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BRIAN KIM STEFANS
CATHERINE DALY
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ELIZABETH TREADWELL
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EDWIN TORRES
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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

"No-one knows collectivity.
A generation gets to write its own history."
—Matt Hart

Struck by this while typesetting it (p. 22). True? (In MH’s poem it’s one half of a dialogue/dialectic). Lately I’ve become involved in several email “what are we doing? where, if anywhere, are the convergences, generational ties-that-bind (yikes?)” back-and-forths. They’re marked as much by the awareness of dissimilarities as by any sense of a coherent “group project” (Elmer’s glue, colored crepe paper...). Jacques Debrot to me: “I like these a lot. They’re particularly interesting to me because we are working in 2 opposite directions in a way.” What does “opposite” mean in this scheme?

And what does this have to do with History (“history shouldn’t be a mystery / our stories real history / not his story” — Public Enemy. But then, can one square the dissing of “his story” with the positing of “real history”? Isn’t the demystified “real” the greatest lie ever told by “him”? But then, in the vernacular, does real mean real? And anyway, isn’t literary history the reification of good gossip, in which case I should be saying Mlinks is in Morocco (was) right now?

As for the work herein, I’m just trying to be Ellington to everybody’s Paul Gonsalves (Newport ’56), letting them blow as long as they want and reorganizing around the results. Can you steal the master’s tools and use them to dismantle the master’s house? That’s a question answered by Ellington along with most of the writers in this volume, variously and complexly and at least halfway in the affirmative (and what luck to have Ashbery here, then).

Discuss disgust. How? How with out getting all theoretically pleasurable, I mean? Of Sianne Ngai’s “Raw Matter: A Poetics of Disgust,” Andrew Klobucar had said (PhillyTalks 6), “Niche Markets are created more quickly than ever, and one might eroticize Ngai’s programme as easily as defecation can serve as a form of radical sexuality.” Kasey Mohammad last week to me: “Ngai’s pleasure is a more informed pleasure that avoids the cliches and easy gestures of pomo ‘desire’ etc. No? Klobucar seems to be being slightly too literal in this way, missing the fact that Ngai is ahead of him, but with a committed ‘theoretical pleasure’ that doesn’t rely just on chestnuts such as ‘radical sexuality.’”

No final answers here but read Ronald Palmer’s “wombs” & sec. 6 of Hart’s “Coterie Behaviour,” to name just two relevant moments, and see what you think (but not without accepting the dialogue between these moments and the ones throughout which are the very opposite, it would seem, of disgust(ed)ing and yet — from Stefans to McCarthy, before in between and after — make their claims for agency, political and otherwise (also political).

It’s the symbolic economy, stupid!

COMBO

K. SILEM MOHAMMAD

Four Poems

Dietary of Ghostly Health

I.

either with or upon his destiny, at balance a plural exact crescento proffered a calculus to reckon the courts, the mind’s marketplace, crated among frills and postures1 for the most genteel artifacts, can’t stop persuading—rather brainwashing—us, the audience facts, threats, and terrors related to being humanitarian whose images we’d like to MONUMENTALIZE. what follows, attempts to boot overt effects in this standoff, coax a scale beyond incomplete progress2 the feet which embark on pilgrimage, wear out aberrant prosthetics in their place, endowed with bionic powers beyond ambient, something—elegance, sprezzatura, supernal disco funk—disappears, and disappearing reveals that value never fully realized something had yeasted their brains
even as fast as conservative efforts to fortify the millwheels flywheels wheelwrights facsimile steamships initially so enchanting, they are mad, or deemed so now they loom and sway, the fried-egg vesicles try to appropriate tropes for outcrowing dependence

1 Pop-up Cinderellas that squeal the infinity squeal, Flack that remains swept up capable of soaring dizzily Into a Berlin Wall—unassimilable detail, crashing pillars of static (“Sherpa” 19-22)

2 ... the Holy Bible is filled with heroes, but at what point Does an anodyne twaddle and a dull, poisonous, one-eyed blab Plummet down the coin shaft of a bibliophile’s zeal (“Yuppie Dog Stuff” 8-10)
II.

who's interested in smoothing things over? of course
the presence we admire we silently plead with,
what place

has a militant gesture, a discourse with claims
to the point you've already rejected, the ritual humiliation—
whose impotence stands out sharply from the microscopic
process
(again, necessarily), becoming even more microscopic
because at each pass through the hypodermic needle—
when you reproduce the creche display
(molecules there are no molecules to shape with)
(when you use molecules as tools you make an ASS out of U and ME)
at some point, your agenda should reduce me to obsolescence
and morality?

the croup shakes, a Britisher guzzling from the chapless terror
the wheatleaf diplomacy has gotten a governor some eyes
RAQUETBALL for instance ceases to signify as a "theme"
this brand of practical criticism assumes the properties of an event
because they don't leave a reputation for being finicky
possibly being our predecessors (a finickiness
of origins, themselves "beholden" to a vague criterion
badly demarcated in—the tea leaves
whose excess may be starred and frozen for directional skips)
statues of principals in this legislative dogpatch OK to “inhabit”

III.

—the denial of the sit-down dinner world
not humbled by pride in glad frontiers

note to self:
collate formula as part of ongoing project of pencil-thin
waystation repair:

FRONTIERS such that
((denial / waystation))
((denial / waystation ?))
((denial / waystation’))

> pride
< gladness

allow as you would bestow, bestow as you would impose
I ask this of you and I have asked this of you, I have entered
the estimation of what it costs in the beckoning to you
I have traced the scrimmage backwards as I had long planned
so that it now occurs what sires multiple versions tyrannizes its edicts
I am reporting this to you and I am discounting its effects!

IS THIS ON?
WHAT WAS I EXPECTING? something expensive
in a careless manner, e.g., transplanted
from an electrical port to a plain wooden base??
perhaps, those chords I was taught to strike and you to hear bright chimes
in your standing transfixed
and while you're there, stand transfixed. when you're done
with that, stand transfixed. then stand transfixed for a while
got something for you you're going to get a kick out of
got whiskers and a musical saw —a hint, a palpable hint

3 Oh thou brackish thespian, could I replenish thy venom sac now,
What pranks and sarcomas wouldst thou cling to?
Thus happily I am casting to sneeze through the belly that flares,
Kissing avers to the surname it displeasures, see what is happening?
("At Phoenix" 43-46)

4...let's just forget I have an upset stomach—
Eye of the seance, toothy fresh halves are slaying lichen chips
Buff the hoarse, hairy cheater, heave as a yan to the flesh,
Heaves a' sighing lies if cheat bum tho' eerie sore chopper
("Slap Cadillac" 5-8)

5 I am singing to the nutshell not the kernel of the phrase
I am pining in the outskirts not the heart of the malaise
I bled when I was thirsty and I wept when I was tired
I took the thing I wept for and not what I desired
("Old Cranky" 9-12)

6 Fathom: bivouac, corral, carouse, chorister, tropical cat
Of Aryan threnodies by three and nineteen to your experiment?
Hey sis, bein' a friend o' you is too human ere expert torment
("Tarquin, Supplier of Expert Torments" 13-15)
Crawling with Cops

the Scientific seen through mists:
the faint heart of the visible V-8 engine,
nouvelle angioplasty in clear bubble pac

to them he is no great innovator
having smelled the grey bologna on his pencils
—universally, Weimar Republic

the religious brideprice
the republican corps d'esprit

father to the right honorable lava rats
the bona fide heaven, their archival tents

the smiling triffid still fits
a pinch as it roars up the nerves

the naive suckling that just continues
just causes greed and disciples' fury
just got back from the widowmakers
and I broiled until the hamstrung song

Orientalist Ska Pastiche

the Turkess belligerent in her robes,
a victory honk for photorealism
pads a motherly decibel near the gazette

an exceptional furnisher of genres,
true boudoir cordovan nailed to the flask
to experience true crispiness

a defense attorney's trick turned French tickler—
cavorting for the doors of the saloon
and immaculate dynasties to the marshall

with twin stars tied to a bum steer
when what to my wondering eyes should appear, but the workaholic trace of vanitas

you and I are scar tissue brought at rice time,
Edgar Rice Burroughs in trim Kahuna wreaths,
Selectric turned Range Rover kissing the pieties
twisted muscles committed to the prose bull
and the shell games and the Circadian relics
the neurosis that will build as it fills all dialogue

you and I implant the dead signals,
take our chances in immense jackboot resemblances
in the hoot 'n' holler at the twelve o'clock

you nipped me, you named the feats
I knew that cryogenics and decrepit guys
would follow the social production tally-ho

although you may as well have crept,
the hideaways deserted in their splendor—
to you Vaudevillian I am correct in goofing

Ragtime Takeover

rogue velvet
Richelieu
crowbar

Lapdog leads into Studebaker
Hardwood ring surrounding Ecuador

Steeplechase
Luna
Dreamland

How them geese do honk
A pushpin surface to chew on

[-dum
[-dee
Dundee

Pharisee crouched in a bower
A quotidian Saul at the close encounter
Ought to fall madly in love
ought to found the tower of daughter
ought to put on the Ritz
on the half shell
aboard the Merganser
aboard the Steve McQueen

Elope and devote a toboggan
to the toast of mon tresor
the semper fi palindrome
the broken neck in touche
the choice of time capsules
Saturdays at the corpse of rivers

JOHN ASHBERRY

Greased Lightning

I.
Reading this folderol
sewers flooded the drains
short-circuited the marble furniture
the truth exploded into jigsaw shapes

A man comes after
What do you want, he says
Nothing we're only waiting here
waiting for the last crisis

In a thousand years harebells will bloom.

II.
The guide got excited
had never seen a hot-air balloon before.
"Please, may I touch?"
It should unload all its sorrow, all cares

into the next room
dim with the mirrored bureau
in whose drawers stockings sleep.

I practiced my piccolo all day
and far into the night

No one caused me to inquire
My letterbox is empty from A to Z.

Next blouse we'll have to undo the quagmire
but that won't be for a long time
till Tuesday.
Look, the rain is shaking the tree-branch now
in anger
All the pets have run away.
It is my coronation day.

This particular ladder
picked out in wired diamonds
against the febrile darkness
your so-so clasp
takes me for another
I must needs go indoors

tie a feather to my forehead and oh sob.

ANGE MLINKO

Nouns for Maggie

Like karaoke, cowboy manqué & broke,
or hitchhiking to Medina, or
drinking at the cybercafe watching
tuck drivers unload chickens or
sticker psychedelia on the dash
& windshields, or the noise
from the strikes when the moon's
jacked over the teleboutiques
shepherds & hippie girls or
ex-marine going to a rave
surfboards guitars & women
at the well hangout
with poison datura or oleander
to give to a half-mad philosopher
who says You don't go
right to the moment of being born
before you start to wait out life!
just as old-fashioned
as you ever were biologically
pining for your imagination city
BRIAN KIM STEFANs

The Straw Camel

A curl in the centuries-long eyelash.          A bittersweet symphony topped off by a gorgeous guitar solo from former Smiths guitarist Johnny Marr. A jaunt dans un bateau. A nose blows its nose and takes with it all currency. A mind.... A night song in the woods.

But that doesn't make me a Protestant.
Birth. Broken ephebe stalks the corporate with a toothpick twitching. Bean counters might question the album's accessibility, but to quote "Juicy Fruit" by Mtume: this joint's "ico-sayl"

Chang Ti above alone rules.
Computers and popinjays, it's all vicious Carlyle. Contempeointy snocker and breaths of gin. Challenging the youth as the panopticon stumbles.

Dalliance with puritan exoskeleton: pop balloons, they go pop! with demonic pitch. Don't be embarrassed. Dust the bending ape that grins. Dyslexic American untk theI Y 1:1 0 1 0 1 0 1 s run out. Demonstrating with a line that stinks.

Effortlessly thinking. Enough about me, what do you think of me? Ephemerual. Eros tucks in its gills Fingers holding the lamps.

For the kids.
Frailty is lieb.

For O'Hara wasn't a member of the French Resistance, but might have wanted to have been; so somewhat challenging verb constructs march nightly from the television and "replace your hips with another man's hips," this for the man who's recently confessed, bluntly puncted a meat-and-potato disparagement of theory, hunted dusty junkets to catalogue the imploded stars, "far and away the leader in culture capital" — bred in the capitol, destitute of attitude.

Fume at the choice alliteration.
Fou-hi by virtue of wood;
Chin-nong, of fire; Hoang Ti ruled by the earth, Chan by metal.


He's managed to stink up the whole cube.

"He became fixated with sex and with a taste for younger girls," Breault says. He drew the cloth back — and there was the Coup de Dés, dried anemones. He had a lot of magnetism because he was taking the Bible and giving women an active role instead of the passive role. He trails. He wakes. Heathcliff.

Her name was Sue. Hips turn.

His Eno-ism disappeared in an "effeminate" scrawl. His Meredith Baxter Bernie-ism descended in a rage of hale. How treat this?

I'm silent.
I've given up on emotion.
I am yours.
I didn’t speak my mind.
I don’t think much of this will make sense.
I stare.
I wonder...

I am speaking a twelve-tone solitude
so you can barely hear it, Youth,
you’ve been replaced in my affections
by a prize-winning hamstring
that’s been laughing at the stats.
“I don’t love them,” the analysand trembles.

*Immoderate love of women,
 immoderate love of riches,
cared for parades and huntin’.*

It’s evil twin day at Yankee Stadium, how’d
they do it? It’s silence here. It’s spoiled my dew.

If I couldn’t hear this sound, but yes I hear it.
It’s tethered, consistent, remarkable — is clear.

If I temper with your heartsick sender
these bungalows are only provisional
history, the blue milk sky or the white
milk one, well, that’s a whole paragraph
of contentment, bursting the bucket,
silence in the cities; so in peril we go
on and on, mixing tracks at our feet
with the dust, bone, leaves, yes, Mason
— you’re angry, but also a demonstration.

I know, indeed, these streets wend
further than knobby knees
carry thee. It opens up there here [Jitterbugging eloquently, tense, but solid (salad).

Let them sleep, criminal,
talk off your brandy,
Mediterranean jazz.
Let us. Laminated dark.

Lizard.

Loyal stencil, beaming cousins.
Listlessly the doves

mannerize the windows.
Let’s turn out the lights.
Largesse, it talks to you
with mouthfuls of vices.
Let’s hope, and then give up.

Mussed.

Much ado about the sentence, not the sentence.
Makes them gum-like. Managing a vocal deterrence.
Normally.

Not by your virtue but by virtue of Tching Tang.
Not now.
Not this.

Not to totalize.
Noting the lack of diatribe.

Obsequious?
On a background of pure exuberance.

On my nails.
On the pants 5.
On.
On to the next chump.
“On” the trophy.

On a boat
be like on a boat
until you
forget and cry.

One can’t be bothered by snow, then.
One step away, and it’s cerebralism.
One two referentiality, is that it?
One, two, I’ve said this several times.
“Ooh, such a delicate thing.” Oh
slavery, I didn’t cry out, whipping pen
against wall, where the ant, centipede and
moth sit, stilly. *Other women.*
Our stands can be so difficult to outlast.
Progress "monstrous,"
what has never
entered the dream book,
eschatological gruel.
Paranoia punks a
check, in the thirty-floor
walk-up.
Party acronyms.
Parliamentary sheets.

Pornography in China?
"Poor aspirin addicts."

Peer endlessly into your version of "lost souls."
Perfect as Cupid, find a love. Pick on
someone your own size, if that's what
you mean. Pop a little Alan Turing
in the CD player, will you, honey? Primitive,
punched in the eye with a wheel on a line.

Rhythms titillate the gluteus maximus,
but the prose is rolled out cheap,
the gargantuan is never so replete with
the biases of the social and in
this order. Remarked. Raise up the glass.
Really, guv, I loathe your suspects.

Reading contemporary poetry, even
if it's bad poetry. Rhyme was totalizing.

She gliding stilly between thoughts...
*She of the damask eyes.*
Shelley possible.
She sulks.
She realized it was running.
So demean it.

*So far are only citizen. So finally we see you.*
Standardization of effect.
Standing downwind from prose.
Suggesting a novella.

So I settled for some Andre Breton,
a Corona Light, a guilty package of Gitanes,
The nasty “Peaches and Cream” uses Beck’s Beeheart-y guitar intro as a springboard for a gutbucket cowbell groove reminiscent of the Jacksons “One Bad Apple.” The frailty cats are coming, and the mystery that surrounds you.

The silence damns its millions with syllogisms in cursive. 

thump-thump thump-thump

The skull of the couch placates my loneliness, you see.

thump-thump thump-thump

The Tempers scare, but that’s talent. The throng levitate. There, that was easy.

thump-thump thump-thump

To the spices I sling my souls.

The therapeutic moment: spelling a c.

The burgeoning century’s customs grimace ha ha.

The Brady Clan. The dandelion urges?

The stadiums pop. The shotgun in your “market forces” that weeds out everything evil in high-minded culture. The tap. They called him “scourge.” They got a raisonette. They advertised balance as the solution to poems. These vultures. They surrender.

These. These banished loves These granular days These tea leaves are frank

This way =>

Three years in preparation, the Epic just rolled off his lips as the daughters all rallied with his packing slips, and mustered Eden. “Turn, face me.”

Vandal my vandal. “Venerators.” Wary of their spelling. Was this toss good?

Wash the lips. We’re 6. We are up. Hia is down.

While all of them tail gray hairs in singular swatch. While revelatory spinners doctor the cannibal ounce. Who else would tell us that? Who monitors the onions down here? With a lilt, and a parry, a laugh proceeds to a well-hung conclusion among the foliage of the Sunday bric-a-brac. With his dimples, flowing brown hair and beatific smile, many women found the 5’11” Koresh attractive. You make a garbageman scream.

Yeou taught men to break branches Seu Gin set up the stage and taught barter, taught the knotting of cords; Fou Hi taught men to grow barley 2837 ante Christum and they know still where his tomb is by the high cypress, between the strong walls. You can still resist — “And he has! one Sunday morning...”

Yum rug stump. Yuppy crop. You subsist on it.

Zoo frailty is lieb. Zagat’s casbah flow...
CATHERINE DALY

from Dystopia

Tantalus

Behind door number three.
Under the leftmost shell.

They must have a gardener. Their grass is orderly.
They must have it sprayed green, it is so verdant.

I am not on the guest list.
I have been watching.

The other lane is moving faster.
The other line is moving faster.

A lady with a new beige car drives slowly.
An overloaded truck in the passing lane moves slowly.

A white jeep passes as traffic halts.
The jeep's lodged just ahead in the jam.

Maenads

Nothing on this freeway will burst into flame today.
We roll along, gunning our engines.

The viaduct vibrates
like the Tacoma Narrows Bridge or sex
during an aftershock.

It is a bridge that divides. It is an ecstatic part
of the East LA Interchange, the Orange Crush, the Grapevine,
oriented east-west.
The sun blinds exactly our eyes.

The billboards' incoherent materialist screeds
rave about beer and cars.

Beer bottles splash into waves, beer bottles shoot foam,
beer bottles seem to athletically perspire.

A woman in a bikini top on the entire side of a tall building
holds a bottle cap out on her tongue,
open me or drink me in.

MATT HART

five types of irony

1. silly and ironic

Nobody gets the news from sitcoms, silly.
And nobody knows the trouble I have
on-and-off these days, tired like an old boot,
having everything. Being from gut to belly.

And nobody gets trouble from newsreaders;
that economy is offshore, in this building.

These days being gut, comedy, everything
silly and ironic makes me want to

have everything on-and-off, even the news,
being like an old building, in this economy.

2. ironic and overintellectual

everything lyrical is murderous.
homes mean troubled humour.
change means wearing a crutch.

making everything happen.
breathing such as should not.
crutch means economic change.

(having change, being numerous
techniques to stop building.)
the jargon of disinterested irony.
silly with psychic body parts.
my penis if you make it happen.

argument cannot withstand poetry.
somehow it must be worth having
psychic with everybody breathing.

(having change, being numerous,
techniques to stop building.)

3. schematic irony

Having everything being stopped and putting *this*
crutch in place of *that* economy of change
is unlyrical murder.

Translucence a lump of gut, technique. No soft
belly, silly, without argument where everything
breathes disinterest.

But penis techniques are numerously plastic.
Building silly bed scene makes it jargon worth having.

4. brittle, ironic and political

White hand in white, a code of conduct
sketched in a few ideas:

Some public disruption is pleasant;
all citizens are treated publicly and
recorded music is tolerated clemently.

Love's mattresses shall be gray
and continuity exceed alteration but
this contradicting THING might just still work.

5. an end to irony

He thought he did justice; for my part I
doubt whether man has a right to do such
justice on man — C. Brontë, *Villette*

Just don't let justice get away
with everybody hating him.
The way he talks about how this person
is being chosen

is what makes these things happen,
and what makes them happen
here, where we are, all
having been chosen.

Black sack, black box—
House art is a lynching
inked upon a shoulder. No
sass in Arkansas

that we've chosen; this public
we—willed but not
chosen, rooted, ranting
on their children

and their choice, or not choice.
Sentenced with no possibility:
impossible, here, where we are
all having, being chosen.

Coterie Behaviour

1. her & him

And I don't want to know ascesis
(as if we are that dullard)
or if your French-Woman-Poet-Fiction
(big cultural block of stuff
that cannot say, but seriously, the
project of incredibly important manhood)—

I say, if your French-Woman-Poet-Fiction
is (I'm told *is*, I'm told *is.*)
ii. him

Can one overestimate the effect of this townscape (California, never seen) on that there poetry?

The republic built this formality with cinderblocks. Built this review of I May.

ii. her (shocking)

No-one knows collectivity. A generation gets to write its own history.

iii. him

Talismanic—meaning, one gets to wear it.

iv. her

THIS space OF gender AND loquacity. My five minute refusal to answer.

v. her-other

(i love you)
(and later, another)
embarrassed by anger:
you are so RUDE.

yr. voice tops Marx’s monument, speaking from what we didn’t think we were doing.

6. hate speech / oh, youngsters

i hate baby-boomers. think about it. the worst liberals and the worst conservatives. post-socialists and not a single cynic among them. their parents fucked everything up and they fixed it so we can’t even think about fixing shit. god, there are so many of them. they rule the world. we will pay for their pensions. they bomb central europe. we will pay for their prescriptions, their ever-burgeoning prescriptions. they rule the fucking world. they betray their own ideals. they insist that i subscribe to those same ideals. make me buy birthday presents and remember mothers’ day. make me be nice to my brothers and sisters. pick up your toys! make me read their god-shitting awful language poetry and their arse-achingly boring feminist journals. make me bleed poetics when i’m stuck in the bathroom. they die and fuck up our careers. they will not die and they will fuck up our careers. they won’t leave us alone. their permanent adolescence makes us permanent children. they rule the motherfearing, fatherfucking world and won’t leave any of it for us.

7. value youth for it is still a weapon

fuck off
fuck off
fuck off

RONALD PALMER

Three Poems

Subject: Matter(s): #6: Wombs

I purchase a fetus from a medical catalogue. Stuff it with sawdust: raise it like a doll: like a son. Ignore it: (you don’t have to feed it!): no bother at all: drag it through town: on a coiled leash: his mind still works: they’re rigged to keep developing: little machine toys: not like the Sixteenth Century: when men died before their memory: resurfaced like a bar of soap emerging: from bluishly-opaque bathwater. Perhaps I’ll teach his tiny mouth to sing. Mold it into a little me: with all my beautiful potential: for constructing consumer pride. I’ll prop him up in my front window: during the red and green light of holiday season. (Perhaps I will buy one for every window!) Each son a different color: the whole house will be glowing with sons: (0 false passion of renewed life!): a stuffed fetus singing behind every pane of glass: (so many windows!): a different God program: planted in each tiny fetus brain: while my lover and i: are wrapped in a blue water blanket: (0 holographic ideal world!): We’ll be listening to each glistening translation of their wonderful orchestration: a song of forced: Capitalistic unity: marching out of our sterile American houses: Puerto Rican American: Chinese American: Japanese American: Irish American: Italian American: African American: Jamaican American: German American: Brazilian American: the long line of teetering fetuses: singing their pre-recorded message to the world: while my lovers mind is gliding against my own electric mind: I’m somehow still me: he is somehow still he: both tubes of our wet-flesh: dreaming of wombs.

COMBO
She could see it all so clearly, so commandingly, when she looked: it was when she took her brush in hand that the whole thing changed. — Virginia Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*

Draging a clean father into this rhapsodic space.

A semi-transparent psychointerrupted my col:

in the Fenway with Ron drinking coke
smoking pot: sitting at a table: there are three tables: one with all men:

Just look into the sky: one thought: a trans: fix: ed sever: ity
amp: lift: cat: ion is acc: umu: lat: ed through the year's witty

one with men and women: the sky
is getting dark: with clouds and blue
and green trees: + flowers: of many

He bravely asked this quest: ion: “Are we able to have: an ethics
of acts and their plea: sures?”

different colors: the voices mingle:
with the sounds around the Fenway:
the cheer of the fans watching the game:

path: ogen path:o:sex path:o: genic sex
welcome: e ba: ck to the fir: st cent: ury. (I'm trapp ed)
in a pol: iti: cal no: d of sex: ual id: enti: ty

Cutting Up Bacon
for Francis Bacon (1909-1992)

My life's one con: tinuous accident:

one leg doesn't want to work
so I keep dra: ging its numbing:

around the city: ran: domness makes one

ABIGAIL SUSIK

Combos

(1)
Greentea
sunglint
offspoon
atdepths
shreddedleaves
strewnsink
offcanoe
atdepths

COMBO
his bowling pin body
swerving through
a bower
of sequoias
Nearby Booboo
dumber in shape
screen blurb
of tootsie roll
palpitates
a darker shade
at his feet
at his feet
a darker shade
palpitates
of tootsie roll
screen blurb
dumber in shape
Nearby Booboo
In darkness
of sequoias
cartoons fortify
a bower
like vitamins
swerving through
the orange of Yogi
his bowling pin body
a scratch
a scratch
his bowling pin body
the orange of Yogi
swerving through
like vitamins
a bower
cartoons fortify
of sequoias
In darkness
Nearby Booboo
screen blurb
palpitates
at his feet
a darker shade
of tootsie roll
dumber in shape
Feminine Death

Drowning the Artist

So romantic to walk into the water
your tweed coat pilfering
the river’s wind

Plash, the cork of your heels absorb the Thames
tightening its girdle near
the factory, your lips say,

"There’s another word for snow that reads swill
like the last New Year’s fray
light as lemon spritzer,"

Satin pursed, packaged wrapped
from out your frame shoots
a slim volume of poems

So romantic as your hat puffs off, pantyhose
fish-net your breath in the
current, manicure gasps

Drowning the Art

A saturated book gets fat bloating
the words as driftwood
across the author’s lips

Paintings float like plastic bags
can be ridden as rafts
brushing into the deep

In art, the dead float to the surface
ten times the size of life
non-retractable shapes

A body drifts by, wearing shorts,
a T-shirt, waves hello
sticks her nose in your book

A book comes down the canal and
opens her legs wide
for the suited officials

Drowning in Art

Women are men too when they drown themselves
they ache in their penises
until they freeze below

Ten men bit the wedge of her lips
as she slipped into
the collection of damp

The moon was not a face or a fruit or a love
the moon was Chopin
severing his hands

O Ophelia! O Lady of Shalott!
flower strewn stream
fish in your crotch

Sea water stings, lake water cleans too much
the river takes the breath
from between her teeth

CHRIS McCREARY

from Aequanimitas

III.

Waters’ abeyance remains an artful alchemy
of slurping eructations. These resuscitations
serve as surrogate for dogmatic peer pressures.
Who has the conviction to disavow experience?
Your congenial jealous mistress needs uplifting.
Acknowledgment reverberates around this
epistle while packets of snapshots speak
of your clerical coma. Her wings bed statistics
in place of rapid conjecture. Pharmaceutical
semblance blurs imperfections. Drainage
sorts affiliation, seeks admission of this massive
hierarchy’s sorrowful forest. Thus a conundrum’s
crux scrubs away conjecture. The adversity
in her vocalization reveals harrowed stomachs.
The sudden tremor was not of the ship’s lurching but some interlocutor’s sling-shot communion. Checks were settled in a terse heap of kindling. This briny wetness descending befell some traumatized abscess. Guilt passes on those portions of vetoed revision. To neutralize the banquets, you uncovered the miles of crossings. Strange chambers recount autographs salvaged from obscure evolutions. Some types of migratory phenomena are irrevocable. Dull quarters uncoil in vertigo. This scalpel’s axis changed acetone accolades to a flawed glossy reprint.

Blanket aneurysms with hydrostatic gravity. Your closeted successor resurrected the medium. You arose clonelike and oxymoronic to stanch this hematoma. Crossfire coddles your escorted revisions of her marrow’s myrrh. Such elation of this current’s cream. Quantify the obligations of the unenamored. Discourse paraded regardless of your renown. Propulsion reinstates oratorial adulation. Your adroitness displacing the ivory’s torrent root. The equivalent of naivete can only patronize bawdy sentiment in retrospect.

You dare to finesse vertigo’s spill. It is pertinent as it is being relived. Abstinence gnaws at these flawed foundations. Melancholy reflexes exhibit further quandries. Rekindled negativity prevents any merit. Billboard endorphins spark empathico. The turmoil of vasodilators corroborating caressingly. Our common denominators combat insomnia. Outlets strewn by reflex when possession’s epiphanies are trivialized. Please shed these unscripted exhibits. Your sentimentalities as expletives for their turbulent bemusement. Acrylic cells smile on these evolving revisions.

Unenamored with esoterica, these affairs topple towers. A quandry is canceled due to lack of interest. Surveilled partitions of these hitherto uncharted propulsions. Retyping is cushioned by optimal conditions. Seize the essence of errors emptied of authority. Phantoms of earlier pages are revisiting lofty recesses outside your window. They scrutinize the demise of this impeding axis. Her lilting interposes a personal dementia. These mechanisms reapproximate all that is disrespected, check the fluctuations in stride. Bend again to graciously retrieve these delicacies, all that has forever been denied.

from strange veins
waterworks
we found
these myths
of hotel mending
kits, travel-sized soap
the last vestiges
of the archaic nose
& here we go
hurry, hurry
masks

cast

aside

& peeling back

past

insecurities

& fear

of release

to see

what’s waiting

beneath

defaced

these walls saw the

quaver & abrade;

the sharp shock

of wearing away

at what separates us

we throw open windows

to air out these rented rooms—

you shredded the letters,

tore out the old inscriptions—

it’s a wonder the walls

still stand, that it hasn’t all fallen

in around us

Still, dishes pile up, dust covers the clutter in the midst of this deliberate composition. I’ve long since grown superstitious of deleting, of cutting back or down. Cracked black pepper and seeds from yesterday’s bagels covering the countertop. I consider finishing the half-eaten sandwich you left out, decide against it. I don’t remember putting the steaming kettle on the stove.
Well, I think you're a bit previous. Strangled by disembodied misunderstanding nuptials.

Okay haze [gothic] cheating or self-curtailment = [my congratulations].

I think of a lot of this writing as being a kind of psychoanalytical science fiction. Ego wants to beeline some, pays [vampire] hotline advocacy — domesticate accused veep.

You are not capitalizing your aces. [Accomplice] — courage means lonesome. Ex-pasteurize. That line's been in a lot of poems.

What chimpanzees do, to our specifications. On the contrary, it's made with real eggs.

Everyone has more fun to need her dream every suppository body dressed alike. Notching phonemes out onto put-upon turbulence,

electrisante — ZONE OF REJECTION. The raiser is betting on the come.

In any good scheme of things blurring bulleting salut through partly dancing, newsprint conquistadore gravedigger's strike. Ribbonology — to prefabricate sifters. It is a right comfortable little insti-

tution, all pomp and no circumference. Renumerate hands liars, gatemouth conflagrative delights.

Female Montgomery Clift. CIA home life falls under stupefaction of our Wittgenstein to give each fold its proper place.

Meat is indigestible.

What she calls "disjointed fluidity". Beavering [premeditated] away with their symptom retorts: GET ME that phraseological propensity [plumps up] as to I very the the for so human in I've when here faded down the applause there.

I was two-ways the one biting the pillow. Desire to please vs. desire to impress. Clitoral [subtitled] [evasive] trapezoidal lilt = pimpmobile made with real cream carbonation.

Quickstep sleazy circumstance — snowflakes protest the triads, eclat opaque on the contradictories. Fondle answers? Nothing but a pencil neck geek. We were especially enchanted with trombone glissandos.

[As if]
Desktop (n.) chromeheads (n.). Phonecard is intestinal [strobelight]
nominal cross-hatching volatile [make minds up] [eggshell] James
Brown Hot Pants. You are my make situation good objects.

Pearls and swine predates our relationship. Status around the
knees, smooth skin stretched over need to please. Urgent[er]
secrecy plagiarized exotica — let's notch on byline. If your cat
has kittens in the oven, you don't call them muffins, do you?

Gay loses, mikes the timbales. Fold leather over knob embraces the
doomed revolutionary.

The play of most dubs lacks subtlety. You lie back & they do it to
you. You can go down ze line & I can go down ze line embellishing.
Buddy Holly died for Islam to make it in the business world.

**ELIZABETH TREADWELL**

Two Poems

**milkfish or milkfishes**

shape of baby windblown

site of murder &
puppet

(spectacular devotion)

years long hewn-in

slippery curtained

baby windblown spotlit anarchy

girls narrow porn drawings dresses

naked ripped

shape of baby windblown

certain wholesome broken glassy

it holds it holds itself up

the chubby

ones are always

skirted

rafters spotty with illumination

hollow, round, lined. or solitary

**mahogany habitown**

neurosis transpiring slowly under foot, two chairs, shelving and one light,
like the place i feared i would end up in, may have already been to,
deceived deceivers.

within the orientation map, i tell the older woman, that's where i remember
tricycles,
i can't recall the year or the names of places, programs, people. there was
tear gas once and daddy ran to get us from the engineer bar on
northside.
i can guess the year.

within the orientation map, i tell my favorite cousin, there was a lot a great deal
of potential. car accidents, heavy mirrors, labels which stuck to foreskin, or a
foresaid skinny, a prior said.

his grizzly peak made a fool out of me but i starred at the frog pond.

within the orientation map, there were gears learnt, and intersections, reshelved
attitudes, and the sky flat penetrant, names of buildings, names of classes,
names

the streets and houses and parks became slowly three dimensional until a
change
struck you as so
noticeable
and he knew of houses inside of blocks that were
first there
like our old four poster
my
other grandma would like that. a stream in her girlhood yard.
up there where some friends lived. where the bus groaned.
the map of the view up to green and science and concrete and
green. sometimes yellow.
the map of the view down to gray and purple and sunset and
blue. always a shade of it
pasted to the back of your brain.
there is a secret waterfall behind a park or rather between the fences.
ferns grow and trees arch over it, sometimes breaking. older couples
making out. us walking

with Jocelyn Sайдenberg & Yedda Morrison

MICHAEL MAGEE

On the Highway its Raining

1
emergent sea, sea? submerge
merge
"something's come up"
trafficking racket
you're a raffle ticket drift

2
but this is normal for a person.
fluid's a medium through
spine's wine
fruit of the vine check your bearings

3
what emerges, murkily, mixed re-
views, divergent, converging
confusing spheres
wipe (LANE CLOSED) sleep (AHEAD) from eyes

4
my optic neuritis resolving toward
normal
myopic eyes but my
myelin
is dissolving "to merge" implies solution

5
but also thinning Hey, you fuck,
this isn't
a race! if it is
I'm an eraser
breakdown lane cum fast lane speeding ticket chaser

6
no straight, as Monk would say
but be cool
things arise . some
mind the flood-
line the apocalyptic get apoplectic,
blow their own horn. a dry run, a wet read, a wet road, a drain. a drain to dry the road, a

solution. a solution in probability a game of chance 50% wet 90% dry, your money on red thicker than water

I'm a condition on one condition: that we keep it to ourselves: me on one side you on my one side. otherwise I'm a "complex of occasions" w/ a debilitating condition (one) called multiple mixed in if the fix is on I'm countering diction w/ tricks — not to save: not to save: to circulate: to go in circles to run rings: I thee on a linedown the line run a line

IV push, we say fluids & mean replenishment, food, w/out a referent "he drown in his own blood"

"they was swapping spit" cop lights near the barriers merge hurriers

too murderously slow to hydroplane, walk on water; won't sleep w/ fishes either — this here's a puddle no tragic aphrodisiac despite "miles to go"

you know how to do the one-foot sink? baby, I been doing that since before they named it what about about about about about

the iambic shuffle? Games with names, brother; games with names to keep us busy while . what'd you say your name was?

one rainy lane now, lachrymal barriers the odds of Argentina crying for Madonna I'm against it "in for it" vs. "for it," the difference being "in"

What do you feel like myself? inject rain so eyes won't cloud (good medicine, bad grammar) at the junction btwn back & ass "we
18
an ass-backward people" . in a makeshift
aqueduct we dream
causalties, pretend we've left
injection site
reactions in Jersey await ejection

19
what will make us different, four lanes:
I'm a lane-
two person myself
"individuation • genetic mutation"
traced in dust on a rig hates

20
the rain, falling on all the headlights
& the red lights
heading West. me? I play
wicked witch, spook
passers & passengers, not by burning but melting

JONATHAN MONROE

Two Poems

Document
A dozen theses signed, delivered. Some other intention masked his name. "We
the undersigned, under penalty of." And no one spoke. His words remained.
Smoke rose gray in morning air. A broken window in the rain. Some horizon-
tal reckoning drew him near. The envelope left inside his drawer. His sentence
withdrawn, a sober judge.

Transition
What's named is done, a fractured clause. Unaware of the price of "unwel-
come." Before that time had buckled sweetly, crashing headlong through the
floor. Then peace came knocking, hemlock high. No dreams by the hour. No
troubles his own. No trace of wanting. Something again more rapid still.
Inside whose claim: "Whatever resembles doesn't move."

PATTIE McCARTHY

from bk of (h)rs

indulgence §for Kevin Varrone

O Intermerata— it is said that the sybil said
that she pointed things out to him
that she does not appear as she should, but in a sickle,
which is, however, golden in many homey off-season resorts.
it is a terrible shame
that this happy iconographic error was not
left to rest. yesterday, shoes one size too large
& the rain in the street at Coney Island.
(this, he thinks, is simply impossible, for to be in space
through such an instant or moment amounts to not
being in space at all, because in any continuous
series there is, in reality, no such indivisible measure.)

if there were, your first would surely break
its margins & stretch across the folio.
it is a very old legend; it is a pawn psychic tattoo shop;
it is fair where our scene laid; it is a very old viney amusement.

indulgence §for Jenn McCreary

ascendant & beheaded— seven (penitent)
heretics or anorexics, quite
the spread & beautifully spent.
they often stroll the market in gorgeous
hairshirts something like yours.
morning coffee & arriving
on your doorstep with renewed
near-death respect for the expressway
& hipster turn of the century dread.

whathaveyou— the first, solid & noble martyr is altered
as though through metempsychosis or linseed until
she is another & a bit more fragile, finely lined—but standards remain
: the cobalt mantle & bandaged eyes
(though one must wonder about the necessity of this formality)
: the heavy yellow fall as the neck bends.

here, one lock strains out of order whereas others
will insist upon neat arrangement even at this finale.
silver fish & our visions begin.
indulgence §for Heather Ramsdell

Emerging—its back & its enamelled brilliance. one wonders
from where the wherewithall came to her—
one never wonders over
the fate of the dragon, thrashing tail-ward for the diamond-spackle.
enclosures finally forget themselves: & she surfaces un-sullied & serene,
without a single mark from its interior or
her grand apocryphal escapade.
if they spoke at all. conversation held in pearly concave
curl of the tongue.
gasping extension of its throat; everything in order.
how is that possible (how)
is that possible?
the surface is hoax.
feeling unlikely or otherwise un-
I had a bunch of words for you—of earthquakes, hail, frogs, & geography.
we had little to recommend us we lacked sufficiently romantic gestures.
the dog is pure desire today—all want.
the music got to her. I threw quarters at your window. emerges, one notices,
is not exactly what she does—a word for her delicious.

EDWIN TORRES

Six Poems

Correction

I like to see; next question—have the chief;
I want to be chief, if I can
I've always been interested; I'd like that
to be, if I can; in destination, pretty much the same
also, the bottom; young ones who work hard; THERE
I consider myself—if I can, yep...
harmonious; born; can't fake it, the next line, I mean...but
I would never, wait—that wasn't, now
what I DIDN'T prove; wasn't clear—right here
I could...if I could FIRST, okay fine; let's do...
barley; then the last line—anyone could put;
well then, the LAST line, going down
to a different, how about this—two words, ONE and SELF, with some
enthusiasm;
heroism—wait...h...e...r...; actually, I'm sorry
that MIGHT be right; and possess, my own—I, each man

Weekaday Whisprells

could we just find where it takes
where this import sails out
across your imagined sea; could we just
lose this place; to be lost—would be so good right now

is that your tail, your front (this upcoming headwind)
could we just gamble on this grip
stoned; by the everything we've
thrown out by now—how guileless to claim that swoon

was it end of week, or just moon
said; sorry, just looking at your deja vu
gives me a headache—and after
a fairly short pause; a pause that never-the-less—gives you

weight—is that, I see I'm pushing it; again
if you disagree, I'm fine, really—was it merely
a man said; humility at the service of praise
would just about, make my day right now

but, having said; is that—
oh...how tuneless, to throw records
at a ruined moon
Vacant Speed

Cameo cloud broached against
the neck of the world

Tower of milk
smoke against
the universe

Selfing necklace
chiseled
out of sky

Starts, how I'm I
isn't again
the falling grain

Grey has
beauty bombed out
by time

Slower by the point
it takes to make
it so

Vacant coloring
vacant speed
slower than anywhere

Locomotive sky
changing water

Piston blue bracelet cloud
againsted by its
steam

Isn't this
falling, how I
against falling, pick up
speed

Adorama

Airplane to elation
I ride
incomplete an' away
I finish
then crash - the end of me
such a fuzzy shag...

I have a bit of me
cracked & fettered
from flight, rolling slug,
sally wander, eggy hatch...

Let me in Let me in
Let me spin Let me spin

it hurts...it hurts...

Let me KNOW it hurts
Let me OUT this tunnel

I tell you
these fetal mindgames are inconsistent
with my ego

A last shrug
an' I'm off... in remote brilliance
from my potato-skin T.V. dinner

scrambled id, feeds the monitor

Glowing face
of man-child,
a dozen to-go an' over
(isn't it always) easy
happenstance...lets me thaw out
my innards

while emoting this control
I seem to have lost...

Pounding message
across my eyes

Confronts my lobe
with personna misfires, equating
a bulls-eye with a cracker jack prize
I am such - the pillar to my fuzz
well aware of my potent sea
ocean of fertility...
in my arms, a once uponna night
a flight
towards elation, trying to outdo calm

Umbilical hairdo pulled
outside the hairball - can you...

Hear his impermanence
an' how it all sounds the same?
How he still tries
to get across what old manners lack?

A pack of cards - an'
2 tricks against the blowhole,
labor train to T.V. season
30 kids an' each one
pre-empted by last week's migraine...

(and now a jingle, sung to the tune of the previous poem)

"Where's A Baby When You Need One
When's My Body Once I Had
One When's The Booty
Gonna Kick - One - Me One
Gonna Kick In - Gonna - Tell Me
All The Lies I Know Already - Gonna
Tell Me What I Knows Again - So's I Can
Summon Up A Bit A Dat' Ole - Remote Distraction
Where's That T.V. Dinner
Incomplete Fetal-Scape
Grounging Out My Blowhole... "...CLICKCLICK...CLUCKPOP - well...
well...Mighty Me,
I Born The Bod...Again! (fade out
to info-ME...to-MER-cial)

Skankworm

Dirty peepod—you
I dare, noise?
glisten to the chingpot, nickel-pock, face-boy
yearly deposits
MC Hemo, checks out the globe;

Skanked-out
popped repition; itit—left out the zitit, what I didit
Was that I'm happy; to code-ify all lunchards, with a...
darn, don't; dare I noise—360 sneakers

Ready, for—not braggards; but groards—about to get
grow'ded;
appeared to me, inna 'piphany; m'masn...can you
Count'n?; definite numeral dissn'—
what I didn't suss
was innervention;
Down home, where ohm boys
chant radioworms—lettracize;

See...the best place for gougers; on the web, lest you bliss...be
dirty noise; damn fire spasm—
contemplative noser

MC SomethingMustaDiedInHere; checks out the skank
offlay the chokay—what a child in charge, will do with emotion?

DJ Dot DoubleYou DoubleYou DoubleYou DoubleYou DoubleYou
DoubleYou DoubleYou, oh...well, wassa double play, anyway;
Metallic summer—'Volution, gore-volute.

brilliant strikeout for the skank
once mentioned already;
Show'd up I did; can you count?
Let the set, jet the ret up!
Sed the hed, ready for the get up!

Rae C. Red No. 5

Winter Madame,
lounge here
in the chaise...snuu...suun...stice...
hier gratsen, perhaps...ummm
Her grace him percussion,
BaBa-Booie's intention.
Allegro's Lesandro
him stand so nintendo, aun'...zluu...luuz...
Glissando's joy-stick,
clicks eight icy blades
and softens disdain...
for waterpoop majcara of illzy shades,
of silky irritat shaze.

MICHAEL MAGEE
Interviews Someone / Someone Interviews

Q: How did you become a poet?
A: Well, my parents always wanted me to be one — I started lessons, god, as early as I can remember — working on my iambics, you know, the various metric drills, and then rhyme of course, probably earlier than I should have. My Dad was a real taskmaster when it came to this, and we'd go at it. I recall one recital where I was supposed to open up with these lines which were utterly dependent on a particular spondee: "sweet meats" — which was supposed to mimic, quite precisely, the meter of Frost's "Out walking in the frozen swamp one gray day." But I hadn't scanned the thing correctly and it tripped all over itself: "Clouds frolicking in the azure sky like sweet meats." Anyway, most people probably didn't notice (I took second prize) but I caught hell when we got home. It was tough — lot's of deception: by this point, remember, I had already started the glam-metal group Calamus and we'd released our first album, Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking!, and my parents knew nothing about that.

Q: How would one characterize your relationship with your mother?
A: As petulantly lyrical.

Q: How would two characterize it?
A: Blemishlessly profligate.

Q: Three?
A: I'm not sure.

Q: Let's move on. You're a big fan of Schofield Thayer — in fact most academics credit you with reviving his reputation...
A: ...Well, the honest, ethical ones do...

Q: Right, right. When did you discover Thayer's poetry?
A: If I'm remembering right it was in '79, at the Vachel Lindsey Centennial (marking his birth, not his death, as stated in his will). In honor of Vachel everyone was supposed to come as their favorite neglected modernist in blackface. I came as Maxwell Bodenheim doing a Fats Waller impersonation, for instance. Anyway, someone, I can't remember who, came as Thayer impersonating Ma Rainey. At some point in the evening we were all invited to read from our poets' work. Well, this person did the most incredible rendition of Thayer-as-Rainey reading Amy Lowell's "Madonna of the Evening Flowers." After that I was hooked.

Q: Is that where the Thayer-as-Rainey Reads the Lake Poets book idea came from?
A: No, no. That was already in the works, or at least germinating, because of all the buzz that Alfred-Kreymborg-as-Dorothy-Wordsworth Reads the French Symbolists had received.

Q: That was your second book, yes?
A: The second book with Norton. I'd self-published Trivialogues, and Hank Mobley's Deck had been selected for the Yale Younger by that point.

Q: Of course, right. That must have been something.
A: Yeah, something.

Q: What kind of something?
A: Hm... You have me there. It was a thing, — I suppose you'd say "a thing to behold," or you could if you were that kind of...if you spoke that way. But, look, I was fourteen years old, it was unnerving, or nerve-wracking you could say. I found myself at Michigan at the behest of Don Hall, teaching poetics to people twice my age and half my aptitude. Of course in some ways they were way ahead of me.

Q: Such as?
A: Age, for one.

Q: Let's move on. You're a big fan of Schofield Thayer — in fact most academics credit you with reviving his reputation...
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Q: Such as?
A: Age, for one.
Q: And for two?
A: Height in some cases.
Q: Weight?
A: Sure, sure.
Q: Was Ted Berrigan still there when you arrived?
A: No, I was his replacement for all intents and purposes — Don gave me his leather vest, a kind of passing the torch.
Q: Donald Hall wore a leather vest?
A: No, no — Ted’s vest. I was uncomfortable with the idea of wearing it though — it just didn’t seem me — so I made it into underpants.
Q: Is that the source for “Ted’s Vestigial Briefs”?
A: One of them, yes.
Q: Could you read a stanza of that for us? [applause]
A: Sure. This is stanza three. [clears his throat] “Vegonomics.” [awkward pause and then more applause]
Q: That’s wonderful. [long pause] Why don’t we return to more biographical matters.
A: I’d prefer to keep it autobiographical.
Q: But coming from me that’s what autobiographical means.
A: You mean biographical.
Q: Yes.
A: “Bio” from the Greek meaning “life.”
Q: That’s right.
A: Akin to the Latin “vivus.”
Q: Yes.

A: “Auto” meaning, roughly, “self.”
Q: Quite right.
A: Continue.
Q: In the mid-eighties you became a key player in St. Louis “unspoken word” scene.
A: “The St. Louis Death” group, yes.
Q: Can you talk a little bit about that? How was it you came to St. Louis in the first place?
A: That’s a funny story. I had gotten a Guggenheim to do field research on the more common varieties of Felis domestica in St. Louis for a book on the childhood origins of Eliot’s Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats. It was a difficult project — I just couldn’t get my head around it, couldn’t find a rhetoric that would suffice; as if the story didn’t want to be told. One afternoon in November I stood under the arch watching some variety of short-hair staring off into the Mississippi. The thing was a void. It shed no light at all — not on “The Rum Tum Tugger,” not on “Old Deuteronomy,” or “Bustopher Jones” or “Shimbleshanks.” I abandoned the idea in December. But before I did I met ZeeZee Z. She was working at a pound in East St. Louis and had just started the “Death of Language” reading series, under the arch on Tuesday nights. We hit it off, too hard in hindsight.
Q: What do you mean?
A: Well, I just got so swept up in it — ZeeZee was so convincing in her refusal to speak. She didn’t speak to me once the whole first year we were together. And the crowds got bigger and bigger for the D of L; sometime in the spring Kimbel Sessions started doing unspoken word pieces, and Steve Expansion, and then as far as most people were concerned we were a school (although in truth none of us had ever met Steve and he was only in St. Louis on Wednesdays). Anyway at some point it just seemed natural to do an anthology and Shut the Fuck Up came out of that.
Q: 212 perfect-bound blank pages.
A: Well, page 212 had some chicken scrawl that ZeeZee decided to put in at the last minute. That was her way of signaling the end of St. Louis Death. I remember that night we were sitting around watching Cosby and she said, “Get me a Coke.”
Q: Wow.

A: Yeah. I understood why she felt like she had to do it but, like I said, by that time I had bought into the concept wholesale and it was tough to let go. And ultimately our relationship couldn’t withstand the transformation.

Q: So, it was ‘87, then, when you left St. Louis?

A: Mn-hmm. For Key West.

Q: What is it about Key West?

A: Well, those are two fairly exciting words. “Key” – as in the legend on a map where various “keys” lie far too low to be designated despite the fact that they may be “key” to ones strategic purposes as say, Gibraltar once was to the Mediterranean. Then there’s the musical reference, and as you know I had started my twelve tone experiments on the triangle by this point. Then there’s “West” — the expansion myth (which I’d brought with me from St. Louis), the irony of Key West’s being the southernmost city in the continental U.S. I was working on Shut Up and Eat Your Lewis and Clark Bar at the time, so the whole thing was highly cathetic for me. Other associations followed: Francis Scott Key, John Maynard Keynes, all rich with possibilities.

Q: Your “Idea of Order.”

A: Something like that.

Q: This was also something of a return for you, wasn’t it?

A: Well, I had spent a lot of time at the beach as a child if that’s what you mean. We rented a house at the Jersey shore each summer and really it was my only break from poetry competitions, which ran from late August to early June, basically your elementary school calendar. Anyway, I grew very peaceful there, it really was edenic in its own way. I can remember scanning a mile or more for just the right shells, wading out into the low tide for hundreds of yards.

Q: You were something of a collector?

A: Not exactly, no. I needed three very particular shells, domed, open on the bottom and absolutely identical, in order to operate a shell game whereby I ripped off vacationers’ children. I would find them, run the game against a little dune for a week or so and then, when I got a bad case of nerves, ditch the shells at high tide. A week or so later I’d go looking for more. This was all, incidentally, a somewhat inadequate replacement for the three card Monte games I ran during the year, something I’d learned from an Uncle.

Q: Your father’s brother?

A: Oh, no, not my uncle, someone else’s. I can’t even remember whose. But his name was Monte. Actually I’ve been trying to write about this period, incorporating the methodology of the games somehow into the work. It’s coming along.
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