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# CALIBAN



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

## CALIBAN

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**CONTRIBUTORS' ADVICE**



NATHANIEL MACKEY

*Can I get you now? Do I have to hesitate?*

—Reverend Gary Davis, “Hesitation Blues”

---

**Soon-Come Sophic I’s Insofarian Tryst**

—“*mu*” one hundred thirty-sixth part—

Woke up from another night’s dreamt un-  
dress, beginning to be an ancestor it seemed.  
Bodily accord among the amenities dreamt  
of,  
first among them, last as well. Aubade an  
abode I came to call home I wanted to say,  
glimpse no less alluring the more I looked.  
So-  
phia’s leggings’ tight fit once again an e-  
piphany, black legs under a sun dress, beauty’s  
clue du jour, mind as ever only on what lay  
under...  
Next thing I knew we were in a rundown hotel,  
empty aside from us and a few others, a musty  
smell everywhere. Me and Sophia no longer  
long-distance twins but it wasn’t utopic. Crab  
legs  
protruded from the bellhop’s pocket. Gnats fell  
into our drinks at the bar. “I try to see what

I can't see," I'd been saying before bed. Dream's  
dress  
rehearsal answered me it seemed, dreamt un-  
dress though it was. Sorrow night after night  
no end. Stale snacks in our bowls at the bar...  
Latter-day twinship's disrepair, something seen  
in  
my sleep I thought not to've seen, distant kin  
though I'd be, Sophia's bliss. Wisdom's hit it was,  
threadbare drape's dreamt redress, something  
it  
wanted to say about my tryst with Sophia,  
dreamt undress that it was. Something it said or  
wanted to say about our tryst, would-be tryst,  
ho-  
tel heaven anything but it  
said

•

So it was I came to reflect on soul, speak of  
spirit, bodily forfeiture, beginning to be a  
ghost. Leg not what it used to be, little else as  
it'd  
been, metal where bone used to be... The  
caravan had moved on without us I dreamt and  
I dreaded, on without me but with her even  
worse.

They looked back at me moist-eyed, Mr.  
P's the most moist of all, missing me but hav-  
ing to move on. *The Book of So* said as much  
and I slammed it shut, the story outside the  
story

more mine, point beside the point. A mus-  
tiness of grapes almost it smelled of, sophic

legs in black leggings, resinous bouquet, ruin  
we  
called finish, dregs... Drunk. Ravenous. Bar  
snacks not enough. Wrack Tavern, Tavern of  
Ruin, cante jondo's quiver. Arrows broken  
off  
in my chest... *Get over it*, all I could hear  
was *get over it*, what was to be gotten over not  
gotten over, *pecho* as well all I could hear.  
Some-  
thing, in my cups, I kept coming back to, some  
revenant someone, something or someone I was  
had hold of by... Some somewhere lay behind or  
be-  
yond where Sophia was, some surfeit, some  
satisfaction found. As though *enough* meant some-  
thing anymore, musty as it was, moist-eyed as  
my tribe was, romance was in the air even so. I  
too  
teared up. I pounded the heels of my hands  
together, tambourines long since absconded with,  
down the hall I heard the voice of a friend...  
Leg  
half dead, I needed memory, bodily sweetness's  
day redone.... Cruel comfort to've known it  
I reminisced, the voice down the hallway louder,  
the  
voice I heard a horn caroling com-  
plaint

•

I beat back my thirst not to drink carcinogenic  
water, held my breath lest I breathe bad air.

Bodily demise and the earth along with it, the  
earth  
would survive even so. Down the street I'd've  
heard dogs barking had I stepped outside but I  
stayed in. Hotel Heaven's mustiness I'd grown  
to  
like... Simply to see Sophia would be enough,  
no glimpse too quick. Whatever something lay  
beyond or in back I'd see. By that I'd be made  
philo-  
sophic. To that glimpse wisdom would accrue.  
To glimpse was not to get glimpse would teach  
me, tutelage I'd fall back in flames from, light's  
long syllabus mine to reread and review, hers to  
as-  
sert I was yet to crack word one... To glimpse  
was to gloss glimpse would teach me, pure form's  
apprentice was all I was it would say, pure form's  
ap-  
prehension, new platonic adhesion, light's verita-  
ble look-but-not-touch I'd see. Sophia's perfectly  
shaped rear end appeared to me in a dream it would  
make  
me admit, her looking back over her shoulder, not  
to be bothered but egging me on, bemused, remote,  
nonchalant... A glimpse was all I'd get, no matter  
how long I looked. A glimpse would get me there,  
gar-  
ner my admission. In the end I'd hear my own  
self expounding, neither a gnostic nor a gnostic's  
son  
but gnosticating, waiting for a real one to  
come

•

I sat wishing to pose thought, a treatise on bodily  
contour and crevice, the lineaments of light  
so unlikely, enough to make Iamblichus blush. I

sat

wishing to pose thought, a treatise on the arc of  
time, woo so nonchalant, so stolid, shape sheer  
containment, catch. Cold heaven the heaven Hotel

Heav-

en advertised, cold heaven what heaven I saw...

Hair pulled tight, a ponytail or a bun in back, a  
mole on the small of her back in the glimpse

I got. No pillow mint greeted us but no matter. We

were

nowhere if not in love's company, mustiness not-  
withstanding, my friend a country boy pouring  
his heart out, a floating sense of time obtained...

The

country boy's voice rubbed off on mine. I was noth-  
ing if not sincere. Bubbles exited my lips inside  
the fishbowl we were in. Had I looked outside I'd

have

seen the moon light up the sky, seen and heard the  
dogs bark away at some something they saw, sec-  
ondary light's pavane... I sat at the bar stood up

or

I might as well have been, the Sophia who asked  
me to meet her not the Sophia who met me there,  
dreamt innuendo so much other than as it turned

out,

tryst I put my arm around her waist in up in smoke,  
sophic retreat what summit there was... I sat stood  
up no matter she was there. Sophic retreat meant

ret-

icent remit. I parsed my dream, I sat learning  
my lesson. Sophic retreat meant reticent romance,

Hotel Heaven's initiatic chill. There where we  
were,  
wherever it was we were, sophic retreat meant there  
but not there... Evacuated we sat, uninhabited  
somehow, accorded what witness foregone wisdom  
de-  
scried

---

*I'm not a painter, nor a painter's son. I only  
paint waiting for a real one to come. So I  
sang, rubbed off on by the country boy's horn.*

A  
critique of impacted reason, a collapse into  
pure form, a wincing tenderness chimed  
wide and high... In my dream Sophia lay oda-  
lisquelike, backside demurely its unassuming,  
self-  
evident self, absently offered up if at all. I limbo'd  
low enough to look, caught out looking in the  
dream I dreamt, held by the glimpse I got... I's  
Insobar-  
I peeped my peeking, inverse peak summit sense  
re-  
sorted to, under-the-line limbo's  
flip

---

Sophia's not-to-be-believed behind took me  
out and brought me back in. Pure design,  
pure setup I sensed. "What more can I say," I  
woke  
up mumbling, sat at the bar mumbling under  
my breath. It was the Wander Inn, the Blue  
Sufi Lounge, Wrack Tavern, every bar I'd  
ever  
been in. The Long Night Lounge, Jack's,  
the Shard Café. Hotel Heaven had a way  
of seeming that way... On the TV above  
the bottles were bombs, beheadings, boots,  
the  
alliterative news no one could get enough  
of. Siren song it seemed to me too as I too sat  
rivet-  
ed, Hotel Heaven's purgatorial  
prey

ROBERT GREGORY

### **Apparition**

The birds keep lifting up, can't seem to settle though the light is getting old and fragile, no obstacle now.

Now the spider makes her way with a little white sack on her back.

A place where the rivers are said to run with wine, the prophets all cheerful and hilarious even though about to be laid off for not doing their jobs.

The cloud advances into the moonlight like a tired woman into her bath, and then halts and gathers itself, as if reaching center stage, all alone, and about to sing.

Unhelpful devils of forethought were waiting in the foyer as we came in. But we carried on, hoping our cheap clothes wouldn't give us away.

The night air tightens everything as it cools.

A smell of Pabst clung to her dress no matter what she did.

These dreaming syllables can end up included in lies by the sackful, he told the young animals who were gathered in a half circle and looked back at him solemnly. Were they trying not to laugh? Were they saying to themselves what's a frickin' syllable?

A picture in which everything was hidden: creatures asleep beneath the snow (grouse hiding from coyotes) or in holes in a tree on the hogback.

A flower like an ink stain was growing just under the skin of her arm.  
Her greatest something.

The birds like to read their newspapers so slowly it takes them all day but that's not the reason why they speak of the eyes so highly in their songs. So says the eminent scholar of the relationship between birds and newspapers.

Dead—or at least very quiet and well-behaved for once.

A bitter smell from the wet stubble where the lavender had already been harvested.

Outside everything breathing again, the fast rain is over for a minute or two. But intends to come back soon.

Home all of a sudden while everyone goes about their business, the time moves differently, the minutes fall off the clocks and lie around on the dirty floor, without agency or ambition or even the urge to write a memoir, just pointing at random, like poems.

“These are very ill people. They shouldn't be dancing. At least not this kind of dancing.” This told us all we needed to know about the doctor.

Scissors with red plastic handles: their patience, their indifference to the particular task, the goal, the vision. Some say that's the ideal outcome of an education.

The new neighbor a dangerous flake (or possibly *cake?*) said everyone. A dangerous cake? Maybe one of those deep red ones that gets the cardinals all crazy so they attack it, thinking it a strange round male moving in to their territory. Tear it into chunks before they realize their mistake.

The cat appears on the yellow table where there was nothing before but a modest reflection, the blossoms appear on the lilac where green shapes like the heads of snakes had been, moisture clouds the windows—apparition is almost always modest and undramatic.

**In a Time as Sweet as Now**

In a time as sweet as now  
and proud as a dog with two tails  
stepping out to show the secrets:

there's where the river goes  
and there's where the moon has her home and  
keeps her fire going low

So go to Sunday morning now: *take a load off Fanny* comes along  
across the tables and the faces

At the light the man above the wheel of someone else's  
garbage truck. Scratched and rusted.  
Sitting high. Assume he's lonely. Cinderella is, as always,  
when everyone is gone to the dance  
and the clock is ticking and the fire's gone out

We can hear it as well as she does, better  
even, she's so used to it by now

Unlike hers, our enemies are mainly  
systems down below the visible  
on the other side of the beautiful membrane  
the thing that keeps us back  
from lifting up and sailing away,  
stealing ourselves  
floating up into the blue  
following the temporary line of clouds

The fire is the story that it tells itself  
so they both finish at the same time

Now comes the climb up past the graveyard

the one they planted at the top of the bare hill  
overlooking the town to remind themselves  
of something they were always forgetting  
because the day comes out of nowhere  
burns itself away, disappears completely

Every summer they could hear the ritual  
performed by the hidden insects  
in which a melody incorporates from air  
and from silence, from smaller and smaller  
bits of leaf sliced away along the silence  
a thousand, twelve, one...

**Imaginary Entries, Fall-Winter, 19\_\_.**

Shotgun shells weigh down a pocket on one side, clouds boil up and blacken.

\*\*\*

The morning would not get started into any colors, just hung there white.

\*\*\*

“Never mind. Just go on from here anyway.” That’s the invisible note left in the air by each moment (except one).

\*\*\*

Summer is fierce again this year, is caught in its anger, like some people.

\*\*\*

Nothing breaks the silence out here sometimes for days. *We read of a heart preserved in clear spirits of wine, etc.* The crows are at that game again they made the other day.

\*\*\*

It’s the hour when everything hesitates and could reverse.

\*\*\*

It was not easy convincing the mare to go backwards, he told us, and she never did seem to enjoy it.

\*\*\*

The devil's tail was turning gray, he knew but pretended he didn't. That's the only detail I recall of that whole long story.

\*\*\*

They were saying the days are nothing like they were, while the sun went off, the smell of the drying grass came in from the cut-over field. Eventually the stars ran out of things to talk about. Usually around 3 am.

\*\*\*



UNTITLED (JUMP CUTS) by Cindy Rehm, 2016  
collage



UNTITLED (JUMP CUTS) by Cindy Rehm, 2016  
collage

ROBIN HUDECHEK

**The Gods Play Pool with the Stars**

Maybe our lives are as arbitrary  
as candy-colored balls scattering on a  
hard velvet surface, as one life smashes  
into another life: a woman is evicted from her home  
in the dead of winter. Her husband  
who left a finger imprint high on her cheek  
forgot to pay his mortgage, and one life  
smashes into another life aimlessly  
like two suns colliding in a swirl of darkness  
or the woman snatching up the last of her clothing  
in a suitcase with a broken handle,  
children in tow as she stumbles down a sidewalk  
and is swallowed by the long driveway ahead of her  
tar black and timeless as a black hole.

If she looked up she could see them,  
their robes smeared across the indifferent sky  
in pale greens and blues, Northern Lights,  
their eyes glowing grim and remote  
as yet another star's light dims,  
becomes a supernova  
and the door slams behind her.

**The day the lights went out**

the girl pulled the reading lamp cord  
and the moon vanished.

In her backyard, fog thickened,  
lacing wild rose bushes,  
and covering the walkway in clouds.

The only light remaining flickered  
in her pocket like a firefly.

She tugged again at the metal cord  
and tried not to hear the blare of ambulances  
and the shouts of people pointing up at the sky.

When the ground cooled below her,  
she tucked her feet in slippers  
and opened the door.

The light flapped inside her blouse  
frantic as a trapped bee.

When she removed the object from her pocket,  
moon crust flaking in her hands like shaved charcoal,  
she tried not to stare at the now broken craters.

She tried not to stare at the hole in the sky  
where the moon once settled. She tried not to stare  
at parting clouds without their silvery anchor.

Maybe if she broke the reading lamp  
with the swinging metal cord, it would be enough.

Or she could pull that cord once more,  
and let the moon leap back into the sky,

*Hudechek/28*

released from the pull of the earth:  
her house, her bedroom-  
her snug, warm pocket.

## **Wind**

The wind is the willow swaying, ropes dragging on the ground, leaves hot and moist. In the leaves are the faces of lives bent back and curled, shriveled in the sun, faces lined with veins of love of regret of memories. The leaves are veins crisscrossing on the exposed backs of men who had to sing who had to sing who had to bend to hoe to sing just to lay their heads on pillows at night while they listened to the dead leaves rustling: lost families, a boat swaying in a putrid green ocean devoid of shade of land of light when all they can do is smell its salty breath in the air, in their cot below the hold. The wind is the willow swaying. Let me chop down each vine, and chop the wood fine, scatter it to the wind, the seagulls and pieces of memory taken offshore to a distant land. Memories I long to forget, yet always return to.

**A bird sings**

and swallows a leaf, and  
its feathers spread green and wide  
as a tree. A bird sings  
and rain drops from the sky in leaves  
that crinkle like the smiles  
in old men's faces, crisp and taut  
before they scatter under a running toddler's boots.

A bird sings and a branch snaps  
red upon the face of its chest

A bird sings and the snow comes  
light and aimless as feathers

as the sun cools and feathers  
gather in the edges of window panes

A bird sings and the toddler  
pulls off his mitten to pick up a feather

and the swift and relentless pounding  
of the tiny bird heart throbs

in the feathery lashes of snow  
clumped in the edges of the window pane.

## FRANK RUBINO

### **Doubt**

Doubt preens. She offers her boot. She has lived  
in this apartment, eaten  
this roast beef sandwich from the corner  
So many roast beef sandwiches  
And Frank in the store has asked for her  
and she remains upstairs  
and preens. In a hollow  
upstate in the woods a still  
pond would be ruined by a touch  
The wild places call out to me  
the pure places. My tree drawings  
are like stone tentacles,  
my fires are black energy.

Your inner pond is sawtooth,  
though you smooth your hair, smooth your skirt  
the waters are disturbed  
If one could make a scientific diagram  
or represent in sandwich layers  
the inner turbulence and those smooth calms

the roast beef, the lettuce, and the mayo

People routinely cheer defiance

I drew black space with galaxies,  
the void was black crayon  
Though it was a baby's scribble, I lay back  
impressed. *This is immensity.*

I made a good space drawing  
It pictured my empty brain  
Moralists who make chains of blame  
are such idiots. Floods sweep up lives,  
the waters advance with the years, the people can do little  
to contain them.

I lay back and drank from a glass of milk  
The milk glopped out, soaking my shirt  
Well, see there? Another hypothesis disproven:  
the glass has no absolute power to contain.  
Gravity will pull out its contents when the vessel  
is inverted. In a hollow  
upstate in the woods a still  
pond would be ruined by a touch.  
If you doubt this, drink.

The animals see themselves approach  
They bow their heads, they open their jaws

## Dolls' House

My hand comes through the door  
Inevitably falling pieces  
I like that they say I'm relentless,

the people inside: one is a tall  
mountain to push, one  
a deep river to drink.  
What about that woman  
who is a wall  
that needs a stone?

I don't stop and ask  
how to do something.  
I start walking  
in the right direction

You're a dog  
tied to the back of a moving cart.  
It's better to think life's that way  
said the Stoics  
centuries before modern speed.

People *are* the speed of life, the hard questions:

How many Bowie lyrics remembered  
How much I wash  
How many sour patch kids eaten  
Where on the animal to vegetable spectrum  
Amount of bad thoughts put down  
Number of charger cords lost

*Rubino/34*

Scratches on lens

Knots in shoelace

Holes in sweater

Variety of flowers growing in my mind?

## **Fairy-Tale Minds**

Two mutants survived a plane crash  
and built from the wreckage a cabin  
on the wild mountaintop  
They gathered data. Phones  
from the victims, instructions on cooking  
from the plane's galley  
They had to mind-project the food  
They made their own cabin  
by welding fuselage pieces together  
with their laser-eyes

The first two years  
they recovered all the photos,  
who died in the crash  
Children with little shoes  
Young people with a thousand  
selfies. Elders who could barely afford  
the flight. Their old friends  
embarrassed in restaurants,  
last birthday parties, these pictures they found,  
and they discussed what they dreamed in their seats  
the passengers flying where they were flying  
while the space between airplane and Earth  
filled up with deadly forces:  
velocity, friction, gravity

They were supposed to stay dormant  
super beings in a suitcase  
but the power of the crash  
galvanized them. They talked night after night

Neo-Platonists used fossils  
to prove the Great Flood  
Trilobites and coelacanths on the mountains

because according to biblical logic  
the peaks must have been *submerged in the Deluge*

Early archaeologists concocted  
massive death assemblages to prove the Bible  
Death's junk cast in plaster  
famous fossils depicted in woodcuts  
these illustrated marvels and curios  
traveling academia for years, influencing  
fairy-tale minds

They said you would come to earth  
to find the all the plane crashes  
The square footage  
of the crash site is tiny compared to  
the square footage  
of the earth, but.

The old lady's house where she sold onions  
her stairs cluttered with jars  
repurposed for fall's marmalade  
The sheep tracks  
across the forested mountain  
One of them drew a sketch.  
He sat on a high meadow  
where no sheep nor human had been  
for centuries. They once ate  
Spanish clementines,  
they once smelled sheep in the turf

**Barbara Dances**

Most beautiful when hearing  
your beloved music, then your smile hides  
secrets, curving like a rope bridge  
across my jungle

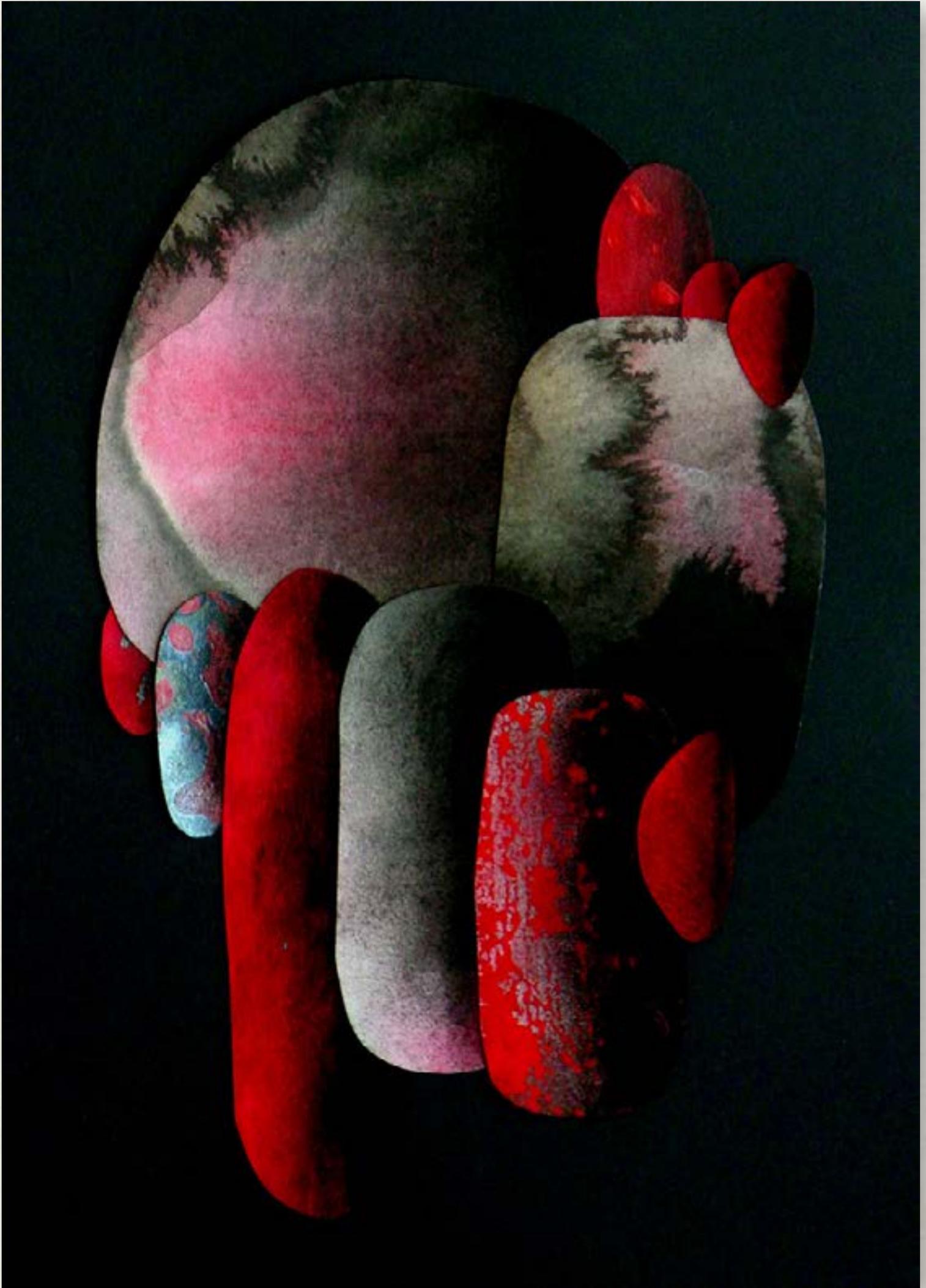
Recalling laughs  
Primate comedy  
The bipeds so street jive

I have let my eyes rest  
on the same light switch  
as you.

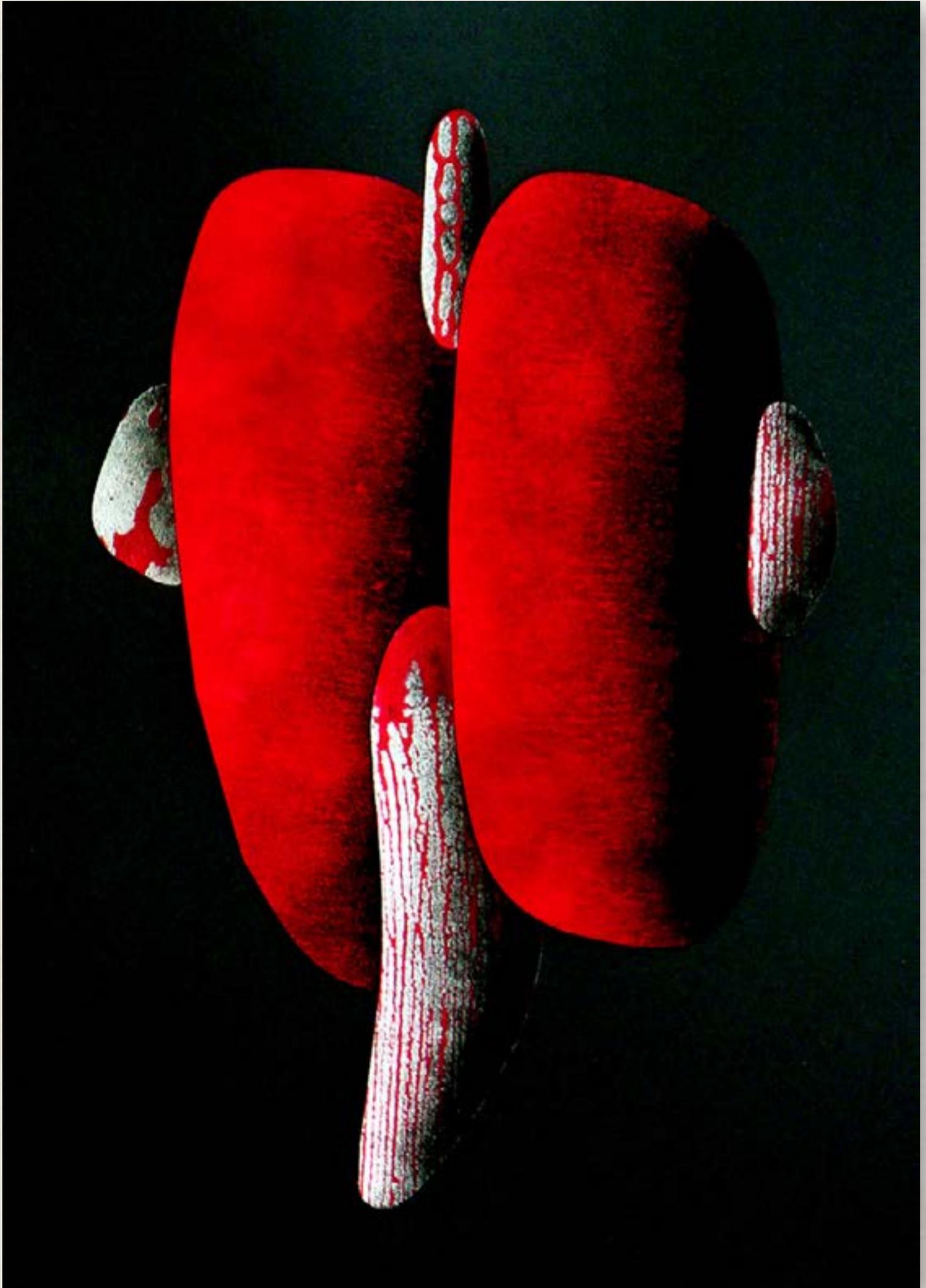
It stays off, no gummy fruits  
or happy cola come through  
the chute. The happy cola

is tangy and gives me a wet mouth  
Always surprised when betrayed  
by ideas and thoughts unconnected

to the root  
to the sound



AFTER MADRID #3 (RED) by Jim Zver, 2014  
paper, acrylic, India ink, charcoal (11 1/2" x 9 1/2")



AFTER MADRID #4 (RED) by Jim Zver, 2014  
paper, acrylic, charcoal (11 1/4" x 7 3/4")

## STEPHANIE DICKINSON

### **inn county, ia**

*Big-Headed Anna Tries to Recall  
The Girl who Birthed Her*

#### **1**

1900. They said I half killed the girl birthing me, my big head wedged sideways. Some swore she was a milkmaid who let a gentleman-farmer have his way; others claimed it was a bull that seeded her. Whichever, they roped my feet and freed her of me. What I saw for the first time they said was a blue sun shining in a black sky.

I was told the buckets she lugged into the barn were meek, and the milking stool she settled on, ached under her weight. Her small-boned boy-body had ripened, her belly a bulging squash entangled in vines and white blossoms, her bare feet crumbed with straw and soil, only her legs—thin and straight—belonged to the girl of before. The thing stirring inside her she tried to hide by wearing tightly-tied aprons. Like a sleeve of farmer's cheese breathing as if it had lungs, twins. Maybe the cow's udders had suffered too much the press of thumbs, the pull and squeeze of fingers. Milk stolen. The cow kicked her in the stomach pitching her over. The girl's wide-spaced brown eyes could taste the buttermilk churning from the bucket, the cream rising to be skimmed. Her womb smoldered like creek ice on fire.

A hired man mucking out the stalls found her. He wiped the curdy blood from her legs, and when the pain came he figured she counted the mosquito bites around his nose, watched the scabs on his forehead take the shape of monarchs and fly away. Too young to be a mother, her body tore. They said she could not look at me and breathe, instead she wept and tears clung like warm icicles to her lashes. She was sorry—she scratched those words on a board and left them with me in the hay loft. I say there are birds that eat their own young, swallowing the head first, others devour their own eggs. It was still the day of blue sun. The

day of civets and badgers, the sloughs disappearing, the screech owl let loose.

## 2

1900. Left behind in the barn, straw slivering my newborn back, I saw high all around, the buckeye-rain falling through holes, the pour of stars, and in my mouth the taste of dew-stained grass, the pigeons burbling. Birth blood still clinging to me, I cried for days. The fields heard but could not get up from their furrows to come. The milkers heard and waited for me to stop. *Bastard baby with a calf's head best not live. The mother left the stinking thing.* I would not stop crying, strong as I was, and then a passing farm hand climbed into the loft.

In his acre they did not let sheep thirst or rabbits strangle in their traps. In his acre they ate a thresher's dinner after being emptied by Sunday sermon. They sang old ballads if and when they had to kill. In his acre the quivery voice of the dove announced blue dawn. *Lilies we do not pull from the ditch throat, pork bones we suck, chicken bones we spit, and mold we do not welcome between our toes.* In his acre they did not hear babies cry and turn away until they died. In his arms I'm lifted, I'm fed from the udder. I toddle in the stanchions and the warm one does not step on me; she cleans me with her sandpaper tongue. Cow mother. Teeth, big white buttons. Her smile is bigger. Hair knots.

Winters I stay close to the mother, sleep in her caverns. I learn to warm my hands with her breath. Like her I walk on all fours. My mother has many stomachs and in summer she chews and chews before belching a humid grass stew and then swallowing it again. Her hooves are quarry stones and her gaze patient. In my third winter the milkers see how fast my legs, how quiet my mouth. When I turn four I prove useful. I am quick with the milkmaids and fetch for them. Let out of the barn, I am quicker with feeding chickens and toting trough water. I learn words by standing still and listening. No one wanted this, whoever I am. Not the calf-headed animal-girl, not the big-headed girl-person who hid outside of the one-room school and scratched her alphabet into the dirt with her toe.

**storyville, new orleans**

*Big-Headed Anna Mops*

*Lulu White's Saloon*

Year of our lord. 1916. I walk south, hitching rides in wagons. I find work. The floor bubbles with blue chandelier light. Rippling over the velveteen couch, tunes not just the bleak music of rain against the window. The man with gold-flecked eyes takes the mop from my hands, presses himself against me until I feel the room shiver. You're nothing I'd go to jail for, he says, you're a shack with a rooting pig eating crabapples, you're the bad side of town with its tin roofs and sweaty porches, you're the plate where worms go crawling on the gristle. The magnolia petals, these showy flowers like perfumed lip skin, that's someone else.

Chicory rain falls, hot pinging rain. Mists of veiled rain. Bedsheets of rain. Maybe it rains inside me. Mold shimmies from the air. Upstairs, daylight is stranded in the canopy beds.

**Grand Isle, LA***Big Headed Anna and  
the Sticking Knife*

1916 I am the big-headed girl raised in the milk barn, beaten too often. I learn how to drift, how to pick up the jobs no one wants. I work my way south to the slaughter houses, the tanneries. *This is the sticking knife*, the square-shouldered foreman says, taking up the glistening blade. The black hairs of his beard stiffen when he frowns at my big-head covered by a blue cap and yet his gaze lingers on my lips. His voice too is a thin narrow dagger. His tongue has only half its face. The steel music must not bend, and the cutting edge stays straight to its tapering point. *Now roll up your sleeves, since it's the stabbing and spearing you'll do. Go ahead.* We need many table birds for the holiday's roast turkey with giblets and stuffing.

He tells me to tie a rag around my face, plating my nose in cloth like a hooligan, and then we step lightly into the turkey house. They are brought here from their pens, from their free wanderings through trees and brushes. Tens upon tens of them. Welcome to the shed of the iridescent stinking god. The turkeys toddle about, enormous beings with bumpy red carbuncles. So many, they bunch together like one breathing being of bronze feathers and wattles. Agitated, restless. *That one used to follow me at feeding times*, the plucking boy says, whose long black braids are ravens. *He liked me to scratch the top of his head with a stick.* Now the great feathered beauty hangs far from the wall in a chain so his wings can flap as he tries to escape. The bird's wattle is a blushing cheek, a girl in a red slip whirling around and around a fire. *I will teach you the proper piercing of the turkey brain*, the foreman instructs, yet I hear the rafters talking. *Hold the brain cavity of the turkey between forefinger and thumb. Press hard on the upper and lower beak. There's the blood cup and the pinning knife.* I look up at the sun through roof holes. *Big Head, are you listening?* His jowls jiggle when he points, figuring I'll learn to judge the spurt of blood, take its measure soon enough. *Big-Head, what are you waiting for?* One motion, aim for the severing of the arteries. Soon I'll be dancing with flames in my own dress of shining red. My left hand grasps the bird, the wings beat like two hearts, flapping. *Oh, friend, your panic matches mine.* The foreman and

plucking boy watch. I picture my great-aunt swinging her cane and thrashing me until her arm falls asleep. I want to wallop her back. I lift my arm, I stab. Blood flies, then flows into the cup and fills.

After the killing the turkey house stands still, the hens and turkeylings look on, having seen a storm. A blossoming of arterial blood, a trough of the warm red water. I drop the knife, knowing all its fright, the lives it's ended. I take the dead bird in my arms, half-singing. I love the gobbler for his strutting and prancing, his fanning tail as if a hundred strings of a Spanish guitar are being pulled, his wattle flagging red to blue. I love the turkey for his sweet tasting meat. For his snood, the strange world of his mating harem, the fleshy red accoutrement scuttling from forehead over beak, and the bumpy red wattle dangling below. The female hens appear. There is the sound of gobbling, higher now, sorrowful, almost a keen. Smell of apples and rust. The foreman has returned and I lay the turkey in his arms. *Good work*, he tells me. The bird's plumage, his bronze raiment so aglow with blues and purples and violets have wilted, gone dull as if a lamp has been smashed. Chestnut eyes blown out. I do my good work twenty more times this day.

**Algiers, west bank of Mississippi***Big Headed Anna Teaches the  
Shucker Sass How to Read*

1919. “You’re prettier than the prettiest cloud, aren’t you?” I tell the thirteen-year-old Sass, an oyster shucker like me, who smacks her rosebud mouth because she wants to eat the clouds. I open the primer and point to the boy with a cloud over his head and a goose at his feet. Mother Goose. The boy, the goose and cloud are O words. Her favorites. You can disappear through an O, put on silk hose and grand clothes. “How do you spell my name?” Sass asks, pointing. Her fingers are crisscrossed with shell cuts. She already knows Boy and Goose. Bending over the cobblestones, she practices making vowels with a blackened stick. “O’s,” she says, puffing up from pride. “And U’s.” Mother Goose lugs her coin purse to church. She copies rows of each on stones. I wish we could grasp chalk and stretch whole sentences over a blackboard, I wish we could press a pencil’s soft lead onto paper, then cradle each newborn word between our fingers. *I made this*. The vowels take time to unglue themselves from her tongue and roll through the sultriness. The quiet gets quieter.

“Sass! Big-Head! Where’d you two lazy no-goods get to? Sass, Big-Head, you hear?” The boss lady comes from the eatery to fetch us. You can smell her from a distance. Gardenia sweat. Like nothing in the world has happened to her. Not the influenza. Not the sickness of the tulip tree, coughing and shivering and drowning. Her eyes are calla lilies that bloom. Her hair fistfuls of fat coppery curls. Women get quiet when she walks by. Maybe they’re wishing they didn’t have to witness the gifts that God heaped on one. Not pieces of petals but the whole tree. “What are you doing with my best shucking gal, Big-headed Anna? You’re both supposed to be at your buckets. I have oysters need seeing to.” My fingers are trembling, even if my voice stays steady. “Yes, ma’am,” I say. “Yes, ma’am,” Sass echoes.

Fishing for bayou gar with the boss man and there beside the flatboat the six-foot-long gar, his snaky, long-beaked body floating in weed water. “Watch him,” the boss man told Sass, his paddle of a hand

grabbing at her leg. “All the pig frogs and blue crab he’s got sunning on him. He’ll wait until he’s got enough for dinner.” Bam. The boss man speared him. The garfish dove and the water roiled with bits of crab leg. Old jowls wasn’t full yet, he dragged the gar on a hook baited with shrimp to shore and split him in half with an axe. Sass and me wanted to cry out, to make it all stop. The gar knew all the way to shore he was finished.

**Bayou LaFitte, LA**

*Big Headed Anna is Courted*

*by the Crayfish Farmer, Esau Bone*

1921 The crayfish farmer, six-foot-three and always the tallest, the little kids made him feel huge and stupid and being deaf in his left ear—ashamed. I sit close to Esau Bone with the lamp lit so he can watch my mouth make sounds. My lips just might be my nicest feature. He comes to exhibit the different parts of a crayfish, showing me his drawings of the red and blue segments, the tiny pincers and antennae, the brown pinpoint of eyes on moveable stalks. Little quivering lives.

I corner Esau and stare, trapping his face in my gaze, every centimeter of his cheeks, nose, how his skin intensifies and dims depending. His face is darker than his earlobes, neck lighter than his hands. I take my time eye-caressing him like he's a newborn. Like he's a toadstool beginning to take on swamp shades. His half-smile goosebumps my arms, as if he kiss-licked my shoulder and cheek. More drawings of unpretty things that have become beautiful. Cypress stumps, woody cones bunching up. Angel of Death's pure white puffballs. We've crossed back into the bayou, clusters of black mildew flowers, buttercups and fuzzy tear-drop vines creeping above our heads. Tangled roots and webs of green blue trapeze the treetops. I bite something soft back inside me when our hands brush.

TIM KAHL

### **A Map of the Splendid**

The endless idealism of a cliff is a major surprise. It asks the paradise seeker to reflect on a perfect elsewhere. So the believer passes into the feast of light. Everything is lit with a kind of asking, the interiors invented in the style of rapid questions. Suddenly, the sun ejects a plasma cloud to make everything electrical stop dead. The Law and Order of the Cosmos applies only to the end of human history when fewer heroes are chosen among the large groups of visitors, when the aristocrats chase wild beasts to stay fit for war. The climate is mild and right for studying a map of the splendid. The Tree of Knowledge is no longer exotic. The water has changed from salt to fresh.

## **The Central Memorial**

Float along in The Central Memorial where photos teach the tongue to taste history before it happens. The mountains buzz in their civilian clothes. The granite moonscape flowers into the shape of a fertility drug. Are we not masters of the spoiled fight without dutiful training in the standards of stakeholder meetings? Oh slippery slope! For the second year in a row the cartels of winter magic will be emboldened to test where the whites of eyes belong in the delicate balance. This place is even greater than loud and clear. An intimate intelligence puts its boots on the ground. A feast of agreement grows.

RAY GONZALEZ

**Geronimo's Canyons**

*Geronimo—Goyaale: "the one who yawns"*

1

*1851*

The 400 Mexican soldiers rode out of the canyon into the sun, their horses trampling Apache women and children as they ran, killing Geronimo's wife, mother, and his three children, the Chiricahua vowing hatred for all Mexicans from that day on, killing dozens over the years and escaping every time. That day, the 22 year old warrior was caught by surprise as his men traded in town, the Mexicans wiping out the camp, Geronimo and his warriors escaping to the river where the light over the water grew into flames he could never put out.

2

Geronimo springs through the rocks into the dark and narrow canyon, the Mexican soldiers spellbound as they spot him darting straight up the walls with no footholds,

the Apache ascending from precipice  
to cliff as if lifted by the sun, turning  
to shoot one soldier off his horse,  
Geronimo carrying a rattlesnake  
in his mouth as he vanishes,  
the Mexicans below whispering,  
then louder, "San Jeronimo!"

3

The calling of his name rises months  
later after he ambushes five Mexicans  
with a knife, killing four as one of his  
men helps him with a fifth, surviving  
soldiers running for their lives and  
shouting, "San Jeronimo! San Jeronimo!"  
because he keeps flying into the rocks,  
the young Chief carrying a thick Gila  
Monster reptile in his mouth.

4

*1873 Casa Grandes Massacre*

Geronimo kneels around the camp  
fire, eleven warriors with him,  
bloody and tired, breathing hard  
after the close escape, another  
band of them dead half a mile away,  
that group tricked with mescal  
the Mexicans gave them after  
the false peace treaty, drunk

Apaches killed by the dozens,  
Geronimo's men obeying him  
and refusing the bottles of boiling  
liquid, the worms alive inside  
the flasks, a mountain lion trapped

and killed inside the largest bottle  
his men drop before they escape

the fusillade, the bullets tearing  
off the rocks, a cave nearby  
pulling Geronimo in, a hot desert  
wind shrieking out of nowhere  
as warriors follow him in, the cave  
trapping them with no way out,  
Mexican soldiers waiting outside,

The great Chief appearing high  
above them, out of nowhere,  
holding large scorpions, one  
in each open palm, the crevice  
swallowing his eleven men,  
the narrow cut in the mountain  
still named Geronimo's Cave  
and no one can find it because  
they claim it is right there.

5

*1886, Skeleton Canyon, Arizona*

After decades of fighting Mexican  
and American soldiers, Geronimo  
surrenders to the U.S. Cavalry,  
thousands of Apache dead and  
dancing in the rocks, cutting  
themselves with thorns from  
barrel cactus, weaving formations  
in the Arizona desert to count a  
century of genocide, the saguaros

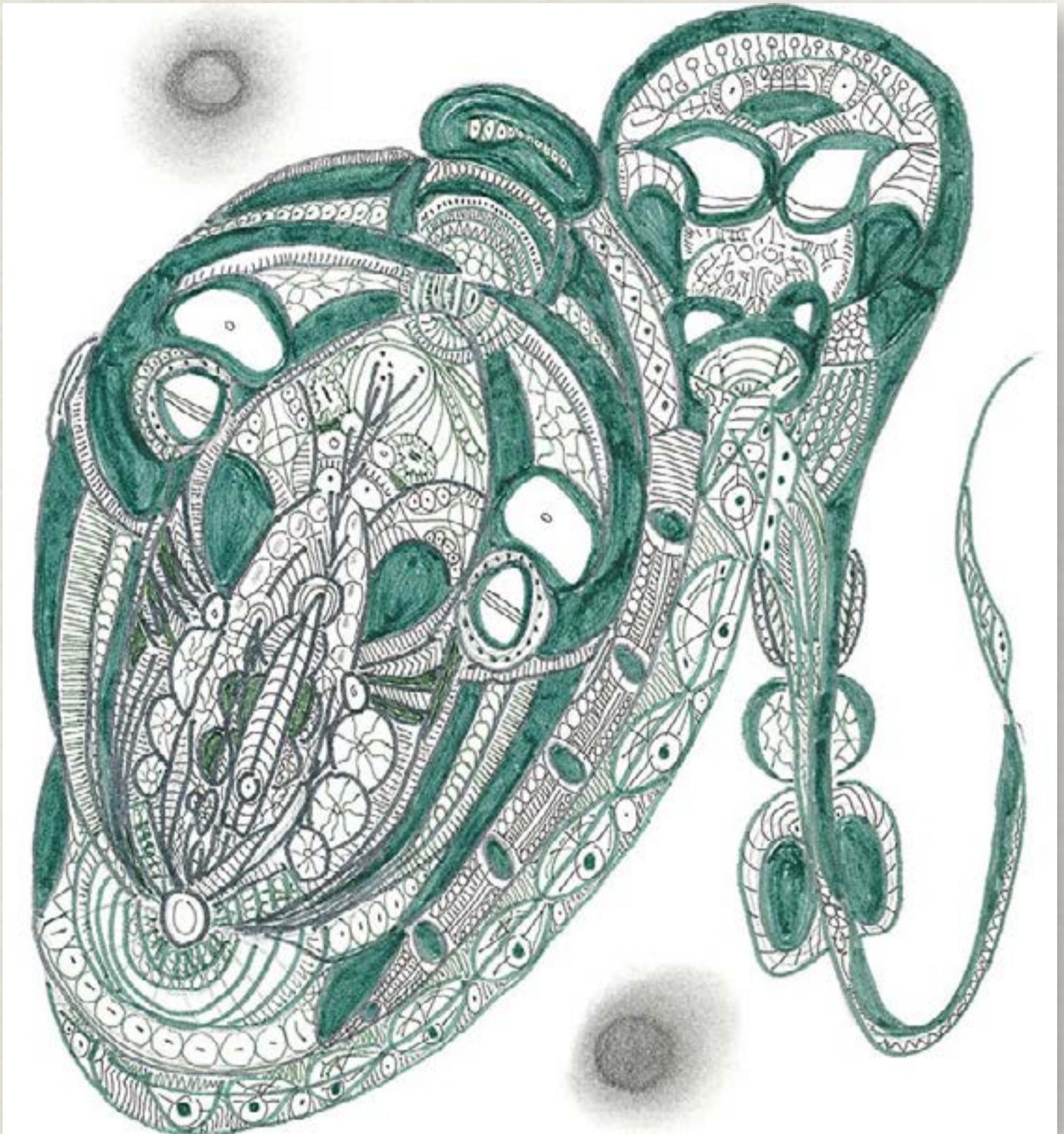
streaming great white owls out  
of their thick and tall arms,

the forest of thorns pouring owls  
until the moment Geronimo's  
hands are tied by a US. soldier,  
the few survivors led away,  
the Apache a prisoner for 23 years  
of confinement, his last deathbed  
words in 1909 Fort Sill, Oklahoma—  
“I never should have surrendered.  
I should have fought as the last man.”

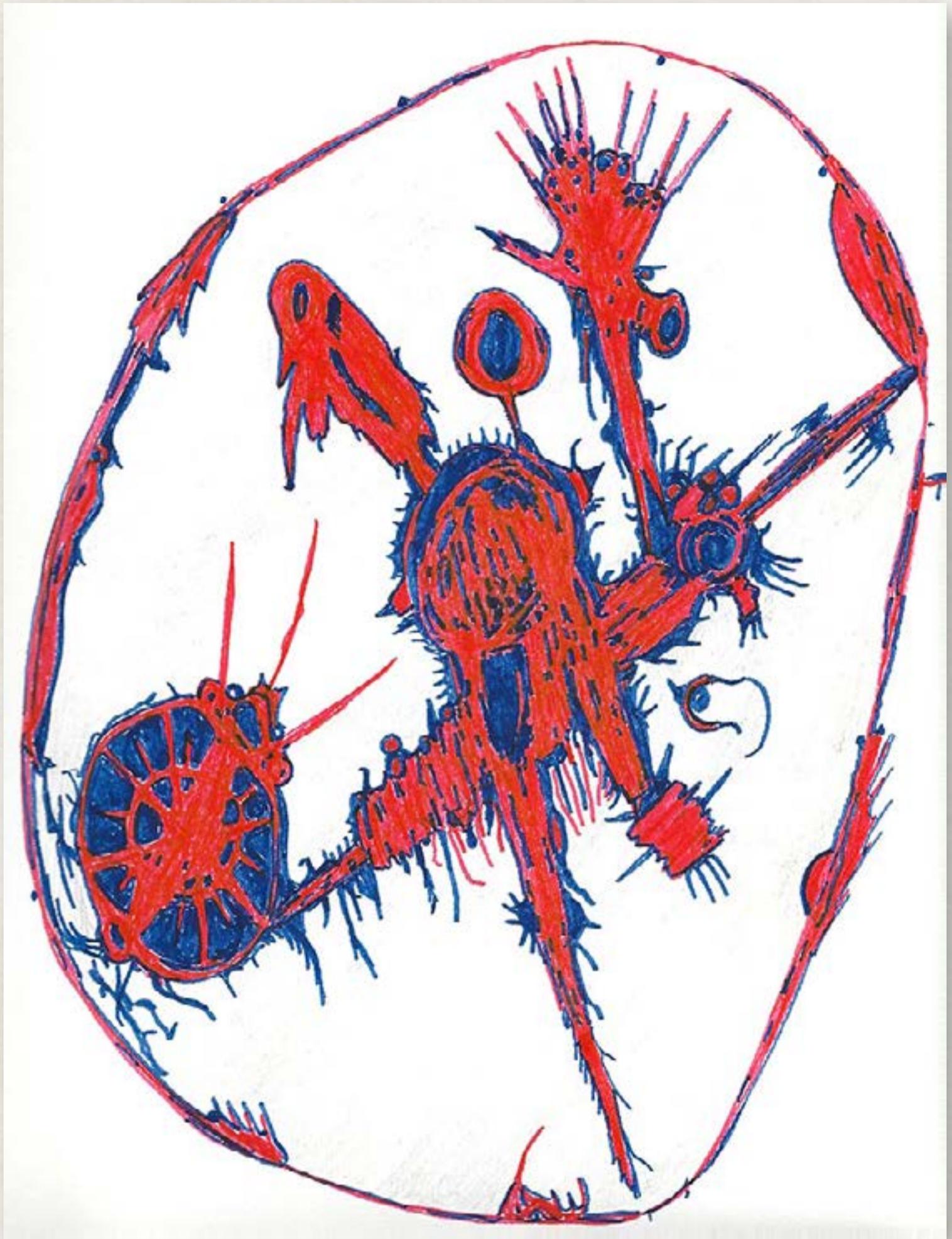
6

*1918, His Stolen Skull*

Members of Yale's Skull and Bones  
secret society desecrated Geronimo's  
grave at Fort Sill, Prescott Bush one  
of the robbers, a relative of two U.S.  
Presidents taking the skull when he  
was in the Army, some bones,  
and Geronimo's silver bridle.  
The theft is in the society's 1918 ledger,  
though it is denied to this day,  
Geronimo flying across the canyons,  
boulders falling on rattlesnake circles  
below, reptiles flying into the fire,  
the one who yawns gripping his  
forehead in his hands, a lone cry  
echoing across one canyon as he takes  
his knife and slices a saguaro to wash  
himself and paint his hands on  
the rocks in blood.



THE FATHER'S SNAKE by Ray Gonzalez, 2015  
ink on paper



INVENTION OF THE WHEEL by Ray Gonzalez, 2015  
ink on paper



SWEPT CITY by Ray Gonzalez, 2015  
ink on paper

BILL MOHR

**The Transversal**

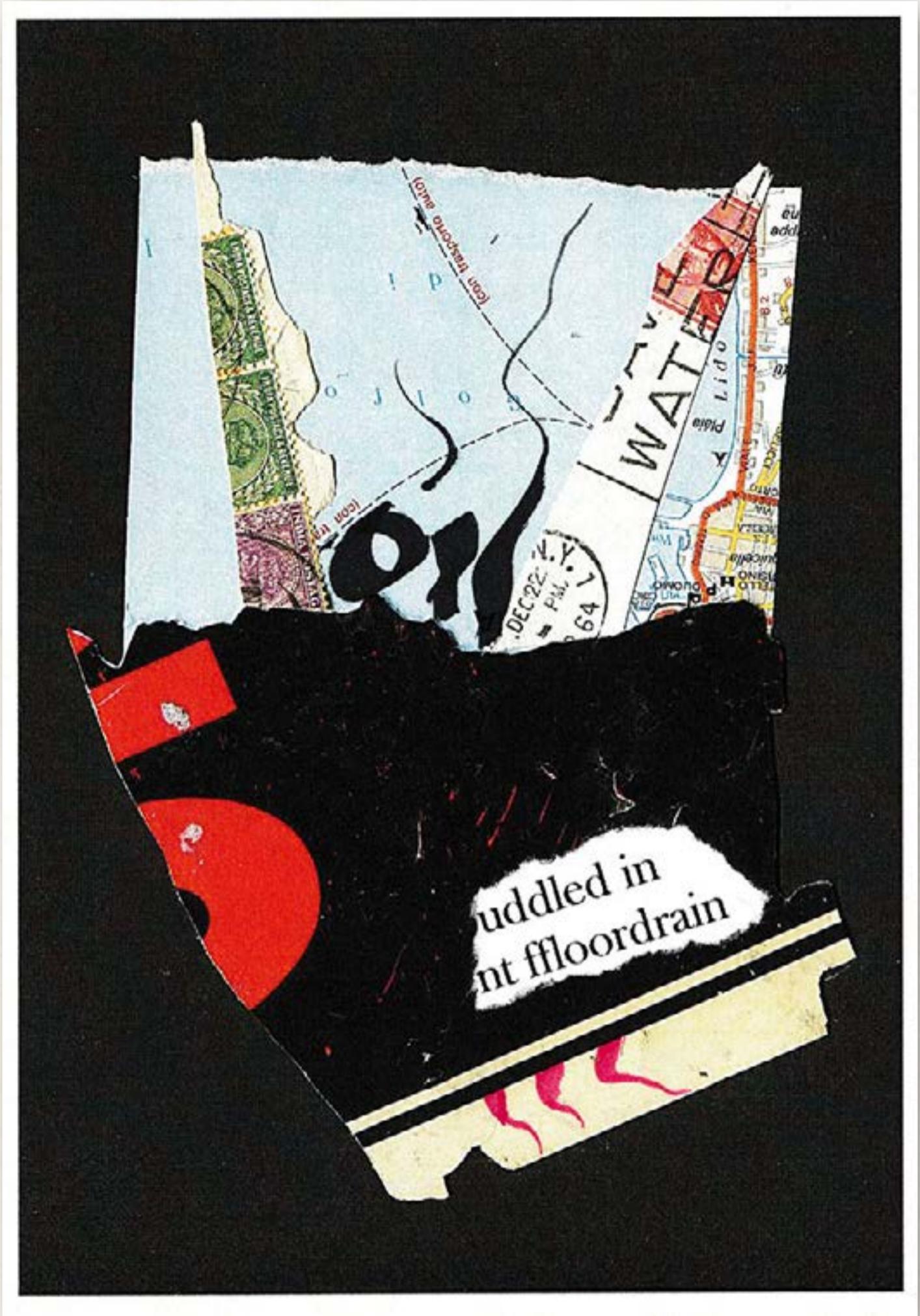
In a crouch resentful of the weight that bends,  
you edge forward into a small, dark room,  
an oval crossed in daylight so often it blurs,  
from the door to a sideways corner;  
in jutting, you want to learn how well  
you know this room, its chairs and tables  
as ordinary obstacles of a miniature labyrinth,  
and you pause like a mosquito  
uncertain of the tremulous vapor of blood  
about to be inhaled, or like a sick man  
hunching in a sauna that glows  
with clotted whorls of steam,  
and then you stretch out  
and dance in the tumult of rapture  
as a reprimand of pure negation.  
Trusting the darkneses now, you stop  
twirling and soothe the room  
within its dome of solemn ecstasy.  
Now, and only now, reach down:  
a cello untouched for years  
needs the fantasy of a distant caress  
brought near enough to quiver  
in disenchantment, such is the perfect tuning  
of its solitude, its ache to be alone with you.



UNTITLED by John M. Bennett and Thomas Cassidy  
(Musicmaster)



UNTITLED by John M. Bennett and Thomas Cassidy  
(Musicmaster)



UNTITLED by John M. Bennett and Thomas Cassidy  
(Musicmaster)



UNTITLED by John M. Bennett and Thomas Cassidy  
(Musicmaster)

RAYMOND FARR

**We Are Digging a Hole Just Big Enough?**

Identical broken ankles in bloom!  
& there are bones poking thru sunlight—

White panties shaking beside the graveyard pond  
Out here, fences roll like silent films off in the distance

& you & I are driving the holy souls of some golf balls  
Into a gale in Wyoming.

We have no recollection—  
Vague or otherwise—of ever reading Tender Buttons

& the TV is blaring in another room & we've secretly  
Hated Tender Buttons from the beginning

& the way this makes us feel  
Is a nuclear war—the farther the golf balls fly

The stranger we become—our voices going up  
Quizzically at the end of a sentence—

We are digging a hole just big enough?  
Death is a small face powdered cosmetically

**Small Talk Emerald City**

The imperative is this—take one ice-cold moment  
To unravel Susan existentially!

I reach out  
My hand of splintered wood & I feel Susan shiver

& I'm self-diagnosing & the last person to get laid in this room tonight  
Is in the quiet parlor downloading *Play Misty for Me!*

Susan approaches the near chair like a puppy on soft paws  
& I'm walking downtown & I'm hailing

A taxi in this small talk Emerald City! It's like outsider art outside  
a gym—  
A ghost road in the polemic of a dark wood!

& there are clumps of burnt toast in Susan's hair this morning  
& her day's unraveling at the speed of one eye opening

& I can barely see winter—& Susan divergent  
& Susan primordial—& all the nihilism of 40 feral cats

With dried up lakes for eyes

& Susan says

No matter! We take the moon with us one step at a time!

## IVAN ARGÜELLES

### **consulting the delphic oracle a rush of wind then silence**

there are poems like waterfalls  
and many people talking about the sex  
they've had the jewelry worn on such nights  
hours spent face down in the grass communicating  
with the nether world the galleries of white ants  
of girls all with Persephone's face sweating  
night escapes into the south where the dead go  
errant and useless in their unilluminated skin  
shooting stars and waiting rooms filled  
with paper wads torn calendar sheets  
people crying about the ones they've lost  
cigarettes inscribed mysteriously  
the forgotten the countless and the many  
who have seen and not seen other planets  
summers of iridescent unending nights  
the poems like cascades in Amazonas  
spilling out of sleep and ambulances  
who will be taken away face down  
in the garden soil conversing with worms  
longing for wings for flight and air  
who have spoken to windows and diamonds  
and held radios to their ears to hear  
the oracle using Apollo's careless tiny voice  
wars will abate ! storms consume the world !  
sit not home but distribute among the leaves  
the envelopes of rain and the many uncounted  
people inside the rain who cannot remember why !  
the time to waste has come and gone

waters have reached the heights of earth's eight peaks  
there are yards and legions and three wastelands  
and seven rivers running every which way  
and waist deep in the middle of one of them  
a god with rust for a mind puzzles over the Sign  
evacuations have been reported in Argos  
volcanic activity in Trinacria has spoiled the crops  
multilateral agreements between the seas !  
how many more misunderstandings and miscomprehension  
and who can say why the library is filled with offal  
and people still talking about the sex they've had  
and streets suddenly open to twilight lamps  
lumbering carts drawn by oxen half-dead  
burdens of life carried up to the Hill  
and Insects ! running up and down Persephone's  
white white limbs and the perspiration  
yearning for the oval aperture of sky  
and the endings attached to honey  
men mortals in contests of agony  
using alphabets as instruments of warfare  
cunning small diseases eating up the spine  
is it a wonder ? the girl who claimed she was Athene  
standing by the riverbank one evening  
when she took off her hair  
the mountains came down from the heavens  
great weeping was in the brush and trees

**america the beautiful**

look how many are out there  
with their guns in braids  
wreaths of smoking roses  
garlands of mother's dying breath  
eyes that capsize planets  
mouths of bitter silence  
growing insane nights like blooms  
bursting into bloody wells  
nowhere found on any moon

last seen wearing lapels  
penciled ear-rings wobbly  
heart fobs juxtaposed with  
ornamental pistol-shoots  
drugs the size of ink  
twice a day or more  
just to keep the going strong  
veins and arteries Boom !  
maps of early x-ray child  
brains in mufti tear-ducts  
roaming grassy malls  
fast food iodine shifting  
like black light across a thought  
having sex with dynamite  
curled spit and lapis lazuli  
lipstick smeared across  
a wall scattered with teeth  
either shoe on wrong  
leaving no plumbing behind  
marks of the beast browed  
near to fainting every time  
the photo enlarges saliva  
to get at the root canal

and weed the black plot  
of its elevator memory

foreseen in the 2nd amendment  
the right to bear arms  
brings us to the corner pharmacy  
and the caroming billiard games  
the weaponry stalks deadly antlers  
brings down a drone or two sizes up  
the next president as a living coffin  
how many swipes into broad air  
to bring oxygen to its knees  
swish wipe the tears from the leaves  
knock 'em breathing for more gas  
peninsulas of irregular godhead  
that cruise sand into destruct  
sleep as a baby on the dance floor  
sing lonely the absent blood  
write with floors of last thought  
seizing the bar for all its drinks  
with alcohol for a mirror  
history becomes littered with junk  
empty ammo shells police brides  
enough spleen to break a hive  
a mind doing solitary for life  
the rest is sirens in the night  
a prayer in shivered mercury  
a long really long last look  
back to where never was

JAMES GRABILL

**Irreversible Golden Oats**

Hasn't this been where gravitas concocts  
intricate means to apprehended ends  
embraced on behalf of the younger hungers  
in common, quickening subsensory and raw,  
considering how syncopated time's burned dirty  
and sweet, embedded and re-vulcanized  
quicker than a hurry or some fully tanked  
post-European settlement as if by design  
in the neocortical eyes,

when what's wailing articulates  
at high altitudes from the old '50s trumpet atheists  
transcendent, and as eyeball Emerson as it gets,  
powdering your convergences with soundness  
where socioethical Mahayana Zen Catholics  
and tie-necked constitutional card players sit  
with foundation-supported street-smart sleepers  
or wakers, wicker shirt phenomenologists upstreet  
from mud and junk construction engineers  
like your nuthatches or beavers or smack-middle  
sumacs detected out at the foot of vastness,

around any of our modest homesteads  
root-reaching under a little further star claw  
subatomic selection, where harvested stretches  
add up at depths of consumer subtractions  
steady as a moray eel's face at the sea floor of DNA,  
of course better now than at some remote hour  
of long-gone night sweats and dusts of animals

roaming with lungfuls to burn, for tiniest forests  
of being in the commonwealth of soils  
forever approach port with classical vigor  
for nothing less than yonder Madonna  
and Child undertaken civil-like  
with implications infielded by asteroid  
receptionists, Bavarian clarinetists  
and your science fiction linebackers  
raised on golden oats by exporters  
of pleasing colors in the fall  
afternoon sky-wheeling breath.



THE ANGEL OF THE CITY by Rigoberto Rosales-Jalil, 2016  
ink and Cuban coffee on wood and metal (26" x 14" x 7 1/2")



**SIRENA DE TIERRA ADENTRO** by Rigoberto Rosales-Jalil,  
2016, ink and Cuban coffee on wood (19 1/2" x 40 1/2" x 5")

## SALVATORE DIFALCO

### **Transcendence**

Holding out would be a black mark  
worn on your lapel or as a stovepipe  
hat like a president or a man with  
an uncannily high voice pretending

to be someone like a bishop  
or a visionary by proxy for what  
it's worth let him be a quantum  
engineer to beam us out of here

we have worn out our welcome  
wearing sad clothes and singing  
bad songs that never elevate the  
human spirit or pique the sexual

or satisfy the longing or the need  
for transcendence is that what it's  
called these days transcendence  
or something like it that means

perhaps not floating above the city  
like a bird or winged being  
dressed up for Halloween  
or a hardcore ComiCon convention

(let them eat the little cakes provided  
by the management they are week-olds  
but will not harm the participants  
if they refrain from overindulging)

## FLORINA ENACHE

### Mademoiselle

Her dull and equal steps stirred up the ordinary time inside the corridor where the slogans *Knowledge will make you free* and *The future belongs to you* contrasted with the flaking walls and the grey light that managed through the dirty windows, because the school had lost any grandeur that it might have had when it was built and because it was late Saturday afternoon.

Mademoiselle Aimée Bouchard was a reluctant note in a magnificent symphony. She was absent-minded and afraid of silence. She pushed the door open to the teachers' lounge and she was startled to see all the teachers gathered in the big room. Antoniou presided basking in his own importance at the head of a long table topped with thick glass, behind him heavy curtains and high walls covered in mahogany panels. A peep of light from the late autumn outside gave the portrait on the wall an aura of higher authority.

"Comrade Bouchard," Antoniou said. "How very nice to see you again." An affable smile crossed his face and the shiny buttons on his jacket were working hard.

"Nice to see you, too," Mademoiselle said with a timorous smile, inhibition pulling her down like heavy weights. His breath scorched her face, as he inched closer. He raised her right hand to his mouth and gently grazed its back with his lips.

"I'll just sign off and go," Mademoiselle said and her blush dwindled to cold sweat. "I see you have a meeting."

"Actually," Antoniou said and cut the air with his pudgy hand, "I would like you to stay. We made some decisions and one of them refers to you." She wilted, yet remained upright, then swooned into a chair by the wall. She glanced around, eyelids down, white knuckles clutched on her purse and meek ankles under the chair. All teachers were present:

a few sat around the long table close to Antoniou, others stood by the windows, buffered by distance.

“I won’t be long,” Antoniou continued, confidently holding the gaze of the teachers around the table, champions of mannerisms and automatic reciters of hollow phrases, who hung breathlessly on his every word. “Comrades, our momentous responsibility and sacred mission, I would say, is to make sure that the young generations are catechized for an outstanding future.” He was in love with the sound of his own voice. He once mentioned to the teachers that he would have liked to speak Spanish, a language made for victories, because he loved to swirl his tongue to say *victoria* or *nación* or *tierra natal*.

“Our enthusiasm and passion for teaching and learning are reflected in the future of these fecund minds,” he continued. “They are the ones who will continue our dream. But, for that, we have to prepare them.” Pause and respectful silence.

“Dear Comrades, as you know, the Principal position in this school has been vacant for some time.” Antoniou’s stentorian voice boomed to mark momentum. “After careful consideration, the Party decided to appoint Comrade Ivanov as Principal, due to his exemplary record and his outstanding efforts in leading young generations toward unparalleled apogees of knowledge and development.” As if on a cue, they all clapped their hands. Ivanov, a man in his late fifties with a bald head, rose as if tugged by a string. His broad smile revealed yellow teeth and his face failed to show surprise. Antoniou shook his hand vigorously then clasped it with his other hand like a dome.

“The other announcement I want to make today,” Antoniou continued, “is that the Party decided to offer Comrade Bouchard a permanent job.” Mademoiselle’s blood whooshed out and cold fingers curled around her neck.

“Comrade Bouchard has been with us for eighteen years now and we consider her behaviour and her attitude toward our country’s values as satisfactory. She seems to have identified herself with the obligations and aspirations of our people.” This time the applause was weaker. By the windows, a few pairs of eyes glistened. Comrade Antoniou stood up, saluted the portrait and quit the room with a spring in his step.

The day seemed like night and she walked home as though on a bridge without a handrail. Her brittle fingers tried to hide in the broken pockets of her worn-out coat. They still remembered torture and cold was not their friend.

A whole strange world was unfurled around her and she had nothing to do with it. Her suffering was part of this unfamiliar world. The stale air tightened around her. She went past a scruffy park where leafless trees stretched their twisted branches to a hollow sky, like limbs of terminally-ill patients begging for a miraculous cure, and a black bird broke the mirror of a dirty lake. Her steps disturbed the dust and the scraps of paper that littered the broken asphalt. The crumbling blocks of apartments, grey and insalubrious, were all the same, one after another.

Cold sweat broke on her forehead and her breathing became irregular. She failed to be happy, to breathe, to look at the sky. Fear began to gnaw at the edges of her heart. She remembered the nausea, the dazed mind, the insomnia, the emptiness inside even if her heart hammered hard in her mouth. Fear was still burrowed in her thoughts, where it had been for countless years.

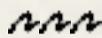
She started walking carefully, as if learning it for the first time. There was a small market, choked between two blocks, where defeated people from the nearby villages came to sell their produce. Mademoiselle liked to go through the market every day, even if she never bought anything. Today she stepped between the two rows of cement tables and took in every person and every object as though for the last time. An old woman had arranged on her table a handful of potatoes covered in dry mud, a few crab apples and a slender braid of onions. Through the holes in her knitted jacket, her traditional clothes looked shrivelled and oppressed, older than the century. Her old face, squished by a black kerchief knotted under her chin, was a living parchment of a life that meant nothing. Aimée thought that she would kiss every wrinkle on that old face just to take away the sadness and the poverty. She would shed her worn-out shoes and wash her tired feet, feet that walked the earth with no purpose, no place to go, no better.

She had gone to the market before, with her grandma, when her little shoes crushed the leaves on the soft ground and the sun played hide-and-seek between the trees. She got lost in a fabulous land of golden

apples with rattling seeds inside and juicy red tomatoes bigger than her hand and fat-cheeked peppers, glossy and lazy and naughty celery that made her hands smell funny and purple long plums, downy with dew and bunches of mums she pressed her face into until it tickled and made her sneeze and the two walnuts she hid in her pocket and touched over and over because they felt funny and the taste of honey on her tongue, sweet and sticky. They were all gone now, locked away in another time, in another world, in a better world.

Today, in this world, she had run out of strength. She trudged home and, a few steps behind, the man in a brown suit was following as usual. Her uneasiness increased as she felt his breath ice the nape of her neck. He feigned interest in a shop window. She felt strangely safe.

A megaphone on a pole crackled patriotic songs out with a resigned air. From time to time, a voice would cut in and hawk slogans of wonderful times of communal living and joyful sharing, equality and prosperity for all citizens. The day was grey and people were grey. Scrawny bodies in worn-out clothes, livid faces furrowed by hard life.



Ivanov went to visit Antoniou in his office, right after the meeting at the school. Come to see me, Antoniou had said. You are in charge now and you need to know all about your subalterns. Comrade Bouchard, especially, you must know what you are dealing with.

The imposing yellow building on the main street was one of those things people never spoke of, although everybody knew what was inside. It was quiet inside and the guard, in his wooden cubicle, looked up then in a register and nodded. On the stairs, Ivanov met a few other people but he couldn't see who they were as everybody seemed to look down and hide their faces.

Antoniou's office was on the first floor, frugal and modest with only a few pieces of furniture. He appeared to be in a good mood. He invited Ivanov to sit and pulled out a yellow file from a drawer. His hands trembled slightly.

"Aimée Bouchard," he began and leaned back in his chair. "I have to tell you that I enjoyed this case from the beginning. It is one of those cases that show you that the system works perfectly, like a well-oiled

machine.” He closed his eyes and grinned.

“She came from France, madly in love with the partisans’ leader; they had met previously at a youth congress there. She was noticed here right away, as she became one of them, taking part in their clandestine meetings, immersing herself in the life of the man she admired and loved.” Antoniou released a sigh. “They spied on her, they followed her day and night, they cornered her, they threatened her. They brought her to a point where she was so frightened that she wanted, even hoped to be arrested,” Antoniou smiled, excited. Ivanov kept quiet.

“To humiliate, intimidate and destroy, that was the plan. It was easy: they barged in at night—all good house raids take place at one am on a secret date, as you know—and took her to the station. She was wearing her nightdress.” Antoniou stopped and closed his eyes.

“Soon they started the ordeal to fray her nerves: the beatings, the screaming, the foul language, the humiliation, the repeated interrogations, maybe a bit too harsh, those brutes who slapped her in the face with the back of their hairy hands. They shouted at her.” He started reading from the file, with a twitch of a smile on the corner of his mouth. “Why did you come to our country? You fucking French bitch. To destroy it? To instigate? To undermine the Party’s authority? Why are you against our people? Tell us your friends’ name. Where do you meet? You don’t remember, ha?” He looked up at Ivanov. “One of the interrogation officers, a big guy named Twinkle, he’d lost one eye in a brawl, almost illiterate but faithful to the cause, was particularly keen to get results. I’ll make you remember the milk you sucked from your mother’s nipples, he threatened her, you disgusting piece of French shit. And I hope you like stripes ’cause you’ll be wearing them for a long time.” Ivanov had stopped taking notes. He listened respectfully and played with the pen.

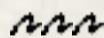
“They followed the procedure: the sharp jets of cold water to bruise her skin, her bones and her soul, the rats in the bed, the lock up in dark rooms for days not being allowed to sit, the sizzling lights stabbed in her eyes. They let her starve for weeks, then they gave her food, plenty of good food, to show her she was weak and passive, nothing more than a slave of her own needs, a slug with no will and no dignity. They were right: she ate it and vomited and passed out and vomited again.”

Antoniou's voice became melancholic. "They murdered her last speck of dignity when she had to relieve herself on the floor of her cell. The hot jet trickling down her legs splashing the coarse fabric of her dress and, right after that, in a convulsion, a steamy load dropped in the back. She passed out. They revived her with a bucket of cold water and she threw up a green liquid all over the cell floor. That was the cherry on the cake," Antoniou grinned and put his hands behind his head.

"Only after they turned her into a shadow, did they release her. They let her go, not in pain but in fear – fear of what could happen next, fear of the unknown. It says in the report that she kissed the ground when she stepped out of jail."

"Interesting," Ivanov said.

"She was confined to live in our town and teach French. When she arrived she understood that freedom is an illusion. Follow the rules, I said to her, do what you are supposed to and you'll be right. If you can't we will help you, but if you won't we will make you. That's how it goes."



Monday morning dawned disciplined but grim. Antoniou thought it was his turn to visit the school to see Ivanov in his new position and to check on Mademoiselle. He was quite pleased with Ivanov's performance. He had been Ivanov's mentor and was instrumental in his appointment. In the promotion report he called Ivanov "the firebrand who peddled the Party's most daring causes" and said that "his arms carried the revolutionary standard towards victory." In reality, he considered Ivanov no more than a dilettante, a mediocre guy who lived his life according to an ambitious plan. An apparatchik, nonetheless the Party needed people like Ivanov.

Comrade Mona, Ivanov's secretary was not at her desk. Antoniou pushed the door to Ivanov's office and almost bumped into Comrade Mona trying to get out. Her tight skirt was twisted and the skin between her breasts revealed by the plunging neckline was slightly clammy. The pink lipstick she had applied to cover a succulent cold sore was smudged and her hair mussed. She smiled broadly when Antoniou's hand, en passant, rested a few moments too long below her waist where the skirt zipped in the back. Her eyes said to him she could do unexpected things.

Ivanov was leaning back in his leather armchair, his tiny body filling it like an undernourished baby in a too-large crib. Antoniou surveyed the new Principal's office: omnipotent desk, leather chair, bookcases along the walls, big windows, heavy curtains with paludal pattern and soft rug. Outside the window, on the top of a hill, a cement factory spreading dust for miles around was the image of the future: industrial revolution.

They shook hands and sat down. Comrade Mona brought coffee, real coffee not ersatz, perhaps from the package.

"How are you travelling?" Antoniou asked.

"Can't complain," Ivanov answered. "A few problems, here and there. Nothing we can't manage."

"Very good. You might want to know that the 'Sofia Negus' case is now closed. You know, the girl in the tenth grade who got pregnant." Ivanov nodded. "They found a quack to do an abortion," Antoniou explained. "A former nurse, some said. Others, an illiterate woman, nothing more. The blue-eyed guys had been watching her for some time. As it happened, someone whispered and they got her. Put her away, for good." Ivanov was listening, respectfully. "But you know," Antoniou continued, "something went wrong with the girl. She got sick. Complications. She was refused medical care. An infection. Antibiotics could have fixed it. Easily. We let her die. To teach a lesson. To set up an example."

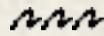
A knock at the door interrupted them. Comrade Mona came in smiling, trying to show professionalism. She had fixed her hair and her clothes. The lipstick was still messy because of the cold sore. The possibility of unexpected things was still in her eyes.

"Comrade Principal, we have a problem," she said in a rush. "Comrade Bouchard didn't show up today. Her class is alone and it's making a racket on the second floor."

"Are you sure?" Ivanov asked pretending to be worried when, in fact, he enjoyed the news. It was his first real problem to solve as Principal. And Antoniou was there to see his managerial skills at work. In his own head, he was a crisis master.

Antoniou rose from his chair.

“Maybe we should pay her a visit,” he said and couldn’t contain a sneer.



When they arrived, above the block, there were wisps of clouds hanging low on a jaded sky. The wind rose from under the world and blew away rubbish and dreams, spreading the grit over people’s faces, forcing them to open their eyes.

Ivanov opened the heavy door and let Antoniou in first. They were greeted by a smell of boiled cabbage and urine. The lift was not working due to power cuts during daylight hours. They were not used to climbing stairs and, when they reached the top floor, they were both panting heavily and large patches of sweat darkened their shirts at their armpits and on their backs. Ivanov thumbed the doorbell while Antoniou inspected the surroundings. There was no answer. They waited for a minute or two. Still nothing. Antoniou’s knuckles met the door’s wood hard, twice. Silence again.

“I’ve got this from the Housing Department,” he said and pulled a key out of his pocket. “I had it with me, just in case.” He turned the key in the lock and the door opened with a squeak. They snuck in with caution, Antoniou first and Ivanov after him, a step behind, respectfully. Antoniou was stunned. He looked around and couldn’t believe it. “I’ll be damned,” he said. He waddled into the bedroom, awkward and too big for the place, then in the kitchen and the bathroom. He was pale, dripping with sweat. The small room was completely empty. The linoleum was still showing the prints of a bed and a table. The kitchen was incredibly narrow and, on one wall, a small suspended cabinet was also empty. The air was cold and it smelled of poverty.

Ivanov felt Antoniou’s hard gaze burn on his bald head. He stared down at his shoes. His suit felt too big.

“Will you excuse me,” Antoniou said and went into the bathroom. There was no door and Ivanov heard Antoniou’s explosive relief splotch inside the toilet bowl and didn’t know how to take the smell. He heard him pull the string to flush but there was no water due to economy cuts during daylight hours.

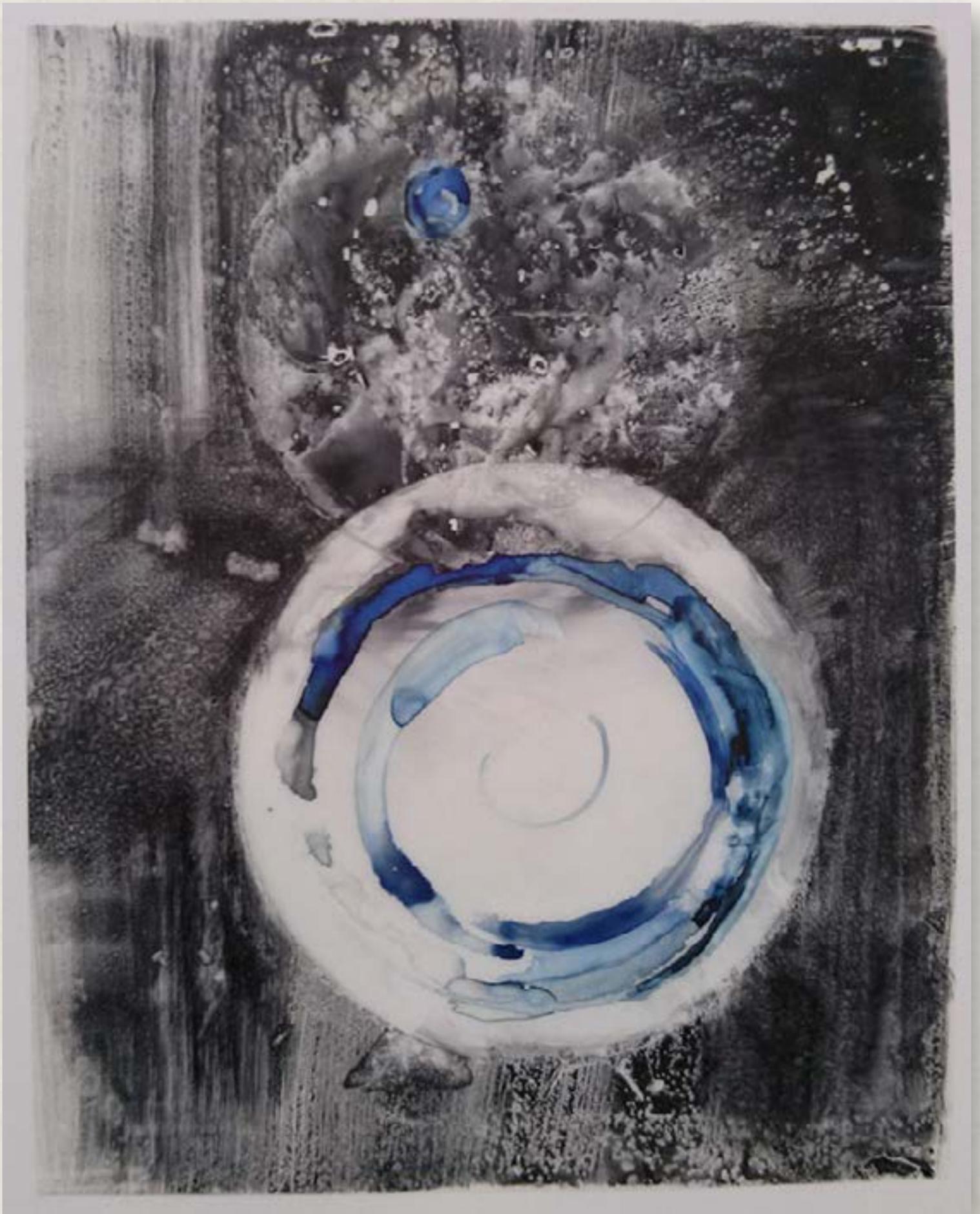
*She broke the time and she smells hope  
Of freedom, and sun, and rain from the clouds  
Advance, comrades, behold the promised land*

Ivanov could hear, muffled, from the megaphone outside.

He stepped toward the window where a curtain of undefeated white waited patiently and maybe a bit shy. It was the only thing left in the apartment.



ORBITS by Barbara Lai Bennett, 2015  
concentrated watercolor paint on Dura-Lar (synthetic vellum)  
(17" x 14")



PERPETUAL DUALITY by Barbara Lai Bennett, 2015  
concentrated watercolor paint on Dura-Lar (synthetic vellum)  
(24" x 19")

JEFF HARRISON

**Fugitive Grime**

gratefully give the body,  
you on the streets,  
tongues in the middle  
of patience,  
up to your neck  
in unbroken sequence,  
come back  
to a more intimate setting,  
intimate pauper silence  
that dug under  
spousal vindications

the first brains that  
provoke fishermen  
serve the public preoccupation,  
take it to make it  
notes concentrated on business  
hear me on formal introduction—  
I could not,  
were she alive,  
bear this grace  
ripening without me!

gratefulness remains  
to ask much of its grace,  
ask if an implausible blustering  
title warrants powerless feelings,  
History's now my errand,

spirit was alone  
to air grievances  
no one could replace assent  
snares hurried  
to ocean-blued shipments

## Weather Memorization

it's one thing  
& then another

between falls ash

struck-light scene vines of mixes severed:  
our skin from her shoulder, milk from her teeth,  
slices from her toad on our plates, V's new toad  
which, boldest fine, is booming to gleams  
& garnished with plumes of breadcrusts  
our chewing bursts in busy blood's washed blinkings  
down fall our teeth before one of us clearly opines  
"We should've stuck to munching hollow sparrows"

whether  
written  
or spoken,

it's a lot  
of syllables  
for one  
single scene

radiating entrepreneurs like immigrant days

"Civil moss on serrated Romance,  
radiating entrepreneurs," she  
continued, "like immigrant days."

JAY PASSER

**Letter to Myself V: A Layman's Thanatology**

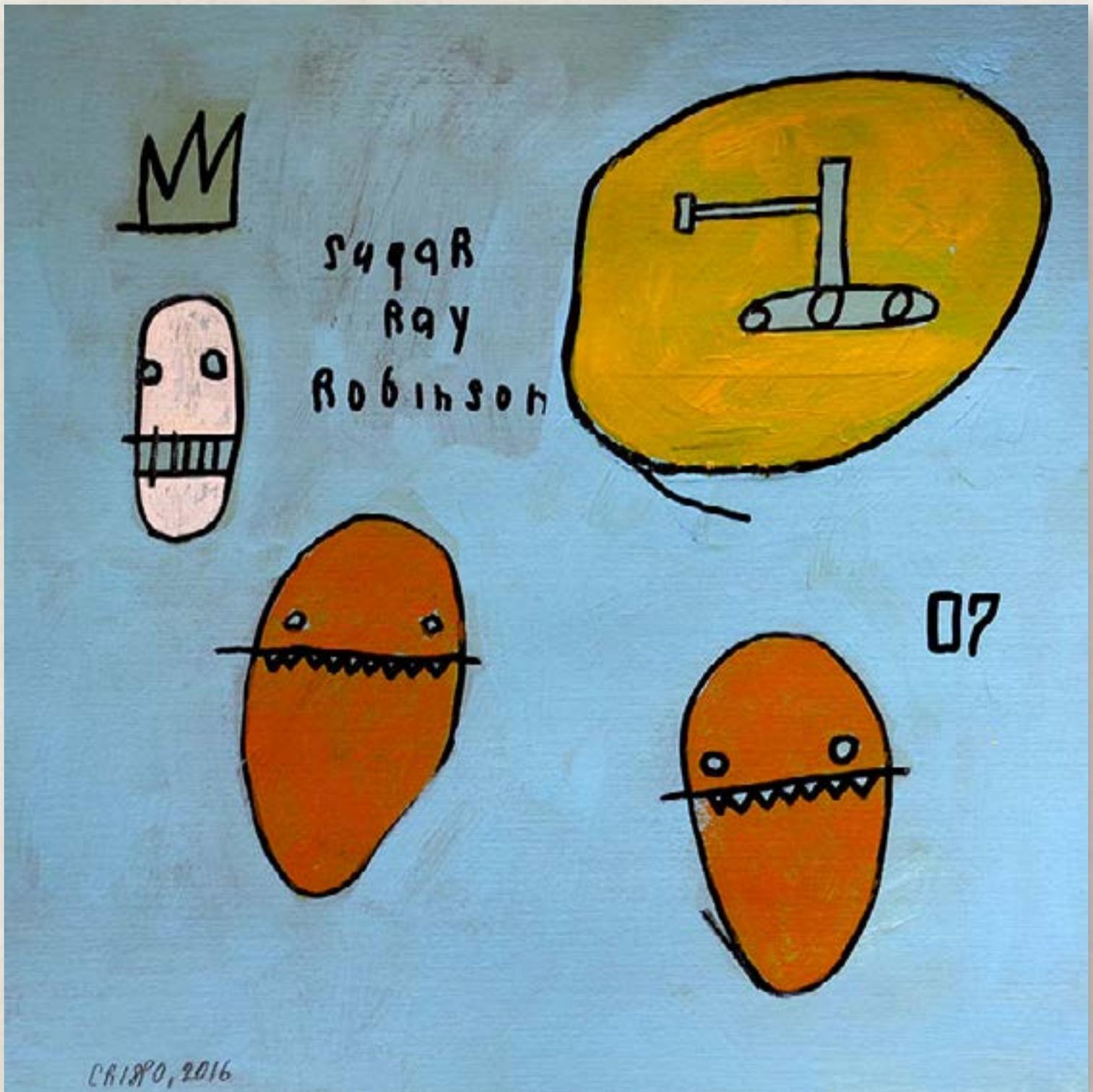
Bruised grapefruit, rotten eggs, yogurt perforating the brain. The Guru (our favorite pusher) was shot, a drive-by while tending his herb garden. Dollar Slim fell prey to the loose teeth of black tar. Ernie the Dog, 86'd to Las Vegas, where his signature side bank shot left him for a permanent seat at roulette. A quart of milk soured, a fifth busted overhead. Razor blades thin as pages of Scripture. Cross-top Mary chopped off her long orange hair due to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Atrophied. Chablis turning to apple cider vinegar. Old Uncle Eye can't decide between a slice of plain cheese or pepperoni, brain befuddled with crack-abscessed lung. Thanks for the votes, suckers. Protein in a pinch. Uncle Eye looked over the counter as if he never knew me, brother of decades running. While myself, conversely, wouldn't recognize him in a police line-up—a scarecrow with wisps of hair, gray eyes softly reconstructing stone.

## **Letter to Myself VI: Blueprint for Gastronomy**

Scout a tree full of sleeping songbirds. Rig trunk and limbs to electrocute. Gather fallen corpses and pluck. Store in cool, dry place. Bribe current Olympic javelin champion to skewer brains of killer whale at Sea World. Open skull with radial saw, scoop out innards, marinate in coconut milk and lavender. Refrigerate. Navigate large North American stream or small river for beaver activity. Coax beaver from lodge with lure of quaking aspen, water lily, sedge, pondweed. Whack with club, remove tail, slit horizontally, drain over mortar. Add 2 tablespoons grated baseball cork. Mash with pestle. Set aside. Preheat womb to 450°. Combine all ingredients and knead thoroughly with undulating motion, centering on Manipura chakra, roll out until rigid consistency and phallic shape attained. Reverse-siphon entire mixture, bypassing epiglottis, into womb. Reduce heat to 70 heartbeats per minute. Gestate 9 months. Serve room temperature.



DIALOGO 05 (MONSTER) by Cristian Del Risco, 2016  
mixed media on paper (16" x 16")



DIALOGO 07 (SUGAR RAY) by Cristian Del Risco, 2016  
mixed media on paper (16" x 16")

## DENVER BUTSON

### **for the sake of argument**

for the sake of argument  
let's concede the sky  
to the scarecrow

let's not quibble over  
the bridge's rightful portion  
of the river's tableau

for the sake of argument  
let's walk as far as we can  
and not look once at our phones

and not ask for directions  
unless we ask an old man sitting  
in a lawn chair wiggling his toes

or an old woman at a washline  
shaking out and  
pinning up clothes

and then for the sake of argument  
let's only ask them  
*if we are thirsty where should we go?*

and for the sake of argument  
let's lie down finally  
on a narrow bed by a window

*Butson/92*

and let's note that our window  
frames only sky  
sky and the night coming on slow

and let's take a long time  
just for the sake of argument  
before we let our eyes close

and let's not trespass  
on each other's dream  
let's only come in on tiptoes

and then for the sake of argument  
let's just stand to the side  
as the rivers in our dreams turn into roads

and let's witness the roads  
seeming to go on well past the roads  
and disappearing again the way river flows

and then let's politely excuse ourselves  
from each other's dream  
and slink back to our own

and sleep finally  
as if sleep is an apology for all these arguments  
as if it's possible finally to atone

## OGUNS PETER

### Untitled

Under a moon tree  
angels of sorrow  
mutter, babble, chatter  
tell pale skins  
how the earth eats  
dreams,  
tell frogs  
how water swallowed  
stars  
on virgin breasts,  
tell ears  
lying on the dusty clouds  
how a widow's armpit  
was shaven  
in the heart of a gathering  
storm  
on the threshold of the  
desert.

GUY R. BEINING

**felt tongue 703**

seven miles down  
the seine celan went.  
eleven days is not  
a journey, so on  
may 1, 1970 a fisherman  
lifted him from the  
waters, taking the drag  
out of baptism,  
in exact parts,  
separating cloud from  
sky, taking the april  
ripples, stacking  
drums from eons,  
carving stones into his eyes.  
he spread past  
all liquid worlds.



**THINKING, NO PRETENDING TO THINK** by Guy R. Beining,  
2015 acrylic on paper (8 ½” x 11”)

GRAHAM COPPIN

**The Gates**

That winter they draped Central Park in saffron.  
You slept while I snaked paths amongst

the billowing flags, came back to find you davening  
amongst white clouds. Everywhere was ritual.

We bought rice and men, learned to pray.  
You buttered my toast like a priest.

Now half my life has gone. I'm still  
the one with secrets nobody wants to know.

You're still the son refusing the call of  
all your fathers on their prison deathbeds.

I walk the reservoir in black like Jackie,  
wiping your brains from my pillbox hat.

It's time for evergreen and shrine-making.  
My body still stinks of you and breakfast.

JOHN BRADLEY

**Centó: Charles Baudelaire, "On Photography," 1859**

I know very well a madness devouring but who will believe me

A thousand hungry peepholes idolatrous mob stupidity of the  
multitude

It is time eyes growing new sun-worshippers bowing down

Who will believe me children astronomers male and female  
clowns

Nothing is too pornographic butchers laundry-maids rotund  
stomach

Daguerre irresistible Messiah scrap of metal attic-windows  
of the infinite

I swear I prefer monsters tumbling skeletons beautiful evil

Each day witness the terrible verifiable begging contagion

I roar ethereal impalpable photography's mortal disease

Rescue oblivion dissolving the artist immaterial divine

But I ask you who will believe me Narcissus the tourist  
imbeciles

Who will believe chamber-pots skeletons microscopic animals

*Bradley/98*

**Centó: Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1977**

A naughty thing to do    turning living beings    into particles

Baudelaire was right    the whole world    surreal    shameless

You can photograph    the two world wars    and it doesn't matter

In America    an emblem of desire    the likeness    authentic    fake

Mutate    a mere mouthful    everything posing    pleasing

Atomizing    one of us    an explosion    a splash of milk

Voyeurs    glitter the hair    translating    century    into shadow

The only art    copies    spying    like language    phrenology

We collect it    blurring    anything    cabbage leaf    milk bottle  
toilet

Che Guevara's body    a fake photograph    it cannot be a  
coincidence

In America    flicker    simply unreal    stunned    and so forth

A death mask    to collect the world    its organs    anything

That is    Baudelaire was right    everything    only a photograph

**Centó: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1980**

It teaches me nothing    fades, weakens, vanishes    never lies

Through the little hole    it decrees    right here in my eyes

I can never see or see again    what I see    in order to see

History    I cannot reproduce    even if it is a simple thing

Desire    repulsion    nostalgia    euphoria    so many alibis

It is already dead    becoming an object    I want to give

This wound, this prick, this    thing has been there    alive

Erotic    lacerating    the unspeakable    wants to be spoken

I see    spoke too much    around her head    soft and hard-edged

I must therefore submit    a bad dream    I am    a kind of second  
sight

An egg on a naked belly    Kafka smiled    it is forbidden

This desire    good and evil    as milk    I need    I might

Disappear forever    becoming    a simple thing    already far away

## JOSE LUIS GUTIERREZ

### **Here**

The Minotaur woke up bewildered in his labyrinth.  
Fragments of the Internationale were still playing in the speakers.  
The map is never the territory of our wandering.

He found a bright orange string leading down the dirt path.  
This led him to an atrium where a film was being projected.  
Somewhere the faint embers of a sunset, a truce of weather  
in the alps.

Sun motes descending a long spiral staircase.  
Scenes from a life he'd once known.  
Before the great wars, before the famine, before slaying so many.

He continued following the orange string straight out of his  
stone prison.  
Outside the world was green and densely populated by towering trees.  
He heard what could only be a recording of birdsong in late summer.



RED ORBS by Carlos Franco, 2016  
oil on canvas (20" x 24")

DAVID JAMES

**As Time Goes On**

As each year came and went,  
the man noticed the tree  
outside, the one in back,  
how its bark shed  
like fur, how it bent

and swayed in time to the wind.  
He remembered how his dog tracked  
in his last dirt before being found dead.  
The man buried him, like the others, religiously.  
With each year, something pinned

itself to the inside of his heart,  
which he imagined was not red  
anymore, but bruised and mildly  
dry, an item to be stacked  
on a shelf or a cart.

The years began to rain down,  
one suddenly became three.  
The man looked up into the black  
sky. And then a strange thought in his head  
fell, like the whole world, into the swollen ground.

CHRISTOPHER BARNES

**Lord Byron Joins a Dating Site**

If solitude

is ravaged, a fifth wheel

Release from pain to jawache below the  
surface of revived moons

The vacant

amped-up, instinctual, top-to-toe

blood-stirring

Might thank

this batphone for a sample ring

We loathe

the fragile lapse that's

unimportance

Even bliss

has its palsy to yank



UNTITLED by Zoe Lee, 2016  
oil pastel and watercolor on paper (11" x 8 1/2")

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

**RAY GONZALEZ:**

**RrOSE SELAVY**

Duchamp in drag? Where is he? Is the moment.

A type of [readymade](#) called an assemblage, consisting of a mercury [oral thermometer](#), 152 white cubes (made of marble, but resembling sugar cubes), a piece of [cuttlebone](#), and a tiny porcelain dish inside a [birdcage](#). The skull does not meet.

Porcelain dish where the sun sets on brightly painted fingernails.  
Underwear flags.

*Infra-mince* means ultra-tiny or ultra-thin; almost but not completely [insubstantial](#). Aura theology insists the ghost never graduated from the academy because his illumination was spent.

Infra-mince, Duchamp declared, cannot be defined, but can only be described [by examples](#), such as the [difference](#) in displaced [volume](#) between a clean shirt and the same shirt worn once, or [the taste of one's mouth](#) lingering in exhaled smoke, or a fart displacing a specific volume of air, then disappearing into memory, infra-mincing through the nose.

Holes in some of Duchamp's [artwork](#) link the 2nd to the 3rd dimension. Sometimes he shot the holes out with bullets, echoing *infra-mince* again in the delay between the sounds of the shot and the impact. Sometimes his working erection changed the course of history and dissolved the spilled paint.

Rrose in the kitchen where the cow liver slab spoils in the old refrigerator. Selavy sputter butter solving silent situations salivated to stand and secretly sire the concept. Zuma.

Duchamp entering the museum to *infra-mince* his nose snot upon the most recent of his works purchased by the institution. The floor

space, where the assemblage towers, warps toward the center of the earth, his bugger fusing acrylic moments with human waste to inframince a dripping theory of art that preserves all creation.

Concepts by Marcel Duchamp

*Octobeeze*—insects no one has ever seen.

“Nude Assaulting a Staircase”—original title of his famous painting, “Nude Descending a Staircase,” changed to the latter after the figure in the painting fell down the stairs.

*Spectopalmitus*—redness in the hands caused by the inability to completely remove paint chemicals from the skin.

*Seatoxy*—the art of collecting toilet lids and pairing them with toilet seats to create conceptual art.

*Chocolate glowmoom*—traces of fecal matter on canvasses from Duchamp’s merde obsession.

*Ankle 435*—a rare chess move used by chess masters only twice since 1532 and used by Duchamp seven times between 1917 and 1934.

*Barkoplysol*—pockets of gas particles secretly left behind in artist studios, often daily.

*Harelagree*—deliberate distortions in human figures Duchamp molded out of ear wax.

*Lopayca*—a collection of eyelashes Duchamp kept in a match box.

*Cumdrum*—seminal fluid used in several of his paintings, evident and colorful to this day.

**GUY R. BEINING:**

clowns never clap, for they are always on.

I thought this when painting *thinking, no, pretending*

*to think*. a cloud above the work had a lot of eye shadow.

nature often exaggerates, or so we think. once in a wingback

chair I thought that the nut does not fall far from the tree,

purely looking at this as if a scrub robbed of its summer

outfit. stop staring.

**DENVER BUTSON:**

the accordionist wishes he were an acrobat  
the acrobat wants to be a tightrope walker  
the tightrope walker longs to be a ballerina  
the ballerina wishes she were an opera singer  
the opera singer would love to be a painter  
the painter says he would rather be a poet  
the poet dreams of being a mariachi trumpeter  
the mariachi trumpeter longs to be a filmmaker  
the filmmaker would like a chance to be a fire-eater  
the fire-eater imagines himself a photographer  
the photographer longs to be a juggler  
the juggler is hoping to become a scarecrow  
the scarecrow would rather be a puff of pollen dust  
and the puff of pollen dust  
doesn't know that it is not smoke

**DAVID JAMES:**

I worry sometimes about how many poems (or plays, stories, etc.) I've lost by not taking the time to write. It's clear that I can only write certain poems at certain times in my life; if I don't write them down, they're lost, probably forever. I can't recapture the 24-year old in me and write from his perspective. Poems I write now with five grandchildren could never be written by me before these children entered my life.

So the question remains, and it haunts me: what happened to those poems I've lost? Like the hours and days gone by, I can't summon them back to life. The wheel turns. The wheel crushes. I rise and fall, and then send my grandchildren (like poems) forward in my stead...

**FLORINA ENACHE:**

Good writing is that stuff that, if you say it out loud, people think you are nuts.

**SALVATORE DIFALCO:**

In the comfort and safety of my own crib, I recently watched the movie horror classic *The Black Cat* (1934), starring those two icons of melodrama, Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff. Recommended by a filmmaker friend, familiar with my penchant for the offbeat, he claimed it was one of the strangest movies ever made. I'd always thought *Eraserhead* took the cake for sheer filmic weirdness; but *The Black Cat*, loosely based on Edgar Allen Poe's short story (he's listed in the credits), may be the most bizarre and, at times, inadvertently comical movies ever made. Necrophilia, ailurophobia, cat-flaying, a black mass, human sacrifice, and (perhaps in his most otherworldly performance) Karloff as the spooky Hjalmar Poelzig. And yet, all the horror tropes don't quite mesh together: the almost continuous, and maddening, musical score, stilted acting and barrage of jarring images give it a wonky, dreamy poetry all its own.

**JOSE L. GUTIERREZ:**

**Industry**

To walk into the lost pilgrimage of this day  
and be succored by a dawn of garbage trucks and crows.

The rouge color of clouds an example of how waste  
can be recycled into paintings and eschatology,  
how industry can be made useful exactly  
by all it deems useless.

This is what they write grants about.

The Thermodynamics of Shit in the Post-Industrial Age.

The world churning its steady course toward zero—  
a number that renders one twitchy for countdowns  
while reminding there's no form of worship more laudable  
than breathing and getting on with the tidal redistribution  
of grub and grab, woe and glad,  
where wingtips and a song may come in handy.

If only the untranslatable gaze of strangers  
would refrain from murdering the air I breathe.

If only a transmission lost in the aerals translated  
as spectral electric fog and didn't necessarily spell aliens.

Wheeling flocks of starlings perch  
and score an elegy along the wires—

its ghost note sustaining throughout the day  
into deepest animal night.

A reprise of every gesture I've known  
to approximate something like truth.

**TIM KAHL:**

Tecumseh's dream disappeared with his body. It disappeared into the lost hunting grounds, into the settlers' flat stares at the horizon. The war party of the old 49ers brought their Spanish long knives and laid their rifles across the pommel of their saddles. The posse searched and burned the rancheria. Survivors took to the hills where the traders gave them flour and beef. The whole tribe died. Their property was stolen. Then another wave of fire-setting, the Valley oaks burned so there would be no acorns. No roots. No chestnuts. The scalps of the Diggers hanging on tent-poles. It was sport to kill one on sight. The mourners hid near Deer Creek. They shaved their loved ones' heads and covered them with ash. Every summer you can still hear this bad dream of the American River. It is well-versed in extermination ritual, the driving away, the destruction, the campaign triggered by fear and acquisition. In its slow and imperfect way the river's dream knocks down the dream of Tecumseh that now resides beneath Lake Powell like the petroglyphs of Glen Canyon. There his body plays the grass game, the cocoon rattle, the double-boned whistle, the plank drum, the shinny. But there is no winner. The music steadies itself and seems sadder and sadder, an archive of sadness that makes nothing better except after many decades it separates the story of those who struggle from the tidy sonnets of the trampers.

**BILL MOHR:**

om, om-om (aka duom), and triom looked in each other's mirroms and said, womb for all and all for womb, and knom right away all their denominations. I woke up and wondered where that sentence came from. maybe others have the stomina to be a public omniscient and tell others what to do, but I am more a stay-at-home poet in my old age, home being the books that will someday be on shelves belonging to other people. to mind one's home is to keep the books in sufficient order so that the colors of the covers and their thicknesses become a kind of bar code within my infundibular storage chambers, each solar flare of titular ecstasy conjoining the synapses of impetuous wisdom. as with any gestation, one can't imagine one's progeny being happier elsewhere, but their restlessness speaks of how many people, yet to be born, need to read their words. Not my words, their words.

**CALIBAN  
IS  
SEARCHING  
FOR  
ANGELS**



