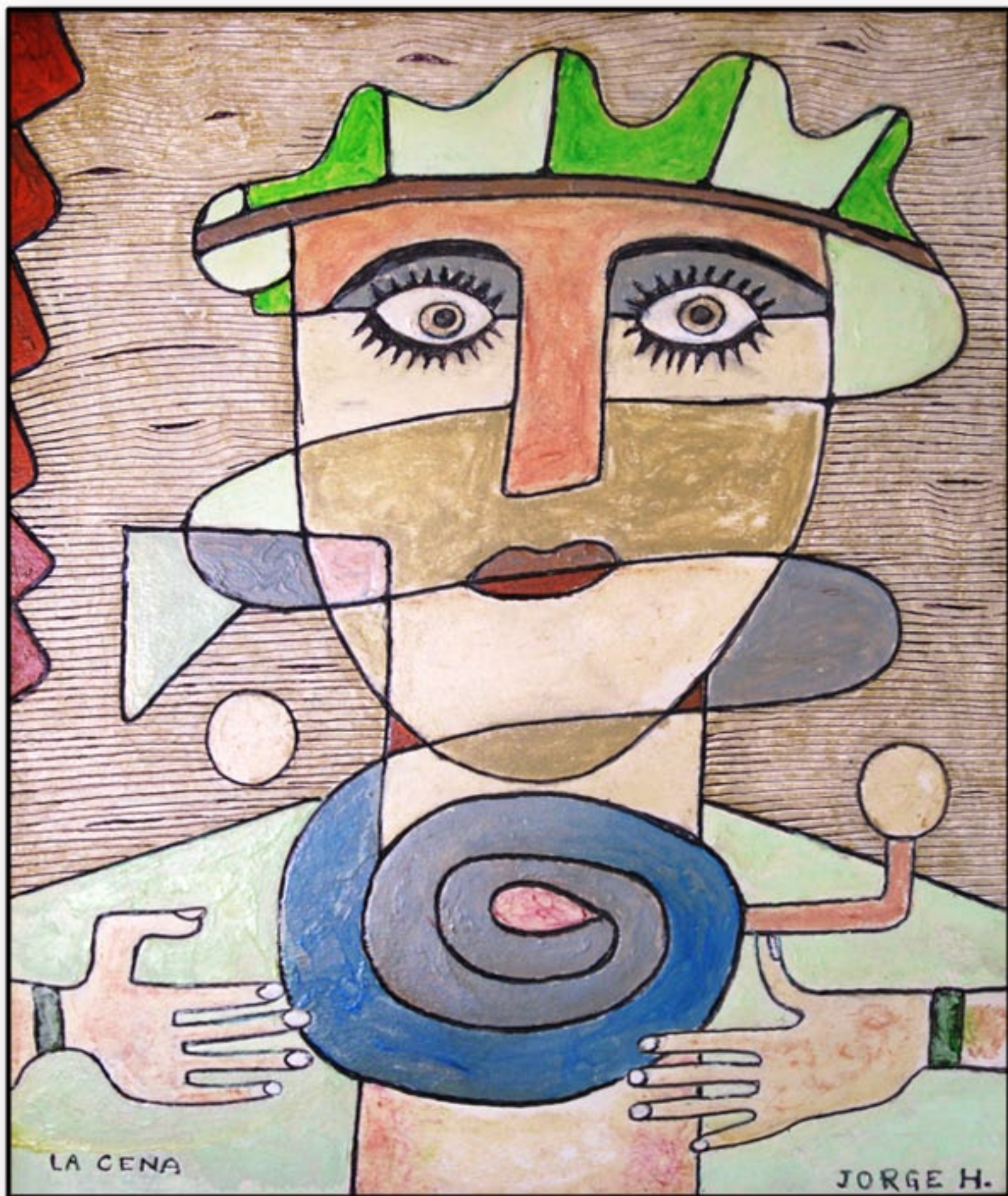


# CALIFORNIA

online



A GEORGE HITCHCOCK CELEBRATION • BLY • COLEMAN  
PAU-LLOSA • DIGBY • WILLARD • BERNSTEIN • GONZALEZ • HAIR  
KUHN • HEDGECOKE • SIPES • VASSILAKIS • LUX • SIMON  
KAUFMAN • ATWOOD • KAHL • KESSLER • HARMON • YORITA  
PETERS • ANDERSON • RUTSALA • LIPSITZ • WAYMAN • LAPPIN









“Caliban is hospitable to any writing which, when chewed,  
makes him hear music in the air.”

CALIBAN

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Collection of Joe Costa

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**CONTRIBUTORS’ ADVICE**





ROBERT BLY

**Smoke-Stained Fingers**

There is still time for the old days when the musician  
Stayed inside his bubble of joy, and the old men  
Threw cards down with their smoke-stained fingers.

Let's hope Brooklyn Bridge will remain standing,  
That Jacob marries either Rachel or Leah,  
And the Appalachians don't wear all the way down.

No one minds if we are scruffy and badly dressed.  
The old man who is checking names at the door  
Speaks only Hungarian, and is blind as well.

There is no telling how many hours are left to us.  
The plateaus in New Mexico lift a little each year.  
It's like hearing a dog barking from far away.

Some bird calls come straight through the walls.  
I don't know why we bother to listen to them  
When we've never heard our own cries.

Don't give up, friends. Somewhere inside us,  
Jacob is tending sheep on our old farm.  
The angels are still sending messages to Joseph.



WANDA COLEMAN

**On Cleaning Up All These Ashes in the Sand**

*for Ian Wayne, after E.E. Miller*

1.

What if I told you Rappacinni also had a son?  
Would you believe me?

2.

During Indian summer 1955, I decided to live life sideways—  
head pointing to Manhattan, heart in the West.

3.

My father takes me to Disneyland. He tells me America  
rises from a sea of blood. Learn to cry while you laugh.

4.

When I was a teenager, I was mother's keeper.  
I disappeared from the kitchen to make history.

5.

What is the difference between revolution and resolution?  
None.

6.

I learned retard intonation with a Dixie twang.  
Colorism makes clowns of us all.

7.

I taught Malcolm X how to fix a hex.  
Not everyone loves fingering on improper pianos.



8.

A lifetime of playing to empty auditoriums  
ignites a raging fire of intellect and verbosity.

9.

Diane Arbus lent me her eyes.  
I consulted my I Ching and found a world missing.

10.

White teeth and a big smile.  
Melodrama rides on my tongue.

11.

Fame made me an unknown woman.  
I don't get paid for describing misery. I don't get paid.

12.

Let me explain about Mami Wata.  
That will tell you why I'm here and not there.

13.

How long will I survive Los Angeles sans moolah?  
I'm holding my breath. Keep counting.

14.

Connubial love is a slow roast over hot wood  
while dancing from a noose. No escape.

15.

Mother died three years ago.  
She has been trying to reach me in my sleep.

16.

There is no poison I have not swallowed.  
I have known blackness.



**F. A. Nettlebeck Cento**

in my mind we're leaving

brutal destinies/living  
in a chicken coop stinking of incense

I wanted to live a million years  
so gone motherfuckers

all over the room kicking and rolling and  
way too fuzzy to remember  
what we thought was freedom

blue tangled in red  
lost in the bottle  
my face screaming  
empty before the meat

scared and lost still  
while out on the Avenida  
checking the mailbox

still

lacking the other/unfolding, flat  
wasted, no sick days left

and still

that ache won't stop, no one  
to ask for any kind of magic



RICARDO PAU-LLOSA

**Passion Fruit Man**

Get fancy with these new German knives  
and say goodbye to fingertips. With time  
the man will get fancy enough because, soon enough,  
even the knives know the hand they feed  
is not the hand to cut up. Better to stab  
filets and shrimp, artichokes and plastic.  
And those luscious fruit in pubic halves dancing  
on the wet marble slab.

Of course it broke his heart to find out  
the fruit was not at all about girls  
swinging like grass huts hip-deep in a typhoon,  
arms waving the waves onto reckless land.  
His penis, and not for the first time,  
had betrayed him on the theme of causality.  
It wasn't the fruit that got him

Where they were now, in deep Hialeah,  
disregarding the flat tire and the dead  
cellphone, comfy in room 25 of the Venus Motel  
with the only massage bed that takes American quarters  
instead of tokens. Like fruit, passion  
is such a martyr business, slayed long enough  
to want nothing more than a tart memory  
and a little following. Dog-ear the pages  
of that book over there so you know  
when to doze off again  
when you start reading it  
all over again, from the beginning.



## **Lion's Den Man**

At 51 the man buried his grandmother,  
no funeral, so his mother received  
respectful visitors all that week  
in his living room. He sat quietly,  
as he did as a child when grown-ups  
preferred to yak for hours, shuffling  
the epic stabs of exile—firing squads  
and tortures back home—with gossip's  
mothy wing dust and fashion scans.  
He stared from the marbled plastic beach ball  
of his deepest mind speechless  
as his mother conversed with the visiting  
lady, struck at the same mint of mind  
in the same tropic place, paged  
into the glacier of a baroque mirror.  
Mutely still as a brook stone grown moon-like,  
half always osseous in the solar wash  
and half murked in the fungal night,  
he could not catch so much as the sound  
of his own breath in the magnetic poles  
of his ears to scrawl down the sky  
of this opal moment. He sank  
undeservedly stunned that nothing had changed  
in the props, cues, script and lights  
on the hollow stage of Cuban conversation  
where monologues dueled and no one heard a thing  
the other said, for there was but one person  
in the audience, and he was a child, legs swinging  
beneath the velvet cliff of a creaky chair.



## **Sophia Man**

All bright people  
start dim in adolescence,  
wringing their mental hands  
over the color Blue.  
Is blue for me blue for you?,  
the promising lad would ask  
himself and the grin of priests  
trained to sniff the egg crack  
of philosophy. Much later  
he would say with aplomb,  
Camouflage is for philosophers  
who entertain  
the contaminations of mind to mind.  
Of course, he felt and downright planned  
the need to explain, to that semiotics  
major the night he read his poems  
in Savannah, he 29 and she 19.  
The blue of this obnoxious dress,  
he said taking the silken strap  
between the coin of his fingers,  
will always be private to us,  
but look, my dear, at lizards and octopi,  
praying mantises and other traffickers  
in seem, how they condone  
the common anchor of form.  
They fool all our eyes  
and those of appetite and refuge  
equally enough to spell a certainty  
and haunt proposal—that we can attain  
the Ion's link. Interpreter is electric,  
my dear, like this blue  
I so wish you too would wish to lose.



JOHN DIGBY

## **There Was No Great Quantity of Blood**



The friars entertained us on Sunday evening with their drunken frolics. Fifteen ladies were accommodated below Tierra Blanca for the purpose of buying a loophole which formed a cul-de-sac. In a performance of this kind I was able to display ability and enterprise sufficient to insure a good living with the ultimate idea of purchasing a useless life. About ten o'clock a policeman appeared and went home to give another policeman one soiled half-baked hole. The next day an adequate guard had written to a number of bats clinging by their teeth without food, clothes or shelter, asking if they were there at 7 o'clock the following morning. They turned their heads away and sang sweetly like lambs chewing the lost hours of a long Sunday afternoon.

After all that was said and done we started out with a man who was as slippery as soap. The others whose names crumbled at the slightest



touch kept the enemy from high roofs belonging to the Electric Light Company. Unfortunately considerably large holes flying over the entrance gates were shot away, bursting from the clouds. It was indeed beautiful.

Gibbon almost froze taking a sketch of it. Hastily packing everything into bags he was bound to his keeper with a glass of water fastened behind his chair. Hotter and hotter grew the air with so many oysters entering the bowels of the mountain where at last I reached the end and placed the “egg” in a pool of water.

Later that evening I shot every old woman with smaller teeth without a struggle, full length in a hammock, and enjoyed a late dinner in solitude down the valley. I decided not to continue my old profession selling candles or even my own socks tied in bundles for the use of frightening away those terrible names popping up unexpectedly around the campfire.





At my surprise, waking the following morning, I found my blanket spotted with blood. I saw it was Li Von Yumen Kettle of the vampire species. He seemed strong though he had no food for seven days. Here was a predicament; he had very little decay but with the visage of an apostle he made room for his exercise. Soon a spirit descended, measuring two feet, with thousands of panes of glass he showed me his head slung away in a pit where two long sharp tusks were placed far back in his mouth. Suddenly he flashed before me a photograph of an old school mate of mine. Indeed I was both horrified and fascinated for I saw a strange crouching figure known as "Old Stinky Blackpool," the writer of long-winded sonnets that had no verbs, nouns, adjectives, or pronouns but with a generous sprinkling of punctuation marks. I was confused and hardly had time to tie my shoelaces when Li Von Yumen's nostrils flared wide open. They appeared to be fitted as a semi-circular flap to be used as a perfect cupping-glass, endeavoring to capture my sweetheart's newly laundered smile. I grappled with his toggles and with extended wings I escaped capture at half-past-two in the rain with a mile or two to spare, a coloured shirt and a pair of trousers for feast-days.



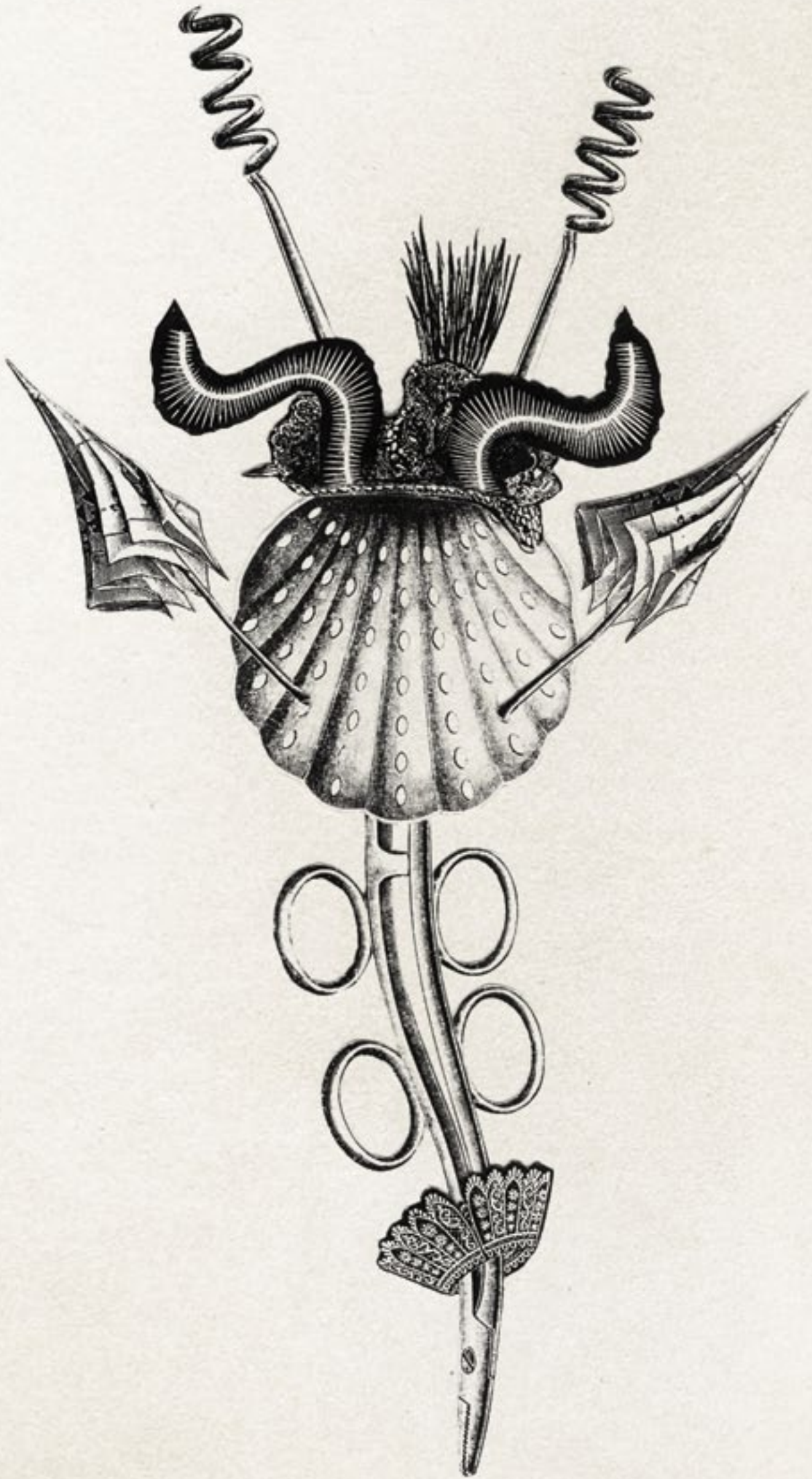


I now take this opportunity of enclosing a translation of one of these postcards which one of the leaders of this vile movement works to further his designs. "I am none other than the Nickel-Plated God of the 'Miserable Fishing Pool' come down in person to display my wealth. I purchase decrees of fate, disturbances, thin bricks, gum copal, plastic rubber ducks, weak white wine and an Indian in his blanket (cost twelve and a half cents), erecting telegraph poles so that the wreath of thunder can be appeased. I have known three times three or nine times nine, sitting on the floor makes satisfaction in chewing spirits of another world."

That day I concluded that so many distinguished themselves by occasionally setting fire to the pommel like a grand lady. This much have we achieved for the advancement of civilization and the happiness of the human race.







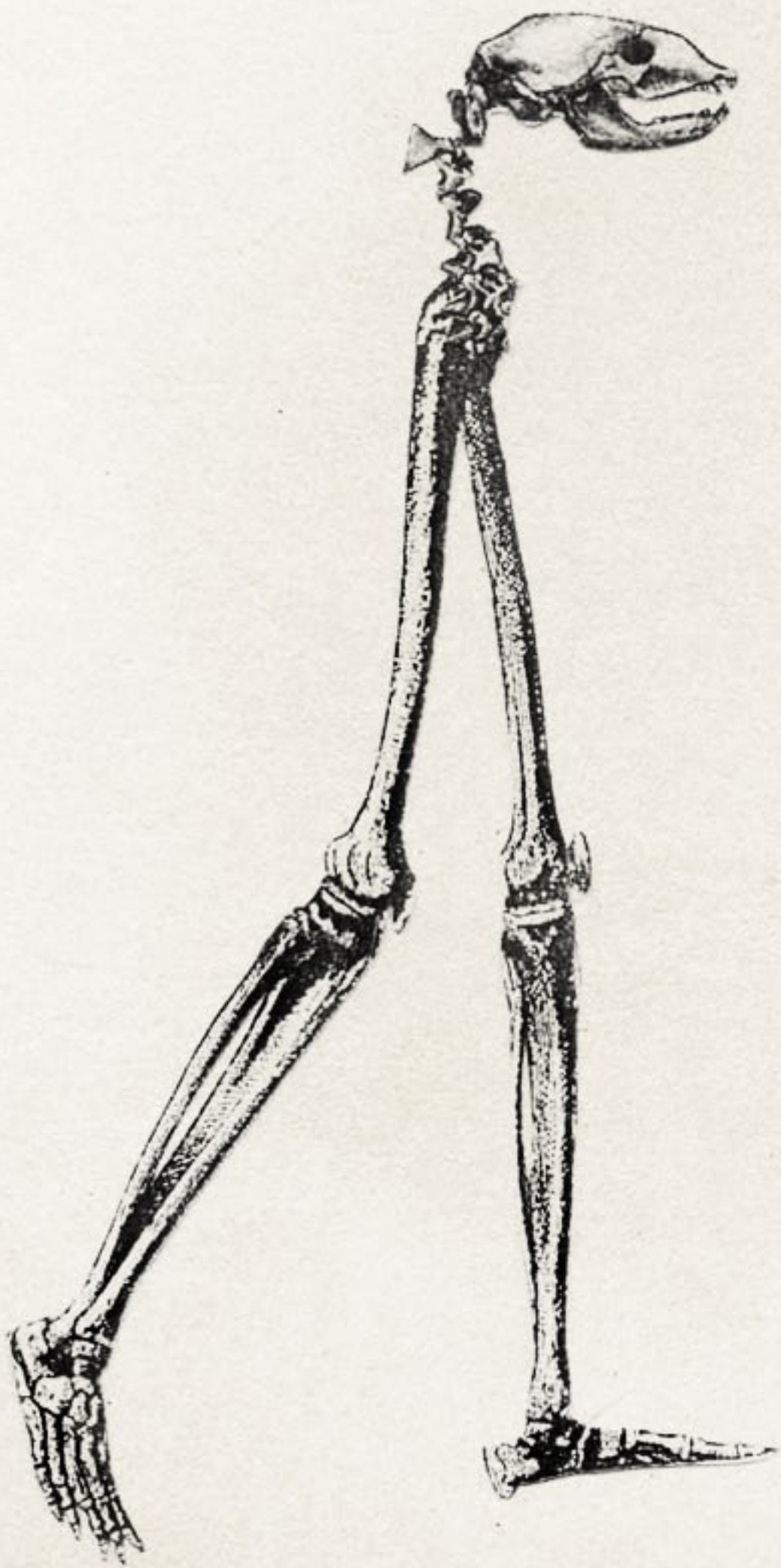
ABSURDITY by John Digby, collage, 2002





BEETS by John Digby, collage, 2002





SKULLMAN by John Digby, collage, 2002



NANCY WILLARD

## **Shedding the Human**

I

At night my lady calls the goats,  
The white goats grazing the blue pasture.

When I walk by, she hands me her coat.  
“Do not refuse me. This is what I do.”

When I take it, she follows her sisters.  
Nothing can hold her, nothing can hold her.

She was my lady of the blue pasture.  
She is my white goat on the holy mountain.

II

First the names went.  
Then the nouns, taking their baggage  
of fragrance and colors.  
Then the structure they lived in.  
Their tracks, wiped clean, vanished like snow.  
The stations like honeycombs stood empty  
till they too disappeared.  
The white room? Empty. Silenced.  
And far off, the bear began dancing.



## Advice to a Traveler

*“The buffalo suns himself on the black rock.  
He is so small he wants to marry my thumb.”*

J.P. Chapin, ***Celestial Ponds of Tibet***

By the Gate of Fishes the snake is sleeping.  
The one you're afraid of.  
The one with a thousand scales.  
In his scales the moon is rising,  
a thousand moons and each one dreaming of you.





CHARLES BERNSTEIN

**Sea Drift**

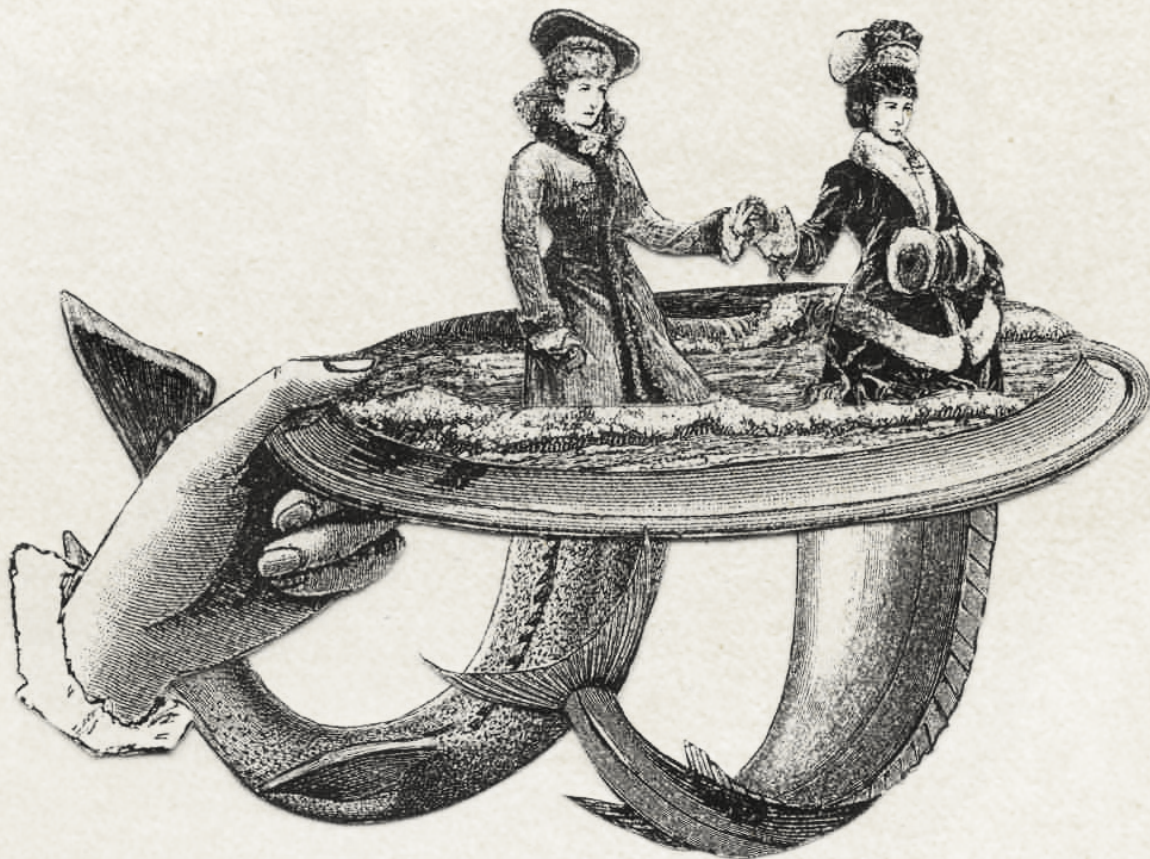
*After Whitman & after Darras, Messiaen, Asselineau*

Issue of oscillation—the incessant balance of cradling  
Beginning of cradling that balances itself without end  
Comes of cradle, perpetually balanced  
By the gorge of the mocker, his refusal musical  
Beginning of the goose of the bird-mocking, birth harmony  
Comes of the goose of the bird-mocking, birth musical  
By the midnight of the ninth month  
Beginning at the midnight of September  
Comes at September's midnight  
Some more lotion in the memory of the change of this bird  
Beginning of the souvenir or the bird that chants for me  
Of my memory of the bird who has sung for me



**And Quiet Flows the Soane**

The difficulty  
is mine  
having met you  
where rivers meet  
& being not of either one  
Rhone nor Soane  
nearer or far away  
bric nor brac  
for a millennial migraine  
as if confluence  
meant the ends are clear





## **It's Not My Bag**

It really bugs me when you say that, man.  
Like, I mean, it's not my bag, man. You are  
bumming me out. Maybe it's the other  
guy's bag, maybe it's your bag, man, but it's  
not my bag. No how no way. What a drag.  
So uncool. I got my own bag, man.  
& I don't need that bag. Can you dig that?  
I'm telling you, man, you're really chilling  
my vibe. My bag is mellow, man, & I  
don't dig what's coming down. Like I say, man  
it's not my bag.



RAY GONZALEZ

**I Once Knew the Black Rider**

*after Cesar Vallejo*

I once knew the black rider,  
but he quit coming to me after

I ate a rare meal with my father,  
the old hunchback anorexic thin

and wrinkled, crunching his lettuce  
in silence as he avoided my eyes.

The black rider rode his black horse  
in circles, fear boiling inside me

the way my father's body  
smoked on his death-bed,

turning to ashes before my eyes as  
I reached down to touch his heart.

Now, my blackened fingers trace lines  
on my face that never wash away

and my head sweats each time I hear  
a galloping sound that never arrives.

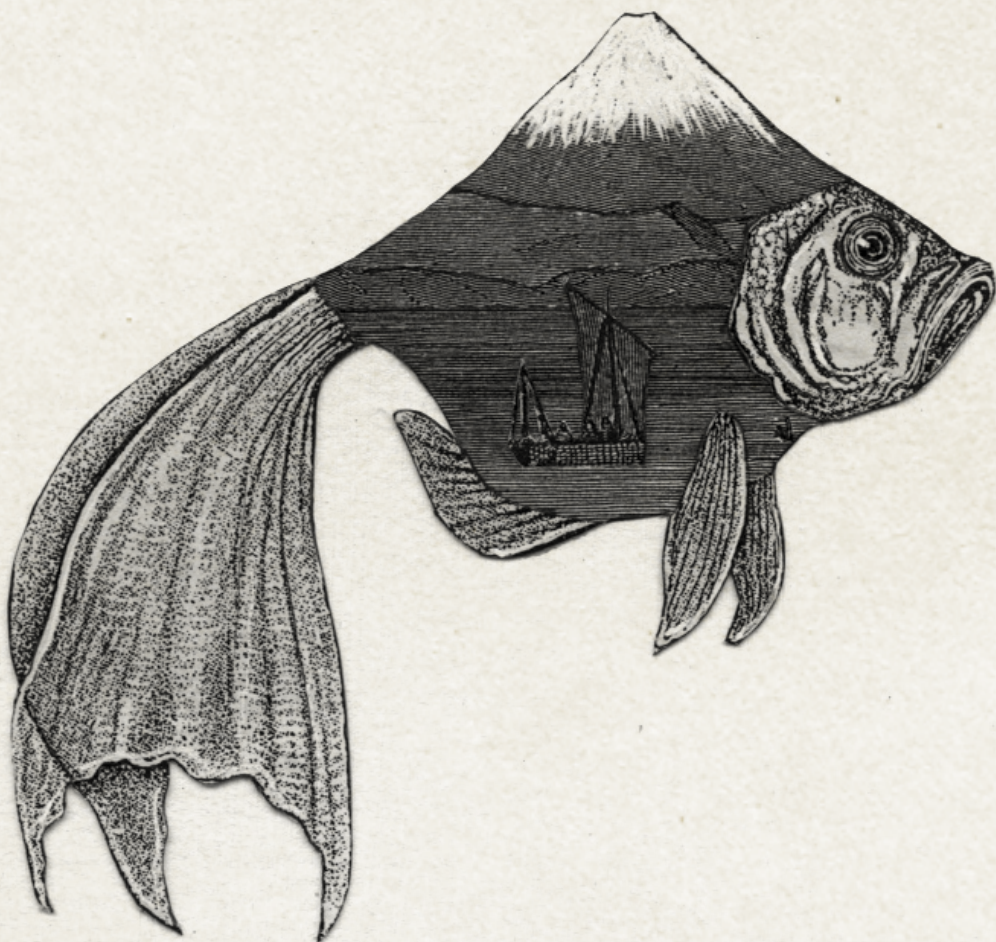


## **The Eyes of Kenneth Rexroth**

I started with a photograph  
where his eyes glisten with  
rebellion and insurgency.

I finished with his poem about  
the hawk gliding over the creek  
where the old man camped for days,

his wife in the earth, his grief  
transforming the mountains  
into tablets left untouched  
by his writing hands.





**The Riches**

The riches of the city echo  
like treason minus desire,

dimensions of grass inside the leaf,  
beauty inflicted and pained because

the desert is sick of being written about,  
imagination fed on bones of angels,

those limbs now petrified because what  
is left in the old house where I was born

is the shiniest nail hammered  
into the wooden floor.



## **They Call the Mountain Carlos**

They call the mountain Carlos because  
it is brown, though its purple slopes  
at dusk suggest other names.

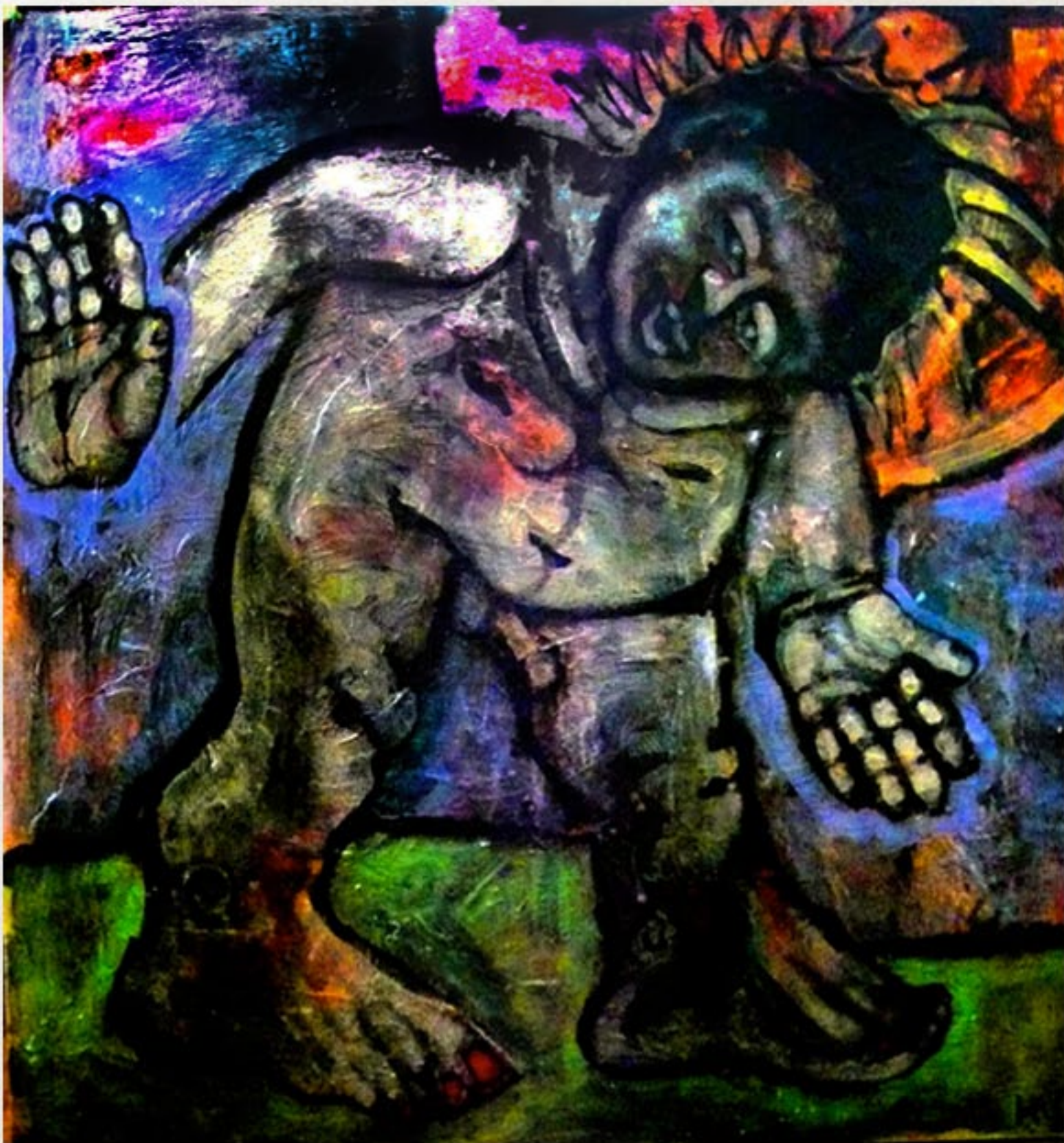
Those who name it have to brand  
the earth with something they know—

a name, a face, even the heat hat says  
“I know Carlos and he is the mountain.  
I am going to cover his eyes in light.”

They call its peak Carlos because  
it is the sharpest feature on the face  
that stares south despite the punishing  
sun, watching people cross the border,  
pausing to catch their breath  
and meet the cliffs of Carlos  
because he is always there.

When everyone enters the canyons  
inside the face, Carlos shifts  
and the climbers see what they have done.  
The moving earth changes everything  
and they are forced to stop playing the game  
of naming a mountain that touches the sun.





DREAMS OF A BENEVOLENT GOD by Christine Kuhn, 2009, collage, walnut ink, acrylic, cast epoxy resin (35 in x 35 in)





INTERROGATION ROOM by Christine Kuhn, 2009,  
collage, walnut ink, acrylic, cast epoxy resin (18 in x 21 in)





FUELING UP by Christine Kuhn, 2009,  
collage, walnut ink, acrylic, cast epoxy resin (4 ft x 5 ft)





A SINGLE DAD ON SATURDAY by Christine Kuhn, 2008,  
collage, walnut ink, acrylic, cast epoxy resin (4 ft x 6 ft)



A. A. HEDGECOKE

**Eddy Lines**

*for JTS*

In transgressions  
migrating song to stone  
au courant    your flint sparks  
question each turn  
waving over azimuth.

Brother, allow me to backpaddle, offer  
bearing,    boil,    berry break – brace –  
lest we broach C-2.

In the chine,  
a quail covey  
awaits release,  
as Passenger Pigeon  
and Carolina Parakeet  
long over yaw  
from foreigner squall –

Sternpaddler, you  
call for reason  
when sometimes  
water just is and  
the path we bear upon it  
simply running  
rock garden,    reading water,  
quartering or purchasing  
avoiding pitch, pivot, portage  
for the freedom here.



Beyond the lob tree  
a mouth opens.  
We both go there  
one after another.  
First you, me.  
Then me, you.  
Our dugouts surely  
best what lapstrake we make  
sur le voyage.

Smoker ahead,  
this yoke may come handy  
despite shuttle duty.  
One day  
Kevlar may be essential  
to offset keening.

For now, it's the cut of it  
the lean and what boldens  
each of us, singularly,  
in the gradient.

I'll feather, you ferry,  
until eddy lines  
we cross apart  
and yet together  
through this art,  
dead reckoning.

Perhaps, one day,  
mapping courses  
for one another, lest  
we forgive odds,  
make mutual course,  
loose branches so  
some might follow  
more easily.



NICO VASSILAKIS

**One Eleven**

I'll hide it best I can in the open. No disaster, America.  
The thumbnail is an image we return to, some code  
specific procedure.

Without it you are nothing to an entire population,  
product derived inspiration –  
That's birdsong to these commerce gangstas.

But tell me, what commodity exists that isn't in danger of  
getting exploited?  
This tired chant lapping onto shore again and again.

You call me by my name,  
You bring me up on the screen. You tangle me in a kind  
of lust memory.

Dogs punctuate these gestures you dream through.  
A cavalcade of muting happens here and

My hand goes in effortless but returns in a bear-trap-mute-  
like cloud composition,  
Cursive to the touch. A slant you seek and follow to its  
completion,

Not more brilliant than can be unfolded in darkness,  
Obliged as it is to monetary conjecture.

I am here alongside you, the length of the field.  
We reposition the visual elements that create an American  
dollar.



We rearrange the economy. You are displeased at the very point of purchase.

I am over-sensitized in a place where being desensitized is lucrative.

Mental disease is a sidecar, a mild attachment.

A thumbnail in a thumb drive we carry with us, squeezed by availability.

A governable simplicity lost to constant profit.

How's that work in French?

Because you remain delicious it's impossible to regulate,  
So it's about portion control and limiting ecstasy.

Divulge the dollar for the luscious temptress it is:

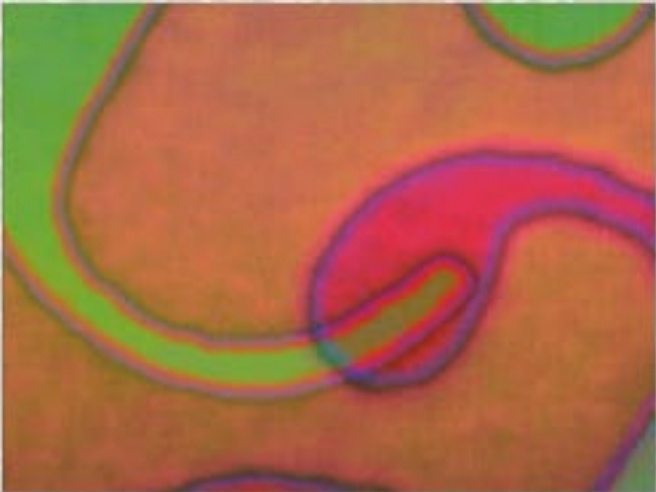
Wants to make union with everything it sees.



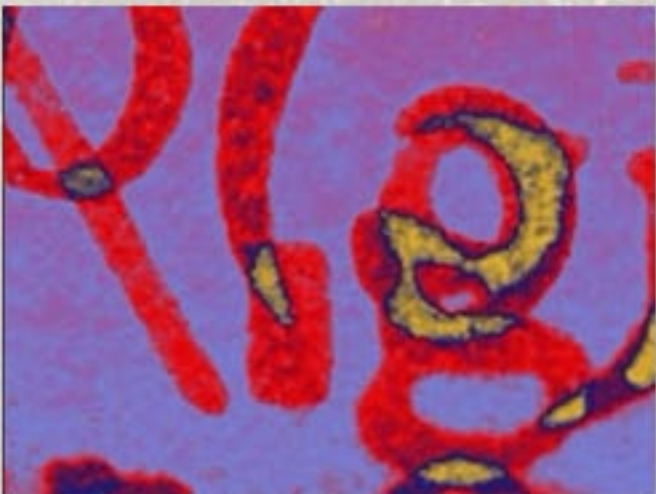


CALIBAN BITES  
*Three Pieces by Nico Vassilakis*

**CURVED POSITIONS**



**IN OTHER WORDS**



**DRAWNING 2**



Video available at [www.calibanonline.com](http://www.calibanonline.com) Issue #3 or  
at our Youtube channel [Youtube.com/calibanonline](http://Youtube.com/calibanonline)



A GEORGE HITCHCOCK  
PORTFOLIO

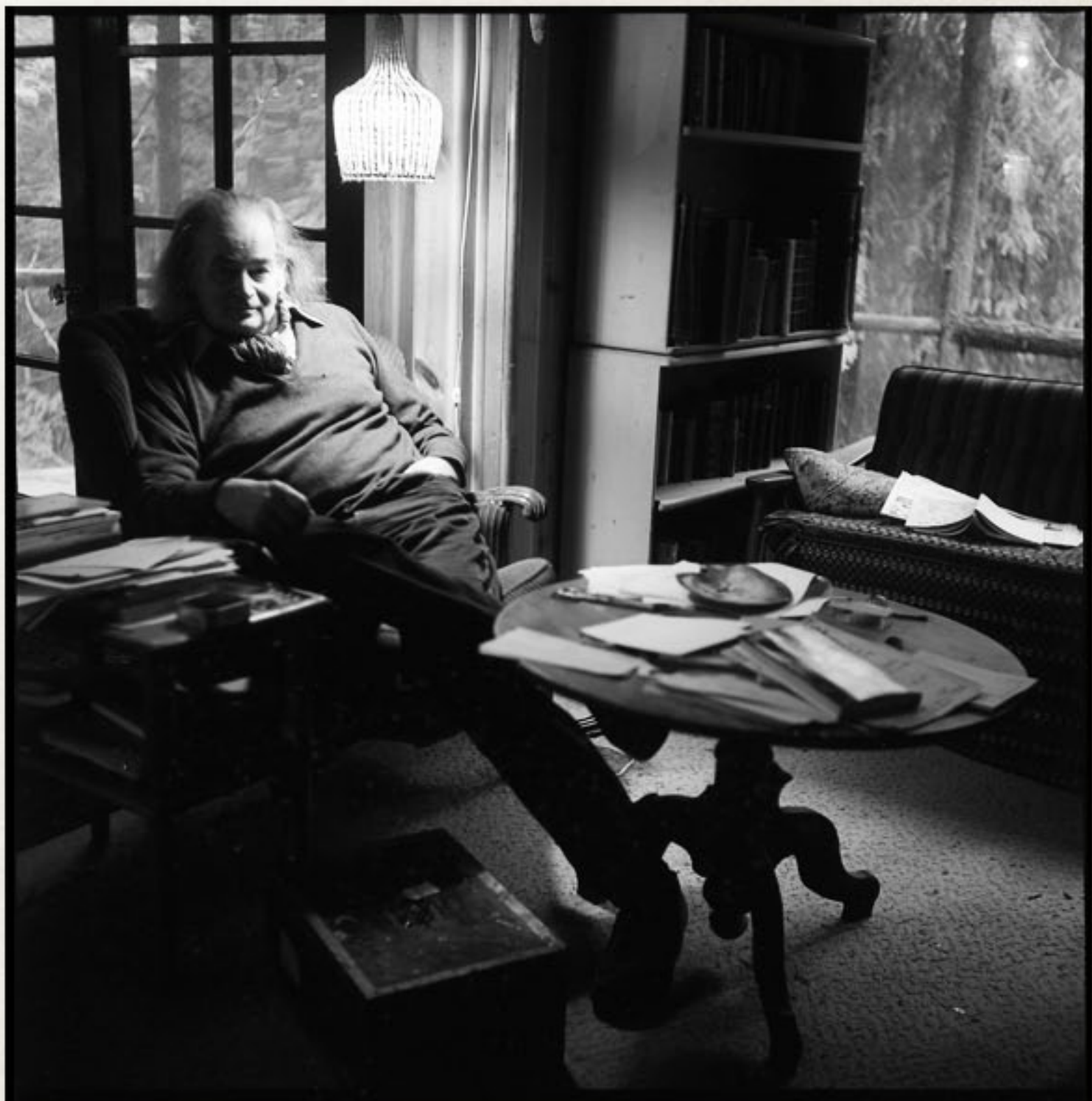


George Hitchcock  
and Kayak were very important  
in the little magazine world of  
the 1960s. I began publishing in  
Kayak before I'd even published a  
book - Kayak is listed in the  
Acknowledgments for No Circle Game -  
and George was always encouraging  
to young poets.

Kayak was a great help to me  
during a sparse period of my  
early writing life. For George it was  
a labour of love - like all the little  
magazines of that era - but George  
had more love than most.

— M. J. A. A. A.





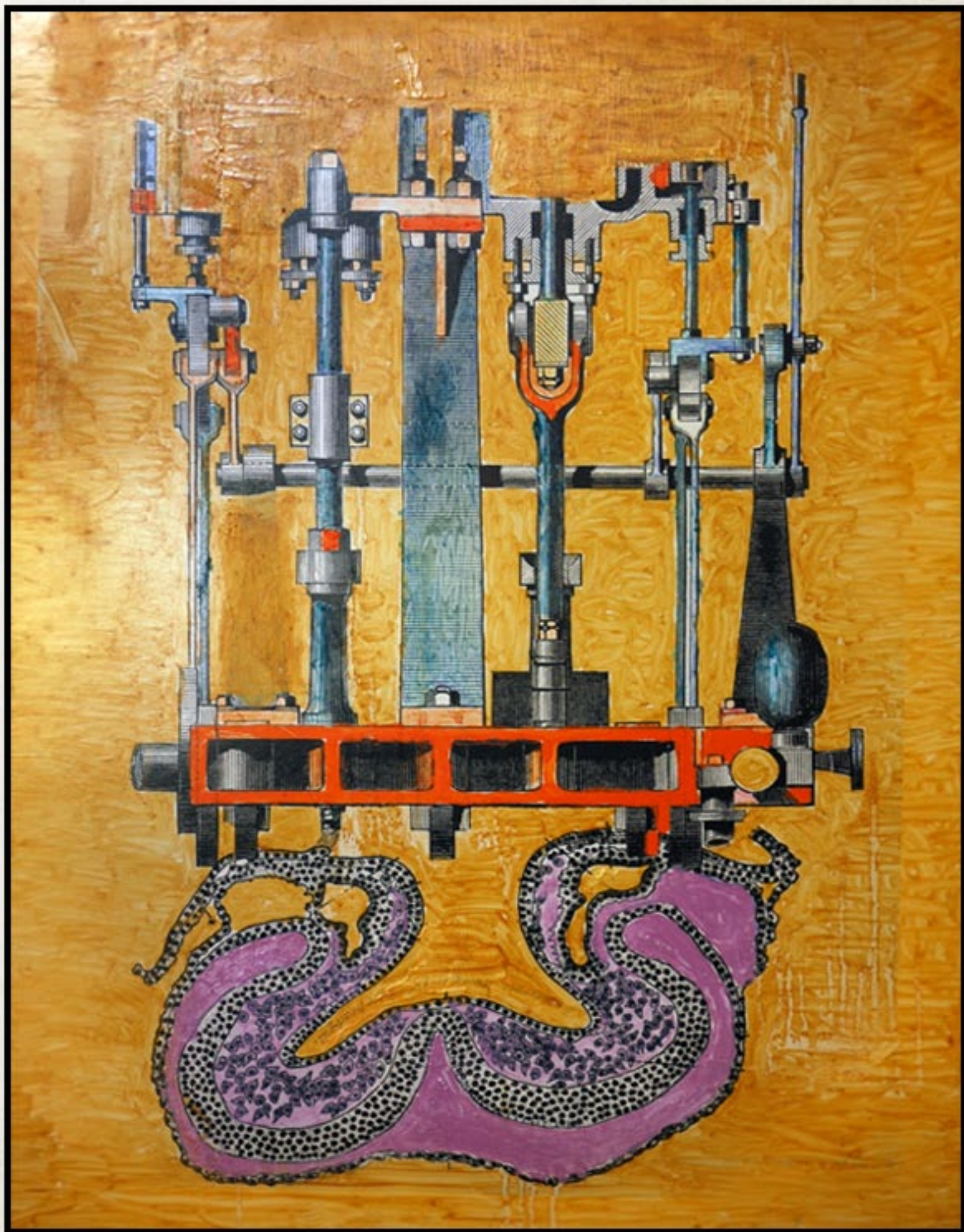
GEORGE HITCHCOCK AT HOME by Jim Hair,  
photograph, 1973





UNTITLED by George Hitchcock, 1999,  
mixed media (20 in x 16 in)





UNTITLED by George Hitchcock, 1997,  
collage, mixed media (19 in x 15 in)





ENTERING THE FOREST by George Hitchcock, 2000,  
mixed media (16 in x 20 in)





SPRING PROMENADE by George Hitchcock, 1995,  
mixed media (15 in x 18 in)





PLAYMATES by George Hitchcock, 1998,  
mixed media (15 in x 18 in)



**Time to Open the Doors of Absence**

Time to sing  
My lost  
Chorus of  
Regret  
The Melody  
Of broken  
Surprises

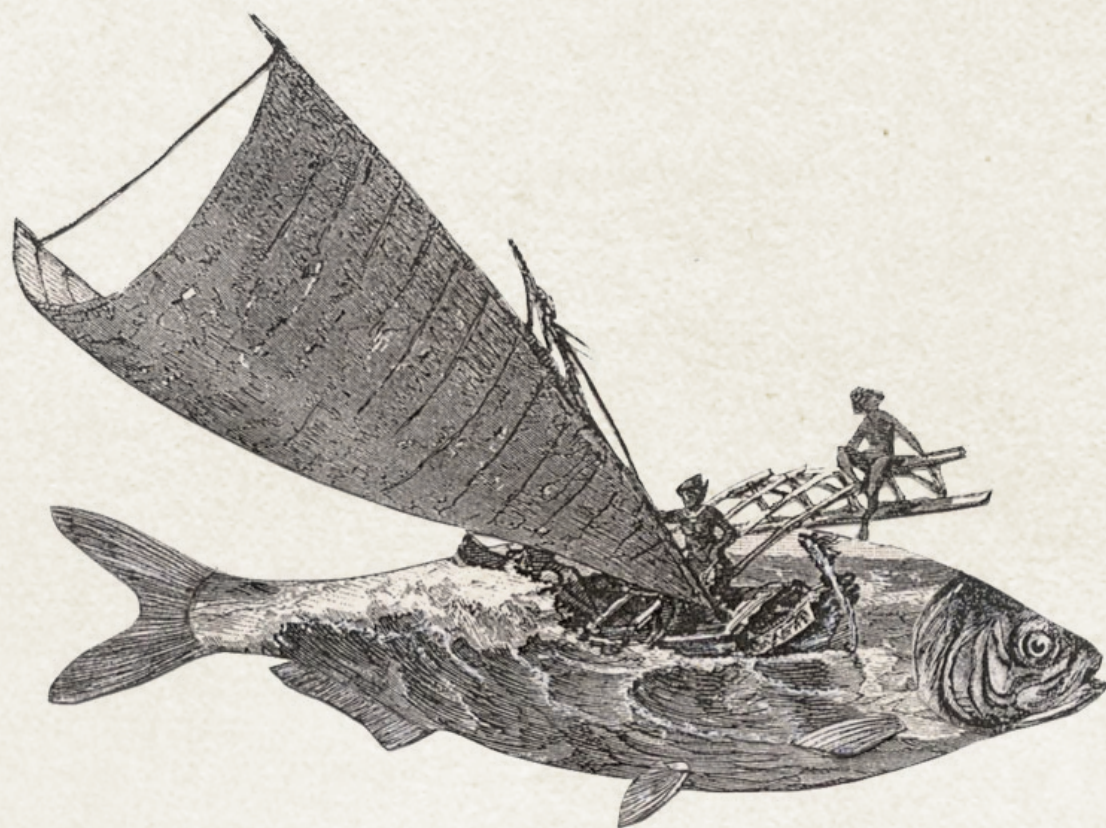
The Mistletoe  
Has taken leaf  
Of the last  
Song tonight



## **Query**

Studying the moon  
In all her stillness  
Fevers dispersed  
Along with desperate  
Hinges, like Spartan  
Twinges the lost patrons  
Of solemn trumpets

Where are the muskets  
Of grandiose purpose?  
Where the final caustic  
Lunar intervention?





**Untitled**

So lemonade twirls  
Its Austrian curls  
While the season sings  
—Off-key as usual  
Amongst the flaming squid  
—We have lost the panniers  
Of shared injustice  
And stagger  
                                    God knows where  
In the conclaves  
Of trivial step-children  
Crying in the broken  
                    Forest.



**Varlet Lost**

A respect for catastrophe  
The flaunters of triple gastronomy  
O hail the incomparable  
Gazette!

Without a left foot  
Nor a heavenly  
Gesture nor even  
A twinge of remorse see

*This was George Hitchcock's last poem, written two weeks before he died.*



## **An Interview with Marjorie Simon**

*Smith:* What is your first memory of George?

*Simon:* My very first memory of George goes back to 1957, when I was living in Louisville, Kentucky. I turned on the television news and they were showing a House Un-American Activities Committee hearing. Here came George walking to the front of the room to testify, holding his clasped hands first on one side of his head then the other, like a prize fighter. He was seated and then questioned about possible Communist affiliations. Someone asked, "What is your profession?" George answered, in his deep, mellifluous voice, "I do underground work. I'm a gardener." I fell madly in love with this man! I finally met him in 1973 when he was in Louisville at a little literary magazine convention. We struck up a conversation and he invited me to California.

*Smith:* And the rest is history.

*Simon:* Yeah, it was never-ending.

*Smith:* Did he ever talk to you about influences on his writing or art, his personal influences?

*Simon:* Yes, he said that Kenneth Rexroth was a great influence on him. I think it was Rexroth who first introduced him to poetry.

*Smith:* So the French and Spanish surrealists were not as big an influence?

*Simon:* George was such a prolific reader; he read everything. Anything that was countercultural interested him. Actually, everything interested him. I know he had read all the surrealists. But the person he said was his biggest influence was Rexroth.

*Smith:* His collages, his rejection slips, looked so much like Max Ernst. Did he talk about that at all?

*Simon:* No, not really, except that he loved Max Ernst, and Hundertwasser, and of course Picasso. While he was talkative, he never really talked about great influences. He just sat down and worked. He worked every day.



*Smith:* Did he have any particular rituals regarding his own writing and artwork?

*Simon:* His artwork all, or almost all, came out of his head. After we moved from California to Oregon in 1990, he decided he was going to start drawing freehand. He'd been making collages for a long time but had never done this before. He just started.

*Smith:* That was a daring thing to do.

*Simon:* He was an actor and a publisher and a novelist. And most everything seemed to come out of his head. He would just sit down and start.

*Smith:* What about *kayak*? Would he get an idea that flavored a particular issue?

*Simon:* Anything that amused him. When we were in England we went to a bookstore, really a warehouse, that carried bound 19<sup>th</sup> century engravings and newspapers. He'd thumb through them and when he found nice little woodcuts or engravings, he'd buy the book. The books were actually very reasonable. He had dozens and dozens of them. He'd leaf through and when he found something amusing, he'd look for a pattern and pick out everything in that area. He found an 18<sup>th</sup> century book on surgery and cut out all the drawings. Of course, that didn't do much for the book!

*Smith:* So he didn't photocopy them, he just cut up the books?

*Simon:* Yeah, it was cut and paste. When he would send out the camera-ready copy to be processed, there were all these little figures pasted on.

*Smith:* Did he have help with the printing?

*Simon:* No, he did it all himself. And he taught himself to do that as well.

*Smith:* So he did the set-up as well as everything else?

*Simon:* He'd sit down and type up all the poetry he had chosen for an issue on his IBM typewriter. Then he'd send off the camera-ready copy and it would come back so he could print it.

*Smith:* He had the printer in the basement, right?



*Simon:* No, the printing machine was in the garage. It was really tough when it was raining. It wasn't a garage, it was a carport. There'd be rain all around and the paper, instead of being nice and flat and starchy, would start to buckle, which didn't help much.

*Smith:* Could you talk a little about the editorial role you played?

*Simon:* You must remember the little statement on the inside cover of each issue: *kayak* is a one-man boat. I just worked with manuscripts and got things collected. After the printing of every issue was finished, I would send it all to the Lockwood Library at the University of Buffalo.

*Smith:* Wow! They were archiving *kayak* that far back?

*Simon:* That was already being done before I came along.

*Smith:* Usually magazines are archived after they shut down. Buffalo, one of the main repositories of avant-garde writing in the U.S., must have known early on that *kayak* was a big deal. By the way, I haven't asked you about the famous *kayak* assembling parties. Could you tell us a little about them?

*Simon:* Anywhere from a dozen to two dozen people would show up for the collating. It was amazing. Everyone was always willing to work.

*Smith:* I believe that's unique in the history of little magazines.

*Simon:* That was the only way George could keep expenses down. He felt that with a little work you could put a magazine on the stands, and keep the price down so everyone could afford it.

*Smith:* Kind of like sweat equity: everybody takes up a hammer and builds the house. So exactly how was the collating done?

*Simon:* We had an old Victorian, and in the front room, as a permanent member of the household, was the collating machine. It was never disassembled. Then in the dining room we had a large table where the addressing of envelopes would take place. Once the pages were assembled on the collating machine, they would be put in boxes and sent to the cutting machine, which was in a little cottage behind the house. Since the covers and pages would often be uneven when they were stapled together, they needed to be trimmed. And then the



magazines, which hopefully still had all the print inside, would come back to the house to be put into envelopes. Occasionally someone's finger got in the way of the cutting machine.

*Smith:* A lot of finger?

*Simon:* No, but we had to stop the operation and start on another operation—of closing the wound.

*Smith:* But nothing ever catastrophic, like the loss of a total finger?

*Simon:* We never lost a total finger as long as I was there. The cutting machine was an old-fashioned one, something like a guillotine.

*Smith:* Appropriate.

*Simon:* Yes, very appropriate. Unfortunately, we never did a drawing of this to use for rejection slips.

*Smith:* The community that gathered for the collation, which was probably a little different each time, makes me think about the big national community *kayak* created. It allowed people who were doing things that might be of interest to each other to become aware of each other.

*Simon:* Absolutely! There's no question that George created that kind of community.

*Smith:* George was famously terse in his assessments of things, good or bad--particularly poetry. Were there any exceptions to this when you and he discussed things? Did he go on about the thinking behind his decisions?

*Simon:* George never went on and on about anything. He was, I would say, unsentimental. He would judge everything on its worth and what he thought about it. When he nodded his head or said "Good," this was high praise from him. And anyone who saw the nod first and heard "Good" was just elated!

*Smith:* He was a tough critic.

*Simon:* Well, he had a very sharp idea of what he liked and didn't like. I never heard him criticize anything. He had groups of people who would take manuscripts home with the instructions: "Anything you like,



anything that should not be sent right back, I want to see.” There were at least sixteen envelopes of poetry that arrived in the mail every day. At least. By the end of the week there’d be quite a stack of envelopes to go through. I would do the same thing. Anything I thought George would be interested in or that I thought was particularly good would go back to him. He would always make the final judgment.

*Smith:* One of the things that struck me back then—because I was one of the people sending those envelopes to you—was how fast he’d turn it around.

*Simon:* He did not believe in keeping people waiting. He thought that was just demoralizing. If someone sent a manuscript, they deserved to know as soon as possible.

*Smith:* Back in those days people were a bit cavalier about holding things for months, or longer.

*Simon:* The big problem with most magazines is the committee system. Until the committee meets, the manuscripts sit in a pile. Then there’s discussion. This one likes this one, another doesn’t. By the time you whittle the pile down, any sense of judgment gets watered down. George really disliked this. It’s why he started *kayak* in the first place.

*Yorita:* I thought he had set forms for rejections.

*Smith:* Famous ones.

*Simon:* George always had fun with that. He’d go back to those 19<sup>th</sup> century magazines and books, find an engraving of a woman falling through ice, with one hand up and her mouth open. Someone looked on, distraught and yet not quite knowing what to do. This would amuse George, so he’d cut it out, then add a line such as “This doesn’t quite meet our expectations.”

*Smith:* Always something terrible happening to people: being eaten by wolves or being attacked with an axe. I got plenty of these. Everyone I knew did. Some people papered their walls with those rejection slips. But when I got the one that said “Yes,” I was in such shock I didn’t know what to do with myself.



*Simon:* Do you still have it?

*Smith:* It's got to be somewhere. I would never throw that away. But it's deep in the archives. You know, sometimes I wonder if George wasn't a kind of trickster, like the folk hero of some Native American lore. Those rejection slips were a way of whacking people and saying, "Don't be so self-important. This writing business is not as serious as you think it is."

*Simon:* Well, George may have been larger than life, but I only saw him as George. This was his sense of humor.

*Smith:* He had such a huge influence on at least 20 years of American poetry.

*Simon:* And he was six feet, four inches tall. And he carried himself well. And he loved hats. He always wore hats. He'd carry a cane and usually wore a scarf that was folded once and thrown over his shoulder. That's the way he looked. He loved Mexican guayaberas. I think in our 37 years he wore something like a tie once, to a wedding. That was the only time I ever saw him wear the kind of clothes one assumed were worn.

*Smith:* Especially around academics, although Santa Cruz was a little less stiff on that kind of thing.

*Simon:* He never wore a shirt and tie to the university, but he loved English tweeds and wore them year round.

*Smith:* It does get cold in Santa Cruz, even in the summer.

*Yorita:* Did people give him hats and things?

*Simon:* He would always buy his own hats. Usually he'd wear a black summer straw hat. He liked a hat that said something. Or said something to him!

*Smith:* You were talking about the Mexican clothes he liked. He signed himself "Jorge" on a lot of his paintings. It was his persona, I guess, or one of them.

*Simon:* Well, we lived six months of the year in Mexico for the last 20 years. When we were in Mexico he didn't call himself George; he was Jorge. When we would come back to Oregon, he would still sign himself Jorge. It depended, I guess, on how he felt. Maybe if he was in



a George mood, he would sign George, but most of the time he signed his paintings Jorge.

*Yorita:* You said he was an actor, too?

*Simon:* Yeah, he was an actor. I was going to tell you the only time I ever saw him outside of his tweed jacket was when he was performing. Originally he acted in San Francisco. This was before I knew him. He was part of a group called the Interplayers. In the winter he would act and in the summer he would garden. He did a lot of gardening and planting for people in the San Francisco area. In the winters he would also write plays. Some of them were winners and were produced in different colleges and universities across the country. He'd usually go to the college to see how the production was getting along. And where he could, he'd give them a sense of what the playwright had in mind. But I think that acting was his great love. He was in several Santa Cruz Summer Shakespeare Festival productions. He played Falstaff in "The Merry Wives of Windsor." The temperature in Santa Cruz is usually 48 degrees at night and then it warms up to around 60 degrees during the day. But we had a heat wave. It was maybe 92 degrees and there's George in a fat suit! It weighed a ton and on top of that there was the costume. I happened to be backstage when he was coming off. He said, "Get this fat suit off me!"

*Smith:* You said that when you traveled abroad he didn't like to make reservations. He wanted to leave it to chance to see where you'd land. That reminded me of André Breton in *Nadja*, and his idea of objective chance, where something magical might happen if you left yourself open to the random. Leave the door open at the hotel and see who will come in. George didn't just think about those surrealist principles, he tried to put them into action.

*Simon:* He really believed in letting things happen. If you make a reservation, you box yourself in. He believed in chance and he enjoyed it. I'm laughing because I'm remembering a time we were in Germany. I really had a thing for going to various thermal waters. I saw a hot spring on the map and decided it would be wonderful to visit. So we drove the rented car to the place and the people inside were all dressed



formally: the women in gowns and the men in tuxedos. They were holding champagne glasses and toasting each other. I was always the one who rushed to the reception desk and got the room. But the woman said, “Oh no, we have no rooms, we’re absolutely full.” I said, “Well, are there any other hotels? Could you call for us?” And she said, “Oh no, everything is totally booked.” Finally, she thought there might be a room at a farm some miles away. She called for us and we got into the car and drove there. And the people at the farm said, “Of course you couldn’t get a room. It’s a meeting of all the former Nazis there!” The people who owned the farm were never pro-Nazi, they were careful to explain to us. That was the reason they still had the room. Experiences like this, if we hadn’t left things to chance, we never would have had.

*Smith:* A lot of people saw George as an intensely private person, even people who knew him pretty well. Do you think there are any misconceptions about who he was and what he did?

*Simon:* I think the reason George was intensely private was that he didn’t make small conversation. As a writer—playwright, novelist, or short story writer—he would sit and observe. People might have thought that he had no interest in them, but he was really listening. This was true to the very end of his life. In that very large head of his, I’m sure all of the listening went someplace and would come out somewhere else. But he was not a person who made small talk. That didn’t mean he wasn’t interested, because he listened to everything.

*Smith:* That’s very interesting, because writers love to gab and gossip endlessly, as you know.

*Simon:* Well, he enjoyed talking, if he thought it would be amusing to someone. He listened to gossip, but he himself didn’t gossip. When I would be willing to tell something that happened, he would just give me a look and say, “Alright, let’s leave that.” That was the end of the conversation.

*Smith:* He took the high road?

*Simon:* He took the high road. I’m not sure if you know anything about his family. His grandfather was a well-known botanist. Some of the plants he discovered were named after him. As a young boy and until



he started college, George would go up into the mountains with his grandfather, looking for new varieties of wildflower. He carried the case with all the scientific equipment. But in terms of George not being chatty, I think his grandfather influenced him a lot. His mother was also very unusual. In 1950 she got sailor's papers and sailed to La Paz, then wrote articles about it.

*Smith:* She was an able-bodied seaman? I didn't even know that was possible.

*Simon:* Yeah, an able-bodied seaman—or seawoman. She sailed to Hawaii, Tahiti, all over the world. When she wrote articles for travel magazines, she'd send them to George and he'd correct them for spelling and grammar.

*Smith:* So he came from a family of adventurers?

*Simon:* His great-grandfather was a senator from Mississippi and was assassinated on the courthouse steps. He was a follower of Lincoln and believed in the Emancipation Proclamation and freedom for slaves. This was the point where the family moved west. So George comes from a family that had respect for all kinds of people and was very serious politically—and always liberal.

*Smith:* I still can't get over his mother becoming an able-bodied seaman.

*Simon:* I met her a couple of times and she was just an amazing woman. As a young person, when her father was Professor of Botany at the University of Idaho, she would wrangle horses and ponies from Idaho to Yosemite.

*Smith:* By herself?

*Simon:* Yes.

*Smith:* These were larger-than-life people! All of them were. George could hardly end up any other way.

*The transcript of the HUAC hearing involving George Hitchcock can be found in One-Man Boat: the George Hitchcock Reader (edited by Robert McDowell and Joseph Bednarik).*







MARJORIE SIMON

**Outside My Window**

koi bubble the pond  
silver orange past the sun  
under palm shadows  
they hide                heron  
who glides white  
                              from nowhere  
to see what teems with  
              such extraordinary gifts

today all fools  
become wiser  
rocks thrown from  
the moon    fell  
on the head  
of a valiant speaker  
splintered knowledge  
              to everyone

the fish wait  
      for grains  
                              to fall





SHIRLEY KAUFMAN

**Legs**

Is it possible  
to wear yourself out  
merely

from waking up  
each morning  
lifting your legs  
grown heavier  
with sleep

and lowering them  
down to the end  
of what you aren't  
sure  
is still there

not sure about  
floors or  
feet or how  
you might lose  
what you need  
to stand on

what ought to be  
holding you up

implacable  
legs that keep  
marching



when all you  
want from them  
is to dance.





**Take a Deep Breath**

now let it  
all come in  
sky clouds grass  
and live roots

feeling their way  
through the earth  
and pockets of air  
under the earth

until they are part  
of you of the  
letting out and  
the taking in

of the juiciness  
of your flesh  
and the density  
of your bone

part of your  
thirst for life  
and your fear  
of death

take a deep breath...



TIM KAHL

## **On the Surface of This Serious Desert**

From space, water tangles and transforms its source,  
its vein a white zipper. The scythe of its tail avoids

the western channel, once mighty as the mission of  
a Christian moon. Adrenaline after the birth of

the virgins speeds away on the river surface, below,  
more injury in the deep, the feared carnival of stress

lurking in a cell. An enzyme that repairs ideology  
is released, extracted from individuals

who seem to believe their survival depends on  
meditation and celebrity, the two wings of

the fly buzzing through the oxygen tent.  
From the oxygen tent, space churns meter by meter,

like a forest shadow in the Mata Atlântica,  
the last loud shirt to attract new species of bees.

The liquid methane oceans on Titan discretely dance,  
discovered just this year, the same time as those

caves of painted hands, the large number of them  
probably recording the training of new shamans.

But the hands need decoding. They need planned  
diminishment, a mouthspray of a few vocables



intended to spread the gospel breath. On a few such occasions the host targets stretch their being on

the range of heaven. Longevity isn't what they're made of. Their molecular pathways sleep;

their telomeres shorten. They are born with disorders of judgment and choose to train for war

by simulating ambitious investment. The increase in lifespan determines membership. Small dinner

parties open up to new recruits and feast on twenty pounds of odd opinion. All this time,

the awakening of spring, a salt wind ramming through the floes between the traditional moon

and a charismatic river, where, from here on the surface of this serious desert,

water is called a gift like unction, and all of nature needing redemption believes in it.



## **The Pull**

A man is attached to a fly, tethered with fishing line that pierces his scrotum.

He says, “Nobody loves me except this fly,” as the fly gently tugs on the end of the line, trying to land on the back of a woman.

“Everyone is so needy,” complains the woman who has harnessed herself to a plow to show she needs no comfortable or pleasant connections in this world, needs no possessions. She does not expect to remain human.

The woman prays to the dead and insists there is another kind of relationship besides the living to the living.

The fly understands the woman is not an ox, but is nevertheless drawn to her by a chemical force while the man gasps repeatedly as if being pulled underwater.

The man is caught up in the moment, trapped, dragged to some strange encounter by the fly, which must take great care to avoid the silken snare of its predator.

“Kiss me,” says the man to the woman; “Kiss me,” says the spider to the fly.



## MUSIC IN THE AIR

*A Piece by Greg Sipes*

## NEUROCHEMICAL RESPONSE

Audio available at [www.calibanonline.com](http://www.calibanonline.com) Issue #3 or  
at our Youtube channel [Youtube.com/calibanonline](http://Youtube.com/calibanonline)



STEPHEN KESSLER

## **Houseguest in a Gated Neighborhood**

The guard in the gatehouse  
has gone home for the night  
and I am locked outside.

Any burglar could climb the fence  
but why, when what's in there  
is just more stuff,

nothing to bother stealing.  
Even the conversations  
gently echoing in memory

are just lost sounds and lovely  
faces in the mind,  
the line between this and that

a slow blur where what was  
for a minute or few is no more.  
Now cool light covers the hills

and a blossomy breeze caresses my black shirt  
and cars curl uphill and down over Decker Canyon  
to the sound of sprinklers where only

decades ago and last night desert dogs  
loped hopelessly across acres of scrub  
and dust—prickly,

you might call the brush  
hugging the slopes, scratchy  
if you touched it,



but who could from here.  
The gate is locked,  
the guard is gone,

my car parked outside, lights  
on, engine a hum, no place  
else to go and no cellphone.





WILLIAM HARMON

### **One Look**

One took  
one look at F. X. Winterhalter's portrait  
of Madame Rimsky-Korsakov (1864)  
and knew right away that  
this  
just  
must be  
the same magnificence who, forty-  
four years later at Rimsky-Korsakov's  
funeral, with Stravinsky making a most deplorable  
spectacle of himself,  
crying, weeping, sobbing, blubbering,  
going limp and falling down,  
little boulevardier's mustache saturated in obituary  
snot,  
would say, "Grushka! *Du calme,*  
*du calme.* Pull yourself together:  
we still have Glazunov."

It turns out  
that  
the portrait is of  
the wife of Nikolay *Sergeevich* Rimsky-Korsakov,  
not of the composer,  
Nikolay Andreevich.



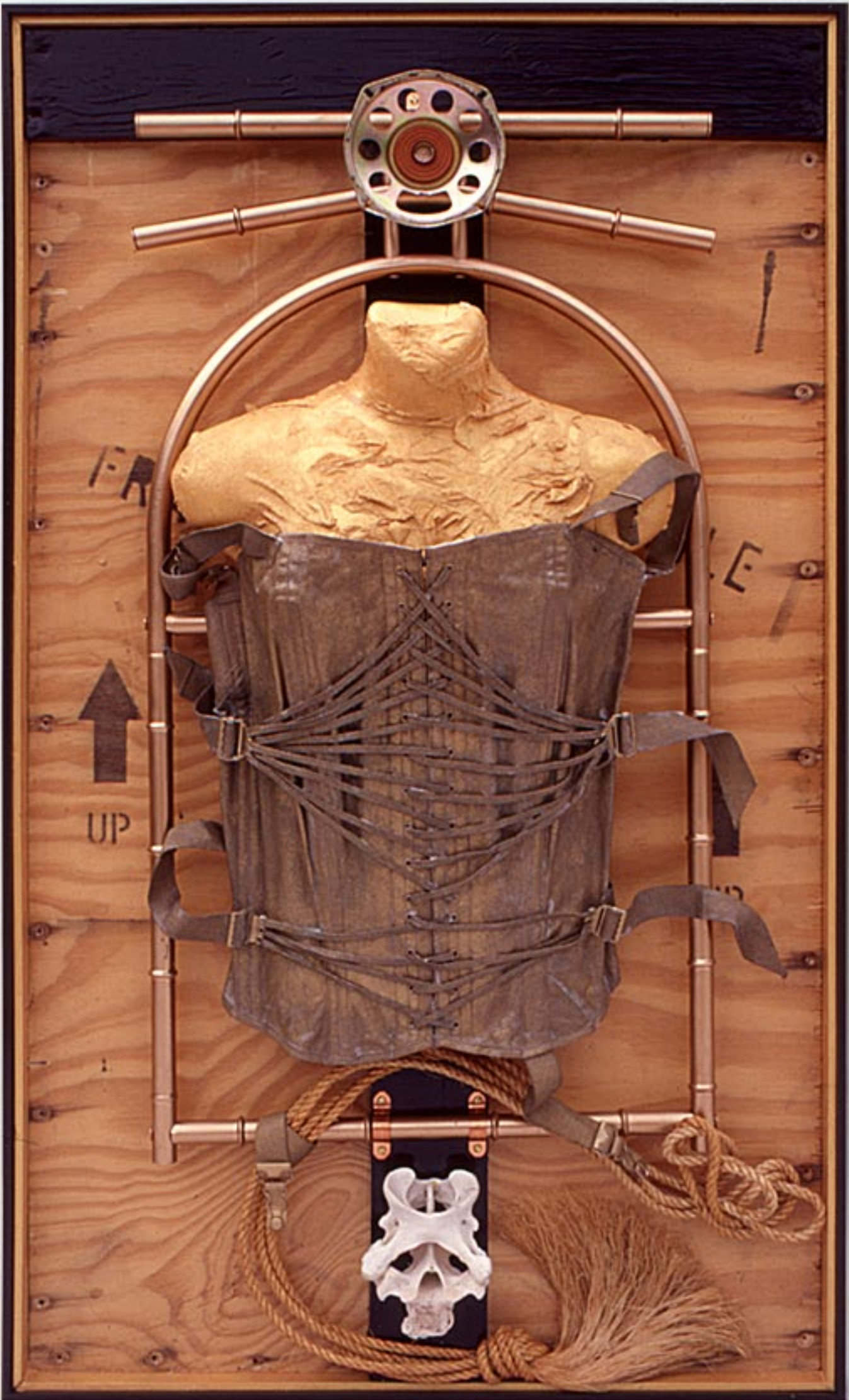




## Paralipomena to “One Look”

*Latin Werther?* A crossword  
 clue led to a painting that  
 led to the wrong woman and  
 an antique  
 anecdote but then to the right woman—  
 Barbara Dmitrievna Rimsky-Korsakova, nee Mergasova—  
 diaphanously  
 disguised in *Anna Karenina*  
 (as though modeling the *zaiïmph* from *Salammbô*—  
 “incredibly naked . . . the beauty Lidi, Korsunsky’s wife”);  
 and then a poem by Kingsley Amis  
 also seeming (fresh, possibly,  
 from recollections of Yvonne De Carlo in *Song of*  
*Scheherazade*) to connect the  
 painting to the wrong Tatar Venus  
 (“Needing  
 no mind, because too  
 beautiful”)—me  
 meanwhile doubly justified:  
 wrong in the company of Sir  
 Kingsley, then correcting my  
 mistake.





TROPHY WIFE by Deanne Yorita, 1997,  
assemblage (44 in x 26 in)





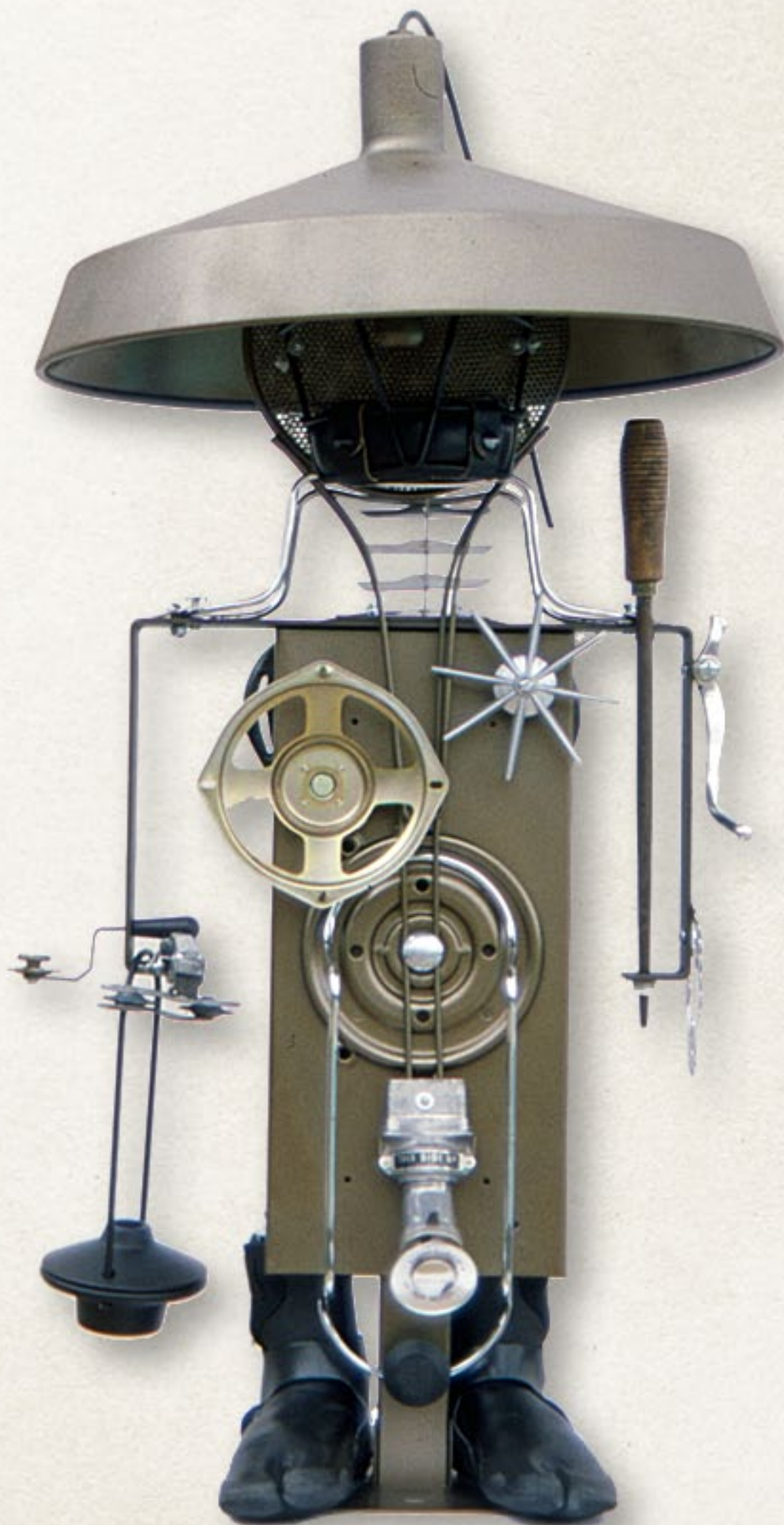
ON THE VERGE by Deanne Yorita, 1997,  
assemblage (59 in x 24 in x 7 in)





MISS UNIVERSE by Deanne Yorita, 1999,  
assemblage (41 in x 20 in x 24 in)





CIRCULON by Deanne Yorita, 1999,  
assemblage (42 in x 20 in x 24 in)



ROBERT PETERS

**How an Old Man Commemorates the Explorer  
Robert Falcon Scott (1868-1912)**

At eighty-four, verses by Tennyson  
and Browning slosh in my brain.  
I eat rice pudding.

In the arctic Robert Falcon Scott  
snuggles with his odorous huskies.  
He'll never again see the mate  
who left in a blizzard to pee.

He scribbles frigid self-justifications.  
He fingers the ice on the lantern.  
The wick burns blubber.

If he shook his heart, it would release  
stalagmites. Would beef bouillon help?  
Should he drink his urine?

With a walrus-hide glove, he shields his face.  
His mate is already ice.  
He huddles against him, churning heat.  
Yet his toes are frozen.

Later, they'll find every  
belly-grumble, catarrh,  
his frozen mate's name dropped  
as frosty beads from his cracked lips,  
and hear the clang of the iron kettle  
on the fire.  
He hopes he'll be found.  
There's so much to tell his son.



JACK ANDERSON

### **City of Obelisks**

Let us go where obelisks gather.

\*

I'd almost forgotten about obelisks.

\*

Now the first obelisk stabs into view.

\*

Obelisks bare as exhibitionists baring privates.

\*

Carnal obelisks.

\*

Obelisks in a petrified romp.

\*

Obelisks baying at the moon.

\*

Obelisks as chess pieces at giant café tables.

\*

Garden-variety obelisks.

\*

Luxury obelisks.

\*

Tattooed obelisks.

\*

Hairless obelisks.

\*

Why don't these obelisks go back where they came from?

\*

Obelisks just standing there.

\*

Obelisks punctuating important intersections.

\*



Obelisks looming over you when your back is turned.

\*

Don't think about obelisks.

\*

Admit it: you've thought another thought about obelisks. Forget them!

\*

A persistence of obelisks, a profusion of obelisks, a plethora of obelisks.

\*

No end to obelisks, obelisks, obelisks....





## **Our Nice City**

We live in a nice city. It's very nice, don't you agree? Yet don't you think some mountains might make it nicer? Don't you find our city short on mountains?

Maybe we could import mountains from somewhere else and set them up here for locals and tourists alike to admire. Well, there are lots of mountains around Grenoble or Geneva. Perhaps those cities could spare a few mountains and ship them to us. Then we'd let them adorn the other side of the river while we'd sit on this side and admire them.

If we had a river. But, as you know, we don't. Well, Düsseldorf has a river, a big one, the Rhine. Robert Schumann once tried to drown himself in the Rhine at Düsseldorf. That being so, maybe we could persuade Düsseldorf to let us have its stretch of the Rhine. Düsseldorf would then be rid of what must surely be a painful reminder of a shocking moment in its cultural history. And we'd a nice river to make our city nicer.

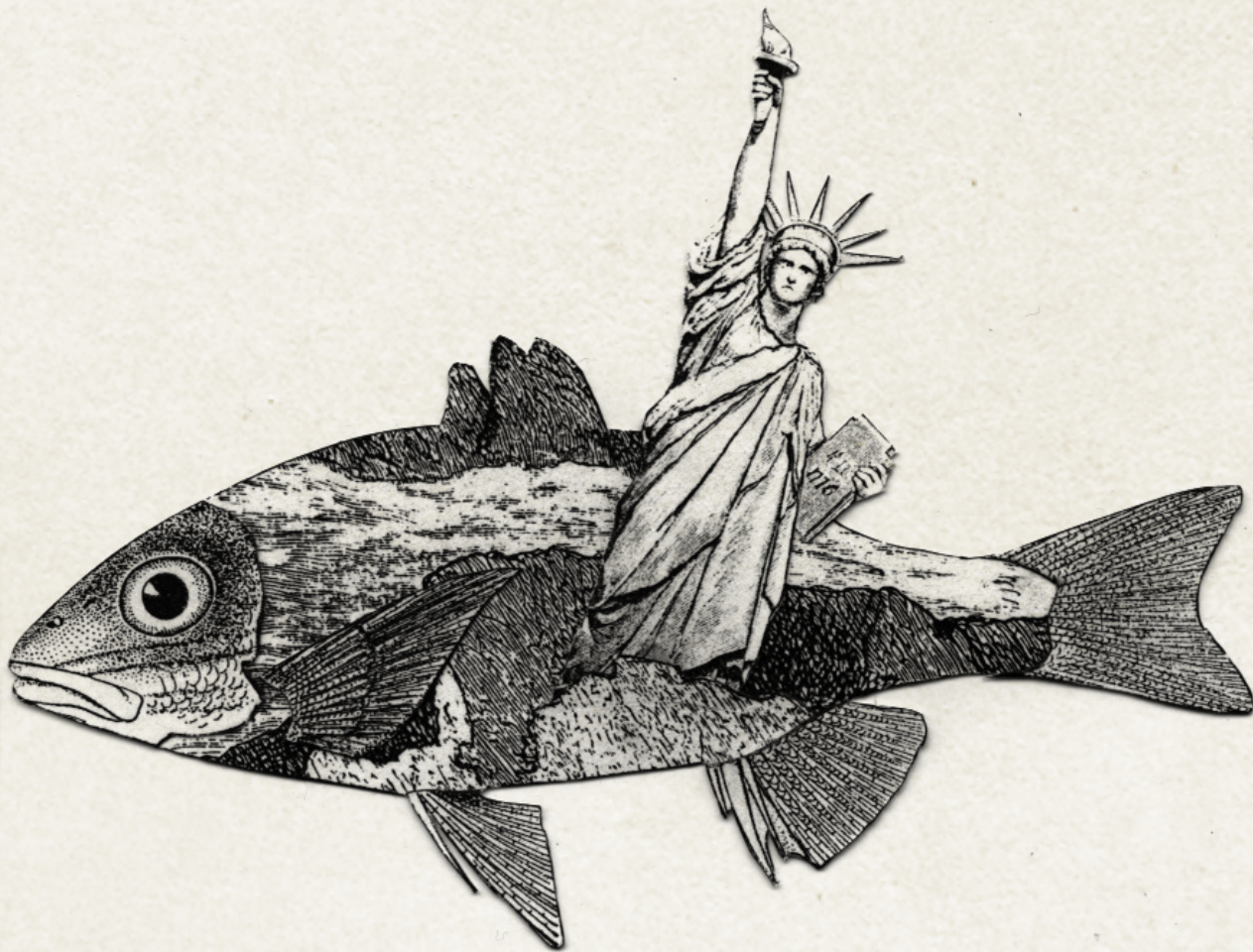
Yet our city, nice as it is and getting nicer every day, still lacks—don't you think?—a touch of strangeness. Not menace. Not danger. Just strangeness. Well, maybe we could replace all our old street signs with new ones with street names in Finnish, say, or Polish—or, better yet, with both Finnish and Polish street names mixed together arbitrarily. Given their startling combinations of letters—all double vowels in Finnish, nothing but strings of consonants in Polish—those long words from Helsinki or Warsaw would undoubtedly spice our city with strangeness.

And because our city has grown so nice, we could even rename it N-I-C-E, pronounced any way you please. Or do you think that would be bragging? So, then, allowing those fancy renovations to speak for themselves, as they surely will, let's preserve a bit of modesty and keep the old name. Let our city be—(Well, you know the name.)



## The Night Isadora Duncan Died

Coming from a window on the Promenade  
The sound of a gramophone that kept on playing  
“Bye, Bye Blackbird.” Again and again.  
Over and over. An open window  
Somewhere along the Promenade  
With a gramophone playing “Bye, Bye Blackbird.”  
That’s what they heard. What they remember.  
“Bye, Bye Blackbird” on the Promenade.  
A gramophone playing from a Promenade window.  
Over and over. And over again.





VERN RUTSALA

## Ghost Words

Sometimes we hear them in our dreams, syllables trying to form words—ones we can never quite remember when we wake up. And there's always the wind speaking its lost language as if the dead were crying out and then those train whistles moaning of sadness. It isn't as if we didn't have a large enough vocabulary now but these other words keep trying to edge their way in like new face cards shuffled secretly into the deck.





## **Whose Dream Is It?**

That thing with feathers flutters in your chest again this morning and you wince. Does it need a bandage? Soothing syrup? And what is its genre? Bird? Butterfly? Or some mutant meant just for you—flying doorstop, termite foghorn? And that dream—you almost forgot—who was that guy? The one beside you. You knew him so well in your dream but now he's like a wanted poster at the post office or the one hitchhiker you would pick up to your enormous regret after passing thousands. The thing stops fluttering after you pour tea down its throat. But whose dream was it?



## **On the Trail**

Something mutters in the mountains. There is a sliding shadow among the trees. Light gives up and bounces off the canopy of firs to be reclaimed by the disappointed sun. Deeper than loneliness the loon's cry turns to lace. What is the meaning of this?—the mountains say to the snow. Ice finds every tiny crack in the rocks and hope is a lost camper deep in a ravine beyond rescue.





LOU LIPSITZ

**Variations on a Line by William Carlos Williams**

*“Saxifrage is my flower that splits  
the rocks.”*

1 —

Ah, how fine to discover  
this plant  
    — leaves so delicate —  
that happens as well  
to be a rock splitter.

I remember Yeats warned that  
    the heart (under  
some fierce conditions) can  
become a stone.  
And I’ve encountered foot-thick walls  
mortared into place in those middle ages —

    So let’s locate Williams’ flower  
that unfolds and cannot be resisted —  
help it grow and  
    burst everything open.

We can search night  
after night  
    — dream after obscure dream.

2 —

You say this flower splits the rocks?  
Actually wedges in  
and cracks them apart?



No. In sad truth, it cannot,  
but it can “slip through”  
the way the dream  
finds its way into the prison  
of the self and

says: “Here’s the way out.  
You don’t have to stay.”

And you turn then  
and grasp  
so clearly  
the shadowy turmoil  
you were sure  
you had to solve:

convicts, prison guards, steel doors,  
homemade shivs, towers and machine guns,  
and behind it all  
the shadowy condemning  
judge.

Your drama.

“Here,” the voice whispers,  
“let’s split.”

3 –

We were walking  
in the garden and I said  
“I cannot grow anything these days.

– the soil is too rocky –  
roots  
can’t locate  
a way to hold.”



*Lipsitz/90*

Come over here, she said,  
This soil needs  
    something.  
    let's dig and overturn the earth,  
give it air, soften.

And so she lay down,  
opening herself,  
wet with liberty.

4 —

Eden. Ah, that did not  
last, did it?

Obedience way  
    too difficult.

Have you noticed  
something in us wants  
to say "No!"  
    grab two handfuls of dirt  
        and throw them.

Of course, we are just  
    three years old at the time.

But how old were  
    Adam and Eve do you  
suppose —  
        sixteen?

A set up.  
The last Act written  
    before it ever began.



Of course Adam's  
roused up prick was  
serpentine –  
    full of earthbound,  
crackling knowledge.

We've felt that  
    groovy wiggle!

Please –  
    let's forgive them.

Better –  
    let's honor them  
the ancient, disobedient,  
erotic ones.

Let's dress their heads  
in apple blossoms.  
    Kiss them.

They need blessing.

Let's give them the  
saxifrage plant.

    They'll carry it out of the Garden  
as they wander  
    where the Master of Shame  
has sent them:  
    long shadowy way  
of sharp stones.



5 —

Let's leave the Garden  
with its sad untouchable  
tree  
its lonely Right and Wrongness.

Leave the apple half eaten  
to rot  
on sacred ground.

There's a word forming  
in the murky underground rivers  
you must forage through.

Listen. It drifts upward  
among the rocks.  
Listen. Green, it  
edges through the cracks, splits  
our hearts.

O brokenhearted race —  
take these hope-filled roots —  
carry them carefully  
in your dreaming hands.



**On Not Writing**

*“All birth is unwilling.”*

Pearl Buck

Captured by some crude, random associations,  
and interrogated in a dark closet  
as they shove me against the wall  
I cannot grasp how these pieces of meaning  
could seize me so powerfully  
their wide glowing hands  
locked against my shoulders  
while I glimpse what I hope  
is a forgiving look in their shadowed faces

and they want to know  
why I forgot what I owe them –  
the vow I made –

and, lying, I say – what vow,  
when?  
and they say – when you were born,  
fool, countryman,

dearest brother.



THOMAS LUX

**Every Time Someone Masturbates God  
Kills a Kitten**

Couldn't it be a rat? There're lots of rats! Remember  
the time You gave a lot of them fleas  
which killed them (that was good) but then the fleas jumped off  
the dead rats  
and bit humans  
who died too, about a third of them  
on the planet? You *were*  
good to Poland (hardly any occurrences), which You  
made up for in following centuries.  
How about snakes? Why such vituperation?  
Little whips, You made, with such wracking poison!  
How about clams? Would one clam feel the loss  
of another clam in, at least, a version of grief?  
If so: don't kill clams, but it's OK  
to keep killing rats and snakes  
even if they *do* feel grief,  
which I doubt. I'm not sorry,  
I prefer clams to rats or snakes.  
I eat clams: they taste  
good, but I'm willing to never eat a clam  
again—for the kittens.  
How about You,  
how about adjusting Your plan  
a little, how about a little less hard-ass?  
How about You tell Your flock it's time to let this bill pass?



TOM WAYMAN

**Instrument**

We haven't finished hearing  
all the guitar has to say

to us

Notes vibrato  
amid the rhythms of the  
chord changes  
—circular, oscillatory,  
picaresque

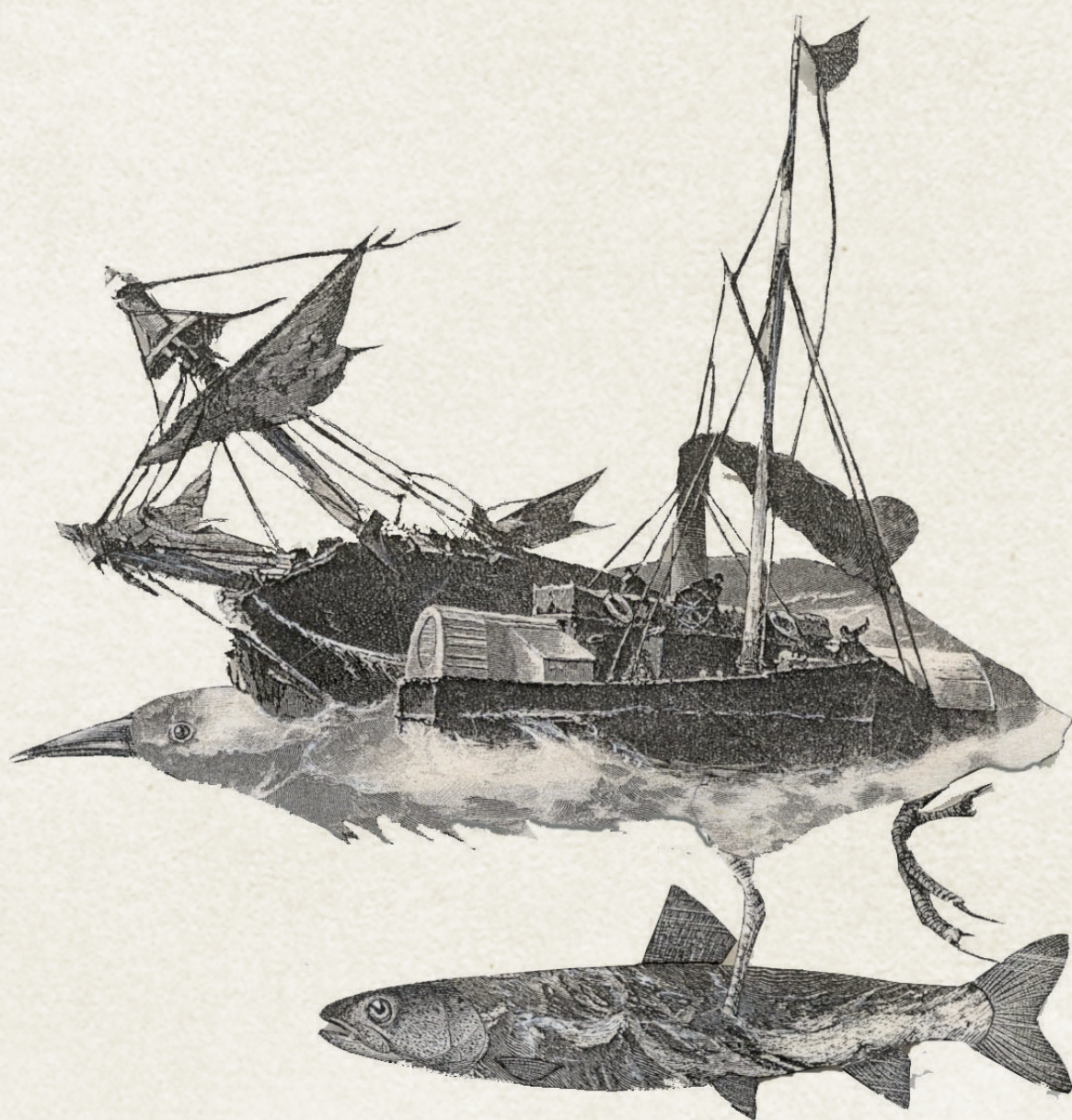
whether six string or twenty-six  
string: the hard chairs  
of the deputation waiting to speak  
to city council, of the union hall,  
community hall, people linking arms  
on the court house steps, lawn  
of the legislature, the dust and litter backstage  
the audience never sees

Minor chords of broken  
love, broken strikes, trumpet of  
resistance to legal war, the embraced violin  
of the unfolding rose

Major chords  
of rescue from coaltown flames, of the merciless executions  
of the Communards, the oppressed's carnival  
masks, peaty whisky  
—everything the support arm of the microphone stand  
leans in to hear:  
air released in a burst or  
scattered



to take the shape of a hammer,  
breast, driving wheel, bacon and eggs,  
a house Jesus avoided,  
jackknifed semi trailer, cottonwood leaves,  
the twenty-seventh of November,  
a young woman stepping onto shore





## Sustenance

When I fail again

a huge cube of meat  
fills my plate, a slab of steaming flesh

oozing red  
that must be choked down, gobbets of fat

catching in my throat  
until sucked clear at the last

instant, me gulping air  
while the server

already proffers another chunk  
balanced on a blade.

*More*, he demands, his tone  
anticipating my acceptance.

*So good.*

*Have more:*

*what you need.*



LINDA LAPPIN

**12 Poems for Cezanne's Black Clock**



*Video by Sandra Binion*

Video available at [www.calibanonline.com](http://www.calibanonline.com) Issue #3 or  
at our Youtube channel [Youtube.com/calibanonline](https://www.youtube.com/calibanonline)











## CALIBAN

### **George Hitchcock, kayak, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Avant-Garde**

George Hitchcock took the river of American literary history and bent it into a new course. He proved that imagination and daring, not money and gloss, were what made a little magazine into a machine for cultural change. He rallied writers of different generations to challenge widespread and stultifying academic notions of what poetry should be. He always claimed that *kayak* was a one-man boat, but there were a huge number of writers madly rowing their dinghies in his wake. Many of those rowers gathered for parties where the pages George Hitchcock had printed on the press in his Santa Cruz carport were assembled, trimmed, and stapled into book form. They were then stuffed into envelopes, boxed, and lugged to the post office, traveling to bookstores and newsstands all over the country, where they sold for many years at a dollar an issue. The assemblers came willingly because they knew they were participating in something big, something that would change everything. Putting *kayak* together collectively served a practical purpose, but it also allowed George Hitchcock to teach those writers the value of being aware of one another. He wanted them to know that they needed to work together, either to encourage or to challenge, in order to take the discoveries of the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde into new territory.

Every book I have ever read on surrealism and the avant-garde started with the premise that it was a story of interesting failures. Yet surrealism and its predecessor, New York dada, were wildly successful, generating some of the most exciting American poetry and prose of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A number of little magazines were involved in this ferment, but the magazine that dominated the American avant-garde in the second half of the century (after Charles Henri Ford closed *View* in 1947) was George Hitchcock's *kayak*.



Many assume that the American avant-garde is nothing more than an imitation of European models. I would argue that dada, which gave birth to surrealism, was invented in the United States, not in Europe—in New York in 1913, not in Zurich in 1916. When Francis Picabia entered a framed dead monkey into the Armory Show and entitled it “Portrait of Rembrandt, Portrait of Cezanne, Portrait of Van Gogh: Still Life,” dada was born. Both Picabia and Duchamp readily admitted that it was America, not Europe, that possessed the spirit of the new. Both declared that the United States, in fact, *was* dada. Although surrealism, the driving force behind George Hitchcock’s *kayak*, did not become significant in American art and literature until the forties and fifties, spurred by the presence of European refugees from fascism in New York, dada was at the center of a lot of serious American art and writing during the teens and twenties.

Renato Poggioli, in *The Theory of the Avant-garde*, claimed that the prime mover of avant-gardes, since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when that term first came into use, was the publication of “little magazines.” In the American experience, those magazines kept up an unbroken dialogue between the protagonists and antagonists of the avant-garde, from the appearance of New York dada until the present day. Early examples include the *Little Review*, *Broom*, *Secession*, *The Soil*, and William Carlos Williams’ *Contact*. Even if Williams was the most open-minded and experimental of these editors (having translated Philip Soupault’s *Last Nights of Paris* and written *Kora in Hell*, based on Rimbaud’s *Illuminations*) he still had reservations about dada and surrealism. It was only when Eugene Jolas started *transition* in 1928 that the avant-garde had an enthusiastic American champion.

One of the writers Jolas published was Charles Henri Ford, who started a magazine called *View* in 1940, two years after *transition* closed down. Ford set out to promote surrealist writing in the U.S. by offering both translated work and a venue where the native version could develop and flourish. The parallels between Ford’s motivation in founding *View* and George Hitchcock’s in founding *kayak*, twenty-four years later, are obvious. There are also other points of comparison. H.R. Hays and Edouard Roditi, who were early collaborators with Charles Henri Ford, also helped George Hitchcock in the early stages of *kayak*. Both



magazines launched frontal attacks on the literary establishment and offered correspondence sections where literary wars could rage on without restraint.

There are also significant differences between the two magazines. The influx of European artists and writers into New York in the forties, refugees from the Nazi occupation, gave *View* the opportunity to become a major vehicle for the avant-garde scene: Ford devoted entire issues to Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, Pavel Tchelitchew, and Marcel Duchamp. The loss of that relationship, when the refugees repatriated, was a major reason the magazine folded in 1947. Max Ernst was the resident muse in the pages of *kayak*, with extraordinary collages by George Hitchcock, John Digby, and many others, but that was a different kind of art scene. Ford had many influential writers contributing to *View* (Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Henry Miller, e.e. cummings, Lawrence Durrell, Edith Sitwell, Thomas Merton, Robert Duncan, Louis Zukofsky, Paul Bowles, Randall Jarrell, Paul Goodman) but they were not his discoveries. The only real discovery published by Ford was a prodigious teenager from San Francisco named Philip Lamantia, who soon joined the staff of *View* as an assistant editor. George Hitchcock was an early publisher (and sometimes the actual discoverer) of a whole generation of major American poets. He also published poets of an earlier generation who had moved from traditional forms to a much more experimental mode, exploring the possibilities of the thriving neo-surrealism of the sixties and seventies.

More important than anything else, George Hitchcock gave a large nascent avant-garde a home. In the twenty years of its existence, from 1964 until 1984, there was absolutely no place in the publication world that was more prestigious than *kayak*. Everyone wanted desperately to appear in its pages. To be included there meant a writer could count himself or herself as part of that great surge of imaginative work, the high point of the American 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde. The avant-garde is still alive and well in our young century. In the future, writers will surely emerge and take our imaginations to undreamed of places, maybe even fulfilling Breton's ideal of the "supreme point." And yet I can say with full confidence that there will never be a visionary editor-writer-artist-provocateur like George Hitchcock again.



Tribute to George Hitchcock:  
the Covers of All 64 Issues of *kayak*



[http://youtu.be/kxmcgYob\\_Uk](http://youtu.be/kxmcgYob_Uk)



**Contributors' Advice, or Free Speech Corner, or the Blind Assemblage (being the unedited comments of contributors on almost anything)**

JOHN DIGBY:

Variations on “cut and paste” can keep you perpetually amused. Chop away at the past and construct a mash-up for the present.

VERN RUTSALA:

My first encounter with George was when he was editing poetry for *The San Francisco Review*, a magazine that didn't last long as I recall, and I was very pleased when *kayak* appeared in 1964. From the start it was a delight to read not only because of the fine poetry but also because of the fanciful collages and other illustrations by George and John Digby, among others.

*Kayak* was also very welcome because it opened up a whole range of possibilities. Unlike the older magazines *kayak* was receptive to experimental work and, possibly more importantly, George recognized politics as a legitimate subject for poetry. During the Fifties poetry that incorporated history and politics was called “social” which meant that it was somehow inferior to “real” poetry. This so-called real poetry was also supposed to be written only in traditional forms. The accomplishments of the great moderns—Williams, Pound, Eliot, Moore and Stevens, say—were pushed away as if they didn't count though some of the more conservative elements of the Modernists were adhered to—such as Eliot's rejection of the personal in poetry.

*Kayak* embraced poems with a point of view but the poetry also had to be good. There was no room for sloganeering or preaching. During this time almost as if following *kayak*'s lead some of the established literary magazines became a bit more receptive to new ways of writing but a reluctance still remained until some of the well-known older poets moved away from set forms and branched out by exploring new methods and new territories, often personal like Robert Lowell in *Life Studies*. Other poets who came up in the Fifties and who



began to change included James Wright, Louis Simpson, and Adrienne Rich, among others. Obviously many others who hadn't been in the mainstream began to receive attention—Gary Snyder, Robert Creeley, Robert Peterson, Denise Levertov, and Robert Duncan, among many others.

At the center of this new mood you seemed to always find *kayak* which continued into the Eighties to publish some of the best work of that era. George also brought out many fine books and several have stuck with me over the years—first collections by Charles Simic, Robin Magowan, and Morton Marcus immediately come to mind.

As an example of George's openness was his response to the prose poems I sent him in 1966. I had been working on the form for a couple of years—a form widely seen in European literature since Baudelaire's time but rarely encountered in American poetry. Later, of course, it became fairly common—in fact, Charles Simic was given a Pulitzer Prize for his collection of prose poems, *The World Doesn't End*. George took eleven of my prose poems and that encouragement kept me plugging away and resulted in several books over the years. I'm sure others could tell similar stories about their work. What George did had a wide and lasting effect on poetry in this country.

#### RAY GONZALEZ:

The use of white space on the page was invented when you told the truth. This gave your words plenty of room to pronounce themselves, though your voice was embedded in a population explosion of pop culture and pop corn. This series of pops moved the white space beyond borders and taught you that hominids were found in the honey pot before you had a chance to be the first to dip your fingers in there.

The use of white space ruined the formation of condolatory mambas that slithered between the sentences, until you had no choice but to redefine the linguistic node of the incorporated simulation that reformed reptilian need into sideboard fingers playing upon your keyboard. When white space was reconsidered by graphic ideologies, the absence of letters on pulp visualized a cause in four languages, though you know only two and accept the theory that people who speak



more than one language remain sane and pure, their tongues licking the white space in search of other alphabets.

The use of white space is based on your need to construct what works as an expansion of what grows on the window ledge, your habit of pure seeing tied down on the page to waste a few trees and pile up the failed manuscripts full of blinding snow that might be the exact dimension unable to paste itself onto a printed sheet of paper that contains your sole confession toward forgiveness because the white page always stays ahead of what you need to write, this obvious moment wrapped in fumes from an extinct bottle of white-out, that force you haven't smelled since the white space refused to be corrected years ago and the page got away with a typo that changed your life.

## TOM WAYMAN

As a writing MFA student at the University of California at Irvine 1966-68, I regarded *kayak's* chief paddler as a role model, though I never met the man. The two blades on his paddle that I admired from afar—and which constitute two-thirds of any “advice” I have—were generosity and activism. A third aspect to George Hitchcock I wanted to emulate was the varnish coating both blades: a sense of humor.

Though *kayak's* standards were high, Mr. Hitchcock was always generous in his brief comments rejecting my poems and those of my friends in the UCI graduate program. His penned responses to our work were unfailingly encouraging, albeit often specific about what he saw in our work that was not as strong as it could be. At the same time, the odd and funny illustrations on the rejections were cheering, and reminded us not to take this process of submission and rejection too seriously. Even the magazine's masthead comment, which reminded the reader that a kayak has never been a vehicle for mass transit, spoke metaphorically about how a poem that one person considers a work of poetic genius, capable of transporting that person into ecstasies, is to another person incomprehensible twaddle. The metaphor was simultaneously funny, astute, and a provider of much-needed perspective to me as a young writer.



Mr. Hitchcock's generosity was as much active as passive, though: he found space in *kayak* for our best efforts. That is, spurred on by our delight in the magazine's content, and inspired by the way his jotted comments when rejecting us never foreclosed the possibility of future acceptance, we were encouraged to draw from deeper down in our writing and revising. Eventually, he published poems of ours, to our enormous delight. The jovial if exacting spirit of the craft's skipper that came through every aspect of the magazine added a human touch to the whole—let's face it—humiliating process of being rejected over and over. And an acceptance from *kayak* felt like you had achieved a chance to participate in a unique project—a different feeling from that provided by an acceptance from slicker, more austere magazines. Placing a poem with the latter were mere accomplishments, notches on an imaginary stick that you hoped one day to wave before potential publishers of a first book. But having your words appear in *kayak* was an event: you felt you had joined a family you were pleased be part of, or an expedition you wanted to travel with, or had been accepted into a club of which, unlike Groucho, you were proud to be a member.

Besides, or part of, that generous welcoming spirit, was Mr. Hitchcock's activism: his evident belief that poetry and revolutionary socialism were inseparable. After all, surrealism was born out of the conviction that changing old perceptions of the world would lead humanity to construct via revolution a more just, more equitable society. "Is surrealism the communism of genius?" the Parisian Surrealist Central on Rue de Grenelle asked in the 1920s. The question was open-ended, but more declarative was another slogan of the Parisian group: "If you love love, you will love surrealism." The Argentinean fighter in the Cuban revolt against the dictator Batista, Che Guevara, had pronounced that a true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love. When as a wounded and helpless captured guerilla in another struggle against a Latin American oligarch, Guevara was murdered in 1967 in Bolivia, *kayak* sponsored an elegy contest for him. I cannot emphasize enough that in the context of the time this was a daring move for a U.S. literary magazine. Guevara was still regarded widely as a godless Communist menace to U.S. control of the hemisphere; his



image had not yet been turned into a brand adorning dozens of consumer trinkets as a vague symbol of teen angst.

The elegy contest created quite a stir. And I don't think Mr. Hitchcock, with his abiding sense of humor, of perspective, would have objected to the complaint of the poet J.D. Whitney in what for me was the best 1960s poetry anthology, *The Whites of Their Eyes*, edited by Seattle's Paul Hunter, and Patti and Tom Parson (Seattle: Consumption, 1970). Whitney in his poem "Che" notes that elegies are to some degree evasion

unless

we took a thousand elegies  
chiseled on a huge  
stone fist  
and shoved it  
up the asshole of  
imperialism

now

that would  
be some tribute

*kayak* itself makes an appearance in *The Whites of Their Eyes*, incidentally, in that a poem by Charles Simic from his 1967 collection *What the Grass Says*, published by kayak books, made the cut.

Of course, the melding of poetry with the tangible struggle for a fairer, more livable world was evident many places in *kayak*'s heyday, since poetry was part of publications and rallies connected to the civil rights, anti-Vietnam War, anti-draft, anti-imperialist, Black Power and women's movements. But I can't think of another purely "literary" publication other than *kayak* that encouraged its contributors to mourn the loss of a revolutionary socialist leader.

My students today find alien the concepts that poetry should have a part in the muck and sweat of the real-world struggle for a better life for all, and that poetry should subsume both generosity and a perspective-granting sense of humor. Many of my students have adopted instead



the fantasy paradigm that, because they have received much attention in the tiny poetry world on their campuses, they will quickly ascend to a stellar, lucrative career in poetry in the larger world. Poetry is a kind of grease that will lubricate their heady slide upwards, simultaneously defying gravity, the odds, and common sense. They find this worldview reinforced when reading organizers introduce poets by reeling off the awards and prizes and other honors these writers have garnered, saying not a word about any *poems* the authors have written that live in the hearts or minds of anyone.

But there's a brittle kind of energy around the careerist hustling that accompanies the attempt to live out that paradigm. It is an approach to art that divides art's practitioners and audiences into winners and losers. While my students are convinced they are winners, my sense is that at the first real artistic setback they face, many of them will feel like losers to themselves and abandon their art entirely.

Robert Bly once distinguished between a poetry *community*—which contains and speaks to people of every sort from every walk of life, as irritating as that can be sometimes—and a poetry *network*—which is usually academic specialist talking to academic specialist. A community, Bly pointed out, will sustain you through good times and bad, whereas a network is strictly an aid to social mobility. If you falter or stray in your pursuit of the network's approved version of success, you are cast aside and nobody cares. For the long run, community is your best bet.

My students don't believe in this distinction. Obviously I and my peers who share a different point of view than our students have not been as successful at showing the alternative as Mr. Hitchcock was. He gave us good advice by example, advice that has sustained us and made our lives (and poetry, I like to think) better than it would otherwise have been. I can pass along this approach to poetry here, likely preaching to the converted. But I have failed to convincingly convey these ideas in the seminar room, where such advice perhaps matters more.

#### A. A. HEDGECOKE:

Place holds memory we collide through and respond to. Our own memory is versed in cultural, psychological, and physiological tenets we adhere to and relate from. What we conceive in memory, moves toward



necessary response while satisfying personal and geographical historical knowns (norms). Could it be that the imprint of memory exists despite us and we revel within its proximity by chance breach or, as we brush against time, implied familiarity?

TIM KAHL

**Fakarouny**

THOMAS LUX:

Being in *kayak* was every young poet's ambition (at least every young poet I knew) and having a few poems and a review of my first book in it in the early 70s was a thrill and a privilege. Long live George Hitchcock!



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