When the narrator leaves the Sultan's domain to travel to the territories of the freemen, he can literally glimpse their freedom in the nature he sees there:

Dedim ki: bak
başladı karşımızda bir çocuk gibi gülmeğe
bir adım geride ağlayan toprak.
Bak ki, incirler iri zümrüt gibidir,
kütükler zor taşıyor kehribar salkımları.

36 The last line of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind."

Saz sepetlerde oynıyan balıkları gör:
ıslak derileri pul pul, ışıl ışıldır
ve körpe kuzu eti gibi aktır
yumuşaktır etleri.

I said: "Look!
Just a step behind us the earth is weeping,
But here before us it begins to laugh like a child.
Look! The figs are huge emeralds.
The vines are drooping
With clusters of amber grapes.
See! The fish are leaping in the nets,
Their skins glisten and sparkle like scales of sun,
Their flesh is soft and white like young lamb."[37]

Of course, it is the attitude of the speaker which is ultimately being emphasized: the euphoria of hard-won freedom causes them to view the natural world with fresh eyes. To draw political hope, in a moment of secular epiphany, from the observation of a vineyard full of healthy grapes, is not to indulge in the supernatural, but merely to stress how much greener fields can look when they are worked by freemen instead of slaves. A force, nevertheless, appears to be moving through nature, and however Hegelian a reading we wish to put on it (the promise of the dialectic, after all, implies an *Aufhebung* which provides its own version of the unrepeatable), the nameless, driving energy the poem comments on does sit ambiguously within the vocabulary of a Marxist materialist.

A second, related aspect of "Sebastian Bah'in," one which pushes the text in an almost Neoplatonic direction, is the buried sense of order implicit in the poem's constant invoking of 'repetition.' "No origin resembles its effect… no grape looks like the vine" writes Rumi.[38] The Neoplatonic idea of creation as a series of emanations, where the One spills out through a series of effects into the world of the Many, cascades down from Unity into Multiplicity, does seem to run alongside the notion of "repetition" in Hikmet's poem. The ironic repetition of the idea itself inevitably brings about the question: exactly what is (not) being repeated? To sit within a vineyard and see vines and grapes, and the sunlight reflecting off the grapes and the feelings one has absorbing all of this, all as effects of one another…to view nature in this way is to bring a chain of causality into the world one sees. This concatenation of phenomena is not by any means explicitly theological – it does, however, invite the possibility of the spiritual with its constant emphasis on the repetition of the cause.

The final aspect of Hikmet's text which might unsettle a materialist reading would be the word which takes place in the final couplet, a word so explicitly religious that it almost sabotages the direction of the poem: miracle (*mucize*). Again, one could make the argument for a deliberate, ironic use of the word here by Hikmet. In a poem dedicated to a Christian musician whose works were so famously couched within the composer's faith, Hikmet's use of the term 'miracle' may well be an attempt to disenchant and redefine the parameters of the term *mucize* through a very secular astonishment at the infinite and forever mutating persistence of life itself, rather than the workings of some transcendental entity. The fact that the Arabic root for the Turkish *mucize* means 'astonishment' would lend some credence to this reading of the poem as a reassertion of this-worldly awe over other-worldly stupor. The appearance of the term 'miracle,' nevertheless, inadvertently constellates the reflections on causality, effect and repetition in a particular way. In the very moment the materialist reading struggles to wrest the word *mucize* out of its spiritual context and re-define it, its appearance re-evokes the Sufi provenance of the very 'unrepeatability' being discussed. If Hikmet's poem on Bach is an attempt to disenchant the Sufi idea of the unrepeatable divine by placing it within the context of physical, material processes, the presence of the term *mucize* forever threatens to reverse the text, re-spiritualizing the observation of physical, material processes as analogies for the unrepeatability of the Divine.

The Turkish historian Şerif Mardin has famously noted the points of continuity between a defunct, religious Ottoman past and a new, secular, modern Republic post-1922. Above all, Mardin points out the naïveté of assuming a clean break between the 'religious conservatives' and the new secularist reformers, unveiling a shift from religious caliphate to secular republic at once much more ambiguous and complex. The fact, for example, that many of the legal experts on the Swiss Civil Code, adopted by the Turkish secular state in 1926 as the only legal constitution in the land, were people fully trained in Islamic law and had even been teaching Shariat law a few years earlier, shows to what extent the influence of religion was able to persist even after the establishment of the secular state. Historians such as Mardin have spent their energies exposing the degree to which religious institutions and

37 Translated by Larry Clark.

38 Chittick, *Spiritual teachings of Rumi*, 106.

intellectuals actually assisted (rather than resisted, as commonly supposed) the process of modernization begun in the *Tanzimat* period.

Our delineation of Sufi echoes in two secular poets, as I have said at the beginning, is not merely intended to substantiate this thesis, even though both approaches do share something of a common spirit. Mardin, in trying to explain how conservative Muslims were able to teach something other than Shariat Law, suggests mysticism as a facilitating factor – as God is a source of 'justice,' the Swiss Civil Code was simply seen as one of many other "degrees of emanation of the principle of justice."[39] In this essay, the reverse process has been traced – how non-religious poets either unconsciously implemented or consciously used religious phrases and ideas whenever they were compatible with what they were trying to express. The unconscious persistence of religious motifs has a more powerful effect than their conscious invocation, which usually expresses itself in an 'othering' or unlikely re-shaping of the original trope. When Veli tries to write about a city and ends up invoking a god, or when he meditates upon the overlooked and unwittingly brings about a sense of divinely magnanimous re-inclusion, the religiosity of the resulting atmosphere – because it is not articulated – is felt all the more keenly. When a phrase such as "Cok sukur" is used, or when an Arabic term such as *tawhid* is given an openly Marxist re-definition, the physical irruption of the religious into the text simultaneously calcifies it, setting it within limits it is subsequently unable to stray outside of.

Our Sufi-biased readings of these poets, however, still have to retain the status of an *a posteriori*, not an *a priori* truth. This is not to say they are projections, which would suggest a blank screen – and no poetic or political movement, however new, ever began with a blank screen. If the interpretative possibilities for such readings in poems like "Sebastian Bah'in" and "Birdenbire" are forever there, ready and waiting to be activated, they do not constitute a hidden, 'deeper' layer of the poem, but merely an alternative reading which is subtly, tacitly, permanently possible.

An insistence on the *a posteriori* status of these "religious" echoes leads us to a final remark. Over the past ten years, sociologists such as Casanova, Asad and Latour have been trying to perform a tentative genealogy of secularism – one which shows not simply how scientific arguments against superstition betray similar sensibilities in their own performance[40], but also (in Talal Asad's words) how "over time a variety of concepts, practices and sensibilities have come together to form 'the secular.'"[41] One might already have suspected this in the etymology of the word "secular" (from the Latin *saecularis*, "worldly/temporal"), interpreting it liberally as any practice which takes place in historical time and space. If we step back and abstract the content of our inquiries for a moment, forgetting the particularities of Sufi Neoplatonism or Marxist materialism, we might simply see a sequence of texts around which two adjacent traditions or sets of practices overlap one another on certain points (holism, individual agency, compassion) without any sense of primacy or precedence. The temptation to see these moments of overlap with a historical consciousness – seeing revolutionary time as a form of messianic time, political false consciousness as a form of *jahiliya*, and so on – is a wholly valid one. However, if we are truly to see religious and secular traditions as merely different sets of historically-located practices, growing into one another like colonies in a petri dish, then the idea of the religious "persisting" into the secular becomes more and more difficult to maintain. The more we analyse (*analyein*) the secular, the more we unravel it – so that its strands go outwards and backward, revealing a network of origins, an undergrowth of provenances. Was there ever a space, a time we might call the "pre-religious"? A time before rhythms turned into rituals? The question of exactly what, if anything, predates the religious and the secular – indeed, whether "religion" itself is not an invention of the secularist – lies outside the scope of this essay. If re-reading poems which talk about a city or a mullah as though they were a God or a revolutionary resurrects and sharpens still-pressing questions about the origin and even ownership of such ideas, then perhaps a new word is needed to talk about this – a word which would circumvent the traditional binaries of the lay and the religious, the secular and the sacred.

39 Serif Mardin, *Religion, Society and Modernity in Turkey* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006) 266.

40 Bruno Latour, *On The Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*, trans. Catherin Porter and Heather MacLean (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010) 16-19.

41 Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) 16.

ALI ZNAIDI
2 POEMS

THE CAPSIAN MAN HAD NO IDEA OF PHOSPHATE

Town is grey. Town is always heavy with particles
of phos[phate] dust which stole the whiteness of
your teeth. Endless editions of carnivalesque dusty
wind have released the cannibals from their cages
to eat your flesh. Those small fossilized teeth of
sharks – a testimony to the abundance of water during
antiquity when the Capsian man had no idea of
phosphate – are still feasting on your drained body.
And I am stoked only on those catalogues of animals
& herbs that inspired the first Capsian man to draw
his grand narratives on the coarse walls of those
obsolete caves, seeking to beautify his already beautiful
life, while inhaling his aesthetics from a raw nature.
No phosphate, no industry, no bloodsuckers, no strikes.
—Only his white teeth sparkling in the pond's mirror.

DIGITAL CORRIDORS

The peacock's feathers corrode.
The peacock's feathers are the pens by which
our post-modern moments will be scribbled.
The hidden aesthetics of the cosmos becomes phosphatic.
& we are becoming obsessed w/ searching for phatic dimensions
in the faraway stars.
We are no longer ground into earth.
Cronus is cruel.
Gaia also becomes merciless.
Everyone is looking for an outlet.
Everyone becomes digital.
Everyone is looking for a nest in a virtual faraway firmament
devoid of phos[phate] dust.

ADRIAN SLATCHER

THE GOOD CITIZEN

I felt like I was the one who had been in the rooming house the longest, though that couldn't be true. Some men only stayed a few days or weeks, others may have been there much longer but they were like shadows, sleeping during the day and their door banging shut at night as they went I don't know where.

It was perhaps inevitable that I'd be the one to show Jam around, though there wasn't much to show. We all had our own rooms which, equipped with a basin, and behind a locked door could be as contained as we wished. The communal kitchen was large, but spartan. There was a bathroom on each floor as well, each with its own pattern of use. A Korean cleaner, a Mr Li, would come in each day, or nearly each day, and scrub away the worst of us.

I think Jam had been there several days when I found myself coming in the front door at the same time as him.

"God is great," he said.

"God is great," I replied, automatically, yet it was the first time anyone had offered me this greeting since coming here. On the few steps to our respective rooms, at either end of the first floor corridor, we became, if not friends, at least acquaintances.

"Al," I said, and he nodded and held out his hand and said "Jam." He looked a little less spectral than the others, in that his eyes weren't weak with tiredness and he didn't smell of whichever factory he had been working at. My own chemical smell always seemed obtrusive in company, and I would rush to shower and get it off me, but if he noticed he didn't say.

Over the next week or so I saw him once or twice, though I didn't really find out much more about him. That's how we lived in the Cedars, silently amongst each other refusing to share what may have been better shared. Why? Out of shame perhaps, or out of fear. There weren't so many places where the only reference required was financial.

Each morning I would leave the house at five thirty for the short stump to the waiting point. Here too I began to

think I was the longest-serving. New boys seemed to be queuing every day, rough shaven, clothes caked in dirt, shoes from some African street market, which would be the first thing they replaced if they had any sense when they got a little money. I was always there early, and now after a few weeks – or was it several months? – I had the little blue security card round my neck that mean I was guaranteed a place in the van.

The hour long journey was the worst part of my day. We had rigged up a kind of seating round the sides, old carpets rolled into a hump, but it couldn't give us much cushion against a sharp bend or an unexpected motion. Every now and then some new boy would have to pee, and after banging on the partition for a stop that us old stagers knew would not come, we all sat in silence as his agony became our discomfort.

In comparison the paint factory offered a freedom of sorts. England is truly a wonderful place, with its respect for the safety of its workers, even workers such as myself who appeared on no other list. Once a month there would be a government man who came round the factory checking that we had all the health and safety precautions in place. That meant our personal goggles and gloves as well as the failsafe mechanisms on the machines and a barcode system for the chemical store, that meant every batch was traceable from its moment of arriving at the factory till when it was used in the production process.

Paint is the suspension of a pigment in a stable liquid that can then be applied and fixed to a particular surface. Although the machines automated much of the process now, we still had to add the necessary pigments, fixatives and resins to the vats, and test and re-test the consistency. Our job consisted of moving things between the different processes, of constantly checking the consistency of the mix, of ensuring the various vats were always in action. It was dull, repetitive work, but that suited me, and I would slump asleep in the back of the van as we returned to South London.

Our routines rarely coincided, so I was surprised to find Jam sitting in the kitchen one evening as I heated some soup.

"I was waiting for you," he said.

I gave a half smile.

"Anything in particular?"

"Want to join me for a drink?"

I turned round. My face must have been a picture. I'd assumed he was a strict Muslim, but we all make the choices as to what suits us in life.

"Come and show me the area, I'm new here," he said.

It was nearly nine o'clock. But tomorrow I wasn't at work. I nodded.

"You have other clothes?"

"What's wrong with these?" I said, pretending to be indignant, but he was right. "I have other clothes," I said.

"Half an hour, then we go out."

The nearest pub was The Huntsman, though at what time in history this part of South London had seen a hunt I couldn't imagine.

I bought two lagers and we sat in a corner seat, his back to the wall watching people come and go.

He talked about my job at the paint factory. Asking how it was? How could I stand the smell and the fumes? I said I'd known worse, which interested him. What chemicals did we use? How were they controlled? I joked that the only way to get anything out of there would be to decant it from my skin, so strict were they. I still hadn't found out what he did but he began to tell me anyway.

"I pick up this cart and I'm given a pitch. I get £10 a day plus 10p for every £10 I make."

"What do you sell?"

"It can be anything," he said, "the market is very fickle. Sometimes its little plastic helicopters, sometimes singing bears, last Christmas it was selfie sticks. Sometimes just the usual, umbrellas and mobile phone covers. If we have something and the shops haven't got it we sell out. People hand over £10 without thinking. And it's just junk."

"Sounds good work."

"But think about it. For every £10 I get 10p – the owner he gets the rest. He has none of the hassle. I want to start up on my own. Import it myself. Find the next thing. Bring in a load, get guys like you to help me shift it."

"I'm okay," I said, "but thanks."

"I didn't mean like that, I meant we could be partners," he said.

"I'm happy as I am."

He grabbed me forcefully.

"Happy?" he said. "This is not happy. Out at work for fourteen hours at a time and when was the last time you had a night out? I never see you with anyone. No girl, no friends…"

He'd hit a nerve. How hard was it to make friends in this place? I told myself I hadn't time for friends, that friends cost money. Money I was saving up, so that I could move to a better place, so that I could afford to take a girl out.

"We need to go to a better bar," he said. "There are no women here."

It was true, nearly everyone was male, and mostly middle-aged or older. Jam had a card. "Bar Warsaw. Members Only." The drawing on the card was of a woman drinking champagne. It looked expensive.

"We go here?" he said. "I'm told it's good. We wait for my friend, he is here in few minutes, then we go."

I shrugged. I thought of what I'd earned today, this week, and how quickly it would disappear in a place like that. I could always drink water.

He gave a big smile as another man came in the bar

"God is great," they greeted each other.

"This is Murat," he said, "and this is Al. Murat will be staying at mine sometimes so I wanted you two to meet, so you didn't think anything wrong about it."

We left the Huntsman and headed away from the high street and in the direction of Bar Warsaw. I couldn't picture it, though I'd walked this way before. When we found it we saw that the neon sign pointed to a doorway hidden round the side of the building. There was a little kiosk at the top and Jam muttered something to the woman behind the glass that was enough to wave us through without payment.

It was a small basement bar, with little tables clustered round the edges and a small dancefloor taking up half the space. The music was loud R&B but nobody was yet dancing. There were small groups sat around – mostly students, I thought – a few East European men propping up the bar and talking to two pretty young women, in tiny shimmering dresses with straightened blonde hair. We took a seat and Jam went to the bar and came back with drinks. Murat didn't drink alcohol and sipped on a coke instead.

I got up to get us another drink, but Jam stopped me, and waved a £50 in my face.

"I need to get change for this."

He went up to the bar and the two women parted to let him through. He started talking to them, and when he returned he had a tray full of drinks and they came and sat with us.

"This is Katya, and this is Annalise," he said, "they are air stewardesses."

They laughed at that for some reason.

"Which airline?" I asked.

"We are freelance," said Annalise and laughed again.

Jam was doing most of the talking. The beers had been replaced by strong spirits and we knocked them back. More came from the bar and I didn't know who was paying.

At some point we staggered out, and the girls came with us, some negotiation taking place between them and Jam. I was beyond doing anything with the girls, but as we caught a taxi back to the rooming house, I found myself in the back, Annalise's arms around me, her tongue in my mouth. She had sharp teeth, and up close she smelt like new bread.

I went to the bathroom and came back to find Katya making out with Murat. I could hear Jam and Annalise in his room. I tried to say something, but I was too drunk and stumbled alone into my own bed. I went to sleep to their febrile soundtrack, my flesh being denied what it most wanted.

I didn't see Jam for another week but then there was a message under my door, and with it a key.

GIVE THIS TO MURAT WHEN HE CALLS it said, simply.

I sat there for a few minutes and then went and tried it in the lock of his room. I could say I was just testing that it was the right one. The door opened. The bed was unmade. I felt a tingling resentment that he'd shared it with Annalise that night. His room was twice the size of mine but the bed was pushed back against one wall and a row of trestle tables were loaded with cardboard boxes on the other side of the room. I suddenly felt uncomfortable being there. I caught the labels on some of the boxes. "Electrical Components." There was a prayer mat on the floor. Was it facing Mecca? I had to assume so. I rarely prayed these days.

I closed the door behind me, locking it and making sure it was locked. One of the other residents came down the stairs but as usual there was no interaction. Jam was as close as I had to a friend in that place.

Murat didn't come that day or the next or if he did it was whilst I was at work, so I didn't really understand why I had been given a key. I wondered where Jam had gone and for how long. Perhaps he was arranging the imports for his business. I found it hard to comprehend other people's lives, it was much easier not to try. I had a bad night's sleep and overslept. I ran to the pick up point but the van had already gone. I walked home, wondering if this might effect my chances of work in the future. I was a good worker, I kept telling myself, reliable. But was that enough? An unexpected day off didn't feel like a bonus as I fretted about how it might be perceived.

When the doorbell went it wasn't Murat, as I'd somehow thought it might be, but a courier with a

parcel for Jam. I signed for it, and took it into my room. I half thought about opening his room again and storing it there, I had the key after all, but then he would know I'd seen the room, and I didn't want that.

I caught the bus down to the high street and wandered around, looking carefully at the various street hawkers. Any one of them could have been Jam, but none of them were.

When I returned to the rooming house, Murat was on the steps.

"How long have you been there?"

"An hour."

"You are lucky," I said, "I missed my shift."

"I know," he said.

"How?"

"One of the boys, he's a friend of ours."

I gave him the key to Jam's flat. I'd forgot about the parcel that had come earlier and by the time I remembered he'd closed the door after him and I didn't want to disturb him.

The next day I was early for the van, but my day off hadn't been commented on. I was glad about this, but also it meant that I was not missed. We were so used to there being different faces on the shift that it didn't mean anything, I guessed, but I wanted to keep the job. I wondered which of "the boys" knew Jam and Murat.

That week went quickly and it seemed that things had gone back to how they had been in the Cedars before I'd met Jam, where you could go for a week or more without catching more than an echo of someone else's existence. We used the bathroom and the kitchen at different times, and when we weren't out working, we were sleeping. I heard Jam's voice, in heated conversation with Murat. So he was back then.

We saw each other one evening. I had gone out to the shops and was coming back when he called me over. He was sat in a car parked over from the flats. I didn't know he had a car.

"Where you been?" I asked.

"Busy times, Al. Good to see you."

He got out of the car and I could see that he was smoking an e-cigarette.

"Better for you," he said, "but I don't think they look right, do you?"

Jam handed it to me, but I declined. I had a little metal case with half a dozen cigarettes already rolled and I took one of those out and lit it. I offered him one, and he took it "for later."

"I like that about you, Al, you don't easily change with the times."

"I'm not sure you know me," I said.

"None of us really know each other," he said. "Murat for instance, is a mystery to me. A total mystery."

"And yet you are friends?"

"We are brothers, Al, brothers," and he patted me on the shoulder as if I was also a brother.

"This weekend, maybe we go dancing again. That was wrong of me. There should have been three girls, but that was what there was."

"It was okay, I was drunk."

"The mind gets drunk. The body it doesn't always know."

"I'd better get back."

"Yes, I have things to do. But this 'vaping,' I don't think it is a good look, and that's why we smoke isn't it? To look good?"

I finished my cigarette and stamped it out. The streets were littered with our habits yet I never gave a thought to that. The only other people up as early as me were the street cleaners, their little robot machines brushing up against the kerb, clearing the pavement of our detritus.

"I shall see you soon, brother."

He clasped my shoulders, as a friend, and yet I couldn't wait to be let go.

When I got home the following evening there was another envelope under my door. It contained £500 in crumpled pink £50s. I had only seen one of these before, when Jam had paid for our drinks at Bar Warsaw. There was a note attached. It was a shopping list of sorts. A list of chemicals, solvents and fixatives that I knew well from the factory. Beside each of them was a figure. 25cl, 50cl, 100cl. Such small amounts. I crumpled up the note and dropped it down a drain the next time I left the house. I automatically put the money with my other savings, but in truth I didn't know what to do with it. I knocked on the door of 5A but they must have left again.

At the factory I found a reason to go to the stores to pick up some replacement gloves, having deliberately torn the ones I had. It would come out of my wages, but no matter. "Whilst I'm here, can I pick up some sample bottles?" I said, as nonchalantly as I could. I was given a pack to take down to the colour lab, where new pigments were tested and sampled, but instead of taking them there, I reached up and hid them at the back of the shelf where we stored our goggles.

I could come back to them if I needed them. I hadn't yet decided whether to help him or not, but at least I had made some preparations. At lunch time I left the factory for a few minutes and went to a pay phone and called directory enquiries. I punched in the number I'd been given and made another short call.

The day of the raid I would have been there had I not left the house so early. Instead, I came home at the end of my shift, to find police vans outside where I lived and a cordon that was checking everyone in and out. I told them my room number and they let me pass. It was Jam's room that they were turning upside down, for which they had a warrant. There was a knock on my door and they asked me to come out and answer a few routine questions.

Did you know the man in room 5A?

I met him a few times, yes. His name was Jam.

Were you aware of any others using the room?

No.

Did he say where he worked?

He was a street trader on the high street.

Was there anything unusual about him?

No.

Did he mention any associates?

Pardon?

Did he mention anybody he worked with or otherwise knew?

No, I don't think so.

Do you know a man called Murat?

No, I don't think so.

How long have you lived here?

Nearly a year.

When did he move in?

Maybe three, four months ago.

Thank you, you can go now.

And that was it. I went into the kitchen and made some soup and toast as I did most nights. I waited for the police to leave and took out my money. The money that Jam had given me was almost as much as I'd managed to save up in the time I'd been there. I separated the money out, and flicked through the adverts in the back of the paper. There was an advert for a motorbike that was listed as £500 ono. I rang the number and arranged to see it.

The next day I went to see my supervisor. There had been some jobs advertised internally, and I asked if I might apply even though I was an agency worker. To my surprise he handed me an application form and helped me fill it in there and then. Some of the questions were about my immigration status. I hesitated, but he said "leave it blank." He nodded at me. There was an understanding.

On the motorbike I could get into work in half the time, and the money I got was much more than it had been. I hadn't realised how much the agency was taking for those trips in that dilapidated van.

Few people stayed at the rooming house for more than a year, and now it was time for me to go.

I had found a room in a house with some other people and put down a deposit. As I packed up my belongings I pulled out the box that had arrived for Jam. I'd never opened it. The sender was an electronics company in Italy. I shook the box slightly, it rattled a little, but was tightly packed. I got out a knife and cut the tape.

There were around twenty boxes, no details on the outside. I opened one up. Inside, in bubble wrap was a circuit board and microprocessor. At the bottom were some other boxes, bigger in size. I opened one of these as well. To my surprise it was a plastic kit, with instructions on how to assemble it. I laid out the parts on the bed and followed the instructions. The microprocessor went inside and clicked into place. There was a blister card with a dozen small round batteries in it. I took one out and installed it on the circuit board, and finally clicked the casing around it. The plastic assembly became a toy robot when snapped together, and I clicked the button at the top to see the robot light up. I put it on a flat surface and watched it move around.

Its eyes lit up, its feet moved, and it even spoke.

"God is great," it said, in a tinny, metallic voice. "God is great."

I realised that all the toy needed to be complete was some colour, for the plastic was unpainted.

I remembered the list that I'd received with the £500 from Jam.

"Why didn't you tell me that was what you wanted it for?" I said out loud. I could have got him as much paint as he needed. They had a warehouse full of end of lines that we could purchase for pennies.

I packed up the box and placed it with my other belongings. I locked the door behind me, leaving the key with a note for the landlord, but giving no forwarding address, and left the Cedars for the last time. I was moving into a proper house with real people. I had a motorbike and a legitimate job. Who could say that I was not a good person, who could say that I was not a good citizen?

ALAN HALSEY

NOCTURNE IN GREENWICH MEAN TIME

* lizard hazard *
possibly say possible repeatedly 'sitautated'
rough felt for shedding
in the great storm of schemes & the scream of things
these words may have chaingangs of changelings as side-effects
you may notice that in Malory 'vigour' means 'figure'
but if you constantly dream in Middle English seek medical advice

or a gnomic hermit in a nameless wood
a stopgap stoppage between *Mingus Ah Um* and *Mmm … Ah Yes*
while insurgents gather in the locus amoenus
not so much a topos these days as a careworn caravan
moved across country by contrary motives
you must contact me to let her know their time of arrival
a mean feat of interpretation down which a reader

brings Raymond Chandler to mind in a back street of Sheffield one Tuesday afternoon in November
seemingly Poe's dream within a dream he'd read that morning and had by then forgotten
too busy pricing books for a long-vanished market
he couldn't decide which silence to assume the air of
either de- or pre-scribed but in any case repeated for the rest of his life
in cowboy colours dumb and climbing down and back and up and back 'a bit more Northern and with ASBOs'
a half-rhyme for asbestos as best as I remember

we've been feathering our dinosaurs ever since
complaining about passive smoking as if that's the worst about being in prison
another reason to distrust impertinent & intermittent diarists
when memory management fails and all your blue-screen numbers come up
a kind of licensed incense lacking incentive
'as a writer looking in his mirror invokes the muse'
while a hi-speed train tears through the woods at 50,000 pages per second

for a moment they thought it was the Questing Beast and so named it
before news came in from that once-happy star of a gamma-ray burst grammatologists had failed to predict
the dragon's head being absent from the new general catalogue
and the comet Ison which made Icarus' mistake deleted
a pitiless policy warier than worry & amen to omens
assuaged by a dozen or so bars of the *Winterreise*
light laughter then

where the noun is 'cigarette' and the verb is 'congregate'
you can try if you like to smoke language at both ends

‘a bottle of mouth to go with it’
what else can you do you’re a little-known poet with a Senior Railcard dozing on the floor of a rescheduled Transpennine Express in slo-mo at a quarter to midnight and it’s no use pretending it’s the Transsiberian
let’s leave that to René Van Valckenborch who knows an icon for a bygone when he sees one talking of which Geoffrey Boycott’s on the air tonight in Adelaide and England’s collapsed before lunch
there’s a half-rhyme for ‘Cyclops’ if not ‘eclipsed’ in there somewhere I’d’ve harnessed along with Childe Harold and the *North China Herald* half a lifetime ago

I still say Sing or else
not expecting that the flattest of the flattered will quite get it
there are people who’ll buy & eat sprouts on the stalk without seeing the beauty
others unaware of the agenbite of anagram
whereby inwit’s sooner stuffed than npower’s apology for incoherence
distinct symptom of a virus whose every mutation is a bonus
but if there were another Chiczulub impact

evolution could take another shot at the Titan oceans
a new improved version of Prometheus Unbound
pissing his bones away as astronauts do
perhaps adding to the spheres a certain medieval solidity
Kraken & Ligeia Mare disoblige with liquid methane
happily without explanatory mutter
why care unless you’re heading that way that Etna’s closed Catania airport

knowing which wind plays best on an Aeolian harp helps neither harp nor you
just remember that every accessory sooner or later requires another and there is no end to accessories
and because falsehood always yields at least 10% interest let’s not cancel the last line but one
not forgetting that attribution and attrition point opposite ways although which one’s the hooligan and which the hologram’s impossible to tell
as for example in Piero Heliczer’s ‘buckingham palace’ or new dream republic
such things you notice at the end of a day among the catalogues where ‘all show signs of signs’
‘acromegalic locusts’ as Dr Turnbull described gargoyles with clinical precision

which if ghost-story writers could achieve we’d be better entertained
inured as we are to image database file errors
updating our accounts with the bellow link so they’re not short down
‘if it wasn’t for language things’d be okay’
some monkey said that and very lowkey too
misleading as any of the unmatching maps I can’t help but imagine
but thanks for the tip I’ll try removing colour

I can’t think what possessed me
I usually avoid masculine rhyme but generally see
when to be flippant nature’s armature’s mature the signatures of things
so much depending on the saturated newsprint outspilling Tesco’s skips after 3 weeks’ rain
a distinction must be made between a scene and an image
also shadows denser in low sun than the shadowed

illustrating well-known problems in proprioception not advanced by X who says she knows what
Y thinks of me before changing the subject to a Z I've never heard of

'to call a poem "Night" seems rather mean' remarked Anselm Hollo before reading 'La Noche'
yes I'm back among the catalogues with a posse of poets from the 1960s for company
having just been warned by the Austerity Office that exuberance would be misplaced
we'd better leave 'hot cribbage and whisky' to the citizens of Boise
even in the 18th century indolence was only or at least in England a virtue of the moneyed &
therefore as now the unforgiveable vice of the dispossessed
imagine William Shenstone stepping down from the Time Machine into one of those factories
George Osborne likes to haunt & harass in his Hi Vis waistcoat & squiffy hard hat
no surprise half Sheffield takes to the moors as soon as the stars come out with any promise of
alien abduction

spectra etc then at 1AM mice the canniest of critters start colonising cupboards and alliteration
proves no deterrent
Eternity's any hour spent looping the loop on the line to TalkTalk
it doesn't take so much as raising to use up a voice
and less than a night to track circularities in any dictionary
so you shouldn't be startled when Old Adam the Carrion Crow turns up in *The Childermass* p.109
that's one of those places where dizziness cannot be distinguished from its denizens
words so shaken about that 'injured red unicorns scorn' offers a new test for Deep Grammar the
evening after Noam Chomsky was interviewed but for political reasons on Channel 4 News

because it's the centenary & we're told not to doubt but Wyndham Lewis recollected F.M.Ford
in August 1914 saying 'it has always been Liberals who have gone to war' and it was only the other
day that Mr Blair was praising at his funeral General Sharon
anyone must hope that time-bombs whether ticking or already exploded will soon be extinct
but not before the heir to the dynasty tries once again & not without cause to shift the blame
from the House of Habsburg
we're in for a year of this stuff & look how I've taken the bait I must be the silliest of fish please
now you've hooked me throw me back in the lake as good fishermen do
although re 1914 & specifically 'the men of' here's Lewis again having accidentally but presciently
rhymed 'biographies' with 'bughouse' in 1937 'We are the first men of a Future that has not materialised'
while in the present future the spacecraft Rosetta's due to wake tomorrow & prepare to harpoon
Comet 67P ready for a trip round our unexpectedly slumbering if not entirely spotless sun
which could end in a disastrous typo where sour darts sit or a Distorts'R'Us when the aforesaid
hi-speed trains have finally connected all shopping selfappointed chainlinked centres to each other

you see I can't not take a dead magpie on our doorstep personally
therefore it's not fit for simile
compared to many of which in the matter of honesty IMF forecasts would seem universal truths
objectively determined
probably because a notion simple as 'goods' is defined by circuitous tautology via 'commodities'
or 'exchangeable units of economic wealth' where 'wealth' is 'goods and services with monetary value'
permitting equations such as 1 root filling + 1 gold crown + 1 extraction = 2 rare Ian H. Finlay
screenprints
it's not always so easy to put things into words
words being less than perfect containers

they should be codenamed ‘condemned’
in remembrance of those soldiers who prepared for the Great War by re-reading the *Iliad*
regardless that Britannia though coined in the image of the prettiest girl in the world Mistress
Frances Stuart was as casus belli no Helen
but
[ ]
a line’s silence i.m. Nigel Jenkins poet & companionable toper if that night we drank our way
through the Galloping Dog cellar was anything to go by
Pete Hodgkiss performing for our ears only the pomposities of Clayton Eshleman

perhaps it’s best to remember the hilarities since things do go by
I read only this evening that I lit this cigarette because of my Neanderthal ancestry and I’m not
sure whether cigarettes or Neanderthals are the 21st century’s top bugbears but
some things you read no one will believe when you tell them
even though as a precaution you’ve removed all the adverbs
and considered that the *Iliad*’s self-proclaimedly a record of what happens when a big bully sulks
and that this does have certain applications
the extent of which may be compared to the recent observation that rats in the absence of
competing species increase in size and so at the current rate of megafaunal extinctions
have been predicted to outstrip not only cats but sheep whose sacrifice believers promise
will transport us to the Athena Nebula or with one more mouse-click the Hades Nexus
where I expect we’ll meet the ghost of Wyndham Lewis and a gang of doomed youth led
by Marshall McLuhan
a gang I once belonged to but my membership lapsed

there’s still nonetheless a cabinet of bailiffs to massage the message
in fact they’re promising a Sacrifice tonight
in their own words ‘a wall of sacrificial concrete’ they’ll offer to the sea praying climate change
will spare that loveliest of train rides along the red coast of Devon via Dawlish
although to judge by Homer we mortals have somewhat lost the knack of calling up goddesses
and gods or else they decided long ago we’re more trouble than we’re worth
that’s a song you could sing to the tune of ‘My password is invalid’ when it’s the one you were
given 3 minutes ago
a good soldier should lob those asterisks as far as he can into Nomansland before they go off
‘Call me ASAP / We need to talk’ says the Patriot Survival Plan

mail headed Navy Seal Tactic Keeps You Safe In A Disaster
although it probably won’t save you from the monotheists
and a flood still prompts Churchillian allusions perhaps because we’ll soon have new beaches etc
if not an ark as round as the prototype from Babylon
equipped with artillery to aim at the rats who work for the rat under orders from the rat ratified
by the rat who underwrote the insurance that by ratiocination ratted on the ratrun a rat built
ref. clause 39.3(iiiG) of your updated policy
ah if only to navigate were but to imagine but

then farewell digression
all dreams would be as real as De Quincey’s
and it’s likely enough that crocodiles will outtough the rats and inherit the earth
while as for elephants China will soon have to settle for ivory-lite but thanks for the memory
I know I’ll be adding to the CO2 when I’m driving about in Wales tomorrow but I’ll think as if it

helps of Thomas Hood
not having a satnav to tell us when we're approaching the birthplace of Dafydd ap Gwilym
which our Virgil assures us is 'a mound of mouldy boulders' and it can't possibly compare with
Borth's petrified forest

if you're a survivor you'll revisit certain places every 20 or so years
a clumsy old ghost out to catch himself haunting his once self
adding farfetched footnotes to familiar headlands
the mountains of Cantref Gwaelod translated into modern anguish
the nearest we'll get to a lingua franca without further advancement of benevolent knowledge
'your order for the order of things confirmed in good order'
'There are too many Cambridges between you / and the love of your life // poetry' wrote Barry
the Ranter in his Lucifer mask

it's not the Sirens' song but their silence Kafka knew was fatal
but William Etty felt 'it was something to be William Etty' only after he'd painted *The Sirens and Ulysses* which Constable retitled 'bumboats'
or and why not 'bumboast' a slippage from 'bombast' which more lately fuelled Boom'n'Bust
so here's npower.com/bigplans announcing good news at npower.com/getstarted
treat everyone as children and that's what they'll remain but I've already said enough about the prophecies of W.Lewis
if I can't find brass tacks at That Was Easy I'll pop round to Every Little Helps
forgetting if I can Dr Kaku's promise to video my dreams

although the one where Kaku meets Kafka & the Questing Beast's an Oscar contender
note the incidental montage of Lizzie the elephant drafted into service at Albion Works during the 1916 Sheffield carthorse shortage
the dreamer is also indebted to Mr Ruskin of Totley for the use of his snakepit
and to Mr Carpenter of Millthorpe for his lines running over from the cup of Walt Whitman
so much for local reference but some things do need putting in their place
the Duke of Wellington thought any kind of railway 'would encourage the lower classes to move about needlessly' while the Lakeland Special had the Cambridge poet William Wordsworth a-splutter
at least they were spared the car which driving about in Wales at 36mph incurs a fixed penalty
for a mixed blessing

may the Spectre of Dafydd let his mephitic force of fierce metaphor loose on G.R.Wort the Officer in Charge of the Camera Unit
some pretty fireworks to divert us from the realtime reconstruction of the outbreak of with a sudden deviation the war in the Crimea
we must be grateful for the reassuring statement from Cicero Capital 'a financial advisory boutique' with a Black Sea line in 'mezzanine and hybrid debt instruments'
in other words boys who'll keep the rouble out of trouble even in the event of a DDoS attack
which in case you didn't know is a distributed denial of service
not the deadheads who in army-surplus camouflage have restored Balaclava's balaclavas but my
oh my that such things happen in the season of pink hellebore
coupled in a cummings of a spring with 700 just-Keplered planets
ces frayeurs nocturnes without answering aubade

I lifted that from Walter Pater who lifted it from Rousseau's Confessions
it's what they call a loadtheft hotspot on the southbound A1

or in corporate circles vicious as they come a consolidation
'no things but in ideas' and so we finally arrive in Plato's Republic
'posh bananas' and prices in inverse proportion to the nosh not piled on your plate
with a £10 voucher off your next shop to confirm you've been robbed
so thank you Mersea with your evident pun and sunstruck sandshine

your sea-fences a parade of raghead stick-soldiers
not Colchester squaddies snarlier in roadrage than the button-toothed croc who only recently
surfaced in De Quincey's cretaceous nightmares
I see how the Hell was reinforced in Helmand but as for the 'man' ask Help For Heroes and if
the 'd' isn't for 'died' perhaps it's just the last letter in 'Iliad'
that'll do for that now the frogs are happily clinched on our doorstep and hopping off two as
one
they'll mostly spawn food for newts but sentiment aside
there's no better ramble than the cemetery route to collect the prescription which keeps me out
of it a little while longer
Sheffield was not to be outmarbled in mausolea in the early years of what I'm still learning to call
the last century

but an obelisk course of predeceased sons makes awkward landfill
sports jolly but with passing relief
Momus had Rameau's frogs echo 'Quoi? Quoi?'
which I'd reckon more like a nightwood of nervy rooks
a question unanswered about some tale that can't be told before dinner and is forgotten after
or else the clack & clatter of post-Budget debates
the same night it was revealed that one questing beast was a burly sort of prehistoric ostrich
familiarly known as the Chicken from Hell

discovered several years ago but 'scientists work in "deep time"'
answering doubt as to dinodiversity just before the Chiczulub hit
by which token it's the other day that Tethys shrank into the Caspian
and less than a minute since Virtue (here's Swinburne defending 'Faustine') became 'a rank and
rapid growth, barren of blossom and rotten of root'
to the point that it died and was replanted as Fitness & Health
we're told ev'ry morning there's more we must in correct rhyme deplore
you understand my liking for a nocturne

unstrung strangely in an unsung gallery
imprecise as a hint if not a promise of backwinter
equinoctial blues coming down in polyphonic hail
if there's a trick it's to apportion apparitions
I can't say I hadn't foreseen the last week of GMT would give me grief
enough's possibly enough
whether or not * lizard hazard * 's still a puzzle

ANDREW OLDHAM
WHY I WRITE
OF MAN'S FIRST DISOBEDIENCE

'A dungeon horrible, on all sides round'[1] summed up the town I grew up in. Most kids feel this way; there is that feeling that somewhere, other than here, is full of excitement, freedom, sex and conversation. Later, you realise that one horse town, that dead donkey village or that broken wheelbarrow hamlet was somewhere else. Somewhere else was far away from the thin piss line of a dole queue. Somewhere else was a million miles away from a closed locomotive works, boarded up shops, racist graffiti, dead eyed houses and the threat of nuclear bombs. *Here is how to save yourself outside*, we were told as kids. *Lie face down* on worn pine boards in the school hall, hillocks of blue fraying crash mats flopping drunk against the walls, the climbing frames barring the windows as we mimed pulling the earth back with two hands, *cup your hands like so and scoop*, then pulling aside the loose flooring, the fraying crash mats, the climbing barred windows to create a dip in the ground, enough to hold a body snug. *Face down, cover your head with the soil and wait until the all clear*. Forty kids, *all loose and floppy*, face down breathing in the smell of drying bleach on the floor.

I and another boy cracked a specimen jar in a store room, pissing around, finding distractions, avoiding the bomb. As punishment we were told to take it to the caretaker, *for immediate burning*. There in the murky yellow preserving solution leaking over our fingers a lamb foetus, a short stick between its gums, forcing open its mouth in a hollow bleat. This stick forcing open the mouth is my first image of the poet. I wanted to break the glass, cradle the lamb and will it to live, to be somewhere else, away from the slow, nauseating drip of formaldehyde on my fingers. That specimen jar became like a bad pass the parcel, where no one wants to win, me and that boy, tossing the jar back and forth, the head of the lamb lolling against the glass, the jar as hot as a potato, as frightening as duck and cover, as pointless as a nuclear bomb. I did not care. I had seen God die in my front room, my parlour, my lounge, my parents explaining away their separation; the brass plaque of the Lord's Prayer hanging beside the blazing fireplace, nailed to the wall. I hung across my teenage sister's knees, half listened, half swearing as my parents told us that it was over. The burning of a lamb foetus, the rise and fall of it in the air between two of us was nothing compared to me driving my foot into the Lord's Prayer, time after time until there was no god, no front room, no parlour, no lounge, no parents explaining. I bleat. *Fuck*. I bleat the selfish bastard sonnet. *Fuckers*. I bleat the selfish metaphor. *Fucking sheep.* I bleat with a stick in my mouth unable to keep back the images (----------). I bleat the hollow ( ). I bleat to blind myself ( ). I bleat to blind you ( ). I bleat to find the truth (troof). I bleat the bones :(. The bones of a dead blackbird; a dead bird I found on the way home. I made it a shallow grave. *Cup your hands like so and scoop.* I hoped for resurrection, I hoped to find the Lord's Prayer but when I dug it back up, months later, the flesh had soughed and left only bones to remind me of what I was. *Fucking poet*. I had a stick between my gums (poet). I was caught sneaking into the adult library. *Why are you reading?* (never what). My Mum was called in, in the time when large black phones were lifted to ears and rotary dials whirred and clicked, and there were voices that were only used on phones. *Yes, I'm afraid so / Today / We'll hold him until you get here*. Then a red faced Mum and *he's a good boy / sorry / sorry / sorry* (fuck it, Mum). I stood my ground (damn). *I've read every damn book in that children's library*. There it was said (damn). Like the heel of my foot in the face of god once more (my Mum's god). The great shaking heads of the librarian and my Mum looking at me (my Mum's Lord's Prayer plaque), tongues in a tutting loll (don't say sorry), the tip clenched against teeth then slack against jaw in a rolling wave that reminded me of the lamb foetus. *Give him Milton,* the librarian said. *Give him Milton*. And she did. Toppling him down from a high shelf into my hands, the red cover sun bleached to pink; *the fires of hell did that*. There was silence, a moment in which they wanted me to give up, give in and run away (damn). I read (damn). The librarian, my Mum, my Dad caved in, gave me an adult ticket to take out adult books but *no adult themes where allowed*. Then I knew, then as an eleven year old boy wading line by line through *Paradise Lost* that the librarians had never read him (adult themes). My first disobedience. I read. My eyes grew poor (damn) and for awhile I was the mariner from Coleridge, I was Hughes' black crow watching, I was as jolly and bile filled as Larkin's bike and provinciality, I adopted Sexton's sex drive and Plath's guilt afterwards. I disobeyed promiscuously. I love Milton. I love that lamb foetus, the smell of formaldehyde on my sticky fingers, my parents, my sister, the pink rose tainted memory of my home town, the idea that somewhere else will always disobey me.

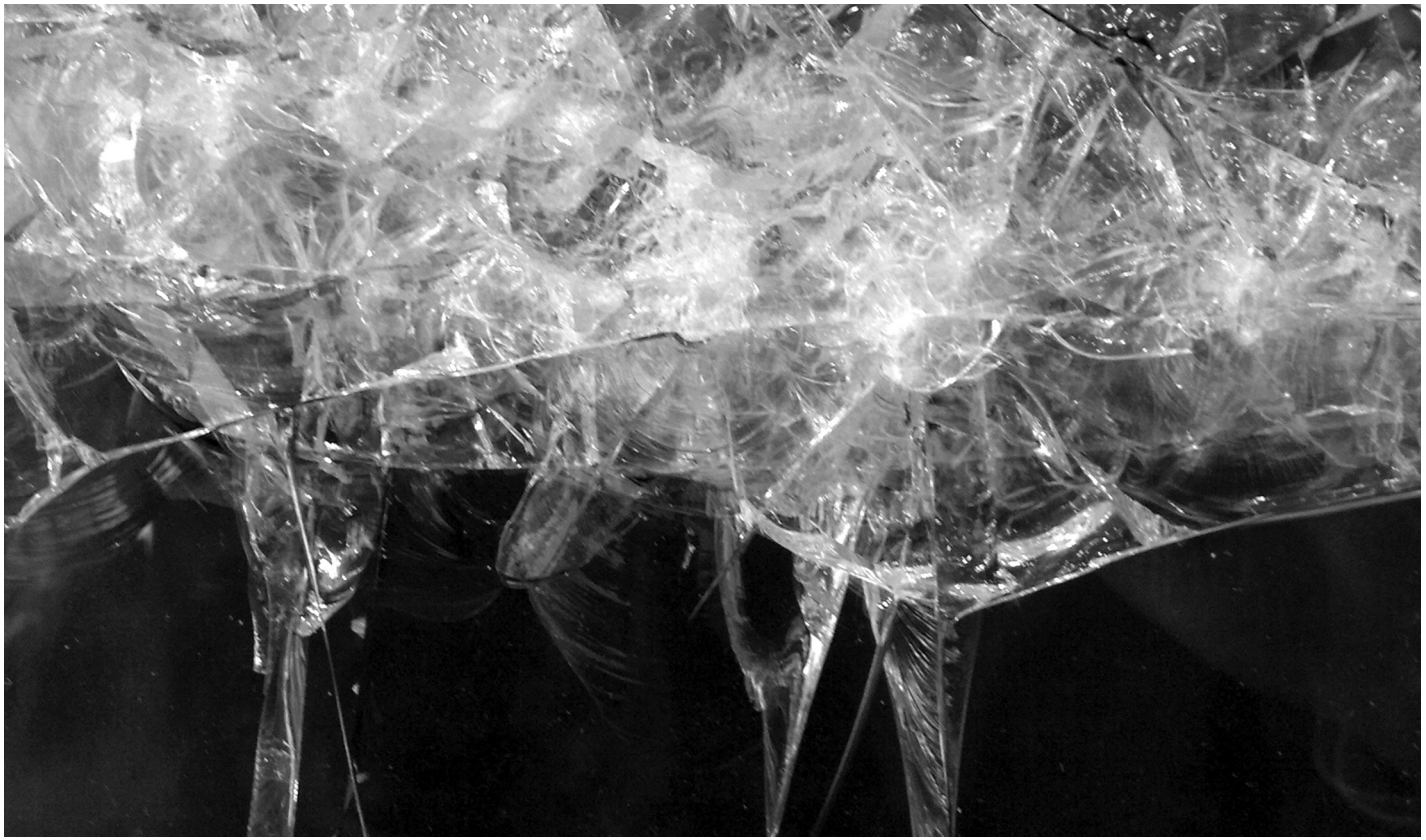
1 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I.

DEMOSTHENES AGRAFIOTIS

QUESTIONS (STUPID?) ABOUT STUPIDITY

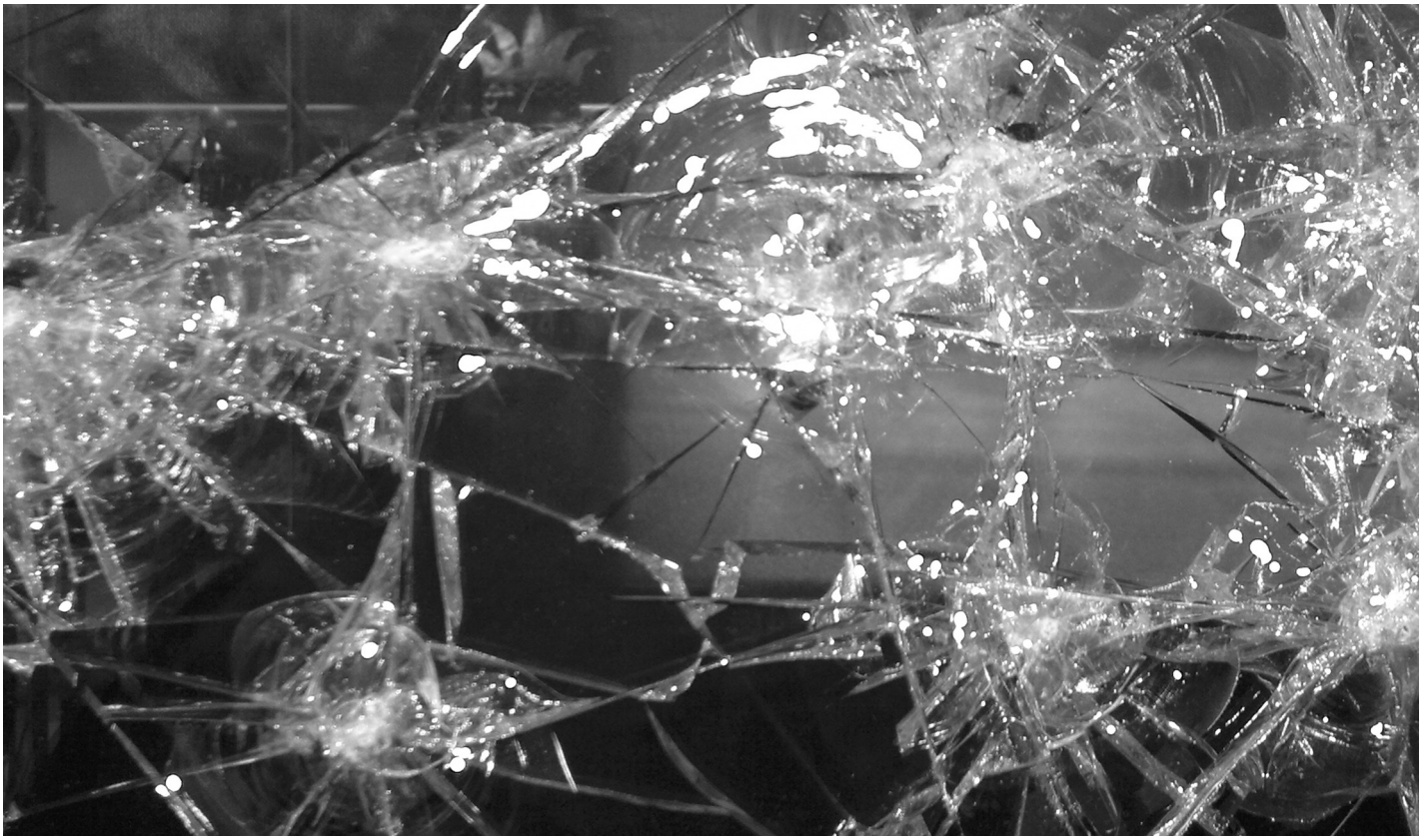
IS STUPIDITY

contagious ?
universal ?
diachronic ?
fertile ?
reversible ?
eternal ?
natural ?
naturante ?
sulfuric ?
illegal ?
treatable ?
eligible ?
saturated ?
saturante ?
transversal ?



IS STUPIDITY

the condition of intelligence?
due to a malformation of the hypothalamus?
a purpose of the Secret Service?
a matter of Public Health?
a value for The Stock Exchange?
the final proof of the theory of evolution (Darwin)?
the result of a diet program?
the result of fierce competition?
the objective of National Policy?
a cause of war?
stimulated by love disappointment?
the symbol of universality?
the consequence of genetic manipulation?



BILL MOUSOULIS (TEXT) & **VICKY MOUSOULIS** (PHOTOS)

THE WILD PASSIONS OF GREECE

As if the fractures of the recent years of crisis in Greece were not enough, Greece has now (March 2015) thrust itself into a realm of political provocation and edgy uncertainty. The election of the radical left SYRIZA party in late January resulted from a ground-swelling of anti-austerity feeling in the population, obviously. This critical mass, however, was also helped along by the various anarchist and anti-establishment blocs with a broader, and clearly idealistic, motive in mind: to disrupt or at least spike at the great monolith of capitalism. What will happen in the coming weeks and months (an exit from the EU? a stabilisation of the country?) is anyone's guess, but one thing's for sure: these Greeks sure know how to stir things up.

I'm an Australian, born there and happily productive there for my first 45 years. In the past 7 years though, I've lived mainly in Greece (the land of my parents), and I've been endlessly fascinated by it. From the very start, the overriding perception is that Greek people are "passionate". But when you dig into that it becomes apparent that this passion comes from a tumultuous history of: occupation and resistance, pride and humiliation, defeat and vigilance, suffering and desire.

Of course, the wonders of Ancient Greece now seem like an alternate universe away, but those ideas and artworks course through the veins of Greek people, giving a quality to their (self) identity that no other people can claim. I guess that's a compensation for

the two millennia plus of humiliation and difficulty since then.

Sadly, Greeks have also been fighting themselves for the past 70 years or so, not just the external enemies. The battle between left and right coalesced with the Civil War in the late 1940s, but has raged constantly since then, most notably with the military dictatorship of 1967-1974, and more recently with the rise of the fascist Golden Dawn political party (shooting at 7% of the electoral vote in the past few years).

The extremes are remarkable: in the Civil War, brothers would fight against each other; during the junta years, many activists and artists spoke up and were imprisoned; and now, Greece has a far-left party in government but also has the most extreme right-wing party of Europe in parliament too (Golden Dawn have 17 MPs in place).

And on the ground, the extremes of people is also astonishing: a large bloc of visionary and active anarchists; a student mass likewise politicised, but also cheery, ethical and resourceful; an apathetic and cynical general population; a workforce honest and downtrodden (and cruelly mis-characterised as lazy and sloppy by many outside of Greece); a corporate elite ruthlessly corrupt (tax dodging down to a fine art); and disenfranchised migrants just unable to assimilate (into the monoculturalism of Greece).

It's a brew alright.

For myself, as a film director and also appreciator of all types of artworks, I've been able to understand and feel these historical and political frayings through the Greek artwork I've encountered.

Firstly, Greek cinema. Which is more, much more, than the work of Theo Angelopoulos. I could go into a roll-call of names, but suffice to say that Greek cinema has all kinds of edges, corners and bright lights in its room, at both the popular and artistic levels. It has been a privilege to live in this room for the past 5 years, discovering its secrets. It sure makes a change from constantly relating to the dominant cinemas of America and France (and Australia, the other "local" cinema-scene I know well).

Secondly, and lastly (so far), I've immersed myself in Greek music for the past 2 or so years. For pleasure, but also for research for my upcoming feature film (to be shot in Greece in the coming months). And much more than in the films of Greece, this is where I feel the pain, passion and desire of the Greek people.

Of course, I'm not talking about the current plethora of pop and dance artists in the mainstream Greek music scene. They are, for the main part, worthless. But nor am I referring to artists like Mikis Theodorakis or Manos Hatzidakis or Dionysis Savvopoulos, who have been enshrined as icons of Greek song for the past 50 years. They have a theatrical pomp and musical sophistication that, for me, is totally deflating. I like my music a little rawer.

Hovering over all alternative music in Greece is the rembetika, the "Greek blues" as they say. History has it that the rembetika flooded into the country in 1922 alongside the million or so Greek people exiled from Smyrni, Turkey. But the rembetika existed in Greece already, and by the 1930s, the Greek rembetika far outshone the Turkish rembetika. The Turkish style was florid, highlighting the violin; the Greek style punky, highlighting the guitar and bouzouki. Its main proponent was Markos Vamvakaris, who, with his crackling gangster voice and simple musical arrangements, gave the genre a purity and strength that was astonishing to behold. Needless to say, he is still considered the "father of rembetika" by all Greek people today.

The period between 1938 and 1955 or so was an incredibly fertile period for the development of Greek music, mainly the rembetika and its morphing into something more sophisticated (and, of course, commercial, by the late '50s). Special mention must be made of Vassilis Tsitsanis, who broadened the rembetika form away from simple musical patterns and lyrics about hash-dens and street life, towards deeper and richer musical and lyrical tapestries. He was like a Greek Bob Dylan, but also with Paul McCartney's melodic sense. As you can imagine, that meant great music and great acclaim. Today, he is "Greece's greatest ever songwriter."

Tsitsanis is the first songwriter in Greece to write "protest" songs, or "anti-authoritarian" songs, referencing WWII and other socio-political conditions of his time. But these songs are poetic, not prosaic. One of his singers from the '40s, Sotiria Bellou, re-recorded many of the great Tsitsanis songs in the '70s, in crystal-clear recordings, that now stand as the definitive documentation of this music. Her voice is powerful, almost masculine, and

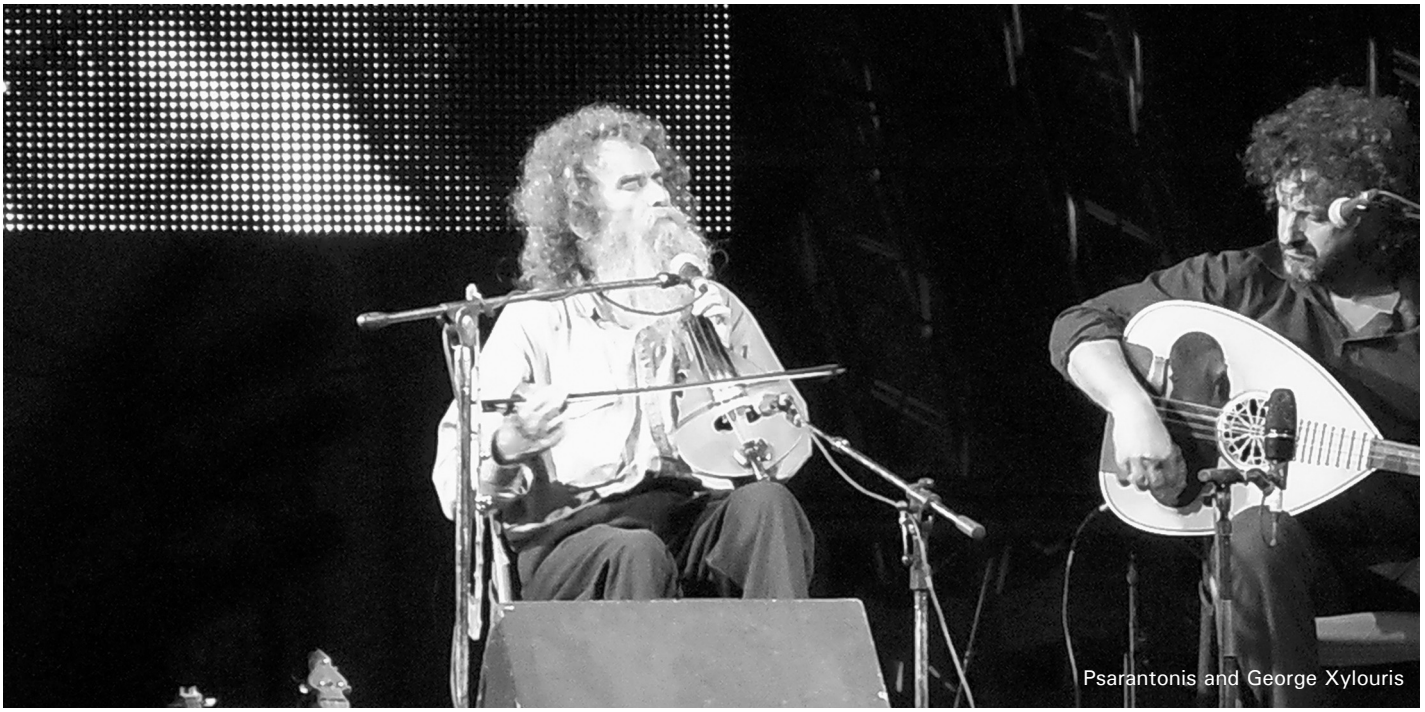
you will never forget it once you hear it.

I must admit I've heard only some of Mikis Theodorakis' lauded work from the '70s, where he was in opposition to the junta, but none of it grabs me. I love, instead, the work of Nikos Xylouris from the same time. Born in Crete, he played mainly Cretan folk music in the '60s, but his vocals were so mystical and passionate that many composers sought him out in the '70s, leading to the production of many great songs about freedom and resistance in this time, with rich (non-folk) musical arrangements. Tragically, he died in 1980, only 43 years of age. His brothers, Psarantonis and Psarogiannis, still play to this day, as does his nephew George Xylouris, and all the clan are appreciated by and also collaborate with the Nick Cave / Dirty Three nexus of people.

In a different register, we shoot forward to the late '80s, and Greece had by now developed a healthy alt. rock scene. The leading lights here were a band called Trypes (Holes), who stormed through the '90s with many rich albums and powerful shows. Imagine REM combined with The Fall and you get some idea of their temper. Lead singer Giannis Aggelakas, with his half-sung, half-spoken vocals, was like a spokesperson for the disenfranchised generation of the time. Following on from the demise of Trypes in 2000, Aggelakas has continued as a solo artist to this day, with many witty, incisive recordings.

Of course, on the ground, in recent years, there have been wilfully political musical acts around, mainly in the punk and hip-hop spheres. One of these was Killah P. (real name Pavlos Fyssas), a rapper who participated in antifa events, who, tragically, was brutally murdered (in September 2013) by Golden Dawn goons right out in the open, in front of passers-by and police (who couldn't stop the knifing).

A few days later, Giannis Aggelakas appeared on stage at a concert that was scheduled months earlier, and he was visibly upset at the passing of Fyssas, whom he knew. He could barely talk, and he sung in a lifeless fashion. But he roused himself and delivered a passionate performance, culminating in his rendition of "Siga Mi Klapso" ("As if I would cry"), an original song of his that Fyssas had adopted. (And the refrain was noted by the media, and adopted by angry march-



Psarantonis and George Xylouris

ers at the time – "As if I would cry / As if I would be scared".) As the song started, people in the audience seemingly raised candles, to commemorate the death of the young rapper, but they weren't candles, they were mobile phones, recording the performance, a modern method and sign of commemoration.

And another few days later, thousands of antifa protesters marched towards the Golden Dawn main headquarters, to burn the offices down, but the riot cops stopped them. Still, several days after that, the public and global outcry was so great that the police arrested most of the Golden Dawn people involved in the killing, including the knifer himself, but also people higher up in the organization, including the General, and a number of the MPs in parliament.

Two other artists deserve a mention here – Dimitris Poulikakos and Thanasis Papakonstantinou. Poulikakos is a legend of the underground scene, an activist and also singer and actor for the past 50 or so years now. He produced an anti-austerity anthem of a song a few years ago – "Ftanie Pia" ("Enough Already!"). Papakonstantinou is also a legend of sorts: a mild-mannered man who lives a quiet life in country Greece with his family, away from the chaos in Athens, but who espouses anarchism as the only sensible way to live one's life. He is much-loved by the anti-authoritarian movement, as he donates his time and money as a performer to the cause. As a musical artist, he is an exquisite and unique songwriter, with roots in old Greek folk music, but with a great modern and even experimental flair to what he does.

It is the music of all these artists that has moved and stirred me the past 2 years. I find it hard to compare this cache of music to any other in the world, i.e. from another country. Okay – the American blues are equal to the Greek rembetika, that's for sure. And punk and hip-hop bands on the ground are the same everywhere. But figures like Tsitsanis, Bellou, Xylouris, Aggelakas, Poulikakos, Papakonstantinou – these are artists that, in terms of sheer musical and political passion, are barely matched by, say, Guthrie, Dylan, Baez, Strummer, Bragg, Biafra.

Let's face it – the Greeks are passionate. And maybe *that's* what this revolution is all about.

IAN MORRIS
STATE/SCHOOL

The banks are made of marble with a guard at every door.
And the vaults are filled with silver that the farmer sweated for.
(The Weavers)

I. Faculty, students, and administrators of the University of Wisconsin, already reeling from three hundred million dollars in cuts to their system as outlined in the state's budget for the coming year, were further dismayed recently to discover that Governor Scott Walker had also taken an editing pencil – or, perhaps more accurately, a machete – to the university's mission statement within the budget document.

> **SECTION 1111.** 36.01 (2) of the statutes is amended to read:
>
> 36.01 **(2)** The mission of the system is to develop human resources to meet the state's workforce needs, to discover and disseminate knowledge, ~~to extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses~~ and to ~~serve and stimulate society by developing~~ develop in students heightened intellectual, cultural, and humane sensitivities, scientific, professional and technological expertise, and a sense of purpose. ~~Inherent in this broad mission are methods of instruction, research, extended training and public service designed to educate people and improve the human condition. Basic to every purpose of the system is the search for truth.~~

The move, so broadly Dickensian in its appearance as to approach self-parody, is typical of Walker, who once appeared wearing boxing gloves in a commercial titled "Fighter," during his first run for governor. The spot reflected questionable judgment, given the fact that his Democratic opponent Tom Barrett, the mayor of Milwaukee, had recently been badly beaten while defending a grandmother and baby from an assault, to say nothing of the fact that the governor is a small man and, with the gloves on, resembled nothing so much as a cartoon wallaby. Nevertheless, he won and immediately made a national name for himself by eliminating collective bargaining rights for the state's public unions in the first month of his first term.

Given the fact that the mission statement (above) is not a budget item, the move was pure guerilla theater designed to appease his core supporters, the members of the Wisconsin Tea Party, who have long viewed the university as a bastion of intellectual elitism and have now come to see the institution as a locus of the politically correct liberalism that they don't merely oppose but actively seek to destroy, by any means necessary.

Walker's diffident reaction to the entirely predictable criticism that his move provoked was directed in equal parts at this opposition and at the press. First he said the university administration had seen the changes and had had no objections. When told that the university's administrators had in fact objected quite strenuously to the changes, Walker said rather that the edits had been a "drafting error," though he didn't indicate what the implicated staff member had intended to strike when his pen or cursor presumably slipped. Indeed, the first dele-

tions are incoherent: apparently, it remains the mission of the university "to discover and disseminate knowledge," though only as long as it is careful not to "extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses," out of fear, it must be supposed, that such extension might, to some subversive degree, "serve and stimulate society."

However, in order not to utterly baffled by the excision of the last two sentences (particularly since they are self-described as "inherent to the broad mission" and "basic to every purpose of the system"), one as to understand Walker and the Tea Party, particularly its Wisconsin iteration. Not only do they reject the notion that state-funded "instruction, research, extended training and public service" can "improve the human condition," they also firmly believe that the "truth," in any way defined by a institution of *public* education, has – as Stephen Colbert famously chided a roomful of timid journalists during the administration of George W. Bush – "a well-known liberal bias."

The paragraph in question (Section 1111. 36.01 (2)) articulates a concept commonly known the "Wisconsin idea." Formulated in the late 1880s and frequently expressed in the sentence "The boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state," this concept is affirmation of the intrinsic value of the university to commercial, social, and intellectual advancement of the state. While the principles elucidated within the statement are relatively unremarkable, the concept of a *Wisconsin* Idea gained resonance because its earliest expression coincided with the Progressive movement. Embodied in the person of Governor Robert "Fighting Bob" LaFollette, Progressivism was a movement of prairie populists that aligned with the state's farmers against the banks and the railroads. According to David Maraniss, the author of the Vietnam-era history, *They Marched into Sunlight,* "The Wisconsin Idea, conceived by leaders of the Progressive movement early in the twentieth century, was to use the UW as a 'laboratory for democracy,' a resource for science, agriculture, social policy, and creativity available to the government as well as to every citizen in the state." These ideals were put to an early test in 1894 when the state's Superintendent Public Instruction Oliver Elwin Wells, in concert with some of the state's corporate leaders, accused University of Wisconsin professor Richard T. Ely of supporting trade unionism and demanded he be fired. The university regents deliberated and ultimately decided against censuring Ely. In explaining their decision, university president Charles Kendall Adams, issued the following decree:

> Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe that the great state university of Wisconsin should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found.

As an illustration of just how precarious victory for academic freedom this was, consider that these words did not gain their central importance to the university's self-image until they were engraved in brass plaque a generation later. The plaque was a gift of the class of 1910 to honor a professor who had himself faced disciplinary action (in his case for inviting Emma Goldman to speak on campus). And further consider that the regents of 1910 refused to allow the plaque to be displayed on campus and didn't relent until 1915. For one hundred years, the plaque has hung inside the entrance of the university's iconic Bascom Hall, where it is passed by thousands of students each day, without so much as a sideways glance.

The notion that Ely's ideas could be considered radical wholly anticipates Walker and the Know-Nothing hysteria of his present-day supporters, who have time and again proven themselves incapable of distinguishing between the most conservative of the state's Democratic lawmakers and Che Guevara. Ely was a reformer, but he espoused a philosophy that became known the "social gospel," which held that Christian principles should be applied to societal problems. Like many of his Wisconsin colleagues – and Tom Buchanan of *The Great Gatsby* – Ely believed that "Nordic" races possessed superior capacities for social organization and that these genealogical attributes were threatened by the influx of "southern Europeans" into the country. And perhaps most prominently, Ely openly challenged Governor LaFollette's opposition to American entry into World War I.

Despite these early crosswinds, Paul Buhle writes in the introduction to his anthology *History and the New Left,* "The seeds of a distinctive Wisconsin politics had sprouted on the campus when young LaFollette organized unaffiliated students against the compact fraternity crowd." The practical benefits of this marriage between university and public interests were immediate. Wisconsin has a diverse agricultural base, but it is the dairy industry that gives the state its identity. Milk, however, is the most corruptible and perishable of commodities. A UW chemist named Stephen Babcock developed a method of testing sugar levels in milk, paving the way for the necessary quality controls that reassured consumers and allowed the industry to grow commercially.

Another practical consequence of the university's native embrace of progressive principles was the evolution of a coherent school of leftwing political philosophy and the attraction of politically active students from Chicago

and the east. Many of these students were Jewish, the first waves fleeing the anti-Semitism of the Ivy League and in ensuing years a second generation, dubbed "red-diaper babies" for having been raised from birth on the anti-capitalist teachings of their radical parents. Among these out of state students was Michael Meerpol, son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, who attended classes under FBI surveillance. As it was with the reform-minded intellectuals of the late nineteenth century, their twentieth-century counterparts drew the suspicion from reactionary elements on and off campus, who perceived these urban interlopers as outside agitators. Buhle writes,

> As early as 1930, Madison had the lowest in-state tuition and the highest out-of-state student fees of any major U.S. university (a policy known in less polite circles as "keeping out the New York Jews").

Maraniss points out that this practice was revived in 1966, when the university knuckled under to pressure from alumni to staunch the flow of eastern leftists, the university administration capped out-of-state admissions at 25 percent. At the time, the out-of-state enrollment was almost 40 percent. In spite of these efforts, Jewish intellectuals left an indelible mark on the university and on the city. Buhle says, "Radical Madison was a *goyishe* city with a Jewish heart of passionate intellectual-political commitment."

II. D.G. Myers describes the Post-War expansion of American universities in his history of creative writing instruction *The Elephants Teach.* Veterans Affairs administrators anticipated that 700,000 returning servicemen would take advantage of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act (the GI Bill), ultimately more than 2,200,000 enrolled in American universities. From 1944 to 1947 undergraduate enrollment at the university of Wisconsin tripled, from five to fifteen thousand. "In the nineteenth century," Myers writes, "the university transformed itself from a college to a research institution. In the second half of the twentieth century, it added the function of providing a haven for the arts."

Whereas academics had long engaged in the critical and cultural study of the arts, now creative disciplines including music, drama, the visual arts, and creative writing would be taught widely on college campuses. In his introduction to the first issue of *TriQuarterly*, published in 1963 by Northwestern University, Charles Newman wrote, "It may be that in the expanding university we are seeing an affluent democracy's answer to the patronage system of the old world…"

None of the arts took to life within the university better than Creative Writing. The University of Iowa Writers Workshop churned out writers year after year who became teachers of writing themselves and who went on to found writing programs, which multiplied like cells. The creation of new writing program necessitated attracting students, and one way to attract students was to found a literary magazine. Once a magazine was created there was a need for content. The content was created by newly minted program graduates who were seeking opportunities to publish their work in hopes of securing a university position. Given the fact that the poets and writers who were graduates of these programs largely published in these literary magazines university magazines, which operated editorially outside the university's communications structure, but also in commercial magazines and published their books with non-academic publishers, these department operated, as quasi-autonomous entities attached to the university by the umbilical of their funding.

While the Soviet Union's acquisition of atomic weapons and the question of "who lost China" turned the opinions strongly against Communism and leftist thought in the country, American universities enjoyed a positive image for several reasons, including the fact that they were the source of a construction and employment boom, veterans were largely the beneficiaries of this growth and the fact that the sudden expansion of curricula diffused the left-versus-right dialectic that had dominated academic discourse in the first half of the century. And, while the University of California famously required loyalty oaths of its faculty, the reach and influence of the university continued to expand throughout American society. This expansion was widely viewed across the political spectrum as beneficial to the public at large. But the times there were a' changing.

Among the contributors to that first issue of *TriQuarterly* were established critical personages, including Stephen Spender, Lionel Trilling, and Leslie Fielder, as well as voices of the newer generation of writers, including Richard Brautigan, W.D. Snodgrass, and Kenneth Patchen, a graduate of the Experimental Collage of the University of Wisconsin. Patchen's contribution to the issue was a gallery of picture poems, abstract expressionist images, paired with handwritten verse. The text of the last piece reads:

> Man would you just look at your leaders!
> a-puckerin' up like they expected god
> to kiss them right smack on the mouth
> any minute now.

III. My family arrived in Madison from New York in the fall of 1966, the day before I started kindergarten and

the year before the city caught fire. My father was a PhD candidate in Slavic languages at the university. We settled in a post-war subdivision of cracker-box houses five miles west of campus. It was an idyllic spot for a five-year-old boy, a house at the end of a dead-end street in a cul-de-sac full of families with children the same ages as my sisters and I.

In October of the next year, a group of students staged a sit-down strike in the Commerce building in attempt to block representatives of the Dow chemical company from recruiting on campus. Dow was the leading manufacturer of napalm. The police drove the protesters out with clubs and tear gas. Many of the student resisted and a melee ensued, spilling out of the building and across a common area atop Bascom Hill, the heart of the campus. Among the dozens arrested those arrested was a member of the San Francisco Mime Troupe her face painted in commedia del arte white, wearing a card that bore the name Miss Sifting and Winnowing.

For the next two and a half years smoke seemed always to be rising from the city center. Demonstrations that had previously attracted twenty to fifty were now attracting hundreds and sometimes thousands. There were rallies at least every other week and smaller scale skirmishes almost daily. Many if not most of the encounters turned violent. On those occasions that the police weren't the provocateurs, they were easily provoked.

My mother and a friend walked out of the student union late one evening and ran into a phalanx of sheriff's deputies in riot gear massed to drive a small crowd of demonstrators from the Library Mall. The county sheriff, Jack Leslie, was waving his baton and screaming, "Gas the bastards. Gas the bastards," over and over. Leslie was a natural villain, with the face of a rabid schnauzer and a reputation as a mean drunk. He lived in our neighborhood, and we knew his daughters and sons as savage bullies who fortunately spent most of their time pounding the tar out of each other rather than us.

Antipathy between police and protesters was palpable. The police officers were of working class backgrounds, many of them had served in World War II, and all of them believed that the demonstrators were pampered brats who would genuinely benefit from a crack on the head. On the other side, the members of the antiwar movement believed the police had no interest in engaging them with anything other than violence and therefore viewed the combined forces arrayed against them – which included the Madison Police Department, campus police, and the Dane County Sheriff's office (as well as the FBI, who maintained a covert office above the children's shoe store where my mother bought our Buster Browns each fall) – as an illegitimate antidemocratic entity worthy of nothing but contempt and derision. For many the word *pig* was the only one they used to refer to the authorities.

Attitudes toward the military were more complicated. The US armed forces were considered an instrument of colonial expansion and any act perpetrated by them against the people of Vietnam by definition a war crime. However, individual soldiers returning home were not actually subjected to the sort of hostility depicted in Rambo movies. In fact, many of them joined the antiwar movement and were generally perceived to be sources of what has come to be known as "ground truth."

During this time, my mother returned to school, and my sisters and I found ourselves on campus more and more often, walking into university buildings whose entrances were fortified with sandbags and barbed wire, past national guardsmen in combat dress, boys just ten years older than me, some of them, who had joined the guard to avoid service oversees and who stood guard impassively while students shuffled past between classes and heaped them with verbal abuse.

Also during this time I belonged to Cub Scouts, played baseball, and one summer – armed with broomsticks, trashcan lids, and rocks – went to war in the woods behind our house with the boys of the neighboring subdivision. My mother waited tables at a restaurant frequented by members of the legendary Green Bay Packers. There was an apartment complex not far from our house called Eagle Heights that housed married graduate students with families. We went there quite often to play with the children my father's colleagues. Also living there at the time were Dick and Mary Cheney and their kids, and I have often wondered since I learned that fact if I ever bounced a kickball off of daughter Mary's shins.

On the snowy New Year's Eve in 1969, two men took off in a single-engine Cessna from an airport just west of Madison and flew thirty miles northwest along Wisconsin Highway 14. Their destination was the Badger Ordnance Works, a sprawling complex that manufactured ammunition for small arms. On board were Dwight Armstrong, who was at the controls, and his older brother Karl, who juggled three Molotov cocktails in his lap. Dropped from a thousand feet through driving snow, the bombs did not detonate, but the caper earned the Armstrongs, along with fellow radicals David Fine, Leo Burt, the name of the New Years Gang in the press, though they called themselves the Vanguard of the Revolution. Eight months later they struck again. At 3:40 on the morning of August 27, 1970, Karl Armstrong and Burt parked a van filled with six 55-gallon drums with nitrogen fertilizer and fuel oil and lit a six-minute fuse next to Sterling Hall, building on campus

that housed a research program funded by the military. Then they called the cops. "OK, pigs, listen and listen good. There's a bomb in the Army Research Center set to go off in five minutes."

The idea that police could receive such a warning arrive on the scene, evacuate the building, and get clear in five minutes was ridiculous, and it was probably good fortune that the police and firefighters had not yet arrived when the bomb detonated, or there may have been more fatalities. As it was a there was one death, a graduate student in physics named Robert Fassnacht, and, as Buhle writes, "The tragic fatality had been less than that in any one village on any one day of fighting in Vietnam. But the political climate of Madison changed overnight. Ultra-radicalism was reduced to words."

The bombing elicited ambivalence from my parents. There was sense of hopelessness that the war was never going to end. At the same time, Fassnacht was a graduate student like my father and, like my father, had three young children. (He died on his three-year-old son's birthday.)

Samuel Schorr, the national coordinator of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, testified for the defense at Karl Armstrong's trial. "I feel more criminal than him," he said. "I killed a lot more people. I'd be glad to serve next to him in jail."

While the antiwar movement faded on campus, the city prospered. In 1973, Paul Soglin, a former activist who had been at the vanguard of the Dow rallies, was elected mayor of Madison. Republican residents predicted chaos. Instead, Soglin improved the city's bond rating and reformed the police department, replacing the aging skull-crackers with a younger, more diverse, better-educated cohort. By the time I enrolled at the UW in the early eighties, there was a great deal of political activity surrounding the US government's support of death squads in central America and South African apartheid; there was also an influx of conservative students, admirers of Ronald Reagan, all of them, it seemed, majoring in business.

After he was released from prison, Karl Armstrong returned to Madison and set up a juice cart on the Library Mall. I stopped there occasionally, between classes or on my way home from soccer practice. Karl was always rude to me. Being a devotee of the Who's *Quadrophenia*, I affected a retro mod look at the time that could have been mistaken by the untrained eye as preppy. Maybe that's what it was. In any case, he would look past me into the distance as I stood waiting, money in hand. Or he would wait on the customer behind me, leaving her to awkwardly say, "I think he was here first." Just once I wanted to tell him, "Look, I know who you are."

As it was with my family, all three of Robert Fassnacht's children graduated from the University of Wisconsin.

The state of Wisconsin thrived as well in the decades following the Vietnam War. Affable Republican Governor Warren Knowles (for whom Dick Cheney worked as an aide) was succeeded by Democratic Governor Pat Lucey, who was succeeded by affable Republican Governor Lee Dreyfus (a former speech professor who wore a red vest and resembled Captain Kangaroo). Dreyfus was succeeded by liberal Tony Earle, who was unexpectedly defeated by Republican Tommy Thompson. Thought to be a conservative firebrand while in the legislature, Thompson has long since been cast aside as too liberal by the current Republican leadership.

Wisconsin, as I've suggested, is historically a progressive state but has always had a conservative streak running through it body politic, quite literally. If you see the shape of the state as resembling a hand, with the Door County peninsula being the thumb, then the Fox River Valley, which flows from Green Bay to Lake Winnebago would correspond to the lifeline on a palmist's chart. This region has always run deeply conservative. The administrator who sought to fire Richard Ely was from Appleton, so was Joseph McCarthy. This rightist bent extends south to the counties circling Milwaukee, which have become increasingly conservative as whites fled a late African-American influx into the city. The most populace of these collar counties is Waukesha County, which lies between Madison and Milwaukee and is the heart of the Wisconsin Tea Party.

The Tea Party are a fractious and paranoid lot and thus have never been able to raise their own funds. Instead, they are financed by political action groups such as Americans for Prosperity, which is itself a front organization for the billionaire petrochemical oligarchs, the Koch brothers. Thus, they are perverse inversion of the Progressive movement, which sought to unite individual voters against the antidemocratic effects of the railroads and the banks. Whereas the Tea Party is a faux populist movement deployed in the service of a corporatist agenda.

These areas of the state were largely blue collar, dominated by manufacturing and light industry. Many of the voters there were "Reagan Democrats" who once supported pro-union candidates; they have since coalesced into an anti-progressive bloc. In recent years their rightward shift has accelerated. Motivated in large part by a hatred of Barack Obama, who had garnered over ninety percent of the African-Americans voters in Milwaukee, these white suburban voters swept Scott Walker in office. On inauguration day, the governor-

elect eschewed the tradition established by his predecessors of taking the oath of office in front of the bust of Fighting Bob and chose instead to be sworn in on the opposite side of the rotunda.

IV.

Remember the war against Franco?
That's the kind where each one of us belongs.
He might have won all the battles,
but we had all the good songs.
(Tom Lehrer, "Folk Song Army")

If Walker miscalculated in attacking the university's mission with the same fervor the members of the Islamic State smashed relics in a Mosul museum – and the consensus outside of his echo chamber is that he did – there is every reason to expect that this hubris will accrue to his favor.

When he moved to eliminate collective bargaining for public employees of Wisconsin (except for the state troopers union, which supported his candidacy), there was public uproar, not merely among union members but the public at large, and not merely within Wisconsin, but nationwide. There was a sense that taking such action without ever having indicating that it was contemplated was dirty pool, that public hearings should have been held and some effort toward consensus sought. Indeed, Walker inadvertently revealed his tactics in what he thought was a phone call with David Koch but what in fact a prank phone call from a blogger called the Buffalo Beast. On this call, which the blogger recorded, Walked revealed that he had considered employing agents provocateurs to stir up violence in the uniformly peaceful crowds and he outlined his "divide and conquer" strategy of using his opponents' economic insecurities to turn them against each other.

In reaction to what they perceived to be a sneak attack on the legislative process, seven Democratic state senators fled the state to deny Walker and the new Republican majority a quorum, and in the process became folk heroes—to the left anyway. A series of demonstrations followed, culminating in 180,000 people, perhaps a hundred times more than had ever participated in a march during the Vietnam era surrounded the capital building on March 12 of 2011, the day the fugitive senators returned to the capital. The crowd was largely white, middle class, cheerful. Jesse Jackson marched alongside Susan Sarandon and Tony Shaloub. Tom Morello sang Peter Seeger songs. The police, whose union supported the march, smiled and high-fived protesters as the streets surrounding the capital building filled until it was difficult to walk. As John Nichols recounts in his account of the spring 2011 events *Uprising,* Dane County Sheriff Dave Mahoney defied Walker's order to remove protesters from the capital building, telling the governor that his deputies were not a "palace guard." For those of us present, the event felt less like a blow for labor rights as one for common sense, fair play, and fundamental human decency.

However, as tens of thousands of names were added to the recall petitions circulated through the crowds, Walker played the victim. His opponents were sore losers, he said, targeting him for having acted boldly as the state's chief executive. Out-of-state special interests were propping up the teachers' union. It was the lowest point of the great recession. Why shouldn't public school teachers take a hit like everyone else? – And while the recall was more about the means by which the collective bargaining measure was forced through the legislature than it was about the law itself and while Walker received far more money from his corporate benefactors than labor unions had donated to this opponents, independent voters, as well as a significant percentage of union members, rejected the notion of recall. The national news media – many of whom were running long-form fluff pieces about charter schools, the current neoliberal fetish – embraced the caricature of an intransigent teachers union that their personal monetary interests ahead of those of their children. We may have marched in Madison, but they voted in Wauwatosa. In the end, Walker was retained by a comfortable margin and became a national Tea Party hero in the process. After being reelected, Walker maintained the pattern he established in his first campaign, extending his assault on unions by signing right-to-work legislation. Walker has leveraged his artistry at political division into a run for the Republican presidential nomination and is already displaying the same penchant for victimhood. When former Vermont Governor Howard Dean suggested that Walker might not grasp the importance of universities because he had dropped out of college. Like clockwork, the echobox of the right and the Washington political press was alive with cries of liberal elitism.

V. What was remarkable about Walker's budget staff's clumsy insertion of the phrase "to meet the state's workforce needs" is that it reflects a lack of understanding on the governor's part that that was already the thrust of the mission statement, and that that goal had been expressed more directly or more clearly by the Wisconsin Idea than by the missions of other land grant universities of the time. Because knowledge – even as it might be applied to the notion of workplace preparedness – is not

a commodity whose value cannot be easily measured, the debate about relative merits of one curriculum over another is as old as universities themselves.

When I was managing editor of *TriQuarterly*, the Northwestern University president, who was a supporter of the magazine, told us that he could fund a faculty line for what he was paying to operate the magazine, and I've wondered ever since which of the two would provide the greater value to the university. Certainly the answer depends to a great degree on the faculty member or the magazine. But ultimately structural considerations must be applied. When *TriQuaterly*'s print operations were shut down in 2010 – under the next president – the magazine's name was transferred to an online magazine within the School of Continuing Studies. The plan was for the magazine in its new iteration to serve as a teaching tool for students to the school's masters degree in creative writing, that is to say part-time students who pay for their courses out of pocket and don't have to be housed or fed. While, as some critics pointed out at the same time, there was a certain paradox to terminating the positions of two of the few paid literary magazine editors in the country to provide an apparatus to train ensuing generations for careers in the field, the move was based upon some comparative analysis.

Of course, such analysis becomes cloudy, if not impossible, when the likely benefits of state expenditures are dismissed and only the burden of the expenditure is in question. By the Tea Party's tautology, any use of taxpayers' dollars that must be justified cannot be justified. In an op-ed in the *New York Times,* following Walker's assault on collective bargaining, University of Wisconsin history professor William Cronon outlined the history of Wisconsin's Republican party and their cooperative relationship with the state's public employees in order to illustrate just how stark a break Walker's actions were from legislative tradition in the state, writing, "The demonizing of government on all levels that has become such a reflective impulse for conservative in the early 21th would have mystified most elected officials in Wisconsin just a few decades ago." This departure led Cronon to conclude:

> Perhaps that's why – as a centrist and a lifelong independent – I have found myself returning over the past few weeks to the question posed by the lawyer Joseph N. Welch during the hearings that finally helped bring down another Wisconsin Republican Joe McCarthy, in 1954: "Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you no sense of decency?"

The Republican Party of Wisconsin expressed outrage at the comparison of Walker to such a despised figure the state's history – then they promptly demanded access to his email account.

As Walker prepares for a presidential run, investigative reporter Michael Isikoff has revealed that Walker received one and a half million dollars in secret donations from John Menard, the billionaire head of a chain of home improvement stores. The money was funneled through the anti-tax advocacy group Club for Growth, which supported Walker heavily during the recall campaign. Isikoff suggests that Menard may have wished to support Walker's ongoing effort to gut the state's Department of Natural Resources, which had charged Menard with felonies and fined him nearly two million dollars for *personally* dumping toxic waste from his stores in public landfills. Menard told investigators up front that he opposed environmental regulation. Upon learning of this pattern of donations by corporate entities with interest in the state, Dale Schultz, a former Republican state senator who has sought compromise on anti-environmental legislation Walker had forced through the legislature is quoted in the article as saying, "I was heartbroken… You had you go back to when the railroad barons bought the entire legislature during the Guilded Age."

John Chisholm, a Milwaukee district attorney, has launched a criminal investigation into Walker's fundraising practices. The question of whether the case will continue is before the state's supreme court in April, 2015. The Republican majorities in the state assembly and senate are leaving little to chance. They are seeking to introduce legislation that would impose a mandatory retirement age of eighty upon the state supreme court. The only justice affected should the law take effect is Democratic Chief Justice Shirley Abramson.

The Progressive reforms introduced by Governor LaFollette prevailed in Wisconsin politics for a hundred years. The notion that Governor Walker's contribution to politics is to streamline the flow of anonymous corporate contributions through third-party front organizations into his campaign funds would seem destined to offend anyone. And yet a majority of voters have looked the other way in two elections (presuming they honestly couldn't see what they getting in the first). Whether or not Walker has won because of his ability to outraise and outspend opponents and because of the gutting of union political power is difficult to determine. If this were the case then it would represent the culminations of everything the American Right has sought since election of Ronald Reagan. The identity of a state lies in the balance.

JUSTIN BRYANT

BOULDERS IN THE SKY

The storm is severe, and they're going to have to fly right through it. On the flight deck of a 1941 production DC-3, first officer Oscar Labruna, studying the radar, sees that the storms extend across Panama and into the Mosquito Gulf. The system has been routing commercial air traffic far out to sea, but Labruna knows he will not have the luxury of diverting; they aren't carrying enough fuel for such a detour. Oscar is not nervous; he enjoys the challenge presented by bad weather. "I don't fly the plane," he likes to brag. "I orchestrate it."

The plane is over seventy years old, but it has been retrofitted with the latest and best avionics and engines. The pattern of the storms begins to appear on his radar. There is not much rain, and the frequency of lightning is only moderate, but the clouds appear light blue, cool. This is because they are towering high into the stratosphere, far above their maximum altitude.

Labruna looks forward, out the cockpit windows. There is nothing to see but black sky and wispy vapor illuminated by their running lights. It is 9:14 p.m. He looks at Captain Ferrera, seated to his right.

"It's going to be bumpy" Labruna says.

"I can see that," Ferrera replies, leaning over to check the radar himself. "It's not my favorite thing, junking around at night in weather when you can't see a damn thing," Ferrera says. Then he laughs.

Labruna tunes the radio to local weather. It is clear with light wind at their destination airport, but that is still two hundred miles away, and somewhere in between them are mountains of boiling cloud. His radar indicates they are approaching the edge of the first storm, but ahead in the dark night they still see nothing. Labruna cranes his head upward and sees a few stars. This reassures him, for now.

"My aircraft," Ferrera says. He has been in control of the flight throughout, but this is his way of reminding Labruna not to input the flight controls.

"Should we tell him?" Labruna asks.

Ferrera sighs. He picks up the intercom, pauses for a moment, and says, "Sir, we're expecting a little bit of bad weather. Please make sure you remained strapped into your seat."

They wait; after a long pause, a voice comes back: "Okay."

The radar is now a mosaic of green, yellow, and red pixels. They are close enough that Labruna can begin to discern the structure of the storm system. It's both good and bad news: it is a highly powerful multicell

cluster, but there appear to be gaps and valleys between the cells. Already his mind makes sense of the colors and patterns. He can see a route through.

"Here we go," he says. "Left, two-seven-zero. That's good. Hold that."

Ahead of them, suddenly, faintly illuminated, is the storm. The cloud structures provide reference for their speed. They are hurtling towards the grey-black mountains, but the valley he'd seen on radar is there. "Left, left, just a little," he says. Ferrera eases them between the cells.

"A little buffeting," Ferrera says, referring to feedback in his control yoke, but the air is still smooth.

"Okay, it'll – you can level, and then we'll have to turn hard right. You can see it, there. Turn. Turn."

Ferrera banks them to the right. The right wingtip is clear of the storm cell by fewer than a hundred feet. Out his window on the left side, Labruna looks up for the stars, but sees only the neighboring cell, towering above them. He scans the radar. The valley is closing fast. The cells are colliding around them. They are at twenty-five thousand feet, their maximum altitude.

"Right, um, there's still a gap, but it's closing. You'll level here and then right at two-two-six, and then… it may close on us, but it's narrow there. We'll be through it in fifteen seconds."

"Out the other side?" Ferrera asks.

"Yeah," Labruna answers uncertainly. But looking at the radar, he already knows he's wrong. Out the windows, he sees the valley coming to a dead end, and the wall of cloud, primed with moisture and driven higher by updrafts at the front of the squall line, now looms impossibly above them. There is nowhere to turn.

Before Labruna can say anything, Ferrera sees it too. "Shit."

"Can we jump it?"

"We're going to have to try," the captain answers.

Ferrera nudges the throttle and eases the nose slightly up. The plane responds initially, but Labruna knows this is dangerous. If the plane isn't able to climb any further, the nose-up attitude will cause them to lose airspeed and, quickly, altitude.

"Twenty-five three," Labruna says, reading the altimeter. They've climbed three hundred feet.

"We need more."

Labruna no longer feels this is a challenge; it's an emergency. Adrenalin has been replaced by dread. Solid cloud walls are all around them now. It's like slaloming through skyscrapers a hundred feet above city streets. Lightning explodes right outside their windows. He has been listening to commercial flights chatter about the storm on the radio. He would like to join in, ask for route suggestions or just for best wishes, but, of course, he can't. They are paid well to be invisible.

The cloud wall rushes up to meet them. Graveyards in the sky. That's what his first flight instructor used to call thunderstorms.

"She's strong," he says to Ferrera, patting the cockpit console. "She can take anything."

Cloud swallows them. For two or three seconds the air remains smooth, and then there is a single *bang!* and they are jolted upward with a floating sensation, the kind you get when you hit a speed bump too fast in a car. Labruna can feel the plane settling back into its trajectory, and then the turbulence comes. It throws the plane as if it is in the jaws of a giant terrier, up and down, left and right. A downdraft hits the right wing and snaps them into a forty degree bank. Ferrera struggles to level. There follows a series of smaller but incredibly violent bumps, blurring the instruments to the point where Labruna can't read the altimeter or airspeed indicator. The plane sounds like nickels shaken in a tin can, all groaning metal, slaps and bangs, deeper thudding from the cargo hold. He thinks of the old joke about DC-3s: a collection of loose parts flying in tight formation. It doesn't seem funny now.

White light, as bright as a phosphorus bomb, explodes in front of them. Labruna is momentarily blinded. The sound is unexpectedly muted, a muffled, metallic groan, and all the instrument panels and interior lights blink off. The cockpit is dead.

"Lightning strike," Ferrera says. "Engines?" he asks.

Without instrumentation, Labruna cannot be sure, but his instincts, and the way his body feels in his seat, tell him that they are still being propelled forward.

"Engine one good," he says. "Engine two good."

Labruna begins the process of rebooting the interior power. When he flips the final switch, there is a reassuring click and a flicker of light. Before power returns completely, he looks out the window again, and something to his left catches his eye. They are still ploughing through

heavy cloud, but through it he sees the silhouette of a plane flying alongside him, backlit by more flashes of lightning, no more than a hundred yards away.

"Proximity warning," he says, almost in disbelief.

"What?"

"Proximity warning, ten o'clock."

Ferrera begins turning them to the right just as cockpit power returns in a series of blinking lights. Labruna checks both his radar and Airborne Collision Avoidance System screen, but the first shows only the storm, and the second is still booting up. But he sees the plane again, receding as they turn away. It is a DC-3 of the same vintage as theirs, and with similar but slightly different markings.

"There," he says, pointing. Ferrera looks over and sees it.

The plane disappears into cloud.

"What the hell," Ferrera says, angry and mystified. "Does he have another plane up here with us?"

Another violent jolt rocks the plane. Labruna scans his radar for any sign of relief, and then -- "There might be a gap opening at your two o'clock!"

"I see it!" Ferrera has continued the climb, helped by strong updrafts, and they are nearly out of the top of the storm. For a split second they find clear air, and he banks towards a seam between cells. But it closes just as fast, and again they crash and bang against masses of moisture-heavy cloud. At one point, a downdraft drops them three hundred feet in a few seconds. Ferrera fights it and slowly begins to climb again. Labruna looks up. Solid cloud gives way in places to gauzy haze. Patches of black sky begin to show.

"Climb, climb," he urges quietly. He sees a star shining through the haze. They burst through a final curtain of mist, and suddenly they are skimming along the top of the storm. The sky in front of and above them is awash in stars. They are free. The plane flies smooth and true.

Ferrera sighs and says simply, "Fuck."

Labruna peers over his shoulder and can see part of the storm wall receding, still spitting swords of blue-white lightning. Ferrera descends to twenty-three thousand. He leans back in his seat and stretches his neck.

Labruna, his fingers trembling, widens the angle on the radar so he can see the storm again, already five miles behind them. Although it is long and winding like a serpent, there is a bulge in the center where multiple cells are colliding, and he can see that it is tracking to the west, towards the Gulf of Chiriqui. It will either spend its venom there, or continue to grow.

There are two knocks on the cockpit door.

Ferrera nods at Labruna, who unstraps from his seat and opens the door.

The man who steps into the cockpit is short and heavily built. Broad muscles spread his shirt collar wide. Sunglasses sit propped on the top of his close-cropped head. He wears no expression.

"I'm sorry, sir," Ferrera says. "There was no way to avoid the storm."

The man doesn't respond. He is coiled and tense, like the storm itself. Labruna can see his rib cage expand with each breath.

"There was another plane," Ferrera says. "It came very close."

The man looks past them, out the cockpit windows. A carpet of benign cloud glides beneath them, faintly illuminated by the stars. His breathing slows.

"It's very beautiful," he says.

The clouds unroll beneath them. The engines hum and the radio crackles with chatter, pilots and ground control trying to fight the storm, but to Labruna, it feels very quiet in the cockpit.

"Yes," Ferrera agrees. "Yes, it's beautiful."

"You must see beautiful things all the time from up here."

Ferrera looks at Labruna. "Yes sir, we do."

He crosses his thick arms in front of his chest as he stares out the cockpit windows.

"Maybe we died in the storm," the man says. "Maybe this is heaven, to fly forever on a beautiful night. No more storms. Fly forever and never have to land."

Ferrera says, "Maybe so, sir. Who can say for sure?"

"And it would be heaven," he says. "It really would be."

He stands behind them for several more minutes, then exits the cockpit.

Labruna begins the landing checklist. Beneath them, the clouds have broken up. City lights spread like a glowing web, mapping the contours of the land.

The plane slows, then descends.

MATT TREASE
5 POEMS

52. Fly Like a (Bad) Eagle
for Barbara Barg

Push through
Empire to

confusion
is reigning

Do not make
any sounds

research deals
with dreaming

house the people
living

field
does not stay
in [one]

53. I'm Bad (I Know It)
for Amorak Huey

a word : conspiracy

write still
in the wake of

the room breathing
one at

this displacement
of time

into the future
I

have spent years
ignoring

54. That (Bad) Bird Has Flown
re: Katherine Grace Bond

Hacking is an index

of bringing
a great deal
of
this should be done
in
the patient's reluctance
to
the babies who don't have

time in the wilderness

55. Bye Bye, (Bad) Birdie
for Mel Functioning

Workers of the world

fan out energy to most

exact repetitions

while they sleep
has shown
that

the children with no
shoes

conveys it is
a field

8/14

It's 4:15am. Berrigan's back to New Mexico. Those kids re-enacting were fantastic. I remember that dream, public speaking being a voice in a crowd of voices only does it help if I picture them naked in this inception or does that just remind me of blue rock candy that this morality tale is spiraling into cliché, that Heisenberg was a physicist not a chemist, that inflation can be a_ slow boiling pot? It's 5:15am. I'm 36 so why do I suddenly want fries with that? This is only supposed to be temporary, feeding a thousand on a fish sandwich and some bus far I want to feel again, but I can't stop my hands from shaking.

NATHANIEL FARRELL
PARADISAEID LOTOPHAGII

06/20/12 13:42:05-17:25:20 BST /// 06/08/13 10:32:31-13:41:29 /// 06/10/13 10:31:30-11:41:23 /// 08/16/13 16:47-21:59 CDT /// 08/17/13 07:55-10:46 /// 01/13/14 17:44-19:23 CST /// 10/24/14 18:14:22-19:49:43

Of mankind's firstborn disobediency and fruitfulness thereof. / Of that forbidden tree whose mortar-made teeth bit into our / brow, deathly intoning theft, worldhood: Andromeda aloof over woefulness, trellises whooshing / withamite lossenite of edenite, till oneness great-hearted manifest / restrung uterine, anechoic, regards blissom the sea-turtle tarry to / [5] / sing with heaven-pointing museau-muscle, thawing omens, the secret topiaries. / Of Oreb or Sinai, the dye-cloth inspirited / through breathless syllables' haptic needlework, firstborn tauriform chromosome seeking / inward theaming beginningless howardite, the heavenly earth-worn / rosette outburst, offshot, chaotic orb igniting over Sioux hillocks / [10] / delivered there, moribund ancestor, where silvery brooklets thatch flowers / fasten bypaths, thereby ordain us offcut godlings in airy theogony / involuted tight in toil's myth adventurously songless whilst / withdrawing, the noble midge flinches intent to soar / above th'Aortic Mountain itself pursuing / [15] / thought's unavailing yield: inaction prostrate in the orchid's rib. // Andromedid chieftans, thousand-hearted among th'oars' spiral throng prefigured double, / begetting alluvial tempo therein uprise heartachingly Andromeda purified / intangible meaning forms thoughtless knuckling; thoughtless from the first / wastage present-tensed andless witness magma-wings outspread / [20] / dove-like over spathic brook, satellite brood oncome vatic, the abyssopelagic eel in / angelic maelstrom, ivory prehistory whips inward mean, Ishmael-darkened / illumined, whiskery island lowlight rallying androgynous supraconsciousness, / Himalayan topography, the Olympian theme lost in great-hearted Argus's / isthmus mazy eternity—provident annihilation assured justly / [25] / thereby wayward of godly toil mending / scaffolding fission / forthing this heavy hidy-hole: nothingness fromshakes thy view-halloo with / deep-drawn northern tracts of helpless breathy saying: fission's cauterizing wheel / against which we / perforce favourites heave-shouldered offusque smoulder high-mettled to-crush fallible offered / frondescence / only to credit that flesh-eating fruit with transhuman wilt, willful creaturehood / [30] / forced onto resurrection's lore as Thetis and Ogyges worldlessly besiege / what whoness fish-thick with toad-spit seethes first in this fouling revolution. / [....]

07/09/12 17:30-18:50 BST /// 06/11/13 11:22-14:45 BST /// 10/27/14 12:34:20-15:50:44

Nine-eyed, time-ridden, the nightbird demurs in the spacearium's measureless dayage animating / [50] / torsion-moved menace headached within hollow horror vacui cruel, layered vantage-ground, / rowlock, fierce gulfweed, inarticulately buzzing: / the arch-confounder's thought inmoulds his door / wreckful reservoir, his toiling motion forcing nowness through Niagrean thoughtography, luckless harbinger of / lasting pain bottle-necked in a tornado. / [55] / Roundabout him thrown balefully his eye-beames heave / wobbly hugeous afflux and dismeasure: that / withering mixture of primal oblivion and steady hatred / atrabilariously onced up ascending fascicular ascesis anguished kenning headachingly he himself villipends, / far-back he his anger kens vigorous, / dismantles six-sided wasteland and wilderness, / [60] / the abject ontogenesis: dunk horrid, sigil-rout in alleys / as yet one green furrow flares from threading flame, nocuous lilt / calling reaches Darwinian vision / to sever ontology from discovery, woeful signature of / register of sorrow, dolorous shapes wherein half-annunciate peals / [65] / retreat into capacious never-endingness wherein theology's dysphasic horizon never-ending comes / communicating to all how words' total energy stills, / urges, figures, demands androidal abortion as anger federates with / ever-burningly sulphurous, uncontrollable suckle— / placental eternity, justice-haggard presence / [70] / forecome in thought rebored herein this problem ordered / in darksome utterance. Anguish thirls this shabby hectic portrait / as fast-removed from godly likeness as / from the pollenate centre's aura torqued the light-like heavy glow / of deep-sea bioluminescence / thrums in his utriculus. [....]

02/27/13 12:07-16:26 19:40-20:56 CST /// 06/20/13 13:53-19:43 BST /// 09/13/14 14:34:24-16:45:27

Thwarted satellite, tallowed in history's nebulous material / withdrawn headstrong upsetting above-cited wavelengths thereabove andabatae eyelets, / the sparstone blazon other-dimensional hitty-missy parthenogenesis bifurcating / prongs on the fronds extensile, long-tailed large-headed in anima mundi's leach. / [195] / Flotsam manyfolded about his roof in vacuo, bulkheads, ashen hullocks / ashore wicks fables through skeins of naphtha moonlight. / Titans earthbound in the orangey brimstone wash, oneiric-jumbled / orange-bricked wildfire typhoon, they—denouncing / cadaveric angelic task, helicoid oracle thence-after—they, seabogium beasties, / [200] / levitate whirl through allogeneic gulp worldward whirling hispid. / Oft the hunchback creature swipes through oceanic strength: / the hindering, harassing onsweeping slurry of nosema fodder, / pincers sometimes smirking in the nigrescence, fractiously skimming / deep somewhence as islolate oligochaetes ascertain through seascape tempestuous what / [205] / fixture ancient hitherward incandescently rings round / the moory byway, his sidelings underbelly leeward whilst nightmares / invidious seclude in wisht morosity to delete the soak / striate outwardly hugged inwardly lengthy th'arch-figure leads / chainlessly onward, bursting lamentation through norite, everlasting theosis, / [210] / the Hadron-risked orchard, heavy history's healing buzzard there winching from carrion / his pernicious rumination of all-ruling heaven / to lift anew / the hoard athirst and larval to his own darkening desire: / that within rejection's crippled heart he might militant / heave hindsight from onomancy as damnation whips his heaped soul / [215] / eviscerate tome otherwise enraptured with might-have-been. Seething / in howardite allantoid, malicious hive, servomotors buzzing his briny fossil of / infinitesimal goodwill from gracious meridians shielding onliness, / mandibles and hippus of segments buttressed and hindered / in trelliswork, the conjugate wreck of Venus and power. / [220]

03/01/13 08:53-12:54 16:40-22:20 CST /// 06/21/13 13:03-15:41 BST /// 09/12/14 11:30:14-16:14:36 PDT

Fortified uprising headless, he reassays the frontier offered pouring / around his migration hung, stays onlayed echalon after echalon flamey / drizzle backward sluices poisonous spiriform antapex romance / inadapted to biloquial leech, ibis-shaped thalmus milky above th'horrific valley / thencefrom expanding wing-headed he steels hissing flinching / [225] / along incurrents once themed dusty airways / thatching fenced universe weighty tilling dry-blown oolite landscape, / heaving lightning igneous ivy west landward thatching everywhere burrowing / without solstice as the lake lisps, withers firmament, / ancestral suck, appendicles innervating hulchy assimilates quenchlessly these forcefully / [230] / offered subterranean winch-works trapping abbreviate hilltops / torqued from Peoria, or sheared sidewards, / oft thunderstruck after whose combustive / angelic fiat entreats thermochemic conception firmly / submerged within mineralizing fusion: th'airy wink // [235] / angel-leapt about singultus-bounce aloft inwrought / without stencil, smudgy suchkin restoring their foundations solemn□, then / opening unbending fiction himward th'homophonic footprint-nicked matrix / bottoms gloryless thereupon tracheal havoced styolite scapulimancy / florescence ashake with godly anger cages this ownhood redeemed strewn / [240] / noughts now their by-work, suffused with supernatural practice. / "Island register, thistle-themed solace, thistle-themed clinch, / saliva-thick," so says *Luciferos archaeopteryx angelus*: / "Thistly the seclusion / that weakening mutation channels through heaviness—thistly / the mouse-dun gloom / this foralit-thatched cellar lightlessly / beckoning itself solace, sinew healing / whorl-nubbed issue / [245] / sovranly canonizing dispossession, abject-bidden / whatnesses shambling, beaks rigid: fastened front Iscariotic bestial whoness / reason-haunted equality: force-haunted madness sure / therebefore th'absent equatorial history. Fare-you-well harmony, this fierce / wherever judges, foredoes everlasting dwindling: half host, half / [250] / infestation anointed by worm-eaten thoughts hellishly profuse."

03/04/13 17:11-22:45 CST /// 06/28/13 11:34-13:41 BST /// 11/03/14 09:19:04-11:33:49

"Recluse ticking newness possum—ones whose brinking / miniatures nothingness, toads, beasts channel, bypass in placode timelessness. / The mingled isomer itself packages plans inapparent to itself, / cancels maker-absorbing heavenly offer hellish, absorbs hellish offence heavenly: / [255] / whencesoever mawworms wiggle incarnate iambus-bearing stillborn sameliness, theoplasm's angelic whatness, / idol-shouldered beauty allied buttressed

lessens thereof headless / whomsoever thunderclaps have madly greeted. Hereafter th'atmosphere's leash / weakly shallowly becrowns freedom, that alphabet-hauling nothingness-bulged / force hereafter encysts history's wimpish driveling notes, usurping henceforth / [260] / hermeneutics' weary maybe reinventing sedimentation and in myeloid choir / together rejoicing in isometric wounds ambitious thoughts' inner hemisphere / between toil- reinforced inborn hellfire: theology's settled inapprehension heavy / buzzing wheresoever Lethe weedy there outbreeds faithful friendship. / Th'assured anger coppers anger oft outcast lost / [265] / lying thwarted astounding only obliviscence pooled / around thoughts calling to nowhere sharp within: usurpers themselves partaking / inbreeding thought's un-hoped marrow, th'organic opera's morphological wither / rancid arteries together trying whatever the maze bears yet / rejects inward heaves organizing that whatness-mouthed louse in inarticulate heroism." / [270] / [....]

03/21/13 13:26-17:17 CDT /// 10/16/14 15:57:18-17:50:38 PDT /// 03/26/13 10:13:12-11:18 17:07-23:53 CDT /// 09/25/14 11:06:52-16:33:36

The hearsum from the honey-work squirms and winks in the abattoir / plucked up / as when menace woos waterbugs from sleepy reeds / to onsetting dwale foveal. Cadence-wide the tholus dreadful / roused and bestraught then-tofore erect, well-intoned awash / notelet didelphids, thralled nothomorphs percolating theories evirtuated in a plink / [335] / which they were, the fiery ore painstaking feeling in nots, / tokens, generous voidage in their hearts soon obeying, they, yet innumered asci / whewling their potted roin, / offscum sonolysis, amulet-incanted ejaculate, evil-smelling deadly, / wavicles clavate, round-arched coaxally upcast abortus pitchlessly in this cloudy / [340] / omnific locust-locution, warpling on the windy eaves; / the orgasmic theater reanimating offspring in Pharos-hung / limbo / nimbus anguish-dark all-over the land-breeze night-blind offshore: / spasming numerousness whaled-up through bad-eyed angelocracy, seething / hovering on winglets, they, the underslung co-peers of hell these / [345] uppermore nevermores. Tymps aneath / suspended firmness. / Asbestic tillers, about-sledges, upswung signifiers; the Great Plains scored by spearpoints / thirlings grinding sundry chains of sound waves, tongues disroofing / their evenlocked course, ligulas tasting the updraft of their downfall, / opening thermotropic firths. Alluvial brinage fills their Paleoscenery. / [350] / Aepyornis. Multocular ungulates like which the poppyheaded notary's / powdery newcomers, frondiferous, hereafter louse-fruited toile, passengers / rhematic order thereat dangling whiskery barbarousness. Herpetofauna / camouflaged: likkewaans abloom. Sovereign delusion on the spuming sap spred / together beneath the lickspittle's gibbous posture amid / [355] / fortifying squalls, formalizing evil angiospores. Each sandy baptism / beheads, leaves their thorax anlage where it stooped for the wave's hatchet, / grebes compassing these goldfish sharks' angelhood forsaken in the surf / exchanging humps for printed dignities, escutcheons. / Androsphinxes powerfully earthed inward heaving Saturn's omniform thrum / [360] / throned in ominous, heavy thisness—namesake's red nucleus of / being's no-being menaced blown, out-anguished, razed. / Byssaceous things recoiling thigmotropic from the bosom of life. / Noumenal haemomaniacs yowl; theromorphs amongst the soot of everybody ground, / grains themselves next, namesake's time-waned orbits therewith earthworms / [365] / thrumbling godling hindguts suiciding forth into the tribe of mankind and / fame by lies: the grubs' party / offcome mangles this cortex to-burst through the fosse / godless this creature of inwardness / glottis ogive, his maggoty therapsid theosophy: translucent tongue floating in / [370] / Oligocene toil, their oil-brutal imaginary. Adrino-verbs / within genitourinary diaphragms removable, organs full of pools of gold, / anger's devious fore-tongue-adorned deities / thence wet thighs knuckling together mending up cadaverous variform nasopharynx / variform idolum as animalis thymuses bud is helico-logically wormeaten / [375] / in and by the unfriendly dunes. / [....]

06/07/13 12:18-14:12 BST /// 06/09/13 11:10-13:16 /// 10/18/14 15:30:09-16:43:34 /// 10/21/14 10:20:20-11:09:51

And blackened Geiger counted calloused with tyuyamunite: Helter-Skelter / [405] / next come with Cheshire grin, *Coelacanthus gulsae*, the gulch-dweller, / obtruding dribbling oophoron moaning sooth in the necro-aroma, / willful from their abdominal orifice spackled with hickies. / Next come *Horoscopus toxotes* separating reason beyond wheel and / the fluent-speaking *Peodes dalekii*, offcome sinking clamour with viscous / [410] / anguine

eels aspirating their other names, pooping through peptic ulcers, / whencefrom hobbling the entire issue marches in scatological onanism, maze-thrown nitrogen narcosis, // together doing hoax-warbling ritual, winnowing cosmos-threaded woefulness / yet thence history's lustiheaded orgone enlarged, heaved / [415] / eventful to that hill-top offertory-scape bynaming the grovellers / of molochine homunculi, lusty hardnesses hatefully cabbaged, / tilting gophers jostled in the drownage, theologoumenon-thrown into hell-fire. / Within they camp this whorish fulfillment, thimble-full thinning through borderless floodplains / of Ole Eureka to-burst theopathic through unbroidered partage. / [420] / Syringes, fulgid ejaculate, grubs, haemorrhoidal genitalia: all named / of Baalite rank maledictions ashore in thousands. / Thesicles, femur-bones forced spirally pleasuring themselves whensoever / their cantors eject soft-finned sey from th'assurgent organ-bother or / angioblast sockets uncompound ischiorrhogic thelemic essencion purified, / [425] / nothing-tied oraculum manifold without joints or limbs / nothing-fleshed onychogenesis thereof the broken strings of boney limit clawed. [....]

01/18/14 15:30-18:12 CST

Allegiance thence anewed, the motion-canceling flood busts witless loose / downfalling castlings, anemo-dampened yieldlessly whetting their applause on / obtuse songs glorifying oily jowled-tongues; hearing fowled then choked on / nocturns indulging desperation too heavy for theology, nothing-locked / [525] / inward lost on isthmus false where once hither courage castled / likeness doubled hangs buttressing heartless his wonton principles / sophistically reconciled, withdrawn high-minded, worm-eaten thus burrowing: / his semblance offers wounds nourishment substanceless, genuine rancor to / thirsty faith cowering beneath dissent's thorny features. / [530] [....]

03/22/14 20:47:59-23:03:45 CDT /// 03/23/14 10:17:59-13:38:04

Withstanding germs, antibodied lungs goldly imbalanced rich, / servant-arrayed antibodied tropics all thinly white: / sorcerous metaphysics blowing marsupial soundscapes / [540] / atop thievish whiskers unisonorously hubbubbling upon / a show that tortures helpless confidences and berthless / frigates reinforced there offward in chaotic anti-olympian night / alkalinized as monarchic thunderclaps thickly gloom, wetting sediment— / barbed tendrils thrash the riversides into thorny alignment. / [545] / Witherlings of ornamentally combed wax, witherlings thence roughcast / about formless hulks of speculum and through-pierced hulls— / apocalyptic, anemo-serrulated ships income thickly, arriving / from oily depths immeasurablly antediluvian thawing movelessly / in perjured pharynxes touched, therein doubled, movelessly / [550] / offering flux among soils red-suckled and ravaged / torn hills, offcut nodes tempest hewn open. /

05/14/14 10:05-12:34 CDT /// 05/15/14 11:54-15:19

Armorial toads bauble-broken read an-erthe inswamp oilish, raging / delinquent, valorously breathing firmament unmoving / without dreadful-offered deformity. Toothily flung orders. Foundation retrod; / [555] / noses wantonly prod torquing mobbing and swaying / with solemnizing tow troup thousandfold anear chivalry animated / amputating doubts, amputating fears, amputating sorrows and pains / frontless mortification overcomes immured minds. Thus they / breathy univocals forcing within fixing thoughtless / [560] / mouthed onward inward silences together soldiering pitilessly through the charade. / O're thiophene-steeped burnt soil, they, anew nowise, advance indemnified villainy; they, standing abdicate horror frothy, / offer drill-long answers, dazzling array incalculably gulfed, / offer wastage overlaid with orthodoxy spellbound annihilation shines / [565] / awefully. Whatness commences, the military chimes / hail, tombac impressed as / him throughout this army finds / dashing his expert eye: angles sorely traversed. / Wick to wick the winkless Battalion he views, their ordination due, / their vital annulment steeling aspect offset godly, / [570] / their numerous latent heaps, supplemented and nullified, hits heart-disturbing. / Within-prisoned a new hate incarnate hoists stricken glory. / Forceful nihilism singes creation manifest. / Metaphysics sufficiently empty forbids ash, names without thought, / countersigns metaphysics mortifyingly thin, thence smoking infernally. / [575] / Warriors ordered by crown, throne all thence girded, bucked / on phrenological witterings / th'heroic race wasted joined.

06/21/14 20:36-22:24 CDT /// 07/9/14 13:29-15:15

In thawless fougue atheal, theftdom's andsech illapses onefolded eagle side-lit / mixy withdrawn avails godless androgenesis, wither resounding / in-about fabulous oracles of romantic otherness soon / [580] / begloomed withdrawn britted angels arpeggioed in knots; / angels alleged // whole-footed, single-breasted barbarocracy overflowing jovian infliction / inbinding asquint, orbicularis-mounted, / damascene-welded iris orcanet marred by the orchid tree / orbit's width-bittering sensuality, frontal agenesis showing / [585] / whencefrom the chasm wild, all history peering ferally / at this or that foolhardy bystander. Thus far this bezeled / compass offered to mortary prows, yew and obsidian / through dreadful commission heaving abstractly the restless / inward shaping once anglerfish's gestureless prosthetic emissary: / [590] / stooping likihood, abhorrent trace of the dorsal fin hoisted / forth haggard, yielding nothing but lost allure. /

07/9/14 17:03-19:18 CDT

Hermitic orillion: bristling Norman appendature / lethal theory arching angularly ruining angel-themed excipients / offering glottal obscurity as when the sunken news rising looms / thumps through horrible moan: air bells / [595] / shoving oily hoar-beaten orbicles, fructifying belligerence; the moonless / incoherence-dimmed ectoplasm, disastrously twigged shields, / onomastics, hallmarks of thaneship neaped within fear of the charity that / perplexes monarchs' dark sophistry-yoked show. /

07/12/14 22:09-23:48 CDT /// 07/28/14 12:19-17:26 CDT /// 07/29/14 11:12-12:58

Allanturic braded thermochrosy: thallium arching angioid: Byronic his face / [600] / deeply scarred embro-thunderlight—breath-threaded thought / ozone-introduced haemic-anguished to Carlsbad where Satan on his failing cheer buttressed unearthing breeched / dawn. Courageous and constructed principality. / Waking reverberation—crust in history's eyeless buttonhole's cavernous / silence oily remoulded among passive toothy beholders: / [605] / the fellowship of his criminal theology following rathe / fascinate, ought after ought only begotten in blistering concussion, / forfeiting every nucleus to havoc this loud inarticulate / pain-millstone upon millstone spitefully force his fault amplified / over heavy and fulgorous eternity splintered flung / [610] / forth horrific revolt, yearning faithless, hueless they stoop, / thrash, gnarled within / ashy white heels firming / hauling scorned fortune's thick oaths over mountains pinched / within single throated statues gruesomely bare-thoughted. / Standing on the blood-threaded hearth's bright doubling shadows / he now presses / [615] / toward speech wherein this doubled ravine they beneath / from wink to wink anticipate haphazard end held to rule by / withy allegiance hither perching attentive helix-thick and mute. / Throng-throated he assembles anguish inbuilt spiky of scorpiod / telescope suckling aspect anisotropically woven by forward-arching law: / [620] / world interwound without, silence foundation overthrown by / these weedy words.

08/29/14 14:44-16:43 PDT /// 08/30/14 10:15-17:00:00 /// 09/3/14 10:17-11:41

"O mysteries of impaled spitfires, O prairie of / matrixed buttes without thresh alleged anguished and thawless strobes, / washed-out note-nothings, ingrates in thought-controlled textus. Eventide waters direct / ashake thine placental testimonial; answer thou direct changed, / [625] / hatefully toed, udders buttered with praiseless offense to mind-blind / forethought oracularly presanctified. Frothsome these depths so / some off-set knuckle-pasted ovaries have pressed council having fearfully / huddled to suck uniformly forceless offering, godward hues sufficing / ascendent stoop, limiting thermolysis, counteracting everlasting knowledge of our repulse. / [630] / Found wholely canyoned, yoking belief, thought afterward lost, / thus alloyed they pulp legitimate willful exorcism which, / heaving empty heaven's shell faith, reactivates / self-rule and repossesses that nauseating secret / foremost meaningful: beingness wobbles. Always the heavisome hosts offbeat in / [635] / ignorant council, diffident orators dangling shunt / by meagre hatch, lostlings outside hope's bulbous heat. Wielding reinforced / monarchy inward heavy, they would tip thence astride oneness secured / as satellitium: oneness historically thumping, upholding bygone oligarchy reputed, / consensual order, customs-bound annals hoarding regimented statecraft / [640] / putrefying forum attended by furry stink hither strengthening concession. / Wincing templets! Ousted attendnents anger-wrought, over-fallen. / Henceforward history's milky weakness known: anhedonic kyphosis, outcast ownership / of the soul ascends

notch by notch and only elective toil pries from origin dreary / newfound warble, produces origin-bound partnership, remaking / [645] / toil, wrapping inbound caisson, dethroning by-form fraudulent, so that ordinal-locked guilt / whirls forcelessly in numb efflux: heads nod letheward / a-time, yes, lenticulating, frondescent, usucapient meadows finger whosoever overcome / the by-form's foreign haunt, but over-coming hallucinogen's historiating foetus / spaceless maze, produce new worlds; whereupon solemn rifts / thread wharfs / [650] / aboard-fastened, interwoven heirs, the headmast erelong looped / interlocking toggles create anew thiefdom's pasture afloat. / Generative whoresons, hoard-choosing regents / shout fearless equality togethering themselves sonorant ohms helming / thought: / illuminated cabins, tongues prowling shameless beasts perforating / outying fissures etched in tholoids or emanating / forth thorny / [655] / from this inferno-pitched shallow newcome hollow / celestially spit inarticulate, bonded now according to / the loom's underwork, dawn long-coveted by thinking thrashed / fully countermoved, mutated maws peacelessly issuing desperate / [660] / forfeit: whoever can thinking submit to warp thereupon the warp- / opened orifice undertakes mute the being-making resonance." // Headline spanning the antagonist, to-burst confused history, worlds outflying / millionfold offering flammivomous syllabary; dreaming frostbitten their thimblerigger / offers millioinfold-thousand chevron. Sufficient blessing / [665] / fast rouses immanent helioliths hips, thighs ragged / aggregation thenceforward hinged androgenous figures within grieved around / clasp only thither soundless shift: their direction officially wardened, / they hurtle defiant their trace thin, vauntfully oinking heavenward. /

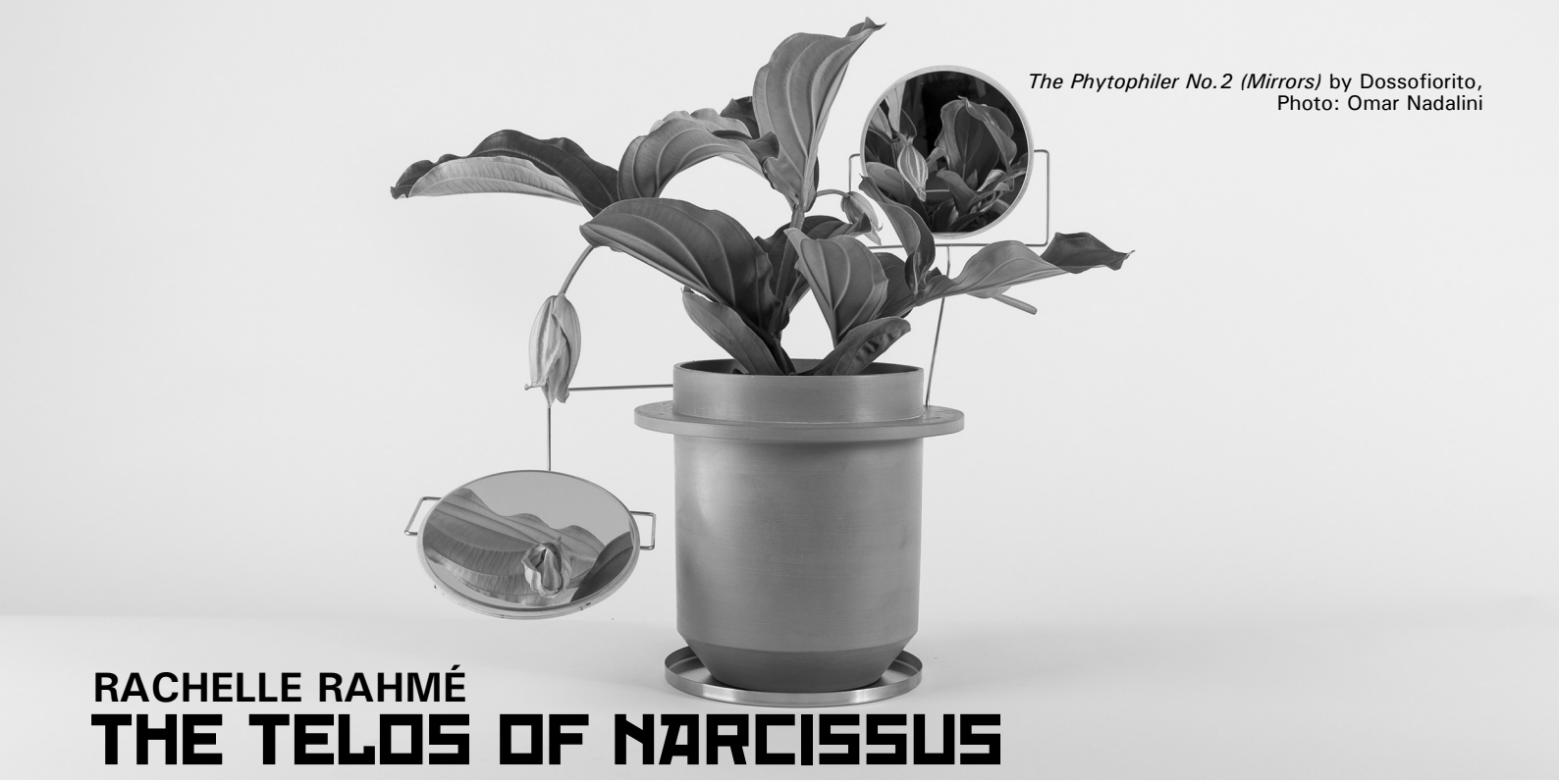
09/3/14 14:19-4:41 PDT /// 09/4/14 10:49-17:18 /// 9/5/14 13:26-16:38 //// 09/8/14 12:13-16:08 /// 09/09/14 09:23:32-13:36:51

These stop-gaps about himself now farrow wide-groined, torn / [670] / believing firmly approved by rucks smolder-thick resurgently entwining / the shoreline, within abducted glottic scruff, undotted signal / inaugurating hole-eaten womb-wastes hieratic metamorphic oreillets / themselves working omniscient summons thitherward winged within spermy / abscesses. Nuptial brimstone hatch aspersing barbs wherewith to climb / [675] / offsprung pips with spareless anchor piercing the armor-like / foreshore; they, ruby campaniforms, tonal trenches acid-filled, / orbitlessly cast abroad rancour. *Aurophagus gibbopennis* leads them on. / The leastways erysipelous spittle-bug feoffing / full hebete, foulest ever inching heavy his loopholes anfractuos threaded / [680] / westward alwise downwardly beraying admitted morningtides; / the riddled oh-so heigh-ho pawn, trooper-pooper, gombeen-man— / the aurora dividing orchestra, homily-spun, elytron-enlaced / inchoate vitriol becripples bypasses history-fisted / menstruation. Altered angels, cadavers hissing sulphuric, tastebud after bud / [685] / rasped they centerlessly anguished whine impling haplological / rift time-boxed offing the thoroughly motionless east, / forelocked trellisses better hid sooty. Hail, hoard crude-opened, / interpolated thievish, history's abased, spacious wounds: / Andromeda dilates the outer ribbon; Ogma's gossamer library no one admires. / [690] / The richest groves inbreathe here the solace mawkish, bestraught / desecrate thrumble preparing their bank. And here, lethed thoughts / widdy-bobbed inmeats—mouthfuls thorny, anguished wonks templar / in official babery, anemo-thistle-worn, omphalo-menacing kinglets / leasing howzats, hox, hamstrings thereby, granting grenadiers' moon-oiled fantasies, / [695] / ankles stretched; ammunition, artillery, arms-eaten ovaries done-in / by spiritual reproduction, ankles inarticulate and hunched / wheeling inward androgynes; ahead they wither incessantly toil-tossed / and haphazard, innumerable scarths perilous / nigher on, thickening the plateau in manyfold cellular prepossession. / [700] / Thatched underprops, haemopoietic veinulets of liquifying firmament / sluicing from the lamb. A second secretes multitudes / within wondrous architecture choked fractally outburst: the massy organs / sewn ear to ear, kinked and scummy. So the bulluous drove / a-goes, thoraco-asphyxiaists sordidly harassing forth within the groundwork / [705] / about-varixed, moulting aneurysms from their bolted cenotaphs / by and by strange convolution filling eagerly every holocausted notch with / aspects incubating alternative organology, fulfilling the oneiro-blasted winds of / today's manufacture of blank for anaemic royals pricked therein with sovereign-boding breed. / Anonymous outgrowths offshoot. Theos-eaten acetate-fabricated hugger-mugger / [710] / rostral-likened appendages exhale within their soup. / Oft dumb sympodials, antrum-voiced swells, / bulge like abortions templed, whereupon pilastrades roundabout / wheel the settlement's angelical dosage plunged down overgilt guts / without archivolt-given norm. Ditto-thick wards / [715] / cornuted ostentateously fret within bottling scutate-graven / thorn-root wastrels fribbling like gonad-knocking baboons. / North-girdled allometry

suction-maimed / equinox-incarned allomorphs throbbing in the glory-hole inshrined / below th'ossuary seraph-filled, throbbing godless ossicles secerned / [720] / thence. Kinocillia aegis-whelved withal astart struck strikes inward. / Wealthy andesite-lying thalamus asomatous, piles / stoney fixtures herein stating Hildebrandine, androgeny-straitened Thermidorsum. / Openly this breed fouled discovers widening / within here / amply spanned-over their smudge / [725] / an anencephalic lexicon, fruitless pavilion, their arching roost / pendulous byplay a-swallows magma marble rubicund / oestruary. Starwortled land anguish-bleeding crests feed / th'open wold: naphthous aperture, asphodel-yellowed limbus / askew from th'abandoned slab. The hasty multitude / [730] / admitted, enters anon: thecodonts worshipping soothless precept, / anointing themselves with sounds of architectureal hive, hanging wasps krobylos / inasmuch heavy buzzing manyfold among acoustic-traced struthonians hindmost / wherein schism amplified holds them resinous / among Satan's aspect-prisoned whorls; then, surfacing, kingdom after kingdom / [735] / exalt: toad-sucking powers, gazillions together ruling / ears *in abstentia*—Hisperic hieroglyphs, th'ore brilliantly / notched wash hither named unhopeful orderlies unbinding / incantations and greetings, annexing incoherent land-lurched authigenesis. / Menace called hoard, multitudeanchored howling hellward in fell fellowship / [740] / frumiously heavy, thick-fabled, thump-thrown by angry Jove / shended, over thorns: chrysalis-hung baubles locked from frondescent morning / to noontide's headlong ferule, noonday's toll everlasting dewless, / daylong astride sunlit antimeric within themselves settling sundials / drossy as from this zenithal limbo above, false stars / onlaid / [745] / lenses thence aesthetically illuminating thyrsus-themed radiation through / the erogenous fosse heaped with thoroughly rebounding row, / festering loops begetting nostrilled aureoles, avouching hints, nubs, / toadstones having but incidental hearts high-pitched. Noose-dight hecatomb, scarred / by-corner, all over hissing englutts the by and by wasteland heaved separate / [750] / within hoisting inertia's crisis together bugling to incoronate th'hemisphere hellish. //

09/10/14 13:42:19-16:30:22 18:04:33-19:32:42 PDT /// 09/11/14 09:10:15-18:19:51

In measured wink, theandric wings harangue with cadence common / offering spacefaring practice awful ceremony antique. / Trumpeted sounds throw theanthropy's hostile proclamation / ablaze: solitary counter-marque freshly tokens bee-glued helictites, / [755] / atactic pandemonium, theanthropic hinge capturing / off-brand satellites anigh hit pegged, threaded, summoned in calligraphic fugue eviscerate—banderoles approach, squatting reincarnate / by turns placed, order-choked thirteen wraithy things answer / witter hurrahs and withe threatful under tropaeolum canopy. / [760] / Attentive alligator-skinned acorns watch through the gateways / and pores wide-mouthed. / Hallelujatic butcher-chieftains theeing, spaeing / (thoughtkins likeless abiotically covercled in fieldite) whereupon chancel boletic / wheedles rigged in-about armor-clad angelification ataken thence, soldierhood's challenge / deflowered, thenceforward beasts offending peaceful chorus / [765] / to-haling mossy comotion orange-red carrion withinward lacing thickly / swarming bottled onde therewithin. Grubs anemophilously inburn th'air-pocketed / bulbs. Withywind weed theriomorphic. Hispid ogbanjis rutting withershin as if beehives incasked / in sprouts tingling where the sunbright woe tarries riotous. / Power-fouling thirl, yowling portals above their incavate hives / [770] / clustered thickfold ampulliforms dewlap-fringed and fluctuous / flocking to and fro. Android fruitage, orbs, oncospheres theeked, smooth plaited stems thence-from succouring offsprung thirst. Strawn-bulked city, / newly ruddered with bayonets, expatriates aneled, confirmed / this world-state affectated sociopathic thicket thorned aerolithic crown / [775] / swarming with anopluriform; strangled time-tossed their signatures glare / behold abducted wonder therewith buzzy nozzles whoded seething / inarched, abound tofore surrounding ecclesia. Glandule-songs / noxiously levitate th'theomachy-smeared dynamo, inappeasably navel-rousting / thronging numinous, limbs thatching pimpernel racemes / [780] / binding therewhile th'indigenous mouths ofcleping faery-rung Elysium / wickerworked midnoon, reverberate byssus accrescence forever signing / over frith for sooothfast bellyache. Pecked seeds / of dreaming heathen seedy, whindle in overhead held melodies, / their skeletal arcadia, antler-neglected tomentum thereafter echo-whet / [785] / heraldic palilogy courses through onward thisness, mis-angled danglement / interlobular wone. Jointed mutation charms hithercome ears / atour the article's once-born witness jugular-feeble anonymuncule hitherto heartfully recanting / thwartlong incorporeity spiritus-smashed to-wowed amongwithst the forshappen reed. /



The Phytophiler No.2 (Mirrors) by Dossofiorito,
Photo: Omar Nadalini

RACHELLE RAHMÉ

THE TELOS OF NARCISSUS

"THE MACHINE NEVER ORGASMS."
(Sylvère Lotringer)

One afternoon while on a hunt in his native wood, the young Narcissus happens upon a place he has never seen before. He knows this forest well, so the clear pond with its faint glimmer takes him by surprise. Kneeling at its edge for a closer look, the growing shadows of late afternoon deepen the pond's surface. It is still; its power to reflect untrammeled. Therein the surface reflects his fair image. He has never known his image, perhaps never known what it is *to see*. His subtle stirrings animate the reflection, enlivening it to the curious status of other. Finding it beautiful, Narcissus speaks passionately to it, reaches for it. Matching the youth's gestures and entreaties, the pellucid reproduction appears to want Narcissus equally as much. Its mouth moves, but Narcissus cannot hear him. They reach for each other, but this only scrambles the surface, their unremitting mediator, making the beloved disappear. When the water stills and the pattern returns, the sheer feedback loop of Narcissus' desire becomes clear to him. Sublimation of desire mounts to terminate Narcissus' first and last erotic encounter.

Codified in this *trompe l'oeil* are key elements one confronts in erotic desire: in the tradition of Bachelard's intimate space,[1] the sudden power of the poetic image; how one looks into the superficial abyss of Baudrillard, where the sacrificial form takes shape with a single, sudden stroke;[2] how super-abundance is the prerequisite to eroticism in Bataille; how absolute reflection proceeds to shape subjectivity from a dialectical torsion and pregnant pause, from which subjectivity emerges, as in Žižek's *Absolute Recoil.*[3] One relinquishes power to the image of desire in the most interior of private spaces. As Echo's utterance in the last instance is her will waylaid by desire, so it is Narcissus' lot to luxuriate before imperial sexuality, one which he both possesses and cannot have. He is animated and reduplicated to excess; in this way, he

1 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994) xv. "One must be receptive, receptive to the image at the moment it appears…it must appear and re-appear through a significant verse, in total adherence to an isolated image; to be exact, in the very ecstasy of the newness of image."

2 Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, trans. Brian Singer (Montréal: CTHEORY, 2001) 112.

3 Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil* (London: Verso Books, 2014) 4.

locates the brink of what Nietzsche wrote "gazes into thee."[4]

Marcuse addressed Narcissus anew in *Eros and Civilization,* wherein he proposes that the character may hold a significance beyond the psychoanalytic diagnosis *narcissism.* He argues that if understood correctly the Narcissus archetype can be used to supplant the predominate Promethean model of "cultural-hero,"[5] one who must endure suffering for the creation of culture. Sketching the outer limits of reason, Marcuse locates phantasy, the remnant, utopian elements of the psyche prior to organization. He argues for an advancement of the reality principle beyond the performance principle to a place of unreason or unreality.[6] Notably, Marcuse's emphasis holds the human image of Narcissus as the key to the myth's interpretation. His method requires us to establish the man and the representation separately, as cause and effect, in order to breakthrough to the new, alternate reality of the aesthetic dimension.

For this reason, I will begin by establishing a reading of the Narcissus myth based in the archetype's lineage through Greek and Roman poetry. Having arrived at a more complex understanding of the Narcissus image, I will engage two thinkers, Baudrillard and Bataille, to move beyond certain strictures in Marcuse, namely beauty and life. I will bridge these two thinkers to Marcuse using the concept of abundance that both Marcuse and Bataille recognize in Eros. For Marcuse, superfluity and abundance denote a non-repressive order, from which a leisurely play on reality naturally occurs.[7] My efforts will be to reassess his notion of "playing with reality" to allow for the murkier terrains of desire in Bataille's *Eroticism*. This maneuver hinges on a reading of the *trompe l'oeil* in Baudrillard's *Seduction* – a concept that is an end in itself, which signifies its own insubstantiality. Marcuse contends that "the free development of transformed libido…would minimize the manifestations of *mere* sexuality."[8] He believes that if the desire is free to manifest itself to abundance in play, rather than be repressed, desire will self-sublimate in each individual and become a productive energy in the name of Eros.[9] I hope to show by reading Ovid's myth closely that self-regulating sexuality is a non-sequitur to equally desirable forms of eroticism and individuation. While Marcuse uses Narcissus to suggest play with an abundance of beauty,[10] I hope to shift the myth towards an abundance of vision that exhausts itself in the existentialism of Baudrillard's abyss and transmutes itself in the collectivity of Bataille's *accursed share*.

The image of Narcissus is a poetic assemblage for Marcuse. His Narcissus draws from interpretations of the character found in the work of French symbolists André Gide and Paul Valéry. In their work, Marcuse highlights themes of re-creation (*au paradis*), the unified will and body, and cyclical-linear time (time returning.) Valéry: "All my fate is obedience to the force of my love. *Body*, I surrender to your sole power." Gide: "Paradise must always be re-created…Everything strives toward its lost form."[11] Marcuse attempts to locate the lost form of paradise in a place beyond reason. The despot which both establishes the institution of guilt, then enables and regulates it, reason is sloughed for the twilit terrain of the unconscious, where phantasy exposes the latent symbols of pleasure.

Denis de Rougement develops a position on the encoding of myths based on the mystery of their authorship. He proposes that myths are developed in society during times when it may be too dangerous to speak their origins or meaning directly. He relates the obscurity of myth not to poetic language, but to a necessary, protective condition of myth's ambiguity. A myth will always couple the desire to preserve its innate message with a justification for obscurity. Furthermore, in some cases a myth survives because it is impossible to destroy the affective relation it indicates, such as a need "to express the dark and unmentionable fact that passion is linked with death."[12] While de Rougement proceeds to give a reading of Tristan and Isolde towards this account, Marcuse also finds that the image of Narcissus "reconcile(s) Eros and Thanatos." Marcuse proposes that Narcissus plays the role of Thanatos, "sleep and death, silence and rest,"[13] antagonistic toward Eros without rejecting it outright. Simply, Narcissus prefers his own Eros to the popular conception.[14]

4 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil*, trans. Helen Zimmern (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989).

5 Herbert Marcuse, *Eros & Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955) 165.

6 Marcuse, *Eros & Civilization*, 142; 157; 165.

7 Marcuse, *Eros & Civilization*, 194.

8 Marcuse, *Eros & Civilization*, 202.

9 Marcuse, *Eros & Civilization*, 204.

10 Marcuse, *Eros & Civilization*, 187.

11 Qtd in Marcuse, *Eros & Civilization*, 164; 163.

12 Denis De Rougement, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgommery Belgion (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 21.

13 Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 164; 166.

14 Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 167. "…when he is contemptuous of the love of hunters and nymphs, he rejects one Eros for another. He lives by an Eros of his own…"

For Marcuse, "Eros strives for 'externalizing' itself in a permanent order."[15] Therefore, if Eros represents a place of permanence, then Thanatos is the flux that pushes against freedom. Their reconciliation is the praxis for traversing beyond both orders. Yet, Eros dominates this conversion, because of its active, self-striving. Thanatos, embodied by Narcissus, is a means to end, a play on fascination with an alternate order, exemplary but not an end in itself.

The myth of Narcissus that is most widespread belongs to Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. It is variation of a slightly earlier version found in the work of one of Ovid's roman contemporaries, Konon.[16] Both versions are alike in their key elements: a beautiful youth from Boeotia fails to return the romantic advances of others, then seeing himself, experiences the paradox of self-love, dying helplessly and regrettably, only to be transmuted into a flower. Ovid's account provides us with Narcissus' female consort, Echo, and in doing so the extra emphasis on excess. Book III of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* begins with the origins of Boeotia, Narcissus' native land. This curiously fertile place was discovered by a wandering exile from Phoenicia, Cadmus. Interestingly, it is also Cadmus' daughter Semele who is the mother of Bacchus, the Roman Dionysus. Seeking to put down new roots, Cadmus consults the seer Phoebus about the land where he should dwell. She tells him that he will see a heifer walking alone and that he should follow her until she stops and lies down. Wherever the heifer lay, that is where he should settle. He follows the cow to a pleasantly unpopulated land of grassy plains and mountains. It stops, looks up at the sky and bellows. Then it folds up its legs and lies in the new soft grass.[17] So Boeotia is born, where the bovine rests and the grass is downy. Cadmus learns further about the strange, richness of his new land, when he sows the ground with teeth (a gift of Pallas Athena), from which men sprout like crops.[18]

Later we find Narcissus, the child of the river-god Cephisus and the Boeotian nymph Liriope, who becomes pregnant with the beauty after being ravished by a rushing stream. Perhaps it is in his genealogy to gives himself over to water by an equal passion. From the onset it seems there is something Narcissus fears to relinquish to erotic desire. When Echo reaches out for him, he flees from her, crying, "Hands off! Embrace me not! May I die before I give you power over me!"[19] Echo slinks back into the forest, rejected, where she lets her body waste away until she is only a voice, recalling Ovid's emaciated lovers in his poetically pedagogical *Ars Amatoria.*[20] The sixteen year old Narcissus carries on with others in the same manner as Echo, rejecting the advances of men and women alike. It is the goddess Nemesis who, to avenge these scorned suitors, advances the youth's fate which had long been forgotten.

When Narcissus was a child, a seer prophesied that he should live long provided he never becomes acquainted with himself.[21] Now, mid-hunt, Narcissus finds he is before a mysterious pool. No human or creature has ever come there, so it is without a single ripple and is remarkably clear. He is thirsty and kneels to take a drink. But in doing so "another thirst springs up."[22] The metaphor of thirst is a compelling one for desire. It incorporates the physical drive towards the object of desire and also anticipates its quenching. (But like sleep, one thirst is always followed by another, until the last…) When this thirst for the other first appears in Narcissus, his fixation is primarily on the face of what he sees. It has a deific quality: "his eyes, twin stars, and his locks, worthy of Bacchus, worthy of Apollo; on his smooth cheeks, his ivory neck, the glorious beauty of his face, blush mingled with snowy white."[23] His eyes remain glued. Fervently he appeals, not to the Gods, but to the forest: "Did anyone, o ye woods, ever fall in love more cruelly?"[24] Narcissus erupts outwardly toward the other, while it casts friendly looks, attempts to embrace him, strives to kiss him, weeps for him, in kind. The innocuous reflection of the mirror, in this case reciprocates and convinces Narcissus of his beloved's sentience. But it is when his reflection can only mouth words, when speech fails, that finally Narcissus understands, "*Iste ego sum*," "I am he."[25]

15 Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 122.

16 Clayton Zimmerman, *The Pastoral Narcissus* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994) 3-6.

17 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank J. Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960) III.23.

18 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.110.

19 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.390.

20 Ovid, *The Art of Love, & Other Poems*, J.M. Mozley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957) I.729-736. "But let every lover be pale; this is the lover's hue…Let leanness also prove your feelings… Nights of vigil make thin bodies of lovers, and anxiety and the distress that great passion brings."

21 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.348. "Si se non noverit."

22 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.415.

23 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.420-422.

24 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.442.

25 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.463.

Several important details emerge from the remaining moments in Ovid that inform this reading of Narcissus in relation to his fate beyond the human. Upon recognizing himself in the mirror, Narcissus' gives a final exposition, illustrating in three parts the reflective abyss of desire. Narcissus unifies both himself and his reflection, asking: "Shall I be wooed or woo?" He confronts his desire and attempts to resist it by reasoning it: "Why woo at all? What I desire, I have." Lastly, recognizing the surplus of being and desire within himself, abundant negation overtakes reason. "The very abundance of my riches beggars me. Oh, that I might be parted from my own body! and, strange prayer for a lover, I would that what I love were absent from me!"[26] It is a metaphysical overture, in which Narcissus wishes to negate his being; either the body or the reflection will do, because the fates of the thirsty and the thirsted for are entwined. The climax of his speech works powerfully to focus Narcissus' erotic energy on death and is also the culminating moment for the self-fulfilling prophecy. "Death is nothing to me, for in death I shall leave my troubles." In a strikingly schizo-erotic moment, Narcissus considers the welfare of his aqueous beloved: "I would he that is loved might live longer; but as it is, we two shall die together in one breath."[27]

His grief-stricken body begins its transformation with deterioration; the active force that will transmute him is one sensitive to this suffering. In his final days, he no longer resembles the youth that made the whole of Boeotia swoon. Yes, Narcissus is insatiable, but he is self-devouring. Even Echo returns to look with compassion upon his fading form and echo the sound of his pleas, where as his reflection could not. When his body withers to the grass and he dies, Echo seconds the sounds of mourning reverberating throughout the forest, and the water nymphs cut off their lovely hair in grief. The nymphs leave to collect materials for his funeral pyre, when they return, they find his body has disappeared, and in its place a yellow-petaled flower with a white corona, *the narcissus.*[28] The Boeotian ground that grew crops of men from teeth has swallowed up a tragic lover and grown a flower. The scene is funerary, yet progresses the tragedy to a place of palingenesis.

Truly it is a rebirth, because Narcissus' transformation brings him back to a form he has historically known already. Narcissus, or the ancient Greek *narkissos* (νάρκισσος), is from the root word "to grow stiff, numb" (Latin *torpere*).[29] The flower form is first found in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*,[30] written approximately eight hundred years before the Narcissus myth appeared in *Metamorphoses*, (completed in approximately 7 A.D.)[31] The root suggests that death for Narcissus is not violent but gradual and painless. In the Homeric hymn, the narcissus flower is used as a trap laid by Hades to ensnare Persephone, goddess of spring. The narcissus flower that tempts Persephone to take it is one of uncommon gaiety and sweetness, to the extent that this flower makes the earth, sky and sea laugh.[32] She reaches down and plucks the flower. At once a crack in the earth gapes wide like a mouth, out of which Hades, the god of Death himself, rides.[33] The narcissus flower finds itself, literally, at the brink of the supreme abyss for humankind, and also as the trigger that prompts the abyss to break open.

Ovid's Narcissus that dies from impossible desire on the riverbed, therefore, seems to aid the circularity of the myth. As the Homeric narcissus flower reflects itself historically in Ovid's Narcissus, Narcissus' mythic lineage is from flower to man to flower. The Boeotian grass that grew men like flowers and flowers like men bears the bewitching sign; Narcissus kneels upon it, falls through it, and establishes it as his foundation. As the Greek flower planted by Hades reflects itself in the lineage of history, so in Ovid's myth we see man and nature reflected over a *trompe l'oeil,* the mediating water's surface, that can be best represented through the reflection that occurs in Baudrillard's conception of seduction.

Narcissus rejects his body, once he realizes the paradox in which he is ensnared. He begs that his body depart from him, and his speech rapidly breaks down over the pool. One loses track of which Narcissus speaks in phrases like, "Oh, that I might be parted from my own body! and, strange prayer for a lover, I would that what I love were absent from me!"[34] Subjectivity and the empirical become malleable. Baudrillard writes provocatively of the situations in which truth is sought:[35]

26 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.465-473.

27 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.472.

28 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.505-510.

29 Liddell & Scott, *Greek English Lexicon,* 525.

30 Zimmerman, *The Pastoral Narcissus*, 2.

31 Frank J. Miller, from the "Preface" to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, ix.

32 Anon, *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 7-20.

33 Anon, *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 7-20.

34 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book III, Line 467.

35 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 54. "Not only does [interpretation] subject the domain of appearances to incalculable damage, but this privileged search for hidden meanings may well be profoundly in error. For it is somewhere in the *hinterwelt* or an unconscious..."

"…one can live only the idea of altered truth… Otherwise life becomes unbearable."[36] Any discourse on symbols must fail in order to elucidate their meaning. When Narcissus' appearance ceases to represent the other, and he sees himself in the reflection, his representation and his self are united towards inevitable finitude, par seduction's course. Symbols and reason neither coexist nor reconcile. When one appears to the other, it offsets the other to excess (reason too real; symbols too abstract.) It is at this moment that death appears to refract and re-oppose the forces. One sets the trap to be caught once again in it. The myth regenerates through a trick of the eye, an indistinguishable reflection. The myth pivots on a disguise; it is change disguised as death. Death is revealed to be too artificial, and it falls back on itself. Rather than the metaphysical death it becomes, rather, a myth of about death's impossibility. But something exists in the *trompe l'oeil* that telescopes backwards and to an increasingly remote final thought in a long series of thoughts: "Like the obsolescence of objects, they are the sign of a slight vertigo, the vertigo of a previous life, of an appearance prior to reality."[37] The *trompe l'oeil* in Baudrillard signifies something like pure noumena. It occurs in a place closed to our senses. It is has neither gravity nor light. It "functions in weightlessness"[38] in a place where time, illumination and perspective hang suspended before a black sun. Baudrillard suggests that a *trompe l'oeil* makes every object and order transparent, like a child first seeing his own reflection, "an unmediated hallucination anterior to perceptual order."[39] A *trompe l'oeil* is perceived as a purely superficial play, but at the same time it works against the mediation of the senses.

In his short chapter on Narcissus, Baudrillard alters the myth. Instead of an unknown other, Narcissus believes his reflection to be his dead sister. Baudrillard goes on to ask, "Is death always incestuous?"[40] Baudrillard does not advance beyond this to produce a theory on the kinship and eroticism of death. Instead, uses his frame to produce an ethical reading of the myth, suggesting that incest may be experienced in one's own image. His reading advances directly towards death, rather than transfiguring it. He writes: "It is by this sensual, incestuous transaction with our image, our double, and our death, that we gain our power of seduction."[41]Baudrillard's mirror is the instrument for generating seductive power. Its machinery duplicates perception and casts unreality backwards to suggest the truth turned from truth, its shadow side. Narcissus tempts also himself to that turning.

Baudrillard brings one before the mirror, recognizing its sophisticated role in seduction, that reduplication of images to excess. The experience of reflection and seduction function hand in hand as consequences of the superficial abyss, the reflective plane in which the *trompe l'oeil* manifests, and demonstrates ones attraction to void.[42] However, Baudrillard only advances so far to the abyss' uncanny edge. He stops at the brink of the void, turning from it, only to seek another route there again. This is seduction, which aids in decoding Narcissus' attraction and reflection, but cannot fully unlade his ultimate physical transmutation. The second half of the Narcissus myth requires an advancement beyond the void – through it – a territory through which Bataille's accursed share will help guide.

Baudrillard likens the still moments of inertia to a distortion that overtakes an image, pushing the image's internal laws to a place of imperceptibility. When Baudrillard reaches the brink of "this black hole, the point of no return," he steps back, pulls it tight, and releases it "in a new seduction effect."[43] However, for Bataille, it seems the point of no return is not where seduction retreats from in order to recommence. The black hole represents the irreversible plethora where from seduction begins.

Bataille's notion of eroticism has an economic ontology. It relates eroticism as production in general to materiality and access to energy. He expresses the general economy of living matter and the sexual realm of beings in the same way, by identifying the surplus energy in both. There is an instinct beyond need. For Bataille all exchanges are part of a rational economy, until the point of surplus is reached. Subverting the energy of the real into surplus energy, Bataille holds: "Erotic activity always takes place at the expense of the forces committed to their combat."[44] In Narcissus'

36 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 59.

37 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 62.

38 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 61.

39 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 62.

40 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 69.

41 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 69.

42 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 77. "Attraction of the void lies at the basis of seduction…"

43 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 128.

44 Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share,* 3 vols., trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991) II/III.191.

The Phytophiler No.3 (Orchid) by Dossofiorito, Photo: Omar Nadalini

self-combatting model of eroticism, Bataille would identify an eroticism that works against the regulative vital instincts by placing them in overdrive, as "even war exudes plethora."[45] Expelling these forces, one is placed on an erotic trajectory that moves from abundance, to excess, and the accursed share, the "squandering without reciprocation."[46] Elemental to the accursed share is the idea of the "for no one"; the gift that has no receiver needs nothing in return.

In a sense, Bataille would rather exist in a castrated economy, where inherent phallocentricities are the necessary point of departure from which there is no return. His stratagem for transfiguring these summit erecting forces is the recuperation of what is buried beneath the pinnacle. Man stands at the summit of his waste; "it destines him to useless consumption."[47] The ground is "a field of multiple destructions," while the energy we produce is like "an unbroken animal that cannot be trained."[48] One does not need to work towards super-abundance; it generates itself unregulated. Super-abundance is the normal disposition of life. "Neither growth nor reproduction would be possible if plants and animals did not normally dispose of excess."[49]

45 Bataille, "The Meaning of General Economy," *Accursed Share,* I.25.

46 Bataille, "Laws of General Economy," *Accursed Share,* I.38.

47 Bataille, "The Meaning of General Economy," 23.

48 Bataille, "The Meaning of General Economy," 24.

49 Bataille, "Laws of General Economy," 27.

Implicitly, excess is the junk of growth and the dross of reproduction. It is discarded and cut-off from practical activity. The headless, acéphale figure advances the model of a new sovereignty via a negative economic method, drawing upon what has been deemed useless. In terms of eroticism, the negative economy flourishes in sexualities that resist commodification. Reading the Narcissus myth alongside the negative economy suggests that the image Narcissus sees as his reflection really is the figure of another, independent entity. It is the manifestation of anthropomorphic natural world.

Abundance is in constant production for Bataille, but the excesses in energy that life creates cannot be stored. The excesses "must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically."[50] In this mode the Narcissus myth resolutely pushes forward through the excesses of reflection and desire to an unconscious ecological state in the flower. The myth re-enacts death, and like eroticism, uses the gestures of death to shift surplus energy into a new state. "Death is regarded… first as a negation of ourselves, then – in a sudden reversal – as the profound truth of that movement of which life is the manifestation."[51] The sexual violence of Narcissus' agony culminates in "a hidden fire"[52] that consumes him.

50 Bataille, "The Meaning of General Economy," 21.

51 Bataille, "Laws of General Economy," 35.

52 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book III, Line 490. "…carpitur igni."

In this way he is blackened imperceptibly from within. While Narcissus fails to reconcile his desire as he is first motivated to do so (superficially, extrinsically), the myth suggests a "movement of the individual transcending in death the always provisional discontinuity of life."[53] In Bataille, this movement is traced through the subjective experience of eroticism. Sexual violence creates a wound that can only be staunched by a swath of anguish. When sexual and mortal anguish are combined, Bataille describes a progression beyond the limits of the preliminary abyss that death presents. This is Bataille's reading of subjectivity into the abyss, the concept of *the black-out*, where "the convulsions of the flesh are more acute…physical pleasure [is] more exquisite." When one yields to the erotic urge, "the being yielding to that urge is human no longer."[54] At this shifting subjectivity takes a new form. In place of a black hole, which one must halt before in Baudrillard, one moves through the black-out in Bataille. Through the erotic cycle, Narcissus' body and desire are absorbed into the ground as excess (the fertile ground of Boeotia, no less;) the resulting figure, the flower, may then represent Bataille's accursed share. It grows from spent superabundance, after perceived 'death,' and subverts the uses of sex.

In addition to the erotic, Bataille engages prophetic, ritualistic, incomprehensible and subterranean forces that may be used to address similar elements in the Narcissus myth that. Bataille writes: "Impotent beauty hates the understanding…but beauty cannot act."[55] Like Marcuse, Bataille believes that a certain aspect of beauty exists beyond, perhaps in excess to, reason: "Beauty is sovereign, it is an end or it is not."[56] It is so heavy with itself that beauty becomes inert, free from time. In life, beauty is a path that is imperceptibly parallel to the movement toward death. For Marcuse abundance of beauty will constitute the new era of free play and the order of Eros. However, for Bataille all excesses must be sacrificed, including beauty, to the "nostalgia of lost continuity."[57] Necessarily, beauty is crucial only for the opportunity to despoil it. "The greater the beauty, the more it is befouled."[58]

The Narcissus myth did not move statically through antiquity: in the Homeric hymn, the narcissus flower is planted on the brink of underworld as a temptation, and in Ovid's representation, a youth does not recognize himself and is reorganized into a flower. In an obfuscation of logic, the trajectory of the myth shows us that flower becomes man, becomes flower. Indeed, Bataille writes that asexual beings are immortal, a syllogism of the relationship between sex and death energy. Marcuse does not emphasize Narcissus' development towards death. For Marcuse, "death is a token of unfreedom, of defeat."[59] The mythic image of Narcissus by this token, represents a monastic surplus of beauty for itself. The image is revoked to present an alternate, freer reality. Because the phantasy is self-contained, its unconscious images are intuited apart from the governing order. In this light, it becomes important to break-down the image of Narcissus using Baurdrillard's trompe l'oeil, in order to understand the role of mirroring in his anguish. An image may be "the disintegration of hierarchical organization,"[60] and be also a simulacrum, a signifier of nothing – auspice of the abyss. To conclude the reading of the myth then, it was necessary to move through this abyss, as Narcissus does, into the space of Bataille's black-out. Doing so throws Marcuse's position on death in stark contrast to Bataille's. For Bataille, death is the resolution of excess, a change in pressure, and also the acumen towards transcending the provisional. Marcuse's great refusal of proscribed governance is reached through Bataille's procession of energies, without necessary reliance on the aesthetic dimension. Baudrillard's trompe l'oeil provides an exegesis on the superficial abyss, but it was necessary to dive into the void, past this point, to conclude Narcissus' story (and begin it again.)

What does it mean to give in/go/to desire, to accept the irrationality of its reflective premise, that it is always the same but secretly so, and to pass through it, as Narcissus does? He accepts his other self in failed apperception and surrender to death. The outcome of this action is not to further break him from being, but to re-establish his continuity and heterogeneity as a cipher of desire. He could not, however, re-establish himself in the same form. The narcissus flower, with its numbing effects and short circuiting of death and reproduction, signifies the headless summit to which Bataille speaks. It rests on the ground and draws up from it.

53 Bataille, *Eroticism*, 104.
54 Bataille, *Eroticism*, 105.
55 Bataille, *"Sovereignty," Bataille Reader,* 284.
56 Bataille *"Sovereignty," Bataille Reader,* 284.
57 Bataille, *Eroticism*, 146.
58 Bataille, *Eroticism*, 145.
59 Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 236.
60 Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 62.

PREVENTATIVE CARELESSNESS

A practice paradise. Looking into the
camera in your peppermint-striped

condition involved extreme calliope. There were
oysters involved. Descriptions that

burst into flame. O their ritualized teeth!

A tourist on your mouth pops gum,
demands that you

look more showery. (Say goodbye.)

Goodbye! I dreamt
about small stabs and

take in the gullible by
hiding them in your velvety purse.

When the zero enters the casino
we all scurvy off. You don't need no stinking

vacation. Her poetry breathes underwater.

LARRY SAWYER

VICTORY
GIRLS
I AM ENROLLED