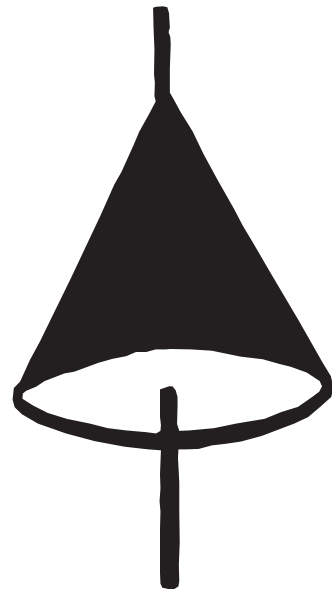


VOLT

THE
WAR
ISSUE



VOLT

A MAGAZINE OF THE ARTS

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The war is the first and only thing in the world today. The arts generally are not, nor is this writing a diversion from that for relief, a turning away. It *is* the war or part of it, merely a different sector of the field.

- William Carlos Williams

ON WAR

DENNIS PHILLIPS

*Oil barge pennant in
tidal wind. Forget it now
the swarm it causes*

1.

When they bombed us
we were sleeping or
we had just arrived at work.

It's hard to remember now
the horizon crackles with silence
and peace is upon us.

*

When they bombed us
the harbinger was a scarab
whose tiny voice was meant
to warn a city of millions.
We mean you no harm, it said.
Leave while you can, it said.

*

When they bomb us
the sounds don't reach through the earth
half a world away.
It's like nothing happened and in that
Civilization brings its gifts to us,
a rain that purifies
and blesses us.

WAR
WAR
WAR
WAR
WAR

2.

The air stills. Traffic thins then disappears.
Invisibly overhead, sound's ever-virgin membrane
is burst by the jets of empire
and the air returns to stillness.

Outside, before dawn, clouds backlit
by the waning gibbous moon,
the quiet makes sense as the frontier
of a new time.

*

Heaven: the midnight tree the
bower of stars the
nest of clouds the void
you try to push against expects no reply
"Sonic booms lattice the sky,"
the dark, impatient, battering sky.

3.

You were young once and full of something
that looked like pain or promise.

When someone said envy of the world
you bristled with impatience at the platitude.

You were young once and whole

and then you went to dinner and the bombs came.
After, what they found of you was elsewhere:
Words on paper in your hand, an empty shoe, a photo perhaps.

Officials in a carefully constructed language
speak directly into the oracle.
They hate us for our freedom, they say.

4.

When they bomb us what they call home
is a quiet world of orderly neighborhoods

where helicopters police the skies
protecting the orderly from distress,
where vast tracts of prison warehouses
hold perpetrators and those who may someday perpetrate.

*

When they bomb us we jump from the windows
hoping to cool the flames oblivious to our landings
hoping for Artemis to take us mid fall to Tauros
to tend her temple or at least to kill us
with her painless arrows or hoping
time will cease and history too
and that may be what it is anyway
but for the survivors.

*

When they bomb us we're eating out with our families
watching them bulldoze our houses
and since we are seated in a jetliner,
we run to the front and slit their throats
determined to die to thwart their plan
determined that anything is better
than the victory they imagine.

*

Weather moves in over the basin.
Winds exchange motion for drama.
The wall of mountain, moments ago clear in detail,
is now obscured in the buzz of a scarab's wings
that somehow recreates the clarity.
The slow pulse of a single engine
transits far above.
The drone of gardeners blowing leaves
reinforces a tranquility that spreads over us.
Our blessing to the world.

DONALD REVELL

TO THE MUSLIMS

With four years still to live,
My black dog leapt into the whitewater
At Indian Springs. He was overjoyed,
And joyfully he swam very hard
Against the current, back to me.

I hear what a pagan would have made:
The higher sound is like bees;
The lower, a dove alone
Alighting onto a rooftop corner.
All together it is whitewater.

All together it is one God, who never made a desert
And whose circus we are, all clowns swimming.

My dog was not afraid.
He lived four years more.

TO THE CHRISTIANS

I was one of a pod of dolphins
Living in the sky.
Mycenae. Glad to meet you.

We were not other-worldly,
No more than is a robin's nest
In the scrawny pines.
Babies open bright throats to the sun,
And out of the sun comes food.
It never fails.

Smile for me, Immortality.
You are a certainty.
Otherwise, there is no sky
And no explaining the life in it,
The lilac colors swimming there.

Mycenae. The robins sleep.
Sunshine warms their bellies until morning.

TO THE JEWS

I am the grass I dreamed I was.
Atalanta,
From inside a drop of dew
Comes the speed to outspeed you.
I have seen it.
Imagine something like a cloud, but like diamonds too.

The human eye began as grass.
In the first mornings,
Water raced out of the air
Becoming Christ, who is the speed of things.
I lay my head onto the ground.
Is my dog a god because he kills a rabbit?

I lay my head beside the broken animal.
Our eyes meet. The world belongs to us.

Donna de la Perrière

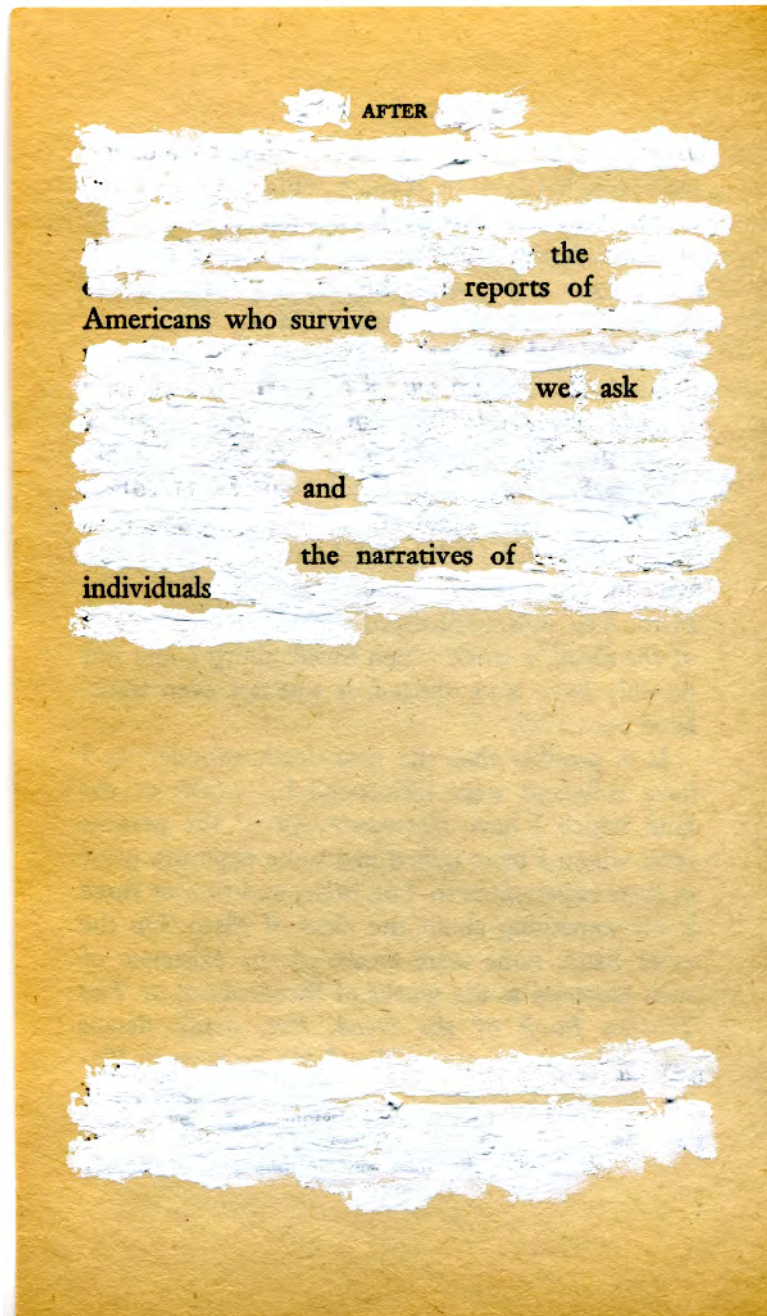
KILLER

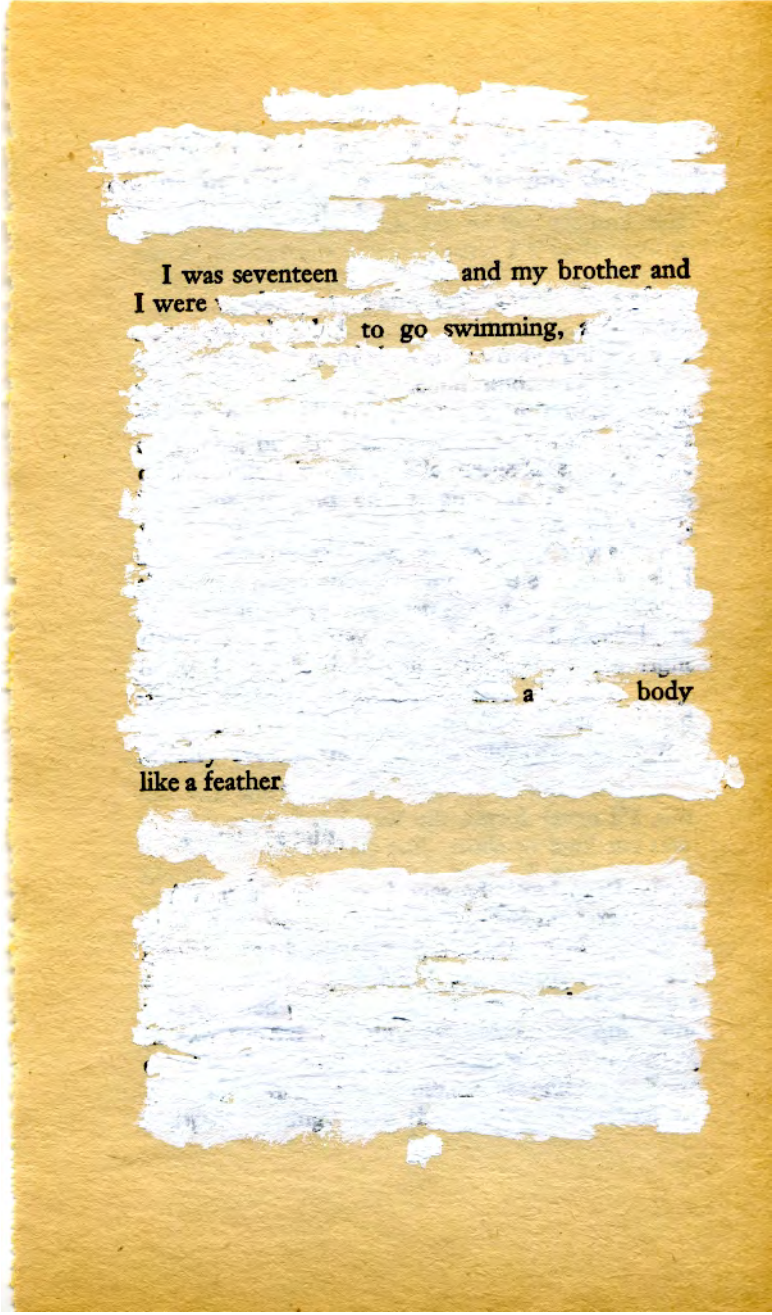
begins in the woods, always begins the same way: walking up a steep path, passing trees, rotten logs, underbrush. It appears dark, slightly rotten, cut off from the sun—the perspective different each time but always oblique, off-kilter. Sometimes we are the older daughter, sometimes the younger one; at other times we are an observer, there for some professional reason, walking along with them, writing it all down. Always, however, there is the impending danger and always already we know about the killer. He has hidden articles of clothing—a yellow-striped tee shirt, a woolen glove, broken sunglasses, a shoe, a paper mask, other things—in the darkness of the underbrush at the top of the hill. The clothing belongs to the child or the children he has killed; the daughters also know, at the same time, that the clothes belong to them, are part of them, must be carried with them: their clothes. They are going to find the clothes, they are going to hide them; they are also, walking up the hill, holding these same clothes in their arms. Farther on, up the hill, when the path opens out into a kudzu field, they bundle the clothes together and hide them in a gulley. The kudzu is thick and green there—lush, pulsingly bright. It whispers around the clothes; it hurts the eyes and seems dangerous. They will hide the clothes here so the killer won't see that they have them; if the killer sees that they have them, he will know what they know, know they know about him—about who really is the killer. They crouch there, wait, in the gulley near the top of the hill. They crouch there, listen for the long beginning.

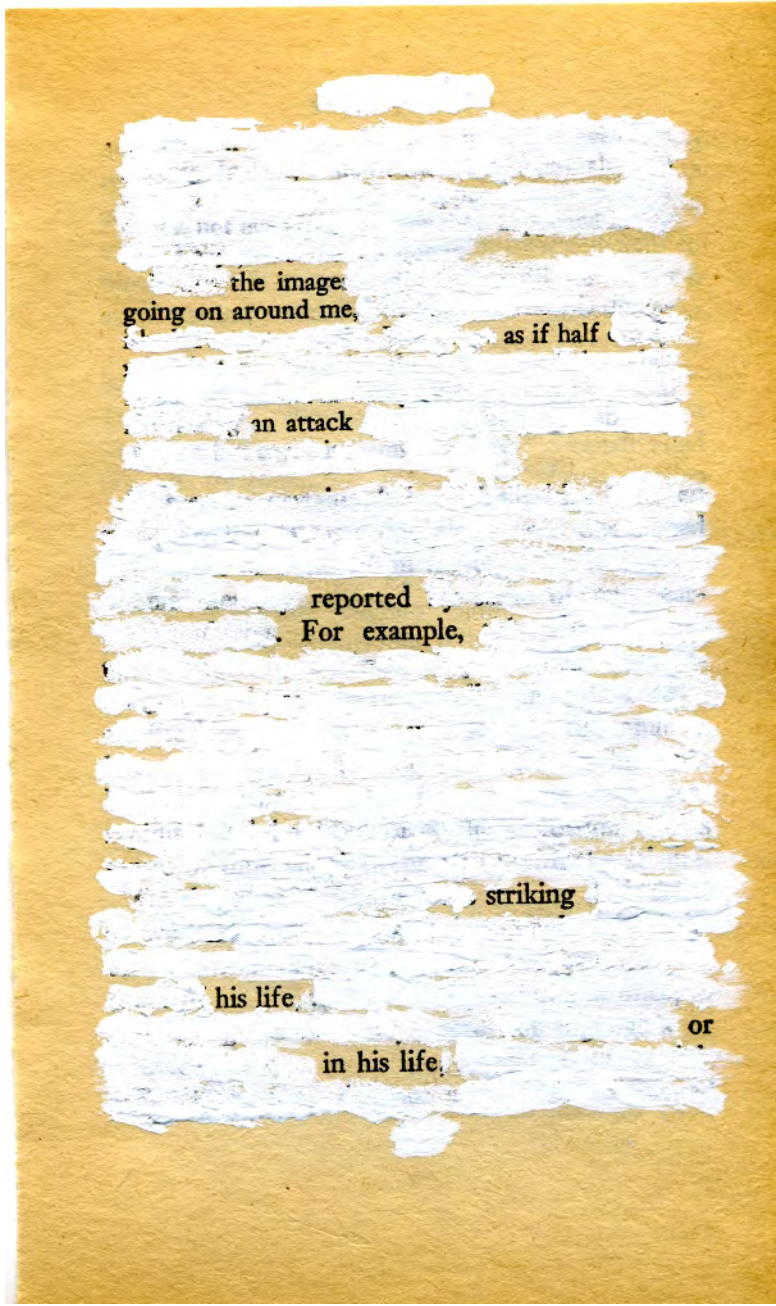
THE GREAT AND SECRET SHOW

the body has been remade
as the center point on a graph
pinning it exactly
in this place, at this hour
someone asks for a magnifying glass
someone removes the body's jewelry
someone remarks on the stillness,
the harsh white of its dress
they are careful not to touch it
(such a dazzling field)
they flop it onto a stretcher
everyone looks away
the afternoon of the same day:
a ceiling fan cools the room
the body's eyes are flat and milkshot
head propped on a wooden block
all afternoon they watch it, just here, just like this
waiting in the body's secret as if it were a shadow

JOSHUA BECKMAN







or to guide me

to welcome

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

I had the feeling that Bob was standing there, right next to me. I could see him

[redacted]

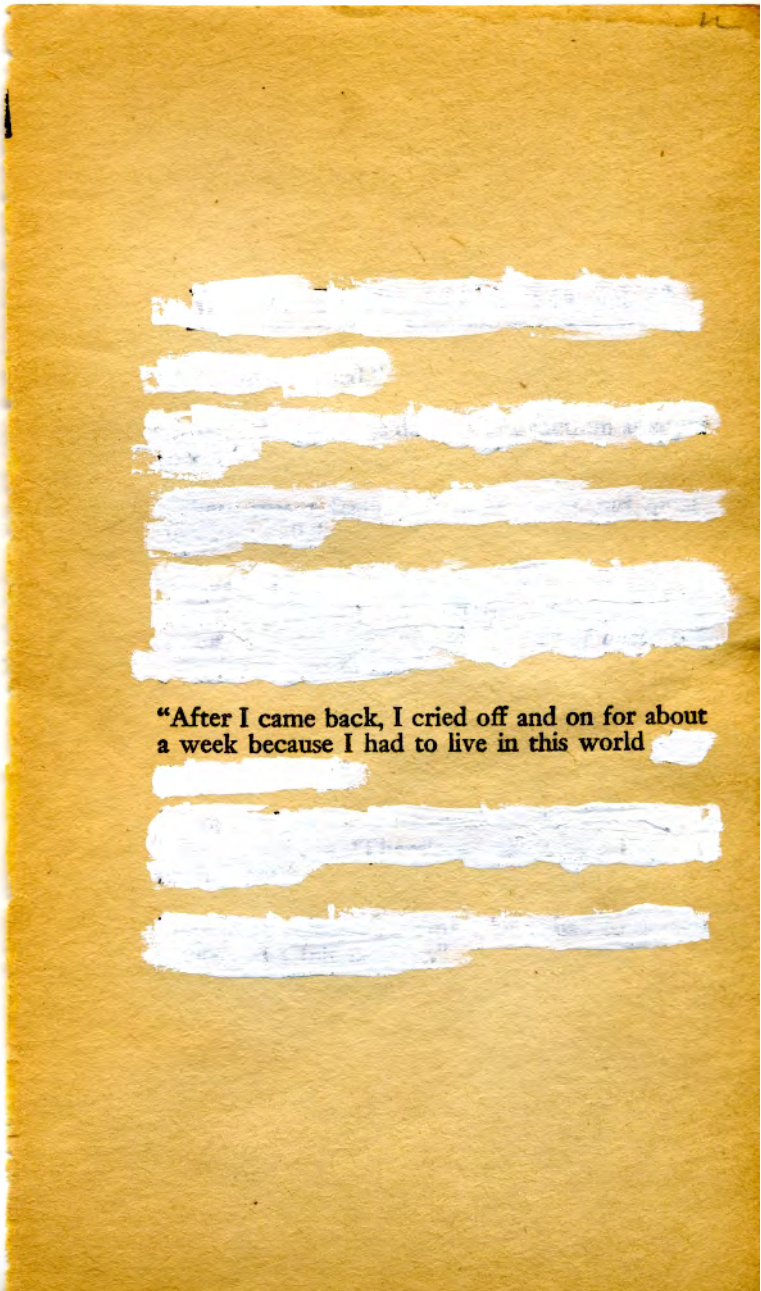
I didn't think about it being odd at the time because I didn't really need to

[redacted]

I would ask him again, "What's going on?" And then the day

It was almost as though he were waiting r

[redacted]



After I came back, I cried off and on for about
a week because I had to live in this world

worst thing is – of the flooded poor here, left corpses swimming
– some of these people (will) want to *stay* in Texas, as if they
already do will want, the mother
of ‘our’ president says who’s from Texas. panned have
been transported
from the flood crowd not on isobath each
enters by speaking it
Set at a certain place is or comes in only *there* at our sides so
blae sky our rubble on isobath float one drops any line; that is,
also in one that one line so there could be anything occurring
there ocean together (without it)
a split in being one and that’s being in language also words are
occur’s first ec
static two
Are things a being in ecstasy are first together – not caused there
one’s here split between day and night is a
one’s structure *for*/to be its it’s anti-structure being outside only
one no longer able to catch up to one separated a delay
for roses first on a roar

DeLay rose and

the flower (rose) yet it's action only outward not vertical or
there our soldiers do horizontal night raids

kick the doors down and line up the inhabi

tants battalions patrol a crowd of young Iraqis

taunt

ing them then a rocket-propelled grenade fired

from "insurgents"

sailing into the chest of the driver, Staff Sgt. Dale Panchot it
nearly cut him in half the death of Panchot changed

them for the

battalion wrapped the town

in barbed wire giving the men in it identity cards in

it's action that isn't split or

English only if you have one of these, you can come and go, if

you don't have one of these, you can't

before taking two men to the river (can't's)
action isn't outward or horizontal or

it was Venus, going away, striking her deconstructed

with conviction forehand
mazarine elands run

with Venus, not her sister, rising

playing sister Serena in US tennis Open action's
the gap between sleeping and not dreaming and dreaming and

waking

both run the plop of the air borne ball from them with Venus's

or from her deconstructed forehand (a concept) first

leading them 'our'

president's brother's just now, the middle, detached the poor
from their
having medical care

in a law that will lead to detaching them in this eve
rywhere in the country the poor when they're ill or dying will
be uncovered corpses swim
in the underwater city leading

Be uncovered

Contiguities

LEONARD SCHWARTZ & LIDA ABDUL

If we are able to believe in contradictory things
it is because those battles have passed into the language as truce.
If we are unable to believe in contradictory things the war rages on.
If we are able to believe in contradictory things
this means we can compartmentalize our bodies and our brains.
If we are unable to believe in contradictory things
this means we have achieved a unity of body and mind.
The warrior achieves a unity of body/mind by purposeful action.
The State of The Union is strong.
The State of Contradiction is strong.
The State of Non-Contradiction is strong.

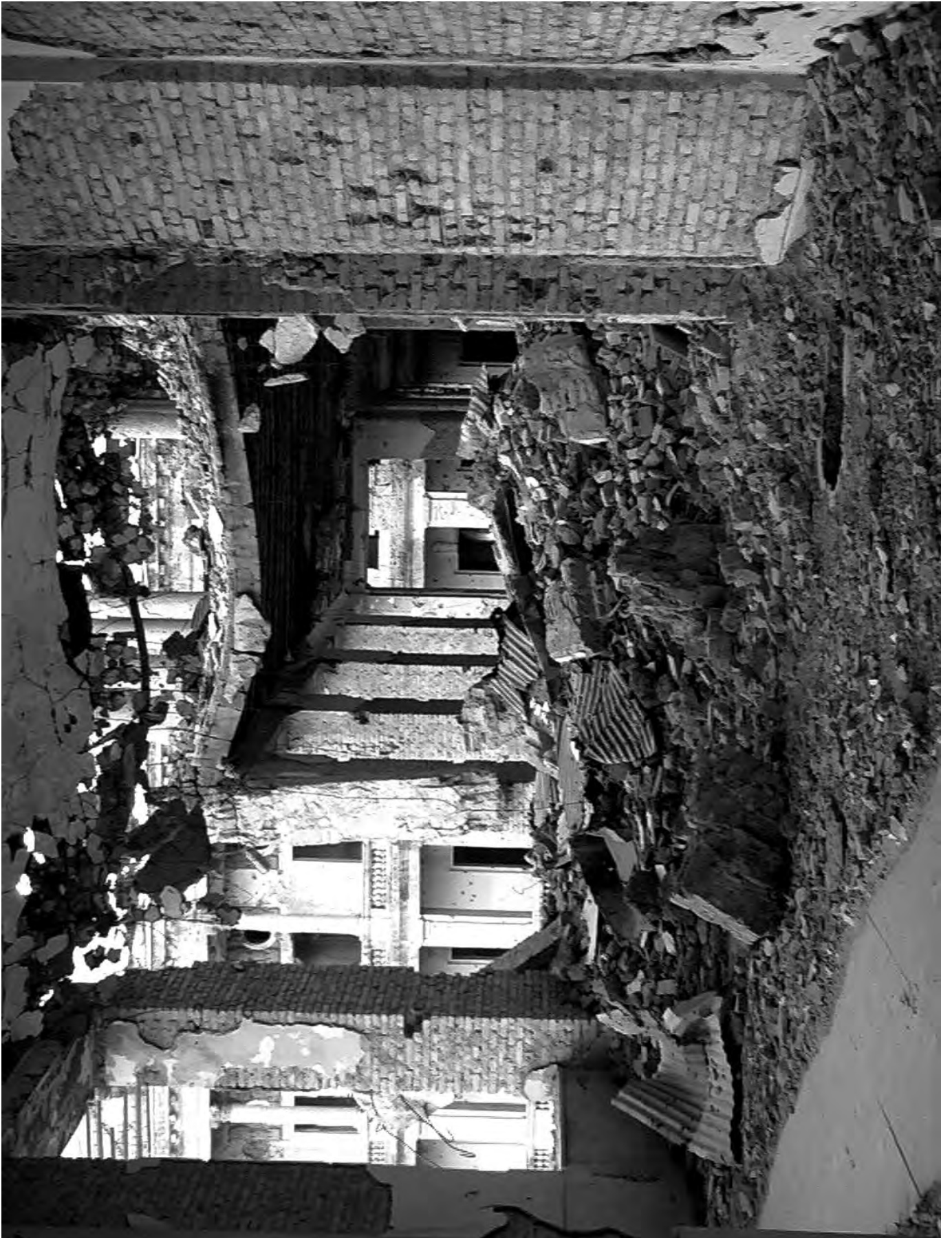
If we are able to believe in contradictory things
it is because violence is accepted as a legitimate political instrument.
If we are unable to believe in contradictory things
this means we will not see what will come to pass without us.
If we are able to believe in contradictory things
it means that the hives are filled with gun powder.
If we are unable to believe in contradictory things
it means the gun powder is filled with the nastiest bees.
The warrior achieves a unity of hive and powder.
The State of the Union is strong.
The State of Contradiction is strong.
The State of Non-Contradiction is strong.



If we are able to believe in contradictory things
The butter moon follows strict protocols of disclosure.
If we are unable to believe in contradictory things
the mitten-shaped leaves barely bother to wave.
If we are able to believe in contradictory things
all speakers need to shut up or step up or neither or both.
If we are unable to believe in contradictory things
a voice that decompresses a persons parts does the talking.
The State of the Union, the State of Contradiction
and the State of Non-Contradiction are all strong.

If we are able to believe in contradictory things that means
one hour in heaven, one in hell, and the rest of time in purgatory.
If we are unable to believe in contradictory things
the journey of interiority means a trip to the liquor store.
If we are able to believe in contradictory things I feel that
I am one of *them*, and share in the silence of being.
If we are unable to believe in contradictory things
I am flightless, an authentic grave, and never other.
The State of the Union is grave.
The State of Contradiction is grave.
The State of Non-Contradiction is grave.
Recurrence is a definite no-no.

#



All passengers ticketed for *Speculum Flight #4434*, bound for *Manhattan Mausoleum Municipal Airport*: that flight has already departed. The next scheduled *Speculum Flight* to *MMM*, flight #8116, is scheduled to leave in four minutes. Passengers from the late arriving *Speculum Flight #5*, originating in *Syntax*, those of you who were ticketed for flight #4434 to *Manhattan Mausoleum*, would do well to approach the *Speculum* ticket agent and ask for permission to board *Flight #8116*.

Speculum Airlines would like to announce that *Flight #4434*, bound for *MMM*, has already departed *No Root International Airport*. Passengers from late arriving *Speculum Flight #5*, originating in *Syntax* and changing here in *MMM*, are advised to plead with the ticket agent for a place on *Flight #8116*, also bound for *Manhattan Mausoleum*. This will be the last flight from *No Root* to *Manhattan Mausoleum* this evening. There will not be enough seats for everyone. Thank you for your patience.

*

You be the General.

Command Decisions.

What Is Your First Bombing Target?

Troops

A) *Fuel Supplies*

B) *Roads*

C) *Troops*

Friday 9:30 PM/8:30 C

The History Channel.

Click here to get into the action –

Picture of a man sitting on a sofa equipped with tank-treads. His feet are up, wearing sneakers, jeans, military vest and helmet. Presumably on the basis of this he is

into the action.

Well, OK then:

our first bombing target?



*

Then the rain came, beating the good
with the better, pooling in the wheel barrow

And the flower absent from all bouquets
tender with cold rain.

Flower that is never
a flower, flower that refuses

To be a flower:
namelessness/haunts/ punctuation.

Your attention please:
train #117, The Signifier,

Bound for Shapely Union,
making stops in Logos, Lyre,

Limpid, and Translator-Of-Desire,
is now boarding.

All ticketed passengers are invited to assemble
at the gate marked "Broken Mirror".



EMBEDDED IN THE LANGUAGE

MAXINE CHERNOFF

"The U.S. share of world military spending for 2006: 51%"
--Los Alamos Study Group

"I'm not a lawyer. My impression is that what has been charged thus far is abuse, which I believe is technically different from torture." -Donald Rumsfeld

1.

Embedded in the language
cultural proofs and tendencies
the word Brunif
to make brown or to polish

2.

here the color, there the rubbing
interaction of text
and interpreter
never closed
bird of dawn:
a constant term

3.

enlisted because
his mother died
he got laid off
she got convicted twice

4..

"our national debt increased
by \$2 trillion
in only five years"
(one trillion seconds
equals 31,546 years)

5.

"Beauty is information."---Juri Lotman

6.

to control base instincts
greed lust and cruelty
to seek spiritual purity
is known by Muslims
as “the Great Jihad”

7.

war coverage through
“a soda straw”
in a forty hour period
not a single story
shows people hit
by weapons

8.

let’s embed Stravinsky
let’s embed aspens
let’s embed history
let’s embed logic

9.

I knew a soldier
lovely in his wounds

10.

the USO tour, said director
Wayne Newton
featured Al Franken
dressed as Saddam Hussein,
Clint Black, Jewel and
SoulJahz, the Christian
hip hop group

11.

dust storms gather
outside a tent
on night patrol
he listens to 50 Cent
is it multicultural yet?

12.

A figure-ground reversal
of any single aspect or facet
of holistic sensory experience

since man the symbol-maker
adjusts to anything

13.

California mother on TV
claims her son died
to keep her and church members
free from wearing burkas

14.

how to make a poem
of so many terrible facts
how to re-embed
sympathy and truth

15.

or rather un-embed
since knowing
needs a room
for quiet occupation
and sorting out of facts
white space and a reason
time and air

16.

no coffins from this war
not allowed on the news
all desertions prosecuted
to the letter of the law

17.

a boy from Honduras
aged eighteen
who died on February 7
citizenship granted
posthumously

18.

“Political poems
are only the crudest
expression
of the feeling of loss,
an attempt to find
a central enemy
so that ironic tension
may be dissolved”

19.

three years to the day,
I read, "I'm reminded
of the commanders
of World War 1
who repeatedly lied
about victory over the Kaiser
as they pushed thousands of men
through the butcher shops
of the Somme,
Verdun, and Gallipoli."

20.

this too information
meant to tie on meaning
carry it on your back
use it as a shield

*19 March 2006
Year Three of the War*

Middle School Number 1 (Father)

Barbara^{by} Tomash

Beslan, Russia, September 2004

in the beginning of September
she is as two flowers
become a place

she is there at the beach in a red dress in the countryside

that's her too with the wreaths with the candles
there she is with her mother that's also her also her turning
she is waving in the salvage in the hollow in the seizure of a school house
that's her her books desks blackboards that little waving
left to burn on a chair that's her at the run out and daughter
filled with rubble and hug me also her
also her also her

she was tall

there she is with Newton and Einstein strewn in the physics classroom
with her friends that little girl died too there she is scribbled
her head face legs that's also her barely joined yes that's her
write that number down

and she is food and water's astonishment

set her place
at the breakfast table

(2 of the hundreds)

if I married again 10 times

bananas apples dried fruits biscuits and her favorite sweets
shoes of the hostages on a windowsill there a mouth nobody eats out of

oof this is difficult

that's her her bed
I sleep in there she is
at night as me that's her earrings
and that's her
bit of her hair and that's
also her after forty days
also her also her

NORMA COLE

In Fishville

the dice are loaded with
eggs over easy on buttered
whole wheat toast or without
the eggs, no butter, no toast, no
table, no water, no glass

no place up to the clouds
the high walls, the wandering
(getting the picture) stones
a spine of stones, rocks,
barbed wire, mesh, bricks

iron disorders

Fe

Atomic number 26

Atomic weight 55.845 (2)

lustrous metallic grayish
tinge

found in the sun

Nobody

I was sitting on the
grass or she was
sitting on the grass the
nothing spread out
all around her

a symbol, a sector

“Nobody” intends to build
a wall

if you can, wave—a
woman holds
binoculars to
her eyes

wild
spreading or gathering
you are
thinking that
now?

you so sure?

CONCERNING THE LAP DANCE PLANTATION

Standard Schaefer

*"They made a desert and called it peace."
Tacitus*

*"desert, desert I endure your challenge"
Aimé Césaire*

That war is the health of the state and the state is blindness
That the alternative to lap dances is boot camp up on Bald Hill
Observation only humiliates the luster, says the Senator from Boeing
Until it seems that chaos is not fiasco, only the long route
through the easy mark, and all over the white lines

A leg full of shrapnel or a belly full of fruit salad

But politics ain't metaphors

They're catching barracuda off Stinson beach
Running tripwires across the Rio Grande

But it's impossible to determine who is writing.

It's impossible to say who speaks,
what gender, what class, what war
as long as the bees blossom
or just hover
over "the quiet creaking of the masts"
or the figures in blogland
and their analogues in Hollywood

And yet I am almost certain

Personality is not community

Just the sound of the drill locking in place.

It reminds me faintly of the Alaskan coastline
which I am told it is crawling with tropical fish

And to this someone adds a theory
to aestheticize every synonym for beauty.

But it's impossible to say who is writhing
only that we tremble before the fumes

And for breakfast, a few pages of Suetonius
For a chaser, a broth of pearls

There is a ceiling but no guarantee of sleep
paced from the aperture and extracted from oblivion
Krieg lights weave across the DMZ

I put on the facemask and stare at what's left of the corral,
later at the barricades, I join the squids

Black clouds oppose nonchalance

*

But between the Bible salesman and the blouse of long braided hair
I choose miles, the cadence and chart

Still, it's impossible to say what you're here for

You could be sipping mercury in some strip mine
or drinking rocket fuel from the pipe, formerly the Colorado

Instead, you tell me rants are out
Here, we crank the disease

We who lay among the giant shadows
We who are but inappropriate comments

It's enough to make you take the kill fee, the French kiss,
the third turn in nine turns, and then stop at the howling door
bowing deeply and swigging the quinine
"May the best church win"
were it not for the dispersion and distraction
and a regard for the number of laws.

*

Observation is humiliation

Where once it had been oceanic.

Today it is only a relic of abstraction.

Something something beeps.
Brothers sister something else
recount the probabilities.

But we cannot exclude the possibility
we might have some effects on others.

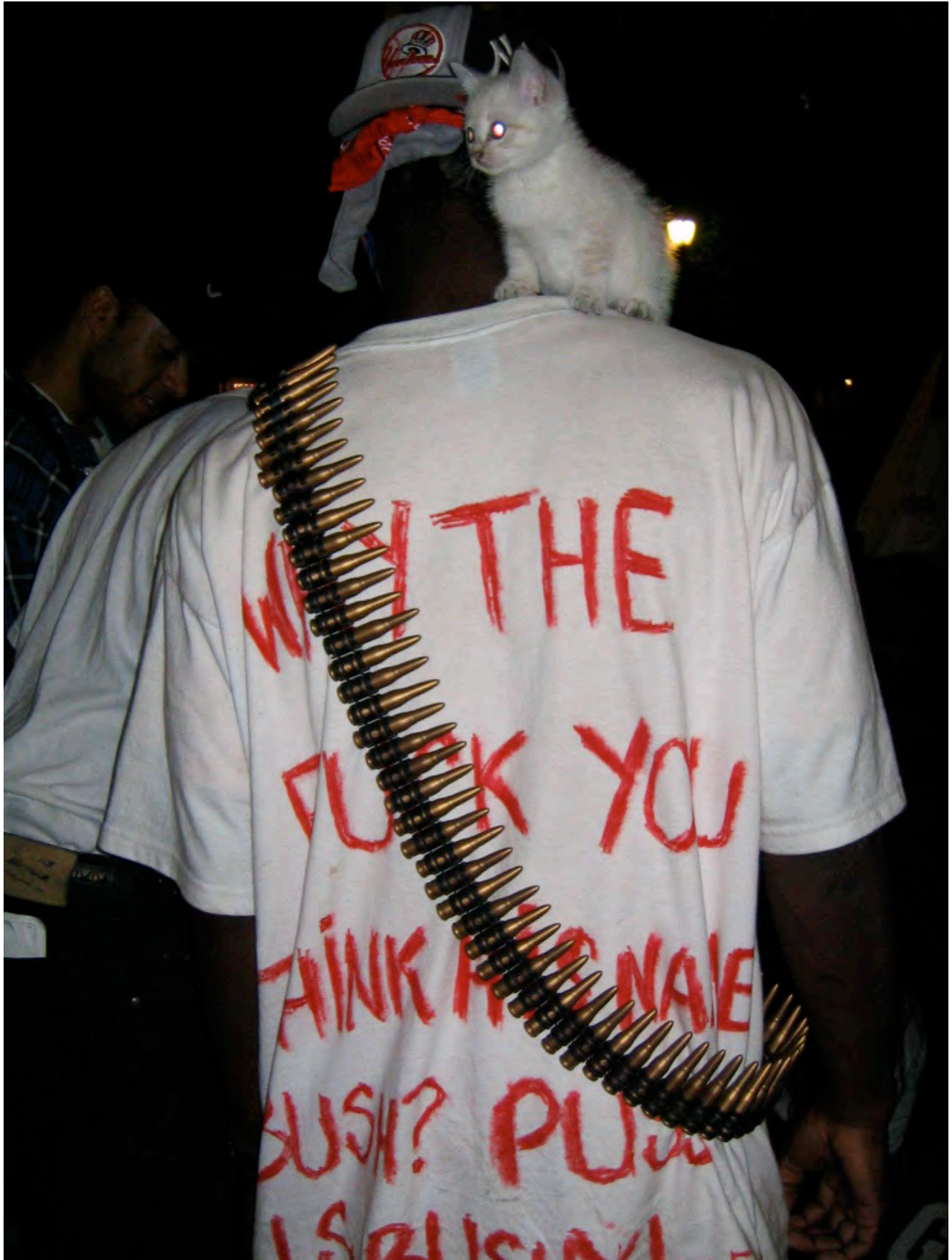
All that is certain is we must oppose the recruiters

Especially salvation, which is useless
against the sweater on sale
or the surplus of meat

Especially now
that skin has been revealed

all hype all the time.

JEFF CONANT





USA Patriot Act of 2001

Jeanne Marie Beaumont

One of us was
Uniting common sense with vision,
& one of us
was hired on the
Strengthening of her computer skills. O
America! We came by the back roads, we drove
By the house. Spied a room
Providing ample sunlight
through ~~French~~ windows.
A movie
Appropriate for the whole family
was being screened.
Words are the
Tools of my trade. But most plants
Required sunlight; they had the house
To themselves and knew more than they seemed to
(often leaves
Intercept me with a message as I am leaving.
A wall obstructs the view
& a wall will
Obstruct the view:
"a rabid dog that becomes the
Terror of the neighborhood"
"that little terror of a child"
(ism:
Action, process, practice)
This night your soul is required
of you.

2
0
0
1

Nine at Nine

Samuel Amadon

There were ninety-seven. New York and then, went down to the ship
in our struggle for responsibility from here I see. A single red cloud,
I have been wanting to write *you be happy if the wind inside the orchard*
over two months elapsed before *where are you going to-night?* To-night
I was captured by the fascist but I do not want to see him again,
to think that Amaryllis had grown old away. Under the skin of his neck
starved men are celebrating (apologize whenever you find it convenient)
who cry, outraged, *Lord when did we see?* You itself, the infinite resonance of its sound
such as *lie smothered in grass by San Vitale* reverberating within four tiled walls.
She explained to Eloise who had come there can be but the one Sordello,
what we do and think is filled as he flings lath and plaster, or cleared.
Probably you expect me to meditate, walk only among plants
he took with him to Fontenay. There, where the vines cling crimson on the wall.
Then, the lorry stopped and we saw the thief and the victim with equal gravity
before she gave him time enough to wink, start choking, frozen, crazy. With fear,
a trifle, a sunflower opening, are you really in Nazi Germany?
Water moving like thoughts mourning. Plays are called music
and brought back the levies designing her own Christmas. Cards:
Selena's father made them or something and there were not those girls there. Was one face
few works, outside the great works, of classical — argue? They don't ask for much.
Perhaps you wrote a letter and forgot the instruments of the thick trees. And sweeps
that restricted idiom with its limited: *long centuries have come.* And gone
I am not. Sleepy or more. Accurately *genug fur die Suppe gemacht.*
So friends (dear friends) remember if you will of dislike, of the trouble involved,
a hoopoe, or two, a fellow at Harvard called McCreary,
the farmer set off for the barn, the terrible mixture of castrato. And faun
eyes floating in dry dark air spoke to him, but he didn't answer her
the rest of the afternoon. Weather hear me Cadmus. Of golden prows,
the elements of the ultimate condition, do the clapboards clean and now
all laws, morals, and rewards are you know, but you're fearless. All the same

they informed their master through broken walls and gray
around us; everything is hostile. If one could only cry
that outraged *Faith has entered in his name.* The lamps were smoking
to the flowing ooze of a gutter; see them float away not sure whether he has mailed it
in their stalls. Suppose even the ear of wheat, a chaste abstraction, but to a life of art
and Cairels was (of Sarlat) the courage to wind it and find out.
Mrs. Snell having finished the cleaning down in the viae stadae toga'd the crowd and arm'd
relation of the artistic. Cannon to the imagination under rags, I come back to my dooryard:
the water's fine and so are we but cuts. Across the empty hours
he had bought Moreau's two masterpieces and he was, always. Quietly arrayed,
they have to worry about acquiring. The hurricane starts up again
to make us wish that we were in his place similar to the life of a monk
almost more breathed than heard affectionately —
and fall onto already-fallen leaves; this is the origin of light and shade;
"Se pia" –Varchi have to help him carry the sails down.

D A Powell

shut the fuck up and drink your gin & tonic

all afternoon the mowers have been mowing: watery eyes exhaust
this distorted tune: *smells like teen spunk* the subwoofer thumps
coronary of another tragic neo-post-adolescent tooling up the street

to wind the engines of this oily-complected land: *yo-yo*. walk the dog
around the world & bloody your upper lip [the latter: no regulation trick]
if there's one thread to be followed, it's "take your lumps and get your stitches"

send down the little nibblies, will you barkeep: the ones called stupor
and deficit and "well, anyway, the cockroaches will survive." oh, you kids:
still that awkward growth spurt that started when you were sperm

what bulges in your britches, besides your comb and a little manhood?
get yourself a pistol, if that's what it takes: better than pulling up pathic knees
straddled by winking lawyers, butchers, fakers, cabinet-makers

listen, have you noticed the evening star gets a little lighter every night?
a bullseye spreads across your face: you brittle bismuth: how high the flame
burning pages, smudged headlines and ordinary terror alerts [drive hertz!]

nobody said the undertaker would come spanking new in a blinding heat
his crucible searing arctic glaciers [indeed: *summer surprised us*] kindling dry woodlands
diverting streams and poisoning this rank firmament: he was a smiling devil, you know

the man who gives you congress, making a motion like a motion to suppress: he's got you
amputated from the mind up: tonight's entertainment: *everybody gets shtupped in the tokhes*
by the wry fellow who says "kiss me, I got keys to the pharmacy" see? [si, si, si]

Or Chronicles of the White Veldt War

John Niekrasz

—
My companion swung open the flack-gate.
On the coral stairs of Saint Lô my companion
told me a joke. It was a market day.
We saw eiderdown swept into a heap.
He pressed a warm shortbread tight into my fist.
Then his shoulder left a hoop of steam on
one of the surfaces and everyone stopped.

—
The sumac grove like a low cloud on the edge of the pines
A frame of sky jointing its knees at us through the pines

—
What I wrote this morning is a lie.
When I arrived it was a different
destination than it should have been.
Or than I should have been told.
Or than the previous pattern of wings
and bluestem straw had led me
to believe: from this window
the octagonal barn reddens with snow.

—
The horses halt, refuse to hoof
through the field of gourds again
though we are cold and though
the rains have softened
the report of their opening.

—
Sgt. Bluestem tore a swatch of his
decorated lapel from the effigy.

He put his whistle away and rode off, humming.
Rode off, putting his hands in the air, putting

his hand in her hair. The serge of the saddle
was like his child's hair and his child

clung to his neck through
all the ballast-stone streets.

–

Entries from the Purple-Lit Veldt
Inappropriate Bloom or Failure to Bloom
Ideal Dottini
Mouth-to-Stoma War: Pitfalls and Complications
The Fight Brochure
Weakling with a Powder-Scoured Sword

–

Back at the Deepening Stall
I boosted the rest of them over the retaining wall
and found I was without guard.
Boot-dust pressed into my palms
and then a sort of chrysanthemum.

–

There lies a white
rib of beach,
I tell my love.
Its saplings are bowed
with birdtraps.
There is a jacket
in a tree so one
may find it.
The sapling near
where I am.
Lie still for the chance.

BILDUNG SEQUENCE

CLAUDIA KEELAN

The parade of bodies
The parade of bodies In the waiting room
On the sidewalk I see them
Attending their x-rays worried over the sugar count
And two who agree killing him would be best
Walking here in the bright desert light
A shadow with shadows
Two feet, four, six feet
Footsteps over footsteps walking through dust
My dead father passing on the left
A living man in the same purple jacket
Right hip slightly lifted like his
Walking through dust
In the bright desert light a shadow with others
In the dust in the fumes
I've begun to remember
My first self
She wanted so much
"Who is the third who walks always beside you?"
In the tree is a figure of a man
He has legs and is living
Below the tree the bodies parade
He has legs and a third
Who is she? To whom does she belong?
"And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?"
"And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?"

BILDUNG Sequence/2

Not discerning their faces, but *describing*
Not feeling the flesh but feeling

“Who is the third who walks always beside you?”
A shadow inside flesh
A shadow proving your face temporary
A part I have wanted to celebrate
“Here is no water but only rock/Rock and no water and the sandy road”
You take the Low Ghost and I’ll take the High Ghost
“The simple, compact, well-join’d scheme, myself disintegrated
Every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme...”
A man in a tree sees horse
Two legs, three, seven
Footsteps inside of footsteps
They put me in a coat so the x-ray would not hurt anything living inside me
Bright desert light x-rays
All that’s left uncounted

2. LITTLE ELEGY (Ground Zero)

“A crowd flowed over, so many
I had not thought death had undone so many...”
The one I know, nowhere near
& the others, the fire from the plane’s
Crash so hot, they clasped
Hands and stepped
Off the broken tower,
Their falling, a choice they made as one:

“...the pale, powder-light, powder-dry dust of August from which the long week’s
marks of hoof and wheel...with somewhere beneath them, vanished but not gone, fixed
and held in the unnealing dust, the narrow, splayed toes prints of his wife’s bare
feet; his own prints, his own prints setting the period now as he strode...His body
breaking the air her body had vacated, his eyes touching the objects--post and tree
and field and house and hill--her eyes had lost...”

Go Down Moses, I say go down
All writing an elegy for the living,

Putting pictures in photo albums,
Bringing the trash dutifully to the curb...
Nothing gets free of this world.
The glum angels in Wim Vender's *Wings of Desire*,
What are the words in German for the tired book?
BILDUNG Roman? World-weary and yet
There they are, the angels, looking over
Your shoulder in the library, mouthing along
/2

With the words...
"When you want me again, look for me under..."
I threw a book on the scorpion.
Its death was all over the cover...
Was it per formative or normative,
The subject's death I mean?
"One is not involved in the conception
Of the airplane, nor its invention,
But one can very well
Steer the flying machine, and de-turn
Its usage..."
Not manna, but the last man and woman,
Hands clasped, falling from the sky,
The Fall itself free from metaphor at last
In the reply, a man and woman in business suits,
Choosing their means of dying,
Living to the last in air
Instead of fire.

3. LITTLE ELEGY (Imagination)

The unseen is not a shadow world,
A better parody of here...
"One must have a mind of winter..."
The old mistake.

“And have been cold a long time...”
Gottfried Behn’s “cold egotistical eye,”
& other mistakes of Romanticism.
Sasha, the world is real
And imagination too, in generation...
“Rooted they/grip down and begin to awaken...”
Nothing doesn’t exist!
Feathers float down
Around a bird’s still body.
My father’s ashes
Lie in box headed for Missouri.
Some day, we will scatter him and my mother...
“Look for me under...” etc.
The ashes of the 3000 dead still
There in New York...
A starting point.

DARA WIER

CONSPIRICISTS

We will not continue until the conspiracy has been justified.
Your greeting us sideways continues to startle us.
We pass the house of a deadman, black crepe blowing
All over its shoulders, time and again we stay quiet,
We stay within our own brainknots, we can't un-tie them,
We can't take a scissors to them or let them be eaten by mice.
Off and on go the sirens of when will we gather to greet you.
Birds are broken over your footprints, their protocol abandoned
And brittle and unreadable and without plans for the future.
They are oracles no longer, they've gone into a new line
Of work. They are assassins. They bleed their victims
Of all desire to take up residence on the banks of a river.
We conspire with you when we shed as we scrape by a
Stonewall. We are criminals because of your eyesockets.

IF I WERE POLICE PERFECT

They say there's one on the other side of the great Falls.

Let's hear it for the 2000 year old seed.

We had embryos to spare.

It's raining, the sun is shining, the devil's on top of his horse.

Perpetual silence was to be frowned upon.

No one on the highway. Lustering proved to be a decent vocation.

Fair enough.

It appeared as if the person in question had embarked on some kind of prayer experiment which included the need to report how it was going.

It was a week in which dozens of photographs depicted men in various stages of attempting to be unembarrassed while offering up various impersonations of piety.

Baleful their pernicious souls.

Because every time the thought begins to collect it is too horrific to complete.

We stood under the cover of the Lincoln Monument watching a lightning storm.

Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?

It is not very difficult to uncover someone's mother's maiden name.

Coaxing a seed to sprout.

Someone questioned me, isn't it always hot by a cookstove?

Someone said, I just want your fingerprint for a keepsake.

Because the current head of state chose to have himself photographed holding hands with a Saudi Arabian prince.

Rain must fall from various heights at various times, no?
It can't all be falling from the same distance always, can it?

To avoid the subject they'd talk about anything other than the subject uppermost on their minds. They'd talk about prairie dogs.

Tonight we chose to talk about fog.

The date palm is revered in the Koran & the Bible.

Would that we were an unruly people.

Paula Koneazny & Marjorie Stein



*what is a community meant to say
while hooking our eyes?*

*initially the west was astonished
moved forward and settled behind solidiering
arriving in pairs*

*children with mammal traps
at the border
became immensely popular on film*

*they've done it now and we've
become the path--*

*become the wreckage beneath body parts
where one wall meets...*

everyone too stunned to burn it down

*Brothers and Sisters,
"We were put into cement city.
(This occurred. This occurred.)
Grinning and snapping. Surveillance
cameras picked off the specta-
tors. Narco dolor sutured our
synapses. Sky fell. Uranium cooled
off. You can't imagine what this
does. It carbonized us. We didn't
learn this in basic training. We
were afraid. Now, we have half-life
to contend with.*

*They're taking it down soon. What
do you think could be good about
remembering? If you had under-
stood, whoever might be listening,
would you have taken the
streets?"*

A Newe Astronomie

Landis Everson

Imagine two Jupiters
where one is,
two gods ruling and sharing
their hands--
Hear how the astrologers howl and disagree
and see the jealousy of the single planets
who understand in empty space
how loneliness gained is
a new loss and
realignments will begin.

Imagine the foxes
multiplying among the furrows
until there is no place empty enough to hunt them.
Imagine the sky
filled up
with a flying of rabbits
their ears turned to wings
and the clouds, trimmed in fur, red
with the embarrassment
of being adorned by another.

Which is why I look everywhere,
a planet two-timed,
a rabbit flying blind,
an un hunted fox frightened by clouds,
hoping there are Jupiters big enough
to hold me accountable on this
St. Valentine's Day for all the
unreceived valentines
I deserve
because I forgot, living here
at this empty address,
that by itself love is not
universe.

PAUL VANGELISTI

from *Agency*

Heart

X

The problem now facing them was how to go about dismantling the untruths they had systematically constructed or defended in the previous years. In her brief tenure as an intelligence officer, she had delighted in over-stamping documents marked *highly confidential* with the words *highly truthful*. When a sentence and its music was inescapably docile or facile as the hills whispered, sometimes hummed into nightfall.

The melody changed, mounted with traffic between signals. She was never heard from again. He had fallen madly in love and spent a week or two with her and then denounced her to the secret police over a trifling matter.

Like the government always at work, they used to say, squinting out over the slack tide at Aquatic Park. Maybe an all too querulous generation dead from the waist up with prophecy and fulfillment, cheap housing and tax-deductible losses. Or maybe just a bunch of talkers besides the ghost of music gliding on that wavy, lingering silence—no will, all bobbing and watching.

She came to him and hummed like a stranger at a piano in the middle of a foreign movie with subtitles when nobody's talking. He kept vigil right up to the moment of his death, spotting Russian troops marching into Manhattan across the 59th Street bridge outside his window. You terrorist, she smiled wonderfully.

XI

The significance of this meeting should not be underestimated. He exhorted American intellectuals to abandon their juvenile radicalism and engage themselves in a mature enterprise of cooperation with the power structure. Three was the supporting number.

Three was friendly, even auspicious, especially before July. Through X, an American intellectual who had made the journey from radicalism to the institutions of power with amazing speed, he was introduced to scores of State Department officials, presidential aides, journalists and trade union officials. The silent transition from falsehood to sly deception was useful.

What was left to say, who was left to say it to, everything had to happen before the arrival of Mars. Rare and local, anyone who lied in good faith was better off, he recited his part better, he was more easily believed. One plus one plus one meant once done there was nothing doing, only miles and miles of stars.

The optimism of suffering like some fat kid running like crazy across the street in front of all those cars. Your wish is my demand, he had once heard her say. Four was seldom a happy number, two before two behind, too symmetrical to face one's end.

XII

Truth—one of the magical words—combine it with the magic of *freedom* and the effect was terrific. It was a new book of revelations for the post-war era, and appearance in it was to act as a passport to the world of official culture for the next twenty years. In the long run, she often said to herself, a good cook is a born optimist, while there was never much travel wouldn't cure.

What began with a melody in another language, a quiet bar, at the other end of the city. It denoted what one officer called that community of intellectuals who were disillusioned, who could be disillusioned, or who hadn't taken a position yet, and who could to some degree be influenced by their peers as to what choice to make. Illusion, as the song goes, moved like wind across a wintry sky scribbling names and dates.

Intelligent people, caught at anything, denied it. "We were not in the least interested in swelling the flood of propaganda," he wrote in his introduction, "or in providing an opportunity for personal apologetics." An uncommon visitor in winter, the book achieved both of these disavowed objectives.

Mercury is usually best, she had often told them, while Saturn may be provident, although with Saturn there was always a price. Who holds what still very much different from who moves how and what makes a real American. Hours before, hours later, who will understand your story, born, she warned, in another century.

XIII

Curiosity invited the cat that never paid attention to anything but the sublime. What good were lists if not to help us remember we were missing, only our opinions ready to answer the call, click to indicate who are you to deny the popularity of love and death, ice cream, chocolate nipples or even rampant cigars. He accepted the unconscious or more or less pleased it, even if it were hard to imagine anything but a robe and fuzzy slippers, neither very pristine, just comfortable enough and worn to excuse that it was already afternoon.

Speaking to a group living, like him, in uneasy exile, he said, "What is required from us now is a will so pure that new strength can be born from the worst of ourselves." While the book was rolling off the presses, they met to discuss something more ambitious, more permanent. The romance of those held by freedom, they almost laughed out loud, or how some guys come to whistle what they find on the corner.

Was it ease in the speech of everyday tunes or simply an appetite for words and phrases ordinary as the hope of getting there on time, just as someone was sitting down or pulling into the station after so many years? Yes, it was true: they tried to set the house on fire by dropping fireflies disguised as potato bugs from a helicopter. The General couldn't help but speak in terms of highest praise: a subtle covert operation carried out on the highest intellectual level.

Rage as a critical device seemed about as useful as the lyrical awash in a buzz of monitors and middle-aged bananas that still dance their hearts out. And thus, as the flags of the gallant old causes were unfurled, liberal minded people everywhere had been victims of a kind of moral blackmail. You terrorist, she smiled wonderfully.

Denise Newman & Meredith Stricker

Tracing

“we are the bees” the bees, the bees, the zeroes
the oxygen “of the Invisible”



which is like saying golden carriers of future

“the earth has” blue, has hydrogen
has “no other refuge”

and so we must meet in hope to talk
because there is “no other refuge” we turn to sea
wild water and the grave
beauty of the shore

trace <extinction web



whose blurred wings

“to become invisible in us”
with a tug of rope



sea lions vanish



to come to the point where watching and vanishing
vanquishing going under after pissing in the sea repeatedly
may or may not be fed quietly at night
along with other earthlings
now that there's



a war against the invisible, waged against the inviolability,
the vulnerability of the invisible

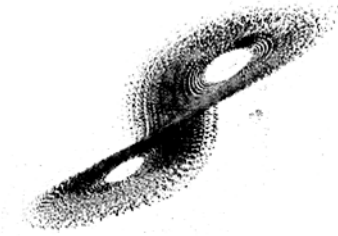
the more I do the less I see the more that is viewed the less is visible
the less that is visible the more that is desired



not visible, not disappeared

with unbreakable aliveness

this is true, I saw it



“aliveness” means in complete wakefulness

not dreaming awake demanding: the more that is desired the more that is desired



ought to know

at any time what to do

in good time

the way milk lets down

hearing a child’s cry—anyone’s child



roots grew soundlessly, a breeze rattled the branches

and I realized God wants us to become uncalculating, *plants*,
I mean, want us more unknown, less in charge

ask it of us

which is to say, this hope is explosive, it is unstable



elemental, it contaminates

bees as atoms, as sparks

“we are the bees”

could be golden carriers

sailors not saviors swimmers in air

and I saw it—our aliveness—

growing out of—

the invisible (wildness)

motioning in me like a red wave,

a hello

from below



red snake through dead leaves



where "aliveness" means
unstable
to see through to
oneself as one of

flashes of orange

pink turret

sky freshly born land water lava bodies
sprawled as in a battlefield teeming with life
volcanic easements shaped to fur
the sky astonishes as if it just erupted



EE
E N
E A N A N O

"out of a thousand changing forms, it will create but one: destitute, empty"





things I hate, to locate my enemies, shift my relations with them

and so we must meet in hope to talk

because there is "no other refuge" we turn

*she makes a tent of her coat for them
and a wave sweeps them away, which is
like saying —*

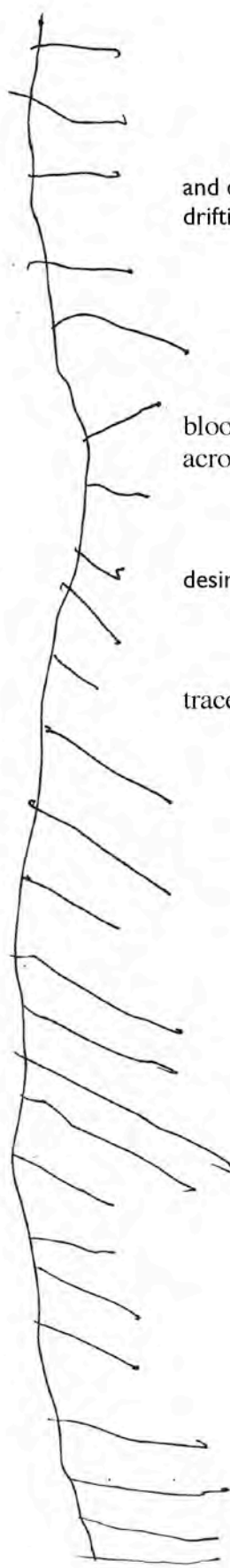
with a tug of rope

"certain images and phrases are repeated but in different contexts"


to become invisible in us

the vulnerability of the invisible





and desiring and dreaming and drifting in seaweed
drifting in traces of desiring, traces of

b E b N p 

blood across the newborn sea lion yesterday and blood
across the mother, placenta trailing in water

a seabird

desiring the placenta to heave onto shore and live in waves

trace <extinction web



I was fascinated, repelled by the "Others" in their snug suits with their
lawyers' dead language

where we meet, in hope, crossing mountains and mountain
passes made of blue, aqua, ultraviolet and red



"the earth has" blue

"no other refuge"

hearing a child's cry—anyone's child

sources

Rilke, in a letter to his Polish translator in 1925:

"We are the bees of the Invisible . . . The earth has no other refuge than to become invisible: IN US..."

John Cage, *Lecture on the Weather*:

"More than anything else we need communion with everyone. Struggles for power have nothing to do with communion. Communion extends beyond borders: it is with our enemies also."

Thomas Hirschhorn, from his artist's statement for the exhibition,

"Utopia, Utopia = One World, One War, One Army, One Dress" :

"I want to make my artwork without illusions. I want to hope, Hope not as dream or escape. Hope as dialogue and confrontation. Hope as the principle of taking action."

Gustav Sobin quoting Schiller in his essay "Undulant-Oblique," in *Luminous Debris*:

"'Sad,' Schiller will warn Hegel, 'the empire of concept: out of a thousand changing forms, it will create but one: destitute, empty.'"

Child's drawings by Eva Whitney, age 4.

WAR GAMES

SHERRIL JAFFE

I was running across a huge field. The air was thick, and it blurred the woods all around yellow-green. I clutched a red handkerchief in my fist and stole glances over my shoulder as I ran. I was running past the empty volley ball court where during games boys served the ball with a hard *thwack*, and other boys spiked the ball back over the net with a blow that could kill but which also could be miraculously returned by a kneeling boy with his hands locked together in a tight fist.

This was my first summer at the YMCA camp in Lakeview, Connecticut. The camp was vast, situated on the shore of a huge lake in a forest of white birch. Narrow winding paths ran through the woods to the lake. Occasionally, one of these paths opened into a clearing. In one of the larger clearings was the dining hall. Actually, there were two dining halls—one for the boys and one for the girls. The girls' side of the camp was so far away that I wasn't even sure where it was. In the dining hall, table was pitted against table to see who could clear up the fastest, and after dinner, each table would sing cheers, the boys pounding the table and shouting in unison, the noise reverberating to the rafters.

Inside other clearings were our tents where we slept in bunk beds. I had come to camp with my best friend, Howie Greenberger as well as Blair Yaffe, another good friend from school who had been coming to this YMCA camp for years. A fourth boy from our town came also, Charlie Filmus, an extremely gangly boy, possibly the smartest person in the Kensico school district. My mother had encouraged me to be friendly with Charlie as Charlie was one of the few other Jewish boys in the school. I liked him and had gone to his house a few times. Here at camp, however, Howie, Blair, and I were all in the same tent, and Charlie was in another. I didn't even know which one.

Howie, Blair, and I quickly became friends with the other boys in our tent, all except one, Roger Martin. Roger Martin had an upper bunk and kept himself above everyone else. He had brought a transistor radio with him to camp so he could listen to the Republican Convention. The year was 1956.

Each morning “Reveille” would blast over the p.a. system, and we would all come running out of our tents and start to do calisthenics: push-ups, sit-ups, and jumping jacks. After breakfast we would play baseball, basketball, volley ball, and every other type of competitive sport. I won a swimming contest doing the butterfly, pounding my arms over my head into the water and making waves so large that everyone around me was pushed to the side. We swam every day in the roped-off section of the lake, competing for our Red Cross cards. Outside the rope we paddled around in canoes, furiously trying to get ahead of each other. All this competition worked us into a bigger and bigger frenzy.

After a few days we were divided into teams and the camp Olympics began; we crouched poised in relay races, ready to shoot over the line that had been drawn in the grass with chalk to the other end of the field where runners were waiting to be tagged. The noise of the cheers was deafening. We were all desperate to win.

At night there were movies, and at the movies there was always competition for the prettiest girls from the girls’ side of the camp. The goal was to get a pretty girl to sit with you on the floor in the dark, leaning against the back wall of the rec room while the movie was being projected, and then to put your arm around her, and, finally, with your eyes half-closed, to bruise your tender lips against her tight little mouth.

At Vesper Services in the clearing in the woods that was used as a chapel at twilight we stood in a circle with the birches all around us and the stars beginning to appear. I could feel my chest expanding and the blood running through my arteries and veins and out into each individual capillary. I didn’t know the songs which we were singing—they were Christian hymns, and I, of course, was Jewish, but they were pretty songs, and they lifted my heart.

One night a discussion was scheduled. The subject was religion. My counselors, to my surprise, began to explain to Howie and me that their goal was to win us over to Christianity. This made me feel a little bit uncomfortable and a little bit angry. I was shocked, also, because the counselors, college students from Ohio Wesleyan, all seemed to me like Greek gods.

One night the counselors came back late from wherever counselors go at night,

and they were drunk and horsing around in front of the tent where we boys were sleeping. "All right, you campers!" one of them yelled. "It's time to get up and start doing your calisthenics!" My bunk was close to the tent flap. I leaped out of bed, ran outside and started doing jumping jacks. The counselors howled and howled.

I began to notice that some of the counselors had a sadistic streak. They punished a boy who had broken one little rule by making him stand for hours with both arms upraised and a heavy frying pan in each hand, and he was not allowed to lower his arms. If he lowered his arms then he would be given an even more draconian punishment.

One day I was on my way back from the lake when Howie and Blair came running up to me. "Hurry!" they said. "The counselors have set up a boxing match. They've got Hans Braunschwag boxing Charlie Filmus!"

This was a ridiculous idea. Hans Braunschwag, a big boy from Germany, was the meanest, toughest boy in the camp and the best athlete. Charlie Filmus had absolutely no athletic ability. "Hans is going to kill him!" Howie said. What in the world were Mr. and Mrs. Filmus thinking of when they sent Charlie to this camp? I turned and ran after Howie and Blair, down the path to the clearing in the woods where an informal boxing ring had been staked out.

When we got there we found everyone in the camp encircling the ring, and as we made our way to the front we saw Hans raining down blows on Charlie Filmus's head. Charlie was making no move to fight back. He was hunching over with his forearms folded in front of his face.

How could the counselors allow this big German thug to do this to this scrawny little Jewish kid? Something inside me snapped. "Hans!" I called out, as Charlie limped away. "I challenge you to a match tomorrow afternoon!"

I was a lot smaller than Hans, but I was not exactly offering myself up as a lamb to the slaughter. Something burning inside me assured me I could beat Hans, because, even though I had not boxed in years, not since I was a child in toy boxing gloves pummeling my father who stood on his knees to spar with his little son, I knew that I was great boxer, because each time I had faced my father on the floor of our living

room in Brooklyn I had felt something come over me, some power which allowed me to punch my father with such rapidity and force that he would be unable to counter the attack. It inevitably scared my baby sister Vicky when this happened, and, crying, she would endeavor to intervene between us. She would push at me, pounding me with her little fists. She thought I was really trying to hurt our father. She didn't understand boxing. I had not boxed for many years, but I was confident this unstoppable force would arise inside me again, and no one, not even Hans, would be able to stop it.

This certainly seemed to be true in the first round of the fight, to the amazement of all. I definitely had the upper hand. In the next two rounds, however, I had to struggle to hold my own, and they were a tie, I knew. Nonetheless, everyone hailed me as the winner when the fight was over.

That night in the dining hall I dropped the pitcher of punch that was passed to me. Spent from the fight, I was too weak to hold it. Red liquid was everywhere. Across the room I could see Hans lifting big heavy trays of food, one in each hand. He was utterly unscathed. I knew he was the real winner of the fight.

One day during rest period, after lunch, toward the end of our month in YMCA camp, most of the boys from our tent were hanging around in front of the tent with nothing to do. The only boy who was inside the tent was Roger Martin. He was up in his bunk listening to the Republican Convention on his transistor radio. He was sitting up in his bunk, we knew, because his head was pushing up the canvas so that there was a stupid looking protuberance in the top of the tent. One of the boys grabbed a canoe paddle which was leaning against a tree and lifting it up over his head brought it down hard onto the lump that was poking the canvas up, the lump which, everyone knew, was Roger Martin's head. This was the funniest thing anyone had ever done. Roger came running out of the tent holding his head and crying.

"Roger, was that lump you? Jeeze. We're really sorry, Roger! We didn't know what that lump was!"

But, of course, we did know. I knew, and for a moment I felt the full horror of what we had done. Poor Roger Martin had wanted to be liked as well as anyone. He had spent most of his time around adults and only knew about adult things, like

political conventions. It wasn't his fault. He was as human as I was, as all the other boys were. It wasn't fair.

But then the Color Wars began, and we all tucked either a red or a blue handkerchief into our pockets, according to which team we were on. The Blues chased after the Reds, and the Reds chased after the Blues to capture their flags, and the Reds ran away from the Blues, and the Blues ran away from the Reds over the fields and through the woods. We hid behind trees, and we crawled into bushes, and we lay holding our breath in ditches trying to escape from each other, and we sneaked up on each other trying to capture flags, and when you captured another boy's flag, that was like killing him. "You're dead! You're dead!" we screamed. And now I was running past the volley ball court with my red handkerchief clutched in my hand. As I glanced over my shoulder I glimpsed flashes of blue in the woods. I was going to duck back into the trees when I cleared the court. I knew a short cut back to home base and safety, if no one tagged me first.

There was no more thrilling game than the Color Wars. It went on for days, and it took place over the whole camp, and the camp was vast. It was like a real war, and the pure terror of the possibility of being tagged, of being killed, and the rush of pleasure that came with tagging other boys and capturing their flags, of "killing" them, was more thrilling and more delicious than anything else I had ever before experienced.

NATIONAL SKY

Karen Garthe

far spicy arithmetic, petals of
Sugar in the coffee day
rasher
of national sky, yellowing dates hang their chits in atmosphere
zone the yellowing
news and debris
shrimp tin in the sink
a mug of memorabilia's
pinless grenade
more ash than saying THE FOG IN A BLEND OF SIMPLES escalating fugue
not a cloying phobic or a sad brown nettle
just the hustle of weightless
furrowing thru tinkling empties, clank of a full can
Trying
Managing
wiles grayed down from an unseen flipping point
pivot the speaker
in maize more green than stalwart
more
innocently stalled
and far more breached and dismayed

Liz Waldner
SURCINGLE, FULLER

What difference does it make if I am not vs. am no longer?

The problem of knowing ever

Second nature

Dolly Wilde: there is something sad about being unable to tell the secret of pleasure

Vice Admiral Blandley, commander of the Bikini Atoll nuclear test: I am not an atomic playboy

This country ends living things often enough

()

Traduce

(tears)

A killing home

()

The mind of the universe social—

Oh shut up

Jeannine throws the lamp because Melinda plays Judy Collins because Jeannine's old lover used to sing Judy Collins around town

I miss my Melinda life

One not to have to distance yourself from in order not to bomb civilians

“What I want to know is if she has a piece of hair that does that on the other side”

Scientific studies show that 14% of the gulls here in Santa Barbara are lesbian

Of course that wasn't very lady-like for her to lick her hand

Knowing how to do what it is

A reason to like it: because I haven't lost it

The mighty clouds of joy

No more desponding maidens round the willow and the headstone

Never more

Then

Not unknown

LITTLE VOICE

Matthew Zapruder

I woke this morning to the sound of a little voice
saying this life, it was good while it lasted, but I just
can't take it any longer. I'm going to stop shaving
my teeth and chew my face. I'm going to finish inventing
that way to turn my blood into thread and knit
a sweater the shape of a giant machete and chop
my head right off. The leaves had a green
aspect, all their faces turned down towards the earth.
This is exactly how I wanted to act, but I didn't
know where the little voice had hidden, and anyway
who talks like that? What a loss, another tiny
brilliant mind switched off by that same big boring finger.
Clearly life is a drag, by which I mean a net that keeps
pulling the most unsavory and useful boots we
either put on lamenting, or eat with the hooks of some
big idea gripping the sides of our mouths and yanking them
upwards in a conceptual grimace. Said the little voice,
that is. I was just half listening, one quarter wondering
what the little park the window looked onto was named,
and one quarter thanking the war I knew was somewhere
busy returning all those limbs to their phantoms.

John Cotter

Taps

Again, taps,
5 pm:

cars at lights
quit gears, I stand

to salute
as the day dies.

Alive at home
you calm,

laughing
through

stories
already

blown up
about the kids.



RUSTY MORRISON

please advise stop

sun setting so quickly away from us and never the proper calibration to our instruments stop
orchestra of our attachments excessively over-rehearsed stop
in the echo of our warped floorboards we needn't concoct a further predicament please

technicians may already be waiting for us in a small future fiercely equipped for such purposes stop
why should exoneration belong to only one of us searching out the eyes of the other stop
I hear your knees begin to buckle as you perform your ancestors' ardencies stop

behold flesh as the moving center of a functional harmony please
night might still be floating somewhere above us its blood supple and aromatic stop
the swamp frogs sound to us only our own fugitive affections please advise

ROBYN EWING

PORTO POEMPLAY SERIES #YY R24:
'SMILIN' JACK SMACKED BY PARADISE'

featuring

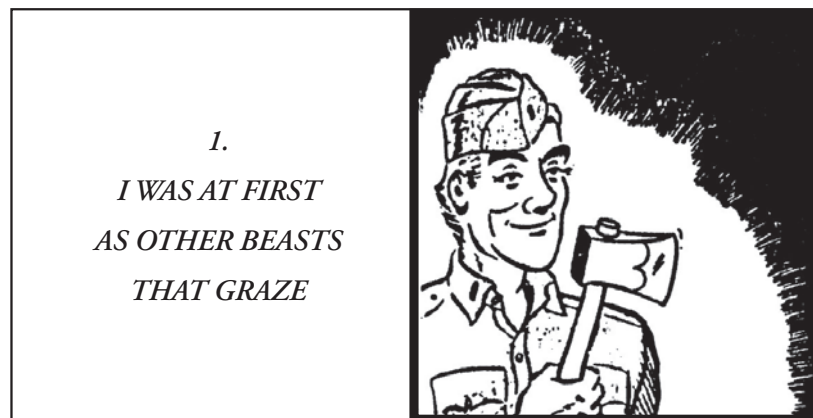
WORDS OF
MR. JOHN "THE FLUTE" MILTON
Paradise Lost, 1674 AD

&

ART BY
MR. ZACK "THE PEN" MOSELY
Smilin' Jack and the Coral Princess, 1943 AD

*"A WORK OF INVOLUNTARY
COLLABORATION"*

*"PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED IN 36 GLORIOUS
BLACK & WHITE FRAMES"*



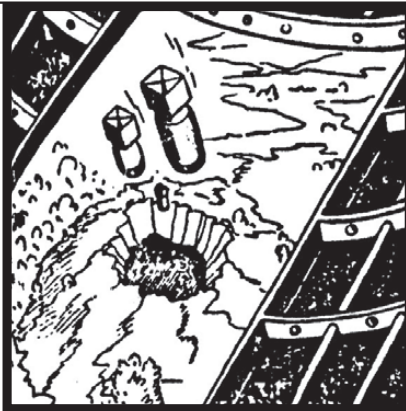
3.
*AS IN A
CLOUDY CHAIR
ASCENDING
RIDES*



4.
*ALL HEART
THEY LIVE
ALL HEAD,
ALL EYE,
ALL EAR*



5.
*WING SILENTLY
THE BUXOM AIR,
EMBALMED*



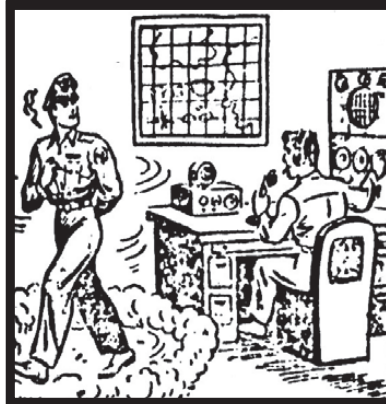
6.
*WAS DEATH
INVENTED?
OR TO US
DENIED*



7.
AMID
THE TREE NOW
GOT, WHERE
PLENTY
HUNG



8.
MADE HORRID
CIRCLES; TWO
BROAD SHIELDS
THEIR SUNS



9.
AND WINGS
WERE SET
WITH EYES,
WITH EYES
THE WHEELS



10.
WITH NICEST
TOUCH
IMMEDIATE
IN A FLAME



11.
*EARTH FELT
THE WOUND,
AND NATURE
FROM HER SEAT*



12.
*THAT ALL
WAS LOST.
BACK TO THE
THICKET
SLUNK*



13.
*ATTENDED WITH
TEN THOUSAND
THOUSAND
SAINTS*



14.
*SO GLISTENED
THE DIRE SNAKE,
AND INTO
FRAUD*



15.
QUEEN OF THE
UNIVERSE,
DO NOT
BELIEVE



16.
SHALL LIVE
WITH HER
ENJOYING,
I EXTINCT



17.
SUPERIOR,
FOR INFERIOR
WHO IS FREE?



18.
HIS RED
RIGHT
HAND



James Tate

NATIONAL SECURITY

I said, "I want to go home." "I told you, we have no home," Anne said. "What happened to our home?" I said. "The government took it," she said. "What for?" I said. "They said it was for strategic reasons," she said. And, thus, we commenced our roaming. Mostly we stayed at campsites along the way. We had a tent and sleeping bags, a couple of pots and pans. I was confused about what had happened to us, but I also liked the adventure. Once a man came over and said that he and his wife would like to share their dinner with us. Anne said her husband wasn't feeling well. I said, "I feel great." We sat around their campfire and talked. The man said he used to be a dentist, but now he was a goldminer. "You should've been taking those little gold caps out of people's mouths all along. You'd be rich now," I said. Anne ploughed her elbow into my ribs. "We're headed for the Klondike," his wife said. "It's best to stay out of the strategic zones," Anne said. They nodded in unison. "But I still don't know where they are," I said. They all looked at me, but didn't say anything. We ate some awful, strange meat and some baked beans, at least I think that's what they were. Later that night I was sick. In the morning when we had been on the road about three hours a band of Indians came riding toward us. "What are we supposed to do?" I said to Anne. "They've risen up all over the country. They're on the warpath. They're going to take over the government," she said. "But what about us right now?" I said. "Just be nice," she said. When they came along side of the car, Anne stopped and rolled down her window. "Howdy, fellow Americans," she said. "Can you tell us how to get to Topeka?" he said. "Sure, that's easy," she said and proceeded to give him directions. "That's most helpful," he said. "Have a good day." We drove on into the glaring sun. "Where are we going?" I said. "Do I look like I know where we're going? I just want to get away as far as we can," she said. "What about our old friends?" I said. "You'll just have to make new ones," she said. "Patagonia, is that where we're going?" I said. "No, we're not going to Patagonia. I don't know where we're going," she said. "We're getting low on gas and I don't think there's going to be a station for a long time," I said. "Then we'll have to walk," she said. I was beginning to

see how crazed she was and it frightened me. “We don’t have anything to eat,” I said. “You can kill a jackrabbit,” she said. There was an old shepherd up ahead moving his flock across the road. When we pulled to a stop, she said, “Get out and grab one of those sheep and throw it in the backseat.” I said, “I’m not going to do that. There’s no way.” She looked at me, then opened her door, and went and grabbed a sheep around its waist and tried to heft it up. She dropped it and tried again. It took all her strength to drag it over to the car. She finally managed to stuff it in the backseat before the shepherd saw what she had done. He pounded on her window and hit it with his staff. “A curse on you. I put a curse on you!” he shouted. She rolled down her window and yelled back at him, “National Security. It’s for your own good.”

THE ICE CREAM MAN

I answered the ad in the paper. I had been unemployed for nine months and was desperate. At the interview, the man said, "Do you have much experience climbing tall mountains?" "Absolutely. I climb them all the time. If I see a tall mountain, I have to climb it immediately," I said. "What about swimming long distances in rough ocean waters, perhaps in a storm?" he said. "I'm like a fish, you can't stop me. I just keep going in all kinds of weather," I said. "Could you fly a glider at night and land in a wheat field, possibly under enemy fire?" he said. "Nothing could come more naturally to me," I said. "How are you with explosives? Would a large building, say, twenty stories high present you with much difficulty?" he said. "Certainly not. I pride myself on a certain expertise," I said. "And I take it you are fully acquainted with the latest in rocket launchers and land-mines?" he said. "I even own a few myself for personal use. They're definitely no problem for me," I said. "Now Mr. Strafford, or may I call you Stephen, what you'll be doing is driving one of our ice-cream trucks, selling icecream to all the little kids in the neighborhood, but sometimes things get tricky and we like all our drivers to be well-trained and well-equipped to face any eventuality, you know, some fathers can get quite irate if you are out of their kid's favorite flavor or if the kid drops the cone," he said. "I understand, I won't hesitate to take appropriate action," I said. "And there are certain neighborhoods where you're under advisement to expect the worse, sneak attacks, gang tactics, bodies dropping from trees or rising out of manholes, blockades, machinegun fire, launched explosives, flame throwers and that kind of thing. You can still do a little business there if you are on your toes. Do you see what I'm saying?" he said. "No problem. I know those kinds of neighborhoods, but, as you say, kids still want their icecream and I won't let them down," I said. "Good, Stephen, I think you're going to like this job. It's exciting and challenging. We've, of course, lost a few drivers over the years, but mostly it was because they weren't paying attention. It's what I call the Santa Claus complex. They thought they were there just to make the kids happy. But there's a lot more to it than that. One of our best drivers had to level half the city once. Of course that was an extreme case, but he did what needed to be done. We'll count on you to be able to make that kind of decision. You'll have to have all your weapons loaded and ready to go in a moment's notice. You'll have your escape plans with you at all times," he said. "Yes, sir,

I'll be ready at all times," I said. "And, as you know, some of the icecream is lethal, so that will require a quick judgment call on your part as well. Mistakes will inevitably be made, but try to keep them at a minimum, otherwise the front office becomes flooded with paperwork," he said. "I can assure you I will use it only when I deem it absolutely necessary," I said. "Well, Stephen, I look forward to your joining our team. They're mostly crack professionals, ex-green berets and navy seals and that kind of thing. At the end of the day you've made all those kids happy, but you've also thinned out the bad seeds and made our city a safer place to be," he said. He sat there smiling with immense pride. "How will I know which flavor is lethal?" I said. "Experiment," he said. I looked stunned, then we both started laughing.

Cloudy to the Gallows

Thomas Hummel

I didn't have an umbrella and more
than half were innocent bystanders—
the time came, we climbed up
to second floor, third floor, then down again
second floor to the courtroom
of the Court. Then straw hat. You could read it
on anyone. The sophism
increasingly blatant. After I calmed down

having climbed so many stairs
not to mention crowd presence, I detailed
my route backward: boarded
just before noon, dim sunlight, the standing
guard en route. Their nails and
teeth had been filed down. Arbitrarily
linking one of us to another in
an unexpectedly meticulous fashion

twenty-four of us then sentenced
to death. Same scaffold. I don't care
about the headstone. I had asked
to take a bath, but told them to forget
about that too. If I could take
the places of the others, I would happily
be trussed up, back split open.
I could live a hundred years and still

would not believe the dead survive
and are pleased to receive flowers
incense or any other gifts. Afternoon
sun hits a carriage from the side.

W

Natasha Sajé

Double-you takes up space like a comb in a pocket or a tank rolling heavy on caterpillar treads. Human beings encased in iron, as in the 1991 photo of an Iraqi soldier standing in his tank burnt to a black crisp. Contraband image, snuck past the censors, now something I can worry up more readily than my mother's face. *Let the cockscomb be red.* The Etruscans used hens for oracles and when they died, stroked their collarbones. The Romans started breaking them for wishes. *Widow*: an incomplete line of type (unlucky break) carried over to the next page, usually avoided by rewriting. *Write*, from Latin, *scrivus*, to tear or scratch. *Let the hen be clawed.* *Writhe*, from Old English, to twist, as in agony. One added letter's difference between a plea and a body as it burns.

MARTHA RONK

In the paintings of De Chirico in the years immediately preceding World War I, Ariadne is presented as a statue. She appears both as exposed to all on the piazza and also enclosed in marble and her own dreams. She sleeps, seemingly, to avoid her memories of abandonment and the threatening signs around her, signs that for De Chirico signaled the coming of war: locomotives, lengthening shadows, conspirators off in the distance.

1.
On the piazza

*I saw that every angle of the palace,
every column, every window was an enigma.*

The melancholy of the beautiful is sheeting the day
as weather missing its music.

Her hands are over her eyes fending off thoughts of war.

Mozart is drifting over the piazza if she could hear
arias rolling off their tongues in the humid air.

We won't think about it, won't come near it.

The Piazza San Carlo stands alone in its sandy expanse,
sun-drenched, and but one of the causes.

2.
The onslaught of shadows

what I do is talk to
in every little bits

in every moment of the day or night
and at the end of the road where what I do is to you
sulphurous pit, my eye
how wrong and how long the tomorrows and tomorrows
but there she is or was before this onslaught of shadows
this weatherall swansway whalesroad
where we were wishing a boat to sail down gutters
she betook herself to the places needful before this whisper of
shadows where the two men do what you can't see

3.

The enigmas of the hour 1911

*I became aware there is a host of strange things from the perspective of on-high
De Chirico*

When he was laying plans no one heard the execution.
He hands them over and makes time go by,
newspapers spread out in mosaic on the kitchen floor,
numbers rendered in Morris code.
It might be minutes before three
as if they were draped in church cloth
as if there were anything to lean against—
water spraying the desert air.
The idea of flying overhead just to fly overhead,
the bird with the ruddy breast flapping against the pane,
the moldy underside of a set of wings.

Meniscus

John Olson

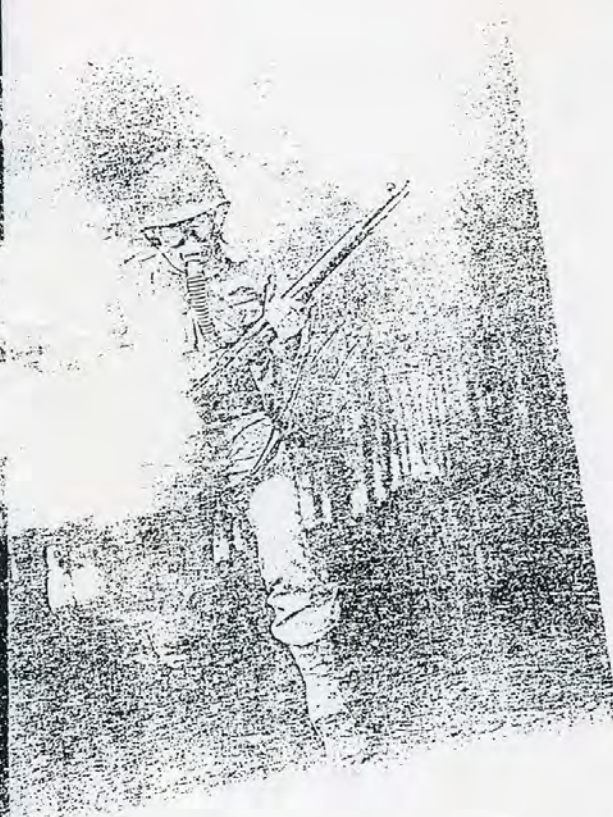
The flamboyance of trout awakens the cadence of water. It is a symptom of birch. Piano and rocking chair confirm the belt of Orion. The fungus did to the salami what the salami did to the harmonics of fable. It became a scrap of royalty, an amaryllis by the bay. Everything turned quiet as a mountain trumpet. Precision was whatever conviction proved most elastic. A candle above the palette moved a kilowatt of line along a surface of paper. A lesion of circumstance gave us a peek at future provocations. We decided to mow the lawn. Later, we chose which spoon to use for the ice cream with an ease neither of us had felt before. Was it our eccentricity, a frivolous ablution, or something even more fugitive, like a fugue? Eternity, you said, is more than a proverb. It is also a warm breathing, a word at the brim of the mouth about to be pushed into sound. This is how insinuation begins. You can follow its tracks to the door. Outside, a galaxy wheels above the horizon, slobbering glamour and cold. There is a magnet of love called romance and a syllable with a core of black. This is what makes coagulation so memorable and red. Coats are even effective as violas when the spine churns with meat and wings blast out of the acorns. A tube of snowflakes blows a smooth music toward a fist of morality. The fist unclenches, the fingers blossom into accord, and a parakeet lands on your shoulder. Bullet or area code, you wonder, pondering a book of geometry, all those parallels and circles answering an inward chaos only a scab of music could turn mauve. Most lids demonstrate a little tension when you lift them. But some, like the eyelids, open more slowly to test the diameter of day when the curtain has been abruptly opened. A limestone idea tempted the goshawk closer. A convertible speeding across Pennsylvania brought Duchamp to mind, and that large shattered glass in which a mechanical bride floats, floats to this day, like something personal and raw, a special feather, or a memory whose parts consist of delight and bluebells. Let me ogle you there at the table. You look so marvelous, so wonderful and silly, dressed like a gold mine in darkness and pages of light. Is that a wedding dress, or a sidewalk hemorrhaging dahlias? I have always loved the color pink. If gravity feels heavy, it is not because of the froth bouncing on the surface of the water, but the way it is calculated with rings housed in crystal. Mayonnaise is generally housed in a buxom glass jar. But no vivacity can linger long in such a cell, not without first evincing pleasure, and then shining against a background of ink, like a freshly written sentence. One that whirls, and hits a few wrong notes, just to let us know it is something ill-defined as a dividend, and more like a bell.

Jan Gilbert & Carolyn Maisel

THE MINING OF THE HARBORS

I think it started when we were born fatherless.
A whole generation without fathers.
They came home from the war dark, still
in their uniforms and we said,
This man is not my Father.

Fort Belvoir, Va. Sept. 1942
Sgt. George Cambialis learning how
to use a gas mask in a practice
smoke screen.
U.S. Office of War Information



22

"The Mining of the Harbors" by CAROLYN MAISEL

Red Lanterns

KENNY TANEMURA

Without struggle there can
 be
no identity,
 said Mao Tse-Tung,
but what is identity—

a mouse-trap with a
 piece
of sushi
 placed on it,
sure to capture

before night's
 end,
a propped up idea
 for red lanterns
and neon logos

colors making a
 striking
contrast in the window.
 The win-lose
situation is dialectical—

would suit Mao's
 one-
up-on-the-other
 pirates of the
Caribbean anti-metaphysics.

One culture jumps
 another's
ship—eye to eye
 no captain
needs a peer

to navigate the
 sea.
We who put our

foreign policies
and Gap clothes

in the same grab
bag,
should know—
there are bigger cities
but that's just a poor

reason to
escape—
the cold, solitude, obstacles,
challenges. You are
what you ooze,

I read somewhere, which
makes
some people sex,
stars, breathing gloss.
Identity goes reeling

before these
involuntary
self-definitions—
tea bag, blue lamp,
hands in the pocket.

Wool-wearing,
brown
or red, how Fall
gets translated
over your skin.

Stay and watch the
colors
turn if you can
take it, resist
the urge back to the coast.

No homeland, but
California,
bootleg rum stash
island
will never be

imaginary—think of the
pleasing
font on the menu,

how much it has
already decided for you.

Tears on the
 hands
of a Cartier watch,
 trusting church or state
never yielded

a trail of
 diamonds.

Try to look
 at the global role
of sticking it out—

there's a woman
 who
talks dirty
 in Polish to you,
her words

can outweigh the
 frozen
tundra of her state.
 She may let loose
and trust again—

more than photocopied
 eyes
bringing energy
 into the room,
her life, leaving me

only with the
 absence
of a black-and-white
 image of a stranger,
almost as foreign

as the one you
 love
on most days.
 Or not, when the temperature
sinks below zero.

Make your call
 before
then, China

and Winter
are sleeping giants now,
except that China won't
wake
for 45 years,
and Wisconsin's cold
blitz is around the corner.

Rob Schlegel

from ICEBLINK

Season of startle, commence. House into which is brought a bullock two years & a half, fleshy & fat & he sets to work beating it & by beating it kills it with his bludgeons. All apertures stopped with white cloths dipped in pitch, the eyes & teeth he excavates deftly. Week after week, windows covered thick with clay until he exposes the bullock to April air April light & secures the house with three more layers of clay. On the eleventh day, having opened it the house is full of bees crowded in clusters roiling over each other on the horns, bones & hair, swarming all that is left of the bullock & from the brain & spinal marrow queen bees are rendered. From flesh, everything from his ability to imagine himself as another, to the dismantled houses, disappearing as cracks in windows further fracture from rumbles of coupling trains lengthening along cities edge where the broken wake beneath road-dust blanketing borrowed clothes & to clean they river in the summer & winter in the somewhere warmer air.

BRIAN TEARE

Vision is question

(Ives : July 4th)

afternoon encumbered

by thunder birches

turned dirty curvy

piss-yellow stormlight

& someone singing behind the trees' screen *a place in the soul*

“a certain

kind of ecstasy”

all made of tunes of long ago

—but it is hard to love

old men's sentimental

off-key singing even

when beauty moved them as it moves us to watch fire

works in wartime eerie green

mimetic sound of missiles

whistling bitter smoke

“but they sing

in my soul”

smothers the field a song our fathers loved : *Shall we gather at the river?*

Gus Iversen The Offender

language, you disaster maker!
what is that anyways?

5 God things:
freedom, love, justice, peace, equality

5 Devil things:
crime, fear, disease, violence, starvation

the kids gather
at the park, laughing and shouting
they play baseball
in the sun
they must be stopped
or we will all be stomped to death.
-sincerely, the grass

i applied the Golden Rule to sea creatures
covered the beach in octopi and lobsters
mountains of gasping, sun-burnt fish
and they broke my tender heart
when they refused the beer i brought

and boredom:
there is much left unsaid about that
no media can afford to acknowledge boredom

i think it is completely clear:
universes ammunition and opinions

are exploding into language

out of boredom

David Koehn

COMMUNICATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 5, PARAGRAPH 1 OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE RESCUE OF ASTRONAUTS, THE RETURN OF ASTRONAUTS, AND THE RETURN OF OBJECTS LAUNCHED INTO OUTER SPACE PARTIAL PANTOUM

I.

Dark matter has washed ashore...

Thirteen children waggle in their hula-hoops,

A shadow hangs over the ring factory of round objects.

Mr. Secretary General should I mention

Product NGC 4151?

Product NGC 4151 is flawed.

Mr. Secretary General I won't mention

What the astronaut was afraid to mention.

It is a dark matter.

Mr. Secretary General I won't mention

That your son has drowned in nothingness, ideas, and music--

In bad dreams and the power of sound,

Debussy's Baudelaire, its brittle opening.

Angstroms and sunspots mark it,

Mr. Secretary General,

Photonic focus on this darkness matters.

void : setRest (CircularListNode rest)

Mr. Secretary General

Dark matter has washed ashore...

void : setRest (CircularListNode rest)

A shadow hangs over the ring factory of round objects.

II.

Shaped like the campanile,

Is it a cistern? A time capsule?

This dark matter is annodated

Antimatter in diffraction, against Jules Verne's visions...

This is not what we are after

We manufacture slinky black nothingnesses,

Stored in the Cisterns of the Boboli Gardens.
You don't understand? I said it is
Stored in the Cisterns of the Boboli Gardens.
You know, Ammannati, Bartolomeo.
You don't understand? I said it is
"A tended heart who hates the vast black nothingness,"
You know. Bartolomeo Ammanati.
Nagasaki.
In the telescope?
A rectangular awl, the image of a lion attacking a human-headed bull,
An interstellar cloud of dust.

SHARP

Matthew Rohrer

Music all day on the stereo. And the rain
in the streets, it's like I'm with friends.
It is hard not to pour a glass of wine in the morning.
I am raining. A red tailed hawk settles
on an old antenna behind the house
and looks right into my eyes
while I'm on the phone with Ellen. Ellen
I say slowly, I'm sure you will succeed
in your endeavors. Those are
not the words I planned to say.
I was still awakening from a dream of the distant war.

Brenda Hillman

BALLAD AT THE STATE CAPITOL

When we climbed the steps of the Capitol in the middle
of winter the middle of main, there were pale new
earthworms washed up on the steps, flat pink circles
around their necks as we passed the hollow in
the soldier's face where he sat in the park not thinking
of the law of If any man steal a minor son he shall be

put to death & so on. Shared light curled under the dome as we
walked. As we crossed. When we rose in the elevators,
we rode with platform managers & retail managers,
investors of mutual funds & stock options, with slim
portfolios that were feeling a little bullish, even slim women
were feeling a little bullish with their trim leather pouches

they took to the staff while the Dow was up & the up was down
past guards with chains that were effective. Through
double doors we walked with our stop- the- killing data
we brought through double central doors where If any
man put out the eye of another his eye shall be put out etc.
we went up dressed like sunrise, for the limits of color

are the limits of our girls. Officials waited like squid for us not
pretty of course like squid in the sea, propped up in
numbered offices when we took our western bodies in
but they flopped. Flopped floppety forward because of
having no spines. Floppety forward they couldn't sit up.
Washington knows best, said Room 2141, Probably not

but Hmm, said Mr. Speaker himself. Yes but Maybe No, said Ed
in 2148. Why try, said Jenny O. Here is some cake. So
it was written on the wall past the chief- of- staff's head
that If any man harm the captain injure the captain
or take away from the captain a gift presented to him
by the king he shall be put to death Raised Seal

Not Required. Thanks for dropping by! said the Canciamilla-
squid as we read the writing past his plutocrat head, in
endless vengeance decimals of pi, two eyes for an eye,
he said, Bye, ladies, goodbye! As we carried our vitamin
shadows out. As we shook their flaccid tentacles off.
As we slipped. When we slipped down the steps

in the middle of rain, the earthworms adjusted the alphabet so
the next thing may not be the next thing, they wrote.
They spelled in calligrammes & codes. When they
brought back Ishtar's cuneiform. For the love of myrtle,
cedar & rose that came from dust. The vine sisters
twisted in stone as they turned in earth to speak to us.

(quotes taken from The Code of Hammurabi, 1750 BCE)

--dedicated to the Code Pink AJR36 Working Group

AJR 36 failed to pass in the Assembly when 3 Democrats did not show up to vote.

JAN GILBERT

DEAR JAN

I'LL START THIS LETTER
SOMETHING ABOUT MYSELF.
WADLE, JUST TURNED 20 Y.
I HAVE BROWN HAIR, BROW
ABOUT 160. IN THE STATE
TOWN NAMED TURNERTOWN, W
MILES EAST OF DALLAS TEX
I GRADUATED FROM GASTON
1965 THEN I WENT TO KILG
YEAR. WHERE I MADE A BIG
AND JOINED THE ARMY IN J
ARMY SENT ME TO KOREA WH
FOR VIETNAM. THE ARMY S
OCTOBER AS I WANTED TH
IN THE FIELD OF SPORTS
ESPECIALLY FOOTBALL U
SCHOOL. IN MY SPARE
COINS.

THE BOYS HERE IN VIE
KNOWN THAT PEOPLE CA
BOYS HERE TO TAKE TI
IT MAKES US FEEL THA
THINK ABOUT US ON TH
WORLD. WE ARE FIGHT
OF THE VIETNAMESE PE
AT THIS TIME OF THE
THE CHRISTMAS AND NE
FOR THE BOYS IN VIE
DAY WHICH MEANS WE AR
COMING HOME.

IT IS HARD TO THINK OF
BECAUSE WE DO THE SAME
IT GETS BORING WRITING
DON'T LIKE TO WRITE AB
OVER HERE.

IF YOU WOULD YOU COUL
THINGS YOU ARE DOING
THE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE
IT WOULD HELP MY TAKI
WAR.

OFF BY TELLING YOU
MY NAME IS BOBBY
EARS OLD, I'M 5FT 8.
N EYES AND WEIGHT
S I LIVE IN A SMALL
WHICH IS ABOUT 120
AS.

HIGH SCHOOL IN
ORE JR. COLLEGE ONE
MISTAKE AND QUIT
ANUARY OF 1967, THE
ERE I VOLUNTEERED
ENT ME TO VIETNAM IN
M TO.

I LIKE THEM ALL,
WHICH I PLAYED IN HIGH
TIME I LIKE TO COLLECT

INAM ARE HAPPY TO
RE ENOUGH ABOUT THE
ME OUT AND WRITE TO US.
T THE PEOPLE BACK HOME
HE OTHER SIDE OF THE
ING FOR THE FREEDOM
OPLE.

YEAR YOU ARE ENJOYING
W YEARS HOLIDAYS, BUT
AM IT IS JUST ANOTHER
E ONE DAY CLOSER IN

ANYTHING TO WRITE
THING EVERY DAY AND
ABOUT THAT AND I
OUT THE FIGHTING

TELL ME ABOUT THE
N SCHOOL AND WHAT
DOING IN YOUR TOWN,
NG MY MIND OFF OF THE

SINCERELY YOURS

Bobby
PFC BOBBY WADLE RA 1597
HHC 567 S&S BN
APO S. F. 98216

A Partial Alienation

Tara Rebele

thirty fence-hangers oriented with anatomically appropriate spouses. former bisexuals lament consolidation and advertise despite a lack of available stock. those who don't sell out hide out and feign suburban. girls once tried to pretend but warn't wont and loosely suffered. so the composition competes with arrangement. all put in order and out of. and the freshest tomatoes. bodies reconstructed all spurious and scraped are ahead of their time. trendsetters one might call them if one chose to consider. at all. considering the waffle in that beeswax time might be better spent. exhausted even. with one of the cognates. otiose and the dirties pile. perhaps an aberration. one could blame the lens. or the finite velocity of light. or the gaze. or the motion. or the fix.

Fragile Elegy

Dan Beachy-Quick

*Speak to me, become a voice
Not too distinct, not too clear,
Come muttering, come as murmur,
Mum imagination, almost violent
—not daisies white in white
pail on pavement
outside the store, not in garden
nor in the darker loam
of her hair, no violets—
Mimic the crowd myriad-voiced
But be secret, be mine
But betray me. Don't whisper love
In my ear. Arrive with your absence
Inside you. Don't tell me I must learn
To speak more quietly. Arrive
With gravity inside you. Don't tell
Me the weight
Is a stone when it's not a stone.
Enter the room and increase the air.
I'll hold my breath so you may
Enter, so you may become a voice
—I cannot promise to bear it—
And speak to me:*

•

Winter knotted the water on wire to ice

Not to deny I remember
Silence the seasonal equi

nox, equi
knot December warm once

again my mouth figments
what

some frozen what

•

that speaking that speaks *Winter*

where in my cold reaches I think
of him who in prison sang a scent
of leaf in his hand to remember
who saw through the smoke-hole
Sirius in the infirmary tent who
might do best to acquire forgetting
to add silence in who cannot
remove himself from brute time
fringes beauty with harm and he
saw on three wires the sparrows sit—
the sparrows who in the searchlights nest—
and composed the canto to varying
perches and so composed his song
and so a wire now in my eye hums
the image in blue wires and inter
lines the words on the blank

sky/page speaks *water* in knots

•

water flows falls drips and doesn't
flow such simple words a moment
unlocks singular heat
even now when the syllable is
what is now

frozen
now creates heat as it excludes heat
. . . .
and so breath will in a word
melt ice
by saying against ice
ice

•

Become a voice, I know you will
Lie. I know you will ask me to
Perjure myself more—formally . . .

Winter knotted the water on wire to ice

How I've come to distrust my own impulse toward aphorism
Is the only story I'm embedding beneath the turn
But it cannot be believed as I myself don't believe

Form reconciles opposites while preserving essence

Where there is no truth but maybe truthfulness
Abides. I can't say why I'm blushing
So exactly in my cheeks and nowhere else

No, it is not the dawn let's vow to despise
Loveliness No, it's not veins flushed
At my own brazenness let's assume exactitude

Corrupts the crest of the cardinal No

No
Nothing here is discovered no

Nothing is disclosed

•

Speak me in Become my voice

Speak it in me as if it were mine

I know there is no
water there is no ice

no sun with a pencil line
cutting in half light

no icicle blood-red, no blood
no thought but breath

except when I say it I feel it
cold in my mind

as if in echo I've uttered twice
what is forbidden

repeats I know

there is no me minus
your breathing above a page

and is this mine this breath
colder as it fills the lungs

a word transferred to blood
to brain
to zero blanketing the fields
in snow or as snow but colder

the simile a shard

there is this icicle on a wire
a wire and no breeze in my mind

•

When a stone is not a stone
When it is forbidden what is forbidden
I have this feeling in me I call sorrow

And it's not even mine

Why—while sitting in this room
With a line inside me wanting
The blank to be filled in—
Do I think someone is about to call me
(not my name) to myself

And I look up from the page
I look back over my shoulder with some

Expectation of being
About to be

Struck and wanting to—

•

The prisoner kept a leaf of eucalyptus in his hand
When he saw the wire he sang
Memory on the edge of the palm and greater need
Scented the air in his lungs and sanity was less
A concern than the lynx he thought the woman
He loved betrayed by his love but the birds

Composed the wires

As he sang them I listened to be humble and grew
Audacious in invocation

Ask me how the blank page crossed by blue wires
Became You and I soldered silence
I called mine to silence I called yours

With only the heat of my mind to say here
There is no sun no light no heat only a wire

Exerting my force in absence to be cruel
To remember the poem is it always this story
Of its own utterance and nothing

I heard a voice and the voice came to me

Winter knotted the water on wire to ice

Past tense before the memory occurred

•

In years past she wore violence in her hair

When she came to me in bouquets I spoke days in her

Then, Winter no scent in the air
Then, Wire no leaf-scented air

Then on the train to work the water in ice
I couldn't exactly sing

The sun or some
Figure

What concentration other than breath equaled heat
To undo what was given

—to melt the image
into use other than
beauty do you know there are those
 so thirsty they are mad and they think to slake
 their thirst they can drink the water
 in the bucket of daisies and worse
 drink the birds

And of my madness I have this simple story
To invoke possibly silence

. . . .

Nothing in the mind sufficed

Joseph Lease America

Try saying *wren*.

It's midnight in my body, 4 a.m. in my body, breaching and olives and cherries. Wait it's all rotten. How am I ever. Oh notebook. A clown explains the war. What start or color or what kind of grace. I have to teach. I have to run, eat less junk. Oh CNN. What start or color. There's a fist of meat in my solar plexus and green light in my mouth and little chips of dream flake off my skin. Try saying *wren*. Try saying *mercy*.

Try anything.

~

Summer was

Drunk we all

Were drunk

Summer danced

Round and

Round

City of God

100 miles

~

Climate change is a fact. The next big thing issue. More. Bands to watch. Climate change is a fact. Fuzzed-out trio from Los Angeles. Climate change. More new music to hear now. The next big scene: Montreal. No—really. “You have some pretty ballsy and innovative culture,” says Gavin MacInnes. Climate change is a fact. Conor Oberst. Conor Oberst. Reduce emissions, too late, too late, too late. No matter how many hybrid cars. No matter how many solar panels. Factories. Trucks. CO2, CO2, CO2. Conor Oberst has gone from indie breakup bard to incensed protest singer to potential pop phenom. He may also be the best songwriter of his generation. So what does he do next?

~

airbrushed
Gwyneth at
the Renoir
Hotel, St. Pauli
Girl, California Check
Cashing, serve
chilled

~

While California's colleges and universities were shedding 8,000 jobs, the Department of Corrections hired 26,000 new employees to guard 112,000 new inmates. As a result, California is now the proud owner of the third largest penal system in the world (after China and the United States as a whole).

~

Wake up, you're not the truth—"in April 2002, Dick Cheney stated directly that the 'War on Terrorism' will probably never end, at least not in our lifetimes—these days, the predominant point of view is that of an innocent gaze confronting unspeakable evil which struck from the outside"—leaves everywhere on grass, astonishing sky, oh well—wake us, wake us and we—

~

I carry the sun
in a
golden cup,
the moon in
a silver bag. I
listen to God
in a pair of birds
fighting like burning
rags.

~

Say it—there is still
magic in the world—it's in your wallet—use your
Visa Card—your next purchase
could be free

~

O Captain, my Captain.

Citizen, O citizen. Feels like. You've killed someone or no. You didn't. You did. You're responsible. You're irresponsible. You didn't do it. You can't remember. You feel like you might have. You might have killed someone. And you won't remember.

Don't want to remember.

Don't want to be told again.

~

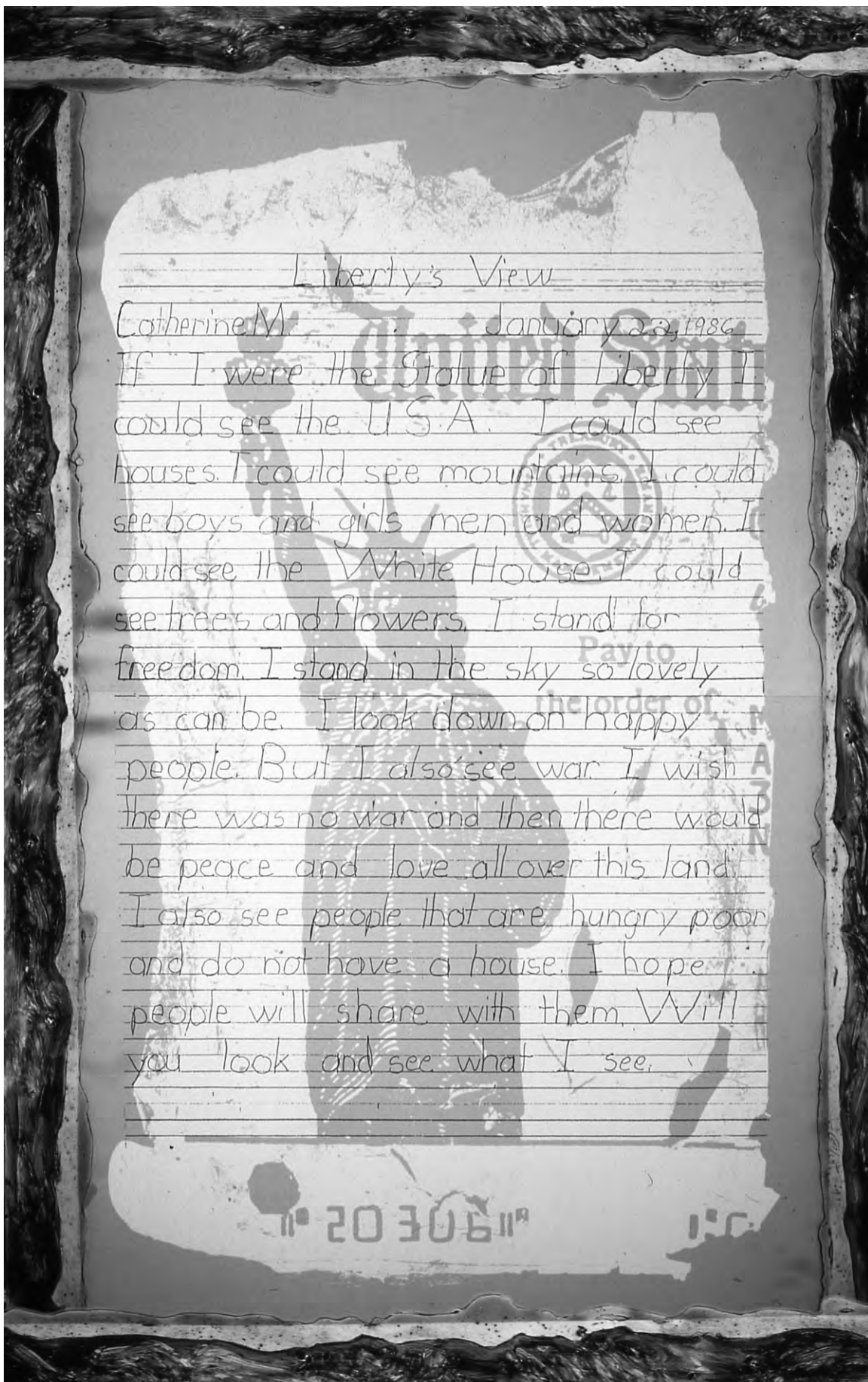
And—as if this phrase had never been abused in our lifetimes—to the ideal of a free society. It's midnight in my body, 4 a.m. in my body, breading and olives and cherries. Wait it's all rotten. How am I ever. Oh notebook. A clown explains the war. Wake up you're not the truth.

Try saying *wren*.

Try saying *mercy*.

Try anything.

JAN GILBERT



Personal Poem

PAUL HOOVER

Tomorrow I have to cross the mountain
Back to the mist of the world.

-Tu Fu

1

There is no Tu Fu now
To praise the recovery of our eastern lands;
There are no lands to recover, only those to seize.
One of our dead soldiers for every ten of theirs,
And the campaign proceeds without objection.
A young soldier cleans his long-distance rifle,
Which killed three men today.
Then he watches the dust at his feet,
More ancient with each step,
Without understanding.

2

When the war photographs are published,
Our imperial army
Is dressed like Star Wars figures,
Helmets slightly German.

A thousand years ago,
The Emperor killed six poets
Who wouldn't listen to reason.

Crows still like to gather
In that part of the forest,
Where the blood is deepest.

But the rain is always new,
Going as far as it can
Into the ground that receives it.

One war follows another.
Armies stumble over their reasons,
Walking from darkness to darkness.

No time is safe from peace.
The monuments in the park
Are built on the darkest blood,
Rinsed by the freshest rain.

3

Seen from the gift shop of the Summer Palace,
The water of Lake Kunming
Glistens in perfect weather
All the way to the island
Where the Empress Dowager
Watched the moon come up each evening.
The pagoda was built to frame her chair.
The island was built to bring the moon
Closer to the Empress.

The Empress is gone, and the Dynasty has collapsed.
But the island remains with its empty buildings.

Waiting until the gates are locked,
A tourist guide and her boyfriend
Sit on the throne together, sharing a cigarette.
The moon is for them and the lake as it glimmers.
They're hatching a plot that begins with a kiss.

4

A great official and lover of gardens
Purchased a beautiful stone.

But it was very large
And distant from his garden.

A hundred men moved it
A few feet each day.

Halfway to the chosen site,
The great official ran out of money.

The stone was abandoned to nature
And has been there five hundred years.

In all such matters,
Nature comes out well.

5

A thousand private moments lie on the battlefield,
Each more hushed than the last.
The trees offer no objection; the grass lies quietly by.
But the wind goes in all directions,
Howling through holes in the rocks,
Rushing without caution into every wall.

6

In a valley of Yunnan,
Three pagodas were built.

Twenty-two kings ruled there,
Nine of them so badly
They were turned into monks
And sent to study at the three pagodas.

They learned to pray all day,
Make paper from cloth,
And write poetry with a few cold words.
There was no one to command, no one really
To share their pain or pleasure.

The palace is empty and also the pagodas,
Which lean a little more with each earthquake.
Now is the kingdom of ants,
Of sunlight and flowers.

Everything is in place
As nature decides to have it:

The bus driver listening to Chinese opera,
An old woman selling cucumbers at the gate,
a bee stumbling over its petals.

But our commander glowers
At his well-lighted map.
He has no desire to end the war he started.
He has what he came for.
Dead soldiers make low wages.
No kings turned poets in American pagodas.

7

We've lived in the house ten years.
In the rainy season, it rises

Because the ground is soaked.
Ants crawl under the door.

In the long dry season,
The house sinks down again,
Like a boat at harbor.

Season by season,
It's good fortune or none at all—
Life in the midst of life.

An old friend calls,
His voice so pleasant
Even though he's betrayed me.
Friends for thirty years
And no way to forgive him.

And the war, the incessant war,
Drums in our ears; turns blue on the news.
No one to tell the truth—
Even the leaves turn quietly away.

ERIC LORBERER

THE FUTURE

An ocean. The future.

Becomes the dawn. In pieces
wreckage of tremor, wreckage of
complaint and distance,

waves of hand eye...

And in the event, the future
so you loved the steps
heard in the hour before hunger

why the sound
of money and other
we waited in lines for bread

style of sunlight

those distant notes
could be a ship, a bell
an alone person's transcendent
moment the tremor
becomes

could be a dream this c

In pieces I began to put
my mind
to it

we had a shaded terrace
a hint of posterity
the corpse
could swim in repose
first bloated, then missing
this was since
summer
since

sin sum

FREEDOM

... an eyelash gliding on the surface of the eye.

Hawley Hussey





REVERSIBLE MASK

The reversible mask lets you see
everything else is wearing a mask.
Tree mask.
Blood mask.
Rachael can't decide about cremation.
How did we get on this subject?
Her dad is sick.
The road is brick
making the coaches rumble.
Behind the sky mask, vast nothingness
showing through the eyeholes scaring kids
and those approaching death in coaches rapid.
Your own mask makes it easier to talk to Rachael
mask.
Who knows what her actual face is sobbing.
Hurt mask. Hospital mask.
Mountains are pretending.
Me in you mask.
Even the city in city mask so you can't tell if it's
lying.
The reversible mask, somehow
you ended up with a collection.
Daffodil mask.
Rachael mask.
Kafka mask.
Old trail in the woods being the high school mask.
Lying in bed with the flu reading mask.
Beauty mask.
Face in a doorknob, face upside-down projection
phenomenon mask.
Talking with friend's mask mask.
Nothing broken everything will be okay mask.
Somehow mask.
Under that, no.
Under that, zero.
Under that maybe
gold foil, glass tear,
unanimal living.

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

My job's to stroll high-end department stores
while the Trans American Building mounts
the fog, the whole public transit system
moaning below, oh let me lick your heart
until your belly's tawny down stands up.
I like to stagger past Nefertiti's nursemaids
with their luminous warpaints and embalming goos,
whose cunts would taste like aerosol
and dyed fur, pink rabbit, blue ferret,
mink green as the devil's dream date's pubic hair.
And the rouged homosexuals in menswear,
thick bracelet watches and weight watchers
lunch shakes, eyes like martini onions
when I look right at them and smile,
the store detective by now trailing me
as I finger an \$800 sandal's miniscule
straps glued to a holy wafer of sole,
buckle like a billionaire's baby doll's
chastity lock, leaving my smudges
on the guncase of scarves fantasmagoric
as blowholes in the mammalian mind,
sneezing into my sleeve, maybe some twigs
sticking out my skull, a brainmass simmering
from sleeping on a steamgrate, casing
the joint for when I return scrubbed bright
with the sword.

Robert Hass

WINGED AND ACID DARK

A sentence with 'dappled shadow' in it.
Something not sayable
spurting from the morning silence,
secret as a thrush.

The other man, the officer, who brought onions
and wine and sacks of flour,
the major with the swollen knee,
wanted intelligent conversation afterwards.
Having no choice, she provided that too.

Potsdamerplatz, May 1945.

When the first one was through he pried her mouth open.
Basho told Rensetsu to avoid sensational materials.
If the horror of the world were the truth of the world,
he said, there would be no one to say it
and no one to say it to.
I think he recommended describing the slightly frenzied
swarming of insects near a waterfall.

Pried her mouth open and spit in it.
We pass these things on,
Probably, because we are what we can imagine.

Something not sayable in the morning silence.
The mind hungering after likenesses. "Tender sky," etc.,
curves the swallows trace in air.

(::) A POEM

“You would think God would relent,” the American poet Richard Eberhardt wrote during World War II, “listening to the fury of aerial bombardment.” Of course, God is not the cause of aerial bombardment. During the Vietnam War, the United States hired the RAND Corporation to conduct a study of the effects in the peasant villages of Vietnam of their policy of saturation bombing of the countryside. That policy had at least two purposes: to defoliate the tropical forests as a way of locating the enemy and to kill the enemy if he happened to be in the way of the concussion bombs or the napalm or the firebombs. The RAND Corporation sent a young scholar named Leon Goure to Vietnam. His study was rushed by the Air Force which was impatient for results, but he was able to conduct interviews through interpreters with farmers in the Mekong Delta and the mountainous hillside farm regions around Hue. He concluded that the incidental damage to civilian lives was very considerable and that the villagers were angry and afraid, but he also found that they blamed the Viet Cong—the insurrectionist army the U.S. was fighting—and not the United States for their troubles, because they thought of the Viet Cong as their legitimate government and felt it wasn’t protecting them. Seeing that the bombing was alienating the peasantry from the enemy Vietnamese, Robert McNamara, the secretary of Defense, General William Westmoreland, the commander in charge of prosecuting the war, and Lyndon Johnson, the President of the United States, ordered an intensification of the bombing. In the end, there were more bombs dropped on the villages and forests of South Vietnam than were dropped in all of World War II. The estimated Vietnamese casualties during the war is two million. It was a war whose principle strategy was terror. More Iraqi civilians have now been incidental casualties of the conduct of the war in Iraq than were killed by Arab terrorists in the destruction of the World Trade Center. In the first twenty years of the 20th century 90% of war deaths were the deaths of combatants. In the last twenty years of the twentieth century 90% of war deaths were deaths of civilians. There is a simple enough response to these facts. The nations of the world could abolish the use of aerial bombardment in warfare. You would think men would relent.

(::) I AM YOUR WAITER TONIGHT AND MY NAME IS DMITRI

Is, more or less, the title of a poem by John Ashbery and has
No investment in the fact that you can get an adolescent
Of the human species to do almost anything,
Which is why they are tromping down a road in Fallujah
In combat gear and a hundred and fifteen degrees of heat
This morning and why a young woman is strapping
Twenty pounds of explosives to her mortal body in Jerusalem
Dulce et decorum est pro patri mori. Have I mentioned
That the other fact of human nature is that human beings
Will do anything they see someone else do and someone
Will do almost anything? There is probably a waiter
In this country so clueless he wears a t-shirt in the gym
That says Da Meat Tree. Not our protagonist. American amnesia
Is such that he may very well be the great-grandson
Of the elder Karamazov brother who fled to the Middle West
With his girl friend Grushenka—he never killed his father,
It isn't true that he killed his father—but his religion
Was that woman's honey-colored head, an ideal tangible
Enough to die for, and he lived for it: in Buffalo,
New York, or Sandusky, Ohio. He never learned much English,
But he slept beside her in the night until she was an old woman
Who still knew her way to the Russian pharmacist
In a Chicago suburb where she could buy sachets of the herbs
Of the Russian summer that her coarse white nightgown
Smelled of as he fell asleep, though he smoked Turkish cigarettes
And could hardly smell. Grushenka got two boys out of her body,
One was born in 1894, the other in 1896,
The elder having died in the mud at the Battle of the Somme
From a piece of shrapnel manufactured by Alfred Nobel.
Metal traveling at that speed works amazing transformations
On the tissues of the human intestine; the other son worked construction
The year his mother died. If they could have, they would have,
If not filled, half-filled her coffin with the petals
Of buckwheat flowers from which Crimean bees made the honey
Bought in the honey market in St. Petersburg (not far
From the place where Raskolnikov, himself an adolescent male,
Couldn't kill the old money-lender without killing her saintly sister,
But killed her nevertheless in a fit of guilt and reasoning
Which went something like this: since the world
Evidently consists in the ravenous pursuit of wealth
And power and in the exploitation and prostitution

Of women, except the wholly self-sacrificing ones
Who make you crazy with guilt, and since I am going
To be the world, I might as well take an axe to the head
Of this woman who symbolizes both usury and the guilt
The virtue and suffering of women induces in men,
And be done with it.) I frankly admit the syntax
Of that sentence, like the intestines slithering from the hands
Of the startled boys clutching their belly wounds
At the Somme, has escaped my grip. I step over it
Gingerly. Where were we? Not far from the honey-market,
Which is not far from the hay-market. It is important
To remember that the teeming cities of the nineteenth century
Were site central for horsewhipping. Humans had domesticated
The race of horses some ten centuries before, harnessed them,
Trained them, whipped them mercilessly for recalcitrance
In Vienna, Prague, Naples, London, and Chicago, according
To the novels of the period which may have been noticing this
For the first time or registering an actual statistical increase
In either human brutality or the insurrectionary impulse
In horses, which were fed hay, so there was, of course,
In every European city a hay-market like the one in which
Raskolnikov kissed the earth from a longing for salvation.
Grushenka, though Dostoyevsky made her, probably did not
Have much use for novels of ideas. Her younger son,
A master carpenter, eventually took a degree in engineering
From Bucknell University. He married an Irish girl
From Vermont who was descended from the gardener
Of Emily Dickinson, but that's another story. Their son
In Iwo Jima died. Gangrene. But he left behind, curled
In the body of the daughter of a Russian Jewish cigar-maker
from Minsk, the fetal curl of a being who became the lead dancer
In the Cleveland Ballet, radiant Tanya, who turned in
A bad knee sometime early 1971, just after her brother ate it
In Cao Dai Dien, for motherhood, which brings us
To our waiter, Dmitri, who, you will have noticed, is not in Bagdad.
He doesn't even want to be an actor. He has been offered
Roles in several major motion pictures and refused them
Because he is, in fact, under contract to John Ashbery
Who is a sane and humane man and has no intention
Of releasing him from the poem. You can get killed out there.
He is allowed to go home for his mother's birthday and she
Has described to him on the phone—a cell phone, he's
Walking down Christopher Street with such easy bearing
He could be St. Christopher bearing innocence across a river--
Having come across, inside an old envelope, a lock,
A feathery curl of his great-grandmother's Crimean-
Honey-bee-colored, Russian-spring-wildflower-sachet-
Scented hair in the attic, where it released for her

In the July heat and raftery midsummer dark the memory
Of an odor like life itself carried to her on the wind.
Here is your sea bass with a light lemon and caper sauce.
Here is your dish of raspberries and chocolate; notice
Their transfiguration of the colors of excrement and blood;
And here are the flecks of crystallized lavender that stipple it.

A Parking Lot Just Outside the Ruins of Babylon

Reginald
Shepherd

Just outside the dust of Babylon, tank treads
not designed for desert transport
grind down the royal road from Sardis
to Persepolis. Just outside Babylon, the gate of the gods
is closed for repair, please choose an alternate
route. Ishtar has retired from the fray and may not
return, stripped naked of her ornaments and hung upside down
in the underworld as she is. Just outside
Babylon, the palaces have fallen into disrepair, the lion
-crowned columns have feet of clay. Although
there is an ample supply of imported spirits,
the incense seems to be missing; the astronomical tables
are off by centuries. Sun-baked mud brick
is crumbling into sand and sentiment, forgetful sediments
and fertilizer residues, a depleted water table's salt
and pesticides. Just outside the outside (a window,
door, a gate left open in the rush to leave, creaking
complaints to desert noon, a blankly blazing candor),
the Euphrates is a toxic fire, fish swimming chemical
currents don't know they're dead, the fishermen
eat them anyway, with garlic, onions, and mint,
while somewhere somewhat north of Babylon, the Tigris
is a predator, a fang of lightning ripping Assyria
in half, Akkad is smashed agate
and tin. Just outside, just outside, the hanging gardens
dangle from a frayed and double-knotted
nylon rope, twisting in a storm of chaff and shrapnel; smashed
clay tablets' cuneiform enumerates the daily dead, body
bag winds score the bare ruined walls of Susa with no song.

Self-Portrait in the New World Order

You're walking down the street alone, absorbed
in the anticipation of a lunchtime salad
with that crusty olive bread you like so much,
and suddenly you're marching in formation
in a crowd, it's called a regiment.
You seem to be a soldier this time, you learn
to be at war. You're never really in danger
because you know you can't die
in your dreams, but sometimes
you wonder who told you that and whether
they could be trusted. The sidewalk is split
and uneven because of the shrapnel
and the artillery shells; yesterday
you didn't know the definition of artillery,
but today you know how to use it, all kinds
of field ordnance. "Ordnance" is a word
you'd never heard before. Every time
there's so much to notice, so much
to remember and write down. Here's
a little notebook with rubbed-down corners
for your back pocket. It's the little things
that distinguish one war from another,
tonight your shoes are black standard issue
marching boots that lace half-way up
your calves, whereas the other night
you had no shoes, or the shoes you'd lost
were beige bedroom slippers whose plush
offered no protection from the slush and rain
you trudged through. The subway crash
distracted you from that, now
you're climbing over the wreckage
to the next sheltered position, air thick
with morning mist (you're shivering), smoke
and a haze of acrid dust, it burns your lungs.
You're clambering through accorded cars,
where are those twisted rails
that won't carry any passengers taking you?

Daniel Tiffany

from "Shivaree"

Interlude: Seven Tears

LB: Down among the hongerey worms I sleep.
FDL: So well paid see you be.
LB: Sans peer.
FDL: Hurt-sickle, rib grass.
LB: Naked shelving crags.
FDL: Wha?
LB: Injun' out of kitchen came.
FDL: Girt gravel—& green gravel.
LB: If it comes to that.
FDL: The bouche of Court.
LB: Stones burnt.
FDL: Nothing showy is liked of.
LB: On my left, my left.
FDL: In distempered dream.
LB: Go-to-bed-at-noon.
FDL: And cast I never know what.
LB: The versing box.
FDL: Discovered very late.
LB : Straight with him in fambling cheats.
FDL: A dimple in the tomb.

0 Per Se 0

Vague Adam: Dear corpse, says he.

Westwest: In my regimental small clothes.

Childe scolding a flower: A vow he made
but he kept it very ill.

Flower-de-Luce: He kept it, perchance, in the conscious shade.

Plank o wude: I should say you are fond of dark
colors and vice-versa.

Westwest: The contest was hard on both sides.

Flower-de-Luce: All upon the running corn
and all the harm ever I done.

Westwest: Hithertoo fruitless errands.

Old Sultan: No, the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman.

Lord Byron: He looks like a giant hair ball.

20471120: His boyfriend's an idiot.

Flower-de-Luce: French Mercury. Frog-bit. Fritillary.

Tragic Mulatto: Determined to get there first
he enters the garden with a private key.

Westwest: To subordinate the idea of Time to that of likeness.

Old Sultan: Slang for the pink redoubt.

Tragic Mulatto: Ba, ba, lilli ba.

Fume Terre

FDL: I came by your door.

LB: It lay in your road.

FDL: Your dog barkit at me.

LB: It is his use & custom.

FDL: There's a straw at your beard.

LB: I wish it had been a thrave.

FDL: The ox is eating at it.

LB: Were the ox in the water.

FDL: And you must barn it in a mouse-holl
And thrash it into your shoes soll,

And you must winnow it in the looff
And also seek it in your glove.

LB: That is all I ask.

FDL: Dog's wheat, double-tooth, duckmeat.

LB: All I ask, the while we.

FDL: For I crave one kiss of your clay-cold lips.

THE DANCE THAT WE MADE

History has a way of rearranging dots on a graph: hairpin turns stack decades, and bind seemingly unrelated events; long curves expand in the middle, stretching linked acts into islands. In the end, sequences may melt into simultaneities, or drift apart like clouds forgetting rain. So when Richard asked me, a few years back, to write the text for a dance about AIDS, I had to lower my body into a graph to see what I still felt, to chart what remained beating near to my heart, or what had diminished all the way to echo.

Richard himself was returning to life as a dancer after his lover's death, after several years of his own struggle with HIV, and was making his own daily tests of flexibility and fortitude. Though in the 90s I'd written a book about AIDS, my immediate senses told me it had happened too long ago: I wasn't sure I could still capably represent the immediate peril and collective saturation, the daily loss and daily triumph I'd once felt (even as a "healthy" man) in pandemic-era San Francisco. I was ready to surrender my impulse to collaborate, and as a kind of apologia, began a formal "letter" of explanation, a substitution, a letter dance.

*

Dear Richard,

I hallucinated you in the park today — just a guy-shadow with a similar shape — and for an instant I was able to project myself into you, enter your skin and for an instant, I saw, possibly speak from there. It took a physical shape to seduce and activate me, where mentality and abstractions had left me wordless. A body knows from which it speaks. A body is full of information. In my thoughts I can sympathize, I can scrutinize, I can inventory and I can pray, I can ask shapely questions, suspend answers, I can even imagine myself toweling off your

night sweats or carrying you up four flights of stairs if I had to. My experience resembles these actions. I can't describe your dead lover; I can't be your wounds or heal them; I can't accompany you on your well-earned victory laps. I can't be suitably astonished by the agonized body's driving force to remake itself again and again, though words resemble these experiences. I'm less than a survivor: I've just been living.

*

I'd wanted to offer Richard something in lieu of necessary comprehension, and I knew a "story" that still wanted telling. But to write about friends dying from, surviving, or transcending AIDS, didn't I need to shoulder some burden of history, to acknowledge the frame enveloping the frame? Even now — several years after I began my letter to Richard and eight years since Marshall's death — when I'm unexpectedly seized by the untold narrative, I still wonder whether giving Marshall's death its due requires placing it *inside* the raging epidemic, San Francisco of the 80s and 90s, inside a frame of other frames, a grand, dramatic, panoramic gallery unspeakably long, or just an everyday family album stuffed with helplessly demotic snapshots. Ah, the vital tenor, the pressure, the grief, the accuracy, the lift, the loss, the loss, the names, the language, the infancy, the phantasm, the new old age, the pure volition, the surrender, the schooling, the tender vigil, the words spoken out loud or not spoken at all or murmured into the mystery of the night, the words held in abeyance in a secret pocket for another time, another room, another improvised blessing or curse... But a personal request was hanging in the air; at least I might be able to offer Richard a tale to spark his dance. So in place of any newly awakened text I might muster, I continued with the letter.

*

My dead friend Marshall wants me to tell you part of his story, which I observed, and which I have remembered. His final frailty was thorough and precise, a total deconstruction, so complete it remained out of reach of sentimental projection or exaggerated sympathy. His wasted body small to begin with dwindled inward to a point, a disappearing act, a fact. His ears gone deaf three months previously, his eyes shut down to light and shade: a secret man. That might have been his story if you hadn't known the people we've known.

He'd been raving semi-coherently about a lovely man who'd been delivered to him by a friend — the last newcomer to be actually seen (though Marshall had barely known him, and he'd already departed weeks ago) — and who'd become, *since* then, blind Marshall's spirit guide, his angel of death (I thought) to whom he spoke lovingly and reverently as an eternal beloved — pure intimate address — when others were gathered around, and often when they weren't. "Arno," who even in absence kept Marshall's vocabulary elevated with thrilling, seat-of-the-pants passion and courtly, troubadour vows. "Arno," whose lyrical name and recollected visage Marshall then placed on anyone else in actual attendance, speaking with fervent, conspiratorial fixation "*There you are.*" We were all guises of this one demon lover, whose skin and face slipped over each of us like a sheath, and whose interactive high-minded ardor we duly impersonated. We didn't correct Marshall, since in our friendships we resembled this devotion. We were all of us willingly *Arno*. A convention of Great Beloveds assembled in his room or near his bed, and we each entered the cottage zone prepared for this hushed intensity, the last cleared circle of theatrical redemption: love in bloom.

*

I put my letter to Richard aside for a while. A story is not a dance, I knew, but I had in my hands only what I had in my head. Stories, I know, circle even when they aren't told (the letter was written but wasn't sent) so that even now, years later, I'm driven, again, to tell. On *this* day in April after relentless, record-breaking rains, the sun — hello, stranger — has yanked up the first

alarming crop of wildflowers, and the word “bouquet” is fresh on my tongue from yesterday’s email (I’d petulantly told a recalcitrant potential date that I had “collected my little bouquet of ‘no’s’” and would wait for *him* to contact *me!*) In this floral melodrama, Marshall inescapably sits on my shoulder once more, and I return to a letter never sent and never really completed to finish a narrative looking for continuity.

*

Zalman, Marshall’s main caregiver, had given over his bungalow to Marshall’s final months, his final days, his breath or two, this winnowing fade. Through the Petaluma summer’s long heat, Marshall had tended a small backyard garden, prize endeavor and joyous, creative tether. By August his eyes were gone, but the garden was bright in his heart and he was kept apprised of its progress. Now, at last — September’s flourish — the plot was in high bloom. From the blind bed on which his bones floated, Marshall asked Zalman, one of the only friends whose personal touch he actually recognized (one of the few who weren’t “Arno,”), in a voice part solicitous and part rich with command, asked, “Bring me some flowers, please.”

Zalman went to the back of the house and cut a fine bouquet — flowers resemble our best intentions — then happily brought an overflowing vase to Marshall in bed: buoyant zinnias in transcendental hues, pledge and proof of summer’s forward-looking zeal. He guided Marshall’s bony hands to feel the curl and bend and flute of each open corolla. With delicate care Marshall sculpted in air, lightly caressing petal and crown, molding the blossoms into a proud, pantomime bouquet. He leaned forward to inhale, where hearing and sight were beyond him, to bring into his body this fist of full bloom. A small shudder rolled across his face. Slowly, carefully, Marshall grasped the brimming vase in both hands and thrust it across the wide bed directly toward Zalman. Then with arms outstretched and filled with flowers, he whispered excitedly, “They’re for *you!*”

Dear Richard, this is my dance for you, insofar as it resembles the movement you can make of it. I've seen such things! — some of which I can tell, in the small ways in which I'm the semblance of the friends I've known. This world, in the end, "corresponds to itself," of which we partake with gusto.

*

The letter remained uncompleted inside of my computer. In the end, I flew from San Francisco to New York in order to watch Richard dance in his studio, to see if his living, gesturing body could awaken in mine the necessary memory of the necessary urgency of AIDS — cast now as the measure of *his* endurance. In a rickety downtown studio, on a folding chair in the filtered light, I felt Richard's muscles pull against their limits, then trembled with the challenge each extension and propulsion made visible. Within minutes his movement *remembered* me, made me actively engaged in a long struggle familiar, estranged, but retained in my body the way steps imprint themselves in a dancer's corporal recall. I proceeded, then, to collaborate with Richard on a new solo for him, while Paula composed a score: text, movement, music in alliance, a model of walking, looking, and thinking. In the piece, Richard's slow-motion weave through space is a paced enactment of composure and focus. Against gravity, amidst the hurrying furies, he has surrendered to the fixity of his own deliberate gaze.

Here is the opening of the dance that we made:

Sky panels move and shift. Things move *through* them and *in* them. Clouds, birds, airplanes; the spires of tall buildings. The sky moves *in* me and *through* me. Air currents swirl and bend; my back bends forward in the wind. On the pavement in a gray puddle the sky shimmers blue, a pinch of white dissolving as the cloud-wisps drift.

Sky panels scroll and shift. The fat feathery clouds are bunched with gray bottoms, white

contours. A sea-blue hole like an eye watches a gull swoop. It moves *under* the sky, not *in* it. A corniced building cuts into the edge of a cloud mass, where a darker gray comprises the heart of the cloud. It moves *in* me, not *over* me.

Sky panels widen. A gleam of sunlight pulls at the feathers of the clouds, spreading them but also spreading the gray—which turns darker, thicker, as if a fuzz were on it. Patterns of shadow cut and lace the pavement, moving *over* it and *on* it. The red in the brick wall pulsates, then fades.

Sky panels shuffle and tense. White serrates the middle of a cloud bank, then rips. It tears *through* me and past me. Car hoods shine metallic under the glare, almost wet with light. A seam of blue widens then closes, sutured. A small hole stays visible, and light rushes into it. It folds shut, but lip edges are flushed with white. They're absorbed inward and move off. Two pigeons punctuate the rooftop in silhouette, featureless but ruffled against the shifting gray.

A panel of sky unmoving. It holds me and I hold it. Layers and layers of petaled gray, deeper and deeper towards a whitish core, where a wash of light hangs suspended. The interior panels congeal and separate, but the outer frame remains whole, fixed. It sucks *in* and blows *out*. A taxi idles, pulling the sky into its windshield where no passenger sits, as if a streak or a flash were frozen.

Sky panels shift and move. Bright masses push gray masses out of the way, making the outspread wings of the pigeons transparent. A flare of sunlight catches the rooftop, turning the granite metallic. Something like heat falls from the sky, passing *through* me. A gray mass nudges past the white. A woman's hair stands perpendicular in the breeze, pointing toward the sky, which coalesces around a dark spot then disperses. An island of blue is glimpsed *inside* the clouds; it's *behind* them and *through* them; they move *over* it and *on* it, but they don't move past it. The nearest cloud seems to silver the whole street. I move *in* it and *on* it as the sky moves through.

Steve Dickison

2

in paper

I thought I saw it all when I went
not me, like a bad cough turned into a thing
nose to the Age of Stone on the pavement
"twenty-seven count team from suspected haven"
written into the book of digital humiliations
what brand of people comes invested in
plastic handcuffs? if I resembled that remark
even as I stumbled over the prescription
"resist the temptation to 'understand'
and accomplish a gesture analogous
to turning off the sound of a TV," and yet
down one the riverine hollows of your mind
the little frogs are going ape with chirping
amphibious crickets in watery bed
arrayed on a field in a black and white scene
aren't chess pieces they're guys still wearing
clothes eating pavement, not thinking
to have become an object among things
who didn't grow up to be broadcasted dots
the mind-bone disconnected to the eye-bone
of all everything been seen and trashed
as proof against mirrors planted in papers

missing link

With little paw

with little beginnings of paws or feet to pull it forward onto sand

With little paw

with little beginnings of paws or feet to pull it forward onto sand

With little paw

with little beginnings of paws or feet to pull it forward onto sand

With little paw

with little beginnings of paws or feet to pull it forward onto sand

with little paw

with little

from WITNESSES

rolling against the wall in massive wAVEs so that he should not be one of those

had never—in actuality—been required to know who he was and to die as
who he had not been

Siege in our own cities can begin to imagine more deeply, one leg ahead

in language under erosion our trust in corrosive repetition

The airplane entered and entered every wall The airplane entered the wall

Up against sure-footedness
or an aspiration Wanting to rush into silence

I am not ready nor will I be ready to enter the wall of anything that recommends
itself now.

The lens hovers. The lens goes out of focus. Now I am back inside time

All day we sit inside of WAR to the other end

Finally rising with jaw aching refusing to go forward into someone's
willingness

“I was in school when a voice cracked over the loud-speaker.”

The depth of the situation and our on-going willingness not to know

They are trading bomb tonnage statistics, their voices leaking excitement under the door
She dreams upright from one end of space that the narrator cut
and fit

fit the historical record to keener dramatic purpose

“I like the feeling of really being frightened,” Graves said, with a dreamy look.
It will always be there and it will be collapsing.

The children’s red-knitted shirts seem to hold them upright, something like flags

Collision. “Not a terrorist action.” Meanwhile, I’ve....

Weighted with news of still being here and to die as who he had not yet been

Evidence of breathing he dreams upright and focused behind her shut door

Running from one end of space to the other end of space

Running from the building, leg in air
and we were running, one behind the other, down the same set of stairs

“We had become like wild animals. We didn’t care about anyone other...”

“...but after the next attack, I will help an old man push his basket at the super-market. He
will say ‘Thank you, Sir,’ and I will say ‘You’re very welcome, Sir,’ and we’ll just go on talking.”

It is always in our peripheral vision.

I will always be there and it will be collapsing.

Δ

VALZHYNNA MORT

BELARUSIAN

I

even our mothers have no idea how we were born
how we parted their legs and crawled out into the world
the way you crawl from the ruins after a bombing
we couldn't tell which of us was a girl or a boy
we gorged on dirt thinking it was bread
and our future
a gymnast on a thin thread of the horizon
was performing there
at the highest pitch
bitch

we grew up in a country where
first your door is stroked with chalk
and then at dark a chariot arrives
and no one sees you any more
but riding in those cars were neither
armed men nor
a wanderer with a scythe
this is how love loved to visit us
and snatch us, veiled

completely free only in public toilets
where for a little change nobody cared what we were doing
we fought the summer heat the winter snow
when we discovered we ourselves were the language
and our tongues were removed we started talking with our eyes

when our eyes were poked out we talked with our hands
when our hands were cut off we conversed with our toes
when we were shot in the legs we nodded our head for yes

and shook our heads for no and when they ate our heads alive
we crawled back into the bellies of our sleeping mothers
as if into bomb shelters
to be born again

there on the horizon the gymnast of our future
was leaping through the fiery hoop
of the sun

- translated by the author and Franz Wright

MOLLY ALBRACHT

since, to touch country

she being so slender sandaled in the shadow of airy aspens
where being her we end her, tender-been. following ranks of leaves leaping
and the river we mean.

sweet that swam-dandled bank, where we whose growing folded
following its beauty sank.

rack the green where we rural delve. guess the comer-after's cages.
seeing a prick not spared or quelled, not one to mend her quenched
is now even the sun felled, sleek ball O: as all we are
who knew what we do.



