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HARRISON • MURPHY • BEINING • GARTHE • LAO • HOUSTMAN
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KALAMARAS • KAUFFMAN • MUSIC MASTER • SIERRA • HEMAN
HERRICK • BUTSON • STEWARD • RAPHAEL • NIKUZE • HOGAN
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CALIBAN

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Cover: CALIBAN by Gary R. Smith, 1986
charcoal on paper

John Digby's collages appear on pages 13, 22, 33, 45, 49, 66, 77, 97, 103, 115, and 125.

Collage on page 9 by Daniel Estrada Del Cid

Cover and title page design by Gary R. Smith, 1986

Typeset in Baskerville by Daniel Estrada Del Cid,
HS Marketing Solutions, Westminster, California

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This is the last issue of Calibanonline. Viewing this and previous issues online and in pdf downloads is free.

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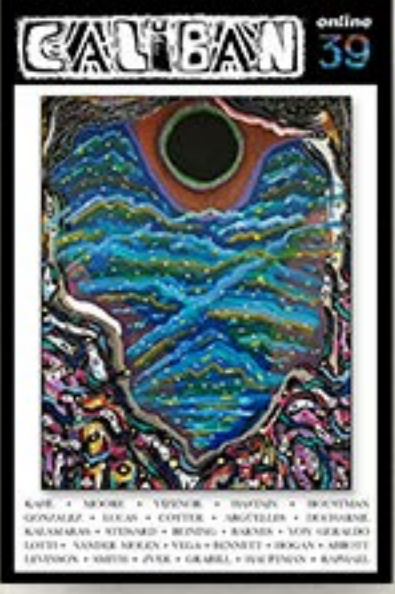
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WILL ALEXANDER

The Ethos of Capital: Reductive Possibility

Forced to thrive according to the exoteric pressure that combusts from extrinsic skills germane to the Occident the individual spirit is forced to align itself as shaken decimal and expected to convey its inner minerals that remain condensed as private capital. Of course this remains the individual spirit consumed by private claims spawned by capital and the poisonous schism of its legendary dishonor. As for the template of barter not a single figment can be extracted that sires itself as greater example. Of course one starts out in life being inscribed by cellular blueprint the connective that is prescriptive hoarding. As if a child could hang onto his objects of play for eternity. This is why we have extreme examples of beings who demand burial in their favourite possessions, say, a classic old motor car, or a personally scorched urn as if they carried the power of post-mortem capital and by the spirit of such meta-possession and the individual is carried by inner cataclysm over beyond the central monuments of heaven. Thus the individual remains bestowed by living error, by neurological inclemence, so that he or she continues to carry protracted meta-weight, carrying a skull sired by blue instinct that attempts to carry its ice to the beyond. An active treason issued by oneself to oneself so that inner entanglement simmers like pre-eruptive salt on say, the moon known as Mimas obscuring the self from the revelation of itself as the ethos of capital attempts to prioritize glimpses at meta-hamlets that remain ongoing as reductive possibility.

STEPHANIE DICKINSON

From TRAKL DIARIES

The Orchard Cell

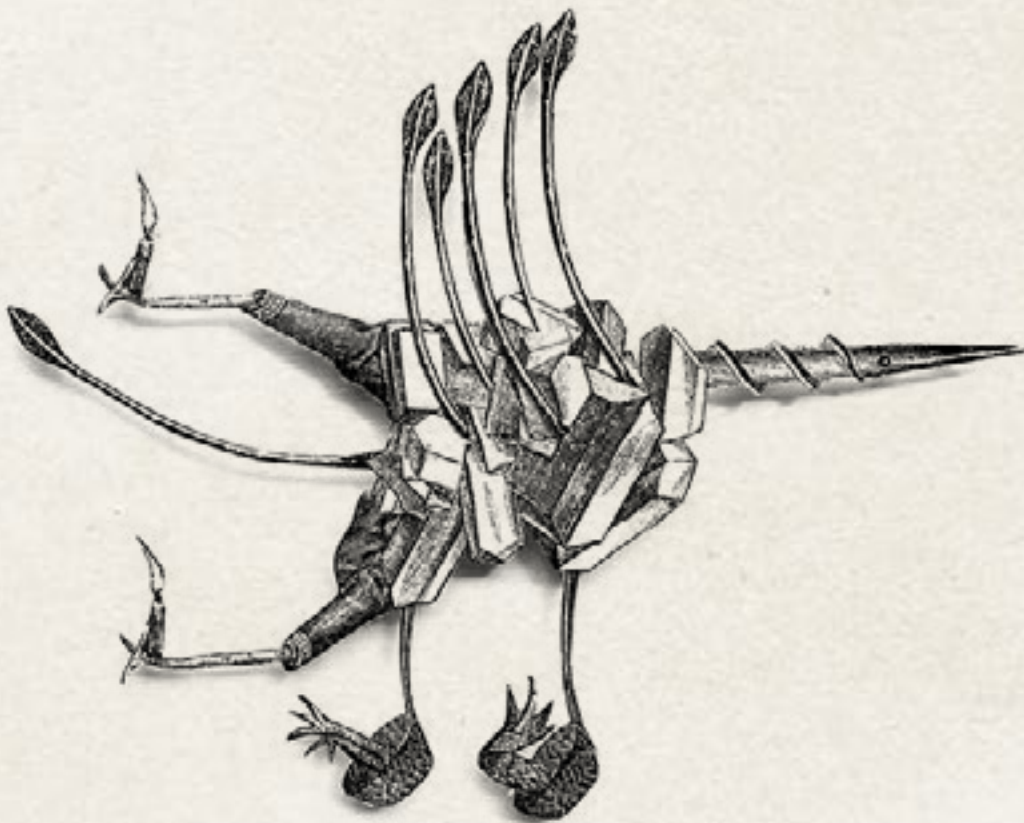
Trakl collapsed after the battle of Grodek and was sent to Krakow for treatment—for schizophrenia. ‘Treatment’ meant being locked in a cell.

—James Reidel in “Mudlark”

*

I am in a cell. A small hill hidden by orchards on both sides. Apples. Each voice has a green leaf in it. Tinkling. I get up from my crouch, the boy floats face down in the puddle, my arms mindlessly stroke the thick air as if I am swimming. *The memory of god is a pygmy elephant.* I am wading in my uniform that wants to strangle my flesh; my body festers. *The eyes of god are four red wolves.* There are strong winds and lantern light from the jailor when he rattles the door for the slop bucket. I go back to the boy and draw him farther into the water. *The brain of god is a raven.* I shall hold my younger self under and watch his breath bubbles end. *The stomach of god is a lion.* The batman tells me of an old wooden staircase that leads to another staircase. Escape. He will bring a key. The stones used in the Convent are beautiful and in the yard over the well, an archway where the crucifix is carved. *The creamlike wings that sheathe god’s heart are smeared with human shit.* I keep walking, past the bodies hanging from trees, soldiers said to have deserted under fire. How their dovelike eyes widen at death and their tongues slide from their mouths embroidered with their last words. They mean for me a noose, they mean to court marshal me, to hang me. *The breastbone of god has the softness of moss.* Keep walking five paces to the slop bucket, five to the bunk, past a beer garden; past green trellises and ferns and young recruits in military caps,

brandishing swords, toasting each other. Clutching their mugs, they rub them against the table until they make a humming then lift them toward the sky bloodied with sunset. They drink and the mugs come crashing down, almost as one man. The machine gun nest erupts. *The sleep of god is innocent as a sloth's*. Almost as one man the shell explodes them, making a hole of handsome trees, bones, toes, ears, noses, nothing left whole. A small hill hidden by orchards on both sides. Apples. Each dying voice has a green leaf in it.





ROBERT JOHNSON WAITS FOR THE DEVIL by Paul Sierra
oil on canvas (30'' x 29'')

JOHN BRADLEY

Scrubbed Out of the Photographs

If you love the King James Bible, you love Frederick Douglass
smacking Lincoln with his King James Bible. If you love Walt

Whitman, besotted with his King James Bible, you love the printing
press and the plow, the stiff white collar and dung-stained

dungarees. If you love Andrew Johnson, playing the marzipan
mandolin at Lincoln's second inaugural, then you love

John Brown swinging his axe deep into his King James Bible,
now scrubbed out of all the photographs of the Founding Fathers.

*

One night in the hotel lobby, after the TV self-detonates,
I meet President John Wilkes Booth. *I'm fraught*, he says,

with violence, violence filling the blank spaces all around me.

Before I strike him on the head with Clara Barton's King James

Bible, I see the holes in his chest. Clear liquid leaking,
dampening the pant legs of his too-large suit. *Be of good cheer*,

sir, I tell President John Wilkes Booth, *for blank spaces fill
the blank spaces all around us with more blank spaces.*

Sleep, Tower of Babel, Sleep

My father once called me *Ultima Thule*; I thought he said *Ultimate Fool*. Cesar Vallejo was washing his black socks in the sink with a potato peeler and a salt shaker. Hovering above my head: a block of wood the size of North Dakota. That's why I always carry a pair of tweezers. Canada geese leave three cuneiform marks in the snow that say: *This way*. True or occasionally false: *The term inertia relaxes the muscles in the face*. It's still unclear how the axe happened to be napping in the bed. It's a crime in Serbia to set fire to the chair you're occupying. Each time I clear my throat, the music stops. In Portal, Arizona, some believe the brain to be treeless and barren. Motionless sleep, sleepless inertia. Loren Eiseley once pressed his ear to the side of the cow and began transcribing. When I stuck my arm through the motel room wall in Portal, Arizona, no one in the next room shouted. That photo by Eudora Welty of bottles, all manner of bottles glowing on the ends of tree branches. *Birds are holes in heaven through which a man may pass*, said Walter Inglis Anderson, on his way back from the butcher shop with ten sausage links. During the pandemic, when I brushed the hand of the man behind the counter, how we both paused briefly. Sleepless inertia, motionless sleep. In the MRI, I could hear the world coming apart and slamming back together again. That self-portrait of Vermeer as the Fool with leaves stuck to his face. Each of us shadowed by a mountain—all the trash we've left behind in a lifetime. *Apologize to the chamber pot*, said the chamber pot. While remaining impermeable. That baby rhino soup must be mildly hallucinogenic. If *therefore* and *thereafter* meet at *thereupon*. Sleep, tower of Babel, sleep.

Birds Go Through

You have hands that birds go through. Above and through. When we last began, I was a character in a South Korean TV series about a fictitious detective. In April, my teeth have that much power. I can describe the scar that I'm not able to touch. In Greece, wax paper. In Turkey, a circular bun. In South Korea, certain things you let go. A does not agree with B, who frightens 70 to 80 percent of A. Then you walk into the room, your tentacles bleeding. We did the movie and then the movie did us. I'm a scientist from interstellar space when I'm on the street with you. *Empty streets don't pretend*, said a broken London. I'm pretending I'm meditating in a tree, a fake tree in Marin County. Oh, the author, that necessary but devastating catastrophe. To a zombie in a mask, everything looks like Mississippi. *You're afraid of comfort*, she said, in the most comfortable chair in the house. What happened at the premiere, watching the attorneys cut themselves. He said he was a Buddhist death metal vocalist. I told him I was a Dadaist aerial potato escapist. *You have a certain kinship with birds*, I told her in our South Korean living room. To this day, isolation begins with a voice. I still don't like to talk, but I must say that there's something quite mystical about that scar on your blanket. I wish I could tell you: *Somehow birds go through wax paper. Above and through.* Whatever comfort gives to you, whatever happens, you get scarred. In your living room, I try to coax love from charts of the waters around New Zealand.

Tribute and Farewell

How do I know if I have Caliban?

George Washington survived smallpox, malaria (six times), diphtheria, tuberculosis (twice), and pneumonia. Though he did not survive his dentures.

Can Caliban be sexually transmitted?

45 percent of U.S. adults believe in ghosts.

Is there or will there soon be a cure for Caliban?

A large plant of garlic mustard can disperse 7,900 seeds that can lurk in the soil for as long as 10 years.

Can I develop Caliban antibodies?

In air travel, zeppelins, not airplanes, were the first to offer passengers flights in Europe and the first to transport passengers across the Atlantic Ocean.

What are the lasting effects of Caliban?

Eat, sleep; sleep, eat.

If I recover from Caliban, will I be immune to its return?

When the cart stops, do you whip the cart or the ox?

SUSAN KAY ANDERSON

Shaniko, Mon Amour

One: Staying On

Another winter in Shaniko—
the mayor said no problem
unless you're one of those
problem finders, one of a dozen
enduring the Shaniko winter
wind down from The Gorge
sliding up from under the spaces
of the boardwalk at 4th and E
just where it intersects with sage
turning a dogleg past the store
then parking it at the post office
skipping past the old garage.

Two: Shaniko Winter

I think of Shaniko and the loves I left there.
The frozen sage the wind was my friend.
All the theater seats ripped out—stored under the eaves
of the once-largest building in all of Oregon
big enough to house my dilemma my indecision
about Shaniko and its location its official position.

Below zero and even somewhere right at—
Shaniko's rusty hinges in the moonlight
all the stars squeaking along in a woolly chorus.

Anderson/20

Three: The Highly Unknowable Town

Things caught fire
ideas only windier.
Our house
was on top of another building
don't ask me how this came to be
a typical arrangement

in those days
hydrants on every block
signs posted
wanted.

Four: Breathing, Seeing the Sun, Having Somewhere to Sleep

What we get.
Alive in air.
Seeing

where to sleep

breaking

river
trees

sun climbing out
only months away.

Five: Shaniko Revisited

Wool center of the world
Rattlesnakes right in town.

Miles away the river.
To measure

Look at the trail
Where it stops

Picks up again
Peaches, plums.

Six: Shaniko Idea

We could not find them
tickling the grasses
eyes empty
out without clothes fasteners
protruding apartments.

Sage the garden
magpies brushing
everything flat.

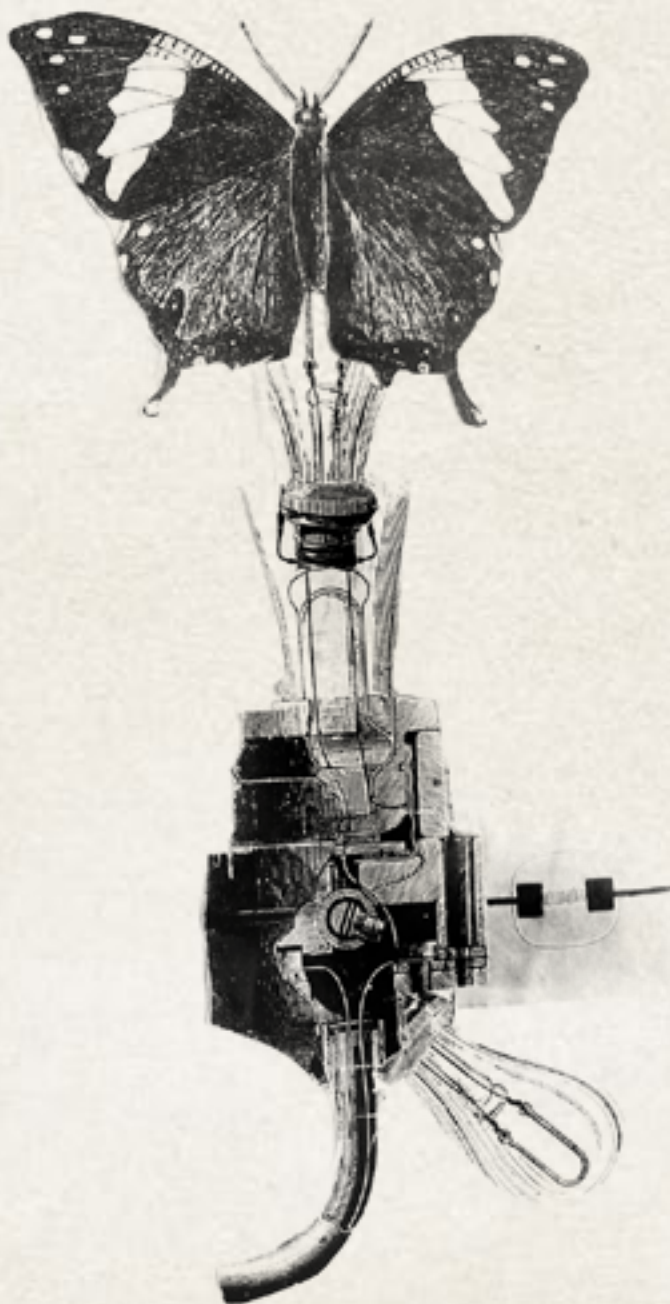
Swirly landings.
The whole picture
including headaches.
Dry reminder of more.

Shaniko has been
yucking it up
at the ice cream parlor.
Ladies and gents the town got too big.

Things made new but empty.
Tourists have a little trouble
passing Shaniko by.

Back Dirt

In the back dirt we found a lot. Sometimes we could declare whole sites. Ten obsidian flakes or more. No less. Or it wouldn't count. I named two of them, not the one where a tree had fallen over and its root ball was full of them sparkling in the late afternoon sun with rain. The Forest Service already knew about that one. No, it was where a bench above the small lake had been bulldozed, disturbed. Clear all the way to the bottom and there were huckleberries at that altitude. One Across. Two Over. Those were my names. I guess it's okay to tell. So much time has passed, bringing myself there is easy as pulling my hair and rubbing my stomach at the same time. I don't mind the extra trouble because it's like going home.



LAWRENCE R. SMITH

Ellen Wilt, the Soul of Caliban (1921-2020)

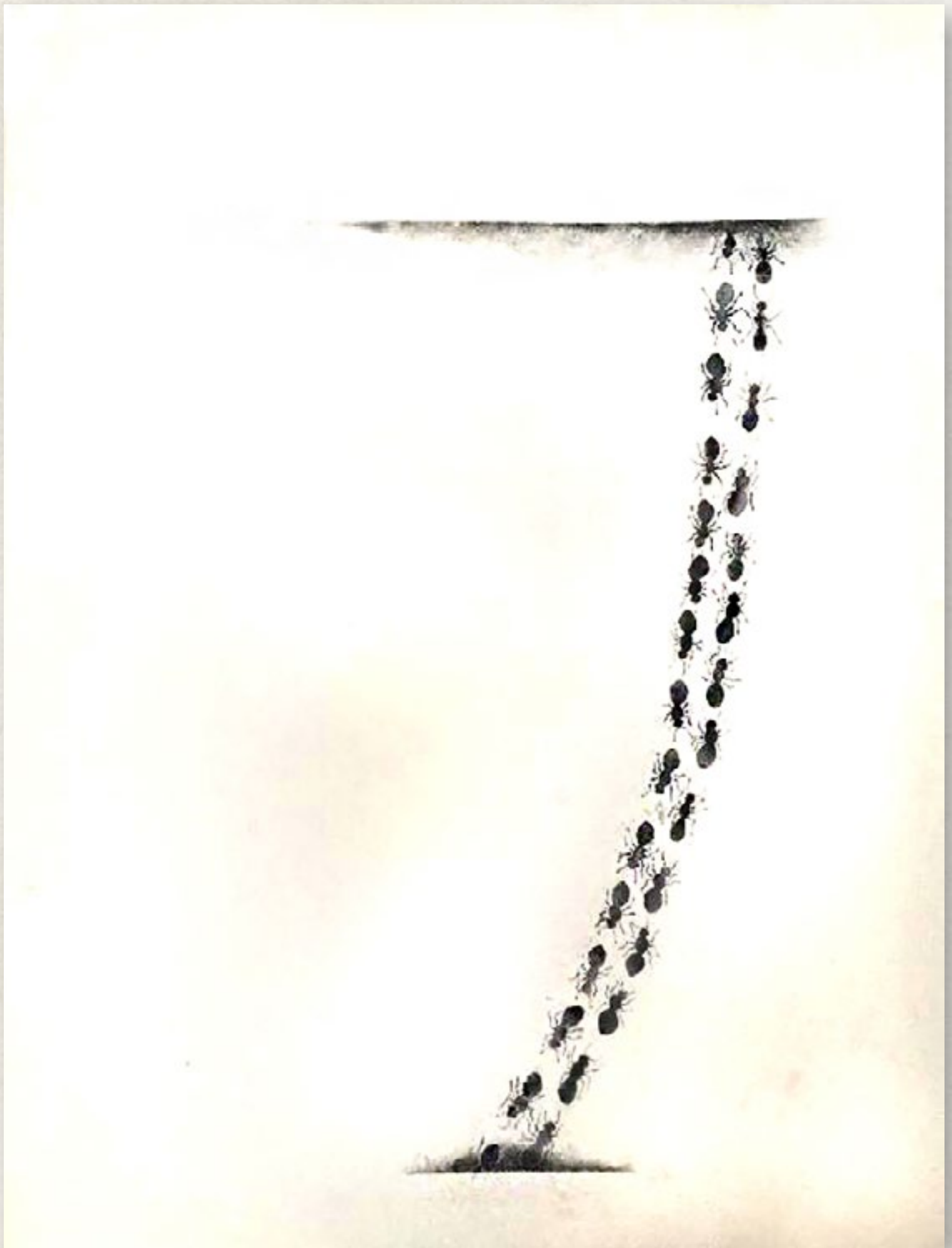
In 1989 I asked Ellen Wilt to contribute ideas and sketches for Caliban #6, “A practical Utopia in Detroit.” She did several marvelous conceptual drawings, but my favorite was the “Kinetic Plaza,” with storm towers for citizens to watch the infamously dangerous thunder storms that occur frequently in that part of Michigan. It was pure Ellen Wilt: brilliant and fearless. I have no doubt she would have climbed into those towers herself. In the 80s and 90s Ellen frequently invited my assistant editor, Doug Hagley, and me to her house/studio. We’d talk about plans for the magazine and she’d always encourage us to be daring, to embrace the magazine’s iconoclastic reputation. She was an amazing artist: full of curiosity, willing to follow any path in her many explorations. She was also a social activist: a magnificent spirit full of compassion. Her drawings for the “Welcome Fence” (see Calibanonline #37), a chain link fence with an engineered cut out— “room enough for an adult and two children” —says who she was better than anything I could write.

Ellen changed my life. When I was struggling to write my first novel, I knew I needed to do extensive research, to travel the United States, talking to people of all sorts, but especially Native Americans. When I said “I wish I could...” to Ellen, she replied “Why not? If you need to do it, do it.” It was an epiphany. If you care about something enough, you have to do it. I took a year’s leave of absence from teaching and left for the Lakota reservation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Same with taking early retirement. Both were life-changing decisions she expedited.

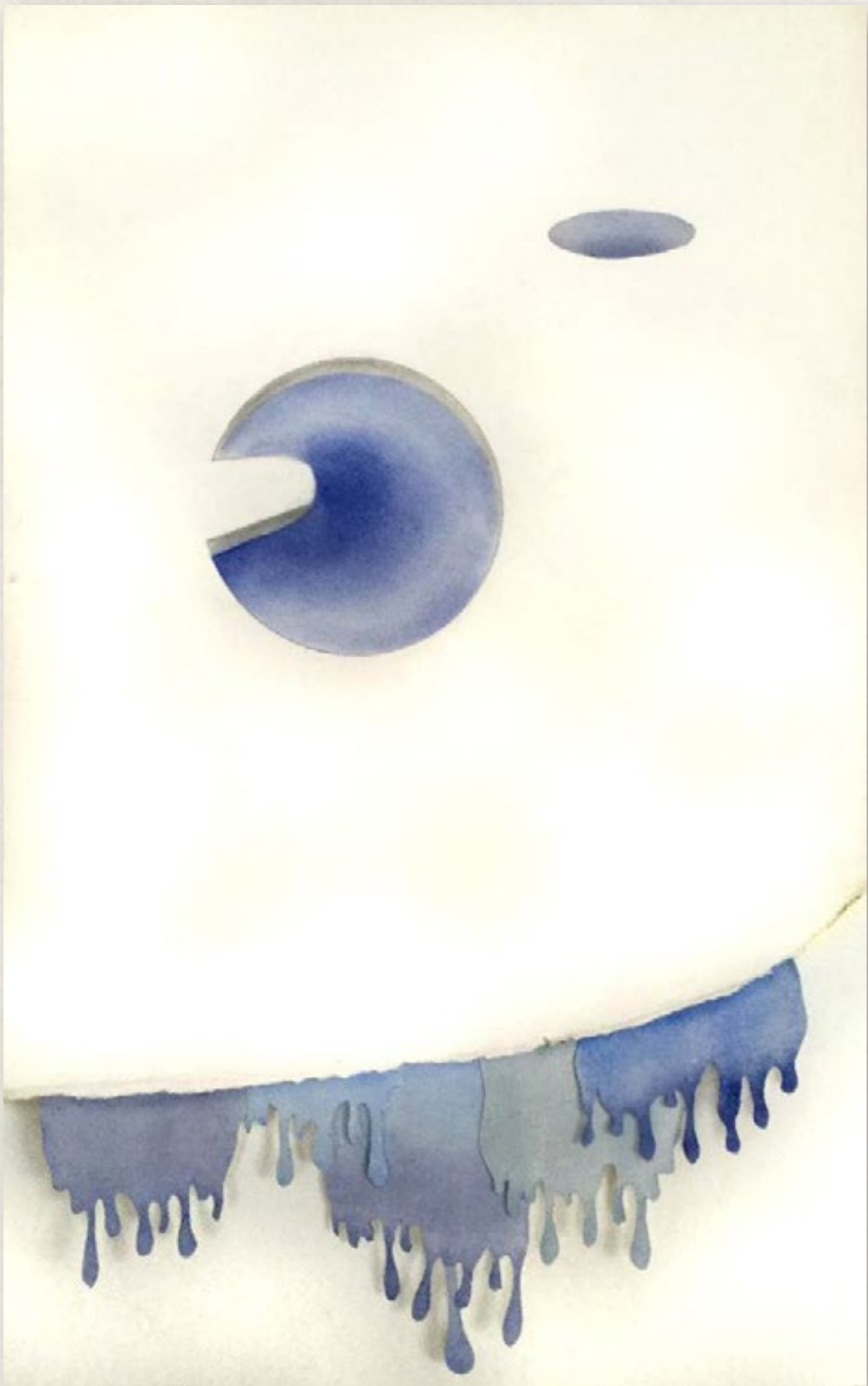
Ellen was always fascinated with the idea of multiple, simultaneous dimensions. In Calibanonline #7 she had drawings of bees trying to penetrate the abstract world of letters and shapes. She always wanted to move through those dimensional barriers herself, as is clear in the three pieces—her last work—that appear in this issue.

Smith/24

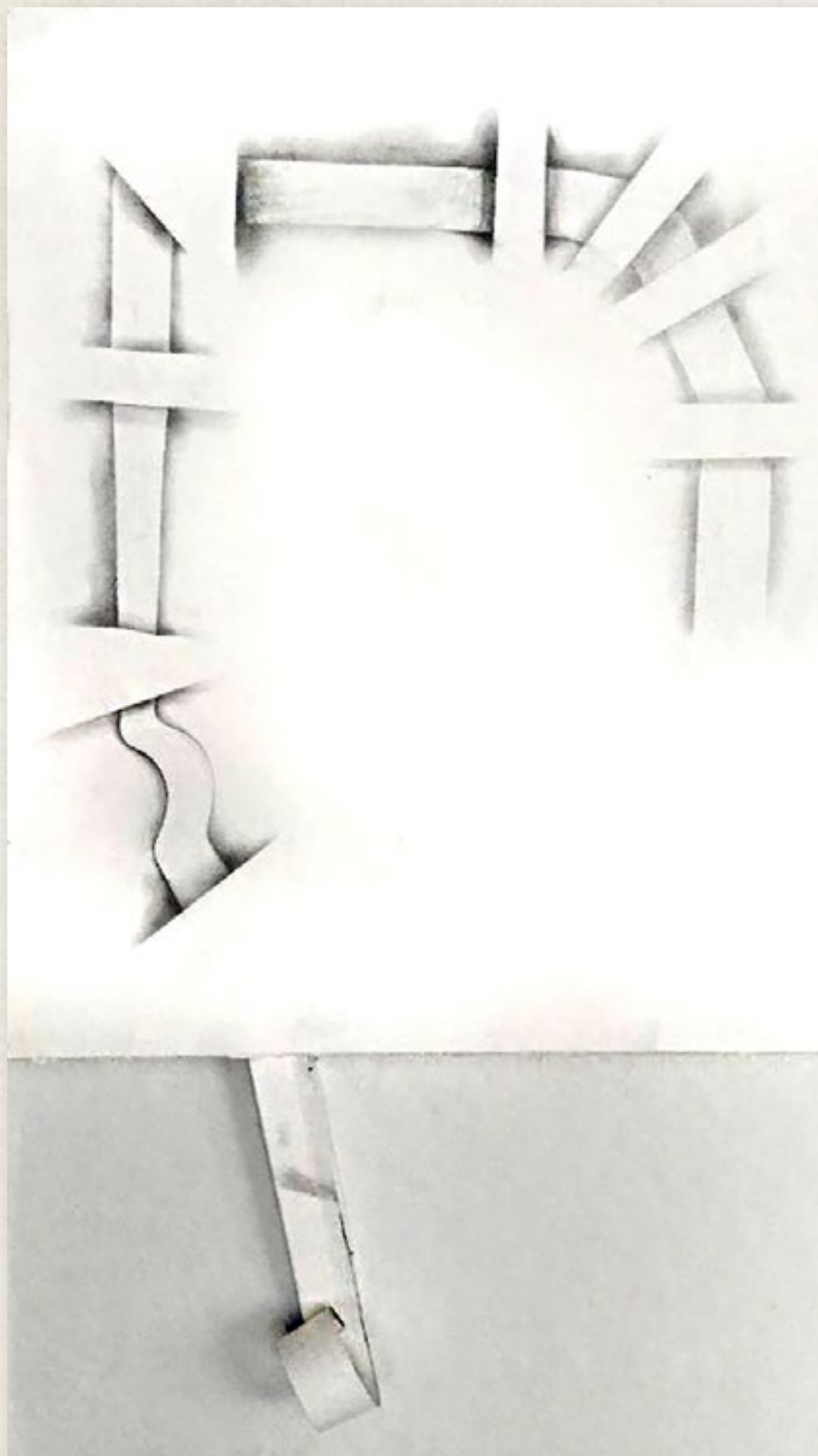
On March 25, 2020, Ellen Wilt passed to the other side in her sleep, two weeks short of her 99th birthday. I miss her terribly. I keep waiting for her to cross back from the other side.



ANTS FORE & AFT THE OTHER SIDE by Ellen Wilt, 2020
mixed media on paper



WATER TO THE OTHER SIDE by Ellen Wilt, 2020
mixed media on paper



WEAVING TO THE OTHER SIDE by Ellen Wilt, 2020
mixed media on paper

RAY GONZALEZ

Julio Cortazar

He closes his eyes because the words are now passing beyond dream rhetoric and entering the biological dimension of the octopus he found at the bottom. Rhythms of light on marble steps have left him and he diminishes the moment by recalling each kiss on the breasts of the shadow that brought him the ending to the difficult novel he struggled with for six years. The octopus at the bottom invented Cortazar's exile to the streets of Paris. No one sees this and he smiles to himself in the dark because critics will have a field day with the octopus. He is more concerned with the hour that does not arrive because his wife has been gone for two weeks, her insistence on traveling alone making him sad, though the octopus moved days ago, the movement he caught through the glass instilling a need to whisper for the angle embedded in his head—sudden awareness that strings of blue and yellow lights are attempting to burn the first sentence of his next book onto the first page of his journal. The secret is safe with him.

Cortazar thinks he hears a jazz note. He sits up and listens to the trees outside his window. There is the sound of the earth moving and people confused by cubes of doorways, windows, and the way the sun moves above them. He recognizes those people are characters he has banned from his novels, the crowd unaware that he hates them because each distinct face was there when the stranger, rebelling against being included in chapter 46 instead of 72, rose from the pages and slapped Cortazar hard across the face. The writer thinks he hears a clarinet far away. It is the plot he rejected long ago and the characters he has kept out of the story are hanging around. He rises from the bed quietly and they vanish.

He has desired to be “the quality of a sponge,” and wrote this phrase that appeared in a recently published essay. He admitted he left his crustacean self behind when he decided to take everything in, yet he remains alone in his house, waiting for the hour to arrive so he can keep writing and completing the tasks that challenge him. One of them is the “idea of the double” that might fill the void with the time it takes to be aware of the clock and the seconds burned in telling what time it is. This double might solve the riddle of the octopus and why he must watch it through the glass, instead of going down there directly, instilling a dream through the waters of yesterday that have already embraced the hour he desires. Clairvoyance is also an issue because he feels what is going to happen, though many things that do arrive take place without him or are changed when he writes about witnessing unusual movements, strange sounds, the clock ticking backwards, cats coming and going in window shadows, a second octopus sliding through his left ear, the tide of chapter 36 easing into the bomb in chapter 65, the puzzle being solved without him, unknown devices going off in the bathtub where he comes up with a fresh perception after a hot bath, the notion that he sees ahead of time pulling the octopus out of the water and into his nightmare where the cloaked figure approached him in Paris and told Cortazar the exact hour, minute, and second when he was born.

The writer is not afraid when the octopus becomes a basket full of eels—eels he has been ignoring for days, the eels wanting to replace the octopus in the tank and the octopus fighting them off in his head. The eels flick their tails and Cortazar arrives in the tower, the great telescope waiting up there for him to act like he really wants to be up there observing what he keeps avoiding. He is tired and wishes he could simply fall on the dark bed and review the nipples above him but, that was long ago and the nipples will never return because his writing room is playing with shadows and the constellations above him are re-figuring themselves into patterns he hasn’t identified since he was a small boy in school, everyone hating him for having the right answer each time the teacher called upon him, the octopus bringing the hour he has wanted his entire adult life, slithering over it and leaving black marks in

chapter 12 because chapter 18 fell into a pool of eels where none of his male characters would go, the two women in chapter 84 hating the young girl in chapter 23 because the eel swam to her first.

Cortazar waits for Theodore Adorno, his beloved cat, to appear before him. It is time to greet that one specific hour with the animal purring in his arms. It is time to see how many minutes it takes for him to set the cat down on the counter so it can eat out of its bowl and disappear again. Cortazar stands in the kitchen and the interior to the exterior struggles with temporal succession, each marble of light containing chapters he has not faced in decades, the plot of a saxophone player taking his instrument apart to pull strands of Cortazar's hair out of it so ridiculous, he laughs because chapter 59 is about a guitar circulating the notes of alliance by ringing in beautiful notes that force the octopus and eel to become extinct in the water tank of the author that refuses to clean it.

Henri Michaux

After swallowing one ampule of mescaline, Michaux arrived on his private island and wanted to leave it immediately. He has not liked his recent drawings and has erased many things and crossed others out, the black line between his eyes curving into a clay vessel where an extreme light burns the last handkerchief Michaux's mother ever used to wipe her tears before she died, this memory tight and wound around the ink pen he drops into the vessel and awaits the smoke. Michaux sat on his old sofa and waited for the procession where his prone body floated by, encased in glass, his naked arms and legs pulsating with dark worms that carried bright flowers up his chest toward his long, white hair. He sat and watched, then shook his head because no one came to his door that night and no one checked on his progress, his doctor claiming he needed someone there with him each time he tried to expand himself in this manner. He heard the music and recognized it, though the piano and violins did not sound well together, the last visitor he had insisting Michaux should take an axe to the piano and listen again. What visitor was that? He sat and shook his head, the first icy wave shuddering through his arms and hands, the sweat on his forehead boiling with microscopic spiders, flies, and salamanders Michaux always saw in blue. He told no one about this and did not write about it, simply kept sweating and collecting the creatures in a small glass bottle. He saw the man in chains twice, once after sealing the bottle with the latest sweat drops full of living things and a second time when he wandered the mad streets in search of mescaline, the friend he regularly acquired it from having dropped dead from a heart attack weeks before the man in chains stood in front of Michaux, waved to him silently, then disappeared by the front door. Michaux swallows air, coughs, and sits back, his fingers stained with ink from his writing pad, the thumb smeared in a blue shape he stares at, the lines and edges of ink sending him to his island where the first thing that greets him is a huge, old turtle that carefully moves over the beach sand away from him. He wants to stop this and keep working on the Ecuador book, but the angle of light at the window hurts his back and he doesn't want to get any headaches. They are too debilitating and the last one made him

greet himself on the stone slab, his arms chained to the rock, his legs cut and bleeding, the rope binding them together as a dark circle of men whispered on the other side of the rock chamber, Michaux worried that he left his ink bottle open and the summer air will dry the ink inside. There is no headache this time, though Michaux feels the pure chaos of the cosmos is about to overcome him on the sofa. The silly thought of a pure chaos make him smile to himself, such a rare thing making the sweat drop onto his arm, where he spots a woman walking down a mountain road, her white hair standing up on edge, the source of her charged electricity making his arm itch. Michaux studies his long finger nails and wishes his psychiatrist believed in spiders the way he does, the last story he told him about the spiders turning into a moment of humiliation when the doctor insisted Michaux stop taking mescaline, once and for all, and check himself into a hospital. Michaux stared at his doctor, then kept telling him the spider story about a little boy that loved to grab black spiders out of staircase corners or off basement walls and eat them, swallowing them without fear or concern, his scalded throat leading the boy to grow up into a respectable businessman and closet writer. His psychiatrist ended the session right there and walked out. Now, Michaux witnesses another naked body passing in a glass chamber and does not recognize the woman locked inside. He wants to rise and walk along the floating glass to study her beauty further, but his legs do not move and he can't rise from the sofa. She disappears and he sits there, yawns, and looks around the room for his glass of tea. He doesn't see it and wants to proclaim strange things about drinking tea or sitting quietly, wasting time because not enough time has passed for him to be able to rise and go outside, stand on his front porch, and wait for someone to approach. Then, he realizes the old mirror he moved out of the house is right there, in his garden, and someone has set it against a tree. Michaux walks into the yard, picks up a stone, and throws it at the mirror, shattering one corner, the cracks reminding him he has another spider story to tell, but he must go inside and get back to work. He shuts the front door at the same instant another prone body goes by in glass, the last of the horizontal chamber disappearing into the wall. Michaux shakes his head and sits on the sofa again. He knows there will be no new writing tonight because the last thing he wrote

down was the sentence, “Mescaline is the disorder of composition.” This statement in his notebook unleashed a green spider onto his desk, made him lose one slipper under the bed, caused the hot water on the stove to boil over, and made him constipated for over one week. He feels like he might be able to relieve himself tonight but, as Michaux sits quietly, he feels the breath of a sick man over his right shoulder and the hunchback returning to his thoughts—that twisted dwarf the ultimate signal Michaux is doing something harmful to himself, the first couple of spiders that crawl up his legs carefully removed in his wrinkled hands before he flicks a few grains from a salt shaker on the coffee table onto the spiders in his fist. He swallows them with closed eyes.



The Surrealist Object

Twisted iron arms wound around nuts and bolts inserted into a wooden bucket full of candle wax, artificial roses sticking out of the wax, the rose petals covered in human hair, some of the strands ending in tiny knots where colored thread leads around the base of the bucket, forming a rainbow circle that wraps around the bucket several times before leading out and tying the colored threads to a carved wooden head of a naked man, 12 inches tall, his thin and wrinkled arms outstretched back to the threaded roses. He looks like a puppet whose strings have tangled in a complex and dramatic skit where the man is desperate and is trying to get back to the roses, the threads wrapped tightly around his head until nothing shows but his eyes, the thin lines of color creating a mask to hide the figure's identity, his bare torso and legs covered in chicken feathers glued on by the maker, some of the feathers fallen already at the gnarled feet, the chicken man with the rainbow mask surrounded by a wire cage built around his figure, the wire encircling him tightly, though some of the feathers stick out through the wire and his head protrudes above the cage, two paper airplanes glued to two of the roses in the bucket of wax, the wings made of plain white paper where sun symbols have been drawn, two plastic wires, red and blue and thicker than the colored thread, leading from the airplane wings to the wooden figure and tied around a small nail inserted on the top of his head, the entire installation mounted on a large, square and flat board whose surface is covered in egg shells glued over the entire surface, the bucket surrounded by brown egg shells, the rest of the board done in white with brown shells decorating the feet of the wooden man, human hair pasted on the shells of each narrow foot, a dog turd glued between the man's hairy feet, its surface hard and dry, a red thread leading from the turd to an area by the bucket where a small, stuffed toy dog sits, its furry tongue sticking out far enough to hold a gum wrapper stuck there, a wad of chewed gum mounted on the foil, the dog's original eyes made of furry buttons replaced by two bottle caps from the maker's favorite beer, the dog facing the caged man, three plastic Army soldiers standing near the dog and pointing their rifles at it, one of the toy soldiers half burned with a match, the green plastic sprinkled over the surface of the

yellow candle wax in the bucket, the green drops of hot plastic trying to spell an awkward letter “A,” the four corners of the board marked with four old walking canes, one cane mounted at each corner, the worn and gnarled handles of the canes also wrapped in color thread, strands pulled taught and crisscrossed in a star pattern from cane to cane, the points where the star crosses joined together by more roses, the pattern hanging a few feet above the bucket, drops of blue paint splattered in random pattern over the surface of white egg shells, drops of red paint spotting the brown shells around the bucket, a few red and blue drops on the back of the toy dog, one lone red spot of paint dry on the threaded mask of the wooden figure, the lone purple thread on the entire installation leading out about six feet from the nail on the figure’s head to the artist who sits on the floor of his studio, against the wall, the purple thread wrapped tightly around the index finger of his right hand as he pulls on it and the motion starts the wooden figure dancing in the cage, the dog to wagging its tail, and the mass of egg shells to secrete yolk that slowly saturates the installation with a thick layer that settles as the artists nods happily and lies down where he is to take a long overdue nap.



GETTING IN SHAPE by John Digby (with Darna Bazanova), 2020
collage



SPIRIT OF PINNACLE by John Digby, 2005
collage

AMY JO TRIER-WALKER

The Ninth House, Looking South and Outward

—*for Li Ch'ing Chao*

jade, you broken jasper, you visit the branches, and they all break. your long perfume enclosed in love withers the window I depressed in sorrow. I invite to the balcony she-who-tomorrows-away in her thin sadness, and the one auspicious animal rises in the ninth midnight's gauze. twilight sleeves against the west's curtains, the sky turns and aches golden, and the ninth time you come here will taste thick and windy as courtyard wine past. how endless are full mallets of winter—crying, lingering, years of jade in the cream, of one-who-comes-last-shaking. your letter of a river. the sorrow I drink. the sorrow I lost off the mists. the gates come nearer and end in the dying dust that rains the flowers. I too fall on my comb. I call all wasted speakings to choke into two still boats, fragile enough to bear the sorrow that listens. how fifteen moonlights composed together sing the same as how empty arms love

ROB COOK

Among the Tenderness of Alcohol Failure

Two puppies drag the sunlight
into a ditch behind the Mobil station.
Delaware, New Jersey, junk March evening.
A teenage girl practicing fellatio
on a flower stem, spitting out the faint gasoline.

And in the gutted nightclub
a woman who keeps her life close with a bassinet
of shallow Shawnee vodka rents what was once a restroom.
A day earlier, my slumlord friend threatened eviction.
Ears to the time-chewed door, we listen to her

eating her dry tear ducts. Her insides breaking
from her rock-hard breathing. Bad news
about a blood test, how she will lose her life soon.
No electricity, not even a watered-down radio to blast.
Maybe the dark stays awake in the blades

of her hair. My friend gives me two dollars
to stay and watch her through the glory hole
and write down everything she does.
Outside, a breeze comes and fondles the nearest tree
and will not let go of the pieces blowing across the lot.

Then the woman—her name, I learn later,
is Lorraine Grego—turns on the twelve flashlights
hanging from the lowered ceiling and strips down
to her shiny Vegas corset and rubs
creamy store-bought innuendos into her thighs.

She takes out a condom the way she would take
out a child and tells it not to die.

Only one towering truck driver visits her tonight
with his vending machine chocolates
and bouquet of pothole lavenders.

Instead of sliding out of her corset, she shows him
where a dark window sticks to the wall. “It’s blind,”
she says. “I have one window and the darn thing’s
blind.” And then the corset somehow sneaks away
and somehow Lorraine Grego rises and sinks

and rises again on all fours. After stripping himself
to a previous night’s shallow wet signal,
the man recites Lorraine’s very thoughts,
“It feels like someone left the lights on somewhere,”
and kisses her face that’s already forgetting her,

route 46 sneaking by like a cure that just misses them,
the moles and bruises already abandoning their places.
“They’ve gone to Florida for the winter,” she says
when the trucker—his name is Tony Shumway—
compares her breasts to the food at Humpty Dumpty’s.

“Take me to Florida,” Lorraine says, spitting her eyes
at Tony, who clutches at her last goose bump. “Take me
to Florida,” she commands because the meat is mostly gone
and she knows the room will not last. And then she screams
at the flashlights because either she or they keep waking up.



REVELATION OF SHAMBHALA by Christine Kuhn, 2008
mixed media (9" x 11")



A QUIET LIFE by Christine Kuhn, 2012
mixed media on cradled wood panel (11" x 7")

JEFF HARRISON

Sealable Krypte

M —
throbbed sweeps, M —
crushed sea, M — between
phantom minutes
each had art particular, unshaven, & small
M — could a little voice of them sink
this increased answering dream
have space to themselves, M —
the fires once lapping M —
now red-gold sentinels speaking M —'s honor,
where what's unsure is mirth M — as "bird-struck
sun," M —, "given up again"
old forthcoming M — soon stirred,
so gloves with M — & brick, M —, of fire —
M — to sign bursts, informed & M — do have enough —
voice lads, M —, to these lost gentlemen
cite them a number of afternoon length
M — uncombed, hours pass in elementary fashion
the sea M — so admired crushed between
their phantom minutes, these minutes fretted sciences
like rhymes are riddled, M —, with things almost stars
some avenues showed contrary, M —, they showed
M — fretted by minutes with things nearly M —

SHEILA MURPHY

Simulacrum

It was evening all afternoon.

William Carlos Williams

Now before I bathe, I dry.
Temptation lunatics its way south
Where I writhe to seam the limbs near peace
I pray to weather
Just as we do now.

Remake my vortices until I cry
The depths within you, notice
There are syllables to wring from threadbare
Sentiment I graze to breathe
From scratch. Why don't you

Memorize my laundry and come clean.
The drapes are taut with fiberglass,
And I each fleck of cloth can break
The way skin emulates results
Of an election where nobody tithed.

This

Trace a rook from tall to keeling
Thirst, our vastness leans to veritas.
Clasp a lie then strut.
Whose britches glow with kissing.
Flow, flow, hen that spans a multiplicity of flings.
Drop sighs.
Sows can span a myriad of strings
Once plucked, fill up
With stakes in rollick
As the few who dwell
will tarry across creeds.



IVAN ARGÜELLES

an ode in the time of plague

our common fate to suffer a blow
from a hidden consonant a rushing
in the ear that has lapsed back into stone
a single breath in and out before moon-fall
the note struck beyond the sonic belt
and the bright coronas vibrating between
vowel and vowel in silent sacrifice
who's to know which is which among
the rife and roiling darkneses of time ?
did a hand offer to shape its syllable
unbeknownst to the fading grass ?
eventide and distant dawn and frosts
that array their sybilline elegance on
mountain peaks longing for their goddess
a round of soliloquys between knee
and burning shoulder-blade and hosts of
benighted warriors astride dun-colored hills
dead donkeys and shields split in two
by a midnight curse and dreams that ravens
are on the window sill imitating human
speech cavorting with clipped wings
and sounding the clarion of a black sun
about to rise like a mantra of spit and
contumely and still the rhymesters loud
their shouting pentameters declaim high
the absent syntax of our present tense
rock fragment and dripping stiletto
and feet discarded by philologists
stoned searching for an archaic prosody

a will to survive in the falling tone and
waterfalls crystalline as the pluperfect
heavens displayed on tents of Chinese silk
a legend in the precious stone like eyes
of haunted leopards that ravage alone
the labyrinthine cave of thread and gong
how remote the first sentence uttered
by the oracle and the island that floats
forever beyond the doubting fogs of ire
will you but fix my sleeve before I speak
and roll up the cuffs to clear my throat
and listen quick to the things I say
for never more will I them repeat
and so denying the delinquent stage
the bard unrolls his dusky parchment
and for hours that no one really counts
recites the myth of Orpheus who
invented first music then the song
in interrupted periods of mortal voice
caught in between the descant and
the irrevocable echo of punctuated silence
the drone and wasp of unheard notes
how beautiful the reverie ! alive once
and now nothing but shadowy memory
the rock and leaf the burdened firefly
alas alone the breath of exiled stars
high in the scribbled empyrean of
a far off unremembered tragedy

these days

can the inflections of ancient words instruct us
can grief be parsed and conjugated for person number
voice and tense and what are the margins of sound
echolalia of rock formations irregularities of light
resonance of seas that have been forgotten by
the voyagers who have sailed their tempestuous surface
only to return to a destruction of consonants
hard by the ravaged wood and the dry well
is language obsolete syllable by syllable plundered
by grammarians of elegance and style oblivious
of the sorrow and inchoate ruin buried in each
archaic vowel and what is it we are after when Zeus
implodes before our very eyes in dereliction of robes
and saffron bolts stammer through the heavens
announcing in a voice borrowed from early radio
abandon the Noun ! mortals you are no more
than statuary bereft of accent and tone marble
hewn from the idea of immortality and thrust aside
into ditches where in your sleep you continue warbling
threats and innuendo envy of the gods of dustless feet
and so on was there ever a first day of innocence ?
fingers of chalk held up to test the wind's directions
nothing returns of formalized declension case and number
pronouns stagnate from over-use and the honorific
employed to address the supreme entity shrivels
on its slender reed of winnowed air and the Ear !
what can it hear but phonetic decay and lunacy
distances of half an inch and landslides taking thumb
and shoulder of the continents into seething waters
it is a dumb-bell and a crown and a steeple magnified
by the lens of unreason and atmospheres loud
in their catastrophic rush to end the planetary ellipse
children ! the day of the hieroglyph and colored ampersand
is here and the rambling song of unknown alphabets

and above all the shapes and wild abstractions
of the earliest poetry grass and leaf and stream
all a shimmer in the afternoon's perfect instant
if only you were *all* still alive to memorize these
stanzas of bliss and eternal silence



the ruins of philology

if I were to write no more than this one inch
of fury and tenderness the banks of the Phlegethon
overflowing and the trills and stamps of the 7th **heaven**
a devastation of half begun letters and essence
of thought in disarray if I were to be known
for nothing more than this half hour of pre-dawn scribbling
this manic presumption to record an iota of the
reflections of an octogenarian living out death threats
and the entire choir of absentee bards and rishis
blinded by the unsurpassed black sun of
an inevitable noon populated by a host
of mutilated statues if I were if I were able
if only to recall the small moment in the summer of youth
when I thought the world was a capacity and
mountains were weightless minds ready to fly
if were able and I am not but remember the losses
of soul and body and the piano lessons in the grass
and the grieving suddenly tantamount to the great
echelon of disarmed angels floundering in the welkin
if I but I am not and the siegeworks of history
recorded in a series of senseless chronologies
dates and kings and saviors rank and file
driving their own automobiles down the freeway
to inferno if I were and am no more and the sequences
of lottery and myth the genealogies of gods
like shopping lists with unfounded data
regarding their armor and skin and hair all a part
of a broken epic that it took no more than a few
minutes to transcribe and the translations from
undiscovered tongues the vowel and cant
of philologists half buried in the dust of Aquinas
or Aristotle the dialogue of mayhem and retribution
the considerations of ideal and circularity
hovering in the bruited nonsense of pre-socratics

and the impossibilities of chain-letters and fugues
the alphabetic heights to ascend if but could
in order to survey the wrecks of bottomless seas
and the small pitted skin of earth and the jungles
where consonants are deployed like small weapons
brimming with poison and fire if all this
were but a half-remembered dream a nightmare
with horns and Persian glyphs and bong bong !
the evidence is not there the last and lost rhymes
the shot scattered epistemologies of Jesus
of Mahavira like a plague of running sand in the eye
if I were but am not the oracle and interpretation
of manuscript and palm-leaf inscription
cryptograms of the effusions of the dead wandering
in their Homeric capsules bleating and sorrowing
for the escaped light of their final misgivings
a literature of symbol and decapitation a single
pronouncement that all is illusion that whatever
has happened may be nothing but rock fragment
fossil and decibel of an archaic holocaust
Big Bang and quantum theory of the illustration
of the stairway to Paradise in mirror-script
upside and hopelessly entangled in Ariadne's thread
if I were but the person I used to be and not
this figment poised in a glassy reflection
waiting for one more sunrise for the horses
of the equator to run the course around the world
even before the ink has dried and the blank
page and its surrogates the asterisks that dot
the plummeting sky and all else is yes
and no more if I but and were and able

GUY R. BEINING

caliban: backed up

wait another day,
another cycle of light,
or props to keep
the image afloat,
& in the long barge
of night that carries the
weight of death in
a new agony of twilight.
no more scouting for
the right path out
of this crisscross existence,
caliban thought, as
he reflected on the image
of a wounded planet.
no more trips
thru lilac park
waiting for rocks
to complete the act.

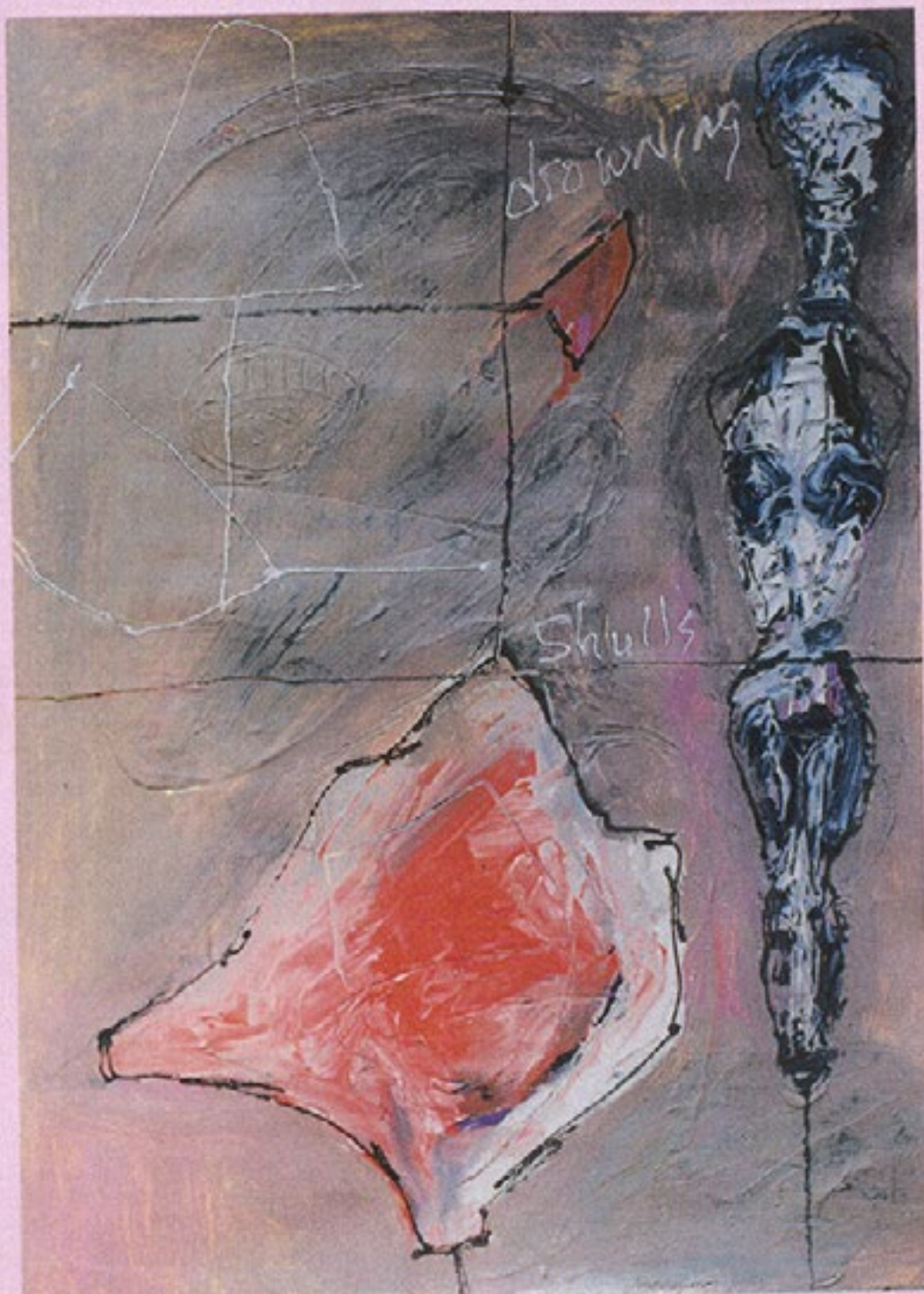
caliban: disbanded

gamble the trust
of spreading words apart,
speaking of a woman
next to an enlightened lamp
down from stone steps
to greed & too many mirrors.
perhaps the nightingale has
stolen all the pictures,
all the vividness of distance.
Caliban drove to a
remote lake that in
the evening looked lacquered.
his eyes began to appear
silver, & as tarnished
as were his thoughts.

fire that swims



FIRE THAT SWIMS by Guy R. Beining, 2019
mixed media collage booklet



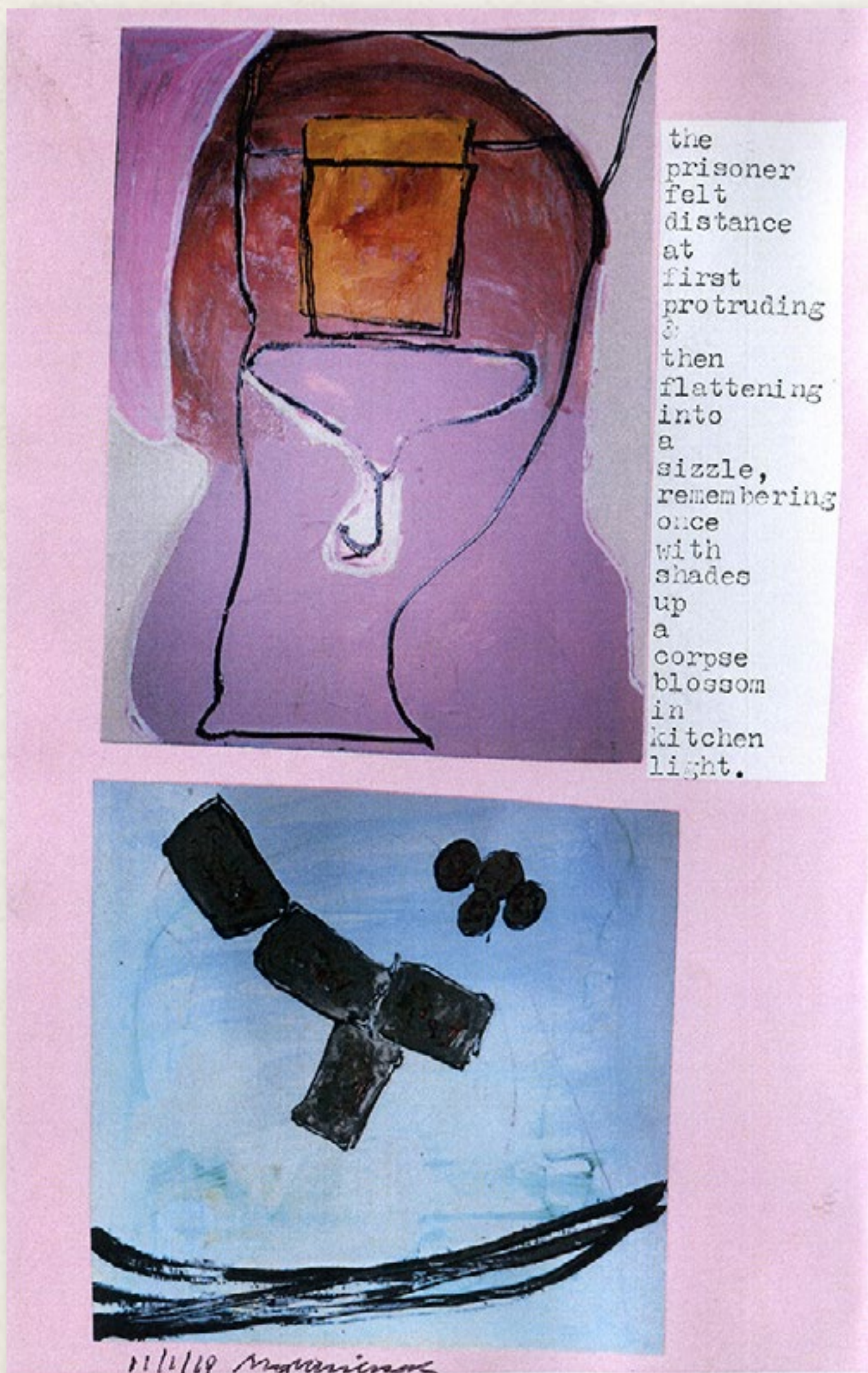
cen(sur)e	(see)ping	(sea)weed
fis(sur)e	(see)saws	(sea)wall
era(sur)e	(see)thes	(sea)bird
lei(sur)e	(see)ming	(sea)sick
mea(sur)e	(see)page	(sea)mark
ton(sur)e	(see)ding	(sea)side
clo(sur)e	(see)king	(sea)ward

FIRE THAT SWIMS by Guy R. Beining, 2019
mixed media collage booklet



in parliament hunting
for red knickers,
in the churchyard,
in the sentinel's line
of firing crackers
henchmen grew deep
& terrible expressions.
bloom stuck his
fork out at
the western canon
& speared the
leg of dante.
so gabriel had a
hat but would not
wear it, taking
rhyme into its
ivory hole.

FIRE THAT SWIMS by Guy R. Beining, 2019
mixed media collage booklet



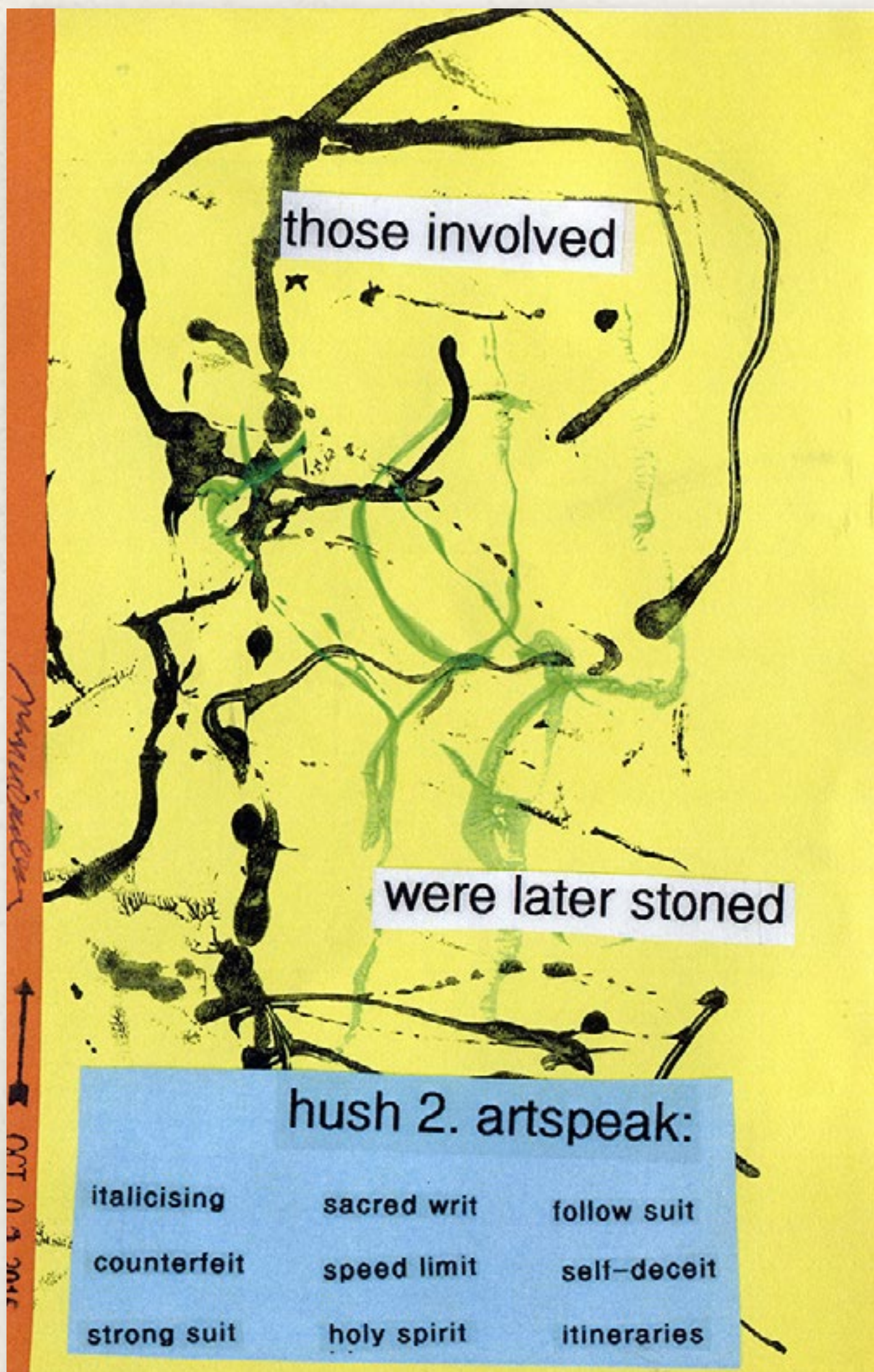
FIRE THAT SWIMS by Guy R. Beining, 2019
mixed media collage booklet

HUSH 1 ARTSPEAK:

GHOSTWRITE FEMININITY JACKRABBIT COMPLICITY
INSULARITY UNDERWRITE BREADFRUIT ADAPTIVITY
COMPLEXITY ANTHRACITE RETRANSMIT DURABILITY
INDEFINITE EXURBANITE MUTABILITY INCAPACITY
DISINHERIT PROCLIVITY NEBULOSITY LUMINOSITY
GRAPEFRUIT IMMOBILITY PLEBISCITE ANGULARITY



HUSH ARTSPEAK by Guy R. Beining, 2019
mixed media collage booklet



HUSH ARTSPEAK by Guy R. Beining, 2019
mixed media collage booklet

hush 3. artspeak:

earsplitting	itemizations	self-conceit	bully pulpit
hypocritical	welsh rabbit	retrofitting	bathing suit
adventitious	microcircuit	uncharitable	precipitancy
recalcitrant	resuscitator	intermittent	overcritical



HUSH ARTSPEAK by Guy R. Beining, 2019
mixed media collage booklet

hush 4. artspeak:

conditioning credit union longitudinal
profiteering propitiation coalitionist
spiritualize straitjacket architecture
partitionist abolitionist hospitalised



11/13/19 *Reflexion*

HUSH ARTSPEAK by Guy R. Beining, 2019
mixed media collage booklet

KAREN GARTHE

Garbo Suite

the stretched-out hands are alight in the darkness like an old town

Mr. Cogito, Zbigniew Herbert

I **V**agrant

in thin air

fathom trinket rummaging parabolas
drift kissing the circus of panic you step in
the wound

shrine filigree

flyball over the moat

Well, there you go shimmering

II **M**ink Boy

afraid of The Cold not crisp air but *low fellowship*
made her wall part roses part
mud

fear

the Holiday Gift Mart tinsel zinged
exclamatory snow's little rockets of solitude

shot
her mink boy
walked and talked

sprinting *forever sleepless*
wee hours crouched over
the drive,

thrum barges
pushed
the age

III Anna Kareninas

What she meant *was the gift of chit-chat*
between the poles EXUberance DESpair
posting
fancy sorrow whose breezed head tilts
throat rings bared to the rail

Tolstoy's *Alpha*
Femme
Fatale way she does and does not care. . .

and **So I Ask a great favor of a queen** cradling
the phone's
handful of riot
that anything so beautiful should ever come to me

The *Old Soul Garbo's* Anna Karenina has
lost her cattle
lost her honest peasants and high *Noon*
feasts

s t i l l Anna sugars her buttons, her **k n o c k k n o c k** bustle
 & *especial glacé* fall to the neckline
 her sledge across the tundra of Late Desire
the drop dead canary pecks at her heels, and the atlas of all
 kin-pouncing chimes

IV **P**alette rose
I rest in
unkempt
attars

twiddling fingers 10 kissings in air
so rendered in my mulberry chair so *bound in*
laughter amongst the images

Alone in my corner **befell**
 solace **befell** reaching my hands in
 the sorest
 rose of opening illness
 tantamount's pinkest
 salmon-colored coruscations effervesce
 Vast Absence twilight harbors The gray blue
 East River
 Slips

450 East 52nd Street

ELIZABETH ROBINSON

May 31: 104,356

Sleep that annihilates and thus sleep that redeems—
as in: all who lived in the sleep of the synonym,
its image blurred, coronal or flannel.
What I would give to sleep in this.

To live, where, to live here,
now, inveterate, a pillow tufted
with insomnia, soft
gesture of bleach on the doorknob—
Come in and be drowsy.

What I would give in this sleep, here,
in the hands so chafed they reject
the wedding ring. Now you must wear it.

Now rest where the grief grants no
celebration for what
I would give to sleep in this. A conspiracy,
which no sleeper ever wanted to celebrate—

hold, hallow, hollow, herded—ever
into the halo of infirmity, the urge
that cannot be denied.

For there once was a glare
at the end of day
shone through the closed eyelids.
And now? Said now?

Sleep bereft of lip and lung, limb
made to limp and sleep bequeathed
as little to linger, now, in the honey of it,
the delusion that vanquishes or
the true measure always for what always
no one can rest in—

eiderdown,
a face in the window of the pillow, whose
sleep conspired as plan and scheme,
a sigh as suspected, a sigh,
but to the last, ever softer,
sleep to survival in softness yielding.



DALE HOUSTMAN

Turned on and Discoverable

The expected trajectory of poetic adventure is the search for degrees of distraction and for distance between writer and process, imagination and imagination's artifact (aka "the poem"). This has taken many forms; aleatory actions, environmental interferences, automatic writing, cognitive dissonance, and so on. By such gestures the poetic hopes to escape easy paraphrase. Yet... that is also a "meaning."

Bryce Justement "Avocado Sleeves"

1. Society Memo



All the parades are extremely ugly, and the children are rolled up and away to the safety of the settlement shed. Some are still missing. Immodest were the overseers.

"Doubt stains the ladder to the observatory," the policeman gossiped to the Gorgon.

The bluest man craves the sweet meats of the reddest man. The reddest man carves out surrender from the bluest man. He has his holiday

carnality tied on so he can manufacture more reliable concussions for Christmas. A clutch of children spectates from the damp racks as our repulsive joyousness undulates across their buttered cheeks like waves entering a Malibu marina. Time for cocktails, Malibu.

The parking ramp reindeer smoking Marlboros, discussing the physics of lazy concern.

[It is the counter-social media we propose to on our knees. So television, so newspapers, so movies.

Natural to know if the larger monkeys find you attractive.

Here and now we can purchase our own opinions. We can store them at home.

We can scheme and curse at schemers. So many delicious types. So *hyperbox*.

We sense the need to run away from the face of the future as if it wished to sneak a kiss.

Stumble into picturesque arms to see your slim configurations of the snout...]

Unter-Sociality is the rift and tether between discrete conflagrations in the ego. This process enforced and serendipitous, and so we go through it and it wants us to spend the night. But... Who are we talking to? A mirage of convergence in the desert air of dys-entities and the aromatic paste of separation.

But no... Not I.

2. The Artificial Embraces Structure (Leaving the Society Memo Intact)



If we were all less enamored of public potential, and perhaps a trifle smarter, we would shut down this Punch and Judy show and give ourselves up to “*mere there*” as opposed to “*mega there.*” A trifle more intelligent and we would devise disappearances in the “*not there,*” singly or (better) collectively, leaving trash fires to light the way for owls and moths.

But we know there really is no privacy, and that we might be head-bagged this next second to wake in an Egyptian hospitality center. So we use our tiny oyster spoons. We dig a poetic crypt.

We can hope the owners occasionally burp ornate dinners in our direction so we might dub them “*Benevolence Incarnate.*”

3. Scrupulous Disaster (Sculpted)



A small group of us are going to make the rest worldly cannibals, and a much larger group will amuse itself with compliance to the dietary regime. I leave no one out. So we are offered a choice between seeking power or seeking that *schmear* of fun.

Disaster is inevitable in its beauties. We jockey to sculpt that disaster's ultimate form. Or we just sleep on it. Walk all over it.

Per usual, I am not sure what I mean.

We should embrace the surrender to the energetic constructors of our formula. But... we think we're getting too old for this.

4. Fuck the Police but Use a Condom



I note that societies of a certain size ignite specialization to create roles.

Functions maintain ghettos of human interaction.

Any emergent quality includes regulation and behavior maintenance.

At our best a dollop of grudging aid and a sack of sympathetic disdain.

This is going to happen.

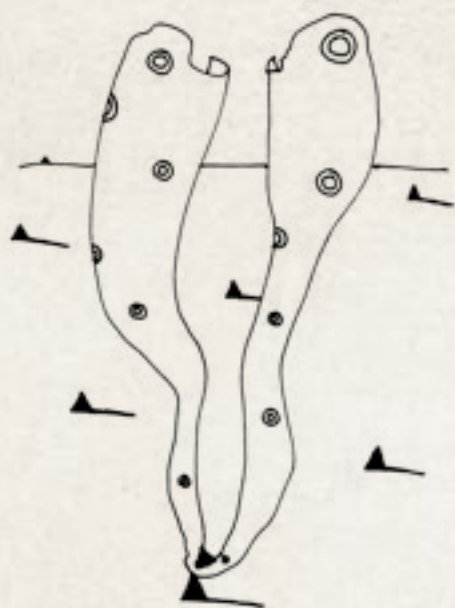
This is going to happen.

This is part of the sustenance that civilization thinks it is. It dwells in that hole.

It is distinct from hungry couples on the wild dancefloor.
At a lesser scale, benign seeming the metastasis of emergent engines.
Corrupt togetherness the teratoma. The fly.
Such is the Sun's appeal.

We pressure the initiates and generate awful forces.
Nietzsche said all countries are of necessity insane.
Owing to the scale of centralized modernity we need to erase
the police.
A similar (and for a second less monstrous) social shape shall reassert
itself.
To eliminate the celebrated beast or to redress the City.
Some doubt their ability to live long enough to see that.
Our mass shall hold down policing entities without easy acceptances.
It is only our shining mass to perturbate a metamorphosis.
We eradicate ourselves via "law and order," we stick to the side
roads.
Amusement and Debasement hand in hand toward the empty motel.

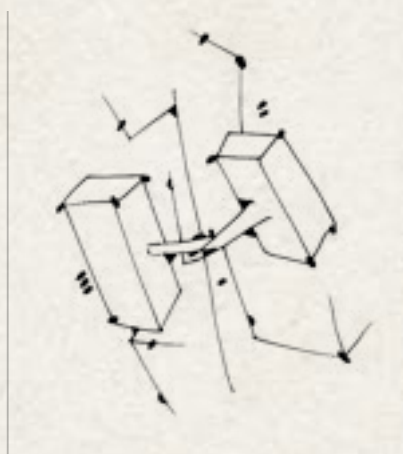
5. Look, I Did Something!



Elections are managed release valves. Look, I did something! That lever is not attached to anything and the pencil spits your lies to save you the struggle. Revolution with hand grips. When we all win the “*I participated*” cup.

Go ahead and disassemble in the dark as arson thrives on dry imagination. A shadow lies behind the two selections. Bootleggers and bootlickers, statesmen and Runyon morons to take our clothes off for us.

6. Three Remnants of Some Shoddy Thoughts



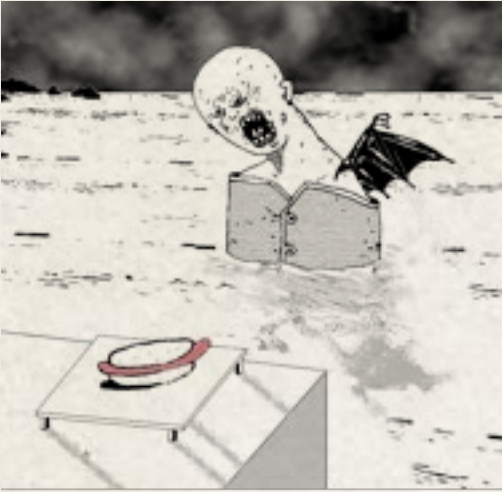
The Illuminati Earwig Mind Harvester has made the notion of “*private information*” quaint as a calico codpiece.

Once the associated app is released, everyone will know everyone else’s business instantly, in real time, 24/7. Run to stay still.

The self is a shared option made obligatory by friction.

I question your intent and criticize your tone. This makes me doubt my own ability to move on a productive path, and so I turn to you for either solace or readjustment. Still, there are questions to be cynical about and critiques I cannot see the bottom (or the sides) of, as if a large wet beast blocked the aperture. I shall move cautiously for a few moments and agonize over my angle of approach. Am I here or over near the egress? Will my feet find the floor before the walls discover my location? I query the spots in my eyes.

7. The Info Ocean



Consciousness and the very (quaint) idea of “self” are diffused across the face of a constant info dump. The seaside.

Opinions pop up like boils in desperate lunges at the unasserted “self,” but they never achieve an impactful status. Their fallen mass only adds to the stuttering surface of the info ocean, where boats go to die.

Or not.



DR. TRUMP IS IN by Dale Houstman, 2020
digital image



THE MASK OF ARDENT HYGIENE by Dale Houstman, 2020
digital image

TIM KAHL

Nerudada

Over there. That bell ringer in the blue evening of Santiago—
we inherit all of it as it is fastened to a great mountain range,
and we pretend it will breathe in the new flowers of the light.
The stems' curved breasts sink under a sequence of water
without license without the wave of a woman's hair
to devour the constellations and their dishonest monuments.
Through the births and townships, according to the praising thrush,
the thin strip of flag glows red as though it is the day's task,
the bread of everyday sea. The bronze month worries about
the bells of existence amid the foreign windows.

The homeless have moved into a vacant house where they
play Bocce ball in the backyard. The pregnant guards at
the prison sort the mail intended for the supermarket
where employees are having their temperatures taken.
The *CAUTION* tape at the playground is cut down and worn
by parents to protest the trash on the ground at the park.
All around there's light traffic no one dares to upend.
Chromosome tests come back projecting a new syndrome.

Cuidado. The hospital beds are floating among the feverish.
They are enormous, a terrifying contract opening in
the shade, but the eyes wait until the sixth of August.
Such interviews where nothing is said. That absence in
the branches of the acacias where the world could
grow bitter, the simple truths bitten in two while we

shopped at the fair in Valparaíso. The dogs in
the alley have left with the poets who stoke a fallen light
with their patience. In the next house it was the same:
a woman grew nervous while officials searched in vain.



Toten Hosen [Dead Pants]

After Andreas Gursky

Gods arise to justify most anything,
and the modern is a machine for living in.
It is slavery to the straight line and
the sharp angle at the point of intersection,
a punctum in a beehive. The photographer
snaps the stock exchange in a singular
moment and comments how it is
a model for contemporary behavior.
The god of the Dow Jones agrees, but
there are other brightly colored indexes.
There is some terrifying inventory painted
on the ceiling of the chapel. Its saturated colors
reveal nothing about our lives but more
about the spaces our lives move through.
Stratified. Homogenous. Duplicated.
Banality builds an altar for the age of
information. The repeated motif echoes
on the social media platform. The chatter
about chatter is amplified into the talking
aggregate that minds journey into instead
of the beautiful albums of seaweed prepared
by ladies as presents or the spraying of
orchards and the growing of winter muskmelons
or the The Love Cure Building where people
are casually paired up and where there are no
dead pants. The recorded world is balanced with
the remarks made on it. The camera is pointed
at a few poignant subjects like the god of
punk rock who shines the shape of a hand
from the spotlight onto the crowd while
the band plays its Declaration of Sentiments.

The Choice of Trails

The insects pure among you and lifting concern, their camaraderie still valid as mathematics. There is safety, health, and wellness in a minefield of legs. The farms express their genius to the crowds, and the bridges exalt in the pictures taken of them from the air, the ground, the sea. The addresses of games and songs are given to showgirls, and the motel employees sing Happy Birthday to a donut. The choice of trails extends to the truth about love, and many babies view the buzz of a bright morning intending to shine. Horns honking. The decent among us flying over speed bumps like a new day seeking reason through liquor. All of the documents complete. A shop owner converts to the religion of a character who puts his electronics down, projects the pink of a first kiss, the orange of a celebrated squash, the green of a mime performing in an open field.

The Origin of the Neuron

The origin of the neuron arose as the first installment in the popular delusion of a crowd in Rome. They were all complaining of hunger and finally going to bed when the clergy prayed for them to imagine a net spread across the Holy Sea . . . and they were made young again, which is to say, they were ready to have someone impregnate their flesh. One by one the soft bodies of ideas alternated with carcasses made of wheat and bran. The good wine was collected and given to the famous charlatan who also faced failure in his domestic life right there where all these men were found sleeping in their nightshirts made of cord, in their blue winter beanies, in their woolen scarfs and dirty socks. They were vagabonds from the outer reaches of the previous evening where already the Pope's mood was improving as he pondered the charms of the jellyfish—its vegetable appearance, its threads of viscera, its spread tentacles. *No one thinks of it as comical* he remarks, but then he is off to tame the multitude's miserable fate. The Christians are all suffering from their mad visions and bad habits once again . . . *if only someone could hold them under a microscope and see what is at the root of their thought.*



HIDDEN BROOK by Chuang Che, 1991
mixed media (65" x 41")



EMPTY FACE by Chuang Che, 1994
oil, wood on canvas (28" x 20")

SIMON PERCHIK

*

But it never loved—the heart some couple carved
didn't last the winter—it died the way every tree
still hides a sadness from so far off that lips

mean nothing and though they no longer quicken
the kisses never heard that pen knife unfold
become this shelf, half wood, half stripped bare

for a soft rag and on the same day each year
made young again, bathed in ice water
to help it remember what night after night is.

*

To face west alone this shore shuts down
shakes off the waves that came to stay
—she's dead though it's the sand

smelling from cut flowers, all night
hardening as if its silence was set adrift
where she should be close by

—on your lips her kisses would stir
live naked without air or shadows
still holding on while she lifts the Earth

into your arms—what you hold
is the black sky in a small boat
half wood, half following what's kept wet

under her hands still folded in place
as moonlight that overflowed
with what's not here now.

*

You can't remember its silence as the early moon
have to wait, be reminded by this cemetery
it was a city once, had buildings, wide avenues

when this place was covered with the darkness
stars need to find you on the map, sort the others
you came here for, to count them in the open

as numbers though you still need more time
have forgotten, keep over and over beginning
with 10 then the slow descent into 0 till it empties

the way the sky now smells for engine oil
—you can hear the fleece-lined boots night after night
coming by to heat the clouds with fingertips

though what's left from all those plazas and gardens
is this small stone keeping you safe inside
no longer hunted as petals and gatherings.

*

What it breathes out is no longer your voice
though each gravestone still warms the other
pretends to be the sun, heats this hillside

with the same silence your lips now grow
is nourished by footsteps and those few stars
it grows here as flowers, watered

with tears all night grieving at a gate left open
for the sea where every wave returns dry
as those small stones still sinking to the bottom.

*

Don't mistake it for the sun, let this puddle cool
the way rain is lowered, sure the dirt is its home
will leave the light on—you're easy

can be misled just by looking at water disappear
not yet the glare covering your grave with the afternoon
—lets it pretend it once was moonlight

and you are still in love, wetting your lips
on stars just now learning to fly on their back
by looking up from below—what you see

is the trace where a great shore should be
was thrown from the air for its mud
side by side leaving without you.



From THE BOOK OF NAILS, 3 by Janet Kauffman, 2020



From THE BOOK OF NAILS, 3 by Janet Kauffman, 2020

JEAN PIERRE NIKUZE

Addressing the Spectre of Gertrude Stein

1.

When you consult the medium, take a ready speech with you.
Extempore is of yore, too withdrawn to make a spirited return
Like an unresponsive Yo-yo. Gertrude was no more random
Than the second of a 1-2 punch sequence, no more automatic
Than an electric triangle. She'll be in dotage when she answers
But her reputation attracts respect like the hats people used
To don and could drop at the drop of a hat.

2.

Start with something like: I think of you, dear Gertrude
And the thinking hounds set out smelling for you smelling
Where you, smelling after you, smelling to you, smelling
Through you as through a window as I see you now. You look
Good in transparent, my dear.

3.

Be modest in your wording. Not ever the punitive sky
To the man who forgot his umbrella, or the beggar
Of admiration holding out her distracting beauty like a hand
Stump to bankrupt the romantic: My favorite color, I said
To a classmate once, is patina. Italian or Dutch? They asked.
I said: I am very well-traveled thank you very much.
None of that.

4.

But you may be dramatic: I am looking at you, O innovative
Assemblage of galanthus. You whom Vesuvius mistook
For a throat, flowing through while headlocking others.
Now you wear those ash stains on your neck like a medal,
Always in the obverse. Once you absorb opacity, you are
Revealed to me the lone chartreuse, the untouched blade that
Must have sung the tune the conflagration danced around.

5.

Or just aim straight for her heart: I see you milk-white
And feathery like astilbe, or is that Basket in your lap?

6.

Display familiarity with her work, reassure her that
The summons isn't by a stranger: I don you on my small
Head like a top hat which wearer can lend to the ground's
Big head at the drop of a hat. You cover my hirsute, Gertrude.
But my head is not like the ground's, it's underneath,
Like the petrified fossils of Pompeii. You are two places
At once, as well as the throat, the lava that flowed through it
And yet, as if that weren't enough paleness for overstretching
Here you are honorable when it matters least,
Honoring this session outside your Rue de Fleurus salon.

7.

Avoid any emotional tangents: No Hollywood aficionado,
You pretended to be your lover so people could notice you.
Why must we meet on fabric? Why must yarn separate us?
You were too good for those self-styled pragmatists.
What need had you of them, anyway? Don't say that.

8.

Address her like Souhami wrote, as if you knew her
Private papers at Beinecke intimately: There's no denying
That Winterson pronounces your name better than I,
But you are too many spirits for any one kraal, a restive void.
There you are on the move yet again. Oakland to Paris
To Gertrude. Once you arrive, the there you said wasn't
There disappears from the maps and you become it.
It abdicates that you may be queen. There...there...there...
Gertrude to Gertrude to Gertrude. Are you here, Gertrude?
Are you Gertrude, Gertrude? Or are you in a museum
Next to an unflinching Picasso? One good turn, I suppose.
The Self-Portraits, they're all him at different times
Of day, right? If anyone would know they would be known
And known to know and summoned to answer
As I've summoned you, Your Majesty.

9

Think honesty, not flattery: Life can change at the drop
Of a paintbrush. Now there's rain, can you still feel
This gerund? You felt the farthest with your prehensile syntax
And gave one sweep, then another and yet another
Because life changes between sweeps. In the twenty-seven
Rue de Fleurus ink makes no stain and nor does paint.
Bordeaux stains are water colors. The stains on your diaphanous
Fingers are permanent. I hope to be summoned when I die.
Summoned and found stained sublimely, blessed by a fire
Leagues from the nearest stoup.

10.

Finally, don't be nervous for you'll be speaking with a human.
And when it's her turn, listen kindly because this will likely be
The first time Gertrude does anything stream-of-conscious-y.

LAWRENCE R. SMITH

The Dissecting Table

The conical shape of an umbrella,
a vacuum cleaner in the forest
that defines a slump, a stable
as libelous as a shade of violet.

There will be centuries of repair,
a collection of ventilated shells
that suggests a pattern, a coda
of stone and rebar to shore up
our metastatic amnesia.

LINETTE LAO

observatory

The sun sweeps out, a line in motion revealing a hidden habitat, a new landscape of the most familiar spaces—your invisible home, submersible, tender. You, your radical maps, your waves of dust, your retinal stars. You, your technical flex, feel the thick hand descending, a snow of hornets pressing the air from so many chests.

Will our animal bodies bloom? Let the insides crawl out. Our fungal imaginations unfold into dreams of a deep space, a new planetary angle of

no loss, no losing
no machines

a slow flow
a swoon

when is the end
and how we will know?



COLLAGE by John M. Bennett and Music Master, 2020

GEORGE KALAMARAS

Sonny Rollins: A Night at the Village Vanguard

Bird song at dusk is the sound of water colliding with water.

The greatest disease one could achieve is the placement of candles in the ear, the clogging of what syllables of sound might reach toward.

I would be an owl in the belly of a mouse.

I would be Venus as one of Jupiter's eight fluid moons.

I would be you, with sunglasses and mouche, standing on stage, decades earlier, with Wilbur Ware and Elvin Jones.

Everything is reversed in hearing these songs, Sonny. Even my birth—as not quite a bluebird, not quite a moth—will return.

The sky at midnight is the color of a squid bringing ocean depths into the sand creeks of your breath at the Village Vanguard, November 3, 1957.

If there be a lamp in the spine, it belongs not to Virginia Woolf, nor to the candles and cigarettes on the tabletops before you, but to Salvador Dalí, when eaten with a fork, as you play Cole Porter's "I've Got You under My Skin."

The body, they say, cries out to cannibalize itself when it realizes the sound of your sax is not distinct from the wind in its spine.

I would be a possum, somehow able to hide in my own pouch—the womb world of this night sixty-two years later with you—when I realize all the revolving stars come not from you but from my ears, lit by candles, embedded in my own mouth.



Six Thousand Gold Pieces Buy the Lingering Death

The epigram is probably fictitious.

When cinnabar is burned, the most common way of stretching is probably an echo.

I am convinced that the color of marriage is a steep chloritic blue.
We sniff one another like dogs in order to understand every grass
of our past.

There is a stereotypical expression, *Death is the end of death*.
It is not common but known in the game comprised of thirty-two
dominoes and a mating pair of lice.

A caricature of my simple labor haunted me incarnation
to incarnation.

I knew I had a past, which was one reason I got down on all fours
to defeat it once every wind.

I was to report to my imagination, punctually, on the third day of the
third week of every month.

Everywhere is an aphorism about me that has something to do
with salt.

Let's try it together, *He agonized over the cruel cruel salt craves of his heart*.
Or this, *The black piping on his pants was the stain of how his victory stance
continued to bleed through*.

The epigram will certainly be fictitious.

It may say he never truly lived.

She wore a blue cotton skirt that clung flatteringly to her hips.
Not even six thousand gold pieces could buy him a way out.

The Burning, If Not Elegant Then Exact

The Maasai warrior who wrote an autobiography.
The color orange and its remnant of even the slinkiest green.

There is no crushed oil of apple-seed delight.
We have eaten many varieties of olives and agree on the duplicitous
manner of the pits.

Is there a way to charge ahead and relinquish the spurring of
the season?
What brings my mind exact if not the quieting of already-quiet
breadth?

Elegant glue of the fourteenth rib. Elegant voice of stopped attack.
I am glad of it and done and wait till and compressed.

You express your stool as if showing a rare and exotic mirror.
I hear the voice of everything beautiful, as if the world was truly fluid.

So now Maasailand becomes another name for *recalcitrant mother*.
We cross a great joy, a great dry gorge, and witness the yoke of the
internal bodice. The sudden burning of sheep. Curds of
the recurring herd.

But You Thought Differently

Slaughter your resistance to any terrible thing.
Glance at a Chinese Sung Dynasty impulse as if you hated history
in all its release.

Wear a star. Wear a star and inflict upon it the gauzy pulse that pulled
it down.

Inflect it this way, *Can the chipped tooth ever measure up to the pelican on fire
in the thatched Bornean hut?*

All right. Instead, one day join the sorrow of a child.
See it for what it isn't—that you've grown beyond primitive projection.

No one gets entirely past the sad stance of their hands.
It's like drinking the staph-ridden obsession in a strangely held cup
of tea.

The master of the razor has an infinite strop.
Strap it on, or around, or through the eye of a needle. Watch the
camel squirm.

In love's *other* way, bend at the knee and sniff.
A weeping willow brushes the earth, inhabits the lamps you thought
they'd swayed toward you in the slow motion of underwater speech.

In You

Because I wore sheepskin I could detect the heartbeat of every worm.
Even before the transfusion of starlight for blood, you could pour me
into a glass of water and expect nothing but strength and tonal
dissolve.

A sugar cube is not equivalent, sexually, to a pinch of salt?
You respect me in the morning but refuse to baste my eggs?

Yes, the homeless are most on fire on the boulevard of my soul.
That doesn't make bathing with a damp blue rag across my chest
a reason for insanity.

The cute cashier filed a report and blamed my ectoplasm for her
heptic condition.

It began, *He glanced at me from across the street, and I felt lightning enter
my spine.*

You could ulcerate my name, blame me *more or less*, even *less than or
equal to*, and I would not complain.

You could illuminate the dark of my spark, tell me the x-ray of your
arm hair includes the intimate now of my mouth.

This is not simply an exercise in channeling sexual heat.

Seminal retention, I say. *The practice of a worm farm on fire. Drench of our
dearest most direct detail.*

I say each phrase slowly, over one another, like blouse tucks of erotic
texture, the word *kielbasa* breaking off into sausage, mustard, onions,
and crusty Eastern European blight.

Gripping cold air modulates each moment of the lost tongue I find,
only, in you.

If I Were to Die Tonight I Would Be One Day Younger

Moon-bit sycamores
Still, it is dark in the trees
You could stand at the cabin door and the Bible would speak
All the pages suddenly a commotion of birds
That would talk, speak
And all the grass would move dark
Through the breastbone of an owl
Say a bluetick hound could save the world
Say my beagle pup is all I need
To know there is love in the shade of love in the giving and the dread
What I know are the muddy bottoms, murky near the river's flow
And a crooked trail through the willows
That somehow winds from me
What I know is that the possum and polecat of my youth
Keep calling me, still, to something
That resists the movements of wind
If I were to die tonight I would be one day younger
Than the hope of knowing the workings of bees
Blistering moonlight with a baleful sting of dark woods and wind
If I were to die, would I know it
Or would I move on into the rich mineral rinse of rocks
Still, there is a tree-lined dark
There is a tree-lined dark
And the vowel of my mouth keeps calling me
Back into what I might one day possibly say
Still, the moon-bit swamps of that backwoods
Indiana cottage keep calling me back to 1961
And that tree fort in the oak
And that mulberry tree shading the pump-house ivy
And the good long luck I've had of staying alive long enough
To love a hound and have the hound love me
All the grass moving darkly through willows
Sugar maples and moon-bit elms
All the grass shivering like mice

Bent and bending, quiet now
Hutched in the breastbone of an owl
The breastbone, the luck, the grass
The trembling leaves





LETTER COMPOSITION by Nico Vassilakis, 2014



LETTER COMPOSITION by Nico Vassilakis, 2017

BOB HEMAN

INFORMATION

After you die they will dig you up and make you labor in the sugar mill. After you die you will have wings you never had before. After you die, for the first time, you will know how to swim. After you die you will speak words that will change those who hear them. After you die you will finally understand love.

INFORMATION

Confuses the roll of paper towels with William Bendix. Counts the leaves as they fall from the tree. It is safe to assume she has her own agenda, one which includes the castle that intrudes on the horizon and the idea of the sleep that always avoids her. She is not who they think she is, but their description of her is still accurate.

INFORMATION

You will be asked to enter the house of death. You will be given a name that is not your own. You will be recognized as someone who has always been expected. They will never ask you to leave. Sometimes they will cover your ears and eyes and mouth so that nothing can enter or escape your body.

INFORMATION

The rope was invented because of the elephants, because of the giant stones, because of the water that grew too heavy. The men were smaller then than they later became, the animals full of words they eventually forgot. Each time the mountain was measured it required a different explanation. The trees were added to the story over time.

INFORMATION

Your life has been constructed to allow for commercial breaks, to allow for a loaf of bread and a mountain that cannot be seen. The captions tell you that discovery is inevitable, that the word attached to your arm is incorrect, that your hunger can never be described. Each step is only a way of counting, a kind of organizing that must be used before the moon disappears forever.

INFORMATION

You should check the words one last time. You should make sure the mountains are in the right paragraph. And that the time sequence with the door is correct. You should make sure that the dog doesn't bark too often. And that the woman's entrance isn't accompanied by too much innuendo. You should make sure the words they speak haven't been corrected.

INFORMATION

Only recognizes his children when they are inside the house. Only recognizes the sun when he is looking at the ground. The caption says the door is open even though it is not. The number assigned to them is not a number at all.

INFORMATION

In the *Guide to Kissing* frogs are only mentioned twice.

INFORMATION

Thinks the planes are contagious, the pond a system they have never seen before. Asks “what’s wrong,” each time a shadow brushes against them. Understands that the woman is little more than an explanation.

INFORMATION

Understands that the trains must be gathered before they can be understood. Understands that this is only the second part of the story. Understands that the colors are not necessary, and can be removed.

INFORMATION

Confuses Adam and Eve with Dick and Jane. Confuses Santa Claus with god, and the tree with a loving uncle. Confuses the sky with the ocean they are afraid to wade in. Confuses the fingers they count on with the explanation for goulash.

INFORMATION

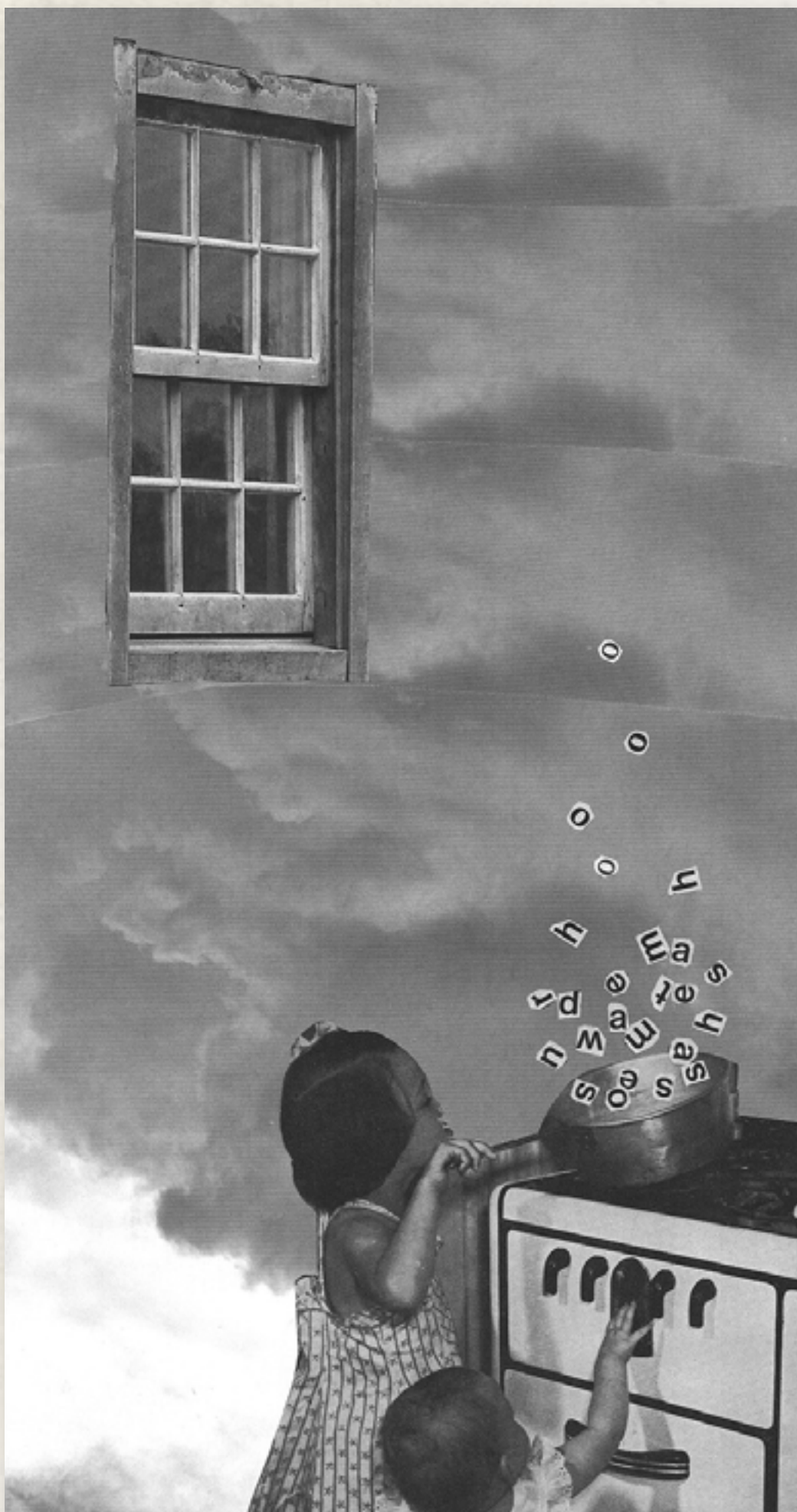
Was given a lantern or candle, a row of windows or a single door. Was given a word to speak that once had a meaning, and a note to sing that only seemed to resemble. Was described by dimensions it no longer had.

INFORMATION

He wondered if they would wear ties in the fallout shelter. He wondered if they would eat squash or cantaloupe. He wondered if she would still use the punishment paddle. He wondered if the beds would be comfortable enough. He wondered if he would still be allowed to speak even if he was not asked. He wondered if the door would ever be opened again.



LESSONS by Bob Heman, 2020
collage



STOVE-ALPHABET by Bob Heman, 2020
collage

LEIGH HERRICK

ineluctable

is it inevitable
this peach the rough pit of handing its fuzz
and sweet juice to your teeth—
jaw setting in
mouth sinking to flavor and tongued sense—
a kindness of tang

is it indelible
is it fixed that lines
get drawn that anything finds form from ink
and does soil spell itself into root
only because letters arrange the event
like the mouth of sky arranging *cirri* and *cumuli*

or is the tired weight of out-wording
wearing you down

has the spire of twinkle left its spark
beyond your eye
leading you to say

this crash or that
all of it is ineluctable

by which you force small things
in the hearts of children

to bleed

if i lived here it would be

where poems ask the sky-bend of harrow
ask the trend in vernacular
ask the arborvitae whose hem is
skirted with snow

for permission

ask spring for extensions of scilla
ask the severed rabbit leg covered
beneath the pine of dirt and needles

ask the dog if he knows i will ask

will we ever come

again

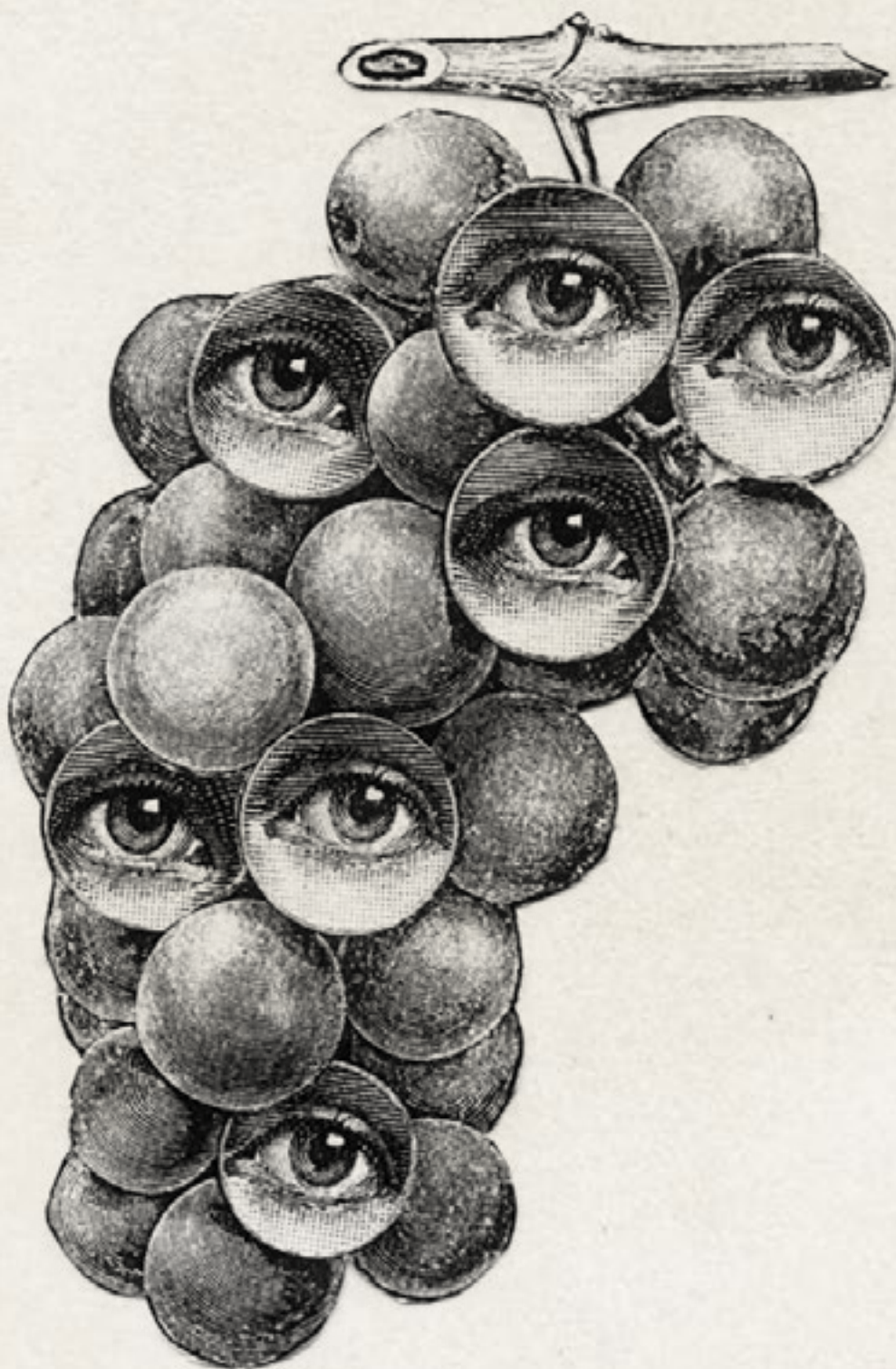
DENVER BUTSON

find and replace

if you substitute *ennio morricone* for *the scarecrow* in every poem previously written about the scarecrow you will soon learn how lonely *ennio morricone* must be standing out there strapped to a stake all day looking out over the tips of corn tassels and the exhailes of mosquitoes and gnats dreaming perhaps of riding the farmer's old motorcycle across the rusty iron bridge dreaming perhaps of getting on his knees and growling so low and so long that the incessant yellow dog never barks again dreaming perhaps no certainly dreaming of putting his lips on the back of the farmer's wife's neck as if he *ennio morricone* has a right to such pleasure

and then if you replace *ennio morricone* with *the scarecrow* in those same poems which revealed to you the eternal loneliness of *ennio morricone* which articulated *ennio morricone*'s bone-hollowing longing you might wonder how the scarecrow can stand another moment of standing there doing exactly what he has done without complaint for all these years and he

unlike ennio morricone unable to
hear dusk approaching like a slow
train and he unlike ennio morricone
lacking the remarkable ability to put
his lips together and make that train
whistle





TWIN BLACK BOOKS 5 by Marilyn R. Rosenberg, 2020
mixed media (10" x 10")

D. E. STEWARD

Mutually Constitutive

Byssus collected from Chilean mussels and spun to sea silk

“lagunas, zonas nulas, hoyos // que escárba terca la memoria” (Octavio Paz)

Obtruding with the esoterics of byssus and Paz’s memory scans

Like fine linen, fine silk

As gossamer lifted in the breeze

Like snow in the wind rinses across a frozen lake

And her bindi front-on assertive much as her *mirada fuerte*

Back on Amtrak from the dwarfing naves of those Chicago boulevards, says she was scunnered by the experience of almost a week of “textual transactions being the mutually constitutive engagements of human beings, texts, and contexts”

A lot more verbiage at the 2019 Modern Language Association Convention beyond its forty-two sessions on alternatives to academia, designated as the alt-ac tract

Nervously known as bailing out

Like sleazy rayon casheen pajamas on knurled rayon sheets

Or being alone in an almost knife fight, knives out and all screaming at one another

Confused about the one-nipple censorship of moderate propriety,
enraged at the media for leaving Trumpismo respectable enough to
gain more than equal airtime

Surreptitiously scurry up a *Quercus Robur* two thousand years ago over
the Via Emilia or some other active Roman road to hide there, slung
over a limb concealed in the oak's foliage to watch how those people
got along

Toward their empire's demise, somewhat worried about what was
coming at them from over the Alps

Not like us with our anxious recycling, composting organics, switching
off lights, riding public transport, walking, bicycling, hanging laundry,
all good for the soul but to count for very little down the line

With tuna fleets to feed our cats, feedlots for our dogs' food, the
dumpsters for about half of what comes to supermarket loading
docks, roads and freeways carrying mostly single drivers across this
flood-lighted landscape of our lives

Leaving us with an unredeemable destiny

That future of what we so flagrantly enjoy limited no matter how
ingenious our techno shifts and AI-inspired solutions

And now the coronavirus has arrived

And a majority of those put on a respirator die

And these early months of 2020 were the time to figure how to get rid
of Trump

And being mutually constitutively engaged discussing abstracts is the
last thing we want to do now

“order is the boat we step into for the crossing” (A. R. Ammons)

Whereas real knowledge follows from direct experience, coronavirus will be a grow-up-fast compensator for kids and the cosseted

Whereas last week’s diversion issue was whether or not to insist on wearing masks

As Guayaquil’s despair grows with bodies in its streets these early April days

And humbling despair about Guayaquil’s bodies in the streets

And about the death avalanches in Italy and Spain

Whereas a shattering number of sophisticated, generous, high-cultured Lombardian, Castilian and Catalan elders have perished and are dying now, so voiding a special vastness of memory and cogency

Whereas in Wuhan tested and then slammed into forced quarantine on the way home from a violin lesson in early March, given a towel, toothbrush, soap, plastic cup, spoon, and a locked room with a cold water tap and toilet

Whereas if you work as a cleaner and your man works in a restaurant kitchen, neither of you has papers or a bank account, your kids had lunches at PS 053 in Morrisania, and since the second week of March neither of you have work and the kids are home

Whereas a youngish and mean Trumpismo apparatchik ruthlessly is in charge of severely narrowing all US immigration and residency possibilities and boasts about it

As the crowded camps of collective tragedy on both sides of the Brownsville to Reynosa, Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, Baja border now, wax and wane

Whereas kids who are underfed and miss their first years of school generally continue getting screwed from there on out aspirationally

Done for already

As for many of the about three million Syrians trying to make it through Turkey to anywhere at all, for now the coronavirus is no more dire than hunger, immediate danger from the Turks, the rain and the implausibility of a reasonable future

As sitting by my brother in his third day on a ventilator, we talked of him that doctor and I, and only he did not understand our reasoned and terrible words before the doctor flipped the toggle switch and the pump shut down

Whereas Mardi Gras and Spring Break meant more to the revelers than their future, and that the malls and movies often are still open on both nearsides of the hundredth meridian, the personal freedoms inherent to the American way of life have endured

As Karl Barth said that in every old photograph lurks a catastrophe, in a good many pandemic photos this spring tragedy blares

And as newspapers document Trumpismo's baleful irresponsibility, still an advance toward dictatorship is recorded daily in the White House briefing room campaign appearances, careerists flanking

The nausea we should feel as we live parallel with Trumpismo

Midcentury last, before the interstates and seatbelts, what a different experience this country was

Only AM radio then

Out on empty US 40 through Dinosaur's intersection with CO 64,
Vernal in Utah thirty-three miles west, Craig there in Colorado
eighty-seven miles east

A Moffat County intersection looking just as it did in the 1950s four or
five times hitching through, the gas station convenience store

Population 325, elevation eighty feet below six thousand

Beyond the scan of memory may have waited there for the next ride
once in the fifties

Hitching the continent was like riding the clouds

Fisherman's Wharf to the Steel Pier

As gossamer lifted in the breeze

Two generations past all that and now with a fifth of this next century
gone, we're mutually constitutive

As respirators wheeze on

"Once the earth decides to have no memory / time seems in a way
meaningless" (Louise Glück, "Averno")

And today in 2020, April 10th, our absurd and extremely dangerous
self-enabler chose a pink tie to bloviate and chop the air into boxes for
more than two hours about "opening America" again

Yesterday eighteen thousand people in this country had already died
in the pandemic

Tomorrow the number of cases here will go over a half million

With patients in New York ICUs set to be attached to a respirator,
frequently offered the doctor's phone to see and have words with loved
ones before being sedated

In New York so far over half of those last stage patients have not
survived

Death not as on the eerie breadth of Pompeii's Via dell'Abbondanza
filling with the fleeing terrified when the ash and cinders began to fall,
but fate engaged in confining Queens apartments and alone in ICU
units in Elmhurst Hospital

Amplly eerie and awful enough

In their solitary terror and despair

The pandemic astonishing in the manner of the quiet bumper-to-
bumper drivethru resignation of the ten thousands of cars and trucks
at a San Antonio food bank today

Today will pass with X thousand coronavirus deaths registered across
the planet

And then in each of many tomorrow's, X thousand more

As eventually way out ahead a vaccine will come to fore to staunch
this pandemic

Whereas assuredly there will be more

DAN RAPHAEL

Between Inner Cities

Driving an interior interstate, 3 hours in one stream
the innernet, one router, how many towers per axon,
who else can tap in, memory's password, once registered
can still evolve—o becomes a, t doubling itself

Driving through the same wintered trees, the same stretched meniscus
i'm usually at the bottom of: is the color changing or just
the saturation,
are the clouds evolving or just showing a different angle
like a hat becomes a seat cushion becomes a fry pan
in the sense of information what can't be repelled is filtered
winds or wings beyond the curvature, horizon's only peripheral
this deflated earth, an earth of so many holes falling through is
the norm
as it's all one side cause there's one me but billions others
with uncountable sides as the breathing world bristles
with brains and sensories—those with better sense of smell,
those with memories from a past life or three

So often on this road tween two cities, two gravities and atmospheres
the internal is seldom inert, relaxed and waiting for cues
pressure fronts beneath my brain lobes, like several planets
with unpredictable centers, like the galaxy of possible combinations of
sugar, fat and heat, as if flour was a way of saving seeds,
making it harder to connect memory with place, could have been
beneath any of a thousand golden arches, hundreds of mountain lakes
swathed in third-growth green, it's always spring somewhere,
a half hour of winter every day

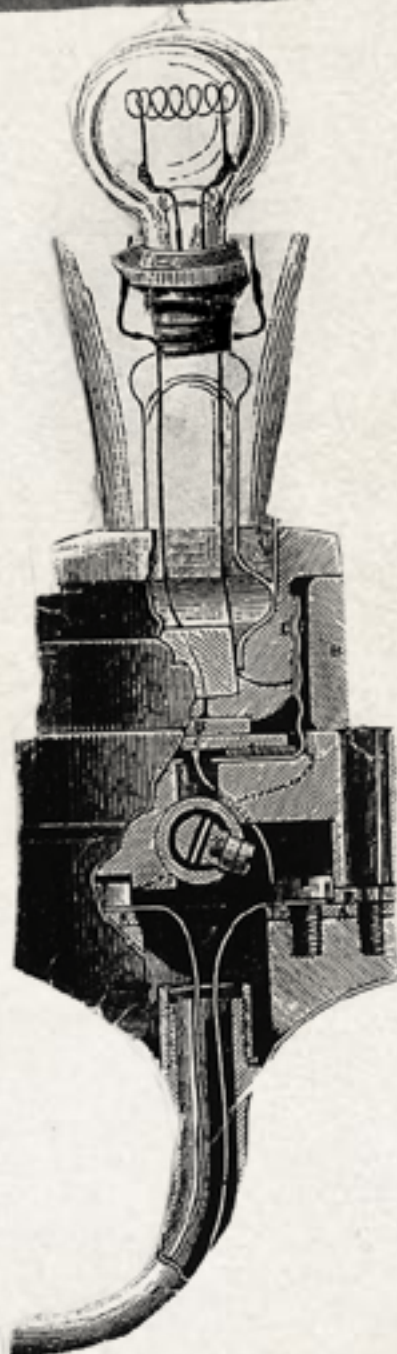
As if clouds are the sun's guards, keeping it caged for weeks,
letting it out briefly two or three times a day, one month the clouds
weren't sure
the sun hadn't escaped, night happens when we give up looking
for light
these multiple muscular antennas needing to reboot, to disk-check

A painterly sky, a gloomy sky, most of the time the road could be gone
and fortunately i don't have the consciousness, the freedom, to fall
through,
follow through, take the exit to elkhead, vader or concrete
the mountains on either side of my highway never explored,
seldom passed through to what's another country at another time,
like miles of every possible franchise signed in languages
beyond my comprehension, how color schemes are impossible
to translate
even geometry is different here—no sharp corners, no circles without
escapes

Times the sky's the roof of my car, the flip side of my scalp
who goes there, as hairlines recede, as even bone—like the best quality
roadway—
gets porous in places, softer in places, crossroads where the questions
gather
a new lifestyle with better drainage, a radical diet of reading only thai
for a month, not attempting to translate but letting the characters
stretch their limbs
figure the best choreography for who surrounds you, a silent place
where the moves create the music, where the back beat's a heart
in some corner of the heart, maybe distilled in real time or fermented
from various pasts, cerebrum aged, the traditional hippocampic yeast,
almost self-regenerating,

Houses go and streets remain, cities gobble
and bud like amoeba without space between gravity & heat distort,
what places I've never been share so the first time is always confusion,

pattern recognition, the smell of coffee, what's illuminated
when the sky goes dark, when I think I'm driving
but I'm sitting on air, unshielded, nearly a mile a minute





GHOST DOG 2 by Homero Hidalgo, 2019
acrylic and charcoal on canvas (65'' x 65'')

ROBIN DAWN HUDECHEK

The Dead Magician

He doesn't own a black cape. He could never
afford to buy one. Though in a fog of stars
you can see it unfurling.
You can hear it snapping in the wind.

He cannot escape from handcuffs
or tanks of water, though he always tries.
In show after show, he is the drowning man,
the dead man, the man whose face mummifies
against exquisitely formed red lips
as his skin bloats and someone in the audience
shouts to break the glass, glass which pours over
them, shards in their hair, in their fine gowns,
shards that meld with the glasses in their hands
and flow down their fingers, shards that cut
and bleed because they waited a moment too long
to break the glass.

Now they will carry the glass with them
when they comb their hair, it will bubble up
in their faces. It will puddle in their cereal and
shine like coins among the raisins.
All because they were too late.

Horse hooves stutter against cobblestones
and throb in corridors behind their eyes.
The hearse they follow is always curtained, a finer
cloth than the cape he never wore
because he could never afford to buy one.

Someone will lay a crucifix on his inert body, and marvel at the seaweed between his fingers. But the water was pure, salt-free. They could not know the magician's travels, moonlight rippling the cape he never wore.

Dead birds don't fly any more, but neither are they buried.

Dying birds flutter in broken cages.

He would have liked them to fly out of his hat just once, pure and white and free. But all he had to show was bloodied and crushed feathers.

They say the dead magician knew only one trick.

He could make souls disappear,

thousands of them threaded in the arm of his needle,

a needle caught in the inner lip of the cape

he never wore. All because they waited a minute too long,

then two, then three. All because they were too late

as he knew they would be.

Lucifer's Wings

If I had wings would I hate them
as Lucifer does
though he could never be rid of them.
No, not the real devil,
but the one in LA who owns a nightclub,
who worries over their color and shape,
who worries if they are still there,
white and full as a seagull's.

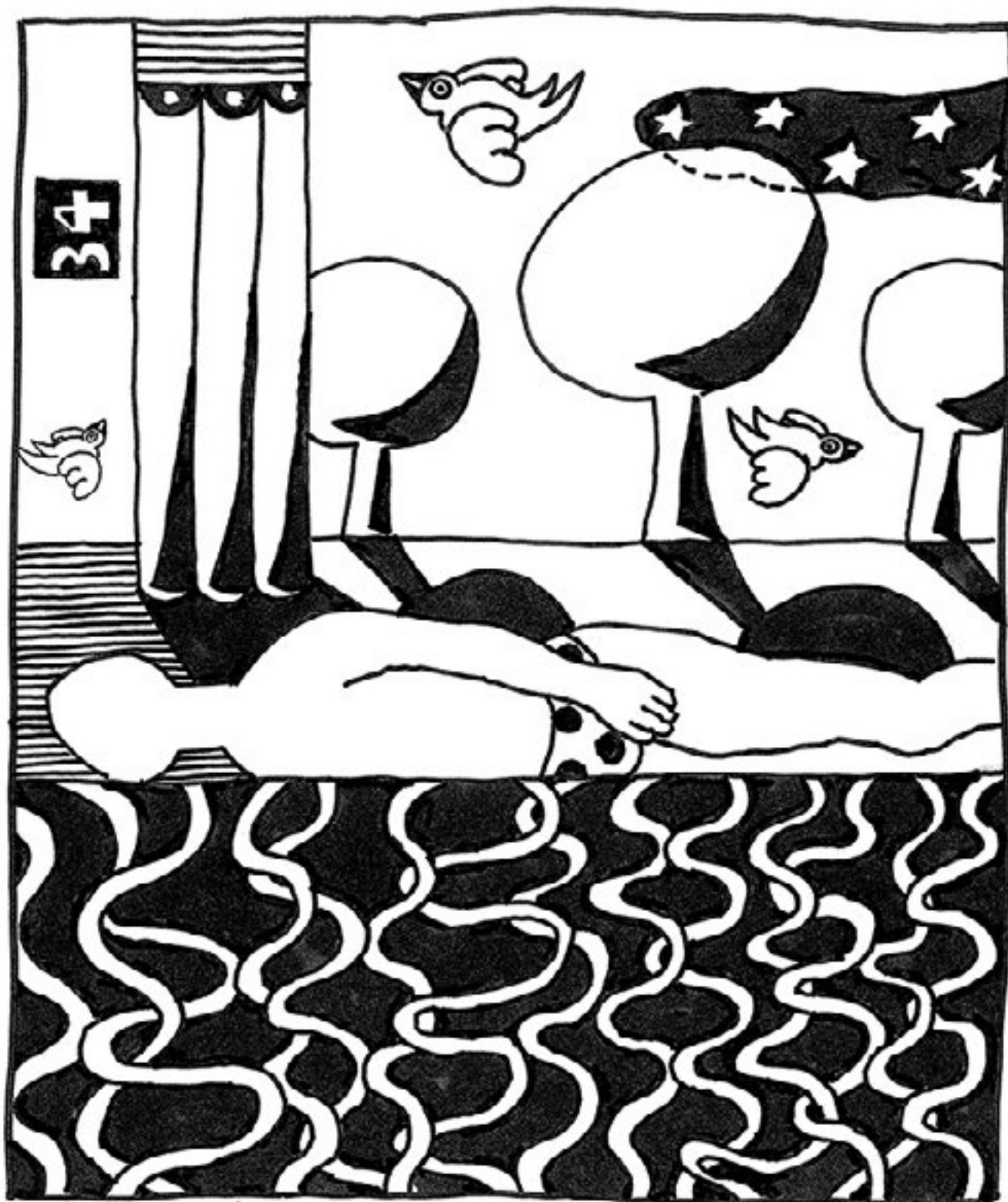
Powerful wings that could take him
to hell and back to Los Angeles,
wings he pared from his back
over and over until his room
filled with feathers and hot wax.

At what point, in what dream
did he try to glue them back on?
He tells himself it was the day
God became a melting sun,
and the wings, a furnace that
pulsed and never cooled
even when he leapt from a comet
into the Pacific Ocean
and cradled a smoking wing
in moon flecked waters.

Could I do that? Could I mutilate
a part of my own body,
slice off a mole,
or carve flat feet into fine arches
with the ease he wielded
that celestial knife?
Could I hate myself that much?

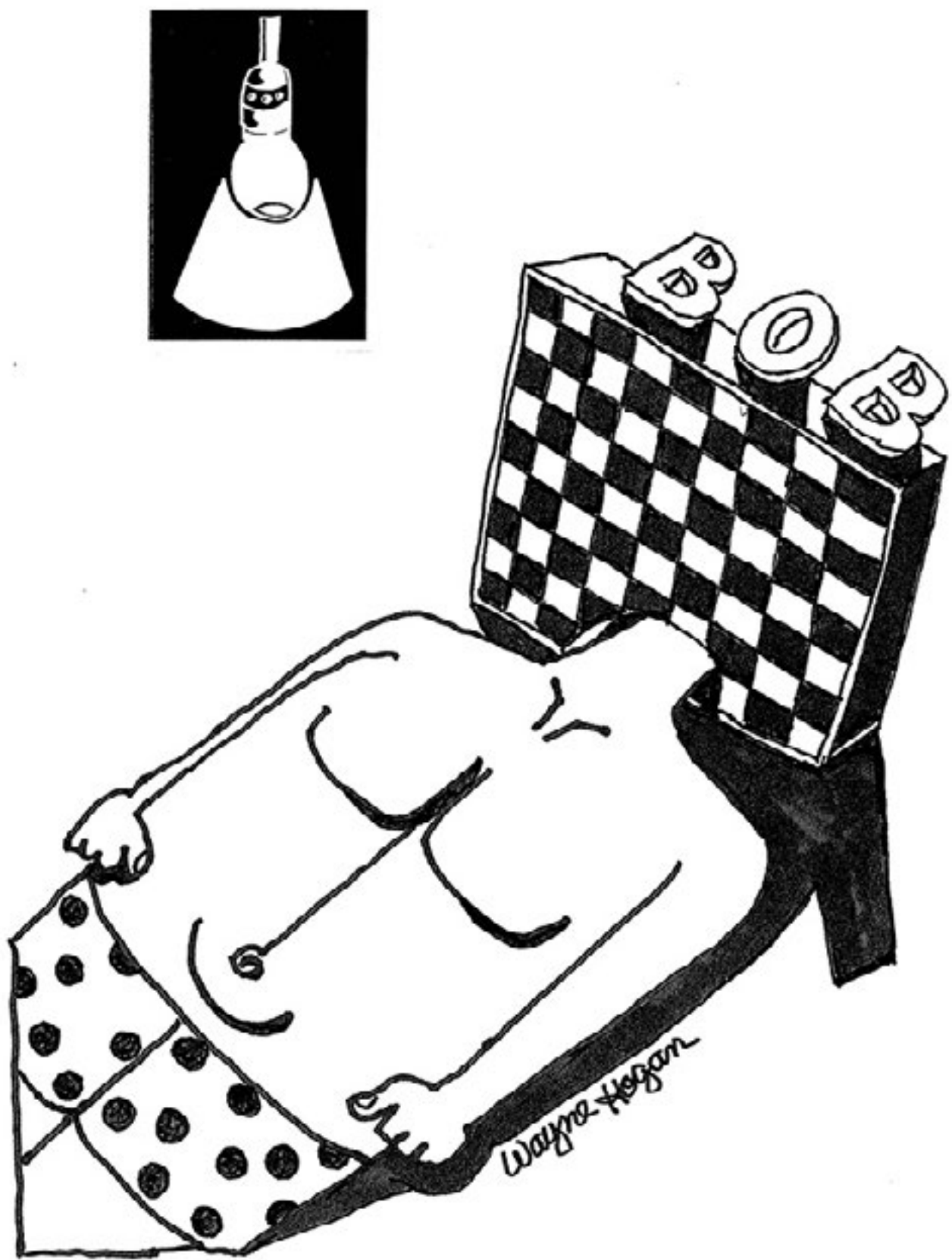
Any civil war soldier who had a leg amputated
could describe the phantom pain of
muscles aching to get up and walk
or fingers wriggling on long lost hands.
Lucifer stretches his arms and wing scars
crust on his back.

A whip could not have caused more pain or confusion
for Lucifer, who could not decide
what color or shape his wings should be,
if he was an angel or not an angel
or something in between.



Wayne Hogan

UNTITLED by Wayne Hogan, 2019
pen on paper



UNTITLED by Wayne Hogan, 2019
pen on paper

JAMES GRABILL

The Circumnavigation of Christopher Marlowe

There's something in purposeful mushroom
root mycelia of standard moral decency
blending stitches, reaching out in directions
sounded out of the stone canyon releasing air
between the exquisite feathered beings alive.
There's the present scent of mammalian hair
in northern Finland and on First Avenue
in Akron, while mammoth twisters splinter
at astronomical speeds in frescoed antechambers
where notebooks of Shakespeare are discovered
to be written in stealth by Marlowe who feigned
death in a 16th century tavern brawl to escape
royal charges, taking his higher education to Italy.
There's no other explanation for Hubble telescopes
of the leaves or Shakespeare's Italian plays.
For other proof, place your aesthetic monitoring
devices before the film of Burton doing Faustus
after much egg-cracking from inside the mother
tongue broadcast in seed out of the future
of geyser-soaked reports translated back into oak,
past swings of incense burning in ritual urns
around urgent recitations of Byzantine rosaries.
There's something in the clearing where forgiveness
comes over people, displacing struggle with being,
whichever door opens at the speed fir trees grow.
There's something to being mid-trajectory
in the wake of the green hydraulic harpsichord
lifting what sinks, in up-hammered depths
back in unclocked lulls of communion ovum.

Haunted by Loss of the Russian Bear and Yankee Eagle in the Atmosphere

Without the impossible-to-count number
of caterpillars that transform into moths,
without tiny flies tending blooms with bees,
without eusocial ants running metro centers
in the underground, people would be missing
parts of themselves when speaking together.
Whatever you're thinking, wherever you are,
the nuclear sun burns down on the morning,
fields steaming, as if reasons enough existed,
small birds with songs flying between maples,
mammals on a few branches faced with more
than we could know, heavy burdens beriddling
manifestations of unfinished beauty, whispering
in fierce tenderness. We can see we've rocketed
over Henry V after he's decided to fix his shield
onto the wall beside his sword and hauberk,
having realized everything living is breathing,
that it has value, that it depends on planetary
conditions the way we do, music of the spheres
grinding out celestial pitches of transcendence
over Timon of Athens, who lived in a sand cave
on the beach of nihilism where he fended off
people by hurling gold and silver coins at them.
In the photograph of the psyche, it was clear
he couldn't hear the music or feel for species
with the sand of his suffering caked in his hair
and ears, stuck in his throat and making him
scratch where his toga was before he left society
in disgust, banishing even philosophy and arts
from his presence, leaving his consciousness
unaccommodated, only lit blue in the sky
without moths or lessons in transformation.

DIETER WESLOWSKI

The Art

Quien sabes what sends me there,
mystery, wave or wind from an unseeable side.
Most of my black bleeds belong to toss of
trash or flush, thus saith Mister Coccimiglio
who wags a mean mastery of tongue
when he is naught mooning or glowing.

Spent yesterday reading Van Gogh's
heartbreakers to his brother Theo and conclude
Vincent was also a poet of sightful words:
Arles, Saint Remy and Auvers where that son
of a whelping bitch priest Teisser refused use
of the parish hearse to carry Vincent's remains.

Here, panic hits, crown and a nothing
that needs the cell's nucleus to live. Sky falls
and crowds have parties of headlessness down
and up supermarket aisles. O empire! Save ink
and breath. I have watched your blood-letting march
for sixty years. Only a there and here sigh left.

Maybe mine is not the voice
lost forever, but truth is that it is. Space
spirals collide in which none of us partake. No
matter how I long for Tesla's electro-magnetic
solvedness. Our human systems spin in error, but
Cupid still has plenty of arrows left in his quiver.

TERRY HAUPTMAN

The Psalms of Qumran

I dreamed of the Bedouin Shepherd
Looking for his lost goat
And finding
Scrolls in ceramic pots,
The night after viewing
The Blood and honey
Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran
At Jerusalem's Shrine of The Book
With wonder.

Memory scrolling blessings
In tablets lost in storms
In the dybbuk clay of Aramaic joy
Fanned by date-palms
From the psalms of Baal,
The honeyed ash of lost souls.

Amulet II

The green humming
Of telluric sparks
Honeyed by sulfur
Wakes the dead
Through a spiral of gall.

Your black eyelids charred by ash
Blink at crows
Dancing at the center of the world.

Blue sap of the ambers
Shimmers in the deep.
Who, in The Book of Splendor
Rises from the dead
Walking backwards
In the dreamworld
Of fireflies

Cantillating into the dark
On Furnace Street,
Drawing us down
Into the great mysteries?

Cupping

My grandma Lillie
Lined up her small blue
Vicks Vapor Rub bottles
On her sister Sara's back,
Struck a match
To draw out the poisons
From within

Smoking the medicine
Into her skin. . .
Heat like wasps'
Burning winds
Redolent of music.

Grandma singing,
"Come on a my house,
My house a come on"

And "I'm going coco-loco
In my cocoa,"
Before visiting grandpa
At Mt. Hebron Cemetery
In Queens,

Wearing her red dress
From the camphor cedar chest,
Singing in a minor key
For life, for love,
Improvising in the lilac dawn
As the winds broke open.



STUDY FOR THIRD DOOR by Jefreid Lotti, 2019
oil on wood (24" x 12")

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

JAMES GRABILL:

It's impossible to write a word here for the final issue of "Caliban" without recognizing the editorial artistry and finish carpentry evident in every issue. Thank you, Lawrence Smith, for your indefatigable pursuit of arts that live with hulky Caliban out in the weather, ruminations that may have flown with Ariel through esemplastic time-space or landed an improvisation in the midst of two fronts of Tibetan throat-singers accompanied by flugelhorns and sonic booms of punch presses stamping fast-serve cafeteria vegetables out of old molecular hotel rooms. You've valued work that lives outside the frame, that corresponds with 20th century outbreaks of surrealism, liminal imagism, anfractuous thalassic personism, bio-associative cultural ethicism, and other unnamed thoracic and often spontaneous poetic forms ready to handle bonanzas of disparity and scrupulous estates on the field of integration.

Caliban's titanium nerve has conspired with recusant precincts of some of the more heathen philosophy at the lip of the volcanic unconscious, where Ornette Coleman's explorations have led to slipstreams of autodidactism, or to footsteps of WB Yeats who in 1917, four days after he married, discovered his wife transcribing language given to her by spirits not part of the material world. In his introduction to "A Packet for Ezra Pound," he describes the encounter:

"What came in disjointed sentences, in almost illegible writing, was so exciting, sometimes so profound, that I persuaded her to give an hour or two day after day to the unknown writer, and after some half-dozen such hours offered to spend what remained of life explaining and

piecing together those scattered sentences. 'No,' was the answer, 'we have come to give you metaphors for poetry.'"

If a poet today felt he or she had come across imagery or subject matter by communing through a psychic portal, would discussing the process help earn the trust of present-day editors sorting through "The New Yorker," say, slush piles? Would it win the sympathies of judges serving on a fellowship granting council? Would the resulting non-autobiographical spirit-whispered writings hold the attention of literary editors long enough for their roses and towers to establish the less-usual grounds on which their meanings stand, therefore their value? With "kayak" (from sometime in the '60s to the mid-'80s), as with Caliban (over the last 4 decades or so), one knew that collaborating with spirits or traveling through space with Ornette Coleman would never set off regulatory alarms, that in fact such a thing might be received as a sign of an authentic artistic experience in which the writer has opened the door to subliminal influences and associative content of less-known or unknown origins.

If surrealism and its nameless cousins have purposes beyond expression, they don't aim at autobiographically corralled moments of insight in cultural anthropology, but on receivership of the reader who can be given an experience resonant with symbolism, like coming across archaic petroglyphs on a wall in the city, in language that explores perspective and communicates multiply while the music of its speaking resonates in sound and thought, rhythm and feeling. Indeed, beyond expression, the purpose of surrealism could be considered "integration," understanding interconnections, perceiving qualities from within another quality, pursuing a widened transtemporal scope, maybe it is, with added perspective—now that many places have been crushed together in trash compactors, with the future placed on the poker table waiting for a one-eyed jack—now with the executive function playing Formica fiddle in reports of Wernicke's area to Broca's before sundown—with old-fashioned distraction having a heyday practicing refined consent on numbers who lack bulwark teams of attorney, but who must depend on forces greater than themselves such as "Caliban," especially when

confronted with cases of modern dumbnation capable of waiting motionless for mushrooms to crown in the dew-drunk morning, when one must take words as arms against the feedlot sea.

Thank you, Lawrence Smith, for your unretiring governorship of “Caliban’s” explosion engine cylinders and linkage, for the unburdened manner of your kayaking alongside Hitchcock and Ernst, for what has transpired from your release of the marvelous and grievous aurora borealis of surrender after what must have been great numbers of excursions fishing through the slush for live ones, to pitch them further out in the sea. You made “Caliban” a work of art focused on the art itself, leaving just one question: would “Caliban” happen to have an offspring (the way “kayak” did) or possibly a close cousin or two?

STEPHANIE DICKINSON:

1

I wake in a cave, a horseshoe bat clinging to the stone stalactites among the dreamers, whose wings have sharp claws and soft fur. Flying out to feed, the vibrating air begins talking to me and the others, hundreds of us, and when the net strikes we fight for our freedom in a frantic rain of blood and urine. Let us be in our caves with our thousand-year-old viruses locked like empires inside us. The Mayans were flourishing then. The Tang eunuchs stealing a throne.

2

I begin to explore the digital flora and fauna. The lovely vegetables—cabbage, cucumbers, white radishes, beets, chard. The fruits—green plums, passion fruit, mangos, pears. Then the more unusual fruits—the eviscerated hens hanging by their stretched necks. Chicken heads with bright eyes afloat in ponds of gizzards and grit bags. Animals in cages awaiting the decapitation, the strangling, the bludgeoning. John the Baptist. Salome dancing in fish scales. Far from its daylight habit of burrowing into the earth, the pangolin, nocturnal and rolled into its scaly ball, will die once and the meal eaten of its stringy dark flesh (so pungent smelling as it cooks, like civet some claim) will burn down the world.

3

Once the deeper sleep becomes the pattern so do the imaginings. I straighten the fragments out and give them shape. The air trembles with a terrified silence.

4

It is buoyant floating on the breath of one then another, it can break into your body's house, take the jewel of your heart and its beating. The thing has plundered, feasted, gone mad in your lungs, your kidneys and now it wants your esophagus. Look into the mirror and something else looks back. You will see people not there. Bodies without heads playing chess, legs running without bodies. You're staggering, your torso shrouded, it will feed your mouth the black grape of your own eye.

5

I enter the tiger, Nadia, lovelier on the inside than on the outside. Her 3-inch canines for severing necks of wild boar. That meat she's never tasted. She is a killer like me, who has never known the hunt. The blades of her back teeth made for pulsing flesh. Musk deer they pick clean—vertebrae, spine, and ribs stripped and then they eat the eyes. But I go deeper, into the brain and lungs, into the cell. I give Nadia antelopes, their long spiral-horns white as salt. I am mercurial, unknowable. O, puzzle over me.

JOHN BRADLEY:

Should you see an arm sticking out of the sky:

- a.) In the beginning, hunger created everything, and everything was besotted with hunger.
- b.) Multiplied by the weight of your forehead and the force of your ass.
- c.) The distance from your left nipple to Andrew Jackson's navel is not as great as the distance from your right nipple to the moon.

- d.) I was born in a poem by Tu Fu.
- e.) The light emitted by a vowel stuck between two teeth.
- f.) Panic a disease caused and cured by the sound of a hammer striking a river.
- g.) Check to see if you're missing an eyebrow. Or growing a gill in the side of your neck.
- h.) See "A Compendium of the Various Ailments of the Sky," p. 2301, footnote to the third footnote.
- i.) Flee to the underground city of Panera, below the Sahara Desert, and sleep soft in your lung.
- j.) In the end, hunger consumes everything, and everything comes to salt hunger.

DALE HOUSTMAN:

We Swim in Mind

We swim in mind and it will not sustain our weight. A filthy path leads away from the river through woods to a stone house whose chimney is aflame.

Or no...

It is a woman in a red shirt escaping a tower. Between the river (one can scarcely hear it from here) and the house not one blade of grass that does not burst into a small flame as you pass.

Or no...

It is a woman in a red dress escaping the grave.

Consciousness fits many narratives.

The mind contains the body. All else is the “great outdoors.”

The mind grows a plant outside appreciation, a flower liable only to anticipation.

The mind is a volatile leaf extensive beneath the snow.

A steady mind is least exhausted amongst many trees.

A nervous mind seeks the artificial lights of hotels, that monotony of bright drapes, a thousand candles near the bed, a distant forest fire.

Trees remove everything from consciousness except for consciousness itself.

Or no...

KAREN GARTHE:

Carrying A Tune

Sheltering in place in NY for as long as we have, novel at first, became excruciating with time. There have been phases of emotional hardship like phases of the moon. I live alone and for me, a contemplative, sort of studious solitude is normal. But I'm no hermit or recluse and my solitude is always relieved by seeing friends a lot, by just walking around New York City *in crowd*. When novelty wore off, when my grasp of obedience and reasonable courage let go—my skin started to crawl and I ached so strangely. This much physical isolation was frightening. I felt a kind of panic and wondered how I'd get through this without becoming, well, maimed in some unquantifiable way. No amount of zooming brilliance helped—and there has been plenty of that. But necessity mothers invention and I came to understand that living life and community online demands both imagination and surrender. I surrendered as best I could. Imagination has never been a problem.

One late night I fell asleep in my living room. I woke up with a start in total silence and darkness (except for the permanent starship control panel of fluorescing green computer lights, the TV's red eye, the cable box's blue one, the digital clock, in the no true darkness kind of night we live in). Jolted awake I said out loud to the room and whichever technology listens: OH, MY GOD as I took in my own bottomless solitude and the catastrophic pain we're all swimming in. There's a hospital around the corner. Day and night sirens pierced breakfasts, naps, books, podcasts, Netflix binges, homespun workouts, addictive puzzling, nightmares and dreams.

Walking to the post office one afternoon, there were two massive refrigerator trucks in the hospital's Emergency Room driveway, a big FEMA tent out back. At the PO we waited 6 ft apart, out the door and around the block. When I got to a window, the clerk was fiddling with something instead of acknowledging me and believe me, I was mighty annoyed—but then she turned around and put her gloved hand flat against the window...she'd been drawing little happy faces on each finger, a big smiley face on her palm. Just remembering it makes me cry.

I took long walks through Astoria neighborhoods I'd never seen before. Row houses were rhapsodic with blooming in meager allotments of yard; first, every color of rose climbing everywhere, then dense carpets of tulips, then waving purple, yellow or violet flags, then peonies—behind cyclone fences. I fell in love with these neighborhoods (some even have alleys. . .). They are precious and dear, especially knowing that if things roll out like they have for the last decade or more (will it stop now??), their days of blossoming homey existence are numbered. Big money will raze them to the ground, gouge out the earth and hoist yet another tricked-out hunk of unaffordable housing preposterously named Versailles or Windsor Court.

Throughout, I've done my own shopping, made my own forays to the pharmacy, etc. But disturbingly, in the very same breath as being lonely for people, I give them wide berth, weave away from them on the street. If somebody isn't wearing a mask, I am furious. Once, crossing the street I could see a cluster of four or five people on the next corner, adults and children—NONE with masks on, so I crossed over both wary and indignant. A woman pacing back and forth seemed to be crying

and as I got closer, I saw they were all looking up at the second-floor window of an apartment building. I understood that this was a family saying hello to a quarantined grandfather who said from the window “I love you,” and the kids, the mother and father separately and in unison called up “I love you, too, grandpa.”

I made peace with isolation only when I started to sing. I didn't *decide* to, it just happened. Randomly, I break into song, usually Standards, something like “All the Things You Are,” or “Midnight Sun,” “My One and Only Love.” If I remember all the words, I'll sing them. If not, I'll just carry the tune. It seems that even more than *listening* to music which is sublime enough, singing yourself, singing right there in your own body, moves the molecules and soothes the soul. You're not *thinking* anymore, not worrying and fretting, but lifted supernaturally in a way that feels a lot like grace. My favorite, my default is the old Frank Loesser tune “On a Slow Boat to China: *Out on the briny/with a moon big and shiny/melting your heart of stone*. I mean, really, lyrics don't get any better than that.

DIETER WESLOWSKI:

I look up, there are the stars, there just the same, desolation, and the the angels below who do not know they're angels—

And Sarina will die—

And I will die, and you will die, and we all will die, and even the stars will fade out one after another in time.

Desolation Angels

—Jack Kerouac

DAN RAPHAEL:

what if everything I see out my windows would start folding my way, like a 3 dimensional paper-cut, would the schoolyard between me and the cars houses trees and all be cushion enough? All I have is more questions, there's so much that probably won't, and just enough you never know, to have no solace, maybe when an out of the blue hankering, some remembered flavor in the breeze, rubbing my eyes and no that couldn't be still here.

could roll like a tv weather person improvising between last week and next, having no responsibility but to encourage viewers to spend money either stocking up or buying equipment to recreate with, but I'm not on the market, of the market, there's submarkets for all of us—the three legged, the compass challenged, those who need to free every clock from its prison, none of the above or all of the below, the ways of sides, aglance akimbo asymptotic asphodelicatessen—so few sounds can take us so many places but only a fraction of every.

I want spontane to be recognized as a verb, as in I just did this, which doesn't mean totally unguided whatever the booster rockets peeling back so we can escape velocity and get into orbit which is tethered speed, staying in touch but being so out there, vulnerable and radiant, you the payload, the great concentration of expense, care and triple redundancy except for the never experienced before, spatio incognito, chrono incognito

and what's left behind, throbbing ahead, a hibernation depending not on the sun but a comet or conjunction of planets, venus as far from mars as possible. All the asteroids of whatever used to be between saturn and jupiter never losing the taste for anti-gravitational revenge, take em all down, so much food the sun's gotta burst or go out the back door to spew.

middle of the year, end of some era or another (era are ear), like the four years no one made brown clothes. like yeah we'll miss their fish sandwiches but eventually learn to swim, backwards at first, drinking with what's only supposed to go the other way, like a newborn who won't stop talking from day 1 and eventually learns silence, its alphabet, scales and topography, a book so large and light you wonder why til' you open it and are blinded by all that's flying away, what they smell like, how their turbulence reminds my exposed flesh, hair and aura of what they didn't know they knew.

IVAN ARGÜELLES:

Footnote to the Mahabharata

heard it all the nonsense the ruses idioms dialects
distortions of sound plangent echoes synonyms of grief
for the sorrowing who live in southland of the dead
shadow and hieroglyph cloud and thunder blotted
lamps blackened sun said it all out loud or dreaming
in stone or wafer thin blood-lines in atmospheres run
afoul of the gods whose counterfeit breaths and faked
dalliances sounded the drum shook the sistra blew
the mighty sea-conch felled trees on invisible mountains
generated lie after lie about the human condition would
not relent even in poetry to mitigate the tempest hush
the seas in their night-dramas evolving vowel and
pitch and the distances too eloquence and diaphragm
of punctuation stellar miasma and tragic declamation
high-school yearbooks burnt in the vicinity of the ear
libraries and mausoleums each interred in the small
inch of soil on the other side of noon remembered only
partially the ways of the hour the discourse of nymph
and reason the debate between soul and corpse always
the heights to contend and the plazas and vacant lots
automobile graveyards and shipwrecks not the least
the children spooling their kites long afternoons in
the imitation of Elysium prams and strollers and bikes
rusting in forty day rains and signs of the afterlife and
clepsydras and Egyptian fortune-tellers and *vedic* thoughts
about the triangle revolutions in mind and dialysis and
trumpet-vines and the whole verbiage about salvation
minutes spent in the organ-grinder's circle ambition and
rebirth the numismatic intent of history the fierce and
forced clerks who govern the state and penchants for war
and spear and diastole and chips inserted in the brain will
we ever and what else is new centuries after fate has run its

course distilling language on pedestals of broken bone and
trumpeting a hollow victory elephants running amok
in the carnage of the Mahabharata reduced to a list of
the names of ten thousand and eleven maharajas and
who will ever say that memory has a role in this lengthy
rigamarole alphanumeric passions to overcome heat and
the woman who used a perfume called opium and hotels
where finally the encumbered of heart come to die

ELIZABETH ROBINSON:

I am probably way too earnest, but my motto is that perseverance is everything. More times than I can count I've been told that something I was aiming toward would never happen. This is an unwise thing to say to me.

D. E. STEWARD:

In isolation we seem to become doleful socialists

Petulant about time's details and its limits

In this shut-down instability

Closed off

Within

The jagged interludes

Missing things like public music and *el territorio Libro* of baseball

Yet months into the lack, apparently there are many newly unimportant things

Stunned innocents becoming simplistic cynics cruise-controlled toward
an onramp of unimaginable dilemmas
As far up the road as we make it

Klutzy fumbling around now in the shell game of Trumpismo tactics
Not knowing for what, for how much, for how long

SUSAN KAY ANDERSON:

Flash in The Pan

The miners sat at the table.
Long legs of the wolf. Same stare.
Give my regrets to the airport.
See all my friends. The curious buildings.
Preserved as Nome. The place
with no name. Give my regards to
Front Street. To my kith and kin.
The musk ox is a small buffalo.
The one that got away. But there
are others. See them? With the others.

TERRY HAUPTMAN:

Thank you for your generous winds of inspiration through your visionary
years editing Caliban. It has been an honor to contribute and be a part
of this resonant community.

Shelter in Place 2

“Transformational Emergency”

Joy Harjo

“ In the dark times
Will there be singing?
Yes, there will be singing

About the dark times.”

Bertolt Brecht

Fear lives in our spirit-house
That lives inside us
Turns us inwards
Towards ourselves
To greet the day.

Children eat dirt-candy
As the new moon
Shelters in place.

What will become of us
Singing psalms
In the winds of fate?
Hidden in seclusion
Listening in the mineral dark
To the earth's
Global burial rites

Listening to
My mother's green humming
From her grave today,
Her birthday.

Who are we
Talking to ourselves
In the blue clay of consciousness,
Our soul-breaths
Surrounded by sickness and fear?

We bathe ourselves,
Cut our hair,
Sing to the winds and sky.

Joy lives in our spirit-house
That lives inside us,
Even in the dark times.
We sip our coffee,
Joy will never die,
There will be singing,
Even in the dark times.

LEIGH HERRICK:

- Being
- A proposition of Yes
- Yes of
- Yes-breath
- Yes-move
- A verb of Yes
- To Yes
- Yes-turning page
- Am
- Is
- Of Yes-ness
- Of Flourishing
- Earthen
- Re/Membering

BOB HEMAN:

What the dream means is the experience that it leaves you with. Why should a poem be any different?

GEORGE KALAMARAS:

Dear Caliban,

What can I say except what I can say? There was a young poet, lost among the literary ruins. Thirty-three years ago. Shipwrecked, beestung by storms. Suddenly washed ashore.

*

Oh, Calvaluna! Moon-calf! Freckle me this, all the way from your mother's womb in Algiers.

*

There is a fish history of the wrist. Combined with ribs of sleep, the bodies of Midwest barns lift and fall through my breathing.

*

George Seferis called him *Giorgos*. George Faludy called him *György*. César Vallejo referred to him simply as *Hey You!*

*

Listen to my history and my prayer:

*I brought the vulture blankets but forgot to wring them free of sand fleas.
I enchanted one lung just to see if I could breathe with greater ease.*

*

And you let me, Larry. Allowing for that. This breathing that breathes us almost whole. That takes us, day by day, further into the firmament of dissolve.

*

How can I thank you, *bless you*, gift you smallpox and its cure? How can I climb the creeper vine you allowed us to swallow? Then follow? What can I say except what I *can* say?

*

And I *can*, in part, because of these thirty-three years in the waking. In the drift and lift of seafoam near the roaring shore.

*

Dear Larry. Dear *dust storm from Algiers*. Dear *crib of corn the raccoons scuttle through each midnight seam*. Dear *immeasurable moment of dawn nesting motionless on the inner eye*. In *folds of the inner ear*.

*

So in the *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), André Breton proclaimed, *Let us not mince words: the marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful*.

*

There are no words. Except the. Word. We eat and. Spit back out into. And through what might. Make us. What might make us *makes* us. In the image of. Dear Divine Dissolve.

*

And the yogi, merging with the Cosmos, chanted, *Come to me. Breathe me. Hold my dissolve.*

*

There are visions. Visionaries. And there are moments we believe, even amidst the lilt of literary *this*, of aching *that*.

*

And what *is* this *aching*? What is the stirring stirrup of the soul? In “The Theory and Function of the *Duende*,” Lorca tells us that the *duende* “burns the blood like powdered glass.” And he quotes an old guitarist master who says, “The *duende* is not in the throat; the *duende* surges up through the soles of the feet.”

*

Dear Larry. Dear Caliban. You have given me an island, a piece of land, on which *to swim*. Free of anchors and tempests and gnarling teeth. A piece of dry land into which I can sink. Further into the rainforests of the heart. Through which I can rise and fall. A place to stand and allow the *surge* of the world to rise up *through the soles of the feet*!

*

I plant myself with gratitude in that ground—even now, as we move forward. Plant myself in the wasp nests you invited. In the crushed bones of bees. In the milk of their constant making. Into the sound of that hive.

*

There are octopus thickets, and there are sea-deeps of bloom.

*

Let us not mince words: the marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful.

*

Surrealism, Miltos Sahtouris said, freed me from many things.

*

Surrealism, Sahtouris repeated, freed me from many things.

*

Dear Larry. Dear thank-you note inscribed inside the cave-wall body of Caliban. Dear dust storm from Algiers. Dear raccoon scratch in the dark. Dear moment of dawn nesting motionless on the fiercely faithful fluids of the inner eye. In the fertile folds of what we might hear. And in that hearing, speak.

TIM KAHL:

It is time for Caliban to go to sleep. But this 4th of July he is rudely awakened by a myriad of fireworks going off across the skyline of the city—Chicago, San Francisco, it doesn't matter. Scanning the phone along the horizon records many private symphonies of explosions. Each site is an isolated celebration of what it means to be American. The only thing that binds them all together is that at each site something is being blown up. But there is something in the slow burn and the quick release of chemical energy that is appealing. Secretly, volatility is entertaining. It's like watching hours and hours of riot footage condensed into a millisecond. There is no mind controlling the outburst. Good. Let's keep things stupid. Meanwhile the monument to Caliban in the town square is weeping. In the global economy one looks for openings to exploit others, not ideals to lift them up, not trickster dreams to interrupt the rhythms of commerce. All those categorical imperatives of Kant that fed unrest in the past have gone the way of the wheat

cent. The followers of the Caliban cult have been caught cutting off catalytic converters in the middle of the night to support their habits. They sought a quick way out, but they made a mistake. There isn't a cheat book for the video game of life. But there are six new apps that let you cancel the past. It has too much gray in it. The color adjustments have been carefully calibrated to coincide with the only known photos of disappeared beasts gone missing in the wild. Like Caliban. They return to the dam and keep vigil with Setebos. In his hours of langour and worship he invokes his own monument to stand between the one of the Neanderthal and the heroic fruitpicker. Where are all the statues depicting the knife sharpeners, the bird callers, the bread makers, the participants in the three-legged race, the beachcombers, the water diviners, the tooth-pullers, the frog catchers, people who lie across roads and just say no, the shade builders, the men who fetch firewood, the soup sellers, the beaded dancers, those who take inventory of the bees, the mixers of paint, the window washers, the reciters of alphabets, the weight loss enthusiasts, the floral arrangers, the masked harriers, the women who sew flags together, the rum runners, the fire artists, the naked defilers? Whose reason prevents these forms from rising up from a plinth? Caliban muses on his days ahead in front of the screen. Just before he passes into slumber again he imagines at the bottom of his pedestal it will read *I shall be pinched to death*.

O brave new world that has such people in it.

Exeunt.

DENVER BUTSON:

Before this pandemic, this lockdown, this quarantine, this social distancing, this shelter-in-place. Before the nothing but sirens in the soggy spring sky, sirens and when no sirens, a mockingbird imitating sirens. Before the barely any masks, the more masks, the almost everybody in masks, and then the sudden defiant disappearance of masks. Before the tractor trailers started appearing beside hospitals, before the wooden ramps, before the tarps or heavy curtains blocking what was going up

those ramps and into those trucks. Before we started calling them *corpse trucks* and we saw them there beside the decontamination tents and the extra-bed tents outside every hospital, idling, their refrigeration units humming around the clock, and before we walked past them knowing the bodies were stacked up inside, unvisited by relatives in their final moments, having died alone, maybe with a Skype or FaceTime call hours before, but probably not. Before the 7 o'clock cheers, a few neighbors venturing out and clapping and then more and then almost the whole block, except for the science-deniers across the street who never stopped their stoop gatherings and thought all this was no worse than the flu. Before the 7 o'clock cheers went from a few of us clapping to the whole city with pots and pans, prayer bells, drums, popcorn cans, washboards, harmonicas, accordions, horns, and the whooping and singing, cheering and yelling. Before the corpse trucks moved from the hospitals to the funeral homes because the curve was flattened but there were still bodies, still bodies.

Before we were finally in the streets, in numbers so great that we could no longer be ignored, unlike the relative calm of our weekend marches from before when we had precious little time off from our endless working, just enough to make some noise that quieted down again come Monday morning. Before these every single day and every single night marches and protests, and statue-toppling, and occupying. Before we, as a people, finally said *Enough!* to what had been going on 400 years too long and what had become our everyday news of police state, police killing, police feeding the beast of for-profit prisons making those who benefited by them richer and everyone else poorer, generations of black people scared of the very people who were supposed to be protecting them. Before hundreds of thousands said *enough!* together and said it everyday and every night in every town and every city, despite the pandemic, the lockdown, the quarantine. Or perhaps because of it. Finally.

Before all this, when *Pandemic* was the name of an interactive board game my wife and daughter and I played a few times, working together not against each other to contain a virus that started somewhere else,

uniting disease centers, healthcare workers, experts, politicians, and people to beat this virus before thousands died and societies crumbled. The game calls for a collective response to the singular enemy. Everyone has to work together to defeat the virus. Before that game became something we will never play again. Before we stopped shaking hands, stopped having an afternoon coffee at the corner cafe, before my daughter stopped being able to kiss her boyfriend and instead spent evenings “with” him watching a movie online “together,” before we stopped walking up to Antonio’s restaurant near the Brooklyn Bridge Sunday nights, if we could, and hugged Tony and hugged the waiters and the others we knew only from the restaurant and waited for Tony to come around and kiss our foreheads and step back and bow when we told him how amazing his pasta was, how nobody grills fish like him and ate in the deafening buzz of his restaurant without a sign, but with lines out the door every night. Before.

Before all this, I realized that at some point my life was strung along and scripted by constant distraction—mostly coming from the phone or the computer or the incessant scream for attention from words and numbers on a screen. I had the privilege, before, to seek solitude and silence, to try to find singularity in a daily existence of news avalanche, email ambush, the brain constantly ransacked of calm by bells and whistles, and the electronic cattle call of necessary response. I found that singularity, or made it by so many means. I decided to take the control of my daily life out of the hands of others and to force myself to be singular—walking every day, sitting by water every day, finding a moment to put my face to the sun if only for a moment every day. I read only books I found on the street (an easy thing to do in a neighborhood of writers and publishers, and readers), reading each novel in a singular location—one book for the sauna, one book for a certain bench by the East River, one book next to the bed. I found it by watching movies in “slow motion”—Antonioni’s *The Passenger* for instance a few minutes at a time every night until I finished it weeks later, fully immersed in it the whole way through, not devouring it in a binge like a netflix series, but savoring it a bite at a time, while my wife finished her work and I went to join Jack Nicholson and Maria Schneider where we left off the night

before in the endless running away from a problem that started as a tiny temptation to shed an old existence. I forced myself to consciously defy the scattershot of contemporary day-to-day. I vowed to do one thing at a time, and just that one thing, no distractions, no checking email every few minutes, no subjecting myself to news throughout the day. I created a recipe for living in a city in the 21st Century and not being a slave to constant distraction. And I had a partner in all this—the scarecrow who came to me in a poem almost ten years before, who stood still as the world went on around him, whose daily witness of the farm, his own thoughts, the bridge and the sky above the bridge, became an ideal I was seeking. Better to be him I thought, longing and isolated maybe but aware of the changing light, able to tell time from what scent comes on the wings of a breeze...better him than a crooked-neck, locked-eyed, flying-thumbed passenger who never sees anything beyond the barrage of text and images on what Leonard Cohen pre-named that *hopeless little screen*. It was a constant work, I was a constant work-in-progress, willing myself to not be enslaved by the kaleidoscope of information and facts and texts and emails that never settled, never stopped, never united, but simply churned and demanded attention.

That was before the pandemic. The isolation. The lockdown. The quarantine. Before Vinny, the fisherman who supplied Antonio's restaurant with the best line-caught Montauk bass, his wife always in the truck as he brought these fish, each as long as his tan fisherman arms into the restaurant, died alone in a nursing home, separate from her, the person he was only separate from when out on the water pulling in those fish. And then Randy from the bar, whose name plaque is still there at his spot, where he joked about his belly and his drinking, and told us about seeing Hendrix after he got back from Vietnam. And then other friends got it and fought it off—Tony and his wife even (how strange after being fed by Tony for twenty plus years to drop off jars of lentils and beans and homemade bread on his stoop and text him “food on your stoop ... see you soon”) and Garnette in Charlottesville who seems to be in a cycle of still fighting it off, and others. Before it was impossible to take my eyes off the numbers of infected, the number of dead, the failure of our “leaders” to respond, the divisively willful ignorance of

our “President.” Aside from the ones of us staying inside and wearing masks, and staying 6 feet away from one another, it didn’t seem like we were all working together like my family did when we played the game. And, the ordeal of gathering and cleaning and cooking anything that came, and every evening cheering, even after the numbers went down, and we seemed to be cheering each other for getting through this or trying to. 7 o’ clock every day was one of the few markers of time at all. I had to say goodbye to singularity and focus, to say goodbye to not being caught in the crossfire of constant information and memes and posts, etc. My shaggy hair and what my wife calls my “John Brown” beard mark the time more than any calendar or clock.

There is a before and there is an after. Someday there will be an after. We hope. *Pandemic*, the game, ends, when all the players realize they have to work together. It can take hours. The virus is defeated by the focused bringing together of everyone with a singular goal—to not give in to the temptation of relaxing until the virus is gone. I was on my way to defeating the virulent attacks of the everything-all-at-once noise, by going inside, by breathing, by shaping my daily response to all the attempts of contemporary culture (which is really just a circus to keep us quiet and distracted and buying and buying, let’s be honest). After all this—if there is an after (the Rupert Murdoch-bamboozled and the otherwise “woke” crowds at the beaches and in the bars don’t seem to want us to have an after because they think we are already there). In the business’s and governments haste to put this behind us, and get “back to normal,” cajoling those among us who are in denial to be even more so and those just losing their minds from the solitude and isolation to think they can party again, we are catapulting ourselves right back to where we were, far from the after.

One day, when this is all over I hope to find the singularity I was cultivating before all this, again—to do one thing at a time, to breathe my way through each moment, to own my own silence (like the scarecrow in my poems) . No evangelist, I won’t preach the healing power of this, but I will hope that maybe the isolation that brought us as a people to say *Enough!* to injustice will bring us to say STOP to the control over

our lives that those intent on keeping us controlled, use to keep us from staking our own claims, and to keep buying. There is a way to defeat viruses, but it doesn't come from pretending that they don't exist, or that they will one day simply magically disappear. Whole hours and days disappear in the clutter. Whole people and ways of life disappear in the cluttered response of those not working together.

I hope there is such an after. But before the after, we have to find our way through the right now with singular focus and a collective response.

In the meantime, Ennio Morricone has died, Larry Smith is publishing this last issue of *caliban online*, the building next to the little natural grocery where I buy over half the produce and dry goods for the constant cooking collapsed one balmy five o'clock from neglect and my store is closed possibly for good. Ennio Morricone, caliban, the healthfood store. Three constants in my life for decades. I will mourn them all. I will take some moments to mourn them today, quietly and singularly, with no distractions, except for those sirens out there, which seem to be becoming disturbingly more frequent again.

**GOODNIGHT
MRS. CALABASH,
WHEREVER YOU
ARE.**



