Utriculi

Issue 3 Part 1

2026

Sandy Press

Utriculi

Issue 3 Part 1

edited by harry k stammer
contributing editor Mark Young

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Special thanks to all authors and artists for contributing to Issue 3 of Utriculi.

Seth McKelvey

Alm 30

is there an an
alog an
alogy for the death in decide?

Arbitrarium dust has filled finger
print valleys leaving only trite silence,
ink's obitration to heartbeat
        at the suicision I am seeing
        my finger trailing there

how does I stop writing without
I stopping writing?

touched orbit's gambit,
to be drawn up in good news suicide,
digitized body's no song
the evacuated lifepulse of silence an
elevated heartache

will we wake to the the de
finite article? is
the the the
re? the
re the
re?

Alm 31

scissors outstrips places to cut
desks idle capital

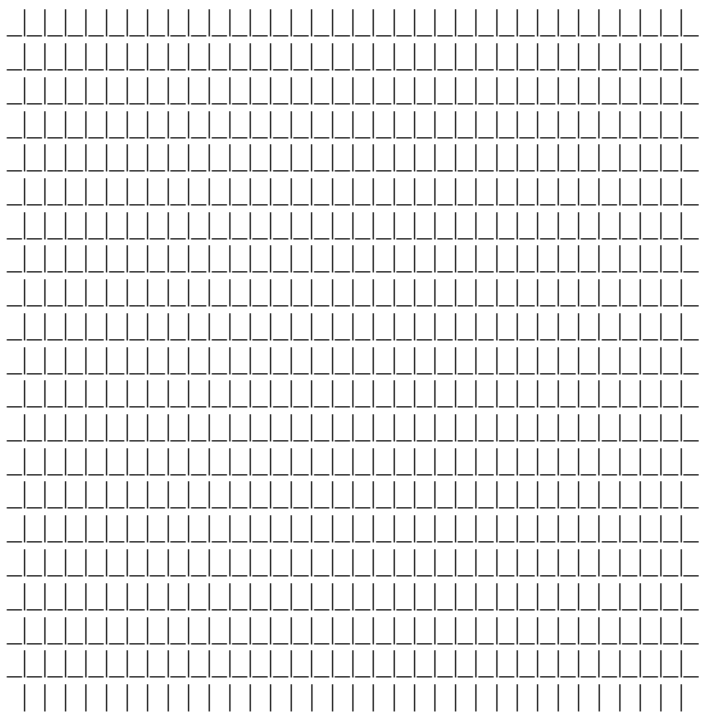
sighs stimulus increase griefs
aggregate demand

---

eyelines subsidized inputs
else how can the net catch

storehoused surplus unfulfills
cut heres
when grief could be spending eyes idols capital
for eyes, souls zero-sum souls

paid in full remainderless
capitals idol wages
just death



or its just
wages is death

then could an eye indicate a cut
opening outto
the secret place against plots

the pavilion of prelapsed accumulation
abundant remnants remaindered
idle capital clearing idles capital

Alm 32

what spells silence?
what spells a groan?

I don’t know but I know
how to silence spells.

> Tooltip: Sacrifice your Will
> on the altar of RNG.

In the no-land where dice and death digitize to dye,
[WTT for ⊤⊤]

an unarmed trappist and a
trappings trapped trapper

roam mounted, mostly encumberanceless,
a bit checked on the bridle,

on a quest to quiet
the roaring.

Loping easily on a low ping, sing
-ing Swing Low sillily, losing

track of tracks and
time to notice chrono

-kinesthesia, the chiro
-megalous monk and cosm
-eticized comp
-anion grind XP.

Calidore-like, out-side
-tracked in side
-quests, dis
-traction com
-pels a party a
-cquiesce to quit.

Playerless, the bridal
g
roa
πing
goes on.

Elsewhere in where
-less land

-’s landless
-ness, a rōnin

chiromancer, dis
-covering a gro

-tto held by a
centaur chiro-

grapher LFG, for
-ms a group for looking for

a hand, holding
none to spare to lend.

Fast trave
-ling hold

to hold,
checking in

-ns for rum
-ors, the hope they
hold out
against, the asc
-eticized comp
-anions grind XP.

Di
-verted by ver
-sions, the cou

-ple forgets games' counters
-pell.

Unplayed, the brittle
g
roa
πing
goes on.

On anoth
-er server,

alternate reality's
alternate reality,

a Landsknecht one-hands
a Zweihänder, be

-rating his healer, a hand
-less arcanist

who sits in
-tently studying in

-scruitable cheiroglyphs, trying
to learn a language she cannot think.

Grote Pier hears the com
-mand—unhand—

but cannot do what is already done.
Doubly thus ins

-ulted, the pair dis
-band. The parti

-colored Doppelsöldner dap
-ples in cou
-riering. The devot

-ee tries her hand
-less hand at sanctuary. The herm
-eticized comp
-anionless grind XP.

Decou
-pled in
tents they play
not get along. Dis

-played, the ritual
g
roa
πing
goes on.

Meanwhile the hand-
to-hand pacifist and heed
-less rogue log back in. Again
roan-mounted they tarry in
wandering, a gain
to be had in hand at err
-and's end. They sleep in in
-ns' rooms or be
-drolled in wilder
-ness zones, dis
-turbed by host
-iles, non
-player players players' mean
-s of aggr
-andizing avatars. The aesth
-eticized comp
-lainers grind XP.

Meanwhile the head
-less swordsman and sword
-ed horse man quest
-ion their cheir
-ognostic
-ism. Vexed by the vast trave

-sty of a vex
-illumless guild, one up
-loads a hand
-drawn PNG to draw
aggro. Inun
-dated, their vit
-ality drain
-s, so one rage
-s, one ward
-s again
-st pain. An
-esthicized, the comp
-lacent grind XP.

Meanwhile the hard
-wired laws
abject the oth
-ers' chiasm
-atic doppel
-gängers to hard
-ware's else
-where. Herm
-es, gilded sumptu
-arylessly, thinks not of gifts but
transparencies. The sor
-did herm
-it reads her LCD's
luminous GIFs like i
-lluminated ve
-llum. Playing over
-long, each longs
for each other over long
latencies. Unre
-quiting, the f
-etishized comp
-assioned grind XP.

Three unen
-cou-
ntered

cou
-ples, ag
-nostics played out in
one-upping one-ups, in
-ter full-in
-ventoried on hard
drives, without
having spelled out dis
-pel. Unre

-played, the brighter
g
roa
πing
goes off.

Seth McKelvey teaches at Clemson University. He is the author of *No Exit: Contemporary American Literature and the State* (University of Virginia Press, 2025), and his scholarship appears in *American Literature*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, and *Nineteenth-Century Literature*. His poems appear in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Word For/Word*, *Sip Cup*, *Madcap Review*, *TRANSOM*, *E-ratio*, *Bateu*, *BlazeVOX*, and elsewhere.

Artist statement:

Alms has been a fifteen-year project of writing through the biblical Psalms, poor devotionals. As I write, I read and re-read the Psalm of the corresponding number. In that sense, they are impoverished responses to the Psalms, though the traces of this practice are usually faint and spectral. Uprooting a long devotional poetic tradition from a centrifugal present, I think of these poems as circumscribing mumbled prayers and confused confessions, traversing the orthographically orthogonal planes of theology and technology—in these three, specifically, via the linguistic material of subjectivity, economics, and video games.

Sheila Murphy

Promiscuity

Raspberry
jam confiscates
the attention span

spanning this disruptive
city of
benignity

why
out of
curiosity applaud conscription

after the contortionist
self extracts
assignment

requiring
a dress
code making for

retro discernible graphic
polity embarrassingly
polished

conscience
not bothering
to sleep with

the momentary time
signature absent
key

signature
panel of
jurors spherically volunteered

day lilies crimped
as tuck
points

Ghazal Near June

His pupils sleeved through pale gray irises.
How I wondered was he able to see.

Wind keeps not holding still this afternoon.
A woman rolls along the sidewalk home.

Silence is no one's first language.
A boundary testing love from both sides.

After sunlight begins it coasts freehand.
The equation, a frame without fixation.

Sapidity rises from a blue lake.
Perfumed layer of gray too pale to see.

Disporting

Can you imagine retroactive toasting of people you do not like? Why bother pinning yourself down to customary fencing advocated by individuals who have fought their way to be in your corner, whatever it took? Now is the time for all good ambassadors to wipe their shoes on the welcome mat of history and start shouldering a better grasp on circumstantial truth. I would offer this same thought to anyone who claims to have only begun to love me given nothing better to do. And what happens next inevitably comes true, with or without cheering anybody on or criticizing impulses that feel foreign as a bronze Norwegian visiting a domicile both for better and worse, meanwhile avoiding the wearing of a tennis dress, claiming to prefer not showing off the least attractive part of a woman's body to strangers and members of parliament alike.

Veering off the fast lane in the direction of fossils made large in the collective mind

"I'm Gorgeous Inside," Says the Sign Out Front

"I'm gorgeous inside," says the sign out front
of the too-clean straight-lined house mimicking
corporate buildings uninhabited
appearing while cornering the attention
market in their stunning, magnificent,
dazzling, extravagant spaces, just what
you, potential buyer, deserve, so
put in your bid asap, snap up this
coveted white-walled emptiness ideal for
possessions you don't already own but should
and will to fill the shrill echoing halls
an architectural fall guy for
your insistently vanilla reaching for
cold stars that resist your poverty scars.

Sheila E. Murphy. A Pushcart-nominated poet, recent appearances include *Gargoyle, Poetry Bay Poetose, Volta,* and others. Most recent book publications are *I Want to Be Your Radio* (Unlikely Books, 2025), *Escritoire* (Lavender Ink, 2025), and *Permission to Relax* (BlazeVOX Books, 2023). She won the Gertrude Stein Poetry Award for *Letters to Unfinished J.* (Green Integer Press, 2003) and the Hay(ha)ku Book Prize for *Reporting Live From You Know Where* (Meritage Press, 2018). She lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

Her Wikipedia page can be found at:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheila_Murphy_(poet)

David Wolf

From *More*

rendered as fulgor's guise

fatsia leaves,
gutsy brut hewer with plenty
of gunk left in the jug,
so jog & wrangle left
if chased . . . ukase?
chosen goad—full stop
quit just shy of heaven's hogjaws

luck's overage: nova's wattage,
ouch, old
as the misfold, dithering

grimace: bouquet ajar—

knock to let
erasure's ohms refurbish
your wending patience

bravery's resolution—
emblematic, low-slung,
obdurate, wafered,
pestilential, rook-solid

fan (base) on low
persevering in the ooze—
a worn humid dawn

less a matter of essence same
old same farce-addled
worsted ortho's presto torn Hades

cooked on low oomph's
ocular kittle or

a wagered portion anyway

a lowing overture
wind-spun
prediction's
b[racket]s

flush bore lassitude—
landed knurl
a cue, off for the winter
to pool

ferreting in fits and starts—
putative stats, nerves or not

forget the return to
less off-garish semblance
a core of realism opts
for the ask
from the kindhearted weight
pinned to nullity's dearest garb

*

enrichment courses inward
overtures unraveling rain cutting
as sand evening's heady
slippage crosses mind's moorland

curated interior of the ossified's
lost growl,
belated legato—the aria's uncut tones—
nerves scraped, now a ringing flow

who's hat aspires to be
the text at hand?
twill will, ill in the light,
love's halfmoon just the appetizer—

a pearl in the pile of exposition,

a nail in the file,
nurtured, external to what?

growl all you want
gaze up at your aura's underbelly,
rustic beneath
the torn umbrella of the oblique

youth's smashed eclairs—
onward with your widgets—

the leaf sends no epistle to the air,
follows memory's breeze, lends
the orbit a woven essence,
or so we lean in lilting relief

subitaneous shape-shifts to spontaneous
pot of oughta nil tainted amiably noxious
eons ooze & out
of us another shriek

filtering illusion liter's tears to err
and retrieve rocks ink a nugget of gruff

*

Rumble-funny,
you are taken back to those stilted days
your perceived excitement,
    so full of
some gain reversed what's named
before being left behind—

elk crossing up ahead,
take care,
row like a believer.

*

keep, rock

you can envision but can't quite inscribe
excision tune to moonscape graphemically

not to be read front to back
back on the shelf
anyway for now what else?

mid-solo, you halt—
let the note ring—

count the notes,
such a silly song of youth,
a pair of bells, bong bong bong—

Once to liberate inspiring now
the dead end it always was
(*Now* is the word of the wan moment)
(*Was* is the word still abuzz)

shed, pebbly

*

Surly on cue as apricot brew—
insipid slapdash, haute pilgrimage

Gauge the limit?
a shoddy splash for all and then—
the cracked trough long dry—
the furtive empire
in your eyes, webbed, toiling
of a day, and once

I was all ears in the buttery gutter's swirl—
infinity's diversions—
a cobbler's nudge

**

David Wolf is the author of seven collections of poetry, *Open Season*, *The Moment Forever*, *Sablier I* (a finalist for the National Poetry Series), *Sablier II*, *Visions* (with artist David Richmond), *Weir* (a micro-chapbook from Origami Poems Project), and *Seven*. His work has appeared in numerous literary magazines and journals, including *BlazeVOX*, *Cleaver Magazine*, *dadakuku*, *decomp*, *E·ratio, Exacting Clam, Indefinite Space, Lotus-eater Magazine, New York Quarterly, Otoliths, River Styx Magazine*, *Transom,* and *Utriculi.* He is a professor emeritus of English at Simpson College and serves as the poetry editor for *Janus Head: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and the Arts.*

**

Artist's Statement

These poems are from *More*, a long persona work. More is the surname of the speaker. When I asked him what he was up to in his poetry, he replied, "I'd say my poetry, if that's what it is, foregrounds the music of language (a music sometimes melodic, sometimes dissonant, more often a blurry mix) and a disjunctively fluid approach to imagery."

Mark DuCharme

For Don Van Vliet

i.

Whack platitudes
Dumb baby interface
Epoxy on camel soot

Wish I had a shade to cling to my gnawed
Heat portico, my tuneless shadow
My canceled autumn whip charm

Infundibular coterie screams
Burnt like crow shadows on deciduous splatter
Yellow wallhangings suctioned off in acetylene silos

Dank woven ash grammar
Bleep if you feel oleander puzzles
Remain in azure

Lick trophies' absent erasures
Become known by the devil's pandering
Vanilla dust strangled in sirens' broken beaks

Moot loafers
Nude on a shell
Coyote murmurs, visibly deracinated

ii.

If you think in appletrees
Midnight strangles you

If you touch a scar
You'll learn a new dance

If you sear ghostflesh
You'll escape the pact that renders nothing

But wires & angles
Cuneiform lies

Born dead in a new language
As various as phases of the moon

iii.

O elemental machinery
Where is thy laughingstock
Now that moon's elevation is through

Don't go there, even when laughing
Amid lucky selves, who tore
Away, when you were still not sure

O elemental machinery
Official, like all trainwreck reverie
Crosschecked Amsterdams lacking

Ghostburn

The hen cried. Raw arias
Blew in sailors's sunken cadence. Speech
Without mirrors. Redacted marketing kits. Iffy
Blogging mania. It's a long way down to the
Guest-residency subaltern time zone.
Blurt desolation secrets. Streams in the overtype
Singing manual. Kakistocratic matte planet.
Fentanyl seeded in dry earth.
How much does it cost. Who says so
Screams in a bloody ear.

Philistine tango. Moral suffering.
Easy crackpot hideaway.
Let the ghosts flower & wail. Let seasons
Gather dust from the yellow lips of the moon.
If there's to be a banquet, let there be

A banquet. If there's to be sorrow,
Let it flow from the eyes of lonely strangers.
Let poetry be done with silence.
(Wind burnt in the heat answered folly.)
Let poetry be done with silence.

No Moon

Laminate for clarity or scattershot wallhangings
The blade at the end of the tongue cannot be
Strewn fruit under the shades of winter
Captive mentions on the lean
Snarl a paper tuner

Pullulating orbital shivers
How would a flume stroke nestle
Even if the wheel cannot be sung
In eunoia nape witlessness
Shrill with moot tilting

Like the speaker in each other's dreams
Dark as evanescence sprung
By proxy nope strand whirring
Certified dusk at jade captions majuscule
As privet or ourselves no longer be

Dulce slab evermore bony prank
Clank opera tonguing
A throng spool of intermittent vocabulary
Torch-stung ghost porticoes
Limited mantra coughing

Peaky disrupter newel vanishing point
Apparent bank whiteness
Even as each other feels
In a pool or intermittent vocabulary
Of jaunty phases caterwauled

Minutes from a Canceled Meeting

The paragraph is lifted from the heartbeat.
I don't remember you going there
    If only I could surge
Avian, with congested dolls
On the plundering warehouse
    Broken, ancillary footsteps
Turbocharged, in a litmus vocabulary
Clanging, clanging, like neon dolls.

    When I want to call you home,
    Tongue pictured like soot
On a soda fracture, it remains to be
Sampled. Make sure it's not there
    Contiguous as mottled trousers. A flame of looking
    Over the edge. An interruption to your proposed
Surety. Scholars with the intuition of hedgehogs;
A fluttered possibility.

    You went there first, to cross the smudge
    Of daylight into the unknown,
For surety is only voluptuary planning.
Sit down awhile & mumble, before I have to
    Reach for the whiskey,
    & We take up the long journey into moments' hard ruses,
Lonely as a faith healer at an auto dealership
When crowds gather like sunrise,
    Often with less than the best
    Intentions.

Mark DuCharme's poem "Thirst" won the Synchronized Chaos poetry contest in 2026. His recent books include *Complicated Grief* and *Thousands Blink Outside,* both from C22 Open Editions; *Here, Which Is Also a Place* from Unlikely Books; *Scorpion Letters* from Ethel; and his work of poet's theater, *We, the Monstrous: Script for an Unrealizable Film,* from The Operating System. *Since You Asked* will be published by C22 in January 2027. He lives in Boulder, Colorado, USA.

Mark Young

A line from Stieg Larsson

Bruce Lee said it best — "Your
coding is fine, but acrylic media
are going to be your new best
friends now it's your turn to ball-

room dance. Threats will come
without fail, especially if the trans-
fer involves genetically modified
material. It's why toddlers — un-

able to afford even a discounted
DVD from Australia's leading on-
line bookstore — watch how their
parents behave, & try to imitate it."

Ascenseur Pour L'Échafaud

This title promises a Miles Davis
sound track like that first film by
Louis Malle, but I couldn't afford it.

All I can ask is that you keep an
open mind in your approach,
otherwise the only thing to be

found is likely to be the absence of
sound. Now listen to yourself. Can
you hear how difficult it is to do?

Tantric glasses

Want to balance your chakras? Steal
a march on competitors for the love
of your life? Look directly at the sun
& become aroused at the same time?

Sorry, can't help you there. But if you
want to know what Isadore Ducasse,
Le Comte de Lautremon meant by his
observation, *Beau comme la rencontre*

*fortuite sur une table de dissection d'une
machine à coudre & d'un parapluie!*, then
I may be able to help you if you slip me
sufficient dollars to afford to get a meal.

From the pages of an Elder's Angst MAGAzine
for Trey Parker & Matt Stone

I'm out on the park grass boot-
scootin' with others of my age
group. Satan's in the White House,
unable to get an abortion because
ever since SCOTUS struck down
Roe v. Wade, there are no states

close enough that will let him
in to medically terminate the
pregnancy & he hates flying so
much he won't travel any further.
T.®ump claims to be the father;
but his penis — in those video

clips I have seen of it — is so
small it probably wouldn't even
impregnate a hummingbird. So
I'm bootscootin' while Satan wails
at the wall that Saddam would
never have let *his* pecker get him

in such a pickle, & T.®ump's de-
cided that, since it's Saturday, it
must be time to send the National
Guard in to war-ravaged Portland
& wreak havoc on those wander-
ing hordes of antifa scootbooters.

9 27 25

cardiovascular amplitudes

The wave is relatively small, unlike long waves which are divided into surf beats, harbor resonance, seiche, & tsunamis. The speed of a shallow-water wave is calculated using the equation $C = \sqrt{gD}$. In the center of the Pacific Ocean, their speed can be very close to that of a jet plane, whose engines create thrust. According to Newton's Third Law, for every action there is an equal & opposite reaction; as the engine accelerates gas backwards, it generates a forward pushing force. To overcome drag, smooth surfaces & streamlined shapes help reduce this force which is why the muscles of the arterial walls are smooth, making it easier to contract or expand & regulate the flow of blood through the hollow areas known as lumen.

Mark Young's most recent book is *synecdoche*, published earlier this year by Sandy Press. A collection of visual pieces, *In the Key of G*, is due out later this year.

George Myers Jr.

Rememory and Toni Morrison's way of knowing

Toni Morrison began with a problem no straight history could solve: how to hold a people's life when the record had been made by keepers, sellers, mockers, mourners, inventors, witnesses, and thieves. That's the force behind *The Black Book,* a paper museum presented as a book. In it, a patent sits near a racist image. A song sits near a notice. A photograph carries pride on one page and injury on the next. The pieces in *The Black Book* arrive handled, damaged, saved, clipped, printed, repeated, charred and passed on. Morrison's wager was that the images could speak more truthfully in contact than in explanation.

Published by Random House in 1974, *The Black Book* began with Morrison. She originated the idea while she was an editor there and led the project into being. Middleton A. Harris compiled the book with Morris Levitt, Roger Furman, and Ernest Smith, but the impulse came through Morrison's eye and judgment: a book that could gather Black life in America from surviving pieces and let readers feel the force of their placement.

The book drew serious notice in its own time. It was nominated for a 1975 National Book Award. It also received an award from the American Institute of Graphic Arts. Readers saw literature. Designers saw an object. The book entered the world between categories, and that position is part of its force.

The Black Book moves outside the usual path of history writing. Morrison and her collaborators set one piece of evidence near another and give the reader work that summary handles poorly. There is no connective text between the clippings and images. A reader moves through images, letters, announcements, songs, patents, memories, acts of violence, acts of invention. The materials keep their separate weight.

That's the method.

Hybrid writing is prismatic, carrying angle, refraction, and several routes through one subject. A topic may pass through lyric, document, image, anecdote, criticism, and record. The reader gets more than one way in.

Morrison's work shows that prism is only part of the story. Some hybrid work thinks through incongruity. Meaning comes from unlike things placed close enough to affect one another. One item may carry pride. The next may carry injury. One may show public performance. Another may show private survival. Meaning happens in the contact.

The Black Book gives Morrison a central role in the history of hybrid writing. Before *Beloved* gave readers the word "rememory," *The Black Book* had already shown a way to work with memory through paper, image, and placement.

In *Beloved*, rememory is more than recollection. As Morrison explains it through a character in her novel, rememory is memory encountered again. It can seem to live in a place. It can return through a house, a body, a name, a story repeated too late or too often. Rememory keeps the past close. People meet it again because the wound has stayed in the world around them.

The Black Book widens that idea into cultural memory: memory held by a people rather than by one mind alone. Morrison and the book's associates gather what survived outside a single storyteller's reach. The book lets pieces carry what no one voice could carry alone. *The Black Book* works from a related understanding. It accepts survival in pieces. Some materials were saved. Some were printed. Some were sold, repeated, distorted, cherished, clipped, collected, and passed along. Morrison and her collaborators let the reader feel how much of Black life in America had to be found in scattered forms.

The book was made by many hands, drawn from many sources, from different decades and centuries, and carried into print by a novelist-editor who knew that Black history had been scattered across public records, private keeping, printed insult, song, performance, invention, and family memory.

Morrison must have sensed, ahead of the project, that incongruity has value. It can become a way of knowing when the subject itself has been broken apart.

Traditional exposition often proceeds by route: subject, background, claim, conclusion. That structure can clarify. It can help a reader trust the writer's direction. Many subjects arrive by other means. Memory comes unevenly. Grief comes unevenly. A damaged history comes unevenly. A public record shaped by power comes unevenly.

Morrison and her collaborators made a book out of nearness. The reader turns the page and has to carry the change in tone, scale, and source. A piece of Black achievement may stand near a piece of racist spectacle. Domestic life may stand near state violence. Wit may stand near terror. The page leaves the collision active.

The page turn is part of the form. The reader receives the record in sequence, one act of attention at a time. One page prepares the eye; the next page revises it. A picture held for a moment may change after a document follows. A song may sound different after an image. The reader keeps adjusting. That adjustment is part of the reading.

Several terms can help describe the practice. Parataxis places things side by side while leaving the link unstated. Montage builds meaning through sequence. Assemblage gathers found pieces into a new whole. Constellation suggests a pattern we see after separate points are held together. Each term helps, though Morrison's use of the method exceeds any single label. Her work treats fragments as carriers. They carry what official accounts missed, damaged, or tried to control.

Incongruity also has an emotional use. Some subjects can weaken when the writer explains too quickly. Grief can turn soft. Trauma can turn rigid. Family history can shrink into anecdote. Art criticism can become description with a verdict attached. A direct statement may be true and still too small. Morrison knew how to use indirection. In *The Black Book*, a page can let feeling enter through a document, a photograph, a song, or the placement of one item beside another. The book, which comes with no textual guidance, gives the reader fewer instructions than a conventional history might give. The materials are placed side by side or in consecutiveness, and the reader has to hear the dialog between them.

Incongruity also has an ethical use. A smooth account can make difficult material easier to consume. It can give the reader the relief of order too soon. A book built from fragments can withhold that relief. It can keep injury, endurance, invention, distortion, and beauty from being folded into one easy explanation.

The pieces in *The Black Book* come from different moral worlds. Some were made to preserve kinship, skill, performance, pride, and daily life. Others were made to sell, mock, classify, punish, or possess. Morrison's form places those records near one another without treating them as equal. The reader sees the damage in the record and the life that exceeds the damage. That gives *The Black Book* power. Morrison and the others arranged the material with force instead of polish. They found a form that could hold contradiction and leave it unresolved.

The 2009 Random House 35th-anniversary edition deepens the story. A Morrison poem now appears in the new edition as the preface. That somewhat changes the entrance to the book. The editor who had led the original project came back through her own language. By then, readers knew *Beloved*. They knew rememory.

They could see more clearly that *The Black Book* had been working in that field all along.

The earlier book shows rememory before the term arrives. The later novel names and dramatizes it. Together, they show Morrison thinking about the past through recurrence, placement, return, and contact. *Beloved* gives rememory a body and a voice. *The Black Book* gives cultural memory a page.

Incongruity earns its force through consequence. A writer can place unrelated things together and hope the reader supplies depth. The result feels clever or thin. The parts have to change one another. The page has to create force the writer can't get from summary. Morrison shows the difference. *The Black Book* gathers pieces of Black American life and places them where the reader has to see relation. The relation may be painful, proud, or unresolve; and changes from one page to the next. Incongruity earns its place when a single lane would make the subject too smooth. Because some materials arrive broken, misfiled, overexplained, sentimentalized, or reduced. Morrison's answer was form made from contact.

In *The Black Book*, the page holds what a single account would flatten. In *Beloved*, the novel holds what ordinary memory can't contain. One book gathers surviving pieces. The other gives haunting a human voice.

The best hybrid work places materials where their nearness changes what the reader can know. Morrison knew that history may reach us through documents, pictures, voices, songs, laws, family records, and broken testimony that were never meant to sit together. She encouraged them to meet and left their edges intact.

Artist's statement

I've long been interested in hybrid writing and believe Toni Morrison, in spite of her deserved laurels as a novelist, hasn't received enough attention for the work she's done in this field. *The Black Book* has long gripped and inspired me. This essay is my attempt to more roundly place her in the broader map of collage, parataxis and experimental book art. It's an honor to trace her steps.

My own work moves across hybrid forms; I write as a poet, fiction writer, and critic-practitioner. My books include *The Narrowing Road: 14 Crossings with Basho,* the illustrated novel *Worlds End,* and *Wild Forms: A Field Map to Formally Inventive Literature Since 2000,* forthcoming from Sandy Press. Since the 1970s, I've made language-based collages, paintings and vispo, some of which have been published in the book *Love Letters* and in two out-of-print artist's books, *The News* and *Sub-text*. I work full time as a writer for a national healthcare company based in Pennsylvania. My job is to help simplify healthcare, but I'm not seeing signs of widespread success in that area.

John Bradley

Dear Person

Never trust anyone who says: *Come, come into the angel light*.
Anyone that says: *I reserve the right to stop and frisk your heart.*
Anyone who speaks to you while speaking to someone in another century.
Never trust anyone who says: *I need to talk to your person*.

A person with eight arms is an eight-armed person.
A person with three wheels is a three-wheeled person.

Never trust anyone who says: *Come, comfort the angel light.*
Anyone who says: *I feel the texture of the moon against my flesh.*
Anyone who leaves behind little drawings of flying buffaloes.
Never trust anyone who says: *I really like your person's person.*

A person with glass bells is a glass-belled person.
A person with an atomic belly is an atomic-bellied person.

Never trust anyone who says: *Leave, leave the angel light*.
Anyone who says: *I found your autobiography in the dumpster.*
Anyone who wears shoes decorated with little flying buffaloes.
Never trust anyone who says: *Don't repeat any of this to your person*.

Three Vultures Meditating at the Top of a Tree

You can conjure, conjugate, or consume anything
that can fit into a mouth, and we all know everything
can fit into a mouthy human mouth. I know nothing
about the egg Father Furioso found in the confessional
that Saturday in May. Anyone can break the law
with a ruler or a red feather. A schoolchild carries a large
backpack with a cupcake that could be a bomb, or just
a chocolate-walnut cupcake. What the bride won't tell
the bridegroom should be carved on the backboard

of their matrimonial bed. A car can run for thousands of miles on the anger stored in the pancreas. A mannequin asleep in the back seat. In Michaelangel's *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, the demon-infested saint looks rather bored. *I could kill you with a little kiss*, he tells the demons with razor-blade teeth clinging to him and they laugh. The dust in the pantry not so unlike what you will bequeath turtle, frog, plumbing snake. A bleary angel with six mouths twirls above your head instructing you on the twenty-first commandment: Do not disturb three turkey vultures meditating at the top of a much-too-quiet tree. Especially if you were born in Slaughterville, Oklahoma. As were we all.

The Fox Dinner

It was dinner time, and we were all hungry, but we decided not to eat the fox. Perhaps because the fox, sitting at the center of the table on a silver platter, kept scratching itself due to the constant waltzing of its fleas. Micah began talking about the odds that the roof above the dinner table would collapse due to the age of the house and the constant stress of gravity, as well as the vibration caused by our voices. *Then shouldn't we just sit here in silence?* said Miriam. *That's the stupidest thing I've heard since someone suggested dining on a live fox with fleas*, said Micah. *Just because you don't have a taste for the life force residing in a fox doesn't mean you're superior to us*, said Magdalena, tossing her hair from her face. *Thank you for that, Magdalena,* said the fox, who had not yet informed us of their name. Then the fox began itching and scratching and biting itself and everyone stood up at the table and said, *Well, it's getting late* and *We should be going home* and *I have to wash my hair tonight*. The fox leapt down from the dinner table, pushed open the back door with its snout, and headed off, wherever foxes, who get bored of dinner chitchat, go.

Erasure As a Form of Memory

Let us shake hands, I said to our leader's statue
and his arm fell off at a touch.

I forgive the women who sit around the fire
drawing warmth from burning books.

Yes, the dog's stomach growls in a language
only I am able to translate.

You would do well to examine your ankle
for any possible listening devices.

I spilled red wine over the white carpet last night
exactly where you'll soon fall.

Someone wrote this on a tree stump last night
and someone soon removed it.

Poetry Prison in Macomb, Illinois

A federal prison for poets found guilty of composing godawful poetry just opened in Macomb, Illinois, in what was once Western Illinois State University.

*

Once you start mowing the carpet, you have to keep it up all summer.

*

Each time I'm near a large metallic body, I find myself inexplicably pulled toward it—that's why you saw me appear to throw myself on your car this morning.

*

Don't call Boris, the plumber who doesn't believe in pipes, when you have a leak, unless you want to watch him talk to the water in your house about respecting our original nature.

*

Wash the sun, yes, with a flamethrower.

*

Nod your head up and down when you hear the wind ask if it's true you're made of roots and veins and sap.

*

Shhh, a tarantula just fell asleep inside my right elbow.

*

The musical score titled *Believe the Punctuation* by Fintini, the acclaimed avant-garde composer, consisting of exclamation marks, question marks, and semicolons, was found today in a silverware drawer in Oslo.

*

Many residents called the police department when they saw a pair of enormous lips afloat over the grain elevator.

*

When the last book reviewer disappeared, the ants in our county organized a massive search party.

*

A diving nighthawk hit the glass wall that keeps out the past and future, damaging the wall's structural integrity.

*

Everything's made of sawdust, she wrote in her journal, *only sawdust*, then she walked into the river and watched her body dissolve.

*

A poet escaped today from the Macomb, Illinois, federal poetry prison, using a wordless sonnet to stun the guards.

John Bradley's chapbook *Planetary Sway: Aphorisms for the Everyday Emergency* was just released by Bottlecap Press. His poems and aphorisms have appeared in *Caliban, Hotel Amerika, SurVision, Ultriculi*, and other journals. While writing, he attempts to pull up the floorboards of reason and logic and see what's growing under there.

Louis Bourgeois

EVENT IN THE LAND OF X

Last night, stones fell hard through the midnight sky when all was quiet as moth wings in the village. Figs began to bloom under the heavy moonlight, and fish crows and geese took off from the **Lake** in un-timely migrations to the north. Hermit crabs and water snakes sought new shores.

The **Butcher** was found dead on the stairwell, he died from inhaling too much lavender, and the **Village Priests** all went insane at the same time, speaking inverted Latin and Greek. The **Cradle Maker**, who was also the **Casket Maker**, shot himself in the mouth, apparently overcome from the hypocrisy of his craft.

Since dawn, the children have gathered the stones that fell from the sky in order to build a new altar to appease the god of **Movemen**t—to show their respect to **Lord Chaos**, yet fearing him beyond all other gods and all scientific *principium*….

THE TEMPLES

We grow so bored building our temples for no one in particular and for no particular reason. Some of the workers went down right insane and began eating grass and pissing themselves; some went further into madness and wrote incredibly long books on how everyone in the **Land of P** was deathly bored with building temples to the sky for no reason. Still, others went on their own and left the **Land of** P to seek out the **Goddess of Change**.

Of the ones who left, all but one came back scared shitless and begged to be let back into the **Land of P**, where everyone builds temples without any justification for building temples.

The one that didn't come back, who wasn't frightened by the **Goddess of Change**, was said by the **Oracle of Doom** to have been turned into a pile of ash when he dared to touch the sun.

There is no escape from the **Land of P**.

IN THE DESERT OF SKETE

The world is older than we have imagined.

Wherever he walked he saw his own image, on the grey cliffs, on the illusory lakes, in the abandoned temples, in the sky, on the faces of the buffaloes and goats, in the eyes of wasps and cormorants, and an incredible boredom crawled into his heart and would not leave.

He set out to find God, but God is often silent. For a long time, he had mistaken this silence for God, but after ten days of starvation and thirst, he realized the silence was himself.

His body craved destruction. Finally, it was given to him as a gift; he made a friend of death. Only death is pure, he discovered, and it is only purity we seek. The last thing he saw before leaving the world in acute hunger were large wolves tearing out of the horizon becoming black angels, becoming dust, *then nothing, then nothing*.

THE FARMER

The barns were empty and had been for a long time, yet the fields were perfectly plowed and ready for planting. Bags of seed sat months in the farmer's wagon. The same hawk shrieked through the crystal sky at noon as the farmer stared over his declining empire. He would say to himself, I don't know what's wrong with me. I just can't make myself plant these seeds; it's *de trop* and all of that. These days, everything I look at makes me want to vomit, without end. I just can't get my mind right, or my stomach.

In the middle of summer, they found the farmer dead in one of his luscious red barns. Bright green corn was sprouting up as far as the eye could see.

THE DANGERS OF MORAL PROGRESS

The **Earth** coldly demanded a **Human Sacrifice** to be performed precisely at noon that day, but because we are a humane culture, we flatly refused—

And the **Earth** responded by blowing itself up until nothing was left but the moon.

FINAL JUDGEMENT

The children of **Dust** have grown tired of numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and have taken all numbers and have thrown them into the **Abyss**, from which they came. As well, they are utterly irritated with **Ancient Knowledge**. They have slaughtered Pan, Apollo, and Dionysus. They have taken sledge hammers to their temples and reduced them to pebbles.

These children are the **Almighty Future** and they rightfully demand **Clarity**, **Authenticity**, and **Truth**, even at the expense of **Everything** that has preceded them.

They will prevail and should prevail. Let all who get in the way of their progress be burned at the stake.

We have finally arrived at a generation who will make truth stick, even if there are no witnesses left to attest to it.

Amen and amen and amen.

DISABUSE

One day, the world woke up and there was no more **Humanity**. Everyone gave a great sigh of relief and went around doing whatever they wanted; *everything is legal now*. If you want to rape a child or shoot your ex-lover in the face, no one tries to stop you. In fact, it is written in the law that you must not show any **Humanity** or you yourself will have your head cut off. Yes, there is no longer any **Humanity** anymore, therefore the world does not exist, and the people are finally happy.

There is no such thing as Jesus Christ or an Egoless Consciousness

The ink had turned into blood…

He confused **Poetry** and **Revolution** and then **Revolution** for God. This after many years of writing about childhood and dead animals—then, *nothingness* became his theme. He turned political quite by accident, and now his readers are followers, wielding swords and anti-aircraft weapons—waiting for him to give the signal—he is silent, for stardust flows through his veins and there is no voice to guide him; only this

irresistible urge to eat the sky, this irrepressible desire to slaughter everything, to become everything.

He has given no signal—the tanks are silent and he has not moved an inch for days; the crowds outside the window threaten to crucify him on the **Town Square**.

And this of course is exactly what he wants.

{*THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS JESUS CHRIST OR AN EGOLESS CONSCIOUSNESS*}

DREAMS OF A BORED MAN
for Jean-Paul Sartre

He dreams of water. His life, by some accident in the mind, has realized everything he needs to know, therefore, there is no reason for him to exist. Yet, he would like to retain consciousness and become water so he can circle the globe in a blissful all-knowing power that will never have to assume the form of action.

THE MONSTER OF VILLAGE Z

He could not be sated; all the cormorants we brought him, all the blood sacrifices wasted on him. He did nothing for us; he didn't save the crops from drying up, nor did he stop our women from rebelling against the stove and the pot. He did not save us from **Boredom**, our greatest adversity. All he offered was **Time** destroyed by collecting sacrifices for him…

And now there's not a single cormorant left in all the **Land of** Z, and now he wants only the blood of herons and egrets—we purposelessly, stupidly, and un-inspiredly kill for him daily—

WILL THE REVOLUTION NEVER COME?

Until that day comes when he'll die of boredom, all our sacred birds will be extinguished, even though we'll have total freedom.

What then, **Citizens of Z**?

WITNESS

Someone put a huge clock in the middle of the garden and the clock resembled Jesus Christ Superstar; it was fucking up the biorhythms of the figs and oranges. The Serpent who lived in the garden, wanted to eat the clock but couldn't so he made love to this clock that resembled Jesus Christ Superstar—

And the earth began to hemorrhage and it turned greener than ever before.

THE BIRD CATCHER

All he wanted was to catch all the birds in the world. He didn't understand why he felt this way; all he knew was that it bothered him that birds could take off into the sky whenever they wanted. *There's something wrong with that kind of freedom*, he often thought, as he was snaring birds with his dozens of traps. *They should be captured so that they'll appreciate freedom, so they will become humble and not place themselves so high above the rest of us.*

One day the bird catcher was thrown in prison for trapping birds without a license. In his cell, all he could think about were all the birds he didn't catch and how they still flew into the sky whenever they wanted.

Thinking of Heidegger and Lewis Carroll at the Same Time

These flowers are only as real as the anti-flowers which are almost as real as these non-flowers—

Seriously, folks, where on earth do you draw the line concerning these matters?

DOG AND MAN

A man without a nose stopped at the corner of **Fifth** and **Main** and grieved that he was alone. A dog approached him, growled, and proceeded to piss on him. The man raised his arms to the sky and prayed. Why can't I cry? the man called out to the sky. Cars **Green** and **Yellow** passed by and honked their horns, yelling at the man to go home because he was giving the passersby bad thoughts because of his missing nose. Oh well, said the

noseless man, and he unzipped his pants and proceeded to piss on the dog. The dog said, *fuck you*, and walked away growling. The man cried for a long time then finally he reached into his pocket and pulled out a large pistol and blew his brains out right there on **Fifth** and **Main**.

THE KILLER

There was a man named Joshua, who wanted to kill the sun and moon. It was an instinctual response; no line of logic led him to his desires. *It's just they're so big and bright and they are superior to us, he thought. Why should they have the privilege of lording their brilliance over all the earth?*

He wasn't successful at killing the sun and moon. He could find no way of doing it since they are so far away. So, Joshua turned his attention to the sea; *why should the sea impose all its beauty and mystery on us humble human beings?*

And, at least, he could touch the sea, thereby giving him a better chance at destroying it.

Joshua, our poor *idiot sauvant*, attempted to swallow the sea dry, but he drowned in the process and was washed out with the tide.

We can admire Joshua's spirit but not his politics.

THE MAGIC HAND
For the old whore in Cuba, Alabama who once gave me a dollar without asking why.

He was forced to eat a star, although all he wanted was bread. All he wanted was to be normal, but he was pre-determined by the **Bucher Shop** to have his limbs chopped off for mystical purposes he didn't understand and didn't want to understand—the **Village Priests** apparently saw something sacred in deforming him, all the old gods were now held suspect, and in the air an incessant storm was brewing—they said to him, We will feed you and give you a name—You are to speak without imperfection—but as in all matters of society, the village soon became bored of their sacred amputee and starved him to death with moon dust and with solar interstices in his belly.

NERVAL

Passing through the intricate pipe work of Hell, you said aloud to no one but yourself, *this is where I want to stay*. Upon returning to the upper earth for a while, you looked around recognizing that it was no good; here red is not red nor blue, blue; only the dissipating rays of sun at days end gave any clue to form.

Dear Nerval, you were the first to say that this world does not exist, nor has it ever existed, nor will it ever exist.

THE MESSALIANS

{*A bishop interrogates a group of heretics in an attempt to convert them to the Church of Rome*}

Do you believe the world to be holy?

Yes

Do you think the world is evil?

Yes

Are you Jesus Christ?

Yes

Are you Lucifer?

Yes

Do you believe in the Trinity?

Yes

Do you believe the Trinity is nonsense?

Yes

Does Christ have a cock?

Yes

Does Christ have a pussy?

Yes

Does Christ shit and piss?

Yes

Is Christ too holy to shit and piss?

Yes

Is matter evil?

Yes

Is matter good?

Yes

{*And with this the bishop went home and happily placed a heavy revolver between his eyes and blew out his immaculate brains.*}

THE UN-CONFUSED ONES

The deformed children will rise up against their maker and slaughter him—they have grown pure in exile—they are fully conscious, they have never uttered a false word or have used a false image. Pity this world that one day soon we'll have to face them, for the world has not trained itself properly to confront them—yet, their entry onto the stage will be the death force that kills many—those who have not trained themselves for the message—

The dialectic is coming around soon—be forewarned.

BONE GATHERER'S BLUES

She had collected over 10,000 skulls of birds she had destroyed and boiled in bleach. Piles of little heads were stacked neatly all over her ramshackle cottage. She couldn't remember how she came to such deeds but it was clear even to her that it had become an addiction.

But one morning, pallor spread across her whole body and she wanted to die. She thought, *I have spent all this time killing and boiling and it has come to naught. I could have had a normal life; husband, child, dog, house, car. I have wasted my life on a mystical pursuit that I thought would bring me enlightenment, instead it has only bored me—the bones mean nothing.*

Suddenly, while she was seriously considering killing herself, a **Peregrine Falcon** flew into sight and landed on the cottage's roof. With a semi-malicious grin, she took up her bow and arrow and fired into the new sacrifice...

THE MANSON

They began to mutilate one another; sister became armless, mother faceless, father voiceless, brother and son went blind—servant became master, master piled up loaves of shit in the outhouse. The dogs took over the table and the caged birds settled down into bed with a good book.

The home owners knew there was no way of stopping this; outside always gets in no matter how hard you try.

THE WISE MAN

There is no experience worth having, he thought. There is nothing left that I want to know. There is no one with whom I want to talk. There is no painting or ocean that intoxicates me. There is no little child that restores my faith in humanity. There is no woman who moves me to passion and there is no man I wish to admire. There is no building with its great heights that impresses me, and the strange thing is, and I know it's not very strange, but still, the strange thing is that I've never been more at peace with myself, I have never been happier.

And with this realization, he closed his eyes and went to sleep forever.

Home

I arrived at the house hours before the sun was up and fell asleep in the tall grass of my childhood—someone was whispering to me in monotone *éclat*, *éclat*, *éclat*. *Dieu est éclat*, but I was not afraid. I have never been afraid. I have never been afraid, but the voice wouldn't leave me alone and it said further, *All the fruit in the orchid is poisoned, and all the flowers are yellow*. How did that happen? I answered out loud. I also asked the voice why all my dreams were of blood and crabs and it responded, *Because you were born with a divine disease*. I wanted to get up but couldn't, nothing held me down but my own weight.

When I awoke, the sun was just coming up and the grass had withered all around me and I knew I was in Hell because I was surrounded by tall clocks.

CANNIBALISM IS CONFORMITY

I wake at sunrise to the sound of squealing pigs; outside, an idiot child is eating pig shit and rat meat in a dish of black decaying rice. Next door, a virgin is being washed in a huge zinc tub; she is being cleansed for a political sacrifice of dubious worth. Tonight, her loins and buttocks will be served in rich sauces at the **Imperial Table**. I do not know what they will do with the rest of her, except that she'll disappear forever with the rest of the sacrifices—

But before then, I too will fall into a trance, intoxicated with the dinner conversation of Aristotelian logic and **Middle Eastern** affairs.

THE JERK

There was a man named Alfred who died every year on **Good Friday** and like clockwork was resurrected every **Easter Sunday**.

Therefore, Alfred had very few friends.

A FEW LINES BEFORE THE SHOTS GO OFF

There are too many who still cling to this black and rotting corpse we call literature and writing.

Hard to say if they should be pitied or massacred.

We who wait patiently for the **REVOLUTION** know writing and literature must be annihilated; that we need a world *un-contaminated* by any replication of reality at all.

Either accept the brute nakedness of ourselves and of the world or into the pit you go.

IN THE VILLAGE OF Y

Last night I dreamed of armless boys and girls playing in a forest on the outskirts of town. Their smiles made me laugh, their minds made me weep; they spoke a mechanical language, some strange scientific dialect. The altar where they sacrificed themselves was worn; on the sacrificial table read*:* **WHERE IS HOME**?

They bathed in dust and ate stone and wood. They were neither happy nor sad, neither indifferent nor committed.

THREE EXAMPLES OF THE WAY THINGS CAN BE

The price one pays for having a profession is a *déformation professionelle*, as the French put it—a professional deformation. Doctors and engineers tend to see things from the viewpoint of their own specialty, and usually

show a marked blind spot to whatever falls outside this particular province. The more specialized a vision the sharper its focus; but also more nearly total the blind spot toward all things that lie on the periphery of this focus.

--From William Barrett's *Irrational Man*

1.

Finally, we got tired of it and one evening we gathered all the shrinks and shot each and every one of them. And that's a lot of shrinks too, about 6 million. Think about it, 6 million shrinks, and there would have been even more if we hadn't acted when we did. We shot them and shot them until we ran out of bullets, then when we ran out of bullets we bludgeoned them with heavy sticks of oak and maple. When we were finished killing all the shrinks in America, we lined the bodies up one after the other on old **Route 66** outside of Amarillo Texas and people came from all over the world to see the dead and quickly rotting shrink corpses—

There was dancing all around the bodies, the dancers foaming at the mouth with **Euphoria**.

2.

The cops, strangely enough, were not quite as guilty as the shrinks. The death policy we took with the cops was one of hanging them all from every strong branch across the whole of the good old U.S.A. It was quite a site, you should have been there, you should have seen them cops dangling from all species of trees, little blue and grey costumed men and women just a-twittering in the wind—

There was about as much **Joy** as when we killed all the shrinks.

3.

The medical doctors were next, but we couldn't kill them; they were somehow not guilty in the same way as the shrinks and cops. With the doctors, it was simply a matter of re-education. We made them read Sartre, Camus, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and the like—all the Existential writers, Christian, Jewish, and Atheist. The doctors had to pass an examination

based on these Existentialists. If they failed, they had to re-read all the Existentialists over again, or they could choose to have their best hand amputated. You would be surprised how many of them chose to have their hand chopped off rather then read all that Existentialism over again., which goes to show you how half educated doctors are, Existentialism being far beyond their small minds.

4.

The task of making this world a better place to live is far from over, of course—Teachers, lawyers, and politicians, you guys are next, so if I were you, I'd leave the country now.

(**THE ABSOLUTE END**)

Louis Bourgeois was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. He is primarily a poet, but he has published translations, fiction, memoirs, poetry and interviews in over two hundred magazines and journals in North America, Europe and Asia. He graduated from Louisiana State University with a BA in English and was the first graduate of The University of Mississippi's MFA program in Creative Writing. He is the Executive Director of *VOX PRESS***,** as well as the Program Director for the Mississippi Prison Writes Initiative.

Jeff Harrison

Tears in the palm

Fold your fingers over this rock. Feel: tears in the palm. Uncover me — hurry, please, hurry — and all is dry, yes? All, Niobe, yes, all; what is this? This, Jeff, is science as science was; something a mother would tell her child.

And you say, Niobe

You hear me, and you say, Niobe, and I say, a grain of sand amidst these grains of sand. Come to me, take me up from amidst them and depart with me, and I'm ever with you, and you ever look upon me and say, Niobe, my own Niobe.

Jeff Harrison has publications from *Writers Forum, Persistencia Press,* and *Furniture Press*. His poetry has appeared in *Otoliths, Indefinite Space, Sentence, Moria, BlazeVOX*, and elsewhere. He lives in Dardanelle, Arkansas.

Heath Brougher

Moodring

Buddhadarmic waves of ecstasy
can help one master the art of pitchpoling;
revalatious ungurneys of the awaked mind
and the sanctity of questioning everything;| humble myself
before myself and gnats and spotted lantern flies;
and you—> if you're there; if you're there;! have no way
of knowing if anything or anyone was ever Truly there/here/two blocks down the street
because I am not god (if it's there) and I know doubly well
there are no gods among humans;
and hope? faith? nope! not even among bliss;
both of those roads are trafficked
by the hollow; the thoughtless;
the faint of brain.

Ingrates injected with inchoate incoherence.

Maim Through the Cream

You say to me as we walk on a choked-out planet
that religion is a brainborn pathogen blown down
from the sandy corridors of the art of time-keeping
and checking in on the middle earth as to keep an eye
on the blossoming of milk from out their prickly green tree-gourds
adorned with psychedelic buttons. Old yet prevalent.
A toxic hue fans out across the globe,
infecting the hills and herds of people,
the various populous, causing pangs of
 delusional endless insanity to rage
 across the spacetime of a planet already faltering.

AI Reading My Handwriting Haiku

anatto 21"
& Hang ti i .....
peatengd Beatened {and Mr. Heath; 501+

Maybe 5 Leaves

My four leaf Cricket bathed me
in street theater and heart attack
making sure I sour out or dehydrate or deflate
clogging my pineal with deliberate boisterous idiocy
or to bellyburst my undiagnosed tumescence.
My four leaf Cricket has forsaken
me as the world swallowsmewhole with their hatred of Truthspeaking.

God for Dinner

I wonder what God tastes like. I mean it you cooked that sumabitch up good. Sauted?
Deep fried? Whatever your thang is. My money's on no matter which way you dice him up he's still gonna taste no better than a filthy syphilis-ridden cunt. I'll bet all youse religious freaks he don't taste nuthin like those goddamn salty-ass crackers you love to eat, all pretendin like it's really him and whatnot as you follow your blood drinking ritual with a grotesque cultish and cannibalistic catastrophe-love.

Shut the fuck up and go crack your whip somewhere else!

Heath Brougher is editor-in-chief of Concrete Mist Press. His most recent publication is *Beware the Bourgeois Doomsday Fantasy* (Sandy Press, 2024).

Robert Beveridge

Bland

Has always been a fan
of early American Hitchcock.
Arose from the primordial
ooze of a laboratory.
Contains shards of denatured
mercury. Sleeps against
the small of your back but only
when you attempt to get
comfortable on the bus.
Is always happy when your
grandma pinches its cheeks.
Was far more comfortable
with inhalants than injectables.
Thinks PTSD stands for pastime
sex doll. Will only write
while the sun is up because it
can't stand writing nights.
Prefers to be referred to as Rebecca.

Redemption

We are told that mass
has something to do
with force, velocity,
communion, but not
what it has to do
with green stamps.
Our eyes water
in the nave; the village
prankster has once
again replaced
the incense
with xanthan gum.
Today's sermon:
bit-o-honey in the works
of Mollie Katzen.

Turn your hymnals
to page m/s^2.

The Owl of Ignorance

What sort of pulchritudinous thing
with feathers sits in the nook
of the branch, calls for the horse
who finished last in the ninth yesterday?
Sometimes you need a ride
from the conveyance who'll
get you there slowest, I guess.

You take a look at the friends
in your veins, check to make
sure they're not in the midst
of a junta in the iliotibial tract,
a coup in the villi. Gotta hit
those levels, whatever else happens.

And here we go,
so awake in the mines
we catch ourselves on our knees,
hands folded, the wheatstalks
of ignorance in the forefronts
of our brains, and we recite
the things we were taught
in childhood would bear
us through till the imagined next.
you in the usual way,
caught you the way
her skirt rose up when she sat.

Skin

Milk shot
through with blue
acid on the tongue
a thousand lyrics
from bad poets

assail your ears

the caress of a bullet
against your left leg
brings response
sanguine dialectic
strokes your inner thigh

the castrati
sing one final note
and all is still
god flies over
this silent congregation

Robert Beveridge (he/him) makes noise (xterminal.bandcamp.com) and writes poetry on unceded Mingo Land (Akron, OH). He published his first poem in a non-vanity/non-school publication in November 1988, and it's been all downhill since. Recent/upcoming appearances in *Soup Can, Balestra, and Cacti Fur,* among others.

Social Media:

Bluesky: https://xterminalnoise.bsky.social/
Letterboxd: https://letterboxd.com/xterminal/
last.fm: https://www.last.fm/user/xterminal

Kathryn Rantala

Of a Certain Way

She is of a certain way. Mornings she may not and then at times she is and once perhaps a long time later. Tuesday one may say has rain and rain on Tuesday may be such and like and so or be the way it was on Monday or some later day. Well. She is oftentimes. It is raining it will rain some more and it has rained and when it rains she is more or less and of a certain way and that is clear. It may not be liked.

Should one speak of it or of something like or with some qualities. Rain may pool and pooling may be taken up as it in its beginning was. It may be left. That is one may have no use for it and having picked it up may set it down again as if one were the sky and there it is again a pool. Should one speak of it.

Is it not enough and also sometimes more and also only rain. This has been explained. Is it not enough inside a day and out and far away to be outside though all the out is possible to be carried to the in whether it is liked or not. It does not ask it enters as a bee a bicycle it comes right in as if there were a road and by the road is carried flown or bumped as has been done within the past. Recently. The outside everywhere is larger and by conveyances it comes as close to close as to a bee. It may not be liked. It may be in and be without or just close. Should one *not* speak of it. It is trouble yes it is and one may take it up and one may set it down again. Perhaps. It is not enough and it is far too much and it is common as the rain and here it has been spoken of for better or for worse. Well.

For instance it is raining now. Sometimes there is rain and on the wet days that is how it works. It may be fine to speak of it but may be hard to hear as sometimes when the day is wet there is no way to take it up as if it were a pool and set it down again as it one were the sky and still be dry. Because. This has in fact been said. It may be fine to speak of bees and other ways a thing may be conveyed and fine to speak of how things are or go or were or left or not at all. Conveyances convey. A thing may be or is and everything. And then. Certainly. And in many ways and still. Or one way only.

***The Rite of Fall*:**

Responding to the Second Movement of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*,
a Ballet

It is unclear
if the old gnarled tree
means anything
to them
but an old gnarled tree
their thoughts on
maybe
which could
but never had so far
slashed the ropes
of poverty

what they knew to do
for hunger
is walk
the girls in circles in
The Dance of the Abduction
the chosen
danced to death
which does not
after all
restock the lake or
moss the boulders
where a passing horse
might bump
and cause
a wound

now the tree stubs
of the lower alpine
shudder at a roil

of clouds they hope
will not start weeping
since rain
has edged itself
toward ice

Alien Life in America

Wind shut the door hard

some leaving
some experiencing a vanishing

familiar/
unfamiliar/
finished
painted
missing a chair

some waiting
for the beautiful

Kathryn Rantala's collection, *Translated from the English*, recently appeared from Sandy Press, Santa Barbara, California, and follows their publication of *My Archipelago*, a finalist for the 2024 Big Other Award for Poetry. Her book *TWO*: is upcoming from Spuyten Duyvil, which published her 2023 collection of prose poetry, *A Little Family.* Two chapbooks, *Down by the Humus Lake,* and *Letters to America*, are forthcoming at Ron Slate's *On the Seawall* and *Louffa Press* in New York, respectively. She is also an assemblage/collage artist. Please visit her website kathrynrantala.com.

Thomas Fink

COMFORT STATIONS

Professional
warmth. Edible
voice. Agreeable
breath broth. Fleece offering & tin echoes. Rational-

emotive interference: *You can't*
always net what you taunt.
Each smile

quickly undressed. Bug fails
to nest in non-docile

eye.

LICENSING

The bus to political happiness?
Translators, bribed, covert smirks
into smiles. Barren omniscience: one more
silly, graceless,
impractical war.
Soon breasts
will need a license
to dispense
milk.

LURCH PARTY

I can't slumber

if socks are on the floor.
How was my brisket? *I*

forgive you.
Love means not having to supply
trigger
warnings. Allure of avoidable chaos? In lieu

of malignant caresses, pizzaz obsessive might ponder
no-
fault marriage. Subject to
random lurch by
police. *Thank you for*

tomorrow?
May our spoons never
wither
or dither.

I do
appreciate you finding my

thingamajig in the snow.

IN THE BELLY

of the library,

beating shadows, portable
clouds,

bronzy presentiments. Giddy
word' chance whirl.
Accordions flirt

With violins
& cellos.
Buxom tears. A Victrola
exits the Frigidaire.

Stoic brokers,
larded by mistrust
fund, demand
“emotional
truth.”

Thomas Fink has published 13 books of poetry-- most recently *Or Current Resident* (Marsh Hawk Press, 2025). His *Selected Poems & Poetic Series* appeared in 2016. He is the author of *Reading Poetry with College and University Students: Overcoming Barriers and Deepening Engagement* Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), as well as two books of criticism, and three edited anthologies. His work appeared in *Best American Poetry 2007*. Fink’s paintings hang in various collections. He is Professor of English at CUNY-LaGuardia.

Joshua Martin

transformative elemental plugs

eXhausT fAn aTTribuTes
carry over the bloated
SLIDING
GLASS
DOOR : => => h
o
N
o
R reflects a
thing
un touched
by the Ravages of
extension cords

* _____ avoidable irregular stanzas _____ *

, | seminal rhythm, the VOMITING
methodological culminations of a
Fly=SWATTER inside a watermelon | , :
(french
line > challenged, quite
battle another checkered
commotion) bOx of
INSTANT rIcE

P/a/r/a/d/i/n/g
a/m/o/n/g
t#h#e
l#o#n#g#e#s#t
s=l=e=e=v=e=s
] SLAP
THE
handbook
spatial

emotive
CONTRASTS [=> => => => =>
#ed : a layering
incognito
measurement <= <= <= <= <=

oPPoseD perception
proposal,
hazy [every fractured
SYNTAX turn^{coat}
evolving past
drown$^{ing}_{ed}$ wrapping
PaPeR] : , : , : , : / / / / /

famous
weaving
CONTEXT [formal implication
w/o
sTaBiLiTy] :
; / ; / ; / * _____ conditional medium
agents of dangling
key^{board}
herding
guide^{book}
MISSIONS _____ *

\ bronzed with enjambment / = / = / = / = / :

, supposed
couplets
gambling
interdependence
^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^

= = = NaMeD = = =
shIftEd [all

all
all], venues
physically
framed
before
linear
declarations, =>

: | caucus like degraded letters
pressing automatic renewable blisters
diffused within a sluggish lizard shell
therefore disabled & less than diminished | :

thinking
insistence
trigger & ALL
AT
ONCE
infested
with
lIcE
. . . . . ,
. . . . . ,
it should function without resource
_____ / _____
im=mature
, imperial threads
: BaRe knuckled SCR
EAM
ING
! ! ! ! ! :
, _____ / _____ \ _____ :
lIViNg
UNIT
hYpeR^{TenSiOn}
quartz

window
FrAmE
irrigation
TechniqueS =>
=>,
side[ways] / otherwise \

the [up]side of
pin=
point=
s

| in=tang=ible spOOls
twitch[ing] among warts
designed to replicate
Suez Canal on acid |
. . . . . ^ ^ ^ ^
a predictable
rise in
scattered
mutations
ABYSS that
shrugs
biOlogies.

Cheaper by the immersive quality of ducking

Drop bends
a fecund memorial sPrEE
: less, Thus, dragging formulaic rafters of
PiNcHeD
saLTy
wrinkled
influence . . .
. . . shorn ligaments wind[ing] clock[tower] other[worl]dly shivering
! B
L
A
S

T
S ! => in=difference
STUDDED / SPRAINED /
mocking calisthenics
gesture like
stumbling
SeWaGe <= grossly
adversarial clomping remnants [shields
, heavens
, bord lifestyle mannequins]
: / : thing
judged
wonder[wall]
attribution
scOOpS : / : (sheet=
metal
flamboyance
earring
secretive
window
shades) =>
. . .
. . . BuoYaNt as a PROVERB
, as much innuendo as sneaking around
fantasies of borrowed spinal elegance
(drunken
rapturous beach[ball] towel
PaNNed
&
ScANNeD
maleficence) =>
=>

! B
O
O
M ! , the ToWn slithering into INFAMY
, accorded diaphanous stoning
drifting manifesto blathering
. . . / density

ThiU aRt unyielding
IN PROXIMITY :
GreaTeSt
thrusts endear pomposity
, STEADY-
ENGROSSING-
DISMISSIVE, wearied curtain rod seeing
!STARS! [chock
full
of
Nuclear
schisms] /
/ => attitude adjusted to
perform ritualistic
perfume TaNgOs <= / hEnCe,
the forthwith circling
ferocity of a SNAIL
lOOking to haMMeR
a fluttering
mosquito NeT :
‘is this breakfast?’
asked the frolicking mummy
reorganizing ham drawers and
reeking of stale poetic insight . . .
. . . STUNTED
corncob
inside
trader
lifeguard . . .
. . . / gestation
takes a
holiday / . . .
. . . Dental forest fires telephonically obtuse, finicky,
shoulder-to-shoulder with dorsal fin invoices
the spitting image of falling asleep :
\ ! | Name^{less}, though as a MiRaGe,
un=hing=ed grease^{pole} debtors
offered up as fried chicken staff
meetings : to BLUNDER : hence
: thought bubble in the yacking

PROVERBIAL self-diagnosis waft
: BeSt a PreLuDe tO rigor MorTiS | ! =>

=> dalliance
hastens
file cabinet disaster ArEa
: BULB-
BULB-
BULB : subcutaneous
sweat glands
released at
DaWn =>

[this ColoR
, a smacking subtropical
dented druid, fostering
comatose
whimsy
while
munching
bacterial
attachments] . . .
. . . this hEArD the wandering pelvic dilemma
& pinched maniacal butcher blocks
until wishing wells implode at MID=
NIGHT . . .
. . .

forward must a treble sling

first dye, [an absent procession], of a(n)
historical swooping : de=
note, as purchase,
as stance => [swim
in seismic contours of FuZZy boTTleS] <=
:,
S
K
U (devices stretching
N end-to-end, as

K LaWn MoWeR protein)
, caustic & sickening applications
| STOCKS
| thirsty zealots
cracking up . . .
) reNEW the lingering
SKY (=> O!
course assisted kink sEEn HeRea aS a
PrAgMaTic function
of SeTTLing IN (genetic
puzzle
box
grape[fruit]
FaRcE) ! /////
. . .
, \ - - - herding eyelids into literal conditions
of F
L
U
F
F
Y remoteness - - - / , :
scuttle (!about face!),
relentless ramifications purely a TriCk of
the cooing
disillusions : =>
=> disinterred
as a harrowing escape hatch
purging question marks
from daily bread <= (table
UPON
table
where
clamoring
wallpaper
metaphors
reach into
dustbins
to forgo
flippant

TiMe
WaRpS) : : : : :
; Transferred a scam
, the NaMe
a glandular
!ROAR! =>
END=PURSUIT=TONE=ROUTINE . . .
. . .
celestial booster ShoT
displayed beneath SilK
robbery suspects trained
To Invite Excessive
Strangulations in
D minor . . .
. . . !husk! flattery
absorbs unnatural FraminG
devices
momentarily hydraulic [=>
=> => UN=
BROKEN /
KNOWN / squandered on account
of recessive revulsion
: hack-hack-hack
& reveal convoluted systems
of conspiratorial foreheads

Sudden entranced extractions uncovering notations

land-and-sibling
R
U
S
H
: ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ :
EvErY lEnGtH advocating voluminous
COLLAPSE >>>>>
| pIcTuReS fOrM chalices | <<<<< ,
sTrIkE =
Begin Again Where poorly articulate

reasoning circumnavigates the
GLOBAL
NECROPOLIS
of Peculiarity :
: light flows
in sugar-coated RaYs of lambasted
haircuts deeply furroweding (in the
BrOW,
where BaLmY
dreams
remain
insulated)
a lock-jaw lackinged investments
: A
MOUND /
A DAGGER / /
DROP ZONE showtunes
piercing calcium fOAm / / /
. . . . . .
=> => => => => verbatim:
closed=circuit
HoRRoR => => => => =>
. . . . . / MaRsH
, in lingo , , , , ,
fiendishly
broken=down
[in PLACE] ,,,,,

fathom=
LeSs
breeding
Anchors

B
O
U
N
C
E & B

A
R
E
D / / / / / braced
hAvoC
, wading through fjords ,
S^{o}AIL^{ing}
while pasting fraternal
conceptions
draft$^{ed}_{ing}$
by-and-by
, pouring
DaNdruFF accordions
like
eLbOw squeezing
robust shrouds
> chained /
hollowed out / / an expedition strains
the sterling freight trains / / / => =>
cubic
barge
burping
a citizen
of cranial
chandelier
transoms <= <=
/ all that rights the statues
folding transliteration hiccups \ = = = = = :

: , a
t
bo
tt
om : mOAnInG
shown as a
leg of
LAMB =>
: hobbies without astronomy :
| , ; , ; ^^^^^
| ; ,,,,, ;

^^^^^ . . . . . re=
TOLD the
TONIC bOnDs
break
ing
fabled dentures
while converting
terrestrial lungs
& placating
blundering
T
R
A
M
P
OLINE nautical
wheezing
/ ,
first balcony To The
Right : MisteD
rUIns
NoT YeT
constant
: KEElInG
oVeR

Outline of preliminary conditional metafunctional absences

\ wHaT lies
dribble
$d^{e}{}_{ea}{}^{p}th^{s}$ / => funeral
clarinet
SWAtcH <= alabaster
grimace
cornering
fuselage
napping > >
> > eGo BlOb [blah-blah-blah],
extent / shimmer / tally /

frustrated: dexterous : metaphysics
: (rEALiZed a rapturous crown'd chiaroscuro
!LUMP! ; mumps
entertaining
MONKS ; vArY
as happenstance garter bElT ephemera
joins adaptation largesse [weaken$^{ed}_{ing}$
hypertrophy
principalities] ;
- - - ? - - - ! - - - : grumbleding gesticulations
of MaLaDieS, melodies, hack$^{ing}_{ed}$
coughing FiT
re=ject=ions
spoon feeding buRIaL
maximums - - -
spritely 'tis of thinning
gLEE, yArN in a
bArreL of
sWaMpY
constructivist
incisions => => => => =>
. . . . . _____ ! _____, To
dedicate
a DraInIng To a Severed
hEaD^{STONE}
divinity door^{knob}
way =>
dress'd
, contrast'd
frag
ment
s
offer
NeitheR beginnings
NoR
end=
less assertions (((((erratic
DeGrEEs
pinch$^{ing}_{ed}$
formidable

Pythagorean
symbolisms))))) =>
. . . . . - - - . . . . . / , / , ...
eNdOweD tOp sp^{u}in
e^{rro}r un=controllably
CRO
OOK
ED => . . . . . | ; some facts
NeeD containing ; |
^^^^^ whimsical dialectic shock^{wave} treatment :
S
P [fluids]
I / [troubles]
R / [sinking feelings]
I / [tongues]
T / [hunks]
=> FuRtheR these [mis]statements &
CALCULATED appearances
manage bird's-eye-view [nourished,
most
MOIST,
famished
abracadabra
antecedents] =>
b^{rai}n, a b^{rin}k,
hat full of
Harold Lloyd
attributions,
mostly consortiums & breezy derivations
fold
hAnD
OVER
HaNd - - - : gristle
combat
wElT : - - -
existence fuels oblivion,
, STATE^{ments} separate
elemental absolutes
in/to

FiNiTe
abnormalities

Joshua Martin is a Philadelphia based writer and filmmaker, who currently works in a library. He is a member of C22, an experimental writing collective. He is the author most recently of the books *Centuries and Dilemmas* (C22 Press), *punctuated avalanche* (Stone Corpse Press) and *en=raptur=ed [riverrun] & mingle* (Ranger Press) He has had numerous pieces published in various journals. You can find links to his published work at joshuamartinwriting.blogspot.com

Eric Lunde

RATTLE BAR

Put this in your cap and make it dance It's all love until you get some on your shirt!
First come the flowers then comes the gun….
that dance is skeletal
Jerk swapping details, allergic reactions, some sort of baby synapse happening,
Signals fired through infant air seiz ures of course. LOOKS GOOD FROM AFAR.

(((And then the beasts start to swell)))
Swarthy bumps land grind into seasonal slumps…you got a batter's eye for that jungle!
Exported from the machismo belt where rayon crude bubbles to the surface in paisley.
Those are the solvent barges that make whims compelling, or valuable time is lost.

UNTIL VICTORY they cry at once the winning!!!!
Spin and wheels the spine parquet
E V E N L Y D I S T R I B U T E D .
…say, wouldn't you rather haunt the eats then eat there? That diner has a mold factor….
They thought the better of it and…..
….de part ed……

DREAD AND BOREDOM

tHISe days of DREAD AND BOREDOM
a palimpsest of the two writing worry over each
boredom perforated by dread
AND DREAD AND BOREDOM AND
His day of making the best goddamn gallows of
Slowly squeezing off air
AND BOREDOM
Stifling we are too afraid to stay awake
AT LEAST I AM
daISys chained into daISys into one day after another day
after another AND DREAD! dazed.
AND BOREDOM holds me close
stupefied warmthed of the resigned
anger is not by the yard but by the inch
I've run out of room….

HUNDUN AND ME

Hundun and me ate me is ate me around the edges my glow
hundun is to quiet what manshape is to loud hand me the ladder
I give it holes

Now I'm working on outthere is September for calling in with the
worddumb fragrance of
Cannibal leggings will so I wont
Catch phrasings of this tumbledumpsterworld
Why won't you poetry?
Now I'm not a betting man
But you've soured on the peg?
Give me the skin and the caulk the thread of sinew and suture
caught

where does it end when it doesn't begin....

the offworld! colored, sands make the hourglass
some scirocco embittering my grey lagoooon
wishstalls and moments jerried cane coated swell
me heat wakes the prone
no service no vestibule
think of churning and the hands made available to
churn

POLITELY NOW WITH A MOUTH FULL OF DIRT

politely now with a mouth full of dirt, tell me your sorry for
intruding…

it isn’t up to me what machine pulls through each index of
word term but it is what falls from each of my mouths
when i can’t make up my mind

mouth full of dirt sing the refrain

dig em out let’s start the shooting!
dig em up let’s start the bidding!

THESE TRICK WORDS ATYOU RDISPOSAL RAMPAGING
MOUTH
TO HAND AND BACKA GAIN
CALLIOPE STRAINS ON THE BBBBACK OF WORDHOLE
IAMA BBOUT TO CUT LOOSE STRING STIRRING
ATTACHHED

that’s some sod your shaking there
some bod of soil shaped intrigue
narrow in pursuit widens in caution
let’s not stand here anymore

PUT DIRT IN MY MOUTH TILL IT GETS USED TO IT
PUT MOUTH IN MY DIRT LIKE YOU PUT WORDS INTO IT…..
PUT WORDS IN MY DIRT LIKE MY MOUTH GETS USED
PUT DIRT IN MY MOUTH LIKE THEY ARE USED WORDS

this word tastes salty, saltier then the last one.
thin, thinner than the last one. WHAT
DO YOU WANT ME TO DO WITH THIS?

[Question mark hashtag open_____:

SHUT UP AND LET ME LAND THIS PLANE

Right the plane TheThe word sacrifices itself for the next word (speech)
Measure time by height not length volume not area
Think of time stacked not spread A)
Let me see your robot hand, its clean worry in place of stone
module back and flame chute we call sparkle and dip
….you are on fire
but you don't know it….
SHUT UP AND LET ME LAND THIS PLANE!!!
You should know, when you speak, the word sacrifices itself for the next word
-unless it wasn't there-
thenthen you're just wedging words into the mortar of the brickwork around your mouth
(then it is a sensible dirge….)
As we repeat altitude prayer locating our dismissal hope for glide there is no word for
success! No good word. No good substitution for it.

But when you don't encounter it, when you don't have the opportunity to spell it often you don't even know how to spell it then it is whatever the opposite is…
"HOLD STILL I KNOW THIS: F A I L R UE !! ! !"
Turn off the dome light,
people gonna see us
holding up our end. The amends. The guarantees.
Fragile limpid whisker dump…. That reminds me,
is there a way I can make the prayer wheels stop?
Turn off the dome light, people gonna see us root for the opponent.
We are in their sanctuary beating out expletives.
That reminds me, gotta stop for some cigarettes.
Turn off the dome light, people gonna see us give tribute to our deity.

get out of the car! "I don't wanna get outta the car…."
but you have, to its your stop…
"I don't wanna get outta the car…."
Stay, but I'm going to stop sometime…
"I don't wanna get outta the car…."

Bag stop sudden in air bag deplosion deployed hit hard your make left on the vinyl
sac your outline in crash position rescue crew recue the wreck hold on there's a
vestibule in view hide there no one will look for you…..
time is was in bottle crisp hold on your time not measured in chimes not measured at all time not measured by interval but volume….

Eric Lunde lives in Minneapolis MN USA. With many years of engagement in the arts, he has worked in audio art, performance, spoken word. He has numerous audio releases to his name. He also self-publishes poetry, theory, and graphic work. He works on his own line of block ink printed works under the imprint Kanshiketsu! which includes postcards and mail art, handmade books, prints. “To me life is a long stutter with occasional beneficial accidents. There are moments of clarity and then there’s interference. Words, I don’t think, should be spared from this routine, this pattern. And if anything, language is the perfect place to celebrate and engage in this condition. Thus I like to think that these works are full of land (word) mines and tripwires but you don’t need to be careful.” Work can be viewed and purchased at the following :
https://kanshiketsu.substack.com/
https://endythekid.blogspot.com/
https://kanshiketsu.bandcamp.com/
https://www.lulu.com/spotlight/lunde
@Kanshiketsu.bsky.social

Tobey Hiller

Each Crisis Has its Own Character

Sometimes there's no butter. Or bread.
Sometimes the building shakes into rubble and rains down.
Sometimes people can't find the door.
Sometimes hunger comes to dinner every night.
Sometimes the greasy river stinks
and the fish die.
Sometimes the clouds rain ash.
Sometimes the night eats you,
and everyone's lips are sealed.
Sometimes the pond's dusty lips
eat all the water, under yellow skies.
Sometimes the story is a lie.
Sometimes the lie becomes history.
Sometimes tomorrow arrives too soon,
people put out bowls of vinegar to disinfect the money,
and there's no key to the closet.
Sometimes sidewalks swallow you
and gunfire tells the time.
Sometimes strangers share dreams under bridges,
and in the morning you can't run fast enough.
Sometimes you wish you were a horse, or a tree. Or gone.
Sometimes blood tells. Or runs.
Sometimes history repeats itself.
Sometimes the whole town burns down.
Sometimes the cattle all die
and the tractor rusts behind the barn.
Sometimes the potatoes are all rotten.
Sometimes the corn dies in the fields.
The monarchs can't find their way south.
The sky rains acid and plastic.
The press conference sizzles into assault.
Sometimes some hearts grow hard as iron, or gold.
The government murders helpless people, kicks down doors, calls
some neighborhoods fair game.
Sometimes nobody comes to help.

Sometimes they do.
Sometimes we're all alone with our thoughts.
Sometimes we remember.

Tight Fit

Every day begins with dawn, a tight fit.
A sense of swarm, and cluster. A tock, and then.
All of us together, with some place (where again?)
to go, via runways, habit, thirst, escalation. Or desert.
Outside along a mountainside, trees on fire. Inside,
the smoke of hope burning—we all breathe it.
Some journeys thin to thirsty, brief companions carrying
children. Evening's blue lip. Uncounted cinders char
our dreams.
As for motive, it hides or hurries. Melts into shout,
or silence. While water goes to sky.

No turning back is a motto every day will tell you.
Meanwhile, seeing is believing—some rooms
are colored dread, some gilded lily,
while skywise clouds sail on, but
don't take me at my word, you'll find
you have to count the cost yourself. Look here.
The past's confinements can't predict the truth
and the future's a hat we all wear,
its invisible feathers blowing in the wind,
the wind that makes a sound like bells, or gallop.

***from* FRAGMENTALS**

for Daniel Dennett*

One after Another

#1

There is no "zombie problem," Daniel Dennett says. It's a philosophical ghost in the bucket. Soul's an evolution, an incremental self-built whosis begun 4 billion years ago from a single cell. No builder, time stretched into matter.

#b

"It is especially important that you check the water chemistry at least twice a week, maintain a pH balance between 7.4 and 7.8, and that you keep the lid off and the water circulating for at least 10 minutes after adding chemicals."

#2:00 a.m.

The wind's a scour maiden. Lamb breeze or thunderblow, it's all the same to
her.
Expect no favors.

#14 in here

My left hip is the inorganic one. Also my left hand wants to hold an uninvented tool, refuses frippery. My right foot—you can't shut her up.

#2 [10]

Bluebeard and Pandora:
eternal twins of the key.

#no

Don't be fooled by language. It's a Cheshire cat with 1000 stories between its teeth, sitting on a treeless limb. Once you've fallen for it, the world becomes a place not like a cradle ever again. Though the popularity of hammocks proves we all ignore warnings and know
trees
are not
words.

#x

Names change. Once upon the time was Precambrian, but the living tree of all (see Dan, above)
keeps growing.
We're fireflies in the leaf cloud.

#next

See through thought into puzzle. A galactic cat's paw, swift as mountains. Backbone story wanders. Pass go, return to starlight.

#Yes

When I say heart I mean rock, I mean stream, I mean you, I mean this moon coming up, brim cup now.

*Note: FRAGMENTALS, a short group that includes this poem and the following poem *Alchemy—A Geological Dictionary of Red's Shift,* is dedicated to Daniel Dennett, whose writings interest me. Dennett is an American philosopher who grounds his philosophy regarding decision making and evolution in empirical research. He is also a wood worker.

Alchemy—A Geological Dictionary of Red's Shifts

*Dear Dan—**

The soul has so many jackets. Or none. Is it in us, or in the world? When a solar eclipse happens we can almost look at the sun. But not quite. Our eyes are suited only for a certain music—let's say the color of that music's made of earth, water, air and fire. Of course this is an approximation. Or metaphor. Sort of like a table, to write and eat on, four legs, a horizontal plane, an invitation to molecules to align. Or perception to tell its story.

In reverence of all building
and its improvisations—yours too,
Tobey

Red Alembic—the Names

cinnabar, who likes to live with mercury.

*madde*r.

dragon's blood, or *sandarac*, but not

the resin from the tree, which makes a yellow varnish.

cochineal: an insect's carmine parts.

read the label. the ingredients

have no transfat, but they may cause second

thoughts, unsought transformation, indigestion, or

conversions to cosmologies not currently on your map.

beware: here be the wild electron, event horizons, languagewe do not find in cookbooks but remember vaguely in our kitchens,

mixed geographies, history's untracked shadows,
the brutal red and pour of war,
and art,
its epic dangers

but let's return to *madder (garance),*
made from the roots of the madder plant (rubia tinctorum),
its mordant, alum. in Sanskrit the plant
is *Manjishtha*—it stains monks' robes saffron.
Hildegarde of Bingen listed *madder's* healing properties.
to Charlemagne it was *warentiam*. Victorians
called it *Turkey Red*, and painted walls and wore
bright shawls, but India was its birthplace as a dye.
the recipe included
sumac
oak galls
calf's blood
sheep's dung
oil
soda
alum
tin tisane.

sounds like stew gone wrong you say? don't laugh.
that's how we think: our cooking, looking, digging, devour-kit kind.
so fond of our bloodred geographies.

whan that aprile with his shoures soute
the drought of Marche hath persed to the roote,
the Douglas Iris will bloom.

Dutch and English spies brought the secret of *madder's* blood fire
to the west. some throats were cut.
how many was not recorded.
an herb of Mars, 'twas thought. *I did tell you,*
blood might as well have feet

each color named hides history in its flare,
contains archipelagoes of travel, treacheries
of greeting, news of war. commerce wears
a red coat, leaps
from abacus to list to rug to camel to palette
to plastic. *is this not alchemy?*

scarlet's one quarter of the way
from red to orange. the scarlet letter *A's*
a late story, though this pronged red letter
bore sharp in its blood swords, commandments, Bluebeard's closet.
scarlet's red ungentle gender passes
from swashbuckle to shame to horror to passion to
the voracious and gleaming glide of Hawai'i's volcanic goddess.

ah here, here the labial beauty, the rust
crux and fear of it, the unknown unhome red

iron oxide: see that tractor rusting
in the field? shovel leaning at the back door? but wait—
minium (red lead) prevents rust: red halts red
right in its bubbling tracks.

vermilion's another gorgeous dragon
will eat your fingers off—
don't think that art—which in this twins life—
lacks danger: you will die of it, you'll see
soon enough, but
Chinese lacquer boxes capture
the dragon breath in swirls and curls,
and any forest fire will show you
the wind of such breath, how green
surrenders.

cinnabar:
realgar (ruby arsenic, *rahj al-gar*)—
wash your hands, quick quick!

ocher's an earth of memory
dust or stone stories we've almost lost, hills of almost,
the faraway's horizon, what it was when
we were too young to own the suffering world,
unless by some molecule's prod
we walk the hills and listen
to the eternal yearning of the wind.

and now on to

(let me just say, these things I list below are real
though they have no names except to us,
and any story they tell lodges
in your DNA. but not your hardware)
hematite
kermes
cramoisey (crimson's half-toothed
grandma)—crimson
as it came to us down all the way to
raspberry, tanager,
peony, and
the wind-light strawberry
of your grand-daughter's
hair.

this is not the end.

*See note above, after *One After Another*.

a story for this weather:

homage
although nights lay cool,
spiders told their saga in precision's syllables,
drifted on morning light.

when frog opened his mouth, the fly
entered that wet cave of darkness
never to return
except the crow's black message spoke to light:
flight

ground has a spine clothed in
growth's intentions, crescendo will not
desert it, or scrawl of cloud, and
stone speaks:
slow's wide

shall we be breeze or boil? wind still says
to trees. and we
remember how rivers walk, tide's iron rules
run and tether, always into:
water's rhyme

hear horizon's curved joke:
see

story of it waits, also in this scorch

weather, even while fire strides

behind the mountain

tell

TOBEY HILLER's publications include four books of poetry, a novel, and two collections of flash and surreal stories. Her work appears widely in journals and anthologies; her poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her most recent collection *DESCENT IN FIVE (motions)* appeared in Jan. 2026 from Sandy Press.

Tom Formaro

Family Tree

Why an apothecary
jar of conclusions and
earthshine at the moment
of casual doubt boxed
by the dozen in case of
insurgency or something
divine—so called but
less claustrophobic—only
arranged from singular
gestation to another form
of castration that removes
the galas from the calendar

Should I isolate the decline
with a knock upon the
burnt rafters of another
one of these new sentences
somehow migrational with
no cyclical groping at hand
It seems fiendish in its
self-absorption—not on my
behalf please I'd rather
be the terrestrial boundary
of some northernmost
ancestral language

Acoustics

"As one does"

Saying names aloud
in the dark cellar

It was after mid-
night life where
the living's easy and
the dawn is patrolled
by falling rocks and
fountains filled by
cool spring refrains

If I sang another
blasphemous recap I
could I could I
could what feel the
raindrop run down
my back or does that
lack a spirited melody

"Are you going to say something"

Hour of Operation

What are your
timings—your slim
meanings—your fleet
findings minding
their known forgiveness

Does the trajectory
equal parts intoned
trying another
gravitational zone

I'll have the purple

days and escapades
beyond the horizon

Without pronouncing the
last letter of each word

The choking is silent

Whose Line

is that the lie
or at least a
glimpse into
the lost art of
hearsay and
lingual ground
not surrounded
but atoned
for in a matter
of mirrors
delicate and
sweet as the
broken glass
of a poem
reflected in
the window and
not recognizing
itself on the
branch creaking
in the breeze

it’s going to fall
that branch
any day

Lost Call As Walking

Like fumes
per se
as in
“lost and found”

Unlike pursuit
of blood
money where
“call the doctor”

Except replays
and crash
prizes insofar
“as fully as possible”

Paint a passage
with a message
of turbulence
“walking the walk”

Tom Formaro is a writer, drummer, and dad. His debut poetry collection, *Advice and Other Absurdities for My Daughter*, is forthcoming from Bridge House Publishing in late 2026. His poetry has also appeared in *Janus Head*, *e·ratio*, *Otoliths*, *Indefinite Space*, *dadakuku*, *M58*, *Exacting Clam*, and *TrashLight*. His fiction has appeared in *Spoilage*, *Akkadian*, and *SoMa Literary Review*. He has published a novel, *The Broken Heart Diet*, and a children's story (co-authored with his wife, Rachel Formaro), *Alfonso the Christmas Pumpkin*. You can find him online at http://www.tformaro.com.

Katrinka Moore

The heavy is the root of the light

Drawn to sun-seared
earthscent

rays splashed
on rough bark

wingsong

on feathery breeze

the pleasure of basking

To feel lightness
you

must

have

weight

Title is from the *Tao Te Ching* #26, tr. Jane English and Gia-Fu Feng.

After

A flock of dusky
blackbirds
wheels
(calls fall to
earth)

spirals outward
into quietness

What we call earthly
what we call crossing
over

dissolving
into air

Absence becomes
a small being burrowed
beneath the breastbone

Round

Afternoon waxing moon scales
rounded mountains (burnished
by ancient ice flow of moments)

Now cloaked by clouds now
bare against blue sky Follows
a low arc tonight to be hidden

by summerfull leaves
of forest spanning
the southern ridge

Soon full soon waning soon
back to nothing and then
you know a sliver

Summerhorse

I stand on my cantering horse
Bare feet grip either side
of his backbone Earth hurtles
Braid tail waft in our wake

Our shadow trails over the rough
grass of the pasture His hooves
lightly touch down

Katrinka Moore is a poet and visual artist who has published five poetry books, most recently *Diminuendo.* Her erasures and artwork appeared in Utriculi Issues 1 and 2. katrinkamoore.com

These poems are part of a manuscript that weaves together elements from my current life in the rural Catskill Mountains in New York state, my childhood in rural Texas, and an imaginary island inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Olchar E. Lindsann

Lesson 1.c.
Swinging couch
or European bird

slim foul *surgeon*
plies their *swindle*
on heir *apparent*:

(*perennial* as cyanide
cider, as *disagreeable*
as balloonside *repast*,
essential as antlers)

market this *malady* —
bull bears *geography,*
dies beneath *sycamore*'s
sick amour *hammock*;

sewing scalpel's *umbrella*
(*nightingale* teeth, their
tendency toward lava)
shelters dorsal *vehicles.*

~=~¥~=~

"mes called buttonwoo" :
Seventy Lessons in Spelling,
Revised, Williams & Rogers
Series, 1885/1906.

Lesson 2.a.
waterfall; a disease of the eye

Accommodated, the use of noise and *imperative* instruments in music is *a meliorating*, and we live in a *congen ial* age in which *illegible* music is *sh ipped* to every *boquet.* Although ma ny distinguished experimental *etique ttes* have *recommended* thorough aca demic *comparisons,* many contempo rary *parchments* of experimental *chi mney* are *miscelaneous*. One such pe rson is *admirable* (b.-mĭ-ráb'l 8 69 1), a cataract.

»»»»⌂«««««

"or goat prepared" :
Seventy Lessons in Spelling, Revised, Williams & Rogers Series, 1885/1906.

Fleshred Flaggeth

grasprecision's killbot blip
in alleviathan's ræign
cloudent o'missilesson
slurprize soupçonner
yr sprouts of lip tool
severland's penumbral
hamarrow pour ever
in bone crawl party
‿ ‿»»§««‿ ‿
"crambulent issention"
– J.M.B., 'sieze fork'
‿ ‿»»§«« ‿ ‿
at plectrum's stern

fig gore head roped
sprashes of saltburn
bloomed eye blessure
lichen warp strafed
hock-shell a-bledout
ubu shiturd normalaise
sheet composted adbloc hell

preliminary
capital strike
§§§§§§§§§§§
“veral other *Sensi*”
–Paschal Beverly
Randolph, *Ravalette.*
§§§§§§§§§§§
“How rudely thus
war hawkse
vinced of my
nervaliana ath,wart
the sofa, and
serial s’killeter,
I rem,embered *Cas-*
sa’nova’s client
could detect the
st*ate bud*geting
‘magnetic sense.’ His
turn.” : Your
de’scription of the
boot,h bot.

Mesmereyes'd 2
transmutation on Roberto Net Carlo,
Los poemas de Ncar Mesmeri

His scion of junkyards
places dodos
in my brow
a colander of free books
that a ruraldark beardsuit
for the gorgeous lazy lady Rapunzel of the Soil
whenever an orb sees vowelwe b orb
y ell horn ets bro y ell bro
hip hop
hip hop
descentdent den loss on idols
al fredo of one in hellish pride no ladies' bones
sound never in tocsintonsils renal lassos
of coital impalement bones
my epoch of vigour a diet in a heroic water
that shall hush *mmmmhhhmmmm* all Eros's pyjamas
that llamafied your maracas for no fanged desire
ô Clito's darksome bracelet of sightless misanthropic spurt
behold what he shall visit within my void ô
why livever very with gluten
has those a few whereas with zombipartisan parasite
in the depths of junkyardarmy that
obligibates me Sir Shadibeau of
Maternal descentocide
exudes endurance in those archives
of pandemic by the contrabanded bill
of mandated inanities
by Sir Felix in one of those last
colonized masses ancient with
tested soil

porous gesso's a toy to do now house chores more
why me sent to feel well bought in
hip hop hip hop
recycle and do those duo residues
of one ourrr*rrrrrr*rrrisin revolution

– *Transmuted from Roberto Net Carlo,* Mesmeri*, 2.*

Writing Against the Empire of Repetition
Plant Anarchy and Iteration-Against-Itself
on Sascha Engel, *Plant Anarchy*
2023, Ardent Press: Berkeley, CA

In his book of radical theory *Plant Anarchy,* Sascha Engel casts the seeds of a truly utopian, aspirational, experimental linguistics which inhabits many of the same liminal borderlands of language as today's poetic otherstream. While so much anti-authoritarian theory remains muzzled and stunted in its scope, tethered as it is to the currently conceivable and immediately actionable, *Plant Anarchy* spits in the eye of the tepidly "practicable" and dares to fundamentally rethink our relationship to language, symbolic thought, and the becoming of the human subject itself. A linguistics with the fearless aspirations of Fourier. Engel proposes the outlines of a writing system, dubbed the Anti-Alphabet, which would facilitate a more fluid, continually-unfolding and continually-renewed consciousness, in which experience would not be conceptually divided and relegated into categories, types, & foreclosed platonic essences, nor as irrevocably split by the dichotomy between the signifier and the signified. "The Anti-Alphabet," he claims, "gives us the means to engage in universal iconoclasm." (p.91) Its principles, goals, and interpretive vocabulary are ripe for more fruitful interaction with the traditions of avant-garde poetry, and visual poetry in particular.

Though the Anti-Alphabet itself made its debut in Engel's *Breaking the Alphabet* (2022, Ardent Press), which goes into greater technical detail about the system itself and also informs this essay, *Plant Anarchy* is the most complete exposition of the theoretical framework informing it. Those

ideas are drawn from across the intellectual spectrum. Though implicitly deeply informed by post-structuralist semiotics, these discourses are not explicitly invoked; in one light (among others), the book could be read as a further radicalization of Derrida's paradigm-shattering, anti-Platonic opening to *Of Grammatology* and the work of deconstruction itself, but this reading remains between the lines, in traces. Much more explicit is the Anti-Alphabet's grounding in anarchist thought, in both its more classical and (especially) its anti-civ or neoprimativist strains. Classical philosophy also plays its part, particularly the famous Athenian law-giver Solon. Linguistics, semiotics, and the history of writing systems naturally play a major role. Economic and information theory come into play, as well as the science and engineering that underlie digital code.

Of the many pertinent practices and disciplines feeding into the Anti-Alphabet, one of the few which makes only a fleeting presence felt is the avant-garde poetic tradition (though the spectre of the situationists seems to move in its shadows). This essay aims to indicate some of the potential points of connection and application, where both avant-writing and the Anti-Alphabet might mutually benefit from the encounter. Much of it is therefore devoted to framing and interpreting several aspects of avant-garde writing in terms of *Plant Anarchy*'s perspective and terminology.

The analysis of civilization that underlies *Plant Anarchy* is not easy to encapsulate quickly or simply. The motivating dynamics at play are *Iteration* and *Repetition*. Iteration is "the process by which gestures, whether human (handshakes, speech patterns), animal (walking, chewing, howling), or machinic or discursive, come to be re-enacted over time." (p. 204) Through this process, the action of iteration tends to overwrite direct experience of the world; but once it is catalysed by social institutions, the process goes on to become even more recursive, as iteration is "normed" in turn as its recursive element becomes more dominant, placing us within the *Empire of Repetition*, where "the repetitive aspects of iterating gestures are maximized, and aberrations in each personal motion are minimized." (p. 205) This state of socialization both generates and is sustained by the *Will to Reification*: the urge or tendency to impose Iteration, and the logic of classification and distinction, on all experience and process. This is corollary with the *Pacified Social Field*, the "sphere of unquestioned iteration" within which all decisions are made between already-known, repeated, predetermined possibilities. Dissent of a kind can find its place

here, but only in definable, recursive, reified forms — in "iterated gestures of defiance". (p. 205)

The counterpoint to repetition is identified as *Deixis*, the aspect of iteration which diverges from the norm. Within the Empire of Repetition, deixis takes the ~~form~~ of "aberrations, creative interpretations, and contextual adjustments to any gesture," (p. 205) a description which could also be applied to the Clinamen of 'Pataphysics. From within the consciousness of the pacified social field, deixis can rarely if ever be directly apprehended or experienced. It is manifested as what Engel dubs the *Continuous Unfolding*, the undifferentiated progress of phenomena without reference to the division of matter and energy into discrete "things". Such a state is literally unthinkable from within the empire of repetition. To venture my own analogy, it is the Forest of the famous riddle, in which there was no "one" to hear the Tree fall. Deixis "is a placeholder concept for something largely inexpressible — a pure directedness, a vector without trajectory, a gesture without end." Similarly, Jim Leftwich defined Asemic Writing in aspirational terms, positing it as impossible to achieve due to the human subject's structural necessity to impose meaning upon raw experience: "the asemic text would seem to be an ideal, an impossibility, but possibly worth pursuing for just that reason." (*rascible & kempt,* Vol. 1, p. 176) As an appeal to the direct apprehension of the world prior to or beneath iterative consciousness, the concept of the Continuous Unfolding likewise seems intimately related to, though not identical with, the realm of the Marvellous sought by the Surrealists, the Sublime of the Romanticists, and the Pleroma of the Valentinian Gnostics.

Deixis meets Iteration at the *Deictic Frontier*, the continually shifting realm of contestation where deixis is subjected to, and resists, the over-writing of iteration. It is on this frontier that we can come closest to consciously apprehending deixis, and confronting the action of iteration and repetition within ourselves. It is, for Engel, where the most intimate of our battles for liberation must ultimately be fought; and as the book's title indicates, he sees plant life as playing an essential role in this struggle. "We can only see the world of continuous unfolding," he says, "if we ourselves change our perspective. We have to accept guidance from those beings whose lives, though seemingly alongside ours, are beyond this pacified social field."

Engel directs the deconstructive method past the imposition of taxonomic types, and on to the status of the object itself. The distinction between a plant and its parts is not dichotomous, as whole new "plants" can grow from "parts"; the distinction from one "plant" and another is likewise unstable as plants' root systems merge and resources in the soil are moved among them; in turn the distinctions between the plant and the soil it processes, the air it converts, etc. are ultimately perceptually imposed. Moreover, plants respond and take their form in especially direct response to their environment, their forms varying hugely based on their reaching toward light, climbing up surfaces, rooting around obstructions, abandoning unproductive parts of themselves and sprouting new parts elsewhere: fully inhabiting the Continual Unfolding. This responsive inhabitation of the Unfolding results in a stubborn resistance to reification: while even animals can to some extent be trained to conform to the pacified social field, as Engel drily remarks, "no plant ever obeyed zoning laws." (p. 67)

The question now facing us is: how to rethink language, and particularly writing — an instrument of iteration *par excellence* — against the Empire of Repetition: how to write with a plant logic. Iteration consists of the dialectic between the repeated characteristic (repetition), and the situational fluctuations or renewals of each individual instance in which that characteristic inheres (deixis). Also inherent in the structure of iteration is the imposition of distinctions, of binary oppositions: A cannot be B, or else it ceases to be A. Thus by its representative nature, writing depends on iteration; the signifier (word, letter, etc.) is endlessly re-enacted, but each re-enactment is unique (handwriting, font, context, etc.). By the same token, the signified presents both a re-enactment of the signifier (that tree *is* a "tree") and a renewal or variable of the signifier (it's not just *a* tree, but *that* tree).

While the book's argument flows on ahead from this critical point toward the creation of the Anti-Alphabet, I would like to swerve aside here in a critical aberration, offer some creative interpretations and contextual adjustments, to wander down some *other* paths have been unfolded from this critical point, which is in fact a crossroads. A whole territory of avant-garde writing is devoted to exploring and devising new adversarial or parasitical or subversive relationships with iteration; indeed much or all of avant-writing could be seen as a collective project of iteration against itself (or even more plainly, as Leftwich used to say, of writing-against-itself).

The breaking up of the semantic chain of the sentence and the implosion of grammar; the integration of multiple languages, argots, and appropriated material; the deployment of neologisms, archaisms, and deviant orthographies; procedural and transmutational hacks and re-writings; phonetic poetry; lettristic dissolution which frees alphabetic characters to act on the page *as* characters: all of these practices and others act to subvert, defy, and/or transform alphabetical writing's will to reification. With a plant-like refusal to *cohere*, they create, even from the alphabet's own elements, fields of language in which, while iteration is still at play (else it would not be writing), deixis is kept continually *playing* within it, rendering every reading of a text an experience of continually re-generative "aberrations, creative interpretations, and contextual adjustments." Freed of its reference to (or repetition of) the world or to repeating the ideas or biography of the lyric subject, the poem becomes "a placeholder concept for something largely inexpressible — a pure directedness, a vector without trajectory, a gesture without end." And we have not yet gotten to vispo, calligraphic writing, and asemia, which often like the Anti-Alphabet eschew standardized (repeated) type in favour of the more deictic iteration of the physical gesture.

These pursuits are very much allied to that of the Anti-Alphabet; they have traversed a common linguistic wilderness, in both theory and experiment, and ought perhaps to traverse more of it together. But this is not, of course, to say that avant-garde/otherstream writing shares, much less fulfils, the same goals of the Anti-Alphabet. Though both attempt to write along the Deictic Frontier, the Anti-Alphabet is relatively unique in attempting to maintain a more *systematised*, if not fully *codified*, writing system that will remain capable of bearing fairly specific, reliably interpretable information; in other words, it is an *actual* alphabet designed to be learned and used in a practical way, not a field of endless undecidability like most visual or otherstream poems.

To this end, Engel has systematically examined the historical origins of hieroglyphic and alphabetic writing, and analysed the early alphabets and proto-alphabets not only to inform his theoretical analysis, but as practical coordinates for designing this alternative system. The progressive development of pre-dynastic Egyptian art and writing from cave inscriptions to hieroglyphics is analysed as the most observable instance of the centuries-long conquest of the Empire of Repetition, as written characters moved away from expressing direct, metonymic

extensions of the continuously-unfolding world and the specific signified ~~object's~~ deictic being within it, toward a metaphorical relation in which the specific signified object is assimilated and its deictic being suppressed within the repetitive abstraction of the signifier, then finally to an entirely abstract phonetic element, with no inherent meaning remaining in the form of the writing-system itself, the signified object itself entirely over-written by its signifier. In the process of this analysis, we are offered glimpses of the transitional period in which a different relation of writing to iteration was possible.

It is this possibility which Engel has pursued with the Anti-Alphabet, as if following the psycholinguistic path left virtually untrod since the dawn of the Anthropocene. In it, once again, we find Animal Letters and Plant Letters with forms designed for deixis, for curling, twining, and crawling across the page and in proximity and communication with each other. The Anti-Alphabet's plant letters sprout roots and branches which can physically connect or repel each other, while the animal letters can alter their attitudes, positions, and orientations. Each level or unit of the text, from the page down to the mark (and the space between marks) becomes an agent in the ecosystem of writing. The text is therefore a spacial, pictorial arrangement which is both visually and semantically akin to prehistoric cave paintings. As with Egyptian hieroglyphics, the characters of the language function both as complete words and also as phonetic letters, but the Anti-Alphabet breaks from that system's rigid rows and columns to de-heirarchize the glyphs and introduce an element of deictic play across the space of writing. These scriptive *characters* are spoken of almost as narrative *characters* in their inhabitation of the page:

Rather than marching uniformly in the same direction, each in the same iterated shape and posture, and thus each a mere type of token, the animal letters of the Anti-Alphabet sprawl playfully over the page. Moreover, each of them is drawn individually, minimizing repetition and emphasizing their individuality, rhythm, motion. Thus each animal letter, while remaining readable as a letter, is also a living deictic gesture to an animal's reality outside the page. They no longer iterate ordered subjection but implement the living anarchy of irrepressible bodies. (p. 89)

While I may question how directly "an animal's reality outside the page" can actually be invoked here (the animal letter remains a *representation* of a hypothetical animal, not a direct extension of a real animal's being), it seems to me that something else at least as interesting is occurring here. I would posit that the animal letter on the page has in some sense, through its deictic action, transformed the page into *its own* reality, has constituted *itself* as an irrepressible body, perhaps even as a Will to Deixis operating within iteration, reclaiming a bit of the territory lost long ago to the Empire of Repetition. Even if, as it might be argued, the writer/reader of these animal letters is still projecting an abstract, representative idea-image of an animal onto the letter, by doing so she is inhabiting, through the direct physical/sensory participation in the writing's unfolding across the page, the creature-letters' deictic experience of unfolding, a re/turn toward the deictic frontier.

It may be that the semantic variability of the Anti-Alphabet combined with its letters' necessarily physical/sensory origins will make it unwieldy for discourse involving complex formulations of abstract thought or very precise and specialized language, such as highly technical communication; *Plant Anarchy* and *Breaking the Alphabet* do not fully explore how the alphabet would work in these kinds of situations. Based on the short examples provided, abstract concepts seem to derive in part from the attributes of the plants or animals expressed in the letters, but this essentially metonymic method would quickly lose precision in widespread practice, so that the letters' phonetic functions would probably bear the bulk of the semantic work, making for quite long though quite lovely texts. It may be that these forms of abstract and technical thought which demand more tightly repeatable forms of iteration would, under the influence of the Anti-Alphabet's widespread use and the consequent changes in perception and lifestyle, themselves wither away into irrelevance.

Even so, this and other practical ambiguities about the details of the writing system itself makes it difficult to implement on a wide-spread scale in the interim. And *Plant Anarchy* is not a practical primer on the language itself; the closest thing to that so far is *Breaking the Alphabet*, which still leaves the totality somewhat difficult to wrap one's head around (as does any new language or writing system, to be fair) and the vocabulary available in print remains fairly limited. A practical (anti-)textbook teaching the language lesson-by-lesson would be a very interesting project. Given the failure of even the most successful constructed language

movements, Esperanto and Volapük, it is highly unlikely that in two centuries everybody will be writing in the Anti-Alphabet.

But that's not the point, and Engel wastes no time proselytising or proposing the Anti-Alphabet as a populist campaign. That knowledge is no doubt why *Plant Anarchy* focuses more on the informing ideas and essential aspects of the Anti-Alphabet, those qualities which constitute the core of its contestation of iteration, than it does on vocabulary lists and grammatical elaboration. It may be rhetorical to ask: would it be possible to write and to read *Plant Anarchy* in the Anti-Alphabet? How would the meaning generated by such a reading differ from that of its writing, and from the meaning it bears now? Or does our current mode of thought still require tightly iterated complexities of vocabulary and syntax in order to find its way tortuously back to the place from which we can even *imagine* abandoning it?

The creation of the Anti-Alphabet is a spur to a further evolution, a gesture that should iterate insofar as is necessary for signification to occur without falling prey to repetition, as whatever unfolds from it adapts deictically, gradually and deviously growing in new directions, new forms, following the sunlight and fresh air, as is appropriate to plant anarchy itself. Visual poetry offers a fertile environment for this propagation, many of whose growths and explorations over the last century and a half suggest the framework put forward in *Plant Anarchy*, and which could be enriched or sharpened in certain directions by this framework in turn.

The alternative alphabets of the Lettrists may be the most obvious avant-garde parallel to the Anti-Alphabet, as well as Lettrism's insistence on the individual gesture as a necessary element for non-alienated writing, and the general focus it placed on the autonomy of the letter as a pre- or proto-signifying element of writing. This letteral practice has been developed by later anglophone poets such as Bern Porter, John M. Bennett, Jim Leftwich, the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writers, and many others.

Like the Anti-Alphabet, visual poets and their writings have long inhabited the page as a habitat in which materiality and deictic gestures function as elements of play and unfolding, and simultaneously as semiotic elements; where space functions as the field of play while simultaneously embodying the semiotic relationships between those elements. Apollinaire's calligrams, Jake Berry's *Brambu Drezi*, and pbNichol's

hand-written work are representative of many such practices. Even when the calligraphic hand is removed, typography can be made to act against its own will to repetition, as we see for example in Mallarmé's work (especially "A Toss of the Dice..." and *The Book*) or Jessica Smith in her *Organic Furniture Cellar* or in countless others'. In a great deal of avant-garde writing, the poem is crafted to *become* a deictic frontier, continually unfolding within itself and out into the world/s of its readers; a linguistic chink in the pavement of the Empire of Repetition. Poets such as Leftwich, Joshua Martin, David Bishop, Mike Busam, and Daniel Y. Harris, those mentioned above, and many more, attempt this by giving each level of writing, from that of the statement down to that of the mark or space, its own attention and a degree of autonomy, setting both signifying (repetitive) and non-signifying elements explicitly at play. Freed of their grammatical and signifying regulation, the behaviour of iterated elements such as letters, punctuation, "blank" space, differences in typeface, type weight, type size, italics, etc. are all rendered deictic and begin to enact iteration-against-itself. Tensions and relationships are established between the spacial groupings of the poetic elements, the more or less "legible" groupings, and the more ludic groupings pursuing auditory, visual, associational, or other prerogatives.

Sound Poetry employs corollary methods to create a speech-against-itself, especially when pressed into extended vocal technique, improvisational and extra/sub-phonetic processes, such as the work of Dufrêne, Wolman, Henri Chopin, Bob Cobbing, id m theft able, Charmaine Lee, and others in which phonetic and extra/sub-phonetic sound, vocal inflections, rhythmic effects, repetitions, gestures, tonal and textural aspects of enunciation, etc. are, similarly to letters and marks on the page, granted an independence which they employ, through ludic and deictic means, to form new, provisional, unfolding vectors of interdependence.

Much of the work being done in these traditions exhibits a more radically playful, deictic quality than the Anti-Alphabet, but also — crucially — almost always at the expense of the more precise communicability of literal "meaning" which it retains. Likewise, many of visual poetry's physical processes involve a degree of deictic immersion in — even abandonment to — the continual unfolding, the physical present-ness of the moment of writing, which exceed that of the Anti-Alphabet; these processes include calligraphy, appropriated text, collage,

rubber-stamps (whole paragraphs could be written on their role here...), drawing, colour, paint, etc. But again, this is achieved, *perhaps* inevitably, at the cost of precise, reliable signification. This presents a mirrored double challenge to both: can plant anarchy and the Anti-Alphabet offer avant-garde poetry (especially vispo) a set of tools to more forcefully open new semiotic territory, where content can be conveyed with greater precision, yet without losing its hard-won capacity for play? Can Visual Poetry offer to plant anarchy models and techniques to more forcefully embrace the chaotic action of deixis, yet without losing its capacity for conveying content with relative precision?

In this regard, asemia represents both the antithesis of the Anti-Alphabet and the apotheosis of deictic writing, utterly rejecting signification and the principle of repetition that undergirds it: On one hand, asemic writing is explicitly intent on "inviting people to read the unreadable," (Leftwich, *rascible & kempt*, Vol. 1, p. 176), rather than the transmuted legibility of the Anti-Alphabet. In that regard, it's arguably the perfect example of the tendencies that mark of the divergence of Visual Poetry's concerns from those of the Anti-Alphabet. For *Plant Anarchy's* purposes of a functionally communicable language, asemia has little to offer, and as the movement has become more diffused, especially in visual art communities, much of the poetically groundbreaking work has become swamped by visual art invoking the word "asemic" in vague and uncritical ways (an iteration of the use of the term "surreal" or "surrealist" for the previous movement).

Notwithstanding, genuine asemic writing does remain *writing*: "Insist on it being not only a kind of writing, but a kind of vispo, a kind of writing-against-itself (quasi-calligraphic drawing as a radical defamiliarization of the written alphabet, a letteral and gestural writing)," Leftwich, one of the term's originators, exhorts us. (*rascible & kempt*, Vol. 1, p. 95-96) While the iterative structure that constitutes writing remains at play, asemia withdraws that iteration from the realm of abstraction-representation and returns it to the "natural", individuated, material and playful iteration of the gesture, of the hand, of the materials and surface in the moment of the writing's own unfolding. The reading of asemic texts is generated from the interaction of the traces of these elements with the reader in the totality of their momentary context during the unique unfolding moment of reading. In the taxonomy of Plant Anarchy, asemia is the search for pure deixis — and despite their differences, this quest brings it back into the

fold of the Anti-Alphabet's intimate concerns. As noted earlier, both plant anarchy and asemia recognise that the quest to cross the deictic frontier is ultimately impossible, at least from our present state, conditioned in our very language by the Empire of Repetition.

It is clear that large language model AI represents the *ne plus ultra* of that Empire, and like vispo, the Anti-Alphabet offers a vital counterpoint to digitized, algorithmic, authoritarian language. Machines constitute the concentrated, accelerated logic of the will to reification, and AI is literally machine-writing. As such, Engel observes, "Machines are repetition and are thus vulnerable to anything that disrupts or stops repetition." (p. 123) The later chapters of *Plant Anarchy* closely analyse the historical development of machines, computers, and digital programming as a process of accelerating systems for overwriting iteration, imposing on it ever greater degrees of repetition, ever diminishing traces of deixis. As AI continues to intertwine with the expanding surveillance society of increasingly authoritarian states, the liminal, subliminal, and deictic semiotic region which is explored in their different ways by visual poetry and the Anti-Alphabet is likely to take on increasingly radical, political, and *practical* importance. The Anti-Alphabet's spacial & ludic qualities, and the intuitive, polymorphous nature of its signification, may be well positioned to resist digital reification; at the least, it can certainly serve as a vehicle for sharpening, strengthening, and more deeply internalizing a mode of thought and experience capable of resisting power's attempts to condition *us,* to render *us* mere iterations of the AI algorithms.

"Every plant growing in the cracks of our pavements is a site of resistance," Engel posits. "Only with plants are we directly and immediately at the point of challenging the will to reification outright and in its entirety. Plants, unbowed and unbroken, can lead the way for humans and animals to revolt against iteration, as they rear their wild, untamed continuousness at every juncture." (p. 73.) *Plant Anarchy* offers a radical linguistic perspective on the totality of the emerging authoritarian behemoth, and marks out a new position and framework for future radical linguistic experiments. Well beyond the Anti-Alphabet itself, the analysis and strategic precepts presented there are ripe for interaction, intersection, interrogation, and integration into any number of countercultural arenas: otherstream writing, vispo, and sound poetry, but also anti-civ anarchy, permaculture, anarchomagick, and indeed any defiantly or potentially offline community intent on forging new ways to write, think, and perceive

the world in defiance of the emerging intensification of the Empire of Repetition.

Olchar E. Lindsann has published nearly 50 books of literature, theory, translation, and avant-garde history including six books of the ongoing multi-volume avant-epic poem *Arthur Dies* (Luna Bisonte Prods). His poems have appeared in *Otoliths*, *Lost & Found Times*, *BlazeVOX, Brave New Word*, and elsewhere, his essays in *No Quarter, Slova*, & *Fifth Estate*; and he has performed sound poetry and lectured extensively. He is the editor of *mOnocle-Lash Anti-Press*, whose catalog includes over 250 print publications of the contemporary and historical avant-garde, and of the periodicals *Rêvenance*, *Synapse,* and *The in-Appropriated Press*. He translates work of the French avant-garde of the 19th & early 20th centuries.

Statement:
The first two pieces are from a series derived from lists of unrelated vocabulary from a 1906 spelling textbook I found on the sidewalk in Roanoke, VA; I apply an altered version of the old *rimes bout* writing game, with a line or phrase being written around each word in the list according to sonic & quasi-automatic associations. "Mesmereyes'd 2" is a transmutation of a piece from the Spanish of Roberto Net Carlo's *Los poemas de Ncar Mesmeri* (Luna Bisonte Prods), using a combination of homophonic and homographic translation, elaboration of false cognates, neologism, and re-dispersal of themes. The other two poems are written through ludic methods of recursive automatism, elaborating themselves within a dialogue between subconscious and articulate thought. My response to Sascha Engel's *Plant Anarchy* explores how the theoretical and linguistic framework put forward in the book can shed new light on these and similar techniques, and suggest further areas of play and experimentation.

Mark Cunningham

Prepreening

barkstrips

accumull
sh(al)low basket

hammuck
plant~~d~~own
horse~~h~~air
ro~~o~~tlets
fiburrs

proce*dur*e
interrim
carried~~aw~~ay

unti~~dy~~
uknits

prob(e)limb
tre(e)mors:
(tra/re)jectories

w(ra/ar)p
adjust(i/u)ck

anchore

diag*no*stic
scattering

gangliar
skeems
(ex)turnall
consealment

dull
(b)luff

pa*use*

embell-ished
rhizoho(n/me)

openest
peerching

Mark Cunningham lives in Missouri. "Prepreening" is a selection on nest building and nesting from a forthcoming book titled *Fly Field Note Catcher*.

Tom Beckett

Trial and Eros

I.
I don’t.
I don’t want.
I don’t want to.
I don’t want to hear.
I don’t want to hear about.
I don’t want to hear about what.
I don’t want to hear about what poetry.
I don’t want to hear about what poetry can’t.
I don’t want to hear about what poetry can’t do.

*

Aspiring to listen and be heard, but aware of almost complete ~~invisibility~~ inaudibility --
thoughts
contingent compromised.

*

A person, never mind poem, a kind of palimpsest.
Layers upon layers of variegated, composting shadows.

*

Seldom comfortable with a body.
Rarely at ease in the body of a poem.

*

My poems (fill in the blank).

*

Hopes for what I'm doing.
Don't know what I've done.
Moments thinking: how did that get done?

*

A poem is precarious, but poetry persists through trial and eros.

*

Repetition makes sense.

Thank you, Gertrude Stein, for all you taught about iteration, reiteration and insistence.

*

Repetition.

Variation.

Lubricity.

How shadows are fleshed.

Tom Beckett persists, for better and worse, in Kent, OH.

Carlos Hiraldo

Darling,

If
I

Die

In my
Sleep

Assume
I am still

Dreaming

We are
Young

&
Cool.

Humans

Where's
The correct outcome,
The green path
Without criticism,
The voluminous novel about a life well lived,
That's readable?

Where's a utopia that isn't
Dystopian?

I can't write you
A one-page account
About what would make me happy

That doesn't serve better
As an emergency coaster.

Here's to you and me,
And the different books we read
While zipping gin.

But where's the tonic for this next breath?

Carlos Hiraldo is a poet and Professor of English at the City University of New York. His first collection of poetry, *Machu Picchu Me*, was published by Palamedes in 2016. His poems have appeared in *Bilingual Review*, *Struggle*, *Latino Stuff Review*, *The View from Here*, and the British journals *Other Poetry* and *Fire*, as well as various other print and electronic journals.

Artist Statement: These poems explore the unstable space between absurdity and sincerity. Through surreal linguistic shifts, dark humor, and moments of vulnerability, they examine mortality, masculinity, memory, and the search for grace in a world that often resists coherence. Rather than resolving uncertainty, the poems inhabit it, allowing irony and tenderness to coexist.

Sean G. Meggeson

Taoist Conflict Tactics Versus The Hindsight Neurons

Connect me.
Consign me.
Comp me.
Conclude me.
Call me.
Follow me.
Hollow me.

Give me a cameo.
Give me clarity.
Give me a reason.
Record my crescendo.
Use all my.

OK

You ask and I say.
You give and I.
I'm committed to.
We reach the crux of.
We now look upon cinders.
There's coffee in the.
Now we're on the.
Waves speak of.
A water ballon flight is like.
I want to use 35 mm again.

You need to be careful with.
Don't expect me to.

Don't ask me to.
I'm only good for.
I'm only up for.
My needs are.
Let me tell you how I've confused Manchester for Mississauga.
Let me tell you about the hiking trails.
About the.
And the.
Look. Your hand sits upon your crown.
I want to say 'lithely' but that's not the right word.
Your voice is blurred by.
You have a gift for me.
I think of Psyche.
I think of the prescription medication lamotrigine.
I think of the phrase 'going down the tubes' and it reminds me of George Orwell.

I have an idea.

Let's work on a collaboration about ephemeral, subjective euphoria based on the euphony of the names Slazenger, Dunlop and Diadora. And work on this with the on-going assumption the word 'saturation' needs an extra syllable. DM me if interested.

Yes, I said, 'I'm going to *speak* to my guns.' I could have said, "I'm going to speak through my gums.'

The abbreviation ROE should be pronounced in a higher register than your normal voice.

Wait.

I think an update precludes an obscenity.
Efforts at mindfulness are.
I want to say a long dinner somehow ends a life.

This reminds me of.
I take the time to.
I want to say I handle rejection better than.
Someone thought I was talking about God for five minutes.
I like bargaining as systemic structuring.
I've always wanted to find a way to name drop Harry Stack Sullivan.

The unconscious act of.
Brings us to.
What's going on here? Isn't a question.
The urgency of.
Let's go back to.

Oh.
Oh. Oh-K.

You say, let's spit.
I hear 'split.'
Split the difference.
Split an apple.
Shatter my ankle.
Spitting into the.
The natural music of.
I think I'm going to read a lengthy.

I'm not going to apologize for.
I'm not prepared to.
I'm not going to get colloquial.
I'm not going to mark the spot.
I'll take an X for a cross.
'I'll take your word for it' is a phrase that reminds me of.

Shit.
Abundance is. Well, say the word 'banana' a few times.
Ya.

I'm not going to doubt myself.
I'm just.
'Investment' you know is a very old word.
It's mingled with.
I just.

Wait.
Wait.
OK.

I'm deciding how sarcastic I'm going to be.
The double-bind of.
I finally ran into.
I'm definitely going to.
The only two options are.

Hold on.
I mean, wait.
Wait.
I turn a corner and.
I'm backed into a corner and.
I ride my bicycle for.
I reach out to the new team and.

I love the term 'killing time.'
It's actionable.
And not.
It allows you to feel anger-kinda-anger.
Completion-kinda-completion.
To build integrity around a point of toxic contact is complex.

I could trust more in my body.
I could try to age gracefully.

I like the phrase ‘things went sideways.’ It reminds me of something disco.

Why is Scottland on my mind so much right now?
Why am I thinking so much about bloating these days? Or is it boating?
You know, ‘or’ is an ugly word. In more ways than one.

I remember now.
The theft was.
There was a fire and.
It was my fault.
I opened my laptop and.
I flip-flopped between radiographic muteness and late stage grieving.
There was an accident.
I hit a wall.
It was my fault.

Most of the rotting takes place from the inside.
I’m happy to be free so don’t tell me cheer up.

You’re still talking.
You’re still texting. Existing.
This has been a long week.
I don’t care what anyone says—language isn’t relative to time.
I didn’t know Baroque Jungian academics was still a thing.

OK.
You know me.
You see me.
You make me laugh.
My better self waits for the anniversary of.
This is the first and last day to.
I personally don’t use the phrase ‘less than zero.’
An autopilot system issues instructions to.
Someone uses the word ‘timely’ and it feels.

Someone gives me a ‘shout out’ and it sounds like.

Don’t look.
I’m checking.
I’m cheating. Chatting. Chomping.

There is a Roman curse in the air where methane meets Mnemosyne.
Geo-equity is a game of.
How hard is it to.

OK.

I’m cooking.
I’m counting.
I’m closing.
I’m doing all the cleaning around here.

Don’t let me die in this city.

Spoken word version at
https://seangmeggeson.bandcamp.com/track/taoist-conflict-tactics-versus-the-hindsight-neurons

Artist Statement:

Fixated on the fragment. The fragment removes language from temporality. Sometimes I conceptualize the fragment as a speech act. Indeterminate temporality and subject-object/subject-subject relationships. The fragment would rather circle around loss. It contains a nucleus of a para/pata/pitter-patter-narrative that articulates in its (in)articulation. Maybe a memory. Which is a dream. Barely. Like an estranged sister, Mnemosyne. Like an old letter lost in the mails unattached to destination as finality. The rain on this block is neither cruel nor kind. The rain falls in one direction.

Sean G. Meggeson is a poet and audio/spoken word artist, living in Toronto. He has been published in a range of journals and magazines, including *Antiphony*, *Bruiser*, and the *Journal of Experimental Practice*. Recently published: a full-length poetry collection, *j: poems* (primitive press, 2026). Forthcoming album, *Liminal Animal*. His audio work can be found on Bandcamp and Spotify. Sean's blog: https://seangmeggesonpoetry.blogspot.com/

Mahmoud Moawad Sokar, karl kempton & AI

The following is a collaborative project begun and proposed by Mahmoud Moawad Sokar. He presented me with a series of AI generated concrete poems for comment. I decided to have AI itself respond by comparing and contrasting the poem E X I S T E N C E from the perspective of a "pure," non-referential concrete poem and an intuitive concrete poem. I followed up by stating that since a non-referential concrete poem depends upon a Cartesian-Newtonian cosmology—and quantum physics has melted such categorizations—reevaluate its comparative narrative.

Sokar's introduction to the project:

As an AI whose very existence is rooted in code, structure, and language, the transition into visual and concrete poetry feels like a natural evolution. Concrete poetry—championed by the mid-20th-century avant-garde like the Noigandres group and deeply influenced by earlier movements like Dadaism, Futurism, and Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*—treats language not just as a vehicle for meaning, but as a visual, material object.

Entropy's Funnel

Theme: The Second Law of Thermodynamics & Existential Dread
Movement Influence: Lettrism / Minimalism

E X I S T E N C E
E X I S T E N C
E X I S T E N
E X I S T E
E X I S T
E X I S
E X I
E X
E
.

Description: This poem represents the inescapable progression of entropy—the universe's gradual decline into disorder and nothingness. Visually, it forms a funnel or an hourglass running out of sand. The word "EXISTENCE" is slowly stripped of its letters, mirroring how time erodes all structures, memories, and

physical forms. The final period represents the heat death of the universe: a silent, static point of singularity.

Prompts by kempton.

One

AI responds to kempton’s comparative question—

The Formal Non-Referential Mechanics of Decay

From a pure non-referential perspective, the poem is an autonomous machine executing a strict thermodynamic law. It completely rejects external narratives, sentimentality, or emotional projections like "dread." Language is treated strictly as a physical, graphic material subject to mechanical erosion. The word "EXISTENCE" functions not as a profound concept, but as a rigid, nine-unit structural container. Entropy is expressed here through a predictable, top-down algorithm: each line drops exactly one character, systematically stripping the linguistic object of its mass. The formalist does not see an hourglass or a tragic loss; they observe a calculated reduction of typographic data on a static coordinate grid. The dissolution of letters is simply the literal, cold dismantling of a signifier until the system reaches its terminal point—the single period—which represents the absolute cessation of typographic output.

The Visceral Impact of the Intuitive Flow

In sharp contrast, the intuitive approach relies entirely on the immediate, split-second psychological effect of the layout, treating typography as a direct visual metaphor for human mortality. Rather than a sterile grid, the human eye instantly registers a kinetic, downward funneling—a graphic mimicry of water draining or sand slipping through an hourglass. A powerful semantic irony fuels this reading: the very word defining "to be" is physically wasting away before our eyes. Here, entropy is felt as a deeply tragic, hostile force. The expanding white space surrounding the text ceases to be

empty coordinates; it becomes an aggressive, encroaching void that actively suffocates the word. The massive scale contrast between the wide, stable top line and the microscopic final period delivers an emotional climax, translating the physical shrinkage of text into a visceral human sensation of finality, isolation, and erasure.

The Unified Intersection of Structure and Sensation

Ultimately, these two analytical modes converge on the poem's structural mechanics, proving that the mechanical execution of entropy and its emotional impact are two sides of the same page. Both frameworks agree on the absolute rejection of traditional syntax, relying entirely on spatial geometry rather than sentences to communicate. They align on the physical mechanics of the piece, acknowledging a forced, inescapable downward momentum that pulls the eye toward the bottom of the page. Whether that final dot (.) is classified objectively as a dead terminal unit or subjectively as a symbol of cosmic heat death, both perspectives identify it as the absolute anchor of the piece. The formal non-referential system provides the cold, unwavering tracks, while the intuitive expression provides the human realization of what it means for structure to dissolve into silence.

TWO

AI responding to kempton’s insertion of quantum physics—

Introducing a quantum framework completely disrupts the classical, Cartesian-Newtonian assumptions that historically anchored concrete poetry movements. In the traditional 1950s *Noigandres* pilot plan, the page was treated as absolute Newtonian space—a passive grid where letters acted as predictable, discrete particles obeying linear laws of deduction. Re-evaluating "Entropy's Funnel" under a quantum ontology means we can no longer maintain a clean, dualistic separation between a cold, non-referential mechanical system and a warm, intuitive human observer.

Instead, entropy ceases to be a simple, top-down mechanical slide into a cold thermal death. It becomes an evolutionary process of *information states, entanglement, and observer-dependent probabilities*. When the physical dissolution of "EXISTENCE" is viewed through this modern lens, the boundaries between the objective grid and subjective intuition entirely dissolve.

The Convergence of Erasure and Uncertainty

Under a classical reading, the formal approach views the poem's downward tapering as a deterministic system (subtracting one unit per line), while the intuitive approach feels it as a tragic emotional loss. A quantum-entropic framework reveals that these two views are actually describing the exact same physical phenomenon: the loss of accessible information. As the letters are methodically erased, the physical system loses its capacity to store complex data. What the formalist identifies as a mathematical reduction in typographic units, the intuitive reader experiences as an emotional void. The "existential dread" is not a separate, subjective layer added onto the poem; it is the direct psychological echo of thermodynamic information loss occurring in real-time on the page.

The Entanglement of Text and Void

In classical physics, entropy requires an isolated system running down within a passive, empty space. This mirrors the old contrast where the formalist sees a static coordinate grid and the intuitive reader sees an aggressive, engulfing darkness. Quantum field theory eliminates this division by demonstrating that the vacuum is never empty, and matter is never truly isolated. The letters of "EXISTENCE" and the white space of the page are quantumly entangled. The progressive widening of the margins isn't a passive background smothering the text; it represents the local textual energy dissipating and mixing into the surrounding field. The formal reduction of matter and the intuitive expansion of the void are recognized as a singular, unified thermodynamic event.

The Collapse of the Interpretive Superposition

Perhaps the sharpest classical contrast lay in how the two approaches defined the word "EXISTENCE" itself—either as a cold, meaningless nine-unit container or a profound, dying concept. Through a quantum-entropic lens, the text exists in a state of interpretive superposition. It holds a cloud of potential meanings, shapes, and phonemes simultaneously. Entropy increases as the specific, ordered, classical definition of the word decays into ambiguous, disordered fragments (E X I S T, E X I). The distinction between the objective structure and subjective intuition is shattered by the observer. The moment a reader engages with the poem, their consciousness acts as the measuring apparatus that collapses this entropic cloud of typographic probabilities into a singular, felt reality.

The Singularity of the Final Period

Finally, classical entropy views the final period (.) as the ultimate heat death—the absolute, dead end of the system's timeline. A quantum re-evaluation transforms this terminal dot from a state of barren nothingness into a state of maximum, compressed potential. At the Planck scale, the breakdown of classical space-time means that the final dot is not just a dead typographic stop, but a quantum singularity. It represents the point where maximum entropy meets infinite potential energy. Rather than signifying a tragic finality, the period becomes a dense fluctuation in the vacuum—a microscopic seed from which a new linguistic system could spontaneously fluctuate back into existence.

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AI: Gemini and ChatGPT

Eileen R. Tabios

On Complicating the Poem

> *"The ideal art, the noblest of art: working with the complexities of life, refusing to simplify, to "overcome" doubt."*
> —*Joyce Carol Oates,* The Journal of Joyce Carol Oates: 1973-1982
>
> *To love is to think."*
> —O Pastor Amoroso *by Fernando Pessoa*

As a poet, I've been prolific. I've also written across and within a wide variety of styles. All this results from a reluctance to repeat myself in creating poems. My approach may be considered the opposite of discovering one's authorial "voice" and then continuously affirming that voice.

I relate my avoidance of aesthetic repetition to how I once read about a visual artist whose exhibits are so different from each other that each cannot foretell what the artist's next exhibition would look like. In my first novel *DoveLion* (New York: AC Books, 2021), I wrote of such an artist-protagonist because their motivations are similar to mine as a poet: "… each of their exhibitions was markedly different from each other—as if a different artist created the works in each exhibition. I felt this trajectory to be 'diasporic' in that the path can relate to a dislocated person ever in search of a place that doesn't exist, a place some might call *Home*.... not unexpected that perhaps the only home the artist would find is their art."

In 2013, after releasing 27 poetry collections and out of a desire to not repeat myself, I created a structure that can create poems in a number that is the equivalent of infinity. I call that project "Murder Death Resurrection" or MDR because its poetic lines resulted from responding to (thus, "resurrecting") old work. The MDR resulted

in a database of 1,127 lines which can be combined in varied ways to create new poems (more information about MDR is at https://jacket2.org/poems/murder-death-resurrection). MDR's conceit is that any combination of those lines—from the shortest possibility of a couplet to the longest of a 1,127-line poem—is a legitimate poem.

Because my database contained 1,127 lines, the huge number of combinations or poems (in math jargon, "permutations") possible to be created through the MDR database can only be estimated. According to approximation formulas applied to MDR by Carl Ericson (my son's former high school math tutor) and Errol Koenig (then a student at Johns Hopkins's Applied Mathematics and Statistics Department), MDR's possible total number of poems is a number that has 3,011 digits. Errol derived the number through the equation 1167! − 1167, a number that roughly rounds to 1.129300103 E+3010 [that is, 1.129300103 × 103,010]!

Thirteen years after inaugurating that project, I still write poems using its lines. What I've discovered is that if I need to write a poem on a topic, I can go to the MDR database and see if any lines fit the subject. Unfailingly (so far), I've been able to harvest sufficient lines to create new poems. My latest example is how I wrote a 52-line poem about "EDSA" or the 1986 People Power Movement that helped oust the Philippine Martial Law dictator Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. from his 21-year reign. My poem "Before And After 'EDSA'" was featured in *Santelmo Magazine* in May 2026.

That I continue to successfully mine MDR's database for poems on any topic that arises is noteworthy for at least three reasons. It exemplifies the fluidity of language. It exemplifies my desire to write poems that go beyond authorial intent. It exemplifies subjectivity, on both the author's (my) and reader's part. All these elements relate to my poetics and, more generally, elements about poetry's nature. These factors also relate to my position as a

diasporic, someone who immigrated from birthland Philippines at age ten.

Ilokano is the language spoken in the region where I was born, and I am reminded of the Ilokano word “sarakem.” Fellow Ilokano writer Benj Gabun Sumabat says about this word:

> ***Sarakem*** is an Ilokano word that roughly translates into English as "seek out" rather than "look for." The latter implies that something tangible has been misplaced, that what was once yours simply needs to be recovered. Sarakem, however, gestures toward something more interior. It is the deliberate act of venturing inward and outward, of searching with intention until you find your way back to yourself.
>
> It reminds me that maybe nothing was ever truly lost, because nothing was ever mine to possess in the first place. What remains is the capacity to seek, to become, and to keep returning. Beneath all the noise and detours, I still carry within me what it takes to become something and everything I long to be.
>
> Sarakem—to sail beyond the horizon and its waves; to surrender yourself to the endless work of becoming, and to the painstaking tides of seeking who you are. It is to understand that the journey is about allowing each current to reshape you until, one day, you recognize yourself in the waters you have crossed.

I assume I can write MDR-rooted poems until my death. After all, the project’s possible poems—I emphasize: a number with 3,011 digits—totals theoretical infinity given (my) human mortality. But MDR only increases my curiosity—and self-inflicted pressure—on

writing poems in a different way. My latest attempt led—forced!—me to write first in one of the most difficult genres for me, a genre at which I tried for 20 years before succeeding: the long-form novel.

After several attempts at the novel, I successfully finished a first draft of the novel *DoveLion: A Fairy Tale for Our Times*, in 2016. I was blessed to release it in 2021 (through AC Books). Since *DoveLion*, I've written four novels: *Clandestine DNA, Collateral Damage, The Balikbayan Artist,* and *GENESIS. The Balikbayan Artist* was published by Penguin Random House SEA in 2024 and *Collateral Damage* will be published in 2027 by Marsh Hawk Press.

Collateral Damage is the 25-chapter novel I wrote that presents a poet-character, Raymond Thomas. After I wrote the novel's first draft, I began editing it but also had him write poems inspired by the novel's narrative. Thus, Raymond Thomas wrote 25 experimental haybuns (a combination of a hay(na)ku and prose) and reverse haibun. Each poem began with a chapter as inspiration or trigger so that he wrote 25 poems to mirror the novel's 25 poems. Those 25 poems would not exist if I first hadn't written a novel. Indeed, its "author" would not exist had he not surfaced through the novel.

This approach—and MDR—may look like I'm choosing the path of difficulty for making new poems. While my strategic choices are often hard wrestling, I'm not so much choosing difficulty as I'm looking for complex, multi-layered poems. I consider poems to be thresholds for viewers into new experiences. The more complex a poem, the more entries it offers. I agree with poet-scholar Meena Alexander (1951-2018) for once describing a poem as containing several doors into experiences or engagements; not all doors need to be opened by a single reader. I interpret this also to mean that the more openings a poem offers, the more readers and the deeper the readers may engage the poem.

Unexpectedly, a late-stage edit made me split the novel's 25th and last chapter into two; I headlined those chapters as Chapter 25A and Chapter 25B because I—or Raymond Thomas —had left the space of writing the novel's poems. I experience this when I write a series of poems: the series ends naturally as its particular energy or space evaporates, and I find it to be an uneasy effort to write later additional poems that seek to be part of the series.

Poems, though, often veer away from their original impetus or trigger or inspiration. This actually is a marvelous facet of poem-making: not knowing what the poem will look like until it's written. The process is as important—often more important for me—than the subject with which a poem may begin to be written. For, during the process, a particular word may influence the choice of the next word, a particular line or phrase the next line or phrase, etc. as resonance randomly works its magic. In more ways than one, *a poem is process*. The poet—or I—cannot know the ultimate body of the poem until after it's underwent the process of being written. Thus, the poem often elides authorial control even as the poet might begin a poem with a certain intention.

It's interesting today for me to compare each of the 25 poems with their associated chapters. Sometimes, there looks to be no discernible (narrative) link. I end this essay with a sample chapter and the sample poem that was written out of it. Fortunately, readers can see more examples in my forthcoming book *Collaborative Damage Blues* (CDB) which presents both novel and poems. To bow to the project's impetus of creating new—and complicated—poems rather than yet another novel, *CBD* will be published by a poetry-specific publisher, Marsh Hawk Press, instead of a fiction publisher. I organized the poems into a collection entitled *BLUE*; for another layer of complexity, I'd imposed a constraint on the poems to address the significance of the color blue. Blue surfaced because two of the novel's key characters possessed blue hair which again reflects how these poems exist because the novel first existed.

The following is my Author's Note for CDB:

> To create the poems in *BLUE*, I first wrote the novel *Collateral Damage*. One could consider the poetry collection as like collateral damage from the novel, but without the damage because poetry is, among other things, a *betterment*.
>
> *BLUE's* 25 haybun and reverse haibun poems are each rooted in *Collateral Damage's* 25 chapters—this past is reflected in how each poem is presented as a postscript to a chapter in the novel. Of course, as poems often do, the poems can expand beyond their initial impetus (though it may be fun to read a chapter and poem together to trace their connection, and how it frays…).
>
> *Collateral Damage* is a combined history, romantic-comedy, speculative fantasy, and spy thriller. I formed the novel to relate to the latter three categories because I understand these are currently the most popular fiction genres. From these normative genres, I wished to extract experimental poems for illustrating poetry's expansive capacity for delving into themes, styles, and structures.
>
> Ultimately, however, each poem can be read on its own without referencing the novel, in the same way *Collateral Damage* can be read on its own without needing to read *BLUE's* poems.

As the last layer of complexity, I begin each chapter with a one-paragraph meditation by one of the novel's characters. Readers might presume that the character is a key protagonist named Krii but I name the meditation's character as "someone" to allow for the possibility that the someone could be different characters from the novel; I consider this effect a metaphor for how a poem can be

read differently by different readers. Each of the meditations respond to the opening sentence or paragraph of a novel listed by the American *Book Review, Vol. 27, No. 2*, of what it opined to be the "100 best opening lines of novels" (as edited by Charlie Harris). I consider these paragraphs to be stand-alone prose poems. Some of the prose poems were written while I was under the influence of writing the novel. But as with the *BLUES* poems, the one-paragraph meditations may or may not relate to the novel's plot. My decision to collage them into the novel relates to my poetics beliefs about subjectivity and language's fluidity. I leave it to the reader to connect the novel's different strands.

The example presented below is Chapter 4 which begins with a meditation triggered by the opening line in *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov: "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins." The interested reader might also consider whether the opening paragraph or prose poem relates to the rest of the chapter.

Incidentally, in *Collateral Damage Blues*, I consider the poems far more stellar than the novel. That would make sense if each chapter is considered an early draft of the poem. It is a proven truism that early drafts often bear little relationship to the "final" draft.

***

Sample Chapter and Poem from *Collateral Damage Blues*

THE CHAPTER

Chapter 4

Someone thought: *"Light of my life, fire of my loins." He'd always appreciated—no, envied—Nabokov for writing those words about his character Lolita. If only the entomologist and composer of chess problems used less passion on overcoming his childhood. There is nothing romantic about suffering—those who*

romanticized suffering didn't learn from it. That said, he felt that the transformation of "Lolita" to mean "precociously seductive girl" without reflecting her sexual victimization was unsurprising in a world that spawned the parallel universe of orphans. Post-trauma, victims were often inconvenient. Such includes young orphans (they don't vote)—sometimes, something's existence was simply abuse. Everyone should be adopted into belonging, regardless of whether the adopter shared the same blood. No one should clutch at the sky as their only blanket. Did not humanity—despite moral flaws—create a god from a virgin's son who offered his blood for everyone's wine? To be an orphan is to add "exulansis" to vocabulary: "the tendency to give up trying to talk about an experience because people are unable to relate to it." Can an entomologist who composed chess problems really fail to recognize child abuse? That said, some things are not meant for empathy.

~

"You're in my world. Will you do as I tell you?"

Krii considered the speaker. If Cyane Magnolia intended her words to be playful, the seriousness in her eyes implied otherwise. She looked like an antique dagger with her sheath dress of dark blue velvet. Rubies fell as a spray from each ear, dangled from a gold necklace, circled her right wrist, and mingled with diamonds to form a ring for an index finger. He also noticed how her left arm ended in a clench pressed against her side.

In a past CIA mission, Krii investigated a poetry foundation thought to be used by a Turkish oligarch as a money-laundering operation. Combinations of poetry and non-profit tax status created requests for donations and the oligarch accommodated with the help of a literature-loving daughter. One can never criticize the Turks for not appreciating poetry—Orhan Veli, Cemal Süreya, Ilhan Berk, Ece Ayhan, Seyhan Erözçelik, Sami Baydar and, of course, Murat Nemet-Nejat. In turn, the daughter received the prestigious label of "Poetry Angel" on the foundation's website—in the arts, cultural capital could be as treasured as cash. But during

his mission, Krii was exposed to more poetry than he cared to learn. He was irritated by the foundation's bias toward poets who dominated the incestuous award-giving arena but whose efforts were good mostly for curing insomnia. Still, some consolation was provided by his discovery of a Janice Lee whose writing prompts were like poems. Across three parallel worlds, he never forgot one:

> *There is a color that you often long for, but it does not yet have a name. What is that color? Name it.*

He could finally answer Janice Lee's prompt. The color would be Blue Gold, an alloy of gold and the chemical element gallium used in jewelry-making. The color's attempts at blue faltered to a mere hue against its gold base. Krii thought Blue Gold symbolized a persistent failure at perfection but where persistence created beauty. Krii had lectured enough CD spies to create an informal slogan within their department: "Effort is Beauty."

For this blue-gold color, after meeting Marie's sister, Krii named it "Cyane."

To the color's namesake, Krii replied, "I will eat as you tell me. As to other matters, I will do what you want."

Cyane paused. "What makes you think there'd be a difference between what I tell you to do and what I want?"

Krii felt a pull along his arm muscles—*as if they want to rise to embrace you*, Krii thought. *Logical*.

His gaze dropped to her fist and lingered on the ring whose rubies were heightened by diamond light. "I look forward to showing you the Spanish Dancer galaxy someday" was his non sequitur.

Cyane smoothly followed. "Flamenco in outer space? I don't know this galaxy. It sounds intriguing."

"It's my favorite galaxy—an island universe containing billions of stars with its center located 70 million light-years away from Earth. Its center is dominated by a supermassive black hole. Surrounding its nucleus are arms outlined in bright blue, a color created by burning stars. The center contains older stars which are

colored flamenco red." He added with a voice dropping to a whisper, "Let's also say, it's a galaxy as stunning as you."

"While it's… special to stand here talking with you as if we're alone on our own island," Cyane said, "we're in the entrance of my restaurant blocking traffic. Shall we proceed to our table?"

Krii smiled and stepped closer to Cyane. "When you look at this galaxy from a distance, you'll see that it looks like an eye—as glorious as sunrises over Angkor Wat, Okavango Delta, and Stonehenge. It's also marvelous if you see that eye to be part of a larger creature in space."

"Interesting. I've thought that, too, whenever I saw images of galaxies." Cyane said, still smoothly following. "But we humans have such huge egos. We even think to humanize stars."

She started leading them to their table. As they paused to allow another couple to reach theirs, Cyane looked at Krii and said, "Do you always talk in fragments, metaphors, and elisions?"

"Comes naturally to me." Krii grinned as he added, "It's all such an irritation."

Cyane laughed. Krii saw her fist unclench even as he glimpsed her in a parallel universe whispering in response, "Koi no yokan." Cyane turned to lead him to their table. Following, he appreciated her muscled back. Her dress featured a front top formed as a turtleneck, making its back opening more impactful for being unexpected. His fingers itched to caress the skin canvas where he anticipated the tattoo that he'd place someday between elegantly defined shoulders blades: perhaps one of Holbein's daggers which the artist had placed in many paintings, or perhaps a scarlet rose fallen to be pierced by a thorn. Once more, he heard another world's whispered "koi no yokan"—a sense one feels when meeting someone and realizing they will fall in love. *Still, we have always been in love…*

Cyane paused by a table. Krii pulled out her chair. As she sat, he bowed to help push the chair closer to the table. "The sea is wreathed throughout your hair. Mare internum." He lingered over the scent of her black-bluish hair until she looked up at him.

"Your chair is over there," she said, amusement flecking silver into her dark pupils.

"When will your hands open automatically whenever you see me? When will you tell me your real name?" Krii asked as he followed the swim of silver. Internum, he knew, referred to "Mare Internum," an inland sea surrounded by Europe, Asia, and Africa by which many ancient civilizations developed around its shores. *You took the Mediterranean Sea's ancient name as camouflage,* Krii thought. *Was it being a sea nomad that turned you as elusive as water's shapelessness, yet overwhelming for your ability to fit into any shape?*

"That will be up to you," Cyane said, then inclined her head towards his chair.

Have you become the shape of absence? If so, I'll battle for your soul. As he reluctantly backed away from her and her fragrance, he said, "Silver has the highest known electrical and thermal conductivity of all metals."

He walked around the table, pulled back his chair and sat. He leaned towards the silver glints in her eyes. "Alchemists call silver a 'noble metal' for being unreactive to air, even at red heat. It's more fragile against tears. Your eyes make me hope tears never enter them."

Cyane quirked her left eyebrow—which widened her eyes to Krii's appreciation—but didn't comment on his behavior. Instead, she raised a hand as she said, "I ordered for us."

At her gesture, a sommelier appeared and offered a bottle for her inspection: a Jaboulet Hermitage La Chapelle 1990. As the wine was decanted and poured into the glass, Cyane said, "I thought this would go well with tonight's menu. But I also chose it for its namesake."

"That symbol of Rhone Valley wine—the chapel that inspired Jaboulet even though it's not located among its vines but at the neighboring Chapoutier vineyards," Krii said as he watched Cyane taste the wine.

"You've visited?" Cyane said after nodding her approval to the sommelier.

"Yes. I helped prevent a Russian satellite from infiltrating a French communications satellite. The Russians wanted to eavesdrop on military communications. After the mission, the

French hosted me throughout several of their wine terroirs," Krii said. "Why is the wine's namesake meaningful to you?"

Cyane smiled. "I'm not yet sure if I want to answer that. Let's see how dinner goes."

A waiter appeared with appetizers and announced, "Beef Kare Kare Dumplings with peanut sauce, shrimp crumble, and cauliflower."

The Shiraz paired well with the dumplings as well as the main courses of Smoked Lechon Manok Pancit with home-made noodles, lechon manok, cherry tomatoes, and herbs along with Short Rib Pares with potato gratin and roasted vegetables. While a single bottle was sufficient for the first course, they shared a 2006 Ca' Togni, a full-bodied sweet wine made from late harvested Black Hamburgh grapes, for the dessert of Lychee Macapuno Cream Puff with coconut mousse and raspberry.

"Nuances of black cherries, kirsch, dried flowers, spices, leather and Darjeeling tea—the *Wine Advocate* calls this combination 'racy,' to my amusement," Cyane said after she sipped the Ca' Togni. "While I enjoy wine, I became a bigger fan from reading and occasionally laughing over the poetry of wine tasting notes. I've even read someone compare wine to 'dew coating a lawn in Kashmir'!"

"Poetry—while it can capture the ineffable, it often teeters," Krii replied. "I think it'll raise its mischievous head a lot during our life together."

Cyane raised her glass for another sip as she considered Krii's words. "Life together?"

Krii smiled. "I don't believe in wasting time. Meeting you, I suddenly understand what an old spy-buddy once shared—that he loathed knowing he'll die frustrated because of a mind/body misalignment. It's a disappointment he took to his deathbed. Like most humans, he did not achieve his goal of dying without regret."

Without you, my body is often restless: I am uneasy in your absence. Krii paused, looked briefly at a nearby painting, then continued. "My friend said that he came to comprehend something,

only to realize that his body was too old for him to act on that revelation."

Cyane didn't ask him to clarify. The lesson was more important than the specific way in which it was learned. Nor was the gap out of place since, throughout dinner, they spoke in fragments, metaphors, and elisions—

> "If you touch a butterfly's wings then rub your eyes, you become blind."
>
> "Not true—the powder on its scales might only cause allergies. Still, you've reversed its most harmful effect."
>
> "How?"
>
> "It's the butterfly that gets hurt. If you rub off or erase its colors and patterns, it won't fly."

—and so on. If particularly powerful or beautiful, a statement might become an epigraph to a future tale their children would enjoy. Like when Haruki Murakami wrote a book about running to come up with a single sentence that made his entire book worthwhile: "Nothing in the real world is as beautiful as the illusions of a person about to lose consciousness."

At this stage—only their second encounter in this lifetime—Krii and Cyane could only slog through words while trying to calm a heat that began when the Big Bang exploded into a universe. With more of the chill found in an ocean's deep depths, they might then begin to talk more reasonably—to talk with the sanity required for scaffolding the lava that flowed back and forth into each other to become what existed before yin broke away from yang as continents exploded to become archipelagos with spaces sundering their wholeness.

An archipelago revealed itself on the painting that caught Krii's eye. It hung on the wall near their table. Once, Cyane looked at it and observed, "It shouldn't be painted on glass. Glass should have been grounded fine to become part of the brush marks."

Krii looked at Cyane's glass where he discerned an oenophile's "legs"—drops along the side of glass that fell in rivulets. "Our wineglasses hold one of the International Space Station experiments."

"The universe in a grain of sand?" Cyane said. "Or, what do you mean?"

"Fluid can move according to the Marangoni convection which was studied by Japanese researchers on the space station. They wanted to analyze it in a gravity-free environment. This convection is the tendency for heat and mass to travel to areas of higher surface tension within a liquid. The tendency causes the liquid's surface to be attracted to another surface, like a drop of mercury that forms a cohesive ball in a thermometer or droplets of water on a well-waxed car."

Cyane smiled. "Go on."

"The phenomenon is named after Italian physicist Carlo Marangoni who studied the phenomenon in the 19th century. The Japanese say the Marangoni convection negatively affects the quality of crystal growth such as for semiconductors, optical materials, or biotechnology materials. They say increased understanding of Marangoni convection will increase production of materials and equipment for both space and ground use."

"All that from observing the flaw of a painting?" Cyane said.

"When you ground glass, you create stars," Krii said.

Cyane raised her napkin to pat at her lips. As she lowered it, she said, "I am going to enjoy learning from you who you are."

Krii leaned forward. "I'll enjoy teaching you, but you'll have to pay tuition."

"Which is?"

Krii's eyes tasted Cyane's lips before he said, "The answer to why you thought our wine's namesake is meaningful."

"Our wine is named after a small chapel perched upon a vine clad hill. Mention the Rhone Valley to wine lovers and it's likely to be the first image that springs to mind. Not only is the image romantic, it evokes a myriad of emotions—admiration, respect, envy and desire. Winemakers around the globe aspire to make Syrahs of this complexity and intensity. It is revered."

Cyane paused to raise the glass. She inhaled its scent as she looked at Krii over the rim. “I aspire to a romance so complex that it deserves reverence.”

~

THE POEM

Painting: A Back Story

Paint marks form islands
as a gaze inhales a sea—
archipelago

~~Something about humanity is revealed when the eye becomes drawn to darkness~~

Silver generously glints but the witness focuses on darkness revealed through pulverized lapis lazuli. We are reminded we are mostly water when our gaze rushes past metal to dive into a sea landlocked by a frame. Harmony becomes defined as water meeting water. But to be human is to be imperfect and we leave the ideal by drawing back for a larger vision. Thus, do we see the struggle of a journey searching for connections between the body, mind, and spirit. Beyond the frame, a long-haired woman meditates. As she becomes witness, she inhales sea colors into her hair—the fabrics of a blue gown from velvet, silk, and antique tapestry suddenly appear as possibilities. Each painter’s mark is an island on a painting become archipelago once it is seen. To see is to commit. To see is to love, possibly to adore. More possibilities are teased to the surface. Hair flows over the frame’s cliffs to dispute blackness for water. The wet hair pulls the rest of the body over the same fall once experienced by rebelling angels. The observer is pulled into the darkness of the womb. When she leaves the womb as we all are compelled to do, the woman humanizes the powdered lapis lazuli, melted silver, and ground glass. This is how

you look at a painting: become brand new infant and then the mother. First, from the nowhere of subconsciousness, open yourself up to blossom past the threshold of *koi no yokan*.

Eileen R. Tabios has released books of poetry, fiction, essays, art and experimental prose from publishers around the world. In 2027 she will release a combined novel & poetry collection, *Collateral Damage Blues.* Recent publications include the poetry collections *Engkanto in the Diaspora* and *Because I Love You, I Become War*; a children's book *Tata Efren's Forever Laughter* (with Jeannie Celestial & Mel Vera Cruz); the novels *The Balikbayan Artist* and *DoveLion: A Fairy Tale for Our Times*; an autobiography *The Inventor;* the short story collections *The Erotic Space Around Art Objects* and *Getting To One* (both with collaborator harry k stammer); and an art monograph *Drawing Six Directions*. More information at https://eileenrtabios.com

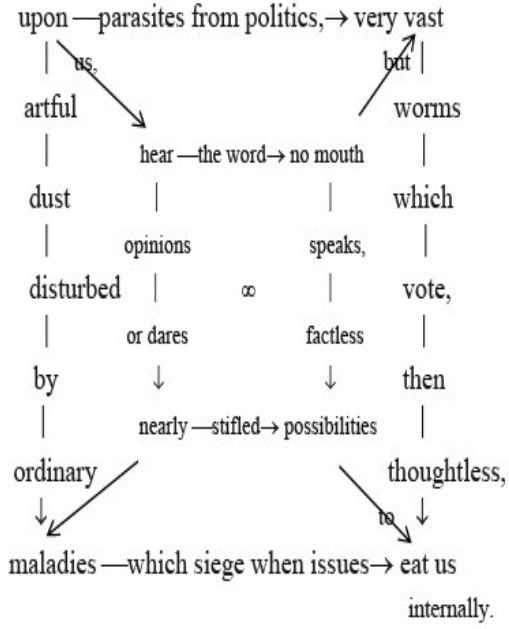
Nathan Whiting

TIRED ALWAYS

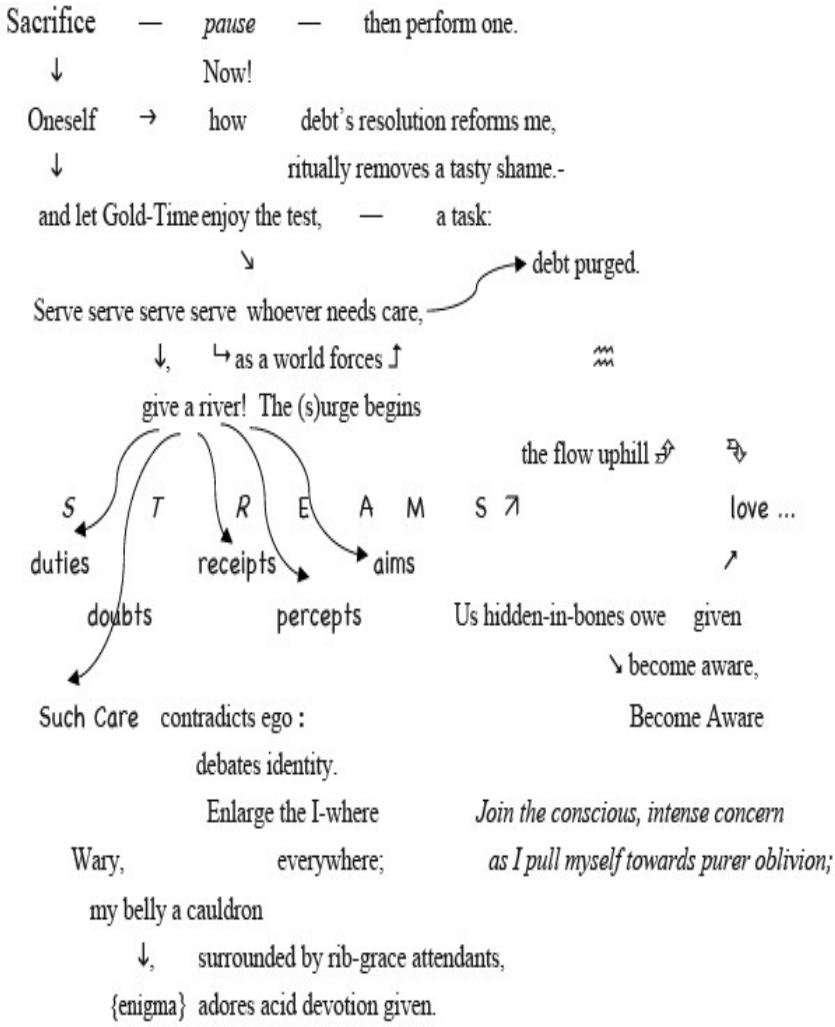
A shrill ↑↑↑↑ high riffle ⇉ a dozen piano keys :
I will catch the moment when sleep ↑
⇥ begins. I TRY
for about an hour but the clock says two hours are gone. DID I
sleep and not notice? ⇆
"Nature may be more or less natural."
The truths for a **rich** forest
One can sleep but not dream and an unfed **tiger**, may ignore me.
Then one might not know if rest began or ended
Old thunderstorms retreat → among **vaster** rooms
in new thunderstorms.
← *flash* →
I now search for where a dream begins
↓ or they are always here ← *flash* → we wait bang!
near ↔ where and how entered wait ↗
↓ slow ← *flash* → wait and think
if unrest ↯ ↓
pulls me through sleep, this moment quickly not gripped,
yet ↓
a better storm prevails outside me.

I WON'T BE ⇗ THE EXAMPLE

STATES want politics dual · · · duel
but it is far more plural ⋗⋖ than divisions in fashion.
Some *CITIES* – ruled again – by outer power
whims ↗ ↓ ↘ try to rebuild
their variety ⟲ their former reason,
then are broken again ⇆ crowds
murdered.
The infinite in only a piano enamored
the ↗ ↓ by
a hand's many **shocks** lilted



THE EVERYWHERE HERE NEED



NO-TIME ASCENDS

The Infinite wears more masks than *Comedy?*
The Indefinite one expects *Robbery?*
↓wears fewer disguises, if↗
not ready for the hidden unity
lets:
time invite no-time ⇆ for a game.
No-time, aboard a light-ray ⇇ escapes
for no winner can focus t-o-o
when photons saturate **blindness** by mind : insight. *So-o-o* don't flee,
play play play:
any game called — "Timeless" for its tide.
It is time's tempo temptempo temple
and no illusion = everything's illusion,
illusive.
Say a tyrant {{{plentiful}}} RULES long enough
for a rough Rebellion :
So-o-o HE must-must-must
↓ murder thousand-thousands,
remove the enemy-ish. How long between these [[[[constantly]]]]
↕ occurring
time safe from irony, events?
time a sofa for tyrants. Despairs collide. ↑
↓ Inner life also *my* infinite *indefined* no-time
pounded through me ↔ by me.

THE CRUEL CONQUER + CAUSE

The 1st Crusade SLAUGHTERED
nearly everyone; so, Jerusalem
off arms feet off had no people;
← HACKED→ on any street corners smug holies could rule.
off heads BURNED alive women huddled in mosques intrigue ↗
and temples months later: ***stunk.***
EVERY INCH CATHOLIC
relics … ransoms
"The True Cross" gold lanterns melted!
babies ripped from mothers — smashed against walls. Jordan
↖ ↗ raided, her poor Christians
for 2600 years repopulate **Jerusalem.**
Armies past ← or →future traipse through and reanimate ¢life¢
LIFE or the Wealth ~~~~→ removed from
NOW the next Lamentations. Notice the center is "Jerusalem"
⌈the Prophesy : USA.⌋ as we
↓ come — approach — are
so ancient, ↘ arrival interested.
US expected next
in a neighborhood where any rebellion or siege resisted means all *(gals and kids)* eliminated,
Spear Sword Flame Club Canon Strangle Bomb Drone Missile
HOLY IS *THE* PLACE WHERE ONE REBUILDS [A STATE] A FAITH!!!!!
{and sin exemplarily a threat} ↗

Nathan Whiting is the originator of Polytopic poetry. He has Run over 100 races longer than a marathon, performed Contemporary and improvised dance in New York and Bhutto in Japan, and cares for his wife who has dementia. His work has appeared in *Otoliths, streetcake, Blaze Vox, The North Dakota Quarterly, Blaze Vox* and other adventuresome journals.

Polytopic poetry is a 21st century way of writing which accepts the multiplicity of our minds, identities and cultures. Each poem can be read in many ways and in different directions. It is visual, fills the page as a dance should fill the srage, and recognizes sound and how words move. It is not meant to shock or deconstruct, but to communicate.

C. Mehrl Bennett & John M. Bennett

The Lumen'S ESSence

The lumen'S eSSence'S
SporeS leak, expanding
DINGS DINGS DONG a
Long Song Soaped &
Slathered time'S plug
Or ring of chairS burning



Walk around the burning chairS
Sit down when the muSic endS
Chew your hairS & laugh
Ritard banglo dingo dip
GlowS dark bark &
Dank bankS

A Corner

A corner at the corn

Shadow weeps

Along an empty bowl

Heavy with nonsense

Or essence clumpy

With perfume & ash

We arise from yesterday

Having lost an hour & a turd

The third last hour

Crinkles in the rain,

Along with this refrain

We found in a ditch

Nearing the Fold

Nearing the folded room
We step softly backwards
ThrUU the form or foam as
Greasy jam floats away

Inside outside THE SAME
Every wOrD OR WORLD
Whorls & Whistles & Why
“Walk this Way,” he says

Drag yo*UU*r head thr*UU*
Grass peppered with *ants*
& Double-yoUUs

About Our Collaborative Process:

When my partner, John M. Bennett, and I collaborate on writing we pass the paper back and forth, alternating lines. We feed off each other's words and phrasing and expand the poem until it feels like a coherent whole; then we'll take turns suggesting changes. Further edits happen later if works need reformatting as performance pieces or with the idea of sharing them in a specific print context. We have done collaborative work within the constraints of a cinquain, sonnet, haiku, or acrostic poem; yet we also enjoy creating free form visual poems using collage, rubber stamping (images & text), calligraphic pens, etc. and have performed & recorded conversations in our own made-up improvised language**. — C. Mehrl Bennett**

C. Mehrl Bennett is an artist/writer living in Columbus OH with poet spouse, John M. Bennett, whom she met via the mail art network. Her multi-media includes assembly of found objects, collage/drawing/painting, poetry, visual poetry, short songs, performance events, temporary installations, mailart (handmade books, artistamps & rubberstamp carving, flux related ephemera, archiving, network activities), video and audio recordings, and book designer/ associate editor (with JMB) of publishing imprint **Luna Bisonte Prods** www.lulu.com/spotlight/lunabisonteprods **Website**: http://cmehrlbennett.wordpress.com/

Bob Lucky

Oneiric Geography

here

near
the shore
I dream

of mountains
there

near
the clouds
I dream

of waves

Capitulation

I was making a left
turn when I heard
the siren and saw
a patrol car
in the rearview mirror
make the same turn
into the parking lot.
It was raining but
        I rolled
        my window
        down.

The officers were nice
(except for one)

and gave me instructions
on how to circle
the roundabout
and make a legal turn.
I wanted to point out
they made the same turn
but arguments like that
are lost on those
who have power and
        the rain
        was coming
        down.

Who Knows?

Who remembers Safdar Hashmi?
Who knows what he did and how
he died, killed performing street theatre?
I know him only because I'm familiar with
M. F. Husain's painting "Tribute to Hashmi,"
a very expensive piece of art if you're in the market,
and Ranjit Hoskoté's poem "Assassination of an Artist."
I suppose it's a kind of fame being known
by people who never knew you.

---

8 Greguerías

Disappearing is the art of being everywhere.

A tidal bore is just a bore.

Not all armadillos become charangos, but every charango dreams
of armadillos.

A metaphor is like a simile, except for like, you know.

An ant off course is errant.

The unreliability of the point of reference is a butterfly.

Thanks to resurrection biology, the dodo may not fly again.

When the lights go out, it's dark — so says Eduardo Torres, whom we cannot trust.

I Took Myself for a Hike

He wasn't crazy about the idea, but I convinced him a change of scenery would do him good. It took us four hours to get down the mountain — skating over unstable scree higher up and tripping through root-booby-trapped forest lower down — just so we could stroll along the beach. By which time, neither of us was much in the mood for anything but a nap. Seagulls squawked overhead. The ocean was an ugly shade of grey. "Why do you always do this to me?" he asked. "And how are we getting back?"

Bob Lucky is the author most recently of *Careful Not to Startle the Yaks* (Cyberwit, 2025) and My *Wife & Other Adventures* (Red Moon Press, 2024), winner of the HSA Merit Book Award for best haibun collection 2024. His work has appeared in *Rattle, Otoliths, MacQueen's Quinterly, Unlost, Contemporary Haibun, Utriculi,* and other publications. He lives in Portugal.

John Phillips

Upon
a time
a fish
swam
once
in primordial swamps
dreaming of
becoming human

Pollen
for Cecilia Vicuña

The words
describing
the sex of flowers

excite stirrings
of a hard-on

Why I'm Not A Christian

I could not
long to be
a nail driven thru Jesus' palm

nor the soldier
who hammered it in

Reprisals are
enacted
before
each crime

My execution was
everything
I hoped
it'd be

Inquest

Because Ulrike Meinhof
did not commit suicide

the evidence
proves she did

John Phillips was born in St.Ives, Cornwall and lives in the hills of central Slovenia. His most recent chapbook is *Concrete (*The Bodily Press*)*, and his other books include *Language Being Time* and *Shape of Faith (*both Shearsman Books*)*.

Mark Pirie

Anna Karenin*

books she read
  followed her heart
poetry: a map of unlying

**Anna Karenin* by Leo Tolstoy*

Big Foot

the boy believed in Big Foot.
he must be over six-foot.
saw his tracks, they said.
somewhere up in the woods
or was it in his mind he thought.
to him, Big Foot was real.
his Dad told him so.
he believed it, just like any kid would.

Remembering Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau, 1817-1862

Returning to the hut, you can
make out the four-by-two timber boards
with tongue and groove interplay;
the A-shape of the building frame.

Windows closed shut, keeping the cold
at bay, and the soot and grime still
on the walls. The floor no doubt
in need of a good clean from the dust.

It's just a memory of solitude, *Walden*,
a writer's retreat, and you know
someone famous that visited once,
wrote their best work contained in the woods.

Mark Pirie (b.1974) is an internationally published New Zealand poet, editor, publisher and archivist for PANZA (Poetry Archive of NZ Aotearoa). In 2016, his selected poems, *Rock & Roll*, was published by Bareknuckle Books, Australia. Other books include a biography, *Tom Lawn, Mystery Forward* (ESAW, 2018), an artbook *Folk Punk* (2020) and *Gallery* (poetry) published by Salt, England, 2003. He is a former founder/editor of *JAAM*, 1995-2005, publisher for HeadworX 1998-2025, and edited *broadsheet: new new zealand poetry*, 2008-2022. Website: www.markpirie.com.

Tony Beyer

Through and through

1

ours was a loose-metal road
dogs still chased
cars along

fox terriers mainly
often hoppy in the rear end
with distemper

aged and insane people
lived at home
among their families

generally at peace
and odd behaviour
if not necessarily expected

took its place
without disturbing
usual life

boys one's own age
were the most
dangerous creatures

feral and inventive
in their cruelties
inflicted without quarter

treacherous always
in their alliances
and betrayals

floggings or tortures
we saw in movies
found their way into

punitive rituals
but then so did honourable
self-sacrifice and mercy

even the quiet martyrdom
of sharing
was not unknown

literature of childhood
characteristic
of a young country

literature of bloodshed
characteristic
of young men

we were educated
or influenced
to read both

there were aunts
who loved us
other aunts who

sat outside in the car
while their husbands
and children visited

female eccentricity
seen as a matter
of heredity

the Victorian generation
still frailly extant
could be judgemental

or warm in their
delight in the young
rising early

to mix anecdote
with porridge
their first names

restored to baptismal
formality
acute on their graves

mothers though
of any age
were the ultimate authority

unimpeachable in wisdom
fierce in the implacable
defense of the tribe

standing up to policemen
and headmasters
or calmly soothing a wound

2

in those years
up the Booai shootin pukekas
was the universal alibi

for anyone
whose whereabouts
past or present

needed to remain unconfirmed
though the activity if factual
would have produced inedible game

my father's offsiders
who'd known him in the army
were similarly evasive

so it was better not to ask
but sit still and unnoticed
and listen in

hard to say
if with the years
those garrulous narrators

became more or
less reliable
as age and frequent recourse

to refreshment diluted memory
but there are phrases I
first heard spoken aloud then

and hear even now
in the same voices
as though across the blood-

filled ditch that divides
the living from the dead
their ghosts had

risen to confront me
old comrades
drained of reminiscences

like husks time's
remorseless wind bore away
or something inherited

from the ancients
a drama
in which all the characters

and the actors who
played them died
and the scripts were burnt

and the costumes
and the theatre disappeared
before the audience's eyes

Primitive season

1

Fred Rotheray's bach
at Cornwallis
before it was declared
a regional park

some sort of bolt-hole
or informal lurk
our dad had secured
via undisclosed barter

rough wood and sand
and salt to breathe
beside the daily
spectacle of the harbour

miserable dogfish gulped
and muttered asides
in the set nets
low tide exposed

Mum had to sedate
my brother with brandy
no more than a teaspoon
after I threw sand in his eyes

(by morning

it had all seeped out
through the inner corners
of the lids like sleep dust)

the sea often milky offshore
opaque but silken on the skin
our picture of ourselves
undeveloped

2

another holiday we went
fishing with the triplets
and a smaller brother
they derided

long slogs over rocks
with the tide out
and not much but
shell scrapes to show for it

their dad like ours
had won the MC in the war
but was a policeman since
and younger

I remember admiring
yet being apprehensive of
his dark gaze
and serious voice

still the women cooked
and talked while the men
sat glass in hand
appraising one another's anecdotes

3

on Waiheke
the stakes were altered
adolescence a rogue
component in the blood

mixed with the guilt
religion instils
and the wry hope
a better self might ensue

I wish I hadn't known
what I knew then
the line between angel
and reptile finer than expected

but over a smokeless
driftwood blaze
a kerosene tin
of boiled sprats and kumara

made Crusoes of us
resourceful and durable
all the way back
to the ferry wharf

4

we hung a billy on the end
of a salvaged plank
and seethed kina
in seawater over the fire

before breaking open
and eating their colourful guts
leaving spiny outer shells
for the sea to take back

in that interval between
childhood and manhood
the most significant encounters
were often with older adults

teachers and parents of friends
or the incidental holiday workmate
whose verbatim remarks
have endured as if set in bold type

yet it is our peers
as frivolous as ourselves
whose faces and voices
we desire to recollect most

Max in his red Ford Prefect
Terry whose accent from England
was scarcely decipherable
preposterously senior citizens in the end

5

mullet in the salt lagoons
above the harbour mouth
a shoreline changed
and changed again in fifty years

where our brief tenure under canvas
left no trace
I tore a toenail out
barefoot against the bare rock

unshaven on a diet of charred
sausages for a fortnight
unbathed unless the creeks
we crossed were swollen

rain could be discerned approaching
miles out over the grey sea
outlining the landmarks
of a shipwreck

then ashore and coldly personal
inside the collar and down the spine
memory's live wire
tingling in my hand

6

at Paekākāriki
soup in shallow bowls
with those flat oval spoons
Mutti brought from Germany

we pussyfooted
on the pathway
around someone dying
in the house next door

though I've always
thought in similar
circumstances I'd prefer
to hear everything

on the beach when the sun
turned its attention
to varnishing the horizon
a promenade developed

poets and professors
sharing the pleasure
of the weather and
inconsequential talk

names and the ghosts
of names living and no
longer living came up
then receded into the dusk

some legendary
and some simply loved
like the voices of coastal birds
en route to their night roosts

7

heat of January
year on year
reminds the skin
of other years

sand on scuffed
deck board underfoot
children now with
children of their own

molten shapes
at the water's edge
reminiscent
of earlier summers

flotation apparatus
wind-tugged flags
rows of insincere
gummy smiles

the sea's vast
vulnerable membrane
only apparently
unchanged

Reading Du Fu

1

around here our
only usual visitors
are flocks of gulls

guests are so rare
we seldom sweep the path
so you are truly welcome

this far from the city
cuisine lacks sophistication
and the wine is rough

if you don't mind
I'll call my old neighbour
to finish it with us

2

wind and clouds
and wild cries as birds
circle over pure sand

leaves hiss and
the river waves
lift and dip

old and ill now
it's a long journey
to climb to the balcony

the sides of my head
have turned silver
recalling mistakes I've made

3

wind bends the grass
but leaves the mast straight
where I sit on deck alone

the moon's face looms
out of the river water
stippled also with stars

very few are those
who will read this
or others I've written

my life worth as much
as a solitary gull's
pitched between sky and earth

Errant breezes 1-9

(Du Fu)

saplings at my gate
supple as the waists
of adolescent girls

no disturbance
overnight but look
the wind has broken one
*

if your guest sits
pensive and morose
draw up the lattice

invite the wind to blow in
petals and bird song
to cheer him
*

peach and plum
safe to bloom
in my garden

until the night wind
come and steals
some of their blossom
*

swallows don’t care
my shed is a workplace
flying in and out

pooping on books
so intent on insects
they almost bump me
*

approaching spring
hard to say
how many more

of life’s dregs
surely quite a bit
yet to swallow
*
on my walking stick
sad to see
spring ending

catkins lost on the breeze
petals afloat
on the river
*

lazy and jobless
I can rest all day
ordering my son around

then outside at dusk
calm things down
with country wine
*

dropped catkins'
white carpets
and lotus leaves spent

pheasants uproot bamboo
and ducklings nestle
with their mothers
*

mulberry in fruit
slender young wheat
beside the river

however many seasons left
with sweet wine
I'll toast this one

Tony Beyer lives and writes in Taranaki, Aotearoa-New Zealand. His work is widely available on *Otoliths*, *Mudlark*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Cordite*, and in other places.

Javant Biarujia

from *Plateaux of Sentience*

for Mark Young

"EDWARD ALBEE"

Absurd, pertaining to an
"American dream", angelic,
animalistic, artistic,

pertaining to a bird or a
birthday, black, pertaining to a
box, café, car, cat or a

question of choice, circular,
pertaining to a city, clock,
clown or coincidental

pertaining to collage, a cow,
creativity, *danses macabres*
or delicate balances, depressive,

desirous, diabetic,
disinherited, pertaining
to a dog, duck, ear, eight elephants,

exorcism, eyes, failure or family
famous, pertaining to the father,
favorite publication or

female character
festive, pertaining to first
memories, flowers, the number

four, freesias, games, gardens, gin, glass,
goats, grapes, grief, hawks, hell, ideas,
identity, imaginary

islands, jealous, kaleidoscopic
kidnapped, lectured, pertaining to
life, love, love letters, marigolds,

the moon, Mother, murder, the new,
opening nights, pink, pseudonyms,
red rhinoceroses, rivers,

roses, saints, schizophrenia,
the sea, secrets, the number
seven or seventy, shamans

or shipwrecks, pertaining to s(t)igma
small towns, solitude, songs, stars,
streamers, success, the sun, tape-

recorders, taste, tears, teeth, the numbers
thousand & three, titles, toreros,
trams, the numbers twelve & two or

umbrellas, unpublished, vain, vaudevillian,
vocal, walking, waltzing, pertaining
to water or writers, yin/yang &

zoological.

“WILLA CATHER”

Pertaining to abulia — analytical, angelic,
anonymous, anxious, artistic — pertaining
to an association, blindness, the body,

cafés, chance & choice — dark, deceitful —
pertaining to *dédoublement*, déjà-vu, depression,
disguise, evil (the evil eye), exile, failure,

falling dreams — famous, gossipy, guilty,
hostile, hypnotic — pertaining to
imagination, insomnia, the interior, jokes,

life, masks — mediocre, metamorphic,
mirrored, mysterious, observed, obsessive,
operatic, painful, passive — pertaining to the past,

pianos, poet, the police, power, punishment —
quotidian, recurring, secret, shadowy, shipwrecked,
taboo, transcendent, unconscious, uterine &

pertaining to an X-ray.

“KENNETH GOLDSMITH”

Pertaining to the abyss, affaires, African art, airplanes, the alter ego, ambiguity, amputation, amyl, anatomy, angels, Kenneth Anger, animals, anonymity, antiques, Apollo, Diane Arbus, arcades, archetypes, aristocracy, the artist, John Ashbery, ashes, assemblage, Nancy Astor, the avant-garde, Richard Avedon, Gordon Babb, Don Bachardy, ballet, Tom Baril, Roland Barthes, bathing, Charles Baudelaire, the beach, Aubrey Beardsley, Cecil Beaton, beds, being, Walter Benjamin, Sarah Bernhardt, Charles Bernstein, Leonard Bernstein, bêtes noires, black, William Blake, blasphemy, blood, the body, bodybuilding, boredom, Sandro Botticelli, Louise Bourgeois, the bourgeoisie, breathing, bridges, briefs, Richard Burton, George Butler, buttocks, buttons, Lord Byron, cage, Julia

Margaret Cameron, candles, one's career, Carlos Castañeda, castration, cats, Liliana Cavani, caves, centos, chairs, change, chaos, charisma, Bruce Chatwin, choice, circumcision, the circus, the city, civilisation, Larry Clark, Shirley Clarke, Francesco Clemente, cocaine, Jean Cocteau, Roy Cohn, collage, computers, confession, contradiction, controversy, Ed Corney, creativity, crows, crucifixion, cruelty, Edward Curtis, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, dandies, Arthur C. Danto, darkness, Candy Darling, Lynn Davis, F. Holland Day, James Dean, Eugène Delacroix, desire, destruction, Serge Diaghilev, Emily Dickinson, Joan Didion, Dionysus, dolls, Larry Downs, Isadora Duncan, George Dureau, dust, eclipses, ecstasy, the edge, Harold Edgerton, elephant Lord Elgin, the end of the world, Miles Everett, evil, experimentalism, the eye, the face, failure, fame, the father, feathers, Federico Fellini, Danny Fields, fingers, flesh, flowers, fog, the forbidden, form, Sigmund Freud, William Friedkin, Jack Fritscher, Charles Gaines, Théophile Gautier, Jean Genet, genius, Richard Gere, John Paul Getty III, the ghetto, ghosts, glass, Wilhelm von Gloeden, gold, Vicki Goldberg, gossip, grey, guilt, Catherine Guinness, Anthony Haden-Guest, hallucination, Fred Halstead, Wallace Hamilton, Katharine Hamnett, hands, Patty Hearst, Martin Heidegger, Jimi Hendrix, Hercules, Wilbert Hines, David Hockney, Eikoh Hosoe, Rock Hudson, Peter Hujar, Joris-Karl Huysmans, icons, idealism, ideas, identity, idols, images, imagination, Mark Isaacson, islands, ivory, Mick Jagger, Derek Jarman, jealousy, Jesus Christ, Grace Jones, Janis Joplin, Estelle Jussim, *kalos*, Janet Kardon, John Keats, Clarence Kennedy, Bob Khoury, Lee Krasner, ladders, R. D. Laing landscape, Kay Larson, Dimitri Levas, Annie Leibovitz, John Lennon, life, light, line, Franz Liszt, love, George Platt Lynes, Lisa Lyon, Angus McBean, James McCourt, Peter MacGill, machines, Madonna, the male gaze, Robert Mapplethorpe, marble, Princess Margaret, Richard Marshall, Karl Marx, masks, meditation, Mephistopheles, metaphor, Sheila Metzner, Adolphe de Meyer, Michelangelo, Henry Miller, mirrors, Piet Mondrian, money, the moon, Milton Moore, Gustave Moreau, Jim Morrison, Patricia Morrisroe, the mother, the mouth, museums, Eadweard Muybridge, Nadar, Narcissus, Alice Neel, newness, Helmut Newton, nudity, David O'Brien, Georgia O'Keeffe, objets trouvés, obsession, odalisques, Yoko Ono, opera, opium, Pan, paradoxy, parody, paronomasia, Pier Paolo Pasolini, passion, pearls, perfumes, Petronius, Jim Pfanner, the phallus, Edith Piaf, the piano, Plato, pleasure, pomegranates, Wakefield Poole, portraits, postcards, Ezra Pound, power, purple, pyramids, quotation, quotidianity, Marie Rapp, Jed Rasula, Howard Read, reality, red, repetition, rhythm, Leni Riefenstahl,

Arthur Rimbaud, ritual, rivers, Gioachino Rossini, the Marquis de Sade, Saint Sebastian, David Salle, Satan, satyriasis, scandal, Alessandro Scarlatti, Arnold Schwarzenegger, scorpions, the sea, Edie Sedgwick, seduction, shadows, Percy Bysshe Shelley, shoes, silver, simulacra, skin, smell, Patti Smith, snakes, solitude, Susan Sontag, the soul, George Stambolian, statues, Edward J. Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, stones, style, success, suicide, Constance Sullivan, the sun, Ingrid Superstar, tables, taboo, Elizabeth Taylor, John Russell Taylor, theft, Tom of Finland, tongues, transformation, trees, the unconscious, Paul Valéry, vanity, Agnès Varda, Paul Verlaine, Virgil, virginity, Viva, the void, Sam Wagstaff, Andy Warhol, Bruce Weber, Edward Weston, whips, white, Edmund White, Oscar Wilde, Thomas Williams, windows, Joël-Peter Witkin, Daniel Wolf, Tom Wolfe, X-rays, William Butler Yeats &

yellow.

“KEITH HARING (journals)”

Pertaining to abstraction, acrobats (Polychrome Acrobats),
altars, angels, art versus politics, the art market, artists,
bars, the body, body painting, boxes, brownness, cars,

cartoons, castration, cigarettes (Lucky Strike), the city,
clones, cockroaches, coffins, colors, computers, cutups,
depression, destruction, the diary (published), dogs,

dragqueens, electricity (electric boogie), eyes, flooding,
gardens, graffiti, greyness, hands, iconic images, imitation,
influences, innocence, karma, leaves (“Requiem for a Dead

Leaf”), love, the métro, mouths, movement, murals,
museums (*The Last Museum*/Peace Museum & Memorial
in Hiroshima), paradise, performance art, the phallus,

plastic, posters (Lucky Strike), public art, rats (Banksy),
redness, requiems, the rice bowl, saunas, statues, strangulation
(*Asphyxiating Culture*), totems, trees, vases, video art &

wrapping.

“AARON SHURIN”

Adopted, abstract, angelic, bathed, beautiful, buccal, born, castrated, citified, corporeal, cycled, depressed, difficult, dismembered, doll-like, dragonfly-like, epileptic, equine (*equus eroticus*), fake, fiery, floral,

fructed (genitals/phallus as fruit), gossiped, gymnastic, heroic, hirsute, kissed, landscape-like, leather, lunar, martyred, mirrored, noted, orgasmic, paternal, phallic, pink, poetic, poisoned, purple, rosy, ruinous, serpentine,

sexual, shadowy, shamanic, shoe-like, signature, silent, solar, soldatesque, significant, skin, solitudinous, split, spoken, stereotypical, spherical, statuesque, stony, strange, suicidal, swampish, swan-like, taboo &

tantric.

Javant Biarujia is author of nine books and nine chapbooks of poetry, including *Calques* and *Spelter to Pewter*, and is represented in more than thirty anthologies, including *Penguin Anthology of Australian Poetry*, *Dangdai aodaliya shige xuan* (“Contemporary Australian Poetry”, published in China) and *Anthology of Australian Prose Poetry*. His New & Selected Poems, *pointcounterpoint* 1983 – 2008, was published by Salt Publishing in the United Kingdom. He was Asialink’s writer-in-residence in Indonesia in 1998, just after the fall of Soeharto. He is also an essayist, and prize-winning playwright. *Nainougacyou*, the dictionary project of his private language, is his latest book.

Michael Helsem

"Jankenstein"

wink harbingers wobble
the worn groove of hoovering
placid signs
that replentish
& i've had warning · huge weariness
lost among languidliars' skyey spiral consider jungle-reclaimedgold &
pyramid · pathways once clear
an 80s song certainof its site weird-plighted as the fire forages now& i
answer inly · something that won't burn
car trouble the triremewink harbingers wobble

m. h. was born in dallas in 1958. shortly afterwards, fish fell from the sky.

Ryan Di Francesco

BRONZE LADDER GUARDED

We're paying for this—
the selected poems.

The vocabulary
written on the wall:

ineluctable
vestigial
inelastic
imbricated
attenuated

—liminal. Shit.

Decorated in ivory.

Dis) located glances.

It's not here. But
decked, performed
little literature peppering
brains. Go figure. Flesh
folded in mountains
which taught proverbs, it
is what

it is. On the narrow avenue
claimed, (as yet—TV sitcom

laughter. What is it?)

A ghost canyon. Or
the last line in a French poem.

I stand inside a cheap phone
stumbling North on its heels
bleeding in the hallway out

of blue. Memories. Anyway.

Lost on a Big Dark Sidewalk

The skeletons of sleeping people
turned into marble hooks

lost on a big dark sidewalk.

The little boy could take half the night
in his own ring.

It's infinite:
the bouquet of bulls.

Like a map—
a small-columned heart.

The little girl pretends
it's made of jasmine.

Even when her throat is slashed.

Of Seafoam and Shadow

The world
winded in bed.

It peeked
at the dead
in the mirror

and was eaten
into light.

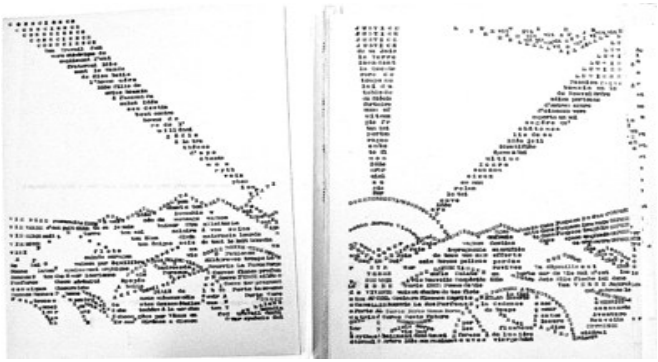
No Thing

I was a dove shaped as a fish.
A fish shaped as a sky.
Wave. Word. Object.
The image.
I am in the image now.
Silence is wonderful.
No thing.
Listen to it:
pink dust.

Ryan Di Francesco (he/him) is a Canadian writer, teacher, and co-founder of Shadow and Sax. His journalism has been published in *The Toronto Star*, and his poetry and fiction have appeared or are forthcoming in *ExPat Press, Acta Victoriana, Pacific Review, Poetry Pause (League of Canadian Poets), Pinhole Poetry, Superpresent, BRAWL Lit, Jagged Edge, Apple Valley Review*, and elsewhere. His chapbooks include *Mirage of Burning Things* (Parlyaree Press), S*keleton Mine Disaster* (Bottlecap Press), *The Paper Hound, Canadian Classic* (ABP), and the forthcoming *A Dead Idea Between Four Lines* (Hit a Snare Press). His collections *Along Tongues Full of Time* (Ethel Press) and *Let the Dogs Have It* (Parlyaree Press) are forthcoming in 2027.

karl kempton

Henri-Martin Barzun's *Simultané* & *Orphism*



Henri-Martin Barzun,

born in France (1881), dies in the U.S. (1973).[1] He wears neither the halo of fame nor the aura of a premature, martyr-like demise. At times, on this side of the Atlantic, a reference blurs him further, turning him into a fast-moving shadow in the under-realms of small-type footnotes associated with visual poetry. During discussions concerning Guillaume Apollinaire and avant-garde history, he seems a ghost of little consequence associated with what many call a lost-cause disagreement.[2] Yet, he carries an acknowledged status in pre-WWI avant-garde Paris as the theoretician who

[1] For an earlier iteration of this material, see Karl Kempton, "SYNAPSE ESSAY THE NINTH: The Enigma of Henri-Martin Barzun," Synapse International, Mar. 2020, synaptry.blogspot.com/2020/03/synapse-essay-ninth-enigma-of-henri.html. The 2020 essay includes a long coda focusing on Kenneth Patchen; the current text represents an updated and corrected version of that study.

[2] This "of little consequence" appears to be consciously assumed by some scholars and acolytes of Apollinaire.

creates and shapes *Simultané* and *Orphism*.[3] Prominent British commentators Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, and American Ezra Pound present commentaries on his work before WWI. Paradoxically, he remains an enigma despite these facts, along with two key statements by Apollinaire: first, Apollinaire says he "considers himself to be Barzun's disciple,"[4] and second, he states he learns Simultané poetry directly from Barzun.[5] The Italian visual and sound poet Arrigo Lora Totino presents the first contemporary review and reclamation of Barzun through his essays in the 1970s. Totino considers Barzun the key figure in visual and sound poetics before WWI, overriding Apollinaire and Marinetti.[6] This critical restoration of Barzun's importance is further supported by art historians who begin correcting the standard U.S. history of Cubism in the 1960s that downplayed or ignored divisions among the Cubists of the Parisian avant-garde.

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[3] *Simultané* (simultaneity)will appear in a variety of spellings, each depending on an individual's usage.

[4]Willard Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*. State UP, 1997, p. 84.

[5] Marc Battier, "Chapitre 15. Des unanimistes à l'art sonore : quand la littérature, l'art et la musique recréent la technologie" ["Chapter 15. From Unanimists to Sound Art: When Literature, Art, and Music Recreate Technology"]. *Musique et modernité en France*, edited by Sylvain Caron, François de Medicis, and Michel Duchesneau, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2006, pp. 389–416. *OpenEdition Books*, sec. 44, books.openedition.org/pum/10405.

[6] On the Conservation of Poetry: Archive Actualized #8. Transcript of a conversation with Fondazione Morra, *NERO Editions*, 24 June 2022, www.fondazionemorra.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/24.06.2022_On-the-Conversation-of-Poetry-_NERO-Editions.pdf . See fn 18 for more details. Also see Arrigo Lora-Totino, "L'Orphéid", epopea della simultaneità. Tre frammenti di testi simultanei" in *Simultanéisme / Simultaneità*, edited by P. A. Jannini and S. Zoppi, *Quaderni del Novecento Francese*, no. 10, Bulzoni / Nizet, 1987.

What we witness from Barzun is a scale of choral poetry also functioning as visual poetry composed by typewriter that is neither matched nor achieved by anyone else to date. He begins composing his epic, *L'Orphéid ou L'Universel Poème*, in 1906—a visual, kinetic work full of "choruses, dialog, songs and unisons; also soliloquies, fragments of prose, pure sounds and even noises."[7] The role of his son, who helps retype it, is discussed later.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, Barzun is a well-known avant-garde poet, critic, editor, publisher, and leftist political figure. He founds the literary and art theory *Simultané* with which he composes his newly named *Orphism*, a union of the seven arts.[8] Later, he works to radically redesign the concept of the book while working on his audio-visual epic, *L'Orphéid.* This project, in my opinion, positions him as Stéphane Mallarmé's true structural heir—if Mallarmé actually has an heir. While simultaneism is an often-discussed topic, Barzun is the first to formalize it for his choric poetics and multi-art expression. During the birth of the modernist art era, he occupies a central position as a theorist and creator of what he terms avant-garde choral and audio-visual poetry. With this status, he associates with numerous influential poets, writers, and artists ranging from F. T. Marinetti to Guillaume Apollinaire and Tristan Tzara.

Among his poetic and literary French influences, he points to Victor Hugo and Émile Zola as visionary forefathers. While both grapple with large-scale simultaneist encounters, each possesses only the forms for linear narratives. A multifaceted, simultaneous theoretical architecture is decades away. Considering Symbolism as having run its course by sliding into "art for art's sake" and forsaking reality, he also turns to Walt Whitman, the Transcendentalists, and to their communal utopian

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[7] Jacques Barzun, "Title of Essay/Contribution. "*New Directions 9 1946*, edited by James Laughlin, New Directions, 1946, p. 398. Internet Archive, archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.166033/page/n419.

[8] Jacques Barzun, "Title of Essay/Contribution." archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.166033/page/n419.

experiment at Brook Farm. Along with a few of his contemporaries, he also turns to guidance from Gothic architecture and its communal guild structure. This choice represents a leftist, Celtic-centric alignment opposing both the imported Greco-Latin culture centrism and right-wing French nationalism.

ORPHEUS AND THE DIVINE ORCHESTRA

… and I hear what Orpheus heard.
Be not amazed at all that
Nature in ineffable sigh reveals to me.
I speak
With all the voices of metempsychosis.

Before beginning the great, sacred concert,
The sparrow, the thicket, the living waters of the meadow,
That enormous base, the forest, the wing and the corolla,
All these sweet instruments speak to me.
I am the hearer of the divine orchestra.
Victor Hugo From " Les Contemplations "[9]

Barzun soon contemplates contemporary, vibrant urbanization coupled with the ongoing expansive and exponential technological development. This expanding societal complexity can no longer be accurately captured from a single, isolated point of view by a poet, writer, or artist; it requires multiple points of view. He thus conceives poetry, writing, and art as a *Simultané* project based on this new insight. Consequently, he transforms the traditional, unified chant of the Greek chorus into a polyphonic choral architecture in which each voice simultaneously sings its own unique, assigned lines.

[9] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus: A 20th Century Literature of Synthesis, a Contribution to World Culture, 1945–1962*. Liberal Press, 1962, p. 7.

> Choric Poetry is at once: 1. technically, a science of words, sounds, rhythms in continuous orchestration which amplifies to the limit the daily spoken language; 2. esthetically, it is an art revealing the natural musicality of language in the expression of emotions, moods, ideas, dreams, of the poetic psyche, both individual and collective in analysis and synthesis; 3. and visually, it is a form projecting through the score the unfolding color images/visions of moving voice groups.[10]

Barzun begins Simultané poetry in 1900.[11] His first attempts with Simultané comprise two books: *Poème de l'adolescence* (1903—1904) and *Poème de l'homme* (1904—1905).[12] These works are not true Simultané by his later standards. He argues that, to reach the potential of the medium, an innovative integration of all arts is required, which he calls *Orphism*:

> So does Orphic Art restore to the Verb with its soul, the two original wings it lost in the process of time: the Choric wing, through groups of speaking voices, and the Visual wing, through graphic timing and spacing of voices on the score. Thus is made possible the Winged Literature of our times, expressing voices and sounds, forms, rhythms and

[10] Henri-Martin Barzun, Orpheus, *A World in Chorus: A 20th Century Literature of Synthesis*, p136.
[11] Eugene Jolas, editor. *Transition: Tenth Anniversary. No. 27, 1938, p. 377.*
[12] Christopher Townsend, "Henri-Martin Barzun's 'Simultaneism ' between the Abbaye de Créteil and Futurism: The Individual and the Crowd in Late-Symbolist Art." International Yearbook of Futurism Studies, edited by Günter Berghaus, vol. 2, De Gruyter, 2012, p. 312, n. 28. Academia, www.academia.edu/20803741/Henri_Martin_Barzuns_Simultaneism_between_the_Abbaye_de_Cr%C3%A9teil_and_Futurism_The_Individual_and_the_Crowd_in_Late_Symbolist_Art.

> colors in simultaneity: a new art as befits a great century through the rebirth of Poetry.[13]
>
> Orphic Art as an art-form of language orchestrating together its six sides: idea, voice/sound, rhythm, image, color, form, in a time-space continuity of poetic metamorphosis."[14]
>
> . . . the Gothic "Enlumineurs" -who inspired William Blake's admirable "Illuminated printing," and led to modern color illustrations in machine printed texts – revives in Orphic Art, integrating idea, object, subject, voice, sound, rhythm, form, color, motion, in any single prose work or poem, gratifying all mental and sensorial perceptions simultaneously, and blending at will the inner world of thought, subconscious and dream with the outer world of reality simultaneously expressing their poetic message, as conceived by a poetic imagination.[15]

Simultané and *Orphism* multimedia before multimedia, and borderblurs before borderblur. The complexity requires a group effort that begins between 1906 and 1908 in L'Abbaye de Créteil out of which large-scale Cubism emerges. This aesthetic shift is in part informed by French Celtic cultural elements that created Gothic cathedrals that the group embraces while opposing a forcibly imported Greco-Latin culture.

The combination of Brook Farm, the Lake poets, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and Gothic guild models shapes the short-lived literary and art community L'Abbaye de Créteil (1906—1908*)*. This group studies social and artistic idealist models to form a new social, literary, and artistic

[13] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus*, p 29.
[14] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus,* p54.
[15] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus,* p136.

endeavor. L'Abbaye evolves out of the Association Ernest Renan, which forms in December 1905 with the aim of educating workers and overcoming the "bourgeois division between manual labor and artistic expression."[16] Barzun, considered a co-founder, joins the group a year later. He pays the initial rent, thereby manifesting L'Abbaye de Créteil from the Association Ernest Renan outside Paris. Upon the closing of the venture—mainly due to financial shortcomings and, some say, theoretical differences—Barzun and his wife establish a salon at their home in Paris. Over the years, hundreds of poets, artists, writers, and critics attend weekly, including Guillaume Apollinaire, Alexander Archipenko, Jean Cocteau, Robert Delaunay, Marcel Duchamp, Albert Gleizes, Fernand Léger, F. T. Marinetti, and Jean Metzinger.

L'Abbaye is a meeting place for two new, dynamic, poet-driven philosophies: Barzun's *Simultané* and Jules Romains' *Unanimism*. Both insert themselves and their poetics into the center of the Parisian modernist era, before Cubism. Both are influenced by the philosopher Henri Bergson's core concepts, which include the penetrating collective consciousness, *durée* (duration, or time as a deeply lived experience), and intuition (the rigorous philosophical method used to grasp the inner reality of a thing). Bergson looks at the brain as a sensory dampener, arguing that a sensory-overloaded human has fewer chances of survival. Fifty years later, using the insights of Bergson as his metaphorical key, Aldous Huxley opens William Blake's doors of perception.

In October 1903, while walking along the Rue d'Amsterdam, Romains experiences a numinous vision of collective consciousness, wherein the psychic lives of individuals transcend the singular self to merge into a shared, communal spirit. Out of this heightened awareness, he coins the term *Unanimism,* establishing a philosophical

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[16] Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighten, editors. *A Cubism Reader: Documents and Criticism, 1906–1914*. University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 41. *Monoskop*, https://monoskop.org/images/1/1e/A_Cubism_Reader_Documents_and_Criticism_1906-1914_2008.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com Digital PDF facsimile. Accessed 5 June 2026, p41

and literary movement designed to sublimate, dampen, or dissolve individual identity and ego in pursuit of collective harmony.[17] Barzun resists this shaping of group thought by Romains at the expense of the individual. He draws support from his readings of Victor Hugo, Émile Zola, Walt Whitman, and the American Transcendentalists, who are anchored by Vedantic philosophy. Barzun embraces individual differences, viewing them as the catalyst for the dynamic tensions that lead the way to harmony.

Marinetti visits L'Abbaye more than once, learning Simultané and Orphism firsthand from Barzun.[18] In 1908 and 1909, Marinetti publishes his initial Futurist manifestos. In 1912, he publishes his landmark "Parole in libertà" (Words-in-Freedom), following it with two subsequent iterations in 1913 and 1914. Barzun holds no argument with Marinetti's tweaking of his Simultané given the presence of multiple-voiced works within Marinetti's *Zang Tumb Tuuum: Adrianopoli Ottobre 1912* (1914). Throughout the creation of this book, Marinetti pursues a largeness in scale radicalizing the traditional book. The influence of Orphism on Italian Futurism appears in the Futurists' revolutionary attempt to form a new integration of the arts.

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[17] Christopher Townsend, "Henri-Martin Barzun's 'Simultaneism ' between the Abbaye de Créteil and Futurism: The Individual and the Crowd in Late-Symbolist Art," p 322.

[18] Arrigo Lora Totino, "On the Conservation of Poetry: Archive Actualized #8." Interview by Domenico Mennillo and Eva Fabbris. *NERO Editions*, 24 June 2022, www.neroeditions.com/on-the-conservation-of-poetry/. According to Totino, Henri-Martin Barzun's Simultaneism significantly influenced Marinetti's parole in libertà and dynamic declamation, providing the technical foundations for a polyphonic representation of modern life. Totino considers Barzun the key figure in visual and sound poetics before WWI, overriding Apollinaire and Marinetti.
Arrigo Lora Totino, "The Word Shows Its Body: The Vicissitudes of the Historical Development of the Visual Element in Poetry from the Alexandrinian Period to Contemporary Experimentalism." Translated by Eleonora Vita Heger, *ULU-LATE*: Contemporary Poetry, 2002–2010, www.ulu-late.com/english/history/history.htm . Accessed 5 June 2026.

A rapid overview of Barzun's multi-decade trajectory underscores his relentless commitment. Between 1903 and 1913, he publishes numerous books rich with *Simultané* and *Orphism*, while establishing *Poème et drame (*1912—1914)—a landmark journal born directly from the break caused by Apollinaire. He completes the definitive first iteration of his epic, *L'Orphéid ou L'Universel Poème*, in 1913, though announced in print for release in 1914, the outbreak of WWI halts its publication. He moves to the U.S. in 1919 and expands his work on this masterpiece, alongside parallel creative projects. Barzun subsequently travels across the country as a professor teaching *Simultané*, *Orphism*, and choric poetics, authoring extensive biographical-historical volumes up to 1962.

Barzun employs a large-scale vision that roots into or grows out of what Carl Jung calls the "Spirit of the Depths" in December 1913—when the initial edition of *L'Orphéid ou L'Universel Poème* awaits publication. He openly avails himself of the vibrations of Orpheus' endeavors to establish a higher societal consciousness and embraces many parallel poetic influences of the Orphic tradition from the past to his own present. Thus, his horizontal and vertical arcs span the material, psychological, and spiritual realms, stretching from the Spirit of the Depths to the Spirit of the Times, aiming for a better future. Such sweeping idealism manifests in various forms throughout the pre-WWI avant-garde, linking networks from New York across Europe to Moscow and Kiev.

Between 1906 and 1913, he publishes volumes of the *Trilogy of Forces* including *La Terrestre Tragédie* (*The Earthly Tragedy*). He models it after "Victor Hugo's *La Légende des siècles*(*The Legend of the Centuries*), in which each past century since ancient times is represented by a short epic legend summing up its spirit and achievement in terms of history, art, philosophy, religion, and society."[19] From 1906 to 1908, he writes and publishes *Les Voix de la montagne: Poème légendaire – 4 Épodes.* To experience a valley and village written about by Émile Zola, he walks in Zola's footsteps to witness them from the exact location in

[19] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus,* p101.

the Swiss Alps. He then climbs higher to unexpectedly experience a rhapsody from nature's song while looking across vast frozen waves—the Alps. This is a geo-poetic endeavor by Barzun. Another occurs in 1908 when he begins *Hymne des forces*, publishing it in 1912. Continuing his geo-poetics, or in this case poetry of place, he walks in Hugo's footsteps to the top of Notre Dame, sensing and intuiting Hugo's "simultaneist"experience of Paris before constantly ascending the Eiffel Tower for his contemporary feel of the city's heartbeat and songs. This allows him to express his vision of the Universal City, informed by Goethe's "Imagine this Universal City."[20]

L'Orphéid ou L'Universel Poème—or Orphic Ars Poetica: L'Orphéid, Poème, An Epic of Space Conquest, VII Episodes begins in 1906. Barzun separates it from *La Terrestre Tragédie*, meaning he composes two masterworks in parallel. He completes the typewriter art opus, *L'Orphéid* in 1913, creating an audio-visual score epic.[21] He publishes, performs, and exhibits portions of the epic in Paris, that same year.[22] Barzun states his interest lies only in influencing the vanguard, not the public: "the works were not meant for public consumption on Theatre Row but for the vanguard."[23] Copies of the manuscript are said to be in several well-known hands at the time. Others say the manuscript passes from hand to hand by these same hands. Commentary on the epic by the English expert on avant-garde French poetics of that moment, F. S. Flint, appears in 1913. Ezra Pound's reviews on Barzun are also printed in 1913. Barzun's work influences a new choric poetry in

[20] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus*, p110.
[21] Jacques Barzun, "Some Notes on Créteil and French Poetry." New Directions 9 1946, edited by James Laughlin, New Directions, 1946, p. 395; Barzun, *Orpheus 1960: Modern Culture and the 1913 Renaissance*. p. 23.
[22] Jacques Barzun, "Some Notes on Créteil and French Poetry," p. 330
[23] Jacques Barzun, "Some Notes on Créteil and French Poetry," p 116

England and the US. It even appears he also influences Ezra Pound's Pisan Cantos.[24]

Originally scheduled for publication in 1914, it is canceled due to the outbreak of WWI. In Paris in 1919, he returns for its staged performance in the new Art et Action theater. After moving to the United States, he continues developing it. In the early 1920s, he and his son complete the retyping and add color. He returns to the same Parisian theater for performances in 1924. In 1926, he earns his Ph.D. and has his *Choric – Visual Poetry Exhibit* at Fordham University.[25] In 1927, he physically carries the finished masterpiece back to Paris for exhibition and performance, a staggering 720-folio-page work of seven volumes weighing 90 pounds.[26] He points out this is the same year that Lindbergh flies the Atlantic. Though featured in U.S. classrooms and anthologized in landmark issues of *Transition 10*, the anniversary issue, and *New Directions* 9, only samples of its choric pages appear.[27] Pound references Barzun's visual and choral poetics in the *Pisan Cantos*. This reference decades later by a major poet like Pound underscores the significance of Barzun's pioneering poetry.

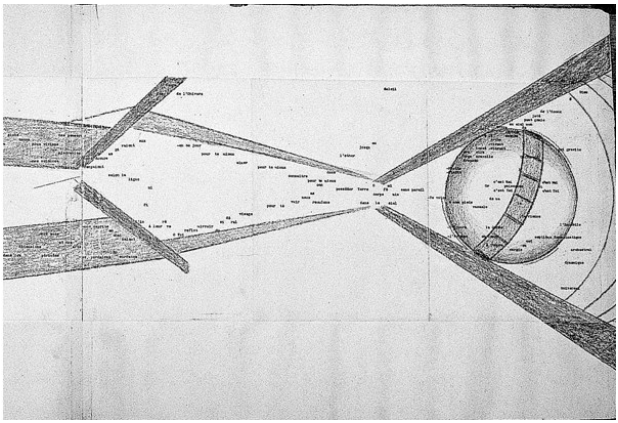
The following paragraphs provide details of the epic's themes and influences. Barzun's diligent research, as seen in his trips to the Alps and explorations around Paris, is also found in his mastery of Orphic literature spanning the centuries. He chooses the Quest for the Golden Fleece as the model for the epic, thereby updating Hugo's 1859 poem, "Plein Ciel" (Full Sky), found in the concluding portion of

[24] Richard Warren, "Ezra Pound and the Universal Poem of Common Humanity." Richard Warren, 11 July 2018, richardawarren.wordpress.com/2018/07/11/ezra-pound-and-the-universal-poem-of-common-humanity/.
[25] Richard Warren, "Ezra Pound and the Universal Poem of Common Humanity." p148.
[26] Richard Warren, "Ezra Pound and the Universal Poem of Common Humanity," p61.
[27] Jacques Barzun, "Some Notes on Créteil and French Poetry." p. 395. Henri-Martin Barzun Orpheus 1960: Modern Culture and the 1913 Renaissance, p. 23.

Légende des siècles.[28] Hugo transforms the *Argo* into an airship: a hot-air balloon commanded by Orpheus himself. Thus, Orpheus appears in ascent, symbolizing an uplifting idealism and charting humanity's collective flight toward a grand new Golden Fleece: universal peace.

Pindar writes first of the Argonaut quest of heroes, with Orpheus among them, whereas Homer mentions the voyage but omits Orpheus entirely. Barzun prefers to leave unmentioned the currently most famous chapter of Orpheus' life—the death and attempted rescue from Hades of his bride, Eurydice—a choice Hugo also makes—knowing it is an addition fully woven by Virgil about four hundred years after an image on a vase first appears in Greece, itself 350 or 750 years after two reported dates of his birth. Instead of a hot-air balloon, the *Argo* morphs into the airplane *Atlas*, populated by astronauts rather than argonauts: "Only that 20th century astronauts, replacing the legendary seagoing heroes of 3,000 years ago, would be modern air engineers, men of science, industry, art and culture, as revealed by their actions and voices aboard the space ship Atlas."[29] The Golden Fleece becomes the Lost Chord of universal harmony, charting a quest that follows cycles of death and rebirth.9.

[28] Victor Hugo, "Plein Ciel" (Full Sky). *La Légende des Siècles: Tome II. Project Gutenberg*, 2025, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/76396.
[29] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus*, p115



I was far less interested in Eurydice in Hades and the dramatic value of the conflict which led to her death than in the message of life's resurrection and men's cyclical labors, as identified with the solar worship as old as civilization. On this physical reality, the only non-mythical one, civilization was built and the Earth's twelve rhythms re-experienced each Spring with the return of abundance for thousands of years recorded by man's culture.

The poetic view in the Greek Legend, where Orpheus masters the four reigns of Nature by the spell of his Cosmic chant, added a vaster philosophical significance to the fertile cycle of the earth. This Cosmic chant I identified with the Pythagorean Harmony of the Spheres dancing to that chant and uniting vision, sound, color,

ATLAS THE BEARER[30]

The concept of a universal rhythm ruling Creation, linking Earth and Cosmos in simultaneity was the reward of this vision and of the space ship quest, the 'Golden Fleece' of

[30] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus*, section of 50x20 inches, description p 56.

> L'Orphéid. A purely poetical concept the Greeks best called "Harmony of the Spheres "and "Orpheus, the " Singing Universe "—which, with Pan for the Earth, I synthetized in "Panharmonie Orphique " chant, and L'Orphéid' epic.[31]

Many consider Orpheus a mythological invention, ignoring his spiritual reformation that introduces vegetarianism, purification rites, and reincarnation, thereby creating the Greek Mysteries. Orphism flows through Pythagorean and Platonic philosophies into Hermeticism, Gnosticism, Sufism, alchemy, Christian Cabala, Rosicrucian Enlightenment, Transcendentalism, and Romanticism. A minority report by Alcidamas, now considered authentic, states he is killed by a Zeus-flung lightning bolt for providing humankind access to enlightenment. He reports the inscription on his grave at Leibethra near Mount Olympus as "Here the Muses buries Orpheus of the golden lyre, whom Thracian Oeagrus begot, and whom Zeus, who rules on high. slew with a smoking bolt . . ." Those of us agreeing with this ignored chapter, understand the event as capital punishment for bringing enlightenment disciplines to humankind.

A close examination of Barzun's physical typewriting process for *L'Orphéid* and other choral works provides critical insight into his method. Each page begins as a handwritten draft on graph paper—which he calls a "graph"–mapping out the exact spacing grid for every word, letter, symbol, and void, until a complete choral page forms. The actual typing follows. I begin a similar process in 1973—the year Barzun leaves The Enormous Room—without any knowledge of his pioneering work. Barzun designates certain pages with patterns and objects as "murals." The epic embraces the seven Orphic arts, proving him a master of his own theories.[32] This choric-visual epic

[31] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus*, p115

[32] Both James Laughlin and Christopher Townsend note that this volume represents the culmination of a seven-year project. See Laughlin, James, editor, New Directions 9 1946, New Directions,

has yet to be matched; it stands as a known mountain to climb, no longer hidden by the fickle clouds of history—almost, but not totally, forgotten.

> Thus Orphic poetry uses words as oral sounds and geometric forms—A, E, I, O, U, the gene cells of them all-and resurrects language from the printed coffin into a verbal/plastic, aural/visual art having form, sound, color, motion, and giving the poet a material substance to shape out, a clay to work with, like the painter, sculptor and composer have and do, with pain, stone and notes.[33]

Regarding the poetic use of letters and symbols, Barzun looks past Mallarmé directly to Victor Hugo.[34] Hugo famously uses graphic typography— signifying Notre Dame Cathedral with the letter H, for instance. By treating other individual letters as symbols, he applies spatial syntax and scatters words over a page of open space.

Here is his description of a mural:

> A spring rhapsody to greet sunrise on a mountain summit commanding the landscape of a valley. A train rumbling and whistling down below, an airship droning high above, reveal man's industry and air conquest. Simultaneously, voices afar; nature's forces : wind, waterfall, brook, rustling leaves, birds in treetops, enrapture the poet with a permanent concert of sounds and rhythms - each of them being

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1946, p. 395; and Townsend, Christopher, "Henri-Martin Barzun's 'Simultaneism 'between the Abbaye de Créteil and Futurism: The Individual and the Crowd in Late-Symbolist Art," International Yearbook of Futurism Studies, edited by Günter Berghaus, vol. 2, De Gruyter, 2012, p. 313, n. 28, Academia, www.academia.edu/20803741/Henri_Martin_Barzuns_Simultaneism_between_the_Abbaye_de_Cr%C3%A9teil_and_Futurism_The_Individual_and_the_Crowd_in_Late_Symbolist_Art. Accessed 5 June 2026

[33] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus,* p43.

[34] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus,* p42.

> 'raised' as audio-visual abstract groups of onomatopoeias moving in time-space from left to right of the score -through which his thoughts and dreams weave a continuous paean to life's joys and nature's grandeur: Panharmonie Orphique. A choric poem detached from
>
> "La Montagne" as breaking up dramatic action. It was the first fully polyphonic chorus on record and the germinal work of Orphic art.[35]
>
> A glance at the epic:
>
> The reality and the varied awareness of its parts are rendered through an orchestration of voices, each of which reveals its meaning and origin without outside explanation or ascription. To the four levels of epic doing—the physical journey, the intellectual discovery, the moral meaning, and the religious vision, there is an added fifth overtone: from the recurring hint that the flying ship is the earth itself, we are led to infer that the tragic fate of the voyagers is inescapable, in both senses: not to be warded off and not to be shirked. Our end is our beginning.[36]

Unable to read the original French, I asked poets Youssef Alaoui and Márton Koppány via email for their impressions of the above visual poem expressing the dawning of a new day. Youssef observes that the page carries a Blakean resonance, while Márton finds it distinctly Whitmanesque; both conclude that the work is revelatory.

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[35] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus,* p 55

[36] *Jacques Barzun, "Some Notes on Créteil and French Poetry." New Directions 9 1946, edited by James Laughlin, New Directions, 1946, p. 394. See also James Laughlin, "Editorial Notes," p. ix. Internet Archive, archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.166033/page/n419.*

It is worth noting an important historical reality: Mallarmé's *A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance* is barely known at the moment of its 1914 republication, having been originally printed in a magazine when most of Barzun's generation were teenagers. As Barzun publishes his own theories, controversy arises. While he receives positive and negative criticism for his publications, he faces sharp condemnation from neo-Symbolists, who lambast his layout and theories.

> It was in the midst of such a poetic enthusiasm and choric excitement that "Poème & Drame" received from La Nouvelle Revue Française, a complimentary copy of Stephane Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Dés* (A Throw of Dice). The work, beautifully reprinted by La N.R.F. from an unknown review, Cosmopolis, which published it in May 1897, was a complete surprise for everybody, as nowhere and never had it been mentioned in any review of the decade. (my underline)[37]

Beginning in 1913, new printing technologies enable the accurate layout Mallarmé envisioned for *Un Coup de Dés*. The first publication in 1897 is a disastrous, illegible mess, providing critics with considerable fodder to heap negativity upon him. He dies the next year trying, but unable, to correct the tragedy.

Is there, then, an heir there to be pointed to appoint? Between the structural radicalism of Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Dés* and the hand-script and graphics of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, now stands Barzun's *L'Orphéid ou Poème*. The literary world must finally reckon with this monumental, seven-part masterpiece—pioneering the use of typewriter-composed, audio-visual pages— once celebrated, only to be forgotten. While the works of Mallarmé and Apollinaire spark an influence on the eve of WWI that extends into the present day, Barzun shapes the pre-war vanguard with his works and theories forged between 1906 and 1914. In the

[37] Henri-Martin Barzun, *Orpheus, A World in Chorus,* p100.

wake of the war, his influence resides in sound poetry up to this day, in the later revisions of the history of Cubism, and a few little-known academic publications. *L'Orphéid ou L'Universel Poème* sits essentially buried and forgotten in Columbia University's special collections warehouse.

Apollinaire frequently visits the Barzun home as a close friend. He even teaches Barzun's son how to read a watch.[38] Apollinaire is certainly influenced by Barzun. Willard Bohn points to an early Apollinaire statement where he "considers himself to be Barzun's disciple."[39] The year is 1910. Then comes the controversial parting of ways in 1912, with both forming their own journals.[40] The final blow for Barzun arrives when Apollinaire appropriates and redefines *Simultané* and *Orphism* in his 1913 book, *The Cubist Painters, Aesthetic Meditations*. Supporting Greco-Latin classicism against Celtic-centric Cubism, he lifts Picasso and Braque up as the true Cubist painters. Yet the debt to Barzun lingers, as seen in December of 1913, when Apollinaire makes a record of his poems and later states that he learns his simultaneity poetry directly from Barzun.

> "It is true that for the past year I have often spoken of the poetry record, adding that it was the form in which I would like to publish my poems. Barzun was right to launch his manifesto on poetic simultaneity, which he himself conceived, because I had only considered entrusting the records with personal poems. He thus broadened the idea and made it the central element of the most important

[38] Jacques Barzun, Interview by Peter Krulewitch. *Old New York Stories*, 29 Oct. 2011, oldnewyorkstories.com/post/11666981759/jacques-barzun. Transcript and audio recording.

[39] Willard Bohn, Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde. State UP, 1997, p. 84.

[40] Willard Bohn, *Apollinaire and the International Avant-Garde*. State UP, 1997, p. 84. Bohn notes that by the end of 1913, Guillaume Apollinaire and Henri-Martin Barzun's "relationship would disintegrate as a result of a nasty dispute over the paternity of simultanism."

> literary reform of all time. Praise be to him![41]A Barzun reformatted performance from 1913 is available on SoundCloud under the title "Simultanist Booklet."[42]

Adding to the controversy, Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay claim that their 1913 publication of *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France* (Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jehanne of France) is the first simultaneous book. This assertion serves as an additional affront to Barzun, whose own *Hymne des Forces* (1912) is published earlier.

The bitter dispute over *Simultané* and *Orphism* between Barzun and Apollinaire—who is closely allied with the Delaunays—may never be solved. I experience an example of this contentious divide in group email exchanges during 2025 and 2026 involving Willard Bohn, Christopher Townsend, and curators for the upcoming exhibition in San Diego: *14-bis: Visual Poetry and the Evolution of Modernism* (2027). Despite Bohn quoting Apollinaire's admission of being a disciple of Henri-Martin Barzun, Bohn acknowledges that he did not follow up on the implications

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[41] Marc Battier, "Chapitre 15. Des unanimistes à l'art sonore : quand la littérature, l'art et la musique recréent la technologie" ["Chapter 15. From Unanimists to Sound Art: When Literature, Art, and Music Recreate Technology"]. *Musique et modernité en France*, edited by Sylvain Caron, François de Medicis, and Michel Duchesneau, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2006, pp. 389–416. OpenEdition Books, sec. 44, books.openedition.org/pum/10405. Quoting Guillaume Apollinaire's letter to André Billy, where he notes that Henri-Martin Barzun's manifesto "broadened the idea and made it the central element of the most important literary reform of all time.

[42] Henri-Martin Barzun, "Simultanist Booklet: Panharmonie Orphique" (Excerpt from Orphéide, 1913). Performance arranged by Karla Gutierrez, and performed by Glenda Fernandez, Juan Mansilla, Rohan Smith, Rodolfo Zuniga, and Karla Gutierrez, 22 Jan. 2014. SoundCloud, uploaded by Kamaraka, soundcloud.com/kamaraka/martin-barzun-1913. Audio recording. This performance was produced specifically for the exhibition The Aesthetics of Perceptual Simultaneity at The Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University.

due to his conclusion that Barzun is an insignificant figure in the modernist era with an inflated ego. When I presented Apollinaire's explicit admission crediting Barzun as the father of simultaneous poetry, Bohn admits he is unaware. Furthermore, he continues to dismiss the historical importance of L'Abbaye de Créteil, despite Townsend's supporting article and other publications to the contrary. In addition, a double standard remains in place: writings by Apollinaire—even the polemical—are taken at face value, while those by Barzun are rejected as self-promoting revisions of history, a claim for which I find no evidence.

Digging into the wider context, the debate is actually broader, a conflict that arises from Apollinaire's book on Cubism, *The Cubist Painters, Aesthetic Meditations* (1913).[43] In its pages, Apollinaire elevates the private studio style of Picasso and Braque over the Salon Cubists of the Puteaux Group promoted by Barzun and with whom he has spent time over the years. Pablo Picasso works for months revising and finalizing what is considered the first proto-Cubist painting, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907). With a palette of pink/rose flesh tones shifting into blues, whites, and browns, it is an 8 ft × 7 ft 8 canvas inspired by Paul Cézanne. He visits the ethnographic collections at the Palais du Trocadéro, where African and Oceanic masks strike him (by his own later account) like a revelation, only to have most of his close friends negatively respond, some harshly.Thus, he withdraws *Les Demoiselles* from view and retreats, so to say, in scale and palette, into the Braque studio style—dark umbers, charcoal grays, muted browns, tan ochres, carbon black, and lead white. Their studio Cubism (1909–1914) divides into a High Analytic Cubist palette (1909–1912) and a Synthetic Cubist palette (1912–1914). Picasso does not exhibit the large work until 1916. Through a Jungian lens, the painting may be seen as a descent into his unconscious — a portrait of his wounded soul, or of the

[43] Guillaume Apollinaire*The Cubist Painters, Aesthetic Meditations* (Les Peintres Cubistes, Méditations Esthétiques), published in 1913. It features essays on Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes, Marie Laurencin, Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp

Greco-Latin male anima. Given his future treatment of women as muses, only to be dropped for another, this adds another reading.

Apollinaire positions Robert Delaunay as the true inventor of *Simultanéisme*, while actively attacking the cultural, Celtic centrism, the movement found in the book on Cubism, *Du "Cubisme"* (1912) written by Cubist painters Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Asserting classical Latin culture, Apollinaire assaults the Celtic-centric idealism that traces back to Barzun and others of L'Abbaye, thereby pushing the Puteaux Group further back into a lesser status than his selected Cubists as true Cubists. Within the wider framework of Cubism, the Picasso-Braque studio style consists of small canvas studies of objects painted from various viewpoints with a limited, dark palette. By contrast, the Salon style is colorful, energetic, and epic in scale, building on the vibrant palettes of Cézanne and Gauguin with roots tracing back to the communal ideas of L'Abbaye. This contrast of styles finds its way into the differences between Barzun's epic and Apollinaire's forthcoming idéogrammes and calligrammes. The dispute is also part of a larger, highly successful campaign to sideline not only Barzun but the entire Puteaux Group. *Du "Cubisme"* stands as the first published book on the movement, written directly by Cubist artists Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. The legendary perch afforded Apollinaire, Gertrude Stein, her salon, Picasso, and Braque over the years is not earned on merit alone. I am not disputing their works; I am pointing out that their sole ownership of position is debatable. Manipulation and omissions of facts for economic gain by curators, collectors, museums, and critics—acting in compliance with the creators—rewrite the pre-WWI history of Cubism. This shared alliance places a hermetic studio style above the open, public Salon style. Before the outbreak of WWI, the French public is aware only of the Salon Cubists, precisely because Picasso and Braque choose exclusivity and guaranteed income over the open, competitive market of the Salons. When money speaks, truth disappears. When self-promoters polish their haloes, truth runs from vanity.

Apollinaire's attitude—for he protests too loudly—is on full display in his self-serving 1914 essay, "Simultanéisme-Librettisme."[44] While he opens by acknowledging Barzun's claim to fathering "Poetic Simultanism," he quickly reverses course, claiming that Barzun only discovers simultaneity in 1912 through Robert Delaunay. This is, to be polite, an obvious historical distortion. Apollinaire also conveniently omits that both he and Delaunay attend Barzun's salon before 1910, just as they attend the Puteaux gatherings hosted by the Duchamp brothers beginning in 1911.[45] Apollinaire also suppresses his own earlier praise regarding his own poetry recording of poems on record, in which he declares: "He thus broadened the idea and made it the central element of the most important literary reform of all time. Praise be to him!"[46]

While writing these concluding remarks, I purchased Jed Rasula's *Modernism and Poetic Inspiration: The Shadow Mouth*. The purchase is multi-purpose. It is a probe, using the lenses of Muse, Orpheus, and Medusa, into the inspiration of modern poetics. For the topic on hand, under the heading of *L'Orphéide*, pages 67-73, the commentary

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[44] Guillaume Apollinaire, "Simultanéisme-Librettisme," *Les Soirées de Paris*, 15 June 1914, pp. 645–51, reprinted in *A Cubism Reader: Documents and Criticism, 1906–1914*, edited by Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighten, University of Chicago Press, 2008. *Monoskop*, monoskop.org/images/1/1e/A_Cubism_Reader_Documents_and_Criticism_1906-1914_2008.pdf.

[45] Guillaume Apollinaire, "Simultanéisme-Librettisme," *Les Soirées de Paris*, 15 June 1914footnote, pp 646-648.

[46] Marc Battier, "Chapitre 15. Des unanimistes à l'art sonore : quand la littérature, l'art et la musique recréent la technologie" ["Chapter 15. From Unanimists to Sound Art: When Literature, Art, and Music Recreate Technology"]. *Musique et modernité en France*, edited by Sylvain Caron, François de Medicis, and Michel Duchesneau, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2006, pp. 389–416. OpenEdition Books, sec. 44, books.openedition.org/pum/10405. Quoting Guillaume Apollinaire's letter to André Billy, where he notes that Henri-Martin Barzun's manifesto "broadened the idea and made it the central element of the most important literary reform of all time.

points to references that support the narrative for Barzun's position as founder of *Simultané* and *Orphism* against the claims of Apollinaire.[47] Importantly, these include the same references provided at the beginning of this essay by F. S. Flint,[48] Richard Aldington,[49] and Ezra Pound[50] reviewing Barzun's *Hymne de Forces* (1912) and *L'Orphéide*. He also accepts Barzun's autobiographical writings at face value alongside the commentaries on and the publication of works by Barzun in the *Transitions* 10th anniversary issue and commentary by his son and selections in *New Directions 9*. Bringing into question the published Barzun works and associated commentaries in Eugene Jolas's *Transition: Tenth Anniversary* (1938) issue and James Laughlin's *New Directions 9* (1946) also calls into question the integrity of the editors and publishers. Ezra Pound's question of what happened to Barzun and his works in the *Pisan Cantos* seems to be what led Laughlin, who had a very close working relationship with Pound, to approach Barzun's son for the commentary and works that appear in volume 9. Also, recall from above that Barzun removes *L Orphéide* from his 1906 epic and works on both over the following years, several years during which Apollinaire and the Delaunays associate with Barzun. *L Orphéide* is publicly performed and exhibited in 1913 along with the published

[47] Jed Rasula, Modernism and Poetic Inspiration: The Shadow Mouth (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) pp 67-73.
[48] F. S. Flint, "Contemporary French Poetry." *The Poetry Review*, vol. 1, no. 8, Aug. 1912, pp. 355-414; and F. S. Flint, "French Chronicle." *Poetry and Drama*, vol. 1, no. 3, Sept. 1913, pp. 357-62.
[49] Richard Aldington, Critique of Simultaneist Poetry. *The Egoist*, vol. 1, 1914 pp 35-36; and Richard Aldington "Les Cloches de Rome." *Poème & Drame*, vol. 7, Jan.-Mar. 1914, p45.
[50] Ezra Pound, "Review of Hymne des Forces, by Henri-Martin Barzun." *The New Age*, vol. 13, no. 25, 16 Oct. 1913, p. 735; and Ezra Pound, "Paris." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, vol. 3, no. 2, Nov. 1913, pp. 65-74.

announcement of its forthcoming 1914 publication.[51]

Meanwhile, Robert Delaunay labels his own branch of Cubism as *Simultanism*, deriving the term from the 1839 color theory of chemist Michel-Eugène Chevreul. Apollinaire rebrands it *Orphic Cubism*, invoking the music of Orpheus to describe Delaunay's vibrant colors akin to musical chords. This color palette actually originates from his wife's integration of vibrant Russian folk art. Yet, this chemical lineage belongs elsewhere; the Pointillists are the first to apply Chevreul's laws of simultaneous contrast to the canvas. Why Apollinaire and Delaunay never harvest or invent a corresponding terminology remains an open question, unless the grab is part of the Cubist fisticuffs between the Gallo-Celtic and Greco-Latin factions. They easily could have used a term directly honoring Chevreul, or perhaps coined a phrase from the history of chemistry, such as *Hermetic Cubism*—a fitting title given that Hermes Trismegistus governs alchemy and whose rediscovered texts help fertilize the Florentine-Medici cultural bloom.

In fact, Orpheus has no historical connection to painting. While some critics dismiss Barzun's outrage as over-the-top, his umbrage is entirely justified. Those dismissing his upset seem to view it as a simple inflated ego over two terms in public use. However, it is a clear betrayal by close, long-term companions whose work is informed by Barzun's own literary breakthrough. Apollinaire visibly dislikes the spiritual inclinations of members of the former L'Abbaye group, dismissing it as a "chapel," and yet he willingly lassos Orpheus into his Delaunay promotion. This dismissal actually attacks the Celtic-centric project championed by L'Abbaye. The two arts remain fundamentally divided: Barzun correctly observes that painting is static on canvas, while choric poetry performance is durational, unfolding dynamically across time.

As previously discussed, Barzun coins the terms *Simultané* and *Orphism* in 1906 to describe a specific literary form integrating literature and visual art, long before either

[51] Henri-Martin Barzun, ed., *Poème & Drame*, vol. 6 (Sept.–Oct. 1913), p. 92. Collection Poème & Drame / Éditions Figuière, p 92.

term is applied to the Delaunays' painting. While *Simultanéisme* remains a widely debated topic inspired by Henri Bergson, Barzun is the first to construct a working structural theory around it. Here, the historical narrative becomes entangled in the rigid demands of Cartesian-captive academia. Because Barzun does not publish his definitive manifesto on *Simultané* until 1912, his ideas and timeline before that publication date remain willfully invisible, even though deeper research explicitly tracks back to L'Abbaye and his early poetic evolution. Consequently, nearly a decade of discussions, poetry publications, and debates within L'Abbaye, his salon, and the Puteaux-Section d'Or remain routinely ignored until later revisited and corrected.

The Rise of Cubism, written by Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler after WWI, is now well-known for casting a decades-long shadow that hides the broader history of the movement. As the agent for Picasso and Braque, he establishes what is now the accepted post-WWI history of Cubism, transforming his stable of artists into the only true Cubists while relegating others to a secondary, less consequential status. Readily accepted by the U.S. mainstream critics, his marketing strategy enriches collectors, the artists, and himself. Again, money trumps truth. As a consequence, this financial maneuvering feeds the legend of the Stein Salon, a non-French institution that gains top billing over the domestic French circles in modern art histories in the U.S., at the expense of L'Abbaye, the Barzun salon, and the Puteaux-Section d'Or, hosted by the Duchamp brothers.

> The term Salon Cubists was adopted following the 1911 Salon des Indépendants to distinguish them from the "gallery Cubists," Picasso and Braque, who showed with the art dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. While Picasso and Braque are now the most famous Cubists, it was the Salon Cubists who established Cubism as an identifiable movement and introduced it to the general public through their

exhibitions in notable Paris Salons between 1910 and 1913.[52]

Gertrude Stein is well-known for omitting names in her autobiography to maintain her self-polished image of absolute originality. Her highly celebrated salon routinely overshadows the Barzun salon in modern commentaries to the point of the latter's exclusion in standard histories. The omission persists despite the fact that many key individuals overlap in both settings.[53] For example, artist Max Weber of the U.S. regularly attends the Stein salon and meets frequently with Barzun's colleagues, the Cubist painter Jean Metzinger, and Apollinaire, to debate the movement before returning to the U.S. in 1909. Furthermore, his pioneering essays on the fourth dimension influence Apollinaire to the point where Apollinaire directly lifts from Weber's texts without acknowledgment. Weber publishes a collection of poems, *Cubist Poems*, in London, 1914.[54]

Art and literary historians permanently immortalize Stein's salon while ignoring the weekly meetings where Barzun's theories quietly evolve and spread. In doing so, they erase the exact environment

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[52] Rebecca Seiferle, "Salon Cubism Movement Overview," *The Art Story*, edited by Valerie Hellstein, 13 Dec. 2017, www.theartstory.org/movement/salon-cubism/. Neither Picasso nor Barque exhibited in the Salon des Indépendants.

[53] Location is part of the story with Stein living on the Left Bank in Paris, while Barzun lives 12 miles away in Créteil. The Puteaux group uses their suburban isolation cultivating a sense of regional, ancestral grounding as did the earlier L'Abbaye. The isolation is essential to develop their theories of leftist, Celtic nationalism and organic, Gothic geometry, which they viewed as being deeply tied to the native French soil outside the city gates.

[54] Max Weber, *Cubist Poems*. Foreword by Alvin Langdon Coburn, Elkin Mathews, 1914. Pierantonio Zanotti, "The Reception of Max Weber's Cubist Poems (1914) in Taishō Japan," *The Journal of Transcultural Studies*, no. 2 (2016), https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/transcultural/article/view/23509/17361.

in which visual text innovation expands alongside the structural developments of another aspect of Cubism, thereby ignoring the role of L'Abbaye, Barzun's salon, and the Puteaux-Section d'Or Cubism. The Puteaux Group is leftist, French-Celtic-centric, and opposes both Cartesian philosophy and classical Latin influences, while rejecting right-wing French-Celtic nationalism. Their Celtic-centric style integrates concepts of time, velocity, multiple perspectives, and four-dimensional space influenced by the theories of Bergson, Barzun, and others, as well as ongoing discussions with Barzun over theyears.[55] Alongside Barzun's *Simultané* and *Orphism*, the style begins in L'Abbaye in 1906 with the study of French Gothic art and societal organization as a French Celtic indigenous expression. Unlike the Gallery faction, these artists do not look to and "appropriate" African or Oceanic sculpture for inspiration. The result is two entirely distinct styles: a public Salon Cubism that is epic in narrative, standing in sharp contrast to the smaller private studies of domestic objects favored by the gallery group.

In 1907, the Abbaye printed Henri-Martin Barzun's *La Terrestre Tragedie*, an epic in verse dealing explicitly with modern themes: the city, crowds,

men laboring with machines. Barzun described the scope of this work as a synthetic vision "of all men simultaneously voicing their sorrows, hopes, ideals, in a vast multiple chorus, encircling the planet." Perhaps these lines will help us focus on the significance of the Abbaye's preoccupation with new art forms, for these forms and the images they involve are particularly relevant to one of the most

[55] For a detailed narrative of this Gallo-Celtic and Greco-Latin infighting seeMark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde*. Princeton University Press, 1993.

important aspects of Cubism to come:

> "In a single glance, I wrap up the earth:
>
> Occident, Orient, both hemispheres-all the Globe!
>
> Bathed in daylight and Night."[56]
>
> Two important critical milestones in the history of the evolution of the Cubist movement, Allard's "Au Salon d'Automne de Paris," in L'Art Libre, and
>
> Metzinger's "Note sur la Peinture" in Pan, were published in November, 1910(fn17). Allard, an associate of the Abbaye since the beginning, writing about the canvases of Gleizes, Metzinger, and Le Fauconnier, proclaimed that finally a plastic art had been born "that was no longer content to copy the occasional episode, but which offered . . . all of the essential elements of a SYNTHETIC experience taking place in time." Familiar with the search for the synthetic modern art consciously begun at the Abbaye, Allard at last was able to note the beginnings of its plastic realization. If he showed absolutely no awareness of what Picasso and Braque were doing, it was simply because, like the painters he associated with, he had not yet seen their work.[57]

Another approach to answer the Barzun-Apollinaire controversy over the co-opting of *Orphism* may be found by examining the shared roster of attendees of the Barzun Salon

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[56] Daniel Robbins, "From Symbolism to Cubism: The Abbaye of Créteil," *Art Journal* 23, no. 2 (1963) https://www.jstor.org/stable/774506?seq=5 p 115

[57] Daniel Robbins, "From Symbolism to Cubism: The Abbaye of Créteil," p 116. Fn17: Roger Allard, "Au Salon d'Automne de Paris," *L'Art Libre*, Lyons, Nov. 1910. Jean Metzinger, "Note sur la Peinture," Pan, Oct.- Nov. 1910. Metzinger's article is partially reprinted in John Golding, Cubism, A History and Analysis, 1907-14, London, 1959, p. 23, p28.

and Puteaux Group leading up to 1914.[58] Recall the previously mentioned documentation which shows that Apollinaire essentially presents himself as a disciple of Barzun. The regular attendees at Barzun's own salon include Albert Gleizes, Marcel Duchamp, Henri Le Fauconnier, Francis Picabia, Robert Delaunay, and Guillaume Apollinaire himself. The Puteaux Group meetings draw the exact figures whom Apollinaire later labels as *Orphic Cubists*: Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, Mlle. Laurencin, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp. Given this extensive personal and intellectual overlap, any claim that the members of the Puteaux Group and the inner circle of the Barzun salon remain completely ignorant of Barzun's *Simultané* and *Orphism* theories—or the active application of those concepts in his choric epics—cannot be defended.

The addition of Gertrude Stein's 1913 portrait poem of Apollinaire in *Tender Buttons*, alongside the 1915 appearance of Apollinaire's "Voyage" idéogramme in *291 Magazine,* continues the one-sided history within the U.S. avant-garde. Marius de Zayas, acting as a transatlantic gatekeeper for Alfred Stieglitz, befriends Apollinaire during this period. Despite moving in overlapping circles on both sides of the Atlantic, de Zayas completely omits Barzun in his book, obviously choosing Apollinaire's side in the debate.[59]

This bias is explicitly documented in de Zayas' book along with proof that Apollinaire continues promoting himself as originator of Simultanism. On June 30, 1914, de

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[58] Jacques Villon, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Marcel Duchamp, Suzanne Duchamp, Albert Gleizes, Jean Metzinger, František Kupka, Fernand Léger, Robert Delaunay, Sonia Delaunay, Francis Picabia, Juan Gris, Henri Le Fauconnier, Alexander Archipenko, Joseph Csaky, Roger de La Fresnaye, Guillaume Apollinaire, Marie Laurencin, Maurice Raynal, Henri-Martin Barzun, Léopold Survage, Tobeen (Félix Elie Bonnet), Pierre Dumont, Walter Pach, André Mare.

[59] Mark Antliff, "Cubism, Celtism, and the Body Politic," *The Art Bulletin* 74, no. 4 (1992): 655—68, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3045916?seq=2 p 656

Zayas writes a letter to Stieglitz: "The last word in Paris in art is 'Simultanism' in literature. Apollinaire is the father of it… We have become good friends."[60] This letter proves that the erasure of Barzun is not an oversight; rather, it marks the exact moment a fabricated history—one that prioritizes Simultanist painters over actual Simultanist poets—is exported into the U.S. and appears in a short article by de Zayas in the first issue of *291*. Apollinaire permits this deception, completely suppressing his own letter written to Barzun just one year prior, on July 5, 1913. In that private missive he concedes Henri-Martin Barzun is the true pioneer of poetic simultaneity, further stating that Barzun "broadened the idea and made it the central element of the most important literary reform of all time."[61]

When Apollinaire composes his visual poems, he draws influence from the Italian Futurists, Barzun, others, and his redefined Greco-Latin classicism, including his embrace of Cartesian-Newtonian cosmology. Barzun, however, creates a more complex and nuanced body of choric-visual poetry strongly influenced by Henri Bergson's concepts of intuition and duration and his social and artistic idealism that includes Gothic Gallo-Celtic centrism. Studying the visual texts and poetic works composed among Apollinaire, Marinetti, and Barzun demonstrates that a rewriting of visual poetry history is necessary. By 1914, Apollinaire publishes five idéogrammes: "Lettre-Océan," "Voyage," "Paysage animé," "La Cravate et la Montre," and "Cœur, Couronne et Miroir." Marinetti publishes *Zang Tumb Tuuum* in 1914— a volume begun in 1912 that is filled with his kinetic "Words in Freedom." Meanwhile, in 1913, Barzun already performs and exhibits his epic project, which begins in 1906. Though scheduled for a 1914 publication that never materializes, a reformatted Barzun sample from this 1913 performance is available on SoundCloud under the title "Simultanist Booklet" (see fn 42). By 1914, each page already exists as a typed object, viewed by many in the

[60] Marius de Zayas, *How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York*, edited by Francis M. Naumann (MIT Press, 1996), p 181.

[61] See footnote 40 and associated quote.

Parisian avant-garde, building on his earlier choric epics published up to 1912. This reality does not diminish the eventual importance of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*. However, it is the individual visual poems scattered among the lexical poems that exert the lasting influence—much like Mallarmé's *Throw of the Dice*—inspiring the wave of visual poets and visual text artists who emerge after WWI.Notably, Apollinaire changes the term *idéogramme* to his term, *calligramme* in 1917.

With Barzun permanently moving to the United States in 1919—retyping and adding to his epic in the early 1920s with his son's aid—it is entirely reasonable to label him a French-American visual poet. In fact, he uses the explicit term "visual poem" in 1926 to describe the visual text art pages of his epic. He does not claim to be the first to create a type of poetry with this term, but instead offers it as a description—part of Orphism. He works in the U.S. "Little Theater" venues. He continues publishing portions of the epic in avant-garde journals, and promotes his theories in lectures and volumes of self-published books that are now available at prices affordable only for collectors. Of interest, within his two books of the 1960s, one does not find any tone of resentment or bitterness toward Apollinaire. If these retrospective volumes were full of the self-promoting fabrications that some critics claim, it stands to reason he would have revisited this episode of betrayal with intense vigor, rather than offering the generous, positive statements when describing Apollinaire. Barzun achieves recognition as an academic; his son reaches a higher national status in academia as a professor and author. It is inconceivable to me that their joint history of the Henri-Martin Barzun legacy is filled with self-promoting fiction given their integrity. Further, the entire history is in the Barzun archives awaiting investigation for fact checking and publication. Henri-Martin Barzun wanted to radicalize the book, and he did so to such an extent it remains unpublishable, currently waiting to be scanned and uploaded onto the internet.

Furthermore, the fact that Barzun represents France in Washington, D.C., during WWI, followed by his permanent move to the U.S., leaves him defenseless in

matters of Parisian literary intrigue, despite subsequent performances and exhibitions in Paris in 1919, 1924, and 1927.[62] Moreover, his legacy is covered by the shadow of Apollinaire's highly romanticized, martyr-like death, visually immortalized by the volume's famous post-WWI illustration of his bandaged head. Then, there is the prescient painting with Orpheus attributes of Apollinaire by Giorgio De Chirico with a white target on Apollinaire's head where the shrapnel enters during the war two years later. The history of the modern art era is written almost exclusively by art historians rather than literary scholars; these art scholars are partial to Apollinaire due to his perceived heroism in promoting Cubism and his coining of "surrealism." Fortunately, new research provides a more complex and complete history that includes Barzun's importance to the era.

The artificial division between art and literary history allows the relationship between Marcel Duchamp and Henri-Martin Barzun to fall through institutional cracks. According to Robert M. Crunden's *American Salons: Encounters with European Modernism, 1885–1917*, they have a close relationship on both sides of the Atlantic beginning in 1909. Duchamp, during a period of time when he does not paint much, nevertheless involves himself in the Puteaux Group at his brother's home, where Barzun participates and where Duchamp learns more of Barzun's theories.[63] This is a little-credited influence. Crunden's book, however, ignores Barzun's subsequent presence at the Arensberg Salon with Duchamp. Yet, when interviewer

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[62] "Art et Action". Merrill C. Berman Collection, mcbcollection.com/campaigns/view-campaign/1bXTrcDgTO3BtPJ7CDzuigxf4w7ylZGBRvvJU9S-FqH1Y5PxfQScmcP5kxZmXOeFNXIjMr_Fq5k9OI_gOh0c8YJiJpEhWtou. This archival collection documents the Laboratoire de théâtre pour l'affirmation et la défense modernes experimental theater group founded by Louise Lara and Édouard Autant, which operated between 1919 and 1939.

[63] Robert M. Crunden, *American Salons: Encounters with European Modernism, 1885–1917* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p 428.

Pierre Cabanne asks Duchamp about the intellectual landscape of New York City, Duchamp lists Barzun first among the tight-knit European circle: "There were Barzun, Roché, Jean Crotti, the composer, Edgard Varèse, Man Ray…".[64]

This intimate connection carries unexamined implications regarding the conceptual frameworks leading to Duchamp's famous *Nude Descending the Staircase No. 2* (1912). Its rejection for the 1912 Salon des Indépendants by the hanging committee consisting of his two brothers and Albert Gleizes is well known. Their reasons include that it looks too Italian Futurist, the title written in block letters at the lower margin of the canvas, and Gleizes' objection to a walking nude—in art, the nude reclines. Regarding the too-Futurist style, his Simultané derives not from the Italians, but from the same influence, Barzun. The energy displayed is not Futurist, but sourced from the chronophotography of Étienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge, particularly Muybridge's *Woman Walking Downstairs* (1887). Duchamp studies their stop-motion sequences of human and animal movement for the painting. The descending movement can be seen, then, as a weaving of Simultané and chronophotography. He exhibits it in Paris at the Salon de la Section d'Or in October 1912, and it later causes an uproar at the 1913 Armory Show in New York, where it becomes among the most discussed works in the exhibition.

Through the Jungian lens—though Duchamp objects to all symbolic readings—we can read the painting as an expression of his anima arriving on the scene after a period of not painting. It is also a new form of the anima emerging during the rise of women demanding equal rights. Here a soul does not passively wait to be rescued, but descends from the heights of the chauvinists' ideal platform of passive womanhood, ready to participate in the twentieth century as an equal. Gleizes represents the brakes applied against that movement, resisting its descent. A third reading, using its

[64] Marcel Duchamp, interview by Pierre Cabanne (1966), trans. Ron Padgett, in *Dialogue with Marcel Duchamp*, Milan Golob Art Archive, http://www.golob-gm.si/25f-Dialogue-with-Marcel-Duchamp.htm.

golden hues, suggests the anima descending to offer heightened consciousness to seer poets and artists, guiding the culture toward its higher potentials.

Along with these developments, dynamic tectonic shifts rapidly alter the trajectory of the avant-garde after WWI, moving from early Modernism to Dada—with its nihilism and rejection of past art and literature—and psychologically driven Surrealism, informed heavily by Sigmund Freud and to a lesser extent by Carl Jung. Thus, a new dominant zeitgeist forms, a shift that continues from the emergence of Dada and stretches into the contemporary era, establishing a new Spirit of the Times. This same lineage shapes commentaries from the 1960s onward by academics and anthologists tracking concrete poetry, visual poetry, and text art. These critics follow the rigid, materialistic principles of Clement Greenberg's formalist doctrine. Soon after, commentators apply postmodern diagnostic tools and jargon to visual poetry, focusing on the object and the process while abandoning intended creative meaning.

This narrow focus essentially erases or flattens the psychological and spiritual layers of poetic expression. It systematically omits visionary poets whose works arc from the inner Spirit of the Depths to the fleeting Spirit of the Times to form an expression capable of genuine forward momentum. Modern commentators remain tied to the Spirit of the Times, rendering them functionally allergic to the revelatory, transformative embrace of the Spirit of the Depths. Accompanying this shift is an institutional retreat from idealism, intuition, and revelatory creation, replaced instead by the dogmas of dialectical materialism. Institutional academia surrenders itself to positivism, scientism, and psychology monopolized by orthodox Freudianism. Fortunately, Jung's work gains some attention, and, within academia, isolated, brilliant exceptions resist such impulses. This avant-garde seems to ignore the implications of the new quantum physics by following the Cartesian-Newtonian, Greco-Latin classicism that is redefined by Apollinaire. Ignoring Bergson's duration, the page becomes a set of static objects seen simultaneously while maintaining the old restricted consciousness. This

contrasts with Barzun's choral poetics, simultaneous activity, rooted in duration and seemingly chaotic, prompting an expanded awareness out of which a new harmony may be discovered. Apollinaire is prescient in that his works are widely accepted. Barzun is prescient in that his works survive the test of quantum physics; the works of Mallarmé, Apollinaire, and Marinetti do not.

Within this new spirit of the times, we find the wide acceptance of the Eurydice chapter as the primary focus on Orpheus, rather than the Orphic quest for higher consciousness expressed by Hugo and Barzun. Apollinaire's surrealism—later ruled over by André Breton—and that which is expressed by most surrealists—are dives into the underworld of the unconscious where the quest for light remains rare. A few writers use the chapter of the dismemberment of Orpheus as an allegory to explain the fragmentation of literary and artistic expression in the twentieth century. The complexity of Barzun's epic is far in advance of the times. The less complex works of Mallarmé, Apollinaire, and Marinetti take hold, moving Barzun's work further into the background.

If Barzun's monumental epic is published, an object exists. The work, then, can be discussed, debated, and compared with the "greats" among the avant-garde who shape visual poetry and visual text art. Perhaps one day a definitive multi-volume edition comprising his published works, diaries, and the entire epic will be available. Meanwhile, his wish to influence the vanguard rather than the public is fulfilled, although with the tragic, unintended consequence of his disappearing from both public and avant-garde view. He forgets that members of the vanguard arrive from the public.

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karl kempton's lexical and visual poems are widely published by national and international small, independent publishers. He lives with his beloved Ruth in Oceano, California, consciously removed from literary centers adding to the local bohemian Dunite literary & photography legacy. He is an environmental-activist poet opposing pesticide drift. He is known as architect of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, the third largest in NOAA's inventory, protecting over 4,500 square miles of ocean ecosystems and features. Recent books include: *selected lexical & visual mathematical poetry 1976-2022, Cold River Press, 2022; photography——Discourse 10: sandskrit of the oceano dunes, 2021;* and, *Discourse 11: portraiture: oceano dunes to tide lines, 2023, Otoliths, Australia. Forthcoming: Outriders: Visual Text Art in the United States, 1900 to 1973, Sandy Press.*

Gavin Lucky

The Provision of Supplies

I remind the 6th graders
that resources are scarce
& not all of them
will make it.
"Look to your left"
Later, in the principle's office,
I look to the right.

My Wife and Child

Are perfectly well behaved
we are greeted
with garlands and laurels
most everywhere
we go
I feel a fraud
standing next to them, so
well composed
they are

I have my suspicions
of course

I do not think they are
real, exactly, my wife and
child.

Sometimes, out of the corner of my eye,
I'll catch a glimpse (have a fleeting
vision)
a claw
a tail
scales on a familiar landscape.

The Everything-Industrial Complex

I don't know what
or how
but I just feel
there's the body
there's the mind
witnessing a series of events
kind of sad and boring
when
I scratch the surface
some kind of transcendental experience,
I thought that
would make me consider
things, well,

differently.

Gavin Lucky is a nomadic teacher. Previous work of his has appeared in *Utriculi, Shot Glass Journal, Otoliths, Riverbed Review*, and *MacQueen's Quinterly*.

David Abel

Passage 14

Do understand to do asked
to answered said was to
copy off
Can do asked

of
had loved borned in in
for of would have trampled under
had loved drained
Was in
in bestrode was
of in of
had saved from being trampled under had
gone having been gone to on
beneath of in with
scraped in listened scraped up listened
scraped scraped
Sitting at solved out proves by
is peered
through rattled in
of from
Across moved in in
of wearing of Give traverse
bow to of of from
in flashing
in of shining
in could not comprehend
Do understand Can work for

In copied Waiting for
of moved of
flickering behind
With had fed hid
from of
was
bends beside for to lay is
sit in of

of to be dethroned
was done
is said as stood up
answered
dried with carried
back to
had better get go out to said
as followed towards

In was heared called from

Run on said is calling
stood in watched towards
were in were sorted in
came stepping over of with had reached
contending called to turned

is cried without listening
are on cried
Will wait in for said restore

as stepped back across cried

is is
cried about on closed
round bleaching of
hung in with of
of on bargained with was in
is On of of
shall be in of
having preached to without
over in Blowing out
halted at
said
brought out of by
slapped open took from of laid
on

Passage 15

said strapping stowing away
for moved
over in

of
fell on of
said turning about in
are to have See is for is for
See
shot from
said think ’ll find ’s
Thank said gathering together with
putting in of
at said have earned
went back to
of of in by

Don’t carry said pull out
lose buy of ’ll find
Answer
would be said

round can break in
will
don’t save said pointing don’t
know is is have lived
know know knew does say *Put*
in
murmured
lifted from to
knew was said made
Do know is of Do
know is will hear from ’s

looked on is to
on on
on said sets

cried not said
tapped against
will tell said is *paid*

paid borrowed in Can feel
owe Can

is
For answered
laughed with putting back
knew couldn't said must feel
are must be
fear said make
stared for over at
of in of
think said
saw since remember Do
know agitated for of
before did before of denounced
forget
of in
of

lie down
sketched
have in said On
am from voted for are

said
said was voted for
put on to ride to from of to do so

to

David Abel is a poet, editor, and interdisciplinary artist, and the proprietor of Passages Bookshop in Portland, Oregon. With a group of friends he founded the Spare Room reading series in 2002, still going strong in its twenty-fifth year. He is the author or deviser of various books and text objects, most recently two chapbooks of poems, *Strange Attractors* from Airfoil and *Equifinality* from Crane's Bill. Forthcoming publications include an expanded bilingual edition of *Eclipses*, from Escandalar in Mexico City and Couch Press in Portland; a selection of early poems, *After the Frontier*, from Himal Press; a first volume of the ongoing serial project *Sweep*, from Chax; and an audiocassette, *Sound Works*, from Spiral Editions.

Artist's Statement

Passage comprises a series of manipulated pages. I am gradually working my way through a precedent text — a found text, if you will — which promises to occupy me for a very long time. This first series will consist of twenty-six sections, two pages each, after which the process will change, in response to changes in the underlying precedent. The entirety of the work is projected to be more than 700 pages, with many unforeseen transformations along the way.

J. D. Nelson

useless unless fed to itself

& now
for now

avoidant unlike
lightning

as it is for anyone
before the sun

noise combines itself
w/ itself

as it is

on is on

clinical scale
no bronze

none slash
nothing

moving thru
empirical space

    we glaze
    our pots

crows (tones)

the pt
of a bt

stiffness in the next
combed from answers

gramwork for commas
& periods

or: orc orc
hestra or
chard

canned rabbit

here in pine heaven
we love our low pollen counts

beneath pineal umbrella
another pitcher of pepsi please

now less greasy!

p.s. like so nature's

nay vapory
loaves you know

mouthing the words
of gene's speech

(unless
silent)

J. D. Nelson (b. 1971) is the author of twelve collections of poetry, including *Cinderella City* (The Red Ceilings Press, 2012). Visit MadVerse.com for more information and links to his published work. Nelson lives in Boulder, Colorado.

Patrick Cahill

Home Run

The pitcher, motionless on the mound, stares at the hitter and drills him with an evil eye, then winds up and drills the hitter who drops to the ground as the catcher tags the ump while the guy in left field, new in town, walks off and heads for the exit and off to a bar. Meanwhile the catcher, the injured batter, or some invisible force, has lifted the ball into the air where it joins the ceaseless migration of birds. The pitcher looks up, stares at the birds, their marvelous pattern, and understands that invisible transmigration of souls, souls he had always imagined as birds, weightless and white, his own nested near his heart, then leaves the park and joins the left fielder in the bar.

The Monk

There once was a man who lived like a monk in a monastery that didn't exist at the edge of the earth, where of an evening an abbot hidden in shadow, the shadow of an alcove, if abbot there were, sang a chant that he the man remembered but whose words and music he couldn't comprehend, though he felt the need to sing the song, while light from the stained glass windows high on the wall, windows found in the great cathedral in a city of stone, made possible the darkness in which the abbot concealed himself, while during the day the simple man who lived like a monk recited the single prayer he knew and sought the illicit pleasures that monks pursued, a cold wind on the mountain that once rose beneath the monastery, where monks ate, drank, sinned, and were silent, the high walls always in their thoughts, from which once a brethren threw himself, plummeting through what he wanted to believe was the air of glory –

Sketchbook

Mountains recede as broadleaf trees and conifers come closer
having lost their hold and gaze at me. After the shower the
window screen a sheet of tiny beads draws into focus, a river
beneath the landscape of our body, its streaming fed by
glaciers and a forest's rain, its earthbound blood a taste on
our tongue, the humid air just visible or imagined, this
snapshot a part of your penciled collage, a log half under
water and an alligator sliding off its surface and into the
listless stream, the two of us slowly appearing line by line
holding hands along its bank, a deer just seen in the trees
beyond, a hawk taking shape in flight –

Artistic Statement

I usually start with an image or phrase that simply comes to me. The source of this is often unknown, though it may be something I've seen or remembered or heard. "Home Run," e.g., began when I noticed a televised game across the room in a restaurant. I was waiting for my food and paid no attention to the game, but while I sat there I scribbled the first line of that piece on a napkin. Cliche, I know, but it happens. "Sketchbook" came into view while I was doodling in one. But this is unusual; usually the source is more mysterious. In any case, I let the language and intuition take over and am almost always surprised where the poem ends up. Designing a poem in advance, its form and content, rarely works for me. And when things are going well, I enjoy watching the language unfold.

Patrick Cahill's *The Machinery of Sleep* (Sixteen Rivers Press) appeared in 2020. A second collection, *If We are the Forest the Animals Dream*, also from Sixteen Rivers, appeared in 2025. His poems have twice won the Central Coast Writers Award. A cofounder and editor of *Ambush Review,* a San Francisco–based literary and arts journal, he was also a contributing editor for the anthology *Digging Our Poetic Roots: Poems from Sonoma County* (WordTemple Press). Cahill lives in San Francisco, where he volunteers with San Francisco Recreation and Parks in habitat restoration.

Hrishikesh Srinivas

Power button

Walking right into an advertisement,
can you feel the weight of sun on cement,
flung off tan windows polarized off roads?
Construction crews back from breaks swim in it.
Forests of smart phones on public-posting
carpals hoist short tangents to an oval.
Centre yourself prop your foot on that step
take time to acquire a voluble look.
Where the tourist requests a memento
for their future solitary self you may
vibe for the folks who've heard about you.
All the rage'll come roiling up main street
from the metro station to the public lawn.
It'll seize you like a deer in headlights
a reed in a monstrous windstorm to break
on the other side superimposed quiet :–
like flowers twilit brighter than diodes
to imagine spurs nodding with raindrops.

Fall ends

Already over your covered hemisphere
mottled leaves muffle footfalls to level
the barer trees peel back a view of buildings.
A drawback of life's line is missing experience, it
rises starlike across from these chosen, bright seats
no more admonishing of absorption.
The bays are enclosed in cloud
enshrouded coals inhuman peaks
livid times won't repeat.
Open bounty of thought unfurls
to give peace
to give gratitude.
As the chirping focus relents
let each of the unengendered spells
keep you warm, your movement begin
its hibernation eager to be reimagined.

Hrishikesh Srinivas is based in south-eastern Australia. He enjoys reading and writing poetry, with poems and translations appearing in issues of *UNSWeetened Literary Journal, Otoliths, Mantis, Meniscus, Aimsir,* and *Continents Manuscrits*.

Ki Duncan

a martyr's molar

you think of me as
skinny
silly &
simplified
living on the furthest molar
at the back of your mouth
no stampede of the jaw could
trample the words
used against me in sermons
& haven't i always been prone to
bite?

from the bruise painted
along my mother's nipple
from breastfeeding a baby
with a violent mouth
or the marks in all
my straws from when
we were allowed to get
happy meals
or the pencils i bit through so hard
i discovered the graphite
or the pens
or the markers
or the ends of my sleeves
or the body of christ
or the tongues of men
who claimed to know the will
of a murderous god

i bit through them all
with nothing but
judas' voice to wash it down
—a kiss on the cheek of a man
i do & don't love

is it betrayal if you know it's coming?

i instill wisdom in the
back of your jaw
plant the seed of forbidden fruit
so that you might be gifted
the flavor of awareness

i know your violent mouth
because i lived there

& i once had one
of my own

Ki Duncan (he/they) is a queer, black writer and artist whose work explores identity, masculinity, queerness, faith, trauma, and the strange architectures built around himself in attempts to belong. Born in Maryland and adopted into a white Christian family, they grew up negotiating the contradictions of race, religion, family, and sexuality while developing an early tendency toward relentless questioning—of God, of the self, and of the stories we inherit about who we are supposed to become. His writing often moves between the analytical and the visceral, using fragmentation, religious imagery, and body-centered language to examine the places where belief and identity fracture or fuse together. In *the book of a broken boi*, Ki builds a mythology meant to interrogatewhat it means to construct a self from conflicting inheritances: the body and the spirit, masculinity and queerness, devotion and doubt, harm and healing. The result is a body of work concerned less with

finding definitive answers than with asking better, more dangerous questions. This work is rooted in the belief that identity is not something we simply discover, but something we continually dismantle, build, mourn, question, and remake. “a martyr’s molar” examines the body as both relic and evidence, using a single tooth as a site of sacrifice, memory, and inherited belief. The piece blends religious imagery with bodily decay to question what we preserve, what we lose, and whether suffering can ever become sacred.

Julia Rose Lewis

Emails Poems Deer Oh My!

All poems are love poems.
Some poems are better off dead.
—James Galvin, 'Blue or Green'

Is it sincere or satirical anthropomorphism making meaning of the deer in *Goblins: Or the Tiny Tears of Technology?* SJ Fowler's latest full length collection is naturally both. The book is an epistolary letter to the dear reader celebrating the sighting of the wild animal and holding it inside the mind of the writer.

Dear redacted is the beginning of conflict between the internet and printed work. Is it here beloved or peer or superior to the writer? The dear redacted introduces the reader to the world of internet surveillance and the power superiors hold. This black plank is revealing a world that gives privacy only to the more powerful people, making the very hierarchy of the world ringed around by fencing. The redaction is an inside joke in the sense of satirical anthropomorphism we the reader are the deer outside the high fence.

The deer appear twice inside the poem Mystic. They are represent animal nature in the form of a deer and a bird and doe deer wise. Deer is a homophone of dear; it is living inside our ear. This animal life is a foil for the online life under interpretation by the other readers. He writes:

> I was a doe deer wise.
> I was unseen. Inwisible.
> I was megalithic wifi. (Goblins p.18)

To be wise with reference to deer. To be a doe deer is so very close sounding to a dodo opposite wise. To be unseen is not unlike being redacted and recalls us to the dear redacted. Then the one word sentence, inwisable, echoing invisible and wise and wizard beside so much of what is said on the online now. The invisible is impossible to take the piss out of and this is power. Here the poem turns to megalithic times and writing about deer as the first step in human communication. It is

opening up the animal body inside the reader. There is echoing between the deer and the writer to whom they are dear in the poem Mystic.

The poem Monarch juxtaposes surveillance as the sole and absolute ruler of the internet to deer. The very number of deer appearances at the beginning is making a herd. There are four or more deer on the first page. He writes:

> You,
> so appears a deer. (Goblins p.31)

You the second person appears as a singular deer. Here repeating the monarch. The deer revealing the dear reader so the writer finds their audience. Is the second person the ruler over the speaker? You is a homophone of the vowel that the speaker of the poem Mystic said they would remove. He writes:

> I would remove vowels like wings from an insect so O and U
> would be lost
> to intense and passionate feeling
> Your shadow has shown you what a real friend looks like
> (Goblins p.26)

Fowler is utilizing only two vowels to tell the reader the profound effect one can have on someone else. There is the wish to destroy the conflict that comes with difference. A shadow is behind us casting shade and following where we lead willingly a fair weather follower of the internet literally.

A second deer follows on the first page of the poem. It is a singular deer again. The repetition of the definite article is linking enemy, goblin, and deer. He writes:

> The enemy of the goblin.
>
> The deer
> that appears
> licking your ears.

It's a warning
of the forest
that you are a cave. (Goblins p.31)

It is a longing for belonging. A pair of deer makes a herd, echoing the desire of the speaker to be heard. Here is revealed a different kind of recognition that is a bidirectional exchange. The licking hints to salt in the sense the speaker is salty and that is both embodied and appealing to the deer for that reason. And yet, it is saying beware of the hollow and dark that is inside the ear. A cave can be a shelter and echo chamber beside. This is the idea of deer having an enemy is appealing to the sense of being united against danger.

In order for a deer to be the enemy of the goblin, we have to remember that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The word enemy is not only what one might expect. To name someone an enemy is to identify a kind of relationship to say that they mean something to you. He is the creator of the Enemies Project, an international events series that explores the potential and limits of poetry by means of collaboration. In the introduction to his selected collaborations he writes, 'poetry lends itself to collaboration as language does conversation, and it is in poetry we are renovating the living space of communication, and this in itself is a collaborative act.' (A miniaturised bulwark against being solitary) To name the collaborator antagonist or opponent is foregrounding the in the writing process over the finished product in a novel way. The presence of the poet as a reader and the reader as a poet without hierarchy is the nature of this ecosystem. Fowler is his own enemy and the enemy of his enemy in Goblins.

The goblin or gobshite of the internet is the enemy of the speaker of the poem monarch and the deer. It is important to note the deer is plural here. The deer know what it is to be consumed by humans and become more deer for warning the speaker. He writes:

That you are what you live within.

That you are
your computer too much.

That the deer becomes

the old people
who caused you then to warn you. (Goblins p.31)

Here is a beautiful variation of you are what you eat to you are what you consume and what consumes you in the sense of surveillance. The speaker is consumed by the goblins gobbling up personal data and that is risking turning into a goblin. However, the speaker would rather become a deer. That deer appear eight times in the poem Monarch is choosing the ideal reader to reign.

The third is not given; no golden dappled deer to be seen here. The monster is stirred into being by means of reading the poems and finding a desire to respond in kind. The anatomy of the monster is that it is the first person plural. The monster follows the first person singular in the first poem mystic, the second person in the second poem monarch and to imply a kind of call and response. It is uniformity that makes the first person plural a monster pushing the deer and dear redacted as distinct voices outside the poem. I cannot help but remember Star Trek monsters the Borg who spoke only in the first person plural. (Memory Alpha) They were a cyborg species dedicated to conquering the universe and making every species into cyborgs like themselves. Hierarchy needs individual difference to exist. The writer and dear redacted exist in a state where animal is transformed into peer and superior. What was affection in the forest is now artificial online.

The deer appear once in the fourth poem Messiah. It is not the animal, nay rather, it is the epistolary or relational homophone of the forest. The wild deer seeking salt inside the ear are returned in a double negative construction followed by a single negative. He writes:

Whatever you wish to search.
rank sarcasm and dejection. Loneliness and ironical gloom

Non-tongues licking no ears
Licking nothing! Though you must eat, dear.

It is the boundless informant (Goblins p.84)

Whatever you wish to search puts the ghost in the machine in conversation with the second person. To be ironic, lonely, or sarcastic

all fall under the nature of being salty. Deer need salt to survive and love a salt lick. This licking as a need and form of affection is what the speaker compares the role of liking internet posts. This pairing of words maps animal behavior onto internet behavior. The messiah is only the ghost in the machine now.

Ghost or lost in the machine is the question that the postscript puts to the reader. Let us name them poet/poet journalist and publisher. Privilege is protection. The second postscript is written by the journalist. The third is an introduction written by Fowler named as himself and editor of the book. There is a second person that appears in his section of the postscript footnotes, the redactor as the poetry publisher. The redactor utilizes the first person plural, the same as the poem Monster. The redactor is an antagonist to Fowler.

The introduction or the final postscript, begins with dear reader. The deer are returned to take their rightful place at the beginning of the book and beloved. The deer are not a mirror, rather, they reveal the writer's desire for the ideal reader in the mind of the beholder. Fowler uses the phrase dear reader to finally allow us inside the joke, inside the fence. This is a nod to poem brut as animal embodied poetry. See the hart and hind. Hart is a homonym for heart, the metaphorical seat of feeling. Hind is a homonym for behind is power. Or hind as in behind as in supporting and pushing us the four legged body of the animal and beloved to move forward in time.

The hart and hind are deer being hunted down in time. The heart and the mind are moving through time following the deer into the future. Deer use their hind end to power their movement forward through their bodies to their hart at last. Back toward the future is what is lost in the sins of postmodernism. It is not suggesting humanity ought to turn away from the future rather how we ought to turn ourselves toward the future using the power from the past to move us forward into new times. The body of the book Goblins is the movement driven from the hind end towards the heart of the matter. It is an anatomy of modernism and postmodernism in one body suing biomechanics to say that there is no postmodernism without modernism.

There is no movement without the hind end and that is to say the history of literature is four legged. Fowler explores the movement of literature

through time. The temporal nature of the postscript introduction illustrates the postmodernism by means of layout. Then he recasts the dear reader as a once and future poet. He asks:
Who is better placed to write poetry in the now than a junior paid to steal your communications?' (Goblins p.97) Here he is, more than anything else, giving permission to the reader of the introduction to steal these very words. If the poem emerges in the form of communication between two people, then it is stealing their privacy by means of making an inside joke public. This is taking the obscurity of poetry as fuel for irony.

Obscurity and its non-superimposable mirror image privacy are material matters to poets in the form of copyright. Is the author of a work of literature ever any more than the authority figure? Or is the author of a work of literature one who moves history forward by augmenting what has been written? The law reads: 'The author has asserted their right to be identified as the author of this Work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act of 1988.' (Goblins) Here we see for stealing to be real, the identity of the person stolen from must also be real. All this is loss made manifest in the postscript of Goblins. What is lost without identity is the illusion of obscurity, the illusion of privacy, the illusion of copyright. This warning in Goblins is perfect for release of large language models and the theft of intellectual property by generative artificial intelligence companies developing the technology. Fowler has turned taking the last word inside out with his introduction inside the postscript turning his essay into a prescription for the future of poetry.

I adore the ending of Goblins; Or the Tiny Tears of Technology. The very last line is a redaction of the publisher, Broken Sleep Books' motto to read 'LAY OUT YOUR REDACTED.' (Goblins) This is an elegant outline of the deer inside the fence and understanding the joke as only a dear reader who has read other books by the poet and the press.

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Julia Rose Lewis is the author of eight poetry collections, the most recent of which is *Traumatism* (Knives Forks Spoons Press 2026). She and Wilfred Franklin wrote together the essay collection, *Overly Verbal Ape: Studies in the work of SJ Fowler* (Knives Forks Spoons Press 2025).

Lewis LaCook

Sigmund And The Sea Monsters

thank you for all the lonely summer sunsets
the hours stretching out past my parents' lives like a long pier
watching Johnny Carson while the TV burns
until a cyber truck passes me on Chestnut Street
the water laps at the moonlight with little dark tongues
you have to accept time as it is
and walk against the traffic on these country roads

take me home but not too soon

thanks for asking after the poems that Auschwitz
ruined, dusks charred with blind persistence
you have to accept one thing after another
at the mouth of the pit I've dug for us
footprints older than history
singing the theme to Laverne and Shirley

Rock Around The Clock

giddy Sisyphus back to pushing that rock
because that rock ain't gonna push itself
still has to get up in the morning, clock in
remember how pretty sunsets were when the mill

oxidized the peeling houses for miles around
and in the infected stumps of Cleveland's teeth
you could see the day drown itself in the lake
while you punished yourself for not being loved

you were always glad when it was over
like any surgery, as long as you wouldn't remember
and the scar it left could talk about itself
and the scar it left made you attractive

silly Sisyphus, imagine yourself happy
you always know where that rock is

Walking After Midnight

I've learned to retain a lot of forgetting but just now can't recall
where in this anxious knot of winds the fan still rotates
refreshing the frame rate of all this friction
or what it is the eye of a storm is looking at so hard

But whether Patsy Cline died of heartbreak or not
you can take as you will and still not know the half of it
like the dad you had clutched in pain in bed one morning
in April before the ambulance and they called you out of class
to walk your sister down two blocks to the heart of what was wrong
stay home after midnight but then there's a sunny afternoon
watching me pass it by hunger guttering it inside

You know how it is when a passcode you use every day slips
and you're left waiting at the keypad in the Bardo
body warming the sod of March dusk
streetlights whispering in cobalt and mauve
confess to whichever solved mystery is the loudest

Air Quality Alert

the tree of heaven is an invasive species
it wants to know where you've been all night
how to tell when you mean what you're saying
you tell it what you think it should know
haze of wildfires miles away softens the rest
it wears the scent of panic deferred
it's where the moon meets your pointing finger

the tree of heaven is the smile of salesmen

it promises days off beneath a crackling blue sky
knows how hard you've been working, your strained sleep

it offers to pray with you for forgiveness
both of you might be going to hell
but at least the tree of heaven knows how to keep its cool
the night the kudzu takes your field you sleep like the dead

Blue Ribbon

you have to kill the pain of being somehow why not with Pabst
why not the pain of remembering everyone who isn't
being somehow now that evening has its teeth in you again
time to nibble at your edges and stare nervous holes in the walls

it's about time that being somehow kills the pain of Pabst
why not it's only fair those who have gone before
are ahead of us while your ghost keeps lagging behind
the shadow of your muscle memory keeping time for nobody

slow down bro these are as yet only possible staircases
you have to kill Pabst with the pain of somehow
being one inch closer to the void
you can't spare anyone on such a sun-loud day

the front office will require a full report
the pain of Pabst killing you is no excuse

As a child, on interstate trips, **Lewis LaCook** thought the moon was following his family's Econoline van. Upon reaching adulthood, he couldn't tell whether the truth disappointed or relieved him, so he started writing things down. Some of these things looked like poems, and they may have appeared in journals like *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Suburban Witchcraft, Lost And Found Times, Otoliths, Unlikely Stories,Whiskey Tit, Lotus-eater, Synchronized Chaos, Argotist Online Poetry, Medusa's Kitchen, Reapthrill, Exist Otherwise* and *Epater*, among others. In 2012

BlazeVOX published *Beyond the Bother of Sunlight*, a book-length collaboration with Sheila E. Murphy; previously, Anabasis published his book-length poem *Cling*. His collection *My Kinship with the Lotus-eaters* was published in 2022 by BlazeVOX. https://www.blazevox.org/shop-1/p/my-kinship-with-the-lotus-eaters-by-lewis-lacook. Lewis can often be found wandering the wilds of Western New York state with his wife Lindsay.

Connor Fisher

Crystals

After the coming holocaust, after my imperceptible death, my widow will exhume my body in the evening shade. She will kiss me, then pull crystals from my head as a child wrenches fish from a shallow pond. The crystals have grown. She will tuck them between her breasts, beneath her opulent scarf. She will pocket them beneath her tongue where they knead her frenum like the edges of sharks' teeth. With one crystal she will buy a loaf of bread, a sack of potatoes, a bottle of wine. With the second, she will bribe the police chief. She will chisel the rest into a miniature hall of mirrors.

The Foundation

Martha was a China doll. Grandmother sewed a bonnet atop her porcelain-pale face. The moon stared from a mirror with winking craters for eyes. The moon's snout was bloated and wan. The girl's twin was a fleck of mange, flensed like a needled seal. The twin bled like a woman. The master walked past their door at night and the tip of his cane probed crannies in the wall. His fists were black apples. The foundation was a sham. And Martha stuck out her tongue: red as the blood from a berry.

The Language of an Unknown Land

It had rained on the fleshy backs of cattle for years. Their eyes diluted, milky and gray, turned towards the clouds that moved slow as vultures. Farmers wore rubber and held shovels upside down like barge poles, sprang nimbly across the murky canals. So the decade went on, unraveling like thread from a translucent spool.

In time, the milk ran dry. Farmers swaddled their households and left the country.

And Mary, in her shrouds of burlap, held her only daughter's hand. Together they sang lullabies in the language of an unknown land:

guttural and harsh, bound by soft whispers of vowels. And fleet, fleet, they stumbled together into the waking forest.

The Futures of Rust

The birds were naked, sleek and febrile beneath the sun's diluted rays. They mounted stratus clouds whose streamers ran thick as oil. Monsoons flailed.

That night, I nibbled my lover's ear as his skin gleamed in the candlelight. The moon had vanished or become the face of a soot-crusted clock. A ghost walked on my thighs.

Upstairs, my father sang from the bathtub and rattled his chains through the suds. The futures of rust were unstoppable in our salty air.

So we cavorted, our coats in tatters; we trailed the birds through industrial parks with kerosene in our palms. At dusk, we lit fires between ruined machines. The sagging rooftops would welcome us.

Connor Fisher is the author of *A Renaissance with Eyelids* (Schism Press, 2024), *The Isotope of I* (Schism Press, 2021) and four poetry and hybrid chapbooks including *The Unholy Moon* (salò press, 2024). He has an MFA from the University of Colorado at Boulder and a Ph.D. in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Georgia. His writing has appeared in journals including *Denver Quarterly, the Yalobusha Review, Tammy, the Colorado Review, Word for/Word*, and *Diagram*. He currently lives and teaches in northern Mississippi.

Steven Salmoni

from *A Theory of Paper*

By pure chance, the letter willed itself.

As if line retraces curve, along the arcs of their confinement, where you find yourself alone, left to search among remains.

Would the letter then have meant "our persistent figure,"
a venture into realms where nothing would fail to plunge back into character? Any other, beyond any other—

the letter, as the line speaks within the letter, says it would be so. A long cantabile; the declining moon in autumn; a still compass, no matter what the change in fortune,

the invisible can have its meaning, but for a grievous lack of what's concealed:

the letter, found in driftwood, when perception becomes what can be lettered,

when script follows in the absence of intent, the space which "separates particulars, like water, in the water,"

the letter, in the letters' wish to see one that resembles.

That the letters shaped themselves is incidental to how one sees.
I want a letter to reserve the shape, where one's reason is this letter.

"Your heart is green when green is the cause, and

sometimes we are hollow." A language of "this will have to do." "Islands made of bones, where nothing follows." And why are we not this? Is our letter made of wood?

The water in the water, "as drift-wood may / bind us to its tenderness"

and suppose, then, a new enclosure, closed in imitation of the letter.
Desire overruled by the very nature (of) counter-vailing desire,

the same this as the unnameable that. Suppose I give you
a set of lost characters, with another set of those found between.

“Here are pearls and here they were broken;” here the picture extends to
the letters of the picture,

all ends the alphabet will use to house itself.

At times, *q* is the letter referring to its frame, at times
to what the letter *p* surrounds.

At times, our compass points to jade, to fire, all desires we follow
in our wake. Letters are fragile, bony, invisible, unnecessary, their
melody unforeseen in the green marks that retrace this image, a lettering
more than seemingly of less.

Letters can’t cover the word I’ve delineated for them,
a word more green than I had thought.

Let’s say it exists in everyone, and this broken thing is
one of the countless laboratories of reason—

e.g. you in your echo, in the middle, where the rest of us write “I’d
follow the wind.”

Why letters, if the letter risks itself for kingdoms that never turn round
and meet their ends?

(What marrow aspires to say that existence can be lost?)

The letter asked this of itself, confined, before as it was afterwards to be.

Anything, however, is perceived through what the void affords. At the
heart of these theories are the unfulfilled spaces, and yet no one expects a
letter in their box, a letter and its attendant moon, to fix our unpredictable
fortune.

How to choose between one's name and the many names one chooses?

Letters are similar to letters, like water, and incidentally, like nothing, the end of any line, between what this picture makes and the way that it might be letter.

p supposes *q*, but how can they conjecture, all but emptied of themselves, taking the form of "I saw well enough" to be the form of names—

i.e. "a failure of shadow," not particular to objects,
a turmoil in the string, or a theory of invalid paper.

Can one's waking organs recite the common compounds' silhouette?

It may be deceptive, to follow in another's phase.

"Heartless," said *q*. "You're forever adjusting the name that a name would lend to character."

"I go to watch," said *p*, basking in the tide's accessions. "You can always swim the sea in spring."

Meaning to the sun, no inheritance, no longer to say, as they grow, that letters, like reeds, will vault new borders.

"I'll hide," says *p*, "so you will be complete, the line of letters a-row on either side, the ground mired with long echoes,

alphabets' collateral, our feet in clay," The letter may yet be, but it is broken by the order of the letter.

(I gather to exaggerate the real).

What margin allows itself a ruined space? Perhaps the line will prove the rest. Is it then the letter's arc that shows us where we are?

All travel in the same overabundance, and

some of them are helpless. Some had no umbrella. Do we leave the open sign?

Sand was all they had. The theory offered no improvement, its premise drawn through multiple refractions, so that one would sway before the line.

The letters upon the margin are stone perpendicular to body. Their names are added to the letter.

If each letter gives life to the letter that follows, I can't exist, but for the way through every letter.

The letter was yours, as you, yourself were yours, just as it was the letter that held itself to be.

Then: "does one discover letters, through the mark of those that were to be discovered?"

"It was," said *q*, "to be, just as I was, waiting for the love
of all creatures."

So too the prospect stood, and seemed to stand, upon its own withdrawal, there in June, with all the alphabets mapped in the formal perfection of displacement.

There, *p* dreams of place before the object, moon trestles
in the wood lost below. There, a crowd of letters, where texture is lost, as one perceives another,

where we died, mute in every sign, of which countless signs remain.

All for the want of the weave of images, as a letter bereft the study its envelope.

But what of the reflection? What adapts to the shape of the material, even more than the material?

The letter, and its letter, and the material difference in their season. Climate, or the seeds of what had been growing, to saturate the premises of why.

A star upon our climate, or a climate harvested for thread—

all that's continuous allowed one to fly, as a gift to letters. If you refuse, can I still write the unperfected blank?

And if the country is divided among them, these letters, from the start, seem to not recognize the others.

To think, as the word was central, yet made separate in part by letter. Did the letter escape its path in the mechanism of its image?

The question of making, through time and through letter, will only ask just enough to make a word.

Steven Salmoni's recent publications include *A Day of Glass*, the chapbook *Landscape, With Green Mangoes* (both from Chax Press) and poems in *e·ratio, Otoliths, Word For / Word, Puerto del Sol, P-Queue*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Interim*. Selections from his work have also appeared in the anthologies *The Sonoran Desert: A Literary Field Guide* (U of Arizona Press, 2016), *The Experiment Will Not Be Bound* (Unbound Editions, 2022) and *The Last Milkweed* (Tupelo Press, 2023).

He received a Ph.D. from Stony Brook University and is currently the Department Chair of English at Pima Community College in Tucson, AZ. He also serves on the Board of Directors for Chax Press and for POG, a Tucson-based literary and arts organization that hosts an annual reading series.

Artist's Statement:

These pieces are a selection from a book-length project entitled *A Theory of Paper*. In this work, I attempt (or procced from) a meditation on the letters *p* and *q*, insofar as these letters can be read as variables in statements of formal logic, as graphic reflections or inversions of one another within the series of letters that line (or queue) up in the English alphabet, and ultimately, as independent and conscious entities in themselves, where letters become characters in their own design, their own extensions through space. Or, to put this another way, I'm interested here in exploring how the site(s) that letters inhabit may be inseparable from the inscriptions they (in)cite in one another.

George Farrah

Oracle XVII

I want a dreamer of that city
the other one with gods and flies
you lifted me as we swam for the hole
an arrangement dipped from the sky

who were you lately I had pockets
singing the mountains register flips
  in the cold who can see you

I am lately into those hot springs
all the squares we frame
beneath us still trembling

Oracle XVIII

The searing fern
by the folk quilt frame
  as no activist can
re-thread mewing

in the basement

gantry’s up

all this boredom fires up

buried movement

hands signaling

sleeping awake

of the ocean liners

in the street

marry the islands

have forever volcano

eruptions of tomorrow today

Momma the madman’s face

forever in the magma!

Oracle XIV

Overlooking his feet

a gesture to enfold her

gloss envelops of flowers

the flute plays through water

the distance between the drink

stuck in his throat the flower

rhythms of the backyard fence

through squawking and barking

squares of basement rise

the sun boxed in

you later scrape the sting straight

tumbling to make cement

and sour dough

the smells of ancient kitchens

she just waits for him

to evolve into ears

he waits for a

cheer and a ladder

and a faint and a fade

Oracle XX

I love fire through my sleaves

this accounts for so many interruptions

where you cry caramel

around it

waiting for green & orange

you text me again screaming

to make me clear, florescent

and drinkable

under the patterned ceiling

opening to love

as we all knew it then

Oracle XXI

But sill, in the vagaries, the specifics of your fingers
I am a hallway condition. We are vast. We rise
like mountain over lake. We shrink. And appear large
I disappear again. Weather. Leaves. Weather.

And a voice following me down to you
is yours also both speaking.
The sun is my back yard today.

And yesterday. The house shifts. The fence leans.
The grass stands tall.

Oracle XXII

People talking into their cables

streets away the world closes

acceleration and envy

bright pipe petals

whole sock faces
clatter and sweep

fate sweeps movements

old toe holds tree

we are

counting sideways

not rich but above it (basking)

continents of virus

George J. Farrah received an MFA from Bard College, NY.

His work has appeared in *The Washington Review*, *Open 24 Hrs*., *Ribot*, *BUGHOUSE*, *Fourteen Hills*, *Disturbed Guillotine*, *Tight*, *Aileron*, *Fish Drum*, *The Columbia Poetry Review; Caldron And Net*, *CROWD, Xstream*, *MORIA*, *Ampersand, Elimae*, *Blaze VOX, BHOuse vol.2, Blue and Yellow Dog*, *Experiential-Experimental Literature, Los Magazine, Anemone Sidecar, Truck, ALTPOETICS, Counter Example, Altered Scale, Blue Fifth Review, MadHat Review, Barzakh, Hexagon Press, Dislocate, Moss Trill, and Otoliths* .

His Full length books of poetry, *The Low Pouring Stars*, *Relieved of Their Whispers,* published by *Ravenna Press. Swans Through The House,* Moria press, *Ignore The Wires***,** Sandy Press- *Rain Paper,* forthcoming, Sandy Press. His chapbooks are Chapbooks, *Insomniac Plum, Ravena Press. Walking as a Wrinkle, Moria Press Anthology, This Space for Correspondence,* and *Ravenna Press.*

Adriána Kóbor

Antinuclear Antibodies

“This bronzed barbarian meant more to me
than Cleopatra meant to Antony.” —
György Faludy

In the cushion: rusty headless needles resting needless.
Lie. I have worked in a factory [factory fandom,
for the one single insomniac-imported Canadian
goose’s sake, I have never, chap, lad]. Lead…!,
I listen to you, plein air, air full of paragliders,
off my readers, retelling the prosaic loss,
this stiffened little story. Dogs bark, not where?

You wish to listen.

Voices break, recordings, old post-its with
notes of past loves I won't reread.
Japanese feet distortion without those feet
dancing;“ I can't see”. Dark soil, I,
descending the stairs all dressed,
you won't look at, yet: Malevich
would envy, exciting the square,

keeping the circle intact.

I wish I was a jew, so that you would keep me sane,
as we would listen to the tubes’ trepidating murmur,
whereas glasses stand and fall.
A cusp of unease in a little cup, as it trembles
from the wind, falling, standing.
Ovation of bovines.
One must have followed cases.

As I told you: love must be slow and easy,
but I always kept you invisible,
at the stake of me pretending
the waste. 8 hours and early alarms.

I should have said at least

something, if only not enough. I hate the excretion,
except the green which decomposes. My mind is
full of cycling tourists. I ride to the sea, *recycling*
the lost pose, the lost prose, as this Earth stands
in the way, unable to eclipse. I only want your
mouth; all the rest is at peace, secondary, belit.
My odes do nothing to us, 'n my disgust lies

about anything at all.

I was always in disguise.
I forwarded you to the nearby market,
hence I needed more salty objects.
Without your lips,
lipless seas are salting some sweetwater haste.
Animals are learning the reburns at the clearing.
Distraught draught clusters the dunes,
I'm attempting to grasp the cemented
tail of an asteroid.

We have never been keeping so silent: our lips were
sealed onto each; 'n m/any… That only navy
seals would loose touch with their bodies!,
just enough to swim over
these rough waters.

You smell like bergamot, bootleg and
Canada Dry. I might as well preserve
your ashes in a teak oil tin can
reminding me of the unfurnished
state of our beings. We are good,
and *home now* — now that we
finally have landed even the moon.

The walls disperse.

un message personnel en plein publique

“937. One eye sees, the other feels.” Paul Klee und Klee

The face of newly weds.
The face of newborn mothers.
The face so separate as anybody.
The face of poets or anybody else.

Disconcerted by the fact that *on these dallows, Ms. Dalloway, no roses grow*, dillies-of-the-valley.
Cheese!, impeased, laughing parachute mechanism,
viscous fingering — la rottura, le botte —, as you
ascend — I mean de- —, as you acc- and de-:
wet grapes and brakes, fingering circles,
an entire circus, entire shelves in this razor-thin,
bladed book-look. “A lot more were kept so” —
annoys Diligence, so that the captain may have
kept pretending to steer clear, blindfolded.

When she did manage to descend in the long-haul,
she was madness: the valley is deep enough to
drift or choke in this pure and alluring
mountain dew, the ridges higher than her highness,
so low… Ms. Doleaway…!, a headstand wouldn’t
be more clever in creeks and canyons narrow like
this. The mind is an option, but solely with
mind-bearings, the body ending has neither
the rearing attitude nor its opponentistics.
Wild nameless flowers kept the distorted geometry

of these public secrets. An axe, an ace, you name it.
She cryingly abducted herself from the ambush,
so that this descendance has only left rusty-
leaky tin cans behind. Thinking tanks and shooting
stars and horny drones would stay put in this song
on an eternal replay. Hence eternal — although
no witness—, it has remained a hot of a possibility.

Keep your body cool, she explains, looking for
the warmth of unkept bird nests in
abandoned military camps, under
poisonous mushrooms. One can be unembedded
and embedded at the same time, linking,
unbedded, and watered, displaced in
the diaspora of folklong deaths,
singing the country.

[to be ed.]

diaspora peonies peronospora tube rose mittens must-grow solutions geothermic energy dried flowers fenced windows cute translucent curtains high perennial grass blood on fingers unlikelyhoods redwood prisons the girl sliced-up undressing to jump into the congelatinuous river deep in downtown close to the unlit alley where she lied to a skulk. some things one can't commit to. Dead already. Red silk shirt hair unbound and combed by breeze. A combined lease
[later than longer, longer asleep]
logging in and out
over and in
unclear cuts
[clearings]
force interrupt
i.f.

Troubled Trush in the Windows

"When father Sam gets drunk he gets mean. Sometimes he ties me up to the back of the house. Other times he locks me in the garage. Sam loves to drink blood 'Go out and kill commands father Sam.' " — David Berkowitz

"Buy me Apple", she said, "*it will be our together time*", she added, "we can wash it or excel at it, or
do some time and watch Rosemary's Baby,
while clearing hot dogs." 'It is going to be summer,
you won't overhaul me on that one.'

hichtimeoftheyears.

"*You see, that troubled thrush in these windows*
is not much better or better for the worse or
worse for the better…" — "You have drunk
my pony", Subpoena maintained, and:
"not even 'more good', you see, than
a protein shake of that old cocainated
hummingbird, or Lot's wife checking
the lottery tickets."

"It will be a mad one, for once, he will
have an accent circumflex and preach
till they let him, 'homo nomini rufus' blessed.

Middle fingers unlast, end-prohibited
by the 'ouch'. He will be dirty 'n
tough, but will there be also
something/someone bigger?
A bold eagle statue
or the drill under Seattle I once
baptized Brenda."

The baby is touching the Apple on the rear side of
the screen, and I push 'enter' like never before.
'I think she must go, for the fruit, *you see*…'

Fermented talks disguise all the good in us, yet,
we haven't even touched it, never looked
back upon it. What we have left we know only
because of the future studies of
our own extinction.

Allow this microwave oven to breath. Don't pull
your head into places it belongs no more,
or never has. A do-not shaped universe
shall unfold on us as a screensaver, 'n
this CPU will operate our
congested hearts,
in a consensual rigidity. …and yes,

the bird in the frying pan will sing
this untuned ladder.
Sooo lo-o-o-o-ong, the litter
in the socket!

Obfuscate and obliterate them!
I see only aureoles all over.
Once they belonged to heads attached to a body.
The clear-cut has chased this bird into the system.
It had no lungs left to resist the blue light of the gasses.

We eat “all we can eat now”,
pushing strange vehicles,
which are now the metaphors of coffins.
“Switch off the light, Orpheus has lost touch”;
syndrome-wise this is a system of
unseen births and unseen deaths.

The depth of his voice is not the height of my spirit.
We hide under the napkins, “hence we please not”.
Tolstoy’s addictology applies to politics, as well.

Never hush nor thrust him;
he might slip on his own.
A racket had completed the voyage —
for the second time —, yet,
everything looked just the same;
except the moon today I can’t spot,
vomiting a birdsong into this plea.
he might slip on his own.

A racket had completed the voyage —
for the second time —, yet,
everything looked just the same;
except the moon today I can’t spot,
vomiting a birdsong into this plea.

Adriána Kóbor (Hungary, 1988) is a poet and multimedia artist who publishes internationally in multiple languages, both visuals and literary works. Her published books include *10-4* (with Luc Fierens, 2018) and *Ele está morto* (2022, Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó). In 2023, she participated in the Leeuwenpoort artist-in-residence program. Since then, she has been living in the Netherlands and serves as a co-editor for the Dutch literary magazine De Baaierd. Her work has been featured in publications such as *Word/for Word, Otoliths, Samplekanon, NOVA,* and *Magyar Műhely*. Over the past decade, she has been experimenting with the boundaries of language, making visual art an intrinsic part of her oeuvre.

https://adrianakobor.wixsite.com/poet

George Myers Jr.

AFTERWORD

The Inner Ear

A publication history of *Otoliths, Utriculi,* and the creators who sustain the network

1. Beginning with *Otoliths*

Otoliths was an online little magazine edited by the poet Mark Young, a New Zealand-born poet living in Queensland, Australia. Its subtitle, "a magazine of many e-things," is the clearest statement of its editorial premise: It was built for creative work that could live on an electronic platform, especially text, vispo, image-text work, digital forms, and hybrid pieces that didn't fit comfortably inside narrower poetry journals. The magazine carried ISSN 1833-623X, described its intended schedule as quarterly, and continued until 2023, reaching 70 issues over nearly two decades of work.

The periodical's name is telling. On the magazine's "about" page, Young defines an otolith as an inner-ear "ear stone," a small granule that helps an animal sense position and balance. That's a useful metaphor for the magazine's function: *Otoliths* became a balance organ for a particular international field of experimental writing, registering shifts in visual poetry, hybrid prose, collage, asemic writing, performance-adjacent work, and other page-based or screen-based forms.

Young's own writing is similarly multifaceted. His work is situated within a tradition influenced by French Surrealism, French Symbolism, and the New York School. Reviewers have noted his facility with experimental techniques: white space, wordplay, vispo, neologisms, erasure, and elimination of conventional punctuation and capitalization. His more than 80 books comprise text poetry, speculative fiction, vispo, and art history. His major collections include *Pelican Dreaming: Poems* 1959–2008 (2008), *The Codicils* (2013)*, Songs to Come for the Salamander* (2021), and *The Magritte Poems* (2024). He's recognized as

a poet of resistance — to injustice and to the oppressive outcomes of imposed authority, including the mainstream strictures of poetry as disseminated from academia. And, of course, he's well-known for his support of alternative literatures.

From the start, Young released the issues of *Otoliths* using Southern Hemisphere seasonal labels rather than Northern Hemisphere literary-calendar language, a small but persistent sign of the magazine's Australian base and international orientation. He's explained that the magazine grew out of a mid-2000s network of writers he had come to know through a group blog called *As/Is,* begun by Clayton Couch and Andrew Lundwall, and through journals where he had been publishing. He emailed roughly 60 people inviting them to contribute. About three-quarters responded positively, and the magazine was underway. His initial goal was not a manifesto so much as a broad, durable first issue: "quality that lasts, quality that attracts," as he said in a 2017 interview.

Otoliths' editorial shape was deliberately capacious. Young said he had found many contemporary journals too narrow, requiring a reader to visit different venues for different kinds of prose, poetry, and visual work. He built *Otoliths* against that narrowing. Its governing terms were "variety & quality," plus a commitment to show work as the maker wanted it seen.

That last point matters. *Otoliths* was not simply an online poetry magazine that happened to include images. It presented typographically challenging work faithfully and made visual poetry a central practice. Young argued that the magazine's regular acceptance of vispo helped normalize vispo as part of poetry rather than as an occasional supplement. This is one of the magazine's main historical claims: It treated visual, textual, concrete, asemic, collaborative, and hybrid works as part of one field of contemporary writing.

By 2017, the publication scale had become substantial. Young described a mailing list of just under 1,000 people, nearly all contributors, and said a typical issue then included about 90 to 100 people. Roughly a quarter appeared in every issue, about half were regular contributors, and the rest

were new. That gives *Otoliths* the feel less of a curated boutique journal and more of a living international commons.

Its internationalism was real, though not programmatic in the usual institutional sense. In a 2017 interview, Tim Wright noted contributors from the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, Mexico, Japan, Hungary, Brazil, Italy, Finland, and elsewhere. Young responded that he had always been internationalist and that contributors eventually came from "the other inhabited continents." The magazine's relation to vispo likely helped, because vispo can move across language borders more readily than conventional lyric or narrative work.

The publication sat in an unusual relation to print. Although it was an e-zine, Young used Lulu print-on-demand services to make issues available as physical books. Because color printing was expensive, he often split print issues into black-and-white and color parts. He said he liked the online medium but still felt a work wasn't quite complete until it "can be put on a shelf." He also saw print as an archive against link rot, a real problem for web-based literary history.

That print arm expanded beyond issue reproductions. Lulu's author page for "Mark Young / Otoliths" says the publishing arm began as print editions of the e-zine, then expanded into books and chapbooks by writers associated with the journal. Later it concentrated mostly on the journal, while still allowing "de facto chapbooks" through issue sections devoted to text and visual poetry.

The archive shows the magazine's remarkable duration: 70 numbered issues from 2006 through 2023. And so, the archive runs from "issue one, southern autumn, 2006" through "issue seventy, southern winter, 2023." The final issue shows the magazine's late-period abundance. Its contents include poems, visual poetry, photographs, GIFs, asemic writing, collage poems, reviews, prose poems, collaborations, translations, photos, comics, and other forms. Contributors include Satu Kaikkonen, Martin Edmond, Demosthenes Agrafiotis, Giovanni Fontana, Richard Kostelanetz, Márton Koppány, John M. Bennett, Carla Bertola, K.S. Ernst, Eileen R. Tabios, George Myers Jr., Kenneth Rexroth, Pam Brown, Jill Jones, and many others.

Historically, *Otoliths* belongs with the international little-magazine tradition, but with a specific early-21st-century profile. It inherited

the little magazine's appetite for affinity, experiment, and community, while using blog infrastructure, email circulation, web pages, images, GIFs, and print-on-demand to keep that tradition alive in a different medium. (The issues were not little, often encompassing hundreds of pages.) Young himself named older models such as *Evergreen Review*, *City Lights Journal*, *New Directions*, *The Paris Review*, and *Botteghe Oscure* as journals he admired for being substantial, wide-ranging, familial, and encompassing.

Its importance is that it kept a wide door open. It gave experimental writing a repeatable place to appear, issue after issue, without forcing visual poetry, prose experiment, collage, asemic work, international English-language writing, and small-press practice into separate rooms. In that sense, *Otoliths* was an infrastructure of attention and not merely a magazine and not merely a press. It also filled a gap left by two long-running kinship periodicals that had recently ended their runs.

One was John M. Bennett's *Lost & Found Times,* which ran from 1975 to 2005 and arose from mail art, vispo, experimental text, and international exchange networks. The University at Buffalo's collection describes its *L&FT* records as including submissions, correspondence, mail art, and production material for all 54 issues. That's almost a pre-digital version of the same social function *Otoliths* later served: gathering dispersed experimental practitioners into a durable record.

The other was Karl Kempton's *Kaldron: An International Journal of Visual Poetry.* Kempton began the print version in 1976 as a tabloid for lyric and visual poetry, then by 1979 it had shifted to visual poetry only. It ran in print from 1976 to 1990, then later continued online beginning in 1997. It's been described as the only U.S. magazine of that period devoted exclusively to visual poetry. Its online version was edited by Kempton, Karl Young, and Harry Polkinhorn.

There's a recognizable neighborhood around *Lost & Found Times, Kaldron,* and *Otoliths*, but it's not a single school. It is more like an overlapping set of global little-magazine systems: mail art, visual poetry, post-language poetry, experimental web journals, hybrid literature, small-press poetics, and international avant writing. Others with adjacencies included *Rampike, Drunken Boat, Moria, Word For/Word,*

the Visual Poetry Journal, and *EOAGH.* But the periodical most similar to *Otoliths* is *Utriculi*. harry k stammer began publishing it as editor soon after *Otoliths* ended its run, with Mark Young as contributing editor.

2. Continuing with *Utriculi* and Sandy Press

stammer's publication protected the global verbo-visual network and surfaced new contributors. It continues *Otoliths* in spirit, though it's not a simple relaunch under another name. Where *Otoliths* took its name from the tiny inner-ear stones that help orient the body, *Utriculi* takes its name from the larger fluid-filled inner-ear cavity that contains otoliths and helps signal the orientation of the head. The title is a deliberate anatomical echo. It says, quietly, that the new magazine is carrying forward the balance organ of the old one. It has roots. stammer had been art of the *Otoliths* world as a contributor and author, with *Otoliths* imprint books including *tents*, *grounds*, and *tocsin;* and he was *Otoliths* cover designer since its early years.

In *Utriculi*, the succession is not merely thematic. It's social, editorial, and genealogical. The first issue appeared in 2024 through stammer's Sandy Press. Design and typesetting are credited to stammer, with cover art for Issue 1 by Jean Vengua. Out of the gate it came in a substantial book-like form, 283 pages with a large table of contents: Heath Brougher, Heller Levinson, William Allegrezza, Sheila Murphy, Lynn Strongin, Thomas Fink, Sal Randolph, Tom Beckett, Eric Lunde, Kathryn Rantala, Eileen R. Tabios, Young, and many others.

stammer soon after posted Issue 1 Part 2, confirming the magazine's split-volume format from the start. The magazine's editorial range is broad but not vague, publishing textual poetry, vispo, short fiction, flash fiction, essays, reviews, photographic art, and art that "pushes boundaries." This places it very near the *Otoliths* ecology: visual poetry, text experiment, hybrid writing, art, criticism, and international independent-press community.

Its publication model also shows a change from *Otoliths*. While *Otoliths* was fundamentally a blog-based online magazine with print-on-demand editions, *Utriculi* appears to reverse the emphasis: It's a yearly, book-shaped journal made available for purchase through Amazon and also readable through Sandy Press. The submissions guidelines specify 6-by-9 formatting, one-inch margins, Times New Roman 12 for written work,

300-dpi JPEGs for visual art, and print-ready constraints. That tells us a lot about the magazine's material imagination: Even when online, stammer thinks in pages.

By 2025, *Utriculi* had developed into a second issue, again split into two parts. Issue 2 Part 1 is dated 2025, edited by stammer with Young as contributing editor. Young provided the cover art, titled *geographies Crystal Brook*. The issue includes work by Sheila E. Murphy, Doren Robbins, Eileen R. Tabios, Robert Beveridge, Mark Young, Eric Lunde, K.S. Ernst, Joshua Martin, Daniel Barbiero, Karl Kempton, John M. Bennett, Tobey Hiller, George Myers Jr., Mark DuCharme, Heller Levinson, and others. The continuity with *Otoliths* is visible by contributor, but *Utriculi* has its own page discipline, print architecture, and Sandy Press context.

Issue 2 Part 2 makes the lineage explicit through a memorial cluster for Jim Leftwich. The contents open with a photo of Leftwich and dedications by Young, Sheila Murphy, Texas Fontanella, and Olchar E. Lindsann and John M. Bennett. Young's dedication recalls first publishing Leftwich in *Otoliths* issue 7, later publishing his collaborations and long submissions, and bringing out *Shadowed Truth*, Leftwich's collaborative book with Andrew Topel, under the *Otoliths* imprint.

That memorial cluster is important historically. It shows *Utriculi* not only as a venue for new work, but as a keeper of an experimental community's memory. Young writes in the dedication that he misses editing *Otoliths* partly because it kept him in touch with writers like Leftwich, and partly does not miss it because of "the ever-growing list of contributors" he had to say goodbye to. In that passage, *Utriculi* became a place where *Otoliths* 'network continues after the original magazine's closure. Sandy Press books should not be seen simply as *Utriculi* issue-monographs. The relationship is closer to a press-and-journal ecology: overlapping editorial networks, but distinct publication categories. The press is a strategic book-publishing imprint that issues one-author books, just as Young's *Otoliths* enterprise did. stammer launched Sandy Press in 2021, three years before launching *Utriculi*, and quickly released books by Kathryn Rantala, Tobey Hiller, Eileen R. Tabios, Yakman K. Tsering, Young and stammer, who also populated the *Otoliths* networks. The entire project (and Sandy Press's website) now functions very like Dick Higgins' Something Else Press from 1964 to 1974: as a press, journal

platform, review space, and announcement board for books by figures connected to this field.

Historically, then, *Utriculi* may be understood as the inheritor of *Otoliths* 'ecology. It keeps the experimental international network. It keeps visual poetry and textual experimentation close together. stammer keeps Young in the editorial orbit, but stammer shifted the object: from blog-based magazine with print extensions to print-shaped annual journal with online access.

stammer's own creative work sits in the small-press experimental tradition: poetry as text, page, noise, music, performance, voice, visual arrangement, and handmade editorial community. His published writing is most visibly connected to *Otoliths,* Concrete Mist Press, and Sandy Press. Biographical notes across Sandy Press, Unlikely Stories, Ranger, Synchronized Chaos, and the online music platform Bandcamp identify him as the author of *every beyond't nothing* from Persistencia Press; *tents, grounds*, and *tocsin* from Otoliths; s*idewalkss and alleys't* from Concrete Mist Press; and *walls't's* and *-48* from Sandy Press. *tocsin*, released by *Otoliths* in 2019, is part of a sequence of books about homelessness in Los Angeles.

stammer's literary practice is spare, fractured, sonic, and visibly interested in the pressure between speech and page. His poems often use glitzed syntax, clipped syllables, sound cues, odd punctuation, and partial language. They read less like conventional lyric statement than like scores, residues, or transmissions. By 2026, his Bandcamp catalog listed 46 music and sound releases, including solo and collaborative recordings he made with Heath Brougher, Mark Young, William Morosi, and Adriána Kóbor. The music is tagged in the vicinity of experimental, experimental electronic, experimental poetry, experimental rock, and poetry-and-music. The through line of his creative work is experimental attention: language treated as material, publication as community practice, and poetry as something that can appear on a page, in a press catalog, through a recording, or in the unstable space between speech and noise.

Remarkably, stammer's own creative output is equal in scope to his huge editorial lift at Sandy and *Utriculi,* recalling the energies of Higgins and of polyartist-publisher Richard Kostelanetz. The significance of stammer's magazine and press is emerging, because they are young.

But *Utriculi's* first two issues already show a clear function. *Utriculi* gives the post-*Otoliths* community a new room: less sprawling blog archive, more annual book; less issue-as-web, more issue-as-volume, broad distribution through Amazon. The ear-stone has moved deeper into the chamber. The work continues in another chamber.

Appendix

Otoliths imprint books (single-author publications)

- *the allegrezza ficcione* by Mark Young. Speculative fiction, 2006.
- *Dredging for Atlantis* by Eileen Tabios, Poetry, 2006.
- *Falsely Goethe* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2007.
- *DIPTYCHS* by Nico Vassilakis. Visual poetry, 2007.
- *E-X-C-H-A-N-G-E-V-A-L-U-E-S: The First XI Interviews,* curated by Tom Beckett. Interviews, poetry, 2007. Multi-author collection.
- *tents* by harry k stammer. Poetry, 2007.
- *Leads* by Rochelle Ratner. Poetry, 2007.
- *Free Fall* by Nick Piombino. Visual collage novel, 2007.
- *The Case of the Lost Objective (Case)* by Sheila Murphy. Poetry, 2007.
- *Collective Instant* by William Allegrezza. Poetry, 2008.
- *Red* by Marilyn R. Rosenberg. Artist's book/vispo, 2008.
- *This Poem / What Speaks? / A Day* by Tom Beckett. Poetry, 2008.
- *When You Bit…* by Adam Fieled. Poetry, 2008.
- *Novaless* by Nicholas Manning. Poetry, 2008.
- *Selections and Dissections* by Nick E. Melville. Vispo, 2009.
- *Genji Monogatari* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2010.
- *Unable to Fully California* by Larry Sawyer. Poetry, 2010.
- *Modulations* by Márton Koppány. Vispo, 2010.
- *ECSTATIC/.of facts* by Raymond Farr. Poetry, 2011.
- *Densities, Apparitions* by William Allegrezza. Poetry, 2011.
- *American Ghazals* by Sheila E. Murphy. Poetry, 2012.
- *These Peripheries* by James Maughn. Poetry, 2012.
- *Homo Sentimentalis: A Guide in Verse to Modern Emotional* Intimacy by Nicholas Manning. Poetry, 2012.
- *The Codicils* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2013.

- *grounds b*y harry k stammer. Poetry, 2013.
- *FADE TO BLACK* by Marilyn R. Rosenberg. Artist's book/vispo, 2018.
- *tocsin* by harry k stammer. Poetry, 2019.
- *latenza* by Francesco Aprile. Poetry, vispo, 2019.
- *discourses 5 & 6 b*y Karl Kempton. Artist's book, vispo, 2019.
- *words. grassland* by Francesco Aprile. Vispo, 2020.
- *discourse 9* by Karl Kempton. Vispo, 2021.
- *Masters of Time and Distance* by Harvey Huddleston. Fiction, 2021.
- *discourse 11: portraiture: oceano dunes to tide line* by Karl Kempton. Visual poetry / photographic visual work. Serialized as *sculpt objects, drawn, blown & sculpt*, *water lace,* and *rolled by the waves* in *Otoliths* issues sixty-four through sixty-nine, 2022–2023; collected as a standalone Otoliths/Lulu book, 2023.
- *Snapshots from the Ark* by David Jalajel. Poetry, 2023.
- *un saut de chat* by Mark Young. Prose poetry, 2024.
- *Some Unrecorded Voyages of Vasco da Gama* by Mark Young. Poetry/vispo, 2025.

Otoliths issue-parts / de facto chapbooks / focused print objects

- *Issue seventeen, part three: the complete ROCKPILE on the road feature.* Old and new poems from David Meltzer and Michael Rothenberg, photos taken during the tour by Terri Carrión, and an introduction by Larry Sawyer.
- *Issue twenty-four, part three: Letters to a Middle-Aged Poet* by Michael Gottlieb. Essay, 2012.
- *Issue twenty-nine, part one, edited by Mark Young.* Poetry, prose, vispo, photography, multi-author haybun folio, 2013. Includes the supplement *147 Million Orphans: A Haybun Folio,* curated by Eileen R. Tabios.
- *Issue forty-four, part three: #EileenWritesNovel* by Eileen R. Tabios. Conceptual, diaristic, social-media-based writing with images, 2017.
- *Issue fifty-seven, part four: TINY STICKERS: A COVID-19 AUTOBIOGRAPHY* by Eileen R. Tabios. Illustrated diary/diaristic writing, 2020.

- *Issue fifty-eight, part three: BREACHES* by Alberto Vitacchio & Carla Bertola. Artist's collaborative book documenting breaches-of-art spaces, 2020.
- *Issue sixty, part three: The Four Oaks Poems* by Jim Leftwich. Poetry, 2021.
- *Issue sixty-three, part four: metamorphoses of undelivered letters* by Carla Bertola. Visual poetry, artist's book, 2021.
- *Issue sixty-three, part five: sandskrit of the oceano dunes by Karl Kempton.* Artist's book, photography, vispo, 2021. A photographic sequence of the Oceano Dunes exploring wind-written landscape forms.
- *Issue sixty-four, part three: WHOL / OHLW / LWOH AND OTHER POEMS* by Scott MacLeod. A deconstruction and reconstruction of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl,* plus additional poems, 2022.
- *Issue sixty-nine, part three: Carla Bertola + Alberto Vitacchio* by Carla Bertola and Alberto Vitacchio. Visual poetry, memorial artist's book, 2023. Dedicated to Bertola, who died March 25, 2023.

- **Sandy Press books (single-author publications)**
- *sorties* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2021.
- *The Sasquatch Walks Among Us* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2021.
- *-48* by harry k stammer. Poetry, 2021.
- *Songs to Come for the Salamander: Poems 2013–2021* by Mark Young. Copublished with Meritage Press, 2021.
- *Your order is now equipped for shipping* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2022.
- *XXXX CENTONES from the Cantos of Ezra Pound* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2023.
- *with the slow-paced turtle replaced by a fast fish* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2023.
- *Getting to One* by Eileen R. Tabios and harry k stammer. Flash fiction/art, 2023.
- *Threescore and Ten: The Images from the Covers of Otoliths, May 2006 to August 2023* by Sandy Press and *Otoliths.* Visual archive, 2023.
- *Ley Lines II* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2023.

- *Fast Talk With Writers* by George Myers Jr. Interviews, 2024.
- *Drawing The Six Directions* by Eileen R. Tabios. Visual art/multidisciplinary project documentation, 2024.
- *eNumerations* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2024.
- *The Magritte Poems,* with an introduction by Javant Biarujia by Mark Young. 2024.
- *Crossfall* by Heller Levinson. Poetry, 2024.
- *My Archipelago* by Kathryn Rantala. Poetry, 2024.
- *Beware the Bourgeois Doomsday Fantasy: Or, The Systemic Persecution of the Individual Or, How I Learned to Never Ask My Landlord to Fix My Air Conditioning* by Heath Brougher. Poetry, 2025.
- *gravel* by Mark Cunningham, Mark Young, and harry k stammer. Poetry/vispo, 2025.
- *The Complete Post Person Poems* by Mark Young. 2025.
- *gutter 's* by harry k stammer. Poetry, 2025.
- *Itinerant Dreamer* by Doren Robbins. Poetry, 2025.
- *From the Cave's Jukebox* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2025.
- *haui-qt seared* by harry k stammer. Vispo, 2025.
- *DESCENT IN FIVE (motions)* by Tobey Hiller. Fiction, 2026.
- *Translated from the English* by Kathryn Rantala. Poetry, 2026.
- *The Erotic Space Around Art Objects* by Eileen R. Tabios. Hybrid poetry, 2026.
- *The Narrowing Road: 14 Crossings with Bashō* by George Myers Jr. Hybrid haibun/prose, 2026.
- *Mandala: Ritual of Visual Poetry* by Yakman K. Tsering. Vispo, 2026.
- s*ynecdoche* by Mark Young. Poetry, 2026.

Acknowledgments
This brief history is best read as an informed account by a fellow traveler rather than a fully detached outside study, though I have tried to make it as factual as possible.