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CARLYLE REEDY

When Fox Was Judge

Several in the recessed area, at first in a haze of grey, detached out of shadow; sudden, by sun flashing, deep from the alcove would emerge. Partly together pieces of some, whoever, the usual, getting together and coming off, each from another. I saw Mahon. At the back. The back of him. In grey cloth, about thirty years unpressed, and the gnostic of better days in the line.

In the Xenos an amalgam of cloth, formica, slick aluminium printed Mahon. It tore off the glittering oily surface a waving light in the changes. It was him. Alright, Mahon, out of the metal into piggy flesh, fatly near me, the porcine back turned.

Brendon stiffly in wooden jointed jerky movement is smaller, slightly, beside the same jacket only it’s large on him. One is gross and sloppy on Mahon’s fat; the other small fitting like grey pipe, the limbs in stems, as if bent chimneys. Brendon in a shadow, to the depth shuddering, always timid, stepped back of course. I brushed Mahon’s shoulder and the twill smelled of hair and plaster; stuck with fried chips, the lasting odour of stone dust. Mahon cut pieces, slabs, out of concrete, many days, every day, in fact, before it cut. That muscle in the arm with the tear and patch hangs down a little; in struggle it flops with pocket flap, wallet, permit, passport. An old picture beside this. In a fist. The one strong fist holds chits and addresses as well, all thrown together with money notes, under a piece of rubber. Mahon’s hand like a limp drags over, barely grasping, but the good thumb was stuck up then in a gesture towards the front. “Professor, that old geezer.” The wide plate glass blew a blast of sun around the figure of an aged man, wasted in a white light. Ghostly. I took in the hunch, the exhaustion, pale grey and drab, as Mahon grabbed his own pocket again, his watch dipped into the fold of cloth, slid on gold rays. The dial of that watch was red round like the egg was round on the clear plate Rani had stacked.

With Black Mat and Brendon, the line would wait in front of the beautiful Rani, for food. Then they would be sitting. Later card players in eternity holding only the game before they might fall. In the Xenos, the old place, the men line on an edge of sheet metal, in undyed silk the colour of eggshell flowing into soft breasts, Rani. She is—a river. Moving. All
but the black quiet hair in a wave like a woodcut suspended, pulsing pulp and sallow in the shallow alcove light, always busy. Eyes long as the counter, veiled, the daughter—Rani of the one moonstone, the inherited. Just between the big pillow breasts, from Kirby. He gave to her.

In a bump, steeply, Mahon, Black Mat, loaded with plates loaded in eggs and biscuits. Chips. And so forth. Brendon slipping. Sidewise, the sausages sliding. Watch it. Quick murmuring “Good Morning All. Where’s Kirby?” The face of Mahon goes blank. Stone. Mmmm Brendon, “Where’s Kirby?” The lines shadow up. Don’t say anything yet. There’s no answer. Rani cannot stop from turning the hiss of steam into a burn and now she’s cursing. Moving you into the hot cup with a hand like an iris; it touched your naked buttock once. Ready. This time. Good, but carefully, motions must be effected through channels of furnishings, damp linoleum, wood bumped. On this leg. Then the plates were heisted up, the cup was in one of my hands held firm, the liquid was falling onto a spot I would rub with the sleeve and I sat, arms on the table, at rest.

At last. That little grey beard. Neat. I thought “Nothing. Nobody.” but he is all cleaned and brushed up. Tweed like the soft muscle the grass holds sometimes, he’s an old bird I guess. Maybe 70. More. His head was slanted to the side, I climbed the flattened flaking features. I couldn’t tell. The nose might be inquisitive, a nostril itching, usually wiggling, small or peckish. Like a crab or a rat’s his claws quick in spiked elliptical writing I noticed. He filled every space in his book. Economical.

I thought he would say something. His mouth tensed in innumerable wrinkles. Out in many directions like a tied bow, he shut it. Pinched it all up again. Scratched like a chicken. Dust was in the filter of sun coming on him, gasping, chewing his pen, he fidgeted. Tracing his marks in the dust, then I noticed on the hand a knot around a knuckle. Hard cartilage and skin thinner than the paper. There. The V-shaped vein, a bluish wishbone. Inside, in pure parchment. Near twilight, a life hidden. In there. Perhaps the shuddering hand might cease abruptly. He struck out in all directions suddenly. Flinging down the pen, patting at the notebook. He watched me finally.

For a minute. He’s swift. He cut them sharply with a razor look. It was abandoned. Almost merry. Then I started wondering. What lonely abused assumptions could be made from any hugged seated figure. Inconsequentially, he now appeared cheerful. Very immediately I smiled, he spoke.

Kirby? You can’t know. “Kirby.” Those old dry lips formed a parched flat O, like the growling of a dog, the old man said “No.” It flung me a little. I found my feet to be on a shifting indefinable material, growing and spreading on the disinfected floor, that unfindable bottom to the place had become cloud. My legs were just dangling from a floated chair. The atmosphere grainy and dense with grease. You could wipe it. On flesh it stuck from the table as it were a wax coat. Where was Kirby? What had happened? The old geezer beat on the formlica with his notebook. Hard and cryptic. Like tombstone or a plastic printed identi-kit picture. Or a mirror, perhaps. Yes, maybe he’d written an explanation.

He would explain if Kirby was dead. That voice of his was loud. It exploded the echo of Barbados. Mat had slid to the dim juke and lonely even rhythm was coming through the nattering speech the professor was reading. That held levels of unclear material up. You could call it fat or pulp or earth or air or ether, clouded, the gem grain of truth was riding the strange fabric somewhere, in and out and up and down again, travelling like a dim flashlight all through it. “As for heroes,” the old man enunciated, “Our heroes operate. Anywhere. Any place. In unfamiliar moralities. In different social areas.” It obviously meant something. He shut the notebook and for emphasis slapped it on the table, spinning off a moon of a saucer. As it danced he said, “Aha. You know Kirby.”

Satisfied, he was leaning, tilting back like a croupier. Wise, small-faced and knowing. Something dirty about that “professor”, Mahon called him. Small. “Right. So what then?”

“Because I have something to tell you about him.” It was a wash of lime that might eat away at any instant the narrow features; it was guilt. Or just doubt in the furrowed forehead? It came out from the dry skin under the clean whiskering of white and grey from the wafer-thin bone of his pitiful visage. A gust of wind might blow the words and the very life out of this dried up pod. I said, “Alright, professor. You tell it. I’ll listen.”

“Years ago,”—his fragile head was nodding as on a stem as of melting glass—he said, “I had a flat in Fulham. For years I kept it, though the area gradually lost its charm. My rooms gave off only onto an abandoned factory with the announcement ‘KILKO’ in a window. Never deciphered that. I could see another. ‘Mecca’, it was. I never explored it.

“I had been restless in the room, a disgust I felt in my work had begun to take over things. There was nothing of use. In that room. Just
papers. These scruffed notes—I was digging at them, trying to use my youth, old diaries. I felt smaller than when I started the task. I'm quite small. You probably noticed it."

That old chicken rising spread tweed feathers in flaps, his arms wildly waving emphasis. "Quite small", at full height probably 4' 11" only. A midget. Perfect. Gymnastic ballettiques follow on the announcement of particulars, the flex of dried sinew. "It's not important," (the crows loudly over this.) Perhaps everyone is turning round to see. Maybe Black Mat, Mahon, Brendon. No. No one. Only me. Mahon and Brendon had started speaking Gaelic. Black Mat just sat there in the Barbados music. That old chicken began to laugh a mad laugh, cackled back into my insides, begging a terror in my gut. "Kirby's quite alive," he giggled. Evil in the knowing sly smile—Who is he to know—What? Anyway, all those cackles shook up the jut of his chin and the flopping wattles stretched like cord. Choke his throat to smother back the adam's apple bobbing up up as though he would vomit it finally with that damned laugh.

"That's enough, professor," I said carefully. "You don't know what you are talking about." I shoved that wizened face aside. Probably mad as an unpinned hinge—his mouth was just flipping open and shut—loose trap couldn't hold any secret.

"Oh but I do. I do—know, you know." He stopped. He looked smug and senile. I heard his ragged jaw—creasing laugh in my gut. He sat for a moment, blinking in a sun shaft, shifted to lean on his elbow and kept on talking.

"I had a plant—it's true. In that flat. I had placed it in the central window. Unusual fact about that place it had three frontal windows. That's rare. I had my head on my task, though. I had forgotten—I existed. Worked with the notes. The paper. The typewriter. All day. Half the night.

"One day about 11 I was watering the plant when I noticed spots—leprous on the leaves. Diseases. I didn't know what it was. I cried out."

Scum of tannin, sifted by a spoon, it clung, smack on the metal turning brown. Shit. I felt sick of the professor.

"Not knowing how to cure it, it made me notice. Age. Growing on me. Like that spotted mess. This death crawling over me. Being destroyed like the plant."

He was humped and crunched in no real name, a spotted white like a stone with lichen, this ancient teller of tales I confronted. Clanking at the teacup with his shaking hands; and scraping and grasping, his little claws rutted and ratted the tile of formica.

Horrible. My eyes slid off.

Somewhere. I mused. Through the Xenos, there. There would always be somewhere a man could go. Late afternoon yesterday, last week. Could Kirby have been looking under leaves for a hide-a-wee? Anyway not here. That would be sure. He would never be walking through that door, I guessed. I had the letter. It finished possibility. It was still as marble, hard just above my heart in a pocket.

"My writings were nothing but a mirror. Why I had my specs and the mss and I was only an old dry bag of bone who had led no life. I was almost dead myself. In sickness. Dessicated. Of course the plant would sicken—in that flat, then. Before Kirby came, I mean—"I'll get to that. There just wasn't a breath of life in the place."

That old greybeard was bright alright. There again was the twinkle like cornflowers from his eyes. The sun held them. It mixed into the dust and dandruff and greys by the red rough scruffmark just under a leathery wattle on his chicken neck.

"It was a Tuesday. September. Like now. A fine day with mild wind and quite a lot of sunshine. It seemed ordinary, but I felt elated." The professor's memorised machine-gun narrative began moving faster, his hands agitated on the table, trying to sweep out the cobwebs and drag me in there.

"That day was alive and lovely. I walked out. I felt abandoned, wild. As though I could do anything.

"Well it led to ruination. I can tell you. It lost me the flat in which I worked. The KILKO sign, I never deciphered it. But I have no regrets." . . .

Deep and enduring they lay waste in the soul, where there is this darkness of things undone and half-remembered fortuitous small tasks that might have made the difference, all those discarded fantasies and hopes piled up to be flipped through in a moment of sombering. Indeed it seemed regret was the pit. The abysmal in the well-bottom of the fragile masonry of this individual found at a corner table at the Xenos. Sad and frank. A pity started up somewhere in a comparable hollow. It was my gut. Gutless. Washed with missed times, impurities, a million neglected atoms, just lost, sliding by in it.

"Pity, that, about the flat," I said, "Sir."

Mahon trembling a motion upward like a sea risen to a peak in a wave that would hang in jacket and overall at the edge of plunge to fall on the back counter where Rani stood. Hot eyes for him, maybe
for us all. The moonstone was Kirby's but Mahon still loved her. An excuse would get more food. Is it food from her? Mahon and Black Mat would get together over some lines from the Workers' press, with Brendon, beginning to sing in Gaelic, just by the juke, the glow of friendship like an emerging dimmed lighthouse.

"It was not such a pity as you think."

"What d'ya know, professor?"

The canny look is a bit sly, as though an animal prey who might know how to untie ropes off his own feet in a trap. He's slippery, or he has courage. Just to save himself, maybe. That could be.

"You might have thought I would have thought of something myself. I didn't, you know. I only knew I had to walk. I got a bit drunk. I moved without any specific goal—but in a direction—away from. I was going to get away from that stifled lifeless place if it was the last thing I ever did. I ambled all around Fulham. A street I don't recollect too clearly found me with a bottle of Southern Comfort under my mac and hardly any money, but an old bus ticket. It was there I found Kirby."

(Ireland, the clear shore, bright in a pulse of plush living wealth the rain never washes away only brightens. The cache of gold is there. Where the scholars all search. It's right in front of them. In a form. Human. They ferret the old celt stone for treasure, but that treasure never disappears. It remains because it is the soul. It will always be shining, in dew, in the clover, electrically, a few particles of light St Pat drew from the garden, into himself, stood to full height. It would send them flying, all the devils out of Ireland, because the devil had never been known before in that split-off island. The knowledges would be deep, filled in with lore like masonry, for a digger to lift up—some part of a jutting tree he grabbed off a leprechaun saying "Mind if I just borrow this," then to spin off from (and maybe lay waste to) any false structure, any order not his own.)

"I particularly remember the car he drove, because it was the first thing I saw. I was hugging the bottle of Southern Comfort and I could look down into this morass of pipes and dangling parts which were the colour of pus and old cabbage and I thought I might be sick then. The vehicle was repulsive from the outside, being a sort of picric. It was a car of bizarre proportions, you may know it—an antique of low-slung patchwork. In dumb concord, quite casual and non-casual, the pieces added on by a whole series of different owners were just barely clinging together.

"I was gazing at this vision when it began to shake. I saw protruding from beneath it two legs of massive strength and a belly whose efforts in struggling to emerge had wrenched a button from its moorings and showed an expanse of black hair. Someone was attempting to exit from the small space—it was a Triumph I think—the awful lemon had been painted over. Groans of these efforts culminated in a curse. I will not quote it. Directed at the car's apparatus. Not at me. This sweeping condemnation was the first communication made to me by our friend."

To be sure. Kirby. Alive, in Fulham. But then again I picked the letter up off a tombstone, by a high wall of a building of learning in Dublin. The post office's communications I kept in my pocket awhile. I would find some perfect corner where there was peace and I would read it. It wasn't from him. It was Cailin wrote it. "He went down," the letter said. I saw guns gather in the trees, beside me. There was no hero, only corpses. No one escaped. Like him they could never fit into the locking grooves, no clasp could hold them rightly. Their minds got twisted thinking ill thoughts upon the masters if they were not dead. There were ballads being written but they were for the skinned meat that was trussed and dangled overhead. The long parks of lawns where the academic Americans moved slowly turning in the piles of September leaves with their feet, furrowing where the peat was richest, saying "I had one ancestor from just outside of Dublin." In this thin connecting link they held a brass ring of a vanishing Ireland, and some were sympathetic, and most were only half aware of the corpses as they brushed them. They moved by me in pairs, discussing things seriously. I felt alone, sitting under the tree where the heroes were dangling. It was the last communication. And now there would be nothing gleaned from the indecipherable faces of Mahon and Brendon.

Yet here beside me coming up in a bad-breath sigh from a rotting old man was something. He stirred a storm in his near-cold tea-cup. Gloom took on the circular ripples going outward. His tongue that would get round to telling me flashed like a quick asp's as he licked the spoon. He kept it a moment on the tongue as though it would shut him up. Now that that spoon was warm with spittle, he lowered it, bobbing and flopping it in his dry hand like a lost housekey. Maybe the key. It would unlock energy out of oppression. Innocent Kirby was running or hung. And I was filled up. In the anguish of sorrow confused with hope, I waited impatiently for the professor's narrative.

"That was an odd fact about that old flat," the old man
continued. "That central window was always misting. Maybe it was the water I put. On the plant, I mean. It was like a blind eye in the middle of the forehead of that room." He was shaken and pale. Annoyed and tense, he looked a lonely child, isolated. In him words had built to come out quickly, a fountain manic spew held back till then.

"Well I was sick to death of that place, I tell you. I never wanted to go back. Kirby blew the last attachment I had for it. It was a good time to change.

"I mean he was the beauty. The beast. Kirby. High and hairy—the first time I saw him he pumped my hand like an old stick. I saw his red lips. Cherry. The thick partly wet black of that hanging Mexican mustache and the strong flat muscle in his chest all at once because I only just reached it. He breathed and shook. I nearly dropped the bottle of whisky."

("Stop," I heard his phony narrative—soon to be an obituary—beneath the tree where hairy ankles had just been jerked up, stripped of their socks. The old beat up shoes the jailers would have given Kirby have a piece of leather that flaps like a tongue cut out. In the yellow leaves of the university autumn I pursued a memory of Kirby and the weight of him was too great because it

When death takes

"What really happened?"

You see he suddenly emerged from there, and there he was. Standing on the sidewalk beside the car. He had on a thin t-shirt and all I saw was muscle because I came up only about to his chest you know. He had a wide band of grey-blue knitting on that shirt. He wore it a lot. That band stretched across his chest like a high steel belt that he might burst with his breath.

"He said 'Gotta wrench.' He sounded like a lorry. I was frightened. I said 'I never carry things of that sort on me.' Then, I remember, he leered at me. 'Have to use our teeth then—got any?' He smiled alarmingly, displaying under the huge mustache a row of

fine pearl. He just flicked at this paper-like lid and it went back onto the car. 'I've got to get this wreck to Baron's Court,' he said to me. He pronounced it 'Barnes'. I remember that because it was my introduction to Gaelic, almost.

"He asked if I wanted to ride and I leapt. He had one eyebrow raised up. I had to stretch. It might've flown off his face. His eye under it was fierce. He had one shut. He winked occasionally, you know. He was always enjoying a joke.

"I jumped in alright. I jumped into that car and a future I couldn't have foreseen then. All at once in a moment. My whole life. These helpers he had magically attracted to push the heap were suddenly at the end of their 200 metre dash dropping off with a cheery wave from him for payment." The professor fell silent.

(Round the dark wheel there was running a stitching of crude scarlet, I thought, back and forth in zig-zag the thread of red crept, by the hair on the back of his hands, black and oily leather of the wheel, the skin of a reptile. Kirby's hands, though, were clear, as though moon-lit, fair, and always beneath there was a callus, rough to touch with an index—you could measure the man from the flab or the firmness, his strength was enough to tear off the wheel. Soon he would relax his hold on the wheel and reach one hand to the side where I was in a soft clap. The muted thunder of Kirby's approach surpassed the gentleness of a woman. He would caress the collar of wool I wore. Brendon had one. Just to feel the feel. He used to touch your coat, your hair, your thigh. Like a blind musician he would find the feel of everything. He'd grab the wheel and spin the lemon car in a turn. The air would be cool under the eyelids through the rush of neon and street lamp and orange growing balls at all the stops. I would lean back and cool out while Kirby took over. He took all the weight off. Relax, he would say. Yeah, I would . . . sure, and after a while, I did.

Then out of the cars on the dark streets, in yards, furrowing, siphoning and picking—a sparkplug, a carburettor, a wrench, some petrol; Kirby's quick hands flitted over the surface like moths attracted by the light of the remaining whole part. Returning with the haul in his pockets of the dragging lumpish denim coat with the sheepswool gathering round his wild dark face, there would be triumph in his eyes. He would settle with a noise like the falling down of metal fences in the city lined in aluminium with the sign of Dogs.

Patrolling London, the night moon finds Kirby in the small hole in the yard, near the works by the factory with the stove-in door.
hot in a hand, pressed down on the wheel, then he lifted it off like
skin, a tissue—a thin insubstantial remnant of cello tape and paper,
holding writing up by moonlight so you see clear. "It says "This
vehicle has been abandoned. Otherwise we don't take anything,
hear?"

The yellow car, with its coatings of cement, its fibreglass
additions, all the patches clear in a speckled moon like the
professor's rotting gut and plant, pushed neat—the nose of it in the
hard wall of the local police station, shoved and with wrinkles all
above the front wheels, the fore-body and engine laid back like a
pig's snout; the car hitting; flung Kirby upward into the air—He
shouted "Don't hurt anybody!" stolen articles and dope were falling
out of all the pockets of the sheepskin coat—and Rani was lined on
the pavement in endless diminishing repetitions of women in black
garments weeping. So for the moon of rock in ice city, the women
crack a hard sound; the men in the sheepsfold gather for the wake—
insufficient imitations of the hero; they are crying, moaning. The
garments weeping. So for the moon of rock in ice city, the women
are stamped. The court shall have its body and its
fleece shall be given . . .

"Did Kirby get done?" I stood in the chickenyard where the fox
skulked. I said: I loved the dope dealer, car thief, carburettor
repairer, remaker of the body and vision and fate of Mahon and
Brendon and the professor and myself. But the old greybeard across
the table from me at the Xenos cafe got lost in falling feathers, just
equal to put his head on, to go to sleep now permanently.

"Did he?"

"Why yes," said the little man. "I was coming to that." All
expression left the old professor's eyes. He was strong. He
straightened in his chair and sat very stiffly. He looked at me
flatly. "When fox is judge," the professor told me, "kind sheep is
hung."

So that was that. Defeat like a cold wet shadow on the dull formed
stone my body was. Unmoving. Forever. Never move again.
Exhaustion like rain melting inward crying over all the parts of the
sick engine.

They put him—inside. The Xenos dimmed. The door would
never open. It was hot in there, stifled. The tall frame would not
move. Never sit there cool, the jewel eyes would not shine. The feet
would not tap any more beneath the table. No music for Kirby. No
round sound of glad greeting no hugs no hearty hand furrowing the
pocket of the buttock for a joke or the hillock of Rani's bosom for
sweat like pearl.

I felt silly. Going through all the images the letter brought. A
pile of decaying leaves from which like the scholars I had not
really wanted to surface. I must have been enjoying my fears. Idiot.
He would have been laughing, Sissy.

I must've wanted it. Of course I did. In a jail he'd be crushed.
He'd never fit. I could picture him on the yard walks in those
pyjamas he'd be given. Enjoying his bit of sun. No room in it. The
picture was tight, serrated at the edges. Someone was always just
about to draw the string that would choke him. So it was worse than
death and I had been right to lament him.

In a struggle like a pit of snakes on the plane of formica my
fallen stains of tannin are impure. Hot blood in the pattern just
spilled. Like that. Somebody. Talking. Like puke probably. It had
just come out. Just like that. To somebody. The olive brown wall-strip
by my table was stippled with transient marks. Rani had stuck it
down on the wall so she could wipe off easily any trace. Prints. They
all vanish. Just like that. It's slick. Very slick. His flesh is rotting
in prison? The bars are long and black as Rani's hair is, long as Black
Mat himself. The key of the jailer is on the professor's tongue,
maybe, like liquefied mercury it has slid the dial and the iron is
closing on him. Kirby's hand is slapping down on a desk, the parts
are stamped. On the back. Where the hairs were, in butcher's
purple, it says: "Mutton. Sell by Friday." I looked at Mat. He was
wearing a dusky rose-coloured shirt. Dried blood, that was the
colour. And in the middle of his lips. A small set of lips there gleam
in pink. He opened them out in the effort to chew. The bite was
enormous. Was it him? Who talked?

"We cannot accept the sheep's excuses. All rogues are clever at
hiding their evil doings. The sheep was there with the chickens on
the night in question. Everyone knows how delicious is the taste of
chicken and the sheep could not withstand the temptation. I
condemn the sheep to death. The court shall have its body and its
fleece shall be given . . ."

Now Black Mat had picked up. Something. The body in rough
denim, but the cool smooth of the blood-coloured shirt moved up,
fairly sudden, a motion of his body in grace, like a tree grown
rapidly, or a bow unbent in slow action. Arms of ebon velvet reaching
out, with thin wrists stuck out from the cuff, and the big black hands
wrapped around the plate and cup. He was still chewing food, his
adam's apple rising, up and down with him. He clattered into place.
Just next to the professor. Mat's neck was lifted. You could get it,
high and proud, just there under the chin in the unusual double hollow. Neat. It was dangerous. You could've put your two thumbs into that double hollow. He was vulnerable. Not Mat. That's a fact. He wouldn't. Those cheekbones risen into the thin frizzled temples were strong and clear, the forehead dome was high. A light shone in the dark rounded surfaces. Mat never sold Kirby. More likely Brendon or Mahon or the professor got loose-tongued. Eating, now Mat through the food, smiled, hunched so his arms barred access on either side. Mahon said Mat had been raised in a family with a whole lot of children. He watched out for his food. He always protected his plate with his arms.

He cast a glance, quick and sidewise. Sliding there and back, took in the professor. Like deer's eyes his curled down with black. Looking only at his plate, "Hello, man," he said softly to the professor, not looking at him, "I seen when you come in."

The professor's narrow hands furrowed in the crease of lapel as though he would have hidden them. He looked down at his lap. His face crinkled and colour began, slowly from the empty dry cheek by the little lump like a spider's egg of stuck spittle at the corner, through broken veins to the eyes, squeezed shut now. The professor was afraid.

"I haven't seen you in a while, man," said Mat not turning towards him. "Whir you been hiding? You live in a dustbin too, now man?"

"I live in a hole," said the professor. Mat changed his position to look at him. Those clear brown deer's eyes turned up at the chair. He leaned over a bit further and grabbed at the professor's hair. "Little man," said Mat very evenly to the professor. "When they got Kirby they roped him at the bottom of the stair. One of them made sure he did not move by stepping on him."

Kirby was falling in a series of stopped portraits of tragedy like the rake's progress only growing black in the changes, downward, the stairwell turning and twisted, the bastioning poles were here and there snapped off as Kirby's hand took them inadvertently, trying to hang on as the fight pushed him. Then the window was breaking. All the glass shattered on his body passing and a cut was carried down with him screaming. The man had fallen. Into a blackness where the lights were dark emerald. Dropped into place he was alive down there somehow. Mat said he had been puffing and steaming and screaming beneath their feet like an iron engine. Mat said marks of bruises on his body were scarlet and welts from the places struck with the black stick billies had begun to rise up.

By a black face brown figures stretch—sleepy women, long, with the snakes all in the sharp bladed grass of the painting on the Xenos wall. The panther is asleep and the leopard with him. Together with each other it is close to the kingdom. The maker has regulated harmony in a wash of sunlight that permeates the painting on the Xenos inner wall. In that painting all the snakes are alive. The devil is up. Behind Mahon and Brendon, the snakes emerge from the grass. Mahon's reddish hair with stone talc in a shaft of light. The snake rises from his head. In a moment. Mahon is almost noble. Little Brendon at his elbow—pale as death. Coming over in calamine. Hardening lice eggs over the pimples. Mahon still with egg in the vague auburn stubble on his double chin. All Mahon's fat was dangerous. You could've put your two thumbs into that double hollow. He was vulnerable. Not Mat. That's a fact. He wouldn't. Those cheekbones risen into the thin frizzled temples were strong and clear, the forehead dome was high. A light shone in the dark rounded surfaces. Mat never sold Kirby. More likely Brendon or Mahon or the professor got loose-tongued. Eating, now Mat through the food, smiled, hunched so his arms barred access on either side. Mahon said Mat had been raised in a family with a whole lot of children. He watched out for his food. He always protected his plate with his arms.

He cast a glance, quick and sidewise. Sliding there and back, took in the professor. Like deer's eyes his curled down with black. Looking only at his plate, "Hello, man," he said softly to the professor, not looking at him, "I seen when you come in."

The professor's narrow hands furrowed in the crease of lapel as though he would have hidden them. He looked down at his lap. His face crinkled and colour began, slowly from the empty dry cheek by the little lump like a spider's egg of stuck spittle at the corner, through broken veins to the eyes, squeezed shut now. The professor was afraid.

"I haven't seen you in a while, man," said Mat not turning towards him. "Whir you been hiding? You live in a dustbin too, now man?"

"I live in a hole," said the professor. Mat changed his position to look at him. Those clear brown deer's eyes turned up at the chair. He leaned over a bit further and grabbed at the professor's hair. "Little man," said Mat very evenly to the professor. "When they got Kirby they roped him at the bottom of the stair. One of them made sure he did not move by stepping on him."

Kirby was falling in a series of stopped portraits of tragedy like the rake's progress only growing black in the changes, downward,
biscuits.

"There are a lot of holes to puke in in London if you're going to be sick," said Brendon dully. His hair gummy with stone dust and his coated face stiff, he was sitting with one arm on the table, laconically wiping egg off Mahon's plate with his index and tasting it. "There's all them aluminium fences to rub up against, and there's all them destroyed chasms just in back of the old flat. You can get sick in a hole out back alright." He pushed himself deep into his chest. His head was clinging to a bottle of Daddy's sauce now. No, Brendon didn't sell him. He was Kirby's baby. It became slowly obvious that everyone was innocent. In the wake that was coming on the gloomy table in the Xenos, all the anguish was from love. Guilt moment.

"There's just more than my usual gracious host and this—parasite—" Mahon's fat hand back-waving, looked suddenly frail and fine. Amid a pile of half-filled cups with roaches and butter papers, I expected Brendon. Maybe a woman rising dew-eyed from the grey bed. The banner of toilet paper leading to the bog should've been on the stairwell along with the stench, but such was not the case."

"It was too clean," sighed Brendon. "Kirby had got this idea. He had cleaned everything before I woke up. Him and the professor. You know it was my birthday, Mahon. My birthday." Brendon slumped further into his seat. His brow wrinkled up and his mouth pouted. He could not assimilate the information he had just given out. His head shook back and forth, back and forth. The professor began to jump in his chair in short stops, and, ragged and unkempt, suddenly spoke quickly, as though there would never be silence. Mat let go of him. Back he fell as though not caring, settled, woefully upward from under, and the eyes were sagging in their sockets. "I had been right. That little professor was tragic.

"Kirby was working out a drawing on the floor," said the professor eagerly. "This was private. He didn't tell me what it was. The flat was cleared. The floor was wide again. He'd swept our rug and the papers were all white and neat again."

"There was nothing unpressed or dirty in the entire room," said Brendon somberly.

"Kirby said he could think better. He could. I knew him," the professor added foolishly. "He said 'be sure nobody ever gets hit'. He said, 'Don't worry, I'll take care of it.' It was a beautiful room, almost like before he came, but he'd been thinking a lot and reading and suddenly he had decided to clean it. I mean that made it more beautiful altogether because all this big life had been happening in it for two months. And so it was splendid. Not like my place at all any more." The professor half raised his arms in a vague winglike gesture, then collapsed back into himself, crumpled, defeated, exhausted, into his corner.

"Didn't like it," said Brendon. "It smelled of disinfectant. Kirby put clean sheets on my bed and I had to get back in them. Holy Mary it was like my mother. I couldn't stand it. It was my birthday and I didn't want to get up."

Mahon glowering pushed a baleful fat face towards the professor. "You must be a mad geezer," he said cruelly. "You must be fockin nuts or an old faggot or something to give a paddy dope dealer your flat."

"I was telling this young man," the professor said shakily, "I was telling this young man all about it in detail." Age settled down on the hunched grey figure of the clean little professor in his limp tweeds, age like a rain of pearlized ash; the scragglng feathers of his whitened hair trembled. The narrow little hands that had done nothing worse than wield a pen now picked in a claw at Mahon's sleeve begging. In the cowardly little figure was naked love; he defended the folly of his late years. I saw right through the pitiful outside failing body and I admired him.

"I had my own life before I knew Kirby, you know," said the professor. Mahon sneered at the thought. Mahon, the bully. He shoves at the old man with hard sneers casting him backward in his chair. I was just about to get angry when Black Mat grabbed Mahon quietly by the chin. "Shut up, Mahon," said Mat. Words level as a mallet, sure. "Or tell us something. Leave the professor out of it."

Mahon and Black Mat were matched, even. Mahon lapsed into silence. Mat let go of him. Back he fell as though not caring, settled the limp arm over the top of Brendon's chair. A quiet, electric, fell, then it settled, over the table, particuled, in late September dim sun. Blue lines of dulled energies breathing, crispy, like as though the assortment of bodies there were forming together into one body, maybe of a large and shapeless madonna of hazes, breathing and waiting for a total cure.

"I was telling this young man here," said the professor nodding at me, "about my first meeting with Kirby." At Mat he looked woefully upward from under, and the eyes were sagging in their sockets. "I didn't know anything about those drugs then," he added.
dolefully.

"Never mind, man," said Mat generously. "You didn't do a bad thing."

"See it was too immaculate," said Brendon. "Kirby gave Mahon this seat—on a low stool. Mahon looked crouched down and weird to me. It was early evening and I was just about to get up."

"The bed had been moved," Mahon said. "That made space. The place looked vast. He'd taken off Brendon's dirty sheets and all the woman in it, only Brendon."

"Kirby," said the professor gently. "He'd put all those wonderful hot colours everywhere. That African wall hanging and the hot patterned rug he used to sleep on. I remember through that central window was blowing a quiet clean breeze. He had put curtains, soft web, they moved at the edge of the window like the mist had cleared to the sides. The ledge he had painted white for me, and under it that small golden table where he kept his special things was polished and arranged like a shrine. Of course the smell of the place had changed by then. That substance they used got into the rugs and the curtains and bedspreads and everything had started to smell of it. I find it quite pleasant," the professor added. "It reminds one of snuff."

"Yeah," snarled Mahon, "Sunnnuff—you . . ."

"Leave the professor out of it, Mahon." Mat glaring at the puff, that pap-filled pulp of cheek. Fed too many pastry crusts. No raw root, crisp cabbage stem or anything firm. Mahon wanted it all cooked down or greased. Out in the open under cold wind. Mahon warming flesh by the fire of food carbohydrates. But the blood circulates badly. Tight at the wrists. He won't take vinegar to burn the fat. Mahon didn't like it. He didn't like the professor either.

"That hookie thing—that pipe they smoked through—well that was glimmering with a high lustre. The glass top of the brass-rimmed table had been pressed on at least 3,000 smoothed foil papers from tobacco packets collected in the flat," said the professor.

"It was a temple," Mahon mused. "I couldn't believe it. I only wanted the stuff. You couldn't decide what to say to Kirby. He seemed to have become close to the maker."

"Belladonna and broom," said Brendon moodily. "The professor looked them up."

"I had a use, Mahon," said the professor bravely. "You just got your feathers picked, professor," Mahon sneered.

"Fox sometime got the feathers on his mouth," said Mat. Black, that wide mouth, cracking bone. A tooth like a pile driver's block come down. It would snap, uncleanly. Inside you would see grey ragged mesh, each small aerated hole showing a splinter. It was chicken. Sure. Mat spat and then ran a black finger over a lustrous row. I gazed at the wet black hook of the finger. "Listen, Mat," I said. "Remember Cailin? I read a letter—by afternoon sun near the old museum of Celtic treasure. I mean—the letter, he sent me, the . . . I want to know everything."

"I told you man. Mat's black face was expressionless. "He got stepped on, didn't he—in the night—in the darkness—at the bottom of the stairs."

"He broke the upstairs window in the fight, in the stairwell," said Brendon uneasily. "They were after every paddy with hair on his chest and balls."

"Then they nailed him," said Mahon. "While you and the professor crawled down the drainpipe. Scum."

"But it was too open," said Brendon. "Already. He never should' ve cleaned the place like that. It was an open invitation."

"Too many people came in," Mahon said.

"It was a long night, man, and a whole lot of people came round," said Mat.

"And you just couldn't tell one from another," said Brendon.

"I could recognise a plainclothesman," the professor said quickly. "Kirby taught me. The plainclothesman," as though reciting a recipe, his tongue clicking rapidly, occasionally wetting the edge of the dry corner where the white spittle gathered, "dressed like everybody else but something would trouble the impression you got from him. He would have put on the garments, but the selections would have been from outside, not from inner necessity." The professor spoke faster and faster. The teaching. He had memorised from Kirby. "It would be wrong," he said nervously. "The way the clothes hung on the body—like a dummy—everything would be too perfect. Or the shoes might be wrong . . ."

"You could tell that creep a mile off," Mahon interrupted. "I seen him posing as an Irishman down at the Sail. He used to get wet out in the rain and try to look like a sack of old tatties."

"It didn't work," said Brendon. "He always called everything by its name. Like hev you enny mariaguawanna, enny cooki-coola—enny graahhss . . ."
“Growin' on yer toomstone,” said Mahon. His face flushed and his clothes flapped scarecrow as he pulled at his arm to tug the watch clear of the sleeve of that old jacket. The red round dial flashed briefly. “It’s deathwatch,” Mahon announced. Dimly through the floor of the Xenos where a corpse was floating in a haze of moving murk, the pure body of Kirby is moonstruck tangled in Rani’s hair and afloat. Up through waters by a pier the sound of a long slow sliding fuck of the pile driver getting the shit pipes and concrete, and the chairs screamed on a solid somewhere and there was a thump as Mahon and Brendon shoved. Always until the last minute they would wait. Then in a minute they vanished.

I entered that place where the regret is stored, where the missed moments are thick on the surface like leaves. I swam in through them, letting them cover my body and my head. I was all naked. I felt the slime of them on my skin, playing with snakes of soft stick that had floated in near me. O so be it then. Let Rani choke with her dark hair at the bottom of the pit. Let all life in its stirring murk just slide off the body like Kirby. Call it pure. There’s nothing for it. All there is.

"Alright," I said, "Mat. Professor. I understand you."

"Forget it," Mat said. He smiled and I bowed. In senseless accolade the music of Man on the Run began playing. Rani was stacking up plates like flattened worlds. We were all to keep on working while the fox was keeping vigil. We were somebody’s stoolie. Nobody talked. We only just waited, living, working, handling a little of the perks, relaxing. Like chickens in the yard. The noisy boyos were driven bleating gaelic through a black night-ridden paddock and Mat was way ahead of them all. I had guessed Mat knew something. It’s the truth. He knew all of it. Way before it ever came up in the narrative. Somebody gave him the message in his dark blood.

Mat only sat for awhile with us. Casual. The thing had bruised his heart, but he wouldn’t let on. He picked at his teeth and his gentle eyes drifted.

"Kirby’s going to know the yard perfectly, man," said Mat. "He’s got time now to study it." Then Mat got up and nodded politely to the professor and myself and moved off like an oil stain sliding through the beige sea of the Xenos. The door shutting spread a sheet of flat light behind him and he disappeared.

Kirby was further into the darkness than he is, I thought. Kirby was far into that darkness that is oneself because he knew how to get hold and make the energy move. It might have been mysterious, but he accepted it. Just doing the thing, whatever it was. That was it. It seemed about loving. The smell of sheep’swool was high in the Xenos. It was damp and ripe. Kirby’s sex part was rotting in the prison, I guess.

“I couldn’t go back to the flat after that; I waited and waited." The professor would be bent up and shrivelled like that until death would come. He held on to the cup as though it could warm him. “There was a pub—a place he used to like to frequent. The decor was heavy, rich in those colours of old amber and scarlet and night blue he loved. The rugs were ornate and all the dark red cedar wood was carved. I went there and sat night after night.”

"I have to get to work, professor," I said.

The little man was gloomy, but he accepted it. "We’ll hear something. Don’t worry." I patted him gently. "Take it easy, sir." At the door I wavered. Then I just waved to him. I knew he was homeless.

Carlyle Reedy’s last appearance in Reality Studios was in Volume 4. Her Orange Notebook is published as a pamphlet by Reality Studios. This is her first published fiction.
Alias

This is a fiction.
This is a fiction and it answers back.
It answers by appointment, answers an obligation.
It answers on demand,
answers in some confusion, but
it answers.

The jacket will belong to the original owner
long after he has abandoned it.
The economics of need.

Factions form part of a general intent.

There is nothing to equal
a demonstrative gesture,
freely expressed, or a cold meat sandwich
in the café at the corner.

A cold meeting of hands and emotions
in the café at the corner.

During the evenings, with nowhere to go,
they would be there, caressing mutual abuse.

It is convenient to let the wind scatter
my father’s ashes
through the grass, and a puzzle to decide
where to place future bouquets.

Higher education was the school up the road.

Snow brightens glooming winter days,
like an escape clause,
with its brilliance.
The forms of the familiar
are modified and disguised.

We dress and go out,
wearing our falsehoods.

There is nothing virtuous in virtue.
We are the signs of the time.

A hostile verification puts the cantankerous
proposition out of reach.
The cautionary tales suit all types of excess.

This is experience. Now and then.
Removed to safer keeping. The rumour
of past infringements
has nowhere to go.

Paying lip-service to a sneer.
Embraced at arms length.

“Do you remember Richard? He telephoned
for help. When they arrived they had to break
down the door. He was lying on his bed,
but they were too late to save him.”
It is not the way you enter,
it is how you choose to leave,
that matters finally.

A search-light probes the sky.
I invite you oblivious of your mission.
This is the past speaking. You know where
you are. A metaphysical language,
a direct approach, a charming proposition,
a dumb metaphor.
Let’s date.

There is safety in numbers.
There is safety in numbers.
There is safety in numbers, so start counting.
You said, nothing moves like the body's fluids move in time with the heart.

You said, an approving glance can be like a glancing blow of native air to the head.

Nothing moves. Though the narrative moves along regardless. Fading into action. Fading into action from your point of view.

Plain daylight hours of obligatory stillness. Nothing moves more arbitrarily than movement. The alternative, the duplicity, selection, stratagem. Nothing, you said, moves.

Bypassing a direct source, like the day passing, like the day passing clear and empty.

Then recite, you said, in the hours given The days are pre-set. The format cross-referenced to fade. Light running into shade.

No, nothing moves, he said.
Quote who?
Renaissance format of native air. The day fades clear and empty.

Nothing moves but the air, the day fades clear and empty.

All channels are open. The receiver is on pre-set format, clear and empty.

This is the narrative, he said, nothing moves. He said, the signal is on repeat. The signal is on repeat and all channels are clear and open.
Revisions

_for Douglas Oliver_

His attention is distracted from that at which he was looking to a slight movement in one of the lower apertures.

When to act and when to remain inert. These are just two of the questions we will be dealing with this evening.

The elevations are transmitters of spatial geometry. Holes to let in the light, and holes through which to enter and leave.

No art taboo and no grand gesture can eliminate the poignancy of such devices.

Between the buildings the action is meticulously executed, all moves perfectly synchronised.

Reason, my dears, is not consulted.

There is an expression of force for which no symbol yet exists.

I was looking for something in the pages that reminded me of what I wrote to you in a recent letter. Postscript to action.

Nudge a righteous citizen's sensibilities.

The street is filled with debris and daybreak. Broken glass sparkles on the pavement.

Suddenly a figure breaks from cover and runs, crouching low, into the shadow of a doorway.

The element of surprise makes hostages of us all.

Trans

I give my name at the enquiry window. They check the list, repeat it, mark a form, ask me to sit, and lift the telephone to say I have arrived. I have arrived, the page confirms this fact. By the door a mother and daughter talk quietly. The mother is explaining that she is about to leave, detailing the reasons for her departure, addressing the inclined and averted face of the girl. Her silence, the girl's, a troubled accusation, is impossible to ignore. Words I fail to hear, spoken for my benefit only. Privacy and exclusion. I turn my back to the door to place them out of range. Now I can see you walking along the corridor. For a moment I forget, and they have gone, you are still there and closer, and I stand to greet you face to face.

A woman steps between us to ask me for a light for her cigarette.

A man weeps quietly in a corner. A cooling breeze blows through the doors.

The counter clerk allocates a room number, and I hand over my box of matches. At times like this, times like this seem a little absurd. Times like this are all too common. We sit, you smile, I ask you, how does one get out of here? You point to the door, and say. There. Tell me what you are thinking. Tell me exactly what you are thinking. I think about the door, walking along the corridor, across the car park, down the road, away, at times like this. You are looking at me looking at the tree outside the window. I say I am thinking about the tranquillity of this room. I say, the same time next week. We say goodbye at the door. The sky has broken into massive clouds.

These poems are from a forthcoming collection which follows from David Chaloner's last book Hotel Zingo (Grosseteste, 1981). He lives in London.
Police say he's been granted political asylum. For now the radioactive dirt stays where it is. Wild increases will not be permitted. The first tall ship arrives in New York for operation "op-sail." She is wonderful, she is symbol of freedom. They specialize in hate mongering and hysteria. I'm really impressed with the dedication of heart teams. I felt totally helpless, needy and afraid. 6% of psychiatrists admit to having sex with their patients. He owns exotic real estate around the world. Bavarian hay is radioactive. The senate passed a sweeping tax reform bill. It was the idea of testifying against someone with Goh's reputation that frightened them. It was the fantasies that customers brought with them that made the clubs so popular. You grew up in Ireland. What did you think about America? Liberty is the most important thing that any person or any country can have. She's won two academy awards. I feel threatened by the responsibility of my intellect. It's perfectly all right for a child to say I hate you. I'm very skeptical when the government speaks of reform. Solidarity is wounded, many Poles say, but it is not dead. That would seem to diminish chances for a summit. Friends and family ready to attend his wedding were shocked. It just works like a miracle. Gonzalez added that due to previous corruption, this health center—Guatemala's largest—is operating under a 10 million quetzal budget deficit and that it has apportioned 72 centavos (about 27¢.) to feed each in-patient each day. The judge ruled her life was so wracked with pain it would be cruel to make her go on. It also attracted migrating birds. He suggested a statue commemorating American Independence at a dinner party in France. Exciting time period, here I have a girlfriend, she's from Phoenix. Let's begin with cuts, bruises and scrapes. That's the original mold of the ear of the Statue of Liberty. Definitely a better weapon for our people. The oldest ship in the world, the Gazella, has reigned over the high seas for 103 years. You can get a Liberty plate when you re-register your car or register a new one. It came over in 213 crates. The people of Newark have heard promises before.
(Agahi engelabi arabi) braked in front of a group of young children. The cops butted at them with the ends of their pistols. The kids surrounded the slow, heavy police and forced them on to the tops of their own jeeps. Then the black-and-blue-and-bloody children crammed themselves between the jeeps. They had nothing else to do, so they returned to their former nurses who would still wash their knees cut their hair mend their socks right through this never-ending night.

Half-naked and mercurochrome-dotted on his chest, a child sat on his bed.

Somewhere else, St Bubu, wearing only a white cotton slip, slept on his back. His knees were tucked into his stomach.

Audry who was Abhor’s sister was sleeping right next to the boy. Her right hand was lying on his thigh. It slipped under the slip. Then it fell on his ass. Though he was still asleep, St Bubu opened one eye and rolled over Audry.

Audry woke up and consciously stuck her hand under his slip. She wangled it between their bodies, heavy and hot from sleep, until St Bubu caught the hand as if it was a wiggling fish. His weight alone spread apart the young girl’s thighs. To do this, his hands held on to her white bra.

One hand rubbed one cup. It pulled it slightly down. The hand discovered a small breast. Touched it. Held the animal. The young girl’s cunt juices had already run down his right knee.

With his teeth, St Bubu unhooked her training bra. Two were adult teeth. The bra, slipping beneath one tit, tickled his tummy. When she felt the results of this tickling, the young girl’s face turned as white as the corneas of her eyes: she understood. “Don,” she said, “I forgot about him.” She went white enough not to exist.

“Don’t mention him again. That . . . Then was the time of true morality and affection. Before the war. Now morality and affection are dead. Now I no longer see now I no longer cry now I no longer love. Anyone. Even you. I won’t cry or smile again because I’m concrete.”

She said. “Our clothes were seaweed and tatters of blue-jeans, slips, shells, bras and condoms. We were naked kids.

“As for daddy, daddy’s dead now. He’s probably in Hell, the old shit. At last at least he’s got a real home; as for me with the war I went from place to place. In each place I met some boy and he did whatever he wanted to me; I survived by not caring about myself. Hookers understand me. And I understand them. I haven’t been a prostitute, understand, but there’s one thing life’s taught me:” Abhor’s younger sister explained. “I can always find a home in a whore-house. I can stay alive as long as I don’t care about anything or anyone: What other people say about me. How many hands touch my body. The physical pain I feel. What happens to me.

“With you, Bubu, I’ve allowed myself to feel something. But that’s wrong,” the young girl said.

“Being a whore means you separate sex and feeling. Sex is an activity as meaningless as is money. I’d be a great whore; I’d even make a fortune,” she cried out, “if my cunt didn’t get so sore! Physically. I can hardly bear to fuck: if I fuck more than once in a row, my cunt bruises and then I get an infection. If I was a whore, I’d die.”

St Bubu didn’t reply.

“My brother, Don, used to try to pull my hair out. Then he’d push me with his knee. He believed his knee was a gun. The top of my body would fall forward. The gun would slide into my legs. As if I was now his prisoner, he coldly informed me that if I didn’t do exactly as he said I’d be shot. I took my clothes off. But I wasn’t able to entice this real commander away from his commands with just my body because he didn’t care about sensuality. Both of us were unable to touch a person physically. In order to touch he had to command.
He commanded me; he commanded positions; he invented a world. When I became too tired to play anymore, to obey him: he put his arms around me and stuck his nostrils into my armpits. Then he rubbed his sweat-soaked nose into my cheeks. I pinched the tip of his cock in my teeth. I laughed when he cried out from the pain.

“As my brother and I form one person, now like mine his heart is gone because it's been cut out. Like me, Don obsessively stares at his dead heart. We're gonna be free, Bubu, when we shit on it, on ourselves.”

The children, such as St Bubu and Audry, and a sailor and a gypsy, in this time after the war all lived in the section of Paris of the dead. We're gonna be free, Bubu, when we shit on it, on ourselves.

There were only prostitutes; the women had all become prostitutes. I didn't understand why.

But I found, for I'm consistently losing myself, myself seated in the middle of the fur of white wolves. We, a young girl and I, nibbled cherries which reminded us of our blood. Red dripped on to white. The fruit at least was fresh. A mutant who was singing a rock-n-roll memory began to cry. There was a past, somewhere. I took my weapon, rose up, and walked to the front of the squat.

Throughout the night, after the revolution, all I wanted to do was get my rocks off. With whomever I could find.

“Give me hell.”

Nero’s tortures.”

Throughout the night, after the revolution, all I wanted to do was get my rocks off. With whomever I could find.

But I found, for I'm consistently losing myself, myself seated in the middle of the fur of white wolves. We, a young girl and I, nibbled cherries which reminded us of our blood. Red dripped on to white. The fruit at least was fresh. A mutant who was singing a rock-n-roll memory began to cry. There was a past, somewhere. I took my weapon, rose up, and walked to the front of the squat.

Outside, next to the purple steps, roses stood in the witch-like winds.

I went back in to get something to eat. While I was choking on some nuts, the girl sat on my shoulders so that her cunt juice ran down my neck. The skin at the back of my neck and my eyes felt allergic. My eyes were burning as they should be.

I took hold of her thighs. I ran my hands around them. I put my mouth on them. I bent her forward so I could run my hands up and into the ass. Red head backwards. She kissed me on the lips. I had her ass.

Dinosaur, who was a stuffed animal, was sitting next to us. Dinosaur was female therefore a prostitute. I could see her cunt. Cherries were sitting on top of her thighs. One of her gigantic paws as if she was a wild cat grazed my knee in affection. The buzzing of a mad bee caught prisoner in the bathroom resounded from tile floor to tile floor. When I managed to get my head up, the red-head rubbed her thighs into the back of my neck.

There was a gun-shot. In one leap I managed to grab the PM and jump on to the front steps. Still, my nostrils opened as wide as possible, moonlight resting on my face and hands, I looked out over the sea, to the port. The girl knocked on the window glass: “You have to eat, Thivai. You can't remain on guard all night. Abhor'll return. C'mon. What do you want to eat? There're dead hamburgers, there's whipped cream.”

When I opened the door, wind blew through the room. The whore was hugging her stuffed animal to her tits. “... That mouth you've got down there below...” I stuck my hand into the hole between her wet thighs. For a second I reached the clit... though she was a whore, she was too sensitive to be touched... I reached for her stuffed animal’s clit... that little nothing of a tongue...

I, shivering in anticipation, walked back into the cold. Car lights flashed blue along the bay. There was nowhere, for me, to go. From the squat.

I walked back inside. Inside the whore. I pushed her under me. I threw myself down on her. She sang out like a black singer... I didn't know why. Dinosaur poured about a cup of his whipped cream down her open mouth. I stuck my tongue between the cliffs of the lips into foaming cream. I became a ship, sailing. I tried to suck it up.

Dinosaur tugged at my army belt. Excited beyond belief by her touch, I threw myself on the animal. The young girl, excited beyond control, threw herself on me. I reached over for her and she, whore-like, rejected me. Her hand rose out of the fur and slapped my red cock.

“Don’t touch me but whip my cunt,” the young whore said to me. “I’m not a brute.” I told her. “It’s wrong for any human to hurt or kill another human. Even to reject to the point of banishment another human. Corporate executives commit atrocities. Must we act like them, sexually, in order to fight successfully? No.” I was answering myself. “Acting like shits will only make us become shit. Greedy and maniacal. Of course we have to use force to fight for our freedom. For forceless humans are dead. We should use force to fight representations which are idols, idolized images; we must use force to annihilate erase eradicate terminate destroy slaughter slay nullify neutralize break down get rid of obliterate move out destruct end all the representations which exist for purposes other than enjoyment. In such a war, a war against idolatry, ridicule’ll be our best tool. Remember, whore: Julien’s sarcasms did more damage than Nero’s tortures.”

“ Decomposing flesh moves me the most:” the young whore said. “Give me hell.”

I laughed at myself and gave her what she wanted. I pierced myself through her belly-button. I thrust and pushed her own blood up her womb. As her red head rose out of the white fur, her mouth opened: monstrous scarlet. Tiny white shells appeared in that
monster sea. "My little dead shark. Better than dead fish." I whispered to her while I fucked her in her asshole.

Stray sprays of my sperm streamed down the stuffed animal's left leg. Our fucking had made her less fearful for the moment. She actually touched my arm and left her paw there. Then this paw pulled my arm to her monstrous body, lifted it and placed it on her swollen belly. Then she stuck the hand in and squeezed it between her two hot hide thighs. I thought that my hand was going to break.

I had already stopped fucking the whore. I was rolled to, almost over, the dinosaur by the dinosaur. My soft gluey cock pulsed against her thigh which was made out of sackcloth. She looked at me. She licked my eyelids which looked pale to her. I turned away from the monster, back to the whore.

I took her in my arms. I adored her. I separated her arms into my cross. I placed my cross down on the white. Her red cunt was the center of the cross. I fucked her, not it.

I raised myself up into the night. I buttoned up my canvas pants, I rebuckled my belt, I reached for a glass of red wine which was on a still-wet legs right through my pants. My throat tightened and quail who weren't asleep yet were playing in a small garden.

Outside the squat, the winds were now cold. They froze my still-wet legs right through my pants. My throat tightened and tightened. I was standing on the steps. Below them, the bees and quail who weren't asleep yet were playing in a small garden. Holding on to this railing with one hand—the other one was keeping my stomach together—I breathed. The sea breathed. I vomitted. I groaned. The liquid part of the vomit dribbled off me then rolled over the black roses, weighed on them, bent them to the ground. Then the vomit rolled down their purple stalks.

... after my escape. I thought.

I ran down to a beach where the tide was rising. In a wall of seaweed I fell asleep. The sea-gulls rode on top of the waves. White-capped surf ran up to my feet which were sleeping. Another whore ran along the red and black cliff; gusts of wind turned parts of her skirt upward into a broken umbrella; a scarf like the wind whipped around her bare teats.

She ran down to the still-warm water. She climbed over the green seaweed which was hiding me. She, the princess, stumbled. Without waking up I grabbed her neck and drew her, which wasn't too hard for me for she was very light, into my stomach. She was curious about me; she examined my pants; inside my pants' pockets. She pulled out some crumbled bills and half a movie ticket. My cock was as hard as a nearby rock. While I felt my cock's hardness, she was counting the money. She slipped all of it into the elastic of her underpants. Her breasts were almost all chest. The girl took my right hand and yanked; she tried to drag me out of the seaweed on to some clear sand.

"C'mon. I'm gonna earn my money however I have to do it. I'm no whore."

Later, away from the beach:

Her room. My sperm even splattered her torn curtains. A shitload had come out of me. I rubbed my raw cock in a rag of sheet.

"Don't get it dirty, baby. You're not gonna make it like yourself, are you? Did you off your mother like they said on the radio?"

"Sure," I answered the whore. "And my sister too. I tossed both of their bodies into the sea."

"Your attitude's bullshit." She paused. "Why d'you really kill them?"

"Because my father had asked me to. She was fucking every gook and wop she could lay her hands on. She had always had weird tastes. But she wouldn't touch my father. Every fuckin' night, she'd lay on her side of the bed. She was a bitch. In the morning, every fuckin' single morning, she'd go out, find a new sailor and make it with him. So I made lunch, one day, then I took the knife, pushed open the door of the room I knew she had been fucking in ... she was sleeping on a wet bed ... the sailor must have come ... come and gone ... no more comings and goings for dad and me ... my mother's legs were so far apart, they must have disgusted each other ... knowingly ... I could have shoved an unpeeled pineapple up between the two of them. I lay one hand on those sheets which were still wet and focussed on mother's throat I pierced it. I thrust through there. Her blood ran along my arms. Outside the room my brother, Xaintrilles, screamed. He had a nightmare. I smeared her blood over my face like a tattoo. On my beach, my father was waiting for me. I ran to him.

"My father and I were running away through rabbit hutches. Then we came to fields of sugar-beets. What had been red had become purple: the blood on my clothes had become the color of murderous royalty, of the President of Austria. Until the night, my father and I hid ourselves in sugar-beets. We ate mulberries which leaked blood all over us. My father started crying until I beat him up with my fists.

"Finally: there was night. We made it to the second beach. I buried dad in burning sand in order to keep him warm. My father fell asleep, his hand in mine.

"Gulls rode on top of the waves. They played, advanced and
withdrew, until daybreak. With daybreak they disappeared. The pain I felt didn't let me sleep; over and over again I rubbed my bloody hand against the white sands."

Now the whore's rose was opening. As the tip of my third finger grazed and grazed and grazed the top of each petal, each petal curled backwards, as if against itself, like a wave, according to its own nature. Her petals turned back and back: the middle, which was becoming her, opened towards the world. Her physical center was too sensitive to be touched. It revealed itself to every part that was outside it. Was raw, was pollen, was touching everything and then wanting to touch nothing.

I had found the whore.

"Dad sat up, as soon as he woke up, right beside me." I continued while I was lightly touching the young girl. "He was still crying and trembling and snot was running down his chin. His face was a piece of drool. Bits of sand were caught in this drool.

"I've got some money." He apologized for himself.

"The sand as if it was a prehistoric dinosaur ate up dad's tears. I wasn't going to take anymore. I leaped up, grabbed hold of him, hit him in the face. Fuck you, father! My right knee butted into his groin. He tried to protect his face with his hands, but he was no good. And he didn't have any hands left to protect his groin. He tried to protect his face with his hands, but he was no good. And he didn't have any hands left to protect his face. I punched him a few times then picked up a small rock and threw it at his forehead. Blood spurted out of his bone. I proceeded to beat him up until he was wrapped around himself like a baby, weak. I beat him up I beat him up. I leaned over the burning sand and vomitted.

"His feet stomped on my back. He kicked me over. He stomped on my stomach.

"In the middle of the morning, the cops got us. Dad went back to his baby act, but the cops didn't fall for it: one of them beat him up with an Arab bludgeon. Then all of us, me and dad and cops, walked along, and down a water-sluice gate. At one point I clambered up the gate. A bullet burst my left wrist into slivers of paper. I fell into the canal right on my head. My head bounced up and down. A pig threw himself on me, down there, and dragged me up to the ground. Two cops snapped handcuffs around my good and my non-existent wrists and around my ankles. They had me good.

"My fingernails were dried blood. The back of my neck was a fire. At the end of the world there was a police truck. It had rolled up the road made out of huge roots which had been flattened by storm after storm. The cops threw my father and me into this truck.

"Before I even had time to stand up on the truck's metal floor, it was moving and a pig was standing on my back. He took out a lash and un unravelled the flesh of my back. A rat leapt up. A cop who looked like a boy threw the rat a bit of red meat. It had probably been a prisoner. The rat nibbled the meat delicately, then pounced on it like it wanted to fuck it. Then the rat pirate-like sank its red prey into a hole in the truck.

"I fell asleep. Sleep, as is death, was a relief.

"It was morning. Any morning. Swift winds were rocking a flowering branch. The emitted perfumes were winds. My shoulders were shivering, slightly, under their white shirt. My throat was bare. The head was close-shaven. The honey in the middle of my ears was sparkling like the first lights of dawn. Alive! I looked at the sky. I saw every thing there: Circles. Seals. Car-signs. Ships.

"My lips quivered, then froze as if they were no longer usable. My throat had already dried into pain. My knees buckled. I was forced to fall down on the cell's mattress.

"Do you want to blow this hole?"

"I kissed his shaven head. I didn't say anything.

"Until it was night. When it was night I was able to think to myself:

"Yes!

"My father was shaking in a pile of his own shit. I said, "There's him."

"His little boy isn't going to stop taking care of him?"

"I nodded yes.

"Three days from then, at dawn, we made the jump. We hid in garbage in a garbage truck; then ran to a town. Father, you stopped in front of the bakery. Your feet were bleeding. Drool was dropping out of your mouth. A man walked by you, he touched your shoulders; the other cop and I, behind you, hid ourselves in a sewer hole; the guy put his shaven head against yours and led you into the fabulous bakery. The bakery of all sweetness. The bakery of all stories. The bakery of all rats. In the bakery, you ate a pale pink and pale green cake while the guy was as all over you as he could get. I saw all of this. Back in the street, he got to you: between your thighs, gently. You in the meantime were more interested in the shit hole in which we were hiding: the rat hole, the home of all rats, our home. But, daddy, you couldn't stop eating your cake. Father. Sugar sparkled on the tips of your ears. The guy took hold of you by your shoulders, again, and bore you behind the shit hole in which we were temporarily living. He shoved you against a red wall; his hands touched every part of you. I saw. You only moved your knees: you were weak-kneed. White cream was sitting on your lips. The guy squeezed himself as close as he could to you. He thrusts his hand
into your boxer shorts and under your cock. I didn’t see: I knew. He made a small cry. He zipped his pants. When you lifted up your arms to push yourself away from him and the red wall and escape, he stayed right behind you, your new shadow. Finally the ex-con who’d engineered our prison break, now covered in shit, walked up to the guy: ‘You’re going to give us your money, aren’t you?’

‘The guy could have been mute.

‘If not, I’ll scream out loud that you just sodomized this old man and his helpless boy.’

‘The guy made an attempt to raise his arm to hit Custer, the ex-con. Custer spat on his feet: ‘All of your money, owner of the arms to push yourself away from him and the red wall and escape, into your boxer shorts and under your cock. I didn’t see: I knew. He stayed right behind you, your new shadow. Finally the ex-con who’d engineered our prison break, now covered in shit, walked up to the guy: ‘You’re going to give us your money, aren’t you?’

‘The guy could have been mute.

‘If not, I’ll scream out loud that you just sodomized this old man and his helpless boy.’

‘The guy made an attempt to raise his arm to hit Custer, the ex-con. Custer spat on his feet: ‘All of your money, owner of the world, of misery.’

‘Since Custer wasn’t used to waiting for anyone, even the Queen of Sheba, he dug his hands into the queen’s nice pockets and turned them inside out as far as they would go. As gently as if he was turning the guy inside out. Instead, he laced the guy up with shoestrings and a piece of rope which he had found in the gutter. In front of us coins were sitting on the concrete, as if they were dogshit.

‘I picked up a passport. Custer got a Casio and a scarf. There was no real money, just coins. There was only fake money. ‘Now you spit on ‘im,’ Custer directed me.

‘I didn’t get a chance in that Hell: dad, you walked right up to the owner. He went red, then white, while you spat systematically and slowly on his dark coat, his white shirt, his dark belt, his dark pants, and the bulge under his pants. Your drool rolled down his face and coat into his socks and shoes. You aren’t Jesus Christ on the ocean, daddy: you’re the Creator of the ocean which houses all the pollution in this world. Custer dragged you away from your delight, sat you down on a curb streaked with dog shit, and walked back to the guy and punched him as hard as he could in the stomach with his left. The rapist collapsed into shit which wasn’t his.

‘We scammed. Dad was laughing his head off so hard his head was almost dead. I ran in and out of the stores, using up every coin I had picked out of the street shit. Breads cheeses wines smoked fish fruits cookies like coke cans weighed down my bruised arms.

‘And we passed through Ecbatane. We walked to the north of Bezar. And then through Ouranopolis. We came to Myacin where people make fires in clay quarries. These were their homes. They were the bums of this world.

‘We saw ex-cons like us, slouching against the windows of abandoned, broken vans. Fleas were visibly nesting in their shit-stained hairs. Young girls, their daughters probably, were hugging them. Custer ran over to a small fire and threw his arms around some old hag who was squatting down either shitting or because her legs didn’t work anymore. She, or someone, had tied a filthy red scarf around her forehead, hippy-style.

‘The ex-con said to the old dish who was a bit cracked, ‘I’ve bought you an almond cookie. All the way from jail. It’s so old now, it’s probably cracked.’

‘The dish just grabbed hold of his hairy arm, all the way past the elbow. Custer, the muscle-man, turned to me. Father was occupied with a blond stud, playing knucklebones under a huge deserted van. Custer looked at me and motioned to the van.

‘Inside two boys were sprawled, asleep, on a heap of glitter and blue chiffon. Wearing lace cut-off slips nippleless bras girls with fingers encircled by ring after ring stroked the boys’ limbs. A boy who was lying on his tummy curled his left knee into his belly. I saw, between his newly-spread ass-cheeks, shit-crusts. One girl thrust her hand in and kept it there. Custer plopped himself down on the mattress. Another girl snaked her arms round my neck so I was strung up, my memory of a childhood game, against the van’s metal door; she dragged me down to the mattress.

‘Don’t worry so much, Thivai. Just you stop worrying ‘bout a thing. These kids never wash themselves and they don’t wipe after they shit.’

‘While my ice saliva mingled with her saliva perfumed by sugar and incense and rose water in the bowl of my mouth, I felt her rags slap then glued against the skin of my thighs. I felt like vomiting. I tore these rags of dried vomit off my skin. I separated the bare thighs; I put them between my knees; I opened my mouth as widely as I could so the gypsy could inject all her vomitaceous poison into me. Without that I felt I would die.

‘I needed her in order to live.

‘That night, in the winds swollen by dead meat, I tossed against Custer. We were both sailing on a pirate ship. The young girls were sleeping off sexual desire in another caravan which stood under a chestnut tree. Over branches buttressed by this caravan’s roof, within leaves rustling with drops of rain seed and bird shit: flies tossed, rubbed their faces, buzzed. Female ears, weighted down to the van floor by silver and copper rings, peeked out of their satin sheets and listened, in sleep, to the insects’ buzzings crossing the wood laths.

‘Outside the camp all was frost. We left the camp. Men were following us. Their lips were blue oysters.

‘Fingers of ice stroked the butcher shop. Inside, chestnuts smoked. Father held my left hand and Custer, my right.
"Goodbye, Thivai. We're going to separate. Cause of the cops. You and your dad: get out of here. I'll go it alone. If you want to see me again, ever: come back here, to the camp. They'll know where to find me. Nowhere."

"My throat dried into nothing. I died: now I knew I was forever nothing. Not a man, but a whore. Custer removed himself from the picture. Father, like usual, was crying.

"We'll go back to the whores in Paris,' I told him.

"I dragged myself on. Just as if I was lifting weights. The rest of my life was going to be a drag..."

"... I found myself in a lit street. I finally saw a whore whom I approached. If there is any variability to reality—functions which cannot be both exactly and simultaneously measured—reality must simultaneously be ordered and chaotic or simultaneously knowable and unknowable by humans. As soon as I began speaking to the whore, a man pulled me away from her so unexpectedly my foot slipped into the gutter: the bloody mud splashed my toes.

"Wait next to that cinema over there. I'll be along in about an hour. I've got to finish up now for the evening.' The whore patted the skirt-part above one of her thighs.

"I looked at the girl; eyes filled with water looked back at me. A cigarette was trembling its ash. A city was death for some people. I walked away.

"While the cockroaches who had become Kamikaze pilots in their frenzy for Jap fashions, humanoid, were banging themselves against blue windows in the buildings under the covered arches made out of dead people's bodies, the intelligentsia of the city's rats were throwing over the tops of garbage cans for bones into the whores or holes of the city.

"I saw honey hanging, like an earring made out of drool, from her ear. Her neck was a Rembrandt made out of filth. Blood the same colour as the nailpolish of the hooker I was about to meet painted her teeth and claws. Her nose had the same red, but crusts of white and brown came out of her eyes. Her mouth was a bruise. The bruise, I knew, was going to be me. It was definitely proven that in the urban environment the species of rat has more chance of survival than that of human.

"Wind was sliding along the concrete made out of dead rats and then climbing up my thighs into the sulphur pit surrounding my cock, then up along my ribs whose flesh had otherwise been untouched except for tattoos of pirates standing in their realms of sun-blasted lands, then up to the shoulders. Wind pushed a bit of newspaper on my knee. I crushed it into nothing. Saliva and blood striped my hands. My cock had shrivelled into a bit of newspaper. I threw another bit of newspaper against the wall of a brewery. The wall was graffitied. One of the graffitis was a red circle around a red cross, the anarchist 'A' for those who are beyond death, those who live in the world of Multi-Nationals. Next to the cross were these words, 'LONG LIVE DEATH.'

"I had to return to my place of safety, the only world in which I could be accepted, the brothel. The cops were after me. The black whore walked up to me and grabbed my hand without saying anything.

"Afterwards, in her room, she said, 'Tonight you'll be able to sleep.'

"The room must have once been part of a girls' school because the bed was narrow and nailed to the wall. The only other furniture was a desk and a sink and bidet. Her skin was the color of a bruised rose.

"She returned to silence. I touched the flesh. My fingers needed something intangible. Flesh. Behind the door was laughter, the creakings of schoolgirl mattresses, kisses, smacks, sighs, garglings, a cry. The black girl shut the door. I sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Her sheets were rags. Rags sat on rags. Tiny ivory earrings and specks of white powder sat in the middle of the piles of rags. The black dragged me up and against the porcelain sink. She stuck a sponge on my face. Then she actually scrubbed me behind the ears. Though I was too tired to laugh anymore, I laughed myself silly. The black whore held out the red sponge to me, 'It's for you, now.' She threw the red sponge at me. 'C'mon. You're gonna get every piece of dirt offa' that body.'

"I plunged the red sponge into the water that was boiling on top of the stove and placed it on my cock. I laughed. The whore's arms were now loads of white rags. 'Just rest yourself. I'm gonna get you clean sheets.'

"Water was steaming up and streaming down my stomach and legs onto the floor which had become a pond. I carefully placed the red sponge which was now slightly cold on my stomach; the sponge fell down to the floor; the whore returned with her clean rags, put them down on the bed, picked the red sponge off the floor and stuck it into my nose. I squeezed the red sponge over her clothed shoulders. She sat down on the bidet, I looked right at the sponge and laughed: 'It's for you. You're gonna get every piece of dirt offa' that body.'

"I threw the red sponge at her while I carefully explained:
‘You’re dirtier than me: you’re black but I’m white.’

‘Then screw you blue. Boy. Hurry up ’n’ wash yourself, boy: it’s carnival time! From now on we celebrate! Thea’s gonna give us all the cooky and snooky we can eat!’

“She threw the red sponge at me; I threw the sponge off me; I danced around the black; I sank back on her bed. ‘I want to go. I can’t go. Not to carnival. I’ve been through hell. I killed my mother.’

“It’s your decision, mon.’

“You go by yourself. You’ll have a great time. Bring me back some cooky?”

“I’ll bring you back fresh whipped cream. I’ll pour it right into your scarlet mouth. Now you get into the clean sheets I brought you and don’t you think about nothing. You think ‘bout nothin’ and all good’s gonna happen to you. You just get your wet sponge outta my bed right now.’

“She left. The door banged shut. The whores, now washed, perfumed, free of men, walked down the stairs. They squawked like the parrots of New Orleans.

“I threw the wet sponge outta her bed.

“I’m a woman and you’re a boy. I’m making demands on you that you change yourself. Demands that you don’t want don’t want to do. And there’s no reason you should. Also: you’re stifling me: I haven’t been happy in your company for a long time. We love each other. We just need to separate ourselves from each other so that each of us can be who we are. So we’ll stop making these impossible demands of each other.’: These winds within my mind woke me up.

The light was upset. As I woke up I couldn’t distinguish between right and left. I realized my whole spine, the area of my middle right side toward my back, my bladder, deep within my groin, and the tip of my cock were blazing. I thought I must be sick, I must be unable to cope with something. The ceiling, and then the whole sky were sitting on my chest. They were crushing me down. Then everything became one knife. You once wanted to knife me. The knife came down from the ceiling into my belly and slashed around. The knife cut my throat as if my throat was a pig’s bladder which was full of blood. I was a placenta which had been cut open. Yours. Then you, mommy, cut the red cord which united you to me. After you alienated or murdered me, you kissed my mouth and told me you loved me. I awoke: anger made my heart awake. I murdered you: I cut through the red blood that united your blood and mine: I cut out all emotion which is hatred. I woke up in the only democracy of freedom. I woke up in a black whore’s bed. Whatever memory there is of you in me, or of me: get the fuck out of here, mommy! Get out of here before the rats of the city get your body! Rats live in shit and the sewer pits here and they piss on human eyes and their blood hungry teeth kiss red lips. So get out of here, mommy. Rats own the city of piss. Do you know what a rat does to a human? It gets in somewhere, it gets in somebody, it stretches the ass-cheeks so far apart it can get in there and slit. That’s the nature of the rat-human relationship. Get out of here, mommy! Get out of here before the rats eat out your heart and tongue!

“But you didn’t get out. So now there’s no more you. So now there’s no more mommy. Men killed you off. Since I’m a man, I killed you off. I killed you.

“No, I couldn’t have. You’re here, aren’t you?

“Yes,’ a whore answered. ‘You’re not sleeping.’

“I came out of my dream. ‘No, I’m not sleeping. Come over here, child.’

“I’m Antigone. I’m gonna start a school next year. If there’s a school left in Paris now.”

“Me: I’m Thivai. I don’t have the faintest idea what I’m gonna do. I know what I did: I told the child who I was. Hopefully. ‘I killed my mom. Then I became a mercenary. I palled around with Abhor.’

“You smell great. But your forehead’s burning up. You sick or somethin’? Maybe that’s why mother said you have to stay here till she gets back.”

“The black girl left the room. It was full morning. I packed my bags. A boy who was chunky rather than fat walked into the room. For some reason when I saw him my heart beat faster. I picked up the plastic bag full of my rags. I couldn’t stop looking at him. He sat on the edge of the mattress. I put the gray plastic down so I could turn on the hot water. I took hold of his filthy head and held it under the water. I scrubbed his cheeks and skin with a stone. He acted like he was mute. He touched my eyelids. He touched my shoulders. I took off his clothes. My fingers trembled as they were holding the bottom of my undershirt. All my clothes were wet. I lay down on the mattress and spread my knees apart. The boy took off his clothes except for his once-white undershirt and lay down next to me. He took my hand and held it. I rubbed my body against his body, I lifted his almost white undershirt. When I reached his nipples, as if I had been travelling and had finally found home, I kissed them. I reached his cock, which had been buried beneath his balls, which was palpitating. He rolled on my body; his chest hairs stung like coals; my dirty fingernails found bits of soot within his cock hairs; my tongue licked the dirt between his eyelids and eyes.

"Rising on clenched fists, the young boy said, 'Listen. In my womb revolution still thrills. She comes, spurts on my eyelids, gets them all dirty. Now that it's full noon, she's coming in all the mouths in Paris. Whoever will lick and suck this first milk is blessed beyond human.' The boy got up. He dressed. He put his makeup on in front of a broken mirror which was already splattered by rouge.

"He left the room."

Thivai stopped speaking to the whore.

At noon a bunch of kids left their squats. They marched to one of the formerly rich sections of town. They broke into a few abandoned apartment buildings. They busted up whatever furniture and decorator objects they could find. They burned books. When this trash left the buildings, there was a lot of trash left, for the only things they kept were kitchen knives and bathroom razors. They slipped and dug the metal into their own flesh to destroy their own flesh. There was a lot of trash.

"Antigone," one boy asked a girl who was blacker and younger than him, "are you a slave?"

The girl touched the ring through her lower lip. "Do you see this ring through me? Do you know there's one down below? In what society do you think we're living?"

"Me——" the boy, Don, answered, "I'm free. We've had a revolution. We're the real children of the revolution. I go wherever I want in this city. Now. I might be a physical mess, filthy, crazy cause I'm wrapped up in my own thoughts which still are mirrors of their desires to enslave me: but now I see this. Me. My eyes are naked now."

"By the end of this winter, I'll be free," Antigone answered the boy. Now that they were almost vinegared her lips tasted of orange blossoms. The boy took hold of her hair filled with lice, then filled her mouth with sperm. Dawn had burned the sperm into light while his Dr Martin's were burning her toes and his teeth black fingernails and badges were scratching the top layer of skin off her nipples. While the insect riffraff of the war was roaming under the first layer of his skin. Whose freedom is dirt? Antigone thought to herself while she was sucking his cock. Her mouth left the cock once it was clean. She didn't cry though she wanted to. She leaned herself against the boy's shoulder so the boy, drunk as a skunk from booze and coming, fell into the mud in the gutter and vomitted into the black . . .

In the livingroom of their squat two twins slept, entwined on a couch.

Audry, Abhor's sister, threw her hands up at the black sky as if to catch something; she cried out that this dawn was tormenting her cheeks.

A mosquito was rocking itself to sleep on a pile of green seaweed. Audry touched St Bubu's temples, "Since dawn, Bubu, there's been a baby moving inside me. She's the last-born of this old world. Rats made her."

Kathy Acker's Empire of the Senseless will be published in May 1988 by Paladin Books.
Hearsay

One life, one leaf,
I can’t help what the sounds sound like
what the sand tastes like, what wounds
the sword swerves to edit.

A ridiculous sense of being naked in the sea when I’m not.
Because one time it means one thing
but the next time there’s no comparison.
Yet a xerox machine is a very real thing.

Because trees are a false unity there is paper.
Because bugs are a false unity there are birds.
Because words are on the outside, sense
is on the inside. Just because.

If there’s no distortion you can’t see it,
if there’s no similarity you can’t spend it,
no name, no shame.

More useful than swimming naked, more similar than the same word
on the lips of club members having a drink, murmured by people
making love in a movie, shouted repetitively in a tantrum as a
nation dressed up like a person threatens to blow it, what is?

Threatens to go right on through the century to eternity. Bonds out to
two thousand eight, tight ones, expensively realistic, elongated
obligations, with charades every evening, sounds like

A thousand patriarchs
line the shortest distance between the beginning and the end:
this is the reason, what the world looked like
when I was first shown to it.

On top we have the genera
in the middle we have the species
and on the bottom we have people, named Joan Rivers, John Tower.
This pyramid may be a false unity, my lord, but it’s your tomb.

Only this tree is real, only this ant I just flicked off the desk is real,
only the whole thing, pure reason as the very lazy susan itself
bringing matter to hand in the form of things to be made into
slaves and then kept reasonably placid and in tune, like you
change the oil then wash the car just to make sure it rains
drumming on the roof at random.

Only this century is now in place, after the happy ending, the death
of god, the birth of a flattened but flattered nation under that
dead god.

A century of massacres, like the sixteenth, as nation after nation
declares itself sacred.

There are many pages,
but only one book, many books
but only one reader, many readers
but only one language, many languages
Here

I’m rolling over, I’ve fallen out of bed, what I write you read, without so much as an is in between. First question (sirens blasting away): Where are we?

“This seems to be an inhabitable planet, the conditions are perfect for pastoral or industrial park, let me get a reading on the temperature . . .” but that guy’s on TV, his costume would make Napoleon blush.

It is well known (always a good way to start), it is well known that there are no final surfaces in dreams, walking on water turns out to be a play on words, and waking up it’s somewhere else.

The Federal Building says Federal Building on the outside, a syllogism masquerading as a tautology. There’s a certain crudeness in lashing the sea, or naming it, or being emperor in somebody’s else’s brain.

There is no way satisfaction will occur outside of all the bodies of everyone who lives here and here, also, are the keys to New York City and all the people who live there, and to San Salvador and all the bodies in the basement of the Federal Building there.

I’m not asleep. Surrealism is was the last gasp of unitary logic, the single I writing the big double word, but the mystic writing pad was is mad as hell, it’s not going to lie flat and scarred any more. Go pin your poem to a tree, and here, again, are the keys to Finnegans Wake and the Bible.

Captain Kirk pronounces judgment: “Cooling, cool, cold, a life is wax. A singular stylus would be good. But there’s only so much time to write,

whether you like your costume or even have one,” but wax or time or Captain Kirk, ceaselessly lashing their own meanings . . .

There’s a moon, tonight, and private property patches together a network of dreaming citizens, or however we want to designate, asleep precisely (pardon the religious mathematicity, the lined up city, parcelled out and heaved up into crowded cancer hatcheries) asleep precisely nowhere, where body meets word.
Hey I know one: The proper study of mankind is what?
Why is there money, Daddy? And why is there daddy, Money?
What is the proper study of Lu Xun?
Guns are made of what? Food is made of what?
Or aren’t these the right questions?
Why did Odysseus lose all his men and then kill two hundred more when he got home? To stay human?

What happens when you mix five billion people with a lot of cheap explosives?
More at eleven. To gain power
I use reason. To fine-tune reason, I use force, and force’s better half, money, and as a last resort, their child, charmism.

The President was at home giving a speech lesson to his family, the nation.
A person at home is the height of reason.
There are no waves or ticks or hurricanes to trouble reflection, and the mirrors stretch to infinity. If he were wearing pajamas, it would be positively Kantian.

Whatever I say is my language, is in my language, how do you say, in my language they say it like this.
But surely the houses are the same, the horses, the hoses, you use the same straight lines, the body divides into the same parts, the waves, the wives, you have to go to the dentist, the podiatrist. One dollar to the podiatrist, and two dollars to the dentist because I have more teeth.
I also have more military prowess and am more reasonable.
What do you say to that, Mr Dead Suitor?

What do you say when the epic’s over, you’re in your pjs giving a speech to the family,
and the epic machinery’s covering the ground so densely that it obscures the children’s fantasy and determines what they will and won’t wear?
The proper study of each member of the team is its playbook, jets punish jungle with impugn reason.

REALITY STUDIOS VOL. 8 (1986) is still available from trade distributors and the RS editorial address, price £3.50 or $6 (postage and packing is 50p in the UK):

Peter Riley interviewed on the condition of poetry, William Sherman on Eric Mottram’s poetry, plus work by Douglas Oliver, Wendy Mulford, Kate Ruse-Glason, Lee Harwood, Hazel Smith, Paul Green, Bruce Andrews, Steve Benson, Diane Ward, Rosmarie Waldrop, Robert Sheppard, Kelvin Corcoran, Nigel Wells. Also, Corcoran reviews Oliver, Ken Edwards reviews Tom Raworth, Maggie O’Sullivan reviews Barry MacSweeney, Andrews Mayfield reviews gay poetry, etc.

For details of other RS volumes in print (that’s from Vol. 4 onward) please write to the editorial address.

ARE STRAIGHT LINES THE SAME THERE? BOXES
HOLD JUST AS MUCH, BUT IT HAS A STRONGER FLAVOR.

BOB PERELMAN’S MOST RECENT BOOKS ARE THE FIRST WORLD (THE FIGURES) AND TO THE READER (TUUMBA). HE IS ALSO THE EDITOR OF WRITING/TALKS (SIUP).
It killed one test pilot and injured three others. We have every state in the Union here. Even if there are no profits, they've already made their donation. Money problems are keeping one Polish ship from docking in the harbor. How about climbing aboard a boat to go fishing or sight-seeing. I am so happy. I haven't been an immigrant for 79 years, but I'll tell you, I'll take the medal. The biggest improvement in finding work was for Hispanic-Americans. Those in need have no holiday from hunger. Pope John Paul supported calls for land reform. We're going to be rejoicing over good luck. It was a sight not to be missed. The Eagle led the flotilla of boats from nations around the world. The wind was perfect, from the South, taking us right up into the harbor. After spending three years in a concentration camp this means everything to me. A stately tribute to the statue's 100th birthday. The long wait has ended, you can now visit Lady Liberty. Tonight's International Music Concert. The early birds got to hear Yo Yo Ma. In the past it's been everything including a smuggling ship. After tomorrow the tall ships sail home. One of the fun events of this day was the great blimp race. Talentino's trouble-making can't be taken so lightly anymore. With their paper ballots voters threatened to topple a dynasty. Maybe even to change party rules which bar him from a third term. Many homeless are planning to build new houses here. The West Coast discovers problems with new immigrants. The pair was executed at dawn. Whether they know him or not, they're role models. Mandatory drug testing in the NFL. Sit, do as little as possible, maybe sit in Central Park. You can be cool in a pool by the river. Those cuts, if they are to happen, will have to be voted by Congress. There is a lifeguard shortage at beaches and public pools. A bloodless end to the general's revolt. We don't know yet if the kidnapper is in custody. Virtually all of Southern California shook for a minute. Someday, say the scientists, earthquake forecasts will be possible. Negotiations to end the strike have stalled.
greatest skill at drawing developed in pictures for friends of airplanes diving to bomb their targets. I worked hard at the perspective of aircraft wings, foreshortened to indicate their length and right angle position to the onlooker, who was also up in the air alongside, taking part in the battle. It was the shape of the wing that kept the plane in the air.

For a long time I couldn't write because no wording seemed sufficient for the head of pressure that had built up. I stared out of the window in various places at the buildings and trees. Sometimes I closed one eye and aligned the road sign, the vertical strut in the window frame and my pencil held close to my eye, but if I opened my other eye they fell back into their happy distances, and their colours and outlines looked like nothing that could be drawn up. This isn't the story of how I came to write or an illustration of its difficulties. This pencil slides so smoothly across the surface that I can't easily recall those violences anymore. I was younger then and believed that everything had an explanation. There were days when words seemed so powerful that they could carry a lifetime's experience over the thousands of years necessary to reach us from the earliest acts of writing. Words were the hiding places of the world's secrets. The problem was that no paper was strong enough for them.

Most of the long scroll is empty. Surrounded by meaningless grey is a Chinese painting of two young tigers on a hilltop sheltered by an pine branch. The grass and pine needles are more furry than the animals. Their bodies are wrong. They completely lack sinewy edged danger and don't have the usual charm of painted cats either. The distance between the sentences was the only indication that unquotable judgements were implied by the falling gestures of hands and the absence of conventional praises. He rolled over and put his arms around her in the novel you read while you were ill and said I've been thinking about us and our relationship. The rest of the novel is irrelevant for now. Summing up the disappointments she said I admired their autonomy, independence and skills. She jumped out of bed. The tigers are a little too orange for the green on the bank where they're sitting. On the other hand, the painting of red and yellow flowers in a blue light, that looks across the room from the right of the scroll, has spread out to cover the frame so that it becomes a shape perceptible only as regular shadowing within the picture field. No meaningless grey or brown here. The author speaks of her involvement with the women's movement. The distance between the images produces parallax. Incessant driving imagery cold enough to quickly soak through the usually warm outer layers of your speckled overcoat, threaten a chill. Large and dangerous, capable of vanishing into a pattern of light and shade without even intending to. A creature of contrasts as its colouring suggests. She accuses recent feminism of exalting as specifically female, virtues which are simply camouflaged versions of traditional male views of women. She writes and she understands. The scroll tells us nothing about tigers. Who are these men and women I keep reading about?

The distance between the sentences is a representative one, meant only to be a guide not an exact measure. For that, and the reader will surely want to carry out such checks, a thorough survey of those London years from 1970 to the present is necessary. Underneath the tigers sleeps a black cat with slightly dishevelled fur. Yellow cat pee on a blue duvet is only momentarily beautiful. When I was little I thought the luxury of being a tiger was the pleasure of going anywhere without fear. Asking to be hugged means what? That you don't expect to or that you want to make a statement about what wants you have at the moment. The beauty of tigers that can't be
touched unless they are oversized soft tabbies in a silly Chinese scroll trying hard to be important. The beauty of London in the memory. The beauty of phrases prepared for by many pages of narrative that arrive and unobtrusively fit so perfectly they blend like tigers into the bush. As you turn over the pages of the novel the distances become more real than apparent and that feels good. I now see what you were trying to tell me. In the next clearing I will be a tiger but now I am light and shadow. Have you read the other earlier novel about the same figure? Let me pause for a second and check my diary for that week. New sentences keep turning up and have to be fitted in as unobtrusively as possible. The black cat is still. Fifteen years of complex activities and yet you can still call it a movement, that's impressive that ordering recognition. To look at those apparently random patterns of light and gloom and see movement is to be politically astute and that's why I read her. Do you see what I mean? Soon I will come to a question I can't answer and it will be time to pause. One thing bothers me about the tigers, their violent appetite. The scroll makes them look such eaters of tinned food but I know they want the real thing, alive, hot and running for long periods without a break.

Peter Middleton is a regular contributor to Reality Studios. His essay on Barrett Watten's Progress will appear in Vol 10.

Stephen-Paul Martin (next page) lives in New York City where he edits Central Park, a journal of the arts and social theory. He has published two collections of poetry, and has had fiction, essays, translations and plays in many literary magazines.

STEPHEN-PAUL MARTIN
Virgil Had No Balls

The teacher had too many words in his mouth. But there they sat, so serious in the classroom, waiting for instruction. First he changed the lighting, closing a few venetian blinds, opening others. Then he looked at them carefully, giving at least one-third of the class new names and shapes. One student, for instance, was given the form of a lawn in late summer, a chilly day that lets you know that fall is on its way. Another became the sky, wedgewood blue, curving down to three students who became poplars, or silhouettes of poplars. Another was a massive house with a mansard roof, an elaborate weather-vane spinning in the stiff wind that yet another student became. The teacher made a pond in the foreground from a senior with a C-plus average, someone who liked to play racquetball in her spare time. It took several students to be reeds on the edge of the pond, and several others to be ripples on its blue surface.

Soon he saw that with each new form he created, a zone of his thought and speech disappeared. He knew that if he kept adding detail to the landscape, he'd soon have nothing to say or think. Yet part of him was attracted to this possibility. It was, after all, the goal of several major religions, or "spiritual disciplines", as he preferred to call them. So he sat back a few seconds and reflected on the landscape. I say "reflected", as if he'd become some kind of mirror. Can people really mirror things, or become reflections? In some ways yes, in some ways no. Would such an answer work on a test? It all depends on the teacher.

A student says she has to pee. She goes out into the corridor and pretends to go to the ladies room. But really she's gone to get answers for an upcoming quiz. There isn't going to be a quiz. But that won't stop her.

The first thing to do is break things down. Release the words from the pattern they're trapped in, from the meanings they've been used to produce. Then recompose. Assemble the parts to make a verbal object, a thing with unique dimensions, a field of force that doesn't exist until it's been created. Now step back and look. The teacher's about to say something, isn't he? I'd say no. I'd say that what he's done with the class has moved him far beyond the confines of anything he might say. Nonetheless, I intend to say something about him.

As a little boy in the Renaissance, he was Claudio Monteverdi, the man who brought operas into prominence as an art form. He got
lots of attention—so much, in fact, that his need for praise destroyed his creative powers, and he later became someone who lost his job in the industrial revolution. He couldn't retrain himself, and so he became homeless. He would have starved except that when he grew into middle age he worked in the Wright Brothers' bicycle shop, and showed them how to make the first airplane. They said he could have all the money he made from selling it so long as they got the credit. As soon as he agreed to this, he became a philanthropist, gave money to stop the Vietnam War, and found himself in class, a writing instructor.


And somewhere else a book was finally closed. On the final page were people listening to rock songs in cars with big fins, parakeets glaring at families through the golden bars of cages, Ethiopians puking, unable to keep their food down after so much deprivation, people screwing in igloos near the Great Bear Lake in the Yukon.

Looking out over the landscape, the teacher gets an idea. He's going to write an article on Virgil. He's going to show that Virgil had no balls, that he was just a lackey for Augustus. When the article appears in a scholarly journal, radical academic types will quote from it, thrilled to see Virgil's balls cut off, and more conservative types will say they're "outraged", or "scandalized", writing lengthy articles in protest. The student comes back with a look of studied innocence, fumbling with her purse like women do in Hollywood movies. The teacher thinks of asking how the bathroom was, but he's so caught up in Virgil's balls that the words get stuck in his mouth.

In 1708, Leibniz discovered introspection. In 1779, the first whaling ship was built in Massachusetts. In 1817, Robert Calhoun took a walking tour through the Lake District. In 1855, Schumann went insane. In 1906, Alice C Carter finally got a chance to read the Tibetan Book of the Dead, but didn't like it. In 1945, the first ballpoint pens appeared on the market. In 1964, Terry Riley composed In C, the first widely-known piece of Minimalist music. In 1981, Lorie Sanchez went to Big Sur to get drunk on her twenty-third birthday.

Clouds are passing over the silhouette of the mansard roof. Shadows move in the light on the grass, poplars bend in the distance. The students play their parts with a kind of terrified perfection, a chilly day that lets you know that fall is on its way. Suddenly, a flash, a sound so loud you can't even hear it. You're not here anymore. You're part of a language now. You can't speak it.
Adonis was famous in his own circle for his saying that goes without saying which he had borrowed from Sophia when she was a teeming adolescent but had forgotten to give it back to her. Having overstayed his own lending rights he grew fond of her as memory and drew as many draws as he was likely to submit to her spendthrift which could not find an outlet in their comparatively small but well undersized country except in his ears was plenty of room for her full waxen sway and tender heart play.

That was Adonis’s view of his memory for which one reminder was as good as any. The more the many the many the merry the marry the marry the marry the marry the mare the hare the care the care the core the more.

Adonis had married Diana as sister-in-law when he said yes I will to Sophia Diana was the flower of their imagination Adonis had promised to keep her for himself and to share Sophia with Diana as in-laws regularly do.

As there were no others—others were not involved neither as other half nor as golden calf—Sophia adored Adonis devoted to Diana stirred Sophia desired Diana admired Adonis spoiled Sophia.

Tinker-Tanker and Pinter-Panther were friends from early childhood on the yellow snake was the boundary of their nationhood understood as Robin Hood.

If and when together the size of their country did not allow them to escape from themselves they split fractions and dropped actions continued to bar sections mixed with affections they had developed for one another as opposed to their own size did not allow them to expect more from themselves as part of a greater tension than invention then tradition then seduction.

That was the goal they had aimed at themselves in the situation they were in the country for themselves and had no-one else to be in for but themselves.

Likewise Diana had aspirations reaching far beyond her own limitations as connotations but not excessively exceeding the permutations played out and on by Sophia and Adonis cared for both of themselves and for Diana as common spirit came to mind.

Diana was according to her soulmate herself after she had taken to the road to Riding to stop at Writing. That was thirty books ago. At that time she had not had the foundations dug for her own church.

Colio and Folio were outnumbered by Recto and Verso as Diana’s shell-shocked conscience-money burned out the third match at her cross-countried examination and stooped the coup in her trenches. When she was hot for nothing Diana celebrated her pillowed concepts and played her preludes to oriental and love-flattering cuplings. The altar piece stood at the centre of her attention stood the moon and her valise. She had a move on her legs.

Diana was as often releasing the nights as she was refreshing the fights she was prone to dramatising as mementoes on the balance sheets of her primordial kingdom. Whenever involved she was ever involved she meshed her own records up and on and to and in her long tunic valves which she later on displayed as values filling the gap between absence and presence between pre-sense and post-sense multiplied by the implicit cost of keeping up outcasted homeland and household backed-up demands.

Diana’s megalithic banded slogan read independence justice and freedom had kept her separate from her manholed conceptions and holy to her suspended superstition. As for her inspiration she tore and drew anger and pity to competitioned houses demi and semi derelicted from wounds winding winding winding and not finding founding the inflection back to reflection.

Diana had always been Diana had been Diana to Diana but Diana had been Diana for Diana had always been Diana to her temper was never so hampered as when if she had no pretentions to be levelled down to up the caring profession she could not care less for that was the lesson life had told her one afternoon cross-armed with perfection when the summer heat was cooling off and down the lanes where the ponies were going home to be fed by virgins from stable homes she had rarely despised as being good for nothing but good enough for something is a much better living than screaming and crying wolf too and too often to the riders and hunters for there were no stores nor shops open and sweat had to be taken down to be analysed and surprised by the outcome at a quarter past dawn as a quarter was oversleeping like a quartet at the Albert Hall which sooner or later has to be done has to be faced has to be taken apart has to be subtracted from the burden of sums of jollified trends and plums and rands.
Adonis used to say I listen to myself therefore I am not for you he added later to his submitted conscience cum conscious which he had sent off and received by return of post. This service done to him and soft on weak spots never called back. Home was so incredibly far unbelievably close that pigeons and Cape Finisterre were too high a price for cup finals and pit closures.

Grammatically speaking Adonis had a headstart when jumping from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet never reached the ground he would be buried in alive and healthy he could not spare a counterattack. Uncivilized and silent in company he angered many a mind took it once he met her twice and in the end he drowned his tongue for ever strangling his hands were so used to committing sins on plimsoles running from Cologne to Rio to be processed by the processions that is to live by day and to sleep by day and to play day and night counts half-sized time and overgrown undertime place cuts a metaphor to size if that were not already done by time and now. Adonis recollected the stamps he had sent the world was not aware he had lost his memory to his heart showed signs of sounds sublimated into symbols overtaken by rotas and outgrown by Dakotas touching down on the Borobudur around cockfights and races illegal though enjoyed the heads chopped off and the blood count down to size again so twice again the rain was cool and there is as well as was the place to live to work.

Sensitised and censorised Adonis loved to be Adonis had never met Adonis before he met Adonis but never as Adonis had met Adonis. To be proud of a name given to your self by yourself that is to be proud of yourself as a member of the community of selves of elves of eleven tortures as free as a maniac with a compulsion to decipher the alphabet which rolls back to bums and cons are redirected to fun at a price too high to pay the price that is sheer malignant delinquent continental sandpapering rampaging walling calls underexposed at the exhibition Survival of the Loneliest Fitter where the visitors could be seen by none but none as was properly described and explained by the organiser who had forgotten to beget a change from one instrument to another windpipe had blown the horn but not torn corn had sown the horn to horn the unicorn was not time was raised hand-lowered and at fingers time lights up that is lighting-up time that was double half an hour late but never mind days go down and nights go home and summer is a good exercise for the body not to forget the mind likes a nice pair of times to be set at angles opposite each other.

Clear for Diana was clear for Diana. In that sense Diana was really Diana. Had Diana been Diana when Adonis was not yet Adonis Diana could have smiled at Sophia. Now she did as Diana did. So she did as it is called. It was unlikely for Diana to call Diana Diana. So she did as it is. Diana loved to play Diana for Diana. Diana was Diana. Diana and Diana were Diana. To call Diana easy-going is to call Adonis easy-coming. Sophia had gone for a walk so she said. Three hours later first Diana and seven minutes past Diana Adonis became aware of Sophia as Sophia who was not there. Adonis and Sophia were left on their own territory as terraced house but that had nothing to do with Diana as Diana was already anticipating Sophia's return to Adonis's farewell which had to be postponed because of Diana's habit to consult Sophia in every decision she chose to take for the benefit of their nationhood as the common good for all common good. Such a likelihood was discussed by Diana and Sophia in front of Adonis and behind his back an argument had pleased its better days ahead. For the common cause of all good Diana together with her proper name reminded Diana Diana had not noticed Sophia had gone out to say goodbye to Adonis who was saying to Diana nine times nine is nine nine times nine if nine does not change before the equation takes place in time. Adonis remembered this boardgame from boarding-school he had never visited nor had he ever been shown around a place that was not his own place. Instead of listening to place times time he listened to time times place to gas his lighter with words free to be spoken at intervals from regular to extra long to regular and back to subsidised as their country was by now firmly established in their mind as the place where their happiness had taken roots. Not a bad idea for Adonis who was a man liked by all men but most of all by Adonis as there were no other men but Adonis.

Sophia and Diana liked the exempt company of Adonis. Diana had put Adonis in her brackets and Diana at a call stacked up her eschatological gateway.

Up and till about now Sophia had played a minor role in the diacritically political life of her country. Up and till about later she was to become known as the inventor of Dianatics her native
blend of presence branded by absence. See you later when there is no time left was her indeterminate reply to there is no alternative life left for the right of the party is left of the arty which can be eaten as food follows and substantiates the way of resistance minus persistence subtracted from involuntary muscle movements. For Sophia the good for all was food for one which for a trained mind leaves no place to hide oneself in but to tie one and other selves up to.

Sophia was known by Adonis as Arrogant Sophia and by Diana as Arrowgant Sophia which for one reason and a sonar time she liked to think of as Arrow Giant as a tribute to her totem and taboo ancestors.

For Sophia and Diana alike are alike Adonis was liked and liked by Diana when she had Sophia at the top of her voice which for Sophia was the summum bonum of exaltation and for Diana the horizon of exaggeration seen from the Tower of London brought to her knees if she was in the mood to utter a prayer or a dream if she was downright out of her mood but still within reach of mind as she so infrequently explained by exposing herself as Sophia as Adonis as Diana to a breach of confidence she as a matter of fact covered up by mentioning Sophia to Adonis who liking himself more than he wished to show Sophia Diana was not at all concerned with her image she once had found in need of a polish rooted in shorts in brief in shows like a group sales in aid of subdued top bracketical sneers she was not after all going down into the deeper regions of her utmost self had Sophia as a help and Adonis as an aid and Diana as a maid had Adonis as a mate had Sophia as a servant had Diana as a dial-in dial-up service dressed up ahead of time and down to globetrotting from which she that is Sophia was a close runner up to Adonis that Adonis often beaten by Diana took as many miles away from her course as Diana had hoped he would do for to come closer to herself than anyone was one of her higher worries not yet owned by her round the clock awareness of unfulfilled attention to Sophia's come-back to the proportion Diana had appropriately subdivided into parts of which she was more of a whole than Sophia and Adonis together with Diana were taken in by Diana to the frontiers of the basics of their agreement Diana for Diana.

VII

With a move next to Diana's seat the moon rose and fell down Hopping Lane with time as a walking-stick to the common's burial ground in case the pots were going the way grassroots rise in the air and come down as smoke from the past.

Diana as she could be Adonis was Adonis as he could be Diana neither was Sophia without the others. Their sudden move had not stopped from anxiety to action.

Adonis had copied Diana's behaviour out of context. None of these inhibitions were affected by Diana's connection with Sophia.

Changes do not take place underneath a full eclipse but surely in the late afternoon when fatigue is not a paying guest anymore. Death as an ever faster sailingly flying snake popped in the bread basket carried around the Skin Market when no-one was there but one whose words smile facing an erection.

Diana met her challenge she was not going to meet.

Unlike so many pleasures a painful face painstakingly transported by Diana and removed from Sophia to arrive at Diana via Adonis was rounded off by setting it up at Diana's secondary armlength. Now she could visit her own impression and take a bath in her own vision with only a minor mirror as companion she once had had once and twice had danced with unto a third night took no chance but set out to deliver time back on its feet which Sophia's heels could hardly catch but so was time still a rural looking countryman never tired of getting up early time permitted and getting down early sub and con and delinquently homeward honoured by Adonis to be treated by Diana to be placed at the feet of Adonis by Sophia to be anchored between home-based conclusions and landcased adventures warmed by an everlasting May Day with no change at its back-handed position but from a localised point shifting the tip to the top. Is that so was that so in so many ways.

So many ways were blocked by Adonis that Sophia's locker had not enough time to present itself with the latest edition of the ill-fed contribution to her independence she had reclaimed from her good lookingly and food lovingly twin-mated mind known by their own folk as the looking glass from the toilet shelf.

Low vices were as vigorously absent from Sophia's mind as high morals from Adonis's sort he was unlikely to confuse with Diana's sport-taking indulgence falling short of a central idea if it came to the matched crunch she was determined to give to Diana as a revenge for this battle that wanted to be neither winning nor to be counted upon as won.
Had Diana not upset her delicately intricate balance she would not have managed to call Sophia herself as an abortive guidance to her severely twisted upper-handish memory which had besides a special preference for mahogany also an outlandishly-woven detail missing she had been looking for as a factual matter in her handbag but had failed to deport the split second that came as a surprise to her tripartite division and now returning from following her own blocked but not gone past Adonis had taken Diana’s side merely to comfort herself with her point of view. Pushed away and brushed aside Adonis found no comfort in the right place so he found out his place next to Diana’s was his place after all having said and done the right thing from a spontaneous angle he was now being confronted with a reasonable alternative going back to Sophia to find Diana in her place she had not left while he was searching shoulderblades for gold-mined excitement wished for and pissed over as entertainment conceals the real and the real reveals entertainment as a promotion of real life and as an entrance to taking a stance for now and ever for one of his swinging back to side-staged shows lavishly constructed from advertisement slogans and sprayed over with a clean washwaterish reduction in hit for small and tit for tall could so be could so see through a plain decorative issue had that been the case. Neither had Sophia mixed with Diana. Their separate ways of dealing with themselves had been hidden from Adonis’s intervention cautiously overrun by panarchistical sequences squared with a flavour from hunger to desire and nothing left to be at peace with or to fight for. When that embarrassment had caused a few simple tensions to come and occupy the open field between Diana and Adonis Adonis had already outlived his Diana life without beginning to be fully aware of its non-causal effect upon his own place in this partially covered spectrum soberly foretold by Diana’s stepping-in the freed crossing of the heath with a childhood like hers nose-picking had the same colour as tobaq:o-picking. So could order re-establish itself at no-one’s expense but that was decided as long ago as Diana Adonis and Sophia had already outlived his Diana life without beginning to be fully aware of its non-causal effect upon his own place in this partially covered spectrum soberly foretold by Diana’s stepping-in the freed crossing of the heath with a childhood like hers nose-picking had the same colour as tobaq:o-picking. So could order re-establish itself at no-one’s expense but that was decided as long ago as Diana Adonis and Sophia were popularly linked with the establishment although they nor their relatively old in new form appearing foundation had decided where so many childhood negations had been converged into balloonly typed abstractions. So caught and so praised and so courteously phrased that with time as a drop in the ocean of fun neither Adonis nor Sophia but Diana had had her own back in full view of Adonis although Sophia had shown no sign of pretending the road was narrower than her sudden uplifting leap-fantasy had scattered her passion for neither small is beautiful nor tall is dutiful but since she had not taken part in conventional and prudential subsurgery she had not been committed to a simpler style than her memory had accounted itself for time as a redundantly absorbent fraction of her time spent with Diana and Sophia.

For Diana home was home where Diana was Adonis.

Diana had not only platformed her ideas she had also platformed her performance. Smoothly dehydrated and currently outsidered there was no need to outnumber a potentially conflicting situation. Diana led and headed a speedy recovery and chaired a slow realisation. She had thank-youed herself to herself. There was this cycle-dated carbon-seated run for laughs she could not escape from siling overcomingly she had to submerge before she could rehearse her final all too final rejection of simplicity.

That being so it seemed to be Sophia had her loftiest smile handpacked and astonishingly forgotten she nor herself by herself had any problems to remember her forgetful mind which seen from the gushing top looked like a carnivalesque riot unforeseen and respectfully although tacitly masked. That was as seldom as it was rarefiedly gratified.

Sophia had never protested against decision-making processes taken away to enlist her mind as a prisoner of self-delusions neither could she have been absorbed by Adonis for deflecting a consecratedly heart-beating lost lustrum. And yet Diana as near as she was to Sophia was as far from Diana as Adonis was seen by himself leaving Sophia around a quarter to midnoon soon to be backhanded by Sophia’s closely interspersed perception of Diana handsetted to Diana’s design with which Adonis as perplex as he was seeing himself as Diana could focus Sophia did had she been Diana before she was Diana which she was as she was Diana as Diana could not miss to fail to see Sophia as she was so much Diana as well as Sophia which she was so she was herself as well as Sophia’s. Sophia left Adonis alone if he worked at Diana was never sure of Sophia so she was alone with Adonis when he worked with Sophia at Diana where he never was alone with her as Diana was there for him if she worked at him which she did often alone and left which she did more often than she worked at Sophia who was good at being alone and even better at being alone with Adonis who
could be good to Sophia but alone with Sophia found Sophia as alone as lonely as she was herself which she never was far from herself she found Adonis as refreshing as he found himself which he had not yet.

So was Sophia for such an Adonis was Sophia that she as Sophia brought Adonis and Diana to Sophia did.

Did Diana bring Sophia to Adonis to lead Sophia to Diana could she bring herself to him she would herself bring to him as she could herself bring to herself as much and as often as she could do better than she would do better than she did bring Sophia to Diana did bring Sophia to Diana did bring Diana to Sophia so did Diana bring Diana to Diana how could she could and do not lack a taste of Sophia did lack something that was as much as a mere nothing.

X

Neither Diana nor Sophia had been caught nor courted by Adonis was painfully as he called it forcefully aware of his self-admiration and therefore they liked him for that linked him to them. Dreaming with one of his hands between his legs he dreamt only then he dreamt of them. That was more not than often as the case may be it was his turn to choose between a handful of decisions to be. Uptight down and ink out he projected a selection of infringements and left them as they were of no use to his bodily functions.

That was for Adonis to be Adonis was dotted with strokes of glory matched to seasonal variants returned to Adonis and received by Diana and thrown over Sophia as if the world was a silent word which by a hapless coincidence occurred to Adonis before it was too early to chase his fortune back and from its proper place to be taken from. Sophia did for him that what Diana did to him that was done to Adonis to meet his namesake in their place was to be introduced to a collectivity he faced by enfacing his face with masks he had plenty of tasks to do which who nor what could that be apart from a puzzle he had outgrown with a list of objections as long as the shortest notice he could make out of nothing but himself was less important than a door shut and closed he had sense to do so.

Adonis loved language as Diana loved life as Sophia loved love and as Sophia loved love as Diana loved life as Adonis loved language none of them fell short of loving each other in spite of the eternal differences between their love for each other and themselves as no other side of love was known to them there could not be any other aspect of life unknown to Adonis but known as such it was so secretly hidden and taken away by Diana to mesmerise Sophia with a future they lived in and out of. So was there no such thing as so.

So was there as well as no. No such thing meant go to Diana who as her fancy took her had a realistic as well as a practical solution afforded her to be awarded with no such entries to second place as there was only one place left to be in at peace with so far until now.

Once during a much belovedly discussed afternoon second thoughts rained from their eyes to their elbows. Adonis was the first one to bath Diana and Sophia had already had one she now handed over to Adonis so he could her and himself save this journey he had never planned to make use of nor to track down his longhanded script that was left to Sophia to complete.

XI

There where Diana was was Diana was at her best she was. She had promised to Diana to be her best friend and so she was Sophia’s friend when Adonis took an afterlunch break which he never did. Nevertheless and subsequently Diana managed to be at herself as often as Adonis opened his eyes which happened none too frequent but if it did it did and so was her expectation organised as it was consequently used to be as it was to be not to speak of the way it never properly understood its own organisation. That was not essential to Diana not important according to Adonis immaterial thus to Sophia.

In the meantime Diana could not get hold of Diana as she was an outstandingly secretive personality she never wore Sophia’s sleeves on her tongue nor did she trace comprehensive resourceful information she could do without face as she did when time changed into night which happened to her as it did to Adonis was all too fortunately concerned with his own intake of space from one to three dimensions he had once confused with time but that had come to an end since he had faced Sophia which he had not had not happened yet it was to come.

One potential was for Sophia two potentials were for Diana what was for Adonis it was three times potential dimensional impotence with the stress on the wrong factorial side of his unawareness slowly overtaken by a chance which had to occur as yet was far from get and closer to set than take a chain as name.

Seven as a number chose eleven secrets for Adonis could not
choose himself lay waste inconsequently he faced his own face
Diana recognised as hers and Sophia as hers to be welcomed.

As for decibellicosical sounds existed as an aftermathematics to
the awareness of their ancestors during a summer recess extended to
recession extracted from heartbreakers and windscreens which
sometimes prevented a soundless scream from Adonis’s lips when
Diana’s hips spoke of a desire Sophia did not meet as the heat from
her co-existence was rejected by the coolness of her pre-
determination so was time slow and hope fastingly outdone.

Never thankful but always grateful to his admirers for their
admiration Adonis suffered as much from their lack of administra-
tion as did Adonis from the abundance of repetition. So was close
to a cat refusing attention as open-ended as a wish decorated with
full wind.

XII

As for Diana time was nearer to her body than her memory
unaccounted for the time that is their being. No expenses paid no
attentions are unattributedly afraid was Diana’s remaining
reminder to her refreshingly sharpened and totally out of place
remark concealed for no-one but herself.

In so many times as she could possibly scrap together and trap
her feathers with which she never did count as far as one but never
mind her replacement was already attractive as a stand-by as
welcome as a forgotten memory she again could not forget to redirect
her new start she never started from nor returned back to hers now
she really had forgotten how to use her underimaginative and
overcompetitive future-ridden mature-sized inner eye-sound as
always out of reach ahead of her own impressive self on top of the
class she was not far behind herself.

Having written that Diana linked her inexhaustively infuriat-
ingly legalised entertainment’s claims with the return to a value-
free warehouse from a century she neither came from nor went to her
doll house benignly hidden in the loft of her lover’s memorial
service for contra-indications and warnings are vulnerable to
diseases squattingly packed for and by the admission to their inner-
most sanctionised state of mind as living was to be expected to
expose a development as nearby as possible.

Sometimes Diana lifted Adonis’s hoodhanked appearance up
the source of her instructions and Adonis having falsely eroded the
countermeasures they deceptively marched around Sophia taking

Johan de Wit comes from Holland and lives in London. His book *Rose Poems* is published by Actual Size.
Fifty thousand nights and
Chill dawns . . . structures
Fade upward into grey
Morning into afternoon   History
In alien familiar streets
Gone haywire written
Before under the same blank
Sky all
Lifelines converge the crystal mists the track
Veer into obscurity peters out
Into bramble fern barbed wire

Alien territory

our minds are blank
Or less than blank . . .

in the drab light the
Embarkation for Cytherea

unrealities of human speech . . .
what is it?
Unwrites these places   Words
Blown away like mist
Stirring the moist grass
Clings to thin soil in cracks
Between stones in an empty square the
Connectedness of things   dreaming itself . . .

There is no language now no letter
Will reach you    Tonight

I stood there again

In the silence in the moonlight empty

Hands your fingertips clutching
The impossible surface
So resistance shrinks to these
Shadow games in the shallow
Ego strapped in its tissue of
Noun verb noun

I meant to say something different . . .

Child’s eyes impossible light

Believe for me

HANNAH WEINER
Weeks

The huge fire started suddenly and spread quickly. Yesterday New York’s highest court re-instated the charge. She must receive constant psychiatric care while incarcerated. To put it bluntly, Mother Superior has had it. This report concludes that violent pornography leads to sexual violence. There will be no labor day parade this year. The Cyclone is finally running again after an insurance crisis shut it down. The court was, to a certain extent, sympathetic. It was the most serious attempt to infiltrate Israel in over a year. Inside are two million bitter and frustrated people. A link between stressful social environments and tobacco. Those are the folks who have an allergy to fresh fruit. You could be in shock and dead in two minutes. Taking a logo and making it huge is very 1980s pop. The laughter really rocks the theater. Whatever it is that we do easily and well is often the least interesting part of our lives. As she went through customs in Chicago, she was held two hours, and was searched and harassed by customs officials who called her a “subversive.” A main theme of the demonstration was to protest the rising cost of living and the government’s new economic package. The seven person crew doesn’t have the money. They say he’s paralyzed from the neck down. He’s armed with a gun, a small silver gun. It’s a miracle that they made it. An earthquake rocks Southern California, the second time in a week. The forty-three year old senator overwhelmed his competition. Illegal aliens are eligible for medicaid. New Jersey ranks fourth among the fifty states in the number of Aids cases. Most democrats like to sleep in their pajamas and make love to their husbands while republicans prefer nightgowns and watching TV. Today oil prices were on a new plunge. The lightweight, million dollar aircraft stayed aloft for almost five days. Aids related discrimination will not be tolerated. I didn’t need Bernard Goetz to promote my career. A lot of people on Manhattan’s East Side think their busdrivers have gone mad.

Hannah Weiner’s Spoke (Sun & Moon Press) was reviewed by Paul Green in Reality Studios 7. She lives in New York.
Placelessness tells when it's coming by right of seniority and will decently relax out its inseparables to find you. In terms of expense this ecological afterburn is or is not reversible, the information to go somewhere conservative. In terms of expanse the seamless flood may well offer cleaner repose, which is purity urging you any primeval condensation active with origin would have been secondary in any case. The node on the rod isn't transferable to the wave of increase which opens to you the museum of the mountains bundled up on primary turf.

Phases incapable of transition-time must somehow be reducible, hope for a better environment, a pattern of streams. Sediment doesn't distinguish but simply lays against the problem like many another sacral finishing line. The city dispatches and receives, translation no particular regard though certainly wary to generate each element. Can there still be so much to say when any sublimier horizon still offers nothing but descriptive principles? By a twist of insertion each contrary plane appears partial but overcompletes.

From the valley head above Greenhead Ghyll no longer discrete summits but mild elongation where crowns of the garden fan the course. Stems lie over to secrete static shoals into the drift. Peak pardon stirs wavefast not crag-sentenced.

As of below a system of exposures bands towards the shatter-zone's ganged pass, as of above the tight fold has thinned into elastic convection but which encysts the migratory clamber upward through each interstitial door.

As the lakes taper tongue in park concern alone can't enclose but the incoming rouses attachment, a welcome headland to face last rings of the crater, steep cauterisings of the linear into shelter coolingly submerged with use and access. Only such overhang, a discharged rail without awning, exempts the air. The slopes wear smooth, unfamiliar texture but soon moonskin. The resort hands into sky-bathing, a ventilation cap screwed slowly tighter by the attention of the heavens whose dark gouge is reeking centre-fall in the lake.

unfiltered direct access by which deep space and exploration are already the runup, each resiting side by side it is transport to approach.

The mountain island is the last descendant of primal earth, of the original trek through early outrage into the cool of waiting to be last: and is about to be levelled over, though the waiting will never know when its time is past but will always climb about us.

The garden city is slow to file upward and is probably itself no longer the englobing edge of taking heart but already in dreams the skill that has closed over and the rock that is husbanded with serious shade.

*In an instant the view from the embrace is distant/content, so much so takes off, stratification slips density, speculation whatever rises less own force, the barriers are down, at origin simply discharge, no shooring but the displacement-vessel of earth no longer being the horizon.*

From primary contusion (the seed compression) up vertical fissure into take-off at a high angle to any bedding is abundant clearing of the wall-to-wall surface of all of us, no longer level with the inaccelerable field that was to catch and encircle deposits of the future. Future now is whatever undoes its own tradition too early for attrition. Not that radical departure won't be archeological even if digging conventions defer to a coming nostalgia whose earth resistances will pain its own.

Something is inside the expansion which distance less friction can't foreshorten. The inexhaustibility carries no history other than the history of in, the comfort of being borne along on the flattened planes of a room which forever free from diminishment will be as heedless of trailing back exemplary rates.

Water only for the ripple, a linear rod which aims to be simultaneous with its bore and ignore the lateral slide over what remains of diastrophic earth. The juxtaposit crust would admit nothing but held ever against itself in the harshest reserve a clarified pool of quest.

*Outer space is ejection-difference not wilderness. The linear per-
iphery so trained out isn't interrupted apart from the frontier where it has to coil into a seat once on the far side of the costreach
As a figure at least commends how such unselectable witness is ever to greet whichever “here” is outward

The fantasy does overtake any hardening, release never goes native over such outspread, no corridor will stiffen into landscape on a tour which can’t settle for a species morality of acceleration without an over-familiar tinted lump getting included, and with an absolute backing of gradation against that

Within the heat panels it’s more classic to include coachwork which keeps the event to it when it rides. Dream in search of that memoir now adds the burn into the real and the whole reproducer is an exit cradle having no interim use for the distance itself

The seat is whichever schema gets through the stimulus, direction not assured, uncertainty in the leap renews ejection within which entropy curves back to its setting to simplify desire to remain in itself, the thing. Pure seatage or before that the impure root object

The closure is having rest in us (the gaps) an (or) equally passable neuter flare with implanted method (total seal). Without closure the bettering would be total, a perfect widening planing back across its own circuit within which (but ignorant of the pull-in) foreground speculation would be invisible, lack infill its fall. The only hole is movement across the nest, friction of the whole corrosive content, impurity of import more primary than drift

Even from the open mistake there is a light sand on which to stretch an irrigation canopy. Here earth will be its right of centrifugal disposal whose ripples are one-dimensional without rear view. Residue is flush(ed) with its own departure allocation but just this is the needle splitting open space, being surpassed henceforth requires the greatest aptitude for containerisation, will absorb up to a dull sunset our entire technology. Distance is underpowered by the raging suction opened into, the root-drag scour one way, flight is the constant need to plug the earth

Migration of terrains seeds plural adjective but the inextendible manifold closed apposition. Neglect of friction is freeplay, the future as trapped set can’t be played down once arisen from the unexpended bed. The slide will light forever with its heavy hole

The loss of that interstitial openness (stasis) that so soaked the homosphere scores its trail on the outside of the dead release (transparent). Horizon is the imprisoned curve of above-ground expansion, the space-deck’s specialism frozen against it (the seed it has promised to preserve) but cosmic history was part of the glass and didn’t emerge, distance shut down in a now unhealthy pressure of pretext sphere

On its outer side global constriction does (ironically) have a right of boarding. A prayer of disappointment will oversee the infinite slowing down to a past powder that now has the entire cloud for insult, would be the whole sequence all the way out were it not a flatness of ejection siphons in old belongings. Fuel has kept it invested and unworthy of sleep in the literal seat

“Here” as trajectory grazes on the severest origin, can only be enshiment of containers on the spatial eye, no reversal onto the hope for new pastoral damage, no setting down that doesn’t read turbidity on the flightdeck as the alteration you carry. Forever more lift underneath, the new cavern. Planetary ground is dome plus attraction-pressure, the surface always above, the city for a moment inside the ring-slap, conscious singling from velocity’s total profile which when reduced to one continuation only does ferry without end a put-down

The pollution mottle once into cirrus attenuates its ferny but motile infusion. Dispersant is creation in one, secondary pollutant keeps its transit-coil constant on stream. Change of state travels minus relativity, is nothing but internal heat, will not now neutralise back to expulsion

A breath of air has rainout speaking any aside, to communicate lateral from city to interstice virtually free of travel. The transubstation is drift-heap staying import for the next propellant, no radiant but has vertical coasting, each new affinity with origin crosses into corrosion-bed. The return is too much not to enlarge, the sour flame unpunishable within the series fire

Earlier extracts from “Five Sedimental Poems” have appeared in First Offense, Loot and Not Poetry.
"How many centipedes went under the wall when he came in? Better I should pick her up by the ears. When thunder comes in over the hills I feel big, then I feel small. Thirty steps from here to the house. A few more will be alright."

Here, the sunlight like a bedsheet. Arrogance act to know a man, perhaps confide in him, and then to come upon him by surprise, talking to strangers in another language. He is an enemy. Kill him and there will be another, perhaps many more.

"Not my logic. I'm a crocodile. Recognize me? Gnawing on a green twig. A perfect liar."

Watched *Miami Vice*. Had a drink. Took a shower. Got to chill out. It's all in the way you carry yourself. They're hung up in debate. Let's get

Threat of the Good Example. With an average attention span of 11 seconds. Snub out that cigarette; not bad for a gink. I'll make a clock in that foliage. Cut it! Hard it is just to talk. Whose hair is this? It's matted, bloody.

Not a person on the streets, all boarded up, not even a dog. There are no maps and no telephone service. Aim for their accomplishments, their school or granary. No more general talk. Back home they've got all the answers and they're all wrong. This detail feels good, my legs under me as I stand up and start walking.

"The story is she'd been to Nicaragua, and had gotten sick. She'll dance like that for a couple of hours. That was a year ago. Sweating. She laughed, really a full laugh, and then she dropped."

Each comes with his own presumptions. That's a hindrance gunfire drops. Call a doctor. The more you understand, the less you want to come here. And no support from home.
JOHN WILKINSON

Cadence

A slightly revised version of a paper read at the Philosophy of Literature Conference, University of Warwick 1986, alongside contributions from Anthony Barnett and Peter Riley.

It was curious, given the presence on the platform of three poets, that poetic writing should yet have been silent during this conference, that we should have been directed towards a programmatic speech, a sort of unadmitted advertising of our wares. The title of the panel, Future Writers, located our writing at the navel of the conference's dream; so I began by asking, is this a thing I do, writing the future?

* * *

The narcissism of the individual writer may be such that to write the future takes its place within that expansiveness, as the material world is thought to aspire to solace in his or her material. But the transitive verb deployed in Writing the Future should cause discomfort; it smacks of that development promoted by the disconnected élites of small, poor countries on whose pavements people starve; while we write the future, there are others that barely live in the present, but who live in it, or below its aegis.

The writing of the future incurs the same necessary ambiguity as does the writing of a poem against writing a poem. The possessiveness becomes a two-way thing; the arrogance of Writing the Future is dissolved in a double ambiguity. Not only does the future have its writing which is exercised upon us since it is located in our past, to which we may be too frightened or infatuated, or too flattened to obtain access, more, writing is put in its proper place as possessed as much as possessing, quite as castigated as castigating. This is salutary, since the most self-cancelling, ideocritical of critiques tends to become as hollowly sufficient as fibreglass, when in consent with such a catchphrase as was brandished over our proceedings. Liberated as we are from "human nature" and such speciousness, then chat of "writing the future" while repressing the loud and clear and evident pronoun. But enough—or hardly so.

The productive points for the writing of a poem lie deep in an inadmissible past; across the depressive adaptations of the present day, pulses that love- and death-tempo, which snarled and hooked
but ever resuming and urgently, becomes felt as cadence, projecting forward to organise the actual and tenderly enveloping day which never will break. For it is the pathos of lyric poetry that the surface on which these points sublend, as is provisional as the actual future reader for whom in turn they offer always a fullness which is unknowable, ever-deferred. By what then, can their future best be best underwritten; I think that is possible of a debt to be incurred, rather than the prepaid promise writing the future flaunts and crackles.

Thereby every writer does of course believe in human nature, given a few sets of quotation marks. It is not through kinship with the writer separated by centuries and continents, but because his or her individual past does become an unrealisable, but a motive future, where writing is strictly cadenced. Our nature is my greatest privacy, and this is the sustaining and silly paradox, that the most idiosyncratic and inadmissible is the most deeply shared. What is projected from the break-points through cadence, is recognised and answered by ourselves while however incongruous. In other words, the continued future bearing of, to take a tendentious example, Blake’s “The Sick Rose”, would seem to be located in the tension between deeply personal, unegotable points and their erotically destructive transitivity, on the one hand, and the trips and stoppages incurred in their tangle with the semantics of complex actuality; this is the cadent way. Blake, of course, was also overjoyed. But I am thinking how the orotundity of the opening immediately runs into the stop of “sick”, to be followed by an insistent and incremental pulse, tripping at the last into the equivocation of “joy” and “destroy”, not merely in the obvious semantic opposition and the deeper identity enjoined by rhyme, but in the vowel sounds themselves, whose pitch is strangely unascert-ainable—indeed, it is difficult to know whether the rhyme termination is a long or a short vowel-sound, an abrupt stop or a resonance.

When I have talked of human nature, and my choice has been deliberate—I am no longer sure if the deconstruction of such a term is not mere complicity with cash-flow—what I mean is, I suppose, to make a cursive and ahistorical claim for the unconscious drives. I don’t think the history of clinical symptoms begins to put that claim in question. When I say “inexplicable”, and I almost have, I do not mean categorically so, but poetry does ride just what formal literary analysis has found quite unreadable, for all its irritable reaching. Some psychoanalysts have followed the cadent way also. “Freud said that he had to ‘blind myself artificially to focus all the light on one dark spot’”, wrote W R Bion, continuing “By rendering oneself ‘artificially blind’ through the exclusion of memory and desire, one achieves F; the piercing shaft of darkness can be directed on the dark features of the analytic situation.” Just so the dark features of the poem become manifest in a reading which is neither an extrapolation to the personal nor an exercise of unpresenting; the moment of obtuse presence must be accepted to tolerate its erotic slippage.

This displacement is indeed the arch into a future, not but one of inert and utopian integration, or achieved personhood; it is the earnest of an individuality which is truly unachievable, even more when every wild lunge in that direction is marketed as a style, and where each person is the prosthetic “man who was used up”. In reading the poem cadently we become impersonal, and only from that impersonality can individuality be glimpsed, and true self-fulfilment; we can be wrenched from the time of surplus value, and in that judgment find our corrupt and dying organs restored. As corrupt and dying organs.

The sorry liability, as much avant-gardism attests, is that with deeper implication into the impersonal of the most personal, a compensatory movement occurs, and atop the magma of grossly accelerated, fissile desire—all radioactive fallout—a tendency is asserted towards the hollow, posturing figure of the adventuring writer, a frozen romantic tableau, a rhetoric akin to that of freedom as present. The best can bob like foolish cork over the radical speciousness which is their true achievement—I’m thinking of John Wieners, the Boston poet whose later work often splits between these components, a detraction over-emphasised by the penchant of the editor of his Selected Poems for the overtly “poetic”. (But in the great achievement of his 1975 book Behind the State Capitol can be heard the dead-urgent as nowhere else, crossed and thwarted by the politics of his daily life as a campaigning “faggot” and a hospitalised mental patient, and by a wild and joyous humour.)

This particular split is fairly recent, since paternalistic authority structures have informed by a quite different fashion, that the writing of the future could operate by a de-throning. Credible thrones are few, with even the evidently wicked régime supported by the fissile rush, a reckless, trivial and destructive saturation, foreign finance capital. The erection of a paper pope over and against this can seem kindly, and hence also that nostalgia for thrones which afflicts the cultural sermons of a Christopher Lasch; oh where is daddy, stern and generous, to give us the backbone to boot him down? This was prophesied by Paul Celan in Meridian, his commentary on Büchner, admiring of the cry “God Save the King” at
the revolutionary moment.

For sure I recognise in myself a drive to write to keep my delusions worthy, rather than a mere bloated counterweight or a protective mechanism. On almost every score such an idea as "humanity" is impugnable, but to make it a true promise instead of a slick assumption or a slogan—that may be a morally tolerable relation of writing to the future. So writing must never be cathartic or an achieved circle of reassurance or recognition; but neither should it just open the sluices for what dwindles to the mimetic of a current social awfulness, a storm of part-objects as consumer durables. We as readers must always feel unsatisfied, but not so easily so as with a new stack-system, the more unsatisfied the better we are touched and discredited, yet through it promised ourselves if only we turn away, unhooked.

And indeed it is correct that at most we underwrite the promissory document of a past and as near as we're able to the present, and say to the future, refer to drawer who's past accounting but whose heirs are with you.

But terms such as "humanity", however dislocated and estranged, remain no more than totems if uncarried and unsustained through integrative cadence, tensed against a viscous or obdurate semantics—inconsistent and impure in diction also. The vocabulary for describing cadence is embarrassingly inadequate; I understand cadence as the relation between a particular body of syntactic gesture in the writer's work, and the involuntary but acknowledged participation in the larger and more impersonal careers of death and love; so cadence would both recorporate and be tensed against the depressive complexities of the local. What Lyotard calls the intensity and surges of the death drive, and of the erotic, seeks to invest the humane and the adaptive; so they become translated into the poem's ambition.

The danger, I repeat, is the separation enjoined by an inherited literary body, neatly disposed on the stainless table in autoptic witness; where cadence becomes the frozen posture of the misunder­stood, the truly tedious figure of the poète maudit. Post-mortem life is also the way both of a soured modernism, and the distinctive agoraphobia of much admired English verse.

But who would subscribe to the tenders floated beneath my name, how could I imagine? For myself, I know I accept my father's, as a nineteenth century rationalist gone spectacularly to seed, as a taker out of patents for machines so useful they snarl in their own mechanisms' complexity. This materialism of the soul is what I am weaned and gagged on both; it is the movement between a futile self-assertiveness and the cogs and wheels and sledgehammered ceramics that spill from the shiny cabinet. There is a distinction to be made from the theories of schiz-flow; this is closer to the empirical reality of schizophrenic language, is more interrupted and governed by sedimented gesture than there fancied; from these points the launch is made towards the investment of unbearable contingency.

Hence this diction, this language of starts and fits. To be left with the unconscious as transhistorical guarantor, this is swampy ground, and there are those who would cut away even this, historicise and relativise the unconscious. Despite the glamour of their anarchic rationalism, following cadence teaches me, both in poetry and in therapeutic attention, that it would lead to moral cachexia. What I call integrative cadence, at least proposes for poetry an ethical future; so to write is an endless forward cast. Of course there is nothing subversive here, I present for the first time my superversive manifesto, the half-arch, the rainbow bridge of cadence!

* * *

Since I wished to bring cadence to bear during this conference, I concluded by reading John Wieners' poem "Necromancy". Discussion of the papers by the three poets on the panel, tended to centre on the relationship between poetical and critical writing, and on the distinctive (or otherwise) quality of the critical writing of poets. In one of my answers I described the production of this paper, which began as an implicit attack on the languages I expected to surround me at the conference, written in a burst of near-automatism guided by metaphorical extravagance. This was succeeded by a period in which curiosity as to developments in deconstructionism and the debate on "post-modernism" during the decade I have been outside the academies, got the better of me, and I produced a far more considered and respectful piece. A day or two prior to the conference, I vandalised this second text to produce what remains above. Consonant with the final impulse, I provide no notes or references.

John Wilkinson works for social services in Walsall and practices group analytic psychotherapy in Birmingham. His most recent book of poetry is *Proud Flesh* (Equofinality/Delires, 1986).
THE MANY REVIEW

In Issue 5, available now, John Lees reviews Roy Fisher's A FURNACE; Andrew Shelley discusses Ford Maddox Ford's novels A CALL and THE RASH ACT, recently re-issued by Carcanet; D.S. Marriott writes on J.H. Prynne's poem THE NUMBERS, from his Kitchen Poems; Glyn Purglove discusses translations of Horace with particular reference to W.G. Shepherd's translations, HORACE THE COMPLETE ODES AND EODES; Peter Middleton reviews Gavin Selery's long poem AZIMUTH and Tony Baker responds to Ric Caddel's collection SWEET CICELY.

The sixth issue of the Many Review will appear in 1988. Since its inception, the magazine has sought to give serious consideration to work not adequately discussed elsewhere; mainly though not exclusively poetry. The current issue costs £1.75 plus 25p postage and packing. A subscription to two issues is £3.50 post free. Please make cheques payable to The Many Press.

The Many Press

FILIBUSTERING IN SAMSARA by TOM LOWENSTEIN is the latest publication from The Many Press, available from mid-November 1987.

This 84-page collection gathers Lowenstein's work written between 1978 and 1981. The first sequence, La Tempesta, is a long meditation on change, identity and the context-loss implicit in western experience. The later poems further develop themes arising from the writer's ethnographic work in Alaska and Pali Buddhist studies. "I find La Tempesta's X-ray quite magnificent. It has tremendous scope, richness, sustained lucidity - and it is moving too... Even the massing of multisyllable words doesn't impede its extraordinary momentum." Christopher Middleton.

Lowenstein has previously published a collection of translations of Eskimo poetry and a number of books arising out of his ethnographic work. Poems from this new collection have appeared in Figs and The Grossesste Review. FILIBUSTERING IN SAMSARA is available now from The Many Press, price £4.95.

THE MANY PRESS 15 NORCOTT ROAD LONDON N16 7BJ

REVIEWS

RON SILLIMAN (ed): In the American Tree (National Poetry Foundation, $45 cloth, $18.95 pbk)

That nexus of contemporary American writing known variously—and with varying degrees of misunderstanding—as "language poetry" or "language-centred poetry" has now firmly established itself as the mainstream alternative to the academy: the new wave, the new thing, that against which not only defenders of tradition but also displaced progenitors of other avant-gardes feel obliged to rail; that whose productions begin to be imitated by writers of lesser originality and imperfect grasp of the underlying aesthetic. It took ten years, from the mid-70s to the mid-80s, for this poetry to arrive—gestating in such magazines as This, Hills, Roof and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E. A definitive anthology was the inevitable next step. This is as close to one as we're going to get.

It's our good fortune that it falls to Ron Silliman, one of the most intelligent and perceptive poets of the tendency, to edit it. Not the least remarkable aspect of this writing phenomenon is that the poets themselves have articulated clearly and explicitly the theories driving their work. This has attracted criticism from those who would have it that it's the business of poets to clutter up their pretty heads with theory but to get on, empirically, with the writing. But it has also meant that this is one of the few poetry avant-gardes whose practitioners, rather than academic critics, have won control of the right to define its own terms.

Characteristically, the last 130 pages of this 600-page plus volume are devoted to critical writings. These include pieces by two poets who are not represented in the main body of the anthology: Jackson Mac Low's challenging critique of the "language-centred" misnomer and Nick Piombino's "Writing and Conceiving" ("Poetic composition is an activity which subtly alters the rules that govern the relationship between the ordering of thought and allowing it to swoon into reverie."). Also included are a large chunk of Silliman's own important essay on prose, "The New Sentence", Robert Grenier "On Speech" (a key text from the first issue of This in 1971), Charles Bernstein's "Writing and Method", Rae Armantrout's "Why Don't Women Do Language-Oriented Writing?" and many others.

These illuminate the poetry—which is of course what matters, and which forms the bulk.
Silliman’s introduction sets the selection’s parameters clearly. He identifies the impulse behind the new poetry as a double one. On
the one hand is the critique by such as Grenier of speech as central to
poetry, a tenet of the Projectivist method. The call for a non-speech
based projectivism Silliman names as “a break within a tradition in
the name of its own higher values”. On the other hand is the
foregrounding of the referential dimension in language, as exempli-
ified in the very title of Barrett Watten’s magazine This. Silliman
writes: “As is manifestly clear in the pages that follow, neither
speech nor reference were ever, in any real sense, ‘the enemy’. But,
because the implicit ‘naturalness’ of each, the simple, seemingly
obvious concept that words should derive from speech and refer to
Silliman has picked formidable poets, and makes a convincing case
for his exclusions. A list of 60-odd poets from whom “a volume of
absolutely comparable worth could be constructed” is generously
included.

Let’s not do these poets the ultimate disservice of fetishising
their movement, if movement it is. If anything is to be regretted it is
that such groupings inevitably exclude those who don’t fit; and such
is the strength of American poetry right now that there are many
poets working outside of this immediate discourse who are as
worthy of attention as, or more so than some of the contributors to
In the American Tree. Some feature in Silliman’s supplementary list.

But at the same time it has to be said that a number of
detractors are motivated by simple envy, and for this reason a good
deal of the criticism must be discounted. Silliman, Watten,
Bernstein, Hejinian and the rest are after all some of the most
intelligent and alert poets working anywhere today. To deny their
influence or significance is sheer foolishness; whatever your
ultimate attitude to their writing, you have to take it into account.

Since its first issue in 1978, which featured James Sherry,
Reality Studios has played host to many of the poets featured in
the anthology: Bernstein, Andrews, Alan Davies, Ray DiPalma,
Diane Ward, Steve Benson and (in the present volume) Bob
Perelman and Hannah Weiner. What significance might their
writing have for poetry in this country, both actual and potential?
This is a difficult question to answer. There are British poets who
have directly influenced or been influenced by them: Raworth, Allen
Fisher, Cris Crouch, or of course Pryne—an interesting case of a
parallel British movement away from Olsonian projectivism. But I
have a sense of a poetry as yet largely unwritten, one which will

move the terms of agreement on from the great burst of energy of the early 70s, the period that gave us Eric Mottram’s editorship of *Poetry Review*, and the high point of the Cambridge group. Its elements are there, and it has been this magazine’s project to help bring them together. Such a poetry would have to reassess its stance towards both the mainstream British context and the transatlantic experience which for the last 20 years has provided us with support in opposition—the picture today being complicated by the emerging alternative oppositional poetics produced by feminists and by ethnic minorities. I think this poetry can and will be written, and it will not be an imitation of American models. Nevertheless, in the meantime buy this book.

Ken Edwards

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PAUL CELAN (tr Rosmarie Waldrop): *Collected Prose* (Carcanet, £8.95)

ROSMARIE WALDROP & HARRIETT WATTS (eds): *Six Major Austrian Poets: The Vienna Group* (Station Hill, $6.95)

Paul Celan’s *Collected Prose* is a volume of concentration-camp thinness from a poet who was all too well aware of the impact of the holocaust on literary practice. The “ashes of burned out meanings” that henceforth covered words, worlds and the whole range of human expression and production. A mere 59 pages of text for, as Rosmarie Waldrop points out in her introduction, “prose was too noisy a medium” for Celan. These occasional texts are not just bones from the scrapheap as is often the case with similar texts from lesser poets; there is marrow and much life in them still. Indeed, just glancing through Michael Hamburger’s *The Truth of Poetry*, it is obvious they have been well excavated in the past, and to a positive purpose—for they are revelatory to the general reader not only about Celan’s own poetic praxis, but also speak to the contemporary poets who labour under the demands of pertinence and politics. Celan is spare of words, certainly, but only in the sense of being aware of the post-war suspicion (and pre-war fears) that to use them implies a certain mastery not always in the service of “truth”. In these similarly depressing times it is welcoming to be reminded “La poésie ne s’impose plus, elle s’expose.” The difficulties of the project are clarified here:

Now I am a person who likes simple words. It is true, I had realised long before this journey that there was much evil and injustice in the world I had now left, but I had believed I could shake the foundations if I called things by their proper names. I knew such an enterprise meant returning to absolute naiveté. This naiveté I considered as a primal vision purified of the slag of centuries of hoary lies about the world.

It is the position many poets, including myself, need to constantly confront. Where the original grace of naming is distorted by contingency: can the tree “on which the rebels of a hundred wars have been hanged” ever regain its pristine meaning? For Celan, as for Beckett and Brecht, this was the impossible. If you like, the absurd. It is the same tree not only Estragon and Vladimir sit under, but us. The word-work of restoration, according to Celan, is to “see the nasty lies the other side told me” whilst utilising the project of “the strange and the most strange”, call it Mallarméan/Surrealist/Formalist/what you will, to generate the spark of the marvellous which could create a new radiance, a new spirit, a new freedom. Always remembering the inherent contradictions of the contingent world: “Do not be deceived the last lamp does not give more light—the dark has only become more absorbed in itself.” The metaphysical darkness Celan addresses, however, has a solid human bed, one not anchored necessarily in rationality. Celan tells the story of the teacher of the law of gravity who gains the attention of his students only by physically demonstrating levitation. It is just such a precarious balance all modern poetry worth a detour displays. Celan, who could not tell the difference between a handshake and a poem, is shown here as having an ineradicable trust in the scene of Rosmarie Waldrop’s and Harriett Watts’ anthology.
The “Wiener Gruppe”, to give them their proper name, was part of the much wider flowering of European poetry and culture that once again, as with the Surrealist project before, Little England missed out on. The six poets represented in this anthology share little in common, at least on a formal assessment, but each is imbued with the project before, Little England missed out on. The six poets represented in this anthology share little in common, at least on a formal assessment, but each is imbued with the times they lived in, a time of radical re-thinking of the poetic material”, “dialect”, visual or concrete mechanisms. Poets represented include: Friederike Mayröcker, Friedrich Achleitner, Konrad Bayer, Ernst Jandl, H C Artmann, Gerhard Rühm. Would that this country could boast such a host of literary vandals to the established clime at the time. “Readable” and “Explosive” quote the blurs on the back, and somewhere between the two lies the truth, between Artmann’s pastoral surrealism and Jandl’s uncompromising “no/no/no/no/no/no/no” (answers to seven unasked questions). Friedrich Achleitner’s work, as represented in this anthology, blends the best of both in “The Good Soup” and “Montage in White”. From “a louse” and “The More Lovely Aspects of Airmail” to the “Increase of the Sense of Ideals” and “The Theory of Navigation Continued [12]” the whole makes one even more keenly aware of what English poetics has missed during the stultifying crassness of the 50s Movement. A joyful juggling of the given.

Paul Brown

Editor’s note: Konrad Bayer’s Selected Works have been published by Atlas Press—see Publications Received for details.

WENDY MULFORD: Late Spring Next Year, Poems 1979-1985 (Loxwood Stoneleigh, £3.95)

Ever at its most accomplished, Wendy Mulford’s earlier work smacked rather of post-modernist chipboard; there was a cleverness in so fine a poem as “warming up & starting all over again” (Bravo to Girls & Heroes, 1977) which was of the times. Between then and this book, some desperate measures were resorted to for a forceful voice, appropriating elements of mass culture (punk, for instance) to feminist purposes, aiming at a militancy which sounded too dressed-up by half. A voice was a dangerous solcism in the politics of gender, but the characteristic bricolage was narrowed to a range which would keep the single mouth in gear.

Late Spring Next Year, an integration allowing an ethical purchase on sexual and social politics shall have been achieved; and here it is published early. Mulford has ceased to “negotiate the cracks” but has arrived in the thick. Though it’s a depressive move, the poems glow with frank wisdom. The adversary stance is no longer essential to produce what can be acknowledged as deep feeling. Here the other can be recognised in its integrity without either identification or guilt at inequality, and an “unmerited exchange”, the key phrase to these poems I think, enacts the poems.

The time is past for the pitiful idea that the surface can consist without an innerness of its figure, together with respect for the innerness of what faces and goes to its forming; or when the figure could achieve a sense of its form only by fending away and attacking the other into which its own intolerable contents were ejected. This book says so, as sampled and scratched sounds enter the charts and their complicity with high consumerism becomes obvious. Importantly, Mulford’s new innerness is an innerness-in-the-group, of like-minded and like-loving women, not set by antimony, but growing in the unmerited exchange. The soul is socialised.

Not every poem fully arrives—I think “Elegy: For Male Lovers (Bradford 1980)” is crude compared with Nicole Ward Jouye’s meditations on the same conflict in The Streetcleaner. However, the other poems which address public issues/private concerns, that is, most of the book, are successful and moving: “Setting Sail for the Falkland Islands: Fools Paradise” (Mulford still loves long titles) is noteworthy in that even a thicket of literariness works as though staves for the distressed conscience, deep from memory, never disposed. All the work seems to have been undertaken tenderly and responsibly, generously. I hope this handsomely produced and very reasonably priced book is widely read; I imagine it will be well read by all who encounter it.

John Wilkinson

MICHAEL HASLAM: Continual Song (Open Township, £4.50)

... for, ists Orpheus, wenn es singt. And it is good to find a poet determined to continue that central tradition of poetry, against all the odds of favour and fashion. After all, most British poets of the last 50 years who have dared a mode even tentatively “Orphic”—let us say a mode of high transformational lyric in which the self is
meshed into the world as a medium of perceptual creation—have had their knuckles severely rapped and been told to return at once to a soul-less suburban versifying.

Michael Haslam risks it all. This sequence of 84 double-lyrics is a whirlwind of terrestrial song. It is a record of progressive self-realisation which patiently gathers a diversity of material together and holds it suspended in the text (fragments, gerundive itemising, a common enough post-Poundian method) but then gathers each assemblage of imagery together and rides it forwards in the search for a cohesive summation. Items of history, myth and sheer immediacy (but never reportage, never the news) fall next to each other on the page in a seemingly casual way, but are brought together in the insistent demand of ecstatic perception. It is precisely the singing, the celebration, the very howl of it, which determines and integrates the modernistic texture of the poem. The mechanics are most of the time unashamedly open to view as a kind of blatant phonetic echoing; the progression settled by what chimes together, implying the connectivity of human experience at a high pitch, which is where it matters and where the poem is sited. But that constant intensity is also inclusive, and although the human image in the text becomes a thing of grandeur (even), it is a grandeur which is intimate to modesty, self-detachment and even foolishness.

Those who know Michael Haslam’s earlier work will surely recognise this as his outstanding achievement to date, perhaps because in it his own insistently religious reading of the world is itself transcended. There is a crucial separation of the self-image from the comprehensive influx of imagery which builds up the poem and from the theological discourse which divides it, and what might have been an indulgent structure of implied homilectic itemising, a common enough post-Poundian method) but then gathers each assemblage of imagery together and rides it forwards in the search for a cohesive summation. Items of history, myth and sheer immediacy (but never reportage, never the news) fall next to each other on the page in a seemingly casual way, but are brought together in the insistent demand of ecstatic perception. It is precisely the singing, the celebration, the very howl of it, which determines and integrates the modernistic texture of the poem. The mechanics are most of the time unashamedly open to view as a kind of blatant phonetic echoing; the progression settled by what chimes together, implying the connectivity of human experience at a high pitch, which is where it matters and where the poem is sited. But that constant intensity is also inclusive, and although the human image in the text becomes a thing of grandeur (even), it is a grandeur which is intimate to modesty, self-detachment and even foolishness.

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reference to any other thing, in short, the very character of it which calls our attention to it, which wants us to know more about it, its particularity." So let me not make Olson's mistake and continue to compare Plato to Heisenberg, Williams to Ott, but move beyond that past and its models, as these poets Ott and Schwabsky have, to present the work itself:

He cries or laughs in the room above.

War is the
topic of sages
rare uses for bayonets.

All the faculties of the healthy man are also in the service of the soldier, and are especially acute due to the deprivation of his spirit. Poets have praised these virtues.

(Ott, Traffic)

I mean a lot of the words because I've written out these

A book which possesses a certain value and a loaf of bread possessing the same value are exchanged for one another, are the same value but in a different material. From another point of view your whole life has been spent on a kind of impacted nonsense, scraps of fate scribbled on the backs of napkins, bits of used envelope. And yet the window remained a window and the rose a rose. You looked out to see the sea and the stars, and between them a man hidden in the folds of his overcoat.

(Schwabsky, Fate/Seen in the Dark)

Schwabsky's way is not the same as Ott's. Rather than the page as Zen inscription, Schwabsky moves simultaneous texts before the eyes: "like seeing it on film". So the title of the work actually appears as

Fate

Seen in the Dark

As on the cover, so throughout the work the two texts do not exactly match up nor directly comment upon one another. That black line that runs throughout both carries the eye forward and stops the eye from too direct a mesh of fate and what's seen in the dark. It is and it is not like persistence of vision.

sighs of relief announced various finalities
or else her death
in hopes of favours to come

Such and such a place has no proper name. Nor I. This is getting too abstract. Let's say the toilet is between the kitchen and the living room. The bedroom is upstairs and there's a bathroom upstairs too. The owner, a follower of Jack Lacan, views life through mirrored sunglasses. The subject burned up like wood in his fireplace: these ashes.

(Schwabsky, Fate/Seen in the Dark)

before the child is born.

Her tongue
in the cavity of her mouth,
tropical rain.

The useless, the outer part, which had given color, discarded. Had the unborn distinguished between the apparent and the not-seen, how it would have laughed! Then the fruit itself is taken into the mind.

(Ott, Traffic)
These works turn on what I take to be a positive note at their ends, but the end of them, as their beginnings, I’ll leave to you to take as you will, but take them then as your own. The whole of it is to my satisfaction.

We had to drive through a slum to get without cause. She simply paused in her story, and then picked it up

In retrospect, I can see how I have negotiated with my own poverty. I’ve apologized, and have accepted a sense of self-guidance. The work is not over. We make a world, each of us, from unrelated fragments.

(Ott, within range)

From both of them—Schwabsky and Ott—I will look forward to the work that is not yet over.

Dennis Barone

GILLIAN ALLNUTT: Beginning the Avocado (Virago, £3.50)

Poems that fly off the page and strike at both the head and heart are a rare commodity. Here is a book full of them. Gillian Allnutt achieves that balance between technique and subject-matter where one is able to forget technique whilst acknowledging its undoubted presence. And she is unafraid.

The poems have a wide range of subject-matter but from the first to last are concerned essentially with the survival of the spirit/heart. “Until you let it be / a member of the wedding or the wild sea’s / harbour // you will need your heart / your dowry. You will be / afraid to die.” (“Until you let it be”)

Many inventive metaphors concern the heart: “my heart is / still in its nightdress” (“Agoraphobia”). “Here I can put the rind and pips of passion / in a footnote” (“Bright Cambridge Day”); “though a bit of shrapnel / is my heart” (“Alien”) but where that place is most deeply touched, as in the poem “after a year the cherry blossom is here again” about the death of a friend, metaphorical device is abandoned, as it must be, for a spare, disjointed succession of images which are deeply affecting... “they laid you under the grass I remember / the formal emotion / our bone stiff standing / thinking / are we old enough to know this / where is sadness”. In “Two Sketches” also, the structure of the poem is kept simple and bare to shift attention to the subject—what happened at Hiroshima. Short phrases accurately measure feeling. The first sketch, “Hiroshima, 1945” begins “Kasa promises. She walks / carefully all the way back / from the shop”. The careful structure echoing the concentration of a child given an important errand. It ends starkly and abruptly “The house is gone. / Kasa stops. there is a shadow on the step / looking up”. The simple words “stop” and “shadow” now take on terrible significance. In “Bright Cambridge Day”, however, there is scope for, and evident pleasure in, quiet mockery of the place and its educated elite using the language which they (and their poets) employ. “The sun is quiet and diligent in the many windowed court, / sedulously snipping shadows from the cloisters / until dinner time”, only slipping from enjoyment of the clipped precision when the poet’s own feeling enters, “I mean love / that pushes up like the grass in the night, / I mean the moon in heat”.

Included in this collection is the group of poems “Lizzie Siddall: Her Journal (1862)”, about Elizabeth Siddall the model for the pre-raphaelites and the wife of D G Rossetti until her early death from an overdose of laudanum. Lizzie was a plain, working-class girl but as Rossetti imagined her she was “Beatrice”. The poet gives Lizzie speech to tell of her crisis of identity, of her despair. Written in the first person for immediacy the poems follow her efforts to claim back her “soul” though death is finally the only solution: “Laudanum / is half / a honeymoon—and by my little window blows laburnum, / morning brief // euphoria, the hour of butter / milk. But then the windblown / afternoon / grows over me, a hood, a close brown pod / and I / my soul, my sun, my seed— / am poisoned inly.”

Janet Sutherland

Because of lack of space, a planned round-up of recent magazines has had to be left out. It will appear—along with reviews of books by Douglas Oliver, Anthony Barnett, Barrett Watten, Bruce Andrews, Ric Caddel, and of HOW(ever) magazine—in Reality Studios Vol. 10.
Publications received

Books & pamphlets

PIERRE ALBERT-BIROT: The First Book of Grabinouler, tr Barbara Wright (Atlas Press, 1986, £7.95 cloth, £4.50 pbk)
GILBERT ADAIR: Steakweasel (Magneta, £4.95 + 50p ppp)
BRUCE ANDREWS: Give Em Enough Rope (Sun & Moon Press, 1980.95)
DAVID ANISH: King Saturn’s Book (drawings by Peterjon Skelt) (North & South, £3.95)
JOHN ASHBERRY: Selected Poems (Paladin, £4.95)
ANGELA BALL: Recombinant Lives (Northern Lights, 75p inc ppk)
ANTHONY BARNETT: The Resting Bell, Collected Poems (Allardyce Barnett, cloth £17, pbk £8.95)
DENNIS BARONE: The House of Land (Spectacular Diseases, 1986, £1.50)
CHRIS BROADBIBB: Propositions (Red Sharks Press, 1986, £1.50)
PAUL BROWN: Longhand (Pre-Texts, c/o Actual Size, n.d., 45p)
MICHAEL CARLSON: Zombie Footwork (hardPressed Poetry, £3)
MARTIN CHERNOFF: Mucho Mojo (Northern Lights, 75p inc ppk)
PAUL CELAN: Collected Prose, tr Rosmarie Waldrop (Carcanet, 1986, £8.95)
DAVID CHALONER: Hotel Zingo (Grossatest, 1981, n.p.)
FRANK CHIAPISULA: Nightwatcher, Nightsong (Paul Green, 1986, £1.50) - 1st in series “Dangerous Writers”
BOB COBBING: Portrayed (Wacy! 1986, £1)
CLARK COOLIDGE: Solution Passage, Poems 1978-81 (Sun & Moon Press, 1986, £11.95)
CID CORMAN: The Promise The Promise (Northern Lights, 1986, 75p inc ppk)
LYNNN DREYER: The White Museum (Roof Books, 1986, £7.50)
FLORA DURHAM: Ikinokoru (Inkblot, n.p.)
KEN EDWARDS: Intensive Care (Pig Press, 1986, £1.50)
BARBARA EINZIG: Life Moves Outside (Burning Deck, £7)
JERRY ESTRIN: In motion speaking (Chance Additions, 1986, £4)
PETER FINCH: Selected Poems (Poetry Wales Press, £4.50)
ALLEN FISHER: Buzzards and Bees (Micro Brigade, n.p.)
(ROY FISHER) Derek Slade: Roy Fisher, A Bibliography (Derek Slade, £2.50 inc ppp)
KATHLEEN FRASER: Each Next, narratives (The Figures, 2nd printing 1983, £4)
LEAH FITZ: From Cookie to Witch is an Old Story (Loxwood Stoneleigh, £3.50)
TED GREENWALD: Use No Hooks (Asylum’s Press, 1980, n.p.)

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PAUL GREEN: Songs for Speaking to the Sky (Micro Brigade, n.p.)
ALAN HALSEY: Auto Dada Cafe (Five Seasons Press, £4.50)
STANISLAW HANSEL: Meditational Prayer (Spectacular Diseases, 40p)
RANOLDPH HEALY: 25 Poems (Beau Press, 1983, £1.50)
HENRY HILLS: Making Money (Segue, 1986, £7.50) - documentation of Hills’ film “Money”
MICHAEL HOROVITZ: Midsummer Morning Jog Log (drawings by Peter Blake) (Five Seasons Press, 1986, £8.95 cloth, £3.50 pkb, £150 ltd signed edn.)
KEITH JAFRATE: War Poems (Slow Dancer, £3)
AUGUST KLEINZAHLER: Blue at 4 pm (Northern Lights, 1986, 75p inc ppp)
MARC LECARD: Things busy naming (Chance Additions, 1984, £4)
TOM LEONARD: Situations Theoretical and Contemporary (Galloping Dog Press, 1986, £2)
ROBIN MCGOWAN: Burning the Knife (Scarecrow Press, 1985, £7.95): And Other Voyages (travel writing) (Mho & Mho Works, 1986, £6.95)
PHIL MAILLARD: Plot 20 (stories) (Galloping Dog Press, £4.95)
D S MERRIOTT: Light, Circles (Open Townsend, 95p)
CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON: Two Horse Wagon Going By (Carcanet, 1986, £6.95)
BILLY MILLS: Triple Helix (hardPressed Poetry, £3)
CHRISTOPHER MILLIS: The Bicycle is an Easy Pancake (Red Sharks Press, £1.50)
EDWIN MORGAN: Newpoems (Wacy! 50p)
LAURA MOWRARTY: Persia (Chance Additions, 1983, £4)
WENDY MULFORD: Late Spring Next Year, Poems 1979-1985 (Loxwood Stoneleigh, £3.95)
GEORGE NAUM: My Tired Father, tr. James Brook (Inkblot, 1986, £4)
F A MELLEBECK: Hands on a Mirror (Inkblot, £5/£3)
JEFF NUTTALL: Scenes and Dubs (Writers Forum/Pirate Press, £1.25): Mad With Music (Writers Forum/Pirate Press, £1)
GEORGE OBIE: Maciste in the Valley of the Pagans (Three Bears Press, 1983, £2)
STEPHEN OLDFIELD: Sleeping Feedback (Open Townsend, £1.25)
DOUGLAS OLIVER: Kind, Collected Poems (Allardyce Barnett, £12.95 cloth, £7 pkb)
MAGGIE O’SULLIVAN: States of Emergency (ICPA, £3.50)
GIL O’TOOLE: Within range (Burning Deck, 1976, £4)
STEVEN PEREIRA: Memory (Wacy! 1986, 50p)
BENJAMIN PERET: Remove Your Hat & Other Works (Atlas Press, 1986, £4.50)
SIMON PETTET: Conversations with Rudy Burckhardt (Interview/photos) (Vehicle Editions, £20)
ELAINE RANDALL: Beyond All Other, Poems 1970-1986 (Pig Press, 1986, £6.50)
STEPHEN RODEFER: Four Lectures (The Figures, 1982, £5)
CLAUDE ROYET-JOURNOUD: The Maternal Drape (Avede, 1985, £3)
PETER SANDERSON: More Poems about Love Affairs and Trains (Slow Dancer, £1.50)
MAURICE SCULLY: 5 Freedoms of Movement (Galloping Dog Press, 131)
£5.50: also available, xeroxed/handcoloured broadsheets, n.p. given (from Coelacanth Press)

ROBERT SHEPPARD: Private Number (Northern Lights, 1986, 75p inc pp)  

WILLIAM SHERMAN: Mermaids (Spanner, 1986, n.p.); She Wants to go to Pago-Pago (Branch Redd, dist. Spanner, 1986, £5)

JAMES SHERRY: The Word I Like White Paint Considered (Awedea, 1986, n.p.)

COLIN SIMMS: Eyes Own Ideas (Pig Press, £5.50)

CHRIS TOBBECE: The Slim Book/Wet Pulp (Stone Lantern Press, 1986, £3.50)

GAEL TURNBULL: A Winter Journey (Pig Press, £3)

ALAIN VEINSTEIN: The Archaeology of the Mother, tr Rosmarie Waldrop & Tod Kabza (Spectacular Diseases, 1986, £1.50)

ROSMARIE WALDROP: The Hanky of Pippin's Daughter (Station Hill Press, £14.95 - her first novel)

CRAIG WATT: Discipline (Burning Deck, 1986, §4)

JOHN WILKINSON: Proud Flesh (Equofinality/Delires, 1986, £3)

ANTHOLOGIES:

1o FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL DE POESIA VIVA, bilingual (Portuguese/English) catalogue with visual poetry from 28 countries (Apartado 5293, 1707 Lisboa Codex, Portugal, n.p.)

A DOG'S NOSE, Basil Bunting 1900-1985, ed Michael Farley (Taxvs, 1986, £2.50) - poetic tributes from Baker, Cadel, Creely, N Fisher, Mottram, Pickard, Raworth, etc)

HORIZONTAL VOLCANO, ed Allen Fisher (dist. by Reality Studios, 1986, £1) - anthology from Fisher's Goldsmiths' College poetry workshop 1985-6, inc work by Ken Edwards, Adrian Clarke, Graham Hartill, Virginia Firthberg

IN THE AMERICAN TREE, ed Ron Silliman (National Poetry Foundation, 1986, §45 cloth, £18.95 pbk) - 628pp anthology of the "language" project, 38 poets included

VOICEFREE ANTHOLOGY '86, ed Michael Connaughton (Voicefree, 54 Dublin Rd, Dublin 13)

Audio

CHARLES BERNSTEIN / LYN HEINIAN: Guess Language (Audio musixa get, C60 cassette, 1986, n.p.)


Magazines

ABACUS 23-26, Jan-May 1987 (Peter Ganick, Post & Poets Press, 181 Edgemont Drive, Elmwood CT 06110, USA, §2.50 each/$16 for 6 single author issues: Ray DiPalm, Steven Firth, Kit Robinson, Maureen Owen, etc)


AGGIE WESTON'S T.V., Winter 1983 (Stuart Mills, 37 Laud Close, Belper, Derbyshire) This issue "Perisfagine" by Ian Hamilton Finlay & Rod Gathereote: also received nos. 5, 17, 18.

ANGEL EXHAUST 6, Winter 1986 (Steven Pereira/Adrian Clarke, Wacy, address, £2 + 25p)

CABARET 246 No 8 (Patrick Egans, Red Sharks Press, 122 Clive St, Grangetown, Cardiff CF1 7JE, £1.50)

CENTRAL PARK 9 (Spring 1986) & 10 (Fall 1986) (Stephen-Paul Martin et al, Box 1446, New York, NY 10023, USA, $5/sub $9)

CONSTANT RED/MINGLED DAMASK 1 & 2 (Nigel Wheale, 64 Sturton St, Cambridge CB1 2OA, free/donations)

THE DIFFICULTIES Vol 3 No 1, David Bromige issue (Tom Beckett, Lake Rd, Kent, Ohio 44240, USA, $7)

THE ECHO ROOM 7, Winter 1987 (Brendan Cleary, 45 Bewick Court, Princess Square, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8EG, 80p/£5 for 4)

EUROFINALITY 3 (John Wilkinson/Rod Mengham, see publishers' address, £2.50 & 50p)

FIGS 12, Dec 1986, & 13, June 1987 (Tony Baker, Mews Cottage, Main St, Winster, Matlock, Derbys DE4 2DZ, £1.50)

FIRST OFFENSE 1 & 2 (Tim Fletcher/Chris Beckett, "Syringa", The Street, Stooardarsh, Canterbury, Kent CT3 4BA, £1)

POLED SHEETS 1 (Sept 1986) & 2 (Feb 1987) (Michael Haslam, Open Townshipped address, £1.50 each post free)

GALLERY WORKS 6 (Peter Holland et al, 1465 Hammersley Ave, Bronx, NY 10469, USA, §4)

INFORMATION 1986 (Tom Raworth, 132 Ditton Fields, Cambridge CB5 8Ql, £30 for 52 weekly issues inc pp)

INTERSTATE 17 (Loris Essary/Mak Loefller, PO Box 7068, University Station, Austin, Texas 78713, USA, §10 for 2 issues) Special British issue.

JIMMY & LUCY'S HOUSE OF "K" 6, May 1986 (Andrew Schelling/ Benjamin Friedlander, 3816 Piedmont, No 6, Oakland, CA 94611, USA, $15 for 3 issues) - this issue devoted to a critical survey of Tuumba Press.

JOE SOAP'S CANOE 11 (Martin Stannard, 90 Ranelagh Rd, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 7HY, £1.25/£4 for 3)

KITE 1 & 2, 1986/87 (Chris Broadribb, 32 Angus St, Roath, Cardiff CF2 3LY, £2/£2 sub £10)

LABEL 7, Autumn 1986 (Paul Beasley/Ruth Harrison, 57 Effingham Rd, London SE12 8NT, £1/£2 for 2)

LITERARY MAGAZINE REVIEW Vol 5 Nos 3 & 4 (W C Light, English Dept, Denison Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas 66506, USA, $3/$10 for 4)

LOOT 5:3 Gavin Selerie, "Puzzle Canon"; 5:4 (final issue) Pierre Joris, "Goodbye to England" (Paul Green, Spectacular Diseases, 50p & 45p, free to SD subscribers)

MARGINAL 1, Winter 1986, 2, Spring 1987, 3, Summer 1987 (Robin Magowan et al, 20 Brook Green, London W6 7BL, £3 + 60p/£11 for 4)

NEW POETRY FROM OXFORD 5, Feb 1986 (Helen Kidd et al, 56 Beech Crescent, Kidlington, Oxford OX5 1DP, £1.20)

THE NEWS 1. April 1987 (Tony Lopez, Dept of English, University of Leicester, Leicester LEI 7RH, n.p.)

NINTH DECADE 7 (Tony Frazer/Ian Robinson/Robert Vas Dias, 52 Cascade Ave, London W10, £2/£6 for 3)

OTTOTOLE 1, Fall 1985, 2, Winter 86-87 (Gail Sher/Michael Ammassan, 414 W 120th St, no 307, New York, NY 10027, USA, $5 & §6)

PAGES (Robert Sheppard, 15 Oakapple Rd, Southwick, Sussex - monthly, write for details)

PALPI 15, Sept 1986, 16 March 1987 (Association of Little
Addresses

Actual Size, 40 Elm Grove, London SE15
Allardycy, Barnett, 14 Mount St, Lewes, BN7 1HL
Asylum's Press, Charles Bernstein, 464 Amsterdam Ave, New York, NY 10024, USA
Atlas Press, 10 Park St, London SE1
Audio musixa get, via Asylum's Press
Awede, Box 376, Windsor, Vermont 05089, USA
Beau Press, c/o Maurice Scully, 53 Dollymount Park, Dublin 3
Burning Deck, 71 Elmgrove, Providence, RI 02906, USA
Carcanet, 208-212 Corn Exchange, Manchester M4 3BQ
Chance Additions, 395 Capp St, no 11, San Francisco, CA 94110, USA
Coelacanth Press, Maurice Scully (see Beau Press)
Equofinity, 147 Sally Oak Rd, Bournville, Birmingham B30 1HN
The Figures, c/o Segue Five Seasons Press, Malady, Hereford HR2 9NZ
Gallopin Dog Press, 45 Salisbury Gardens, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1HP
Paul Green, see Spectacular Diseases
Grosseteste Press, 4 Fleming Place, Maryport, Cumbria CA15 6ES
Alan Halsey, 22 Broad St, Hay-on-Wye, nr Hereford HR3 5DB
hardPressed Poetry, Billy Mills, Joaquin Costa 45, Barcelona 08001, Spain
ICPA, 11 Dale Close, Thames St, Oxford OX1 1TU
Inkblot, 439 49th St, no 11, Oakland, CA 94609, USA
Laxwood Stoneleigh, 75 West St, Old Market, Bristol BS2 0BX
Magenta, 40 Maldon Rd, London W3
Micro Brigade, 74 Lodge Lane, London N12 BJ
Moving Letters Press, c/o Segue National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine at Orono, Orono, Maine 04469, USA
North & South, 23 Egerton Rd, Twickenham, Middx TW2 7SL
Northern Lights, 24 Harwood St, London NW1 8DJ
Oasis, 12 Stevenage Rd, London SW6 6ES
Open Township, 14 Foster Clough, Heights Rd, Hebden Bridge HX7 5Q2
Pin Press, 7 Cross View Terrace, Neville's Cross, Durham DH1 4HY
Poetry Wales Press, 56 Parcau Ave, Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan
Red Sharks Press, 122 Clive St, Grangtown, Cardiff CF1 7JE
Roof Books, The Segue Foundation, 300 Bowery, New York, NY 10012, USA
Derek Slade, 29 Ashwater Rd, London SE12 0LB
Slow Dancer, address as for magazine
Spanner, 64 Lanercost Rd, London SW2 3DN
Spectacular Diseases, 83b London Rd, Peterborough, Cambs.
Station Hill Press, via Burning Deck
Stone Lantern Press, 39 Cromwell St, Swansea SA1 E6Y
Sun & Moon Press, PO Box 481170, Los Angeles, CA 90048, USA
Taxvs Press, 27 St Mary's St, Stamford, Lincts PE9 2BN
Three Bears Press, 200 E 15th St, Apt 7-0, New York, NY 10003, USA
Vehicel Editions, 239 Mott St, New York, NY 10012, USA
Wacyl, c/o Adrian Clarke, 87a Theberton St, London N1 0QY
Writers Forum, Unit P8, Metropolitan College of Craftsmen, Enfield Rd, London N1 5AZ

The above lists publications received up to and including 31 July 1987. Publications received since then will be listed in Volume 10. Some of the above titles may also be reviewed in full in the next volume.

Addresses of publishers are on the next page, but in the UK both Alan Halsey Books (22 Broad St, Hay-on-Wye, via Hereford HR3 5DB) and Paul Green (Spectacular Diseases address) can between them supply most titles. In North America Segue Distributing and Small Press Distribution (see front page for addresses) offer the same service.

Prices of books, pamphlets and single issues of magazines are given exclusive of postage and packing; subscription prices of magazines can be assumed to include p & p. Publication date is 1987 unless otherwise noted.
REALITY STUDIOS READERS' POLL RESULTS

A total of 24 entries were received for our readers' poll. Readers were invited to "submit a list of up to three of their favourite/most significant books of poetry published in the 1980s".

While 24 is not a massive number, the results make interesting reading, and can be taken as a fair indication of what British readers (in particular) of Reality Studios consider to be the most interesting poetry being written now. (Only one entry was received from a non-British resident; we considered, but decided against, issuing a specific invitation to American and continental European readers. Perhaps another time.)

Here is what you thought:


Paul Buck: I’ve found myself particularly engrossed with: Michael Palmer: First Figure (North Point Press); Bernard Noël: Bruits de Langues (talus d’approche); Marguerite Duras: The Lover (Collins), even though it is categorised as a prose work.


John Seed: John Riley: The Collected Works (Grosseteste 1980)—because of its summation of a long and uncompleted struggle against “common sense”, because of its vulnerability to the commonplace, because through its pages he still speaks. Peter Riley: Tracks and Mineshafts (Grosseteste 1983)—because of its engagement with the intractabilities of a specific social landscape, because of its resistance to the arts of silence and the silences of “art”, because of its wildness. Allen Fisher: Unpolished Mirrors (Reality Studios 1985)—because of its loyalty to the best ideals of 1968, because of its historical ambition and its beautiful naiveties, because of its hard faith in realisable alternatives.

Gavin Selerie: J H Prynne: Poems (Allardyce, Barnett); Tom Raworth: Tottering State (The Figures); Charles Olson: Maximus Poems (complete).

Peter Larkin: I think I would nominate Peter Riley’s Lines on the Liver (Ferry 1981) and J H Prynne’s The Oval Window (Cambridge, 1983) which are likely to be popular choices. PR for one would be horrified if I were also to append Ian Hamilton Finlay’s Talismans and Signifiers (G Murray Gallery 1984) but he is a very extraordinary man, and doing very odd things with “pastoral” of course, as strong in his way as Prynne in his. If Americans are included I would also mention Charles Bernstein’s Resistance (Awede 1983) but that is over my limit.

Andrew Lawson: Tom Raworth: Tottering State (The Figures); Bill Griffiths: A Tract Against the Giants (Coach House Press); Allen Fisher: Brixton Fractals (Aloes Books).

Mike Horovitz: Allen Ginsberg: Collected Poems (Viking); Frances Horovitz: Collected Poems (Bloodaxe); Michele Roberts: Mirror of the Mother (Methuen)—all 3 will continue to signify for me for the rest of my life, by no means for personal reasons only. It’s true Ginsberg never edits himself enough, & didn’t in this Collected—better either to’ve gone for broke with a Complete, or more rigorously Selected. But that’s no excuse for most of his English reviewers, who clearly neither read much of the book nor edited their own extraneous, overweening & far less illuminating egos. The two women, on the other hand, both only publish what’s been pared right down, exquisitely in both cases.

Harry Gilonis: Ric Caddell: Sweet Cicely (Taxvs); Roy Fisher: A Furnace (OUP); Gavin Selerie: Azimuth (Binnacle). Tips for work finished/collected/reprinted in full in the ‘80s would lead me to nudge forward the names of ‘other Fisher for Place, Olson (Maximus), Niedecker (for a putatively properly edited Collected Poems); tips for the Hit Parade: Andrew Lawson, John Seed, Steve Oldfield.

Tony Baker: (i) I think John Riley’s Collected Poems will creep into the 80s; (ii) am sure Paul Blackburn’s do (tho’ of course written before); (iii) for a one-off little cracker, Geraldine Monk’s Tiger Lilies (Rivelin); (iv) for a one-off slow burn, George Evans’ Oeuvre; (v) of recent: Maurice Scully’s Five Freedoms (Galloping Dog); Ken Edwards’ Intensive Care (embarrassed, eh?); Ric Caddel’s Fantasia in the English Choral Tradition (Slug Press); (vi) Allen Fisher’s Unpolished Mirrors probably ought to be in here, altho’ I still don’t think I’ve read it clearly enuf/nearly enuf; (vii) the other 63 I’ve forgotten.

Lee Harwood: The ones that gave me most pleasure, moved me, and pushed me—if it has to be only three—James Schuyler: A Few Days (Random House 1985); William Corbett: Collected Poems
(National Poetry Foundation 1984); Paul Evans: Sweet Lucy (Pig Press 1983); though coming close behind them would be Kelvin Corcoran: The Red and Yellow Book; Doug Oliver: The Infant & the Pearl; August Kleinzahler: Storm over Hackensack; Elaine Randell: Beyond All Other; Jack Marshall: Arrival on the playing fields of Paradise; John Ashbery: Selected Poems; and possibly Michael Haslam’s Continual Song.

Ian Patterson: J H Prynne: The Oval Window; Denise Riley: Dry Air (Virago); James Schuyler: Morning of the Poem.

John Wilkinson: My wholly predictable desert island books are all anthologies—a worrying sign. John Wieners: Selected Poems; J H Prynne’s Poems; Denise Riley: Dry Air.


Patricia Farrell: Allen Fisher: Brixton Fractals; Clive Fencott: Non Hysternon Proteron (significant though very rare); Bill Griffiths: A Tract Against the Giants.


Elaine Randell: John Riley: Collected Poems (Groseteste); Jeremy Hilton: One and One (Rivelin); Barry MacSweeney: Ranter (Slow Dancer Press).

Kelvin Corcoran: Les A Murray: The Boys Who Stole the Funeral; Tom Raworth: Writing; Jack Spicer: Collected Books (1980)—if the latter is a cheat (all much earlier than the 80s), then James Schuyler: Morning of the Poem; Peter Riley: Lines on the Liver.


Ian Vickers: Gavin Selerie: Azimuth (Binnacle); Eric Mottram: Interrogation Rooms (Spanner); Peter Riley: Lines on the Liver (Ferry).

Will Rowe: Barry MacSweeney: Ranter (Slow Dancer Press); Allen Fisher: Brixton Fractals (Aloes Books); Eric Mottram: Elegies (Galloping Dog Press).

We have stressed that the exercise was not to be taken desperately seriously. The intention was not to determine who were the “best” poets, but by asking for recent books to be nominated to gain some insight into what the readership’s current predilections are. Yet it’s tempting to codify the response. And so, employing a complicated and probably quite unfair scoring system which takes some account of subsidiary choices but eliminates multiple applications and other irregularities, we have arrived at a Top Twelve of the poets most often mentioned:

1. Allen Fisher
2. Tom Raworth
3. J H Prynne
4. Peter Riley
5. Bill Griffiths
5. John Riley
8. Denise Schuyler
8. Eric Mottram
8. Gavin Selerie

Bubbling under these would be: John Ashbery, Charles Bernstein, Ric Caddel, Kelvin Corcoran, Ken Edwards, Charles Olson, Oskar Pastior.

What are we to make of all this? First, the Surprising Omissions department. Bob Cobbing, Thomas A Clark, Iain Sinclair, Andrew Crozier, John James, Chris Torrance, Tom Leonard, Tom Pickard, Wendy Mulford, Colin Simms, Chris Cheek, David Miller, John Wilkinson, Ralph Hawkins, Paul Buck were among the poets one would have expected to show up who didn’t get a single mention,
while Douglas Oliver only got one passing mention. In most cases this can be explained by the focus on books published in the 80s—many of these have published little or nothing since 1980 (Sinclair), or have substantial new books out this year which arrived too late for most people’s responses (Mulford, Oliver), or alternatively have maintained a constant output without one particular book standing out (Cobbing, Clark).

Although respondents’ comments were enthusiastic, there were several disappointing aspects of the overall response. The usual male bias was apparent (only three respondents were women, and only one woman poet, Denise Riley, made it into the top twelve). The response was heavily biased towards longer-established poets—at least nine of the top twelve have been publishing since the 1960s. The pages of Reality Studios are testimony to the growth of a new generation of British poets, but have most of them yet to write their definitive works? Support for American or other non-British poets was also surprisingly thin—James Schuyler being the only non-Brit in the top twelve—but perhaps this can be taken more positively as confidence in the strength of our own poetry.

Those who figured most prominently had one or at most two outstandingly strong books in contention. Most of the time it was a two-horse race between Allen Fisher (Brixton Fractals and Unpolished Mirrors) and J H Prynne (The Oval Window and Poems), with Tom Raworth (Tottering State and Writing) making a late surge. Peter Riley’s support was divided between Lines on the Liver and Tracks and Mineshafts, while the late John Riley was cited exclusively for his definitive Collected Poems. Other books cited more than once included Bill Griffiths’ Tract Against the Giants, Gavin Selerie’s Azimuth and Denise Riley’s Virago collection Dry Air.

Caveats aside, the poll, if it signifies nothing else, provides evidence of an engaged and intelligent readership. Our thanks to everyone who took the trouble to send in their entries. Any feedback, grumbles and addenda will be considered for publication in Reality Studios Volume 10, due in 1988.

This may also be the place to forewarn the readership that RS may well be taking an indefinite holiday after that volume has appeared, to allow time for the editor’s own writing and for consideration of future publication programmes.

Ken Edwards
KATHY ACKER
DAVID CHALONER
PETER LARKIN
STEPHEN-PAUL MARTIN
PETER MIDDLETON
GIL OTT
BOB PERELMAN
CARLYLE REEDY
JOHN SEED
HANNAH WEINER
JOHN WILKINSON
JOHAN DE WIT

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