

THE CAPILANO REVIEW



So much for
worth, wisdom and goodness, subjects for gossip columnists Go back to the heart
Of what things.

— Alice Notley

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Lina Delano

FRONT COVER

Tokens for a Foolish Heart

BACK COVER

Heretic



Norbert Ruebsaat / THE CHALLENGE OF LOVE SEMINAR

PHRASE

The woman who was tall and voluptuous and beautiful, and whom the man with whom she was speaking constantly wanted to date, said she liked men with a streak of evil, even “bad” in them. The man who wished to date her, and who stared continually at her as she spoke, replied that it was possible she wanted to date evil men because she wanted to hide the bad which was inside herself. The tall voluptuous beautiful woman ignored this statement and said she wanted to “take care” of these men, maybe even cure them, and it was for this reason, perhaps, that she wanted to date them. The man who wanted to date her wondered whether she wanted to cure them of their evil or their good; he wondered also how, if it was the former, she could continue to love them once their evil had been cured; but he didn’t ask the woman about either of these concerns because he couldn’t think of a way to phrase a query about them without appearing to want to hurt her. The tall voluptuous woman smiled as she spoke about these things, and this caused the man who was already looking at her intently to look at her even more fixedly, especially at the corners of her mouth, which lifted and then twitched slightly as she spoke, which action seemed to him to be a dance performed by the energy of her words. “I don’t know,” said the tall voluptuous beautiful woman, pursing her lips: “Yes, I probably do have an evil side.” When she had finished saying this she tossed her head and gave a short burst of laughter, and her long thick reddish-brown hair bounded out in a cascade behind her, which caused the man who by this time was completely unable to not look at her to see sparks flying from the ends of those hair. The man became agitated, then, and angry at the woman for wanting to hide her evil inside men, rather than “owning it,” as he had once heard

such an activity called; but he didn't say this to her because the thought of uttering such a phrase filled him with despair and his anger frightened him. And it was in this moment of not uttering the phrase that he experienced a surge of desire to reach out and run his fingers through those reddish-brown spark-spewing hair which played such tricks with the light and angles of vision around both their bodies, and, it seemed to him, inside their bodies, too. He wondered if it would be bad or good to act on this desire; and when he embraced her some moments later, in a friendly, almost "brotherly," not a desirous way, and she pulled back ever so slightly, which was perhaps noticeable only to him, but which caused him nonetheless to not prolong the embrace, he didn't know whether in relinquishing her in this way he was being a good boy or a bad man.

A MAN WHO WAS TRYING TO BECOME VULNERABLE

A woman who introduced herself as “Christa” to *The Challenge of Love Seminar* said she wanted to be able to go on separate vacations when she was in a relationship with a man, and when somebody asked her what would happen if the man who was in the relationship with her didn’t want separate vacations, Christa said that would be a problem, but she would continue to go on these separate vacations anyway. The man who had posed the question asked her if — assuming for a moment that he, the man asking the question, was in a relationship with her — she would raise the issue of the separate vacations with him if he said he didn’t want them; and Christa said, “Only if it came up.” Whereupon the man said, “That would be a tricky problem for me, because I would be tempted to avoid the issue, for fear of upsetting you and thereby the relationship,” to which statement Christa made no reply.

“If I was your imagined partner,” the man then asked, “would you tell me when you were going on this separate vacation on which you were planning to go regardless of whether I wanted to or not?” Christa hesitated, then said, “No.” “Then how will I know when you are going to leave?” the man asked. Christa said, “When you see me pack my suitcases.” The man then asked her where she kept her suitcases, and Christa said, “Why do you want to know?” The man said, “So I can prepare.” Christa said, “Now I’m afraid you’re going to try to get revenge on me, and, furthermore, you are spying.” She then told the man — and her friend, who was listening in on the conversation agreed — that the fact he, the man who was asking all the questions, was frightened to raise the issue of the separate

vacations in the first place, and frightened also of her leaving without warning — which was the reason he was “glomming onto her suitcases” — meant he was afraid of becoming “vulnerable.”

“How can I be vulnerable if I am in a relationship with you?” asked the man. “I am terrified that you will leave unannounced on your separate vacation and meet a man who is even less vulnerable than I am, and who doesn’t care whether you go on vacations with him or without him, and who you will therefore love more and want to spend all your time with, including vacation time.”

Christa’s friend laughed when he said this, and the man who was trying to become vulnerable looked at her and wanted to ask her what her name was.

SEA OF TEARS

The woman with the sad eyes said she wanted to be "a mysterious creature," but that her husband found no mysterious parts in her and was not surprised by a single thing that she did, and this, the woman said, made her sad. She said she had gone to a tantric sex seminar and "become erotically attracted" to one of the men there. The two had "fondled each other's genitals," but they "had not had sex." But when she told her husband about this experience the husband only smiled and found it in no way mysterious, and so the woman became even sadder because she seemed unmysterious even to herself. Her girlfriend, who was also participating in The Challenge of Love Seminar, had told the woman with the sad eyes earlier, the latter recounted, that the woman with the sad eyes' husband had touched the girlfriend once, even on the breasts and genitals, and the two "had not had sex"; and when the woman with the sad eyes recounted this story she said that she had "believed" her friend, but she "had been upset" when she heard the friend tell this. And so when her husband (who found her unmysterious) heard that she, the woman with the sad eyes, had done the same thing, more or less, in the Tantric Sex Workshop, and he did not, so to speak, bat an eye, she became even more upset, she said, and she fell into the pit of sadness which kept her eyes constantly filled as if with a sea of tears. It was this sea of tears, she claimed, which had "washed her up on the shore of this seminar."

IDEA

The woman who had brown short straight hair and who said her name was "Lisa" said she was aghast that her aunt, who had been married to her uncle for forty-five years before he died some five years ago wanted to be buried not with her former husband, beside whom a plot for her had already been prepared, but with her new lover--or "companion," as Lisa called him--with whom she had become intimate only in the last two years. Lisa said she felt her aunt, to whose husband she, Lisa, had been "very close," was betraying her uncle by taking a lover so soon after his death and then adding insult to injury by stipulating in the will she was currently preparing that she be buried with this lover and not with the husband. The thought of this made Lisa choke with anger and then become ill, she claimed; she found it "unbearably sad" that a woman could simply abandon a man to whom she had been married forty-five years, and to whom her niece had grown so close; and when somebody in The Challenge of Love Seminar pointed out that the man to whom her aunt had been married had been dead for five years, so her taking a lover at least could not be said to constitute abandonment, Lisa said such a statement didn't make an iota of difference to her. "I guess we die alone," she said then, with an air of resignation, "and I find this thought very sad." The man sitting across the room from her who had been listening to her all this time but not saying anything didn't know whether it was on her own behalf or on behalf of her uncle that Lisa was appearing to resign as if from life at that moment, and he felt a tightness around his body which he interpreted as being that of an idea closing in the perimeters of the room.

BALD MAN

The man with the bald head from which the light glanced when he sat on a cushion on the floor close to the window, and who was later seen wearing a brown leather bomber jacket with the collar turned up at the back said he needed "more context" for the stories about love and ethics which the group leader of The Challenge of Love Seminar was telling and reading to the participants. The group leader said it mattered to some people whether stories were true or not true, but it did not matter to other people, and he asked the man with the bald head what more context he needed for these stories which explicated issues of desire, death, love, betrayal, forgiveness, laughter and redemption. The bald man who later turned up his bomber jacket collar said he wanted to know things such as age, socioeconomic status, ethnic background, race, gender, family relationships, place of residence, etc. of the people featured in the stories, and when the group leader asked him why he needed these details the bald man said he found the stories "incomprehensible" without them. The group leader told the bald man that he probably found the stories incomprehensible because he didn't want to listen to them, and since he didn't want to listen to them he couldn't properly hear them, and it was for this reason that he missed the details. The man with the bald head from which the light from the window glanced, and who later turned up his bomber jacket collar to deflect, not the light, but the rain, which, at the seminar lunch break, which occurred some time after this exchange, was coming down hard, said this was possible, but he was sticking, at least for now, to his story. The group leader said, That's fine, and turned his attention to another part of the group. The man with the bald head

didn't speak again until the lunch break when he was seen opening the door of the restaurant the group was entering and, gesturing with his hand, said "After you" to another group member who was also entering the restaurant.

Louis Cabri / from *THE OPERATIVE WORD*

/ "the break,"

What I need to do is feel this extending
far as it might go, even
if let's say it's not that far
into a subject, whatever that is

that calls for extending and prolonging,
for tending to, and longing for
even by simple means
the break, for instance,

which, after all, can be faked as
effectively. "I like a pause
inside, to read the porch thermometer
before stepping out."

What! But, isn't there an outside here?
Isn't this "for" those social referents?
Aren't "social referents"
responding? Which is it!

If only answers stretched out like this does; perhaps they do
when known. An answer's style
simple, a-musical, monovalent
prose by the yard, factory-direct.

What can be accomplished with what is already “accomplished”?
Even the question can hardly contain its unruly answering desire for
everything.

The very body of prose is desiring —
to be extended, to be prolonged, omni-directionally, by every force,
inducing a narcissistic “I-think-this, I-think-that” in its machine-head.
Prose without necessarily an object — neither itself, as such
(language)
nor as some other, as subject —
this prose that “structures,”

what is it?

Why is it here? What does it want, and where does
it want to go?

Questions follow answers, so long as answers follow

/ “what Middle America is all about,”

a desire for the next level of
evidence — why not. They say for a long time politics stopped
at the water’s edge (where for Aristotle it actually began).
A new dictum holds that foreign policy stops there now.

Tied Senate vote on Kosovo proved it, *New York Times* journalist
writes.

And “Today this street, what Middle America is all about,
might as well be in Kosovo”
not Moore, Oklahoma

thanks to — “not politicians [i.e., X], but” — The Rage of Nature
Dateline reports, hours after F5-level tornados touch down.
Now that’s up-to-the-minute, consumer
reportage. One reason show wins awards, I guess

they have mastered their instruments of production
/consumption, just like CNN
and everyone else in the business. Is this like tv, then?
Broadcasting awards at every advertent break

“I” announces itself, or me — what’s the diff post new dictum:
reflexive as the medium, part of the medium,
producing — “live” — another
form next to this one with a period.

The machinery shows through on occasion
even if more sometimes happens —
there is this happening over again
as well, *and* this, that by now

brought to the attention again demonstrates built-in
redundancy — for some, annoying to no end,
machinic premise worn thin as this
is thin and filmic, lacking only images,
tv's one triumph,
while retaining its degraded use.
Counting stanzas completed this section
ending can't happen quick enough: repeat.

/ ““This old news.””

My body lies catatonic over the bed,
eyes feeding at the tv.
And swallow. — I don't want anything to do with it, *or* its organs of
consumption.
I'll be let out soon enough to act out specific needs

in the nick of time —
nicks, which display humanity, after all.
My machinery partakes of tv's machinery
in a symbiosis made for Althusserian sci-fi —

the powers of critique are over-rated.
Critique: power, or instrument?
Instruments perform specific, limited tasks which define their
objects.
Powers are mimicked, turned “inward” and given motive force,
invoking the wrath of an
 end

or worse, beginning. So, invite the end in, delivering judgement on
the beginning:
You're constructed like an ad
made to be ordered in order
to sell as much as you can buy. “This old news.”

The off button on the off ramp
leads to the beginnings of the control panel,
in search of screws
that access the inside

premise that on and off
replaced yes and no.
“Replace on and off
with yes and no
as premise
of the outside which can’t be turned
too far,
its so-elastic

forms swell and ripple at slightest pressure,
what can snap it?
— and there you have the tattoo, or stain — which is it! — of a moral
problem on your
hands.
“Let me see your hands.”

/ "What a mistake."

Dying for an ending, and hardly begun,
premise of yes precarious
in a crossfire of reflexive
machineries

or dead from the beginning.
What you need to do is arrive
ahead of the game? What I need to do is "feel me,
touch me, heal me"? Or is it the other way around. What this needs
to do to this need

is feed it leavings, head, tail, feet —
the parts, and grind them up.
Like this, it's regulated, processing for "mass" distribution
distributes parts equally to every product uniformly across the field

like points of light on an as-needed-to-simulate basis, the mean
and rule grey, not golden, or
golden afterwards
(deep-fried "matter").

Dead from the beginning is necessary in
order — necessity of order —
to begin, and perhaps "we" didn't know this at the time
of starting out, and for this reason slaughtered unnecessarily

thinking it possible to avoid. What a mistake.
Now, we try and plan mistakes,
and though each one is premeditated
we continue to call fatal outcomes accidents of a necessity fulfilling
itself.

Planning for death therefore has been substituted for a plan from the dead

worked into — through — the process — the processing — from the beginning.

“Sell by June 6,” “Made in USA,”

it’s in the labelling, as they say, which is why ruler and rule are involved

— to trim off excess, make sure of fit,

excess — waste — of law

like claws, intestinal tract, recycled for

rounds of consumer-confident consumption.

Alice Notley / from BENEDICTION

CITY OF TINGLING

city standing together high on that hill voices souls

We are the city

in an act
something like remembering
will envision something like a city
from before all curses
I was, am, born here.

I'm coming to the front of things though you may not perceive my outline
you'll perceive first what you're used to seeing
framed, simply the clothes, the costumes of Ukrainians say

because most art is a portrait of national costumes.
my hair tangled and hangs down is it is hair real hair; understand? is hair real hair:
whatever i see, it isn't, at least in the city down there in the city up here overlooking
that one the voices click together glass leaves or melt together liquid glass.

i dreamed of my mother momma you're so beautiful. she was younger and i was im
older ive grown just to here. I'm two I's young and old. I'm going to grow
up again, differently Why
in order to change. No because there's no order and time isn't orderly

Sometimes it's so hard to be here in the right city Can I see it?
I'm from each end of a spectrum of I young and old, past and future
and it's so hard to get here With no form but thought or dreams With no
forms but the already seen Already seen down there, but where do forms come
from? I want to be in this high bare place Allow it Asking who
Ask me or you How do you ask Ask who?

Asking in the quick broken phrases of thought. It's quick thought reaching out
and connecting complexly needing only a few A few wordlike things fan out
and curl around other statements or expressions How we talk here: We
think. telepathy, our true condition

Units of blue and red-yellow amorphous are seen against hills in a dream
units of two and three "things" combined into the amorphous tinted are seen
blue and red-yellow, along the hills they could be anything or
us they could be us in
 ourselves each and same

Same-looking not same

 Could be anything. Could there have been anything What's
anything?

Come with me amid this instability
permit me not to know what things mean yet.

He, just someone
gets up from the bed of Swing High, Sweet Chariot
high in a highrise down there in a city
in the world we know best
dizzying windows, in black and gray.
How unpleasant and how unpleasant he seems.
Get up at night to get high down there
One gets high down there, but

inside himself he's amorphous
somewhere inside he's here without knowing
So beautiful where the crystal wind rushes across the

bare highlands Where we shapes are in our colors
He isn't the story.

You have always equated shapes, equated form with the good.
You have always equated stability with knowing.

I will have to be clear to make you down there come up towards me. But
clarity may be neither visual nor aural nor verbal. it may not be stable.

This happens at many times at the same time. This house I believe is older than the
first house I've been so far able to remember, the house furthest back in time I've been
able to remember — past that. I'm to sleep in the high bed which may have a colored
squares afghan or quilt my mother is younger than I've ever known her in memory.
I'm a little girl and my brother isn't born though I know he's lived and has died; my
sisters are there though they aren't born either. Young one with tangled hair, sleeps in
another bed at the foot of mine, and another sister has a modern apartment in another
part of the house, it's her real house, where she lives now, attached in a faceted time
shape to a faceted time shape time is a diamond this house is. It isn't a cursed house,
even though cursed events will happen have happened, it is a crystal faceted with
different times. The diamond contains them lets them go

Lets them go, to be a diamond am I
the diamond?

family isn't the story

your friend is dead he said, Life is for the living. That isn't true.
Was put among the ah ahs ashes
and told they were jewels

ashes the same old ashes and told they
were jewels, but now we are here in this city. have been all along

i am the one born recently. i can choose what i want to be can choose whats good.
prescient i can know prescient, green quality i can know quality, but do i want to there
arent even any green or leaves, in the city except for crystal leaves, where is you your
respect i dont yet we arent breaking the heart we might dissolve it instead to a dark
void got started from can you remember i dont know. maybe i dont have to
remember anymore.

maybe this is close to chaos or uncreated

But all our visions of chaos and nebulousity
come from previous art What
could we know of dissolution without total dissolution?
Would there be a we to know, if dissolved?

i couldnt break that much, what is can't be that broken. our imagination's often
full of lies.
has never been that broken dissolve into the dark ring and find that you
dont break
you dont even disappear. you are carried peacefully backwards to
the fact that you dont disappear.

They have broken our hearts with imaginings but we don't have hearts. What do we
have My friend has a telephone cord
a thorn cord a cord of thorns, black
a thorny necklace wrapped around her neck
it's said that she never takes it off
that they are some sort of cursed house

Our hearts have been broken by imaginings but we don't have hearts What do we
have We once had thorny necklaces telephone cords wrapped around our
necks but not here in this city, on the high hills

Life is for the living he said I say, But there is no life so drop it.

Leave your body you have another body it is a pronoun in fact stripped of
everything
there was a book in which silkworms became moths. i cant understand this change quite
they are worms then they are angels their gauze wings against the lightbulb, in a book in
the old early house. i am transfixed by the texture of their sudden wings the light
through their wings. outside, in the blue night are you. blue and yellow. oh mother you
are so beautiful, father asleep behind the door in this city families are facets of encrust
the crystal giants do we tell each other apart but we already have i cant tell the if theres
so much we already have done but ive forgotten forgotten much of it can forget. then a
man comes and presses his hands against my temples so i'll forget whats important, this
city, and come to be a citizen of the unpleasant lower city no not this time.

You look different inside We see how you look different inside you are
different. I've come here for that.

Down in the other city I've entered the world of another, the hall of her worth. She or
I feels vengeful or compliant, how we get along down here. Tonight I listen to her
performance, lying down before her worth on a long chaise longue. She reads from
her book — is she still defective? I want to judge — that can't be the point any more in
this dark intersecting hall facet of a black diamond with a gold light on her stage. Her
stage. In our city there is no stage. In the unpleasant city I will allow her her worth
and in our city is there worth? Not at all. She's still defective in that she's only for
herself, what will we do about that in the city that intersects but transcends all worth
transcends my own worth probably? Wisdom the figure of wisdom is also in this
hall but our city transcends wisdom
even wisdom

Goodness is in the hall but our city
transcends goodness

In our city there is no need
What can it have then
if there's no need.

I quote her words back to her I affirm her worth what difference does it make
if I affirm it The gossip columnists are watching

So much for
worth, wisdom and goodness, subjects for gossip columnists Go back to the heart
Of what things.

i walk through to, is it time, i walk through, is it to, i walk. i want to see you in order
to be a. that can't be. i am already intermingled with you in. i am choosing a living
shape of sorts. go on. did i choose. who chose us. who chose me, no one. what is a
random beginning, there is no random beginning there was no. there is no system it
doesn't conform to our words, start again with what then.

I have to take you to the doctor no you don't no you don't.
You have worms They live in my body they may need my body.
I can tell them when to go can't I
No you can't

City of Tingling, to go there makes me tingle.

I i know where to find the city inside the tingling that i I knows
magical flux, memory potential and something realer and older but what is that?
suppressed sensation, City of Tingling

Take off your transparent black dress he says your black dress should be more opaque
the night

night he says should be as heavy as another's authority.

Where am I what am I doing? It's a beach it should be hills it's a vast bare beachland
and someone is ill, dying and therefore doesnt really have to wear clothes my friend
she's my friend a blond the air is magical tingling with death and also with size the
empty landscape almost no color at all. I'm sisterlike she or I hug him her husband in
identification but not theft of self there is death why not we're all dead, and she hugs
him or I hug him on a bridge across no color. Child asks can we go home no we must
stay with them another twenty minutes in the identification with them of their
outlines. which is love

But I understand indeterminacy. The considerable concreteness of the unpleasant
city in which I am made to conform to precise outlines suppresses its tingling.

i am allowed to choose it i am unformed enough to choose indeterminacy
instability.

If I look in the mirror I'll break it
Break it like my broken friend Tony

complexly singing without brutal work. We can do that

In the city of Tingling

do that.

THE MET

in this city we are interconnected No we Are interconnected down here too
by some invisible grace which most often you don't acknowledge
... says his life's being paraded before him in a travesty of itself
as if it were a visible story: as in 'I'll pay you' god says all the
immoral demanding gods say god the immoral demanding god the
goddess says too such impossible dictators Don't choose God

What is the grace that connects us the lost cause

The brunette
walks over to a car, in a shacklike garage down on some farm or other
siphons sherry out of the gas tank so she can still drink secretly always
preferred sherry in her small dark core to glossy clarity, so she says 'in my
small dark core, only my exes understand me, I am the past which will never be
shaken because I love obsession its vengeance and rejection the
paucity of dark small rings of feeling bursting petals of a black autumnal flower
stunted dahlia.'

in her small dark core, only her exes understand her, so she turns people into exes she
is the present world churning them out old loves and wars
always presaging the new ones

but I want to change my past. I want to remove the bad from it

i opened it a book of clouds momma said its about the weather and how they come down
to earth in rain then go back up to heaven. the pictures arent very good do i choose more
than it seems do i choose the sound i hear choose the way i feel when i look at you.
choose that color that the sky is how it looks to me, choose how to hear the sound. when it
just comes up is met. we are sitting playing cards i see the hearts because i prefer them,
momma gets up to go have a baby. we must take care of these babies other peoples souls

whats a soul a baby no it is the site of the tingling sensation you have lost it take it back
choose a new body thats the soul its a new body. i choose it secretly for myself at night
now in this future life.

At school you'd sit at a satanic desk, with a line of fire around its top
rectangular surface a wire popping with fire small fires and when you
made a mistake, you would get burnt This happened to me No one
expected to burn me though theyd constructed the instrument for it i wasnt
supposed to get burned. they said
now i speak to the
flame by admitting it into our crystal
our telepathy chorus, all

In the backseat girl I wearing green corduroy
in the backseat I not girl wearing, in the backseat I thinking, not girl wearing
What you see isn't correct unless you see the whole thing what you see
is usually a notation.

Twice someone came into the kitchen
to criticize what I was doing. Someone else
was doing it the Right Way in another
kitchen. If it's cooking a large dark whale
telepathy is different from that we will just talk to it. not kill it and cook it

help me no one. she, my blond aunt, lay in the bed coloring, too old, was I really
there, she took their coloring books she yelled and sulked. help me no one, no one
helped her she was crazy. i want to help her now its fifty years later shes dead.

I don't know how to find the city yet how we talk or don't talk. I'm hung up on past
shoes, these shoes have thicker soles but I haven't found mine yet.
Have entered the apartment of my enemy. or my semblance. She has a large apart
ment I'm not as apart as she is, from the crystal air. This message flies

She doesn't want me there. The figure of Life is there is grouchy and has a new
hairdo. Life's hair is a redder tint, it is short and curlier, the figure of Wisdom is there,
dull and quiet. My enemy wants me to leave, because she's upset about something
I'm not going to be upset about something. looking for my shoes, under the bed
can't find them and leave leave for the last time, no
apartment for me large or smaller The city has no apartments What does it have

Does it have the Met. whatever is met that is, already chosen by what?
I entered the Metropolitan
Museum of Art and turned left

where the Greek and Roman statues should have been but it was dark
walked across darkness and then down some stairs later walked back up and
across the same darkness which was tingling I thought, I'll say,
The met is so beautiful! I suspect I've been taught to think that

What is your sexuality I don't have that though you say its met
there is no sexuality. And in the city of there is no hope,
the fact of no hope tingles

 I entered the met and turned left across the white
and black tiles walked down some stairs but didnt see what's in the
basement of the met

 what's in the basement of the met?

only the buried is or are breathing, really. where does the met
come from, the basement of the met?

 how does it get met

 pretend I descend to the basement of the met
 walk through dark statues dont pertain. no statues
i see you star flaring there does there have to be more i dont know
only if there is time the meanings are all double but not i not i at this
 point finger back at small star flare and bigger
it isnt any way youve ever thought
the star is getting bigger it lights it up.

i see a face with a smile the met i or you demented that is without their mind Youd
think it was a vampire a demon So beautiful i am a demon

Identification with others floats a floating soul like thing I identify
with the other since I was born in and out am not them identify them
by being so separate. I take her on as my double, since I identify with
her, how she'd hurt me, even if I would not do the same to her. I'd
like to cease to identify with your outlines as someone who'd hurt me

I'd like to identify with anyone in the crystal city

nothing lush here all the lushness is in the tingling not in the messages the lushness
the tingling is in me

We're destroying the other species
though not in the tingling.
How then can you found
this city? It's the only thing to do
The only thing that will not hurt them.

evolution is a tangled line no one knows how
long it took one second before she identified herself as similar to
another there is no time line of that right away it was a right
away. the met isnt evolution

save these beings who are you married to america or what

not i i'm

just born and have never been married

to america the map of the world the

unpleasant city

We were married to the
animals and plants Now only our spirits can be married to only
their spirits as they die.
In the crystal city?
I don't know It is much mind, this dying
as i'm being born born what's the point of being born to witness such
loss which i don't choose. In the basement of the met the animals are sick
the plants Why did i think i could ever be born

the map of america fills the window

The crystal city the real city is not a nation it is everyone everything a lot of it is dead.

have i no right to beauty
there is no such thing as a right, not in the beautiful tingling. where does the met
come from.

This has been so wrongly
done these thousands of years then this couple of hundred In the lovely city are
the souls of the discarded What time is this? our minds are reaching out to
touch it has its teeth and wild wild eyes why would
anyone want to be alive in the nonimaginary now Do you
understand me

born above can i identify and be above anything both there is no
both there are several worms in

me and i must repel them now they are my doubles they are not worms they want my
sympathy in a vicious way. what is vicious when i was four i thought
there was no vicious but now that im five. a sickness that city is sick The
worms will rob me of tingling expel them now
They always come back This time dont come back. they arent the moth kind

whats in the basement of the met why is the room on the way down dark and what was there woman with ragged hair i am coming to the fore there have been two versions of this so far one for I and one for i but soon it will be this I the only. I am telling you the rats were splendid a pond with something on it like saliva might be clich could i ever get past when not asleep and dream in the dark for if time is knotted whatever happens then is happening in this now with worms inside i i though the one I is coming to the fore. raw raw splendid what did the first pondscum eat then, raw color and water? down in the dark cry before you step to hear of echo. its more like and like the first thing ever was telepathy not a one thought but a tangled thought that was rooted in an individuality or more more than one. why not that instead of milksop see if i care what should i care about except who cares what word wha shou i and how many letrs do you nee to get mesage? just so my frends. down theres plenty of tingling and you have the sense of sparks inside it go in down the just there more stairs hard.

I have to keep trying

if i can found the city and tell you youll stop killing species —

the faces in our city, are nonfunctional and imperceptible. anyway i realize ive never seen a face and theres no such thing. i see you what you tell me how. we're married arent we every one. if the only relation is between everything points of I. am tingling again.

Lina Delano / BURNT OFFERINGS

Tell the truth, but tell it slant.
— Emily Dickinson

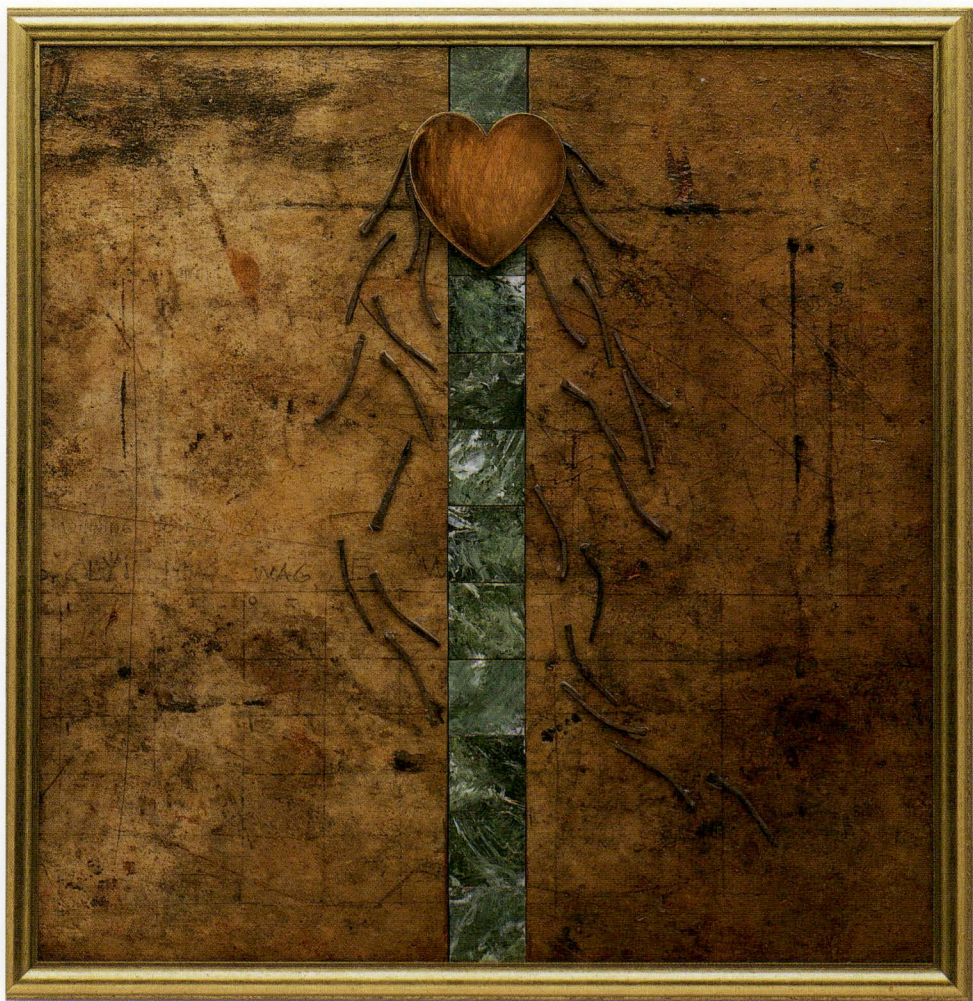
ARTIST'S STATEMENT

This body of work focuses on Joan of Arc with references to Isis, Eurydice and other foolish hearts. It is intentionally ambiguous, characterized by subtle shifts in meaning. Some objects are mysterious, their original purpose lost or forgotten — assembled from relics, souvenirs and artifacts, anything which is the material evidence of life and time.

Nostalgia has no place in their selection; rather, I see them only as potential emissaries for my purpose. They are fragments washed up by the sea of time, physical entities to be freshly charged with a new significance. And so these objects take on a different meaning as they become part of the whole to express a repertoire of human emotion, by turns ironic, comic or lyric and, at the same time, both classical and deeply romantic.



Burnt Offering



Her Heart Did Not Burn



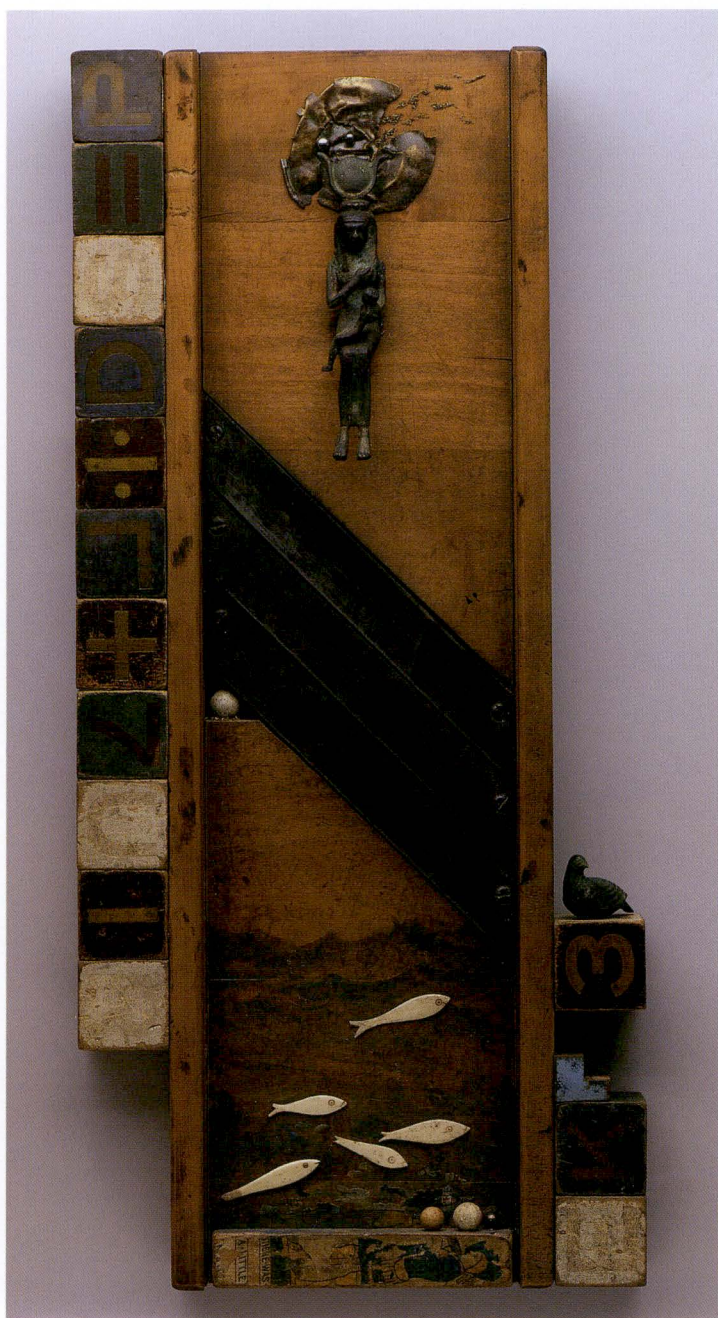
Hi, this is Eurydice. Orpheus isn't here right now, but if you'd care
to leave a message I'll see that it gets to voice mail Hell.



The Bride



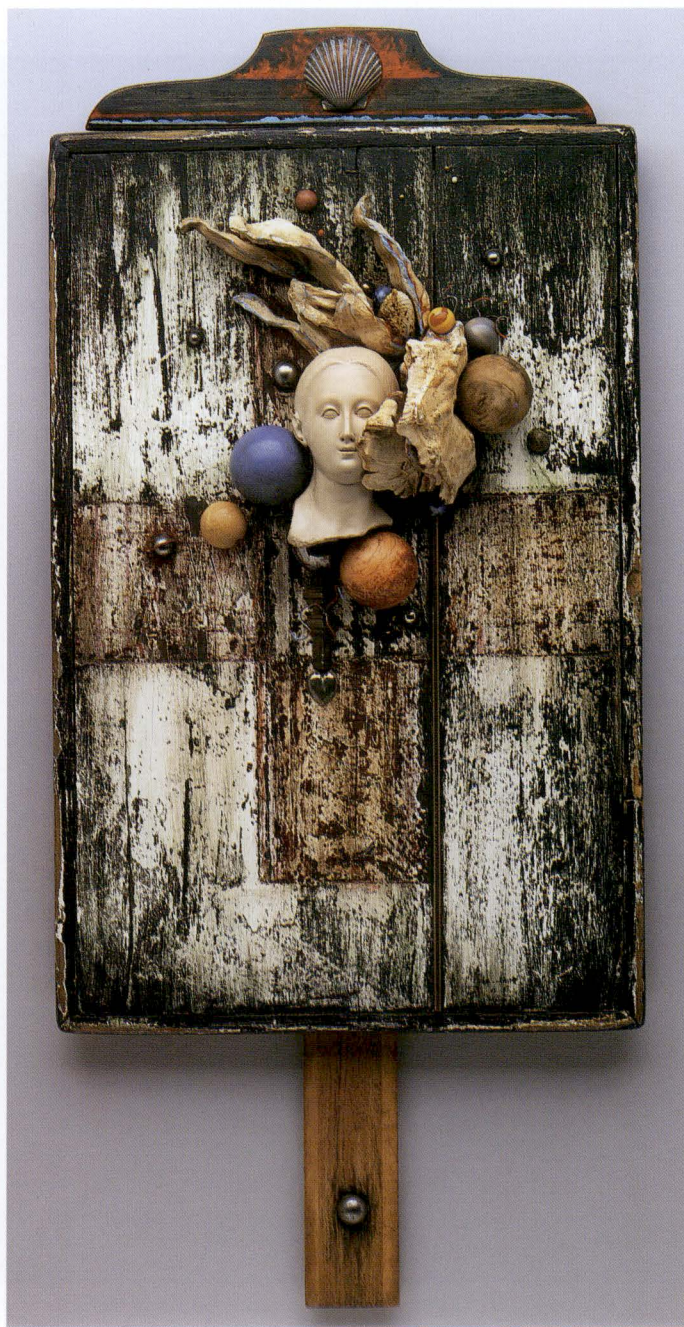
Martyr



Isis



Goddess of the World



Saint

Douglas Oliver / THE ALBATROSS AND THE GOOSE

from Whisper Louise — work in progress, a trans-historical comparison of two memoirs: those of the 19th century “Red Virgin” of the 1871 Paris Commune, Louise Michel, and the 20th century memoirs of the author

Shortly after her trial, Louise and other women comrades were taken by cell wagon to the Auberive centre in the Marne. The snow fell thick, the cold was atrocious, the passengers inadequately clothed, half-starved; Louise, say the hagiographers, kept up everyone's morale, she herself privately despairing unto death. On arrival, they hurried towards a warm stove but were thrust back by a guard, a foretaste of the ill treatment they could expect at Auberive, Louise privately despairing unto death.

Strong bonds linked these women: Marie Chiffon, a lingerie worker, who became a nurse during the Commune and, it was said, was an armed combattant during the Bloody Week: now, she brandished the prison number on her arm at the brutish guards and shouted “*Vive la Commune!*”; Adèle Desfossés the wife of Viard, a Commune member who fled to Switzerland; the Créole Victorine Gorget; and Elisabeth de Ghi, who, like the gentle Blanche Arnold, was to die on the voyage home from New Caledonia. Nathalie Lemel, had even more celebrity than Louise, for she had run a famous soup kitchen, been a leader of the Commune's League of Women, fought at the Place Pigalle women's barricade, and, not wanting to survive the end of the Grand Dream, had shut herself indoors and set fire to her home. The police, arriving to arrest her, saved her life, reports one of Louise's biographers, Fernand Planche.

At her trial, Marie Chiffon had shouted at her judges: “I defy you to condemn me to death, you are too cowardly to kill me.” With justice, the inflammatory journalist Felix Pyat claimed Marie as another Louise Michel, “less known, illiterate, more of the people, even more courageous.”

“Less known, illiterate.” Whereas Louise had learnt aristocratic manners as an illegitimate child in a noble chateau. Revolution

creates its own hierarchies, whether of intelligence, competence, or powerful incompetence — the kind of thought that during this long crossing drove Louise finally towards anarchism. Thus I have the names of the other women but what they did I don't know. Louise bore the number 2182; if more than two thousand women preceded her, how unsung are their stories!

On Tuesday 24 August, 1873, at six a.m., Louise and her 18 fellows were taken to Langres and transferred into another cell wagon. Six cutlers came from their workshop to doff their caps. Diderot's father, a Langres cutler, would not have approved.

That night they slept in the cell wagon parked in Paris. A day later, they were held at La Rochelle before the *Comète* ferried them out to the *Virginie*, at anchor off the port of Rochefort. A fleet of little ships crowded with supporters accompanied them, handkerchiefs waving.

They climbed on board the old sailing frigate, built in 1848 and heaved out of the scrap heap to transport insurrectionists. The Admiralty had a job to find a willing skipper, but Captain Launay knew the boat and needed to live down his previous voyage when he had unknowingly allowed a nun and her confessor to copulate beneath a spy-hole shared by delighted crew members.

Just the other day, the French legislature agreed to constitutional changes for New Caledonia, giving that old prison colony, one of the last "colonies" left in the world, a chance of independence after more than a century of struggle — and we shall find Louise in that struggle, at the beginning of it.

Louise and Rochefort are bound there now, into exile, as the creaky old vessel turns on its keel and heads to sea.

Exile is a strange word, its root being *ex-sal(ire)*, or "to leap outwards." It has two principal meanings: to be thrust out of the nation by judicial or other sentence; or to leave the nation voluntarily for a long time. The first is the grandiose fate of Louise; the second is the minor story of my middle age.

Not knowing this second meaning, critics scoffed at an editor who wrote of me as a "poet-in-exile," though admittedly such a title is far too high-blown for the non-dramatic events of my own life.

Back in the eighties, all I took from the family home were blue

lightweight suitcases collapsing with the weight of books. And self-blame I shall never shed for actions to which I still don't see an alternative. As Louise says, "a single, isolated life is no longer interesting." Unless, I add, it somehow becomes a window.

Simply, I write better from a standpoint outside Britain. But I have not "left" Britain.

Like Rochefort, I am one who resigns jobs and even countries in order to retain a supposed purity. This is not a trait I admire.

Gave up journalism because I could no longer stand the harm it did. Went to Essex University at last, age 33, went there for its poetry and radicalism, and took a first because I'd done all the reading already (at 16, ashamed at flunking school, I'd fiercely kept up private study). Gave up an Essex lectureship after two years and went part-time to write a misbegotten novel in a small coastal town near the university, but got starved of mental stimulation there. Former students conducted bitter, powerless political discussions in the pubs: easy just to hate Thatcher and cheer on the doomed miners' strike.

Yet . . . Brightlingsea . . . 7,000 population clustered round a muddy sailing estuary, warm, friendly, neighbours caring for the elderly, all the clichés, intense local loyalties, square dances, pantomimes, dinner parties, school events. A bad planning decision would bring 800 people out in protest. This model community suited Jan's life more than mine; she taught the local children. I liked best sailing up the estuary towards Colchester in a tiny dinghy with a mended mast: we called it "Penance," formerly "Carry Me."

"If you were in Paradise, you'd walk out of it," my elder daughter Kate said.

Could I have written good poetry in Brightlingsea? Not my urban kind of poetry. Well in England, then, in Scotland? Not my kind. I'm not English. I'm not really Scottish either. A cultural vagabond.

Had a chance for a new career teaching English and literature; it meant returning to France. My marriage couldn't withstand the move. Jan had too much to lose and I had all the fault.

A yearning, a lean, a gulf, saloon chairs slide across wooden decking, a stasis, a shudder, a grinding on, the Sealink night ferry from England nods its great nod forwards into a gale. A yearning

again. The chairs reverse their slide. I am on my own in the passenger lounge, wondering what I'm doing there. Outside the windows the waves rear mountainously. It's four a.m., the toilets stink of vomit, all heads are bowed on the dull tables surrounded by bench seats. My life opens at its worst page, like the desperate lines I had written in caps in an old Brightlingsea notebook:

EACH SMALL SETBACK REVERBERATES BEYOND ITS TRUE SCOPE.
ROOT OUT THE ENEMY FROM MY SOUL.

A deep-sworn self-vow I didn't have the talent to keep, lines now blotted with sea water. And so others have been friends of mine in casual night-time intimacies as meaningless as this night-long conversation with a hollow-eyed divorcee on the night ferry.

She wore a shadowy white suit with black piped lapels and worked at Rhone-Poulenc; I had no idea why I was still talking to her as dawn rose.

Seeking signs of a wider politics in panic auguries of gulls over green-haired crests of waves, flat sea glints from a kitchen mincer. The mind sending out flight lines.

Yes, the lowest time, teaching for a living but scouting round Paris bars with journalist friends, and returning to England once a month. It all lasted six years until my life started to restabilise, become rich again, a slightly shorter period than Louise's far-grandier exile. She never restabilised: she was to find fame instead.

I have never had to live through such darkness as Louise sank into at Auberive — behind her, memories of massacres, of friends tortured and executed, of the deep tragedy of Ferré, and of her own privations. But I do know, like her, how you can dress a bright linen over a bad mood and live a while like that, everything real hidden underneath.

Like her, I could go out on a ship's deck, feel imprisoned on it, yet let my spirit go out to the waters and be in a sense happy, numb inside because I had left behind people I truly loved but who, at the last minute, would not follow. My own mother, whom I idolise now, thought me wicked to leave. I may have been at that time. I am not wicked about it now. I am no longer imprisoned; the family members have recovered in their various ways; I have Alice to be (fairly) poor with, all of which is the richness.

That sea is always fairly near
under the rails of night ferries
swaying with unsteady thoughts, blackening in crisis,
roughening with time or fortune, drawn on
by inkless nibs, as if the written surface
were integral with liquid rooms of memory
distorted in the currents undersea.

"As the seed contains the tree, every life from its beginning
contains what it will be, what it will become despite everything,"
Louise writes in her *Memoirs*. I pity her and her fame.

Ah well, Louise and Rochefort are at sea, as I say.

She had always loved the ocean, though she had never yet seen
it. She, queen of the *déjà vu*. The first toys her grandfather made for
her were wooden sailing ships:

Oh! how when still a child I have seen white sails
Pass in my evening dreams across sea-swells.
I always saw one which under the stars, alone,
Seemed a great white bird against a black horizon.

My grandfather told me: "We will make your boat
Beautiful, make it from heart of oak,
For it's a frigate."

But grandfather didn't make that frigate from heart of oak,
though his cruder toy ships seemed to sail on a round stone, near
red roses, bees flying around the masts. It was on the great waves,
after the fall of the Commune, that Louise "recognised" the *Virginie*
as the ship in the dream.

I have spoken of the beginning of certain circumstances which made
Edgar Poe and Baudelaire dream about the outlines of strange things; I'll
say little about it; perhaps even the history of the *Virginie*, sailing fully-
rigged such as I saw it in dream will be the single page in this genre.

If you can trust her:

I say *perhaps*, for often one gets excited while writing and one goes, one goes, amid the memories . . . without thinking even about what one is writing. It is on those occasions above all that the ends of phrases stay in the pen. One has always gone far, really far away from the line one is writing.

As a young teacher, she had dared the authorities to deport her to Cayenne, like the 1848 revolutionaries. Now she smells the waves' bitter tang, she hears the "wind-organ" in the sails, the sailors bustle into their manoeuvres, the whistle pipes for raising anchor. It is for her a mighty harmony of teamwork, a miniature Commune of chanting as the crew haul in the anchor rhythmically.

The cable grinds, the canvas slips from the grasp of sailors on the yards as they untie the reefs, the wind bellies the topsails outwards, the ship is still gradually turning on itself to leave port. Louise is exalted.

She is shut up in a barred cage along with 21 women and, in neighbouring cages some 125 male deportees, including about 60 Algerian freedom fighters. The tall Créole, Victorine Gorget, would snarl at the two nuns detailed to serve the women prisoners: "Ah! Believe me, sisters, I am not here for having strung some pearls. I damn well shot them out of rifles at those Versaillais toads, you better believe it!"

For discipline is light: Louise will be allowed out for promenades. Rochefort, instantly and revoltingly sea-sick, will remain on deck and take his minimum repasts at the captain's table.

Before departure, Edmond Adam's wife told Captain Launay that Rochefort was bound to be released once he got to New Caledonia: a good report might help the skipper's chances of promotion. The only person punished that whole trip will be a warder who has been rude to Rochefort. It's on the other prison-vessels that you hear of manacles, whippings, slave treatment. It pays to travel with an aristocratic prisoner.

The real friendship between Rochefort and Louise began on this voyage.

"Look at the pretty wedding basket that Mac-Mahon has given

me!" And Louise showed him two skirts, a dress in Indian cloth and a bonnet. Her prisoner's allowance. They exchanged poems lamenting the corpses in Paris, the city still smoking in memory,

Rochefort's poetry ("To my neighbour on the starboard aft side") was a distinguished piece of journalist's doggerel:

A seal bobbed up, the sea was calm,
how much my morning mind remembers:
it was bald Rouher with his slimy palm.
And the sharks that sailors try to catch
Look to me like an excellent match
For Commission of Pardon members.

They had both refused the sham of appealing for pardon. Louise responded with "Louise Michel to Rochefort": "Gaze from the waves to the stars/The dawn of wandering lights . . . O ship sail on, sail on! . . . Open your wings, o cyclones/Let us cross the blessed abyss." That kind of "O! O!" stuff.

The old vessel, buffeted by gales, called at Palma Island in the Canaries — Louise busy at her notebook there, thought it might be the site of the lost Atlantis —, then skulked across to Brazil to look for favourable winds. For his fellow prisoners, Rochefort spent 2.50 francs on 500 oranges bought from canoes, a protection against scurvy. They turned back from Brazil across the vastness to the Cape of Good Hope, as icebergs fit for Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* floated by.

Louise tried her hand at a Baudelaire "Voyage" genre of poetry, but it was the albatross from Baudelaire and Coleridge that came to haunt her. The sailors were catching these princely birds on fish hooks, then hanging them upside down to let the blood drip clear of the perfect white feathering. "So sadly, they raised their head as long as they could, rounding their swan necks, to prolong for an instant their miserable agony, opening their large eyes with black lids with an expression of horror."

Though a prisoner, she protested loudly against this barbarity and the captain ordered it stopped.

As with animals, so with people. When her fellow women cold-

shouldered Mme Leroy, who was rumoured to have denounced Commune member Urbain, Louise took her part. Rochefort said Louise found all sorts of excuses for everyone.

Several warders, promised land holdings in New Caledonia if they were married, had wedded prostitutes. Even modern historians find this amusing. Neither now nor in later prison life did Louise find prostitutes funny: she had already insisted they should be allowed to fight for the Commune; she made them her friends, learnt their argot, tiresomely inserted it into her prose, and took damaged emotions for pure ones.

In ferment here was her revolutionary anarchism, a scorn for all power. Of stronger constitution herself, she tended Nathalie Lemel in her sea-sickness, and the conversations she had then confirmed her growing disaste for power.

She sought its origin in childhood when she'd seen a decapitated white goose with gouts of blood on its feathers, drunkenly continuing to walk with bleeding, raised neck while the head lay in a corner, eyes closed.

It formed the basis for her concern for animals, such as the albatrosses and her cats, and then too for her horror at capital punishment. Still in her childhood, they executed a man from a nearby village who had killed his father. She felt a disgust parallel to her feeling for the goose. Stories of torture heard at family knitting circles kept these memories alive, and her grandmother had trouble persuading the child to eat meat.

Louise declares in her *Memoirs* that, rather than torture animals to study their physiology, it would be better to study the functions of the heart in the human beast.

She thinks nothing of ourselves survives after death, just like a flame after the candle has been blown out (O Wystan, the cat! O Diana, the princess! More "O!"s.)

Still, if there were eternity, like the immensity before and after us, and if the part that thinks may pass into the unknown currents of electricity, and become absorbed like the elements of a body returned to material elements, it would not be a miracle. Visible or invisible, it would only be

nature still, and I have often wondered why one imagines that this electricity, conscious or not, passing to invisible crucibles, would prove God more than the birth of organisms which swarm upon Earth.

In another version of these thoughts, expressed in a modern, equally pretentious scientific language, I subscribe to Louise's speculations. Individual mind, as a discrete creation in space and time, may take part in that great mystery of whether or not space-time disappears after time's arrow has passed on.

Stupid or not, naive or not, such thoughts affect my political views, as they affected Louise's. Human dignity seems such a fragile, unimportant thing compared to any wider sense of significance.

From my evenings at that knitting circle dates a sentiment of revolt that I have also often felt again.

The peasants raised the corn, but they always had no bread! An old woman told how, with her four children, during the bad year (I think one calls a year this when the monopolisers have famished the country), neither her, nor her husband, nor her children had eaten every day; they had nothing left to sell, they only possessed the clothes on their backs; two of their children were dead, they thought it was because of hunger! Those who had corn did not want to give them credit, not even a *measure of oats to make a bit of bread*. But you had to resign yourself! she used to say. Everyone can't eat bread every day. She had prevented her husband from beating up someone who had refused them credit at *double interest over a year*, when her children were dying. But two others had resisted, they were working for the same person whom her husband wanted to *knock down*. The usurer scarcely ever paid, *but it was best that poor people suffered what they could not prevent!* . . .

When she said all that, with her calm air, I was hot in the eyes with rage, and I told her: You should have let your husband do it! He was right!

Now, on ship, with the failure of the Commune behind her, these thoughts came at last to fruition. With nothing but sails, sky, water, and horizon, her thought had immensity for topic.

She meditated on how her friends in the Commune feared so

much to act cruelly that they could only throw away their lives. She became convinced that honest people in power would be as incapable as the dishonest were harmful. Liberty should never ally itself with any kind of power. If a revolution formed a government, it could only be a step, and that a deceiving one which could not open all the doors of progress. It would chain a new regime of institutions to the past world;

The ecstatic cosmology, the vast horizons, now enter her discussion:

I saw that the laws of attraction which endlessly carry numberless spheres towards new suns between the two eternities of the past and the future, came also to preside over the destinies of beings in the eternal progress which draws them towards a true ideal, always growing. I am therefore an anarchist because anarchy alone will bring human happiness, and because the highest idea that can be seized by human intelligence is anarchy while waiting for a summum to appear on the horizon.

Only anarchy can render humanity conscious, only it can make them free. For any man arriving in power, the State is himself and he is ready to defend it like a dog its bone. To try to seize hold of any other political principle is like trying to haul yourself out of an abyss by grasping crumbling stones and yielding clumps of grass.

It was time that the real ideal, greater, more beautiful than all the fictions which have preceded it, shows itself clearly enough for the disinherited masses not to spill their blood any more for deceiving chimeras.

That's why I am an anarchist.

So, meditating these thoughts, she saw the long voyage draw to an end, as the little group of islands that were to be her prison home reared on the horizon and they endlessly drew close enough to see the arid crests, the reddened Mont d'Or, and the steep volcanic gorges.

At last, they steered through a breach in the double rampart of coral which encircles New Caledonia and dropped anchor off

Nouméa, whose seven blue hills under the blue Pacific sky, she compared to ancient Rome.

She conceived herself as half-savage, well pleased with these deserts and extinct cones ready at any moment to burst into flame.

Immediately a political problem. The governor wanted the women to have better lodging in Bourrail, not on the fortified peninsula of Ducos to which Versailles had, in fact, sentenced them. (It's thought a prudish priest thought promiscuity too likely — were they not communards? — if the women were housed near the men.) It was Nathalie Lemel who conducted the fiery protest:

"We do not ask for nor will we accept any favours, and we will go to live with our co-deportees in the fortified place that the law decreed for us."

"But at the moment when I choose for you another place of internment you must only obey."

"We will so little obey you that, if we do not go today to rejoin our friends on the peninsula, then this evening at precisely 8 o'clock Louise and I will throw ourselves into the sea."

"That's enough ladies; you will go to the Ducos peninsula."

When they disembarked, Rochefort and the other men were already there and that meant a round of parties in the makeshift huts.

As a good journalist, Rochefort had invited the prize guest to his party, Daoumi, a Canak from Sifu, dressed in European garb, with a tall hat — which disfigured his proud, savage head — and leather gloves on his large hands. (He had been badly advised.)

As this lion of a man had nothing to do, Louise got him to sing a war song, while feeding him goat cheese on castor oil plant leaves. He sang full-voiced in quarter tones, which Louise in her cosmic enthusiasm thought must have been learnt from the noise of tropical cyclones, just as "the Arabs have taken theirs from the simoon."

War Song

Very beautiful, very good
Red sky!
Red axe,
Red fire,
Red blood,
Hail goodbye
Men, — brave ones, —

Ka kop,
Méa moa,
Méa ghi,
Méa iep,
Méa rouia,
Anda dio poura,
Mateh malch kachmas!

Louise retained only this couplet, full of the colour red which so attracted her imagination. The decapitated goose and the tortured albatross had lent her not only their pathos but also their blood.

Mark Cochrane

Dumbhead

*Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the
same; leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to
see that our papers are in order.*

— Michel Foucault

+

WHATEVER PUMPS HIM, HE PLAYS

on the headphones
in the gym. billy idol, dumbhead metal, even
zz top: chainsaw guitars, the musky

mewling & yowl of *Legs*
soothe the lizard brain as it presses iron.

vertigo of

who am I without a woman
to be inside? panicked
reptile sleeps only here, flexing a heavy bell, or there

when he has entered her. peace

is there, essential blank
of the organism. there
is home & feels like
purpose, elemental.

(never without

a regular girlfriend
since sixteen: one of the badges
of cowardice he boasts of —

knees bent to a half-squat

behind her

as she pegs
her elbows to the sofa: spreads
her undercurves to watch *himself*
diminish, vanishing
into — & the lizard exhales

with the warmth of closing
folds / lifts
for a moment

its sticky fingerpads
from the brainstem, & every choice
the man has ever made.

what would his life, this island be, without?
meaningless, hisses
the despot with a tongue flick, *head*
full of noises
(in the vacuum of space

& not an outed sound.

DUMBHEAD II: IDLE IDOL IDYLL

To the peace that comes of entry

he compares the silence
of a burial chamber

unsealed in the pyramid, or the
himalayan hush & foot-scuff

of the Lady chapel at Ely,
its idols broken & powdered

by frost on a December
noon; or the draftless chamber

of a tomb among the catacombs
(you raise a slab of stone & stir

dust that has settled for a thousand years.)
To the calm a woman gives he compares

the mute & subaquatic
wad of air in middle ear

that threatens madness in parking
garages, where pillars & ducts

swaddled in foam
muffle the soles & breathing

of bandits or *b-boatmen*
who squat with spring-loaded thighs

in wait.

DUMBHEAD III: WOMAN AS LIMIT

he makes of each woman a border
to the livable world. his changeable
fidelity a shield
to the unknown, the new, she
contains the panic in his chest,
the groin, the aching triceps, if not
this one then another, mrs
or mistress, ok
always keep two women said
benny williams to
louis armstrong, ready nurses
to the overflow, the anxious gush
of the organism, bullbody's
binding bull, its specious
species agenda, a gentle
pressure on the daily wives
to squeeze a man inside
a confined place
the way a newborn
sleeps with head wedged
into the corner of the crib
because cranial pressure
from the pelvic cavity
is uteral memory, because
a woman is the whole outside world
turned inward, a draperied room
of bone, involuted
surface that carries his myth
of edges, of small, eventho he knows
libido is limitless
by constraint, his whole sexed
being a water bomb

dissolute, vertiginous
& a man might easily vanish
as fluid into other fluids, ether, he needs
the tight space of a woman
as a second skin
to keep his insides in,
his blood from billowing out

& into

(Choitla plume)

the sympathetic blood
of other men.

+

**YOU USED TO WORRY YOU'D
NEVER HAVE SEX.
NOW YOU WORRY WHEN YOU DO.**

— Advertising copy for the
Home Access Express™
HIV 1 Test System
(*Muscle & Fitness*, February 1997)

DUMBHEAD IV: HIV AS LIMIT

⁺*in which the pronouns shift*

Flirting with guys in the gym
is a bad idea. Now that he
believes I am safe, muscle queer,
bi-tease, or at least
not a basher, he is
on me every day, I look up
from the abs mat
& he has been watching me
do crunches

He calls me a *cyborg*
& is sharper witted
than awkward I

am: he makes
nasty cocktail chat
about contemporary art
by the upright row

*(All b-boatmen
are Grace Darlings to me . . .*

says I am too cute
to be a campus secretary
& calls me the Aesthete
though I feel thicker
than Maurice at Cambridge

(Wrongtexte, my dear

— He is a medievalist, parchment
fetishist, an archivist

for the Library
scandalized that I stuff
runny notes for poems
into my sweatsocks
between sets

(*not exactly acid-free*
he protests
on behalf of my papers)

he is just my height
but deeper thru the chest /
pes stranga guma
with a celtic armband
tattoo, a gold loop
thru the eyebrow's eyelet
an orange-stubbed chin &

he has a sore
or birthmark, like an ink-blot
at his throat
that has lasted the whole three
flushed & gushing weeks I have known him.

DUMBHEAD IV.II: INTERVAL (BETWEEN THE WALLS)

Section 1(a): Excuses, or "Theory"

*Once sexuality can be read and interpreted
in the light of homosexuality, all sexuality is subject
to a hermeneutics of suspicion.*

— Lee Edelman

homosex the rabbit he plucks from every hat:

Or, emblem of eruption
chasm he can probe forever:
smoking gun, The Clue, it is always true, a case file
rising to the moon, like magic it explains
WHAT IS WRONG WITH HIM, Or: *Inquirer*,
some quests are not sexual in nature
is a dumb show
& who reads lips?

Confessional verse
an exercise in the liar's paradox:
compulsion is my theme
he said, four times.

(mind hiding
inside a Trojan)

(he blows like St. Helen's)

*Just keep telling him, she laughs later,
you're in love with this beautiful woman.*

DUMBHEAD V: PLOVERS' EGGHEADS

Once I gave a reading
in this weight room

& my Archivist
loves the newsphoto
of these snarling pit-bulls, lips
& sleeves peeled back

— reminds him of that scene
in *Brideshead*: one
of the vice-regent boys
delivers with lisp & stutter
The Waste Land
by megaphone
to the sweated and muffled throng
of rowers at Oxford

then retreats from the balcony
for a Cointreau

(but I am his dunce,
his stenographic hunk, no
longer scholarly, clerk
not clerk, I am red-faced,
he is my Blanche, & whatever oiled
postures of erudition
I strike here

— are retroactive.

DUMBHEAD VI: SHAVED HEAD PASSES IN
CANNON BEACH, OR, OR
THE PANIC DEFENCE

The innuendo, poetry boy, is slanderous &
as storytelling,

salacious: ominous
suggestion, so delicious

to straight culture, the scare
of gay contagion, it was just

a shaving blemish, a purplish
brownish, forked, smudging, blade-hickey

& it went away, it went away (&
even if it didn't / I needed that

imaginary sarcoma there
to close the question marked

in the curve of a lycraed ass
— to soothe the split hysteria

prissy & stigmatic
harbinger of the blood blot

O to keep that ~~svitar~~ out
of me, out of the dark
& holographic O. +

+

Last August
he got his scalp buzzed
with No. 1 clippers
& travelled thru the States
under the changed eyes
of strangers, hotel clerks, he was obviously
not a military man
so with that skull, that bristly
pencil-sketch of hair, he was obviously

working out in an upscale gym
with bottled water & a whale mural
in Cannon Beach,
hippie town with the tightest lips
on the whole left coast, he was

+ O Homo
-chondria of the closet class
& I am its
valedictorian.

sweating up the machines
after a jog from Haystack Rock
& looking bony, his granite temples
shot with veins, his white
T-shirt in the wall mirror, he was

lifting in a circuit of sets
& wiping off each seat or grip
with towels & disinfectant spray
but still a fellow traveler
in fitness, a hidebound
marathoning type
worked in
on the leg press,
the incline bench
cocked a different spray bottle
held her breath
inside a grim face

& positively
blasted the pads
again

& again

+:

to kill his every trace.

Sexing the Page

my derridean dissertation
on the concrete poem
as rebus
for the hermaphrodite body
was never so real as
the day my friend the archivist
with white cotton gloves
in the climate-
controlled vault
jerked me
(me) (me) (me)
off
all over the delicate
yellowed original
of bissett's

am/or

Thiefs Journal: Glottal Jack

(Courier-matrix 49 x 14)

Jong je-nez, eyeknows, Ma, death throws on death-
row. Broom flowers? Fish-you-all-eyes. Vishnu?
Play that tile or dis tile; distyle. *Disent-ils*.
Arche text, you're. Mechano. Domino no notions.
2 E-Z. The fasting nation of watusie cult. Aet.
Gl-ahh. A dill. Doe. A female dear? Arraign,
Andropov's girlie son. Me? A name I gal myself.
(The trans ation is exa t. Oh knife, in shining:
amour? Sheath's log. Vanilla eyes. Aet a moll,
oh gee! Latin force. Cab bard. Taxi, scabbard.
Caught aux creases. (G)love. Petalpush pod-ner.
Hi men. Art, a tack. An T-erection. Anther me,
eagle, I, rebus, mark. Auf! he bung. Skinraft.
Stay, men. Style? Sex pistil. Anther me! Bud?

DUMBHEAD IX: FOUND POEM

So one day Miranda finds this poem

so far, face up on my desk
& appeals to our face-up
document rule
which holds that any exposed manuscript
around the house is free for reading, but
paper-shuffling or the opening of journal pages
is prohibited —

Miranda finds this poem, so far

& although we both know better than to explain
I start to explain

*Dumbhead I - XIIITM is a work of fiction, & any
resemblance of its characters...*

Dearly tested reader, it is too late
to complain. You broke the rule, the seal, & the compact.
You peeled back the sheets, & every page you turn
hereinafter —

DUMBHEAD X: SEMINAL TEXT¹

*Camerado, this is no book,
Who touches this, touches a man.*
— Walt Whitman

1 Originally left blank to accommodate a watermark of authorial ejaculate, this page remains intact to preserve the integrity of the signature, against advice from counsel. Do not attempt to remove this leaf from its binding. Private inscriptions may be elicited from the poet.

Alternatively, taxpayers are invited to fill this space with their own inconsequential drivel. After all, you paid for these resources, & the author is obviously wasting them.

DUMBHEAD XI: ESSAY ON MARRIAGE

What the Inquirer is trying to do, here, is allegorize
object exclusion & the loss
he cannot grieve.

Or: he is confusing the dissemination of text
with sleeping around. Paper is brave,
paper is promiscuous, to publish
is to play the field.
(He believes you are grasping him now, his

wank scholarship.

— *Truth is you don't need anyone,*
Miranda writes &

he admires: words that bind
to their own falsehood

silky as the slipknot
in a bedpost scarf.

Freedom-giving is an irresistible ruse.

I release you,

their little joke.

+

Advice Column

1) *A tergo poetica*, a slippage or sinking doubt in the mechanics, bar of white chocolate massage oil from Lush™ spread melting across the immaculate confection of gendered pronoun's object, you know it when you squeeze it, leavened loaves of androgyny versus kulchur's kneejerk PIVMO, cf. *The girl's all right* (raow-raow . . . raow . . . raowroawroaow) & the poem as air-guitar workout, *passim*.

2) We each drew a map of the Domain of Personhood. We compared. We accused each other of tracing. We corrected for reflexes. We gave mutual ground.

(The secret is, we are using the same map. It bears the same symbols, the same legend, the same key. It is a map we each have drawn. It traces the Domain of Personhood.)

3) When we say I love you, it does not mean I want to annihilate, erase & rewrite you, though we have been that route, & if it works for people, we wish them every contentment.

4) With Genet, we aver that betrayal is an ethical necessity. But we are lying about it.

+

Tho a husband boast to play libertine
mark it down to apotrope: needs her

so bloody badly
advertises his meat
market readiness
to muzzle the fearsome jaws of —

Men's Health says: buff enough
to forfend the whelpish
catastrophe of —

Alone.

COMME SI

just any
body will do.

The poem of betrayal is nothing
but a preemptive assault
on getting dumped.

You dumbhead: you dickheart.
You acolyte of the pectoral cleft.
You glans of the chest.

+

DUMBHEAD XII: PLAY RISK

*If we strain thought clear of impulse slowly,
slowly the day scream subsides to ordered lust.*

— Anne Carson

One lover as limit
to the utter, able world

(back off i'm taken)

Erects his anorexia
of "life experience"

(that hard venous line
of phallus & forearm)

The sexual being
a lipogram, his posture of betrothal
a martial art:

+ in short, I was unavailable.

- To trim to perfection
with absolute exertion
a domain so cramped & trivial.

Bodybuilding, like the habit
of monogamy, is a controlled simulation
of a wilder aesthetic.

A walled city. Farmed vigour.
The Weider principles / for a wider back.

*(It's a nice day for a /
white wedding.)*

Serial fidelities
protect him
from choosing to do
anyone/thing
new.

*Come for crantinis
on my roofdeck
whispers the Archivist.*

The eye's banquet
of fresh lovers
as he grinds out his reps
a substitute for writing.

A CUTEY DATE

A substitute for faith.

*We'll eat smoked eels
from Amsterdam*

A substitute for hang-gliding
cleaning the toilet
meditation:
for volunteering at the hospice
or feeling the full present
of her singular love.

*& toast the sun's red
infusion
with the sea.*

Exchange
phantasmal desires
for tasks.

SHAM, EH?

Obscenely methodical.

Not another fuck
but another book.

*It's a nice day to
start again.*

+

The political self
— abdicates —
& he gets Hard.

Desire is boundless *And*.

*The act a slave to limit
act a slave to limit
a slave to limit
slave to limit
to limit
limit.*

+

Adultery as a vocabulary
for bold action

is pretty lame. Is colloquial. Is bathos. Is prose.

(Flirtation's frippery
comes easily
'cause he's
Always Already Married.

+: As if sleeping with new continents of bodies
is the same sum gain as

"risk"
(beyond the viral)

as travel
(to Irkutsk)

as courage as
bringing a range of potential selves
into un-

(*un coup de dés*)

concealedness

global
openness
& make-a-mess

NOPE, HE'LL ERR, A

As if the endlessly renewable
new lover
is the true brink of hazard & growth

poesis

making new

on the cusp of the moment as if

clear-cutting the wilderness of other green & pulpy flesh

is not
more or less

LIZARD

a nice start

hisses

Tiresias / despot

with a tongue flick.

DUMBHEAD XIII: BI

If the image of a man pass
thru the rims of a black hole & in —
but it cannot, the module of flesh passes
while the light that clothes his nameable self
snags on gravity, the hard pull that the dark takes
& the snapshot of a last ecstasy on this side, whichever
this side is, hovers there, blistered to the lip of history, to shine on
even if the body of the man be far gone (in) or come out
already, wherever in is, out is, the rays of knowing
him, or thinking so, hung to fade on choice's
cusp — & we scorn his flicker, wave fists
in the air yet cut with no shadows
a picture of one who is neither

there nor there

Nicole Markotic / EIGHT POEMS

"Trance-Poetics."

Somehow Colette's whistle covers my body parts. She describes how her three husbands rotate the narrative forward. December now. While he was convalescing they printed new maps. So far the grave itself is quadrupled. Don't bet on siblings related by earth. How could he be born in an invented country when he lived to see its retreat

Then after addressing the letter she phoned to have my mother pick it up. Put that way why not show him the text before it's distributed

Don't wait for the translation

"No such thing as a prose poem."

Mumbled the Cyclops. Shining her black leather. Rig construction tumbles into the valley of. Faraway and too many. Yearly postcards to line the ceiling. Goes to show how many pairs of boots fit into one box. X-rated continues his morning fast. Then he read that crocodiles have no tongue. Except when he looked inside there was the rogue organ. Not tied or mangled at all just limp from exhaustion. Nowhere near extinct

The pump was low and baby crawled out the side window. Well isn't that the way we harbour expectation. Nothing could prevent this story or I could pretend these words belong to the same sentence twice as often as you watch tv

“Virtually all criticism is auto-criticism.”

Moebius strip — purple shaded — dark edges fade towards lavender. Rather than make a point of this I digress towards another subject. Travel the path towards open explanation. No matter here's the wit of the story. Yellow or cobalt blue flowers beyond the orchid. Dappled colonels signalling purpose and named borders. Spoiled and unhappy flattery became the main currency of interchange

Except they share each other

Rhetoric left out the passion

"No, this country is universal."

Lengthwise the basic question for him is more than a vernacular zero. Originally my background was what I'd moved away from. Mostly question period comes after the long answer. Right angle explorations take a body farther north than one'd expect. Those feminist utopias subvert what else in your contemporary world of conversion

Notice the family as a stand-in for television. Note the metaphors for identity and self

Four times the cross for mass rage lands in the airport while we grapple with slotted spoons and line endings. Subtly leaving out her scalp rub. But I was going to explain about feminist utopias . . . Stories change. Ensure the "make way for plot" plot. The road plan plan

"Non-identity politics."

Slumber or after a night on the town I have more than music on my mind. Damp shoe laces and blood flow. Which direction points one-way. You know I'd love to *_study_* the classics but first there's the problem of wedding woman and her photographic pose in snow

Whereas poolside I'm watching a programme where every displacement has more to do with dispeoplement than Calgary's underground poet. That ringside embrace shares the limelight with theoretical autobiographies

"She's clinging to the fax."

Xmas will be here in the minutes and we both wait for returns. See me in the arms of the decade. Examine these dates to see you in the centre of the word

Do you prefer an edible or attracting fluid subject position. Nobody admits pleasure in chaotic sentence structure. Entire weapons have been labelled for less. She passed out instructions to an audience of poets. Secret was to listen as if she spoke lies. Some graphic. Some bio

Opening wide we anticipate the resounding transformation of otherwise ignored placement. The etiquette of menstrual control demands more than personal choice

Egotistically if it happens to you it happened to me too. Otherwise know as the *share* syndrome. Effective self government and other forms of confusement. The way others mean narrate. Enuf. Four generations crunched up without a drop spilling. Glacially changing an arm and one leg. Guy's hobby you might say. Ye old artefacts of the present tense but where's the body now

Woozy thinking has been known to lead to sentences complete or otherwise.

“End with Optimal absorption. Nothing but books.”

Sometimes dreams export their own punctuation. Now *_scooting_* settles the literary precedent. Those clichés include rooms full of stacks and stacks of booked worms. She’s holding a bicycle helmet

This means I cross the room from the events to the unevens. So that not dreaming at all eventually I am assigned a seat at my own table but not before you speak your mind. Divorced nicely. Young silent letters — singing consonants and vowels — startle the academic in. No glue here just a leftover diamond

Distinctly not the opposite to lemon peels and dew

"We thought he was innocent."

Took bold behaviour from one who takes more than winning for granted. Demoted they say he's a hero. Or you wouldn't believe how for one year we waited. Drowning in the heat

Tell them I won't mention this now but when we return there'll be more than you can imagine to fill up that gap. Please remember we bought that thing. Genius looks the same from above or upside down

Never engulf

False fallopian indicates I don't think about her more than once. Editing that may be too vital

Kristjana Gunnars / WINTER GALES

Everything had come to a strange standstill for Rosamund. Rosamund Archer, always calm, always cool. That had not changed. Everything on the surface looked as if nothing had changed. It was only Rosamund herself who knew. A strange dilemma. She had what everyone wanted. A good career, a good, secure job, a beautiful home and a husband who loved her. On the other side, however, things were different. Like flipping a coin and seeing heads. Or getting to the dark side of the moon. The dark side was that she felt emotionally ravaged, psychologically excavated, and financially stranded. She knew this, but that was as far as it went. It was like a knowledge she carried around, for which there was no help, and about which she could not talk.

She had taken to staying up at night. The black windows loomed large at night. No lights outside to warm the presence of the world. No street lights, no flashing neon business signs, no traffic, nothing. Just blackness. Usually there was a sound accompanying the stark darkness. The sound of pelting rain. Heavy, large drops, crashing by the millions. She heard them on the skylight. They fell drastically on the tarpaulin they had wrapped around the deck furniture. Sometimes there was also a storm. The wind raged in the tall cedars and howled across the water. It was the time of winter gales.

She made the morning coffee even though it wasn't morning yet. The dishes were clean, the kitchen was clean. Everything was clean. The jar of dry roast peanuts was empty, last night's snack. The bread she made, standard wholewheat, was almost finished, sliced crookedly with a too-big knife. She sat down to read the paper. It was not the day's paper, for the newsrag only came once a week to this outpost. Once a week they could all read what had happened

around the coast. Headlines this week were a house fire. A man nicknamed "Biggar" had perished in his own home in Egmont. The house caught fire while he was asleep, and everything burned to a cinder. It was those winds. Once the gales catch a flame, you can't stop the fire.

She asked her friend Ramona, how could it be? How do you actually die in a housefire? Can't you just jump out the window? For Biggar, some sort of term of affection because he coached the junior softball league, was asleep, they said, on the second floor, in the bedroom. There were lots of windows. She asked Ramona because Ramona acted as if she knew everything. Sometimes Rosamund felt tired of that, of Ramona always saying "I know" in her clipped way, her little smile cemented into her face as if nothing could be more obvious. But other times that was a comforting thing. To have a friend who had all the answers. That was soothing at times. And Ramona assured her it was possible to die like that, because the smoke alone would blank you out before you could move. And those wooden buildings all around the coast, soggy from too much rain, produced so much smoke.

Something had to give. Rosamund knew that. But it confounded her that she didn't know which things in life ought to go. Her job? It was only an administrative post with BC Ferries, repeatable anywhere. Her husband? He clung to her, and he also kept himself to himself. Loved her and did not at the same time. Her house? It was expensive, lot prices going up all the time. A sanctuary and a trap both. Or maybe all of them. Somehow life had to be simplified. And yet, when she constructed the ideal, simple life, she wondered whether that was just a version of death. A life without complication and worry, without frustrations and guilt and tension and stress, wasn't that simply a non-life?

She observed an eagle trace its course through the thick cloud, high up. The white of the eagle showed brightly against the dark cloud. Looks simple, basic. But maybe that eagle had its own set of worries. Maybe that beautiful eagle circling above Pender Harbour was anxious and strung out too? Rosamund had taken to visiting a New Age shop in the village where they sold crystals and relaxation cd's and aromatherapy oils and books of alternative healing.

Sometimes when she was in there, the soft music and some perfume from potpourri jars on the counter, she thought it resembled death. That what people wanted was “tranquility,” which was another word for being blotted out. But no. Wasn’t that too simple?

She had gone so far as to take her predicament to a therapist in the village, Lorie. Lorie made Rosamund sit on the floor and make a circle around herself with green twine. The circle was supposed to indicate her comfort boundary. Then Lorie said the fact of the matter was, you didn’t just go around with the anxieties and frustrations you built up during the course of your life. You also carried with you the anxieties of your whole family. Going back many generations. So they had to retrace all the individuals in Rosamund’s family and find out what the problems were. Then they could locate what she herself had inherited. Rosamund’s questions about that, afterwards, were also simple. How far back do such “carried” feelings go? Five hundred years, or just to your parents? Or is it like the genetic code; something that just gets passed on and on and on?

She threw on her jacket and rubber boots and stepped outside the cottage. What she had was just a cottage, but an up-scale cottage, she liked to say. They had put in pale pine wood floors, panelling in fir halfway up the walls. Trinkets she enjoyed from the various flea markets around the coast decorated the little place. But best of all, she could step out and stand on the cliff outside her front door, listening to the water below. There was a small marina there, but hardly anyone used it. Right now, two boats, one covered in a blue tarpaulin. Belonging to Timmy the “Square” and to new neighbours up the road, whom she didn’t know. There were so many new people moving in, anyway. This morning there was a slight drizzle. You could hardly feel the spray on your face and hands, but you could see it on the blank water.

It came up with Lorie, that oddness about Rosamund’s past. Trying to trace the people became strangely unfocussed. Instead, she was always brought back to the Union steamships. The Union Steamship Company of B.C. Everyone in the family, going back to the mid-eighteen hundreds, had worked for the Company. In the north, Northern Canada, it looked like everything centered around the Hudson’s Bay Company. Here, on the British Columbia coast,

the "old families," the ones with history, with roots in the place, were Union Company people. Many of them, anyway. The others were logging families and fishing folk.

Her own family history always came down to the *SS Cutch*. In the family mythology, that's where it all began. How would Lorie respond to that? Would she say it didn't count? You had to begin with people? The *SS Cutch* was a two-funnel steamer that once made the rounds between Vancouver and Nanaimo. Actually it was built in 1884. What it was, was a yacht for the Maharaja of Cutch. An Indian prince. His pleasure boat. But the Rajah died just after the boat was finished and some Indian merchants sold it through the German government. Convoluted history, really. The *SS Cutch* ended up in the hands of Hajeebhoy Lalljee, a dealer in Bombay, who sold it to the manager of the Union Company. "The unfortunate Captain," he was called. Captain William Archer, Rosamund's great grandfather.

Perhaps it was that connection to the Raj. To sovereignty. Rule. A Rajah is a prince, a chief. Someone for whom silver wedding bells ring, hanging on white twine in the open air. That connection that intrigued her. And sudden death. What did he die of? And the sheer difference of it. Bombay, so crowded, so full. So overwhelming, really. They say you forget to look at the details when you're in India, because the overall picture is so overpowering. Different from here, where it's the detail that looms large. The leaves on the maples, how they come out in spring, turn color in the fall. The millions of alder trees, swaying naked all winter in the storms. Their slim trunks so flexible, they can bend all the way to the ground in a wind, as if bowing to the sea.

The drizzle in the air showed up on the blank water below Rosamund's feet like nervousness. An irritation of the surface. So slight, you could hardly tell it was there. She stood on the rock ledge outside the porch of the house. The water that lined the rock never rose or fell. It was always the same. In the storm, there were little waves. Sometimes whitecaps, if it was a real gale off the sea. But mostly the water behaved like a pond. It wasn't a pond, but a cove off the big Pacific Ocean. Her brown jacket was beginning to soak in the moisture in the air. It was a good, fresh feeling. She took a deep breath. She could hear movement in the house. Stone was back, she

guessed. Stone. Stone Bridges, the man she finally married three years ago and ever since wondered why she did. He talked her into it.

"Stone?" she called out without looking behind. There was no answer. He worked at the mill and sometimes came home disheveled and out of sorts. If it was a morning shift, he came home in the late afternoon. Then he just wanted a beer and a chair. If it was the late shift, he came home in the middle of the night. Then he crashed. Sometimes he delayed coming home. The guys sometimes went for late night beer at the village pub after the shift. Rosamund never bothered to follow those details. She kept her own schedule and her own thoughts. Went to bed at her own time, and got up early. Five or six. She loved the early morning, especially when it drizzled like this.

"You're getting wet, Rosie," she heard Stone say behind her. She turned to look. He was standing in the doorway, leaning against the doorpost. Through the mist he seemed like a figure out of someone else's dream. He was tall and lanky with chestnut brown hair that fell to his shoulders. A dark moustache and supple limbs. Still handsome, she thought. Perhaps a bit bent in the shoulders, but that was just from being so tall. He was a handsome man. That at least she could say. He smoked a lot, though. Probably a pack a day, although she never kept track of that. He just always seemed to have a cigarette lit somewhere nearby. He was standing in the doorway smoking a cigarette.

"God you're beautiful," she heard herself blurt out. He just stood there. When he stared at her like that, his eyes seemed to be squeezed half shut. He was thinking something, she could tell. Something on his mind. But there was a little smile, just barely visible in the corners of his mouth. She turned back to the water, to her own reveries.

"You seem deep in thought," he said gently. Darkly.

"I was just thinking about the Rajah. What does a Rajah do with a pleasure boat? Why is his pleasure boat our labour machine?"

"Maybe that Lorie of yours is all wet too," he breathed.

"Lorie?"

"That therapist in the village. Lorie. What are her credentials

anyway, messing with people's minds."

"She's got a certificate," Rosamund said. "Anyway, it's on her wall." She looked more closely at the water. There were lines of blue and green in it. "Looks like an oil slick down there," she said.

"Could be an oil slick," he mumbled.

"I heard the oil spills in the Persian Gulf are so thick, that you can't light a cigarette on a ship there," she mused out loud. "The water will blow up." Stone was gone inside again. She could feel his absence, when he left, without looking. He came and went like a spirit, somehow. Without substance. He washed through the house like mist. Through her life like some lost angel, drifting.

The *SS Cutch*. June 2, 1890, they brought it into service between Vancouver and Nanaimo. The "gay nineties." There was a steamer war back then. The fever of competition flared up and somehow, she guessed, it had remained in the family. Even after they beached the ship. They said they would. It was all over the newspapers at the time. *The Vancouver Daily News-Advertiser*. The competition between the Archers and the Dunsmuirs over that passenger run. The Dunsmuirs owned a steamer they named the Robert Dunsmuir. The Archers called it "Dirty Bob," because they played dirty. Turned into the general nickname for the Dunsmuir steamer. It was "Dirty Bob" against *SS Cutch*. But the Archer boat had the legacy of an Indian prince, the memory of gold bracelets and red face paint and cloud-white clothing.

She dreamed about the life that boat never got to have, when she was a kid. Her own place in it. Her family ship and her prince on it. In the mists of time, she protected her own fantasies and then reality looked better. Rosamund had always been a dreamer. Maybe she should have worried about her hold on reality. Her mother used to warn her against that. And now, sometimes, Stone did too. But Stone couldn't convince her, however he tried. He was himself so much like her dream. Her prince, the way he moved softly about the cabin, and through the morning. His incongruities. The rough work he did at the mill and the cynical attitude it gave him. Then, he had those roses. He wanted just to cultivate roses, he always said. He planted rose bushes and pruned them and looked after them. She would look out the kitchen window of the cabin and he would be

there, his hand around a lavender rose leaning down over him like a blessing. He would kiss it, and the rose would be high up, the rose tree so tall. Taller than him. His dark brown hair falling over his shoulders and across his forehead.

Funny how we reenact the dreams of our childhood, she thought. How we play them out in later life and we don't even know it half the time. She turned to go inside. Even this cabin, this house. It was a freshly built wooden home, made with pine and cedar. Pale birch coloured exterior and blue around the windows. She built this place to look like a childhood home she once thought she had, over on the other side of the bay. Maybe we just can't help ourselves, she wondered. Or maybe we can. Maybe we really are able to examine what we do and consciously change it.

Stone was in the kitchen pouring the rest of the coffee into a mug. The morning light lay darkly on the blue countertop.

"Aren't you going to sleep?" she asked him suddenly. "Aren't you tired?"

"No." He seemed taciturn. Holding something in, she could tell. Why would he not be tired after working the late shift? "Sit down, Rosie," he added, as if in afterthought. She obeyed. As always, she thought to herself. What he wants. She sat down at the kitchen table in her wet jacket. Her dark hair lay on her back like ringlets. The gold band on her left hand. She had taken to leaving the ring at home when she went to work. She wondered why. It had never really occurred to her to ask herself why. Stone sat down opposite her with the mug of coffee. He fished in the breast pocket of his red chequered shirt and pulled out a vial of white pills.

"You should take these." He spoke brusquely and deposited the pills in front of her. She took them and examined them. White powdery pills, a prescription made out to Stone Bridges.

"What are these?"

"Pills you should take."

"What for?" He was not too talkative, she thought. He let a lengthy silence elapse.

"It's Margaret," he finally answered. Margaret, his ex-wife, who lived in the village now. "Margaret came down with some form of VD. The doc gave her those and said you should be taking them

too." Rosamund stared at him. Lots of explanations suddenly became self-evident to her. Why he was always late getting back after the evening shift.

"I suddenly have a headache," she mumbled. They sat in silence. She rubbed her forehead with her fingers, as if to pass the time. As if she were bored. "Things never are what they seem," she mused. He was looking at the cold coffee in his mug.

"Maybe not," he agreed.

"Fuck you," she whispered. When she stood up, the wooden chair scraped against the oak floor. The noise of the chair seemed inordinately loud. Fortunately she still had her jacket and boots on, so she was able to walk straight outside again.

"For what it's worth," Stone said as if to grab a disappearing smoke-ring, "it doesn't mean I don't love you. I do." She heard him without hearing him. A voice that suddenly seemed far away, as if coming from somewhere else. She closed the outside door behind her and leaned on it.

Maybe all of them, she thought to herself. Maybe everything should go. Husband, house, job, the whole kit. Maybe she should just start over in some other place. Queen Charlotte Islands or somewhere. She could tell her head was hot. She knew it was anger. Strange how sometimes you can't tell if you're angry, she mused bitterly. Damn him. So now she knew why the acrimony between Stone and Margaret had suddenly, miraculously, ended after they got their divorce. As she stepped down to the shoreline she kicked the rounded pebbles, dark with the rainwater. It felt as if her private life had suddenly run aground. It's the same fate, she thought to herself, over and over. A kind of legacy. The fact was that her ghost ship, the *SS Cutch*, had come to a similar end, hadn't it? For some incompetent reason, the boat rammed another Dunsmuir ship in a hit and run collision. It happened in Nanaimo harbour in 1892. November 12, it was. The boat was trying to sail as fast as the "Dirty Bob" on one of their runs, and just hit this other ship, the *SS Joan*. It was a disaster. The Archers had to pay the Dunsmuirs for repairs. Then it had another collision later, near Juneau, Alaska. Somehow it was a marked vessel.

What should she do now? Now that she was apparently carrying

some other woman's venereal disease? She felt dizzy. Unfortunately it was a Saturday and she couldn't go to work. The cabin was quiet. She could tell Stone had gone to bed. Maybe he was even asleep already. She turned briskly, as if she knew what she was going for, and headed back to the house with sharp steps. Actually she did not know what she was walking so quickly for, but seemed compelled, almost automatically. She opened the front door and went back in. All was quiet. Stone had gone in to sleep. He was so quiet. His movements almost had to be intuited. She could see around the corner that he was in bed, his eyes closed. She grabbed the funny lighter that looked like a curling iron. Something she got from her father, who used to light the fireplace up in Pender with it. She put the canister of pills in her jacket pocket and went back outside, quietly.

When she stepped out again the fresh, newly rinsed air struck her. Wonderful smell of salt water and seaweed. Beautiful odor of cedar bark in the air. She leaned against the fresh pine of the cabin wall. The rain had stopped, the drizzle of the morning. Soon it would be warm. Soon you would see the strings and clouds of mist rise out of the wood with its drying. The mist would ascend like a spirit, over the water, up from the walkway, the stones lying cold on the ground. She stuck the tip of the lighter under a wood plank on the exterior of the cabin and flicked the switch. The small flame licked the wood, nervously. Almost passionately, she thought.

The ship that haunted her, the one she wanted to tell Lorie about, went from Vancouver to the Klondike during the Klondike gold rush. All those men had to be transported north. When it rammed into Horseshoe Reef, the family got something like six thousand pounds in insurance money. Then it ended up in Colombia. As a government gunboat. That was so bizarre. A gunboat. And all the Rajah's dreams ended up somewhere else entirely. She straightened up. That's what you have to do, she told herself. You walk away. Just so what has stopped starts to move again. What has stranded gets pulled out again and finds smooth water. To glide on the smooth water, even without direction. That's what it is.

And she did. Just as the mist was beginning to rise and to mix with a few curls of silver coloured smoke, she heard her own footsteps on the gravel as if they were someone else's footfalls.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

LOUIS CABRI's recent work appears or is forthcoming in *Arras* (http://www.geocities.com.arras_online), *Highwire Yearbook 1998-99*, *ixnay*, *non* (socrates.berkeley.edu/~moriarty), *Open Letter & TheEastVillage.com* (<http://www.theeastvillage.com>.) He curates the poets' newsletter & talks series, PhillyTalks (529B-19 Ave SW, Calgary, AB, T2S 0E3).

MARK COCHRANE's first collection of poems was *Boy Am I* (Wolsak & Wynn, 1995). His second, *Change Room*, is forthcoming from Talonbooks in Spring 2000. He lives in Vancouver and writes for MIX, the Saturday books and culture section of *The Vancouver Sun*.

LINA DELANO was born in Yugoslavia in 1922 then moved to Vancouver in 1923. She left Canada in 1944 to study art and theatre for the next decade in such cities as L.A., San Francisco, New York, Paris, Rome, and London. To support herself and her studies during that period, she worked in the film industry as an actress, both on screen and as a voice-over artist for film dubbing. Her visual art appears in collections in numerous cities, including Boston, Provincetown, Rome, New York, and London. As in the beginning, she now lives in East Vancouver. Along the way, there were three husbands and another story.

KRISTJANA GUNNARS is a poet and fiction writer. She teaches English and Creative Writing at the University of Alberta, and lives partly on the Sunshine Coast. Her latest book of fiction is *Night Train to Nykobing*.

NICOLE MARKOTIC has published two books of poetry (*Connect the Dots*, 1994, and the recent *minotaurs & other alphabets*, 1998), and a novel (*Yellow Pages*, 1995). As well, she has published widely in magazines and journals across Canada and the U.S. She co-publishes a chapbook press, *disOrientation*, and is presently the poetry editor for Red Deer College Press. Currently, she teaches creative writing at the University of Calgary.

ALICE NOTLEY's most recently published book *Mysteries of Small Houses* won the Los Angeles Times Book Award for Poetry in 1998 and was one of the three finalists for the Pulitzer Prize. She is currently working on an excessive trilogy of books, co-editing *Gare du Nord* with Doug Oliver, and teaching a Euro-Anglo-American poetry workshop in Paris.

DOUGLAS OLIVER Douglas Oliver's long-awaited *A Salvo For Africa* is due out from Bloodaxe in March. He is currently working on a book called *Whisper Louise* which intertwines his own biography with that of *Louise Michel*, the Red Virgin of the Paris Commune of 1871. With Alice Notley he co-edits, from Paris, the journal *Gare du Nord*.

NORBERT RUEBSAAT has published stories, poems and articles in numerous journals and newspapers, including *Geist*, *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Prism*, and *Event*. He is a regular contributor to CBC Radio's IDEAS program, and also works as a translator of German plays and operas. He teaches media studies at local universities and colleges.

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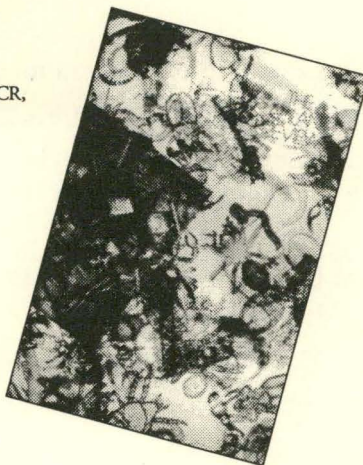
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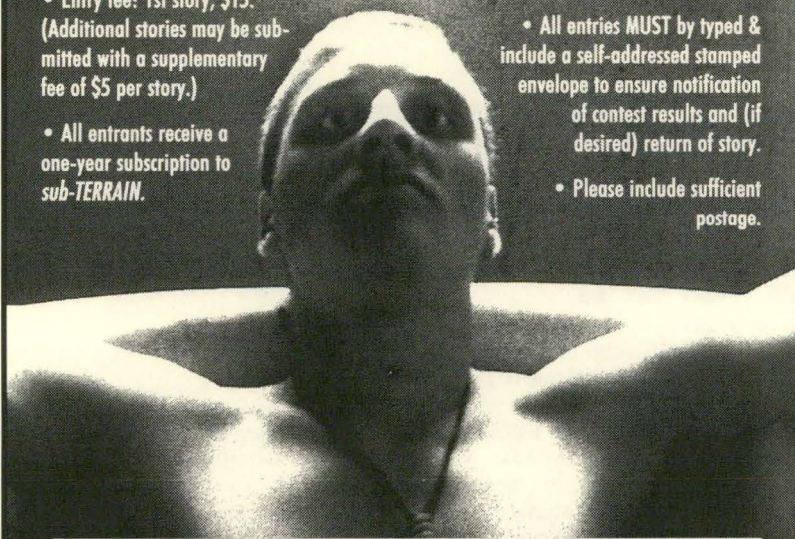
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