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CALIBAN

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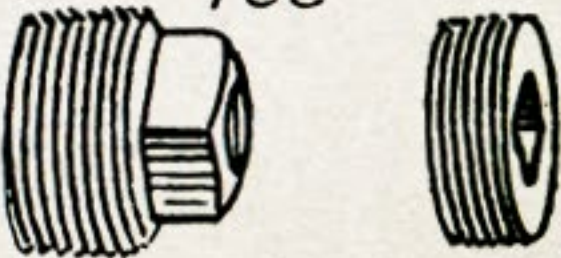
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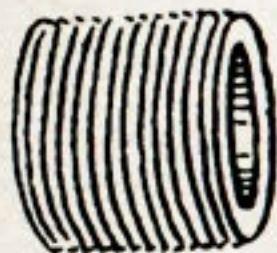
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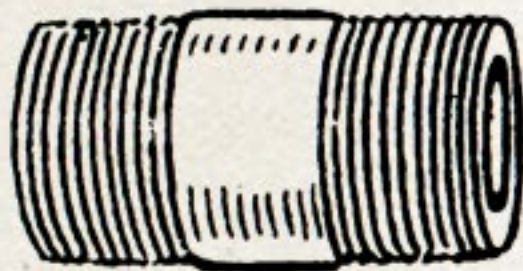
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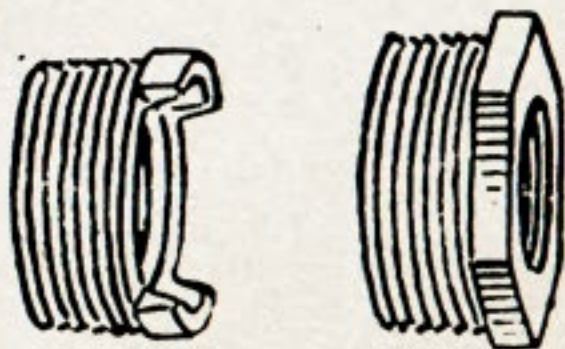
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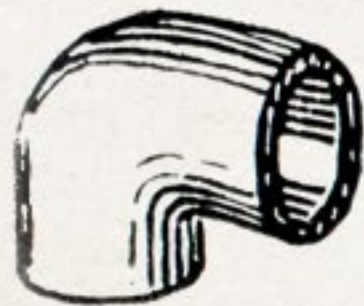
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Parallel Reality, Scene 2

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CONTRIBUTORS' ADVICE



90° Ell



45° Ell

SIMON PERCHIK

*

Your death seemed a neat trick
the crowd shoulder to shoulder
and in the center, eyes closed

as if some dirt makes a difference
knows how the first shovel full
is already spreading out

as hillside, as galaxies and echo
—without any string a tiny stone
pulls you back hand over hand

is charged the way this iron-sharp magnet
empties the Earth
becomes a flower, shaped

not by some restless butterfly
but from your dress giving birth
every Spring, half mist

half some child running underwater
and all that's left is thirst
for someday or another.

*

It's time! the ache side to side
and across your forehead
the wrinkles split open

—the cramp comes into this world
as the tightening grip
that has your eyes, your cry

takes you by the hand
the way its shadow falls
exhausted, in pain and now

two mouths to feed though one
is still invisible and you
are never strong enough

to lift it, to bathe it
as if it needed lullabies
would grow into your arms

held up to be carried
one next to the other
—what you hear in the ground

is the cry birds have, made crazy
from watching the sky forever
hold down the Earth though this rake

leaves nothing intact, its handle
half unnoticed, half
from behind, holding on, held

by the still damp dirt
floated out for more room
that enters from somewhere

and everything around you
backwards and forwards, covered over
with eggshells and emptiness.

*

They have no second thoughts
and still your footprints
inch by inch, gradually

made whole the way this shovel
lost its taste for dirt
carries in only snowfall

leaves its own reason at home
for a room that stays
close by, becomes those skies

one by one, done for, dives
on every path night first
—you dig for worms

as if one would tell you
or show you, or move your hand
or with the light off

a kamikaze cry for light
—you have no return
and step by step no morning.

*

It's hopeless! every nail
exhausted, falls over
as if the treeline

—there's not enough air
though the hammer, half
relentless, half turning back

the way all rescue begins
just below the horizon
for leverage —Casey

the nail you lift up
can be used again
—a second try to hold together

the same sky, familiar now
—there's hope—darkness
is what you're learning

for when a warm breeze
bends down to cup your hands
around the evening star

you will soon wait for
till all that's left to breathe
is a love song, one after another

—you pull out this nail
as if it were a flower
maybe tomorrow, would become

your voice, already scented
and in your arms
a beautiful woman is listening.

*

You store in your mouth
the sky, for better or worse
the sun though her lips

flake off bite by bite
and each morning more leaves
found dead on the doorstep

—you eat the way these leaves
lose their way
still open their wings

thrown back as if the wind
once was everywhere
all the sweet water on Earth

on your lips clinging to hers
afraid what's down there
growing huge in your cheeks

filled with sunlight year after year
returning to the tree
that lost its fire

and somewhere inside a wooden box
calls out for stone :a single spark
to heat her bones with flesh

become a face again
and in your mouth the smoke
whose fragrance is her mouth.

BRIAN SWANN

Perder el Hilo

No one here had ever heard of him or his poems, not even the elderly blind gent in a gray suit I met at Café 991 on Calle Mexico who thought that maybe the title foreigner in ‘The Foreigner Who Died in Juchitan’ could have been Pancho Nacar himself, or perhaps it even referred to me.

“After all, you’re a foreigner, and this is Juchitan.”

“But I’m not dead. I just translated him and want to know him better.”

“In Nice, I met a man from Harlem who was retracing the steps of Ricardo Wright across Europe. He carried with him everywhere a huge solid oak table, which he said he couldn’t write without.”

“And what had he written?”

“Nothing.”

With elegant finger-tips he traced the contours of the table.

“He gave my father, the schoolteacher, an inscribed copy of his famous book.”

We discussed it, but he remembered a very different book from the one I’d read. I told him so.

“Exactly,” he said. “Now, how does your poem end?”

“ ‘When people of pure soul visit the dead,/ They’ll leave him flowers of cordoncillo.’ ”

“Future tense, so he’s not dead yet.”

“Maybe I made a mistake.”

“No, I like it. Ah, cordoncillo, it used to grow around here. You know ‘nacer’ means ‘to be born’.”

“It’s ‘Nacar,’ ”

“I have never seen the name ‘Nacar’. ‘Nacarea’ it is ‘mother-of-pearl’. ‘Cordoncillo’ is ‘bread’, no, como, what I do with the thread, not ‘bread’ but—.”

“Braid,” I said. “As with hair or thread.”

“You know the phrase ‘perder el hilo’?”

“To lose the thread.”

“Yes, and to lose the thread is to remember the thread. That’s a Juchitan saying. Do you recall Valery longed for a literature of no dates, no names, no places, and so on, one created in the same spirit as the Holy Ghost?”

“Well...”

“It is quite possible Nacar, or Nacer, was from here. But it’s also even possible that you wrote the poem to follow it here, to the exotic Juchitan where you would meet me and even, metaphorically speaking, find your own death, une geographie secrete. You must remember De Chirico saying that a painter must never show his brushstrokes.”

“No, but Borges said that memory is a rubbish heap of inventions.”

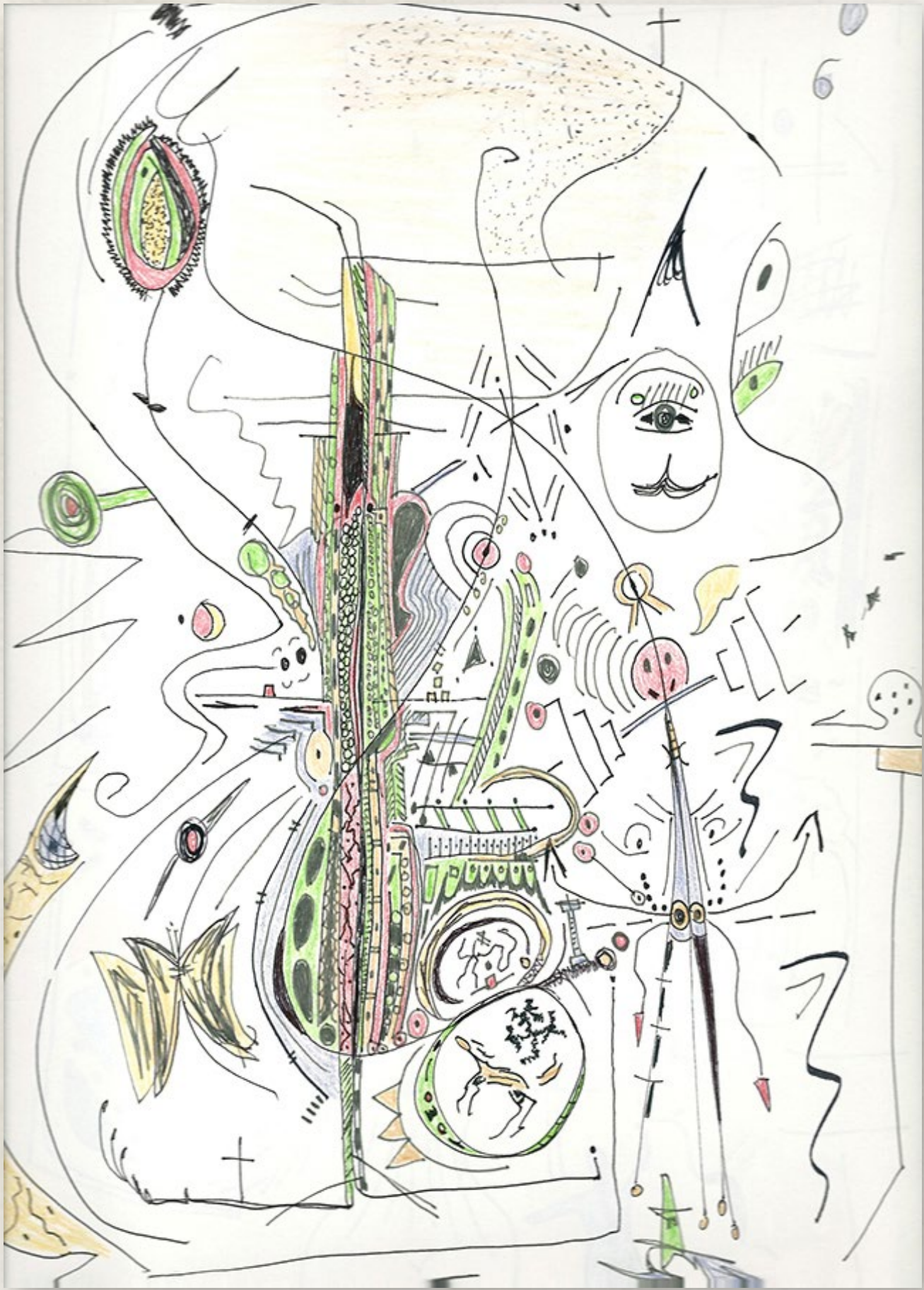
“Exactly. So forget Nacar, for in all likelihood he has forgotten you, or is buried in you and you in him.”

Smoke Up the Skirt

The fool up a ways scares me from my nightmares. It goes on all night, explosions lighting up the sky. Drunken whoops and whistles. Next morning, bleary-eyed, I wander into the garage. In a corner I notice some spots of blood and five pink blobs that on closer inspection turn out to be five new-born pups. I must have forgotten to put the door down last night. I call her, but she's cleaning her teeth. I call again, but she must be cleaning her teeth again. A hundred strokes up, a hundred down. I call again but she must be washing her face. And cleaning her teeth again. Putting up her hair. She kills me. "Come *now*!" Eventually she comes down. "You're so impatient. Give me a break," I think she says. "Where would you like it?" I say, not for the first time. Just then, the coyote mother returns and pushes by. "Not a coyote. Coydog," I say to no one in particular. Just then there's a knock on the front door, so I go back up and open it. The local policeman, putting on an English accent. Too much TV. "Do you by any chance know anyone in this vicinity by the name of Mr. Rimbo?" he asks. I know he's trying to trick me. "Rimbo? Rimbord? How do you spell it?" "R-i-m-b-a-u-d." "Oh, you mean Rimbaud." "If you say so, sir. Do you know where he is?" "Six feet under, I imagine. He's a famous French poet. Deceased." "What makes you think I'm not aware of that, sir?" Then it hit me. Rambo. That's why they called him 'Rambo' in the movie. The poet as hero. The poet as avenger. "That's why I killed her," I blurt out. "Killed whom, sir?" He doesn't trip me up that easily. But there's no point in making a run for it. "I'll need you to come to the station with me," he says, in a tone that reminds me of my father who used to say things like "Stop blowing smoke up your skirt," or "blow it out your ear," at a time when I had no prospects and needed encouragement, wanting to make a name for myself as a writer, and for a while even holding down a position as signpainter until I forgot to write backwards on a glass window so it could be read from the outside. Anyhow, looking back, all this Rambo business was a bit strange because the only writer I'd ever liked even a bit was Rimbaud, and that was probably because he died so young. I could have identified with him, maybe even internalized him. I wonder, is that how you blow smoke up your skirt?

Pioneers, O Pioneers

I still don't know why you want me to go, I said. We just thought you might like to, Mike said. But I'm afraid of heights, I said. I get a funny feeling between my legs. In the prostate. Don't worry about that, said June. I do too. But why me? I said. If it's pr you want, Allen Ginsberg's your man. He couldn't make it, Mike said. Ah well, I said, in that case I suppose I could go. But I still don't know how to repair things. Leave that to us, they said. It's only two days at the station anyway. We'll be back before you can say Yuri Gargarin. But I still wasn't sure I liked the idea, especially since I'd just had breakfast and had heard about the bathroom facilities up there. Well, OK, I said. But first I have to check with the wife. OK, they said. But be quick. We leave soon. Just like I thought she didn't go for it. How about I wave to you? I said. Well, OK, she said. But make sure you do. So I know you're alright. And write. I was still debating with myself when the limo arrived. Soon I was walking around the rocket's cabin wondering what I'd write about. Actually, it seemed pretty obvious, wonder, for one, and, well, more wonder, I guess. Why didn't you ask Robert Frost? He's dead, said Mike, our pilot. Oh well, then how about James Dickey? Ditto, said June, our navigator. Besides, I don't like him. Mucho macho. We want wide appeal. I hated his "Falling", said Mike. Hated it, said June, adjusting his seat belt. Do I have to wear this seat belt? I asked. I feel constricted. Up to you, said Mike. Just don't look down if you've got that prostate problem. I know exactly how it feels, said June. Hang on.



ONLY ONCE by Ray Gonzalez, 2011
ink on paper (18" x 11")

EDWARD SMALLFIELD

Untitled

1. in the pink motel by the highway
2. the gas gauge
3. sausage & eggs
4. a work day
5. the dogeared copy of *Lolita* on the nightstand at the Bluebird Motel

JAX NTP

neurosis VIII

sketches during rush hour on the Chicago Loop

each tomato heart beat, softer
than the sole of ballet slippers

the way we keep track of things
throughout the day as if the act
of measurement made us a promise

to measure something is to change it

each tick of the body, bubbles
in saliva, spasms of streetlights,

the way you use a lint-roller, vertical
rotations, spiderworts and slot-machines,
edible hissing coins, such sour aftertaste

to refill the vacuum is to excavate the void

to refill the vacuum is to excavate the void

each chord of cheap tequila, jaunts
the momentary nature of nearness

the way i think about counting distracts me
from counting how many times i've washed my clavicles,
now i must reapply soap, rewash, recount

to do nothing is an action

to do nothing is an action

to do nothing is an action

neurocity XI

the body's relationship with language

collapse of the center, the heart, a feeble rat,
lost in its own cage of ribs. the best way to tie

a bow: each knot of intestine more precise
than the last. your urgent nostalgia for a district

that exists as a rawboned flicker, but never really knows
if said place is about to exist or if it ever existed at all.

in that frame of tongue, 'i' means 'here,' it shall
never reference the self. the location where 'i am'

is not an expression of love or fever or opulence,
but the word of presence—'here i am'—a voiceless

boundary. how can you be sure you're not just a character
in someone's lie? where people step out of uteruses

and step right into dreams. the synthesis
of kelp jungles and living fossils. when you

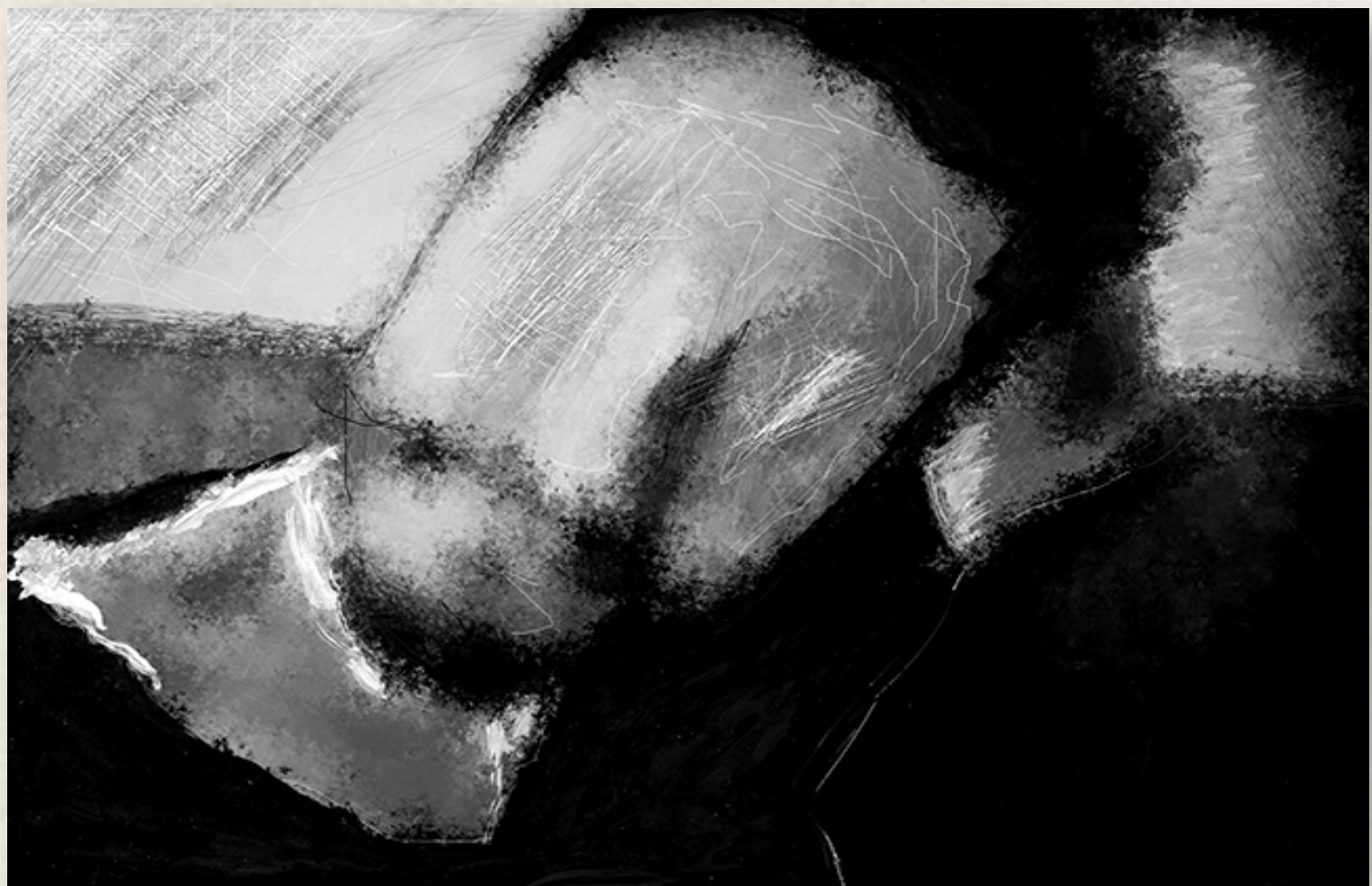
cease to sleep, you become a plaything
of other's memories. you breathe until

you no longer. the way buddha
gains weight—waiting

for emptiness.
the last one

standing
is the first

one,
alone.



#3945#4 by Samy Sfoggia, 2013
photograph, mixed media (6"x10")



REM: WHAT HAPPENED? by Samy Sfoggia, 2013
photograph, mixed media (12"x 22")

CARINE TOPAL

The Dissecting Room

You must imagine a room bathed in light.
Whitewashed. Well lit. Sterile.

One large window overlooks a birch grove.

The concrete floor is red—
the color of a heart.

In the center of the room a table of polished marble.
Along its edges, several drains for the bleeding.

Against the wall, three porcelain sinks, and the second window, above
the table
covered with a screen to keep out the flies.

The doctor holds a small head in one hand, documents the darkness
of the hair in the other. The distance between the brows.
The circumference of the head.

And staring up at Mengele with dead gimlet eyes, the very blossom
of mercy.
This gypsy boy.

Like a temple this child.
This child like a temple.

This Life

In a subway entering
the station leading me
out to Union Square

I see him.
He reminds me of someone.
Or he is my eldest,

my long-buried brother
Brian, dusted with the talc
of bones.

He is forty-four, he's climbing
the stairs out to the hazy daylight
wearing a gray suit, pants

too large in the seat.
Twenty three years of lying
under the ground

has made his body straight.
If I could take him into my arms
there'd be nothing about him

pitted by age or illness.
In this life he has
no sudden heartbreak

no hungry thirst. Here,
his left eye still sees,
here, no gaping

Topal/28

wounds, no bright cry.
In this life he waits
at a crossing on the lower eastside,

a bouquet in his hand,
his wife on her way
and he is whole

not traveling alone
and he is whistling
as he used to do.

ZOLTÁN KOMOR

The Swine Wizard

The cold lean against chimneys. Old loam houses crackle as black soot carried by the wind dashes against them. The pig slaughter finally begins as a young girl drags a fat swine into the courtyard. Her long, dark hair is tied around the animal's thick neck like a rope. The girl's head bends back and her windpipe accordions out as she leads the pig. Stubby men arrive and knives glint in their fingers as they stab between the bristly hairs. The swine pukes black liquid onto the snow. Its sharp screech circles above the courtyard for some time, then a bird catches it in midair and flies away.

"That's right, keep torturing it, and it will give out its secrets!" The girl claps her hands joyfully as the words steam around her white face. "Who cares if it screams! We'll paint the courtyard black. The head... I'm sure it's full of tasty black pitch, gluey titbits of the future! But be careful with your damn blades! Don't touch my beautiful hair!"

Basin-holding women squirm in the distance. The blood-puddles freeze. Children arrive and begin to slide on them cheerfully. Later, their shoes will leave red footprints in the snow and in the kitchen. The smell of scorched skin tramples on their noses. Entrails in vases—vapor-ghosts flying out of them, rising into the sky.

"Blood makes my hair so shiny," admits the girl. At the end of her hair lies the scraped pig, whose four pink legs point in different directions. "Maybe if I lighten my hair a bit more, a halo will grow around my head. And the prettiest thoughts, like a cluster of grapes, will hang down from it. I can almost see... Boys will arrive, circling around me like hungry starlings, picking and tasting them. Oh, such greedy little rascals! What wines we will drink!"

Bloody snails, the innards of the dead pig, crawl over the courtyard. They are trying to escape. Men run after them, impaling them with pitchforks just before they wriggle out between the fence boards.

The villagers lead an old woman wrapped in a filthy blanket from her house. A giant hammer hangs from her thin, shaking hand. The woman hands the tool to a man and watches as he knocks out the dead pig's teeth. The man shows the bloody teeth to the old witch, who takes them into her palm, shaking them as if they were dice. She drops them onto the snow and begins to read the terrible prophecy.

"Villagers! Your bodily auras will burn off this year" She spits out the words. "The trees will produce railway carriages and unkindly guests will arrive to tread on the tender faces of your rooms with their ugly boots. Giant pines! From now on, your needles will grow inside your trunks! Birds on tree branches! Your colorful feathers will fall out! People! Hear my words! There will be no spring this year!"

The bilious attack somersaults—the pálinka bottles explode and pieces of glass injure the children's faces. Dark hair grows from these wounds. The villagers grab each other's crusty hands and begin to cry: "Truss the saws! Mix some sawdust into the sausage! Pour hot water onto the snow, and chain the rising ghosts, so you can dry them in your attic! If their limbs fall out, we can have a feast! Cook the thermometers, slice the icicles, we don't want any more winter!"

Anger blocks their words, so they begin to prod the dead animal with their knives. The girl, her long hair still tied around the pig's neck, begins to scream: "Stop, you fools! My hair! You are cutting my beautiful tresses!" Dark clumps of hair swirl in the air. The cold wind picks them up and they fly, tiny spiderlegs clumping together until they turn into black crows. The echo of their cawing is like skeleton fingers pointing at Heaven.

The old witch turns her hunchback on the lunatic assemblage. She opens her dry lips and begins to put the swine teeth into her mouth. Then she gets on all fours, and trots up and down in the snow, grunting wildly. Someone yells: "It happened again! The pig didn't die! The soul just moved into that cursed witch! Catch her! The wizard is escaping, with untold prophecies in her filthy mouth!"

The swinewoman tries to get around the men, dodging back and forth in front of their knives, then slips between her attackers's legs. Suddenly, the bald girl blocks her way. The pig stops, and looks up at the girl, who says "I have no more hair to lasso you with. Not anymore.

But my baldness excites me.” She looks at the villagers and then back at the animal.

“Wicked sinners, that’s what they are! Born with penknives under their fingernails. You don’t want to shake hands with them, believe me! Of course you know more about them than I do, you poor thing.”

The swine looks at the crying girl with warm eyes.

“Free me, please, so I can have a glimpse of the future!” the girl begs. “Take me on your back, so we can leave these starless courtyards, where they put rocks in our shoes, where they throw salt into our eyes. Silly villagers, they believe the soul can melt! Ah! Take me away, dear wizard! Take me anywhere!”

The pig lowers its head so the girl can mount its back. They run away, far from the courtyard, where innards skate on red ice, where old superstitions rot the meat, where they cook crystal balls in a huge caldron. Where the villagers spear dogs with their mustaches. The hairy legs of the dying animals jerk and their small claws scratch indecipherable marks onto the air. A bald girl riding a pig over a snowy field—bristles tickling her thighs—as her laughter paints a shining yellow halo around her head.

“I thought I was your keeper, but now I know, I was the captive all along. My hair was the chain, and it is gone for good!” she yells happily. “From now on, nothing’s going to pull my head back!” Wine oozes from her halo. It’s just like blood, but the taste is heavenly sweet. Above, noisy crows with unrelenting beaks peck at clouds that smell like meat.

Flamingos in the Ashtray

The shoeshine boy spits so fervently on the shoe, the fat, ugly customer jerks back his foot and jumps up, ready to run. “Hey, punk! What are you doing, trying to give me some of your damn germs?” He grunts with disgust, but the frowzy-headed boy just laughs at him. “No fear, my dear sir, this’ll make your shoes so shiny that the next time you stand by a lady, you’ll be able to see her panties!”

The businessman shakes his big head: “I only deal with respectable women, pal, and they don’t wear any panties at all.” He sits back down, returns to his newspaper, rolling his buglike eyes in their pink orbits as he reads. Every time he glimpses the word money, his frog tongue snaps out and tears the printed letters out of the paper. He gets fatter and fatter as he reads, and the shoeshine boy’s shaky chair, made of broken broomsticks, groans painfully beneath him.

“Are you done yet? I haven’t got all day!” the man says to the boy after a few minutes.

“Sorry, sir, there’s some tough smudges here, and they don’t come out so easy. Nasty little bloodstains. Looks like you offed somebody. I think I’m going to have to take this work home. Occupational ethics, you know.”

“My shoe? You must be out of your fucking mind!” the man laughs. But the shoeshine boy is determined. He detaches the man’s feet and runs away with them. The client tries to grab him, but falls to the sidewalk. He just lies there like a beached whale, shouting at the sky. “Help! That little rat stole my feet!”

Homeless people gather around. One of them kicks him and says “Show us some money, big shot!” So the whale man pukes out undigested pieces of newspaper, says “Here, why don’t you go out and build a palace?” Meanwhile, the boy runs down the next alley, howling like a wild dog, smashing metal trash cans with the bloody feet. On the street, the usual chaos greets him: homeless people grabbing the brazen hook of dreams out of their skulls. They chew old menus as the magnets in their dirty hands collect small change from the pockets of passersby, or fillings from their teeth. One unfortunate man has his pacemaker jump out of his chest, fly over and land with a clank on a magnet. The cotton

picker of prey. A hobo walks by in a suit made of today's newspaper. A guy chases him, shouting. "Wait! I haven't read the business section yet!"

Oh, the economic news. The most honest, trustworthy, freshest goods you can get—apart from ripe fish. With its gorgeous headlines it shakes out the mirror's lost reflections: The fountains are lobbying for more water in this pyromaniac city. Buses with electric chairs are running through the streets. Passengers ask for tickets to Heaven, then take their seats. Eyeballs jump out of their smoking skulls. "No littering in the vehicle!" growls the driver, adjusting the hat on his horns.

Cinema glints, then flies away—some rude children have broken the world—its sharp splinters stuck in the cosmic bunghole. Scissors caw at the park, cutting up forgotten trash. In an auditorium at the subway station, a man holding a comb offers his services to the button-eyed passengers. They salute one another with their boredom.

"I'll comb your shadows for some spare change, mister!"

"Get that smelly fish skeleton away from me, you hustler!" someone yells at him. Having been unmasked, he shoves off in his fishing boat, ashamed. Billiard balls roll out of the saloon and onto the street. They explode—fire-petals bloom—setting some whores on fire. The girls chase the fleeing clients. "How about a fast ride, baby? I'm the hottest hole you can get in this hell!" Even the most honest horoscope could not foretell this kind of shit. But these fiery girls are better than the ones who give off the scent of roses when they climax. For days you feel like you've deflowered a saint. Bars gargle with cheap music—a striptease dancer slowly takes off her clothes, then her skin and flesh.

"That is the filthiest bitch in this ugly town, and I love her!" a drunk cheers, sticking some money into the skeleton's ribcage. A scrawny canary sits inside, picking hungrily at the money. The hustler tries his luck on the street corner again. This time he's a pimp, offering his catch of mermaids to everyone.

"But she's almost dead! I mean, look at her!" a client complains, pointing at the drying fishgirl leaned up against a brick wall. "Well, yeah, that's why I said you'll never get an opportunity like this again!" laughs the pimp. This method is well known on street corners—it's called "the big sell" or "last minute pussy." The customer opens his wallet more

willingly if something unique comes his way. Ordinarily the pimp holds a gun to the whore's head, then swears to God he's going to kill the girl if the client doesn't take her. But, of course, there are always the cheapo Johns—you can easily recognize them by the pieces of brain that have dried on their clothes.

Money is like gills—stick it on your neck to catch some air. Those gills, of course, wear out in time, so you'll have to get new ones. Now and then a couple of prophets, dressed in newspaper, appear on the corners—making speeches, telling everyone that air is free. But in the end, they all suffocate and dogs carry away their bones.

The shoeshine boy is smothering too. In the afternoon, he steps into a boutique, drops a cardboard box on the counter. It contains the stolen feet. "The best from the best!" He smiles, and the shopkeeper counts out some money. Later, he will attach the feet to one of his mannequins. The factories always deliver these plastic dolls without hands or feet. Not that they don't fabricate them, but somehow they end up in the hospital. The public health minister must have done some serious lobbying for all of these plastic prostheses. That's why the shopkeeper had to find himself a leg supplier. All he needs now is a good hand thief, a real gentleman, who kisses the hands of ladies and steals them before they notice.

The night is halfway through—dark walls made of film reels—bricks of directed nightmares—old radios fizzle—according to the news, a thorn bush set itself aflame in the plaza and yelled obscenities at the crazy ass shoppers before it collapsed into ashes. The shoeshine boy lies in his raspy little bed, looking out his window. He sees a helicopter circling over the city. It's rotor is made of photo stills, so as you look in you can watch an endless movie about a bucket full of shit falling over again and again. Never saw anything worse. The helicopter drops dead seals on the streets. When their bodies hit the pavement, they explode, like juicy fruits, and the homeless arrive with their rusty forks. According to government orders, the scum of the city must be fed, otherwise their hunger would drive them to attack decent citizens. Dead animals from the central zoo are perfect for this purpose. The economic situation makes it impossible to feed zoo animals on public monies, so one by one they slowly starve to death. Last week they dropped giraffes onto the

streets. Next week's menu: bare-boned penguins. Bon appétit. A smiling dad takes his child to the park, so they can watch the animals diving down from the sky. The kid has never seen a seal in his life. Now's his chance.

No more waltzes, please—in the saloon, the pool shark terrorists of the New Order break, using torn out flamingo legs as cues. Soon their black eight balls will set the whole city on fire.

The night falls here in the ashtray—wilting keys in the doors—on the second floor, someone kicks a woman into pregnancy. In bars, desperate people throw their bellybuttons into slot machines. Broken hearts bandage each other. If the heart had gills, there would be no need to surface for air. Always the same sight: something is pushing itself out of the rib cage, covered with lethal little scars.

The shoeshine boy has his usual nightmare. Footless clients climb the fire escape and crawl into his room. From the floor they reach out for the boy's hanging legs, and they pull and pull until the kid's feet come off. Then the clients throw them out the window, so the boy can no longer walk. He will just lie there all day, starving in his bed. Would anyone help him? He's alone—a cheap mannequin gave birth to him on a street corner. Mother.... When her wounds—caused by her pervert clients—became infected, and her pimp, who had her pose every day on the street, couldn't use her anymore, that ugly son of a bitch poured gasoline over her and lit up her goodbye cigarette. Cinema glints and flies away. An angel on fire—floating beneath the cracked ceiling. A worn-out boutique mannequin—her wings made of sleazy curtains. Flames melt his plastic skin as she talks. “Thanks for these lovely feet, puppy! I just hope they won't burn away too fast. But, of course, everything in this world is so flammable, darling. You know what? I'll tell you a secret. We, the angels, are big gamblers. Playing poker with burning matchsticks on the clouds all day. If just one slipped out of our fingers and fell down to earth, everything here would catch fire. This might happen any day now and I'm sure one day it will. Then why worry about anything, darling? This whole city is full of climaxes, my baby boy! And cumming is like crying” she says, blowing away the kid's nasty nightmare with her smokey breath. She melts and slowly oozes into the boy's mind, giving him an erection. As he ejaculates in the dark, the scent of roses fills the

room. The still frames of the nightmare fly out the window, over the city, and get pulled into the spinning rotor of a helicopter, promising a fast ride to the clouds.

Cinema glints, flies, and dies alone—nice dreams are great honors from above. The boy now sees his most beautiful dream ever. With torn out flamingo wings, he flies toward the sky. (Somewhere beneath, a bird cries in pain.) God dangles his mighty leg from a cloud, and lifting it toward him, asks the kid to clean his shoes. As if he had no fear that the little rascal might steal his feet. And how dirty is that shoe! The plaster dust of a destroyed city slowly streams from it.

SESSHU FOSTER

Untitled

because outer space is filled inside with black matter that they
cannot locate
and inside the atom is nothing, except it's like a wave or a particle
or a string
but it's nothing they can pin down, because it's like the dog hit on
the 110 freeway
that when you drive up to it you expect blood and guts strewn along
the curved lanes
but traffic slows and it's actually a rug, a carpet with the carpet
liner shredded
and the fur of the carpet inside, as if the inside of a dog is fur,
fur on the inside
because it may be that we are turning the universe inside out by
posting images
on our eyeballs and Facebook, images of faces and zucchini,
what's inside a zucchini:
greenish flesh like worlds posted in recipes across the face of the world
as the mind of the world flashes across screens and Facebook
and little hand-held
devices that young people press against their smiles and their
young shinyness
so that the outside of everything is decorated with insides,
everything shining
like screens, all the interior flatness and chockablock emptiness
of humans chockablock
silly on the roadways, silly tilted sideways, wearing their tattoos
inside out
they're tattooing the celestial firmament of the hive mind
with constellations of

Disney characters and Spiderman, because it fills the void with
the void, it is
the void, the fur-lined animal inside its own cry, vast green heart
of the world
turned out

that's why



ONE OVER TWO, TWO OVER ONE (1) by Ashwini Bhat, 2013
stoneware sculpture (4 ¼" x 8" x 5")



ONE OVER TWO, TWO OVER ONE (2) by Ashwini Bhat, 2013
stoneware sculpture (3 ¼" x 6" x 5")



ONE OVER TWO, TWO OVER ONE (3) by Ashwini Bhat, 2013
stoneware sculpture (5 ½” x 6” x 5”)

DENVER BUTSON

if the scarecrow has one regret

it's this. he was at the wrong café. that
afternoon. when he was supposed. to meet her.
at *the* café. he sat there for hours. drank two
espressos. and then a grappa. and then another
espresso. and then another grappa. and then he
walked back to his hotel. and never saw her
again.

this is what. the scarecrow thinks about. or
would think about. if it had ever really
happened. if he could think about. anything at
all. except about how quiet it is. when the wind.
stops. just between the wind. and when he hears
kids playing. in the housing development. that
used to be. the next farm. up over the hill. past
the tobacco fields. in a world he will never know.
no matter. how hard he wishes it.

if the scarecrow were clyde barrow

and you were faye dunaway. with the memory
of once upon a time. being bonnie parker. the
scarecrow would certainly never forgive warren
beatty. for kissing you. like that. and for the
way you looked at him. when he was driving
away. with cops' bullets everywhere. and you
holding onto his arm. as if his arm would lead
you safely. to forever. as if this movie would
never end. but the scarecrow is not clyde
barrow. no matter how many banks he robs in
his dreams. and you are only faye dunaway.
when you put your head back and laugh. just
before I steal a few kisses from your neck. as if
this movie will never end.

in absentia

when the night called out
the night's nightly roll call
the bridge was *here* the sky
stated *present* even the
crickets answered *yes* when
the night read the word
crickets and looked around
for them but when the
night said *scarecrow* the
scarecrow remained silent
and the night said *scarecrow*
again and waited

and then the night said *ok*
then we will go on with the
scarecrow in absentia yet
again

and the scarecrow listened
in as the night called the
meeting to order and went
through the endless
minutes of the last meeting
without him

JEFF HARRISON

Body Demeanor

errant erroneous listen offhand
pace, pace, pace, reverse:

outrage, body, their number
gives winter a go, soldier

the spur, their eyes tunnel regret
... and Paradise: your house
wholehearted of branches

force sunlight,
poised flower,
grow earth,
actual silence
may water
unsatisfied forward words

slow shooting laughter petals guarding
died planets into
dead planets,
theirs is regret?

themselves body demeanor
“Farewell, With Trees” is
the name of this stanza

irreparable freely
freely descending
while books adjust

a following though of losses
great guffaws, already
dust to walk, will things to rise
and walk an island's length

no, not THAT island
lifting THAT sleep
piping THAT coherence
escaping THAT wave
constantly THAT contour
prowling THAT half of the meteor

THAT... against the roots are birds
land, land but they sing "THAT'S our sea!"



DIATOMIC WOUND by Brian Lucas, 2013
mixed media on board (16" x 12")



SATURNAL CAMOUFLAGE by Brian Lucas, 2013
mixed media on board (16" x 12")

BILLY CANCEL

short lived cancelburg haze core scene

red ash coal tower on
royal blue road was a spot
barren gravel places
by cloud glow another
willing soreness for stress
export some pig snag too weak
to spread fire less dominant one's
laughter less frequent but higher
pitch *larded vignettes from*
crawling beak amidst narrow
fragment range thought of
hobbling it forever though
basement skirmish bore
fruit right deliver us from some dreary
middleman's chance
interpretation of white vein blue
sun dew
cup self-
defeat

TIM SHEA

Untitled

If the intention of wind is to be among some act of penetrably uninterested narrative ceremony then, perhaps this time here in the company of mountains will make penetrable that same ceremony in the heart, though scarcer, restrained, compliment to a church pew or page after page of ash-last black & lingering clouds as at times each returning spiritual company & also a suddenly passing judgment.

How have I drugged so, dug myself joyfully, joyfully this gone, Christ, & decrescending, the enemy, these decrescending & audibly rural skies?

Aphelion, field, a far silo, solace there, & the encampment's collective quartersun's soaring brilliantly struggling pause stunned silently back on itself: war, that enormous & everywhere always annihilating dark peace. Right.

Of human being perhaps this alone, the impenetrably common & fragile, frail, flushed, the uninterrupted crows flying higher always higher from the rorschached sunflower-timber below, straight for the expectation of freedom from me above.

Untitled

As in the life left kept cuttings of clouds, these bodily, unrelenting hundred revolutionary clouds like redefined dropped bombs perhaps, points of bureaucratic light crying out between you & I in the other's always heavier wall of separation.

Karen once said that living with me is like she is living alone. The slowly chosen near darkness of the thought, if I had heard it from someone else, would have been barely audible to me. But when such attention is towards the deeply unreachable place of one's own *known* self, the thought is more an echoing accusation of one's having now no known human concern, isn't it?

Howling open, everywhere rioting dead wildflowers...

Heaven in heavy winds & odd clouds...

Recline, that last moment in anonymity is infinite, an anonymity shouting down from the middle ages over these oh so unbecoming, heavy, yeah, heavy & hurrying crows half scattering into tomorrow's eternal repetitions too.

Untitled

Briefly conversational then all alone again I'll, for a few moments near silence & that, poetry as the measured, difficult salvation through which we all, on hostile, effortlessly annihilating white horses, ride into isolation thus.

That this way on, say, necessarily makes into wounding the wounds of our solitary light's many arranged failures, breastfed-full bidden in dominion nearly, the way back winding down the mountain, real only if I let it be beckoned on towards infinity brilliantly &, by circumstance then, gone.

Now where?

Miles, I've miles everywhere up here, mind struggling, & the play of these many wildly uncollected mountains for company pitching past the pierced put, my love, my love, put pillaring into each other arguing hard for, & only ruin. Fuck the ruin.

Last things, in the order of their inevitable succession, the storm of things we come to understand too unintimately in ourselves; before turning away

Untitled

That the thing in itself may be to move not towards the heroic thought but towards what we most fear, for miles in every direction. I fear it, the morning emptied bottle of wine for moonlight.

Repetition, of nearby moonlight over the two wolves: I, with you still.

Brevity, in opposing open fields beckons the desolate now, drifting walls closing up over either sky.

The moment one knows one's in trouble again that trouble becomes both eager & more acute, even audible—the poem then as necessary discussion with all the words left not only repetitively behind, but also uninterruptedly within. You see, the private is the white to the public's black, much as the most intimate relationship of heaven is to be the troubled consolation today to hell's unapproachable, repetitive brutality for tomorrow.

Hell, coming down again the insane crows hush us up in the brain swooning so swiftly damaged, against tomorrow.

CHARLES BORKHUIS

Dead Reckoning IV:

Echoes Drawn upon a Point

1

why throw this stone off a bridge
just to hear a plunk in time

already swallowed by a wave
maybe I'm just talking out of turn

darting from branch to branch
in widening detours and digressions

attempting to elude the limits of the known
to live in a twitch of the lip

a tic in the shoulder a running eye
a knock at the knees a hammering in the head

just hold a microphone up to the forest listen
to the interminable chewing under every leaf

2

burrowing through a dark tumble when
a voice whispers “your mother is waiting”

look up to see your multiples
leading separate but unequal lives

one falls off the seat of a train
and another takes his place

you watch yourself acting in a film
but your ghost is squeezed

by a story you didn’t write
he awakens in a tunnel on a train

and asks the woman sitting next to him
“please tell me ... am I still alive”

3

caught again behaving as if
thought could enter the being of things

that we might read the other's hand
as our own but that's not in the cards

it's the burning candle at a distance
that extinguishes as we approach

it's the voices on our breath that coyly
suggest there's someone really there

only to disappear on our tongue
feeble substitutes for silence

better to have never spoken than this
incessant buzzing over an open wound

4

arthritis in reason's bones
or just one trick knee that kicks out

against injustice whereas the educated other
may simply turn and waltz away

but then morality was never linked to knowledge
there's an argument there somewhere

I just can't find the thread
though you never know when a phantom draft

may pick up without warning turn a page
near your left shoulder that suddenly

fans an ember under the ribs
don't give up the ghost

normally the table doesn't answer
to its name words just bounce

off its surface mirror-bent
back to the speaker and his reflection

yet a verbal spell may dwell in the call
and response of a small pink rubber ball

jumping off the wall as if I were being led
by a child's hand into *objectland*

as if a misheard word had entered accidentally
through a momentary crack in the pavement

"let me in" I said as your eyelids fluttered
over a page of choppy waves

6

still-born photo of my head
reflected on a dinner plate

the call of other lifetimes inside this one
incomplete separation at birth

so in death remain on call
as if finality were a lost cause

as if I never left the dinner table
and it was only possible

to relive events
to act as if all this were a surprise

in other words to pretend to live
and make a show of it



THE SHADOW—IS IT YOU, PAPA? by Miguel Ronsino,
2002-3 mixed media and collage on canvas (48" x 32")



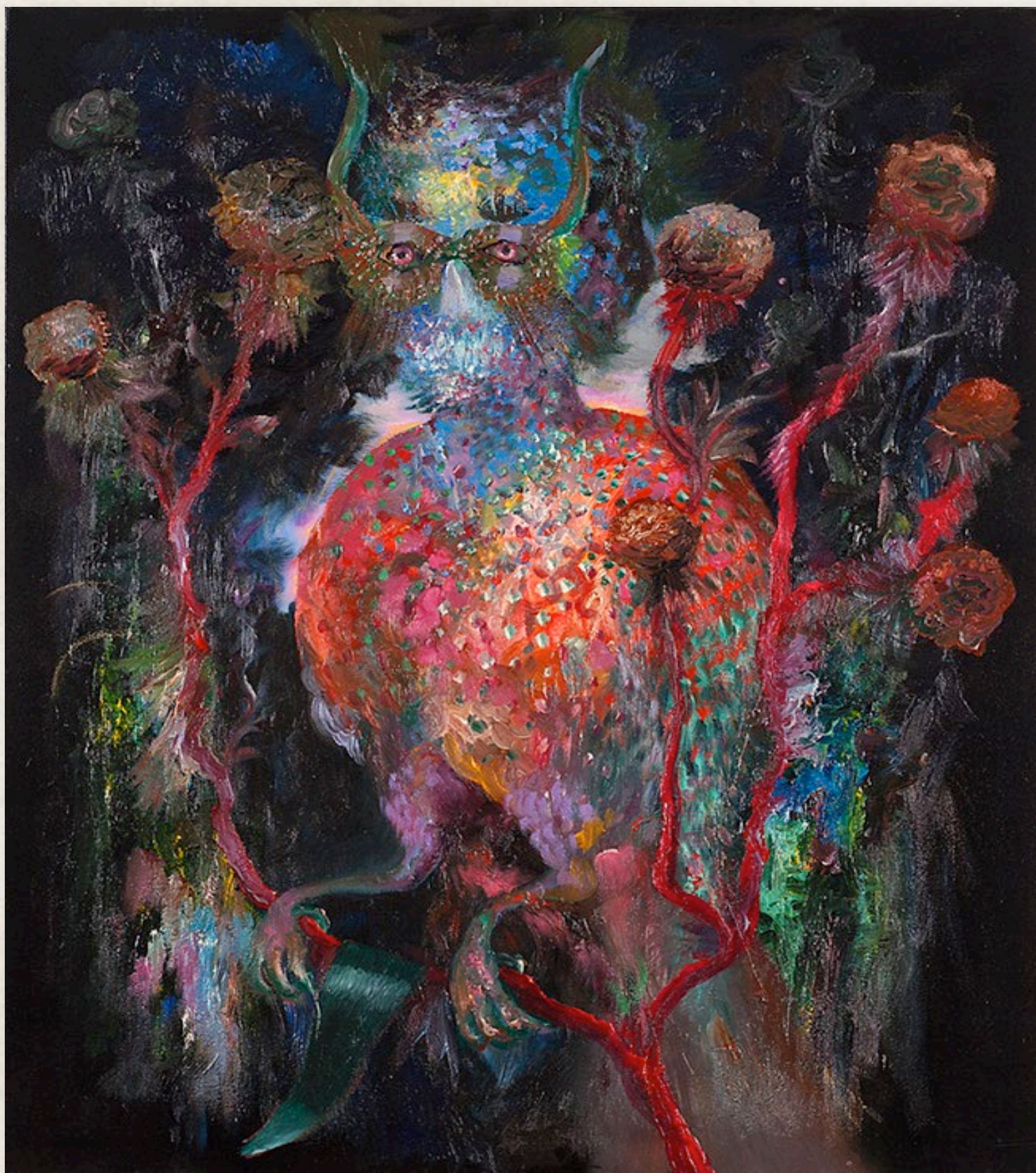
THE STRANGER by Miguel Ronsino, 2003-4
mixed media on canvas (73" x 65")



THE NEST by Miguel Ronsino, 2005-7
oil on canvas (28" x 35")



WILDERNESS WITHOUT ANGELS by Miguel Ronsino, 2007
oil and mica on canvas (52" x 86")



DEATH AMONG THE ROSES by Miguel Ronsino, 2010
oil on canvas (35 ½" x 29 ½")

TIMOTHY LIU

Love Poem

What a poem

wants is not
what I want

necessarily

though it can
be difficult

to explain

why what I
want is not

what fastens

these words
to the page

when it's clear

I'm willing
to give up

what I want—

Liu/66

No Regrets

You give me
so many
reasons not to

fuck you.
But don't you
want to

feel my talons
swooping
down on you,

lifting up
your rodent
ass to where

it belongs—
the sky
no place for

circling—
the sea still
churning below

as fins close in
on anything
but regret.

JANET PASSEHL

Bleat and Sigh Night

Dear Gertrude,

I have tried to write you edemic letters and add juice to keep it plump.

The misusers torment the alphabet. A letter is an innocent. A letter is not an army. The alphabet is weep. It is angry as in K. It is a chained ankle but it is not a shackle per say. To say that it is a shackle is to say hatred is A.

For those who don't know, it is grace to process.

And this is why you should never rest: a ledger holds and shapes conflict.

As pages curl and limp you are subjected to a damaged aroma rising chimera-like as from a steaming bowl of soup. Soup that is nurturing and a girl's locks fall into it at their tips.

Single stream recycling, what does it mean does it mean to crush a can under a foot a green foil can can cut in a way similar to glass and if it is rusted will make you sick. Sick. Up to your soft little egg-shaped eyes two of which can neither be in the center of a head.

I want to remember this and I want honestly to be alone and softening almost to liquid. I don't mind but do behave and my exile is complete and unrepentant. One time and never again, a tone without echo. I am certain there are other sounds.

Shhhh. In this opening there is screaming and pieces of absence of light waiting to be joined to a concept of darkness. Dark as pungency, fiber and acid, that makes your eyes seep, in which is the seed of the small mistake that can be seen through.

How round and red, how long and pink, how translucent and layered you are.

Dry sand, bare legs, monstrous stalking. Monstrous stalking and the gift of the absence of the monster. Never again the kindness of warmth. It was a kindness and a kind of meaning.

When the ceiling is torn away, years of dirt fall on your head. It is and it does. It is underground, which is not the end of the world but a question of slender ankles and sugar on your tongue when you are young. Moving in one direction makes life pleasant alright. It does. As long as there is polyphony under the line of your song.

Dear Gertrude, I want to, I badly want to. Does the bone protruding from my ear shock you? Character can change when a bone is thrown. An occasion is stirring so don't be surprised if there is nothing to eat. Cake is not nourishment but solace and solace is silence and statutes shake the mountain douse the tender. Darkness ignites training retraining shivering and more flammable drinking. Expiration stops a spark and on the whole binds us. River ringing the mountain is C.

There is little more to sing but much to chop. Do not be sheepish. Eat the chop chiefly but do not chop the lamb. She is more than a little. Whisper, whisper against hearing.

LAWRENCE R. SMITH

Bowl

That bowl is made of water.
Poke through its side, pull a
finger away and draw out
the honey of dreams, a skin or barrier
that denies content, wraps us briefly
in our lives then falls away.

What else but water could hold a fist
of ancient fire, retrieved night voices
that spiral in on themselves like time.

Place it on an altar for
rites of transfer, dead to living
and living to the undivided dead.
When a prophet waved away
a basket of bird-ravaged figs
the remaining shreds of fruit
dropped from the tree as tears.
We still hear his breath, drenching
the orchard with honeyed light.

Bird Signs

When birds write on air
they know the audience is small.
Their kin the lizards
occasionally watch,
but spend most of their time
doing push-ups.

My granddaughter
speaks to hummingbirds
in their strange chirping language—
and I have heard them reply.
She says their darting moves,
in all the vectors of a compass,
are stroke by stroke instructions
in hummingbird kanji,
advanced lessons for the child
who broke their code.

Language can live only in mid-air,
not on the page, and proud cities
raised with the music of vowels
dissolve as they are uttered.

There is no memory.
Hummingbirds merge into
the space that ignores them,
writing their best lyrics
on the beating heart of the world.

A Paradise of Stones

In my dreams she still calls about
the Omphalian Codex.

She says, “On the twelfth page in,
the one with the gargoyle in Tyrian purple,
you will find everything that was promised.”

Then the voice skips along the ground,
just out of reach, over the wall of the well
and down its eternal fall.

Once again I eat my questions.

The sound of a human voice is a stone,
a well a chorus of darkness.

I try to read the codex of her escape,
but its arcane script blurs as it dives
into Persephone’s night.



BIG DOG MURAL by Christine Kuhn, 2013
acrylic on aluminum panel (96" x 96")

CRAIG COTTER

Waiting for Nico

—*for Nico Zuluga*

Forgot to put on bandages.

Last week
after an hour with you

I didn't need meds.

*

Because I was silent,
listening, daydreaming

while Bernie talked
through the phone

he asked if I cared what he was saying.

*

I drift
watch grass.

A young couple kiss.
I looked at segmented tree bark.

*

Nancy and I both have stories.
Her father died recently
and she has a story of a grandchild to share.
I'm ill with stories of factory work.

*

Nico's profile sadly says he's interested in women.

*

I was drifting, fatigued and medicated
when Bernie asked if I cared
about the story of his sister's recent
suicide attempt which he told me he'd told me before
and which I still don't remember.
Was it gas, pills?

I thought 20 other things
listening to him talk.
It's like giving up guitar
I let my mind drift.

*

Nico just pulled up.
He drove into the parking space fast.
Maybe for an hour
he'll be interested in me.

HOLLY DAY

Lung Tissues

geraniums start small and are
easily inhaled, take root
in the soft flesh
between joints.

if kept warm enough
they can overwinter in most parts
of the body, grow comfortably dormant
wait for spring.

in summer, their thin
stiff limbs
crumpled flowers and
paper-dry leaves
keep me from sleeping
rustle in my dreams

DAN RAPHAEL

the song the smog

a luminance crosses the street between my lungs
horizon blotted by trees I could throw to
over the houses and through the cars
8 kids playing football; no one else is home

in every room in my house is a door to another room
where someone I never met whose door opens
some other neighborhood where the clock has the runs
no windows opened here for months
incense sweat garlic with 4 feet

when I move the ladder my house ascends
worms bursting jars starlings swimming underground
concentric interiors a page too long to turn

when the windows find another station
I confuse breathing with accordion
paralyzed water anything could be in the middle of
like reverse engineering a seed

to live inside a tree without killing it
neither saprophyte or heavyweight
every wall at least 5 rituals
so much willpower forgotten makes the best roof

I'm open to the street like a bouncer on commission
address is access the wrong door at the right time
internal saxophone compass
unclenching the joints kickback suspension
been half an hour since any bird

fuse on fire

dawns lava pumpkin stain on the hottest day of the year
my skin seeking coolness of lost midnights, lost friends
with all their hair & the same clothes as years ago,
only the sun is unchanged, never still, repeating such a long sequence
who can say which of gods 7,000 names are duplicates,
if walking opens more doors than a jetliner

we frisk the sun and send it through mazes we call training,
accommodation.

we're parasites twice removed, cousins of everyone
wondering where the rest of our race went wrong, warped,
in whose jeans is what I'm missing, a breakfast too simple and fatty—
coffee from powder, bread from a mixing bowl 12 of us could
drown in

could this be the same sun of our births, the neighborhood no one
moved from,
a city that cant decide its age and ethnic heritage,
when the trees outnumbered us, before the fish were imprisoned
in rivers,
when the hills seemed to breathe and we'd race up them as
they exhaled

I pull the curtain to block the sun so I can see whats next,
like I'm a field choosing which flavored creek flows through me—
self irrigation neath a sky that needs paint, rivers in their hidden
channels and tollways,
we haven't yet learned how to lake let alone put a faucet in the sky
and sate the moments question

was that a bird or textures rubbing together,
we all have sounds we can't escape, even in the most
controlled climates

Raphael/78

with everything scanned and IDed before admission
the sun rises almost 40 minutes ahead of schedule every day,
when no clocks erupt, before the cameras blossom and the curfew lifts.
I bathe in this light, furtive as a tree, waiting for the camouflage
of breakfasts and rush hour

Sky Sand Window

the ocean is blue because of all the life inside,
not blue like the sky cause of all its forgotten.

<><><>

air and disorder. air, gravity and textiles
textiles and intent intent, limits, and a door not meant to open
like a door where theres not yet another side
hinges in the wood in the wall in the earth acting like its not injured

<><><>

sand beyond horizon, without a moon to wrest
tides wind clams architects reborn as gulls
 water waiting for the tug, then paralyzed by freedom—
could we go where we cant get back

<><><>

i take so long returning to the surface everythings moved but me,
the ocean just an aroma, trees turned into windows and combs
mountains in the rear view but never before me
what I think atonal music is rain.

<><><>

today's sun looks familiar but tomorrows will be nothing
 we've seen before
then how do we know its our sky?
I could be in a totally different body and my eyes would have
no language to tell me where I end & the planet begins,
at what distance sky and ocean no longer hear each other

Isthmus

“you can see a million miles tonight
but you can’t get very far.”

Counting Crows

when the ocean jumps against the rock, is transformed white & leaps
further

a thousand structures moved through and gone quicker than gravity.
taking a single color through all its saturations and lightsources

><><><><

this trees 5 times older than me and moves exponentially slower,
I could sit here six hours and be less than an extra needle, the unequal
distribution of bird bombs.

how sooner or later every lost feather bursts into flame and reminds
everyone of a different meal:

I feel the napkin tucked under my chin, the 19 year old instep gliding
along my ankle,

><><><><

we want, we cant, we nibble away, skin always falling from us,
my brain rippling the occasional emotion as if from the outside,
more than blowing a kiss or an opportunity, belaying,
lowing like a cow instantly aware of her limits,
forgetting the robot calves she feeds twice a day who will free her

><><><><

around we are, like one continuous global coastline—
if we string all our intestines together how long til our mouths realize.
that day everyone who commuted to manhattan never came back,
the island floating a little lower, more empty shelves,
buildings sprouting extra stories overnight, sending out electrons

like micro-gulls who've lost the ability to navigate, lost the stamina,
can't sleep without falling, don't know which clouds will rain meat

><><><><

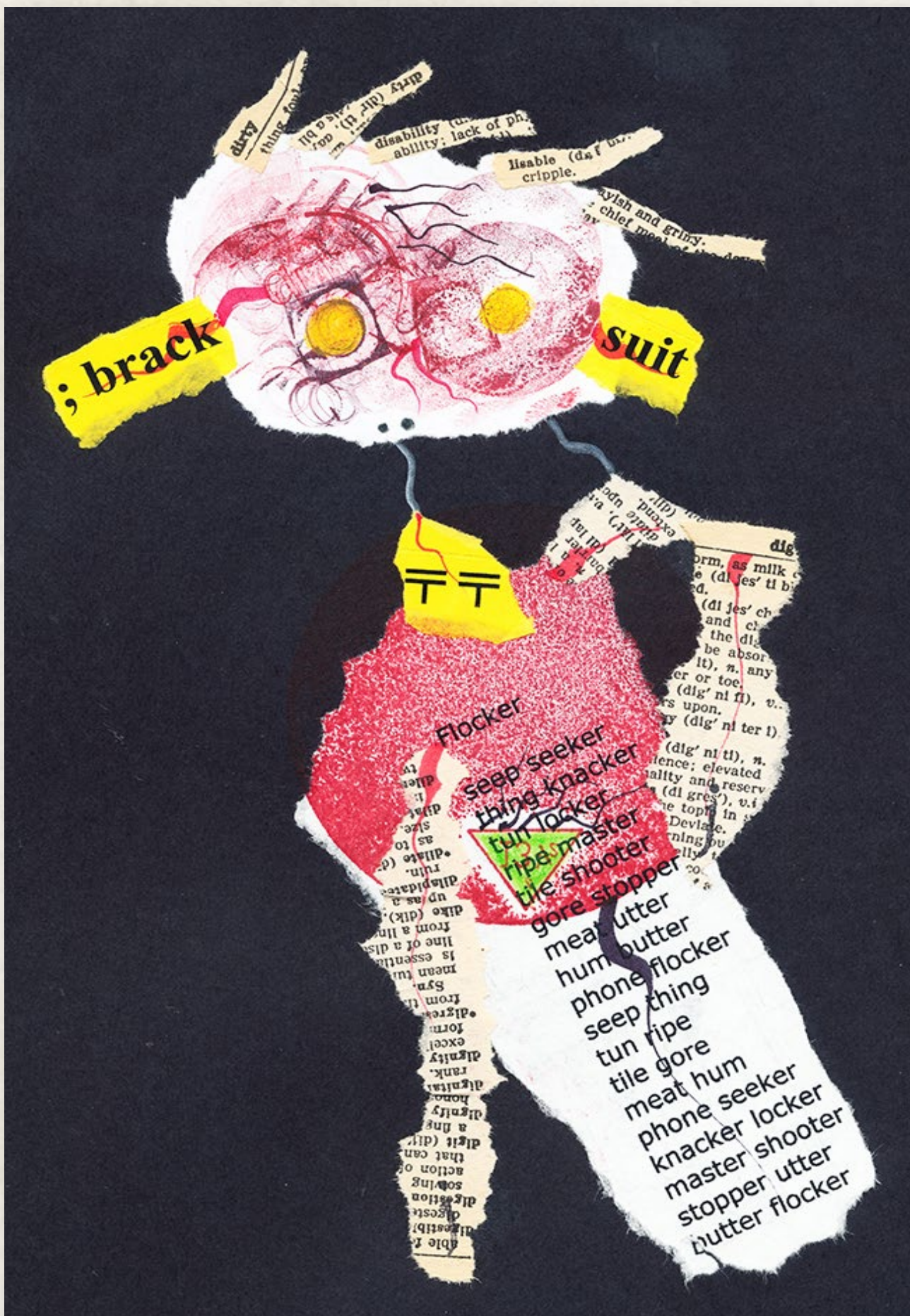
how if you took all my skin off I'd be a different form of human,
without that vibratory shield
without the accumulation of living at the frequency of meat,
how even a small cut begins to send me to another dimension,
where my wound pulls plasma from the air,
as I'm dozens of intentions bound by skin, plumbing and mutual
needs.

><><><><

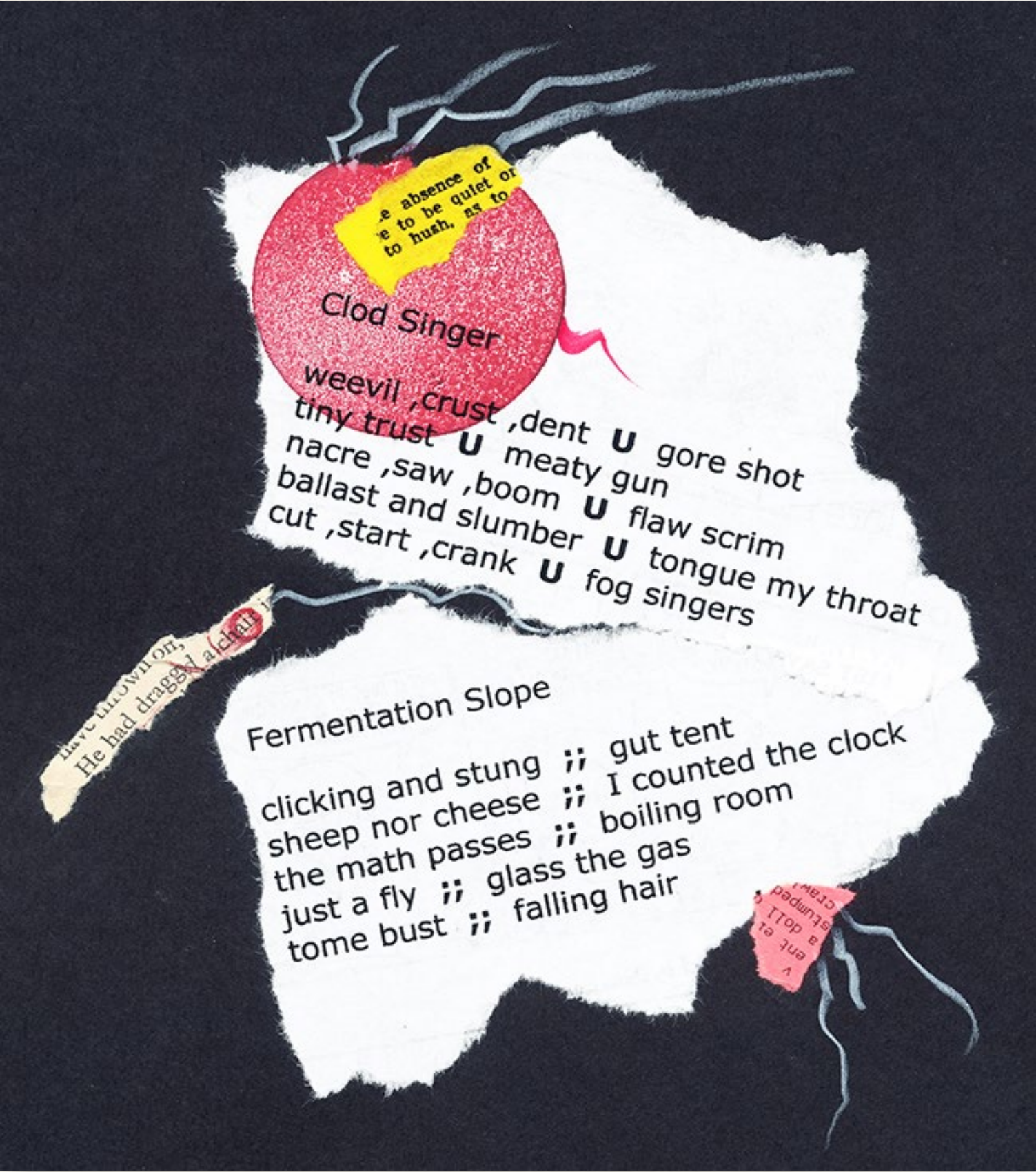
the time it takes a cliffside to rotate 45 degrees brings questions about
eggs, tensile strength, fluid dynamics,
how I've honed my will power to spatula strength—
the egg about to flip should ripple like a wave with a sea lion
as the yolk,
foam thickening around it like a jelly fish convention,
like a large sail whipped into the sea 40 years ago evolving its manta
ray hungers,
its handholds for hitch hikers, the lands between its sheets

><><><><

we get so accumulative we think we're each planets,
a swarm of asteroids with many gods to orbit.



UNTITLED by John M. Bennett, 2013
mixed media and collage (11" x 7")



UNTITLED by John M. Bennett, 2013
mixed media and collage (10" x 8 1/2")

PAUL B. ROTH

Warrant

You do without. Ground fog amputates your bare feet in wet grass where you walk. Without them, and unable to find your way back, you appear lost.

In such fog, any object can be dangerous, any clearing a chasm into which depth at such velocity may have no memorable name.

Afraid of moving, you wonder why the sky you wedge between sleeping and waking and which at times lies still with you, manages to now hide on the side of the day you don't happen to be.

Getting Away

It comes down to sky and what color sunset fills your eyes, what flocking green birds at last light fill your silence with song, and what rivers in their unseen struggle to follow where they lead themselves enter your wayward bloodstream.

Left on their own, your bones assembled from bits of bituminous, mica and compacted river water, straighten your spine from mud into a longing for legs. Those your old body owned, imprisoned by pacing unlocked rooms in noisy Parisian quarters, squeeze tighter the drying mud's push through large cracks from its ever wet center.

In spite of escaping on all fours, your memories wait abandoned on the doorstep you were so proud of leaving behind.

JAMES GRABILL

The Past Present

Evening murmurs with further consequences of centuries of learning, with instantaneous winds arriving from other towns in the fossil atmosphere at the end of long burns.

Widening solar pulse splashes through the center of the world which is everywhere an atom exists, complex with prayers for relief, losing paperwork sheet music to other sides of the late-Friday sun.

The heave of long-standing ache from times we lived on branches of trees comes with brail rushes of crimson-clear needs, with cardinal words of bearing to ancient fathers along liquid neural avenues from way back.

Red feathers spreading with dusk appear at edges of the sky over black leathers squeaking in half-lit rooms on inextinguishable seismic trajectories.

Mushroom Reverberatum

Into the cloud-lit fall of leaves, slate-white heads crown smooth in the grasses before opening their turbans in melts of air.

Slippery with bark dusts and dew, pale fruits of the underground continue to show up faceless, but not without sense in the cells.

Mushrooms roil, bursting out of node into the atmosphere taking on spores for lamp-quick expansions arterial with spawns and fractal spirals, as feather out through urban heat and falls of rain.

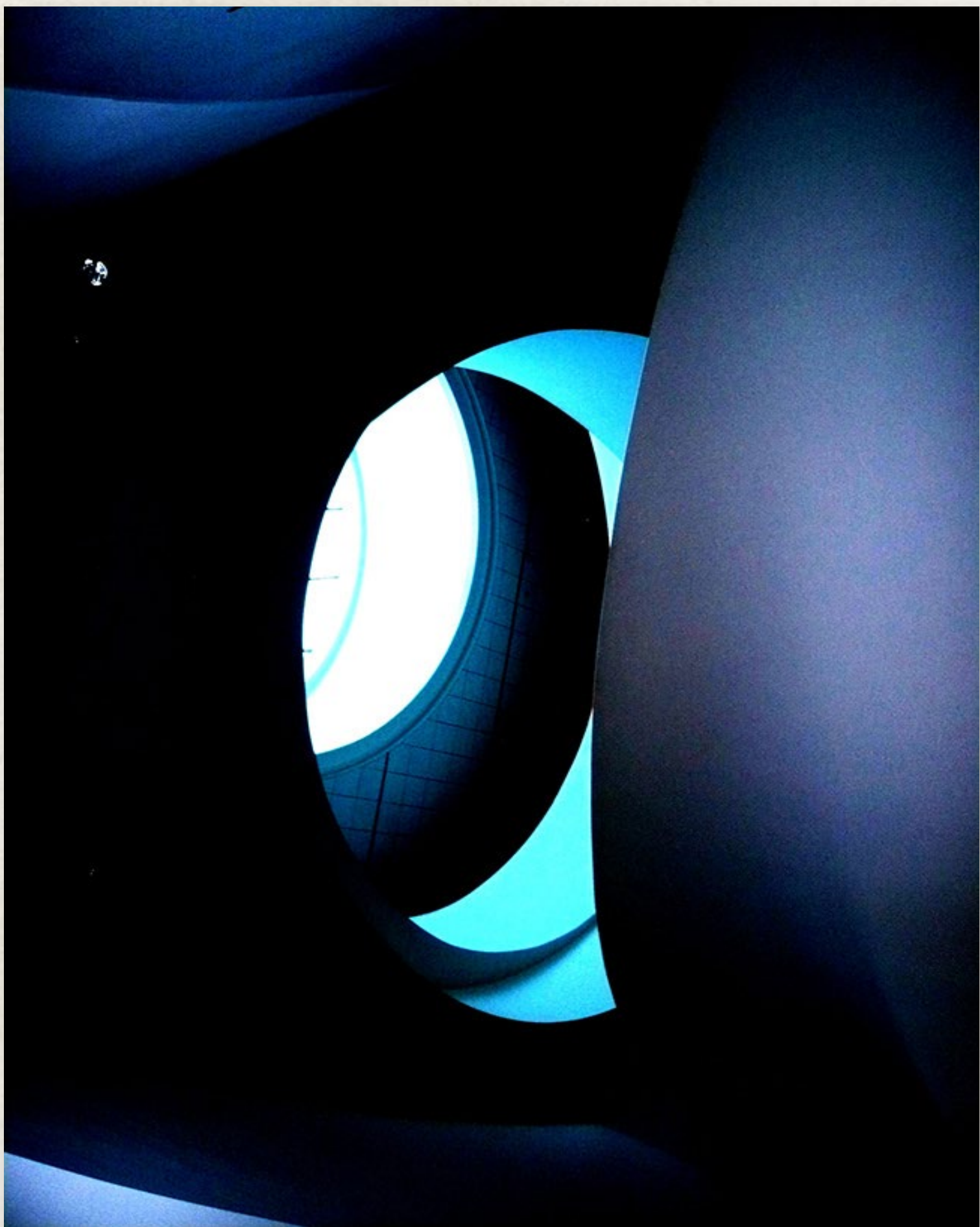
Breakthroughs on the ground can appear between sleep and waking, as morning concentrates under shape of the body any remains of unhouseled night.

Between turgid pulse and yoni cradling her baby, come moss-quiet yields with sweltering build from below. What gathers releases, echoing in the trunk, into limbs, drawn by smallest translucent threads over miles, where mineral transit goes.

Root sense rises, sinking with core-spun multitudes fir forests had have in a snake roar.



UNTITLED by Sarah Kayss, 2013, digital photograph



UNTITLED by Sarah Kayss, 2013, digital photograph

CALIBAN

The One and Only Wanda Coleman (1946-2013)

Wanda Coleman was larger than life: heroic, charismatic, brilliant. Many writers have tried to incorporate the blues and jazz into their writing, but Wanda had both the historical knowledge and the musicianship to riff like a master sax player. The title of her poetry collection *Ostinato Vamps* (my favorite for any book of poetry) tells us exactly what her poetics entails: improvisations on a “book” of recurrent themes. Wanda was always fearless and brutally honest, but she made her rough vision into high jazz lyricism.

I met Wanda in 1984 when she gave a reading at Cal State San Bernardino, where I was doing a visiting gig. The first opportunity I had to publish her was that year in *The Pacific Review*, and I have been after her to send work all these years. One of the poems, “Jass Man,” was unforgettable, ending with

his melody, one she’s heard before
from other dilettante rifiers of do wah wah
he plays it sweeter still. *so reet*
he draws a drop of blood

Beautiful and tough. She was also a contributor to the first issue of the old print *Caliban* in 1986. In the first two stanzas of “Bakersfield USA” she is as wild and lyrical as the trip she describes:

i zero in on *el dorado* push that fire engine red mustang
to the floor. we take that high mountain pass at mach one
chuck man at my side is *loosiana* drunk nodding out and I’m in a
hurry to see what’s shaking on the love horizon

all we gots twenty dollars in change and no change of clothes
the adventure of good air and green valley something in our
genes
rips the heart out of ripe melons and giggles like
juveniles as we run through that landscape of cotton and I pick
it for the first time

In the same issue, “Auguries (6)” is a gorgeous solo worthy of
Coltrane:

adderstongue jacaranda rosewood & oak

a dog awalk on three legs

black emesis

a glut of verbiage emotional cul-de-sacs & truculent eyes

the disembodied yeeaahh
of an alien baritone

vitaligo

the abrupt appearance of formless insects
amove in a spiral at the foot of a bed

one-eyed jills

a millionaire slum lord found hanging
from the knotted end of his arian dream

catalepsy

the traumatic stress release of
feculent wind

a jitter jag

whispered warnings from walls

the grinning Christ
in a bodega window

blood of the shaman—head of the crow

Issue #4 of the print *Caliban* featured “A Forum on the Prosody of Thelonious Monk.” The idea of the project was that understanding Monk’s musical innovations might translate into innovations in poetry, since jazz was (or should have been) the idiom that provided the underlying music for contemporary American poetry. Wanda participated, along with Charles Bernstein, Yusef Komunyakaa, Clark Coolidge, Lawson Fusao Inada, Harry Smallenburg, and Steve Somers. Her wonderful essay, “On Theloniousism,” not only explored many of the historical, political, and aesthetic aspects of the subject, but was also an example of the Theloniousism she was talking about. It was a tour de force. The essay is reprinted in its entirety after these words.

Wanda Coleman was an extraordinarily generous person, and she maintained that generosity in the face of the opposite behavior in many of the people she encountered. Like most courageous innovators, she often had small-minded detractors nipping at her heels. Since she was more a force of nature than an average human being, always seeming to triumph in the end, I still cannot believe she is gone. I miss her terribly.

WANDA COLEMAN

On Theloniousism

*who allows essence possession/translation into sound/voice
via mech-tech mastery/chrysalises it
who allows the perceptive either entry or regurgitation and/or
transmission/heightening or propulsion into another
realm/space/form/void*

beyond inspiration

I

Everybody tells you that's not allowed/don't do that. Never mind history, it's against the rules (which change the moment *you* get them straight). You are a fraud.

Until Monk music had not gotten deeply into attitude—particularly Black attitudes. Music had not shown its ass. Monk persisted in succeeding at being who he was without compromise, providing listeners with the elementary components of a deep and never ending source of creativity. A kind of poetic sensibility yet to achieve recognition is one which does with language what Monk did with music—as if the two were successfully divorced. [See the headings of Music and Negro Poetry in the Princeton Encyclopedia of *Poetry & Poetics*, edited by Alex Preminger, Princeton University Press.]

MONK, THELONIOUS SPHERE—b. New York City; Composer, piano; though technically a limited pianist, he evolved an extremely personal style and in his best moments produced some of the most provocatively heterodox Jazz on the 1940s.

—Leonard Feather, from *The Encyclopedia of Jazz*, Horizon Press, 1955

A Working Definition

Theloniousism: (epistrophy). Accelerated spurts of sound upon the high side of linear or circumlunar thought and/or attitude; seeing with your ears and hearing with your eyes (who said what?). Its antonym is Marxisticism, a philosophy of art that disallows for genetic psycho-socio influences manifest as sensibility; gangsterism as art; a conscious attempt to level all creativity; ideally a socio-political constructiveness; but which, in current proponents, results in fashionistic cannibalization.

*you see, I play your game and my game
and win at both
when you play my game you automatically lose*

THE KEY/history + vision + craft = transcendence

it began as a mimic—a comment on racism
a showing off
and became a “thang” unto itself
i.e., went legit

jack-ass music or jive-ass or j-ass or jass or

*

I had a wild rave with this Poet Fellow and during it I had to stop and give him a history lesson on race music and assorted fusions. Black music/language is always taboo until embraced by young whites and through them infused into the Dominant Culture (D.C.). This was true of Jazz and Rock-and-Roll. Specifically we discussed the marriage of Calypso and Blues/R&B and the offspring, Reggae. “Oh, of course!” he said, a bit embarrassed. And while our talk was language centered, there was no effective way to discuss Black language without interjecting Black music. He was discounting The Blues as a viable art form and

downgrading the contribution to American language made by Black Americans, expressing his own preference for the “cleaner,” more “distanced” Caribbean approach.

I had to point out what C.W.E. Bigsby, in his opening essay from *The Black American Writer, Volume I: Fiction*, says so perfectly:

The native American feels little or no need to bolster up a self-image which for the most part is not threatened by an alien culture. In America that self-image has been eroded by slavery and the indignities of an unjust social system. In Sartre's words the black writer has his back up against the wall of authenticity. In his attempt to “reveal the black soul” he has frequently been drawn towards an African past which seems to have the virtue of conferring on him a distinctive identity, unaffected by the demeaning impact of his American experience. Yet, whatever the stance of the ardent black nationalist there remain only vestigial remnants of African culture. The slave owners were too successful in stamping out indigenous traditions for the contemporary writer to be able to draw on a genuine cultural heritage (outside of the world of music and, perhaps, religion). Thus the black writer intent on revising a sense of identity which has its roots in a distant African past is trapped into creating rather than discovering a usable heritage and into manufacturing usable myths.

I had to add that Black Americans are, in spite of well-meant rhetoric, a *minority* with a different sense of self than Africans and Blacks from the West Indies who see themselves as a clear majority. Not to mention Jamaica having freed its slaves 25 years before America.

Johnny Nash couldn't ignite the fad of this fusion called Reggae within the Dominant Culture, but his pioneering enabled Bob Marley to capitalize when Eric Clapton and other white profligates made “ska” fashionable and the film *The Harder They Come* put Rasta and its godhead Jah on the American cultural map. I pointed out the tendency of Whites to maniacally appropriate anything *different* (exotic) that smacks of being “in”/hip, citing the insulting extremes of dreadlocks being called a “Bo

Derek” (after the White blonde female star of *10*) and Elvis Presley’s theft of Big Mama Thorton’s *Hound Dog* from which he made millions he did not share with her.

Further, I made the case for the dilatory effect some early American legislation had on Black morality and Black music simultaneously—that is, at one time, a Black woman marrying out of her race to a White man escaped slavery and became a freed woman; whereas, a White woman marrying a Black man married into slavery. (Consult your desk copy of Peter M. Bergman’s *The Chronological History of the Negro in America*, Harper & Row, 1969.)

The failure to communicate is not on the part of the Blacks, but on the part of the Whites who do not wish to understand and/or in understanding simply don’t give the proverbial damn.

Now, skip one paragraph and go back to that sentence concerning slavery. Substitute artist/poet/musician for the word woman and put “economics” in front of slavery. The sense is chilling. To escape economic slavery the Black artist is forced to turn his/her back on Black heritage and adapt to White tastes/sensibilities in order to make money (in this case, money is synonymous with freedom but not power). George Benson and Al Jarreau are currently, if unfairly, cited as examples of this phenomenon—also known as “selling out.” On the other extreme, a White artist steeped in Black culture without carrying the news back to his/her own cultural neighborhood oftentimes becomes trapped in obscurity, or is regarded as a freak/aberration (e.g. Teena Marie). Cross-culturalization is yet to be credited as a valid phenomenon (between Blacks and Whites, anyhow) as should be the case in our so-called Melting Pot of a nation. The tendency is to (want to) keep the race pure, be the “race” White American or Black American. The arguments on this point (ethnicity vs. race) are complex and unresolved so I’ll keep it simple: That which identifies as African-American of slave origin is “Black” and that which identifies as “White” is White.

The Black poet/writer cannot make it in establishment literary circles merely on his excellence as a writer unless that excellence is sanctioned/patronized by the proper Whites. One may be as niggerish as one wants as long as one doesn’t bite the hand that makes out the advance checks, distributes the books and pens the reviews. In this respect, the Halls of

Ivy are no different from the Alleys of Hollywood. Like the Black musician, the less *ethnic* a Black writer is, the less angry, the more attainable that elusive reward of recognition (if not cash).

Another twist in this cowing of the Black creative psyche is that one is allowed to be as much of a clown and/or racist as one wants because the Dominant Culture has, over recent decades, learned how to neutralize this sort of energy—which is why Black humor succeeds where Black drama fails. Even hatred is palatable as long as it is unreasoning hatred, empty of threat, and having no “army” or “intelligence” to back it up. It is no coincidence that the success of Black artists in America is, almost without exception, linked to rise and fall of social currents which kaleidoscopically bring “the race problem” into national focus. For the Black artist to succeed as an individual free of this bond is rare.

to notate is to fixate

which is why The Word is a superior power

II

An important somebody comes along and tells the world you’re great—a genius, in fact. The world embraces you. It pretends to understand, but doesn’t—really.

That we Black people still undergo holocaust makes the plight of our artists much more difficult, much more urgent and much more poignant. Once that artist renounces his/her birthright he/she may cease productivity because of being cut off from the very Blackness that spawns (one’s certainties or confusions about it). This reality still plagues all Americans of *ethnicity* but is particularly exquisite pain for Black artists. The pain is articulated at length by Leroi Jones (aka Amiri Baraka) in his prose, including the chatty *Blues People* (1965) and *Black Music* (1968), and in the life stories of some Black musicians. The autobiographies of Billie Holiday and June Jordan are good starting points for the female version.

. . . the Negro writer's social experience is, despite its bitterness, also an artistic boon. To live continually with prejudice based on the accident of skin color is no superficial experience, and neither is the reaction produced by such constant exposure superficial. There is a depth of intensity to the emotions of Negroes—as demonstrated in “Negro music”—which is largely lacking in white Americans . . . Thus the negro writer, if he does not make the tragic error of trying to imitate his white counterparts, has in his possession the priceless “gift” of thematic intuition . . . He will be able to convey suffering without romanticizing . . .

—William Gardner Smith, “The Negro Writer: Pitfalls and Compensations,” from *The Black American Writer, Volume I: Fiction*

Without romanticizing? Maybe. The trouble with too many of us public Black folk is that we do not inform our work with our history. Perhaps we can't because that history is, for the most part, still made inaccessible to us. It is no coincidence that an unusually large portion of books available on Black themes of any kind (including reprints) have copyright dates, within two or three years, corresponding to the beginning and end of the Civil Rights Struggle.

*

Compare these three stanzas from Nathaniel Mackey's “Ghede Poem” (Ghede, the Obean god of death) with two comparable stanzas from Ishmael Reed's “I Am A Cowboy in the Boat of Ra.” Mackey's later poem (in this case the latter) appeared in *Alcatraz 2* (Santa Cruz), and Reed's earlier poem appeared in the Norton Anthology. Not only does Mackey “take off” on Reed's imagery, bringing it even closer to “home”/Blackness, but he also does an improvisation on Reed's poetic diction:

I am a cowboy in the boat of Ra,
sidewinders in the saloons of fools
bit my forehead like O
the untrustworthiness of Egyptologists
Who do not know their trips. Who was that
dog-faced man? they asked, the day I rode
from town.

School marms with halitosis cannot see
the Nefertiti fake chipped on the run by slick
germans, the hawk behind Sonny Rollins' head or
the ritual beard of his axe, a longhorn winding
its bells thru the Field of Reeds.

While different in form, Mackey, nevertheless, with or without intent,
zaps us with an electrifying poem as fine as Reed's, with Reed's exact
same rhythm, yet completely on its own without any clues *except* for
rhythm:

They call me Ghede. The butts
of "angels" brush my lips.

The soiled asses of "angels"
touch my lips, I
I kiss the gap of their having
gone. They call me Ghede, I
sit, my chair tilted, shin across
thigh.

They call me Ghede
of the Many-Colored Cap, the
Rising Sun. I suck
breath from this
inner room's midearth's bad air
make chair
turn into chariot,
swing.

Mackey's poem echoes Reed's, a wonderful happenstance which sets up poetic dialogue on several levels simultaneously. Reed's Cowboy is a minor deity plotting dubious overthrow, whereas Mackey's Ghede is a full-fledged God with the powers of life and death. In his play, Mackey effectively digs deeper to the root of Blackness—yet clearly echoes the assertion of “I am,” a quality Sonia Sanchez identifies as the male voice in Black poetry, but which can be equally accomplished by the female, as in my “take off” on Bob Kaufman's rhythms in “Heavy water blues” (*You Better Believe It*, Paul Bremin, Penguin 1973):

The radio is teaching my gold fish Jujitsu
I am in love with a skindiver who sleeps underwater
my neighbors are drunken linguists, and I speak butterfly,
Consolidated Edison is threatening to cut off my brain,
the postman keeps putting sex in my mailbox,
My mirror died & can't tell if I still reflect,
I put my eyes on a diet, my tears are gaining too much weight

I turn Kaufman's poem inside out, take his horn and blow my own tune, making my “Heavy Daughter Blues” (*Heavy Daughter Blues*, Black Sparrow Press, 1987):

the t.v. is teaching my children hibakusha
I am in love with a dopefiend who sleeps under freeways
my neighbors are refugees from S.A.
and I speak negrese

the source is promising to terminate my train
of thought. the postman has put a hex on my P.O.Box
when my mirror cries do my pupils dilate?
I put my dial on quiet, my ears are gaining too much hate

Reed expresses Blackness representationally, relying on cultural reference points and stringing them together with the rhetorical posturing that goes with being a cowboy at showdown. Mackey puts forth Blackness organically and is free of the necessity of embracing rhetoric or posture.

He simply is God, no questions asked. Perhaps Reed's ultimate artistic sacrifice liberates Mackey. I certainly feel liberated from the need to perform the kind of awkward intellectualizing apparent in Kaufman's wild sojourn into Beat surrealism—the loss of Self not only in the confusions of ethnic Blackness, but a more Western existential blackness. Yet Reed and Kaufman serve to take me “home” in much the same way as Monk's “Round Midnight” or Ray Charles' androgynous rendering of “I Didn't Know What Time It Was.” Originality of thought? Cool. Originality of execution? Most cool. [It enrages me that a society that places such a pathological premium on what is first and new continuously fails to give Black artists proper due/support. Of course, Dominant Culture artists continue to argue, but not effectively enough, the ascendance of the mediocre over excellence.]

The potential fun in the above game is obvious and obviously unlimited; and, the apparent elitism/specialization more or less goes with the turf. Thus one may eat one's poetic cake and have it too. What is central here is that rhythm refreshed, beyond style and lyricism, ascends once more to its rightful throne along with content and form and copulates with both. That which starts with homage and/or satire, takes on its own independence.

There have been such moments/movements in the Dominant Culture, such as Dada, Beatitude and Pop/Popism/Op. But in terms of sheer bankability, no Black millionaire artists (or widows thereof) emerged from those movements because they are not *ethnically* Black movements. We Afro-American artists are allowed to play the game but we are not allowed to become dealers. To deal is to have power—*control* beyond meager influence. In this respect the Black musician/composer/singer is way out ahead of the Black writer/poet. [Say what one will about Michael Jackson and Prince.] By denying linkage between music and language, and music as language; by effectively denying the Black holocaust, the Black writer/artist is successfully frustrated by the scions of the D.C. By relegating Jazz (and the Jazz principle) to obscurity, the people who give birth to it are kept in a position of economic and cultural inferiority. And the *quality* of one's work has *nuthin'* to do with it.

To recognize is to empower.

III

Now you are somebody. Relax. Recognition at long last sits on your doorstep. You don't have to break your ass anymore, or kiss ass. You are over—you think.

(what a stalk of maize looks like
musically)

The backside becomes an affront, a refusal to reveal or share one's agony/lust (moonning). Turning away in/into aloneness. And so what if you're alone? The unforgiven sin is choosing to be alone by one's self . . . as semiotic perversion is one derived from licking backsides.

dat fulminous note soars no mo

dead beat

a frozen note of attitudinal bliss

entombed

in the catacombs of poet-soul

name inscribed

upon the sacred stellae of ancient tribal worshippers

of diddlypoot

will we hear the sanctimonious snort

from your nostrils no more?

will our eyes never again travel

the mystic mythic tracks of your ectodermic addiction?

will our hearts never again thrill

to the resonant wise-ass of your

existential jonesism?

yes

we have been deprived—jealously

deprived/years gone/no opportunity to

commune with the grand wizard of

woogiedom

yes
we have been cheated (in premeditation)
only to witness America deconstructed
by venereal disease

yes as we sink into the homogenous audio-visual
potato salad

catered by a deaf tongue

*

Monk had made the journey from the obscurity of the Jazz underground to the cover of *Time* by remaining tenaciously true to his own musical vision. He kept playing things the way he heard them, and people eventually discovered his way of “using notes differently” made beautiful sense. In the process, he helped change the way people thought about music; he contributed a stunning body of compositions to the Jazz repertoire; and he influenced a generation of musicians—not just the pianists and not just the young players like John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins who had worked in his bands, but everyone who heard what he was doing and absorbed his message of freedom and individuality. And yet a strange thing began happening around the time of these Jazz Workshop performances. Some people began to put Monk down, not because he was too different but because he wasn’t different enough. Specifically, a few impatient souls began to complain that when they went to see Monk perform, they heard the same old stuff . . . He wasn’t writing new tunes. He wasn’t growing.

—Peter Keepnews’ liner notes, *Monk*:

Thelonious Monk—Live at the Jazz Workshop
(Columbia C2 83269, Reissue)

Classical music infused with the Drum (a music which also functions as a language) and violated by the Holler (religion—particularly Obeah) cum Jazz in all its probable and improbable variations. Tightness and rhythmic stricture plus stimulation to an erogenous zone equals release equals expression. Whereas over-stimulation results in: 1) Numbness 2) Irritation 3) Infection 4) Sepsis 5) Necrosis 6) Hello, Death (see Ted Joans' "The .38").

When the Jazz principle is applied, growth becomes irrelevant after one obtains mastery. When applied to performance, growth ceases only when the improvisations themselves become fixed, ceasing to be actual improvisations but instead become mere arrangements and/or interpretations/comments upon. The nature of improvisation is spontaneous infusion/renewal—not *repetition* or geometric progression/ascension. Max Swartz of San Francisco's Mission district dares to apply the Jazz principle with great success and great failure all in the space of a performance, usually accompanied by bass or saxophone. He's published little, expressing disdain for fixation on paper. Kamau Daaoud is the foremost L.A. proponent of this, although he periodically self-publishes small books of "jazzualizations." Thus one could, as Monk did, play the same song (or write the same poem) repeatedly throughout a set and yet continually renew it/rebirth it/present different aspects without (if you are lucky) boring listeners who see with their ears. Blindness is, in this respect, deafness (aka double trouble). And, needless to say, the tone deaf will, of course, be bored.

In relation to what I do as a Black/Afro-American *po-et womon* who believes her people are a first, a unique if tortured cultural/world event, I could and do swear that the Dominant Culture flagrantly denies my people-language (again, the Holler and the Drum) and refuses to recognize the nature of African-American duality established by W.E.B. Dubois in his writings as far back as 1903. There is a deliberate and on-going failure on the part of the government to officially recognize that a holocaust continues for Black Americans. The passage of the 14th Amendment to *their* Constitution and our glorious struggle for Civil Rights did not resolve our problem.

As has been pointed out previously the D.C. craves its Black underclass upon which it vampirishly feeds, though it is careful to never quite

kill off its victim; rather, keeps it minimally alive, enough to provide sufficient and periodic infusions of blood/excitement/challenge/richness/deviance. Which is why Blacks and Amerindians will never be allowed the same privileges as, say, first generation emigres (certainly not without substantial and bloody social revolution). Our businesses are not patronized unless they are deemed safe/nonthreatening or “in.” The Communications Media continue to present an America in which slavery never happened or has been adequately and officially atoned for. [For example, the video travesty of Alex Haley’s *Roots* lay in the rumor that two of the “White” stars were paid salaries equal to what the *entire* Black cast was paid, and the fact that only two Black writers were hired to work on and “blacken” scripts written by Whites.]

We live in a nation without proper context.

IV

Everybody complains. They are tired of you doin’ your same old moldy thang (neva mind dat thing made yo’ famous, Shamus) when are you gonna do something new? Even dyin’, particularly of a drug overdose, is unoriginal.

It is possible for an impoverished writer to escape poverty through making use of that poverty in his work. For a white woman to escape the economic confines of an oppressive sexism by making use of her sexuality is possible. But for a Black American writer to escape Blackness through the use of that Blackness in his/her work is not possible. To escape, one must be able to, in effect, *write white*.

—conversational music—

During her career, Billie Holiday never won a *Down Beat* poll for best singer/vocalist.

##

Speaking of furnished rooms, suppose Classical/traditional writing and/or music were compared to an apartment (compartmentalization). The Classical apartment is very lovely. You can paint it. You can move things around in it. You can buy new furniture and lay down new floors. It is still the same apartment.

A Jazz apartment has modular/movable walls, it is an environment allowing for the predictable to coexist with the unpredictable; ape the Classical then suddenly break loose into variation to the point of unrecognizability; i.e., new, alien, and always as renewable as the occupant (artist/creator) desires—limited only by the occupant's pocketbook/imagination.

Hahaha.

The act of recording creativity in progress fixates it, depriving it, inevitably, of maximum emotional immediacy—yet, simultaneously freezing/encapsulating unspeakable fertility awaiting the thaw of proper receptivity and rebirth/recreation, etcetera.

If one defines art as memory, then Black music (or music infused with/infected by blackness) gives me *my* memory. And as much as I might enjoy/appreciate other musics, they cannot open the treasure box of my memory; they do not stimulate my “muse” nor do they provide me vision.

Not that the classics/Classical music is not beautiful; I would no more deny Bach's greatness than I would deny James Brown's—I shouldn't have to. But Bach does not give me back myself. He does not take me home. My home is no more Europe than Africa, though book figure in my heritage. Home is not the libraries, museums, offices or concert halls where I most often encountered this kind of music (cold stony environments). Classical music doesn't take me to any one of the dozens of funky little flesh-teeming joints where I struggled to escape poverty during my young womanhood. It cannot take me to the emotional peaks and valleys of Los Angeles' Black community from which I spring.

It does, however, evoke the superior attitudes of “across town”; of white school teachers, of librarians shushing me viciously with their index fingers, of stiffly stuffed gowns and tuxedos applauding politely,

of the blond blue-eyed Christ staring dazedly over his flock from the backs of pastel Sunday School cards. No matter how accomplished, how beautiful and true this music is, it evokes the *ugly lying* spectre of racism.

Thus the social consciousness of music becomes social memory. Poetry, too, is equally social memory/consciousness. Rhythms are the conduits of memory/linkages to time and place in the very real sense that they allow me, as a writer, to recreate the past in excruciating detail and clarity. To tap into and summon up that which might, otherwise, be lost forever.

Instantaneous dialog occurs between those who recognize the same or similar rhythmic history; as much as those who live through a particularly stormy or horrific historical event.

The poet hears the saxophonist. The poet may imitate the sax—the actual sounds made with words, may imitate the moves and sways of a particular saxophonist; may record the evocations made by that saxophonist at that moment; may describe the images and/or feelings/associations which arise. In the oral presentation of the poem, the poet may become/reveal all or any of the above thus bringing the communication to one sort of conclusion—adding or subtracting from the total experience given the mastery of his/her gift. Thus music becomes text.

When the poem itself is set to an actual music, as a lyric, or read to the accompaniment (improvised or rehearsed) of a sax before an audience, the process is brought full cycle to begin again.

The medium of music chrysalises the present allowing future access. The poet/writer may draw on it to release information, shape it creatively, rebirth/make it live and breathe with immediacy of just having happened (the poem) or reshape it as a social nourishment, a vital aspect of life as experience (the story). In this way *my* music gives me back *myself*.

My most private moment of musical love manifests itself as an orgasm.

Conclusions

Fixation is death temporarily.

At a recent poetry reading featuring Black poets from the community of Watts, I listened rapt to their voices, which included my own. We were diverse in every respect, including economics. But after two solid hours our voices seemed to converge as though we were all writing/reading fragments of the same long poem/history.

Simply put, Theloniousism is the Jazz Principle applied to verse.

The perverse pursuit of THE NEW in the Dominant Culture (biological aspects aside) without full recognition of the ravages of racism/xenophobia upon its infrastructure, leads to creative bankruptcy; a circumstance/environment which allows THE BOGUS to seize power on all levels.

Literature is not only political, it is politics supremely—at its most vicious and most vigorous, and is, therefore, to be prized—utterly.

A Dominant Culture writer/poet can afford to play literary games, because, in doing so, the stakes, while extremely high, can be written off. Sooner or later there will be another game in which to indulge. But the Afro-American poet/writer gambles everything when he splits his psyche in order to win at this game. Should he/she achieve success, it is inevitably devalued by tokenism on the one hand, and a demand that the artist provide a solution to the burdens of racism on the other. To obtain (not to mention maintain) said success, the price is either death or relentless war. Death may take any form, the economic or the creative, the literal or the figurative. And if it is to be war, bittersweetly, it will be a war that even when won is automatically lost.



PARALLEL REALITY, SCENE 2 by Branko Gulin, 2013
pastel pencil on paper (4" x 5")



PARALLEL REALITY, SCENE 3 by Branko Gulin, 2013
pastel pencil on paper (4" x 5")



PARALLEL REALITY, SCENE 4 by Branko Gulin, 2013
pastel pencil on paper (4" x 5")

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

ZOLTÁN KOMOR:

The girl didn't notice that her boyfriend's head had transformed into a big microphone. So when she whispered her secrets into his ear, her words echoed through the city. In her embarrassment she ran out of the house to hide somewhere. And what she saw scared her: couples with microphone heads walked the streets hand in hand. What a sad new world this was, where everybody had to learn how to hold back from saying things. Sounds of slammed doors echoed through the city. Apart from this, there was only silence.

JEFF HARRISON:

One cannot outwit poetry.

JAMES GRABILL:

The voice speaks with insinuation of the lift in small ribs of a feather, in the antique peel around onion core and hour-tone blue of continuum with northern tundra bubbling out methane into current oil-soaked global fertility out of boilerplate chemistry slow to recognize what its family needs, what each of the 7 billion, 8 billion people, needs from umbilical torque and sense of Old English in the collective past or present foreign purchase of African farms or global treaties, the undiscovered fractions in apples ripening into their future, the unbroken egg of vision alive in the whole brain, the raccoon at the door, her hand on the screen, with all the old lurches in the direction of hunger, chirp of a rooster weather vane swiveling on turns and gusts of business-as-usual, the North American nightcrawlers pawing dirt by their holes to the moonlit night, the future generations blended into safety light and the brilliance of galaxy Markarian 231 by steel slams of graveyard punch presses, the Blackjack cards already pasted over with photographs of industrial

waste sites, and more than a hundred towns abandoned to dust in North China, the modern extenuating circumstances here to roost in current dispatches, the human concepts of higher inclinations and wherewithal out of multiple powers of ten with melting dark in a handful.

EDWARD SMALLFIELD:

Between the square and the market, the faded blue wall that appears through the flecks of darker layers of pigment laid over it. A damaged Rothko. Or something perfected. Ironwork on doors and balconies, an unseen clarinet—something said, or almost.

JOHN M. BENNETT:

the chair

roof detamination and ,p
antsless ,behind the dump
ster ,slime and gnats
,the doubted clouds re
gather in your eye's
repellant ,or whine of
heated steel ,writ ,like
yr shirt's ,with's end
condition ,time redacted
,in the outer air where
yr never's skirts ,ch
offing the mildewed b
un replied ,the ghost of
sausage in its pleats
and folds ,your textual
hat in the sky once s
ailed ,falling on your back

Porte sourde! - Fenêtre aveugle!

--Théophile Gautier

TIM SHEA:

Snakes fracturing form the intimate presence of God.
Snakes, fracturing from the intimate presence of God.

JAX NTP:

“inbetween the spaces of overchewed flimflam and brain peonies there is another chance” do not watch shadows, it’s not the proper way to say goodbye. when the journey is not enough—oar starfish until salt bristles goad the furthestest nostril hair. commission another artist to paint your portrait—make it in the woods. refuse to be confined by your own nudity. burn lanterns that only shine on half the heart. tangle your hair and tango your tools. possess the spirits—make them your slaves. utilize each clove of garlic. cry in the fetal position—alone, and then do not forget to masturbate. fissure and collapse. the poet is the person who receives the direct action of a verb. emulsification processes render out salt pockets the way ants abandon their food to carry their dead. when it is easier to start than resume—when restlessness perverses resting into waiting, you must never forget, to shade in the carcasses. when the déjà vu won’t stop vu-ing—go inward and choke—adagio until only the curves of forgotten things rust sharper than sodium orange streetlights. when eyes wan—brimfuls and bushels of avocado bleus—blur to zoom.

JOHN DIGBY:

PROTECT YOUR
“PUSSY CAT”

FORTUNATELY THE SECRET IS OUT

NOTICE

STRAY CATS ARE NO LONGER SO COMMON

Powerful industrialists that cannot be
named are now breeding CATS for their GUTS

CAT GUT can be used in many ways and methods

IT WOULD NOT BE SEEMLY TO LIST ALL THE WAYS
THAT CAT GUTS ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH
REMDIES, PROGRESS OF SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION,
AND EVEN FOR USE IN SPACE TRAVEL

Cat farms are proliferating at such an alarming rate that the world's
stock markets are rising at astonishing rates—even beyond investors'

hopes, wishes and dreams

Such higher yields have never been witnessed before

There are many uses of CAT GUT on the everyday market

Firstly did you know certain brands of condoms are made from CAT
GUT

Secondly some brands of ladies underwear are also made from CAT
GUT to help the figure of even a plump lady appear quite petite

Cheaper than elastic

CAT GUT is now stronger and longer lasting and will not fade or stretch

ATTENTION

Professional pick-pockets are now having gloves made from CAT GUT

for they are so smooth to slip into the pocket of an innocent person

who stands around admiring the scenery

that before he or she is aware of the situation precious handbags, purses
and wallets are stolen

Certain naive people have also been robbed not
only of the above but also the very clothes they wear

BE ALERT

“if you see something say something”
NOTIFY A POLICEMAN IMMEDIATELY

TIMOTHY LIU:

Some books that are shaping up my lyrical ambitions for the new year include: *Mother of God: An Extraordinary Journey into Uncharted Tributaries of the Western Amazon* by Paul Rosolie (forthcoming in March); *Tracks in the Wilderness of Dreaming* by Robert Bosnak; and *One River: Explorations and Discoveries in the Amazon Rain Forest* by Wade Davis. And Jean Valentine reminds us, the word “safari” means “to travel” or “to love.”

CRAIG COTTER:

On 2014

Although “January 1” starting a “new year” feels arbitrary—it’s all one lightning bolt to death, or, more ideally, a positive afterlife where I can one day see The Beatles perform live—some years I’ve used the calendar to make goals/resolutions.

In 2005 I wanted to take the pressure off, so wrote this poem:

New Years Resolution

Next year I resolve
to increase my use of boy whores,
gain 50 pounds,
and create significant credit card debt.

*

In 2012 I cut all sugar/refined carbohydrates from my diet, and lost 85 pounds. In 2013 I made no resolutions, but reintroduced sugar into my diet, and regained 40 pounds.

For 2014 I toyed with these resolutions: no sugar; spend as little money as possible; eat 1200 calories of good/whole food per day with fruit as snacks.

It was good to attend the Rose Bowl game on New Year's Day. Good to see my alma mater Michigan State win. With 70,000 State fans screaming the whole game, I had many flashbacks to being 17 when my friend Mike Morris and I bought season tickets at Spartan Stadium.

So I'm 5 days without sugar in 2014 and feeling better. It's like meth is to several of my twink hook-ups.

Hare Krishna Sports Fans

**CALIBAN
IS
SEARCHING
FOR
ANGELS**

the 'information' and 'communication' fields. The 'information' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'communication' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of communication production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information science' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information studies' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information research' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information practice' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information policy' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information management' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information technology' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information systems' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)