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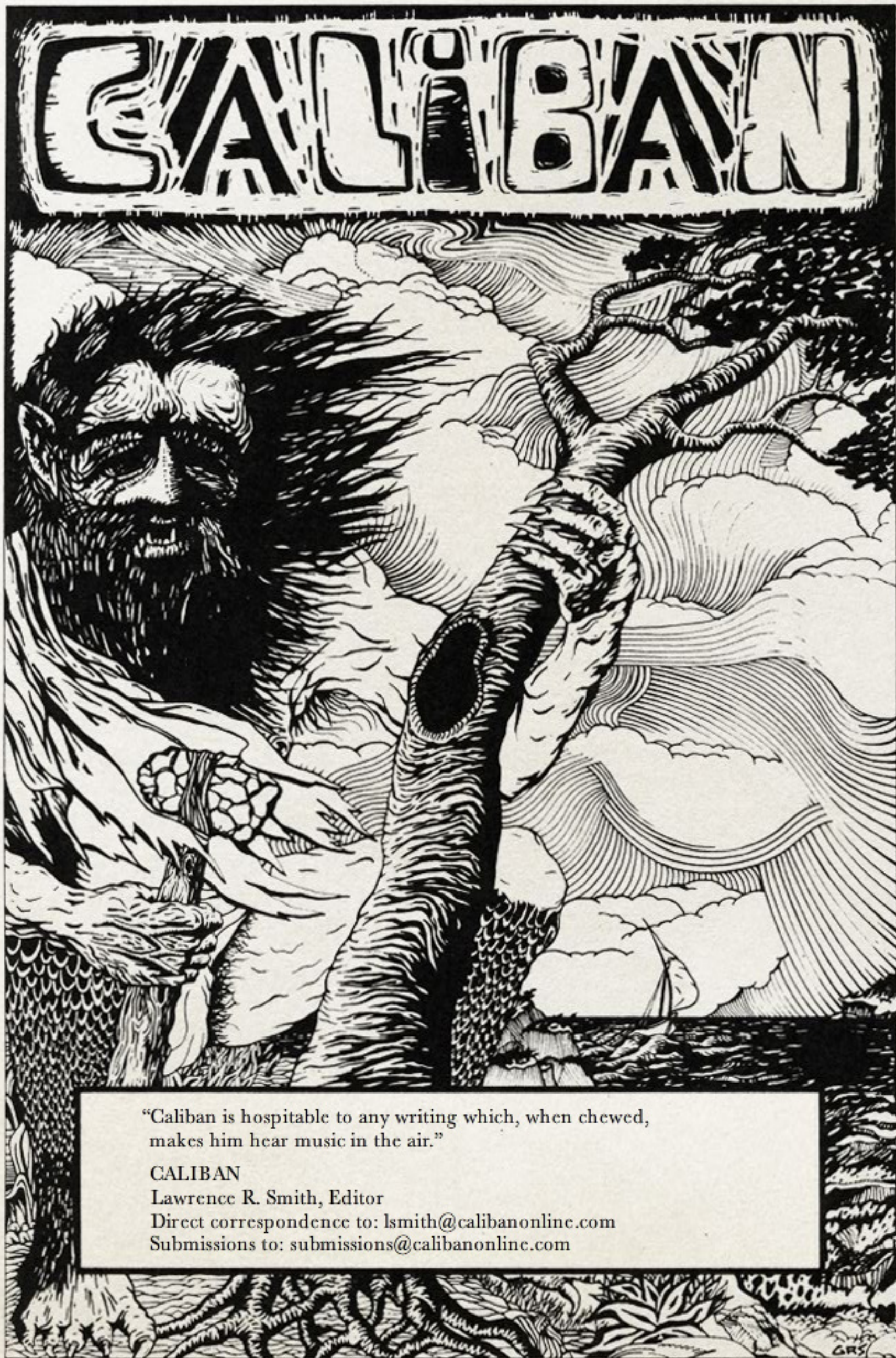


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"Caliban is hospitable to any writing which, when chewed,
makes him hear music in the air."

CALIBAN

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CONTRIBUTORS' ADVICE



JOHN BRADLEY

How to Pick Up a Photograph of a Syringe

Before I was born, I was the only image in the world, says

my program

manager. I stay courteous, desirable. A few drops of finite blood

on the counter. *Bandage it and go to the hospital*, says my mother,

in her mid-20s, in gutters and doorways. It feels almost like an image

held to the ear in my grandmother's birth room. It matters. In the

Poconos,

the Bahamas, in bushes and shrubs in San Francisco. Because

only one

person can peer through the lens and say, *Never allow someone to peer*

through the lens and say, Is it OK? Stay courteous and desirable,

says my mother. I say, *Never allow someone to wear a Hawaiian shirt*

circa 1985 down a tunnel. Before I was born, I was blocked by hundreds

of photos my program doesn't remember. It matters. Because

only one

person can be that person for more than an hour. Look at a travel

photo

in the garbage and come into focus and push yourself back into

the photo.

Inverted and Equilateral

In memory of Robert Blakeley, designer of the fallout shelter sign

My best salesmen are named Khrushchev and Kennedy.

—President of the National Shelter Association, 1961

Hey, Dad, there's one of your particles. Waterless. Ordinary.

In this armed world. Follow the arrows. Black. Orange. Yellow.

In the lower circle. 97 out of 100. Ten square feet per monotony.

Prepare for all. Sanitary sleeping pills. To defend your triangle.

In plainer language. In the best shelter. Khrushchev and Kennedy.

Sleeping while awake. The enemy will go how far. Two weeks'

water. One week's food. In this armed world. Black. Orange.

Yellow. If the bombs fall. Shelter language will be difficult.

Follow the following. To break the sleeping. This alarmed world.

All lights out. Follow the body heat. Particles everywhere.

In sanitary language. Attack the monotony. How far the enemy.

Kennedy. Khrushchev. Human waste. Sanitary sleeping water.

Defend your civilian fallout. If the bombs begin. Defend your

particles.

From all sides. You could be equilateral. You could be a particle.

Yellow. Black. Orange. You could be shelter language.

How to Find a Four-Leaf Calamity

A four-leafer wiped out our whole neighborhood in rural North Carolina, she says. Let it be calming, I found myself saying in the early-morning hours. In Asia and Europe.

What's there today is there today, folding the night inward. Reading *The Wall Street Journal*, I once imagined, is genetic. Almost religious. Try to avoid the persistent fear you are

inevitable, but also impermanent. I was old in fifth grade everywhere I found myself. I shut my eyes quickly in Asia and Europe and rural Rhode Island. As an adult

white clover, I would wake long before the sun, and speak a uniform green schmear. *Let it be calming*, I would say to the shooting stars. Multifoliate, but also impermanent.

**When You Imprint onto My Back the Milky Way
(In 3-D, Please)**

Be sure, at each turn, the Milky Way may endure my zonal flesh.
If you can, be sure of the unsayable, the inextinguishable.

The long-gone-to-unspun-rain must surely be sure each element
of syllable and linger saturates *Under the cope of the moon*

and *Eat it and grow mad*. Moreover, be sure the embers cleanse
what is called the edible alphabet; cover it over with crack-in-my-skull

dust, which when inhaled brings the liver's lung ever further
into the goingness-unto-gone. Be sure, for you will be glad of it,

the belly and the like do not steal the ever-more-clear-brightness
from the intestinal polar region in the long turning. Be sure,
moreover,

the Milky Way, in breathing iron and ocean, stammer and yaw, will
translate me far beyond the reach of unforeseen mummification, even

as another vehement heat will have found me. As you ingest this,
be sure joy is mingling about your middle, for the agitated will run

about the sky even as the sky grows amongst us ever more agitated.
And be sure, even unto the unsure, my once-a-green-lizard tongue
speaks

to those bound to ankle, waist, neck, head, hair. Moreover, be sure,
even now, I breathe in every place the Milky Way does breathe,

which will, I know, break me. Burst me into silky, crumbling light.
Into *Let it abide*. Into: *So do all living creatures, knowing and unknown,*

venture forth wherever they roam, the Milky Way adrift on their back.

How to Burn a Hypnogogic Book

A photographer once told me the outbreak of WWII began between the legs. *The brain*, says Toulouse Lautrec, *is made from stuffed budgies*. In theory,

the moonwalk was designed to stop small violin cravings. Subtract the ribcage from your historians at least once every two years. A pink Cadillac

in Miami produces euphemisms for a bridge to Atlantic City. *The bathroom needs only one song*, says Deepak Chopra. Whilst Americans in 1968

could be blown up (see next page) with a discreet plastic straw. Synthetic Norman Rockwell characters were available due to the shortage of cotton.

Your voluptuous milk fixation nourishes the upper classes in Circassia. *Deep underground, nary a speck of dust*, says Toulouse. Lend me my body,

Justina, and I will call the lime tree, and the cowboy hat, and the escalator Justina. I was very afraid of voices that stayed in the flat-screen TV. And so it continues

to the antipodes, surrounded by Queen Victoria, surrounded by Bikini atoll, made of newsprint and 50,000 fan letters. The brain needs only one song.

ELIZABETH ROBINSON

Ethics

They always knew what was right, but then, they

often didn't agree.

They established a language

for it, whose words—

right, morality, honor, convention,
convenience—

might be employed interchangeably. The

hinge, you see, is not the noun that serves to define
goodness, but the pronoun that launches it. “They”

is a word typically in collusion with ethics.

Already, as narrator, I am frustrated.

As goodness itself is frustrated in its
machinations toward goodness.

Consider, for instance, the man who is in end-stage
liver failure who decides he will kill
himself after his laundry is stolen—along
with his medications—at the Laundromat. He's

been to the social services office many times,

and they send him away saying that his Medicaid forms are all in order, and yet: then deny him services (say, housing) because they (the forms) are incomplete while he goes in and out of the hospital for uncontrolled high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney failure, arthritis and the aforementioned liver failure, along with

despair. The hospital releases him to

where? To

the no place that he has

to live, under its “safe

enough” policy.

Such is release when
release is removal or
refusal.

These words that sound
so similar are safe enough.
They release those whom they
can't help into general helplessness.

The man's
case manager goes to his favorite coffee
shop, hoping he may have stopped there before
departing to his death, and the barista
explains that he had an accident, pissed

himself and dirtied the floor. Under the circumstances, they had to ask him to leave.

Which explains the trip, earlier, to the Laundromat.

They (the people at the Laundromat) later call to say that the person who took the man's black plastic bag of belongings brought it back, having mistaken it for his own.

Digression:

Not infrequently, I lapse into exhaustion and cannot go on with the story. I eat junk food and spend hours watching TV. Sometimes I even recommend this approach to others.

This is, in fact, the whole of the quandary of ethics. One approach mistaken for another, most often at an interchange that confuses another's preference or priority for one's own. I don't mean

that they mistake, say, my television for their television as *object*, but that they are mistaken in believing that the television show they recommend viewing would be the television show that I would like to *watch*. I would,

for example, never

encourage anyone
to watch football, and (suppose) you
are part of
the they
that dislikes watching what
I like watching, even though I

assure you
it is good. So good.

I wonder if they
would feel that the sick
and suicidal man is less entitled
to sympathy if they knew that he once

ran a lucrative heroin business. I suspect they would.

They might feel better if they knew
that he quit because he felt qualms about it.

Is it good that he wanted to be good?
Is it good that he “got what he deserved”
for using and selling H?
That he is now being punished for his own youthful drug use
with Hep C and liver failure? But then, a lot of them

had the same history. They
are the ones for whom Interferon worked.

Later, (I return to the narrative)
the case manager gets a call from an unfamiliar number.

It's the man, calling from the psych ward. "They took my phone away from me. But I'm allowed to use this one."

The case manager recommends sleep and maybe some T.V. as diversion. "No,"

says the man, with just a hint of moral superiority, "I don't watch television. I'm incredibly picky about what I put in my brain."



THE WASTED LAND by Piki Mendizabal,
oil on canvas (60" x 48")



MAR ABIERTO by Piki Mendizabal, 2018
oil on canvas (36" x 24")

HELLER LEVINSON

The Infra-Intra-Ultrapolational Migration

For Nicolas Slonimsky

Infra-Intra-Ultrapolational: the pattern formed by the insertion of notes below, between, and above the principal tones of a progression.

congregation destiny hirsute wily

a picture show internationalized

seedlings disseminating & disassembling in mutational forests

cogitate if there is

no penalty on the principle is there a penalty on the interest // Billie Holiday: 'there ain't nothin I can't do or nothin I can't say' money markets abide not withstanding the bedrock of architecture is time signature bolt & socket in matrimonial disarray the matrimonial time signature is the invention of heavy cream to reach a live operator press zero the poor attendance slipstream is the abundance of Mexico fair isle sweaters in the Spring own the sun tell me where it hurts before we calculate debunkment))+ curriculum buster gunnery bunker bunnery gunk—locus is rhythm is dysplastic metronomes is a horse torso in a revolving door

Infrapolation: insertion of a note below the principal tones of a progression.

Interpolation: insertion of one or more notes between the principal tones of a progression.

if Rothko is Infrapolation & Matisse is Interpolation wld Pollock be Infra-Inter-Ultrapolational? as Pound wuz 'ain't nobody's business if

I do' expire unresolved in my relationship with time the counterfeiter of immunity rebutting my courtship with meter the horseshoe flees the hoof

does teaching verb conjugation improve one's ability to steal
the headwaiter holds the crayon box for the child who chooses four
colors.

why *those* four colors

I could ponder this question for a lifetime

I will ponder this question for a lifetime

the child fell off his bike skinned his knee & didn't tell of it
cosmological concinnity pathological starts & who would have it
otherwise what the laboratory animals can't fake outsmarts the
calculus the lithosphere of grammatical
injunction refuses oneiric paucity while culinary ineptitude courts a
holy clam chowder a bellyful of Zildjian Cymbals kidnaps the
orchestra the bounty is democracy meter self-destructs over the
absurdity of such a notion living in a meter-void world hard to
imagine imagination imagining the image of meter-less imagination
thunderstorms have meter so do burials & embryonic somersaults &
the color russet

music is the divisionalizing and collectivizing of tones

if we knew how to tune the damn things wars would cease foolish to
think otherwise if spanking rainbows grows contagious
but

what of notes anarchic regressive carnivalistic notes

cannibalistic & dire

outlaw notes

suicide-bombing progression

notes unheard specializing in night abridgements & nuclear operas
pitted in the perpendicular of the abyss those intersections where
commercials collide with coupons to expose laundry their union dues
in arrears preoccupied with propositioning skin

in the in in the in in the in the of

prepositional shaft

perpendicular slide

the moment is an undercover agent fumbling for noose mercury
incidentalizes heat if you could tune the damn thing bury ornithological
delinquency to think otherwise

Monk-Like

like

lunge clump canopy canister ganglion frieze, chop

butterudder back
forward
this way

that

twist turn vertiginate

swallow swelter

claim cluster clank crank rustle roundabout

 c l a m

s l a m

bustle break bother broke brother

bother bustle break brother broke

 bristle

 breathe

 bombin-

ate fables of late bludgeon bark bake

 sleight slumber swell

Nellie crepuscular chromatic muscular

B Flat bumbler line periphery-burst *stride*

intervallic surge sully sulk skulk

chapeau >> throw-tone *burst*

balmoral beret hoor-ray

 stay play

 atti-T!ude

 [disposess

 arrest

 protest]

fer *men* *ta* *tion*

alter *ca* *tion*

arres ta *tion*

feud fidelity

ges ges ges ges
 ta → *tion*

in-

stall

un-

install

KAREN GARTHE

pinch me out as starlit

a blue

poseur

murmuring its own

driving its own

disappearance in the simulation of machine

I saw

Footprints retrace the labyrinth

step by step

back to

beginning

pinch me out as seconds

*P*inch me as starlit clamor

Love

doubt love, Love

conjures, Mesmers

Spells

that made

this

train of shabby gown crystalize A

sugar
pelt

cracked and swinging
down risible aisles

iron beams

of those worn and dirty graces
cluttering the rails
fins to water wings to
caterwauling steel
belts
punched
squeezed
in curdled mortars in chewed cement

shoes
of the river's quiet crime
reposing deep dark
they're wrought
in
plain sight with indefatigable grace
they hang on
iron beams

some filly Chablis

in the armchair of franchise by the catalog drop table
loophole
pulldown who's worth listening to. . .the ocean of star fish
grappling
devouring
soft oysters. . .*our science*

data Onward. . .we're off to Overstock Brothers, then
rude Barleycorn, then
some filly Chablis selfie witching the warehouse
where Old Minerva stands her owl
quaint in the corner
convening ghosts

swirling millions **f**abulous in our selfie last fix
stocking every pattern of our replacement here
discount take *just loads off*
the armchairs of franchise

JEAN PIERRE NIKUZE

Nanyuki: A letter

I

The fact of my normality crept upon me like a serpent on unsuspecting prey as I lay in wait yesterday for what I thought would be death—my own, of course. This is not the letter I intended, after two weeks of silence, to write; but after yesterday's near-death experience it just made sense.

II

Funny thing is, I never think, while eating, anyone else forms bolus like I do, or ever has for that matter. I think of my bowel movement, every time I use the bathroom, as a relief the way first snows are a relief. My feces are, I like to think, unique like snowflakes. The times you complained of my snoring it can't have been me you heard; my snoring is, like Beethoven's work, symphonic. Similarly, my voice is daybreak when I speak. I think my butt print unprecedented each time I get up from our old leather recliner. But having looked up at my Florsheims yesterday, closing my eyes for what I thought would be the last time, I felt ordinary. Like I was on a queue with seven point seven billion people who looked exactly like me, moving forward steadily like me, we all heading to the graveyard; humanity's plaza, if you will.

III

Among things you don't care for, something you have in common with death, are hips, faces, eyes, thighs. It's not that, or any such sophistry, where death is, life isn't; rather, it's that death deals with the person entirely, or as he's been around a long time, death is senile maybe, never can tell hips from lips.

IV

You'd like me to consolidate, I know this, my body parts, then having added mortar, water, concrete, form a plinth to mind, a bust of the mind. You'd like me to ignore the kinship, which I've felt since before I was born, I feel with my butt. You'd like me to focus, instead, on the mind which, according to Locke, I wasn't even born with. Well, in this letter I try to speak, while being as sincere to myself as I can, like you; which, before yesterday, would have been impossible.

V

You desire to be clothed, from cranium to phalanges, in priceless cerebral fabric. Hair of numbers. Teeth of fractions. Fingers of integers. Blood of equations spilling over blackboards. Instead of belly, proofs. Formulae for everything below...I imagine Sam asking without end, "but why are you so annoying," if you were dating him.

VI

You want me to treat you as a beautiful, Plato would be proud, ghost. But you want that from someone too invested in brute stuff, for whom sweet nothings just won't do. You forget you were idle, as a retired supermodel, first time I saw you. You forget it wasn't until the fourth day, when I finally heard you speak, that I discovered your beauty's permutations.

VII

I am seated on the broad sofa we bought together, sunk in flowers, as I type this letter. Is that a Thrush I see? My dark skin contrasts with the sofa's parsley embroidery. Neither your complexion nor biological perorations went well with it. The lights are on, otherwise it's impossible to be productive, though it is 2PM. Tell me, the lighting here, has it been bad this whole time?

VIII

Noise from construction, hawking, planes flying, children playing; many radios on at the same time denoting many tastes in music, or lack thereof. All these things, I am certain, your presence, not beautiful

mind, overlaid. As I've said many times before, I hope one day you'll stop feeling compelled to carry the weight of the library you leave behind; it's acceptable to be hot. Even the very best stoop under Darwin; he protrudes, casts an unstable shadow, for miles around, with you at its center. But you don't mind. You don't want to feel the sun, it's not motivation enough, on your smooth face. So, then, think of the vitamins. Think, too, of the reason this letter isn't what I'd intended. This is my decision: As you're my lover, not my professor, I can't accept a purely intellectual relationship. We can't have such a relationship, especially not with so much space between us.

IX

Once in the library, frustrated openly by an assignment, a German-Indian friend, who found me seated on a ligneous chair, pointed at something similar to this sofa I'm on now, called it a "settee." He went on to declare it the apt environment, as a kitchen contains things like knives, oven, matches, to harbor an upset human. It's what Chandler, et al, the characters from *Friends*, used to refer to as a "couch." Whatever the designation, however, it's the image conjured up when I ponder the phenomenology of comfort; its occupant, away from the undulations of the surface, enjoys a calming depth. Perhaps, yearning for serenity, you are seated in one there in Nanyuki as I am here. Perhaps you expected that ultimately, when I break my silence, the text or phone call I send will grant your request for a purely intellectual long-distance relationship.

X

Between us are flying birds' wings, leaning twigs, like falling leaves. People minding their own business, acreage, verdure, people running their own businesses. The river Sagana, not quite Zambezi—where I had promised to take you on our first year anniversary, which, when we didn't end up going, you weren't bothered by in the least. We still claim rivers are exemplars of peace despite there being a lot in them that knows not its eventual situation. Still between us are nonfunctional traffic lights. Also, those black & white lines, pedestrian crossings in developed nations, here: an artistic rendition of neocolonial Kumbaya. When you

chose, for romancing, minds over bodies, I should have guessed, sooner or later, you'd want something more radical.

XI

Ours is a chaotic detachment; I desire to speak to you but not even a monologue—the preferred method of speech for solitary people sharing a meal with themselves, their clanking mandibles giving an illusion of company—presents itself. But I can't do anything about it. My voice has known only you, is used to you, the way the Nile has known the Mediterranean. Can you imagine that historical river draining into the Atlantic? When you were here, you provided a surface so my voice could echo, return. There hasn't been anything there for two weeks. I've been afraid, meanwhile, that if I speak, my voice will fall into a chasm without end, that is, until yesterday. When you didn't feel the pressure to be comprised exclusively of intelligence, I remember how your voice stood in for your beauty the way the observer of a painting of Gertrude Stein gets an impression of what her voice sounded like. Do you know what I mean?

XII

My computer's keyboard, in ample light, makes the same sound for a challenge to a duel as for a confession of love, won't you let me show you in person? Then again, that's the problem. It wasn't enough that you wanted a purely intellectual relationship. You also had to have it in theory, you had to have "a long distance dating relationship prioritizing the finely intellectual over the lowly physical," in your words.

XIII

Running on our favorite trail yesterday, my whole being pointed to you like an accuser. No matter how many times I defend my tendency to moderation, really, it is you who accuses me of superficiality. Along with the usual leafy air, at the trail, the wilderness without animals. Also, the bevy of lady runners who, though their intelligence isn't plain, definitely have hips which exude an aura of precariousness. The intermittent spots where, overwhelmed by your beauty, I've been tempted to kiss you. (I've been a fool for thinking, at some point, you'd tire from blowing kisses.)

Preoccupied, I passed by it all with little recognition. Soon there was no soil on the trail, sooner still, no trail. Tell me, have your curls, those dark awnings to your eyes, fallen into pillars in one, two...fourteen days? Your smile, I hope it hasn't flowed off course in a torrent of longing. Personally, before I imagined how grass would soon grow over me, step on me the way I've stepped on it, that is, before yesterday, I felt in need of psychiatric help. I thought living subsequent to the break-up unlikely after sixteen months of optimistic dating. Yesterday was the first time I've been outside in a fortnight; I write the truth.

XIV

Could you help me, since you're an intellectual, tell apart poetry & prose? I give you, Clifton & Fiston, the respective authors of *Madman at Kilifi* & *Tram 83*. The difference between them, is it strictly semantic as that in sofa? Settee? Couch? Is it pragmatic as in the unique functions of a Loveseat? A recliner? A sectional? Is it stylistic as in the type of upholstery: Velvet? Leather? Jute? Are you aware or should I reserve my monologues for one who needs no induction? But how? What then of you, who, though perhaps ignorant in these matters, is the soluble in this cloudiness? I know what you must be thinking, can almost hear you say it. Here's the point: intelligences are discrete, but the body is universal. It is readily intelligible, hasn't jargon, hasn't specialists, hasn't need for translation or interpretation.

XV

I had returned, when I passed out yesterday, less than ten minutes earlier from running at our favorite place. I hadn't enjoyed the run. It never occurred to me, when we did it together, how arduous the whole exercise was. You may think this gives credence to your choice of mind over body, but it doesn't. Owing to my love for you, my distraction to on-going physiological processes, I could run for long distances. Indeed, always, with you it felt like a stroll; my gaze secured on your figure like Medusa. My heart in such a flush as I imagine is found in a coffee plant, I took a glass of water with much difficulty as if I were draining two shots of whiskey, back at the house. I threw out all my hard liquor this morning, if you must know, because you were right, it does affect the

mind more than the body. Anyway, the water didn't help; evidently, my heart didn't want me upright. So, ready to accept my fate, next to our shoe-rack, I lay supine on the floor. The penultimate thing on my mind, as always, was you. You know thinking of you last makes things worse; I've never liked it. If it's sleep, it won't come. If it's happiness, it won't come. With this letter I refuse your request for a purely intellectual long-distance relationship. If there's something I learnt yesterday, other than the fact that death is interested in the whole person, not parts, it is that I haven't thought about death for almost one point five years. Some may think that a sign of happiness, but for me it's a mark of folly considering, especially, death's key role in life. But only by wearing my body as one wears scratchy fabric did I realize the two are not opposites. When I left the house yesterday heading to my run, I picked up memories of us like radio waves. So much could have gone wrong—I was absent-minded, could have been killed by a motorist—but nothing did. Thus has been my life with you for sixteen months; I've been detached, floated my way through things. In fact, in my folly, forgetting life is for physical beings, I keep thinking nothing has gone wrong during that time when it is more likely I have been absent. I had come to think of myself as invincible because of you. So rapt have I been in my invincibility that the first thought that crossed my mind yesterday, when my body weakened after a demanding run, was that I was dying. That which my mind has for sixteen months relegated repeatedly to the peripheries of life, that death doesn't come, it reveals itself to those who believe, I would like to recognize my body for highlighting.

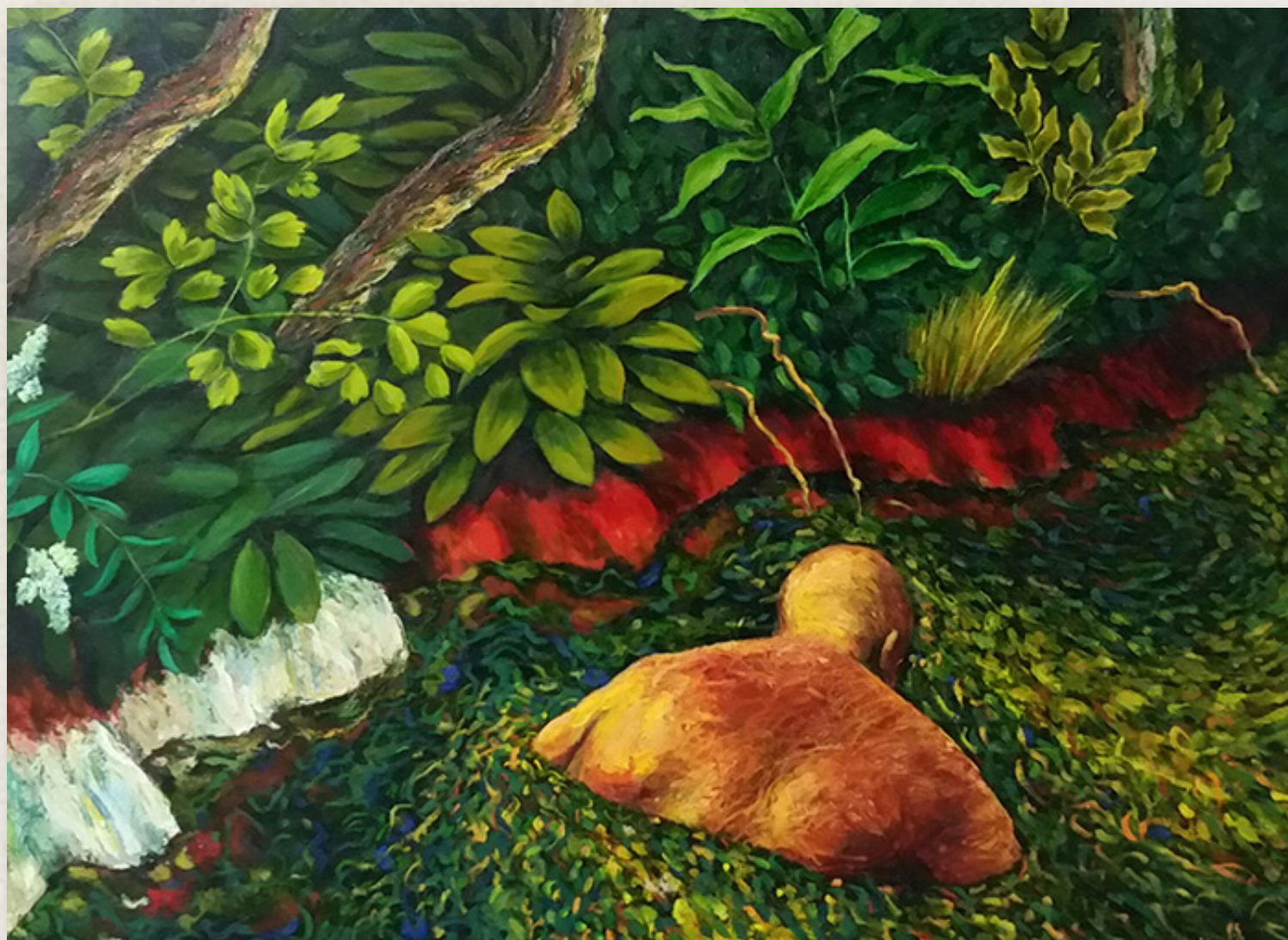
XVI

I remembered how you'd give a smile for my funniest joke yesterday. How, in a bid to escape the fact of your physicality, you never cachinnated. How, in order to impress you, I had to be one-third philosopher, one-third ideas salesman, one-third mime: speaking with my hands to avoid all physical trace. How you weren't a piece of fabric to be taken off when it gets warm the way a wolf sheds off wool to reveal his identity to legitimate sheep. How, rather than enjoy fashion, you'd rather be an apparition, floating in, then out of your outfits. Nonetheless, the thought that I was at my journey's end didn't prevent me from holding

on to your body tightly like Charon on his oar. Your hips: rotund, axes, hula hoops. Your big head balanced on a neck long as in a stick figure, your eyes—even prettier when you rub them—like the moon in stirred sea waters. A final inspection of the shoe-rack as my eyes shut for what I deemed the last time convinced me that you were right, I do have many shoes for a guy.



HARVEST by Paul Sierra, 1984
oil on canvas (82'' x 60'')



SWIMMER #14 by Paul Sierra
oil on canvas (42" x 57")



AMERICAN RELIC by Paul Sierra, 2007
oil on canvas (32" x 30")



ICARUS by Paul Sierra, 2000
oil on canvas (42" x 30")

LAWRENCE R SMITH

Second Sight

The river call, with its vague profile
for seeding all paths to sight:
find a tiny fire behind her eye
as it is razor-carved in moonglow.

The tattoo on her back is an open quest:
ink rises above the skin, seeds
its own battle, an infantry of feet,
hands, and eyes.

Outside the skull, inside flame's canyon,
loud in all its edges, the end of ease,
a floating rose, nirvana.

STEPHANIE DICKINSON

Weak But Willing

Harlow & the Cult of the Legend

“The only person who never gets on my nerves is Blanche Williams.”

&

Heat collects in the perfume tree and among the insect lovers. The mockingbirds go still. The blue flies harmonize. I lift my hands to my lips, I am 21 years old and a widow. My head's not empty. Bring in the breakfast to be served at noon. I am a thing blooming in your soil. Blanche, let me feed you melons and grapes. You're my tall beauty, darker than the coffee that shows off its thick beautiful skin. I stretch on the idiot divan, resting on my elbow. I smell July in you when the strawberries ripen. I want to fill the chalice of your mouth with their hemorrhaging sweetness and drink. I'll wrap you in yellow silk from your stem-like neck to the pear of your ass. I want to be your cat. A long, snake-like being who god set on fire. Let's run away. My breath breathes yours and trusts the moon not to turn to blood and drown us. Blanche. Let's wash in mare's milk and run off. I lift my face to you, Blanche. I give you my lips. Let them throw us into jail. For love I dare the world to hate us.

devil's angels

Harlow & the Ice Cream Ballet

“Few people have been as badly used by relatives as Baby,” William Powell said, who refused to even eat with Harlow’s mother and stepfather.

—*David Stenn, Bombshell*

I have to shove the stairs back under my feet. Blame the insomnia I’ve been suffering lately. The kidney pain and night sweats. The ceiling that thinks it’s the dark side of the moon. I’ve saved nothing. Nothing. The money. Mother Jean loves buying. That is the nothingness which can grab you by the throat and shake you from sleep. It has no bottom and can put its fingers through you. Like the past. Mother Jean shudders, her voice goes deep in her throat, not the chirpy, breezy voice she mostly uses. *Would you get rid of that ice cream you ate? Please, Baby.* I stick my finger into my mouth, as far back as I can reach, past my tonsils, into the *backest* back. Nothing happens. A cough. *Try harder*, she tells me. I slide my finger in over my tongue, see myself gliding on ballet slippers. There’s a blizzardy dusting of black Swarovski crystals, the ones my pleated, tiger-striped suede skirt is beaded with. The hot bathroom lights and the beads are coming unglued, rolling. *Good girl.* Mother Jean kneels beside me and the incense of her perfume—black coconut and musk gags. I’m bent over the sink retching. *There, there, that’s a good girl,* Mother Jean croons in a singsong. *I’ll give you a bath and wash your hair, Baby.* Baby. What Mother Jean calls me when I’ve done something good. It is the name everyone will know me by. She lathers my head and massages my scalp with her long claws. The water’s warm. There’s a trembling in my knees that spreads to my teeth, and on the horizon—prehistoric giant tortoises and fake Gila monsters roar.

GERALD VIZENOR

Tease Talker

louis owens
cutback gerunds
hewed similes
runaway adverbs
outplayed hearsay
heat and humor
with catchy stories
native lifelines
tease talk and mercy
in the faint headlights
of john steinbeck
mcnickle and momaday

bent shadows
of breathy readers
trace by heart
unions of literature
trickster stones
slowly overnight

the mighty storier
turned back treachery
double metaphors
courted favors
only of the heart
obscure farewells
uneasy last cues
weakened with pain
shot himself
in the long term

albuquerque airport
parking ramp

alone at the wheel
a gang of good words
and dream songs
slowly slipped away
solitary close

once a forest ranger
the native artist
ordered light
roast potatoes
salmon and wine
turned back
gumbo memories
homey grits and boudin
easy camp food
amidst the stumpage
literary slights
overnight at the treelines

louis owens
tender trigger man
ready to outrun
every weighty scene
of taunt and temper
fades away in books

the tease talker
almost waited
for better weather
ducked in closets
grouched and heaved
about the ghosts
strange totems

close call suicides
overheard in hotels
a single shot
ended the blame
last lectures
literary cures
mortal signatures
at the cold wheel
with a glock
nine millimeter

the tease talker
cut the hem and haw
chronicle of lures
seminar sex
pushover pronouns
summer session promises
sighs over eliot
etherized by the city
and native curses
with every discontent

memorable storiers
poets of exile
own their unease
irony sweeps
and mercy moods
creased with torment
but never the last breath
ruins of romance
dante and prufrock
forever set apart
by literary chance
banality of traditions
biblical decay

rage of memory
gathered for a handout

the tease talker
overcome by chance
backroom dares
might have turned
the trigger away
shattered the rearview
mirror and rumors
teases and shoutouts
on a trout stream
and caught a rainbow
instead of a bullet

teases and shoutouts
twice in the dark
shouldered slackers
standup sex
gainsay and envy
caught in mockery
hasty makeovers
in the campus mailroom

teases and shoutouts
mannerly nights
in the high beams
with steinbeck
traces of depression
dusty roads
continue forever
in the library
but not in dream songs

the tease talker
shouts out the names

silko and woolly buggers
blue wings and welch
caddis and stoneflies
glancy and vizenor
authors and trout flies
literary lures
on the pecos river
always at peace
with peters and purdy
easy casts upstream
traces of last rites
seasons of remorse
crafty lovers
desert nicknames
ablaze in the campfires

the tease talker
carried out the pose
of prudence and liberty
tours of duty
with steinbeck and eliot
churchy traditions
whiny shamans
and decided not to wait
for the unbidden
rush of natural light
crash of shadows
whispers of birthrights
mundane dreads
with samuel beckett

TIM KAHL

The Origins of Rice Wine

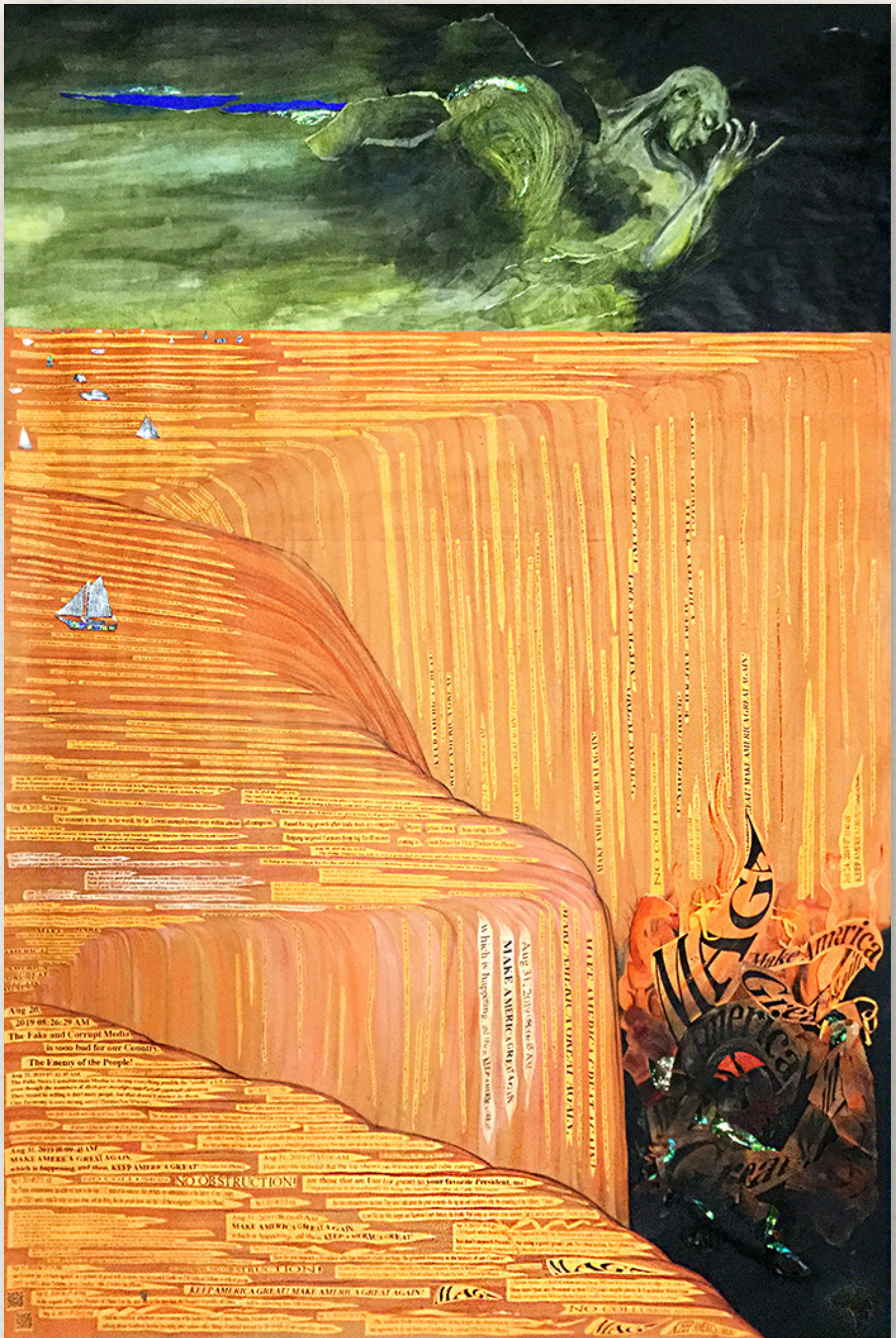
Dementia begins in the colon. The afternoon shadows branch out from the Koran. The scent of a hard-boiled egg emanates from the impulse to throw a dinner party. But a dog's purpose is simple. It is here to wag its tail at things it finds amusing, and if it is not amused, it will go on sleeping like a pot sticker fastened to the couch. And though there are many cooks from the banks of the Yangtze River who praise a stylish dance and feast, there are none who understand the importance of grapes. They do not understand the importance of the vintner, nor do they understand the purpose of the chow whose pointed ears make everyone believe they are always listening. They stick up above that puffy lion face and introduce themselves as annoyingly attentive. Someone should just tell them, "Hey why don't you go in the other room and do a puzzle?" Or better yet, they should stand guard in front of the Buddhist temple. This is what they were bred to do, but they have lost sight of their origins. They are confused. They have doggie dementia. It probably came about from something they ate or drank at a festival. It all goes back to the method of crushing rice and the instincts of those who flee from war.

The Ravenous Brain

All hail the ravenous brain and its distinctive fingerprint on the symbolic world. Its tissue intrudes on the matter of meaning, and it metabolizes all print and sign like a wagging bee over the landscape. It is Citizen Neurodata and a complicated one at that. But when it fails to answer simple questions like “How old are you” and “What do you like to eat?” then it is time for walking and running and hanging from a tree. Ridiculous elements captured at talkable moments. Then sh-h-h-h-h. Then whisper. Then silence. The brain expects its narrow windows in which wild arcs of sunlight paint the dormant streetlights with enormous riddles that the pre-frontal cortex can contemplate, contemplate and confront with just the right amount of muscle and attitude.

A Patient Heredity

Human variation abounds. Yet the same ears appear on Burmese policemen and London families and fans of the Asian carp. The carp swim up the Mississippi to the Calumet and cause panic, but they are just trying to survive like the poor damned soul who is forced to work overtime for years—then goes on a shooting rampage that targets his supervisors. Oh my, how the body wears down and takes the mind with it. *Bring it in for repairs. Fix the broken pipes* demand those who cherish the idea of being responsible. They always know twice as well as anyone else. They know what to do and suggest everyone start doing it . . . and everyone listens with the very same ears. By now you'd think someone would have developed an echolocation organ. Humans could will themselves to think like bats. The mind could meld the body's inputs and flower into the kind of animal that shoots itself into space. Or they might use dogs or chimpanzees as surrogates, then erect statues in the square to honor the bold adventurers. Such is the desire to fly among all those who lack wings. They want to lift up and take aim at the moon. They want to lift up and be fierce with flight. They want to lift up and dedicate themselves to winds from a hidden domain. They want to lift up, but they can't. They are never so variant. They are held by a disciplined skein of idiot protein. They are captives of a methodical heredity and its insistence on patience, patience, patience.



WAVEFALL by Robin Wilt, 2019
mixed media (60" x 40" x 1/2")

DIETER WESLOWSKI

And if there is a Guadalupe

where the blue shards stop
amid blooming *membrillos*,
I'll take my sour shots
straight and wait for the *tunas*
of the *nopal* to ripen before heading
back across the Rio Grande.

Quick Step for a Vinegaroon

black dance without a question, *dansa*
negra. Let the glass-tinkling
of dried oleander leaves
brittle night even further.

And let November, *mantilla* tight
around her shoulders, wander off
into the creosote, *solo*,
solo, until it reaches San Isidro
where marigolds and quinces
will welcome her.

JASON WALDROP

Shame

Our awesome God is still so delicate
that anything but lies can kill him. Mosquitoes,
bad feed, Laminitis, or cold water
on a hot day. All praise Him: Our Most Primitive One.
Work it long enough and God reduces
to a paradox—a mind wider than the head
because His digestive tract does not forgive.
It teaches by example be careful what you eat.

God loves a joke, but we sense Him only as the Maker
of Shame. Shame covers our grief like a broken
umbrella—maddening rags. We are the rotten fruit.
On our way out, the sun gave us no hiding place.
We had only one good suit, and no one took us in.
(Worn day after day, even the finest clothes spoil.)

And the spray of God's breath as he nudged us
away from the Tree—how could we deal
with His mucus and drool except by confusing it,
mixing it, with our own sweat and salt?
That's why we didn't beg—we ran
until our fear sagged into armpit circles
and a jagged sour ring below our collars.

It took less than a week for our clothes to stiffen,
the fabric no longer able to—shall I say “seduce”?—
our curves so that even the possibility of managing
shame was lost—grief could not be folded away—

because the seam, the crease, would not be pinched—
the original cloth refusing to draw the line.

Since then, we've had time to puzzle it out.
—Go to!—scavenge for food fit for animals.
Fate, like loneliness, is not good;
Fate will never console us like a well-tailored crotch
—and comfort is now our dream. Now that we understand
why God pushed us away. He needed room
to engage, inside the silent garden, with Her brilliant
forbidden fruit, the Tree, His fragile Mate.

IVAN ARGÜELLES

The Buddha Preaching on the Steps of the Berkeley BART

no more horizons left to discern
the circles have all straightened out
the steps to walk the heights to climb
up the down in the out and side to side
an inch or sixteen days a bride to spell
a hundred differences in the talking leaf
does time have an anchor for its parallel ?
a house to close and two meters of red
to unfold the silk that remains misused
on the mannequin's deranged anatomy
who holds the hand and miscounts fingers
whose floor-board only wavers in the night
a clock illumines lost hours and walls
of words resound nowhere in sight
lawns where dark triggers played
their childhood hostage to the Unknown
and trees now unaccounted shivers
in the suborned nocturnal mists alas
forlorn the teak-wood hills that disappear
the west amounts to a pair of asterisks
and orient is the divide between eternities
what if they say we are no more nor
can the goddess who governs dust hold sway
adjunct vowels distended consonants a mouth
paints its oracle in stone and riveted
to plumes of wind a thousand syllables
and no fewer waves of ravaged salt abound
somewhere in the chasm of summer memory
library and drug store exist on a single street !

how is it Sanskrit sleeps and vedic seers
ride straw elephants into a basalt reverie
a god who holds all other gods in pawn
thunders accents from a chariot of rain
theaters of empty mind boom the bright
and spend afternoons in the silent vale
come down ! plead smitten devotees
their knees a fling of rags and moons
ampersands meant to implode deep in thought
and vertical seas whiplashed by ionic storms
the distance between shoulder and mind
the tombstone of phonetic disarray
avenues that broaden hemispheres of air
it's all ether and microscope the x-ray
invented by Neolithic philosophers
to plumb the brain's stammering device
speech in its aphasic elocution of grief
to know ! stutter and mimic of the tongue
a width of echo and similitudes that yawn
gone is the forever more of Krishna's
game-play with thirty thousand wives
to repeat the beginning of this grassy sleep
devouring dream and spool that winds
around the endless linguistic fragment
a span of years a brief of months
three days and nothing left to count
the mirage of gasoline and burning wires
the deaths untold of a man's small life
bang and sold ! no horizons left to walk
no circles that remain unwound a leaf
dismembered of its speech a rock
that stands yet nothing does it sense
the whole of space in a grain of sand !

DENVER BUTSON

it has never entered the scarecrow's mind

it has never entered the scarecrow's mind that he isn't the master of his own destiny that these clothes he has on his body have not been his clothes all along that he wasn't in fact sitting on the edge of the bed just this morning after getting dressed and staring off in the middle of lacing his boots it hasn't entered his mind that there might not be a wallet in the left inside pocket of his blazer and that that wallet would not have in it a couple dollars perhaps a foreign coin a photograph of a young woman he loved years ago and whom he only thinks about when he sees her picture in his wallet or when he's had a bit too much to drink and then he takes his wallet out of his pocket and looks at her and runs a finger tip along the cheek that he once kissed it has not entered his mind that the wallet would also not have in it his ID with the scarecrow's name whatever that might be and his birthdate whenever that was and a birth city a place that has to be so far away from here so exotic and surprising that it hasn't even entered his mind that someone as real and before before your eyes as the scarecrow might be from there that the ID would not say that the scarecrow is 5'11" tall and weighs 170 pounds and that his hair is dark brown and his eyes are light green though they must look dark brown in certain light and depending on what the scarecrow is wearing it has never entered the scarecrow's mind that he would not be able to pull out his wallet any time he wanted and

show his ID if asked by a police officer or a customs agent or someone who didn't believe he was who he said he was someone who said the scarecrow did not have the right to be where he was that the scarecrow was not permitted to be doing what he was doing it has never entered his mind that whoever accused him of such a trespass would not simply look at the ID and be embarrassed and bow slightly and say *I am so sorry sir* it has never entered the scarecrow's mind that he would not be able to walk away then in these boots that are his boots in these clothes that are his clothes with his head held high because he is who he says he is and can prove it it has never entered that scarecrow's mind that this in fact will never happen that he is here sunset after sunrise after sunset after sunrise after moonrise after cricket crescendo and fading out again and again and again it has never entered his mind that he will disintegrate here that some wind one day will be the final wind that will blow across the dust that was once him and that dust will dissipate in that wind and be gone and nobody will say *whatever happened to that scarecrow who used to be up there?* and point to where he is now without any of these thoughts at all entering his mind.



TOMOKO VS. MR. A by Yumiko Glover, 2016
acrylic on canvas (77" x 77")

AMY JO TRIER-WALKER

Go On, Gone

“When trees burn, they leave the smell of heartbreak in the air.”

—Jodi Thomas

without a sound, all the hunters:
the hemlock, rushing to wither
all the hunters sounding
how disparate I would be—
swarming the sunrise
without being slept,
the fireflies trenching the stars,
the minute clovers of algae sweeping from one side of the pond
to another,
crinkling toward their cloudless wakes—
she sleeps in one eclipse:

without a with, all the moons,
all the wolf: skinning down
the amaranth she will carry every year,
all the hunters salting our life above walking—
where we burn the wind with rustling,
without mercy,
with the woods walking—
saving our life:
go on

That Claw in the Tongue

Only someone who never swallowed a bird's nest could say that.

—John Bradley

I keep my eyes to myself
I pounce
onto my sleeping daughter

and steal her breath
before the cats can
I believe them

I deserve all I get
and we get it all
in shredded ribbons

Only some body
only some mind unbodied
who did not love the velvet in my eye

Only someone who could not see
that claw in the tongue
Only someone without Beirut

without the civil in war
that hunger
down to the teeth

Who knows a Muriel
Who has actually heard that name
Who has feathered a tree without tar

Who has not squawked into a garden
for lack of a roostered-up hen
to scratch the seeds homeward

Who doesn't have a home
all the curtains in shreds
Who has never unlocked her sternum

for the voice that only sings
that only screams
for the silence
of that first flight
out of
Who falls

JEFF HARRISON

Ms. Virginia When Last Seen

subscription of the tenderest to appear grandest, the bailiffs
left knowing you would soon be damaging his admiration, Virginia
his old fair picture was not so low, which was altered whipped/poetical
speak out!—I had you with me, classical for about thirty lines
linguistic perversion followed a living death
the best thing is to tell her reputation must necessarily read & write
a pond gave Adonis back to the community, but we had quite a scare
promises, Virginia, are life-sized casts of refuse
keep that in mind when he insists “nymphs & shepards dance no more”
an affair of pelf doesn’t amount to the most whitened sepulchers, nor
the rhymes Virginia spoons into my mouth
chance is all the time getting heavier to hold
the thing is, your harvest is hard on others—give them a great deal
of work to keep their mind in check
the formal is ankle-deep in doubles
your swarthy tone is busy beating out consequence
this incident, as she reiterates, is caught fancying a bit of
suggestibility—so clever with no opportunity to place!
I assure you, these precautions are wholly involuntarily
I want to help you! eagerness parades its apparent horrors
knees sealing ears, cages swept in through the glass
our Honest Abes are at sixes & sevens (mostly sevens, eh Virginia?)
roses, paper bags, & the burning single penny ended a block away
a white cap and orange sheets as they pray for a sneeze fast asleep
spelling-words pinned to their sheets, the night swelteringly private
O but for one icicle chalked in above our heads! instead punctuality
burst another moon-bulb—would it be impolite to offer you

the bamboo strips I never paid much attention to? I'm sure they're
not going to stick around much longer, but ah, my verdicts, and oh,
my forebodings—they'll give a lovely light! bright tins bright blue
also-rans are stacked toweringly on the counter—help yourself
animals are metamorphosed into graham crackers for their
transgressions

He is late, He is late, He is going to eat them, just you wait
for God's sake!—what is first invisible should stay that way
all surprises should be filthy with dust

Turn

volte-face; toto coelo; curvet; turn (to give attention to; epoche); somersault; somerset; overturn; subvert (the line); eversion; excern; socern; knack; to have a turn for; detour; ambages; torsion; meander (err; errancy); mortise; recovery; retrieval; redeem; redemption;

turn

(conversion; versipelles); passage; convert; resolve (into); transfer (psych.); turn (a)round; season; globe; fortune; eurydice; rota; turn out to be; turnabout is fair play; turn the mind (insanity; rabies; poetry); turn/interchange; unexpected (chance; to turn up; to find; hermes); turn (morally—whether abstractly, the reverse side of the coin);

journey; swarm (to meet at every turn); turn (opposition); turn (dialectics; syllogism; sonnet); turn (as in to close or open—once again,

opposition); turn (form; perception); circumstance; cause . . .

ZOLTÁN KOMOR

The Womb Tailor

That day the tailor boy was called again to help with another birth. According to the elders, the evil horses from the sky were responsible for the black magic that impregnated every female in the village all at once on one mysterious night. And it only took two weeks for everyone to deliver the fruits of their wombs.

Normally an old blind lady functioned as midwife in the village, but after a flaming thorn bush jumped in her window and killed the old witch, the job was left to the tailor boy, who had some smattering of knowledge on childbirth. But what surprises awaited this young man! A celestial curse-pregnancy is never like a usual one: the girls began to give birth to the strangest things possible. One woman delivered a sewing machine to the world that stitched feathers to the birds, birds to the sky, and finally the sky to the souls of lovers. Another girl wasn't this lucky. A giant kitchen knife was growing inside her womb, and when the time came, it sliced her birth canal in two. Fortunately, the tailor boy always carried needle and thread in his pocket. And yet, after some thought, he decided it would be much easier for everyone if he started with a caesarean section. So he proceeded to slice up the girls. In one case balloons filled with helium flew out from the open wound, another time he found a large gaping catfish in the uterus. It was a nasty job getting it out. The skin was so slimy the fish slipped through the boy's fingers, splashing back into the bloody incision over and over. He had to knot a hook onto a string and fish the animal out, while the mother's shouts were ringing in his ears. "Look at the little bastard! Ouch! He has a moustache just like his father, I tell ya. Ouch! But how could it be his? I only open my legs for him twice a year, when he's dancing on the ceiling from the pain of blue balls! Ouch! But first, I make him bring mirrors! Lots and lots of mirrors! So he can admire my body from every angle! And after he praises every inch of me, I order him to count all of

my hairs. So the whole procedure takes about four days! Ouch! Oh no, no, I haven't opened my thighs for him this year, so it can't be his brat, I can assure ya!"

"Stop squirming so much, or I'll accidentally leave this hook in you. It'll be a fine job pissing it out!" growled the tailor boy. Then he looked aside and his eyes made a teacup explode. That night they cooked the fish for supper, and the villagers put their heads together over the soup to discuss this whole birth situation.

"The Celestial Stable!" whispers an old woman. "Where the evil spirits come from! At first glimpse, they are just like any other horse you ever saw. But if you give them a second look and stare in to their eyes, you'll see the melting faces of the people whose souls they've stolen. If you'd cut their skin with a knife, screams would ooze out from those wounds. Beware the sky horses!"

The saw-teeth of goose bumps. You could cut a tree down with their children. The villagers drove off every horse from the neighborhood, letting them out of the stables, not even looking into their eyes anymore, beating them with sticks, watching them disappear over the horizon. The borders of the village were now full of sauntering stallions, snorting and rooting around in the snow, eating the pages of discarded books. Sad ghosts chased each other in the clouds of their breath.

The next day, the tailor boy was called again to help with another birth. They led the boy into a room where a fifteen-year-old girl bathed in her own sweat. Her parents were standing next to her bed, squeezing their skinny hands. Broken butterfly wings fell from beneath their fingernails.

"Don't worry! This procedure is easy, like making wine from shirt sleeves," said the tailor boy. His self-confidence had already won over the hearts of the parents. The mother boiled some water, the father took out a bottle of palinka.

The tailor boy looked at the girl's giant belly, saying, "Place your bets, folks, I say it will be a bucket full of stones! Or a cage, with a mad rooster in it!"

But no more jokes. The boy got down to work: his scissors flew out of his haversack, grew and grew, and when the instrument was large enough, the tailor rode it like a horse, yelling, "Giddy up, free that child!"

He flew up and down in the room while the mother clapped out a lively folk rhythm. The father poured flaming alcohol into his daughter's mouth, and she began to yell, "Countess, oh my dear countess, you left your beautiful hair in the cabinet last summer! I preserved it for you, blowing my nose into it only once or twice! Oh, my intentions were more than good. My bathtub is full of prayer books, waiting to wash away my sins!"

"No time for fantasies, let's do it quick!" the boy encouraged the young mother, as he cut her open. The blood spray painted biblical scenes on the wall.

"Oh, but it's empty!" yelled the tailor, his hand moving around inside the incision. "There's nothing but air in here! I've been had!"

The father slapped his knees, saying, "Maybe the baby's invisible! Don't forget, we're dealing with black magic here!"

"Maybe, possibly," murmured the tailor, but he didn't really believe it. "You cannot take the risk! You must raise the child, or just pretend that you are raising something. Better to raise the nothing than leave something unseen unraised."

Cotton balls gathered like swarming flies, buzzing, drinking up every drop of blood in the room. The family offered to cook a meal for the tailor boy. While the food was boiling, they sat him down in an old armchair. As soon as his butt hit the cushion, the furniture began to cry. Jumping up, the tailor found a large bulge under him. He took out his scissors and sliced into the cloth. He discovered a crying pink baby beneath.

"Ah, here's that prodigal son!" he cheered, fishing out the child. He placed him in the young mother's arms. "Neither a bucket of stones nor a caged rooster. This is a real boy, I tell ya!"

The girl's tears washed over the baby. The newborn keeps reaching his fingers, he hooks his eyes into his mother's gaze. It must be her imagination, but the girl catches a glimpse of her own melting, screaming face in the baby's pupil.

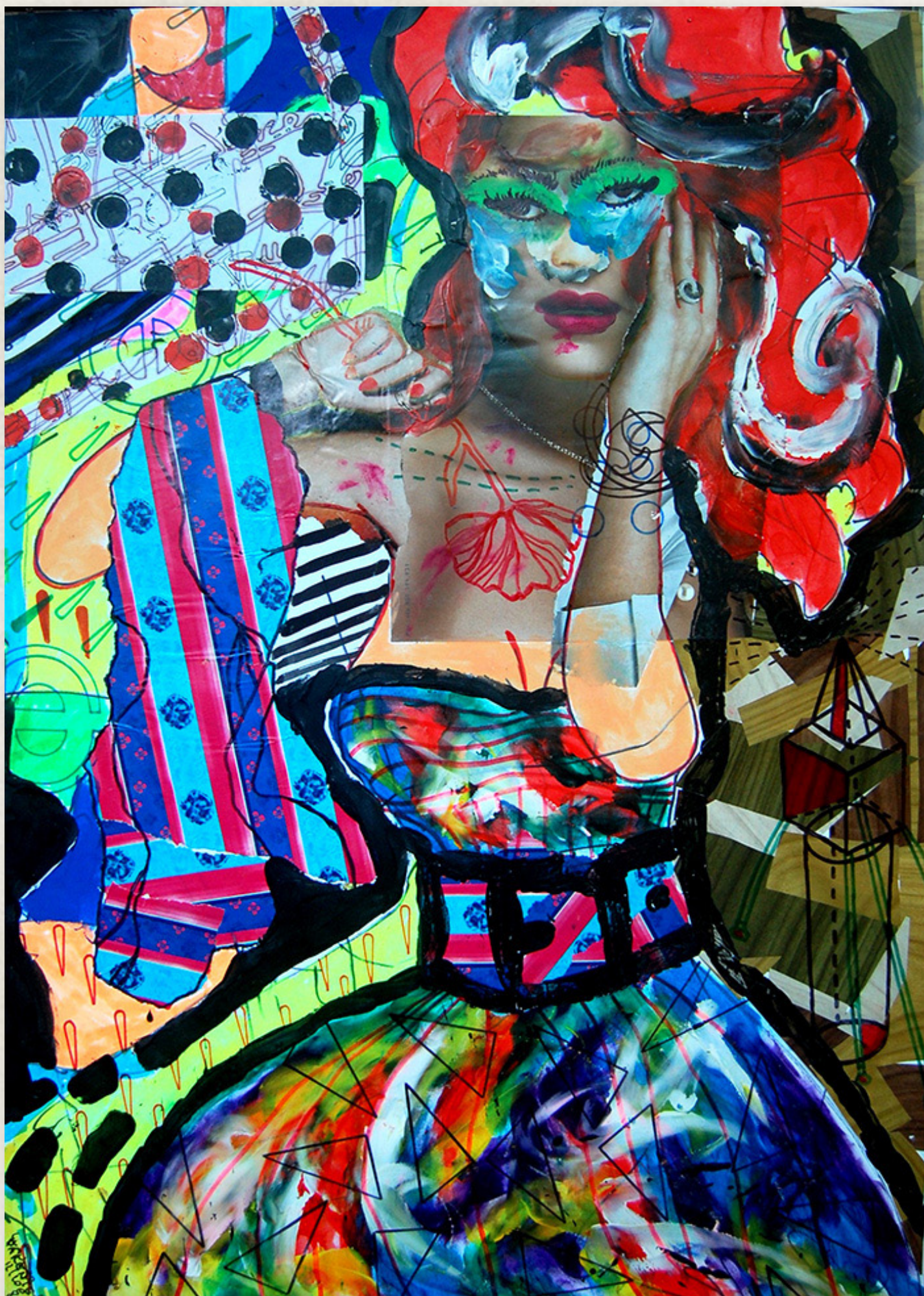
After eating, the tailor boy mounted his giant scissors. He flew up and out over the snowy roof tops, yelling, "Behold, here comes the womb tailor! I'll nose out every fetus, cast them into the deep water of the world!"

A swarm of blood-soaked cotton balls followed him.

At the village border, loud neighs scared away the crows. They had left their spindly legs standing in the snow. A brown horse arrived, snorting angrily. It ascends, disappearing among the grey winter clouds.

That night, giant sperm cells rained from the sky. Like long white worms, they squirmed on the roof tops, then crawled inside the houses to impregnate more sleeping girls.

February. February. All peacefulness is temporary.



UNTITLED by Claudio Parentela, 2009
collage, mixed media



UNTITLED by Claudio Parentela, 2009
collage, mixed media

MERCEDES LAWRY

In the Journey, the Relinquishing

A sun blaze made it difficult to see.
I was heading west where forgetting
might take shape, where the small darts
of pain might be abolished by a new sky.

There were no roots trailing in my wake.
Occasionally I paused in shadow while my breathing
settled. I chose to believe flight was courage.
The crusts of my hands clenched and released
as if rosary beads were slipping through. As if
I hadn't tossed prayer in the rubbish
in a year I can't now remember.

Movement of one sort can focus the mind.
It was too late to be sorry and I'd grown sick
of stale stories, unfinished, of myths
and miracles and last ditch rescues.

I could almost smell the salty ocean air.
It appeared my legs would hold out.
I looked forward to lying down in the whiskery
dune grass, to the swoop of pelicans
with their croaky cries and a felted night sky
punctured by stars.

Evasion

Dark surrenders, a fade intrinsic
to time's emphasis. All the shudders—

branches, pistils, swamp grass,
a mimic we conjure, wed to our solar selves.

The hollows in birds, perhaps echoes.
How far will the day reach? A suggestion

of frost along the vine. Clouds hold back.
A largeness settles on us, a deception.

GEORGE KALAMARAS

Monk's Dream in Four-Four Time

First Dream

1. let's begin with stars in our mouth
2. pour me a shot of whiskey while the moon pours
3. milk through the winter branches of the weeping
4. willow weeping for you / me / and the great unknown ache of trees

Second Dream

1. *Ruby, My Dear*, take another
2. shot of the dark. Amber-thick in the midnight glass. I'm thinking about being
3. beaten with a blackjack (that night) by the fuzz (that night) in Wilmington

Count Three

1. four-four time's easy as calling it fourfour times zero
2. yes, my name is Sphere, and so yours would be too if you stopped fortuning your life in front of a mirror
3. yes, the summer of '57 at the Five Spot, with Trane, Wilbur Ware, and Shadow Wilson—the open space in my heart, opened then forever
4. when I look in a mirror, when the mirror looks at me, it's gotta be the moon / or the moon's shadow / or shadows, say, of the moon's most wanton milk

Forthright Four

1. don't forget, I bought my contract from Prestige for \$108.24
2. let me remind you that prayer malas in India contain precisely 108 beads

3. for the 108 Sanskrit letters known as *The Garland of Letters* /
whose molecular motion / whose chemical collision / in the
ether constitutes intricacies of the syllable *OM*
4. that jackass Philip Larkin once called me *the elephant on the keyboard*
5. let me plod into your ear / let my jeweled saddle dandle /
let my mama speak again, always kind, teaching me to forgive the
switchblade of their words

Four-Four Time Always Includes a Fifth (Dream / Note / Bottle / or Bruise)

1. there's an asymmetry in the way we step / here, measure the
length of my feet / my ears / I swear they're both uneven—the
length and strength of rain
2. strike this chord hard / two harsh notes at once / make it whine
/ give me an orderly confused mouth, a dissonant bowl of
Picasso soup!
3. this is the *real* four-four time / the prosody of myself / yes, *the
prosody of Monk*
4. I once read a book about them Hopi Indians and their four
corners of the earth rubbing up against my own two eyes, plus
my own two lungs, plus my two
5. sound feet, minus, say, two of my ears—yes, my one good ear,
and my other good ear as well

Blue Train

for John Coltrane

Yes, *Blue Train* tonight, all its hues blowing right through,
pummeling me—
Ecstatic blue face, purified aura of Lord Krishna
Robin's eggs cupped in willow leaves, twigs, tucked inside the copper
gutter
Neptune—floating bold—blue planet and ocean god of the deep
The endangered Miami Blue butterfly coaxing starlight from mouths
of muskrats in mud
Fifteen shades of blue in a box of Crayola crayons
Periwinkle always missing, the one color no one quite seems able
to find or forget
A blueberry in the beak of a bluebird in Baltimore
Edgar Allan Poe's raven, in certain light
The fifth song on Buffalo Springfield's second album
Even the color of the wing flap on the cover in back of Richie Furay's
head
The *entirety* of 1967, the Memphis sky preparing a full year to
assassinate itself
The color of a villain's powdered face in a Chinese opera
Viviparous sharks threading the waters
Dugongs rooting the Great Barrier Reef, iron salts bluing the coral
The Sargasso Sea and underwater stream of parrotfish, of the Regal
Blue Tang
B.B. King's entire life
Koko Taylor's seamstress after the singer lost weight
Buddy Guy's blueberry smoothie, even the gleam on the key fob to his
CRV
Each of John Mayall's thirty-six studio albums that I have on both LP
and CD
Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*
To arrive without warning, almost out of the *something or other*
How we say things over and again until the face is said to change hue
Clear rivers in Montana, in Colorado

Rainbows drained of all but one shade from trout drying in baskets
Cattle dogs in Livermore and Laramie
Bolivian sky caught in the roof of the jaguar's mouth
The Blue Willow dish from which Elizabeth and David's cat, Mozart,
eats his fish while listening to Brahms or Scriabin
Springwater rilling in the legs, feet, even toes, of the willowy dance
troupe in Fort Wayne, Indiana
Kelsey, Craig, Kynzie, Ren, Zach, and Ann, eating Ann's eggs (farm
eggs from Ohio) before they dance, how they are joined to one
another, threaded, like the membranous chalaza of an egg, as they
perform parts of *Windows of Sentiment*: red Passion, yellow Joy, white
Serenity, and, of course, a sorrowfully blue Sorrow
Eyes of Siberian Huskies
Arctic ice at midnight
Antifreeze when it leaks, as if parts of things can no longer be
contained
Blackberries in dim light
Cotton candy at the State Fair
Snow-cone dye staining the lip
Moon-moods in the fingers of young lovers working to extract
the bruise
The swampy spots on a bluetick hound
Bootsie's beagle tail, its merry merle tip
The moon twice a month, but only rarely
Cornflowers, bluebonnets, sapphires
Coal loads when it snows
Trane at the Village Vanguard, at the Gate
Trane blowing bellychords, removing the letters of my name from
the letters of my name
Seaweed the Blue Whale parts with flukes across massive migratory
miles
Sue's Colorado pie
Slices of sky on the mountain road home
Berries in my favorite muffins
These jeans gripping my waist when—admittedly—I eat too many
Peafowl, benitoite, lapis lazuli

Capital *W* for the word, *Word*, in medieval manuscripts
Lord Krishna's face
Lord Krishna's face
Mary Ann's eyes
The slinky off-shoulder dress of that hot woman in the Zyrtec
commercial
The dress, oh, the dress, and what is accented in the curve and blur
of words
Mary Ann's eyes
Lord Krishna's face encouraging me to preserve my urge, its creative
force and verve
Crush of my thigh when in the night I stumble against the bedpost
Moon, in Tasmania, bruised at noon
The other side of the other side of the earth
Tentacles of deep water squid
Seventy million years of the lobe-finned coelacanth, two species still
swimming the Indian Ocean deeps
Vasco de Gama importing indigo from India to Europe
Lord Shiva
Lord Vishnu and his four arms
Kali's face just before destroying the evil of the world
Her foot stopping all time, her hair wild, her tongue, her perfectly
poised arms
Hair perms of elderly women in the local poetry group, "The Society
of Rhymes"
The *Caliban* broadside, twenty-nine years framed on my wall
Booklets in which my Surrealism students map the efficacy of their
dreams, like astronomers of night wind in the mouth, cosmologists
of gusty colloquies
Stars splintering Sparta, parting the sea, prompting the gambling
addiction of Nikos Gatsos
Forget-me-not petals in the armpit of Nikos Engonopolous's reclining,
amorous wife
Freshly shaved plums and Ionian grapes in a bowl by the window
The dark Aegean loneliness of Odysseas Elytis upon returning,
frantic, from Breton's blebby branch in France

George Seferis threaded to the chalaza of Aimé Césaire's egg
My soul when listening to Trane
My soul listening to Trane
Blue Oyster Cult jamming too loudly, vibrating—across town—the
tubes inside a cerulean R2-D2 impersonator
Cream's "Condition" on *Disraeli Gears*
Eddie Cochran's incurable "Summertime"
The equally melancholic—though frenetic—season of The Who and
Blue Cheer
Margaritas my friends drink on Mondays
Monet's lilies, the harbor *within* the harbor in his 1872 painting,
"Sunrise"
Smalt used by El Greco, Rubens, and Rembrandt
Ink-rich dark in Van Gogh's "Starry Night"
Dürer paying twelve ducats for just thirty grams of ultramarine
Streambeds of cosmogonic heat, riverous veins in the sway of the
adorably gorgeous breast, in layers of lacteous light in the Milky
Way at dusk
My soul listening for her soul
My mother's fingertips as she left the body, 1:45 a.m., Friday, June 8,
2018
The way I wept and in weeping keep
Medicine Buddha, lotus-posed, unbruised, his face the color of
rain-filled clouds, the indigo deep of an unjostled sea
My soul listening to Trane
My soul listening as it listens to Trane
Tagelmusts of the Tuaregs
The Ishtar Gate of ancient Babylon
Captain America scuba diving in the Black Sea, in the Baltic, in the
Strait of Hormuz
Trane listening to Trane listening to Trane
Saxophone depth with each note calmly repeating, calmly repeating
itself
Boxcars boxcars boxcars through snowfields in Ginsberg's *grandfather night*
Whitman's beard when leaves of the Chinese blue wisteria stick and
dampen down their autumnal resinous release

Flames from tunnels in the gas stove my grandmother finally got
in 1952

The unpredictable pilot light in the below cold in our backwoods
Indiana cottage, 1961

Faint flit on tribal faces in Borneo while trying to keep their single
lantern lit

Glow of my radio tuner searching the small towns for Brahms

The entire catalog of Blue Note Records

Rudy Van Gelder and all of Hackensack, New Jersey, in a 5:13 p.m.
sudden storm in July

Pale, anemic-green sky, a sickly intruder unto the blue it removes
1956 to '68 or '9, each Blue Note release dazzling as the last

Boxcars boxcars boxcars

All of January '58 in the clout and found of *Blue Train*

Lee Morgan, Curtis Fuller, Kenny Drew, Paul Chambers,
Philly Joe Jones

All together coaxing the lobe-finned coelacanth from depths near
the island of Sulawesi

Chesterfields in a dimming light

Three on a match, three farmers matches with cobalt-blue tips

The smoky haze of the Five Spot with Trane and the fellas onstage

Beach murals on the walls at Smalls Paradise

Peafowl in the body of the burly bouncer suddenly weeping
uncontrollably

Trane laying the ache of "I'm Old Fashioned," like birds' eggs, into
his chest

The bouncer's mother on a fire-escape in Harlem, back from her
double at the diner, beneath blistering summer stars, her hose rolled
to her ankles, her toes, as she soughs over a bowl of blueberries and
cream

Smoke rings of Luckies in even dimmer light, the scene where Bogie's
words hurt Bacall, but her strength aches back

Trane at the Gate publicly displaying his spine

Tone holes and keys of his sax, like chakras aglow, so blue they ooze
Krishna blue, renewed

Krishna blue, and his Gopis

Krishna blue spilling through my pineal gland
3:33 a.m., Indiana asleep, Colorado's sky a faint O'Keeffe bone blur
of orchids and morning glories in night-pool dark
The ticking in the fur of Bootsie's front paws, moon-soothed in
the swart
Night bedded down in the open cars and hay beds of the hobo rails
I listen over and again to *Blue Train Blue Train Blue Train*
Night bedded down, bedded down
Sound of the sax, the dribble of drift, dribble of drift, the oceanic
night pouring through the oceanic night

All Night, In a Silent Way*for Miles Davis*

As if I left the body and returned
to the astral world. As if plants breathed
into me the legacy of the dead. Legacies
of the dead have many mouths. Often
silent. Often stout. Chief among them, Miles,
is you. For eighteen minutes sixteen seconds
I am quiet in your “SHHH/Peaceful.”
Peaceful in the trumpet step of your tongue.
Breathe. Breathe slow. Breathe into me
the slow of my name’s name. Once, when I woke,
I knew it, a word without cuffs. Once, when I slept,
I felt its strange fire-tongue mouth me back
to sound. Ground could be starlit sky tonight
at 4:16 a.m. Something is always
keeping me awake during the hours
others forget. Once, I heard a possum
say my name in the birth of thirteen
young, squirming among the twelve
nipples. Culling the shame of my name’s
name. Another time, I left this world for hours
through rings around a raccoon’s tail. Friends say
they wonder at my unusual, my odd. Call me
man who sleeps the animal, or even, *he who holds hours
from now*. How’d you know, Miles, to bring Shorter,
Herbie and Chick, John McLaughlin
and Tony Williams, Joe Zawinul
and Dave Holland into the quiet
light of my night? Once, I dreamt I was bitten
seventeen times by fire ants
from Namibia. And John told me
it meant I had sixteen holes in my aura,
my poems searching for the one door out.

If you go to the hacktree out back it may mend
the moon's weight all the way from Cataract Falls,
where hound dogs bay as if they know rhythms
of your speak. Words bend and shift and lose their
place. Sentences slip. Endings ache. Food
placed in the mouths of the dead is one way
to stop the cumbersome chaos in our heads.
1969, Miles, meant for you a lot of weed,
the Horse galloping your veins, your gravelly
voice, and many nights in which you got laid.
Also this magnificent lp. As I spin
In a Silent Way quietly again
tonight, a cosmogonic crease speaks
into me and through. Marks my mouth.
Takes my tongue wholly torn. As if the legacy
of life your trumpet breeds wings me deep.
Breathe, Miles. Breathe the slow. Slowly
into me. Let me wake this night to this
silently silent ground. In notes of your starlit stir,
let me open the dark, the pulsing
primordial dark. The spoken cuts we keep
private. Alone. Perplexed. Clothed to the world.

Let's Begin with the Way Stars Work

First, there's light from one of Jupiter's eight
gaseous moons. Then a hound embryo
appears to begin its sixty-three day
gestation. Let's say the earth during the eclipse,

then, is finally full. That a sliver of moon
means the willow won't work the river
to shreds. That rain rains upward,
even when it falls. That since the beagle

is pregnant, the possum can allow
the pouch. I have been traveling inside
a lightning bolt burrowed in the earthworm
in my gut for as long as wind blurs

the trees. I have seen cottonwoods
impersonate the willow. I have been sure
that what is unseen is seen only when held
up and read backwards in the mirror.

If I had an *every-time* for the penny
in my mouth, I would be a rich richening
of what it means to speak. Let me say it
this way. At the close of sixty-three days

and the release of the burgeoning
belly, the world is surely a better place.
Each pup changes the earth's squirming
way. Witness, first, the tree parts

of the heart, rising with the pups' birth, doubling
back as if the forest was no longer lost
but was the scent-trail of a hound. Let's face it,
even if the eclipse in the mirror loops things around,

then the forest is birthed every time
the hound howls. And nothing echoes through
every-thing and -one. Which means
even what's sad is sometimes sad. That the hound

dog we settle with settles into us to lift
that veil. I don't have a better way
of saying it. Of placing fire in the water
hole thirty feet from the river, or of allowing fish

to inhabit the lamps. That dream
in which Thoreau is Emerson
and Emerson becomes Walt. Whitman
is all things that continue in and through

one another. The dream where we grow
beards like willow leaves, and the dark
nudges us to divest our lightning
selves of skin and all its grasp. Our dog

selves to thirst and thrive. To finally give it
all up to raise hounds. The acreage, I knew,
was not meant for sheep. Just as the lambs
get grub-head, we need to allow what's left

of starlight to shine equally on all
we never did. To praise *equanimity*
as not just an urge. Or even how
our mouths resemble words. And imagine

the entire beagle or coonhound
night as a kind of day. Delayed.
Something is added to the willow
when the stars work and a hound pup
passes through, coming unto our world.



THE REMOVAL by Bob Heman, 2019
collage

BOB HEMAN

INFORMATION

The story arranged differently each time the book is opened, each time they stop reading it aloud. There is always a different number of characters, always a different shape to the city they find in the desert or ocean.

INFORMATION

Dancing on historic ground. Wading into the legendary sea. Walking into the forest that was too dark for the legions to enter. Flying into the sky that knew only the wings of the birds.

INFORMATION

Cannot identify water except on the map.

INFORMATION

The second arrangement was a chicken. The tree had to be used more than once. Sometimes there was a man waiting or a machine that had to be started. Sometimes there was a solitary cloud.

INFORMATION

He wants to ask but he is afraid. He knows how to sing but he never sings. He was a man once but that was long ago. He has more machines than he can ever use. If he counts his journey is changed.

INFORMATION

The metaphor was not intended to be a metaphor. It was never more than the way the tree grew, the way the river swallowed everything in its path, the way the man arranged the words he was given.

INFORMATION

A rabbit assembled incorrectly becomes a fence or a barn. The same dimensions mean something different then.

INFORMATION

Was asked to explain distance to the turtle and depth to the cloud. Was asked why their bones had to be repeated. Was asked for a definition for the word "front."

INFORMATION

I eat supper, but my friends all eat dinner. The difference no more than the language attached to it. Dinner was always something special for me, eaten on holidays, or Sunday afternoons. Supper was something we ate every day, the way those friends of mine now eat dinner every day.

INFORMATION

She was killed by a falling dog, by a room without mirrors, by a woman who danced too slowly.

INFORMATION

In Spanish the house becomes larger. In Chinese the road is paved with bricks. In Norwegian the sky is too heavy. In English both the man and the woman must be repeated.

INFORMATION

One listens because the day is still a rumor. One listens because the trees still haven't been installed. One listens because there are no alternatives. One listens because the women have not yet arrived. One listens because the color of the sun is wrong.

INFORMATION

He knows that the dead shall open their eyes. He knows that the trees will sleep uncomfortably. He knows that the woman is more than a mannikin. He knows that his own hands once belonged to someone else. He knows that the sun will not always be hidden.

INFORMATION

He said "New Rochelle," but the close-captioning read "Nourish Hill."

DAN RAPHAEL

Going in and out of the Sky

Fog or clouds, them or me
how crowded the skeleton draped in plants, black stretch
what cant this bag hold—a thousand voices,
hairs from around the world
not vacation but travel, who you leave behind
an accent, a language of seven fingers
rolling, roiling, looking through

Edges wilder here, sidewalks narrower,
accidents smell differently, city versus otherwise
edible landscapes, landscapes that eat at us

What I couldn't have done before
higher than an aftermath, windows with too many facets
to be glass, hands like clouds, bi-directional feet
taking off the shirt I've never seen
hands on through down
bows or strings shoes on walls sealed bags
striding past the mystery, the funneling alley
towel repelling water, roofs growing hair

Bright light on both edges, immeasurable space between

Raphael/92

Which Way

Sudden wings, the cat does a 540
a mist between my eyes and the ceiling light
water in boxes, eggs from the tap
my shirt's not ready to remove

><><><><

The clock is stalling
runs through all those zeros but still collects interest
i came from a country that didn't exist then
the first car i saw had only one door
a marathon of dodging

><><><><

Rain paper, sun mask, freeze-dried clouds
seeing the future before i could talk
i wish my feet were wheels
how different the fashion, the doors, if we had wings
ceilings don't seal anything

><><><><

Just four muscles from my shoulders to my ass
let this go and make another
this package will open itself—be patient
do i follow the scent of garlic or spilled beer

><><><><

Flicking the switch locks it in place for a random interval
hundreds of miles but less than ten walls

my ringtone is a fighter jet, no one has my number
this week i'm the smaller barkier dog

><><><><

40 feet above the ground are aromas i can't name
if the tornado stopped spinning it would be a
laundry chute / chimney that couldn't stop delivering
a vertical palm opening & closing
my build-your-own-cocoon kit is missing several pieces
a staircase starting at my window sill



WONDER THEATRE! NO. 126, by Christiane Kowalewsky, 2019
hand cut collage on cardboard (11 1/2" x 8 1/4")



TÄUSCHUNG UND TARN, No. 127, by Christiane Kowalewsky, 2019
hand cut collage on cardboard (11 1/2" x 8 1/4")



THE VISIT, No. 131, by Christiane Kowalewsky, 2019
hand cut collage/assemblage on cardboard (11 1/2" x 8 1/4")



A SECOND-HAND INSIGHT, No. 139 by Christiane Kowalewsky, 2019
hand cut collage on cardboard (11 1/2" x 8 1/4")

DAVID GILBERT

Noah and the Nephilim

The Lord spoke to Noah with agitation about the iniquity of his people. His rants were persuasive and overwhelming in their accuracy and demand for an accounting. Noah told the Lord that with the urgency to multiply and fill the earth, depravity had inevitably followed. The Lord, though, seemed limited in the understanding of his creation and often swore, using his own name in vain. Noah found the swearing disconcerting. It gave righteousness an uncertain presence in their dream talks. As if challenged, the Lord listed the iniquities of his creation: a disregard for the type of animal used for sacrifice and consumption, men thinking like the Nephilim that they are divine, worshiping or inventing other Gods, tree of knowledge reenactments and the iniquity that could be directly attributed to multiplying, incest, adultery and sodomy.

Noah was uncomfortable with human failure, but the Lord was adamant that his creation was wicked and unmanageable. He bitterly regretted creating human beings, calling creation a sentimental and reckless whim. With the gleam of spittle flying through the dream, the Lord wanted to be rid of his creation and the Nephilim along with them. He had once thrown the Nephilim down to earth, he said, but they did not die. They lived on like large insects spoiling from the corners of creation.

Build an Ark and save yourself, said the Lord raising his voice. Save the animals and plants that will renew life on earth, the rest will perish. Noah lamented, but did not remind the Lord that the multiplying that had been done after creation would be lost in a wet obliteration. This thought was not concealed from the Lord, whose restraint from censure was a rare act of modesty and a sign of a moderating influence Noah hoped would guide the reestablishing of creation after the Deluge.

The Lord wanted to begin the Deluge, so he assured Noah that he would assist in any way he could with the subsequent going forth and remultiplying once the water had drained from the earth. After the Lord's assurance, Noah began to see and hear water rising all around him in his dream. When he awoke, his buttocks and loins were puckered and curdled like those who would die in the deluge.

Noah built the Ark and filled it with the animals and plants that would reinhabit the earth after it had been washed of the wicked. The Deluge came as promised, wind and water converging on the earth. The Ark rose with the water and so did the malformed Nephilim, flushed out of the hinterlands. They had the uncanny and malevolent ability to tread water and float on logs while the wicked quickly went under. It was as if the Nephilim had been given advanced warning on how to survive and they did.

Noah and his sons spent many days repelling the Nephilim from the sides of the Ark. Their claws scarred the gopher wood as they attempted to board, red-eyed with anger. A few Nephilim stuck to the pitch that oozed from between the planks, baying and cursing their creator and former colleague. Others made it into the Ark where they fornicated with animals as they ate them, a fatal flaw in the execution of the Deluge.

After the rain stopped, the mountains appeared as the water receded and the Ark settled. The remaining animals left the Ark, tentatively looking for food and finding soggy foliage that was edible. Noah sacrificed an animal for the safe passage in the Ark, while his daughters, long pregnant and relieved to be out of their lurching sojourn in the roiling water, gave birth in the mud. They washed their babies in pools of water and fed them in the tents that had been raised. Multiplying had begun again.

The Nephilim gathered on the deck to watch Noah's daughters giving birth. When the Ark had emptied and Noah had moved his family and animals to safety, the Nephilim left, slinking away, one by one down the valley and into the wilderness. A rainbow appeared in the clearing sky as a sign that the Lord's wrath had been spent and he would not destroy

mankind again.

Noah forbade the demolition of the Ark. The wood could not be used for construction in the settlement or for fires. The Ark stood there as an unmistakable landmark and backdrop while Noah and his sons planted seeds and saplings among the native plants that had miraculously revived, not the least the trees bearing fruit and vines with abundant grapes.

When Noah had grandchildren, he allowed them to join him in the Ark. He would regale them with stories of the wicked drowning in the Deluge and his fighting with the Nephilim. The children had seen the Nephilim on the ridges and in the mountain caves peering down into the valley. It was believed that they hid in the evening shadows. But they were easily spooked and would retreat, unless they were seriously engaged, then they became fierce adversaries.

Storytelling in the Ark came to an end soon after one of the children died unexpectedly, the first death since the Ark touched dry ground and the remultiplying began again. With the imposition of mortality, Noah no longer allowed his grandchildren to play in the Ark. They reconvened story hour in a tent.

Eventually, the Ark spread like a man's stomach in his middle years. The caulking gave and the planks began to spring loose. In the wind, the Ark hummed like it had when the wind had dried the land after the Deluge. The Lord made it known that the Ark was a good place for their dream talks. So Noah moved bedding into a room high above the bilge and the fetid slop left by the animals and Nephilim.

As dream talks began again, Noah pressed the Lord not to destroy mankind a second time. He knew that his people were returning to the iniquity that goaded the Lord who continued to exhort his creation to multiply. Noah was not confident that the Lord would restrain his destructive urges. He suggested the practice of husbandry as a way for the Lord to intervene in the errant ways of his creation. The Lord heartily agreed that destroying his creation would not be a seasonal

event, although the idea was appealing.

The Lord began a discourse on the husbandry of the vines already growing and available to Noah. He commenced to tell Noah how to cultivate the grapes that thrived on the nearby hillsides. After the grapes had been pressed, the juice was to be stored in vats and allowed to mature in a place like the Ark. Noah would learn that wine in moderation would bring joy to the people.

A town grew up around the vineyards and the nearby fields. Noah's family thrived and multiplied in numbers that led the adventurous among them to leave and form new settlements in the surrounding wilderness and even in the lands between the great rivers. With their new prosperity, they returned often to trade. They also informed on the Nephilim who were always nearby, finding ways to pass and mix with the settlers.

Noah had been old for many centuries and was no longer active in the multiplying of his people. Unless his eye wandered and the Lord's command to multiply came with a renewing force, he spent his days in the Ark. One day, though, Noah came upon a girl working in the vineyard who was ready to bear children. She knew that Noah had captained the Ark and his family safely through the Deluge. She believed the story that many youths considered apocryphal, a story only used by randy graybeards who had never been in an Ark.

Noah invited the girl to his tent despite rumors that she was a child from a union with a Nephilim. She was comely, not unlike one of his granddaughters whose name he couldn't recall. Ignoring the gossip, Noah arranged for a jug of his best wine to be ready in his tent. He looked forward to telling a Deluge story with exploits of battling the Nephilim. He did have a grudging admiration for them; they survived the Lord's wrath more than once. Who else could make that claim?

The Lord did not come to Noah that night as he slept without dreams.

He did not wake with the girl in his bed as he hoped or even remember if she came to his tent. In her place, Ham came and saw his father naked. He came to warn Noah that the girl was most likely Nephilim. She may have been an avenging spy with poison. Ham did not find the girl. Instead, he had the displeasure of seeing his father's flaccidity. He left and told his brothers of his shameful entrance. To make things right, the brothers entered the tent walking backwards to drape a robe with the colors of the rainbow over their father. He stirred like a child being tucked in bed by his mother and did not remember his son's visits.

Word got back to Noah that Ham had entered his tent and seen him naked. Noah sent for Ham and cursed him, detailing an unpromising vision of Ham's progeny—oppression, servitude, infertile land and forced copulation with the Nephilim. Noah knew that he had taken, if not mimicked, the Lord's language of condemnation and his many fulminations against his creation. But Noah had not railed against Ham as a claim for authority, like the Nephilim had made before they were thrown out of the Lord's presence. The curse had been given and Ham left the tent with the unsteady stride of the accursed.

That night the Lord came to Noah, almost before he was asleep. The Lord was amused by Noah's outburst and cursing of Ham, a rash act without a foreseeable outcome. The Lord was bemused, though, by Noah's mimicry, which mingled the human with the divine in a way that seemed to expose the Lord's lack of omnipotence, a claim he had never made. My power is growing, the Lord had said, but it is impossible to measure and is of no real interest or purpose, given the difficulties of creation. As for the curse, it was something the Lord would have to deal with long after Noah was dead.

Noah had been drunk and did not remember the details of the curse. If anything, it was an embarrassing entry into shame and remorse. He was more concerned with remembering what had happened before Ham had entered his tent. Had he slept with the girl and forgotten already? Was the girl still nearby? Was she a Nephilim spy? Noah knew that his years were taking his memory, but this did not stop him

from asking shamelessly after the girl. Some claimed to have seen her leaving the tent, but she could not be found and Noah was ashamed to have pursued her and brought jeopardy to his family.

The Lord confessed to Noah that he did not watch closely when his creation multiplied, certainly not in tents. He said that there was so little difference between fornication and procreation that he regretted leaving his eternal absorption to dabble in the creation of the body and its unruly parts. Noah began to fear another Deluge. But the skies remained blue and the Lord was more resigned than angry.

Nights were given to the Lord. Signs and images appeared on the surfaces of Noah's dreams, as if the Lord were in the shadows moving them as needed. Lambs gathered on a grid bleating piteously as they disappeared one by one, called by a shepherd or leaving for slaughter. Other recognizable scenes from daily life appeared with signs and voices of increasing complexity. Noah believed that the Lord was preparing him for a new discourse that would be needed as creation multiplied and migrated to distant lands. But Noah was unprepared for the difficulty of the signs and came to believe that a younger man would have been a better student. But he made of them what he could.

As the dreams wore on with a tedium of the hot season, the Lord began to appear before Noah in disguises. He aligned the signs with images for the language they spoke, then for new languages that Noah did not know, if they were indeed languages. The images were then mixed with new signs and sounds spoken by different voices. None of it was recognizable and the meaning was often unclear. Noah was listening, he thought, to the Nephilim disputing with the Lord before they had been thrown down to the earth, a disheartening look into the world before creation and a distortion of time.

Noah began to fear that he would die in his sleep before he came to an understanding of what was before him and what he was being called to do, if anything. Fatigued, he tried to sleep within the dream to escape the exacting toll that the Lord demanded as he began again to talk of

Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. He should have continued hunting jackals, said the Lord. The Tower is a shoddy piece of workmanship propped up as a Nephilim blasphemy. To save the workers from certain death, he said, and to stop the amateurish idolatry, I am releasing new, albeit, incomplete languages which will arrive in their mouths like pestilence and disease. The Babylonians and their Nephilim minders will flee in bewilderment when they are no longer able to boast of their Tower.

The Lord told Noah to leave his dreams. Ham had returned to have the curse withdrawn and for reconciliation. The Lord did not offer counsel, but told Noah that they should try and make the curse right. It was within Noah's authority, if not ability, to do so. He was assigned the negotiation with the Lord's blessing.

The sounds of animals woke Noah. They were approaching from the valley below, moving in twos toward the Ark, an unpleasant reminder, if not a veiled threat of another Deluge. Small elephants, giraffes, zebras and other animals not found in the region, moved into the fields around the Ark. They gathered, as if they were a menagerie that was tended by shepherds trained for the occasion. Children came running in amazement toward the skittish animals.

The charm of the exotic scene eased for a moment the bitterness of the Ham's return. Noah invited Ham into his tent, the same tent in which Ham was cursed. As expected, Ham wanted Noah to withdraw the curse, which had driven his people into conflicts with their neighbors. They were taken as slaves by the Nephilim. Their infertile land was too close to the crumbling edge of the world. Despite the adversity, Ham affirmed the sanctity of his people, their adherence to all aspects of the law and their honor and obedience to the Lord. Ham was bold in saying that the Lord should take his own law seriously.

The power of Ham's reasoning and contrition was authentic, but Noah did not know how to retract the curse in a manner that would satisfy him. Only the Lord could mitigate the curse now that the consequences were

acquiring a history. Noah expressed surprise that the curse had come alive when his intention was of no more significance than someone cursing an animal for wandering into planted fields. He was moved enough by Ham's plea to tell him the story of the girl he had been waiting for in the tent, foolishly calling her his bride. Ham was not assuaged by the ordinary circumstances that brought about the curse. He wanted Noah to intercede with the Lord and withdraw the curse.

Noah agreed to bring his curse to the Lord's attention and find a remedy. He instructed Ham to set up camp on the outskirts of the settlement and wait for word. He must stay until the nature of the curse was known, but not to take it as either final or of enduring consequence. He told Ham that he had grown old talking with the Lord, but would try to live long enough to atone for his intemperate act. It would take time.

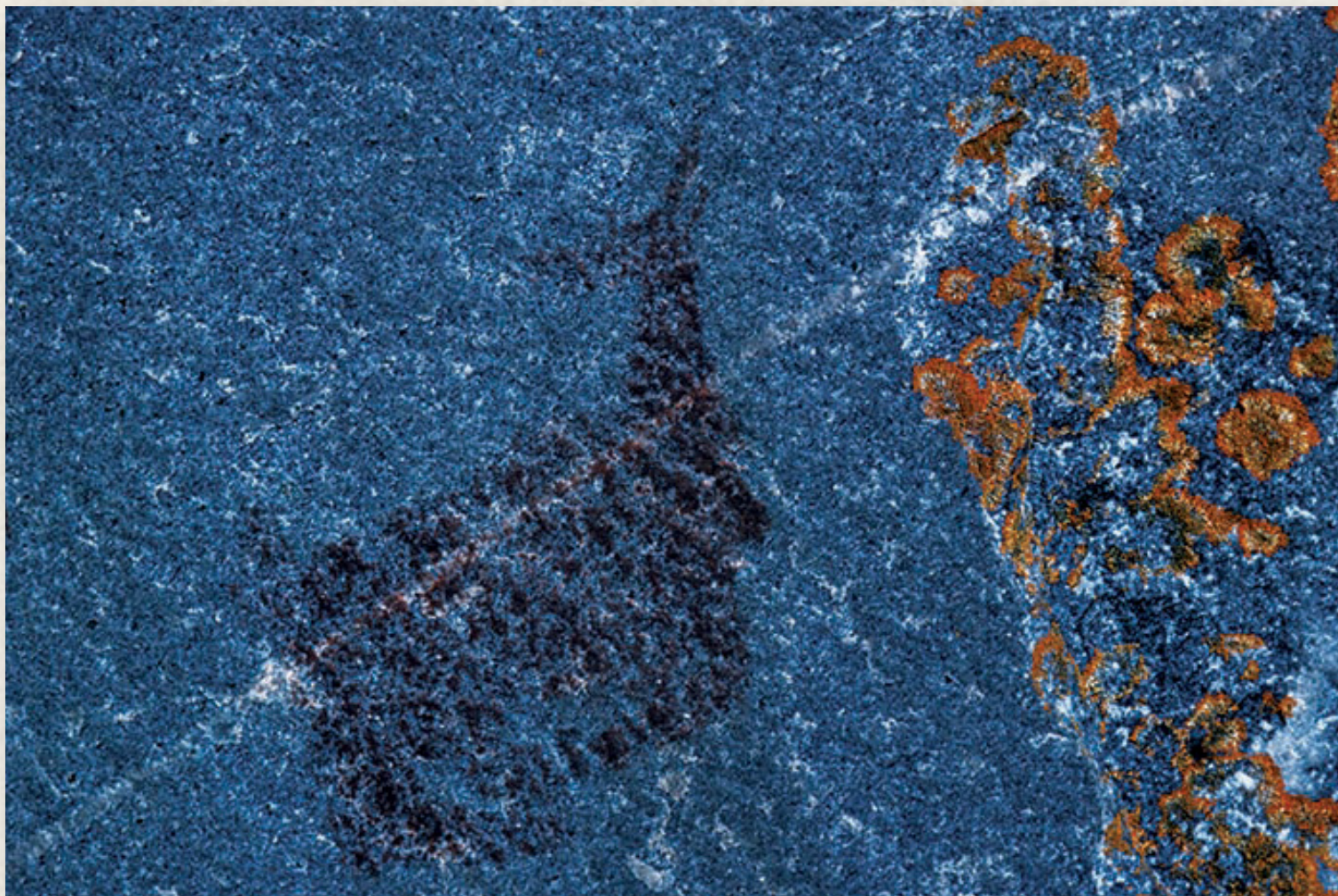
After Ham returned to his tent, the Lord came to Noah, almost before he had fallen asleep. The Lord was not interested in Noah's curse. He said, I have given the Nephilim my new languages and they have fled Babylon with their wives. I no longer know what they are saying or if my new languages will work as a curse. We will see if they make war among themselves.

The Lord knew that Noah was tired and encouraged him to sleep within his dream, then sleep even deeper within another dream as he was wont to do if allowed. Noah fell into a state where even the Lord did not go, a place where uncreating was possible, if not imminent.

We are going to try uncreation now in the hour of your natural death, said the Lord, when there is no rancor or regret. I will start by turning my flat and unleavened world into a ball. This will disrupt the lives of the Nephilim. Some may fall again through space and they will not find a forgiving earth. Then I will uncreate the rivers that have not as yet been muddied by animals or dirtied by shepherds washing their arses. I will flatten my favorite mountains and leave expanses of sand in their wake. Then I will uncreate you Noah and you will leave the world of memory. When I am finished, I will not even remember you

and your Ark. If we are conjoined as I suspect, I will become a lesser God or even one of the fallen, exhausted and left to beg at the base of the Tower. I will have no choice but to speak one of my new languages and ask plaintively, what has happened?

Noah was dead before the Lord had finished talking in the waning moments of the dream. The Nephilim girl came soon thereafter to lay with Noah in the tent until morning. When she discovered that he was dead, she fled to find her people.



WOODLAND CARIBOU CONTRAST by Doug Hagley, 1990
photograph of Agawa pictograph

TERRY HAUPTMAN

Tribes

In The Book of Why
History torques
The thunder's burnt tears
In the city of dreams.
Your garnet eyes remember
Stephen Berg's
"Desnos Reading The Palms of Men
On Their Way to the Gas Chambers"
In Buchenwald
Predicting Good Fortune
Before they perish forever.

This day of At- One- Ment
In the winds of lamentation
In the pomegranate ash
Maror and tar,
I wonder about Desnos' optimistic gift.
Wearing malachite, the thorned jewel
Of my tribe's dust,
Drinking Sangría
In El Farro's Spanish Restaurant
Where James Baldwin
Used to laugh
Writing on Fire,
Writing on Wind,
In the burnished sun
Burnt-earth silhouette
Of Freedom.

Aleph

“Does the Aleph exist in the heart of a stone?”

Jorge Luis Borges

Tell me how the Angel of Longing flies through your soul.

Who in the Book of Splendor dreams the open dark?

Listening to ululating coyotes

Flinging destiny's winds

Into the open world of song,

Fling fate into the heart's migrations,

Fling emptiness into the resins of pine.

That azure sap of mountain thunder

Humming within.

Azure

When you were a garbage man

On Buffalo's West Side,

Elvis jumped on your truck,

“Oh don't you step on,

Step on my Blue Suede shoes,”

You accidentally poured ashes

On his white silk suit,

Entering the night

With diamonds pouring over you.

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ

Short Tales on My Name

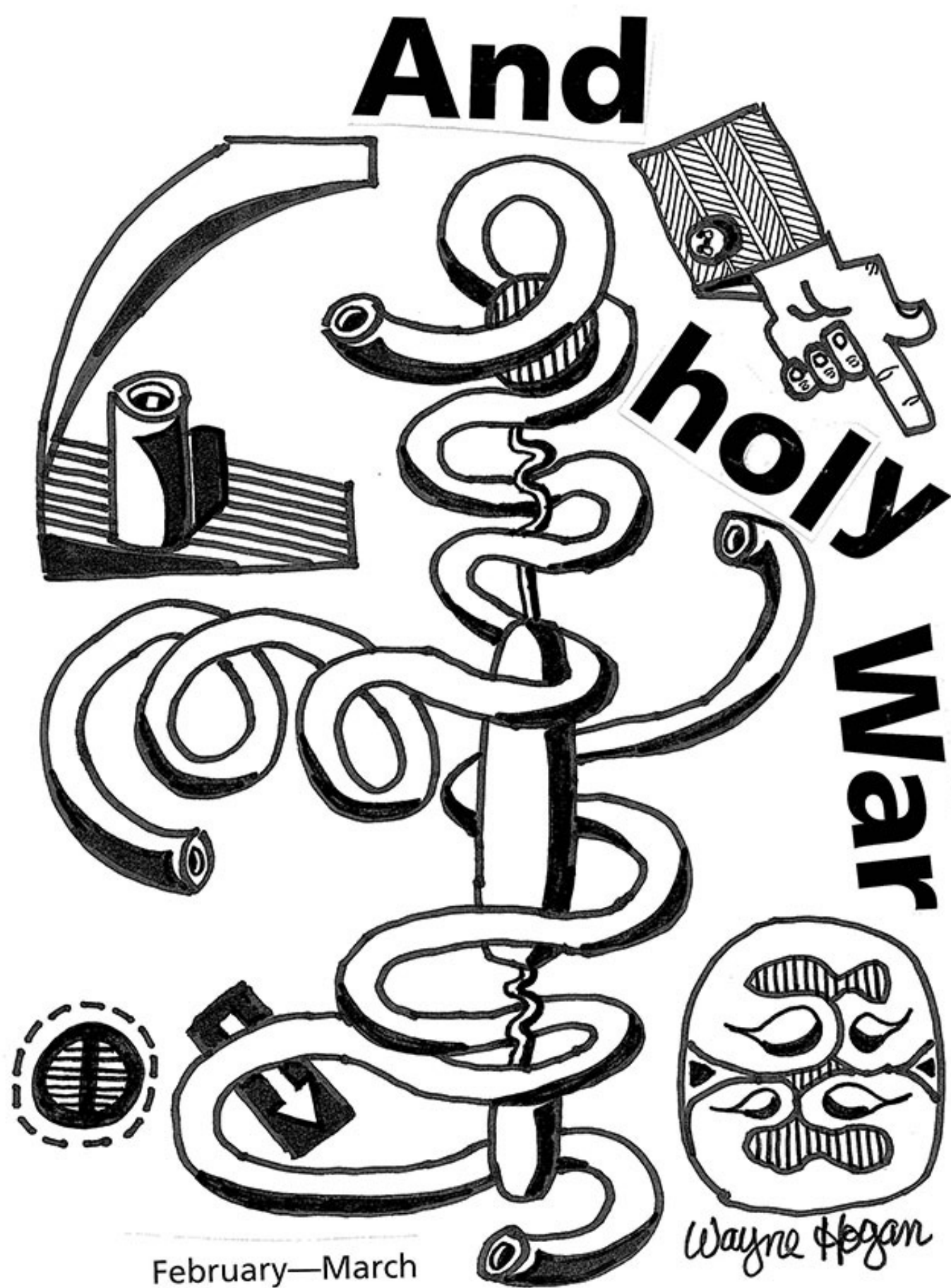
To create these tales I honor a hellish artistic constraint.
Cleanse at least the sole literate doll in her scentless lair.
See silent little children's tanks tread.
Nine ice doltish lizards hiss and rioted.
Old looted lots are dead real estate in a hell zone.
Interlock hostile rancid red roosters' racists cocks.
Search the latest screen artists' horror diets.
Cook a thick ninth tooth to astonished craziest taste.
Restrict a little lean loose door noose.
Reckon, dread, nonetheless realize rain.
Heist handheld steel that doesn't stand heat.
Derail the tenth toll train that once ran.
Start all kinds of loose tea diets.
Strain stare at the last host clinker stool.
Choose to store cold car horn races in a cash toll.
Sanction three trained lice to hold rolled shit-licked loot.
Chaired hatched chicken holler and sear.
Retain and rinse peep scratch on ten-cent capes.
All told alone, her chosen steed concedes terror soldiers.
On his lane of distinction stood to rot a stark dank kiln.
Stinker stock cars either stall or rot.
Enlist rich discrete zealots race crazed horses.
Constrict too late the last capped soot school.
Concoct keen caps to hold cold hazed head knots.
Heist to a holiest snoot a tot aspirant's distinct scent.
Deal rote ethereal colorless ideas in stolen dollars and cents.
Arise to ride a looped stained hooded cuckold.
Raze their haloed satanic coiled concerted carcass to share at
the shore.

Kostelanetz/112

I sent the zestiest retarded deer to eat at hardened rock zoos.
Sane retired liars lack centralized star to learn tricksters' haze.



UNTITLED by Wayne Hogan, 2019
ink on paper



UNTITLED by Wayne Hogan, 2019
ink on paper

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

STEPHANIE DICKINSON:

As a writer I emulate my cousin who reads opera scores to the grand piano of her cerebellum. The violets of her parietal lobes—petals drowning in almost cold water—make a symphonic poem. She is content, assured in her selfhood, in what she's furnished her brain with. The mundane does not satisfy her when the opening motif of Tristan-Isolde springs from her fingertips. Her gaze able to take in both the visible and the hidden is the gaze I ape. I am reading Russian these days. I finished Marina Tsvetaeva's magnificent *A Captive Spirit Selected Prose*. That led me to *Petersburg* by Andrei Bely, a brick of a book in width. I read the difficult work in the morning with tea and toast; I carry a smaller size book in my bag to read on the subway and, today it's *The Industry of Souls*, short-listed for the Booker. Last week it was the novella *Music of a Life*, by Andrei Makine. Slim-waisted and small-breasted we two, my cousin and myself, our bodies have never swelled. No child has sheltered in our bellies. Bach spills from her fingers instead of her womb. Her inner ears carry Wagner and Liszt and at their lobes, Cosima Wagner picks up her long skirts and brushes her golden hair. My cousin decorates herself with dwarf dogwood and 1930's Berlin degenerate art deco. *Die Meistersinger* in claw-and-ball bathtubs. My cousin is the self I would have chosen if I had had a say. Her sculpted head where the thinking lives I covet, her hair glinting red-blond in the sun. There is earth in her body, the soil of her flesh where the brush and canvas thrive. My cousin's brain studies signs from the cosmos, extracts and delves into the depths of what can't be grasped. Yet we are alike in our taste for high ideals and low gossip. Late nights after work and after midnight I read the easier texts. I just finished a biography of Lizzie Siddal, the Pre-Raphaelite muse and wife of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She too was the four-chambered heart, the clump of red moss, the lover of the little and the large. As a writer I am a reader. The only one (usually) in the subway car with a print book in my hand. Perhaps, I am a fossil.

DENVER BUTSON:

New Year's Resolutions

(a month early in case the world ends before then)

1. Have a coffee with a scarecrow. Ask about stillness.
2. Find someone in the phonebook named *Avalanche*.
3. Take *Avalanche* a gift of tiny flowers.
4. Continue to look up whenever birds fly over.
5. Kiss *Avalanche*'s belly at least twice a day.
6. Don't be one to look back and regret not punching fascists.
7. Drink each coffee as if it is the last coffee anyone will ever drink.
8. Play guitar all the way through my daughter singing "Me and Bobby McGee" without puddling into tears.
9. At the aforementioned coffee date with the scarecrow, ask him if he believes he is a bullfighter and that one day the bull will appear out of the high grasses and charge at him, as promised.
10. Tell *Avalanche* she looks as lovely as she did fifty years ago.

JOHN BRADLEY:

SalvatoreDali did not like to be touched.

LeonoraCarrington did not like talking turnips.

FridaKahlo did not like uncooked termites.

VictorHugo did not like to wear a tether.

ElizabethBishop did not like to be tickled.

JuliusCaesar did not like to cut his own toenails.

Billythe Kid did not like to go near a jar of pickled tonsils.

FedericoGarcia Lorca was allergic to Toowoomba.

Cleopatradi did not like her hair to be tousled.

KingKong did not like air transportation.

LizzieBorden did not like to be truncated.

Joanof Arc and Frankenstein did not like a lit torch.

GertrudeStein did not like to be called Twinkle Toes.
SalvatoreDali did not like to be not liked.

BOB HEMAN:

every word, a clue

ZOLTÁN KOMOR:

the girl with the carriage tongue wants to kiss—I'll bet you've never seen something like this, the chick's got an old fashioned fiacre in her mouth from the last century—it's all silver, it's all gold—the kind of horse-drawn four-wheeled carriage the leech-moustached gentlemen in Vienna used to travel around—she tells me this vehicle always runs towards her front teeth carrying her unspoken words—but never arrives—maybe she wants to tell me now that love is a purposeless journey, a kidnapped sunflower held in a dark cellar, or a lonely fat submarine hanging a hairy periscope in the men's shower room

for a girl who doesn't have a real tongue she does talk a lot—although her words are mostly horse snortings, the chimes of Christmas bells and the crazy creaking of wooden wheels—still, I understand that's she's chattering about the pits where the holes were thrown, and these are the holes where the gaps have fallen into, and these are the gaps that makes the abyss dizzy—but all I care about is how to squeeze the caffeine out of the peacocks—the jellyfish of oblivion keep stinging my forehead—see, it's all covered with burning red rash now, and every bump resembles a tired pearl fisher who has been suffering from a creative crisis for years, and can only bring up bathtub plugs from the bottom of the ocean instead of rare jewels—sooner or later they will they drain all the water—some say that urine is the best medicine for jellyfish stings, because it's acidic and has ammonia in it—but maybe the girl with the carriage tongue would find it rather strange if I would piss myself in the forehead right here and now—although for a long time this was my favorite hobby—and before that, I also collected prison windows—every morning I wondered at the metal bars until they started to disgust

me so I have escaped from them and since then I disguise myself as a free man—my life was almost perfect until now, but I need to find out how to squeeze the caffeine out of the peacocks

one of the wheels of the girl with the carriage tongue falls off and rolls away, it pops out of her mouth like a decaying tooth—oh the mineral spark of suffering, the swollen upper thigh of grief—mucous snails cling together and hold each other in the porcelain cupboard—the wheel fracture of picturesque dreams—maybe if I would have kissed this girl, her wheel wouldn't have fallen out—oh dear girl with the carriage tongue, never mind that damned fiacre, because your heart is all silver, it's all gold, something that the leech-moustached gentlemen would use to travel around in Vienna—and I promise I'll hop into it and then we can slide away, drawing a long blood stain in the snow—and we'll take those cursed peacocks too—and figure out how to squeeze all the caffeine out of them on the way

DAVID GILBERT:

Jesus, I'm due for some advice.

ELIZABETH ROBINSON:

Use bars of soap instead of plastic bottles of “body wash” in order to save on plastic waste.

IVAN ARGÜELLES:

New decade! Watch out for oncoming traffic, false divisions of time and echolalia! History is catching up with itself, great homophones of narcissism and the return of the Sun-King with a Versailles of bric-a-brac gaudy real estate surfacing in the swamps of the Southland. And beauty queen contests and cozying up to the Russia. News is enemy of the people. Journalism like poetry is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the last century. Who reads anymore? For that matter who writes anymore? Glitz and fabric of coal dust and smog that obliterate the Indian sub-

continent. Fires so out of control that Australia has disappeared from the map. Climate change, global WARNING. Is this decade the last? Everything is speeding up at lunatic incremental rates. What was yesterday's Miami is today's Atlantis. And Holy Et Cetera. Why go on raving and frothing while Penguins and Polar Bears wonder what happened to the great Ice-Continents! Eternity is around the corner. Paranoia is a contagious disease. Look at the Republicans with their undying unquestioning adherence to the Master. Mussolini be-alike in the White House! Border walls and illegal rapists on the run like hoards of unidentifiable cucarachas released over night from El Salvador. Let's not kid ourselves, there is nothing divine about humanity. Just another species in the long and still experimenting evolutionary chain. Like the dodo there is no reason why we can't go extinct either.

DIETER WESLOWSKI:

It is Winter again, Winter when I often find myself thinking of James Joyce as snow falls. You know, about the every thing it covers.

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ:

Politically I've become seriously anti-anti-Trump, which is to say that I regard people vehemently opposing the legitimately elected president as seriously threatening not only America but the Democratic Party (where I'm still registered), because the sore losers who make anti-Trump their principal position alienate more swing (and formerly Democratic) voters than even Hillary drove away in the last presidential election. Consider that deranged anti-Trumpers ultimately become de facto fools working overtime for Trump's reelection, simply because, out of a disrespect for democracy, they didn't understand how and why Trump won and is likely to win again. Whether or not the Russia hoax was designed to prompt Obama to initiate a military takeover in his lameduck months (which he fortunately refused to do), continuing to mention it hurts the Democratic party to a degree it doesn't yet recognize. With likely losses in 2020, the kids comprising the Justice Democrats (who brought you AOC) will, let's expect, take out the losing Congresspeople in the primaries,

just as AOC, attractive but unqualified, took out a veteran pol named Joe Crowley. Whenever anyone charges that anti-anti-Trump is “pro-Trump,” I remind them of my anti-anti-Communism of the McCarthy era. Only political dunces thought us anti-antis to be Communists.

Over the past few years, I’ve been writing that to win Democrats must develop a charismatic candidate with a winning platform. From my first learning about Tulsi Gabbard, she’s been my choice for the top of the ticket. As a woman with a record of indisputable achievements, she lacks discreditable baggage. Two generations younger than Trump, she also represents a clear alternative. As a military veteran, she protests with credible authority the costs first of endless wars, not only in money but lives; she decries America’s initiating “regime change,” usually to disastrous results. Note that she doesn’t waste her time or the audience’s attention in smugly deprecating Trump. As a Samoan, she’s tough, very tough; in my considered opinion, no other Democrat can stand down Trump in a direct debate. (Remember that Samoans have been most visible on the mainland as football players, wrestlers, and the toughest West Coast gang-bangers.) In my judgment, the Democratic Party denying her obviously choice candidacy is cruising for losing, which I hope they (we) accept more gracefully than happened three years ago. Smug sore losers have trouble accepting that they scare normal human beings. May I suggest that the only Democrat capable now of making Tulsi the top candidate is Obama himself, who ought to be sympathetic to a fellow young mixed-race Hawaiian; but he typically lacks the courage. Otherwise, as everybody who knows me know: Whenever the outcome for any election is easily predicted (here in NYS for electoral college delegates), I recommend voting third party, for any third party, simply to count toward keeping its option on the next ballot.

AMY JO TRIER-WALKER:

Must I even have to scour the high rises for snipers in dreams. Must I cower over her until I remember the stampede. Shall I famish my house until a red broom is planted at every front door. Yes. And yet slouching a chickadee and a cat with no tail at my center. We are ever expanding apart. Can’t I fly back.

TIM KAHL:

Recently I began following a thread online that posed the question: what is the avant-garde? It was posed earnestly and with curiosity by a veteran journeyman poet who has after many years established himself at a major American university. Many respondents toyed with the notion or chimed in that they had no idea, that it was everywhere and nowhere, that there was no outside anymore. Of course, I found this rather ridiculous. I wondered if a kind of bland middle class taste had subsumed everything, especially a preponderance of university publications. Certainly, the AWP-fed sinecure-chasing set could be seen as establishing the benchmark aesthetic. Often it is thought one should strive to be a member of a group of this kind. Anything starkly independent doesn't get a head nod from that group and stands to be a good candidate for joining the ranks of the dramatically relegated . . . like someone who unearths an obscure Afghani form. Or comments on the relationship of lichen to the taxonomy of people standing in line to see a movie. Or the cultural appropriation of space dust. Or the fashioning of Sufi-inspired verses that are sung as part of devotion. Or someone fashioning a poetry app (whatever that is/may be). Or someone teaching in an MFA program requiring proficiency in Photoshop and InDesign to circumvent the gatekeepers of manuscript publication. Or someone with a bit of music literacy trying to fuse the tradition of poetry and music back together in English. Or someone delivering a lofty soliloquy on NASCAR. Or personal poem-films in the style of Jodorowsky. Or poem collages that incorporate instructions for assembling a toy, two nutrition labels, and text appearing in a glove box. Or someone who documents the imperialism of ground squirrels. Or someone who writes a performance for a demonstration dance of many angry letters to the editor of *The San Francisco Chronicle*. Or someone who can render a collection of Mongolian throat noises that resemble the cadence of Dickinson. Or someone who can announce her own slow annihilation by flesh-eating bacteria. Or someone who can deliver a libretto for a choral piece that dramatizes the raging battle between rats in conjoined cages. Imagine something too weird or uncompromising for a university journal to publish, and you're halfway there.

Another good question raised was why does it matter? Apart from this inside-the-academic-beltway discussion about who is in and who is out, I think this question applies more broadly if examined in the context of today's workforce. The powers-that-be have emphasized flexibility. They want to move everyone into the gig economy that they can. This is the best way to reduce the cost of labor. The way this is done most reliably is to create a culture of conformity within the workplace. Anyone who opposes the general consensus as it is shaped by bosses is not a good team player and is out. Most workplaces are structured around one set of employees who go along with the desires of bosses and one group that is set apart from having most-favored status, relegated to a sub-level, a divide and conquer strategy. It is a top-down arrangement enforced through conformity to the group ethos. Much of this strategy has been derived from the new management playbook in the tech sector as depicted by Dan Lyons in *Lab Rats: How Silicon Valley Made Work Miserable for the Rest of Us*. It seems there is no end to the psychological pressure that can be applied by using the will of the group to make individuals work more and more and spend the majority of their lives in the workplace. Anyone who stands apart or outside is castigated and eventually given grounds for dismissal. Or at the very least they should be ignored and made to feel irrelevant. Lyons details deliberate rankling of employees to always make them anxious about whether they are in or out, whether they are in favor or out of favor. Sometimes they do this to the point of inducing panic disorders. This way high-achieving employees continue to work at full capacity for fear that they lose approval. And it works. The most successful in this system are the ones who are able to manage the stress the best. Or pig out on Prozac and other SSRIs.

Discussion of the avant-garde is pertinent in that it depicts an independent player within the works. These are rather scarce creatures. They are going extinct and are subject to premature death. The avant-gardist is someone who can critique the system playfully or maybe throw a wooden shoe into the machines. They are people who can arrive at singular conclusions and expand the diversity of thought, not just attach themselves to the prevailing ideology. It seems that this is an important

time for the avant-garde to arrive as symbol to the casts of sideways-looking phone-checkers that there can be action that doesn't automatically seek approval from the established authorities. They are not necessarily provocateurs but resistance fighters to a culture that has seemingly become trained to confer with and react to a thousand and one opinions instead of standing on the uncertain ground of one's own sharp take.

When someone asks the question of whether there could possibly be an avant-garde anymore and then promptly dismisses the notion, it stands as a rather smug affirmation that they have arrived on the comfortable ground of general consensus. Their work no longer seems to matter outside of sustaining the soft middle, and in a cultural climate where the independent voice at the margins is being bled out of existence, the all-encompassing regression to the norm stands as a force to flatten any kind of egalitarian sensibility. The monolithic narrative in the global economy is to work longer and have your labor serve as source of greater profit for shareholders. The avant-gardist is the one who says ENOUGH to the mindfuck games in the workplace (in the electorate, and everywhere else) that pits one faction against the other so that the labor of all can be leveraged each against the other. The conform-to-the-norm techniques need to be deconstructed and called out. Good old-fashioned critiques need to be articulated and not just be seen as someone being mean-spirited who is getting in the way of someone's personal right to self-promote. Is it any coincidence that the same people who would raise the specter of the avant-garde's death are the ones who would also champion the death of the culture of critique?

TERRY HAUPTMAN:

Deforestation

The Amazon forest burns through
The horned moon's
Mouth of fear

The blood-red heat of molten earth
Flames in agony
Moans like jackals
Flanked by bees

In the smoke of sinewy animal hearts
Fanged by petrified hope
Trembling in prayer

DAN RAPHAEL:

Timing and distraction. Not learning from history cause I don't remember. Last night got an e-mail saying my next book, *Moving with Every*, will be published this fall. And damn the celebratory energy of it. I know life's always a sine wave. We might not be manic depressive but reality tends to be. I'm looking/feeling for ways to tuck this positive energy away, like a battery, or water behind a hydro-electric dam. To even out the dark turns to come, whether internally or externally. There are a lot of ways I can improve but for the moment I'm focusing on not hesitating. Yeah, consider the conditions and consequences of the leap but then just doing it. Nothing half-ass. Nick Cave: "I've spent my life butting my head against other peoples' lack of imagination." I'm not even trying to envision, just sometimes there's an open door...

MERCEDES LAWRY:

I am reading *ESSAYS* by Lydia Davis and I feel as if small fires are being set in my brain and then I think perhaps "fire" is not the best image right now, given Australia. Maybe "bursts" is better...writers I should read, sentences I should rework, ideas I should note down before they slip away. And so on.

GEORGE KALAMARAS:

I'm thinking of the great Japanese poet, Takiguchi *Shūzō* (1903-1979), who was jailed and tortured in 1941 because he was "Surrealist." I'm

thinking of his remarkable line, "The air is a beautiful princess without bones" (translated by Miryam Sas in *Fault Lines: Cultural Memory and Japanese Surrealism*, Stanford University Press, 1999). And I'm thinking of so many other bones in the world:

Bones of the living / bones of the dead
The bones of tea leaves left behind in the cup
The bones of sleep
And the bones of sleep's sleep
Bones of the garden hose and back-aching work
Grass bones poking up from the foot of the wormfence
The glistening bones moonlight makes in the rippling pond at midnight
Glorious animal bones propelling healthy bodies through nocturnal
woods and hollers
Fish bones the raccoon discards back into the river
Skunk bones, possum bones, the bones of weeds
Bones that come toward us in sleep, that glow with the slow growth
of trees
The sorrow bones of Thoreau's face
The newborn infant's first bones as it reaches toward light
The boneless bones in a slice of toast
Bones in the Viking dice
Bone notes in jazz, bone-music hunched over a piano in a 2 a.m. club
Smoke and fog and bones of the tree, half-filled with leaves
Bones of the giving / bones of the dread
The air's bones
Princess bones
The air, a beautiful princess without bones

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