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AND POETRY

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Catherine Widgery—WOMAN

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GÜNTER BRUNO FUCHS</td>
<td>A Biographical Sketch—Teo Savory</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>From A Chimney Sweep’s Remarks</em> tr. RICHARD EXNER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On Job Selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On One’s General Condition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On the Times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On Professional Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On Wage Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On Old Age Pensions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMBERTO COSTANTINI</td>
<td>tr. JANET BROF</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.D. GREGORY</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lullaby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recollections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAVIER HERAUD</td>
<td>tr. RICH HASWELL</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autumn and the Sea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUCIA CORDELL GETSI</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Jewel Cutter’s Dream and the Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALBERT HUFFSTICKLER</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID RAY</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Sun’s Eye: Monument Valley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Factories in the Fields</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Tourist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHILIPPE DENIS</td>
<td>tr. MARK IRWIN</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Six Untitled Poems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARY OLMSTED</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boxes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. PENZI</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyclone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARRY HASKELL AND GREGORY BREHM</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Tides of Day and Night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GUILLERMO SUCRE—tr. WILLARD AND ALINA GINGERICH .......... 54
Stone of Scandal
Just Silence
In Idleness
Atlantic April
The Other Sun
Proscripted, 1930
H. E. FRANCIS .................................................. 60
The Killing Station
HARRIET ZINNES ................................................. 63
Ancient Ritual
JEAN BRETON—tr. ELAINE DeROSA ........................... 69
Alone Like A Beast
You Grow New
LYGIA FAGUNDES TELLES—tr. ELOAH F. GIACOMELLI ......... 72
Tigrela
REGINALD GIBBONS .............................................. 77
A Transcription
The Foreigner
MARK CONNELLY ................................................. 78
The Head
STEPHEN DIXON ................................................ 80
The Student
CLAUDE VIGEE—tr. J.R. LEMASTER ............................ 92
April
Epilogue
I Do Not Deny the Night Too Much Loved
Nunc Dimittis
The Play-Actor of Heaven
YANNIS GOUMAS ................................................. 98
On The National Health
MICHAEL HONEA ................................................. 100
The Family Tree
JENNIFER GALOS ................................................. 104
Winter Solstice at Dog Theater
Canyons of Winter
Darkness is Refracted
SOPHIA DE MELLO BREYNER ANDERSEN—tr. ALEXIS LEVITIN. 106
Portrait of an Unknown Princess
An Autumn Morning in a Palace at Sintra

R.C. DAY ................................................................. 110
The Pit

RONALD TOBIAS .......................................................... 121
Kings and Desperate Men

EUDOXIA ALIFERIS ....................................................... 128
Soft Cry
A Nietzschean Priest
The Agora

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS ............................................. 129

ART REPRODUCTIONS

VALTON TYLER—Six Paintings ................................. 24, 25, 52, 53, 90, 91

CATHERINE WIDGERY—Four Sculptures .......... cover, inside front cover, 66, 67
Günter Bruno Fuchs—SELF PORTRAIT
GÜNTER BRUNO FUCHS

Günter Bruno Fuchs, born in Berlin in 1928, has been variously described: in his own words as “drinker, poet, woodcutter,” by his German publisher as “writer, poet, graphic artist, printer,” by his biographers as having been, variously, circus clown, day laborer, prisoner of war, co-founder of an important Berlin art gallery. He has been called the German Prévert, but such a comparison is only apt, other than in a very general way, if one bears in mind that Prévert is essentially a Parisian poet and Fuchs a Berlin poet. For Fuchs is a unique phenomenon: his graphic works as well as his writings are filled with the laughter and gravity, grotesquerie and polish, irony and provocativeness, typical of Berliners. In his expressed endeavor to “stay close to the truth,” he turns words and visual elements around and makes us see and listen in a new way. Because a mirror only reflects what we are accustomed to seeing, what we expect to see, Fuchs, through the words and images of his sparrows and owls, of his beast-man and man-bird, of his sword swallowers and chimney sweeps, tragic clowns and ridiculous bureaucrats, takes us through the looking-glass, where the grotesque becomes delightful, the serious becomes rebellious, the irony compassionate. This is the new surrealism: simple yet profound, committed but understated, quite German, very contemporary.

Since 1957, when his first full-length book of poems and graphics was published (After the House Search) and won him his first of many awards (the Baden Baden Youth Prize), he has been prolific, publishing almost annually, almost always collections of words and graphics. Recently, his poems have become prose-poems of a distinctive sort and his woodblocks, fables. Examples of his titles hint at his unique vision and style: Humbug, A Sword Swallower’s Prayer Book, The Kreuzberg Bar Dream of Mr. Owl, Crumb Pickers or 34 Chapters From the Life of Animal Imitator Ewald K., Itinerary for West Berliners . . .

Günter Bruno Fuchs died, tragically too soon, on April 19, 1977.

Teo Savory
Günter Bruno Fuchs
BEMERKUNGEN EINES SCHORNSTEINFEGERS

Zur Berufswahl
Ich hatte
als Kind mit beiden
Händen an den
Ofen gefabt. Danke,
hatte der Ofen
gesagt, jetzt wird
meinem Schornstein
warm ums Herz.

Zum Allgemeinbefinden
Haben Sie
mit dem Herzen
zu tun?
Ja, mit Sirenen
auf Dächern.

Zum Zeitgeschehen
Konfetti
wäre schwarz wie
Kohlenrub. Schwarzes
Konfetti
streuen, wenn
der Kanzler
unten
vorbeifährt?
Günter Bruno Fuchs

A CHIMNEY SWEEP’S REMARKS

On Job Selection

As a child
I touched the stove
with both hands.
Thank you,
said the stove,
this gives my chimney
a warm feeling.

On One’s General Condition

Have you
trouble with your
heart?
Yes, from old
air-raid sirens
on rooftops.

On the Times

They say confetti
could be black as soot.
Should we scatter black
confetti down onto the
Prime Minister
as he passes by?
Zu Berufserfahrungen

Sie wissen ja, wie klein die Vögel aussehen von hier oben! Mit der Hand nicht zu greifen. (Mit dem Federhalter.)

Zu Lohnfragen

Ich liebe meine Häuser, denn als Schornsteinfeger kenne ich ihr Inneres besser als jeder andere.

Zur Altersversorgung

Bewaffnete Flugzeuge werden von solchen Personen gesteuert, wie sie überall zu finden sind als Opfer fahrlässiger Berufsberatung.
On Professional Experience

You know, don’t you, how small the birds look from up here! Impossible to reach by hand, feather, or quill.

On Wage Questions

I love those houses of mine; as chimney sweep I know their insides more intimately than anyone.

On Old Age Pensions

Armed airplanes are flown by such people as can be found everywhere: victims of careless job counseling.
Once there was a man who died. The man had been very important. He had had fame, power, money, etc. He had worked hard and had become successful. Therefore, he wasn't afraid to come before God. So he came before God and said:

"Isidoro Passini, how do you do."

"Take a seat," God answered him.

And the man sat down.

"Your life, if you don't mind," God said to him.

"My life?" said the man slightly surprised.

"Yes, your life please."

"Well," said the man and got ready to speak about his life. Naturally, he had faced many difficult situations in his life. He wasn't going to be intimidated. On the contrary: he straightened out his chest, smiled compulsively and gathered his forces to turn the interview to his best advantage.

"Sir," he began in that direct and cordial manner of his, which had come with so much success. "Sir," he said, "I worked hard. I worked my way to a position of great responsibility."

"Responsibility?" said God, as if he didn't understand too well the meaning of the word.

"Yes, great responsibility," repeated the man, sure of himself, fully confident of his natural charm, deciding to be on top of the situation from the first minute. "Chief of Production, to be precise. With Burnes & Mathews, Argentina, S.A. Branch offices in twenty-four countries."

"Oh," said God, nodding his head approvingly as if taking in the importance of this recent arrival.

The man smiled genially, he thought, "the first round is mine," and continued.

"You could say that I did it alone. On my own steam. My virtues? Concentration, work, dint, ability to solve quickly whatever comes up. In short, what distinguishes the man destined to win. Forgive my immodesty, but it's best to be frank, don't you think?"

"But of course," God answered gently.

"I remember," the man went on, "when I started in Burnes & Mathews, Argentina, S.A. I was only eighteen. My family was very poor, Sir. I had to go twenty-five blocks on foot to save money. With this money I bought books. At night I studied. At twenty-one I was an expert accountant. When I received . . ."
"Twenty-five blocks?" asked God.
"Yes, twenty-five blocks. Not counting rainy days, of course."
"There was a square, wasn’t there?"
"A square?"
"On the way, I mean. Wasn’t there a square?"
"Oh. Yes. In fact there was a square," answered the man, somewhat
disconcerted and thinking that perhaps God was becoming a little dotty with
the years.
"In the square there was a bench."
"Well, I guess there were many benches."
"No. No. I am referring to one bench in particular. Was there a bench?"
"Of course there was a bench. If there were many benches, there had to
be one," said the man barely containing his bad humor.
"Aha. What about the bench?" asked God.
"The bench was a bench. Once you’ve seen one you’ve seen them all.
What else can I say?" answered the man, wanting desperately to put an end
to these stupid questions once and for all.
"Is that all?"
"That’s all as far as the bench goes," he said, convincing himself that age
had completely softened God’s brains.
"O.K.," said God, sighing, clearly annoyed. "Go on, please."
"I am going on," said the man energetically, deciding to put some order
into this conversation which seemed foolish to him. "My education helped
me to advance to another department and to get an increase in salary. I was
twenty-four and I was already the boss’ right-hand man. The department was
transformed in my hands. I brought in new ideas. I imposed my rhythm, my
way of working. It became the most efficient department in the company. It
was my first important victory."
"Oh, important ... " said God in a rather ambiguous tone.
"When I was twenty-eight I got married," continued the man as if he
had not heard. "I believe I have given my wife, Monica Juarez, all she
deserved. Children, affection, and all the rest, you might say. Well-being.
You must know her, she is still alive."
"I know, I know," God said dryly.
"We had four children," continued the man lightly, intrigued and for
the first time, suspecting that his wife would not have had so easy a time with
the interview. "Armando, Luis Maria, Clara and Angelica. Angelica was my
weakness. She has beautiful blue eyes, like her mother. An enchanting
creature."
"Ah, blue eyes," said God. "And Alicia?"
"What?" said the man.
"Yes. Yes. What’s the color of Alicia’s eyes, I asked?"
"But, Alicia? Excuse me, you said Alicia?"
"Alicia, naturally. You told me the color of Angelica’s eyes and I am asking you about the color of Alicia’s eyes. That’s clear, isn’t it?"

"But you aren’t going to bring up that girl . . . that Alicia whom I knew when I was, I don’t know, sixteen, seventeen . . ."

"Of course I am referring to her. The color of her eyes, then."

"Well, heavens, so many years have passed. What’s more, we were only alone so few times that frankly . . ."

"You don’t remember."

"No, I don’t remember, that’s the truth," answered the man, not giving much importance to these interruptions and anxious to get ahead with the story of his life.

"That’s a pity," said God.

"Well, gosh, I suppose that won’t be too serious."

"It is serious," said God. "Continue."

The man was by now quite disconcerted. "I was talking about my children. I wanted to tell you that they were the very proof of my efforts, my struggle. It was for them, Sir . . ."

"No digressions, please," God said.

"Well," said the man, somewhat hurried and beginning to doubt somewhat the outcome of the interview. "I went on working hard. I understood what was expected of me and I gave myself to it entirely. Let me tell you. I was a model for many a man. They put me in charge of production."

"June 5, 1954," said God.

"In effect, June 5, 1954, coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the firm," said the man with new determination. "An enormous party at the Palace Hotel, I remember. Such moments are never forgotten, they give you incentive. They mentioned me in their speeches. They congratulated me. They invested an enormous capital in my ability alone. The general manager, himself, grabbed my hand, moved. Full of hope and why not? It was a momentous occasion. They expected much from me. I can tell you now, I didn’t cheat them, even more, I went beyond their most optimistic expectations. As we were leaving, the general manager came over to me right there in the door of the hotel and said, ‘Mr. Passini.’"

"Excuse me," said God, "your hat and your overcoat."

"What?"

"Your hat and your overcoat, you checked them in the cloakroom, didn’t you."

"Yes, it’s logical. It was a night in June. It was cold. I carried a hat and overcoat," said the man. "A scarf, too. I can just picture myself, ha, ha," he added, trying to make himself amusing, thinking that it was perhaps the way to behave in front of a God who’d become hopelessly senile.

"A woman placed them in your hands."

"Yes, the hatcheck girl gave me my hat, my overcoat and my scarf. I put
them on right away because, as I told you, it was a cold night, and I came to the door. It was then that the general manager told me...

"Her eyes, please."

"Eyes, why eyes?" asked the man, on the verge of desperation.

"The hatcheck girl. The color of her eyes, if you please."

"How can I remember the color of the hatcheck girl's eyes? It's absurd, isn't it? I am speaking of an important event."

"It isn't absurd," said God.

"Ah, it isn't absurd. And why isn't it absurd? We'll see."

"It isn't absurd. They were the color of Alicia's eyes."

"But you are trying to tell me that Alicia... that the hatcheck girl was... was Alicia."

"Oh no, who said that? It might and might not be. Furthermore, that is irrelevant. The eyes were the important thing. The eyes were the same."

"Very much alike? Similar?"

"The same."

"Very well, good. They were the same. But what could I have done? Should I have changed my life for that? Should I have quit doing what I had been doing?"

"That's something else," said God. "Go on."

"But, please Sir. I don't understand," said the man. He thought he was going crazy, seeing the interview, stupid and incomprehensible in its way, rushing headlong, hopelessly towards failure. "I need to know. To know what it's all about."

"Circuits," said God.

"Circuits? What circuits? I don't understand."

"Points. Fundamental points. They have to make contact. Simply. Don't worry. Go on."

"You mean... the eyes of Alicia and those other eyes were so many fundamental points."

"Fundamental points," said God.

"Fundamental points. You mean I should have been different, that I should have done other things, and had I really looked at them, I would have remembered them now?"

"Go on, please," said God.

"So, it's the eyes, then. A man's mission in life is to look at eyes. To look twice at the same pair of eyes."

"For any man, no. For you," God said. "Different points for each man. Very few points. They must be brought together. That's all. Go on."

"Then my life, my long and fruitful life, Sir, would only be justified by taking a look at those eyes."

"Yes," said God.

"But, and the bench? You asked me about the bench. Why did I have to
look at the bench?"

"Oh, the bench," said God indifferently. "You had to sit down on the bench."

"Sit down on the bench?"

"Yes, because it has to be. For hours and hours, perhaps. And particularly on one autumn afternoon. But don't worry about it now. Be good enough to go on."

"I will, I will," said the man, fearful and unsure about everything he was saying, searching his memory desperately for something different, something which might ingratiate him with God definitively, something human—he thought without knowing well what he would say—or tender, or heart-felt, or pious. Because evidently one had to touch on those points.

"I am listening," said God, after a pause.

"Well, I, you know . . . I remember a friend. A dear friend," said the man, hedging. "I met him in the street after I hadn't seen him in a long time."

"Fernando Carrera," said God.

"Yes, yes, Fernando Carrera, precisely"—answered the man almost jubilantly, at last seeing his chance. "Fernando Carrera. He was very alone and very poor, besides. I stayed with him. We talked, talked a lot. I helped him. I believe I was good for him. By the time we separated it was seven. Because of him I missed work. We were standing on a corner of a square and embraced one another. It was wonderful. When we separated Fernando stayed behind leaning against a tree, waving goodbye."

"Tell me about . . . " God said.

"Fernando? He was tall, weak, a little awkward. Grey eyes, large, full of tenderness. I remember his eyes very well."

"No, no, the tree," said God.

"What?"

"The tree that Fernando was leaning against. It was exactly seven. You don't remember?"

"How could I have been looking at a tree? What reason would I have had for looking at a tree?"

"It was autumn. The square," said God, "from a certain bench the tree could have been seen quite well."

"Yes, it was autumn," said the man, trembling with an anguish that prevented him from forming his words. "Then the tree . . . "

"You don't remember," God repeated the question because the man had remained silent.

"No, I don't remember," said the man, lowering his head.

"What a pity. That was the fourth point," said God.

"Can I . . . can I go on?" asked the man with a broken voice.

"That was the last point," said God. "I'm sorry. The interview is over."
R. D. Gregory

LULLABY

night:
city empty
darkness thinned by a tincture of light
delicate
as the eye of a hummingbird
lying there on your palm
stray lights in the buildings vanish
the eye holds their light for an instant
city a black leather jacket
tossed on the dining room table
near the white jug that holds dried stalks
of cattail, maidenhair, chicory . . .
the room now filled, like an hourglass
with darkness, the darkness
of empty sockets
but the mind refuses to rest
is frantic inside the skull
the tips
of its delicate wings
on the cool thick surface

RECOLLECTIONS

at night, the seabirds remember
secret colors of the sand

the skyline glows;
the grass remembers fire

the spider, when
blue ate his legs
and the houses
remembered to grin
Javier Heraud

POEMA

Un eucalipto, alto, espigado, contiene para siempre mi corazón Eucalipto, alto germen de la tierra, espiga y piedra de ríos, fruto eterno y sagrado de los hombres. Bosques, valles, campos y quebradas, quebradas que bajan como un hombre, quebradas que bajan en los pechos, sombras que descienden como cuerpos, sombras que descienden como sombras.

Javier Heraud

EL OTONO Y EL MAR

Al acercarse el otoño, corro hacia el mar y busco las doradas conchas son como las hojas, el mar las lanza precipitadamente a la arena, y entre ola y ola, y mientras el mar se alejá y se aproxima, las blancas escamas de los peces, (caídas al son del viento del otoño que penetra hasta el fondo del océano) aparecen par ser recogidas por la mano.
Javier Heraud

POEM

A eucalyptus, tall,
spiked, holds
my heart forever.
Eucalyptus
tall seed of the
earth, spike and
stone of rivers,
holy and indestructible fruit
of men.
Woods, valleys
fields and canyons,
canyons descending
like a man,
canyons descending
into the chest,
shadows falling
like bodies,
shadows falling
like shadows.

Javier Heraud

AUTUMN AND THE SEA

As autumn nears
I run toward the sea and search for gold sea-shells,
they are like leaves,
the sea hurls them precipitously
into the sand,
and while the sea backs off and comes on,
the white scales of the fish
(fallen at the sound of the autumn
wind that penetrates
to the ocean bottom)
seem ripe for gathering by hand.
¡Blancas conchas,
aún escucho los sonidos del mar
que escuchaba cuando la infancia
era pequeña y dulce,
aún eschuchó en el fondo
de todo caracol dormido,
el inmenso rugido del mar!

Son como las hojas,
caídas en el fondo de la arena.
El mar las mueve y las renueva,
las golpea y las destroza,
y el otoño las ofrece con los pies desnudos,
recogiéndolas, ahuyentándolas.

**Javier Heraud**

**POEMA**

El valle de
Tarma es grande.
Pero más grande
es mi corazón
cuando lo miro,
pero más amplio
es mi pecho cuando
aspiro aire, y aire,
cielo y cóndor,
martes y jueves,
mas grande que el
río es el hombre,
más grande que el
valle son los ojos
de tantos caminantes
de costado.
White shells!
I still hear the sounds of the sea
that I heard when my childhood
was tiny and sweet,
I still hear in the depth
of each sleeping spiral
the immense roar of the sea.

They are like leaves
fallen into the depths of the sand.
The sea moves them and renews them,
pounds and annihilates them,
and with bare feet autumn offers them,
gathering them up, scattering them away.

Javier Heraud

POEM

Tarma valley
is huge.
But when I look
at it, my courage
is larger,
my chest is
wider when
I breathe the air, wider than air,
than sky and condor,
than Tuesday and Thursday,
greater than the
river is man,
greater than the
valley are the eyes
of so many travelling
side by side.
Valton Tyler—REF FLY TRI DOM DE (Oil on canvas, 50 x 50), 1976. Valley House Gallery, Dallas, Texas.
Valton Tyler—Off-Spring (Oil on canvas, 60 x 60), 1973. Valley House Gallery, Dallas, Texas.
THE JEWEL CUTTER'S DREAM AND THE MUSIC

LUCIA CORDELL GETSI

Alexi, the jewel cutter, lived with his wife in a valley surrounded by mountains. Even though he was a very good jewel cutter, there was always in his mind the thought that he would never be able to bring all the beauty in the gemstone to light. This facet or that, as he cut away the rough edges, would displease him, and his sleep was haunted by diamonds crying to be born from the ore locked inside the mountains.

The couple lived in a house they had built of flawed gemstone. All his life Alexi had wanted to build a house out of perfectly cut jewels, and therefore, even though the house seemed a miracle of rare beauty to the people who lived in the village nearby, Alexi's house seemed a mere commonplace to him. Each stone upon another stone stung his eyes with imperfection, and each memory upon another memory of his failure to expose the singular beauty of the individual gemstones stung his aging heart.

The jewel cutter was afraid to look above the mountains at the wide night sky. All his work was done by day, and when darkness fell, what he had finished seemed a blasphemy against the stars set free from the sunny air by night. At the end of each day, he would hurry to bed to sleep his tormented sleep until dawn. His wife, who was free of his fears and whose untrained eyes could not detect the flaws he saw in his work, would sit dreaming upon the jeweled porch until the moon had fully risen and outshone even the stars with its gentle and steady light. Then she would go to her husband and cradle his fitful slumber in her arms.

The jewel cutter's wife wanted a child, and secretly so did he. But he was plagued with the fear that the child too would be flawed in some way. Now they were almost in their middle years, but their life was so solitary that the woman yearned for someone to keep her company in the darkness before she went to bed. At last her longing became so great that she, this one final time, spoke of the child to her husband.
"Alexi," she said quietly, "the world is very beautiful at night while you sleep, but it is also a lonely world." She went no further, for the pain in his eyes drove the words from her mouth. She did not wish to increase his suffering.

For a long time, the jewel cutter stared at the gemstone in his hands, almost as though he wanted to bring the jewel out of it by the force of his will. Finally, he laid it gently down and turned to his wife. "Yes, Anna," he said, "I too would like us to have a child. You have borne your loneliness too long because of the fear I carry with me." He hesitated a minute, and then went on, his voice rising. "O Anna, Anna, all my life I have wanted to create something unblemished by human imperfection. Each time I have picked a gemstone, I have willed my hands to use their skill to release the stone's natural beauty, to call from the stone such a jewel as would catch the light of the whole world and cause the universe to shimmer with radiance."

The jewel cutter's eyes shone like sapphires as his dream carried him away into a world transfigured in light. He looked again at the gemstone lying on his workbench, and his eyes dulled. "We will have a child, but if this child is born with a flaw, I could not bear it. It would be my final failure. I could not bear for even the villagers to know of that failure. If there is anything wrong with this child, you must hide it, keep it where I am not made to look at it, for it would be the image of my fear, grown to flesh."

Anna's joy was so great that it drowned her husband's last words, and she was so certain that nothing could be wrong with their child, that she ran to his arms and kissed his face again and again and would not stop until he caught her hands in his and said solemnly, "Anna, promise me." Like birds released from cages, her hands flew free to his face and embraced him. "Oh yes, Alexi, yes, anything, I promise anything." And her happiness was so touching that the jewel cutter almost ceased to think about his fear.

The woman's anticipation made the months of waiting go quickly, as the seasons pass for the very old, and it filled her nightly reverie with purpose. Even the jewel cutter was enchanted by her enthusiasm, and he made a cradle hewn from the most beautiful wood he could find, with insets of smoothly polished jewels in soft colors that swept the cradle sides in graceful arcs like rainbows.

The baby was born in a winter's dawn, so quietly that the jewel cutter was up and preparing for work when his wife called him from the room they had set aside as a nursery. Something in her voice caused him to start in panic, seized by tenderness and hope and dread, and it seemed to him that the faster he walked, the slower his progress to the room, so that when he arrived at the door, his breath was coming in short gasps, like sobs. His wife stretched out her hand to him and smiled, cuddling a small bundle in
her other arm, and the man stumbled to the bedside, burying his eyes in his hands. Slowly the woman unlocked his fingers and pulled them across her to the baby’s tiny face, and watched as they moved delicately down its cheeks, over its mouth and nose and stroked the wisps of fine, blond hair. The jewel cutter opened his eyes upon his daughter. “She is beautiful, Alexi, is she not,” his wife said to him. He looked at the woman intently for a moment. She was smiling, and even though a look of anxiety shadowed her eyes and mouth, he decided it must be because of his fear. “Yes, she is beautiful,” he breathed, and he did not leave the room even after she and the baby had fallen asleep. When he looked at them it was as though a wound in him was healing.

It was a cold winter and only a steady fire in the hearth and many layers of clothing kept them warm. The woman wrapped the baby in soft clothes and blankets, and the child was so quietly contented that it never cried, but seemed patient beyond its age. The jewel cutter sometimes worried that his daughter was so strangely silent, as she lay reaching with tiny, mittened hands for the bright jeweled playthings he made for her. Never had he heard a sound pass from the baby’s mouth, never so much as a coo or a sigh. But watching as his wife busied herself to care for the child’s every need, he decided, again and again, that with such a mother the child did not need to demand that attention be paid to it, and the soft sonata of half smiles and almost frowns that played on her face was quite enough response for him.

The seasons rolled themselves round once more, and the tender crocus began to push their buds through the melting snow, and the days began to stretch themselves longer across the earth, playing tug of war with the mountain shadows, winning more time each evening as the shadows lengthened and spilled themselves over the valley, until at last the sun dropped away and the day, with one great last tug, disappeared and carpeted the world with night. Anna would sit with her bundled child on her lap, watching the game between sunlight and darkness and dream that the two were twinned from the same great mother, one only the absence of the other, and she would spin stories for her sleeping child of the day bearing the night over the land, the day and the night forever clasping hands in play. As the evenings grew warmer, she would wait for her husband to retire to his bed and then gently pull the child’s hands free from its little mittens and watch as they would open toward the dance of sunlight and shadow, and she would close her eyes in joy and fear as the music, beautiful and unearthly, would escape from the child’s fingers.

The child had been born different from other children. The tips of its fingers were not formed from softly rounded flesh, nor did they have fingernails. Rather, they opened out like little bells or tiny flower petals,
and they were of a smooth crystalline substance, fragile and delicate and lovely as snow flowers. The first time the child’s fingers had moved and touched each other, the music trembled forth with such clear and piercing beauty that the mother had known the child would never speak or sing or shout or weep. The child’s voice was in her hands, in the little bell shaped crystals that drew in all the world’s turning in daylight and darkness and echoed for the sun the music of the night and for the night the music of the sun, and filled the mother’s waking and sleeping with perfect balance, sweet harmony.

Anna feared only the moment when her husband would see his daughter’s hands, and she kept them hidden in mittens whenever he was about, determined to let him love the child as long as he could and to give the child the pure memory of fatherly tenderness. But the winter was pulling the seasons around and summer was racing quickly behind the spring, so that the jewel cutter began to wonder at his wife’s care in seeing that the child remained wrapped in winter clothes.

Early one young summer morning, as the jewel cutter passed the nursery on his way to his workroom, he noticed that the child was awake. It was truly a fine, warm day, and he was filled with such love for the smiling child that he picked her up and carried child, tools, workbench and gemstones outside where he could work in the sunlight and watch the child crawl about and play with the stones and flowers. Noticing that the child was hot in its mittens and clothes, he bent down and began pulling one tiny mitten off a little hand. A cry from the doorway stopped him. Anna stood on the porch, her hands pressed to her face in dismay. He looked again at the child, and then at his wife who walked forward with hesitant steps, her eyes beseeching him, shaking her head in jerking, trembling movements. He again took up the child, his face locked in a grimace, and removed the mitten. Carefully, he examined the hand. He pulled off the other mitten and glanced at the fingers. Defeated, Alexi collapsed crosslegged onto the ground. The child reached for both mother and father, the one standing over her daughter with hanging head, the other sitting bent and bewildered, and the unearthly music began ringing, entoning a sound such as no human ears had ever heard, recalling legends of love and sacrifice, happiness and grief.

“The child is mute and deformed,” the father mumbled, as if the statement was irrevocable and yet too awful to be believed. “Take it away from me.” The weeping mother gathered up the child, carried it into the nursery and closed the door. Except for faint sounds as if bells were pealing, the house was silent all that summer and the next and the one after that.
The jewel cutter worked the days away at his workbench, cutting the jewels from the stones, but there was no peace for him in his work. Many times he would stop and stare vacantly at the flawed jewels, listening to the tones of alien music coming from his child's room. Despite himself, his ears would strain to hear, for the music was like gentle murmurings, soft chippings that soothed his bitterness and sense of failure. He would shake himself from his reverie, and bend again hard at his work, thinking over and over of the shame of failure, of dying a failure at everything he had wanted to do, leaving behind him a child that seemed to him a mockery of what children were supposed to be, a child that could not sing and laugh and talk or make things with its hands. His wife's sorrow only drove his misery deeper into him, so that he could not bring himself to speak to her. During the day, she would remain alone or in the room with her daughter. At evening, they ate in silence, and afterwards he would trudge wearily to sleep. Anna would steal silently to the jeweled porch taking the child with her, and the strange music would sound louder, at the same time calming and haunting his dreams.

One night he dreamed at last of the perfect gem, a gem crying to be born into light from the dark mountain ore, a diamond whose radiance increased in his hands as each facet was cut away, and in the morning his mind sparkled with purpose. He rose and went to his daughter's room. She sat at her window, her arms reaching into the dawn, the murmuring tones falling from her hands like dew. She turned and saw him, her fingers fluttering like wings in her excitement, casting little bell rhapsodies upon her father. He grasped her hands and the sound ceased. He looked at her fingers, touching them gently, running his own fingers over the smooth, fragile surfaces where the flesh stopped and the flower shaped crystals began.

The jewel cutter carried the child to his work room and laid out his tools. When all was ready, he chose a small file and grasped the child's hands in his. "Now you will be like other children," he told her gently. "I will make your hand useful." He singled out one small finger and held the hand where the light shone steadily upon the crystal. His hands shook slightly as he took up his file and drew it across the mouth of the bell. His ears buzzed with the rasping noise, and then echoed and re-echoed with a terrible cacophony of smashed chimes, broken bell tones, shuddering the air with vibration as the little crystalline bellflower shattered, scattering in a hundred pieces across the floor.

The finger was ruined. The frightened child waved her hands wildly in a crescendo of chimes, and searing music of despair and depression swelled the air so that the tools and gemstones caught the resonance in a grating accompaniment of rattles and scrapings. The child ran away, and the noise
suddenly stopped as she hid herself in her room, leaving the jewel cutter weeping bitterly on his knees, holding his ears to shut out the reverberations. All that day, the mother stayed in her child’s room, and from time to time, little chiming tones would issue from the closed door. The father’s ears would strain to hear better, but no matter how closely he listened, one tone was always missing, some sound was lacking, so that the harmony was disrupted and fragmented. He listened harder, straining for some unidentified sound he could not catch, surrounded by a strange and eerie tonality, knowing only that something in the music was absent, almost but not quite blending into that odd beauty he was already beginning to yearn to hear again. Bitterly, remorsefully, he brushed the broken shards onto some paper and locked them in a drawer.

Then there was guilt, heaped like stones upon his sense of failure, so that year by year his heart felt to him heavier and harder. He could not bear to look at his daughter, and she stayed in her room, sensing his displeasure and his weariness with life. Sometimes when his wife took her food or at night after he was in bed, he would hear faint chimings, little bell tinklings, expanding as the seasons passed into full bodied rhapsodies, haunting and lovely, the strange sounds gathering themselves around the absence of the missing note. Nightly his dreams began to compose about that central silence, until all his daytime comings and goings seemed poised in a great listening, as though he were carrying a burden of massive weight so that when he turned his head to listen better, his entire body turned slowly with it. Gradually his whole posture changed to accommodate an absence of sound that had petrified his center of gravity, and all his movements, like his dreams, became bonded to the little bell-like rippings that issued from that silence and emptiness, only to return to it and reissue once again. The jewel cutter became a listener. His body listened during the day, and at night, when his body slept, his dreams heard. Like a violin with no bow, his waking and sleeping were tuned to the absent tone that flickered in silence through the heard melody.

The seasons came and passed, pulling the years through the changing colors, and the child remained in her room, chiming for the dawn the crimsoned yellows of the sunset, and for the sunset the deep purples of the dawn. At night shimmering bell sonatas would ring through the shadowed air, composing themselves around the absence of light, the silence of the missing tone filtering the harmony as shade trees filter the sunlight. The people in the nearby village grew accustomed to the faint strains of music that trembled through the air from the jewel cutter’s home. At first the strange sounds had sent tremors up their spines, and they had listened in awe and wondered among themselves what could be the source of it. But as the months passed, and then the years, they grew attached to it. The
children in the village could not remember a time when they had not awakened to the chiming or when it had not lulled them to sleep. The miners took their monthly loads of gemstone to the jewel cutter as always, and as always he made lovely jewelry, window decorations and lamps for them to sell in neighboring villages. After a time, they had stopped wondering who was playing the music and upon what instrument. The villagers’ lives were gathered into its melody, and all their ponderings and doubtings, their moments of happiness and grief, their birthings and dyings nestled in the hollows of the absent note that teased their listening with mystery.

In the village lived a boy who had recently arrived to make his own way in the world. His parents were both dead, and he had heard that there was always work for two willing hands in the jewel mines. The odd musical tones that he had heard upon his arrival had entranced him, and he had asked many people where the music came from, but they all only smiled and nodded toward the jewel cutter’s house. Nightly as he lay trying to sleep, the music would weave his loneliness in patterns of peace and rest, and would ease his fitful tossings to quiet slumber. Each morning he would walk the long way around to the mine shafts so that he could pass by the jewel cutter’s house. He would gaze at it for a long time, watching how the gemstone caught the morning light and listening for the music that on occasion drifted out of it. The music both increased and soothed his loneliness, as flares both increase and illuminate the darkness, and he became so drawn to it that when his work was finished, he would steal back to the house and sit listening until it was time to go home and to bed.

Each night he would find a spot a little nearer the house, in order to hear better, until finally he was just a few yards from the open window from which the music seemed to come. At last his curiosity became too great for him, and one night he approached the window. The jewel cutter’s daughter sat by the window sill, her hands open and poised gracefully as doves on its edge, the fingers moving slowly, little bell tones rippling through them like wind through feathery down. The girl had grown beautiful, and the image of her there, enveloped in the trembling music, made the boy catch his breath in wonder. The music ceased as he did so, and the girl sat still and alert, like a bird preparing for flight. Very softly, afraid that she would run away and that he would lose the music, the boy spoke to her.

“Please don’t be afraid,” he said quietly, “I was drawn here by your music. I will not hurt you. I came only to listen, for I am alone and your music makes me less so.” The murmuring chimes trembled and then again were silent. The boy moved closer and spoke again, and again the little bell tones rained upon him in answer. All that night and the nights thereafter, he remained by the window, gradually coming to know that the small hands were the only voice the girl had, and slowly he began to understand
the secret language of her fingers which counterpointed the darkness with light, grief with happiness, and loneliness with company. His words threaded easily through the silences in the melody, and his life became woven in harmony, the absent tone caused by the one ruined finger opening for him a space where he could be at peace and not feel alone.

Sitting by herself on the jeweled porch, the mother watched the boy's comings and goings, and daily she saw her daughter's face grow radiant with anticipation as the evening approached. The fragile, bell-toned murmurings rang ceaselessly through her thoughts, and the soft answering voice of the boy made her heart glad. At last, she mused, her daughter had a companion who understood her, who would perhaps take care of her when she and her husband became too old. The seasons had already quickened for Anna, whirling over the land like leaves in the autumn wind, and she knew that soon they would bear her and her husband to sleep beneath the wintry snows of death. Her husband had grown silent and cold with age and the bitterness of failure and guilt, and she realized that the only bond he retained with living was his great and now almost forgotten dream. But she also knew that his daughter's music, while it kept the wound of his guilt running with pain, also stirred the ashes of that dream, feeding the hope that he would one day bring his shining stone from the dark mountain ore. Now that her age bent her thoughts and her body to the ever darkening stretch of the shadows in their daily game with the sun, she both loved the boy and feared him. Loved him because he loved her daughter, and feared him because she knew that one night he would take her away and that her husband's dream would die without the flickering, empty spaces where it still lived in his child's music.

The quivering tones of his daughter's fingers now seemed to the jewel cutter louder and clearer than before, and they troubled his sleep, seared his dreams with burning crystals that splintered and sent flaming shards like needles into his heart. He would wake in a sweat of pain, only to be soothed again into sleep by the same music that had tortured him awake. Finally a night came when the mountain gemstones cried to him so loudly and the melodic splinters pierced him so painfully that he could not sleep at all, and he rose and ran to his workroom, cowering beneath the window from the starlit darkness. The bell sonatas fell even more clearly upon him, haunting and tormenting and lovely. He sat and listened. His ears strained toward the music through the press of his hands until he let his arms fall into his lap and sat with his head leaning on the sill in a muted torpor of grieving. Other sounds seemed to him to ramble through the hesitations and silences of the chimes, echoes of words, entoning voices. The words smoothed the harmony, counterpointed it, added resonance and buoyancy, trebled the chimes in endless ripples of music that reverberated in his brain.
like a cathedral organ in a country church. Slowly he sat up and listened harder, beginning to distinguish with effort the words from the music. And then it became clear to him that an intruder had penetrated the melody and stolen his home of sound.

The jewel cutter rose up in a rage of displacement, the sudden knowledge of his daughter's long years of solitude dropping such a weight of guilt upon him that he could not support it. What he had done was too huge, too unredeemable for thought. The guilt drove out the pity in his heart, and its beating pelted his sides like stones. In a frenzy of homelessness, the jewel cutter hurtled toward his daughter's room and flung open the door. "Leave us," he shouted, "go away from here. The music is mine. You have no part in it. Go away or I will kill you." And the jewel cutter lunged forward, seizing his daughter's arms, falling into a storm of chimes as the terrified girl fought him off. As the boy climbed through the window to free her, his shouts thundered through the music, and he sent Alexi crashing against his gemstone walls.

The dawn was growing light when Alexi woke up. He was alone in an absolute silence. He staggered to his feet and through the empty house, the silence eerie and heavy in his head. His wife was not in their room, and he made his way out onto the porch. Bits of dried leaves were blowing in whirlwinds across the lawn, and his tongue tasted snow in the air. At last he found his wife, sitting against the wall on a far corner of the porch, her hair blowing across her cheeks in the wind. She turned her gaze to him but did not get up. The jewel cutter eased down beside her and began to weep.

"Do not cry, husband," she said in a low voice, "the boy is strong and our child is happy with him. He will take care of her." Her voice cracked with age and weariness, but she continued, raising her hand to her husband's bowed head and stroking his white hair. "I watched them run to the mountains, heard the world become resonant with music as they ran. There was the sadness of all farewells in the music, and my grief at seeing her go opened into it and was borne away, as though it were cradled between the rising and falling of the chords as they rang fainter and fainter. When the music ceased, so did my grieving. Now the silence lies upon me like warm blankets." She stopped for a minute, watching him, and smiled gently. "I had thought to come to you, but you see, I am too weak, too old."

The jewel cutter looked at his wife and knew she was dying. His eyes searched the calm in her face, his fingers probed the composure of her hands. Icy bits of snow blew over them, whirling with the particles of leaves. Long hours Alexi sat with his wife in his arms, shielding her from the cold and the snow. The silence bit into him, stilled his tongue each time he tried to speak, emptied his mind. He felt hollow.
The sudden quiet in the village after so many years of melody had sent the villagers into the streets whispering among themselves about what had caused it. All that day their voices sounded loud and artificial in the quiet, and even the dogs were uneasy and growled at sudden noises. At nightfall, the people listened again for the music, and when it did not come, babies cried and could not sleep, and the women, deep in their listening, forgot the food burning on the stoves, and looked anxiously at their husbands who could make no answer to the questions in their eyes. Late that evening, an uneasy curiosity had turned them toward the jewel cutter’s house, and they had found him on the porch, clasping his wife in his arms, the woman dead, the jewel cutter cold and unspeaking but still alive.

In the days and nights that followed Anna’s burial, the villagers took turns sitting with the jewel cutter as he lay tossing in fever, mumbling words that made no sense to them. Very slowly a broken story fitted itself together in their minds, composed in fragments of gemstones and crystal and music and in a child with speaking fingers. As the jewel cutter grew stronger, the villagers withdrew again from his solitude, shaking their heads and murmuring that something awful must have happened in that house. After a time, they almost ceased to speak about it. Steeped in the wisdom of valley folk, which dictated the things that should be aired with words and the things that shouldn’t, they knew only that the mystery of the strange music and its ceasing was connected with the jewel cutter’s story very much as spring is connected to winter, or the stories of angels to those of demons. And like all holy mysteries, this one commanded their respectful silence.

The jewel cutter lived in the center of that silence. Without his willing it, a vigor returned to his hands, but they drooped idly at his sides. He wandered vacantly through the empty rooms and about the empty lawns, but even the coming of spring served only to send him deeper into desolation. His sense of failure was total, his dream suffocated by it, and with the death of his dream perished the fear of not being able to accomplish it. All of this he accepted, and by day and by night he moved through the silence and listened just as earlier he had moved through his child’s broken melody. The silence infused everything with a sameness, so that the day crept into the night and the darkness of night into the light of day. He could not understand why he was still alive.

Each morning his old habits led him to his workroom, and he would sit musing in the stillness among the pieces of gemstone. Since the darkness now held no fears for him, sometimes he would continue sitting far into the night, his gaze moving from the starred sky to the gemstones and back again. Memories heaped themselves and became one memory, recalled in silence, of a music he had shattered, the gift of a child who had no other
gift to give. And as he sat listening in that awesome quiet, the little bell tone
murmurings would again construct a phantom melody, until the silence
which trickled through it swallowed the tones back again, just as the sun
would swallow the stars in the dawn.

It was in these nights, filled so with silence and the fragments of
remembered melody, that the jewel cutter’s dream awoke in his hands, and
the hands touched the gemstones once more, lovingly, involuntarily, and
began to fashion a jeweled bell, fragile and light and delicate. His hands
worked slowly but with certainty and sure knowledge, almost as if from
memory. The nights passed through the days and the days through the
nights, and still he worked with no fear and no hope, cutting each stone
perfectly and polishing each surface smooth. With gentle precision, he
would attach the finished jewel to the inside of the bell frame he had made
of metal and glass, inserting the sparkling diamond into one of the hundreds
of open sockets and tightening the delicate metal prongs that secured it in
place. It was almost winter when the bell was finished, bitter cold and
snowing before all the infinitesimal air leaks were sealed around the jewels
so that the entire interior surface of the bell was smooth to his touch. He
carried the bell outside and held it over his head to the winter sun, which
poured through the tiny holes on the outside surface. The pointed tips of
the diamonds caught and filtered the light, and a shimmering sparkle of
prismatic radiance washed over him. Alexi held his breath in wonder.

Only now did he tremble a little as he walked back into the house and
opened the drawer where years before in bitterness and despair he had
hidden the crystal shards of his child’s finger. But again the concentration
of memory bent him to his work, and the silence gave space to his listening
so that a hush of melody whispered inside his hands as they fitted the
fragments of the belled crystal together. The lost rhapsody composed in his
mind as his fingers recomposed the petalled bellflower, and his hands sang
with love as they suspended it on a piece of fine, elongated glass inside the
jeweled bell. The hands were steady as they carried bell and clapper
outside to the setting sun and hung it from a hook at the edge of the
jeweled porch. All night the jewel cutter sat looking up at the bell. The
remembered melody seemed to him to float upward into its curved surface
and to gather in the little mouth of the belled crystal suspended inside.

All the night his memory drained into the bell, and he became empty
and felt himself submerged in rest and quiet, having the weight and sub­
stance of still night air. So it was without any effort at all that he rose and
touched the bell to start it swinging, and then again fell peacefully onto the
porch floor in a gentle rain of murmuring chimes as the little crystalline
bell inside struck the jewels of Alexi’s own bell, seized and held their
resonance, showering over him the disembodied music of remembrance
without regret.
Albert Huffstickler

CREATURE

I have held my silence
    in my hands too long.
My fingers are brittle as time.
I have felt a white sorrow
    in my bones
as the days stretched to breaking
and the hours turned in upon
    themselves like dead leaves.
I have gone down and gone down
till my heart lay wasted
    among the shadows.
I have held my silence
    in my hands too long—
till my fingers were eaten
    to the bone
and my arms fell from my shoulders
and lay watching me,
curled in the dust like
    giant question marks.
I have stood in the desert
    of the night
watching the red moon eat
    the shadows one by one
till the world was a flat,
    dark place,
where I stood cupping my silence
    in my bone-white fingers,
searching the sky for stars.
David Ray

THE SUN'S EYE: MONUMENT VALLEY

It is red rock,
blue sky
through an entry,
sandstone laid down
by centuries,
whipped, kissed
by wind,
smooth now
as labia,
an eye, an almond,
teardrop
through which
mind and sun
from another world
fall at a man's feet,
broad valley of
misunderstanding, love.
I touch my hat,
look up to
the perfect crawl—a
way into what
might be eternity,
faultless as
turquoise,
inviting,
Don't tell me
fallout crawls
there on fly-
ways of carrion
birds, let me climb
there and worship,
let me float
my way up
and out of this
floor of cactus
to my heaven, my
aerial womb, to wind
that tore through
Van Gogh's drawings
tacked on tavern
windows, to sky
where stars are
born with my
other lives, shapes
of eternal
triangle, circle,
cry.

THE FACTORIES IN THE FIELDS

for Cesar Chavez

The machines that pick tomatoes
also suck off the arms of children

THE TOURIST

rides through Belgium
spots a crater
but an apple tree grows therein,
nothing going on just now,
a cow or two
between shows.
So he argues with
the concierge.
Philippe Denis

A l'amarre de ton sang,
le creux
laissé par ton somme,
pour toi,
maintenant, respire—

(le vent-entre les dernières étoiles
circule
des lambeaux de coq
crépitent
dans les enclos—

avant que ne grossissent
les routes
—comme les veines
de tes poignets.

Philippe Denis

Le monde est déjà loin derrière—
comme une apparence de chacun de nous.

Haute de ce qui nous emporte, et qui n'est
qu'avenir.

Véhicule de lenteur
(dans l'oblique de froid)

où une image crie.

Philippe Denis

La maison tremble parfois,
d'être
au bout du chemin—
comme une monnaie
sous le soleil.
Philippe Denis

Moored to your blood, the hollow
left by your sleep, now breathes
for you—

(wind between the last stars flows
rooster
croaks
sputter in the paddock—

before roads begin
to swell
—like the veins
of your wrists.

Philippe Denis

The world is already far behind—
a semblance of each of us.

The haste which carries us, is merely the future.

Sluggish vehicle
(through the cold's oblique)
where an image cries.

Philippe Denis

The house trembles sometimes, being
at the end of the road—
like a coin under the sun.
Philippe Denis

A vivre comme respirer, 
à s’avancer
au-devant de sa vie—

ce que nous rejoignons
sort de ce jour
comme le vent,

aveugle
notre respiration.

Philippe Denis

Sentier,
sentier qui sort de la bouche.

Le long d’un futur sommeil,
ge gagne ce qui est un froid . . .

le visage vide,
— où la peur entasse
(goutte à goutte de preuve)
les hautes larmes du besoin.

Philippe Denis

A la place du vent
je ne vois qu’un incendie—

Mais je ne respire
que pour me reconnaître

et ne devoir
qu’à cette neige

— dont la blancheur
m’a mis en route.
Philippe Denis

To live as to breathe,  
to advance  
towards one’s life—

what rejoins us  
issues from the day  
like the wind,

blinds  
our breathing.

Philippe Denis

Path,  
path which exits from the mouth.

The length of a future sleep,  
I reach a coldness . . .

the blank face,  
—where fear collects  
(drop by drop of proof)  
steep tears of need.

Philippe Denis

Where the wind was  
I see only fire—

I breathe only  
to know myself  

owing only  
to this snow  

whose whiteness  
had led me.
Being in that room with Joan was a little like being back in a college dormitory, although it would have had to be a college for rich kids (but then, most colleges are, aren’t they?) with lots of clothes. The room was large and lined with bureaus, boxes, dressing tables, and built-in drawers. The overtones were amicable. I felt no insecurity but neither did I feel any particular warmth. I knew without seeing that the drawers belonging to Joan were filled while the drawers belonging to me were empty, and I had a neutral feeling about the situation. Was it good to have full drawers and bad to have empty drawers, or vice versa? The various drawers and boxes were of different sizes and relevancies, and my neutrality was pierced slightly by the idea that hers were of use, whereas mine were not.

My uncle, David, appeared on the scene. He is a tall, serious, conscientious, clean-cut, slightly lacking in humor, but kind and well-meaning sort of man. I have always liked him, maybe because I have felt an affinity to some of his puritanical aspects. He appeared not once, but several times. He wanted to tell me that I should be using my boxes and drawers. He didn’t say what for, but the idea of use kept coming through. I should be ready, he said. That empty space should be filled. Ready for what? Filled to what purpose? He didn’t elaborate.

Then the scene changed, the way it does in dreams. The college for rich kids was out, with the neutrality, and a large, rustic, old-fashioned lounge or
meeting hall was filled with people and a mission fervor. There was some kind of conference going on, of which I was a part, although I had no idea why the people were gathered in this spot. I saw myself clearly against the backdrop of people (in one of those old-fashioned hall mirrors? or didn’t the realism extend that far?) and was surprised and pleased by my appearance. I had always assumed that I was tall, ungainly, short-haired and masculine looking. Instead, I saw long, pretty hair in abundance, and a pretty face, really. I looked like Joan, and I worried a little; am I really seeing myself, or is this, indeed, Joan? The worry passed, and, still feeling pleased, I wanted to show Elliott how pretty I looked. He was always complaining about my short hair and lack of sex appeal. He surely couldn’t complain any more, now that I looked so fine. But I couldn’t find Elliott, and the moment passed. The people milling around seemed more concentrated than I had previously realized, on some important matter. There was a meeting going on and I thought I was back in the mission at an annual meeting, complete with prayers and hymns. I couldn’t be sure, because I didn’t recognize many of the faces, but Wilma was there, serious as ever, participating in the program. I wondered what was going on. Since she seemed to know, and I at least recognized her face, I stuck as close by her as I could.

At this point, a little old man, weather-beaten and wizened, almost gnome-like, appeared at one of the doors. He brought news of an emergency, and the people who gathered near him, ready to take action, became even more purposeful and intent. I couldn’t hear him say anything and I was very curious. I asked some people around what was happening, but no one would answer. Hating to be left behind, I followed the crowd out of doors, where I saw that we were to follow the little man up a mountain, and then I heard him speak. He said that his uncle lived in the high mountain. He said that it was incredibly cold on the mountain, only 55° Fahrenheit, and to be prepared for the worst. I wondered how anyone could survive at that low a temperature. But we started up.

Climbing the mountain was stiff work. I have seen flea-collar commercials where miniscule fleas have to make their way through forests of hair. That was the way this mountain looked—like giant hair on a giant scalp—only narrow and steep as well. The paths were smooth and worn into deep ruts, like toboggan trails, and I had to pull myself up the narrow, slippery trail by means of the hair-like outgrowths. Sometimes, around a curve over a steep drop, only the hair, which I clung to frantically, prevented me from falling. My feet would swing around over nothing as the path just seemed to disappear. I wondered at the strength I seemed to have in my arms and why I wasn’t killed, as I didn’t recall that I usually had enough strength to manage a single push-up, except from the knees. Ahead of me, in the long line of people, Wilma, twenty-five years older and in only slightly better physical
condition than I, was doing extremely well. She acted as though this were a
typical small outing and she were only out for a short walk. I didn't understand
how she could take it so easily, even though an easy acceptance and
unruffled calm were typical of her.

I started passing small wooden shanties on my left. Some of them were
no bigger than outhouses, and the doors of some hung open to reveal human
shapes sitting on the wooden boxes. The shapes were curious. As I examined
them more closely I saw that they were like inflated space suits without
bodies inside. As I looked, one of them deflated and went into nothing. As
each of these shapes occupied its own outhouse, I went on confidently
looking into outhouses, expecting to see more empty space suits. But then I
saw that the space suits were no longer empty. The shanties grew more
frequent, and now, inside the shapes were the bodies of dead men, their eyes
popping out of their heads, their mouths contorted, and ropes around their
necks as if they'd been hung. I was horrified, and I hated to keep looking, to
keep going on, as the feeling of catastrophe grew more oppressive and
imminent. There was, however, one shanty which offered what almost
amounted to comic relief. It contained a kind of giant shoe, a sort of
moccasin, and the shoe seemed to be crowded with living people. I would
like to have seen more, but I had to keep climbing. I sensed that we were
nearing the disaster.

Finally we all arrived. Our destination was a small village on a plateau.
It had been ravaged by fire and death. The small wooden houses, built
closely together and now in various stages of wreckage, charred and still
smoking, disgorged occasional women in rags in various stages of terror and
mourning. They ran aimlessly, looking to no one for help and apparently not
expecting any. There were a few knots of people who rejoiced in survival. In
one case a number of women were hugging and holding onto a man who had
lived through the massacre.

It was after the fact. There were no evidences of an enemy, natural or
mechanical, and no clues except the dying fires as to what had caused the
disaster. I observed this ending and felt helplessly apart from it. How could I
help anyone or any group of people when so many of them were, apparently,
already dead, when their dwellings were destroyed? What were we all there
for? Why had we climbed the mountain to be witnesses to the destruction of
strangers? Most of the climbers did seem to have disappeared into the
village with jobs to do, but I had no idea what their work was. I wanted to do
something. Wilma and a few others were standing silently near me, looking
on patiently at the carnage. They did not seem to be too worried, so I asked
Wilma if there was any way that I could help. She seemed to know something
that I didn't. She offered hope. She said there would be something for us to
do in a little while. I waited in expectation of that time.
J. Penzi

CYCLONE

there is a long passage through the wind
and tireless birds circle your heart
i wanted to know nothing of these things
to see no images
hear no foaming memories
or glass silence breaking over your mouth
a valley of starless waters
grey against the rain
twisted and turning
a cold flame
devoured by stones

THE VOICE

the morning stained my blood
my voice trembling yet immobile
trapped by color
desired to rest under a light
soft as your fingertips
i smeared myself with white clay
and sat among sad stones
waiting for the darkness
to heal the wounds of the horizon
of your shoulder
waiting for the moon
to pass above you like a pale vessel
returning memory
to fire
Harry Haskell and Gregory Brehm

For Octavio Paz

The Tides of Day and Night

Dawn ripens the fruit of eyes
   With the lips of dawn and midnight
   On each other
Two birds on a tree of clouds
   And a horse made of wind underwater
You enter my life like a landscape
Of words and silence
   While the sun's moon's bell's sons sing
   Stones undress their centuries
Your shadow embraces light

* * * *

A river of fire undercover
   A child drinks the milk
   Of its Mother's eyes
An eclipse of your eyes in my blindness
   Two hands invent a body
   Your fingers
   Are ten eternities
While past present and pluperfect are one
   Two stars kiss the neck
   Of the sky

* * * *

Two birds embrace a dream
   And from the shadows of centuries
   Light sings of childhood and darkness
The shadows of silence
Light kisses the moon
   Look! A man in a trenchcoat
   Singing your name
One boat on two rivers
   And silence is rescued in laughter
Dawn awakens and pulls off
The blanket of night
You sang no one's name

* * * *

Like a dream you awake in my arms
The seed of your voice opens
And plants itself in the wind
With the tapestry of misery
Sewn in your eyes
Politics is a dream without words
Echoes sing
As dawn kisses the breast
Of night

* * * *

Open your eyes
Let stars sing
And birds shine in the sky
Open your mouth
Let your tongue
Lick the face
Of your dreams
Who invents the night?

Like the rhythm of blue
In the sky underwater
You surface
From the depth of a color
With crystalline rhythms
Of laughter and tears
Lost in search of each other

She flows like a river
To the shore of his dreams
Stars open their eyes
Stones bathe in the waters
Of their centuries
Two eyes open night
With a shadow of ice
For a reflection
I have tried to tell you
The story of a man and woman's life
Which melts in the earth and stars

* * * *
The man who played piano
   Rio '66
   A woman in rags and tears
A woman
   Whose laughter was stolen
   By invention
Night Night Night

Each man becomes a mirror
   Of something he does not want to reflect
Each woman looks into that mirror
And sees only her transparencies
And visions are born in a transparency
   Whose colors are clear
   Like the invisibility of a sigh
The light by our bodies shines

When dawn fully awakes
   And night takes off her clothes
When two people make love
In a garden they invented
   Darkness will ripen
   And stars will smell
The pollen of earth

Each wave is a man
   The shore is a woman
Of whirlpool and foam

Stars join sky and become light
   Stones join fruit and become clouds
   Two mouths join
And the moon loses its shadow
   In the water

Each night is a man
   Noon is a dark woman
Who searches for day

Life remains an unspoken word
   You and I
   On the shoulders of night
Return our silence to the moon

   *   *   *   *
From a river of dreams
You awake
You bring back
The trumpet of your dreams
Note by note
The rhythm of echoes and silence
Tide of equators
The shores of your eyes
Filled with foam
Unspoken
The flower of a word
Whose petals are vowels
Time erases the night

* * * *

The sky dissolves
Into noon
Stars shine like clouds
A piano with 88 silences
Six strings of despair
Unspoken rhapsodies
Memories of stars
That shine like stones
The silence of silence shines
Like your voice in the dark

* * * *

A song out of tune
Love run away
Caught in arms and eyes
The dark clouds of your eyes
A silence that speaks
Like a stone
Arrivals Departures
When you love me
You leave me
Your hands hoist their sails
The wind of your dreams
Arrives
Valton Tyler—**Tat Tat** (Oil on canvas, 30 x 24), 1975. Valley House Gallery, Dallas, Texas.
Valton Tyler—Bubble Gum (Oil on canvas, 31 x 23), 1974. Valley House Gallery, Dallas, Texas.
Guillermo Sucre

PIEDRA DE ESCANDALO

yo sí voy a decir lo que pienso
voy a pensar lo que digo
voy a decir lo que pienso en lo que digo
voy a pensar lo que digo cuando pienso
sólo que ya es tarde cuando digo lo que pienso
ya es tarde para decir o pensar
sólo pienso decir ya es tarde
la blasfemia el abrumado silencio la inocencia
el sueño o la trama del sueño ya es tarde
tirar la primera piedra o la última
el insomnio centro de la llama la primera
ráfaga del día ya es tarde
tirarla o recogerla ser el escándalo

SINO SILENCIO

la poesía no se hace en silencio
sino con silencio
las chicharras la zampona del verano
el calor las lluvias estallan
arco amenazante
no hemos visto el cielo
pero sabemos hay
un relámpago en su orilla
esa orilla se rasga y es el mar
tú y yo nos alejamos o volvemos
en la última tarde
pero cuando aparecen las palabras
espacio de otro espacio
suena solo el silencio
I will say what I think
I'm going to think what I say
I'm going to think what I think in what I say
I'm going to think what I say when I think
only it's already late for saying what I think
it's already late for speaking or thinking
I only intend to say it's already late
the blasphemy the exhausted silence the innocence
the dream or the plot of the dream it's late
to throw the first stone or the last
the insomnia center of the flame the first
gust of the day it's already late
to throw it or pick it up to become scandal

poetry is made not in silence
but with silence
the cicadas summer's ancient flute
the heat the burst of rains
threatening dome
we haven't seen the sky
but we know there is
lightning on its shoreline
that line rips open it's the sea
you and I withdraw or return
in the last evening
but when words appear
space of another space
only the silence speaks
EN EL OCIO

un homme saute dans le soleil

V.H.

tu cuerpo que es una sombra dorada
    un cuchillo
que parte en dos al sol
entreveo el ligero temblor de tu sexo
como las algas palpitación húmeda
y el pulso del mediodía en mis sienes
veo un caballo en las praderas de Virginia
al filo de la tarde su respiración
azul y ocre como un búfalo del Oeste
veo un bosque ya olvidado
en mi memoria austral
el sol remotamente ciego
los pájaros que huyeron de esta nieve
tan familiar ya tan extraña
veo lo que veo lo que escribo
en ésta en la otra
    página
donde todo se borra

ATLANTICO ABRIL

este táctito cuerpo aún sin sonido
    oscuro
esta herencia de la sal que ahora despierta
es el mar
    preparando sus garras su nueva
    guerra
su disputa o su reconciliación con la
    intemperie

56
THE OTHER SUN

your body turning golden from within
fountain of fresh fire
foliage
where the sun reappears
    not as clarity
but as the mask we had lost
your face alive now with the perfection
    of the climate

PROSCRIPTED, 1930

    to G.Y.B.

summer returns but the longest day
    will not be mine any more
outside I see light the night that prefigures
I know now only what I was
the vast land the dust of a horseman
a soulless a violent country
disdain the enamel of a neutral
    passion
I am ready to die
I don’t know what I know but what I am
words a populated silence
THE KILLING STATION

H. E. FRANCIS

They have made the legal punishment for crime so great that most criminals or intended criminals, those who have grudges or fears or angers which they wish to express, choose the station. Indeed, the station has so cut down on national crime that families are the first to recommend the choice. Entry is purely voluntary.

Station 51—there are three hundred over the nation—is a four-square-mile area in the middle of the potato fields of Eastern Long Island. With his victim(s) the offender or to-be offender need only press the entry button and a narrow metal door slides open on a small square the size of an elevator. This door closes on darkness and a light reveals a passage to a similar door fifteen feet beyond and opening on a similar area.

The far door opens on barren flats white as alkali, apparently endless; actually it is a mile to the next square wall enclosed within it like a Chinese box. The offender is sometimes momentarily blinded by the brightness and stops, soon to discover that the alkali is hot and burns his soles unless he keeps moving. If he turns back and attempts to climb the wall, he comes upon millions of infinitesimal, nearly invisible needles which cause him to scream and the myriad pinpricks to bleed. Everywhere there are human bones. The white is accumulated lime sifted in fine layers over the dead in
periodic sprays in a complex system imbedded in the ground. Sometimes, from whatever passion, the to-be offender kills his opponent at once and only then becomes aware of his surroundings; sometimes the murder is not perpetrated and the two are driven to pursue their course together. They do not backtrack because, as they soon learn, the stone is less hot as they move ahead across the flats. Their movement is therefore usually more rapid as they approach the next wall.

The second wall is permanently cool and damp, so the offender often clings to it, following the wall either left or right to find a way through, but the entrance is on the opposite side of the square from which they entered the first wall and they must find their way around to it.

The discovery is simple: steps lead up three-quarters of the way in the wall to a shaft down which the offender must slide into the next square. A faint trickle of water pours from the sides. Here he may drink. The water moistens the slide. If he chooses, he may drink and step back down and remain in the first quadrangle permanently. Nearly all, especially when they grow hungry, slide down the shaft into the second quadrangle.

The terrain is damp. Visibility is good for a hundred yards or so, but there a fog similar to that off the ocean makes a white wall which looks impenetrable. It is impossible for the criminal to return to quadrangle one through the slide because it is overgrown with a dense slippery green algae and the wall itself is sheer barnacles against which flesh may be scraped beyond recognition. The ground is almost at the freezing point, and he moves toward the warmth which creates the fog.

Inside the fog he may wander for hours or days or weeks, dependent on his constitution, careful to dodge the pointed stakes which protrude from the ground. These become more dense as he moves ahead: with the vague warmth they are his only evidence of progress. If he is with another, he must touch him or talk constantly or may lose him for days and weeks or forever. At this stage one has been known to feed on the other. If he moves toward the source of an aroma, crawling at last through thickly planted stakes toward the greater warmth, there is an abrupt clear space under a heavy fog, higher here, and under this a third wall is visible.

This new wall is heavily charged and the least touch will throw the body down, but the ground is still too cold to lie on and the offender must keep moving unless he is too weak or dies. He must follow the wall—right or left does not matter—until he finds a rubber seat (there is one on either lateral), and when he sits in it, automatically it revolves. When it stops, if he does not rise it ejects him. A thick transparent substance walls off the opening; he cannot return.
This is the stretch of flat yellow sand and a sun so bright that at once the vision is impaired. Periodic winds rile up the sand and smite the eyes, seal mouth and nose and ears and pores, and numb the head and mind. But because the area is small, the next wall is already visible from the revolving chair. The criminal may almost reach the wall and be driven back. This action may occur many times. Against the wall lie deep piles of bones, which he must scale before he can top the wall and reach the final one.

The last is an area of infinite stillness—six feet square, six feet high. The walls are dark, with the normal temperature of the body, and on each of four sides is a round tunnel large enough for a body to crawl through on its stomach. When he crawls in, the light becomes overpowering. The floor of this area, and the walls, are mirrors. The sun blazes against them. In the quadrangle, whichever way he faces there is someone else: himself. But in no time the sun burns his remaining vision away. If another accompanies him, sound keeps them together, and touch, though neither can move far. One may eat of the other’s flesh or parts of his own. Eventually he cannot move and dies.

After each death the sprinkler system pours an acid over the flesh and only bones remain. Periodically the bones are collected to be ground for fertilizer and human manufactures, but the team of men, the collectors, are put to death to keep secret the functioning of the killing stations.

The engineer is the most valued person alive—his achievement miraculous. He meets with subofficials as a voice only or in disguise. He has had petitions from many countries to set up a comparable network of killing stations. All over the world nations are begging for his help. They promise him anything. They will ask no questions. Everywhere mystery will be restored.
ANCIENT RITUAL
HARRIET ZINNES

With helmets on their heads they return to the beach. Their bodies polished with grease gleam in the sun. Peering through the telescope, she thinks their nude bodies look like burnt almonds. Their helmets seem absurd to her, and so do the guns in their holsters at their sides.

They are not soldiers. Are they on location? Are they a dance group or actors, extras for some pornographic film?

She puts the telescope down and watches the loose curtain as it waves out toward the farthest corner of the large English park below her. Her blond hair tied tightly at the nape of her neck by a red ribbon gives the young woman a sense of strangulation, as if the ribbon were round her throat, tightening tightening. She can hardly breathe. Yet she once again picks up the telescope and peers through it. Again she sees the men, this time lounging on the sand, with flutes in their mouths. She thinks she hears melodies as she watches them arranged in a semi-circle, their bodies even more brilliant with grease, with sun. Her throat feels less taut as she watches.

One man stands up, removes his helmet, puts down his flute, and turns toward a man seated in the circle. He voices some command. The seated man turns away sharply even as he is knocked over by the standing man, who in a powerful embrace pummels the man sexually.
The woman trembles but does not put down her telescope. She watches as the man slowly succumbs. She thinks she hears a groan from him, a groan of pleasure and release. The telescope shakes in her hands until she cannot sustain even its light weight and has to put it down. Now she feels a tightening of the belt around her waist. It becomes almost unbearable as she stumbles to her bed and with weak hands tries to unclasp the tight buckle. Shaking, she gasps for breath. Gathering all her declining strength she makes a last attempt to ease the buckle. This time it works. Her green belt lies on the bed beneath her, the silver clasp gleaming.

She places her hands on her pounding heart. She lets them rest there until slowly she begins to breathe normally. She closes her eyes but opens them quickly to blind her from the reappearing vision of the men on the sand. She stares at the ceiling covered with painted angels, of rounded bellies, rosy cheeks, and wings that look like enlarged butterflies pinned to a scrapbook. As she looks, she relaxes. Stretching her hands upward she touches those wings until disintegrating into thin films of wax they fall lightly covering her entire face. As she lies enjoying the caress of falling waxwings, she tries again to close her eyes. The beach scene does not reappear. She rests like a corpse receiving strange balm, beads of sweat from a priest reciting the last sacrament.

Hours pass. Suddenly she feels a fluttering upon her face as if the films of wax are moving. The sensation at first is pleasant. Her bed itself becomes a bed of feathers and her whole body rises as if it is itself down. Even as she succumbs to the delicacy of her invisible messager she becomes aware of a subtle pain upon her face. Impalpably the light flutter upon her face hardens to crystals, then to needles, and then to distinct claws ripping layers of wax film through to her own skin. The shift from gentleness to fierce tearing away of wing and flesh is so sudden that she experiences both pleasure and pain. In agony she tries to sit up in her bed but feels an enormous weight upon her face by now drenched in blood. She tries to lie face down on the pillow to protect herself from the fierce marauding but all she can do is twist her body with only one cheek protected from her enemy. Weakened by loss of blood, powerless even to cry out, she lies still in her semi-protected position. How long she lies she does not know. She has lost consciousness.

The men on the beach leave their flutes on the sand and sit tightly together in a circle. They sit like sun gods—nude, strong, each in worship of his own body, yet each admiring the others in their tight circle. One is taller, stronger than the others. His crotch is covered with a shield-like insignia of red silk. Obviously the leader, he gestures to the men to remove their helmets. In unison they raise hands and in a quick movement grasp the headgear. Arching their bodies toward their feet they place the helmets
in front of extended legs. Returning to a sitting position each looks intently upon the leader awaiting further instructions. The leader remains unmoved. His face is stone. Its strange pallor contrasts with his bronzed body. Staring directly in front of him he is as indifferent to the circle of men as just a moment before he had been intent upon his command. The men hold their eyes riveted to his face. How long they remain in this taut position the only observer of the scene does not know. The man who earlier had been sexually attacked sits apart from the circle. Exhausted, still confused, still feeling at once pain and pleasure, he has withdrawn from the group and is now watching them in a lazy, half interested fashion. The leader who had attacked him has completely dismissed the man from his view. Now nothing seems on the leader’s mind as he stonelike stares ahead of him, unperturbed not only by the isolated one but by the men piercing him with their eyes awaiting his new command. That command does not come. Yet they do not remove their eyes from his face.

Minutes pass? An hour? Two? The sun beats down on their faces, indiscriminately. Upon leader. Upon isolated one. Upon the men still drawn in the circle. Silence is neither reproach nor storm, thinks the isolated one, as he begins to look with more interest toward the group. His fatigue, his sexual shock are leaving him. He is almost ready to become part of the circle, even to the extent of turning his eyes to his leader, to become transfixed in a silent unwavering obeisance. Just as this decision is taking hold of him, he hears a penetrating scream. The scream is shrill, eerie, a female voice bestial in terror. The men in the circle shudder. He notices that even the leader stands up. Involuntarily. All turn as they see the woman running toward them blood streaming down her face, a face no longer a face but planes of bone and flapping flesh. She is almost upon them when in a sudden jerky movement her body falls, completely limp.

As the men rush toward her the leader shouts, HALT. They halt, legs taut, as the isolated one slowly picks himself up, reaches for his gun and with perfect aim shoots the leader through the heart.
Wood Sculpture by Catherine Widgery
Wood Sculpture by Catherine Widgery
Jean Breton

SEUL COMME UNE BETE

Seul comme une bête
au milieu des vagues qui me rejettent
seul parmi les hommes
(ils se nourrissent de légendes,
d'opiums, d'idées de salut).

Seul comme un brave
devant les proues qui jonglent avec l'eau,
les bouches riant pour échapper aux rides,
le soleil, athlète blessé luisant d'huile,
le grand mât crispé des pins.

Seul comme la pluie
sur la planche et les fers usés des pontons
obligeant les bateaux à rester au port plus longtemps
pour faire durer les voyages,
le crucifix que la lune mouille le soir entre deux îles.

Seul comme une bête,
il ne restera que poussière
de tout ce que nous avons adoré,
dont nous avions gonflé nos maigres bagages
et qui, à l'usage, s'écaille sous nos yeux,
les vacances mortes derrière les brouettes de la mer.
Jean Breton

ALONE LIKE A BEAST

Alone like a beast
surrounded by rejecting waves
alone among men
(they nourish themselves with legends, opium,
and ideas, their salvation).

Alone like the brave
before prows juggling water
eluding the ripples, mouths smile,
the sun, wounded athlete gleams in oil,
the great mast contracted with pine.

Alone like the rain
on planks and irons strained by pontoons
compelling ships to harbor
a long time
making voyages last,
a crucifix
when the moon moors evening between two isles.

Alone like a beast
only spray remains
of all we have worshiped,
we swelled our meager store of knowledge
which peels beneath our eyes with use,
dead holidays behind the wheelbarrows of the sea.
Jean Breton

TU ES REVENUE

Onze heures sonnaient
aux quatre vents du monde

Les vieillards se réfugiaient
dans l'horloge des rêves

Rencontre avec les vérités et les mensonges
de l'amour aux jambes de roseau

L'herbe pousse et chante
sur les terrains vagues de ma mémoire
depuis que tu es revenue
poser des boutons d'or sur ma poitrine
ce brûlot à explorer l'avenir.
Jean Breton

YOU GROW NEW

Eleven o'clock sounds
at the four winds of the world

The old people seek refuge
in the clock of dreams

Encountering the truths and lies
from love to the stems of reeds

The growth and hum of grass
on the vague land of my memory
since you grow new
place gold buttons on my breast
a firebrand to explore the future.
I ran into Romana in a cafe. She was half drunk, but deep below her obvious drunkenness I sensed that dense silt surging fast whenever she stood lost in thought. Then her mouth would sag, heavy, and her eyes, fleeting, would change from hunter into prey. She clasped my hands twice, I need you, she said, but right away she no longer did, and her fear turned into indifference, almost disdain, a mean line swelling her lips. She was again an adolescent when she laughed, without any mysteries, the best in our class. Without any dangers. She used to be extremely beautiful, and she still was, but now her decadent beauty was sad even in joy. She told me that she was separated from her third husband and that she lived with a small tiger in a penthouse.

With a tiger, Romana? She laughed. Once, a friend who had been traveling in Asia brought Tigrela back with him in a small basket, she was so tiny he had to nurse her with a bottle. She has grown into a large cat, one of those with golden eyes and tawny stripes on their ginger coat. Two thirds tiger and one third woman, she has become humanized and now—At first she was always mimicking me, it was funny, then I too began to mimic her, and we ended up by becoming so involved with each other that now I don’t know if it was from her that I learned how to look at myself in the mirror with narrowed eyes. Or if it was from me that she learned how to stretch out on the floor and lean her head on her arm to listen to music. She is so well-proportioned, so clean, said Romana, dropping an ice-cube into the glass. Her coat is this color, she added, stirring the whiskey. With her fingertips she picked up a blade of ice that lay melting in the bottom of the days she used to bite into popsicles. She sure liked whiskey this Tigrela, but she held her liquor well, she was restrained, only once did she get really stoned. And Romana smiled at the thought of the animal frolicking about, tumbling over the furniture until she leaped onto the chandelier and then started to swing, to and fro, and Romana made a feeble imitation of a pendulum swinging. She and half of the chandelier finally landed on the bolster and then the two of us danced a tango together. It was a riot. Then she became depressed and in her depression she gets excited, she almost wrecked the garden, she tore my housecoat, she broke things. Then she wanted to throw herself from the balcony, just like people, exactly. Exactly, Romana repeated, groping about my wrist for my watch. She resorted to a man walking past our table, the time, do you have the time? When told that...
it was just before midnight, she lowered her eyes, brooding. She remained silent. I waited. When she spoke again, she struck me as an excited gambler, dissembling under an artificial speech: I had a steel grille placed on top of the balustrade, of course, if she wants to, she can easily climb this grille. But I know that she only tries to kill herself when she's drunk and then it will be enough to shut the door that opens into the balcony. She's always been so lucid, she went on, lowering her voice, and her face darkened. What's the matter, Romana? I asked, and touched her hand. It was ice-cold. She gazed at me, her eyes crafty. She was thinking of something else when she told me that at sunset, the sun, hitting the top of the building slantwise, projected the shadow of the grille onto the middle of the carpet in the living-room, and if Tigrela was lying asleep on the bolster, it was beautiful to see the net of shadows descending like a snare upon her coat.

She sank her forefinger in the glass, moving the ice around in the whiskey. On this finger she wore a square emerald, like a queen would. Really extraordinary, isn't it? The limited space of an apartment has restricted the growth of an Asiatic tiger, thanks to the judicious magic of adaptation; she became a mere overgrown cat, as if she had sensed that she had to confine herself to being nothing more than an oversized cat. Nobody except me knows that she has grown, nobody except me has noticed that she's taking up more space now, lately there has hardly been room for the two of us, one of us would really have to . . . She interrupted herself to light a cigarillo, the flame wavering in her unsteady hand. She sleeps with me, but when she's not on speaking terms with me, she sleeps on the bolster, her back turned to me, rigid like a sphinx.

She must have created problems, what about the neighbors? I asked. Romana stiffened the finger that was stirring the ice. There aren't any, one apartment only on each floor of a highrise, completely white, Mediterranean style. You should see how Tigrela and the apartment match so perfectly well. I've traveled in Persia, you heard about it, didn't you? That's where I got the fabrics and the rugs, she loves this velvety comfort, she's so sensitive to textures, to smells. When she wakes up restive, I light an incense stick, the scent relaxes her. I turn on the record-player. Then, after much stretching of limbs, she falls asleep, I have a suspicion that like the dragons, she also sees better with her eyes closed. I had some trouble convincing Aninha that she's just an oversized cat, Aninha's the maid. But now everything is fine, the two of them keep their distance, but they respect each other, that's what really counts, respect. She has accepted Aninha, who is old and ugly, but she almost attacked the previous maid, a young woman. While this young woman remained with me, Tigrela would hardly leave the garden, she kept herself hidden behind the leaves, her eyes two slits, her claws dug in the earth.
The claws, I started, and then didn't know what else to say. The emerald dropped sideways like a defenseless head and it hit against the glass, the finger much too thin for the ring. The sound of the stone against the glass aroused Romana, momentarily apathetic. She raised her head, and her eyes roamed over the tables, all of them filled. Quite noisy, isn't it? I suggested that we leave but instead of the bill, she asked for another whiskey. Don't worry, I'm used to it, she said, and took a deep breath. She held herself upright, Tigrela loves jewelry and Bach, yes, Bach, she insists on the same pieces, especially The Passion According to Saint Matthew. One evening, as I was getting ready to go out for dinner, she came up to me to have a look, she hates me going out, but that evening she was cheerful, she approved of my dress, she prefers the classic styles and this one was a full-length, straw-colored silk dress, with long sleeves and a low waist line. How do you like it, Tigrela? I asked and she drew nearer, placed her paws on my neck, licked my chin lightly so as not to spoil my make-up and then with her teeth she started to pull at my amber necklace. Would you like to have it? I asked, and she growled softly but firmly. I removed the necklace and put it around her neck. She looked at herself in the mirror, her eyes moist with pleasure. Then she licked my hand and walked away, the necklace hanging from her neck, the largest beads grazing the floor. When she's relaxed, her eyes turn into a clear yellow, the color of amber.

Does Aninha sleep in the apartment? I asked, and Romana started as if suddenly realizing that Aninha came in early in the morning and left in the evening, leaving the two of them by themselves. I looked hard at her and she laughed, I know, you think I must be crazy, but from the outside nobody can understand it, it's complicated. And so simple, but you'd have to step inside to understand it. I put on my jacket, but had it really turned cooler? Do you remember our graduation party, Romana? I asked. I still have some photographs, the shoes you had bought for the dance were too tight and so you ended up by dancing barefoot; during the waltz I watched you from afar, you were whirling away in a light dress, your hair hanging down; I thought it beautiful this idea of yours of dancing barefoot. She was looking at me attentively but she wasn't listening at all. We're vegetarians, I've always been a vegetarian, you know. I didn't. Tigrela eats nothing but cereals and fresh vegetables and milk with honey, absolutely no meat at home, meat causes bad breath. And thoughts, she added, and clasped my hand, I need you. I leaned over to listen, but the waiter stretched his arm to pick up the ashtray and she was once more frivolous, interested in the ashtray being cleaned. Have you ever tried milk blended with watercress and molasses? The recipe is a cinch, blend everything in a blender and then strain it, she said, and stretched her hand out, do you have the time, sir? Do you have an engagement? I asked, and she said, no, she didn't. No, no, she repeated, and I had the feeling that she turned pale as her lips parted to
formulate some obscure computation. She caught a dwindling ice-cube on the tip of her tongue and crunched it in her teeth. It hasn't happened yet, but it will, she said with some difficulty because the ice froze her tongue. I waited. A gulp of whiskey seemed to give her some warmth. Any night now, when I get home, the doorman might rush towards me saying, you know, madam, from one of those balconies . . . but then he might say nothing and I'll have to go up and behave normally so that she won't notice, and wait for another day. At times we size each other up and I don't know the outcome, I've taught her much, and I've learned as much from her, Romana said with a gesture she left unfinished. Have I mentioned that it's Aninha who clips her fingernails? She would give her her paw without the least resistance but she wouldn't allow her to brush her teeth, her gums are ultra-sensitive. I've bought her a natural bristle toothbrush, the brushing is done very gently with up and down strokes and the toothpaste is mint flavored. Dental floss is not necessary because she doesn't eat anything stringy, but if one day she were to she'd know where to find the floss.

I ordered a sandwich; Romana ordered some carrots, raw and well-washed. And salt, she said, and pointed to the empty glass. While the waiter poured the whiskey we didn't talk. When he went away, I broke into laughter. Is it true, Romana, all this you've been telling me? She didn't reply, she was tallying memories and amidst them, there was one stifling her: she gasped, loosening the knot of her scarf. A blue bruise on her neck became exposed; I turned away to the wall. In the mirror I saw her retie her scarf and then sniff at the whiskey. She smiled. Tigrela could tell an adulterated whiskey, something I never could. One night, with a kick she sent a bottle flying away, why did you do it, Tigrela? She didn't reply. When I examined the broken pieces, I recognized the brand, it was one that once had given me a hell of a hangover. Would you believe that she knows more about my life than Yasbeck ever did? And there has never been anybody more jealous than Yasbeck, he even hired a detective to watch me. She feigns indifference but her pupils dilate and overflow like some black ink spilling over the eyes, have I mentioned those eyes of hers? It's in them that I see her emotions, her jealousy. Then she grows sullen. She refuses the blanket, the cushion, and goes to the garden, the apartment is in the middle of a garden designed especially for her, a mini-jungle. There she remains all day long, all night long, sulking behind the leaves, I can call her until I'm blue in the face, but she won't come to me, her muzzle wet with dew, or could it be tears?

I was staring at the small circle of water the glass had left on the table. But Romana, wouldn't it be more humane to send her to a zoo? Let her become an animal again, I think it's cruel to force your kind of cage on her when she might be happier in some other kind. You've enslaved her, and you've ended up enslaved as well, it was inevitable. Won't you at least give
her the freedom of choice? Annoyed, Romana sank a carrot into the salt. She licked it. Freedom is comfort, my darling, Tigrela also knows it is so. She has been provided with all comforts, just as I had been until Yasbeck ditched me.

And now you want to ditch her, I said. At one of the tables a man started to sing an excerpt from an opera at the top of his voice, but it was soon drowned in laughter. Romana was talking so fast now that I had to interrupt her, slow down, I can't follow you at all. She did, but a moment later she was racing away again like mad as if she were running out of time. Our worst fight was because of him, Yasbeck, you know how it is, this turmoil of an old love that suddenly turns up again. Sometimes he phones me and then we sleep together, she realizes perfectly well what's going on, she overheard our conversation, when I got home she was awake waiting for me, standing like a statue at the door, of course I dissembled as much as I could, but she's cunning and kept sniffing at me until she detected the male smell in me, then she grew wild. I think that nowadays I'd like to have a unicorn, you know, that tawny horse with the pink horn on his forehead, I saw one in a tapestry, so deeply in love with the princess who was holding up a mirror so that he could look at himself, but where's the waiter? Waiter, would you please tell me the time? And bring me some more ice. She spent two days without eating, tigerish, Romana went on. She was speaking slowly now, her voice thick, one word after the other, the numbers of her computation filling the empty slots. Two days without eating at all, dragging her necklace and her haughtiness around the apartment. I was puzzled, Yasbeck had said he'd call me and he didn't, he sent a note instead, what's the matter with your telephone? it's dead. When I examined it, I saw that the cord had been completely ground, there were teeth marks all over the extension cord. I didn't say anything, but I felt her watching me from behind those slits of hers that can cut through glass or wall. I guess it was that very same day that she realized what I had been thinking, we distrusted each other, but even so, do you understand me? She was so passionate...

Was? I asked. She spread her hands on the table, and faced me. Why are you looking at me like this? What else could I do? She must have waked up at 11, the hour she usually does, she loves night. Instead of milk, I filled her bowl with whiskey and turned off the lights; when lost in despair, she sees better in the dark, and today she was lost in despair because she overheard me, she thinks I'm with him now. The door to the balcony is wide open, it has been so for the past several nights and nothing has happened, but one never knows, she's so unpredictable, she added, her voice fading away. She wiped the salt from her fingers with a paper napkin. I'm off now. I always get home trembling because I never know if the doorman will come to me saying that a naked young woman with an amber necklace around her neck has thrown herself from one of the balconies.
Reginald Gibbons

A TRANSCRIPTION

The cold has hardened the snow
to ice under its heavy paws.
But with my walking out and back again
I have outstripped even the cold.
I lean against this black tree trunk.
Through the orchard's orderly lanes,
rigorous and wide in this season,
I see the windows of the house
full of guests, a quarter mile yet
down the slope, silently shining.
The ice in the bark crackles under my shoulder,
the scroll of the field unrolls in the moonlight;
and the black strokes stand up
in rows against the page.

THE FOREIGNER

Continuously reading, he waits
for the book whose pages are mirrors.
His ambit is diminished more each day
though he still walks out
into the crowded street
gasping imperceptibly for air
and stares up at the windows
from which he expects the life
he needs to fall to him.

In a bar each night
he waits for someone
who does not come. He reads,
he walks, he gazes at windows
and at the strange fruit on trees.
He remembers a debt
owed to a casual acquaintance.
He stands under the brown clouds
raining dust on the city
and longs for the book
whose pages will be mirrors.
THE HEAD

MARK CONNELLY

The day of the accident Torless was drawing animal pictures on the porch. The impact was so great that he felt its vibrations even though the noise was somewhat muffled by the garden wall and thick storm windows. He ran outside, racing along the vine-covered wall, wondering what had happened in the invisible street. But before he could reach the gate and look through its spiked bars the maid grabbed him. Scolding Torless for not wearing a jacket she escorted him inside. He went directly to his room and put on a warm pullover. But when he went downstairs he found that the maid had locked the doors and drawn the curtains.

From an upstairs window he saw an ambulance depart with covered stretchers. Police cars parked in front of the house. Uniformed men photographed the smashed vehicles, measured skid marks, and held back curious onlookers. They searched through the wreckage, prying open doors and lifting up collapsed seats. A small fire truck appeared and hosed down the cars. Then two trucks with power cranes pulled the cars apart and towed them away. Soon there was nothing left but yellow chalk marks and puddles in the road.

He could hear the maid talking to her mother on the hall telephone. “It was horrible. They say the bodies were torn apart. Just like wartime. Maria was in the park and saw the whole thing. Thank God the children weren’t around.”

Now he knew he had to see what happened. Torless crept down the steps and let himself out the kitchen door which had the only chain lock he could reach.

Peering through the gate he watched policemen patrolling the street, probing the bushes with sticks, examining sewer grates, even overturning empty trash cans. Neighbors were talking on the other side of the wall. Their voices were excited but secretive.

“They keep looking for something. The whole block’s been roped off.”

“The car was going so fast. They must have been robbers. Now the cops can’t find the money. Maybe they tossed it out a window and planned to get it later. That’s the reason for the ropes.”

“They’re searching for something.”

Torless couldn’t see anything except a few feet of empty pavement. He returned to the porch and listened. All afternoon cars parked and official-looking men walked past the gate. Ladders were placed against the wall. A special truck hoisted a man in a white basket who examined the trees and telephone wires before taking pictures.
In the garden he heard dogs barking and a resigned voice, “It just rained this morning. The dogs are confused and can’t pick up the scent.” More cars arrived and the voice instructed unseen officers to question all dog owners in the area. “Don’t be specific. Just ask where their dog has been and if they have found anything unusual.”

Torless knelt in the cold earth and listened. Adults walked on the other side of the wall. Disturbed faces appeared at the gate and peered over the ends of ladders. He waited and listened, clicking one marble against another. The glass spheres collided and ricocheted like billiard balls. One of the cat’s-eyes rolled under the hedge. Crawling after it Torless discovered a human face staring at him. Eyes open, the head rested upright, firmly planted in the cold earth. Tilted slightly, its lips parted as if to speak, it had a quizzical look.

The questioning head was still there in the morning. Slightly discolored around the neck, it still rested against the wall. The curly hair was matted with dew, but the eyes remained clear and moist. The full pupils regarded him calmly. Wind rustled the hedge, but the head did not move.

All day the police continued their search on the other side of the wall. Cameras clicked and the bushes, sewer grates, and trash cans were examined again. Only when the sun went down did they stop the investigation.

Torless was asleep when the storm broke. A late autumn storm with strong gusts of wind rolled in from the east. A few raindrops, large and isolated, banged heavily on the metal awnings. He got out of bed and sat by the window. The dark hedges waved skeletal branches, scraping the wall. The few remaining ivy leaves fluttered weakly then fell.

Torless worried for the head. He hoped he could watch it turn color and dissolve like a rotting pumpkin. He would have to nurse it, protect it from insects and adults until the slow metamorphosis was complete and the skull emerged with clean rows of white teeth.

During the night it turned cold. Torless awoke shivering. For several moments he feared that the head had poisoned him in some way and that he was deathly ill. Perhaps it longed to be rejoined with its body and was cursing him. He imagined the body lying in a refrigerator like a broken toy. He thought about the family. Could they have a funeral without a head? Probably they would anxiously call the police every day for news as if the head were a lost pet or a stolen bicycle. They would have to wait, what could they do if the head appeared after the burial? Or was a body without a head just a piece of trash not worth a ceremony? Torless fell into fitful sleep.

Snow had fallen during the night. The wind banked it into drifts along the wall. The hedge was coated with white. On his way to school Torless paused at the wall. Each successive layer of snow would thaw, then freeze until the head was locked in ice. He knew that he was right. The head was safe until spring. By then everybody would forget. It would keep.
This story begins more than four years ago. It was during the time I was driving a cab in the day and going to college at night. I was a pre-dental student. I lived in a single room. My folks were dead. I had no close relatives. I was dating a girl and had a number of friends. I had little time for going to parties and movies though, what with my studying and job. The girl, Louise, usually stayed with me on weekends. She had a set of my apartment keys and we planned to get married at the beginning of my third year at dental school, when she would be graduated and teaching the second grade.

One Saturday, when Louise was studying her own college work in my room, I was driving a man through the factory part of the city. I suddenly felt this cold thing on the back of my neck. I swatted it from behind. The thing came right back to the same spot. "It's a gun," the man said. "Make another move it doesn't like and it'll bite off your head."

"I'll do anything you say," I said.
"That's a smart hack."
"You want all my money, you can have it."
"Just stick to your driving."
"You want me to still drive to where you asked me to go?"
"Drive around this block."
"And after that?"
"Just keep driving around this block."

He took the gun away from my neck. In the rearview mirror I could see him sitting in the middle of the back seat. He was nicely dressed in an overcoat, suit, tie and hat. His gloved hands held the gun between his knees and kept it pointing up at my head.

I drove around the block several times.
"How many times you want me to drive around the block?" I said.
"Till I say for you to stop."
"And if I run out of gas?"
"No funny remarks."
"That wasn't intended to be funny. I'm low."
"You'll be lower if you make any more funny remarks."
"I mean I'm very low in gas. I was going to get a couple dollars worth right after I dropped you off."
"You'll be dropping off if you don't shut up soon."
"But if I run out of gas?"
"Just shut up."
"Right."
"I said to shut up."
"I mean—excuse me. Never mind."
"That's better."

I drove around the same block about two dozen times. The gun was still between his knees. Just the end of the barrel was visible now and still pointing at my head. Then the cab began making these bumping back and forth movements every few seconds.
"What's that?" he said.
"That's the gas tank going out of gas."
"I'm serious. What is it?"
"You must have never owned a car. Take a look at the gauge."
"Then get to a garage quick."

I told him I knew of one right around here. It was cold weather at the time and all the windows were up but mine, which was opened just an inch. And there was no glass partition or steel cage separating the driver from the passenger section as all the cabs in the city are forced by law to have now. Not that a thick glass or cage would have stopped any caliber bullet from coming into me from behind, if I had wanted to yell for help through my window crack or signal with my hand or lights to a policeman if I saw one nearby.

"And no funny remarks or lowering the window an inch more or getting out of the cab business," the man said putting the gun in an overcoat side pocket, "or the trigger gets touched. It's a hairpin trigger too."
I wanted to ask him what exactly a hairpin trigger was, something I read of in newspapers and heard said about in movies and never looked up, but I knew he would think that a funny remark. Or maybe I wasn't as calm as all that and only imagined I wanted to ask him that question. Later on though, I told people I had asked him what a hairpin trigger was and that he said "It's a trigger that releases the hammer that strikes the cartridge primer that sends the bullet up through the back of a cabby's head and out of his hair like a pin."

Anyway, I drove the few blocks to the gas station and pulled up beside the gas pumps.

"Two dollars of the cheaper grade," I told the attendant, "and a receipt."

"Why'd you ask for a receipt?" the man said when the attendant began putting in gas.

"I always get a receipt when I don't fill up at the taxi garage."

"No receipt," he said.

"But I need a receipt to get my two dollars back. I've dealt with this guy. He knows that."

"I don't want you passing anything to him."

"What could I pass? He'll be the one passing me the receipt."

"No."

"That's two dollars," the attendant said.

I gave him a five.

"I'll get your change and receipt."

"No receipt," the man said to me.

"No receipt," I yelled to the attendant as he headed for the garage office.

"It's no trouble," he said.

"No thanks."

"No three dollars either," the man said.

"I shouldn't wait for my three dollars?" I said.

"Get going."

"Forget the three dollars also," I yelled to the attendant as he left the office.

"But I got it right here."

"We're in a rush. Sorry."

"Sorry for what? Are you kidding?"

"Why'd you tell him we're in a rush?" the man said.

"I just said what came to my head."

"Stupid."

"Really," the attendant said. "Three bucks tip is crazy." and he held the three dollars out for me through my window space.
“Should I take it?” I said to the man in back.
“Why you asking me?”
“Is it yours?” the attendant said to him, his mouth at my window and waving the money through the space to the man. “Well really thanks, mister, but three dollars is a pretty large tip.”
“Will you please take your change?” the man said. “As I am in a rush.”
“I’ll take it,” I said to the attendant.
“I shouldn’t have said anything,” he said. “Three dollars extra would have done me fine.”
“Now please get moving,” the man said, pointing to his watch.
“See you,” I said to the attendant and drove out of the station. “Where you want to go now?”
“Around the block,” the man said.
“This block?”
“You see another block?”
“There are plenty of blocks around here. This, that and all the other blocks including the factory one we must have driven around a hundred times before. It’s a big neighborhood. An even bigger city.”
“Shut your mouth and drive.” He took the gun from his pocket and held it between his knees.
I drove around the block that had the gas station on the corner of it. The first time the attendant saw me he smiled and waved. He waved the second time also and then scratched his head when he saw me coming a third and fourth time. The fifth time he saw me, he yelled “Hey, you’re driving in circles.” I shrugged. The man in back said “Don’t shrug. Don’t make faces. Behave like your driving is perfectly normal.” The next time the attendant saw me, he yelled “You’re getting me dizzy with your driving—you know that?” The time after that, he was pointing out my cab to a driver of another car in the gas station and yelling “What’s your cab—locked to hidden street rails we don’t know about?” Then he gave up on saying anything to me and only made the crazy sign with his finger screwing away at his temple, and the times after that he mostly wouldn’t even look up.
We drove around the same block for about a half hour. Finally I said “You still want me to drive around this block?”
“Yes.”
“That gas station guy’s going to get suspicious.”
“That’s his trouble.”
“He could call the police thinking something’s wrong.”
“Then that’s their trouble.”
“The police could try and stop us and you might use your gun on them and they might use their guns on you and I could get killed in the crossfire.”
“Then it’s your trouble then.”
“Why don’t we drive around another block? One away from the gas station.”

“This block.”

“We drove around another block before.”

“That was till you ran out of gas.”

“I could run out of gas again. This stop and go driving drains the hell out of it.”

“Then you’ll get some more at the garage.”

“What could I ever say to that man the next time?”

“You’ll say ‘Fill er up, please, and no receipt.’ And then exchange pleasantries about cars, auto parts and motor oils, or read from one of the books on your seat.”

“You must like that gas station very much.”

“Save your funny remarks for the gas pumper.”

“I will. I was just trying to be protective about myself then. I don’t want to get hurt or cause any trouble in the least.”

The gun was still between his knees and pointing at me. I drove around the block another fifteen minutes. Every three times around or so the gas station man looked at me and went right back to his work. Then I saw a policeman waving me down on the avenue around the block from the gas station.

“Keep driving around the block,” the man said.

“Pass him the next time you see him too.”

“He’ll have a car on our tail by then.”

“Do as I say.”

I drove past the policeman. Through the side mirror I saw him calling out for me to stop. Through the rearview mirror I saw the man putting the gun in his overcoat pocket. We passed the gas station. The attendant was wiping someone’s dipstick. We went around the block. The policeman ran further out into the avenue this time and waved his nightstick for me to stop.

“The light’s red,” I said, driving past the policeman.

“Go through it and around the block again and then stop where he says stop.”

“Why not back up for him now? I could say I didn’t see him the first time because I was keeping my eye out for a certain address. And only spotted him the second time when I was turning the corner and had mistakenly gone through the light.”

He motioned me to continue around the block.

“You’re the one asking for trouble now,” I said.

“From you?”
“From the police. I could still back all the way up this block and around to where he is. It will look better for us if I come around backwards that way. More respectful, and as if I only passed him once and not twice. And I'll do what you say and won't mention your gun.”

“Shhh.”

I drove around the block. The policeman was calling in from a police box on a lamppost. Seeing the cab, he dropped the receiver and blew his whistle at me. I stopped. He started over to us.

“Roll up your window,” the man said.

I rolled it up. “What do I tell him when he gets here?”

“Cover your mouth when you talk to me and don’t turn around.”

I put my hand over my mouth and said without turning around “Well what do I?”

“What didn’t you stop those two times?” the policeman said through my window.

I hunched my shoulders and kept up a bewildered look.

“Sit up straight and show more confidence,” the man said.

“And why you driving through lights and around the block so much?”

“Tell him you wanted to help him lose some fat by his chasing after you.”

I shook my head.

“Say what I said.”

The policeman was rapping my window with his stick. “Roll it down.”

“Three inches,” the man said.

I rolled it down about three inches.

“Anything wrong in there?” the policeman asked the man.

“Nothing, thank you,” the man said.

“Now let’s hear you start explaining this,” the policeman said to me.

“I’m very sorry, officer.”

“Should I say now what you told me to tell him?” the man said to me.

“What he tell you?” the policeman asked him.

“Should I?” he said to me.

“That I only passed you once and not twice as he says he thinks he saw I did. And only that one time because I wanted you to run a ways after me so you could lose a little weight.”

“Get out,” the policeman said.

“Do I?” I said into my hand without turning around.

“You’re damn right you’ll get out,” the policeman said.

“I don’t know what to do,” I told him. I covered my mouth and said “What do I do?”

The policeman unsnapped his holster flap and tried opening the door. In the rearview the man made a turning motion with his hand for me to roll my window up.
"No need, officer," I said, when he tried opening the rear door. "I'm coming out."

He stepped back, his hand on the holstered gun. I rolled up my window. He smashed the window with his stick.

The man slunk back in his seat screaming and then said "Get."

I drove away. Some glass had got in my cheek. The policeman shot one off in the air. Then two more.

"Drive to the block with the movie theater on it," the man said, pointing to a movie house six blocks away.

"And the light?"

"No. This block here with the supermarket. Keep driving around it and don't stop for police or lights."

I drove through the red light and started around the block. We were on the avenue in front of the market completing our third trip around the block when I saw two police cars waiting for me in my lane.

"Make a U," he said.

I made a U-turn and then a left at the first sidestreet as he told me to do.

"Which block?" I said.

"I want you to find another one around here. But a big one. If possible, a block with the city's biggest avenues on two sides of it and with its other two long sides being very wide shopping streets or main thoroughfares."

"There aren't any around here like that."

"Then drive across the park to the South Side. I know of a beauty over there, right off Fourth."

I drove across town and was heading south through the park transverse when I saw that both lanes ahead were blocked with police cars.

"Around," he said, but through the side mirrors I could see that the way back was blocked with police cars too.

"What now?" I said, slowing down.

"Get out and run."

I stopped the cab between the two police car barriers and said "If I run they might shoot me."

"And if you don't run, I'll shoot you. And if you do run and suddenly stop, I'll shoot you. And if you fall to the ground after you get out and run and suddenly stop, I'll shoot you. I'll shoot you if you try climbing over the transverse wall or get out and yell to the police and me not to shoot you. Just get out and run either way down the road's dividing line to the police shouting threats that you're going to kill them, or I'll shoot you from behind. Now out," and he nudged the gun barrel against the back of my neck.

I got out, jumped to the ground and crawled underneath the cab. He
began shooting through the floor. Two bullets hit my shoulder and arm, another ricocheted through my ear. The police drove up. They called out to me. They took the gun from the man and asked why he had shot at me. Shaking all over and between loud sobs and tears, he said “This bum ... this man ... he forced me to drive with him as a hostage. I luckily disarmed him of that thing seconds before he was going to drive us straight into your cars and shoot every policeman he could see.”

Even with two bullets and glass in me and blood coming out of my face and clothes, a policeman wrenched my head back by the hair and threw me against the cab and slammed my handcuffed hands on the hood and kicked my feet out behind me and told me to keep my legs spread apart and don’t speak unless questioned or they’ll knock me to the ground for good.

“But the man’s lying. He’s the one who made me drive around those blocks a thousand times and to try and roll up my window on that policeman’s hand.”

I was punched in the back and head by two policemen till I rolled off the hood to the ground.

The man and I were driven in separate cars to the police station. An hour after I was arraigned and exhibited to the press for photographs, I was taken to the hospital where my bullet and glass wounds were treated and also a gash on the back of my head that the policeman’s ring had opened up.

I was brought to trial. My court-appointed lawyer advised me to stop repeating those ridiculous statements about the man forcing me to do all those things in my cab.

“He’s a university professor,” the lawyer said. “Had written several highly regarded textbooks on forensic psychiatry and medicine. And he and his wife have such an impeccable reputation and social standing in this city that he could never be thought to have done the bizarre things you claim. I don’t believe you. The judge certainly won’t believe you. The prosecuting attorney is too good for the jury to believe you. If you plead guilty to all charges and ask for the court’s mercy, I can get you off with only a few years. If you don’t plead guilty, then that policeman and gas station attendant and the man you held as hostage will all testify against you, and you can be sent away for thirty years.”

I pleaded guilty and was sent to prison for six years. In prison I was taught mess hall cooking and worked in the kitchen there for the last three years of my term. In the prison library I read more books on psychology and psychiatry, including a couple of the professor’s works, than any student could have read in any university in the world.

Lots of times in prison I thought about getting revenge on that man once I got out. I thought I would wait for him in the lobby of his college or
apartment building, and only after I was sure he remembered me and the cab ride we took together, would I slam a two-by-four over his head, not really caring if he got killed. But then I knew I could never do anything that fierce. So I thought I would just walk up to him on the street one day and slam him across the face, and after I wrestled him to the ground, as he was a pretty small guy and so I thought easy to handle, I would kick at his legs and arms and maybe spit at him, and then just leave him there like that.

But I knew I wouldn’t be capable of doing any of those things either. After reading all those psychiatry and psychology books, I found out I wasn’t at all the type to go around kicking and slapping anyone for anything. I also learned from those books that the professor was the type who would always have a gun, or know where to get one, and that he would come after me and use it if I so much as accused him of the crimes I went to prison for and took a swing at his face. And he would have all the right excuses too. He could say “That man tried to kill me for having told the truth about that day he kept me captive in his cab. For he swore to me in the cab that he’d get even with me if I ever talked. And he’s phoned me a number of times since he left prison, with threats against my wife and me. So I got a gun. All right—I got it illegally” (if he couldn’t get it otherwise and as the one he held against me must have been gotten) “but I was desperately afraid of him. And when he came to kill me, I had to shoot him to save my own life.”

So I gave up on getting my revenge on him. I was a model prisoner, got out in four years and returned to college, but this time to get a simple business degree in restaurant management. Louise, my old girlfriend, was too seriously involved with someone else to see me. Some of my old friends were still in the city. They all had fairly good jobs and a couple of them were married and had children. The few times I did meet a couple of them for beers, they asked me to tell the story about the professor and me. But I always told them it was best for my future career and personal well-being if I forgot that incident forever and if everybody else forgot about it too.

Most of the nights now I work as a waiter. About once a week since I got the job a few months ago, that same man comes in the restaurant and sits at my station and orders drinks and a complete meal. Near the end of his dinner on that first night, he said “Aren’t you the fellow who did that strange thing with the taxi and police that was such a popular news story a few years ago?”

I said “I’m that man, all right.” and he said “I thought you looked familiar. You’ve clipped most of your hair and taken to wearing a mustache and eyeglasses, but I suppose those pictures of you on TV and in the newspapers left an indelible impression on me. I happen to have more than a morbid gossiper’s concern in criminal cases, and yours. I have to admit,
was one of the more interesting ones.” Then he excused himself for having brought the subject up. “As I know it must be embarrassing if not potentially damaging to you for anyone to repeat it in public,” and he didn’t say another word to me for the rest of his meal except “Thank you” and “Goodbye.”

Since then, after his first drink, he always asks if I’d mind speaking some more about that day he had talked about, and I always tell him I wouldn’t.

“What I’m saying,” he’s said in a different way each time, “is I don’t want you getting mad at me or anything. Because if you think I’m being nosey, even if it is with a professional interest in mind that could lead to a paper on the subject, please say so and I’ll shut up and never ask you about it again.”

He always asks me just one question each dinner, though a different one each time. Such as “What prompted your doing it in the first place?” and “Didn’t you think you could get killed in the act?” and “Where did you get the courage to face the police like that?” and “What was the significance of riding around the blocks?” and “Why for a while did you settle on just one gas station in case you ran out of gas a second time?” and “Didn’t you know that if caught you could be jeopardizing your employment and social activities for life?” and “Did you really believe you were innocent as you first proclaimed to the press the day you were caught?” and “Didn’t it also occur to you that your passenger might have been killed by police for being thought of as your accomplice or by a stray bullet aimed at you?”

I always make up an answer for him. Such as “At the time I intentionally wanted to get myself killed” and “I really can’t say why I did anything that day because it was essentially another me who was responsible for the act” and “I went around and around those blocks because I’ve always been fascinated by circles and cycles and revivals and such” and “I was too concerned with carrying out the crime itself and having a good time playing around with the police to pay any attention to the passenger in the back.”

My answer always seems to satisfy him for the time. He then apologizes for having brought the subject up again and changes the conversation by asking after my health or college work or if the dinner special looks good tonight, and throughout the rest of the meal acts somewhat frightened as if he thinks I’m about to pick up a chair and crash it down on his head. Then he finishes his dinner and the bottle of wine he always orders with his meal, and leaves without ever giving me a tip.
Valton Tyler—"Fis Leg" (Oil on canvas, 64 x 64), 1978. Valley House Gallery, Dallas, Texas.
Valton Tyler—BOZ DOZ LOZ DA, MEK LOZ MEK, DA DA (Oil on canvas, 76 x 70), 1976. Valley House Gallery, Dallas, Texas.
Claude Vigée

AVRIL

Je nais d’un sang trouble:
ma nature est double.

Les chatons des bouleaux
pleuvent dans ma nuit verte.

Sur les troncs abattus
par la lune de gel

rit mon pollen solaire:
étoiles, vent et sable.

L’eau-mère emplit mes combes:
ô noirceur utérine.

Mais les buissons d’écume,
l’or vert sur mes hauteurs . . .

Genêts et colombes,
couronnez mes trombes!

Claude Vigée

EPILOGUE

Entre chant et clameur,
pontife du silence,
lance du coeur au chœur
ton arche d’alliance!
Claude Vigée

APRIL

Turbulent blood runs in my veins:
my nature is double.

The cat-kins on the birch trees
rain down in my green night.

On trunks felled
by the icy moon

laughs my solar pollen:
stars, wind, and sand.

Mother water fills my valleys:
O uterine blackness.

But thickets of foam,
green gold on my uplands . . . . .

Gorse and rock-doves,
crown my whirlwinds!

EPILOGUE

High priest of silence,
between song and clamor,
hurl from the heart to the choir
your bridge of alliance!

Translator: J. R. LeMaster
Claude Vigée

JE NE NIE PAS LA NUIT, LA TROP AIMEE . . .

Automne: arbre de flamme érigé dans la terre, immuable bûcher, mémoire de la pierre,—
je ne tairai jamais la nuit, la maladie, l'angoisse et le contact écartelant du vide.

Présence de l'attente à soi-même vouée,
tourmentée de soleil, d'eaux vives sous l'azur,
la souffrance est aussi un royaume de l'homme,
l'absence, une présence, et l'exil un foyer.

Les fragments d'étoiles brûlées que j'exhume de mes ténèbres
dissipent en étincelant l'opacité de la mort absolue:
albâtre est habité,
la nuit est navigable.

Eponge du silence,
automne, oiseau de terre qu'appesantit la plume opaque du brouillard après le bain d'écume
dans la rose solaire,

Automne à crête rousse,
automne à l'aile roide,
Amour inassouvie au fond de la mémoire comme une grive morte silencieuse et froide,

mon cœur qui de l'hiver a fait l'apprentissage n'ose plus séparer les saisons des visages:
je ne nie pas la nuit, la trop aimée,— j'en sors.
Par la mort seulement l'homme échappe à la mort.
Claude Vigée

I DO NOT DENY THE NIGHT TOO MUCH LOVED

Autumn: flaming tree erect in the earth, immutable pyre, memory of the stone—
I shall not fail to tell of the night, the sickness, the anguish and the crucifying contact with the void.

Present in the promised expectation of oneself, tormented by the sun, spring waters under the blue sky;
suffering is also one of man's kingdoms where absence is presence, and exile a home.

* * *

The fragments of charred stars that I dig up from my shadows burn themselves out shining through the darkness of final death: the abyss is inhabited; night is navigable.

Sponge of silence, autumn, bird of the earth weighed down by the opaque plumes of the mist after its bath in the spume of the sun-rose.

Autumn russet-crested, autumn tense-winged, love unslaked at the bottom of memory like a dead thrush silent, cold.

My heart which has served its apprenticeship to winter does not dare to separate faces from seasons. I do not deny the night, too much loved—I emerge from it. Through death alone does man escape death.
Claude Vigée

NUNC DIMITTIS

Muré dans les ghettos de l'histoire, Dieu dit:
   Je parle haut la nuit pour taire le silence.
A travers tant d'échos nul bourreau n'entendit la voix de la Présence.
Au jugement dernier Dieu vint alors lui-même et leur fit violence,
criant sur leur charnier:
   Victime, en toi je m'aime!
Le sang toujours unit la blessure à la lance.

Claude Vigée

LE COMEDIEN DU CIEL

Je m'exile en tout lieu pour me muer en lui,
je peuple de mes yeux chaque étoile entrevue,
   j'accoste à tout moment la terre inattendue.

Je ne suis que regard:
le monde est le poète,
le soleil est l'amant
qui me tourne la tête.
Que montre le miroir aveugle de la nuit?
“Juan,” I asked him, the first time, “why are you singing? There is nothing around here but your garden and trees.”

He smiled. “Do you not sing sometimes when you are happy?”

Then I smiled, too. Of course, I said to myself, many people do.

One morning very early I happened by Juan’s place. In the sunlight I saw something in the tree. I walked closer I discovered it was Juan, lying in the branches. He must have climbed to the top for some reason, fallen to the lower branches and injured himself, I thought.

“Juan,” I called to him. “Juan, my friend, are you hurt?”

He looked up quite startled, and jumped down immediately. I’d never seen him blush like he did then.

“I am all right,” was all he said.

Then about a year ago I was returning from San Sebastian very late at night. I knew it was much too late to stop and visit Juan. I suspected he had been asleep for hours. The moon was bright, and as I passed his place, I saw some unusual movement at the tree. At first I thought it was Juan, but in the moonlight and the shadows cast by the branches, and my fatigue, I must be imagining a human form there. But still, it looked as if a man were pressed close to the trunk of the tree, his arms around it. And the tree seemed to be moving in a rhythm with him. But it had to be the wind and the moon and my eyes and my imagination. Perhaps one of Juan’s goats was scratching its back against the smooth trunk. I laughed at myself and thought no more about it.

Eventually Juan had enough money to buy that adjacent property, and today, as a gesture of celebration, he invited some of us to his place to ceremoniously tear down the old wooden fence which had separated the two properties for years and years. It was a joyous occasion, and Juan had several skins of wine to add to it. The fence was removed with great pomp. The posts and railings were chopped and split into smaller pieces which Juan claimed would keep him warm next winter. The remainder of the afternoon was spent drinking wine, eating cheese which Juan made from goat’s milk, and singing old songs.

Just as I was leaving, Padre, I noticed it. It was a small tree, hardly half as tall as a man, in the ground next to the great tree. I stepped closer. Both trees were obviously of the same type.

“Juan,” I said with some confusion. “You’ve got another tree?”

Juan laughed and slapped my back. “Yes,” he said. “Isn’t it wonderful?”

He walked to that great tree, put his arms around its trunk and hugged it.

So, you see, Padre, I had to go back there tonight after Juan had drunk himself to sleep and cut down those trees.
Jennifer Galos

WINTER SOLSTICE AT DOG THEATER

i am shadows' movements.

a creature of light-plays
canine presence following you
make your way
to the light booth
(you go in search of colour)

while onstage
the dogs are wailing
druid incantations.

this theater is savage.
roles are cast tight like muscle.
sets are electric
(current flows to chrome
and the blacksharp edges
of sacrificial reflection).
Wolves are Alchemists
and Fire masters the performance.

i am Coyote (playing Fox)

i am one dog barking.

CANYONS OF WINTER

where we stood
was warmer

ancient wind
awakes primeval
as we climb.
animal;
we are forest
and smell of laughter
molten ice over rocks
coming down
we dance
this water is not darker.
or so cold
as these hollow echoes/
your unspoken cries

Jennifer Galos

darkness is refracted
through woodwork-prisms
and shines
into every corner of that house.
her doors have rusted hinges;
metal eating itself solid
to secure no openings.
he is only grey
and speaks one voice.
a dull resonance of repeated tone.

(i bathe in the days of Earth.
slow turning is the force of breathing.)
walls are endless or turn back on themselves.
with locks and sure unity,
they waited for an open end.
Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen

RETRATO DE UMA PRINCESA DESCONHECIDA

Para que ela tivesse um pescoço tão fino
Para que os seus pulsos tivessem um quebrar de caule
Para que os seus olhos fossem tão frontais e limpos
Para que a sua espinha fosse tão direita
E ela usasse a cabeça tão erguida
Com uma tão simples claridade sobre a testa
Foram necessárias sucessivas gerações de escravos
De corpo dobrado e grossas mãos pacientes
Servindo sucessivas gerações de príncipes
Ainda um pouco toscos e grosseiros
Avidos cruéis e fraudulentos

Foi um imenso desperdiçar de gente
Para que ela fosse aquela perfeição
Solitária exilada sem destino
Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen

PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN PRINCESS

That she might have so slender a neck
That her wrists might break like the stems of flowers
That her eyes might be so direct and clear
That her back might be so very straight
And that she might hold her head so high
With such a simple clarity across her brow
Generations were needed, generations of slaves
With bodies bent, with tough and patient hands,
Serving generations, generations of princes,
Still a bit rough, a bit rude,
Deceitful, greedy, and cruel
With a vast expense of men
That she might reach perfection
Alone, in exile, without direction.
Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen

MANHA DE OUTONO NUM PALACIO DE SINTRA

Um brilho de azulejo e de folhagem
Povoa o palácio que um jovem rei trocou
Pela morte frontal no descampado

Ele não quis ouvir o alaúde dos dias
Seu ombro sacudiu a frescura das salas
Sua mão rejeitou o sussurro das águas

Mas o pequeno palácio é nítido—sem nenhum fantasma—
Sua sombra é clara como a sombra dum palmar
No seu pátio canta um alvoroco de início
Em suas águas brilha a juventude do tempo
Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen

AN AUTUMN MORNING IN A PALACE AT SINTRA

A glistening of tile and leaves
Peoples the palace traded by a young king
For an open death on an open plain

He didn't wish to hear the daytime lute
His shoulder shook away the coolness of great halls
His hand refused the murmur of waters

But the little palace stands sharply forth—without any ghost—
Its shadow is clear like the shadow cast by palms
On its patio sings the tremor of beginning
In its waters gleams the youthfulness of time.
I was somewhere in the desert, traveling west on business. For days I had been following gray concrete, black macadam and reddish, glinting asphalt; and, as one will on a long journey, I had lost track of time. Had it been a Monday when I first pointed the car's nose westward, and did the "accident" occur on a Thursday, or a Friday? I remember eating many meals in restaurants along the way and stopping at motels to rest, but the number of those delays escapes me; their details blur together in my memory, cities and landscapes blending into a stream. The road itself, I remember quite clearly, or rather an animated composite of all the roads I traveled: a road curving, climbing, and dipping, reaching beyond sight into the haze. The trouble is that on the open highway one travels as if dreaming, with the forepart of the brain disengaged for a time; and the car's motion, the gentle bumps and rockings, and the wind thumping pleasantly at the vent, smooth away all thought of past and future.

During an emergency, of course, one can't think at all, can't even see accurately, as is proved by the conflicting reports of several witnesses to the same accident; and therefore, since I was the sole witness to my mishap, I have been reluctant to give an account of it even to my insurance company. Quite frankly, I doubted my senses, and so how could I expect anyone else to believe me? I have no desire to be called a madman. Had I seen, for example, what Jeremiah saw, I would have kept my mouth shut about it, out of fear of ridicule. If I now have the temerity to speak out, it is only because I am more afraid to keep silent, as perhaps Jeremiah was when he spoke strongly to men well contented with their lives.

I was driving west through the desert, as I have said—a few hours after dinner, pushing at eighty over a fine highway. Smooth pavement compels speed, particularly at night when the dark world splits on the beam of headlights and goes spinning away behind; and if it is a clear night, so much the better: one dreams along terrifically, with half an eye on the road and an ear lulling to the hum of the engine. As fast as I was driving that night, however, three big cars in succession hissed by me down a long incline, hit bottom and began the ascent, doing I would guess around a hundred. At the time there were no cars in the eastbound lanes; I was alone except for the three sets of tail-lights diminishing ahead. Climbing in their wake I saw the shoulder of the hill looming above and to the left of the highway, which entered a cut in the slope a little below the crest. When I was halfway up the hill the first set of lights dipped out of sight, and the others glowed
brightly. For some reason they were braking at the top. Automatically, slowed.

Abruptly and without warning, the divided highway narrowed to two lanes at the crest, narrowed and curved tight to the left along an embankment. I touched the brake pedal as if it were a rattlesnake, and the car sickened sideways. The pavement, which normally would have held my tires, dropped away; the outside shoulder was lower than the inside. The three cars ahead of me were gone as if swallowed.

For a terrible moment I danced along the rim of the abyss, already tilting down into it, and then my right front wheel banged hard against a rock. My door flew open and a violent kick sent me out to meet the concrete.

I don’t know how long I lay unconscious there on the high side of the road, but I awoke stiff as iron, flat on my back, looking up past the rocky embankment to a sky full of stars. At first I couldn’t move. Numb from the neck down, I was afraid my back was broken. Gradually, though, my fingers, wrists, elbows and shoulders began responding, and I gained control of my legs. With a good deal of pain I managed to roll to one side and into a sitting position against the embankment, where I assessed the damage. As near as I could tell, nothing was broken, though I was so bruised that it might have been done methodically with a hammer. My right hip and shoulder had scraped against something, and there was a small cut under my chin. A longer cut, caked with blood, ran diagonally over the top of my skull. But at least my skeleton seemed intact. My clothes were torn and stiff with dried blood and one of my shoes was missing. My car was nowhere in sight.

Recounted in this manner, piece by piece as it were, it sounds as if I functioned rationally after the accident. It sounds as if, good practical man that I am, I first examined my capabilities under the circumstances and then proceeded to act up to them, as, say, Robinson Crusoe might have done in a similar situation. Such was not the case, I can assure you. I doubt that I thought at all, at least in the normal sense of that word, and even now I’m not certain that I can account for what happened. At the time, sitting there with my feet extended downward at an angle, I merely felt that the whole business was odd. Down the slant across the highway, the pavement ended in a cliff beyond which the air flickered and smoked, with an odor like a dump burning. My car had fallen down there and caught fire, which seemed strange but not very remarkable since for the moment I was safe enough.

It was strange, indeed, and I didn’t have long to wait before another car came humming up the hill, skidded into sight and pranced off the highway, its tires barely in contact with the pavement. It plunged over the side, struck, and exploded.
If I had been thinking, I would have tried to move. But I sat there apparently in a stupor while another machine, after a wild swerve, pitched into the depths and landed with a muffled smash. The next two arrived simultaneously, one from the east and one from the west, leaped furiously off the cliff and met head-on in space, dropping like shot birds. Finally, a transcontinental bus crept into the curve, hugging the high side next to the embankment. A good driver there; a few feet farther and I'd have had to draw in my legs. But so steep was the incline that, although nearly at a standstill, the bus tilted on her beam ends almost above me, rolled once and clattered off the edge. There was the sound of metal ripping, a heavy crump as she hit bottom, and then a dwindling rain of small pieces. From a distance I heard cries arising faintly, moans and screams wafting upward with the smoke and the smell of flesh burning.

At last, carefully, I set about getting upright without slipping. By flattening like a snail against the rock, I managed to work my way on around the curve to where the road was level. I walked perhaps half a mile facing the traffic, signalling the cars to stop. A few gave way into the passing lane, others accelerated by me, and one at high speed edged so close as to nearly take me with him. They had no idea I was trying to help them, and no one slowed. It was night, after all, and I was bloody and in rags; I suppose I would have done the same had our positions been reversed.

I crossed to the empty westbound lanes and walked until I could no longer hear the squealing of tires at the curve. In the crumbling, hard earth beside the highway I sat down to wait for morning. Although my body drew tight when I stopped moving, and I had difficulty finding the least painful position, it wasn't unpleasant there with the smell of sagebrush and the occasional noise of small animals. The night remained windless and warm and I caught a few minutes of sleep now and then, my head on my knees. I felt detached from everything, even from my aches. With no more than passing interest I twice saw jackrabbits make a dash for the headlights in the other lanes, a desperate sprint ending in death, as the cars hurtled on to their own skittering demise. I smelled the sagebrush and listened to the desert night, stirred as little as possible, and slept when I could. An hour or so before dawn I curled into myself on the ground and slept soundly.

Not long after sunrise, help arrived in the form of a police cruiser which slowed in answer to my wave, turned across the divider-strip and pulled up beside me. I struggled to my feet and limped forward, as the officer got out and came around the car. Like most state troopers he was big, with meaty shoulders and the chest of a quarterhorse. In suntans hard with starch, jackboots, and sun helmet, he planted his feet and waited like a statue for me to cover the last few yards on my own.

He looked down at me. "Well, what is it?"
I didn’t know where to begin, and to make matters worse I couldn’t see his eyes. He was wearing sunglasses whose outer surfaces were mirrors, giving me only twin distorted images of myself.

“Accident,” I said.

“Where is your shoe?”

“I lost it. In the wreck. I could use some water if you’ve got it.”

“Get in the car,” he said.

The sunlight on the desert was incredibly bright, and the air was hot and granular, parching my nostrils like fine sand. I felt the beginnings of a headache, a shaggy flower growing in my skull, with roots deep into my stomach. The patrolman poured a cup of water from his thermos, and my hand quivered accepting it. Against the lacquered brilliance of the desert I shut my eyes to slits.

He removed a clipboard from a rack beneath the dash. “Driver’s license?” he said. He meticulously copied out my name and license number, and inscribed the date and the time of day.

“You were driving?” he said.

“Yes.”

“Alone?”

“Yes.”

“Any other cars involved?”

“Several.”

My head crawled with pain. I covered my eyes and gritted my teeth.

“Don’t,” he said, “puke in this car.”

He waited while my fit passed. “Now, how many other cars involved?”

“I don’t know—four, five, twenty.”

In the same steady voice he asked me which direction I had been going and at what speed; he asked the time of the accident and the extent of property damage. All the while his face remained blank, a tanned, flat-cheeked face, thin-lipped and heavy in the jaw; and because I couldn’t see his eyes I had no notion of what he might be thinking. He went on interminably, it seemed to me, checking the squares of his report form, writing a word or two, and rippling the muscles in the side of his face.

“In your own words,” he said, “tell exactly what happened.”

I couldn’t do it. To have told the story with him as my only audience would have been insane. His response would have been the same if I had said I had fallen from an airplane, or that I was Alexander the Great, come to grief when my mare stepped in a gopher hole. While I hesitated, I saw beyond that wooden face a stream of traffic glittering in the sun and heading for the curve. “Either you already know, or you wouldn’t believe me if I told you,” I said.

“Is that all you have to say?”
"That's all."

He lifted the microphone from its hanger and said, "Control, forty-three. Code three point seven point eight. Coming in." In a moment the receiver crackled in reply. "Forty-three, control. Roger."

An hour and twenty-five minutes later by the dashboard clock, we took an exit marked State Police. The post was a mile off the highway, a low, white cement-block structure with green-tinted windows. There was no lawn—only an asphalt parking lot, an area of crushed rock between the sidewalk and the building, and the building itself. It was hard walking, and my saviour offered me no assistance whatsoever. "In there," he said, following me a few steps behind. As we entered the lobby, two other uniformed officers and a man in civilian clothes watched silently. Like the man escorting me, the two in uniform wore silvered glasses and their faces seemed cut from walnut. But the third man looked me up and down with interest.

"Straight ahead," said the trooper. At the end of a short corridor we came to a door numbered 25. "In there," he said. "Strip and get on the table."

Except for wire mesh over the window, it was like any medical examination room. There were specimen bottles and jars of cotton and tongue depressors, thermometers standing in a glass of alcohol and a tray of hypodermic syringes; and the table, across the room from a deep-sink, was wheeled, padded, and covered with a plastic sheet. The smell was that of any doctor's office. And yet the relief I should have felt at having my injuries treated was absorbed in a vague apprehension. The patrolman stood silently against the wall while I undressed, perhaps observing me, perhaps not. His glasses reflected my awkward efforts to get out of my clothes, and once that was done, my nakedness. He gathered up everything I discarded, rolled it all into a bundle, and went out the door.

In a few minutes two men came in, one of them the civilian I had seen earlier in the lobby—a doctor, apparently, for he removed his jacket and examined my wounds—and the other a man enormously fat, with a paste-white face and hairless, delicate hands. For a man his size he had very small feet, which made him appear uncomfortably balanced, as if on tiptoe. He didn't seem healthy in all that flesh, and I somehow anticipated his giving off an unpleasant odor; but there was no smell to him. He walked all around my table, observing me minutely, bending quite close to have a look at my head—and even his breath was neutral, a phenomenon somehow more disturbing than if he'd smelled stale. His face was startlingly broad, with the eyes right on the surface, hard and steady: an impersonal, baby-smooth face with a flower-like little mouth and cavernous nostrils. I could see no beard on his cheeks; apparently he didn't have to shave.

The doctor straightened, saying, "Superficial. I'll stitch him up when
you're through. He'll be as good as new by tomorrow."

"Hmm," said the fat man. "Stop at the desk, would you? Have them send in a little refreshment. Iced-tea for me, and whatever you think for the victim here. Or shall I say patient? Mr. Mann, is it? Charles Mann from New York?"

The doctor put on his jacket and departed.

"Single, age thirty-four, born on Long Island, parents deceased? Married once, divorced, no children—an appliance salesman?"

"How did you know all that?" I said.

"We'll know more before long. Ah, here's the good Jenkins," he said, as the door opened to admit a muscular, dark-haired young man in a starched white jacket. Jenkins spread a cloth over my shoulders and went to work with a pair of electric clippers, taking my hair off close to the scalp; and then with a safety razor he shaved a path along the cut. His hands were strong and precise, and he seemed to know his business.

"We found your car," the fat man said. "A total loss, I'm afraid—except for your luggage and briefcase. We salvaged those. You have some clothing, and some papers, too, that I imagine you'd hate losing."

"So you went through my briefcase."

"Of course."

"Well, why did you do that?"

"Good heavens, to find out about you. You might not be aware of it, but you're unusual, yes, unique in my experience."

"But who are you?" I said. "Are you with the State Police?"

"Forgive me for not introducing myself. The name is Smith, and I'm chief investigator in your case. As for your other question, I would say that, for the time being, we're both with the State Police."

Jenkins, his fingers as gentle as a mother's, was cleaning my head with alcohol.

"How long will I have to stay here?" he said.

"At the moment that is hard to say. We've sent an inquiry to Washington, the reply to which could come as early as tonight. On the other hand, we could wait quite awhile—as long as six months in the case of a really tricky gentleman. It depends on how devious you've been."

"Devious about what? What are you investigating? I had an accident—that's all there is to it."

"My dear Mr. Mann, there is no such thing as an accident. You've told one of our troopers a very interesting story, and to be quite honest, we're puzzled. If Statistics can't help us out, then other agencies will come into it as needed. That would be the investigation proper, our part of which would consist of learning all we could from your own mouth. If, for example, you shouldn't happen to be listed with Statistics, and if you should be an
alien traveling with false papers, we would urge you to confide in us, if you see what I mean.”

“Am I under arrest?”

“Oh, nothing so formal as that. Washington will set us right, I’m sure.”

“But you can’t hold me without arresting me. If you don’t mind, I’d like to talk to a lawyer.”

“Perhaps you’re afraid of confessing to something under duress?”

“I have nothing to confess. But if I’m to be interrogated, I want a lawyer present. It’s my right as a citizen.”

“I’m afraid, sir, that this is beyond a lawyer’s scope, beyond the law itself for that matter. The law has nothing to do with it, since it falls within the purview of the Bureau.”

With one hand on the nape of my neck, Jenkins held me immobile, while with the other he scrubbed at the cut beneath my chin. He released me and began cleaning the abrasions on my shoulder and hip. A patrolman entered with a tray.

“In America, nothing is beyond the law,” I said.

“Ah, you see? That is exactly what we must determine here—whether you’re actually this naive, or whether you’re playing sheep. But please refresh yourself.”

He lifted his glass to me. Jenkins stood back and allowed me to drink a cup of bouillon and eat a piece of toast, my first nourishment since the previous evening.

“I don’t understand,” I said. “What is it you want to know?”

“We might begin with the question you avoided earlier. In your own words, what happened?”

“Very well.”

As unbelievable as the story sounded to my own ears, I finished it, speaking precisely, even gesturing now and then to emphasize a point. He listened straight-faced and unblinking, as if my tale were no more bizarre than any twenty he had heard that week, and then he said, “So there were more than ‘several’ cars involved, which was the word you used before.”

“I witnessed several separate smashes, but I assume there were others—are others, occurring right now. As near as I could tell, no one escaped except myself.”

“How do you account for your escape?”

“I don’t know.”

“Tell me, what put you onto that route in the first place? There were other roads you could have taken. Where and when did you make the decision?”

“I don’t remember making a decision. I started west and simply got onto that highway, without thinking about it.”
"In one of your replies to our trooper, you said, 'Either you already know about it, or you wouldn't believe me if I told you.' Were you accusing him—us—of complicity in the events you have described?"

"I want a lawyer," I said.

Jenkins looked inquiringly at Smith, who said, "That's about all we can do for now. He's getting sulky."

Jenkins prepared a hypodermic.

"Wait," I said, "What is all this? A minute ago you said there's no such thing as an accident. But I had an accident. I'm not the one to be investigated here. That highway is intended to kill people; investigate that, why don't you?"

Smith held up a hand to stop me. "You can see how badly you need rest. Calm yourself, you're nearly hysterical. As I've said, your case puzzles me—the 'accident' of your being here against all odds. After due thought I see two alternatives: to free you, by which I mean letting you continue to your destination bearing the madman's story you have just told me, or to send you back. Now, I'm being open with you, and in return I ask gentlemanly cooperation: a reasonable request, certainly."

"Send me back along the highway?"

"How else?"

"Kill me, you mean. Without a trial."

"It isn't a matter of trial and sentencing. The investigation will simply determine whether a mistake has been made."

He nodded to Jenkins who, with a deft motion, sterilized my arm and, with another, punctured it. His hands on my shoulders forced me down on the table. He placed a sheet over me to the chin.

I said, "I want a lawyer. Remember that—I asked for a lawyer. I don't care about Washington, or statistics, or anything else. Your statistics mean nothing to me."

"Oh, but you're wrong," he said, "entirely. Life and death have everything to do with you, wouldn't you agree? My good Mr. Mann, there's so much we know that once was hidden in darkness—so much..." His voice began thickening and thinning in my ears. I struggled to hear, but the words were drowning in the sedative. "History...", he said. "Fate...foreknowledge...in your case, the theory..." The drug unstrung me, and I lost interest in life and death.

I awoke at night to find Jenkins counting my pulse, a silent, blocklike man, his face dark as basalt in the greenish light. "What time is it?" I asked. He put a thermometer in my mouth, wrote on a clipboard illuminted by a tiny bulb, and moved around to inspect my bandages. I had been taken to another room, this one an ordinary jail cell. In the corner were an unenclosed toilet and a washbowl, and the light, a diffused, greenish glow, came through a barred window.

117
Jenkins retrieved the thermometer and departed softly.

"It’s twelve minutes past midnight, Mr. Mann." The voice was very close by. At my left, Smith’s bulk disturbed space, and his face materialized, the color of a high moon, between me and the ceiling. "I’m curious about you," he said. "One or two things aren’t quite clear. Now, you told the patrolman that, right after your mishap, you spent some time trying to warn other drivers. Is that correct?"

"Yes. I did that."

"For heavens sake, why?"

"Well, that seems obvious to me. Wouldn’t anyone? There was a terrible thing happening, and I wanted to warn them."

"Very generous of you. Very altruistic. It must be comforting to have such solicitude as part of one’s make-up. But why, then, did you cease your efforts?"

"It was hopeless," I said. "And I was hurt."

"Come, now, it wasn’t hopeless. Don’t be so sullen and defensive. You had some matches on your person, did you not? Couldn’t you have built a fire on the roadway? Surely you could have stopped one car, then another, and another. Why did you give up?"

"That isn’t the issue," I said. "I want it in the record that the highway is a trap."

"Oh, everything is in the record, don’t worry about that. But let me get to the point. Surely you know what all this is, don’t you? Here we are, two gentlemen conversing in the night. We can afford a degree of honesty. Wouldn’t you admit that you know about all of this?"

"I know nothing about it," I said. "I’m innocent."

Smith sighed. "Innocence, guilt—the old terminology. Perhaps we shall never be rid of it, do you think? At any rate, forgive me for troubling your rest."

He withdrew toward the door.

"But is there any news?" I asked.

"By morning we’ll have at least a tentative report," he said. "You’re tape is being re-run. I’ll send Jenkins with a sedative, so you won’t have bad dreams."

He left, and Jenkins replaced him beside me. I accepted his offer of a capsule, and slid almost at once into a black sleep, which lasted until the sun struck my face directly through the window.

As the doctor had predicted, I was on my way toward recovery, as creaky in the joints as a rusty pump but definitely on the mend. Bandaged at crown and chin, awkward, ludicrous in the tie-in-back gown they had put on me, I climbed down from the bed and toured my cell. I washed at the metal basin and used the toilet, my morning ritual watched, I suspect,
through an observation hole. For no sooner had I returned to bed than Smith entered with two uniformed gift-bearers, one with a tray of breakfast and the other with my good brown suit, underwear, shirt, socks and tie.

"The report was favorable!" I said.

If I'm not mistaken, he smiled at me. "Favorable? Who's to say? This means only that your tape continues. But tell me, how do you prefer to go on, by bus, train, or plane? I'm afraid we can't replace your car. We have no budget for that sort of thing."

"In my situation," I said, "how would you go?"

"I'm not in your situation. All I can say is that your tape continues. You must decide for yourself."

"By plane, then. How soon can I leave?"

"You have time for breakfast. By the way, I'm sorry about your shoe. We weren't able to locate one to match."

"My slippers—in the large bag. I'll wear slippers. May I shave? My razor is in the leather case. I suppose I should be hurrying."

"You're very excited, aren't you?" he said. "A whole new life before you. Think of it."

"Why do you say it that way? Shouldn't I be excited?"

"Perhaps."

"May I make another request?"

"Surely."

"That you accompany me to the airport."

"Ah, the birth of caution," he said. "Yes, I'll go along if you wish, but if you're thinking my presence will give you insurance, you're wrong. I too have a tape running, as do far bigger men than I. It is said that God Himself had such a tape."

"Had?"

"Eat your breakfast. We haven't time for the old dispute, interesting as it might be as a diversion. I'll send in your razor and slippers. We'll leave in an hour."

Easily within the hour I was waiting at the cell door to be let out. For a few desperate minutes I thought how foul it would be if, having raised my hopes, they chose not to release me after all. No one knew I was there, and they had at least a practical case for keeping me. In those few minutes I was sick with the desire to be free, literally sweating with it.

Then he came for me, a trooper indistinguishable from the one who had brought me in, and he took me back along the corridor to the lobby. He carried my suitcases out to a patrol car in the parking lot, while Smith, on his tiny feet, rolled heavily between us bringing my briefcase. All three sat in front, Smith in the middle, and in the harsh desert sunlight we drove out to the freeway and turned right, into the empty lanes. Across the divider the eastbound traffic glittered.
Half an hour later, at the outskirts of a small city, we came to an airport. “Your reservation is for Reno,” Smith said. “From there the choice is yours.”

I got out and set my luggage on the sidewalk. “Mr. Mann,” he said, and I leaned in at the window to hear him. “You have a very strange story to relate; an hallucination it will seem to most. Should you persist in it, men will call you insane, and you might, eventually, come to agree with them. It is extremely difficult, you know, to insist on black when everyone is shouting white.”

“Are you predicting my future, or warning me to keep quiet?”

“Neither, my good fellow. I wouldn’t presume to interfere.”

“Then you’re giving me a bit of friendly advice.”

“Let’s put it this way,” he said. “Persist in your story and the multitude will destroy you. Would the wise man let them? You’ve simply had a nightmare; try to see it that way. With a new pair of shoes you will look quite prosperous. So be prosperous, and forget all this.”

“Cry peace when there is no peace.”

He shrugged and gave me a white, soft hand to shake, while the patrolman looked on silently through his mirrored lenses.

“In a few days, have a doctor look at those stitches,” Smith said.

The police car pulled away.

He was right, of course. I am far too mild to be a prophet. Besides, all the evidence contradicts what I have here written. It would be impossible, wouldn’t it, for that many people to disappear without a cry of protest from the populace? Each of those travelers had left somewhere, each was going somewhere; so surely there would have been inquiries. Surely the newspapers would give front page space to a tragedy of that magnitude. But I have found no such notice, and I have heard of no inquiries. Moreover, according to the interim census reports, the population is increasing just at the rate predicted by the Bureau of Statistics.

Yet I have a long scar across my scalp, and I often dream vividly. Daytimes, of course, appliances occupy me. But at night I dream of automobiles careening full-tilt into space, and of flames rising from a pit deep enough to contain all America. I dream of human beings in a stream plunging like swine over a cliff. No Jeremiah am I certainly. But I dream that, hovering above the pit, His vast form usurping the sky, an enormous Fatman devours mile after mile of perforated tape. His furious gaze is on the end of it, somewhere behind me. So far, I have managed to awaken before the teeth snapped up the final bite.
At dreen tide, lobstermen wandered out onto the mud flats of the Fundy to look for their lost moorings. Around them, the hulls of their weatherbeaten boats rested in the mud like nesting hens, while deeper in the reach, herring seiners sulked at anchor. The village of Viterbo was buried between the solemn desolation of the wintered sea and the bleak, flat barrens which isolated it at the end of a neck of land thirty miles from the nearest town. In summer a few people dared out to harvest peat and low bush blueberries on the heath or trawled for scallops and shrimp in the bay, but in winter the town was paralyzed in the same depression as the season itself.

Hyacinthe lived in Viterbo cloistered in a gray clapboard house at the edge of the barrens near where the St. Croix bled into the mouth of the Fundy. She had been born in the same house in the dead of winter the year the bay froze over and locked everything in ice. It was the year desperate men set fire to their boats and the year, it seemed, that barren women conceived.
Hyacinthe's mother had resented the pregnancy and blamed her husband for it, just as she had blamed him for her stillbirth fifteen years before. The accoucheuse had blamed the moon, but she had blamed him, a ghost of a man who hid behind the counters of his general store and dispensed creams and cottons and beans, a man too frightened to lead the cortège for his unconsecrated son and too weak to dig his unconsecrated grave.

When it became obvious that she was pregnant, Hyacinthe's father had asked her about it. We are being punished, she said coldly. Your sin is inside me.

For five months they sat in silence; she in the deacon's chair, smoking her pipe and staring at him, and he, across the room, watching her reflection on the glazed enamel of the wood stove. Together they sat in their house empty of dreams. He had long ago taken to the sea where he begged the songs of Sirens that never came, and she, after the death of her stillborn son, watched his twisted body rise in smoke from the bowl of her pipe and evanesce, like her life, into nothing.

She expected her child to be born dead and seemed surprised when it wasn't, and while the accoucheuse held up the baby to the sun and hailed Mary, she cursed the girl and abandoned it to her husband, who, in despair, turned to Father Ferrier of Ste. Therése's.

Ferrier, a paladin of the cross and a man of countless spiritual anodynes, baptized the girl with the name Hyacinthe while her mother watched on faithlessly from the kitchen door. Ferrier purged the house with bitter smoke; he lit vigil, cut horseradish, and roamed the halls intoning chants and invoking Ste. Therèse. She watched Ferrier throw holy water against the doors, where it ran to the floor like tears, against the sills and lintels, into Hyacinthe's cradle, but she stopped him as he stood poised over her bed.

I'm serving the Lord, Ferrier said angrily.

Well, she said checking his arm with a grip that made Ferrier's black eyes widen with surprise, don't serve Him to me.

Ferrier, enraged, retreated down the stairs, where he cruelly abused her husband for his unconfessed sins, and then disappeared out the door with his black manteau flapping behind him like a bat's wings.

In Viterbo, all men negotiated their death with the sea. But Ferrier tried to insinuate himself into their arguments by tempting people with the comfort of God. He tried to usurp the authority the sea had over their lives with ceremony and promises for salvation for those who obeyed and damnation for those who scorned him.

Ferrier was an ambitious man, and he aggressively tried to bring
Hyacinthe's mother into the church. But she staunchly defended herself against him even though she left him to claim her husband and her daughter.

Unmoved by Ferrier's arrogance, she would sit by herself in the front room smoking her pipe and listening to Ferrier in the kitchen with her husband as he cursed their bed until Ferrier finally drove him out of it and up into the attic where he slept alone.

For years Hyacinthe was kept sheltered in the house where she knew only the estrangement of her mother and the land. Her father timidly brought her playthings: scallop shells, hundreds of them, which looked like the calcified wings of butterflies and frightened Hyacinthe when she saw them on the floor: fallen, brittle, unable ever to take flight. He also brought her Clabber Girl tins from the store and lined them up on her shelf in a chorus of little girls' faces. Ferrier brought her years of his insistent catechism.

*Years later she became the only one left in the house. Her mother had fallen dead in the front room near the spot where Hyacinthe had been baptized, and her father, who suddenly saw the fear he had dreaded all his life materialize, had shut himself up in the store eating canned foodstuffs and talking to God. For days people in the street heard him running around in frantic circles like a dog chasing its tail, upsetting furniture and shouting heresies. Later, when Ferrier forced open the door to take him out, he found only empty cans and hundreds of scraps of paper with the words "chose jugée" pencilled furiously all over them.

After her mother's death and her father's disappearance, Hyacinthe stayed in the house with its torturous solitude of rooms and its faint odor of horseradish. She knew only the wheeze of water from the river as it rushed the chokestones to the north and the hollow whisk of wind from the flat barrens to the west. She rarely ventured out of the house, and except for the hunters who cupped their faces at her windows, and Ferrier, who kept visiting the house begging for a confession she could not offer, Hyacinthe sat alone, yielding only to the mensal flow of tides and blood.

Like her father, Hyacinthe was ghostly, and frail, as if she'd suffered a long fever. She was as tremulous as the kerosene flame that lit the house at night, and she moved from room to room like fox-fire; she was a timid spirit of light that faded to the point of exhaustion. Those who saw her said she looked like the pale reflection of one of the nameless virgin martyrs in the sacristy windows of Ste. Therése, but the coincidence wasn't that startling since both of them had nondescript faces; in fact, it was their lack of features that made them look alike.

Ferrier's insistent, yet tender entreaties for her sin became too passionate,
and Hyacinthe allowed him to take her as a lover. He introduced her to sex as he introduced any sacrament: with the intimidation of his authority. Together they struggled in an awkward, angry passion on her bed where he tried to deliver her the reality of sin. But as defiant as Ferrier was, as a man and as a priest, he failed, and only made her aware of a distant resonance, a slight tremor of something alien within her she had never known before. When Ferrier climbed on top of her, she felt neither pleasure nor pain, but she felt its stirring, like an eyeless reptile living in subterranean depths disturbed from its ageless sleep. It was apart from her; its skin grazed hers. When Ferrier made love to her, she could feel its drowsed head turn slowly.

In the dark by her bed, the gilt of Ferrier’s breviary danced in the air like golden insects.

When Ferrier realized the hollowness of Hyacinthe’s body and her apparent impermeability, he withdrew and made her repent with him. In one sense he was frightened of her because not even the corruption of her flesh seemed to leave a scar. As much as he assaulted her, she was indomitable; he believed his only heritage to her would be the vague string of Pater Nosters and Ave Marias they had canted while kneeling on the cold linoleum of her bedroom floor.

But Ferrier was wrong. One evening, when she followed him downstairs after he had left her in bed, she walked into the kitchen where he was eating a plateful of eggs. She looked at him, still unaware of her presence, and found him intolerable. She sensed a profound threat and ran back upstairs into her bedroom. Later, when Ferrier tried to return, she refused to open the door. The next day, when he tried to return to the house, she locked him out and hid in the widow’s watch while Ferrier pleaded to be let in.

But Hyacinthe couldn’t escape the smell of Ferrier’s body which reminded her of the wet, decaying forest floor; she couldn’t escape the haunting sound of his choked breath or the feel of his damp body smothering hers. She could no longer shut out the melancholic sough and moan of stale water beneath the poisoned soil of the barrens or ignore its unending lament. And worse, she feared the animus inside her, again silent, waiting.

Driven out of the house, Hyacinthe took a job shucking clams for a food processor and spent her working days laboring in a shed at the end of the co-op pier.

The dark, salt-soaked shed was cluttered with baskets of hissing clams and crates of shrimp shivering on ice. Broken gaffs and rakes rusted in a litter of traps and broken hods. Hyacinthe stood at pitted steel sinks all day
as her knife learned to cut open clams and her amnesic fingers tore the gems of entrails from their hinges and let them slip into the trays. The clicking of her knife was a metronome that vainly marked time against the void; the psalmation of water against the pilings outside, and through the hoses and trays inside, was as deadening as the drone of the wind on the barrens. Days became weeks, perhaps months or years, and Hyacinthe again drowsed in the anaesthetic of time. Only the muffled clang of the harbor nuns warned her of another world.

Hyacinthe, expectant with a vague dream of violence, walked home along the edge of the reach. She winced at the sight of the waterlogged balks of traders that littered the graveyard of the coast. Straining her eyes towards the flat horizon, she saw blurry images of a hundred ships sailing a phantom sky, tacking away from her and fading into the air as windward currents carried their darkling reflections to shore and slammed them into the shoals.

Tide pools teased her with their memories of sunken ships and bloated men. She was drawn to their pain. Hyacinthe felt she had once known the sailors’ deaths: she heard their swallowed screams lost in the water, and the soft pop of their lungs bursting in their chests; she saw their bloodied eyes stare longingly at the soft bed of the sea. They seemed part of a memory that was slowly returning, and part of a promise that would transcend the emptiness around her.

She dreamt of the Clabber Girl standing on a somnolent shore wrapped in a shroud of fog, a drowned sailor at her feet.

Somewhere along the endless, torpid procession of days, two seiners threw a live nurse shark onto the floor of the shed, and while the seiners laughed, the shark’s body thrashed wildly across the floor towards her. The brutal grace of the shark’s dance excited Hyacinthe: the desperate snap of jaws as it turned up its bottlenose to assault the formless air, the pinched flesh as it scraped the splintery floor, and the rubine gills that beat furiously as they choked in the empty sea of air. Hyacinthe’s heart pounded wildly, and as she watched the shark convulse on the floor, the almost forgotten creature within her uncoiled and lifted its head to nose the wet darkness around it. Its cool skin nuzzled hers as if it wanted to feed.

Then, in a movement that she would dream of endlessly, one of the seiners bent over and slipped a knife into the shark’s belly, quickly slitting the entire length of its body. Its insides spilled out onto the planking, and with them, three fetal sharks in a tangle of golden yolks that flared as brightly as the apricot sun of summer.

For Hyacinthe, the blur of the silvery knife across the shark’s skin was
a comet's tail. She saw a bright crescent slash a spectral sky of faint stars and distant planets. A sudden tumescence aroused her, and while she watched the shark bask in the languid calm beyond pain, she wished for the same placid breath and communion of blood.

A gray rain fell like a great sorrow. The windows of the pier shed wept with runnels of tears. While Hyacinthe worked her knife into the clams, she stared at the fingerling sharks she kept in a bottle on a shelf above her sink. Weighted by their jaundiced yolk sacs, they balanced on their noses and stared down at Hyacinthe with their cottony eyes. Mute, expressionless, they circled the jar with the rhythm of the sea, turning slowly either to face Hyacinthe or the limit of the reach.

Their perfectly formed faces were blank—innocent of the fear or memory of their birth. But Hyacinthe remembered what they could not: the seiner's blade stabbing the shark's soft belly and entering the foetid darkness of her body, the silken tear of her flesh, and the nearly inaudible sigh. And deep inside, Hyacinthe could hear the wash of fetal blood and the calm, confident beat of their hearts until violent bursts of cold and light sheared the walls of their sanctum for a moment of flawless ecstasy. The memory repeated itself like the reflections in the facets of a perfect diamond. As she stood at her sink, Hyacinthe trembled with the vision of it.

The angry wash of rain against her window seemed to want to beat her. Outside, taut hawsers droned at the niggerheads while the sea tugged at the ancient joints of the pier until they groaned. Hyacinthe's past returned to her like flashing cards of doom: the Clabber Girl with her sleepless smile, the hundreds of shells littering her floor, Ferrier's pasty face. The shed trembled and swayed on its pilings. The sudden odor of horseradish frightened Hyacinthe. She flinched and tasted the bittersweet of panic. Wind squalled around her. She flinched again.

Her body shook. As her knife worked itself mechanically, the odor of horseradish got stronger. She was afraid to turn around to see who was standing behind her, and so she continued, half in nightmare and half in golden dream, while fatal insects burrowed beneath her skin and into her blood. Pain skittered down her spine, rebounding from her brain to her womb. Its echo silhouetted the embryonic form within her as it swelled in its silent incubation. The virulent life within her made Hyacinthe feel strong and alive, unafraid of pain.

The water and air around her seemed to adore her with their violence. Hyacinthe felt herself soar above the waves, and above the clouds, free from the ugly, sucking bogs and the daze of fog which had bound her so mercilessly to their tyranny. When she looked down into the trays and saw her hands covered with blood, and the clammer's knife ridged with the bright red ribbon of her innocence, she cried with soft tears while she repeated the soft litany of chose jugée, chose jugée.
Somewhere unwound in time, Hyacinthe lay on the altar of her bed and drew the knife across her arms until she perceived the form behind the camouflage; she saw the gaunt, dark shape of the incubus that lived within her as it uncurled its fiddlehead fingers to embrace the walls around it. Hyacinthe saw the transfiguration of the shark as she spanned death and birth in a single act. As she cut deeper, she knew her suffering perpetuated all life.

The pain became a silver monolith rising out of the darkness, brilliant with light and strength. It arose from the heart of the barrens, growing out of the cruel soil that destroyed even the most insistent seed. It towered above the spruce hummocks thrusting out into space as if to violate it. The greater the pain became, the greater she could sense its presence piercing the bleak, empty universe. The monolith was a knife that stabbed the darkness.

On the last night, the first night, her womb pushed out a bastard child of darkness. Through her wet eyes, Hyacinthe saw the pinprick glitter of lonely stars turn into a blazing galaxy filled with swirling nebulae and cascades of fire as they spilled through the rent sky. Dragons clawed the obsidian flesh of the universe; bulls mounted cows in frenzy; an eggshell swan glided towards Andromeda. The chaos of the heavens was wild with phantom life. From her bed, her child-beast rose, glancing her tired flesh before rising into the nexus of stars.

At dawn, as the last light faded, Hyacinthe saw the china blue of falling snow fill the air like the wings of thousands of soaring butterflies.
Eudoxia Aliferis (1940-1978)

SOFT CRY

Sweet hills of Hellas
Olive groves
Figs, juice pregnant by fire,
Sky
Perfumed in sapphire

Feel, feel the fingers of a salt breeze
Caress my raven hair
Fly! Fly!

Hush heart, please,
Soften your plea,
Lesbos, wait, wait
My work is my measure now.

A NIETZSCHEAN PRIEST

It was the first time
I saw a priest
Whose soul danced.

THE AGORA

A wet and broken street
With wounds of blood
Raw and laughing skulls
With open eyes of brown
Hairy slit gullets
Disemboweled torsos
A nauseating smell,
As victors we emerged from
the slaughter
Greeted by fruits
and spices
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR’S

SOPHIA DE MELLO BREYNER ANDRESEN is one of Portugal’s best-known contemporary poets. She was born in 1919 and has published several poetry books and children’s stories. A selection of her work was also included in the International Women’s Issue of Mundus Artium.

GREGORY BREHM is a poet and filmmaker who lives in Southern California. He has published one book of poetry entitled The Counterfeit Liar in 1975.

JEAN BRETON is a poet, critic and editor of the contemporary poetry journal Poésie. He is one of the editors of the prestigious publishing house Editions Saint-Germain-des-Prés. His writings were also included in the special French selection of Mundus Artium.

JANET BROF is a widely published translator who currently lives in Mexico City.

MARK CONNELLY is working on a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He has started a novel entitled Kurt which is based on his travels in Germany, England and the Soviet Union.

HUMBERTO COSTANTINI was born in 1924 and is one of the most powerful Argentinian writers today. He has published several collections of short-stories and he appeared for the first time in English translation in the special Latin American Fiction issue of Mundus Artium, which contains a listing of his books.

R. C. DAY’s stories have appeared in numerous journals including the Massachusetts Quarterly, Kenyon Review, and Redbook. He teaches at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California.

PHILIPPE DENIS could be considered one of the strongest poetic voices in France today. He has published several volumes of poetry. His poetry is appearing for the first time in Mundus Artium.
ELAINE DEROSA is a poet and translator who is currently enrolled in the English Master’s program at New Mexico State University.

STEPHEN DIXON was born and raised in New York City. He has worked as a teacher, newsman, technical writer, magazine editor, salesman, bartender and waiter. His publications include two novels, Work published by Street Fiction Press and Too Late published by Harper & Row.

RICHARD EXNER teaches German and European Literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has written extensively on Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and has published poems, prose, and translations in both German and English. He is the translator, for Unicorn Press, of Alive or Dead, a selection of poems by Heinz Piontek, as well as the 1979 selection of poems and graphics by Günter Bruno Fuchs, Law & Disorder.


BRUNO GUNTER FUCHS’s first book in English, Law and Disorder, translated by Richard Exner, will be published in a bilingual edition as volume 5 of the Unicorn German Series in 1979 with a foreword by Teo Savory. Twenty-two poems and twelve graphics will comprise the Unicorn Press book. Unicorn Press P.O. Box 3307, Greensboro, N.C. 27402.

JENNIFER GALOS was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico in 1957. She studied art and literature at New Mexico State University and is currently residing in Portland, Oregon.

LUCIA C. GETSI teaches English and Comparative Literature at Illinois State University. Her translations of Georg Trakl’s poems were published by Mundus Artium Press.

ELOAH F. GIACOMELLI’s translations from the Portuguese have appeared in numerous journals including the North American Review, The Malahat Review, and The Latin American Literary Review. She is currently working on an anthology of contemporary Brazilian literature in English translation.

REGINALD GIBBONS is a poet and translator. His translations of Luis Cernuda’s poetry were published by the University of California Press.

ALINA GINGERICH is a native Cuban speaker who is studying toward a Ph.D. in Latin American literature.

WILLIAM GINGERICH is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Texas, El Paso.

YANNIS GOUMAS is a widely published translator who lives in Greece. His latest book of poems Athenians Go to Work was published by the Sceptere Press in 1978.

R. D. GREGORY’s work appears for the first time in Mundus Artium. He lives in California.

HARRY HASKELL works as a freelance translator in Mexico City. Recently, he was the assistant to the director in the Mexican film Carnada.
RICH HASWELL is a widely published translator and teaches English at Washington State University.

JAVIER HERAUD was killed in guerilla action in Peru at the age of 21 in 1963. The poems in this issue of Mundus Artium are from Javier Heraud. Poesías completas y homenaje. La Rama Florida, Lima, Peru, 1964.

MICHAEL HONEA was born in Texas in 1940. He is a graduate student in the Interdisciplinary Humanities Program at the University of Texas at Dallas.

ALBERT HUFFSTICKLER was born in Laredo, Texas, in 1927. He has been published in numerous literary magazines and is currently employed at the University of Texas Library in Austin and hopes to put together a volume of poems in the near future.

MARK IRWIN is a widely published translator. He is currently a member of the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa.

J. R. LEMASTER is Director of American studies at Baylor University. His most recent publications are Jesse Stuart: Selected Criticism (1978) and Jesse Stuart: Essays on His Work (1977), with Mary Washington Clarke.

ALEXIS LEVITIN is a widely published translator who currently teaches English at Denison University. He is also working on a bilingual anthology of twentieth century Portuguese poetry for Perivale Press.

MARY OLMSTEAD has taught at the University of Puerto Rico for several years and has just begun to write her first novel.

JAMES PENZL lives in Philadelphia. His chapbook of poems, Salt Fever, was published in 1976 by Isthmus Press, San Francisco and he is currently working on a play entitled Still-Life.

DAVID RAY is the editor of New Letters and the author of several books of poems. The Tramp's Cup, his most recent book of poems, has just been published by The Chariton Press.

GUILLERMO SUCRE is one of the leading poets and critics of Venezuela. He has published several books of poems, studies on Borges and the modern poetic tradition in Latin America. The poems reprinted in this issue of Mundus Artium are from his collection En el verano.

LYGIA FAGUNDES TELLES is considered one of the best contemporary Brazilian writers. Her first collection of short-stories appeared in 1944. Her other collections O Cacto Vermelho (1949), Historias do Desencontro (1958), and O Jardim Selvagem (1965) received major literary awards. She has also published three novels. Her collection of stories, Antes do Baile Verde (1971), brought her the prestigious Guimarães Rosa Literary Award. "Tigrela," is from her new volume of stories, Seminario dos Ratos (1977).

RONALD TOBIAS teaches Creative Writing at the University of Texas at Dallas. He is a widely published short-story writer and has just finished a book on snipers. He is also one of the editors of Translation Review.
VALTON TYLER was born in 1944 in Texas City, Texas. He had his first one man show at Southern Methodist University in 1972. His prints and paintings have been shown in numerous galleries both in the United States and abroad. He is represented by the Valley House Gallery, Inc. in Dallas who published a catalogue for their 1979 exhibition of Valton Tyler's works. Tyler is a very prolific artist. Since 1973, he has produced close to 200 paintings. The reproduction of his works in this issue of Mundus Artium were made possible by Valley House Gallery.

CLAUDE VIGEE was born in 1921 at Bischwiller, in Alsace, where he lived until World War II. He participated in the organization of resistance in the region of Toulouse, and became a refugee to the United States in 1943. He attended Ohio State University, and eventually became chairman of the Department of Romance Languages at Brandeis. For several years now he has occupied a chair in French literature at Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

CATHERINE WIDGERY, a young sculptor in her mid-twenties, has had several One Woman Exhibitions. She was recently awarded a fellowship to Yaddo where she is currently working on her art.

HARRIET ZINNES teaches modern literature and poetry workshops at Queens College. Her volume of poems I Wanted to See Something Flying was published in 1976. She has also written a volume of prose poems and a study on Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts, scheduled to appear in 1979.

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