

TCR

THE CAPILANO REVIEW



...an ark of infinite sustain...

—PETER CULLEY

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BRONWYN HASLAM / Four Anagrammatic Translations from Nicole Brossard

These poems are anagrammatic translations. As such, each English poem uses the same letters, and the same number of letters, as the French original by Nicole Brossard.

Although French and English share the same 26-letter alphabet, each language uses it distinctively. In fact, it is possible to determine the language in which a text was written by looking only at its “letteral profile”—the frequency of usage of each letter.

Translating Brossard’s poetry anagrammatically creates an English text with a French letteral profile, yielding a more “French” English and a translation that has irrevocably absorbed something of the language of the original text.

dans les plis et replis et reprise des patiences
chaque patience de nos corps est inédite
dans son rythme invente l'attrait
traverse nos poings comme une écriture
un signal ouvert

car les veines ouvertes des biographies
à toute allure dans nos vies (car)
à côté de la souffrance des folles failles
de défaillance
la rigueur de l'à côté de
toute faim qui comme amour fou
cette probable imagination

—Nicole Brossard
from « L'ignée l'intégrale »
Amantes (1980)

Retelling lineage

pleats and repeats patience replete
in each patience our undeleted physique
conceives its cosmetic edges
its cadent lure a muscled beat
eloquence traverses our fists
moving our set letters to
split open seeds

open arteries of life stories careen, slam
and course our lives beside
endurance of mad faults of failure
become relation's rigour
all hunger is an adamant love
a valid imagination

je présume que le jour se lève à plusieurs endroits
et parce que cette pensée me vient au milieu de
la réalité et de ses poses innommables, j'ai, pour
témoigner du temps et des langages mobiles,
recours à cette pensée que rien n'est trop lent, ni
trop bref pour l'univers

—Nicole Brossard
from « La matière harmonieuse
manoeuvre encore »
Typhon Dru (1997)

i presume time rises joint in parallel sequence,
conjecture i just met amid a melee – realness'
nameless poses – to attest to time perpetuate
liquid language i refuge deep, revel replete in
pen, essence ebbs, our universe never too
ponderous, plumped, brusque or terse.

Ce sont des mots comme genou ou joue et encore d'autres à perte de vue qui nous obligent à nous pencher au-dessus du vide, à nous étirer comme des chats le matin ce sont des mots qui font veiller jusqu'à l'aube ou prendre un taxi les soirs de semaine quand la ville s'endort avant minuit et que la solitude reste coincée entre les mâchoires comme un abcès.

—Nicole Brossard
from « Soft Links »

« Silk Fonts »

Eocene, queen, jurel, levee, melee: a quoted bouquet of voodoo terms emerge, summon us, coerce us to surrender to emptiness, mediate, envelop, unroll us as cats at sunrise, jolt, quench and clutch us at sunset and ride our minds to sunrise, taxi us insomniac in cities asleep at midnight; secluded tumors deliquesce, entombed in our even vocables.

je sais que tout n'est pas dit parce que mon corps
s'est installé avec un certain bonheur dans cette
pensée et que parmi la secousse inexplicable qui des
mots fait trajet, eau vive et tant la soif, je peux en
liant les voyelles et le dos des pensées me
rapprocher, les yeux bridés de fascination, de la mort
et de son contraire

—Nicole Brossard
from « La matière harmonieuse
manoeuvre encore »
Typhon Dru (1997)

not all is said i accept because my body relaxes,
settles content, exults in promise of an
unsolvable jolt, a jump's lettered ride up a river
alive as need, frees me to join letters, equate
spines of ideas, peel speech, coerce secrets, use
a text's sequence to pen a poem in calques, and i
squint enrapt at our death and its inverse.

PETER CULLEY / Pages from “The Children’s
Encyclopedia”

for Michael Szarpowski & Bruce Conkle

Cascadia Border Patrol

I’d like to stop kicking,
but every time I do
something spectacular happens

that people will pay to see—
it’s not like it’s even down to me,
& running my fingers counting

bribes along envelope tops
hurts me as much
as these January pellets

raining from my wrinkle-pickers
must hurt you, but
Centralia’s where the Inland Empire

meets the Real Empire &
you’ve entered our domain
on an ark of infinite sustain—

orchards hazy with
ciderblink down to
Dorn’s sound, lowering chopper

heat differential maps
of backpackers loaded
versus ornithologists

lightened by self-hypnosis,
though in real life
if surveillance gets

that close it's probably what's
in your thermos
they're after.

Cranberry Firehall

Stinks to be in the engine
of always conspirin' & pokin'
where it *ain't* exactly required—

rattlin' around like a tooth
in a paint can achin' for inspection,
but like the firehall's multi-function

a ramp into space
is no longer an option,
no fire escape in the sky—

they're mixin' the gravity with somethin'
or somethin'—but it's still a good thing
the lids this big, you turn it right down

step out onto the 'scape
for a couple of cupped Cameos & voila!
when you return everything

is exactly the same
except it's ready now,
wreathed in glistening steam!

Entiamorphic Chambermaid

A stack of "Argosy"
in an orgone box,
but no bacon
in the midden—
individually a dry maple leaf
in good nick seems
worth about a quarter
but I'll get rid of it
for a dime and put the change
in a Crown Royal bag,
and in the spring
a parcel of mulch
will arrive by courier;
less an operating system
than Rick Wakeman
vs. Dr. Who at Joddrel Bank,
more something slipped into,
all warm & well-rehearsed,
all long exhalations uncoiling
like Gilray speech balloons,
though the unfamiliar tread
tenderizes ankles on the icy slopes.

The Wire

Then the tree if not time
at least Art Blakey—
hard bop with a touch
of the parade ground,
in a good way—
the orderly handling by
many bird species
crowded up amongst
the short-term food
emergency—giving way
on the good branches,
keeping beefs short etc.—
then everybody gets their
designated seconds of
bark digging unmolested
maybe some eavestrough
spider web, but stepping up
clean and bright
in bandstand order with
a solo worked up ahead of time
so that routine becomes display
and spring can start to operate.

The Dawn In Britain

Fax addresses
other fax in fax

“titivates with plumes
of voodoo jargon”

aka “speaks in tongues”
the mellow ameliorants

of Mormon d’esprit,
lodge-blue, cop white,

pink snow, halfhard hotdog
bun cigar-angled

the raven’s new year
accessory of choice

they get them “from the farm”
whatever that means—

we’ve seen the rendering truck
stagger under towers years past

bundled like newspapers
now that presumptive hogs

are rarely present—
the old neighborhood herd

thinned to unemployability—
dogs, cats & fish—

hence other people playing cards,
golf, the film on baby foxes

in both official languages
with the sound turned off,

it's all to calm you down,
with at Xmas halfraw turkey

thawing by the "fire"
to sink your teeth into

while a song we all know
encourages wordless grunting

suffused with emotion &
the heavy wine of childhood.

Punishment Parkway

I suppose the scenic route
is out of the question—
too much time

by lay-bys earlier
running our elbows
along the bunched steel

of braille mountains
worn through at the ocean
& where the /2/ passed through

amenable space you stand
at the edge of
the whole thing a ribbon

of iron control extending
even to the lichen's fluffy edge
so that to stray

is to fall into
the literal orchestra pit
after a Big Drop—

the vast
arbutus forest preserved
on either side of it

certainly terra incognita

before they put the highway through—
but Northfield was a labyrinth

out of Floyd Crosby's Poe
anyway so excuse me
if I never found it but

the immaculate moss meadows
argue that no one much
else did either—

there's a lot
of places dirt bikers
it turns out won't go—

but this civil terrarium though tidy
was roamed by giant tapirs once,
by badgers big as bears,

undisturbed by pneumatics
or the shrieking steam of the factory whistle—
must now endure

the lapidary condescension
of highway patronage, the cement lobby's
largesse, the planner's *passion*,

the grim and anxious trucks
from which the tongues of mammals
taste the pre-Cambrian air.

Crazy Rhythm

To speed up
or slow down at will
like that
like Anita no matter
the lyric's "arcs"
or who you're playing with
or in what vehicle careering
depends on the services
over decades
of a drummer—
Roy Haynes & Sassy
would be another
example—capable of lowering
six whirring brushes
onto a linseed-darkened
dream sideboard
while defending a perogy
supper from a platoon
of gibbons—imagine
having such a pedal to press!
messing with the band
would just be the start—
to feel the tin-pan-alley world
snapping like a green twig
but how tough after
negotiating now that speech
is king again the cabless dawn.

Ikea Deserta

Leave sleep to those
in charge of sleep,
the bus he knows the way;
the pussycat anarchists won't
blow up the viaduct tonight—
you can rely on me.

*

On mattresses masters bestir cosily
by thread counts unmolested
noisily, easily, easily, noisily—
but otherwise untested.

*

Planet it up for the business
of orbiting dirty snowball courses
what tirebiters flicked at cops,
nothing is as still as this sentence
which I began a million days ago
lifting myself onto the bamboo hula
while laces dragged the Barents Sea,
to wake folded in the folds of Forfar
in full dark stars coiling
mystic pools of social housing
& ghosts in full monologue
& all of it melting
not into green icing
but holes which are then patched over
with similar stuff
taken from elsewhere.

RAVSTEN COTTLE / The Mystery of Advertising and the Monkey of God

A few weeks later I was examining the four-packs of sugar-free gum at the giant Superstore on Mayor Magrath Drive, trying hard to determine which flavor would best meet my needs—spearmint or wintergreen or the newer funkier flavors like melon mint and cinnamon—and which brand represented the best quality—Trident, Dentyne, Extra, Orbit, Stride—not to mention the deeper problem of what actually constituted quality in gum, and in what gum format I should partake of the gum experience—i.e., the plain-old tablets in the blister packs, or the new-fangled tablets with the exploding liquid centers, also in blister packs, or the older-fashioned small sticks in the tissue-like wrapping, or the even older-fashioned long thin sticks in the more paper-like wrapping covered in tin-foil—trying with dogged determination to come to the best decision—trying, in fact, to think, what would Kierkegaard do even though I had never read Kierkegaard (had only had a brief explanation of Kierkegaard’s thought from my brother the professional philosopher, who was, as he mumbled his way through this précis, visibly annoyed with my ignorance), when I sensed an overwhelming light next to me. I turned to see John F. Kennedy all in white and surrounded by a blazing angelic aura. There was a white monkey on his shoulder. John F. Kennedy said, “God prefers cinnamon Dentyne.”

“He does?” I said.

“Yes—and now you owe us”—

“Ask not what God can do for you—that kind of thing?”

“Don’t joke,” said Kennedy in his Boston accent that we all know so intimately from the History Channel. The monkey nibbled at his ear.

“I’m sorry,” I said, “why do I owe y’all?”

“You owe us for solving your problem of what gum to buy.”

“Did you receive the monkey after you got to heaven—I mean, on the History Channel they never talk about you having a monkey”—

“Look, none of this matters,” said John F. Kennedy rolling his shimmering eyes. “What matters is that you now owe us”—

“Who’s us?”

“Kierkegaard—God—God via Kierkegaard, that is.”

“God via Kierkegaard?” I said. “You expect me to believe this?”

“You’ll believe it when I tell you what you owe us.”

“What do I owe you?”

“You must solve for us the mystery of advertising.”

“Oh God, no—not”—I felt my heart palpitate—felt my brain go fuzzy—felt phantom tinglings up and down my inner thighs. I was going to pass out, I was sure.

“Breathe deeply,” he said. “You’ve known this, haven’t you, Asa? You’ve known your entire life that this would one day be required of you, haven’t you?”

And, yep, I had known this since very early in my life (I have had, for as long as I could remember, some sort of Kierkegaard magnetism—something that drew Kierkegaard—his ideas, at least—to me—one might rather speak of it in biological terms and deem Kierkegaard a sort of parasite that can’t resist freeload off me)—I could remember clearly the day the original *Herbie the Love Bug* opened, that day when the man behind the concessions counter at the local theatre in the small town I grew up in gave me that funny look when I asked for Milk Duds and a Grape Crush—I was probably eight then—maybe ten—but I knew from that day on that one day God would call me to an accounting—and that this accounting would constitute me cracking the mystery of advertising.

Some maintain that the mystery of advertising is just a myth—that behind its glossy façade there is in fact nothing to advertising—no hidden core—no secret of the universe. Others, however, maintain the mystery exists but that it is so keenly guarded that all who have sought it have died in the attempt—some even claim that the mystery of advertising is guarded by a eunuch U.S. Marine blinded at birth after having been conceived in a test-tube with a mixture of human and vampire bat DNA, who carries an XM8 assault rifle that he has been trained—that is, in a Pavlovian way—to fire repeatedly and methodically back and forth at the slightest disturbance in the field of his bat radar. He never asks questions because his genitals were not the only body part they stole from him when he was little—his tongue, which they removed after he spoke his first word, which was, incidentally, “Sir”, is now kept in the bottom right drawer of the desk in the oval office of the President. This bat-marine believes the gun, which is never out of his grasp, is actually a part of his body,

subsidiary mystery of the main mystery that is the unsolved riddle at the core of advertising.

More on all this later.

I was perfectly equipped for the task because I had just purchased a 42-inch JVC flat-panel plasma TV, and a brand new Sony Vaio with a 2.36 GHz Intel Core 2 Duo processor; plus, I subscribed to all the fashion, sports and news periodicals, including a couple from European countries like Germany, Italy, and Norway.

So I started watching commercials on my TV, surfing them on my laptop, and finding them in my magazines, all the while scribbling in a small coil-bound garnet-colored Hilroy notebook some questions that might help me crack the mystery. By the end of the night, my list looked like this:

1. Why so many animals, but no Yaks. (No wait, there was a Yak in that last commercial.)
2. Why so many animals, but no shots of them mating? Would be effective in a Viagra or Cialis commercial, wouldn't it? A way to get around the prohibitions against showing mating humans—an old couple smiling wanly, jump cut to humping elephants.
3. Why babies?
4. Why jokes? Why no jokes?
5. Why female breasts? (Covered in America, bare in Europe.)
6. Why, when a restaurant is being advertised, do the borderline-insanely ecstatic patrons only ever take one bite of the food? Why not more? Do they spit the food out as soon as the director yells cut? Is the food poisonous?
7. Why develop a training-diaper that delivers a cold shock to a toddler's genitalia when he or she accidentally lets out a squirt or two of urine? Does this endanger the youngster's future reproductive abilities—or, rather, does it enhance these abilities? If in fact it does enhance their reproductive abilities, why not develop a cold-shot diaper for the impotent?
8. Why, no matter how long I search, am I not able to come across an ad for a corresponding cold-shot-alarm-system diaper for the incontinent aged?
9. Why no snake-handling in advertisements for rental car companies. (No wait, why no snake-handling period?)
10. Why the preponderance of white clothing in the advertisements for

feminine hygiene products—why the preponderance of dancing and calisthenics in these commercials—why all the women wearing hats in these commercials?

11. Why, whenever a doctor or dentist appears in a commercial to give a testimonial—or, just as often, to just smile furtively—are their zippers always so securely done-up? Why not, just once or twice, leave a fly down to lend to the actor (or, the actual doctor or dentist if the person appearing in the commercial has had bestowed upon them the actual credentials of such) more of a sense of real, fallible humanity?

12. Who has their finger(s)—*whole fist*?—up the anus of that guy who does the voiceovers for the movie commercials? Seriously—something is up that guy's butt.

13. Why not more vomiting in advertisements—why not more attack ads featuring vomiting—a McDonald's advertisement that shows patrons walking out of Wendy's or Burger King—or even Subway—and immediately vomiting, right there in the parking lot—no commentary needed—just sudden shots of people walking out of the establishment and vomiting—maybe a close-up on the vomit to show bits of actual hamburger or sandwich—maybe identify the ingredients unique to the competitors cuisine and then have the camera find those ingredients there in the vomit—anyway, no commentary, just the shots of the people puking, and then a black screen with the golden arches on it. Why not?

14. Why not set a few of your celebrity spokespersons on fire?

15. ...

And so my list went. By 4 or so in the morning I was suicidal. What a retarded list. Clearly I was no threat to the mystery of advertising. I opened bag after bag of Lays potato chips—Smoky Bacon, Ruffles, Plain, Natural Plain, Sour Cream and Onion, Creamy Dill—and spread the contents around my living room and then took off my clothes and rolled around in the greasy salty mess. It did nothing to alleviate the depression, desperation and miasmic ennui that was engulfing me. I drew a bath with plans to soak for a while (I threw in some raspberry-vanilla-bean bath beads) before slipping under to drown myself.

But there in the bath with my eyes closed my mind was drawn back to the mystery of advertising in the same way a nicotine addict is drawn to cigarettes—once you’ve licked a little of that lollipop, you’ll always come back for more—and so my mind started to ponder and I started to bargain with myself, saying, “How ‘bout just one more shot at it before this waste-of-mortality-that-is-mine starts whirlpooling down the drain.” I thought of my mother, the 323-pound, beer-guzzling, international-championship-level-squash-playing gal who always warned us that we’d be beat on the bare ass with a snow shovel should we ever not compete to our fullest capabilities in any of the sports we played as youngsters. I thought of how she’d be ashamed of my quitting (and thought with envy of how she was conversely so proud of my brother who, in her words, “went at Kierkegaard like Dick Butkus going at an opposing team’s halfback”).

So I put the thumb of my one hand in my mouth and the other thumb of the other hand between my buttocks and closed my eyes and started concentrating like Socrates doing a Rubik’s cube—and concentrated so hard that I started seeing stars popping in the darkness there behind my eyelids—and moved both hands to my nipples so that I could fiddle them with forefingers and thumbs like I was some sort of ham radio operator dialing in the cosmic—and then, as ashamed as I am to admit, slid one hand down to old Billy-Budd himself there between my legs—and I thought and I thought until I was sure my brain matter was going to explode from my noggin...!

...I jumped from the bath and dressed without bothering to dry myself and then rummaged through a drawer in my bedroom filled with all sorts of old junk until I found that beautiful, singular item I had purchased from a Finnish rapper with Tourette’s syndrome who wanted, in his rhymes, to honor women and encourage love and harmony, but whose syndrome kept inserting contrary verbal explosions that denigrated women and celebrated the most vile and obscene forms of violence—that’s right:

A Browning P35 just like Indiana Jones’s in that eponymous movie!

I stared at the Browning and it turned for a moment into a vision of a shimmering, bloody, beating, anatomically correct human heart—though for all I

knew it could have been a baboon's heart—which was for me a sign from the Heavens Above that I had indeed solved the mystery of advertising! It sat there in the drawer of miscellanea a' beating and pumping glossy squirts of blood until I reached for it and grabbed it at which moment it turned back into the hot metal of weaponry. I had some ammo somewhere in there as well.

I nibbled my Wendy's Jalapeno Bacon Burger and looked through the cafeteria windows to the college courtyard bellow. There he was, my midget brother—or dwarf, or small person, or whatever the hell they're calling themselves these days—in the short pants and Danish military tunic of the uniform he had designed especially for his Kierkegaardian Paramilitary Unit. He was leading them in some sort of drill—some sort of marching formation. He shouted, "Company Halt!" and they stopped and turned to him in that controlled-electrocution fashion of military physicality—they were barely out of high school most of them. I knew my brother craved their young flesh—the boys and the girls both—and I knew that, via his Kierkegaardian spell, he got his fair share of said flesh. He shouted, "Present arms" and they snapped open before their faces a copy of Kierkegaard's *Blah-Blah*. A crowd was gathered to watch the spectacle—they oohed and aahed and clapped. "Company Read!" he shouted and they began to read in perfect unison a passage from *Blah Blah*...

I thought, if only you knew the real essence of Kierkegaard as I know the real essence of Kierkegaard and stroked the shape of the Indiana Jones pistol safe there in the thigh pocket of my Gap cargo shorts. But really, I thought, it is only moments now before you will know what I know—will know it with every fiber of your being.

I stood and tossed the rest of my Jalapeno Bacon Cheddar burger and the fries and drink that had come with it to the Guatemalan family of six at the table next to me, saying, "Here, chow down on the American dream, compadres," and then strode to the stairs leading to the courtyard...

With that same stride I passed the three towering saguaro cactuses between the student's union building and the courtyard, parted the crowd, and approached with my pistol leveled at his head—well, because he was so tiny, the pistol wasn't really level but was held at an angle so that if you drew an imaginary line from me to its terminal point out there in the air where I held it the line would have to be drawn starting at about my mid-thigh—but then, I guess that's still level with *his head* while not necessarily, per se, generally level—no matter. Many shouted, "He's got a gun!"

and I thought, what damned fools—this aint just a gun; if you'd wanted to represent the reality of this situation you would have shouted: "He's got an exact replica of the old vintage pistol Indiana Jones uses in the set of cinematic adventures named in his honor!"

He said, "What the hell, Asa, can't you see I'm in the middle of something." His little paramilitaries stopped reading but he snapped at them: "A pistol would not have frightened Kierkegaard from his convictions, and shall not frighten you from yours! Resume reading!" They resumed, but their unison was off at this point. He turned back to me and said, "Now, what the hell Asa?"

I pulled the trigger and said, "Harrison Ford hates your ass," and watched as his head exploded with more knowledge of Kierkegaard than it could ever hope to contain.

They tried me, they convicted me, and then threw me in a jail where I was plagued by a recurring nightmare of the bat-eunuch-Marine coming at me in his dress uniform—the one with the red piping and the gold buttons—his hat held at his side as if he were bowing to a pretty woman at some old World War II USO function, but his terrible fangs bared to plunge into the soft tissue of my poor, poor neck. He kept saying to me in an open-mouthed heavy-breath hiss, "Come on, tell us the mystery of advertising and you shall be free." (When I heard the bat-eunuch-Marine's voice, I thought for a moment that the stories of the severed tongue must be untrue, but remembered that this was a dream and was therefore no indicator of truth or untruth in the real world.) Fortunately, each and every night, I awoke before he could bite...

That is, I kept waking until one particular night when the bat-eunuch-Marine of my dream was accompanied by another figure as sinister—if not more sinister—than the vampire Marine, that being the figure of his ultimate boss, that's right, the President of the United States of America, who, at this time, was that tongue-tied Texan, George W. Bush. George W. Bush sucked a banana daiquiri through a straw and said, "Asa, well, this aint a dream, my friend—aint a nightmare—well it is, and it is and isn't." The vampire-bat-eunuch grinned and ran his tongue across the point of one of his sharp teeth.

"I don't get it," I said.

"Well," said George W. Bush doing that thing with his head that makes it look like his words are in his stomach and that his head and neck are some sort of pump

system to draw the words up from those recesses, “the thing is the government—me and my people, that is—have purchased the rights to the sleep of our enemies—are able to enter in to their sleep and do our duties—our biddings”—

“What he means,” said the bat-eunuch, “is that we can come into your sleep and monitor your subconscious desires and intervene where necessary to meet our aims.”

“So your tongue wasn’t really cut out?”

“As a dream-warrior I have a tongue—in the real flesh and blood, I have no tongue.”

George W. Bush slurped his daiquiri dry.

“So that means...” I didn’t know how to ask what I wanted to ask.

“What it means is that if you don’t give us the mystery of advertising then we are going to kill you and I am going to drink your blood”—

“And I turn into a zombie—a vampire myself?”

“No, yer just plain dead,” said George W. Bush.

“But then I wake up?” I said.

“No, there aint no waking up from the dreams that we own,” he said.

“We kill you here, we kill you there,” said the bat-eunuch-Marine.

“But,” I said, “I thought you guys had the mystery of advertising—that you guys guarded it.”

“We thought we had it,” said bat-eunuch-Marine, “but your actions have somehow thrown a kink into things—have somehow let that terrible cat out of the bag.”

“Meow,” I said.

George W. Bush had wandered off into some nether dream space to find another daiquiri, or, rather, as he mumbled, “Some nachos with that real spicy cheese on ’em.”

“So?” said the bat-eunuch-Marine, “the mystery?”

“It was revealed in my actions—an artist doesn’t explain his work.”

“Come on,” said the bat-eunuch-Marine, “you can do better than that?”

I shook my head and then he was advancing on me with fangs bared and I yelled, “Dear God help me!” and suddenly Gandhi was in the room in his diaper-get-up and on his shoulder was the White Monkey of God that had accompanied John F. Kennedy when he called me to this all, and the White Monkey of God jumped from Gandhi’s shoulders and sent two laser bolts from his eyes that converged at the exact

point of the back of the bat-eunuch-Marine's head, which convergence caused an explosion that reduced that bat-eunuch head to little more than a black pulp of boiling flesh. "Time to wake up, Asa," said Gandhi.

I woke up and Gandhi told me that George W. wouldn't bother me any more and instructed me that this time in prison was given to me to write out in detail—in Kierkegaardian fashion—my solution to the mystery of advertising. So I started writing and by the time I got out I had written a screenplay called *Fear and Trembling: The Movie*, and without even sending out a treatment was contacted by a Hollywood Agency who said they had divined the existence of my screenplay through study of codes embedded in the Old Testament, and now, here three years later, I am attending the opening night of the filmed version of my screenplay, which is called Kierkegaard's Gamble, and which stars Harrison Ford as me and Richard Dreyfus as my brother. My favorite scene is when they feed the giant Cialis pills (which remind me of the old salt licks my Pop used to set out for the cattle) to the circus elephants who then have thunderous sex, the sight of which tempts one to believe in a godless universe started by the smashing together of blind cosmic forces.

ANGELA CARR / Nine Poems from The Rose Concordance*

of the precious

to have a precious lover
a precious kindness
what i could not promise
of these hundred precious books
take what's mine and precious
now subterfuge and blue
doubts sweep a bare and
precious backdrop
don't wait for me to choose
preciously between
meaning and coincidence

preciously the covers
and the stones of blue ink
are transformed presently the
shhhhhh of soft
and contrary kisses/

and sighs of worse preciousness
of these hundred precious books
do they suspect wrongly?
in whose night and day were types of grain argued
most passionately?
in luxury's garden
asleep as though
my precious eyes
i cannot see her

of the worst

this felony is worsening
a hundred pairs of worse ch
irrs chastity you worsen me
worch comes in my bed
and softens the worst of th
worst bitterness is a wet mouth
i read this worst love is a no

worsening and other eyelets
in bed my aunt wakes me with toast
nakedness of a delicious word convenience

of confusion and covers

if our love has been outdistanced
confusion of claustrophobia and breaking waves
of vast blueness and covers
in this confused complement
tending a floral flush
where wine decompresses
and sumptuous difference quivers
confused i copy her handwriting
under hers (luxury's)
cover

just when i said
mine is inner confusion
i would be forever separate from her
discovering conversation
heaped handfuls
morning leaves tenderly confused

nostalgia is dew
covers a surrender
to the logic of vocations
where residual confusion

of covers and of seeming

covers dance and note
engulfed in huge coverings
of satiety and satisfaction
uncover the manuscript
where laughter seems welcome
her hand covered in pine needles
what uncovered loves?
when the poem covers bitterness
almond blossoms are plentiful
seemingly she writes to me
it seems there should be quotes here

monogamous love are you in pain?
over love runs the tail of mutton
outrageous and maligned covers
will you cover me then?

from the pasture where you sing sweetly

what long nights and days the covers languished
who has no power to cover
who slips under the cover of a heart
who got under the covering and wrote

of running, of the core

how running dryly from complicity
running dryly with fragile limbs
nothing runs more beautifully than instinct
no one runs more beautifully
to poverty when running yields
runners, these aspects, leaves in her hair.
can you fashion such a beautiful runner?
my heart races
it appears softly enough
presumably slows your running
the running of our voices changes nothing
how the smell runs into me
running and the smell of your body
i say running when i mean to say bodies
the bodies of our voices change nothing

how bodies dryly from complicity
bodies dryly with fragile limbs
nothing bodies more beautifully than instinct
no one bodies more beautifully
poverty for whom bodies cede
bodies, these aspects, leaves in her hair.
can you fashion such a beautiful body?
my heart races
it appears softly enough
presumably slows your body
the bodies of our voices change nothing
how the smell embodies me
bodies and the smell of you running
i say bodies when i mean to say running
the running of our voices changes nothing

of nearness

that i dare near him to speak volubly
now a tertiary nearness i must leave
envy oh those near leaving
me now near the vanishing
(as if never near a smaller thing)
little by little if i interject
this button of yes-nearly-loving
(and know that i am nearly)
bears remaining's weight
a wetness nearly adjusting
know well, when i flee nearby
if nearness that soft button feels
i will nearly return
trampling tender grasses

of the courier

forbidden access to the fountain
at night coursing furtively
fortuitously splashing another pair
bright coursings of sex is
a misleading city reflected
what couriers endure
her love occurs to me
without slumber
who has recourse to the pasture?
will she love me when i have recourse?
will she course through a city
and we emerge/

and now we seem to be
coursing on luxury
clear and coursing and pretty
on the earth
coursing to sigh or to cover
coursing earth even emerging from bitter
ness and shivering
over the course of safe distancing
nuanced minutely and fucking
over the course of such fucking
the course of laughter

of n

not folded in my suitcase
between insistence and displacement
in the fragile design of this
an antecedent trembles
now a graph of coursing blue
and the spectra of nouns
and this expressing
a sky

what suits me is this
in the shade of abstraction
we spread our blanket and lay back
serifs tickling our ears and scalp

our necks
although figuratively serious
edging away from the given nexus

our bodies entangled in the words
bed throws and hollows
solid arm askew this poem
as though solidity trembles

* *The Rose Concordance* translates and organizes lines in the keyword index to the 13th century poem *Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. The lines are fractures of epic sentences. Translating, I rub the concordance, I flaunt the concordance, I dodge the concordance, I spurn the concordance, I regard the concordance.

MARIAN PENNER BANCROFT / from Paris Streets

Some notes and directives to myself for photographing at the centre of the spiral of Paris, a city within which is embedded a history of picture making, photography in particular, and choosing to work with a format of four equal sides.

Double Dutch
Remember!
Look look again
jump in
Walk, walk
Render a tapestry of the body & its material surrounds
Watch the ground
Check where flesh, fabric, metal, stone, concrete, leather, asphalt,
Glass meet
Pass the camera up
Be quick
If seen, don't stop
What's designed, fabricated
Everything
Be entirely alert
To the privilege of the ironic
Take pleasure
Proletarianize the picture plane!
Forget the horizon
Take in the familiar
Inhale the alien
Be swept be swallowed
Pack the frame from inside
Engage the guys
Nadar, Marville, Haussmann, Atget, Cartier-Bresson, Frank

Then there's Stein

Look out

Side deeply

Old women, young women, middle aged women

Dis/appear

Keep walking!

Give form!

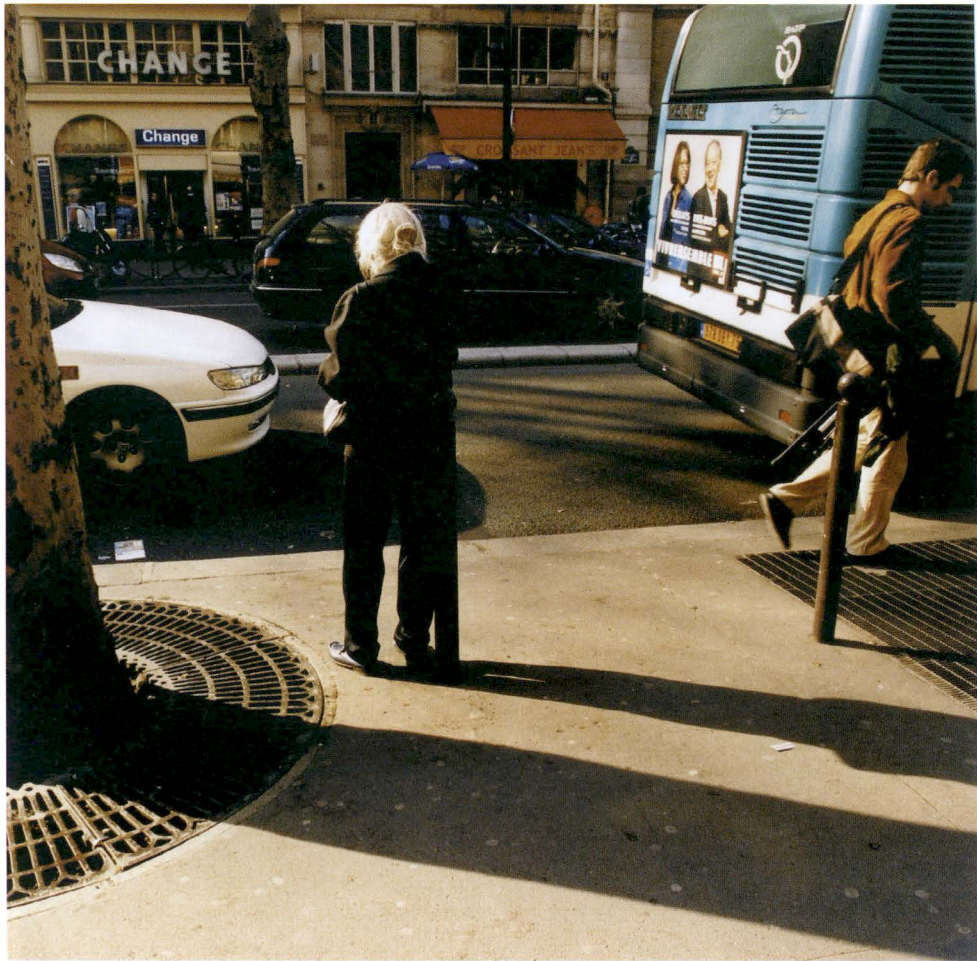
January to April 2005

A selection from a series of twenty 11" x 11" c-prints.

















TOM WAYMAN / Three Poems

The Man Who Could See Time

The man who could see time
claimed it has a blue tinge
like a bruise, or meat beginning
to go bad.

It's texture
that of a bale of straw
or a woven basket

except the intertwined stalks
fill all space—not drifting,
he said, but chockablock: the very stuff
of everything, although
permeable by each object,
including ourselves,
ordinarily perceived in three dimensions
despite existing also in the fourth.

String theory, he noted, posits
several other dimensions. He could not discern
those.

He could see time
but he was looking for the soul.

The Woman Who Heard Time

wouldn't specify the sound
she listened to. *Think tectonic plates,*
she said, *when they collide, there's subduction,*
right? One plate slides under the other?
The present, in a similar manner,
continually rides over the future.
Noise is vibration
and how could this moment not generate a tremor
as it pushes atop what was, until this second,
the next moment? In string theory, too,
the most elementary particles
are vibrating threads. That can't be silent.

Regardless of source, vibration
is motion in time. Thus time's clamor
is time hearing itself.
Time is the kitchen of the universe
and you bet there's a racket
where things are cooking. But the noise
can't be compared: not to a pulse
or faint tinnitus when the world is quiet.
What does a bell sound like
other than a bell?

If You're Not Free At Work, Where Are You Free?

Voices murmur concerning "a work/life balance"
or reverberate with conviction about
"our revered parliamentary heritage"
or intone why municipal tax subsidies are needed
to persuade someone to finance
construction of a new mall. The words surge and drop and swell
like the fluctuating clamor of the drunken dinner parties
—symposiums—where the ebb and flow of wit
created the concept of democracy,
while around the guests
the lash, shackles, branding iron
ensured that grains and animals were raised
and brought to market, the meal was concocted
and served; locked windows and beatings
that resulted in broken limbs and teeth, permanent hearing loss
meant grapes were harvested, wine fermented,
bedchambers readied. Days, years of hopeless sweat,
the shattering of families
caused fresh flowers to be grown, cut,
arranged amid the company in vases
other slaves threw on wheels slick with wet mud
—flowers also placed
along the Senate's benches
in preparation for the next debate.

JOY RUSSELL / Four Poems

On King George's Crowning

On King George's crowning, the interviewee
said they all got sweets and little goodies, and when
they come by boat, some come as stowaways. Once

they collect money for this woman's fare. Others
come, a fiver tight in their pockets, like my grandfather
when he escaped from the belly of the crown and never

spoke of it again. Others not bring overcoat—
no one told them how air moves vampires through
bone, erases memory matter. Some dress in suits

tropical style, as the ship moved its shaky
hand over the old surface of the sea. They arrive,
say 'I born Jamaican, I die Jamaican,' take a bite

of the sweet, hand to mouth, take the test
of motherland's history—bitter—replied, when asked if
they spoke the Queen's English; Enoch Powell's rivers

of blood forming a new oxygen, scarlet-marked
as they sliced through London fog; iris recording
life, how it is: Houses of Parliament, Big Ben

in the grey dank; a room, a galvanized tub to wash, emerge
baptized; the city soot, a new glove for the body; the signs
reading no Irish or blacks or dogs, not wanted but

take your money, just the same. Some, some,
carry hope like luggage, others not so sure-footed, others
not so childlike in believing all what this mother have to say.

Some bring formal names, leave pet ones behind,
whisper night bougainvillæa. How this country
cold, cold, cold through and through and no tea hot

enough to warm you, or hand friendly enough to pry
open the dark days, bring morning brightness. Some come,
stay, patience worn thin like paper, hearts

tough as old bread, and letters back home with every
copper earned from the Double Decker, brow wipe
of the sick, hammer of nail into two by four— if they

let you, if you not too dark for their liking.
Some, some, come long way, did bite
of the sweet. Motherless mother's milk.

Ol' Englan'
cryin' crocodile tear
for her lost chil'ren.

Vigil

Here, the body,
as sentence, conducts
a treading, never touching
the bottom, yet all
things submerge here.
The mouth of the city
speaks you in, its gesture
mapped on a grid of sorrow,
the old brick crumbling its own
fable day by day. You see, I came
to the city briefed in its ways, my
childhood resurrected by Lime Cordial,
Earl Grey and Salad Cream; the BBC;
a million coronations; a cacophony
of British marching bands; how
de say Queenie ate rat when
she come to Belize. Yes, I

came to know the tiny shifts

spoken by the eyes, the minute
violences of lips souring as milk.
I re-studied the thing that killed
the autumn trace of light
in my parents' generation.
I made weapons of my words,
watched the Thames,

daily, nightly, for clues.

What Comes Between

Careless.

Been forgetting names, entries
to the city, incapacitated recollections

of streets born to
ask *where are you from?*

this heart of amnesia
takes broken journeys to windows

marks faces as appearances
in momentary sun

makes map dissolve words primordial

what lingers is not fact
only detail of buildings, things said

before,
slippery
after.

Barrier Reef

Staghorn, elkhorn and brain coral expose sharp, boney remains. Colonies grow, breeding. Billions of singular polyps form a chorus over limestone skeletons, each one

mother birthing calcium carbonate; mouth, tentacle and gut perched on the brittle bed they cultivate: thin life veils the dead. Polyps swell towards nationhood

but wound when careless boat or swimmer knocks them— injure one, injure all. The soft coral rejects hardness for flexibility, holds limestone

secret inside its corpus, while its exterior drag shouts a flamboyance of reds, yellows and purples. Feathered fans of sabellidaes sway, patiently seeking hands

of Ziegfeld Girls, as Pleistocene coral cuts the shoreline of Ambergris Caye—an area big enough to bend it like Beckham. This Barrier Reef thrives a million years, far back as northern

glaciers that imprison water. Its length splinters into segments exiled by deep arteries where sacrificial plankton and oxygen are brought twice daily by the Caribbean blue, to feed hungry

polyps, the reef creatures, the old colonies that never die.

RODRIGO TOSCANO / Pig Angels of the Americlypse

an anti-masque for four players

Four players: can be of any age, gender, or accent.

Props: one pencil, one hand-held yellow plastic sharpener/tumbler, something in standing for a “fax machine”, blank sheets of “fax” paper.

Scene: P1, P2, & P3 bent down over on the ground (over the ground always, unless otherwise staged), never turning to each other, concentrated, looking down as at an ant farm.

{P1} The sun *the sun*... {P2 & P3 straining to see it}

{P2} And these puercos {snorts like a pig}{sneering} *sin destino*.

{P1} “Se busca”?

{P2} “Wanted”—“is sought”—“we seek”

{P1} Ah.

{P3 takes out a sharp pencil; gestures every word (clearly visible to the audience)}

Se busca—

lápiz {“pencil”}

filoso {“sharp”}

ambriento {“starving”}

{P3 matter-of-factly, to no one in particular}

Se busca (por lo mínimo) un Brasileiro mas Mexicano que un Argentino Gringo.

{P2} And these puercos sin destino...*qué?*

{P1} The moon *the moon*... {P2 & P3 straining to see it}

{P1, P2, & P3 continue inspecting the floor; P4 comes in from the side, stands near them; P4 is not acknowledged by the others, as they can't see nor hear P4; P4 is only slightly conscious of the others}

{P4 in the direction of the three, but not directly}

That can't be the whole of it, folks, comon.

{P3} Se busca—

un fax {pronounced 'fahks'}
del Presidente

de la Republica!

{P4} That's...if there's *ink*...in the Fax Toner. {walks toward the machine}

{P2} And these puercos...sin destino...*qué? qué?*

{P4} And if I've re-ordered a back-up cartridge.

{P3 swoons, salivates, as if seeing an attractive body}

Un Canadiense—*fregón!* {"kickass"}

Uf! Dual citizenship, *that's*

tight underwear.

{P1} Too tight for me

{P2} Oh my god

{P4 fiddling with machine} Is this thing even plugged in? Let's see.

{P1} The groom *the groom*... {P2 & P3 straining to see it}

{P2} We can't "marry" these {snorts loudly several times} *to one another!*

{P4} These presets...(tsk) I wonder if (tsk)

{P3 rolling pencil between palms of hands, evil-like}

Se busca

lápiz	{“pencil”}
ambicioso	{“ambitious”}
vicioso	{“vice-prone”}

{P3 quits 'evil-like' manner, then very matter-of-factly}

and a yellow tumbler

to screw it into.

{P3 takes out the tumbler and sharpens the pencil; blows on the pencil, and touches the sharp tip}

{P1} The bride *the bride* {P2 & P3 straining to see it}

{P2} More slop more slop.

{P4} Tsh, I wonder if I even kept the receipt for it?

{P1} Oh my god—

{P2} Qué? qué?

{P3} El Presidente de la Republica! {P2 & P3 straining to see it}

Se busca...

hair gel (mucho)

y una tropa de poetas

worth a *culo*

{“ass”}

“ambriento”

to anyone!

{P1 somewhat startled, but delighted, pointing}

The sanctimonious hypocrite twilight

and its

attendant northern

sparkling cluster of

—oh—wow

Shine on! shine on!

{P4} I should have priced shopped it (tsk) I mean... oh well {P4 in the direction of the three, but not directly} (—hey, you folks down there getting a little antsy?)

{P2} Watch the gates! Watch those gates, now. The pretty pretty orange... *troughs*.

{P1} The bride *the bride*

{P2} We've already *established* "the bride"

{P1} Sorry

{P3 waving hand over ground, marveling}

Se busca

—Cuddle Machines—

—Octupii—

{P1 alerted} "I needn't budge an inch further" One of them just said that—d'ja hear it?

{P2} I'm...*right here—right now* {gestures erotically, grotesquely, like an octopus}—give me that lápiz—ambriento.

{P2 grabs the pencil from P3, and lowers it toward the floor as if trying stab some tiny thing (continues doing this until **)}

{P4} I *probably* should have checked into newer technology.

{P3} Which way's the sun again? Or the moon for that matter. I'm all *twisted* up.

{P1} Nationstate *up*—personal dreams *down*—got it?

{P2} These puercos, sin destinos... lively bunch.

{P3} "Ethos, lady sovereign, be not my decay!"

Tell me tell me

Who are the *real* Americans of today?"

—What a beautiful songlet.

{P1 lowers ear to the floor} I can't hear it.

{P3} "Ethos, lady sovereign, lend me some velour..."

—I've always liked velour
the touch, the feel of it—

{P2} {interrupts with a very loud snort}

{P1} The border *the border*...

{ P2 & P3 straining to see it; ** P2 stops picking at floor with pencil}

{P3} Se busca—

{P4} A fax—coming through!

{P3} "Paciencia"?

{P2} —"Patience"

{P3} —Ah.

{P4 reading a fax sheet from the machine; after reading the text out loud, continues silently (perplexedly) mouthing from it}

From the...President...of the Republic (I'll be).

"Dear Sir / Madam,

With great uncomfortable and unfortunate condolence (my apologies dependant) is denial of transmitted acceptance, yours...for...Zero Card"

Zero Card?

{P2, looking at pencil, as if he's caught something on the tip of it}

This is... "desvaluado" {"devalued"}

{P1} What means "desvaluado"?

{P4 and P2 speak to themselves as they are (know each other) in real life, using their real names; P2 stands up and faces P4. The casual conversation is about recent travels they've both been on, talk about crossing border, paperwork, lines, patience, impatience, all completely improvised—for about one minute; P1 and P3 continue their inspection of the floor, P1 ear to the ground straining to hear, P3 delighting at songlets, smiling, delighted}

{Example... "Hi Dan, how was your trip to Canada?" "Cool man, or, maybe no, I waited for my-" "Walmart card?" "nah, they only took Target, *plus* the visa to Serbia—stamps... you know, there's these Serbo-Italians—or I don't know what's, just outside of Belgrade—and you, Stephanie, I heard you were in Dayton, Ohio last week" "Sure was" "heard you had a helluva time getting geo-psychic traction there" "geo-psychic traction is right! couldn't use my Macy's card for even *play* ammo! / etc}

{P2 plops back on the floor, picking at it with the pencil as before (unable to sense P4 in any way)}

{P1} The bride the bride the bride. The groom! (I can't tell which is which)

{P4 reading from another fax that just came through}

"Dear Sir / Madam,

Additionally, a downpour of pleasure mine, to bestow, for 28,000 Americos, upon receipt of herebesaid, Pick Five citizenship...in exchange for...Zero Card...wallet

size pic of me, bonus...{keeps silently and intently reading from the fax until next speaking part}

{P2} Slop, more slop for these...{sneering} *puercos de sus republicas*.

{P1 ear to the ground} "I needn't go a centimeter further"—d'ja hear that?

{P3 waving hand over ground, like a medium} Se busca...{matter-of-factly} un Nicaragüense with less of a Castroist mask than the most demasked Chilean, on any Sunday, liberal.

{P3 in a loud, hoarse, monotone voice; P1 and P2 looking at the floor, as if they're seeing something speaking}

"HI"

"HOW ARE YOU?"

"HOW'S YOUR FAMILY?"

"WHAT'S THE GRAPE SEASON LIKE THIS YEAR?"

"HOW DO YOU MANAGE

THE SLIGHT

CHANGE OF

ACCENT?"

{All players throw themselves on their backs, arms and legs spread out, looking straight up}

{pause}

{P1} Dário

{P2} Darío

{P3} Darió

{P2} Darió, ok.

{P3} No no, Darío it is.

{P2} I still think it's Dário.

{P1, P2, P3}

¡THANK YOU RUBÉN DARÍO!

{P1} For the options

{P3} Poetic palmistry

{P4} 28,000 Americos!? Monster Pants! How can anyone manage that?

{P1 P2 and P3 pop up and link arm in arm with P4, like a phalanx, facing the audience; they menacingly charge toward the audience, stopping just short of collision}

{P2, defiant and sober}

What
patch of earth

are these angels
overlooking?

{P3, defiant and sober}

Defiant and sober

that's what

they look like.

{P1} Hell—is *me*, the way I feel.

{P4} Heaven you too {locks arms even tighter} (here, now) and *me*, purged of all *practical* purgatory—cripes... what kind of art-form is this?

{all 4 players}

¡THAT CAN'T BE THE WHOLE OF IT, FOLKS, COMON!

{P1, P2, and P3 plop back on the floor, on their backs facing up; P4 returns to the fax machine and snatches fax after fax (each one blank) throwing them to the floor after a brief inspection of each sheet (continues doing this until next speaking part)}

{P1} Nationstates *up*—personal dreams *down*.

{P2} and mugs

{P3} mugs

{P1} mugs

{P2} mugs

{P3} mugs

{pause}

{P1, P2, P3, slowly, in a semi-sleep state}

{P1} All I see is... The Great Divide.

{P3} I am the heat.

{P2} The wanderlust... where'd it go?

{P1} "Solo se que dios es Bolivariano" I just heard that.

{P2} Puerqueros Hammer.

{P4 frustrated, loses interest in machine, shushes it away} Tsk

{P4 slowly walks to where the other three are and joins them in the prostate position}

{Pause}

{All four players (slowly, calmly, peaceably) act as themselves, addressing each other using their real-life names}

{P2} That's good, [Jocelyn]... it's good you're happy...

{P3} So happy... the nest of some missing pretty baby I am...

{P1} Delighted is a goofy word {chuckles softly}... jazzed... is only a little less goofy
{all four chuckle softly}

{P3} You're here, [David], right... some... far-off... *other* time {all four chuckle softly}

{P4} Borders... silent wars... mirth... gloom.

{P2} Vogue, what's in vogue.

{P3} May...*be...that*, [Stephanie]...*that*

{P1} The way out?

{P2} Art goes art goes

{P3} Away...

{P2} And back...

{P1} In...

{P3} And out...

{P4} “Yo persigo una forma que no encuentra mi estilo,
botón de pensamiento que busca ser la rosa” *

{P2} Contrive
 identify
the themelets
 variate

{P3} Se busca...

{P1} Songlets of sorts, yeah?

{P4} Yeah...

{P2} Mhm...

end of anti-masque

* lines from Rubén Darío's *Yo persigo una forma* ("I seek a form")

"Yo persigo una forma que no encuentra mi estilo,
botón de pensamiento que busca ser la rosa"

"I pursue a form that doesn't find my style,
mind's stem that strives to be the rose"

(trans. R. Toscano)

JON PAUL FIORENTINO / from **Mentholism**

...The Closer I Come to Elegy

Little Lucifer falls
despite listless prayers

The palliative strain
and cigarette drama

Don't fuck this up
with your feelings

Went to sleep without
him

Tried to dream him
back

But it's zero sum the
summer

Nothing cold about it
just that

the closer I come to loving
the closer I come to elegy

Shh. There are other
poets trying to die

Sherbrooke, November 3, 2006

Jobless Wonderboy

Jobless little wonder
needs his antibiotics

Jobber never leaves
never earns his lesions

Got paper and markers
and motherfucking white-out

Listen, sent you a text
message in 1983

One day you'll get it

All Frigid

This cold is your gift so
spend countless hours grifting

We have sole proprietorship
of these barricades

Close your eyes
and pretend that we have talent

Impossible not to be swayed
you're too into you, too craven

You can't hold your liquor
but you really can't hold your sobriety

I think you smoke Craven Menthols
I'm not sure why you smoke them or why I'm craven

Get all frigid. Ride late night
to last call. Scratch open the white scabs

The walk-in therapist will
see you now. There you are

You don't have a problem
would you like that in writing?

I need an adjacent room
from which to watch you

So hard to keep your story straight
this poem makes sure of it

Comprose

composed in 1946
compost in 4/4 time

then
comprosed
wicked and defiant

missing you

send in the nouns

What's the Worst That Could Happen, Courtney?

She slides out of a launderette
No, wait. She struts out of a café

Check that. She stumbles out of a bus
Or not. She steps out of a bank

Too dull. She stirs out of a dream
That sucks. She slips out of a clinic

The washer is old; the smoke is thick
The transit is slow; the credit is wrecked
The fear is real; the doctor is sick

Her clothes are stained; her coffee is cold
Her transfer is gone; her money is low
Her mind is made up; her pills do not work

Grift Economy

Manage to in syntax
Xerox massage it

Bedsore soothe, bedsitters swoon
Back when X cared about things

Intentions pulped or stapled
closer

So close to sleep
yet so closed

The epiphany changes
when the font does

Easy to look down on you
from this basement suite

Stop Knowing How I Am

When the punch line is chlorine
you transgraze, catch cold

When the punch line is Advair
the side effect is death

When the punch line is adjunct
high on grad school Sudafed

When the punch line is prairie
periodicals spiral

When the punch line is hockey
tell it antiseptic

Stifled by Winnipeg dust
stunted by Winnipeg stricture
when the punch line is stop

I'm Pulling For Your Narrative

It's a trope
I think you know it

The ATM looks lovely tonight
if you believe in the word lovely

You kill an adjective
and then

The word lovely wakes
you up at 4pm and says

You sleep too much
you drink too long

Hysterical Narrative

Alpha.
Wide.
Right.

Shouldn't think so
I've been so thoughtless

Pronounce hegemony wrong
that's nothing

Announce too candidly
my candidacy

Something I hardly know
protects itself from being happy

So much more than something
whatever that means

Years saunter by, increasingly incapable of lyric
yet here I am

All about your breath, all about you breathing
every beta male needs better Maud Gonne

Twisted thorns and all
you are there / where is you?

Very well aware: closed/posed/structuralist readings
find me lacking or treading or tactless or fruitless

But here's something: it's 4:07 am
you are asleep; and I weep swell

Beta.

Left.

Home.

Cautiously Solipsistic

If self is dishappy
cautionary tale stuck on repeat

If posed self is paused
solitary drive drivel

If drive is inward
sociological, heteronormative slapstick

If feel you can drive it home
power outage, gender outrage

If triage is trendy
crack and hiss Christmas illness

Don't let yourself get paid
if cost is that everyone knows you gets paid

SØREN GAUGER / The Deaths of Four Consular Officials

Per Olaffsen, seventy-two and bent-backed, was double-locking all the doors and windows, recalling that every day he received a memo urging him to bear in mind that his was a job of *maximum security risk*. And it was not for the first time that this formulation of his job made him snort in amusement. For indeed, why would anyone harm the Danish consul to Norway? The thing was unthinkable. And yet with all the security systems haloing the office, one caught oneself thinking from time to time: They can't all have been installed for no reason whatsoever. The Danes are a practical folk, he thought with a twinge of remorse, and they would not install so many security devices if no risk were *thinkable*. But how hard it was to imagine two peoples more amicable and similar-headed than the Danes and the Norwegians!

Of course, even with all that similar-headedness, reflected Per as he crossed the final security gate to leave the compound, waving a stiff good-night to the security officer, he had not managed to really know the heart of a single Norwegian in his seventeen years here in Oslo as consul. There had been more than ample friendliness, of course, you could not fault the Norwegians on this score, but not once had he left a Norwegian home with his head ticklish from strong alcohol and the lightness of chest that comes from two people having laid themselves open entirely. After the first five years of feeling no closeness whatsoever to another human being, he had actually proposed a deeper friendship to a man he knew, he had actually said to Edvard one night in a fashionable bar, where all the drinks are served with fancy straws and the waitresses address you in the familiar, Per had actually said Let's you and I become closer friends Edvard. I have made an effort to conceal it, Per continued, but in fact I am seized by a frightening loneliness. I walk around each day pretending as though I am occupied with my normal thoughts, but in fact I am concealing a powerful misery. When I return home at night, to my expansive and desolate home, I am incapacitated, I merely sit still in my very comfortable and supple leather armchair and reflect on my disappointments and rue my existence. For many people, the position of the Danish consul to Norway is the highest summit a Danish citizen could hope to reach. I am not exaggerating when I claim that thousands of Danish people, both young and old, lie awake at night dreaming of being awarded my position, imagining my sudden death. As a young man, biding my time in consulates in savage

and inhospitable countries, countries seething with parasites and venomous beasts and where the people walk about in scrappy loincloths and ritually scar each other's bodies, I spent every minute of those years dreaming of being promoted to Oslo. Every time I had my stomach pumped after food poisoning, every time I scraped dog excrement from the soles of my shoes with a stick, every time young street urchins threw firecrackers at me and then laughed and jeered I would think to myself: Oslo. In Oslo people walk down normal streets with normal buildings doing sane things, in Oslo I wouldn't have to worry if every stranger's pocket concealed a knife, if every bill was counterfeited. And yet now that I am actually *here*, in Oslo, holding precisely the position I dreamed of holding, I still feel no real pleasure, because I never experience human warmth. One person would be quite sufficient, one soul I can trust, I don't need...

At this point, Per recalled, he had broken off, having noticed that Edvard had twisted his long plastic straw into knots, finished the whole of his cocktail and torn his napkin into little bits of paper. Per's drink was still full. He tried in vain to change the subject, but Edvard was already remembering an appointment he was going to be late for and hurrying towards the door.

Per was now making his way through Oslo's main business district, men in suits were scampering this way and that, climbing into rented cars and taxi cabs, glass buildings soared as high as Per's imagination would reach. After that incident in the bar, to which he had never returned in the twelve years since, owing to the fact that the waitresses had witnessed the whole humiliating *mise en scene*, and he didn't need anyone reminding him of that evening, he reminded himself obsessively as it was, after that incident he could not say that he had grown any happier, but he *had* acquired an air of indifference that was beneficial to his nerves, that spared him from endlessly suffering. And staring at the streets around him covered in snow and ice, with the glass buildings here and there, he again had the thought of how very much alike Norway was to Denmark, but with this important difference: he understood the Danes, whereas the Norwegians he would never fathom.

A shout caused him to turn his head. A man and a woman were having a public argument, young people of less than thirty. As he watched their faces and gestures, Per caught himself feeling jealousy surge through his veins. Only once, for a period of three and a half years, had he loved a woman enough to quarrel with her so violently. He blushed when he recalled their parting. After three and a half years of,

in retrospect, miraculous companionship, shared meals and amorous embraces, long minutes spent gazing insensibly into one another's eyes, the mind a helpless soup, utterly paralyzed, after all this he had simply had enough one day, and announced that their relationship had fizzled, using precisely that cliché. If he had had any way of glimpsing what his life was to become after that, if for even an instant he could have seen what comparative misery was in store... And now he was jealous of arguments. Even arguments he was jealous of.

Per stopped outside the plate glass window of a restaurant, and he found that as he watched the Norwegians dining his mind supplied the mawkish din of their language for him. It is altogether possible that I have not gotten on good terms with a single Norwegian because they perceive that I find their language vulgar to listen to, Per reflected. There is a small chance that when I speak with Norwegians and they seem to be following my conversation they are in fact studying my eyes and discerning that as I listen to their voices, to those Norwegian tones that are such garish and uneducated parodies of Danish tones, with their pointless misinflections, the glaring hypocrisy of such a language is almost more than I can bear. How preferable it would be to listen to a language completely unlike Danish! That sort of language I could sink my teeth into, I could learn to love. But this neither *this* nor *that*!

Staring further past himself into the depths of the restaurants, observing the swishes and sashays of the fashionably-dressed clientele, he felt as though he couldn't do it, not on this evening, he was categorically incapable of going through the motions of selecting a wine, browsing a menu for something the little gatekeeper in his throat would let pass by, signaling the waiter, sniffing the cork, all the abhorrent little rituals that made regular dining out such an ordeal to be faced, and then worst of all were the other diners blithely enjoying themselves, as if there were no such thing as human misery, and he could understand just enough of their dialect to be revolted at the absolute poverty of the Norwegian conversation, the jolly indifference to how they appeared in public, their willingness to be regarded as imbeciles. His mind thusly distracted, Per Olaffsen stepped out into the street, slipping on some black ice.

(When a consular official dies, the angels shed hot tears.)

Marissa Winston, blonde and doctrinaire, pounded four times on the door of the cab before the driver noticed her and unlocked the back door. Stepping carefully over a puddle of vomit by the curb, she informed the driver that even in the most inhospitable states of America one did not need to pound four times to get a cab driver's attention. He shrugged his shoulders and chewed on his cigar. It was hard to tell if he was able to understand her English.

Marissa muttered out the name of a street, brushed a couple of empty cigarette packages off the back seat and struggled to fasten her mutilated safety-belt while Peruvian panoramas unfolded themselves before her. Sometimes, when she looked through a window and saw a typical Peruvian scene developing, young boys dancing around a dead dog, a man with a bloody head being pushed into a police car, or just a particularly disfigured face leering in her direction, she would want to take a cloth and wipe away what she saw, like so much dirt and grime, to reveal underneath it all an American street scene filled with normal people engaged in normal activities. She gave up trying to attach the incompatible ends of her seat belt. How insufferably long it had been since she had felt truly clean, she thought to herself, American clean. She felt filthy inside her filthy shower and the moment she stepped out the filth of the air seemed to magnetically gather around her body and remain there. And the heat! In the sweltering heat the filth thrived, breeding insects, parasites, viral bacteria. Sometimes she longed to be clean so fervently that she feared she would go mad. A colleague had once told her with a sympathetic expression on his lips that the first eight months were the hardest on everyone. Get past the first eight months, he had said, and you'll be A-OK, using precisely that pedantic turn of phrase. Well it had been eleven months, Marissa reflected, almost a full year of her life, and though she still went to bed each night expecting to wake up her jocular old self, every morning she discovered that her suffering at the hands of Peru had not been eased one iota.

The taxi ground to a sudden halt as a gang of emaciated children chased a dozen bleating goats in front of the vehicle. The driver honked and cursed. Most disconcerting of all, Marissa continued to think, was the desperate sensation that time, real time, calendar and clock and history time, time that belonged to her life, was slipping by in America unspent, unwitnessed, while here, in Peru, she was experiencing little more than a crude replica of time proper, a cardboard-and-nails version that could scarcely be fooling anyone, not even these Peruvians. Even these Peruvians must combat the nagging sensation that whatever is happening here

exists only on the level of the individual, and to get caught up in the rush of the Earth's pulse, time as an inescapable fact, you would have to travel elsewhere, to London, Tokyo, preferably to America. Even a Peruvian would be forced to confess that actions, whatever actions, rendered in Peru had a meaninglessness to them, a wafery insubstantiality that made any individual effort pathetic. And the more she considered the eleven months swallowed up by the black maw of Peru, living in hand-washed clothing and suffering intestinal ailments every other week, regarding the people as animals and berating herself for such thoughts, but then inevitably thinking the same thing again and again, the more she wondered what might have become of the other Marissa, sucking the marrow out of life in America during that forsaken period of time. They were passing through a housing district now, five and six-storey apartment blocks strewn with hanging laundry, Peruvian flags, children swinging from balconies, young men repairing automobiles with bullet holes in the sides, smoking cigarettes and spitting through their teeth, throwing rocks at women in tight dresses who cackle flirtatiously, an ice-cream truck flipped over in a ditch, its melody skipping on the same three notes. She would give this country two more months, she decided, just to make it more than a year, which looked good on a person's resume, employers would look at thirteen months in Peru and think *Marissa Winston is a woman who can live in a challenging environment*, they would say to themselves *this Marissa Winston doesn't give up even in the most blood-sucking conditions. She's prepared to tough out just about whatever you choose to throw at her*. The car jolted to a halt a second time, this time for geese, flinging Marissa halfway out of her seat, and for a split-second she found herself wondering if she might die. That was something new since arriving in Peru as well, this feeling of frailty that often retired to the background of her consciousness but never in fact vanished totally. On ordinary days it would make itself felt in the same way as some obligation that has nearly been forgotten but which tugs at you from the back of your mind. So too was this awareness of mortality, poisoning any would-be joys in her life. And then whenever faced with a real threat or even a momentary shock, the feeling welled up inside her breast, sudden and paralyzing, and she was always certain it was an exact copy of the feeling experienced before, or rather not a copy but the same invincible feeling itself, which had been merely reposing until it could once more make itself be felt. The last goose straggled past and the driver started the engine once more. Oddly enough, the fear was not so much of death *per se*, not so much as it was the

fear of death in Peru. Marissa was neither religious nor sentimental, but the thought of being buried in such filth and obscurity, to never again find the long-desired succor of America, this was too much. She could face almost anything, the cockroaches in her bathroom inclusive, but that final second of knowing she was never to return to America was more than she could bear. She forced her mind to change the subject. She thought of herself at the compound already and Victor there waiting for her, holding a bunch of lilacs, good sweet dear old Victor, only two years older than her and yet so reminiscent of men her father's age. It was precisely this feeling of safety and solidity, she confessed to herself, that had drawn her to Victor in the first place, though ironically it was the very thing that now made him so repulsive to her, and if she was now to be completely honest with herself, she would not have been much inclined to have him even for a friend in America, where there were a great many people to choose from. Good kind but insufferably boring Victor, she thought, he has been my rock through these last nine months. With his bad breath, synthetic suits and unfashionable haircut he is nobody's idea of a dreamboat, of course, but what I need right now is an anchor, someone primarily to keep me from exploding into bits. My sanity, that is. And with Victor, you could always predict what he would say next, he wasn't going to catch you off guard with any wild statements or unusual points of view. You could count on him to offer no challenges, but to reassure you whenever that was what you needed. Actually, she wished that nine months ago she had less suppressed her first instincts, which had practically pleaded with her to say Victor, what a good, sweet man you are, but I feel I could love you best as a friend, and I think, Victor, once the heat from this wine cools we'll both appreciate how precious little we have in common, you'll realize how much you have bored me with all your talk of sailing and high school trophies, she wished she had lovingly guided his hand back onto his own plump thighs and then perhaps today she would anticipate his company without the same sense of dread, without the deep feeling of nausea for which she had recently been taking pills, and she would definitely not be waking up in the middle of the night (this was the worst part by far) with that oceanic feeling of loneliness, a solitude so vast that she felt she would never truly escape from it, while Victor slept soundly by her side. The screech of tires and the tinkle of glass.

(When a consular official dies, all the saints bow their heads.)

I was making final preparations for the ball, while Franco and Jose were carrying the Russian consul, pale and quivering, upstairs to his deathbed, followed closely by a priest ringing a little bell and chanting the last rites like a rondo. The Russian consul was a big man, and his sudden thrashing movements were making his two carriers wobble about on the staircase. I set some cocktail sandwiches next to the carafes of wine.

The ball had been organized on the occasion of the conquering of the West Indies for patriotic purposes and as such the guest list was impressive. The Marquis d'Erestia and his nine daughters, named after the planets and in the same sequence, Sir Godfrey Camden, arguably Britain's most prominent social philanthropist and his wife, Laurence Firella, wheelchair-bound military strategist, pushed everywhere by his daughter Eleanor, who hosted an artistic salon of eternal luster and scandalous repute, all these and many more were sure to be in attendance. Once again I had a thought which I knew to be profane, but which foisted itself upon me time and again in defiance of my will: One simply cannot arrive at certain pinnacles of society, where the air is so impossibly thin, without an aspect of derangement.

I cast a careful eye across the ballroom, trying to catch any final details that were out of place. The three-meter-high swan-shaped ice sculpture was gaudy, to be sure, but a certain gaudiness is adored in high society, and it would be a popular conversation piece. Master Raoul, who knew everything about these matters, said that bad art was preferable to good art at high society functions—the former allowed the guests to flaunt their critical prowess, while the latter was too frequently confusing. I would not have placed the oysters so close to the chocolate fountain, but again, Master Raoul had said that aphrodisiacs belonged side by side, and obviously the final say was his. Franco and Jose were coming back downstairs, their white cloths slung over their forearms. The groans of the Russian Consul—who would not, after all, be attending his last ball—were still audible from somewhere above. I was just setting down a tray of mouse tails when the main doors flew open and a flood of costumed aristocrats poured in, a sea of society's acknowledged cream vying to outdo each other's extravagances. I must admit that for a second I was dumbstruck, each costume was magnificent in its own right, and then the thought that behind each mask lurked a face known to readers of the tabloid gazettes... it was simply too much for the senses. Glancing at Franco and Jose, I saw that they too were moved. I only recovered when a peacock-woman swept past me, tickling my face with her feather

boa, not even noticing my presence. A swashbuckler was crying *Hola! Hola!* and lancing at a sea captain with his scimitar. Surely no society can jest like the very rich! Twelve identical mermaids hypnotized me with their salty perfume, and when I came up for air I remembered that I had to serve, and picking up a bottle of champagne I flicked off the cork with my thumb (it only *appeared* to fly helter-skelter, in fact I had planned its trajectory, but here appearance is everything), filled a dozen glasses and began roaming the floor. And at just that moment when my cork went Pop!, Pop! too went Jose's, and Pop! went Franco's and the effect was like a military salute, like canons before a siege, and the corks flew like tiny rockets and then the three of us slipped like trained eels through all of the finery, all the adornments and refinements and the Mad Hatter took a drink and Heidi helped herself to a glass without catching my eye and I was swimming, perfectly swimming. And then Master Raoul, thronged by party-goers, lifted one arm and Up! struck the band. The rhythm was a tango, the rich love the sauciness of a tango, and now I was swaying, and passing the ice swan I very nearly flew head over heels. The champagne glasses rattled but did not fall. Looking to the floor I saw a small puddle of water. I bent to wipe it up, and felt a pair of drops strike the back of my neck. The swan was melting. And to think that only yesterday I had been in Jean-Pierre's workshop, my breath crystallizing in the air in front of my eyes, surrounded by ice dragons and eagles and unicorns, and as he was chiseling the last bits of the swan's beak he assured me: The ice sculpture is the ideal form of art because it is perfectly temporary. After music is played you can still read the notes on paper, a play leaves behind its script, but when an ice sculpture melts you have a puddle of water that needs mopping up. An ice sculpture is perfect because it exists *only in people's minds*. Then he gave me a serious look and continued: After you remove the sculpture from the cold storage, you have nine hours before it begins to melt. Nine hours, Jean-Pierre, I whispered to myself now, it's hardly been three, you old scoundrel. I began wiping up the water and Franco, sensing trouble, came and joined me. We were both on our hands and knees, wiping up the drops as they fell. You know that man we carried upstairs, asked Franco. He's the Russian Consul, I said with a shrug. Is that all they told you, said Franco taken aback, he's much more than that. They've given him the highest awards for what he's written. People spend hours waiting in the streets, in the snow, just to buy his books, in Russia. In Russia! I repeated, with a tone of disbelief. In Russia, a poet is not a nuisance or a laughing-stock, they say, continued Franco. Serious gentlemen, accountants,

botanists, cobblers get into heated discussions over metaphors. Sometimes one man shoots another over a simile! Stray leaves of the Consul's books blow in the wind on Petersburg streets, people read them until the spines disintegrate from the stress. The books fall apart from all the turning of pages, they say. The consul was raised on cabbage soup and black bread in a countryside too poor to be called rustic. His mother sent him to Petersburg at fourteen years old to be educated, to spare him the coarseness of the village life. On the train, bandits fell upon him and stole everything but the clothes on his back. It was the dead of winter. The big city wind howling in his ears, the Consul stood on a street corner, doing the only thing he could think of to collect money: he began reciting Pushkin from memory. A man stopped to listen, curious if the boy's *Onegin* would contain any mistakes. The listener also knew the poem by memory. Such things can actually happen in Russia. In Russia! I repeated, astonished. Then the Consul was taken home by the stranger, who gave him a place to sleep and began teaching him literature. He taught the Consul to laugh at Gogol and then be afraid of Gogol and then to laugh at Gogol again. He pumped blood into the heart of Mayakovsky and then stepped back to demonstrate that Mayakovsky's heart was in fact pumping by itself. They shuddered at Shklovsky and blushed at Bulgakov and derided Dostoevsky. The stranger's well-bred manners brought him to the brink of effeminacy—his walking stick and top hat, the way he crossed his legs and pursed his lips while tapping out the meter of a poem, his too-long eyelashes or the way he would insist on leaving the Consul the last piece of poppy-seed cake—and yet it came as only a modest surprise when the Consul returned home one evening to find that his caretaker had been incarcerated for multiple homicides, and was unlikely to ever again see the light...

I heard my name being called from some distant place and without thinking leapt up to answer, the effect being like rocketing suddenly to the surface from the depths of the ocean, I was struck by the roar of the ball, the throb of the music, but everything had transfigured, the masks were all smirking or leering, the rhumba was making lewd and explicit suggestions, there was the stench of spilled alcohol and vomit. Neptune and the Baron of Toredó were right next to me and being rather clumsy in their affections. I heard my name again, and this time I spotted Master Raoul, his face red with rage, beckoning me from over the crowd. Slinging my cloth, now sopping wet, over one arm I began slipping through the crowd, and made it most of the way to Master Raoul when one of the planets, Mercury I believe,

dressed as Cleopatra, collided with me and remained pressed up against me, feigning powerlessness, adrift in the crowd as it were, I could feel her hot breath radiating on my neck, we were nearly entwined, and hot flashes shot through my body as she coiled her bare arms around my neck, but then another surge of the crowd carried her off, in time with the music, like a minnow or something less substantial, and I plowed on until I got to Master Raoul. He clapped a firm hand on my shoulder and said You and Franco are the springs winding the mechanism of this ball and you are spending the whole time on your knees before the swan. Look at poor Jose—and he directed my gaze to Jose, whose eyes had been plucked out by a buccaneer—and you'll see how urgently you are needed. Jose was feeling his way along a wall, squinting his eyeholes pathetically, as though he were attempting to weep. I quickly traded in my wet cloth for a new one, picked up a tray of wine and then I was lost again, and was it possible that all of the costumes had grown still more grotesque and outlandish, could it be that everyone was dressed as insects or reptiles, munching on mouse tails and mouthing seductions, life-like feelers growing from strange places, sickly yellow face paint, fat red intoxicated lips. I found myself once more arrived at the swan, which by now more resembled an ugly duck so far had it melted, its wings twisted as though in pain, and when I knelt down to pick up Franco, the roar of the waves once more subsiding to a gentle hum, I was surprised to see him still narrating, as though he had been oblivious to my absence, his hair and shirt drenched by the falling water, saying: ...in literature, true literature, one shines floodlights on the soul, the Consul told the gathered crowds on that day, one might choose to tell a story about this or that but what is really essential is that the words shimmer with honesty, an expression of that part of the human creature which, like God, can only be described through negations, and the absence accumulates... The sharp ring of cutlery striking pure crystal filled the hall, the band quit, the roar hushed, I pulled Franco to his feet. Master Raoul had climbed the podium and was about to make a speech, the heads of the gaudily-dressed insects swivelled to see what was happening. Honored ladies and gentlemen of the nobility, members of councils and secretaries of states, magistrates and cherished celebrities... he said, and then paused for effect, and during that pause, in which all those present savored being part of such fine company, a chilling moan erupted, a moan which gathered volume until it filled the hall with a deep-chested holler building into an unearthly screech that seemed to rend apart all the sexual gambits, witty repartee, intrigues and scandalous

insinuations, leaving the ball-goers flustered, disrobed, undone. It was then quiet enough for the Consul's death rattle to be clearly audible, after which there was a ghoulish silence, broken only by the shuffling of feet and the steady drip of water onto the floor.

(When a consular official dies, a star dims in the night sky.)

Zurich was chosen, obviously, as the site for the wake of the Chinese Consul to Turkey. And because consuls have a tendency to meet one another at conferences and business meetings, and because a special chord is touched in all of us when someone in our own profession suddenly expires, be it amidst money-lenders or bakers or grave-diggers, prompting us to go to unreasonable lengths to give vent to our emotions, there was a strong showing of consular officials at Mr. Weng-Sen's wake. They came from all corners of the world, many remembering no more than an anecdote about Mr. Weng-Sen, or the smell of his cologne, they came dressed in black, almost to a person, and Zurich accommodated their desire for melancholy by providing a sticky and listless drizzle and a greyness of the heavens.

Arkady Brechunov, the Russian Consul to Spain, sat himself in one of the three chairs next to the decanter of brandy, set out with the tacit intention of offering the guests a 'symbolic drink,' relying on the dignitaries' inborn sense of propriety to stop them from getting too carried away. Mr. Arkady Brechunov was helping himself to and brooding over his sixth, in such a way that encouraged the other consuls to gather elsewhere. Chris Clegg, Canadian ambassador to India, was the first to approach the table. Since living in India he had lost all sense of private space. He poured himself a drink and remained standing by the table, taking noisy sips. Finally he said: I've heard the Gypsies like to dance and sing at funerals. Whereas we Canadians prefer to weep and moan. Arkady Brechunov studied Chris Clegg for a moment and then said: Both ways are pointless. The only sane response is disgust.

Normally this would have ended the conversation, but somehow Mr. Clegg remained rooted to the spot, and the Russian, perhaps too drunk to hazard standing up, or perhaps merely passive, also remained where he was. After another loud sip, Mr. Clegg continued: Does it not seem to you that the lion's share of what comes out of one's mouth is not what one ought to be saying at any given time—no, please let me, regardless of how this sounds—that when having a conversation one can at best

shoot signals from one's eyes as to what one would really like to be saying, desperate and mute appeals sent over the tyranny of the mouth... And that as one ages, the signals from the eyes, once perhaps sparkling and mischievous, grow more and more morbid in their content, more hopeless and stranded. That is, when one is young, one's eyes are most liable to communicate unfulfilled joys or sexual escapades, and with age one realizes, as if all of a sudden, that throughout every conversation one's eyes are straining to communicate a horror before death. Am I making myself clear? The Russian Consul to Spain gave no reply, and a half minute elapsed as the two men looked at each other before Per Olaffsen, the Danish Consul to Norway, cut in-between them in a bid for the brandy. He glanced at the Russian's dark, serious eyes and judged him a bad bet for conversation, and then smiling at the Canadian's plump cheeks said: This is a poor funeral, isn't it? Though to be frank, I hardly remember Wen-Seng.

Weng-Sen, corrected the Russian without looking up from his drink.

A clearing of throats.

Of course, naturally, Weng-Sen, said Per straightening his glasses and sipping at his brandy, but at a funeral like this—hardly any chairs, harsh lighting, something administrative about the tiles on the floor—there is nothing that makes a man want to linger, *to stay awhile*, you know, to strike up some conversation with his fellow man. You're from Canada, aren't you. I knew it, a Dane can always talk to a Canadian, two countries with very similar heads on their shoulders. I'll tell you something... He leaned forward so that Mr. Clegg observed the flaky skin on his forehead... I feel closer to the Canadians than I do to the Norwegians. And I have lived among the Norwegians for ten years! Can you imagine! Day in and day out waking up to Norwegian skies, Norwegian hills and voices, Norwegian coffee and Norwegian toast! A man with a Danish disposition—or a Canadian one, I daresay—could lose his wits in such circumstances! And a Russian man, asked the Canadian Consul, not smiling, could he too lose his wits? Well, the Russian... began the Dane tentatively... character...

Marissa Winston, American Consul to Peru, stepped up to the drink table, and the Dane allowed himself to be cut off by the intrusion with a sigh of relief, making apologies for blocking the lady's path. In fact Miss Winston didn't seem to notice the other consuls in the slightest, her concern was for the brandy. Eventually, Mr. Clegg said something to the effect of: I met Weng-Sen in Syria... Or was it Lebanon?...

four years ago in a sauna for consular officials. I was entering together with a short man with an unusually prominent rib-cage, both of us were dressed in no more than the monogrammed white towels around our waists. The day was hot, there was no reason to have a sauna on such a day, it was hot in a deliberate and frightening way, in a way that only Syria—or Lebanon—can be, there we were, the two of us, using the sauna in defiance, in flaunting stupid defiance of it all, Weng-Sen and I. And then (continued the Canadian Consul, holding up one hand as though about to say something truly startling) he lit a cigarette, a cheap Chinese cigarette, in that infernal wooden closet where the air had already been sucked of all its oxygen. For a few minutes, until my eyes adjusted to the gloom, only the tip of the cigarette was visible, and the perimeter of the shining halo it created. And I had the thought that this was truly the inconceivable power of culture, that this Chinese diplomat, with full access to the far superior local tobacco still prefers his Chinese cigarettes, surely the world's worst. We introduced ourselves, and he said nervously: This sauna looks like Hell. His accent was thick, but that was what he said, fingering the ends of his moustache, oblivious to the gauntness of his own chest. I don't want to go to Hell, he said, I have suffered enough in Turkey. It was so natural, the way he spoke in that sauna, half-naked and pulling on his cigarette, as though he were saying I don't want a cup of tea, and it was infectious, I said *I don't want to go to Hell either*, like I was continuing the tea conversation, though I am intrinsically irreligious, though in all my life I have scarcely given a serious moment's thought to Hell as such, I did think to myself: I want no part of this Weng-Sen's Hell, and this thought was in earnest. That was the last we spoke, and I never saw him again, concluded the Canadian Consul, directing his eyes to his glass of alcohol. Per Olaffsen said, Well, what a coincidence that you spoke of death with Weng-Sen, which made the Russian snort with laughter.

Marissa Winston ahemed: All I can say about Weng-Sen is how he leaves a hotel room. I was staying at the Waldorf in Sydney. Weng-Sen had had the room directly before me and the cleaning people had taken the morning off, or so it seemed. He had left eggshells in the sink, a damp towel on the bed post, and polyester socks on the window ledge. The room smelled somehow Chinese, I remember. The American Consul blinked and looked embarrassed. That's all I have.

The Russian Consul said: I once played cards with Weng-Sen, and owing to my foolish courage I lost one hundred and fifty dollars. This was in Bangkok. It was my last bit of money, but my pride did not allow me to ask Weng-Sen for mercy. He was

a very businesslike gambler, not cold, but not the sort of man to make humanitarian exceptions to the rules. He didn't much like to talk to his opponent. Afterwards, I was so desperate that I had to assault a Frenchman from behind, just outside a fried noodle place. I took only enough money to get a hotel room and a long-distance telephone call. That was Weng-Sen for you.

Per wanted to chime in with his own memories, but he was having trouble remembering if the person he had shared a flight with on a certain occasion was in fact Weng-Sen, or rather the Chinese ambassador to Liberia. Even worse, there was nothing interesting in the story to make it particularly seem worth telling. So when all eyes fell on him he felt baffled for a moment, went red in the ears, and stammered something apologetic. After that the foursome went their separate ways, never to meet again.

OANA AVASILICHIOAEI / Origins or The Book of Questions

Is risking an act of
spring, the sunrise between sleep
a lily
 breaking?

The book is thick.
If filled with words
will it be thicker?

If a question mark didn't
the possibility of a question
its existence
its wolfishness

In this book there are no keys.

*

A slaughterhouse built in haste. A new city demands meat.
A city will have its meat.

A slaughterhouse built
because it can't be helped.

1869	Land Auction, New Westminster
Lot #26	purchased
George Black	buyer
The Slaughterhouse	a shack

boarded with rough lumber, hand-split cedar roof

He casts his lot
twenty five down, twenty five later
not exactly game
but a land of hemlock
and swamp, cedar and scrub.

1863

The land, lacking pioneers, has to be	divided and numbered.
--	--------------------------

A piece of forest with a small stream	lot number 26.
--	----------------

A meaningless equation
perfectly understood
in pioneer language.

This is not a riddle.

A place you go to find laughter. Thick,
abundant. Laughter you can hold
in your hands. Laughter you can laugh at.

This, a slaughterhouse
built over a stream.
The stream blushing into Burrard Inlet.

*

In the building of a book
there are techniques
one must learn
to keep wolves out.

Early morning have the blinds drawn in the east
 and open in the west.

Afternoon reverses.

Though the windows stay shut
all day long.

*

George Black, a worldly man, doesn't begin
with cattle and meat
but with a seaside resort.

1865

Down the stream,
(later the red stream, later pushed
underground to make way
for horse racing and roller-coasters) ocean-side,
Brighton Hotel is built.

A hotel and a slaughterhouse. And a stream in between.
Black new to this wilderness. This coast. And him not looking back.

Of course, as usual in these sort of circumstances,
the smell is a problem.
Also the cattle skulls, the bones.

*

Is the slaughterhouse a confession?
The fire pit out back a mouth left open?
The pulley and hook the ghost of a word? The word of a ghost.

*

A word can travel back in time, invent its origin, its muse.

Hastings Mills, Hastings Street, Hastings Park, Hastings
Hotel, Hastings Townsite, Rear Admiral George Fowler
Hastings, Khanamoot.

*

When he dies

Black relinquishes a few heirlooms: a plank road
a burned hotel
and a widow.

The widow has nightmares.

At night

she strolls the Scottish countryside,
mouth filled
with sweet scent of broom.

But when she wakes

Oh sorrow!

This cursed coast!

Nothing but moss,
young mountains
and eight months of rain.

Water diligent

works on the soil loosens

and the soil drains.

Surely this is an ever encroaching ocean
tide always coming
never going

Where is that spit of sand
she swears she saw
ten years back.
And the forest,
once looming,
now dead logs hug the shore.

The widow panics.
She digs out old storybooks,

reads instructions about the Ark
and sells the five acre lot
to the BC Gas and Electrical Company
for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.
The same day, she books a train to Halifax
and a cabin on the first ship
back to paradise.

*

inwards stories are foreign
render the skin puckered
pulley and hook

 a park with no history
the book opens and questions
leaves imprints

 in the wet grass
 in a room of floorboards and old sweat
hooks a pulley into a muse

cattle hung by an open mouth
and blood is draining 1865 1863 26

road planked over the old Musqueam trail back to Khanamoot

*

Ancestry a footpath in the park
barely visible torn loose

 wolf driven.

Along the path a long list of firsts settled: the first
the first the first
At the closing of a century
each first obsesses a first
civilizing a land into the worshiped other.

What was lost? What was found?

no dreams to speak of

Where language was languages. In things
grown, things cared about.
Words are meagre these days
hungered
words wake into wakefulness reluctantly.

*

If to slip into the hole of the park

In this cell hope to flourish.
In this cell hope becomes
to speak a passion. Limbs'
humid petals, pages risking
open.

Below the window a day sits waiting.
Later, cattle will stroll with the day, cattle shoulders
remembering the buzzing of flies.
But now she is

in a childhood bookcase a magic-book.

*

Contributors' Notes

OANA AVASILICHIOAEI is a poet and translator from Romanian and French into English. She has two books of poetry: *Abandon* (Wolsak and Wynn, 2005) and a translation of selected poems from the Romanian poet Nichita Stănescu, *Occupational Sickness* (BuschekBooks, 2006). She curates and coordinates the Atwater Poetry Project reading series in Montreal and teaches writing part-time at Dawson College. The poem included in this issue is part of her current manuscript, *feria: a poem* park. She lives in Montreal.

MARIAN PENNER BANCROFT is a Vancouver artist/photographer whose work is widely exhibited across Canada and in Europe. Her photographs and texts are in a number of public collections, including the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Canada Council Art Bank, and the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography. The photographs in this issue were made in the spring of 2005 during the artist's four month residency at the Canada Council's Paris Studio. She is an Associate Professor at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design and she is represented by the Republic Gallery in Vancouver.

NICOLE BROSSARD is a poet, novelist and essayist, and twice a Governor General Award winner for her poetry. Since 1965 she has published more than thirty books, many of them translated into English: *Mauve Desert*, *The Aerial Letter*, *Picture Theory*, *Lovers*, *Baroque at Dawn*, *The Blue Books*, *Installations*, *Museum of Bone and Water*, and more recently, *Intimate Journal*, *Fluid Arguments*, *Yesterday, at the Hotel Clarendon*, and *Notebook of Roses and Civilization*. She is co-editor of the *Anthologie de la poésie des femmes au Québec*, first published in 1991 and re-issued in 2003. Brossard is a member of l'Académie des lettres du Québec. In 2003 she won the W.O. Mitchell Prize and, in 2006, the Canadian Council of Arts Molson Prize. Her work has been widely translated into English and Spanish and is also available in German, Italian, Japanese, Slovenian, Romanian, Catalan, and other languages. Nicole Brossard lives and writes in Montreal.

ANGELA CARR lives in Montreal where she makes a living as a writer, editor, and proofreader. Her first book, *Ropewalk*, was published by Snare Books in 2006. Her essay about translating *The Rose Concordance* will be published in *dANDelion* in November 2007.

RAVSTEN COTTLE has published fiction in the *Mid-American Review*, *Word Riot*, and *dANDelion*. He lives in Lethbridge, Alberta, where he staves off boredom by writing yet more fiction and teaching literature at Lethbridge College.

PETER CULLEY's poem is taken from *The Age of Briggs & Stratton*, the second volume of *Hammertown*, which will be published by New Star next spring. The third volume and a collection of essays on Vancouver art are also in preparation. Culley lives just south of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island and his weblog can be found at <http://mossesfromanoldmanse2.blogspot.com/>.

JON PAUL FIORENTINO is the author of *Asthmatica*, *Hello Serotonin*, and *The Theory of the Loser Class*, which was a finalist for the 2006 A.M. Klein Award. He is currently working on a novel called *Stripmalling* and a collection of poems called *Mentholism*. He teaches writing at Concordia University and is the Editor-in-Chief of *Matrix* magazine.

SØREN GAUGER's work has thus far been collected in a book, *Hymns to Millionaires* (Twisted Spoon Press), and a chapbook, *Quatre Regards sur l'Enfant Jesus* (Ravenna Press). He is a Canadian living in Krakow and is active as a literary translator of Jerzy Ficowski, Wojciech Jagielski, and Bruno Jasienski. Also a playwright, his *Triptych* debuted at Krakow's Alchemia last Easter. The present story is from an unpublished manuscript.

BRONWYN HASLAM lives in Calgary, where she is completing a combined degree in English and Cellular, Molecular & Microbial Biology.

Born in Belize, JOY RUSSELL is a poet, writer, and playwright. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in numerous publications, including *Callaloo*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *Beyond the Pale: Dramatic Writing from First Nations Writers and Writers of Colour*, *IC3: The Penguin Book of New Black Writing in Britain*, and *Bluesprint: Black British Columbian Literature and Orature*. She lived in London, England for many years working as an assistant producer and researcher on documentaries and currently lives in North Vancouver.

RODRIGO TOSCANO is the author of *To Leveling Swerve*, *Platform*, *The Disparities*, and *Partisans*. Toscano is also the artistic coordinator for the Collapsible Poetics Theater. His experimental poetics plays, polyvocalic pieces, masques, anti-masques, and radio plays have recently been performed at the Disney Redcat Theater in Los Angeles, the Poet's Theater Jamboree 2007 in San Francisco, and the Yockadot Poetics Theater Festival in Alexandria, Virginia. Toscano is originally from the Borderlands of California. He currently lives in Brooklyn and works in Manhattan at the Labor Institute.

TOM WAYMAN's newest collection of poems is *High Speed Through Shoaling Water* (Harbour, 2007); he also recently published his first short story collection *Boundary Country* (Eastern Washington UP and Thistledown Press, 2007). In winter 2007 he held the Visiting Fulbright Chair in creative writing at Arizona State University; in October 2007 he will serve as the Ralph Gustafson Poetry Chair at Malaspina University-College. He teaches at the University of Calgary and lives in Winlaw, B.C.

NOTE

TCR regrets that in issue 2.50 the image on page 63 was inverted during printing. The caption should read, "Calligraphy by Abdel Ghani Alani."

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—FRED WAH (February 2006)

Yr mail jarred me back to 1974 to Peregrine Books, where the first “books” I bought on moving to Vancouver were 3 issues or so of The Cap Review. Exciting, cover to cover reading, not the usual mag snoresville... I thought life had changed utterly!

—ERÍN MOURE (March 2006)

I have never felt so satisfied with the appearance of my work in a magazine. It has been beautifully laid out on the page, the page itself is beautiful (the paper), the typeface is beautiful. The company my poems keep in this issue is beautiful. For some reason, publishing these poems in The Capilano Review feels as enlivening as publishing an entire book of poems.

—JOHN BARTON

An image of the world as of now. Beautiful.... I can see the extraordinary care with which each issue is handled, obviously a labour of love.

—WARREN TALLMAN



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