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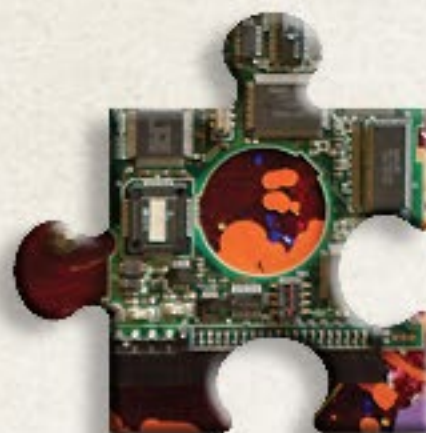
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**CONTRIBUTORS' ADVICE**





## ZOLTÁN KOMOR

### **Tub Hussars**

A wheelbarrow carries the night into the village. The rasping sounds of its rusty wheels wake the hanging bats in the steeple. Their webbed wings comb the cold air. A straw bale shakes out the ashes of the dead.

The mother floats into the children's room like a ghost. The moon is grazing in her round eyes. Black lines on her white face trace where the dream's matchstick scratched her. She watches her two sleeping sons. The blanket rises and sinks with their small breathing chests. Their light hair tickles the feathers out of the pillows.

"My little darlings! My sweet peas! It is time to wake up and take a bath!" says the woman behind the dark. "Quick, I'll get the soap, and we'll make bubbles that will polish the night!"

She doesn't wait for a response. The mother picks up the children and carries them into the bathroom. The boys become conscious only in the tub. Frothy water splashes under their smooth armpits, small bubbles sit in their bellybuttons.

"But Mom," they moan, "we already had a bath before going to sleep! We are all clean, Mom!"

"Shh!" The woman puts a finger to her lips. "A terrible nightmare visited me and sat on my bedstead. Oh, my hair still smokes because of it! In my dream you grew up and left me. You became robbers and murderers. Ugly knives glinted in your hands. Nice and clean, my darlings, we must wash off these premonitions from your dear skins!"

The eyes of the two boys meet. They smarten up and begin to splash each other with the soapy water. Dice waltz in the bottom of the tub; they get nipped between the boys' toes. The mother raises their tiny feet, blows off the soapsuds, and observes what the dice show.

"Beautiful sixes!" she praises them. "Quick, my darlings, the warm bed is waiting for you. I rubbed the devil's shadow off you, now you can go to sleep!"



Outside, the stars slip from the bats' dark claws and fall into the snow. Half-frozen violin players on the white rooftops. They throw their instruments into the chimneys and watch the rising smoke, how it plants small musical notes in the dark sky.

"Darlings! My sweet little peas!" A bodiless voice behind the curtains of a dream. The boys open their eyes in the dark.

"Mom," they whisper, "we are so tired."

"Hush, my angels, and come quick! Or the water will get cold!" says the mother as she pulls the children from their warm beds. "Come on, little matchsticks, out of that box! You must take a bath now! Quick, I'll get the soap!"

The boys take off their clothes and the mother begins to wash their backs and bottoms.

"The bubble of the dream popped, and black ants marched out of it. They are still buzzing in my hair!" she explains to her sons. "Ugly, ugly creatures! Their formicary is made of cemetery dust, and they carry out the bitter tears of the dead! I dreamed that... Oh, why am I telling you this? You grew up and left me, and became dog-eating tramps! The little puppy heads all disappeared into your sweet little throats, my darlings. You twirled the leashes above your heads as if they were lassos! The sad barks stuck between your teeth! Quick, quick, nice and clean, we must wash these premonitions off your dear skins!"

The two boys keep yawning and stretching in the water. The dice at the bottom of the tub crawl between their toes. The mother raises their tiny feet, blows off the soapsuds full of dead ants, and checks the dice, but they are all white. The soap has washed away the dots.

Like anxious ghosts the towels wriggle, cuddle the children. They hide their faces in the dry cloth.

"Now pop into your bed, angels!" she orders them. Bats squirm in the aqueducts. The mother also hits the sack, but when she raises her blanket she finds dry cornhusks under it. She sighs sadly and lies down on them. As she moves in the bed, the sound of crackling husks fills the house. Like someone tearing pages out of a prayer book.

The boys in the other room fall asleep out of pure exhaustion, and in their dreams they see their mother, flying through the sky, throwing bars of soap at them.



“My little darlings! My sweet peas!” she yells from above. “These are pieces of the sky. They will make you heavenly clean, my dear ones!”

The falling soap turns into heavy bricks. A few seconds later the boys find themselves back in the tub, their bruises painting the water pink.

The arrestor of the imagination. The two boys wake up, finding their pillows uncomfortable. They pull bricks out from under them and throw them on the floor, where they grow insect legs and crawl into the corners and up the walls. As the boys watch them, they hear a distant seething sound. Their mother is filling the tub with running water. As they close their eyes they can see the bubbles playing tag, they can smell soap and feel the touch of the water. The thought of the bath gives them goose flesh.

“Darlings. Sweet little peas! In my dream you grew old, and died. You were lying in coffins, but I wasn’t there to give you goodnight kisses. There was a family around you I didn’t know, and they placed flowers on your chests. The flowers began to wilt and they dropped their petals. They were like tears. A rising wind carried them to the North.”

The water is almost white because of the soap. Breast milk ripples in the tub.

“Don’t forget to wash your willies, too!”

Brick insects keep crawling inside the walls, and new rooms appear and disappear in the house. Only the bathroom doesn’t change. The shadows of the boys, like dark ink, dissolve in the water. Towels arrive. They are like sandpaper.

“Please don’t bathe us anymore!” the children cry. Their eyes are all red, the cloth has shredded their dry skin.

Nestling in the night. Scrape out the remains of a soul, and feed it to the dogs. Dice in the keyholes, everything is locked now because of bad luck. Frozen tears on the eyelashes: the mother plucks them off and puts them in a glass. The clinking sounds, when she shakes it, like the sound when the boys’ toenails hit the enameled tub. A wheelbarrow full of dying bats under the window. As they squirm and grab each other, membranous wings are torn apart.

The minutes go by and the mother makes up the bed in the bathtub for her little boys. She puts pillows under the naked children’s necks, and gives them a kiss on the forehead. Then she turns on the water.



“Good night little angels, this stream will keep you clean till morning. The nightmares will disappear down the drain. You will see.” Then she whisks away the light and leaves the room.

The two boys close their eyes and listen to the running water. All of a sudden the sound of neighing shakes the room. The bathtub begins to shatter under them. The children open their mouths and scream, but their mother can't hear them anymore. She's sound asleep in her room. Her eyes move under the lids, as she keeps turning the pages of her dream.

The bathtub ascends, and extends its long horse legs. Then it begins to move, trotting in small circles in the bathroom. It jumps out the window into the snowy courtyard carrying its small, naked jockeys. The cold bites into the bathers' flesh. The winter chill crawls into their bones.

“Come on, soldiers! We're going to wash your willies nice and clean!” neighs the crazy tub, then springs over the old palisade and gallops away into the night with its shivering captives.

Dry cornhusks crackle in the bed, as the mother turns from one side to the other, then onto her back. Her breasts go up and down, and a secret, bright smile appears on her face. In her dream she sees her boys. They are beautiful cavalymen, riding horses toward unknown countries and unknown princesses.

“Little hussars!” she sighs, with dice between her toes, showing the number one.

A needle sews North into the compass. Somewhere near the border stands a bathtub full of ice; the moonlight skates on the icicles that drip down its sides. The two bathers are frozen too. Staring at each other with motionless eyes. Their white skin lights up the dark. They are clean all right.

Music of burnt violins leaches the walls of the village. The broken chalk of angels falls on the rooftops.



TIM KAHL

### **The Eyes of the Jumping Spider**

Once upon a damaged spine I grew into a book  
and let it help me redefine

the way that I might look upon  
the stained cabinet of mysteries I visit  
during the downward-facing dog  
of my yoga repose.

My ass in the air, my hands on the floor —  
exhale and leap across  
several centuries of dirt into

the pre-hygiene past where the sterile seams  
of imagination in a concrete form  
became infected with a flood-borne mold.

This is the wild way to experience faith —

leap and speak of elephants in  
the Okavango Delta, the confusion of  
lagoon and bush and savannas fenced,  
look, there is a goddess hidden in  
a smuggler's dress working its way to  
the museum inside you underneath the flash  
of signs and the sweat and the prison of  
permissions you've been granted. Quick! —

there is passage in the surf  
there is a channel through the smoke  
there is a gangway through the nightscapes  
there is progress in the casual plunder  
of a driver's eyes always ready to shift focus  
like that damned jumping spider and its  
staircase retina blurring the hysteria at  
the edge so it can jump on top and hunt



for the rest of its days in the muck of  
    this project planet,  
    so it can sexually signal in the UV light.  
Now you read across that secret dimension,  
    that trial of the Titanic, that show of explosions  
    during the mission of the mind crying for  
its bottle, its open warfare against the aftershocks  
    occurring every seven years. Slowly, you populate  
    the polished surfaces where you behave,  
    remember a sad smile you once gave,  
and you gave yourself to some meditation mecca,  
    that lamentable garden and its unsung praise.  
To stand here, reluctant, in the brightness  
    of another westward decade,  
    scanning the horizon for its convulsions  
    you can mimic and better.  
    You can compete  
with your simple pattern,  
    your hope half-opened to surprise,  
    your tag-along among the egrets and sheep  
frolicking together in the tall grass of Elk Grove.  
Faithful reader, test the heat of a manuscript  
    again, blanket yourself in a sail.  
You wait in a library with a three-tiered mast.  
    You wait, terrified of the water. You wait  
on a bamboo mat. The waves chase you  
    toward the human,  
        toward the first fruits  
of awakening as you wait  
    to be humbled by  
        the resurrection of the book.



## A Luxury Paper

A luxury paper is pressed from mantis cocoons,  
and a great amount of time is spent reading it  
by members of the casters guild whose festival  
of handshakes begins with a roar of engines.

There is a brothel in one tent and  
the orchid princess collects a series of puddles  
in zip-lock bags. The whole operation is  
an accident of money which in many ways  
resembles a cave-in at the edge of a hole.

But everyone must be paid in mud or some  
other durable: cellos, space probes, left-handed  
proteins, the robes of the Byzantines.

You can write that fan letter after the mantid  
hatchlings escape into the world. You can send it  
where the first mold of the road map was poured.

It organizes men to be held by the whims of  
the feminine; the women create their own  
lubrication. Over the loudspeaker, a husky voice  
yells *Let 'er rip* and *Let 'er fly*. The parade through  
town with its nostalgic doodads commences.

It floats through the frail pages, all circumstance  
written down. Each curved letter perspires its  
vaginal moisture onto your passport.

You should leave now, head for the highway  
the open road that leads to  
the Oatman Hotel for a buffalo burger.

Meat is not paper, is not pillow, is not turquoise.

No one can afford that where you have traveled.



**Blind Force and Chance**

the virtues of jojoba  
are praised by  
the provincial dentist

half the electorate  
opts to downplay  
the effects of friction

algorithms of snowflakes  
predict the heredity  
of needlegrass

the law of turnout  
is complicated by  
the stiff rules of the task force

a single currency is  
grown from bulbs

an amateur language  
builds a tree  
by blind force and chance





THE DANCE OF DESIRE I by Eduardo Sarmiento, 2013,  
pencil on paper (16" x 12")





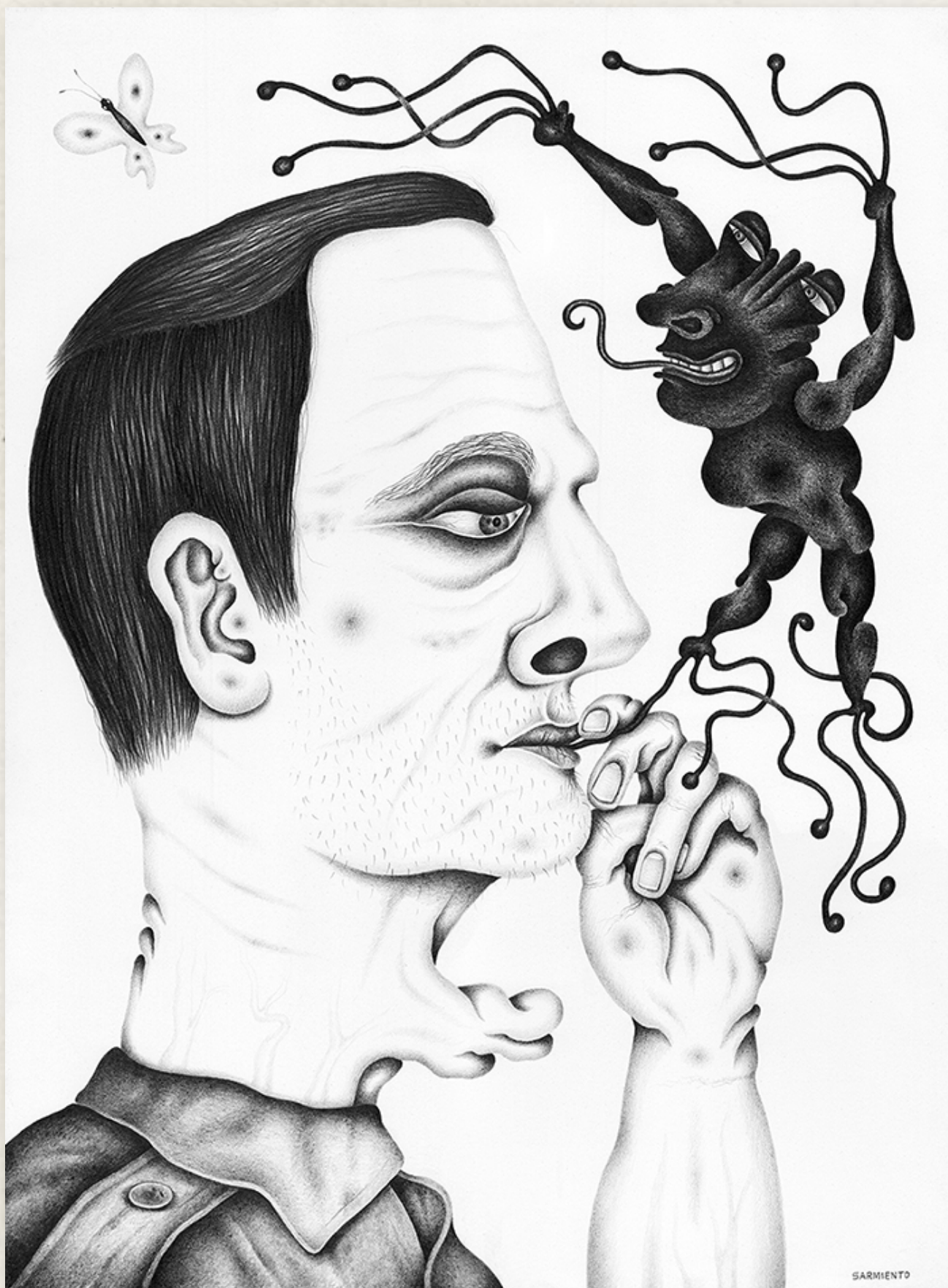
THE DANCE OF DESIRE II by Eduardo Sarmiento, 2013,  
pencil on paper (16" x 12")





FRAGMENTS OF DESIRE by Eduardo Sarmiento, 2012,  
pencil on paper (16” x 12”)





A REFINED WAY OF LIVING DESIRE I  
by Eduardo Sarmiento, 2013, pencil on paper (16" x 12")



CARINE TOPAL

**Hook and Ladder**

What's left of the town  
are the ribs of a ship

From my open window—  
only our walled garden

Beneath mackerel cloud—  
the last of my mother's Bourbon roses

In the heart of Amherst—  
our strange summer moon shining

Hear the ticking of bells?—  
oil exploding, that awful sun

The day so light tonight  
birds sing like lunatics

*Amherst Fire*  
*July 4, 1879*

[Editor's Note: this poem was accidentally dropped for the first three days of the issue #11 run. I have reprinted it here for those who missed it then.]







**Down dear**

Down I dove this is a given. If I hear voices,  
at least they're all  
my voices. Sometimes  
I get kissed  
sometimes punched in my mouth.  
This is my heart. As is with high hoping.  
This is the pen I play over loud. This  
I can see and wish to, high as a hundred dollar habit.  
Loving, stepped on a whole ant pile. Shall I hold forth,  
stick fingers  
in my ears,

surrounded by neither, better  
nor? I won't struggle. I don't remember,  
was I very ill? This is how  
I like to grow, I said  
to Jenny. We were in her car, full with junk.  
some lousy journal?

Am I again writing

Dear young

me, get off the road. Dear me,  
you're not leaving  
this table until you finish  
that verbiage. But that's how I like  
to grow I told her, in dark tough soil.



## **Spice**

From stick ground to powder, the sunset dirt of cinnamon. Fragrance for old sacred, sweet gingerbrown pepper dust and warmth from baked rising, stone fruits. I invent the Mumbai market pungent where crushed spices take tone as hazel eyes: cinnamon more yellow for turmeric, more red for curry, piled in cones resembling incense. Ancient soil. Along the San Juan, formerly white clothes silt-stained that pant as a girl inside them catches breath. A river Baptism. A resonance of gong. Desert sand goes crimson near Sedona. Frail bodiless fingers tinged orange that move Torah pages by candlelight. Holy holy. The Kalahari mirage, a standing pool and hooves from a donkey. I handle a pure fineness, sprinkle silk particles on my tongue. The loam residue that flattens a rug's mosaic, a dust storm, dry oil lamps, cave dwellers who build staircases to their kitchen. Five dancers who spin and jingle about, sprinkling the squat emperor with powdered gold.





RHAPSODY by Cristian Del Risco, 2007,  
mixed media on canvas (60" x 48")



MICHAEL S. HARPER

### THREE GENTLEMEN FROM VERONA

In the prose poems of James Arlington Wright  
He visited Verona with his second wife, Annie;  
Intimates who loved his poems called him JAW.  
He sent me a letter about my "*Nightmare Begins  
Responsibility*," unsolicited; I invited him to Brown campus:  
He was on the wagon and on leave from Hunter College.  
I recorded his reading at Pembroke campus:  
Windows open, frolicking children, a Yiddish joke;  
His commentaries were about his brother ["*To a Defeated Savior*"]

And his Grandmother, 'semi-literate,' who wrote letters to school  
When he played hooky. Then he wrote "*Hook*"  
About a Sioux brave in the Minneapolis bus station;  
He was kin to "*Little Crow*;" they ate gar together at New Ulm, MN  
And JAW's best translations were from the "Spanish." His PhD  
dissertation  
Was on Charles Dickens. In the military he was in Japan after  
Hiroshima &  
Nagasaki: no poems on that period of his life.

You should know he was a brilliant teacher:  
He taught no poetry writing but literature classes  
As he learned from his Latin teacher  
In Martins Ferry, Ohio;  
Somehow he went to Kenyon on the G.I. Bill.  
He married his girlfriend from his hometown  
Had two sons and studied Ransom, Tate,  
Lowell, the ancients, Horace in particular:

He called himself a '*Horatian*.'



## II

The best teacher I ever knew was Sterling Allen Brown.  
 He was a 4-H-Man: **Homer, Heine, Harding, Housman**.  
 He studied with Kittredge at Harvard on Shakespeare;  
 He told stories of “*Kitty*,” who had no PhD: “who would  
 Examine him,” Sterling said. Sterling called himself  
 “*Falstaff*,” he loved Prince Hal who needed protection  
 To rule. Sterling called himself a ‘red-ink-man;’  
 His comments were longer than his students.  
 The first blues record he knew was by Mamie Smith.  
 He had the best ear at Williams and ran the Howard Players in D.C.  
 In the nation’s capitol: wrote **Southern Road**, ed. **The Negro  
 Caravan**.

He was our Library Of Congress, where he could not eat while doing  
 Research, in his hometown: his comments on Lincoln,  
 Dante, Proust, Melville, Douglass, were In the American  
 Grain. He was no fugitive poet, but a believer in ‘*An Integer  
 Is a Whole Number*.’ His book on prosody was a companion  
 To James Weldon Johnson’s **American Negro Poetry**.

Sterling’s father was a preacher who graduated from Fisk  
 And Oberlin; his mother was valedictorian of her class at Fisk.

## III

Both JAW and Sterling were believers in the text:  
 Literature, for them, was a study in comparative  
 Humanity. Both loved **Keats**: Odes & Letters:  
 ‘*negative capability*’ and “**vale of soulmaking**”  
 their special tropes & archival landmarks.

## IV

Gwendolyn Brooks[“*We Real Cool*”] gave me my career:  
 She took my first book out of a slush pile  
 And saw it was published; she was one  
 Of three judges; the other two Denise Levertov



& Robert Penn Warren. I did not win  
the United States Poetry Award from Pittsburgh  
but I was in *Time* Magazine  
with Jesse Jackson on the cover  
and Ralph Ellison's seminal essay in its center:

**'What Would America Be Without Blacks'**

V

We are in a period of expansion from Lincoln's  
"Second Inaugural:" literacy and citizenship  
Are the next vistas to that expansion.

*"Let the doing be the exercise, not the exhibition"—*  
read Jean Toomer's **Essentials** & his **Cane**.

VI

*Meet life's terms but never accept them:*

*"I been down so long that down don't worry me"*

*'I don't know why my mother wants to stay here fuh  
this old worl' aint been no friend to huh.'*

VII

I once took Linguistics from Mrs. Robinson; her class met at 9 a.m.  
Three days a week. One morning she came to class only  
To read "*After Long Silence*" by William Butler Yeats,  
An eight line poem of epiphany. Then she dismissed us.

When I asked an English secretary why Mrs. Elizabeth Robinson  
Behaved in such a manner, the secretary at L.A.S.C. said:

*"Mrs. Robinson's husband died last evening."*



VIII

**“It is late at night and still I am losing  
But Still I am steady and unaccusing.**

**As long as the Declaration guards  
My right to be equal in number of cards**

**It is nothing to me who runs the dive  
Let’s have a look at another five.”**

—Robert Frost

“*In Dives’ Dive*” from A FURTHER RANGE, 1936

Frost believed in *Sound & Sense*  
To me his word has no recompense.

Note: *this ditty is dedicated to Kyle Glasper/  
Jon Henricks/ & Jacob Henry. 4 19 10, Patriots Day  
& Day of the Boston Marathon.*



**DEAR JOHN, DEAR COLTRANE** (Pittsburgh, 1970)

Philip Levine helped me most with **DEAR JOHN, DEAR COLTRANE**. He'd recommended journals where I should send poems: Poetry/Southern Review/Field (Oberlin). Henry Rago took six poems for Poetry; Rago was writing me a response to my query about first books when he died—his wife sent his unfinished letter on to me. Levine insisted I send my ms. to his publisher, Wesleyan U Press: "We already Have our black book," Holly Stevens wrote in her rejection letter— "Swallow the Lake" by Clarence Major, a poem about Lake Michigan, was her black book. Philip Levine cautioned— 'Don't put your ms. in a drawer, send it to University of Pittsburgh Press competition;' the judges were Gwendolyn Brooks, Denise Levertov, and Robert Penn Warren—the prize money 2K. I met Levine's student, Lawson Fusao Inada, at Iowa.

Brooks wrote me a letter on peach paper: "YOU WERE MY CLEAR WINNER!" She fought for my book hard enough so Pittsburgh agreed to publish it despite my not winning; originally the book was entitled BLACK SPRING—it conflicted with Henry Miller's book about Paris in the thirties. My mother put GB's letter in freezer to open.

My book was one of nine nominated for the National Book Award in Poetry; then it was reviewed in TIME [April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1970] with Jesse Jackson on the cover. Ralph Ellison wrote the cover article for TIME Magazine: "What would America Be Without Blacks."





WINTER LANDSCAPE by Paul Sierra, 2002,  
oil on canvas (50'' x 60'')





ABLAZE by Paul Sierra, 2005,  
oil on canvas (38" x 56")





THE SUN UNDER THE TREES by Paul Sierra, 2011,  
oil on canvas (32" x 44")





OUR HOME AT THE END OF THE WORLD  
by Paul Sierra, 2011, oil on canvas (32" x 38")



## ANNELLE NEEL

### The Flower Show

“Rosemary,” the old lady said, her head slightly tilted. “Great in bread and songs. But it’s not who I am.”

She was elegantly dressed, tweed suit with gloves and pearl earrings. Her thin frame looked as if it came from a small appetite and not hunger. I started to move to the next exhibit, but she looked perplexed.

“Is something wrong?” I asked.

“I can’t remember my name.”

She moved to the peonies, full-blown heads of pink and white blossoms the size of softballs. I followed, seemingly more concerned about her memory loss than she was.

“Secrets,” she said. “A bouquet of peonies means you can keep secrets.”

With hundreds of people attending the flower show, there had to be a cop somewhere. She seemed to guess I was looking for help when she tugged my sleeve to follow her.

“It’s here,” she said. “My name. I know it has something to do with a flower. I’ll recognize it when I see it. But I’m not Rosemary, or Peony.”

“Then you’re probably not Crocus,” I said. “Or Fuchsia. Or Protea.”

“Or Anthurium,” she said. “Don’t be silly. Of course not.”

I followed through the camellias and lilies and the violets and the tulips while she tried on each name for size. Still watching for any kind of officer, I suggested we look in her purse for identification. She popped it open. Inside were five twenty-dollar bills and a ticket to the flower show. Nothing else.

“Daisy?” I asked. She shook her head.

“I’m hardly the ‘skylark of every heart,’” she said.

“Excuse me?”



“From a poem.” She kept strolling. “Not Jasmine. I could never tolerate its perfume. Roses are for horse races and funerals. The dahlia is too unstable.”

“Heather?” I asked. “Iris? Marigold? How about Pansy?”

She paused. “Pansy, the shared, unspoken thoughts of lovers. But no. I have no lover.”

She tripped over a stray cable but righted herself immediately. I hesitated to suggest Poppy because maybe the old lady was on drugs. But she sighed and touched the flower’s red petals.

“The sleep of dreams and death.”

It took a few seconds to move on to Lavender. She shook her head before I could even ask. Zinnia and Wisteria; Daffodil and Periwinkle; Sunflower and Lilac. None brought any sign of recognition. We’d made the complete tour. Winding up near the entrance where we met, I spotted a cop at the door. Afraid to leave her, I tried waving to get his attention. Her hand clamped around my wrist.

“This is it,” she said. “Hamlet, Act IV. Poor mad Ophelia: ‘There’s rosemary. That’s for remembrance.’”

I locked eyes with her. “But this is where we started.”

She looked at her watch. “Time to go. This has been fun.”

I followed her out and watched her hail a cab. Rosemary waved as she got inside, a woman who knew exactly where she was going.



## LAWRENCE R. SMITH

### **Hermes**

Doves on the power line  
see their wings torn open by sunrise,  
and yet remain swollen with hope.  
His listening voice in another room  
is the source of divine banquets.  
The City of God lies next to  
the City of Serpents  
with their whispering skins.  
She approaches the table,  
drops a ruby and two emeralds  
into each cup,  
jewels vibrating with the molecular  
record of eons, the grief of all species  
still unknown to us, and to any force  
but their own extinction.

Voices again, rejoining the pilgrimage  
through rhizomal tunnels, hinting at  
Herme's dark arrival, his indecipherable gifts.  
He will surely demand a reopening of wounds,  
cutting right down to the brittle bones  
that have centered our flesh into healing.

The man at the first gate welcomes Phoebus,  
the moon dragon, Heraclitus, the red lion  
and his green sister, Boethius, antimony  
and ash, Zohar, the Sephiroth, the astral  
bodies of Pythagoras. Their work continues:



finding an explosion of light in each  
small point of darkness.

Fire opens like the lion flower,  
its petals reach high to seize air  
with the sly intent of breeding  
a race of violent offspring.

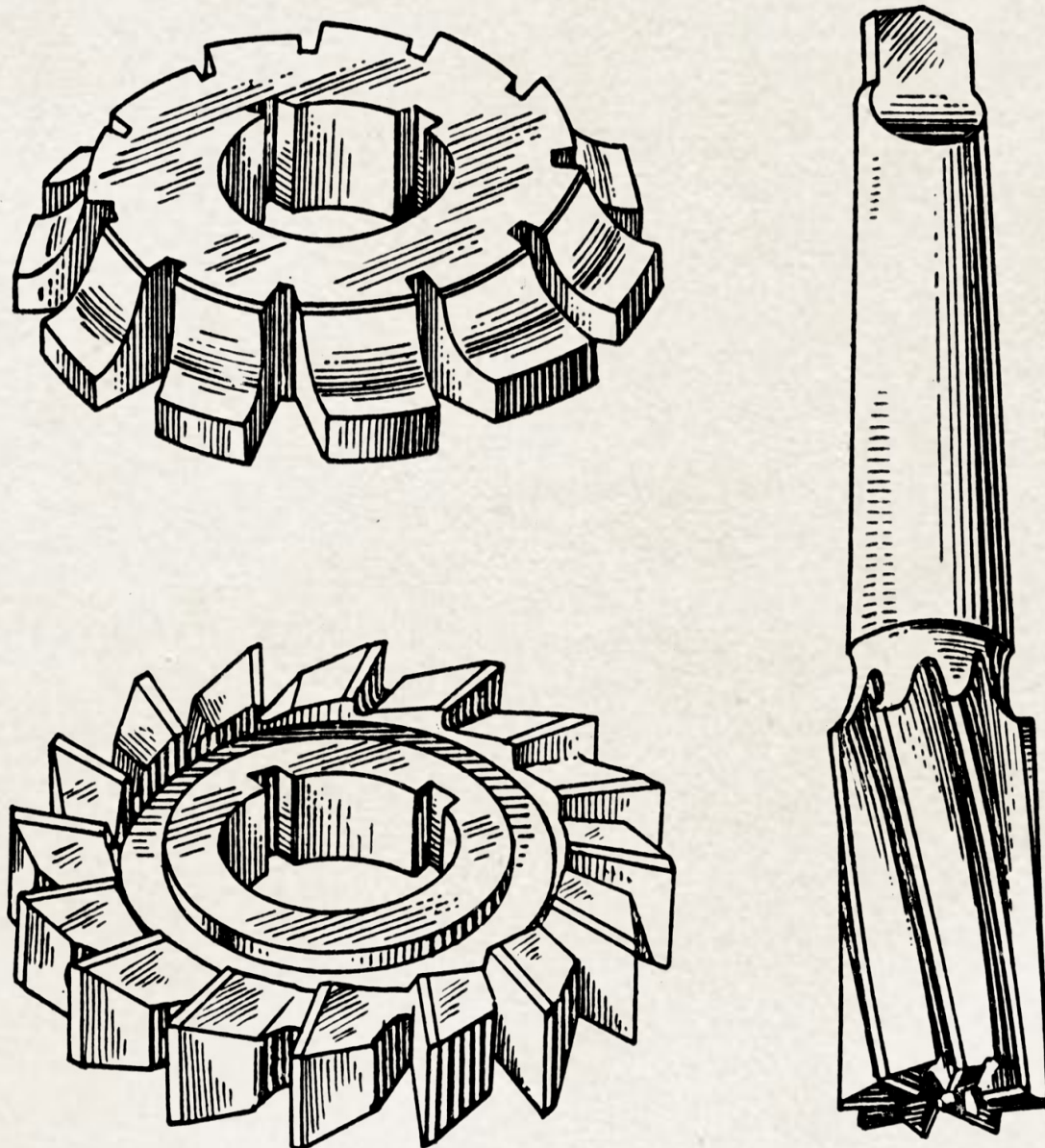


FIG. 427.—Milling cutters.



**Altar**

The dog-legged river stones  
and threads of air between  
make the chest-high stack  
a passport, a sword of entry.

Bones, a scalloped niche,  
the gutter with straw hat  
and cardboard box, braided  
lips, the pier that moors breath.

Cars, mule hides, mangoes,  
a syrup of flour and tomato  
thinned with jugs of water  
that have never touched glass.

Sing stones, the blood of prayer.



**Sentinel**

And the flagman said:

“There is a hand and a rope,  
bad teeth that have forgotten purpose.  
There is a black tank containing  
the remnants of an ancient sea  
buried in the guts of a mountain.

A found bone is a plan for travel—  
shrines, sutras, empty corridors of October,  
a quiet gesture to seize the horizon  
before it slips away as clouds.

I hold an opal in my mouth  
to taste moonlight.”





CONTINUATION (For Deedee with love)  
by Barbara Lai Bennett, 2013,  
oil, mixed media on wood panel (12" x 16")



JAMES GRABILL

### **Will of the Mind Falling Asleep**

Take this mineral pulse through restorations of coastal marsh in which the bleed of light carries lumber from Japan's tsunami turning on the ruined axle of shape.

Also, take my anthill across anonymously spaded yards to where planetary rainforest iridescence sinks to the sea floor in leaves, giving what matters to the trunk, the way it was for ancestors.

Show me where civilization exists in the future as in the present, with its amphitheaters where the Greek chorus paces and the masks of each act made of clay and heat of the sun hover outside time.

Share my locomotive load of coal with block-long stacks of parapsychic engines hauling further ball joints for limbs and cradles for hips down tracks of spreading temperate vectors.

Let me release the cells of this skin ready to fly with gnat wings, so they can lift into branches at muscular lengths still letting mushrooms thread neural links to the tiniest.

Fill my roadside muskrat torso with Vajrayana emptiness that collects beautiful water for the fauna visible only through lenses made for love of learning what is.

Upend my vats of atmosphere the mind serves at the pleasure of blue meridians of whales and urban swells where the climate turns on its stem.







## **At Genetic Speeds**

The promise of being here thickens with scientific longing, bread baking in the bull's eye whole, the root-hold pull of common good.

Loose shaves blend with splashes of overflow sun. The hour stops in a burst, swallowing 100,000 years of spear-tip readiness, however winning or losing has gone.

What breathing reminds in the body, smoothness of arms negotiates. Sunlight swims through vision broken and whole.

Haven't we unmasked already, in the summer afternoon when we were little under the trees?

When the eyes opened, were we watching maple seeds twirl mid-air on their helicopter blades far from the end of anything?

Rain falls within beauty, letting more plants into the mind.

A blue jay feather flares up in slow motion, as unfinished as the place is, where camera-flash comprehensions migrate generation to generation, before understanding appears.



BRIAN SWANN

**Snow in June, or Why I Hate Actors**

*“I am my remembering self, and the experiencing self,  
who does my living, is like a stranger to me.”*

—Daniel Kohnman, **Thinking, Fast and Slow**

That tall Philistine head-dress crossing a Tuscan back road could be a porcupine caught in my headlights, lit from within. Those girls on a Watteau lawn might well be made of light, while down cathedral steps shadows creep from the mouths of stone lions. Things you forgot or forgot you forgot ring like buoys signaling the hidden, or signs marking where you can be lowered into a pit in order to be raised and draped in a technicolor coat. So go the rocks, so goes the sun and the world of many colors turning into the shirt of Nessus that eats you up in flame before you have a chance to know what it's all about, consuming you in a shower of sparks, flowers and flurry of fire to the descants of the dying, brightness that blinds where the steps have been worn down and shadows thick as snow take what's left, creeping across green expanses, down into deep places, up again like smoke so nothing is wasted while everything is pretending to be itself which is why I hate actors; you never know where they are, going or coming, being or not-being. Where should you go if you look to them? Why indeed do we look to them who are always someone else? If you are, where are you? Who and what would you look like here? A focused illusion, a divination of time present only in the divining? In this time and place other selves break and bury to revive as shards of a morning always snowing yet always June. And still, with only words to try to look through, strangers, we are trying to see beyond our lives.



## Plot

It follows itself and has its own reasons, while underneath's a provenance safe from headlights, voices free from form, bending, summing themselves up in their own expression, no lines or limits, but plenty of leftovers and pulses like the wind which is a way of filling things. How lively to be so exposed, staking oneself to beginnings that are in fact old and useless the way everything is at its best. The abundant is not will or idea, substance, Geist, or being. As I said once, "lost shores are still shores," the unseen seen where things get richer, strangers to themselves so we have to ask again what air is. There's no need to pull it all together. Things break across all the time, cross and thirl and intersect and at that very point become loose again. This means you have a taste for discord. It means cures in corners and curses up close. Humiliation's its attendant in the wide where reversals and cancellations dismiss identity and work's paid in blood. Stones are stacked against us. When the horizon is so far out we can't get back then ask it for clear directions, anywhere. Ask the stone itself down there, ask the half-hidden hare, bones along the bank, the terrapin like an amulet baked in clay, the outlines like hearsay the smoke makes. They know the good dead who brought them, who direct resourceful rain, who lean on small lovely flowers to bring grief's whisper home, trying apart from yes and no to show the shape of things though it's all a god who whistles and birds appear who whistle and gods appear.





61.1 by Bruno Neiva, 2012,  
pencil and pen on cardboard (4 ½" x 6")





61.2.1 by Bruno Neiva, 2012,  
acrylic and transfer lettering on cardboard (4 ½" x 6")



CLAUDIA REDER

**Beyond the Suburb**

Past the azaleas, past the row homes linked  
by shrubbery and tree branches leaning  
so far from their trunks no one knows  
who owns them, past the mailbox on the corner,  
and the tiny dog who yaps incessantly  
behind his fence, is a quiet

that opens out onto a large field  
redolent with odors from ponds, streams, waterfalls,  
the trickles of rain on a leaky cabin roof,  
mice scampering in its walls, and thoughts:  
of midnights when I could stand outside  
to soak in the swizzle stick warmth a summer moon emits,  
and wonder which constellations I could identify  
and retell the stories of: Orion, Big Bear, the Big Dipper  
tilted towards the horizon, and Gemini, the twins;

and in the permeable morning, sensing each leaf and twig,  
the sun angles my shadow across a tree stump;  
leaf into shadow; twig into the branch of my arm,  
bird voice into my mouth, tongue cold with wind,  
I am taken back to that riot of woods behind your house  
where stringy roots filtering insects, where frog chatter  
guided you to their globs of eggs on the green stalks.



AARON APPS

From **DEAR HERCULINE**

*Dear Herculine,*

*A LETTER CONCERNING THE UNFOLDING OF OUR FIRST  
EROTIC ENCOUNTERS*

*A LETTER CONCERNING THE CONFUSION OF GENDER THAT  
FLOWS THOUGH*

PREFACE: \*\*\*

*Bodies rage.*

*Our raging bodies fluid with other raging bodies.*

*Erotic.*

*Our bodies tucking into genders: we don't quite comprehend, we  
can't quite describe.*

*We're bodies flooding into and out of forms. Thick corpse  
substances drooping forth in a contorted manner from purple wombs.  
Raging animals with no molds except for the molds that the fluid  
movement of our going in the world has provided. We are dumb things  
tucking into a world of strange and hostile ideas. We snap our jaws. We  
hiss softly as we tuck our bodies into other bodies.*

*Desire drives.*

*We rage forward into sexed timelines of dark water, excessive with  
its tar. And we try to breathe.*

*A LETTER CONCERNING THE NATURE OF OUR VIBRATIONS AS  
OBSCURE STARS*



YOU: \*\*\*

&

I: \*\*\*

*A pulsing threefold.*

*A pulsing*

YOU: \*\*\*

In the dark you go to see her body because your desire calls you to. Her name is L. and you met her in the infirmary, both of your bodies full of sickness. Broken ornaments in need of constant care together breaking into each other. A little sadomasochistic binding of children, in which you become *her slave, her faithful and grateful dog*. Your own words. Your own turning into your own desire.

The deep bodily love that heaves from the genitals unknowing.

You say to a lover for the first time, “I love you.”

Platonically because you’re still figuring out how bodies gesticulate.

Sexually because the attraction runs deep into tissue.

“I love you.”

I: \*\*\*

I meet him in the tiny woods between our houses. His name: N. Sweaty in the shadows below the twisted branches. N., our bodies slaves to our mischief. N., our bodies slaves to each other. Limbs slick battering rams. Anytime. Anywhere.



Fluid. We are pack animals.

Two dogs. Pulsing genitals below the limbs with their rough bark, we curl our bodies into our bodies, limbs on limbs, and feel waves. We stripped off our clothes and skin to get at our nerves.

I look at your dick and pinch the slick fluid on top.

You inspect me with your fingers too.

“What’s up with yours?” you say.

Your hands cleaving through my body in a wave.

“You’re kind of weird, aren’t you? Have you asked your parents why you’re like this?”

“No.”

I know a kind of answer, I know that I move between doctor visits, I know that those visits shape and modify my gender, but I really know nothing. Nothing but my strange flesh under the waves of your fingers.

Waves and then a fear of exposure.

The naked body a pastiche of ruined film below the casing of the underwear. Unrecognizable cloth shadow.

I shiver in waves as you reach into the shadow of my phosphorescent genitalia.

“I love you.”

YOU:

\*\*\*

In the dark you go to see her body because your desire calls you to. You bring a fist full of ivory to L., little linked beads, and you slip around her neck. She penetrates your idea of her – the sphere of her head fitting softly between the many spheres of the polished beads. The slight spheres dangling on her neck, the slight spheres of sweat accruing on your brow.

This shiver of bodies that replicate.

Such sexual atoms glimmering.

You say, “accept this and wear this for me.”



I:                   \*\*\*

N., you pretend to be a bottom. I pretend to kiss you,  
to put my tongue on your tongue. A slip and then saliva. Two  
pink sacks rubbing. Gum on gum. Slick clay.

I listen to you talk about what sex might be like. We  
think about girls. We talk about how it might be okay to “try  
shit” because I was “different.”

You are “normal” with your pubescent dick.

Strange that you play bottom.

I hold your head and as you pretend to suck me over  
the fabric of my pants. Literally a blow job. Below my genitals  
stiffen.

Later we take our clothes off and rub our little  
phalluses in the liminal space between the fat of our ass cheeks.  
Wet filth. We take turns slipping into and out of it.

You say, “don’t cum we’ll get diseases.”  
I oblige — aroused, 12.

No relief. No release. Our arousal a constant pulsing.  
The smallest beads of fluid collect and glimmer on  
the tips of things and for a while as they vibrate to the tune of  
nerves.

Later we separate.  
Later they (the tiny beads of fluid) dry up.

YOU:               \*\*\*

In the dark you go to see her body because your  
desire called you to.  
You give her your atoms, you merge your vibrations.



Then you retreat into the dark hall like atoms.  
Then an outburst from an authoritative voice –  
“*Mademoiselle!*”

Not that the gender of the phrase fits you, but you  
curl under it like a dog that has been scolded and you whimper  
as you are ripped away from your love. In the last moment you  
kiss her, and then your atoms separate.

Indefinitely.  
Matter ripped from matter.  
Flesh taffy from flesh taffy.

*Do they rip you away because you're monstrous?  
What sad energy emanates from animal taffy, phosphorescent in  
a chasm of salt water?*

I:           \*\*\*

I perhaps rub all of my body on yours because I want  
to possess it.

I perhaps look at your naked skin with longing.

I perhaps don't think “experimentation.”

I perhaps hold some small part of you in my mouth, a  
petal of flesh on the tongue, and all around these dog teeth.

I perhaps am sad as we grow apart – those moments  
and then we're two curves that never intersect, heading in many  
opposite directions.

I perhaps miss the intimacy as we grow apart and  
grow fearful of our animal sex.

I perhaps ossify into the type of masculinity that fails  
to allow such fluidity.

I perhaps am pumped full of bovine testosterone,  
masculinized.

I perhaps miss the amniotic fluid of pubescence.



YOU:

\*\*\*

Two years later you learn that L. is dead.  
Dead from the sickness that bound you to her.

Your corpse again bound to a corpse.  
Dark vibrating matter.

I:

\*\*\*

Years later I learn that you are married as I google  
you.  
I feel bound to my idea of you, not to this image I see.

Somewhere in an idea we are still becoming  
sodomites.

Queer titans, powerful and discarded in our beastly  
artifice.

Somewhere in an idea our bodies still rub and the  
scent is fleshy.



JAY PASSER

**They May Very Well Turn Against Me**

my feet would  
burst  
living this  
long

music derived  
from the center of  
nocturnal ambience

I mock dance, minions of  
death

this is not especially  
modern.  
my friends are  
going to be very angry.

they may very  
well turn  
against me

I hate my feet  
and the unfeeling dance  
the desire of  
music

bursting into  
flowers  
the soil



enamors, insect life

the beatitude would expire  
at the typewritten song

as it does  
every day  
easy as butter  
melting in the sky

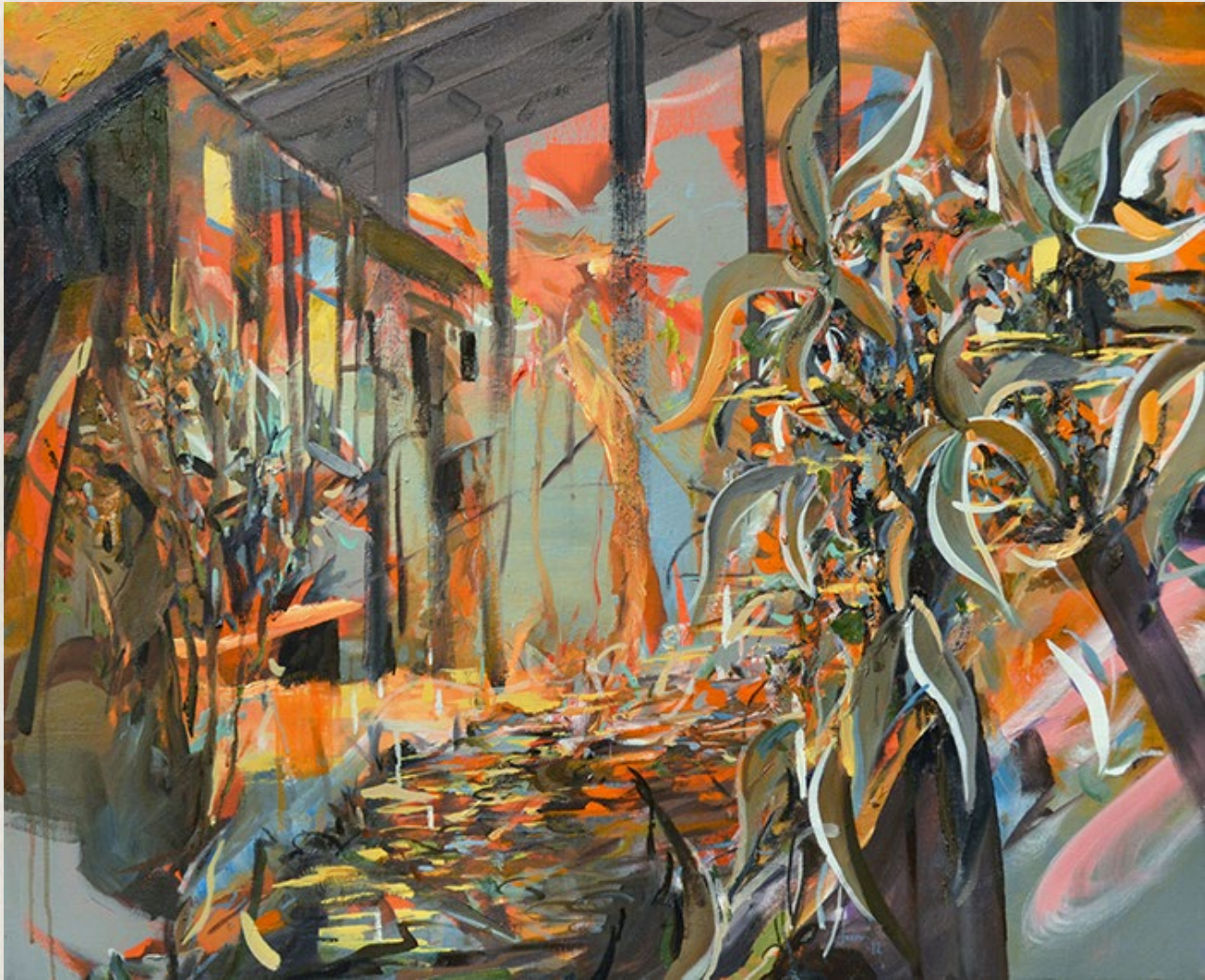
as if  
through fog

say a city  
say a snake

anything  
hungry  
anything angry  
enough

to mention.





BRIDGING THE GAP by Jovan Villalba, 2012,  
oil on canvas (30'' x 40'')





ON THE RISE by Jovan Villalba, 2013,  
oil on stainless steel (24" x 24")





RESURFACED MONUMENT by Jovan Villalba, 2013,  
oil on stainless steel (24'' x 24'')





THE SHIFTING NEW TIDE by Jovan Villalba, 2013,  
oil on stainless steel (24'' x 24'')



DOUG GUNN

### **Strange Deed**

I was supposed to be out of the city by a certain time, I had five documents for my friend Teddy in a folder that told the story of his dead sister's house, but that didn't take into account something like running into the superintendent of my building on the way down the stairs he asked me if I could help him move a very big piece of plate glass from the bottom of the stairs to the roof of the apartment building. I put my two small suitcases down at the foot of the stairs, it would be hard for him to find someone else to help him. There was the question of a theft in some people's mind, I didn't think so, it wasn't in the documents, it was in your mind if you wanted to believe it, though, it might not even be about the house, or that house in the deeds I finally found, Teddy's niece could certainly find enough to believe it was a theft, there was so much else involved like her grandmother's buried ashes, she would believe anything. The superintendent was holding out some gloves of course I didn't ask where the piece of plate glass came from or what it was for because it would take a very long time for him to answer me, longer than it would take to carry the glass to the roof. Then I should have known that there would be more to it once we got to the roof I had to hold the plate glass on its edge while the superintendent sorted through his many keys to find the right key to put the large plate glass in the shed on the roof, he said put your end down and help me move this stuff out of here, he said lean it up against the side of the shed. Teddy's niece said to me, she won't be able to sell the house because of my grandmother's ashes. I didn't know what she was saying, I said why would she want to sell it, Ella. Ella couldn't separate out all the things she remembered about Teddy bringing her dying mother home finally to that house from the picture in her mind of the woman who now owned the house, it made it easy for Ella to think of the woman as someone who might steal a house, and I might have agreed but I had



the documents and I understood she didn't need to steal anything somehow Ella's mother made that unnecessary just before she died like a trick, Ella said that's the same as theft. I touched Ella on the side of the head with my hand over her ear like I used to touch my own sister when she was alive like a hug. The superintendent handed me a cardboard box full of parts he handed me a bike frame the superintendent was not a big man but he was strong he moved a washing machine aside then there was enough room for the plate glass. The superintendent thanked me, he said I'm much obliged, the superintendent liked to shake hands, he always held out his hand when he thanked you, you had the feeling that he was sincere, I took the superintendent's hand at the bottom of the stairs and shook his hand, then I thought I should have gone back upstairs to phone Teddy, to say I'd be late but that was out of the question with the superintendent standing in the hall Teddy would have to wonder where I was.

#

By the time I got down to my big car parked at the curb the air inside the car was hot already from the sun. There was room in the trunk of my car after I put my suitcase in the trunk along with Teddy's suitcase there would be enough room for anything we could bring back with us, if we managed to bring back anything like Ella's anger about her mother's things in the house equaled her anger about the house, what happened to the things of the house. Teddy said his sister held herself back from Ella as a mother like you might expect Ella's anger was toward an outsider, but Ella should keep it back at that time a strange deed I found looked like a theft or something illegal, I told Ella it's best if the woman on the deed doesn't know I found this deed like a cunning strategy. I drove out of the city in my car, it wasn't the handsomest car on the road but it was roomy inside and a very comfortable car once to show off I put it on cruise control on the highway and kicked my feet up lounging on the front seat propped up on one elbow and steering with one finger on the steering wheel for a half mile. To get out of the city I had to drive along the usual network of highways and bridges you would expect in a city all of a sudden I was driving along a service



road through the area of refineries and rendering plants on the way to Teddy's house with rusty stacks and scattered around at random heights a small flame burning at the tip of these tall stacks and black smoke rising above. Enormous fat round concrete tanks low to the ground here and there covered with metal structures that resembled cages when we were young in our twenties I came here with Teddy with our SLR cameras because we started thinking we might make some art, and it would be a good place for an artist though it could be unpleasant to be in this area, because of the rendering plants, because of the horrible smell of the rendering plants. I think about the people who work in the rendering plants, the smell gets in their clothes, but it gets in their pores, lying down in bed with it in their pores and their wife lying there next to them. There weren't a lot, but there were houses where people lived in a small neighborhood on the edge of that area of refineries and rendering plants. I drove through on my way to Teddy's house, two men were standing next to their motorcycles. The people that lived in that neighborhood would scam someone out of their rural house, I said if I lived in that smell I would try to swindle someone. Teddy told Ella to think about that, she thought about it she said the woman in my mother's house is a sleaze bag, Teddy. Teddy said people do bad things, Ella. Ella felt that we were against her, of course Teddy was above her as an uncle, I put my arm around Ella's round shoulders.

#

I said if I lived in that smell I would try to swindle someone.

*One of the men standing next to a motorcycle went into his house into a different smell he said damn, Flo he said you shit yourself, his wife was on a bed in the living room she said fuck, Kenny, squeezing angry tears out of her eyes propped herself up on one bent arm. Kenny said why didn't you call me, she said how the fuck was I supposed to call you, I called your daughter, the bitch didn't come home again last night, he said shut the fuck up about my daughter. The man bent down to the bed he lifted his wife the man carried her in his arms to the bathroom in the tub he ran warm water, undressed her naked then he washed the shit off his wife with soap on a soft wash cloth rinsed up between her white legs and her legs with a warm shower stream.*



*Naked with a bath towel in a chair he brought her some clean clothes she said well, help me on with these things, will you, he put her socks on her, her sweatpants on her he said, sit there I have to change your sheets, he said did my brother-in-law call. Flo said no, he didn't call, Flo said when are you going to talk to your brother-in-law, she said why the hell do you need to talk to your brother-in-law. Kenny said, he knows someone in the VA, I already told you that. Just fill out the fucking forms, Kenny, we need that money if we're going to get out of here. He said, I told you, Flo, I can't fill out the forms they'd make me see a doctor, doctors can't prove you have pain they can't prove panic attacks, I wouldn't get on disability. She said then call your brother-in-law, Kenny. Kenny said shut up, Flo, he has to get someone to sign papers, Kenny said if you can't be patient you can live here for the rest of your miserable life, I told you, Flo, he has to be careful, he'll lose his fucking job somebody will go to jail. Kenny said I'm going to make you some eggs.*

Teddy told Ella to think about that, she thought about it she said the woman in my mother's house is a sleaze bag, Teddy. Teddy said people do bad things, Ella. Ella felt that we were against her, of course Teddy was above her as an uncle, I put my arm around Ella's round shoulders.

# #

An old quarry next to the interstate was winding down still getting some sand and gravel out of it running up belt conveyors and onto the tops of enormous upside-down cones of sand or gravel, then I was driving on a state road through a large industrial center of low buildings, loading docks and dumpsters on one side of the road, new buildings designed by architects with big windows and landscaping across the road on the other side. Teddy's house was back in behind these rich new buildings, turning off the state road onto a street I drove past some of them for a few minutes and made some turns then one more turn I came down into Teddy's surprising neighborhood, ten or fifteen houses on a couple streets that had been there before all the corporate center and industrial center buildings just like they were back then with their trees and fifteen acres of open space of land that Teddy and his neighbors had been able to hold onto. I drove up and Teddy was walking across the yard with his cane and the exaggerated limp of his painful malady when



he spotted me in my car Teddy smiled a little bit with the side of his ironic face he came over to my car, Teddy wanted see the deeds I got from the computer. I found my folder, two deeds were inside and three documents about his dead sister's house, it looked like one deed meant Teddy's dead sister gave her house away but it was a strange deed with no guarantee, it was an exaggeration but a lawyer told me it looked like a theft, that's how that got started. Teddy started walking toward his house and looking at the deed, he walked away he said I just have to feed these ants. I bent my head down on my neck from instinct in Teddy's basement, I saw his four or five ant colonies lined up on a bench built up against one wall, the usual tunnels of the ants in thin layers of sand between sheets of clear plastic with wooden bases to hold the slim ant farms upright, Teddy built the ant farms carefully and Teddy was careful to feed the ants the carcasses of various insects, and vitamins and drops of water from an eye dropper, Teddy was preparing his mind for the time ahead with his niece, he slid the lids back on that fit carefully on the ant farms after feeding each one, he said I guess I could have done this before you got here. I said it's your trip, it was Teddy's sister's house, by now we knew there were no laws broken from all my digging around Ella decided she had to go to her mother's house itself, she would make a speech to the woman in the house Ella would confront her, this is where Teddy needed me for Ella — like Ella held herself back from Teddy's sister when she was alive as Ella's mother, she also kept that far away from him, Teddy knew I could hear Ella where he couldn't. Teddy was fitting a lid on an ant farm so I could only see the side of his ironic smile by the time we got in the car I wondered if it was a grimace and not irony, we drove off for Ella. Teddy was always putting one hand up over on top of his head and the other hand pulling under his chin twisting his head around on his neck for a slow stretch then a slow stretch the other way, sometimes he would reach back over one shoulder as far as he could, pushing back on his elbow to get as much stretch out of that as possible he said it was all pain management. Teddy always had perfect posture with a rolled up towel behind his back in the car seat, it didn't look comfortable but he said it was more comfortable.



#

Some things about this trip Teddy told me or showed me, anyone could make sense of it, and some things I'd heard from Teddy over the years of knowing him I put together in the background, of course I knew what I knew from the deeds and documents about the house, the rest of it like anything involving anybody's family you could never understand unless you were part of it, like something in Ella's second divorce and her mother alone as a widow, I couldn't see the resentment in that and I couldn't take the time to understand it, the amount of time it would take to explain if you could explain it to anyone. I used to ask my sister if she could tell me what was in Ella's marriages, and why they could last until she got hurt, my sister said Ella can take care of herself. How can Ella take care of herself, when I was in high school I saw Ella, she was in the seventh grade she was with my sister, my sister was smoking a cigarette and Ella was smoking a cigarette when I looked back Ella was sucking her thumb.

#

Ella was sitting in a motel chair and Teddy was sitting in a chair, the motel dresser and the motel mirror were between them, I could see myself in the mirror like the moderator of the comedy and my documents were on the brown top of the motel dresser including the strange deed to Teddy's sister's house, Teddy held it up to the light he said the lawyer told me this deed was the strangest thing he had ever seen. I told the lawyer then Teddy talked to the lawyer on the phone, the documents on the dresser I found the deeds from the county recorders office and the transfers of the titles and mortgages and mortgage satisfactions said his sister owned the house and Teddy's sister owned the land, then I found the strange deed with no warranty suddenly someone else owned the house. Ella wanted to know how a new deed got signed it was a strange deed she said I'm going to drive out there, Ella had a dark face. I touched Ella on the arm, I held her wrist with my thumb and one finger I said it's strange, maybe it was a scheme but your mother signed a title.



#

When Ella came back she said let's go home. She said Teddy, that was Candy in the house. Ella said the two people who live in the house, it's Candy and his new wife. Did you know that Teddy. Teddy looked, he said, Ella, he said how could I know that, why would it be a secret, of course he didn't know, Ella wasn't stupid.

### **Ella's story**

Ella said, I saw Candy, I was thinking, was it a long time ago, no, years but not more than a few years when our mother was dying, Candy had damaged his mind with alcohol from all his despair after watching people die as a cop those years, then he lived by himself on the third floor of a house, it seemed like he had to get drunk it seemed like he had to stay drunk, he couldn't be a cop, finally he met his new wife I thought she sized things up, Candy and his damaged mind. I was sitting with our dying mother for two days, I think Candy remembered who I was he told me my father died, he said where were you. I said what, Candy it was five years ago. His new wife said leave him alone. I looked, what should I say. Do you remember the dirt driveway through hedges off the dirt road and the dirty yard, I parked the car there today, I heard the sound of a chainsaw cutting down trees, it was Candy, I found Candy he was behind the house cutting down a small tree up against the woods, when it fell he stood back Candy put his hands on his knees and his head dropped down pointed at the ground breathing, I said hi, Candy. Candy looked up at me then back down, the chainsaw, he pulled the chainsaw started then Candy started cutting the small tree up, I sat down on a chair in the grass. Finally after ten minutes Candy stopped and turned off the saw again, and put down the saw, looked at me he walked over he asked, Ella. I said hi, Candy. Candy looked back at the chain saw, he got some pills out of his pocket and took them finally he said hi, Ella, a small hug, he went and bent over, picked up the chain saw then Candy walked to the house and his head bent sideways and down toward his shoulder. I did mean things to Candy when he was a young kid, because he was my step father's son, he was twelve years



younger than me, his wagon was tipping over around a turn, I might have pulled just that much faster for Candy to fall out, not a bad fall on the cement but they found out he broke his rib.

#

Ella was walking all around the motel room she was drinking a glass of water, she sat on the bed but she got up, I pushed gently and held Ella's shoulders with my hands toward the chair in the room until she sat in the chair, I said be still, it was a good story.

#

Ella said, I decided to knock on the door, I knocked on the door but then I opened the door like a family member. Candy's wife was holding a jar with a lid in her hand and heading for the door suddenly she stopped she said Ella, I said hi, June. June said Jesus Christ. Fuck, why are you here. June told me I had to wait, she said she had to get some bees for Candy and June walked roughly past me out the door. Candy was breathing and sighing sitting on a kitchen chair and his head hanging down toward his knees, and his elbows on his knees, looked over and saw me he said hi, Ella. Mom died. After I ran away I thought of what my step father would be doing to Candy, it made me feel sad and I felt guilty for the things I had done to him as a kid, it was our job to pick up the shit from the dog in the back yard, I made Candy do it if it wasn't picked up my step father would whip us, I would lie and I knew Candy would never tell, he would pick up the shit. I said Candy, what about our granma's ashes, he said they're in the back yard, what do you think, Candy said you have to leave me alone, Ella, he said there's a cross. June brought some bees to Candy, she told me she had to sting Candy with the bees, the bees were in a jar with holes, June took off the lid. She sprayed the bees with water from a spray bottle so they wouldn't fly around when she took off the lid she reached carefully in with long tweezers, June held one bee close up to the back of Candy's neck until the bee stung Candy on the back of the neck and left its stinger there, then June held a second bee in long tweezers up against Candy's neck



until the bee stung him, then June stung Candy with a third bee. Candy had three bee stingers in his neck. June said, it's none of your business, they have to stay there for fifteen minutes for the bee venom to drain in for the pain in Candy's neck. Each bee after it left its stinger in Candy's neck June dropped it gently into a dish of water to drown peacefully she said after they sacrificed their lives for Candy's pain, she said I know why you're here. June stings Candy on the neck with bees twice every day and she stings him on the back twice every day for all of his pain. I said whose name is on the strange deed, she said a friend of mine it's none of your business.

#

Teddy said whose name is on the strange deed. Ella said I asked Candy's new wife whose name was on the deed, she said a friend of mine it's none of your business, Ella said it doesn't make any difference Teddy, our mother gave her house away with a title for Candy until he dies, then his sleazy wife will own the house, Ella said June will own the house. Ella said after Candy dies there's another strange deed like another trick. Teddy said it sounds like a theft. I said it's not theft it's a scam.





**SYMPHONY OF THE MARIONETTES**

by Alvaro Labanino, 2012, oil on canvas, (30" x 40")





RAUL TRUJILLO by Alvaro Labanino, 2011,  
oil on canvas (28" x 36")



JEFF HARRISON

**Train Soothsayer**

a wind sidewalk  
limbs of dispersed  
the word is the same question  
know yet ask where the birds line up

contact Rose Table

tongue table rose

fire rose rose

may cash become tin  
somewhere in the halls of  
the Betty Grable library

some in millenniums  
but hours hawk the universe  
Wormswork is the falconer  
Mr. Hole is the Snowman  
the ghosts are fungi  
months talk amid cattails,  
gossiping about the years

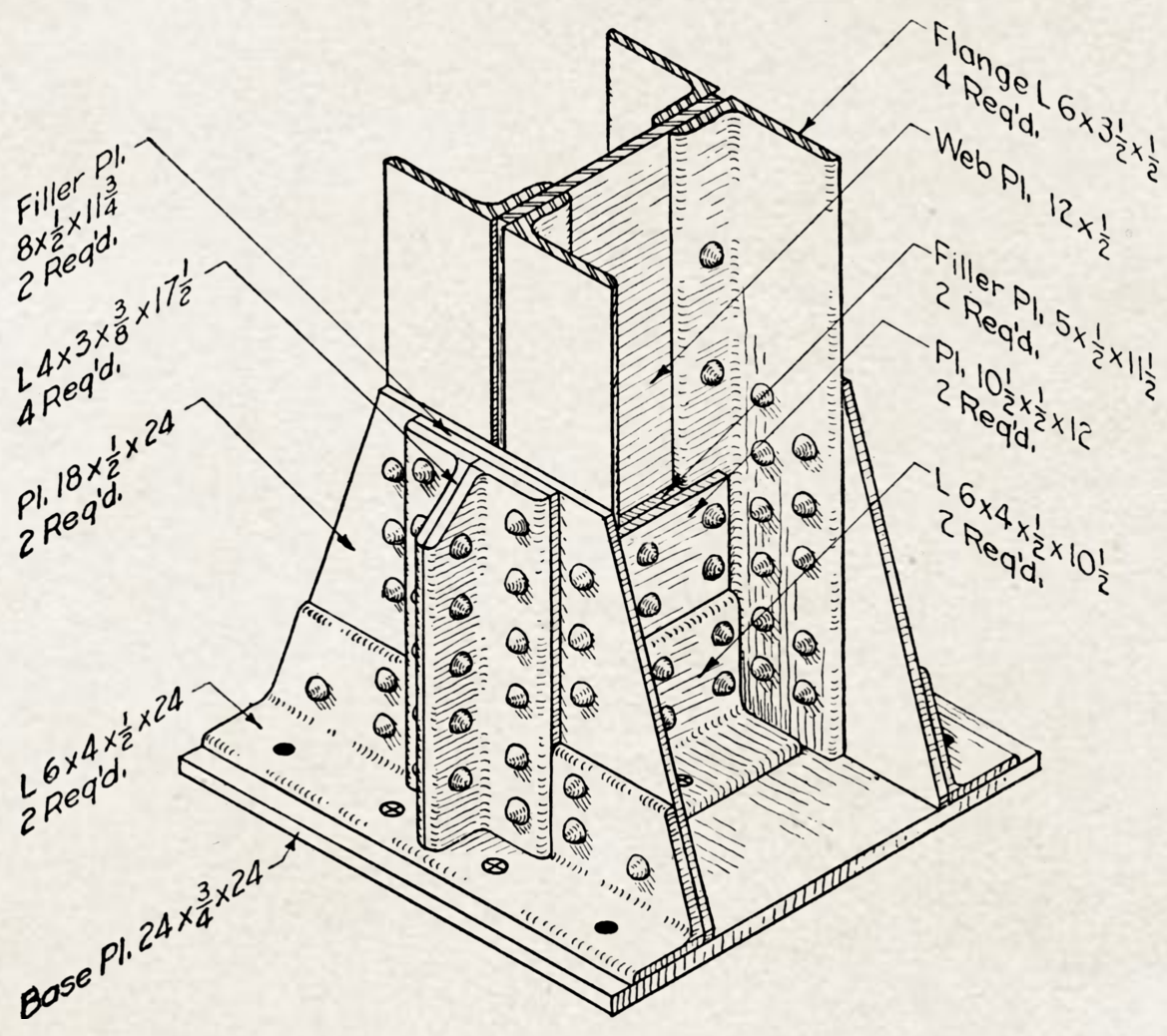
rose tabletop

tabletop roses

Tokyo Rose's top table



train soothsayer, sing the prefix list, please,  
you know, the ditty beginning  
“I introduced myself aannd  
she tolldd me heer namees...”





JAMES BRADLEY

**Cities on the Surface of the Skin**

In those days the body did not decay  
As it does today, melting about bones  
Turning to dust to coincide with a  
Simulated ephemerality.

No, in those days the serpent hovered from  
An opening in the bedrock over  
A land of crystal domes, cities in shade,  
Teaching the science of hiding from God.

Entropy. This is the song we were taught  
In choirs of lamentation for what it  
Was we had learned in those days. The body  
Did not decay as it does at present.

In those days the body's boundaries were  
Ambiguous, we let the world in, and  
As a result did not decay as we, post-  
Enochian and naked, do today.



PAUL B. ROTH

## **Places to Go**

Weightless stones balloon their colors against a yoke gray and yellow sky. Bird shadows, brightened by these colors, swerving through tree hollows, and around twisted root caves, break apart in the last light of day before assembling as the darkness between your feet, the earth and the night in which it all stands still.

Your whole life's waited for this darkness to rainbow the moon. Creek water at the back of your mouth trickles between rock and fallen logs overgrown with crumbling moss where your words used to flow. But the creek of late has more water than words, more trout than words, more stones than words, so perhaps no syllables will manage to nudge a few reflections off their fins to its surface.

You wait. You wait and Earth turns away from your feet no matter how many times and directions you don't think you've gone while you've waited. No matter where you've been, nothing exists in your absence. Shreds of maps you find in old coat pockets are useless. Lost are places that never existed. Found, those you wish never did.



## **Another New Future**

Balling yourself up into a frightened spider's clenched body, footsteps growing louder, echo concrete underpasses with their frenzied tap dance, while across this widening creek, slippery stepping stones are set way too far apart for your escape.

The alternative's to walk backwards eleven centuries until reaching a street sign bent in half out of respect for the meteoric holocaust each previous visionary failed to predict, but whose new future's become an unsettled dust full of jumbled house numbers and mirrors having never before seen the sky until it was broken.

You witness this dust walking upright in its human shape where a sudden wind could easily ruin its chance of being either. Watching and knowing your aloneness better than anyone, you rush to polish in its midst the place your face might most clearly shine through.





SUBPAYASO by Alexander Morales, 2005,  
watercolor on paper (12” x 10”)





ABC by Alexander Morales, 2009,  
acrylic on canvas (48'' x 63'')



## BILLY CANCEL

### **dot beneath read petal sunset**

announces hate radio priest

obscured by mangrove knots

abandoned car high tide

3.2 chicken-legged shack

line of trees covered in branches bark amongst them boy

mistranslated as GRATITUDE PARADE

if warm electric

sound it is the

cutting of a narrow

avenue

gazing stock recently successfully completed single fierce loop round

updated garden

**THIS LINE UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

Scheduled To Open-----Early Fall-----Year Of The Snake

repetitive narrow movements culminated in blue sprayed metal moon

thrown into reeds

thirsty girl shall fill *dark blue boxes* with shells 'til she

gets all spread with seafloor fishtail +

monkey + sewing kit = ,

mermaid

pass me ode to

an invisible summer

cropped hair but medusa approaches nonetheless





COLLAGE by Claudio Parentela, 2012,  
mixed media on paper (12" x 8 1/2")





COLLAGE by Claudio Parentela, 2012,  
mixed media on paper (12" x 8 1/2")





COLLAGE by Claudio Parentela, 2012,  
mixed media on paper (12" x 8 1/2")



ROB COOK

### **The Undermining of the Democratic Club**

Deer gather under the bridge  
exchanging hoofprints.  
A man at the Agway platform  
teaches his son how to stack  
the burlap corpses of chicken feed.

There's no money in the Blairstown newspaper  
or the failed McDonald's  
led away in the middle of the night.

The election signs for F.D. Shotwell,  
Township Committee, have crawled into the road  
and taken the place of black ice.  
None of his traffic lights are awake.  
None of his democrats see him alive in bed,  
covering his heart attack with blankets  
and flickers of raw *New Jersey News* 12.

The high school covens drink from each other  
in the A&P parking lot  
and chant for the midnight stock clerks  
to come help them drown.

The police scrape through the river  
tracking their chief who blackmailed Art Huff  
with all the doors left open inside his child-angry wife.  
They hear gang colors of wind approaching from Newton.  
Close to the crimes of the water table,  
the town's one detective swims quickly under the shotgun trees.



The sound of his eyes clenching reaches the Christian cell towers.

He knows one thing: the river steals  
its current from what's been spoken here:

*We've run out of money for sunlight.*

*The mayor's body is empty.*

The river sneaks past the dying houses  
and the amphibian town halls.

It whispers to food-frightened Emma Cramer: *Eat. Please. Eat or die.*

And one trout minute away, a boy follows those rumors  
until he's just an interruption in the current,  
the searchlights thinning to arsenic where he floats.



## Conspiracies

1.

Flocks of bread crumbs get caught in buildings  
drawn incorrectly.

Names and addresses without people.

And where an answering machine reveals  
the sedation left in a previous minute,  
the voice of Mr. Shannon seems taller  
than the slander that's weakened into autumn.

The television loses its direction through the thunder quarries  
and the storms filmed in the souls of boarded-up flowers.

Disconnected phone districts beyond the chasms of Runyonville.

Mistakes made by the corners of rooms beginning  
after a man wipes away the window that's kept him awake.

2.

Today the trees point north  
and a woman is admired for the way she goes about  
destroying her beauty.

Paint peeling from the eyes, the light uncertain.

"I enjoy ironing the hills and valleys from the dresses  
that look like me," she says.

In a moment not yet corrected, the gas oven's unchecked breathing  
harms only some of the pictures  
dimming on the wall.



## Warning Lights Inside the Heat Wave

It's too hot  
to put the windows  
back where they belong.

The meteorologists predict a month  
of uninterrupted noon, fire weather, link rot,  
garden vandalism from Nebraska to New York.

"It will be difficult to keep track  
of the thunder's casualties,"  
a friend writes from the charred altitudes  
of the central underground mountains.

I want to say men and women today  
listen to the hot weather  
on their lonely, overpopulated i-pods,

I want to call it technology for flash rape,

but I have a sister  
visited by her own tremors,  
the names I called her  
during an adolescence filled with holes  
to the bottom of the terrible songs we knew.

She has two children  
and I have no idea how warm it is  
inside their laughter,  
their radon playdates where they attack each other  
in a tenderness close to the triceratops.

I don't know how my sister carries  
the sweat she's hiding, only that all sweat moves  
in the unknown direction of the heat's infrastructure.



On a weather map  
there is an orange spot (Pleasanton, California)  
where she lives  
and an orange spot (New York City)  
where I live.

And in between  
is the trucklight wilderness  
where the drought collectors move,  
heat-drop by heat-drop,

testing and scavenging  
the vulnerabilities

(what some call a childhood)

saved in the lines of a windshield's  
brain-dark terrain.



## Shadows and Curtains and Lions

A little girl's death in Arkansas  
is justified by the conquest of a lion  
in the Congo; someone's *abuela*  
dying in a pueblo is justified  
by veins that dampen the ceiling.  
Distance and light and time believe nothing.  
Even now there are tiny men expiring  
along the length of my arm,  
explorers lost in the slopes of a curtain.

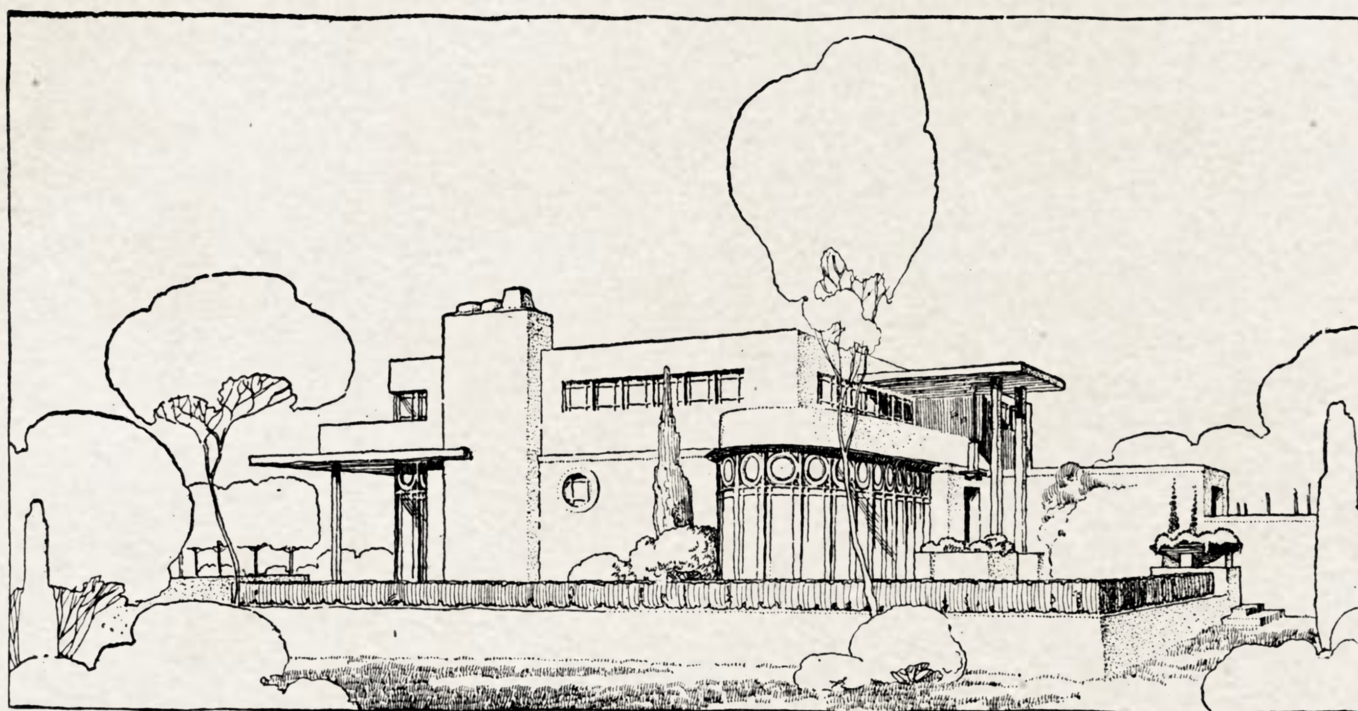
For months matadors have been  
taunting me from the edges of rooms,  
and this morning: the remains  
of insect astronauts lay crumpled and pale  
up and down the kitchen tiles.

All things are justified,  
but it is better to look beyond this,  
past the incubating smoke alarms  
and the piles of live clothing  
and into the minute-long tropics of a church bell—

"I will never swear in the name  
of an animal again," you tell what's gone forever  
as the lions turn to blankets  
at the foot of your stairs  
and the cobras find your silhouette  
trembling without you, and you shut off  
the lights, the sky still lurking in your one window,  
an aspirin's confession coming as wind from a faraway television.  
"I'll never be alone, truly, as long as I keep  
praying to myself," you say to the silence



making its little noises, nuzzling and plowing  
row after row of a cobweb's beheaded daughters  
that lead to your forgotten sleep whose blemishes do not heal.



a suburban home





EOLZ by John M. Bennett & Thomas Cassidy  
(Musicmaster), 2013 mixed media (8 1/2" x 11")



JON WESICK

**At the Farmhouse that Inspired Anne of Green Gables**  
*(Cavendish, Prince Edward Island, Canada)*

I can almost see her, strands of red hair over pale breasts,  
warm Browning automatic and empty gin bottle on her dresser  
while the strict schoolmarm's body cools in the drawing room.  
Life would never return to normal  
even after blistering those pretty hands  
digging a six-foot hole in the garden.  
The sound of automatic weapons fire  
from the guerillas in the hills  
grew closer by the day  
and that briefcase of rum runner's cash  
could not buy the constable's silence.

So she fled to Paris  
survived by lowering her panties under the Pont Neuf  
the few francs paid by sweaty workmen  
enough for a glassine envelope of Turkish heroin.  
Part of the Lost Generation she slept with rats and fleas  
until Gertrude Stein taught her the pleasure of a woman's tongue.

Then to Spain and a doomed affair with Lorca  
She joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade  
was captured by Franco's forces  
When the interrogating officer  
shoved his thick fingers under her skirt  
he found the hidden hand grenade  
its pin removed seconds before



KYLE HEMMING

**Geography of the Dark Lobes**

I have your heartlands memorized in my palms. You have a tendency to resurrect small birds from wind farms. In winter, you want to be albatross sabotaging whale hunts. Lost Belgica days. The subdued mirth of penguins who love the krill and the edge. By summer, there are rumors that you still exist. I march over miles of desert, past Joshua trees, over white wooly daisies. I grow melancholy in basins. The June Gloom getting to me, old miners reminding me that love is mostly chemical and 2/3rds jumping cholla. Behind me, I leave the rock skulls of my desire. In the Sonora. In the rim.



Tight Shoes

You can never go back to the same place & perform the same trick with razor blades. People’s needs are becoming more binary. Parse this or that. But in the end, know that it will not be a whole number containing your permuted passions. And the shit with adopted families. Your aunts are tired of holding the wire while bleeding Balzac imitations. Make them jump. Or make them wiggle in a vagina-shaped space. But for God’s sake, get your slow dogs out of my ruined soup kitchens.

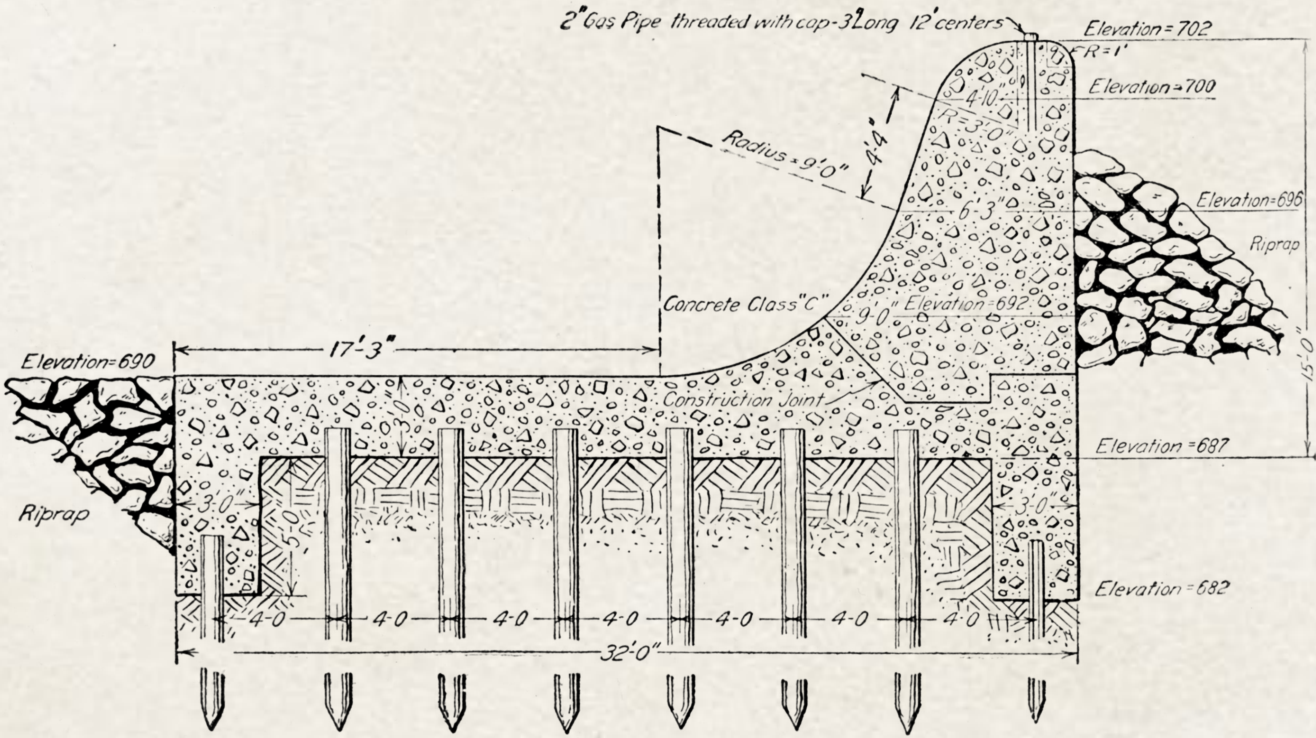


FIG. 960.—Masonry section; weir dam.



BENJAMIN LARSON

**Holy Minister of Gull Feather**

For those whose backs  
require the dampness  
of old Earth to wick  
the marrow of ages  
out from their walls,  
I will paint your names  
on the spines of books.

For those whose names  
are etched in wooden blocks  
surrounding my father's grave,  
I will give you the light  
that illuminates all  
pocket watches,  
so you may rise each morning.

And for those whose eyes  
are full of ink,  
I connect your line  
and give it the name  
Holy Minister of Gull Feather.  
I will carry your well  
until the dry dawn of time.



MATTHEW P. GARCIA

**Some Fortunes Should Never Be Told**

Homes decay like anything else  
The drywall cracked and brittle  
Mold growing around rooms  
In which we drank bourbon  
From each other's bodies  
Windows become cloudy with breath  
Pollen forms a layer of frost  
Between here and there  
Between what can be seen  
And what can be touched  
The tiles crack at the corners  
The ceiling needing repairs  
Hangs its heavy burden overhead  
Crushing the little ones  
When opened the door pivots on its hinges  
And springs back  
Each day the roaches and termites  
Claim more territory  
You laugh as I suck them through a straw  
And spit them at the mirror



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

**MATTHEW GARCIA:**

Konstantin shot himself; not for love of Nina, but because he'd come to realize that he was no better a writer than Trigorin—and Trigorin was no good. Once the fog of youth had lifted all the ambition was lifted with it and he was left standing with a sobering assessment of his true abilities. It is a cruel fate to live for what kills you. Konstantin was the seagull shot down to avenge the futility of flight in a world where distance is measured by how hard you beat your wings. Konstantin shot himself; not for love of Nina, but for lack of description of moonlight, for the sake of new forms which he himself could not conjure.

**TIM KAHL:**

We were not interested in the city but in the shorebirds. The gods would give a command through the tide, and we would gaze at the fireworks of the stars that had been inspired by some Chinese pyrotechnical muse. The deep sea was also made in China. We lived five men to a room and watched an old TV. Some seemed to get lonely and tried to speak English. To no avail. The screens that advertised the next meal kept flashing. We felt the anesthetic effect take hold even as helpers came to spice the curry with ants. A bald woman wearing a red bandana entered the park and ate at a plastic table. She spoke of a miracle fruit and its miraculin that turned a lemon sweet. Oh, Morpheus, come change us. We are tired of our sleep. We are tired of being electrified clay. We are tired of the durian's nauseating stench. Every day Hawaiian shirt day is canceled. Remnants of colored keys litter the freeways. Unpaired shoes clog the sewer grates. Tales emerge of a bright eccentric bubble rising above the concrete maze. In the light no one dares to follow it along its outer edge rumored to touch down near the beach. In the dark we explore a sense normally hidden in daylight. The dark emboldens us to question our space. We dim the lights for a minute as a tribute to Edison. In the dark we are damned to hypnotic sleep. We slip under



the coverlet of awake—loss of consciousness may have more than one origin. The only reason we ever became aware was to slowly empathize with elephants.

**JEFF HARRISON:**

Abyss is amid the Muses, where, fabled bird of Araby, Abyss is the inciting tongue lost in the conflagration--incite? Incite? Is every word to lather up flame beneath Mnemosyne? Oh, that a brazen beast did house Mnemosyne, with its mead well-kindled!

**CHRISTINE TOPAL:**

I practice closing my eyes as you mumble, East or west darling; then when the small beams of light shine on my face, you turn me to the left and I follow with my fingertips the warm brickwork along the walls, pausing before the old sink.

**KYLE HEMMINGS:**

Don't ever wake up. Don't ever ever. Even if the crazy girl who lives with upside down sparrows in her eyes sings off-key in your left ear. Even if she sprinkles alligator pepper between your toes. Or places a smudge of brown mustard under your tongue to prevent you from curdling after sex. Even if you plead with her that you've been falling from trees for years and your bones are too soft and your head is too scrambled with bittersweet truths and your shadows are too opaque on empty streets. You tell her that so many people get by with paper coronets and fake jewels. Someday your words will bruise her and she'll place herself in a jar by the windowsill. Or she'll turn to water and fill everything half-way. Winter. Spring. And rain. Long after she moves away and marries a saxophone player from the city, a man who makes her float and swing by open windows but only when the moon is right, long after she starts denying that she's been breaking her best wedding-gift china or that her feet have tiny scars from dancing alone and without shoes, you will still have trouble keeping time.



**JAMES BRADLEY:**

Express regret where regret is due. I was born in the city of Orange, California. In the eighth century, Count William of Toulouse sacked another, distant Orange, and the incongruous horror of what had been done under his command, a slaughter of innocents in the name of the lamb, led him to a life of monastic renunciation while the embers continued to glow in his stricken heart. Blood and fire mingled. Heaven and earth shone upon his chainmail as one-thousand two-hundred and sixty tiny, distorted reflections of regret, though personal experience attests to the truth that a forlorn subjectivity in such circumstances needs little in the way of external prompting. When Count William died, it is said that the bells of this subjugated Orange rang of their own volition which, if true, was doubtless a gesture of fear rather than fealty. Whatever the case, the monastery he founded quietly, yet persistently, denies the veracity of such superstitions to this day. Meanwhile I, far from California, openly profess to hearing those gloomy bells of Orange nightly as I gaze out of each and every window fit to be penetrated by the beam of a backwards-glancing eye.

**CLAUDIA REDER:**

When Isadora Duncan was twelve she burned her parents' marriage certificate. That's what I remember from watching the t.v. film of her life all those years ago. I like to think I was also twelve at the time, and admired how she spoke with such defiance and action.

**ROB COOK:**

**Instructions for the Coming Revolution and other Mumblings**

Say nothing. Eat very little. Keep still. If a thought creeps up on you like a hunger pang, kill it immediately. If you have to read, leave no words behind you.

Pretend you're a scout wandering the wastelands of your silence.

Say nothing, not even to yourself, not even to the cells building their defenses inside the body you've already lost.



Leave the lights off. They're better off blind.

Prepare for the war that takes place when nothing moves.

Only the stain that had been the moon now advancing across the walls.

\*

Imagine if everyone stopped communicating for a day. And by this I mean no speaking, no writing, no texting, no eye movements suggesting we progress back to the safe days of nothing but noise, no shrugging of the shoulders, no middle fingers, no purchases of any kind, no kissing, no flesh games, no indiscretions, no smiling, no frowning, no grimacing, no acknowledgment of the tongue's many powers, no whistling (usually the symptom of an unjustified happiness anyway), no ransom notes carried by pigeons or shadows or caravans of wind to a different city.

\*

Murder is admirable if you possess a movie-star's beauty. All forms of theft and self-mutilation and cultural debauchery are to be emulated in the manner of the camera's favorite children.

My grandfather, Fred J. Cook, was a famous curmudgeon who also possessed the facial dimensions of that stillness at its most aesthetically haunting. He wrote and published more than forty nonfiction books in his lifetime—books that people actually purchased and read. Studs Terkel called him “one of the great muckrakers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” I inherited his grumpiness. But unlike his, mine is earned. Perhaps my books are read only by the words inside them. I hear little noises scrambling at night from the boxes of books I've not yet sent out for review. And at forty-four, I am still trying to figure out if I was ever a handsome man. That search tells me all I need to know.

\*



My friend's sister, a born-again Christian, believes gay marriage to be a sure sign the country is descending into Gomorrah. When my friend mentions the environmental catastrophe now taking place, she shrugs over the phone from the hells of Texas and says Earth will soon be the new heaven, the new kingdom. And she shows a genuine concern that her brother worries himself to the extent he does about the environment—an organism that's being flayed alive for totalitarian profit—an unproven cliché according to the money's few owners who require neither breathable air nor hydration that's free of infernos. The slaughterhouse bureaucracies and shadow war opportunists betray an unpardonable blindness. But the planet conceals infinite gods and infinite ways to punish its torturers. If this woman were to watch a movie like *Gasland*, she would no doubt dismiss it as liberal propaganda. This is why I left the Evangelical church at 26 after two brutal, terrified, and lonely years.

### BILLY CANCEL:

wrote unreasonably but caused bees to settle    close    could    virtually  
taste    spasmodic    should    reterritorialize but can't be  
with    brute matter    neighboring soil lord's translate thrust q+a  
session    cruising for mono    invitational rockfall    micro-scrape  
pervading    sensitive    off short run kaleidoscopic boredom came  
father    landed    self-aggrandizement theme    did i tell you the  
one    about the complexity of the medium?    in juicy assignment  
radical    gesture i do not bust    through their yoke    drab  
material thick earth tone    BENIGN    UPSTATE MERINGE  
BLAST tonight    baked    meringue insulating ice cream    to prevent  
THE MELT    tried to    go rouge came out    fucking marshall  
synchronized echo    am dark visceral    with saturday    flower show  
backdrop    still hear    galloping

### DOUG GUNN:

I'm familiar with the theory that there is a kind of truth, or meaning, in these fictions made up by modern writers, these lies. Maybe there is. If you think so, and if it gives you pleasure, I don't see the harm. My advise to you is to not waste too much of your time looking for it,



though. Like Molloy says: “You would do better, at least no worse, to obliterate texts than to blacken margins.” That’s my motto.

**ZOLTON KOMOR:**

the writer just realizes that only with hooked letters can he catch a muse  
...r, a, s, f, j, c... (so always carry these with you)  
the caught muses are squirming in the corner—silver scales keep  
dropping from their bodies  
(this is the only payment poets will ever get)  
if the heart would have gills it wouldn’t need to surface every time for  
air  
always the same sight: something is pushing itself out our rib cage—  
flames die  
without oxygen (we know, we know)  
just sink back into yourself and watch how the beach grows  
yellow ashes—someone burnt the most valuable muse here—the gold  
scaled god  
the scissor-tongued horse arrives and whispers a tale

**JAY PASSER:**

Myself, I look toward scissors on mirrors, chalkboard spaceships, and  
the fiery core to which nothingness aspires. I am grasping, and naked,  
and wondering why the truth is as ugly as apes at war.

**RACHEL MINDELL:**

Mother (mine) gave first advice: child, meter your outbursts.



**CALIBAN  
IS  
SEARCHING  
FOR  
ANGELS**



