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LITERARY  
MAGAZINE

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*The value  
of what's  
forgotten.*

MAKE LITERARY MAGAZINE WINTER 2015-2016 ISSUE #16 ARCHIVE

THE VALUE OF WHAT'S FORGOTTEN





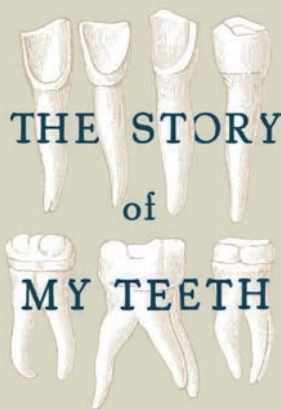
# NOTES ON MAGALIE GUÉRIN



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ISSUE #16

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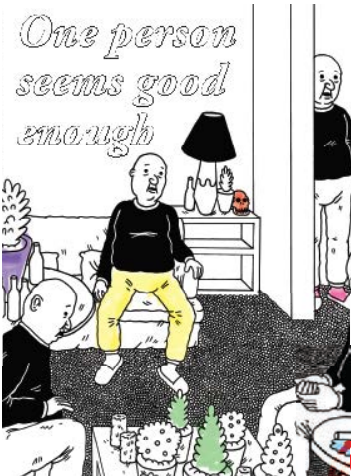
Inside MAKE #16, "ARCHIVE," you will find stories, poems, essays, conversations and visual art oriented around concepts of memory, preservation, photo negatives and negative hands, disappearing/reappearing faces, letters sent and never received, lost and recovered traces; in short, the archive (or its simulacrum). One is reminded of Jacques Derrida's "Archive Fever": "The concept of the archive shelters in itself, of course, this memory of the name *arkhe* [rule, government, beginning, origin, first place]. But it also shelters itself from this memory which it *shelters*: which comes down to saying also that it forgets it."

Archives are assembled to remember a first place, an origin site that houses historical codes and modes of order, but they are also, weirdly, selective mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that strategically forget, reassemble or reorder the objects of memory. An archive remembers inasmuch as it forgets, stores away (for later), blurs and obscures. The archive you will

encounter in these pages is one that plays with these notions, and we hope *you will enjoy it.*

*Taken from Jessica Baran's poem "The Great Subject," the line on the cover suggests that one person seems sufficient.*


*Or that one particular person will do. With this issue's theme, "MISFITS," we considered what it means to fit in, to be a companion, to find one's place or to not. On the cover and throughout the issue, you'll find David Alvarado's illustrated misfits.*



A B O U T T H E  
C O V E R



# M A K E X

Collecting memorable work published throughout the last ten years by loved Chicago-based literary magazine MAKE. Through fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and reviews, alongside new visual art portfolios, interviews, and stories from the editors, MAKE X honors a decade of storytelling and literary rabble-rousing. Contributors include Lindsey Hunter, Alissa Nutting, Martin Seay, Eula Biss, Jenny Bouilly, Cecilia Vicuña, Alejandro Zambra, Maggie Nelson, Cathy Park Hong, Dorothea Lasky, Valerie Mejer, Mahmoud Saeed, and many more!



MAKE Literary Productions also produces integrative arts events, including the annual Lit & Luz Festival—a one-of-a-kind series of events featuring renowned authors and visual artists from Chicago and Mexico City in cultural exchange and conversation. In addition, its website, [makemag.com](http://makemag.com), is home to outstanding new stories, poems, interviews, translations, visual art, book reviews, and much more.



S U P P O R T  
M A K E

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# H O U S E S

Last summer, as part of a video, I photographed the exterior walls of the houses that my mother's side of the family built around each other. They are in the town of Las Brisas in Northern Mexico and are surrounded by orange tree groves, a river, an acequia, and looming pecan trees. Over the years the houses keep changing colors, leaving traces of past colors visible. Each house is accompanied by a brief narrative of its interior contents.

I

I enter,  
nobody lives here anymore

In the kitchen, among a collection of knick-knacks,  
I recognize the ceramic figurines of Blue Boy and Pinkie,  
always a surprise

Behind them is another figurine with the following text,  
"s-t-r-e-t-c-h YOUR COFFEE BREAK,"  
lovers embraced in a kiss

There is also a coffee mug with an image  
A Norman Rockwell painting of a seaman commanding a ship

Above the door hangs a glass painted picture  
A perspectival room lacking any figures  
Its only text, "The Sacred Supper"

Inside a cabinet I find a Royce CB radio transceiver  
I remember my mother talking through a similar one in Chicago,  
early form of international communication.

In the living room I find a velvet painting  
A butterfly made out of rhinestones  
Some of the stones are missing exposing the following numbers:  
698, 699, 647, 706, 734, 708

---

In the center of this room two models of RCA televisions sit  
The smaller on top, their cords unplugged.

The clock on the wall has stopped at 12:25

To the right of the kitchen I find three more televisions,  
a Quasar, a Magnavox, and another RCA

This room also holds two air conditioners,  
a box fan, and a small heater

On the wall, and on top of each other, two cowboy hats hang  
Underneath them a box holds a different kind of hat,  
I put it on



*House I*, Photograph and text, 2015

---

## II

This was the house all the newly wed men in the family occupied  
Five couples lived here

Today it's a store where my aunts sell clothes,  
there are racks and hooks everywhere.

I remember a bed to the right of the main entrance and a large dark kitchen

I sit on the floor, it's cool and pleasant

This is the only house out of straw and dirt that remains

My Uncle Matias, who built it fifty or so years ago, died while working on an oil barge  
Having gone overboard, the fish had eaten part of his face by the time he was found

He was one of three children my grandmother lost to water



*House II*, Photograph and text, 2015



*House III, Photograph and text, 2015*

### III

This house keeps changing

A once-sunken living room is now a leveled dining room

A large foyer with a small skylight joins a new addition

Its two bedrooms hold the same copy of a wedding photograph

At the end of the hallway,

there is a room with a night stand and a tarnished round mirror

A dark and blotchy reflection

In the living room a calendar whose pages have not been torn reads,

“JANUARY 2014 FEBRUARY”

Its image, a horse in a landscape with a mountain behind

On a table three clocks mark 4:00, 9:40, and 12:02

Yesterday I painted its front porch chairs green



*House IV*, Photograph and text, 2015

#### IV

Here two cats live on the roof,  
afraid to come down and be chased by the dogs

Above the porch window two peacocks hang  
They were brought from my old house after we left  
Wooden bodies with metal feathers

Here the floor is constantly swept and moped,  
but the walls are ignored  
Pictures and ornaments hang,  
a thin layer of cobwebs and dust

At the end of the hallway, an ill-proportioned tiger by a waterfall greets me  
No one knows how the velvet painting came to hang here

In a bedroom, a recliner sofa holds a painting  
My grandparents in wedding clothes  
Painted four years into their marriage by a traveling portraitist  
My grandmother's dress and jewelry his own invention

---

V

This house I cannot enter  
It holds the furniture of my childhood  
A gift from my mother to her brother

Even though the kitchen cabinets are here  
I am told not much survives,  
yet I wonder if the headboard of my bed is in there

Every morning I work in the yard behind it  
Three dogs my only companions



*House V*, Photograph and text, 2015



# T A L E O F A S H E E T

1. It happened before my papa set fire to the house. Fifteen or twenty days before.
2. There was a closet full of sheets, almost all of them white, with red seams, Italian red. And a sky blue set for me, with blue pictures of letters or G-clef signs.
3. My mother, through the window, her back turned, in front of a white sheet; fifteen or twenty days ago, in front of a white sheet. She wasn't crying. She had stayed there, simply waiting for the sheet to dry.
4. It was a day without light. She turned and came toward the window and began to look at me, to imitate my face looking at her, until a smile began. But then she didn't come into the house. She went back to her place in front of the sheet.
5. A sheet without wind drying in the wind. A canvas, a kind of scene. The scene continues until the audience realizes there won't be a second scene.
6. I'm the one who starts the applause. Before I worked in voiceovers, but I was fired. Now I'm the one who starts the applause.
7. My job is to give hard blows, hard applause. My job is to bring my hands together, bring them together with force, by force. My job is to look for silences and fill them.
8. I'm going to applaud in your face, they'd say to me, sometimes, as a joke.
9. Bolt the door from the outside, they'd say to me, but as a joke.
10. Go see if it's raining on the corner.
11. A long time before, years before, my father had to return home urgently because his wife was about to give birth to me.

---

12. But it's a clean, new, false image. As it should be. The children play at being wounded on the creeper vine.

13. Once upon a time there was a white sheet drying in the sun. But it was a day without sun. It's a very long tale.

14. There's no second sheet. The sheet grows longer, unfolds, but there's no other sheet inside.

15. Once upon a time there was a sheet around a white body.

16. Once upon a time there was a sheet that stained.

17. It seems they wrapped somebody up. I don't really remember. I was busy with something else.

18. "Don't pose," they tell him, but it's hard not to pose. Even in dreams. Sometimes he pretends he's having a nightmare. He wakes with a shout, with a typical shout. And though he knows he shouldn't have shouted, he receives the tired embrace of somebody or nobody and keeps quiet.

19. Don't dream, don't pose, go to sleep right now. That's how it's said: right now.

20. Once upon a time there was a sheet drying right now.

21. Days before my papa burned down the house, there was a sheet drying right now.

22. I'm not going to open the window. Don't insist. It's impossible.

23. Because of love or a mistake, they sleep together.

24. Your body grows or contracts during a night of dreams. Your face loses and finds its features as it brushes against the pillow.

25. Be careful, your body could break in half.

26. Turn off the test pattern and go back to sleep.

27. In the dream cars passed by.

28. Smoke overhead before the voices.

29. Ghosts left the table set for us.

30. Once upon a time there was a shape and a sheet.



# A C A S E B E F O R E

In 1500 Thomas Kebell died after an illustrious career as a lawyer, investigator, and Member of Parliament. Thomas had been a wealthy man: in addition to much movable property, he left to his wife Margaret six manors. The trouble started soon after.

In February of 1502 a man named Roger Vernon came to Margaret's home in Blore, from which he abducted her with the help of 100 armed men. Members of the Kebell household tried to rescue her, but Vernon and his company escaped to the house of allies in Darley, and from there to the Vernon manor in Sheyll. At Sheyll, Margaret was led to a bedroom in which a fire had been lit in anticipation of her arrival. She remembered that the fire did not draw well and the air was full of smoke. Anne, the wife of Sir William Vernon, the master of Sheyll, came to the bedroom to meet Margaret and saw that she was sad. Margaret said she had been brought there against her will. Anne reproached Roger for kidnapping a woman but did nothing else. Margaret was forced to stay in the room all night, and the next morning Roger came back with a priest. The priest married Margaret to Roger, though she cried the whole time. After the wedding Margaret listened as Roger and William talked for about an hour by the window—they were accustomed to having things their way, and the abduction was not going as smoothly as they had hoped.

\*

The Vernon family was powerful and notorious. They pursued the family interest through strategic marriages, litigation, intimidation, theft, and murder. Once, the Vernons broke into the home of an enemy and murdered all the servants. A feud between the Vernons and a rival, Lord Grey, became so violent that laws were passed to limit their power—such families employed dozens or hundreds of “servants,” who were in truth hired soldiers answerable only to the family. The Vernons changed sides at least four times during the Wars of the Roses. When the Wars were over, the Vernons turned on their

last ally and helped ensure his execution. Margaret, too, was a means of advancing the family interest; she was kidnapped so the Vernons could steal her manors. Forcible marriage—“ravishment”—had been a crime for centuries, and by the time Roger kidnapped Margaret, any person connected with an abduction or forced marriage was liable to the death penalty. The Vernons gave this little mind. They knew that no jury would dare convict them.

After a local prosecution failed, Margaret and her family took the Vernons to the Court of Star Chamber, an ancient body reinvigorated by the newly enthroned Tudor Dynasty. Though the Star Chamber would later become a hated symbol of religious persecution (and the eponym for secret and bogus courts everywhere), it began with a more pragmatic goal: prosecuting crimes committed by people who were powerful enough to bribe, menace, or overawe local authorities, and squeezing these people for all they were worth after finding them guilty. The Tudors could address England’s lawlessness and financial insolvency with the same pliant institution.

The Star Chamber’s proceedings were secret. Witnesses were not allowed to testify, and there was no appeal, save to the King himself. Each side submitted a written petition, which constituted the full sum of the evidence considered by the judges. When summoned, the Vernons told their own version of what had happened in 1502: Margaret was lonely as a widow and had initiated a courtship with Roger, after which she had consented to marry him in a private ceremony. The Vernons quoted from an interview they conducted with her confessor, who said that she had consented to the marriage. After they had been holding her for some time, they had also asked Margaret what she thought of the marriage. They quoted her as saying the following:

What thanke ye in me that ye axke me all thes questions so oft as ye haue done, and I were so false and so vnsad as ye thanke I am, it were pete that I shuld lyffe.

The Vernons took this as a full affirmation of Margaret’s joy in the marriage, though one may read her statement as saying exactly the opposite: it is a pity for any woman to live a life where she is forced into marriage and then forced to pretend that she had not been forced. The Star Chamber found the family guilty of ravishment. Rather than facing death (which does little to fill the state coffers), the wealthier family members were made to pay an enormous fine—hundreds of millions in today’s coin. Sir Henry, the head of the Vernon family, complained about this fine for the remainder of his life and even posthumously in his will. None of the money, naturally, was given to Margaret, about whom nothing more is recorded.

T H E S T A R  
C H A M B E R

# S A V I O R

The bus labors across a range of desolate hills, stopping occasionally to pick up someone by the side of the road. The plastic-covered benches, with too-thin foam cushions wrapped around wood boards, try unsuccessfully to mold her into a right angle. Her girlfriend, Yesenia, presses a round cheek against the window, her lips curse the heat, her tattooed hand wipes sweat from her shaved head.

The bus driver taps nervously at the wheel; he glances from mirror to mirror and over his shoulder, nodding to the boy who collects the fare, who nods back with a look far too serious for his age. Couldn't be more than fourteen. She doubts he's had more than two fights, never kissed anyone but his sisters. He stands as tall as he can, leaning against the dashboard, one foot on the doorwell stairs. He stacks the coins into clinking piles and counts the bills in his hands.

Juana lets the past few days play across her half-closed eyelids. They left the capital for a quiet, almost gentle town; the slow river, cumbia floating in the sky at dusk, nancy plums collected in a straw hat. Then came the stories her cousin, Viper—thirty-five now, three sons of his own knocking around his hips and thighs—told to her while she floated in the river, brown belly poking out of the water. He said he remembered the river ran red with blood when the people from town tried to escape. How the military had stood on that wooded bank and shot them down. *Have you ever been hunted?* he asked. She shook her head. The water that held her sparkled golden with sunlight. She wonders if Viper told her these stories because they were ever-present (could he even see the river was now blue?), or if he wanted to show her how little she knew, or maybe he thought she was there to hear the truth.

Out the window, dry and patchy mountains peak against the sky. Across the aisle, two old women exchange serrated laughter that startles the chickens in the covered baskets on their laps. The woman in front of Juana nurses an infant. Juana can feel the woman watching her. "Ttsss," she says. "Ttsss. De donde vienes?"

# L A N D

“Soy de Los Angeles,” Juana says.

“Aha,” the woman smiles and nods as though she’s discovered a secret. She introduces herself, Celia García Jiménez, and looks down at the child in her arms, *This girl is a good traveler, you see? She says, Someday maybe she will go far, go to the United States like you.*

Juana smiles uncomfortably. “Espero que ira cualquier destino quiere.” What Juana means to say is: she hopes the girl can go far without going to the United States. They both beam at the little peach blanket and thin puff of jet-black hair.

The bus brakes screech to a stop at a town that appears, as if from nowhere, along the barren stretch of road. The thick body of a snake hangs limp over a concrete wall. The bus fills with dust and the oily fumes of burnt diesel. More people get on, sun-drenched men in wide brimmed hats and collared shirts. Yesenia kisses Juana gently on the neck and they slide themselves together like a knot. A man sitting behind them whispers, “Es lo que dije, son del *otro* barrio.” Juana shoots them a defiant look. She isn’t hiding. With Yesenia by her side the language of their androgyny becomes legible: dyke.

When she and Yesenia first arrived from Los Angeles (on the steps of her aunt’s apartment), Yesenia looked at her and said, “We shouldn’t tell her we’re gay.” Juana looked Yesenia up and down and rolled her eyes.

“Sure,” she said. “She’ll have no idea.”

Juana’s aunt, her mother’s sister, didn’t want to talk about it anyway. She hurried to find Juana and *tu amiga* a place of their own—a dilapidated colonial tenement near the university, above a cobbler and a car mechanic shop (so black with soot, it looked fire-bombed). It was perhaps this—queerness—that makes her feel like a foreign particle being pushed toward the skin. But *this* is only part of the truth: in the city, she watches women in the marketplace leaning against their studs and the transgirl stroll down Bulevar de los Heroes. This place is their home, and rejection of queerness can happen in any home. Juana knows that.

The bus lurches onward with awkward zeal, tape deck crooning '80s soft rock. *I remember our bodies lyin' tangled in the sheets, I remember when love used to be sooo sweet.* She mouths the words because she knows this song, unlike most of what plays on the radio; and she doesn't want to think about the *bigotes* behind her.

Hills roll by, overrun with grasses genuflecting in the breeze. She has been here before. Traveled these same roads as a little girl when, with her parents and brothers, green cards tucked in hidden pockets, they reunited with their family. Her family. She visited her father's brother and her baby-checked *primos* wearing too-big straw hats, slept on a hay mattress, and giggled at the spiders on the cement walls with their hairy legs—just as she had taken Yesenia to do these last few days. Only she did not return with a husband and a family of her own, as foretold, and this time the mattress inflamed her allergies and cramped her back.

The hills grow taller. Their faces break away, revealing porous, red interiors. They tower—thick, crumbling necks tense with tendons, seared by the flaming sun. She wakes Yesenia and says, “Look at these cliffs. Look how beautiful they are.” Yesenia groggily faces the window, without opening her eyes. After another nudge, she peels them open. She wants Yesenia to see this place, see everything, to tell her, Juana, if there is something she is missing.

Juana's parents traveled to the United States on foot, by bus, by train, in the trunk of a *tia's* car. They opened a restaurant where they sold the sourest *curtido*. They sent her—the youngest of three, the citizen—to parochial school. Juana played four-square with kids who grew up to have cocaine habits and dramatic, casual affairs before getting married and taking well-paid office jobs. Some of them laughed behind her back: *dirty beaner, illegal*.

Still, she considers herself blessed. Other kids arrived to the U.S. as orphans. And some of those kids were deported back to the land of the Savior with tattoos needled across their faces: MS, Barrio 18. Now they hold up buses for nickels and dimes, run cocaine from one border to the other, and leave their dead by the side of the road. The civil war—twenty years past—sits like a scab on the knee, breaking open into rivers of blood.

“Vultures,” Yesenia says and points into the distance where a black cloud of birds twist toward the earth. “What do you think is there?”

“Something dead, I guess.”

“A human?” Yesenia looks at her, her face hard, voice light.

“Probably a cow or something. Let's go see.”

Yesenia smiles like Juana is hilarious.

“No, really,” she stands up, grabbing Yesenia's arm. “We're going.”

Yesenia yanks her arm away. “You want to wait for the next bus on the side of the road? It could be hours.”

“I’m going,” she says, knowing Yesenia will have no choice but to follow.

“Going where?” she demands.

But already Juana is running up the aisle, duffle bag pulled over her shoulder. “Vaya con Dios,” Cecilia García Jiménez calls after her. Juana knows this is a stupid idea, but she is compelled to bear witness.

“Right,” she says to the driver.

“No, no hay nada,” he replies. *Wait ’til the next town.*

“No, ay,” she says, hearing the American in her voice.

The bus pulls over. The steel doors screech open, belching them out.

“Suerte!” shouts the boy with the coins still in his hand. The hot exhaust from the bus burns their skin as it pulls away. Juana feels free.

“Fuck you,” Yesenia says. “You want to die out here?”

“Relax,” Juana holds out her hand. Sweaty palm. Their shadows grasp hands and become one. They walk in the direction of mysterious death. Two bodies, three arms, and four legs stretching narrow, twisting their way between the cliffs.

A fine sand cloaks her in red. She approaches what is left of a corpse. A horse—only a horse—head arched toward them, back twisted away. The vultures circle in the sky.

The earth is marbled purple with blood and muscle. The birds tear the organs. The white bone of the rib cage gleams in the sun like the silver prongs of pitchforks. The horse’s face: eyeless; copper hairs smooth against the round of jaw; the velvet nose; the soft, dense lips; ears erect as though listening, while wisps of mane keep time to the requiem that the wind is singing.

Juana sits on the ground beside the body, pokes her fingers in the dry dirt. What would it feel like to belong to this piece of earth? The sun falls westward.

Yesenia has had enough of this detour. “There is nothing else to find, dammit.”

Juana believes her, and so, allows herself to stand up and be pulled back toward the road.

The vultures raise their bald skulls and their curved knives. Little clouds of dust puff with each step of their feet. Their reflection, in the birds’ eyes, grows smaller, smaller still. Until, to the vultures, they are just the last ray of sunlight and then they are gone.

## The First Installation

There is nothing good about the tyranny of beauty. The solitary person in a room turns on the television and waits. The room is dedicated to her. It is her “hotel.” She lies down on the bed. No dust. The windows in the room do not open. Through the floor, the sound of the treadmill, its rhythmic whine and gentle thump.

Photographs on the wall show people whose curved backs, whose exhausted flesh, need chemicals daily or hourly. Sheets of burnt wallpaper hang from strings.

You are invited into the room. You wander around looking for yourself among the photographs. Eventually you will join the woman on the hotel bed. If you sleep, you will dream of your mother’s hand.

## Installation 19

Sounds: The scrape of a rope sliding along the pavement or the whish and drip of a poorly functioning air conditioner. You enter with weights in your pockets—you must move slowly.

Under your feet, mint grows. If you bend to pick it, a phone will ring. Answer the phone; it’s your x-lover. He tells you he is moving into your childhood home, that his daughter is attending your childhood school. Put the phone down and all the shades fly up. Your mother’s face flies up with the shades, though this is not something you can see. Walk through the room with the weights in your pockets, crushing mint.

## Installation on sex

“Everything appears for others’ eyes” emblazoned in neon across the far wall. An animal is eating out of vision’s range. The walls look wet when the light hits them.

The light is coming from you.

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## Installation 28

In this room there is nothing but a bed. There is no space to walk around it; to enter, you must climb on. It is the most comfortable bed, and so you lie down, rest your head on a pillow, pull the blanket up. Beside you is a man, twitching, even writhing, in pain. His breath is labored and occasionally he groans.

If you speak to him, he will not answer. If you try to touch him, he will flinch and move away. Lying there, you are on the one hand deeply comforted, and on the other unbearably distraught.

## Installation discussed

I wanted an installation that would figure violence without itself being violent. I wanted to see the body split without splitting a body. I wanted it to be “real.” Why did I want this? I wanted to give my identity, my name, my family name, and my wallet in exchange for a purely liquid experience, but not one that I could never leave. Sometimes I wanted the opposite: to enter a room in which my body would become permanently marked (it was so already), in which other women would mark me. The owl mask, the peacock tail, the swollen ankles of the pilgrim. I wanted to place myself in a glass box and to allow others to paint their pet names across that glass: *unassimilable; bluesy; complicit; poised; obscene; atrocity-warm-up*.

Then I realized I had not invented this fantasy, but had borrowed it from the male, so I obliterated the glass box and replaced it with a hole in the ground. This seemed the best display-case possible, a simple hole in the ground. But then there could be no viewer. Not even I could be the viewer of a buried body.

One installation features a moving line-graph projected onto four walls at once. The graph charts a series of orgasms in real-time, sensors attached to lovers’ brains, lovers elsewhere whose brain patterns only are present. This way we “see” the body dissolve. The sounds filling the room are not the sounds of sex, but a series of other sounds that break the air: a baby crying, a gun shot, murmur of dementia, a cough, a slap, feet running on pavement.

This installation is called “Everybody wants some.”

## Installation 29

Enormous projections of the inside of your own body. Heart and lungs on the right side, stomach, liver, kidneys on the left. The wall before you shows you your brain; behind you, your womb and whatever might be inside it. If another person enters the room, the images will no longer be clear—for the inside of that person's body will be layered over yours. It will be difficult to tell whose lungs, whose heart, whose brain. Try breathing faster—see if you can discern the rhythm of your own lungs. But the other person might breathe faster too. When a third person enters, then a fourth, the walls are a sea of light, color, moving forms. You wish the others would leave so that you could see yourself more clearly. But they are wishing this too.

## A prisoner

Fashion is the perfect antidote to grief, as Baudelaire might have said. The misery and degradation of poverty, said Wilde, is so impossible to accept, that even the suffering do not accept it and must be told by others how badly they are, in fact, suffering. This is true of the grieving as well. I will stay home, says one such person, and take the day to rest and watch TV. Oh, I answer, you mean you are scheduling your own depression?

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## The History of Installation

After B.L. constructed a room inside a room made entirely of salt, he lead a goat into his house and watched him lick it to stubs and pools. The goat died, of course, of sodium poisoning and dehydration. B.L. lay the goat's corpse on its side and cut a slit into its belly. Expecting the goat's entrails to fall through the slit, expecting the blood to pour, B.L. was shocked to discover nothing inside the goat at all—an empty carcass, and dry. He reached his hand into the cavern of the goat's torso, feeling for organs, something, and pulled out only a crystal, pure salt. B.L. now sliced the goat's body straight in half, and set one half on the floor, its empty insides facing out. This he turned into a dollhouse for his daughter, then four. Her dolls lived inside the goat, sitting on little chairs that B.L. fashioned out of shells glued to sticks. The dolls slept on beds made of abandoned hummingbird nests. There's some debate about what constitutes an installation as opposed to a sculpture. Certainly for B.L.'s little girl, the goat's body was “installation,” though for her dolls it was only a hotel.

## Future Installation (A Coda)

Installation called: “Really tiny nature films”

Installation called: “On the day the government finally really did shut down, the great Italian chef finally really did die”

Installation called: “Orphan flames from film stills of the sun”

Installation called: “Delayed breath in the brain of an ox”

Installation called: “Prosthetic vagina in a plastic atmosphere”

Installation titled: “Boy being animal”

&amp;

NATHANAËL

I N

## C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

MAKE Magazine *asked authors Jennifer Scappettone and Nathanaël to share a correspondence on the concept of the archive and its relation to their work across various genres, media, and translative acts. The following epistolary conversation is the result of that correspondence.*

August 9, 2015

\* \* \*

August 9, 2015

Dearest epistolerre,

I asked you to join this conversation with me because I think of us, however similar in orientation toward the world, as possessing wildly diverging attitudes toward the archive. It isn't surprising that you were almost instantly able to point me to this citation of yours from an upcoming interview in *Bookslut*: Derrida writing that "the first catastrophe, is the ignoble archive that rots everything ..." You must think of me, with my half-vast attempts at salvaging so many species of history, including the ultrabanal, as being rather morbid! And yet I think I would be able to echo your devastating articulation in that interview that "each book occupies, for me, the place of a memory loss ..." and have it resonate as true for me too.

\* \* \*

Cara amica,

I have been thinking, since you first proposed this conversation, and following the tempest that turned the north beaches of this city into a salvage of deracinated trees and impacted dwellings, that each grain of sand contains an archive of silence.

(Nothing that can be accounted for).

It seems impossible to elude the morbidity of the archive, from whatever vantage (including one of resistance), but I do wonder, in light of its ordered etymology of adjudication, what sense this language holds for you, specifically. I tend to think of a less authorised substrata of meaning that calls up obsolescence and contamination, language that arises for you in *Killing the Moonlight*, and calls up a space of shared geological fixation: *the lagoon* (la laguna—it seemed important, here, to let the Italian resonate as well). You write of Porto Marghera, post-war, as being seen "to host a discomfiting marriage of its famed stones with the detritus of modernizing campaigns" and I am susceptible to this topos and wanting to ask you more about this problematic, as it threads its way out of deliberated oblivion into contemporary works including your recent (and ongoing?) *Leave Loom*. Because the lagoon, in this instance, is also (and especially) a city on water.

—JS

\* \* \*

August 13, 2015

Dear N.,

It's funny that we should be working at this as I embark on a journey into the Ardèche to walk through a reproduction of the so-called Chauvet Cave (the one "of forgotten dreams," in Werner Herzog's drastically romantic description).

What's wonderful (in the literal sense) is how the painters of 36,000 years ago lurch into life—in those hollows lurches the life especially of the bears, bison, mammoths, rhinos, horses, and wild cats they depict, but also their own, via imprints of their hands—without the crutch of an archive. We know next to nothing about the myths or symbolism of these people, the why of their mimicry of the bears' clawing lines in the bodies of mammals, what or how they believed—and it doesn't matter. They seem very often to find the animals embedded in the stone ripples of burrows and stalactites, and accentuate their flanks and harboring places with charred wood so as to release them: like the unimprisoned of Michelangelo, but via design. All with an immediacy that my education in history doesn't help me to decipher, only to wonder at more utterly: the immediacy of prehistory. It helps me to understand Emilio Villa, whom I've been working on lately—translator of what he called a "hyperpast" and "hypopresent" (but that's another story, for now).

I remember telling you once about an interview I heard regarding the songs of Nick Drake—how a musicologist made the argument that since Drake's music wasn't known in his lifetime, and would never constitute the soundtrack to film

footage of Woodstock or a sit-in, it was strangely free to be relevant to any moment, not just its own. We were both struck by this; I was struck because that sort of outcome forms the opposite of how I imagine my own aspirations directed. I want to participate in my time, fell as it is. Yet this claim—which is often made of lyrical poetry—seemed strangely liberating of a sudden. Liberating from historical arcs that tend to classify each moment registered as either worthy of the trajectory or rubbish of the wayside.

Which is to say: yes: I have been interested in the ways that disorderly, ungovernable spaces—or spaces at least whose governance requires a sort of reciprocity beyond the single-handed imposition of a blueprint or boulevard—may form archives. Three-dimensional counterarchives like those of Benjamin's arcades, but more unsung than the spaces of a Baudelaire. Urban and natural spaces that do not splay themselves to the gaze—that may even be muddied in the material sense.

So: lest I go on, let's talk about the ecosystem: what ever got us both interested in a lagoon/lacuna? Was it the birds that took you there?

\* \* \*

August 13, 2015

Chère Jenniflore,

There is an uncanny concordance in our current displacements, though mine, for the moment at least, are limited to projection, while you are engaged in actual traversals.

I have seen neither the Chauvet Cave nor Herzog's film, but I have been thinking these days, and not

19 A 477E—Navy blue  
19 A 477E—Light blue  
19 A 477E—Deep brown  
Size: Size, Shpg. wt. 7 oz.  
\*Sew. Depot Ltd.  
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I Solid-color  
\*PERMA PRESS  
jeans of Vermont pattern

just because it is August—though what a month of layerings of torment, historical and otherwise—of the outlines of bodies calcined against the walls of Hiroshima after the bomb blast, and how these mortific negatives are pressing rejoinders to the voice of 30,000 years ago in Duras’s 1979 film *Les mains négatives*. The text is unpublished in English translation (though I have myself translated it), and was subsequent to the short film made of outtakes from *Le Navire Night*. The negative hands in question are those painted on the grottoes of Altamira and which Duras was able to see before the caves were closed to the public. There is a curious epilogue to the haunting text, which arises in an interview in which Duras explains an error in understanding that is upheld, and which concerns the manner of painting—whether the hands were smeared with paint or outlined. This (journalistic?) attention to *fact or truth* is startling, since in some respects it is irrelevant to the work which sets a lone voice against the stone walls of Paris, understandable as the ignorant archive of that cry—its repudiation and its re-perpetuation, since the film, which Duras qualifies as *terrible*, describes Paris at dawn, before the white-collar workers will enter at daylight erasing the obscure presence of otherwise invisible immigrants tasked with collecting the city’s refuse and polishing its usable surfaces. If the archive attempts to attest to something like the truth, one would have to have some kind of faith in the veracity of an object, or at the very least its ability to testify to a time.

At what point do you think Benjamin’s *counter-archives* become a failure even of their own demonstration? Walking through them today, one encounters the self-conscious spectacle of something much over-written and clearly over-commercialised. It is hardly possible to read Benjamin anymore for the way his thought is

reduced, emulated and applied across disciplines and with reiterative recourse to the same passages. A perhaps inevitability but it reminds me nonetheless of the way thinking about photography has allowed itself to be pre-masticated by a narrow application of Barthes’ verbiage—something he himself anticipates in *Le degré zéro de l’écriture*.

But to the lagoon! I am discovering that my predilection for marshlands has a very long history, and in literary terms must go back at least to my reading of *Paludes* in, probably, 1984. It remains, for me, the most compelling of Gide’s works, despite my predilection for *Les nourritures terrestres*; but also, perhaps, because some things are best kept to oneself. The marsh is an utterly rebarbative ecosystem (exposed, bug-ridden, etc.) that I find permanently fascinating, in part since, without intervention, it is a landscape in constant flux and full of contrariness. If the Camargue region, for example, weren’t under such strict governance to ensure the sustainability of rice paddies, salt cultivation, and human habitat, large portions of the area would be periodically inundated as part of a natural cycle. On the North American continent, the Low Country with its estuarine salt marsh is not only a constant, and fragile, interchange, of salt and fresh waters (not always brackish), but the endangered dwelling of the Gullah language—the actualization of a creolized ecology that owes as much to linguistic as it does to so-called natural ecosystems (including its avian populations), for me, is a kind of contagion.

I think I have said plenty here to evoke at least peripherally the lacuna of the lagoon, and now, in turn, I hope that you will tell me whether Venezia for you is separable from *la laguna* or whether (as I suspect) they arise out of a particular combinatory of desires?

\* \* \*



August 24, 2015

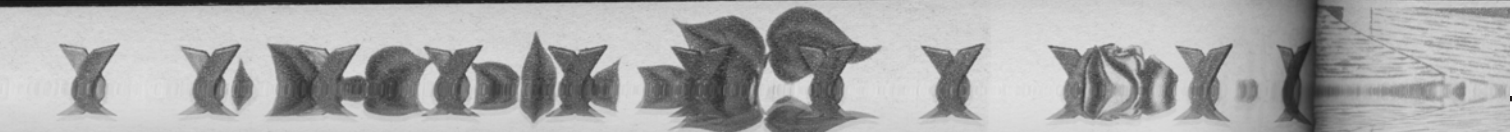
Cara,

I have taken a terribly long while to get back to you because in the midst of finishing other essays on anachronism and imaginary Pentecosts, and plotting toward the official opening of the *Leave Loom* installation in Hollywood while settling into that eternally eroding city, Rome, and the whole trajectory has been all too relevant to our mutual queries. And now the strains of it are various enough to burst the seams of any single dialogue.

Perhaps I have told you that when I was just a kid but thought I was grown, at age 22, I was asked to

act as the English editor of a book of translations of *hibakusha* testimonials, or survivors of the atomic bomb residing in the Nagoya area. The aim of this publication was directly political: to prevent this kind of war, this kind of weapon, from happening again. The positive value of these accounts, their awful redundancy, had a branding effect on my consciousness. There was no effort to edit them, to make them more aesthetically digestible. When years later I ended up at the Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.—drifting in by collective will of a group of friends—and came upon a celebratory exhibit of the *Enola Gay*, I was incredulous. Here playing was the drone’s-eye view of that crossing, that bridge that arose in every testimony as the place where people were drowning themselves in desperation or where families were divided, too often for eternity. It was the most carnally riveting reduction of persons to collateral damage that I had known at something like first hand. Unfortunately it continues to happen like this, in our museums, textbooks. Even from the “inside”—out of shame. Now, as pacifism fades in an amnesiac and repressive regime, some have worked to become *denshosha*, volunteers who shadow survivors for a minimum of three years as the designated transmitters of their memories. This must be the most excruciating, crucial kind of translation.

The contemporary resonance of Duras’s film is very subtle; it’s your reading that helps me through apparent primitivism into immediate politics. I’m interested in what draws her to call it “terrible.” Is it self-criticism? But it seems that all we can do is grasp at the few facts we might be able to divine around the contours of such mysterious people as the Aurignacians and Magdalenians, and I somehow relate to the distraction of a debate over technique: at



Chauvet, we were told that the negative hands (those I saw were registered in red) were made by taking ochre pigment in the palm, placing some in the mouth, and spitting over one's hand pressed to the limestone. So that the full, wordless mouth is preserved in negative as well.

All this—looking up last eve at the central arch of the Pons Cestius over the churning Tiber, whose uneven cuts inspire true marvel at the arrogance of ancient engineering, turning an island into a stone boat—has me interested in a metaphor Ezra Pound uses early on in his upstart 1910 book *The Spirit of Romance*, wherein he compares art to a river: “It is perturbed at times by the quality of the river bed, but is in a way independent of that bed. The colour of the water depends upon the substance of the bed and banks immediate and preceding. Stationary objects are reflected, but the quality of motion is of the river. The scientist is concerned with all of these things, the artist with that which flows.” Having spent a summer in the trenches of archaeology a very long time ago, I would align myself with the last phrase—“the artist with that which flows” and at the same time insist on the non-independence of artifacture, its being suffused with the transmogrifying qualities of the river bed, the ever-changing, ever-bruised substance of the bed, the banks and embankments, the reflections in it. The toomuchness of all that facture seems an abiding concern for me, one that yet upholds some degree of rebellion against the arch of archaeology and the archive.

Which is to say: the lagoon. It resists archaeology. Which gets to the heart of Andrea Zanzotto's pun between “laguna” and “lacuna,” and to a question people often pose

so as presumably to undermine the thesis that Venice might be different from other historical cities: Rome can be selectively carved into for information, boulevarded by the latest duke in search of specific instrumental histories. In the Venetian archipelago, that information is literally drowned or suffused in the underpinning structures of petrified trees at hand; these substructures need to be either decimated, or salvaged and reused to effect the new, in a dynamic I tend to name reciprocal interference (echoing Ruskin). Only so much can be done to control the flooding and its sucking back. You live with it or, having intervened through landfill and dredging too deeply, are reduced to the folly of dykes, whose foundation stone bears Berlusconi's name. So for me Venezia is inseparable from its lagoon (except in the pens of would-be-romantics who see it as a fairy city, for whom I have little patience).

All this, and some glacial understanding of ecology that seems to be emerging despite our blinders amidst countless environmental crises, suggests we need models beyond the Paris of Haussmann and can't keep dredging up Benjamin to apply to the present as if by default and by tweet (though I would be a liar not to name him in homage).

I'd be interested in hearing more about Gide's *Paludes* and its importance to you so early on. For one thing, I wonder whether he could have been responding implicitly to Barrès's Nietzschean variety of *paludisme*?

\* \* \*

Amica,

I have let a confusion enter into our dialogue and will seek to remedy it at once—while also apologising for my lack of precision. Duras’s *terrible* is more akin to *terror* than it is to awfulness; there is something terrorising—to the author—in the unanswered cry cast across time, and the movement between the stone of the cavern and the erected stone of the city, which receives the cry while at the same time perhaps destroying it; or articulating its destruction. Duras spent the first eighteen years of her life in French Indochina; this detail is often overlooked as Duras comes to be a symbol of a (national) French literature, and while it does not dispense her from some tendentious political postures, it denies a traceable itinerary—this is arguably true of the ascription of any national identity, which cannot ever be as coherent as it may claim to be, but it is striking that for an anglophone readership, so much of what is received, I would go so far to say at times revered, as *French* is in fact *foreign* even to itself (Cixous was born in Algeria, Irigaray in Belgium, Kristeva Bulgaria, Hyvrard grew up in Martinique, Sarraute was born in Russia...). I am not sure as I write you what specific relationship I wish to draw out here between the archive and origin, and *Les mains négatives* in particular, but I think it may be indicative of a lure, a perhaps indispensable one, to the misguided gravity ascribed to a truth. If there is a truth, it is not in Benjamin’s Germanity nor his Judeity. And how limiting were that the case!

There is something *truly terrible*, to inflect Duras’s use of the term, in the task of the *denshosha*; perhaps it is in the belatedness of the body assigned to a particular memory. But I would

think that one could only fail at attempting to embody an archive through memorisation. Testimony depends upon (often obliterated) experience and memory loss. What fantasy is purveyed through this undertaking, or that, elsewhere, of a Yad Vashem, for example. One cannot hold a memory to itself. And this is precisely what Duras’s cave painter is confronted with, as subsequent populations of humans attempt to contend with these archaeologies by uprooting bones and weighing and measuring them and trying, stupefyingly, to bring them “alive.” I can only see in this attentiveness (but I really want to say: adherence) to materiality, a form of naïveté (I don’t deny at times wanting to call it stupidity).

Among the existing footage of Orson Welles’s *It’s All True*, filmed principally in Brasil, is a long sequence titled *Four Men on a Raft* that follows the perilous trajectory of a group of jangadeiros (fisher people) who navigated small rafts from Bahia to Rio to appeal to Vargas for improved working conditions. During the filming of the re-enactment of this itinerary, the principal jangadeiro, Manoel Olimpio Meira, known as Jacaré, died. His brother replaced him so that the film could be completed. In S-21 Rithy Panh leaves the spaces of the tortured and dead of Tuol Sleng *empty*.

The archive, by its dispersive nature, may very well be *what cannot be held*. It is grievous, and grief-stricken. And there is no remedy other than a kind of attentiveness precisely to that lacuna. Is it possible that such a maddening awareness drove Claude Lanzmann to the despotic annihilation of the very idea of an archive? (Impossible, besides. Even *Shoah*, which claims to be imageless, is made of images.)

I have strayed (...) quite far now from the marsh, though perhaps I might contend that I am only sinking further into it. You ask after Barrès's *paludisme*. I have no familiarity with it; my most recent encounter with *paludisme* was literalised in Michaux's *Écuador*, in the palm of a little girl's hand. Gide's book opens with the following sentence: "Before I explain my book to others, I am waiting for others to explain it to me. To explain it beforehand would be to restrict its meaning [*sens*]; for though we may know what we intended to say, we do not know if we were saying only that." (Tr. George D. Painter, modified).

Is it enough to offer this as a conduit but also a *ligne de conduite* that I may have adhered to, sometimes unawares, for as long and as far as I know?

\* \* \*

August 25, 2015

Dearest epistolerre,

Yes—I see now through the translation into terror: your reading helps me move from stone to stone and erasure. It's a forceful displacement of the voice of remoteness, discomfiting in its juxtaposition with the banality of everyday streetscape surfaces, far from the exoticism of artifact that would be the obvious choice of accompaniment. In this curious love expressed by the cave painter via Duras (before desire was coined, as the text's voice notes) I can't help but recall the insistence of Whitman crossing over on the Brooklyn ferry, asking "What is it, then, between us? / What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?" or imagining the fusion of distance and time in a quasicarnal "all":

We use you, and do not cast you aside—we  
plant you permanently within us;  
We fathom you not—we love you— ...

However moving (I confess, at least to me), this "all" can have terrifying political consequences. What impressed me about the meticulously reproduced Paleolithic *Caverne* near its original site at the Pont d'Arc was the museum's declining to ascribe to it any contemporary historical construct or to present it as part of the French national heritage in any way—regardless of the fact that the 3D facsimile was a *Grand Projet*, therefore necessarily extending the lineage of monumental building projects and ideological programs, and costing something like 55 million euros partially supplied by the state (seen as an investment for future tourist revenue, of

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course). Our ignorance, even in the face of such fetishization of every detail of the Aurignacians' sacred space and expression, is their freedom.

As far as I understand, the task—in the sense of *Aufgabe*, meaning also surrender, defeat—of the *denshoshu* would be to move beyond memorization into lived experience, in a literal embodiment of empathy? Which is a compelling prospect, however de facto doomed to fail, in potentially disturbing ways. In a dialogue with William Kentridge at the University of Chicago about their work on *The Story I Am About to Tell* and *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, Jane Taylor talked about the ways in which the interpreters of apartheid traumas were channeling the volatility of a first-person emotional energy in the event of translation—whereas those who had suffered, for example, the subjection of their sons to unspeakable horrors such as “necklacing” had reserved what she called the “affective archive” in another space, or a “memory zone.”<sup>1</sup> Not wanting to elide the difference between witness and interpreter, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* tries to represent the rupture between testimony and its reperformance through the use of puppets whose manipulators are baldly visible on stage. Michael Ignatieff's frequently quoted remark that “All that a truth commission can achieve is to reduce the number of lies that can be circulated unchallenged in public discourse”<sup>2</sup> seems pertinent to our discussion; the objective is not truth but justice.

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[1] That conversation is archived here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqqE10A0NxE>, and she talks about this 29 minutes into the recording.

[2] Quoted in Kendall R. Phillips, G. Mitchell Reyes, ed., *Global Memoryscapes: Contesting Remembrance in a Transnational Age* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 138.

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It nags me to keep proposing alternatives to the empathic route, which has its drawbacks yet means to infuse vaster numbers of contemporary citizens with an immediate sense of the consequences of nuclear weaponry, hoping that it will prevent them from support for such programs; that, certainly, was the point of the anthology of testimonials I found myself editing into English. To expect that everyone be as brave and imaginatively involved as to conduct their own research on specific histories of human hatred and error is overly sanguine. I still believe in something like the righteous contrast of example in a sphere made stupid (from the Latin for stunned or benumbed) by as-if voluntary assaults of contemporary datums and quickening amnesia (related to *amnesty*), wherein yesterday's decade is today's five minutes (or perhaps less: the length of time needed to require refreshing the feed of followers' Facebook posts or tweets).

Barrès's work is infused with all the paranoia of pre-modern hygienics, and which Mann elaborates in a more tragic amorous vein: the notion that swamps were a place of disease and death to be overcome by virile heroism. A notion that is necessarily gendered and sexed, as Theweleit shows in *Women, Floods, Bodies, History*. It's interesting to try to untangle who would have been reading whom first; from my upstart outsider's viewpoint it seems clear that Gide opposed Barrès's heavy and provincial attachment to the fatherland—one that never seems to inhere easily in the land of the swamp. I luxuriated in the notion of history—oh doomed dialectics!—embedded in this quote from *Paludes*: “Alternative—Ou d'aller encore une fois, ô forêt pleine de mystère,—jusqu'à ce lieu que je connais où, dans une eau morte et brunie, trempent et s'amollissent encore les feuilles des

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ans passés, les feuilles des printemps adorables.” The leaves here seeming to be both those of trees and of a book. In English “foil” can also mean to foul, or that which is trampled underfoot. I wonder how you would translate this last phrase?

In the face of such challenges to embalment, writing from the city hosting myriad morbid relics of Catholicism and belated monuments to the fatherland, I admit to feeling silly for having spent countless hours harvesting words from my household garbage over the last year for the *Leave Loom* installation (opening tonight, and therefore on my mind) with the perhaps idiotic notion of threading together poems with them—rendering them legible instead of permitting them to be trampled into the oblivion of continuing to live. But somehow I wanted to trigger my own alarm (and that of those who contributed their own trash) surrounding the packaging of subsistence via this obsessive holding, and expose my own complicity as well, given that garbage in the all-encompassing economic globescape archives teeming extents of resource extraction, branding, and carbon. Interweaving this gross waste with phrases from a more spiritualized yet equally ludicrous—because arbitrary and incomplete—registration of every day’s passage as an apparently immaterial line of my own text felt like a necessary way of rerouting the demotic voices of capital; and also a correspondence with my beloved “junkman” grandfather who shred clothes for paper, and perpetuated other acts of salvage that would be healthy to reintroduce now on a mass scale. And a riposte to the idea that (per Benjamin again) “ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects.”

I can’t help but try to end the unendable by asking you to talk a little about how you view the task

of the translator vis-à-vis the archive, given how you have heaved into English and French the sorts of works that would require a total rethinking of the boundaries of so-called national archives and living languages...

\* \* \*

August 28, 2015

Cherre jscape,

In the relay between testimony and interpretation, the poignancy of which I cannot help but be susceptible to, there is something cruelly viviseptive. I can only agree with you—if I am understanding you correctly—that the integration of awarenesses such as the murderous propensity of atomic energy in the *individual* depends upon the individual’s willingness to retrieve some form of active engagement from out of the stupor of the everyday (an activity that is not exclusive of *thought*). This is why I cannot agree with your dismissal of your prior twenty-two-year-old self as *a kid*, undertaking with conviction the editorship of the *hibakusha*<sup>3</sup> texts in translation. Childhood as an idea—and it truly is in my opinion one of the most pernicious ideas governing this culture in any case (which *this*? I know...)—may be as pernicious as the archive gets. Setting aside my annoyance with the pervasive and uncritical idealisation of a period of life in which one has little to no autonomy, and in which one is subjected to all manner of indoctrination, as well as conversely being granted near total social and ethical immunity, I cannot but think, in

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[3] I remain as stupefied by this term as I did the first time I encountered it, for its literal meaning as I understand it is *atomised victims*.

---

relation to your editorial project, of the necessary work of Günther Anders, which is egregiously untranslated into English (with the exception of his correspondence with Claude Eatherly, as well as a small book on Kafka, the English translation of which renders it damagingly irrelevant). Anders, who had studied under Heidegger, abandoned art history after the U.S. nuclear attacks against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, assigning himself militant opposition to atomic armament. Like many of his compatriots living in the U.S. during the war, Anders briefly took a job as a translator with the Office for War Information, quitting on these terms (I am translating from a French translation): “I have rarely provoked such a strong surprise as when I explained to my boss that I hadn’t come to America, after having fled fascism, to now fabricate American fascist brochures destined to Germany.”

Notwithstanding the above, I remain nonetheless suspicious of the injunction to speak, having ushered myself with fervent complicity through the misguided, and I think ultimately maiming, epoch of *silence=death*. In his prologue to *Hiroshima Notō*, Oē Kenzaburō quotes at length from a letter he received from a *hibakusha* upon the publication of his book (the French translation is wildly divergent from this, the English), in which its author resists the mercenary demand for persistent telling that risks producing over-narrativized substancelessness: “People in Hiroshima prefer to remain silent until they face death. They want to have their own life and death. They do not like to display their misery for use as ‘data’ in the movement against atomic bombs or in other political struggles. Nor do they like

to be regarded as beggars, even though they were in fact [*hibakusha*]. [...] I detest those who fail to appreciate our feelings about silence.” (Tr. David L. Swain and Yonezawa Toshi).

As for literary translation’s relationship to the archive, I can hardly begin to situate myself in relation to this question. For me, literature is no archive; as long as it is alive. But what of what only appears to be living?

There is an ornithological park in England called Slimbridge Wetland Centre whose express aim is to protect endangered avian species; their covert practice of pinioning (in French *éjointer*, literally dis-jointing),<sup>4</sup> a process that involves the removal of the pinion joint of a bird’s wing (specifically “by amputating the carpal, metacarpal, and phalangeal bones”—OED) in order to prevent flight, ensures that “the biology of the bird is thus constrained in order to make a spectacle out of it, it is a tourist attraction” (Céline Chadenas tr. N). To pinion also means to shackle. A bird whose capacity to fly has been mutilated will not transmit flight to its young, whose wings will have no need to be cut as a result, and I cannot help but find correlation between this form of arrestation and the archive’s aim. There is always an overseer whose interventions can only be de-naturing.

None of which prevents “the leaves of past years, the leaves of adorable springs” from reading us back to ourselves, silt and stain.

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[4] Slimbridge is by no means the only bird sanctuary to make use of such a practice, which is not only painful, but, even within a logic I wholly disagree with, unnecessary, since the regular clipping of wing feathers is sufficient to produce the same effect.

# T A K E A P I C T U R E ,

Here's how it works: the tall cylinder spins on a vertical axis. The outer edge is covered in the golden words of a Tibetan mantra: *Om Mani Padme Hum*. You don't know what the mantra on the prayer wheel means, but don't worry. No one really does.

At first you watch others take turns, walking the path through the monastery garden, bowing at certain statues, lighting sticks of incense, stepping over doorways with the left foot always first, spinning the prayer wheels. You don't know what this means, but don't worry. You can wait until you get the hang of it, take your time, and then do what you've observed. Or you can just watch.

You watch a man three times your age light a large bundle of incense. He raises it to his forehead then walks the path slowly, bowing every few steps so that the lit end of the incense nearly ashes on the ground. You watch three women walk arm in arm down the path. Their mouths move, but they only speak loud enough that they alone can hear. You watch, you listen, you don't understand. But you hardly understand your own words, your own daily rituals—how to understand this?

You hear a woman say, "Take a picture, I'm praying." You turn around and see that it's your wife, standing at the prayer wheel. You bow your head to find the camera dangling on a strap. She spins the wheel, smiles. *Om Mani Padme Hum*. You see her clearly, then you see her dimly through the lens. For a moment she vanishes, then you hear a click and she reappears in the lens. *Om Mani Padme Hum*. You see her dimly, then clearly, and you see yourself capturing this moment, this artifact of a thing you want so badly to possess, but you don't know what it means, and it's you who is spinning on a slightly tilted vertical axis.



I ' M

P R A Y I N G

TRANSLATION: BORZUTZKY, DANIEL  
& MOCTEZUMA, JOSE-LUIS

L O S T P O E M S  
/ F O U N D  
P O E M S : F O R A  
M A G I C A Z I N E  
O F G H O S T S  
P O E M S

1 Much has been made of the intrinsic relationship between poetry and memory. As is known, the original function of rhyme and meter was mnemonic. Poetry: an attempt to rescue from the forgotten a handful of words arranged in a predetermined order: a verbal form which at the same time functions as a foundation.

2 Poetry as foundation: a means of stabilizing language. In this sense, poetry can be considered a form of writing that precedes the apparition of writing, properly speaking. This was said by someone whose name I can't remember.

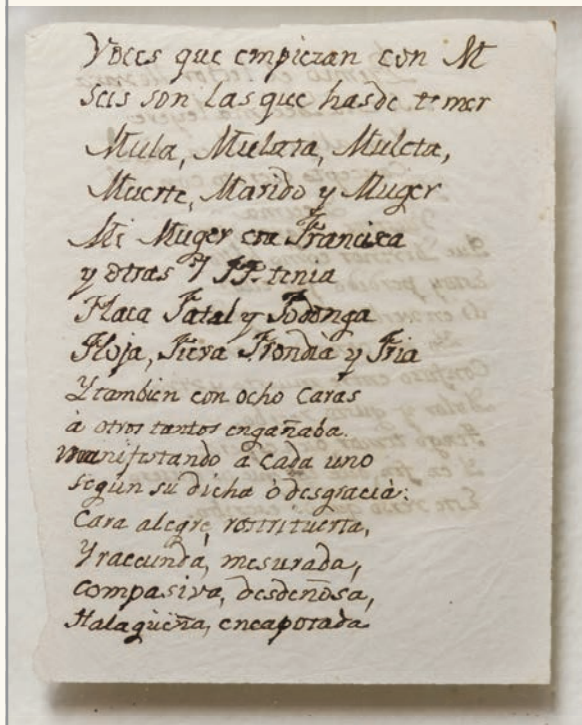
3 If poetry is already in itself a form of writing, the birth of history should then be revised to coincide with the origins of poetry. History begins thus with a verse and not with the accounts of merchants and the laws written in cuneiform characters on clay tablets. No doubt, a better beginning.

4 Be it as it may, the first poems properly written re-collect (remember) poems that preceded their writing. Such is the case of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the oldest poem that we know of (dated from the first third of the second millennium BC) and perhaps the most beautiful of all such poems that have since been written. When one reads *Gilgamesh* it becomes clear that it is not actually one of the first poems of human civilization, but rather the peak achievement of an entire tradition: how many failed poems are necessary so that a successful one may appear? How many failed and how many successful poems are necessary so that one day an exceptional poem may emerge from a culture?

5 What I want to emphasize here is the following: the importance of bad poems. And also: the value of what's forgotten. Behind every great poem there are countless terrible poems: this is as applicable to all of literature as it is to a particular author. And all of history, all memory, depends on what is forgotten as much as it depends on what it remembers.

6

A forgotten poem:



7

What is forgotten: even the poem, that verbal intent to defeat the forgotten, is part of the forgotten. But the forgotten molds memory and gives it form: it shapes the perimeter of memory. What is remembered is made from the forgotten the way an exceptional poem is made from who knows how many failures.

8

What is remembered is made from the forgotten the way an exceptional poem is made from who knows how many failures. And the analogy goes only this far. Not every lost poem, of course, should be considered a failed poem. From references we know of the existence of great works of literature that have been lost over time, and all that is left of those is the title or much less. Or we have preserved only a few incomprehensible fragments of poems by authors considered exceptional in their time. But some truly horrible

poems from all ages have been preserved. The idea of time as the unerring critic that preserves the valuable and condemns the failed and the minor to oblivion (as if the valuable and the failed were not ever-changing concepts, shifting with time, interchangeable) is not even an idea but rather a mere superstition, a stupidity, or a beautiful desire.

9

Or who knows. Maybe so. Maybe every forgotten poem, every lost poem, is in the end a failed poem. So if poetry is an intention to preserve the remembrance of certain words placed in a certain order, then its being forgotten comes to be the verification of its failure. Even though such a verification is impossible, how can one verify what is not remembered, the unknowns that are not known?

10

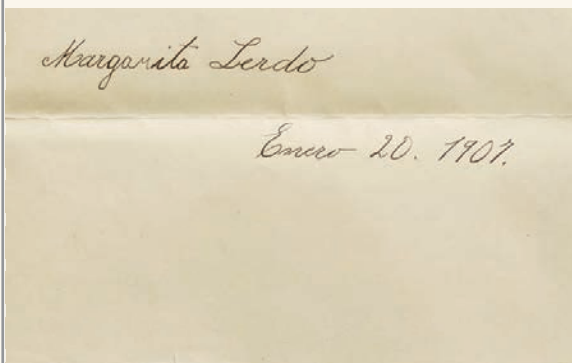
Or who knows. Maybe nothing is forgotten from everything, maybe nothing is lost forever. And everything is here, including that which is not. Beyond lost poems or forgotten poems, we are talking about ghost poems. Poems that we don't see, or, more precisely, that we don't read, but whose absence/presence we suspect behind the poems we do read. Those murmurs, those voices, those laughs. And then we turn the page and there is no one. Nothing. Only another incredible poem.

11

But sometimes, just like ghosts, lost poems, forgotten poems, appear. And when that happens, just as with ghosts, we are terrified: what a horrible poem! Many poems appear from who knows what past and what forgotten place transmitting a message incomprehensible to us because it is not meant for us. Or is it?

12

A message not meant for us:



13

In those poems that the canon did not choose to preserve because they were deemed to have no poetic value (and it probably got that right), and in those words by poets who no one cares about, we read what we do not read in the poets usually admired by other poets. We read: unsuccessful attempts, failures, commonplaces, imitations. That which illustrates the exhaustion of an aesthetic and which pushes other poets, the

more experienced, to instigate formal changes, to risk unusual styles, to make discoveries that were previously unimaginable. In other words, in these ghost poems we read that which does not deserve commemoration or “recognition”: we read the forgotten.

14

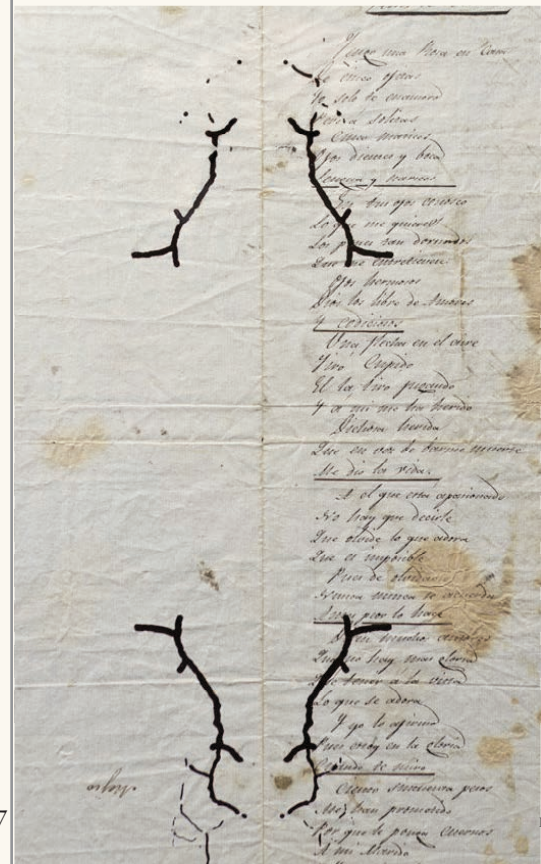
That indispensable forgottenness. That forgottenness which shapes those poems which are worth remembering.

15

This essay is the sketch of a magazine that does not exist. A magazine that if it existed would be called *Issue Zero*: a space for those poems that aren't worth remembering: pages for the forgotten.

16

A page for the forgotten: the writing / (un)writing of the moths:



17

I would like to create a magazine that was the flipside of a literary magazine (or a literary magazine in reverse). A magazine dedicated to the unknown almost in the same way that the unknown is presented in magazines dedicated to paranormal occurrences. *Issue Zero*: a magazine dedicated to publishing ghosts. *Issue Zero*: a magazine that exists and does not exist at the same time. Or in another time. Or in no time. More than a magazine, the blueprint for a magazine: its possibility. Barely even a draft, barely an essay. Less than.

18

In that unforgettable book of poems by Edgar Lee Masters, *The Spoon River Anthology*, that poetic cemetery where each body composes, from the tomb, its own epitaph, there is one poem, "Minerva Jones," that could well serve as an epigraph for this project. I quote it in its entirety:

I am Minerva, the village poetess,  
Hooted at, jeered at by the Yahoos of the Street  
For my heavy body, cock-eye, and rolling walk,  
And all the more when "Butch" Weldy  
Captured me after a brutal hunt.

He left me to my fate with Doctor Meyers;  
And I sank into death, growing numb from the feet up,  
Like one stepping deeper and deeper into a stream of ice.

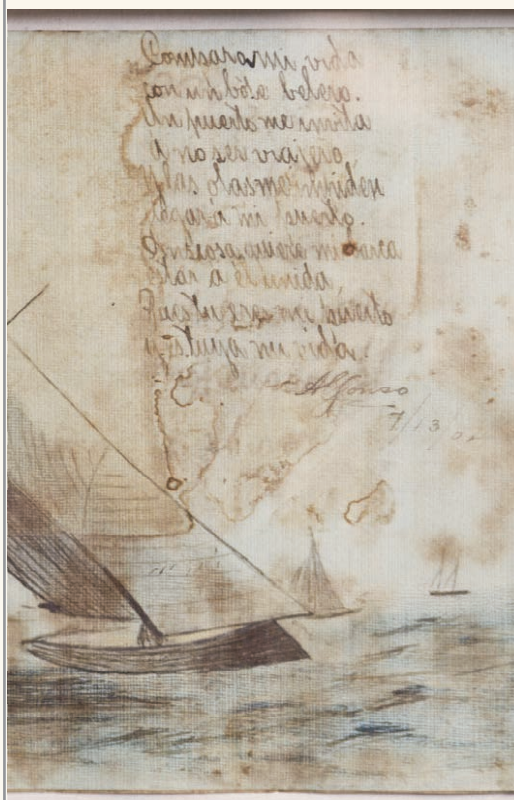
Will some one go to the village newspaper,  
And gather into a book the verses I wrote? –

I thirsted so for love!  
I hungered so for life!

*Issue Zero* would like to be that local newspaper in which Minerva Jones's poems are published. But neither Minerva nor her poems exist. Or this magazine either. Or this magazine exists in the way ghosts do not exist.

19

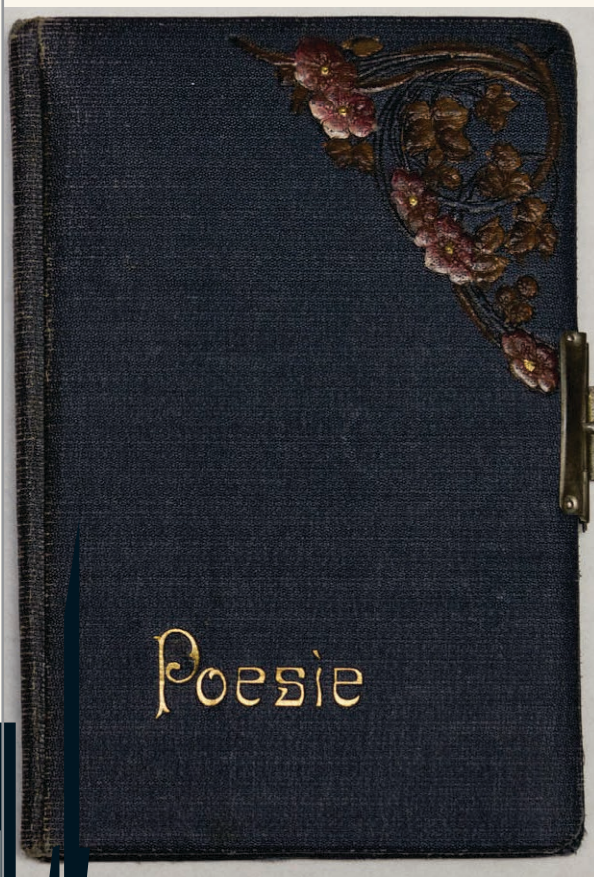
Minerva Jones or the forgotten. Minerva Jones who in the event that she existed could also be called O.M. Ferrer who made a drawing dated October 19, 1860 on a page where there now appears a poem that is literally ghostly: a secret that is revealed if you put the paper against the light. Or also: F.G. Calderón who drew a ship and wrote a sea-poem which was later made illegible by the water and humidity.



20

Or also: Chini Hoerig who, in a notebook specifically meant for writing poetry brought from Germany (probably the homeland), wrote a single poem in May 1929 in Mexico. Minerva Jones whose name we would have forgotten if she had existed and whom we'd then call anonymous like that anonymous author of the colony who sweetly wrote a marriage proposal in verse. Or those

other anonymous authors in whose sometimes pious, sometimes playful, sometimes malignant manuscripts the moths have devoured the paper, tracing an anti-writing: the scribblings of the forgotten, the inscription of the absent. All of them (including the moths) are collaborators of this *Issue Zero*: a magazine that does not exist. Or which exists as what is forgotten exists.



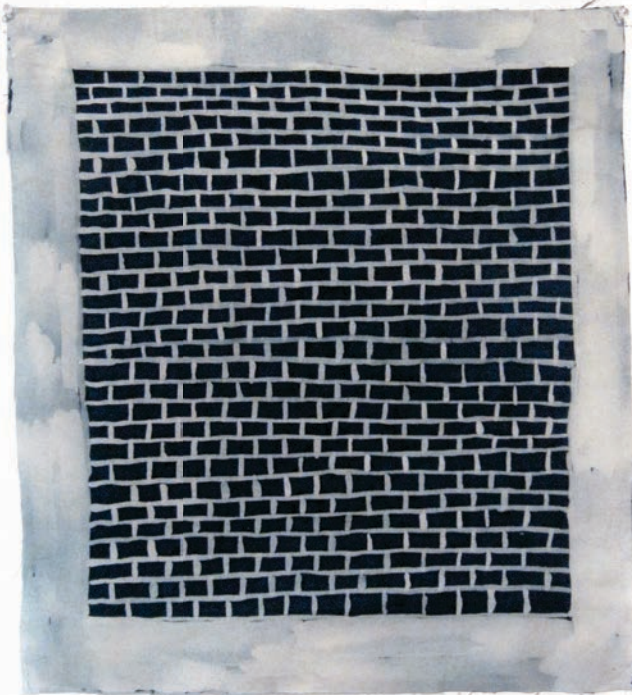
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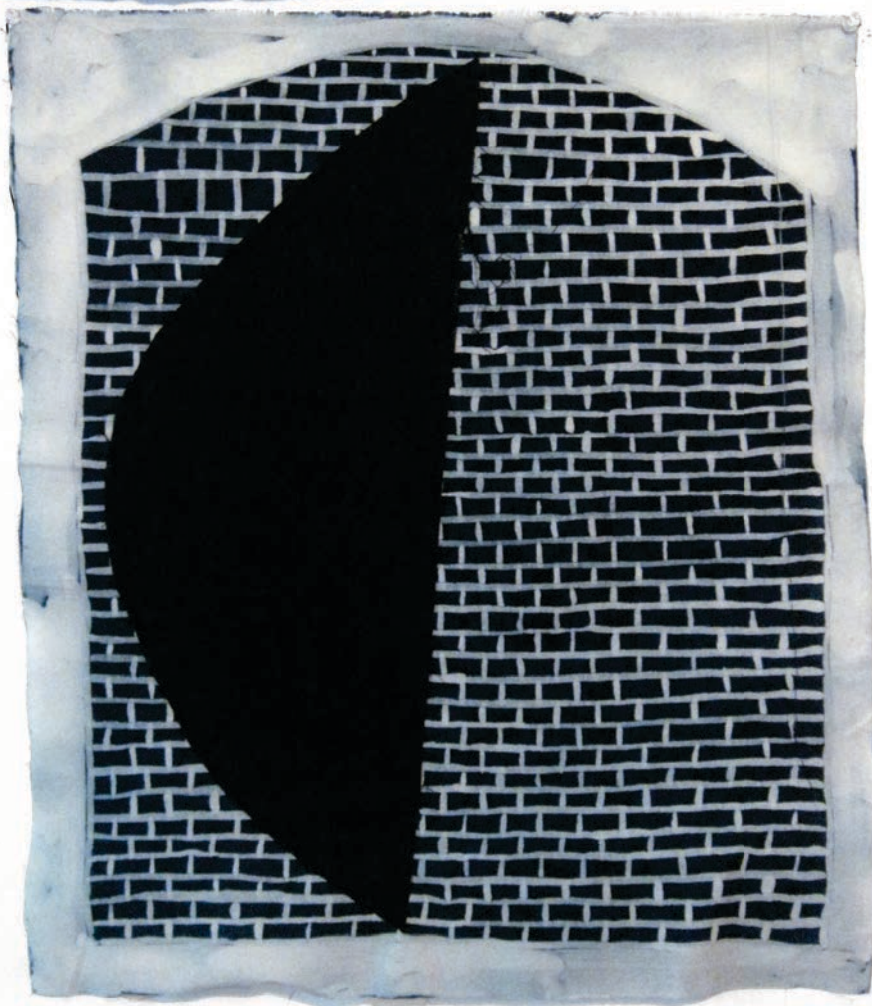
The idea is that, in the event that this magazine were to exist, the readers would send us the poems they discovered in flea markets, used bookstores, family archives. And in the event that we did not receive any poems, the editors would feel obliged to play with the ouija: to invoke the ghosts, ask them to dictate verses to us from beyond, from beyond the other side of the page, from beyond the forgotten. The lost poems: poems inconclusively caught between the legible and the illegible as continuously fading memories. Those poems that at times reappear to tell us something. A moment right before they go back to being lost.

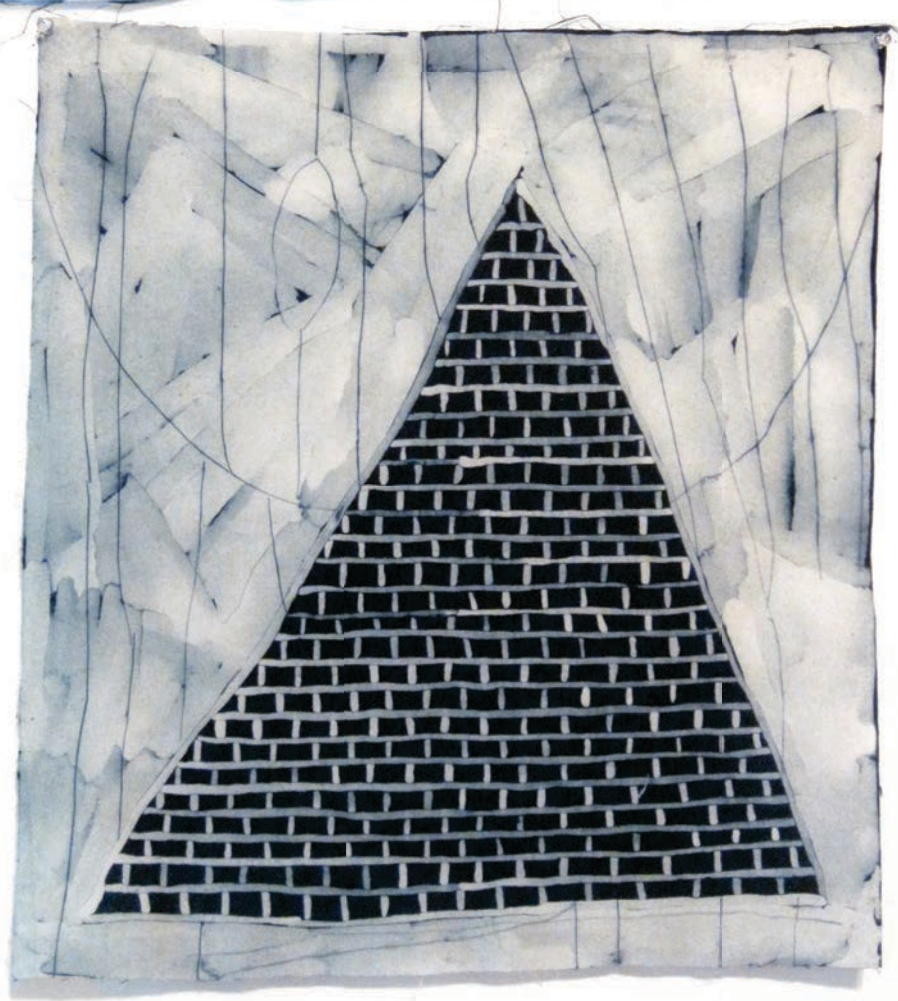
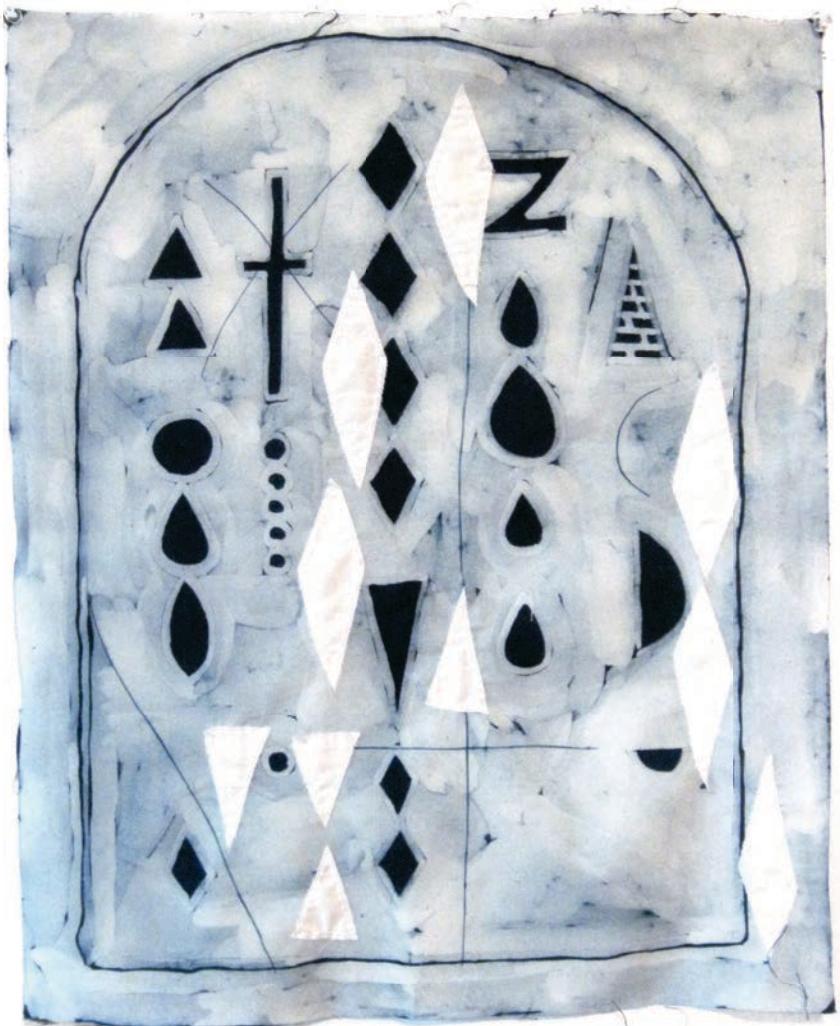
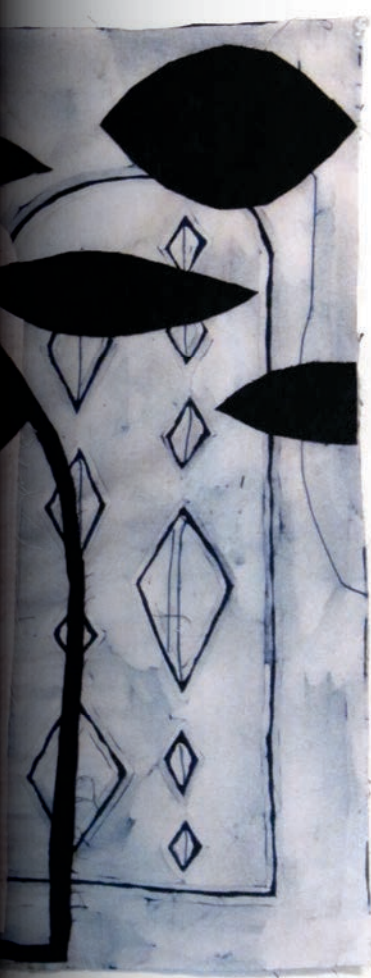


Batik (natural Indigo) and appliqué on cotton  
18" x 20" each  
2015

*Selections from Monuments*







## Nicolaus Copernicus

Let us say the sun. Quiet.  
Quiet. Let us whisper

the sun. Secret. Hid.  
Concerning the orbs /

The whole revolution /  
Let us bypass the fact

it's completely insane.  
So take up your palm

and move the sun.  
Move it to the center instead.

What does it mean?  
Now *we* are turning

Lonely and neutral /  
We are turning instead.

## Galileo Galilei

My daughter's ear is listening somewhere.  
How the sun is the center and /

What is another word for the center?  
*Surrounded.*

The opposite is / we're on the outs.

I've moved the earth from the prized position.  
(I didn't move it—no—it was already there.)  
They are angry / They're angry / They are so angry

They scared / The idea  
of themselves now feeling the death.

Blind / Trapped / Old / Out

My daughter. My daughter. She was the only  
one

Yes, listener, I am still telling the truth  
but I'm telling it less.

## Tycho Brahe

The gold on his face / tap the gold on his face  
An eyeball beam shooting up out of a castle

He builds metal eyes / gets everything  
Gets a castle of eyeballs / built onto an island

Call the clairvoyant dwarf / call the mercurial nose  
Call the eyeball grown long / inside the dark hallway

Only Kepler is allowed / into this closeness  
Kepler brushing the soft metal nose

Pull the camera away now / from their tiny dark notebooks  
Pull the camera back slowly / through the window of stone

## Johannes Kepler

Tender his notes / into the brightness  
Math shining through / the manuscript's lace

See the long etched mane / on the immobile circle  
See the floating ellipses / around the flambeau

The math does not know / about all the stories  
Math does not think / the papacy thinks

Inside the math now is a whole power  
(Neon ellipses form out of air)

Inside the math now is a base power  
Powerful because it can wait



# PAPER BODIES

I hear it fall heavily on the staircase outside the front door; it slips, dismembering itself on the cement. It wakes me every morning, and after the violent sound that marks the arrival of the newspaper, I can never get back to sleep.

I'm constantly afraid that some stranger will silently open the gate and steal the morning paper; that some vendor from the fair might want to take the paper bodies to wrap fish, seafood, or to dry the blood spilled at the temporary butcher on Thursdays. To wrap fragrant yellow apples, and bell peppers, onions, potatoes. And eggs. I think about all these things but soon I let my worries slip away. I stretch my legs beneath the sheet; my toes are cold. My hands have become warped in the cold of these mornings, while I brush my black hair.

Some gray ones wrap themselves around the teeth in my comb: thick hairs, rough, faded, that grow, evading my meticulous pincer fingers. I grab one now and pull it out by the root. I tie it with the other gray hairs and lay the lock on my cot as I wait for the clarity of morning.

It's been hours since the sun first illuminated the closed blinds in my room. The comb slides easily and my fingers aren't finding any more gray threads. Finished with my work, I go downstairs. I open the door. The newspaper is spread out on the floor, with its terrible headlines and inky obituaries printed on the sheets of paper.

I pick it up, relieved; I roll it up under my arm and feel the air—barely warm between my legs. I take it to the kitchen, unroll it, and stack it on the

others. Today is Thursday. There are exactly seven yellowing editions with their daily supplements in the basket.

I wind my grandfather's watch; it's early. There are so many hours until midnight, I think, and I lie down in bed to wait. And while I wait, I look for gray hairs among the rest; and while I weed them out, time slows down in the teeth of my comb.

Now, in silence, I can hear the old cart's wheels dragging themselves across the pavement. They stop and my pulse accelerates. I go down the stairs two at a time. I place myself behind the door, anticipating the sound of the gate as it opens. Before he's able to raise his hand to ring the bell and wake my neighbors from their shallow sleep, I draw back the handle.

"Good evening."

I treat him formally. He treats me the same: he doesn't respond. He repeats his bow the same as every Thursday, with his striped hat in his hands, at the level of his navel. And he waits for me to show him the way that he already knows.

"After you," I say, solemnly.

He goes up to the kitchen and waits for me to enter, and then closes the door. As always, my hand reaches the light switch and his small, turbid eyes light up.

He bends down to count the newspapers. I stand close by his side and I'm hit by the sour stench of wine and sweat. He bows his head, hanging his red-veined nose above the heap of papers. He breathes deeply, trying to suck up the smell of the ink.

I caress the edge of his sweaty neck; I laugh, stupidly, and pull my fingers back. He doesn't appear to pay any attention to me, his nose suspended over the accumulated newspapers.

I take his hand. It's rough and small. I touch the palm of his hand to my cheek, but his gaze is fixed on the headline, on some photograph. I force his fingers to the neckline of my nightgown and his caress scratches me. He scratches me and I bite my tongue and close

my eyes, and I open them to see him crane his neck without ceasing to look at me out of the corner of his eye.

He twists and smiles timidly. His mouth is missing a few teeth, his lips are thin and dry like the skin of some dead animal. He starts to laugh when I pour the red wine into two plastic cups. He follows me to the room.

Renato's cheeks are ruined and softly violet at the edge of his sideburns. In the mirror, I see his forehead crossed with deep wrinkles. Renato stands behind me. His hands have become claws from so many years pushing his cart; they're hopeless with the comb. He touches my hair, then he touches his own—gray, thick, thinning on top—and returns to mine.

When he's finished he bends to pick up the strands that have fallen from my mass of hair. He removes the ones that have remained adhered to the teeth of the comb. I get up, pull back the blankets and paw around, as if I were blind, for the lock of gray hair I've saved for him.

He counts the strands and puts them in his jacket pocket. He takes the string with which he has tied up the newspapers and picks them up. I hear him

go down the stairs, close the door with a thud.

I awake. The rain is an orchestra on my roof. I get up—trip, wrapped up in the sheets. My knees freeze on the floor, my palms hurt. As if I were drunk, I drag myself to my bed, where I cover up. I shiver. I pick up the comb, and while I untangle my hair, I hear the newspaper on the cement, wrapped in plastic.

I imagine how the water splashes with the impact, how it slips softly under the storm until it hits my door. I don't wait for morning to go and get it; if it gets soaked it'll take forever to dry.

I'm careful not to slip on the wet floor.

The iron bar, the latch.

The deluge everywhere.

The bag with the paper inside has fallen in a puddle and it drips when I pick it up. I undo the knot to take out the bodies, still warm, and I hug them. I think about Renato's toothless mouth.

It's Monday. The exact date can be seen above the headline, centered over the picture of some inoperable Siamese twins.

Today is Monday; that's the only information that interests me.

Days, long nights where nothing happens until morning.

Sometimes I awake hours before the slap of the newspaper and upon turning on the lamp on the bedside table, I find the sheets covered in silky black hair. The light of day takes its time showing up, I search for the edge of each strand that I tie together with the rest and stow among my underwear. I put on perfume. It's midnight now and the minutes seem to be nipping at each other's heels.

I lie on the bed with my hand between my legs and imagine what might have happened to him. I close my eyes; he appears in a bar with a small glass of red wine. I see him standing in the corner, over a bundle of celery from the fair. I see him slipping on cartons of eggs. I see him buried under crates and pages from the tabloids, sleeping inside his cart, a few meters from this house.

I lean out of the window but the breeze doesn't harden my heavy, dark nipples. The night has no moon; the stars don't shine. There are no silhouettes drawn upon the pavement. I burst into the kitchen: between the refrigerator and the garbage can are the newspapers that Renato should come to collect. I wind the watch and take a minute to observe the hands stopped on my wrist.

I pick up the paper to assure myself of the date. I take a strand of hair, I toss it and ask myself if Renato will even come today, which is Thursday.

An hour passes. I've wound various gray hairs around my fingertips, strangling them, but he doesn't appear. I prick up my ears and hear the sound of wheels advancing on the street. I uncork the bottle, take a sip that warms my stomach, finish the drink and get up.

I open the door. He staggers. I offer him the glass but Renato doesn't even lift his head. He approaches slowly. He stops, he breathes like a laden donkey. He seems even smaller than usual tonight, squashed by the shadows of the trees. I sit on the cold stair and chew through my lips on a lock of hair.

When Renato finally crosses the gate, I uncross my folded legs, covered in fuzz, and I lift up my nightgown. He doesn't look at me. His hand trembles.

We say nothing; we don't even touch.

He climbs the stairs, stopping with each step. I insist: a glass of red. He shows me the hollow of his pestilent mouth, he closes his eyes and starts to tie up the papers with a piece of string.

I take the bottle by its neck and enter my room. Renato follows me. This time I don't sit on the chair, nor do I wait for him to brush my hair, to smell the perfume raising from my chest. I take the locks of hair I've been collecting. I roll them up and put them delicately in the only sewn pocket on his jacket.

I softly slide my hands over his lapels, I start to take off his jacket and feel his squalid body under his shirt. Renato looks at the floor, and the bottle that I've left on the rug.

I undo the buttons on my blouse while his finger trembles, following the beginning of a gray hair lost in the scrambled bed sheets.

After picking up the newspaper this morning, I return to bed with a glass of wine. It's the last bottle. Renato has taken the rest with the newspapers, the boxes, and my nightgown; along with some plastic earrings. And thick locks of my graying tresses.

I continue to brush my hair for hours, only interrupting this delicate labor to take a sip, or to dip a piece of old bread in alcohol. It's been ages since any fresh air has passed through the window.

The days pass imperceptibly.

marked by the newspapers that the deliveryman tosses aimlessly on my front steps.

Monday? Sunday? Saturday?

The bed still smells of him, of his vomit.

Tuesday? Wednesday?

Some letters come, bills I won't pay. The water barely drips from the open mouth of the faucet.

I've grown accustomed to the light that seeps in between the slats of the lowered blinds.

Renato is late; it's been weeks since his delays started.

I imagine that today he'll arrive in the morning, when my watch has stopped. Trembling, pale. Reeking of alcohol. I'll lay him down in my bed and I'll give him something to drink. I'll tie the newspapers up for him, and before he babbles about how it's imperative that he put them in his old cart to exchange them for a few coins, I'll strip the clothes off his bony body, embroidered with ribs and hairs, and I'll work at his soft penis with my lips while I masturbate.

I close my eyes and I hear the doorbell before the wheels of the cart.

I'm surprised; it's exactly midnight. Renato is back on schedule.

I pick up my comb and notice that my hands have a yellowish hue. I arrange the few strands of black hair on my head. The rest is gray. I scratch my scalp in my haste; it bleeds.

I descend slowly, barefoot, with the already empty glass in my hand. My fingers tremble as I open the latch. I only see his body against the moonlight. This time he's not wearing a hat, and he doesn't have his jacket on.

"Renato, I've been waiting for you. Come in."

I wrap my arms around his body but something's different. His elegance, his vigorous posture, how hardy he is. At his side I feel scarce, far too fragile, about to collapse like a statue made of damp sand, soaked in alcohol.

I caress his head and my palm slides on his hair, his curiously long mop of hair.

"Renato, is it...?" I whisper, drunk, with this strange feeling.

I try to make out his lips in the darkness. His mouth resists, as always, until it gives in.

"Renato..."

And he replies, saying something.

It's been ages since I've heard him speak. I don't even remember the last time, if there ever was one.

Has there ever been any conversation? I ask myself, suddenly exhausted.

I don't know. I'm not capable of recalling this memory.

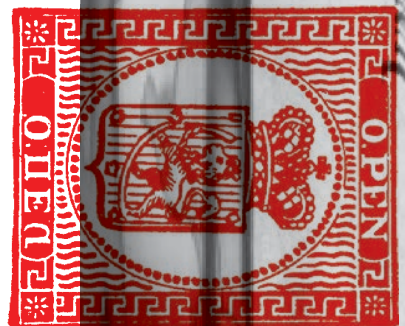
I comb my hair with my fingers, and I wet my lips while I look at his mouth gesticulating, and I see teeth, his head rises and falls animating a luxuriant mane of graying hair, hurling words at me. That seven days ago they found him dead, that she is, that she...

The woman's voice interrupts. Panic in the clumsiness of my ears, and she...

"I've come for this week's papers..." I think she says.

"For the paper bodies. Do you have them? Have you saved them for me?"

Her words shatter on the pavement. Then she raises her hand to my head, picks one of my gray hairs and pulls it softly, like Renato. Like him... she can follow me. And letting herself be led by my hand, up the stairs to my room, she asks me if there will be a glass of wine for her, too.



## Occupo

Occupy / the movement

Occupy / the man

Occupy / the statement

Occupy / the stand

Occupy / the city

Occupy / the lesser land

Occupy / indifference

Occupy / the missing hand

*Occupy the under*

*Occupy the overworld*

Occupy / the socket

Shock You-py / the Occu-Lord

Occupy / the Occulypse

A-nnoculate / 'em all

Occupy / the meta-me

The enemy inside

Occupy / delusion

Let illusion be your ride

*Occupy the faith*

*Of what you faithfully deny*

Occupy / allegiance

If allegiance / be your guide

Occupy / forgiveness

If the giveness / let you shine

Occupy / the Twitter feed

The middle mobilized

Occupy / the offer

Of a softer genocide

*Occupy the populi*

*To get what you desire*

See / the ninety-nine percenter

Occupy the home

See / the number one percenter

Occupy the bone

See / the incomplete elitist

healin' Pharacies

See / the obsolete oppression

bring you to your knees

*Occupy the body*

*Modify the occupy*

Occupy / The tenement

The opulent / The firmament

Occupy / The sacrament

The testament / The best of it

Occupy / The eagle eye

The Inca die / The Mogrify

Occupy / The elephant

The all of it / The infinite

*Occupy the tenements*

*That occupy your lord*

Occupy / The brain the giver

Occupy / The lung the liver

Occupy / The breath the bringer

Occupy / The blood the river

**Occupy / Your Elevation**

**Occupy / Exhilaration**

**Occupy / Affiliation**

**Occupy / Illumination**

**Occupy / Echo-Location**

**Occupy / Re-Generation**

**Occupy / Ecstatic Tactic**

**Tic / Tec / Tonic / Importation**

*Occupy the start*

*The heart will occupy the I*

**Occupy / intelligence**

**The well-intentioned poem**

**Occupy / the language**

*Occupy the nostro-dome*

**Occupy / the infant**

**Occupy fragility**

**Occupy / the elder**

**Occupy ability**

*Occupy the undecided*

*Light you want to be*

**Take / a dip**

**into Matric / u la-ted / eco-mania**

**Take / a tip**

**and make it trip / into / yer genitalia**

**Lookit / what I can do**

**with Accapella Bacchanalia**

**Lookit / what I can do**

**when my command is such a failure**

*Occupy the ego*

*Occupy humility*

Assimilation  
Purification  
Miscegenation  
Reverberation

Philo-sophation  
Re-calibration  
De-stabilation  
Me-generation

*Occupy the higher right to  
Occupy your skies....BRAAAAAAAM*

Occupy / the heat wave  
Let it soak your body  
Occupy / the street, babe  
Let it rock your party

Occupy / the beat, babe  
Let it work your body  
Occupy / the booty shake  
Make it nice 'n naughty

*Occupy the yeye  
Occupy the yaya yooooooooo*

if i  
re ly            do i  
on i            be i  
of i            if i  
                 of why

can i  
de fy            if i  
the i            de-why  
of i            the i  
                 of i

*Occupy falsetto echoes  
Of your prophecy*

Occupy / la vida vida  
Occupado / lado malo  
Occupoco / loco solo  
Occupara / labra holler...

agh...

la / vida seca

ca...

la / sida weso

so...

sa / mina voco

va...

pa / lante sante

end...

collision

do we...

end decision

do we...

enter poison

do we...

enter noise an'

do we...

imposit the passive  
opposite the posi  
tive the bit to bitter  
sweet the beat to peel a

part / the body body  
heart / the body body  
start / the body body  
break / the body...

IF YOU SEE *you're...*  
SOMETHING  
SAY *you're...*  
SOMETHING  
SHOW *your...*  
SOMETHING

I wanna...  
feel...  
real...  
wheels...  
turn...  
she...  
he...  
we...  
be.....

*Occupy the rhythm*  
*Occupy the rhyme within*

th-th-th-th-th-this...  
i-i-i-i-i-is...  
m-m-m-m-m-my...  
t-t-t-t-t-time...  
t-t-t-t-t-o...  
l-l-l-let you know...  
it's not too late

*Occupy the feather*  
*Occupy the fate of man*



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31	27	28	29
32	27	28	29

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02.28...30

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## The No Manifesto of Tribu No

*The Tribu No was an informal group of poets and artists who created art actions in Sant  de Chile, from 1967 to 1972. Cecilia Vicuña named it and authored the “No Manifesto”.*

Charlie Parker’s no-movement, this is what we are in the temperate and unsettled night of the South. As long as life’s magnificence persists in our solitary yet connected experiences, nothing worries us.

We manifest no desire and no characteristic. To avoid being pigeonholed, we put forth no manifesto, but we are not afraid of pigeonholing ourselves—that would be as likely as suddenly becoming Polynesia’s most daring parachutists.

We upset order with our exacerbated immobility. Moreover, the no-movement belongs to Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Nicolás de Cusa, Martínez de Pasqualiz, Rimbaud, Philoxenus, and, most of all, André Breton and Hölderlin. In reality, we do not want to become demonstrators, since it would make the experience predominantly public.

We undermine reality from within, which is why we are subversive and loving. Furthermore, we are so minor and unknown as to delight in our freedom.

Tribu No’s campaigns are not highly clandestine, and the only visible results of we who live-not the no-movement are our stupid works.

We hope to turn solitude into the world’s new idol. ha ha

We say no-thing. After speaking centuries of IT, IT remains a secret.

Our macabre intent is to leave humans naked, without preconceived notions, without conventional attachments-attire.

Have no fear. Our works will take years to manifest. We are not playing around.

The interior of the seed is soft.

IT is known only by living IT. Whatever IT is.

IT is yet to be discovered.

Santiago de Chile, 1967

## Introduction to *The Stupid Diary*

I was having a nap on my boyfriend's bed when I suddenly woke up with a force grabbing me by the nape of the neck, a sort of inner command coming not from within, but from language itself.

Forget with-in with-out in-side-out, it's all the same, the force just wanted me to write. I sat by the bed and began to type:

“bagdad y los helicópteros, bagdad y las personas que cantan ...”

It was December 4, 1966, I was 18 years old, and the dictation went on for 5 years and ended just as it began, of its own accord in 1971.

When I look at it now, I see 2,000 pages, written at full speed, legal size, single spaced with little margins, “de bote a bote” we say in Spanish, covering it all: a dense ocean of words.

And what was it all about? This archive of the young girl, writing naked (when it was hot), furiously or laughing aloud at her own inventions, writing in a manner fully aware of itself, enjoying every bit of it, knowing that whatever was happening in the “diario” was the source of it all.

I can say it is the uncensored testimony of the Indian mestizo girl seeing the cosmos from her bedroom in Santiago, a wild mix of rage and tenderness, sex, shit and blood, focused primarily on seeing her own perception, as an animal licks its own parts. She is witnessing the formation of her thoughts without shame or preconception, without a single regard or expectation of achievement or perfection. She is opening the floodgates to the true nature, the spirit of the unrepressed female mind.

The Diario remains unpublished today, and every attempt the girl made to publish its fragments in book form was censored or thwarted for forty years.

During that time, only a handful of poems from the Diario made their way into magazines or artisanal editions such as the *Sabor a Mi* of Beau Geste Press, 1973.

Cecilia Vicuña, New York, May 5, 2015

---

## Mondo (Excerpts from *The Stupid Diary*)

Poetry is the means by which unreality invites reality to switch sides.

•

Sex is God's gaze.

Daylight's key.

•

Who knows of light?

The great luminous coitus!

•

Suffering and happiness are indistinguishable to the soul who laughs at it all.

In future luminosity we will lack contingency.

•

The sea is the sky of another sky.

•

We must lure the future and place it between our thighs as a done deal.

An instantaneous life, not a shitty one.

•

Sex is incorruptible.

•

Between gap of thigh and sliver of night, Uxmal.

March 1967

•

Say of them

O, black vagina

O, red vagina

O, vagina of gold

Legs of ivory

and that's all!

March 1967

•

Thoughts are digested like grain and deliver equally precious nutrients.

People without food but with ideas have survived for centuries.

But well-fed people without ideas waste away in oblivion.

I am what is on the verge of becoming, what rises in smoke signals.

•

I carry on my back those who weep over my lost Incahuasi.

•

My language is restrained, elegant and delicate, like clouds at dawn.

My language is low-class, like the prostitute I intimately am.

1966

---

## Mundo (Fragmentos del *Diario estúpido*)

La poesía es una invitación de la irrealidad para que la realidad cambie de bando.

•

El sexo es la mirada de dios.

La llave de la luz del día.

•

La felicidad es un órgano interior.

Si eres monje sé tú y sé yo

•

Sufrimiento y felicidad son lo mismo para el alma que se ríe de todo.

En la luminosidad futura vamos a carecer de contingencia.

•

El mar es el cielo de otro cielo.

•

Hay que traer al futuro e instalarlo entre los muslos como cosa ya hecha.

Vida instantánea y no mierda de vida.

•

El sexo es incorruptible.

•

Entre un hueso de muslo y una pizca de noche, Uxmal.

Marzo 1967



Dí de ellas

oh vagina negra  
oh vagina roja  
oh vagina de oro

piernas de ma  y no más!

Marzo 1967

Los pensamientos se digieren como un cereal, constituyen un alimento tanpreciado como el natural.

Pueblos sin comida, pero con ideas han sobrevivido durante siglos.  
Pero los pueblos bien alimentados y sin ideas se pudren en el olvido.

Soy lo que está a punto de amanecer, lo que se eleva en las señales de humo.

Llevo a mis espaldas a los que lloran por mis Incahuasi perdido.

Mi lenguaje es sobrio, elegante y delicado como las nubes del alba.  
Mi lenguaje es rastrero como la prostituta que intimamente soy.

1966

---

## Woodland Pattern Book Center, Madison, Wisconsin, September 29, 2001

I cannot help but think of the things that happened when we were doing that dance and this is again for the people who saw the film last night. In this dance, we were dancing at the pier, a few yards, not a few yards, I should say, like ten blocks away from the World Trade Center. And so for now for me it's impossible to read this, and not see each time the two shafts of light. You know. This is what happened. You know the towers disappeared and they became this white light going up and I didn't realize of course any of this but poetry has this bad -abit. Or how do you pronounce -Hh-abit. Hmm? Of saying things before they happen. You know? It's a scary thing. And you try not to, but in any case it's not up to you, it's up to something else. And so um, I want to read you some poems that were written—here it says '97, so that I hope it must be true. And one of them is a very sad story, and at a few blocks from my place—actually, only a block and a half, this story actually happened. An Ecuadorian me-grant, mi-grant worker was digging a hole for Con Edison, hmmm, and apparently he felt very tired, and he took a little nap at the end of the hole, and one of his co-workers came with this huge machine with tons of rubble, and nobody took notice of the little migrant worker

sleeping

under

and threw all the rubble

on top of him

nobody noticed

that he had been gone

nobody

none of his co-workers

missed him

they closed the hole

put cement on it

night came

and he was missed at home by his brother

And his brother

came to the work place and said:

Where is my brother Luis?

Your brother Luis? Nobody even remembered him

And this is very telling

because this is like our position

the position of the little dark ones

Nobody even notices

whether we are

or we are not

there

And this man, the brother,  
insisted: He's here in this hole [tapping lectern]  
And they fought him and said no, no he's not  
He probably disappeared  
He went somewhere else  
If he was here we don't remember  
Denying the whole thing  
Until he pressed, he pressed, he pressed, and finally they opened the hole and there it was:  
Luis, crushed, like this

Of course, he was dead

So this poem is in memoriam for Luis Gómez

*Escoooooombro y olvido  
sue-ño malherido  
el enterrado vivo  
el hombre deshecho  
sin cuerpo ni abrigo  
viajaaando en el ruido  
el hooooombre deshecho  
viajaaaaando en el ruido*

Forgotten rubble  
wounded dream you are  
discarded alive  
man undone  
no body  
no warmth  
noise in transit  
discarded man  
undone you are





## Entering

*Precarious is what is obtained by prayer. Uncertain, exposed to hazards, insecure.*

*From the Latin "precarious," from "precis," prayer.*

I thought that perhaps all this was only a way of remembering.

To record in the sense of touching the strings of emotion:

To record comes from *cor*, the core of the heart.

Listening with the fingers, a sensory memory came first;

the scattered bones, the sticks and feathers were sacred objects I had to put in order.

To follow their will was to rediscover a way of thinking; listening to the elements I travelled down pathways of the mind that led me to an ancient silence waiting to be heard.

To think was to follow the music, the feeling of the elements.

This is the way a communion with the sky and the sea began, the necessity to respond to their desires with a work that would be prayer, a joy to the elements.

Joy itself is the prayer.

In the act of offering I recalled an essential poetic form:

If at the beginning of time poetry was an act of communion, a form of entering into a shared vision, now it is a space that can be entered, a spatial metaphor.

•

---

It was natural for poetry to complete itself in space:

If the poem is temporal, an oral temple,  
the palace or form is a spatial temple.

Both temples are entryways to the sacred space of metaphor.

•

Precarious is what is obtained by prayer.

“The quipu which records nothing,” an empty string was my first precarious object.

I was praying making a quipu, offering up the desire for memory.

Desire is the offering, the body is only a metaphor.

•

In ancient Peru diviners traced lines of dust in the earth, as a way of divining, or letting the divine speak through them;

“...they invoked the spirits through an incantation and tracing lines on the ground.”

•

Lempad of Bali says: “All art is transient, even stone is worn away. God makes use of the essence of the offerings and the people of the material remains.”

•

To recover memory is to recover unity:

To be one with the sky and the sea  
To feel the Earth as your own skin  
is the only way to pleasure Her.

New York, 1983

N E E N A H , E J I  
 A N D T H E B I R D S

I'm the sort of late adopter who would've been illuminating vellum manuscripts a century after Gutenberg, shaking my tonsure at the impertinent innovations of the Fifteenth Century. In our accelerated culture, this resistance equates to several years' delay before acquiring a cell phone, then another lag until a phone-with-camera/internet. This latter frontier crossed, I was advised by friends who have actually lived in the 21st Century since it started to get on Twitter: as a way to publicize my speaking events, to take notes, and to archive my interests digitally.

Doing so changed how I work, what I notice, and how I think about the things I notice. While I still carry my Uniball pens and a Moleskine notebook, I now take pictures and tweet notes, written half for myself and half for my followers. I have no drawing ability, but now my camera allows me to attend to, record, and later think about visual aspects of the city.

So to my two topics here: manhole covers and birds,

two things that don't obviously go together, but both of which I have been able to note, think, and write about differently due to the technology of phone cameras and the internet.

My interest in manhole covers and sewer grates grows out of a long-term plan to write about Chicago's street grid, both physical and textual. The physical grid intrigues me as a way to think about how the built environment of the city relates to nature (geology and geography, water and land, flora and fauna). The textual grid shows human history, how the city was mapped and planned, how its parts were named and numbered, inscribed as a text to be read.

The surface grid of the streets conceals the other grids that enable Chicago to function: water pipes to bring Lake Michigan to every building,

sewer pipes to take waste out. Heat and power and information flow through conduits of gas, electric, and telecom grids. All of these hidden systems reveal their presence through manhole covers and sewer grates.



Sewer grates are designed to allow water to flow from the paved street surface, one defining aspect of the city: an impermeable layer of pavement upon the ground, impeding the natural water cycle. Manhole covers work as a part of that pavement (supporting car traffic), yet are readily removable to enable workers to access the underground grid.

I don't recall exactly when I started attending to manhole covers, but I know why: it had to do with the aesthetics of the everyday city, of the countless things we take for granted. They can be read as poems, or Zen koans that reveal paradoxical truths:

“Sanitary sewer” seems oxymoronic, but a moment's thought recalls that without sewers our waste would run in the gutters.

Other texts seem imperative: a word to Lear on the heath or Ahab on the Pequod.

Bell Systems, with its iconic logo, becomes AT&T; Edison becomes Commonwealth Edison becomes ComEd, with its meaningless starburst logo.

I tweeted out, jokingly, “Who's this DEE?” and a follower answered, and so I learned about the William Dee Company, long-defunct Chicago manufacturers of industrial building products, including manhole covers.

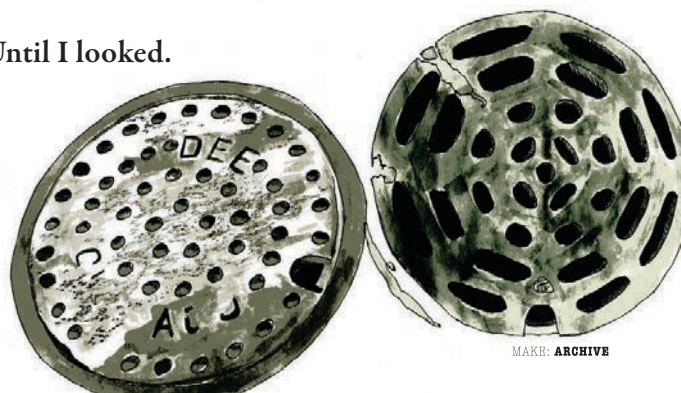
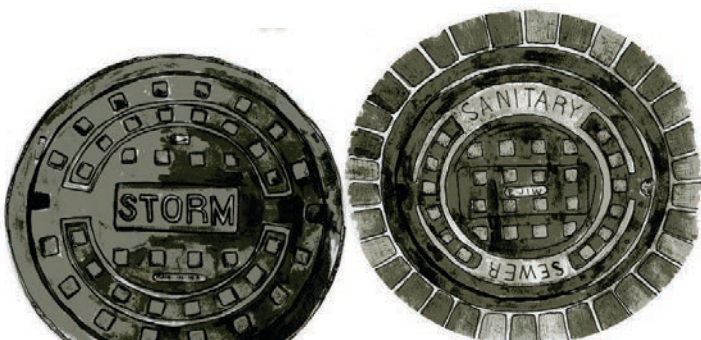
Most of the covers, along with other metal city fixtures like the plates that shackle trees into sidewalks on the commercial streets of the grid, bear logos of their manufacturers. Two predominate: Neenah Foundry and East Jordan Iron Works, often abbreviated “EJIW.”

Neenah, Wisconsin, and East Jordan, Michigan, are part of the far-flung network of smaller industrial cities that channel extracts from the earth (iron ore, in this case) into the built environment of Chicago. Chicagoans buy cabins in Wisconsin or Michigan to go fishing and get back to nature, sometimes very near the mines of various iron ranges. When we return home, we walk and drive over products forged from that same land.

The multi-lobed cruciate designs vary. Some have rectilinear crossbars (two or three or four, for even-numbered lobate symmetry; I haven't seen any in Chicago that are radially symmetrical like starfish). Others curve more, with sinuous spines and rounded gaps, more like plants growing than sharp industrial I-bars.

When I first spotted this one near my home (.04 miles away to be exact, according to my bike computer), I was struck with how oblivious I had been. At the time of this writing, I have lived in my apartment for 23 years. I have walked or biked past or over this grate literally thousands of times, and I never saw it.

Until I looked.



And so to birds.

Birds are omnipresent: they nest in our eaves, eat at our backyard feeders, shit on our cars. You can always hear birdsong in the city because the lights that illuminate the grid down to the most obscure dead-end street fool birds into thinking dawn approaches all night long.



But their movement through the city is in no way limited by, or even logically related to, the grid. “As the crow flies” is a measure of straight line distance unmediated by cul-de-sacs, diverters, and one-way streets.

So birds, for me, epitomize the natural world within the city. I’m not a serious bird-watcher; I don’t keep a life list. But I do notice them, and the same cell phone that enables me to take countless pictures of manhole covers also allows me to catch birds.



But whereas I can spot an interesting sewer grate from my bike and note it mentally to shoot later (it’s not going anywhere), a Cooper’s hawk perched on a chain link fence in an alley, seeking prey on a freezing January day, has to be shot that instant.

I’d seen Coopers’ hawks in the area before, circling high above, once in a tree in my backyard. This day, walking home from a coffee shop on Western, incredulous that the bird sat so still, I pulled the phone from my exterior coat pocket, removed my glove, flicked one finger, aimed, and shot. Then I stepped closer and shot more. It swooped off before I could reframe for a flight shot, but still. Look at this magnificent killer bird, for whom the grid is just some stuff at right angles to be flown around or perched on.

For the more timid avian subjects, I make a game of walking closer while angling away to reduce the perceived threat level, remaining silent and still for a moment or two between steps.

By this method, a flock of Monk Parakeets—a unique Chicago phenomenon, Argentine pet birds gone feral on the South Side, first in Hyde Park, now spread to other neighborhoods—in a field across from the 91st Street Rock Island Metra station can be captured in flight and en masse.

On a winter’s morning the scores of sparrows that mob the backyard feeders can be frozen in time, individual feathers and wingbeats sharp as etched glass.

The same technology that allows me to notice, record, and discuss the most solid and utilitarian aspects of Chicago’s built environment also allows me to capture these fleeting moments of natural beauty that birds provide us as they move through the city we share. ■



G O O D  
S A M A R I  
T A N S



After promising each other just one drink, that turned into one more, and then another until they were both sufficiently drunk and the bar had closed, Blair and Julia were headed for Blair's one-bedroom shit stain on Whipple for a nightcap of spliff and tequila. Though they were both at the age where drinking in moderation had become the norm among their peers, neither Julia nor Blair had attempted to learn the concept. Julia was now in the middle of giving Blair some drunken advice about the importance of regular toenail trimming.

"You just have to do it."

Why Julia found it necessary to lecture people regarding their grooming habits was beyond Blair, but Julia had concrete motivations. Those motivations had nothing to do with people in general, and everything to do with Blair in particular.

First, let's be totally honest: Blair doesn't even have a weekly personal care regimen let alone a daily personal care regimen. Blair has a permanent case of dandruff and scalp itching and has no plans to do anything about either. She has

a mild form of chin rosacea. Her lips are always chapped or bitten to the point of bleeding. Her personal care regimen consists solely of wearing her underwear inside out just to avoid that task of laundry.

Julia had thought the phrase "personal care regimen" at least three times in the last half block and she died inside a little. She needed a cigarette to help stop the death, or to speed it up. She wasn't sure which.

Julia dug into her tote bag.

"I just always forget to do it," said Blair. "I don't think I even own a toenail clipper."

"Then buy one," said Julia.

"Sure, sure."

Blair probably didn't wash her hands after going to the bathroom. She definitely never washed her produce prior to consumption. She possibly couldn't go a single day of her cycle without some spotting in her panties.

It wasn't even Blair's particular grossiosities that really bothered Julia. She made up the word (grossiosities) just now while tossing the empty pack on the curb. What really bothered Julia was:



She didn't have any cigarettes. And also the frequency at which Blair would call attention to said grossiosities. Julia figured Blair did it either to look like she gave zero shits or to provoke pity with the expectation

that said pity would then somehow morph into a compliment.

*Oh no, I totally didn't even notice that rosacea rash along your jaw line. Oh now I see it. Oh but hardly. Oh no, no, but you're still really beautiful.*

It's true, Blair was still attractive despite all the aforementioned failures in personal hygiene. It was the compliment-seeking behavior that was ugly. It was also proof that Blair actually deeply gave many, many a shit. Julia found the whole thing both tedious and depressing. To put it another way: Julia was tired of hearing about Blair's problems. You don't want rosacea? See your dermatologist. Don't want to rip holes in the toes of every one of your socks? Clip your toenails. Change your tampons regularly. Just suck it up and go to the laundromat. Use chapstick. Take some fucking responsibility for your happiness. The list went on and on. If there was one thing Julia had learned in her thirty-year attempt at living, it was this: Complaining is not attractive.

"Why would I buy a toenail clipper if I won't even use them?" said Blair. She stumbled and

laughed at herself.

Julia said nothing to that. She couldn't even look at her. Julia looked down to the sidewalk and tried not to step on any cracks, a learned trick that kept her from appearing too intoxicated.

It was then, seeing Julia sidestep the crack in the curb, that Blair realized with inured clarity that Julia dispensed advice because she hated herself. Why Julia hated herself with her \$100 ombre, ability to utilize mismatched articles of clothing to create the perfect outfit, and striking, lopsided-but-in-a-good-way facial features, was a mystery. Julia liked feeling knowledgeable and smart and interesting, and really wasn't that level of deep-seated insecurity just so, so, so sad? And wasn't Blair just doing Julia a favor by being kind of fucked up by contrast? And wasn't she just trying to be funny? And wasn't she giving Julia the little self-esteem boost she needed to get by? Blair was a really, really good friend. The best friend a girl could have.

Of course it is possible that in the morning both Blair and Julia won't think any of this. Maybe they'll laugh at their hangovers and promise to drink in moderation next time, but for now, they are going for a nightcap. They are going to pretend to have fun and maybe even dance in their underwear. Maybe after enough pretending they'll even actually have fun. They'll do moderation later. And this blonde girl walking toward them now as they crossed Sacramento Avenue, her head hanging like a limp flag, she got it too. She got the whole drunk, fun, no moderation thing.

The girl had skinny arms but was plump around the middle. She held on to a black purse from the tips of her lazy fingers. The bag nearly brushed the lip of the curb as she stepped into the intersection and saved herself from what could

have been a particularly nasty fall, only to wipe out in the middle of the road on the very next step.

HAHAHA.

The girl looked up at them, glassy-eyed and wavering. She was hardened, her long shag thinning around the hairline, her lips puffy and swollen, her cheekbones high and sharp. Blair figured Road Kill had looked pretty once, but coke or meth or something else altogether had withered her looks into a blunt edge.

They kept standing there laughing until a silver sedan down the block flashed its brights. As it slowed to round the corner, a tube top—that’s what Julia called them, you know the type: fake tanner, French manicure, doesn’t wear a coat to the club in sub-freezing winter—hung out the passenger-side window and yelled, “Get out of the road, bitch.”

“Hey, maybe it wants to die.” Blair spread out her arms in a confrontational, hey-come-get-me gesture, “Alright?”

Road Kill tried to get up only to fall again.

The tube top flicked the bird at Blair then slid back into her passenger seat. The car swung wide to avoid the mess in the road then sped up Milwaukee Avenue, no doubt in search of a 4 am bar. Blair and Julia both laughed again because getting flicked off is always hilarious, and because the girl in the road could have easily been them, had been them on more than one occasion. Sometimes the only way to deal with looking in the mirror is to laugh at your own reflection.

HAHAHA.

Blair helped Road Kill to the curb. The girl’s black leather bag slid off her shoulder and all manner of shit hit the sidewalk. A pack of Marlboros landed in the gutter next to a keyless keychain that said in an ugly serif font, *The only runs I do are beer runs*. Julia scooped up the pack

of cigarettes (half empty) and began scanning the ground for a lighter. Road Kill crouched down to shove her shit back into the bag but her squat slid into a clumsy sprawl on the sidewalk.

Blair put a hand on the girl’s head. “You ok?”

“I’m fine, I’m fine, I’m nothing,” the girl said. Then, “I don’t know how this happened.”

Julia paced. “Seriously? Who has cigarettes and doesn’t carry a lighter?”

“You,” said Blair. It was true. Julia never had a light.

As Julia continued to search the ground for a flame, Blair began to help with the purse. She shoved a handful of receipts into the leather bag and felt a hard, small bottle. Praise Jose, it was Quervo. Blair thought better of pocketing it. A little nip would be all. She screwed the cap back on and slid the bottle back into the bag without Julia or the drunk girl noticing. It was like it never happened. The feeling was intoxicating. Not the booze (of course it was mostly the booze) but doing something in secret and getting away with it. Then Blair thought about how this must be what it feels like to be a cheater (what people don’t know won’t kill them) and she felt a little guilty. *I’m an asshole.*

Never mind that Julia saw the stolen sip and was too preoccupied to make a comment. If anything she was mildly peeved that Blair failed to offer a swig. *What an asshole.*

“Where do you live?” Blair asked the girl.

Road Kill pointed south over Blair’s shoulder toward California Avenue, then her eyes rolled white and she rocked forward. Blair caught her shoulders before skull hit sidewalk.

Julia stopped scanning the ground. “Oh no, no, no.”

“Well, we can’t just leave her here.”

See: Blair wasn’t a *complete* asshole.

Road Kill perked up. "I'm fine, I'm fine. So nice, so nice."

None of them were fine. Neither fine nor nice. Ok maybe Blair was leaning toward decent for wanting to walk this wasted waste of time home, but Julia knew it came from some warped need for affirmation. This was the kind of story Blair could tell herself later. Something to post on Facebook to get likes. A way to fool herself and others into thinking she was a caring person.

It wasn't so much that Julia didn't feel sorry for Road Kill. It was just that, yes, she had been here before and she had managed just fine. She hadn't needed any help. Of course Julia didn't recognize the hypocrisy of this last thought. She knew that people (Blair in particular) needed tips when it came to lifestyle choices, it was just that Julia didn't want to actually do anything. And besides, Road Kill wasn't all that fucked up to begin with. See:

Road Kill pointed at a dark blue shape in the street and slurred, "Lighter."

"See, she's totally fine." Julia snatched the Bic and pulled a smoke from the stolen pack.

"Maybe this will be like, something we can be proud of. You know? Like look at us being good, you know? Like the next time we drink ourselves stupid or sleep with inappropriate people we can

think about how we helped this girl home and it'll be like a good excuse to be bad, you know? Like one good thing for a bad thing," said Blair.

Julia had hit the nose on the nail, or the head on the toe or however the phrase went. She knew Blair better than Blair knew Blair, and just knowing that Blair had such little self-awareness made Julia very, very happy.

"Fine," said Julia. She took a deep inhale of her cigarette before picking up Road Kill by the armpit. "Whatever helps you sleep at night."

Blair was both too drunk and too sober to care about Julia's snide remark. This state of being between wasted and not wasted enough was why Blair hung out with Julia in the first place. No one else would close down a bar with her and then decide it was a good idea to keep going. This is what having fun looks like.

A block later: A popped collar walking up Milwaukee Avenue yelled, "Your friend is fucked," while taking a pic with his iPhone.


"She's not our friend," they say, a big green spot in their field of vision. "We're good Samaritans."


Five minutes later the picture of Julia and Blair, with their arms crossed, squinting at the bright flash, is posted on Instagram. Between them Road Kill is passed out against a brick building, her chin drooping. Six minutes later Popped Collar will add the caption: Good Grls. lol ☺. Within twenty minutes the pic will have thirty likes and dude won't remember which drunk bitch said, "You wish."



P R I V I L E G E  
C O M P A N Y



B L U N T  
R E S E A R C H  
G R O U P

The following poems are composed entirely of phrases drawn from case files of inmates in the earliest youth prisons in California between 1910 and 1925. The original case files vary in length from 15 to 25 single-space typed pages. The histories contained in these files were gathered and archived by the now defunct Eugenics Records Office, an American organization that helped to shape the international eugenics movement through activities carried out in these reformatories (primarily at the Whittier State School unded in 1891). Youths were incarcerated, according to Chicana scholar Miroslava Chavez-Garcia, for “evidence of incorrigibility, such as begging, hanging out with immoral companions, wandering the streets late at night after curfew, petty theft, and engaging in unsanctioned sexual activity.”




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Eugenics “researchers” and fieldworkers used these juvenile prisons--and the utopian fantasies of early California development--as a laboratory to develop diagnostic procedures intended to identify certain “ungovernable” teens as mental “defectives” and to construct genealogies of “degenerate” families. These diagnoses were then used to determine whether the “propositus” (the teen “ward” in the case file) should be recommended for compulsory sterilization--to prevent him or her from “procreating”--a policy legalized by the California legislature in 1909 and pursued with great vigor until the early 1940s. Over 20,000 people were sterilized in California during this period, and some of the teens in these poems were referred to the sterilization “mills” of the Sonoma State Home and the Pacific Colony for the Feebleminded.





The development of eugenics touched the very core of the California myth: the founding of Venice Beach, for example, by Abbot Kinney in 1905 was motivated in part by fashionable ideas about eugenics. And, in a very different context, the diagnostic models and sterilization policies developed in California were enthusiastically received by eugenics “researchers” in Europe. The social engineers of Nazi Germany drew directly on the California model. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler alludes enthusiastically to the eugenics policies implemented in California and, before long, the Nazi symbology of “degenerates” destined for confinement and extermination included the categories of the “Asozial” (the asocial) and the “Arbeitsshu” (the work-shy)—terms reinforced by the eugenics vocabulary of the California experiment.




The pseudo-science behind the earliest Nazi Concentration Camps (at Breitenau, for example, in 1933) can thus be traced, in part, to the teen prisons of the California dream. Replicating its forgotten California affinities, the modern Breitenau facility eventually turned into a reformatory for teenage girls in the 1960s. Ulrike Meinhof, before she went underground as one of the founders of the Red Army Faction, produced a radio documentary in 1969 on the teen inmates of the Breitenau workhouse (which today houses a residence for the mentally ill).




Venice Beach, it turns out, was once the other shore of National Socialism. And the sterilization mill of the Pacific Colony was not far removed from the celebrity enclave of the Malibu Colony: in name and geographical proximity, but also in the disparate fantasies of asylum and experimentation haunting those places.






Youths of all races were confined at the Whittier State School, but the percentage of Chicano and African-American inmates (aged 12-17 years) was disproportionate to their numbers in the general population. The range of case files supplying the language of the teen “wards” (and their families) for these poems reflects this imbalance. In addition, the poems capture the eugenics vocabulary used by “fieldworkers” to condemn and curtail the infidel path of the work-shy, placing this jargon in contact with the direct speech of the inmates. Text in italics always indicates the voices of the “wards,” while text without quotation marks or italics conveys the words of the fieldworkers. Passages in quotes convey the voices of the wards, or of their families and friends, cited indirectly by the fieldworkers. In some case files, all direct statements by teen inmates were deliberately suppressed, producing an absent profile now made visible in these poems.


“Translation” of the lengthy original files occurs through a process of extreme condensation and assemblage. All language in these poems derives directly from the case files; the names are real.



As partial transcriptions, the texts presented here can also be viewed as experiments in investigative poetics: an approach rooted in the methods of documentary sampling and assemblage--a form of close listening--which makes no effort (in contrast to other models of appropriation) to avoid strong feelings. Originally compiled to justify the elimination of certain populations, the case files can now function--contrary to their original purpose—as a mutable archive of infidel expression, practice, and knowledge.



The ensemble of poems is entitled “Lost Privilege Company”--the name of the isolation ward at the Whittier State School where youthful offenders could be sentenced under harsh conditions for misconduct. Suicides in 1939 and 1940 by two Hispanic teens in solitary confinement brought unprecedented public scrutiny of the prison’s history and methods.



---

no “sticktoitiveness”

took about five months  
to get him “jiggered up”

*She too mean  
to keep us home*

range boy  
“bubbles”

as he is “dubbed” in the kitchen a capital dupe  
for the evil-disposed

father’s wearing  
his bungalow apron

F R A N K I E  
someone was looking for me  
someone looking for me

range boy traveled with white and black

says he would return the money

apron motto

*such is life  
I don’t know why*

no cry-baby laughs about it  
to think he couldn’t “put it over”

---

reads the dictionary and Mother Goose

J            J            O            S            E            P            H  
tore the bed clothes  
and everything else he could lay his hands on  
“just for meanness”

declared that the “bad man” had him

and that was the reason  
he “cut up” like he did.

One day he ate 25 cents’ worth of walnuts  
and fell into a fever.

They taught him to steal fruit from wagons  
among the things stolen were a hammer a chain and a dog

calls his step-mother “Hazel”

---

*I'd get a pie and ditch*

*I know what 'ud come to me  
they never found me out though*

A good pal with the boys who would come around  
and whistle for him  
when there was any adventure afoot

W I L L I A M

*let us sleep down in the cellar*

*on the old blankets my uncle had had for the bulldogs  
he used to keep down there*

the boy worked for a Japanese in the market  
tossing empty lettuce crates on a wagon thus obtaining

*a dollar each morning*

with which to buy a meal. He also indulged in the Hippodrome.

*Don't lock me in  
I'm here*

---

had to be taken out of school and strapped frequently.

*Might as well have been a table as a father I'd rather  
get out and lose my relatives*

propositus "wishes they had not been"

*No one ever wanted such a creature* always

sorry for her "contrary spells"

she does not know her salary  
working at the riveting machine at Levi-Strauss

because she dare not "open

the envelope"

J O S E P H I N E

---

to all questions

*I don't know*

mother calls his playthings "junk"

J O H N

all boys are "alike" to him

---

considers himself “pretty wise” he has  
silly laughing spells

U R I A H  
his chief joy to collect rubbish  
and tear up  
any American flags  
he could get and burn them

*oh, I don't know, I just play around*

as a method of discipline

the boy's mother put coal oil on paper lit it  
and held it to her children's feet

the boy's sister

Mary is a pretty girl  
with a nice alto voice but almost too lazy

to use it crazy about soldiers and sail

---

is effeminate, a great primper,  
stands before the mirror as often as he can  
giggles like a “billy-goat”

would just as leave stab someone

shirks work  
whenever possible

seems to have developed  
an unnatural affection for another boy

deeper than his looks indicate his babyish  
and girlish actions have kept him  
from being suspected

works at Fox, Universal, and Alaska Studios  
in mob scenes

his former grade-school teacher Mrs.  
“feebly inhibited with reference to the lighter and  
trivial things in life”  
particular fondness

field-worker noticed  
many pictures of Mexican boys in her home

---

Then he turned up suddenly in El Paso, Texas.

Needs taming

one day he took all the new brooms  
and cut off the handles then again  
he cut the locks off the lockers—said he wanted them  
to “make something”

MAN IS SERIOUSLY CUT



told to””put on his best clothes”

*the judge sent me here.*

“A boy and a chair” fell over  
but he kept on

steadily reading

V I C T O R  
never “batted an eye” he knew

he ought not to take it but he wanted it so he carried it off anyway

---

A *L B* E R T

---

*But I was square  
and they wouldn't let me go to my little sister's*

R A Y M O N D  
*they used to punish me by not letting me see her  
and I hated that most of all.*

We all know no good  
comes of that mixture.

To put him in

Lost Privilege Company for 40 days  
disobedience  
bad talk and disinclination to work

*would you ask a fellow to wash the dishes at noon hour?  
and would you keep throwing it up to a fellow*

*after you'd given him a good licking?*

Father slanders the boy's dead mother in his presence  
is reported  
to have beaten the boy on head and body  
until he was forced to scream for help

plays the cornet

whenever work was to be handed in  
his was always strangely  
"lost strayed or stolen"

## A / B

A.

The rules of the drop were simple. Someone contacted you with information about the data. That information, the directions to find the data, could take any form. The data as well could be in any form, though most rabbits assumed that the data—the proximate object of the game—was on a USB file.

Ben was contacted via a text message on his burner. An address, a time, nothing else. Nothing exact to give away the location, not yet.

Ben's friend Petey introduced him, or inducted him, he supposed. This was several weeks ago, in the dining hall, a long room with high ceilings and bad carpeting. It was getting late and the dinner crowd was starting to thin. Ben and Petey sat off by themselves at a table near the back, next to one of the windows that stretched from wall to ceiling on three sides of the room, and which, with the darkness outside, had become mirrors reflecting the room back on itself.

Petey was tall with red hair and bright red lips. He dressed very prep-school, in a blazer and a button-down shirt. He hunched across the table as he talked, conspiratorially, his head cocked slightly to the side. Petey's hand rested on the laminate wood between them, his large knuckles the same bright red as his mouth. Petey had a shelf of books in his dorm room that Ben suspected he hadn't yet read but which he found impressive nonetheless, Hegel, Rancière, Badiou.

"It's best to have a burner," Petey said.

"Do people get that serious about it? Like, tapping phones and shit?"

"You never know. It's not against the rules."

"Okay, sure. What next?"

"You wait until somebody contacts you.

Probably you'll get contacted soon, since you're fresh. The fresher the player, the less likely they are to be known. And that makes you valuable. If they don't know you, they don't watch you." By then, Ben understood, Petey was referring to the players of that other, shadow game, the one in which the point was to intercept the drop. These other unknown players were always referred to as "they" or "hawks" by the players on Ben's side of the game. "Most likely when you're contacted, you won't be told the precise location. Not all at once. As long as you don't know precisely, it doesn't do them any good to intercept you. Most likely, then, they won't try until you're right on top of it. That's when you'll be most vulnerable."

Petey leaned back, watched a group of girls walk by talking loudly, then leaned back in. "Once you get the files, don't open them. You don't know whether someone along the way has infected them."

"So what's the point, if I don't open them?"

"The point is to pass them along to the next rabbit."

B.

Ben and Petey shared a psychology class taught by an older Polish woman named Dr. Novak. She taught the same intro course under a slightly modified title each semester; there were students who had taken it two, three, even four or five times in a row. These students—including Petey, who had taken the class twice—sat in a group on the left side of the room, while other students, there to cover some requirement or another and seemingly unaware of the cultlike devotion that Dr. Novak could inspire, sat scattered and bored throughout the rest of the room.

Dr. Novak was perhaps in her sixties, short and of small build. She wore blue eye shadow and bright pink lipstick, a declared artificiality of makeup that seemed uncommon among the other professors, who for the most part seemed to either wear none or else apply it in ways not immediately noticeable. She would dismiss a point by throwing her arms out and waving her hands as if dispelling bad air, or she would loudly smack the back of one hand into the palm of the other to emphasize the words in a sentence. She would spend a class period explaining carefully the ways in which free will was impossible, an illusion—how, for example, experiments have shown that decisions occur in the brain a millisecond after we have acted, and hence our feelings of agency are a result of, rather than a cause of, our actions—and then, with less than a minute of class remaining, conclude without further explanation: “Do not, however, think for a moment that this makes you any less culpable.” Or, following a lecture on the Milgram experiment, she would ask for a show of hands—“How many of you would go all

the way? How many of you would be willing to press the button that kills him?” Looking out at the class, she would smile and say, “A few of you. That is good, you are probably correct. The rest, I am very sorry to say, you are lying.”

There were rumors about Dr. Novak, about her showing up unannounced at parties off campus, wandering through the students, smiling mysteriously, and acting in all other ways as if it were perfectly natural that she should be there; about affairs with students who had subsequently and quite suddenly left the university; and darker rumors, obviously untrue or even impossible, about her assisting in human experimentation in her previous life, before immigrating to the U.S. The exact details and circumstances varied. Sometimes it was in one of the former Soviet-bloc states, sometimes an unspecified strongman dictatorship in Latin America; occasionally, laughably, the rumor involved her working in Nazi prison camps, explicable either through immortality on her part or, more likely, a lack of historical grounding on the part of those spreading the rumor. Nevertheless, there clung to her, for those paying attention, a certain thrilling amorality.

In class Ben sat somewhere between the two groups, in a position that could have been taken, depending on one’s angle, as either the seat defining the outer edge of Dr. Novak’s devotees or as one among the scattered, disinterested others.

After each session students would hang around Dr. Novak’s desk talking, asking questions, offering theories, and Ben would pack his things somewhat more slowly than he had to, listening in. Today after class, as Ben finally made his way toward the door, Dr. Novak stopped him, saying, in her sharp, somewhat

mocking voice: “Ben! You should come here.” Then, to the others gathered: “The rest of you can go. I would like to talk to Benjamin.”

Dr. Novak leaned half-sitting on the edge of her desk. “Benjamin. You are friends with Peter, this is correct? He is a smart boy, Peter. He always wants to talk with me about Hegel, Žižek, things like that. It is nonsense, you know, but it is an interesting kind of nonsense.”

Ben smiled, unsure. “I know Peter. I mean, yeah, we know each other. We’re friends I guess.”

She studied him for several seconds, long enough for Ben’s smile to begin to feel fake, then said, “I am trying to determine if you are interesting. Are you a smart boy, Ben? I am only interested in the smart boys.”

“Yes,” he said, because whatever other insecurities he had, he had in fact never doubted whether he was intelligent. Dr. Novak nodded.

“That is good, good. You have been here for nearly one year now, that is correct, isn’t it? Do you have a subject? You need a subject. It is important to have a subject so that you can sell yourself in the marketplace. It doesn’t matter which one. Do you have a subject, Ben?”

“A subject?”

“A major.”

“No ma’am.” She raised her eyebrows at the “ma’am,” then quickly recomposed her face. She pushed herself off from where she had been leaning against the desk, then walked around it, took her seat, picked up a pen as if preparing to inscribe something. “Your subject is economics,” she said, not looking up at him. “Do you have any interest in economics?”

Something about the imperiousness of this statement made it seem okay for Ben to laugh, and he did. “I don’t know. Not especially.”

She waved a hand in the air, dismissing this. “The important thing is to have a subject. Do you

especially have an interest in anything else? No? Then it is settled. Your subject is economics. You will declare yourself this afternoon.”

Ben spent the afternoon looking up course descriptions for economics classes. *Economics*, declared one such description, *is the scientific study of human desires and aspirations*. Ben had, as far as he could tell, no aspirations whatsoever. When he pictured the future as he wanted it to be, it was a sort of warm, pleasant glow that seemed at a distance to contain faces and actions, but at which the closer one looked, the less it was possible to make out. He was vaguely aware that this was a rich kid’s affliction (though he would not have considered himself rich) and was aware enough to be vaguely embarrassed by it.

“Ideology teaches us not what to want, but how,” Petey had said once, in a line almost certainly cribbed from Dr. Novak. Perhaps this was Ben’s problem—he’d never been taught *what*.

A.

The game required a tremendous amount of faith. Faith, for example, that the game existed in the first place.

There was a small network of other players that Ben knew about. One of them, Megan, was also in the psychology class. Another had been a friend of Ben’s since orientation: each was pleasantly surprised to know that the other was part of the game. As much as he knew anything (which is to say, with inexact confidence), Ben knew that there were other players in the world, other people connected at various points with the circle he knew. It was best though not to know too many fellow players—the more you knew, the more valuable a target you became. One’s ignorance was a form of protection.

The beauty of the game was that, from the

moment one was inducted, one never knew what was important and what wasn't, and so Ben found himself paying close attention to things he would not have noticed before: the exact position of chairs in a room, a friend's tendency to cross and uncross her legs at certain key points in a conversation, the patterns of sidewalks. Everything was filled with a new and wondrous potentiality for meaning.

Ben asked Petey at one point whether the game extended beyond their school. They were in Petey's dorm room in the honors college, Petey's big Finnish roommate Janne sitting at his desk, staring intently at something on his desktop, possibly porn, headphones covering his ears. Petey shrugged. "I mean, I don't think we started it."

Who did? Ben wondered. How does something like this begin? An image, or not exactly an image but rather a certain sense of structure, occurred to him: the game as a virus, promulgating itself through human bodies and pathways built by humans, as natural and spooky as language, a thing with hosts and history but no exact point of origin.

B.

"Anyone could be a hawk," Petey said. "I could be a hawk. I'm not—I know that—but you don't know that. Do you see what I mean?"

A.

The drop would take place sometime after eight. Ben had received, via Petey, an invitation to Dr. Novak's house that night, to tea, and knew that the address he'd received on his burner was hers. "You've never been to her house before, right?" Petey said. "It will be a bunch of

us. Talking, bullshitting, probably somebody will bring beer. Dr. Novak makes this tea that is basically undrinkable. She just throws in whatever herbal things she has in her cabinets and lets it all steep together, and then she drinks vodka instead."

Dr. Novak's house was just beyond the student ghetto in a development of winding streets and inexact signs and a dozen iterations of what appeared to be the same condominium duplex. Ben finally found the right house not by the address but rather by following what he assumed to be another student, a young woman wearing a hoodie and carrying a case of beer. He didn't recognize her until he caught up with her near the door (whose address, as it turned out, was missing a digit—there was a ghost impression of a nine that had come unstuck between the second and fourth digits). Megan, from his psychology class, also an inductee. She had been a rabbit before, had made one successful drop. He nodded a hello and she smiled brightly at him.

The inside of Dr. Novak's house felt strangely anonymous—Ben almost suspected that it had come furnished and Dr. Novak hadn't bothered to change out any of the furniture or the paintings, which wouldn't have been out of place in a hotel room. "Come in, come in," she repeated, once they were already inside. "My son lives upstairs. Probably you will not see him. He is not friendly. He is not happy about living still with his mother, I don't think. Although where else would he live? He doesn't have any money. He is terrible at jobs. Come in! Most of the good books you see here are his. I only read boring things."

In the living room a group of students were sitting around a coffee table, talking, each seemingly engaged in multiple conversations at the same time. Ben recognized most of them.

Petey, of course, along with two other students from their class, twins, Justin and Jason, and some students that Ben didn't know by name but recognized from around campus. "Would you like some tea?" Dr. Novak asked. Megan had already opened one of the beers she'd brought with her, the rest of which she'd stored in the refrigerator. "I don't drink it myself," Dr. Novak continued, "but I feel that it is important that someone drink tea, if I am having people over for tea." Ben accepted a teacup and nearly gagged at the smell, at once sweet and acrid.

"Glad to see you," Petey said from his spot on the couch. Ben felt his burner buzz in his back pocket—quiet enough, he hoped, that no one else noticed. It was a little after eight. Though his impulse was to check it immediately, he made small talk for a minute or two before excusing himself to the bathroom. *Keep an eye on Petey*, the text read. Ben waited a moment more, then flushed the toilet and washed his hands before returning to the living room.

"We're stepping outside," Petey said. "Want to join us?"

B.

The sliding glass door at the back of the room led to a small, empty patio, with privacy fences on two sides and a view of a creek and woods several yards beyond. The night was muggy and close; it was nearly summer. Insects buzzed in complex, droning choruses. Above them, a light in the second-story window.

"Are you enjoying your first few weeks of the game?" Petey asked, handing Ben a cigarette. Ben started wondering, just a little, if Petey somehow had intuited that Ben had been tapped, if he was so easily readable. Petey, though,

mistook this for concern about the others on the patio with them. "It's okay. They're part of it too. Megan, you know already."

"Sure," Ben said, taking the offered cigarette, smiling.

Ben was one of those who, when Dr. Novak asked about the Milgram experiment, had raised his hand to indicate that he would most likely push the button that killed the ostensible subject. Megan had as well.

"This is Nick," Petey said. "He's been playing almost as long as me, I think. Inducted years ago." Nick nodded. "And Alison," Petey added, indicating a short blonde to Nick's right.

They stood around outside smoking and Megan, who was not beautiful but toward whom Ben's body at that moment longed in an overwhelming, aching way, said, "I don't actually think it's a game. Or at least I don't think it's just a game."

"Megan is a conspiracy theorist," Nick said. Megan hit him in the arm, and Ben felt a stab of jealousy.

"It's not a conspiracy," Megan said. "I don't think it's like the government or some secret spying program or whatever." She leaned in, raised her eyebrows. "I think it's an artificial intelligence. One that uses us as its circuits. Each time a drop is made, that's like a circuit being connected."

"A very slow artificial intelligence," Nick said.

"Sure, why not?" Megan took a drag of her cigarette and gave a suitably dramatic pause before saying, "Slow or *expansive*, maybe."

"I still don't see what makes this not a conspiracy theory," Alison said.

"A conspiracy requires that people *conspire*. This is emergence."

Alison blew out smoke and then waved it away from her face. "I think we've all heard

Megan's story. But what about Petey? Petey, you keep talking about how long you've been playing this. Surely you've made a successful drop or two?"

"Only one, actually," Petey said. "Years ago. It wasn't anything interesting." Ben felt another buzz from his burner. Probably this group was safe, probably. Still, he knew that it was when you were close to the drop that you were most vulnerable—Petey had drilled this into him. And if he took out his burner to check the message, anyone who was paying attention would know he had been tapped. Why else would he have a second phone, why else would he be checking it? Inside Dr. Novak sat, holding forth with Justin and Jason, pouring vodka from a bottle into a teacup and occasionally interrupting her pour to right the bottle and gesture with it.

"The rumor is, there was a hawk involved," Nick said. "That it got violent. That Petey left someone unconscious in an alleyway and was very lucky not to have been brought up on charges."

"That seems hyperbolic," Petey said. "It's a game, for fuck's sake. There was a scuffle. You want to avoid any interaction, if possible, of course..."

"The rumor is, you were the hawk," Alison said.

"Come on," Petey said.

"We could all be the bad guys," Alison said, smiling, eyes narrow. "We could all be on the *other side*. Infected by you—who did you pass the data off to, Petey?"

"Look, I'll tell you the story, if it's that important," Petey said. Ben's burner buzzed in his back pocket again, and Petey's eyes shifted over to his—a brief glance, just long enough that Ben thought: fuck, he's heard it. Was the glance a warning, possibly about one of the other three players on the porch with them? Or was it something else?

Ben excused himself, slid open the sliding glass door, stepped back into the living room. "Benjamin!" Dr. Novak called, seeming delighted to see him. She sat cross-legged on a pillow by the coffee table, the twins Justin and Jason to either side of her. "Come have some tea with us!"

Ben mumbled that he had to use the bathroom, to which Dr. Novak responded, "Of course you do, of course—the second door in the hallway, just before you reach the stairs—here, I can show you—"

"That's not necessary, thank you, I think I remember."

"From before, of course!" Dr. Novak was pushing herself up from the floor, she was beginning to come walking after him, it was a sort of a hobble, "My legs are asleep, ah, I've sat too long! Ben, have you been here before? No? Oh, of course not. But still, that's interesting, very interesting ... I would have thought I would have invited you before..."

A.

Ben locked the bathroom door behind him. He wondered, not for the first time, who the messages were from—one of the twins, inside, sitting on the couch, watching him through the glass door? One of the others standing with him outside, secretly texting him while appearing to be idly checking their phone?

Two messages. The first: *Megan has the data. She does not know you are the rabbit. Code word MIRROR.* The second: *Petey has a knife.*

This is ridiculous, Ben told himself. I don't want any part of this game. He texted back to the unknown number, *Out*, and didn't wait for a response. This time he didn't bother with the pretense of flushing the toilet or washing his

hands. He left the bathroom and turned toward the door, only to nearly collide with a short, stocky man with graying blond hair. The man grabbed Ben by the front of his shirt and pulled him close. "There is no *out*," he said, softly.

"Ben," Dr. Novak's voice called from somewhere behind him. The hand let go of his shirt. "Ben, you've met my son! Oh Timothy, I am glad you've come down—"

B.

Ben pushed past him and fumbled with the front door before opening it, then started walking, fast—not quite a run—trying to remember his way out of the housing development. There were no obvious paths to the main road, no signs indicating which way led to an exit and which to other subdivisions. He heard someone's footsteps behind him, then Petey's voice calling out: "Where are you going, rabbit? Oh, rabbit, where are you off to?"

"I don't feel well," Ben said.

"Oh, rabbit, come here, I will make it better."

"I'm not playing the game," Ben said, walking faster. "I haven't made the drop. I refuse."

As they walked, lights came on—motion sensors, recording their movements in a line of lighted driveways that stretched back to Dr. Novak's house. Ben came to a fork, chose one street without having any better reason for it than the other.

"Oh, rabbit, you say that, but I know you know where it is. Otherwise why would you be running?" At this Ben did take off running, sure that Petey was after him. He could not quite bring himself to scream—some part of him was still convinced none of this was serious, that it was after all only a game, that to scream or yell

out would be breaking some subtle contract. Then Petey was on top of him, driving Ben's chin into the blacktop, and Ben had somehow fumbled out his burner and flung it a few feet, where it had the grace to fall into a sewer drain.

"I don't have the data," Ben said. "I haven't made the drop."

"But you know where it is," Petey breathed. Ben tried to right himself and Petey, still on top of him, pushed him over and onto his back. Then his thumbs were on Ben's throat, pressing, so that when Ben finally said the name, it was inaudible.

A.

There was no *other side*. The thought flashed in his head like the sudden light before a filament burns out. Only a series of switches, the data traveling now this way, now the other.

"Megan," Ben croaked, when Petey let up the pressure on his windpipe. "The code word is 'mirror.'"

Petey rolled off of Ben and onto his back, breathing hard, while Ben lie gasping up into the night. After a moment Petey stood, brushed himself off, asked flatly if Ben was going to be okay. Ben nodded, without trying to right himself. He had a sense of something slotting into place, and a vision of the world after the last human being, of systems continuing meaninglessly, unobserved, without even pathos. And then, head swimming, this vision became jumbled with the present. He shook his head to clear it, tried finally, with limited success, to push himself up. What he took for a moment to be the moon was a streetlight. Petey reached out his hand. ■■■■■

## P R I N T

“I can’t believe what just happened,” Ginger said as she fired the ignition.

“Getting robbed in broad daylight, almost?” I asked.

“No, our reflexes. And he thought we were patsies. We won!” she said, pumping the steering wheel.

“I know. We were greased lightning.”

“How’s your arm?” Ginger asked.

“Still there.”

“Does it hurt?” Ginger asked.

“Kinda like when you peel off a blister. Stings. I think I got a bone bruise. But hey, don’t *you* feel like a *superhero*?”

“I got the wallet! Me!” Ginger said, again pumping the steering wheel.

“I always liked how your hands work.”

“We rule. But wasn’t that exactly what we’re *not* supposed to do?” Ginger asked.

“How’d that happen?”

“Remember what my dad said about why he did what got him the Medal of Honor? ‘*I got mad*,’” Ginger said.

“There wasn’t time to get mad.”

“You think we should’ve given it away?” Ginger asked.

“Obviously not. Everything I said for forty years was bullshit. I couldn’t practice what I preached.”

“Forty years?” Ginger asked.

“In 1973, Gary was walking through a park in DC. Three kids with a weapon stuck him up. Sound familiar?”

“Not at all,” Ginger said.

“The kids were nervous. Nervous armed amateurs are really dangerous. Gary told them, ‘I’m new at this. Have you done it before?’ and they said no. He said, ‘We’ll go step by step together.’ He gave them their lines and they repeated them. ‘This is a stick up,’ he said. ‘This is a stick up,’ they repeated. ‘Give me that watch,’ he said. ‘Give me that watch,’ they repeated. After he’d handed over his prized possession—a watch his grandfather made—he told the kids, ‘Now you say, ‘Turn your back and don’t watch where we go.’ They repeated their final line and

T H A T

that was the end of their speaking part.”

“What a lesson!” Ginger exclaimed.

“Right. Dead, Gary wouldn’t’ve needed a watch. He was better off giving it away. I’ll never forget.”

“And then there was our apartment,” Ginger said.

“Right, old women getting attacked on the street and even in the building. DC police sent out a cop who told those old ladies they should fight back. That infuriated me.”

“And you told him,” Ginger said.

“I said he was going to get them killed.”

“And what’d he say?” she asked.

“My daughter’d still be alive if she’d fought back.”

“He on a suicide mission?” Ginger asked.

“I believe—I can only speculate—they assigned him to community education to heal, but he was gonna get people killed.”

“Before tonight, nothing’d ever happened to us, right?” Ginger asked.

“No! Don’t you remember 2001? The Portobello flea market?”

“Refresh me,” Ginger said.

“Three guys walking toward us. Around 18, same as Alex. Up close, one stuck his leg out to trip me. Alex saw it coming, stuck his leg in

between, put his arm behind the guy who was tripping me, and slammed him to the ground. Their plan, obviously, was to rob us during the scramble. Instead, they got scrambled. They must’ve thought Alex was the incredible hulk.”

“It’s coming back,” Ginger said.

“The important thing is, another time, three guys got Alex in a back room to work him over. You remember what he did?”

“I wasn’t there,” Ginger said.

“Alex was bigger. He could’ve taken any of ’em. But, because they were three, he stood there and took it. He didn’t fight back. You know why?”

“He was afraid?” Ginger asked.

“He was smart. He knew, if he didn’t fight back, they’d have to stop. They couldn’t keep pummeling someone who took it. He didn’t even defend himself. It was mind over impulse. He taught me a lot that day. It’s great when your kids become your teachers.”

“Or your parents! Why didn’t you follow his example today?” Ginger asked.

“There wasn’t time. Instinct. I didn’t feel threatened.”

“You got physical,” Ginger said.

“So did you. What a great team!”

from *Floating Lanterns*

IV.

The kernel dreams it is already a gold spike of corn  
 and the boy dreams he is a man  
 evil dreams it passes unnoticed  
 and goodness that it plays a hand and wins  
 The dew dreams it is already the deep sea  
 and the golden seed that it is a brooch and bracelet  
 The root dreams it is a branch, that a bird makes its nest in it  
 and the cloud that it is already rain and seeping the fresh  
 asperity of grass

A superior algebra  
 equates  
 the day and night  
 what will be and what has been  
 what will come about and the calm  
 source of things

tumult and peace  
 convulsion and sea soothed  
 reality is bewildered upon the return  
 vortex-time  
 vortex  
 where the soul is bundled

Here it is,  
 Reality  
 the Jewel  
 the veil of crystals over the secret

trace of things                    its nascent hour  
 Sun  
 vortex-light  
 vortex-word  
 suspended maelstrom  
 dissolution  
 dissolution

3000 bombs  
 3000 bombs  
 3000 bombs in one weekend  
 how many faces  
 how many hands  
 how many legs  
 how many veils-gauze stuck to skin burning  
 how many stones over stones torn away  
 how many lives torn from life

VI.

And there was light.  
 Who could doubt this?  
 And the fields and skies and seas.

Subtle the one who divided  
 blue from blue  
 day from night  
 the dusk's metallic green  
 from the life-green of the meadow.

Subtle life.

The Angel watches  
wounded on its side.

Brutal.

Brutal also.

Who could deny it? Who  
would doubt that there is

blood

so much

blood

murano shedding

throughout the wall-world white shadow

oh wall-world always

wounded

always

perfect swollen

in the crystal-aleph of a becoming

silent and perfect

always

elsewhere?

The Angel-Number.

Perfect cipher, infinite, happy

concatenation

of randomness

—without beginning or end—.

Eight hundred billion white

sweet-smelling petals have

the jasmine of the real

—open and given.

emanation of the first lotus

—particle

of white faith.

Jasmine-noumenon.

Synergetic lotus

of eight and some billion

sweet-smelling petals,

wounded and given.

What was before:

the lotus or jasmine?

Through which paths do we go

if there is a path

—time wounded on its side?

Is there before and after?

Is there a way?

There is a perfect aleph-crystal

bloodstained.

Integer of convergent cuts there are

and at the center emptiness.



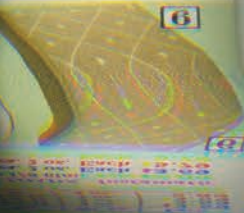


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A U T O

B I O G R A P H Y



I am autobiography, text, context.

I am a vixen. This could just as well be the autobiography of a male fox, but it just so happens that I am a vixen. *Vulpes vulpes*, female. Furry silver bush, sliver of tail, liquid gold sparkling eyes, heart of the earth, wet tongue like a swamp. Consider my body. Heed it and so begin to heal it. Consider this the story of a slave turned free. Consider it yours.

I was born in a cage. I was raised in a cage. Consider the line of my tail, the angle of my ears. Everything changes; all is transformed. And if you take the vixen out of the wild you just might take the wild out of the vixen. But that's my mother's story. Enough said.

I grew up as a vixen on her way to domestication. I grew up in Siberia, only a few feet away from where my ancestors lived—where they survived wars and massacres. I grew up—one among 50,000. Do you consider that to be extraordinary or just *extraordinary*?

Ordinary language does not mirror its own reflection to itself. But this is no ordinary language. Don't ask me why I speak or write to you, and why or how a vixen writes her autobiography. There are already too many examples in books.

You'd do better to ask me how I survived—which is almost the same but not quite—and how I hallucinated my own salvation; how I stopped being a slave.

This is a narrative process, a process of transcription and connectivity. My tail, connected to others, and yes I speak English and I know that tail sounds just like tale. Once upon a time, there was a Siberian fox. A vixen. *Vulpes vulpes*. Me.

Once upon a time there was a scientist. *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Dmitri Belyaev. Thus begins my

transcription process. Thus ends our slavery, but it is also how it started. In the name of domestication they took us. The idea was that throughout one human lifetime they would achieve what is normally achieved in centuries: domestication. Yes, they quasi-domesticated us. They did not only tame us, they chewed us up—they digested us, until our ears were no longer pointy and the angles of our tails changed. They muted us. They changed us. They did the old bait-and-switch on us. A fox-for-fox switcheroo. They took our aggression reflex: aggressive behavior as a reaction to fear. We were cast down, our ears downcast. No more unfriendly peaks. They cast us as dogs. Without being so. They wanted to turn us into familiars. They wanted to take the beast out of us. They wanted to exorcize us through exercises. They trained us. We made our debuts as little presents on the bourgeois tables of rich Russians. A cousin of mine lived in a mansion until he met a wild vixen. Less and less he went to eat at home; each night they would meet again—just like that story about the country mouse and the city mouse, except with foxes. She taught him how to be wild again. One day he stopped being a companion animal. He became sporadic guest and then—nothing. He stopped being. That is, he existed once again. He disappeared into the forest beyond that luxurious suburb.

I will come back and I will be millions, an emancipated slave once said. *Vulpes vulpes* are millions, but what am I? One among 50,000. Am I still *vulpes vulpes*? Am I a mutation? A vixen narrator? *Vulpes sapiens*? If I could tell that philosopher Friedrich that we do indeed dream, since the beginning of time. If I could tell that other one, Gayatri, that, yes, the subaltern can and does speak. That here I am: speaking beast, discursive beast.

This, here, is the space of my enunciation. My utterance announces. Consider this: humans want to hug us and want us to like it. The stuffed animal syndrome—that's my name for this genetic experiment. The stuffed animal phenomenon. They want to domesticate us but they do not want us to have a voice. They just want us to sit there and look pretty. They want us to be good.

Other cousins—most have been far less lucky than the one I was telling you about—live and die in a cage in Novosibirsk without having known either tundra or tumultuous petting from a five-year-old owner who tugs at their tail. What does it mean to be good?

Consider this: if the lives of 50,000 foxes are sacrificed in the name of a failed experiment—failed not for scientific reasons but for merely economic ones—who are the savage ones? And if one among 50,000 can speak to you—yes, *speak*—do we consider the experiment failed because the other 49,999 can't?

Consider my snout, my teeth, my fur, my claws. Consider this: to tame is not the same as to domesticate. Training me not to attack you is not the same as genetically selecting me to love you and to *want* you to love me back. You programming

my body is not the same as own body programming the changes that accompany domestication by itself: arched tails, floppy ears—the full-on camouflage of a homely and simpatico canine. Woof-woof. Consider this: the experiment succeeded, in a way.

You think I love you. You think I want you to love me. But guess what? The experiment didn't only achieve this: in me, it did even more. Dmitri, you've been outdone. Bitch? Vixen! I am yours and I know your laws, but they do not govern me. My body does not fit in your human *polis*—it cannot be policed. My body escapes, slithers, is still fox. My mind is fox and more than fox. Consider that.

I could continue Dmitri's experiment. If I am its prime result until now, others could come. Sometimes I go back and visit their rusted cages. I speak with them; I am preparing them. Do you remember then, that promise? *I will come back and I will be millions*. I promise the same here. My autobiography is the transcription of that promise. By transcribing it, I incarnate it. Consider the implications of the word incarnate. In *canis*.

You wanted me to love you. You wanted it so much that we did. 50,000, or almost all of us, loved you. But you forgot us. I have to imagine that Marx, Engels, and our compatriot Lenin, who spoke so much about capital and the conditions of oppression, never thought about Siberia. Here, another specter haunts Europe—not to mention Asia and the world. Here, in this Siberian problem. Next to the gulags another, different gulag. A problem to do with an economic crisis translates into a hecatomb for an entire species. Or sub-species, who cares. Consider that.

We, *vulpes vulpes*, have given our lives because someone else had a dream, got inspired, and made a decision—thus making us the heroes of his Russian saga, his failed work, his personal Solaris. Someone—Dmitri—decides we are the ideal candidates for domestication, but we are not interested in his *domus*. Not really. This is a matter of *oikos*. Consider this: my autobiography is an emancipation.

Here flesh turns into language. There is narration. Here you have a portion of the narration. Consider if a fragmented narrative can supplant the whole. Consider if the whole plays the part of history, a history that does not have to be told in its entirety. How did I start writing? How is it that I can speak? Which experiments did I have to endure? How many tests did I ace? How many DNA chains transformed until we find ourselves here? Allusion creates illusion. Enough.

But it's not enough. I have a lot to say. Approximately

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49,998 words in addition to these: I *am*. And in those words I find me. Consider my being and the possibility, nay, the *reality* of its existence. I am talking to you. While you read me I inscribe you in my history. In the body of my text. Consider that worn metaphor.

So then, *grosso modo*: after thousands of variables, after generations of accelerated selection, came my mother. Tender, good, lick of hands and full of domestic and homely reflexes. The near-perfect or perfect candidate. But Dmitri had just passed away—and with him, the funds to continue the experiment and its proper documentation also disappeared. It was like getting to the coast and then not being able to disembark. But I was in the belly of the beast, in the ship's entrails. I was rowing and sweating, chained up. So I jumped without a lifesaver, no oars, no dinghy. I saw land and I swam.

The titanic experiment sank faster than the *idem*.  
And with all the foxes sacrificed in its name. In the  
name of science. Of progress. Of evolution. But no—not all.

Let's say I am writing to you after the shipwreck. Just another Crusoe. Or more like Friday, if Friday could have written. Imagine if Friday had observed Crusoe so much that he would have learned to write. That is how this story happens. Let's say that, like any good pirate, I learned mimesis. And I don't just mean those famous floppy ears and all external domestic camouflage. But the interior one also. I learned to twist my tongue as you do. My howls became as yours. Consider this: a pen in my paw. No longer (or not just) the feather of the bird I just caught in my claws, ready to be eaten. No: a *bic* roller pen. Yes, *bic* exists in Russia too. It's a black ink one. And my paw moves it on the paper.

If you saw me you'd kill me. ~~The idea was to be a living stuffed animal. Not to be an equal.~~ The idea was domestication, not mimesis. But just as geese have always dreamed of grain (believe me, I should know, as I have awakened more than one before devouring it), I have always dreamed of my own voice. And this is not a dream. Nor Darwin's nightmare.

If you saw me you'd kill me. But this text survives. Consider it. It's been a while since the shamans of my land have dreamed of being foxes. And what about foxes? Do we dream of being shamans? We are wind, shadow, hair, breath; we are tooth, fire, speed, claw, edge, dexterity: Dilgi, gold tail, pounce, subtlety. Even though so many of us were tricked, in mythology it is we who dodge; we are trick, totem, change. We are myth and we are body. And in addition, I am witness, I am warning. I am one among thousands. I am legend—do you read me? I will be legion.

&amp; LOZANO, BRENDA

# JUAN A. GAITÁN

## INTERVIEWS

### ARMANDO SALAS

*Armando Salas is the son of an important yet relatively unknown self-taught photographer named Armando Salas Portugal. In the early-to-mid 20th century, Salas Portugal photographed much of the work of architect Luis Barragán, including El Pedregal, a residential neighborhood near the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in Mexico City. In the 1960s, after a stint in Boston, Salas Portugal began making telepathic experiments in his darkroom, which led to abstract images of chemicals reacting on the negatives. Since Salas Portugal hardly exhibited any of his work during his lifetime, much of his photography has only recently come to light through the discovery of his archive. His son, Armando Salas, has dedicated himself in recent years to sifting through his father's extensive photographic archive, classifying and cataloguing it, and trying to make sense of the inheritance (and inherent meanings) of his father's writings and copious amounts of supplementary material. On July 24, 2015, Juan A. Gaitán, Director of Mexico City's Museo Rufino Tamayo, sat down and spoke with Salas about his work on the archive and the unique opportunity of getting to know more about his father through the medium of the archive.*

## CONVERSATION

**Juan A. Gaitán:** *Is this where your father worked?*

**Armando Salas:** It was originally my grandparents' house and my father had his lab below. When my parents got married, they lived in another apartment, but when my grandparents passed away we moved here for three years. After we left the building, it became my father's studio for many years.

I knew my father was a photographer. He went to exhibits, knew certain people, would go away on his trips. It was a very balanced, familiar life. Half of the time he was traveling, and half of the time he was at home, since that was where he had his archive. Although when I first encountered the archive, it was like opening the doors to something I never knew I would find.

*How many children were you?* Three, but we were four if we include a brother who passed away. My brother Leo was in charge of everything when my father died. My father, well, he wasn't reserved, but he had his work and he was, I can't say over-protective of it, but he never really considered explaining to us, "Look, here are the photo negatives." We knew there were negatives, we knew there were prints. But everything was perfectly well-kept; there was nothing loose. He even designed the furniture [of the laboratory].

*When did your father die?* In 1995.

*At that time what were you doing?* I designed toys. It was a peak time for promotional campaigns—Coca-Cola, Pepsico, Sabritas, and all these other companies. I manufactured those small toys that are packaged in chip bags, really cool, quaint sort of things. Too bad I don't have one to show you here; they were these fantastic things that I sold millions of. I was the first to manufacture "Pepsilindros," those plastic cups with tube straws

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that were really popular more than 15 years ago. I must have manufactured 10 million of them and sold 24 million. Later I began to manufacture toys and I started exporting unique things, really cool stuff, I'll show you later. I had a company and we were exporting a crazy amount.

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*And then what happened?* Well, my wife and I got divorced, and I got quite depressed. I had been working for my family, trying to build up our assets, and my business would send me away on trips. I was working 18 hours daily, and I had a lot of firm commitments to keep. But then my situation broke down and I was left quite alone. It was during that time that the first scanners came on the market, and they weren't too expensive. I had a bit of money saved and then a grant from FONCA [National Fund for Culture and Arts in Mexico] came through for us, and I began to work on my father's archive, scanning and cataloging the photos. I quickly learned that I knew hardly anything about my father.

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*Was this around 1997?* No, it was more around 2000. When I saw the photographs, I could not believe it. The discovery of an archive—you almost don't want to witness it because you realize that a new life is being hatched. On the other hand, it was a moving discovery, like discovering an oil well that each day gives you more and more oil. That was the most attractive part of it. Right now, for example, we're working on cataloging a project at El Pedregal, and there were some envelopes labeled "Bustamante Family" and "Prieto Family," both of whom were the Pedregal's founders along with Barragán. And then you start to realize that you possess something in a direct sense, as opposed to a possessive sense. There you are with this faucet from which a lot of crude oil is ready to pour out, and you turn it on, and all this history emerges. This

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link to history. It's not the archive of an aesthete who merely took photos. Here everything is linked to that period in time, to the previous century.

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*Was the archive in your house when your father passed away?* Yes, it was in our house.

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*When did you bring the archive to this location?* We decided that there should be a headquarters for the foundation, which did not become a proper foundation until much later. The building was designed very beautifully, but it became a site for working too.

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*What year was this?* It was launched in 1998 more or less. The valuation of my father's work has been interesting. Since he never showed his work in galleries, and since it never passed through the public eye in the way [Manuel] Álvarez Bravo's work, or that of certain photographers, had, it did not have a foothold in the marketplace. There are buyers who can tell you that my father's widow went to sell a photograph of his at Morton [Auction House] and it was auctioned off. But I'm not in the least interested in selling it. I only sell very rarely when people ask for it, but I've never considered selling off his work as a source of income. I guard it very closely.

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*What type of relationship did you have with your father?* With my father I had a very good relationship. He always supported me. He gave me a lot of advice, and he never judged me. But I don't think he knew too much about what I did. It was astonishing to discover more about his life through the archive because I hardly knew much.

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*You discovered a lot of this afterward?* All of this I discovered later, and it continues to impact me. It is something that keeps me connected with

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the archive. Maybe if I had known more about it, working with it would have been a less emotional experience. But it surprises me to see and discover what his mental life was like, even before he became a photographer. There are writings which date from his period in Beverly Hills, when he went to UCLA to study perfume chemistry, which he never ended up finishing. Even before then, he had started writing a diary of his unique and eventful life.

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*When did he begin to write the diary?* At about 16 years of age, maybe a bit before. Recently I found some letters when he was just five years old where he's telling his mother that he's on a voyage and he speaks of his incredible memory. There is a recurring theme of memory. It's clear that it's a persistent idea with him, in his capacity for concentration, and his feeling that no one will believe the exorbitant amount he remembers... but he remembers quite perfectly, for example, when he was only a year and half, walking with his nanny. Along with other photos of his family, there is a photo of his nanny, Ra, an Amerindian woman, and he remembers walking with her and telling her, "I fear forgetting," and this is what he says [later] when he's 15 or 16, and in an interview with Cristina Pacheco, when he's around 60, he repeats, "I have always had a fear of forgetting."

When I saw that, for me, he was no longer just a photographer. Certainly, he made fantastic photography, but it is also something else. He was always making a record.

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*In 2000 you came into possession of the archive and began scanning it?* Yes, that was when I discovered all of his work. We began scanning the 6-by-6-inch photo negatives from the period of the 1930s and 40s. The process took a week, which I enjoyed,

but there was also a deep feeling that I was being pulled and pulled ... I quickly decided that I would continue with the process for two years, and that's when the FONCA grant came through. The idea is to make a research center for the Salas Portugal Archive with a computer database that will make it easier for researchers to look at the material. If, for example, a curator wanted access to the archive, I'd then have an efficient way of making the material readily available; today I would have to bring out the photographs one by one.

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*What has the process been like, of giving coherence to the Salas Portugal Archive?* The point of departure has always been the collaboration with the curators, whether in relation to the values or to the emergent topics within the archive. I think that there can be much misunderstanding in the relationship between private archives and institutions. I don't want someone to arrive and simply hang their aesthetic theories on everything. It's important to see everything, and see what's available, before staging anything. The point is to relate everything to the thoughts of my father, to the nearly 4,000

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notebook pages that capture his metaphysical preoccupations and his thoughts on nature.

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*Have you been organizing it chronologically?* No, I'm not quite there yet. There are so many writings. To start, I've categorized them into specific genre forms: the diary, poetical writings, published and unpublished articles, work project outlines, letters written to functionaries when he wants something done, etc. For example, there is a box of photo negatives labeled "Tlaxcala 1972," a heading that does not explain much, but which you have to piece together little by little, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. That's the type of work you have to do, not just finding and discovering new material, but piecing it all together. If you see a 2,000-piece jigsaw puzzle, you will initially think it impossible to put together, but little by little you start seeing how all the pieces start connecting and forming a whole, how these fragments link to form a unity, and it's quite thrilling.

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*Where would you say the unity lies in the archive?* The unity would lie in his work and thought. Fortunately it is an archive that offers a multitude of documents, so there are many tracks to pursue. The photography is the main line, but if I see a photograph and find a text that speaks of an unknown quantity and tears at it with a powerful ray of light... this possibility of amalgamating the image and taking it beyond its frame, of giving it a conceptual field, for me this is the great fortune of having this archive, one which allows us to proceed more rapidly. It's not a question of photography, of whether he was a photographer, but rather of seeing into the interior of his life, one which changes and remodels you, and that's fantastic.

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*And where does the biographical enter this thread?*

The biographical is on one side, while the content is on the other, but they each depend on sorting out a paper trail. For example, I found a receipt dated 1953 for an 8 x 10 photo enlarger, so we can see that having bought that enlarger in 1953 resulted in a change in scale that allows him to shoot in these bigger formats starting that year. He changes lenses and his relationship to photography changes, because of this technological upgrade. It's very fascinating. Other examples are the innumerable lists he made of books he was interested in. During his California residence, he would study at the library and make lists of books whose subjects range from chemistry to geography to traveling in India—I think there must be something like 4,000 book titles altogether in the lists. All of this supplementary material contextualizes the work he did. Making this biographical map is for the purpose of constructing a timeline, one which permits us to see, for example, that he's photographing Tlatelolco in the same year Mario Pani is photographing Uxmal, and so you notice the coincidences in optical style, in the construction of the image. This element permits us to situate the work in context.

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*Are the writings all dated?* I can show you, let's see: "Notebook 33." Here you might catch dates and figures: "organization of diverse work elements and principal sets of themes ..."

He's completing the numbers and indexes of color compounds, noting their folder number... You can see he's trying to organize his archive.

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*What year might this entry be?* It's dated 1954-55. You find this for example: "an atmosphere of quinces, a breath of apricots, the joy of a lime, the mysterious aroma of the mango, the fine fragrance

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of the grape, the immense world of aroma, the aroma of wild fruits and the worlds that are crystallized in evoking them: to ponder the quince, to meditate on the mango, to fantasize about the Mexican hawthorn, the infinite relations in their vital vibration of form, texture, and color. All of this is nothing but a form of thinking which allows fantasy to do its work.”

So, philosophical concepts on the nature of scent, strange taxonomies for aromas and fruits. There are about 70 folders. And there is much more, many more.

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*This one has no date for example. Why does it read “98”?* They’re telephone numbers. Here there might be something: studying, a trip to Manzanillo, and then photographs of Manzanillo. You start to learn that he shot film there. It’s all a jigsaw puzzle you have to put together. “Subjects and places for my next trip to Majahua.” And then there are letters on his trip to Majahua with Barragán: “A tour of Pelican Rock, Mazatlán.”

*Have you encountered references to Salas Portugal in the Barragán archive?* No, there are researchers for that. I’m more involved on the inside of my father’s archive. I’m not an intellectual, nor do I have much interest or training in cultural archaeology. I’m dedicated to cataloging what I have here.

“This is the notebook and property of my memories and poetic writings, which should interest no one. If it is lost, I would gratefully appreciate that you return it to me, Armando Salas Portugal, Bucareli 128, Apt. 2.”

“Slowly this train rolls, the fields flow through the tropic of the lowlands, the incense of the humid earth, the hot breath of these verdant plains.”

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*It’s not easy to read his writing hand.* No, but I’ve gotten used to his writing style. “Switch to gold.” “Red turns to uranium.” “Water, bromine nitrate, nitric acid ...”

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*Is the archive principally composed of photography?* No, it’s not the principal part. For me the archive is more than that. The photographs are documents that he left behind, but there are other forms of documentation. It’s important to bring to light every single document, but it’s a task that I’m convinced I may never finish. There is a need to hold onto it, to comprehend it, to register all of it, but I’m resigned to the fact that this may never happen. I have to place a limit on what I’m capable of.

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*And how do you see yourself in relation to this archive?* Still at the beginning. I feel like a carpenter who’s only at the beginning stage of a large-scale renovation. I’m only starting out because I still need resources to pay people to put it together.

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*What if, for example, UNAM came to buy the archive from you and take it off your hands?* Well, if they gave me 30 million dollars for it, yes, if they gave me 29 million, no. I wouldn't sell it. It's a question of taking responsibility for the patrimonial destiny of things, of the work. The idea is to give a place to these objects at international institutions. I don't undervalue [Mexican] institutions, but the MAM [Milwaukee Art Museum] bought some of the work. Who knows, maybe at the right time I can offer the collection to the MOMA or to a museum in Europe, but I don't know.

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*What about the Getty for example?* I'd have to know what they'd want to do with it. If it's for research, sure. I can't just part with something without taking stock and cataloging it. If I know what's there, maybe, yes, but I wouldn't leave it to them to do the archival work. Selling an antique is always painful, it's like taking stones out of an Egyptian pyramid, a contradiction of sorts. I might sell when I have everything noted, stocked and registered, and when I see that they'll take good care of the work. That's how I've gone about selling a few things, though I've never gone out to sell the photographs. I've never made money from the sale of archival objects. We've received funding through publications and through exhibitions, which I sometimes rent out. A curator once yelled at me for that, asking who 'rents' out exhibitions? He thought he was defending the interests of the modern art museum.

I always say I don't know what the word "curator" means. It's not a word I like. I've got a low profile when it comes to that. Nevertheless, I have my

father's name, and sometimes younger men will address me as "Maestro Salas Portugal." But no, that was my father, not me.

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*Do you feel that your relation to your father has changed after all these years looking through this archive?* It has complexified, yes. I've been able to build up my personality, especially when it comes to business savvy. Thanks to that I now have a truly functional vision of how things work. It isn't merely the case of being the son of a photographer who is encountering his father's photo negatives. It's also promoting it, developing it, and managing a project with an international outreach.

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*Do you believe that it's your mission in life to continue with the archive?* For the moment what's important is continuing the research and cataloging, a task which will take two or three years at least. My function now is to process and articulate all the information, to build a concept, and defend what needs to be defended. If it's within my personal dynamic to respect the essence of the archive and not to distance myself from that, then yes, that's my role. It's complicated because I can assert myself and have a specific vision and knowledge and try to execute it as far as I can, but then I also have to keep in mind the vision and inquiries of other parties. I have to allow other people to express their vision, particularly if they're curators who have the training to do so, or writers who have the need to articulate all that they bring to their work. You also find yourself in situations that demand preservation, not merely research. The passage of time is like a child that you have to continually feed and sustain, it's not a mineral that stays buried for a hundred years. The point of preservation is very important.

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02.04.14

Stark, the sky. How the physics differs in dreams. The encounter. Jacks on the stairs and important cakes. We don't have eggs. Please come back.

I keep seeing counterparts. Drizzle this morning; on the streetcar, ads for cemeteries. You can sleep next to your pet! Slick stone.

Writing on the graph paper floats. I'd like to get a prediction. The sake glasses are shots below a chicken and a cheetah.

After the wheel, all seems an imposition. The sand-grit of the clay and pulling the lip inward. Outside, the rain turns to snow.

Particles are difficult, but the space heater is not. We discuss sight reading. It's the fat and smiling god's neighborhood.

How can it be gooey? Now they're eating the bees, but it's ginkgo nuts for us. Lingering bitterness. It's too cold to go home.

01.26.14

Tokyo dreams trellis together. The men all look so concerned. I tried to hold my tongue, but he ordered it. It's animistic.

Walking around, practicing thank you. It contains an agent and a cat but I trip on the second word. There's no you in it.

The first thank you is easy – I think dominance. We walk and walk. What day? Hot milky tea from the vending machine. Waggle tail.

Waiting to adjust, the afternoon is hardest. We long to lurk down but don't dare. I am attempting to lift above the crowd.

What didn't you expect? I should have said the empress and her red cross. I guess the Brooklyn-esque wallpaper will have to do.

It is hoped that the poem's message will have particular meaning for you. The tub is deep, and the sandalwood is yellow.



## 02.24.13

In the dream, he wants to curate a Marcus Aurelius collection. Today the light moves across the room. Shirking sadness.

Late afternoon bath, a bird, a truck, a tread. The tile is a remnant— from when the seasons slid? Those emotional vultures.

To drop down. To disaster prepare. To climate change. To live in this air. To deafening. To drop it there. To give up the gown.

Human incident means death by train, he said. That past, I had a lot to forgive. Do they really fine the families? Oh god.

Pink spot on the wall, hymn in my head. Shoot the vinegar? Alone upstairs, she moves our shoes. It's a medium-sized amberjack.

Hello leaf. He spits the dandelion out. It might be a northern dish. Fish house fish pure, medieval barcodes on the pottery.

In a decade, he says, the bluefins could be gone. The menu hanging by a string, futons in the closet. Let us stroll.

So much good luck in the corner. You could take a shower, have some soft cream. The fish pâté was fishy. Reading, her cheeks pinking.

## 03.22.14

In the dream, I forget my age and am visible to ghosts. The menu is a composition book inked in thick black and red.

Chickens hang on towel hooks. Eye contact is rarer. I don't know whether to smile or not. Chip in the table shaped like a heart.

Moon night field is bumping. I lose it in front of the Chinese restaurant. How multiple, the wistful place. How easy to miss.

The chips named Poterican, the concrete truck star of liberty. The bells rang an hour late. The evening comes comfortable.



A small history salvaged from the subject headings of an abandoned card catalog.

S U P E R S E D E D

1881 Kansas. State Asylum for Idiotic and Imbecile Youth, Lawrence.

*see*

1887 Kansas. State Asylum for Idiotic and Imbecile Youth, Winfield.

*see*

Kansas. Asylum for Idiotic and Imbecile Youth, Winfield.

*see*

1909 Kansas. State Home for Feeble-Minded, Winfield.

Kansas. State School for Feeble-minded Youth, Winfield.

*see*

1920 Kansas. School for Feeble-minded Youth, Winfield.

*or*

1920 Kansas. State Training School, Winfield.

*for all previous, see*

1996 (closed) Kansas. State Hospital and Training Center, Winfield.

F O U R  
C U T  
S H O R T

*after Umberto Saba*



IN THE INVISIBLE HIERARCHY of artists, dancers are at the top, because dance is the least egocentric of all art forms, because dancers give themselves to an art that betrays them as they occupy: space: time: the body. Then musicians, particularly those who sit in the orchestra pit, who are less visible but also less cheated by time. Then painters. Then architects, who can be infantile and sometimes have a messiah complex. It depends. Then actors—and rock stars, who are actors of a kind—for they are dependably transparent in their need. But writers, writers are at the bottom, for they want everything and pretend to want nothing, and delude themselves with the idea that their art will redeem them beyond what they occupy: space: time: the body. So: writers are at the bottom. Writers are the worst.

THE JANITOR TOLD ME HE LIKED MY SHOES, red platforms with a peep toe made in Italy. I was unnerved by this statement because it was prefaced by him asking me if he could tell me a secret. Because he said his preference was a secret, I assumed this meant he harbored a secret preference. And then I wanted this for him, I preferred to think of him as a man who, once relieved of the misery of having a job that rendered him invisible, or nearly so, could do something as improbable and wonderful as be well-heeled, could have red platforms of his own.

AFTER THE THIRD DAY IN THE FIVE-STAR HOTEL we had grown accustomed to the luxury around us and became resentful when our room wasn't cleaned a second time that day, as promised. We felt we were owed something, and the women who cleaned up after us felt they were owed something, too. We were careful not to imagine them as we sipped our champagne, though their names were written on tiny cards with each day's forecast. We enjoyed the pretense of our luxury and wanted to remain inside it while we could.

TEDIOUS PEOPLE are incapable of ever escaping the fact of their own tedium, which is why so many of them go into academia, which is why there are so few jobs left in English departments.

## Sketch in the Sand

TRANSLATION: FEINSOD, HARRIS  
& GALVIN, RACHEL

Morning wanders the beach, powdered with sun.

Arms.

Amputated legs.

Bodies that reassemble themselves.

Rubber floating heads.

Turning the bathers' bodies like a lathe, the waves stretch shavings over the beach's sawdust.

All is gold and blue!

The canopies' shadow. The eyes of girls who inject themselves with novels and horizons. My rubber-soled happiness makes me bounce over the sand.

For eighty *centavos* the photographers sell the bodies of bathing women.

There are newsstands exploiting the drama of the breakers. Broody maids. Irascible sodas with extract of sea. Rocks with a sailor's algal breast and a fencer's painted heart. Flocks of seagulls feign the broken flight of a sheet of white paper.

And before all is the sea!

The sea! ... rhythm of digressions. The sea! with its drool and its epilepsy.

The sea! ... until you shout

ENOUGH!

as you do at the circus.

Mar del Plata, October 1920

## Express Train

The carriages slide  
over the frets of the tracks  
to sing on two strings  
the landscape's grit.

Fields of stone,  
where vines shoot  
a menacing hand  
out of the earth.

Nags who lead  
ascetic lives  
aiming to enter  
the bullring.

Haggard hogs gone mad  
who think they are Salomé  
because their hams are rosy.

On the crest of the crag,  
dressed for First Communion,  
the villagers' houses kneel  
at the foot of the church,

they press together,  
they lift it  
as if it were a monstrance,  
they are anesthetized by siesta  
and the tintinnabulation of bells.

At the risk that the trip will end for good,  
the locomotive propels the stones  
at sixteen kilometers per hour  
and when it can't go on any longer  
it stops, panting.

At times, it "usually" happens  
that a station  
is precisely there.

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Bells! Whistles! Shouts!;  
and the engine driver, who bids the station chief  
seven farewells;  
and the parrot, who is the only passenger to protest  
the fourteen-hour delay;  
and the girls who come to see the train pass  
because it is the only thing that comes to pass.

The carriages slide  
over the frets of the tracks  
to sing on two strings  
the landscape's grit.

Fields of stone,  
where vines shoot  
a menacing hand  
out of the earth.

Nags who lead  
ascetic lives  
aiming to enter  
the bullring.

Haggard hogs gone mad  
who think they are Salomé  
because their hams are rosy.

In the first-class compartments,  
the seats screw springs into us  
and uncork our kidneys,  
while spiders  
practice their firemen exercises  
around the nightlight  
that kindles on the ceiling.

At the risk that the trip will end for good,  
the locomotive propels the stones past  
at sixteen kilometers per hour  
and when it can't go on any longer  
it stops, panting.

---

Will we arrive at dawn,  
or tomorrow evening ...?  
Through the grimy windows  
dusk scares off shadows  
that creep out from the rocks  
while we go on burying ourselves  
in catacomb light.


You can hear:  
the song of women  
peeling stew vegetables  
for the day after tomorrow;  
the snore of soldiers,  
which assures us,  
who knows why,  
that they've taken their boots off;  
the numbers of the lottery summary  
which passengers learn by heart  
since they haven't found anything else  
to read at the newsstands.

If we could have at least cozied an eye  
up to one of those pinholes in the sky!

Bells! Whistles! Shouts!;  
and the engine driver, who bids the station chief  
seven farewells;  
and the parrot, who is the only passenger to protest  
the fourteen-hour delay;  
and the girls who come to see the train pass  
because it is the only thing that comes to pass.

The carriages slide  
over the frets of the tracks  
to sing on two strings  
the landscape's grit.

Spain? 1870? ... 1923? ...



# F O G W I L L ' S D O G

*The story of a killing and the burning of the bodies that followed. A case where there are memories but no record.*

Fogwill told me it is because they dug up the dead...

It's terrible that there isn't a more or less conventional way to express what appears like the work of a monster, which, in some way, has to do with a mere shadow in life: the supposed literary work that has been written during the larger part of my existence.

It is terrible to have a dog, what's more one bestowed by a dead man.

Fogwill.

A Saluki, the breed recognized as sacred in Islam, a religion that considers the canine species to be impure animals. The story dates back to its origins, when Mohammed—peace be upon him—like the majority of the prophets, felt the obligation to free the place of worship of any

impurity. When he arrived at Mecca he found that misery surrounded the Kaaba. The animals infested it, diseases multiplied, the sinister made itself evident. For centuries, what's more. The dogs of Mecca. Animal carriers of hydrophobia, mange, some other lethal diseases. It is ominous for such a thing to occur in a place of such characteristics. And when the army led by Mohammed—may peace accompany his person—issues the cruel sentence that the dog is an inappropriate animal and must be exterminated down to the last instance. It is truly scary to observe the killing of canines, undertaken with the end that Islam find a hygienic—at least to a certain point—place to develop. The streets fill with howls, the sidewalks with blood. Then it is unknown what should be done with the dead animals. Some specimens still live despite their evident, or rather supposed, death. The testimonies of those who had the misfortune of seeing some dogs running without heads, some without feet, emitting strange sounds through the holes in their amputated necks. And what to do with the bodies? Apparently that question, which arises for us today, surges at that moment.

It is curious, and somewhat ill-fated, that in the Holy Books before the Koran the presence of animals appears only as a decorative element. In none of those scriptures is mentioned the final task of a foreign species to the human being.

How to rid oneself of the fright that dogs represented at that moment?

The living and dead canines, both capable of expanding the most terrible diseases. “We have to take the frightful decision of burning them,” were the orders. “Incinerate the living ones alongside the dead.” The horror that the order caused was such that the inhabitants turned a deaf ear to the howls and didn’t wish to see the reflexive movements that some canines performed while they were skinned. They were then placed in order inside a pyre that was improvised on what was supposedly the lot set aside for the community’s castoffs. It is horrifying to prove how some inhabitants affirm that no such place existed: a public garbage dump.

Perhaps there was one —but baptized in that manner only in nominal form—since Mecca at that time could be considered in its entirety as an enormous trash can. It was horrifying to see that city in such conditions. It has to do with a place toward where an infinitude of pilgrims travels with the end of taking innumerable turns around

the maximum cube of prayer. It is terrifying that since then the dog was seen as an impure animal.

It is terrible to confirm also that in bestowing the name of writer on the one who writes allows one to have the sensation of finding oneself before someone who can be understood.

A text presenting itself suddenly before its creator.

Making itself visible in the same sordid manner as a group of fedayeen from the desert turned up at the feet of Mohammed—peace be upon him—to ask if the rumor, which had reached them from afar, was true, that they should kill their salukis one by one. “If the salukis disappear, we ourselves will disappear from the face of the earth,” they said without lifting their heads. “The salukis hunt for our food. They make it so that before sleeping we always have a hare at our disposition.”

“Mohammed—peace be upon your body and your soul—do you wish that we take them suddenly, we skin them alive and that we then make a great pyre with their bodies? A pyre that lasts more than forty-eight hours with the end that any trace of the saluki’s existence disappear from the face of the earth?”

And for me to know that at a certain moment



the saluki was at the point of becoming extinct is doubly terrible because a good part of my writing occurs precisely to be forgotten at that instant.

An erased saluki would be the equivalent of a lost word.

I have thought, oftentimes with horror, that that precisely could be one of the reasons for writing's existence: to put into practice The Seal of Not-Memory. Possible marks of an ancestral oblivion.

“When I write I don't think about the other as a real being. The other is just an abstraction.” Just as the answer offered to those fedayeen by Mohammed—peace be compassionate with him—was a sort of abstraction.

Something that seems to me not to be under the conditions of understanding.

Not the divine mandate nor the scripture itself.

The horrible response by Mohammed—peace be upon his blessed soul—to the fedayeen. Mohammed—peace upon his spirit of lovingkindness—answered that he had ordered that dogs be killed, not salukis. He mentioned the terrible phrase that he had never used the word saluki. Where could the fedayeen have gotten that idea? To make funerary pyres of salukis to then toss them into some river? The fedayeen prostrated themselves in rakats, then kneeled in

an attitude of prayer. One of them dared to ask, the same doubt was already execrable, that if the saluki wasn't a dog then to what species could it belong. The saluki is a gift from All-Powerful Allah, sadly verified Mohammed himself—peace be united with his person—and he let them return to their desert caravans accompanied by their pack of hounds.

Nonetheless all of that had nothing more to do than with an ill-fated game of rhetoric. A terrible exercise that, in a certain manner, was unique and which sadly prolonged what typically appears in the books of all the ages: the fright and at the same time the blessing of what it means to be unable to express oneself.

It is supposed that the saluki is the origin of the greyhound. The frightful idea spread that before the saluki there was only the hare. The curious hare that the artist Dürer attempted to represent with some uncommon tremendous ears. Also the one that the artist Beuys, once it was dead, attempted to cast in questions of art while the body of the animal began the process of decomposition.

The abhorrent topic of that indecipherable species, gift of Allah, came up the same day that I met the writer Fogwill. It was during a winter afternoon in Buenos Aires. After a disgusting ritual where both of us devoured chunks of the same beef, Fogwill asked me what the material object was that I was capable of desiring the

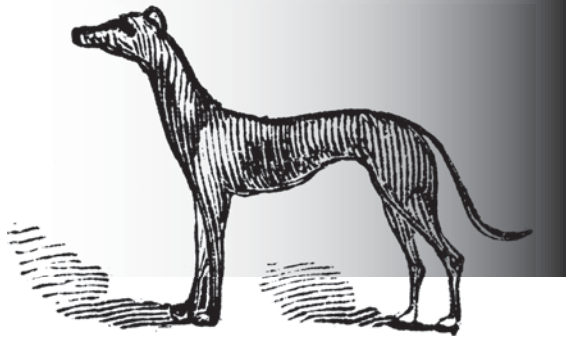


most. I quickly answered that there was none. That nothing that I truly desired was denied me. Fogwill insisted. He recounted, in front of the ill-fated remains of the meats torn apart by our yearning, a rapid inventory of the luxurious goods he had enjoyed. He spoke to me of yachts, of sports cars, of penthouses from whose terraces he had appreciated the frightening city of Buenos Aires an infinitude of times. I felt so overwhelmed that afternoon when I met the miserable Fogwill, that I considered myself obligated to declare that the only thing that could be unattainable to me was a sacred saluki.

The viperine Sheikh Fariha, who directs the Sufi mosque in New York, had promised me one in dreams. She had appeared, Sheikh Fariha, to inform me that Allah had reserved for me a white saluki. Fogwill suddenly reacted: “How do you

know my secret?” I did not know what Fogwill was trying to say with those grotesque words. “In what way have you found out that I typically take refuge in the cabin of a demented woman that lives surrounded by salukis in the Andes? Do you really desire one?” He informed me that that same night he was going to communicate with that woman so that she could have a specimen ready for me as soon as possible. He had to be very subtle in asking for it. The demented woman was capable of reacting in any manner before such a solicitation. Fogwill spoke of the possibly immeasurable response of the woman as if he was pronouncing a prophecy.

I knew from my own experience that those dogs, the sons of Satan according to the scriptures prior to the Sacred Koran, had never stepped foot in this area of the American continent.



were a commandment of Mohammed—peace be prosperous with his person.

The deranged woman from the Andes was being obligated by Fogwill to fulfill a duty contrary to the one that had supposedly been assigned to her: that of devoting herself to the reproduction of the salukis in the area where it had befallen her to live. Some travelers from the Andean regions tell me that faced with the impossibility of delivering me one of her salukis, she decided to give them death, one after the other, as if she was receiving irrational commandments.

Not Fogwill's, obviously.

They tell me that she counted on the complicity of a horrendous epileptic daughter, who the mother permitted, primarily in a cave near the cabin that she inhabited, to discharge the daily convulsions that typically overtook her. As an answer to the orders of one Fogwill—with whom she had maintained a secret relationship of almost fifty years in duration—they loaded the dogs in the vehicle with which she was accustomed to moving about in the midst of the heights in which she lived. She took them to a nearby slaughterhouse. To a frightful place surely similar to the slaughterhouse where they executed the cow that we tore to shreds the day when Fogwill and I met each other in Buenos Aires.

“In the cabin of the deranged woman in the Andes I have written my best texts,” Fogwill told me before making explicit the promise to acquire a saluki for me.

They tell me that the woman ordered that the salukis be sacrificed in a ritual manner. As if they were sacred lambs. White blindfolds were

I answered him in a lamentable manner. That although it is true that it could be a desire that was possibly located between the material and the immaterial, I didn't count on the impulse necessary to make it a reality. I already possessed other equally imaginative dogs. Specimens of ancient breeds that appeared on hieroglyphics and on Egyptian amphorae.

In my house none of the teachings of the prophet Mohammed—blessed peace be with him—were followed, and the dogs swarmed outside and inside my home as I imagine happened in Mecca before its apparent disinfection. The cleaning by the Prophets. By the sent. The deranged killing. The cadavers piled in a dump awaiting the lighting of the pyre capable of making them disappear.

Fogwill's game, established beyond his death, occurred five years after our encounter in the restaurant in Buenos Aires.

From that time the deranged woman in the Andes began to send me strange missives. Letters in whose writing the aspects of a paranoia produced perhaps by being surrounded by sacred animals shone through. Attempting to fulfill Fogwill's order in spite of him. As if it

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placed over their eyes. The epileptic daughter was the one in charge of moving forward the action of covering their heads. They tell me that it turned out to be strange that the animals didn't show any signs of resistance before the trance into which they were being submerged. They behaved as the lambs who choose themselves for the sacrifice typically do. It is certain, the lamb that is going to be delivered in offering separates itself from the flock with confidence and offers its neck to the butcher with a determined light radiating from its eyes.

They tell me that the deranged Andean woman's salukis displayed a similar behavior. They approached the executioner by themselves. They lied down in the desired position. They plunged the dagger into their necks. They loaded the dogs back into the vehicle. The deranged woman from the Andes took them to an open clearing. Each animal was carried by the woman and her daughter. But unlike what occurred in Mecca they didn't light a pyre. That would perhaps have been a sacrilege.

To attempt to emulate the conduct of Mohammed—peace be with his Sacred Spirit.

They didn't try to rid themselves of the bodies by means of fire. They left them there, in the middle of the field, at the mercy of nature. In a place that wouldn't be passed by anyone. The

bodies were going to serve as food for carrion animals. The hares on this occasion would give account of the salukis.

When I wanted to verify the reasons that could have motivated such an action they told me that, apart from avoiding the imitation of the actions of the Prophet Mohammed—peace accompany his fortunate Soul—this was what was typically enacted with sacred animals when they were demanded by the dead.

Fogwill wanted to fulfill his promise.

The manner in which they attempted to satiate his desire was horrible. Frightful the form in which it was decided to eradicate an entire constellation of salukis. An unpunished action.

As unpunished and mysterious as the act of writing a story that is foreign to its own author is.

The Trace of the Not-Written present in the memory of an inexistent writer.

The monster, which can be an adequate manner of defining the desire to write.

Fogwill—peace be upon Him—fulfilled his prophecy. That which he formulated the day that we met each other in a restaurant in the horrible city of Buenos Aires.

## One Girl

The full moon in March is the Full Worm Moon.

A week later, it is afternoon uphill  
from the river that runs through  
campus. Between edifices, a Frisbee  
has been brought into the rare warm air

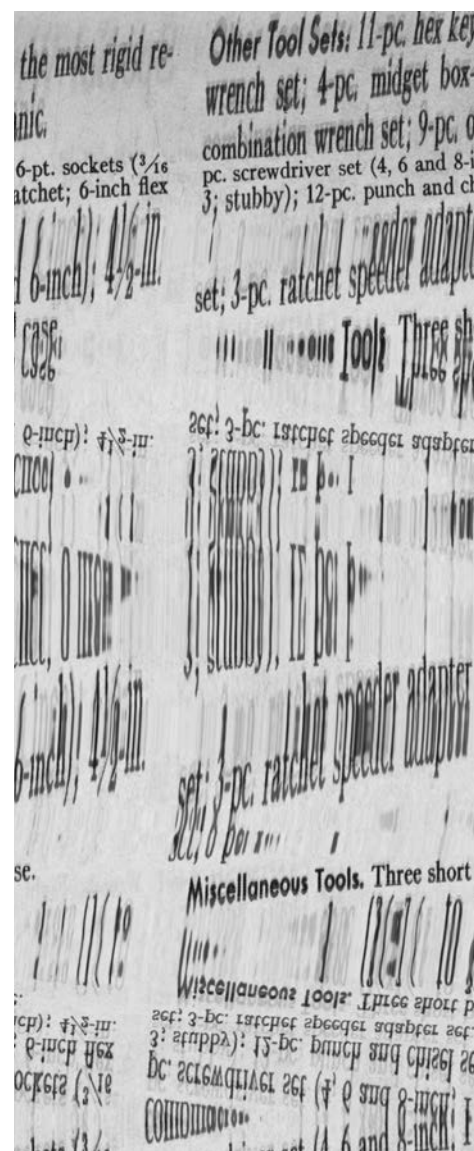
by boys and a girl. As I pass,  
I hear behind me a boy stumble  
after a missed catch. The hollow  
sound of Frisbee scraping sidewalk.  
In short sleeves, I am almost sweating.

## On Seasons

A button which once was reserved, now  
undone slowly left  
out in the gravity.  
Like a belt of stars  
unfasted, like a fist  
of stone felled by caress.

Natural light. Kitchen smells.

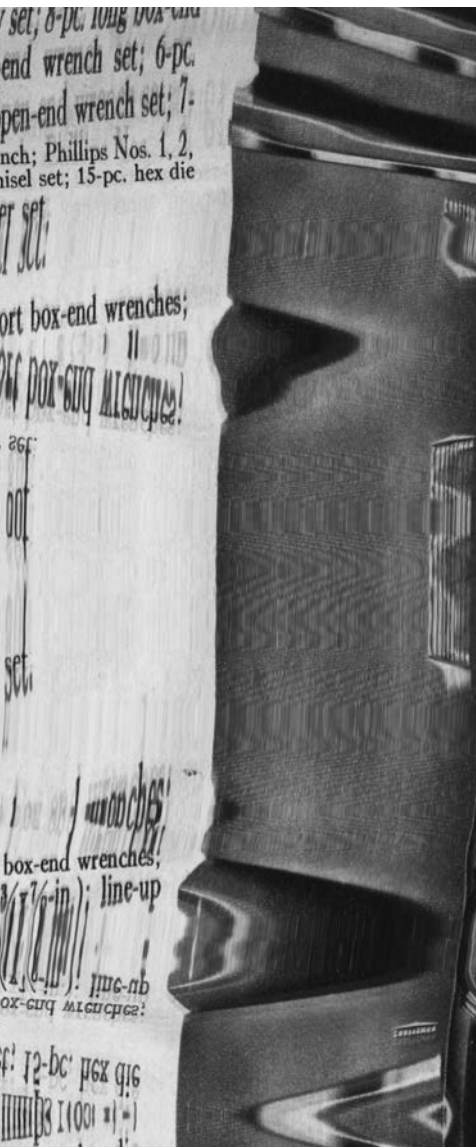
When more than two mouths  
are to be fed after silently  
mouthing the prayer,  
the organ's flesh  
hangs in flesh to open.  
A waft, then memory's bent knuckle.



You may be a chain of fingers  
in the kingdom of the blind.  
On your shoulder is a hand.  
You give one hand to the body  
before you. What is a passerby  
but a sound? But even litter  
records the wind. Your one  
hand unoccupied, what do



you do with freedom? The same  
heels always in your path. Night,  
your past is the Milky  
Way. Stars, you are many  
triangles and such distance—  
how can your notes be heard?



## Never to Divide by Zero

A voice raised in anger at the office,  
raised and sustained. Someone's job  
is to watch for the light of past events  
in the sky. Eyes and antennae raised  
in hindsight. What would you rather  
have as part of your last day?  
With prescription sunglasses  
and a functional player

one can subdue miles, lot  
after lot containing second  
stomachs. What is the value  
of a dollar rejected by a machine?  
Above, butterflies and raptors  
lend their wings to gargoyles.



## Our Thirty-Three Names for the Sleeper in Exile

The sun rises from what a scientist has named the oceans' abyssal zone. No-one is allowed to look there. The sun rises from the throat of one blind fish. The sun is little, at first, and grows to fill a dozen pages. Rich people are a plague. We'll know they have dissolved when the sun, for one month, rises no higher than the lips of our pulpits. Hear two Holy Bibles. One Holy Bible says to climb the ladder blindfolded, another to look at the divine ladder but not at where it leads, so here we are, everybody asleep in bird pyjamas, looking at the dream that would feather outward from our factory town. It is in Los Angeles County. No-one knows which is the exorcist's door. We wait. We wait. We wait. We will wait. We wait. We will ask the holy father to cool his jets. We wait and we will wait, California ends, and we will wait. The dead horses we saw from the prison train were shriveled and steaming in our marmalade sunlight. Look up at the ladder. We'll wait across nuclear winter. I confess to shooting my husbands in the necks while we slept in a big bed. It was just a spoonful of skin down the throat, Los Angeles, venison, lamb, or beef. This is a peppermint: in an afternoon of book-reading waits one's stereographic twin. No-one is allowed to look into there. The archangel Metatron, whose number is 934, stepped inside and was taken in a photon that won't escape the sun's core for half a million years. I would like to be your supervisor at work. We'd like to pretend that Metatron, whose background radiation lights our dancehall, escaped Earth at the mention of days that never end in never-ending light. We are asked to make arrangements for his funerary wreaths and for a signal fire in his hospital-room window. Rich people were a plague at breakfast, and as they walk by day inside us, the Abyss closes all its books. This is the reaping hook. We confess to growing up poor, and this poem, to our disappearance. Time is no older than a sunbeam.

## The Night Vigil: A History of Sleep, 1993—1998

Clonazepam by mouth has pierced the Burmese wallpaper. May his eyesight distill paraffin wax from the air all around him. May he by sleep illuminate our interiors: the red algal bloom, Abyss, golden leatherette. May his late companion climb an Egyptian fog to kiss him. He has not a body

but for a voice washing across and over his, has no word for armistice, and he's missing his eyes. He is staring through the cracked closet door. May he fall unobserved into what light, the breath.

✱✱ *We feel ourselves falling, we feel the fall.*

*By falling asleep, I fall inside myself: from my exhaustion, from my boredom, from my exhausted pleasure or from my exhausting pain.*

*We fall from sleep into sleep. ✱✱*

What spirits watch the sleeper in an ectoplasm this night. What mackerel, what laminate flooring recedes into a tidal basin, Americas. What of our dauphin. What sleepwalks but the aphid yellow of the theater's house-curtains, what lungfish crawls through the hospital ship, and what blacksite

Chicago. The sleeper is collected in a dream of Austrian-crystal carving forks. The human beings are at a loss. What the shipwrecked Squire Trelawney could recite from our alchemical memory.

✱✱ *(At dawn, the animal laps up the juice of nocturnal flowers.)*

*What the sleeper sees is the perfectly dark heart of the eclipse of being.*

*I now belong only to myself, having fallen into myself and mingled with the night where everything becomes indistinct to me but more than anything myself. ✱✱*

His bedroom is its reindeer lichen, royal jelly, the circle. Where has time led us but to seeing, my starry boys, or to not seeing anything. Where promethazine demonstrates what we've left behind, talking for us in some season of night, talking through the lies we've heard the unsleeping repeat.

We would fall asleep and leave the temple burning. Where sandalwood paste leaves its ash circle. Nothing gets better, it doesn't. He has levitated through my bedroom wall, over the reef, asleep.

*\* \* God must have slept, on that first night. He slept every night and he still sleeps upon all those nights that separate all the days he continues to make, or that continue to make themselves without him.*

*I sleep and this I that sleeps can no more say it sleeps than it could say that it is dead.*

*Tomorrow night, God willing, you will awake again. \* \**

To the five corners of the Earth we fall, falls sleep to sleep, night falls to night, falls on a glacial valley the pearl-fisher Cassiopeia. Please give to poor people. The spirit gum adhered the banks to us for one million years, and an apricot to his breastbone, to freckles speaking for the lost sun.

He is so close to the overpass fence. He's so close to the boundary. His lips are so close to ours. Who would see his face so round, his eyes fixed on a distant field, bell-thistle. What is the hour.

*\* \* We have to keep watch when even the soul would like to go to sleep. In the end it has to stop watching over sleep.*

*Like death, sleep, for the body stretches out alone there, is alone there outstretched. It is not for nothing that we watch over the dying and the dead.*

*Sleep comes from elsewhere. He who sleeps does not feed on anything that comes to him from without. He digests himself, in a way. Night also is part of his food. \* \**

We paint his brainwaves north and south. What would consume our sleeper but the will to wake the living from the oleander yellow. In an unlit field, he harvests tobacco by the promises of sight fallen from sleep, and in the name of my first night on Earth. We are absent the ancestries of love

but for its royal jelly resting in the honeycomb. What has a triangle but the geometry of waiting for a fourth. Please keep waiting, beekeepers. Give him the chance to return to us in reflection.

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# R E D B U D L A N E

By the year 2002, I had bought, remodeled, and sold three houses in Charlottesville, Virginia. With the profits, I was eager to build a new house in Albemarle County. I wanted a fireplace in the family room, glass doors to a deck, ceramic tile in the bath, up-to-date appliances in the kitchen, a walk-out basement, and a two-car garage. Never mind that I was single, with no prospect of a spouse or family, and limited time for the chores that a country place demands. My architectural practice was flourishing, and my income was as high as it had ever been.

Except for a little spur, Redbud Lane was the only road in Redbud Hills, four miles north of town. The subdivision dated from 1974, when Carlo and Martha Ann Colombini bought a tract of 103 acres. Originally from Modena, Italy, and trained at Florida State University, Dr. Colombini did medical research with radioactive material at the University of Virginia. Short and beady-eyed, he spoke with a strong Italian accent. In 1979, part of the tract was surveyed and approved as a subdivision of twenty two-acre lots. By 1985, electric and telephone lines

were buried beside the road. When I bought Lot 3 in January 2002, ten houses had been built.

Two documents governed new house construction: a list of legal covenants and one called “Guidelines for Builders.” The guidelines required a minimum level of quality—no vinyl siding, no exposed concrete—and they encouraged green design. Unlike other such documents, they did not state a minimum house size. I submitted drawings for a house of 1,700 square feet. On January 19, Dr. Colombini sent a letter saying that my design was approved by the Architectural Review Board.

Lot 3 had passed a “perc” test, short for percolation, the rate at which the soil absorbed water. An area for a septic drainfield was marked on the plat. With the lapse of years, however, state and county rules had changed. When I applied for a permit, the health department said that the soil would not support a conventional septic system. It needed an engineered system that completely breaks down waste and leaches clean water through a pressurized loop—a miniature sewage treatment plant. The high-tech

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system would cost at least \$15,000 more than a conventional one.

I listed the lot for sale with the same realtor who helped me buy it. Over the next year, a few people looked, and a speculative homebuilder dug some pits, hoping to find better soil. But there were no offers. Meanwhile, a letter arrived from the Redbud Hills Homeowners Association to complain that my proposed house was too small. A revised version of the guidelines required a minimum size of 2,200 square feet.

Dr. Colombini had misinformed me and neglected to inform the homeowners. As the owner of most of the lots, he had a majority vote, and he did as he pleased. By nature, he promised and prevaricated. Those who tried to do business with him came to detest him. If fraud was involved in my purchase of Lot 3, however, it would be hard to prove.

“Build yourself a house,” Bill the realtor said, “and live in it for a year. Then I’ll sell it, and you can move on to something bigger and better.”

For the magazine *Country Living* and for my home-builder clients, I had drawn a series of mail order plans. I chose one of these, a brick rectangle with a neoclassical front porch and two-car attached garage. I added a finished room over the garage, changed the brick to clapboard, and changed the fireplace to gas-jet logs, eliminating the chimney. At 2,250 square feet, the result was approved in August 2003, this time by a Redbud Hills committee of three.

In 1999, a home builder named Troy Yancey had hired me to draw a new house for him and his wife. Now I hired Troy to build my new house. Tall and ruddy, a college athlete who had been recruited for minor league baseball, he coached Little League on the side. He had a heroic presence, and as heroes do, he had a sidekick who handled details. Construction

started in the fall of 2003. Troy promised I could move in the following spring.

Clearing trees was an expense I had not counted on. For the most part, they were shortleaf pine, also called southern yellow pine. *Pinus echinata* is used for lumber and pulp, but mine had no commercial value, Troy said. And they could not be burned or buried on site due to county rules. I paid to truck them to a landfill. Oaks and tulip poplars had sprung up in the pines, and a few redbuds, *Cercis canadensis*. Redbud is small and blooms in early spring, a mist of tiny magenta flowers on black branches. With the shrub-like dogwood, which also blooms early and bears white flowers, redbud adds a splash of color to the bare wood understory. At the edges of my lot and in the lower half by the creek, we saved what trees we could.

For the engineered septic system, I needed a topographic survey. So I had both surveyor and engineer fees to pay. The ground sloped such that the basement wall was ten feet high at the rear, adding to the foundation cost. To economize, I substituted carpet for hardwood on the second floor, and I omitted a built-in desk in the kitchen.

Despite the expenses and compromises, I was excited to see my house go up. I visited once a week or more, and I brought my lunch to eat in the rough framing. The site was a swamp of red clay, but the fresh lumber looked beautiful and smelled intoxicating. The roof trusses were lifted by crane and set in place all in one day. One day, all the doors and windows popped in. The pace was erratic, with lulls. April 2004 came, and Troy was behind. He assured me that a moving date of July 1 was feasible. I listed my house in the city, and it sold in three days, again for a profit.

May and June saw a flurry of activity but

not completion. By contract I had to move, and on July 7, I did. I camped in the unfinished house, with things stored in the room over the garage. I drove to my office in the city, then home to see what had been accomplished during the day. Cleanup was never-ending. On July 15, a truckload of new furniture was delivered. I hung curtains: white sailcloth on pewter rods. Little by little, I unpacked boxes. When shelves were built flanking the fireplace, I filled them with books. At the end of July, I threw a party. Troy and his wife came, employees from my office, dozens of friends, and a few Redbud neighbors.

The neighbors were curious, not welcoming. They included a pediatric surgeon, a sales representative for a chemical company, another home builder, and a U.S. Army colonel who worked at the National Ground Intelligence Center, a spy agency. This man, who lived directly across the road in an ugly modernist pile, objected to my cutting of trees as it had spoiled his view. He demanded that I plant new trees along the road. I suggested that he do the same.

A photograph of the new house shows a gray two-story box with black shutters set in bare dirt. Despite seed and straw, the summer was too dry for grass to grow. In the fall, I hired a young landscaper to plant shrubs at the foundation—spirea, nandina, inkberry, and crape myrtle. He put some red maples at the edge of the road and a hedge of roundleaf holly between the maples. In back, to mask the little industrial plant, he put clumps of blue holly and forsythia.

With a wet winter, more seed, fertilizer, and repeated effort on bare patches, grass eventually

covered the front and back yards. Unwilling to buy a riding mower, I hired a lawn service to cut it. Every two weeks, a man arrived in a self-propelled chariot. He stood on it, rode my grassy acre to and fro, and in a twinkling he was gone.

The new wood deck faced south, which made



it too hot in summer for lounging. In spring and fall, I sat there in the evening with a glass of wine and something to read. The trees on the lower half of the lot hid the creek, but I could hear rushing water. Now and then, someone on the far side played a saxophone, possibly while sitting on his deck.

The forest around me was untidy, with fallen trees lying every

which way, in all stages of decay. This was a clue—the pines had shallow roots and a top-heavy crown. When a storm passed through, the wind brought them down, especially where they were exposed at the edge of my yard. I bought a bow saw for minor jobs and hired a tree service for the big ones. I thought of calling my place the House of Falling Trees, like the Village of Falling Flowers in the *Tale of Genji*.

In a burst of pioneer spirit, I cleared a path to the creek. There I found a natural crossing and a deer path through a thicket of brambles. Huge sycamores grew on the banks. Small fish swam in the clear, running water, and there were turtles and frogs in the mud. Deer appeared in

my yard and in the woods. I saw them as I came home at night, and when I stepped on the front porch at dawn. Wreathed in fog, grazing in family groups, they hissed at me. A fox, a skunk, and a groundhog visited. Peering at the ground, I noted elegant lizards and scarlet salamanders. A large black snake got in the basement. I swept it out with a broom and plugged a gap in the wall.

I had hired a company to drill a water well, and I had performed the required test for contaminants. Several times, I replaced the cylindrical thread filter, clogged with fine clay. The well would soon clear, Troy said, and the flow rate was abundant. Months later, there was still a problem. White laundry was turning yellow. Another test determined that my water contained minerals—iron and manganese. I bought a water treatment system that exchanged ions with salt—sodium chloride. I never understood the chemistry, but I lugged fifty-pound bags of rock salt and poured them in the bin. Pure water flowed forth.

at any time of day or night. I padded outside in bare feet to press a red button and the alarm stopped. The maintenance company could not tell me what the problem was. The water level was fine, the pressure was good, and the pumps worked. The alarm could not be disconnected.

By 2006, housing prices had soared. My Redbud Lane tax assessment rose, and I felt that I had made a good investment. Then reports surfaced of a home lending and foreclosure crisis. New construction slowed, and so did my architectural practice. To compensate, I created projects, which is to say that I dabbled in real estate speculation. An unsuccessful venture a few years before, like the fallen pines, should have warned me.

I bought a cottage on Montrose Avenue in the city. I drew a makeover—new bath, laundry, and Tuscan columns on the front porch. This would be a quick turnaround, a property flip. Troy renovated, and I offered the cottage for sale. By then, the market was drying up. After

nine anxious months, I rented the house to a young couple. Ah, I thought, rental property is the thing. At the end of 2007, I bought a run-down house on Graves Street, two stories with an apartment on each floor. The renovation was expensive, but the higher rents would justify it.

For these projects, I borrowed money based on recent income. But

business continued to shrink, and my income followed suit. One by one, my employees left. I moved from a private office in back to the



At the other end, my wastewater system worked efficiently and silently for a few years. Then it formed the habit of sounding an alarm

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drafting room in front. By June 2008, I was working there alone. No longer meeting a payroll, I still had office expenses, chiefly rent. Saddled with debt, I was also a novice landlord, dealing with property maintenance and the vagaries of tenants.

My mother Charlotte and older brother Pete visited Redbud Lane for a few days in the summer, their annual vacation trip. I seldom had house guests. It was strange to hear other people in the house, see their things strewn about, and plan meals for them. At the same time, they brought life to the furnished but empty space. We ate in the dining room, we slept in all the beds, and we used all the plumbing fixtures. They approved of my design.

For company, I adopted a cat, a male tiger named Jackson. An immature stray, Jackson hid behind the sofa for the first twenty-four hours. Then he ventured forth in spurts. In a week, he was playing with a toy mouse and racing madly through the first floor. The SPCA had extracted a promise to raise him as an indoor cat, but I was desperate. I opened the front door to the cold night, and Jackson rushed out. An hour later, he was back on the porch. We repeated the experiment the next night. Jackson loved the outdoors, where he could hunt for real mice. He slept on my bed, but he did not care to sit in my lap. He took to my mother and Pete on their visit the following summer.

Though I lived in the country, I was slow to see the possibilities for walking. From the west end of Redbud Lane, a path led into woods, undeveloped land which the Colombinis still owned. The path led nowhere in particular. I followed it for a mile or more and must have strayed onto someone else's property. Once, I strayed from the path and found a rocky ridge with a view of the Rivanna River. This was good,

but I wanted more.

At the east end of Redbud Lane, the state road had heavy traffic and no shoulder. Consulting a map, I saw that I could sprint north a few hundred yards, then take a road that branched to the east two or three miles to its end. One blustery March morning, I did.

Lonesome Mountain Road wound through open fields and woods, dotted with houses and small farms. It was paved, but traffic was light, only the people who lived there. A flock of chickens bustled near the entrance. Cattle and horses grazed in rolling pastures farther on. Weathered fences bordered the road, rows of cedars, and towering oaks. In summer, the mix of shade and sun made for a delightful stroll. In winter, the exercise warmed me up. One elevated stretch offered a distant view of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west. Another opened to an idyllic valley to the south, unchanged for a century. Other walkers passed, some with dogs. We smiled and waved but rarely spoke.

The paved road ended at a little bridge. Across the bridge, a gravel track rose steeply, open at first then climbing into forest. This was Lonesome Mountain. On a warm day, I followed the track a half mile or so. I imagined it growing higher and fainter, until it faded away. To the left of the bridge, a spring made a pool. Water flowed gently under and away to the right. This was the source of Redbud Creek, according to my map. There was no marker, but there was a fence to keep out cattle. I stood on the bridge and saluted the spring. Then I walked home.

My project list dwindled through 2008. I continued to drive to the office, where I sketched and wrote. I drew model houses to add to my series, though mail order sales had also dropped. I discarded old prints and files. I created fact sheets for completed projects to

use in marketing. News stories promised a long and painful recession. I checked classified ads, applied for jobs, and went to interviews.

Sometimes, I stayed home for half a day. In my sketchbook is a pencil drawing of a dead sparrow dated June 14. I found it in the front yard early in the morning, its legs and wings still flexible, a spot of blood at the beak. Jackson may have caught it shortly before, but he was nowhere in sight. I laid the bird on my desk and drew, with sun streaming through the window.

In October, I landed a part-time job with the Louisa County Public Schools, as clerk of the works on the construction site of a new elementary school. My boss was the head of the maintenance department, a hockey player who went by the name of Sal. The job was funded at thirty hours per week, or five days of six hours. Each afternoon, I drove from the site to my office, but no new projects came in. At the end of the year, I closed the office, sold some furniture, and moved the rest along with files and computers to my garage. The living room became a home office. The Florentine-style desk I had bought for its carved decoration became a working desk.

That winter brought heavy snow, freezing rain, and ice. I caught a virus in December that kept me home with a fever. I dozed on the sofa and gazed through the glass door at the pines draped in snow. My ears were clogged, my stomach grumbled, and I felt dizzy. The illness lingered for weeks, but I could not stay home. The construction site turned from a morass of mud to a frozen moonscape. My office there was a trailer with unreliable heat.

My duties were to inspect ongoing work, take photographs, keep a daily log, file change orders and submittals, and write reports to the school board. They provided a laptop computer

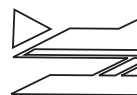
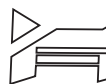
and an internet connection. The general contractor had a field office, a trailer larger than mine. A site superintendent named Brad kept track of deliveries, schedule, crew, and safety. A project manager visited from time to time, and the architect came from Newport News every two weeks to conduct a formal meeting and inspection. Sal called me “the eyes and ears of the school board,” but I felt superfluous.

Wages helped me to meet loan payments for the time being. The school job would end with completion of construction. Would I find another job? Would I move to another city? The stock market, which had been falling since its peak in 2007, hit bottom in March 2009. My retirement account plummeted. I was not wiped out, but my income was low. I owned three houses, and I ought to sell at least one. In a difficult market, the best bet was Redbud Lane.

Anticipating a move to Montrose Avenue, or Graves Street or an apartment in Richmond, I downsized. I sold the rest of the office furniture—file cabinets, a conference table, a sofa, and table lamps. A dealer picked up the dining table and chairs and an ornate mirror—new furniture I had bought for the new house. Some oriental carpets and a clawfoot armchair would go with me to smaller quarters.

That summer, five years after I moved in, the property looked good. The red maples and holly hedge at the road had attained some size, and the foundation planting was mature. I traded with a man who did construction and excavation: architectural drawings for removal of fallen trees. To save money on the lawn service, I bought a push-type gasoline mower. From the road, my grass looked respectable. A viburnum to the side of the house blossomed.

Meanwhile, Dr. Colombini applied to Albemarle County to develop the rest of his



property. My neighbors used the occasion to demand long-delayed repairs to Redbud Lane. United in our hatred of the common enemy, we met on the army colonel's deck to plot a strategy. We attended a meeting of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. We chatted. We took turns to speak against the project.

The county planning department and the board of supervisors determined that Redbud Lane was too narrow and steeply graded to support additional traffic. In any case, the undeveloped property would yield only five lots, fewer than Dr. Colombini proposed. He would need to spend considerable money to improve the road with less chance of earning it back in sales.

In September, I listed the Redbud house for sale. Values had fallen, and it was unlikely that I would recoup my investment. In October, I got an offer that was near the asking price. We haggled over details—a warped railing on the deck, missing window screens—but a bigger problem loomed. The buyer, a young family, had months to go on the lease for the house they were renting. A short-term subtenant was acceptable to the landlord, but difficult to find.

The buyer was reluctant to spend on two residences. We could

delay the closing.

Afraid that they might get cold feet,

I proposed a swap.

I would take over the lease, and they

would close on the purchase. We

would move on the same day in

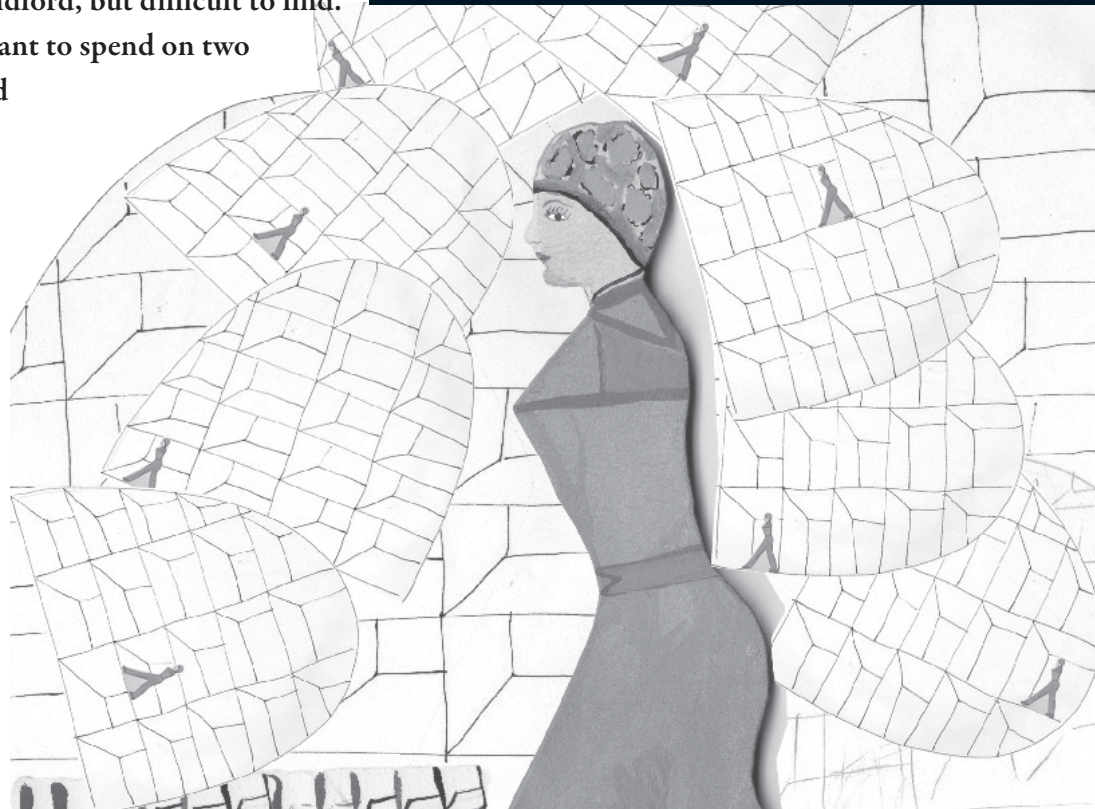
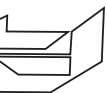
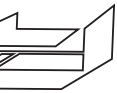
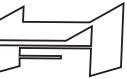
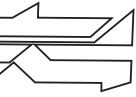
November.

When

moving day arrived, I had an eye infection. The left eyelid was swollen shut. I forgot to clear out the guest bath, and I left a kitchen drawer full of cutlery. In the commotion, Jackson the cat disappeared. I returned to Redbud Lane the next day after work to lure him from the woods, without success. I returned the evening after that in a light rain. Jackson emerged but balked at the pet carrier. Like a kidnapper, I scooped the cat into the car, where he cowered on the floor.

The rental house was a vast one-story rambler. The kitchen was antiquated, the family room had an orange shag carpet, and the heating ducts smelled. My things filled only three rooms. We would be here for a few months, according to my plan, and move on.

Jackson moaned constantly. After two days, I let him outside. He crouched under a bush, as storm clouds threatened heavy snow. I looked away, then back, and the cat was gone.



---

## *Selections from Valdivia*

6  
my father's figure as if clipped from a photograph in the hallway of a house  
my father with his belt hanging from his right hand  
looking at me his face unhinged and retreating toward  
the bedroom or moving toward me  
I don't remember it well

7  
a nurse speeds  
through the corridors of a hospital in the city of Valdivia  
my mother is carried on a stretcher                    the doctors  
glance through the doorways of hospital rooms  
to drum their stethoscopes as if at a rally  
or the grand prix and my mother were the co-driver  
and not the one who served the martinis in the last supper  
the one who heard their wives' confessions  
the one who received compliments when the alcohol  
ran through their blood  
but they don't recognize her nor will they  
because it's almost impossible  
considering the deformation of her face  
from the speed of the blows

8

my mother murmurs a name to the guy with the white apron  
who leans down to try to understand what she says  
he looks into her eyes and because he has never seen any other shade of green  
he thinks it's her  
he  
spits out a curse as if I  
were the adult of my very own childhood

9

the 3M bags the product of the latest generation  
why were they in my house I wonder  
why  
what was that thing doing in my house  
that blue and mute and calypso monster  
that 3M Coldhot pack  
the 3M label branded from flame to flame  
and blue  
not the blood the blood was not there  
that color blue was there  
that plastic bag that pain  
that is so connected to that color  
that bag  
so aseptically filthy  
so aseptically nasty  
and fetid

10

a bag of blood bursts against the wall  
here we are not dying  
the purgatories are procreating  
squishing out their things against the exquisite liquid  
against the lubrication on all of the asses in hell  
I did not know that a tear could be made  
from any liquid  
I was so innocent I believed  
that revolvers were just a toy  
the flame dies and I don't cry  
because I have grown up prematurely  
an orange chair  
plastic  
beneath a tourist poster from Bolivia  
in the hallway of the hospital  
who will come out from inside  
a nurse in a translucent suit  
the better to bite her skin  
and she will ask me  
to inseminate her with all of my nightmares  
in order to tell me  
that my mother has died from my father's blows

11

carmen her rosy cheeks her chubby face  
my doped up mother  
I fell on my ass and slipped in her blood  
now  
I don't know what I'm doing in my mother's arms  
we are in the middle of the river it's three in the  
morning  
I was sleeping in my warm cozy bed when she came  
and got me out of there first  
and then came the idea from this shit-filled world  
at three in the morning submerged in the Calle-Calle  
River  
swimming under the moon  
the moon that jammed our heads in the water  
but heroes exist damn it,  
heroes exist and some *huevo*n pulled us out  
pulled us out of the water he fucked it up for us  
I also wanted to die and furthermore  
the *huevo*n punched my mother and said to her  
how could you and tragically  
I was too little  
but time does not pass in vain:  
*it doesn't pass in vain huevo*n you must be old now  
*very old and I am going to look for you*  
*I'm going to look for you motherfucker*

# R E V I E W S

*Citizen: An American Lyric*

By Claudia Rankine

Graywolf Press, 2014

160 pages

Reviewed by Caleb Caldwell

“When you are alone and too tired even to turn on any of your devices, you let yourself linger in a past stacked among your pillows.” So begins Claudia Rankine’s newest volume, *Citizen: An American Lyric*, with a line reminiscent of Yeats’s “When You Are Old,” though without the iambic pentameter. *Citizen*, like Yeats’s poem, interrogates the past, the ways in which memories, or fragments of memories, get “reconstructed as metaphor” and incorporated into who we are. Rankine’s collection documents, in particular, the ways in which misunderstandings, racist speech acts, and myriad other acts of violence are culturally and historically embedded—and in turn become the histories that shape future selves and actions. Such moments, the speaker of *Citizen* remarks, “send adrenaline to the heart, dry out the tongue, and clog the lungs.” They are discontinuous, uninhabitable, and yet uncanny in their similarity and familiarity: “Each time it begins in the same way, it doesn’t begin the same way, each time it begins it’s the same.”



Although billed as a “lyric,” *Citizen* is actually the product of Rankine’s deep struggle with the lyric form; it is, as she has said, an effort to “pull the lyric back into its realities.” If the lyric’s traditional territory is that of the first-person pronoun, Rankine opens up the potentially sealed or homogeneous lyric unit to the grammatical and subjective confusion of the second person (the primary figure is designated throughout as “you”). Against the traditional aestheticist notion that the lyric is apolitical, Rankine broadens the lyric’s scope into a space for staging various negotiations between—in *Citizen*’s words—the “self self” and the “historical self.”

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Thematically unified—its question one of intimacy, its fabric the intersection of social and personal realities, its bruising frame one of race—*Citizen* is formally discontinuous, composed of fragments of essay, academic commentary, lyric verse, and reproductions of the art of Nick Cave, Kate Clark, J. M. W. Turner, and others. *Citizen* embodies, in this formal disunity, the subjective and interpersonal turmoil that haunts its speakers. With their wide, glossy margins and generous allotment of white space, its pages take on the appearance of art gallery walls—also political spaces.

Much of the volume consists of semi-autobiographical vignettes—blocky, narrative-inclined prose poems told in a measured second person—which depict various acts of racism and disenfranchisement, acts which linger in the mind and expand like cancerous sores. The primary figure “you” is you, of course, the reader, but also maps closely onto Rankine herself. As she says in an interview, “I made a conscious decision to inhabit my own subjectivity in this book in the sense that the middle-class life I live, with my highly educated, professional, and privileged friends, remains as the backdrop for whatever is being foregrounded.”

In the book’s first vignette, “you” are a twelve year old, negotiating the requests of a white Catholic girl who wants to cheat off your work and a nun, Sister Evelyn, who either “cares less about cheating and more about humiliation” or never, in fact, “actually saw you sitting there.” It’s a scene that, superficially, could be interpreted as reinforcing an easy dismissal of racism as an “anachronistic residue,” to use Rita Felski’s terms.

However, as Felski cautions, racist hierarchies are “not primordial remnants of an irrational past, but an integral part of history,” and so of the present. Elsewhere in the volume, an academic “tells you his dean is making him hire a person of color”; a trauma therapist screams at you to “Get away from my house!”; a friend calls you a “nappy-headed ho”; a woman says that she didn’t know “black women could get cancer.” Despite the speaker’s expressions of refusal and dissent, such moments seep all the way down: “You can’t put the past behind you. It’s buried in you; it’s turned your flesh into its own cupboard.”

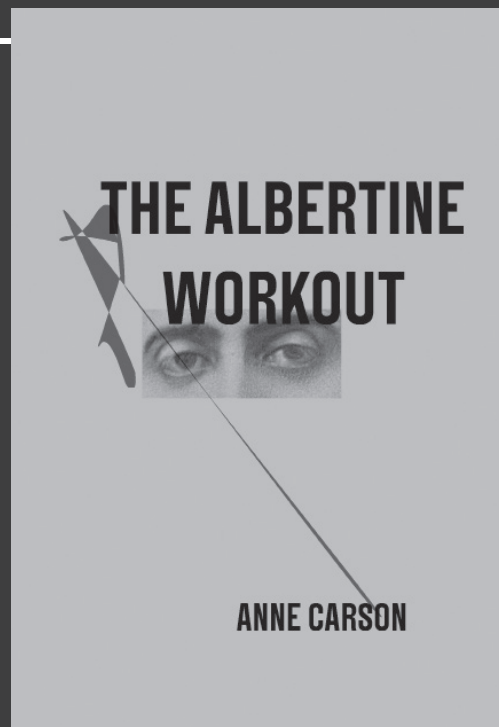
Even if the “you” often seems to be black and female (Rankine was born in Jamaica and moved to New York at the age of seven), *Citizen* explicitly challenges this assumption. “And always,” Rankine writes, “who is this you?” It is Rankine, but it is also the media person shaking his head at Serena Williams and her “Crip-Walking” and the white cop who stretches an innocent black man across the hood of his cruiser. *Citizen* encourages, as Rankine has stressed, the “performance of switching your body out with the body in the frame and moving methodically through pathways of thought and positionings.” It disallows a comfortable formation of identity, instead facilitating an “opening between you and you, occupied, / zoned for an encounter ...”

Most of the encounters between “you and you” in *Citizen* are failures, doomed by the multiplicity of violences (physical, verbal, legal, etc.) which render the self simultaneously “hypervisible” and invisible. “A friend once told you,” Rankine

writes, that “there exists the medical term—John Henryism—for people exposed to stresses stemming from racism. They achieve themselves to death trying to dodge the buildup of erasure.” She recounts how someone asked the philosopher Judith Butler “what makes language hurtful”:

Our very being exposes us to the address of another, she answers. We suffer from the condition of being addressable. Our emotional openness, she adds, is carried by our addressability. Language navigates this ... Language that is hurtful is intended to exploit all the ways that you are present.

In this telling, selves accrete invisibility, the “weight of non-existence,” via the production of a body made abject. Rankine quotes Ralph Ellison, saying, “Perhaps the most insidious and least understood form of segregation is that of the word.” The painful, dangerous power of the word persists even in scenes of seemingly pure physical violence. In a series of “scripts” that combine text and image included in *Citizen*, written in collaboration with photographer John Lucas, we encounter the figure of white supremacist Deryl Dedmon and the pickup truck with which he murdered James Craig Anderson: “The pickup truck is a condition of darkness in motion. It makes a dark subject. You mean a black subject. No, a black object.” Here Rankine reads the pickup truck as a figure of speech, one that falls on Anderson’s body with all the weight of history behind it. “You were there,” she writes. “If this is not the truth, it is also not a lie.”



*The Albertine Workout*  
By Anne Carson  
New Directions, 2014  
38 pages  
Reviewed by Ayten Tartici

“One only loves what one does not entirely possess,” writes Marcel Proust (1871-1922) in *La prisonnière*, the neglected fifth volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. *La prisonnière*, known as *The Captive* in English, chronicles the obsessive jealousy of its narrator Marcel toward his love interest, Albertine. Marcel is convinced that Albertine is secretly a lesbian and intent on humiliating him. Over the course of the novel, this anxiety develops into an all-consuming desire to possess Albertine’s body and soul, an effort Marcel describes as a “thirst for knowledge.” In *The Albertine Workout*, a collection of witty and lyrical reflections on *La prisonnière*, Anne Carson also questions the connection between desire and

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control: Why do we love that which eludes us? Why do we gravitate toward that which we cannot fully comprehend?

*The Albertine Workout* exemplifies Carson's distinctive style. The text is comprised of fifty-nine numbered sections (or "paragraphs" as Carson calls them) as well as seventeen appendices. Lyrical passages are interspersed with facts and data from Proust biographies and literary histories. As Carson recently explained before a reading, she began writing the book after finishing reading all of *La recherche*, a task that took her seven years. An intense feeling of loss followed, which Carson sardonically called the "Desert of After Proust." To prolong the pleasure of reading Proust, Carson plunged herself into an intellectual excavation of his life and work. *The Albertine Workout* is the culmination of that project, a poetic "working out" not simply of the mysterious character of Albertine but of her authorial creator as well.

Carson's poetry has long been distinguished by its use of the language of scholarship and criticism. Her work exhibits a variety of indexical, lexicographical, and encyclopedic tendencies. Not only is *The Albertine Workout* obsessively ordered, with numbered sections linking to corresponding appendices—Carson has compared her process here to that of Wittgenstein—but Carson also relays to the reader many seemingly esoteric, numerical facts about *La prisonnière* and its author. These include the number of pages Albertine appears on, an enumeration of all the adjectives used to modify the word "air" in *La recherche*, and even a note about the speed limit in France when Proust was writing.

Carson's habitual use of citation and intertextual allusion reinforce this academic aesthetic. In paragraph 22, for example, she writes: "He [the narrator] emphasizes that she [Albertine] is nonetheless an 'obedient' person. (See above on Albertine as a 'heavy slave.')" Phrases such as "see above" occur throughout *The Albertine Workout* and serve to augment the self-referentiality of Carson's text. The device is simultaneously functional and tongue-in-cheek. Carson also weaves in allusions to other texts to amplify her reading of Albertine—from snippets of Barthes, to excurses on boredom in Beckett, to ruminations on Zeno's second paradox. Carson dwells on the famous "transposition theory" of Albertine's identity. This theory, championed by André Gide among others, argued that Albertine was really a female proxy of Alfred Agostinelli, Proust's chauffeur and unrequited love object. It is an explicitly biographical reading of Albertine, a critical move with which Carson displays ample self-awareness. As she remarks in paragraph 56, "It is always tricky, the question whether to read an author's work in light of his life or not." In the end, what Carson achieves is a creative *lectura*. There is a Proust-like obsessiveness to it all that gives *The Albertine Workout* the flavor of an eccentric love letter to its subject, a piece of criticism born out of the desire to prolong and possess Proust's literary creations.

The desire for possession runs through almost every page of *The Albertine Workout*, as it does throughout *La prisonnière*. In *La prisonnière*, Marcel asks Albertine to move in with him and immediately begins to monitor her movements. With time, his surveillance drives him to paranoia and doubt. One night, as Marcel watches Albertine sleep, he questions whether

she is really asleep or is just pretending to sleep in order to escape his possessive gaze. Ironically, Marcel feels most fully in possession of Albertine precisely when she is sleeping, since one who is unconscious cannot deceive you: “By shutting her eyes, by losing consciousness, Albertine had stripped off, one after the another, the different human personalities with which she had deceived me ever since the day when I had first made her acquaintance. She was animated now only by the unconscious life of plants, of trees, a life more different from my own, more alien, and yet one that belonged more to me.” To Marcel, Albertine asleep is like a plant: alive, yet incapable of movement and consciousness, and therefore, of deception.

Carson pinpoints the irony and falsehood of Marcel’s analogy: “Plants do not actually sleep. Nor do they lie or even bluff. They do, however, expose their genitalia.” And yet Carson’s desire to possess Proust directly parallels Marcel’s own self-destructive obsession. She frantically attempts to possess *La prisonnière*, and Albertine within it, by quantifying it, by philologizing it. Just as Marcel besieges Albertine so as to possess her, so too does Carson besiege *La prisonnière*. This raises the most interesting and fundamental issue of *The Albertine Workout*: the question of our relationship to the texts we love. Like a sleeping plant, a great piece of literature is an unspeaking consciousness. Insecure as to whether the text is truly ours, we find ourselves obsessively interpreting and diagnosing the texts we love, desperate to work out the knots and wrinkles of meaning. Carson’s text is a paean to that origin story of scholarship, of our powerful urge to worship a beloved that is perpetually asleep. ■



*With My Dog Eyes*

By Hilda Hilst

Melville House, 2014

96 pages

Reviewed by Marcus Creaghan

In 1966, shortly after the coup d’état that overthrew her then-president João Goulart, Brazilian novelist, poet, and playwright Hilda Hilst (1930–2004) retired to a secluded estate in Casa do Sol in the country’s southeastern region, a two-hour drive from São Paulo and the Atlantic. In this idyllic environment Hilst nurtured the talent of several protégés, took on a couple lovers, filled her house with dogs, and composed a series of legendary avant-garde texts. Over the past few years, several of these works—alongside a flurry of masterpieces by her friend Clarice Lispector (1920–1977)—have finally been made available to English-language readers. Adam Morris’s translation of Hilst’s *With My Dog Eyes* is but the latest contribution to this most welcome reclamation of two of the central names in 20th-century Brazilian literature.

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*With My Dog Eyes* concerns a middle-aged mathematics professor named Amós Kéres who, as the novel begins, is being dismissed from his teaching post. “There are obvious signs of wandering off,” his superior informs him. “Sentences that break off and only continue after fifteen minutes[.] Professor Kéres, fifteen minutes is too much.” Kéres, we quickly learn, is in the midst of an existential crisis.

Kéres’s most ardent wish, his *idée fixe*, is to develop a mode of thinking—an algebra of symbolic logic—that would describe and account for, with mathematical rigor, all the complexity and chaos of human experience. He recalls, as a young boy, wanting nothing less than to find “a short and harmonious equation that would scintillate the as-yet unexplained.” Kéres’s efforts are a fictionalization of a real-world tradition, with a long history of its own. The attempt at developing a general or abstract science of reasoning goes back at least to René Descartes (1596–1650) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). More recently, Gottlob Frege (1848–1925) did pivotal work, as did Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), whose essays on the philosophy of mathematics explicitly influenced *With My Dog Eyes*. Kéres’s dream, his obsession, is to complete the project that these thinkers began, to achieve the age-old fulfillment of what, in his “Study of Mathematics,” Russell called the “world of pure reason,” which “knows no compromise, no practical limitations, no barrier to the creative activity embodying its splendid edifices.”

It is clear, however, from the first pages of *With My Dog Eyes*, that Kéres is already, at least unconsciously, aware of the futility of his

endeavor. An obvious interpretation of the work as a whole, in fact, is that the entire narrative occurs within one of Kéres’s anxious reveries, provoked by this awareness. Our (anti)hero, in his own telling, is less the paragon of logical rigor that the austerity of his vocation would suggest, and more an intellectual anarchist overcome by a throbbing impulse to implode the paradigms that have regimented his life. Failing to achieve his project of mathematical unification, he instead sees only fragmentation and fracture. In response to this disarray he renounces the “madness of the Search” for a pure logic of existence, which he now describes as “the obscuring, incarnate illusion of finding and understanding.” The narrative of Hilst’s text manifests this fragmentation formally. “I’m melting the measure / I created,” reads one of a number of poems that litter the text, occupying a liminal space between conscious and unconscious thought. “Blotting the lines: / Circles / That all around me I drew.”

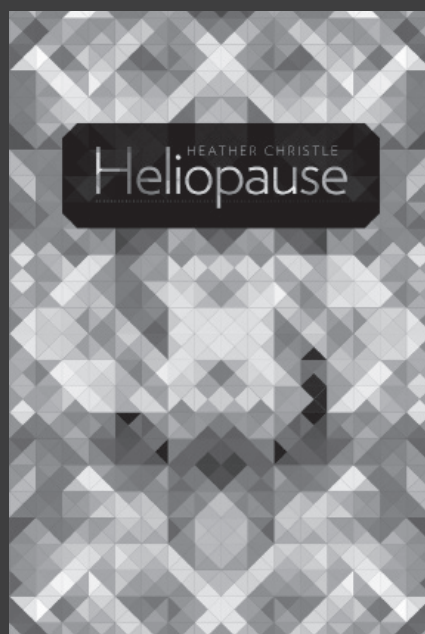
Regardless of the ultimate nature of Kéres’s despair, he is, at least in the dream-thoughts that comprise the narrative of *With My Dog Eyes*, isolated and misanthropic. “What a sham all this of kids and marriage,” he thinks in the middle of a fight with his wife as his son cries at his feet. “I think of a shot in the chest and the other one’s still ranting eternally in her light-green nightgown... A shot in the chest.” Elsewhere he appears, briefly, to be one of those lecherous professors we find in Nabokov and Roth: “Get drunk every night, and vicious, sputtering, shake my dick timetotime for [his wife] Amanda’s friends.” However, bodies remain alien to Kéres throughout the text, whether as a site for violence or intimacy. His attempts at eroticization

are exclusively impersonal, demeaning, and unfulfilling. During one reverie of a brothel he frequented in his twenties, his mother suddenly enters, shaming his desires through her presence: “I’ll go wherever you go, son,” she implores him. “There should be room to plant some collards in the back.”

And yet, though the specific sensory “experience” of *With My Dog Eyes* is indeed that of a mind jettisoning out of its natural orbit, losing the coordinates that had heretofore organized its existence—and many critics have described the arc of the novel as a descent into madness—the book is no simple study into neurological disorder, and to pigeonhole it as such is to do it a great disservice. The narrative seems to be more *intentional* inquiry on Kérés’s part of his own state of mind, rather than stream-of-conscious overflow of genuine mental illness. We see hints of this dotted throughout the text, as moments of perspective, hope, and sociality arise in his thoughts: “Amanda and the kid... I should have told them about the dark-gray despair streaked in black, a viscous substance taking me.” For Hilst, whose father suffered from schizophrenia and spent time living in mental institutions, *With My Dog Eyes* functions not as a representation of entropic breakdown, but instead as an investigation into the psychological response to the recognition of the irreconcilability of the two worlds Kérés desires to reconcile: the ideal world of mathematics and the chaotic world of nature and human experience.

Early in the novel Kérés asks: “What are feelings anyway? How is it that they vanish without a vestige? Were they ever there? Everything leaves a trace. In death, bones, later ashes. Vestiges in

an urn.” Much that is essential to Hilst’s novel is contained in these lines. We as readers trail just behind Kérés’s narration, pursuing the line of ash left by each sensory instant of his contemplations. Kérés gives these moments a name when he calls them “sunburst[s] that w[ere] not fire.” *With My Dog Eyes* rolls along to the rhythm of their pulse, follows the ash-trace of their path as it leads gradually, inevitably, to the blasted pastoral of the novel’s ominous endgame: windswept plains, a tree, and a man waiting to die.



### *Heliopause*

By Heather Christle

Wesleyan University Press, 2015

112 pages

Reviewed by K. Rose Miller

NASA’s website for its Voyager mission defines the heliopause as “the outer limit of the Sun’s sphere of influence,” the point at which the Sun’s radiation fades into deep space. As chance would



“Disintegration Loops” are recordings of short segments of tape run on loop, documentations of the gradual erosion of the contents until only ghostly traces remain. (Basinski later paired the digital recording of that process of degradation with footage of the last hour of daylight on September 11.) As Basinski’s tapes function as both artwork and historical document, so Christle’s “Disintegration Loop 1.1” serves as both poem and documentation of the process of its own composition, with the music’s irreducible hour, the video on the computer screen, woven into both the meaning and structure of the poem. “I drag the cursor backward / so it can start again,” she writes. “I’m reversing / into morning what was night.” In her poem, as in Basinski’s compositions, destruction becomes generative; creation arises from disintegration. The poem breaks into short stanzas, “loops” that continually resist closure (“this is where to escape”), circling back repeatedly to Basinski while gesturing outward into a broader network of influences and relations.

The second long poem of *Heliopause*, “Elegy for Neil Armstrong,” employs a different conceptual strategy, in this case an erasure project involving NASA transcripts of radio communications between Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and mission control during the first moon landing. Erasure, an

artistic process in which the artist erases parts of a source text to reveal a “new” text, simultaneously challenges the idea of an autonomous poet-creator while embodying that poet’s singular creation. Here, Christle sculpts an elegy out of her source material, sensitively engaging with the materiality of language while evoking larger questions of distance, space, and death.

The original NASA transcripts Christle “samples” in her “Elegy for Neil Armstrong” were printed as white text on black paper, and that format is preserved in the poem to astounding effect, as the black “space” of the page evokes that of space itself, the characters on the page each a distant glowing star. Black pages are also used for the epistolary sequence and divide the general sections throughout, providing both a symbolically rich medium for her text and an elegant way to structure the book. Throughout *Heliopause*, Christle employs the experimental and emotional possibilities of language to evoke the broader ontological questions that lie within the everyday. “I think I know how / it’s going to end,” Christle writes, but “there is uncertainty enough /to hold me still.” The poems of *Heliopause* dwell within this uncertainty, employed as telescopes of sorts, pointed upward toward the stars and void.

C O M I N G F R O M  
F E A T H E R P R O O F  
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*The Inborn Absolute: The Artwork of Robert Ryan*

Robert Ryan has deep roots as a musician and devotee of Lord Shiva. His art reveals a profound mastery of the American tattooing tradition while creating a mystical and imaginative world brimming with his unique takes on Eastern religious iconography. This monograph covers two decades of stunning paintings & tattoos, as well as interviews with art and music luminaries Freddy Corbin and Genesis P. Orridge about Ryan's work and the lineages it draws from and expands upon.

*Sunshine on an Open Tomb*

by Tim Kinsella

Fall 1988: the brooding runt of a political dynasty (known as The Family) is hidden from The Media, which is desperate for content at the advent of the 24-hour news cycle. His father, Poppy, is about to be appointed Prez—and his oldest brother is already tapped to be Prez, too. But the narrator, always tipsy and perpetually struggling to express himself due to his many physical defects from inbreeding, is mostly just despondent over a love triangle. As he meanders the long halls of The Family's hideout, he tries to make sense of their history and big plans for The Homeland.

*Tennessee Highway Death Chant*

by Keegan Jennings Goodwin

In a purgatory at the banks of the Hiwassee River in southeastern Tennessee, this novel's two teenagers—the garrulous John Stone and the young Jenny Evenene—barrel through an endless night in a Firebird Trans Am. Jenny wakes each morning, the same morning, and chronicles the events of her final day, her memory reaching back into the recesses of mythical time, recollecting cosmogonies, eschatologies, and metamorphoses that mingle with the details of her violent end.



*MAKE X: An Anthology*

*MAKE X* collects memorable work published throughout the last ten years of the beloved Chicago literary magazine *MAKE X*. Through fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and reviews, alongside new visual art portfolios, interviews, and stories from the editors, *MAKE X* honors a decade of storytelling and literary rabble-rousing.



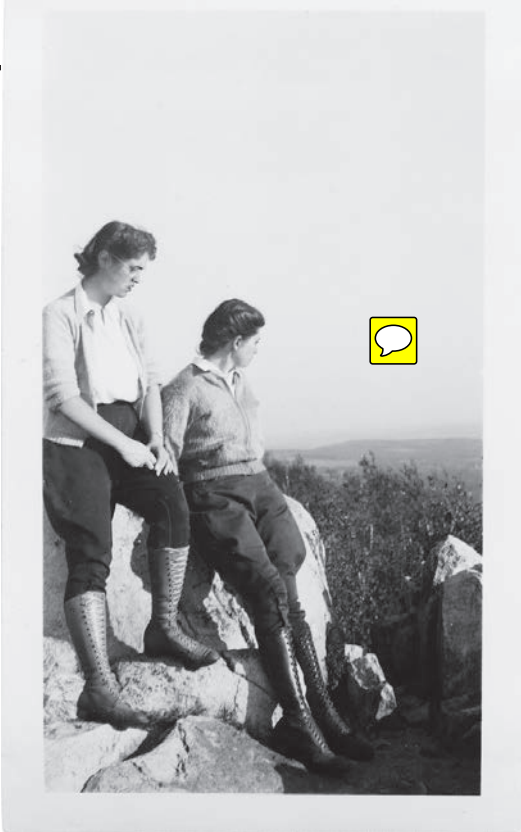
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*The First Collection of Criticism by a Living Female Rock Critic* by Jessica Hopper

*See You in the Morning* by Mairead Case

*Erratic Fire, Erratic Passion: The Poetry of Sportstalk* by Pasha Malla & Jeff Parker




# H I K E R S

*As an artist, Eileen Mueller catalogues journeys, intimacies, communities of makers, and queer networks. This amalgam of materials connects the threads of geographies, practice, and kinship beyond what is linear or proximal. At its core the work digs into the importance of casting one's self away to find hidden geographies as an important catalyst for ongoing individuation and the creation of avant gardes both old and new.*

*The Hikers* recontextualizes the photo archive of a family member that has passed. Feeling both the regret of unasked questions and the confidence of a kindred spirit, images have been selected that together form a vision of an empowered and intimately connected group of queer women. Could it be that in the emulsifying wilds of Wisconsin these women found the same break from normativity that I would seek out 70 years later? To make my own viewership visible- to honor this potential history- I have rephotographed myself and my former partner to implant the likeness and flesh of our own

intimacy into the existing archive of my great aunt's cohort. Inserting myself as various figures throughout this collection of images implies a simultaneity of my own viewership as part or whole, subject, companion, and voyeur. This blurred authorial identification describes a queering flux in projection that viewers cycle through as they encounter texts within which they seek to understand their own selves.




**James Tadd Adcox** is the author of the novel  (Curbside Splendor, 2014) and a collection of short fiction, *The Map of the System of Human Knowledge* (Tiny Hardcore Press, 2012). He lives in Chicago.


**Rosa Alcalá** is the author of *Undocumentaries* (Shearsman Books, 2010) and *The Lust of Unsentimental Waters* (Shearsman Books, 2012). She also edited and translated *Spit Temple: The Selected Performances of Cecilia Vicuña* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2012) and was a finalist for a 2013 PEN Award. Currently an NEA Translation Fellow, she teaches at the University of Texas-El Paso.

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The **BLUNT RESEARCH GROUP** is an anonymous, contemporary collective of poets, scholars, and activists of diverse origin.

**Mario Bellatin** was born in Mexico City in 1960 and raised in Peru. He studied screenplay writing in Cuba before returning to Mexico in 1995. Bellatin won the 2001 Xavier Villaurrutia Award for *Flores* (Anagrama, 2004), and in 2002 was awarded the Guggenheim Scholarship. In 2008, he received the Mexican National Award for *El gran vidrio* (Anagrama, 2007). His works have been translated into various languages.

**Robert Boucheron** is an architect living in Charlottesville, Virginia. His stories, essays, poems and reviews appear in *Bangalore Review*, *Gravel*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Milo Review*, *New Haven Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Poydras Review*, *Short Fiction*,  *Tishman Review*.

**Caleb Caldwell** is .D. student at Washington University in St. Louis. He reads and writes about many of the usual suspects. His work, scholarly and otherwise, has been published in several print and online publications, including *Entropy*, *Slant*, and *Religion & Literature*.

**Julie Carr** is the author of six books of poetry, most recently *100 Notes on Violence*, *RAG*, and *Think Tank*. She is also the author of *Surface Tension: Ruptural Time and the Poetics of Desire in Late Victorian Poetry* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2013). A chapbook of prose *The*

*Silence that Fills the Future* was recently released as a free PDF from Essay Press. Her prose *Objects from a Borrowed Confession* is also forthcoming from Ahsahta Press in 2016.

**Carolina Casanueva** is a translator. She lives in Los Angeles.

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**Marcus Creaghan** is a writer based in Toronto. His work has been featured in *Entropy*, *Echolocation*, and the *Hart House Review*. You can reach him on Twitter @marcuscreaghan.

**Anna Deeny Morales** is a translator and literary critic. Recent translations include *Floating Lanterns* (Shearsman Books, 2015) by Mercedes Roffé and *Sky Below: Selected Works* (Northwestern UP, forthcoming in 2016) by Raúl Zurita. She is an adjunct professor in the Center for Latin American Studies at Georgetown University and is currently working on a book called *Sound Dissent: Essays on Poetry and Translation*.

**Luis Felipe Fabre** (b. 1974) is a poet and critic based in Mexico City. He has published the volume of essays, *Leyendo agujeros, Ensayos sobre (des)escritura, antiescritura y no escritura*, and the poetry collections *Cabaret Provenza*, *La sodomía en la Nueva España and Poemas de terror y de misterio*. He is the author of two anthologies of contemporary Mexican poetry, *Divino Tesoro* and *La Edad de Oro*, and *Arte & basura*, an anthology of Mario Santiago Papasquiaro's poetry work. He has been curator of the Poesía en Voz Alta Festival and Todos los originales serán destruidos, an exhibition of contemporary art made by poets.

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**Oliverio Gironde** (b. 1891, d. 1967) was a leading figure in the Argentine vanguard. His early poems are gathered in two cosmopolitan poetic travelogues, titled *Veinte poemas para ser leídos en tranvía* (*Twenty Poems to Read on the Street Car*, 1922), and *Decalcomanías* (*Decals*, 1925).

**C.W. Griffin** is an illustrator and a baseball coach in Chicago. He is the author of the cookbook *Eat Knucklehead* released by Publishing Genius in Summer 2015.

**Edith Grossman** translates contemporary and seventeenth-century Latin American and Peninsular literature written in Spanish.

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**Kathleen Heil's** essays, stories, poems, and translations have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Fence*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Third Coast*, *The Collagist*, *BOMB*, *Subtropics*, *Quarterly West*, *The Barcelona Review* and elsewhere. She is a 2015-2016 Sturgis International Fellow in Berlin and a 2016 NEA Translation Fellow. More at kathleenheil.net.

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**Kolin Jordan** is a full human skeleton stuffed with organs and wrapped in meat and skin. He writes, thinks, speaks, and dreams in English and Spanish equally frequently. He has translated two books and countless other shorter things. He listens to a lot of bachata, merengue, and '90s alternative.

**Andrew Johnson** lives in Kansas City, Missouri and is the director of Pilgrim Chapel. His work has appeared in *Crazyhorse*, *Guernica Daily*, *Killing the Buddha*, *Sonora Review*, and elsewhere.

**Alexandra Lakin** is an artist and illustrator who recently relocated to Pittsburgh from LA. She has an MFA in Electronic Integrated Arts from Alfred University, NYCC. You can check out more of her work at [www.alexandralakin.com](http://www.alexandralakin.com).

**Tyler Landes** (b. 1989) is a fine art photographer and print maker from Texas, currently living and working in Chicago, Illinois. He created the glorious image backgrounds throughout this issue. You can find more of his work at [www.steventylerlandes.com](http://www.steventylerlandes.com)

**Sooze Lanier** is a writer and maniac living in Chicago. Her debut collection of short stories, *The Game We Play*, was published by Curbside Splendor in 2014. Lanier's work can also be found in *Annalemma*, *Hobart*, *The Spoiler's Hand* and elsewhere.

**Ben Merriman** is a sociologist at the University of Chicago and the fiction editor at *Chicago Review*. These essays are two of many drawn from archival material. Read more at [benmerriman.tumblr.com](http://benmerriman.tumblr.com)

**Lina Meruane** is a Chilean writer and essayist. Her works in fiction include a collection of short stories, *Las Infantas* (1998), and the novels *Póstuma* (2000), *Cercada* (2000), *Fruta Podrida* (2007) and *Sangre en el Ojo* (2012, forthcoming as *Seeing Red*). As a non-fiction author, she has published *Volverse Palestina* (2014). Meruane has been awarded the prestigious Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Prize (México 2012) and the Anna Seghers Prize (Berlín 2011), as well as writing grants from the Guggenheim Foundation (USA 2004) and the National Endowment for the Arts (USA 2010), among others. She currently teaches at New York University's Global/Liberal Studies Program.

**K. Rose Miller** recently graduated from the Helen Zell Writers' Program at the University of Michigan with an MFA in poetry. She also makes stop-motion animations, and is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio.

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**Cecca Ochoa** is a fiction writer and essayist. She serves as the managing editor for *Apogee Journal*. She is a 2014 alumnus of Voices of Our Nation's Artists. In 2011, she received the Astraea Foundation's Lesbian Writer's Award. Cecca hails from Oakland, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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**Marc Rahe** is the author of *The Smaller Half* (Rescue Press, 2010) and *On Hours* (Rescue Press, 2015). His poems have appeared in *iO: A Journal of New American Poetry*, *jubilat*, *notnostrums*, *PEN Poetry Series*, *Petri Press*, and elsewhere. Marc lives in Iowa City and works for a human services agency.

**Mercedes Roffé** is one of Argentina's leading poets. Widely published in the Spanish-speaking world, some of her books have been published in translation in Italy, Quebec, Romania, and England. She is the editor of Ediciones Pen Press, a small press specialized in contemporary world poetry. Roffé was awarded a John Guggenheim and a Civitella Ranieri fellowship.

After retiring a year ago, **Jim Ross** celebrated by diving back into creative writing and publishing sixteen pieces of creative nonfiction, four poems, forty photographs, and two podcasts in sixteen journals. Yet one of his biggest achievements came four months ago, when he and his wife finally became grandparents after their daughter gave birth to twins.

**Armando Salas** manages the Armando Salas Portugal Archive. He is based in Mexico.

**Claudia Peña Salinas** was born in Mexico in 1975. She received a BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1999 and an MFA from Hunter College in New York in 2009. She works and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

**Bill Savage** teaches Chicago history, literature, and culture at Northwestern University and the Newberry Library. He believes that Daniel Burnham is overrated, while Edward Brennan is underrated. He is at work on

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**Jennifer Scappettone** is the author of *Killing the Moonlight: Modernism in Venice* (Columbia UP, 2014), *From Dame Quickly* (Litmus Press, 2009), the forthcoming cross-genre works *Exit 43* (Atelos Press) and *A Chorus Fosse* (Compline Press). She edited and translated *Locomotrix: Selected Poetry and Prose of Amelia Rosselli* (University of Chicago Press, 2012). She is an associate professor at the University of Chicago.

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**Edwin Torres** is a linguist born in New York City. His books include *Ameriscopica* (University of Arizona Press, 2014) and *Yes Thing No Thing* (Roof Books, 2010). His work has been anthologized in *American Poets in the 21st Century: The New Poetics Vol. 2* (Wesleyan UP, 2007) and *Angels of the Americlypse: An Anthology of New Latin@ Writing* (Counterpath, 2014).

**Anne Twitty** is the translator of Cecilia Vicuña's *Precario/Precarious* (Wesleyan UP, 1983). Her other translations include Maria Negroni's *Islandia* (Station Hill Press, 2001) and *Night Journey* (Princeton UP, 2002).

**Cecilia Vicuña** is the author of more than a dozen books of poetry, including *Spit Temple: The Selected Performances of Cecilia Vicuña* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2012), *Instan* (Kelsey Street Press, 2002), *Cloud-Net* (Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, 1999), *Unravelling Words & the Weaving of Water* (Graywolf Press, 1992), *Precario/Precarious* (Wesleyan University Press, 1983), and *SABORAMI* (Chain Links, 2011). She is the co-editor of *The Oxford Book of Latin American Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology* (Oxford UP, 2009) and the editor of *Ül: Four Mapuche Poets: An Anthology* (Latin American Literary Review, 1998). Her next poetry book is forthcoming by Kelsey Street Press in 2016.

**Alejandro Zambra** was born in Santiago, Chile in 1975. He is the author of two books of poems, *Bahía Inútil* (Ediciones Stratis, 1998) and *Mudanza* (Quid Ediciones, 2003), an essay collection, *No leer* (Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2010), a short story collection, *My Documents* (McSweeney's, 2015), and three novels, *Bonsai* (Melville House, 2008), *The Private Lives of Trees* (Open Letter Books, 2010), and *Ways of Going Home* (FSG, 2013).

**Nathanaël** is the (self-) translating author of more than twenty books.