Aufgabe
Number 11

Yasmin Khan. Representational Landscape Drawing 02.

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You can be trying to connect the experience of being lost with something external or physical, but we are really connecting what is experienced with what is experienced.

—Empathy, Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge
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Insurgent Hungers and the Crises of Everyday Life: Poetry of the Recent Present in El Salvador

Maybe my brother calls me from the United States but that doesn’t mean we’re alive
—Otoniel Guevara

In a talk in 2009, the writer Bruce Boone suggested that the labor of translation literally wastes away the body, like a parasite that starts at the language center and eats its way out through nerves, organs, muscles and skin. Expenditure and sacrifice, dependence and consumption, material and symbol—those ritual lineaments—all constellate this claim. Especially the last: symbol. In the old apostolic sense; the mortal half of the ligature between representation and flesh. The fuel for symbol conversion might be a substance contained in the cells, in a complementary reversal of that logic that would locate potential for the body’s life in past and future bank accounts. It also implies that there is a fatal economy between languages, and between the nations kept walking (like zombies) by the colonial cross-feed of linguistic exchange.

It’s ironic that this pan-national martyrdom is visited on the translator, when the “national literature” in question here—the borne over—is that of El Salvador, The Savior. It’s a national figure that is eulogized, bewailed, cursed, forgiven and never-forgiven again and again in the history of its subjects’ songs, stories, sermons, speeches and poems. The little Christ at the navel of the hemisphere; the child begging in the street, the war’s leftovers; the radical priest torn by rifle fire; the disappeared rebel, eviscerated on a hill by vultures; the migrant crucified by three borders; the poet assassinated; the assassins themselves mutilated by their own false consciousness; the 30,000 campesinos massacred in 1932 by a “warlock” dictator, that number itself (30,000), its wrecked familiarity; the very possibility of signification—all are brought into this metonymic chain that binds nation to Christ by virtue of official semiosis.

According to a short poem by Claudia Hérodier:

And life sharpened
Its insomniac knife
There,
there
In the word.
A twist of the wrist in this chain, however, yields a third term to frame the hegemonic contract between language and sacred victim: the militant.

Salvadoran literary history is haunted and vivified by a writer who made it his purpose to realize the consanginity between poetry and leftist militancy. And nearly forty years after his death, Roque Dalton’s myth is still swaddled: his family descent (fictional) from the notorious Dalton gang of bank robbers; his deliverance from prison by earthquake; his torture; his time of exile in Cuba; his return to El Salvador under mask of plastic surgery; his notorious tendency to be always laughing; state-sponsored rumors of his being a CIA agent, which provoked his execution by members of his own guerrilla faction. His writing, its many-headed irony and its laser-beam didacticism, hanging in the glow of his aura, is one of two international jewels of the committed generation (la generación comprometida) of writers. The other is Claribel Alegría, whose adamantine lyric and whose involvement with a successful revolution (Sandinistan) in her original country of birth lend her a place beside Dalton in every Northern-hemisphere anthology of Spanish language poetry in translation you can find.

This is all to say that I agree, in part, with Boone’s idea about translation. I agree because I have known the reduction he refers to. With each of the poems in this selection I have felt a whittling at the corpus of my political imaginary. A body that has often been fortified (as if by eating the horse-glue out of the binding of an old volume of the Grundrisse) by the image of El Salvador, concentrated in the figure of Dalton, his persistent efforts to square the liberties of the poet with the responsibilities of the Marxist revolutionary. The poems in this selection suggest to me, however, that one personality is not nearly enough international life-support for the political-poetic memory of the region that is the isthmian hinge of this pan-America, the “little thumb” that nearly enough international life-support for the political-poetic memory of the globe. These poems may indicate that the poet’s resistance has progressed to a point of complexity that serves as a check to the self-satisfied hubris of the petty bourgeois adventurer.

I am still with Dalton when he addresses poetry, or us, directly and says, for­give me for having helped you to understand/ that you are not made of words alone. And I love the solid, rhetorical ground I am let down on when he writes that the writer under capitalism is forced to choose between the three roles of “servant, clown, or enemy.” But I love as well all the other poems in this selection, poems by writers less intent on naming their commitments at the same time that the intimations of engagement quiver and flare through their language, or else press in from the outside, absent, golden frames that flip to reveal strangely iron complicities. They are poems that are not

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always laughing, and when they do they laugh strangely, gravely; poems that
describe surrealist griefs and sober joys, that don’t always offer up a clear
density of awareness that often defamiliarizes the personal, lyric ‘I,’ placing it
in a much different register than we are used to in the US, making of it a sort
of biomorphic hybrid between public and interior—a subject that experiences
denies both the perversions of isolated selfhood and the systemic breadth
of the hive. It is a poetics that has examined the call of militancy and found it
tied to a survival of each moment.

The novelist Horacio Castellanos Moya touches on this when he affirms
that even though “in these times the word ‘political’ is very much discredited,”
and despite the fact that he “never intended to write political novels,” politics
were nonetheless “part of the air (he) breathed in (his) formative years. As a
case in point, in 1997, five years after the end of the civil war, Moya published
Revolucion/ Thomas Bernhard in San Salvador. The book is a nearly unbroken rant
delivered by a character, Augusto Vega, upon returning to El Salvador for the first
time, after living in Canada for eighteen years, in order to attend his mother’s
funeral. A stand-in for the author, ‘Moya,’ is the recipient of this rant:

I did not run from the war, Moya, or from poverty, nor did I flee because of
politics, it’s that I simply have never accepted that the stupidity of being
Salvadoran might have even the most minimal value, Moya, it always
seemed to me like the worst imbécility to believe that there might be
any feeling in the fact of being Salvadoran, this is why I left, Vega said to
me, and I didn’t get any help nor did I help any of those guys who call
themselves my compatriots, I didn’t have anything to do with them, I
didn’t want to remember anything of this grimy land, I left precisely in
order to have nothing to do with them, it’s why I avoid them always,
they seem like pests to me, with their solidarity committees and such
stupidities. I’ve never thought of coming back, Moya, it always seemed
like the worst nightmare to have to return to San Salvador... 4

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Upon publication of the novel, Castellanos-Moya received death threats, which forced him into exile. Revulsion struck such a nerve because it embodied the bitterness and anger of many Salvadoreans both inside and outside of the country in relation to “a violent and polarized society that had just come out of ten years of civil war.” The semi-fictional Vega’s resentment of his patria, of politics on both sides of the spectrum, also frames the sort of questions about modern Central American cultural identity set forth by poet and journalist Miguel Huezo-Mixco.

In a 1999 lecture delivered at the Washington D.C. headquarters of the Inter-American Development Bank, Huezo-Mixco outlined two related historical tendencies in the conceptualization of Central American culture: “resistance” to foreign influence (especially when it comes from the United States), and the belief that “culture is valid to the extent that it is strictly ‘one’s own.’” Together these two ideas “have disqualified the dynamic and heterogenous character of culture, since they consider that the basic cultural manifestations of Central America are essentially produced through imitation of, and dependence on, North American culture.”

We can see this disqualification, and its critical opposition, at work simultaneously in Revulsion. Vega rails both against “the hypocrisy of those who hold the desire to be gringo in the depth their souls,” and against the provincial narrow-mindedness he sees in the cultural institutions and universities of San Salvador, the latter of which is compared to a “turd expelled from the rectum of the militaries and the communists.” The novel presents a vivid case of a psyche that wants nothing to do with his nation’s ‘self’ or its ‘other,’ while revealing itself to be implicated, to the point of obsession, with both.

“The quest for identity” is a concept that perhaps signifies anachronistically in the intellectual climate of North America, where a “post-identity” discourse provides some semblance of a contemporary mood, even if is not embraced or fully elaborated. We—some of us—are perhaps experiencing a milder form of what Huezo-Mixco cites as the presiding trend of the 1970s and 80s in El Salvador, when the “collision of social movements with entrenched power tends[ed] to displace identity issues.” In his lecture, Huezo-Mixco tracks the continued vitality of the concept of identity with regards to mass-events that have served to vitally confuse the idea of interior and exterior, namely a thirty year mass migration that now locates a quarter to a third of Salvadoran citizens outside the national borders. At the end of his lecture, Huezo-Mixco, arrives at a provocative conclusion that the younger generation of writers “re-creates the catastrophe of a fragmented and impoverished society.” It’s a generation that does not write with “any enthusiasm for the political gains wrested from one of the bloodiest periods in Latin America.”

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Now, more than a decade later, in the wake of the first election of a left-
party candidate in El Salvador, I am wondering about the possible reasons
an engagement with Salvadoran poetry, and with its specificities of socio-
political context, could be crucial for North American literature. One way
of approaching this question is to recognize the affect of Moya’s narrator, a
visceral and overflowing disgust at all that the nation has proved itself to
be: devious, cowardly, moronic, psychopathic, homo-, eco-, aesthetico-cidal.
It’s a familiar feeling from the Bush years, and it’s been even less submerged
over the past year, though the object is less a central administration than the
embedded networks of power that suppress, again and again, the most vital
and peaceful attempts to collectively re-conceive social value, to question
bodily the fatal marginalization of many millions of capitalism’s discontents
in streets and prisons. One might also imagine forecasting a version of this
feeling, this inflamed nausea, twenty or thirty years into the future, after a
period of armed local resistance to capitalist hegemony has been mounted out
dire and unavoidable necessity. How would we respond to our resistance’s
failures and compromises, or to successes then flooded by the miseries and
manipulated by the strategies of the wider world?

Carlos Fuentes wrote, in 1993, that “the literature of Spanish America had
to overcome, in order to exist, the obstacles of flat realism, commemorative
nationalism, and dogmatic commitment.” In this introduction, instead of close
readings of the work on offer, and instead of explicating the specific affinities
of the authors, I have attempted to provide the beginnings of a socio-political
context to readers who might not have encountered it. This is not, however, to
reduce these poems to their politics, but rather to help make clear to readers
what an intricate task it has been for Salvadorans to overcome the ‘obstacles’
Fuentes mentions. They do it obliquely; they do it with the gestures of a
bare, ecstatic, sophisticatedly unhinged negativity that seem to sidestep the
questions of artistic autonomy/heterogeneity, while maintaining a marbled
commitment to outrage. To list a few of these: Krisma Mancía’s half-waking
subject who wonders why she doesn’t “poke out (her) eyes with the help of the
vultures/ and … turn them over to the woman who made me be born”; who
learned, from infancy, “to hate each weighted currency/ and its slight nickel
converted into bread”; Miguel Huezco-Mixco’s view of a Santa Barbara (California)
in flames, “like watching Cindy Crawford look sad/ her face smeared with soot/
uttering a cinematographic moan”; the moment in Luis Alvarenga’s Central
Hotel, “long after the war/ was a young man suspended from the tallest mango
tree/ and after feeding a world/ that licked its plate/ made of my sadness”; this
address in Teresa Andrade’s Corridor for Cats: “love, the crisis of everyday life
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accumulates in the eye/ Better if we look for a little land/ And begin to declare our independence from the undersoil/ and grow like robust parasites/ in a cat's mouth," Otoniel Guevara’s "star of the struggling ones/ aquatic dagger that conquered/ the kingdom of the lights"; Rafael Menjivar Ochoa’s "urge to die in mid-street" and also in his Skeleton Woman “who wets herself and farts”; Claudia Hérodière’s “old song of vegetal memory” sung by “spilled blood/ that moved like an ailing old woman." To go back and find another side of Roque Dalton, we might find it in “the half lives of all that were born half/ dead/ in 1932.”

We can definitely hear it in this fragment of a poem by Claribel Alegría, describing an encounter with a North American lover (her husband and translator D.J. Flakoll?), in which, despite good intentions, they seem to unconsciously recapitulate a key North/South trauma in Central American political history:

I told you about Sandino10 and Farabundo11 and you didn’t understand but wanted to learn and little by little we wandered into the Halls of Los and you were William Walker12 and I Rafael Herrera13 and what was I doing amongst the barbarians of the north who invaded us invade us now and will invade again;34

10 Sandino: Augusto Sandino was a Nicaraguan revolutionary who fought against U.S. occupation forces in the late 1920s and 1930s.
11 Farabundo Martí: a Salvadoran liberation fighter who led a peasant uprising in 1969 and was assassinated by the government.
12 William Walker: a 19th-century American who led an expedition to Central America and was later killed in a battle against a Honduran army.
13 Rafael Herrera: a Salvadoran revolutionary.
34 This line seems to be a reference to the conflict in Central America during the 1980s, which involved U.S.-backed Contra forces fighting against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.
1 This phrase is from the Puerto Rican reggaeton band Calle 13’s rendition of Mercedes Sosa’s anthemic Hay en Nito en la Calle.

2 Maximiliano Hernandez-Martinez, a self-proclaimed fascist (and theosophist) who would go on to rule the country for twelve more years, and who was the basis for Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s Autumn of the Patriarch, and Horacio Castellanos Moya’s Tyrant Memory.


4 I refer here to myself, although this is what former guerrilla Joaquin Vilakibas, who acknowledged his participation in Dalton’s execution, said of the poet: “no petty bourgeois adventurer deserves to die just for the fact of being one.”


9 Though this election went largely unremarked in the US media, aside from the statements of various congressmen who threatened to pass policies that might cut off the flow of family remittances, which account for roughly half of El Salvador’s GDP.

10 Augusto César Sandino, anti-imperialist leader of the Nicaraguan revolution of 1927, who held off invading US Marines for seven years.

11 Pambidin Martí, leader of the crushed Salvadoran peasant rebellion of the 1930s, namesake of the leftist party FMLN.

12 American filibusterer who—with the physical help of mercenaries recruited in San Francisco, and with the financial help of southern slave-owners and large-scale capitalists Cornelius Vanderbilt and J.P. Morgan—managed to temporarily “conquer” Nicaragua. From Roque Dalton’s poem, “1856-1865”:

Walter elected himself President of Nicaragua, decreed the confiscation of the goods of all patriots, imposed English as the official language of the whole country and reestablished the enslavement of blacks, which had been abolished by the federal laws of Central America.

Of course Walter was not an absolute pioneer in Nicaragua and it’s clear that the slaves of the south weren’t the first to lay eyes on us.

13 Conservative, pro-indigenous dictator of Guatemala who participated in the Central American coalition that expelled William Walker.

14 Alegria refers here to the Los of Blake’s pantheon in Jerusalem, The Emanation of the Giant Albion, who is the fallen form, or human emanation of Urthona, the Zoa (spirit) of creativity. The name is an anagram of ‘Sol’ (sun). In The Book of Urizen Los has a child, Orc, who incarnates revolution.
sólo soy
un paraíso verde una corona de laurel

he conquistado la fauna de mi sangre el temple de mis nervios
y he colmado mis vísceras con bálsamos sales y sahumerios

he viajado por la senda de los martirios y he conocido el olor de la muerte limpia

(extiende sus manos como tentáculos y forma una flor en cada tumba)

hallarme será fácil

tan fácil como encontrarnos en el cruce de una calle y tener en cada dedo un enjambre de niños con sus sistemas nerviosos simples y espinas dorsales de mariposas
tan fácil como abrir los ojos y encontrarte bajo la almohada

y encontrar culpable junto al llanto de la aurora y con la sangre de la noche entre las manos

y dirás que eres inocente que la serpiente es la culpable
Three Poems
Krisma Mancia

Monologue with Serpent or on the Guilty
Act of Waking
Translated by Jocelyn Saidenberg

ONE

Only I
a green paradise a crown of laurel
I've conquered the fauna of my blood the temple of my nerves
and I've filled my viscera with balsam salts and smoking incense
I've traveled along the martyrs' path and I've known the smell of clean death
(stretch out your hands like tentacles and form a flower in each grave)
It will be easy to find me

as easy as finding us in the crossroads
and holding in each finger a swarm of children
with your simple nervous systems
and the butterflies' dorsal spines
as easy
as opening my eyes
and finding you beneath the pillows

and finding you guilty

together with the cry of the aurora
and with night's blood between your hands

and you will say that you are innocent
that the serpent is the guilty one
y yo diré que me creo
que las serpientes son tan bellas como la piel de las manzanas
y me dirás que soy
un paraíso verde una corona de laurel
y entrarás en mi
pisando el césped de mis ojos
y llevando en tu cabeza el veneno de mi gloria

DOS

abro los ojos
y me obligo a ser humana
a encender el bullicio de las calles
de las gentes
de los pasos
me fumo la colilla de un sueño
y miro figuras en el techo
y las convierto en algo lógico
un dragón marino
una serpiente devoradora de esmeraldas
o un tesoro escondido al final de las manos)
entonces me escupo
me refugio en lo amargo
en las tazas de café
abro los ojos
y mi cuerpo es un lamento bajo las sábanas
un pedazo de mármol sobre la almohada
una dolor enmohecido de tiempo
un perfil detenido en los retratos

y yo diré que me creo
que las serpientes son tan bellas como la piel de las manzanas
y me dirás que soy
un paraíso verde una corona de laurel
y entrarás en mi
pisando el césped de mis ojos
y llevando en tu cabeza el veneno de mi gloria

DOS

abro los ojos
y me obligo a ser humana
a encender el bullicio de las calles
de las gentes
de los pasos
me fumo la colilla de un sueño
y miro figuras en el techo
y las convierto en algo lógico
un dragón marino
una serpiente devoradora de esmeraldas
o un tesoro escondido al final de las manos)
entonces me escupo
me refugio en lo amargo
en las tazas de café
abro los ojos
y mi cuerpo es un lamento bajo las sábanas
un pedazo de mármol sobre la almohada
una dolor enmohecido de tiempo
un perfil detenido en los retratos
and I will say that I believe you
that the serpents are as beautiful as the skin of apples

and you will say to me that I am
a green paradise a crown of laurel

and you will enter in me
stepping on the lawn of my eyes
and carrying in your head the venom of my glory

**TWO**

I open my eyes
and I am obliged to be a human being
to turn on the noise of the streets
of the people
of their steps
I smoke the butt of a dream
and I look at the figures on the roof
and I turn them into something logical
(a sea dragon
a serpent devouring emeralds
or a hidden treasure at the end of my hands)

Then I escape
and take refuge in the bitterness
in the cups of the café

I open my eyes
and my body is a lament under the sheets
a piece of marble on the pillow
a pain moldy with time
a profile suspended in the portraits
Trés

Suave suave
como la enredadera alrededor de tu cuello
como el vuelo de los gorriones en perpetuo dolor

la mujer que llamaste Suicida
mete sus brazos a través de la ventana
y quiere beber el aliento que dejaste en la almohada
y quiere comer el fruto maduro de tu tacto

Cuatro

escribo
con el presentimiento de que Dios caerá detrás de tu risa
escribo
con la angustia que produce un beso a media luz
escribo
y pienso en tu ganas de no volver

Cinco

me reconocí fantasma de foto
fantasma de fotosíntesis
fantasma con sabor a aguja oxidada en cada pierna
fantasma con una miopía triste en cada frase

por qué no permito que se pudran las Flores
y me voy
y me llevo lo irremediable de cada espejo roto

por qué no permito que el cabello encanezca
y que los dientes se consuman en el vacío de la boca

por qué no dejo de mirar
para que todo se apague en un silencio de tumba
THREE
gentle gentle
like a vine around your neck
like the flight of sparrows in perpetual pain

the woman whom you named Suicide
put her arms through the window
and wants to drink the breath you left on the pillow
and wants to eat the ripe fruit of your touch

FOUR
I write
with the presentiment that God will fall behind your laughter
I write
with the anguish that makes a kiss in half-light
I write
and I think about your wanting not to return

FIVE
I recognized the ghost of the photograph
ghost of photosynthesis
ghost with the taste of a rusty needle in each leg
ghost with a sad myopia in each sentence

why don’t I let the flowers rot
and I leave
and I take what is incurable of each broken mirror

why don’t I let my hair go gray
and my teeth consume themselves in my mouth’s emptiness

why don’t I stop looking at
why everything is extinguished in the grave’s silence
y sacarme los ojos con la ayuda de los buitres
y entregueros a la damita que me hizo nacer
ahora crece el musgo de mi frente
y fluye el manantial de mis dedos
ahora agonizan los pájaros en las ramas de la angustia

SEIS

(epitafio para la tumba de mauricito mora)
aquí yace el amor
latido perdido de un ciprés
canto sin voz
olor de Siemprevivas
(duerme lentamente
arrullito de ave efímera)

SIETE

muerde la manzana con la longitud que produce el deseo
muerde la manzana
no pasa nada
(Dios está dormido sobre un séquito de ángeles
también Dios fórnic a pero es un secreto
no se lo digas a nadie)
las manzanas se pudren al borde del manzano
es torpe la ternura
es torpe el primer roce

y sacarme los ojos con la ayuda de los buitres
y entregueros a la damita que me hizo nacer
ahora crece el musgo de mi frente
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(Dios está dormido sobre un séquito de ángeles
también Dios fórnic a pero es un secreto
no se lo digas a nadie)
las manzanas se pudren al borde del manzano
es torpe la ternura
es torpe el primer roce
and to poke out my eyes with the help of the vultures
and to turn them over to the lady who made me be born

now grows the moss on my brow
and flows out the spring of my fingers

now agonize the birds on the branches of anguish

Six

(epitaph for the grave of mauricito mora)

here lies love
lost beating of a cypress
song without voice
smell of evergreens

(sleep slowly
whisper of ephemeral bird)

Seven

bite the apple with the length that produces desire
bite the apple

nothing’s happening

(God is sleeping on top of an entourage of angels
also God fornicates but it’s a secret
don’t tell anyone)

the apples rot on the edge of the apple tree

it’s awkward the tenderness
it’s awkward the first touch
Dios no se ha vuelto transparente
se esconde
es un fugitivo del paraíso
pero es un secreto
no se lo digas a nadie)

no pasa nada
God hasn't become transparent
hides
is a fugitive from paradise
but it's a secret
don't tell anyone)
nothing's happening
Frente al mar
soy una extranjera en la ciudad prometida
con las maletas llenas de cangrejos disecados
pero en el Imperio de las Ventanas Cerradas todo es áspero
y al salir a la calle ciervo la puerta con doble llave
y trato de olvidar
a la sirena atrapada en la tubería del baño
y soy nostalgia
cuando me entrego sin dolor al abismo rutinario de las esquinas
y soy nostalgia
al cumplir con mi tarea de ser buena ciudadana.

Frente al mar
soy una extranjera en la ciudad prometida
con las maletas llenas de cangrejos disecados
pero en el Imperio de las Ventanas Cerradas todo es áspero
y al salir a la calle ciervo la puerta con doble llave
y trato de olvidar
a la sirena atrapada en la tubería del baño
y soy nostalgia
cuando me entrego sin dolor al abismo rutinario de las esquinas
y soy nostalgia
al cumplir con mi tarea de ser buena ciudadana.
Before the sea
I am a stranger in the promised city
with suitcases full of dried crabs
but in the Empire of Closed Windows all is severe
and going out in the street I shut the door with double lock
and try to forget
the siren trapped in the bathroom plumbing

and I am nostalgic
when I surrender painlessly to the abyssal routine of the street-corners

and I am nostalgic
to fulfill my task of being a good citizen.
Desde el umbral añejado de mi infancia aprendí a odiar.
Odiar el aullido repentino de los perros cuando atan al eco de las casas todos los fantasmas giratorios de las pesadillas, de los miedos. Odiar con todo y estado y objeto y conjugación de estudio.
Odiar el simple silencio de tumba.
Odiar el césped crecido repentinamente en los pies.
Odiar la rareza de los felinos, la piñata y sus eternos golpes de berrinche.
Odiar la opereta burlona de las medallas de buena conducta.
Odiar cada arteria, vena, pulso y yugular central de la ciudad.
Odiar las aguas estancadas en la cuneta esquina poniente de un sur mendigo.
Odiar el humus y su roce lesbiano hecho carne, su rapiña de muslo, su careta murmurante de una catedral sin Dios y la comisura seca de sus cuarenta grados centígrados.
Odiar cada moneda pesada y su liviano níquel convertido en pan.
From the ancient threshold of my infancy I learned to hate
To hate the sudden howling of the dogs
When they tie to the houses’ echo every phantasm
Spun of nightmares
and fears To hate
with all and state and object and conjugation of study.
To hate the simple silence of the grave
To hate the lawn suddenly grown up over feet
To hate the rarity of cats, the eternal tantrum
of the struck piñata.
To hate the medals for good conduct, ridiculous
operettas.
To hate each artery, vein, pulse and central
jugular of the city.
To hate the stagnant waters in the corner gutter
due west of a southern beggar.
To hate the humus, its lesbian rubbing made into meat
Its pillage of thigh
The murmuring mask of a cathedral with no god
And the slit of a dry mouth, its forty degrees centigrade.
To hate each weighted currency
and its slight nickel converted into bread.
Santa Bárbara

Vinie do Playas de Tecate miramos a Santa Bárbara
California
escupiendo
ceniza / polvo
como una borracha

echada sobre un catre de piedras
entre movedizas ondas de vapor

El humo cubría el sol en Running Springs
Oye huele a resina y hierba
flores y pájaros quemados
dijo mi broder tapándose con la manga

El día huele a eso
a mierda a chamusquina

Como mirar a Cindy Crawford entristecida
su rostro manchado de hollín
exhalando un cinematográfico quejido

Veníamos de Tecate
con los pies hinchados
y nos quedamos mirando la escena
de aquellas almas en ascuas abriendo latas de cerveza
palacios caprichosos desplomándose entre el fuego
y el agua manando de la panza de los helicópteros como espumante orín

Al atardecer llegó un Lexus color perla colmado de porcelana
conducido por una mujer salida de un set de la MGM
que irradiaba un perfume que no alcanzamos a aspirar
entre el tufo amargo de los vientos de Santa Ana (California)
Coming from the beaches of Tecate we look to Santa Barbara
California
Spitting
Ash / dust
Like a drunk
thrown over a cot of stones
between drifting waves of vapor
Smoke hid the sun in Running Springs
Listen smells like resin and grass
flowers and charred birds
said my brother covering himself with his sleeve
The day smells like that
like shit like fishy
Like watching Cindy Crawford look sad
her face smeared with soot
uttering a cinematographic moan
We came from Tecate
with swollen feet
and we stayed to watch the scene
of those souls on embers opening cans of beer
capricious palaces tumbling in fire
and water flowing from the belly of helicopters like foaming urine
There arrived at dusk a pearlescent Lexus overflowing with porcelain
Driven by a woman out of a MGM set
Who radiated a perfume we could not breathe
Between the bitter fumes of the Santa Ana (California) winds.
Es necesario tener
Un reloj fosforescente.
No sé cómo explicarlo.
No tiene que ver nada
Con el tiempo.

Es un pequeño rostro frío
Este reloj fosforescente.

Es importante usar
Un reloj contra-agua.
No sé cómo explicarme.
No tiene que ver nada
Con la sed.

Es una boca abierta
Este reloj que sólo habla
Cuando se lo pido.

Es bueno tener
Un reloj automático.
Trataré de explicarme.
Es una bóveda de arena
Que corre a nuestro favor
Bombeada por un corazón de acero.

No tiene que ver nada con las máquinas.
No tiene que ver nada con el tiempo.
It’s necessary to have
A phosphorescent watch
I can’t explain it.
It’s got nothing to do
With time.

It’s a small frozen face
This phosphorescent watch.

It’s important to use
A waterproof watch.
I can’t explain it.
It’s got nothing to do
With thirst.

It’s an open mouth
This watch that only speaks
When I ask.

It’s good to have
An automatic watch.
I’ll try to explain.
It’s a vault of sand
Flowing at our favor
Bombed out by a heart of steel.

It’s got nothing to do with machines.
It’s got nothing to do with time.
La tribu

Una mañana envolví mi calavera entre los periódicos del día y corri al desierto donde el sol adormece y abrasa en busca de mis huesos

Mi terca tibia el galante occipital tan amado por su médula el ufano esfenoides la mugre de mis uñas y la luna de mi sien eran la viva estampa de mi tribu

—Este no eres tú tú eres otro— me decía mirándome en los fríos charcos de las calles de Sonoma

Un gordo muñeco de nieve herido por la ventisca

Un cubo de nieve se forma arañando la escarcha del refrigerador cuando ya no queda nada en su interior

Viajé anduve nadé hasta ingresar a las ciudades donde vive un Dios impaciente Es un administrador implacable Las muertes que dispensa suelen ser muy meditadas

Veo mis huesos azules reflejados en los cristales de los rascacielos colgando de un andamio como mono de otro planeta Pregunta mi barba de dónde la lluvia esta tristeza El viento es un puñal que me sacude Pero sé que mi cuerpo sigue en alguna parte a menudo lo persigo entre sueños

Noche tras noche a la hora de comer desempaco mi calavera de su cuna de periódicos la beso mi aliento a soda y caries parece disgustarle

Toda vida todo abismo todo dique todo árbol todo clavo toda sangre El hombre y la mujer que yo contengo son la viva estampa de mi tribu
 Tribe

Translated by Christian Nagler

One morning I wrapped my skull in the day’s newspapers and ran into the desert where the sun lulls and burns in search of my bones.

My staunch tibia gallant occipital loved so by its medulla haughty sphenoids dirt of my nails and moon of my temples were the living figure of my tribe.

—from this is not you
you are another—
I said, looking at myself in the cold puddles of the streets of Sonoma.

A fat snowman wounded by blizzard

A bucket of snow forms, scratching the fridge’s frost nothing left inside it.

I travelled walked swam until I entered the cities where there lives that impatient God who is an implacable administrator.

The deaths he distributes turn out to be very meditated.

I see my bones reflected blue in the panes of skyscrapers hanging from a scaffold like monkey from another planet.

The wind is a knife that shakes me
But I know that my body carries on somewhere I often follow it through dreams.

Night after night at dinner time
I unpack my skull from its newspaper cradle I kiss it my breath is disgusting with soda and cavities.

All life all abyss all dam
every tree every nail all blood
The man and woman I contain are the living figure of my tribe.

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All life all abyss all dam
every tree every nail all blood
The man and woman I contain are the living figure of my tribe.
Tengo suficientes años
Y sin embargo me confundo.
Pongo mi ropa al sol
Como si abriese flores rotas a la luna
Conservo ideas propias de la noche
Del siglo.

Para dormir arrojo mis botas
Muy cerca
De la cabecera
Y escucho su andar
Sus vagancias
Sus tropiezos.

Revuelvo sombra con iluminaciones.
El silencio con los sacrificios.
Mi lámpara con la estrella.

Me confundo
Si a bordo de golpe la vida.
Me enredo
En general ante las leyes
Y con el amor
Que no las tiene.
I should be old enough
However I’m still confused.
I put on my sun clothes
As if I would shoot broken flowers to the moon.
I keep my own ideas secret
From the night.

When I go to sleep I toss
My boots very close
To the headboard
And listen to their amblings
Their vagrancies
Their stumbles.

I mix up shade with illuminations
Silence with sacrifices
My lamp with the star

I’m confused
If I get onboard the whip of life.
I mostly get tangled up
With the laws
And with the love
That has none.
Un día más del nuevo milenio
Las aves chillan entre la bruma
Multitud de gente urgida por cruzar el río
Abatidos
Exhalando suspiros

Allí miré a alguien que conocía:
"Aletheia"
le dije
"extiéndeme la visa para saltar al sendero de tu sueño
y empujarte a la llama líquida
en esta sopa de tallos"

"Aletheia" exclamó
"aquí la realidad primera se estira y encoge como gimnasta"

Y sobre aquel espejo de agua
cegaba con hórrida belleza
blanco como un analgésico
el sol de los condenados
One more day of the new millenium
Birds shriek in the fog
Hell, it seems, carries on as always
Multitudes of people urged to cross the river
Battered ones
Sighing exhalations.

I saw someone I knew there
“Aletheia”
I said to her
“grant me a visa to jump in the path of your dream
and push you to the liquid flame
in this soup of stems”

“Aletheia” I exclaimed
“here reality first stretches and contracts like a gymnast”

And over that mirror of water
blinded with horrid beauty
white like an analgesic
the sun of the condemned
Ciudad Tecún Umán

Entre las casas pobres las ventanas enrejadas
los chupaderos y la música a reventar
viene Pablo Menchú borracho
subiendo por el barrio Xibalbá

Pues nada patojo
Qué te pasa conmigo
Dame un quetzal

Por un quetzal
pájaro bobo te puedes morir
Chingate cabrón Ciégate
Cambiarias tu nahual por un cigarrillo

El parte de la policía dice que vienes a mudar de piel
Que te tumbas sobre los durmientes del ferrocarril
Que saltas a uno y otro lado del río meando en el agua
Sabandija
Que moras entre la hojarasca y las piedras
Tecún Uman City

Among the poor houses barred windows
Chupaderos and pop music
Comes Pablo Menchú, drunk
Climbing through barrio Xibalbá

It’s nothing, boy
You got a problem with me
Give me a Quetzal

For a Quetzal
Penguin, you could die
Fuck you, bastard, shut up
You’d trade your nahual for a cigarette

The police dispatch says you come to change your skin
That you fall down on the sleepers of the railway
That you jump from one side of the river to another pissing in the water
Scum
That you dwell among dead leaves and stones.

Tecún Uman City

Among the poor houses barred windows
Chupaderos and pop music
Comes Pablo Menchú, drunk
Climbing through barrio Xibalbá

It’s nothing, boy
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The police dispatch says you come to change your skin
That you fall down on the sleepers of the railway
That you jump from one side of the river to another pissing in the water
Scum
That you dwell among dead leaves and stones.
Durante un año estuve hechizado en la espuma del agua
—Jorge Luis Borges

Acaso tu alma sea ave transmigratoria.

Vanamente quisiera apresarla en este cuaderno, porque ahora que has vuelto a tu inocencia, rechazarías, como se rechaza un traje ajeno, a todas las aves que te despertaban —tus hijos, diseminados en vidas tan lejanas—, como si fueran habitantes de lejanas nebulosas, a mi admiración al verte como una esfinge amada, y aquel hotel que levantaste con tus insomnios, como se levanta una ciudad en medio del desierto o de la eterna siesta de los hombres, y se desvaneece, como se desvaneece también este espejismo que sabiamente haces en olvidar.
Perhaps your soul a transmigratory bird.

In vain I wanted
to capture her in this notebook
because now that you have returned to your innocence,
you would reject, as one rejects a strange suit,
all the birds that used to wake you
—your children, spread out
in lives so distant—
as if they were inhabitants
of distant nebulas,
and my admiration in seeing you
like a beloved sphinx,
and that hotel where you arose with your insomnia,
as a city arises
in the middle of the desert or from the eternal siesta of men,
and disappears,
as this mirage
also disappears
that wisely
you do well to forget.
Los amplios corredores del Hotel Central, donde llegaban viajantes vestidos de mitos y búsquedas también me recibían. Entonces yo creía que tanto tú como esos corredores habían nacido con el mundo, un sexto día en que fue ineludible crearlos a ambos para que el orbe no estuviese incompleto.

Lo cierto es que el hotel nació de ti, como se pare a un hijo pródigo: bello, pero oneroso. Lo fuiste incubando en tu ser, desde que te negabas a ir a los bailes para soñar con él, inclinada en la rueca y pinchándote los dedos como Blancanieves, pero sin baile —¿qué más baile que este, en el que amaneces rodeada de desconocidas?— ni príncipe —¿qué más príncipe que mi Coronel convertido en imperdonable viento que enreda las piscuchas?—.
The wide corridors
of the Central Hotel
where travelers arrived
dressed in myths and quests
also received me.

Thus I believed
that you just as those corridors
had been born with the world,
a sixth day in which it was unavoidable to make both
so that the globe
would not be incomplete.

What is certain is that the hotel
was born from you,
as one gives birth to a prodigal son: beautiful, yet burdensome.

You incubated it in your being,
since you declined
to go out dancing
to dream of him,
leaning on the spinning wheel
and pricking your fingers
like Snow White,
but with neither dancing
—what is more a dance
than this, in which
you awake surrounded
by unknown women? —
nor a prince
—who is more a prince
than my Colonel
turned into an unforgivable wind
that tangles up the kites?
Él aparecía a medianoche
a lomos de su caballo,
como si fuera el Caballero del Diablo,
para dejar una flor
en tu ventana.

Queda sólo
el ruido de los cascos
golpeando las calles empedradas.

Soñé anoche
que me invitabas
para las galas de tu despedida.

Tu voz, interrumpida acaso
por las olas de los muertos,
 llegaba al otro lado
por encima
de los recuerdos
que todo lo adulteran.

Pero vives, y además,
ya no quieres saber
ni nombre, ni ningún otro nombre,
pero me invocaste.

Así resucité
de entre los vivos.
He appeared at midnight
on the back of his horse
as if he was the Devil’s Horseman,
to leave a flower
at your window.

Only the noise of the hooves
remains
galloping on stone streets.

I dreamed last night
that you invited me
to your going away gala.

Your voice, interrupted perhaps
by the waves of the dead,
arrived at the other side
on
the memories
that corrupt everything.

But you live, and besides,
you no longer want to know
the name, nor any other name,
but you invoked me.

Thus I was raised
among the living.
La colmena era el sueño
que coronaba tu cabeza
aún sin canas.
Tú eras la reina y eras las obreras.
Miel del sudor
que coronaba tu frente
iluminaba los pasillos
como un sol ignorado.
Luego de ti, el inútil
empeño de los zánganos.

Sólo había un momento
en que cerrabas los ojos:
la fiesta fugaz y silenciosa
de la siesta
que duraba un parpadeo.

A veces, la niña
aprovechaba esa eternidad
para prenderse a la ventura,
para perderse en caminos de gigantes
y volver
cuando abrieras los ojos.

(A veces pienso
que la huida de la niña
es un sueño
que cumplies al cerrar
tus ojos milenarios.)
The hive was the dream that crowned your head still without grey hairs. You were the queen and you were the workers. Honey of sweat that crowned your forehead illuminated the corridors like an unknown sun. After you, the useless effort of the drones.

There was only a moment in which you closed your eyes: the fleeting and silent fest of the siesta that lasted for a blink. Sometimes, the girl used this eternity to latch onto destiny to lose herself in the paths of giants and return when she opened her eyes. (Sometimes I think that the flight of the girl is a dream that you realize closing your millenarian eyes.)
Mucho tiempo después de llegar
a un incansante amanecer
y de no atender
a la paciente labor de la traición;
muchó después de que la guerra
fuera un muchacho suspendido del árbol de mango más alto
y de alimentar a un mundo
que lamía su plato
hecho de mis tristezas;
muchó después, siglos,
o sólo un momento
en el que este hotel
dehíja de ser un acaso
y se tornara en la presencia que me impide cerrar los ojos;
cerré mis recuerdos como arca,
revocé el hotel,
desde su pozo hasta las azoteas,
lo cerré como una ciudad asediada por la peste
y caí.

Caer fue mi nuevo nacimiento
con olvidos fui sanando,
aunque no lo crean.
Es tarde ya,
No hay habitaciones
disponibles para ustedes,
ya vengan con halagos
o con enormes maletas.
Déjenme dormir,
déjenme olvidarlos.
Long after arriving
at an unceasing dawning
and after not attending
to the patient labor of treason;
long after the war
was a young man suspended from the tallest mango tree
and after feeding a world
that licked its plate
made of my sadness;
long after, centuries,
or only a moment
in which this hotel
stopped being a perhaps
and became the presence that prevented me from closing my eyes;
I closed my memories like an ark,
I revoked the hotel
from its well to its rooftops,
I closed it as a city besieged by the plague
and I fell.

Falling was my rebirth:
forgetting I healed
although you do not believe it.
It is late already.
There are not rooms
available for you all,
you approach with flattery
or with enormous suitcases.
Let me sleep,
let me forget you.
Pasillo para gatos

Nos encontramos cinco calles abajo
y la cocina dejó de ser el refugio de las ratas.
Nos encontramos para cruzar las calles
y desperdiciar el cigarro a la vuelta de la esquina,
el comedor dejó de ser el lugar perfecto para esconderse
tras los manteles que nunca han de mover.
Nos encontramos para esconder el laberinto de los ojos
y cargar las compras de la semana.
El espejo dejó de robarnos personalidad
y el televisor dejó de ser el centro de atención de los miedos y
los quejidos.
Nos sentamos en el parque de la esquina
ha construir murallas al lado de nuestros pies
porque los zapatos viejos estorban en el closet
y dejamos que la ropa se fuera acumulando en el sillón.
Ya para qué seguir con el calvario de los gatos maquillados.
Dejaremos de encontrarnos
y tal vez la próxima semana nos tomemos un café.

Amor, hay días en que vigilo el pasto desde aquí
Y se me da crecer en la tierra
Como un parásito orgulloso de su baile.

Hay días en que respirar se me hace constante
Y me parece una molestia para el vecino,
Pero él no sabe que padezco de estas perversiones,
Ignora que he dejado de ser artificio de colmena
Y que he construido un plano bajo el suelo
Donde ni él cabe ya.

Andrade
We meet five blocks down
And the kitchen is no longer the refuge of rats.
We meet to cruise the streets
and to waste the cigar around the corner,
the dining room is no longer the perfect place to hide
behind tablecloths that shall never move.
We meet to hide the labyrinth of eyes
and haul the week's groceries.
The mirror stopped robbing our personality
and the television stopped being the center of attention for our
fears and complaints.
We sit in the neighborhood park
and build walls beside our feet
because old shoes pile up in the closet
and we let our clothes accumulate on the couch.
Why keep on with the torture of cosmeticized cats.
We will stop meeting
And maybe next week we can get some coffee.

Love, there are days when from here I watch over the grass
with the fancy to grow in the earth
Like a parasite proud of its dance.

There are days when breathing is constant
And it seems to me that this is an annoyance to the neighbor
But he doesn't know that I suffer from these perversions
He ignores the fact that I have stopped being a hive artifice
And that I have made blueprints under the ground
where not even he fits anymore.
Amor, desde hace días he visitado las plazas públicas
y el comercio se me hace molesto
pero suelo encabezar las filas de las tiendas al dos por uno para
no perder la
costumbre,
como cuando vaciábamos el bolsillo izquierdo llorando de culpa
y temblando de orgullo.
Estoy vez me he cansado de caminar,
De tomar el autobús,
De esperar que alguien me lleve en su carro,
Me he aburrido de ver el cielo
Amor, la crisis de vida normal se acumula en el ojo
Mejor busquemos un poco de tierra
Y comenzamos a independizarnos del humus subterráneo
Y crecemos como parásitos robustos
En la boca de los gatos.

Amanece al borde de la calle
Pasiva,
Respira la humedad de planta subterránea
Con las ojeras más grandes que la culpa.
Asemeja una pregunta bajo el brazo.
Deja de silbar, pequeña conciencia.
Deja que el norte camine un poco más al sur.

Hay noches en que velar a los gatos es lo único que parece
sustentarte,
Pero también los basureros guardan tesoros oxidados.
Olvidas que los perros te salvaron la vida
En el dibujo de aquel ocaso metamorfoseado.

Deja de olvidar,
El olvido sólo mata 27 neuronas por hora
Y ya no puedes perder menos del doble.
Camina pequeña conciencia en los ojos del escarabajo de oro
Y restaras las horas de las arrugas que te dejaron los sueños.

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Y restaras las horas de las arrugas que te dejaron los sueños.
For days, love, I've been going to the public plazas
And business makes me uncomfortable
But I'm used to heading the line at the two for one stores so as
not to lose the
Habit,
Like when we emptied our left pocket crying with guilt
And trembling with pride.

I'm tired of walking this time
Of taking the bus
Of waiting for someone to pick me up in their car
I'm bored of looking at the sky
Love, the crisis of everyday life accumulates in the eye
Better if we look for a little land
And begin to declare our independence from the undersoil
And grow like robust parasites
In the mouths of cats.

She awakens at the side of the road
Passive
She breathes the humidity of an underground plant
With bags under her eyes larger than guilt,
She resembles a question under the arm.

Stop whistling, little conscience.

Let the north walk a little bit to the south.

There are nights when keeping watch over the cats is all that
seems to sustain you,
But trashcans too guard oxidized treasures.
You forget that the dogs saved your life
In the drawing of that metamorphosed dusk.

Stop forgetting,
Forgetting alone kills 27 neurons per hour
And you cannot lose less than double.
Walk little consciousness in the gold scarab's eyes
And you will subtract those hours from the creases your dreams leave.

---

Andrade
Ya no queda más que volver a la inconciencia
Y desdibujar la cara
Volverse 1 igual a 1
Y la suma vuelve a dar lo mismo,
Pero ya dejó de molestarte la comida fría.

Un poco de paciencia señor,
He venido tarde este día
Y los demás también.
Me reclutó un ejército de hormigas
Y las cosas se hacen cada día más pesadas
para los murciélagos que habitan mi cabeza.

Un poco de paciencia señor,
He dormido solo tres horas colgado de la pared
He dormido con agujeros en el zapato
Pero aun tengo dolor abdominal rezagado.

Un poco de paciencia señor,
He dejado al gato esperando su comida.

Hoy volví a tener ese sueño
Donde te escondías de los pájaros
Y yo simulaba olvidar los rostros
Volvi a soñar que abejas nos seguían
Mientras me sentaba a tomar café y a fumar frente al televisor
Con tu gato arrullándose en mis piernas.
There's nothing left but to go back to unconsciousness
And undraw its face
Return to 1 equals 1
And the sum turns up the same,
But cold food doesn't bother you anymore.

IV

A little patience, sir
I have come late today
And all the other days too.
An army of ants recruited me
And things get weightier each day
for the bats that inhabit my head.

A little patience, sir
I have slept only three hours, hung from the wall
I have slept with tiny holes in my shoes
But I have leftover abdominal pain.

A little patience, sir
I have left the cat waiting for its food.

V

Today I went back to having that dream
Where you hid yourself from the birds
And I pretended to forget faces
I went back to dreaming that bees followed us
And everything went on going blind
While I sat down to drink coffee and smoke in front of the television
With your cat purring on my legs.
Hay días en que la los gatos anuncian la llegada de los ancianos
y trabajan los ojos para esconder los árboles
y te das cuenta que has regresado
y ya no hay nadie que te visite,
ni te extrañe.
Ya no hay nada que disfrazc la pena y la culpa.
Todo se quedo refugiado
en las cámaras fotográficas

Tú gata me odia
y he sepultado todo el polvo bajo la cama
ya no me deja dormir.
Todo se ha ido bajo la puerta.

Tú gata me odia.
Ya olvidó quién le dio el último abrazo
y gracias a quién ya no le temes a los roedores,
quién le dio de comer
y recogió la última piedra en que se sentó a llorar.

Sentada en una piedra
se queja de la falta de talones,
de la falta de ataduras
y de cómo se dibujaba la piel.

Tú gata me odia
y ya no cabe mi mano húmeda en tu espalda
porque a ella le dan risa los grillos
y a mí me estorba tanto residuo de su piel.
Se fue todo
hasta la culpa.
There are days when the cats announce the arrival of the ancients
And eyes work to hide the trees
And you notice that you’ve returned
And there’s no one to visit you
or to miss you
Now there is nothing to disguise the shame and the guilt
Everything goes on taking refuge
in photographic cameras.

Your cat hates me
And I have buried all the dust under the bed
And now I can’t sleep.
All has gone under the door.

Your cat hates me
She already forgot who gave her the last embrace
and thanks to whom she no longer fears rodents
who gave her food
and picked up the last stone on which she sat down to cry.

Seated on a stone
she complains of the lack of heels,
the lack of knots,
and how her skin was drawn.

Your cat hates me
and now my moist hand does not fit on your back
because the crickets make her laugh
and me, I am cluttered up with too much of her skin’s residue.
All has gone
unto guilt.
Un día estaremos más lejos de lo que quisimos.
Soy el sudor frío de la noche
el que apacigua la tiniebla de madrugada,
miércoles el parabrisas se nubla
con la mirada de los murciélagos

Soy el nudo en la garganta de la noche
cuando los gatos no pueden cantar
y dibujan con sus patas un nido de arañas
para poder adornar las ventanas de los vecinos viejos

Soy el corazón roto de la noche
del enjambre de pericos que dejó de posarse en el balcón
por acariciar mejor el sonido de la mañana.
El sol definitivamente volvió a salir
ellos ya no volvieron.

Soy el ocaso de la noche
mientras el gato se arrulla en mi rodilla
y el incienso se dibuja en las paredes de la habitación,
en la ventana, en la puerta
y regrese al cúmulo grisáceo de mis ojos.

Soy el reloj de la noche
y se detuvo
una vez más
se detiene
y un día estaremos más lejos de lo que quisimos.
One day we will be further away from what we want.
I am the cold night sweat
that pacifies the early morning dim
while the windshields fog
with the gaze of bats.

I am the knot in the throat of the night
when the cats cannot sing
and they draw with their paws a spider’s nest
to adorn the windows of the elderly neighbors
tired of dying of guilt.

I am the broken heart of the night
of the swarm of parrots that stopped landing on the balcony
to better caress the sound of the morning.
The sun definitely came out again
they have not yet returned.

I am the dusk of the night
while the cat purrs on my knee
and the incense draws on the apartment walls
on the window, on the door
and returns to the grey cumulus of my eyes.

I am the night’s clock
stopped
one more time
stops
and one day we will be further away from what we want.

Andrade
Esta necesidad de páginas muertas,
amarillas, tornasol.
Ese volver y no querer,
esa sensación de pregunta en el hombro,
eso aullar caucásico,
esas ganas de envolver el sueño entre serpientes.
Siempre esa necesidad de páginas muertas,
solo esa trae un ropero escondido entre los ojos,
un agujero de culpa en el paladar
un maullido a las tres de la mañana
una caricia de almohada
una noche en que el gato te mantiene en vela
Todo sabe a viento
y a compañía de olvido,
Todo es una necesidad de páginas muertas.

Comenzamos con el delito de pensar que el oro es eterno
Y que las murallas no se destruyen con un suspiro
Siempre hemos ido dibujando la cola del gato en las sienes
Para que sea menos angustiante la necesidad de morir
Siempre hemos vuelto al primigenio mundo de los ratones
Cuando padecemos el mediano cansancio del buen vecino,
la costumbre de angustiarse a las tres de la mañana
Y de vigilar el sueño de las paredes de la habitación
Cuando acariciamos el atardecer de los abismos
Y la psicosis del medio día sin sol
Nos escondemos bajo la mesa
Con el deseo de huir de la muchedumbre
De la cortina sin miel,
Huimos de todo
Y de nadie
Solo huimos
Caminamos en círculos
Buscando el oro que se perdió bajo el zapato
This need of dead pages,
Yellowed, litmus.
That returning and not wanting,
That sensation of question in the shoulder,
That caucasian howling,
Those desires to tuck the dream between serpents.
Always that necessity for dead pages,
Which alone brings a closet hidden between the eyes,
A hole of guilt in the palate
A meow at three in the morning
A caress of pillow
A night when the cat keeps you awake
And the mirror comes to life.
All tastes of glass
And of the company of forgetting,
All is a need of dead pages.

We begin with the delight of thinking that gold is eternal
And that the walls are not destroyed with a sigh
We have always drawn the cat’s tail on the temples
So that the need of dying will be less anguish.
We have always returned to the primordial world of mice
When we suffer the median fatigue of the good neighbor,
The custom of suffering at three in the morning
And of watching over the dream of the apartment’s walls
When we caress the dusk of the abysses
And the psychosis of half a day without sun
We hide under the table
With the desire to flee from the multitudes
From the curtain without honey,
We flee from everything
And from nobody
We only flee
We walk in circles
Looking for gold lost underfoot.
Aquí, en este silencio que no da sosiego a las catedrales, aún resuenan los relucientes machetes que no soportaron transitar la amargura.
¿Cuántos de nuestros pastores advirtieron la sombra?
¿Cuántos de nuestros hermanos no advirtieron la luz?
Seguimos a oscuras. Sin luz. Sin sombras. Dudando de ser humanos, en el mejor de los casos, cumpliendo con el simple ofertorio de respirar, en el más deplorable. Siento que los perros sí sospecharon. Que en el fondo de sus ladridos desataban la horrenda homilía del miedo. No a la muerte, que es burocracia fugaz, sino a la caravana de instrumentos, cada cual con su luz, con su apretada nostalgia, con su suave e incomprensible vibración. Los perros sí sabían, por eso ladran. Y aquéllos les rebanaron el nervioso cuello, les clausuraron la voz; y los otros hicieron de metal sus instintos y olvidaron las lágrimas que en sus ojos animales ya lamentaban este tiempo maldito.

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Six Poems
Otoniel Guevara
The Dogs
Translated by Christian Nagler

Here in this silence that gives cathedrals no solace
resplendent machetes that bore no bitterness transit still
ring.
How many of our priests warned of shadow?
How many of our brothers could not figure out light?
We carry on in darkness. Without light. Without shadows.
Wondering whether we’re human, in the best case,
giving up with a simple offering of breath, in the worst.
I feel that the dogs, yes, they suspected it, who in the depth
of their barks
unleashed the horrific homily of fear.
Not of death, that brief bureaucracy,
But of the caravan of instruments, each with its light
with its reckless nostalgia
with its gentle and incomprehensible vibration.
The dogs, yes, they knew, this is why they barked.
And for that their nervous throat was sliced, their voice sealed;
and the others made metal of their instincts
and forgot the tears that already in their animal eyes
had lamented
this cursed time.

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La Libertad

Un plenilunio era la flor más erótica que se podía colgar la noche
Por eso
cada vez que las luciérnagas desentejaban la oscuridad
te recordaba con tu vestido de plenilunios estallantes

Tal y como serás
Una noche, 1986

Contra la culpa

Nací
para que el dolor montara su fiesta milenaria

Se me ofrendó un nombre
para ser perseguido a través de la selva

Y el rostro se me dio
para ser señalado por dedos inclementes

Todo porque me dejé acunar por la furia del río
y me atreví a volar en las garras del viento
porque osé quemarme con la piel de las amantes
y convertí en raíz mi corazón sobre esta tierra

Jamás me verán declararme culpable

Pago con este amor lo que les deba

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Pago con este amor lo que les deba
A full moon was the most erotic flower that could hang the night
Therefore
Each time the fireflies unroofed the darkness
I remembered you with your dress of exploding full moons

Such and as it will be
One night, 1986

I was born
so that pain might mount its millennial fiesta

I was offered up a name
so as to be pursued through the jungle

And the face I was given
to be pointed out by inclement fingers

All because I let myself be lulled by the fury of the river
and ventured flying in the clutches of the wind
because I risked burning myself with the skin of lovers
and converted my heart to root on this land

I will never plead guilty
I pay with this love what I owe them
Hora nefasta

Todos en el jardín están marchitos

La puerta que conduce al exterior
inútilmente abierta

Bajo las nubes no son estrellas fugaces
las que relampaguean malvadas

Un niño muy pequeño recoge del suelo un árbol
No es más que una ramita destrozada
pero es todo lo que sobrevive de la selva

Y la muerte—desolada—se desploma

Nadie sonríe de verdad
No hay motivo

Tal vez mi hermano me llame desde estados unidos
pero eso no significa que estemos vivos

Es de día
pero eso no ha logrado acabar
con tanta oscuridad
Dire Hour

Everything in the garden is withered

The door leading to the outside
unnecessarily open

Beneath the clouds are not shooting stars
to light up the evils in a flash

A very small child picks up a tree from the ground
It’s no more than a destroyed twig
but it’s all that survives of the jungle

And death—desolate—collapses

Nobody really smiles
No reason to

Maybe my brother calls me from the united states
but that doesn’t mean we’re alive

It is day
but it has not managed to end
even with such darkness
juntanos
guía de las noches secas
chupamiel de las batallas
tambor del horizonte

que tu savia nos arrodille
bajo el tierno llanto de los niños silvestres

la choza del tecolote nos proteja
quietud de la marea
astro de los que bregan
puñal acuático que conquistaste
el reino de las luces
la unión de las breas
la conjunción de las miradas

Guevara
Petition to the Flower of Evening

join us
guide of the dry nights
honeysuckle of battles
drum of the horizon

so that your sap might kneel us
under the tender cry of the feral children

shanty of the owl, protect us
stillness of the tide
star of the struggling ones
aquatic dagger that conquered
the kingdom of the lights
the union of the tars
the conjunction of the gazes
Ciudad perdida

Humo
¡Pero si ya se quemó el último ocote!
Humo
¡Pero si ya las nubes no pueden salir de aquella enciclopedia!
Humo
¡Pero si ya no hay palabras que dejen ceniza!
Humo
mucho humo
humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo humo
Lost city

Smoke
(But what if the last torch is already burned?)

Smoke
(But what if the clouds can’t escape from that encyclopedia?)

Smoke
(But what if there are no words that leave ashes?)

Smoke
much smoke

smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke
smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke
smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke
smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke
smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke
smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke
smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke
smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke

(The city sneezes)

Wake up…

Lost city

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(But what if the last torch is already burned?)

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(But what if the clouds can’t escape from that encyclopedia?)

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smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke
smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke
smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke
smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke smoke

(The city sneezes)

Wake up…)
Uno se levanta a veces, sin saberlo,
con los dos pies izquierdos. Saluda al espejo:
la barba creció. No hay café. (Se necesita
café para vivir hasta las diez de la mañana.)

Uno a veces se levanta y aún duerme
y años después despierta en una casa que es la suya
y si acaso encoge los hombros y susurra
una frase de perdón para sí mismo.

Uno tiene a veces las ganas de morirse a media calle.
Uno contesta a veces que sí porque así son las cosas,
que no o que tal vez porque así son las cosas.
Uno a veces no contesta
y se llenan de silencio los zapatos,
el pantalón queda flojo
y la camisa suda.

Uno se preguntó alguna vez “¿debo?”
y contestó “me muero”.

Uno, alguna vez, tendrá los ojos vidriosos
y dirá la palabra equivocada
y cantará sin tono
y no habrá quien lo escuche.

Uno verá alguna vez que el tiempo es viejo
y que no tuvo tiempo.
Sonará el despertador
y una sonrisa a la izquierda de la cama
ochoa
Three Poems

Rafael Menjivar Ochoa

Epilogue

Translated by Emily Abendroth

One rises sometimes, unawares, with two left feet. One greets the mirror: the beard has grown. There is no coffee. (One needs coffee in order to live until ten in the morning.)

One sometimes rises and still sleeps and years later awakes in a house that is one's own and perhaps shrugs the shoulders and whispers a phrase of self-forgiveness.

One has sometimes the urge to die in mid-street.

One sometimes answers yes because that is the way things are, or no or maybe because that is the way things are.

One sometimes does not answer and the shoes fill up with silence, the pants remain loose and the shirt sweats.

One asks oneself at some point, “must I?” And answers, “I’ll die.”

One, at some point, will have glassy eyes and will let out a mistaken word and will sing tonelessly and will not make out who hears it.

One will see at some point that time is old and that you did not have time. The alarm clock will sound and a smile to the left of the bed.
le dirá que ya es hora, que el agua está caliente,  
que no se le haga tarde.  
Y uno—que es uno y no más que sólo eso—  
dirá que un rato más, sólo un minuto,  
sólo un segundo más, medio segundo,  
y qué extraño, ya no suenan los violines,  
y qué extraño es el mundo cuando no suenan los violines.
will let one know that now is the hour, that the water is hot, that one must not be late.
And one—who is simply one and no more than this—will try for a bit more, only a minute, only a second more, half a second, and how strange, that the violins aren’t playing already, and how strange is the world when the violins aren’t playing.

will let one know that now is the hour, that the water is hot, that one must not be late.
And one—who is simply one and no more than this—will try for a bit more, only a minute, only a second more, half a second, and how strange, that the violins aren’t playing already, and how strange is the world when the violins aren’t playing.
¿Qué hago sin gato aquí, cierto y ecuánime, sin causa que juzgar?
¿Qué hago sin cara propia, sin pies ni tambaleante? ¿Quién me busca y no halla mi teléfono en su mesita de centro? Soy apenas las señas particulares de alguien que me conoce, tarjeta de identidad que se descalza un pie y luego el otro y dormirá hasta que sea demasiado temprano.

(Mi carne no sabe a carne. La saliva se coagula y, oh, de nuevo es media tarde y no ha llegado la lluvia.)

¿A qué hora habré nacido, que no recuerdo la luz?
¿A qué hora me habré muerto, que no me duelen las manos?
What am I doing—catless—here, 
level-headed and certain, 
without cause to judge? 
What am I doing without my own face, 
without either feet or staggering? Who is it that seeks me out 
and doesn’t discover my telephone on its tiny coffee table? 
I am but scarcely 
the description of someone that knows me, 
an identity card that has cast off first one foot 
and then the other 
and who will sleep until it is far too early.

(My flesh does not know of flesh. The saliva 
coagulates and, oh, once again it is mid-afternoon 
and the rain has not arrived.)

What time will I be born, that I don’t remember the light? 
What time will I be dead, that my hands don’t hurt?
Aún hay bancas en los parques.
Aún hay parques
y las estatuas gruñen en silencio su soledad patria.

Aún hay flores y aún no tengo nombre. Aún
arranco flores para entender que alguien muere
cuando el amor nos mira fijamente.

¿Y de qué se habla en el parque?
¿Y a quién se espera en el parque? ¿Quién llega?
¿A quién se pide perdón? ¿A quién se paga la entrada?
¿Quién cobra?

Hoy no hubo un reloj que me llamara
y llegué tarde a la ceremonia de estar solo.

Mañana será hoy, y así las cosas.
Mañana no es mañana.
(¿Qué hago sin gato aquí,
donde dormir es muerte?)
Still there are benches in the parks.
Still there are parks and the statues grumble of their native lonesomeness in silence.

Still there are flowers and still I have no name. Still I pull flowers up in order to understand that someone dies whenever love stares fixedly upon us.

And just what was spoken of in the park? And for whom did one wait there? Who arrived? From whom did one ask forgiveness? And to whom did one pay entrance? Who was it that was paid?

Today I had no clock to call me And I arrived late to the being alone ceremony.

Tomorrow will be today, and so too its things. Tomorrow is not tomorrow. (What am I doing—catless—here, where to sleep is death?)
La mujer esqueleto

La mujer esqueleto se desnuda con ansia vegetal
La mujer esqueleto
La mujer esqueleto dice gracias por no llorar
Siembra esqueletos
La mujer esqueleto masca dientes y goma de mascar
Sombra de un esqueleto
La mujer esqueleto se nos muere: vocación de esqueleto

Boca sin boca: esqueleto
Pasión de caderas y hielo

El perro que te ladra buenas noches
Tu perro personal
El sillón que se sienta a tus espaldas
Tu sillón personal
El baño que te lame los sudores
Tu baño personal
The Skeleton Woman

The skeleton woman undresses with vegetative longing.
The skeleton woman
The skeleton woman says thank you so as not to cry.
She plants skeletons.
The skeleton woman chews teeth and chewing gum.
Shadow of a skeleton.
The skeleton woman makes us dead: a skeleton’s vocation.

Mouth without a mouth: skeleton.
Passion of hips and ice.

The dog that barks good night to you your personal dog.
The armchair that rests at your back your personal armchair.
The bath that licks your sweats your personal bath.
Tu furor tu leucemia tus vaginas
tu cara personal
Las sábanas que huele siempre a siempre
tu cama personal
Los dolores de espalda los dolores mensuales
tu status personal
Tus libros tu diarrea tus impuestos
tu cuándo personal
Tu zapato tu dios tus vegetales
tu nada personal
Tu fémur esquelético tu sífilis
Tu náusea personal
Tu noche tus gruñidos tu carro tus pendientes
sí
tu náusea personal
Tu máquina de mierdas y de lágrimas
tu idiotex personal
Tu hermana la que canta tu tío el que te viola
tu niñez personal
Tu cosa personal tus pocas ganas
tu cosa poca cosa personal
sí
tu cosa personal

IV
Bagazo
anónimo sin dueño
sombra de un caballo triste
sueño de un mal espectro
Eclipse del cuerpo

Tu furor tu leucemia tus vaginas
tu cara personal
Las sábanas que huele siempre a siempre
tu cama personal
Los dolores de espalda los dolores mensuales
tu status personal
Tus libros tu diarrea tus impuestos
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Tu hermana la que canta tu tío el que te viola
tu niñez personal
Tu cosa personal tus pocas ganas
tu cosa poca cosa personal
sí
tu cosa personal

IV
Bagazo
anónimo sin dueño
sombra de un caballo triste
sueño de un mal espectro
Eclipse del cuerpo
Your rage your leukemia your vaginas
your personal face

The sheets that smell forever and ever
your personal bed

The back pains the monthly pains
your personal status

Your books your diarrhea your taxes
your personal when

Your shoe your gods your vegetables
your nothing personal

Your skeletal femur your syphilis
your personal nausea

Your night your grunts your car your earrings
your personal nausea
yes
your personal nausea

Your machine of bullshit and of tears
your personal idiocy

Your sister who sings your uncle who rapes you
your personal childhood

Your personal thing your lack of motivations
your thing of lack your personal thing
yes
your personal thing

IV

A dead loss
anonymous without an owner
shadow of a dispirited horse
dream of an evil specter

Eclipse of the body
La mujer esqueleto amor a solas
sombra y hueso
La mujer esqueleto casa aparte
el rubor a destiempo
La mujer esqueleto mala cosa
mala sangre y aliento
La mujer esqueleto que se moja y descose
y baila ante un espejo
La mujer de su casa y de sus dientes
La mujer de las piernas sin sustento
La mujer que se sangra y no se muere
los ojos de relleno
La mujer que se cansa a medio día
La mujer de las tripas y los gestos
La mujer sin embargo la mujer apellido
La mujer de su padre y de su dedo
La mujer poca vaca
La mujer sin su peso
La mujer de la bota y del canario
La del muslo desierto
la mujer que lloró toda una noche
La que se fue muy lejos
La que viene y se viene y se palpita y sangra
La que se peina el pelo
La mujer desvelada la mujer trapo en uso
la mujer que va al cielo
La que se antoja a ratos la que se entrega nunca
La que saca a pasear a su hijo muerto

Quién mujer cuando entonces
Quién campana o complejo
Cuándo bata y sostén
o niña o descontento

Largo su largo brazo
su brazo de esqueleto
The skeleton woman loves alone shadows and bone
The skeleton woman separately weds bashfulness at the wrong time
The skeleton woman the bad thing bad blood and breath
The skeleton woman who wets herself and farts and dances before a mirror
The woman of the house and of the teeth The woman of the legs with no support
The woman that bleeds and does not die the eyes of stuffing
The woman that tires at midday The woman of guts and gestures
The woman nonetheless The surnamed woman
The woman of her father and of her finger
The somewhat cowed woman
The woman weightless
The woman of the boot and of the canary She of the desolate thigh
The woman that cried a whole night through She that went far away
She that came and comes to and throbs and bleeds She that combs her hair
The sleepless woman The used rag woman She that has a mind to at times She that never gives up
She that takes her dead son out for walks
Which woman when then Which bell or complex
When mother and sustenance or girl or discontent

How large her large arm is her skeleton arm
De Hambres Insurrectas

Seres Humanos:
reloj y caminando…
¡Qué muertos van…!
Entre mis huesos tienen
—coxis abierto—
¡mi hambre insurrecta
en la memoria!

Torre de Londres
—Hora y callada—
¡Aguja el mar!
Un barco. Al fondo niebla.
La soledad.
Sobre las aguas mansas,
repta el silencio.

Costas de arena.
Tierra —y de nadie—
se lleva el mar...
Bajo las aguas, hombres,
nieblas, ciudad...
¡Tiempo de adobe ruedan
bebendo sal!

29/VIII/1997
SANTA TECLA

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De Hambres Insurrectas

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reloj y caminando…
¡Qué muertos van…!
Entre mis huesos tienen
—coxis abierto—
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Bajo las aguas, hombres,
nieblas, ciudad...
¡Tiempo de adobe ruedan
bebendo sal!

29/VIII/1997
SANTA TECLA
Four Poems

Claudia Hérodier

On Insurgent Hungers

Translated by Christian Nagler and Jocelyn Saidenberg

Human beings:
Clock and walking...
How go the dead...!
Among my bones they have
—open coccyx—
my insurgent hunger
in memory!

Tower of London
—Hour and silenced—
Needle sea!
A ship. At the bottom, snow.
Solitude
Over the calm waters,
silence slithers.

Shores of sand.
Land—and nobody's—
Carries the sea...
Under the waters, men,
snows, city...
—Times of adobe they roll
drinking salt!
Y Vinieron las Edades

Y todo estuvo bien
hasta que solo fuimos sangre…
Luego vino el interés
Y resbalaron las edades…

5/IV/2001

Cuchillo Insomne

Y afiló la vida
Su cuchillo insomne
Abi,
ahi
en la palabra.

22/VII/2002
And the Ages Came
Translated by Christian Nagler

And all was well
Until we were only blood...
Then came interest
And the ages slid...

Insomniac Knife

And life sharpened
Its insomniac knife
There,
there
In the word.
Y amanecieron de pronto
las palabras
con tres heridas en la boca
Sangraban sin cesar
y sin nostalgia
Sangraban sin parar y sin medida
hasta que, de pronto,
se apostó una delante de las otras
y les dijo:
mañana es otro día
¡despertemos!
Mas no había mañana,
sino puertas
pasadizos sin fin
y alturas ciertas
Un túnel rectangular
una cama a medio hacer
un jardín de cristal
y una fuente de papel.

Fue entonces que,
desgañitadas, gritaron a coro:
—ellas, las palabras—
¡Ay de la sangre que va
del túnel rectangular
da la cama sin hacer,
de la cama a la puerta
y de la puerta al papel!

Y la sangre derramada,
que se movía como vieja achacosa
por los pasadizos y las desbordaba,
a ellas, las palabras,
—pegajosa por las paredes—
buscó altural mayor para verlas
y, al no encontrarlas,
cansados los ojos
And suddenly at dawn
the words arrived
With three wounds in their mouth
Bleeding endlessly
and without nostalgia
Bleeding without stop and without measure
until suddenly
one positioned itself in front of the others
and said to them:
tomorrow is another day
let's wake up!
But there was no tomorrow
except doors
corridors without end
and certain heights
A rectangular tunnel
a half made bed
a crystal garden
and a fount of paper.

It was then that,
hoarsely, they shouted in chorus:
—them, the words—
Oh from the blood that goes
from the rectangular tunnel
to the bed without making
from the bed to the door
and from the door to the paper!

And the spilled blood
that moved like an ailing old woman
through the corridors and overflowed them
to them, the words,
—stuck by the walls—
it looked for the best height from which to see them
and, when it did not find them,
eyes exhausted

And suddenly at dawn
the words arrived
With three wounds in their mouth
Bleeding endlessly
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And the spilled blood
that moved like an ailing old woman
through the corridors and overflowed them
to them, the words,
—stuck by the walls—
it looked for the best height from which to see them
and, when it did not find them,
eyes exhausted
vidriosos,
enneblecidos,
abrió su tremenda boca
para soltar al viento
su viejo canto de memoria vegetal
Y entonces quedó escrito...

vidriosos,
enneblecidos,
abrió su tremenda boca
para soltar al viento
su viejo canto de memoria vegetal
Y entonces quedó escrito...
glassy
crowned
it opened its tremendous mouth
to release to the wind
its old song of vegetal memory
And then it remained written…

22/VII/2002
SANTA TECLA
Todos nacimos medio muertos en 1932
sobrevivimos pero medio vivos
cada uno con una cuenta de treinta mil muertos enteros
que se puso a engordar sus intereses
sus réditos
y que hoy alcanza para untar de muerte a los que siguen
naciendo
medio muertos
medio vivos

Todos nacimos medio muertos en 1932
Ser salvadoreños es ser medio muerto
eso que se mueve
es la mitad de la vida que nos dejaron

Y como todos somos medio muertos
los asesinos presumen no solamente de estar totalmente
vivos
sino también de ser inmortales

Pero ellos también están medio muertos
y sólo vivos a medias

Unámonos medio muertos que somos la patria
para hijos suyos podernos llamar
en nombre de los asesinados
unámonos contra los asesinos de todos
contra los asesinos de los muertos y de los medio muertos

Todos nacimos medio muertos en 1932
sobrevivimos pero medio vivos
cada uno con una cuenta de treinta mil muertos enteros
que se puso a engordar sus intereses
sus réditos
y que hoy alcanza para untar de muerte a los que siguen
naciendo
medio muertos
medio vivos

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para hijos suyos podernos llamar
en nombre de los asesinados
unámonos contra los asesinos de todos
contra los asesinos de los muertos y de los medio muertos
All

Roque Dalton

Translated by Christian Nagler

All of us were born half dead in 1932
we survive but half alive
each one with a bill of thirty thousand wholly dead
who fatten their interests
their revenues
and today manage to spread death to those who come after
born
half dead
half alive

We were all born half dead in 1932

To be salvadoreños is to be half dead
that which moves
is the half of life left to us

And like all of us half dead
the assassins not only presume themselves totally alive
but also immortal

But they are also half dead
and only alive halfway

Unite, we half dead that are the country
For we can be called its children

in the name of the assassinated
let’s unite against the assassins of all
against the assassins of the dead and of the half dead

All

Roque Dalton

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All of us were born half dead in 1932
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each one with a bill of thirty thousand wholly dead
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and only alive halfway

Unite, we half dead that are the country
For we can be called its children

in the name of the assassinated
let’s unite against the assassins of all
against the assassins of the dead and of the half dead
Todos juntos
tenemos más muerte que aquellos
pero todo juntos
tenemos más vida que ellos

La todopoderoso unión de nuestras medias vidas
de las medias vidas de todos los que nacimos medio
muertos
en 1932
All together
we have more death than some
but all together
we have more life than them

The all-powerful union of our half lives
of the half lives of all that were born half
dead
in 1932.
On one hand, I feel knowledge as an air, a sound the mind
makes when it makes it; what sustains and relieves another
natural thing doing work in the main order. This does not
make me a lung tissue. It hurts me,
savage commerce in aspects. They will want me to say, here,
about the person I saw somewhere, do the thing about music,
then animals, then domestic work. A brute set if ever. I reject
an ashy death, not to say childless,
not to say, as if I could be so late to thinking, all the fat was
sucked out. An observer who pities dry thought, yet performs
other feelings, would never say, get you a baby in the wordless
vicinity, as preparation for this is this sound the mind makes
when it makes it.
In the half species, it is urgent
to lie back in sense memory
and be sat upon. A crooked spine will not pull right
between your legs, up and down. Also, poor vision.

There are shoulders burning somewhere
full of stickpins. Optimistic weathers
bludgeon and call for entry at the same time. A tiny brawn,
it explains itself best quite naked.
The cat was trying to look into my eye. Turning her head and bobbing a little to get a better look into the eye I had opened. She pressed her nose against mine and looked into my eyes, pressing her brow, her 3-inch skull underneath it, against mine.
This was a darkness. I felt my way through with the left hand, shifting the weight of the ring to where the works were working. Axis of collapse and scar and devil I knew. Bareness everywhere, idea of “makeless,” murder and whatnot, reading hard, one seventeen, twenty, one forty-four, discoveries came very dear, very dark. For a long time, yourself the vortex’ source and master (say, thirteen, say, Sovereign—whose “S” is so gangster). Did my pants hurt? The wrong medicine swelled eros, pinced and cracked her thin shell absurd like a loon’s egg on a broke up pond,
already dead. Scree, equally bankrupt.
I will not say it, nor should you say it.
I learn from television certain things
about congress. A long time ago, weird
ugly thinking about my sex, roses
cut, rolled off the body in little pills
because I was definitely after
everything, even the no-thing itself.
Sweat of our wages the yellow orange
of grapefruit and bitter pinks confronted
some afternoon that should be warm and ain’t.
Harsh things I forgot the rank design of,
I put them in my mouth; I swallowed things
were fundamentally wrong in nature.
(Twin boy, don’t I know a serious band when I see it?
Everybody sees me walk around Manhattan live as the day I was born, an optic terror of the Americas.
Quick bright thug eye, oil/gas man, whatever. All small hells are heavens.
Thrill and rip. Press my neck, prehistory comes out at the throat.
Thought yields before flesh in sound, same as it ever was, he wrote.)
As memory is the case and vice versa, the great Lew Sargentich scanned and spoke the maid's gifted teeth from her skull, exercise of self-help no one gets between through or under the several rule systems which uphold it. Take my cue from this reversed compassion, most anxious, mortal. I hold myself down in self-help, my Leviticus. A wider psychological space for everybody not against love, granted me, and forgetfulness to forget things we do to one another. Plus, legs like Clint Eastwood.
you li’l Supreme niggas make me cry happy tears get up in
the morning worrying about where they have you on the
island of Somoa why have they locked you up it was not
possible previously to account for the frisson between us
yet yet it is not possible to stop eating altogether or putting
fingers through freshly burnt hair even when that rancid
protein smell is so disgusting various practices cannot be
given up suddenly so many li’l Supreme niggas going down
the street in antics one in a Target-ass shiny wig I cut my own
wig therefore I am elegant Robert Duncan he was not dead
to me The Homosexual in Society kept coming up in earnest
it happened that the club was no longer needed there was so
much joy in going down the street repeatedly called back by
your mother to be punished observably and in an exemplary
manner what sacred music what is outside being known and
saying what you yourselves prove and witness it is abnormal
to be style-free unliveable perhaps you’ll go unpunished fast
li’l niggas
Yes you can hear
noise music
coming off
my body
healing then
scratching at
wounds of peace
In the circle of
animals there
are a few knockoff heads to keep the counterfeiters honest I wish you could answer me standing at your door w/ a bouquet of bruises & a lust letter

Yes you can hear
noise music
coming off
my body
healing then
scratching at
wounds of peace
In the circle of
animals there
are a few knockoff heads to keep the counterfeiters honest I wish you could answer me standing at your door w/ a bouquet of bruises & a lust letter
written in each
others' blood
But I think
I'm thinking
of a different
social media
Fight & flight
are not forever
opposites
How did we
figure on this
commitment to
non-convention
Admittedly it's
hard to
deny this
thisness
These times
so tough they
tax the witch
whenever she
gets it wrong
written in each
others' blood
But I think
I'm thinking
of a different
social media
Fight & flight
are not forever
opposites
How did we
figure on this
commitment to
non-convention
Admittedly it's
hard to
deny this
thisness
These times
so tough they
tax the witch
whenever she
gets it wrong
Bios are
only accurate
when told through
rolled up
scrolls
Ribbons from
the razor marks
they decorate
the skin
Blossoms
left by cigarettes
live again as
pock marks on
someone’s ancient
sun Undefined
property lines
confuse the space
between us Just
call it clinamen
the angle
cf our swerve
Dumbly I fell
for a trick that

Bios are
only accurate
when told through
rolled up
scrolls
Ribbons from
the razor marks
they decorate
the skin
Blossoms
left by cigarettes
live again as
pock marks on
someone’s ancient
sun Undefined
property lines
confuse the space
between us Just
call it clinamen
the angle
cf our swerve
Dumbly I fell
for a trick that
evidenced no disease but love
Lost on a familiar corner stuck w/ a death certificate
the size of LIFE magazine
I read about a son of a railroad worker kid of a diplomat
born on the baphomet & fed the good book
raised on tahrir & 1916 a son of a son of the gun
Air holes sliced in plastic wrap allow the bound
to breathe  It
doesn’t seem
like much right
now but
the cave mouth
is both
a circle & a whole
The matter of
this matter
comes down to
frequency & tone
Still for now
there is a way for
me to get from
here to the rest of
the world  Hear
me stand inside
the piano & play
I will walk
toward you
to breathe  It
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toward you
come & lift the bodies of the gentlemen out of the car and they pull out instead my crush, who i pass on the street some times she didn’t live here in the city until they bombed out his pass word. she was from the war clouds softened over this vacated beach, and that is why he left his ego altar

we heard the whistle as he fell out of the tallest building, steeple chase poland. he couldn’t annunciate “information age” without the geographic illusion that the plow on the field was a meltdown italicized

i walked across roberto clemente bridge that day and swore i saw my father jogging along the north shore. paper thin battlefield. i saw a therapy session in the distance near the shotgun tower

two brothers cashed in their farewell checks. their father croaked and left them a building to demolish. the furniture dealer was an unfriendly flea counting the sofas the same as the old musical harp with thousands of silver strings. he cranked up the record player. suddenly 1920’s criminal codes divorce lawyers pilgrimages up the driveway to find grandmother’s perfume stash. criminal fragrance. the brothers’ antiquity stories in a downtrodden building. slap happy powerful police reports. the wife of one of the brothers steps up to the furniture dealer & says all i want is this tidy green dress and for this i would give you my pass code
it was a silent road outside detroit & with a whistle a lumberjack looks for a street side urinal. he is a reproduction of a stranger & he carries a three-ton harp double his size & has decided to place it in the center of a soon to be demolished park.

in the morning st catherine of siena behind the venetian blinds like a spectacular beta version of suspense. a VCR timeline. a recording of Nixon & Kruschev chatting 1958 and i am an ornament-claim i am a field of people spread eagle on bayonet hill overlooking thousands of tourist departments.

a death hole croak chord a blue road sign testimony sign cosmology we the people metallic rims rotting roller coasters pygmalion earthbound bridges bridges dinosaurs

the plants aligning Family Highway pig soot my crumb seamstress crafting the robes they wear on the island. benediction checkbook. she disappeared behind the large sign. a picketed ranch poster. join the scrap metal union. the marches of the effigies who have taken out their eyes.

prisoners removed bricks from around the torn rollercoaster behind fences & we were in the park & the fortune teller time chord sign dismantled shrub bush a dead woman plays a harp in the square. fig trees grow too large and take up valuable space, this androgynous forest where the bear traps are discredited by the bowels.

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all codes dante-like fish-eyes cave brisk in the vertebrate cave where we were crouching painting a glow-orange color on the walls underneath the jagged bridges as they drove caravans over the hard cold cobblestone everything grew silent & arrested we heard each other awaken beneath the bridges where the air was warm and this cavern hung mid-air

another character was speaking as the truck created a path in the dirt road in the eyes of the river where they are pushing tug boats & i saw people dashing across old Fountain Road the first human blood stain middle-sex the woman’s form a spherical hubble

white bone fig harbor iphigenia lightning marsh the two brothers are talking about their father in the living room near the old hope chest & the furniture dealer is grumpy but they’re condemned to be toads like this condemned to be eaten by the very toads they are these desert croaking things

broken lines pre-historic i may be making broken sex in peggy’s bedroom next to the doorway of her father’s room & he’s cursing about the wilderness & he was stepping on the gas pedal of the land rover & what does he think of her Vietnam lamp he is medieval in his tunic metal clucking in the other room where she is shining new mutant silver grabbed off the fiery mother board she is croaking by the river a surly crimson code
the harp in the corner worth a few hundred cents
& the furniture dealer is counting his pennies &
fixing his eyeglasses & fifteen years later, another
woman enters to investigate she has two pairs of
binoculars & a telescope & her galilei constantly
talking about finer things, blinking things

in my apartment a blue mold & henry was
trying to be azure, shiny like the American
Mountains where the blue sky a party mix King
Lear a heroic big September so we sat in the
miserable waiting room while Jennifer stood in
the margins unhitching the beauty cars so
they can speed down fam’ly highway

(reproach) me nothing engine the becoming
city where the next plot begins again and she
carries the entire university and places the
campus between the lush green field and germany
road cricket she died like that, she wasn’t local,
she was a passing tourist older man constructed
while standing next to a papery maple leaf

break away culture a tattered bag of Jersey
Tribunes a diamond usurper your ruby is not
an escape plan she is crying & her daughters
& sons skeleton bodies roting beneath the
broken metal sand earth field plow metal

nothing memory code eliminated sarcophagus
bedroom perimeter she dismantled a change in
the past mr miller stood outside the meat
counter slicing buffalo meat making sandwiches
for the younger folks & his windows are open
for a deli is a hot oven & my tolerance for
this scene is a city in Montana with lots of
christmas lights flashing habitat enthroned.
grey circle mandate. bight into the buffalo
meat & remember

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christmas lights flashing habitat enthroned.
grey circle mandate. bight into the buffalo
meat & remember
All the words R dead.
But not me.

Still drooling into the hanging
receiver still starting
nosebleeds. Left too long in the parking lot

I was adopted
by star-stars.

And the blond driver.
Now she’s sick.

Coldly grown into her life-jacket.

And when I listened for words? I puked
warm hoar instead.
Each day gets its feeling
and all the feelings get cufflinks.

Prof. Jabuka left us
and left behind an apple.

He walked backwards to
his side of the world, writing all the time
in front of him.

Don’t walk on it. Don’t follow me.

He told us not to mess it up.

Now sometimes there’s a feeling
like a core in the west.

I want to write about
the megastores.

I can’t.
Jane Fonda looks uncomfortable. When the others get up to go, she raises her hand, says: Wait, let’s think this through—
Then my body’s raised a squeak above the furnace & I see that Jane’s a stand-in for my lung: can’t breathe right—how is this frozen cone of smoke above the tenements a row of steps you could walk up into—the teeth of noon, wide lot where giant cable spools would sit empty but for the red car, or am I —? No, this is some kind of exercise tape for organs: what’s inside thaws right out

Jane Fonda looks uncomfortable. When the others get up to go, she raises her hand, says: Wait, let’s think this through—
Then my body’s raised a squeak above the furnace & I see that Jane’s a stand-in for my lung: can’t breathe right—how is this frozen cone of smoke above the tenements a row of steps you could walk up into—the teeth of noon, wide lot where giant cable spools would sit empty but for the red car, or am I —? No, this is some kind of exercise tape for organs: what’s inside thaws right out
Great chimes with pink sky behind them.
Motioning through the desert.
To go back + forth in that desert, hearts
singing: to commute.

What I was built for
will have looked to them
an antiquated future: a smell or
thaw…

Not this malignancy
Not the cheese breads squeezed through the ventilator
vents like breasts or jaundiced foam.
Behind the walnut tree
the room where you're not yet ghost
knits out of air.

Who can be scared of an old face again?
I was prompted to dust the earth with my lips.

And in the gloom
I did it until the room
went soft dark gold and another
me appeared behind me in the
mirror, peered in from above
right. Me was the glow + eyes. So this

was the golden bitch
that came into my room
when I was five and lay with her
back to my back. And all
this time I thought it was a
boy.
Go figure. The scary
was just another word for not for sale.
In the room’s gold

the spoked beam that once centered a haystack
leans against the barn. And underground

a thin ivory bone stick
props up the keystone.

Now I’m prompted to raise the stone and reveal
the organs of the world.
Thin light of foreclosure…

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the room where you're not yet ghost
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Thin light of foreclosure…
That dog's on the surface of my face, but to sleep
I have to sink further to the sun-rinsed store where I sell blackberries.
The blackberries pass from being into nonbeing, then back, as from hand to hand.
See what I mean?
Here: scratch and sniff your kittenhood. We hold a mirror each up to our faces, reflective sides out—
and only once, at the end, a shadow will pass between:
when we're dead I'll know you as a baby. Getting tired now, but the one long straw accessible by blackberry still shines...
Spend too long away from your tongue and it's auto-divorce. Still, the union's child lives on: yourself. By you I mean me.
& I smell your sweat and tremble to feel the lion beside me:
we've cheated everyone.

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devising options, nativist, insular, indigenous. Subjects respond to dollars. Just as Dimples, the Patron’s understudy promoted from private booth to Chinese Room. She speaks of logic. Between her legs genders remittance genders economy bodies the prospectus lines palimpsest, a compatible metatext message: “Bagong Bayani ng Bayan.” Heroes of the gulag archipelago flesh makes possible: Little Brown Fucking Machines, uniform bold print silkscreened on Little Brown shirts laundered between shifts by little brown labanderas. In Arcadia, are all raptures reciprocal? DOLE will not allow epileptics. Flaneurs waive National Interest. What sleepwalker waits promotion when competition is lexical when panic is lexical when prophecy is lexical when flesh makes ligation possible, the tussocked “ladies of the corridor” conjugate clapboard contracts. They do not hear themselves moan. Mirror consummation, a supply chain’s third party municipal bonds. Talent scouts mobilize subject positions like exercising proprietary stock options. One cannot be fit and pregnant

seizure. Collaboration expedites ambition. The “War Song” fathers. Colonel Kilgore trenches zones of silence, economic intruders may fear to tread, if they value the slurry of their assumed bodies. Tsonggoes are as lucky. Dense canopy preserved for tiger encounter. Mangoes the shape the Zambal heart capital makes custom. But are all labors performed ornamentally? Ornaments suggest rhyme. Certain ornaments insist error. Other ornaments suggest candescence. Candescence suggests sutures. Are repute. A clean bill of health. Compromising.
positions are expedient therefore compromising positions do not exist. Stirrups suggest salvage operations. So Dust cannot collect. Synonymy are labors contracted. A mint swapped between guest relations officer’s mouth to mouth of guest. If the Senate can see them now: under employed under studies paying for their under graduate degrees. It’s consensus, prostitution does not exist when no one roach speaks. The paddy shark promised, a ragdoll’s creditor is just another station of the cross. Distance between scholarship to compliment a girl’s choice hosiery. Once a coaling station always a coaling station. The clapboard metatext message not taught in vocational school. Dark continent companionship is job rotation, employed with hammers, ragdoll’s pyroclastic tongue is adjutant is compliant is improvisational. Ethnography’s phototropic bills observer’s bias, the lahar cannot hold the receding berm. Malinowski and Mead certify seminal workers perform duty
free seminal work. The International that never was. What happens when socialists and communists fuck pleasure models? Oligarch’s unreported accumulated wealth. Utters her shrewd legs. Credibility of her subject position passes review. She clawed beneath his sleeping torso. Her seminal work seemingly undone. A farmer’s daughter is not export quality unless chosen for her technical tongue. Karaoke’s imperial grammar, collograph revises Penal Code. Mistresses asked not to reproduce. Bella is not astonished. Somewhere in the South China Sea floats a Bausch and Lomb Accuvue contact lens. Apertures are nominative when you have long hair long like mine, no one knows the measure of her intermammary sulcus, the crawl space between canvas and counter-position, between text pales. It is a matter of time when lagoons agglutinate jurisdictions and Economic Intruders document blood debt. The vector infecting inner boll weevil, red light districts find.
She places two ladybug magnets on her refrigerator.
The ladybugs are red with black spots, good luck belongings
handed down to her, circuitously.
Imagine animating your things so they could simply fly over,
while you remain stationary.
Underneath, none of them are solid, just like you, replete with
rabid energies in motion, subatomic bed-rocking.
Listen up when deploying above-board coarse-grained mimicries.
You’ll mainly notice a thing if it breaks or goes away, viz., in
selling the house, we had to discard many things our
elders had accumulated.
Doorstops, bookends live on past them as depreciating
testimonials, along with the trees and shrubs they planted.
Yet you are not supposed to want for too many things, a desire
for things not considered a higher order of wanting.
Still, she remembers a story about a boy who was bored with
his everyday things, so they all went away.
Except for one sympathetic blanket, he had to sit on the
ground naked and shivering.
Fancy the set of communal axioms aimed at that boy’s thing
hatred.
My things cry out to be dusted or at least touched, cookbooks, rocking chair, copper-plated teapot anticipating heirloom ontology.

She asks me if I want to live with her: what about my things?

There are latent obligations hanging over you, not just things.

The afghan’s red squares, held together by white borders, organizes homegrown flight paths by way of the deceased crocheter’s fingers.

There were many more of those charming magnets, but my brother threw them away.

Quick, touch that thing!

There are things she needs to do today, laundry first, among them.

Bring me that blue thing from that closet; put it over there with those other things to be taken away.

Was that a sex cry or a cat cry, from the neighbors?

Here’s the thing.

Suppose that ____________.

Suppose that she supposes a spirit residing in the ladybug magnets, on the surface of the refrigerator doing a spirited ladybug thing.

You have been invited to speak on behalf of what things?

In the living room closet she keeps two purloined x-rays of her skull, from which to develop a thinged intimacy with her head’s interior: brain, eyesockets, sinuses.
The boy’s things did come back when he said he was sorry, extending a here-there liminality, like each key on her piano.

Expect dizzying side effects—humiliation, shame—when she takes on the filmed head’s subject-object ambiguity.

As when after the earthquake you need transport vehicles to get things to the damaged island, not disappearing solaces.

Like the repentant boy, she apologizes to her things, acknowledging in them excess metaphysical presence, cultural fantasy: fetish, value, totem.

Probable causes, happenstance bind music box interiority into her solid state appurtenances, “I beg your pardon” motivating aura, wish in the real or fake coccinellid, skill in joining.

2.

Lately, I’ve been “caught up in things.”

He was fighting his decline, but does not remember he put 39 photo albums together for his children.

Here’s a photograph of an evicted woman on a sidewalk with all her household things.

Think of eye-catching, literally, your eye being tossed around by your things.

On her piano is a gold statue of an elongated woman playing a violin.

The heavy-metaled woman would make a good defensive weapon, if someone broke in.

Likewise, stolid gadgets holding down the virtual realm stir up residual grace, soul, atemporal utopia.
Over what’s inside the thing, her nominal adulthood superimposes digital war games, plants zapping zombies with seed missiles.

Appalling visitors to the substructure seek out vital innards with more than just idle curiosity, child picking apart a beetle.

She used to picture soul as a leaky pail, sometimes a thimble.

If so, what to do with continuous grace drippings.

Wistful gradients on the emission, absorption spectrum require formal generosity in assessing another one’s cherished objects, frog collection, glugging fish pitcher.

Time to set limits for sorting out statistical illusions underlying the constant clutter.

How about if she pleases herself with a clown face instead?

The nursing home staff calls the WWII veteran’s assisted bathroom visits “toileting.”

Seek forgone intimacies with him in recollection of tadpoles, oak galls, jack-in-the-pulpit sightings, even those all too frequent arguments over insect repellent.

The young army lieutenant brought home a miniature English-French dictionary dated August 1944, a gift from Georges Illy, who may have been a French soldier.

M. Illy wrote his name on all the odd-numbered pages of his 624 page book, which fits inside her closed fist neatly.

If beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of the thing, don’t be surprised if underneath the thing there’s an überclown that says, don’t get comfortable.
Hence, the dictionary is becoming all that’s left of times past between unknowable soldiers.

Est-ce que c’était si tôt? et qu’est-ce que vous avez fait pendant ce temps?

She depends on inconspicuous blossoms from backyard tulip trees to ward off aesthetic casualty from over-ripe economic systems.

Good heavens if I have been bombarding you with bricolage, intimacy as contingent as yarn culture!

The blossoms resemble a yellow-green cup, with yellow pistols and stamens, orange splashes at the base of the sepals, perfect flowers for decorative bowl floating.

She wishes that in the bowl she could float him three thousand years of memory blossoms, Etruscan jewelry, Da Vinci diagrams, Mezzogiorno.

Can she exchange her bowl’s forms of value for her clowned forms of value, visible or invisible?

Believe me, I am not dodging the question of the trivial.

Though evoking tender scenes or touching objects by cultivating memory wishes might make even a remotely emotive daughter crumble.

You can see why the ladybug magnets opt for their right to remain humble.

NOTE
This poem owes its inspiration to Bill Brown’s essay “Thing Theory,” from which some phrases have been borrowed and reworked.
1. I watched an inchworm cross the width of the deck, humping itself up, a body without ventral prolegs, plank measuring. The momentum of the worm is frame dependent, like my trafficking in sweet mouth.

Laws describing the momentum of forces acting on the worm’s body and my body will solicit a sense of where each body is going. Similarly, a first word exerts a force on a second word, enticing a third.

Little errors will compound themselves.

Hip girdle, heave away ho.

So as in almost all wars, rational discourse tries to forestall glimpses of its nonsensical material base, Suzie Rottencrotch, Short Arm Inspection, to prevent a search and destroy from inching through.

Pelvic ambushes can host rational discourse, but not the other way around, so you won’t be able to just sit there comfortably.

Does one say more from an avoidance point of scrutiny, such as rhubarb under my window: rue: barb.

Use “as if” as a mobile device, use all laws, use “as if” as if there were no other ethical ways of doing.

Rubber heels are a good choice for walking on dry macadam roads.
Clothing must not bind or rub.

The sense of acceleration or turning in the inner ear, even the motions of muscles and bones can be caught word-worming.

Rational discourse won’t tell you if you are slapping an angel around.

2.

Splashing in a sea with three-foot wave heights might be a little like slapping the angel.

She’s afraid the angel will slap back harder, but not on any consequential level would an angel be involved.

Water proof, wind proof, what other proof?

A fit walker’s pelvis sways easily, when she is striding along.

Sand underfoot demarcating a lighter to a darker brown rules in a law of aesthetic probability, giving her her value.

Use “as if” as a mobile device, use all laws, use “as if” as if there were no other ethical ways of moving.

Your feet may increase appreciably in size.

He might be going downhill or he might get better after an infusion of fluids.

Wayfarer, your affair moves slowly.

Embed fourteen aesthetic thrashings you would not have otherwise, never mind the angel.

He is not where his body is, buccal cavity to her excessive thin-lipping.

As if ____________________

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As if ____________________
If movement follows movement (Heraclitus), will a good mouth-off follow along.

Rational discourse will not tell you how much you are lamed by not “as-if”-ing.

3.

The pelvic mechanical system transfers weight from the trunk to the lower limbs for walking or standing, as if holding itself responsible.

In a nonrational discourse, you can have inside voices, swing low sweet, that time of year thou mayst, veteran nonsense.

I was jumbled, I was wrote, round and round we go, language flashing its biology.

Walk on, walk on, blameless from a molecular vantage point, as if you were a soldier.

The worm is a caterpillar that will become a geometric moth, plank-measuring only for a limited amount of time.

The rule is, when following orders, to whose advantage.

Use “as if” as a mobile device, use all laws, use “as if” as if there were no more ethical a way of ruining.

Use a pastel pencil to mark where the curious dog got the worm on the deck.

Explosions cause more casualties to the ranks: reuse booby traps, rocket propelled grenades, mortar and artillery rounds as humped up points of comparison: intimacies in and out of our keeping.

Let the angel be a center of proleg gripping hooks, enticing leeway, empathy in adopting an attitude toward others, for example, enemy soldiers.
Let a river in summer look as if it were iced over, random sunlight posing you a thin freedom.

Severglass, severglass, sever in the glass, amass amass.

In such cases, carrying a larger knapsack for sprinkling nonsense, aesthetic activism over the terrain will not keep her in motion with the falling soldier.

To ramble on, cultivate balance, belated starlight, veteran motions-at-large, arms swinging rhythmically.

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**NOTES**

Some phrases have been borrowed and reworked from Mutlu Blasing’s Lyric Poetry, Henry Fountain’s “Hiking around in Circles? Probably, Study Says” (Times 08.21.09) and Going Afoot by Bayard Christy (1920). Military slang is from “Unofficial Unabridged Dictionary for Marines” compiled by Glen B Knight.
When good king Wenceslas rode out that night on the feast of Steven...

Stephen, spelled with a "ph" not a "v"

Dear Stephen Friend you told me at Poet's House "Did you hear? Akilah Oliver died. I have to go meet someone now."

"Oh" I said, no longer being an "I" at all but rabbit thighbone pie in the New Year of The White Metal Rabbit "Oh: thank you for telling me"

I notice you say thank you you compulsively repeat thank you when you feel embarrassed about what's arising the desire to immediately turn into a spirit and fly through the second story window glass of Poet's House and

fly over the West River to be with Akilah in the mixing dark blue water the river currents speeding downtown on the One Train where is the 9 train it is inside The World Trade Crater Brain I AM when I construct these pyramids called The Time Being come in and test drive a HONDA
today at your leisure come in and be tested to see if you’re going to die. I’m trembling to stay concentrated on Akilah but I can’t comprehend her death. Comprehend has OM in it but that doesn’t help now. No use being cute when your friend is dead.

cut it out
How not lovely to be so loathsome toward yourself. The Bach Violin Monster tearing your ears apart puts earmuffs over your head so you can warm up: compassion and terror go hand in hand together. The War on Compassion is what you have to watch out for.

Where is Akilah now? She is here in every one of our empty chest cavities. The nest. The nest. The Nest is empty. Her son died in 2003 I would die too if my son died I think the next day it’s amazing she lived for so many more years I can’t do the math I don’t know how many more years was it.

Akilah Oliver died and inside I post a status update on Facebook as part of action toward improving my internal life: Quote: “Dear Akilah, we love you so. I’m still in shock. We love you beyond shock.” “Mimi, Eleni, and two other friends like this” replies Facebook. I hate Facebook. I want Akilah back. I’m greedy for her. Today at your leisure come in and be tested to see if you’re going to die. I’m trembling to stay concentrated on Akilah but I can’t comprehend her death. Comprehend has OM in it but that doesn’t help now. No use being cute when your friend is dead.

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How not lovely to be so loathsome toward yourself. The Bach Violin Monster tearing your ears apart puts earmuffs over your head so you can warm up: compassion and terror go hand in hand together. The War on Compassion is what you have to watch out for.

Where is Akilah now? She is here in every one of our empty chest cavities. The nest. The nest. The Nest is empty. Her son died in 2003 I would die too if my son died I think the next day it’s amazing she lived for so many more years I can’t do the math I don’t know how many more years was it.

Akilah Oliver died and inside I post a status update on Facebook as part of action toward improving my internal life: Quote: “Dear Akilah, we love you so. I’m still in shock. We love you beyond shock.” “Mimi, Eleni, and two other friends like this” replies Facebook. I hate Facebook. I want Akilah back. I’m greedy for her.
next book. “A TOAST IN THE HOUSE OF FRIENDS” she called her most recent book.

I love books. I will eat AMAZON.

I am a Centaur, of Bookstores the Defender:

There’s no way of goofing your way out of this.

Akilah Oliver is dead.

Thank you Stephen for telling me this
this is news I did not expect

This is news wrapping me up
in a newspaper I’m still an
Alive Fish flopping around inside
grey rolled up newspaper tube

I take the London Tube to Picadilly
and pray I don’t blow up today.
Akilah, I want to throw
a spontaneous memorial party for you
but this cyber-mourning
has paralyzed me

I am not paralyzed I am a fully
functional paratrooper
floating down into the flames of
this sardine tin town

with all its sardine tin towers on fire
and reflecting each others’ flames
in the vanity mirrors of skyscraper
eyeballs. I turn into a spirit and
float through second floor Poet’s House glass

and over the West River

and Pema sitting next to me takes a deep

in-breath reminding me to breathe

and of my relationship to gravity
how it is a ship
boarded by pirates saying

MATEY
MATEY
MATEY

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MATEY
MATEY
MATEY
Check mate Matey in Chorus

They say Hey Matey

AHOY They say none of this

Pirate liars God damn pirate
liars Where's my parrot
has anybody seen my parrot feather
detergent I'm allergic to everything else
Detergentleman am I see how I wear
all the toucan colors on my face on the
roof of this canopy fretted with false fire

Polonius, out from behind the
curtain of my eyelid
left eyelid
left left eyelid
you creeping tabby cat
death for a ducat

Does anybody have any detergent
to wash this witness from my hands.
I am not the murderer.

What do you mean by "mer"
I mean "sea" in French
I'm bathing in the Adriatic Sea
at Queen's Beach with Nada Marinovich, my grandmother, who used to be
a communist party secretary before she died
this week. Two deaths in two days
you are too much for me.
One was unexpected the other expected.
Now I know counting: One Two Three
One Two Three. Breathe Breathe Breathe.

Dear Akilah, we love you so much.
This is not Facebook.
This is paper.
Paper comes from trees.
I come from trees.
Therefore I am paper.

This is the New Year of the Wood Rabbit
No I am a Wood Rabbit born in 1975
This is the Chinese New Year of the White Metal Rabbit
with all my treebark skin covered up
with metal plate armor
how can I be Daphne and I want
to be Daphne now Oh Father
turn me into a tree so I may
escape the Sun’s rape. How is the
Sun raping me? Rays Rays Rays
it shoots its rays rays down
as arrows. Behind the arras Polonius is dead
slain by Hamlet “Who was in life
a foolish prating knave”

but who isn’t?
You were never a foolish prating anything
Dear Akilah
Dear No-Fixed-Self
Dear Every couple of weeks you
forget about death and think its
a rumor that will eventually be
discredited by the Eternity Commitee
ONE TWO THREE
first Akilah dies unexpectedly
then Nada dies
expectedly One Two Three
and now you know counting
Filip Marinovich and
“Sometimes you want a fuller response,”
beyond the numbers as Louis Armstrong
said in 1933 in Copenhagen “Beautiful Number:
I COVER THE WATERFRONT I COVER THE WATERFRONT”

This is paper.
Paper comes from trees.
I come from trees.
Therefore I am paper.
This is the New Year of the Wood Rabbit
No I am a Wood Rabbit born in 1975
This is the Chinese New Year of the White Metal Rabbit
with all my treebark skin covered up
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how can I be Daphne and I want
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said in 1933 in Copenhagen “Beautiful Number:
I COVER THE WATERFRONT I COVER THE WATERFRONT”
La ternura nunca ha sido eléctrica, cielo, susto mío
me has habitado tanto la estructura

No siembres el metal de tu raíz
No enrosques el plástico de pétalos como una brasa enferma

Desde este territorio cerrado, nuclear, te percibo sin piel:
Luz de vidrio, tonelada de asbesto

Mi pulmón ha dejado de odiarte
Mi brazo izquierdo muestra el perímetro de tu brillante cicatriz.
Tenderness has never been electric, my scare, sky
you’ve so inhabited my structure

Don’t sow the metal of your root
Don’t coil the plastic of petals like a sick ember

From this closed nuclear territory I perceive you without skin:
Glass light, one ton of asbestos

My lung has stopped hating you
My left arm displays the perimeter of your brilliant scar.
La metálica dependencia en circulación toca mi mano
toca mi pulmón
toca mi pulmón
emapa el recorrido de la garganta a la nariz
(yo esperaba)

Yo
necesitaba una melódica interpretación de ese rodar surcándose

cuando se escureció
cuando licuó mi sangre con la carne y me marcó desde esa quemadura
tuve tiempo

para revolcarme, para aferrar la mano que quedaba arañando el
revólver de la soledad para tragar el polvo que me supo a gloria
e imaginar una recuperación sin avalúos una

escritura cargada de cuerpo artificial

y solté el pulgar, y blandí el acero como macho que llora en el desierto antes
de formar parte del asustado monitor

y volver a la brea de mi descanso:

La metálica dependencia en circulación toca mi mano
toca mi pulmón
emapa el recorrido de la garganta a la nariz
(yo esperaba)

Yo
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de formar parte del asustado monitor

y volver a la brea de mi descanso:
Metallic dependence in circulation touches my hand
touches my lung
drenches the path from throat to nose
(I was waiting)
I
needed a melodic interpretation of that spinning motion
plowing into me
when it got dark
when my blood mixed by machine with flesh and marked me
from that burn
I had time
to be overturned, to grasp the hand that was still scratching
at the pistol of solitude
to swallow the dust that tasted like glory to me
and imagine
a recuperation without appraisals a
writing charged with artificial body
and I let go of the thumb, and I brandished the steel like a
macho man crying in the desert
before
becoming part of the frightened monitor
and returning to the tar of my rest:
Muro del pensamiento creciendo desde el agua, boca de filos
déjame
no ir a ese adentro

no pretendo pisar la parte de tu sombra
Wall of thought growing from the water, mouth of knife-edges
leave me
not to go to that inside
I don’t attempt to trample that part of your shadow
Esto no es poesía
es
lo que dictan las circunstancias:
una res abierta descansando en la carnicería
una puerta violada para alcanzar tu corazón, criminalmente
This is not poetry

it's

what circumstances dictate:

a cow sliced open at rest in the butchershop

a violated door through which to reach your heart, criminally
Three Poems

calum gardner

An That

Possibly even died a virgin, which seems difficult for those for whom it is impossible, a long and not entirely glorious act. The most politic thing to do is not to make people feel as though heartless, weak or they have made a wrong decision—things come together anyway and human ‘interaxion’ sometimes will only to colour the issue. There’s no need to be concerned about—a combination of genetic luck, tiredness and simple lack of sex are common causes, all orders of the bones of the brain. It seems to a pure Titian aesthetic (not) entirely (to) meet out graves and grains when we have no answers we and no need of them virgins are diffuse as a philosophical school and carry a pathetics in a sense unstudied but not in a sense we don’t have. and there area mirroid of these, vanity vanities: the ability to smell sex: to want in equal proportion and measure: to not take jokes about what other people and each other are to be ashamed of seriously: to decipher the sortilege alphagamme: to express through the medium our of selves taste to understand as if encoded in our nativity the unthought language in any traditional sense of lions which gets epressive—of a smear of a system a whissing hone heard in translation to treat the kultur target like a text—smean how would you feel if someone like you, someone, and a virgin, say, took your in your city textversations and translated them as a into lectual exercise: as a into lectual exercise books with carred covers, howe are you handleing differance? to be honesti quite like me/an this em virtue bodies in crowed pasture

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but it is only so much straw flesh—another Easter could carry the same value, and still exist: has the historical Jesus, for instance, visited the historical Troy? and if so why not discuss you don’t have the vocabs you don’t have the vocabs yet: if someone was to right come along with an hermeneutically satisfying and orchidaceous tribute then suppose perso n that with a certain amount of riverside handholding what?ever and amso riant about that they don’t even know that that pervades a virgin’s belly have been not proven. Responsibilities considered as an ethics of rape an one plastered kiss would, willow ways regret then not too obvious, and held up to the heard defusing the scores like someone wanted this to happen your role is ready on demand mission to the moon.

a full mire mill on the sea of the sea in storms and it went on musical, blue grid that went on these people in turn who live in circles and us don’t have in that traditional sense sex the ual chemistry and astronomy courses the these we are par for practice is another matter: the manifest parts of love the physical o world is a rose and on the other hand everything are only difference: give examples, and show your work or the work of your slaves.

But they have a better song the song of the speaker when a text is come have about is the sacrificer made that not the point the promontory in say the mountain lake like a noise that would get the mortal aspect of them, that better chatter, under the cold breathe wind of the dragon born by that that the wise of a century doesn’t fear, worth this is a sliver of abstinence: any virtue couched between the probability, and the event, predestination on an autumn day has teeth, has claws, and colours an even sky ing on you: i swear now why i should on that i cannot guess the shapes of advancing wrecks, wet air an holograph in dialect of crossed strings vibrate at odds’

gardner

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even so that that sound flavour makes move  
the steeling long rut, play of soft hand night and then escaping  
it’s like a lava lamp where tourist feet gingerly and  
then in may hotels each sleep later other next and then  
to the lamp cast glow the good news bible.

Note 1  Acts 19:28. ‘As the crowd heard these words, they became furious and started shouting’ (Good News Bible)
she knew that in her derrian dress she would look a cake
to be tranched and divided among the guests
and taken home in napkins with balloons—
comeagain comeagain precious peopleings,
when we are living our entire lives!—
do not come again—let her rip
let her finish before or as
you finish, that’s the way she’d like
like the meats of life to come for rhythms at a time all over—but
bad sound is a blood sound, it is not sensible
to scream it like you mean it
even if you mean it! this is for the species
& joy’s irrelevant, she is in the kitchen
a fat and bloated beast, a liberal
weight on the balance; get thee, so
to the bus stop, and the ceiling;
polish it hard before you put your fist right through it,
my precious bride! bring me home the horror you made
beautiful and slew and I will have your dinner on the
my faerie love, my coffee cup—
o my heart my love
dressing for you is my very breakfast
and i hang on your every significance with
more grace or less or dress, at our marriage-feast we
were flush but now i feel like the stiletto
in the gut, i apportion your loaves and
i fillet the fish every day on the premises, finish
your every dangeling thought, and you
fix tenderly (on) my mistakes but it gets
too much and i wish i could run like i used
though the dunes where the grasses whip me raw
heuw bright the stars i used to loue their
strange girls in there dresses like flowers i
feel me banging on my mouth let me
out-out! this imperial metrick—
every time we make a sortie, I ask you
to remember, you were loved
I worry you will go mad and
embarrassingly loud, you’re not making—i
only want to feel that careless weight, it is only them

i want my heart, it doesn’t have to make
he comes to win
to roll one over
the city he reaches
(casually, tugging his tshirt
by accident from his boxerband
now showing: tight Saturday bellyhair)
to conquer—

the brave now hands, with face forgotten off
his ears that distant way of speaking his
is the hardsprung chest of a warrior probably
too old even now to learn cuneiform.
But when peace comes to dolmens, it comes to stay
and the cold throats of the singers, steep as cliffs
never insist and scuffing off intride
their getting older always.
The patternchested people who used
to strain their talk through bad-little-grandmother beards
have lost it, and have left
the fingerpaints behind
so that much later someone else can interturn
a tiny brick of glitter in the woad,

Its stiff blue peace now exacted
as I came the kirkcaldy road back in the long,
late height of a day that seemed to sit on the edge of enough
and under empty the light of the noon, the trees naked fractal.
The pressing paint came down on any back doors
and voices to be heard, and I was thinking—

are
you any better now it's essay season
than tracking our geese through the stinking marshes
a day the muck froze and the grasses ished you couldn't
go on, kneecap in hand you stopped
breathing

he comes to win
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go on, kneecap in hand you stopped
breathing
wait
(long water fingers
like blue cold predictable
chocolate, typical frictive impossible but
it is enough to have died once) there
and never will we have the listwhall to sit
outside in a tarpaulin and decide who timbers true
as you had that morning we
companion nothing
the bus gave way
and chimneys, presumably empty, stood up
antimacassar clouds were fitting themselves in an estuary row
and the waterline brushed clean.
There’s something in this.
Two Poems

Crow Jane

Why Did We Stop Calling Ships and Storms “She”? 

Amidst the fashionably dispassionate recent
ruins of writing
Swine showed me success I took secession
L’amour or la mort deplorable fakes with pull
avatars of the unsexed
I fell asleep between a magician and a musician
Lissome to listless Acmeist to academic
Voices from beyond the tomb I receive direct
The unexamined life responds by walkie-talkie.
Negative on the friendlies. Take out
Structures 50 m west of my smoke mark.
I fear Ginsberg’s “best minds
Of my generation” won’t go into poetry . . . 

We call the occult an obscurantist
Attempt to depict phase-transition
States such as love insanity and art. anagrams
As soon as you speak, as soon as you
Even acknowledge another, there
Can no longer be any freedom . . . ars magna

At the heart of a violent act
Two souls straying through limbo
Undergo radical reassignment:
The mouth becomes a cry
I wear gloves when
writing
But at no other time.

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Two souls straying through limbo
Undergo radical reassignment:
The mouth becomes a cry
I wear gloves when
writing
But at no other time.
Guilty of sexual thought-crimes
Isn’t it alarming that Evan and Warren
Vale marked every volume in their libraries
With a contemptuous sign?

Now show how secret Might
Delights Thy power to declare.

Where harsher doctrines
Shower down a sheltering glee

Hunger weds thirst in failure mode.
We—What begins in desecration, ends

As décor. “My only star is dead. My lute
Constellated with the black sun: Melancholy!”

---

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Mexican Action Fiction

Avoir peur means love of fear
This music sounds like weather
Scissors cover paper puzzle pistol
pages years
Picturing laughter in slaughter
Remember’s hard to spell
I’ll never be a writer.

Child, you are led into error
By the denomination of phenomena.

Do you remember the beginning
of the end?
A world that never was has passed away
I came here from distant lands
Lots of thoughts like dirty birdies
déjà vu do ghost of past
Walk streets once known now foreign too
All is forgiven I am in heaven.

Chick sold my *Raw Power* LP
For beat dope cut with baby lax—

Fuck art eat flesh.
The black hole is a curve in space
So dire it devours matter.

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Dicen que Tijuana es una ciudad violenta

Dos carros chocan en la línea mientras veo la pelota anaranjada resbalar de la mano diminuta del malabarista.

Una bola de billar se impacta en un mentón sin número ni raya cae dentro de la pista donde alguna vez bailamos.

Tras la barra el cantinero piensa en una mujer que lo ha olvidado seca un vaso como quien busca a ciegas en un cajón la foto del recuerdo.

Los gatos pelean la diminuta porción tras la puerta de la casa. El amo dejó de alimentar la esperanza y regar las plantas.

Se escribe con rencor, se mira de soslayo.

La gente se desenfunda antes de tiempo insultos en diferentes lenguas: perros que corretean.

La violencia de esta ciudad no es la causa de tu partida, es la consecuencia.
People Say Tijuana is a Violent City

Two cars collide in the line at the border as I watch an orange ball slip from the juggler’s tiny hand.

A billiard ball slams into a chin with no number or stripe and falls onto the dancefloor where we once danced.

Behind the bar the cantinero thinks about a woman who’s forgotten him dries a glass like someone blindly searching in a drawer for the photo of the memory.

Cats fight over the tiny portion of food behind the door to the house. The owner stopped feeding his hope and watering the plants.

We write with rancor, we glance sidelong.

People rush to draw their insults like weapons in both languages: stray dogs on the loose.

The violence in this city isn’t the reason for your leaving, it’s the consequence.
La Libertad es una zona afectada
Camino por estas calles:
alguien atropelló el semáforo nuevo; 
hay negocios de Internet donde antes fondas; 
mataron a Roberto por andar de narco; 
mandan saludar a mi padre.

Regreso a casa con noticias, un seis de cerveza 
el cambio en monedas sueltas y las manos húmedas 
como la colonia en febrero, cuando la lluvia no se lleva todo 
y los damnificados nos quedamos a cuidar las pertenencias.
La Libertad is an Affected Area

I walk these streets:
someone ran over the new stoplight;
there are Internet cafés where little restaurants were before;
they killed Roberto for acting like a narco;
people tell me to say hello to my father.

I head back to my house with news, a six-pack of beer
a few loose coins and my hands wet
like the neighborhood in February, when the rain doesn’t
wash everything away
and we the afflicted are left behind
to watch over our belongings.

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and we the afflicted are left behind
to watch over our belongings.
A mitad de los 80 mi familia estrenó vajilla de filos dorados y denso decorado de flores. Nunca comimos juntos. Por esos mismos años me vestía de camuflaje desde las botas hasta la boina. Coleccionaba cartitas de baseball como un junkie y miraba las caricaturas con fe de ciego.

Mi hermano Marcos, el mayor, hacía casas al otro lado ocho horas diarias por quinientos dólares semanales.

Mi hermana Teresa rizaba su pelo y delineaba sus ojos como Madonna; nunca compró ninguno de sus discos. Escuchaba El Andariego mientras escribía en su diario de hojas impresas con tenues imágenes de paisajes y nubes.

Don Marcos perdió un dedo en una máquina trabajando para U.S. Elevators.

Carlos, mi otro hermano, escondía sus libros bajo el asiento mientras cruzaba con pasaporte a la escuela.

Mi madre leía la revista Hola para comentarnos a cada uno lo que le pasaba a la Familia Real o a Julio Iglesias y terminaba diciendo: ¡pobres de los Kennedy, están malitos!
In the mid-80's my family invested in a set of dishes with gold edges and thick floral decorations. We never ate together. During those same years, I wore camouflage from my boots to my beret. I collected baseball cards like a junkie and watched cartoons with blind faith.

My brother Marcos, the oldest, built houses on the other side eight hours a day for five hundred dollars a week.

My sister Teresa curled her hair and outlined her eyes like Madonna; she never bought one of her albums. She listened to El Andariego as she wrote in her diary, its pages printed with faint images of landscapes and clouds.

Don Marcos lost a finger in a machine working for U.S. Elevators.

Carlos, my other brother, hid his books under the seat as he crossed with his passport to go to school.

My mother read the magazine Hola so she could tell each one of us what was going on with the Royal Family or Julio Iglesias, and at the end she'd say: Those poor Kennedys, they're cursed.
El primer migra en interrogarme fue mi madre:
¿Cómo se llama tu papá? Marcos Ramírez.
¿Cómo se llama tu mamá? Sara Pimienta.
¿Dónde vives? En Nacional City.
¿A qué fuiste a Tijuana? A visitar a mi abuela.

Y así, practicando antes del cruce, mucho antes de saber leer y escribir, aprendí a mentir mirándote a los ojos.
The first migra to question me was my mother:

What’s your father’s name? Marcos Ramírez.

What’s your mother’s name? Sara Pimienta.

Where do you live? In Nacional City.

Why’d you go to Tijuana? To visit my grandma.

And so, as I practiced before crossing the border, long before learning to read and write, I learned to lie looking you straight in the eyes.
The careful pattern imitated randomness. Ours took the form of not really calling attention to itself. It became the highest compliment to say, I can’t believe you made that.

Half the people in the park say they are there to look at other people. The other half say they are there to be alone.

Immortality, like its opposite, is a pattern of accretions. Taken alone, any one instant is meaningless.

It was useless to telegraph this discovery.

At what point did discovery no longer mean exertion? Experience came to mean the submersion into circumstance.

We modeled the form in scrap metal and Styrofoam and clay. The clay was soft to touch, it lured everyone to rub their hands on it. We wanted to make the shape of order within randomness. It was the accidents that made the rhythm seem unplanned or unpredictable.

All the small ideas had already been worked out. The only problem left to solve was the materials. A small bronze version was more durable.

Adding our content to the mix made our pulse quicken. There was no telling where this cloud seeding would go. The minor acts accumulated into movements that couldn’t be explained by any one event. Going deeper to resolve this, we carried our investigations to a smaller scale.

In a rush to judgment, we forgot the feel of rough-cut stone against our face.

The beginning persisted through the middle but gave us no clue what to expect.
If this is work, it’s only through the accumulation of attention.

A fan-shaped web spread out from our beginning. We learned the tasks and then combined them to make acts. The sheer consistency belied the effort needed every time. We permeated matter, colonized the surfaces, and digested forms. Always there could be the detail at the end that would undo everything. There was no taking measure since there was no common form. Every time we came up with new reasons to make effort.

Progress slowed as events accumulated. Each act seemed smaller compared to the whole. Our investments were shallow but they kept us engaged.

The delicacy repeated at every scale. We lost track of the orders of magnitude and mistook millennia for pounds. We gave crude names to forms, like finding our own face in constellations.

We looked back, though that implies we knew which way was forward. Every instant tempted us to start again.

Even the oldest living thing needs new cells every day. Beginning permeated everything.

Each new detail made us change our explanations. There was no container large enough to hold it all and so we drew a line and called it one. The surprise of finding cultivation at that scale revised our explanation of how food came to be. Hunter, gatherer, and forager could not account for everything. In our newest understanding we tried to replicate the scenes that captivated us, emulating without describing, like the old fiction-writer’s rule to show, not tell. If other systems had worked for millions of years, why not this one?

We grasped the fact of our relatedness comparatively late, only by finding other examples and describing them. For a time the fervor of acknowledgement kept us occupied, till gradually our explanations caught up with occurrences and we could move ahead to less self-conscious things. Generating our replacements was still the favorite goal. Anything that fit within this was allowed.

The closer the angle of reflection, the smaller the point of view. We backstitched to strengthen the construction but couldn’t get away from the fact that we were looking at it. A better player, maybe, would have done it blind.
Each time we struck a gem we held it to the light and offered it for admiration. This was not the same as doing it for the team, but in any event it shaped our time and sometimes broke our concentration. There’s no other way to say it, but we chose the path that best approximated cheerfulness.

We lost the thread, there were miles of thread infusing every cubic yard and we couldn’t find it, we were grasping at threads, we were threadbare. It seemed so necessary and then it seemed irrelevant. We anticipated things in order to forget them.

Working backwards, we knew more than we thought.

If you could inhabit this obscurity there still might not be a reason to. Melodious enchantment, one more pretender to the throne is swallowed and the throne gets smaller. When did we let go? When did we realize it?

When the only power is refusal.

Everyone succumbs to blind justice at one time or another.

Reverse the pattern but still there is no purchase.

Penetrating an undetectable field of defense. Particles move through us with no perceptible effort.

As if the effort itself were the failure.

As detectable as muffled breath.

Traveling invisibly and everywhere. No caption can expand on this. Where membranes touch turns into a surface. Mathematics describes a shape that can only be realized by two. Momentum carries this even if nobody is around. I lost my voice then found it but it never let me know where it had been. He said he liked it but not to me.

Space makes things bigger although space, being nothing, has no size. It’s the space between things that we measure. As the Big Bang tells us, things themselves can fit into the space of nothing.
Now I’ll never join
pirates.—Nor I for
that self-help group for
their co-dependents.—
That’s the thing about
deserted islands.
You keep meaning to
change your life and then
all of a sudden
you’re on one.—What are
you trying to say?—
I’m not very sure.—

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deserted islands.
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change your life and then
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you’re on one.—What are
you trying to say?—
I’m not very sure.—

What if we only
believe we’re on a
deserted island
but actually
writers’ colony?—
Where are the writers?—
We are the writers.——
And the sandwiches?—
I didn’t think of that.—

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believe we’re on a
deserted island
but actually
writers’ colony?—
Where are the writers?—
We are the writers.——
And the sandwiches?—
I didn’t think of that.—

Would you rub some
suntan lotion
on me?—Why not
do it yourself?——
There’s an unreachable spot between my shoulder blades and I’m very afraid it’ll start to hurt. So lie on your back!—No, you’ll make me get suntan lotion all over my feathers! You don’t appreciate what I go through because of you.—

If you were shipwrecked on a deserted island, what’s the one book you’d want there with you?—What do you mean if?—What do you mean if?—I mean what do you mean if.—

Why did you say it’s difficult to be shipwrecked together on an island?—But it is difficult to be shipwrecked together on an island. Why is it's difficult to be shipwrecked together on an island?—But it is difficult to be shipwrecked together on an island. Why is
it difficult
to be shipwrecked
together on
a deserted
island?—Well, I
mean… what’s so weird
about saying
it’s difficult
to be shipwrecked
a deserted
island?—Is it
me?—It’s not you.—
me, what you said,
about you, it’s
just difficult
to be shipwrecked
together on
island.—Come on,
say it, it is
me.—Okay, it
is you.—Oh why
did you say that?—

If you were shipwrecked
on a deserted
island, what book would
you want with you?—I
hope this shipwreck doesn’t
make us separate.—
Separate? Where would
we separate to?—
Things might have turned out
so much easier
had we attended
pirate-and-parrot

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to be shipwrecked
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make us separate.—
Separate? Where would
we separate to?—
Things might have turned out
so much easier
had we attended
pirate-and-parrot
therapy before being shipwrecked.—Oh, don’t start that again.—

therapy prior to made you more rational.— It’s true! Had we gone to our shipwreck, it would have rational? You’re a bird that talks!—I’m a parrot!—
Parrots can’t improvise with language. Wittgenstein represents you as an example of people who look like they speak, except they don’t.—Your Wittgenstein should keep his mouth shut if he has no idea what he’s talking about!—
Ordinary language speaks clearly: Parrots parrot. You’re allowed only to repeat what others say—
I beg your pardon. I’m an emancipated parrot. I do promise that in the unlikely event you say something worth repeating, I shall repeat it.—AAARRRRGH!!!!

Captain Macgregor’s bird?—Oh my God! Oh my God! You’re looking at Carmen! You’re looking at Carmen! I can’t believe it, you are looking at other

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Captain Macgregor’s bird?—Oh my God! Oh my God! You’re looking at Carmen! You’re looking at Carmen! I can’t believe it, you are looking at other
parrots!—Come on, I'm not looking at Carmen!—You're not looking at Carmen except you are looking at Carmen. Oh, what did I do to deserve this?!—

If you were shipwrecked— Just stop it, okay?!— Stop what?—You know what.— No, I don't.—AAARRRGH!— Why do you say that?—I am the pirate, that's my line.—You hurt me.—No, really, what book would you most want to bring along, should you be shipwrecked on a deserted island?—I don't know, pirate! How about this book?—This book? But you're in it.—And so?— And I am in it!— Well now look at you!— But what's even the meaning of this book?— How can I know the meaning of this book when I am in it?—You mean you can't think outside the book?—No, can you?— I am a pirate!— The hat is a dead giveaway.—But where do we go from here?—Nowhere, I'm afraid.

You're looking at Carmen!—You're not looking at Carmen except you are looking at Carmen. Oh, what did I do to deserve this?!—

If you were shipwrecked— Just stop it, okay?!— Stop what?—You know what.— No, I don't.—AAARRRGH!— Why do you say that?—I am the pirate, that's my line.—You hurt me.—No, really, what book would you most want to bring along, should you be shipwrecked on a deserted island?—I don't know, pirate! How about this book?—This book? But you're in it.—And so?— And I am in it!— Well now look at you!— But what's even the meaning of this book?— How can I know the meaning of this book when I am in it?—You mean you can't think outside the book?—No, can you?— I am a pirate!— The hat is a dead giveaway.—But where do we go from here?—Nowhere, I'm afraid.

We're on an island.
Life on Mars

Hung Q. Tu

In the parlance of the military
whiskey tango foxtrot
in the parlance of the girl scouts
courage confidence cookies
and in the parlance of gas giants
Jupiter Saturn Uranus
their anticyclonic eyes
buffeted by the brown belt
the uncorked message
grows inside a bottle
to be elected sheriff
an easily bruised pear of a man
democratically unleashed
on the janitorial process

Ancient olive tress walk us down the bridal path
taking the stress out of burled objects
the aves and the ave-nots
“Colony collapse” is a mystery
also a Freudian slip
and fall into canals
that promptly vanish
ahead of our arrival
on Mars martians clutching blankets
slog against vicious solar winds
that open up behind closed doors
smoke where there was talk
of soot on the forehead
of absentee cliff dwellers
a blur of cottontails
dives into deep brush
not beating around the bush
Indian School Road is poor syntax
also a sad reminder
you speak English-only

Domesticated partners
I recognize pecan trees as such
an act of discrimination

---

Domesticated partners
I recognize pecan trees as such
an act of discrimination
Together we regress
said the driver
all burdens are equal
said the beast
the state is fed and starved at once
I quote sector and verse
mega-parking lots
it helps to think of church
as a rocket
now think of a number
random is the kingdom of chance
accidents everywhere are waiting
to live the commercial
of their dreams
unconcealed an armed cowboy
is a demonstration
of a gay activist on parade

Impediments get leafier by the day
in the Humble Administrator’s Garden
a fiscally conservative ficus
The Project predates the state
mineral water hard on the pipes
trash between neighbors
soft water easy on the pipes
wind from the prevailing sea
nearest you
names are embarrassed when called out
hundreds of channels from one cable
irrigating the lawn
least resistance is the pathology
of fictions written in legalese
understand this
the Salt River evolved into a cafeteria
too much salt
and the pipes become brittle
there’s housing under all that water

These windy acacias I’m told are fugitives
from a long line of fugitives
with roots going all the way back to Africa
Our governor’s prayer
is answered by Mississippi
virgins (the poor ones at least)
are ritually sacrificed
to placate the recession
you offer protection
money being fungible
Our Lady of Orderly Succession
promotes a theory
of its own incompetence
where grandma plays the spoiler
to this tanker
you call an “economy”
that’s empty largely empty
urban lots full of coarsely ground glass
seeds perhaps

Pausing inside a dense and woozy cloud
of orange blossoms
to buzz alongside ‘em
Resident paradigms face the wall
nonresident enforcers patrol the line
between reality and perception
a school of vectors swim as one
becomes a magnet
for people watching in cars
they see in profile as they drive by
you may be excused or the excuse
meanwhile their investigation
is ongoing oppression
boxes proliferate please check one
but this is A Tale of Two Cities or
one city with two mutually canceling tales
air-conditioned enforcers patrol the streets
between Broadway and Baseline
a resident spokesman
on what he saw “perception is reality”

Historically so and so
it blows and blows
for the ponderous pine
the question is will it come down
in pieces or all at once?

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Historically so and so
it blows and blows
for the ponderous pine
the question is will it come down
in pieces or all at once?
Infinity pool
the privileged see themselves beside
an illusion
maintenance requires me to say this
better homes and magazines
in Scottsdale
sanitation requires me to put quotes
around “culture”
and “ten years ago there was nothing”
delight in the non-vegetarian context
of food court
What’s My Incentive could be the name
of a popular game show
based on moral hazard
is ass backward how they think
to park cars

Non-union saguaros in a right to work
light can be very photogenic
but prickly is the bosses’ greeting
“How do you think you’re doing?”
Announcing closures and restrictions
did I hear a sigh
people live for the weekend
a clean burning renewable
TV journalism counts down the days
to a caribbean rhythm
as we stumble into the nebula (airport)
where fines are double
routine freeway closures going forward
leaving behind a glossary
of eating disorders
outsized thumbs pounce on
impossible medicinal pads
foreplay between updating adults
poised a picture of poise

National Guard armories state prison
and boxed trees have a fenced-in look
institutions have souls
insofar as their facilities are haunted
Consider the four-day workweek
go ahead it won't bite
soon we'll all be wearing armbands
on which arm
education is a child
poor thing must be starved
we'll see who's left behind
enough nuts
I want to hear from the goats
one (an official no less) calls for a boycott
on his own state
others (student-types
you'll be relieved to know)
chain themselves
in preemptive anticipation
I'm reading Brecht for clues
fear and loathing
followed by sports and weather
you think the world of intention
I think the emporium of props

Someone orders a round of slurs
and around it goes
it's played as a drinking game
each taking their dreaded turn
Bloodletting

Dot Devota

It's sensible, after all
what I purchased now
seems absurd—

the belly of a dove
before rabbit language
calls us to its Great Hall, one after another,
not just
in meat
but in
the whole animal.

Bloodletting

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It's sensible, after all
what I purchased now
seems absurd—

the belly of a dove
before rabbit language
calls us to its Great Hall, one after another,
not just
in meat
but in
the whole animal.
Place together  
ceiling rushing to accrue floor, synthesis  
delivers us  
from a holy skull crush—

noise completes  
what we have thought  
since the slaughter preparations.

A quiet confidence  
was used to pick the good pigs  
from bad.

Devota
from *The Re-echoes*

*Magus Magnus*

...is as sits at which astringency

sparkle

trial

clabbers of squirrel

strident

The Purposes

the proposes

is apropos, is a pro

is turmoil

lobes

cargo
... rends designs
as was rent the borrows into barrows of
paired rind fabrications
twinned plants
twined the handholds into
twain harrowing renderings
slick-rich reckonings
is renders
is rends
to open the hollow parts

... rends designs
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twain harrowing renderings
slick-rich reckonings
is renders
is rends
to open the hollow parts
... obliques

obloques

punches through materials posh programming
contrasts forecasts
for thickness

no-name ignominy
densities, inhomogeneities

nevertheless is names

is furthermore, is ongoing

scraps
The players positioned:

performs
the disguises of cocottes
from midday to latterday retrievals
in the gutter, humanity's brawls
unmasked and de-shawled in our theatre
ture distraction from working on the budget

Inclusion of peripheral forms.

sexually
squeezing all of it into one act
laying us out flat on the table
shock work: <> uh uh
again
bare me flesh-bone friend
on the table

one's cocktail hour is a logical existence
walking around in your now-time
which is not my now-time
where every concept leaves a remainder
this
sieve put out to catch
thought's guilt
recognized in some stranger's slumped
shoulders consumed with unpaid but impassioned work making an event to quote

All these systems as managers of crisis in the global bubbles of internal pleasures.

All these systems as managers of crisis in the global bubbles of internal pleasures.

desired your dream-curve. dream dust lover. sitting at the table nylons a sweet revelation. like, China has little to announce today but a serious aura upon entering.

Attempting a return to its historical moment.

Attempting a return to its historical moment.

subliminal contributed Fourier's phalansteries in a basket of dried lavender.

"I missed you"

Sublime circled round encompassing everyone at the table. Our humanities stood up swooning.

subliminal contributed Fourier's phalansteries in a basket of dried lavender.

"I missed you"

Sublime circled round encompassing everyone at the table. Our humanities stood up swooning.
"Not a narrow window of effects that founds its community in a mutual commitment to deferred action, to the horizon"

"horizon this, before it's tried

hyper really
Who found a General amongst all forms of Regulation, univocally denying their attenuated torturous speech. Their poetry. Was made instead at an American degree zero outside the boardroom, outside the context, but inside total reality. As the empire declined the General stayed mapping—the map a living, breathing sex-monster capable of self-reproduction—hyperreal—

(history explodes in recession receding while words seem to precede in their own promiscuous behaviors. Create promiscuous behaviors. Bend the curve of projected taxonomies.)

speculum inside one's own want packaged and furrowed developed and dim. Sighted. A tool for repurposing what has happened into what

speculum inside one's own want packaged and furrowed developed and dim. Sighted. A tool for repurposing what has happened into what
will and should, what could and can. Simple
measurement devise, a real
definitive member.
while
difference
lied in waste. She checked the waste
baskets for traces of its presence and lit
the essential circle on fire in the middle
to prove the point.

I thought
this would all lead to a break out
by reinstating alive, incantation
a magic trick, conjuring up remnants
of anyone's hopeful ontology

break out: ^<^>^<^>^<^>^<^>^<^>^<^>

queering
a theater, a playing, a
belly-smacking the other seven
on the table like it doesn't really matter.
Giving everyone a very hard time.
Feel you up, and down, squirting
<;> explosive!
and out of control!
Notating rhythms in an unprecedented manner!
Squirting panopea abrupta one last time, then
subsumed into approaching seismic mists
teaching us: a whole hell of a lot
Breeding a political experience that’s not just experience
Having sex like it matters.

Still
subhumans involved
crosses of robbers and prostitutes.
This is where I trace my lineage.

(The lean to either cynicism or argumentativeness
says a lot about your taxo-structure.
Where does the limit to human misery lie? then becomes
a “real” or “unreal” question.)

The implication being
what fence sits on your grounds
The last act:

"what unencumbered doll? am I not limp enough, protracted enough? I take the swipe of the card for pleasure. Learned a lot. Treed myself after treed you. Developed a taste for music installations."

Equivalence is a liquid instrument with which to synthesize discrepancies

Anarchy, of the players, once unleashed breeds new structures unceasingly

thoughts are such: kill the amorphous beast unleashed at whim
At Saint Paul-De-Mausole, He’d
Hymned Majestically, the Christ
Had Beckoned Sweetly from the
Hall, Year After Year...Part 2

Timothy Shea

I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me.
—Francis Thompson

Ash, & the ashes made imaginary
out here between the few far blown blocked mock hollow, hollowing
other origin’s undulant
farmhouses, Gethsemane–

No more now
awhile longer on my own only here, all of the people, all, they nearly
here, Gethsemane,
they nearly, & all of their always own groaning half mile high darknesses on the page, whor worst, w

within Shea

ithin Shea
In all of the center instead of our shared past, all of that crowd in a perfect circle like odd clouds, or a nearly anonymous, bitterly opalescent précis, cacophony— cacophonous précis

These distances, distances & the black wild sound of their impenetrable routine in things, though worse, worse, yeah, brute, celebrant beak bejewelled, this deafening & brute, brevity private, so?

In our vacancy packed crows
tuck, Sundays, Christ
both crows, anyway,

clot,

str

angle
In all of the center instead of our shared past, all of that crowd in a perfect circle like odd clouds, or a nearly anonymous, bitterly opalescent pr\textsuperscript{2}cis, cacophony—

These distances, distances & the black wild sound of their impenetrable routine in things, though worse, worse, yeah, brute, celebrant beak bejewelled, this deafening & brute, brevity private, so?

In our vacancy packed crows tuck, Sundays, Christ both crows, anyway, clot,

\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots

\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots

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\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots

While the mind may be wholly spirit, know that the way gone, say, gone, the mind bent by a breath randomly meaning, spared, a world without meaning always on its way to these compositional hillsides for company, before walking away—

A going over, wrack, over a slowly lulled infinity from within, to there unrealizably, the part pact to the back’s pinion put playing in inaudible air all, all of the audible sunflower-timber’s unpredictably distant roar?

Hmm?
Four Poems

Ray Ragosta

Four Signs

A dream of three cities which vanish,
and where pines bend with good intention,
... prescribes countermeasure.

Four signs point to the error of ways:

egregious flight,
polished air in heat,
tempered sleep,
a meeting in the garden of tongues.
The Evidence

Ten years gone
the secret is reprised
as mimed truth
decoration above lines
that bone enigma
roughen surface
scarred way back
and the path
stopped up.
A voice tells me, “You are playing at the borders, straying into other fields.”

A cocoon grows around and I inherit its living edges.

One pulse throbs into the next.

Sleep has become movement; lip, its understudy.
Melancholy

Honed as demonstration the heart strays,

makes adjustments, closes its volumes

befitting a capricious nature

like spray on walls of its hermitage.
May the claustrophobic reader contain himself. Detention in space is instructed by the organ's text. We are prepared for it. Its vehicle leads to where the body's fence is undermined. It no longer possesses the attribute of an obstacle. It is a diving suit minus the impermeability. Rendered soluble to solids by putting it on, it is possible to produce oneself in it. One must only pierce the surface of the thing to emerge from it again. One develops a couple. It transmits the force of inverting the order of causes requiring that one open before entering.

1) These are parametered cages, from which they are able to escape. The pin wheel only represents one case of a particular figure.

2) I have a face. I mean (simple way of putting it) that what I said is said. I mustn't forget it.
   I should never have forgotten anything.
   Especially not the fact that the initial step implies the loss of the test-subject.
   I should never have documented everything.
   I will be quiet then and propose, in order to give breadth to these regrets, that we begin with a test-drive from which we will proceed.
What is to be done? A note on a page torn from a notebook says: a note in a defused cage. Further along, as a matter of fact, the grey skeleton of a human cage: a whole series of sawed, twisted bars. At the back, in the hay, as they say, lies a page torn from a notebook. From here, it is impossible to read it, but the repeated patterns trick the field: we are holding the page in our hand, we have already, necessarily, entered. On the front, we read: Turn the page; on the back: Turn around. Do you follow me?
In front, the cage is intact. It’s normal. There are bars. Normal that a right-angled pivot lead us face to face with a new series of bars, of intact bars. Panic settles in at the second quarter-turn. The bars are intact, we are caught. Quarter-turn, then again, this time in the lost direction. Normal point of departure. Three-hundred and sixty violences of the hasped face, an intact cage. Worry is normal. Panic is normal. We are seeking not so much the exit as the breach by which we entered. We will shut our eyes tightly—our fists crush our eyeballs—our eyes like great white smashed fences. We open our eyes. The cage is closed. The bars are intact in front of us, the torn page is in our hand. Barely creased. We read: Turn around. The page is the trap’s flapper gate.
To sojourn there, the opening hand. Let the page fall. It slides on air, turns over and over, turns over in its fall. It alights on the ground, we read: Turn the page. In front, at the top, on each side, from the corner of the eye—don't nod, don't provoke the void: the cage is intact. We must breathe so as not to leave the body of flesh. The cage defuses itself: a whole series of sawed then twisted bars. The cage breaks, somewhere on the page. I remember. On the ground, a torn page: Turn the page. We'll soon see.
Eyes shut very tightly. A step back. Retracing the dotted line of remains, another one. (Repeat). Something like a cold and dismembered rage blocks the way when we stumble, our back against an obstacle. Caught again? Panic. Breathing is upset, a hand covers the mouth, with the full of the other, our eyes are bandaged. Spread the fingers, risk an eye. There is the base. The base is topped by the torn page on which is written: A note in a defused cage. There is the exit. The cage further along remains intact. Bars on each side. The inside is empty, save a torn page at the bottom, out of reach. In the hand now, a note on a page torn from the notebook: a note in a defused cage. Yes, we know, but it was necessary to lose oneself there. Knowledge doesn’t compensate for loss, ever. Now, however, we know what the enclosed note says. The note, however inaccessible it may be, nonetheless says: Turn the page.
A note in a defused cage, on the front, leads to the back, huh. Make yourself coherent, saw the bars. What is to be done? We are much obliged to the possible. Put everything back. A note on a page torn from the base: a note in a defused cage: a cage further along—the bars must be sawed and twisted, how it is on the page must be recalled, the noise retained. The note inside, perfect (front: Turn the page; back, invisible side: Turn around). To be able to leave. Retrace one’s steps: it’s a dead end. Breathe. (Repeat).
Something jams in the apparatus; in the arrangement of the cartridges. Several sources of information are consulted. Various codebreaking protocols are applied. It is necessary to make corrections. What is misformed in the course of normal usage must be repaired.

New instructions: classification required.

The objective is to understand the break by controlled demolition. The energy will be gathered, and its trace—anticipated—efficiently utilized as an information relay.

The undecipherable remainder, transmitting its force to the mechanism, bulges then flattens the grid. Just as many impulses recorded by this grid where the explosion of the cartridges is graded and chronicled.

The presence in the first person will be heard throughout the loud-speakers of the ‘we’ in this experiment of classification and grouping. The surge of a clasp of vessels will be understood as an explosion.

As a continuity shot we choose the trace that binds the helicoid (projection in time of the continuous trajectory of a circle) to the flash (projection of a single moment on the plate of meat).
A mound of soft and sticky pipes. A form, kneeling nearby, is already not quite a form. Is no longer simply a form, say, alongside an inert mass, which, by its volume, makes it appear small, harmless.

This form, nonetheless anthropomorphic, is not really a man. It has that appearance because of a complicated knotting of ropes around what could be a bulb of gelatin. Its finish is frozen. With each of the gestures of this moving form, clear rolls of flesh spill out from between its bonds, which yoke it to a task. Its gestures are those of a man who is digging, on his knees, in an enormous mound of sticky pipes. He grabs one, for example. He rips it without too much difficulty along a certain length.

Four or five cables of strung pearls burst from the pipe, sticky and frozen. He inspects several of them haphazardly. He nears them hastily to his worried eye. His head swells when he leans forward, under the action of the folding torso. It swells like the reflection of his eye in each of the examined spheres. A shell detaches and remains stuck to his fingers. He rids himself of it with the urgency of starting again. Next to the little character, the mound of stickiness melts in plain sight. The mound of bowels liquefies, and time is lacking. Then, it is with a resolute panic that he digs without method through the disorder that is escaping him. Soon there is only a puddle left, in which he is kneeling, with a last sphere in his fingers. He crushes it like an octopus egg. The riggings of the form crack and break. He looks at himself in the liquid film which returns his image to him: a form kneeling in ice.
Let us imagine that this must really have hurt. A simple state of discomfort would not have caught our attention. Yet we must have been attentive. It has been necessary to accept that the nail of our index finger ripped off on its own, lifted by a wound unfamiliar to the flesh.

A minuscule character of black metal emerged beneath the nail. A sort of five-pointed star. He carried the nail for a time, at arm’s length, then let it go.

It was the turn of the other fingers of the same hand—the other hand was garroting the forearm at the wrist. Our mouth opened to scream, but nothing. It really hurt. The sharp characters left the tips of our fingers in ribbons. They explored our hand for a time, in every direction. They dotted it with drops of blood, crawling like nervous insects.

Each time I tried to catch one, I was bitten. It closed its five points over my finger. I had to let it return to its automated task.

The five characters ended up meeting in the palm of our hand. They grabbed hold of one another to form a metal clot, irregular, no larger than a pupil. I picked it up. I have since not taken my eyes off it. I keep it in a fragile and translucent sphere that I will break against a rock when my hand will have healed.
I will wear the moustache. I will swallow a pebble. Then? But the gratuity of the gesture will escape them cruelly. Where is the sense? "They are all absurd" might say those who are not of my kind. Why the moustache? The pebble, we understand. It is necessary to ask questions. To look and be quiet is the most certain way of being seen. Silence is the dwelling of that which we seek to understand. The silence is too great, or else too small. It shelters their vile or void speech. I don’t escape them. Everything I do to be alone grants me the company of those who aren’t there. Once, I committed suicide in a dream. I didn’t wake up right away, the interval no longer existed. Once, I awoke from another dream without being able to say whether I had slept. I tried again. I said: “I would like to start all over.” I raised a finger to say “alone”. The din rose in my pebbled mouth. Something petrified at the nape of my neck. Demented mustached ones, flattened dwarfs. I was lost among the similar ones they were inventing for me. I was shrieking, and others heard the howling of wolves. Do wolves have a particular taste for novelty? Does the river capsize when something is thrown into it?
Patience has never disappointed me. Why? We wait. Logically, things should return to me. I have never made moves that would have endangered the life of another. I don’t recall anyone having noticed. Nothing remains of those whom I preserved from everything someone can do to someone to ensure their disappearance. This should have resulted in my meeting them, but they disappeared on their own. I remained alone waiting and asking myself: why did I never engage the conversation on that basis?
The disorder of the moment; you asked for it. Now, I go from black to the white point. The void that separates them is to be heard as a pause. A silence. Across a time, I go to the point, and you will say: "I am walking." I had to get used to it. When I come near, the point swells and reveals itself to be a big mirror in which I don’t appear. It is a psyche whose chassis is comprised of two naked women. They are each holding a pivot, identical and with their backs facing me. Their black hair falls to the curve of their hips. In a free hand, they hold a big sword. Their brows seem to be pricked with a red flower, the underside of the corolla of which is visible. Two identical bodies turn their backs to me, each on one side and the other of a mirror in which I do not appear. The trap of the lighting shows its symmetrical jaws. I take a step toward the light. They let go of the mirror. It falls and balances on its edge. It fissures like the silence, which, until then, was complete. They turn toward me, but I am still faced with two backs. They turned around forcing the inverse of their joints, on the sound of dislocating glass. The flowers were sucked into their heads and opened again on my side. In each corolla, a dead eye replaces the pistil. With their swords touching at the tips, they opened me from my lower belly to my throat. With your eyes braced on me you see me, but not I. Not yet. I do not appear in the mirror whose surface is breaking. I lean my head to come to terms with the inevitable. My torso is gaping with a wound shaped like a cat’s eye. A rubbery membrane, white and striated with thin blue veins stretches between the lips of this artificial mouth. Forced from inside, under the weight of a content that sharpens its angles, the membrane tears as the mirror finishes breaking. Its pieces fall to the ground. In a drooling wave of afterbirth, my torn stomach or my thrice pierced brow or my mouth wide open expectorate: colorful cubes, small plastic trucks and a wooden train tied with string. A mobile, an abacus. These are the toys of the noise I’m made of.
Homozygous

Rachel Moritz

Barely a valley of dissimilar air.  
Walking, walking  
Your breath visceral  
as becoming is.  
Leaves hinged by cloud, the sunned trunks slit open  
their bark, themselves currents in the low periphery.  
Valley of no one spoken for.  
Wrens, their sac throats bleating in the bush.  
Blossoming pupa, lost definition.
Valley of veined and recidivate branches.

Of light where the wool
hangs, foundling in rain. Of
water undressing soil,
a blue garment—
for when you ascend, you
are singled and ignored.
Your beating apron is only
a body of upthrust.
Are you a window looking
in on a window neither within
nor one of the seams, sutured wing.

Paintbrush sound on the chest—same, same.
Between each breath, the euphemed world.
Now the water, ignitory,
in a state of duress.
Wrens bathe their milk-
borne forgiveness like
satchels of vacant air.
With your lantern, your dark
wonder, you never turned down
any bravery of form.
Wings of the earthbound
inked by this pale
window who makes but little breath.
Now we do with night as she does with our eyes.
Two Poems

Garrett Caples

avid diva

avid diva, visit me
dispense divine advice
o radiant deviant
evidence of violence
rivets my vivid dive
addictive desire violates me
drives my rivers
in reverse, revives
my velvet revolution
revs my vacuum cleaner
that died, veils my veins
with unbelievable sleeves
divides evening into
eternities laced with
invisible sleep
my valves go viral
my values on vacation
my vultures counterclockwise
they prey on my vices
the liver rippers! the wind
invents voices on the wing
to whisper livid
prayers above my
vibrating window

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they prey on my vices
the liver rippers! the wind
invents voices on the wing
to whisper livid
prayers above my
vibrating window
listen, avid diva
i have a hive nearby
i invite you to

a hovel i’ve chosen
close to the oval of love
run up my vacant stairs

invade my ventilation
shaft and fill my vats
with quivering liquid

video my elvis selves
in silver levis swiveling
vote in my next erection

save me, avid diva
in advance of the broken
arm, advocate for the victim

who avoids your eyes
to envision the void
devour his heart

provoke my vital signs
i survived just in time
for your give it to me

leaving me heaving in
tears of repulsive beauty
i’m not vegas or jesus

i’m recovering
belief in the everyday
rave against time

days i want to live, days
i want to die, days i’m
the luckiest man alive
dictation from Barbara Guest

the gong flares
les paul is more withdrawn
bypass mohawk craze
open failed boutique
dark hardens and harkens
harnessing

yon drunken orchard
yon pretty field
not in my los angeles not on my budget
dear blood and guts
we mustn’t eat chicken and waffles
more than once a week
if it’s not against the law

cracking jokes in two

dear blood and guts
we mustn’t eat chicken and waffles
more than once a week
if it’s not against the law

cracking jokes in two
a darkness

underneath

lends even this

vapor weight

what became of

the millennium

they used
to speak of

(nostalgia for

that apocalypse!)

ο dangerous passage of time

ο opium dream

the poem

becomes

los angeles

by means of

mental geometry

rigid grid

on fluid spine

the colossal

squid's giant

eye

wider than a dinnerplate!

warms its cornea

against

oily human tentacles

supreme knuckle sandwich

this science

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warms its cornea

against

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supreme knuckle sandwich

this science
spume covered

tell me, poet, what is pain?
pain is the blank page
surrounding the poem
outside it

predominant

o unsaid pain

pain grew up
on a farm

pain slept in a loft

in los angeles
drinking vodka

pain slept on zoloft

hooray pain

pain shuts its eyes
impelling itself
through the world
pain even became a connoisseur cosmetic pain
pains itself dainty for you
in the blood-green eye of the national turbine
floating events still occur on the street
a three year old girl
plucks a dandelion’s empty stem
and hands it to me saying
this is a flower from yesterday
later at the lake two ten year old boys
one pegs a goose with a woodchip
goose departs, furious
i hit it—hear the noise it made?
this too investigation of nature
or

or
future passion
future passion
los angeles fauna
los angeles fauna
roll on the flora
roll on the flora
j’adore ça!
j’adore ça!
let perception write itself
let perception write itself
let perception right itself
let perception right itself
reluctant flanêur
reluctant flanêur
speak to me only with your eyes
speak to me only with your eyes
eat the cantos, then tacos
eat the cantos, then tacos
let the radio play
let the radio play
in the metal brain
in the metal brain
of los angeles
of los angeles
let the guitar fret
let the guitar fret
the gong gong
the gong gong
the tambour do what it do
the tambour do what it do
give ’em hell, shoenberg
give ’em hell, shoenberg
we are not prejudiced
we are not prejudiced
behold yon motherfuckers
behold yon motherfuckers
exercise caution
exercise caution
presumptive nominee
presumptive nominee
this a flower from yesterday
this a flower from yesterday
an apostrophe to everything
an apostrophe to everything
Three Poems

Adam Katz

Thorold

the leg in the flower pots, magief
another what story isn’t here
whose hearts’re already broken can react
like you have no reason to punch them

the nothing in the tortured dog’s center
pure misprision enactment
not that you might be having a speech
but that already a kind of friend

like we always go out with the friend
to be in the matter, like we exist
because we’re complicit in existing
and this complicity’s a kind of waste

that you’d want to interrupt the complicity
because you desired a nihilistic form of complicity
one that took away the existing copula
and made a blithe spread be what was leased

every detail of the photograph
the photograph doesn’t have details
not what we mean when we talk about photographs
the deathlessly prolonged day

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every detail of the photograph
the photograph doesn’t have details
not what we mean when we talk about photographs
the deathlessly prolonged day
the gift of a thought of hand
a hand of thought
a leg and an arm
a leg of thought
a hand and a leg
a leg of thought
the hand bites the leg
with a ferocious grasp
like the leg were life
and the hand wanted to wait
Even Those Things of Yours That Came to You

would then own because they precipitated the circumstance your price,

being something to which the person was tantamount too
in the mirror someone else was looking in changing ownership.
For you to keep yourself by then owning like you didn’t care
this form of therefore having yourself in a moment tantamount to even the changing ownership, was owned because you then were theirs and so was everything that was yours you and therefore your things it wasn’t your obligation to dispose
and only wanting to sell yourself
the phenomenon of The Fourth Ballade for a fee, the person who paid it, that, allowing you to become someone, what he or she was going through by the person who made it possible Entitled to make obligations that’s why you might find yourself

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the phenomenon of The Fourth Ballade for a fee, the person who paid it, that, allowing you to become someone, what he or she was going through by the person who made it possible Entitled to make obligations that’s why you might find yourself
Because he’s forgotten which toothbrush is his, the man squeezes a small amount of toothpaste onto his finger tip and applies it like so. We watch him do this, knowing that he is a stranger, that neither toothbrush belongs to him. Allow me to demonstrate. It is often difficult to tell a capital I from a lowercase l. The problem, of course, is not a case of mistaken identity. By way of commentary I offer only that this film lasts for hours, and we’re restless and hungry. The problem is I mean both of us.

On his medication, he is normal; off his medication, he is more himself. I like you just the way you are. The problem is lyrical.

I go to the fiery lake to eat words of power. I interview a poet who expresses disdain for those who write things they clearly do not believe. I believe the problem is paratactic. From now on, f-i-e-r-y will be spelled f-i-r-e-y.
The Problem

If she does it, then he certainly won’t do it, disappointing them, although it’s what we’ve expected all along. If we do it, she’s sure to harbor some misgivings, and they’ll feel slighted yet a little at ease, while he’ll, no doubt, expect nothing less. If I do it, I plan on complete discretion, as I don’t know how they’ll react, nor how she’ll take it, but he’s sure to admonish me. If he does it, which I assume has already happened, I’ll study my initial reaction until it blossoms into the kind of acceptance they expect of me, wearing it like a new shirt, one she’s bound to comment on, never, in all these years, having seen me in it. The problem is the buttons seem to be on the wrong side.

The Problem

The problem is how that ship got inside the bottle. No, the problem is that the line “How that ship got inside the bottle” appears on page 56 of The Collected Poems of Philip Whalen, in a poem he wrote in 1956, and now also appears here, in the 56th problem, which is not a problem at all, but a coincidence, which makes this, of course, a problem.
Place your mouth on my palm—

Lead a thoroughbred on a leash, quilt a topological map, then—grouse, knuckle, delta. Wrought bodies, heifer’s maws, tousled branches, then—but a surface lives, it has been born. How what is known shapes what is not known, hued by a palette of command: plate glass constrained by its own internal friction. Its vice versa, the broken dishes, unlimited edition. Beneath a concrete hull, a lone transistor winches an engine. Beneath wormholes, their electromagnetic impact. The viola’s sour pink muzak. Do you know how sibilance grades, elongates absences? Do you know how neglect bleaches a flute of its process? As most words known aren’t navigable roads. As most words used are heavy metals, migration.
Taste my pulse, call it honeysuckle—

What moves and what does not move, in heavy metals, migration? What desire to dagger downwards against movement against? Then seep into leech, into magnet. What is radioactive spirals outward. What is radioactive intends, as over, over again, contents resist their packaging. Ink blot. Milk spilt. Fireworks. A starling’s yaw, a starboard zag, a getaway car. A vandal’s black mirror well. A meteor, expired and expiring, in a coat pocket. Detected by a method by which our eyes are fruit no one can eat. By which our fruits are seagulls chained to a revolving door hunger, our deficit smelted to the moment’s bloc. As, alone in the perfumery, the Rachmaninoff performs itself, a tomb-rubbing, a graft spelt. As, alone on the court, love of the same embraces the same. Don’t struggle. Come in. You’re welcome.
What is fragile must break early. Some unlikely porcelain, recipes, classified documents. And lacquered mercury-chewed hat brims. And asbestos licks, tics of tide table indexes. As scribbles of lacquer and consonants remain. Some in a thumbprint as the whorl of days shirks requirements. Dandelions simper, offer themselves as their substitute sacrifice. Bald streetlights line up as though they were in a cop show. What proof: braille of rain on windows, pollen in a pool of piss? What cannot prove: hurled cloud, hinges of taxis and patience? Reverb suckles a bootstrap. Grain buckles a lens. One cannot lend audible depth to an ice cube until it begs, bleats water, and water cannot retrace its steps. Write the rule one hundred times on the dry erase board: one must count incrementally to thunder. But by the time time is understood, it is already too late.
For instance, the sky is a dandelion of church fire—

So much cement, so many hedges, topiary, dips and blades to choose from. Canned feathers, candid camera, one is already behind a gate. Behind the plumage of paint chips, the remains of decommissioned holidays narrate no entry, as a broken plate can’t narrate dinner. As airborne filigree can’t orate an archipelago, even if every island is an ear, burning to rumor. What we learn from baseball can’t translate here, where a float dazzles the flow of traffic the way an earmarked wing sizzles in a dish. We can bequest a wreck, but the gift is echo. Reflecting fractions of dividends/lemons. Even puddles genuflect in the primacy of representations. A box top on the stair where a holler was hijacked. A ribbon in a bow beside it.
In the stairwell, the echoing stairwell—

What remains after glass is a grave. As a shower drains, bile speaks from a spleen, a stomach carries a grudge against silk. Bile hollows its troughs the way one uses a fork to pick cigarette butts from a blender. In the lottery of batteries, track marks, and poppy seed confetti—in the lottery of hand-scored sports statistics, of words traded for branded names—in the lottery of being born again in the leaf pile—Of being the cause of our rejection of causes—Of gravity drinking our appendages into our withers, first as an act of magic, then ritual, then torture. Radio waves pierce us. We hear them coming. Is what remains, after they have passed, adolescence? Is what remains, after they have passed, analogous to amber waves? Who can remember what one wished on candles? What child’s wish for sweets is manifested in a rage?

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and what drives us to make love
or anything, really?
Dreams
of moneybags and goldbricks, era
of shipwrecks, your pirates swam to sand.
With what will we tow ourselves?
Limericks? Marshmallows? Peonies?
Alone in the stadium, Love of the Game
and The Game embrace.
—Drive. Where to?
Anywhere.

NOTES
As Moscow’s inland location provided no suitable venue at which to stage the sailing event for the 22nd Summer Olympic Games in 1980, the USSR’s Olympic organizing committee looked to seaside Tallinn, the capital of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. The V. I. Lenin Palace of Culture and Sport was completed in Tallinn in time for the games, and included a concert hall, a heliport, and an outdoor park. The complex was later renamed Linnahall after Estonia regained its independence in 1990. Although the concrete building has decayed significantly, it is occasionally used for concert events. In early 2010, Tallinn Entertainment, founded by Ronald S. Lauder, CEO of cosmetics giant Estée Lauder, signed a 99-year lease with the local government to develop the structure into a casino.

From “V. I. Lenin Palace of Culture and Sport,” page 1: Discussing his departure from representation in his 1915 painting Black Square, Acmeist and Russian Suprematist painter Kazimir Malevich said, “but a surface lives, it has been born.”
Three Poems

T r a v i s C e b u l a

space-saving, flat-pack storage:

The 
] Modular Body Storage
System is a portable, modular system for the storage of bodies and body parts. compact, easily assembled and transportable, it permits rapid response in mass fatality incidents, as well as offering a storage solution to 

}


the systems come as self-contained units complete with insulated shell, easy clean racking, chiller unit and an optional privacy awning. Accommodating 12, 24, 48 or 96 bodies, these systems are designed for deployment by light van or trailer at the [scene] or consolidation area. The systems can be erected and operational within 15 minutes of arrival on scene.

Note

*Hamlet, Act V Scene ii:
[A dead march. Exeunt, bearing off the bodies: after which a peal of ordinance is shot off]*
the processing
structure is
pure white
unblemished
by windows
or labels.
refrigerated
trucks idle
at loading
docks;
a haze
of diesel
exhaust and
burnt oil
settles on
[sanitary]
chrome
surfaces.
the shine
diminishes
slowly.
the sky crumpled
in, then spread.
four directions flew
with a velocity
only ever achieved
by clouds on fire.

[his face turned away, looking
down to where feet would have been]

and bright light shone
through a gap, for an instant
only. wind.

concussion
threw
something sideways—
wet—
that shouldn't have been.

sheltered from rain
in white coveralls [sterile]
the uniformed
men laid
something sideways
into boxes.

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Two Poems
Paula Koneazny

Warped

If everything were freely falling . . .
the situation would be indistinguishable
from everything being at rest
—Lisa Randall

i.
word swarms / out of the math
parachute physics
/ circumscribed by the tongue tied
on all sides / accuracy is a hard rift
between the carefully chosen number
/ and silence
if the very notion is to stud with
/ to stubble-graze
we should be able to do exactly as we please

New World chronicles / appear estranged
as if a sense of the distances / everyone who journeys
/ is either openly or in secret
/ very small and comestible

II.

science says there are rules to human sacrifice.
if water is unsafe. to touch. dynamiting the air
breeds. sight gaps. science says we use too much.
we like an emporium. anyone’s gun lubricates.
not a single tree.

[Image of text]

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if water is unsafe. to touch. dynamiting the air
breeds. sight gaps. science says we use too much.
we like an emporium. anyone’s gun lubricates.
not a single tree.
we scorch a share of the loot / our desert hypothesis (damned rivers)
we still don’t know what a field is / name given to \textit{la vida} as it is commonly lost / look
we need the hole version / in which to crawl to climb out everything rests / after a collision

/ sheer number of falling bodies
/ there’s no such thing as a fraction

\textsuperscript{1} Cecilia Vicuña :: Instan Koneazny
euphoria of resistance

with a nod to Claudia Rankine

where disturbance was intermediate in frequency . . .
diversity was extremely high

—Robin Wall Kimmerer

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every nuance inhabits a surface

gamboling moss  / scientific

is a story

in search of fuel

floating knot of filaments

turned to / tethered to the muck

whether or not sex exists in drought sleep

shape wears thick / spinning wheel of forms

coil of spinal arc

embraced by buttress roots

Berlese funnel they fall through

ii.

to lounge on the peat / julaceous

between brisk wood and its jacket

sporophytes waving

/ her illusions and her lack of

slipped into the pool of possible names

/ not to give herself up

he says: are you ok?

Konezny | 239

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he says: are you ok?
what are they doing here in the first place / engaged in herbivory
as if source were resource / food the last expression in the "solar
currency" / facts of the matter prove sight specific / again rumor /
not every fiction can pass / power is never so transparent

as she might say “ahistorical love” in error

hand lens makes her forgetful
tiny fractures in the evidence errata
run aground / if a child survives
an intricate (with)holding is performed
carbon blooms in the sediment
what comes afterward part of the plot /
or after the plot unimaginable
even as it happens

/ the joy
rufescent: tinged with red or becoming red
has to be somebody’s past

Two Poems

Vincent Katz

Granite Curbs

A paper edit.
Sliding to a halt.
Sibilant murmurs,
threatened peace.

A grinding.
Pressed minutes.

You shudder,
singly.

Shingles huddle,
plain turnip.

Prize,
simple eternal
puddle
prize champion
priest
whiffle
silk tie
a ravaged purse uplift decide
prism Atta brink prism

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priest
whiffle
silk tie
a ravaged purse uplift decide
prism Atta brink prism
A season of dishes, falls, 
an optimum thrusting, 
brainwaves internal fixed 
steam from a window, 
drinks at noon, whiskey, 
but fallow, studio visit

Regardless of the plummet, sales pitch foreground, 
summit interloped, preview canceled, the forest green 
camper, permit vista purloined jumper, previous grin

A seasoning, dipped concrete 
fiestaware, hybrid, a magic concealed 
at week’s, forest drippings, insight 
tall magnums inserted light diminish

Concern for falling, corners tipped into light, the exhibition 
one and the same, a farmer’s tight-lipped consternation, 
once again, a chip risen to take its place among the stands 
of olives, oleander, mistaken

and again, slipping, a time lapse 
frosted early intimate sequins 
antennae twitching at an adult camp

the former waste unit, brimming 
as such to 
breach the shyster locked here

Annette touched her hat as signal 
the lock-to 
warrants seasonal bypass

freezone martin symbolize

a symptom, a waning, precipice 
where one could drive, feet

Katz
even if winter’s win struck low
certain residues prefigure gloss
a system of riggings close to nests
psoriasis regal sublet fantasy
looking into holes, climbing
up inclines
jog into pits, speaking into
giant phone
guns and fantasy
the wits get pushed farther along
the fathers of our country are mothers
twigs balance the act of caring
witness where one has fallen, falls,
and one can do nothing, can see,
only look and learn, the restaurant,
all the places, the destruction,
and fathers are their own mothers
and we are witness to that
and others, forgetting what we learned,
where we were to come from,
the fathers of our country are mothers
twigs balance the act of caring
witness where one has fallen, falls,
and one can do nothing, can see,
only look and learn, the restaurant,
all the places, the destruction,
and fathers are their own mothers
and we are witness to that
and others, forgetting what we learned,
where we were to come from,
season of dints, marbling
long sky pushed rivulets, quarries
salmon inside of lips, margin
achieved, a long way ago
shards imitate delight
weakness kneels to it
and strength is right here too
now, go and take a breath, a step
don’t let it get too far
season of dints, marbling
long sky pushed rivulets, quarries
salmon inside of lips, margin
achieved, a long way ago
shards imitate delight
weakness kneels to it
and strength is right here too
now, go and take a breath, a step
don’t let it get too far
a stifled breath
hardness, harm
Katz
Katz
To the Unaided Eye

Amy Catanzano

Like memory loss and its anti-matter, unabridged. In a moment for eight hours. Accepting its astronomical weight at the bottom of the sea like an unstoppable anchor.

You say to me several times, and I hear nothing but one. Then I hear nothing, but I know something was said. I propose this: You hear what I said, forget it.

I say.
The memory of having spoken.

You respond in capital letters.

I await messages, documents. Moving the ocean beneath me, still sunk.

I repeat.

Equal and opposite a mirror contains simultaneous worlds. A single false flag or not one at all. A national flag or a personal flag made from seasonal flowers to make a point about impermanence.

She says. Moving beneath her.

I swim to shore.

A form of literary archeology, the books I love all contain timelines of the history of

I prefer to keep current.

I work my mouth.

Dreaming in crop circles.

I mistake voice-overs.

For favors.

I am fond of.

Satin/spirals.

I disregard.

Pseudo/citation.

I often point.

To supermassive.

Black holes.

Vaguely.

Perhaps suddenly.

Sensing.

My characters.

Monologuing.

Landscaping.
Overlapping.
... Au contraire...
Symbolically.
I succumb.
As if here is where.
I chalk-outline my speech.
I mean memorize.
Object.
Devote/disrobe.
I am beside myself.
With biota.
Bloodbonds.
Dorsalwave.
Glossaries.
Secretly.
I flinch.
My wings.
Paperless.
I make my entrance.

The air bubbles rise to the surface. I can’t seem to escape the memory of how many fingers am I holding up? Carefully modulated our thoughts are traveling by sonar through waves broadcasting a new world order.

Today, buried in the underwater stargrave, I light special tools to find my way. My other senses are sharpened. But your candor stays with me. Changes me. Even down here.

Which is why all of this—This!—is not simply a deconstruction of fine delicacies.
Emerging into notes I play a lightning on.
Twice.
I’ve seen it and lived through its sideways mastery.
Queen Mab

Dual-purpose hag.
Trickster and midwife.
Mistress of wet dreams and nightmares.
You gallop through the sticky brains of ladies, courtiers, and lawyers in a tiny carriage,
waving a cricket’s bone.
You were in the delivery room when I gave birth to my daughter.
You pressed down on my pelvis.
You told me to bear it.
You whispered something hot and indistinguishable into my ear, over and over again.

The pelvis is a carriage.
It carries shit, blood, eggs, babies.
She is of good carriage.
A miscarriage of justice.
I was thrown from the carriage.

I lost one of my passengers once, but I carried him around anyway.
I kept the dead next to the living.
I had no choice.
The carriage doors were locked.
We had some cheap equipment, but the shades were drawn, so we couldn’t see much.
Eventually, a living girl stepped out.
She was naked, bloody, screaming.
I felt awkward asking her about him.
Did she remember him?
Did she know he was there?
I decided not to say anything.
I cut her loose.
I let her go.
River Hag

She loves mud and combing her green hair with a rusty comb. She files her teeth to sharp points and rubs her face with moss. Sometimes you’ll find her in a stick house on the bank, but mostly she swims underwater and against the current with turtles by her side. She prowls slowly, and she’s capable of seeing through the thickest muck. She’s looking for ankles, a tiny calf to grab, yank, and pull under.
You get in your boat and start rowing.
Your net needs mending, but you don’t fix it.
The shore stares back at you in disappointment
and the waves lap against the side of the boat.
Nothing to say.
Nothing to say.

You rest your forehead along the prow.
You catch nothing.
You see a woman floating underneath the surface of the water.
You blink hard and feel the boat tug and pull.
You’re moving in a circle now—slow, steady, guided.

When you open your eyes and look again, there are more women—
a school of them, underneath the boat, calling to you.
Somehow they know your name.
They tell you to jump.
They tell you your boat will sink.

You dream of an island covered in clover.
It reminds you of the pubic hair you’re never allowed to touch.
It’s damp and thick.
You see yourself tangled in it, burying your face in its green.
You decide you’ll build a house on it.
On this mound.
On this island.
Everyone thinks it’s a great idea.
You’re certain.
Murmur.
Nod.
Nod.

The hot sun wakes you up.
You’ve never been thirstier.
You’re miles from the shore, but you know now that it doesn’t matter.
No one liked you in your village.
Forget her.
Forget them.
Your new wife lands noisily on the tiny mast of your boat.
She’s got an amazing rack, wings, and a beak.
She pecks your eyes out and carries you over the water.
You tell yourself it’s a relief not to see.

She takes you to that island you dreamed about.
She keeps you in a nest, and regurgitates food into your mouth.
You never see the clover, let alone touch it.
And for the rest of your life, you hear the same song over and over again.
Every time she sings it, your heart quickens and your cock gets hard.
She loves me, you tell yourself, she really does.
The remainder of the fruit, the hour.

Sssht. The hour collapsed in two.
Halved. Hallowed. Slowly filled.
The remainder, the wish, the spell.
A hollow balloon filled with helium.
A gentle nudge in that direction: X
The direction is two. Begin to read.

The terrible apprehension of hollow is
the part that’s scary. The hollow itself
is fine. We were in the window.
The wooden frame had been eaten
by termites. A frugality of view.

When we rain in on the hour, it twangs
as on a skylight: some like it, some don’t.
Sharon does. This particular Ali does not. How we are. The ring glints in
the sunlight. The general halo is it.

The hour is neither quick nor slow.
It is not what we make it. It is
hour, hour, hour. When we rain on words
there is a twang, some like to hear it,
some do not. Naturally.

In this letter of leaf fall,
we turn to the rain for answers.
What it gives is yes. And
so we are, this metal of tea.
The struggle of the ancestor in
that cough. All is evolution:
here today, we have survived.

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we turn to the rain for answers.
What it gives is yes. And
so we are, this metal of tea.
The struggle of the ancestor in
that cough. All is evolution:
here today, we have survived.
And if religion were a drug to ease
the pain, would that be so bad.
We’re just stumbling along here, all
of us, throughcomers. He and she
have stories we cannot reach.

When in the winter you shiver,
think of Stéphane. When in the
month you bleed think of the
Virgin Mary. Yes she too a politician.
A projection of ourselves as heroic
without the messy bits. And if we
write a letter that doesn’t hide.

Where were we when it rang: the hour
Has our tt pew left on how whit
talm tee freeze pH la peep tulupp

flower flower flower flower flower
flower fever flower bouquet
flower grave flower valentine
flower flower flower flower here

This is to say worthy on no
name of telling, remarkable there,
a task for a task. This letter
letter letter what beautiful word.
Let’s sleep in its contours.

More mellow the buttercup
shows your love of lemon.
He was running with cupcakes,
a dangerous activity. But we two
are together, this is all we know
for sure.
Translation as narcissism, effacement, both. She makes a practice of running into walls, only then backing up to jump over. Words as walls, windows, winnowing things. They set sail one day on a group mail.

Translate, sleep, talk, visit, bump: and backwards. Writing as two coins of the same side, translation as two tails wagging on a human form. Double v-shaped flights transformed. W is two birds flying close.

Lastly the word of yore exists in your time: you are its maker. But what is intoxicating is toxic. The tremendous wrenching thigh of a syllable. Wet rind. Watermelon. Spitting the seeds out as so many marks of punctuation.

Magically memory appears as if from a deep cavern: form in detail. We can pick out the occasional daffodil from the black. And will you paint here? Or are oils as in cooking?

Not knowing. Are you strong enough? To take on all that logistical mess rather than see this (you would have to see it at some point). The blind spot that is you is in him and here and him and her. Are you not alive enough that you need to be attractive too?

Z writes herself to sleep & wonders at the lanes in the clouds. We're all dying and going to die. Life comes out of death, look at those primroses over there. A strange scape.
And when they make love they’re no more together than when they’re arguing. They’re never really together and they are together much of the time. That is the loneliness of it. We are none of us ever really together and we are together much of the time. That is the loneliness of it. We are none of us ever really together and if we are composed of everything and everyone around us. As evident in the bouts of laughter.

Such is the tongue, when in the plural. We resonate with the multiple, yet we are singular. A blurring that reflects the uncertainty of self-knowing. A treble reach, an improvisation of words. I cannot possibly master this exchange, it speaks for me.

Save the day. Infinity is under the trash bag, not as previously thought up above. More is less. And if Pluto stays unreachable. Let us not know.

Formally. A deletion of object. Here we are, swimming in verb. Such is the hour of grosse mer, heavy appetite, of photographs spread around. We collect the waves.

Dear bird, the latest technology is flutter. We cannot follow you through thick wind but through invisible channels of communication: YES. In your fingertips the time, the weather, the print of you. Unravelling in airports. Lily, come in.

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Interior en la yegua. Lo usual cae en su esófago pero es su espalda un peso de osamentas apiladas. Desde adentro sus ojos encendidos por visiones nocturnas de penas inservibles y engranes quebradizos. Alguien yace entre plantas y residuos. Ella se acerca y salta, deja su cuerpo sombras en el rostro que duerme y galopando se aleja.

Hace tiempo enterrada en sus gusanos, es la mancha en el musgo, es el verde luciérnaga. Con su respiración levanta las cenizas de un cuerpo que en tus hombros sigue ardiendo. Cuando quieres que vuelva te arrepientes. Dentro de la linterna se aparece sin pelo, se pierde entre tus piedras y sin mirarte brota.

Alzados en la noche, los muebles, sus cajones. La ropa casi en vilo, los ganchos son anzuelos oscilando. La ves en tu sigilo con el rostro de muerta, viajando con los ojos debajo de sus párpados tendidos. Así se ha conservado: el perfume sellado, la madeja de joyas en un puño sin brillo. Si sabe que la miras, mañana habrá olvidado tu visita, cuando abra y se la trague el resplandor del día.

Vivimos succionando glándulas salivales y buscando los restos - cuando hay - entre los dientes. De ser engullidos nos salvamos los que en la lengua creemos. Es una buena diosa, nos protege, nos lava y tendida mansamente nos arrulla. Si hay luz en la oquedad, su majestad el ídolo se yergue, nosotros nos plegamos en alabanza al tótem. Pero si lee que hay falla, señala con la punta, descarga latigazos, nos sacude. Y en el violento arrastre de la masticación, un bolo de lamentos desliza su clamor hacia el abismo.
In inside the mare. The usual falls down her esophagus, but her spine is a heavy stack of bones. Her eyes lit from within by night visions of useless woes and brittle gears. Someone lies among the plants and scum. She approaches and jumps, her body casting shadows over the sleeping face, and galloping she flees.

Been awhile buried among her worms, the stain of moss, the green firefly. The ashes of a body still burning between your shoulders rise on her breath. When you wish for her return, you regret it. In the beam of light, she appears hairless, lost among your pebbles—not looking at you, she turns.

Militias in the night, the furniture, its drawers. The clothes almost hidden, the hooks are lures rising and falling. You see her in your stealth with a look of death, traveling with the eyes beneath tight lids. This is how it’s been maintained: the perfume sealed, the skein of tarnished jewels in one fist. If she knows you watch her, tomorrow she’ll have forgotten your visit, when she opens up and drinks in the glare of day.

We live sucking on saliva glands and searching for leftovers—when there are any—between the teeth. We save ourselves from being gobbled, we believers in the tongue. She is a kind goddess, she protects us, cleans us, and, tending gently, coos us to sleep. If there is light in the cavity, her majesty the idol stands, and we bow down in praise to the totem. But if she senses a lack of faith, she shows it with the tip, doles out lashes, beats us. And with the violent drag of mastication, a bawling bolus slides its clamor toward the abyss.
Ser ojo te permite el parpadeo, te hace enfocar mejor. ¿La quietud es confusa, nítido el pulular? Empáñate en cristal, sudá en el vaho. Aunque no lleves piernas, eres lente ondulando, te columpia el fulgor. Un ahorcado en la sombra. Si encuentras los destellos gozarás la ceguera: irás a conocer un mundo agujero.

Advierte en la escalera escases de horizontes, exceso de poleas, esperanza de ciegos. No acepta del peldaño un porvenir más claro. Con vertical impulso, política, sintaxis o deportes imantados a meta, el mundo parece otro: propulsores realistas esquivan las tijeras del terrenal común resentimiento. Los anillos de Saturyno esperarán, no probará jamás aguas glaciares, ni mezclará Martini en un penthouse. Que ciencia y alpinistas se detengan, árboles, alas, grúas, tibias, ladrillos, fémures, misiles. Que las líneas se tiendan, que yazcan Paralelos y se extienda en la tierra un paisaje sin sombras, de sábanas y almohadas subrayado.
Being an eye lets you blink, makes you focus better. Is the quiet confusing, the swarm clear? Fog up your glass, sweat in the steam. Despite leglessness, you’re a waving lens, swung by the shine. Someone hung in the shadows. If you face the spray of light you’ll relish blindness: you’ll probe a muddled world.

On the stairs he notices the lack of horizons, excess of pulleys, hope of sky. He refuses the step’s clearer future. With vertical impulse, politics, syntax or athletics magnetically driven to the goal, the world seems other: realistic propellors dodge the scissors of earthly, common resentment. The rings of Saturn will wait; never again will he taste the glacial waters or mix a martini in a penthouse. May science and hikers hold up: trees, wings, tibias, cranes, bricks, femurs, and missiles. May the lines be flattened, the parallels draw down, and a shadowless landscape spread out across the earth, highlighted only by sheets and pillows.
Three Poems

Rodney Koeneke

ghazal

piyaara, you can’t tell you need me badly
so I’ll tell the meanings of some words first

I am the plural of tifl, which means child
our genre is this soft palace to bounce and sway

aah is a sign for the poet’s crying
beneath it your sighs push open the throat’s lost doors

who lives alone to wish for your lengths of zulf
is one who won’t wish long to live alone

halq’a is a ring, sad means hundred
misshapen bumps convened on a massy pearl

this poem is a solitary circle
the world is sad a hundred different ways

heart, build up your fire like a neighbor
growing too drunk at spring’s first barbeque

ishq is a large gold edifice
where only the unedified may lounge

how quick are the pure to repulse the despised
how slowly those nipples would answer my caress

think what small change the water has to suffer
to be itself and several different drops

tell her broken grass smells sweetest
I a razed field you can drink wine in at noon

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tell her broken grass smells sweetest
I a razed field you can drink wine in at noon
the bee that’s come to love its sweet partitions
the body in the cupfuls of its cells

I will fold up my health like a garment
for you to forget in the ebony groove of your chest

the afterparty after the afterparty
and after the afterparties?

the colony half-loves its mutinies
the snap of the wings of the bird who must sing to the rose
god for how long will remain a flâneur
in his own café on his own boulevard?

now boss, don’t take what I say above for granted
its surface was the parts I understand

I write for the people, my feelings are simple
it’s readers make a complicated hell

the bed conceals its lexicon of stones
but scows above still find the river fluent

the words themselves are melodious and embellish my
depth of meaning
I think you don’t know yet how long I can sit at your door
could someone give this sher its right translation?
the liar who writes it lies right before my eyes

Rodney, no translation is ever satisfactory—
be foreign only to its disappointments
after all the usual modes of adoption
you trade lives with the diocese
now there is courage and now there is loss
new space for the brethren’s exhaling
re-breathed into you

a spur of foam
that empties into reverence
there is bread there and broth
a confusion of rooms

the dawn road from the capital
past disused industries
you at different times adopted

pity the convoy that goes down it
carrying tears and carrying names
one brake in a field of breathings
it is gone

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one brake in a field of breathings
it is gone
Hater

Hater, your curious is immense
at last you desire me
but here I am on Mars
gone from your republic
with its 3,370,000 inhabitants
now you will languish
alas, dense ice
you tiny hard pendant.
upon a string of setbacks
confused about power
in the internet itself
hater, your curious
makes me even more dignified and warlike
an air force of the future
performing for game show widows
a perfume at evening
with lumps of meat inside
curious how Europe
behaves when suppliant,
an empty Belarus
ephemerality visits
jangling its slow troikas
through your square and bitter districts
hater, I’m serious
I’m Mars to your insistence
a lifebook of updates
secreted in a flower
the confusion is palpable
yet physically outside us
still, it’s therapeutic
my letters on your prosthetic
without them you can’t prosper
for distance is their Christmas
they open to the present
hater
you’re their flower

Hater

Hater, your curious is immense
at last you desire me
but here I am on Mars
gone from your republic
with its 3,370,000 inhabitants
now you will languish
alas, dense ice
you tiny hard pendant.
upon a string of setbacks
confused about power
in the internet itself
hater, your curious
makes me even more dignified and warlike
an air force of the future
performing for game show widows
a perfume at evening
with lumps of meat inside
curious how Europe
behaves when suppliant,
an empty Belarus
ephemerality visits
jangling its slow troikas
through your square and bitter districts
hater, I’m serious
I’m Mars to your insistence
a lifebook of updates
secreted in a flower
the confusion is palpable
yet physically outside us
still, it’s therapeutic
my letters on your prosthetic
without them you can’t prosper
for distance is their Christmas
they open to the present
hater
you’re their flower
Sea El buzo, ocupación que se ejerce o propiedad horizontal o hijo bobo de patria o niño con biberón (áreas densas de pasto, hay los terrenos baldíos, donde el vecindario peatonal arroja los escombros de sus vidas y entre la mala hierba crece la seta de una nueva civilidad, sin incluirse aún en mapas de la contracultura), sea El buzo, ocupación que se ejerce o propiedad horizontal o hijo bobo de patria o niño con biberón (áreas densas de pasto, hay los terrenos baldíos, donde el vecindario peatonal arroja los escombros de sus vidas y entre la mala hierba crece la seta de una nueva civilidad, sin incluirse aún en mapas de la contracultura), sea El buzo, ocupación que se ejerce o propiedad horizontal o hijo bobo de patria o niño con biberón: “a la hora señalada, cuando me llamen por mi nombre, no responderé”. 
Whether The dumpster diver be occupation one exercises or horizontal real estate or foolish son of the homeland or child feeding from bottle (areas thick with grass, there are unused wastelands, where pedestrians from the neighborhood throw debris from their daily lives and among weeds, the first mushroom rises for a new civility, not yet included on maps of the counterculture), whether The diver be occupation one exercises or horizontal real estate or foolish son of the homeland or child feeding from bottle (areas thick with grass, there are unused wastelands, where pedestrians from the neighborhood throw debris from their daily lives and among weeds, the first mushroom rises for a new civility, not yet included on maps of the counterculture), whether The diver be occupation one exercises, horizontal real estate, foolish son of the homeland, or child feeding from bottle: “at the appointed hour, when they call me by my name, I will not respond.”
En la escena del crimen

Limpiarse los ojos, ha de tener su lado bueno, aunque pesa demasiado el hollín de esta época: sintomáticas, salían a calentarse al sol sobre la carretera asfaltada (los conjuntos, por diversión o por fobia, las mataban, aplastándolas contra las ruedas de los camiones), limpiarse los ojos, ha de tener su lado bueno, aunque pesa demasiado el hollín de esta época: sintomáticas, salían a calentarse al sol sobre la carretera asfaltada (los conjuntos, por diversión o por fobia, las mataban, aplastándolas contra las ruedas de los camiones): limpiarse los ojos, ha de tener su lado bueno, aunque pesa demasiado el hollín de esta época, a mí no me los crean.
At the scene of the crime

Wipe your eyes, it must have its good side, though the soot of this epoch weighs too heavily: symptomatic, they’d go out to get warm in the sun on the asphalted highway (the bands of soldiers, for their amusement or phobia, would kill them, crushing them under the tires of trucks), wipe your eyes, it must have its good side, though the soot of this epoch weighs too heavily: symptomatic, they’d go out to get warm in the sun on the asphalted highway (the bands of soldiers, for their amusement or phobia, would kill them, crushing them under the tires of trucks): wipe your eyes, it must have its good side, though the soot of this epoch weighs too heavily, none of you should believe me.
Ninguna parábola me gusta más que la parábola del segador, mi cabeza es un aspa, mi cabeza es un aspa, mi cabeza ha usurpado la función de mis pies, ¿aún queda hierba en el césped?

En esa caravana me hubiera gustado a mí enrolarme, ir tocando harmónica hasta los fuegos verdes de Jerusalén.

Ninguna parábola me gusta más que la parábola del segador, mi cabeza es un aspa, mi cabeza es un aspa, mi cabeza ha usurpado la función de mis pies, ¿aún queda hierba en el césped?

En esa caravana me hubiera gustado a mí enrolarme, ir tocando harmónica hasta los fuegos verdes de Miami Beach.

Nana, para festejar, a la vuelta de todo, si es que hay vuelta de todo, guárdame otra bolsa de plástico.

Ninguna parábola me gusta más que la parábola del segador, mi cabeza es un aspa, mi cabeza es un aspa, mi cabeza ha usurpado la función de mis pies, ¿aún queda hierba en el césped?

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En esa caravana me hubiera gustado a mí enrolarme, ir tocando harmónica hasta los fuegos verdes de Miami Beach.

Nana, para festejar, a la vuelta de todo, si es que hay vuelta de todo, guárdame otra bolsa de plástico.
No parable gives me more pleasure than the reaper’s parable, my head is a fanblade, my head is a fanblade, my head has usurped the function of my feet, is any grass left on the field?

I would have liked to join that caravan, playing harmonica all the way to the green fires of Jerusalem.

No parable gives me more pleasure than the reaper’s parable, my head is a fanblade, my head is a fanblade, my head has usurped the function of my feet, is any grass left on the field?

I would have liked to join that caravan, playing harmonica all the way to the green fires of Miami Beach.

Nana, to celebrate, on the other side of it all, if there is another side to it all, save me another plastic bag.
A black hole weaves into a white hole and the result is lace, not a void. Is a tightly coiled piece of thread meant to be made more taut? Or loosened as a way to restructure knit? Boi takes down the front of boi’s overalls and there amidst boi’s hard ribs Maxima lays on a tiny spinning mandala.

Had boi eaten Maxima recently? Or is this how it has always been?
Convergences and layers. Prior to us the statues of the Virgin came to us as parents would. We detected distaste. But once our bodies could no longer be separated, like wind cannot be clipped from wind, it was like being taught by an alchemist about how to raise the dead, or how to sex what has never been sexed before. Or any of those act’s inversions.
Suddenly, there in bleating heaps near the exhausted mountain lake, the statues of the Virgin began to show signs of human blood. We noticed that they were beginning to vouch for us through cardinal secretions.

Because aren’t paper-mache dolls sempiternal corneas?

This is how we make them. They make us move. There are always things to avenge. Cosmic laws keep being subverted into states of unrest. We are orchestral encroachment. Versions of engraving papyrus. How he is a monosyllabic jolt within the pronoun she.
There are ways to un-know grief but they require viscosity, matchboxes, and manikins being turned into ululating flame. If we abandon some of our narratives by choice, is that loss less violent than being forced to remember other parts? A dialogic of lobes or lobbing the locks until they unlock. Until surrounding ghosts or weather grow feathers. Apparitions are being calcified into gowns. Into fortifications to wear. How fragments make it easier to fragment further. And we had not yet even gotten to the issue of ink and its potential relation to turning the elusive into desire.

Bites into this inebriated array and a rainbow appears. An appellation to purr against other depictions.
PREÁMBULO

Los gobiernos de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (México), de Canadá y de los Estados Unidos de América (Estados Unidos), decididos a:

REAFIRMAR los lazos especiales de amistad y cooperación entre sus naciones;
CONTRIBUIR al desarrollo armónico, a la expansión del comercio mundial y a ampliar la cooperación internacional;
CREAR un mercado más extenso y seguro para los bienes y los servicios producidos en sus territorios;
REDUCIR las distorsiones en el comercio;
ESTABLECER reglas claras y de beneficio mutuo para su intercambio comercial;
ASEGURAR un marco comercial previsible para la planeación de las actividades productivas y de la inversión;
DESARROLLAR sus respectivos derechos y obligaciones derivados del Acuerdo General sobre Aranceles Aduaneros y Comercio, así como de otros instrumentos bilaterales y multilaterales de cooperación;
FORTALECER la competitividad de sus empresas en los mercados mundiales;
ALENTAR la innovación y la creatividad y fomentar el comercio de bienes y servicios que estén protegidos por derechos de propiedad intelectual;
CREAR nuevas oportunidades de empleo, mejorar las condiciones laborales y los niveles de vida en sus respectivos territorios;
EMPRENDER todo lo anterior de manera congruente con la protección y la conservación del ambiente;
PRESERVAR su capacidad para salvaguardar el bienestar público;
PROMOVER el desarrollo sostenible;
REFORZAR la elaboración y la aplicación de leyes y reglamentos en materia ambiental; y
PROTEGER, fortalecer y hacer efectivos los derechos fundamentales de sus trabajadores;

HAN ACORDADO.
The Government of Canada, the Government of the United Mexican States and the Government of the United States of America, resolved to:

STRENGTHEN the special bonds of friendship and cooperation among their nations;

CONTRIBUTE to the harmonious development and expansion of world trade and provide a catalyst to broader international cooperation;

CREATE an expanded and secure market for the goods and services produced in their territories;

REDUCE distortions to trade;

ESTABLISH clear and mutually advantageous rules governing their trade;

ENSURE a predictable commercial framework for business planning and investment;

BUILD on their respective rights and obligations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and other multilateral and bilateral instruments of cooperation;

ENHANCE the competitiveness of their firms in global markets;

FOSTER creativity and innovation, and promote trade in goods and services that are the subject of intellectual property rights;

CREATE new employment opportunities and improve working conditions and living standards in their respective territories;

UNDERTAKE each of the preceding in a manner consistent with environmental protection and conservation;

PRESERVE their flexibility to safeguard the public welfare;

PROMOTE sustainable development;

STRENGTHEN the development and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations; and

PROTECT, enhance and enforce basic workers’ rights;

HAVE AGREED as follows:
animal incluye peces y fauna silvestre; contaminante incluye residuos de plaguicidas y de fármacos veterinarios y otras sustancias extrañas; evaluación de riesgo significa una evaluación de:
(a) la probabilidad de entrada, radicación y propagación de una plaga o una enfermedad y las posibles consecuencias biológicas y económicas relacionadas;
(b) la probabilidad de efectos adversos a la vida o a la salud humana o animal provenientes de la presencia de un aditivo, contaminante, toxina, o un organismo causante de enfermedades en un alimento, bebida o forraje; 
· información científica significa una razón basada en datos o información derivados del uso de métodos científicos;
· medida sanitaria o fitosanitaria significa una medida que una Parte adopta, mantiene o aplica para:
(a) proteger la vida o la salud animal o vegetal en su territorio de los riesgos provenientes de la introducción, radicación o propagación de una plaga o una enfermedad;
(b) proteger la vida o la salud humana o animal en su territorio de riesgos provenientes de la presencia de un aditivo, contaminante, toxina o un organismos causante de la enfermedad en un alimento, bebida o forraje;
(c) proteger la vida o la salud humana o animal en su territorio de riesgos provenientes de un organismo causante de enfermedades o una plaga
· nivel apropiado de protección significa el nivel de protección a la vida o la salud humana, animal o vegetal, que una Parte considere apropiado;
· norma, directriz o recomendación internacional significa una norma, directriz o recomendación:
(a) en relación a la seguridad en alimentos, la establecida por la Comisión del Codex Alimentarius, incluyendo aquella relacionada con descomposición de los productos, elaborada por el Comité de Pescados y Productos Pesqueros del Codex Alimentarius, aditivos alimentarios, contaminantes, prácticas en materia de higiene y métodos de análisis y muestreo;
(b) en relación a salud animal y zoonosis, la elaborada bajo los auspicios de la Oficina Internacional de Epizootias, y
(c) en relación a sanidad vegetal, la elaborada bajo los auspicios del Secretariado de la Convención Internacional de Protección Fitosanitaria en colaboración con la Organización de Protección Fitosanitaria para América del Norte; o
ARTICLE 724:
DEFINITIONS FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION:

animal includes fish and wild fauna;
appropriate level of protection means the level of protection of human, animal or plant life or health in the territory of a Party that the Party considers appropriate;
approval procedure means any registration, notification or other mandatory administrative procedure for:
(a) approving the use of an additive for a stated purpose or under stated conditions, or
(b) establishing a tolerance for a stated purpose or under stated conditions for a contaminant, in a food, beverage or feedstuff prior to permitting the use of the additive or the marketing of a food, beverage or feedstuff containing the additive or contaminant; area means a country, part of a country or all or parts of several countries; area of low pest or disease prevalence means an area in which a specific pest or disease occurs at low levels; contaminant includes pesticide and veterinary drug residues and extraneous matter; control or inspection procedure means any procedure used, directly or indirectly, to determine that a sanitary or phytosanitary measure is fulfilled, including sampling, testing, inspection, evaluation, verification, monitoring, auditing, assurance of conformity, accreditation, registration, certification or other procedure involving the physical examination of a good, of the packaging of a good, or of the equipment or facilities directly related to production, marketing or use of a good, but does not mean an approval procedure; international standard, guideline or recommendation means a standard, guideline or recommendation:
(a) regarding food safety, adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, including one regarding decomposition elaborated by the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products, food additives, contaminants, hygienic practice, and methods of analysis and sampling;
(b) regarding animal health and zoonoses, developed under the auspices of the International Office of Epizootics;
(c) regarding plant health, developed under the auspices of the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention in cooperation with the North American Plant Protection Organization, or
(d) established by or developed under any other international organization agreed on by the Parties; pest includes a weed; pestfree or disease-free area means an area in which a specific pest or disease does not occur; plant includes wild flora; risk assessment means an evaluation of:
(d) la establecida por, o desarrollada conforme a otras organizaciones internacionales acordadas por las Partes;
- plagas incluye malezas.
- procedimiento de aprobación significa cualquier procedimiento de registro, notificación o cualquier otro procedimiento administrativo obligatorio para:
(a) aprobar el uso de un aditivo para un fin definido o bajo condiciones definidas, o
(b) establecer una tolerancia, para un fin definido o con apego a condiciones definidas, para un contaminante, en un alimento, bebida o forraje previo a permitir el uso del aditivo o la comercialización de un alimento, bebida o forraje que contenga el aditivo o contaminante;
- procedimiento de control o inspección significa cualquier procedimiento utilizado, directa o indirectamente, para determinar si se cumple una medida sanitaria o fitosanitaria, incluidos muestreo, pruebas, inspección, evaluación, verificación, monitoreo, auditoría, evaluación de la conformidad, acreditación, registro, certificación, u otros procedimientos que involucren el examen físico de un bien, del empaquetado del bien, o del equipo o las instalaciones directamente relacionadas con la producción, comercialización o uso de un bien, pero no significa un procedimiento de aprobación;
- vegetal incluye flora silvestre.
- zona significa un país, parte de un país, partes de varios países o todas las partes de varios países;
- zona de escasa prevalencia de plagas o enfermedades significa una zona en la cual una plaga o enfermedad específica ocurre en niveles escasos; y
- zona libre de plagas o enfermedades significa una zona en la cual una plaga o enfermedad específica no está presente.

9. Para fines de mantener el registro, cada una de las Partes reconocerá el uso de una marca por una persona distinta al titular de la marca, cuando tal uso de la marca esté sujeto al control del titular.

10. Ninguna de las Partes podrá dificultar el uso en el comercio de una marca mediante requisitos especiales, tales como un uso que disminuya la función de la marca como indicación de procedencia, o un uso con otra marca.

11. Cada una de las Partes podrá establecer condiciones para el licenciamiento y la cesión de marcas, en el entendido que no se permitirán las licencias obligatorias de marcas y que el titular de una marca registrada tendrá derecho a cederla con o sin la transmisión de la empresa a que pertenezca la marca.
(a) the potential for the introduction, establishment or spread of a pest or disease and associated biological and economic consequences; or
(b) the potential for adverse effects on human or animal life or health arising from the presence of an additive, contaminant, toxin or disease-causing organism in a food, beverage or feedstuff, sanitary or phytosanitary measure means a measure that a Party adopts, maintains or applies to:
(a) protect animal or plant life or health in its territory from risks arising from the introduction, establishment or spread of a pest or disease,
(b) protect human or animal life or health in its territory from risks arising from the presence of an additive, contaminant, toxin or disease-causing organism in a food, beverage or feedstuff,
(c) protect human life or health in its territory from risks arising from a diseasecausing organism or pest carried by an animal or plant, or a product thereof, or
(d) prevent or limit other damage in its territory arising from the introduction, establishment or spread of a pest, including end product criteria; a product-related processing or production method; a testing, inspection, certification or approval procedure; a relevant statistical method; a sampling procedure; a method of risk assessment; a packaging and labelling requirement directly related to food safety; and a quarantine treatment, such as a relevant requirement associated with the transportation of animals or plants or with material necessary for their survival during transportation; and scientific basis means a reason based on data or information derived using scientific methods.

12. A Party may provide limited exceptions to the rights conferred by a trademark, such as fair use of descriptive terms, provided that such exceptions take into account the legitimate interests of the trademark owner and of other persons.

13. Each Party shall prohibit the registration as a trademark of words, at least in English, French or Spanish, that generically designate goods or services or types of goods or services to which the trademark applies.

14. Each Party shall refuse to register trademarks that consist of or comprise immoral, deceptive or scandalous matter, or matter that may disparage or falsely suggest a connection with persons, living or dead, institutions, beliefs or any Party’s national symbols, or bring them into contempt or disrepute.
12. Cada una de las Partes podrá establecer excepciones limitadas a los derechos conferidos por una marca, tal como el uso correcto de términos descriptivos, a condición de que las excepciones tomen en cuenta los intereses legítimos del titular de la marca y de otras personas.

13. Cada una de las Partes prohibirá el registro como marca, de palabras al menos en español, francés o inglés, que designen genéricamente los bienes o servicios, o los tipos de bienes o de servicios, a los que la marca se aplique.

14. Cada una de las Partes negará el registro a las marcas que contengan o consistan en elementos inmorales, escandalosos o que induzcan a error, o elementos que puedan denigrar o sugerir falsamente una relación con personas, vivas o muertas, instituciones, creencias, símbolos nacionales de cualquier de las Partes, o que las menosprecien o afecten en su reputación.

ARTÍCULO 1709. PATENTES

1. Sujeto a lo dispuesto en los párrafos 2 y 3, las Partes dispondrán el otorgamiento de patentes para cualquier invención, ya se trate de productos o de procesos, en todos los campos de la tecnología, siempre que tales invenciones sean nuevas, resulten de una actividad inventiva y sean susceptibles de aplicación industrial. Para efectos del presente artículo cada una de las Partes podrá considerar que las expresiones “actividad inventiva” y “susceptibles de aplicación industrial” sean respectivamente sinónimos de las expresiones “no evidentes” y “útiles”.

2. Cada una de las Partes podrá excluir invenciones de la patentabilidad si es necesario impedir en su territorio la explotación comercial de las invenciones para proteger el orden público o la moral, inclusive para proteger la vida o la salud humana, animal o vegetal, o para evitar daño grave a la naturaleza o al ambiente, siempre que la exclusión no se funde únicamente en que la Parte prohíbe la explotación comercial, en su territorio, de la materia que sea objeto de la patente.

3. Asimismo, cada una de las Partes podrá excluir de la patentabilidad:
(a) los métodos de diagnóstico, terapéuticos y quirúrgicos, para el tratamiento de seres humanos o animales;
(b) plantas y animales, excepto microorganismos; y
(c) procesos esencialmente biológicos para la producción de plantas o animales, distintos de los procesos no biológicos y microbiológicos para
ARTICLE 1709: PATENTS

1. Subject to paragraphs 2 and 3, each Party shall make patents available for any inventions, whether products or processes, in all fields of technology, provided that such inventions are new, result from an inventive step and are capable of industrial application. For purposes of this Article, a Party may deem the terms “inventive step” and “capable of industrial application” to be synonymous with the terms “non-obvious” and “useful,” respectively.

2. A Party may exclude from patentability inventions if preventing in its territory the commercial exploitation of the inventions is necessary to protect ordre public or morality, including to protect human, animal or plant life or health or to avoid serious prejudice to nature or the environment, provided that the exclusion is not based solely on the ground that the Party prohibits commercial exploitation in its territory of the subject matter of the patent.

3. A Party may also exclude from patentability:
   (a) diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical methods for the treatment of humans or animals;
   (b) plants and animals other than microorganisms; and
   (c) essentially biological processes for the production of plants or animals, other than non-biological and microbiological processes for such production.

   Notwithstanding subparagraph (b), each Party shall provide for the protection of plant varieties through patents, an effective scheme of sui generis protection, or both.

4. If a Party has not made available product patent protection for pharmaceutical or agricultural chemicals commensurate with paragraph 1:
   (a) as of January 1, 1992, for subject matter that relates to naturally occurring substances prepared or produced by, or significantly derived from, microbiological processes and intended for food or medicine, and
   (b) as of July 1, 1991, for any other subject matter, that Party shall provide to the inventor of any such product or its assignee the means to obtain product patent protection for such product for the unexpired term of the patent for such product granted in another Party, as long as the product has not been marketed in the Party providing protection.
dicha producción. No obstante lo señalado en el inciso (b), cada una de las Partes otorgará protección a las variedades de plantas mediante patentes, un esquema efectivo de protección sui generis, o ambos.

4. Si una Parte no ha dispuesto el otorgamiento de patentes para dar protección a los productos farmacéuticos y agroquímicos de conformidad con lo dispuesto en el párrafo 1:
(a) al 1° de enero de 1992, para la materia relacionada con sustancias que se generen de manera natural, las cuales sean preparadas o producidas por procesos microbiológicos o derivadas significativamente de los mismos y que se destinen a constituir alimento o medicina; y
(b) al 1° de julio de 1991, para cualquier otra materia, esa Parte otorgará al inventor de cualquiera de esos productos, o a su causahabiente, los medios para obtener protección por patente para dicho producto, por el periodo en que siga vigente la patente concedida en otra Parte, siempre que el producto no se haya comercializado en la Parte que otorga la protección de conformidad con este párrafo, y que la persona que solicite esa protección presente una solicitud oportunamente.

5. Cada una de las Partes dispondrá que:
(a) cuando la materia objeto de la patente sea un producto, la patente confiera a su titular el derecho de impedir a otras personas que fabriquen, usen o vendan la materia objeto de la patente, sin el consentimiento del titular; y
(b) cuando la materia objeto de la patente sea un proceso, la patente confiera a su titular el derecho de impedir a otras personas que utilicen ese proceso y que usen, vendan o importen, por lo menos, el producto obtenido directamente de ese proceso, sin el consentimiento del titular de la patente.

6. Cada una de las Partes podrá establecer excepciones limitadas a los derechos exclusivos conferidos por una patente, a condición de que tales excepciones no interfieran de manera injustificada con la explotación normal de la patente y no provoquen perjuicio, sin razón, a los legítimos intereses del titular de la patente, habida cuenta de los intereses legítimos de otras personas.

7. Sujeta a lo dispuesto en los párrafos 2 y 3, no habrá discriminación en el otorgamiento de patentes, ni en el goce de los derechos respectivos, en función del campo de la tecnología, del territorio de la Parte en que la invención fue realizada, o de si los productos son importados o producidos localmente.

8. Una Parte podrá revocar una patente solamente cuando:
(a) existan motivos que habrían justificado la negativa de otorgarla, o
under this paragraph and the person seeking such protection makes a timely request.

5. Each Party shall provide that:
   (a) where the subject matter of a patent is a product, the patent shall confer on the patent owner the right to prevent other persons from making, using or selling the subject matter of the patent, without the patent owner’s consent; and
   (b) where the subject matter of a patent is a process, the patent shall confer on the patent owner the right to prevent other persons from using that process and from using, selling, or importing at least the product obtained directly by that process, without the patent owner’s consent.

6. A Party may provide limited exceptions to the exclusive rights conferred by a patent, provided that such exceptions do not unreasonably conflict with a normal exploitation of the patent and do not unreasonably prejudice the legitimate interests of the patent owner, taking into account the legitimate interests of other persons.

7. Subject to paragraphs 2 and 3, patents shall be available and patent rights enjoyable without discrimination as to the field of technology, the territory of the Party where the invention was made and whether products are imported or locally produced.

8. A Party may revoke a patent only when:
   (a) grounds exist that would have justified a refusal to grant the patent; or
   (b) the grant of a compulsory license has not remedied the lack of exploitation of the patent.

9. Each Party shall permit patent owners to assign and transfer by succession their patents, and to conclude licensing contracts.

10. Where the law of a Party allows for use of the subject matter of a patent, other than that use allowed under paragraph 6, without the authorization of the right holder, including use by the government or other persons authorized by the government, the Party shall respect the following provisions:
    (a) authorization of such use shall be considered on its individual merits;
    (b) such use may only be permitted if, prior to such use, the proposed user has made efforts to obtain authorization from the right holder under this paragraph and the person seeking such protection makes a timely request.

5. Each Party shall provide that:
   (a) where the subject matter of a patent is a product, the patent shall confer on the patent owner the right to prevent other persons from making, using or selling the subject matter of the patent, without the patent owner’s consent; and
   (b) where the subject matter of a patent is a process, the patent shall confer on the patent owner the right to prevent other persons from using that process and from using, selling, or importing at least the product obtained directly by that process, without the patent owner’s consent.

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   (b) the grant of a compulsory license has not remedied the lack of exploitation of the patent.

9. Each Party shall permit patent owners to assign and transfer by succession their patents, and to conclude licensing contracts.

10. Where the law of a Party allows for use of the subject matter of a patent, other than that use allowed under paragraph 6, without the authorization of the right holder, including use by the government or other persons authorized by the government, the Party shall respect the following provisions:
    (a) authorization of such use shall be considered on its individual merits;
    (b) such use may only be permitted if, prior to such use, the proposed user has made efforts to obtain authorization from the right holder.
9. Cada una de las Partes permitirá a los titulares de las patentes cederlas o transmitirlas por sucesión, así como celebrar contratos de licencia.

10. Cuando la legislación de una de las Partes permita el uso de la materia objeto de una patente, distinto al permitido conforme al párrafo 6, sin la autorización del titular del derecho, incluido el uso por el gobierno o por otras personas que el gobierno autorice, la Parte respetará las siguientes disposiciones:
(a) la autorización de tal uso se considerará en función del fondo del asunto particular del que se trate;
(b) sólo podrá permitirse tal uso si, con anterioridad al mismo, el usuario potencial hubiera hecho esfuerzos por obtener la autorización del titular del derecho en términos y condiciones comerciales sensatas y tales esfuerzos no hubiesen tenido éxito en un plazo razonable. Cada una de las Partes podrá soslayar este requisito en casos de emergencia nacional, en circunstancias de extrema urgencia o en casos de uso público sin fines comerciales. No obstante, en situaciones de emergencia nacional o en circunstancias de extrema urgencia, se notificará al titular del derecho tan pronto como sea razonable. En el caso de uso público sin fines comerciales, cuando el gobierno o el contratista, sin hacer una búsqueda de patentes, sepa o tenga bases comprobables para saber que una patente válida es o será utilizada por o para el gobierno, se informará con prontitud al titular del derecho;  
(c) el ámbito y duración de dicho uso se limitarán a los fines para el que haya sido autorizado;  
(d) dicho uso será no exclusivo;  
(e) dicho uso no podrá cederse, excepto junto con la parte de la empresa o del avión que goce ese uso;  
(f) cualquier uso de esta naturaleza se autorizará principalmente para abastecer el mercado interno de la Parte que lo autorice;  
(g) a reserva de la protección adecuada de los intereses legítimos de las personas así autorizadas, podrá revocarse la autorización de dicho uso, siempre y cuando las circunstancias que lo motivaron dejen de existir y sea improbable que se susciten nuevamente. La autoridad competente estará facultada para revisar, previa solicitud motivada, si estas circunstancias siguen existiendo;  
(h) al titular del derecho se le pagará una remuneración adecuada según las circunstancias de cada caso, habida cuenta del valor económico de la autorización;  
(i) el otorgamiento de una licencia obligatoria no haya corregido la falta de explotación de la patente.
on reasonable commercial terms and conditions and such efforts have
not been successful within a reasonable period of time. The requirement
to make such efforts may be waived by a Party in the case of
a national emergency or other circumstances of extreme urgency
or in cases of public non-commercial use. In situations of national
emergency or other circumstances of extreme
(i) la validez jurídica de cualquier resolución relacionada con la autorización estará sujeta a revisión judicial o a una revisión independiente por una autoridad superior distinta;

(j) cualquier resolución relativa a la remuneración otorgada para dicho uso estará sujeta a revisión judicial o a una revisión independiente por una autoridad superior distinta;

(k) la Parte no estará obligada a aplicar las condiciones establecidas en los incisos (b) y (f) cuando dicho uso se permita para corregir una práctica que, en virtud de un procedimiento judicial o administrativo, se haya juzgado contraria a la competencia. La determinación del monto de la remuneración podrá tomar en cuenta, en tales casos, la necesidad de corregir las prácticas contrarias a la competencia. Las autoridades competentes estarán facultadas para rechazar la revocación de la autorización siempre y cuando resulte probable que las condiciones que la motivaron se susciten nuevamente; y

(l) la Parte no autorizará el uso de la materia objeto de una patente para permitir la explotación de otra, salvo para corregir una infracción que hubiere sido sancionada en un procedimiento relativo a las leyes internas sobre prácticas contrarias a la competencia.

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Some notes on ANTI-HUMBOLDT

A Reading of the North American Free Trade Agreement

Some years ago I attended a lecture by philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy; as I remember it, at some point during the talk Nancy mentioned that what we know today about the total implications of the Fascist period in Europe are, still, very limited. We know about it, of course, but we are just beginning to know. And beginning also to articulate an idea of what the concept of humankind has meant through the rupture posed by Fascism. I take his comment as one not about the “impossibility” of knowledge, but as a powerful reminder of what we still don’t know. In a sense, everything remains open.

I keep Jean-Luc Nancy’s remark as a measure of how to explore a sense of the contemporary and in what way it articulates itself, for example, in/as language. Documents lay inert, generally. How can we sound the implications—one might say, the reverberations, even—of a fact such as a past document like NAFTA, signed in 1994? How do the living species all incorporated in an Agreement continue, still, to make meaning through it?

I’ve attempted to transfer into the text of the Agreement an instability equivalent to that which the document has put into place “outside” itself.

If everything remains open, the pressing diasporic reality of the hemisphere, forced exodus and displacement of meaning, can now be brought into the agreement and activated, as a migratory effect within the text.

If any, this project is an act of listening inside an act of writing. Instability alters projected trajectories. In this sense, Anti-Humboldt attempts to defer the capability of a purely instrumental language, so that only by increasing its opacity does it accomplish anything.

I think of A-H as a space of non-differentiation. Perhaps it is in such a space that we can listen closely to what emerges undifferentiated. And although they are reified by the language of the agreement, phenomena, animal and human life now populate the text in an afterlife, like ghosts in a sort of madness in which we might discern an afterlife, like ghosts in a sort of madness in which we might discern an afterlife, like ghosts in a sort of madness in which we might discern an afterlife.

This is then an act of listening inside an act of writing. Accepting that we do not know yet we are searching in the unintelligibility of the present, where the text invests itself of its alleged transparency. Far from the political as a “theme,” as when we assume that poetry “about”
it will bring us closer to it, I’ve tried to articulate constellations of words, a certain magnetization with no outside or inside, that is the political as I see it; as in the expression “political oxygen,” neither in the background nor at the forefront: such is its ubiquity.

**A Note on Process**

I began by working with the NAFTA document in Spanish (better known as TLC “Tratado de Libre Comercio”); it wasn’t long before I decided to continue with the text in English as well (in total, there’s three “official” versions of the Agreement, in French, English and Spanish, “representing” each country, Canada, US and Mexico. None of the three versions are word-by-word rendering of the other. Actually, each one claims to be “autonomous,” like in Article 2206, titled “Authentic Texts”, which reads: “The English, French and Spanish texts of this Agreement are equally authentic”). In both cases I had to read the text, seeking out passages or even words which, when isolated, might have the capacity to create links, and eventually establish surprising visual and sonic “constellations.” I say “visual” because certain words began to stand out extraordinarily. Something similar occurred sonically: when a constellation was read, it generated a certain tonality that gave the impression of liberating the words from the weight of “having to mean.” Obviously this effect was illusory, insofar as they could not (and should not) escape from the document of which they are a part. This aspect of the work was largely intuitive.

When I worked with the text in English, it was impossible not to be aware of my previous experience with the text in Spanish; I already had an idea of how to proceed, but I didn’t know how far the tonalities and repetitions that presented themselves in one language might or might not exist in the other language. For example, in one section of Chapter Seven, “AGRICULTURE AND SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES,” the strong resonance in Spanish of the phrase “cualquier uso de esta naturaleza” (“any use of this nature”) appeared in English simply as “any such use,” which does not share the same register, and—most importantly—lacks the key term “nature.” Immediately, “cualquier uso de esta naturaleza” echoed all over this section, unearthing, as it were, the other “usos” in the passage. Another example: “trademark of words” in the English document appears in Spanish as “marca de palabras” (literally “mark/trace of words”), which is more interesting, and clearly opened the document further toward possible semantic constellations.
I've been thinking a lot about a quote of Charles Olson's I first encountered many years ago, in a short review of a book about Billy the Kid, originally published in 1954 and reprinted in the 1967 edition of *Human Universe and Other Essays*:

It's this way. Here's this country with what accumulation it has—so many people having lived here a millennia. Which ought to mean (people being active, more or less) an amount, you'd figure, of things done, and said, more or less, as in other lands. And with some proportion of misery—for which read “reality,” if you will wait a minute and not take “misery” as anything more than a characterization of unrelied action or words. That is: what strikes one about the history of sd states, both as it has been converted into story and as there are those who are always looking for it to reappear as art—what has hit me, is, that it does stay, unrelied. And thus loses what it was before it damn well was history, what urgency or laziness or misery it was to those who said and did what they did. Any transposition which doesn't have it in an expenditure at least the equal of what was spent, diminishes what was spent. And this is loss, loss in the present, which is the only place where history has context.

What needs to be done to ease this pressure of loss, to relieve the past? One can't help but try to contextualize things through the present, through the immediate present. As I was thinking about that, I was considering a letter by Robert Duncan to Olson in 1963, May 9th I believe. It was one of the things in *The H.D. Book* in which Duncan outlined the idea of generations, writers belonging to certain worlds, worlds they were born into and those worlds having certain qualities or characteristics. He mentions a remark by Gertrude Stein in *The Making of Americans*, something to the effect that an American doesn't know what he or she is doing until they are about twenty-eight years old. Duncan agreed, saying he was twenty-eight when he wrote “Medieval Scenes.” Then it took him another two years to figure out whether he knew if...
he knew what he was doing. Which made him thirty. And so, I took twenty-eight to thirty as being this generational marker and began thinking from the present backwards about how one might contextualize Olson in the present. Getting at this context, looking at all the origins and erasures, has a lot to do with detecting shifts and transmissions between and across generations.

In a scene from one of my favorite movies, The Big Lebowski, by the Coen brothers—this film now has a whole subculture around it—two guys, played by John Goodman and Jeff Bridges, have a close friend who has just died of a heart attack. After having his body cremated, the friends are confronted with a problem. They have been given their friend’s ashes by the funeral home, but, unable to afford an urn, they buy a large coffee can instead. They decide to hold their own private service for him and are about to spread the ashes out over the Pacific Ocean. The character Goodman plays, Walter Sobchak, is a Vietnam vet who isn’t, let’s say, fully balanced:

WALTER SORCHAK (Goodman): …and as a surfer he explored the beaches of Southern California, from La Jolla to Leo Carrillo, and up to Pismo. He died, he died as so many young men of his generation before his time. And you took him, Lord, you took him, as you took so many bright flowering young men, at Khe Sanh, at Lon Doc, and Hill 364. These young men gave their lives, so Donny, Donny who loved bowling… And so, Theodore Donald Karabatsos, in accordance with what we think your dying wishes might well have been, we commit your final mortal remains to the bosom of the Pacific Ocean which you loved so well. Goodnight, Sweet Prince—

[Goodman opens the coffee can with Donny’s ashes in it; a wind blows towards them and the ashes fly away from the ocean and all over Goodman’s friend, the Dude, played by Jeff Bridges]

WALTER: Oh, shit, dude I’m sorry.

THE DUDE: Goddamnit Walter, fucking asshole.

WALTER: I’m sorry.

THE DUDE: It’s a fucking travesty with you, man. What was that shit about Vietnam? What the fuck does anything have to do with Vietnam? What the fuck are you talking about?

That’s what I wanted you to hear, that question: What does anything have to do with Vietnam? This is how I began to think generationally backwards.

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It takes us back to that extraordinary quote from George Bush Sr.’s inaugural before the first Gulf War: “The final lesson of Vietnam is first that no great nation can long afford to be sundered by a memory.” Going back further, there is a quote from the period right after Olson’s death, the early 1970s:

We were sent to Vietnam to kill communism but we found instead that we were killing women and children. We knew the saying “War is hell,” and we knew also that wars take their toll in civilian casualties. In Vietnam, though, the greatest soldiers in the world, better armed and better equipped than the opposition, unleashed the power of the greatest technology of the world against thatched huts and mud paths. In the process, we created a nation of refugees, bomb craters, amputees, orphans, widows and prostitutes and we gave new meaning to the words of the Roman historian Tacitus: “Where they made a desert they called it peace.” We wish that a merciful God could wipe away our own memories of that service as easily as this administration has wiped away their memories of us. But all that they have done and all they can do by this denial is to make more clear than ever our own determination to undertake one last mission. To search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbaric war, to pacify our own hearts, to conquer the hate and the fear that have driven this country these last ten years and more. So when thirty years from now…

That “thirty years from now” would be around 2001.

...Our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm or a face and small boys ask why, we will be able to say “Vietnam” and not mean a desert, not a filthy obscene memory, but mean instead the place where America finally turned, and where soldiers like us helped in the turning.

These are the words of John Kerry, speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 22nd 1971. One could look at this text and be amazed at the distance Kerry traveled in his rise to political power. But one could also see evidence of something else. If one looks at things in light of American politics and the precedent here of assassination and political blackmail—even holding the validity of the 2004 election results in abeyance—we might reconsider our perceptions of the Kerry campaign for the presidency against Bush Jr. Maybe the Democratic party didn’t want to inherit the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the economic mess just yet. Maybe the Democratic party didn’t want to win the election and didn’t want John Kerry to become president, given his political history. Maybe his previous experiences, as a Vietnam vet and through
investigations he initiated as a Senator, particularly the precursor to the Iran-Contra hearings, the Kerry Commission, and his subsequent investigations into the financing of terrorism, gave him access to structural knowledge. Kerry's staff was the one to first expose the illegal activities of Oliver North, uncovering the financial network behind the illegal transfer of arms to the Contras. After being denied a place on the official Congressional Iran-Contra Investigative Committee, Kerry exposed what the U.S. Senate ended up calling "one of the largest criminal enterprises in history." This enterprise, the Pakistan-based Bank of Credit and Commerce International, known as BCCI, was a model for international terrorist financing with deep roots in both parties and ties to senior and junior Bush administrations. But it was Kerry's decision to go after a major Democrat, Clark Clifford, implicated and indicted in the BCCI scandal, that would have marked Kerry as an enemy to his party. The deep politics of this are truly deep, as pointed out to me by Fred Dewey, since Kerry's attack on Clifford was also on one of the original architects of the national security state and the two-party fix. Given his history, maybe Kerry understood that winning put his life and family in danger. Given our history, these are plausible conjectures.

Kerry's formulation, from 1971, made me think about the enormous stakes in memory, where we place it, how we catalog it, where it goes and what happens to principles over time. We are living in a supposedly "post-modern" world. The characteristics of that supposed world are very unlike the characteristics of what I think Olson meant by that term when he used it in his letter to Robert Creeley in 1951. So I want to telescope us back to see where Olson and others might fit as a path not taken by this culture, as those who may have had their finger on the pulse of debates, of arguments and issues that have largely become non-debates, non-issues, false debates, false issues.

To put it another way, Olson and Duncan and others put their finger on matters that have become more and more important, however forgotten, buried, or unrelied they may be.

According to Robert Duncan, Olson's 1910 birth meant that he was born in a "pre-World-War-world." He writes that Olson was "initiated into childhood—learned to walk and talk 'before the war' the last possible member of a creative family that we now sketch as having its time from 1882-1914." Duncan then goes on to characterize, in this generational mapping, 1945-on, as "the state of War economy with the idea of world destruction." This echoes something Muriel Rukeyser said in the 1940s:

We are a people tending toward democracy at the level of hope; on another level, the economy of the nation, the empire of business within the republic, both include in their basic premise, the concept of perpetual warfare.

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This observation by Rukeyser was made a half century before the U.S. state openly and publicly described this as official doctrine. Rukeyser provides the link between Duncan and the poet and activist Devise Levertov, through a review of Duncan’s first book, Heavenly City, Earthly City, that caught Levertov's attention in 1948. It was Rukeyser who would accompany Levertov to Hanoi in 1972, when Levertov's relationship with Duncan was strained to the breaking point. The relationship of Duncan and Levertov, with their differences and debates revealed in nearly 500 letters exchanged between the poets from 1953 to 1988, can tell us a lot. The letters explore, as their co-editor Albert Gelpi writes, “how the imagination can and should address violence, how poetry can and should engage politics.” For Duncan, life and the practice of art were already politics: “I write as I do and live as I do not because these are ‘right’ but because I want this kind of living and writing to come into existence.”

What had been a life for Duncan, open homosexuality and a long domestic relationship with the artist Jess Collins, was being turned, by society, into a "lifestyle." For Levertov, “words” had “to be filled with, backed up by, imaginative experience,” something Duncan felt implied a reliance on “truth anterior or exterior to the realization of poetic form.” By contrast, for Levertov, commitment to “the movement” had nothing overtly to do with poetic form, while “taking on the burden of action,” as she says in New & Selected Essays, could be a source of “unforeseen blessings.” Duncan preferred to believe in what he called a “Robin Hood or guerrilla existence. Not for the future. But from the beginning of life.” That letter, from March 30, 1968, has Duncan taking Levertov to task for thinking that, in writer and social thinker Paul Goodman’s words, “We assume that the Americans do not really will the Vietnam War but are morally asleep and brainwashed.”

Robert Duncan’s companion Jess Collins, like Olson, was somebody who could have made a mark officially, participating at the highest levels of the country’s establishment. Jess was a chemist who, while in the military, worked on the establishment. Jess was a chemist who, while in the military, worked on the unrepresented crimes. There are those, even among those who feel Vietnam is a revelation of the evil, who think the carnage of Berlin, Dresden, Hamburg, Tokyo, Hiroshima ‘was in a good cause.’

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[This is] an assumption that I do not make in the face of half a century of living in America, of having American parents—I see the Vietnamese War (as I saw the Second World War) as a revelation of the truth of the potential evil of ‘America’—Blake, Hawthorne, Melville, Lawrence—Whitman in his ‘Eighteenth Presidency’... the Vietnamese War as a revelation of the truth of American Karma, what Commager called [sic] the consequences of the unacknowledged, unrepresented crimes. There are those, even among those who feel Vietnam is a revelation of the evil, who think the carnage of Berlin, Dresden, Hamburg, Tokyo, Hiroshima ‘was in a good cause.’
Manhattan Project and later at Hanford. He had a dream, I believe it was in 1946, that the world would be destroyed. He left his chemical engineering career behind and enrolled in art school.

Olson's case is even more revealing. He'd gone far as a child of immigrants, but he retained the consciousness of his class background very clearly. He went to Wesleyan University and at the age of twenty-two was already doing the kind of primary research that would establish his scholarly credentials in a field he would then begin to question and, eventually, leave behind. After pursuing research in the newly defined field of American civilization, Olson wrote in the 1930s about Melville. Olson's subsequent move into politics and his work under the Roosevelt administration was a very clear turn away from the academy, just as his turn away from party politics would signal an even more radical stance towards knowledge, history, experience, community, narrative, and form. In a letter to Van Wyck Brooks from Washington, dated 6 August 1945, Olson announces that the “Melville Book is finished.” This would be Call Me Ishmael. As Ralph Maud, the Olson scholar, points out, it was chronologically after the atomic bombs dropped on Japan that “Olson directed his attention to the cannibalism of the Essex story.... Olson told Ann Charters (who did pioneering scholarly work on Olson), that he wrote the introductory ‘First Fact’ on the ferry back from Nantucket on what was presumably Monday 20 August 1945.” The sentiments Olson began to express after the war, about political corruption and “the big lie” war had become, refering to the “big war” as a “defeat for the people,” were more apparent and visibly popular, that is, widely shared and in the open for the public, before the war than after it. With the Cold War looming, Olson, like Jess, chooses to move, to find a different vantage point from which to work.

It would be good to recall some of poet Bob Kaufman’s activities in this context. In a documentary radio show written and produced by David Henderson—poet, Jimi Hendrix biographer, and one of the founders of the Umbra Arts Workshop—brother George Kaufman recounts Bob’s experiences:

Bob and I lived together in New York when he was a seaman. I was a merchant seaman then too. He represented the National Maritime Union at conferences in London and France after the war. Then he got into politics. He was an area director for Henry Wallace’s [presidential] campaign in 1948. The Progressive Party [Bob] ran into some real problems. He was an area director in the wrong area and he ran into some real serious problems with the police forces definitely trying to see his point of view wouldn’t be heard in that area of the country. He was arrested many times, brutally beaten, thrown into jail cells with no heat and freezing conditions and kept there for a long time. But that never stopped him. He still had his own way of thinking.

Manhattan Project and later at Hanford. He had a dream, I believe it was in 1946, that the world would be destroyed. He left his chemical engineering career behind and enrolled in art school.

Olson’s case is even more revealing. He’d gone far as a child of immigrants, but he retained the consciousness of his class background very clearly. He went to Wesleyan University and at the age of twenty-two was already doing the kind of primary research that would establish his scholarly credentials in a field he would then begin to question and, eventually, leave behind. After pursuing research in the newly defined field of American civilization, Olson wrote in the 1930s about Melville. Olson’s subsequent move into politics and his work under the Roosevelt administration was a very clear turn away from the academy, just as his turn away from party politics would signal an even more radical stance towards knowledge, history, experience, community, narrative, and form. In a letter to Van Wyck Brooks from Washington, dated 6 August 1945, Olson announces that the “Melville Book is finished.” This would be Call Me Ishmael. As Ralph Maud, the Olson scholar, points out, it was chronologically after the atomic bombs dropped on Japan that “Olson directed his attention to the cannibalism of the Essex story.... Olson told Ann Charters (who did pioneering scholarly work on Olson), that he wrote the introductory ‘First Fact’ on the ferry back from Nantucket on what was presumably Monday 20 August 1945.” The sentiments Olson began to express after the war, about political corruption and “the big lie” war had become, refering to the “big war” as a “defeat for the people,” were more apparent and visibly popular, that is, widely shared and in the open for the public, before the war than after it. With the Cold War looming, Olson, like Jess, chooses to move, to find a different vantage point from which to work.

It would be good to recall some of poet Bob Kaufman’s activities in this context. In a documentary radio show written and produced by David Henderson—poet, Jimi Hendrix biographer, and one of the founders of the Umbra Arts Workshop—brother George Kaufman recounts Bob’s experiences:

Bob and I lived together in New York when he was a seaman. I was a merchant seaman then too. He represented the National Maritime Union at conferences in London and France after the war. Then he got into politics. He was an area director for Henry Wallace’s [presidential] campaign in 1948. The Progressive Party [Bob] ran into some real problems. He was an area director in the wrong area and he ran into some real serious problems with the police forces definitely trying to see his point of view wouldn’t be heard in that area of the country. He was arrested many times, brutally beaten, thrown into jail cells with no heat and freezing conditions and kept there for a long time. But that never stopped him. He still had his own way of thinking.
Bob Kaufman’s case, maintaining his “own way of thinking,” eventually entailed complete withdrawal in the form of a vow of silence taken after the assassination of JFK. He kept that vow until almost the end of the war in Vietnam. When I talk about Olson responding, turning away from this very real possibility of either becoming a very significant academic or person in Democratic party politics—he might have been offered the head of the Democratic National Committee or Postmaster General, the latter a classic patronage reward for good party service—it is to show that, for Olson, it was clear the world, and America’s role in it, were going a certain way and he was going in another direction, an alternative direction.

When, in “This Is Yeats Speaking,” Olson asks “what have you to help you hold in a single thought, reality and justice?,” he addresses this in its broadest possible terms—as a call for a new kind of ethics, a new kind of work based on new materials. He’s quite clear about the Cold War, what institutional affiliations in such a climate are about, what is happening, and where he has to go. He attempts to go across time, through place, by going to the Yucatan. He begins to research, and conceive of, culture in a holistic way, something that’s begun to return more recently, connecting archaeology and astronomy, anthropology, ecology, neurology, biology, and linguistics, relating these and looking at production and culture as being of a piece, as humanly connected. Olson’s conceptualization of these things anticipates the most advanced contemporary thought, theories linking genes to language and migration.

Olson went to the Yucatan to study the Maya at the same time he applied to get his Fulbright to go to Iraq. He was simultaneously fascinated with the Ancient Near East and the antiquity of the Ancient Near East. Olson was onto the fact antiquity itself has an antiquity. He was relating the case of North America and the “Old World.” Like Mesoamerica, Mesopotamia had an antiquity that you would have to go back to, to the Neolithic and Paleolithic, and you would have to look at it in a full sense, in relation to the pre-history of the Americas, to begin understanding anything. You had to go back, as broadly and concretely as possible. Clearly moving along Olson’s trajectory, poet, writer, and translator Clayton Eshleman has dedicated significant creative and intellectual energies to just this sort of inquiry in his Juniper Fuse: Upper Paleolithic Imagination & the Construction of the Underworld.

The concern with Pound, the interest in the antiquity of antiquity, awareness of the politics of knowledge, all these form a kind of pre-history to Olson’s taking up poetry. Olson had two personal relationships, two friendships that were very important to his awareness and consciousness about what took place in Europe during WWII. My dates and some of the details on all this may not be fully accurate, but I believe the first of these friendships involved Corrado
Cagli. Cagli was an Italian sculptor and painter and his sister Serena married an old Alcalay family friend, Mirko Basaldella, an Italian sculptor and painter. I remember Mirko from my childhood, impeccably dressed, a chain-smoker, able to sculpt out of any and all possible materials, making little figures of bulls out of tongue depressors when my brother or I were sick, masks made from the hoods of automobiles or monumental totems from bronze or driftwood. Cagli had apparently come to this country from Italy because his daughter, I believe, was studying here. In checking his biographical information, I found the following: in 1938, as racial laws were instituted in Italy, because of his Jewish origins, Cagli fled to Paris, then to New York, where he got a studio. In 1941 he became an American citizen and enlisted in the army. He was one of the people to enter, now as an American soldier, the Buchenwald concentration camp. He made a series of remarkable drawings of what he saw. One of Olson's most important poems, a poem that really marks the terms of where the human race is at the time, a poem I have cited often in my work, from 1946, is "La Préface." He would publish a chapbook with it and Cagli's drawings together. The poem refers both to what Cagli saw and to what another friend, Jacques Ribaud, a mathematician and French Resistance fighter experienced. Ribaud became close to Olson in that period. He had been interned in a camp and was the person who ended up weighing, as the poem notes, "80 lbs." This is "La Préface":

The dead in via
in vita nuova
in the way
You shall lament who know they are as tender as the horse is.
You, do not speak who know not.

"I will die about April 1st …" going off
"I weigh, I think, 80 lbs …" scratch
"My name is NO RACE" address
Buchenwald new Altamira cave
With a nail they drew the object of the hunt.

It was May, precise date, 1940. I had air my lungs could breathe.
He talked, via stones a stick sea rock a hand of earth.
It is now, precise, repeat. I talk of Bigmans organs
he, look, the lines! are polytopes.
And among the DPs—deathhead at the apex of the pyramid.

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he, look, the lines! are polytopes.
And among the DPs—deathhead at the apex of the pyramid.
Birth in the house is the One of Sticks, cunnus in the crotch.

Draw it thus: ( ) 1910 ( )

It is not obscure. We are the new born, and there are no flowers.

Document means there are no flowers and no parenthesis.

It is the radical, the root, he and I, two bodies
We put our hands to these dead.
The closed parenthesis reads: the dead bury the dead, and it is not very interesting.

Open, the figure stands at the door, horror his
and gone, possessed, o new Osiris, Odysseus ship.
He put the body there as well as they did whom he killed.

Mark that arm. It is no longer gun.

We are born not of the buried but these unburied dead
crossed stick, wire-led, Blake Underground

The Babe
the Howling Babe

I grew up with stories of both the lucky ones who landed in Italian DP camps and others who disappeared without a trace. The starkness and drama of this poem stuck with me from when I first encountered it as a teenager, even though at the time I couldn’t articulate why.

In a remarkable article called “Warlords of Atlantis: Chasing the Demon of Analogy in the America(s) of Lawrence, Artaud and Olson,” André Spears writes:

"La Préface" not only announces the start of Olson’s career as a poet, but also, in line with Artaud's continued work on the Tarahumara, the poem views humanity's radical, archaic commitment to the creative impulse as the most immediate means for contending with the midden of history.

In Juniper Fuse, Eshleman also points to “La Préface” as a marker, and specifically investigates the phrase “My name is NO RACE” address / Buchenwald new Altamira cave:

Olson's presentation of Buchenwald and Altamira (shadowed by Odysseus' response to the Cyclops' question), with space rather than a verb between
the two nouns, presents the reader with an overwhelming question: What do these two nouns have in common? The answer that I find suggests that the astonishing ancientness of the human creative impulse, which was discovered in this most inhuman century, may somehow offset total despair.

This is further articulated by Jed Rasula in *The American Poetry Wax Museum*:

Olson abandoned a budding political career for poetry in the aftermath of the atomic bomb and the disclosure of the Holocaust. But the appearance of the Collected Poems, edited by George Butterick (1987), made it clear that Olson turned to poetry as the most imaginatively expedient means of reckoning the cost, to the species, of such historical traumatization.

Spears describes Olson’s chapbook *Y & X*, from 1948, with Cagli’s drawings:

This collection, like Olson’s first major volume *In Cold Hell, In Thicket* (1953), opens with “La Préface” (“Buchenwald new altamira cave”), the poem that stands as the clearest instance of his writings’ ideological rootedness in the moral collapse of Western civilization after World War II... In addition, “La Préface” is the most succinct exposition of the archaeological scale by which Olson proposes to elaborate an enduring poetic response to the trauma of global warfare.

As Spears notes, Olson’s temporal scope never abandons specifics in the insistence that all human time connects:

As an “archaeologist of morning,” Olson is positioned to bring to his poetry the globalism and “post-modernism” of a Pleistocene perspective on history, from which he looks as far back as the discovery of fire and the invention of language to relocate humanity in the present.

Despite a severe language barrier, Olson’s encounter with Cagli proceeded through gesture and symbol. In this short poem, Olson was able to convey a profoundly human encounter and transfer of vital knowledge across what he once defined as the limitations any one of us is inside of. He did this through “a nail” drawing “the object of the hunt,” “via stones a stick... a hand of earth.”

My parents came from Belgrade and were refugees in WWII. They ended up in Italy where they were in hiding. My late father was a painter and he had his first exhibits in Rome right after that war, 1945–46. Then he ended up working as an art guide in the Vatican. And one of the people my father met in Rome was
society, which is this magazine—an independent community—then it has to
find and talk to because he realizes, through a poem by Ferrini he encountered in a
small magazine, that here’s maybe somebody he can talk to. This is occurring
as Olson is rethinking the nature of political life.

Ferrini is mentioned at a number of points in The Maximus Poems, and has
been consistently misrepresented as a secondary and transient interlocutor, as
if his labor, his publishing poetry since his debut No Smoke in 1941, his political
toughness and connection to the local fishing industry did not embody part of
a presence that Olson relied on. Olson’s thoughts are precise when he declares
Shore and Vincent Ferrini “the one brother and sister that I have.” This brings
us back to one of the reasons Olson settled in Gloucester. He felt he found, in
Vincent, a living connection to a possibility in American poetry and expression
that had been almost completely obliterated or forced underground. As Olson
saw it, Ferrini provided the key link between the activist, public poets of the
1930s and the “post-modern.” Of Italian immigrant background, Ferrini had
been a union organizer at General Electric during the Depression years, on
some very tough terrain, in Lynn, Massachusetts, then moved to Gloucester,
spending the rest of his life as a frame maker, poet, and activist in, and on behalf of, Gloucester. In light of this, it is important to note, for instance, that
at Black Mountain College, Olson urged one of his great students, Michael
Rumaker, to read Anzia Yezierska’s masterpiece Bread Givers, a forgotten book
that was later revived. He then convinced Rumaker he ought to write to her
and Rumaker, indeed, began to correspond with Yezierska. While much has
been made of Olson’s relationship to women, his allegiance to immigrant and
working class roots is seldom explored, particularly given that his three prize
students at Black Mountain, Rumaker, John Wieners, and Edward Dorn, all
came from working class backgrounds. Withdrawing into small societies, very small societies of peer groups, like
that in Gloucester, then the societies that get built up around little magazines
and presses and around Black Mountain—these are the acts that, as Olson put
it, “initiate another Kind of Nation.” In the early Maximus Poems there is this kind
of frontal attack on Ferrini and his magazine Four Winds. It’s a crucial matter
that has been taken out of context to obscure deeper ties. One of the things
that Olson is trying to say here is—if you’re going to have an independent
society, which is this magazine—an independent community—then it has to

sculptor and artist Mirko Basaldella, Cagli’s brother-in-law. When my parents
came to the United States, this thread somehow led my family, in the early
1950s, to Gloucester. We began to get involved with all these people who were
there. First, there was Mary Shore, an artist in Gloucester who later married
Vincent Ferrini, the poet to whom The Maximus Poems were addressed. Olson
had returned to Gloucester in the ‘40s, and Ferrini is somebody he goes to find
and talk to because he realizes, through a poem by Ferrini he encountered in a
small magazine, that here’s maybe somebody he can talk to. This is occurring
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society, which is this magazine—an independent community—then it has to
be as good as any other endeavor. I think at some point he compares it to a fishing vessel where everybody on your crew would have to be tested, you wouldn’t want to have somebody on that boat, on your crew, just because you heard they were good. That could be very dangerous. So Olson engages Ferrini. This is a key point about Olson’s endeavor, and about so many relationships that might appear contentious when taken out of context: he doesn’t ignore Ferrini but seeks him out and engages with him, on principles. The context that The Maximus Poems have been put in makes this hard to understand—the false assumption is that one needs all kinds of erudition in order to approach something, one needs to know this, that, and the other thing. It’s as if there were two strains of American poetry: those deriving from Pound—one needs all kinds of esoteric knowledge in order to even open their books—and those deriving from Williams—their work is vernacular and emotional. These origins and splits are posited so that everyone else becomes derivative or an imitator and can then be erased. Poets are not looked at in the complexity of their own historical or poetic experience, and experience that is the result of generational differences and allegiances. Poets become codified, in Robert Lowell’s terms, as part of either “the raw” or “the cooked” schools.

Rasula points out that “after 1960, when it was clear that Charles Olson could not be conveniently ignored, it became fashionable to dismiss or belittle him as a derivative poet, overly indebted to Pound and Williams.” Edward Bruner in his book Cold War Poetry, comments further on this:

What remained invisible to Lowell was Olson’s innovative return to bounded geography, for that in turn forced a recovery of the issue of civic welfare (the problem of the “polis”) as it was powerfully dramatized in the first three books: an interest in working-class values and history from down under, a no-nonsense revisionist approach to the founding of Massachusetts as a business venture and a deromanticized portrait of the sea as the ultimate dangerous working condition.

There’s that famous poem by Olson where he talks about walking by that “bad sculpture” of a fisherman at the shore in Gloucester and he writes: “no difference / when men come back.” All that is remembered is when they are lost at sea. It is helpful to read The Maximus Poems in light of the fact that work worth doing always entails risk. The price one might pay for making a mistake in dangerous working conditions becomes an example for Olson, just as the example of his father’s union activities and the price his father paid for them shape Olson’s intellectual ethics. Holding to an ethical standard, especially in building and maintaining a community is part of Olson’s engagement with be as good as any other endeavor. I think at some point he compares it to a fishing vessel where everybody on your crew would have to be tested, you wouldn’t want to have somebody on that boat, on your crew, just because you heard they were good. That could be very dangerous. So Olson engages Ferrini. This is a key point about Olson’s endeavor, and about so many relationships that might appear contentious when taken out of context: he doesn’t ignore Ferrini but seeks him out and engages with him, on principles. The context that The Maximus Poems have been put in makes this hard to understand—the false assumption is that one needs all kinds of erudition in order to approach something, one needs to know this, that, and the other thing. It’s as if there were two strains of American poetry: those deriving from Pound—one needs all kinds of esoteric knowledge in order to even open their books—and those deriving from Williams—their work is vernacular and emotional. These origins and splits are posited so that everyone else becomes derivative or an imitator and can then be erased. Poets are not looked at in the complexity of their own historical or poetic experience, and experience that is the result of generational differences and allegiances. Poets become codified, in Robert Lowell’s terms, as part of either “the raw” or “the cooked” schools.

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Ferrini at Four Winds or with poet and editor Cid Corman at Origin. It directly inspires the astonishing situation of a magazine like Yugen, edited by LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka and poet and writer Hettie Cohen/Jones, affirming the possibility of linking up the most vibrant but isolated and far-flung elements of thought and poetry throughout the country, with only a circulation of a few hundred copies.

To date these things generationally, and put oneself into such histories—my own ties to this world, through experiences and memories of going to Gloucester as a child, growing up around these journals and people—is essential to figure out how to take things off the shelf and put them back into the "polis," into the living context of a place and its location in a more collective, plural, geographical history. Olson was very clear about how all these things were being compressed and ruined at just the moment they were most needed—the things people needed to hold on to their experience and retain crucial independence. In the initial poem of The Maximus Poems, "I Maximus of Gloucester To You," he writes:

But that which matters, that which insists, that which will last, that! o my people, where shall you find it, how, where, where shall you listen when all is become billboards, when all, even silence, is spray-gunned?

The question of the commercial, of ownership, Olson’s insight of looking at Massachusetts as an enterprise of business and work, and the founding of the country as an enterprise, not having any romanticism about that, pays dividends as things go on. The idea of engaging in a small society, of engaging in the exactitude of that—this is an aspect of Olson that has not been fully examined or acknowledged. Olson set the tone for what would become these independent societies of small magazines. In Letters for Origin, his correspondence with Cid Corman, his initial letter is clear:

But take a look at any little magazine, take a look at the PNY issue starring Apollinaire. What happens? The oldest thing here in these States: backtrailing, colonialism, culture scratching!

Any such endeavor has to have its own integrity, its own reason for being, its own purpose, its own standards, and its own work, otherwise it’s not worth doing and can’t be tested. One can trace something like Origin, Ferrini’s Four Winds, Yugen, Diane di Prima’s Floating Bear, and so many other little magazines, to the growth of core principles in the underground press, to the growth of the idea of independence, of autonomy of thought, of means, of distribution.

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It is there that one can locate different kinds, different scales and activities of remembering and forgetting amidst the indices and life of public memory. It’s in these kinds of things that one can begin to make a case for Olson as a major force in American thought and culture after WWII. A lot of things that happened afterwards would be unimaginable without that presence, without that work that was taking place from the mid-’40s through the ’50s and begins to explode in the ’60s, in the mid-’60s and later ’60s—Olson’s research, his many friendships, his involvement in creating and sustaining crucial clusters of activity and attention.

The role of authority in all of these matters and how it is both formed and deformed is something Olson is very concerned with, especially how individuals, through the practice of an ethic, can temper the deformities, or not. I’ll leave the reviewer nameless, but in 1975, in the New York Times Book Review, there’s a piece on Volume III of The Maximus Poems, in the Grossman Viking/Compass edition, Seelye’s Charles Olson & Ezra Pound: An Encounter at St. Elizabeths, and The Post Office, Olson’s memoir of his father, published in Bolinas by Donald Allen’s Grey Fox Press. The piece fills a whole page. It gives an indication of how Olson was already being framed five years after his death, by someone ostensibly sympathetic to his work. This comes at a point when I think even someone like myself (around twenty at that time) figured, well, maybe a whole cadre of scholars will come along and embalm the poet and entomb him in some kind of academic dust. This didn’t happen—the few scholars who devoted themselves to Olson were unique and dedicated individuals. I’m thinking primarily of people like George Butterick and Ralph Maud, but also Ann Charters and Donald Allen very early on, Don Byrd, Charles Stein, Al Glover, Sherman Paul, Charles Boer, younger people like Benjamin Friedlander and others that I’m sure I’m leaving out, not to mention people like Ed Dorn, John Clarke, Duncan McNaughton, or Fred Wah, all of whom enacted Olson’s poetics and ethics in diverse ways, through independent scholarship. They didn’t do it out of any sense of careerism—quite the contrary, as the New York Times opinion of Olson makes clear. It is here that we can see that the paths not taken in the academy parallel those not taken in the culture and society generally. A major national paper codifies the general mechanics of how to handle Olson: he is defined as someone with great ambitions and a grand scheme but who is, on the whole, in the words of the New York Times, “a failure.” How this is done is clever. The operation undertaken is all about the arbitrary nature of authority, that is, authority with no, or arbitrary, standards—an issue Olson had faced frontally with the Pound case, in “This is Yeats Speaking.” With no overt and disclosed criteria for what might constitute a “success” or a “failure,” innuendo and the public and private spheres come into play, as if in

It is there that one can locate different kinds, different scales and activities of remembering and forgetting amidst the indices and life of public memory. It’s in these kinds of things that one can begin to make a case for Olson as a major force in American thought and culture after WWII. A lot of things that happened afterwards would be unimaginable without that presence, without that work that was taking place from the mid-’40s through the ’50s and begins to explode in the ’60s, in the mid-’60s and later ’60s—Olson’s research, his many friendships, his involvement in creating and sustaining crucial clusters of activity and attention.

The role of authority in all of these matters and how it is both formed and deformed is something Olson is very concerned with, especially how individuals, through the practice of an ethic, can temper the deformities, or not. I’ll leave the reviewer nameless, but in 1975, in the New York Times Book Review, there’s a piece on Volume III of The Maximus Poems, in the Grossman Viking/Compass edition, Seelye’s Charles Olson & Ezra Pound: An Encounter at St. Elizabeths, and The Post Office, Olson’s memoir of his father, published in Bolinas by Donald Allen’s Grey Fox Press. The piece fills a whole page. It gives an indication of how Olson was already being framed five years after his death, by someone ostensibly sympathetic to his work. This comes at a point when I think even someone like myself (around twenty at that time) figured, well, maybe a whole cadre of scholars will come along and embalm the poet and entomb him in some kind of academic dust. This didn’t happen—the few scholars who devoted themselves to Olson were unique and dedicated individuals. I’m thinking primarily of people like George Butterick and Ralph Maud, but also Ann Charters and Donald Allen very early on, Don Byrd, Charles Stein, Al Glover, Sherman Paul, Charles Boer, younger people like Benjamin Friedlander and others that I’m sure I’m leaving out, not to mention people like Ed Dorn, John Clarke, Duncan McNaughton, or Fred Wah, all of whom enacted Olson’s poetics and ethics in diverse ways, through independent scholarship. They didn’t do it out of any sense of careerism—quite the contrary, as the New York Times opinion of Olson makes clear. It is here that we can see that the paths not taken in the academy parallel those not taken in the culture and society generally. A major national paper codifies the general mechanics of how to handle Olson: he is defined as someone with great ambitions and a grand scheme but who is, on the whole, in the words of the New York Times, “a failure.” How this is done is clever. The operation undertaken is all about the arbitrary nature of authority, that is, authority with no, or arbitrary, standards—an issue Olson had faced frontally with the Pound case, in “This is Yeats Speaking.” With no overt and disclosed criteria for what might constitute a “success” or a “failure,” innuendo and the public and private spheres come into play, as if in
a secret trial based on evidence and criteria that never make it into the record
and are never stated.

The review opens with what, superficially, would seem to be praise:

For twenty years or more Charles Olson has been a cult figure in American
literature and a prophet of the Black Mountain poets…

To start with, these poets did not exist: there were no Black Mountain poets,
just poets who went to Black Mountain.

…even to their second, third and successive indistinguishable generations.

It is not enough to pull in one generation, we must tar them all as “indis-
tinguishable.”

It is a fact to my mind, it is also a misfortune both for the man, i.e.: this
posthumous reputation and for literature itself. We know what happens to cult
figures. When the bubble bursts it bursts completely and they go down into
academic oblivion. I hope this won’t happen with Olson. But I fear it may.

The definition of Olson, the enclosure of Olson as a cult figure, encodes him
at the outset as not being worthy of serious attention, much the way we are
asked to treat "conspiracy theorists." We are made to feel sympathetic with
the reviewer. He has a heart. He feels sorry for Olson, and so should we. We are
forced into joining him in the unpleasant task of literary execution. The paper
draws this conclusion: The Maximus Poems

...is a huge and truly angelic effort. It needs prolonged reading and extended
commentary. Here, all I can do is record my feeling that Olson succeeded only
in parts. The whole is a failure.

This business of killing through compliments is, indeed, a fine art. Through it,
the Neuw York Times, in a sense, sealed the official view of what this work, and
this poet, should and should not be considered as.

The Neuw York Times April 1, 2005 obituary of Robert Creeley—whose
friendship with Olson proved important and fruitful—bears this out, in the
choice of quotations and the inclusion of a critic of no literary standing as an
obligatory detractor—"There are two things to be said about Creeley’s poems,”
John Simon wrote. "They are short; they are not short enough.”

Such stratagems serve to buffer and neutralize the effect and importance
of our key poets as writers and thinkers, not so subtly disappearing vibrant
and critical history to maintain administrative control: “Robert Creeley... helped transform postwar American poetry by making it more conversational and emotionally direct.” The obituary then goes on to emphasize Creeley’s relationship to William Carlos Williams’s “vernacular style, casual diction and free-verse rhythms.” While couched in genteel terms, the analogue of this would be to extol a “natural sense of rhythm” in the work of Langston Hughes. How different if the reporter started: “Robert Creeley, following in the line of classic American poets and thinkers like Dickinson, Emerson, and Thoreau was one of the formulators of the concept of ‘post-modernity,’ a category that has come to mean something different from what he and fellow poet and thinker Charles Olson originally delineated in 1951.” Had such an obituary been written, I contend, we would be living in another country.
How I Became a Painter: A Didactic Poem

Wayne Koestenbaum

1.
O reader, hear me praise things abstract, artful, and abject.
Mies van der Rohe's unwaxed rear-end made me erect.
Porn? Poetry? Painting? Theory?
Nazi shame? Professorial anality?
Behold the didactic impulse in my unruly body.
Zsa Zsa Gabor still appears in the news frequently.

2.
I've spent the last five months painting—mostly acrylics.
A slide-rule-toting nerd attempts jazz licks.
For Madeline, Vertigo's Jimmy Stewart gives up Midge.
My mother leaves me crazy phone messages.
What Clytemnestra endures, Cassandra presages.
Hetty Sorrel kills her baby in Eliot's Adam Bede.
To alter fate, or to transmogrify duration, take speed.

Note
Performed on 18 February 2010, at COCO (Contemporary Concerns Kunstverein), Vienna, as part of the art exhibition "Six Conversation Pieces and a Didactic Poem," curated by Christian Kobald.
3.

Defamiliarization is modernism’s oldest trick.

Blanchot, whose clauses are molasses, shunned the camera.
Consider every body part, in porn, a utopic tessera.

Can’t words, post-Fluxus, behave as imageless paint smears?
Thomas Bernhard’s lungs were mortgages-in-arrears.

For Clash by Night (Fritz Lang), we took the subway to Canal.
Despite Courbet’s Origin (which Lacan bought!), genitals sans faces are banal.

4.

Couch-pillow buttons titillated Bernard Berenson.
To avoid sequential argument isn’t treason.

Libido’s uncorrected, incorrigible.
The sentence’s musical unit outfloats the dirigible.

Smudged lines describing hand jobs can’t be fixed.
I like colors straight from the tube, not mixed.

Not half my propositions will survive in Vienna.
Preferring red and orange, I scapegoat burnt sienna.

A stanza’s grid inculcates crafty parallelism.
Scriabin’s color-keyboard synesthesia “accessorizes” atheism.

My bleeding right thumb stained the bathroom light-switch.
I gobbled down (mistake) a duck paté sandwich.

Biting, I lost a molar on sticky toffee.
Fritz Lang’s The Big Heat ends with coffee.

His Ministry of Fear ends with cake.
Coffee and cake appear in Lang for sadism’s sake.
5. I broke concentration by writing an abject email.
Toward *Kitten with a Whip*, or any juvie trash, set sail.
I treasure D. H. Lawrence’s chthonic (anal?) prose for being inchoate.
"Forgive me!" I begged a sometime buttfucked poet.
Though hung, he’s hairless, and thus, for me, a nada.
Beneath surrealism, I hide a core covertly Dada.
After a month, we threw away the expensive bacon.
The dumb, the obtuse, and the colorful are my kins.
After I ran away, and returned, shamed, to our back stoop,
my father fixed me canned tomato soup.

6. The huge-cocked guy on the Marseilles bus wasn’t kind.
His chocolate cake relied on orange rind.
Like Highsmith’s Ripley, he lied, psychopathologically.
The grid, like the objet petit a, behaves illogically.
I invented three separate identities. All three wore thongs.
(An older man, my keeper, wore a leopard-spotted sarong.)
Thongs emphasized my unusually curvy cock.
We necked on the couch, like a heroic couplet, mostly mock.
Typing, eyes closed, I attain a state of quasi-trance.
In second grade, I changed my name to "Pierre," then "Lance."
My Gestalt therapist specialized in giving butt-pleasure.
A quarter note too much enjoyed exceeds its measure.
Teach me unpleasure, unlust—teach me to tolerate extinction. I use a palette knife to give the scarlet’s edge distinction.

Recidivist, I turn to yellow, red, purple, in place of sainted words. Dieter Roth’s use of sausage as Hegel is not absurd.

The Bauhaus taught that ecstasy could be practical. Klee’s Tunisian garden—oddly shaped particles—inaugurates an unpartitioned moodlessness. Abstract shapes divide aura into rivers, lakes: Loire, Loch Ness.

Klee liked miniatures whose borders weren’t stingy. His rhombuses are neither Palestinian nor Israeli.

In September, I decided to become a painter. I opted for acrylics, though oils are quaintier.

I bought a set of watercolors, and four brushes. Gloria Grahame specialized in playing lushes.

The next week, I bought five tubes of gouache. Schumann marked tempestuous passages “rasch.”

Debussy and Ravel are wrongly considered painterly. Susan Sontag’s hair, and her hauteur, posed as my fleur-de-lis.
9.

Quickly I stopped worrying about paint fume's toxicity.
I drank a thimbleful of crème de menthe in Mexico City.
I dreamt my car could drive only in reverse.
Fingers in anuses can dig up fossil fuels, or worse.
The loudmouth grocer had tardive dyskenisia.
I filmed my first nude scene in Southeast Asia.

10.

For each line, imagine a cock or ass or abstract grid.
For grid pointers, delve into Agnes Martin.
Fantasy: a Scot wears no undies beneath his tartan.
Decoration, obscenity, and autobiography combine in Schiele.
A goy bully, deriding my features, said "Hava nagillah."

11.

Right before I come, my balls feel stretched, elongated.
Don't deride nostalgia, anyone's Sehnsucht is complicated.
Desires complex as Gestalt described by Merleau-Ponty
drove Sophia Loren to marry Carlo Ponti.
Goat hair brushes are shockingly cheap. Aren't goats sacred?
A hungover savant's post-nasal drip tastes acrid.
I wax didactic to defend nostalgia.
Each paint square’s calisthenic overcomes neuralgia.

Acrylics accrete nuances—feather-stacked, like mille-feuilles
that fight, with dead Guy Hocquenghem, to liberate the fey.

Klee advised: befriend your paintbox, not some crap idea.
Blue, unlike a dog’s bark, is immune to onomatopoeia.

Unlike a senator, pink will never hog the floor.
Peace passages ripple more than Tolstoy’s war.

Predicates harden the edge of a poetic line.
Schumann heard a repeated “A,” and jumped into the Rhine.

A palette knife, combatting amorphousness, creates an edge.
Keats loved rivers because they were bordered by sedge.

A sentence, like a Tibetan bell, is a useful durational measurement.
Each porn body, catalogued, constitutes one increment.

Sentences, like genitals, candies, or blood cells, are monadic.
The skyscraper’s silver skin kills mental noise: abstraction’s anacoustic.

Paint rises a few millimeters off the canvas.
Though gay, I wasn’t bad at giving cunnilingus.

Critics should make art, or else shut up.
My coffee grinder, Krups, is not the Nazi Krupp.
Poetic fashion forbids first-person testimony. Go back in time to strip hunk-o-la Freddie Mercury.

Hardboiled eggwhites inspired Marcel Broodthaers. Hymen acquires value only when it tears.

If you're a fifteen-year-old with cleavage, hide it. Simple art conceals agendas maniacally intricate.

Today's the one-year anniversary of my mother's stroke. Eyes closed, I see, behind my lids, quinacridone pink smoke.

Wiener schnitzel's edges curl, like Aladdin shoes. Wagner sucked Wotan's balls. Fricka was a ruse.

White Aladdin shoes, on the Ile St. Louis, made my toes bleed. Blissfully blank words—and, but, the—sodomize Siegfried.

Ice creams abutting vanilla are nougat, tapioca, Clair de lune. Shove pitches together: seek microtones. Monody's my cocoon.

Scarlet, rose madder, vermillion: I preach similarity. To fight anxiety, Schoenberg invented atonality.
Squares crammed next to squares intoxicate—a smoked meerschaum. Aleksei Kruchenykh pursued shamanic beyond-sense Zaum.

Making art and getting stoned are kindred processes. Montgomery Clift’s chest—unseen onscreen—was (allegedly) a chimpanzee’s.

Hearing Art of the Fugue, high, I stroked a straight boy’s knee. Rock Hudson slept with Merv Griffin, who slept with Liberace.

Tyrone Power slept with Judy Garland, Lana Turner, and Errol Flynn. Cary Grant followed suit with Randolph Scott and Barbara Hutton.

I monoprint, for mimicry’s elixir, Sal Mineo’s face. Disordered garments—Parian rivulets—drape buxom Nike of Samothrace.

I pencil feeble lines on cotton duck or rag. Orgasm droplets accumulate on orange shag.

Glory hole disguises identity. Is that your cock, Herr Klimt? Bardot’s buttcrack appears, with Hölderlin’s Dichterberuf, in Contempt.

For three contagious years I was a cocaine snorter. Between granite pectorals, a declivity catches rainwater.
Five seconds divides into fifty thousand increments, said Roshi.

Heart palpitations. Racing thoughts. Rabid claquedenting. Trying to revise this poem in a hair salon is daunting.

Each day’s diaristic grid, like gouache, dries opaque. Praise the mad and the sick, advised Artaud and Blake.

Cocksucking’s spectral twins are monochromes by Blinky Palermo, as gesso, in tubs, not odorless, alludes to American Gigolo Crisco.

20. Devotion to art, like arson, poses risks.
Reflections in a Golden Eye: Liz’s gaze is not a basilik’s.

Fuck my didactic voice. Identity, a daffodil, dies. Medusa had it bad. Her consolation: mesmerize.

In an “ultimate” mood, I face cognition’s firing squad. Dostoevski, who worked as hard as Hesiod, felt death approach and then rescind its bite, like jaw-ruined Freud, whose Dad kowtowed to an anti-Semite.

21. Repeatedly I stick my fingers in clammy prepositional phrases. The moon, an overstuffed sentence, passes through phases.

My thumb finds a wet groove in the adjective’s glans. The German word for pervert shininess is Glanz.

A rectum speaks, not a North American poet. For tips on tactile monosyllables, tackle Beckett.
Some hairy guys smell like aged gruyère.
Walter Benjamin, no twink, I'd classify as bear.

Before the sun departs, the sky becomes Orangeade.
The Unconscious, dense as marquetry, snores in the whore's arcade.

Artists, swaddled in depersonalized trance,
produced Alhambra mosaics and Blaue Reiter faience.

Bach set up shop as erotic hypnotist, charging by the hour.
Raisins and pine nuts accompany Sicilian cauliflower.

Sal Mineo said, “I played a sympathetic Jewish boy.”
Baroque sexual fantasies link aristocracy and hoi polloi.

Sal’s last role was opposite Keir Dullea in P.S. Your Cat is Dead.
Imagine Keir’s hard-on, or any Nordic newlywed’s.

In David and Lisa, aphroscopic Keir hates human touch.
Fornophilic, I’d hogtie Keir to any Biedermeier hutch.

Neurotic stars, like metaphysical poems, reconcile opposites.
In Sal Mineo, perchance, an Ashkenazi aura meets a Shute’s.
Tesselations vibrate, lozenge-shaped, in Mondrian’s wet dream.
The fatter the milk, the less digestible its cream.

Disorient the eye. Don’t serve smoked duck breast warm.
I teach desire, abstraction, words, aesthetic form.

No one accuses Klee’s “In Memory of an All-Girl Band” of being agitprop.
He painted the window of Anna Wenne’s specialty lingerie shop.

Anna Wenne didn’t exist. I gave my sister a see-through nightie.
Klee called one watercolor, though abstract, "Anatomy of Aphrodite."

Postponed jouissance produces an Ad Reinhardt.
Eva Hesse called her work "nothing." My belly contradicts Descartes.

Rothko loved “taint”—highway between balls and ass.
I tuck a glossed Genesis between his cheeks’ crevasse.

Realists place eyes halfway between brow and chin.
Pallor, refined, rebuts brute noise: Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin.
26.

Mark Spitz, Munich: Jews look good in swimsuits.
Mary Tyler Moore praised my glutes.

I apologize for bourgeois allusions to American TV.
In Shirley Temple’s dimples lay my wish to be a lackey.

Watching Heidi, I fetishized 16mm film’s John-Cage-esque whirr.
Judgmental fathers forfeit limbs: Ironside’s Raymond Burr.

Projector’s thrum, flick-flack, gives clitoral tips on minutiae.
In samsara’s Nighttown, Mark Rothko becomes Marcia.

27.

When Fauré went deaf, his harmonies grew abstract.
Schiele tongued her clit inexactly, like an autodidact.

If orgasm says “da,” its prelude abstractly says “fort.”
Less propulsion, more wandering! Like Stephansdom’s spire, jut forth!

Late style: Joan Mitchell’s final paintings were her most purple.
In no extant photo does Bobby Sherman’s face have stubble.

28.

To postpone ejaculation, and to query Dasein, he gessoed a canvas.
Sling, a Vienna sexclub, has neither “perfumed drama queens” nor chiasmus.

Then he took out the garbage. Wilted lilacs. Coffee grounds. Razors.
Gertrude Stein called defecations and orgasms “Caesars.”

He postponed evacuation until high noon, despite doctor’s orders.
Feminine rhymes end with unstressed syllables: mushy borders.
These guys will pose, play with their butts, and jack off just for you.

Sinhala (Pali) script, like Josef Alber’s drypoint “Variants,” consists of curlicue.

At Boy Scouts campfire, we ate dehydrated beef stroganoff.

“All videos have cum scenes, unless it is stated that the model does not jack off.”

“Just click on a model’s name and see more about the video.”

For kowtowing to power, Brodsky denounced Yevtushenko.

“We use two cameras for a multi-angle, close-up exploration of each hairy jock.”

Klee’s “Analysis of Diverse Perversities,” ink and watercolor, apotheosizes gridlock.

Tony, on New York Straight Men dot com, has a “two-day load,” ready to shoot.

1912: Schiele, using watercolor and pencil, paints a brown-skirted prostitute and spreads his ass checks. His rentboy alias is “Tony Bay.”

A barcarolle abstractly denotes rocking motion in late Fauré.

Singing Cherubino’s aria, don’t stint staccato, crescendo, slur.

“Meet Billy! His friends nickname him ‘Billy Pelt’ because of his fur.”

“Tim is a ‘face sitter.’ He loves sitting on a warm face. He hails from Staten Island.”

1908: Kokoschka mechanically lithos three nude knaben, Giacometti-hardened.

Without forethought, the poem abruptly ended.

Thanks for concentrating, even when you felt offended.
Slips and Falls

Carley Moore

We stand in line underneath the coat hooks outside of our classroom—boys on one side of the wall, girls on the other. We’re waiting for our principal, Sister Frances, to release us for the day. She’ll do it with a nod. She rarely speaks to us, but we all know about the homemade wooden paddle she keeps on a hook near her desk. Tammy, my sometimes friend, shoves me on the small of my back, and I land hard on my knees. The marble floor is cold. “Cripple,” she says matter-of-factly. I look up at the half-inch red halo of dry skin around her lips. She has an obsessive-compulsive lip-licking habit, which no amount of Chap Stick can cure. “Your lips are chapped,” I say, extending a hand so that she’ll help me up.

I run in the gutter next to my best friend Michelle, who’s riding her bike on the sidewalk. I won’t ride my own bike because it has training wheels and I’m eight years old. It’s embarrassing. I want to keep up, so I dig in, but my left foot catches on a gutter seam. My head hits the curb on the way down and my bottom lip drags against the concrete. I see blue spots and a flash of fear on Michelle’s face that tells me there’s blood. Later, my father will pick the smallest bits of gravel out of my lip with tweezers.

I trip on the wooden railroad tie that serves as a planter in our front yard and hit my forehead on the pale blue metal of my mother’s used Plymouth. The tire leaves a track mark on my cheek. I decide this is a successful fall because there are no witnesses.

In my first year of graduate school I try to “prove,” in a paper for a Victorian literature course, that Jane Eyre was epileptic. I make a kind of catalogue of all the moments in which Jane faints, falls, or otherwise loses herself. My argument, although I’m sure it’s not clear, is that these moments—in the Red Room where Jane is punished for reading a book, and on the heath where she runs away from the knowledge of Rochester’s first wife Bertha—are ones in which Jane’s personhood is reconfigured.

I like “sick” characters—outcasts, sadsacks, and invalids—who use a fall or a swoon to change the direction of a narrative, grab for power, or make some bad shit stop.
My grandma falls and breaks her hip. My mother tells me she’s been doing “things she’s not supposed to do,” like “taking the Christmas ornaments off the tree,” and “walking out to get the mail.”

According to Atul Gawande, in his essay “How We Age Now,” each year about “350,000 Americans fall and break a hip. Of those, 40% end up in a nursing home, and 20% are never able to walk again.”

I hover in front of a long patch of ice. My father stands behind me and says, “She who hesitates is lost.” I resent his attempt to toughen me up, to make me enact what we both know is the inevitable.

I struggle to tell the difference between pity and interest. At a birthday party, I feel pity’s prickly presence. The girls, who are all two years older than me, are overly solicitous. One brings a glass of ginger ale to my lips even though my hands and arms work just fine.

On Valentine’s Day, an athletic girl in my class named Deidre gives me five Valentines because I am a “special person.”

I tell my mother that I won’t go to the mall anymore. I can’t take the staring and the long, slippery corridor that runs from JC Penney’s to Sears.

If I complain to my mother about the way people stare at me, she says, “They’re not staring.” Looking back, I wish my mother could have acknowledged my body as spectacle—seen it for what it was to others—freak show or point of interest, a spasmodic point on their horizon. I wish for the poet CA Conrad’s grandmother’s response, “Well of course they’re staring, we’re very interesting.”

I am making an art project with my daughter when I find an old package of Edward Gorey character stickers in my desk. I am delighted to see that there’s one of an old woman, a hag, who is bent over a cane, wearing a shawl. I realize that the quintessential image of the hag is of a woman who is stooped over but not yet fallen, breaking but not yet broken. The hag is in a state of perpetual fall. Free fall. Falling and yet standing. Falling while remaining upright.

I take out a book from the library on Jean-Martin Charcot, the French physician who many consider to be the father of neurology. During his lifetime, Charcot worked with hysterical girls, epileptics, and patients with Multiple Sclerosis.
Two things strike me—his early description of a hysterical girl, and the nude photos of female neurology patients that the authors—Goetz, Bounduelle, and Gelfand—include. Here is Charcot concluding his description of the hysterical patient, "But you must not forget, however, that it is a characteristic of hysterical subjects to exaggerate their phenomena, and they are more prone to do so when they think they are observed and admired." Here's the caption the authors attached to one of the photographs of a nude patient, "Patients were almost always photographed nude and the supporting props, in this case a pedestal and umbrella, were likely objects found in the work studio of Charcot's neurological service."

Doctors have observed and admired me because I was a puzzle. Does this make me prone to exaggeration? Preening? I feel Charcot's sexism here, or at the very least, his complicated relationship to his female hysterical patients. They perform for him, so that he may cure them.

I have the book open at a café, but I want to shut it. The photograph makes me queasy. The woman's body is bent by muscle rigidity, and her face is contorted to a grimace. But that's not what bothers me most—it's the nudity. The spectacle of the patient, exposed for science. It's the late 1800s. I wonder what it was like for this woman to strip for her doctor?

Is it shame or humiliation I feel when I look at this photo? In his book, *Humiliation*, Wayne Koestenbaum articulates the difference: "Humiliation is external, though it registers internally. Shame, on the other hand, can arise simply internally, without any reference to outside circumstances." Am I humiliated then by what I perceive to be this female patient's humiliation? Does this perception call forth my own past humiliations?

This photograph reminds me of being on display, and of knowing that for some doctors—like the one who fits me for leg braces—my nudity is of no consequence. I am specimen, object, and problem. Or maybe my nudity does matter to him.

After a slow climb, I reach the top of the staircase. I'm wearing slippers. My mother's left the vacuum at the top of the landing. I lose my footing and grab wildly for the railing. I miss it and get a hold of the vacuum instead, but it's no anchor. I slide backwards, taking the vacuum with me. I hear my limbs hit the wall. I close my eyes. I blame the slippers.

and Parkinson's. Two things strike me—his early description of a hysterical girl, and the nude photos of female neurology patients that the authors—Goetz, Bounduelle, and Gelfand—include. Here is Charcot concluding his description of the hysterical patient, "But you must not forget, however, that it is a characteristic of hysterical subjects to exaggerate their phenomena, and they are more prone to do so when they think they are observed and admired." Here's the caption the authors attached to one of the photographs of a nude patient, "Patients were almost always photographed nude and the supporting props, in this case a pedestal and umbrella, were likely objects found in the work studio of Charcot's neurological service."
I push a metal chair along the carpet of a classroom. I’m going to join my reading group. The book is Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing. I push too hard on the chair—in truth, I’m using it as a walker—and it catches on the carpet. It topples and I fall onto it. One of the legs of the chair hits me between my legs. My face rubs against the carpet. I pass out for maybe thirty seconds. When I wake up my teacher is carrying me to the nurse’s office. She’s sobbing. She thinks I’m having a seizure. She thinks I might die.

I stand on a riser. I’m wearing a green dress and white tights. I look down at my shoes—my scuffed brown oxfords. I will my feet to grip the riser tighter. We’re on the last song of the pageant, “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.” The stage lights are bright. The priest, who is playing the piano and smiling hard in our direction, is the last face I register. I hear the audience gasp as I go down.

My father, in an attempt to console me at bedtime, says, “Everybody falls. The real challenge is to do it well, so that you don’t get hurt.”

In my favorite two-part episode of Little House on the Prairie, Mary, who has gone blind and is sent away to a special school, rages against her new teacher and soon-to-be-husband Adam because he wants her to learn to be independent. I like the melodramatic back-and-forth between Mary and Adam about the nature of disability and platitudes about self-acceptance. I’m ten. I don’t see myself in Mary at all, but I find her anger and their chemistry intoxicating.

I go back and forth. I want a wheelchair because it will be easier. I can just sit there and people will drive me around. In this future vision of myself, I never imagine that I will use my own arms to move the chair. It doesn’t square with my ideas about invalids. But I don’t want a wheelchair because its presence will mean it’s true. I can’t walk. I’ve given up and so have my parents.

Pratfalls make me nervous. I can’t bear to watch The Three Stooges or The Marx Brothers because there’s too much falling, pushing, and shoving.

It’s late in the day. I manage to get out of the tub and dry myself off. I hear my parents and my brother watching TV down the hall. The volume is turned way up. I stumble to my bedroom and fling myself onto my bed. My mother’s laid out my pajamas for me. I’m to dress myself. It’s a test. One of the newer
ones—I’m to practice self-reliance. I’m Mary in Little House on the Prairie. I lay on the floor. My muscles are taut, on the verge of cramping. I can’t get my legs through the holes of the underwear. I try for ten minutes. I call to my mother. I want her to come in my room. I’m naked. She says, “Come here instead, we’re in the middle of this show.” I know three things at this moment: my parents are tired, when you’ve really fallen you have fewer choices about how to get back up, and that disease is in many moments pure spectacle.

I’m fascinated by the case studies in Oliver Sacks’s The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat. My favorite is “On the Level” because it’s about a Parkinson’s patient who has no idea that when he walks he tilts nearly twenty degrees to the left. He leans, but he doesn’t know it. Sacks observes that the patient maintains “his balance by the narrowest possible margin.” I’m interested in narrow margins. Maintaining. And the difficulty of knowing one’s own body in its deficit, deficient state.


I often look away when I see someone else fall. I carry around with me the traces of my own falls. I never learned to stay down, to linger, or to lie there. I always get up—too quickly sometimes, so I project onto the strangers I see fail my own desire to be left alone, invisible, unembarrassed, and free from the humiliation of continuously falling and of having a body that won’t stay upright. I know some would say it’s wrong not to help, callous even, but I can’t get past the notion that sometimes it’s a gift to fall alone, unseen, and invisible.

My daughter’s current favorite book is A Hole is To Dig by Ruth Kraus, which contains a series of silly, poetic definitions. My favorite page shows a little boy tripping over a rock. The accompanying text reads, “Oo! A rock is when you trip on it you should have watched where you were going.” We read this line together out loud, in a sing-song scoldy voice. I hear in our reading the playful, subconscious understanding that we’re not supposed to fall. We’re supposed to watch out for ourselves and remain standing.
What is a fall? Loss. Losing ground. The sure knowledge that gravity doesn’t care. A fall is loss of control, humiliation, and the pain of hitting the ground. To fall regularly and without provocation is to know that there is, in fact, no guarantee that we remain upright.

The Bible tells us that our default human position is fallen, but what if you physically enact that every day? What if you don’t believe in the Bible?

I mean to slip up, and lay myself bare.

I fall because I can’t help it. I fall to name the ground, the floor, the hallway, the sidewalk, and the corridor as fallen territory—as land that needs reclaiming.
whoever would constantly make distinctions erasing what ever was possible and creating less blatant statements than what was said before, such as using a knife as a screwdriver, or a letter opener as a wedge for an underdeveloped table, which had more to do with “not,” than “is,” or “is not” than “is not is,” the blessed and defiled, and or the oddball exemplar that would step away from bell curve weather news and remain unmentioned, but still whatever would go about a conversation even if no one hears. it was duty…

—kari edwards

In which pocket did I leave that “I” is “I” ever a thing to miss, a personage to mourn, if the “I” still lives in the physical body and is capable of re/articulation? If it desires mirrors? History? Or and then narrative sensibility.

—Akilah Oliver

I had a defining moment this spring on the toilet, looking at my library copy of Lesbian Words, an anthology of essays published in 1995. I wanted to rip off the coated LGBT sticker. But that would ruin the cover, I reasoned. It would take off the skin of gridded portraits. And the gone sticker wouldn’t undo the title, it would just undo the confirmation of placement in the stacks.

I noticed the word Lesbian seems a timepiece to put on the mantle of this strange electronic fireplace glowing with Queer as category.

I then walked into my room to hear on the radio that Kay Ryan won the 2011 Pulitzer Prize.

I am narrating these events as if happening one after another.

NPR tells the news with clips from an old interview, with no mention Ryan is a lesbian. If there is nothing about being a dyke in her poetry then should the word lesbian be uttered? Is Kay Ryan making history as the first out lesbian Poet Laureate with a Pulitzer Prize, or is this actively not being treated as history?

I hear a megaphone, or almost silence, which maneuvers itself as a vague opposite of a megaphone.

I started collecting “queer art,” the utterance, in late 2010. I felt pricked by this “queer art,” which is all over the place: in group show titles, dance
The term “queer art” is both persisting and failing at a rapid pace, and for multiple reasons. Mostly the anti-definition catchall capability of the word “queer” sets the stage. For instance, I am resistant to a dead on defining of the word. Different queernesses float up here, and more specific identifiers inside of the “LGBTQ” acronym come in to sharper focus. I am working backwards, piecing together scraps. There is a sort of pact, in the word queer, anyway, to resist the task of definition. I am identifying with it, but also varying from it, throwing back to lesbian, or dyke. I pluck and examine. I am inconsistent. As important as it is to identify a gender or sexuality, so is it to name my race, my white privilege. My excellent education privilege. Being Jewish, whatever that means. The identifiers don’t exactly end. Being gender queer or a dyke or both collapses in this long exhale where it’s not important that I know the answer to a question someone is always asking.

This Fall, I saw Laurie Weeks read at the San Francisco RADAR series that explicitly labels and promotes itself as queer, in a complicated mix of productively funding artists and fixating a social group. I go buy Weeks’ debut novel Zipper Mouth and find I am distracted by Michelle Tea’s blurb on the back, Eileen Myles’ on the front. This is queer marketing at work.

I then admit to myself, I am that market. I buy Zipper Mouth because I am hungry for books by dykes, books about dykes, books I’m hoping won’t be disappointing, as that. I want the dyke in that whole sentence to become invisible, and it just be a book. But I put the dyke in because the straight world is almost unbearable. Even the ads on the subway seem to attack. I struggle through Weeks’ crush on straight best friend plot line while looking at the ads on the subway. It’s like reading about a wound to produce the gag reflex. But I like it, in a necessary way, to banish the best friend crushes of my past through hating hers, being so unsympathetic to Weeks’ narrator.

There are so many covers, and some are not so discreet as Weeks’ Feminist Press book. There is one cover that I’ve just come across recently, on The Wild Creatures: Collected Stories of Sam D’Allesandro, you’ll find in a small font size the words Gay Fiction.
And then in a blurb Alvin Orloff writes: This is what queer literature looks like freed from pretension and banality.

Orloff leaks a common sentiment that assumes the worst from writers who are queer: that the struggle as a queer person story filled with sappiness is going to populate the pages. This is opposed to a story that might have some coming out, some reports of homophobia, or gender discrimination inside it.

Bios and blurbing are exterior modes of promotion that give the reader what they want, but also what they don’t want. Promotion is practical, with a dark side. The exterior of a book ideally holds information that is as desirable as foreplay might be in order to know if this will be a good fuck or not. You think you can tell by how someone shoves their tongue in your mouth. You think you can tell from their breath.

To call something “queer literature” as an exception to a bad typecast, sirens alarm, as does using the adjective “queer” to relentlessly describe work. It is certainly not the familiar silencing alarm in uncovering internalized homophobia, or societal homophobia.

The shit talking on “queer literature” embedded in Orloff’s mere blurb is a weird problem. But it’s a good one. Let’s criticize things that are “queer”! But let’s question it on a language level—we could replace “queer” with another problematic label—even the word “literature” seems wrong as a way to describe work: that’s a mass-produced time capsule to give you the feeling of culture.

If I imagine where Orloff’s criticism is pointed, I would pick a book like Michelle Tea’s Valencia, the second edition, where Seal Press stamps: A fast-paced account of one girl’s search for love and high times in the dyke world of San Francisco in the 1990s. They might as well be selling a hoody a sweatshirt akin to Provincetown Cape Cod souvenirs. But isn’t this the story of all publicity—that it will reduce its subject to a cringe-inducing cliché? “Queer literature” is clearly not exempt from any sales pitch, yet should it be more or less shocking?

As with Laurie Weeks’ blurbage, if the word queer doesn’t get a peep on the covers of a book, one could play a constellation game in the thank yous, or the knowable/unknowable/self-identified queerness of the blurb writers. Maggie Nelson’s most recent book The Art of Cruelty, is called Cultural Studies, thanks to Norton. Nelson writes about plenty of artists who happen to be queer and about art from a feminist perspective. But what makes The Art Of Cruelty distinctively not “queer art” or “feminist criticism” is the marketing. Is it because it also discusses straight artists? It is a clear fact that the actual identity of the subjects does not make a writing on them “queer,” anything can be interpreted as and argued for being “queer.”

Anyway, I can gather Nelson maybe identifies as queer because of her book’s Thank You page. Thank you Michelle Tea, and your arts organization for...
taking me on a writer’s retreat. Thank you Harry Dodge, a very out trans artist, for being my lover. So it is certainly not hidden biographical information, but also not publicized. What does it mean to be surrounded by “queers” but not be labeled as queer? Is this some fucked up form of protection? Of privilege? Or is Nelson enacting the freedom of segregation in the marketing of writing?

Going back in time, to the biography on the back of Aaron Shurin’s 2000 book A Door, I find out about how Shurin was: Nationally recognized for his recent collection of essays, Unbound: A Book of AIDS (1997), and how Shurin was well known among post-Stonewall gay writers before he achieved his current standing in the American poetry community and his work is considered pivotal within the traditions of both gay writing and innovative poetry.

There is something sinister about announcing a work uniting divided communities of writers and readers, by sexuality, by issue, by style. There is something unforgivable in treating the gay community as just one step on a ladder that takes Shurin to actual “poetry community” legitimization.

Treating gay art communities like some sort of preschool, like a writer should graduate from those by not having any label on their book, is terribly common. I turn to Renee Gladman’s book covers, which do not mention her being a queer woman. The constellation of her blurbage points more to feminists and black writers. The closest to lesbian visibility we get is Gail Scott’s blurb on Newcomer Can’t Swim, which mentions the juicy event of two women making love in a restaurant’s bathroom.

I think the writer Gail Scott is a dyke. What is my agenda, or is this not about agendas, something pre-agenda, like a poetics can have a coming out too. I ask myself the question as I read her blurb, are you a dyke? I read her book Heroine. I think I figure it out. I borrow Heroine from a dyke.

A friend once mournfully told me a whole semester of their Queer Poetics class was taken up with discussions going through that same ping pong I went through with Heroine. She felt that conversation was treading water, as futile energy to pass a swim test. She wanted deep sea diving. It wasn’t quite gossip, but it was also a diversion from a certain expanse of textual readings. It was in a way disrespecting the text. Getting sidetracked perhaps because of some lack. I am interested in the crucial difference between the marketing of queer, and the mentioning of it.

I know I wouldn’t want “queer” placed on the cover of my book as a category, or in the title, sending it to the LGBT section, but I wouldn’t mind at all if queerness, as the adjective, as the noun, whatever, was mentioned in a blur, in the bio, anywhere else.

On the surface, I don’t have “queer content” in my poetry. When I perform, I look queer, and what I write about is inevitably from a queer perspective, taking me on a writer’s retreat. Thank you Harry Dodge, a very out trans artist, for being my lover. So it is certainly not hidden biographical information, but also not publicized. What does it mean to be surrounded by “queers” but not be labeled as queer? Is this some fucked up form of protection? Of privilege? Or is Nelson enacting the freedom of segregation in the marketing of writing?

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On the surface, I don’t have “queer content” in my poetry. When I perform, I look queer, and what I write about is inevitably from a queer perspective,
including content related to photographs a queer person might encounter and react to. But no one has ever labeled my work “queer art.” I have never written a bio to say, “I’m a queer artist.”

We shouldn’t ask which writers are homosexual, but rather, what it is about a great writer—even if he’s, in fact, heterosexual—that is homosexual. (Felix Guattari)

My concern is that using “queer art” has become a dangerously limiting device to talk about art. It doesn’t seem like a real space to be inside of—or outside of. It is at first this necessary way to claim a minority space and then what is it?

How can we have the non-labeled, non-separated artist who is still valued for their variable positions in this world? Somewhere between the expected and the projected and the implicit and the explicit. I don’t want to argue with the existence of “queer art” as a label, but I don’t want to accept it either. There is something underneath a language not feeling right.

AA Bronson curated “Queer Cinema from the Collection: Today and Yesterday” in March 2011 at MOMA. He posted the program notes on his Facebook page. It took an hour and fourteen minutes for Barbara Hammer to ask, Why are all the filmmakers in your curatorial program men? AA Bronson replies to the brewing controversy: I am a man, so I only curated men. I propose that they should ask a woman to curate women. Which provoked the response from Ree Dykeulous: OWN yr separatism and misogyny! Butt no cawllin it queer… otherwise it’s a tad riDICKulous. The conclusion from the watchdogs, and Bronson alike, is that the film screening had a misnomer. The series should have been called gay guys, or something, but it was too late to change the press materials. And “queer” was clearly chosen because it is mod right now; it been called gay guys, or something, but it was too late to change the press materials. And “queer” was clearly chosen because it is mod right now; it is the now. The commenters on the Facebook wall seemed amenable to further “conversation” on the underlying issue of women being fairly represented inside “queer.” But there was also this infuriating post: “Can’t we all just get along?” I haven’t heard of an event organized to talk about the issue. But I’m also not on Facebook.

Counting how many people of a certain gender/ethnicity/sexuality/class/ability there are inside a group of represented people is essential, however riddled with defensiveness and defining difference. What is the purpose of a club queer? In the slight field of sexuality inside whatever constitutes queerness for whatever moment, counting is a social tactic of figuring out who it’s good to have a crush on and who it’s not good to have a crush on. This sounds primal, and impossible to have as deep ripples as curatorial strategies, but it does. It’s a protection and reaction against rejection. More broadly, outside of sexual attraction, there is also the signaling of who you can become vulnerable to; there is the yearning for friendship among people with similar
experiences of the world. It’s a common impulse of a group of people who feel few Minorities are always counting.

The Bay Area poet Ted Rees wrote to me about a reading he once gave with Kevin Killian at Sara Larsen and David Brazil’s curated reading series that got relocated to Rees’ house for that night, where Rees reported that most (if not all) of the writers who showed up were queers... But I also wondered why a lot of straight poets and writers didn’t show. Is it possible that community lines can get drawn around sexuality in implicit ways?

I look at the Dia Contemporary Poets Series to see Eileen Myles was billed with Stacy Szymaszek. They have directing the Poetry Project in common but also being dykes. But their work? I don’t get the connection. Sexuality is treated as a theme by curators, visibly and invisibly. I think about The (New) Reading Series at 21 Grand that in the past five years have billed Carol Mirkove and Robert Glück; Mina Pam Dick and Evan Kennedy; Julian Talamantez Brolaski and Kathryn L pringle.

What is the context work is delivered in? Who decides context? When is it self-determined? When interviewing artists who identify as queer, this was my primary question and I found an increasing frustration with the practice.

I asked the publisher and photographer Amos Mac. How do explicitly queer themes for organizations, shows, and publications affect your experience of the work therein?

I feel that if an event is “queer themed” I have more of a chance to show my work there/ be invited to be a part of the event. But at the same time it almost feels “too easy” a route to stick to, and while I am very grateful for queer events, I’m quite ready to be appreciated and noticed for my work by people/organizations/galleries outside of the queer community too.

I ask the performance artist and filmmaker Zackary Drucker. How would you describe the role of queerness as content and then queerness as form in your work?

My work is not so much about queer sexuality as much as it is about gender performativity—so I see it as connected but maybe not the primary thing functioning in my work. Sometimes it seems like queer-themed shows are a bit of a catch-all, and a few times I’ve felt tokenized as a trans-woman in a pool of mostly gay men. If “queer” includes too many fags I’m not interested—my kind of queer is as a translady and a feminist, and I generally feel much more connected (historically and personally) to queer women & transpeople.

I ask the artist Paul Mpagi Sepuya. Can you map the support for your work from a queer arts community as opposed to just an arts community?

Almost 100% of the support of my work as I began making portraits came from the queer arts community. Making my own zines, 2005-2007, led to the inclusion of my work in many other collaborative queer zine projects and publications... I began experiences of the world. It’s a common impulse of a group of people who feel few Minorities are always counting.

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showing in group shows; gay subject matter and queer community was the central curatorial focus of all of the shows I participated in. Printed Matter... was a VERY queer-friendly institution and played a very large role in getting my work exposure. Over the past few years, as vital as the initial support was, I began to feel a bit suffocated by a single note that seemed to get played over and over again. I want my work to be engaged from formal, methodological, and other angles equally with its queer foundations and am consciously trying to push my exposure and involvement in future shows in that direction.

**Insistent Geography of Disorientation**

In this country, we take our identity from how it feels when we come... In that country they despise the body because it gets you sex but more often it doesn’t just controls you sends you to words

— Jocelyn Saidenberg & Robert Glück

I ordered the Queer Voice catalogue in anticipation for the 2010 show at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. The senior curator, Ingrid Schaffer, was seeking to foreground voice as a material in contemporary art, in particular a queer voice—one that signals a disengagement both with gender norms and with everyday conventions of communication. She writes this in a form letter, reproduced as the first page of the catalogue, to an unknown list of solicited writers.

The queer voice is a refusal of the safe distance of irony—a willingness to admit your vulnerability and to be moved deeply by the silliest of objects, to spoof and adore in the same breath. (Dodie Bellamy)

Bellamy writes for the catalogue as a response to Schaffer’s call for “the queer voice” as if blowing a conch shell to rally the settled population who have accepted being lost on an island and have lived there now, for many years.

The catalogue is in black and white and perfect bound. It’s the size and style of a course reader with a roughness to the touch. I almost want to discredit the exhibition Queer Voice for including Andy Warhol. It’s getting to be a bit like Shakespeare in an immovable curriculum.

Anthologies and group shows are not going anywhere. They are one of the most likely targets for when art is described as queer, yet often the art is being described as such just to serve the purpose of a group show or an anthology. Anthologies continue to create huge problems; they are inevitably vulnerable creations, riddled with compromise and representative of exclusion typical to the labeling that “queer art” enacts. I am interested in anthology formats

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that don’t choose essentializing candidates and bypass the traps that even successful anthologies fall into.

Harmony Hammond, in the introduction to her anthology Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History, published in 2000, goes through a painful process of justifying the project.

Why write a book devoted to lesbian art, whatever its definitions? Because images of lesbians by lesbians remain almost completely absent from the dominant history of Western Art. Lesbians still lack a historical context for their work.13

Why justify?

Iterating this statement more fully is the intimate, tender, and terrifying dedication in Lesbian Art: to those women who dare to be lesbians and dare to be artists. At the end of the anthology's introduction is Hammond's own coming out story and the ultimate disclaimer that her selections are highly subjective.

I discover the stamp on the inside cover: "Gay Collection" in the imprint style of due dates. Defense and regroup. Tactics of survival.

The words lesbian or gay have had the spotlight in history, and now shows and anthologies are embracing the new politically correct or popular identifier of "queer." But for the word trans, there is some rightful new frontier to claim: there is the question of firsts. As TC Tolbert and Tim Peterson (Trace) point out in their Fall 2011 call for work for a trans and gender queer poetry anthology: this will be the first Trans and Genderqueer Poetry Anthology.

I’m interested in this call for work that the poets Jen Benka and Carol Mirakove made in 2008 for their GenXX anthology:

As admirers of your work, we are writing in hopes that you’ll be a part of Generation XX, an anthology we are editing of poems, stories, essays, and comics by lesbians who were born between 1965 and 1981. In the book we want to collect the most provocative and anthologies are embracing the new politically correct or popular identifier of "queer." But for the word trans, there is some rightful new frontier to claim: there is the question of firsts. As TC Tolbert and Tim Peterson (Trace) point out in their Fall 2011 call for work for a trans and gender queer poetry anthology: this will be the first Trans and Genderqueer Poetry Anthology.

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They edited their responses down to 8 writers and artists to pitch to publishers who are queer or have a history or mission of publishing LGBT work. One publisher said a lesbian anthology would only sell if you tailor it to The L Word crowd. Memoirs are selling. Write a memoir. When interviewing Benka and Mirakove, I was overwhelmed with the impression that in the year 2008, an anthology with a focus on lesbians was deemed the most undesirable thing on the publishing market. This is sad. Their project was so fraught that the call for work even generated a controversial response from women who did not want to be associated with a lesbian anthology if they identified as
biseux or queer. Is it the fear of association, or the inaccuracy of the word lesbian held against a more various experience? Their anthology did not find a publisher, and that puts an ambiguous mark on the project, though it doesn’t make it seem finished—the work of this anthology.

I wonder if a more clustered set of ephemera has been doing the nuisance taming and nutrient feeding that anthologies are thought to do. Like Room for Cream (RFC), a live lesbian soap opera that ran from 2008 through 2010 at La Mama theater in New York.14 RFC was an alternative to an anthology because it employed people in the moment to enter a community or to become more present in one. It had a cult following. Recently I listened to a director mourn the fact that someone at a bigger venue didn’t pick it up and produce it. The cast lists for RFC shows were amazingly long, but a core group of writers alternated serial style, producing the scripts. There’s a coffee shop, a sex shop and a university, among other things, in an all-lesbian town called Sappho, somewhere in the Berkshires. Some recaps of Season One:

Robbie suffers from symptoms of post-traumatic stress after being kidnapped by a deranged straight couple...The Bearded Goat, a local organic dairy farm owned and operated by transmen, is served an eviction notice. Lacey attempts to cast a love spell on Dire with the help of Grace, but her plans backfire when Dire falls for Julie...Ellie is shaken when lost love Tahira re-surfaces as a man...The Cream crew mourns the recently slain Jill...The gang heads off to the woods in hopes of finding Bailey who has been kidnapped by vampires...To celebrate a return to normalcy in Sappho, Robbie decides to host an open mic night at Cream, Dire confesses that she misses her mother...

It was after Room for Cream’s run, which I missed all but one episode of. I was visiting New York and went to the 2011 Invisible-Exports gallery Ridkyulous show “The Hurtful Healer: The Correspondence Issue” was a mini dry erase board (designed for to-do lists) where Eileen Myles scribbled, to the tune of the collective’s signature blood fingerprint: Dear Ridkyulous: Today I’m just pissed I have to think about your fucking show! The exhibit does not have the word lesbian in the title: Ridkyulous the art group itself masters the irony/commentary divide by embedding but morphing a label economy. A compact mirror of holograms.

Ridkyulous’ anger was making its teeth mold impression by cutting my gums. This show mocked the yearning of epistolary, focusing more on the hate mail emotion of letters as the formal principal. Zoe Leonard’s classic letter that begins I want a dyke for president has led me to a place of fantasy.

Ridkyulous has been taking a crap on Guerilla Girls’ feminism—even making it for sale at Invisible Exports as a t-shirt for $20 and a screen-print for $75. Hanging was their vandalized but still recognizable Guerilla Girls classic
poster The Advantages of Being A Woman Artist that lists, in high irony, all the disadvantages, like Not having to be in shows with men or Not being stuck in a tenured track position.

Of course the Guerrilla Girls’ poster is way too straight. Thick cross outs and margin scribbles perform the anger that’s funny/not funny of Ridykeulous plus the level of intimacy and rupture between lesbianism and feminism. And ta-da: The Advantages of Being a Lesbian Artist, reads, Working without the pressure of sucking dick, Seeing your face live in the pussy of others. And then a sort of opus or collapse in Fuck You, which stands near a whole line that gets crossed out to the point of illegibility, with no effort to replace it with more subtlety. It’s part punk, part Valerie Solanas, and part Eileen Myles’ essay “Everyday Barf.”

For The Kitchen’s 2007 “Evening with Ridykeulous,” the promotional materials follow this suit of mess-hall food fight:

Founded by artists A.L. Steiner and Nicole Eisenman, Ridykeulous is a collaborative effort to capsize, contaminate, corrupt, debase, deprave, destroy, degrade, deplore, despise, destroy, extinguish, invalidate, invert, level, overturn, overturn, pervert, poison, rape, reverse, ruin, sabotage, supercede, supplant, suppress, topple, undermine, upset, vitiate, and wreck the language commonly used to define Feminist or Lesbian art. Borrowing heavily from subversion, Ridykeulous aims to distill a cultural moment or tap into the blood and guts of an underground movement.

Rage is a necessary trope in art inevitably containing some strain of a minority perspective. Ridykeulous masters rage as presenting its self-defeating prophecy, a blast of a foul play sport horn. I want to watch the horn like I would most channels on TV: muted. Can you mute rage? Can rage be mute’s sidekick? Similar to the coming out story, the rage of the radical often gets the spotlight. I want the radical to stay, but not be treated as the lead in the play just because they are the loudest or wear the brightest clothes. Rage is as much a trope of “queer art” as sex is another high-risk zone for work not getting taken seriously. Much categorizing deserves un-categorizing.

Ridykeulous does rage with humor, by playing with the idea of a pack of angry women. Their secret weapon at times feels questionable. As the magazine Girls Like Us does, they build armor out of their self-made coolness. They come with their own self-sufficient trust fall team. There is always a posse and they are always hot.

The lonely misfit lesbian is also a trope, but not one that gets much attention. One that we wait for to die, and then glorify, with their torment or invisibility too unglamorous to touch.

This year I watched Cheryl Dunye’s Watermelon Woman, which is from 1996. Dunye herself plays “Cheryl,” a young filmmaker who works in a video store where she can pick up women and rent VHS tapes to research a 1930s actress.
a fictional Fae Richards, whom she discovers as a lesbian though with little to no recognition due to her stereotyped “mammy” roles. Dunye slips into the credits. Sometimes you have to create your own history. The Watermelon Woman is fiction.

I was provoked throughout Watermelon Woman by the characters of Cheryl and her best friend Tamara as they bicker, and really fight, about artistic aspirations, porn, who to sleep with, and biracial dating. Their fighting is one trope of the film, filled with overacted frustration. Watermelon Woman marketed itself as about a 20-something black lesbian struggling to make a documentary… Her interactions with the gay and black communities are subject to the comic yet biting criticism of her best friend Tamara.

This unresolved subplot was more than a small and tight friendship fissure. The film most importantly dissents on the desire to typecast, to assume. By presenting two gay black women, Dunye pushes against those labels with their relentless disagreements. Dunye hashes out the “queer art” problem as it mediates difference, laying out the traps and the obscurities labeling manifests. What Tamara and Cheryl disagree about enters a realm of slapstick; it is a form that overshadows the content, but also serves, along with the video diaries interjected throughout, to convey ways that Cheryl (both the character and, we presume, the filmmaker) feels unsupported in making the film. In the meta-video journals where Cheryl tells all about the struggle to make the documentary on Fae Richards, we get a view into how the character—and perhaps Dunye too—was constantly in doubt. While trying to place herself within history and make her first film, Cheryl gets criticized inside the film for both exploiting her resources and indulging in an introspective subject.

Dunye’s video journals hit on how it is much harder to be out or to actualize a queerness, as distinct from simply being alone, unpartnered. Her film seemed highly relevant to this moment, these questions. Or to how artists who are queer go invisible.

I’m interested in how art gains visibility for its queerness when it is actualized by a couple present in the art itself, as the subject. Most famously, Gilbert and George have built their career on this iconic “coupleness,” or Felix Partz, Jorge Zontal and AA Bronson of the art group General Idea, who worked together up until Partz and Zontal died of AIDS. Being queer and not alone is a problematic expression because it sets up a schema for actualizing queerness inside a partnership or a group. Being queer certainly doesn’t need a political mass or collective. But our images of strength in numbers/realness in numbers, overshadows the representation of a strong and alone queer person. The singular figure in most of David Wojnarowicz, Paul Thek, and Peter Hujar’s work does retort my claim. Perhaps this hits on the non-gender or non-
sexuality association of queer as outsider. Which barely escapes the fine line when the look of an outsider gets co-opted into the coolness of being queer.

In the winter of 2011, Margaret Tedesco’s 2nd Floor projects resurrected from the late nineties Daughters of Houdini, the performance-zine collaboration between Zoey Kroll and C. Ryder Cooley. During its time, the mail art and riot grrl aesthetic/intentions influenced how they publicized themselves as: collaborative queer-girl dark fantasy medical zine—drawings, comics, & writing on girl-girl love, bloody horrors, reproductive loathing, hysteria, curses on nasty doctors, medical experiments, sexual experiments, sweet maniacal revenge & lusty slumber parties.18

Over ten years later, Kroll explains the project to me in an interview as being about exploring our relationship, life art, the medical industry, the psychiatric. It was about queer as being positioned outside of or different than normative behavior; a lot can be encompassed. But I’m not crazy about questions like what is the definition of queer. I’d rather just do stuff.

Daughters of Houdini zines and prints are line drawings of girls going into sexual worlds that don’t have pop-culture ringtones, just invocations of “playing” with your friends as a kid and then whoops totally making out. The Daughters are drawn in floating spiraling figures addressing wombs on the loose, while the doctors in the zines are defunct, representing the refusal of men in terms of soothing or curing. The drawings say no to prescription drugs fixing things. Rhyming gets operated on: they gleefully chopped Dr. Freud’s erection & tossed it into a freeway intersection. The famous guy doctors were talking about dealing with hysteria, particularly, removing a clit, while pissing into urinals before the castration text bubble illustrates two girls with their pants down so we can see their dildos.

**Murky Lines**

I was meanwhile trying to learn to be a poet and didn’t want to be waylaid into being gay because I wouldn’t be taken seriously. (Eileen Myles)19

When I first looked up Kay Ryan on the Library of Congress website, I was surprised to find a total butch. My mom called to tell me this in not so many words about a year ago and then I forgot. The Poet Laureate is not only a lesbian but she teaches basic skills English, just like you, Ariel. She read an article about it in The New Yorker. And there was Kay Ryan, seeming totally irrelevant to me. Why should just any poet lesbian be relevant to me? I persisted in assuming Ryan and I had nothing in common.
But then a question began to haunt me: how does a dyke get to be the Poet Laureate? The obvious answer: she keeps her mouth shut. I am confused about Kay Ryan being successful, government funded, in the sense that I feel there are a ton of artists who are queer with supposedly radical work (to this mythic entity of taxpayers) who may be removed from this type of success. Her insistence on her personal life’s separateness from her work is too close to a history hangover of antagonizing straight culture discreetly closeting a gay. A white lesbian, born and raised working class, in a much more homophobic time than now, divides from “queer.”

I turn to The Library of Congress’ description of Ryan on their profile page: Unlike many poets writing today, she seldom writes in the first person. Ryan says: I don’t use ‘I’ because the personal is too hot and sticky for me to work with. I like the cooling properties of the impersonal.” In her poem “Hide and Seek,” for instance, she describes the feelings of the person hiding without ever saying, “I am hiding.”

Kay Ryan is out, but that doesn’t mean there isn’t homophobia at work. In the DVD series The Poets’ View she tells this story about Carol and her reading the Sunday paper in bed. She dedicates all her books to her late partner Carol, a gendered name. She is an intensely private person. So why do I feel threatened when I think about how guarded her “personal life” is from her work and her success as a writer?

Perhaps the core issue is an estrangement from Ryan’s poetic language of knowledge tidbits and rhymes, with the use of words like innocence, god, truth, man. In her poem “Outsider Art” from Elephant Rocks: she writes:

Most of it’s too dreary
or too cherry red
covered with things the savior said
or should have said—
dense admonishments
in nail polish
too small to read…

There never seems to be a surface equal
To the needs of these people
their purpose wraps
around the backs of things

It is the careless aesthetic of outsider artists that Ryan finds repulsive. Outsider is a loaded and derisive term because of its blanket othering of groups of people. In this poem, the narrator has seen some art with too much clutter and matchsticks glued to it and decided to generalize, perhaps in the
blindness of their irritation. Is my criticism of Ryan's work a mirroring of a criticism she has to the "Outsider's" messiness coded as un-crafted? Ryan just may be sick of café walls showing "art." But Ryan also identifies as an outsider from the poetry establishment. She identifies consistently in interviews with the people she taught at Marin Community College. She identifies as working class more openly than she does as lesbian.

I find Ryan's first book of poems, _Dragon Acts to Dragon Ends_, published in 1983, the year I was born. I feel the strongest difference with her current work in "Letter from the Front" where she writes:

I have enlisted in a disbanded army—always attracted to the supernumerary…
Louise, I am not welcome as I enter the city.
Mothers do not hold their children up to see me.
What would be the point of remembering one;
no single costume is a uniform.

Here I found a personal address, in the first person, and a metaphor about being invisible and unappreciated. It's like when Agnes Martin was painting portraits and self-portraits before she went on to grids, which is how Martin gained entry into the "Hide/Seek" exhibition at the National Portrait gallery in the winter of 2011. "Letter" has no recombinant rhyme or children book style description of animals that you find in Ryan's more recent work.

Ryan toiled at writing without workshops or classes. She doesn't narrate an entry into a social scene of readings linked to small presses and magazines to circulate her work. She embarked on years of sending poems cold to more nationally established publications and contests. This first book _Dragon Acts_ was published by subscription from Taylor Street Press in Marin, California, where she has lived for a long time.

Perhaps there is a part of me that has been hunting for moments where "queer art" the label feels insufficient or in conflict with the work. And I fixated on Ryan in this search as though lost on some other path—she has muddled my stance by doing what I might have proposed as a resolution to the label "queer art"—the refusal to ever label or associate work with identity. But of course, Ryan doesn't even identify as "queer."

Ryan is interested in "the brief and compressed." She also admits, "I never read poetry" and "I like to read my poems, but I don't like to hear other people read theirs." I might as well be asking how does a poet become popular in this country—which is a relevant question to what are the causes and effects of a "queer artist" or "gay artist" label or the dodging of that label.
It seems you get to be a popular poet by degrading poetry and presenting the most traditional image of it: a solitary, private figure whose work is compared to that of Emily Dickinson, someone who hid in her poems, whose work was read, mostly, after she died. Ryan's work has developed to a voice of wisdom. Not timeless to me, but stubborn. Fortune cookie style. She wants everyone to get the metaphors. What results is a certain type of poetry that feels too confident, too omniscient. I could argue this is not a "queer aesthetics." The question is can a "queer aesthetics" be cultivated with the problem of the label embedded in, too? Can a "queer aesthetics" deviate from the flamboyant, vulnerable, or narration of life from a certain perspective? Or is Kay Ryan the gay poet who has the most ungay writing?

The Kay Ryan problem gains traction when I put it next to the Susan Sontag problem: what does a younger generation of queers do with the ambiguously out cultural literary powerhouses? It is certainly not a model to aspire to.

Kay Ryan protects herself in a steadfast way by embodying this aura of a private person, also insists her sexuality is irrelevant to her art. I cannot quite compare this to Sontag's words, My desire to write is connected with my homosexuality:12 I need the identity as a weapon, to match the weapon that society has against me. This quote became public domain only after she died. But I can put these next to each other. I can pretend to investigate this as just an uncomfortable thing to look at because I am really just looking at myself—I am not really speaking with Ryan or Sontag directly.

It was this what is up with Kay Ryan being this bizarre enigma to me that made me refine my stance. While I may react to the labeling of artists with the word "queer," I must do it too, to think about the issues. I do it all over this essay. And it has formed me in a way, to reconsider how queerness can be very present in my work, even if not explicitly. Even if a trap, the tracing of what is where inside a work. The interpretative scale hanging in the produce section swaying.

I want Eileen Myles to be the Poet Laureate. She ran for president, but it doesn’t seem enough. Where is Myles' Guggenheim fellowship?13 She, and I, are asking. Ryan just got hers. What is with my tabulations? What if a poet who writes about life and that happens to be from a lesbian's point of view were Poet Laureate? We would all survive it! I have heard Myles read from Inferno (A Poet's Novel) maybe three times—and it still doesn’t feel like enough. I think about relating to Eileen Myles: I was meanwhile trying to learn to be a poet and didn’t want to be waylaid into being gay because I wouldn’t be taken seriously, which is about her entry into a poetry community of the seventies. But it’s not the seventies anymore. I asked Myles about this in the fall of 2011, at the Wilde Boyz Salon; why did I feel that too like 30 years later? Myles answered

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Lesbians are being treated as though we are not human and do not deserve representation—in literature and anywhere else. In fact we do not even have the right to discuss why we cannot have these things... When people refuse to discuss why they are shunning you, when they give no reason and have no terms for reconciliation it is because to actually talk about it would reveal their own behavior and their power lies in their ability to command silence about their own behavior. (Sarah Schulman)

I had a dream that Sarah Schulman attempted to clarify how Ryan’s silence on anything lesbian is deeply rooted in her aesthetics. The sans dyke is as predictable as a clock’s second hand. Time is upside down. Minutes don’t add up. Things are moving slowly like gravity is nodding its head no. I said what about Eileen Myles’ aesthetic of complete straightforwardness, of here is my life that sometimes has the queer in it and sometimes does not? How is this somehow termed experimental, simply because she tells the life of a lesbian, and she tells it with a lot of sadness?

Schulman said, look at me. Everyone hates me because I say what no one wants to hear. I tried to reply: but it’s also how you say it. In the dream Schulman got a soft voice after the fierce tirade that she had packaged from the handful of talks around the country she gave. All I really want are my lesbian protagonists to be with all the other protagonists.

After this dream, I wanted to wake up and go to my playground of a bookstore and find the LGBT section gone, and every single one of Schulman’s novels and social criticism with all the fiction and journalism of the world’s bookshelves. How in twenty years I wonder if the label will change to the current usage of queer, or actually be gone. Or if there will be Trans, Lesbian and Gay and then Queer, all separate.

I was in a bookstore in Nebraska this June, where I had to get pointed towards the LGBT section, which was tucked way in the back, a nook akin to the porn section, a cove. I found Schulman’s book about the Reagan years, shoved on top a stack yet to be alphabetized and shelved. Then I went to the poetry section and found Kay Ryan. I tell the poet Jocelyn Saindenberg about this problem. Her response is: can’t we have both—meaning, shouldn’t books by queers be in both sections? But will every bookstore really order double?

My sense that poems were my first queer texts is, first of all, intuitive... and what’s queer is what we read as queer... (Masha Gutkin)

There was a dyke story in one of Max’s porn magazines. It was my favorite but not because I liked it exactly. Reading it by the light of my flashlight was like examining a photograph of dead relatives. (Camille Roy)

There was a dyke story in one of Max’s porn magazines. It was my favorite but not because I liked it exactly. Reading it by the light of my flashlight was like examining a photograph of dead relatives. (Camille Roy)
It’s easy to focus on extremes in attempting to place myself in relation to female queer or lesbian identifying writers. To fixate on feeling estranged propels me to find affiliation. Saidenberg’s context is the Bay Area experimental poetry scene, and because this is the land of small presses, she is of a much lesser national visibility than Ryan or Myles. But that also makes her approachable. She’s helped me flesh out the ideas of this essay over the past year, which I don’t know how to separate from the experience of seriously trying to read her work.

In Saidenberg’s work, I find a range that goes into the “hot and sticky” first person as well as detached minimalism. Over time, her three books develop a climate outside the extremes of my temperamental Kay Ryan and Eileen Myles comparison storm. Weather patterns in Saidenberg’s writing include straight up sex, traces of desire, a view of the world, or recreations of that world.

The weather is inaccurate, and reported as post fact, taking language into a farther reach than communication, than planning, than having a sweater as an extra layer. Much of this climate has to do with the use of the first person, and the dedications or collaborations the poetics contain. I pretend to be a meteorologist of Saidenberg’s poetics. At first I tried to watch how queerness appears, over time, in her work. But I barely agreed with that methodology. Instead I played along with it. I concluded on a refusal to make “queerness,” in terms of content, quantifiable, because it is too fundamental, permeable. The space of figuring, responding to quantifying “queer,” is an anti-calculation. The “queerness” is like the glitter on your pillowcase after it poked your eyelids.

In Saidenberg’s first book, Mortal City:28

I had a dream I was a man
- not a man but me w/ a penis -
& when I noticed that I went to a brothel
Where I fell in love with a woman
There were life sized carnival animals
There were women sleeping inside of them
& then the woman excited me...

I was happy my new penis worked so well

As if the penis were necessary in allowing oneself to fall in love with a woman, it happens first in the story. Who the woman is doesn’t matter. What matters is that it could happen instantly, with some permission, in a place not meant for love. Where does love belong, anyway?
The narrative of gaining a penis and disagreeing with the initial description of the process of being assigned a gender, presents a real conflict in both language and experience. The ghost of this poem is a dildo, the prosthetic to wake up to. It is really easy to get a penis, but to use it requires imagination. Dildos are stand-ins for totally detachable emotions. How you can feel inside a cock.

In the gender issue of the journal Tripwire, Saidenberg writes an essay “As a/ As if” to introduce selected poems:
Gender is a nightmare. To inhabit, to enact one gender, to embody one gender all day and all night, everyday and every night is a nightmare. To speak as a woman, to speak as an anything, to speak—but one needs though provisionally a place from which to speak but again as a woman, as a lesbian, as a New Yorker, as a Jew, as an individual, for fuck’s sake that’s already too many and too limited, there’s already too many of me. crying for their turf.

In her second book, Cusp:

- the erasing of differences to increase exchange value. a genderless mall with sales on old sporting goods and old food.
- in which sense in what sense how to say i or we and in what tone of voice.
- her plot is not her own or i mean and repetition is unbearable.

Nothing is resolved in this state of fantasy and crisis. What is “new” and what is “sold” for knowing even a pronoun becomes singular and plural gnawing on each other to encapsulate the failure of representation. How this happens everyday. How the agency in registering yourself as a consumer is staggering. What is there to buy at the mall? Everything sucks.

In her third book, Negativity, Saidenberg’s bio ends with: she lives in San Francisco where she is active in the queer arts communities and works as a reference librarian for the public library.

The poems in Negativity are in sections that range from collaborations (there are two) to clear and unclear dedication. But in every page of this book the seatbelts of narrative presumed desirable for the body are figured and reconfigured as under tense flings of reception or rejection. Realizing then disregarding mistakes is huge; what even is a body and who has agency in it are blurred. You take a photograph and your subject is moving, then you take the photograph again only to find that you have moved.

The movement chases you, so you sit with blurriness, so things cancel each other out, only as if on sheets of transparency paper scribbled on an overhead projector. This makes the net total of modest impact; invisibility is protagonist.
in a land devoid of protagonist. Connection between agents of same-sex longing and satisfaction are tempting, engaged, and then reverted. Negativity is like an undocumented performance combusting in excitement and disappointment.

In the poem DUSKY, or Destruction as a Cause of Becoming we get “compassion misread as fear,” “quivering sighs,” and “our uncorrosive alloys.” The tension is intensity as a lifestyle, a proposition.

I asked Saidenberg to tell me her story of being a poet and being queer in San Francisco. She recounted her coming into the poetry scene in the 90s, that her being queer was an asset, or how it might have actually helped her get a reading, at Small Press Traffic, because at that time, it was run by Dodie Bellamy. Queers and their allies tend to curate queers.

Saidenberg told me about Kris Kovick, and her 17 Reasons reading series at the Bearded Lady in San Francisco’s Mission district of yore. This was in 1991-93. Kovick introduced Saidenberg as the geeky brainy poet—which I translated to mean she didn’t read autobiographical prose. Saidenberg reminisced about how Kovick was a model of bringing together different aesthetics at the expense of the audience feeling uncomfortable. And how Saidenberg did the same thing as a curator at New Langton Arts and later Small Press Traffic: no matter what the aesthetic, invite your friends to read. And her life as a poet, she told me, was really a lot about friendship too, and how it may not be something to theorize, friendship.

There was a moment where talking to Saidenberg and reading her work simultaneously helped me fit some pieces into place. There was a moment of trying to reach Ryan through her agent and giving up. There is still the possibility of going to Ryan’s reading in May of 2012, handing her this essay and her writing me back. But this is one possibility: personal contact, and is that necessary? Do I need to replicate a long lost family impulse or become a more fastidious reporter? I imagine a part two, and a cardboard press badge.
Humans, like many other species, migrate. Languages change constantly. And neither migrations nor evolutions in vocabularies and vocalizations, in idiomatic and lexical registers can be prevented or stopped. Nor should they be (and this goes for the migrations of humans too!).

Still, while refusing any compromise with all the politico-cultural and socio-political mechanisms of authority, power, and suppression, which is to say, refusing any compromise with the gendarmerie of language or border, it remains possible to say one or even two or three critical things about this or that particular linguistic evolution, i.e. that it may represent an awkward or otherwise stultified adoption and/or that it may be the result of not altogether salutary socio-cultural forms or processes. Doubtless, in this critical practice one must always recognize the best lessons of humanity, however much the lessons may sometimes be of the most obvious and preliminary of kinds, i.e. vérité en deca des Pyrénées, erreur au-delà. What is stultified and unsatisfactory for the one, might not be for the other. Interminable truth, interminable problem.

Any condemnation of this or that new usage cannot have any claim at all to an absolute status, certainly not absolutely, as is inevitably and necessarily the case with all—or certainly almost all—human judgments. But the relative cannot in turn hope to always claim absolute status! Some things really are quite stultified and unsatisfactory!

The "new usage" which I want to criticize became present everywhere sometime in the 1990s or so it seemed to me. The phrase or figure was this: "[As such and such] famously said." "Famously"? Where did that come from? Was it always in use but I never paid attention? I thought the standard phrase, the standard figure, in such situations was, i.e. "...in the celebrated phrase of...", "...in the well-known phrase of...", etc. But now in all the middle-brow and even "higher-brow" journals there it was. And a few years later there it was in all the various journalistic fare, and in other places too, the high and low breaches and reaches, and in all the aspiring and not at all inspiring places. The figure proliferated, suddenly was ubiquitous—every media commentator, every professor, every... On every page, in every broadcast...

In his early years Amiri Baraka expressed in his oft artful manner the poetics of the newer, the "younger poets." "How we sound!" Well, everyone...
sounds in one way or another, and how it sounds is dependent in part on who is listening. “And how?” “Can’t dance to bebop?” “Can’t dance to free jazz?” “Can’t dance to Cecil Taylor?” To which the proper refrain could very well be, waa! “But look, I’m already dancing!” “Famously said!” It clings in the ears, it clatters, tuneless, rhythmless... out of tune.

But it has come on like a... What? “It comes on like a rose...” But everybody knows. / ...You can look but you better not touch! Poison ivy-e-e-e-e-e!” But not like a rose, rather like a flood, a stampede, like the most stumbling, like the stalest, the most still-born of words. More: not content to use it whenever it is a question of a quotation, writers, commentators, everyday speakers scramble to find a quotation so as to use this figure, so as to be able to say, “...famously said.” For those who use the figure everywhere (“everything”) once said and everyone who said it seems to have been famous, which only makes the proliferation all the more prolific, the “famously” being everywhere, which is to say everywhere in the “said.” Yet at least 95% of the time—and more—the quotation or referent that is supposedly “famous” is one that isn’t famous at all, indeed, rather little known or unknown. It has come down to this: now every time someone utilizes a quotation they automatically—and with self-satisfaction—insert the figure: “famously.” Everything ever said has become famous! This would actually be quite a marvelous thing if it meant that our species had in the past couple of decades collectively increased its erudition by great magnitudes. Now everybody knows everything! Wonderful!

But unfortunately.

Like so many things received, this “new” phrase is precisely that which is received without examination, without consideration, without discernment. “Herds of suffering intelligences” as Amiri Baraka once again wrote? No, there is no suffering for those amidst the rush. But audition is evidently not the virtue of the day. Nor socio-linguistic reflection, else it would not be a question of these herds who, auditionless—“no ears!” to turn a phrase of Lester Young—rush to use the figure in question. Each time this usage appears it is rather clear—and even if one undertakes only the most cursory examination of both the particular manner in which the usage has come about and in which the will-to-this-figure, the “desire” for this figure has been enacted—that we have here a scramble for one more sign of belonging and for one more sign of distinction. Because the users, necessarily without any linguistic or rhetorical care, but all the more with that kind of prefabricated consciousness which makes possible the reception and subsequent employment of received culturo-linguistic orders and maneuvers as if they were the most original of self-creations, have produced all the linguistic textual markers which would fairly shout to any possible onlooker and auditor their new possession, their
conscious/unconscious usage of the new linguistic badge. “Look at me! I’m saying…” famously quipped! Yes, the oldest and most banal of social processes. Herds of conformities—and the delight evident in being able to conform so. Certainly when this phrase was in its early stages one could easily see that each user of the phrase understood internally its newness and was anxious to participate in this use which for reasons both contingent and not so contingent seemed to possess social distinction.

Moreover, the phrase quickly invaded those domains where one might have thought it would have been resisted, given its clear and certain status as a phrase of conformity and a phrase instantly traveling the circuits of media/academic establishment and mass. But that it did invade even ostensible oppositional realms did not so much show the power of conformist proliferation (which doubtless is in general an overwhelming power) as it showed simply that socio-linguistic and socio-cultural resistance can never be assumed in relation to any domain or to anyone. A biographer of Guy Debord, Andrew Hussey, exemplifies the full extent of the process. Hussey uses “famously said” on virtually every third page, if not in every third paragraph, in a book ostensibly devoted to a person, Guy Debord, who, despite abundant faults—certainly abundant personal and intersubjective faults, the worst kind of faults it should be added, but which faults Hussey fails to mention or minimizes—vehemently opposed forms of cretinization and conformity, linguistic or otherwise. Another paradigmatic example is Robert Hullot-Kentor, a translator of Adorno and the editor of a series of Adorno translations at Stanford University Press, as well as an ardent, albeit a too-orthodox defender of Adorno, it being understood that a too-orthodox defender of Adorno is nonetheless much better than the myriad detractors of Adorno who without exception exhibit one or another form of ideational or even straight-forward prejudice, incomprehension, and ineptitude. All the trajectories of Adorno’s philosophical, linguistic, and socio-linguistic actions would have ranged themselves at the antipode, the inimical antipode, of the usage and figure in question. And Hullot-Kentor? In his translator’s introduction to Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory, an introduction meant to defend the aforementioned antipode, the necessary inimical stance thought, language, and comportment must take in relation to domination and heteronomy, we find Hullot-Kentor writing: “…that Barnett Newman once did the world the favor of putting in a nutshell when he famously quipped…”[my italics]. I winced and I’m certain Adorno would have winced too at being placed in such proximity to the “famously…[quipped, said, or otherwise]”. But then, to cite a further example, an infelicity of greater magnitude, in her English translation of Vladimir Jankelevitch’s exceedingly beautiful, La Musique et l’Ineffable (Music
and the ineffable), the musicologist Carolyn Abbate gives Vladimir Jankelevitch
to say (and more than once . ), “famously.” Doubtless, in translating one
necessarily employs present idiomatic usage in the language into which one
is translating, so it is proper for Professor Abbate to use an idiom that is now
the reigning idiom in her present socio-linguistic world—except for the fact
that one also has to think of the socio-linguistic manner and sensibility of
the person one is translating and in this sense, in the sense of Jankelevitch
himself and in the sense of the being-in-English he would properly have and
certainly desire and claim, “famously said” is a linguistic figure he would have
refused, is something he would never have said and still less written!

But with Hullot-Kentor the other aforementioned salient factor was in
abundant evidence. Because who would know of Barnett Newman’s utterance?
His one well-known utterance, but well-known only in limited circles, occurred
when in response to a question about the meaning of his paintings he replied
that examined properly they meant “the end of all state capitalism and
totalitarianism.” Doubtless an admirable aim although much better if he had
included monopoly capitalism and its depredations, but not one that could
be found immanently—or anywhere—in his vastly overrated paintings. But
the utterance to which Hullot-Kentor referred was not this one and was one
that could only be called, for non-art-historical specialists, obscure at best.
Who would know or would have known of this “famous quip” of Newman’s
to which Hullot-Kentor referred? Jean-Francois Lyotard? Perhaps. Yve-Alain
Bois? Certainly. But then Lyotard and Bois are admirers of the absolutely
insipid nature of Newman’s canvasses. Certainly art critics might know of the
“quip.” But not even rock critics or rap critics are capable of the magnitude of
their “famously,” it is that, the sounding so bad that gives these
inevitable phenomenon. But again because it sounds so bad. But, then,
sounding so bad, it is that, the clang, the clanging, which gives to the anterior
and subsequent scrambles and the concomitant significations of the readily
evident “pride” evinced there-in, this pride in this newest “distinction,” this
“fame” of their “famously,” it is that, the sounding so bad that gives these
scrambles and significations the even more unattractive of features.
But the "sound" here, the clang, is not an immediate function of the phonemes in question, because it is the particular nature of the union of this new figure and the particular manner of its proliferation and usage which produces the louder, the more toneless clang. After all, I could cite an anterior historical example of that which needed nothing more than its very "sound" itself to send one scurrying for earplugs—"critiquing," "critiqued." But the ellipsis just utilized marks out an appointees and novitiates of prefabricated thought. Of course, it was because of this latter incarnation that the intellectual and politico-cultural realms in the U.S., lacking a deeply rooted and supple philosophical culture, and subject to the longstanding repressions and suppressions characteristic of an anti-intellectual, anti-Hegelian, anti-Marxist, and anti-Left socio-culture and socio-politics, could very well succeed in the confinement of the word "critique." But the upsurges of the 1960s, which began to transform our intellectual, academic, and cultural worlds, liberated the word from its confinements. However, the increase in socio-political and intellectual maturity thereby evinced had as a rather unfortunate consequence a verbalization process whereby a "new sound" emerged which only the most tin of ears, O, how many! could bear—"critiquing," "critiqued." Clang, clang, clang...And the clang was certainly not the euphonious sound coming from Judy Garland in Meet Me in St. Louis: "clang, clang, clang went the trolley; ding, ding, ding went the bell!"

"Gesture" was also once upon a time a nice little word. And in the analyses of Benjamin and Kafka a rather fecund notion and idea. But nothing is ever really immune to stilted and stultified use and/or to a proliferation that by its omnipresence alone founds the stultification in question. Comes Derrida with his precisions and manifold insights as well as with coagulants the bloated side-effects of which turn out to be—in the case of the coagulants in question—the only effects. Thus, all his various epiphanes and then in succession all the other functionaries of our academico-intellectual world, aping without respite one of Derrida's most stilted utterances, "gesture", begin to "think" that thought "gestures"—and succeed in saying it everywhere and in relation to every thought. "This commitment gestures, finally, toward what [Walter] Benjamin once called..." That from a page of a recent compendium of misunderstandings about Benjamin or from any page of the other myriad appointees and novitiates of prefabricated thought.

And not just today's functionaries, high or low, because in a non-academic vernacular there was this figure...But the ellipsis just utilized marks out an immediate necessity. Because at first I couldn't make out the words. "My——"
was all I could hear. For one could not make it out. "Sir, I can't make that out, I can't make that out," says the sonar man to his captain, Clark Gable, and subsequently to the first mate, Burt Lancaster, in Run Silent, Run Deep. "I can't make that out!" "I can't make that out!" Nor could I, and particularly on the basketball court. But it always seemed to occur when someone had thrown the ball out of bounds or the wrong way or otherwise messed up a play or simply messed up simpliciter. And, then, one day, accelerating around the man guarding me and without a break in motion, straight off the dribble, sending a no-look bullet pass behind my back, I watched as the ball, passing neatly between two defenders bunched in the key, made its way to my man open beneath the basket, watched as it bounced right off his chest. Had he been distracted or had he simply stopped to watch (and hopefully admire!) the pass! No matter, it was one less assist for me that day. "My bad" he said to me. But on this day I heard it clearly!

"My bad!" There it was. And how bad it sounded. And here "bad" does not at all mean good! Rather, a listless sound, fatigued, but no less out of tune. But it wasn't just on the basketball court. I began to hear it everywhere. But words will always come and go. And sometimes come back. "Fly" By the 1960s it was gone it seems, that is if our historians of the vernacular are accurate in their soundings of our linguistic and cultural history. But it returns. Perhaps it does not now sound as good as it once did when Ivie Anderson was singing with Duke Ellington about being a "fly chick strolling on 47th Street," but then that too, these ebbs and flows of use and sound and aesthetic pleasure or lack thereof are part of the inevitable processes of cultural appearances and disappearances, transmissions and re-transmissions. But "my fault" has about it rather little sound at all. Is it that it had long, long ago become attuned, accustomed, or that from the start it did not sound as bad? Will "my bad" find its attunement, its custom, and disappear into the ordinary, or will it appear and disappear like the two-hand set shot? Who is to say (although it seems that it has become the norm, the ordinary)? But please don't allow another pass to bounce off your chest! On the other hand, there should not be any subsidiary misunderstanding. I do not at all mean to malign the two-hand set shot. When the ball went "swish!" I'm certain it sounded no less beautiful, was no less pretty than any other swish, the one of Oscar or Nate or Pistol Pete or Willie Somerset or Earl Boykins or Steve Nash or my own!

"Famously said," "critiquing," "my bad." Clang—and clang again. But they have won. But there is an even worse phenomenon, although it has to do with a word that in and of itself doesn't clang. It is a word, i.e. "luminous," that in sound and in meaning has lovely qualities. But, alas, the word has been ruined. I don't know when it started as the one word, the one term, was all I could hear. I for one could not make it out. "Sir, I can't make that out, I can't make that out," says the sonar man to his captain, Clark Gable, and subsequently to the first mate, Burt Lancaster, in Run Silent, Run Deep. "I can't make that out!" "I can't make that out!" Nor could I, and particularly on the basketball court. But it always seemed to occur when someone had thrown the ball out of bounds or the wrong way or otherwise messed up a play or simply messed up simpliciter. And, then, one day, accelerating around the man guarding me and without a break in motion, straight off the dribble, sending a no-look bullet pass behind my back, I watched as the ball, passing neatly between two defenders bunched in the key, made its way to my man open beneath the basket, watched as it bounced right off his chest. Had he been distracted or had he simply stopped to watch (and hopefully admire!) the pass! No matter, it was one less assist for me that day. "My bad" he said to me. But on this day I heard it clearly!

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the ubiquitous term, the absolute term, the ever-and-always employed term, in each and every instance where critics not just in this or that realm, not simply in the art or music or literary worlds, but in all realms and in all worlds, have recourse to a superlative. In every instance of praise for this painting or this poem or this novel critics not just invariably but in every instance use the word “luminous.” Could one find an example in any field where, in those instances when superlative praise is being given, the word “luminous” does not appear? This word has been used and then overused in geometric progression to the point where long ago it turned into something else, into its opposite, into something not lovely at all, into something that wreaks damage by virtue of the utter emptiness—and utter vapidity—of its present usage and employment. If everything—everything—superlative or, to be more precise, everything deemed superlative, is “luminous,” and if every writer and every speaker, everywhere, writes or says, i.e. “luminous” for everything they especially like—every time—then the word will not so much petrify every other word around it, although it will do that while simultaneously and immediately revealing the petrified state of the user of the word in question, as it will succeed in ruining—by its mere use alone, by its mere presence—whatever superlative quality the intended object of praise may or may not have or possess. Today and already many yesterdays ago, to use “luminous” is to show oneself oblivious to signification, to meaning, to intersubjective life, to rhythm, to discernment, etc. But never has there been an absurdity such as the one of two quintessential valedictorians of the immediately anterior nominatives and attributes. And we are here given the ne plus ultra when it comes to present usages of “luminous”—and also when it comes to a host of cultural phenomena and processes in general. Several years ago, David Pagel, an art critic of the Los Angeles Times, wrote a review of a retrospective of the minimalist artist, Dan Flavin, whose art—pitiful, paltry, and utterly subservient—consists of phosphorescent lightbulbs mounted on walls. One of Pagel’s declarations—highlighted in the review as a prominent insert—was that Flavin’s art “made ordinary light luminous...” But Pagel couldn’t claim originality for this declaration. Prior to Pagel, Peter Schjeldahl, in an article in The New Yorker, had already written: “The art of Dan Flavin is luminous...” Yes, the ne plus ultra of every possible quod erat demonstrandum.

Enough. Let us celebrate more supple figures of speech. Like Aime Cesaire and Osip Mandelstam—and Wanda Coleman and Will Alexander—write with marvelous verve; and like Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Nina Simone, the ubiquitous term, the absolute term, the ever-and-always employed term, in each and every instance where critics not just in this or that realm, not simply in the art or music or literary worlds, but in all realms and in all worlds, have recourse to a superlative. In every instance of praise for this painting or this poem or this novel critics not just invariably but in every instance use the word “luminous.” Could one find an example in any field where, in those instances when superlative praise is being given, the word “luminous” does not appear? This word has been used and then overused in geometric progression to the point where long ago it turned into something else, into its opposite, into something not lovely at all, into something that wreaks damage by virtue of the utter emptiness—and utter vapidity—of its present usage and employment. If everything—everything—superlative or, to be more precise, everything deemed superlative, is “luminous,” and if every writer and every speaker, everywhere, writes or says, i.e. “luminous” for everything they especially like—every time—then the word will not so much petrify every other word around it, although it will do that while simultaneously and immediately revealing the petrified state of the user of the word in question, as it will succeed in ruining—by its mere use alone, by its mere presence—whatever superlative quality the intended object of praise may or may not have or possess. Today and already many yesterdays ago, to use “luminous” is to show oneself oblivious to signification, to meaning, to intersubjective life, to rhythm, to discernment, etc. But never has there been an absurdity such as the one of two quintessential valedictorians of the immediately anterior nominatives and attributes. And we are here given the ne plus ultra when it comes to present usages of “luminous”—and also when it comes to a host of cultural phenomena and processes in general. Several years ago, David Pagel, an art critic of the Los Angeles Times, wrote a review of a retrospective of the minimalist artist, Dan Flavin, whose art—pitiful, paltry, and utterly subservient—consists of phosphorescent lightbulbs mounted on walls. One of Pagel’s declarations—highlighted in the review as a prominent insert—was that Flavin’s art “made ordinary light luminous...” But Pagel couldn’t claim originality for this declaration. Prior to Pagel, Peter Schjeldahl, in an article in The New Yorker, had already written: “The art of Dan Flavin is luminous...” Yes, the ne plus ultra of every possible quod erat demonstrandum.

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Abbey Lincoln, and Martha Reeves sing—with magnificent force and splendor, impatient and impassioned; and like Clyde McPhatter, Jackie Wilson, Ben E. King, and Rudy Lewis sing—avec l’ame tout entiere, exultantly: “Je voudrais parler la plus belle langue de mon siecle”, I want to speak the most beautiful language of my century—and the most beautiful music too (‘...there’s a place right across town/ whenever you’re ready/ and the music begins to play/ automatically you’re on your  way, are you ready...?’ [Major Lance!]), yes! like Dizzy Gillespie said, twirling and twinkling—in a line that is not, but which ought to be so much more well-known, which ought to be celebrated!—“the next song is dedicated to Mother Africa/and if that don’t get to ya, shame on ya baby!”

WORKS CITED


Last summer, living in Brooklyn, exposed in an extended fashion for the first time to the pummeling, crowded, oppression of New York City’s congested, noisy persistence, I found a park near the apartment that became a kind of oasis. Yes, it too was crowded, but crowded green was much better than the ubiquitous concrete grey of the rest of the city, seemingly of the rest of the world. One afternoon, on the edge of the park, on a street lined with trees, one of the very few free from automobiles, I heard the distinct sound of an alarm, a car alarm, cycling through all of its blips and beeps. But there were no cars around. The sound was coming from the trees, from a branch above me.

The sound was coming from a mocking bird. So much for my little oasis in the city. I was slightly amused but basically forgot about this moment until walking home a little drunkenly on Monday night, after a poker game, where I told Seth that I’d be happy to introduce Elizabeth Willis. On the walk, I realized that I had a ton of other projects brewing, and immediately regretted having volunteered for this one. What was I going to say? I love her poems. I’ve been reading them for a decade now. Isn’t that enough? Then I passed a guy fumbling with his keys, setting off his own car alarm, and the old Proustian trigger was fully pulled.

The mocking bird and the car alarm, undeniably a parable waiting for its author, carries, like Willis’s poems, a complex political economy just below its surface of beauty and humor. Isn’t a bird call itself the desire to copy, to mate, something somatically mimetic, something we’ve, as humans, twisted from the utilitarian into the realm of the aesthetic. And when this twist, or as Willis might call it, this turn, is reflected back at us in the form of industry, capital, the globalism not of migratory birds but of the love song of Henry Ford and its chorus of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion echoing even now whenever rubber hits road, isn’t this turn what makes the tune, while easy to hum, frightening in its implications?

And what does it mean when we can’t get it out of our heads? When we can’t tell where the border lies between park and city, song and speech, green abstraction and grey concrete, self and culture. Aren’t poets invariably a species like that of the mocking bird, singing out of their, out of our, collective histories and into the history of the collective, which is, without paradox, the personal...
and the particular at the same time? The more we turn away from the mocking bird and the car alarm, the more we turn toward the history and implication of their relationship, the clearer our own involvement within it becomes, even as it begins spiraling into the shameful complexities of imperialism.

And these complexities are at the core of Willis's latest collection, *Address.* When one says "I" one is also saying "we" saying all of us, singing the scope of self, from the digits on the hand to those on the house, the address of home, to address an other, dressing for a party, or for a wound. Everywhere in this book—as in her other work—beauty abounds: sonic beauty, syntactic beauty, imagistic beauty, but never without revealing its Janus-faced other, never without admitting that that afternoon strolling in the garden here equals ten thousand hours down the mineshaft over there. And to get from one to the other, from any one and to any other, is to address the civic and the self, the country and the continent, the word and the world, or as Willis succinctly puts it: "Your footprint on the planet/ pinned down by outer space."

From the list poem to the sonnet, the ode to the elegy to the invective, from "oily noise" to "leaf traffic," Willis masterfully offers a direct treatment of the thing in all of its indirect taxonomies. Here is a poetry unafraid to salute our democratic ideals and civic institutions while simultaneously showing the scars they carry, the foundation of conquest they're precariously perched atop, a poetry of scope, one that can in a line or two zoom in on the atom, on Adam naming all the plants and animals, on the atom bomb, and the work of art in the age of digital interaction, a poetry too that is at once humorous and personable, as bewildered in the backyard as it is anchored in the open field.

But let me return to the mocking bird again. I have two more sentences to read about Elizabeth Willis's poems, both of which were written by Willis herself, both of which she wrote about other poets (the first on Christina Rossetti, the second on Neidecker) but both of which are uncanny in just how applicable they are to the experience of reading Willis's own poems.

"Her poems often willfully resist standard modes of interpretation by focusing on the very hinge of knowing and not-knowing, secrecy and disclosure, and one often leaves a poem with more questions than answers."

"They can move deeply and laterally, engaging the alternate realities of history, geology, botany, politics, aesthetics, and sociology through brilliant wordplay and juxtaposition."

Elizabeth Willis is the author of five collections of poetry, including *Second Law, The Human Abstract,* a national poetry series selection, *Turneresque, Meteoric Flowers,* and, most recently, *Address.* Willis also edited *Radical Vernacular,* a collection of essays on Neidecker. *Second Law,* a national poetry series selection, is the Shapiro-Silverberg Associate Professor of Creative Writing at Wesleyan University.

Please join me in welcoming Elizabeth Willis.
Peter Gizzi, University of Colorado—Boulder: 12/3/09.

Peter Gizzi was born and grew up in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. After an immersion in the art, punk and poetry scenes in New York City, and a degree in Classics from NYU, he received an MFA from Brown University, all the while straddling the often incommensurate worlds of academia and work-a-day roughing it, from a factory gig to waiting tables to a PhD from SUNY Buffalo’s Poetics Program. His books include The Outernational, Some Values of Landscape and Weather, Artificial Heart, and Periplum. He has also published several limited-edition chapbooks, folios, and artist books, including work with David Byrne, Trevor Winkfield, and many others. Gizzi’s work has been widely anthologized and translated into numerous languages. His honors include awards and fellowships from the most prestigious institutions and organizations, including the Academy of American Poets and the Guggenheim Foundation.

What I’ve always admired about Peter is not only his dedication to his own writing but also to that of opening a space for others. From a dozen issues of the now legendary poetry journal o•blék to the stellar anthology the Exact Change Yearbook, Peter’s editorial acumen constitutes a veneration and amplification of the modernist, international avant-garde tradition. As editor of Jack Spicer’s collected lectures & co-editor of Spicer’s recent volume of collected poetry My Vocabulary did this to me, Peter’s loving, diligent and on-going work has solidified Spicer’s recognition and reputation, and, more importantly, has made Spicer’s writing available to an entirely new generation of poets. Currently, Peter is the poetry editor for The Nation, where he’s single-handedly brought the politically progressive mainstay up-to-date on the artistic end of things. As an educator, he’s been on faculty at Brown University, the University of California at Santa Cruz, the Iowa Writer’s Workshop, and just down the road at the wonderful Summer Writing Program at Naropa. He currently teaches in the MFA program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, which is where we first met.

One afternoon, seven or eight years ago, I was standing in the doorway of his house: There was music blasting from somewhere inside. I remember waiting there for a few minutes before Peter finally came to the door. He said he’d been reading all morning and then, in his characteristically impromptu manner, launched into an explication of what he called the nuanced arc and vectors of the Cormac McCarthy sentence as inoculating counterpoint to the brutality it performs. Here was Peter, at home, reading, and listening to music—loud music. It’s a minor anecdote, yet something about it strikes me as a kind of preformative equivalent for the way in which a Gizzi poem functions.

The narrative propulsion of event tied to the sonic field—all of it given to drift while firmly anchored, all of it at home, housed. It’s the domain of the
lyric, but one extended and complicated by multiple trajectories of narrative, not the narrative of plot or story but that of Tarkovsky’s notion of sculpting in time within the frame—the deep bond between image and rhythm. The shape of a song. How it’s also an ephemeral location, an unfolding impermanent experience that provides, however paradoxically, a place to rest, to live in, to be, and in being to be both one’s self and the absence of any singular body. This is the democratic pluralism behind Gizzi’s echoing self-revisions in lines like: “is this what my body says/ my buddy said.”

Both the conditional and the interrogative drive the unsettled and unsettling lyric expansions of Gizzi’s poetry. This is not the dreamy, easy what if; rather, it’s the if what—the far more ethical matrix of the imagination given agency. But such a probing, philosophical register is always compounded, tempered, and called out by Gizzi’s attention to dailyness, to “cricket clicks” and “jets overhead in the yard.” Here, the world of things is edged by ideas, as the orchestration of scale in each poem expands and contracts. Now, a lung. Now, a tide. Interior and exterior space fully delineated yet doubly exposed. Like the steady back & forth motion of a child on a swing, oscillating between familial comfort and the thrilling, unnerving possibility of flight, there is simultaneous fright and joy in Gizzi’s poetry—the distinct balance and pitch of the self and the scope of citizenry, of all selves, of positive culpability.

Please help in welcoming my teacher Peter Gizzi.
This is Yvonne Rainer's first collection of poetry. Published by the artist, Paul Chan, Rainer's poetry forms slender columns, left-justified, sometimes two phrases per line, but mostly one phrase per line, or a word per line. The poems are poems on the page, assertively, directly, straightforwardly poems. The poems are often some dozens of carefully chosen words distributed over handfuls of lines. I count 7 poems longer than a page. The longer poems include a poem in 9 parts, "Saga," and a poem that is a memorial for Rainer's former New York upstairs neighbor, painted-metal sculptor, George Sugarman.

Here is a Rainer/Sugarman snippet from "For George Sugarman":

the daily work
was everything
that's what I loved
that was my school
the ominous things
eluded the syllabus
intimations
doubts, shoals
melodramas
nipped in the bud
given short shrift
Making Art
was the only measure

Rainer's poems are specifically textured, context precisely observed, highly readable... Part 6 from "Saga," is surviving, it's love, it's loss—yes... but not melodrama. It's a death in the family, unflinching:

He lost no time
courted the first skirt
enacted in quick relief
a synopsis of need
drank liters of Dekuyper
cherry flavored brandy
flooded the house
clung to the cat
mollified his daughter
sat
alone
in groups
alone in groups
talked
and talked
played Schubert’s Trio in B flat major
wept
howled
the year passed

Those of you who have crossed paths with Rainer know that since the 1960s
she has been writing—moving on-stage with language—writing—creating
dialogue for characters—writing—collaging appropriated, projected or scrolling
text into dances and films.

Given Rainer’s films, it is tempting to read these poems as dialogue, a
conversation among related, divergent, and at times contradictory voices.
Given Rainer’s choreography, it is equally tempting to imagine dancers, hands
smacking foreheads maybe, or clumping up together while readers offer poems
as voiceover, poems as evocative, short narrative snippets to dance with. A
sweaty or previously squeaky-shod dancer could speak these poems into a
microphone.

But then these are, after all, poems—singular poems, stand-alone, facing out.
They are person-in-public poems, accumulated intimacies, poems to mark not-
insignificant occasions, occasions like asking a subway performer a question.
A question, from the poem, "Take the R train":

"What’s that from?"
Smiling shyly
on the R platform

enacted in quick relief
a synopsis of need
drank liters of Dekuyper
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A question, from the poem, "Take the R train":

"What’s that from?"
Smiling shyly
on the R platform
almost no English
"Italian folk song
O Sole Mio"
"my father..."

before the words are out
"...used to sing it"
on the R platform
the song
my father used to sing

Rainer shows us she can make wonderful stuff in her notebook, no projected budget, no crew. Action. Action, written: walking, yawning, searching for food, eating, swallowing, balking or pleasuring, balking then pleasuring, getting on the train.

Let's look at the first work in Poems, "1977," 5 lines:

1977
I dreamed of bodies burning at the edges
When I awoke my belly was cold as an abandoned stove
The streets were cleared, trees bent
The air so still, as though just inhaled
When next I noticed it was spring

1977. I wonder, which bodies? In this dream space, are there specific bodies? 1977: Alex Haley's African-American saga, Roots was on TV. In 1977, militant anti-imperialists, members of the Baader-Meinhof Gang, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Jan-Carl Raspe—DEAD in Germany. (In 1980, Rainer would release Journeys from Berlin/1971, a global and personal, psychological struggle taking on a discussion of, among other subjects, Baader-Meinhof.)

Also, 1977, New York City, neurotic-monster Son of Sam Murders... and, in 1977, New York City, something else, something radically different was happening too. Right? I want to read in a certain optimism, but perhaps my optimism is overdetermined. I want to read 1977 as a productive moment. Just one example: 1977, a collective of 20 women including Harmony Hammond, Lucy Lippard, May Stevens, and Mary Miss published the first issue of Heresies, a magazine of
Feminism, Art and Politics. And, Rainer, the previous year, 1976, released the film, Kristina Talking Pictures. Kristina comes to New York to be a choreographer.

The dream bodies in the poem “1977” are like pictures of bodies printed on paper and cut out; they curl up at the edges, the curl is agitated, singed and becoming flame. In spite of the violence, I read possibility—there are clean streets, crisp air. Yet, with possibility, if possibility, moving forward, perhaps this possibility, this moving forward is a moving forward as if bent, movement marred by violence, moving forward under a strain. Maybe, what I am trying to say, if I were to say it physically, I imagine myself in this poem and in the poem, I am walking on my knees... In any case, in this poem, the body does notice a new, warmer season... Spring.

How does the body endure? How? Specifically, the action of enduring, in what measure, in what spatial field, in what form, in what context can we mean endurance?


Body: In Rainer’s poem, “Indices,” “The impression of your head/ etches the pillow.”

Memory strings together, a succession of knots.

To treat collectively Rainer’s body of poems and the accompanying selection of intermittent images, more from my rough plan: Forty-five poems; 8 images; it seems there are quite a few traveling poems written on the road or enacting moments waiting; there is a good-natured jibe of a toast to old friends.

I read significant, heartfelt mournings. Dates and places are important forms, as is dialogue, as is rumination, as are specific people.

There is at least one rule of thumb, the poem, “December 24, 2010.”

December 24, 2010
Rule of Thumb:
when the partner cries
embrace her
hang on for dear life

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There is a reprint of an image of Merce Cunningham, newspaper clipping, March 2010. Cunningham has already passed away and Cunningham is there, arms extended, his white coveralls, eyes to left foot extended, left toe upturned, the body forward and the body back, on a diagonal. Cunningham appears to be doing a kind of soft shoe routine, tap dancing without tap shoes. One leg shoots out diagonally, but the rest of his body doesn’t appear to follow.

Elsewhere, in “Untitled,” the final poem in the book, details seemingly newspaper-picked: a ninety-year-old woman (her endurance protest walk for campaign contribution reform), then a 6-year-old boy and a 6-year-old girl (their terrible violence, the boy shoots the girl dead). Rainer puts these three figures together to wonder if: “One of them/ maybe two/ will never look back.”

The cast represented in this collection of poems is large. I... We... She... Her... Me... One of us... You... It is 1950, then 1751, 1996-2008. It is 4 AM, some are going 70 miles per hour. Time oscillates. Read time, read and think of Vienna 1900 or reading and thinking, think of New York in great swaths, time again, the order of the progression of memory.

Rainer looks at what she comes upon, found walking up fast, stopping hard on it, deliberately... commenting, and/or:

Sat. April 3, 1999
All unaware
at the red door
my throat disgorges
memory’s groan
etching the moment

her life foreclosed
I bought her
green dumplings
someone passing might think
“one of those crones”
who—me?
more like a multiple
risible and wrung.

If an artist who started out in the 1950s can write a startling first book of poems in 2011, why not another book of poems in 2012 or 2013?
I went back and read some interviews with Rainer in preparation for writing this article. (True confession: Yvonne was my teacher; all of her books are my treasures.) I’m struck now by Rainer’s description of her work with friends and dancer compatriots, Simone Forti and Nancy Meehan, in New York, 1960. In a 1976 interview with writer and video artist, Lyn Blumenthal, Rainer remembers that this group played with and talked about “spatial restrictions... Pretty much formal things,” for example, the idea, the action, of “moving on a diagonal.”

To be risible, which means capable of laughing, and simultaneously to be wrung out, to feel well-used, this seems to me to be a kind of diagonal existence, moving on a diagonal. To look forward while looking back is a diagonal motion, Merce Cunningham represented as newspaper clipping after his death, one appendage stretching forward and other appendages stretching back. Speaking to form—if I can speak diagonally, or write diagonally—that might mean: someone passing might make a judgement (“crones,” supposedly cruel old women). After this perceived judgement, the subject pulls the judgement back, keeping, taking on and agreeing with a sense of time passed, age (“wrung”), but significantly adding in agency, action (wringing, like hard-twisting a wet cloth). And, what is eating, laughing, dying? Is it mean? Is it cruel? No, eating, laughing, and dying are what they are. We’re moving, moving on a diagonal.
In Kate Schapira’s The Love of Freak Millways and Tango Wax (published in 2009 by Cy Gist Press) the book and its profoundly androgynous characters (these two aspects of the experience of the book are inseparable, really) are a sort of redemptive mid. Mid detritus. Mid city. Mid one another.

This little deviant space, ripe with its emanating components, admits it is a “study of touch” (“do the other wrist”) and is in my opinion “like a monster helping itself” itself. Helping itself to itself. Perhaps even like a monster lovingly masturbating. “Where going is grinding”—removing the girdle. Giving life. Tergiversating toward new states of sate.

Full of non-delineated parabola, the book (a consciousness) and the characters (Freak Millways and Tango Wax) work together to sculpt a commitment that is also a quality of space (“to live [. . .] a publically gender-free life”)/“deep in territory”/where “what [they] do is the center.”

I was repeatedly intrigued (drawn in) and held (kept) as I read this book. I am specifically impressed by the way that it engages some of the quandaries of gender and sex. By revealing. By eluding. “Freak is printing an assembly of body parts that all fit together so nicely”—but why is Freak doing this? To try this assembly on? To get closer to Freak’s images of itself? To play dress up with what Freak is not? Perhaps like the performance artist paints the stage that they perform on, Freak plans to redden or shred this “assembly of body parts.” To make perforations or penetrations in the seeming perfections of traditions or norms.

I sense no envy in Freak and Tango. They feel sustained by the ways that they set themselves apart from_______. I feel in Freak and Tango a collaborative intensity regarding their performances (which are their bodies—which are their pleasures). Perhaps all of this (the book itself, and Freak and Tango’s love acts) is an only way that Freak and Tango can become their own stage.

As TLOFMATW progresses we come upon some pulls toward vow. “Don’t ever say you only loved my augmentations.” This statement breaks me. Because
there are authenticities that DO exist in any here. Authenticities (and not only the augmentations of those authenticities) that must be acknowledged and affirmed. Affirming an authenticity makes a me (lonely) a we (merged or composing future merge). “What makes us members ([a collective or a collaborative which is a “we”]) is the smell, the share, our share of suffering.” And Freak and Tango do share. They share in this life and the impetuses that get them through it. They share and they are “the art of braiding from underneath.”

A juicy mongrel, indeed!
“Implicit Promise”:
A Mosaic of Observations on Connectivity and Resonant Space in the poetry of Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge

Laynie Browne

To illuminate the illuminated text is a ridiculous task, yet highly seductive. If one could inscribe with an invisible light that would merely direct a reader’s eyes to a page of Berssenbrugge’s text, that would be the best possible non-commentary. But as the text is already illuminated one can only point toward it hopefully, with the intent not to layer possible meanings over the surface but to pull away any self-imposed obstacles or preconceived notions which impede readership.

Textual excursions are recorded here, with space to pause between miniature observations. The audible breath of the poet allows us to gaze into possible philosophical and emotional interiors, vantages, or sitting rooms forged within physical landscapes, as if we could all dwell within a long line, recline there and take in the prism of words which stretches along the backs of her letters.

Berssenbrugge offers luminous space and text tuned to an exquisite understanding of how consciousness links to and dictates that space. Her works orient us toward something synonymous with an auspicious or heightened awareness, a project in deciphering intimate questions we inevitably must trip upon, regardless of the language we use to describe our passage: the unspeakable nature of being without limit, within a physical body, upon a physical plane.

What Berssenbrugge suggests is that our collective will is a large consideration. The confines of the mind and perception constantly shift. We are reading down a sinuous passage which is never in a hurry. A hurry would be antithetical to process—which is also being. Time—which is also being. What is the relationship between time and poetics? Edouard Gilssant writes:

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“Every poetics is a palliative for eternity.”

The light has a curious quality of switching as we walk, or as we read or think ourselves down her elegant sweep of text. Her text accumulates in fluid delicate lines but it is also wild, exceedingly so. It goes where it will and it does not exclude multiple perspectives.

Berssenbrugge’s poetry is a type of ever expanding body or interior, impeccably framed. As we move the frame moves with us, lending both containment within concrete perceptual borders in which to contemplate a question or notion, and simultaneously, a sense of a borderless space that exists both in the text and within our sensory capacities. Even when noting what seem to be obvious or dislocating limitations of our perceptual abilities we are given a sense of something beyond them which we may not have previously considered. A door is opened in ether, vocalized, supposed.

Bachelard writes in The Poetics of Space:

“Here space seems to the poet to be the subject of the verbs ‘to open up,’ or ‘to grow.’ And whenever space is a value—there is no greater value than intimacy— it has magnifying properties. Valorized space is a verb. And never, either inside or outside us, is grandeur an object.”

Berssenbrugge writes:

“What is imprisoned in our wingbones will remember itself”

“Look at your fingertips The planets rising in your nails”

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Berssenbrugge points to remembering the act of remembering, which is different from the continuous self-knowledge we push against and ignore, an involuntary utterance or action which often precludes authentic remembering. The habitual is unlatched to become intentional. Is freedom the blank piece of paper upon which you may inscribe? And how does the body disown, disengage from, disrobe from habitual imprisonments? Elizabeth Grosz writes:

"The refrain is a kind of rhythmic regularity that brings a minimum of livable order to a situation in which chaos beckons. It is the tapping out of a kind of order or safety that protects the body through the rhythms of the earth itself." 4

The refrain, as an aspect of musicality and rhythmical remembering is akin to repeating a mantra, inscribing a verse, and then finding its inscription in the landscape, in the body. This is a type of protection brought about by listening (implying a musicality in reading or writing) which also dissects, undoes, destroys or reforges our perception. In other words, moving the mind outside of habitual impediments does not imply a conventional sense of safe order. Safety as a mode of dwelling within an intentional poetic space requires danger, risk and possibly ruin. In the volume Nest, Berssenbrugge has titled the last three poems "Safety." All of these works explore human constructs of safety by delving into possible mechanisms inducing fear alongside the question of what changes and what remains unchanged within ruin, in particular our understanding of the relation between interior and exterior. She writes:

"One folds in and re-opens to outside, not "as if" building for someone afraid of heights, who strains long, structural tresses of light, trying to wear out an image." 5

* Though Berssenbrugge’s work isn’t written within a structure that suggests refrain, it has a similar effect in the way that the text follows the reader, in the way in which we keep hearing the line or seeing an image. We create or extract the refrain, the mantra, the hypnotic rhythmic continuity that brings with it not necessarily an order, but the sonic mapping of a pulse. Protection through “the rhythms of the earth” is another way to view language as suggestive and vibrational.

“And any stick or straight line in your hand can be your spine,”  

In the poem “Irises” Berssenbrugge writes:

“In a world which transcends the confines of her transient being, she can reach and bring existence within the compass of her life, without annulling their transcendence. These invisible entities infuse the visible with femininity, showing nonlocation by the adjectival status of her mind. You place sixteen girls in a meadow and always fill it. They’re everyone, the world, implicit promise.”

What is it exactly, that transcends the confines of a transient being? Acknowledgement of ephemeral containment of the transcendent—a gaze which allows and affirms both the limited and unlimited aspects of being, connecting time on either side of the statement. And the poem itself, as a location which keeps repeating outside of time but within sound, a pulse.

Implicit promise is to read the body into the landscape, not seen as separate. The “invisible entities” could be a consciousness that sees such correspondences between stick and spine, and bodies as inherent possibility.

In the mystic aspect of all religions we find this notion of limitless potential for each human life as represented in the seed of the soul. Berssenbrugge’s work is not overlaid with any one dominant system or source, but rather, reminds us of many. She is adept at moving between worlds: artistic, visual, philosophical, sacred. She moves with such ease between languages and perspectives that many are evoked.

It isn’t possible to proceed in a line, to move from one point or idea to the next in the manner of a scaffold or outline. If one were to proceed in an order it would have to be an order of the body, which calls to mind the yogic system of the five bodies, or maya koshas, each seen as a layer. There is the physical

body, the energetic body, the mental and emotional body, the intellectual and intuitive body and the innermost body, the anandamayakosha. Kosha meaning sheath. Ananda meaning joy. All of the bodies are ephemeral, to be given back, except this fifth body, the innermost body of bliss, or soul. We cover the innermost body with Kleshas or sheathes of illusion. Berssenbrugge is able to rearrange these sheathes at will (as would a visual artist in a multi-layered work) and to direct our gaze through various lenses while acknowledging that all of the bodies of language exist simultaneously.

We often only think of the bodies we do not keep. It is more difficult to consider how to contact the innermost body, which is made of everything and nothing, upon which all of the other bodies depend. There is no clear route to this body. There are many practices. The practice of poetry is one path that can correspond with, probe, question and remind us of the existence of the innermost body, whether we perceive it or not.

The difficulty in creating a structure to represent and hold awareness on these many levels is mirrored in the poem, and in Berssenbrugge’s intent.

“For me, it seemed that love was a spiritual exercise in physical form,”

And that is why it is not possible to proceed in a line or a circle or even along the line of a landscape in discussing Berssenbrugge’s poetry. These realities, bodies of verse, permeate and traverse the many textual bodies and dimensions or sheathes of being, requiring the widest sense possible in order to speak through all layers, all simultaneous beings.

“No one can describe the relation between an experience that needs to be communicated and the form of that communication.”

How does an innovative poet, a poet writing now, consider the luminous? Resonance does not dictate any particular belief. A refrain is repeated countless times, throughout written history—the desire to express from within a finite ephemeral form a longing diametrically opposed to the limitations of physicality, temporality.

This continuous collective desire is one way to conceive of soul. Another is to think of that which remains unaltered, pure, like the anandamayakosha. A similar concept in Judaism is found in the birchot hahachar, morning prayer, that the soul can be reached, but it cannot be altered or stained.

Unblemished potential for each human life is one reading of “implicit promise.” Is it possible for a reader to proceed into such territory, such questions, without layering possible meanings over the surface or between the sheathes of a text?

“Think before that moment freedom is inside there. Think before the man and woman, their freedom of the animal among silvery trees.”

Berssenbrugge’s work evokes longing for the untouched, unblemished inarticulatable essence in many ways: through utterance, through silences, and in the shift that occurs in entering the poems. Reading her work is a tonic or alternative experience which reminds us of the impenetrable, the indispensable, the place that can be probed but not altered, and how that promise may alter us.

A contemplative perspective implies how we may effect change by first altering ourselves, how we see, how we consider ourselves and others, and then how we act. In this sense an intentional practice, whether it be sitting, reading, writing or any other engagement may be viewed as prerequisite to a meaningful activist process.

Another way to read “implicit promise” is that of transforming the protective rhythms of the earth into protective actions. Sixteen girls in a meadow are also a future. Promise is implied in girl, boy, person, body, body of earth.

Berssenbrugge likens the soul to the “implicit promise” of sixteen girls in a meadow who she describes as “everything” and “the world.”

“So she proposes a soul of fine-grained material, in order to hold this promise”

She conjures a location for containment, the possibility of temporarily capturing the consciousness of limitlessness. Reading this poem one has been guided to the meadow and is both watching and embodied in the figures represented.

She ends the first stanza with the following:

“If I dream I see a light on a new bud in the woods, this is feeling used as thought, beautiful because of my attempt to contain it.”

Rosmarie Waldrop writes in *Lawn of the Excluded Middle*:

“When I say I believe that women have a soul and that its substance contains two carbon rings the picture in the foreground makes it difficult to find its application back where the corridors get lost in ritual sacrifice and hidden bleeding.”

One reason it is difficult to locate this innermost being is that it has been covered over by endless naming of obstacles, interruptions, denials, the speed of daily life. If the soul were a reflection you sought in a mirror, then the mirror would be draped with various layers of cloth, dust, notes to oneself pasted layer upon layer.

Berssenbrugge’s writing acknowledges all of the layers which must be exposed in order to see something obscured—that our habits of perception are often impediments to acknowledging something we are trying to locate. The poet has already negotiated several layers before revealing to the reader a text which continues to unhinge the illusory assumption that there is no essential connectivity to apprehend.

Reading is hardly an involuntary act. It is willful, and willfully broken. Certain texts require that you stop checking something that pulls you out of the experience, as if you could read leaning over your own shoulder and shuddering.

Many worlds dissolve and others come into focus as we read. Must we then, bring sensation back into finger or toe, turn our heads to look and see, beyond

infatuation with certain sentences, what remains outside the perimeter of our reading light or like?

* . . . the places you get / through inwardness take time."

When reading The Heat Bird one may experience an immediate sense of being accompanied, first through a voice, then through an instruction to read inwardly—toward experience of the poem. Modest blocks of text are presented with light and air poured between. We read with an outward attention, with focus upon the text in front of us, automatically, as if that were the only direction. Reading inwardly, a different text becomes available. This is a subtle shift, not mechanical, and not directed towards the individual, but towards the space and light between words, the silence and how it presupposes, or rearranges possible meanings. We read not with the expectation of an extractable meaning, but to enter the world of the poem.

Dual directional awareness possible not only in reading—but as a practice—has been described by Vasant Lad (within an Ayurvedic philosophy) as double-arrowed attention.

“When you look outside, one arrow goes out. At the same time, a second arrow goes into the heart to look at the looker. This is called double-arrowed attention. In double-arrowed attention, a third phenomenon happens which is called witnessing.”

“Perception is a product of time and our perception is a learned phenomenon.”

If the most common arrow of attention, the arrow pointing out, is the only sight considered, an observer is easily caught in the surface, or illusory. Berssenbrugge’s attention moves in many directions at once, and permeates with a stillness which enables us to imagine the gaze of each attentive arrow. Heightened perception and a multiplicity of gazing points pierce and rearrange our field of vision. Inner vision becomes legible.

“You concentration is a large array, where debris in the mind appears as an intense shower of heat radiation, like a cluster of instincts to the body.”

In returning to read Berssenbrugge one immediately returns to the margins. They take the reader further than expected, expanding the page and preconceived notions of the form of the book as object. Even before any word is read a shift occurs. Her margins are far narrow beaches upon which to reflect on the breadth of her line, how it imitates a horizon, a place where earth meets sky. A place of the meeting of language and silence.

Joan Retallack writes:

“If silence was formerly what we weren’t ready to hear, silence is currently what is audible but unintelligible. The realm of the unintelligible is the permanent frontier—that which lies outside the scope of the culturally preconceived—just where we need to operate in our invention of new forms of life drawing on the power of the feminine.”

Berssenbrugge writes out into the edges of space transforming our perception. Thus the visual suggestion of a meditation before reading begins. Silence is inserted into our reading, the silence necessary in contemplating the line—which is concentrated time. We are cued to immersion in a field of language which stretches immediate expectation, slows a pulse. Can a reader know speed in her work, run, or scatter? The deliberate slowing necessary in order to absorb, even a first reading creates a deeper meditative field in which to experience language.

The conscious mind reads and the unconscious mind is enabled to exist within language at an uncommon pace. Slowness allows speed. Silence. Wading. While the lips and the breath slow, something else expands, races. A departure from the land of surface consciousness is possible. This transformative act of reading is a steady linguistic ambulation—always moving toward an edge of consciousness we are forced to redefine.

How does Berssenbrugge interrupt the idea of the form of the book or poem as commodifiable object?

The aim of any intentional practice is freedom. If the aim is freedom, then

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Berssenbrugge frees the reader of being given any predetermined answer, and returns us to Retallack's notion of unintelligibility as a permanent frontier of innovation.

An answer is a type of object if you consider that a conventional notion of reading is one that is transactional, like a conversation in which the listener expects to receive a piece of information. Berssenbrugge's poetry resists this premise. There is an intent to tie or weave many strands of consciousness together. The preconceived comes apart. The poem is not a placeholder for an experience or conviction, but becomes a resonant place in itself. A poem is a location which may appear different to each reader, and perhaps different to the same reader, over the course of many visits to the text.

Her work moves like a wave or a waving frond. Her abstraction is always moving—wed to materiality, form and location. Sometimes musicality is the form. Sometimes thought itself builds a visual structure.

When you hold up your hand or eye or a page—what we are given is more than a reflection of what may be seen. We are led into a complexly woven spectrum of speech acts, spaces, and thoughts.

Take all of Berssenbrugge's books down from a shelf and arrange them in an arc, a semi-circle that surrounds you. Little by little other texts are invoked to join the gathering: Wittgenstein, Cha, Retallack, etc.

A reading through is a non-systematic method of reading, whereby we proceed by association and observations evolve through conversations across and between writers.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha writes:

“Composition of the body, taking into consideration from conception, the soil, seed, amount of light and water necessary, the genealogy.”

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Bersenbrugge writes in opening the poem “Nest”:

“My mother tongue, Chinese, has an immemorial history before me.”

And later in the same first section of the poem:

“Non-comprehension tips ambivalent matter, as if there were two of us, here: one is Kuan Yin, one is mother tongue.

Her matter inserted, a motive, is always somewhere else, exiting one language, another without intent, translated as heart.” 17

In an interview Berssenbrugge writes:

“I believe one experience that made me into a poet was switching from Chinese to English, because then you see everything is relational. I think of poetry as a set of proportions, equivalences. And you see that language consists of these equivalences.” 18

The statement in the poem “Nest,” of two being present, mother tongue, and Kuan Yin, places language in the category of the sacred. Here Berssenbrugge defines poetry as an ability to see correspondences—between text and body, between seen and unseen, between one language and another, between the act of writing and recognition of the unnamable.

Cecilia Vicuna writes:

“The sum total of our thoughts creates the world.” 19

Bersenbrugge writes, in the poem “I Love Artists”:

“Creation is endless.” 20

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Bersenbrugge writes, in the poem “I Love Artists”:

“Creation is endless.” 20

We replay her phrasing which marks grooves in the brain, sonic memory. Poetry proves nothing yet we breathe it. We remember the groove worn into the brain.

“If existence is vibration, everything creates sound—trees, heart cells” 21

Berssenbrugge’s poetry requires a type of concentration which abandons those who want to own meaning.

There are those who don’t want to be bothered with presence. This is a real problem to the disingenuous. How long does it take to swallow a painting? And other quandaries to say nothing or little about. An augury.

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Books of poetry can appear hot to touch, disappearing, and seem to travel in clusters and bundles. Not enough to be cold to touch is another way to say still enough to detect motion. A languid current. Slow enough so that the mind may move fluidly.

A continuity in form, a placid entrance, a steady voice. Certain statements cannot be heard if they are stammered, cut spare, exclamatory. The urgency of this verse is partially time that has been prepared, or you could say the poet has invented a liquid space in which the reader enters. When the surface is serene we can plummet, dissolve into and inhabit various depths.

Water is a common image, a common location, of which we are mostly composed.

“A listener, like water, resonates dread in a blue vase, in glasses.” 22

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Phenomenology is entering the thicket or current we have already entered.

She doesn’t make a statement. She enters the thicket—statement becoming both.

Berssenbrugge enters, and simultaneously allows entrance—both of others, and of the thicket into herself.

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22 Ibid.
She writes in "Red Quiet":

“I look into a blossom, and its image sinks into me like winter rain.”

Wittgenstein writes:

“It is also a part of dissembling, to regard others as capable of dissembling.”

In phenomenology, empathy is considering another’s subjectivity and our engagement, our ability to recognize our bodies, alter our perceptions. Can we recognize the difference between seeing and entering? Berssenbrugge reminds us of our perceptual vantage and evokes a multiplicity of perspectives simultaneously. As we read we inhabit a text with moving parts and audibility. What we observe minute to minute may appear unchanged and yet within her text we see permutations for the possible as seemingly endless.

She writes in "Hearing":

“A voice with no one speaking, like the sea, merges with my listening, as if imagining her thinking about me makes me real.”

We recognize her horizontal line which mimics the landscape and a slow emanation is prescribed in reading. One enters the lines as a map, physical demarcations which outline a circumference, a landscape line.

In the longer landscape—or portrait of the line—breath becomes a necessity in reading and at times impels a physical turning of the book.

Contemplative practice requires a physical turning, a constant reorientation, or reframing of experience. It isn’t where the text takes us but the tangle of motion. A reader is enmeshed in the necessity of stopping to startle and to rearrange and reform her person—which is not merely thought-based. Something else is required of the speaker. By the poet. Of the reader.

Berssenbrugge creates not an edifice but a lookout. The reader walks along the

trail of words, but not to a singular point. Her lines appear unfixed, without end. They might begin dreamily, or precisely or embedded in an image or another text. We are given one look out, a precipice and then through a gaze, an interior or admission, perception shifts.

Nothing is what we initially see, and seeing again we have revolved.

The manner in which Berssenbrugge reads her work causes the listener to question the validity of rushing. We are all speed and functionality. We make a point or take a position. That some work must be rushed is an opposite and equally mystifying art. Tom Raworth comes immediately to mind. There is the weight of fast and the lure of what is never sudden, and yet suddenness happens with lingering. Form is sometimes an excuse to be soft or to leap. When we listen to Berssenbrugge we move associatively through a landscape of possibilities discarding nothing. We carry our weight. This is one premise of wading, wandering, becoming.

Charles Altieri writes:

Berssenbrugge the poet shaping distinctive affective states cannot be separated from Berssenbrugge the implicit theorist linking postmodern motilities to the referential commitments of contemporary science. And Berssenbrugge the lyric poet cannot be separated from the apparently anti-lyric flirtation with the seductions of objectivity. No wonder then that we have to use what often seems an outdated language of experiment if we are to bring together the energies of Berssenbrugge’s refusals with the forms of power articulated in her actual renderings of affective intensities. She seeks ways to force us back from narrative and drama to the more elemental phenomenological aspects characterizing how language helps make it possible for us to connect to a world beyond the ego.25

The world beyond the ego is a world difficult to render, not because we fear that language here fails us, but because here we fear conventional, normative or fossilized language. We fear the unknown and we fear our failure to embrace the unknown. We fear that language is not evolving. This failure implies that both writer and reader must give up the fear of unintelligibility.

The world beyond the ego is the world of “implicit promise,” “a world which transcends the confines of her transient being.”26 We all inhabit this world and we don’t inhabit it. Inclusion of many perspectives and types of language may be an aesthetic choice or possibly a resistance to the negation of connectivity that excludes possibilities. Berssenbrugge’s innovative resistance makes possible a room large enough for many poetic practices to stand shoulder to shoulder, line to line, or superimposed one upon another in various layers.

Joan Retallack writes:

“What we need is a robustly nuanced reasonableness, one that can operate in an atmosphere of uncertainty, that gives us the courage to forge on, to launch our hopes into the unknown—the future—by engaging positively with otherness and unintelligibility.”27

Invisibility is a form of resistance. We resist what cannot see, what we do not immediately accept. Berssenbrugge questions reliance upon the outward senses as a method for drawing correspondences. At the same time, her work is highly visual. She points to the difficulty in relying on the ways in which we represent reality. Berssenbrugge transcribes the invisible motion of thought, allows us to hear, and to envision thought. She enables an examination of the mechanisms of thought—a dimension both physical, painterly and not merely pictorial. Her works are vivid, yet also hidden.

In the poem “Honeymoon” Berssenbrugge writes:

like the inside of a body emits more feeling than its surroundings, as if the volume or capacity of relations would only refer to something inside, that I can’t see.”28

As the text travels in time so does the reader, possibly revealing what may only be perceived from the vantage of a particular number of years habitation (within the poem and upon the planet).

In the poem “I Love Artists” Berssenbrugge writes:

“I saw through an event, and its light shone through me.”

Seeing through an event means both to see in time, on the side before the event occurs, and also on the other side, once an event is complete, and to consider what has been modified in this happening. But to see through an event is also to see everything that occurs through the lens of the event, connecting each event—moment to this seeing. An awareness of how events color perception allows an observer to see with a new compass or orientation. The speaker doesn’t separate from happenings. And happenings become a type of medium or air in which we must read by thinking and wading, a type of double seeing. The light of an event may shine through the speaker, permeating text with a type of radiance. Events have the capacity to see into one, and experience then becomes multi-directional, often outside of a field we call nameable or imagine within conventional time.

In the same poem Berssenbrugge writes:

“Even if a detail resists all signification or function, it’s not useless, precisely.”

And yet the usefulness Berssenbrugge evokes is the usefulness of something that does not exist, that is not made with the intent of a particular purpose. In this light, connected awareness is a phenomenon similar to a poetry which embraces the unknown. It does not serve a purpose in the same way that a chair may serve a purpose. And yet a chair may serve many purposes which don’t immediately occur, and perhaps never occur to the makers of the chair. Consider Merce Cunningham’s dancers with chairs strapped to their backs. Consider a contemplative practice. One does not undertake such a practice with the premise of return. There is a particular purpose which may never be measurable. Poetry is not a measurable gift. The signification of a detail is a precise resistance. Resistance to expectation as to how to write is evident in

work which strikes out as fundamentally opposed to a poem as a location to represent hindsight.

"Arriving doesn’t occur from one point to the next." 30

Contributors’ Notes

EMILY AMENDOTH is a writer and artist currently residing in Philadelphia, where she co-curates the Moles not Molar Reading & Performance Series. Recent print publications include Exclusions #1-8 (Albion Books), Toward Eduard Forward (Horse Less Press); a biannual and multi-media collaboration "Property. None / Property. Undone" (TapRoot Editions), and an extended excerpt from "Muzzle Blast Dander" in Refuge/Refuge (vol. 3 of the ChainLinks book series). She regularly teaches literature, critical theory, the contemporary essay, and creative writing to students of all ages.

AMMEL ALCALAY’s recent books include Islanders (City Lights), and neither wit nor gold: from then (Ugly Duckling). Other books include Scrugmetal (Factory School), Memories of Our Future: Selected Essays (City Lights), After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture (University of Minnesota Press), and the Cairo Notebooks (Singing Horse Press). A new book of essays, A Little History, along with a reprint of from the warring factions, are due in 2012 from re:public/UpSet Press. Most recently, he is the initiator and General Editor of Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative, a series of student and guest edited archival texts emerging from the New American Poetry.

LUIZ ALVARENGA was born in San Salvador in 1984. She won the Alkimia poetry prize in 2002. She was a member of the literary workshops at La Casa del Escritor. She has written newspaper articles for El Diario de Hoy. In 2003 she published her chapbook Lento Féretro (Slow Coffin). She also co-edits a series of student and guest edited archival texts emerging from the New American Poetry.

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MATHIEU BERGERON lives in Montréal, teaches literature and creative writing in college and is currently working on his first novel.

ANA BOŽÉTVC is the author of Stars of the Night Commute (Tarpaulin Sky Press, 2009) and the forthcoming Rise in the Fall. She also co-edits, transcribes, and at The Graduate Center, CUNY, hunts the hydra/butterfly of knowledge.
Laynie Browne's most recent book is Roseate, Points of Gold (Diabé, 2011). Currently she edits for TriQuarterly and co-edits the anthology with Caroline Bergvall, Teresa Carmody and Vanessa Place, I'll Draw My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women (Les Fugues, 2012).

Sommier Browning is the author of Either Way I'm Celebrating (Birds, LLC, 2011), a collection of poems and comics, as well as three chapbooks, most recently THE BOWLING (Greying Ghost, 2010) with Brandon Shimoda. Her poems and drawings appear in EOAGH, The Denver Quarterly, EVENT, The Hairpin and other places. With Julia Cohen she curates The Bad Shadow Affair, a reading series in Denver.

Mary Burger is a writer and artist in Oakland. She works as a landscape designer, helping to create gardens at public schools. Her most recent book is Then Go On (Litudus Press, 2012). The excerpt of "Matlike" printed here is from a longer work of 3,500 words. Another excerpt appeared in The Brooklyn Rail in November 2011.

Garrett Caples lives in Oakland, CA, and is the author of The Garrett Caples Reader (Angle Press/Black Square Editions, 1999), Complications (Meritage Press, 2007), and Quintessence of the Minor (Wave Books, 2010). A collection of essays, Retrievals, is in return. He's an editor at City Lights Books and a contributing writer to the San Francisco Bay Guardian. He is also co-editing the Collected Poems of Philip Lamantia (2013) for UC Press.

Amy Catanzano is the author of Multiversal (Fordham University Press), recipient of the 2010 PEN USA Literary Award in Poetry and Fordham's POL Prize, I, Epiphany (Erudite Fange Editions), and an e-chapbook, the heartbeat is a fractal (Ahahada Books). Recent critical and creative work on the intersections between poetry and science appears in Jacket2, Poems and Poetics, Give A Fig, Interim, and Critiphoria. Originally from Boulder, Colorado, Amy currently lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Travis Cebula graduated from the MFA program at Naropa University in 2009—the same year he became the founding editor and publisher of Shadow Mountain Press. He is the author of one full-length collection of poetry and six chapbooks, most recent of which, but for a brief interlude at Versailles, is due to be released in Fall of 2011 by the wonderful Highway 101 Press. This year Western Michigan University awarded him the Pavel Strut Fellowship for Poetry.

Marcus Cvijin grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, earned a BA in Theater from Brown University (1999), and an MFA in Studio Art from University of California, Irvine (2009). Marcus is a co-founder of New Urban Arts, a non-profit in Providence, RI, and a co-organizer for 2 years of Perform! Now!, a performance festival in Los Angeles. Marcus teaches Art History and Curatorial Practice at Maryland Institute College of Art, and creates prop-based performances, text works, sculptures, and drawings. He writes about art, often for the Internet magazine, artslant.com. His writing has also appeared in out of nothing (online), listenlight (online), The Futility of Making Salad
ROQUE DALTON, militant poet, was born in 1935 in San Salvador. One of the most prominent figures in Latin American literature, he was the author of many books of poetry, memoir, essays, and hybrid-genre works. Among his books are El Torno Ofensivo (The Duty of the Offended, 1962), La Ventana en El Rostro (The Window in the Face), Miguel Mármol, (1972), Las Historias Prohibidas del Pulgarito (Forbidden Tales of the Little Thumb, 1974), and Pórculo: Poeta que Esa Yo (Poor Little Poet was I, published posthumously in 1994). In the 1960s, under threat of death in El Salvador for his radical organizing and publishing activities, Dalton fled to Cuba, where he participated in militant training camps, and eventually to Prague where he worked as a journalist. Dalton’s poetry has often served as material for protest songs and chants in Central America. In 1975, accused of being a CIA informant, he was executed by members of the militant group to which he belonged, the ERP (People’s Revolutionary Army).

The poet DOT DEVOTA is from a family of ranchers and rodeo stars. Her writing can be found near New Franklin, MO.

DOLORES DORANTES has published six books including, most recently, Querida Fábula (Práctica Mortal, CONACULTA, forthcoming 2012) and Estilo (Mano Santa Editores, 2011). Jen Hofer’s translations of her poems into English have been published in a number of literary journals and in the anthology Sin puertas visibles: sexoPUROsexoVELOZ and Septiembre, a bilingual edition of two books from Dolores Dorantes by Dolores Dorantes was co-published in early 2008 by Counterpath Press and Kenning Editions; a new volume with the entire series will be published in 2012 by Kenning Editions. Dorantes lived in Ciudad Juárez for 25 years, and currently lives in Los Angeles where she teaches workshops in autobiographical writing and documents the lives of exiles through Proyecto Sur Los Ángeles (http://www.proyectosurlosangeles.blogspot.com/).

KRISTIN DYECKT is a 2012 NEA Literary Translation Fellow. Her past translations and commentary are featured in the bilingual editions Did You Hear about the Fighting Cat?, Something of the Sacred, Time’s Arrest, and Violet Island and Other Poems. Recent translations of other poems by Juan Carlos Flores appear in The Brooklyn Rail, La Habana Elegante. Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas, Sentence: A Journal of Prose Poetics, Drunken Boat, and Words without Borders.

JUAN CARLOS FLORES, born in 1962 in Cuba, is well known in literary circles around Havana. In 1990 he won the David Prize for his first book, Los pájaros escritos. His second collection won the 2002 Julián del Casal prize. Selections here are taken from his third book (2009), El contragolpe (y otros poemas horizontales). It is dedicated to the “poetic resurrection” of Alamar, a massive community of housing projects where Flores has lived for decades.

CALUM GARDNER is currently a student of English at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and enjoys philology, chess puzzles and the company of cats.

ARIEL GOLDBERG writes and performs poetic criticism on photography and other things. Recent publications include Picture Cameras (Trafficker Press) and The Photographer without a Camera (NoNo Press). Goldberg is completing their book / performance of The Photographer at The Invisible Dog in Brooklyn during the summer of 2012.

NOAH ELI GORDON is the author of several books, including The Source (Futurepoem, 2011), and Novel Pictorial Noise (Harper Perennial, 2007). Gordon is the co-publisher of Letter Machine Editions, and an Assistant Professor in the MFA program in Creative Writing at The University of Colorado–Boulder, where he currently directs Subito Press.

OTONIEL GUAYARA was born in 1967 in Hacienda Chanzónico, San Juan Opico, La Libertad, El Salvador. He is the author of over twenty books of poetry, including El Violento Hormiguero (The Violent Anteater, 1988), Despaciada Ciudad (Brutal City, 1999), No Agno para Turistas (Not Suitable for Tourists, 2004) and Proclamaciones para Analfabetos (Proclamations for the Iliterate, 2009). During the civil war in El Salvador he was a part of the guerilla resistance and he founded the radical collective Círculo Literario Xibalbá. He has worked in advertising agencies and as a journalist for radio and newspapers. His poetry has been translated into eight languages and has appeared in countless magazines, newspapers, anthologies, and exhibitions in America and Europe. He has represented El Salvador culturally in sixteen countries and has received over twenty literary awards. In 2010 he organized an international conference for poets in San Salvador entitled “The Duty of the Oppressed.” He is directing editor of Mazatl y Alkimia, and member of Fundación Metáfora. He also directs the editorial project La Chifurnia and the press picaucha inhilica editores.

J/J HASTAIN is the author of several cross-genre books including long past the presence of common (Say it with Stones Press), trans-genre book libertine monk (Scrambler Press) and anti-memoria a vivaz (Black Coffee Press/Eight Ball Press, forthcoming). J/J has poetry, prose, reviews, articles, mini-essays and mixed genre work published in many places on line and in print.

Poet and philosopher CLAUDIA HÉRÓDIER was born in August 1950, San Salvador, El Salvador. She studied philosophy at the Jose Simeon Canas Central American
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JEN HOFER is a Los Angeles-based poet, translator, interpreter, teacher, knitter, bookmaker, public letter-writer, and urban cyclist. Her quilted poem The Missing Link will be published by Insert Press, and her translations of books 1-4 of Dolores Dorantes by Dolores Dorantes will be published by Kenning Editions. Her most recent books are the homemade chapbook Lead & Tether (Dusie Kollektiv, 2011) and Ivory Black, a translation of Negro marfil by Myriam Moscona (Les Fugues Press, 2011). Her installation titled “Uncovering: A Quilted Poem Made from Donated and Foraged Materials from Wendover, Utah” is currently on view at the Center for Land Use Interpretation in Utah.

MIQUEL HUÉZO-MEXICO was born in San Salvador in 1954. He is the author of thirteen books of poems and essays. His books of poetry include El pozo del tirador (The Well of the shooter, 1988), Memoria del cazador furtive (Memory of the Furtive Hunter, 1995), El ángel y las fieras (The Angel and the beasts, 1997) and Comarca (Countries, 2003.) In the 1970’s he published the magazine El Pape with the writers Horacio Castellanos Moya and Roger Lino. During the Salvadoran civil war, while underground, he directed the Radio Farsáculo Martí. In 1990, he returned from exile and founded the journal Tendencias, a publication essential in the post-war transition to democracy in El Salvador. He served as director of publications for the National Arts Council in El Salvador from 1996 to 2004. As part of the editorial team of the Human Development Report on El Salvador (UNDP), he is a reference point on issues related to migration and cultural change in El Salvador.

CATHERINE IMBRIGLIO is the author of Parts of the Mass (Burning Deck), which received the 2008 Norma Farber First Book Award from the Poetry Society of America. These poems are from her new manuscript Intimacy. She lives in Providence, RI.

CROW JANE is an anonymous international all girl poetry collective. All poems are collaborations by all members of our group. We do not consider our poems to be translations. These are English originals. However, these “same” Crow Jane poems were first composed in four different languages, so their rewriting in English required art, ardor, and arduous application. Our home cities are Kyoto, Lyons, Bath, New York City, and our newest Crow nests in Bruges.

University, UCA. She is member of the folk ensemble Mahucutah. Among her many books of poetry are Volcán de Mimbre (Wicker Volcano, 1978) and Tracién Contra la Palabra (Treason to the Word, 2002). She has been included in various anthologies in El Salvador and internationally. During the civil war in El Salvador she lived in Nicaragua and Guatemala, where she was involved in the artist’s collective In Arte Nueve. She returned to El Salvador in September 1994. In 2002 her monograph La Idea del Sueto en Michel Foucault (Idea of the Subject in Michel Foucault) was published. She is currently an active member and co-founder of the first women’s literary collective in El Salvador Poetry y Más. Since 1996 the group has hosted events and workshops and published poetry in San Salvador.

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WAYNE K OESTENBAUM has published fifteen books of poetry, criticism, and fiction. His most recent books are Humiliation (Picador, 2011), The Anatomy of Harpo Marx (University of California Press, 2012), and a new collection of poetry, Blue Stranger with Mosaic Background (Turtle Point Press, 2012).

PAULA KONEZNY lives in Sonoma County, CA with four cameras and numerous rose bushes. Her poetry and reviews have appeared most recently, or are forthcoming, in Shearsman, New American Writing, RATEUX, OR, Sidekicks, Rain Taxi, and American Book Review. Her chapbook, Installation, is forthcoming in 2012 from Tarpaulin Sky. She is an assistant editor of Volt. She can be contacted at paulagrahpress@gmail.com

KAREN LEPRI is a poet, translator, and writer. Her work has appeared in Conjunctions, Chicago Review, Vanitas, 1913, and Shearsman. Lepri is the author of the poetry chapbook Fig 1 published in 2012 by Horse Less Press. She was recently a Writing Fellow at the Millay Colony.

ADAM KATZ is a Ph.D. candidate in the Buffalo Poetics Program. His writing has appeared in Abraham Lincoln, boo, BlazeVOX, Sous Rature, and the anthology Imaginary Syllabi. He is affiliated with Vera Maurina Press (www.veramaurinapress.org).

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KAREN LEPRI is a poet, translator, and writer. Her work has appeared in Conjunctions, Chicago Review, Vanitas, 1913, and Shearsman. Lepri is the author of the poetry chapbook Fig 1 published in 2012 by Horse Less Press. She was recently a Writing Fellow at the Millay Colony.


RAFAEL MENESES-OCHOA was a poet, novelist, journalist and translator. He was born in 1959 in San Salvador and died in 2011. He spent many of his teenage and early adult years in exile in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Mexico, where he lived thereafter for 23 years. Among his nineteen published books are Algunas de las Muertas (Some of the Dead, poetry, 1986) Ramón del Valle Inclán (novel, 1990) winner the Premio Latinoamericano, and Trece (2003). His last book was Un Mundo en el que el Cielo que Cae y Cae (A World in Which the Sky Falls and Falls, 2011) In 2001 he founded La Casa del Enviator (Writer’s House) in San Salvador, an important place for performances, workshops, and gatherings, which continues to support young writers.

CHRISTIAN NAGLER is a writer, translator, and artist. Recent writings have appeared in Fillop, and in the books Somatic Engagement (Chainlinks Press), and Six Lines of Flight (UC Press.) For many years he was a coordinator of The Colima Project, a community organizing and oral history project in the town of Colima, El Salvador. He is translator of the novel la disipores by Horacio Castellanos Moya, and of the selected works of Alberto Masferrer, an early 20th century Salvadoran poet and political economist.

EUGENE OSTASHKEVSKY is working on a manuscript entitled The Pirate Who Does Not Know the Value of Pi. The poem in this magazine comes from the part of the manuscript where the pirate and the parrot, having gotten shipwrecked on a deserted island, bicker nonstop.

OMAR FIMENTA is an interdisciplinary artist from Tijuana/San Diego who works with media such as photography, video, installations, and text, in order to explore social landscapes and collective and individual histories. He has published three books of poetry; his most recent, Escribo desde aquí [I Write From Here] won the Emilio Prados Poetry Prize in 2011 and was published in Spain.

JOHN FLUCKEER is a writer, interpreter, educator and translator. His work is informed by experimental poetics, radical aesthetics and cross-border cultural production and has appeared in journals and magazines in the U.S. and Mexico. He has published more than five books in translation from the Spanish, including essays by a leading...
Mexican feminist, short stories from Ciudad Juárez and a police detective novel. His third chapbook, Killing Current, will be published by Mouthfeel Press in 2012.

RAY RAGGOTA’S collections of poetry include Opposite Ends (Paradigm), Grandines Episode (Paradigm), and Varieties of Religious Experience (Burning Deck). His work has appeared in Denver Quarterly, New American Writing, Shyly, Hambone, Shuffle Boil, and other magazines. He lives in Rhode Island and works as a writer and editor.

SARAH RIGGS is the author of Autobiography of Envelopes (Burning Deck, 2012), 60 Texts (Ugly Duckling Press, 2010), Waterwork (Chax Press, 2007) and Chain of Minuscule Decisions in the Form of a Feeling (Reality Street Editions, 2007). She is the translator of Isabelle Garren’s Face Before Against (Litmus Press, 2008) as well as several other books of contemporary French poetry. A member of the bilingual poetry collective Double Change (www.doublechange.org) and founder of the inter-art non-profit Tamaas (www.tamaas.org), she lives in Paris where she is a professor at NYU-in-France.

JOCelyn SADENBerg is the author of Mortal City (Parentheses Writing Series), CUSP (Kelsey St. Press), Negativity (Atelos), and Dispossessed (Belladonna). She is the founding editor of Krupskaya Books.

TIMOTHY SHEA is the author of Unflux (Orchises, 2000).

FRANK SHERLOCK is the author of Over Here, The City Real & Imagined (w/ CAConrad) and a collaboration with Brett Evans entitled Ready-to-Eat Individual. His latest chapbook Very Different Animals is forthcoming from Fact-Simile Press in 2012.

Born in Vietnam and raised in San Diego, HUNG Q. TU is the author of three books of poetry. He currently lives in Phoenix.

JASMINE DREAME WAGNER’s poems have appeared in New American Writing, American Letters & Commentary, Aufgabe, Colorado Review, Verse, and other literary magazines. She has received fellowships and grants from the Hall Farm Center for Arts & Education, Kultuuritehas Polymer, and the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. Wagner teaches creative writing at Western Connecticut State University and will be a fellow and resident artist at The Wassaic Project in the winter/spring of 2012.

SIMONE WHITE’s chapbook Unrest will be published by Ugly Duckling Press in 2013. She is the author of House Envy of All of the World (Factory School, 2010). Her work has also appeared in the chapbook Dolly (Q Ave Press, with the paintings of Kim Thomas), The Refuse, Callalo, Floughshaves, Tuesday; An Art Project and in the exhibition catalog for the Studio Museum of Harlem’s Flow. She lives in Brooklyn.

BRIAN WHITENEX works in a project called Displaced Press.

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BRIAN WHITENEX works in a project called Displaced Press.
About the Artist

Yasmina Khan is a New York based artist working closely with architecture, visual representation and (de)constructed landscapes. She currently attends Columbia’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.
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