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Translations from the Japanese
by Sawako Nakayasu, Hiroaki Sato,
and Eric Selland
I recently received in the mail a small, photocopied journal of poetry and poetics called Ekoshi Tsushin, bearing the title, “Genius Poet Sagawa Chika Mini-Feature.” Sagawa passed away in 1936 at the young age of 25, but not before writing and publishing over eighty poems and an armful of translations. Some people consider her to be the first female Japanese modernist (while many people do not know of there having been any); however it is only recently that she is being “mini-featured,” receiving critical attention, and being read at all. While all of the others featured in this selection are from the postwar period, I have made an exception for this remarkable poet.

Because eighteen-year-old Sagawa arrived in Tokyo and was immediately embraced by some of its most prominent writers (including Nishiwaki Junzaburō and Kitasono Katue), it is easy to lump her in with the Japanese modernists and surrealists. She certainly had much in common with them: a stark juxtaposition of images, the free-wheeling inclusion of foreign vocabulary and concepts, and a highly visual, colorful, tableau-like construction of poetry. But even among them her work is unique. In addition to the fantastical, surreal elements in her work, there is a palpable realism that wells up in each poem, a distinct stance on reality from which Sagawa produces a deeply furrowed cross-section of her world, where “cars and skirts cut the city into slivers of music.” These slivers are carefully layered – and at the same time narrated – in the time and space of her poems. Instead of indulging in an arbitrary or abstract playfulness, Sagawa carries us through, and out of, each poem with an urgent force of sensation, in a poetry crouching on the brink of prose. All with such a deep sense of loss, for someone so young.

While traditional Japanese poetry displays a close association with nature, much of the work in this section does so in a distinctly non-traditional fashion. For Sagawa, who left her nature-lush Hokkaido (Japan’s northernmost island) for Tokyo, shards of nature wallop their way through her intimate and urban landscapes, while Park Kyong-Mi’s “Weather Patterns” from her newest book Sonoko (That Little One) explores human and otherwise external patterns of weather and weathering. Kawata Ayane, who comes from a family of tanka poets, puts a volatile and subversive spin on the short traditional forms of waka in her book Sora no Jikan (Time of Sky). Hiraide Takashi depicts a tension between nature (a walnut) and danger (of the Tokyo subway system). Like Sagawa, he embeds his own stance on reality inside a seemingly fantastical surface of modernist lyricism, but while Sagawa writes from a fixed point, Hiraide engages a shifting continuum between poetry and poetics – the poet himself aiming his postwar reality gun at all points in between, while pausing to joke with his neighbors now and then.
Within each of their various writing styles, Tomioka Taeko, Hirata Toshiko, Ito Hiromi, and Park Kyong-Mi inhabit a contemporary poetry that is colloquialized and feminine, though the work of Hirata and Ito can often reveal a connection to older Japanese roots. In Hirata’s “Nenbutsu, very busy,” Nenbutsu is not only the name of a character but also the invocation Namu Amida Butsu, a prayer to the Buddha. In her writing in general, Hirata’s humorous and catchy turn of phrase captures the variations of spoken Japanese so well that it is not surprising she has taken to writing plays, some of which have been produced and published to award-winning acclaim in Tokyo.

Looking to the West, Tada Chimako’s writing reflects her deep interest in western religion, mythology, and philosophy; while Park gains strong influence from American writers such as Dickinson and Stein. Both Park and Tomioka are translators of Stein; Park at certain points hinges her rhythms on a Stein-y syntax and grammar.

Ito, as well as Yagawa Sumiko, are two poets who draw very fine lines between their personal lives and their work. Ito is well-known for her frankness on female physicality, while Yagawa’s “Etcetera Ode,” published in 1980, is a precursor of the book she later wrote concerning her relationship with the novelist Shibusawa Tatsuhiko.

Though he is highly esteemed as a poet, Inagawa Masato’s work can at times harbor an ambiguous relationship to poetic discourse and poetry itself, and he is not alone. Like the burglars in Hirata’s “Career Counseling,” Japanese poets have a variety of interests. They not only work in a tremendous range of poetic forms, but we also find amongst their works art films by Inagawa, sculptures by Kawata, criticism by Tada, advice columns by Ito, baseball poetics by Hiraide, and children’s books by Yagawa, for starters.

There are many people I would like to thank for their assistance and support: Iwabuchi Tatsuji and Nakayasu Atsuhiko for helping me on the Japanese end, Ben Basan and Sally Picciotto for reading the work in English, Sato Hiroaki for sending me his translations of female poets, and an enormous thanks to Eric Selland, who talked me through countless facets of Japanese literature and the translation thereof, via literally hundreds of e-mails. This section owes a lot to his encouragement, support, translations, and advice. Finally, I would like to thank the NEA/US-Japan Friendship Commission for the Creative Artist Fellowship which gave me the time and resources to work on this project.

There is much more Japanese poetry to translate, and the tip of an iceberg, one amidst many, is an exciting, albeit dangerous, place. Please stay tuned.

− Sawako Nakayasu

NOTE: The poems in this section are arranged roughly in order of publication date. The Japanese names are given last names first here and in Eric Selland’s essay; elsewhere we have it “Western-style.” All translations are mine unless otherwise marked.
Insects

Insects multiplied with the speed of an electric current.
Lapped up the boils on the earth’s crust.

Turning over its exquisite costume, the urban night slept like a woman.

Now I hang my shell out to dry.
My scaly skin is cold like metal.

No one knows this secret half-covering my face.

The night makes the bruised woman, freely twirling her stolen expression, ecstatic.
Morning bread

In the morning I see several friends escaping from the window.

Temptation of the green insect. In the orchard a woman stripped of her socks is murdered. Morning, sporting a silk hat, follows along from behind the orchard. Carrying a newspaper printed in green.

I, too, must finally get off the hill.
The city cafés are beautiful glass spheres, and a troop of men have drowned in wheat-colored liquid.
Their clothing spreads in the liquid.
Madam with the monocle tears off her last piece of bread and hurls it at them.
My picture

The sudden phone call surprised the villagers. So does this mean that we must relocate. The village mayor panicked and removed his blue jacket. Yes, mother's allowance chart was indeed correct. So long, blue village! The summer, again, chased after them like a river.

The rooster with the red chapeau disembarked at a deserted station.
Black air

In the distance, dusk cuts the tongue of the sun. Underwater, town after town in the sky stops laughing. All shadows drop from the trees and gang up on me. Forests and window-panes go pale, like women. Night has spread completely. The carpool takes a flame aboard and crosses the park.

At that point my emotions dance about the city Until they have driven out the grief.
Green flame

I first see men loudly approaching down numerous green stairs pass by look away cram into a small space while gradually hardening into a mound their movement makes waves of light furrow through the wheat field a thick overflowing fluid makes it impossible to stir the woodlands larch with short hair snail painting carefully spider walking its line like fog everything rotates from green to deeper green the men are inside the milk bottle on the kitchen table are reflected crouching with their flattened faces slide around an apple they seem to crumble as they block off a shaft of light in the street a blind girl plays by ducking under the shadows of the sun’s rings.

I hurry to shut the window danger has reached me a fire blazes outside the beautiful green flames spread high, circling the outskirts of the earth and in the end dwindle, disappear as a single thin line of the horizon

My weight leaves me takes me back to the depths of oblivion people are crazy here no point in sorrow nor in speaking their eyes dyed green believing is uncertain and looking makes me rage

Who blindfolds me from behind? Shove me into sleep.
Departure

Night’s mouth opens, forests and clocktowers are spit out.
The sun gets up and runs the blue glass track.
Cars and skirts cut the city into slivers of music
which dive into the display window.
The fruit stand hints at morning.
Even there the sun multiplies in blue.

People throw rings at the sky.
In order to capture the sun and such.
The blue horse

A horse came tearing down the mountain and went mad. From that day on she eats blue food. Summer dyes blue the women’s eyes and sleeves, and then whirls merrily in the town square. The customers on the terrace smoke so many cigarettes that the tinny sky scribbles rings in the gentlewomen’s hair. I am thinking of tossing my sad memories like a handkerchief. If only I could forget the love and regret and the patent leather shoes! I didn’t have to jump from the second floor after all. The sea rises to heaven.
Green transparency

Transparency of one acacia leaf
May angels who discard their clothes there legs dirtied green
Smiles that chase me memory becomes a swan’s neck and glimmers in front of her

Now where has the truth gone
Music of birds congealed by evening mist pictures of trees printed on the walls of the sky a green wind gently flicks them off
Pleasure is on the other side of death calling from the other side of the earth
I see for example the sun, grown heavy, dropping towards the blue sky

Run! My heart
Become a sphere at her side
And then in a teacup

– A layered love it makes us miserable
The furrows of milk waver my dream rises
Beard of death

A chef clutches the blue sky. Four fingerprints are left,
– Gradually a chicken sheds blood. Even here the sun is crushed.
Blue-suited wardens of the sky who inquire.
I hear daylight run by.
In prison they keep watch over a dream longer than life.
A moth slams into the window so as to touch the outside world, like the
backside of an embroidery.
If for a single day the long whisker of death would loosen its hold, this
miracle would make us jump with joy.
Death strips my shell.
Blue sphere

There are two black men holding hammers. They violently tear at the door from here and the other side. Morning is there, so that their city might be lined up. The house painter spreads gold on everything. On the shutters and walls. The apple orchard is lush with golden apples. Her blond hair sways there. In the corner of the yard a sunflower turns, turns, turns and rolls its way inside. It becomes a large sphere and shines. The sun is more warm bread than we can carry, and we, along with their homes, ride the horizon, venturing into a trip around the world.
Fragment

The blue officer corps wearing military caps of clouds stand in line.  
From the bottomless pit they lop off the neck of night.  
Sky and trees overlap and seem to be fighting.  
The antenna traverses above, running.  
Are the flower petals floating in space?  
Noon, two suns run up the arena.  
The rusty red emotions of summer will soon sever our love.
Glass wing

People carefully pass along love, held between glass wings, which the sun destroys on the street corner. The sky stands facing the window, darkening as the ventilator turns. Leaves are in the sky, drawing a single line, the rooftops leaning in. Trains crawl along the bulging street, the sailor’s collar rotating between blue creases in the sky. The dressed up lines of summer pass by and crumble into the flask. The fruits of our hearts rain happy shadows.
Circulation

A fence dirtied by dust continues,
Leaves turn from red to yellow.
Recollections accumulate upon the path of memory. As if spreading white linen.
Seasons have four keys, slide down the stairs. The entrance is shut again.
The blue tree is hollow. When hit, it sounds.
While night sneaks out.
That day,
I am sad like the skin of the boy in the sky.
Eternity cuts between us.
I lose countless images to that other side.
Ocean of memory

Hair disheveled, chest splayed out, a madwoman roams about. A crowd of white words crumbles upon the crepuscular ocean. A torn accordion, a white horse and black horse storm across over it, frothing.
White and black

A white arrow runs. The nightbird is shot down, dives into my pupil.
Incessantly obstructing the sleep of figs.
Silence prefers to come to rest in my room.
They were the shadows from candles, a pot of torn-off primula,
mahogany chairs. Time and flames entangle, as I watch over them
planing the circumference of the window.
Oh, the black-faced man comes again today in the rain,
slaps around the garden in my heart, and runs off.
O rain, which comes in boots,
Must you trample the earth all the night through.
Ribbon in May

The air roared with laughter outside my window
And in the shadow of that colorful tongue
Leaves blow in a cluster
I am unable to think
Is there someone there
I reach a hand into the darkness to find
only a long wind of hair
Mystery

Golden delicious tumbles on the golf course. While avoiding the earth's crust, they dive in spinning. Space runs towards them; or perhaps the wind collects in a clamor. Blue of the cross-section. Hands like the surfacing veins of a leaf. As at one point their dreams circled the perimeter of night, so people's hopes will collect like dirt on the side of the road. Shadows distort, the grass dries. Two flower petals form a butterfly. They bloom towards morning, filling in the vacuum of the earth. We are allowed no predictions for the sake of one day. As if trees were so. And then the sky was window-dressing for everything. When I draw back the curtain a thick fluid gushes forth like water.
Hey, the men are getting dizzy again.
Dream

Reality disintegrating only in naked midday light. All ash trees are white bones. She is unable to explain with her back to the clear window. However, her ring replicates its reflection many times over. Gorgeous stained glass, superficial time. Then they will detour around the house and choose a busier street. Dark sweaty leaf. The wind above it limps and cannot move. While rejecting the illusion of darkness, I understand. The mistrust between people. Outside, the salty air stirs the spirit.
In white

Flickering above the grass like a flame
An amethyst button sparkles
You descend slowly
A turtledove turns its ear to the lost voice.
A mesh of sunbeams cut through the treetops.
The green terrace and a dried flower petal.
I remember to wind my clock.
Green

From the morning balcony rushing in like a wave
flooding all over the place
I nearly drown upon a mountain path
and choke, many times bracing myself from falling forward
The city in my vision opens and closes, the way my dreams spin
and in their pursuit, the men nearly collapse with tremendous force
I am abandoned
Like a cloud

Insects pierce green through the orchard
crawl the undersides of leaves
ceaselessly multiplying.
Mucous expelled from nostrils
seem like blue mist falling.
At times, they
without a sound flutter and vanish into the sky.
The ladies, always with irritation in their eyes
gather the unripe fruit.
Countless scars are attached to the sky.
Hanging like elbows.
And then I see,
the orchard cleaving from the center.
A bare patch emerges there, burning like a cloud.
To awaken

Spring, scattering roses
descends into the center of our dreams.
Night burns
the bear’s pitch black fur
sticks out its long ruthless tongue
then the flames crawl about the earth.

A singing voice placed
between lifeless lips
– Soon the ceiling’s flower bouquet
is opened.
To the vast blooming sky

They are the eyes of all people.
Don’t these words resonate in white.
I’ll take off my hat and throw it all in.
As the sky and oceans hide countless flower petals.
One of these days, blue fish and rose-colored birds will burst through my head.
The things I’ve lost are never to return.
Flower

Dreams are severed fruit
Auburn pears have fallen in the field
Parsley blooms on the plate
The leghorn at times seems to have six fingers
I crack an egg and the moon comes out
Three Poems

Seiichi Nikuni

Sea has already been reduced to pus.
悲歌
elegy
(非)＝non, (心)＝mind, (悲)＝sorrow
In this country we do not bury the dead. We place them in glass cases like dolls, and display them in the house. People, particularly from old, highly cultured families, live their lives surrounded by great numbers of fine-looking corpses. In the living room and guest room, even the dining room and bedroom, the glass cabinets bulge with ancestors. When it gets too crowded, they may even be used as furniture.

In our house, we arrange our dinner soup atop our beautiful, twenty-five-year-old great-grandmother, laying there smothered in flowers.

We do not harmonize. When four of us get together, four separate melodies get entangled. We call this a relationship. It is invariably a ‘snarl’ of sorts. When the snarl unravels, we scatter off in all directions. Sometimes relieved, sometimes bewildered.

Scatter off in all directions, I wrote. But to scatter off like light beams emitted from a single light source, dodging each other while shooting out, never to return, is not what I meant.

With no further reason to see each other, four people will scatter towards the four points of the compass, though not one of us will ever break through beyond the horizon.

People fear stepping off of the earth, and thus decide to turn back one step short of the horizon. And this is how thirty years later, faces you weren’t particularly longing to see will reappear in your field of vision.
Everyone in our country fears the noontide. The dead are all too dead-
like at noon. When hit by the piercing rays of the sun, we get goosebumps
and shudder.

When a sea of blind nights, and a sea of deaf nights – enough so as to
bridge the distance between one person and another – descend, we remove
our corsets and let out a sigh of relief. Lying down to sleep upon the bottom
of the darkness, most of us seem to be almost as happy as the dead.

We fear the sight of new leaves. That small bud lifting its face to the
treetop – who is to say that that is not my nipple? Those tender leaflets,
extended forth from the damp earth – who is to say that they are not the
vaguely parted lips of a young man?

As the green invasion begins in the spring, we lose our escape route and
go hide in a deep dark corner of the house. And at times, poking our heads
out between our dead brothers, we watch the green hemisphere as it rapidly
swells up. Many of us are plagued by a slight fever, and keep thermometers
tucked between our arms.

To be a woman – in particular, to be a woman in this country in this
season called spring – have you any understanding of this?

When I was fifteen, I imagined it dreadful to become a woman. When I
was eighteen I found it despicable to be a woman. And just how old am I
now? I've become too much of a woman so that there is no going back to
being human, such an age, an age of no return. My head is small my neck is
thin and my hair is very heavy.

We are very good at laughing. Affably, with a strong resemblance to a real
smile. But one botched laugh would be a terrible catastrophe. Our chins
would drop and sag, and our facial structures would decompose into pieces.

Times like these we excuse ourselves, faces covered with handkerchiefs,
hole up alone in a room and wait quietly until our natural scowls are re-
stored.
While eating, a gleaming black insect darts across a diagonal of the tabletop. From whence it came, the people know all too well. When the large insect speeds past between the salad and the bread, people hold their tongues for an instant, then casually return to their respective conversations.

This insect has no name. This is because to this day, no one has made a point of speaking about this very well-known insect.

Three times a day, every large building blares its siren. Elementary schools and theaters and police stations, like beasts bored silly from being tied up all day, let out an endless roar.

There is no escaping this sound, no matter where you are in the country. Even while in love, even while looking through a telescope.

Yes. There are many telescopes in our country. In every major intersection of the city an impressively large telescope is installed. People love to see things outside of their own country. Every day, countless numbers of people get hit by cars and die while looking through that lens.

When the wind turns and the scent of the sea drifts in, I am reminded that this country, too, owns an ocean. But this ocean does not exist for us to sail upon it; it is there to hem us in. The waves continue their perpetual motion not in order to carry us away, but to coerce us into giving up.

Like slowly rolling waves we lurch back and yawn, then sadly slump our heads down and collapse. While spreading our skirt hems out on the sand hill...

All these things notwithstanding, the trading vessel comes and goes from the harbor, carting unknown products. An unknown language is spoken, and unknown faces appear and disappear. Oh, and every time it leaves, how I've covered my ears against the drone of the siren and sent it off with my eyes closed, my heart carried away on that ship leaving the harbor!


Two Poems

Taeko Tomioka

Translated by Hiroaki Sato

Chairs

I greeted the human being.
Things to give
I have none, at any time.
I have seen
a photo of a beach
with many
round wicker chairs.
Inside those shell-like chairs
I'll say the same
greeting again.
About the chairs
there was nothing more to talk.
You will put
your hand
on the rifting edge of space
and look around.
Our
short trips have no sound
at any time.
Either of us
may weep
in the air.
The chairs are put
at any time
face to face.
How light we are.
Don't hug me so
intimately please.
Please Say Something

To a man eating a pear
you pose a question
like
why the hell
is he turning the light
on and off
only when
you’re sitting like an insect
on a chair
in the dark of
an autumn house
and revenge and such crap
doesn’t count.
Which reminds us, doesn’t it,
how yesterday
a nine-year-old girl
got out of her kimono
better than her mom does.
Then
an insect like a golden green
glass bead creeping up
an outstretched arm, oh I know,
all of these
stories are too good.
For a midnight snack,
have a pancake or something,
and think it over,
will you?
from *Time of Sky*

≡ *Ayane Kawata*

1

Blood always blood
As blue is blue
Incessant explosion of a thirst-ripened orange

2

A pigeon-like kiss upon the well that grows anywhere on the trembling mirror that exposes itself

3

Flinging inwards
and further in
the innocent window
Screams are forced to run radiantly and full speed

4

Don’t call
Don’t bundle the yellow lilies that fly about
Don’t eavesdrop on the egg

5

I discover a newly drowned body amidst the geometric scene welling up in the sky of my eyes
The peninsula
the rail
the exploded branches
the breasts
the netting
the white plate
fly!

Because the blue sky is so swift
I must lap up the warmish blood seeping into the mirror

The morpho butterfly
who crosses over
lighter than semen
snatches what away
from the eye called eye

A transparent clock is constructed while being kneaded by the foul breath
of things which sprout

A scream inside a fish
A table is a table
The raped orange becomes the blue sky

Tumbling recklessly while mincing the surroundings is a wound or ear or
the yellow lily
The pigeon
does not get any lighter than that
does not go dark
draws yellow on the spine

The woman who drank the glass window will have a seizure at dawn and
tremble to her fingertips

See
Let’s sound the organ and
blow away the woods bulging with sparkling eggs

Please give me the fishy stars born by the coral trees with black nostrils that
inflated into the sun

The word
of the right breast
of the bag under the eye
of the leg
of the fire filling my fingertips
of the sounds of bloodwaves
in my eye

While ceaselessly painting the cranial sky blue
the blood must train inside the brass instrument
A slope that arises
from anywhere
Stray dogs loiter about
and dawn imposes the birth of an unexpected bird

From the trace of the incontinent blood of an angel walking along holding
some sky cut out with a glass cutter, the dawn

In the insanely quiet
sky of the eyes
a blank sheet of paper rouses the suggestion of a peculiar flower and blows
up

The ridgeline of the woman who gives over her entire body to an invisible
light becomes the first blue aria of spring

Shh
Did you see the sky open
Roses are islands of distraction
pursued by a distant voice

Noon
I pass through both my ears barefoot and become an eyeless blue sheet and
undulate
The pebble shoots up blood
The fig tree sings
In the butter clouds the newborn eyelids have trouble with the glare

Is that the sky cleaving just as I've reached the top of the midsummer midday stairs filling my arms?
So please, now tell me just who was it from what place who deigned to say that beauty was an edible thing, now well this time around, in a fleeting moment as hard as those old-time China Marble jawbreakers tumbling out from the back of some unexpected drawer, which I suck on, and intermit­tently play with in the palm of my hand, but now this time around I thought I was loving it, caught up in it, how it melts into brilliant new colors by the minute, all the while showing none of it on my face, but oh, my. What fine balls! So now I would think it should melt away in the course of the night, but as time passes it comes to reveal its mysterious immortality, but if I keep it in my mouth like this, sooner or later it will get caught in my throat and I will none other than die in convulsions, crying and laughing...but in any case if I get a little choked up on the aftertaste of this morning after, I can’t possibly accept it as some trivial matter. Now indeed when it comes to being your Cleve, with only this much sweetness even my drools tend to stall, but then this too could very well be evidence of being raped just as far as the lips, by that natural inclination towards a lovely hazy drunkenness. But, now fortunately, no matter how much I blather on when I melt-melt into my sloshety sloshing, we did in fact have right here with us one fine person who with grace and good timing catches me between breaths with nary a flinch, crudely cheering me on, and I am quite happy that we both happen to be Japanese, though there was nothing to be done, really, you see, there are times when even stars collide, and now that this brilliant natural disaster of a chance encounter has occurred before we even knew it, attending to this life or death is a farcical matter to this wife-servant holding the liquor-shop pillow, when you get right down to it both of us a rare breed of nobility with our bodies armored in a bluff of bravissimo, until that fateful day when we altogether crumble apart from the balls, far off into the eternal distance, though of course in the end I can’t help but plead for a tête-à-tête with you as the guide. Indeed without you, sir, to constantly take the lead I can’t even muster the confidence to buy my ticket. To ease my loneliness I contribute a story to that popular magazine Girl’s Match, it’s okay to play house and sing oldies every once in a while but I’m already sick of it, never been good with childish things anyway, would much rather be reading grown-up books on the sly, on my tip-toes trying to join my father and older brother as a bona fide genuine old-school anti-girl, my purpose in life nothing at all except for the rhetoric of truth, which I’ve long ago said all there is to say for as long as the leopard changes its spots on you.
And well this from the final dwelling sumiko or her loathe letter

to your
sweet shadow
Eve sets

dear odd maximist
coming

47
The radiant subway. The wall that clears up and is endless. In the thundering prayer of steel which fastens the days together, one brush stroke of cloud gathers. The beginning. Your nesting place.

The sound of the tearing of the fruit’s flesh scatters between your ears. The forefront of the burst of spray beckons to those outside sorrow.

Things that rain, and things that grow. All that holds my interest. (Until the things that rain have grown, and the things that grow have poured.) Things that grow, and things that rain. All that I desire. (Until the things that grow cease to grow, and the things that rain no longer rain a single drop.)

Unaware of the arc-light above, one day she reads intently – “The one consumed by unrequited love, alone, knows that person.”

Along the coast lined with hangars, you were born in a pool of light. With the almond eyes you received from the straits. Tidal hair connecting the islands. Your burning cheek. Soft legs that trip up at times. Though forced to fight in one place after another, you harbor a resistance to death inside your power to keep your voice down. Hence your aging slowly comes to rest upon the backsides of days.

* Numbers 1, 2, 10, 15, 17, 18, 26, 37, 42 and 104 translated by Eric Selland.
Getting lost within the soft tear of the decayed rice paper or freshly unearthed beak in the wind-whirled grass. With bones breaking, skin opening—entangling, heaving up against them—striving to get that unerasable grease to finally rise from the lips, beyond the ends of this grass, to bleed apart in scatters.

Protected by a hard shell, the fight just to continue sleeping. Not just for those pitiful drupes, but also the bold army of snails who spiral single-file down the escape well of a skyscraper—single-mindedly, dragging along the breath of their sleep.

The continuous need to pack ice. No matter what I write it melts, even the address. If and when it is received, she may die.

The road that lightly makes herself up with frost needles, for the clamorous shoe-bottom stars: my sister. Once tilled, she comes through the looking glass door, resisting the spread of her own hair, and puts all her effort into getting up. What the beast prowling the underworld should look up at, the ‘crazed moon.’

It is unknown who will look through to the inside. On the surface of the solid skin, the line of vision pointed inward, grows steadily winged, and the youthful yet deeply furrowed wrinkles make the sculptured skin of the exterior more vivid than the dawn. Like the burst of the shore it frolics, then coagulates. And with the whole of the ocean where people are lost as they come nearer, and the broom-like stars which fall there, it wraps up, bends and folds in on itself.
From a precipice situated northwest by west the aged mixing machine looks down on the ruins of the acrylic resin, covered in mist, yet still thoroughly functional. The mixing machine digs up from the memory the small things which emerge from the self without pain. Honey bees, a scorched rice paddle, the magnetic needle in disorder, the water in the screen’s depths, a woman’s tongue, fire. His job is done. And now the memory gradually shifts into our hands.

The radiant subway again. Here and there in the radiant subway, today also, a small white explosion occurs. It is the sound played out on our joints, the sound of an all too convenient despair disappearing. The walls collapse. Other birds, setting out in the explosions renewed daily, without hesitation, begin transporting their nests.

May the danger which has grown hairs always be holding your hand. May the unjust prayers and select worries keep rocking my lungs. And then without the days going by, or the ability ever to confirm the sound of love, may the ashes of the bones of stories repeatedly burned cook our deeds inside the furnace of the truth of things destroyed.

Getting off the train, there was only one exit to the north. I pass by a quiet old commercial strip along the tracks, what seemed like a row of repeating liquor stores, grocery stores, and rice shops – in other words I took a long detour south around the station house. Finding someone to show me the way, I am finally able to stand before the tree of my dreams.

The soap which transforms into a living thing inside the hand of silence. The remains of the fingernails of those approaching death fragrantly produce a foam on the skin. A railway.
We are running low on things to bat. Go to bat. Hold the timber at a right angle, thrust it slowly towards heaven (dizzying over the blue), then quietly lower it to chest level, relax, and brace yourself. A single lightening bolt of something will descend through the grain of wood. From across the field, a fistful of corpse candles come burning in a loose curve. Give, for an instant, and bat. We are running low on things to bat. Go to bat.

“Up ahead, difficulty.”

The web-like passageways played out, made to run by the once vivacious fibers of the fruit’s flesh now, as they are, having together attained envelopment in this unexceedingly rigid state – touch this perfect bell. In our underground passage where no fires are allowed, touch the bleached out labyrinth. At first, it does not ring. At first, it does not ring.

Hey say it again, one more time. Come see the dust that rises when you say it again, right here, hey you, say it again.

The production of ideas at zero. Pack it away in a box and there is a white explosion. I have the tendency to want to call this, and only this, a poem. How many times I have bathed myself in unhappiness mistaken for rays of sun beneath the round roof at the base of the cliff. While the rain’s fruit grows one after the other on my head.
On the light descending to the inside angle, I broke my favorite black bat. At that, the Tokyo Bay Landfill Number 13 Baseball Grounds (Small) began effacing the grass surrounding this softly glowing left-handed batter, as the crest of a wave quivered this way, like a whisper. Oh that’s just fine. Just go on laughing. At this bare-handed striker with neither age nor regret, beginning to collect like an unraveled raft the broken ends I used to gaze upon, into the space of memory.

The business of discovering numerous cul-de-sacs. Patiently walking, out in the field. As soon as I find one, I tie up its mouth. In a secret corner of the city, doing nothing at all but waiting for a pinhole to develop between two cul-de-sacs, just wide enough to let a breath through. Rupture • Concatenation. Then, all that is left is the breezy task of undoing the string and walking on.

Midway down the deep darkness of the trash bin, the kid plum finally caught on. “Oh, I am about to rot away, without ever having leapt, never having known anything tough and shiny.” And then, through the wet wrappers and bread crumbs, he slid down two body-lengths. Cheering is heard from afar.

Poetry has continued to differ way too much from what people believe it to be. That must be it, and just now as I think it, a shelf in the bar tilts.
If a work can stave off the strife of the world’s disasters, and at the same time encompass this disaster as the oxygen of its own world, then the gaps in space between words, seemingly hand in hand, between those breaths, one slightest hint and another – this is the very basis of its solidity. And relaying through this vacant hole, the work is reversed back to the world. And so then we possess the final right to read out of order each air hole in the work while overriding the time of the writing, and as for the work, to hold the right to exercise that final disaster, so to speak.

And just then in the emergency reservoir, the young carp leap. Quick, have a fire, they leap.

Only a satisfying hit teaches me the way of sorrow, and only that trenchant light comes to console my crushed heart. And every single grain in a spray of dirt shudders for the long-awaited end. Perhaps I should overturn this place, along with my appreciation, back to the perfectly clear sky.

Walnut, you’ll have a hell of a time there. Why go to such a place, drenched in black sweat. Walnut, I am closing in on you. Can’t you hear it, the rumble of my steel?

A train whose one hundred and eleven cars each simultaneously break into the lead past the thin hazy air of the midnight sun. Linking is optional. A train whose one hundred and eleven cars each trail the withered scenery behind their backs. Dissection is voluntary. Upon what kind of track would such a train run, O train, lease this illusory space, and graph it.
The window was always a mirror overlooking a small cemetery. According to the indefinite line of vision, the days which cultivate the area there are a part of anyone. Of course, I too once had a room in a wooden house lined with a shaky steel handrail.

What a great number of mistakes, without being known as such, lap up against us every day. Along with the signals that well up as bitter waves is a lesson that is gradually understood. However, in its shadow, an increasingly suspicious truth.

That’s enough. I’ll pass it from my lips to yours, that very special leap of a single drop in the bottle. Afterwards, nutcracking.
People continuously scatter
Here and there
Words also scatter
Here and there

Not withstanding a period of discord
The position of death darkening to green
Shifts to a position of minute solitude
Limitlessly blurring the position of the work
Then deriding both failure and hope
He pursues a frenzied, round life
Their number left the same
Cut off from the original intent
Each thing supported made over again
And steadily on into something too deficient
He loses the words before his very eyes
To an unsaid punishment
Repeatedly he discards the same name and commentary
Even to this long period of discord of the metaphor of the work
He answers only with his own name and identity

But it's all over now
Rejoicing at this abject oppression
Relying on standards and subversion, imagined despair,
He approaches numerous splendid coasts
And selects things drifting up
On that solid land
Then discarding desire and moving toward proof
He limitlessly blurs the position of the work

Finding their way, taking their leave
And again, taking their leave
Again he passes through this gate of Autumn
Twilight of a day of intermingling
Trembling, the pain of the eyes gathering up the beautiful script
Invites a moment of falsehood
To read and write is more and more
To associate with traces of things gone
As if to hurry only a resolution almost completely out of one’s own self
Pale death, invites a moment of falsehood
Growing weary of waiting, losing control
Only an ambiguous source is celebrated here
Subsiding in the cross-section of refusal, even now
Growing weary of waiting, losing control
Rather than pursue the whereabouts of thinking dried up and passing away
Continuously, one-way through this gate
He shamelessly undertakes an ill-fated journey
And then gives it all up, but
The simple life, with the clutter in the wind
Stands at this autumn gate
Wandering aimlessly in the rejoicing of humanity
Finding their way, taking their leave
And again, taking their leave
Stripes

In an apartment I try to get together with someone I met on the airplane. The body of this young man is completely covered in oily stripes, he is sticky, and I am afraid he will rub off on me.

Falling apart

Repeatedly, something falls apart. I have only the realization that I accept that “this is how things fall apart,” but there is nothing to see. Its concrete texture has flowed past and disappeared.

Backside of the pool

I go around to the back of the pool I always pass by, to find it completely empty. I think that if they turned its walls into a tank and put some fish in, it would liven up the space. I have the sensation of diving into the ocean and catching some fish, and the sensation of strewing some transparent instant products into the water, which immediately turn into live fish and begin swimming. In either case they are fish from southern waters, with three heads, or nothing but heads, or some such peculiar tropical fish. I like how they are thrown in with no consideration for variety. But there are concerns such as feeding, and so I need to make friends with someone who knows a lot about nature.

The following day when I go there the space has completely changed, there are several tanks for young fish, the bookshelves are teeming with books and there are specimens arranged in a neat row. It’s turned into a stuffy museum. The man in charge of the pool proudly says “It’s so much better now,” and “Because we filled such a large tank with water all of a sudden, the whole district had a blackout last night,” using a model of the district to explain. I listen vacantly, not caring anymore.
Ability to take action

A man places his hand on my tense, frozen back, and inspects it, saying “On a scale of large, medium and small, your ability to take action is small.”

Cup of blood

I hold a cup, trying to drink the blood coursing through it, but I just can’t bring myself to drink it.

On the grass

Suddenly, a farmer-like man grabs me on the grass and with a very serious expression kisses my ankles with his nose. “With your mouth,” I say, but he replies solemnly, “It must be with my nose.” He is the offender, after all, so I give up and leave it up to him, until something like rapture wells up in me and I shiver, at which point the man nods as if to say “yes,” in confirmation. He reminds me of someone, maybe the milkman.

Travel scene

I go on a trip, and take in the sight of a dead person’s bedding being slid one by one down the corridor of a tall tree and shoved down below. A strange resonance lingers in my ears. Later, there is nowhere for me to spend the night.
Eyelids peeled

From down the corridor a banker or a stage actor, a man I think I've seen before, approaches. I am thinking that his glowing smile means that he wants to touch me, when suddenly; standing there, the man peels back both my eyelids and checks me out. I grow cold to him after that and nothing happens.

Running posture

I am being chased and so I run, though the problem lies not in the fact that someone is chasing me, but in the posture in which I run away.
Rabbit

You be the fox and try to eat me. Find me hopping along in the snow and come chase me, with bloodshot eyes.

I'll run. So you chase me. I sometimes turn back, make sure you're still there, and hop, hop. My heart leaps. My ears perk. I'm happy. That you want me so. That you should be this devoted to chasing me.

My ears catch your footsteps, your pulse, your growl. I hear your heat rise, your sweat flying.

Don't you dare give up. Should the skin fall off your feet, or should you trip on a tree stump, get up and keep chasing me. Imagine how good my flesh tastes. Your first taste of prey in three days. My flesh is insanely delicious.

On a winter mountain.
Covered in snow.
We are hopelessly alone.
I run.

Chase me. You will probably catch me. I will cry as I laugh, laugh as I cry, as you eventually catch up with me. You will pounce on me. With warm paws. Rapid pulse. Pouring sweat. Your breath on my ear. I've been waiting, for this moment, since one thousand years ago.

You should bite hard into my neck. That's my weak spot. A flurry of white fur. Trickle of red blood. The snow is dirtied. The sky is near. I have rainbows in my eyes, I smile lightly, take my last breath.

You know I've been waiting, for this moment, all this time.
Mountain potato

My stomach felt tight and so I thought what if and when I tried giving birth I ended up with a human child a six or seven-year old boy no less, who comes up to my chest now I don’t mind bearing stuff I like but I do not like human children and so at a loss, I check him out, flip him around, peek in his mouth when I find that his legs poking out of his shorts are just like good mountain potatoes, of a nice shape and color sliced clean right at the ankle the cross-section a bit slimy just like mountain potato mountain potato is one of my favorites so I decide to wait and see

The child had trouble walking scooted forward slowly on smooth stainless surfaces, leaving a trail like a slug but he hurt pretty badly on sharp, pebbly surfaces I tried to buy him shoes but there were none that fit no shoes that fit a kid with nothing past the ankles I thought I should feed him, or rather, invited him to a restaurant you know I don’t eat, he replied coldly

This cold manner of speech sounds familiar oh yes an old lover, I realize and so then it follows that he must have been my child as well

If this kid eats anything he will die that much sooner which might mean we’d have to part ways again and so I walk on without holding his hand, keep turning back and turning back at him

The smooth path fades away like the tide the place is scattered with triangular rocks the child’s potatoes wear down no matter how careful I am each step leaves behind some ground potato, shining on a rock

The sight of which filled me with regret, and I touched him, through his shirt, thinking how wonderful if only he were potato all the way from the neck down but he felt sort of human-like and sort of potato-like and I just couldn’t quite tell
Career counseling

If you are aspiring to be a burglar you must first choose a master, just like with carpentry. Then you may go live with your master and begin your apprenticeship. You shall wake in the morning before everyone else, mop the floors before brushing your teeth, put on sandals and sweep, sprinkle water out front, walk the dog, and then chop greens in the kitchen. You have thirty seconds to eat, then it’s weeding the yard, running errands, cleaning the bath, repairing the television. Drill nails, sell books, hang shelves, cramp a leg.

After three years of living this way, it will finally be time for you to be taught a couple of things of substance. Vocalization, usage of tools, how to wash gloves, and much much more. Roughly once a week, if you’ve been a good kid, they might even take you out into the field.

The best thing, obviously, is to start training before your body is fully formed, so parents who are serious about having their children become burglars send them off to apprentice from kindergarten-age. The kids steadily learn their craft there, and then by the time they are your age have already become full-fledged burglars.

You folks who went glassy-eyed through your primary education, then high school with your mouth hanging open, all the way through to college – it looks like you went around the long way. Time for a little regret.

If you wish to become a burglar at this stage in life, your only hope is to join the Burglary Corporation. Because of its stability and promising future, and the fact that it is unaffected by economic tides, said corporation has become a very popular firm indeed. Long gone are those nothin’-better-to-do days where folks sighed, “Well I guess I’ll become a burglar,” “I can’t do much else but become a burglar” – it’s now a complete buyer’s market. All hopefuls will need letters of introduction or reprimandation...recommendation from their thesis advisors. Of course there are examinations and interviews. And aptitude tests, absolutely, oh yes.

New employees will undergo training, and then will receive a post in either Sales, Accounting, Projects, or Human Resources. Sales is popular because of the potential to eventually become independent, but of course not everyone can go into Sales you see. It is reserved for those with exceptional judgement, decisiveness, leadership, and swiftness. Transfers are possible, and individual requests are taken into consideration, so don’t be too
hasty in writing your resignation letter even if you get assigned to Human Resources.

Even if you are not recruited right out of college, there's still hope for you yet: we also accommodate mid-career employment. Please keep an eye on the classified section in the paper.

Now let me talk about benefits. As a recreational facility, the company owns a house by the ocean. The door is locked, so if you'd like to use the house just go ahead and break in. Of course you may go ahead and steal anything you wish, but most items of interest have already been taken. Because burglary tends to attract people with a variety of interests, there are many clubs for you to choose from, and plenty of activities — cultural clubs such as coin collecting, magic, model railroads, bottled ships, as well as physical activity clubs like jogging, boxing, and R/C cars.

The clubs that do fieldwork in residential neighborhoods are very popular. You can bet their annual retreat is going to take place overseas. We don't do work on this trip, but there are many exchange opportunities arranged with our colleagues abroad. Our friends over in Sydney, Dresden, and Florence are like brothers to us.

The company operates year-round, 24/7. We have a flex-time policy, and each department can discuss its own needs and you may report to work as necessary. Three working days a week, twenty-four working hours per week, your starting salary is a bit low, but by the age of thirty we guarantee you ten million.
Nenbutsu, very busy

When you get the urge to kill your husband you should just go ahead and do it rather than hold back. Repressing the urge to kill and the urge to pee are both very harmful to the female body. Just go ahead, go through with it.

The means of murder are actually quite simple. Bring over the pot of salt from the kitchen, and stuff your sleeping husband’s nostrils with salt. Then go get the miso, and stuff it in your sleeping husband’s mouth. Then go get the oil, and pour it into his right and left ears. To top it all off, pour vinegar all over his entire body, and then, so he doesn’t come back to life, smash in his head thoroughly with a cleaver. That’s it. Easy, right? He’ll go into convulsions and then head off to paradise.

Now if you do this to a whale, people from other countries will give you hell about how it’s cruel, you horrible person, etcetera etcetera, but when you do this to your own husband no one will bother you about it, so no need to worry, you may proceed in peace. But the dead husband you must dispose of. This is because when the alarm rings in the morning, the husband will get up out of habit, and go to work. People will have all sorts of fun ridiculing him, saying things like “Dude what’s up with your head?” “Looks like your wife gotcha, eh?” He will get no work done that day and everyone will hate him.

Now, back to the disposal issue. It is probably safest to avoid the mountains. A recent increase in illegal husband dumping has resulted in piles of husbands all over the place. The majority of these husbands are “non-combustible husbands,” so there is no good way to handle them. If they still have some use left they may be sent to get recycled, where they are free for the taking, though not a single person tries to take one home, much less even come down to take a look. All the while we have ever-increasing numbers of husbands, and the exasperated clerks have started forcing random husbands upon any passing cars. And this doesn’t get us anywhere.

On the other hand, there is more flexibility in the ocean. It is technically not permitted to toss husbands into the ocean, but really it is so very large and the security is loose, so it is a great aid to those in need. That said, however, if you toss him over a cliff, a great buzzer will ring and the person in charge will come rushing over. After they thoroughly wring your neck over it, they will force a couple of other people’s husbands on you as punishment.
So what should you do?

What is the artful way to dispose of a husband?

If you drive along the coast for a while, you will come across a rustic mom-and-pop candy shop with a very small lamp. There is a sign posted out front saying “Will Take Husbands,” and when you peek inside, a little old lady will be watching TV with her back to the entrance. If you speak to her, finding her to be kind-looking from behind, you will have made a terrible mistake. The only thing kind about this lady is her back. When you see her from the front you will find great avarice on her face; she will demand outrageous sums of money from the wives who come hoping to dump their husbands off. So be sure to drive right past this place, and keep going a little further.

Then you will come across a fleet of squid-fishing boats about to set out. Among the men who are bustling about, look for the woman everyone refers to as “Nenbutsu,” and ask her to take care of your husband. This woman will, far offshore after squid-fishing, submerge your husband skillfully, while chanting her own style of prayer. Perhaps it is the strength of this prayer, but no man, not even the very best swimmer, has ever made his way back.

With a large body and no hint of makeup, everyone thinks that Nenbutsu is a man. But she is really a woman and has even once been married. The husband, of course, is now at the ocean bottom. Her own unhappy marriage prompted her to come up with this enterprise. Word of mouth spread amongst the women, and nearly every night a wife arrives with her husband in the passenger seat. But this is not to say that Nenbutsu takes on every single job. If a malicious wife has killed a well-intentioned husband, no amount of bribery or sweet talk will make her budge.

Though not as steep as the fees charged by the candy-shop lady, the amount requested by Nenbutsu is by no means cheap. But it is absolutely forbidden to try to talk her down. If you show even the slightest inclination to try to do so, she will turn her back to you and saunter off. She prides herself in running the kind of business where one does not haggle. And there is no change of heart in a Nenbutsu who has once turned her back to you. You may beg and plead and throw yourself at her feet, offering to pay twice as much, but she will not concede. Nenbutsu lives all by herself in a small rented house by the ocean. All of her clothes are from her dead husband, and on her feet she always wears boots. Once a year she goes to the hair salon to have them take care of the little bit of gray in her hair. Of course she wears no jewelry of any kind, and she is certainly unlikely to go on vacation. Her daily bread is a frugal affair. And not a single friend to visit.

The neighborhood ladies always gossip about what she does with all that money.

Supporting some young man?

Her dead husband left behind huge debts, and she has trouble paying it back.
Not only debts, but an illicit child, and she’s paying child support. Well I hear she has aging parents in the countryside. No one knows the truth.

But everyone, in the corner of her heart, thinks that maybe, just maybe, she takes that cash and slips it into the husbands’ pockets before she sends them down. We secretly think she hands the entire sum of money to their husbands as they go, so that the spirits of these murdered husbands may safely cross the Rivers of the Underworld.
Snow

Hiromi Ito

As I follow with my eyes a dotted trail of footprints
I found that a rabbit had been killed
Continuing straight is the fox, I am told
Feet together pause feet together pause goes the rabbit
‘Feet together pause’ and ‘continuing straight’ intersected and
Had become ‘continuing straight’
There was no blood anywhere
‘Feet together pause’ didn’t even put up a fight
I am barefoot
I removed my shoes and removed my socks
It was all laid bare
You watch this
When I removed my shoes and socks
There was hair growing on my toes
I was bleeding between the toes
You watch this too
I write
You watch this too
I think I would like to show this to you
You write too
I watch this
A man with such beautiful handwriting
I think
What a beautiful
man, men, women
You finish writing and put it away
With no intention of showing it to me
You put on your shoes
And set out to cross the snowy field
I remain here
If ‘feet together pause’ in a snowy field
Is destined to get caught by ‘continuing straight’
This must be referring to a
Morning
Where the light spreads
Weather Patterns

Kyong-Mi Park

Evening

Knit diagonally. Get off the spoon. Crisp, grand celery. Chop fatback at a steady clip and walk on. Square of a green onion. Cloud-shape of a Russian dumpling and the shape of a hat and. Teeth and miso and gestures and. Go out front and give it inflection. Spring, as it ever is spring. The handle on the small pot clatters. These sandals have a fine patina. Standing in the bicycle space. The tough solid things sink. Water loosely seeps in. Spring, as it ever is spring. Oh, I’d like to hit my head on a tofu corner and die. (Would like to laugh.)

Even here twenty-three years have passed.
Always folding the evening in like this at the mouth of spring, that’s me.
I get this tofu after selecting it carefully.
I set my chopsticks in from the corner and bring it to my mouth.
As the rich taste of beans soaks into my tongue – how I wish I could give you some – my temples convey. Wish I could share this with her – but she’s no longer in this world – my heart tightens. My chopsticks quicken to the tofu, I clench my jaw. I chew the tofu and my teeth sound, like an idiot. A line of water is drawn to my ears, and I choke back my crying.
We’ll probably meet again.
The chest of the sky expands blue on the brink of night is drawn closer.
Let’s hitch our promises firmly to the Big Dipper.
Instrument

Because this instrument
started playing on its own
its strings go just a touch out of their way
for the brightness of the bright room
To strum is to grow internal
Fingertips gently touch my internal voice
My breath gathers pleats
and the sound enters softly
Will only that which is irreducible
to nothing
continue
Will it vaguely point out
gather up
My nails, and ears
Rhythm is not how it used to be
Rhythm is measured in a box
Rhythm measures my heart, just a touch

Smoothly
ducking the air
and even then her Chima, appearing to breathe
The hat says

The bouquet woman says yes, to me.
Me, no, I say.
No, and I shake my head shake my head shake my head bury my face in the bouquet and then because I am away too and then because I am possessed and then because I quietly worry about the grass around me and then I speak with a tree that is away and away and away and then the bouquet, as if laughing, spills and spills and spills a strand of magenta and the color and shape and stema and leaf and petal and calyx and core and yellow spill. The woman’s lips were slightly parted, I think. Did she see the red Russian journals. No, because there weren’t very many journals back then, and how can you say these and such things without even being a Russian person who lived over there in Russia. Rubakha, the hat says. Rubakha, the red and green and blue and white say. The black hat says. Turns stripey. Squares and triangles and circles and angles and. Tears travel along the horizon. Throw it all in and take a look. The hat spills. The hat with two mounds. Even pebbles have angles, and they’ll accumulate eventually. Red and green and blue and white and. The black says. The black hat says. Turns stripey.
And then.
I walked too. It’s been twenty-three years already. Perhaps looking for the well. Is the woman still waiting there. Watching over the direction of a gust of wind, does she strain her ears to a poem being read. Oh yes, I understand very well. Her hair gets in the way. Drawing up from the water in the sink, dripping, it sticks to the nape of her neck. The bags under her eyes do not go away. A glance is tossed into the distance, is indifferent to the near vicinity. Really she is overlapped with my self of twenty-something years later. I had no choice but to etch all my words upon my heart.
Is it Mariya, or Marina.
The name, accurately.
I hear Marsha, Marsha.
Mother walks. Heading towards the blue waters of the Ukraine, she turns back at us. She is the mother in my memory. Possibly my grandmother. Clutching the present moment this tightly, she travels freely through the half-opened door. She is indifferent to time.
I walked too. With the women. With mother and grandmother. And her mother and grandmother. And now, it is my lips that are slightly parted, as I stall outside the house. I turn back to the inside of the house as well. Clutching a little bit of the present moment.
Three Poems

Africa Wayne

talking
routes

of force
and more

an animal
emerges

physical
and prone

at times
dangerous

occasional
with thickness

varied in
a way

like some rules
holding
the world
is a serious
lesson
to listen
is a type
of waking
a winter
enclosed
in print
preserved
from weather
luxury and
hardship
strides or
certain
swimming
beds
ground
down
each reach
soft here
nearer
in a way
to reason
you wonder at the wonder
on a bridge without volume
of a train on a bridge and
the day that you’re facing
in the second that you feel it
through a crack near your neck
in a train full with pressure
on a bridge lacking volume
it’s clean air that’s been missing
from the train on its way
while a sign on a wall
lets you know that you’re dropping
in a tunnel under order
there’s a clip of the rhythm
as the train hits the dark
near a street named by numbers
so this light that you left
on the bridge without volume
is a light that you’ll live for
through the want of a window
from having been blue for charity

kari edwards
say it with sincerity, ('dear I am am water, this is your mask - watch for the incoming contrast regulating (the nonregulated) speaking parts. and sayth: praise praise, holy holy, praise praise, holy holy.')

awaken in the dream life which is a dream life - or something soon to come with the next... this is to say... "the wind wishes past economy higher than..." say it on schedule - in an hour - in X - defined by another need for cohesion - point blank minus or plus all substitutions (this includes for comfort, situations in a fixed flexible focus - infinity @ 38,000 -or - 42,000 and early formulation).
public: please
protect and preserve these new ///
gothically pointed dream explorers - these
systems in climax - these something between here
and memories carpeted landscapes (that remained
closed by multiple surface things and portable
things - renamed new and better w/ minute details
in the production of {which began to say it with
that that instructed so . . . })....
across the border, through the great dilapidation that disintegrates surface transgression, (only possible when mobilized by hooks), that bottoms in an even darker place.
the weather goes on forgotten in words without morse: homesick, war clouds and kitchen lighters. Once in position, stability strives for absolution on a shore littered with martyred wood, punished stones and carcass remnants from winter's decomposition. And yet somehow, as a step falls and some spark precedes the fall, each life & each thought to be glaring remnants that guide the great mariner's lost mind / or / school children in times of national disaster - begins to melt along with the background, as if laughter is lobotomized then labored away to a laboratory under lock and key only to be abandoned in Lazarus's languor - with a spark behind the eye - where flourishes words like migration - cease to say anything and becomes zero's down loaded mimic nightmare on a continuous repeat: 'water the feed dog brush your repeat after me.'
We watch as speed castrates the day’s adrenaline flow.

Each hyper minute wedge of human’s, tree decorations, and overlings...
from *Beauty Is the New Absurdity*

Jennifer Scappettone

Beauty

It's the new absurdity, supervisory unatone in urbane color as black literary seepage, Via Addolorata soldered to the sell. Something like ground pianos of afar buzzing stars your itinerant field remarks with uncounted annotations in the rain remembrance. You knew when you felt as buses arrive: with every death of a pope. That part of poverty. Every death in asterisks art a monument lean as old flame after beauty abruptly curious as a portrait bust, sealed to you as such. No longer hot alliance looses him who suffered gorgeous deliberation in the crowded recliner. Not wrong to criticize allows Jenny crossing the square of speckled doves.

Oscillant as an icon would this quartered console draw home of vacancy newfound having had to walk the park path parallel through tears and fog with the traffic pathetically correlative as ever motion

is
a film of your exotic life compared to Budapest together until an excuse to tell the waiter
He's a miscarried man

lean a sculpture of swan flank forever covered for now on every imperfect death takes you to task afresh yet it being swapped all over the place again as decadence embracing on the night train after a scare and a deal with the conductor you were never to agree upon the narrative again
Proposition as relation confined to open public spaces after The every day of interstitial rooms of rhythms tapped out on the recliner As exercise in dining now spectatorship pieces within a palace break-up Is supervisory somebody inevitably eating takeout at the scenic overlook somebody mourns an unsponsored prison isle is present mass palace overseen seepage pine (c.f. Basilica of Los Angeles whose esplanade Laura harvests for paste) exits of engagement unaccompanied pianos lyrics he never knew she sang intra-

rain as remembrance. You knew when the buses had finished your personal peace of poverty, 30 exactly too long gone ardor of a tram ticket never reached the baths nor nostalgia steam Machines as they are require your arrogance to get on & engage the ur edict no longer but second pure alliance crowding this black square with doves

Noah's window in the sponsored portico a many-quartered relief, striation reproducing rain's medieval having couples parallel as plans (fields empty) (for supper) of loving correspondence – as silver dove

is – exotic – an excuse – or just our being

now yet as after again –

85
of rhythm rooms
dining pieces within Is supervisory at the scenic mourning
mass Angeles her Laura through veils
of lyric ardor one saw his start to sing another song every chance she sang
had no hands
difference a birthday forgotten several the seven or the nine
the pope ripped she finished off personal peace long ardor of a tram
that baths nor steam piers are
Machines as longer shadows crowding this black square
reproducing rain’s medieval parallel
fields empty doves

or is it

gain –
Of the inundated dining mass Laura by vine stakes and Gigi in the dark square perfectly lit apart in carpentry as in some Giotto from butter fields of marriage the photo greens past this Bronx damn Of nonparticulars they hand us in who saw us happy off steam piers as on nitrus saw not the ringing shadows which endow such shared ardor of maquettes in other contexts of joy’s brave indications in pencil from this I have been aliased (“Artemis”) in petition war illocality of the exhausted parallel Of doves fleeing from the bank Of beauty is the new absurdity His pigeons well kept after having no owner they flew Father (“tiresome ‘or’!”) in that –
Five

Of the inundated “fox…and thrush” dining on fractions of our abatement
we who broke laurel becoming stakes at institutional doors had no hands

some day when buttery aplomb the horizontal projects shot the Bronx this
is human
to reconstruct damn an ocean dream who countervails as edge sucking
belonging in skirts gathered as they sank black to away with empty sail

or ocean in which you had again after my suicide generous as always
who consented to walk still beside one who apprehended her decay

it was against pencil us once
permanently approaching the spiny tide that cutting corners is

traced

He who turned around entry exits apocalypse rodent rigidity in the couch while orange
trawl floated

who unMidas marked our pigeons environed Farther

in in
Three Poems

Gustaf Sobin

Questions of Grammar: II

...even here, where you’d gotten the
rocks, finally, to rhyme,
rhetoric’s

still riddled. won’t close, include you in the
blown veils of some lost
ideation. part,
partial, partialized. would, if you
could, enter the conjugates: there, that

is, where every instance of
inter-relatedness lodged, once, in-

violable. wasn’t that, in fact, why you’d
threaded stars? tried to catch, in the
cicada’s

monodic stridulations, the
stray bars of some
arcane an-

nunciate? for only there: there, that is, in the
world that the
world left out, would the

nimbus, at
long last, wrap – adamant – about the naught.
Questions of Grammar: III

...was why, once, they’d brought them, those ear-shaped oyster shells: scattered them a-bout their expiatory altars. ‘hear,’ the shells must have sung, ‘hear us,’ im-plored. what, by the sheer urgency of such supplications, had kept the stars wobbling – misericordious – within their hard socketed stations.
The Goldbeaters

...I would rather be Echo, in love with what she hears.

for C.

...ours, autumn’s
deep
baroque golds: ours, ours alone, their
para-

digmatic decors (as much the
dense
overlapping foliage of
our voices as that of the leaves them-
selves).

*

would tease from her
tongue its
least
glistening particle, set its every
such fleck to the wefts of sequence: those long-
since-
dis-
mantled frequencies.

*
‘echo,’ pluck ‘echo,’ of all words, from so much proffered ore (as if, indeed, only the reverberative, in extremis, could assure such passage: oaks, either side, voluminous, about our each secreted whisper).

* 

wherein would tell: tell the world, if we could, to its own forgotten self. for the boughs beg telling. beg the least depleted syllables just as we,

begging our own, would beat light. beat shadow. down through the rattling foliage, bring, at last, our own breath-im-pacted bodies to a taut pummelled sheet.
Two Plus Two Makes Data

Trey Sager

The chorus is about to sing
Real words I always
Doubted the utility of
The archives of the mind
Weaving & raining & any
Use for this joined in &
Sang through a glass darkly.

*

The theory man in the face of
The image may hide in his
Perfect doubt & he shall seek
The beloved & find information
Then run for his inaccurate life
From fascists of velocity & men
Of the north mental pictures.

*

The approximate mouth
Disbanded intelligence
In full voice transparency,
An electro omega to-
Morrow suffered by daybirds
& horses torn to shreds.
The human face with fear
Worked in confidence of
Radiation – its waitress
Entertains her symptoms
Like monkeys eating layer cake.
This old gray head escape,
I see your thoughts
Mistook funds for prose –
Win if you must – think highly
Of the lord channel merchant,
His surface green illusions.
You won’t shoot us all.

*

A solitary radar warmth
Entering the cave artist.
A regular grade milkflower
Not of one mind acquired.

*

There exist standards in the face of temptation,
A one dollar area over five minutes a show
But also the chemical roses at depths of ten feet
Which mind the highway-babbled white whale
Spectators respect. Survivors find a bullet
To change expression, but the moral varnish
Corresponds to solutions of elephant dictators.
If she can be alive, the film will mix English
With Greek in x-rays of chameleon indecision,
A visible image like 185 km of wonder.

*

The average man splits into products –
One mind the god of data unopened, & two
A ten dollar forest of lightning.
Doubt stripes his castle of theory with a mist
Part debutante, part inconclusive scar.
Attention cheek-to-cheek with opacity,
These concepts of water crash into ice.
There is only oceanic nothing, & further.
To offer his radioactive wife
The beautiful multi-infection inflicted with alpha transparency
The president man gave up love to control the decay of attention,
Parallel to these deaf hundreds
Broken as glass horses.

*

We bought this mind in non-Euclidean history
& the human voice in a microwave age –
A silent room in the active space.

*

And it pleases you to move
The human arm with carelessness
In the garden of satellites
The face of one mind scanning
The rich, the beautiful
In the heart & in the head.
from *Quadriga*

≡ *E. Tracy Grinnell & Paul Foster Johnson*

but such were postures

before misregistered self-portraits – in ruff, with dobro, peering through lorgnette, as bouncer, tinkerer, barbarian

noose, elocutionist, draftee

who hid beneath the crinolines

in such numbers to drive the painters away

no reflection to speak of, but semi-permanence

in the stare, half-hidden

in waves

such were amphibious hybrids

outlasting our own images
only certain palms admit their shade, in which anthologists, doglike, cool themselves

and suffer in agora
for an afternoon
of prone
satisfaction

though dampened by hope and prohibition
my memory is what we study
in a quiet crowd

while my hair fries
the day splits
with portent
paused in the doorframe
all stamina
leached out

and unworthy to the point of confession, I knelt by
each pool for a word, an impossible romance
upon reflection
the air restrains Christian radio so neutrally!

all else being equal
the sermon on the front porch better heard in silence

better weathered than revolted, an audience
of dandy interpreters for the performer

of no definitions
only aliens
who from years of freight
resemble bilbies
this disended evening

there is no grandeur left but such delusions as this

haunt of a system
in constant furtive movement
distorting our migrations
slow as seaweed

or the Black Sea’s composition
that nothing survives
save artifacts
save each blank face for the trained logician
calling out numbers for the portrait painter

each ringed by graffiti
and categories form from intoxicated horseplay—

impediment, antimatter, hangars of plenty

the flora for facsimile, each glass a toast to the scrawl—

the airwaves to carry home each fighterpilot-god
cowering alone in the vibrating desert
of devotees

the civic guilt
I had previously contacted blind, always enamored of those
who skip ahead, rub out the places I might pause

awake, unarmed, but strung-out

before all predators and saboteurs fall in step behind
the drum, or fall together in the shadow of the quadriga
from *The Scented Fox*

Laynie Browne

from *Tales in Miniature*

12

rue
daunt
twine

13

stallion
broken
ribbon

14

wintry
purse
dew

15

braid
cliff
axe

16

oarsman
leaf
queen
17

purpled
snarl
lilt

18

wince
sap
cloak
from Festoon Dictionary

farewell: white fields and gray
purling: a copper horse
vexed: raked with shadows
will: swordfern
driven: false tracks
ogress: brow of the wood
vanquished: swallows at the bottom of a lake
cold: a beard falling over the chest
wish: cloth hung from tree
belonging: promontories which keep one from walking
greenwood: distant saber
thyme: optical sachet
maim: to shred flame
howl: coaxed underling
blind: hidden armor
tangled: dubious trawls
tine: dart chamber
unguents: painted eyes of family portraits
head-dress: doves which sleep

hunter: hedgehog in bramble

prowl: past the road that led to the house

pincushion: deceived girl

milk teeth: spun sugar

ornaments: an owl in a holly tree

supple: a gray mare

to lodge: evening porridge

thistle-seed: falsifiable

keen: plum bun

gravity: a bird’s nest

ardent: ‘a’ was an archer, and shot at the fog

loggia: out of everywhere

locket: handwritten fossil

hansom: forehead smooth and high

lowbrow: from the same box as cherubs’ wings

venom: scanty covers

beauty: the science of correct or reliable reasoning

silvering: torch over water

vouchsafed: mirror broken

topside: intertidal mud flats

collapse: secreting, or resembling serum
methodology: huntress’s nights
pifflé: guided by natural law
cuff: vertebrate landfall
benign: alligators’ lack
witless: bony fishes
chimera: unlit by star
pillory: winglike pectoral fins
bon mot: a curved wooden club
bonnet: on or near a border
boot black: a rocket used as principal thrust
epaulet: overseas lobule
envoy: a small burrowing
Still the invisible attends to you. Weathered ink or an ostinato moves. As in the form of feelings—pressed by the weight of a hand. A coarse voice.

beetles
persist against the glass
Retained is a certain battle. Tonight snow poised at an edge ready to spiral—you lift—again against it—an inaudible conflict. Limbs gathering speed and exhausted. Looking for an invisible pulley.

even dreaming
you feel the weight of your body

a long time in the snow
Orange-green light—an entrance through—her figure dispersed over beads of water.

awash
reflections
Dream: of birds or histories of winter. Beneath each word is a word unseen. As with each cell an infinity—in a projected self.
This pull. From the retreat. From the fragments of days or even hours. A labyrinth of noise and its opposite. When conversations rise and drop away. Perpetual maneuvers—a musicality of fields. Over the passage and absence—with nothing to say.

a lull of margins
from *Quotidian*

*John Sakkis*

Poverty, too, in there was a rock
(isle)
though it was separated,
though one was
more populated than the other,
and some are / saved / by the commitment.

– of rest

nowhere
that movement
reasonable
in
crucified
rest –

Split, and unavoidable with non-commitment,
this being
the-sound-of-present-body-split.

**HEARD**

“And what was most
interesting was the utter
lack of shame in this, it was though
these people (bar, bar, bar) were
entirely devoid of reason/faith.”

“she said, ‘while my limbs
then lay like wood or paper
which has fallen from a great
height, my sight looked back’”
and again – a white
   tree that became
reflected as a white tree
in brown water –
It has been noted that
this rock
(isle)
was a jagged one,
this somnolent [this the wrong word]
jutting apart,

she wasn’t saying “come shadow come,”
 [this is refrain]

she was crooning
’sweet lovely Lazarus
who must die twice’
 [this is refrain]

(she tried to put the fig back on the tree, – genuflected – so, she
couldn’t see
the awkwardness of this)

This at no rate,
no soil, this little
better things.
His watch-band would
tug at his hair, his wrist
was covered, below,
and his watch made
him check his wrist,
there were hairs, “in the absolute smallness,” he said.

this tugging makes his watch work.

(meanwhile)
    things would go away.

this is called
“walking down the street”
in that utterance, that continuation.

(meanwhile)
    he gave her a heart,
    was scrawled in between
the blackboard into
what was scrawled, the
    tethered bone, he called it
    “an arrow.”
(meanwhile)
it’s stopped with,
she thought, a puss hardening,
she thought,
where it entered are
purple scabs, they were
without picking, those layers.

this is called;

    content which is shared, that there would be that much in
    common.
Two Poems

Dawn Michelle Baude

"SEC. 501. (a) (1)
The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations or a designee of the Director (whose rank shall be no lower than Assistant Special Agent in Charge) may make an application for an order requiring the production of tangible things...."
H.R. 3162

They want tangible things.
They’re after our tangible things.
All our tangible things are
and
and even

Put your
Hide your

those stamps that permanent ink the letters letters letters received, the notes fly from the screen, cower among the circuits whisper their tangible words, exchange tangible ideas, emit tangible hopes, such tiny tangible hopes in such a big, big machine

There are tangible things in your pubic hair

among the forks knives spoons
high school yearbook
tucked between cushions
the hem of the curtains

plans to wire your dreams
in the factual quiddity,  
imperfectly known  
our sensuality shaped  
I am tangibly emotional  
edgy, touchy  
bottle window corn  
epistemology spills  
over the poem, awash  
in the production of things  
the thinginess of things

My rock and shell collection
My scarves and blue glass

Are they looking, too, for that?

Or the bumper sticker from Berkeley
"Support local Arab-American Communities"

twice pulled over on the highway  
between O'Hare and the Loop

Is this evidence of collusion with foreign powers?  
Is evidence collusion? is power?  
What is the nature of the evidence?  
A note? A stray note? A note upon the margin?

Weighing, measuring, dating, initial calculations analytical create  
a legal inventory of tangible.things.

Enter your apartment (this is secret)
The cat. Very tangible, the cat.

small sandstone chip from Meroë
still tangible after all these years

Syrian bedspread, Powells Books receipt, and beneath the bathroom sink

the proof of things
thought about
evince mind
as if tangible
consciousness
thinged by
consciousness
your ideas
thingy you

what.they.
want.

production.
of.tangible.

unthinkable.

things.they.
want.what.

away.
"I'm a stronger patriot than you," she says.
"I've put a flag in my yard."

And because the flag is a symbol
because red for blood, white for eyes, blue sky
or is it red for sex, white sheets, blue for ink, bruises

lies

The stripes stripped of meaning
Bandages in the breeze

And if the flag is a skirt
And if the flag is a bed
And if the flag is painted upon the barn door
    crucified on the cross, taped to the window
    faded in the sun

Sold as a swimming suit, a lunch pail
    sweatshirt, magnet, a pen

A Cartier jewel, the stars so bright they blind
    dazzling stars, photographed, exquisitely clean
    the points puncture the balloons, the film, skin

    something seeps through
        sticky

And here and here

    and here here here here here
Here is the flag covered with hearts
Here the drape of the dead
Here father mother those before
  all our sons and daughters

  pride mistakes communion

  flag upon my tongue

I pledge American

in act, of constitution

the opposition

flagged

(an opinion)

flag

the invisible side of the moon

name

in the name of

claim

the proof of

waves

among us

  sh –

Let the flag hang
From every cedar, mountain, and volcanic lake
From shop, mall and stadium, from the façade of institution
On every crane
For this is the work of our building

Erect it high upon column and pole
Erect it throughout the neighborhood, city and town

That which never touches the ground
Never knows known ground

And when the wind

still there

our flag stills

there

flaccid, limp
from Counter Daemons – WYSIWYG

≡ Bob Harrison

[rung words for mouths]

i dive into water that peels off the salt of your errors
in the ocean of trouble
in the younger years of your tinny response

i pounce in the rain of your lover’s betrayal
in the nothing that welters
in the surface that folds into time

i crash
i restore
i refuse with the past of a sliver

with the yellow that opens
with a crack in the ass of the proper
with a hunting that starves
with the red slab of lead
in the hat that you promise to wear

i forget all the people
i forget all the feeble attempts
that i made with a leper

* There are a few computer science ideas that form part of the basis of Counter Daemons. First, the poem in its entirety is divided into 3 parts – WYSIWYG, 4D, and Oracle. The following 2 sections are from Counter Daemons – WYSIWYG. Letters such as i,j,k,a,b,c,m,n,s,y and z are commonly used by novice computer programmers as variables, especially as “counter variables,” hence, and for other reasons, the “i.” Counter variables are used by computer programmers to count how many times a program has gone through a processing loop. Loops are a common notion in computer programming, as well as being a variation on a circle, something I use often in my work. Counting, in this case, also obliquely refers to the North American Plains Indian notion of “counting coup,” which values touching an enemy over killing them in the midst of battle. In computer jargon, a “daemon” is a program that works for the operating system, instead of for the user. Some other programming terminology and ideas made their way into this project, though they are usually used in an ambiguous or polysemous way, and do not require the reader to know much about computers. Many of the computer terms in this work are used in the database query language known as SQL, or are used as common word processing terms, or can be found in the relational database language known as 4th Dimension.
the pause that adorns with cremation
the fool that i spill

with a never
with gases
with the gold of your shriveling Texas

i adorn
i vacate
i am found

by the troubling planter
in the mother board of the lost
in the meeting that rakes
all the dead leaves for fall
every twig that rebuilds
every picture that shows
you will cry
for the bars in the cells
of your power
for the rain in your faces,

a rose petal follows
the scarring inside.

i destroy
i am bound
i resource

i decide that the birds have no mother
i crack eggs for the ones with no other
in the nest of relays
in the green that the clouds fill with powder
a powder of blackness
cold sweat in the empire of switches

i propel
i flaw
i resume

i breathe
i blind
i target
i ocean the tide
for the arabs that swim through the map
for their camps in a lover
for the long road that ends
for the network
that spills out your dead

i walk on old letters to farmers
in Tleta Ketama
in the mountains of Atlas
and borrow their goats
for more guns. it was here
that i left all my friends
to gather the hooks in the whales
of our caves
for the taxis to chase us again
by police in the hole
that the words i put out
were collected to space
all the Spanish in swords
that they wore. i put razors
by deals that we made
in the smoke
in the spittle that makes
for the crippled, in the buses
that roll down the sides
of the mountains, in the promise
to bring you more helpers
more letters of sickness
& snipers
to fill up the void

with the shots of a cobra’s two fangs
through the nets
of a Portuguese cross

arms wide open
for walkers, the staff
and the zoo of your polis
for shiny white mosques
that the breast
has no sketch for
in prayers for the end
of american cash.
i float turds for the dollar
for the coinage that rattles
for the bills that the lame
of the end
trample on. i pit sides
to the opening slip
of the weaker instead
in the batteries under the bed
for piss

i wake crabs
for the flesh that is dead

the flesh of your freedom
the flesh of the cancer in lovers
the flesh of your prisons
the flesh of your faces, filled up

with addresses
with your constitutional rigs
i call down the green courts
of anaesthetized doubles
the parallel sickness of beds

in the sleep of your righteous incisions
in the waking of shameful reports
in the vision that pulls all your limbs

for the fireplace of the torn
all the wraps that you hide with are gone
all the traps are set off
every bible you thump is like wiping
the sills of fake windows
you open, letting the air
of the holy embalm you
you robber

in the evil that makes you a question
in the opening over your face
in the host of the daemon
in the process that gives you a name

the wrong server
the promise that chips at your wings
the speed of the answer of ships
on the foam of your steps

i put holes
i put leather like climates
i put out a feeler for Fez

i borrow the timepiece of Babylon
the eclipse of the no longer dead
i shrug with no pain
as the martyrs that color the set
with old cameras
send their youth through the guns of the tanks

to hold soldiers of mercy
to read lies in the toilet
to give thanks to invaders that bled
and will take

more than hunger
more than death
more than weather

in the pilfering beauty
of heads in the pickle jars full of the limbs
of the pioneer sleigh bells
on the christmas that others forget

the end of beginnings
the beginning of restart
the hopeless detail

of 4 firing stars
that turn every organ
of the possible sons of new blood

new blood of the feather
new blood of the lizard
new blood of the iron in the sand

where southerners bury themselves in the mist of relief
where northerners end with thick snow on their heads
where easterners drown in a sea of cheap sales
where westerners surf and return to the sand
in your country of kills
in your place
filled up with the tides
of the watering lakes
of the infant at war
with flint points
of the dithering pledge
that the free will not hear
that the slaves of your wealth
will finally fire
to awaken the child
of the red and the white
building cells
for the crumbs
that give speeches
for truth, the rephrase
of the dead
of the storm
of the signal that piles
all the ones
of your separate word
for the rapist to seed
all the mines
to the hand that won’t say
to the cities that chill under glass
to the strips that impregnate the runts
for the popular song of the prop

i flee every radio wave
from the start
to the last empty room
of your wake

for any remorse
that the soldiers in happy returns
become mute at the sight
for anyone now
the sight of your gifts
the end of your drift
the beacons of states by the door
that abort with the light
and bury the buildings
of commerce —
    3 voids
full of fast drilling flights
i drown in a sea of omission
i force out the letters that ply through the ends of snow storms
i make a fireplace for stitches
i carve the remains of your fleet on your bone lining lips

i fuse
i report
i handle the rest
i am one with the cell of your ashes

i no longer feel any draft

in the roads of a mother that barks
in the circus of trust
in the battering ram of the poor
in the reasonable lava of newer volcanoes

i paint with the leaves of chameleons
i draw tomahawks in the sky for your cabins
i reel in the sharks of your teeth
i return to a field of no weather

no wind
no fins for the bottom
no opening staff
no reptiles to make all your scales in the cavern

in the country of forcing the tow in the water
in the rocket of backward replies
in the space tunnel stretched with no guide
in the pocket of cyclones
in the shrapnel aimed right for your eye

i hold planets
i unzip every landscape
i defer until someone pulls spanish

129
for the empty return of a trash can  
for unknowable stands  

the stand of no secrets  
the tower of intrusion  
the spot of your mummers  

i escape from the tomb i designed  
i resurface the wings of your tangle  
i defuse every market that rhymes  

in the cost a flower  
in the most of your sour intentions  
in the impossible hanging repair of your tribe  

i listen  
i read  
i defuse  

i roll barrels out of your stalls  
i crack all the lamps of your tunnels  
i deform every message that climbs  

climbing the rest of the soldiers  
climbing the open reply  
climbing the light of the weather  
climbing the fishes that slide  

through the open return of your prisons  
through the cannibal lessons of love  
through the tears of a serpent  

i flower the hands of no skin  
i flower the torture of water  
i flower the empty returns  

of the island  
of letters  
of animal skins in the shower  

i walk with the killers  
i sand the creator  
i smooth the red of the devil  
i number the raindrops tonight
in the patches of lipstick
in the noise of the pollen
in the criminal freedom of suns

i stroke leather
i plastic the weather of time
i turn signals to words for the eyes

for the swimmer, the axe, and the cover

i fume riots that open inside

in the copter that sees what you ride
in the punishment fit for a tin
the face has no father
no federal statute
no semblance of other's demise

i detect
i unbalance
i split into 5 groups and hide

from the armies of blankets
that sleep with a rudder
with speed that no other describes
in the thief of a word
in the salvaging plant of the marsh
in the cattails that field
every firefly
that lights in flat skies

for the plane of a spark
for the stain of a pope
for the white that glows when deprived

the numeral counts
the poison reveals
the stings of a murmuring clock

i project
i loop
i recount
for the claws of an empty red line
for the call of a rodent
for the shivering sickness
that dots every land with a speck

the speck of no answer
the speck of each skin
the speck of a mammal that harbors

every code that delays
every code that improves with a rack
every code that reveals its real name

the name of the land of the circle
the circle of ocean cut hands
the hands of the corpses that grow

in the fields of despair
in the cities of sleepy refrains
in the circling tide of the rain

i sport colors
i plant words
i recover from slugs

the slugs of my tunnel
the slugs of each other
the slugs of no blanket to burn
Two Poems

Sarah Rosenthal

sonnet

had murder blighted
my kin (cowering victim), had
we rolled
to sea level (horse and wagon),
had we sweated
under layers
(mercury collects),
had the past
been swallowed (throat lump),

silence with pinholes (prickle).
solo (oboe).
Afield

Terror translates into more terror. I can't move in any direction. At dawn I wake to the glow of the computer screen. Contaminated during sleep by multinationals. Mother fumbling outside my door, wishing I’d get up. I do a dead dog imitation. It works, I fall asleep. I’m wandering through a field, sellers offer tastes of cabernet, gewürtz, lemon/chocolate cookies. They’d withhold if I were homeless, but they sense I have one toe in the economy....

I’ve left the vendors behind, stumbled further afield. I’ve got the parachute pack all hoisted up but I want out of this. My write brother pretends he doesn’t hear me. He of the evil pencil mustache. He’s tired of my complaints. If I don’t go through with this, leave the ground, leave him alone, he’ll kill me....

He attacked me. I dreamed my way out of the battle. It felt a little fake, slitting his wrist with the razor he’d produced, but I did succeed on a technical level – he’s dead, and I’m here.
It is later labeled drift, but we feel the centrifugal force of it. A tectonic wish fulfillment, maybe; the fissures contain the satisfaction of throwing a puzzle at the wall. Oceans creep in.

What lies between: a monogram, an instep, a dirty stocking in Berlin? Puzzling equations. For example, you were learning French, while I was busy trying to forget it. We study the shifty blue hearts of flames, the shifting blue borders of our allegiances. You in Prussia, mapping your terra incognita with a hoe and compass, planting posts; plotting coordinates of discontinuity.

Charting courses, dodging icebergs, or we are taking in and passing water like an aquifer. Let’s become amphibious, I say. You say: this language will get us nowhere.

She walks the perimeter with a dousing rod and compass, detecting instabilities, possibilities, predicts a sinkhole behind the house.

In a three-wheeled cart she slakes desire, cartographically; consumes an atlas, maps boundaries between which the earth’s foundries are sealing cracks. Assembling forgeries.

The earth cracks with lack of rain. She peers inside at blue flames, but will not be swallowed today.

What lies between: a Prussian beet farm and itself? They call it steppe, or, this topography of no relief.

A drought. Throughout Bororwihlas the peasants are on their rooftops, tearing off thatch to feed the livestock. They’ll replace it with something less permeable.
Still: she is made of drifting plates. She is no longer allowed to wash the dishes because she tends to let every third fall and break. She pieces them back together in relief maps. Patterns interrupted, she can finally read them.

She has thrown away her needles and the mice are making progress, busily gnawing through her threads. They are gnawing through the third leg of her three-legged stool. She is beginning to list, to drift into uncharted waters; Pangaea *redivivus*, she redistributes the weight of a globe.

The glue only holds so long; the plate maps crumble over time, fall into pieces, archipelagos.

Where is the rent? demands Doris Wingender. Doris is a seamstress.

Stockings steam before the fire, shed skins, perforated, her skin is full of rents and holes that grow by the day. Sometimes her foot rips straight through and leaves the torn skins flapping at her ankles.

She staggers through the streets like Charlie Chaplin, flayed bits of her waving like adjectives and misplaced punctuation.

Doris is glowering from the top of the stairs. The fire’s glow casts shadows on her face, but this, too, is just a trick of flames. Doris casts no shadows; she inhabits herself like a point.

Here, the blue hearts of flames like blowtorches or the entropic potential of a munitions factory. She holds a grenade in her hand, like Atlas, a globe.

She is holding up the assembly line, but through the smoke and sparks the other workers can’t see what she’s revealing.

She is Pangaea; she’ll smash this globe like a plate against the wall.
Here, at the center of the earth, the heat and magma make her giddy. *Magna est veritas*. She tips her hand, the globe falls and her neighbor explodes in protest. He drips from the ceiling, bits of flesh cling to her face.

She’s also taught herself a bit of Latin.

6

Where is my sister?, Felix wants to know, and heads off with a stringy, starving dog. He finds Franziska, ear to the ground. This piece of earth will heave and wind up elsewhere; she’s never felt more at home than at the center of this subduction zone.

Of this purgatory: she’s been consuming an atlas, whose definitions she can’t digest. She eats dirt by the handful, chokes down soil, rubies, tropical meridians and boardwalks of Yalta. She once savored them like glue.

And she is digging, digging mines at their feet. This is shaky ground. Felix returns to tilling beets and leaves his sister to her undoing. To her purgation: or a pyroclastic wish fulfillment. She vomits earth, parallels, cheap paper borders and expectations steeped in beet juice like blood.

The stringy dog lies down to die beside her and their skin and hair become caked with dust. They cover their heads and wait to be swallowed.

7

We are moving forward in metes and bounds. In cadastral surveys of consciousness, we read our beginnings and endings, but plumb what lies between.

She lies in bed reading maps. Shaky fingers tracing borders, plotting coordinates of neither nor or boundaries between: Poland, Russia, Germany, a farm, a factory, a western front of uniforms and empires like aquifers, in pigeon holes or dialects of accretion and self-ablation. Bloodlines, *belles lettres*. An impossible dialectic. They used to say she put on airs, but she longed for layers, like petticoats of what else.

She inhabits her bed like a black hole, performing her last right, lengthening ceiling shadows in blue flames. Her last intention. She stays in bed withholding intention and omissions that collapse like holes in sand. The earthquakes contain themselves in points; there’ll be no reverberations like onetime waves of lovers. She once used them for glue.
She once imagined bridges and last chance migrations, revisions. But she’s thrown away her flimsy needles; Pangaea is coming apart at the seams. Oceans creep in.

A foggy night of Berlin. Franziska walks the outskirts with a dousing rod and compass, burning bridges, her bootlaces flapping like lips of hooked flounder. On a bridge on the canal she stops to pull her shawl over her head and in the lamplight the water below ripples like blue hearts of flames.

Crouching on the wall, she’s at the equator, and below, the flames between desire and what was never meant. She releases the dousing rod, watches as it’s swallowed by the canal. Her element, her solution.

And leaning forward, she’s now taking in and passing water like an aquifer. Her last rite or wish fulfillment.

She’ll be an anemone, inhabit undercurrents. Her eyes are opaque blue marbles.
Things Which the Moon Cannot Account for
Nor Their Weird Astronomies

And while that goodnight kiss, a writhing ghost among
the dunes, sunk down down deep bamboozles, shies and shifts
we plant our wilting footprints where they once pressed fingertips.

Older than anything opal and unbound by noon.
Occasional Empires

That night I saw another only pointing to the rise so then slipped under airily seized unshaken regardless of nomen or number – like unto though unwittingly.

Dust fire quarks in human stone your numbers near to untouched flues through places where even the oceans won’t low – purposeless outwrests of tumbling.

Sleep-muted swans in mid-tableaux. Unriddling perks – the spider the stone, the funnel, the lip of the cellophane kilt – unwitting outcrests of moth-going.

Here, we’ve only the tiniest fires, reams drawn out by midget tongs like unto verdant or dust-trap reminders, unworded houses of stone.

Such are our heights – downshells, not words, a sun-going softness buttering eyes while wayward we thump bright duplex rows of white-winded moments or outspeaking uploads.

I hesitate to enter where the whipit is so small, unwitting captures so readily quailed where spurious remnants cede their dew. In the lightening pale which this subtends the smallest of ruptures does not even clue.

Unwitting captures so readily quailed, their numbers wispo hued meanwhile conductor clouds concede rejected landscapes sway off cue and launch the beamer into sighs despite occasions for unraveling.

Amid the greater gathering another trispic spun – such cheeky reminders, seen and not clued, your numbers are near to awakening spidery looks like unto, like unto.
Zero Alley

Where are we going? Answer me, you can’t answer, no one answers. This distant close place, you reach out and it floats off like a balloon pushed by the air current of your hand. There will be a time that you, with grizzled hair, reach the end of a prolonged journey, and stand exhausted in the place you sought. Only then, you glance across a small gully. Looking back at you from the sun-chasing hillside: childhood.

Now, we ride down this sepulchral alley. In daylight it pulls back from a close-up, camera lens dodging in and out, probing forward forward forward along the alley. Through tree branches I see flocks of people rising and falling, flapping their wings and soaring across the square screen, flying down fate’s narrow alley. At night, lemon-yellow lamplight twitches like a gecko’s tail on a wall.

Walking along, the wall intrudes, icy and smooth — empty, your heart in your throat. By your body gapes a black hole, sucking out all reaction. Bleak lamplight when you pass by; shadows shiver. In front of you spills an illusion: lofty storied building, glass windows, each winking with candles... Along the road spurt fountains, water columns interweaving, droplets soaring through city air, across flower bushes like herds of green buffalo... Hazy, someone near the wall slides toward you, buzzes beyond your body. Funhouse mirrors, loneliness and terror, this strange, new alley!

We ride onward, ever onward, toward our unknown destination. Feelings like projection slides are inserted into my brain and one by one are pulled out again. We throb from head to heel, exhausted; our heads crack open and by adhesive plaster are pasted together again. Minutes bore like drill bits into my skull, the road hisses below us. When the last slide is pulled out, only lemon lamplight on the screen of my skull. Lamplight, yellow lamplight. Motionless. Blank space.

In Zero Alley we turn a corner, realize: if we want to reach our goal, we must return along this wall — a wall between; on either side, Zero Alley. No way to surmount the stones. Perhaps our destination is across the stones, but we must complete this serpentine journey. Wall... Journey... We ride forward. Piss-colored lamplight splashes against the projection screen of my mind. All around a kind of constipation, restless anxiety. But this eases to
dense softness, then from everywhere gushes past. It blocks eyes and nostrils, suffocates all exposed cavities. This transparent sticky thing binds you close, constricts you, plunges you under each time you struggle to rise into free space. Liquid seals off all trains of thought. Yellow lamplight unceasingly flickers.


Sun splits open. Human bodies in lamplight drift outward like moths.
Perhaps, I had no way to approach you. You are part of ocean and sky, you are petal scent, you are wind combed by tree branches. I, at a distance, trace you with reaching eyes. Gazing into my mind I see a translucent, revolving gas. A bird, piercing air, piercing dense virgin forest, flies through, fades away, but changes all we know! Breaking waves wet a child’s feet; he shrieks as he runs off. Your silent vision sprays my heart; I stand stupefied, two feet tree-stumped in earth, immobile, prolonged century a drawn note submerging my body.

Tell me, only tell me. And what of the free will of clouds? In the forest small bells blossom – what wind brushes their bodies, striking a fine timbre? Is it dawn’s trumpeting steps or twilight’s whispering slither? Only tell me, what hand guides rivers to the sea? Or does the ocean lure? Tell me, soul, along what kind of road do you enter this body? And the fruit this flesh left behind on that remote island? What kind of gondolier ferried them across? How did they reach that gentle kingdom? Tell me, only tell me! You are part of ocean and sky, another world!

At you, at that drizzly sky that brought you to us, like me, sorrowfully, at all thoughts and things... You didn’t respond. You didn’t answer me. You turned your body and slowly walked into distance.

A twinkling of an eye pierces my body.

I stood there, a long and narrow century twining around me. Your quiet stare stops to rest on my palm.
Three Poems

John Keene

Color

To resort to other expressive methods, other ways of deriving the called thing, drawing. Without you. Through color the key, the eyes the harmonies, the soul palette with its innumerable stirrings. Can it be trapped as a figure, the perceptual color. Is it clear where the color space lies, where string and range begin. Without you, whether the fingers that play are representable, the fingers that say: artist. One layer beside another, differentiable, where tendency is evident, one key or another, the graphic that enfolds, withholds. From closing to stitching. Vibrations as color. Touching drawing. Compact or not compact, call things soul, represent them as differentiable. Where it is clearest is lyrical, where it passes through itself as connections, figures mass. Without you, the other ways, through methods tying the spectrum to what stays, what plays beneath the other layers, untying the last one. Without keys or harmonies. And where it would it be, without you?
Prisms

attack motion
less mathematical than lyric

Richter echo

breathing thinking

emotional event in mark

effort notation

emanating splendor

through nail or eye

iconographic force

pictorial storms

catching scribble

x-raying concept

private ghosts dialogue

shear interiors

exploratory forums

constellation sharing

ideational response

communicating mind as line
(Do you hear me?)
the act: not merely to fulfill its beauty (do I hear it?)
hands with pencils close in,
noting onset,
summer twilight settling
on its transparent courses
stone delight flowing concept
like laughter, fear and cataracts
netted and caught:
whose magma scorches
and replays our conceiving
seeing, feeling
(Motive hand, closer)
into interior discourse
where ego nests, where desire passes
and embarks on rivers of
absence and its colors –
desire shapes and their negatives
eddy in forms
detail storms the ear and retina
(You project me -- you growing already
in the neural grid
to arrest on paper,
guide through ink and graphite
past surface
I project you, this strangeness, ecstasy
bleeding into the black reflection: identity
do you hear it, does it hear you?
(its auratic web thrums but doesn’t come undone)
drawing is surfacing
through a different plane
Viv’s vague à l’âme

Chris Tysh

For every melancholy absence of the real
I substitute
    seedy simulacrum clatch of malcontents

    blowing smoke up their ass
    “tada!”

switch words

    on her dance card
    in that faint

    thin-blooded scrawl

the muezzin dawn has a fondness for
    you will have recognized beat up
    motorcycle jacket black slip she

wears as if in a dream matrix
    here a hint
    of softness in the straw

pulls back what one’s allowed
to see: cleavage’s

    pharmakon word
    (cure and poison)

    on the rim
the very form of writing
made flesh
wire bed cotton

batting
lodged under false pretence
I teeter

then play a movement
passionara – scorch of gas and face masks –
“Silence! On tourne”

hoisted so one may ring the change
or fall back on ropes’ default status
the future anterior of the wounded world

further press into the body
of work
– entrenched idea

like a thick wallet or factory building –
red and black filaments
upon water cannons
bloody lineations on white sheets
Who said “I will not mix contexts?”
the feeling that

evidentiary status of war
continues
to sweep the room

like spilled hooch
“I have a leg
in the cooler”

this tête du fémur
conceals a migratory story
from Barbie foot to juvie hall

as if sleepwalking, women
return to the bar
involuntary angels

each deposition irresistible keystrokes
tell nothing but
long spokes
(of flesh) in the crosshairs
from *Ash*

♫ David Pavelich

*For Stacy Szymaszek*

**Under. Sympathetic. Sequent.**

Itself calcium, pebbled,
what is it

quietly fights, finds
in the selection

of the gull’s song
sympathy.

The evolution of grief
is untrying,

grief,
the lighter.

■

Wind is the course
air without ticking

takes

takes

clouds into tides
collecting –

“It is hard
“to turn away

“from running
“water.”
Canvas. Light. Celebration.

Turn, tip the shape
this container

defined
ring ring

meaning round
like a whistle

spinning empty
of April

“Two voices
“on a page

or is it one?”
Why declare

the river
each letter

flagging scarlet
signatures

fluster the backyard
inventions

in the sheets
a quarry

would also
tell you that

■

How many angles
make up the patch

this morning

“a readiness
“were shards”

the bright
fronting

is the falling g
in highness

Phrases in quotation marks are taken from the following works, listed in the order in which they appear.

Static Portrait the Younger

Christine Hume

Sugary um in the gut
and lung of
kindergarten hall
rain of um
a hard orange chant
in the window
harvesting a face
from a sad taste and
a climbing vine
the alphabet
um-dubbed
lifts want to will
its itch of iteration ticks
in mourning's number
a rowing away
lying down in another
boat a body
to lie down
invisible in
and lapping um
against primary blocks
fitful bridges linking
tower and tongue
build a dirge of kisses
build a racket estate
umpteen doorless frames
um enough
to build a brevity
of home with
soft optic corridors
let no word machine-gun
through what’s through
Above

Timothy Shea

Were the cave spray orientation,

inertias

engage,
outside human being fullness –

latticed, the scriptural tissue there, -e

difice

ear with wire ath
irst
Isolate, the
geyser brushed can quicken in candles

inward

Were the going epipelagic,
*curtain*

*Presence*, at stake,

sheeting in -scale, soul

sheer
Each overshining sheer around me first –
    Shook,

a
archaic, the seeding shafts’ facade
sky
total

journey,
cloister the looks lovers’ whirl,

grate
Buoyant, and washing up with it,

*burial*

-bound blown sacred, b

ellows

au

gment
Frequency

Jennifer K. Dick

Electric significance received outside
Lock foam hearing
Pages or wings
Shift of plastic caught understone
Could we touch over the surfaces over scintillating
Was that aquamarine
Simply the red mud of our pasts
I drew the yellow house with one story no balcony
Sketch a form a lie of
What / which of these words
Would reach you
Bassinet cardamom luminous
Plant under her back on a lake
Seaside sails something bit or netted unearthed
Depths of where
Malachite iron fern
“My origin” “a linguistic surface” (she wrote)
Blue light fades on
Mute
Rustle in the dark
Stop
Make us sound a surface
Under the meniscus line or anatomy
Frolon night hornet eyes
Citronella by maroon bottles green glass now empty
Wine a torch salve
Peer limitless limited into black
Back at the slight green-grey of vines
At sight-limit radar an approach
Tip this way and back
Tilt towards then away
An apple
Stop
Concave
Gloved anemic dusted presence
Sand in the evidence

is the or of

Evident at the sculpted frame

White break canopy

A preference for unpainted appearances

Beams and raw wood

Unglazed space of here

Plaster cupped contour she scratches

Emerge

What with the taking down of elements

Caught only the flag-flap and feather

Bodies vanishing into thin air

Titanium licked surface

Ash of fingertips amounts to

No other whole
This backtracking

Parachute    fig    camera

A dropping inwards as in the ridge or crevasse

Fingers slip and peel

It was just another memory forming

Now

To recall a nostalgia for violin music
Months of then come back to
Insides the glass spaces
an atelier
Crystal meth
Fly caught against pane’s yellow light
As when she closes her ears up to out
Gull cocks to turn
Sail-slip caught on horizon
Pinned in the attic
pine
row of poplars
Triangle stilled on the porch by swing
How could effervescent be
Row over the stilted skin
Host hushed hollowed
Dust in her mouth a honing device
Message clipped to that which is reaching through
Hammer anvil vibrato
She cocks her head to hear more closely
To know I’m there
White in the all of every frequency
Registered bytes or bits of notes bitten down
A waterfall cyanide cerulean
Speakers fizzle to electric snap
( she says )
“A layer between us” “thin as waxed paper translucence”
Body coming towards or into
Penned dried leaves fall parchment scribbled
Arch through which voices notice
Whispers in cupolas
Something plucked or abandoned
Closed eyes know better
Ridge of powdered edge
Tympani incus cochlea
The netted rumours
Release banging insistent snagged the ragged teepee

Configuration of oars curved over caught in the pinna

Visible layer din banks against

Flats to enunciate and pronounce

Declarations devotions dogmas

It came down to

Lodge fix settle

Incidence of fuselage or repetition

Briny swell on her breath

Markers like green buoys riding the surge between or towards

Underneath the force vibration

Loss bewildered backtracked into debris

Caught in her lull

Insert minutious wave against cilia on seabed

Salt tastes the band of granite green striped

Etiolated mound throated stone opens
A’s Tale

Gian Lombardo

It wasn’t the primacy. It was how primal it was. (Unless there’s a misreading and it wasn’t the privacy — or rather it was how private.)

The weekly, occasionally daily, sessions of who gets what when, where what gets taken, handled, withheld.

That’s all well and good, you might say, but what’s begun bound by one category ends with the snap and release of another.

There’s that envy of what someone has done. Whether or not the why enters, there’s that previous shudder, the ladder of expectation.

I’m not saying what you might say whether or not there’s been an interjection. Rather, it’s primarily what gets spilled, what gets righted, what’s left, what’s lost and who cleans up the act.
Inferno, Canto 13


Between culture and culture ugly Harpies—knitted fannies—for nests make. Brutal net—honeycomb. All had wings in a broad sense and neck and faces girly. Articulate feet. (Taloned.) Feathery bellies. They make complaint in strange trees. An odd library lament.

The good master—pretty diva pure feet—entered. Know this second circuit—a ring. You will stay here until you dive—you cheetah—into the dreadful sand. But consider well—if you can see—guarded there—bent—the real thing—that torrent my sermon makes cozy.

(Everyone’s psychological baggage filled up the small anxiety filled room.)

I felt—smelled—breath—trouble. I heard another—trapped—cologne—a person without face. So smart it arrested me. I believed—yes—believed—so many voices—were those very same branches. My useless voice—my cough—my mind must have slipped.

Master said—If you cut the trunk—tell me master—truncate—whatever is fresh of these plants—whatever you think—will be made—stumps.

Sweet think munch. My man hands of little wars. I stretched my hand forward and plucked—regret—complaint. (Like Dorothy.)

The trunk cried. Because I stabbed myself in the back? From that which made it then was now blood. Why tear me up? Do not have you the spirit—of poor pity—have you—no—sense of decency—sir? Men we were—come fuming or fat stooped—men—made trunks! Devout your hands must be—if plunged into this core of locked serpents!

I let the cutting fall.

And was like that. Dumbfounded.

And he—sage quick spirit—scolded me. If you were capable of believing before—silly potato—my vocabulary—that which you had seen in my rhyme—your response would have been less than this dysrhythmia. So say you there of hand extended—tell him who you are—so he may refresh your reputation.

The log hissed. Sweetcakes—you compel me in so far as you are likely to return. Write this down. (There must be many to remember by now.) I cannot shut up. Nonplussed by you without grave.

I had perched—a little radiator—on top of he who holds—who keeps an eye on—the keys. I fucked the ambient chair of Frederick’s heart. I turned the core of he who locked and unlocked. Clenching and unclenching—so delicate. I cradled all his secrets. This was my error so suave. Faith. I carried my pride to his glorious offices—ah his sun so pulsed—so many times—I lost sleeps and wrists.

They called me Caesar’s whore. (Envy a common death in women.) Said I turned his key. Inflamed minds flamed against me—all inflamed my flame the sun—and so from flames I fled to flames—and made my just unjust.

By my roots—hair destiny—of this wood—I swear to you—never—did I break off faith—never did my cheer fade—from my sir so worthy of honor mine. So if you from that world that turns returns—repeat my faultlessless. You comfort this my memory—my souvenir. I lie down before you—a culpable anchor—lying still—from the blow that envy struck me.

Little waits. And then master: Since he has shushed—don’t lose the hour—speak—if more appeals to you—easy pearl.

And I to him: Question—of him? I can’t—much mercy wounds. You ask—to ease me like.

So he began—pursing his lips. Free this—mean captive—please if you please—to say of like spirits—alloys—in these stocks. Locked nut—tell us if you can—this night—at night—if some ever unfurl their limbs.

(Soft allure my leader.)
Then leaves blew the strong log—and from that wind total voice converted. Short—breezy—I will answer you. When that part of the spirit—ferocious wind—leaves. When the wild spirit—from the body—itself—once the same—chooses leaves—free and easy—to this street this boulevard—Minos sends—to this seventh mouth—a cave. The self with no part not scolded—crashes into the wild without choice except where fortune at the crossbow lands it.

(Dame Fortune. Dive maestro.)

From which it sprouts—a grain of spelt—quivering germs—surge vermin—become grain—into plant—into mapped wood. And so the harpy—passing through—makes her foliage—feeds. (Bitches add insult to injury.) Pain into pain into breath.

Like the other empty ones we will seek our spoils—coming for our stripped bodies—but none will cover us—none. Without justice no justice comes. (They chewed off their noses to spite their faces.) So we will drag them here instead. The messy spirit forest. Never a self—our body hangs—we ourselves—hang—our molestation. Shade into shadow.

We were still to the log attended—(this log might never shut up)—when we were of—something—surprised. Like he of bloody muck—the lousy destroyer on the lookout—hears beasts—storming. Come two—from the left—naked and scratching—escaping—yes—strongly—not meant for wood—at breakneck speed.

The one ahead cried—come—come running—come running death.

And the other—who seemed to be late too much—screamed in fashion. Yes—shrewd legs—go—go merry-go-round. And that one—missed. So of himself and a bush made a squall.

There was a forest flood—exactly a crowd—of black bitches—gross current—yearning greyhounds long of chain—wrenched from him—the skulker—tooth—cog—piece by piece—his regrettable limbs. And so washed him away.

My laurel grabbed my hand to take stock of the diminished bush—bleeding in vain such broken laments: Why did your fire blame me? What good was I for protection?

Then teacher: Who were you—who from so many points huff and puff such a painful blood sermon?

And he to us—Oh mind and soul so sewed together—see my torment—my rebellion. I was from the fickle ditch—Florence—of the hung—such as I—I so hung—from my very own house.
Three Poems

Chris Martin

D

I have these ideas even
When there is no negative

Pupil moon       An evening
                Considered by light, the arc
                Of sight’s longing gone

Horizontal by way of what       Is on television
Horizontal by way of what       Is ontologically
                                Visible

Rhizome, tuber, douse

My shoulders in the constant
Licking of fluorescent tubes

We form a sodden
What it means to be

A pencil point expanded
To pupil & on & on
To no
As yes

Lead that is drawn
Into dawn’s rosy

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Calgary in Flames

after Eleni Sikelianos

There was not enough bomb
To politic ash, nor a proper grill

For the Dancing Boy. They had to
Import a worshiping wall
For the gods to toss

Agreement at. Sundry

Questions were strung out
On an architecture of flames.

Whose heroes (A or B) intend to change

The Earth’s bandwidth? Is the alphabet
An apt spackle to (blank) this fragmented

Cherry further? Sundays

The Abolitionists prune The Conquistadors
And end up in the gutter. I declare science to be

A carnival of bandages. A cavalry of whiteboys

Spits in the meadowdust & glues
Calligrams of heaven onto the callipygian

Lasses at milking time. Is now when

We hang our celestial smoke mechanics?
Can we kill the strong in order
To redeem the weak? Fire suits this here

Megaville, I believe
I shall call it *Calgary*. 
A Sanity Construction

after Alice Notley

We wear our gaudy hallucinations
like a mechanical California
of loony ‘selves’
where our warm
air dance rings
terrifying!
It’s but one part
of this vibrant appendage we’ve taken
to calling chartreuse
and therefore is pregnancy rare
a bottle of mild crocuses
mysteriously English
mulatto neon
glowing with the diluted
embroidery of puzzled flesh

Enormously orange behind
The shower curtain rose
she loves the edgy obscenity of fingering
nimbus mist sun faces
a window within breathes
all your favorite topics

The lights continuing to scissor
The baby coppery with midnight
occupied in a form of Vicarious
its apparatus veiled by daffodils
Amber, a return. Once pliable, hardened. Breath-trap, air pocket scars, debris, a dictionary. Preserved speech. His voice on tape, translating. My flat speech: too few vowels and endings that stop, closed in by consonants. Flashcards/fossils. How to count. The days, the months, I am a student, where is the bathroom, the night is long, write me a letter. Sap turns to stone as the sounds conjure whose memories?
Late fall from my bed, sycamore tree bare. Thumping rush – a cloud of blackbirds. Sunday. Cold sky. A small low-flying plane buzzes the house. Blackbirds lift up again into a swarm and at seven years old I wait for the whir of a bomb and the explosion of war.
If you were to build a house it could not be so large as to be anti-Communist. Travel to The West was granted only in extreme cases (“when she was on her deathbed, my sister,” he explains) and a training seminar was mandatory. Instruction on what to take pictures of: railroad stations, highways, airports, information on phone lines, dialing. He uses German to explain that it was in the ’70s. In 1991 tanks rolled into the streets, the tension building but he survived, the cramping and shooting pain was a heart attack, this deep desire for peace.
Two Poems

Bill Marsh

we decide to have a boy
to make the day happen unobstructed
habits of invention protect us
information wants to defray
at the tail end of the rational: make it known

nothing by impulse alone
direct communication, but what’s lost?
a quiet assembly of heart and mind
inheritance (wheel) of ambient exposure
ways of doing quiet language

Z. down the helix
M. up a rope ladder

swing shift

as child's play, litanies of survival
for all time tunneling under
Prompts

sonic branding
provides the mystic
palm dance
    triggered
    base
    found
    ecstatic

chimes alert & wintered
monkey chained to plastic
    hanger on the clothes line
cat on the blue tarp, again
panting “arrangements”

z: I know everything
m: You don’t know what the sun tastes like

no smoke, green tea
losing the zip
@ due time
    call-and-response
comes down to
a tough sell, up hill
(out of the box) before
a flash alt.faith-based
reality
    last refuge
    for use in and
    or the liberation
    experience, meant
    in the ever-unfinished

left by visitors
Throes

Jefrey Jullich

The crack of a whip sublimated to echo
offers no oasis or solace,
no relief from a smolder that scorches the charred,
living under master-slave despotism,
the innards of an abdomen public property,
town square pulled off-center by a cadaver
left unburied, died twice for the crime of
bringing comfort to corpses died threelfold,
a flock of birds detonated by a scowl.
Frenzied gestures frozen to a tableau,
a dog starved into a fanged carnivore,
plaintive lamentation memorized,
lesser developed countries on the map
feed tributaries into the green ocean,
marcescent, withering but not falling off.
The conversion rate between currencies
balances maelstrom against undertow.
A hieroglyph of limbs made to express
turmoil, dilated as still as a lake in hell,
famished to the point of devouring star light,
pallbearers rehearsed woeful threnodies
by imitating a slight gasp.
Two Poems

Michelle Noteboom

Back

This night my us unable to father sleep in a tight in a plastic still uncontrollable sheet, a cocoon, to rip a hole near impossiibility in his mouth, prevent begging for such anguish. Night always confused at these. Drive me to my bearings, all-American lie lost now, the only sure nullified. Like things that get far away and bewildered back to European ground. Three times last again, that dream hammock wrapped being stuck in same nightmare of I, tore frantically for some reason, catch the plane or him suffocating circumstances. Wake in a sweat. Hurry! Changing surroundings. Make it to know where am, to perpetual and then doomed. Push out and relate freedoms. Choose life or.
Exchange

City full of angels stroking their feet, women in pink in Bangkok. The heading out for feel. One in ritual against my tension, sigh and stare. Gentle hands know foreign thoughts, a silent body blessing. Lay flat still trying to reach her language. Few words we share. Closed eyes contain this spot where empty, two torsos of flesh and bone dance. Coming from do as much as some void to palm this prayer. Dynamics leave over, pull, walk round the globe. It’s an exchange line of energy dispelling any other commerce. Uncomfortable though.
Roses and Tea

Nothing is the matter.
It is all not prison or reform or pulling teeth.
The bombs reach the furrows
as the make-up artist waits in his
charming enormity, picking

his hands open.
What else is vapor? Sexy thighs.
A bloody ring around the feet
in the sun. The wall
chosen the one that best fits the picture.

Amity is killed in the hills, working
down to the foothills, mesas and irrigated land.
A lip bent the only mast.
News reaches the laborers:
The heavens don’t drip.

According to circuits
what is carried is hard
by winds with blood
that do not say
and do not say who
they carry.
Turn and Turn Again Telling

Nestled in a string of coral
a letter to the main official
of discourses: it's what it had
to be.
To bless the packs of audiences;
To regard regret as sentiment, half-buried
in a peat-meadow of grief.

An unthoughtful thing, invading
a country.
The courage never to forget
the taste of the place;
the food, the sex, the blood.

We try to make our conversation
more than like an interview.
Wait. I have to check on the meat.
Newspapers, screeching cars, books,
in that order.

A hidden satisfaction comes into
clear view. Take this for me. Do
this how I do.
You have a remarkable figure,
a remarkable capacity. Exploit
me. Coerce me. You do
love it. You do
love me.
The entire universe
is beautiful and hostile.
Swan Hashish: Just Enough In That

Crops in need of water.
Bliss.
Break the pale beak of origin.
To pick the crops in need.
That predicted that misery.
That that misery latter predicted.
Crops in need of misery.
That in that misery that latter misery.
Just that misery that wound.
Crops in need of wound.
Swan lush swan.
Dish lush swan.
Swan lush dish.
Swan dish lush.
Swan lash dish.
Lash swan lush.
Dish swan lush.
Lush swan lush.
Lash swan 'lush.
Swan lush swan.
Bliss to break origin to pick crops.
To prick crops in need of need of origin.
Crops in need of beak.
Crops in need of bliss.
Crops in need of crops.
Just needs.
Crops in just needs.
In just needs land.
In just needs crops.
In just needs break crops.
In just needs hands.
Nevertheless, more.
Prier to exactly.
A little distance.
Precisely. Exactly.

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Merely crops. Only.
Nevertheless.
Covet.
from *The Figure*

Ted Mathys

Quandary

the figure has moved up the slope of the scape and lain
down on rock | igneous black | lacquered with wet | the figure has
reclined on a fissure in the jut before the blue | the blue moves

in | the blue moves out | beneath the fissure
in the rock is a depth | beneath the depth is the red

the red beneath the depth in the fissure will erupt
if the figure inclines | the figure a trigger | if the red erupts
the scape will dissolve | the figure will melt on the jut | a death |

if the figure remains reclined | the red will remain arrested
beneath the depth | beneath the fissure | beneath the figure | but
a figure reclined on a rock forever will weather until the figure dies

the figure regards the sun | the figure regards the blue
The Figure Bleeds Twice

the figure discovers a clast
fractured from the shelf | the figure grasps
the clast between the figure’s forefinger and the figure’s

thumb | the figure casts the clast into the blue |
the blue goes down | the blue comes up | the blue moves in
ripples | the figure discovers another clast fractured from the shelf

the figure grasps the clast and presses the clast into the shelf | the finger turns red | the rock turns red | the finger turns red
numb | the figure rubs the finger against the thumb

thumb red | finger red | jut red above
the black | the figure regards the figure’s self | the figure discovers the figure’s self
is also red below | the figure does not know
how to bleed | why to bleed | when to bleed
the figure does not know | the figure knows

the bleeding is good | the figure rubs the numb
forefinger and red thumb over the opposite
red of the figure’s below | mix of reds | the blue

moves in | the blue moves out | the finger moves in |
the finger moves out | the figure threads opposite reds
one of pain from the fractured clast | one preparation

for another figure to come | the figure regards the sun
The Figure Sleeps with an Animal

an animal approaches the figure reclining
on the rock | the figure regards an animal | an animal returns
the figure’s regard | an animal is the shape of the soft blue space
between two large trees lining the scape | the trees sway
but an animal retains its shape | the figure extends a forefinger
to an animal and an animal retreats | the blue moves in | the blue
retreats | the trees retreat | the figure retreats |
an animal stands paces away from the figure and regards |
the figure is flat | the figure guards
its lower zone of red with wet
fingers | the figure discovers and casts a clast
at an animal | an animal makes a sound
the sound opposes the figure’s | never
has an animal encountered a figure with transmutable
sound | nor the figure an animal | but a shared interior
fear of the fissure prefigures encounters | the jut is cold |
an animal embraces the figure | lacquers the figure’s
face with wet | black rock on the slope of the scape remains
lacquered with wet | the blue moves in | the blue moves
out | the soft blue space between trees
takes on the wider shape of an animal
curled into the figure | curled into sleep | black as the slope

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Deus ex Ptero

imprisoned on the fissure the figure considers
the sun and the coming of a large-winged one |
the blue moves in | the blue moves

out | the figure has never encountered
a large-winged one | the animal’s warmth
is not transmutable to wings | the figure discovers

a clast fractured from the shelf | the figure grasps
the clast and draws a little new red from the fore
finger | the figure traces the finger on the rock

in the shape of a large-winged one | the little large-
winged one dries | flaps | floats off the jut | off
into the blue between trees | the blue moves

in | the blue retracts | the trees sway in | the sun
retracts | the figure traces a larger large-winged one |
dries | lifts | floats over to an animal

and flaps an animal to death |

the figure stops creating |

the figure regards the scape |
Talking About the Universe as if It Existed

Mary Burger

My boss Erick can’t stand Yoko Ono.

That surprises me. That anyone would have that much passion about Yoko Ono. That much passion for Yoko Ono. Or against Yoko Ono.

I don’t passionately dislike Yoko Ono. And I don’t dispassionately like her. I like Yoko Ono ok. But you have to let go of your passion to like Yoko Ono. You have to let go of your own passion to like the passion or the dispassion of Yoko Ono. And Erick won’t do that.

Erick talks about Yoko Ono as if he believes she really exists.

When I say “I see,” of course I don’t mean, “I detect waves of a certain length with the receptor cells in my eyes.” I don’t mean that I transmit electromagnetic pulses through my optic nerve to my brain in response to external stimuli –

We teach seeing: we teach a child to organize the stimuli received by its optic nerve in a certain way only.

We organize the “everything” into “things.”

And so he passionately disliked what he believed was the dispassion of Yoko Ono. And he was willing to make this stand, he was willing even though it was in fashion, among his crowd, to like dispassion, to favor it, to privilege it. He was willing to stake his reputation on a preference for passion. It was what made him seem less superficial. He did not like something simply on the basis of its fashionableness.

Is that the corollary of presence: the quality of “depth”? He was not superficial: he was not of the surface. He had mass, volume, dimensionality. He occupied space. His being was not all apparent, he had qualities, characteristics, which were concealed. Which could not be seen. He was not entirely visible.

This is somehow a favorable condition, that one’s judgments, one’s manor of assigning value to things, should not be entirely determined by measurable conditions or apparent influences. That something comes from a source no one can predict, and yet they can understand it when it is there.
And still it is impossible to describe this thing, to derive the condition of this thing, without in some way resorting to describing some other thing when I say “I see.” “He is not superficial” is not a mathematical condition. He is not in relation to himself or to anything in the way that a denominator is in relation to its numerator, in the way that a tangent is in relation to its sine. He cannot be calculated. He cannot be measured.

To declare that he is not superficial is to declare that he does not exist solely on his surface. But what would the surface of a person be, what is the surface of a social identity? It is not a material thing with mass, volume, and dimensions. It is not a sphere or a cube or even a hyperbolic parabola.

When we describe things in physical terms, in geometric terms, in terms we can measure and terms we can see, sometimes this can help us believe that we are communicating, that we, in our collectivity, are talking about something.

When I say “he is not superficial” the he I am describing cannot be measured, cannot be seen. We cannot take the measure of his volume or his depth.

“He is not superficial” is a statement about him, about the way he forms judgments. “He is not superficial” leads you to understand that he may be unique or unexpected or complex. He has behaviors, he has opinions, that lead us to expect he would have certain other opinions, and when he does not have those opinions, we say that he is not superficial.

We make judgments on his superficiality or his depth, these judgments are different from the judgments we make when we are measuring quantities that we believe to have been proven to exist, we measure his depth or superficiality differently than we measure the water for coffee, though still we believe that both he and the coffee can be proven to exist.

Though we know, if we know anything, that we do not know everything, and therefore our judgments are always premature, are always speculative, are always judgments, involving choices, eliminating some possibilities just to make things more concise.

My non-presence may outlast your presence, is that what bothers you?

My non-presence may continue even if we stop believing that the universe really exists.
He is in the next room and it is as if he is part of the universe that does not exist.

When I say I see I do not mean that I believe that you or I really exist. When I say I believe, I do not mean that the things you have done that have had consequences for me are things that prove that you or I really exist.

When I say “he is not superficial” I do not mean that.

This is not the best use of language. This is not the language game between speculative subject positions. This is not something you made up in your head.

When I say this is not what I mean, this is not what I mean at all, I do not mean that you or I can ever really believe that you or I exist. When I say that the things you do have consequences for me I do not mean that this proves that you or I really exist. These things have consequences even if I do not believe that you or I really exist. It is not possible to prove that you or I really exist based on the consequences of the things that you do that have consequences for me.

When I say you do not know I exist, when I say the language games are shiny mirrors, substanceless in themselves and having no relation to the things around them, when I say real, when I say

– when I say the shiny surfaces do not react to things around them, when I say the mirrors reflect only each other, when I say this is not superficial, this is inert, this is not the nonreactive condition of the stable elements, the noncombinatory gases, this is not a considered condition.

When I say that is not what I mean at all I do not mean that you have taken the meaning and twisted it, I do not mean that you have taken the meaning and sheared it between two surfaces, two continental plates sliding in opposite directions, pulverizing what is caught between their surfaces, I do not mean that you are a heated metal rod bent back on itself, I do not mean that somehow I have failed to say what I mean.

My boss does not like Yoko Ono. I like Yoko Ono ok. I do not think Yoko Ono is empty of all passion. And I do not think that the rage that rages through a house to purge the dispassion that is stuck there, I do not think that this rage is a belief. This rage is not a belief.

To talk about the universe as if it existed is not to have a belief. It is not the same thing as having a belief. To rage in a furious rampage to purge the
dispassion of disbelief is not to have a belief. To rage and rage and rage and rage is not to have a belief. It is not a belief. It is something different than a belief.

To rage against the mirrored language game that neutralizes belief is not to have a belief. This particular language game, this shiny unreachable fetish,

— someone asked me if I was writing a political poem about the terrible event, if I had written a poem about the terrible event that was political. Much later, very much later, very long after they asked me if I would write a political poem about the terrible event, I experienced a rage against the shiny fetish that poses itself in opposition to belief.

This particular language game, this shiny fetish that is hard and reflective and beyond reach, that does not react to its surroundings, that is not a belief, that is a position against the position of any belief, this shiny opposition to belief, this hot metal rod curled back on itself away from any possible belief, this shiny fetish that must have attention in order to exist, this is not a belief. That shiny fetish that reflects whatever is around it to draw attention from what is around it,

— I do not believe that the things that anyone has done and the things that anyone continues to do are things that can ever prove or disprove the consequences of belief. It is not possible to prove or disprove the consequences of belief. It is not possible to prove or disprove that the things that anyone has done are the consequences of their belief. It is not possible for someone to know everything that they believe. Knowledge is not belief. If I say I believe and I am doing this thing because I believe, if I believe that what I am doing is because of something I believe, if I am still believing this thing when the thing I believe has been measured and calculated to not be the thing I believe, to be something other than the thing I believe, if there are particles that will someday be measured that will disprove the things I believe,

— if I am in opposition to this opposition to belief, if I do not want to touch or look at the shiny fetish that is the opposition to belief,

— if I am willing to scorch its surface with a heat that is too powerful to reflect, if I melt it to a dark, irregular lump, if I disintegrate it and open the space it once occupied, if I sow the ashes in the fields of belief,

Even something as simple and fundamental as the curve – the regulated shift in tangent between one point and the next – even this throws it off.
But as soon as you admit the possibility of deferment, you admit that the universe can be anything.

Talking about his dispassionate dislike of dispassion as if it existed. This is not mathematical. Like a white telephone, like a blank wall, like a clean brushed bar of aluminum, he existed. Talking about his passion as if it existed. He talked about the universe as if he existed.

My non-presence may outlast his dispassion.

She talked about the universe as if it existed. She studied the movements of things that might not exist. She measured the things that might not exist by the traces that might have been left by them as they moved. To study the things that might not exist, she built a spherical tank four stories high. She had learned that girlish enthusiasm was effective with the old scientists.

It is impossible to believe in the universe and not be passionate. It is almost not possible to believe in the universe.

When she measured the thing that might not exist, the measurements she calculated might not have been for the thing that might not exist. She made measurements based on other things that had been calculated to exist. Her calculations had to be consistent with the things that were known to exist.

She had to believe in the possibility that the thing she was trying to measure might possibly exist. No one had proven that this thing did exist. She set out to prove that the thing she was measuring really did exist.

If she could prove that this thing did exist, the way that people knew the world would be different. There would be one more thing in the world that was previously not known to exist. This thing would affect the way people knew the other things that were known to exist.

There are things that are said to be known to exist, based on measurements and calculations made with the instruments that we have determined to be measurers of things that are known to exist. Some of the instruments that we have determined to be measurers of things that are known to exist are eyes. Except that we do know that some things that we measure and calculate and observe with our eyes may nonetheless not exist. And that some things that we cannot measure or calculate or observe with our eyes may nonetheless exist. Even if we see it with our very own eyes, even if we can’t see it with our bare eyes, we still know it might or might not exist.
Each instrument has its limitations, its particular area of legitimacy. If the thing you are measuring is not what you think you are measuring you may figure that out or you may never figure that out.

The universe does exist, it has been determined to exist, and we are behaving as if it exists at every moment, even now.

He was in the next room the whole time but he never said a word.

I turned on every light in every room even though I could only be in one room at one time.
(Undersong) The Distance (This)

Laura Mullen

1. (NEW) BRIDGE / AS HERE

A way [tracing] (even closer) (divisions of) (apportion) these soundings (foliated)
Follow
A name under another (to a vanishing) point ("pont")
Leaning out
Sonant (interval) (to keep)
Successive A word for The word for (""")
Another
Name (you tried) remember (to forget) another paused (under which)
Something of the river’s silver-blue length chopped at green shadows
Periodic
(Perspective of bridges so the water was) ( ) ( )
2. [APPARITION]

Under which a distance opened moving / As of enforced / As / (Under which: stopped – at the lips) / What? / Taken apart so as not / The way a name under another name is not / A body under another body / (Memory), not / ‘a mass grave’ / Though you might say ( ) in place of ( ) / aulit / While in the air the lit or illuminated lights / While apart from or to one side of the action / “for” / You could mistake / another time / (Looked up to see the waiter – off – finishing someone’s drink) / just as / meaning / Or gradually to lose an accent / The way a way / Opening other / points of departure / Your current / lover’s / name / for instance

Flowing just under an echo / (also) / Seductive / its traceable / Wake

Said a different
Said No, I didn’t know!
Said nothing, looked – the self
betrayal – shocked

Held still there in a silence

Another silence
3. AS (INSTANCE)

Viewing [oui, j’ai vu] a film [c’est le même] in your ‘own’ language (“v.o.”) in another country you might find yourself (still? also?) reading the subtitles. Or, remembering later a certain passage you might (not) remember you’d been reading: recalling fragments (interwoven) of both spoken dialogue and written translation (you were rendering back into..., testing against...), against the flow of images – white letters revenant near the bottom of the screen

Hovering, slightly unsteady –

snagged on something unseen for a second and submerged replaced (to be replaced) again

slippages of momentary agreement

(see: forget)

plein de

erreur / eros

(gloss)

(these versions) fault
Hearing (“long-distance”) the duration of the call your voice after your voice echoing broken vocables (too) slowly fading sounded a layered essentially flat (theatrical) space (“space”) (a series of spaces or intervening views of one, resonant: to see like a spy, like a spider...) \(\textit{during}\) and halted to let the (mocking) echoes die (“I...”) before continuing meanwhile (I’ll) (“under”? “answer”? \textit{dernier} [halts]) the caller – not hearing or only more faintly – wondered as though you gestured toward a \(\textit{only apparent to your}\)

Stopping to let the phoneme
Subside speaking again and again
Stopping: that “tinny” ring (wringing)

(Or) you thought someone was trying your door as so near (“next door”)

(Trying) later
Reverberate – wake – backwash shattered pattern against which (this)

Lay there rigid trying (that cadence – syllables? – he murmured in sleep)
5. APERTURE ("PLACE")

Light caught in moving water so a line (imposed by a jealous attention) structures
So lines (vertical) (arc of) (as) "Fount"
And rough in the basin caught (as) crashing returned (to)
Line of trees following line of fence thinking

Made of (still) the air a haze of light around the of the park
Heard (voice) finishing the finished Silver? White? What

Predicated path(s) through (against which: "I would like to live in a liquid house.")

From apparently similar vantages to look out on the kept Place
Of enclosed vistas, trapped (Between terms) "faithful"
So measured
The circumference, trees Shifting out of alignment
And back
Shadowed stop, shadow loosened In wind blurred air, water-saturated, the fountain (one view of), as through smoke
Differing from the visibly pointillist (On occasion)
Stuff a harder gust splashed out
On the raked path in the wide swath of sunlit lawn (seen past the wrought iron bars of the fence) a still group – singular focus – funereal

Under erasure (to) repeat
6. ( ) AS FROM (THIS)

(To stay) “in mind” in waves (inconstant) recollection
Referring Sections of under one / sound another sonant
surging crosscurrents (so near ) Sections of
(apposed) dusk swallows Flows through dusk swallows

Sectioned off Close to Close to
Narrows access horizon Flows through Flows through
hearing hearing Close to lights
hearing hearing

“In” (perspective) “the distance” asides Flows through
Sounds like asides
Narrowing access horizon Rift

(bright) flash quick
Narrowing access horizon quick

spell ways these several ways these several
betray (trajec) ways these several
betray

spell ways as lit spell ways as lit
betray (trajec) ways as lit
betray

Nothing left but where the opaque surface lifts refluent reflecting back

To take apart
Breath subject In ways

Other

Words for Crossed

Silence
The Son(Nets) of William Shakespeare, by Jen Bervin

Christine Hume

Jen Bervin’s new book, a beautifully designed object, presents sixty through-writings of Shakespeare’s sonnets. In these, the original text is grey-shaded, a ghost-text, and her extractions stare darkly, in full black ink, back at us, foregrounded but not obscuring the map that they follow. What shines through – “that bright / becoming of things / in the very refuse / such strength” – is an individual’s reading and interpretation of the sonnets as much as it is a new work in and of itself. Bervin’s isolated words and phrases further infinitize Shakespeare’s hold on our imaginations; with one eye we can read a fixed and familiar text, with the other we read a “fresh repair” of it, a “tillage of windows” that triggers our own visions, our own creation impulses, and encourages us to decide how the poem should be read (all parts seem to seam into one poem); how meaning(s) should come together as words and phrases shift through grammatical and spacial arrangements; and how we might make our own ruminating ruins.

By offering us the source text as a net that catches fractured Shakespearean alphabets, our eyes dredge the sonnet again and again to see what might be shored up. The sonnet is both the net, the container, and the song, the content it memorializes and robs. In this way Bervin doesn’t reinstate one authority with another, but ensures mutual and multiple author-ities. Her interventions playfully emphasize the potential to generate meaning within other contexts and systems, frustrating the original’s presumed signification and remotivating certain words and images therein, without removing the first site. This work is gentler and ultimately more generous than deterritorialized texts like Ronald Johnson’s Radi Os and Tom Phillips’s A Humument, though these texts are clearly its predecessors. Bervin’s text, like Phillips’s, plays on the source text’s themes – here love and death – reconfiguring it onto a new historical map. Through-writing in this case minds the site that it mines, offering an analytical installation, one that literally breaks down the stanza/room as it erects a new architecture within it. The opening pages give us an extended ars poetica (for instance: “distill / their substance // In singleness the parts / Strike each in each / speechless song, being many, seeming one”) and situate the reader/writer in the fallen site (“form / lets a house fall to / hold you”).

Bervin clearly has fallen for Shakespeare, and these poems are in fact love poems to him and his art; one page bolds only “Will” an obsessive 13 times. Twice-repeated words proliferate, drawing on couples and couplets. Bervin’s poems are gusty celebrations: “master-mistress of my / shifting /by / adding nothing / prick’d thee out for pleasure.” But her designs on
Shakespeare are double-edged and her awareness of destructive impulses trades on her creative hatchings. The words “wake” and “date” — each with two common meanings — rhyme in Nets, drawing together death and love, consciousness and time.

About mid-way through the book, sonnet 64 presents “I have seen / towers down-razed / loss loss,” a poem impossible to read a-historically. The next page extends our sense of eclipse by enacting the psychological imperative to remember original sites: “map / the / shorn away / map / what beauty was.” In sonnet 64, Shakespeare says ruin acts in two ways (naturally by time/decay and active destruction), both seeming to be without rhyme or reason. Here, in Bervin’s own combination of erosion and willful manipulation, “loss” and “loss” stand for the towers “down-razed.” Like Shakespeare’s sonnets, Bervin’s poem collapses into a monosyllabic truth that materializes the absence of our own towers in this contemporary setting. The chiastic relations within Shakespeare’s poem have been leveled to linear reiteration, the loss is double because it cannot be wrapped up, cannot be rounded on itself in a neat linguistic and philosophical package, and ends like the sonnet itself with a direct syntactic antithesis of chiasmus.

Bervin shows us ways in which we might open up pre- or over-determined uses of past structures without erasing them — making the poems all the more complex by their refusal to dislocate. Her Nets is context responsive and responsible, without the knot of lyric-envy and linguistic guilt of many contemporary poems that pillage the past for strangeness, or worse, for an energetic imagination that might be made to impersonate the writer’s.

Nets, Jen Bervin
Ugly Duckling Press, 2004
Paperback, 150 pages
$10.00
ISBN: 0-9727684-3-2
In the process of writing – in arrangement:
Laynie Browne’s Acts of Levitation

== Drew Kunz

aspects of levitation – “defiance to gravity” –

two being psychokinetic – e.g. possession and transport
– the mystical cases of St. Teresa of Ávila – the Tibetan ascetic
Milarepa – or demonic – as Linda Blair from The Exorcist –
the third like a parlor trick –

an illusion – staged – a rig of gossamer ropes and pulleys to awe
an audience –

the title denotes both Biblical and theatrical themes –
magically interwoven throughout –

an evanescent world in the hull of a mystery –

prose sections create a “passage which leads between herself
and her composition,” – opening a psychological aperture –

cinematic images – scenes cut and dissolve –
herbs, fabric, felt tubes, photographs, books, partial nudes,
tea parties, flowers, libraries, shells, trains –

mesh of reader and writing – of eye and image –

I see Amelia walking within a ghost world of vague edges –
fractured and shifting subjectivity –

I see an interweave of mysticism and sensuality – subtle
eroticism –

I see an interlink of time and space – a de-centred narrative –
a lexicon of dream consciousness – attempts to articulate –

questions we want to solve: Who is Clare? What is Clare? –

I see Clare as a photographer – a psychotic delusion –
a daemon – a fantasy – some netherworld being –
mirrors – doubling – dichotomy of subject and object – interior and exterior –

Amelia and Clare: paradigmatic others? –

I see a quest for another –

boundary of identity – blurred – dissolving passages – ethereal figures half revealed – transitoriness of a cut flower that holds attention –

music in the process of writing – in arrangement, disarrangement – appearance, reappearance – full and between things nearby and far away –

twilight awash –

“artists who carry light and those who carry sound, and those with capital letters only” –

even against all these body parts that speak –

Acts of Levitation, Laynie Browne
Spuyten Duyvil, 2002
Paperback, 230 pages
$14.00
The Landscape of Identity: 
Poetry and the Modern in Japan 

Eric Selland

In 1989 the death of Emperor Hirohito officially brought Japan’s postwar period to an end. The category of “postwar,” born out of the cataclysmic events of 1945, had until that time been the major defining image of what contemporary Japanese poetry was all about. For poets standing at that border, poetry had to be reinvented just as Japan as a nation began reinventing itself. But while there was essentially a sense of creativity and liberation from militarist oppression, reopening the gates to new form and experimentation, this new boundary crossed in 1989 presented quite a different problem, and in a sense cut just as deeply into the sense of poetic and national identity. The basic grounding “postwar,” with its dependence on the stark differentiation between a Japan before and after the atomic bomb, was no longer available. Identity was no longer so clearly defined.

In 1990, a most loved and respected member of Japan’s avant-garde and a bridge between modernist and post-modern practice unexpectedly died. Yoshioka Minoru, the very embodiment of what the postwar period meant to Japanese poetry, had influenced virtually all of the younger experimental poets, and received the admiration even of those outside the bounds of that genre. The event shocked and dazed Japan’s poetry community, rendering the confusion and loss of direction all the more graphic and painful. “Poetry has died,” wrote one critic in a commemorative publication a year later. Japanese poetry would again have to reinvent itself.

Already the limits of “postwar” were being exceeded in the work of Hiraide Takashi and Inagawa Masato. These two poets were blurring the boundary between poetry and criticism, poetry and prose, and questioning conventional ideas of what comprised the modern in Japan. At first glance what appears in Hiraide to be a kind of neo-surrealist imagery turns out to be in fact hyper-realism. Hiraide has also produced a book of tanka, the 5-line traditional form, thereby challenging Japanese literary orthodoxy in which modern (i.e. Western influenced) poetry and traditional forms are to be kept far apart.

Poet/critic Kido Shuri, in his recent book delineating Japan’s postwar poetic landscape, questions the idea of there ever having been a postmodern in Japan at all. His claim is that the postwar period never completely broke with modernism, and was instead merely the long, drawn out death of the modern. This may be so, especially when one considers the curious fact (at least curious to westerners) that Japan’s avant-garde, whether during its beginnings in the 1920s or in more recent years, has never been associated
with leftist politics. The political writing of Japan’s “proletarian literature,” finally crushed by the rise of militarism in the 1930s, is conventional in form. In fact, modernist experiment in Japan during the prewar years poses some fundamental questions regarding modernization and cultural transformation. Derrida writes, “the frenzy of experimentation and proliferation of schematizations develops during epochs of historical dislocation, when we are expelled from the site of being.” How is it that literary experiment whose purpose in Europe was to bring established artistic, social, economic, and political structures under serious question becomes the foundation of the new in Japan – the modern, technological, urbanized and westernized Japan. The implications are enormous for modernist and cultural studies in general.

Despite the interruption of the Pacific War, modernism in its various forms became the lingua franca of poetry in Japan. The absence of a truly oppositional poetics in Japan, even amongst its experimentalists, may be due to the culture’s need first to assert its difference with the outside, to defend itself against total cultural domination by the west even as it so eagerly devoured all things Western.

If anything along the lines of the oppositional could be said to exist, it is more in the voices of women who became increasingly prominent in poetry after 1945. Tomioka Taeko represents the postwar tendency amongst women poets toward direct address, plain language as opposed to high modernist poeticization, and use of the narrative. Tomioka introduces what she calls the “story poem,” and carries out an exploration of Japanese women’s identity and experience through a multiplicity of voices. Tomioka, in her essays offers an alternative view of society and of Japanese literature. She attempts to rescue the lost work of women modernists such as Sagawa Chika also included in the selection in this issue of *Aujgabe*.

In more recent women’s poetry as well, one finds an exploration of the natural rhythms of speech, often in a specifically feminine language rather than a high, literary form, as well as the language of local dialects. All of these strategies are expressions of difference, whether sexual or regional, and map out shifting fields of identity in modern Japan against a backdrop of mass culture where these identities might otherwise be lost or overlooked.

Ito Hiromi takes this further in an attempt to deconstruct the Japanese image of the feminine, as well as to deconstruct the narrative. Ito looks especially to the thought of Julia Kristeva for the theoretical underpinnings of her work. Park Kyong Mi is a Japanese-Korean poet. Her choice of keeping the Korean reading of her name, rather than to use a Japanized version, which has been not only customary but a requirement for Koreans in Japan, points again toward the expression of particularity amongst women poets, as well as the subtle political strategies used. There is nothing politically overt in Park’s poetry, but the use of the name, and the subtle tilting of the linguistic axes speaks volumes.
Historically, women's writing has played a major role in Japanese literature from classics such as the Tale of Genji on down to the present, however, women have tended to be more associated with traditional forms, especially the 5-line tanka. Foremost among these in 20th century literature is Yosano Akiko. There are a growing number of scholars who argue that the beginnings of modernism in Japan are to be found at the end of the 19th century (much as we would see the roots of European modernism in the work of 19th century poets such as Baudelaire and Rimbaud). According to this point of view Yosano, working in the traditional 5-line tanka and publishing her most famous work, Tangled Hair in 1901, would be Japan's first modernist. Yosano introduces personal emotion into the tanka, focusing on the unique experience of an individual ego (a new concept in Japan) in a more modernized version of the language rather than the archaic diction common to the tanka. Sexuality as such has never been taboo in Japan for either sex, but Yosano appropriates the sexual for her own purposes, becoming the agent of her own sexual feelings, and making use of male sexuality for her own pleasure. Yosano was one of Japan's early feminists, producing a series of essays calling for the improvement of women's status in society.

By 1929, when Sagawa Chika arrived in Tokyo to begin her poetic activity, Symbolism, Surrealism and Dadaism had all been introduced to Japan via translations from the French and the writings of Japan's own poets and theorists such as Takiguchi Shuzo and Nishiwaki Junzaburo, editor of Shi to Shiron (Poetry and Poetics), mouthpiece of Japan's new modernist movement. Tokyo was a teeming, modern metropolis only recently rebuilt after the earthquake and fire of 1923. This was the city of all things new where the "modan gaaru" and “modan boui” could be seen wearing the latest in Western fashions, where one could dance the night away to American jazz. Fresh from the provinces and only 18 years old, Sagawa jumped into Surrealist experiment, producing a body of work that expresses the essence of her time. Filled with jarring imagery; odd juxtapositions and bright colors, her poetry puts into practice Kitasono Katue's call to a visual poetry. Yet hers is a poetry of more than just surface. Sagawa produces an acutely personal world of warmth and depth, which hints at other meanings beyond a mere cataloging of the exotic, or dependence on technical experiment alone. Although she would live only until 1936, Sagawa published around 80 poems in the major experimental magazines of the time, developing relationships with major figures such as Nishiwaki Junzaburo, Kitasono Katue, Takiguchi Shuzo, and a group women writers also involved in modernist work, including Ema Shouko. Although a collected works was published after her death, the poetry of Sagawa Chika soon fell into obscurity, and is only now being rediscovered.

At the same time this rush of experimental activity was taking place with Kitasono Katue's vou group and others, another more sinister movement was growing in reaction against the rapid westernization that began in the
late 19th century. This came in the form of militarist fanaticism and empire, but there were philosophical underpinnings to the anti-westernism that was now growing, produced, ironically, by some of Japan’s European trained philosophers. Kuki Shuzo is the Japanese philosopher spoken so highly of in the first essay in Martin Heidegger’s *On the Way to Language*. Upon his return to Japan, Kuki both taught and wrote on aesthetic philosophy in an attempt to delineate what was unique about Japanese culture. Through the use of traditional Japanese literature, exoticizing images of Japan oddly dependent on Western stereotypes of the Orient, and an eroticized version of the traditional feminine, Kuki set the stage for a growing politics of cultural authenticity. Soon Japan’s militarist government would take up the call and begin extending the tentacles of its control into the very minds of the people. This meant a “cleansing” of Japan’s artists and intellectuals. Anything that smacked of the foreign, of the “inauthentic” or unpatriotic, had to be cut out.

In 1940, Saito Sanki, an experimental haikuist, was imprisoned for the crime of writing haiku without any seasonal reference. Kitasono Katue was arrested in the same year and subjected to a grueling three-day interrogation by Japan’s infamous Thought Police. Virtually all of Japan’s modernists were arrested, sent to the Manchurian front, or silenced. Nishiwaki Junzaburo, whose first book of poems was composed originally in English and then translated into Japanese, and who introduced the technique of Surrealist estrangement to Japan, found it wisest to retreat to his home town with his British wife, where he began research on the Japanese classics (a much safer pursuit during those times). The careers of many writers and artists were completely destroyed by the events of the war era. Not even the restoration of political freedom after the war could recover all of what was lost.

It is interesting to consider the possible effects of a rhetoric of cultural authenticity in which images of the feminine become central in the setting up of difference in relationship to the hegemonic West on literary canonization on into the postwar years. Yosano Akiko becomes a major figure in Japanese letters, in part because of the ability to reread her work and her literary persona within the framework of an authentic “Japaneseness.” Nishiwaki Junzaburo negotiates his literary survival after the war by editing his earlier work, removing some of the strangeness, and making a connection with Japan’s native literary traditions. Canonization in Japan involves a process of normalization, in which the foreign elements present in a poetry whose influences are essentially western are hidden or erased through a re-situating or reinterpretation of the work in relation to the broader culture and to the native tradition – a kind of cultural filtration process. Is it possible that the work of Sagawa Chika and other women modernists of the prewar years was lost not only in the chasm of war and destruction, but in
the politics of cultural authenticity whose echoes remained within academia and elsewhere for much of the postwar era?

One can see in the unfolding of Japan’s literary history over the past century a working out of identities, of possibilities and realities – a negotiation of constant change and shifts in the cultural landscape. Now again, with the death of the postwar, Japanese poetry is in the process of reinventing itself. In his recent work on postwar poetry, Kido Shuri writes, “An unheard of wilderness lies before us.” In this new frontier of poetry, will more room be made for outsiders? Will women writers be able to recover their proper place in Japan’s literary and cultural life, a place in which they define themselves on their own terms? In these pages we see some hints of hope.

SUGGESTED READINGS


WORKS IN JAPANESE


Ohka Makoto (ed.), *Gengo Kuukan no Tanken*, Gakugei Shorin, 1969
SARAH: I’m struck, on reading your more recent work, by the way you use and re-use simple words, many of which have a certain permeability or lend themselves to multiple allusions. As you use them in different combinations and contexts, a meditative, layered complexity emerges.

STEPHEN: I think you’re right. As I use words again and again, they become little markers or signatures. They become filled with possible sense. But I’m not using them to make allusions to things, but because I like the presence of a particular word in the text. You know, on the page.

SARAH: As an object.

STEPHEN: Yes. Some words, like “yellow,” enter every page. So the question becomes, what does it mean even to write that word? How precise can it be? I used to think that you should never repeat, you should always say something different. But now I am fascinated by this effect of repetition. I think that it connects to a whole tradition of song; it works like a refrain. These poems are like song – they’re so shaped in various ways, and there is a music that goes with them. And the repeated words and phrases accrue a certain power. In my current manuscript, HUMAN / NATURE, the unmade yellow and blue bed is almost like a character because every five or six days I put it in there.

In fact, all the books in the series I’ve been working on for the past few years – Portraits & Repetition, REAL, CLOUD / RIDGE, and the current one, HUMAN / NATURE – are marked by the use of a simple, recurring vocabulary. I see my work as an investigation of structure and form and what appears to be a surface which doesn’t have any depth to it: perceivable phenomena, things going on in the immediate present tense, or very often things recalled. Not recalled from distant memory, but from yesterday or something like that – somebody saying something, or somebody telling me something. In HUMAN / NATURE, there’s often a man in a blue shirt who is recalling, so the word “recalling” comes in over and over, but there are other words that repeat, like “cloud” and “ridge” and “sky” and colors and things from the ocean, surfing and water.

But I did want to note that in my early book Distance, I used a much more varied and esoteric vocabulary – but it was all coming out of a found text, a dictionary.

SARAH: Yes, and then there’s Present Tense, which I group with Distance in that the vocabulary is much more varied.
STEPHEN: That’s true, although unlike Distance, it’s composed through ob-
servation of daily life and popular culture, not taken from a found text.

SARAH: Yet both books contrast with your more recent work, where the
field of diction has radically narrowed. This narrowing seems to allow for
a deeper exploration of nuance.

STEPHEN: I like that idea, like Voltaire’s notion that we should cultivate our
own back yards. Which I do. I sit there in my house in Bolinas and write.
The landscape there is essential to my work.

SARAH: Could you describe that a little?

STEPHEN: I live in a house that looks out onto an 85-acre field, and beyond
that the Mount Tam ridge. Above the ridge is the sky. There is a road
where cars go by, but it’s on the side. I sit in the morning and write,
looking out my kitchen window. And in every poem in this series of four
books, the first section of the poem – and in the case of Portraits & Repeti-
tion, the entire poem – is based on looking at things as perception. Either
looking out the window, or looking at postcard images or objects that are
on the windowsill, that sort of thing. But it all comes out of writing in the
present moment. And doing it over and over. I am aware that I am re-
peating a lot of the same words. I’m fascinated to see how a word can be
different depending upon its immediate context. Because in fact, as Stein
said, it isn’t so much repeating as it is a kind of insistence. Hence it’s
exploring facets of something. And maybe you only want to read a little
bit of it; that’s fine. I think with my work you can open to any page and
just read that page. There can also be a spell-binding quality for listeners
when I read twenty pages or so; it takes you off on a visual/mental excur-
sion.

SARAH: Did you plan these works to be a series before you began them?

STEPHEN: No. When I started the first one, Portraits & Repetition, I thought,
Well, maybe I’ll go for a year. Then when I got to the 365th poem, I
didn’t want to stop. I thought, It’s just getting good. So I kept going, and
then things were going on in life, and I thought, This has to stop, it’s
getting ungodly long, it’s ridiculous. So I got to the 474th poem and there
was a certain symmetry in that number, like a 747, a big jet. So then I
thought, Well, maybe I will write another one, and maybe I could go on
that long, and maybe I can do a triptych. I’ll do three. So REAL was next,
and CLOUD / RIDGE was the third one, and then I thought I would
stop. But I didn’t want to. So I started the current one, HUMAN / NA-
TURE.

SARAH: All of these works have exactly 474 days of poems in them? There’s
a poem for every single day for 474 days?

STEPHEN: Yes. And they are all the same length on the page, i.e., the poems
in CLOUD / RIDGE all have fourteen lines, though some of the lines
drop down so they look to be more than fourteen lines.
SARAH: So there is an echo of the sonnet form.

STEPHEN: Silliman calls them sonnets, while Raworth would say fourteen-line poems. I think of them as fourteen-line poems. But the form is influenced by my study of Renaissance poetry so, yes, there is a trace of the sonnet in them.

SARAH: I think a lot of writers would feel deadened by the practice of looking out and describing the same scene day in and day out, year in and year out. They would feel they had exhausted the possibilities of that scenario.

STEPHEN: Yes, except I’m not really focusing on description. Merleau-Ponty said something like “What we want is to give a direct description of our experience.” Stein, in “Portraits and Repetition,” says she became excited by the discovery that the words that made something look like itself (and then later she says “made something be itself”) were not words that had anything to do with description. I think she is talking about *Tender Buttons*. In that work, she gives the name of the object that she’s making a portrait of, like “Mashed Potatoes,” but the text itself doesn’t seem to be a description of mashed potatoes at all. I think my work does appear to be description, but it’s trying to test the boundary of what description could be. There is always a gap between writing something down as words, and the world that’s out there being described. The world out there can’t ever be exactly reenacted. But through working in these repeating forms over a long period of time, I’m exploring how the things of the world can be enacted in language.

SARAH: When I read your work I am not even worrying about what’s out the window; I’m engrossed by what’s on the page. The more I read, the more I slow down and become hyper-aware of the immediate sensations and perceptions I’m having in the act of reading. Every little moment begins to matter, from letters to punctuation to the spacing. So I assume you are aware of these things too?

STEPHEN: Yes, I’m completely focused on the words on the page and what’s happening in the form.

SARAH: Can you describe some of the formal elements at play in your current manuscript?

STEPHEN: Sure. In every poem, there are four stanza units totaling ten lines. The first stanza has three lines; the second has two lines; the third has three lines and the fourth has two lines. The three-line stanzas have two commas, which means there are a total of three syntactic units in those stanzas. In the two-line stanzas there’s one comma, so those stanzas have two syntactic units. The lines can only be five inches long. I use Courier typeface, which is non-proportional, meaning that every letter and space and mark of punctuation has the same width. For example, a “w” is as wide as a period. In Times and Palatino and many other typefaces it’s proportional. So I don’t count letters, but I do set up a margin. There’s a
lot of mathematical measuring; it’s about measure. Figuring out the relationships between things.

My procedure for writing the poems is also very precise and formalized. The first unit of every poem in this book and in the previous book, CLOUD / RIDGE, is always being written in the present moment, looking out the window in the morning. The following three stanzas come out of notes that I’ve written down previously. I use two notebooks. I have a small notebook (“A”) that I keep with me at all times to jot notes in. When I sit down in the morning to write that day’s poem, I write it in a second, larger notebook (“B”). I start by writing a direct observation. Then I flip through the small notebook (“A”) and look for recent notes, and when I find one I want, I put it into the poem I’m composing in notebook “B.”

SARAH: These are notes on things you are reading and thinking.
STEPHEN: Reading, seeing, overhearing.
SARAH: Do you copy the notes verbatim from “A” into the poem you’re composing in “B” or do you rewrite them in the process?
STEPHEN: I’ve gotten so I can write things down in notebook “A” that I will be able to use as closely as possible. But there are often extra words that I have to pick and choose — when you’re overhearing something, you have to catch it on the fly. So there is still a lot of pruning. For example, here’s a note in notebook “A”: “Red finch landing on rose branch next to feeder in right foreground.” When it entered a poem, it became “Finch landing on rose branch next to feeder.”

I should add that what happens with the right margin is an important aspect of that pruning. As I type a poem, there’s something that pleases me in seeing a certain visual pattern emerge along the right-hand margin; a visual relationship created among the line endings. That visual relationship helps dictate what’s being written down in the line. So the shape of the right margin is crucial to me in the process of composing the poem. It has nothing to do with what’s in the notebooks.

SARAH: It’s a further restraint.
STEPHEN: Yes, it’s like a rule or a game. Each one is different, and it comes about only when the actual materials of the words come into the poems. I pay a lot of attention to the sounds of the words, but also to spacing on the page.

SARAH: Has the right margin always been an important element of composition for you?
STEPHEN: Absolutely, going all the way back to my book MOBILE / MOBILE. In that book, all the poems had right-justified margins, which I created on a Courier typewriter — not by counting letters, but by adjusting the words to make it come out that way. But that was letterpress typeset, and the person who typeset it, Les Ferriss, used a different typeface, so it shifted. It caused me anxiety; thinking no one would know that
I had worked to get this right. But then I thought, Well, it doesn’t really matter because it served its purpose; having that constraint helped me to write the poem. Now I use a computer and I use Courier typeface to approximate that pica and elite type that old typewriters used. But again, when these books are typeset in different fonts, things shift. *Idea’s Mirror* was set in the same font as the one I’d composed in, so I could preserve the look of the right margin.

**Sarah:** Why do you think working with the right margin is so important for your creativity?

**Stephen:** A poem isn’t a picture, but it is like a visual abstraction. It is like an abstract painting, perhaps. I just attended a slide show at the Art Institute by James Sienna, a visual artist from New York. He works with metal plates, maybe 18" × 13" or somewhat bigger. He thinks of them as being on a human scale, like the size of a head or something. He fills the two-dimensional plane right out to the edge with very minute, detailed work—nesting, repeating forms that create a sense of complexity and shape, yet there is also a simplicity. The shape of the poem, the physical space that the line occupies on the page, is for me a dimension of the poem. I wrote about this in an essay, “...sound...shape...meaning...” in my book of essays, *Listening to Reading*. There is the sound of the words, which is potential when the words are on the page, until they are actually read aloud. In other words, you might hear a sound in your head when you read to yourself, but there is something about speaking that puts it out into the air, where it becomes an acoustic shape. And then there is what we’ve been talking about: the physical shape of the words on the page. The relation of sound and shape to meaning, whatever “meaning” might be, is, I think, crucial in poetry. So I pay attention to it.

**Sarah:** Do you feel that focusing on the length and shape of the lines is a way to keep the quotes around the word “meaning”? To continually demonstrate to yourself, and perhaps to others, that meaning as a kind of rational sense is only one factor, one element in a dance that includes sound and shape?

**Stephen:** Yes, I think it’s a way of acknowledging the provisional, elusive quality of essential meaning, whatever that may be. It’s also a way of celebrating the process itself. James Sienna said in his lecture, “My work is a celebration of work.” I thought, I can dig what he means by that. There’s something about the sheer dint of effort to get this stuff to come out this way, which is a lot of fun.

**Sarah:** When we talked a few years ago, you described a similarly rigorous and elaborate process you used for *Present Tense*: You had a precise line measurement, and you even completely reconfigured the lines and stanzas at one point. I seem to remember you used to work as a carpenter. Do you see this work as a carpentry-like craft? Hammering, sawing, sanding?
STEPHEN: I do. It is like building stuff out of words.

SARAH: I haven’t seen the books in your recent series but I’m getting the picture that while many formal constraints are repeated throughout, each has its own signature formal elements as well.

STEPHEN: That’s true. For example, both *HUMAN / NATURE* and *CLOUD / RIDGE* include one stanza unit drawn from a note I’ve written the prior day about something observed while surfing. I go in the water every day, and when I’m out there I see something, and when I get back to the house, I write it down in notebook “A.” But an element unique to *CLOUD / RIDGE* is that the fourth of the five stanza units is always an excerpt from Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*. Every day I would turn to one page and find something and put it into my poem. I went through the book several times. I wasn’t using it during the early part of the manuscript, but then I started to read it and make use of it.

SARAH: Maybe you could read a poem from *CLOUD / RIDGE*.

STEPHEN: Sure. I’ll read the last poem in that book. It’s titled “10.18,” because it was written on October 18, 2002:

10.18

grey-white streak of cloud above ridge in window opposite the unmade yellow and blue bed, song sparrow calling from lower left foreground

woman on phone looking at center of circle passing through vertices of triangle, noting “proofs are in the heart of mathematics”

man in green shirt wondering what it means for words to be concrete, Pound claiming Chinese presents “pictures of actions and processes in nature”

Lily Briscoe drawing a line “in the centre,”
thinking to herself “I have had my vision”

line of white water moving across flat grey plane in the lower right foreground, circular green pine on point against grey plane above it

SARAH: I get the sense that you were very aware of saying goodbye to this book: “I have had my vision.”

STEPHEN: Yes, definitely. I know it is almost too much, but…

SARAH: It speaks of your deep personal involvement in the project, and of the loss involved in finishing it.
STEPHEN: Oh, yeah, it was really powerful. I knew that I was going to come to the end, but I didn’t know what would happen, what I would do next.

SARAH: And in fact you moved right on into *HUMAN / NATURE.*

STEPHEN: I did.

SARAH: You mentioned that you surf every day. Part of the ritual and skill of surfing involves becoming highly attuned to changes – often minute ones – in the conditions of weather and horizon and ocean. Do you see a connection there with your writing practice?

STEPHEN: I do. I think about how this writing is like life. Our lives are made up of little incremental changes, and if we are fortunate, things go by and one day follows another and another and another. These poems seem to be trying to enact that. They are recording what happens.

SARAH: I came across a passage in a book called *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* by Christopher Norris. He’s summarizing Derrida’s critique of structuralism: “Structuralism and phenomenology are locked in a reciprocal *aporía* from which neither can emerge with its principles intact, but on which both depend for their moments of maximum insight.” (p. 51)

That made me think of your writing: You have a highly structured practice which is designed to release a phenomenological, moment-by-moment experience involving lots of chance and accident. You take in – are in a way flooded by – sensations and memories and perceptions, and you find a way to let them have their own flow onto the page, but within a very defined structure. There’s a phenomenological side and a structural side to your practice, and these two sides are in one sense opposed yet at the same time deeply dependent on each other to produce your poetry.

STEPHEN: There’s this ongoing flood of phenomena that’s happening in the world, and in our perception of the world – it’s just incessant. Even when we are asleep, we’re dreaming, and, whether we remember it or not, there are cars going by outside on the street. There’s all this life. There is this continuous present. The future is always becoming present, and the present is always receding into the past. My work is an attempt to articulate that by giving it a shape, finding a structure. There’s a lot of artifice; the shaping hand of the maker is at work, in the work. But there’s also an awful lot of accident that comes into it. So there’s a tension between the contrivance of the shaping power and the accidental.
At this past year's MLA conference, I split my time between roughly literary and roughly communication oriented panels. Highlights on both sides included Jena Osman's presentation on journalistic found poetry and Peter Jaszi's rather gloomy predictions for copyright and IP law in the 21st century. It was my first time attending the MLA, and I went primarily because it was here, in San Diego, and because I had a chance to meet and reunite with some cool poetry people, particularly the many on hand for the Harryette Mullen reading and (refreshingly unplugged) follow-up discussion.

Literature – at least the kind showcased at MLA – is a rather sad academic discipline that can't get over its obsession with the literary artifact, be it book or poem or even authorial biography. I took up “communication” as a field of study a few years ago in part because I'd had enough of literary artifacts, or at least the production and study/fetishization thereof, even those produced by artisans engaged in a deliberate dismantling of artifact-producing categories and processes.

The discipline of communication has its obsessions too, among them the rarefied “object” of sociological or historical study. But in general these objects add up to a much broader, and I think more compelling, set of questions, procedures, policies, dances, and moments, and rarely do they look like artifacts in the way an Elizabeth Bishop or even W.C. Williams poem can in the hands of tenured lit/poetry professor. The difference in disciplinary focus might come down to that rather simple matter of range of coverage.

Granted, the lit world, as such, has its more flexible trench-workers doing their best to keep the concrete soft before pouring (a few of them on hand at the MLA). But building the monument is almost always the endgame of official discourse, so even the more wily experimental lit panels can end by offering up the same ritual of publicly witnessed foundation-setting. Okay, but that's the business of lit so why rehearse the knocking of it.

Poetry journals are mostly epiphenomenal non-artifacts that live pretty short, snappy lives on the borders of literary studies and monument building. Great resources for watching the micro-work of literary communication transpire, poetry journals give up the artifact in search of the fact. Evidentiary objects – things in the Heideggerian sense of gatherings – poetry journals are great documents in search of dedicated readers-qua-researchers. The good-time of poetry and poetics, let's say, transpires in the pages of good poetry zines.
Journals communicate, perhaps, in ways that books do not and cannot. Or at least that’s how I’d like to go about reading them from now on – as communiqués from the wilderness of poetry production which for the most part resist the hardening effects of artifact-obsessing. In that spirit, I was happy to receive *Submodern Fiction* 1, *The Poker* 3, and *Antennae* 5, three journals whose status as documentary evidence I would like to examine in a communication framework, assuming that’s a fair place to begin.

Editor Mark Wallace opens the first issue of *Submodern Fiction* with a call for “alternative fiction to go sub-modern.” So concludes an editorial that makes, along the way, some rather bold (if sweeping) statements about the current state of fiction publishing in the USA as well as the prevailing relationships between a “non-mainstream” poetry crowd and their fiction-writing allies.

*SMF,* Wallace writes, is “devoted to alternative forms of prose narrative” or a non-traditional narrative typically passed over by major publishing outfits due to its “postmodern” bent. Two forces conspire against such efforts, he suggests, namely the prevailing interest in, due to marketability of, realist/magic realist strains and what Wallace characterizes as the avant-garde rejection of narrative as the “essential enemy of socially engaged writing.”

One of the interesting things about Mark’s intro is the use of “alternative” about five or six times to mark this “non”ish (non-realist, non-mainstream) kind of writing. It’s a tough job, obviously, to classify and label, for purposes of editorial framing, the kind of writing one is looking for particularly when the commercial activity of labeling and classifying is one of the things one hopes to resist/avoid in promoting an “alternative.” What transpires, it seems, in trying to make room for work typically rejected for not being “x” enough is the dialectical call for “anti-x” to fill up its own space. The boundaries of the “alternative,” however, are not all that clear, aside from this specified “non”-ness. An old problem.

Mark does suggest some positive values, such as “radical cultural critique” and (as above) “socially engaged writing,” and I’m not too concerned about this (non)definition problem because the zine at least risks proposing its own alterity by steering headlong into the problem of sameness. Some may object that an appeal to the “alternative” is precisely what’s commonplace – even main – these days, so Wallace’s opening call depends a lot on whether or not a fiction writing/reading audience really needs or wants that altered space (or state) to work in.

In the end I must assume that what’s “non” is what’s there between the lime-green covers, and for the record those who have so far answered the call for “alternative fiction to go sub-modern” are Susan Smith Nash, Cydney Chadwick, Joseph Battaglia, Jefferson Hansen, Anne Bogle, Stephen-Paul Martin, and Harold Jaffe.
Maybe this list names some of the “natives” of this particular sub-set of alter-native writing, and they know who they are and know (they know) the particular genre knowledge required to identify oneself and one’s work either in or outside the range of this somewhat broadly stipulated “alter.” Again, that’s cool. Communities, I’m the first to acknowledge, should know themselves, and that self-identification work is enough to both float the project and keep the “realists” out, which is obviously part of the project as well.

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Kaku:

Taking a break from writing this review, I went to see/hear Barbara Kruger and Jerome Rothenberg discuss image & text over at the Vis Arts building (UCSD campus). The question of categories, as one might expect, held fast as a centerpiece of conversation.

“Kaku,” J.R. noted toward the end of the talk, is the Japanese word used for both “writing” and “drawing.” He wondered aloud how things might be different in the West if we likewise had only one word for that activity of moving the hand across a surface with a marking implement. Jerry evidently spent a few of his many years at UCSD trying — unsuccessfully in the end — to get “creative writing” moved from the Lit to the Art department. The disciplinary walls, he said, were just too hard to “punch through.” (He did, however, hold a joint appointment [Lit/Art] throughout his tenure at UC.)

As his anecdote suggests (if obliquely), absent typically from discussions of “image & text” — or choose your favorite binary — is the effect of institutional/administrative, even architectural, logistics on the ways we make sense of our various “kakus.” I approached J.R. afterward to get the right spelling for this Japanese word, and he asked in passing if I was in Lit now and I had to confess that, no, I was in Comm — another disciplinary demarcation (I thought but didn’t say at the time) adding another piece to the image/text puzzle.

Because, as Lev Manovich, Vis Arts prof and ‘new media’ theorist, rightly pointed out in Q&A, it’s not just about image and text but also motion. And yet, getting back to this review, it’s also not just about image, text, and motion but also action or interaction. Communication is interaction is art, and this in reverse, meaning there are ways to think about art as communication that go beyond the justifiable claims once made by Lang Pos, among others, that poetics has suffered over the years from implicit and explicit recourse to the communicative fallacy — basically that good poems communicate their meanings in the way good pipes pump hot water.

“Half with loathing, half with a strange love,” The Poker (3) communicates (partial list) Fanny Howe from On the Bus (“Turn back time!”); Dale Smith from Notes No Answers (“Shall we make it perfect?”) and other pointed
rhetorical questions); Dan Bouchard from *Evensong* (ratcheted-up intertext, pieces of which I heard read in NYC last year at the Subpress reading); Durand interviewing Kevin Davies; Alan Davies (from *This Is Thinking*, which it is: ‘A good poem deflates the ego. It breathes out.’); Fanny Howe again on music, religion, poetry, and Henry Hampton’s “Eyes on the Prize” plus the camera as “social animal.”

In the call for work at the back: “Essays by poets will be prized.” (!)

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*Antennae* (5) is one of those nicely conceived mixed genre journals that pushes at some of those real/imagined walls separating poetry; art, performance script, document, lecture, and musical score. That really compelling examples of each are included in one issue is impressive enough, but also the works tend to start looking like each other, or maybe unlike themselves, as the thing moves along. That was the message I got, at least, as I paged through: Rodrigo Toscano, Dennis Barone, Sawako Nakayasu, Steven Timm, Matthew Goulish (whose “microlecture” alone is worth the cover price), Keumok Heo, Leslie Scalapino, and Patrick Durgin, among others.

*Antennae* has something like an aura of occasion to it that I really like. I want to write something specifically for it, in other words, whereas on other days I’m wondering whether something I have might fit a particular journal or zine. Maybe the latter approach is wrong-headed anyway, but I wonder if there’s something to the journal/zine itself (its size, shape, texture, print run, smell, font, focus, etc.) that either attracts or repels active-interactive response of this kind.

I for one would like to see more of these operations where what seems to materialize, in the end, is a sense of invitation to communicate with the people and projects happening in the pages of the zine/journal occasion-object. Maybe that’s what all of them do, in theory anyway, and some obviously print that invitation on the inside cover, but it’s clear to me that some do it more generously (even if not explicitly) than others.

And for the record I think these three – *Submodern Fiction*, *The Poker*, and *Antennae* – come packaged with really lively, effective invitations.
Poetics of Impending Loss, A Tale*

Laynie Browne

In her paragraph I wanted to write my paragraph. Early tales contain your origins. Received literature is the constant present, the disappearance of the constructs of time and space. Cleverness is no substitute for reciprocity. Originality comes from somewhere lodged not solely in mind, in any one mind, not solely from a place of thought. You might ask what else is there? The question is not to answer, but to embark. The question is a life of writing, of reading and listening perhaps, or how I come to all this, any project, any understanding of poem or person.

In preparing this “talk” and reading I’ve tried to locate my writing by placing it in conversation with other writing, suggesting influences without which I could not have found myself here. I’ll proceed largely with a collage of received texts, for all of which I am grateful.

I. Definition, Intention

Each word itself is an arrangement
The story must exist in each word or it cannot go on
– ZUKOFSKY

Irretrievable
Unutterable
A story for the untold
Tale replaces speech
Fable replaces advice, preaching, prohibition (cautionary tale)
Irresolvable
Gaping hole – inexplicable in narrative replaces narrative
Tale replaces telling
Obstacle becomes legend

This is the loss of what is missing

* This talk was written for a talk in the 21st Century Poetics series in Berkeley, California, Feb 2003. Elizabeth Robinson and I collaborated to come up with the title. We each gave a talk and a reading. In between each of the numbered sections, I read from my manuscript The Scented Fox.
To live is to impend loss. With no loss is no tale, no telling, no impending, impingement
In one sense to “poem” or to write is to pronounce the opposite, to suppose something may be secured. But that seems a frivolous wish to those who are required or compelled to write by such an overhang, imminent wind.

Helene Cixous writes in *Three Steps on The Ladder of Writing*:

“The imund book is the book without an author. It is the book written with us aboard, though not with us at the steering wheel. It is the book that makes us experience a kind of dying, that drops the self, the speculating self, the speculating clever ‘I.’”

The tale is an authorless text. Or, the ultimate collaboration with time.

2. LOSS AS CONCENTRATION

“To be able to say: “I am in the book. The book is my world, my country, my roof, and my riddle. The book is my breath and my rest. I get up with the page that is turned. I lie down with the page put down. To be able to reply: ‘I belong to the race of words, which homes are built with’ – when I know full well that this answer is still another question, that this home is constantly threatened.”

—EDMOND JABES

Poetics of loss is a type of concentration
What fills in around absence, resonance
A plea for the form to be modeled on an earlier howl
From the comb which became a forest
from peril, the notion of
from self to beast, ghost, monster etc., embodied by speech or action

The nature of peril is not fixed but is as changing as success – and at times, as desirable.

My interest in the tale as received language is inspired by reading of tales, hearing them as a child (before reading), and repetitions of reading as a parent, reading other presents into pasts. And by many others’ notions of received or dictated texts/or artistic works.

Hannah Weiner’s notion of Silent Teachers: speaks as a type of listening. Her book “We Speak Silent” begins: “All words dictated silently. Clairvoyant poet. Silent teacher.”
“if we are going to learn maw we have to have more people speaking silent punch drunk maw is what we’d say which is not working well and warned about it. Sir silent generation says.”

Spicer’s notion of “the outside” is an endless resource. “The third stage I think comes when you get some idea that there is a difference between you and the outside of you which is writing poetry, where you feel less proud of the poem that you’ve written, and you know damn well that it belongs to somebody else.”

Cage, and Mac Low in their use of chance also connect in my mind to a type of reception or listening, not allowing the controlling eye to gather focus. This brings the many coincidences of now into a listening frame. So to be interested in music doesn’t rule out astronomy. To be interested in “the tale” doesn’t mean one must be tale-like. Loss as concentration. Many things drop away and a form presents itself.

3. “A TALE IS A SMALL CHEST FOR SECRECY”

“An anthology devoted to small boxes, such as chests and caskets would constitute an important chapter in psychology. These complex pieces that a craftsman creates are very evident witnesses of the need for secrecy, of an intuitive sense of hiding places. It is not merely a matter of keeping a possession well guarded. The lock doesn’t exist that could resist absolute violence and all locks are an invitation to thieves. A lock is a psychological threshold. And how it defies indiscretion when it is covered with ornaments.”

— Gaston Bachelard, from The Poetics of Space

on the same subject Clarice Lispector writes in O Lustro:

...what had illuminated her against the world and had given it an intimate power, that had been the secret. Secret about which she would never be able to think in clear terms, for fear of invading and dissolving her image. And which yet had crystallized in the furthest depths of herself a remote and living seed... feeding her with its insoluble vagueness as the only reality that in her own eyes would always have to be lost.

Another influence is the photographic work of Francesca Woodman, (which was the starting point and initial inspiration for my novel, Acts of Levitation. One of Woodman’s photographs appears on the cover). Her work consists largely of self portraits and is constantly in conversation with the question and illusion of identity – the secret being what is revealed to the eye sug-
gests something utterly unseeable. The images point to a figure intimate yet remote. Whether attempting to shut oneself into a glass cabinet or to relay a veiled commodification of the body, what is unknowable can be held intact and secret, even stripped bare of all pedestrian associations. This ability to reveal and illuminate the unspeakable or hidden, is in part what attracts me to the tale as a form. While knowing, the tale unknows and begins again, beginning with a new alphabet already formed, creating a texture beneath the surface of newly forged language.

4. THE UNCONSCIOUS CENTER OF THE TALE

Imagined spaces cannot be possessed. They belong to no one. Or to you or to everyone.
Imagined relations cannot be stolen.
Imagined places may be enchanted, inhabited by both or many conflicting nations, exchanged for dust.

Melissa Wolsak writes in *An Heuristic Procularion*:

“The unconscious is the center of our mental life, or at least … nearer the divine, and posits multiple centers from which to say. An imaginative response is one in which distinction between emotional and intellectual has disappeared, and in which ordinary consciousness is only one of many conceivable psychic elements. No judgment, but interrogation into the quality of life, via text limits. Projecting outward and multiplying the visible appearances, the phosphorus of the mystery.”

TACITURN TALE

I often begin with the words of other people not because they belong to anyone but because we all need momentum and history. We all have been somewhere before coming to the banquet, and to display any thought is an interchange of energy as necessary and often as invisible as breath.

Old tales be they biblical, pre speech, or local legend, to descend to the level of gossip, are such offerings.

Tales cannot be fully embodied with logic. You can critique, but that is another land. For instance, in the winter one shouldn’t go around with wet hair and bare feet. That’s why we have permission to write in the present tense beginning with old forms. Since we recognize them immediately they become as changeable as talk and therefore we can puncture the fruit and
take a seed to plant something else. It’s underpainting that sheds radiance, it’s the authorless quality that gives voice to newness. It’s the time within which they are re-invented which relates authenticity, surrounded by the mechanisms of time present thought.

Old language gives underpinnings. New language lends light and refitting what can never be a closure, but only a hook and an eye. The tale is dressed and undressed beyond the outer gesture of garment, and the indelible thought beyond thinking, the unnamable substance which recognizes itself and fosters an intelligence which doesn’t claim a recognizable form.

Imagined characters may become someone. Anyone. The character “else.”

The space of impending loss is that which is to be taken outside of the tale. The page or voice provides a looking glass into which one may peer fearlessly into such a drowning.

5. TALE ASLEEP: TO DREAM EVERY LOSS

W.G. Sebald writes: “perhaps moths dream as well, perhaps a lettuce in the garden dreams as it looks up at the moon by night”

“...the solar day which we take as our guide does not provide any precise measurement, so that in order to reckon time we have to devise an imaginary average sun which has an invariable speed of movement and does not incline towards the equator in its orbit. Why do we show the hours of light and darkness in the same circle?” (from Austerlitz)

“For the spiral-walker there is no plain path, no up and down no inside or outside. But there are strange returns and recognitions and never a conclusion.”

— FANNY HOWE

Within the tale a jewel may be found and kept without tax
Within the tale the jewel may be lost and unaccounted or never mentioned
No one may find it
You may find the tale and discard the jewel
Objects become inconsequential or luminary.

This is not of course limited only to the tale but to the concept of loss within all imagined spaces.
The tale is welcoming because it is recognized internally, because it is not new. The mind develops the tale after it has been spoken or written. The mind interrupts and objects. A new version is created.

The tale provides a space for inconsolable, irrecoverable, irretrievable, unresolvable.

It works like a rune or an internal map or a forgotten dream upon the onlooker. It enters.
Talking Dirty & Carried Away: kari edwards' iduna

Chris Martin

iduna is a daring book. It dares readers to expand, to activate, to embroil themselves in the processes of language rather than simply process language for its simplest, consumable, unidirectional content. It is textual Truth or Dare and in its constant hunger for multiplicity encompasses both, as edwards strips the commercial dressings of language in order to communicate something of untransactable disorder.

To this end, edwards plunges the reader into a disorderly cabaret of expression. Anyone looking for shapely line breaks, crystalline verse, or poetic calm of any sort should look elsewhere. Each page is a palimpsest of visual clues, cluttered to bursting with information. It’s as if edwards has made transparencies from the Want-ads, the oed, and the Dead Sea Scrolls and laid them one over the other. Which is not to say the content is random or without author. edwards is inclusive without being unbiased, detached, or indifferent. There is a palpable yearning after new ways of saying, of thinking, a thrust toward possible if unwieldy constructions. As edwards himself puts it: “Lines that meander wildly over general wounded dumbfoundedness.”

This is a wild book, untamed, untermed, answering to a variety of names and un-names. It is full, incoherent, without consensus: “Whenever people agree they must be wrong.” It is a work of compassion and politics, tracing “the holy roman empire” as it “moves from hotel to hotel.” In tracking this movement, edwards seeks out the coincidental sexual machinery of language and invites the reader into its tangled, humorous, and libidinal works: “sexuality begets language, copulates with gender algorithms, beget fucking, begets triangulated panoramas, vistas of different modulations.”

This proclivity for the “obscene” or scatological is typified by iduna’s intoxication with four-letter words, which parade the top and bottom of each page. They hound the reader with the implication of obscenity and in doing so effectively subvert one’s notion of obscenity. Though you will find “cuss” here, you won’t find much standard profanity: Instead, edwards forces the reader to redefine his/her/hir feeling for what makes a word profane. Lash starts out as an innocent flirtation device and morphs into a bondage game. Jerk might be a person or an action, or both. Flag becomes a thing with which to flagellate someone, a flapping thing like lips, a message strapped to a pole. Pink Skin. Pink Slip. Slit, Clip, Clew.

Make no mistake about it, edwards is talking dirty to you. And one obvious criticism of iduna is its apparent muddiness, its tendency to muddle the message. While there is certainly an indulgence here, a digressive inclusiveness that can confound readers and lull them to weariness, such muddle is
undoubtedly part of edwards’ project, hir reclamation of language. You cannot approach this as you would any other book. It is not a book. It is a sculpture. It is something to look at. It is dense, plush, multivocal. It is something to hear. It is an installation. It is waiting for a reader to be born(e). It is a unique pleasure to watch kari edwards getting carried away. There’s a good chance you will too.

iduna, kari edwards
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Beyond the Darkness: An Interview with Xue Di*

Meadow Dibble-Dieng & Heidi Brevik

MEADOW DIBBLE-DIENG: Your resume is very impressive, you seem very active and solicited. How do you perceive your career in the USA as being different than it would have been had you stayed in China?

XUE DI: If I had remained in China, I would probably be in prison now. That’s the number one reason I am in this country. Also, in China, one is not allowed to give individual readings, especially contemporary poets and artists. China tends to go against the contemporary arts because they speak out more than the traditional forms of expression. Traditional artists are quieter, more or less following the Party’s regulations. The contemporary artist has more of a tendency to rebel.

MDD: Then how do the contemporary writers share their poetry?

XD: Today, the critical circumstances are looser. In the past, the public couldn’t produce their own magazines, they only had access to governmental publications. Some of the editors had a sympathy for the contemporary arts and would selectively publish new work. But the critical situation came and everything vanished, it was banished. The editors who published any contemporary work would get laid off or fired. Certain artists could get in real trouble. When the political strings are tight, everything goes underground. Back fifteen or twenty years ago, the government was very much in control of our contemporary arts. The only way we could communicate was to have a private poetry reading or a gathering in a person’s house. Get together, go out, go to the parks, to quiet places. I used to live alone, so my place was one of the sites where people would gather. The artists came to give readings or just to have a good time, to drink, chat, fight, whatever.

MDD: Do you miss that?

XD: I miss that kind of thing very, very much. To think about it now, life was kind of crazy, it was chaos, but I loved that kind of free living and a

* Xue Di is a poet and a fellow of Brown University’s “Freedom to Write” program, established through the Department of Creative Writing after the Tian’anmen Square demonstrations of 1989 in which he took part. Of the three writers who benefited from this program, Xue Di is alone in having made Providence his permanent home. Working part-time in the Department of English, he continues to write poetry in Chinese and to publish in translation. Having lived for thirty-three years in Beijing – one of the world’s largest cities – Xue Di enjoys the small-town feel of Providence, where he has made many friends, as well as the proximity to nature, which serves as a source of inspiration for his poetry.
feeling that so many people have the same desire and different personalities. We might be opposites in art, but in friendship we really share our writing. You can do anything, say “I hate you, you are a bad person, you’re an asshole” – you can feel free to say it. In this country, whoa! You can’t always do that. You should respect your people, but there’s some kind of an intimate connection. That’s something that I really miss. The connection.

MDD: Have you found anything similar here?
XD: Nothing similar, really. That is the one thing about the culture, it is so different. In mainland China, we do not have our own space, we do not have privacy, which is bad. Oriental cultures focus on family, the group, that is the way government encourages people to think because it is in the benefit of the government to control people. It is much easier to control groups than to control each individual. Part of that is our culture and part is a strategy of the Communist party. That was the way we grew up. But here, this culture encourages privacy. You have to have your privacy, your space. In Asian countries when you talk with someone you really get close, physically. But in this country, if someone gets too close to you, you will back up. If they pat you on the back you will think “ooh, that’s weird.” All the small, subtle cultural details are different. It is such an open society, so when people respect the privacy of others they also want their own privacy. Another big difference is for example at a reading. Say we are good friends and we know we are really good friends (some highly-respected American poets are my friends). I will read a poem and ask what my friends think, and they say “oh, good, that’s nice.” And that’s it. They say, “oh this is very interesting” and you ask “what about it interests you?” and they back off, nothing more. It doesn’t get detailed, or personal. This is one thing that makes me feel quite uncomfortable. In China we really don’t have this sort of problem, we’ll say “this is a damn bad poem!” and will start to argue or whatever. I love that kind of thing! It’s so honest and so free.

MDD: You have mentioned in the past that formerly when you wrote poetry, you liked to express a lot of emotion – violent emotion, love… And now that you are in the USA, you seem to be tending more towards repressing this emotion and toning it down to the very minimum. It is interesting that, writing under an oppressive regime, you felt the need to express emotion, and writing under a democratic regime, the need to repress emotion. But you are saying that you and your friends shared a great space for expression, whereas here in the States, in reality, you don’t find that. People tend to repress their emotions here.

XD: I am not sure that it is specifically about repressing emotion. I think it is something else. In China, other people care enough about you to enter in. Here, I don’t know if it’s getting too personal or just that they don’t want to hurt you because they don’t want to be hurt. It really bothers me.
a lot, but I think that it is a cultural thing. Something about the way to live, between private and public life; it is different in the two countries. It seems to be less about repression than some kind of discipline. It does not come from emotions but from rational thought. The reason I said my writing has changed (see “Releasing: Light and Darkness,” published in *Arts & Letters*, No. 4, Fall 2000) is due to the fact that then there was so much emotion because our lives were so close, there were so many things that we were angry about. We had a very strong, unbeatable opponent. Like a boxer, you cannot beat that person up. The only thing you can do is to stand up, but you will spend all your life trying to punch, punch, punch. There is always something defined for you, right in front of you, that you are going to fight. You don’t have to think anything through, just fight, fight, fight. Because you need to get out. But in this country, there is no particular opponent. Everything is so free, so open. You have all the options. You choose. You choose to speak out, you choose to not speak out. No one forces you, no one tells you that you can’t do this, you have to do this. Everything is only your choice. There are no defined opponents. When I came to this country I felt lost. I was so used to fighting and when I came here I realized that there was nothing to fight against. Of course, you have to fight to earn money, but it was nothing like in China. So there was a really big gap. I was sinking in a big hole and couldn’t get out. Gradually I learned to make an effort to adapt. The opponent is still right there. It still exists, but the opponent is myself. I realized that if I could think of myself as the opponent then my life could change, as well as my writing. I really have more distance in my life. In China I used to say that my life was miserable because I was under the Communist Party’s rule; that was true, but how much was attributable to the society, and how much was within ourselves? No one really looked too deep, it was easy to complain, to make that claim.

**MDD:** In a sense you have transposed the opponent; the opponent was an exterior, oppressive force and now you say that the opponent is in you… Do you feel that you need an opponent to write poetry?

**XD:** You need a motivation. You have to have a desire. What is the motivation? What is the desire? You cannot say “I’m sitting here, I am so peaceful” and that is what you write. You always have to have some sort of underlying anxiety, or strong appreciation for something to make you feel “I want to write, I want to express myself.” As a writer, we always have something in our lives or mind that is pushing us to move on, not just the desire to write. There must be something behind, beneath. Pushing things out. I always think that life is a battle but in different kinds of ways, on different levels. The lowest level is the physical: violence, battle. Then the battle becomes increasingly spiritual. But there is always something you are working with, or battling with.

**MDD:** So why this desire now to limit the emotion expressed?
XD: Because emotion is power, but it's also beauty, which is a power in itself. I find that emotion, when you are writing or practicing an art, has a certain limitation. Emotion can touch people, but it's like after a punch you will feel pain and only be left with the memory of that pain. Now, if I really control my emotion, I can go to a deeper stage, a more profound reality, to bring something out of my poetry. These things, compared with the emotion, create an impact. That impact is like you are punching but you are using a soft cloth wrapped around your fist. You receive a soft punch and don't feel very much pain, but after a few days you might find that there is an internal injury. It's the same kind of principle. I'm not trying to take out the emotion, it is just that the writing is different. There is not so much trouble and anxiety in my life so I can quiet myself down to listen to myself more, I am not so restless or anxious. There is a voice that comes from a deeper state, combined with raw realities. And that's what I feel. I think that this kind of writing has much more power than just shouting out. On the one hand, I am aware of this, so I am pursuing it. Another aspect is that I am in this stage. As my life has changed, so has my way of writing. People say of writers, “Oh, he writes the same year after year” or they say “she’s changing.” You cannot say, “Ok, I’m going to change my writing.” You can try a different writing style, but it probably will come out just a piece of junk, like an experimental piece. The way the writing has changed, your life has changed. You have developed internally and expanded mentally. So when you are really developed as a person, as a human being you are developed, you are going from one level to another level, your writing of course will have changed.

HEIDI BREVIK: I was reading some of your poems and was particularly struck by the series that you did in reaction to Van Gogh’s paintings. I was wondering if you might comment on that. You refer a lot to the artist, and it’s interesting to me that you chose an artist who is not a poet to inspire you.

XD: The reason I wrote that cycle of poems entitled Flames is because Vincent Van Gogh’s work, even before it was widely accepted and sold for great sums of money, was very, very popular in China, especially among the younger generation. Van Gogh started to paint when he was 35. He had a depression, he was crazy, he had a strong desire for solitude, and art, and love and nature. And his painting was full of this strong desire and twisting force. Our young generation in China was very familiar with that kind of emotion and feeling. We felt we were so closed, we were depressed, we couldn't be the way we wanted to be. So we had a sort of understanding of the craziness of Van Gogh, the desperation. That's why we love his paintings. Especially me. I had a very difficult childhood. My parents divorced when I was six years old, I couldn’t follow either of them so I had to live alone. In the meantime there was the Cultural Revolution, and the violence. So, all that put together, I was probably more
crazy than all my friends, other poets and painters about his work. I also feel that I’m reborn, I probably feel that I share Van Gogh’s soul, or whatever. I feel I have such a good understanding of him. I used to paint when I was in China – landscapes, oil painting. Also my poems are largely images from nature. I have a strong connection to nature. Because of my situation, I didn’t really appreciate the time I spent with people because I didn’t get any support or love from them. But I feel so much comfort and encouragement and love from nature. Nature always accepts you. I could talk to a tree, a river, a stream, feel love. That’s why I feel a strong connection to Van Gogh and wrote that cycle of poems. I wrote 32 of those poems, published 16 and destroyed the other half because they didn’t come out as good. It’s our feelings, not a description of Van Gogh’s paintings.

MDD: When did you come into contact with nature if you grew up in Beijing, what was your first experience with nature?

XD: My first experience with nature, I believe it was from my previous life. I believe that was my beginning. That is an excellent question. Growing up in Beijing I didn’t really have any contact with nature, people were everywhere. But the nature was right there in my heart. I think my internal experience must be from a previous life. Neither of my parents was a traveler, they had no interest in nature. I believe people have many lives, a soul selects a body to grow in. I just love nature, it’s just always been a part of my life.

MDD: You were recently in China, is that right?

XD: Not recently: It was three years ago. I’m trying to go back this summer if I don’t have any big events. I have a couple events coming. Every summer I want to go back but I always feel that I can’t because there is always an event. I’m very homesick now. Sometimes you are so sick, you know you’re sick, so you have to lay down, take a pill. This is a time when I feel I’m homesick so much I really have to go back.

MDD: What is your relationship like with the literary community in China? Do they follow your career here in the States? Do they read your works?

XD: Once in a while I send some poems back to China. It’s not like poems of exile. These poems cannot be published in China, I do not even bother to send them to my friends who are editors, they might have problems. Usually, I send poems about nature, love poems. Not poems with a critical tendency. So I get some work published in China. Also, once in a while they say they are going to publish all of your work, then two months later you learn that the publishers are closed. Now there is another one who is working on my anthology, but it’s an unpredictable situation. It’s luck. There is such a short time, a friend is in a position, you are right there, you could probably get work published but then your friend will get bad luck later. Basically, my friends and colleagues are not able to follow my writing. Most of my work is published in magazines in the US.
and Hong Kong. But when they do have a chance to follow it they like it, more and more. Because it is really different from my old writing.

**HB:** In the States, do you have a publishing project that you are working on right now?

**XD:** Yes, I am working with a couple of different chapbooks, and also another full-length book. That was my first. * Flames* was a chapbook. I have a number of poems in Chinese, but the translation process takes time.

**HB:** What about “Parallel Deep”?  
**XD:** I finished the book in Chinese, but the translation is taking time. I am very careful about who translates my work because, as a poet, if the translation is really bad my career could be affected in this country.

**MDD:** Do you think it has changed the way you write or conceive of poems in any way, knowing that they are going to be translated, or knowing that your first audience now is the American public?

**XD:** There are two parts to that. People often ask when you write do you consider the audience. When I write, I never think about the audience. I am my own reader, I write for myself. When I finish, it needs to be published, but I never think about how to change it for the public. That’s my experience. I am not going to change myself. I am not going to adapt my experience for the readers. But the skills, the technology is different, what is the best way to allow a reader follow your internal bridge to get into your work. That is something you can consider. But it is not working to suit them, it is working to suit the poetry, helping them to connect to the poetry. The second part of the question is about translation. If I am able to write something in English now, if I am thinking that I am writing for an American audience, it probably would be a big difference. Because I understand the humor and the performance and also the importance of entertainment in this culture. This is a culture of entertainment. You see the movie stars, talk show hosts, Jay Leno, they entertain people so well. If I was born in this country and writing, the writing could be very different because of the culture. If I am thinking about the translation, I probably would add a little more entertainment, more humor. But I am not going in that direction. To answer your question, that could be a possibility for one poem or a collection of poems, but probably I am never going to go there. Because my poetry is so severe and serious.

**MDD:** I read a little about Gao Xingjian, the Nobel laureate. What do you think of his stance on the role of literature, conveyed in the speech that he gave before the general assembly when he received the Nobel Prize? Contrary to Sartre and this whole idea of commitment in literature, his view is that a true writer is not a spokesperson, not a representative of his people, and that literature should have no relationship to ideology. Do you feel that you need to speak for the people or address issues that are important in Chinese society?

**XD:** I think this is actually a very complicated issue. Every writer looks at it a
different way and will give you a different answer. I understand where his response came from, because our writing is so much entangled in the politics – bad politics, adapted to communist theory – so his basic stance is that he will not entangle his writing in the politics. He is very much into the technique and the skill. It is pure human condition. I understand his view but I am not really of the same opinion. I am from China, I am currently living in a free country; my people are still suffering and are facing real danger. They can’t speak out. I think I have a duty to tell the world what is happening in my country through my writing, not through shouting. I feel like I am obligated to speak. As a poet you could be living in your own world, writing about clouds, rivers, flowers. But I think I am more than that. I feel a poet should speak out for the people behind him. Through the poetry you really carry the culture, I am with my people though my particular style of writing.

MDD: Xingjian was condemned by the Association of Chinese Writers (governmental) who did not approve of something he said in his acceptance speech – in which he was very political, by the way – discussing the repression of writers who have chosen to speak. This Association claimed that writers in China have “enough freedom.”

XD: I usually say that, as a writer you have the freedom to write, in your mind. But the more public you are, the less freedom you have. So it is absolutely not true. If you want to write for your conscience, speak out the truth, even to pursue your individual and unique writing style it will not be allowed, because government cannot understand it, they are going to construe it as threatening.

MDD: Can anything positive come out of such a situation? In one of your interviews you mentioned that it is the suffering you experienced as a child that made you a poet. Do you think that an oppressive social situation can produce a very creative and dynamic underworld of cultural expression? Or will oppression always kill such projects?

XD: It is always floating underground. Under looser control I think it could emerge, like a volcano or an earthquake and spread. The difference with nature is that when it comes out it could continue to flow. But the government feels a strong need to control and to oppress. The government would shut down the volcano. The situation will continue to be like this until the critical circumstances have changed in mainland China. At that point the fire will no longer be a fire, but spring water. It is hard to predict when and how this might happen.

MDD: Do you think the other artists like you will go through a sort of a dark period where, because there is no longer this oppressive force, they will have to find a new voice?

XD: I hope they will be able to go through this. Many Chinese writers living abroad have stopped writing. The one reason is because language is the way we make a living, the way we live, and when you come to a foreign
country language becomes your weakness. It's not like a painter who could continue to paint, or a musician. If I cannot get translations, my work would go nowhere here. That is why I say I hope they will go through this transition and come out writing. It's not just because of the difference of living circumstances, as an artist you go through a deeper stage of alienation.

MDD: Do you have contact with other Chinese living in the USA? Or with Chinese Americans?
XD: I have a couple writer friends. But I don't have a particular connection with either Chinese Americans or even the Chinese student community here at Brown. Just because it is so different. Most Chinese students here are involved in science, not in the humanities. Also, I am kind of a solitary person, I don't maintain a lot of contact with people. I am very much focused on what I am doing. If I feel homesick I might watch a Chinese movie. If there are events I will go.

MDD: How do you feel about the word “exile” – do you consider yourself to be in exile?
XD: I think exile is your first condition here. You have no choice. But for me now, if I chose to go back to China I think I would be allowed to go back, but I wouldn't be allowed to be active politically, or to be truly free. I don't think I am really exiled. This is the lifestyle I choose to live in this country. It is very important that I have the freedom to write, to live without fear. That is the most important reason I choose to live in this country. There is this internal emotional loss and pain, for being here and not there, but I cannot call myself exiled, not from my point of view. I choose to be here, to be alone, to feel solitude and to be cut-off from my people.

MDD: Do your friends and family and colleagues who are in China understand your choice?
XD: I'm not sure how much Chinese people understand that, because they have no choice. The theory that one is responsible for their own actions, you have to live in a free country to understand this. My parents understand emotionally. My friends don't bother to figure out whether I'm here because I choose to be or because I can't go back. Unfortunately they don't have the chance to go through this internal understanding of the question of choice.

MDD: Do you produce more now than you did in China?
XD: It's hard to say. When you're young, you tend to write a lot. I may write less than in China. I am still impulsive, but life is busy here. I used to cause a lot of accidents because I would be riding on my bike and would get an idea and would have to write it down immediately, while riding. But here, you are older, your thoughts are more skewed. In China, you have no choice but you do have a lot of free time.

MDD: Who are your favorite authors?
xd: My favorite writers are W.B. Yeats. Alexander Pushkin, a Russian writer – it is because of his poems that I began to write poetry. And Charles Baudelaire. I love a lot of French poets. But Baudelaire affected me a great deal, because he was very dark. Pushkin presents so much beauty and love, this was very important during my childhood. But when I began to grow up and begin to write, feeling the anger and pressure, Baudelaire made more sense to me. Now it seems too dark, there is nothing beyond the darkness. And humans need light. If you don’t go to the bottom of darkness then you never can reach the center of light. If you remain in the darkness you might be very powerful, but you cannot be a world-class poet. You hold a light to shine, to help people out of darkness. That is how my writing has changed.
Returning to Our Lesser Instincts: 
Craig Watson’s True News

=  Brian Strang

Craig Watson’s True News is perhaps the most rewarding book I’ve read this year. It is antithetical to definition, not because it can’t be explained but because the writing works against the drive toward definition; resistance to certainty is both part of the message of the book and what gives it its power. And the tension in True News between deceptive simplicity of form and dense thoughtful philosophy sets it apart. It is both commentary and description and reflects a meta-philosophy of liberation, one that asks for an expansive and inclusive imagination. I found the work both accessible and elusive.

Watson’s syntax both allows access to the work and belies its complexity. His lines and sentences are often easy and conventional in their syntax without the slightest trace of fragmentation. At times they can even be breezy. He builds seemingly straightforward syllogisms and the reader can be seduced by the ease of the language, but as one steps across his semantic lily pads, one feels the complexity of shifting meaning drifting and sinking underfoot. Watson’s linguistic soft sell lures rather than shocks and skeptical readers might find themselves drawn in with little resistance. Here is “Profit Margin” in its entirety:

Every choice is a round trip
From wilderness to climax
Among a knowledge that exerts no gravity
Between seeing and the thing seen.

Like a perfect virus
Or a bride in the dark, we want
What anyone wants as if
The reciprocal was always true.

Only the author can escape
That chorus of particulars and
Rain from below, a continuous
Failure which keeps us immortal.

Nevertheless, we dig and fill
Burn and pour, haunted by
The act of acting and the inequality
Of eternal solace.

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As one can see in the poem above, Watson’s efforts to remain slippery are more than merely linguistic. His movement away from certitude and definition in this writing (on both personal and societal levels) is a movement toward possibility and freedom and away from orthodoxy and confinement, though, paradoxically (as if to rein in the energy of the poems and keep them on the page) his poems often take on conventional forms:

With Certainty

In the manifesto of happiness
The sum of all words inhabits a solid distance
Where each effortless destiny is indivisible
By the muscle that slowly chokes it.

From orthodoxy stammers privilege.
This is why hands do not have faces
And fractals crumple against every riveted eye.
A map without destination, a gift unoccupied.

Subsistence sung a cool profit.
Now name this ambivalence:
The detective in search of the detective.
The potential of the glass unjuiced.

In the end, architecture will triumph over
That duality of mind and resurrected spirit
By which we imagine ourselves outside form
And shadow: all lips, tongue and teeth.

In this poem and in the rest of the four-stanza, sixteen-line poems of “Spectacle Studies,” the first of three series in the book, one can see a resistance to “duality of mind.” The world of True News cannot be reduced to “clear-thinking” dichotomies (like “evildoers” and “heroes,”), nor can it be clearly categorized as the anarchic protest of fragmentation, what Kit Robinson calls “a junkyard of mangled signs heaped up in silent protest against a century devoted to the material possession of form” (Democracy Boulevard). It finds its power in the tension between smooth comfortable surfaces of language and an uneasy wandering among the relationships between ideas. One is invited into a Zen-like world of intangibles and paradoxes, where we are forced to reexamine the forms which thought takes, the rules by which it functions or the foundation upon which it rests. And though it may share the same tendency toward indeterminacy (and perhaps similar philosophical underpinnings) as more language-oriented poetry, one is invited, not thrown, into Watson’s work. But the effect of implicitly
questioning the social order is the same, though with Watson the revelation is not always immediately apparent, nor is it always manifested in its syntax. And this is the greatest difficulty of Watson’s work, for this indeterminacy and questioning often occur not as object-lessons materially and linguistically demonstrated for the reader but on a philosophical, and therefore abstract, level. Watson does not heed Pound’s advice to “Go in fear of abstractions.” Metaphors do not serve to make abstract ideas more concrete. One even wonders whether the comparisons are meant to be taken as metaphor or whether they are meant somehow to create tenuous relations between otherwise unrelated ideas, drawing for us a shifting map of connections:

“But for now we will accept narrative for spectacle, blood for razor, obedience for a pool of used light.”

“Like that old song about one fish in the mouth of another, we are not accountable for received distances.”

“Like ideas ripped from headlines or medicine’s poison flooding an incontinent heart, our best creations are those that replicate us.”

Watson’s work reflects a decentralized, rhizomatous model for thought, one in which there is richness in ambiguity and paradox, one in which ideas are not chained to things. And this is a notion that, at first glance, seems to run counter to much modernist and postmodernist thought, especially Imagism and Objectivism, which have been so influential in American poetry. In “Ill Forms of Refusal,” Michael Davidson explains George Oppen’s criticism of Imagism, “For all of Imagism’s emphasis on the visual (Pound’s “Petals on a wet, black bough”), Oppen felt it often overlooked the world on which it gazed. Objectivism served as a corrective to (not a repudiation of) Imagism’s faith in the visual by linking the phenomenal object with an experiencing, language-using subject.” Experience, truth, honesty and words that are “earned” are earmarks of Oppen’s ethical objectivism. But as Davidson points out, Oppen’s later work is “often abstract, as mysterious as koans, a sea-surge of contradictory forces: assertions and their negations, declarations couched in double negatives, questions without answers, straightforward observations placed next to gnomic statements whose beauty lingers forever because they are never fully understood.” In this sense, we can see that Watson’s work is not at odds with Oppen’s Objectivism, but rather an extension of it. It is not always visual but is an attempt, like Oppen to link the experiencing subject with the phenomenon of the world.

Watson deals in the structures of thought—epistemology, existence, nature, etc.—and he comes to conclusions that are not always certain, for certainty is suspect, not reflective of the deep underlying connections between people,
things, ideas. In a world of uncertain relations, the experiencing subject may inhabit a shifting terrain, one in which language is as tangible as things:

In a properly domesticated memory, matter is interchangeable, so in order to narrate a desire called “terra incognita,” history invented the present, that generous father whose continuous gaze impregnates his children.

Now we can draw a new map, one without a center or margin, and mark the four cardinal directions: “do not enter” “do not exit” “do not belong” “do not come back.”

To enact an imitation nature we have created a perfect language in which absence is the key to every material lock.

from “South Africa”

This is an ethereal world, broad and inclusive, one in which the experiencing subject holds no special status. Even the dead and “ghosts” are just as tangible as the subject.

But the dead hate that metaphor of sleep As if each absence implies enclosure Or a class of images craving projection Back-lit by the verso of chance.

from “Plus One Plus”

Without duality, without hierarchy, there is no center, no axis of ego for the world to spin around. Rather, the world exists as a field of relations and the subject is just as subject to the indeterminacy of these relations as ideas, theory, objects or anything else.

But despite its occasionally intangible quality, *True News* is, above all else, social commentary, rooted in this world (as evidenced by the inscription “first this world…”). In it, we can see a recognizably American world, dominated by the trappings and ideology of our political and economic systems, a world in which “war manufactures new consumers so a good enemy replaces the gold standard with the erotic amnesia of no-risk investment” and in “the kill zone the republic had been privatized and the theme parks had adopted a damaged-goods-no-return policy that reality-checked every identity.” Our expanding American empire – with its prioritization of wealth, its elaborate and powerful instruments of control and its growing interna-
tional dominance (and enslavement of peoples all over the world to its global capitalism) – has lodged itself deep within the psyche of the world, embedding itself in the terms we use for thinking. Watson manages to negotiate this terrain most successfully in the final section, “Home Guard”:

The duty of sex is to initiate the proletariat into the monastery of free credit where the past can do no harm and everyone learns to sing “be happy in defeat.” Ours is a supernatural destination of recycled necessities, smart bombs and closed captions. In the genetics lab the logicians misread consequence for coincidence, so what had been sacred was simply pregnant and unfucked. Back on the street, among the sounds of sales cultivation and public burnings, it remains impossible to imagine one as another: that which doesn’t so much resemble as replace. Here we can disappear among the clones that metastasize to the sign of themselves continuously asking: which of us is the other, desperately?

Watson maintains his broad approach even on these political topics, which tend to drive people toward dogma or toward the cliché that political art makes bad politics and worse art. His commentary is poignant because it remains elusive, not quite reducible to dualistic, logical terms. It remains, despite its fluency, resistant to assimilation, resistant to the devastating logic that has made unrestrained global capitalism possible. Will True News end this system of global exploitation? No. Will any book of poetry? No. Can anything? Maybe. But True News isn’t the propaganda of opposition (something that also has real value in the world). Watson’s task is to chronicle and comment upon, to report the news of, the world spinning outward, spinning perhaps toward finality. He writes of the nature of things, of language and of the ways in which we relate to the world, how it relates to us. And in this, he is, like many of us, negotiating an inclusive and humane way of thinking, being and writing, one that can imagine more, one that can “sustain an innocence, gnostic and harmonic, until we can return to our lesser instincts intact.” His writing is both an affirmation of imagination and a lament for its lack. And in a world that seemingly possesses so little humane imagination, this is no small accomplishment.

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BOB HARRISON moved to this country from Panama at the age of 7, at which time he first began learning English. He edits Bronze Skull Press and co-edits, with Andrew Levy, Crayon. His first full length book, O3, is forthcoming from subpress in 2004. He lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

TAKASHI HIRAIDE, born in Fukuoka prefecture in 1950, is one of the leading poets of Japan’s postwar generation. He writes in several forms, including modern poetry (The Inn), prose poetry (For the Fighting Spirit of the Walnut), off-prose poetry (Notes for my Left-hand Diary), tanka (One Hundred and Eleven Tankas to Mourn My Father), critique (Point of Attack), essay (Berlin Moments), and fiction (Cat Guest). He is a Professor at Tama Art University in Tokyo, as well as a book designer.

TOSHIKO HIRATA (b.1955) won the Gendaishi Shinjinshu (New Faces in Modern Poetry prize) in 1984, leading to the publication of her first book, Repayment of the Shallots, which has been translated into English for The New Poetry of Japan anthology (Katydid, 1993). She is the author of over ten books of poetry (including Terminal, which won the Bansui Prize in 1997), fiction (Piano Sandwich), essays, and award-winning plays (Good-luck Radio). Her work has been translated and anthologized in English, Chinese, Korean, Italian, and Russian.

CHRISTINE HUME is the author of Musca Domestica (Beacon Press, 2000), winner of the Barnard New Women Poets Prize, and Alaskaphrenia (New Issues, 2004), winner of the Green Rose Award. She teaches at Eastern Michigan University.

Born in 1949 in northern Japan, MASATO INAGAWA edited a poetry magazine with Hiraide Takashi while in college. He published his first book of poems in 1976 – For a Biography of the Redeemed, followed by Seal in 1985, and For Those Who Make Us Live in 1986. He has published a total of six collections of poetry, as well as books of literary and film criticism. His work questions basic assumptions in Japanese postwar poetry such as the lyric self, and is concerned also with the relationship between poetic discourse and contemporary consumer culture (the commoditization of language). In more recent years Inagawa has directed a series of art films. For other translations of Inagawa Masato by Eric Selland, see durationpress.com and The Oakland University Anthology of Younger Japanese Poets (Katydid Press, 1992).

SCOTT INGUITO is a graduate of The Iowa Writer’s Workshop. His poems have most recently appeared in 1913: A Journal of Forms. He lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area. Other of his poems have appeared in Parlour Games, DANTA, and Aufgabe #1.
HIROMI ITO (b.1955) is the author of over 30 books of poetry, prose, and nonfiction, including *Good Breast Bad Breast*, and *I am Anju Himeko*. She began her career as a contemporary poet in the 1980s, and was a prominent figure amongst female poets of her generation. At the same time she became well-known for developing a genre of personal essays with her books on pregnancy and child-bearing. Ito has lived in Tokyo, Warsaw, and Kumamoto, and since 1997 has lived in San Diego. She continues to explore new literary ground, more recently in fiction, and received the 1999 Noma Literary Prize for the book *La Niña*.

PAUL FOSTER JOHNSON co-curates (with Sherry Mason) the Experiments and Disorders reading series at Dixon Place in New York City. His work has appeared in a number of journals, including *Fence*, *Pom*, and *Conundrum*.

Work of JEFFREY JULLICH'S is forthcoming/published in *New American Writing*, *Fence*, *Shiny*, *Chain*, *Ecopoetics*, *Boston Review*, etc., and *LUNGFULL* will be publishing a comic book done when he was eleven years old.

AYANE KAWATA was born in China in 1940. She published her first book, *Time of the Sky*, in 1969 and has published at least eight other books. In the summer of 1969, Kawata traveled to Italy to pursue studies in art and then lived there and throughout Europe for numerous years. Despite her multilingual background, she writes poetry exclusively in Japanese.


DREW KUNZ is co-editor, with Stacy Szymaszek, of the poetry journal *traverse* & also editor of *g o n g* chapbooks. Recent work has appeared in *Antennae*, *Conundrum*, *Bird Dog*, *Gam*, 26 & the Bronze Skull Eight chapbook series.

SUSAN LANDERS is the author of *248 mgs., a panic picnic* (O Books, 2003). She lives in Brooklyn, where she co-edits the magazine *Pom*.

GIAN LOMBARDO'S third collection of prose poetry, *Who Lets Go First*, might see the light of day this year. He directs Quale Press and teaches in the publishing program at Emerson College.

JILL MAGI'S poetry, prose and visual art has appeared in *Chain*, *Boog City*, *canwehaveyourballback? issue 12*, *Pierogi Press*, *murmur*, and *Global City Review*. She runs Sona Books/sonaweb.net, a community-based micro-press and teaches writing at The City College/CUNY Center for Worker Education. The pieces
published here are from *Threads*, a work in-progress that will include documentary and imaginative prose, poetry, and collage.

**Bill Marsh** lives in La Mesa (near San Diego) California with his three collaborators, Octavia, Zazil, and Maya. His new book of poems, *Tao Drops, I Change*, written and assembled in collaboration with Steve Carll, was released this year from Subpress.

**Chris Martin** is the author of *Vermontana*, a chapbook published by Angry Dog Midget Editions featuring the art of Larry Heller. He lives in Brooklyn where he edits *Puppy Flowers: an online magazine of the arts* and coaches girls basketball. His recent and forthcoming work can be found in *Lit, XConnect, Accurate Key, Pom*, *Jacket, Magazine Cypress, Respiro, and Forklift, Ohio*. He is furthermore a rapper and half of Twiglight, a folk-hop duo anchored by Edmund Berrigan.

**Ted Mathys**’s first book of poetry, *Forge*, is forthcoming from Coffee House Press. Poems have appeared or are slated in *The Canary, Fence, Swerve, Good Foot, Ploughshares, Quarterly West* and elsewhere, as well as the anthology *City Voices: Hong Kong Voices in English, 1945 to the Present*. He currently lives in Manhattan and works for a trade book publisher and as the New York limb of Hong Kong’s Sixth Finger Press.

**Laura Mullen** will be joining the MFA faculty at LSU (Baton Rouge) in the fall. Her fourth book, *Subject*, is forthcoming from University of California Press in Spring of 2005.

**Sawako Nakayasu** writes poetry, prose, and performance text, and translates from Japanese to English. Her first book, *So we have been given time Or*, was selected for the 2003 Verse Prize and will be published in 2004. Other works include *Clutch* (Tinfish chapbook, 2002), *Balconic* (Duration e book, 2003) and *Nothing fictional but accuracy or arrangement* (*she* (e-Faux, 2003). She edits Factorial Press and the translation section for *HOW2*, and can be contacted at sawako@factorial.org.

**Seiichi Nikuni** (1925–1979) is recognized as the greatest Japanese pioneer of concrete poetry. His first collection of visual and sound poetry (*Zero Sound, 1963*) presented the first solid experimentation of its kind in Japan. In 1964 he founded, with poet Yasuo Fujitomi, “The Association for Study of Arts” (*ASA*), which published the journal ASA. This paralleled the *VOU* journals edited by Katsue Kitasono and others in its presentation of avant-garde poetry. Nikuni was also active internationally, and his collaborative work with French poet Pierre Garnier includes “3ème Manifeste du spatialisme” (1965) and a record, “Phonetic Poetry on Spatialism” with Ilse & Pierre Garnier
in 1971. Some of Nrkuni’s most important and original work focuses on the
visual structures of Chinese characters, and are a significant example of
modern poetry coming from the Chinese-based languages. His major works
were collected as Selected Poems in 1979.

MICHELLE NOTEBOOM is a writer and translator living in Paris. Her poetry
has recently appeared or is forthcoming in Verse, Fence, Gargoyle, Tears in the
Fence, Van Gogh’s Ear and others.

KYONG-MI PARK (b. 1956) is a second-generation Korean living and writing
in Tokyo. Since publishing her first book of poetry Soup, in 1980, she has
continued to publish numerous works of poetry and prose in major Japanese
publications including La Mer, Waseda Bungaku, Ginka and Asahi Weekly. She
is noted for her translations of Gertrude Stein: The World is Round (1987) and
Geography and Plays, (co-translation, 1992). In addition to other translations
such as Over the moon by Mother Goose (1990), and a collection of essays The
Guardian Spirit in a Garden: Words to Remember (1999), her most recent collection
of poetry is titled That little one (2003). In 2002 she was invited to Canada
as one of the featured poets in Dialogue 2001: Artists in Banff. Park’s work has
been translated into Korean and English, and she currently teaches at Wako
University.

DAVID PAVELICH lives in Madison, Wisconsin. He is curator of the Felix read­
ing series at the University of Wisconsin. Cuneiform Press published his
first chapbook, Outlining, in 2003. His poems have appeared in Antennae and
Traverse, and are forthcoming in Bird Dog.

SARAH ROSENTHAL is the author of three chapbooks: How I Wrote This Story
(Margin to Margin, 2001), sittings (a+bend, 2000), and not-chicago (Melodeon,
1998). Her poetry and fiction have appeared in hinge: A BOAS Anthology (Crack
Press, 2002), as well as in magazines such as Bombay Gin, Shampoo, Untitled,
VeRT, Tinfish, Fourteen Hills, Tripwire, and Mirage Period(ical). She is the recipient
of the Primavera Fiction Prize and the Leo Litwak Award for Fiction.

CHIKA SAGAWA (real name Chika Kawasaki) was born in 1911 in Hokkaido,
Japan. Through the encouragement of her brother, Noboru Kawasaki, a
poet and editor himself, she moved to Tokyo in 1928 and became a member
of the lively community of writers surrounding Katue Kitasono, and was
highly esteemed by many of her contemporaries. In addition to her own
poetry, she translated literature from English, including prose by James Joyce
and Virginia Woolf. Stomach cancer took her life at the age of 25, at which
time her poems were collected and edited by Sei Ito and published (Sagawa
Chika Shishū [Collected Poems of Sagawa Chika], Shōrinsha, 1936). Later a
more complete collected works – including prose, eulogies, and a complete bibliography – was published as Sagawa Chika Ōsshishū [Collected Works of Chika Sagawa] by Shinkaisha in 1983.

Trey Sager lives and works in New York City. Recent work has or will be in Fence, Insurance, FO A RM, Blazevox, canwehaveourballback, Aught, Counterpunch, and Brooklyn Stoop.

John Sakkis received the 2002 Frances Jaffer Award for poetry. An interview with Benjamin Hollander will appear in Vigilance from Beyond Baroque Books (2004). His poetry and interviews have appeared or are forthcoming in Small Town, Scribbler, Transfer, Firebush, Papier-Machete, Zaum, and Commonweal. He lives in San Francisco.


Jennifer Scappettone’s recent poetry and prose appears or is forthcoming in The Poker, 26, Volt, Can We Have Our Ball Back?, Tripwire, & elsewhere. She co-curates the Holloway Poetry Series in Berkeley.

Eric Selland is a poet and translator living just south of San Francisco. His translations of contemporary Japanese poets appear in a variety of anthologies, as well on the Internet. He has also published articles on Japanese Modernist poetry and translation theory. He is the author of The Condition of Music (Sink Press, 2000), and has work in The Poem Behind the Poem, an anthology of Asian literary translation (Copper Canyon, 2004).

Timothy Shea has published Unflux (Orchises), & a chapbook, Memory’s Guest (Red Barn Press).

Gustaf Sobin has lived in Provence for the past forty years where he’s written, translated, and taught. Recent work is appearing in First Intensity, Verse, Talisman, The Denver Quarterly, Literary Imagination, and New American Writing.

Brian Strang, co-editor of 26 magazine, lives in Oakland and teaches English composition at San Francisco State University. He is the author of Incretion (Spuyten Duyvil), machinations (a free Duration Press ebook), normal school: hommage à Beckett (lyric&), A Draft of L Cavatinas (Letters to Ez) (Potes and
Poets) and movement of avenues in rows, (a+bend). Some of his recent writing has appeared in 580 Split, Vox and ecopoetics.

Chimako Tada (1930–2003) published her first book of poetry, Fireworks, in 1956. Several of her books have been recognized with awards, including Lotus-Eating People (Contemporary Women’s Poetry Prize, 1980), By the River (Hanatsubaki prize, 1998), and Country with Long Rivers (Yomiuri Literary Prize, 2000). Tada is also well-known for her translations from the French, including work by Marguerite Yourcenar (most notably The Memoirs of Hadrian in 2001), Claude Lévi-Strauss, Georges Charbonnier, Antonin Artaud, and Saint-John Perse. Her last collection of poetry, When breaking the seal, was published posthumously by Shoshi Yamada in 2004.

Taeiko Tomioka was born in 1935 in Osaka. After playing a significant role in the emergence of postwar poetry by women in Japan, with six books of poetry as well as a Collected Poems book in 1973, Tomioka practically stopped writing poetry, focusing her attentions on countless works of fiction, essay, criticism, plays, screenplays, radio plays, and translations (including Gertrude Stein’s Pink Melon Joy). She is the first woman to be included in the Gendaishibunko (Contemporary Poets Paperback) series, and her criticism and prose have had a profound effect on the representation of women in Japanese literary history.

Chris Tysh teaches creative writing and women’s studies at Wayne State University in Detroit. Her latest book of poems is Continuity Girl (United Artists, 2000); Mother, I (fragment of a film script) was released as a pamphlet by Belladonna in 2002. Her poems, reviews and essays have recently appeared in Chicago Review, Jacket, Lipstick Eleven, Chain, Metro Times, Mirage, Poetry Flash and How2, among others. She edited mark(s), an online quarterly. (http://www.markszine.com) from its inception in June 2000 to December 2002. She is the recipient of the 2003 NEA Fellowship in poetry.

Africa Wayne is the editor of Dürer in the Window, Reflections on Art, a selection of art writing by Barbara Guest and the author of tiny pony, a chapbook of poetry from Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs. She is also the curator of the BBR reading series in Brooklyn.

Xue Di was born in Beijing in 1957. He has published four books in English translation, An Ordinary Day, Circumstances, Heart Into Soil and Flames. Xue Di is a two-time recipient of the Hellman/Hammett Award, sponsored by Human Rights Watch.
Poet, novelist, and translator Sumiko Yagawa (1930–2002) studied English literature at Tokyo Woman’s Christian University, German literature at Gakushuin University, and Art History at the University of Tokyo. She wrote over fourteen books of fiction, poetry, essays, criticism, and children’s books, as well as literary translations from German and English. Her translations of children’s books include the Babar series, works by the Brothers Grimm, Michael Ende, Paul Gallico, and Reiner Zimnik. Yagawa’s works include an experimental book of poetry *Alice in Word-land* (1974), fiction *Woman called Rabbit* (1983), and essays and critical biographies of female authors such as Naoko Nomizo, Mari Mori, and Anaïs Nin, which contributed to developing her own unique feminist theories on literature.

Elizabeth Marie Young is a Berkeley-based poet working toward her Ph.D in Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley. She studies Ancient Greek, Roman and 20th c. American poetry and poetics. She is currently organizing a Bay Area inter-arts poetry festival that will highlight intersections between poetic and other art forms.