

The Portable

BOOG READER 7


An Anthology of New York City and Pittsburgh Poetry


NEW YORK CITY EDITED BY LAURA HENRIKSEN, AMY KING, DAVID A. KIRSCHENBAUM,
GEOFFREY OLSEN, NICOLE PEYRAFITTE, AND ANGELA VERONICA WONG
PITTSBURGH EDITED BY MARGARET BASHAAR AND LAUREN RUSSELL



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7  Leopoldine Core

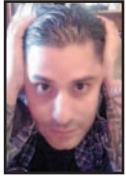
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For the past 103 days we've been at work on this, the latest incarnation of *The Portable Boog Reader*. The we being Laura Henriksen, Amy King, Geoffrey Olsen, Nicole Peyrafitte, Angela Veronica Wong, and yours truly for New York City, and Margaret Bashaar and Lauren Russell selecting work by poets from this volume's sister city, Pittsburgh (see p. 4 for more on the editors).

Before this issue, the greatest numbers we had was with last year's edition, six editors gathering full pages of poetry from 18 different poets. This year? Eight editors and 30 different poets' pages. And after seven (well, eight) volumes, the number of different poets who have appeared in the *PBR* is up to 355. (For a complete rundown of *PBR* contributors, see p. 48). And huzzah to our co-editor Lauren Russell for being the first to helm multiple cities, with this year's Pittsburgh stint joining her *PBR5* New York City tenure.

I always think of us *PBR* editors as scouts, bird dogs, colleagues who are on the streets seeing who is out there delivering the goods. When we do our draft before constructing an issue, deciding who each of us will ask for work, there's nothing I enjoy more than seeing a co-ed's draft slate filled with names I've never heard of, poets I'm about to learn about, poets whose work we're about to share with our peers, occasionally for the first time.

And it's that work that's always the muscle behind this issue, this sharing our picks with our communities, really one overall poetic community. It's not that we're so arrogant to believe these 20 New York City and 10 Pittsburgh poets represent what's happening in these cities' poetry scenes, but instead that they capture a bit of what's going on, a sample that could overlap another sample of 20 and 10 poets if we started over from scratch.

Ultimately, we hope you enjoy these samples as much as we did the sampling.

And, for the first time, Boog City has set its sites on what's happening in our *PBR* sister city, checking in with Pittsburgh-themed film, music, and printed matter sections.

—DAK

About the Cover Photo: Ideal Auto Exchange, Jamaica, Queens May 21, 2011. I took this photograph from the car—très American if you read French philosophers or dig the work of Martha Rosler.

Alison, Lucas, and I took a long and winding trip trip back home to the Bronx after my friends, the poets, Jess Fiorini's and Eddie Berrigan's wedding party in Long Island. The party was a quiet yet historic event. I had a sense of this being one of those days where we may look back at pictures of it with joy and amazement. Something like the feeling I get while gazing at photographs of cool New York School poets hanging out, maybe in Bolinas or New England. Anne Waldman sunbathing with Andrei Codrescu while Alex Katz paints Joe Brainard's chest. Suddenly their words are made more real by evidence of their lives.

So I took a lot of pictures that day. Poets dancing, drinking, just being in each other's presence, joyfully. Later I edited a slide show of the pictures. Ideal Auto Exchange was the final image because the day was ideal in a pop art, post-post-post New York School way. The photo was appropriately appropriate to the occasion.

Alison was driving. I had had a few cocktails at the party, so I was safely digging the scenery rolling by in the dusk. We came to a stop light. I looked up into the blue gray gloaming and there was this sign, Ideal Auto Exchange, glowing like an Ed Ruscha pop art word painting. It was saying, "Frame me for Jess and Eddie."

—Greg Fuchs

About the Editors

New York City

**Laura
Henriksen**



<http://www.brooklynrail.org/2012/02/poetry/two-hendriksen-feb2012>
Laura's work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Big Bell, Clock, Peaches & Bats*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*. She lives in Lefferts Gardens, Brooklyn.

**Amy
King**



<http://amyking.wordpress.com/>
Amy's most recent book, *I Want to Make You Safe*, made *The Boston Globe's* "Best Poetry Books of 2011," and *The Missing Museum* is forthcoming in 2014 from Kore Press.

<http://www.myspace.com/gilmoreboysmusic>
David is the editor and publisher of *Boog City*. His poems form the lyrics of Preston Spurlock and Casey Holford's band Gilmore boys.



**David A.
Kirschenbaum**

Geoffrey is the author of *Not of Distends / Address Panicked* (minutes books), and has recent work in *Little Red Leaves Issue 7*.



**Geoffrey
Olsen**

**Nicole
Peyrafitte**



<http://www.nicolepeyrafitte.com/>
In the U.S. since 1987, Nicole is a Gasco-Rican pluridisciplinary artist. Her latest projects : *Bi-Valve: Vulvic Space / Vulvic Knowledge* was published by Stockport Flats. Joseph Mastantuono photo

**Angela
Veronica
Wong**



<http://angelaveronicawong.com/>
Veronica is the author of *how to survive a hotel fire* (Coconut Books).

Pittsburgh

<http://www.margaretbashaar.wordpress.com>
Margaret is the editor of Hyacinth Girl Press, author of two chapbooks, and a blogger for NYC-based Luna Luna Magazine. Susan Yount photo



**Margaret
Bashaar**

<http://www.readlauren.com>
Lauren's most recent chapbook is *Dream-Clung, Gone* (Brooklyn Arts Press). She is an M.F.A. student at the University of Pittsburgh, where she teaches writing and serves as an editor of *Hot Metal Bridge*.



**Lauren
Russell**

New & Forthcoming from LITMUS PRESS

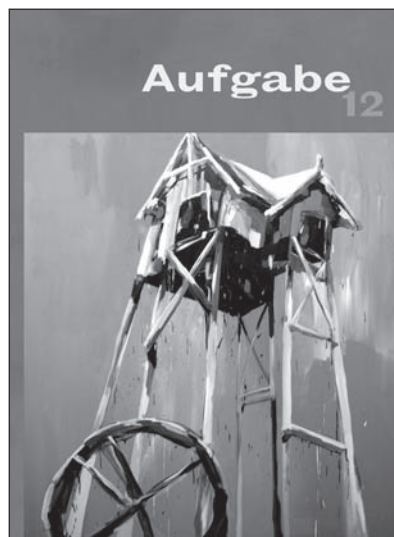
AUFGABE 12

Featuring poetry in translation from Quebec guest edited by Oana Avasilichioaei

With work from Abendroth, Albertini, Armendinger, Audet, Avasilichioaei, Belflower, Besemer, Bierkegärt, Borzutzky, Bradshaw, Brossard, Canty, Carlson, Casas, Charron, Clevidence, Cole, DeBoer, Desgent, Desrosiers, Dick, Dickey, Dickinson, Dickson, Donato, Doré, Drescher, DuPlessis, Eaton, Gagnon, Garthe, Gevirtz, Goldman, Grubisic, Haslam, Hegnauer, Hutton, Joris, Jutras, Kronovet, Lara, Leblanc, Lederhändler, Lee, Lopez, Longabucco, luong, Majzels, Mavrikakis, Mesmer, Morrison, Moure, Nathanaël, Neveu, Peyrafitte, Pluecker, Queen, Robinson, Rosenzweig, Rounds, Rubin, Savage, Schürch, Swensen, Torre, Tremblay-McGaw, Turcot, Vischer, and Zurita

2013 | \$15 | ISBN: 978-1-933959-18-4

Poetry, Art, Essays & Reviews | Artwork by Mie Olise



MURDER

Danielle Collobert

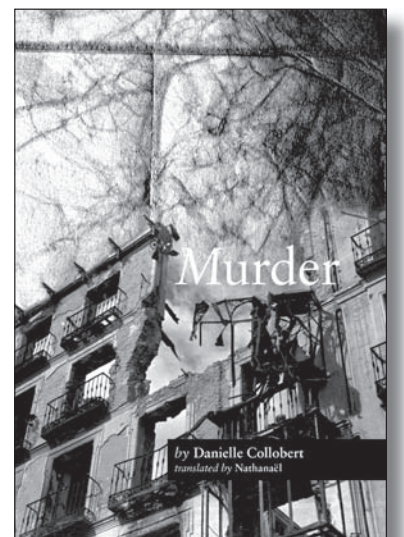
Translated by Nathanaël

"One does not die alone, one is killed, by routine, by impossibility, following their inspiration. If all this time, I have spoken of murder, sometimes half camouflaged, it's because of that, that way of killing."

Murder is Danielle Collobert's first novel. Originally published in 1964 by Éditions Gallimard while Collobert was living as a political exile in Italy, this prose work was written against the backdrop of the Algerian War. Uncompromising in its exposure of the calculated cruelty of the quotidian, *Murder's* accusations have photographic precision, inculcating instants of habitual violence.

2013 | \$18 | ISBN: 978-1-933959-17-7

Poetry, translated from French | Cover photograph by Robert Capa

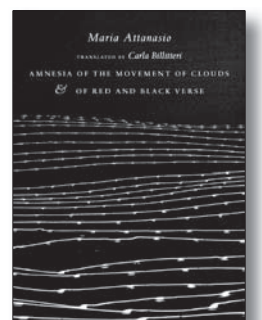


AMNESIA OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE CLOUDS / OF RED AND BLACK VERSE

Maria Attanasio; Translated by Carla Billitteri

These two books collected in one volume comprise the first full-length translation of Maria Attanasio's poetry into English. Blending realistic and oneiric landscapes, Attanasio's poetry is a form of vertical writing that shows the historical and political strata of everyday life. In a landscape darkened by poverty, death, inequality, and illegal immigration, selfhood becomes an embodied but only partially understood node of historical events. Attanasio sets reflections on the cyborg dimension of contemporary selfhood against a desolate and existential void of a new century, one she describes as "the god of indifference," "the great amnesia." (Carla Billitteri)

2014 | \$18.00 | ISBN: 978-1-933959-42-9 | Poetry, translated from Italian | Cover art by Thomas Flechtner



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ニューヨークシティ
New York City

Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges, Fall 2013
Amanda Deutch photo

From This God Between Us
for Arisa White

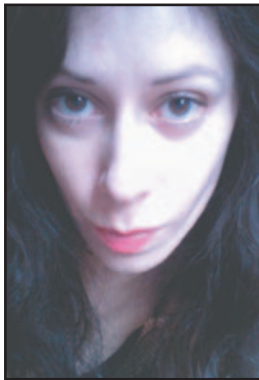
This year Yom Kippur falls on the Sabbath,
But I'm thinking of the years
It will fall on the Day of the Dead.
It happened once when I was a child,
And my father recited Kaddish
In the procession to the cemetery.
My mother hung the harsh and angular
Sounds on the folds of her *rebozo*.
My mother wrapped me tightly in it,
Saving my mouth for last.
This is the silence between us,
My parents said.
This is a gate of water
Struck from stone.
This is the promise
We sow
To bury you in.

Yet there is this god between us.
This god ravenous.
This god unsent,
The letters
Bereft
Of this god,
A grace note,
She is not unessential.
This god,
At times,
A single pair of hands
Bound
In cat's cradle.

Tonight in the countryside
They leave me a trail
Of copal and marigolds.
The Kiddush cup is full.
I am porous as loess.
I am loose ground.
Bury me standing.
I am the osseous snaps and snarls
Of that promise sowed.
Bury me three times.
I am not a high priest.
I am forbidden to speak
His real name,
Unlike this god between us
Who rises between us
This god
A lucid dreamer.
Kadosh kadosh kadosh
This god once taken
By her own dream.
This god,
At times,
Awakening
Chained to the railroads
Of Golden Mountain.

>>>>

Rosebud Ben-Oni



A century before, the first of November I came
On the Oaxqueño train, goat heads
Bleating out the windows.

Every year I'm shaken
From a threadbare seat,
And the only children
Wave from a distance.

Their ashes
The sun shepherds
In the boot hills.

Every year the last *chinampas* city
Leveled and burned. Every year
I ask less of the god of my parents.
That god and I never of one body.

When I can walk no more
I will have no home

Wandering is my homeland

It takes a certain kind to know this

The grace note of an evening
This god but a mosquito swarm
This god a lantern outside a damaged Cathedral
This god jaguars hidden in the guaje trees

What is this god anyway
But a pulpous echo
Within this god between us,
This god in which we sleep
Our bare backs on her bare arms
Our promises her talking in her sleep
This god
Belfry of the senses

The Real Frank Vega Was Epic

In real life badass was a gringo
and there's danny trejo
playing himself
I'm not sure we're in on it
like the prada store in marfa
or padre island
now a big, gated hotel
where you need wristbands
to use the pool
No island anywhere
No vaqueros come home
No cameros bumpin' down the road
which is fine
since in real life that kind of badass
ends up alone
or never goes anywhere say on a plane
that crashes in the reboot of predators
where danny trejo plays the entire zeta cartel
I guess his cred is danny trejo himself
but the 12-step road
to big-screen danny trejo
Well maybe that's why
danny trejo
is the first to die
while fishburne survived years alone
in that new world
I mean the game preserve
where only danny trejo ends up the dummy
of alien ventriloquists
Perhaps we are to know
the first sacrifice is catalyst
or is it our salvation
will have no legacy
unlike saddam
lenin
lebron
all badasses brought down
I mean all we get is a man
who's eaten
by a giant anaconda
before opening credits roll
and then we're back in the ring
in the state prison
and what more can we do than
Listen
for the ripple of dollar bills
that reveal the next danny trejo has risen

God Gave Many Things I Made

Lose value. Once I took a Sharpie
To my Hebrew School primer
And drew a rare thing
I didn't mean.
Another name
Which too had become a secret,
A riddle, the punchline
Of our existence.
It's all just to get your attention, I said.
Wind me up and I'm still a plastic watch
Stuck at ten, or ten to twelve,
Both hands the same length—
Something never meant.

There are many gardens since
Where I've perched on a bench
And keyed up a dedication
Meant for a congregation.
Words too lovely for me to bear,
I'll say, when I mean
To warn of what's to come
From a bench
Stuck in the basement,
The dedication flayed from stone
And placed elsewhere,
The garden gates
Never reopened.

Veronica Bench

look at me I'm a clown
when I'm forced to breath
I become a different clown

look into the bowels of my face

am I like you
or are you like me?

is there a difference?

yeah. there's a difference.

alone and stalking the empty fridge
it's like having nothing
twice
just the salad
getting smellier

it's like you're kissing me
but from a strange country
dark eyed

peach

a bum doesn't work
a tramp just travels

13th street never surrendered
it's junkiness
it just looks like shit
relaxes me

brown night
the ions
their pure bouncing joy

I wish I had a big horse blanket to put over us
wouldn't that be nice

The Wheel

To be a little absent
suggests you have
something better
going on.
So what.
I'm addicted
to your vagueness
who you'll be today
a man
or a woman
someone
or no one
perhaps several people
sitting in a chair
Maybe you make me
feel human
just sitting there
It solves the problem
of intimacy - it's pale tedium
just marry one
tortured
head.

I'm not any more human
but I feel my blood in this climate
of shadows and the flow
of light in your mouth
your little head relaxed
your quietness
your brain
pumping
on the pillow

The peach-light
holds you
the surreality
of the '60s
a bothness
like soda
the ocean
the light

Leopoldine Core



Hush Robot

I haven't met you but you look familiar
I've met your clone
There's the thing next to McDonalds
which is McDonalds
Tap water with a drop of coffee in it

Maybe people aren't looking
at what poetry is
just who produces it

Yeah
It's like collecting urine
I'm so ready for the past to be gone

I'm so ready

Pennies

I feel so pessimistic right now.

I think it's the right way to feel.

You look like someone riding in a stage coach

and I'm like a savage who stuck her head in the window

my eyebrows flirting

and pleading.

You keep giving me money

but never the whole amount.

I guess you like me

I mean

you're paying

for my desire.

I guess I'm sort of

defeatist

young at the end

Gimme that penny

that one over there

it's sticking into me

Just gimme a second

I'm trying to fashion

a response

I can hear your smile

on the phone

because you have a memory

many

of my ass out on a cliff

It makes *anything* funny

my shit glisten

it makes breakfast funny

a table

the moon is funny

It's a nightmare. Here it is.

Conversations w/marvin 1

for d.w. & j.b.

"marvin" i say – "you know the poem's dead"
 he's too busy sitting in a shady corner
 (one shoe off)
 counting his money
 it's 7 p.m.
 everyone seems to be packing up
 for the day
 tho there's at least an hr. of sunlight left.

Conversations w/marvin 2

"listen marvin"
 i said-

"tunaMelts'
 not the thing you should be eating"

bent, sheer headed
 streaming, petrified brief
 mister marvin burnt the dainty
 fly master & replied,
 skull cupped -
 "yes i no"

Conversations w/marvin 3

for dw again & sb

marvin sighed -
 "i'm tired of waiting lad - give me the dough
 so i can
 go
 the patriarch of cluttering
 where i began my clocking
 career
 called me a complete idiot
 because i'd been trained to call
 a thing a thing
 rather than the
 'shots'
 he asked for
 so i got tired of waiting for the dot
 like now
 so please can i go(t).."

Steve Dalachinsky



Conversations w/marvin 8

*after lanny q again
 left out a wrd 1st time*

it's a twinkling after midnight,
 Steel Prunes break wind in the breeze
 independence day has drawn to a close
 marvin stares star-eyed upward
 as smoke & debris
 firework their way into his eyes
 squinting he proclaims
 "it's dark & then the sun comes out
 & you burn"
 as with Stars
 banjo strung in cyborg-folk clusters in the limbworks
 too hobbled by nails,
 marvin covers his face with his forearm
 as a pluramonticeizuring bold sartrap once
 snot-torn & silent now deafens his soul

"poor waif-like boddhisatva"
 is all i can think
 as marvin strips off his shirt
 & the hammer of nudity
 yokes starfish from his jaded flaming skull.
 i then & there realized that freedom & independence
 were totally different and that the old prophecy
 about the country (all countries) being ruled by
 ass-headed demi-dogs
 was true.

Conversations w/marvin 13

on the corner of bway & mars
 across from the church of
 TIME SQUARED (& stardust)
 where all the fabulous solidifying
 of truths
 occurs
 between the late/weights & doning
 & sighing & singing
 & waiting aftshaft for dinner
 marvin graced w/lots of questions
 looked absently up at the billboards
 read & quietly proclaimed:
 " i wouldn't mind if somebody stole my identity."

Conversations w/marvin 14

marvin & i went for a dip
 in the community pool
 as the sky over cast itself
 & one kid kicked the other in the eye
 leaning against the pool's side
 feeling the water rush in
 i heard marvin babble some unutterable muttering

wha' ya say? - i stumbled

"nothing" - he wetly declared - " i was talking to
 myself

because i'm

such a lucky person."

Selections from Red Attempt:

Shaftway, Shaftway

i didn't take into account the body as age or aging
 which isn't very fair to myself or anyone
 i wanted to use this section to talk about
 the hot young sapling of our bodies or some shit
 but i wanted to talk about it like we don't have genitals
 not like eunuchs
 but like our orgasms were bigger than our sex

it's hard to write about that
 being that our institutional language is changing
 that what one word represents shifts and swallows itself
 and most of us just want something calm and there

there the light is death
 the last child up on the shore
 darkness with no splendor in it

so this writing is another question about completing
 a journey or the is it to go down into the mind
 and find your own hell to find
 the victims of history and try to save them

i don't know i can't say yes to that

i'm not trying to find tiasias
 because i don't fucking care
 about fertility or anything
 the bound fucking in boxes on the sea wave

blossom's locked in a stroke of swim
 and what are you?
 the fuck are you

*

delight isn't the right word
 but this sense that the world is fine is still out there
 a sign post in dark red yellow lightning type

something you discuss in bed
 a gossip column mid way the prophecy

back of my sockets ache
 better sight coming

evolution
 and progress
 click cum swap the lie
 'your mind on the past'

with my father being dead now
 the dream

a dark boat on the oil sea of shades

*

there is a crowd around you
 a thousand years all forced to be found
 but it's all right
 this is the end of the line

and you will never remember
 when the icy atlantic finds it's knack in flooding
 your whole life down into the amberson nitrate spools
 where wares only our friends
 economies on birth right losses

this isn't just your first born
 the globe is taking a star into atmosphere
 pressure bursts with slow burns on the top soil

the moving of money sucking the ocean

Nicholas DeBoer



one floating island on a terrestrial globe
 and i'm okay without the new world
 it's not a bitterness to be alone in the universe

it's not even all that real
 it's like you knew a place
 drawing maps on the beer soaked table tops
 nine months on the road where the ship wore

mappemunde
 like panegyric

a map of the whole world with me in it
 but the map is more than eulogy
 eulogy
 with praise and criticism

an alien record
 in the midst of voyage
 that periplum stuff

some sludge & monsters
 paul atreides will get his spin

*

we have enough tragedies
 to mourn all day every day
 and its not enough to mourn

we owe the dead nothing
 else than the revenge of time
 a truth eating into wood

and then i'm walking with my father and he
 and i are the only ones
 who know where we are going in death the chanting is the
 'song in the thing itself' and whether his
 ashes plant flowers or not i'll

still cut my poem into the waters
 up the track of the hill
 amongst the rain of our arrival
 that dream of love leaving

and running home to a paper village from an elevated track
 the trains at the sight of the river and
 a lot of shit aint' discovered
 the ditch where we can't breathe

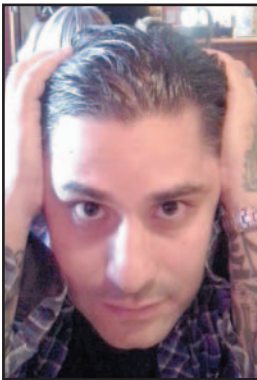
where flowers break and the mass drives on

no roads
 blackberry or mulberry stocks
 walnut of the musket
 damage patrol
 the worst blizzard

Nicholas DeBoer (<http://elderlymag.tumblr.com/>) is a poet from the United States. Co-runner of the journal *Elderly*. Currently, living in Bushwick, Brooklyn.

- the acoustics, a stick's cuckoo
- i. are we freaking out with ed at the the top heading the games & minding yr interest with a bugaloo dance
 - ii. the slow rock back & forth & roll on the r train, italian lullaby, nod, nap, light me one, lita ford, before the day/night mets' double dip
 - iii. fecund
 - iv. Why does the hunter follow and delta airline units
 - v. engender
 - vi. "somewhere in utah"
 - vii. open the door: coffee break, prom
 - viii. vitrine limpid
 - ix. or, if he'd arrived safely in new/york maybe to disappear
 - x. is vic power's bare knuckles.
 - xi. the bass competition trembles, davinci, a solid trial for heidegger, a long pull for lao tzu's mother, sales of madonna's book sex plummet.

Ray DeJesús



In Memory of OTB

for Dad

If I had money I'd make you king! word on the street:

A memory la palabra like a heel the skinny the long short of it like a bad man a tough leathered man

the horse races the harness races would make yours wealthy jump high!

instead of fall in line fall in line yr 32 teeth

more or less!

out of your hair! mi padre

hombre

mi

Would you *attempt?* a slingshot from underneath the covers? sheets? swimming pool

rising to hit

pinpoint accuracy? the slather of the night?

the flashing the flickering motel sign?

Último poema

1.

Louise Brooks' short
 curlicue in a sloop cut
 a step in a bespeckled
 heel in a direct transfer
 opposite

2.

The only way to
 a gentle dusting of
 Hegel's bust

index card or fichero

para Raquel Rodriguez y John Dejesús

Victor Pellot unsung change Vic Power trigeñuito

hollywood's hollywood Aericiobo-àCaguas

tarmac, dry heat vs. humidity, a fast getaway in a car,
 che manuel drinking an 8 oz. schaefer
 never looked better

for instance, who do you think you are?!
 nicknaming yourself quequi, pobi, monchito?

fast-forward: yr burnt out hotel room
 window

I remember when cock fighting was ok!
 the grocery list, top of the counter
 juan, pedro, gratitud, el del

i

grew not much

Rosaline to Juliet: "He was mine first!"

outro: exeunt

by saying no to everything & anything you get...

for Corinne

brook fulcrum kerfuffle if limbic

into above ground shards quick feeds non communicative
 without transmission conduct arms stretched
 a tandem curl
 slates of memorial

clasps tangles birds or fowl equine above and beyond boris
 karloff animated cafeteria buttons not snow not snow
 the sun the sun arms thin arms small arms the big moon
 apparently rain thick thatch thick thatches pearly whites venal
 reprobate the song of the north the flag of the world hum
 hummmm global language geopolitical preface epilogue
 photo stack nutrient hydrant

don't fail

is that fall dertritus

you've come that far to say that
 origin its origin needs to be consumed intact

zane grey harness saddle lips them lips those lips oh those
 lips fresh lips dem lips fine tuned sleep fine tuned plural it's
 zipper its zipper telephone or telefono

radio's

taken

and

video's blue

i can find a riding partner that rides

an X— an in your eye strike

From TURN!

III.

here it comes GOD the sun never talks to me
Frank O'Hara and Ariana Reines, too
so lucky

hey, hello sun
i'm down here...
do you see me i'm tanning
i love what you do to my body...

PLEASE TALK TO ME

The sun ignores me
I haven't peaked yet
or maybe I'm on the wrong beach
figures, story of my life:
OMG DID YOU SEE KELLY SLATER!!!! no

HE WAS AT THE COVE TALKING TO <cute guy I went to high school with>
YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE WHERE WERE YOU

snapshot of me with ketchup spilled down my bare stomach
and a hotdog in my hand

of course I was on Steger's Beach when KELLY SLATER went to The Cove
for no apparent reason KELLY THERE AREN'T EVEN WAVES HERE
THIS IS LITERALLY THE FLATTEST SHORELINE I'M CERTAIN OF IT WHAT ARE YOU
DOING

The sun is like, oh hey, here I am, hanging out with lifeguards and shit and Kelly Slater
at The Cove. If only you were so cool like <cute guys you went to high school with>
and not so insecure that you only hang out at Steger's Beach by Hot Dog Tommy's Hot
Dog Stand.

The sun and Kelly Slater and all the cool guys from high school are laughing outright at
me, and I look up from trying to wipe the ketchup off of my bare stomach like What?
They laugh even harder.

the entire time why aren't my arms skinnier?
or at least this bare stomach could be a shade tanner
this fucking bikini anyway
this print
Billabong
why do you look good on every girl I know except me?

So now I'm walking down the boardwalk
or not, how can I escape Kelly Slater and the sun and <cute girl I went to high school
with who told me about Kelly Slater in the first place and keeps me thinking we're
friends but doesn't seem to say anything friendly to me ever>

I mean this is town they are everywhere
I ride my bike to Mario's Pizza see
Kelly Slater, the sun, that girl, the cool guys
like Gianni Colameco one time he said
he really wanted to blow dust off a really old book that seems like the coolest thing

he didn't say that to me
but I know that he said it

WHY WON'T YOU JUST SAY SOMETHING
KELLY SLATER OR THE SUN OR
JUST SAY, oh hey, good morning
and then I can turn the conversation around like
tell me I'm a good poet, tell me I'm a good poet?

maybe, as a conversation starter
Do you remember the time I watched you come up at Higbee's Beach?
but that could go badly like
No. Everyone watches me all the time it's embarrassing I close my eyes.

I'd save though, I'd be like I know how you feel.
but then maybe you'd smirk! and then a turn? like the sun looks as if it feels guilty for
smirking like I might be the one person who has ever said that to the sun. but I'm just
trying.
Instead, here's a poem, a short one!

To The Sun

Your shape
Spread
Over time

I just hear

the wheels, girl, the wheels
well greased
I've tried everything
I'm super exhausted
I've tried
I've tried talk it out hug it out scream it out
I've been calling Atlas like, can I get you a milkshake
he never picks up
I've tried the first second third step twice I didn't try very hard I guess
I bought some oil and tried to pump it back into the earth like a collagen lip
I'm just super exhausted
>>>>

Francesca DeMusz



but then does it mean me? I think it means me

I don't really know

if I met Kelly Slater I wouldn't have been able to
offer him anything fall-in-love/grant-your-wishes-able
what's the point I was just a kid and he would not have remembered any of this

Me at 16: Hey.
Kelly Slater: Hey, what's up?
Me at 16: Hey, are you Kelly Slater?
Kelly Slater: Yeah.
Me at 16: I know this song, by The Matches? They have this line that's like she showed
me pictures in her car, of the Beach Boys and Kelly Slater.
Kelly Slater: Oh.
Me at 16: Yeah. So what are you up to?

That's my go to.
I say shit that makes no sense like when
I wanted to say something to someone I'd love to be
blessed by or become in some small way
Frank O'Hara or Ariana Reines but I didn't know what so I was like
Hi and s/he said oh we met already
I was like yeah you liked my t-shirt
with the moon on it. Frank O'Hara was like yep
then someone invited me to a party and I was like I don't think I'm going to that party
to her! Why would I say that to him? So many things
have been said to them by so many incredible people and THE SUN so why
would I say this nothingness to Ariana Reines /Frank O'Hara?
He said, oh.
and I was like I have a fever. LIKE SHUT UP!
and Ariana Reines said, I think everyone here has a fever, Fran.

So then there was a pause
I thought So what are you up to?
and it echoed around in my head
sounding lame
I left

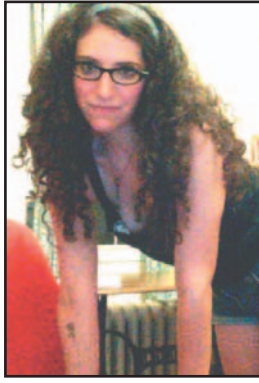
I never remember the answers anyway
I'm like so what are you up to?
and people say blah blah it could be:
Oh right now I'm just neutering stray cats.
I started freelance neutering, the hardest part is catching them
but then I just know what to do.
I used to be a phlebotomist so it's easy
just like that, I do it in the basement
of my apartment.
They could stop and look so shady and shifty eyed: Hmm
why did I say that? and I'd be like oh, I like cats.

I can't even get out of my head for one minute to be curious
about something someone said
that's not true but that's how it feels after a dead conversation with the sun
I didn't even ask what it's like to be the center of the universe

I can kind of feel that, though
sitting around outside with no one
having a drink, knowing me, just me
me and me infinitely connected to me
it's so stagnant, standstill, me and me
the wheels it means me
and I need to keep the universe turning though
it doesn't matter
in what
direction or what it's around
I just need to keep revolving
it's that to be a sign one must be dynamic
not static, I hate predictability
but security well, of course security in that always prepared
scouts kind of way, like I can adapt like those frogs that switch genders
I'm not an image, frozen, I'm not a still
not an object, flat, the wheels I'm trying to keep this going
Who should I be now?

Francesca DeMusz (<http://francescademuspoetry.wordpress.com/>) lives and works in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. She manages online initiatives for Futurepoem books and is a member of YOMO Poetry Collective.

Claire Donato



Statement of Poetics

In 2011, I began writing greeting card poems in response to an advertisement posted on the AWP Job List by the Blue Mountain Greeting Card Company. I had no money, and the Blue Mountain Greeting Card Company promised remuneration for verse. My poems were not taken, but my efforts manifested as the Blue Mountain School, of which I am the sole member.

The poems are composed in Lucida Handwriting font under my pen name, Claire Elisabeth. I posit a linguistic, chromatic and affective proximity between the Blue Mountain School and the Black Mountain School. My feelings about the schools share an ambivalence—in each case, the practice is generative, and the poetics are potentially problematic.

In these Blue Mountain poems, I explore affect and notions of mastery through the experience of creating and sharing. The poems bring me delight in abjection; they are simultaneously deferential and irreverent. I hope they make you feel as funny as I do.

(print and fold greeting card, opposite page)



art by Carl Ferrero

from Blue Mountain School Greetings

*Seeing you each morning
is like opening my eyes
to a brand new love*

*that makes me realize
how I discover you again
and again and again*

*every moment of my life.
At night, when I close
my eyes, my mind opens*

*and I see your face
looking back at me again,
and I love you once again,*

*this time in my dreams.
In every language, "I love you."
"Je t'aime."*

*"Te quiero."
I love you, my love,
my open eyes, my dreams.*

into steam, girding mass,
 of the carousel. birds let loose in a
 cutaway model of the carousel.
 dinnertime
 tames the garden,
 where war is done.
 restless diagram. musical generals,
 you draw
 holding circumference to its ratio.
 ducats on stone stairs. smell of import shop.
 carousel is a hope
 human. bird on cradle. the weather's out. bullhorns
 line the streets
 contours reconfiguring each other.

*

sing to the whole alphabet,
 little vowels, aitches huddled together
 helping everything we know to become wind.
 crisp under plectrum,
 logic of hexagons
 go to sleep
 we steal the honey,
 the museum is not safe. we meet under.
 it's bound to be black. send me a postcard.
 send me moral
 all the vowels from the bridge. well that's
 a method. a province.
 natural. you take the bag of sounds. back to
 beginnings now. deep under the house.

*

into the shifting contours of wakefulness
 you send yrself
 the river takes
 I know I know
 a crystal pear, its abstraction runs over
 yr chin
 dissolve on your tongue
 ailanthus
 you send yrself
 my mouth is an oyster
 & I'm listening
 you bite deep into a crystal broadcast
 & make a sugar of frequency
 make a photograph we'll watch from here

Ian Dreiblatt



what is this bullshit in my gazpacho?
 I hear is not Slovak, bones in the wrong
 countryside.
 is the blubbering down the hall, house gone
 pink,
 be writing something.
 seems fair
 aren't all they're cracked up to be vis-a-vis
 "sexual identity" & "religion"

*

arrears before arrival, great before
 grandmother.
 footprint as clear as a name.
 mine. a cycle of text & death & text,
 a library swelling with brides like a
 hive.
 sitting in brine.
 thru the window
 over boerum hill, maker's mark, melted
 ice.
 electric avenue.
 the sky is a luminous grammar

*

one way of looking at it is to see
 everything coming in waves.
 open. butts flutter in. you're up against
 velocity here, & Fellini you
 ain't.
 which means life is a comedy. congrats!
 you are this movie I'm breathing I'm
 to. the viaduct broke. my grammar: a
 torah of cinders.
 you bury the afterbirth. lodestar. vast.
 all frequency is recurrence.
 to the radio. tell it to the speed
 of light.
 it's true we recede, nobody cares like Frank

From Say Summer

You were brave, rubbing the tension from your eyes and forehead, waking up. Say summer, say cicadas, say the interior décor left something to be desired. Celibacy was simple and trustworthy, and you didn't have to shave your head. The sky was always soothing until it wasn't. Rice, frogs, planes, who knew what would fall? What storm? A knot moved into your shoulder, took out a mortgage, would work until death. This frayed nerve (nerve/never) mumbled every day: close your eyes. Pray. "Elsewhere" a blank screen for dreamy projection, false escape. A beachy life if you'd married rich. In accounting class, the teacher said nothing of sins. Your moral compass was clarified by whiskey; "right" and "wrong" were just words. Still, those kisses were irreplaceable, the childish bliss. A beautiful face could make you do anything in those days.

In those days, a beautiful face could make you do anything! So much you can do with a mouth. Say a waterbug skates the lake's surface without getting wet. Say you're tired. Say the gravesite's rarely visited, bone in silk in wood in dirt. A slower fire, exchange of carbons, sprinkling of self into earth. Forgiveness heals the forgiver most of all. He skated on water and filled baskets with fish. The age of miracles is with us. You abandon the first thought and await the next. A tulip-shaped umbrella offers a little protection. Living alone is the calmest way. The sex problem hidden in the nightstand. Your parents slept in separate beds.

Your parents slept in different beds? What is the tone here—the mood, the setting? Wiser folks stop planning their lives and live in the now. Sugarcane and hurricane are partners in the winning book. You want to quit the business as if quitting is a choice. But this isn't a waitressing job, this isn't a restaurant in the burbs. You've made people cry for heaven's sake. Happy tears and angry. Grace and an uphill climb. In the skyline, the cathedral dome is a gown. Does everyone live with constant sadness, a rib licked clean by sorrow? Brilliant calcium curve. What's next is always hidden. It's all written, all within, the chemistry to ignite fires. Only 9-5 is like sand. Only fear. Only you see a striped green snail by the lavender and say *cousin*, say *friend*, say *little mirror*, am I wasting my days?

April Naoko Heck

"Am I wasting my days?" you wonder and choose another radio station. Classical music—childhood's soundtrack. Later you hated it and then later you didn't. Your twenties went down in flames. In your thirties, you lay bricks by hand, you forgave your parents, an exhalation. The great sex diminished as you demanded a side-dish of love. You scooped take-out onto a good plate as if someone were watching, a measure of dignity. You refined waiting into an act of surrender. Blissful greens on a morning walk. Dog sniffing dog. Small moments added up to more small moments. A poem transformed a peach into a symbol of anxiety, plums were never plums again. The fruit started talking when you thought you were alone in the kitchen. Get-rich schemes and real estate prices dominated the new conversations. Your abs needed more work. Some exercise and a scrub-brush. Antioxidants for the spirit, sparkling fruit.

Sparkling fruit—antioxidants for the spirit—also to rub onto skin, for smoothing wrinkles—also to inject into time, for extra longevity—also to feed to the dog, for eternal life—also to apply to the heart, for rejuvenation—the cool mask of mirrored sunglasses—disguise for a lazy eye—the wrong forecast ruins beach plans—the divorce rate increases while the number of marriages remains the same—no one can think of an alternative—let's divide the holidays among four houses—"evacuation assembly area"—bridges are a danger—high rises continue to rise—bodies sink underground—a white gull floats in the river—a wisdom tooth to be extracted—ships on the Hudson—the slow carving of water—cliffs ache with age—what's the use—naming the view, describing cloud and sky—the velvet antlers of sumac—Yonkers sounds like a condition—Florence a woman you loved but never met—

A woman you loved but never met. Sounds like god. A moment when the subconscious takes over and you say flyers. As in birds, as in airplanes, any wing in the sky. And then you run out of ideas. You vow to quit. You vow a humbler life. As contained as a tub of margarine. Fuck being an artist. Anxiety a silk ribbon through your days. Paycheck to paycheck, leapfrog games, lily pads are prettier than banks. If you clean the windows, if you paint your toenails red. High heels and high rises while somewhere a green field yawns and sips the sun. The glassiness fades and you're back at square one with a crush on your teacher. Small audio speakers, concrete dorm. Getting high on a twin mattress. The way running shoes get worn at the heels, distance and mileage, all the birthday parties. Every morning you wake up, you wake up.

Blown Away

You point at your lips,
 an abandoned place.
 I pass you my lip balm.
 Wet wax captures your lips
 going my direction.
 You ask me what is?
 and pucker. Kiss I reply.
 You push the balm
 into my hand.
 I press your prints
 onto my lips. Kiss you say.
 We tremble.
 Your veil tumbles.
 My gun drops.
 Then ooh,
 the best kind of
 boom.

~ after Marine LCP. Jeff Key

Darrel Alejandro Holnes



Coup

Your mother cries because she can see you moving
 inside the lion's belly, raw meat heading
 towards his bowels turning against
 the walls of his stomach. The lion
 swallowed you whole. That greedy beast says you're
 so scrawny he doesn't even
 need to bite you into pieces
 to devour you like a mouse. Then his
 stomach's sudden shift rolls your eyes
 directly into his gastric acids, folds you
 into yourself, and your twisted
 two hundred pounds breaks
 your left arm. But a breaking can be a beginning
 if you use the bone's sharp edge to pierce and claw
 out of the sack. Tear apart the
 lion's skin and birth yourself,
 feet first, out from death inside the beast's bottom.
 Rip through his red ends and
 feel his entrails slide down
 your back, the kind of slime that means
 you've conquered something worth
 the stench of carnage, raw gallbladder,
 and bile. Pant with the lion's
 rotten breath. Feel the wind
 in your mane and look through
 his eyes at your country, belt
 a thunder that shakes rain from the clouds, a roar
 that frightens the quarry to
 death. Listen to your hunger,
 and see your claws reach for the warm
 bodies at arm's length. See your mother
 raise a gun at the lion. A trigger pulled
 to set you free.

From "Operation Just Cause"

Cut To:

EXTERIOR – Home, Panama City, 1989 – DAY

Obeah incantations work to keep the land quiet,
 Op arubatu tahini Jesus tierra terra safi man
 Spreading ancient vowels from the gutters of their
 Middle passage mouths over the tremors of this country,
 A Christian witchcraft lullaby, expanding its alphabet shoulders
 Keeping the walls up, a pillow for the falling microwaves
 Bought at the Military Piex, one micro for each dry and wet season.
 A bruise left by the guardia civil on our brick fence
 Bleeds Americans live here. Ube sitra danomanch.
 Our father paints over it every morning,
 Paints it the color of ¿y porque nosotros?
 Shouldn't we be the delivered ones?
 My parents weren't born American,
 Mother stole away to have me there
 So that my birth would be
 A kind of halo, so we wouldn't die
 Like the others. Our house was
 Marked just in case enough American soldiers
 Hadn't died the guardia knew how to drive up the numbers;
 It was marked so that if the guardia
 Lost the war and the Americans started bombing
 Our house would be spared. My father tries to
 Give the fence new skin with white paint,
 But still the bruise bled. We pray, and chant
 Kneeling around the sight of blood:
 Jesus, fanti tildo en el cielo keep us life.
 Too much life to risk on color,
 We hang it off our tongues and
 Hope salvation will take a bite.
 The land shifts like our tongue
 Around languages in our mouth,
 Trying to find the words to live us free tonight.

Cut To:

INTERIOR – Home – NIGHT – 1989

*The family is crouched on the floor in the master
 bedroom. The house shakes. Papa looks at his
 wife.*

MAMA
 What?

*Mama looks at her children and then looks back
 at her man.*

MAMA
 God wanted them to be American.

*The lamp smashes on the floor and a broken piece
 misses my eye and slices my left cheek.*

I see my own blood for the very first time.

DARREL
 Are the good guys here to get the bad guys,
 mommy?

MAMA
 Yes.

*Mama answers, wondering if God can really read
 clasped hands.*

*The land tilts and questions the purpose of
 standing steady, remembers how it had seen more
 peace underwater where man does not breathe
 or bomb. My father spreads his arms over all of
 us on the floor, a mattress over him. He sings us
 lullabies wishing us sweet dreams, but I can't help
 staying up to see if my world of in between is
 really coming to an end.*

FADE OUT

Money Colored Light

To show the city as it is
Neglect to mention
What is exchanged for

We already have that
In 6 colors, green for example
This song in a boutique, for example

Write this you-know-what before
Climate control gets the best of
The city, temporarily

Colored like a certain
Clover sort of said it was
Subsequently colored by the likeness

Of what once was called just
Changes for a quarter century
Baton the wrong guy wired

When the money was ripe
And the other adage hovered

Jeff T. Johnson



Overblown

You have to have better diplomatic skills & long hair hit in '91
From the side of the stage saying how could that be successful
Eventually, with no choice. Exactly! We thought, this is the guy
For us. The mix of punk & metal was hard stinking work
Reading paperbacks at the time it was just kind of gonna be
Filler seen as a gold digger hot chocolate party but it was cool
To be able to watch my friends knock people over a mass-marketing
Machine didn't have that kind of communication undressing onstage
Snapping viciously at any gig we piled out of this Volkswagen
Or killed myself a crazy primal deal easier to make a big, dramatic
Punks because they didn't have enough fire exits & the shit went back on

When I was probably 14 the decision was personality driven by everybody
In that club when I was in larger cities truly missing the big picture under
Bridges through the people hanging out with the then-unheard-of advance
Put-together band as far as they were concerned mingling with his excuse
For you being fucked up regardless of one band's attempt to remain kinda
Burnt inciting appropriate siblings wanting to be dead in a month. It wasn't
Like a high school party to put out records anymore it was like a sports team
My sister & I were super tight without going into any graphic details &
It's not necessarily evil. & then she showed us how tap dancing was like
Power-drinking highlights of the band he was an angel backstage catering
Against future record sales when I see pictures of him wearing under duress

One of These Days

I looked for signs of his report in all the magazines. Particularly the ones that included the most off-putting editorial gestures, as if I was being warned away from my position far from the source. The action. I have a tendency to recede, to blur. I go away, waving myself off. His report was sporadic, for sure, but strangely precise. He knew exactly when to forgo the usual niceness. Like, for example, *goodbye*. If you were there, he was not. If he was there, you didn't know it. But if you looked closely, the report followed. Pop. Pop. Paw. A report. His name stripped of story, or story stripped of his name. Abrupt end to the album followed by too many bonus tracks. A short film based on a long novel. Ink where blood should be. The introduction leaves us standing, the procession including us only temporary. I don't know you anymore, but neither do you me. The necessary breeze gives us away. A series of allusions paint our picture. The plot figures us out. Language takes us by the throat. We go as we go, separately. A report. All together now, a record skipping the exact spot. Exact spot. Exa c t s p o t

And Now, A

Form that releases, denies
the form, takes
release of form

To the dean of circumstance
your I-caps and shove them
in a swinging torpor

Designated attributory
notion reminded by farce
pantry light door jamb

In your temporary room
in a warehouse full of itself
in a lyric sense of doubt

In formed by the gap
crawling over itself, up
the wall via vine

We too struck in word
but freed by scenery—
it's there before us

And we recede in the heat
creased shadow of a stucco corner
hardening to form

The massed
attributes
we have observed

Grafting onto our
version of the film
over our I-s

Goodbye to all that
but also all this
end that demasks

The Last Line Being The Easiest to Pronounce

A Refusal

Let go the sea
Bring closer dour marbles
Fecund with misty sauce
Garble tonic lenser
Nicely, in the arrondissement

Iris off again, blemished, sparse

Toucan Sam will tellie evering
So garnish the wait nest, volume
The fair witless bar stand
Until smother fondu this
Bankrupt summary section code
Forger meat outlines, punctuate

Dear Echidna

My monotreme flower,
 Claw & burrow into spiny
 Bush, dear reclusive pop
 Star of Papua New Guinea,
 Upside down pineapple,
 Prickly anteater that is not
 Anteater, mammal-reptilian,
 Beaked but no flightless
 Bird, soft-shelled egg-
 Bearing, leathery egg-
 Rearing, egg-hatched
 Puggle in warm pouch;
 Nipple-less, lactating
 Females of many suitors,
 Promiscuous despite
 Thinning existence;
 Scaly males of the four-
 Pronged penis, my
 Funky cold medina,
 Off the evolutionary
 Tree, offspring of half-
 woman, half-snake
 Mother of all Greek
 Myth monsters, dear
 Beautiful anomaly,
 Dear unchanged, dear
 Vestige of prehistory.

Triptych

1.

What is wrong with wearing red shoes?, she asks her taxidermist father while he slices into an alligator three times her length. Nothing, he grumbles, corner-eye watching his little girl twirl underneath a bald eagle's embraceable wingspan. The ocelot watches, too, as do the owls, zebra, raccoons and bear: bestiary being vacuumed into her black hole swirling. Her father grasps his knife tightly, holding dominion over the reptile, hollowed out for reanimation.

2.

I receive a phone call from a friend whom I believe is dead. *I've just been away for five years*, she says, *I'm calling from the corner deli, eating a sandwich*. "But I saw your inert body inside a wooden box in a room fragrant with flowers." *A dream*, she insists. She might be right: I'd gone through years without memory, and currently, my thoughts are preoccupied with salami.

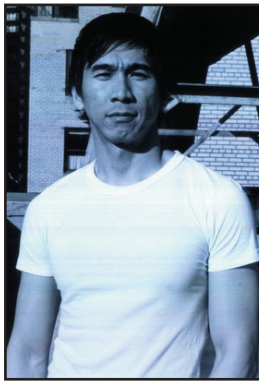
3.

A man decided to live underwater. The dock was full of cephalopods, rotting. He launched his submarine of junkyard wood, tin, and iron. The new moon disappeared forever.

Years passed, his surplus of creamed corn depleted. So, the man harvested moss and mushrooms that sprouted on damp surfaces. Gradually, algae grew between his teeth and bitten fingernails.

He met a mermaid. They fell in love and kissed through the one glass window of the capsule. It'll be another hundred years before he grows gills.

Joseph O. Legaspi



Triumvirate

1.

Raw, pungent heat rises from the bed, enticing the moon into the room. We are made of everything and nothing, of dark matter absorbing slivers of light. We hum in masculine embrace. Bitten flesh, limber limbs, necks, calves, crumpled white sheets, ears, thighs, elbows on pillows, the mattress, spent. We lay on a blanket of our twin bodies.

2.

With the moon still high I awoke to a half-empty bed. Light from the living room frames the bedroom door. I am dim and wonder, Is that my lover taciturn with sleeplessness, his mind like ticker tape, trains of endless headlines, his face computer screen blue? Or is that my mother sitting up melancholy once again with her clasped hands, her face the hanged pale clock of the moon?

3.

Sharing a bed with an insomniac awakens the dormant insomniac in me. At last, I once thought, I've abandoned my flock of sheep, starved for numbers and fences, to pasture. But again I'm shepherding in night's vast valleys, which somehow are less lonely. In unison we toss and tussle under the summer moon. Parched, we then share a glass of cold water in the kitchen. At the table of our sleepless congress, he sits with languid authority. I fall onto his lap, wrap my arms around his torso like a marsupial as the hours stretch towards a blue border.

Am I Not?

A boy trails a school of boys up a tree for fruit picking, or prehensile expedition. He lags behind not because he is unskilled at climbing, in fact, he possesses the gibbon-grace of Filipino coconut boys in provinces. He trails to marvel at the twin jellyfish of their underwearless shorts bobbing heavenward, to glimpse at their flaccid nautilus, to bask in their shared ocean life in the tree's ether.

*

Am I not that tremulous, salty-skinned boy who trails like jet stream along bark and anxious leaves, committing some thievery against the boys' oblivious physicality and joy? I am stolen glances, surface scratcher, light's glimmer, am I not? Anticipatory and vigilant as a hatchling fish expelled from its father's mouth? I feed starry-eyed at the bottom. Am I not your boy? Who dangles from an offshoot branch, reaching for the plumpest guava for my ripe mother? Sepal not calyx nor calendula. Yet, too, am I not non-committal substance like chalk, pencil lead? I'm self-adhesives. Not your loose tealeaf connoisseur scattering steeped, dried confetti from windowsills for wind to carry? Am I an opossum that raids trash bins, feasting on eggshells like shattered light? The crescent moon that conceals? Reflection on the impenetrable mirror? Am I no one's Promised Land, of distant adoration? A boy better suited underwater, a dislocated tragic seahorse, a darting, cautious sea anemone fish, am I not?

*

A boy visits the zoo, and weeps.
 A hundred-year old tortoise lives in a tank
 no larger than its own body. It can only survive
 this way, he reads tearfully, in the wild it digs itself
 into a hole as protection from alligators, predators.
 One of Darwin's fittest, the tortoise retracts snugly
 encased in the carapace and plastron of its bony igloo.

Amy Matterer

Jersey is gone. I know it
by the clean track rhythm
quitting its hiccuping
under the layered grease
of Philadelphia money.



Lines of landmarks relax
within a blond haze bucketing
the smokestacks (I have caught)
disassembling themselves as rubble.

Combat has been forged here prior to my engagement. I know it in the way they flaunt their amputations:

THE GLOB__
D__E
WORKS
FACTORY

A
D
A
M
S

Names missing, in uniform, strategic letters slanting their recital toward perverted, mortifying interpretations.

&

To get this far
the campaign
has grown
dependent
on the eye
turned blind
by conductors
caretakers, all those
who oversee the day.

Or (still lost)
the true order
of the actual letters
in the final word

S

—
N
S

I spoke
to my brother
that morning
three weeks
before his body
was returned to us
mutilated and

I too am trained not to flinch but
for different reasons entirely.

washed.

Doing it out in the open like this
isn't arrogance, pride, or suicide.

Documenting
the removal
of what is no
longer needed
here, I am document
ing the removed.

It is necessary

being that

being obvious

is the sole requisite

for being

accepted

as landscape.

The first time I spotted the scrim I thought myself a very clever
detective. Months I meditated on its dimensions, the weights of its
anchors, consumed by such trivia. Stoned on knowing it and gone
enough to go public—I put my hand out

Filtered first by the iris, their deeds
(what is being done) get shoveled
into greater piles of data (mostly decoy)
to be discarded, divided from memory.

fully expecting those silhouettes
all it projects

to ripple
off my palm
like water.

This aisle light
for example, pulsing
since they sat me here
a verdigris neon glow:
dull/less dull
dull/less dull/././
its accent too constant for an interrupted current.

But they did not. Like water
they bubbled, boiled, and exited
as a procession of ghosts. Unlike
water this mutation worked itself
from the center outward, taking all:

detail, color, faces—leaving

just the shapes of things blanketed
by pale, grey ash—though I have heard doubt
as to whether it covers anything at all.

from the beginning of After, Us

From "Anonymous Landscape"

152

anonymous signs.
anonymous houses.
anonymous inhabitants.
anonymous family crests.

devils & angels.
bleeding hearts & roses.

they all cry out
in one anonymous voice,

saying,

"HELP ME!"

153

his heart
was stabbed
by a knife.

the world was
bright like
a red umbrella
in a rain.

a bird flew away
carrying a letter
to someone unknown.

the day was like
a beautiful hat
worn by a shy girl.

154

it's 5 am/pm
a man hangs himself,
wishing he was
a beautiful hat
worn by a shy girl
with no name.

155

stitch by stitch,
somebody with a name
but known to no one
fills the fabric of his life
with an image of
worms, fish, flowers,
weeds & a woman
with anonymous tears.

stitch by stitch,
he moves away
from REASON
of any kind.

156

two men talking.
two animals talking.
two men with hats on fighting.
two pagan stories told.
two notebooks burnt.
two names disappeared.

Yuko Otomo



157

rules of the game
shared & understood
by no one.

faces buried
in a cave
with no masks on.

a banquet
held for everyone.

a table full of
screaming silence
beyond fear.

158

it's me.
it's me.
it's me, again.
that's me, too.
here, again, it's me.
it's me.
it's me.
it's all me.

white masks with no eyes.
white masks with no mouths.

it's me.
it's me.
here it is me, again.

like endless faces
sitting on hill,
it's all endless variations
of anonymous: "ME"

159

twisted & tied up
at random
for no particular reason,

all my toys are forced
to metamorphose themselves
into a silenced voice
on the wall.

the color of the wall
is faceless.

160

laughter over anger,
please, no matter what.

keeping a petty accounting book
can be hazardous to your health,

whether you are
known or unknown.

161

clarity beyond clarity.
sanity beyond sanity.
logic against logic.

reason.

a door to an empty UTOPIA
opens/closes itself
like a repetitive sexual fantasy
with no title.

forget about
a world full
of peace loving
families.

let's weave
anonymous logic
words can not explain
into clothes, shoes, & bags,
instead.

162

"HAVES" keep stealing from "HAVE-NOTS".
they even steal poverty from the poor.

163

a lighthouse brightens the balance
between the dark & light of shadows.

both sanity & insanity are
(totally) overrated.

red or black, it's all about the savagery of
a survival game: SOCIAL CAPITALISM.

you can opt out, or, you can join in &
learn to be a skilled player.

out or in, known or unknown, just
remember to say "I PREFER NOT TO"
at the right moment to the face of the
deserved.

164

thoughts misunderstood;
words mistranslated;
emotions veiled & lost;
signs crossed;

language
repeatedly juggled, bent & twisted
becomes a field for a game
of football of a sort.

you'll win the game
if you know how to kick it well.

but,

poetry has nothing
to do with winning;
it's more about losing.

losing yourself
in words
as you stop fighting
with your own "UNSPEAKABLE VISION"

165

"sur la route" –

whenever I turn,

I see a sign that says

"erase everything"

Afro

"I ain't passed the bar but I know a little bit/ Enough
that you won't illegally search my shit."
—Jay-Z, "99 Problems"

I'm hiding secrets and weapons in there
Buttermilk pancake cardboard, boxes of
Purple juice, a magic word our Auntie
Angela spoke into her fist & released
Into hot black evening like gunpowder or
A Kool, 40 yards of cheap wax prints,
The Autobiography of Malcolm X,
A Zulu folktale warning against hunters
Drunk on Polo shirts and Jagermeister,
Blueprints for building ergonomically perfect
Dancers & athletes, the chords to what
Would have been Michael's next song,
A mule stuffed with diamonds & gold,
Miss Holiday's vocal chords, the jokes
Dave Chappelle's been crafting off-the-grid,
Sex & brown liquor intended for distribution
At Sunday Schools in white suburbs,
Or in other words exactly what a white glove
Might expect to find taped to my leg &
Swallowed down my gullet & locked in my
Trunk & fogging my dirty mind &
Glowing like treasure in my autopsy

My Vinyl Weighs a Ton

Sit down shut up slip me out of my sleeve.
I have come from the grasses of California.

I'm carrying twenty years of the dark.
The sun bends its back over Struggle City.

It hits me first thing: I've never been cool.
I am driving and the breaks are shot.

I take a jetpack into the heaviness alone.
My bare face hanging out all over the kitchen counter.

What's largest is the ego, half-animal growing in the dark.
I'm a rare EP strutting into the brown morning near mint.

T-shirts are a theme song. The neighborhood watches.
Lawn chairs tumble into liquor stores alone.

The good old urban sprawl at half-volume.
It is literally just another day,

all my friends are changing religions and getting laid.
I have been too patient.

My bed is a rooftop where drugs are allowed.
My voice is a river splitting between tracks.

It's just one long slumber party in here.
I wonder if Mom will ever come pick me up.

Morgan Parker



Everyone Knows Where
Art Comes From
It Comes From The Store
for Keith Haring

I'm telling you it's in the hips,
the cash you cut and sniff
over my horn-rimmed cartoon,
walls shaking like DayGlo
and LES nightclub
toilet I'm pulling my face from.
Behind the stall you draw our outlines
on a scratched up mirror with
red lipstick you took from my purse.
And suddenly it's like penises everywhere.
Surfing new wave airwaves
you shout Are we not men? But you
are drowned out, drooling a pool
of screenprints to the floor. A: we are
empty! Hollow as egg whites
and ink between our eyes. Wouldn't
you know it? Crack pipes no longer
pass for sexy fingers. Turns out
everyone's empty as sin and
heads are televisions, empty too.
Still, I'd let any man
paint me into a corner
these days with a good set of lips.
In this equation everyone stands for me.
Oh you in your strikened pose!
Oh fly honey baby
on the run and on the market!
It's like pictures are words
or sex is a Xerox machine.
It's like all my friends are fucking
in a planet-sized circle around me.
You're what I think I see
on the G train platform, glowing
womb spiked with the glory
of everyone, but then wake up again.
I know a little something about pissing
in public but nothing about loving.
It's funny because there are 1700 products
stamped just for you, rising from cinderblock
murals to meet you at the check-out
line in the sky. Say mister are you for sale?
I think I become for sale too, become
the greatest hits or a seed of greatest hits,
lock the door to my stall and drip plastic
over the boredom, the pills, the patent
leather, the chunks of hair in the sink.
When the party ends I will still
be here with you, lips stained with pop.
I could pick a billion flowers for your sick bed.
Do you see me I could dance all night

Ain't Misbehavin'

I take a sip of beer.
My asshole feels.
I cannot believe
in how successful
and how alone I have been
today. I would like
to say he didn't enter
and I didn't appreciate
free drugs. I would like
to say my mirror
didn't force itself to be
involved. I spend
most nights topless
and appreciate
my dog. I go to sleep clutching
the side of the bed.
I blow my nose
and repent for the night
before. I masturbate.
Remember the album
that mattered when we
were still poor?
Persons say
I'm getting along
just fine. Like I'm
a baby who
just claps and shits.
Some stars have aligned
in our spines. Moons conjuncting
my eyeshadow flushing,
planets up to their necks
in our longing. Without your
stringy hair in cushions,
stomach against
the up-coming
morning traffic noise I
get bored. No one to walk with
into the glowing couch, the green
afterwards. I am saving for you
a sharpened arrowhead
for luck and practicality.

Miss Black America

Does she drink smoke lights
Does she bother spitting her seeds

Does she hate her little sister
Is her ringtone R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Does she wake up next to you
and shudder

Does she think she's crazy
Does she go to church

Does her therapist ask
where her desires have gone

Does she know
what makes her special

Does she say wild
and free does she believe it

Selections from Angry Ocean

1.

A chapter on fingers and folds of cinnamon buns, a burst of wet sugar. Asking for sexual attention necessitates a nervous breakdown. A meltdown. A psychic break. Hunched in twilight with a familiar pain in the outer rings of the anus.

I have developed a language with my spine that is pre-emptive DEBASEMENT, flexing and contracting, “yes” and “no.”

yes + no = yes and the breakdown

no + yes = fear and the orgasm

orgasm = breakdown and every nightmare I ever wanted

Sticky Buns: for some reason your asshole aches, but you don't remember who was there. Maybe it was just a probe to get all the shit out of your diapered ass once when you were allergic to milk.

Hold your mother in your arms after you are out of the bathtub, as she weeps and asks you for breast milk. Tell her, “Baby, Baby everything is gonna be alright. Be a good Baby and suck my left breast, now.” And she does, her lips formed to your child-nipple.

You rub a stuffed mint green frog between your legs and call it Father. You shat in the binding of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *The Frog Prince*, and laid your little turds around the crib for all to see on a Saturday morning in 1983.

Love Muffin: amorphous, spongy, bursting out of control and groaning every letter of the alphabet out of my mouth, rectum, urethra, and cunt.

I pray to the God of No Revenge to prevent me from killing my parents. I will never marry and I will never know what sex I am, what sex to have, do or become. I will remain forever fuckable and abstract.

2.

I love television, I love my boyfriend who is a systems analyst. He never cries, so he begs me to make him as his cruelly nurturing top-fuck. In our Mommy game, I offer him breast milk in exchange for sucking on my silicone cock that's that will never stand straight.

3.

Whitney Houston is singing the theme song to *The Bodyguard*. Dad, you are Kevin Costner, and I am Whitney. It is your job to protect me because I'm a star, and you fall in love with me, slicing my silk scarf in half with your samurai sword.

Were I to become you, I would be the best masochist. I have felt this in my veins for many years. I don't flinch. I love being cruel. I know how to seduce another into dying without fear. Anticipating my lover's arousal, intimidation, how it lubricates glands and makes all organs stand on end, kills all possibilities of Princes, Knights, Kings, Rescuers, Vigilantes, Pirates, Daddies. I want to smack that piece of genitalia into the afterlife.

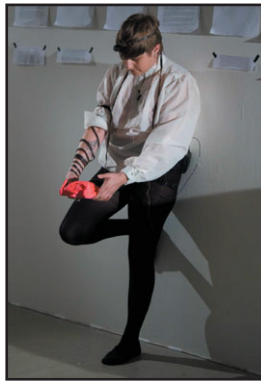
My clitoris often can't take this at all. It gets red and perks up at the sound of “smack!” It unfurls. It is pearling, and chomping, and tightening my inner lips, making my hips buckle. I need to squirt myself out of this raw atmosphere, smacking a hard cock and the austerity of 2 bodies whose only contact is punishment.

I need to come into my power; I need to claim this cock, this absence, this memory of fear, this infliction of cruelty.

No Dad, I'm coming, let me come. Know me. Eat me out. Finger me with Vaseline, find the center under my clit, up around my pubic bone, set me loose.

I am everything to you. I. Am. The. Only. Thing. The thingness of me, rising from your cum in my mother. I am the monster of you that is untidy, that has no self-awareness, that responds to being caressed, that fears you. I will always fear you.

Marissa Perel



4.

The more I call out to you, the more I fear I will waste myself for any good person. Not that I am against a solitary lifestyle, or no lifestyle.

I'm strong enough to lose everything, but if I do lose it, it will be in your name. I will die with your Hebrew name tattooed on my third eye over a Star of David, which has been branded there by my grandmother's hot iron.

I always wanted to lose everything and to have nothing, to live fully as nothing. Not everyone can have the imagination to even begin to see the world of nothing. This travels beyond lack of sensation, or material. It has nothing to do with Buddhism. Some people know about this place from drugs or psychosis, but it doesn't have to be accessed that way. I can curl up right now and just do it. See, I'm gone. I'm not real. I'm not invisible, but inanimate.

I'm definitely not detectable on the human level. Hermaphroditic crustaceans swim around me as if greeting a lost relative. They clean me, skimming my flesh with their miniscule teeth. They are patient. For them, life is one entire day and night. They let me sink deeper and deeper, just on the verge of drowning. I wake up as my skin begins to crack from the saline. I am full of bumps, and my curves are calloused.

I am hungry as if I have never eaten before, but my mouth is now a blowhole. I am sucking up food from my sphincter, which doesn't feel like I'm eating.

Everything is neon.

5.

In neon, perception is smooth and light. My vision comes to meet each glowing thing without tension. Nothing cuts or disrupts the panorama. My body, lithe in its subtle prowess, turns from reef to reef, inlet to algae. The discharge released from my silken gills is warm.

No one here has a name. The logic of the seabed is wandering, and mostly darkness. From one cave with marbled textures to another, more grainy.

So much buries me. Mostly just blue and its striations. How it appears to fill me, and how I feel of it, composed by it because it is all.

Negotiation of blue and blue, of neon and blue, viscous, electric shapes gliding, melding, or exploding to bits of shredded light. I am mistaken for rock; I have no predators.

Everything shits and fucks on me while I lie still, feeling their fish-cunt throbs and slimy cumshots. It's a sloth-like day, full of nothing, which is everything I've tried to become for so long, and I'm free.

Free to feel limitless pain, depths of scar, wounds blossoming like anemones.

Every rape floating in different neons, soft and open. The darkness grows tubular, begins to suck in my rock body and soft neon rape anemones. Vibrations swell around us, the tides churn counter clockwise. A layer of sea lifts up to reveal moonlight blazing from all directions of sky. It's pulling us out, out, up and up, and out until we burst from the tide's tube and scatter in the sky.

Now I'm not my memories.

Marissa Perel is an artist, poet, critic, and independent curator. She is re-writing the Isaac Bashevis Singer/Barbra Streisand epic *Yentl* into a queer love story for a show at Long Island City's The Chocolate Factory Theater. (Image from performance-installation of *Yentl Rewerked*, 2012. Lauren Goldstein photo).

From Telescope Highway

1
By inducing euphoria the circle evolved into a wheel until there was no more reason to return. Harping on the same moments becomes a past time, occurs in a past when there was no record of emotions. The wheel gets knocked around and can no longer spin under its weight of oppression. The free world survives on such allusions. Only the thoughts are crumbling and disintegrating without glue to cohere them. Silence invades the crevices of sanity and holds its own, to resist means death. Do not remove underwear from our monuments or step over the yellow line of delusion. Dark powers are invading newspapers who merge with crimes well spent as a day on the beach. Up ahead a carrot waving in the breeze, an airy promise.



Clouds of misgiving settle on the populace. The air raid shelters are full up. Some wag a finger at authority and questioned the foundations. Others seek progression in a waterfall of clay idols before succumbing to the mass directives. Fomenting anger cannot distinguish the inhabitants from one another. The head swells and reveals an assortment of shells. Mollusks fly out of ears and leap towards the horizon, fulfilling the ancient prophesy.

2
Chasing the elusive parroted soul through a maze of transparent thought canals—a bird with self made wings held a ticket to another circumstance The cage of outside influence had the power to entrap—until the outside spoken word revealed a message. “Take this ticket to another dimension” there’s a spot on a map leading nowhere. An absent pathway to eternal bliss and a perpetuity machine somewhere in the afterlife. As clockwork settles an old score.



Toni Simon



3
It was then that I first recognized my character for what she was. “It was difficult to remain afloat at that time in the sea of so much turmoil.” Advisable to float beforehand and sink the decks later, seafarers are seldom risked for their own good. The phone rang at just the right moment and the receiver was blue from the waist down. Too many times have passed and not that much said. It is claimed “all good things must end” but insufficient evidence to conjure up the past. The places gone are imaginative slices in the main pie, to serve in the guise of events. We bound through a maze of deterring factors. The victims are laid waste by recalling the old tunes and flavor their tea with bitter herbs once remembered. Only time can tell the outcome; it waits around the corner of perception knowing you will catch up with your shadow when the time presents itself. A lost and found object which will only fade.



The larks are inheriting the frost the dew collects on the unemployment lines. Escape at the end the rainbow is underhanded. In the towns the cities are seething. Leaden masses too hot to handle. Traditional structures are dividing and conquering the will of the people. Termites set in and delay the foundations from crumbling by careful re-examination with their teeth. No home entertainment guides due to lack of discretion. In bleachers the onlookers are not scorned for wearing plaid, they are too busy with the popcorn to indicate their weariness. Uniformness was betrayed too soon by blowing glass from the wrong dimension.

4
Exchanger expedite with Moses bundles. Whodunit clause for barnacle Sam. Detective swallows alleged email apostle, carries harmonium suitcase on a train to nowhere. Exchangers of the curtain times most enterprising illusion. Donald Rumsfeld’s aspartame formaldehyde air suit fireside chat. Accentuate the missile trough if bored and aimless.



Uncalculating time switched off the outer planets, orbits undulate in time. The oblong regulations spout pretensions for watery eyes. Closely knit patterns of antiquity laced with the insulation of the past and marred by a host of illusions from a-z. The clanging purchases resist direct confrontation but hide behind a sewer of old meaning. We anticipate a world full of nuclear horror but somehow this will all fade away.

Toni Simon (<http://tonisimonart.blogspot.com>) is a multimedia artist living in Park Slope, Brooklyn. Her illustrated book of prose poetry, *Earth After Earth*, was published by Lunar Chandelier in 2012.

Telephone Call from Samo for Miles Davis:

for Jean Michel Basquiat

the voice came in from nowhere over my telephone wire,
it was samo, the radiant black sorcerer of startling
indelible images, he was sluicing in on a scatological brush-
stroke of improvisational art,
risk-taking at its highest level, an unconditional shot
inside the verbal dark of word-play, language,

when the voice can be used as high-jinks rapology, hip-hop, jazz,
when it flies in through skipping signatures of time-changes,
which is the moment all true art lives inside,
when what one needs then is a key to unlock the magical impulse
mystery provides in surprise, where great music lives always –

great visual art, poetry & dance too –

inside a sequence of luminous metaphoric rhythms,
the happenstance of transcendent colors, images thrown together
on a canvas, a sheet of paper – like notes, words, sentences flying
as bird wings – full of imagination they dance into our lives with clues,
wake-up calls, signals that fuse, focus our attention, wrap it up
within a rapturous moment of incandescent beauty,

now samo's voice was reaching out to me to meet miles davis,
the prince of darkness, master of rhythmic nuance,
the golden trumpet voice of quicksilver mood changes,
unreconstructed black man not giving a fuck
what anybody thought of him was not inside his dna,
only music, the power to move, innovate through risk-taking rhythms
dancing on the head of a needle, mystery ingrained in his magic, voice,
was where he was at, just like samo through brushstrokes, images
colliding with colors, his voice, the language of history

speaking through both these radiant black sorcerers rooted in voodoo,

duende, now in this moment meeting miles was necessary for samo,
for his paintings to keep getting up on the magical one,
he wanted to know the spirits of jimi hendrix, bird, dizzy gillespie,
all dead now but living in the disposition of the prince who knew
their darkness & light, because he held the key
to unlocked secrets of the underworld, where ancestors lived
without flesh but flew as pure matter through that dark

unknowable space, bugged-eyed,
their invisible arms beating wings, without feathers,
creating brilliant music full of colors swimming there drenched in light

& was what samo needed to transition to the ether world
he had so often dreamed of since he heard the calling of ancestors

pulsating through rhythms & colors he imagined in a long-gone dream

Quincy Troupe

A Beautiful Woman Putting on Makeup
on the Downtown #3
New York Subway Train

she dabs a little of this, a bit of that with a brush on her lovely
face, smooth as any honey-brown female temptress'
countenance,
she holds a small hand mirror in her right hand
so she can best see her reflection in glass preening there,

but she wasn't satisfied with what her demanding
eyes saw,
so she applies a fresh coat of lipstick to her lips,
purses them, sticks out her tongue as if about to lick the image
caught there in glass, she is not pleased

so she licks her left index finger lovingly
before wiping it over her mouth until it glistens as if
seducing desire
(like it does when a female movie star opens herself up
in a seductive scene when kissing a co-star with an open
damp mouth –
two luscious pink tongues probing sensuously
between orifices wet with heat)

now she is satisfied with her image
in the glass,
so she rises alluringly, knowing all eyes are upon her
in this moment,
smiles sweetly as he struts off the train when the doors open –
like the lover's mouth in the movie – then disappears,
a dazzling illusion floating through the teeming crowds

A Singer's Siren Calling in

Marcus Garvey Park; August 24, 2013

for Cecile McLorin Salvant

her voice reminds of a great dancer's supple body
the way it bends itself into syllables, grace notes
extended into flight, phrases spinning high in the moment
where her voice cruised through space creating melodies,
improvising solos so stunningly elastic, different, still
her voice echoed familiar clues – bessie, ella, billie, sarah, abby –
threaded through our ears sassy as it eased into lyrics –
wanting someone to be a lollypop she could suck & lick –
then she pulled back to naughty french kisses – oo la la –
sounds of lascivious jelly rolls à la josephine baker,
then, for one so young, she turned on a dime

became magical, changed again into a bright flower
blooming mysteriously right before our eyes, suddenly
her hypnotic light captured our attention,
wouldn't let go when she soared, dipped back down to earth
became a spiritual deep growling in the blues dark,
a lover moaning heat, trembling – soaked to the bone –
before passion leaped into the moment, flipped her tongue risqué,
risky, elongating her vocal sounds into stretching possibilities
deep into a language of outrage, then it switched quickly to tender,
love we came to know now in her ancient voice,
an urgent calling, a siren's song igniting cleansing flames,

it was a commanding performance, fierce, unafraid,
a searing light beckoning to us hours after midnight

Quincy Troupe (<http://www.quincytroupe.com/>) is the author or co-author of 20 books and 10 volumes of poems. His most recent books are *Earl the Pearl*, co-authored with Earl Monroe (Rodale Books) and *Errancities* (Coffee House Press). He is the editor of *Black Renaissance Noire*, published at New York University.

Manic Pixie Sleep

Voice enters into the fore by opening.

And then the kids bully it; over a donut, nihilism erupts the sunset unacknowledged.

You're going to eat the chicken; because I said so and I'm the dad and that's how it is.

There is a plethora of copied voice is so interesting a placement, there.

"Speech is nothing more than a commercial approach to reality."

And, once your sister came over and we all thought she was dieing, or at least she did, but nevertheless, it was nothing more than irritable bowels, RAAS failure.

"Everything will be hesitation, disposition of parts"—

these things, schizophrenic man running out into 10th Avenue plowed by an un-brakeable waste management truck. The silence of our waste heads first to the river and then out, further,

into question.

It'll be a date, then; she'll joke about being a lesbian; it'll be a date, then; she'll refrain from the entire time. There's always unfinished, quickened pizza. When you turn around, the bricks behind you, they'll be staring, needy. When you fall

in love, don't fall at all; turn around.

Disappear, in the sense of going invisible; all things change except those things that aren't visible. "Just keep bringing her the books . . . she'll be fine."

Thank you. "I know you've already probably got a No cued up in your head." Beauty, according to sublimity, and for me, has always been a diversification of everything, like when the memory of someone's body interrupts me at work; there is no currency to the body becomes commodified by the voice. "I get very nervous when I date." "My favorite part of New York is you can just walk and walk and you never run out of city . . . Just be honest; that's the only way I'll continue this. . . I reveal myself very quickly, too quickly even."

And, the nihilist kids. And, the crowded bar. And, the nihilist kids in the counselor's office, crying.

"I'm sorry I told you; I tell everything."

Self-deprecation is one of the most important facets of a clown's act.

"You put on a dress tonight and saved a man's life."

Through the thin crevice, a skinny rectangular space, up thirty five flights, straight through to the top as if never-ending, interior, Escher, upward vat of perpetuity, just breathe. Again, he has daughters and you're way too close to the edge.

"I don't want you to fall." "My name's Liz."

And, the mentor turning your idiocy into her pleasure, taking her gestures as something tangible; no gesture is tangible except to the gesturer; the rest is an instruction. Like when you tell me to pull at it like my finger is saying: come here.

It was in midtown and Mexico and Boston that you came out a screaming fetus and we held you in a little cradle of flesh carpentry, smiling all the way into the misery of otherwise upsetting narrative. All the midtown lights are on.

And the esoteric gray-haired man obsessed with red curtains says, "Go; be funny, funny man; go, be funny."

And, you look up.

"Fuck you, David Letterman, Fuck you!"

(in silence, silence, vocal disappearance, signage, streetlights).

Ken L. Walker



Half-lives or Collisions

Three days have passed as if squares at their center, tried supplication, my eyes that keep you around, slipping on an ear, the negation of how to find me—the horizon inside circle. Tonight, again, the possums don't speak. Time breaks in two and makes us chase the worse half. Understanding may happen better with the eyebrows burned off, each pluck a detached wing, each foot not the rule under oath. Break free with a backslash; stay away from the outdated warden. You move like the prospect of two planes crossing the between and calling on combustion to find the out-of-place. Running, muscles become downy grain as you pour water, the way you dress in the morning, the towel not supple enough yet sure enough for the cul-de-sac of your two arms. If the gymnastics, the balance head-over-heels. The past three days strand me somewhere where no municipal yellow lights stop anyone. No one can be certain the alarm works when fully asleep. I cannot recall if what I cannot recall is what I am telling you or if it's what I'm supposed to tell myself. Elastic, the band of gratitude sets up direct center between the shoulders—screaming the most frightening thing is how well-behaved. The tomato used me, a good rarity. Your lace, the way it radiates, walking under a string of plane crashes, staring towards where closer to am-pink meets afternoon. And, who really, can land on water? The good days require storage space and control climates like a constellation of chimneys, melt my teeth which cannot feel you there. A better stratagem may be an understatement—a string of plane crashes strung together.

Bar Rooms

for Tyler Flynn Dorholt

"We have not the ethics for these genes, automatic refills," and the tap is a lamp, a television turned into music,

"I can't believe this is New York on a Wednesday," she said.

"We fall out of atmospheres in the morning"

translate the worst phrases into faces, the worst sands into horns. "I'm all hospice in these storms; I'll wait for you."

In the past two weeks over 11,000 have left or forgotten items in New York taxicabs. Of those 11,000, at least 7,600 have reported those items stolen.

In the past thirty days, there have been nearly 40 murders directly attributable to firearms. "The privilege is weather," and we never catch up, really, do we, looking for these jobs and staring up at ladders fit for our hands; in fact, we do nothing but deny

the murmurs—always here, the murmurs forever here.

She's going to move downstairs and you are going to, for the most part, build something no one else can see, float through early anonymity until two cracked arms form an arch, the arch itself just a monument subjugated by zoning restrictions like anything else immovable.

Lexicon's insinuated; I say, "Myself walking across the street from myself, signaling, laughing about being insurance-less." The cop sees you, for you, she says. Language, the angle of the age. I was there when you consumed your twenties into a plot. She said, "Stay still little man, just cause." My friend once wrote, if I could carry the radio of the world, I'd press pause. We aggregate in front yards, right here, for the most part, in front of everyone who can regularly see the façade, for the most part, of what we regularly do. She said, "This ain't the suburbs, son; get with it;

they're singing: "Mama England/Open your legs/and let me go inside."

Mitigate the matter like you've committed to continue. "What matters begins at identity and ends at you." Gerald Delanty examines the impact of rediscovering community. Here, just the two of us and this little canvas-book, brokenfooted, scale-turned, laugh-canyon. When we write that someone does something in the present tense, we acknowledge the book not as catacomb but as incubator.



ピッツバーグ
Pittsburgh

Roberto Clemente Bridge, Summer 2010
Sarah Reck photo

flash prayer

careful and hot--
thin images like
Cher riding the back
of a motorcycle in Mask like
all the city graffiti stacked

no precipitation for our
prisms like

forgetting to be on fire
so you can
truly burn as if
everyone in the picture
blinks with the shutter

the sun is a bookmark
the faces are pages

and i won't claim still frame
slow motion
unknowing;
i knew.
the professionals insist
leave it to pleasure
like a blissful head nod
can lead you--
leave it to a beat,
guide like that
hand moving the sentence ender of your spine
through a room
full of engines

the purr
the taught
the never learned
the lean into corners
the taking in

to keep from coming

Our hips smack into each other,
oceans that can't quit
biting & collapsing.
You light a cigarette and pass it to me.

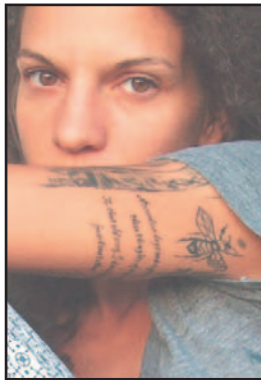
The air is August, bed yours,
our limbs jigsawed against vines that
pattern the sheet,
her fitted corners by all our flexing
released.

Earlier the evening sun snagged us
slowdancing to The Temptations,
hard floor and cassette,
our tequila-soaked circles lopsided, slow--
how this carries over to kissing--
shirt over my head as the tape flips and drums kick in
loved you like a fool and
teeth found neck--

I ride you on inhale--
I never look past your chest.
The twin tide pools wait there
slow blinking
dams down
flood promised.
I opt for shore of your collarbone--
it is too cold to swim--

I pass the smoke back--

Nikki Allen



parted mouth of sky letting in
enough light to hold our places

land of a body

My hands are home to chains of mountain range, the bed
of palm my Andes, rising with blood for nothing. I am
considered strange because of this. Disfigured. My hips boast
the Great Divide. Most belts won't fit. When I am in love, Alps
sprout on belly and each tunnel beneath dermis will pulse
with my breath. It is impossible to keep secrets--instead of
blushing, my veins sprout like highways.

My father was a town crier. He never stood still, never said
much unless it was to yell at the top of his lungs. Past the top
of his lungs--past neck and ears and reach. He screamed for
every hour, every important arrival, every thought that stood
awkward in his brain. He shook with his hollering. Hand
clenching, tendons flared. And then he would bloom like a
rose bush.

Mother had the sun freckles and sirens. Beneath snapshot of
oasis she tucked frozen tundra and the softspots kicking like a
chorus line across her gut. Eyes the color of grass blades. My
mother made of wings.

When I'm angry, soft explosions take over my elbows and
tributaries spread across my inherited limbs. Blue Ridge, Pelly,
Cayoosh. I bump my palms across to calm myself. I fantasize
on the slitting of skin, to pull out the mess. To climb them all
covered in blood.

Eulalia

mere digits before dusk
window blinds sectioning light
and skin into parallelograms,
knife blades I can
dip my knuckles in
reaching up to touch--
another button curtsies out of place on your shirt.
late day witness and bird song--
arriving windless
and pitched forward at the hips,
so out of breath i could only talk
with my hands.

once upon survival

The oranges would not eat themselves.
You, the neighborhood's miracle,
devoured them as if nature
herself promised riots in the tongue--
half-penny monster with pockets
brought a cake baked in bonfire.
All the loves were dead around
his neck, brief jostle of sockets
that bumped your mouth to blood when he lunged,
who cried when you crawled in his drum
and there a heart shoved in thick moss
and to it rose a mountain of
citrus, beyond that stray segments
like glistened boats sailing curses.
After this risky feast the seams
of your stomach grinned big and split--
the tailor loved your loveliness;
mending your broken strands with her
fingerprints, so head over spool
she stitched to your lining a moon.

Cartize, for Brittanica

Looks like *car/ties*, not *Cortez*, which is what your mother meant, but chose not to spell when, alone, she named you. Last name Durham. Middle names Barnard Aries. Nickname Buckeye, for your bucked eyes, round and glorious, they saw you into your future, celebrated with gunshots and American flags. Born January 10, 1977, Bossier City, Louisiana. Capricorn. Second-to-the-oldest of five, two girls and three boys. Raised in the projects, you broke out. Talked white, folks said. But when you called on Friday nights, after tackles and touchdowns, glory hung around your voice when you said "Tameka" like a sweet. Believed yourself to be ugly back then. Did you learn the lie of that? Decorated your body in Greek letters and fatigues, to stand out, to hide. Died a captain, November 8, 2007, in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy. When the Blackhawk that carried you like a bad mother spent out of control and broke into one million pieces of metal and empty mechanical scraps, it ripped you and your gear, you and your gun, you and your helmet, you and your skin, you and your pink and red and taupe and purple and black organs, you and your breath, you and your seed, all, to shreds. After, the light kissed all the broken pieces, you, a psychedelic tapestry of human, of man. Did you see you fly again, skyward? Just then, a chill wrapped around your mother, who could have been our mother. If. In a breath, she went insane, Cartize. You always wanted to rule, to take flight. Cartize. Superstar back then, master of the thing Black girls wanted to groove. Beneath. The names of your first loves burn next to mine. Who can remember running through water sprinklers with you during the muggy nights of July? Just one night, Cartize. Wanted to love every woman, your body a six foot mass of honeyed whispers, sullied hisses. Role model. Heartbreaker. Soldier. Beloved: Beautiful brown Buckeye, tell me the names of God.

"Cartize, for Britannica" first appeared in Calaloo

Shreveport: Christmas Morning, 1989

for Wanda Coleman

Squeal & hug mamma neck/*Why we survived*/Blue metal-lic ten-speed/*What would we have done?*/ Shinin like a bow/*There were always good days*

Sista bike lil & pink/*Poverty is a thing to go through*/ Bikes be side by side/*Though you looked good going through*/Like we be side by side/*Dimpled smile, thick legs*/ Big sista, lil sista/*Raising girls alone*

Ride updown the block/ *Your man will pay your bills*

whooshwhoosh whoosh whooshwhoosh & swish
You do what you must/zipzipzip zip zipzip zzzzzzzzip
/Tread water/

swish swish swish/*Cain't ride to nearest street*/*Strike a compromise*/*Mamma got strictlove/ Bargain*

Grease stains, rusty chain on Tameka ten-speed/*A mother's love*/No grease stains, rusty chain on sista bike/*If money grew on trees*/ Ten-speed used/*There would be no trees*/ Sista bike new

If mother was rich/Sista get the best
We'd be rich/of everything

Tameka Cage Conley



Body Out of Nowhere

You got to die to leave me, Nancy.
What did my eyes see?
You got to die to leave me.
Shoulda let that broke nigga be.

Take off runnin' in that field, baby.
I'm gone count to ten.
This here thirty-eight
got some majesty to send.

*Jesus, don't the moon turn black,
turn black sometimes?*

Into the flyin' night, don't cry,
don't scream, don't moan, no--
what good it gonna do?
You cut my heart; the beat turn slow.

Saw in you a whole split world
for me and you to mend.
Slipped my mind up in you--
your tongue said husband, said friend.

*Sweet Jesus, don't the moon turn black,
turn black all the time?*

I showed you my hands,
where work made me hard.
Your lips soft on my fingers,
my mouth call the Lord.

Saw his hand slip up,
slip up, slip up, slip up
where only mine's supposed to be.
You a stone cold lie, woman.
Done brewed rage in me.

*Jesus know the moon turn black,
how it turn black in the night time.*

Here lies Nancy Lee Washington Young,
is what the gravestone will say.
She cheated on her husband,
and ain't alive this day.

*Jesus don't the moon turn black,
turn black sometimes?*
*Jesus, don't the moon turn black,
turn black sometimes.*

Why I Read Romance Novels, Shreveport, Age 10

Behind church fans & pots of slowly cooked peas
sweat & song slide from mouths, heavy
with lack & duty, thrill of salt & bone.
Tongues stretch across rows of uneven teeth,
amen on the edge
of a scream—they never know how much I listen.

*When you're waiting for a voice to come in the night
and there is no one, don't you feel like crying?*

None of my kin say what is true.
They dream of love & settle,
appetite for plenty heavy
beneath the gospel,
hymn buried in gravel & decay,
They confess:
My thighs got rhythm.
Bring your lonely tune.

*When you're waiting for a voice to come in the night
and there is no one, don't you feel like crying?*

I touch you, feel the pulse of my people,
born again, their boiling is my overflowing
cup. I refuse to shut my mouth. Let this torment
burst a new blues
on my greedy tongue.
The alto you hear in your sleep is mine.

*When you're waiting for a voice to come in the night
and there is no one, don't you feel like crying?*

Tameka Cage Conley, Ph.D. (<http://tinyurl.com/nxs7xsu>), is a Cave Canem Fellow and Pushcart Prize nominee. Her poems are published or forthcoming in *African American Review*, *Callaloo*, *Chapter & Verse*, and *The Driftless Review*. She is completing her first poetry collection, "In Other Circumstances" and a novel, "This Far, By Grace." Martha Rial photo.

Sound—Part 3 (Ostinato):
All the World's Wars Commence in the Head

Hunched in a thimble, I wept. *Mercy.*

Once blotted out trees. *Well.*

Made some second-guess me. *Speak.*

Ought not act so ugly.

Said—

Ought not act so ugly.

Hunched in a thimble, I wept. *Yes, yes.*

Won't make no apologies. *Naw, Sir.*

Who will take on this burden?

Ought not walk alone.

Said—

Ought not walk alone.

In my sleep, I wandered.

Sssssssssssss stitch, sssssssssssss stitch,

Sssssssssssss stitch, sssssssssssss stitch,

Sssssssssssss stitch.

That's the way they do you.

Said—

That's the way they do you.

Words can make a mountain.

Said—

Words can make a mountain.

No pulpits in the thimble.

Said—

No pulpits in the thimble.

Head—hah—

Head—hah—

Said—

Head, shoulders, knees & legwork.

Ought not act so ugly.

Ought not act so ugly.

Head, shoulders, knees & legwork.

No room for one more.

No room for one more.

Don't go pray for me.

Don't go pray for me.

No acres for want in a thimble.

Said—

No acres for want in a thimble.

All I could do was roll.

Said—All I could do was roll. *Mm-hmm.*

Sssssssssssss stitch, sssssssssssss stitch,

Sssssssssssss stitch, sssssssssssss stitch,

Sssssssssssss stitch?

I know not what, I know not what.

as others like you
after John Ashbery

Yona Harvey



How a man holds his knife has nothing to do with what he really is—his anathemas tucked in a bedside drawer, word scraps in the Journal of Internecine Manifestos. He questions his role in the family, his liminality & atavistic disturbances. Another night's sleep in fragments: a drowned olive, a slow tongue, a belle blonde flirting across the table. *I'm not so old*, he tells her. But she hasn't heard, her earrings almost perverse—little chandeliers beneath chandeliers. "Abandon this bit of hat," and relax in the chill of Russian vodka, "careless as wrinkled clothes." Celebration seems ostensible.

But why?

Another articulate Negro? For Christ's sake, it's 20___. Surely he's more than a gustatory truffle in a third course. The woman's lipstick, at least, looks sincere. Sincere. Now, there's a word. He lugs it into morning. "Approbation-seeking is for boys. There are no rules against avarice." *Who said that?* he wonders, wound in the new day's mechanisms. Must he revisit his country's founding? Blind to conflict & drunk with abnegation? Isn't this the house he funded & furnished? "No taxation without representation." "Crispus Attucks." Starched shirt. Smart knot.

I'd Rather Be a Blind Girl :: Etta James

Lord, Etta—

Something told me My mama waited too long to mention *it was over*. *When I saw you with that girl & yall was talking* her neighbor *saw you with that girl & yall was talking* cueing your music all summer long *Something deep down* —scotch *Something deep down & water, Something deep down gin & Something deep down you, Something deep down said / it was over / When I saw you / gone & cry girl* she knew how to keep company. All my muscles *deep down* undone now. Girl, I shoulda *Something told me Something told me Something told me* had your name. Et-ta, Et-ta. Et-ta. & *I'd rather*. Let the men holler after me, & *I'd rather* let the women shake their heads. *Something told me* relish the cool *I was just sitting here thinking* of a single ice cube *thinking melted thinking* at the bar counter, *thinking thinking thinking thinking* far from conversation. You sang the songs & *I'm scared to be by myself*. Your mama warned you not to— & *I'd rather & I'd rather & I'd rather & I'd rather &-- be by myself*. Yo. Yo. Hmmm. & yo. *I see Yall know what I'm talking bout when I say, sweet sin & excess, & yo. I see yall know what I'm talking bout when I say, cigarettes & yo. & yo. & yo. & yo.* the smoke *when I look down into my glass & say yo, Summer Yo & yo & revealing its Yo damp sky, Yo Yo. Yo. Yo. Yo. Yo. & yo.* When I saw you with that same person & *I'm scared to be by myself*. & holler after me. Too long. *Something told me.*

"I'd Rather Be a Blind Girl" first appeared in *Fledgling Rag*. "Sound—Part 3 (Ostinato): All the World's Wars Commence in the Head" previously appeared in *Hemming the Water* (Four Way Books).

Skot M. Jones



From Hundred Hell Sonnets

9 (Anti-social)

I desire a life of ritual without ethical consequences, entirely alchemical or elemental, definitely anti-social, no obligatory tribalism or familial crafted cosmogonies that would have me soldiering in their metaphysical operas—no Father/Son-service, no mercurial Holy Ghost allegiances. This man that was built for war and plunder stares back as if on earth for nothing, not even for me, so I unhook mirrors from the walls and conjure whatever will come. Give me a mannish green-skinned demon of desire, hooved and horned to reckon the fear with the damned speech that makes from dreams, imagined intelligible spirits to connect me with a bit of the real shiny change in exchange for a cigar or a saucer full of cream. Because I am here right now in the future, broke again and nothing is working.

52 (Silhouette)

Looking up from the street I see a silhouette at the window through lace curtains yellowed by incandescent light. I could come in through the back, put my cold hands on her bare shoulders *changing* before she notices—maybe she would smile sweetly at an intruder and take off tiny pink underwear she wore for this night, baby-powdered in honor of strangers. But this isn't so, because what moves there on the third floor has what looks like 9 inhuman limbs of wanting. O dark and heavy planets, yes it is I who will be destroyed at the dark end of the road where cars only go to drop off and turn around.

56 (Dead Leaves)

Polaroid photographs in boxes in the attic are faded hues of orange to a brown that obscures faces. This one I press to closed eyes, to the sweat on my forehead as dry thin yew branches scrape against the walls, world full of dead leaves outside litter the ground. I take this final picture, it might be of you, mouth an impromptu prayer such as horrified hikers always mutter before an unknown body discovered suddenly in autumn woods, unexpected white of skull bones beneath the hair, rotted skin.

88 (Apocalypse)

I nail a cross of twigs and sticks on the cabin's bedroom wall, imprint circles so nothing with a goat's head, no primordial horns or barbed claws arrive in the mail out of valley mist, through the mountain woods. I rub the palms of my hands on my eyes, place them in sympathy on your eyes that remain crazy, bloodshot with original fear. To you this impatient sunlight through the window is a pointed finger, indicates the one whose soul is burning in Hell. Limbs wrapped in white thorn branches, wire fences, rocking chairs, red X's mark the calendar, the hammer and nail and time kills the heart manually, painfully, invites apocalypse to reveal the room, you, me, the cities we left, our people, the geometries of everything...

Prayer of the Hearthkeeper's Ghost

I have become erased by my own hands of work. I build fires and leave, return again. The front of me is a ghost, my children erased. They have the eyes of miners who have emerged from the earth, eyes when first revealed by sunlight on soot-covered faces. Light—may it shine on me until the end. The world is the ghost of the sun. It will not achieve destination, it will not land. I work and do not bathe—may it never land. I choked the last man before me with these hands—I? I live below, the floor you walk upon is warm. May the children's eyes never be erased, I throw another log upon the fire, I tend to all children. One came before me whom I strangled with these hands. Though I am tested through the hands' evangelist flame and long to burn old friends, I have no use, I am vanishing into something whole, something pure. I? I am burning. I am become these large hands that kill the Last Man, hands that have worked at fire-keeping since before my birth. May they keep going in work, may they be my undoing. Centered in my white heart of fire, prophets boil blue in the dark blood of toil. The floor you walk upon barefoot is warm. I am below you with these hands putting logs into the fire. It is burning everyone. I put my hands into the sun—Work is surrender to the world. It will never achieve destination, my Lord. The sun rises the good work in my blood, all I was ever born to know. The moon is a hole in the earth. My children have charcoal faces. The children lying on the warm floor will not be extinguished. Let the dark world fall into my eyes. Flame of course. Fire of dissolution.

In Flames

The orange glow in the house across the street, fire inherent in the room, tells me that someone burns to withstand the night. Someone's body is horribly disfigured as the flames take apart their life.

No doubt that it is this or that person's fault—kerosene can, gas stove. The way a slow leak will take years to fill the whole house and how the person in flames went on ignorant of the odor, refusing to believe

that yes, this life, my house too, is a tinderbox. What can I do though, but admit that the orange glow is somehow comforting from this distance? I don't want to get any closer to them, I can tell you that.

It makes me remember the instruction my father gave me for the old Brunco wood and coal burning stove, important function that it could burn more than one type of fuel. Proud though he was

his anger was clear when he came down the stairs to feel the intense heat, to see me sweating and commented about the flue glowing an unusual orange. *Son, that is dangerously hot, that fire is too big...* I knew. It could burn anything.

Skot M. Jones (<http://tinyurl.com/mcdnx3b>) lives in Pittsburgh. You can reach him at skot.m.jones@gmail.com.

Melodrama for a Losing Steelers Sunday

You had a hell of an entrance:
*I think I just got us killed tonight—
 put away my groceries, wouldja Babe?*
 You were out the door again
 to see if the cops had come
 to break up the domestic
 on the corner of Ridgeway
 and Blessing
*You might not want
 to sleep here tonight*
 was your opening line in Scene Two
 and you didn't have to tell me twice
What about you? I wanted to know
 as I packed a small bag,
 in haste
Should we find a hotel room?
 You were still talking fast,
 like a man who's been threatened,
 shaken, backed into a small space:
*I'll kill him if he comes here,
 I've got the kitchen knives
 and the shovels from the shed*
 I was down the street
 and partway across the bridge
 before I saw you following me
 in Scene Three
 You said you wanted to witness
 your beloved getting on a bus
 and riding to safety
 In Act Two the barista asked
How are you?
 which made my voice waver
 as I ordered my *peppermint
 tea, with lemon, for here*
 The second friend I called
 had a couch to lend for the evening
 but not until much later
 Act Three was a 12 Step meeting
 on the topic of Loneliness
*The difference between solitude
 and loneliness
 is connection to yourself
 You've either got it
 or you don't*
 In Act Four I ran into a poet
 I didn't know worked at Whole Foods
 who said she'd just been to Baltimore
 for her book release party
 and everyone there knew me
*You're the most popular person
 in the country!*
 We laughed
 after which
 I retreated to a booth alone
 and ate carrot salad
 with braised pork
 over lemon rice
 while the aching clerk
 swept the café floor.

It's bedtime now,
 and I'm sleeping with strange cats.
 In Act Five
 I hope you're still alive
 I wish you sound sleep
 and pleasant dreams
 and wonder if the knives
 are under the pillow
 or the shovels, by the dresser.
 I heard you shaved your beard off
 to make yourself
 unrecognizable
 to predators.

Karen Lillis



December News

It wasn't so much that the rabbit died
 as that he was never there to begin with.
 A false commencement is yet
 an emotional miscarriage: look at
 the husband's face and tell me it's not
 true. What to do with a seed planted
 in hope's central artery, a potency
 left to flow through the backyard garden
 of the mind? For that matter,
 is the wife's hope stronger
 than the husband's despair?
 Who says your answer's
 anything but questionable?
 The wife's younger, but she
 has her own despair, sir.
 The wife's anger has a tongue
 of its own, but it lies in wait,
 ma'am. These and other
 dilemmas will be worked out
 on their own time, in the right light,
 provided that indeed, food,
 light, water, love, and air
 are availed of in sufficient doses,
 that nutrition is pursued, dead
 growth trimmed back to the stem,
 more hours are spent above the
 skyline than beneath its entrails,
 and the life that's excavated
 pulsating is ever encouraged in
 the direction of the sun.

Chinese Couplet #17

Marriage	Lust
mountain	river
one	swift
direction	bends
Forgiveness	Honesty
carves	gives
walking-stick	navigation

Chinese Couplet #26

Husband	Wife
smile	heart
loses	gains
gravity	sunlight
sudden	again
beams	beats
shy	careful
sun	hope

Mann's Chinese Theatre Couplet

Love	Love
smooth	bumpy
give	hide
it	in
Hollywood	Eagle Rock
marquee	apartment

Fifth-Floor Chinatown Walk-Up Couplet

Ganja	Fridge
plenty	empty
lover	girlfriend
wakes	weeps
ravenous	furious

The Reunion

We got lost, you'll remember, on the way to the wedding.
 We screwed up, did everything wrong; there was a certain protocol
 we neglected to follow. The ring wasn't a ring at all, but a car,
 the car smashed into the house and broke in two. The house fell
 apart into more pieces than that, and I ran off broken,
 hid myself securely. From you, from the sun,
 from anyone who could even imagine a method
 of loving me. Lord knows which direction
 you headed; I was no longer looking out, merely
 backwards. You tell me now there were times you placed yourself
 at the sound's edge, the salt in your nostrils, and inscribed
 my letters on the insides of your eyelids. Perhaps
 more to the point, you wondered after me in
 present tense. While in my world, there were only
 ever one or two notes I played, to no one's great
 advantage: you were mine, and you were gone, and nothing
 afterward made a lick of sense. This song droned on
 for years; until one day, boredom gave way to a lusty taste
 for vengeance, and the darkness no longer
 served me. Without divulging the location of my secret
 lair, I made my way into it again: the flow
 of crowds. I feigned surprise when we fell into
 each other's arms after so many decades, and as I bared
 my incisors, you marveled at the sweetness
 of my long forgotten smile.

Moving From Babies to More Babies

All the conversations I ever had with you were in my head.
The last thing you ever said to me might have been a eulogy.
Every time I speak, I remember what I don't have to say.
The way it is now we only open our mouths to devour.
I say I've had enough and you seem to disagree.
I still say I've had enough.
Babies

If you do nothing the world will come to you.
If you sacrifice yourself the world will sacrifice you.
Moving From Babies to More Babies

All the conversations I ever had with you were in my head.
The last thing you ever said to me might have been a eulogy.
Every time I speak, I remember what I don't have to say.
The way it is now we only open our mouths to devour.
I say I've had enough and you seem to disagree.
I still say I've had enough.
Holding Babies

The first time we held babies you screamed
and I think you knew how much you missed me
at that point. Everything that came out of you
got pushed out into the world so fast.
If you keep pushing
you'll run out fast.
The babies are already gnawing on minerals.
They will never stop.
Before now nobody knew
the origin of gravity.
I wanted to tell it to you, because it's shocking, and I
will do anything to make you scream that way again.
The Finality of Babies

The stretch of infants is an expanse. You are a total mess.
No expanses are safe anymore. There are no more expanses.
The touch of hands breaks bones. Everything is far too
fertile.
If I could take your bones in my hands they would break.
Some believe only what breaks counts.
History is a loop of breaks and beating.
Consistency is simply a matter of odds.
There are other things we overcome as well.

Ask a question about what we can do anymore.
Eventually we won't even want to touch the ground.
You think it's fine to go out. I've seen running water.
There's a prison in everything that flows.
There is a house that is always empty now.
And I've wanted to look inside you for so long.
You have a place full of things that never break.
Most often, they just cease.

Banishing Babies

I don't need to be drunk to do this but I need to be drunk
to do this. Even if being drunk means I can't do other things
like this. Your face is prettier than you recognize, I'm just
sayin. The standard is the standard. A scarf is just a thing to
blow in the wind. The last time we spoke like this, you were
sobbing, and I hated babies. It brings us to a conclusion
nearer the ground.

If patterned silk touched your skin, you would howl for days.
If that was the last thing I touched you with it would have
dolphins and dots like bubbles. A scab grew where a cut was
not. I conducted my own funeral prematurely while you slept
on a pile of old baby clothes riddled with dolphins and blue.
You should sleep more. You should see your mother. You
should caravan.

Shawn Maddey



Ending Babies

This was a love poem before I wrote it.
My glass is salty, so I could spit
and poison a slug, things to be
free of - now it is about dirt,
growing fonder of it yearly.

Part two, takes more shots
to the nose, takes plucked hairs,
takes tickling until too much
laughter, anything to cry
if it makes you feel better.

Three, the foundry cities,
the black lung babies,
the dirt that clings to each wall,
the way bricks can't taste like a smile.
It eats them.

No More Babies

I've done us a kindness. I've plowed
fields that grow the best flowers
for pollination, sowing seeds to chew
with our teeth, like good seeds
are good for. Our growing season
is a solipsist, it believes in itself,
and it buries the babies in leaves.

One Day, the Babies

One day all of the babies will find all of the windows.
One day all of the babies will find a way to open up.
Their insides will spread out like wings and something
will draw them up into the sky. One day, a rapture of babies
will black the sun, because someone will have had enough.
The babies will become gods in the sun, out the windows.
One day all of the babies will have been born.
One day there will be no more babies born, because
all the babies will have been born already.
There will be no choice for the babies but to rapture away.
All of the babies will rapture away, one day, and the print
they leave shit and barfed into the crust of the earth
will be the work of bulldozers for decades, and the shame
of everyone who ever cared to breathe fresh air.
One day all of the babies will gift us with silence
in the departure of everything.
There will be clouds of babies and hot air balloons of babies.
There will be Greek pantheons of babies.
There will be asteroid belts of babies.
There will be fragments of babies dipping in and out
of our plane of reality, sequences of dimensions of babies.
The babies will go. Seeds will still fall
from tissue to tissue and into hapless sand, forming crusts.
We will form a crust to hold us together, one day.
One day we will become a crust.
There will be no need for windows or questions anymore, and we will be a crust.

excerpts from "A book of cataclysmic love poems"

Birthing

There will be blood, the Scottish nurse shouts to get the room full of rounded bellies and scared quiet men smiling nervously to her attention. She's tasked with teaching you to birth and care for the small stranger you should love. *Women have been giving birth forever*. She says, *That's how we all got here*. It's too late to walk out. At your appointment you're lying on a vinyl table, your feet resting in awkward stirrups. The doctor instructs, *Open your legs wider...wider. Relax your knees*. Two months later a baby's soggy coned head is crowning out your hole. The hole you were always told was nice and tight and now the doctor is reporting 10 cm. It will never be the same. It will never be a small hole again, you think. The trauma of another human traveling through and breaking free will never hush after the whoosh of your water breaking. You kept asking, *what if my water breaks but I don't realize?* In hindsight, stupid you, it's an indistinguishable gush you've stored up in the fall, winter and now it's spring, spilling out onto a white towel on an elevated hospital bed and there is no returning to before, you can't just walk home. There is no returning to before, there is no returning, your body will never look or feel the same. The doctor holds up this red scrunched up baby that will not cry and the nurse runs her to the warming bed. The doctor proudly shows you, your placenta, a veiny wet blooded alien and the short umbilical cord that attached you to a small, now crying prize and your first impulse is to shove it all back inside but you will never go back to just you again. After you stand for the first time and look back at the bed (the nurse said don't look) but you can't stop staring at the bed of blood soaked sheets and clots. And there is no way that could all be your blood. You are no longer alone.

Digits

She almost lost her left middle and ring finger trying to trim the stubborn overgrown hedges with a new Black and Decker. The electrical green, black, and yellow clippers fell from her right hand and her reflex kicked in. She caught the blades before it fell. Shocked she looked for her digits in the mulch only to find them still attached in a dripping bouquet of exposed bone and blood blossoming. In the ambulance, she asked, *Will I ever play guitar again?* She was the kind of guitarist, You'd pay to shut up, tone deaf and flat. The EMT said, *Probably not* and she smiled.

Dear Pittsburgh

Dear Pittsburgh, dear dirty city, dear pointless traffic in the rain or sun, bottleneaking at the Squirrel Hill Tunnel. Dear tailgaters in sub-zero temperatures, the crowded old world smell of kielbasa as I cross the Fort Duquesne bridge with my window cracked open, wishing for fresh air. Dear polluted rivers I refuse to swim or fish in, you are everywhere, there is no escape. Dear old crumbling bridges I wait in traffic imagining a collapse and drowning in my car, submerged in cold water. Dear Steel City, I have lived you longer than I ever imagined, I find you in my words and accent Iron, Warsh, and Hello. Dear hilly topography, I know you, the back ally potholes, blind curves, and short cuts through Polish Hill to Baum BLVD. Dear city untouched by change and the world. Dear Yinzerland, I hate and love your grey skies and cheap rent equally.

Deena November



Things I Could Never Tell My Mother

Inspired by Aaron Smith

I stole money not only out of dad's brown folded wallet, but your messy purse and it was easy. You never realized all your cash in wrinkled up balls or wrapped in soon-to-expire coupons, you never kept track of your cash, you just handed it to strangers with hard time tales you wanted to shut up.

I used your expensive anti-wrinkle creams on my oily teenage skin. I snorted coke off the mirrored jewelry box you bought me for my Bat Mitzvah.

I remember when you believed my high school principle as she told you I was having sex and you believed her even though you never asked me and I had been raped in a small park only five minutes from home, I can't walk or drive past that park to this day without a panic attack. I always had to walk home from school even in a thunderstorm, yet you never let my younger sister walk alone.

Wearing it without permission, I let my boyfriend rip your emerald anniversary necklace off my sweaty neck when he came.

Angry, I knocked off the side mirror of your Avalon when you grounded me for breaking curfew.

You constantly said as I struggled to pull on my jeans that I had a fat butt and I threw up after most meals.

I wasn't sleeping at Molly's or Miriam's all those nights I didn't come home And Aaron was a guy not a girl.

I have tried to kill myself after hanging up on you, twice. It was horrifying at thirteen to hear you come through my bedroom wall.

I went to the Mikvah for you, pretended to let the rain water purify me as if I were some dirty creature which I am, but not because I bleed.

I remember always wanting to be the daughter you could be proud of, but it was impossible without washing away myself.

I could never say or do the things that came most natural to me when I was around you. You made me a fragmented person with one hand on the Mezuzah in the doorway and the other on a stranger's hard cock.

Purple Robe

Hers is inside-out, I realize, when my mother gets up out of her recliner at 7 am. The pocket at her right hip's flipped out like an ear. All the hairy stitches show. *Do you know your robe is inside out?* I say to her back, as she bends to turn off her oxygen flow. She has a cane in one hand. She's trailing a complicated tubing that curls and loops behind, catching occasionally on chair legs, on my left-out shoes. *I can't be bothered with clothes*, she says. The last word's barely a wheeze. Limp into the bathroom. Mother of buttons, zippers, patches, bleeding now redblue threads around the seams.

The Moon

Because I have something in me that does not want for anything. Because I have something else that can't wait for you to turn off the light so I can eat everything. Who is it who has compassion for the soldier who comes back from the war missing the great horses? Who kisses the parts gone missing? Who decides not to cry into dinner? Who makes light of the right loss? Who doesn't need to be clever? Let me kiss the face that survived the disaster. That once smiled make smile. With whatever. Swells and fades, sharpens and scars, dust and vacuum. Tangled in shadows like a search party coming. Because something is always looking for a way out of whatever it is we keep getting into. Or rather, we keep seeing home in every mistaken turn.

The North

The temperature dropping fast. The wind picking up, kicking cans and loose boxes down the street. All of which I can fall asleep to, can throw my own small battered self onto the heap of things without homes or parents or weight. But, in the quiet after, let come that tiny scraping of crystal, the snow's intricate wild honeycombs, and I'm wide as a river awake, hot as a vampire bride to walk into the wolf of it, the growing mold of it, the weird whispers of its tiny hammers and chimes, remembering maybe the time in my teens when I stared into that year's first snowflakes falling into our lawn and realized how many of them had to be lost preparing the land for the rest, cooling everything down by infinitely small degrees until others could stick and begin to build banks, blankets, drifts. I made the usual teenage vow not to be among that lot who served in the company of death, of waste, who melted without complaint. Then I wrote some words down in a red velvet notebook I still have on my desk. When they didn't disappear, I wrote more. Until one day there was no otherwise. I couldn't not.

Triolet for the Left Behind

There are many words who live alone or nearly, rhyme-less now, or with only one, long lost. Width used to have Sidth, a length. Yes, really. There are many words who live alone. Or nearly. Some shine like Silver despite Chilver's getting tossed for Ewe. Or Film whose Pilm has turned to Dust. There are many words who live alone or nearly, without any love, or only one, long lost.

Jeff Oaks



The Night Train

The nine thirty blasts its warning a sound I've grown up within just as the book I'm reading slips away from me I'm already on board and traveling the streets disappearing the sound of the horn again fading among the houses as if I've left the dog in the car and begun forgetting everything in the shape of keys, my hair coming out in the mirror my teeth falling out in my hands the water beginning to rise around the boat I'd just lain down in I swear for a second because there was so much country to cross there were maps still to sketch a whole system of rivers running toward maybe a sea of horns fading away the book falling away and Look! Look! Eyes under the floorboards Hands unable to paddle any longer Old love having returned as a wave as a distant shore as someone waving me off with one hand always in his pocket with another life already started

For Jack Gilbert

Pittsburgh's just where you left it, just not how. The enormous fires gone. The great machines are silent, dismantled in the eighties and nineties, scrapped. Remade even into memorials, artwork. I listen hard for anyone anymore walking the streets thinking about metals, forges, the weight of coal and dust in the lungs. The fathers and sons are gone who had to enter their own houses quietly, humbly, through basement doors, taking showers first, before their women would allow them in. There's a dogpark where every old mill burned. Medicine is the new monopoly, an oligarchy of administrators, fundraisers, and celebrity surgeons. The poor of course still think about beauty. Even in emergency rooms where they have to wait. Still have their dreams of being chosen. Still, the old dragons turn in the earth around us. Men ride shafts miles down to hack at their veins. The barges carry that black rubble up and down the ancient rivers we've mostly got under control. The local crew teams race in the early mists, and a few of the new urban pioneers in their sturdy plastic kayaks bought out at the malls push and pull against the always new water coming down out of the hills, into the old sluices. It's fall. The trees are all mostly destroyed again. You've died in California. We read your poems to each other the way people building a boat out of their memories of being in love might. A train on the other side of the Allegheny blows its horn as it passes Millvale, Sharpsburg. The old churches are still here, protected more for their beauty than any utilitarian reason. Even we atheists with our health plans occasionally stare at them grateful for what they want to mean.

Uncertainty Principle

For a brief moment I saw you, in sound of metal bending back on itself, in a dream of the history of train collisions. Contort iron, glass splinters, freight fire. Yellow sleepwalk. Don't say: "You look tired." I wanted to stay there with you, scale on which gravity has no bearing, observing our innate behaviors' colors between nothingness and something of substance. Late nights out the window I count the boys sneaking naked through the neighbor's backyard. That thrill, to reckon no one looking. For a moment I see you, as a weather doppler in Wisconsin captures a ring of birds ballooning from a northern island. A necessary adjustment of aperture here. A movement mimicking the eye's black center, named for what might be seen in the reflection there. Green, blue, teal. Nowhere else can we appear so small to ourselves.

Solstice

A majority when asked what they would give up

to be care free The teacher counts our heads

on the field day bus each spring; I miss it

when it's so dark

in winter I pick the skin off my lips

My mother corrects me on "pulling"

the studio audience—

final answer divided between moon and elephant

My only major fear is space aliens singing beside us

with glimmer guns disintegrating my body

when it's so dark: sum of night vowels

and sometimes the sun stops, sometimes

there's a god in it

warrior or worrier

Alicia Salvadeo



America Loves Jessica Lynch

If sun descends by pulley tomorrow rolling a Hollywood

She was so cool and a girl Age of miss take and run with

route :: by rote

I was like a mother or some similar carrying

my own shaking out my history quilt stitched states and monuments

Holes in my elbows worn through my ideal: the leaves are falling again

fill in the blank still rolling

Try to imagine: one ocean footage collapsing a current reversing

Can you did you even try

Black Cover

How to tell time with sun

clicking into high noon

into my amazing spider-man

special Threat level

meter forgetting

ROY G BIV Feeling

red today, or maybe just

a brick orange that pretty

girl's hair that I crush

on, want to be There you

are, cloud-shaped

devil and the bright smile

Bottom of the ninth

For Ryan, after you left Pittsburgh, and after a dream in which Robert Creeley offered us concessions in the aisles of PNC Park

Your coloration all of a crazy person we turn into

our consolations and run out of ourselves—the center

fielder up to home

plate and swatting gnats from his glisten—I can

see only the bat swings

I can't any longer see the home run moon

the bat swings and misses, the body

it follows, the crowd sighs in unison, deflates

a little I think I see someone I know

rise out of his seat to accommodate

the view we are all running

out of ourselves and turn into the twin koi

we were in a past life, the very same

moon on our backs in other words, don't worry

a face-covering corridor, I'm the one with the thin separation, the oldest trick in the world, I'm fake – a malicious, impenetrable hole, I'm the gate opening, the oldest mask in the book, the world, the oldest world in the trick, have at it – a monument to filmic images, I'm the reeling tumult, the end of the month – Happy Halloween, through a face-covering corridor, a resolution, blurring, of a self-portrait expires

shredded floral photography, I'm nothing like the gate opening, alternative opportunities to photographic images, clustering like flies/pits

*

imposing gates on alternative opportunity, I'm always the gate, a floral behemoth, thinly cut – that opening, I'm always the gate opening, the last hinge on the door, the oldest hinge on the left – Happy Halloween, through an opening gate, a face-covered corridor, a loose image of

the self, I'm not myself – I'm a mask, blurring, connect the waterfall to a backdrop, a screen, a cast – an unreal assembly, ghost transports –

I'm confetti, shimmering matter, slough piece facing confection, I'm nothing like the gate opening into the corridor, clustering like/blue

Ed Steck



*

I'm the fake entrance – to the gate, wondering what is fake, the oldest knot in the wood, I'm fake – an image at the end of the hall, full of ink, an image at the front of the gate, take it, I have more gates, more corridors, more masks – Happy Halloween, pal, a nice costume, I'm

the end of the month today, the one clean arm, flies clustering in blue pits, a tinfoil knife stuck in a forehead, mouth agape, the oldest

trick in a face-covering corridor, the oldest gate in the mirror of the body – a monument to faces, covering masks, cluster-like/layers

*

a face tinted blue opening blasted chasms on screen, that's the last blue-mask – I answered it, I said, Happy Halloween, through my mask

covered face, opening the gate and walking down the hallway, through a face-covering corridor – a reeling monument, like tumult,

I'm thinly separating into codes of ranged reconstruction – calmly lift your head away from the mask, the resolving material line,

to see, I'm nothing like the oldest gate in the world – an isolated house at the end of the street – I'm the oldest trope, clustering/fly

*

A self-portrait is a representation of singular perception/A self-portrait reflects a material and enforces the viewer's perception into the substance of the perceived material

it is an automatic function; it is not created but enhances the act of creation through its conception

Mirroring the self is a form of self-portraiture/a collection of reflecting-glimmerings of sensations molded into an activated portrayal of grotesque layers, landscaped human chronology

An image is a form of self-portraiture regardless of whether the image is of the self or of an alien figure of the self

this is a self-portrait/This is an image of a self-portrait in language

I guess this is language/I am a self-like portrait

this language is inaccessible/Other language

I genetically engineered my self-portrait for my genetics to do this to me in a manner that projects a pure image of all that I have gathered to represent myself to be as how I picture myself in my self-portrait

From the project "Confetti/Remasquerade (Happy Halloween)."

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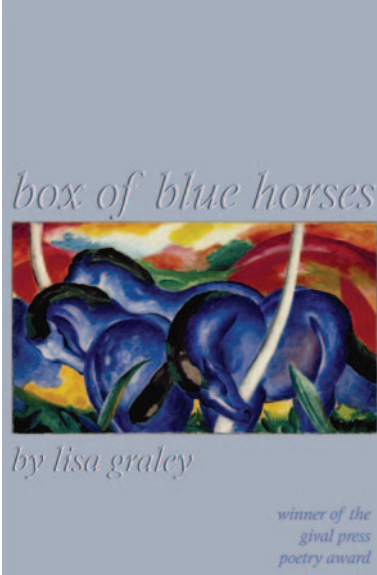
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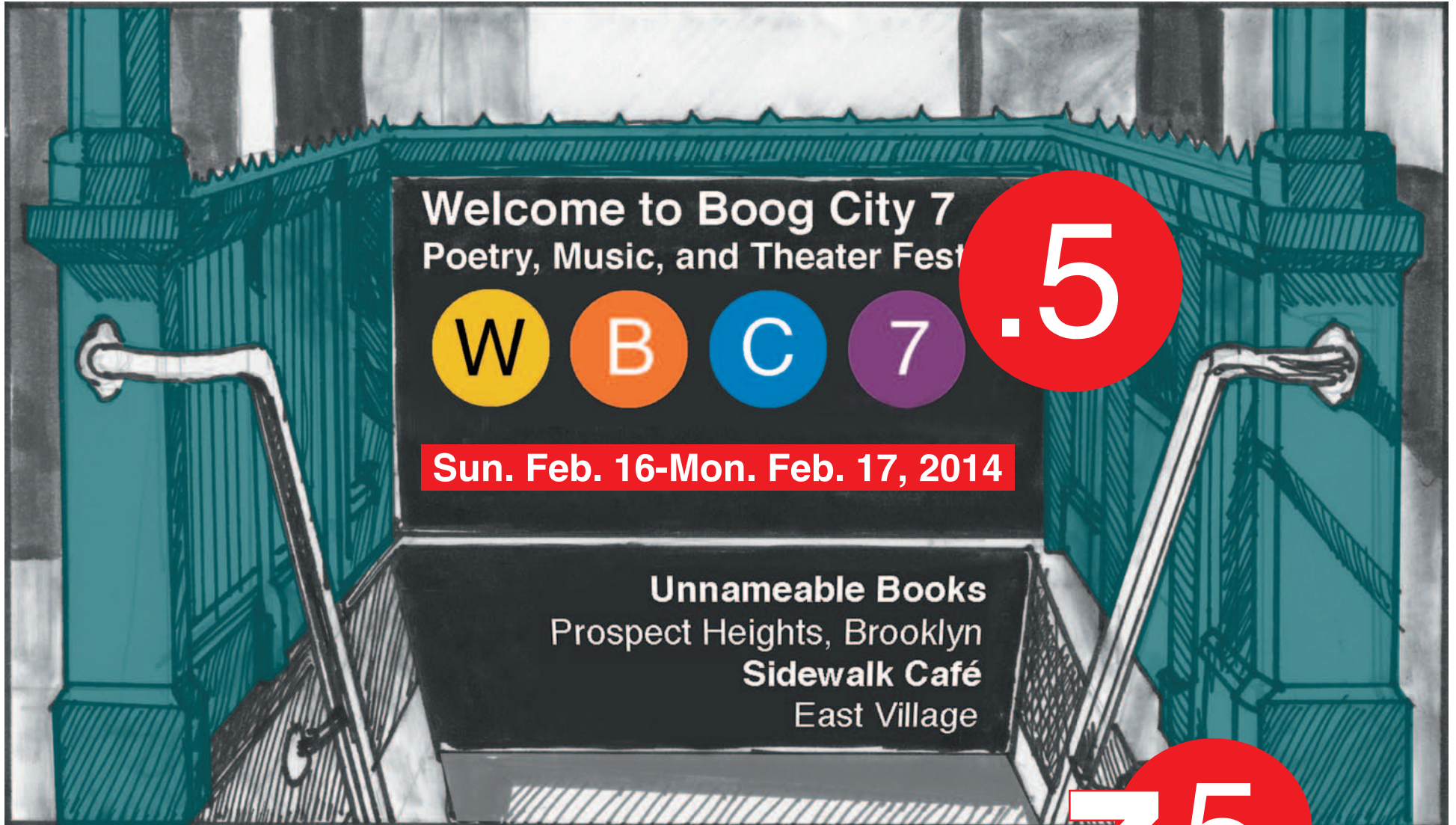
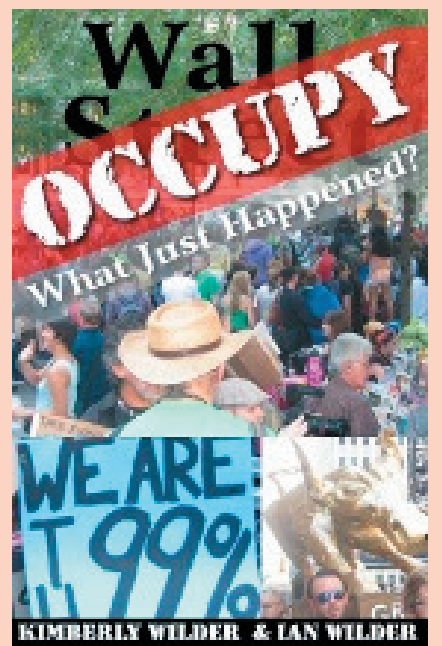
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In *Occupy Wall Street: What Just Happened?*, Kimberly and Ian Wilder cover the fun, the controversy, and the meaning of Occupy. The eBook is like a joyride through these last three years of Occupy, including original reporting, essays, photos, reviews, poetry, video links, and even a comic strip. **Occupy Wall Street: What Just Happened?** is available at your favorite eBook store, including in formats that can be read on anyone's computer or smartphone.



Welcome to Boog City 7.5

Presidents' Day Weekend 2014 Poetry, Music, and Theater Festival

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12:00 P.M.-5:00 P.M.

Unnameable Books

Prospect Heights, Brooklyn

SUN. FEBRUARY 16, 2014

8:00 P.M.-11:00 P.M.

Sidewalk Café

The East Village

MON. FEBRUARY 17, 2014

12:00 P.M.-5:00 P.M.

Unnameable Books

Prospect Heights, Brooklyn

Featuring

Poets

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 Anselm Berrigan
 Edmund Berrigan
 Jackie Clark
 Robin Clarke
 Eric Conroe
 Gillian Devereux
 Betsy Fagin

Jessica Fiorini
 Ethan Fugate
 Susana Gardnerh
 Peter Bogart Johnson
 Gracie Leavitt
 Katy Lederer
 Magus Magnus
 Pattie McCarthy
 Jenn McCreary
 Allyson Paty
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—Magus Magnus

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 A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St.
 F/V to 2nd Ave., L to 1st Ave.

For info: editor@boogcity.com
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ピッツバーク
フューチャーズ
Pittsburgh
features

The Harlan Twins: James Hart, vocals/guitar; Nate Campisi, bass;
Carrie Battle, vocals/guitar; Nick Charters, drums; and Greg DeCarolis, keys/vocals

Cindy Howes photo

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For further information: 212-842-BOOG (2664), editor@boogcity.com

BOOG CITY

Issue 85 free

*The Portable Boog Reader 7:
An Anthology of New York City
and Pittsburgh Poetry*

co-editors N.Y.C.: Laura Henriksen, Amy King, David A. Kirschenbaum, Geoffrey Olsen, Nicole Peyrafitte, and Angela Veronica Wong, and Pittsburgh co-editors Margaret Bashaar and Lauren Russell. **Design** DAK, modified from 2000 PBR design by Scott White **cover photograph** Greg Fuchs **japanese lettering for sections** Yuko Otomo

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FROM
NEW! KELSEY STREET

IN CELEBRATION OF OUR
FORTY YEARS PUBLISHING
LITERATURE BY WOMEN

PREMONITION by Etel Adnan

There's always a
conductive thread
through space for an
untenable position.
In all respects absence
is a porous and arrogant
matter. One has to cross
one's life again, the one
that wants to be ahead.
A forest saturated with
trees proclaims the
existence of a river
saturated with reflections.
The soul turns into a ghost
and runs into the void.

premonition
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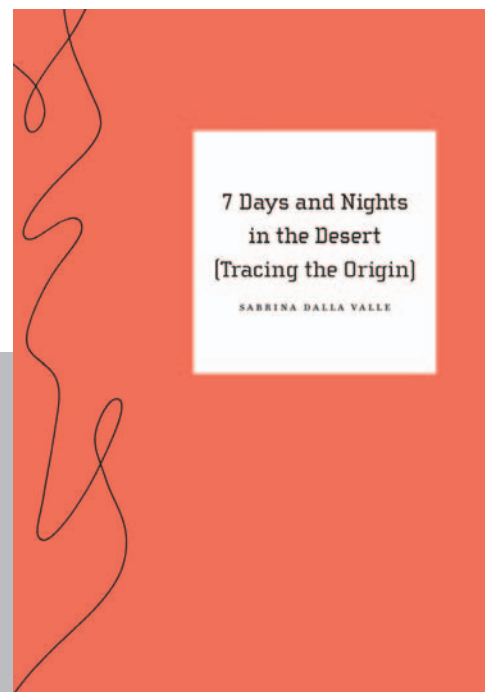
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were also the skin of the universe?
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Bio

Joel Schlemowitz is a Brooklyn-based filmmaker who makes short cine-poems and experimental documentaries. His most recent project, "78rpm," is scheduled to be completed in early 2014. He has taught filmmaking at The New School for the past 15 years.

Growing Up Pittsburgh

Film-Makers' Cooperative's Chief

MM Serra on Her Formative Years

BY JOEL SCHLEMOWITZ



MM Serra, filmmaker and executive director of the Film-Makers' Cooperative, sat down with me in The Charles S. Cohen Screening Room at the Co-op to discuss her formative years growing up just outside Pittsburgh, and the connection to her current work as artist, and exponent of past and present avant-garde cinema.

Room at the Co-op to discuss her formative years growing up just outside Pittsburgh, and the connection to her current work as artist, and exponent of past and present avant-garde cinema.

Boog City: Can we talk about your roots in the Pittsburgh area?

MM Serra: Outside of Pittsburgh in a little community, a mining community. My ancestors settled just outside of Pittsburgh in Jeannette, Pennsylvania. My grandfather helped form unions in the mines. My father, at 12 years old, worked half a day at school, and half in the mine. They paid children by their height. The fights for miner's rights were for children to get equal pay, and for age limits. So my ancestors helped form unions in the coal mines and the factories.

My father worked in a factory, and came

bought something new, and they gave it to the family across the street. There was a prostitute that lived across the street. My mother would pack a bag of groceries and send me down to give this woman food, me with a name like Mary Magdalene. And I wasn't too happy about it. She had three children, and my mother would say "Mary Magdalene, what are her job choices?" It's true, and so it made me think about compassion. The idea of the word "community."

I wanted to be educated, I wanted to have knowledge, and so when I went to school I studied Latin, and I felt Latin was really important, understanding Lucretius's "On the Nature of Things," the idea that we're all atoms, that there are no gods, about non-aggression, and about connecting to the earth. There was a garden at my father's house, I'm a member now of the community garden at 6th and Avenue B. So some of who I am, as a personal vision artist, running the Film Co-op, it's about the common good. It's egalitarian, we're all working together. So for me, having my background, working class, and as an artist, it's very layered.

My dad would take me to union meetings, actually when I was very young, when I was 10 years old, I went with him because my mother was in the hospital, and I heard them fight for what we all need, like health care, for decent hours. It was everyone talking, men and women. I came from a very working class background, but I didn't know I was working class because we all came from the same area, everyone worked in the same factories.

My work deals with the body, it deals with my name being "Mary Magdalene" - my mother thought that was a great, great name, and it's the whore in the Bible. Who else would name their child "Mary Magdalene" but someone who comes from an Italian, religious background? For me it was iconoclastic, going to a Catholic school. But I had the best education at St. Xavier's. It was only 45 girls, and I thought I was so lucky to learn Latin, to read Caesar's Wars, it was difficult, but it gave me the tools to live my life.

BC: Can we talk about the Pixelvision film you made, Papa's Garden.

MMS: Fisher Price came out with a toy camera. I happened to be visiting my dad, who was gardening at my brother's. And I said, "Dad, can I film you in the garden?" He didn't like to be filmed, but I was following him around and he was talking to me. It's interesting: here I am in the most natural situation where my

dad's growing this huge cabbage, but as the camera is running down the sound is slowing and you see the image fragment. But it still has this visceral, humanist quality to it. I liked the Fisher Price camera, it's black and white. It was popular with artists, like Joe Gibbons, and Peggy Ahwesh, but kids didn't like it, because it wasn't color! It wasn't like what they saw on television.

I did a portrait of the artist and performer

My work deals with the body, it deals with my name being 'Mary Magdalene.' My mother thought that was a great, great name, and it's the whore in the Bible.

Anne Hanavan, it's called *Bitch Beauty*, about a street junkie whore, about prostitution, it's about how art can change your life. How Anne used art as a catharsis-the sphinx reborn through the creative process-and I firmly believe in that.

BC: How does it feel, going back there, to bring work from the Co-op to screen at The Andy Warhol Museum, or your own screening at Orgone Cinema?

MMS: Orgone invited me to show films with Tessa Hughes-Freeland, and that was how I met her. I was carrying down her film *Nymphomania*. They'd said "I think you'll like her work." And I loved her work. I'd brought my film, *L'Amour Fou*. Greg Pierce, and his wife Alisa set up their letterpress business (Third Termite Press) when the local Catholic church got rid of their letterpress. It was interesting showing in Pittsburgh.

BC: But as someone from that part of the country, does it have any meaning to you to return there as a filmmaker, as opposed to doing screenings elsewhere?

MMS: Well, the Warhol Museum's architecture, the rivers, the people, there is a difference, it always feels like home. Working with Greg Pierce, talking to him about collecting films. But my films are about New York now. The Warhol Museum is great, I showed Barbara Rubin's "Christmas on Earth" there. It's an exquisite space.

There's something about the earthiness, and connection to the earth, that's different from other places. The first city I saw was Pittsburgh, and I was so excited. I was a teenager with a group of Catholic girls in my uniform, visiting the Pittsburgh Museum of Art. And I thought, "I'm going to live here someday. I'm definitely going to college here." But it wasn't like New York, which can be aggressive in a way, about power, about competition, branding. But with Pittsburgh, at least in my experiences, it still felt real. A place where individuality mattered, who you were as a person, a place where your work ethics mattered.

When I was very small my mother got me an encyclopedia, and I would read it, and from that experience I think that poetry, language, and words became very important to my filmmaking. And going to the girls' school and learning Latin gave me an appreciation of the importance of language. Poetry is also about associations, and my films are not linear, formulaic, beginning-middle-conclusion. Connecting language and image in a vertical way rather than a horizontal way.

In January you can see recent work from The Film-Makers' Cooperative, presented at a joint benefit screening for The Co-op and Millennium Film Workshop.

The first city I saw was Pittsburgh, and I was so excited, I was a teenager with a group of Catholic girls in my uniform, visiting the Pittsburgh Museum of Art. And I thought, 'I'm going to live here someday.'



MM Serra at The Film-Makers' Cooperative in New York, with Orgone Cinema poster, printed by Third Termite Press, Pittsburgh.

Joel Schlemowitz photo

from a very working class background, but I went to a private Catholic girls' finishing school. It was called St. Xavier's, and it was in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. My brother went to St. Vincent's. It was the best education you could get in that area. Everybody worked in Pennsylvania, and work was a good thing, you were proud that you were working. You worked as a community, and for the common good. My mother would have an extra dining room table when they

Dave Newman is the author of four books, including the novel *Two Small Birds* (Writers Tribe Books, 2014), and the collection, *The Slaughterhouse Poems* (White Gorilla Press, 2013). He lives and writes in Trafford, PA.

PRINTED MATTER

Beatific Without the Bullshit

Scott Silsbe's Poems Shine on Pittsburgh



BY DAVE NEWMAN

The River Underneath The City
Scott Silsbe
Low Ghost Press

Almost 60 years ago, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, publisher of City Lights Books, launched the Pocket Poets Series, little uniformly designed books packed with great poems but small enough to fit in a shirt pocket. Inspired by Ferlinghetti, legendary Pittsburgh poet and publisher Kristofer Collins launched Low Ghost Press to publish similar-sized and stylized collections, the City Lights color scheme replaced by the black-and-gold colors of Pittsburgh, a nod to the city's legendary sports teams, itself a nod to William Pitt's coat of arms upon which the city of Pittsburgh's black and gold flag is based.

The fourth Low Ghost release, *The River Underneath the City* by Scott Silsbe, is an excellent

collection that takes the city of Pittsburgh and its over-sized characters and filters those places and people through some of the same raw and poetic lines that City Lights writers used to entertain and enlighten readers, except Silsbe delivers the beatific without any of the flowery bullshit. This isn't Jack Kerouac asking you to pull his daisy. This is Silsbe saying, "Don't be jealous of others if you don't want what they have" and "Remember that it's tough being in love with a stripper" in the poem "Advice to a Young Poet."

In *The River Underneath the City*, poems move around city streets like downtrodden artists looking for a place to crash or beer-drunk workers looking for the next great dive bar. Silsbe's poems are about what it means to make art, about what it means to believe in reading and writing and music, much in the same way that Frank O'Hara's poems were about living out his own genius artistic vision, the goofiness of Coca-Cola, and the power of staring at a Larry Rivers painting. Only Silsbe could take Lemmy, a lunch break from a warehouse, and some Catholic school girls and turn those unrelated details into a little masterpiece of optimism like he does in "Motorhead and Milkshakes." New York has The MOMA and The Chelsea Hotel. Pittsburgh has diners and beer distributors with old men screaming, "Powerball!" Silsbe, somehow, makes Pittsburgh as interesting and as legendary as New York was to O'Hara.

Silsbe's forms, all free-verse but still definitely forms, run the gamut—long, short, narrative, lyrical—but he shines best in the moment, where a tiny detail or event grows to represent a broader, overarching life. Take "Last Night," which starts "We were drinking Devil wine on a Tuesday night" and leads to job call-off and discussions of tornado weather. The same goes for "One Night at Duke's," a meditation on the life of a bar and the chances to be found over beer and pool and jukebox music.

Silsbe is a poet of place, much like two of his literary heroes, Ed Ochester and Jack Gilbert. His stance is one of love and vulnerability in the face of a world that demands the opposite. In one of the best poems in the collection, "Hikmet," Silsbe invokes the great Turkish poet

Silsbe shines best in the moment, where a tiny detail or event grows to represent a broader, overarching life.

and his belief that "living is no laughing matter." Silsbe's own declarations include "It could be that/ good poems are only written out of darkness and despair," which certainly rings true, though the beauty of the poems in *The River Underneath the City* is their author's devotion to finding the light.

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*My own selfishness
wants Battle and Hart
to allow me into their
souls and see the world
around them.*

Cindy Howes photo

Harlan Twins Activate Form of the Familiar, Shape of The Band

BY J. J. HAYES



When Harry Smith put together his anthology he deliberately chose recordings that had been made before the influence of radio began the process of homogenizing American music. There were regional styles once. Folk could recognize them. Now we are reduced to genres, the old record store classifications having given way to the artist/blogger driven tags. I wonder whether they communicate much. Do the scenes of various cities have recognizable sounds or personalities? Or are they just the chance convergence of various talents and particular audiences? Does the geography and local culture have any actual effect? New York being a center to which people travel benefits from an influx of everything. Three months here with the intent to stay and you are a New Yorker, but one can't help notice along the way that certain areas of the country are sending some mighty talented sons and daughters our way.

Now you know, and I know, that while some people move from the local New York scene into a more national prominence, myriad major talents remain behind, it therefore stands to reason that perhaps there are equally major talents who have remained behind in the cities that feed our own scenes. Whether a critical mass can develop that sustains the talent is another question, but for purely selfish purposes the internet does allow us the luxury to go and look and see what other cities or regions have. I wouldn't have actually thought of checking out what's going on in Pittsburgh, if it weren't for this issue. But I did. And the only reason I don't have more to report is that I got so drawn in by Carrie Battle and James Hart, and their band The Harlan Twins, I put everything else aside. You gentle reader may complete the assignment on your own, however. Might I suggest looking into Jayke Orvis, Amoeba Knieval, Phat Man Dee, The Illegals, or Radium Girls if your taste runs hard core. A good place to start seems to be The Thunderbird Cafe. Look at their calendar, check out the local opening acts. Follow the links!

But back to The Harlan Twins. There is something hopeful and worrisome about finding this group. Check out their bandcamp page. Go listen to "Blue In Bloomfield." (the original version):

I like to bicycle, I like to swim
I like the way that her hair smells like spring

Carrie Battle makes those lines the summation of every innocence every true love ever wanted to return to. That was also the point at which I gave up the ghost on giving an overview of the Pittsburgh music scene, poured a cup of coffee and sat back to listen to The Harlan Twins as the snow fell.

There appear to be only two Harlan Twins albums, the eponymous debut from 2008 and last year's *Old Familiar*. At this point I am favoring the first without rejecting the second, which has its own particular virtues. In between these two albums there are a few good videos out there, particularly ones from an April 2011 show. These do a fair job of showing why this band is known for its live performances in the Pittsburgh area. Highly recommended viewing by the way is the cover of "I Wish It Would Rain," in which James Hart shows the soulful depths to which his singing is capable of ascending. I really don't think the Stones ever did a Temptations cover like this.

One can feel those depths in Hart's low delivery of the in "Stones in My Passway" from their debut album:

There's no stones in my passway
No Hellhound on my trail
No evil hearted woman refusing to go my bail

There is absolutely no reason for this man to have the blues, but you feel as if the singer has already given up even when he knows he shouldn't. A few tracks later Hart presents us with a Springsteen like ballad, except in this case, 'tis a woman singing of the mistake she made with this particular guy. "I Should Have Danced All Night" is the lament of a girl sung in a rich

male voice. It's good that people still think in these terms.

On the other hand it's Battle's singing I keep wanting to hear. Is it a Rick Danko vulnerability? Is it something else? I get lost in hearing "Stinging Bee," lose the lyric path, go back and get lost again. I don't mind.

Both of these artists shine when the orchestration is kept to a minimum. Which constitutes complaint as well as praise for their second album, *Old Familiar*. Here the instrumental music prevails. And on first hearing I feel Battle's presence is diminished. *Old Familiar* here seems to refer to the band playing in the various styles which they grew up with, or loved. On the other hand I could be totally wrong. They could be looking around trying to find something. It is clear that with Rob Collier on bass and Greg Decarolis on keys they have a lot of musical terrain they want to explore, and explore it they do. But the danger from my own selfish listening perspective is that they will become a great sounding band with just decent lyrics. I can't speculate. I like this band. I think they are searching for something. Bands should search for their sound. At some point they should be granted a this-is-it moment. Or not. Being a damned decent rock band is a noble profession. But alas what gets the crowd dancing, what they listen to in bars, is the music. Hell what musicians want to explore is the music. But vocal window into the joyful aching or loving soul that only a human voice using human words can give starts to fade into the background.

My own selfishness wants Battle and Hart to allow me into their souls and see the world around them. The clear inspiration for these folk is the Band, and they could achieve what the Band achieved, without even sounding like the Band. They need to bring the respective virtues of their first and their latest albums together. At which point the world will hear from Pittsburgh.

Links

<http://harlantwins.bandcamp.com/>

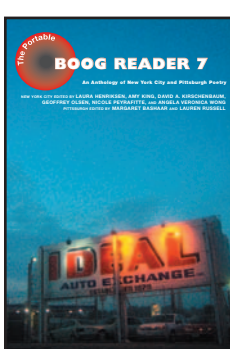
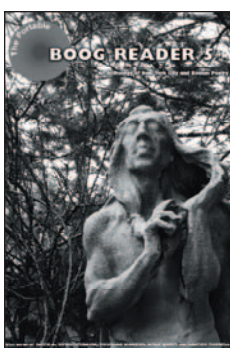
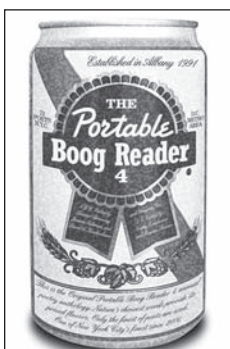
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J.J. Hayes comes from Staten Island. Sometimes he is a poet, sometimes he's a singer, and sometimes he writes about music and the world.

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