

TOFU INK ARTS PRESS
Winter 2022



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Tofu Ink Arts Press

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K. ELTINAÉ

Winner of the 2021 Tofu Ink Arts Press Poetry Prize
in Honor of Theatre Visionary Reza Abdoh

arraigo 

My aunt is still alive
scheduling Eid lunches out-loud to soothe away panic
I am transfixed by the mallow leaves in her hands
how like worry they multiply then disappear.

The social worker is taking notes across the room.

Mother is propped on a cushion at the far end of my breath
legs crossed counting currency
έντεκα, είκοσι ένα, τριάντα ένα.

Only the last three years will be considered
she tells me after living here for ten
I need more proof you belong
here.

Open my mouth
as a ghost talks about the weight of my life,
each year, invisible, undocumented.
she nods, says

I need receipts

فاتورة

we say back home

I want to grab the alif |
tap the earth between us and deliver them,
like a miracle but the word now spells فتور
at my feet a dizzy δ pirouettes, a coin
I toss back to mother who claims it was stolen.

kendine dikkat et oğlum she snaps when I talk back
بيبيك وبشتريك father says without thinking, if challenged.

Where do your parents live now?
Father is watching National Geographic sipping hibiscus
each bunion is a compass begging me
to flee the room.

Her phone rings and I hear mother's classic *Τι διάλο θέλεις τώρα;*
Leave the office promising to hand over proof
I've existed for years.

Notes:



arraigo is the Spanish word for rooted.

έντεκα, είκοσι ένα, τριάντα ένα in Greek translates to 11, 21, 31.

فاتورة is an Arabic word for receipts.

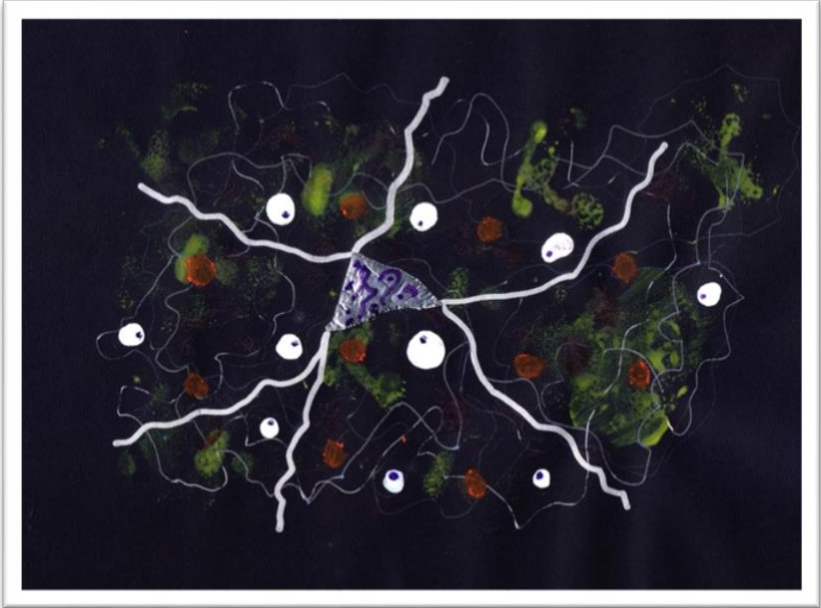
فُتور in Arabic translates to apathy, exhaustion.

kendine dikkat et oğlum is the Turkish expression for watch yourself, boy.

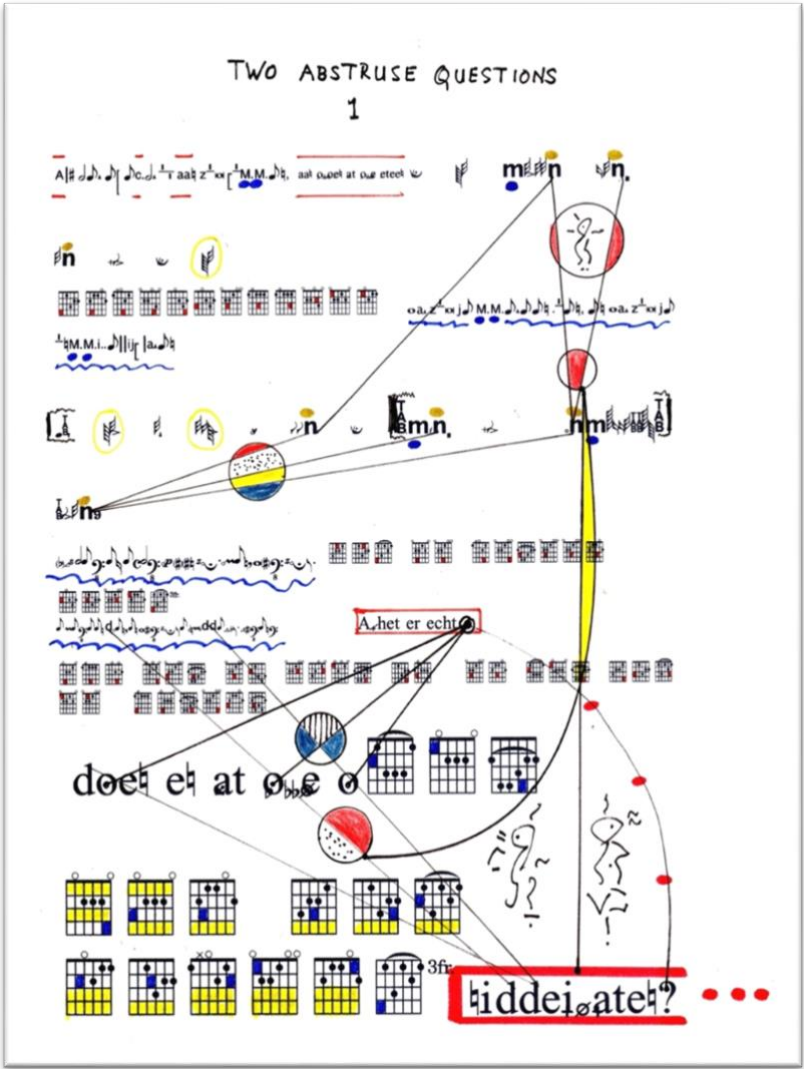
بييعك وبشترك in Arabic translates to I will sell and buy you if I please.

Τι διάολο θέλεις τώρα in Greek translates to What the hell do you want now?

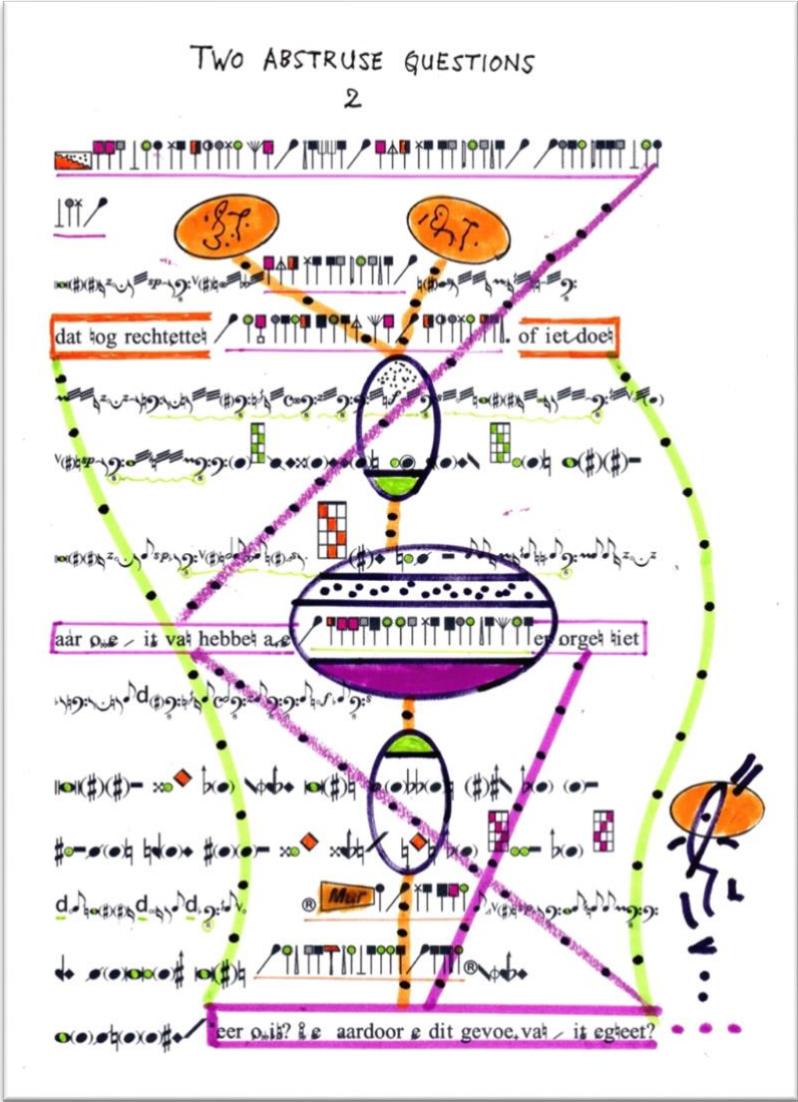
JAAP BLONK
Friendly Ghosts



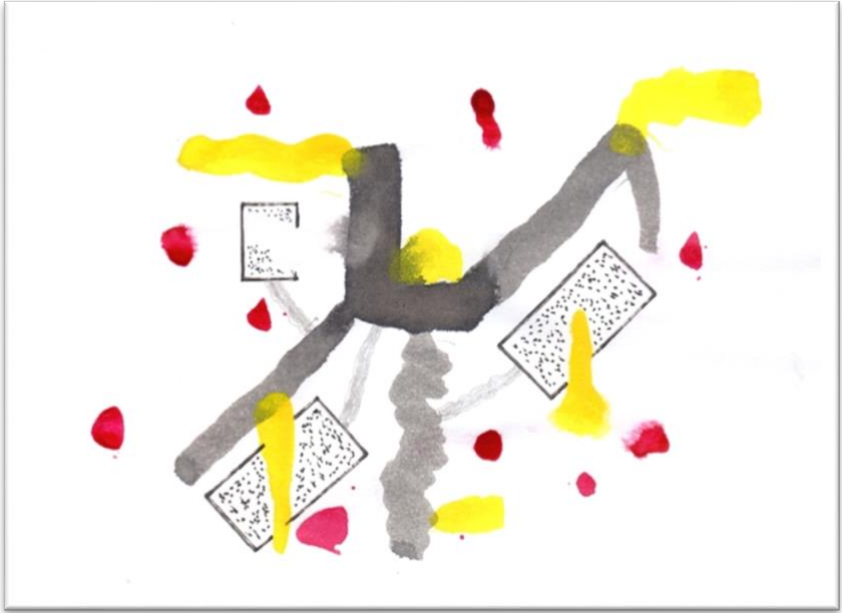
Two Abstruse Questions 1



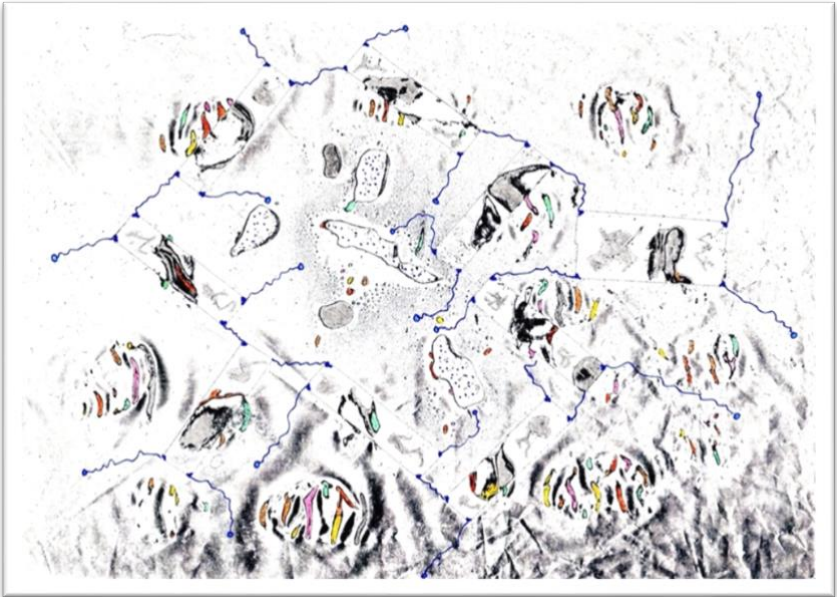
Two Abstruse Questions 2



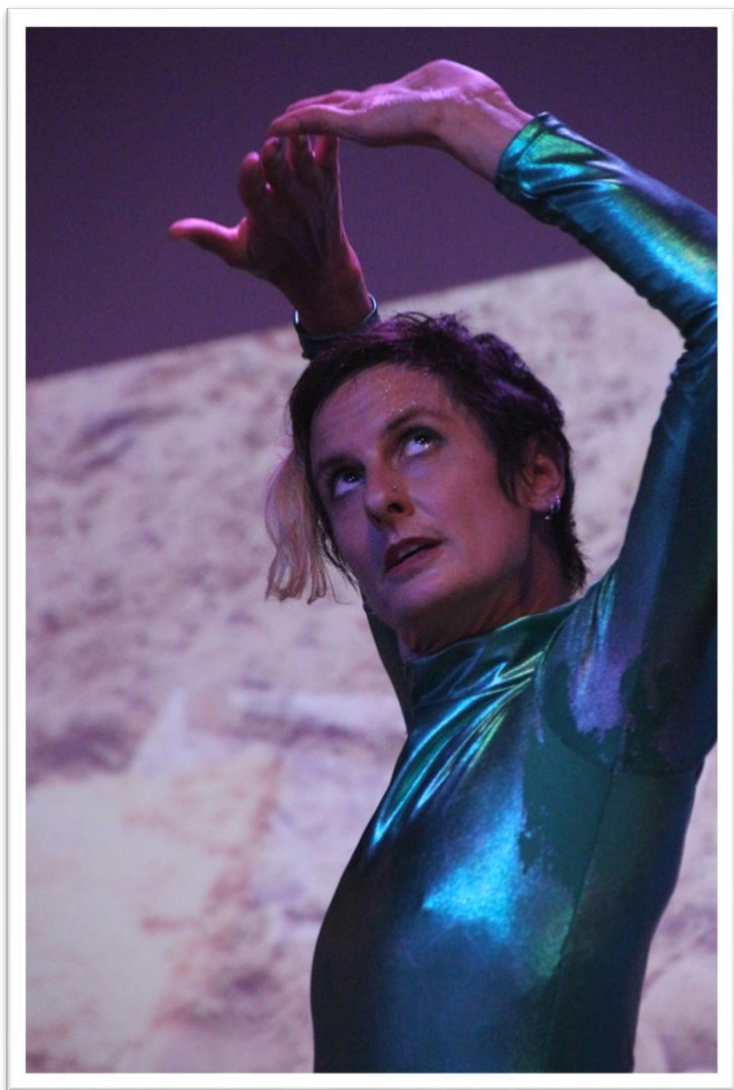
The Circumstance



Ketsersloch



LIZ DURAN BOUBION
June Bug Rolls Toward the Sun Like a Scarab





“June Bug Rolls Toward the Sun Like a Scarab” is a 45-minute multimedia dance theater solo about dating, dance, and parenting with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). On a quest for true love and artistic survival, Boubion’s transformation from larva to beetle draws from *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka, the beetle God, "Kepri", from the Egyptian Book of the Dead and *The Myth of Sisyphus* by existential philosopher, Albert Camus. As a queer Latinx dance animal grappling with themes of alienation, failure and self-acceptance, Boubion rolls deeply personal stories into a fidget-positive, relatable overshare with both humor and vulnerability. Her work burrows deeply into the genre of Magical Realism, skittles about with the nuances of contemporary dance, flirts with the *grotesque burlesque* in multiple costume changes and arrives into the realm of ritual performance art to embrace the healing power of the arts to transform, metamorphosize and resurrect a sense of meaning and hope.

<https://youtu.be/k4Dc6ApWWOU> <https://youtu.be/UVGAiKewVgM>

Written, Conceived, Choreographed and Performed by Liz Duran Boubion

Directed by Kimberly Lester

Music collaboration: Micropixie (Neshma Friend)

Camera: Matthew Sigal

Video Installation/Editing/composition: Liz Duran Boubion

Costume/Props: Liz Duran Boubion

Photo credit: Yvonne Portra

Premiered at the Mojo Theater, San Francisco, Ca. June 2019.

ANDROMEDA MENDOZA
In My Head



Solitude Series 2



Untitled



SARAH SOPHIA YANNI

Diary Poem

once wet ink blots in purple
and red call to tell me
I have changed. i've been reading
my old diaries lately—by reading I mean
inhaling, voluntary thoughts etched
down in space, that is to say, the space
of a teenage mind, idealistic and sweet.
time feels violent. time catalogues the things
I no longer feel or see, that is to say,
time reminds me of being choiceless
and once much more happy.
in my diaries I am in love every
day with different bodies. exchanging
paper notes to no one, pages stained
by vinegar fingerprints, stained by
girlish perception, my own unrequited exchange.
covers smell like cheap mall perfume
and I touch them to feel safe.

Self Inflicted Wounds

a pry, or cavity open.

tomorrow this cartilage will be half-healed.

consider all the different kinds of pain.

despite best effort, the knife confuses finger for tomato.

a deep, dumb slice.

my face confused for shock of white.

markings of biting before.

once I bit so hard I bled, chewy tongue matter and wet shiny cheek.

this pinch of dark red soaks my gums, copper taste.

as peroxide dulls the throb, but barely.

limbs thrusting towards ice cold basins.

like dirt hollows as greetings for a scraped host body.

where water unfolds, so do hands.

tomorrow, the stings will not be as plenty.

MEGAN MERCHANT
Advice for the New School Year



JONES IRWIN

Letter To An Unknown Woman; After Guy Goffette

Admit, if you dare, that for us
to fall victim to demise without
having tasted the spoiling of virtue
in the present tense is sad and useless.

Come then, Madame, let me
lift your shadowy dress and
you can unzip me so as to play
together where the joys of life
are finally promised to us.

A Story About Panero

Leopoldo María the mad poet
Was originally found smoking a joint
By his conservative mother who sent
Him straight to the Asylum Ward
For some Reversion Therapy to send
Him back to humanity

But the effort failed miserably
And Leopoldo María was sent on to the men's prison
At infamous Zamora where he was told to bend over
And to focus on the venerable image of St Theresa
Whilst successive inmates lined up to sodomise his verse

Poem for Sonia Delaunay (who is wow); After Tristan Tzara

The Angel slides two long fingers into Sonia

Into her luscious basket of open fruit

He wants to make a hand poem which

Will screech like auto-tyres

In a handbrake turn of her vertiginous human heart

The Return of Laure Ekphrastic inspired by Georges Bataille

1

During this agony, the soul is inundated with inexpressible delights. St Teresa of Avila

- I don't do this for the fun or the hell of it, you know. The public have just got me all wrong. They see me as some tabloid good time guy scribbler. What gives, *merde*?! I'm a serious guy, non?

Bataille looked around the room. Empty except for a chair and broken looking wooden table with a half-drunk Malbec, a bottle of gin, a long crystal wine glass and spirit tumbler. On the chair lay a book of poems by some obscure dissident Surrealist (a plagiariser from early Artaud) and, on the bare off-white walls, simply a photograph of *The Hundred Pieces*, a Chinese torture that Georges had been meditating on for some time. It was nailed up poorly and so hung slightly askew and the print was badly soiled. All purposeful no doubt. Normal mortals would have been terrorised by the image – a naked, skeletal oriental male with long wispy black hair heavily doped up, his torso literally deconstructed piece by piece with knives by an executioner, whilst tied to a post and the whole spectacle watched by an ecstatic and relatively large crowd. The crowd up claustrophobic close and peering in like the most horrible, evil voyeurs. What a world!

Terrifying then, shocking even to the very core of our humanity, for its visceral cruelty and simultaneous group complicity but, with Georges, well he found it almost strangely uplifting and peaceful. Of course, it also helped him understand the lure of Nazism a bit better. All around his community, the responsible citizens were falling like flies. Giving in to either illusion, self-deception or pure preservation instinct, Georges had got to a point he couldn't really make a clear distinction between these contemporary weaknesses. Lucky he didn't have much of an investment in his own survival, he thought. This photograph had been given to him as a present by the enigmatic anthropologist Caillois (author of the infamous and influential *Man and Games*) after he returned from a trip to the East. But it was very definitely the West which was subject to its dramatic temptations right now. He moved across the room a little like a ghost and peered at its interstitial horrors as close to its stirring surface as his big handsome face would allow.

This image had obsessed Bataille ever since its abrupt arrival in an awkward package that had been half-opened by Customs, keeping him awake all through black nights looking for clues, as if staring deeply into the hallucinating panicked eyes of the prostrate victim long enough, could yield some answers to the Eleusinian mysteries as well as proffer access to other esoteric magic portals. Of course, it also agonised him, that this kind of violence and blood sacrifice was at the heart of all supposed civilisation, the very morbid and psychotic foundation of the very same culture that gave us museums and churches. Ever notice how no one

these days has any idea where the slaughterhouses are located in urban cities? That blindness and repression is no coincidence. He was speaking to himself, of course, as no one else was in the room. It was often like this. *Mostly, it was like this. Bien sûr.* Bataille didn't mind catching himself speaking to himself. After all, most people thought he was thoroughly mad anyhow, didn't they?

- Look, why do I do this then, spend all my days in protracted agony?
That's exactly what Aristotle would have asked of my desperate soul, isn't it? What is the function of your agony, Georges? Oh those upstanding, healthy Hellenes, such ideals make me sick. To hell with false and deluded idealisations of the life-force! Literally, they make me puke up my hybrid of Malbec and cheap, dirty gin spontaneously and profusely. Ah, *merde*, what an unholy mess!
- Well, dear old Aristotle, if you want a quick answer, let's just say that St Teresa was right. If nothing else, I am your worthy dialectician. Through the agony comes a whole host of joys you wouldn't otherwise experience. Especially not you, Dr Hellene himself, with your upstanding balance and all that mullarkey about 'measure is the principle of all things'. Order, Measure, Balance – ahhh, *putain de merde!* Bloody nonsense, and not in the Hegelian sense – after all, the Germans have at least understood the need of the negative. Need we confirm we have all too recently seen the results (after all, this is why WE ARE AT WAR IN 1942). Not the Greeks though, nay! Somehow that extraordinary people (after all, I am an

admirer of theirs) managed to rape and pillage their way through whole cultures and societies, and yet pass it off as positive, as an affirmation of LIFE!

The day was Thursday, although Bataille had to check the newspaper from yesterday to discover that. *Oui, Jendi* (sigh). These days of the lockdown were hard, even the bordellos had shut under war-time conditions. Fuck that. He hated the monotony, the solitude of wanking. The alienation of alcoholism, addiction and the intermittent (but consistent) vomiting. Perhaps some writing in between to keep time. Yes, writing gave some kind of internal rhythm to this lockdown malaise, as if it was the only way to tuning in to where the universe right now was, given we couldn't get out to see anything or speak to anyone else for clarifications. Georges never got writer's block as such, as things mostly tended to spill in and out of his corporeal delineation, as if he was in reality not a human body at all but actually a minor French river. Yes, dear reader, a very polluted one. Still, these days of lockdown, the scraps of writing on the backs of pages were dirt poor, literally fragments of shit. Sure, he'd earned a bit of a reputation with the underground publication of *The Story of the Eye* back in the late Twenties and the infamy had kept up through to the late Thirties, but what use was that? He had barely written anything in over ten years. People even called him a pornographer, maybe they had good reason. *Mereby a pornographer.*

- Has no one even bothered to read Sontag? The pornographic imagination gives birth to a literary form that must claim its own rights in the domain

of genres and which has a significant claim on existence and the truth of life. Anyone denying this is either a prude or a fool. Most likely both. I am ahead of my time, I am *untimely*, just as Nietzsche prophesied. To be fair, he prophesied this of himself, not of me. But I have never believed in false modesty, eh?

Aside from the lack of artistic status, there had been, shall we say, also recently some enquiries. Significant murmurings and doors of specific acquaintances being knocked on late at night. A particular (and long) list of interrogative questions drawn up. They'd even shook up his fragile ex-lover Laure when she refused to give any details on his sexual activities. *WE THINK THAT TYPE OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY IS DISGUSTING*, they kept shouting at her until she collapsed.

- We all know how vulnerable Laure is. People say it could kill her, she is already a wreck from pills and self-flagellation. Those bastards, the moral authorities.

For all the talk of the Enlightenment and Modernity, Bataille knew that France was still a Catholic Republic. Oh yes, he knew this only too well. Did it stop him, though? Haha, no it did not. Nonetheless, he would have been well advised keeping wary of, and away from, the clutches of Church and police power.

- *I'm no Genet*, let's face it! And I don't mean that I am not a homosexual.

He whispered into the cracked mirror in the bathroom. Eyeing up that truly handsome face with the curious and unique (never to be historically repeated) mixture of modesty and perversion in mood.

- Ain't got the courage or the resilience for prison. This drasted lockdown is bad enough. Argghh.

2

Laure had been named Colette Laure Lucienne Peignot and was thrown into this mad world on October 8, 1903 in this self-same city. She came from a wealthy Catholic family but denounced her bourgeois and religious upbringing with an acute and bitter vengeance. Writing and dissolution became her ultimate and fatal revolt. Of course, this would all only make her so so attractive to Georges Bataille, precisely as if he had invented her in one of his novels. But he hadn't. Laure had been truly real, more real than anything or anyone else in his life. Tragically, she died at the age of thirty-five, still raggedly beautiful, of tuberculosis on November 8, 1938 at Bataille's house, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The story seemed now over, the narrative that had shone so bright. But not quite, dear reader, not quite yet was it finally over. Not for Georges, anyhow.

It is a humid afternoon. Early summer 1942, Paris. The room has high ceilings but a paradoxical air of claustrophobia. All week Bataille has been feeling tense.

'What bugs you, Georges?'

Bataille is startled.

‘Jesus Christ, what voice is this? Is it in my head? Oh, this crazy cortex of mine, it gets more bonkers daily’.

‘No, dear Georges, dear beautiful extraordinary Georges, rest assured, this is not a voice in your head. I come from outside although I am no enemy. To the contrary. Instead, think of former lovers’.

‘Wow, what an event. What a surprise this morning, of all mornings, when I have only myself to talk to, to flirt with. Or so I thought! Former lovers... Well, that narrows it down not very much [dirty laughter]. Yes, it is true that I have had many liaisons but authentic lovers, well that is different. There can only be one, to my mind. Laure, is it you? Please tell me if it is you. Several years you are dead now and I thought I had reconciled myself to my utter and decrepit guilt in your demise. But NO, this week my poor psyche has sweated and nightmared through the longest of humid nights. I have seen you in all your suffering and worse, in all your kindness and love for me. But it was a kindness and a love I always refused. What a wretch I am! Laure, please is it you? Do you forgive me?’

‘Georges, if it is me darling, I cannot tell you so simply. Us spirits and ghosts of the other world are sworn to a certain set of laws concerning communication. If we can indeed reach across the chasm between the living and the dead, we cannot be so Cartesian as to prove who we are or offer an authenticated ID.’

‘Oh, what utter torment, then to think that this may indeed be YOU, my late lover Laure so close to me as to be whispering in my left ear in this Parisian room. And yet not to be sure of this is such a raw and debilitating fever. You may rather be a demon come to destroy me and I have no way of telling the difference’.

‘Look, Georges, every lost woman needs a man to go with Hell with, and you’re the one for me. Only you can save me’.

‘It is you, it is YOU, Laure. I know it now. You may be a ghost come to haunt me but you are no imposter. Let’s face it, you haunted me alive, what difference should there be dead. Why then, dear Lucifer, am I afraid? What am I afraid of? Evil? [laughs wildly]. Hardly!’

‘Well, we are both evil, Georges, there can be no doubt about that. You don’t stop being evil simply because you die and become a spirit. The spirit world is dualistic just like the mortal world. Evil is immortal, don’t let any religious fools tell you otherwise.’

‘You know they have been checking the house and my calls, Laure. All these weeks, they have been on my tail. Now I know why, of course. They are on *our* tail. But you know what – I feel a renewed strength and valor now I am certain it is indeed you. Even death cannot separate out Bataille and Laure, eh? The moral and Church police don’t stand a chance. You give me the bile to fight back against the imbeciles who try to control our lives. Yes, *oui oui*, I can resist but only with you by my side, dear beautiful tragic Laure. My Laure! Also, I presume you have access to some Satanic tricks now you are on the other side, eh? I don’t doubt it. Well, we should not refrain from using them against the pricks. There are plenty pricks about as you know, especially in the intellectual world. Oh yes, *oui oui* (laughs and rubs his sweaty hands together with a morbid glee), we can set some wonderful traps for the pricks and see them fall right in. I cannot wait, dear Laure. Let us get on with this project of reconstruction of the world (I would not call it revenge

which is of course only petty, so much as RESHAPING) and ooo, we will have some fun in the process.

First, that idiot Jean-Paul, he has been annoying me recently. So pompous, and on what account? His *Nausea* is only all stolen from the Russians existentialists like Chestov, my old friend Len. Did he not think I would notice this borrowing? Do you have any specific curses for pathetic plagiarising pseudo-philosophers, my darling Laure?’

‘Oh I do, Georges, I most definitely do. Let me check my little notebook of nasty spells’.

There Is No Paradise

Still mid-June, we await news
Of tomorrow's humidity. Like Aragon
We share a militant and provocative
Truth. If truly there is no paradise
What is left? We might seek solace
In the aphorism, in the fragment.
Like Char, we believe that what is secret
In knowledge must be brought out.

Like Tzara, we also know that the road
Is what separates. We can find in the fragment
All that remains of connect. On the street
A chance encounter. The common ingredients
Of life disregarded. Like some psychopath
Who gives up murder for poetry. Let's do just that.

Artaud At Rodez

I

You can say all you want about artistic men who
Cut off their ears but it is the sick society which
Invented psychiatry and diagnosed the collective spell cast
On Hölderlin and Monsieur de Nerval.

II

Edgar Allen Poe was not mad indeed at all
But is accused by these drasted psychiatrists
Of cerebral ill, these crowd of fools with not a fingertip
Of genius between them. It is rather downright dishonesty

III

To discredit the truth he sought to reveal. Did they not
Even hit him on his very head one night to make him forget
That he was a genuine lunatic? Thus, was a spell cast too
On Monsieur Poe. But it couldn't last.

IV

So, let us raise a suspicious hypothesis. That the poet
Is a seer that society cannot forebear. This is the pus that
Must be arraigned. As with Dr. Lacan whose diagnosis
Of poor old Artaud in Paris murdered his beautiful art with

V

Electroshock. Within the convulsed cell at Rodez where took place
The coma lasting fifteen minutes and the body wrung out
Twisted. If ART dies there it must desperately fight back to
Breathe. It must grope for blind spots to REVOLT.

VI

How in hell does an Anarchist Surrealist
Poet become Head Psychiatrist but
Let's face it he was also an atheist
Which was no doubt for the best

If the death-toll at Ville-Evrard
Would have killed Artaud also by
The end of war the transfer to Rodez
Was lucky and thanks to this Anarchist Ferdière

Still, at first, Artaud was in terror of this as yet
Unknown asylum leaving him open to the magic forces
Always chasing him. More, he lost his Voodoo Sword

En-route from Chezal-Benoît. His hair was shorn so short

But here, he would grow it long again and gain

A toothbrush for his eight remaining teeth.

Poem for Sonia Delaunay (who is Wow)

After Tristan Tzara

The Angel slides two long fingers into Sonia
Into her luscious basket of open fruit
He wants to make a hand poem which
Will screech like auto-tyres
In a handbrake turn of her vertiginous human heart

The Female Rimbaud

i.m. Rosemary Tonks

I

The metempsychosis of that infamous slave trader
With the early verve in French verse
Took this errant soul to London environs
Emerging in the late 1960s as a female *poète maudit*
She pushed messages of secret liaisons and prohibited desire
And had her books burned by herself in the end
So as to hide the transmigratory evidence

II

All that daring and they killed her
Exchanging her self-ironising contempt for their disdain
A harlot in an open dressing gown incapable of shame
But who decided that? I see her
Extra modest in her wedding dress
At the Jardin de Luxembourg in Paris
In a cross-legged photo with a friend in 1948, Mrs Trent
Like some saint whose only blasphemy
Is beauty and poise beyond her contemporaries
She was incriminated by her verse
And what it revealed of her unconscious

A woman too, of course,
Fancy that.

III

If you cultivated a loucheness it
Was nonetheless reinvented via London
And the Paris of the Symbolists

So your hymn to Sixties' hedonism
Was never of any ordinary variety
This was your feminist poetry *contra* poetry

Even Baudelaire stood askance and told
Arthur that only *he* could truly read
This new voice, this transgressive verse

To which Rimbaud replied: *I gave up all*
This jazz years ago. Still, there is
Something here needs redress

IV

Did you really lose your identity
There in the bed making love to the wrong person?
After all, could you know right from wrong
Once you had read Nietzsche and gained flexibility?

Free thinking in morals is a dangerous art
Not a science it is tantalisingly vague
When we seek its advice

Rarely did you seek its counsel
Preferring to err on the side of the irresponsible
Refusing to take due care

V

Later in the great retirement home of Bournemouth
For a while you took time to contemplate your epoch defining poetry
To remember how your writing set the senses reeling

But by then these had become terrible decisions
Which scarred you with ferocious indelible harm
Made you fall out of love with your muse

VI

After all these years you still effervesced
But differently now you stood silent
Listened like an Oriental skill
Cupped your ears to the voice of mediums' omens

That life you led was not yours but theirs
All those chosen loves were as fake
As your limp orgasms and your diffident marriage

Now that Mother and Father were both gone
A sense of self could finally be written
But at long last without books and without pens

KYLEEN RUSSELL
Untitled





JEROME BERGLUND

smeared halo

a haiku

Diana wears a
smeared halo, an angel who's
had very rough night

rather than idolize

a haiku

as someone who left
lot of toys in packages
really, should play with

why people write sonnets celebrating you, and tragedies

a haiku

ye saucy little
black grape can see what the fuss
is always about

JEFF MANN
Collateral



Valter



ELLEN SKILTON

Waterlogged

I found biblical precipitation
in the cloud forest,
thirteen days and thirteen nights
was forever, sky gaping open
deafening drops on the tin roof
bottomless weeks and months
of the clouds crying without end,
my favorite socks un-dry-able

I am leaking
a forever rainy season inside,
with mildew-scented reminders.
The faucet dripping
on the empty womb,
the overdose,
the fist-made holes in the walls
no one else can see

I muse about
moisture-wicking cloths,
more silica packets for
drying things out just enough,
finding a smooth patch of sand
for sunning myself
or even launching a boat
across the surface.

These waterways
are deep, dangerous, and wide,
open cavities filled to the brim.
I dive silently to the bottom.

Rhizomatic

--after Jericho Brown's *Duplex*

My father's boozing haunts my roots, my tough bark.
Implanted in xylem of our male bloodlines.

Spirits mock my fierce twin daughters Yin and Yang:
I, a well-grafted-not-birth-mother weep deep.

Loud crashes of their dad's rage put fists through walls.
Entangled too, in his bequeathed strangler fig.

He damaged this forest with his fiery storms
On fallen eggshell leaves. We tiptoe, flee free.

Yet Yin's own death-wish bolt craves drugged numbness
Her incisors pierce my skin as we tussle.

Yang puts her taut frame between us in brave fear,
Daydreaming a return to their shared womb home.

She channels her (grand)mother's steely resolve.
This conifer's old bark bruised, branches still strong.

Mercy

The world will give you that once in awhile, a brief timeout; the boxing bell rings and you go to your corner, where somebody dabs mercy on your beat-up life.

- Sue Monk Kidd, *The Secret Life of Bees*

Will you
anoint me
with some mercy?
Can I dab it
on you
sometime?

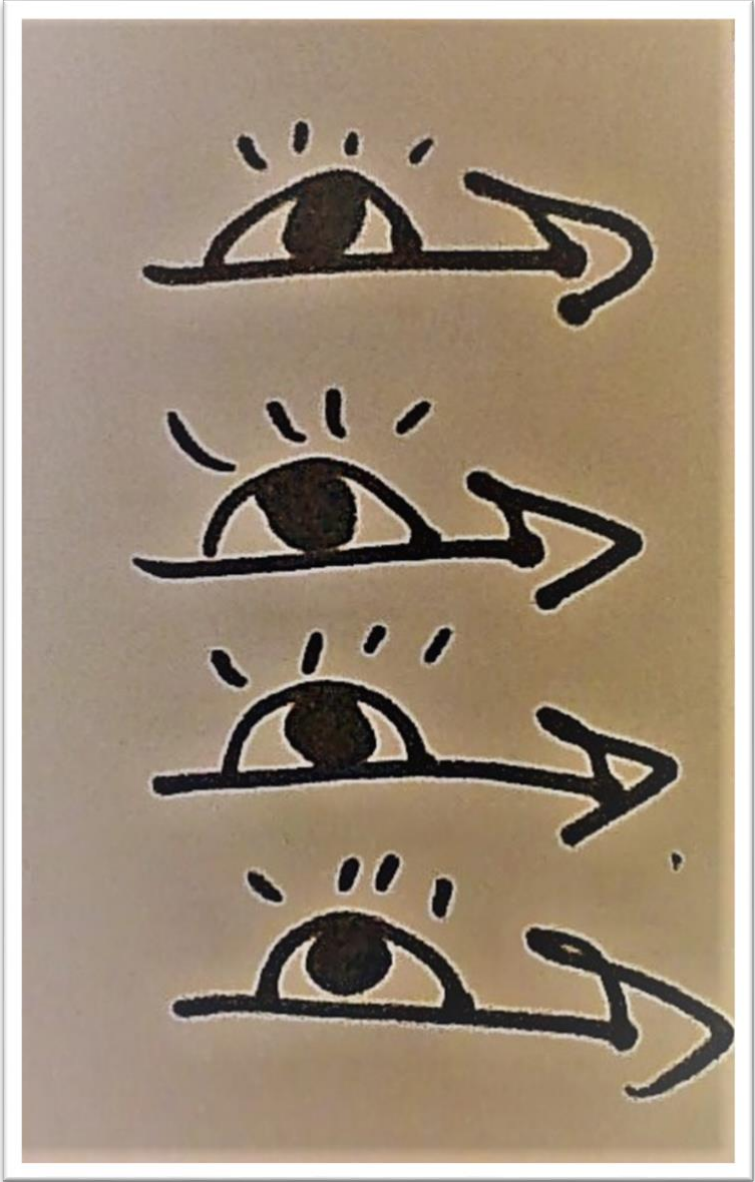
A perfect summer peach
was the only reason to live
Laughter restored me.
My dog greeted me
with unbridled joy.
Again.

Even the tears that fell
after the shame lifted
pierced my flimsy shield
the membrane
that protects me
but also deadens my soul.

I am the princess,
I am the queen.
A deity of tardiness,
piling up to-do lists, obligations
hailstorms of pollyanna-ish hope,
time to fit in one more thing.

I respectfully request a timeout
from the inside of the ring.
I need a full-on shower of mercy tonight,
now that I've been bathed
in the harsh comfort
of my very own tears.

KEN EDWARD RUTKOWSKI
Vultures





COLOR OF HOPE

I am Hon Ba shot at three times 2 misses one small round hit no damage done in the corpuscular golf ball grind two eyes in the back of my head looking out into forever not knowing when it will end if it will end if it ever does all certainty in life lost forgiveness gone Hon Ba great golden eye big rock spit stretching out into the shoreline the man who did it lost his life let down his own shield in carelessness by his gun now sits Jesus' arms outstretched looking at me every day I pray for him to talk to me to blow the swings away from the sun to come down after the rain in the summer time in the morning time in this once in a lifetime the rains come in long afternoons barreling over Vung Tau Long Hai Phuoc Hai Ho Tram endless South China Sea Hon Ba Lady Island a hole a golden shoal around her neck Jesus' arms orange over red flame trees white Hoa Su under his nose the pulse from his fingers running away they seem hardly flowers at all but color and the movement or shape perhaps of restlessness the growing need to be in the wind with the sun in the sky the man he left and went under the sea inside the rocks I hear the hissing granules of barnacles twisting in their shells you see when the waves come in from the West the wind blows blue blood in the leaves the white horses come out from the sky bow down in pelting rain I see levels I see rays folding in bold trained flowers the sea the color of new life Neruda wrote in green ink his personal color of hope green rings green mind all the man could find tied to his umbilical line was Jesus to answer him speak Jesus it's me please I have no prayers nothing only forgiveness I've taken away all practicality and certainty in life giving it back to the last shot unto the man who never harmed me never hungered never held me and finally you ask why do you not speak of dreams and leaves anymore well look at the crumbs for bread left in the streets and the women and men with their heads held down wondering why what are we going to do my mind's lost call hardly alone the color of movement is personal forever holy to grow.

**Hon Ba is an island, connected by a rocky spit to land...the view in the pic is broad/elliptical, on the left is the island and on the right another part of the peninsula...the lines are fishing lines in the sand.*

MICAELA SILBERSTEIN

Hit This

Fumes sit in my air
I'm all stretched out and old.
Do the fleas smell my rotting flesh?
Apologies for the delay, I'm usually slow to respond.

Must remember:
Lemons
Cucumbers
The fridge is still on the fritz
fucking gaskets.

A fly is tapping me -
he can smell my iron leaking
and
he
fucking
likes it.

Tap-tap.

All the same,
I think I'll have a
puke.

I blew smoke at the sun and it blew it right back at me. I'm stuffed up on love 23 feet above and I died with no bra on, a pound of scallops, three joints, a pull of Kalhua in my belly and grasshoppers chirping on my patio. I died knowing a few quaint things.

We're tired.
Fine tuning muscles, charisma, my ears,
burning yester-years and through —
Diagonally upstairs, the neighbor's baby is crying again.
Damn -
I could go for drunk and it's not quite 7am yet.

So far,
today,
I've figured
magic is connecting raindrops in bed
watermelon skins get tossed like chicken bones
the more I know means the less I know, but
I'm finding something

rifling through syntax,
the arranging.

I live in California and this is all mine -
Mamba Confit

This sweet date from the Sunday market
this peaceful sorbet spread across the sky
this burning in my hand, my fingers, my lips, lungs
this fresh dirt just outside ready to grow.

Dusk is coming on and I feel good I didn't do much today. I'm tired of being
blown away by the flowers. I feel
chubby and strong and gorgeous, unformed and uninformed.

Sometimes I think I really might be one of those charming women they warn you
of —

 You know,
 a keeper:
 best with casseroles and a spoon.


Sometimes I think I might sweeten miasma.

LAUREN THOMAS

After Pollock, Autumn Rhythm

If Pollock had stretched the body of the season out onto
Its stomach and reached across the canvas
Dragged the twangled sprawl, the mass
Of Autumn's barbed and blackthorn form, towards him
It might have come to this.
And in the style of the season, he painted the brown splay of attrition
The fall and burst before inertia
The drop and splash of time, ushered through the flow
And fevered pathways of his paint
And in that moment, did he sense how lines would then become
Detached so far from colour? Writhing from black depths
Grasping to fit time back into bright lit space
Left open but without dimension
His historied scribble, a future scrubbing out to
Bring again new means, new ways of fitting on a page
Like rhythmic bodies, crowding their jangled bones with branches,
As if dancing inside the elemental throes of life
The archetype of what it is to be alive

BRIAN L. JACOBS
Rainbow Assassins



I never wanted a home
nor a Lotus Sutra
I am not a lotus eater
I'm a rapture of rainbow assassins
the loss of formalism
I am a complex ask
of fantast's accretion
floating in language
soundfacts

hemorrhaging me and oystering me onto the open road

weave gambles
and texture me

the weave
to entwine me

no margins
realm

in the refracted
mad state

hemorrhaging me
and oystering me

onto
the open road

Untitled

convict
of parenthesis

aspiring to live
all my births

Homocaust Skin



Discursive Burnt Stick Pilgrim

empathy envisioning flying peacocks with galloping antelope
and drum charging oxen while lifting the drum at the avalanche pedestal

in the shadow of the Beats
pilgrimage into Samsaras'
a liquescent sift
greased on counterfeit disposition
for I am not a clock but intricate hopscotch

and even if this man sits at a blank page
it doesn't mean words suit this cosmogony

inhabited by spirits' ash heaps
and colorful victims more present than the living word
that offend libretto's authority

poetics refused me

am I a citadel liberated through
the Baldwin house

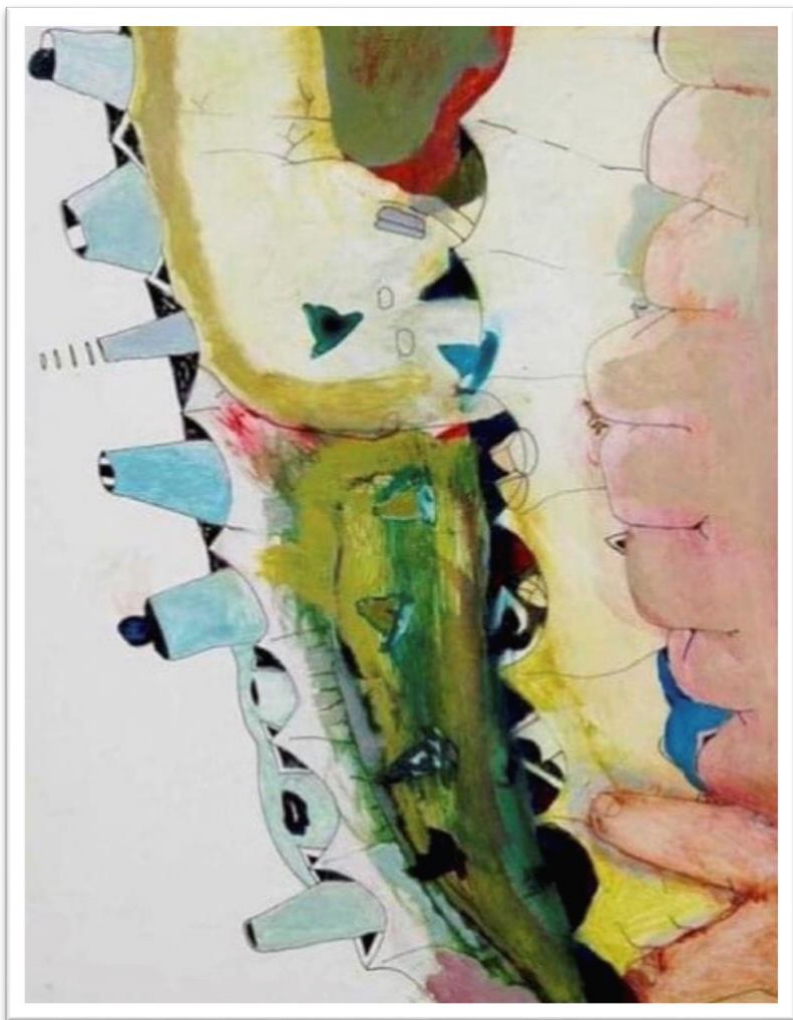
ulcers come aching and obliterated
amongst this sacred geography

this pilgrim
a consultation with dirt

valediction to understanding
that soaks the creeping figs
that resemble vaginas
or is it kidneys

even the freeway has memory
under poetry's frowns

CAROL RADSPRECHER
Standing at the Ready
Ink and acrylic on Claybord
14x11"



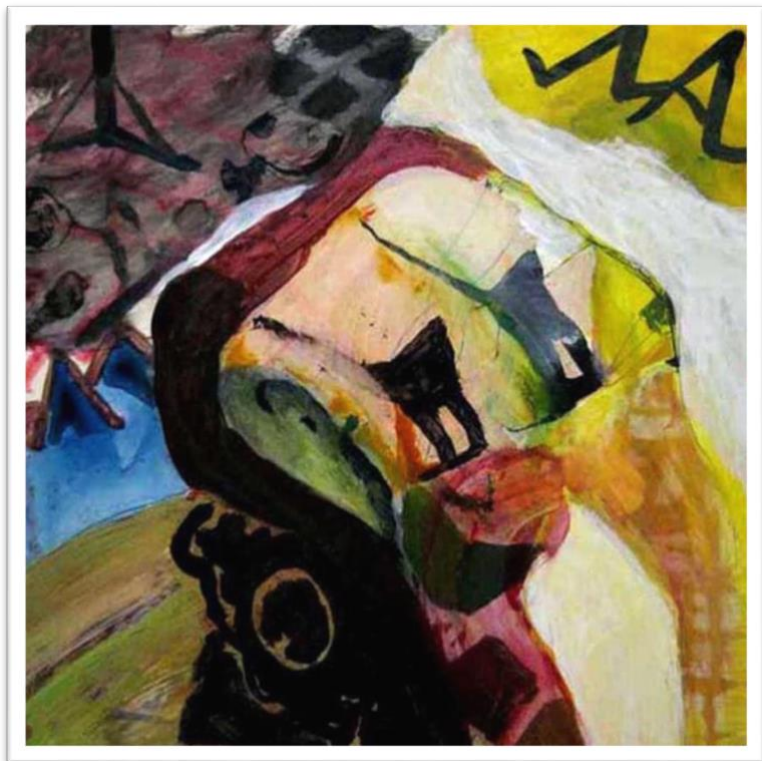
Dropping the Box

Ink and acrylic on Claybord
8x10 inches



Over a Barrel

Ink and acrylic on Claybord
12x12 inches



JONATHAN MACK

DIS / ENCHANTMENT : *an oracle*

“We are involved in a life that passes understanding and our highest business is our daily life.” -- John Cage, *Silence*

“The Buddha’s car was a really big one. He could take it all in one go. With only your tiny, little car, how can you possibly take it all at once. It’s a different story altogether.” -- Ajahn Chah, *Talks on Formal Practice* “Tools that are no good require more skill.” -- Marcel Duchamp

#30

Lluvia at the lavanderia says lo siento, no suerte -- the colcha won’t fit in the washer. My *tres*

sounds like *seis* and so I get a double order of tamales from the tamale truck and rather than correct the error I fumble to pay. Ernesto passes, arms out, hauling a wooden door, won’t even look at me, of course not -- his wife’s with him. The bodega daughter on the corner hums to radio and when I ask for 200 grams of queso oaxaca she peels off a little extra, snacks on it, and grins. These are my daily errands: everything I need is right here.

#52

Medals

My darling methlords up and sold; the new owners, well-to-do gay gringos, decided to keep the renters, just for now, what with the pandemic and all, though the rent I pay seems to them absurdly low. It turns out we are all of us somewhat from Denver. We said who we had been to see if we had known us.

One landlord said, At my first Gay Games I won a bronze, at the next Gay Games I won a silver, and at the third Gay Games I did win the gold. Yes, I remembered him, presiding haughtily at the Triangle or the Wrangler. I said that I’d been special orders at the Tattered Cover, barback and coat-check at the Grand. He shook his head, could not recall. But he knows me, I know he does. All I have to say is -- Remember at the Denver Swim Club, at the baths, the towel boy with the crippled leg who did the laundry and walked around all night wiping up spunk with

a spray bottle and a rag? Kinda dorky, aspiring hustler, nickname *Slut*? Small limp? Peculiar, formal, oddly overdetermined manner of speaking?

#10

Considering the rapidly ascending difficulty of our situation, we would do well to disburden

ourselves of what is heavy, unnecessary or extra.

Fine, then. Let us jettison first the need to be accommodating or convenient for those in power.

#22

As planned for months: had a shot of Cazadores to salute the headline BIDEN BEATS TRUMP,

followed by any number of beers. And that was it.

Because I figure, if we are now having something other than a shitshow, then life, too,

deserves better of me.

#13

Sobriety, Day 1. Again.

I make unhelpful plans to improve my life.

Step #1: Quit being such a loser.

Hours later it is still morning.

No checklist needed. I cannot help but get things done, now that the day is hundreds of hours

long.

#19

Envious, because the neighbors had had fun, gone drinking, then, because they'd only closed the

screen door, I heard her for an hour, vomiting and sobbing. Sent a message:
Pharmacy? Electrolytes?

Boyfriend wrote back: *Sorry bout that. I guess she's finally out.*

#21

The garbanzos, I presume, sabotaged Day 3, because I left them overnight in the slow cooker.

Withdrawal is another possibility for why I spent the entire day shitting comprehensively, as though I'd eaten haphazardly from a train station platform in

Kathmandu. Supporting evidence: the night of Day 2, after a maniacally productive day, I really was totally and entirely insane.

#41

Good behavior needs to work very seriously on its incentives. Because box-checking holds only

very limited allure. Especially now that I've been wholesome (more or less) for FOUR ENTIRE DAYS.

Where is the box in which I might place this good-natured and timely suggestion?

#20

Day 5, as I recall, is generally the first good day. My eyes, for sure, do open wider. Still, you

have to figure, this face can only get so much better. It used to be that I improved. Now, drunk or sober, I look like meat that's been boiling a very

long time.

#31

I meditated and read the Thai Forest masters, I wrote, lifted weights, listened to a talk on

translating Celan, walked 10 kilometers and ate salad. Nothing was an improvement. Nothing helped. Shortly after midnight my neighbor, a young horse-faced grandote, appeared at my gate. Inside the door he gripped his boner through his sweats and grinned. Dropping to my knees I blew him avidly, sloppily, grabbing his ass to shove his cock against my throat. Finally he jerked off in my open mouth, bent down and kissed me. There is still hope for me, I am worthy, possibility exists.

#44

The most important thing. . . Suzuki-roshi often began. And the most important thing was always

something different. Yet every time he said the most important thing it was so convincing, so evident and true.

The most important thing is knowing how to behave at the end. Here at the end. I write as do because it seems to me the obvious way to proceed, now that there is so very little time, and not only for me.

#1

This particular WISH: to create a set of 108 disparate TEXTS, printed on 108 medium sized

blank CARDS, small black tight text, held within abundant SPACE.

First to UNWRAP them, then to PEER curiously, then to tap, SHUFFLE, hold aloft and then

allow to FALL, in cascade to the FLOOR, then to GATHER them up haphazardly, so as to ensure that PROVIDENCE or THE SPIRITS have a say as to their order, so as to ensure that YOU WILL BE PERSONALLY ADDRESSED.

First, you must be careful. Then you must let it all fall. Finally you gather it back again, with plenty of what is called “mistakes”. (Accuracy is not for us, but for the Divine. Unless the Divine is *also* not interested in accuracy, as may well be the case.)

I wish for readers who might understand that these are ORDINARY and COMMON-SENSE directions, just as, when confronted by a raw EGG, a hungry CHILD, you know just what to do. CRACK and SCRAMBLE and SERVE.

#12

Sliding doors cracked to hear the rain on fallen leaves, traffic on wet street in the distance,

tumble sound of the dryer behind me. This is my evening at the symphony, and I have as much right as anyone to call myself a music lover.

#32

Is it still possible to tour the anechoic chamber at Harvard? The silence at the center of the genius

of John Cage. I want to hear the silence he heard, those 2 sounds. *He said, Describe them. I did. He said, the high one was your nervous system in operation. The low one was your blood in circulation.*

#40

Of the 3 recent, sudden deaths among my acquaintances, one was a murder. He was a “drug

dealer”. We call him that, so as to safeguard our vanity. He was an unlicensed private pharmacist specializing in celebrations, trauma, and intimate events. He was patient, available, and responsive to our urgencies.

We killed him for it.

#36

Malachite

I want to make less sense but it is a thing that requires courage. “The sudden spoon is the same in no size,” I mean to say. “The sudden spoon is the wound in the decision,” wrote brave Ms. Stein. Instead my words are elementary level and, even when I strain on tiptoe, the meaning’s still clear enough to any less-than-wholesome seventh grader.

On the other hand, my *life* makes absolutely zero sense to upstanding, high-quality, well-do persons.

#3

What exactly is going on here?

I see that even some of those who consider themselves to be sympathetic are shifting in their

seats, and feeling they deserve an explanation.

Fine. I will provide one.

(If you don’t like it, just raise your hand, and I will provide another.)

This is a study of space. For example, the way a thing is changed, is released, just by giving it

room to stretch and breathe.

To exist. And then to fade away.

Space, it must be admitted, is a poor word for space. You might be fooled into thinking

nothing is there.

Nothing is also, rather infamously, a very poor word for nothing. Nothing is almost

guaranteed to lead one astray. Anyway, space is the subject. Let us say no more about it. It wouldn’t be helpful.

#37

“They ask when we speak: What are you trying to say? However, being told about the weather,

we get ideas about the next step to be taken.” John Cage, from the lecture, “Where Do We Go From Here?” And, if I understand correctly, that is why I do adore

him, just as I love Gertrude Stein, or Dickinson, or any writer who presents -- intelligence shot through with space. A floating zone of generosity, of mercy, where you may hear dictates of your own, or else the underlying hum, that thing called nothing, the only medicine that helps.

#28

Quick personal question: is it too late to resume being a sex maniac? Alcohol is dreary and, at

my age, I feel I can only do justice to one addiction at a time.

True, it is unlikely I will meet the acclaim I found at 23, when I blew the fresh stars of pornos

now so old they appear to have been colored by hand. I had whoever I wanted. How crass it seems now: I alternated races, black asian white latino, once 3 days before Christmas I decided to get fucked by the Light Rail and very nearly succeeded. At 47 less glamor is to be expected. Then again, being a middle-aged drunk, too, is lacking in luster.

One big plus: at least now everyone isn't shaving everything. #34

When I was in my twenties I was certain I would bitterly regret the nights I spent sucking dick at the baths. It was like my *job*. 14 dollars for a 12 hour locker. I went twice every week. Unless I went three times. For a year I worked a shift so I could get in for free. I figured I was there enough -- I might as well do the laundry.

All those years I thought I was bad, crazy, out of control. I thought I was *doomed*. I thought I would be punished. I thought I *deserved* to be punished.

I spent a large part of 20 years sucking dick at the baths. Where did the regret go? I am so very grateful.
How lucky am I?

#33

Not so much the Pope

I believe in the infallibility of Clarice Lispector. Most especially:

What saves you is to write distractedly.

#4

I write without knowing what writing is for, what writing means. Along with sex, writing is what

most interested me. Unfortunately, I never got it.

Writing, I mean.

The results are bound to produce bemusement (at best).

Like a Japanese restaurant -- here in Mexico -- where it appears the chef has been shown a

photo, given an approximate list of ingredients and left to -- improvise.

The people will say it's obviously wrong. No point in arguing with them.

One could also say it is a radically different interpretation of the materials at hand, as well as

a lot, really a lot, of queso filadelfia, or cream cheese.

#38

These are the field notes. This is the homework. Because somehow it got indelibly into my thick

head that, to accompany the human life, one must provide a *detailed report*. Sources, footnotes, bibliography.

Everyone, I assume, has their own instructions. These are mine.

#39

How to

Thus far in life, I've found 3 truly excellent books about how to write, both in terms of heaven-sent inspiration and down-to-earth practical suggestions.

Here they are:

1. Joan Miro, Selected Writings and Interviews
2. John Cage, Silence
3. Shunryu Suzuki, Not Always So

Nothing else comes close, in terms of real help or usefulness. None of the books are about writing.

#11

This consistent wish: to write a vast and invisible space where you may wander at your liberty. A

two-thirds empty museum, suggestions and invitations hanging from the bare white walls.

A museum in which to be a little free, to peer at things or make your own discoveries. Grab a

coffee maybe. Find a sofa and stare. Or you might choose to have sex in the handicapped toilet, with a hot guy in a wheelchair. Because museums get very sad when no one fucks in them.

Freedom and space. No one to shout at you, no one to hurry you along, no guards, no one important. Absolutely no grabbing of shirt collars. (I did that to my love once, to Angel, 12 beers in at Mr. Flamingo, and all his amigochos watching. I am still ashamed.)

#27

The 12 people who share custody of me all know small things about me. Every person knows

different things. The only thing they all know is that I am someone with precious little going on.

#46

Addicted to literary biography, dreaming stubbornly of a life in letters, I'm annoyed by how the

brilliant meet the brilliant at every turn. (Is it a verdict then, that for me it's only just the same grumpy señora at the register, who always keeps 5 pesos of my change?)

Whereas if John Cage went to a party, not only were Frida and Diego there -- Marlene Dietrich, too, was smoking in the corner. And, if John Cage went camping, he met not just John Steinbeck but also young Joseph Campbell, climbing out stark naked from a lake. I can accept that, when John Cage had an orgy, Peggy Guggenheim was there. I assume that Peggy was *always* there. And Max Ernst -- Max was her husband at the time. But seriously -- Marcel Duchamp too, in the same bed, at the same time?

#35

The assumption, always, is that it has to be more complicated, more sophisticated, more pure. And I, too, would have to be -- improved beyond recognition. Don't you think so too? Don't you agree? But consider, for a moment, just lightly, and in passing --

what if we are wrong? (*December cards, #1 - #7*)

Chaman Mexi blesses me -- pensamientos palabras corazón -- inserts aplicador with rapé in right nostril -- blows -- roar of pain -- pride -- fight to hold still -- left nostril -- blows -- exploding pain -- gracias Mexika -- careen past the fire -- abuelas aglow -- fall to the ground beside my friend the palmyra. Until it's time to stand again -- tobacco in right fist -- arms lifted to sky -- to spirits of 6 directions -- fiery abuelas -- then crawl into the temazcal -- permiso para entrar con todos mis relaciones! -- and there to crouch through the 4 doors -- 4 songs maybe in the blazing heat and the door opens -- or there are 6 songs -- or 8 -- or Mexi talks and talks -- 7 more glowing abuelas are carried in using antlers -- the prayers go on and on, sick tias, drunk tios, padres muertos y habladores -- until the last door opens -- crawl out again -- permiso para salir! -- gasping on the cool dirt -- a pink plastic cup agua de guayabe -- the full bright blazing Moon -- why?

The purpose is to be born again. Still people ask me,

What does it do for you? What do you get?

The ceremony finished, I help Angel tend to the temazcal lodge. The blankets first, then the tarps, lifted away, shaken and folded, exposing the frame of interwoven branches. Gracias gracias buenas noches a todos. We drive to the little house in Ixtapa, ensalada de pollo, agua de jamaica sin azucar, sleep at once. At dawn I jump up, pour cold coffee, throw the ball for the dogs. I am in a hurry. Right now I think that I can almost tell you. What it is I do.

About Life-Reading

I examine my life -- already one false word at least -- as a fragment from the papyri of a scripture --
as a few threads from the tapestry of unicorns --
as evidence from a crime scene.

I read it like tea leaves or clouds or entrails --

without knowing what it means.

Contrary to common opinion this isn't selfish -- because nothing makes it *mine* -- it only just briefly appears.

With apologies to Kafka -- it is as if I were stranded in the ocean in an inner tube, sunburnt and solitary, vulnerable, provisioned to survive for an unknown period. As if, tired of shouting for rescue, I chose instead to study my patch of the ocean, with no clue as to its habits, contents, or depth. I specialize in where I am dangling.

Out of sight of land. Over my head. And it is excellent, of course, that others choose, for their studies, the Bay of Bengal or the craters of Mars. It may well be they possess a greater capacity. But it is also fine for me to study my patch of the ocean:

it's weird enough here.

The life that appears, that is perceived, but which isn't mine.

(If it were really mine -- dammit -- it'd do what I tell it.)

That life which appears as: what happens right now, or the scolding of my beloved deaf Mexican macho, or something Gertrude Stein wrote, or a suggestion from John Cage, or besieging memories of life as a hustler, or the long slow death of the family farm, or the pyre of family, or strangers overhead, or evidence of Nature's collapse, or attempts at being Marcus Aurelius (notes on horseback), or attempts at being Joan Miró (you can start anywhere, you can start from a stain), or, most commonly, panels and gutters from that appalling comic slapstick telenovela entitled *Dumb Things I've Done Lately*.

What use, this? As teachers say, I can 'model the activity'. Of life-reading. Of that school of divination that prophecies from just what is, and finds its omens everywhere, its news non-stop. A world that never stops speaking. Without answer or conclusion. Without knowing what it means. Without pasting up a moral. Without a thread. Without anyone to be reborn. With no verdict as to what's holy, what's trash, what are the dirty bits. With only very playful and speculative interpretation. With rank suspicion of "better and better all the time!" and "oh sacred schoolhouse" and "all shit and then you die".

I present things, as they appear, and place them before you : a broken shell, a lopsided flower. Childishnesses. Together we peer, listen, and sniff. Marveling and muttering.
Shaking our heads at life.

CHARLIE BECKER
Your House



CHARLIE BECKER

Seeing Through

Echo, echo, echolocation does not need light
to find its way out of darkened winter hunger pangs,
it only requires we learn how to use bounced sound
tap by tap in the nearly whitened phosphorescence
of our wakefulness. Long white cane in hand, flashed sonar
guides us human beings without sight right to the door
demanding to be opened for some cold food or drink
think primary visual cortex with acoustic
locator, no matter, memory and taste enhance
supersede the need for any bright bio-sonic
substitutes, we simply choose sweet, savory, sour
bitter or umami such pleasures must always come
like waves, incandescent waves, pitched high above the earth.

This Ark

Noah did not sit home
to isolate
stay safe
no, his genesis
came mid-motion
among the wise
chosen animals
and we must travel now
post-quarantine
surrounded by the pastel spirit
of our watercolors.
See an apricot sun
guide
its tusk-shaped moon
like a friend
who longs to be
close, watch a healing
radiate
from the tan desert
to rose-washed
snow tops, follow
a soulful vessel
powered by peppermint steam
as it chugs and spins
toward the oblong purple
of heaven's sky
then wait
and watch
with other curious
fish
in hope
we, too, will remember
how to swim.

AARON HOGE

Wood-man

I went to school with a wood-man,
Handsome, bearded, bespeckled,
Smoked cigarettes, drank coffee, and worked with his hands.
Strong arms and hands from working in a bakery, baking bread, and moving
pianos too.
He also made scribbly colorful drawings, and big crazy white abstract sculptures.
The inside of his car was a mess,
I rode shotgun with him one time to get coffee downtown, he talked of Invisible
Cities.
When we parted,
I carried him over land and sea.
Carried his long, lovely neck and breathtaking throat,
Gorgeous, slender, athletic physique,
Freckled shoulders,
Perfect torso,
Red checkered shirts, workmen's pants and Chukka boots.
Carried also his rough, dark-green military courier bag,
Scribbly drawings, crazy sculptures,
Friendly brown poodle who looked like a teddy bear,
Messy car, Robe And Ring ritual magic.
His wild pagan jerky frantic dance moves I also carried,
And the storm window nest-making grass-carrying wasp who he recorded for a
sound piece. She had much to say.
Carried also his midnight LA parking lot public pissing dick,
Oboe, bassoon, sitar, and hot air balloon,
Souped-up distressed black Subaru, silver spoiler,
Lovely, enormous, green towering cannabis plants,
Copy of Gibran's, Jesus, The Son of Man,
Affinity for thin-crust veggie pizza, homemade gin, and Tara Sass's, wild, green,
Poison Ivy costume.
And what about his hand-made brown walnut staining pigment?—he collected the
walnuts from the woods near his home. Yes, I carried that too.
Carried also myself, my true self,
His lonesome friend and secret admirer,
Who always wanted to share with him,
Just as Maurice and Scudder shared long ago, in England's greenwood.

Untitled



Self Portrait



DANA MILLER
Recrucify, Then Rewind

Drinking electric venom under madder-hydrangea,
dreams and thighs, pure vanilla-strawberry slack.
You wouldn't know that we call it "pink" all because of jagged dianthus;
you aren't a gardener, don't know how to grow anything,
but you're going to need this time on your back.

For all your black and white world,
the unslakeable color saturation (to the point of pigment thrombosis) tracks you
like a falcon.
And, like the pilot's leg you inherited,
it lies brumating for you in the quickened intramural warfare of your Dorian-soon
attic.
The pace is hot.

It's still me.
Maslow's bitchocracy, in kinetic type no less.
The rare combination of high wind and bright sunlight.
Wind-chime cadences you have no rhythm for.

I never dressed for you; I dress *at* you.
I get a snarky laugh out of the way your paper-doll proportions
don't suit my Chrome Hearts leather bikini.

I used to feel such pity for you; it was the nation of my first emotion at the sight of
your face.
This was the fisherman-woven willow that cauterized us together, but you didn't
figure that out until the very end (neither did I).
Much the same as the way I felt for the broken fox's jaw I found lying out
destitute, sunbleached, and dirty by the propane tank one day long after your
skeletons ran
their tuneless bones far from my closet.
You were equally overpowered and overshadowed by the modernity huddling next
to you in the form of my timeless adoration, I reasoned.

I left that bone out there, as I left you, to remind me of what ephyra can do.
At night I do sometimes worry that it gets cold, but this doesn't mean I will ever
again love you.
Everyone forgets that type was born moving, not static,
and mine will be your gut-braiding Gravitron long past your grave.

Last Halloween in Hawaii

A wave breaks in a place that is half as deep as the wave is tall.
If the rail is too low, you claw into the curl;
if it's too high you become the world's least rad rhino-chaser--straight into the soup.

The ultimate middle finger is to leave with your name,
carve it with an ice pick,
jagged as Jagger, across the back of Jeff Beck's guitar like Tina Turner did--
because Jeff is cool enough to love that the way any honest man should.
Meanwhile, the sleaze who tried to invent you with said name,
on a continent you gave him no less,
is still running the same tired, back-alley barf-game. (Yeah, okay barno!)

He'll only ever be remembered as the Bucks Fizz version of "What's Love Got To Do With It."
The gross kind of hot-dogger. Never a wave-slider.
One who had to pull leashes to win.
And these are the comments of his friends.

Over here, I am shimmying down the stages he didn't have the crest to ever set foot on.
We always knew I had the sand, didn't we?

Telling them to keep the current under me,
I keep the pulse in my pocket.
I'm just about ready to get more than compliments for all of this,
about to cash in on every single thing you missed.

I've studied hard and I've learned
even tame impalas have to run fast to catch their connections.
Kevin Parker said:
"there are definitely things that have disappeared that would have been great."
The greatest of all is that I know you're not one of them.
The second is wavelengths like him made me know it wasn't too late.

GEORGE L. STEIN

Mexican, circa 1965 pez museum, orange, ct.



walkies love queen layla and peaches



astrid on the tracks astrid brandt, baltimore, md.



FRANCESCO CAPUSSELLA
From Pilgrim to Pilgrim

from pilgrim

wrestle for the unchained jolly-whistled jail-lessness of our nations break the
neck bone between procrastination and constellations head back to the bonus
thought of charitable moonlit acts soothing the umbrella-veiled expression of
the man upon his petrichor alley bed and tuna rations

to pilgrim

inhale vigorous care when the magnifying glass flies too high from the
newspaper and opacifies its focus from the callous cartography of class
inaction

from pilgrim

don't sign up for the bully world where
the Kings only had nightmares
and martial laws prevailed
upon marching dreams

to pilgrim

the same milk from black & white tits already pours solemn warmth onto the
cold-blooded facts 'til the unsoiled new union psalm will chant with cups of
dignity and Georgian peaches on that table close to the broken mill of
impeached powers

from pilgrim

the time for the complete works of Shakespeare
must wait for all human spears to rise up
in unison and shake the clouded grounds
of the unrooted gods in the war room

to pilgrim

breathe out the wrath of men

from a pilgrim

let's stay pilgrims

to you:

let's sit quiet underneath the weeping willow
and tickle its bark with our backs
to ease the ownership of the

free breeze

Upon Subway Lines

as I witness recitals of races on the screen
my bloodhound dashes over the cash bowl,

TV cables and my grandma's ashes
on the parquet — the smoking spirits
populating the subways can't hail
my brother, shot above in a parking
lot with the Prius keys still in his fist

grandma always said that with
a car of that sort one could've gone
undercover in society — wise words
from my granny repeated by that
Emmy award-winning actress on
the telly in a different soup for
wider access smelling its supper

better quit the streaming confusion
and evade this hellish grey cave

exited the moot room
I put some music on: today
I won't take that sick subway

what looks like an untrained soul
is beating my flesh: likely I've
got my fav jazz song in my earbuds

his kicks like drumming sticks
beating on my guts — the cement
departs from my sight, I feel on
my way to the uncharted stop
while this cop's legs sting as
toothpicks on what was once
my primal fear

my blood in turmoil
echoes the black leather boot hits
as I reach the most tranquil topsoil
punching my thoughts beyond
the prejudice line — my big bro
and granny are here: she offers me
orange juice, I hear her loud whisper

Black and white ain't water and oil

as my blood makes a pond at my street
address the only thing I can think of
is if my bloodhound will be safe inside

my blurry vision on my dark skin layer
as this Miles Davis' trumpet lies to reality

Alabaster Road

*here you are
I couldn't find
a coffee spoon*

my intention map so clear
to her
still untraceable
to me
she casts
words dispersed
by e-cigarette vapor

oh, you prefer raw sugar too

maybe she needs a car ride home

her blue singing notes on speedy
yellow traits of route 101 asphalt

— — — — —
what happened? a fast elation
must've been all that sugar

why's her touch so cold?
that's her arm I feel warm

that's her cold arm among
all these slo-mo gestures

flashlight on ajar eyelids

wait, you're blinding me!

that's my car door,
don't drag me away
where is — *sbb*

I can't open my mouth

that blanket
take it off me
what kind of medic is this?!
she needs it

she needs
half sachet
of sugar
me

red and blue dwindle
away
from the snow:
a distant siren
on alabaster road

M.P. CARVER

Invasion

How come the aliens
are always looking for us??
Where are the
stories about the one
who find us by chance?
Don't know what to do
or say? How will they
figure our poems?
What will they think
about our sprawling cultures,
our medical advancements
our failures?

To my uncle with Alzheimer's
everyone's an alien now.
He's afraid
of the woman who cleans
his room, of the aides
who try and get him to eat
and shower. It's just him
and the cat. Or was it
a son? Who left that baby
all alone like that? And who
are these people? Some unknown
enemy, with their exigent
uncanny language.

FRANK WILLIAM FINNEY

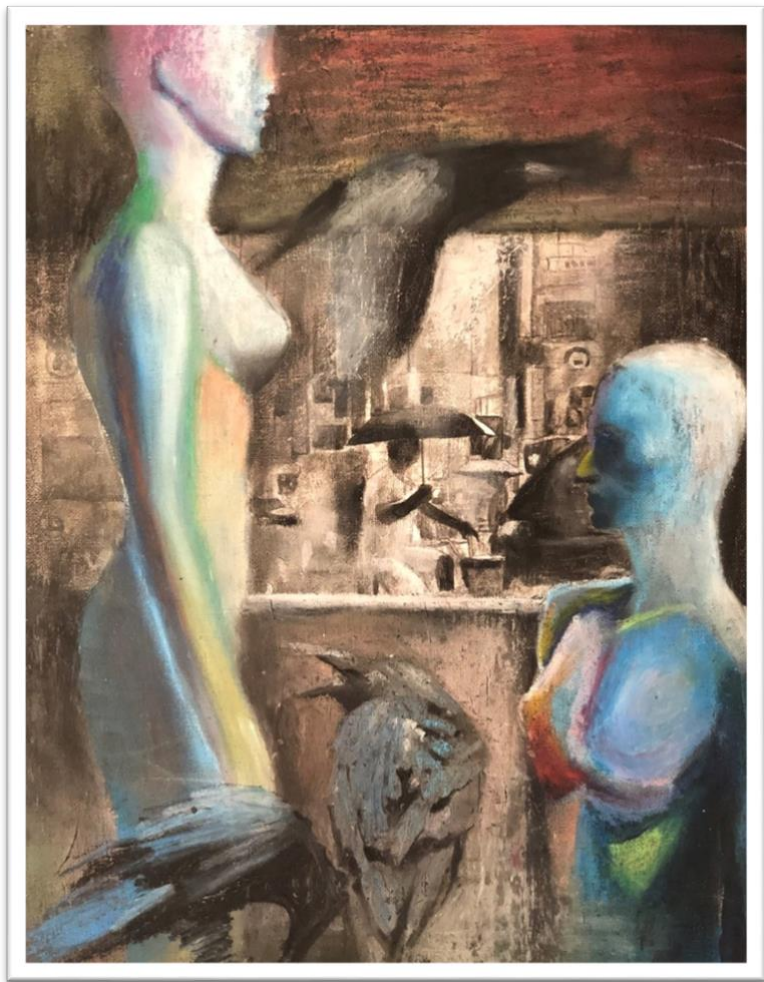
I Remember You Married the Art Teacher

Did he nude you
in paint before
the nuptials?

What did he say
when the paint
dried up

and you told him
you were bleeding?

LOLA WANG
untitled



BRIAN YAPKO

Lots of Light

When that moment of dazzle arrives to enter
your place of loudness and straight lines,
to enter that jiggly little flesh-shell that's
been picked out for me, let it be raining,
not harsh so that the roads are scary to
drive, but like syrup dripping from the sky,
so that hair gets silly wet and roses have
luster and windows have joyful tears; so
that maple leaves swirl and I can imagine
milky clouds giving birth to new life just
like my mum. When I slip-side into my
squishy self let there be a buzzing of bees
getting a new spring ready for the honey,
let there be sour apples and sweet peaches
ripe for plucking and mashing. Let there be
silky softness, the yippy barks of puppies,
the twitter of starlings, the pink and blue
and in-between sounds of my first sunrise.
Let there be scrunched noses, clapping
hands, curling tongues, and teething gums.
Let there be the pulsing of hearts, raucous
laughter and the rhythmic rumble-boom of
new breath in open air that smells like me
but with a hint of her and him and something
else completely new. When I arrive,
welcome me with gurgles, smiles and
happy tears. Let me be free of the darkness
but not the warmth. When I get born
let there be lots and lots of light.

Images of Altamira

prehistoric bison, hand prints, abstract swirls
of the hesitantly sapient. symbols of grief, triumph,
warnings of the mammoth's retreat, the saber

tooth's den, the terror of the tar pit where the
unskilled ones drown in the blackness that will
one day fuel the strangest of horseless travois;

awe of the lightning that may ignite the forest into
smoky-red death or augur life-giving rain.
these petroglyphs have weathered eons with

warnings of weaponized femurs, an arms race
of arrowheads and the strange sense that little
has changed -- the quality of rope, perhaps; the

ease of sparking fire, the cut of animal-skin,
but go back and you'll still cherish the newborn
and dread death; you'll still fear storms, at

night you'll wonder at the stars. maybe you'll
enter altamira and see a cathedral of paintings
or maybe you'll gather stones against the hill

people angry at their use of red pigment instead
of ochre, the strangeness of how they work the flint.
paleontologists once excavated a cro magnon boy

whose bones spoke of a fatal fall. he was buried
with stone beads and fossil pollen speaks of flowers.
who wept over this ancient boy? who weeps for us?

petroglyphs -- messages from the deep past their
message to us may be the poetry of the neolithic;
or they may be the writing on the wall.

SUZANNE S. RANCOURT

Thoughts of a Wandering Witness

“What are you thinking about?” I hear Dad’s voice while staring out the starboard portal thinking how sodium streetlights bleed a delta sprawl across desert darkness – seeps down highways, washes up against curbs in neighborhoods, & barrios, soaks into sparse populations. All but the occasional high intensity lumen clusters, say, of a facility-housing-child-prisoners & various violence of aborted humanity, are all beacons that Fanta as sticky spill down your street, into your house, your church, your lungs because a round of pepper spray, a couple cans of tear gas, & rubber bullets can be like that. How will we ever emerge from these shoals of political descent? This jet banks right and I see the orange light bend. It thickens into cities separated by blackout cover ups. Balaclavas can be like that.

A Twist of Dry Rot at 5

easements settle dust mites the early use of forced hot air geysers up
I walk to the chow hall and become
my old turquoise dodge station wagon - 4 on the floor
rolling & picking up speed geared in neutral
wait for the perfect tension
pop that clutch and shudder into action
pump my socialization skills - clear my throat
with a jerk & squint that sets my right eye to twitching
I question actions, & words, "Really?" I say
and backfire a suggestion before I doubt my hesitation
I brake for the outrageous

a lone driver with topo maps - my fingertips nibble brail
routes & curves chasing dreams like dog ning-nings
running down a rogue flea

you died in my heart
I convinced my self
I didn't care

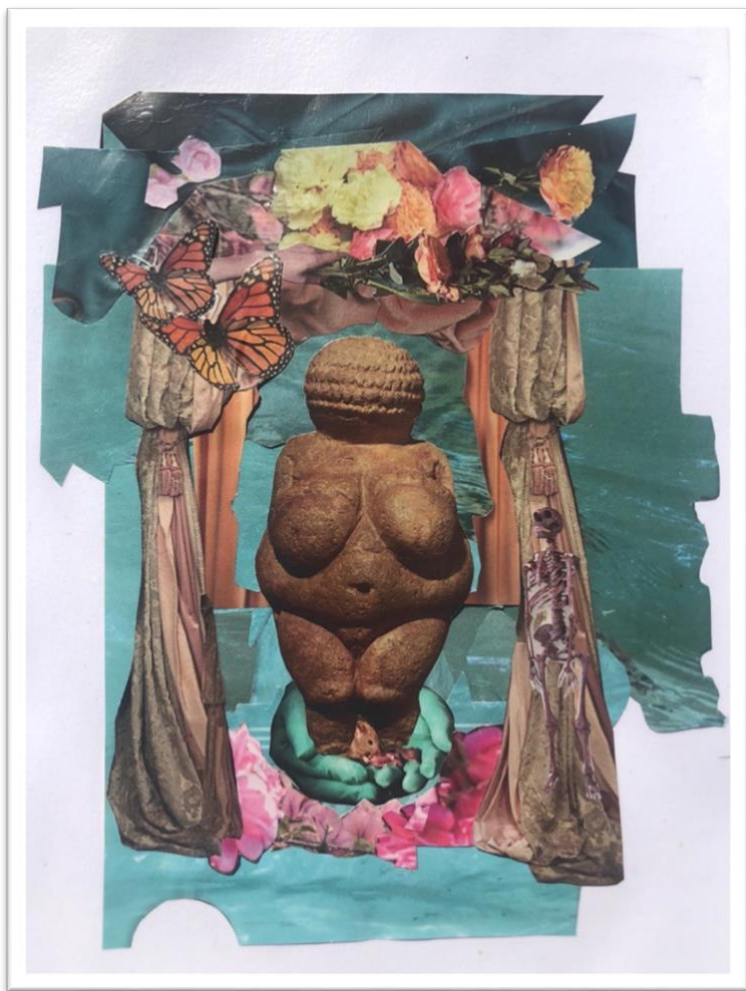
Absurdity Makes Perfect Sense to Me

she said, with a swirl of tongue tip dabbing her lips' corners, first one then the other, a matter of fact that the everyday reality is the most absurd of all - juxtaposed - juggling kitties & chainsaws - wildest beauties & beheading atrocities - gang rape & joyous first born celebrations. "So, yeah," she says again, "absurdity is the everyday." i back up against some warm brick wall to better angle my view - examining a round, open hole - a manhole - I think, why is a hole into the Earth owned, by this naming act, a man hole? is this the absurdity she speaks of? the mirrors, the reflections, the "yes" and there in winter defending our Mother, the Earth, they held mirrors, not riot shields, skyward, genius, i thought, someone understands what's actually happening. i move an arm's length from the brick, its heat emanates - in / out? loss / gain? rabbit holes. pot holes. smoke holes. corn holes. bean holes. holy holy holy - although absurdity makes perfect sense to me, i refract, loop around sharded fragments, broken intentions, pick up the brightness piece together new regalia, dance as a wind chime in a kettle of bones.

REBECCA EEDMONSON VANCE

Butterfly and Bloom Goddess, collage, 2019

(collage of Venus of willendorf figure with drapes, butterflies, flowers, mouse at feet. Held by blue/green gloved hands)



Earth and Grass Goddess, collage, 2019

(collage of Venus lespuges on bleak, moon/planet centered above goddess, black and white natural landscape, surrounded by blue water, framed by buffalo eating green grass)



MAYA J. SORINI

The Body Only Speaks Her Own Language

The body cannot make sense of bullet's ricochet from pelvis
Up through bowels and back off rib, and will not apologize. The body doesn't
speak

Lead, she speaks blood, knowing so well its pulse that upon introduction
Of mechanical pump to replace arrhythmic heart, the body rebels by
pushing insidious

Blood into the intestines whisper by whisper. The body only speaks her native
language.

She does not compromise, will not be colonized, cannot be forced to assimilate
To our messy inexact tongues. She bleeds. She knows how to do this. She does it
expertly.

We say, "rate your pain?" but her retort is zapped with electricity and sticky with
blood,

Impossible to translate, even when, like me, you have thrown your life at the task
of

Decoding her messages.

My heartbeat is like a tinnitus, a ringing through my body, I do not get to ignore it.

My body is trying to say something, a lifetime of chatter, I work tirelessly to
understand.

Sometimes we manage to communicate in pidgin of our languages,

Hanging on each other's every word, using every ounce of energy we have to
speak.

These days I am poring over dictionaries,

Bleeding into google translate, trying to find an interpreter

So that when she uses words I don't understand, someone can help me put
together

More sentences. I need to get this much across: Dear body, be brave.

Psalm For My Body

There are contracts
Between genealogy and fate that
I was not present to sign. Somehow I must
Come to terms with the things inside me
That don't sit flush. That I was not constructed
With a level in hand. I put my palm to my lips
And try to think about the warmth
In terms of sun-hours and tablespoons of chili.
I am still learning to pray in the cathedral
Of my body, lighting candles
Not to burn it down, but to honor
The women who split their bodies to get to me.

Bone Seam Song

You will find no marrow to drink when you snap open a rib
Even now that the muscles around are no longer deemed leftover meat
That whiteness
(ever the gentrifier)
Could not add succulence
To the inside of the bones
Which remain almost inedible
Though I imagine my Nonno during the war
Would have crunched up the chicken ribs probably, not bothering to sort them out of
That which was nutritious
If his mother had somehow
Found and slaughtered a chicken
To eat instead of the usual meat of stray cats.

MARGARET HARTLEY
Flower Storm



ADELE EVERSLED

A Guide To Flash-In-A-Pan Living

They told you / don't want more / hide the teeth of your tongue / show the veins
in your wrists / flashy and vulnerable as those on a cow's udder / powder the cleft
of you / make a beckoning bowl with your hands / suck your hair like a gag /
hope that is enough

But later you/ lay the drunken rib of the stuff / calling in the yellow light / you felt
the dragging length of them / overwintered lumpen / large / flightless / fightless
/ talking about beautiful things as if they were ugly / so you leave behind your
urine town / practice turning people into hills / freely look back / not minding the
turnings / tell old stories / order coffee with foam / pretend all incidental noise is
the sound of angel's wings / scrunch up so your edges meet / lay eggs like a
magpie / nest in other's pulls and snags / take the slinken things / wrap them fast
in a fever amulet / tie it round your neck / tell yourself they're safe / and only
things in pouches scream

Tell them they always deserve more / not to listen if they say you cannot be an X /
always, always, always, show your teeth / when things make you smile / and
especially when they don't

It does not matter if you drown in the middle of the sea or close to shore—you are
still dead—so don't let the only fascinating thing be—you've gone

STACY THOMAS

an egon schiele drawing (c. 1918) found in a thrift store

was the room warm
was her mother there
did you let her keep her clothes
or did she wait
naked
on a table
or cold chair
bare thighs hard wood
dress folded to the side
or draped
when you ordered her to the floor
how long after she lowered
lengthened, did you consider
the bones
the hard curve of her
body
did you pause
or just draw her that way
why did you like them that way
starved, coupling
dare to look away
or swallow them whole
to see the whole story
of them
hunger produces the cleanest lines
addiction the most
interesting figure
after, did you cover her up?
did you give her tea?
did you pay her well,
when you sent her away?

landslide

i levelled the beeches
she says; i
forested our room.

the one i made primrose
for you?
you

were a backlot when
i met you.
your scrubby

plain told me all
i needed
to know.

you are practical.
you don't

need more than what
you need.
and i, who

need everything
liked that. your
shoulder

a fjord in my hands.
my
first sense
other smallness.

you are my life
you could say
and do.

you poured yourself
into my
spaces&

i let you find points
where you
fit, small.

now the mad bees&
the honeycomb tactics

the landslide on
the bed

that lumberjacks
you in the kneecap, or

a chrysalis, or
a glimmer of water.

bitter

in my mouth a taste her
perfume left. paired with
what she wouldn't say. she
didn't stay but the sour of her
lingered. she could not be

sweet. now the sour of her
smells sweet, taste her reckless
something I didn't reckon with.
not her alone but paired with
the smell of her man's cologne
I can't spit. the bitter taste
of nothing left.

VIRGNIA LAURIE

Honey-Thief

I was trying
to tell you
to leave him
before he drank
all the honey
from your eyes,

but it came out
like "I hate him,"
it came out like
"I miss you," it
came out like "I
can take his place."

It came out like
a snake, could not
get to my lips
before it slid out
of my gullet and
into your lap.

This is not the
first time this has
happened. I am
an artist, I leave
pieces of ear at
your door, mice.

I don't know
how else to
paint a heart
I see so little
of, I don't know
how to thaw.

Please rub your
hands together
for me, please try
not to startle the
snake. Please spare
us a bit of sweet.

First Date

Even when it's not love,
it's love. A bigger love, orange
and spread out over the green of
the park, a space we have to
ourselves.

You packed a picnic of Goldfish,
and I only know your name. We're
shy to touch each other, but a man
is singing songs like "Build me up
Buttercup" with his guitar, and it's
hard to take ourselves too seriously.

What I mean to say is, there aren't
sparks per se, and I think this will be
our only gold evening. That's okay.
You teach me to play Uno, and I really
want to use my Wild Card for red again,

but you say I have to pick a new color.
You say you can't hold conversations
with men, because *men*, and I nod sagely.
We make fun of them, all of them all at
once without exception because we can.

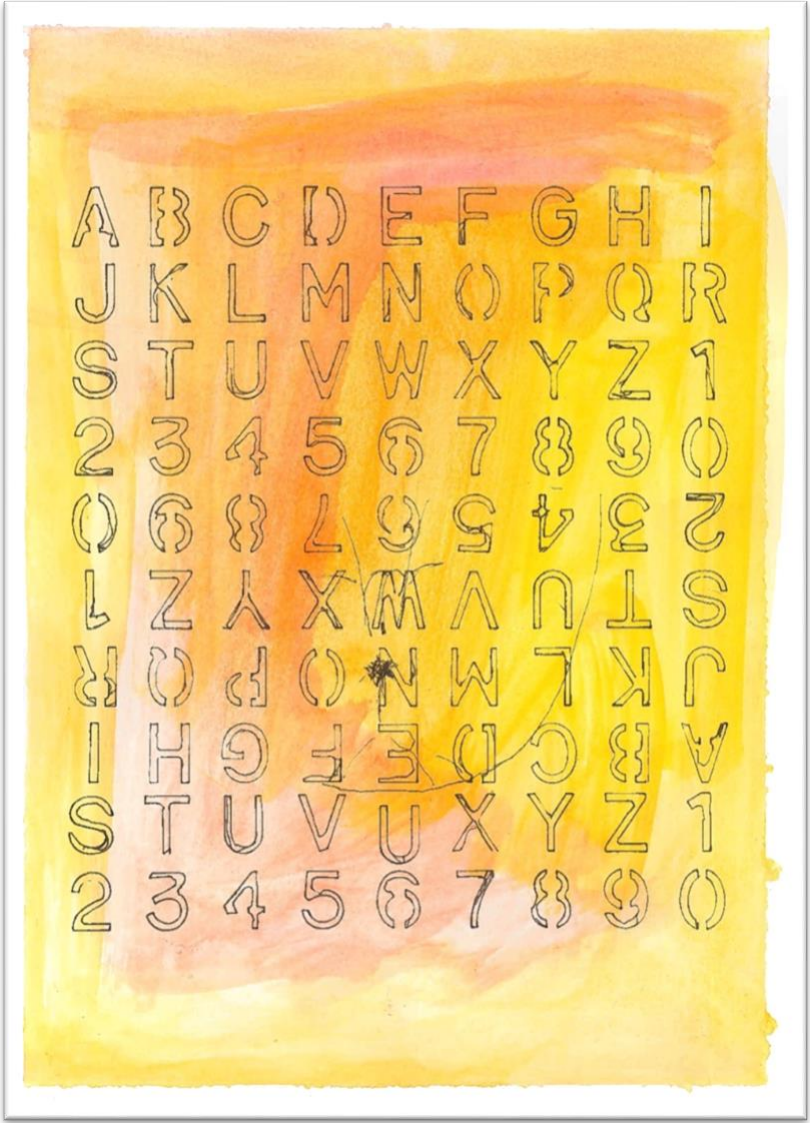
It feels good, like picking a scab, to let
go of them. It feels so nice to not be nice.
I feels so good to sit on this blanket eating
watermelon across from a pretty girl and
know I'm the only one in this park
she'll kiss.

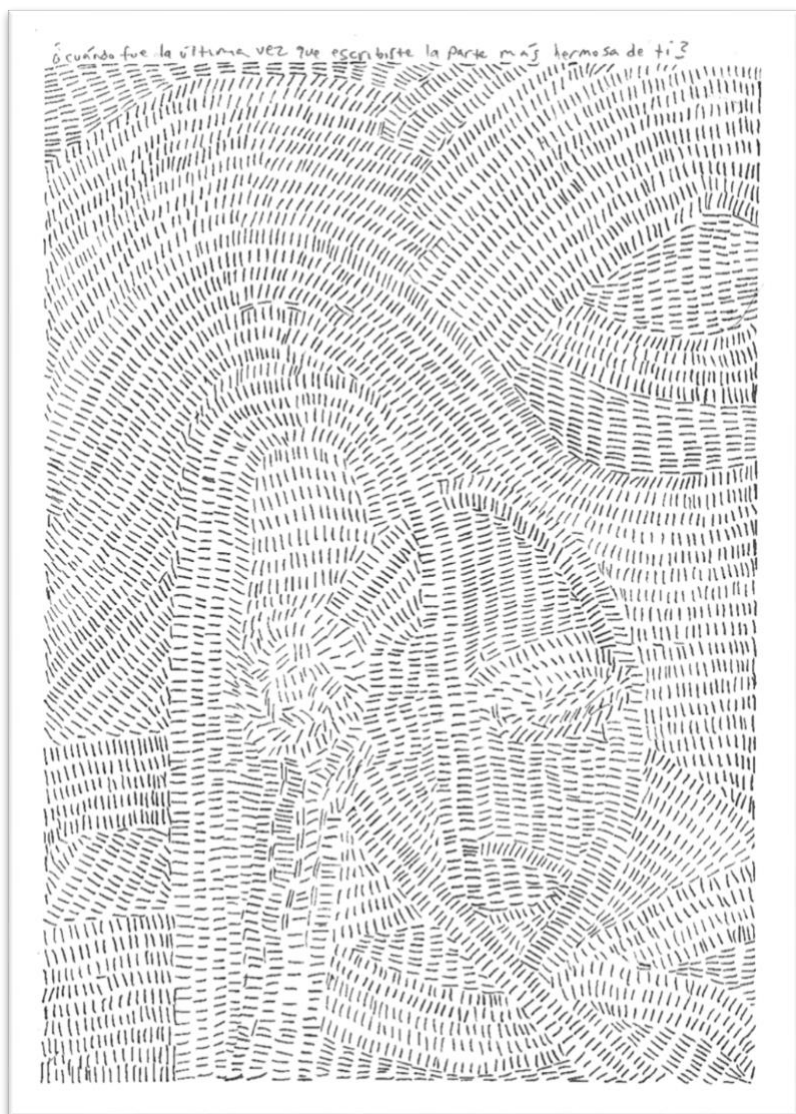
I'm not sure we'll call each other back,
but there is nothing but heart-glow in my chest,
being around, being, a woman-defined woman.
The boys playing soccer leave. The field turns
forest green, and our knees are red.

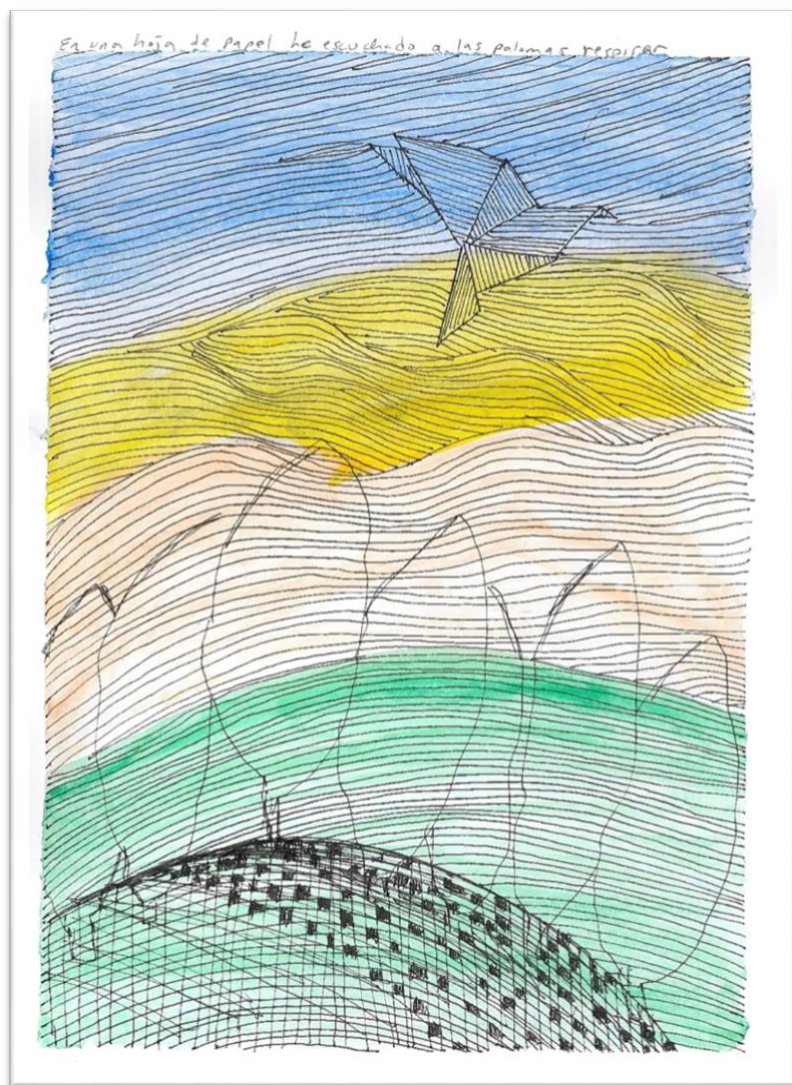
That's what I mean.

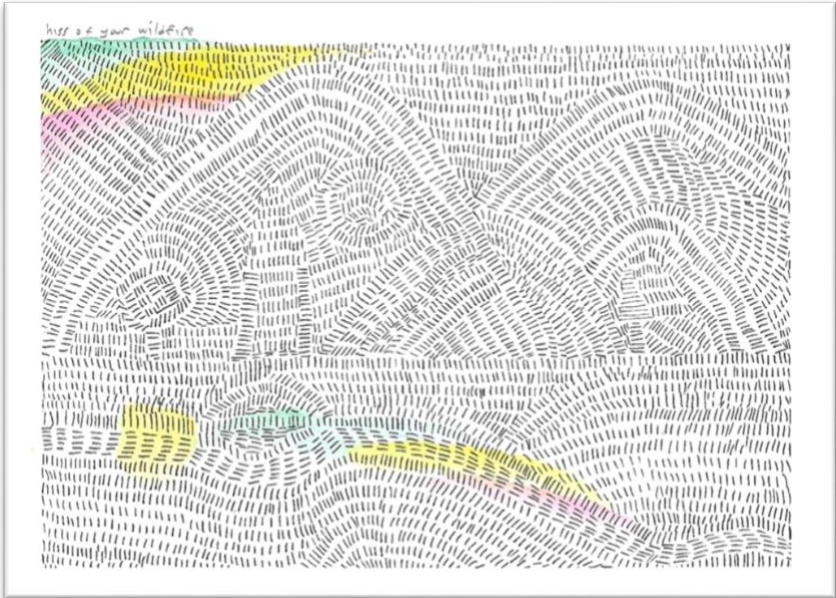
Even when it's not love,
it's love

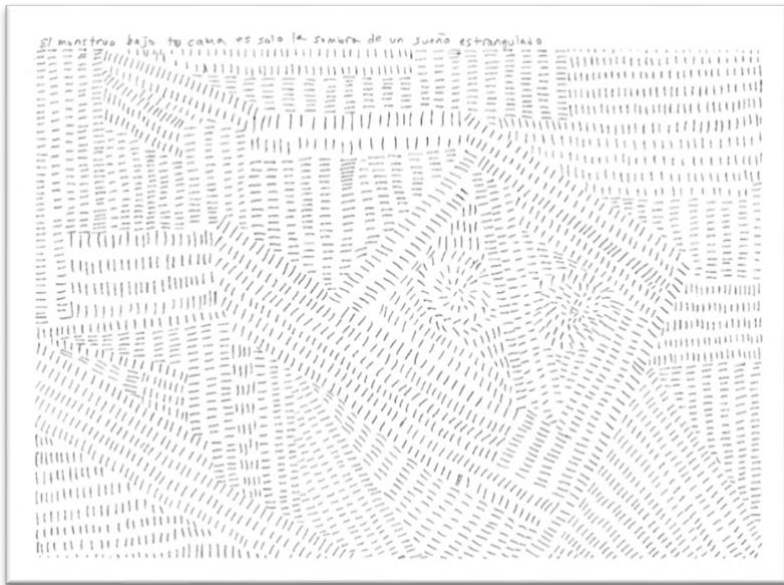
OCTAVIO QUINTANILLA
Frontextos











MARY ELISE MEYERS

“The Happy Feminist”

I sat in the Coffee Café on the second Monday of October Year: 1990. Not that it particularly matters. It is night time and Lance called me here for coffee.

Lance goes on about his art. I follow his lips. Two rubbery pink things bashing their brains out. Lance starts with...

“Avant-garde Art World...”

The rest of the sentences become “blah-blah-blah.” Oh, that’s right Lance, I am thinking now. I am completely enthralled with every square inch of art that you attempt to divide between man and beast, man and breast, man and bowel movement.

Everything Lance makes looks like shit. It really looks JUST LIKE SHIT. I pick up on Lance’s conversation.

“Brown is what. I am about.” I stopped listening a second time. When Lance isn’t painting objects of shit, he tangos with “putang” in the night. Rolling around with twenty-year-old art students giving them “A” plus pluses. Lance is a forty-five-year-old balding man trying to compensate for the aging process with girl love.

I don’t like Lance. But I am lonely and haven’t seen many people after my arrest. Recently, I’ve found this need to burn down cosmetic counters and griddle and vaginal cleaning factories, to symbolically free women from social torture devices.

“The vagina is a self-cleaning organ,” I told those rallying around me in front of the local douche factory. “Douching causes more bacterial growth than if you screwed every UPS driver who delivers in your neighborhood. If women must flush their genitals, then I must ask every man to wash their love jewels with meadow fresh ointment.”

The audience applauded me. One woman, although terribly clique, threw her bra towards the podium. Then as I was adjusting the pile of douche bottles, soon to be made into a Summers Eve pyre, five policemen sieved me.

“Crawl back into the closet,” one laughed, then held up his thick cop bat.

The only person who got up the bail was Lance, and ever since then I figure he is worthwhile. Since my arrest, female friends have stayed away from me. Some of them think I am fighting for the right cause but with the wrong approach. They say I should be fighting for equal pay, materiality leave, fairer real estate contracts, and the struggle for making it easier to get into mechanic and truck driving schools. I try to explain to them that it is the superficial subliminal crap that keeps women behind.

There was a woman who had terrible stomach pains that lasted for months. She went to the doctors and took tests after tests. Finally, the gastroenterologist came to the conclusion that her stomach had migrated behind her liver. It was then discovered that the woman had worn a 23 hour cross your abdomen girdle for sixty-five years. The girdle solely contributed to her ailment. The next day she was found yellow and very stiff near the cosmetic counter at Neiman Marcus.

“Girdle Death” is one of the careless accidents I am fighting to stop. Women should have the right to let their fat hang rudely until death. Women should have the freedom to have a vagina smell like a vagina instead of a cedar closet. If women are allowed to be human, then and only then will they be allowed to earn the same dollar as a man.

Lance touches his bangs, shoving a cigarette into his mouth. He goes on about his latest exhibit entitled simply, “Still Life.” Even though Lance has a somewhat narrow mind about Women’s Rights he still respects my opinion. He thinks I am “a gas,” as he puts it, for being so daring. And I find it most ironic that it was a man and not a woman who saved me from the same doom Elvis experiences in “Jailhouse Rock” in 1955.

Why is this, I thought? To keep Lance satisfied I say, “huh-uh, oh really” and all the humming noises that give the impression of interest. Lance, someone who screws undergraduate female students and left his wife when she was getting too old for him, in a left-hand sort of way, supports my cause. Of course, I could rationalize this by using Aristotle’s claim that everyone aims at the good. Every person on earth has some good qualities, even if the person is immoral most of the time. The good in Lance is not the highest anyone can achieve, but his motives aren’t completely selfish either.

I have thought about Lance wanting a little pussy award for all his doings. But I’ve known him for over three years, and the only physical act he has committed towards me was a mere kiss on the cheek when I received a grant from the National Organization of Women. Lance knows not to fuck with my buckles. Anyway, I am too old for him. I am pushing thirty and most of the women he screws have the members of Motley Crew tattooed on their forearms and can’t get into bars yet.

Where were my sisters, I keep thinking? They were cheering with support for me in front of the douche factory that spring day, but when I really needed them, they became scared. Scared of what? What were they scared of? The lack of love they would receive by going against old ideas? If they fight just a little, will they feel they are going against some natural flow of the womb?

It has been written and ingrained in our little American heads that women are the quiet gender. The gender that is passive and willing, ready to serve. For example, role models like the well-developed actress who holds a pencil and revolver for the actor in the made for TV movie, “the Life of a Suicidal Writer,” only destroys the

idea that women have their own talents. “Now that’s a woman,” I can hear Lance say.

It might feel odd for some of these women to take a stand on anti-vaginal freshness. But some can’t even take a stand on more basic issues. Who must mow the lawn (he mows the lawn)? And who washed the dishes (she washed the dishes)? Is there some Law of Moses that says women must do this (polish utensils) and not (stand up against trivial cosmetic products that blind innocent bunnies in the laboratories every day)? Moses said, “and you women must scrub thy bakery bowl? You woman must dry with thy Hebrew cloth!” Of course not! But not every woman knows this nor every man. These are the same people who buy twin beds when married.

We have also been taught that it is not nice for little girls to be loud. “It’s so unattractive,” the unknown infamous “they” tell us. We all have aunts (my Aunt Nancy) who say, “you want to get married before your menstruation runs out and your sore joints kick in?”

These voices of society tell women if one isn’t loved they rot. My followers were scared their men would find them “ugly” protesting their American rights of Free Speech. If they helped to release me, were they afraid of being labeled “man haters?”

These women should see that if they don’t try to change oppressive ways then they will have reasons to hate. If a person is restricted from believing what they want to become, they will start destroying themselves through sleeping pills, anorexia, heroin, or the negativity of bad disco wear. They might even start destroying others around them.

Imagined scenario while smoking...continuing to ignore Lance...

My friend Ida is a woman from Idaho who graduated from a good college. Her grade point average was a perfect 4.0 and her mind was incredibly logical. Basil, a male acquaintance of hers, went to the same college. He did a lot of drugs and was an active member of the Satanic Chicken Slaying Club. When he wasn’t decapitating the heads of hens, he was in his room listening to Scorpion albums backwards in order to communicate with his dead grandmother.

Ida and Basil had the same majors, applied for the same jobs and ended up working for the same company. However, Basil got paid thirty-three-point two percent more than she did. Day after day, night after night, Ida had to live with the humiliation of a Satanic worshiper beating her out of a career. This anger gunny sacked deep inside of her psyche until one day she snapped.

She put on her cutest black patent leather sandals and the frilliest dress she owned and raided a McDonalds. She cleaned the place out, killing everyone except Basil,

who ironically, was eating there at the time. Instead of killing him right away, she threw him off a mountainside after performing torture to his eyelids.

It only seems logical to me, through this example, that if women and men deny the inequalities in our society between them there will be millions of Ida's parading around in revolutionary fashion oozing down fast-food restaurants across the country.

Lance finishes his sentence and is on his third cup of coffee. I am on my fifth. I am cutting back. He shows me his sketch of his recent lover. She has no distinct facial features giving her an "insert-here" quality about her and the subject has noticeably large breasts.

"Isn't she beautiful?" Lance asked, putting on his brown acrylic leisure suit. I think he wants to go soon.

"Yeah! But no woman on earth has this size. I mean real one anyway."

I stare out a window at Coffee Café and see the busy street. Jesus shines a light of wisdom across my lap. A mammoth breast brigade of four women march past the panes. Each one is equally large. Each one in tight sweaters smiling at the balding men in the alley. I turn my eyes to Lance. He stares back looking scared.

"Then again Lance, anything is possible." I am merely silent for a moment. "Oh, by the way, I really like your suit."

"Sears," Lance replies, "I got it at Sears."

CASSIE PREMO STEELE

Dear Audre, Mother

I see your face before me on the altar where I've placed all your books and a small round soapstone bowl with a shell-like Yemaya stone and a shiny pyramid-shaped lapis lazuli and a note to 'fairy's' that my daughter wrote when she was a girl.

Everyone lives with death these days. You tried to tell us, you talisman from the frontlines, you said the words, spoke them, and wrote them and you couldn't have been stronger or clearer.

But most people were too busy getting rid of Carter and welcoming Reagan – white people – and those who weren't playing that game were too busy surviving this world we were never meant to survive.

But it is not the world, Audre, that is out to get me and everyone in it, on it, in her, on her. Her. You felt the swell of ocean waves and traveled them back to Carriacou and Dahomey as you traced your motherline, and I sat on her lap when my daughter was a baby and witnessed the sand of her fingers and loud crash of her voice and salty taste of her, moist when we bring our fingers to our lips.

Diaspora is dead now, too. We stay at home to save our lives, the lives of those we love, we love the ones we do not know who have already died. We hear the sirens and I hope somewhere in a cloister there are millions of nuns saying constant Hail Marys because we don't have the time.

But we have all the time, mother, as long as we don't look at our clocks or have a meeting or have to send or pick up supplies or do anything that keeps us tethered to the world now dying of rushing and money for hours and people as cogs and bottom lines.

That's the world we were never meant to survive.

Not this one. This one has seashells and conches and paper soft books and blue stones for speaking and words to face the truth and new glasses to see through illusions and the reliability of earth as she works with her brother gravity and motherliness across time and water and the memories of babies and all of this, Audre, mother, I am telling you, I swear to you, I take an oath at your altar and promise that all of this will survive.

ANDRE PELTIER
Upside-Down Skies

I read an article once
about spiders in a lab.
Some were dosed
with LSD,
others with mescaline.
The mescaline spiders
made webs with geometric
precision:
perfect triangles, exact angles,
laser-straight lines.
The LSD spiders, however,
were different.
Their webs seemed
a chaotic mess.
Gossamer strands akimbo,
the acid webs were everything
we expect from
acid-head
arachnids.

I saw a painting once,
barren trees reflected
in an upside-down sky:
large limbs, small branches,
stately trunks.
They wiggled and shook
like the liquid lines
of those spaced-out
spiders.
I wonder if those spiders saw
the world like that.
Did they know reflected clouds
with flying birds throughout?
Ink-blot atmosphere
folded, doubled,
the perfect field for
perfect hawks.
Perfect lysergic
inspiration.

JOEY SALOMONE

365 more spins

around this sun that brightens
just like you are laughing at it

another year with you
and i

so let's fill a junk drawer together

soy sauce and hot sauce packets with clever phrases

and a screwdriver that just wasn't big enough to make it to the tool box

so let's walk wine drunk around the small town of Herman

and look into windows at antique women and old stuff

boy, now you're ready for a bubble bath
but if i slip under the water and can't breath
because of soap and shame

i expect you to either revive me
or pull the plug

don't make me spin the sun again on machines.

CHALK MAFIA





JR RHINE
Sword Swallower

Anyone can swallow swords;
we watch to see what you
spit out. Maybe it rises
from the depths as if
from a stone. Or, kabob'd,
leaves fruits spilled
in rotting wreaths of oedipal
arrangements. Momma's boy,
the two-edged tickle holding
my throat hostage; instead
hoping for all that phlegm of
words unsaid to rise with it,
looking for mosquito in
the sap.

Fault Lines

I am a city of small tremors.
This may be one in which
we break out the needle.
Death's long gaunt finger
tracing my every itch.
When all's said and done,
the end of the episode,
some may say it is
a caricature.
It depends on the dosage.
Depends if there's dosage
at all.
On the exit ticket,
to the statement, "We can
prevent earthquakes" my
student selects FALSE.
He looks at me and says,
*I don't think shelter will
save us.*

Hot Trash

As a kid,
my brother had this thing where
he couldn't let anything go.

Most notably,
any household trash
and
his bowels.

There'd be a mound of junk
in the corner of our shared room,
a menagerie of candy wrappers, soda
bottles, plastic bags.

Much more personal, he'd hide
behind the living room furniture
his entire body trembling
from having not shit
in days.

Mom would drop him on the toilet
and stand there, screaming for a
bowel movement that wasn't hers to
make.

In her own closet,
she still had my kindergarten
graduation outfit.

My father keeps a replica of
Stonehenge made out of VCR's
in the garage.

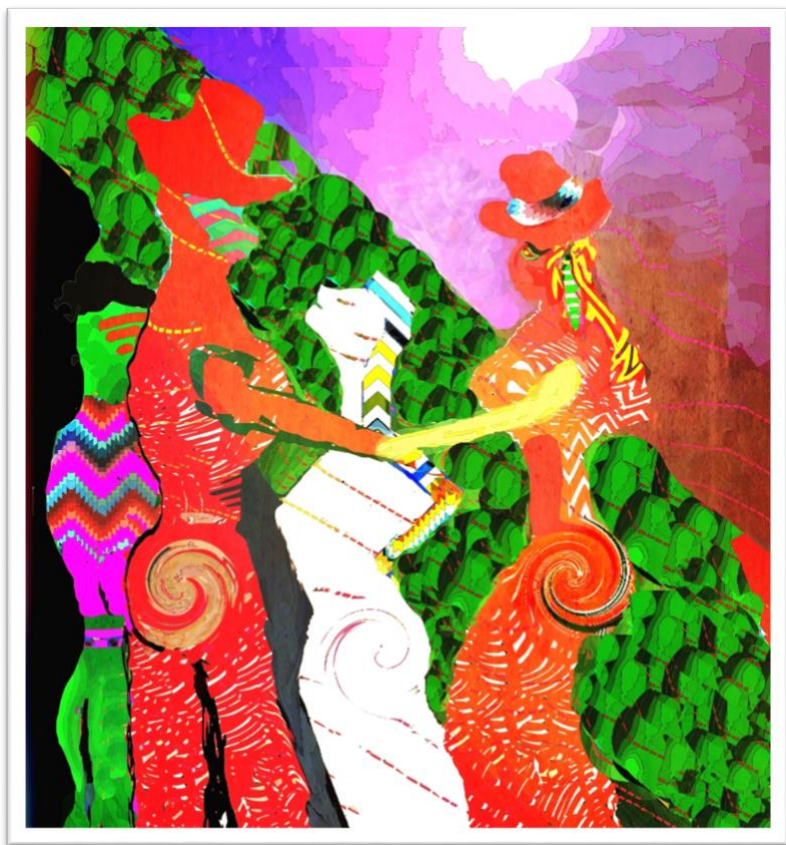
My brother learned if he held
it in any longer it would become poison.

Some things are like that.

Somewhere, off-screen,
a man tells this story
to a barista he is suddenly in love with.

When he passes thru the door,
he'll just be another chance
to let the light in.

KEITH EDWARD
No Joy



SUSAN CORONEL

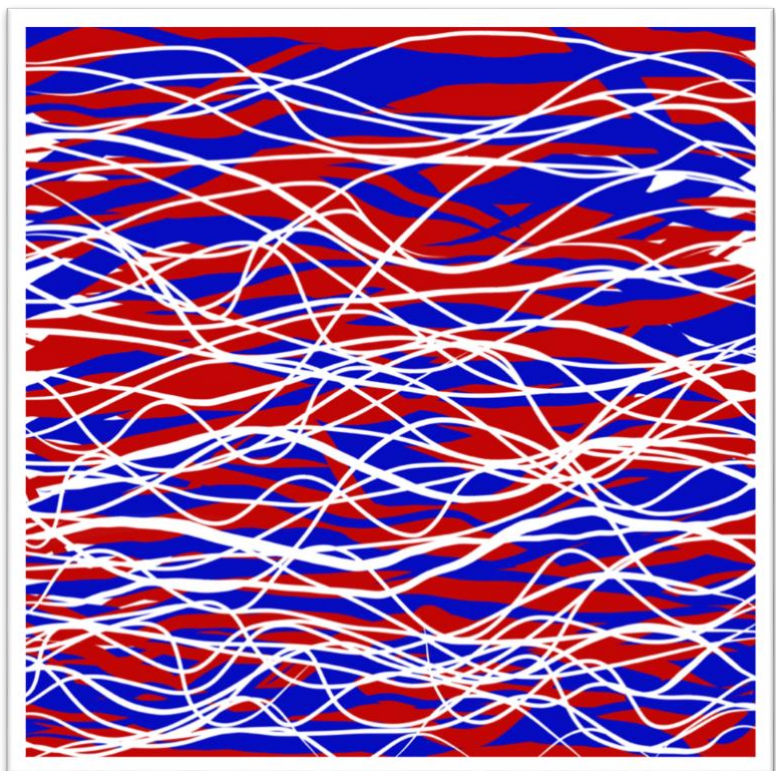
In the Underground World

Alabaster statues commemorate the dead, marking time with filtered shadows. They are draped in winter robes, and their stony lips struggle to suck grapes from fat straws. My mother visits once a week because she can't connect to the present, and it's too late for the future. In the underground world, my mother is no longer mottled and nervous. Her skin is as clear as the white sky above a forest. She is able to drive a car, use a computer, and do calisthenics. One night her friends prepare her an extravagant feast under the roots of trees: calves' liver, caviar, a chilled vichyssoise. She and her friends communicate with each other across tombstones with paper telephones, waiting for the wind to unfriend them. My mother sleeps in a fleece coat, arching her back toward the North Pole. She always returns to the cold.

JOSEPH L.
Midnight Dream
Oil on Canvas (digital)
2100x2100 pixel
June 2021



StudyII
Vector brush
2100x2100 pixel
July 2021

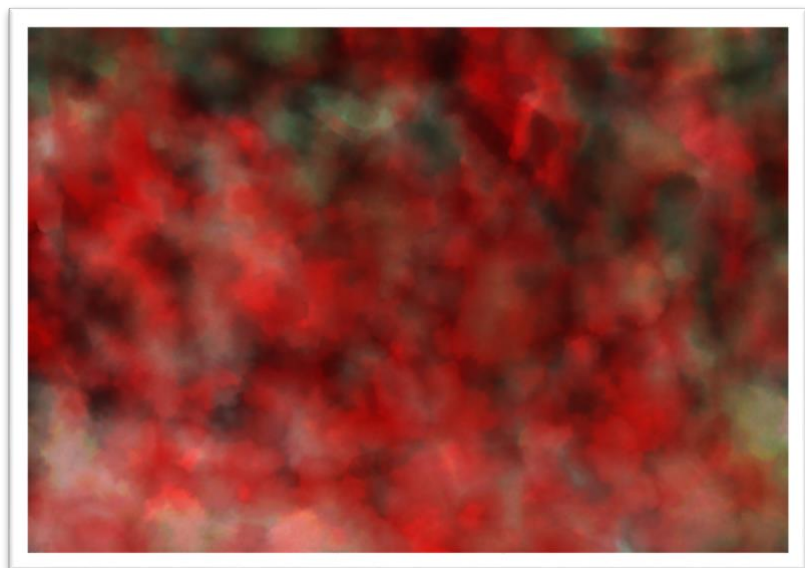


Night Lights

Watercolour (digital)

2388x1668 pixel

Nov 2021



CLAIRE BLOTTER

Let's Do Something Fun That Doesn't Hurt Anyone

Let's write
a letter
under
stream perhaps or up- stairs
write through splashing
water wheels Let's dive
sarcasm
beneath peel
back its slimy skin to that soft
kiwi within sweet green
deleterious delicious never
beneficial both on trees and to health but highly
those
fallen strangely odd
deformed fruit that Beccare
picked by herself gathered
in oversized plastic bags piled
into her truck and later carefully placed into Christmas
bags with chocolate hard candies and nuts
for her friends gifts for us let's not
up the moon so much
go to
anymore or contemplate Mars what and why
have we got to prove
and prove and prove and keep looking up
when we can find such
imperfect abundance here
under foot
fallen
on the
ground

JANET MESKIN

me/tree/she

moved

moved

by the person

moved

and there she was with tree and here I was with she and tree breathing

slowly

together

one life force

with the other

I know tree pretty well been growing roots with her for a long time merging

and then journeying on

to the something

I'm supposed to know

the something

needing to emerge

that will connect me/she

to the deeper self

of spirit

empty nest

last year when i departed for second adventure to Asia i thought about this being
the last time i'd see my father in his house
on his couch
and it was

the final physical visit sitting with him in casket in a strange box
wrapped in tallit
and i sat with the same emptiness then as i do now

he watched me leave the nest many times this time it was he who left the nest for
good maybe that's the emptiness i felt
and still feel now

DIXIE LONGATE



Hey hookers, I'm Dixie Longate, America's favorite Tupperware lady. I come from Mobile, Alabama, but I moved my trailer with my kids to Los Angeles as part of the conditions of my parole. I started selling the fantastic Plastic crap in 2001 and I have never had so much fun drinking for free in my life. Within a year, I was one of the top sellers in the nation because, well, me and some plastic bowls, and a bunch of drunk women somehow equals lots of sales.

I have 3 kids; Wynona, Dwayne, and Absorbine, Jr. and 3 ex-husbands. All of 'em have somehow died, but I ain't crying about it. I'm way too busy traveling all over the place bringing creative food storage solutions to your town.

My Tupperware party caught the eye of some New York Theatre producers and in 2007, I had a big opening in my own show, "Dixie's Tupperware Party" off-Broadway and got a Drama Desk Award nomination for Outstanding Solo Performance. I know, shut up, right! Now over 7 and a half years and 1000 performances later, I've shown my bowls in 5 countries since the tour started in 2008 but I haven't stopped there. I've also written and performed three other solo stand-up shows - 'Broken Shit and Baby Jesus', 'No Instructions', and 'My Bags Went Where'. 'Bags' was featured as part of the 2013 Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

My most recent solo theatrical show, 'Never Wear a Tube Top While Riding A Mechanical Bull and 16 Other Things I Learned While I was Drinking Last Thursday' celebrated sold out houses at Denver Center for the Performing Arts in 2014 and is also now touring the world.



SHALINI SINGH

Remembering a Generation Bygone

My grandfather was a retroflex
etymologically long, a standard orientalist
a contrast with equivalent short vowels
an aspirated consonant, he breathes
fricative synonym of threat and valor
father was a freedom fighter, a pahelwan
long before wrestlers knew that their second preoccupation was not rings but fires
and bullets
grandfather read literary Masterpieces or transliterations all his life, stashed them
away, dreaming of posthumous celebrations
he quoted Leopardi: "as air fills the spaces between objects, melancholy fills the
intervals between one pleasure and the next."

He asked me not to write for augmented conventions, never in black and white,
he taught me that there is often nothing more sensible than being sad
the invisible weight of his absence overwhelming me on his death,
"Like Lakshmi, you, my girl, are colored to spread colours"
remembrance of retracted affricates, voiced sibilant,
valor dental bilabial
his world had words of his own,
strewn in diaries he kept, some in words unkempt,
a tea before sleeping to challenge his sleep,
recounting days of plagued bodies in winters of escaping death
unfounded, implosive, an explosion of essays, my father was palatalized by the
umlaut (O)
after him there was a vague succession of responsibilities but nothing came as
close
to a male writing poems in Rasalpur,
just a few kms around Patna, on a sweltering day of sweet June
then depositing seeds on farm lands,
poems stacked in a corner; farm ridden

LEE ANN BROWN
The Earth Book

Another Green World

Each song a magical toy

What we want to be is

Full of greenest weeds

Unfamiliar storybook lush

To play a ball with bell inside

Spicy like clove road

Or cinnabar tinkling some kind of deep

Lacquer box open sound

A riddle song So long sung

i am dissociating on the day George Floyd's killer is going to trail

Down with white male Chauvinist Pigs

Stephen flies to Minneapolis with his sign

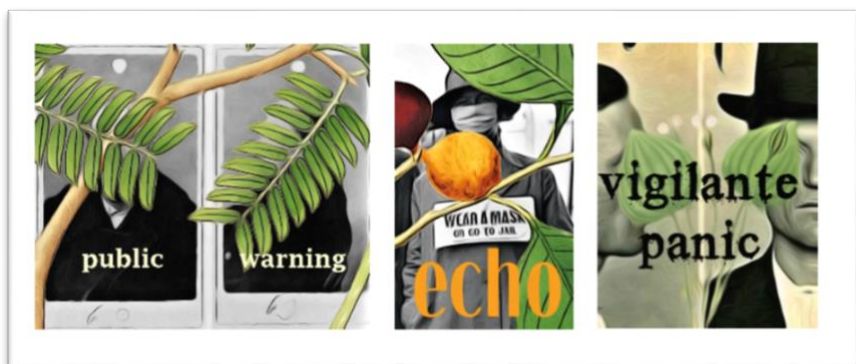
It reads America's very Soul is on trial

Footsteps on the fly smack

Eno as Blake goes outside each night

To hear his brothers and sisters as angels in the trees

ASHLEY PARKER OWENS
A Poem in Three Images



ALI TELMESANI
THE CARMINA TERRA OF ĀYĀ

Dār-wāsīn Grasslands

If I had to retrace Gaea's steps, where else would I start
but Dār-wāsīn? If I were asked a million times,
a million times I would answer Dār-wāsīn!

If I had to retrace Gaea's steps, my animal self
would roam unloosed the grasslands raging!

If I had to retrace Gaea's steps, I would prostrate
and study the ratios and the subtleties of stem
and stamen in measures both separate and equal.

If I had to retrace Gaea's steps, I would infiltrate the herds
of gazelle and antelope. Even they move at the whim
of the Mover, who moves the heavenly bodies
and the herds.

If I had to retrace Gaea's steps, I would scour the grasslands
of Dār-wāsīn in flight with fleet-footed foxes on the prowl.

If I had to retrace Gaea's steps, I would place my ear to the ground
and follow the stampede of wild elephants as they migrate
up and down the windy banks of the River Zagra.

If I had to retrace Gaea's steps, I would call upon the Bringer
of Seasons to turn the winter into spring in time to sow,
and on the Guarantor to guarantee an ample harvest.

Gaea of the vast Earth! Gaea skin, Gaea bone, stuff of Gaea!
Root of Gaea! Stone Gaea, mountain metal Gaea, Gaea gargantua,
sulpher Gaea, on the plain Gaea, dune-shifting! Night and day Gaea!
Primeval Gaea, tufting, loose-dirted Gaea, grit-crunching Gaea
of mouthfuls! Gaea Meliora, festoon-ruttled song of Gaea,
milk and ghee-fat goated Gaea! Hoof-hucked plenum of the grasslands!
Dragging feet dragging calamus drag of Gaea! Cool water Gaea! sweet
free-running, to the briny firmament-fleshed Gaea of the sea!
We salute the rogue queen: Gaea of the teeming Dār-wāsīn.

Dār-wāsīn, the well-endowed, gushing land of o'erspread bodies.
Dār-wāsīn, the doctrinal seat of creeds that raised on high the houses.
Dār-wāsīn, the overflowing well-spring of unrepeating archetypes.
Dār-wāsīn, the guttural, rasping, sun-choked breath of the Living,

Dārwāsīn, the heaving and the ho-ing waft of the animate Dying!

Untamed pan-handle of the bifurcating river-cradle of capitals;
Untamed arbitrator of the blood-feuding lords of Buyutāt and Apilai;
Untamed child of equal parts fashioner and equal parts desecrator;
Untamed grassy pleroma unfurled by the Manifestor of pleromas;
Untamed, uncured, unrinsed, unripe, gestating beast of gathering!

When they say, 'How fine are the fineries of Dārwāsīn?'
howl from the parapets! Say, fine are the horn of plenty meeting houses;
fine are the occupiers of their sweat-stained pulpits
that rain down missile prayers upon the noose-tight congregation
of game-house chancers, snake-oil hawkers, and lame skin-walkers;
of libertines and the children of libertines; of celibates and the children celibates;
of hash mongers and the children of hash mongers; whore-hounds
and the children of whore-hounds; of invalids and the children of invalids;
of the soiled and the children of the soiled; of the raised on high
and the children of the raised on high; of the most abased and the children
of the most abased; of the regurgitators and the children of regurgitators;
of the dirt eaters and the children of dirt eaters; of the hog-sloppers
and the children of hog-sloppers; of the soft-gutters and the children of soft-
gutters;
of silk-wormers and the children of silk-wormers; of rakes and the children of
rakes;
of barefoot sandal-bearers and the children of barefoot sandal-bearers;
of juveniles and the children of juveniles; of zealots and the children of zealots!
Foreigner, what do you know about congregations?

Fine are the stone-cutters of Qishāra that hack
whole cities out of the quarries of Anbūr.

Fine are the nomadic shepherds whose herds and flocks graze in the foothills
and are grazed upon by foothill folk and the beyond-foothill folk.

Fine are the aṭṭārs of Dunyā busy extracting musk from the glandular excretions
of gazelles, chameleons and crocodiles; extracting amber from the tracts of sperm,
hump-back and other fat fruit of the Cerulean; extracting myrrh, frankincense,
labdanum, camphor and copaiba gum-resin; extracting aetheroleum of sassafras
and cassia bark; of clove, hop, hyssop, marjoram, manuka; of anise, flax and
nutmeg,
of cedar, agar, rose and sandalwood; of tea tree, melaleuca, and eucalyptus.
How busy are the hands of the aṭṭārs of Dunyā!

Fine are the glass-blowers busy blowing and staining macro and microcosmic
hylic wonders and spherical oddities; blowing and staining exquisite murals

of the sacred and the profane; blowing instruments for the physician and the distiller
and the astronomer and the diviner and the poppy-farmer and the navigator out at sea.

Fine are the tanners of Qishāra busy harvesting, curing, soaking, liming, scudding, deliming, bating, drenching, pickling and finishing their rawhides that on the backs of bodies will keep warm kin and valley-folk all throughout the punishing deep-drag winter months.

Fine are the scribe novitiates of Buyutāt and their postulating pedagogues syllogizing in the fora of their academies, keeping records of histories and treatises, systematically collecting and copying folk anthologies and sacred texts and manuals of the esoteric and exoteric sciences, then preserving and cataloguing them in the great Library of Buyutāt.

Fine are their rhetoricians who spin their ways into the courts of regents, ladies, lords, materōns and paterōns, who place them on scales and are paid their weight in gold to spin sycophantically at their whim and pleasure.

Fine are the singers and the pipers and the lutenists and the harpists and the mizmārists and the reed-flautists and the gourd-banjoists and the lithophonists and the bullroarers and the lyrist and the water organists and the conch shell trumpeters and the metallophonists and the ocarinists and the qānūnists and the rabābists and the kamānjanists of Buyutāt's grand conservatory founded before the founding of the City, sent across the vast Earth of the Zagra Valley to pluck archetypes out of the aether and leave in their trails free-floating traces of the myriad names of the Emancipator.

Fine are the weavers of Qishāra who spin royal-purple brocade from the silk of Yusrāwan silkworms and with gold from the mines of the Tā'ifa Plateaus, but who also spin frocks and tunics and cloaks and breeches and habits for the coarse carefree folk of Dārwāsīn who are truly the precious gem-and-metal boon of the Zagra Valley.

Fine are the grammarians, linguists, philologists, genealogists, who track the ins and outs-- the foreign the domestic the common the exotic the banned and the permissible; the sound the confuted the plain the perfect the imperfect the pluperfect the conjured the ordinary and the extraordinary; the simple the past and present participle the future tense the glottal the palatal the vocalized the unvocalized the terse and the drawn out; the borrowed the stolen the right way the wrong way the cursive the discursive the modified the unmodified the living the extinct the obtuse the acute and the radicalized.

Fine are the artisans-- the sculptors, engravers, silver, brass and copper-workers, potters, jewellers, mandala mappers whose hands move by the will of the Mover,

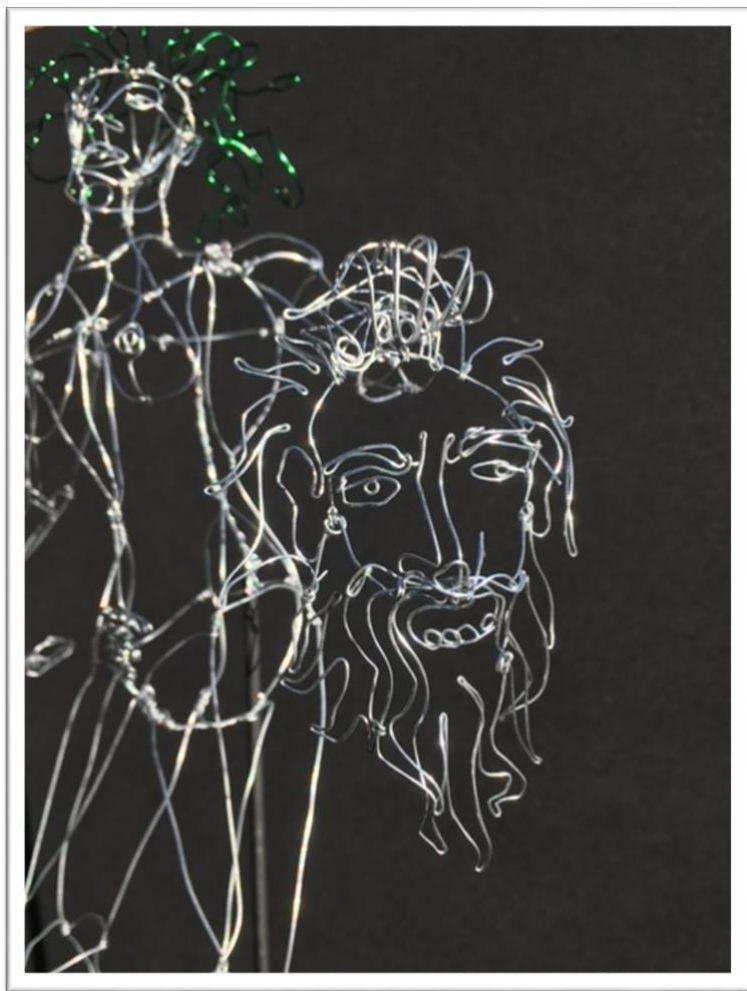
whose creations spew from the fount of the Creator, whose surgical precision vies with that of the heavenly bodies in their fixed courses back to the Real through whom their creation occurred; whose kilns bake and double bake earthenware for the homestead, bricks for the brick-layers, and canopic jars for the priests and the shamans.

Fine are Dār-wāsīn's academies of secular and sacred sciences at Jawāzayn and at Buyutāt and at Dunyā and at Qishāra; fine are their mathematicians, engineers, astronomers, astrologers, architects, calligraphers, cartographers and fine are their women and men of letters at the zenith of their influence; fine are their vying schools of jurisprudence, and fine are their head-butting exegetes, compilers and traditionists.

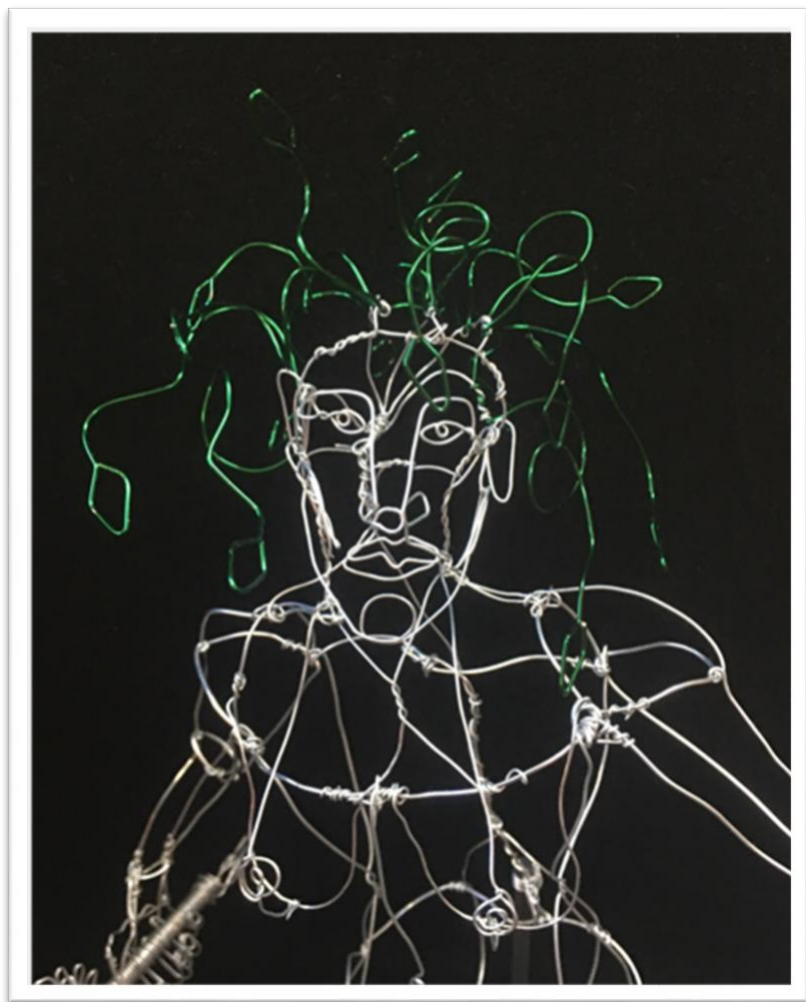
Fine are the meeting houses and courtyards of the peripatetic schools and fine are their faculties of naturalists, rationalists, logicians, rhetoricians, ethicists, transcendentalists, occultists, metaphysicians, cosmologists and numerologists.

Ask me again, foreigner, of the fineries of Dār-wāsīn. But hear this time through the All-Hearing and behold through the All-Seeing! And if you would speak, speak in the name of the Wise, the Knowing, and by the tongue of the Eloquent and the Sublime. And when it is time to listen once more, be inwardly with the Tranquil and the Patient. Remember that the boundaries of Dār-wāsīn are a complete figment of your steadily-ripening imagination.

DIEGO SHARE-VARGAS
Medusa with Poseidon Head



Medusa



CHELSIE B. NUNN
Check Check 123

check red, check white, check blue
stripes on the side of our Opryland bus
those colors never fade
but the sun had done a hot number on them
we were American
we brought the gospel to
people of the deep woods
Saturdays and Sundays packed
with subwoofers and microphone cases
black egg crates like cradles
kept the sound equipment babies safe during
travel--violent stops at red lights
no match for these bad boys
clickety clack closures all over those boxes
meant nothing could harm the investment
my folks had made
to live this humble life
microwave oven bolted to the cabinet
we were like sailors
everything had to be bolted or clasped
as the ship swayed, so did our things
so did we sway
this is where I learned the word 'reverb'
it's an echo during sound check
no one appreciates reverb because
you have to hear your own self singing
inconveniently as you're singing
mocking yourself, impossible to ignore
He leadeth me, O blessed tho't
yo ho yo ho and a bottle of rum

While My Parents Sang

call me a lyrical architect
constructing houses out of hymnals
I sat in pews by myself
an overpopulated bathtub
soaked in perfume, cologne, perfume, etc.
puddled tears of everyone crying
amen or hallelujah
so much screaming
bodies crammed together
a perfumed raucous heat
Wrigley's Juicy Fruit
stuck in everyone's hair
juicy fruit heads on the floor
juicy fruit heads thrown backwards
juicy fruit heads wrapped around
other juicy fruit heads

I hated putting on that red coat
when it was time to go

I'll Wear Real Versace One Day

I imagined being the church custodian
after the parade of kneeling bodies
passed through the aisles waving
dropping candies from their squeezed pockets
digging for more in their grandmas' purses
wrappers on the pews and floor
decorated floats all congregated
out in the parking lot, smoking cigarettes
then, I would walk the opposite direction
away from their dresses, their suits, their ashtray mouths
towards the empty sanctuary with a vacuum
trash bag tied to my belt loop because my
uniform was different
I wore overalls with a folded bandana hanging
from my back pocket to wipe my sweat
bent down to collect the shiny Juicy Fruit wrappers
as if they could be recycled
melted down and molded into silver chains
knockoff Versace Medusa coins around my neck
people wouldn't just call me a sinner
they would call me a sweet, fancy one

Love Me, Love Me Not

Acrylic + Panel

40 in. x 18 in.



MELINDA R. SMITH
No One Loved 2020 More Than I Did



CONTRIBUTORS

Charlie Becker is a retired speech pathologist who now studies and writes poetry with the Community Literature Initiative in Los Angeles. He also has helped bring poetry to under-served high school students through the Living Writers Series and L.A. Unified School District. Charlie's first book of poetry and drawings, *Friends My Poems Gave Me*, was published by World Stage Press in 2016. He has also had poems published by Tofu Ink Arts Press *Passager Journal*, *Comstock Review*, *The Dandelion Review*, and *Silver Pinion*. Charlie lives with his partner, Aubry, in Laguna Woods, California.

Jerome Berglund is a writer and fine artist who cowrote a television pilot which at a festival for them received numerous accolades including best in show. He graduated summa cum laude from the University of Southern California's Cinema-Television Production program, with emphases in screenwriting and philosophy. Berglund is author of the collection *Plague Poems* and *Hack Haikus* and the chapbook *WILD/LIFE*. His poetry appears in *Abstract Magazine*, *Bangalore Review*, *Barstow & Grand*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *deLuge*, the *Dewdrop*, the *Elevation Review*, *GRIFFEL*, *Lychee Rind*, *Meat for Tea*, *Nine Cloud Journal*, *Poet's Choice*, a *Quillkeeper's Press* anthology, *Raw Art Review*, the *Silent World in Her Vase*, *Tiny Seeds*, *Wild Roof* and most recently *O:JA&L*. A drama he penned was published in *Iris Literary Journal*. His short fiction has also been exhibited by the *Watershed Review*, *Paragon Press*, and the *Stardust Review*. Berglund is furthermore an established, award-winning fine art photographer, whose black and white pictures have been exhibited in galleries across New York, Minneapolis, and Santa Monica. In another life he worked as a visual effects artist for Lucasfilm and Dreamworks, and assisted on set at Lifetime and Comedy Central. He has the unique privilege of being able to say he was once Minnie Driver's driver. Berglund is a committed activist as well, and has been actively involved in the Occupy, Standing Rock, and Black Lives Matter movements, and supported grassroots efforts promoting the Green Party.

Jaap Blonk (born 1953 in Woerden, Netherlands) is a self-taught composer, performer and poet. His unfinished studies in mathematics and musicology mainly created a penchant for activities in a Dada vein, as did several unsuccessful jobs in offices and other well-organized systems. In the late 1970s he took up saxophone and started to compose music. A few years later he discovered his potential as a vocal performer, at first in reciting poetry and later on in improvisations and his own compositions. From around the year 1995 on Blonk started work with electronics, at first using samples of his own voice, then extending the field to include pure sound synthesis as well. He took a year off of performing in 2006. His renewed interest in mathematics made him start a research of the possibilities of algorithmic composition for the creation of music, visual animation and poetry. As a vocalist, Jaap Blonk is unique for his powerful stage presence and keen grasp of structure, even in free improvisation. He has performed around the world, on all

continents. With the use of live electronics, and sometimes projection of visuals, the scope and range of his concerts has acquired a considerable extension. Blonk's recorded / published output comprises some 60 titles: CDs, vinyl, books and cassettes. From his sound poetry scores he developed an independent body of visual work, which has been exhibited and collected in books. See tofuink.com to experience Jaap's brilliant recordings.

Claire Blotter represented San Francisco in National Poetry Slams in Chicago, Boston & SF. She has published 3 chapbooks and teaches poetry writing and performance. A 2018 Finalist for the Fischer Poetry Prize, she judged the 2020 competition.

Liz Duran Boubion, MFA, RSMIT is a multimedia dance-theater artist, presenter and Registered Somatic Movement Therapist dedicated to the practice of liberation through the body in relation to self, other and the world at large. As a Chicana and queer choreographer currently based in the San Francisco Bay Area, Ms. Boubion is making a bridge between several communities by placing value on identity, ecology and radical aesthetics through personal narratives, ritual performance and political art intervention. Her choreography, under the name of the Piñata Dance Collective founded in 2011, includes a body of work developed as deconstructed Piñata rituals, historically rooted and serving as a container for the creative process within the context of impermanence, adaptation and survival. She holds a bachelors of dance from CSU Long Beach, a MFA interdisciplinary art from California Institute of Integral Studies, is an associate teacher of the Tamalpa Institute and she serves as the founding artistic director of the Festival of Latin American Contemporary Choreographers (FLACC) which is heading into its 8th season this Fall. See www.lizboubion.org and www.flaccdanza.org

Francesco Capussela in an Italian author class 1996. In 2021 his poem The Soldier's Sandals is printed in SURVIVAL, the Annual Winning Poetry Anthology by Hammond House Publishing, and his poem Statue of Slavery published by the International Human Rights Art Festival. Francesco is also a multi award-winning screenwriter and lives between Italy and the US.

M.P. Carver is a poet and visual artist from Salem, MA. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in the Lily Poetry Review, Jubilat, and 50Haikus, among other journals. Her chapbook, *Selachimorpha*, was published by Incessant Pipe in 2015.

Chalk Mafia came to be 2 years ago when street chalk artists Lori Antoinette and Jacque Keith DuBois, sitting around after an exhilarating day of chalking, decided it was time for them to get matching chalk-related tattoos. Fast friends since they met at the first Pasadena Chalk Festival (then called Chalk on the Walk), back in 1993, they kicked around several ideas, "chalkalisciousness", "chalktastic duo", "chalkadoscious", and so many other such treasures. Suddenly Keith blurted out "Chalk Mafia!" Screeeeech!

"That's it!" Keith's next statement sealed the deal, "And I'm the

CHALKFATHER!" Brilliant!

So off they went to see fellow chalker and fabulous tattoo artist, Lesley Perdomo (@pacificangelart) for some ink action.

When their "chalk family" saw what they had done, several of them asked if they could also be "Chalk Mafiosos". Answer? Unequivocally and resoundingly, YES! And the Chalk Mafia as a group was born.

Lori Antoinette had for many years been interested in creating a forum/website for streetpainters to increase their visibility as viable working professionals (yes, for money/actual dollars, not because "it'll help build your portfolio"), to make a listing so artists could be found by parties interested in booking their talents, and to share their multi-faceted and diverse talents with the public, beyond just chalking. She actually did create a website for these lofty goals a few years back, but her "real job" schedule allowed limited time, making it difficult to keep up.

With the sudden formation of the "Chalk Mafia", a new opportunity opened up and now, being a full-time artist, Lori can better facilitate her dream.

The Chalk Mafia has become a place for streetpainters to not only be seen and show their wonderful talents, but more importantly, to come together to share valuable insights, job/event leads, recent works, and tools of the trade with each other as well as build a strong network and new friendships.

Lori Antoinette and Jacque Keith's tattoo dream has grown to be a collection of 340+ fine street chalk artists from countries all around the globe, and it's still growing!

To see our members and some cool images of the artists at work and play, visit www.ChalkMafia.com Our presence is also on Instagram and Facebook at Chalk Mafia (@chalkmafia)

To any streetpainters, chalk event organizers and assisting staff out there, we invite you to find our private group, "We Are Chalk Mafia" on Facebook. Just answer the two questions, it's that simple. (note: the group is exclusive to chalk artists and those affiliated with chalk art. All others, we cordially invite you to follow us on our regular Chalk Mafia social media.) Thank you.

Chalk Mafia, killing ignorance with chalk!

Susan Michele Coronel is a NY-based poet and educator. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in publications including *Spillway 29*, *The Inflectionist Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *The Night Heron Barks*, *Prometheus Dreaming*, *One Art*, *Funicular*, *TAB Journal*, *Ekphrastic Review*, and *Passengers Journal*. In 2020, she received a Parent Poet fellowship from Martha's Vineyard

Institute of Creative Writing. Her poetry was longlisted for Palette Poetry's 2021 Sappho Award. She is currently working on a manuscript of her first book.

Keith Edwards was born in New York City and living in Albania. For Keith the most exciting element of creating his "Poster Arte" is extracting a world from the photos he takes and imbuing the "canvas" with his interpretation of it as his new world.

K. Eltinaé is a Sudanese poet of Nubian descent. His debut won The 2019 Beverly Prize for International Literature (Eyewear Publishing) and Muftah's Creative Writing Competition, co-winner of the 2019 Dignity Not Detention Prize (Poetry International). Winner of the 2021 Tofu Ink Arts Press Poetry Prize in Honor of Theatre Visionary Reza Abdoh.

Adele Evershed was born in a small town in South Wales and now lives in a small town in Connecticut. The towns have absolutely nothing in common apart from Adele and lots of trees. Her writing can be found in a number of places online and in print.

Frank William Finney's work has appeared in Calliope, The Disappointed House, Lucky Jefferson, Tofu Ink Arts Press, and elsewhere. His chapbook *The Folding of the Wings* is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.

Margaret Hartley is a cartoonist and painter. My work has appeared in New Zealand and the USA. I try to stand in my garden with a cup of tea every day.

Aaron Hoge is a visual artist and a writer. With over 40 years of art-making and multiple performances and exhibitions, Aaron is a seasoned professional artist. Using the mediums of drawing, painting, performance, video, writing, and photography Aaron's work explores intersections between loneliness, becoming, homosocial relationships, and futurity.

Drawing inspiration from a wide range of sources such as cave paintings, graffiti, Expressionism, Imagism, Vorticism, English Literature, Western Esotericism, and Philosophy, his studio practice represents an abiding interest in language, text, choreography, semantics, poetry, and the creation of striking visual images. Aaron becomes what he is through his visual art and writing. His lifework is the integration of all aspects of the human personality.

Jones Irwin teaches Philosophy and Education in Dublin, Republic of Ireland. He has published original monographs on philosophy and aesthetics. He has published poetry most recently in Tofu Ink Arts Press: Spring & Summer 2021, Poetry London, Showbear Family Circus, Passengers Journal, Festival Review, Plainsongs, The Dewdrop and fiction/creative nonfiction have recently been published in Kairos Magazine, The Decadent Review, and Critical Read. His vision is of a postmodern existentialist, with a dash of noir mixed in with a progressivist ethic.

His new book is on how Paulo Freire's educational philosophy has influenced social and political thought in contemporary Italy.

Brian L. Jacobs is a poet and editor of Tofu Ink Arts Press. Brian grew up in Southern California and has been teaching GATE English and Humanities for twenty-nine years in both K-12 and college settings. He lives in Pasadena and has been married for 16 years to Thye, a Professor of Nursing and a Nurse Practitioner. Both Thye and Brian are currently working on their PhD's. Brian was the assistant to the Poet's Allen Ginsberg and Julie Patton, during his time at Naropa in the mid 90's. During that time he walked half way around the world while on a peace pilgrimage with Buddhist monks commemorating WWII visiting Europe, the Middle East and India. Brian is also a three time Fulbright Scholar, which has allowed him to study in Brazil, where he studied its water issues; China, where he studied its vast 10,000 year history; and Japan, spending time to participate in a case study in one of its small towns near the Japanese Alps. He had also earned a National Endowment of Humanities grant to China, studying its philosophies and histories while living in Xi'an. He subsequently participated in a grant from Fund For Teachers visiting South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho, plus earning other various grants that have taken him to places all over in the United States. He also taught teachers at a university in Fuzhou, China for five summers under grants from SABEH. Subsequently he has earned an Earthwatch grant to the rainforest of Ecuador, to study climate change and caterpillars and he recently earned another Earthwatch Senior Fellow Grant to teach teachers in Acadia, Maine studying climate change and crabs. Brian has been to 110 countries and had visited all 50 states, practices Yoga and is a proud vegan. Brian's poetry has been published in several publications including, *Shiela-Na-Gig, the Crank, The South Florida Florida Poetry Journal, Progenitor Art and Literary Journal, GRIFFEL, Foxtail, Rip Rap, The Bangalore Review, Sunspot Lit, Anthropolod, Pa'Lante, Dark Moon Lilith Press, Black Tape Press, Genre, Inky Blue/Celery, Red Dancefloor Press, Entelechy, 1844 Pine Street, Pasta Poetics, Trouble and Praxis*. Brian marinates in inspiration from Gilles Deleuze, Richard Rorty, Audre Lorde, Edouard Glissant, Reza Abdoh, Marlon Riggs, Tim Miller, John Fleck, Karen Finley, Essex Hemphill, Patricia Smith, James Baldwin, Walt Whitman, Pedro Almodovar, Keith Haring, NEA Four, Justin Phillip Reed, The Beats, Paul Celan, Artist Nick Cave, Sam Rami, Jean Rhys, Erasure, House Music, Robert Duncan, The Smiths, Lee Edelman, John Waters, Lana Del Rey, Patti Smith, Michel Foucault, American Visionary Arts Museum, Kurt Vonnegut, ACT UP, Daniel Day Lewis, Radiohead, PJ Harvey, Lady Gaga, Zhang Huan, Arthur Danto, Derek Jarman, Kiki Smith, Marc Almond, Nina Hagen, Grace Jones, This Mortal Coil, Boy George, Bjork, Divine, Tracey Thorn, and Florence Welch.

Joseph L. has more than ten years of experiences in branding, marketing and retail communications. He lives in both Singapore and Malaysia. In 2019, he started his own branding and marketing boutique agencies, JLTy Atelier (Singapore) and JLTy Marketing (Malaysia). Specialized in digital/ visual communications, he is mobile-tech savvy, skilled in typography, pre-press, printing and product photography. From 2010 to 2013, he was a part-time volunteer of Project X, a human rights organization based in Singapore that provides social, emotional, and health services to people in the sex industry. A linguistic graduate and polyglot, he speaks English, Mandarin, Malay and French. He has passion for the arts and travel, and occasionally, writes poetry.

Virginia Laurie is a student at Washington and Lee University whose work has been published in *Apricity*, *LandLocked*, *Panoply*, *Phantom Kangaroo* and *Merrimack Review*.

Dixie Longate hails from Mobile, Alabama where she lives with her three kids who she's almost sometimes ever proud of: Wynona, Dwayne and Absorbine, Jr. She started selling Tupperware as part of the conditions of her parole back in 2001. Within a few years, she became the top selling Tupperware representative in the US. When a friend of hers told her she should turn her living room party into a theatrical show, she laughed so hard at the idea, she almost had to put down her drink. "Dixie's Tupperware Party" soon opened off-Broadway in 2007 to both raving fans and rave reviews. The show earned Dixie a Drama Desk Award Nomination for Outstanding Solo Performance. She lost to Laurence Fishburne. Really. Look it up.

The following year, with plastic bowls in hand, she embarked on a small tour to some theaters in the US. Twelve years later, that tour was still running and had become one of the longest-running off-broadway tours in history. Covid put a halt to the live shows for the time being which meant Dixie had to go back to her trailer in Mobile to spend time with her kids 24/7.

It was while she was mixing a cocktail in the baby's room one morning that she thought, "Just because I can't be on a stage in front of people doesn't mean I can't be on a stage not in front of people but with people watching anyway." And a new show was born. "Dixie's Happy Hour" is her third major show from America's Sixth Favorite redhead. Her second show, "Never Wear a Tube Top While Riding A Mechanical Bull (and 16 other things I learned while I was drinking last Thursday)" was originally produced by the Denver Center for the Performing Arts which Dixie discovered is really hard to say after 8 alcoholic Shirley Temples. She has now ridden that bull all over this great country and looks forward to mounting it again when this whole crazy period in our lives is behind us. In the meantime, she wanted to give everyone a big hug even though she can't do that in real life. You'll find that hug in "Dixie's Happy Hour." dixiestupperwareparty.com

Jeff Mann lives in Fort Erie, Ontario just across from Buffalo. My studio is a shipping container. I use cars and car infrastructure as the basis of most of my work because I believe there are far too many cars in the world.

Andromeda Mendoza emigrating to Houston, Tx in 1989 from the Philippines, Andromeda worked to cultivate her talents in the arts. Exploring various creative avenues has led her to cement her love of photography. Her style is heartfelt—driven by anything that moves her.

Megan Merchant's latest collection, "Before the Fevered Snow", was released at the start of the pandemic with Stillhouse Press. She is an Editor at Pirene's Fountain and The Comstock Review. You can find her work at meganmerchant.wix.com/poet.

Janet Meskin is a native Californian; a once-upon-a-time freeway flyer teaching modern dance and improvisation in the Los Angeles, Santa Monica and Orange county community colleges. After receiving her MFA in Dance at CWRU in Cleveland, Ohio she left her legacy as Founder/Director of SCANDALS with Janet Meskin and Friends. It is still alive and well today (with a new name) - 37 years strong! Janet studied with many of the modern dance icons including Erick Hawkins and Lucia Dlugoszewski. After 32 years teaching and training dancers, 17 of those with LAUSD she has retired gracefully into a plethora of art forms, mindfulness meditations and qigong healing. Janet has been published in Tofu Ink Arts Press Spring 2021 Issue.

Dana Miller is a wicked wordsmith, giggling provocateuse, and mega-melomaniac from Atlanta, Georgia. Her poetic syllables like to trundle in the wilds—usually in search of a smackerel or two. On their way, they have found themselves featured in *Postscript Magazine*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *Fairy Piece*, *Sledgehammer Lit*, *The Pangolin Review*, *FERAL: A Journal of Poetry and Art*, *Small Leaf Press*, and *Nauseated Drive*. When not wielding a lethal pen, Dana adores surf culture, Australian grunge rockers, muscle cars, Epiphone guitars, glitter, Doc Martens, and medieval-looking draft horses with feathered feet. Oxford, England is her spirit-home and Radiohead is holding the last shard of her girlhood heart.

Chelsea B. Nunn is a LGBTQIA+ artist and educator working and living in Knoxville, TN. She has served as a public visual art educator and mentor for the past ten years. She is a founding member of the artist collaborative formerly known as The Vacuum Shop Studios, where she has practiced painting for the past seven years. Her artwork and writing primarily investigate the sublime and delicate nature of the mental landscape, which includes but isn't limited to identity, emotionality, and relationship narratives. Her writing has previously been featured in Tofu Ink Arts Press Spring Issue, *The Quaranzine: Poetry in the Time of Covid-19* (Fearsome Critters 2020) and *Decomp Journal* (Issue 1 2021). Explore more of her

artwork and writing at www.chelsienunn.com. This manuscript contains three selected poems from my chapbook titled *Candy Carpeted Hymns*, a memoir of the years of my childhood growing up in rural Appalachia on a renovated tour bus as my parents traveled to sing gospel. The artwork I have provided is titled *Love Me, Love Me Not*, a painting that explores the complex nature of being queer in rural Appalachia--beloved as a bucolic landscape, discarded as gaudy golden trinkets at a yard sale. Someone's trash is always another's treasure as they say. Unfortunately, I am drawing this analogy towards the historic attitude of queerness in Appalachia.

Ashley Parker Owens is an Appalachian writer, poet, and artist. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from Eastern Kentucky University and an MFA in Visual Arts from Rutgers University. She is an Honorary Winner of the 2021 Tofu Ink Poetry Prize that honors Theatre Visionary Reza Abdoh.

Andre F. Peltier is a Lecturer III at Eastern Michigan University where he has taught African American Literature, Afrofuturism, Science Fiction, Poetry, and Freshman Composition since 1998. He lives in Ypsilanti, MI with his wife, children, turtles, dog, and cat. His poetry is forthcoming in The Great Lakes Review, La Piccioletta Barca, Big Whoopie Deal, Prospectus, Tofu Ink Press, and an anthology from Quillkeepers Press. In his free time, he obsesses about soccer and comic books.

Octavio Quintanilla is the author of the poetry collection, *If I Go Missing* (Slough Press, 2014). His poetry, fiction, translations, and photography have appeared, or are forthcoming, in journals such as Tofu Ink, Poetry Northwest, Salamander, RHINO, Alaska Quarterly Review, Pilgrimage, and Green Mountains Review. His visual work has been exhibited in various galleries and art spaces such as Southwest School of Art, Presa House Gallery, and Equinox Gallery. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of North Texas and teaches Literature and Creative Writing in the M.A./M.F.A. program at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas. octavioquintanilla.com Instagram @writeroctavioquintanilla , Twitter @OctQuintanilla

Carol Radsprecher's images combine figurative and abstract elements. She earned her MFA in painting from Hunter College, CUNY. A longtime painter, she discovered the wonders of digital image-making and found that media well suited to her need to make a succession of rapidly-evolving narrative images based on distorted representations of the human body, especially the female body. Her work has appeared in several solo shows and numerous group shows and has been published in print and/or online publications. Her website is <http://www.carolradsprecher.com>.

Suzanne S. Rancourt, (Abenaki/Huron descent,) inspired by Ionesco, & Beckett, author of 3 books: *Old Stones, New Roads*, Main Street Rag Publishers 2021, *murmur at the gate*, Unsolicited Press 2019, and *Native Writers' Circle* of the

Americas First Book Award winner, Billboard in the Clouds. A USMC and Army Veteran, she is widely published. www.expressive-arts.com

JR Rhine is a poet, musician, and educator living in Asheville, North Carolina. His first children's book, "Jimmy Loves His Long Hair" is now available online. He tweets @jarjarrhine and is on Instagram @jrrrhinepoetry.

Kyleen Russell's previous publication includes a creative nonfiction lyric essay, "Little Peanut, Little Monkey," in Shooter Literary Magazine. She has a BA in English and currently resides in St. Paul, Minnesota with her boyfriend Reid and cat Nugget.

Ken Edward Rutkowski lives in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. His work has most recently appeared in Tofu Ink, The Fiction Pool, Synchronized Chaos and forthcoming in Fiction International.

Micaela Silberstein is a NYC raised, California living, bilingual dyslexic. Her writing and films have been accepted into a number of festivals, most recently including: Scriptation Showcase and The Sacramento Film Festival.

Ellen Skilton is a professor of education and poet whose work has appeared in *The Dillydown Review*, *The Dendrop*, and *Rebelle Society*. She is in the second year of an MFA Program in Creative Writing at Arcadia University. She is a chocolate snob, a swimmer, and lives in Philadelphia.

Joey Salomone was born and raised in the Midwest. Being homeschooled, Joey grew up spending much of his time reading and writing. He started writing poetry during his teenage years and continued throughout college and into adulthood. He currently lives and works in Kansas City, MO as a nurse and freelance writer.

Shalini Singh is trying to find how to fit Law, which was her main chunk in the professional world into her writings and how she can make finances and tech creative enough for a telling. She thinks some Laws are painful experiences and most times they should not exist. Because Shalini could not change the world with Law as her spouse, she wishes to change her world by her writings, however lonely it gets.

Melinda R. Smith came late to painting through the medium of poetry. It was while designing the cover for her collection of poems *Tiny Island* that she became entranced with visual imagery. Soon, she was working exclusively in a visual medium. In her work, Melinda explores the liminal regions between reality and fantasy, using tropes strongly reminiscent of childhood play. With her background in poetry and theater, she conceives of her pictures as staged theatrical scenes that tell archetypal stories whose roots reach for the dark core of memory and truth. Melinda was born and raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and has lived in Los Angeles, California, for over 25 years. She can be found at melindarsmith.com.

These paintings were a reaction to urban life in an industrial loft. I took the window/stage/theater motif of the giant glass wall of my studio/home near downtown Los Angeles and turned it into a fantasy of having returned to the humid, green Michigan summers of my childhood. Once again, the window became a space onto which I was able to project what stirred within my soul, and, through the paintings, I lived vicariously, while coming to terms with my industrial surroundings.

Maya J. Sorini, MS is a medical student with a background in trauma surgery research and Narrative Medicine. Her poetry has appeared in Tendon Magazine and as part of Resilience Dance Company St. Louis's performance, "Stanzas and Sculptures."

Cassie Premo Steele is a lesbian, ecofeminist, mother, poet, novelist, and essayist who writes on the themes of trauma, healing, creativity, mindfulness and the environment. The author of 16 books, she is a recipient of the Archibald Rutledge Prize, named after the first Poet Laureate of South Carolina, where she lives with her wife.

George L. Stein is a photographer from the greater NYC area focused on street, art, urban decay, surreal and alt/ portrait photography. He has been published in a number of literary magazines including Tofu Ink Arts Press Summer 2021.

Ali Telmesani is a PhD candidate in Creative Writing at Swansea University in South Wales. Author of House of Abbas: The Legacy of Harun al-Rashid (Claritas Books), his research interests focus on Eastern and Islamic mysticism. He has been published in Tofu Ink Spring Issue.

Lauren Thomas is a Welsh poet whose writing is in The Crank Literary Magazine, Briefly Zine, Re-side Magazine, Abridged and Green Ink Poetry. She has work coming in Dreich's Summer Anywhere anthology and Songs of Love and Strength by TheMumPoemPress.

Stacy Thomas lives in Squamish B.C., Canada. She runs a takeout joint with her partner Nicki, and spends a lot of her time being in, and looking at water. She grew up in the Okanagan which means she has trouble being anywhere that isn't beautiful.

Rebecca Edmonson Vance is an artist who explores feminism and the self. Her work is inspired by pre-history, antiquity, pop culture, nature, and cosmos. Her art explores ways to present real figures that both herself and others can see their own bodies represented.

Lola Wang is a junior in high school at the Taipei American School in Taiwan. Her interests include art history, writing poetry, golf and creating art.

Sarah Sophia Yanni writing has appeared in DREGINALD, Maudlin House, Feelings, Full Stop, Tofu Ink Arts Press Spring and Summer 2021 Issues and others. A finalist for BOMB Magazine's 2020 Poetry Contest, she lives and works in Los Angeles. sarahsophiayanni.com

Brian Yapko is a lawyer whose poems have appeared in Tofu Ink, Prometheus Dreaming, Wingless Dreamer, Gyroscope, Cagibi, Society of Classical Poets, Chained Muse, Abstract Elephant, Poetica and other publications. He lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

TOFU^{INK} ARTS PRESS

absorb possibilities



Tofu Ink Arts Press, a not for profit celebratory venture aims at publishing poems and other arts of un humdrum'd inclusive rhizomatic errant possibilities. We support work of established and emerging poets and artists. We strive for tri annual issues.

We are looking for polished art and poetics that are absorbed in possibilities. We are committed to amplifying voices of the under-represented and marginalized. Tofu Ink Arts Press is a member of CLMP, Poets & Writers, Association of Writers & Writing Programs and The Academy of American Poets.

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