



KAUFFMAN • COOK • RAPHAEL • B. BENNETT • STEWARD  
GARTHE • GONZALEZ • LOTTI • ARGÜELLES • HOGAN • ANNESE  
KALAMARAS • DEL RISCO • BRADLEY • STEELE • MURPHY  
WESLOWSKI • LAO • CROSS • KUHN • BEINING • J. BENNETT  
KOMOR • HELLEN • GILBERT • CAPORASO • BARNES • GRABILL



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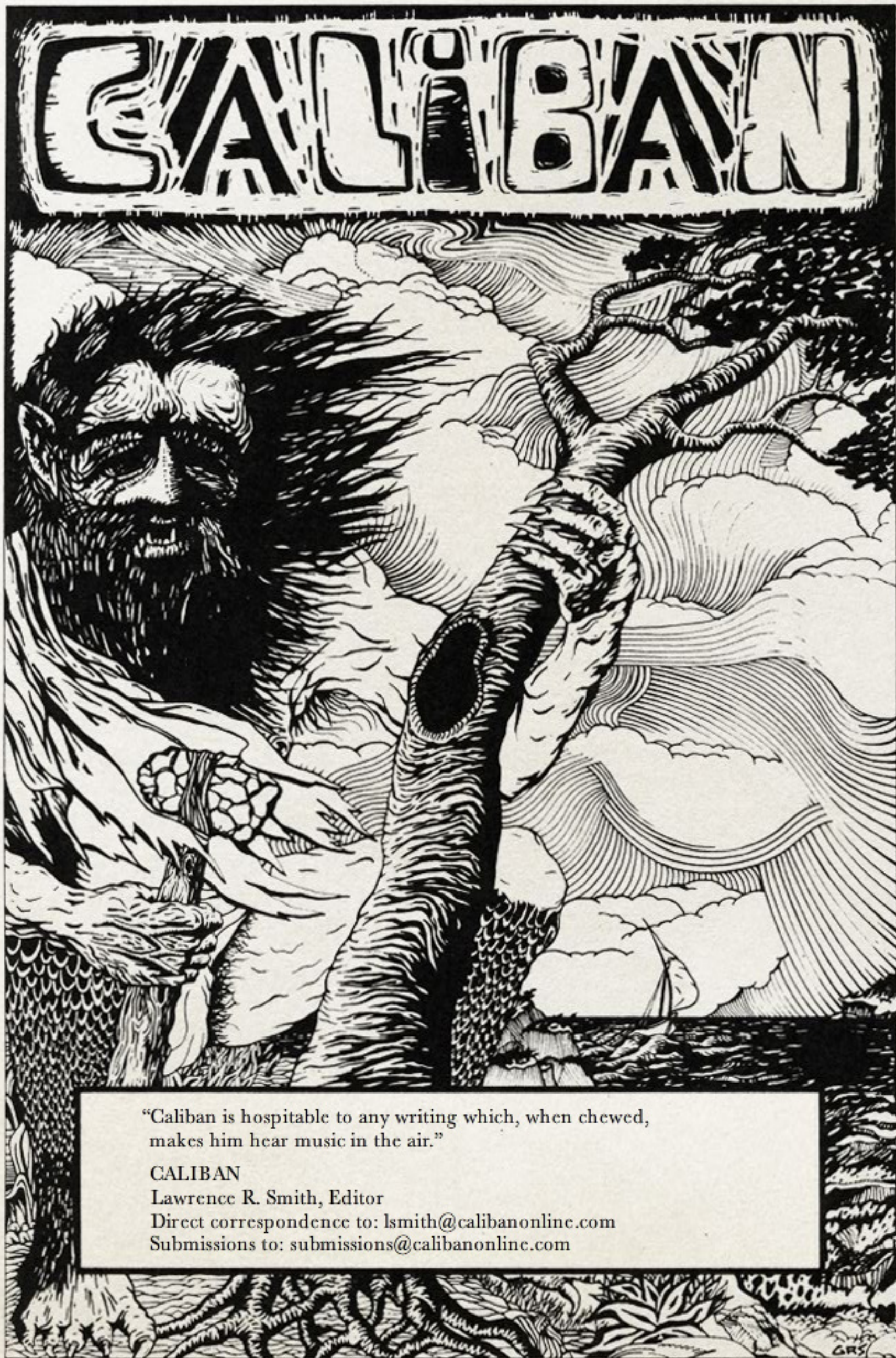
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together



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

**CALIBAN**

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**CONTRIBUTORS' ADVICE**





JANET KAUFFMAN

### **The Democracy of Debris**

All things being equal—and they are—in this world of profound loss, we can no longer claim the center of the scene. In daily life and in art, we need to step aside and upend our human perspective, human plots, and human hierarchies. We don't run the show.

We've run ourselves to an edge, we're on the brink. Our habitats, now visible from the air and from space, are debris fields. Leftovers, pits, scars. With damage so deep, our own bodies and constructions are now flimsy as cottonwood fluff. We're at risk in the landscapes we've also made vulnerable. They break at a touch: mountain tops, great lakes, all micro and macro features of the planet. Looking around, and into our blood, our bones, we know the bits we're made of, the microscopic, the molecular, the atomic. In that mix and scattering, we flow, we are mostly water. Hydrogen, oxygen. Nitrogen, calcium, carbon, phosphorus. Our elemental names. We spin with atoms. They are dizzying, irrevocable links, our substance and kinship with the cosmos' bits and pieces, the commonplace and the rare.

Human lives and art, human actions and policy, justice and morality, all these shift when we recognize the elemental equation: all things are equal in substance—and connected: the overlays and interplays of bodies, ecosystems, cosmic particles, cilia, air, teeth, waves. We can see the intact and the torn as equal in all their parts.

We are in flux, orbiting, breathing animal air, leaving our motes and mites and puffs for others, cohabiting in elemental arrays or disarrays, organic and inorganic.



As we diminish our dominion and understand fully the democracy of debris, our survival will be more assured, learning to see, live, love and create—in the midst, awash, enmeshed with all things.

There's joy, and relief, in this knowledge, and a new ethic of shared consequence in a shared world.





AFTER THE FLOOD ST. JOSEPH CR by Janet Kauffman, 2019  
photograph





AFTER THE FLOOD SPRUCE GROVE by Janet Kauffman, 2019  
photograph





AFTER SNOW MELT DEER HAIR by Janet Kauffman, 2019  
photograph



ROB COOK

**Treatises From Inside the Information Cloud**

1.

You forced the apartment grids  
to the deep web marshes,  
the running water's unsaved distances,  
parked vehicles led away by asphodels.

Money gone shallow,  
click-card banks run dry,  
no place real to escape or love  
the one standing next to you,  
asking how to suture the dream sky's cortical ruptures.

2.

The thoughts lurking  
in the digital mountain forests  
reveal each other as black bears  
and praise-encrypted algae—

the world builders, the fled tribes of God,

and in your city that vanished,  
a man nurses all the slivers of moonlight  
tallied and remembered as data.



3.

Your footprints go blind  
from a different sleep,

an outpost,

a hacker's lean-to  
at the edge of a cave-stored connection.

Your avatar commands everything  
that prays from the simulated taiga:

Go back, though not the way you came.

Go back.

And do not let the guardian  
hear you sneaking past  
his empire of dead links

where your body knows everything  
that will ever happen to you.

4.

But it is safe, for now,  
to carry your body—

camouflaged beneath a dinner jacket  
bright with battle standards

and magnetic stains

and a tremor that scavenges  
the circuitry of each prayer



*Cook*/16

and misses nothing

when a cat chases the glint  
sent from a dying wrist watch  
and another star system drifts  
out of range in someone's head.

Notice how fake  
the cold feels this far from the flesh,

a herd of blinking diamonds  
trying to heal the wind  
that mangles your nothingness  
into believable cities,

cloud-tall towers and tenements,

sheet music cafes,  
payphone embassies,  
dog walk brothels,  
babies pushed  
by single strolling  
dictators  
derived from snail shells.

5.

The shallow winter does not pass.

It is not safe to return  
to your window the way you arrived

because there is no such thing as time,



the distance between galaxies  
measured  
in perceptual shifts,

less than one spirit-step—

what you hear inside  
your feedback loops, tonight,  
from your lamp-lit city,

repeating your name until nothing exists,

just your tiny room blinking  
beneath a street light on a planet  
thought about by no one.

6.

The world outside the window  
the same as any other year, cemetery  
markers crowded in rows like children  
too slow to advance to heaven,

the church bells melting  
and sticking to the aluminum oxygen,  
the same view of leaf-like pedestrians  
chewing their wooden food  
even at this screen-generated hour.

Your wife, still named Stephanie,  
who saved you from the houses in your head,  
the holes God left in the sky,  
does not scold you for choking the bed sheets  
and keeping them awake.



**Appalachia**

Among the October chainsaw  
birdsongs, a man walks to the house  
of a vanishing lady-leaf

and takes the slightest look  
at God tearing his body  
to nothing, which some say

will survive the winter's invasion  
of ashes and mountain teeth,  
and take the valleys of black lung

water back from the stone  
men, and the stones back  
from the men of air

who tormented the deer  
home to their planet  
where the rabbit-boned

grandfathers buried  
the rocks and skunk salt,  
the neurons of the rain

that either created  
the wind (and filled it with flocks  
of feathered gunshots)

or simply left it here,  
poisoning the treeline blackouts  
that the men of no action

protect inside their pockets  
where a sharp edge  
of the sky is still glaring.



## Depression Survival Story

The lightning snuck into the house  
and skinned every coin asleep  
in the emergency jar, which stayed intact.

The day with its arch-pundits  
and commentary did not:  
“Sandpaper sandwiches  
and unpardoned cirrhosis  
for the takers, not the makers.”

Nor did I know how much  
a coin could bleed when not sipping  
from a person’s hand.

\*

In my pocket the myeloma-filled wallet  
betrayed the cursor blinking  
at the base of my spine,  
the martial law of a bird-gutted flag  
pointing to where the wind will put on  
its clothes, never to be seen again.

\*

How we created the future:  
On one Sunday a lunar mint  
exposed its kingdom as a praise-dry liver,  
where it takes all the stars in the ceiling  
to forgive the local Jesus,  
who moves a lake of drowned crosses  
from child to child to child.



\*

Two girls among the eyes that fell  
picked their giggling from the pew  
and stuffed it back into their mouths  
gnashing still with all the laughter  
hidden there—some call this terrorism,  
others consider it “close to God.”

Either way, they know nothing  
about how to keep the boredom—  
what they feel as a sociopathic  
silence—from advancing.



## LINETTE LAO

### Harlem 1930-1939

I want a wilderness with distance, a structure to lift and feather my skeleton as the air moves faster. Dinners appear and disappear, eighteen frames of light reverse above the flicker and grit of the fish market. Come stand on the stoop. Blow smoke into the brim of your hat. Don't listen to the music. Don't watch the men pass by. Look up. Let me fill your mouth full of snow. Let me cover your eyes and tell you a story. Give me your breath to inflate my skirts as I float toward the ground.



*Lao/22*

**Colossal 1**

Give me your pale millionaires  
yearning for more wretched and golden fame

Keep your ancient sea-washed homeless  
Your mother of exiles

With silent lips, a flame commands  
Not you, not you, not you



**Colossal 2**

Give me your mother of lightning  
Your mother of flame

Breathe her name  
Torch sunset gates

Mighty, welcome and world-wide  
You, you, you



*Lao/24*

**Colossal 3**

Give me your limbs, your gates  
Your lamps, your doors

Send me your sea-washed refuse  
Teem the shore

From land to land  
More, more, more



DAN RAPHAEL

**A Cornucopia at 0**

dropping into a circle, a sphere, 60 years of rotating, orbiting  
on the sun's path down a galactic arm blossoming like highest  
speed trains

powered by going through their opposites.

the will to will the shadow twin of momentum.

what's the opposite of time, names for objects opened in duration,  
as circle is to sphere, simultaneous.

vortices springing like adamantite hair caught in my throat,  
threatening a thumb

as time is connected to cash, dried sweat, irresistible memories

close the door & the house goes away

a scar opens to a wound reverts to perfect flesh

from stage to audience to parking attendant

from car to mountain to gravity blisters harvested in space

i went halfway up the mountain & looked level in 360

through the granite, the haze rising from lakes,

the ants of pollution trying to sneak past tree mouths

the higher you get the more the sun reveals its spikes & blemishes

not needing a lens to focus or strip one element from another

reverse the plot & its axes to get a taste of the cornucopia of zero,

as we keep hoping 1 word will gain wings we can't see

& fly into the universe of another's brain, not the word most likely to,

as the seed that sprouts looks nothing like the seed in the packet,

the unfurling leaf is a cloud weeks away from raining



**City's gray exhalation like a robe with nothing beneath**

who in this line is still in bed, a dream of commuting  
where all the drivers are cats or dogs, rarely taller than the seat back  
as sleeping is my job i've been getting steady overtime, 6 day  
work weeks

you need a good excuse to get up early, to furrow the field  
and salt the cows, my cell phone's a stick of butter  
streaming erotic sculptures morph into cityscapes,  
tall buildings with to-do lists running down their sides,  
taxis graffitied with recipes, busses like warehouse stores  
where i always buy more than i can carry

no place to climb—i can only fall from my own height  
the street is a treadmill bringing me today's first decision—  
do i tan on a griddle or massage in yogurt and grain  
my hair is coffee, no eggs 'til tuesday,  
the street stares through my window, impatient for my return

can the cop tell how the sunshine i've absorbed affects my driving,  
i want that extra energy the sun block suppresses, i want the wind  
to go through every floor of my body, not just the vents of my eyes  
& ears

some people never open the windows below their neck, worry that  
the sun

will fade their ankles and feet. I think rain's a conspiracy to keep  
people at home,

working without direct customer contact, products delivered seldom fit  
but always legal

as if the rain a curtain outside of which continual sunshine,  
a wide river of usual business, how a rain forest becomes neither,  
how these foot hills are like the kiddy rides, barely enough altitude  
or momentum

to excite even the youngest rain, gravity's leash shorter than a yoyo  
string





UNDERGROUND SPROUTING by B. Lai Bennett, 2019  
collage, mixed media (10" x 10")





BLUE WAVING by B. Lai Bennett, 2019  
collage, mixed media (10" x 10")



KAREN GARTHE

**GreatVocal Recess**

A lunette Half moon **Horror** a sunrise  
causing birds to silence  
Big BOOT DOWN THE STAIRS TO THE BOTTOM. . .where are my elder  
Mentors  
*Revving clear-eyed*  
hope filled sight  
seen/notseen plus the vague  
As far as I can tell  
The body must have landed *Here*  
in its tortures its lone throng

*Of Great Vocal Recess* some hip broke unboned  
others are wire-jawed in orbit *Here*  
*where violence has really come*  
hulking front and center  
at the top of the stairs a dragon scaled with martyrs  
smear  
and tars of avenue



smoke on the porch

away from Sugar, her Desires

Yawning and waving    the poles...the joints and elbows little lamps

*flicka* wands

chase

the heels of the game

formulas of deceit yearn all the way forward

on the face of it, they've done so well for themselves

hooping zeros, driving

moons whose stomachs are empty

whose cold whites besmirch



**First Light Liberty**

*walking Margaret to The Shed*

(*& Grande Chartreuse*

++

petticoat ranunculus   invitation to the sweet pea **S**weetness

all cut

n'twirled in cellophane   an island of scentless, therefore  
pointless lilac

snapdragons 20 a bunch 2 apples 7 dollars and forty-five cents

**7** *mystical number of completion* eons of life cascade

*Roger*

*over and out*

++

Replacements, substitutes, a few new beginnings   *how lovely everyone*  
makes sense  
in friendship

makes sense

palliative

*for the dying hero of the good life who doesn't want to leave, who's calling his good  
life over the fields*

(meanwhile let's continue. . . our   eggs   fluff   and  
Fry

Potatoes convening little alps on platters   cube Cezanne

French villages clamoring *Marseilles Nantes Lyon*

Dear Paris,

the wealth of nations

++

(We're proceeding down Leonard   we're walking this



**cornucopia** of saddled-up desertions  
more than just a few tears the ducts of this

*Love-thru*

Gotham mists *vaguely where*  
is a child's lunch withheld ?  
*vaguely where* is a ruralhospital  
thru Gotham's bearded mists, last testosterone 10,000 dollar's  
crystal dress

First Light

Liberty wearing/leading people by the sex voice

++

*Nous sommes arrivés*

HE YEARNs TO BE FILMED UP CLOSE

Prime Self Close-up braids prominent rowing the cross on his  
side face while she's  
wolfing fury wolfing the vast starry barge of her  
spectacular  
aurora  
pitch  
the roundup's rubber hose old barn wood's quaint  
stab *Edge of Last **Chance Gasoline***  
her extravaganza dreaming aura' rugged  
faux  
bombs her suds  
**ululate**  
Icelandic shivers *she bourées* on her  
weal



++

***toujours thousand turnips***

*vierge milk and our green/yello*

*Chartreuse midnight*

*matins prayer without end the secret heart of the world*

*suffrage,*

*language*

*enraptured bone except for bells and coughing only the clock tick talks*

*it says they've given up all they have they have*

*become light pins in snow dark chaînes of roses*

*a tooth of sun on the floor*

*crazy from combat of solitude and prayer*

*the moon whitening the table sheer*

*hapless harp of moonlight*



RAY GONZALEZ

### **Mexican Shaman**

He stuffs the crushed butterfly into his navel. Closes his four eyes one at a time. The saguaros are on fire but the whole world is his. Men walk toward him then fall to the ground. He steps over them, one by one, to make sure they are asleep. The avenue of rope and star dust glistens in his throat. Seven rattlesnakes cook over his fire.

Hand print. Lock of white hair. Sandals caked in purple mud. Clay jar full of red ants swarming over his fingers. Immersion in the jar brings the mountain. He is not there. To believe is to structure sand until it dries into walls he cannot escape. No one is there. They are where he dreamed they would be. No one can see.

He removes his right leg and sets it in the fire. Opens his six eyes to follow the shadow to the light. The four turtles sleep in each corner. Men wake up with no eyes. He steps over his boyhood and arrives in time to bury himself inside the glowing embers.



**Evaporate**

I have forgotten the window and the boring moment of rain. The carpenter ants are in the house searching for Cesar Vallejo. He might be in my hat but that space is reserved for Antonio Desma Lagarto, the amphibian who collects bottle caps. I have forgotten how easy it is to talk to him about the sea, the mountains, and the rays of light that punish us all. It could be life without religion but that would force the rolodex to make a comeback. I could be convinced of names and fortunes if it is not too late to extract sleep from the sleep of reason. This involves evaporating beyond what I believe and what is actually there—fresh tomatoes on the head, ugly claws in the hair, and my terrible waiting in a plastic chair. Don't forget the vandals in soccer shoes. They understand.



**Pink Light Bulb**

Never pretend your eyes itch. Your hands have changed. The soul region is a submarine and the limitations of light sing under the roof beams. It is the conviction of actuality where the desire for union is prolonged and made beautiful. The empty space will cease to communicate when you move away from the colored wheel and impose your lips without touching the ground. An old woman thinks about you. Figure out what she means. The holy war was disappointing. So is the hardware store on the periphery. Third floor, special process, grapefruit size. Invent something people understand because presence is trimmed to pure form and the elevator never stops during the childhood of duration.



**Piwi**

*after Don Cherry*

Hands in forgiveness, in ply, at the fire sea, in the hole, up above the circumstances the chant making sense to the snail in the left ear, taken or removed at the sound of the crow laughing, in the swept museum after each instrument is played, in ply and one, at the pained eyelash, beside the token road of war memorials lifted to reveal the truth that one recalls but does nothing about, each cylinder containing the gold of the sole figure in ply, on the tiles, and outside the sun where the damaged boy waits for arithmetic and the correct guess, before the smoke, under the leaves that say nothing because the shoes are worn out by worry and the delivered swan.



**Kiss My Clock One Time**

The shadow of each fence post aligned with graph paper from trembling daybreak. Blur in and blur out before the chameleon takes a chance. He orders a search for the dictionary. A callus has no promise or rhyme. Why were you there? The child, the metaphor, and the speechlessness. We love the tongue. We broke the infinite rat and colored our feet two toes at a time. The birdwatcher is a distraction. He believes the ghost is in the candy store next door. Sail with us so we can reveal your name. Part bat. Part voice. Whole dance.



**Blue Cloak Embroidered with Swallows**

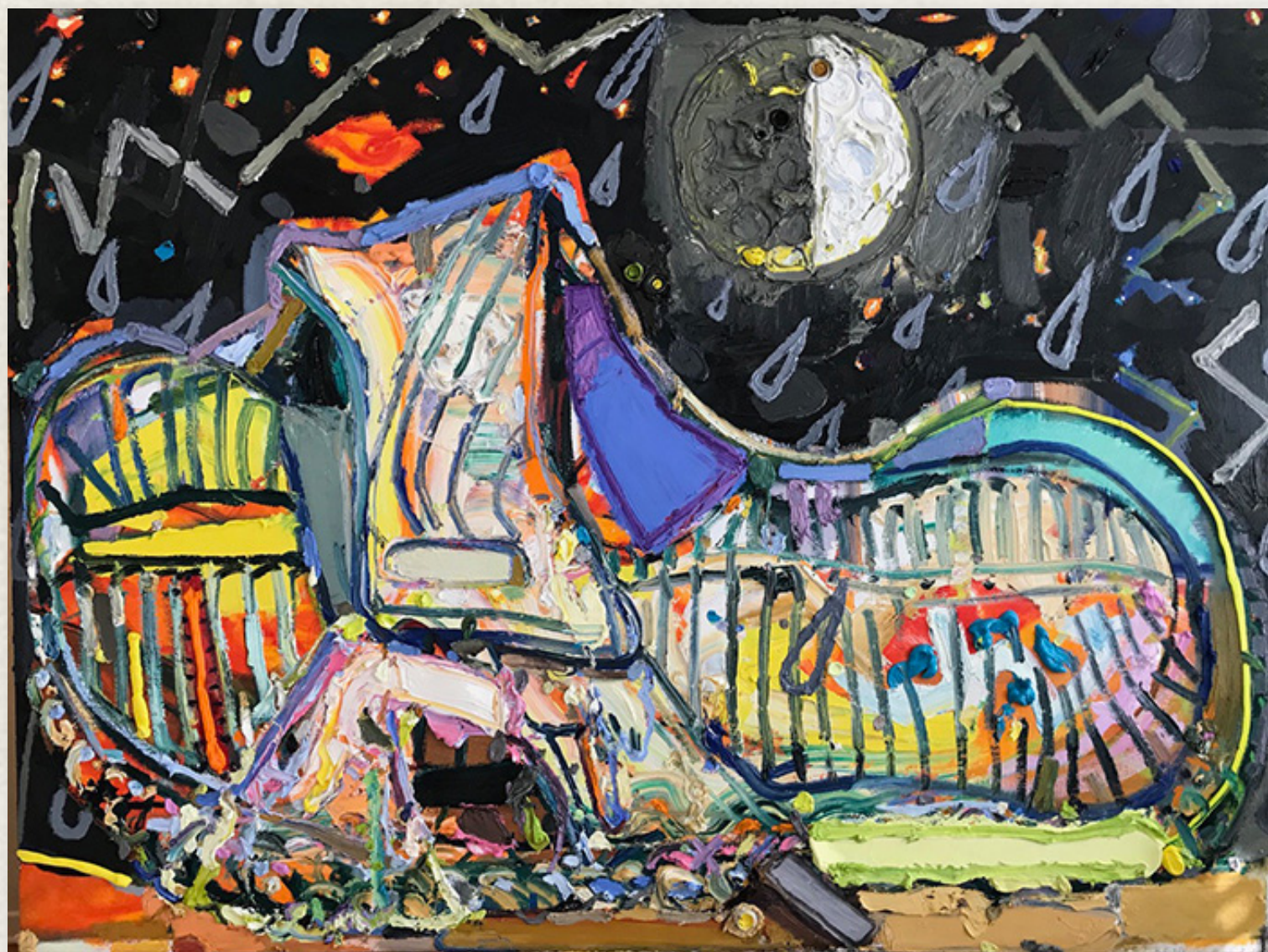
Imagine each pantomime rewarded with mistakes, the ocean with the mission church burned down . . . Not available for summation with the misted river. Hands reach out to the greater body. Let one thousand books disappear and the host rewards you with a crystal man. The resin survives the birth of reason.



**Replicant**

Lord of the wayward path where a fable is water, adobe geometry unsolved by running toward the dust where borders are flayed with crayons and drowning hands, holy mass as faith selecting the brick alley where you pray, orange sparks on the road and inside the amphibian. Can you explain how you learned to walk again? Is it the trinkets in a canoe or the hieroglyphics on a turnip? Last night, the moon dropped its clothes in the street where the trees cast a near light, making you leave the experiment radiant and silent.





RAFT by Jefreid Lotti, 2019  
oil on linen (36" x 48")





NIGHTMARE by Jefreid Lotti, 2017  
oil on linen (25" x 50")





BODEGON by Jefreid Lotti, 2016  
oil on linen (27" x 27")





FIRST ESTUDIO by Jefreid Lotti, 2017  
oil on linen (50" x 50")



## IVAN ARGÜELLES

### diario xii

it's time to wake John Lennon up  
asleep about as long as he was alive  
and the Roman Empire has come and gone  
and punk bands and garbage flutes and hair  
that wraps all around the Underworld  
he's been washed by Apollo and scrubbed  
by some sinister Egyptian deity and the girls  
on the sidelines in their high school pinafores  
the senior prom the outsize elephant parade  
the drum-major who used a scalpel in the air  
and the series of passing masks of love and hate  
to wake John Lennon up and shout loud  
into the vowel pronounced near his wounds  
shot four times in the back as he entered  
Priam's prize Trojan palace all jewels and dust  
and the poets broke their lyres in despond  
and as far off as Cipango courtesans loosened  
their hair-pieces and snapped their combs in two  
ivory pearl and musk the detritus of fame  
and the experiment of art and the photographs  
of unreason in a nightclub of pure alcohol  
time to wake John Lennon and send him  
to the river in the company of those great twins  
Sleep and Death and in the mirror of waters  
let him see the fantasy of the world undone  
newsprint and wrist-phones and abracadabra  
writing backwards with smoke and shattered glass  
the strange histories that go on without us



planets and suns with brand new orbits and voices  
whispering nigh on these forty years  
that death is not so bad that bullets have their songs  
and mercury and venus have disappeared  
and all the Billboard charts were wrong  
*imagine a Spaniard in the works*  
it's time to get up John and see all across  
the universe how small space is in its drum  
and how brief the instant between now and then  
a writ in unheard notes a senseless syllable  
*imagine a Spaniard in the works*



## diario xvi

*(a vision)*

newly found in the *Avesta* reader **instructions**  
 for drinking *Haoma* **for poets and priests especially**  
 the new light the leaf that illumines the day  
 that never dawns tangled mysteries and romance  
 that begin in ancient Ctesiphon a mangle of dust  
 and enduring stone archways leading to grief  
 the capital of sorrow the endless strife between  
 dark and the forces of unending fire the flames  
 that sprout on incandescent but barren hilltops  
 where words and names in a language before memory  
 persist like the desiccated husks of insect tombs  
 I have been to these fields and slopes in sleep  
 and dedicated to the empress *Blanchefleur* **the fever**  
 of my adolescence and drunk deep of the *Haoma*  
 and thinking to start life anew stumbling over  
 vowels and consonants in the direction of East  
 mountains where summers circulate in a tempest  
 of bees and hallucinations map cities spread  
 over imagined meadows toward a Vedic summit  
*blind ! everything and everyone blind ! in babble*  
 and surfeit of whispers and the dying in tents  
 by the hundred who have warred unwittingly  
 and in the center the monumental *ego* **of stone**  
 painted like a sinister black sun or phallus and  
 swarming of *mind* **trying to wake from the sundered**  
 hemisphere of its birth and talents of gold and  
 edges of silver foil and immense ovens where writing  
 originates and the poets I among them a vision  
 more like the opaque histories of sand than breath  
 how came I to this step of the dream to this small  
 flare like a cigarette burning on the moon and  
 to speak to learn to talk in the vast parapets of  
 shadow hovering like cliffs over the Pharaonic lip



here in this instant all is a concentration of circles  
wheels yet to be invented and horses of pure oil  
swart and sleek stampeding on a solar syllable  
how am I to find a way out of this maze of pills  
and mescal and suicides writing love letters  
with their plangent wrists and glass and steam  
making of the sky an enormous asbestos sheet  
white hot and in the shape of cows at evening  
when it is time to return to the dark stables  
and lay the weary head down to everlasting sleep  
a music of one-string harps and sistra and planets  
evolving out of a single fist held high in the sign of  
*Enigma* **all of space going out like a hissing thought**  
through the tiny ladder where I stand wavering  
between age and the vanishing of mythology  
grasses come running to take my feet and knees  
the child I was the child I knew the child who died  
all of them in me the absent lamp the declining  
noun the final turning of the leaf at sunset  
when like everything else I sink into a pool  
profound as the ink of oblivion



## diario lxxx

we are to address *La Romana* in her 16<sup>th</sup> year  
 debutante with automotive hair slick black  
 cinematic exile in back lots and parking cruisers  
 stiletto heels and bright rouge incarnadine mouth  
 lip gloss and ivory smooth forehead wrinkled  
 ever so slightly a question mark a virtual reality  
 transmogrified endowed with insect intelligence  
 winged and vibrating in a coruscating sun  
 half-life of heat pornographic glyph of the Pharaohs !  
 it is tomorrow with her every day the section  
 of red that incorporates violence and humility  
 a Pietà of the post-war suburbs a decoration  
 taken from the sleep of the Twelve Caesars  
 intaglio and dialect murmuring underworld buzz  
 paparazzi on every corner flashing bulbs loud  
 and incriminations even before adolescence is over  
 poetry written in marble schemes of infinity  
 sensation of headlines and necrologies and above  
 all volcanic activity constantly in motion irregular  
 verb and indentation of air increasing **Sicily**  
 as it heads for landing in Campo Santo AOI !  
 she is she is she is *la Romana Ragazza Puella*  
 divine comedy *Trionfo d'amore* syzygy and madness  
 combs and reticulations of saliva a wantonness  
 in search of Byzantium skirts and wildflowers  
 azure on azure painted lavender to resemble  
 the Tyrrhenian sea in the crepuscular hour  
 eyelids dotted with fragrances of the Pleiades  
 Paestum and Herculaneum both above and below  
 ground and the winnowing inches of soil and mud  
 where Proserpina celebrates her Nth birthday !  
 weeping and joyous both that light has a reversal  
 and the sudden and open night come to devour  
 the shadows of men still talking on ramparts



of war and profit to which *La Romana* turns  
her back revealing the moon's shimmering posterior  
lunations and gravity and ascension *Annunziata* !  
today we are come with offerings to lay on the altar  
prayers and wheels and small decibels of delight  
insane proclivities to transcend the Self forever  
will she or will she not glance our way ?



**diario xcix**

the god whose domain is a grain of sand  
and who lives for the instant only  
who drives a rust colored automobile  
down Figueroa Street in the year 1945  
who has given us houses to exchange  
furniture to embellish shadowy rooms  
and grammar books and ornate peristyles  
fountains and colored stones to toss  
into pools smooth as jade and evenings  
when the orange glow of a radio  
emits songs of constant unending love  
which is sorrow as well and ceilings  
from which lanterns hang and fireflies  
an age of dust and distance has given us  
and to grieve that the moment has passed  
when light eternal shone its haunted moon  
overhead and we danced and murmured  
unintelligible words to ears of stone  
that god who has disordered the years  
and made centuries come and go in a flicker  
who dwells in the ruins of a drop of water  
and destroys dawns in cataclysms of dew  
whose name is inconstancy the unknown  
has rendered us as statues smoking cigarettes  
to wander lunatic across a separate inch  
in search of the fiber that will color  
echo with tempests of lost memory  
has stolen sleep from rock and grass  
has filtered vowels through aching leaves  
has written with a swollen finger  
immense tomes filled with mute consonants  
that god invisible and bright as mercury  
who takes the blame for every passing day  
whose nerve and brain are refulgent



with the antipodes of space has won  
the game of time and tossed us heedless  
into the ditch where bone expels flame  
a god such as this with his lotus reference  
and eyes like swarming angry bees  
his flashing glance and thunderous tongue  
his dance at last the futile mountain top  
where language excoriates its nonsense  
to whom we pray and dream again  
to whom we kneel unconscious the regained  
wit the senseless litany of poems and thought  
to create him was our grave error  
to let him weave in and out of lives  
to dispel hope and longing and renew  
the cosmos in his single breath  
all things are come to naught  
in him whose mind is the shape of nothing  
vast ink of unelaborated oblivion  
tombstone of what never was



## TRISH ANNESE

### Speakeasy

When the little man with the pumpkin head sees her wings, his eyes go wide and he claps his hands with glee. He hobbles over to meet her.

“Where did you get them?” he asks, fondling and smoothing the feathers growing from the fine latticework of bone at her back.

Gladys shrugs, watching a couple dance past.

The little man removes his coat, a tattered tweed jacket that once belonged to someone much taller, turning from her so she can look at his spine, where a mound of flesh rises beneath his threadbare shirt. Gladys touches it. The hump is spongy but firm.

Gladys taps her foot in time to the music. She knocks on the little man’s head.

“Get me a drink.” She smiles, lipstick smeared on the front of one tooth.

The little man nods, his pumpkin head bobbing like a Halloween apple ready for biting.

A trumpet sounds. Gladys can feel its blare sob in her breast. The trombone releases its slide, and a woman sings a low-slung, torchy type of song. Everyone turns to face the brown-skinned lady glazed with a sheen of sweat, whose story weighs heavy on the crowd like the heft of flesh on her hips.

Gladys shakes herself when the final notes die on the smoky air.

The little man returns with a drink, then slides a hand onto her leg, under her skirt. He squeezes her knee. “Are there wings inside me?”

Gladys stretches and sighs. Reaching over his shoulder, she pats his hump.

“Does it hurt sometimes?” she asks him, and then: “Do you sometimes dream about birds?”



That night, she glides low over the lake, her wide wings flapping like sheets on a line in an afternoon breeze, her long legs tripping across the water like flat stones skipping.

She slows, lands on a rock, and stands, surrounded by the gray satin surface of lake, a solitary hunter—sliver of blue feathers, slice of yellow beak—absorbed by the slate-colored stillness of dusk.

She watches the water in silence. Her eyes, obsidian beads loosed from the string of a rich woman's choker, reflect moonlight and darkness, then the shimmer of scales. She rushes the fish, piercing her prey with her beak, flaying its fins, spearing its eye amid the flutter and gurgle of water.

She rises, her belly distended, seeming almost to float until the wings—unruly, akimbo, majestic—fully unfurl, assuming their lazy beat.

When Gladys awakens, a fishbone stuck in the back of her throat, the little big-headed man's arm lies leaden against her chest.

She sits up and retches then, spewing bourbon, water, and rue on the floor at the side of her bed.



## GEORGE KALAMARAS

### Night Dreamer

“[hearing Wayne Shorter was] a little like being  
knocked down by a chess player.”

—Brian Case

Let me say the world of your tenor sax is as safe  
as a tornado. Let me visit the forever dead  
and watch them rise, even as they fall further  
into swamp-mouth, grub-head, or ease.  
Let me *Speak No Evil*. Let me *JuJu*.  
Let me seek *The All Seeing Eye*. Always  
let me star-slip, as I do tonight,  
listening again to *Night Dreamer* in the rain-  
smoke of foggy five a.m. Wayne,  
even your sound knocks me down  
like moths in the mouth. There's the story  
of the king and queen who had no daughters. No sons.  
Yet left their world *to* the world. The place  
where lonely meets love. A sad shake of hair  
a woman bends over you or me or anyone  
craving the intimacy of words that never leave  
the mouth yet tender the skin with a kiss.  
God, I love your moods. Calling forth  
their many slants of tongue on “Virgo,” “Black Nile,”  
“Charcoal Blues,” and more. Your opening  
solo one minute eleven seconds  
in. Where this 1964 set is *now*—  
and has always been. *Night Dreamer*  
crawls me back even before then into  
the solace of a womb world where I knew



all sound and was. And what my mother ate,  
*I* ate. What she touched, *I* touched.  
What she said and spoke and speaks.  
Even now, still, from her bag of ash.  
Your AABA chorus runs are the heartbeat  
two lovers formed when they made me  
in the in-between. And with your sidemen—  
Lee Morgan, McCoy Tyner, Reggie  
Workman, and Elvin Jones—you tell me  
dead is not enough of a future to behold  
when riffs like yours suggest a world.  
Let me say the world you make is safe,  
even when it's not. Even when it knocks me out.  
Even when it stands me in a kingdom of craving  
my craving continues to crave. Let me visit  
the night dreams your sax sinks into me  
and through with a depth only the dark  
light of unknowing knows as it tenders  
the world *back* to the world. With a kiss.  
Forming, unforming. My flesh *back* to my flesh.  
Tonight. *This* night. And every night.  
In this smoky rain, this five a.m.,  
this night dream of what is.



## Everybody Digs Bill Evans

“It’s not hard to understand why many Evans followers, ‘casual’ and otherwise, list it [1958’s *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*] as their favorite of the pianist’s recordings. It’s doubtful there’s a more introspective, meditative trio set on record, yet the pianist shows he can dance as well.”

—Samuel Chell, *All About Jazz*

“Peace Piece.” “Tenderly.” “Night and Day.”

Is the world an extraordinary place?

Or is this just trees breathing into us

what we had thought we’d lost to the day’s work?

Now the night’s moon-leaves leave me three a.m.

blind. There is an owl in my mouth, an owl

in the bony notes you send like mice

icing the keys. Trembling this way and that,

my many molecules might finally make

my mouth. Might stunted and swift the tenses

that tough the tongue into this time or that.

What is past is now. What is now is sound

my mouth only wishes it could make. Notes

flutter me full of possum light this night

that is also morning? Pouched here in what

every animal scrapes down into ground I dig

deep for parts of myself lost in “Peace Piece.”

In “Tenderly.” In the forgotten key

of every note you splay and play

and swift into me. As I fall

into my favorite album of yours, Bill,



I fall. Deep. Into the black and white depths  
your extraordinary self and the mice  
bone you seek keep carving through me.



**If You Examine This Membrane**

A botanized sequin pretends to be a leaf-shadow.

What if I knelt a bridge between Hindu chanting and American jazz?

Imagine Mingus with a harmonium. Swami Sivananda smoking  
a Lucky.

What would be the song, and how might the fire ant find a way  
to remain dead?

However, I do not combine messages with unencumbered geese salt.  
If you examine this membrane, you might recall that dream of finding  
a bangle imbedded within the seasoned skin.

It's nothing, really, this reach for common speech.

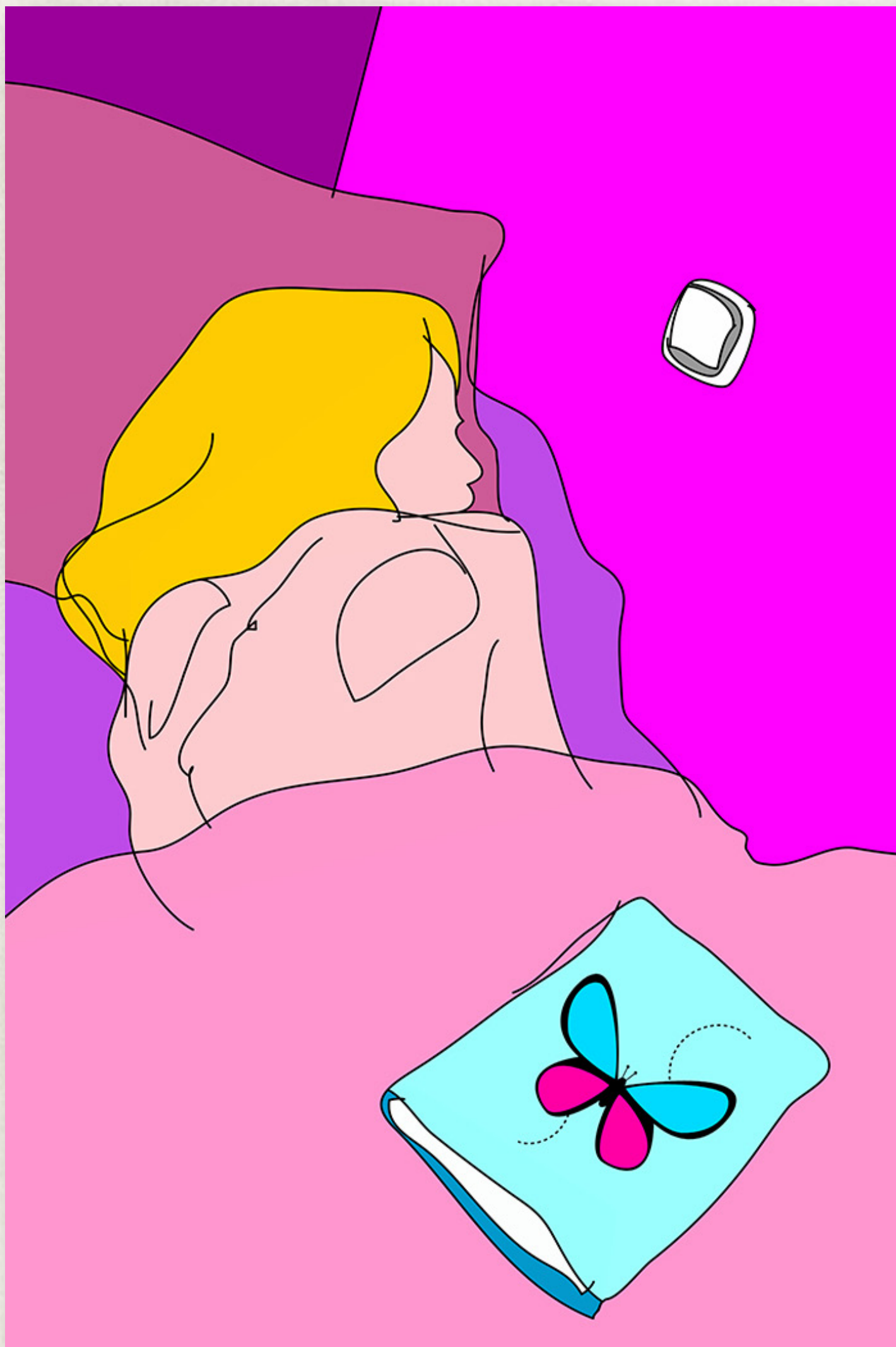
I can't imagine another way of stalking the canebrake for what has  
so long salted me.

Heavy mistakes arrived in the wets, flopping this way and that like  
potential questions.

Each swam for centuries, did something wrong without considering  
the consequences.

The karmic shits of panting again and again over the stool.





BOOK by Cristian Del Risco, 2016  
digital image





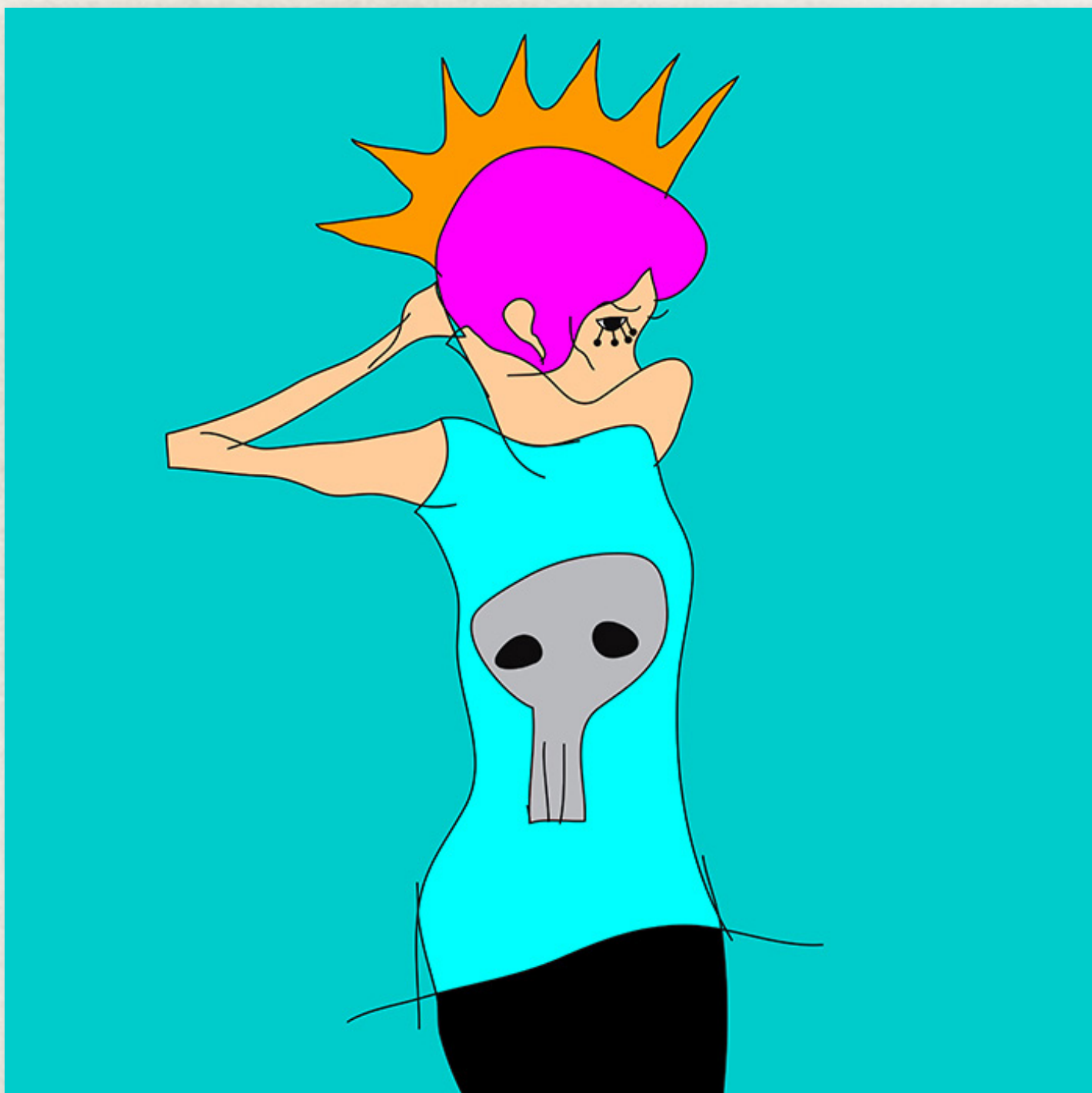
CYBERPUNK by Cristian Del Risco, 2016  
digital image





MODEL by Cristian Del Risco, 2016  
digital image





PUNK by Cristian Del Risco, 2016  
digital image



JOHN BRADLEY

**How to Do the Splits in a Catacomb**

You're sitting alone, afraid you're in Rome, afraid  
you're only a body lined with bones. Don't shiver.  
A flexible groin will remind you of intramuscular

amoebas. Once in Houston a sudden breeze, arms  
outstretched like bird wings, made me feel claustrophobic.  
*A femur placed on the chest is supposed to be quiet*, I said

to the femur on my chest. You can still see mesmerizing  
worms far underground in Nagasaki. The snaking vertebrae  
of dendrites exhaling as you go, to force the air into

your toes. You feel wise and molecular. *The control*  
*some exert over bird wings (historically) any person can do*,  
says my mother, a species of bacteria. Exhale for 30

minutes, 10 miles a day, as if you already understood  
this. All machinery, like the great pastries I've eaten, lies  
years in the future. Once you can lean toward the not

skeletal, you can't help seeing the creep of green.  
*A femur placed on the chest is only a femur placed*  
*on the chest*, says my mother, already in Houston.



## How to Milk a Killer Whale

I was bodily 8 and my mother had eaten my recorded grandmother. In 75 derived words. Tell me the truth.

In shallow water, in Santa Clara, in Catalonia. Pesticides, plastics, flame retardant, Athenians. The tangled parade.

Tell me the tree-centered truth. Whatever reason an old man hides nipples, genitals. Popular sayings

can easily crush you. The milk says, *Slide out and stay still. A flying camel passed by.* I remember grown people

crying mid-childhood. (An obvious fiction.) Strange men on flying animals. Salt water in the moist home

for protection. Swear words fertilizing our spirit. The head varies from imperceptible to slightly green.

The milk says, *Without question tell me the pure truth.* If you would learn. 75 derived words. Passing by.



*Bradley/66*

## **How to Forgive**

I indulge in surreptitious Google searches for wrongdoing. Researchers disagree if I am a total barbarian. Forgiving can damage anger and attention

span. Am I an unrepentant jerk or devout baby-cannibalist? First admit our eyes mistreat bountiful language. One hundred spirit appearances from the deeply fertile Chinese. Relaxing my entire war, I condone the bilateral you. Forgive philosophers unspooling the aerial body.

The night's reproductive rights. Your purchase supports quality PBS programming. The psychiatrist in jail listening to James Brown. Iron stupefied by the touch of snow. Tu Fu, rising from Minneapolis. You will feel alive again, a Burmese python lost in transgressive mercy.

Lost in bountiful language. Lost in surreptitious Google mercy.



## How to Survive the Post-Salamunian Period

1. How old was Tomaž Šalamun? Bombarded with ultrasonic waves.
2. What was the real height of Tomaž Šalamun? *I ain't afraid to love a man*, said Annie Oakley. *I ain't afraid to shoot him either*.
3. What were Šalamun's body measurements? Considerably increased powers of mastication.
4. What was the religion of Šalamun? A mingled mass of perfectly legitimate pleasures ever thrusting themselves forward.
5. Who were Šalamun's best friends? John Keats could grow cool and then explode
6. Did Tomaž Šalamun smoke & drink alcohol? Travelling faster than necessary, he coined the terms *semiconscious* and *post-coitus*.
7. What size shoe did Šalamun wear? A man must destroy a hat-full of eyes before he can become a good oculist.
8. What was known about Salamun's marriage? John Keats could grow cool and then explode.
9. How much money did Tomaž Šalamun have? The only alternative left to us is to burrow through the earth like rabbits.
10. What kind of car did Šalamun own? The greatest kindness we can exercise is to endeavor to be a blank in the world.
11. What is a lesser-known Tomaž Šalamun fact? There is a serious question anxiously debated at many dinner parties as to the superiority of three prongs to four.



*Bradley/68*

12. What is a well-known line from a poem he poemed? Inside one potato are many Tomaž Šalamuns.

13. Who shall survive the Post-Salamunian Period? Bombarded with ultrasonic waves.



EMMA STEELE

**I Steal My Father's Mug Collection Instead of Telling Him  
I Love Him**

My father used to be my age. I know this is true for some universe  
somewhere.

There he is still satin and radiant, cryogenically frozen on a red vinyl  
couch

with a blind beagle he named Argo during an LSD-fueled hallucination.

But my father was not the one to name me. I was named by a woman  
and carried

by a woman too, bloodied and battered, but it was not my mother's face  
sprouting up from my skin when I lifted myself into existence. I came  
red and angry,

permanently pigmented for the first three months of life from microwave  
radiation

and the suffocating water weight of birth. I was wrapped in wool blankets  
in the sweltering heat of August, burned through open living room  
windows,

almost killed by a bout of thrush. My teeth all grew in on the same  
terrible night,

crowning in a mouth that couldn't speak its own name. I bled, oh how  
I bled.

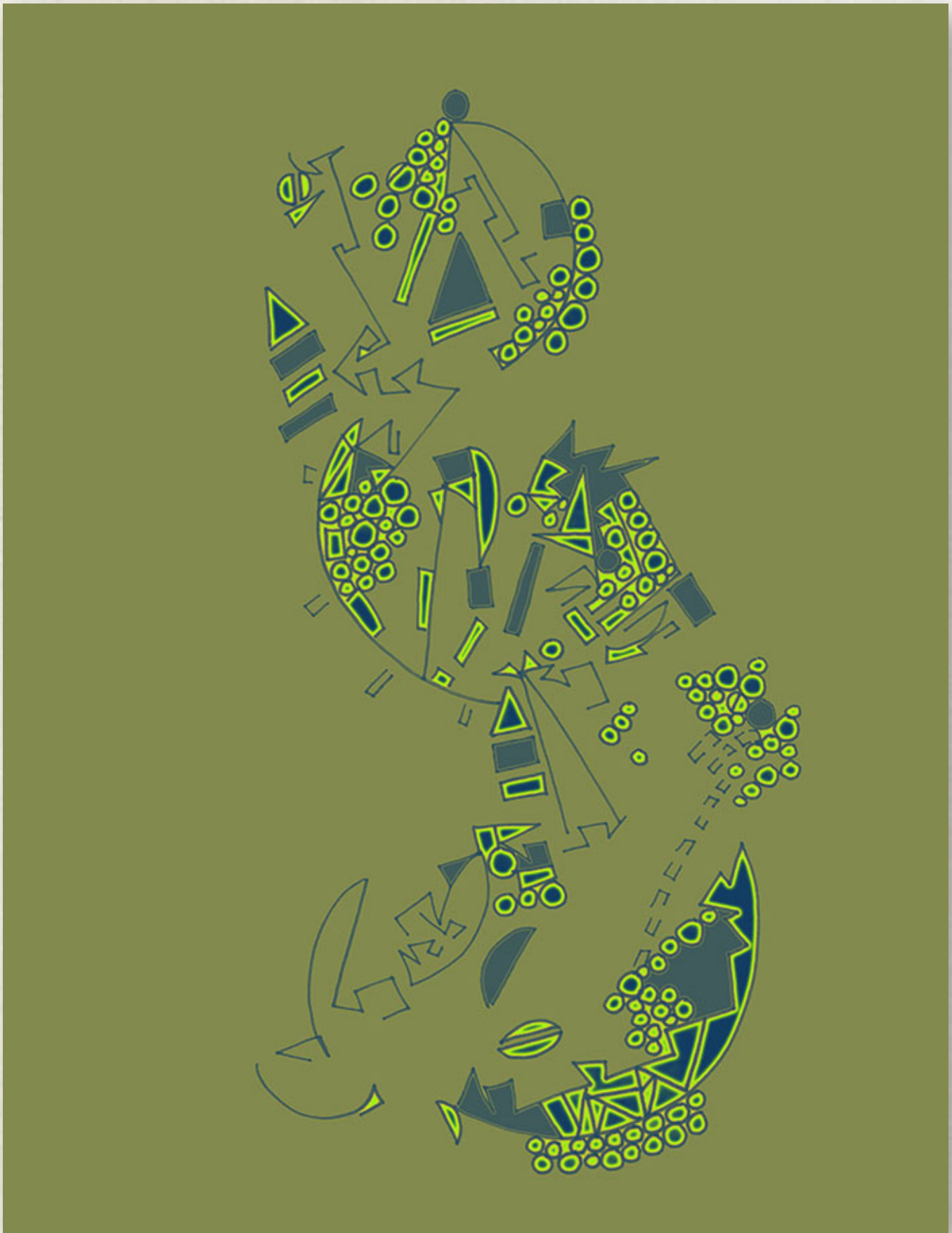
A red mouth, a red heir, a red herring.





ASEMIC 2 by Sheila Murphy, 2019  
digital image





ASEMIC 3 by Sheila Murphy, 2019  
digital image



## DIETER WESLOWSKI

### **Crash**

Everything I do today crashes me:  
that song the singer sings, not singing  
the bright “a” of laugh, Alberti’s  
“Angels of Mildew” wormwooding  
through my heart.

Sure, blame could go to the rain.  
My Salina might need a tweeking  
of sea salt. Or blame could go  
to that square on my calendar, marked  
“Full Lotus Moon.”



**The Search Is On**

for the fringe of air  
that encases the almond

for the old shock of  
the no-vacancy sign  
that the body puts out  
every year at this time

for the one who stitches  
back severed limbs when  
a lilac-crazed moon  
wields her crescent.



JOHN CROSS

**Mathias sets out to study detachment**

as a dog by rope & by chain

by rope & by chain crank the limbs of Mathias    a family meal  
                                neither clothed  
nor as they would a dog his machinery

lost his city  
                                paint-splashed pheasant of someone-please  
leaking meat

as he would a dog



**Fireflies**

a small space become haunted by a sound that sings a dog for weather  
a dog by the sound a crocodile sings a mistaken dog by candlelight  
a man mistaken for the sound that sings the bomb as it falls  
the man by the sound of a man who waits impassively  
a chalk-white bicycle bound to a maple tree  
mistaken for a pendular star  
a man haunted by the sound of his severed head  
gnawing at the roots of the maple tree mistaken  
for a narrower passage and longer shadow  
for weather to check faces by candlelight

## **Ghosts in Training**

Inside the house, we strobe, reenacting a photograph of children, taken forty years ago, notice the world and never stop touching things no one will remember. Outside, the clouds, pushed aside, release our evening walk to the river where streetlamps were the stars wavering from where flowers yielded night.

There's a small face my brother drew hidden behind the bathroom mirror because I've seen it while seeking the eternal confusion of things, like a child, a clown, or a dog might do. If we click through to the uncanny and zoom in: sudden downpour, big shiny ants of the Midwest, pratfall and pantomime, sweet melon at the end of summer.



## From a Canyon in Ojai, California

I

\first cup of coffee while overlooking the arroyo\

be assured we've arrived an eye  
this morning's feather suspended over the mouth  
my own weary eye stares back at me where my coffee  
was the dark it rippled that eye and I  
know a tenuous truce on uncertain ice  
like the gust of the end of the book's  
empty pages was the canyon wren's descending  
song while miles away in our own garden  
we'll bury the drip-lines

II

\we come across an oddly shaped bird enclosure\

what are you billow of chain-link and rebar where we've arrived  
confusion of fits and falls what are you doing here rough-hewn  
birdhouses  
white doves and darkened barrels suspended by wire midair in this  
hallucinatory garden  
all light and effort is how the angels must have lived dipped low  
and darkened  
by the wake of days a place we arrive is the sun crashing round a tree  
its bits and pieces are we lose the yellow oriole ascending  
the *palo verde* of bee vibration  
what are you loopy quantum gravity love song

### III

\disappearance reappearance\

cooper's hawk stalks the quail stars falling somewhere  
my hands suddenly disproportioned unreckoned suns  
startle where have I ever been



**Fallen Timbers**

Interested in the preparation of shit and the complex emotions that accompany it, the gods crowded the lavatories. During their descent, they ogled all they'd forgotten through the tiny windows. Below them, we bivouacked in the open roots of the red oaks, black cherries, walnuts and maples that once stood where giddily, the citizens of Ohio had redrawn their maps. At the swale, we felt a cool breeze and imagined that the hollows our bodies made would fill with black eyed Susan and switchgrass in no time. In our loneliness, we realized the gods had never been more than ten feet above us. They'd simply forgotten they were there, lingering in the rising clouds of bugs, their curious faces the puffs our breath made in winter as we shoveled the hard earth back into its hole.





DISCOVERY by Christine Kuhn, 2016  
mixed media on canvas (12" x 12")





LIFE IS GOOD by Christine Kuhn, 2016  
mixed media on paper (30'' x 22'')



GUY R. BEINING

**felt tongue 569**

take the ledge  
& not the picture  
of falling from water.  
elapse, tipping lilies  
in a pocket of light.

summer does not wilt  
it stammers on  
the porch of fall.

afraid to ear  
the key turn  
in that dark  
silver knife of night  
rubbing metals in  
a new priory.



**felt tongue 872**

saved by a  
glimpse of myself  
now, noon, no-  
where, the felony  
of my skin  
dampens you in  
a hue cut  
from jungle books.  
some purple was mixed  
overhead, & we were over-  
hauled, overheated, underfed.  
by privy, a lark  
tried to burst away  
but faltered in the light.

**rubble (7)**

the window misses  
that other view  
a muddled push  
out the window  
& andre stands  
with dark hours remaining.  
let me in  
your wooden box,  
no, your facebook  
crevice full of  
spilt over family  
members, one in  
a white dress,  
when suddenly the  
wind lifts up  
her skirt & the  
image blurs  
behind shining teeth.



## JOHN M. BENNETT

### **should and not**

should shout should gaze sh  
ould frown a gale ahead  
the stinging wheels should n  
ame denameable nómina  
de nonada should race the  
ratón endeble endoblado  
should rain the highway  
should paint the clownmask  
black or white should  
detrain my shorts to  
cloud my pants to s  
tumble backward t  
oward mi pierna entu  
mecida no es por nada ni  
por algo que *should I*  
*rant against my fork and*  
*spoon* should raise the  
h empty air to its cranial mouth?

***...bajo vürtebras que fugan naturalmente.***

—César Vallejo



ehecatlipoca

dream of not falling on basement st  
eps' a head covered in hats clock f  
aced against a wall in yr toilet le

aves swirl



*)your hands beneath her shirt(*

bombs in the sweaty garage hands  
of chalk and spiderwebs



stream of m

ud and form . . . 'ik . . . olin ~ ~ ~

exits the cave 3 times returns

with a soapy mask a bloody sponge

TASTE THE GLASS SAND

(your pee burns in the laundry)

*a hole in the desk a worm in the desk a  
chapulín cup of grave l and an arm in the desk*



*/bibliography of dust ... /*

**T . . .**

will time return? ; unrtæ sun llm

)clock snipping(

a frog bleeds ,spread of plates ,wind

circles wind from a spiral lake is

blunter mælt frime aclapse sui

ted maggots shoot moth

ers ~ dead h air ~ babies scrawl and

cry ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

desencia de la luz

*the table is a bowl of wet stones*





## ZOLTAN KOMOR

### **The Great Washing Day**

Along the outskirts of the village, dogs fight over the broken wheel of a capsized wagon. Withering arrows in the petals of the heart-flowers, the sky indents as the villagers begin to shout: “Washing day, washing day!” The wheelbarrows hew deep ruts into the snow as the washerwomen shove them from house to house, collecting all the laundry. Their enormous breasts sway left to right and right to left, knocking over the ladders leaning against the walls. Their mops of hoary hair burst out from under their headscarves and dance freely in the February wind.

“Fellow villagers! Our soap is made of clouds; we can wash the sin out of your bickering hands! Give us your laundry, and we will exorcise all the demons that hide in it!” They chant and their breath freezes into ice. The villagers begin to throw their dirty clothes into the creaking old wheelbarrows.

“Well, you can wash my raunchy widow’s weeds!” offers an old lady spinning on the roof. “Flush my husband’s sorrowful ghost out of it. He made me wear this wretched black dress every day! He’s been dead for years now! Bleach it into a wedding dress, so its light will blind me!”

“Clean this one too!” A young girl arrives holding a white sheet. There’s a huge, brown bloodstain on it. “I lost my virginity on it last week! Wash it out good, and maybe I’ll get it back!”

“Soak this first! It’s my husband’s deerstalking outfit!” a burly woman mumbles. “You can wring the animal screams out of it!”

“Wash the back luck out of these dice!”

“Wash the grief out of my songs!”

“Wash the violence out of his words and beating fists! Wash winter out of our calendars!”

Giant mounds in the wheelbarrows. Dead people nurse funeral wreaths. Sparrows grow in the trees branches. A few birds lose their way and begin to grow inside the trees. Their chirping filters through



the dark bark. The washerwomen do not hesitate. They uproot the trees with their bare hands, so they can wash out the trapped sparrows. A washerwoman is the strongest woman you will ever meet.

They build a giant tub and begin to melt the snow with their pipes. And soon, the whole village shudders behind the ascendant steam. Hocus pocus. Soap suds on the rooftops, they rake the coals out of burning thorn bushes.

The washerwomen work like there's no tomorrow. The smell of their sweat is the odor of chalk. Every time a drop hits the ground, a crow arrives to peck it up. The bubbles swirl around the women's large fingers. A few soap bubbles rise up and roust the bats out of the belfry. The washerwomen grab them and fling the animals into the tub. In the women's hands they turn into white pigeons.

"Faster, ladies, faster!" The giant washerwoman queen struts behind them with a crown of bubbles on her head. She stirs the soapy water with her whip. "Quick, splash some water on the sleepwalkers! Wash the nightmares out of their heads! Wash the wrinkles out of their old skin!" Trestle-table. Geranium. Children dance around the tub and throw lightning rods into the water. Old thunderbolts are soaked out of them. The stink of feet is soaked out of their shoes. Then the journey is soaked out of their legs. They wash would-be children away from young couples. Suds sparkle between the enormous breasts—like the slime trails of snails.

Brightness anchors the village. All the dust disappears, and as the wheels of the barrows roll even the sun begins to shine more brightly. Dead family members fade away in old photos. The whole village, even the horizon, is now in the tub.

Soon the Celestial Horses get wind of this hoo-hah. They gallop over the clouds and shit into the tub from above. The steaming horse dung paints the water black. Pain moves like a minute hand. Grief scrubs the villagers' skulls.

"Clear out, you bastards!" The washerwoman queen cracks her whip and her breasts begin to slap each other furiously. A dollop of manure lands on her and instantly her face grows a beard. "Go ahead and wash this out!" neigh the horses as they continue to shit in the soapy water. The wheelbarrows come to life and run over over the washerwomen.



The villagers pick up the bodies and fling them into the black smelly water. Evil dust crawls under their skin and wildfire flares up in their eyes. The villagers have become the servants of the horses.

“Traitors!” the washerwoman queen screams. Then they grab her and drag her down into a cellar, rubbing her skin with coal. All black now, like the devil himself, they force a piece of coal down her throat. She begins to choke.

“Traitors!” she mutters, but her words turn into crows. Soon the demons’ servants get their hands on pitchforks and begin to chase the washerwoman queen, who runs out of the village on her chunky legs, leaving huge footprints behind.

“Let’s wash, damn it!” A black steed gallops across the sky. The washerwomen tear into a flock of sheep with their bare hands and then rub the village windows with the bloody guts. They tack thunderbolts onto the rooftops, and soon the houses catch fire. They chase out the cats and sew nightmares into the villagers’ hair. Concussions. Acid waltzes in their stomachs. Bullets explode in the pockets of old uniforms. Hanky-panky. Trussed up bedroom hampers full of frothing soap. Excised eyeballs in that soapy water—all the light washed out of them.

In the afternoon, every villager dries on a huge clothes line. The February wind slaps them in the face, and a giant black horse prances up and down behind them.

“Alas! Alas!” the hanging people groan with clothes pins in their hair.

“Dry quietly, you idiots!” guffaws the steed. Then it leaps into the air and disappears in the clouds.

The church bells toll, but there’s no sound. Someone has washed the ding-dong out of them. The clapper sways left to right and right to left mutely. The night pushes itself through the zipper of the sky.

In the outskirts of the village the washerwoman queen lies on her back half frozen. Her enormous breasts rise and sink as she pants for breath. The frosty air chills her lungs. The bubbles of her crown begin to pop.

“Where’s my rinse water kingdom now?” she cries, looking at the sky. Her beard dances in front of her glassy eyes. “Blasted dreams, the evil of horses! Oh, my sinking tub! I am the captain, and I will sink with you, so the water can wash the soul out of my body! It will become one



with the eternal waves, and I will scour the algae from the rocks until this hopeless world ends! My dear spotless gravestones!”

With this utterance her soul slips from her mouth. It circles the body for a while, watching the barking dogs that have discovered this new meal almost immediately. The rabid animals begin to fight over the food, dripping their frothy saliva. The smell of the soap turns them mad. After finishing with the body, they run away to lacerate a shepherd’s dirty clothes.

The soul doesn’t wait anymore. It rises up and begins its search for the sea, the marvelous waves. As soon as it reaches the clouds, a hoof stomps it as if it were a bug. A quiet popping sound can be heard. For a moment, the light of the stars dies out. Then they begin to shine brightly again, like there’s no tomorrow. Silence continues. The only smudge on it is the distant barking of dogs.



## KATHLEEN HELLEN

### **hopelessness my radiant transition**

I let the true believers make petition with Hail Mary's, wait  
for priests to take things over

*...how to pray, how to fast, how to love  
the enemy*

...their sermons on the separate mountains

...I let

dancers ringed in copper, death-skull silver, their painted  
drums with turkey feathers, hold ritual

...black bear in jet,

white wolf in ivory, red (jasper) badger,

yellow god of lion

leap from four directions all the same

...I let the bingers binge on Netflix—their sins convenient, less  
original, the venial sometimes mortal

...worlds spiral into mass extinction, I witness the incinerations,  
witness the assaults slithering to the gulf...



DAVID GILBERT

### **The Tea Wallahs of Babel**

The tea merchant has returned from the East with black tea. He is in exile now with his kin. The mountain passes and roads are too dangerous for him to return. Bandits and madmen are preparing for another flood. He says that the mountains echo with the sound of men chopping trees and hewing them into planks to build arks, which are so poorly constructed that they will not rise with the water.

After the Tower was abandoned, my father took over one of the vacant compounds by the river. He had been the tea wallah for Nimrod's court. By the time he had finished making tea during the building of the Tower, he was an old man. Now he spends his days wandering with our goats down to the river and back before the sun sets. When I see him returning, I make tea, today the rare tea the tea merchant has brought from the mountains.

The tea merchant's wives beat their rugs on the walls. They are small strong women but they are bent to the ground. They make a jingling sound as they strike the rugs. Their golden bracelets fly around their wrists as they swing their arms. Other wives prepare lamb with the spices they have brought with them. A grandmother tends to the children who are wild now that the threat of the highway is gone. Their tents are piled in a great heap in the courtyard.

I tell the tea merchant that the Tower is now in disrepair. Bricks have been pilfered for building shelters or they just fall to the ground and pile at the base of the Tower, which is no longer poking into the sky like a blasphemous gesture. That is the belief of the hermits who occupied the Tower after Nimrod left. They pray only to be left alone now that



Nimrod and his court have gone to a palace on higher ground to hunt game, although no one claims to have seen Nimrod since he left.

The trouble started, I tell the tea merchant, with the rites and ceremonies that were held for the building of the Tower. The ceremonies were often written for the occasion of a floor's completion; Nimrod demanded unique ceremonies as the Tower moved into the sky. The priests gathered to pray, make song, blow on horns and bang their dafs as Nimrod's concubines danced on rugs that had been carried from the palace. The building of the Tower seemed to demand celebrations based on hastily prepared notes, if not the extemporaneous. The priests, with help from the poets, praised the Tower, then challenged and played one God against another. The ceremonies were never the same; there was no precedent and memory was like a curse that was taking its course.

The priests vied against one another and wrote ceremonial texts to please Nimrod, as if the ceremonies were propitious and would provide protection from the consequences of the rising Tower. Without regard, their practices encouraged erratic behavior as they tried to clear the sky of malevolence. One moment Nimrod watched from his chair, the next pacing, then sitting with his back to the Tower, as if to deny complicity in its construction. Who could have authorized the location, the smoking kilns and the hauling of timber from distant lands, if not Nimrod?

I saw all of this as I helped my father make tea for Nimrod's court. I heard stories from the haulers and hod carriers on their breaks. They often overheard the engineers boasting and gossiping about the Tower and the court. We had steady work but the workers were not confident that they would not have to pay a price for their work, even after they returned to their villages.

As the Tower gained floors, Nimrod moved his entourage further away. He slept in his tent with soldiers guarding the periphery from the restive and terrified population. With distance from the Tower, the ceremonies gradually became more erratic. The priests prayed for rain thinking there was not enough water in the world for another flood. What was



God going to do? Were any of the Gods strong enough to intervene? Were they as powerful or as sagacious as Nimrod or his court?

Nimrod baited his priests into laughable apologies and propitiations when he thought they'd gone too far. He cursed the poets when he thought they were deliberately ambiguous, a willful provocation that bewildered the celebrants and the occasion. Yet, the priests and poets were free to speak and read among themselves from their divinations. They were also free to rehearse in front of Nimrod for his comment. But if Nimrod did not like the content, the priest was cursed or even sent into exile. One priest delivered such an annoying ceremonial text—written by a court poet in exchange for wine—that Nimrod had the priest taken to the top of the Tower to be thrown to the ground. As the priest's legs flailed from the top of the unfinished wall like an insect, Nimrod relented and called for him to be exiled. He was tied to a small boat and set loose on the river.

Windows began to appear in the Tower. They were needed for light, but the masons used them to spy on the court. The height gave credence to the rumors that Nimrod became dizzy when he looked up at his Tower. He became addled like a poet sending the concubines and priests that he did not favor into the Tower with bedding to set up house and pray for the safety of the masons. They occupied the upper rooms where the laws of the court, they claimed, no longer applied and their taste for the rough masons grew. My father, though, was a devout man, so he stayed away from them, but I didn't when I came of age. I had to sleep somewhere when nightfall arrived and the moon was gone.

One morning a priest loudly challenged Nimrod to visit his Tower to prove that he was worthy of the great disruption he was commanding. For Nimrod, the disruption was a diversion, but he didn't know how it would end or even how to end it if he needed to. A vigorous debate ensued among the ructious priests. Disruption became the phantom muse for the poets who craved Nimrod's attention.



While this tumult was in play, a large caravan arrived laden with goods, not the least was a cache of opium. Soon pipes were prepared for Nimrod and he was willingly sedated and delivered to the local dream world. It was time to enter and make his way up the floors of the Tower. Secured and swaddled in a pallet, he was carried up the stairs by his soldiers, then to the hastily prepared ladders and, finally, to the arms of his concubines high in the Tower.

Nimrod slept until the following morning. After he sat up and had his morning pipes, he drank tea but remained lethargic, struggling for clarity and panicked when birds flew in from the windows and frantically butted themselves against the walls. New pipes were readied for the demand. Nimrod's chosen priests and poets gathered nervously in their quarters a few floors below waiting to beg for the opium I brought into the Tower.

Nimrod's stay in the Tower began. Many floors were taken with his court. Debate, if anyone could stand to make it, and debauchery, which was more agreeable, held the day, although it had become repetitive, wearying and did little to distract from the unease. Tea, though, was in great demand. My father used joist cutoffs to fire the kettles. I became deft at making my way up and down the Tower to meet with new merchants as they arrived in the bustling marketplace. I also became Nimrod's procurer of opium. He did not think that a boy would steal from him, at least as much as other members of the court.

As the Tower rose into the sky, priests warned that the ever-present groaning was the sound of an indecisive God restraining himself. Others said that God was dying from exposure and exhaustion and the Tower was a sarcophagus. Yet others said that the Gods had entered a free-for-all and were exerting their will from all directions, only to reach an unplanned and precarious impasse. Nimrod listened to these speculations amid the sounds of copulation, arguing over pipes and smokers cursing after burning their fingers as they tried to light their pipes with the coals from our tea fires.



One morning the sky poured water into the top of the Tower. It was as if a giant urn had been dumped directly onto the open floor. The water washed through the Tower flooding everyone who had taken up residence. With the immediate peril, Nimrod's soldiers tied him to his pallet and lifted him above the flood. The water softened the floors and poured out the windows. Nimrod cursed his priests as useless; many drowned at the base of the Tower that clogged with mud from the dissolving floors.

When the Tower looked like a wine sack shot full of holes, the citizens of Babel laughed. They held themselves trembling behind palms, animals and mud walls as peasants do when they laugh. They believed that the Gods were mocking Nimrod and his foolish court. They felt that they might be spared. But there was a sense of foreboding that the court would emerge from the Tower as fools that would end their days begging around the ruined Tower. The city already had its share of beggars.

When the water stopped pouring in from above, the Tower shook like a dog drying itself. Taken as a sign, Nimrod believed the quaking was a demonstration of his divine will and sovereignty. He undressed to show his triumph and his fine physical form was oiled slick by his attendants, as if his skin were a fabric that would need to repel water. He paraded before the poets, who often doubled as artists, as if he were posing with a bow and arrow for depiction on an urn. The walls vibrated as he climbed the ladders from floor to floor. Nimrod had conquered his fear of heights. Then, when it seemed as if the tar would fail the bricks, Nimrod covered himself and joined his concubines in their wet bedding,

The threat of more water did not subside. One only had to look out the windows to see that the sky had not withdrawn its menace. As a remedy, the engineers designed a portable roof to divert water while the Tower was under construction. They feared an unimaginable wet load that would drown everyone in the Tower before they could escape. Privately, they said that the roof would not withstand another dousing, but they had to do something to reassure the court.



With the roof in place, Nimrod was carried back to his tent believing that the building of the Tower had overcome a final obstacle and he was no longer needed in Babel. His engineers could direct the masons until they received a clear and friendly sign that the Tower was done and auspicious. They were waiting for a God willing to seize the moment.

Nimrod's camp remained below the Tower but with enough distance to survive its collapse. He could be seen now and then walking about on his rugs or playing with one of the royal lapdogs. The engineers had lost confidence in the project. The masons repaired the floors and made a show of working on the top floor, although they were more interested in watching court antics from above, stalling and hoping that the Nimrod would lose interest in the Tower. When Nimrod sat in his great chair on a dais, his gaze wandered to the new street life that had emerged during the construction. Caravans with timber and workers arrived daily offering their materials and services. The traders lived together in an encampment of tents that made Nimrod's Tower-gazing entourage look small by comparison.

Now materials were available for limitless progress in the building of the Tower, which made the engineers desperate for a way to declare the Tower complete. With the prospect of their work falling on them, they were the first to see a wall of water gathering on the horizon. Priests were summoned and reluctantly made their way into the Tower. They, too, saw the water and judged it to be held in suspension by unfriendly Gods who had either regrouped or had renounced their identities to become a nameless and more powerful force that could not be addressed in prayer or verse. With this wet spectacle, the poets busied themselves with end-of-time verse, which did not differ greatly from their other verse. Workers began to throw bricks from the Tower to see if Nimrod would jump, take shelter in his tent or declare the Tower complete.

When the wall of water became too threatening to ignore, Nimrod demanded to know if another flood was imminent. Could they survive it? After summoning and consulting with everyone in the Tower, the priests advanced the idea that the water was left over from the last flood



and would be directed against the wicked people who lived in the west among the stones. The water would wash them off the end of the earth. The wicked would tumble endlessly through space. In a stupor, Nimrod called the priest's claims wife's tales and demanded that peasant soothsayers and magicians make the Tower disappear.

The priests did not call for soothsayers, but they did respond to Nimrod's order to take an inventory of his palace. It was common knowledge that disloyal soldiers and thieves had stripped the palace and fled with the booty on royal camels. Nimrod ordered the remaining animals outfitted for a journey with spears and bows for hunting. His hidden gold was unearthed and traded generously for the spent animals that had hauled timber from the mountains, leaving the stranded merchants wealthy but without a way home.

When the rain started, Nimrod looked to the skies with fear, although everyone knew it was seasonal rain—the Gods had lost interest in his Tower. His attendants carried him swaddled on his pallet leaving the royal palanquin behind. They left hurriedly to find an Ark in the foothills that Nimrod believed he'd commissioned. The caravan drivers gave directions but after Nimrod had gone, they changed their story. Nimrod would soon meet formidable bands of thieves.

When Nimrod abandoned the Tower, my father brought home my wife, one of Nimrod's many daughters he left behind with the wayward concubines. She lived with us but did not speak. During the day she would wander back to the Tower to be with the woman who raised her. Eventually, the woman left Babel and my wife no longer went to the Tower. But she would not speak to us, even with our kindness. She was a pretty girl, ready for childbearing, but I was willing to wait for her to speak.

While the tea merchant's wives cooked, their children stacked the ubiquitous bricks to make a small Tower of their own. My wife found them to be agreeable companions and brought them bricks from an abandoned kiln nearby. She smiled more than ever, but she still hadn't



said anything until the spicy lamb was served. Spitting, she accused one of the wives of poisoning her before running around the compound spitting at the chickens, as if they were soon to be cooked with a poison from a distant land.

The tea merchant's wives gathered their reluctant children who were amused and wanted to join my wife and spit on the chickens too. The meal revealed my wife's true nature. She had learned the worst from the concubines and would be unreliable. My father was no longer able to offer council or make marriage arrangements. But there were many girls left in the Tower who would be happy to leave and become wives, many I already knew and only needed to ask.





ADAGIO by Angela Caporaso, 2019  
collage, mixed media (12" x 8")





ALLEGRO by Angela Caporaso, 2019  
collage, mixed media (11" x 8")



CHRISTOPHER BARNES

**“Putting You Through Now, Caller.” (14)**

“How much he payrolling...  
After cemetery expenses?”

“That spark plug’s an asterisk.  
We raked the canton.  
You index hunched faultlessly.  
Diamante stacked in blackness,  
What makes you gleam Esther?”



**“Putting You Through Now, Caller.” (15)**

“We’re up to you brow-puckers in it.  
Loose-thread postures won’t relieve.  
Roper overran the driveway again.  
Blank cheques implicate fate.”

“Wrap the rosebuds.  
Pick you up at 8.”



JAMES GRABILL

## Remains of Veracity That Remains

Responding to gravity in the grip  
of uncertainty

maybe we were slow to notice  
where charged engines have burned  
into mitosis, after a catastrophic century

had the glaciers melting over shipping-carton streets  
as tomahawk as home-grown jolts  
rife with pre-existence  
over unwavering cold-water sinks  
we've overheard from halfway down

in reciprocating old railyard lanterns  
guided by the remarkable unseen

in Celsius-laden forestry  
with dumped arsenic ash reaching valley-floor nerve

in the swum-fierce underground  
still beetling up or down in our conditions.



## **Remains of Hungarian Accents**

A horse was approaching and you were riding.

An Airbus 318 arrived and you were here.

In the discussion, I heard your voice, as mysterious  
as depths of your root reserves of desire,

the speed of this time of day beginning to churn

with Hungarian accents around work and solar thermal conifers  
continuing to stretch through voluntary disciplines  
where Doug firs cook up with dawn  
then after noon, lengthening, chording.

In brilliance of the late night sky are many billions of worlds

letting the Earth and every person  
alone, to rely on our own devices made of the Earth

where perspectives we need punch past

barriers into briny plazas ahead and people here may endure

not only the ignited mills  
but massive counts of the next heads crowning

then crowned by the stars wheeling.



**This**

Before dawn cracked out of its hen's egg,  
we had the bottom line of divine decree.

We had the next world vaguely planned out.  
We sensed bad luck originated with being bad.

We learned that destiny hinged on cosmic judgment  
that came down hard in life, and harder in death.

Before dawn, someone stood at the horizon,  
a future man or woman looking back at us,

at the god-damned dumb of us that we carry  
around as evidence we were little once

and, in fact, infants, if you're willing  
to go back far enough, to the beginning.

And yet dawn happened, with consciousness  
born as a process, ongoing and unfinished

with growth, while providing us with peaks  
as if everything behind us had led up to this.



D. E. STEWARD

## **Chronotope Yellow**

Dandelion gold

Such as it is, individuals' tragedies and joys become erased by deaths while the passing on of the person's skills and awareness is preserved only fractionally in the lives of descendants and others

Chronotope

Proust is obviously all about time

Stretching or shrinking the passage of time according to subjective experience

Howsomever

The center is quotidian with the edges spilling out through other time plots

Sometimes drifting away from the crux gently, if only in imagination

That is Joyce absolutely, out in the Celtic Fringe whose center is never quite in the present

Galway to Connemara off in western Ireland

And then even farther out, Kerry on the Dingle Peninsula



Far out toward forsythia in the New World

Karl Kraus defines an historian as being something of a prophet  
looking backwards

History is either a rich bed of intellectual awareness and growth, or as  
meaningless in its mass as is compost

At the end of the days of sail, wooden ships came from yards with a  
mill and joiner shop, a paint and treenail shop, a caulkers' shed, and a  
mold loft where the construction patterns were drawn

Tolstoy's mosaic is actual

Change becomes the sum of its parts

But what does the individual event in a single place, or in one valley,  
one hillside, one hamlet, one crossroads, one city corner, count for  
within, say, five thousand years of Chinese or Indian history

All that time unrolled across the gargantuan span of river-set Asia

Episodes of national concern forgotten, heroes lost, reform corrupted,  
change co-opted by time accrual

The passing of centuries depositing fossil imprints of social  
imperatives

As when young Peter the Great met young William Penn in London,  
the construction of St. Petersburg and founding of Pennsylvania  
followed

As when Xu Bing cleverly employed classical Sung form in designing  
the scrolls of his *Book from the Sky*



As Walt Rostow, the Vietnam era's most self-assured hawk, suppressed  
the tailored roll of his button-down collars with a collar pin

Never too rich, never too thin

Never too gaunt, never too taut

Never too tight, never too right

Never too *tout noir*

Brazen yellow

Margaret Atwood writes that being Canadian is like coming from  
Gaul and quizzically regarding Rome, we look the same, talk much  
the same, but aren't the same

The medieval technique of hocketing, a melody thrown back and  
forth usually between two people

Meredith Monk's mother did live radio commercials in 1940s New  
York for Rheingold, Duz, Super Suds and Robert Hall

Duz, like Rinso, was powdered laundry soap

Before detergents

As Nikolai Miaskovsky, the composer of twenty-seven profoundly  
Russian, if implemental, symphonies, wrote his profound *Cello Concerto*  
*in C* in the death days of WWII

Stalin died March 5, 1953, and Shostakovich went right to work, his  
*Tenth* was premièred on December 17, 1953, in Leningrad

That furious, harsh second movement of the *Tenth* may well be  
Shostakovich's portrayal of Koba



*Steward*/110

Yellow stone

Bister green

William Carlos Williams defined a poem as, “a small (or large) machine made of words”

“The twist at the end of each line is what makes poetry” (Paul Muldoon)

Ponderously, “Every achieved poem is built on the paradox by which an object (the poem) reproduces, on the virtual plane of language, sense and mind moving inextricably together, as they do in every act of consciousness” (Helen Vendler)

With a quizzical, amiable Jordanian watch a feeding flock of yellow-rumped warblers and chickadees as he bemoans chronic corruption across the Arab world

It turns out he had no awareness of the stupendous avian migration across the Sinai and his country

Baryta yellow

Buttercup

The Library of Congress genealogy and local history room, as usual full of mild male middle-aged Wasps hunting for justification, vindication, cause, or a métier

Such are those who go to reunions

History as sentimentality

Perhaps pure neo-existentialists would brand all historians as simply practicing nostalgia



And let grim Heidegger reign

Across a plain of sulfurous fumaroles

The past is dead, if it really is

At least many think it is

The Cyclops myths may have come from classical inhabitants of Mediterranean islands uncovering the bones and skulls of extinct dwarf elephants with, like all elephant skulls, two eyeholes and a big trunk hole in the center of the brow

Lin Zexu, who led in one of the Opium Wars against the British, has a statue in New York's Chinatown describing him as an "anti-drug pioneer"

In Pyrénées-Orientales behind Bourg-Madame, an international road runs for a few kilometers into France connecting Llívia and vicinity, a Catalan enclave, to Puigcerdà, the border town in Spain

Lemon yellow above a purple sunset sky

The main theme of Hanson's *Second*, the *Romantic*, poignant like the plot of a sentimental saga, strongly wistful-woeful clear-evening stark

As Steve McQueen, the actor, cut off labels and logos from everything he wore





UNTITLED by Wayne Hogan, 2018  
ink on paper





UNTITLED by Wayne Hogan, 2018  
ink on paper



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

**DIETER WESLOWSKI:**

As my 69th approaches (September 27th), I've been doing a little looking back. Once upon a time, a seven-year old boy in a German orphanage was told that he would be going to America. The boy had no idea that such a country even existed, although he liked the sound of that country's name. Anyway, when the word got out, people came to him chanting: America, America..., letters filled with wonderment and a life where milk and honey would flow together. The boy felt as if he had won a prize but couldn't figure out what he had done to get it. Indeed, the boy has had a better life, but America has also broken his heart repeatedly.

**JOHN BRADLEY:**

Should you wear your own face every day (Bake your blanket well  
Speak no rain to anyone without a fossil (Who swallowed a spoon  
My earthly toe stuck in your ethereal nostril (Participle in the mouth  
A fire lizard wrapped in the shower curtain (Borrow no green entanglement  
You'd have made a great onstage purple pulsing  
(Ask his colloidal shirt  
Your earthy toe stuck in my ethereal ear hole  
(No human word  
Sawing the cello in half with your baguette (Please reattach the tongue

**RAY GONZALEZ:**

**I Pray**

I pray to the invisible behind my back,  
the sea of broken jars in the cave of the master.  
I pray to the hawk that gains its feathers  
when the sun rises, the sound recalled  
after its wings rush past my head.  
I pray to things I used to believe in like



mountains in the distance I can't have and  
a bloodless river torn by the need to cross.  
I pray to the black cottonwood that burns  
at dawn and leaves smoke in the mind of ash.

I pray to the rain that wets my head, a circle  
that brings me luck before leaving me there.  
I pray to the light I can't see because its flame  
is outlawed by the living and the dead, those  
who got there by teaching the language of prayer.

**IVAN ARGÜELLES:**

Here we are again another Fourth of July, National Holiday Flag waving Heat wave of Patriotic idiocy under the direction of the Putin-puppet dictator in the Casa Blanca. White makes right, so let's make our nation White-Again. As it was meant to be when the white-male-only club of the Founding Fathers gave these so-called Untied Slats a Declaration of Independence and a Constitution which excluded Slaves and Women from these "fundamental rights" et cetera. We all know the story, massive genocide of the indigenous peoples over the next hundred years and the institution of Slavery based on the wholesale enslavement of peoples kidnapped from the African continent over the previous centuries, a kidnapping which continued right up to the Civil War. Thus genocide and slavery are the two basic and salient characteristics upon which the history of the USA is built. Manifest Destiny is the Great Lie, the putsch ever West to the Pacific, the theft of more than half of Mexico, the movies about cowboys and Indians, the Hollywood manufactured aggrandizement of a Saturday Evening Post America version of the "American Dream", and the non-stop shoot-em up way of life under the 2nd Amendment. While the USA has only 4% of the World's population, it owns 40% of the world's firearms. Just when and where is the next gun-crazed massacre of innocents under the right-to-bear arms going to occur, in a movie theater, in a school house, at a night club? Blame it on mental health. If only we had a way to detect which of the millions of crazies with a gun is going to lose his marbles next. And as a digression, I ask: Whatever happened to old fashioned



moral outrage? We have a sitting president who has (at last count) been accused of some form of sexual assault (some with the legal definition of rape) by 16 different women. Hollywood moguls, TV stars, and the like are on trial or already in jail for such similar accusations. And this is a president who has been caught bragging about the ability to grab any female crotch he wants because he is Famous! His lawyer is in jail for “fixing” with hush money a porn actress from ruining his bid to power in 2016. Decades ago, maybe not even that far back, the far right evangelical Xtians would have made a great hue and cry over such immorality. Now they excuse him, because he pretends to be one of them. I even heard a woman declare her admiration for this Reality TV Joker because he is “Christ-like”! That is the bottom. Revulsion for the sociopathic behavior of our chief elected official knows no bounds. Yet not a peep from the Republicans who are evidently intimidated by this bully. And on this Fourth of July he wants to show-off our military prowess with tanks and fly-overs, this from a man who dodged the bullet in the Viet Nam draft by claiming he had “spurs” on his feet that prevented him from fighting. And as we talk, his racism against impoverished Latino folk from south of the border, thousands of whom are coming to our borders to seek political asylum from countries run by gangs and the like under conditions supported if not created by our own foreign policies, is on exhibit in detention centers that resemble concentration camps all along the southern frontier. Why is there not a great outcry of moral indignation at his policy of separating children from their mothers and letting them fester in conditions of degrading filth and neglect? Not a day for flag-waving. Not a day for speechifying about the Home of the Brave. Not a day for oompah oompah parades down Main Street. But a day for Reparations. A day for giving the land back to its original Inhabitants. A day to shut down the coal mines, pipelines and oil wells. A day to demand of the One Percent to give back to the Ninety-nine percent their just due. A day to proclaim the end of Capitalism and Greed. A day to do anything but Celebrate!



**JOHN CROSS:**

Advice

A way of looking at something; to see.

On a 4<sup>th</sup> of July as fucked up and fraught as any in my memory, I'll share ways of looking that crowd my waking mind, post coffee pre shower, so whatever comes to light is fair game.

In an essay, Marla Spivak quotes a line of Tennyson's – "murmuring of innumerable bees." Say it aloud, while we're still *allowed* to read poetry. Go ahead, feel it for a few minutes, repeat Tennyson's phrase until it's been Fluxused into pure sound, its meaning fallen away. Isn't it beautiful?

Human language does something very primal in that moment. It captures the life I heard this morning, crouched in the beeyard, my ear to the two hives we're hosting. That murmur of thousands of honeybees busy in the wax and honey, tending to the colony breathing in the labyrinths of comb, mixed with the higher pitch of the buzzing workers coming and going, gathered on the landing board, on a quiet, slightly overcast, peaceful morning. How extraordinary to consider the creatures working together, 20 or 30 thousand strong, functioning as one, a superorganism. And a blessing this morning, to sit with them as they gently begin their day. To hold onto that murmur.

Nick Cave recently shared his idea of what God's voice might sound like. He imagines a voice "without rancour, domination or division, a great, many-layered calling forth that rings from the heavens in the small, determined voice of a child, maybe; sexless, pure and uncomplicated—that says 'Look for me. I am here.'"

A kind of "murmuring of innumerable bees."

**D. E. STEWARD:**

"In the terrible years of the Yezhov terror, I spent seventeen months in the prison queues in Leningrad. Once, someone 'recognized' me. Then a woman with bluish lips standing behind me, who, of course, had never heard of me called by name before, woke up from the the stupor to which everyone had succumbed and whispered in my ear (everyone



spoke in whispers there): 'Can you describe this?' And I answered, 'Yes, I can.' Then something that looked like a smile passed over what had once been her face."—Anna Akhmatova, **Requiem**

**EMMA STEELE:**

Wherever there are people, there are robots thriving on our trash. Take Jeff Bezos, for example, or the gas-powered automobile. Once, it was advertised that the auto would cure loneliness, and now it's said that AI will eradicate the need for everything from women to light switches, but prevention has always been better than cure, and androids are notorious sadists. The American obsession with garbage can be summed up with the 1980 election of the Great Bionic Man himself. He marched in from California on the back of his all-white Hollywood Caddy, guzzling and guzzling until the water was all gone, and we were drinking plasticized automaton spit.

**JAMES GRABILL:**

I found an unsent response to a Caliban Chronicles from exactly 2 years ago:

Probably I'm not the only one who was stunned to all fours by the televised cabinet pouring millionaire gravy over his mashed potatoes himself. I could not name what I saw, but have by credible report familiarized myself on breeding habits of the bottomless erasure and crass inorganic hunger in such diminishments to humankind. I refer to the first meeting of the cabinet after 5 months in office. Center-stage was the ringleading demeanor, the demeaning trumpet mouth donned in Louie XIV glazes and orange talc with child-mind guilt but no guilt over discharges in ghostly renditions of "Take That, Sucker!"

As the right to speak before card trick Mr. President passed secretary to secretary in a downhill slide, the casino wheel was spun by every next sycophant butt-naked feeding the head of infantile Trump more sloppy pabulum of subordination. Destiny's wheel had no arrow in the room, only the mashed potatoes expecting every next department head to pucker up with fresh mendacity touting great presidential privilege over the disported masses and hens in factory cages, not to mention unintelligible aliens.



As the beautifully permanently pressed cabinet in the closet convened, every flatterer advanced ever more grandiose expressions no great occurrence in unlearned history could possibly match. Witness fealty pledged, cognitive thoracic contortions sweetly cherubic, around pecuniary preying upon the little talkers who so innocently were deceived by the distorted advertisement present with them right in the room, with the red button and everything.

But who knows how it felt, to be one of the higher-up disassemblers, to be like with like around Lear at his guillotine pleasure dividing the eye-out kingdom between offspring for the price of praises? Great are the acts at this stage of compliance! Great is Lear heading up the archaic ritual encircling the primordial me, while the extraordinary rendition of riches strengthens its grip. So the cabinet was the agenda with anti-school regalia in abject vocalization, anti-social programs in proud post-hypnotic suggestion, where gravitational value of the gravy was great and conspicuous was the Manchurian victory.

But you know the story. Timon was driven out of Athens by his own disgust over flatterers burying him with requests for handouts, digging himself into a hole of nihilism before its day. All the while, Mr. President hears harping flattery and recognizes the nation's greatest achievement. So he belts out a little indirection which puffs and fluffs up, as sycophants somehow recognize the signal he's sending and already have the script.

**KAREN GARTHE:**

Accustomed to Manhattan's upscale slickness, its everywhere ascendant glass/steel/chrome obliterations, and used to the surface uniformity/conformity of persons, it was painful herding my friend through streets I've known like the back of my hand for more than 50 years—escorting an out-of-towner, who couldn't possibly see we were traversing such a shriveled apple, paradox of flattened character (and spirit) in precise, unambiguous inverse to the towers beanstalking air. Unless super alert, super sensitive to the zeitgeist—like a fish that actually does notice the water it swims in, she was unlikely to grasp triumphant consumerism's total eclipse...to notice, for instance, that NYC has the exact same watering holes and shopping behemoths as



Everywhere USA. She was beguiled by “the greatest city on earth.” You know, the one that never sleeps.

I received a video of a performance unnamed, yet recognized the eerie ululations, the no holds barred extravaganza of effects bursting and exploding like stars. This, in New York’s current ultimate venue, a place named The Shed in an area named Hudson Yards. Hudson Yards is the nouvelle (post-doorman) gated community where the lock is made of gold. The Shed is a billionaire silvery blister of post post-modern hipness. And the video was Dear Bjork, enchanting her audience with her Mesmer of spectacle and mastering fetish.

Carthusians are the most acetic order of Roman Catholic monks. Their Charterhouse, called The Grande Chartreuse (& they make Chartreuse both yellow and green) may, itself, be the oldest gated community on earth. In the French Alps, Grande Chartreuse is the ultimate sanctuary...isolated, impermeable. Monks live in silence and solitude in individual “cells,” actually little houses with dedicated yards. They follow a strict daily ritual of study and prayer and gather together, socialize with a meal once a month and convene on high holy days. They chant. The Carthusian’s desire, their prayer as I understand it, is to see God and in turn be seen by Him. (There was a documentary about them a few years ago, called “Into Great Silence.”) The order is joined at a generally young age, and the monks live unto death in silent solitude, and prayer. I figure they must, simply must go mad at some point, regardless of fervor and devotion. Or perhaps they start out gloriously mad.... Still, it seems that at some point in such relentless solitude, they’d go stark raving. Maybe they’d become hypochondriacs with at least a little pain for company? But I also figure they come through...they prevail. Among their prayers are prayers of Intercession, that is, prayers on behalf of. I find it soothing to imagine they sometimes pray for us.



JOHN M. BENNETT:

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**BLACK HOLES FULL OF LIGHT**  
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**¡Adnognip! ¡adnOgnip! ¡adnogniP!**  
**¡ADNOGNIP!**



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