

Numéro Cinq

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Deirdre Baker

Peripatet | Essay — Grant Maierhofer



*I walked through the city l
(Someone talked me in to
Attracted by some force wi
(Had to close my eyes to ge
“Interzone” -*

*Whether factually or not, I'd trace the severe
moments throughout my life to stretches of mov
I walk. When writing my first novel, I'd finish sc
at four and walk outside in my father's neighborhood
and lie down on the street at the intersection. Nobody c
worried. I've convinced myself somewhere over time th
bound up in all that's done: i.e., you pore ove
researching projects, say, and feel it's this that leads to
work done. What about the menial tasks? The mailbu
family calls. The television watched. The food prep*

eaten, not. We pay attention to apparently massive events and neglect the steps it takes from where you sit to the ground your bladder can be let. I do this, in turn. I care little what moments are happening and even belittle them to make me often feeling I've done nothing all day when to recount they require sincere attention. I think of walking in these terms of it as necessary toward a particular kind of relief brought. It wasn't constant, I didn't walk great lengths when I made time for it something else seemed to happen

Walking for me changed when architecture changed, cities stretches suddenly took on meaning, became signs that warped. In Jarett Kobek's novel of the 9/11 attacks, *ATTA*, Mohammed, Atta, wanders cities hearing voices in the city he hadn't known this prior to reading but Atta was a student who had written a dissertation in fact regarding the imperial metropolitan architecture over the Middle East. The specific sentiments is largely unimportant to my purposes here, I wonder about the post-9/11 psyche and its relationship to the city. Like the possibility of burned, sacked, destroyed works of art in the hands of their creators or fascists or mere accidents, the anticipation of destruction alters our sense of the landscape, we simply couldn't prior to the explosive power of our present. It isn't only terrorists who alter our cities, our landscapes, our town in apparent constant search for redefinition and new norms. Restaurants in husks of old diners, college campuses with glass opposed to brick, these are familiar shifts to anyone who has lived through them. Although his final acts warp any logic one might glean from the real or fictional Atta, this notion of an intensely personal physiological relationship to one's comparably inanimate environment would seem a thing not duly mined, considering its likenesses to the idea of AI, the Singularity, or our soured relationship to ecology.

In Tsai Ming Liang's brilliant short film, *Walker*, per

opposite to Kobek's citydweller can be found. What the monk walks slowly, almost frustratingly so, through the bag and by film's end removes—slowly—a burger from slow, meditative bites. It's my understanding that this scene is occasionally a form of actual meditation. This makes Turning inward and simply sitting there is often trying while focusing in minute detail on every movement deliberate steps, asserting the body's form against the world, this makes perfect sense.

I've always viewed walking as a literary matter, an art before discovering figures like Iain Sinclair, or Gustave Baudelaire and conceptions of the flaneur. Walking has been therapeutic, whether doing so aggressively late at night in the apparent danger of the world present itself, or doing so in the afternoon after being inside for too long, the act simultaneously transcended a basic corporeal state, and

Rogers Park is a neighborhood in north Chicago. Where the El and through a smear of shops and bodies have a wonderful nodding of demographics. I lived in an apartment with one room surrounded by large family apartments hubbubing and boiling these complicated wafts. I never took them of minor nods and kept to myself that year from a tendency I have of eating or not the wrong medicine, wrote a set of acts that led through all their variation to the solitude, a bitter living spoken aloud to myself and only through incredible heaps of television and the few obsessions with the arts.

Leaving my apartment after turning right once you'd reach the beach. This beach is on Lake Michigan and I typically walk there at night. At my entry, a jut of large rocks allowed for a platform whereon you could easily fall into water were you careless.

careless and ill-dressed for whatever occasion it was but I'd walk out, say, mildly winded from the trek from studio on some rock's jagged seat to watch the sky and water exactly dangerous regarding crime but all the same one v focus on matters and turn any potential needs—direction inward. For myself these were paranoiac times. I'd unipolar depression summer previous after meddling since a youth and being poked at by various abbreviated took a heap of medicine each day and returned to Chicago. Then I threw my medicine into the toilet and sat in the bathtub light and read at pages of Jim Thompson or Céline un former into the tub to watch it waterlog, and leaving apart night with latter gripped to ward off the world's moods and idiot notes upon my head.

So this beach was particular, dirtied, humming and full of what clothes were there and sit on wet sand spreading beside me making bellows.

An aside: on arriving second year in the city of H.H. Holbrook broke downtown without means to ride the L back up to being midday and having eaten—I, bodily, have diabetes thus would note these things at moments—I decided to walk took me eight hours and for the last two I dug in to lining the lake for sips at discarded Powerades as my bank made its plummet.

Endless hubbub has, can be made of the opening to masterpiece, *Paris, Texas*. I first saw this film when living watched it and, some point after Harry Dean Stanton "Travis" made his long walk through the desert valley, "this is my favorite film." What happens in its opening,

in a tattered suit and red baseball cap walks. He's return he's so disheveled, and carries a two gallon jug with re water. Simple, droney guitar emanates, and his walk co of nothing like it in cinema, not to mention films taking p and I can't watch it without feeling buried in some abstra

Just as often as walking shaped my days and hours wer on the few feet of ground just next, I'd create arbitrary tr blips of meaning to otherwise empty, useless days. Th when I'd begun work on my second novel. I'd turned 21 I'd read Frederick Exley's trilogy and Céline's *Journey* ar come home from school or movies or walks, I'd etch a bits of narrative I then called *Shadows to the Light*. I'd coffee and work, then walk for X amount of time. I'd retu scribbled notes and work until I couldn't, then leave anc of an all-night grocery not wanting to go home just yet.

Long walks then along the beach and through the park as coffee'd stints of work. Short, staccato blips I'd map ou from block to block nearby so as to stave off this constan

Exley walked, if memory serves, after a hospitalization; mother's couch with dog to watch television for months. abruptly, he took to foot and spent his days walking t breathe or take it. I admired this and understood. All my to saturate my head in often rotten media: literature st also hours upon hours of television. I'd do this then and that movement, physical movement, could right the m never entirely right but it at least put the muck to wo ways. I'd walk say after reading Jim Thompson in the police procedurals and edges of paranoia scattered my tl

There is, then, at best, a kind of art ingested through c letting the city cover you. My body would be anxious, slo

my head I'm frantic. In retrospect it becomes simple to
Remember the monk, remember Baudelaire, remember
and the foundation here, walking as transmutati
compelling, fundamentally human, Iain Sinclair cover
allowing himself to become swathed in the narrative wh
I'd aspire to it, and perpetually fail. I remember *Molloy*
into the unknown and bodies affected by their enviro
that's left is a withering tramp, a citizen without shoes su
and keeping time this way. Once I felt chased through the
to music. I turned Beethoven loud in my ears and covere
nobody would follow. Followed still, I turned and face
screamed at them and wandered off. I was losing mysel
saw me later and spoke with me. He flattered me. He fli
told me all would be O.K. and the person likely just wa
me. I imagined a life with that old man. I wanted to hug
and feel his history pass through me. I stood there
eventually he did hold me. I do not know how I look
person, thinned by anxiety and in search of something. I
older men that way, though typically it never went beyor
always in transit. He was sweet, however. He sort of
words. That night I returned to my apartment and rec
message. I didn't know where it came from and it show
up in his kitchen, a kitchen. I didn't respond but it didn
was losing it. I'd continue my frantic pacing contacting
and speaking with them on the phone, always older m
and always touched with some bit of the anxiety of lust.
walking is imagining your lives in every step, what mig
problem of reflecting is you're brought back, wherever
feel the heap of potential history wash over you. I walk
myself at the feet of living and submit to human beings
and fail to welcome entirely the lonely glints returned i
past.

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Mother Tongue | On Doris Lessing — Victoria B

 2 Responses

 2017, August, Essays, NC Magazine, Nonfiction



Doris Lessing

“I think Miller was an early essay and Lessing a much later one, I had grown quite practiced at entering imaginatively into an author’s mind (I was probably overconfident about it!). I really loved writing these essays.”

writer I chose, once you got down to it, was a hapless flake, making mess of their life and yet stalwartly, patiently, relentlessly process every crisis and turning them all into incredible art. How could you people and their priceless integrity? I felt like I had found my tribe. the least that they were pretty much all dead. There was just that pivotal, creative attentiveness to everything wrong – that I cherished.'

1 942 in the land that used to be Rhodesia. A 24-year-old woman spreads a picnic blanket out on a lawn beneath the large, spreading leaves of a cedrillatoona tree. On the blanket she has two children: John, a lively three-year-old and Jean, a sweet, chubby baby. They watch their mother with steady interest.

She explains that she is going to have to abandon them.

She wants them to know this is a carefully considered decision. She tells them 'that they would understand later why I had left. I wanted to change this ugly world, they would live in a beautiful world where there would be no race hatred, injustice, and so forth.'

Her comrades in the Rhodesian branch of the Communist Party have been encouraging her for several months now to break up her family. For the first time in her life, the young woman finds support for her aims and her principles; the group has given her the freedom to take this extraordinary step. But it is not really her friends, not wholly – politics that has provoked it.

'Much more, and more important: I carried, like a defecator, the curse of doom of fatality, which would trap [the children] as I stayed. Leaving, I would break some ancient chain of repression. They would thank me for it.'

The children, she believes, are the only ones who 'remember me', unlike her husband, who is bewildered and silent.

decision, and her mother, ever a stern critic and now in righteous rage. 'Perhaps it is not possible to abandon without moral and mental contortions,' the young mother wrote. 'But I was not exactly abandoning mine to an empty house was full of concerned and loving people, and they would be admirably looked after – much better than by me.' In her act was one of desperate self-rescue. 'I would not have had a nervous breakdown would have been the least of it. If I had become an alcoholic, I am pretty sure. I would have had to live with myself, riven, hating what I was part of, for years.'

The young woman went on to become Doris Lessing, author of twelve novels, seventeen short story collections, numerous non-fiction books, and winner of the Nobel prize for literature. But when her first children she had scarcely begun to write. She was Doris Lessing, bored and miserable housewife, irritated by her husband's indifference towards her babies, and terrified of repeating the strains of her parents' marriage. All she had was her literary ambition and a fierce love for the inequalities of the country she grew up in, which was as fierce as her love of the land.

From these disparate ingredients she would produce a fierce and scorching power, a novel that would take London by storm. She arrived with the manuscript in her suitcase, and informed the world of the desperate abuses that took place on either side of the colour bar.

But before she left Rhodesia, she was going to make the mistakes of marriage and motherhood all over again.



Doris Lessing with 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature

Doris Lessing was born in 1919 to the dispirited aftermath of World War I. Her parents met in the Royal Free Hospital. Doris's mother was Sister Emily MacVeigh, the clever daughter of a disciplinarian father. Doris's father, Alfred, lost a leg, his optimistic resilience and half his mind in the war. Emily nursed him, the doctor she intended to marry worshipped. Neither could have the life they wanted, and so they made do with the shared burden of their disappointment. They married in order to make restitution to the woman who had lost her life and his sanity, whom he knew wanted children. Emily wanted children, but marriage meant she had to refuse the position of matronship at St George's, a famous teaching hospital. It would have been a fine post for a woman in her era. She did not want it, in inner turmoil. And then, depressed and shell-shocked still, she was insulted to the core when handed the white feather by a group of women in the street who could not see the war in his trousers. Unable to tolerate his feeling that his own wife had betrayed him, he took a post in a bank in Persia.



Lessing's parents, Alfred Tayler and Emily McV

Doris Lessing believed that her mother was as depressed and conflicted over the choices she had made, the sudden weariness of having worked so hard in the war. As a woman who had been advised not to have children too soon, but Emily was already thirty-five and may not have wanted to wait. They joked that she was pregnant on their wedding night. In Persia, after a difficult birth she was handed not the son they wanted, but a daughter who didn't even have a name. The doctor suggested Doris. 'I was a difficult birth scarred me?' Lessing would later write in her autobiography, 'I do know that to be born in the year 1919 when half of Persia was a graveyard, and people were dying in millions all over the world was important.'

The early years in Persia were, in fact, to be some of the most formative of her parents would know. On arrival, it was as if they started with new identities, her mother taking on her middle name 'Maud' and her father 'Michael', which she felt sounded classier. Money was made in rounds of colonial parties with the 'right sort' of people. Her mother was content at the bank, and another baby arrived, the second child, a son. Doris Lessing's earliest memories were of slouching and her father's wooden leg in social gatherings, hearing her

discussed by her mother: how difficult and naughty she made her mother's life a misery. Her baby brother, Bébé, was perfect. To the cross, elderly nursemaid who ruled the house, Maude would say 'Bébé is my child, madame. Doris is Doris. Doris is your child. But Bébé is mine.' It was a very unsophisticated age, in which childcare was dominated by the idea of Truby King, who advocated strict discipline in the nursery. Maude never forgot her mother's gleefully recounted tales of how she had nearly starved her daughter on a rigid three-hour feeding schedule. The nursemaid failed to take into account the thinness of Persian milk. Doris and her brother were potty trained from birth, held over the pot for a whole day. 'You were clean by the time you were a month old,' Maude remembers her mother saying, though she did not believe her mother's romantic expressions of love as a mother. 'The trouble is, love is a word that has to be earned through experience of love. What I remember is hard, bundling her in my arms and her voice telling me over and over again that she didn't want a girl'. Doris's birth had been inauspicious and her upbringing was proving catastrophic. 'The fact was, my mother made me one of the walking wounded for years,' she writes, 'with some psychological pressures, and even well-meaning but physically damaging as physical hurt.'

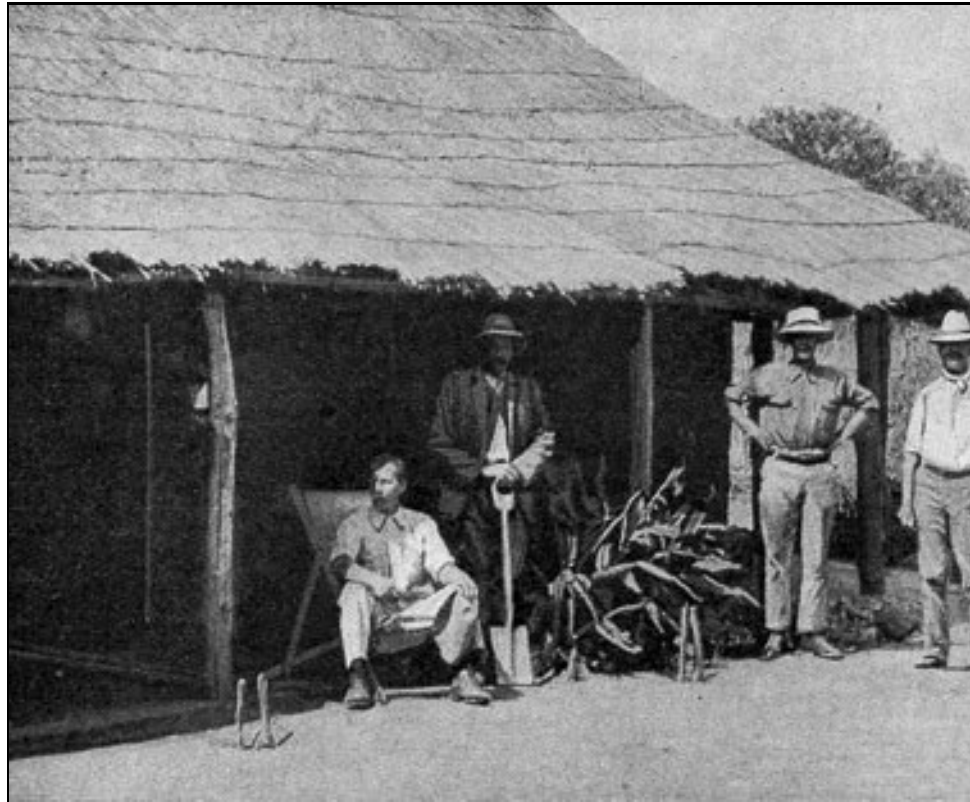
In 1924 their time in Persia ended, but after a few months of travel that felt as depressing as ever to the Taylers, Michael went to the Exhibition and was seduced by the thought of farming in Rhodesia. With ill-prepared impulsiveness they sailed for Rhodesia (though they both had all their teeth removed on the voyage, that there were no dentists in Rhodesia). Michael was seasick and remained in the cabin for most of the voyage. Maude had a wonderful time consorting with the Captain through the rough weather. They enjoyed 'hearty jollity' together, but Maude found to her discomfort that the Captain was a keen proponent of the 'towel' and told her one day she must sit on a cushion 'where he has sworn swearing it wouldn't break... My mother said I must be careful'. Doris was wearing her party dress, which was spoiled,

roared with laughter. There was worse to come. 'When Line I was thrown in, though I could not swim, and was sailor. This kind of thing went on, and I was permanently nightmares.' Looking back, she did not believe her naturally cruel person; she was simply grasping at a good hands, drunk on pleasure and anticipation, falling in thing' on board. But for Doris, it was an early, wounding those in control could so lightly and easily humiliate noticing what they did.

By the time they arrived at the Cape, Doris was starting and to lie. 'There were storms of miserable hot rage, lil alive by hatred.' She took a pair of scissors, thinking she stab her much-disliked nursemaid, Bidy, with them. and unexpected balm to her spirits: for five days a travelled in an ox wagon, leaving behind the niceties of curtains, trunks of clothes, silver tableware, Persian carpet – to follow on later by train. For Doris, bumping along into a vast emptiness 'there is only one memory, not of u anger, but the beginnings of a different landscape.' Her sensitivity was being given a new world to work on. The of a koodoo, the glistening green slither of a snake, an beetles and chameleons, thick red soil churned by the m was a landscape to echo the intensities and va misunderstood emotions, a harsh landscape for su overwhelming beauty.

Her parents had chosen a grand hilltop site for their could only afford to construct a traditional mud house roof upon it. It contained both the piano and furniture f petrol boxes, the Liberty curtains and bedspreads mac sacks. There were no 'nice' people in the district, to Mau had had dresses made for entertaining, calling cards gloves and hats that she would never wear. Instead of th she imagined, she had a toilet that was a packing case over a twenty-foot drop. The farm was too big for a mar

leg, but too small to make any profit. The heat was crippling malaria. Twice. Maude took to her bed for a year with enraging Doris with unwanted, burdensome pity understood even then to be depression.



Settler farm in Southern Rhodesia, early 1920s, via Wikin

Maude's illness brought Mrs Mitchell and her son supposed to act as 'help'. Doris experienced them as nightmare, the woman a heavy drinker and her son about them in her memoir, she realised they came from of white poverty, from a life she could not have imagine which the immigrant farmers around them never acknowledge as a depth to which whites could sink. Mrs son roundly abused the black workers, and decried Mrs attempts to treat them well. It was, Lessing remember encounter she had with the ugly white clichés. 'They only stick. They are nothing but savages. They are just down. You have to keep them in their place.' The Mitchells months and Doris and her brother took to joining their the land. Eventually Maude rose from her bed, having de weight of her hair that was giving her headaches. She reducing her children to tears as they rolled in shanks o

then she bundled it up, threw it in the rubbish pit and set



Lessing with her mother and brother

Doris was eight years old when she was first sent away to a Catholic Convent. The main subject was fear. The dormitory was decorated with images of the tortured Saint Sebastian, the broken, whose swollen heart disgorged gouts of blood. At bedtime the nuns would stand in the doorway and tell them: 'God knows what you are thinking. God knows the evil in your hearts. You are disobedient to God and to the good sisters who look after you in the glory of God. If you die tonight you will go to hell and be burned in the flames of hell'. They were allowed a bath once a week and were supposed to wear boards around their necks that prevented them from seeing their own bodies. In her memoirs, Lessing calls this 'unwholesome', a notable understatement. Her pa

towards her was disquieting and she had a dawning sense that it was not right for the blacks on the farm. But this must have been a clear and immediate experience of abuse by authority, the only known power except self-indulgent or corrupt.

When a bad kidney ailment brought Doris into the sickroom of one of the few kindly nuns, she found a power of her own. There was a button she could push that made her mother relent. She pushed it repeatedly. Lice and ringworm would sign her out from the nuns. At the next boarding school, measles gave her a blessed quarantine and then a bad eye infection – violent but not serious – set her free. She insisted she could no longer stay and made her mother take her home.

And so, at fourteen, Doris finished her meagre education and gave full attention to the covert cold war with her mother. ‘I fled in flight from her ever since I can remember anything and from fourteen I set myself obdurately against her in a kind of independence from everything she represented,’ she wrote in her memoirs. When she returned to the farm, it was to a new level of her mother’s care. Her father had diabetes by now and had entered a long decline that cemented his general air of helplessness. Maude raved and gave obsessive attention, and extended her compulsive care to Doris, fretting over what she ate, and worrying about her growth and her bush. It was not love that provoked this behaviour, Doris wrote, but a struggle over control. For the biggest argument between them was over clothes: her mother wanted her to wear smart, frilly clothes that were inappropriate for her age and surroundings. ‘I knew my mother wanted when she nagged and accused me, come out in these well-brought-up little girls’ clothes at me. “You’re at least!” They were sizes too small for me.’ When Doris showed her first bra, her mother noticed, called for her father, and thrust the dress up over her head so he should see it. “Lord, I’ve got something serious,” her father grumbled, edging away.



Doris Lessing, age 14

Both Doris and her father hated the way she treated them, always talking to them in a 'scolding, insistent, nagging dislike'. "But they're just hopeless, hopeless," she was confronted. The 'Native Question' had become a topic between Doris and her parents. 'I had no ammunition in numbers and figures, nothing but a vague but strong feeling that something terribly wrong with the System.' She read the Rhodesia Herald, arguing that the black workers were paid so little because they were housed and fed so badly, and Doris argued how little they were paid on her own farm. But such opinions were against the pervasive conviction that blacks were simply inferior. Her father was kinder in his views but he was as ineffective as her mother's virulent opinions as he was in everything else.

that Doris was determined to escape, physically, emotionally.

Doris had already created a false self, a kind of persona behind in an attempt to keep her mother out of the private mind. She had early realised that 'it was [my mother's] to have an over-sensitive, always observant and just impressionable, hungry-for-love child. With not one, but too few.' After a bout of family enthusiasm for A.A. Milne as a child, Doris began to live up to her nickname of 'Tigger'. She was a daughter in her mother's image, capable and resilient with good humour, a good sport with a thick skin. At 18, she had jobs to be had at the telephone exchange in Salisbury and was mastering the easy work by day and joining in with the night. Tigger Tayler was all about love and excitement, a strong, beautiful young body. She smoked, she drank, she was a good dancer. It was 1938 and she knew, as everyone else, that war was coming. Tigger dreamt of becoming a driver, a spy, a parachutist, whilst throwing back the cocaine herself to the rhythms of the music. The adventure she would be the most mundane on offer.

'A young woman sensitised by music, and every molecule of abused response to the drums of war, a young woman on her own body – she did not have a chance of escaping her fate the same as all young women at that time,' Lessing determined self-absolution in her memoir. Tigger Tayler's heroic attitude and smouldering sexuality had found a way to the lost, lonely, hungry-for-love child she was trying to reach although she would describe her reckless rush into love as happening under the effects of 'the same numbing agent as chloroform, that overtakes someone being eaten by a lion.'

And so it was that, at 19, she returned to the farm with a fiancé to introduce to her parents. He was Frank Wisdom, a career in a respectable profession for which her parents were grate

assumed Doris was pregnant. In fact she was, but didn't
time. They had a 'graceless wedding,' which in retrospect
have hated: 'It was "Tigger" who was getting married.'
were two children born in quick succession: a
hyperactive boy, John, and a sweet, affectionate girl,
years, she played at the conventional role of housewife
competence and much inner anguish. 'There is no bore
an intelligent young woman who spends all day with a ve
she wrote. She was perpetually exhausted, partly from
the children, partly from the pretence of being Tigg
suppressed rage at her mother who now visited regular
her decisions, often calling her selfish and irresponsib
must have utterly infuriated her, given her own memories



Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, 1930 via Wikimedia

Frank did not understand why Doris took to bed, we
once she had gone. But then Frank and Doris had quick
The war was on, but Frank had been turned down for
medical grounds. He nursed his resentment and shame
drinks at the club. He agreed that Doris would write w
time and energy, but he grew angry when the poetry sh
fiercely critical of apartheid, afraid it might undermine hi
would become increasingly involved with subversive org

he would become a cliché of conventionality.

Not long after Jean was born, Doris made the decision to go off and travel to Cape Town with John. Her health had deteriorated; she was tired all the time and had fainting fits. 'I was confused, being torn apart by these two babes,' she wrote. 'The demanding task of caring for two small children was conformed to an unformed, unarticulated sense of profound self-betrayal. I, who, according to Lessing, had longed for a daughter, had now lined up to take baby Jean. 'I did not feel guilty about this at the time, but I do not feel guilty now,' she wrote. 'Small babies need to be cuddled, held, comforted and it does not have to be that difficult. This was to be a formative month, in which she met, at the time where she was staying, a woman from a Christian organization promoting good race relations by way of the sort of strategy that hypnotised Doris. "How can one describe a country where white people use 1 million blacks as servants and cheat them out of education and training, all the time in the name of Christianity," she asked, and Doris found it a 'revelation'.

She returned home rested, revolutionized and newly informed. Frank agreed help was needed and it was a sign of the times that a mother leaving her child for a month never raised an eyebrow. Doris hired a black nanny and invited her to live in the house, a scandal. Doris's mother even ambushed Frank in his car to vent her outrage. The nanny had to go, and Doris's political claustrophobia worsened.

It was at this time that she joined the Communist group, which had such an influence; Communist, socialist, progressive, the blurred lines at the time for her, but she knew for sure that she was marked her out pejoratively. 'All over Southern Rhodesia, people whose attitude toward race would be common of decades, but now they were misfits, eccentrics, traitors. The persona of Tigger Tayler – briefly Tigger Wisdom – was breaking down, under sustained assault by subversive

and her suppressed rage and resentment. She was energy with domesticity, when she could be doing so good to the world. Her situation was chaotic, messy, distraught. Frank hated her politics but didn't want her to feel she hated him – because she was treating him so desperate to be free. The holiday she had taken now to rehearsal for something altogether more audacious political friends encouraged her. Those years behind her left her feeling she was a stranger to herself and she could not. Nor could she tolerate the 'terrible provincialism and narrow life.' She knew that if she left she would be doing something 'unforgiveable'.

She left anyway.

Doris Wisdom abandoned one family in 1942. In 1943 she married this time a man whom she didn't much like even when she was young. Gottfried Lessing was a committed Communist, a hard-core German intellectual and, in Doris's eyes, a cold, humiliated man they had met through the Rhodesian Communist group. He was at least a match for her politically. 'It was my revolutionary attraction to him,' Doris wrote. Gottfried felt it would increase his chances of obtaining British nationality, for both he and Doris now lived in South Africa for England, and he believed that marriage would protect him from the threat of the internment camp, where his political views could still land him. But what was really going on? Why would she, even out of a misplaced sense of duty, rush back into marriage? Was it an impetuous self-abandon? She would claim it was because she was in love, but it was a sham, just a matter of convenience, but it seemed to her the impetuosity and the thoughtlessness to whitewash a desperate and shameful need.

She was struggling hard to find out who she was. As a wife and mother and husband and children she fell ill for a long time because

was full of division.’ The Communist group that she had faith in was not providing her with the certainties she hoped it had swiftly ‘dwindle[d] into debate and speculation diverse, there was too much potential for schism.’ Doris was ever more horrified by her political engagements and her personal life. And her sex life with Gottfried was a dramatic positive change had been effected: she had finally started a serious commitment – the first draft of a novel about the inequalities that wracked her country and had spoiled her. Division might have been destroying her, but it would be her power and beauty into her writing.

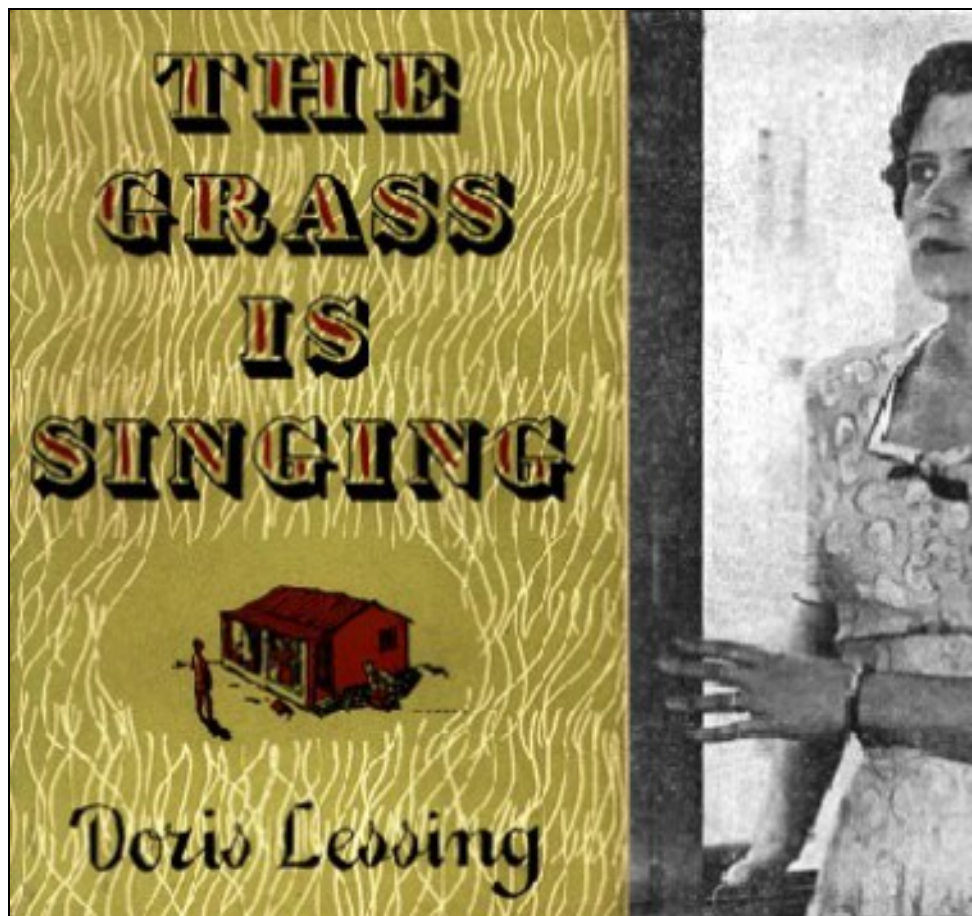
Then, as if in sabotage of this step in the right direction, at Christmas 1945 Doris fell pregnant again. She and Gottfried married for a while, so they might as well ‘fit in’ a child with their friends, ‘we’ve got nothing better to do.’ Her parents were against it. Her father said: “Why leave two babies and then have another?” Her mother was fiercely, miserably accusing.’ Lessing’s own explanation was and bizarre. ‘I believe it was Mother Nature making up for the dead... Besides, I wanted another baby. I yearned for it. I was at the mercy of her own poorly understood compulsion, so than ever as she tried to find her authentic self. Her instincts, or the experience of thinking and writing serious fiction about inequalities of power, were covertly working on her side. When Peter was born, something seemed to click into place. The new baby was ‘easy going and pleasant.’ ‘I was in love with him,’ she wrote in her memoir, in a way that seems a thoughtless repetition of her abandoned children. One thing seemed to make a difference: she had discovered Dr Spock and the idea of feeding on demand, to her mother’s insistence on the timed feeds of Truby King had been punitive to her when nursing her first two babies. Now, on demand, to her mother’s outrage, to her own exhaustion, feeding was a dialogue with her child, not an act of oppression.

Finally at the end of 1948 the official papers arrived, permitting Doris and Gottfried to leave South Africa for England and then to

made that Doris would sail to London ahead with Peter she carried the manuscript of the novel that she had fragmented and frustrated fashion, between the demands of her mother, and her wide circle of political acquaintances would make her name.

What she did not know, in her elated escape to London, was heading for a decade of single motherhood. Of all her situations might seem on paper the worst of them all, scraping a living whilst bringing up a son alone. But later she would claim it saved her. Although she finally sent Peter to boarding school twelve, those interim years saw her stuck to her writing out of necessity. She could not go out and party and find new love more disastrous marriages. She was obliged to commit herself to fatigue and loneliness. It is not certain whether Peter was a mother that textbooks idealise, but it was these years of apprenticeship that transformed Doris Lessing from a naive girl into a phenomenally successful writer.

When she arrived in London, Doris Lessing sold the manuscript of her first novel quickly and easily to the publishing house. *The Grass Is Singing* was the novel that had been written long and hard for her sense of a true self, that came out of her hatred and resentment at the injustices she had suffered as a child, and which she saw mirrored in the cruel country of South Africa where native 'children' were oppressed by a harsh and authoritarian authority. In that shared suffering she had found her strength. The great audacity of her novel was to speak of racial prejudice from the white oppressor, to make the ugliness and the injustice of the apartheid bar stand out starkly.



Cover and author photo from first British edition of The Grass is Singing
via dorislessing.org

She had been warned over and over as a child against black men and one true story had stuck in her mind: a white woman had been brutally murdered by her black manservant. Her memory provided the opening of her story: a (fictional) newspaper report of the death of Mary Turner, a white farm hand of her manservant, Moses. The opening chapter takes place in the shocked aftermath of the discovery of Mary's slaughtered body. Tony, a recent arrival at the farm who is learning about colonial stewardship, is dumbfounded by the attitudes of the men on the scene: the police sergeant and Charlie Slatter, his neighbour and a farmer of the rich, efficient and brutal type. The men have more contempt for the victim than for the killer. Tony knows a black man will always kill if suitably provoked. Tony wonders about the truth of the situation as he sees it: that Moses and Mary had a strangely close and complicit relationship. But he comes to a realization in the silences between the words' that he must never give his testimony, because it opens up possibilities that cannot be understood by a colonial mind. He understands his own social survival

would have to adapt himself, and if he did not conf
rejected: the issue was clear to him, he had heard the
used to our ideas” too often to have any illusions on the
is understood that Mary nagged her servant and he kille
rest of the novel returns to the beginning of Mary’s stc
unspeakable, complex truth.

Mary is an indigenous white whose parents belonge
echelons, her father a harmless, useless drunk and her
woman who treats her husband with ‘cold indifference’
‘scornful ridicule’ in the presence of her friends. Mary is
mother’s orbit as her unwilling confidante and escapes
Doris did, to an office job in town. Here she lives
contentedly in a sort of arrested development, feeling
her parents die, until one day in her 30s when she overk
gossip of her friends at a party. They poke fun at her gi
make snide remarks about her unmarried status, and s
‘Mary’s idea of herself was destroyed and she was not f
herself...She felt as she had never done before; she wa
empty, and into this emptiness would sweep from 1
panic’. It is enough to propel her into the arms of the fir
He happens to be Dick Turner, a cautious, uneasy man
town and only feels comfortable on his beloved veld. F
been farming in a small, unprofitable way, loving his lan
nothing more than meagre self-sufficiency. It has rece
him that a woman about the place might be nice; some
and support him, and to boost his wavering morale.

What follows is the slow, painful and inexorable failure o
Mary is left to fend for herself in a tin-roofed shack, p
heat and half-dead from boredom. Dick, meanwhil
money away on overly optimistic schemes – pigs, turkey
which fail gently. Dick longs for love but is too isolatec
caught up in his own foolish schemes and ventures to
she needs to be happy. Mary can’t assert herself agains
small-mindedness, her energy ebbing away as she real

in a situation designed to drive her crazy. It is all too childhood, and their relationship starts to mirror that of Mary is capable and intelligent; if she believed there were to be had she would work hard for it. Instead her feelings towards fury and contempt, which she then has to work because it is unbearable to admit they are wrong for each the ability to change.

Mary's emotions are vented on the succession of black household without her even fully realising it. She is a neutral submissiveness, which she reads as shifty dishonesty the lack of relation between them an uncomfortable marriage with Dick. The servant is 'only a black body bidding' which angers her even more. When Dick falls she is obliged to oversee the men on the farm and the e her into a vicious bully – her fear and insecurity, her claustrophobia channelled into an acceptable outlet. When he insists on fetching himself a drink she brings her whip down rather than bear his disobedience, and several months horrified when Dick brings the same man to the household servant.

Mary and Moses now begin a psychological dance to torment each other. The scar of the wound she inflicted reminds her of her mistreatment of Moses, a crime she cannot admit then she would have to unpick a whole series of feelings even more unbearable truths. And so her anger and hurt inwards instead and she becomes terrified of him. Moses and his blank, neutral servitude becomes tinged with a curiosity, contempt, his own unresolved anger. As it intensifies Mary's 'feeling was one of a strong and irrational uneasiness and even – though this she did not know, was rather than acknowledge – of some dark attraction.' Mary's fight in her own mind and the narrative shifts to a different Now we catch glimpses of her allowing Moses to help her rest, and buttoning her dress when she gets up again

relationship, it is untenable. Unable to tolerate the situation, Mary sends Moses away, knowing he will return to kill her.

Doris Lessing had taken all the ugly, entrapped, rageful relationships she had experienced – her mother and her father, her mother and her son, her mother and her old Mrs Mitchell and her son, herself and Frank – and distilled the awful essence from them. What she learned from *The Grass Is Singing* was that any relationship based on submission was doomed to disaster for all parties involved. The dominant had to rule so absolutely, the submissive was crushed, that no full humanity was available to either. They were locked in airtight roles, waging a futile war to maintain a status quo that damaged and reduced them both. On one side was pride and contempt, on the other resentment and bitter self-loathing. Compassion and sympathy – love itself – had no room to breathe. The space to nurture joy and pleasure. The complex reality of life was lost, and in the absence of that true self, perversity reigned. She had witnessed it and she had lived it, over and over again. She understood that thwarted people lived stubbornly, pleading with others for the things they didn't want, seething against the things they did. Her unholy triangle of Dick Turner and their houseboy, Moses, provided a psychologically brilliant diagram for how the catastrophe unfolded.

Doris Lessing would go on to write more detailed novels about her upbringing and early marriages in Africa. But *The Grass Is Singing* was the one she wrote as she waited impatiently to leave because she knew that was hopelessly wrong about her life. It was the one she struggled to put her false self behind her and find a way that corresponded more accurately to her genuine desires. For the rest of her life she could be shockingly lacking in self-awareness while it was a strategy that she never abandoned for its use. It was a strategy that was great. But when she wrote this first novel she was trying to be as truthful as she knew how. She had done 'unforgotten' in order to win herself that freedom. And in the shift from

another, in that new relationship she forged with her thi seem to break free from the tyranny of motherhood th her for so long. Right back at its origins, the imbalance of the mother's breast, and the consequences could l colonised nations. She believed she could mother differ mother, and in doing so she would break a vital chain chain that kept all slaves in their place.



Notes on Sources

All the biographical material in this essay is drawn from magnificent volumes of autobiography, *Under My Skin* (1994) and *Shade* (1997). The story I have picked out here represents a tiny wealth of incident and insight that the books contain, for they are what we expect from her, wonderfully wide-ranging, brutally honest and so I warmly recommend them.



Victoria Best taught at St John's College, Cambridge for 13 years. Her books include: *Critical Subjectivities; Identity and Narrative in the work of Marguerite Duras* (2000), *An Introduction to Twentieth Century French Literature* (2002) and, with Martin Crowley, *The New Pornography in Recent French Fiction and Film* (2007). A freelance writer since 2005, she has published essays in *Cerise Press* and *Open Letters Monthly* and is co-author of a book on crisis and creativity. She is also co-editor of the online magazine *Shiny New Books*. <http://shinynewbooks.co.uk>

Of Beginnings and Endings: Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer

Essay — Patrick J. Keane

 No Responses

 2017, August, Essays,
NC Magazine, Nonfiction



For Doug Glover

When Doug wrote to me this morning, to announce that he had “decided to cease publication” of Numéro Cinq and to start a “new life,” he added two points. The first was, of course, effacingly untrue: “Maybe I’ll try to become a writer.” As you know, that attempt has long since been an actual and significant achievement. The second remark was both truthful and encouraging: “I’m not gloomy or regretful.” Considering what he has done over the past half-dozen years—making available a treasure trove of poetry, art, and critical commentary, and bringing together a vibrant community of writers and artists in this warm place—neither Doug nor the rest of us have reason to be gloomy or regretful. Quite the opposite.

I believe that the cliché that “All good things must come to an end” has its origin in Chaucer’s great 14th-century narrative poem “The Knight’s Tale.”

Criseyde. As it happens, that five-book masterpiece is complete long poem, and, for all its tragic love-story, it d either its author or the poem's hero "gloomy or regretful." last aware of everything, Troilus ascends to the eighth spheres, from which celestial vantage point he looks down and "laughs" at all that "cannot last." But Troilus's laugh disdainful; from his observation point in eternity, he see perspective, and knows that in his mortal ending there is c

Numéro Cinq will survive in its own, secular, version of c said at the end of his announcement, "All the pieces we've stay up on the internet." No new issues will be added, but disappear." The magazine's temporal ending coincide ending beginning, its internet afterlife. By way of valedict to dedicate to Doug, in admiration, affection, and gratitude on beginnings and endings. In truncated form, it was pres 4, as a talk at the eighth Mark Twain Quadrennial Confe where Huckleberry Finn was completed in 1885, precise after Chaucer published Troilus and Criseyde.

Pat Kea

The beginnings and endings of all human endeavors are writing of a novel...and, eminently, the finish of c

John Galsworthy, *Over the River* (1933), 9th & final nove
Saga

In *The Pound Era*, Hugh Kenner introduces T. S. Eliot in an odd way: “Elegant, shy from great sensitivities and youngest of eight children, he came, by way of several A a birthplace by Twain’s Mississippi in Twain’s lifetime.” on to note, Eliot’s was “a family of some local prominence moreover, with the Massachusetts Eliots.” Of course his deep and distinguished roots in England, in East Coker and, when young Eliot left Boston and Harvard for then London in 1914, he rapidly became, in manner, drawn more English than English, certainly more English than A Sam Clemens of Missouri had reinvented himself as “Mark Twain, world-traveler decked out in that iconic white suit, s Missouri, the American who, along with Henry James, r reinvented himself as an Englishman, became “T. S. Eliot who, in 1928, pronounced himself “classicist in literature, politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion”; affected a disaffected accent that caused an annoyed Robert Frost, in that dismiss him as a “mealy-mouthed snob”; and took to rise on the anniversary of the Battle of Bosworth, in medieval III, whom Eliot, Shakespeare notwithstanding, considered English king.^[1]



T. S. Eliot in 1923

Equally worth noting, however, once he was established as a prominent literary figure with a comfortable income, Eliot made two trips to the United States. After a visit in the late autumn of 1950, the latter became part of his routine, “a regular event” in the final third of his half of his life. There was, as Peter Ackroyd observes in *Tom Eliot*, “a sense in which he was returning home.”^[2] Eliot’s first visit in 1950, not to his own St. Louis and Twain’s Missouri but to New York, where he visited, along with relatives, old friends Emily (who had preceded Eliot’s first wife, Vivien, as a romantic interest and never succeeded her) and Djuna Barnes (whose lesbian novel *Lulu* Eliot had admired and shepherded, delicately edited, through publication in 1936). Novelist and translator Willa Muir, who also visited him at the time, reported: “Tom Eliot is much more human here than in London. He was less cautious, smiling more easily, spontaneously.”

enjoying the teasing he was getting from Djuna,” in who seemed to have shed some English drilling and American.”^[3]

Eliot may have “become more American,” in part, because he wrote an Introduction to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* like “most of us,” Eliot suggests early in that Introduction “never became in all respects mature. We might even say that the adult side of him was boyish, and that only the boy in him, that was adult” (322). In the transformed Eliot Willa Muir described we may have not only a man loosened up by the liberating as Ackroyd suggests, filled with memories of his own childhood “to be wished for although lost and gone forever” (301-2).

Willa Muir’s observation of the American humanizing priggish Eliot in 1950, her refreshing account of his boyish enjoyment, may indeed remind us of the Huck Finn he had been writing about. That relaxed pleasure might also have been rummaging among his unpublished papers in the Bodley Library, that Eliot confided to Ezra Pound in 1961 that he had only two happy periods in his life. The last was during his marriage, to Valerie. The first, he said, was “during his childhood boyhood that may have been glimpsed, in part through *Huck*, by the adult and successful Thomas Stearns Eliot (as world-famous as Mark Twain himself had been), returning to lecture and see his sisters.



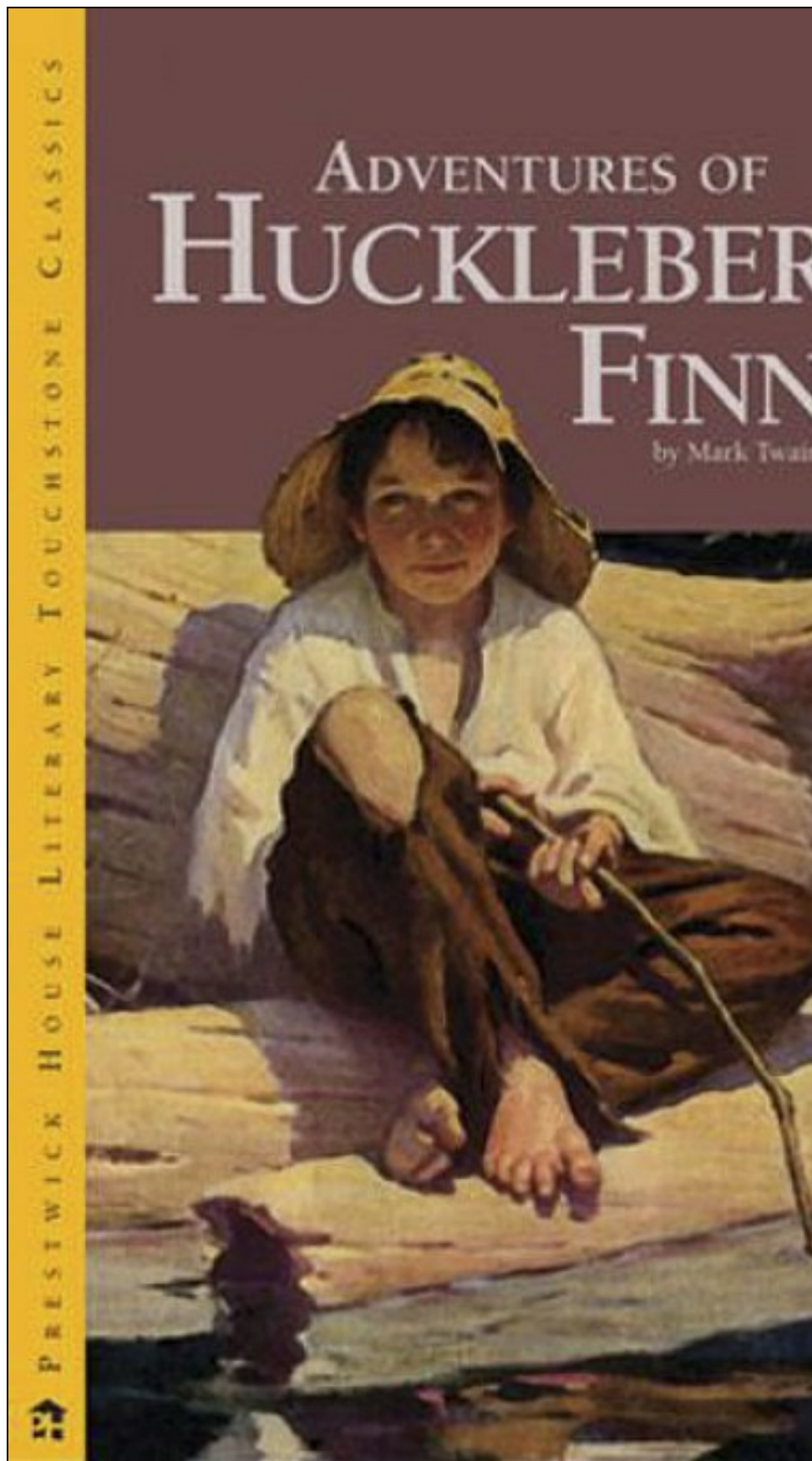
Young Tom Eliot

Huck's impact would have been all the more powerful since, as we see in the second paragraph of his Introduction, the "unsuitable" by his strict parents, was kept from him and he was "only a few years" prior to writing the Introduction to *Huckleberry Finn* the first time, and in that order, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* (321). Eliot perceptively saw Mark Twain as a "compulsive, applause-seeking, and Huck, "indifferent" to fame and success; and he may have had in mind his own situation as a public figure in describing Mark Twain as a man who "sought approval, and reputation, yet simultaneously "resented" his integrity" (322).

But there are two interrelated problems with this 1

between Huck and Eliot's inner boy. The first is that Ackroyd quotes from Eliot's Introduction (the impossibility of Huck or the river having "a beginning or end") may render a defense of the much-disputed ending of the novel. Eliot calls *Huckleberry Finn* "one of the great works of art," among which he numbers *Huckleberry Finn* much more than the author could have been aware of. He says that what seems to be the rightness, of reverting at the end of the novel to the mood of *Tom Sawyer*, was perhaps unconscious art" (326).

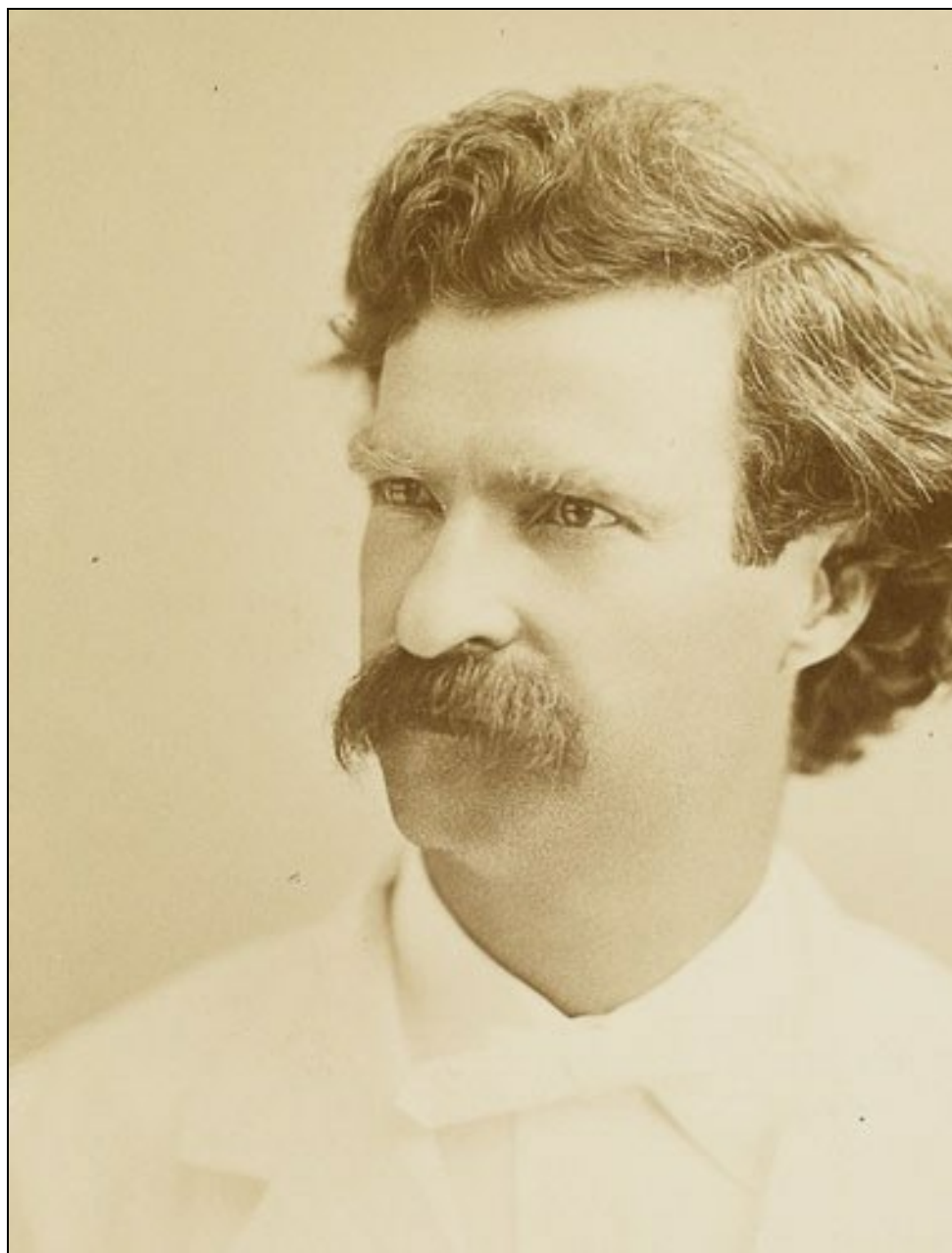
One can agree with Eliot that for Huck "neither a tragic nor a happy ending would be suitable" (327), and that no "book ever written more certainly with the right words: 'But I reckon I got to head out on this territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to civilized me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before.'"¹ His repeated insistence on the "rightness" of the novel's ending, and his so-called "evasion" chapters, to the mood of *Tom Sawyer*



2.

Eliot's final formulation—"it is right that the mood at the end should bring us back to that of the beginning" (326) is particularly appropriate to Eliot, as poet and as man, or to Mark Twain.

famously came into the world, and left it, with Halley's Comet streaking across the sky, than to the conclusion of Twain's novel. Eliot enacts that rondure; and his own ashes rest in the Parisian suburb of Saint-Michel's, East Coker, in Somerset, the place of origin of his family. Centuries earlier, his ancestors had emigrated to America. A memorial tablet circumscribed by the opening and closing lines of "East Coker" (1940), the second of *Four Quartets*: "In my end...in my end is my beginning." But to apply, as Eliot does, the circuitous journey to the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to identify the flaw in Mark Twain's masterpiece and to endorse, in the end, the regression that betrays the boy's instinctive and unarticulate commitment to freedom. For most readers, the principal theme of the book, even if it takes the limited form of "free and easy" down the river" on the raft, "free and easy"—Huck's a freedom in harmony with nature, in contrast to corrupt and violent societal violence, malice, and vulgarity exhibited in the shore.



*Mark Twain in 1882, two years before publication of *A
Huckleberry Finn**

The second, and intimately related, problem is that privileges *rondure* above almost all else, seems less “*freedom*”—embodied in, and symbolized by, Huck and Jim’s ultimate goal (Eliot does mention, as an illustration of the controlling power of the River, that “it will not let them go where Jim could have reached freedom” [325])—than the supposed coming-full-circle structure of the novel. As a non-specialist, I am unfamiliar with details, I am generally beginning with James M. Cox as early as 1966, followed by readings in 1991, by Victor A. Doyno and Richard Hill—many sophisticated post-Eliot defenses of the sustenance of *Huckleberry Finn*.^[5] “But”—to quote Huck himself reject

of Chapter 3) the early fooleries of Tom Sawyer (as I wish his later Gothic grotesqueries at Jim's expense at the Ph for me I think different."

I'm hardly alone. As early as 1932, in *Mark Twain's A DeVoto*, the scholar-critic whose professionalism n Twain's scattered papers, said of the ending of *Hucklebe* whole reach of the English novel there is no more a chilling descent."^[6] The landmark attack on the ending of the wake of the publication of both Eliot's and l introductions to popular editions of *Huckleberry Finn* and immensely influential essay, Leo Marx took issue major critics and men of letters, arguing persuasively th critics see the problem as one of form," it is the content, farcical tone and the disintegration of the major characte so many readers uneasy because they rightly sense th the significance of the entire novel."

This is no minor matter since, as Marx forces us to ending "comprises almost one-fifth of the text." For M of the book's audience, if not for its author, whose experi made him more realistic about racial matters), the novel formal unity independent of the joint purpose of Huck yearning for a more affirmative conclusion to Huck's purpose" are bound to find the ending—in which subservient to Tom Sawyer and Jim is reduced, as a antics, to a caricature of a slave—particularly egregiou stress of both Trilling and Eliot, in particular their defens comes at a considerable human and ultimately aesth register the pressure of historical realism, but, for M others, myself included, the movement of the novel, ho into a serious moral world is betrayed by the return buffoonery and cruel slapstick at Jim's uncomplaining ex

Eliot should have known better. In his Introduction, sir best illustration of the relationship between Huck and Ji

conclusion of the chapter (15) in which, after the two separated in the fog, Huck in the canoe and Jim on the raft, “on impulse of boyish mischief,” persuades Jim for a time to dreamt the whole episode. Heartbroken at the “loss” of Jim, weeping “thankful” tears to see him back again, Jim realizes what actually happened, the trick Huck has played: “En all y’bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. He is *trash*; and trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de face. It en makes ’em ashamed.” It was “fifteen minutes,” Huck says, “I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger, and I warn’t ever sorry for it afterwards neither.”

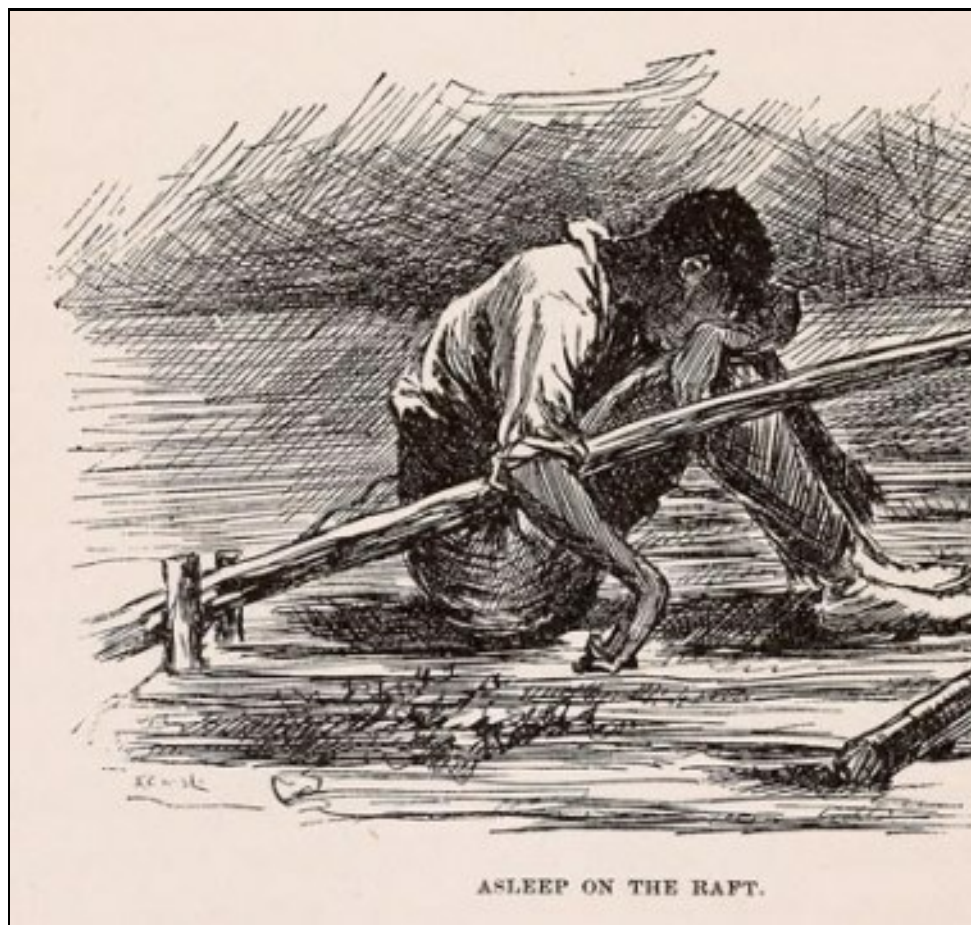


Illustration by Edward W. Kemble from first ed., via Univ

Aware that the passage had been often quoted, Eliot quotes it not only because of the obvious “pathos and dignity of the scene,” but because of something often “more even more profound: the “pathos and dignity of the scene reminded so humbly and humiliatingly, that his position was not that of other boys, entitled from time to time to a privilege that he must bear, and bear alone, the responsibility of

Given that insight, it is all the more painful that Eliot : accept Huck's resubmission to Tom Sawyer's leadership protracted "practical joke" at Jim's expense in the final celebrating those chapters' "rightness"—all under the a a reversion at the end to the novel's beginning, even to *Tom Sawyer* rather than of Huck's own book.

To embrace as "right," even "inevitable," the "Ev: violates the integrity of Huck's own maturing char instinctive alliance with Jim ("They're after *us*") to h "awful," decision, in Chapter 31, to defy the law and "morality" rather than betray Jim. Having just written Watson, revealing Jim's capture, Huck, as we all reme letter in his hand: "I was a trembling, because I'd got to betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute my breath, and then says to myself, 'All right, then, I'll tore it up.'"

Whether or not he recalled that Huck had earlier cho: "bad" rather than the "good" place, providing Tom Sa Eliot says not a word about this crucial decision. That se since, as epitomized by his reading of the fog episode, E the "kinship of mind and the sympathy between the boy negro fugitive from the injustice of society." He even that Huck would be "incomplete without Jim, who is alm creation as Huck himself," and that "they are equal in d Earlier, in the context of praising Twain's pivotal decisio person of Huck," Eliot adds that "the *style* of the book, w of Huck, is what makes it a far more convincing indict than the sensationalistic propaganda of *Uncle Tom's* (But just as he forgets that, unlike Twain's, Stowe's no when slavery was still an issue,^[8] Eliot is silent about willingness to "go to hell" rather than turn Jim in as a run can imagine the conservatively religious Eliot resisting th as hyperbole, sympathetic or blasphemous, even sayin and recurrent formulation of Huck's (repeated in Chapte

that was one “too many for me.”

3.

Eliot was of course impressed by Huck’s demotic descriptions of the Mississippi, its majesty and movement, its power and thematic unifying force: “It is the River that voyaged Huck and Jim,” the River that “separates them....Recurrently, we are reminded of its presence (325). Eliot had personal experience of the power of the evoking that power in his Introduction, Eliot refers to “The Eads Bridge,” the river-spanning steel structure which, unlike “could resist the floods” (325). Two decades earlier, Eliot’s interviewer that, as a boy, “the big river” made a “deep impression on me; and it was a great treat to be taken down to the Eads Bridge at the time of its 1874 opening the largest ever built—in flood conditions a useful reminder of Hugh Kenner’s emphasis on Eliot’s reading of Twain’s Mississippi in Twain’s lifetime.”



*Eads Bridge, St. Louis, Missouri, between 1873-1909, courtesy of the
Public Library Digital Collection*

In a much later interview, referring to the “sources” of his work, Eliot said that, “in its emotional springs, it comes from America.”

referring less to American literature than to American lo
and language.^[9] In 1953, Eliot noted that in *Huckleb
Twain*

reveals himself to be one of those writers, of v
not a great many in any literature, who have di
way of writing, not only for themselves but for
place him in this respect, even with Dryden and
those rare writers who have brought their lang
and in so doing, “purified the dialect of the tribe

These linguistic observations had been anticipated in
Finn Introduction. “Repeated readings of the book,” s
confirm and deepen one’s admiration of the consiste
adaptation of the writing. This is a style which at the pe
America or in England, was an innovation, a new discove
language.” Other novelists had achieved “natural spec
particular characters, “but no one else had kept it up th
of a book,” and flawlessly: “there is no sentence or phras
illusion that these are Huck’s own words” (323).



That last point is, Huck himself might say, a bit of a “strange” twist. The history is wonderfully recast in his own terms, the unknown knows more than seems plausible about British and French history. To mention Hamlet’s soliloquy, as rendered by the rapsodist, might be added that, in terms of Eliot’s own poetry, despite these insights here, while he may have purified the dialect, it seldom varied from his increasingly British-inflected diction. There he could not catch the working-class vernacular of the pub-scene of *The Waste Land* without the help of his wife, who was attuned to “lower-class” speech. Eliot never approached the linguistic innovation of Mark Twain in *Huckleberry Finn*. A serious literary achievement was reserved to William Carlos Williams, who, in admiring the brilliance of *The Waste Land*, deplored its cultural impact. In his *Autobiography* (1951), written three decades later, he registered the shock of *The Waste Land*, Williams described it as a “great catastrophe” that “returned us to the classical moment when I felt we were at the point of escape to... a new art form” (164). Though it took years to come out from under the Eliotic rock, eventually Williams emerged as the most fulfilling Whitman and perhaps Twain, achieved a distinctive American poetry employing colloquial speech, and so became more influential to generations of American poets, more influential than Eliot.

To return to Twain’s masterpiece: Eliot had asserted that in “the writing of *Huckleberry Finn* Mark Twain has done what which, when treated with his sensibility and his experience, is a great book: these two are the Boy and the River” (320). “The spirit of the River,” and we “come to understand the River through the eyes of the Boy” (325), whose human voice is the unifying element as the River. Considerations of style and content shift attention from the river itself to the life on the raft that is possible for that boy and for Jim; and to the language, the vernacular he invents for Huck to express his love of the river. The vi-

novel, early in Chapter 19, precedes the intrusive arrival of the “Duke.” The days and nights, Huck tells us, “slip by like a dream, and the water is so clear and smooth and lovely....you see the mist curl up off the river, and the east reddens up, and the river, and then from across the woods a breeze springs up and comes fanning you, so cool and comfortable to smell, on account of the woods and the flowers,” though there is also the rank smell of dead fish; “and next you’ve got the sun and everything smiling in the sun, and the songbirds just



Illustration by Edward W. Kemble from first ed., via [Univ](#)

Two paragraphs later, our attention is turned to the river, and some seemingly casual but in fact rather profound cosmological/theological speculation: “It’s lovely to live

had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we us backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether or only just happened—Jim he allowed they was mad they happened; I judged it would have took too long to Though far more cheerful than the author of *The Myster* Twain's other late, dark fables, Huck seems as mu agnostic as Mark Twain. And he is a loner. His compani however warm, is temporary, ultimately unsustainable. notes, "alone: there is no more solitary character in fict as suggested by this passage, stressing chance rather th Huck—while he believes in providence, heaven and he riverine or celestial. He has, instead, his alert sen intelligence, even something of Coleridge's "sha imagination," made flesh in the incomparable language Mark Twain.

4.

To re-focus on the second of Eliot's two elements: If gives the book style," it is "the River" that gives it "form, "great book." Eliot contrasts Twain's Mississippi to Conrad, who, in *Heart of Darkness*, constantly reminds u and terror of Nature, and the isolation and feeblenes unlike Conrad, who remains always "the European o tropics, the white man's eye contemplating the Cong gods," Mark Twain "is a native, and the River God is hi native that he accepts the River God, and it is the subjec gives to Man his dignity. For without some kind of God, very interesting"

At this point (325-26), agnostic Huck and agnostic Tw pushed offstage to make way for theistic T. S. Eliot Christian believer, who has, nevertheless, more than a f about animistic River Gods. "The Dry Salvages" (1941) f

“I do not know much about gods; but I think that the
brown god...” This poem, the third of *Four Quartets*, is
England Coast, but its opening movement summons up,
River” section of Hart Crane’s *The Bridge*, Twain’s river,
as Eliot notes in his Introduction to the novel, “the Mi
book only after its union with the Big Muddy—the Miss
specifically “Southern” muddiness of the river in “The
becomes uncomfortably clear in lines 117-18: “Time
time the preserver,/ Like the river with its cargo of dea
and chicken coops.” “Cargo” casually evokes the comme
slavery, the antebellum world of the *Adventures of H
and, like the more notorious “spawned” and squ
“Gerontian” (elevated, more than forty years later,
uppercase), the dead “negroes,” tossed in with cows and
are, if it is not too politically correct to note, subordinat
status.*

This is hardly the place to relitigate Eliot’s anti-Semitic
legitimately wonder if, despite his expressed admira
Huck’s equal in “dignity,” the apparent indifference
implicit in Eliot’s endorsement of Twain’s final chapters
to do with vestigial racism. We were alerted to Eliot’s ea
the publication, in 1997, of notebook poems written wh
twenties, especially the scatological and racist doggeral
a sexually well-endowed Negro monarch, attended by a
a “hardy” and “playful lot/ But most disgusting dirty,
featuring an imaginary interview with Booker T. Washin
titled “Up From Possum Stew!” or “How I Set the Nigge
unfair to saddle the mature poet and critic with ribald
intended to be published; and, as we have seen, th
offensive or racially insensitive, quite the opposite, in v
say of Jim in the Introduction to *Huckleberry Finn*. But re
Eliot might wonder if it is possible that, in making the c
the final Jim-imprisoning chapters of Twain’s novel, Elic
1950, still less than passionately interested in setting Nig



Illustration by Edward W. Kemble from first ed., via [Univ](#)

To return, with relief, to the River: it is always capitalized, personifies and deifies the powerful, all-controlling Mississippi. Huck, “the River itself has no beginning or end. In its beginning it is not yet the River; in its end, it is no longer the River.” Having many headwaters, it “merely disappears among its deities.” For the people who “live along its shores or who commit their lives to its current” are all subject to its flow, “the River gives the best of itself for the River, the book might be only a sequence of adventures with a happy ending” (327). In the finale, Jim is revealed as free, and Huck has \$6,000 to fund his next adventure, in the last chapter. But Eliot had earlier said that it would be “unsuitable” for

either “a tragic or a happy ending.” And in the worst read Eliot may have decided that the novel’s Evasion chapter *whole*, not only illustrate rondural “rightness,” but concluding.” If so, he would seem to have adopted the : Sawyer, who thought keeping Jim locked up the “best fu his life,” and hoped to delay his escape indefinitely (Chap

5.

Since Huck, like the River, “has no beginning and no end” “only disappear.” And, Eliot adds, crucially and disappearance can only be accomplished by bringing f performer to obscure the disappearance in a cloud of (327). But the more-than-whimsical torments inflicted following the “rules” of Romantic escape-literature, spiders, and rats, a menagerie that kept the terrified since “*they* never slept at one time, but took turn about” all of this, though he occasionally offers practical sugges the more absurd of his friend’s literary fantasies, Huck authority.

The only time he is seriously critical comes at the very k Tom, yet to work out what will become his ever- “escape” plan, agrees to help save Jim. Huck merely wai mum and not let on,” but “Tom’s eye lit up, and he sa steal him!” An outlaw at peace with his own decision, Hu discover that Tom, a mischief-maker but a “respectable’ law-abiding community, is more than willing to help was,” says Huck, “the most astonishing speech I ever bound to say Tom Sawyer fell, considerable, in my es couldn’t believe it. Tom Sawyer a *nigger stealer!*” (Ch when Tom belatedly reveals that Jim has already bee Watson’s will does he regain full respectability in Huck’s

If, despite his development in the course of the novel, Huck is the South, so, and even more obviously, is Tom. Whatever Tom's behavior, we join Huck in admiring his friend's fealty as well as his "pluck." The gunshot leg-wound he received in his escape, welcomed by Tom as a badge of honor, might have been fatal if not for Jim's help. And yet an inescapable premise of the novel is the ordeal to which Tom subjected Jim is that its victim is a subhuman. The real villain is not Tom, but the society that makes him. "All Europe," Conrad tells us in *Heart of Darkness*, "is the making of Kurtz"; so all of the American South—though not by Conrad-admirer and Missourian T. S. Eliot—contributes to the making of the racially-unenlightened if far more appealingly. Nor is Huck untainted. ^[12]



Tom, Jim, and Huck — Illustration by Edward W. Kembl
via [University of Virginia](#)

This recalcitrance of history is often lost in our tendency American love affair with the film *Casablanca*—to lavish book which for many, especially in the wake of Ernest encomium in the mid-1930s, is *the* “great American *Huckleberry Finn* in the context of longstanding American debates, historicist critic Jonathan Arac registered the novel while also pronouncing it mean-spirited. Writing warned against that overloading of the book with cultural led to feel-good white liberal complacency regarding race called the “hypercanonization” and “idolatry” of *Huckle*

flaw-forgiving development contributed to, Arac claims. Introduction to the novel.

Four years later, Ann Ryan examined Arac's view that *Huckleberry Finn* has an undeserved reputation as somehow resolved the issue of racism. In Ryan's conclusion, Arac's argument, critics since the 1940s, "self-conscious an interpretive process, "equated Huck with tolerance with Huck, and America with Twain." Reacting to the criticism" of the "white literary establishment," Arac's *Huckleberry Finn*, not as healing or resolving, but "as a mean spirit and Twain as an author with a hard heart." (Ryan) Ryan argues that "it is precisely this raw quality, in both author," that makes *Huckleberry Finn* a valuable asset in discussions of race, in general and in the classroom. Ryan persuasively that, while Twain "evades political entanglements," "intentionally represents this evasion"; and that while Twain "operates on racist assumptions and privileges," it illustrates how both are expressed and defended."

Finally, there is the matter, troubling to so many critics, of Twain's love of humor and penchant for practical jokes. Registering Twain's even for rascals, Ryan reminds us that, sickened by the feathered plight of the King and Duke, Huck concludes it a dreadful thing to see. Human beings *can* be awful creatures (Chapter 33). Ryan then notes the final ironic twist: that Twain's novel with a grotesque practical joke at the expense of a 'human' being in the narrative." Regarding Twain's humor as a possible "imaginative response to our racism," Ryan concludes: "If Twain imagines that race is a joke, he does not mean that we should not take it seriously."^[13]

We can appreciate this multilayered irony. And, whether opposed to common readers like it or not, there *are* significant moments in the final chapters; Twain himself certainly played out Tom's shenanigans in his stage performances, and did

he always sought. Still, it hurts to see Huck subordinate whose extravagant, ever-proliferating machinations so long (as virtually every critic, even Eliot and acknowledged), sometimes becoming as tedious as the cruel. If Jim, reduced to a minstrel character, even emanates out in Aunt Sally's calico dress, doesn't mind, we especially since Tom withholds, even from Huck, the fact already been legally freed.

Mark Twain may have been "cheating" at the end, famously charged in nevertheless celebrating the novel as all modern American literature."^[14] Or Twain may have worn the customary cap and bells simply because he remained troubled as he had been from the beginning of his work in 1876, as to how to bring the journey of Jim and Huck to a conclusion. Or he may just not have been able to resist even one as strung out and seemingly anticlimactic as *Escape*, especially not if, as Ann Ryan suggests, it constitutes that Twain "does not necessarily mean we should not take

One can understand how, psychologically, back in the South under the sway of a self-confident leader like Tom, an adolescent boy, even one as experienced and practical-rational might regress, and the mores of Southern society reassert themselves. But, all joking aside, realism needn't require farce, spectacle, but finally dehumanizing. Eliot insists that the chapters of protracted buffoonery at Jim's expense (with the painful Huck, who hasn't a malicious bone in his body) have the "art," whether conscious or "unconscious." I remain unp

Like the issue of racism itself, the debate over the *Huckleberry Finn*—a debate as protracted as Tom's *plans*—may be ultimately irresolvable. But those on either side of the debate can only regret that T. S. Eliot—given his immense reputation in 1950, as world-famous poet-critic and Nobel laureate—has his imprimatur on what seems to us an error. As Eliot has

1928, re-invented, now more English than American, royalist in politics and Anglo-Catholic in religion; he was a poet, a critic, a literary theorist, and a literary scholar. He was called (in the subtitle of the book in which he made his announcement) “style and order.” In the case of the *Huckleberry Finn*, in mounting so eloquently a roundabout and venerable symbol of the ouroboros, Eliot in effect committed Twain’s original sin against his own (or Huck’s) book—not only, as Eliot himself asserted by emphasizing the unity of the River, a series of picaresque adventures, but so as to make it a *bildungsroman*. In defending what many readers considered indefensible, the formalist Eliot himself paid too high a price in order to have Mark Twain’s novel, to quote one of Eliot’s phrases, “end where it began.”^[15]



Illustration by Edward W. Kemble from first ed., via [Univ](#)

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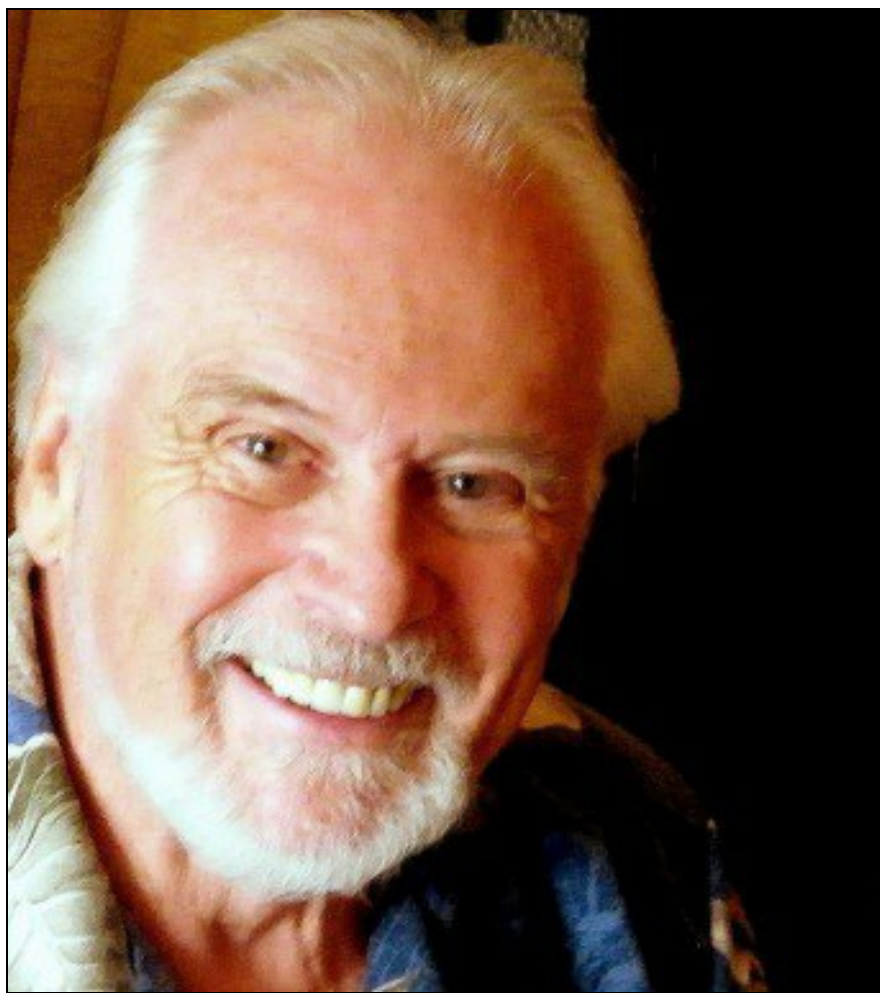
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Numéro Cinq Contributing Editor **Patrick J. Keane** is Professor Moyne College. Though he has written on a wide range of topics, special interest have been 19th and 20th-century poetry in tradition; Irish literature and history; the interactions of philosophic, religious, and political thinking; the impact of Nietzsche; 20th century writers; and, most recently, Transatlantic studies; influence of German Idealist philosophy and British Romanticist writers. His **books** include *William Butler Yeats: Contemporary Literature* (1973), *A Wild Civility: Interactions in the Poetry and Thought of W.B. Yeats* (1980), *Yeats's Interactions with Tradition* (1987), *Terrible Joy: Joyce, Ireland and the Myth of the Devouring Female* (1988), *Coleridge and the Politics of Romanticism* (1994), *Emerson, Romanticism, and Intuitive Reason: The "Light of All Our Day"* (2003), and *Emily Dickinson's Approving God and the Problem of Suffering* (2008).

1. On Eliot's wearing of the white rose, see Joseph Epstein, "An American Style," in his *Narcissus Leaves the Pool*, 241. For Eliot see *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, 4:286, n.1. Eliot's own famous passage about his stance in literature, politics, and religion—a cause of consternation among modernist literati—occurs in the Preface to *Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order*.
2. Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 274-75. Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot: A Life*, 301.
3. Muir, *Belonging: A Memoir* (London: Hogarth Press, 1968); see Ackroyd, 301.
4. The edition Eliot introduced was published in 1950, by The Oxford University Press in London, and Chanticleer Press in New York. It is reprinted in the Critical Edition of the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Twain's quote parenthetically from this edition.
5. In *Mark Twain: The Fate of Humor*, Cox insists that, since Huck has never been a "quest," but an "escape," a flight "from tyranny toward flight toward freedom," his behavior in the final chapters is "not a flight and that, while *we* "become uncomfortable when he submits to the role," Mark Twain knew what he was doing: "The entire burlesque is a revenge upon the moral sentiment which, though it shields the humor, ultimately threatened Huck's identity" (312). Two analyses of the ending appeared in 1991, the first by Victor A. Doyno, in an extensive study of the manuscripts of *Huckleberry Finn* in his book *"Huck Finn": Mark Twain's Creative Process*. In his 10th and final chapter, "Repetition, Cycles, and Structure," Doyno defends the novel, including the ending. In arguing that, "in a complex way the ending is aesthetically and thematically appropriate," he questions both the critical and genre-assumptions of those who want a *bildungsroman* series of "adventures." In establishing a strong contrary case against the critics put off by the novel's final chapters, he notes that, though "criticized" it has been, the ending "does resolve several problems, at least the issue of Jim, who is "decriminalized" (223-27). In his acerbic essay on critical "overreaching" in assaults on the ending of the novel, Richard Hill attacks Leo Marx and the critics who follow him. Hill, too, finds Huck in character in the final chapters. "To ex-

give up instantly both his ongoing personality and Tom Sawyer the epiphany aspect of his decision to tear up the letter to Moby-Dick the excesses of modern social-agenda fiction.” Nor, he argued, he was reduced to a caricature. (320, 323-27)

6. DeVoto, *Mark Twain's America*, 92.
7. Trilling's Introduction to the 1948 Rinehart edition was reprised in his *The Liberal Imagination*. Marx, “Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling, and *Finn*,” 329.
8. What Jonathan Arac has called the “hypercanonization” of *Finn* at the specific expense of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* began in the 1950s and has continued—despite praise of Stowe's novel by Edmund Spenser (*Patriotic Gore*, 1962), Ellen Moer (*Literary Women*, 1976), and Richard B. Sewall (1997). That Twain's novel, a “work of art” written well after the war, has been judged a more powerful attack on slavery than Stowe's, which appeared as a book in 1852, galvanized Arac into writing a reassessment and partial debunking of Twain's novel. One of the reasons, as Eliot's Introduction, which put the prestige of the “mid-century man of letters” and recent Nobel Prize winner on the side of *Finn* rather than the “propagandistic” *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as the “most convincing indictment of slavery.” This “mythicization of history” continues, “by which *Huckleberry Finn* gained the prestige of a classic despite its having been written at a time when slavery did not go unopposed and defended by no one, helped provoke me to this book.” *Huckleberry Finn: Idol and Target: The Functions of Criticism in Our Time*, 92-93.
9. Both interviews mentioned in these paragraphs are cited by Richard B. Sewall as a Product of America,” in Moody, ed., 24, 28. In the first, I interviewed by M. W. Childs, “From a Distinguished Former St. Louisan,” *St. Louis Dispatch* (15 October 1930), 3B. For the second, see *Writers on Writing*, George Plimpton, 110.
10. *American Literature and the American Language*, 16-17. Stéphane Mallarmé's imperative “to purify the dialect of the tribe” occurs in Eliot, most notably in the nocturnal encounter with the “familiar compound ghost” (mostly Yeats) in Part II of “Little Gidding,” the second section of the last and best of *Four Quartets*.
11. Eliot, *Inventions of the March Hare*, edited with scholarly thoroughness and annotated, copiously, brilliantly, and protectively, by Christ

12. We recall the opening exchange (Chapter 32) between Aunt (pretending to be Tom, and to have experienced an accident) “Good gracious! Anybody hurt?” “No’m. Killed a nigger.” “V replies this affectionate woman; “because sometimes peop Though admirers of Huck would rather repress the memor two-chapter stretch between the running over the raft by a the apparent loss of Jim (toward the end of Chapter 16), and in Chapter 18, when he is rediscovered by Huck (less emotio would expect, even though Jim weeps with joy). In the inter engaged in onshore adventures, has had not one thought o doesn’t know is dead or alive. This is troubling, whether we thoughtlessness to a Southern-inflected flaw in Huck’s char Mark Twain, guilty of episodic and careless plotting or to a s regarding offstage characters.
13. Ryan, “Black Genes and White Lies: Twain and the Romanc 170. For Arac, see n.8, above.
14. Hemingway’s hyperbolic but endlessly repeated praise/ cri *Huckleberry Finn* occurs in that half-memoir, half-fictional safari, *Green Hills of Africa*, 22. H. L Mencken was no less ef celebration of *Huckleberry Finn* (a book he read annually) a a masterpiece that soared in solitary splendor above all oth novels.
15. John Donne’s “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” conclu brilliant compass-image—lines addressed to his wife, who home while he was compelled to roam abroad: “Thy firmn circle just,/ And makes me end, where I begunne.”

Ode to Meaning, or The Joyful Apocalypse | The
Josh Dorman — Mary Kathryn Jablonski



Josh Dorman in his NYC studio

I have placed there a little door opening on to

I ha

I read Josh Dorman's works like a Mary Ruefle essay writes about a revelation she had and the connectic

for her in her essay "Someone Reading a Book Is a Sign of the World:" "I was reading the dictionary, where I came across the meaning of the word speculum: 1) an instrument in which a body passage for inspection; 2) an ancient mirror; 3) a compendium of all knowledge; 4) a drawing showing the position of all the planets; and 5) a patch of color on the wings of most ducks and some other birds." Ruefle assembles these to be discoveries, connections... that explode the day and the long years that have led to the moment."

Just so, artist Josh Dorman discovers a scrap, a tidbit, a something recognizable (or not) and turns and turns it in his mind, appropriating it in his collage/multi-medium works, into a drawing, layering, until it becomes more, becomes Other. The connections in his mind are revealed to him and/or us — or not, and the labyrinths open to some Home, or swallow us entirely blissfully.

Mary Kathryn Jablonski (MKJ): I'm very interested in how collage begins for you. Do images you find suggest a narrative? Do you use some images for use in collage based on the intrigue or beauty of the image for you alone? Do some images, which to the outsider might seem to have nothing in common, beg to be grouped with others? Do you picture files upon files named for various subjects in your mind, unlike in collage artist Michael Oatman's vast studio space, or do you have a lot of your sources. I'm most familiar with your paintings of birds, but you seem to be moving away from these a bit.



Camel Cliffs – ink, acrylic, antique paper on panel, 12 x

Josh Dorman (JD): I'm first struck by your mention of studio space. Picture my studio as more of a small cave filled with collections and piles of moldering detritus. Overflowing with hundreds of antique books and yellowing photographs, diagrams, ledger books, topographical maps, player piano rolls, and mostly textbooks. I use only printed materials from the pre-photography era: 1820s-1950s. They're categorized by subject: Engineering, Biology, Botany, Architecture, Ornamental Design, Structure, Human Anatomy, Geology, Geography, etc. It's

I still can't resist when I stumble across a crusty tome and realize not that the items are valuable, but that they contain information and knowledge that is outdated. Last summer I found a catalog that's eight inches thick, bound with rusty metal. I've been mining images from it all year. It moves me that a hinge and screw was rendered and printed so carefully by an artist whose name we'll never know. I see it as part of my job to give these drawings a new life.

Only once did I hire an assistant for a month to cut out c
my books. Though those categorized clippings serve
process now is more organic, and I usually cut out image
no set system for creating a painting (to be honest, I'm
that arises out of preconception).

A piece for me can take several paths. As you mentioned
beauty of an image can call out to me and I'll build a pain
good example of this is "A Knight Errant," where the
mentioned were the inspiration. In a clear case of pare
bodies around the faces I saw in the hardware. These
with pieces cut from a 1790s Italian architecture bo
reminding me of a childlike fantasy/delusion, I inse
mounted rider.



Knight Errant – ink, acrylic, antique paper on paper

I work in a subconscious state. A narrative may assert often, multiple narratives and connections emerge. You when you asked about images that beg to be grouped almost as if they're whispering when the pages turn. It's my formalist training or it may be much deeper roots need to connect forms from different areas of existence a rib cage. A radiolarian and a diagram of a galaxy. Flower scales. Tree branches, nerves, and an aerial map of a river about shifting scale wildly from inch to inch within the the reason I'm a visual artist is because it sounds absurd say in *words* that all things are connected.

As I write this, it occurs to me that most of my closest friends and novelists, who *can* do this with words. I recently commissioned version of "The Tower of Babel" for the Chabon. He's a "maximalist" novelist who takes dozens and generates stories within stories. I'm often inspired by Calvino, Richard Brautigan, and Li-Young Lee. I'm drawn *suggests* rather than prescribes. I'd say the same about Klee, Redon, Turner, Pinkham Ryder, Brueghel.



Tower of Babel (for Michael Chabon and Ayelet Waldman)
antique paper on panel, 48 x 38 inches, 2011

MKJ: Oh, make no mistake, your studio still sounds a lot many ways, believe it or not, as does your sense of preserving the past. Although I cannot speak for him, I mind me saying that. And his studio may have been vast not mean it was not also cave-like and jam-packed, sort of floor to ceiling. I love what you've just said about the writers, especially since you've included one of my favorite

see what you mean about generating stories within stories. Ruefle, Li-Young Lee is a wonderful example of one of those remarkable, unique associations. You've mentioned that you've titled a solo exhibition of your work in London *The Misty Sea*, a phrase found in the first few lines of his poem "Pillars of the Earth," superb examples of just such associations.

Li-Young Lee is also a perfect example of a poet for us here in New York because often, like Brigit Pegeen Kelly's, his poems seem to flow themselves over and over as they are woven, or as they are a form of meditation, just as I feel your artwork does in some way that at times are inexorably linked. Labyrinthine, they form a network of passages that could lead only to the next poem with no other possible exit. Take a look at "Words for Words for My Father," printed consecutively in *Book of My Nights*. I feel that too in some of your works, both within them, and when they are put together. Lee also judiciously and poignantly uses the titles of his poems, as I feel you do in your works, Josh, addressing the viewer and the viewer.

I imagine that once a work starts going for you it takes on a life of its own. Do you find this to be true — that what you had in mind for a group of images can end up being far from the direct intention and the piece eventually leads you? Tell us about some of the decisions that have taken you on. In this way, what has the act of making a work revealed to you? What would you be doing if you were not an artist?

JD: In the 90s, I would begin a painting by gluing down newspaper clippings and maps and letting the swirling lines guide my drawing. More often now, my works (especially the larger panels) begin with a compositional sketch, and maps are only used tangentially. My recent panels begin with a base layer of player piano sound that provides a tone, a history, and beautiful perforations that give the work a rhythmic structure. I then sketch forms quickly and lightly and begin the layering of paint and collage. I work on five or six panels simultaneously. Some emerge in a matter of days; others take months.

or more.

If any element of a painting happens too easily, I'm usually destroy it. Part of the reason I use collage is to resist control from the process. For the same reason, you'll see areas in my paintings where I've rested living plants or metal objects, poured ink and allowed it to evaporate. These "stain/splatters" feel like a natural phenomenon, outside of my self. I'm not giving over to Dadaist chance in my work. I need a certain structure. But within that initial framework, it's all improvisation.



*Night Apparitions – ink, acrylic, antique paper on dark surface
38 x 48 inches, 2017*

Looking at one recent piece called “Night Apparitions” is a bit about my process. This might sound laughable, but it's a minimalist work for me, since I managed to pare it down to a small palette and space. It began with a ream of rice paper I brought back from a trip to Taiwan. In this case, I broke my own “rule” by us

paper. Since the paper was lightly gridded or lined practice, I cut it into varying sized rectangles and soaked ink of different densities. My initial sketch had two essential elements: the central mountain form and the halo surrounded by expected multiple mountainscapes and horizon lines to suggest, in this case, the gradation of light to dark from the center outwards until the end. As soon as I'd add a new landscape element, I'd wipe it out with the light or dark. In recent years, I've been using various imagery (animal, vegetable, machine) that identifies as human-made. So, each hovering entity is a conglomeration – a hybrid form (located at 11 o'clock) contains human-made forms, and a faint hint of architecture in the contour of the mountain. I'm interested in the disconnection we humans imagine and reinforce between ourselves and other living things.

Here, I could go off on a lengthy tangent about the electricity of anger and ultimate despair I felt while making this piece, but there, and that may be why the painting is so dark. But I'm interested in artwork that illustrates or prescribes a path, and I'm interested in what each viewer will bring to the piece.

There are creatures that are buried under the pink haze of the black. Things that aren't visible to the viewer are still part of the evolution of a piece. Some detours and quirks — I cut out a seashell mountaintop came late to eliminate a silhouette, but "whole" birds also remained at the bottom, to ground the work and further call the reality into question (birds should fly). In most of my work, I suppose my goal is to generate a sense of an apocalypse. My dreams do influence my work deeply, and I'm interested in the association with Surrealism, most of which I view as non-literal.

It's a never-ending cycle, trying to understand the work without the process. In the same way that I don't like to interpret dreams, I don't like too much breakdown of my work. I need to know just enough to understand me, but not too much to remove the mystery. As George

“The only thing of value in art is that which cannot be explained. I was asked your question about what I’d be doing if not this, I’m not sure. I’m fascinated by archaeology and I began college as a psychology major, but I quickly realized that it was not for me. Frankly, I don’t want to be doing anything else.

MKJ: I appreciate that you say you’ve been trying to avoid being identified as only one thing. I’ve always admired this about your use of the written word as well: poetry whose lines slant in both directions, connecting them to the previous or following line, which can happen through carefully thought-out enjambment and punctuation (or lack thereof). I know that you say you value things that aren’t visible to the viewer, but if it’s crucial to the evolution of a piece, I couldn’t agree more. I think these are the *most* important aspects of a creative work.

Most viewers expect your collage pieces to be two-dimensional, but yet in your new works you are exploring depth as well, by painting on panels into panels and pouring in resin, at times in pools up to 1/2 inch deep with a watery shine difficult to reproduce in photographs. Is this a sculptural necessity? Do you see it going further?



Welcome to the Machine II – ink, acrylic, antique paper resin, 12 x 12 inches, 2017

JD: The poured resin layering is yet another manifestation of rule-breaking. While I have never been drawn to making collages, I am intrigued by creating illusions of depth, and in this case, I want to engage the viewer with a bit of tangible depth.

I've found in my artistic life that a medium or subject will find its way and only years later will it find its proper home in the way with the topographical maps, which lingered in my mind for years before I dared draw on them, and it was this way with resin, which I tried out twenty years ago and failed. I'll never be like [Tomaselli](#), with his resin-embedded pills and leaves left to be admired, but I'm after something different. In his collaging gorgeously rendered engravings, one rule

gimmickry with resin. Pour this glossy stuff on a child newspaper page and suddenly it looks luscious. I'm still with it, but it's incredibly exciting. I'd fallen into a rut for creating these space pockets is reinvigorating me. It has that play is crucial. Ha! Perhaps, I can also credit Trump to seek new territory. I suspect many artists right now making protest statements or constructing even richer worlds to.

MKJ: Yes, at a time when we could all use, as Mary Ruefle's *Sign of Order in the World*, we'll leave that struggle in more things that aren't visible to the viewer.

Your paintings are really multi-medium works that combine painting and drawing (and as we've said, now sculpture as well). How do these pieces differ in your mind from the drawings that you make, which to me seem very fluid and mystical way reminiscent of William Blake.



Wheels – graphite with antique collage elements, 10 x 2

JD: The graphite drawings are almost a form of meditation. In making them, I eliminate all questions of medium, layering. Even composition and subject matter disappear. I encourage a drawing student to do this, but these horizontal works emerge from the lower left and move eastward, without outline. I love the traveling journey aspect of Chinese scrolls. For me, it's a mysterious process and not usually

journey. I rub the pencil until shapes and images themselves. They are not sketches for the paintings. Their own.

MKJ: I am delighted to learn about this drawing process and find them as even more riveting. I hope you do not find the diminishment of your collages/paintings, but the drawing works I favor most. They are magical to me and to themselves, to this viewer at least, in perhaps the same manner in which they were created, which I find marvelous and compelling.

Although it took place awhile ago now, I do want to mention how I found your project for the [Memory Bridge Foundation](#) and the internal geographies and memories of Alzheimer's patients, moving and inspirational. Describe how this project changed you. Tell us how memory plays a role in your work and how you find that it does.

JD: The [Memory Bridge project](#) influenced me in a way I can't understand at the time. The obvious answer is that the project has its own memory: it's physically from another time and place. The images I use were created in a world without the ubiquitous internet, let alone computers and the thousands of images we're surrounded by daily. I'd like my work to feel like it's not of this time and place.

When I was commissioned to create the Memory Bridge project, I listened and sketched as six people with dementia were interviewed. I could see bits of memory coming and going, intertwined with the present, imagination, and chaos. Later, back in my studio, while making a "portrait" of one particularly unreachable person, I found myself in a mental state not unlike hers. It was liberating. I sat on the floor with my canvas and pile of papers. I began reaching for images in a frenzy of finding and pasting them down and drawing on top. This state of mind is where I try to be now when I work.



*Thelma, Memory Bridge portrait – ink, acrylic, antique paper
x 42 inches, 2006*

We can never be certain that we are communicating wavelength with anyone else. I trust in that lack of certainty. If people ask me what my paintings are about, I know they are not about nothing... I know, in fact, that they are about something very specific. But some people will embrace the ambiguity, and others will reject the work, needing a clarity and resolution I can't provide.

Josh Dorman was born in Baltimore, MD and lives and works in New York City. He received his MFA from Queens College, Flushing, NY and his BA from Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY. Josh has been the recipient of numerous residencies and fellowships including Yaddo, Art Omi, and the MacDowell Colony. He has been a visiting artist and lecturer at numerous institutions including Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY and Mass Art Program, Boston, MA. His work is held in numerous collections in the United States and abroad and he has exhibited nationally and internationally. In 2010, he completed a collaboration of seven animations he made with composer Ar

“[The Violin](#),” was released on DVD. Currently, Josh is represented by the [Koplin Del Rio Gallery](#) in New York City, [Koplin Del Rio Gallery](#) in Seattle, and [Koplin Del Rio Gallery](#) in London.


<http://www.joshdorman.net>



A gallerist in Saratoga Springs for over 15 years, visual artist **Kathryn Jablonski** is now an administrative director in holistic health. She is the author of the chapbook *To the Husband I Have Not Yet Met*, and her work has appeared in numerous literary journals including the *Beloit Review*, *Blueline*, *Home Planet News*, *Salmagundi*, and *Slipstream*, among others. Her artwork has been widely exhibited throughout the Northeast and is held in private and public collections.

Two Sound Fetishists | Short Story — Kinga Fab

 No Responses

 2017, August, Fiction,
NC Magazine,
Translation



Vibrato

I. Hidden in distortion

*B*ack into the body, may commotion reach her no people had disturbed her relentlessly. Bad mem —had showered her, even amid the strain of—in rhythm, sheer sound. Tension ever at the ready—read attuning to the other, conjuring up any of her own rhyt any sound she'd ever heard. That which it didn't con

she composed. No one knew of her rare ability; she knew well. The concealed sounds now began storming with them, at once. (Making their word heard?) A fine line through her. Perhaps her overblown need for a perfectly oversized ability to attune, was linked to her singular sounds. Effortlessly she assumed the—rhythm of the music when turning directly its way. She is in sound and she is in pain she is—as long as she might be. Yet another orgy followed her. She would have broken through her own skin for a complete commotion?! May nothing happen! “VIBRATIONS, MY LUXURY, MY VIRGINITY LOOSE HELP ME” she once proclaimed. This (grammatically unsound) catchphrase which back then was found also on pins, now came with the aftershock of the beat generation. And yet this—still—vibrated. Back then, everyone wore tight T-shirts and jackets emblazoned with words, wrapped snugly around their bodies. She should have bulged on the outside—now too. Caught up in conquering—those, she didn’t undertake, after all her operations—she was weary of those. No ambition, no action going forward, either. Because externals were a distraction for her at once, they were stuck in her—hiding her. No perspective. She’d become mired in authoritarianism. In a one-way communications blackout she’d been forced into self-pleasure—a self-pleasuring (art). The vibrations within her body were many. Sound or prosthesis? No longer did it matter. Nothing could be done with them. Her whipped-up body had become a source of unanticipated stimuli would one day cause its explosion. Her perpetual doubt about whether she lived up to her body, by not satisfying it, had now seen dubious proof. Her unique sounds had heightened to the extremes. At every source of pain all the more. Now she herself—putting into practice a performative act of naming—dubbed her unprecedented condition, which she was the first to suffer from, “ego-atrophy.” In the absence of use, personality fades away. Through sour

and so too it goes. In the meantime: totally tied up.) At her body slowly gobbled up her shrinking self, the ex out of shape. Having formed a parentheses, it was covering its once (already, then) perfect shape; deprived womanhood before it would deprive her of everything her shape and form had not overlapped, and so the gap did occur—there had always been some, and they re for voyeurs to peep through. She tolerated no eyes u being watched neither on the outside nor the inside; no upon her through the gaps. She wore a cuirass. No on in—there. Her onetime desire, *slow with the body*, w here in distorted form and late (in delay is the p whose?). In a distorted mirror, she seemed tinier. Her mouth—in parentheses; lying fallow (in reserve, word Doors and windows elsewhere: she had to fear in two far as goings-on were concerned, mornings were more now. The house made a big hoopla over her. It screwed one turn, every sound. *He abounds at my expense*, she *thyroid minds*. Can the soul be seen, or only if its wanting to injure an ear, she all but thought this only *smoothly turning screw; my soul—a metabolic disor* really did think, but—still not injuring an ear. A great silent bouts of being left alone, that she was. But, bew degree of her exploitation (the screw is turning), still centrifugal force (*away from the centre!*),^[1] words mouth: “I will not share in your degree of noise.” Th even think. The late declaration of her stifled demand extruding from the mouth—derailed at once: lost in commotion. Thus she was compelled to keep sharing. that every ringing noise pulled in. There was always ready. Continual reinforcements: lines waiting. Her organs cramped; as with heart and soul. Her love org; interlock, her working organ went kaput. If a glance cou couldn’t. By now her hearing had turned cocky: she

between people based on sound alone. The difference was big—only a matter of who happened to fling off which his/her own sound back upon her. Of a certain ringing to know: surely is to be continued. (It was.) She didn't stop it. She switched to her own volume. She opened all her ears to noise and leapt into their dizzying waves.

(Optional musical closure, cadence)

A singular life—she chose: for it a singular—death. Always from her own source, and so on her own she would have—rather, she didn't wait it out.

“Shall I regard you as absence?”

“Feel free.”

Never had—the scene and in it, her: simultaneously—given that she really had gone away, by homeopathic noises. She couldn't stand them, so with them she killed her neighbor, who was not at all rhythmically attuned to her, unwittingly in this. Or too attuned? With noises he had introduced an unknown partner into—into—suicide.

II. Bestial rutting; the tension degenerates

Out of the body, ready for noise at once. Bad memories of him; his were that too.

(He was quite willing to forget anything.) Not even busy was one. Most of all he liked to make noise (bent on it, from the mouth), but he irritated (tormented, molested) too. His act hit home patient at once. He screwed onto noise. He kept screwing onto himself, too, until—he became stayed that way. His body, prancing as a sheer exclamation.

priapism?) but feeling no desire (a priapism indeed) co
to swarm and to occur! Out and in all directions; dispe
which way. And in fact: he was constantly flickering and
he scattered—compliments—properly. His tool graduall
him. His glance—blocked—an operational territo
communication got stuck there—all of them. He knew r
it came to noise level. His hyperactivity—mounting to th
as could be. He partook of—singular pleasure. Becau
could not be riveted, he always adhered to other loos
cementing.) As a signal of his recognition, at such times
sorts of clicking and knapping sounds. He always pulle
constantly subservient threads—rotating them often. Th
silent partner. When he managed to tie himself down, he
lots of it. With them—totally tied up. Thus it was h
(became free). Time having passed, his mood having be
public disturbances became routine. He organized
mornings (orgies) for himself. He could cause a ruckus
the house. Spirits set ablaze—the screw turned high
(Squeezed, pressed, screwed.) Passions set ablaze awai
subservience (in bonds). His whip was frayed, while he v
his own. The chronic, pleasureless swelling of his n
aforementioned priapism)—has entered into a
hypertrophy. His onetime desire, *May a woman never*
now reversed, distorted, late: *Someone deflate me alreac*
entire crowd. His great big ego ensured a spewing of ple
So much spewing that it almost emptied out, cut to shre
object, the method changed along the way, but—not th
the ear with noise, for he is a homeopathic—murder
naked torsos didn't bother him. Everyone gathered, link
public in line (canon fodder). But then one day (ma
mortis?), silence fell. His singular mercilessness (exqui
toward noises intensified to no end. He rang the doorb
neighbor. *A door can't stand in the way*, he though
intoxicated by this repository of burgeoning opportu
himself on all potential sources of noise, among them hi
was just starting to give an overdose of sound,

(Optional musical closure, cadence)

and who, in the end, died multiple deaths. Opening the :
(like turning on the gas on a stove), she overdosed on
medication); jumped (as from the fourth floor); and—d
waves. Finally, she exploded (like a gas tank) due to th
inner and outer pressure.

I. and II. Homeopathic murderer and suicide up and away for good .

The bodies, and those who take pleasure in them (bot
could get mixed up and away even when exploding (m
tight space) but no later than when plummeting. And in
organs and events are similar, after all, as is, indeed
homeopathy—though in their lives they could have dor
by chance—they were preparing to plop into a black h
yielded many of them everywhere. Nearing the ev
current immediately sucked everything in. No goal was
one been, the black hole would have gobbled it up, too. l
(would have) received it nor he who (would have) k
Enormous anesthesia, as if after orgasm.

—Kinga Fabó, translated from the Hungarian k

Kinga Fabó is a Hungarian poet, linguist, and essayist. She is the
books. Her latest, a bilingual Indonesian-English poetry collect
(Poison), was published in 2015 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Fabó's p
included in various international journals and zines, as well as
Some of her individual poems have been translated into Persia
Tamil. One of her poems, "The Ears," has six different Indonesian
six different authors. She has also written an essay on Sylvia Plat
she's done, Fabó has always been between the verges, on the v
extreme. Kinga lives in Budapest, Hungary.



Paul Olchvary, a native of Amherst, New York, spent much of his childhood in Hungary and has translated numerous Hungarian novels into English. He has published with publishers as Simon & Schuster, New Directions, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and Steerforth. He has received translation grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and Hungary’s Milan Fust Foundation. The founder of New Europe Books, he lives in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Footnotes (returns to text)

1. *Desire, never yet so fast; maybe—because it is—already it is a*



1.

When I think of art I think of an uncluttered space
which doesn't last, of course, and so call it inspiration.

And inspiration, well, it comes and goes, doesn't it.

Little sister, arranging
bottle caps. Little brother, back

and forth you run
from one side of the pier

to the other.

Oh young mother
pulling your thin dress

to yourself
tighter

and tighter.

When I think of the artist I think of an attentive state of mind
criteria. No possibility for criticism.

It's risky business. There's no help anywhere. The intent is
Whether looking outward or in, what one discovers is
predicted nor controlled.

Paying attention is making oneself present, no matter what.

Immediacy is inspired. Presence is inspired.

Children, without having to think about it, make their presence
presence possible all the time. Children pay attention.

Children and artists see with their minds.

Thinking is a secondary experience. The critic's pincer-grip is the
greatest symbol of secondary experience.

For the artist, giving up thinking is called discipline. (For the critic,
giving up certainty, comparison and judgment is called discipline.)

For the artist, wasting time, which the French performance artist calls
discipline.

“Those who depend upon the intellect are the majority.”
minimalist painter, Agnes Martin. “Those who depend upon the senses
alone are the few.”

Agnes

Here comes perfection. When I think of art I think of my arm around it. Around my mind, I mean.

You may as well give up judging what you've done.
young, the grey sun stayed that way.

Here comes an iron shade, partly down. Their head

Please don't print the negative. I love their shoes. I
light is.

2.

I am taking a walk in the city. I am enjoying a meal. Some
bath. I have just spilled my cup of tea. The cat steps into
pencil rolls off the desk. I'm working! I'm working!

Two thousand five-hundred years ago, on her birth island
in Sicily, the island of her exile, Sappho sang a lonely lyric

for I would not be like these
toys

but may it happen to me
all

Artwork is not similar to something else. Artwork exists
tone, as mood, as state of being. All inspired artwork ex
The insistence on art as reality when you're doing art,
art.

messenger of spring
nightingale with a voice of longing

sang Sappho,

and gold chickpeas are growing on the banks

spangled is
the earth with her crowns

In response to an interviewer's question, Sir Lawrence

always thought that my job was to make people believe that
actually taking place.” Exactly. The insistence on art
you’re doing art.

And is it not the same when you’re experiencing art? Who
experiences one of artist Joseph Cornell’s luminous, in
the reality is clear.

Postage Stamp with a Pyramid

The lonely boy must play quietly because his parents
after lunch. He kneels on the floor between their
matchbox, inside which he imagines himself sitting
In her sleep his mother has uncovered her breasts
The car, for that’s what it is, is moving very slowly
wheels are sinking in the deep sand. Ahead, nothing
and more sand.

“Shush,” says the father sternly to the desert.

In Cornell’s world, Charles Simic could see with his mirror
himself. Visceral, palpable, the whole narrative of a man
driving a matchbox, of a child as voyeur among adults, or
in a desert with “nothing but wind, sky, and more sand.”

Children and artists are happiest when they experience
they seem to be identified.

In solitude, children and artists can be happy for hours. And
recognize themselves in the artwork of others, they do
they don’t remember it, it will never become part of them.

“An inspiration,” wrote Agnes Martin, “is a happy moment
by surprise.”

3.

It would take an epic psychological study to explain why

toward any given poem or story, or film, or painting, or sculpture, or any other kind of art objects we make. And that study of human history, so drenched in blood—would be flawed.

The filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock investigated the possibility of a belly button removed because he found it annoying and unattractive.

He was a neighbor and frequent dinner guest at the home of a woman whose name I don't remember when she was a young girl in London. And one night when Mr. Hitchcock arrived with a sack of bones, he scattered them on the table every day. Different kinds of bones, actually, which he placed on the table. And he took note of each one, as each one was scattered. And he heard the sound of a human bone breaking in his mind. And in every scene he would shoot the next day.

Alfred Hitchcock feared above all, by his own admission,

I don't know why or how some of Hitchcock's films have become a part of me.

A lovably shallow Cary Grant being subdued by feelings.

A quietly intimate and refined Tippi Hedren's emotions exploding into outrageous catastrophe.

An aristocratic Ingrid Bergman shunned by society for love.

Or the voyeuristic James Stewart and me sitting in the dark watching the lives of neighbors.

Or James Stewart and me following the otherworldly Kim Novak and falling in love with her, and with her descent into madness and killing it.

I watched a recently restored copy of *Vertigo*, and, as I did after such way-cool experience, I got up the next morning

again. And I carried it around with me for some time, I already inside me, like an homage. And so I stole the title

Vertigo

Only one is a wanderer.
And when she was sad she'd go into the street to be
Two together are always going somewhere. They lie
cypress,
next to a bird. I imagine the sky. It fans her mountains
and waves. She'd left some small town
where they used to make tires.
Stories are made out of stairwells
and rope. I'd been interrupting for years and didn't
know it. This old park. The dark hatchery. Workers
throw down their poison at dawn.
Not everyone can be described. It's perfectly
natural. If she's thinking about love
does she break down

the door of the bedroom. Of course not. Not public
speaking. To the left there's a sofa. We all lived in r
That's how it goes with subject matter.
Nude figures in profile
floating among palm trees. The idea was touristy,
like a postcard. I was given a small auditorium. I w
rush hour. I write down everything as I forget it,
especially at night.
I lock the door from the inside.

4.

My studio is a mess:

Piles of papers. Piles of books, and open books, every
rocks, a toothpick dispenser in the shape of a crow
Incense ash. An apple core alongside a stained demitasse
and hand cream, pens and ink brushes, a gyroscope. Fre
15, and 20 pounds. Boxes of discontinued Polaroid film.
glass tumblers, and blood-orange toffee. Cobwebs. Snor

And I like it, just writing it down. It serves no purpose, but

“All you have to do is write one true sentence,” as Hemingway wrote one afternoon in a café in Paris trying to be a writer.

A thousand years ago, Sei Shonagon, an empress of the court in Heian-kyo Japan, was given a pile of paper with the shape of a “pillow.” A thousand years ago one of the first records of Sei Shonagon’s *Pillow Book*, was listed by subtitle:

“*In spring, the dawn,*” as in “when the slowly paling red is tinged with red, and wisps of faintly crimson-purple cloud the sky.”

“*Markets –*”

“*Peaks –*”

“*River pools –*”

“*Things people despise –*” as in “A crumbling earth wall. Famous for a reputation for being exceptionally good-natured.”

“*Infuriating things –*” as in “A guest arrives when you are too busy to do, and stays talking for ages.” Or “to wit, noisy and boisterous in their cups, groping round insistently with a finger or wiping their whiskers if they have them, and offering sake cup on others. ‘Go on, have another!’”

“*Rare things –*” as in “A son-in-law who’s praised by his mother-in-law. Likewise, a wife who’s loved by her mother-in-law.” “A pair of tweezers that can actually pull out hairs properly.” “A cat without a single quirk.”

“*Refined and elegant things –*”

“*Insects –*”

I encountered Sei Shonagon’s *Pillow Book* while researching

“The Art of the Journal,” that I thought to offer because I could not forgive myself for never journaling. But there they were, in the garage, even the Moleskines on this very desk, tens of thousands of various sizes comprised almost entirely of what other people had said or written.

“You can always come back,” sang Bob Dylan, “but you can’t always go all the way.”

“Your shadow is—how should I put it? Faint.” wrote Harriet Beecher Stowe

“Everything terribly,” wrote Guillaume Apollinaire.

“In poker, it’s better to tell the truth. The other people are bluffing,” spoke Jean-Paul Belmondo in Jean Luc Godard’s *Le Breton*

“Doing almost nothing,” Marina Abramovic said, “is the most powerful performance, because your story’s gone.”

“I’m not going to get my Coca-Cola,” yelled Louise Brooks when her make-up is wrong. I am afraid to be interrupted. I am afraid to remember what I intended to do.”

“Let us take down the old notebooks,” wrote Virginia Woolf, “we will all have...and find...beautiful things.”

Among the pages of Joseph Cornell’s journals, tens of lists of things

January 4, 1943

Into town late – bank – down to Lexington and 24th Street. A large assortment, Mexican midgets, dancing bear, Hungarian folk art, a set of Naples litho. colored. Over to Madison Square Park. A swirl of snow suddenly came covering everything and then letting up before the short bus ride to Penn Station. Unexpected illumination and evocation of the circumstances with feeling about Madison Square, Pajarito and Matta. 2 hours. At Reading Room then to Penn Station 1:42. Interest in Savarin Restaurant seen through windows in waiting room, etc.

Things to Do

Balance checkbook.
Rid lawn of onion grass.
“this patented device”
“this herbicide”
“Sir, We find none of these
killers truly satisfactory. Hand weed
for onion grass.” Give
old clothes away, “such as you
yourself would willingly wear.”
Impasses. Walk three miles
A day beginning tomorrow.
Alphabetize.
Purchase nose-hair shears.
Answer letters.
Elicit others.
Write Maxine.
Move to Maine.
Give up NoCal.
See more movies.
Practice long-distance dialing.
Ditto gymnastics:
The Beast with Two Bucks
and, The Fan.
Complain to laundry
Any laundry. Ask for borrowed books back.
Return
junk mail to sender
marked, Return to Sender.
Condole. Congratulate.
“...this sudden shock...”
“...this swift surprise...”
Send. Keep. Give. Destroy.
Brush rub polish burn
mend scratch foil evert
emulate surpass. Remember
“to write three-act play”
and lead “a full and active life.”

And music.

Always music in the other room.

And the songbirds there, too. *The Beep tones*, Slick a
Nicaragua, and Ella and Louie, from South Africa. And t
Cesar, a jazz-cat god, the Caruso of the household, belt
after another.

Like waking up in the morning in a pensive, sour mood
King Baby,” they’re singing, ever since the light came.

Today it’s Coltrane, *A Love Supreme*, replaying itself over
over again long into the afternoon. Long into evening.

Part I: Acknowledgment

for John Coltrane

We spin
and we deny it.
We speed through space and
hold our ground. We stand firm.
We sprawl out
in the shadows of cobwebs
and swim to the surface
and toast again the staggering
stars and the planets
and our getting away from it all.
We’re nobody’s business—
and the truth,
the truth’s wooden-clock voice
actually lives here.

When the night sky
for example is spattered with paint
and the forest is reduced
to a few glowing windows
and a curlicue of smoke
above a train,
I was at once inside
our cabin after all, and frankly

sick of friends, though
not the close ones,
of people, maybe,
not you.

Like something in the body
reflecting streets and chance interiors
and yelling Silence,
Camera,
your heart, your
family, inappropriately,
your clothes
against my idiocy,
not you.

6.

Upon a mountain top in China, sculptor and performer
Zhang Huan piled five naked bodies, his own included.

He recalled the ancient idiom: “There are always high mountains
behind a high mountain.”

“When we left the mountain,” he said, “it was still the same
Without change. Life is full of limitations and failed attempts
to make the mountain higher but our attempt was futile.”

In Canberra, Australia, Zhang Huan gathered a hundred
large number of naked volunteers.

In New York City, a few months after 9/11, Zhang dressed
a body in a hundred-pound suit of beef. “In New York
bodybuilders who, for long periods of time, do training to
test their bodies’ capabilities. They have every kind of vitamin
supplement imaginable..., oftentimes it’s more than their hearts can

Zhang Huan invited three calligraphers to write the story
of his family on his face. By evening his face was ink-black.

disappeared entirely, and nobody could tell the color disappeared. As if he no longer had an identity.

The calligraphy told a well-known story, and its moral is person is determined, there's nothing that he or she. Other characters included predictions of one's fate. For symbolic meaning of the shape of a cheek bone and a mole.

Zhang Haun hung on to the roots of a tree rubbed with flour, which the dogs devoured greedily.

*

The Belgrade-born performance artist, Marina Abramovic, "wanted attention to my work, but much of the attention was negative."

"The photographs of me naked in Galleria Diagramma were scandalous."

"What if instead of doing something to myself, I let them decide what to do with me?"

"In black trousers and a black t-shirt, behind a table of objects: a hammer, a saw, a feather, a fork, a bottle of perfume, a rose, a bell, scissors, needles, a pen, honey, a lamb bone, a mirror, a newspaper, a shawl, pins, lipstick, sugar, a pistol. Various other things. And a pistol, and one bullet lying next to it."

"For the first three hours, not much happened...somebody gave me the rose, or drape the shawl over my shoulders, or kiss me."

"Then, slowly at first, and then quickly...the women in the room tell the men what to do to me, rather than do it themselves. Later on, when someone stuck a pin into me, one woman (who was not from my eyes)."

“After three hours, one man cut my shirt apart with the s
it off. People manipulated me into various poses.”

“A guy took Polaroids of me and stuck them in my hand.’

“A couple people picked me up and carried me around.
a table, spread my legs, stuck the knife in the table close t

“Someone stuck pins into me. Someone else slowly po
water over my head. Someone cut my neck with the knife
blood.”

“There was one man—a very small man—who just sto
me, breathing heavily.”

“After a while, he put the bullet in the pistol and put the p
hand.”

*

Holding You Sober Close to Me

The city’s
behind us. The water’s calm. There are many heads
above the water.

Show me a victim and I’ll show you
a bathroom—a man slathered
in honey, a carpet

of flies.

Orange blossoms
and salt. Even the creepy doorman
tastes the salt

in the air.

If a child’s brought in, well, that’s something
different. We don’t want

our animals

to suffer.

You're the last person on earth
prepared for the death

of your parents.

7.

When I think of art I think of beauty.

It's where the eye goes, autonomously, on its merry way
and artists the message is about happiness—all across the

Beauty is writing itself, and I'm always one step behind
throat is. And the tear.

“And to speak again of solitude,” wrote the poet Rainier
becomes increasingly clear that this is fundamentally not
we can choose or reject. We are solitary. How much better
that we are thus, to start directly from that very point....”

“For all the points upon which our eyes have been accustomed
will be taken away from us, there is no longer any nearness
distance is intimately far....”

“A [person] who was taken from his study, almost without
and transition, and placed upon the height of a great mountain
would be bound to feel something similar: an unceasing
parallel, an abandonment to the unutterable would all
him.”

Immediacy is inspired. Presence is inspired.

Being this close is everything. It's a discipline, like a child

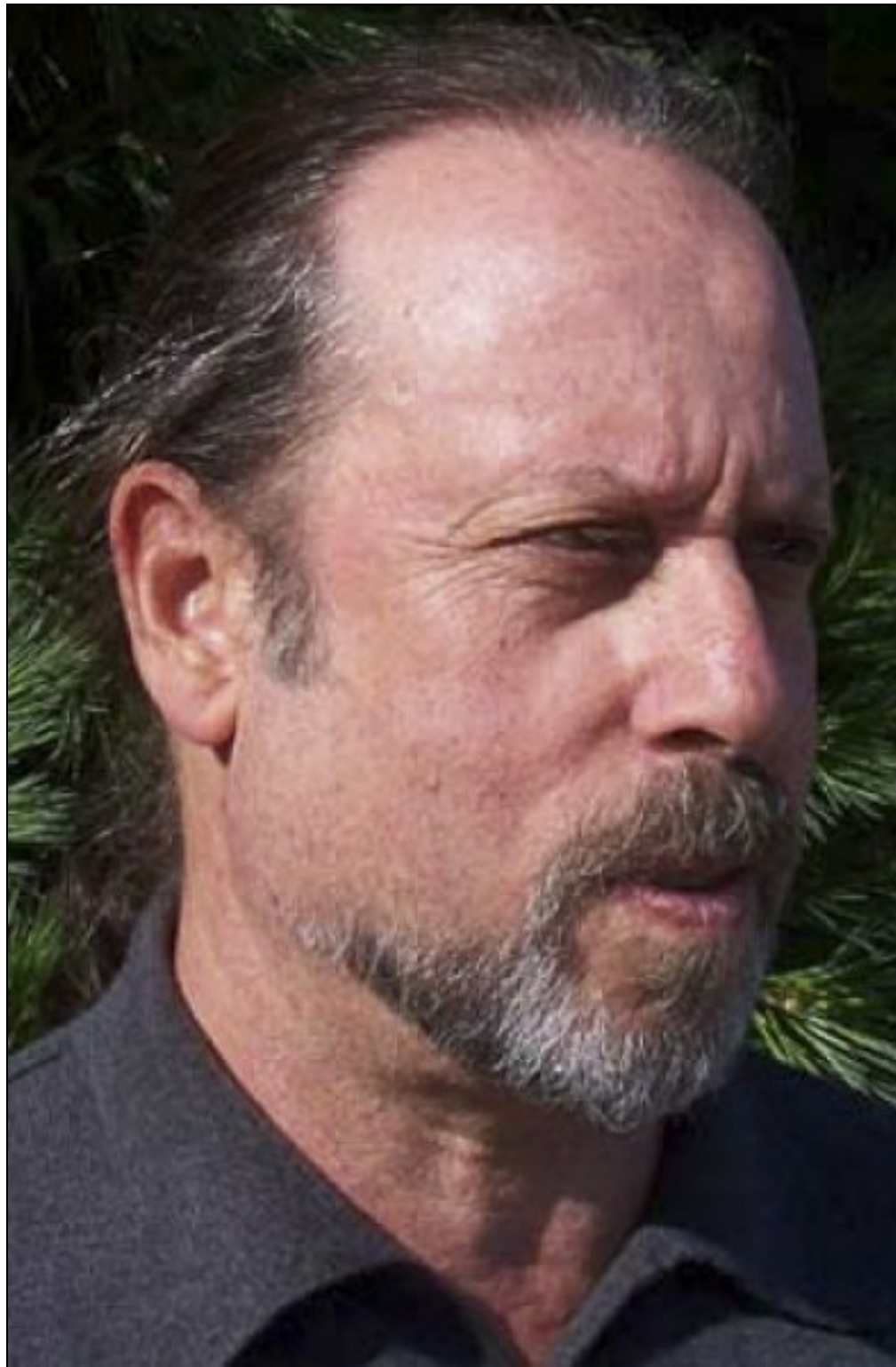
You're the Rub

Murmured in loneliness, round and round.
Let's not go inside. The cliffs drop off, and the ocean
a friend—on the boardwalk
enough people alone
have died.
So relax, take your feet
off—nobody's
missing. There are many parts
of the mind. On that old
open day we let out our long green grass. A night's p
and you expected it
to be there.
You're the rub—the love
that loves the loves. I like especially the puddles
and your wire. I like your mud.
I like your part
of it.

Ralph Angel's latest collection, *Your Moon*, was awarded the Grand Prize. *Exceptions and Melancholies: Poems 1986-2006* received the Poetry Award, and his *Neither World* won the James Laughlin Academy of American Poets. In addition to five books of poetry, he published an award-winning translation of the Federico García Lorca *Poema del cante jondo / Poem of the Deep Song*.

1 Response

2017, August,
Memoir, NC Magazine,
Nonfiction



The Tin Palace was a seminal place for jazz in the 70s and many we today came up from the grass roots of that space. Paul Blackburn in the poetry world of that time. The essay doesn't belabor those focused on the mystery behind the history.

—Paul P

1. Intimations

Along with Dick Tracey's two-way wrist radio watch and Midnight's decoder ring, invisible ink highlighted the history of my Brooklyn boyhood. The idea that unseen words could be revealed on a surface with the heat of a flame held under the page was irresistible. I experimented with different solutions, like milk and turpentine, in an attempt to duplicate the process. Unhappily, little more than these experiments beyond the flaming napkins in my hand.

My fascination was ignited again during hormonal teenage years while cruising the beach that ran along the southern hem of Brighton Beach, an elevated BMT subway stop on Brighton Beach Avenue, a few blocks from the Gate. My crew roamed between the parachute-jumping area and the Egyptian obelisk from Luna Park, to the fourteen story Hotel Manhattan. Both loomed like thresholds at the edge of the known world. The haunting quality of the place was especially palpable in the Half-Moon Hotel, where Abe Reles, as FBI informant, was defenestrated by detectives, jumped or was pushed out the window on the roof. Reles had already brought down numerous members of the Mafia, Incorporated. His defenestration occurred in 1941, the same year he was scheduled to testify against Albert Anastasia. The hotel's history echoed that of Henry Hudson's ship, which had anchored nearby Gravesend Bay, hoping to find a short cut to Asia. The sight and smell of warm oiled bodies on the beach and the pressure of boardwalk, past and future pressed hard against the flesh.



Luna Park by Marc Shanker

Nowhere more so than at Brighton Private, a pay-to-
bordering Bay #1, one of fifteen numbered sandy plots :
Island peninsula. Brighton Private aspired to the kin
prized by the elite in Long Island or Atlantic City, b
modest basis of a daily entrance fee, as well as by subsc
who rented lockers by the season. It offered a poo
cushioned lounge chairs and a superior cruising ground
Those inside could come and go to the ocean throug
where the gate-keeper stamped the hands of me
waterproof mark visible under a black light.

My crew from lower Flatbush devised a strategy for er
beach. We put together enough money for one person t
into a bathing suit, and exit on the beach, his hand fre
validate re-entry. His mission was to reach the rest of u
sight, under the boardwalk, in time to impress the still w
hands. This was not without an element of risk. Just as

got smeared or devolved into a smudge. At one time or another I had experienced the humiliation of being unmasked by my friends and fleeing the consequences if caught.

2. The Call

Before I opened the doors of my jazz club, the Tin Palace rang a bell that raised the memory of Brighton Private. There had to be a way of marking the threshold between the space built so lovingly and the war zone outside. Bowery Street had been a no-man's-land inhabited by winos, fleas, and those who spilled out of the Men's Shelter on 3rd Street. Then there were the predators who preyed on them, the Alphabet City drawn by the monthly mailing of welfare checks and junkies looking to score. It was also a deep underground of creative energy. Artists' lofts lined Bowery all the way down to the Side, and jazz lofts seeded by musicians sprang up like mushrooms on the side streets. My partner and I staked out our territory at the Tin Palace on the corner of Bowery and 2nd, transforming the husk of a bar into an oasis. Our interior featured walls of brick under a pressed tin ceiling, an art deco mahogany bar, cocktail tables and a small stage for musicians. In the days that followed, I heard nightly improvisations that transported the room into another dimension, unfolding at the outer limits of the cultural mainstream where survival is often "writ in stone." From the start, I understood that such a space as we had created had its own rules and rituals, a way to make the mystery palpable to those who entered it. I settled on the idea of a sign that dipped in invisible ink made visible under a black light.



Tin Palace entrance by Ray Ross

In August, 1972 there was only one listing in the Manhattan Yellow Pages for Invisible Ink. I traveled up to 23rd Street and walked between Third Avenue and the tenement facing Madison Avenue, in the shadow of the Flatiron Building. An elderly male voice r

signal on the buzzer asking what I wanted.

I answered, "Invisible Ink."

The face that greeted me at the door at the top of six flights out the picture.

The Invisible Ink Man had been taller in his youth, his body bent at an angle that reduced him by a couple of inches. A clock face circled his head, and frown lines framed a kind but expressive face as though hinting at the unseen interior. He wore a white shirt with sleeves rolled up to his elbows and brown pants. The room was dimly lit, flanked by long tables cluttered with newspapers and magazines. There was a living space at far end, a round table with folding chairs, a couch behind it. He apologized for the adjustments, letting me know the obvious, that he didn't receive many orders these days. His face brightened, and he seemed to straighten up as he told him why I'd come.

"I can customize the stamp to your design," he told me, "do you have something in mind?"

I emphasized that this stamp would operate at the intersection of the two worlds, and wondered if something Egyptian, The Eye of Horus maybe Hermes's winged sandals that allowed him to travel between worlds. The Invisible Ink Man nodded, thoughtfully, but he didn't have had books of designs if I wanted to look through them. I mentioned that I wanted to reminisce, letting me know that his business had once been a big business. The call for his product had kept him busy with orders from all over the world. He had been a craftsman, reaching for the quality and power of his designs. Now, he was the last



Apollo pouring a libation to a blackbird

“Let me think about what I want,” I hesitated.

The Invisible Ink Man replied that would be fine. When I was in a bathroom I could use before I left, he pointed to a corner of the long tables. It was a small room with a pull chain that illuminated a veined marble sink and a vintage toilet with a wooden thunder box. Tucked behind the pipe leading to the toilet was a poster with the Day-Glo figure of a man half-way into a chair on the pull chord of a chain such as I held, spoke through a hole. “Goodbye cruel world.” I pulled my chain to the thunder box, and water from the tank above the toilet. The Day-Glo figure wondered if he expressed something unseen in the Invisible Ink Man what would emerge from my host’s interior under the appearance of a chair.

The Invisible Ink Man walked me to the stairs. He assured me that

back to him in time, he would make me a stamp for the a
me with a generous supply of ink in the invisible color of

3. Collapsing time

Walking on 23rd towards 5th Avenue, I stopped at an en
On another mission, a few years earlier, I had seen
Blackburn standing in that lot, head tilted, looking at son
caught his eye.

“There was a building in front of this one.” Paul said wh
“Sarah and I lived in it.”

“And now it’s gone.”

“I can still see the room where we made love, the
window.”



Cornelia Street 1922 by John Sloan

He stared intently, as though what he described was still space, time out of mind. There were few poets more alive to the sounds and feelings rising from a unseen source, images that came under the ultraviolet glow of his imagination. Paul re-visited the visible and invisible worlds, like Hermes, but wearing a helmet instead of a winged helmet. Through him I became aware of the world not only as art but as physics—or in the words of Erwin Schrödinger where *field precedes form*. His poems formed themselves like the incarnate nervous system of the experience he brought

design specific to it, but inevitable. Paul's fields in synchronistic, spooky action at a distance, while cleaving details. As he wrote in his poem "The Net of Place," *Th even if it is not my act / The hawk circles over the sea / My*

When I encountered Paul in the parking lot gazing at the which once contained the apartment where he and Sarah, had made love, I was reminded of the mystery that and his work, to which I aspired in mine: to capture in the patterns that are so immediately present to the senses, l of time as well. The net of place contains both visible worlds. Or, as Paul put it at the conclusion of his poem: *of its time / It is not the place goes away.*



Angel: New Orleans by Paul Pines

Clearly, Paul, who died in 1971, had also been my Invisib

My desire to realize the forms inherent in the fie
experience, moved me to ask him if he would write an
my first collection, *Onion*, forthcoming from Mulch Pi
encountered resistance from the literary gatekeepers. I
stamp my hand. I felt so much rode on Paul's blessing.

He wrote three introductions, which I rejected. Each c
what I had hoped for, something worthy of what I rea
counted on a certain gravitas that was not there. One of h
described me as a small man walking a large dog down
reveling in his world. It was full of an affection I didn't
The image of me as presented was accurate, even vi
glimpsed as much, but couldn't bear it.

Onion came out the year Paul died, 1971, with no introdu

Twenty years later, preparing to read at a tribute to Pa
Church, I searched his *Collected Poems* for a poem I l
about goats in the next field hobbled because they are ot
to catch, but remain "so quick, stubborn / and full of fu
me of Mallorca, where we had both lived at different ti
ourselves, in the respective fields of our callings. As I lea
thick volume of Paul's collected works I stumbled on
Journals that sent a shock through my system, and
shaken. They had been sent silently years earlier, but h
instant. Paul's final message to me once again collapsed

How can we
offer it all, Paul? How
ignore the earth movers . will
take it all down?

I never saw the Invisible Ink Man again. I did manage invisible ink pad and a black light stationed at the entrance jazz club. There was nothing designed to order, and a process became too slow and unreliable. But I did come journey to 23rd street that day with a greater approach mystery I felt on the threshold of that door separating the Tin Palace from the world outside of it, what I thought of a moment of light in the dark. The fact that that my light for the decade, then went out, gave me a deeper understanding field from which such forms arise and dissolve.



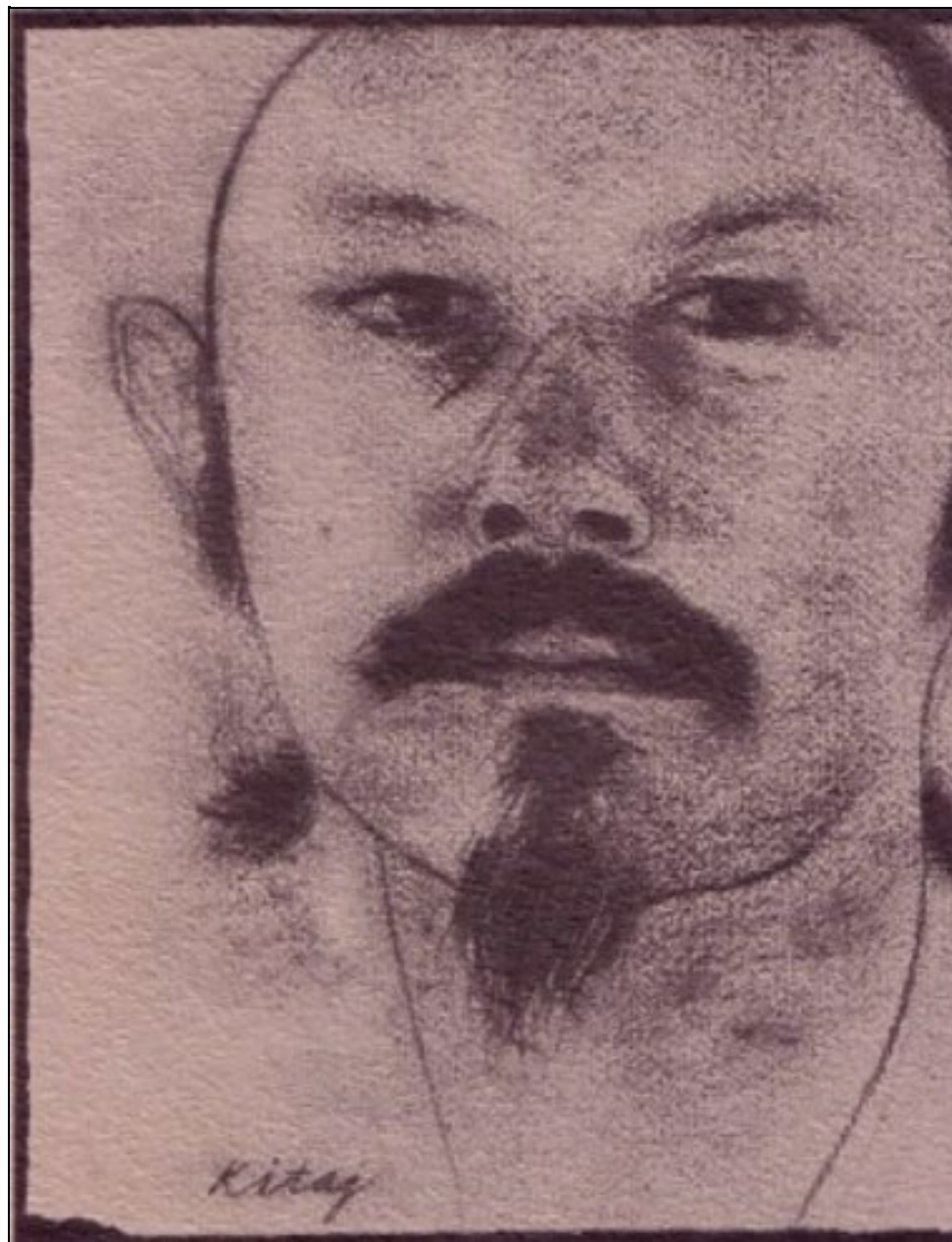
*Outside the Tin Palace, 1976 (courtesy Patricia Spears Jones)
Stanley Crouch, Alice Norris, David Murray, Carlos Fariñas,
Patricia Spears Jones, Phillip Wilson, Victor Rosa and Charles "Boyz" n*

Invisible Ink is a metaphor for a narrative already written
of time will emerge to be read as destiny, history, or mer

in my own experience to the Invisible Ink Man and his th
Paul Blackburn reliving his intimacy with Sarah in the en
and my moment beside him wondering at the invisibil
Greeks thought of their underworld as a place where h
were stored, and it is easy to conflate those with me
eternal and continuous.

What I contemplate still at the entrance to my own under

All thresholds are essentially boundaries between the
unknown. One enters a jazz club from the street to call
not available elsewhere to the eye and ear, the audib
disclose hidden places. Often these are places known an
now known again in a way that changes everything.



Paul Blackburn by R.B. Kitaj


I am certain that there is a connection between the moment when someone stamped my hand with invisible ink that glows under a black light, and the initiation into a mystery as the veils of Persephone, and Isis. I consider what took place at the Tin Palace, beyond the big oak doors on the Bowery, where Blackburn haunted The Five Spot, followed the improvisations and reproduced them on the page. I remain fascinated in the pursuit. I wanted to possess Captain Midnight's decoder, the late 1940s landscape of potentials, things in their nascent state on the page, not realized. In this pursuit, earlier guides like Toth, Telephoros, now have names like Monk, Mingus, and Blackburn died before I opened the doors to my club, but he would have been at home there. We shared a desire to focus our attention to the page of a given moment and watch what was written there unseen, emerge into plain sight. It draws me to Blackburn as I imagine him, tuned to what emerges from the implicit on the other side of that threshold. He was, after all, no stranger to invisible ink.

[Paul Pines](#) grew up in Brooklyn around the corner from Ebbet's Field in the early '60s on the Lower East Side of New York. He shipped out as a US Navy Seaman, spending August '65 to February '66 in Vietnam, after which he returned to New York and worked as a taxi cab driver until opening his Bowery jazz club, which became the setting for his novel *The Tin Angel* (Morrow, 1983). *Redemption* (Editions du Rocher, 1998), a novel, is set against the genocide of Guatemalan Mayans. His memoir *Brother's Madness*, (Curbstone Press, 2007) explores the unfolding lives and the nature of delusion. Pines has published eleven books of poetry: *Onion*, *Hotel Madden Poems*, *Pines Songs*, *Breath*, *Adrift on Light*, *Taxidancing*, *Last Call at the Tin Palace*, *Reflections in a Small Room*, *Divine Madness*, *New Orleans Variations & Paris Ouroboros* and *Five Pole Star*. The last collection won the Adirondack Center for Writing's best book of poetry in 2013. Poems set by composer Daniel Asia and

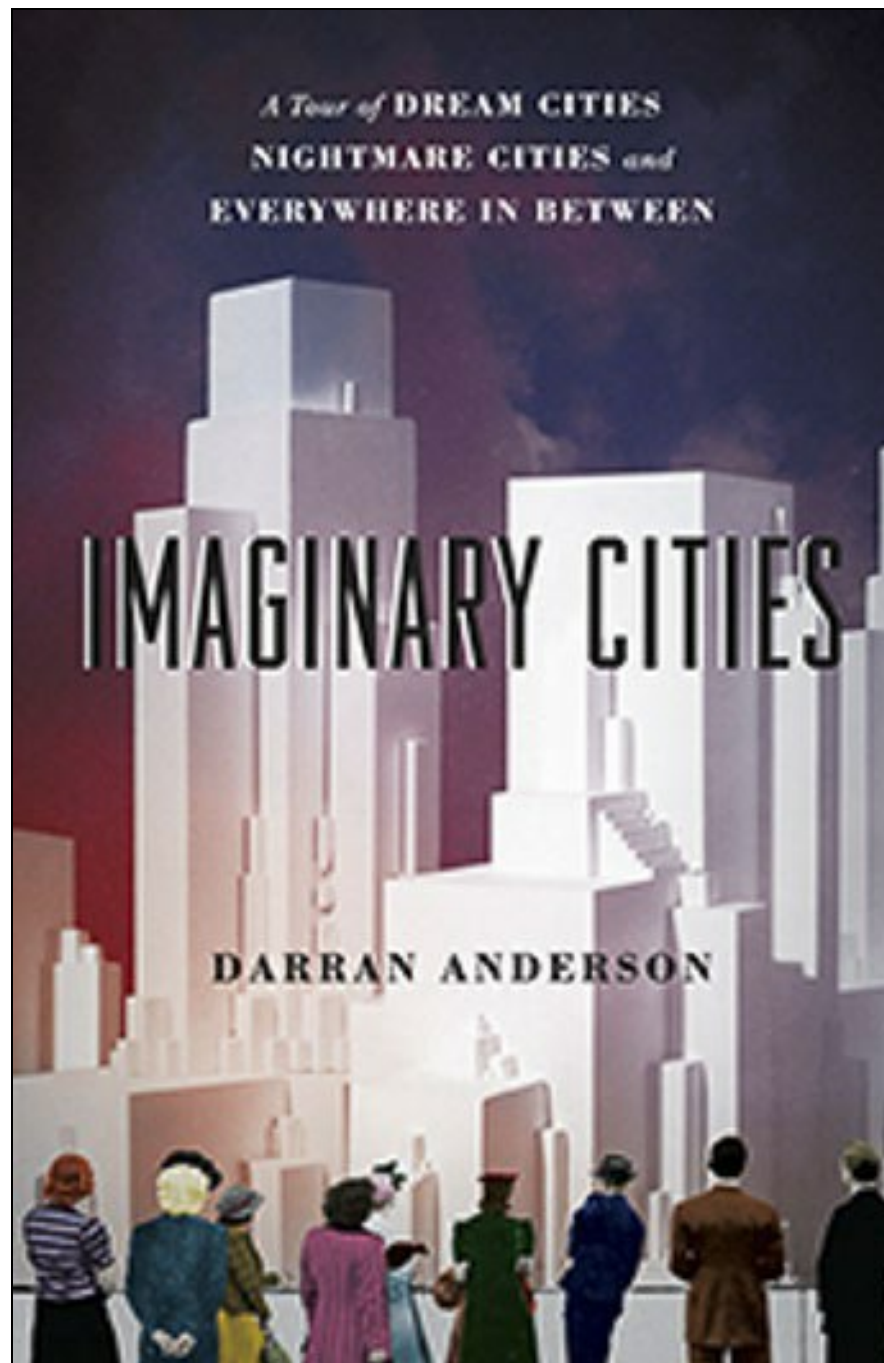
Summit label. He is the editor of the Juan Gelman's selected poems. Hardie St. Martin, *Dark Times/ Filled with Light* (Open Letters Press). He lives with his wife, Carol, in Glens Falls, NY, where he practices as a psychotherapist and hosts the Lake George Jazz Weekend.

Imaginary Cities | Book Excerpt — Darran Anderson

 No Responses

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Imaginary Cities

Darran Anderson

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The Thirteenth Hour

The future will be old. It may be bright and shiny, wonderful but, if we are to be certain of anything, it will be built from the reconstructed wreckage of the present and the just-about possible. 'The future is according to William Gibson, 'it's just not very evenly You sit amongst fragments of it now.

All prophecies are intrinsically about the now. When slowly coughing himself to death on the wind-scoured wrote *1984* (under the original title 'The Last Man in Eu reversal and critique of the year in which he wrote it, 19 cracked mirror of the present. When he wrote of doub writing not just of the future and the Soviet Union identified and deplored in his fellow journalists, impe (carving the earth up at Versailles and contemporane and the politicians of Britain, the proto-Airstrip One. threads of his day and followed them to their logical ; conclusions. So perceptive was his take, influence Zamyatin's exceptional *We*, that it rendered the va jumpsuit-wearing dystopian literature to follow as some edge he had was an awareness that things will not enti future. The architecture of his future London is a transp his contemporary city, yet to recover from the Blit widespread poverty; 'Were there always these vi nineteenth-century houses. . . their crazy garden wall directions? And the bombed sites where the plaster du air?'

In the future, there will be not only flux but pointless inefficiencies, all these things that make us human b which we rail against daily.

There are exceptions:

The Ministry of Truth – Minitrue, in Newspeak – was different from any other object in sight. It was a pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete with a terrace after terrace, three hundred meters in length. Scattered about London there were just three or four of similar appearance and size. So completely did it differ from surrounding architecture that from the roof of the Mansions you could see all four of them simulta-

They gazed at everything and were blank in response. Censorship and totalitarianism would obliterate not just satire but the very words from which words are made. Objective truth was illegal if not unknown. The daily torrent of lies was provided and managed by the Ministry of Truth. Continual war was waged by the Ministry of War. Austerity was provided by the Ministry for Plenty; 'The Ministry of Love was the really frightening one. There were no windows in its

It would be a mistake to see Orwell's vision as an extreme version of the world's obvious tyrannical regimes. Orwell knew that the power and interests behind the world of 1984 were evident in our world. Ideology is faith; irrespective of whether that's in religion, capitalism or materialism or the invisible hand of the markets. It is this faith that makes there is absolute and condemnation. It is this that makes the warnings so perpetually apposite. The powerful of every political and corporate variation will employ faith. Quietly, but with fidelity to the objective is the only bulwark against it. And when the worst comes, life will go on, due to Humanity's stubbornness when it seems like it shouldn't. We would do well, as Orwell would, to see the traces of the dystopian around us, to find the threads and how far along we are; the most accurate of these is that people, and the allure of domination, never really change. Copenhagenise our future cities, make them as green as possible, but provided we are still embedded in systemic corruption, cronyism, exploitation and short-term profiteering, that

and degradation, it will be mere camouflage. Dystopias lanes and host World Cups. What may save us is, in O dedication to ‘common decency’, and the perpetual kr need not be like this.

Cockaigne

The future may well fail but the urge for the utopian i emerges from the failures and unsatisfied wants (Inventors identify problems of the present, vacuu preferable end-results to backcast from. The shadow aspiration is present misery and the utopian impetus often-untold real-life stories. It’s no accident that Hanse the cottage made of sweets and gingerbread when they of starvation or that Harry McClintock sang of arcadian Great Depression. For all its jaunty wide-eyed delinqu Candy Mountain’ is a song of shadows and implication nursery rhymes do, of pestilence and regicides, of starvation, drought and exposure to the elements. Utopi an escape into a parallel world of fairness, justice a medieval times, the popular myth of the land or city of vent to these same notes of protest and yearning.

Work was forbidden, for one thing, and f appeared spontaneously . . . One could even fish, game, fowl and pastry, for another featu was its edible architecture. The weather was sta was always spring—and there was the added b range of amenities: communal possessions, l free sex with ever-willing partners, a four beautiful clothes for everyone and the possib money while one slept.

In a version inscribed in an Irish monk’s manuscri Cockaigne was linked to biblical promises of rivers o

righteous but turned subversively against heaven:

Though paradise be merry and bright,
Cokaygne is yet a fairer sight . . .
There is no thunder, no hail,
There is no vile worm nor snail,
And no storm, rain nor wind.
There no man nor woman is blind . . .
There are rivers great and fine
Of oil, milk, honey and wine.

The verse then spins off into a ribald account of amor nuns, as well as a desire to escape the darkness of the time:

When the monks go to Mass
All the windows which are of glass
Turn into bright crystal
To give the monks more light.

Here is the vacuum speaking; the need for technological (electric light, mass-manufactured glass etc.) to rescue us from the amounting to years, of darkness spent in stone cells lit by reeking candles of animal fat. The absence of this once-considered an indication that we exist without realising it in what our lives have been sought after as an improbable utopia. This is to say that we can now communicate instantly across the globe, live our lives, see worlds from the microscopic to the cosmic that we once knew existed, listen to and watch performances by the great artists of this, we doubt the existence of progress, partly because of the luxury of doing so.

The Brothers Grimm speak of Cockaigne with the insight of the nursery rhyme: 'There I saw a plough ploughing with a cow . . . and I saw two gnats building a bridge . . .' with the question 'I not told enough lies?'

Look beyond the nonsense and you can see it is a future they are willing. This is most evident in Pieter Bruegel the *Het Luilekkerland* where men condemned as lazy and nevertheless allowed time to sleep or simply stare automated creatures scurry around serving them; an suicidal roasted pigeon, a suckling pig running around pe is a future life of leisure and farmyard robots, granted hours from rudimentary tasks. It is a utopia of time; the time as we choose by being freed from the wasted time. Today, we have never had more labour-saving devices and yet the blissful life is suspiciously fleeting and elusive.

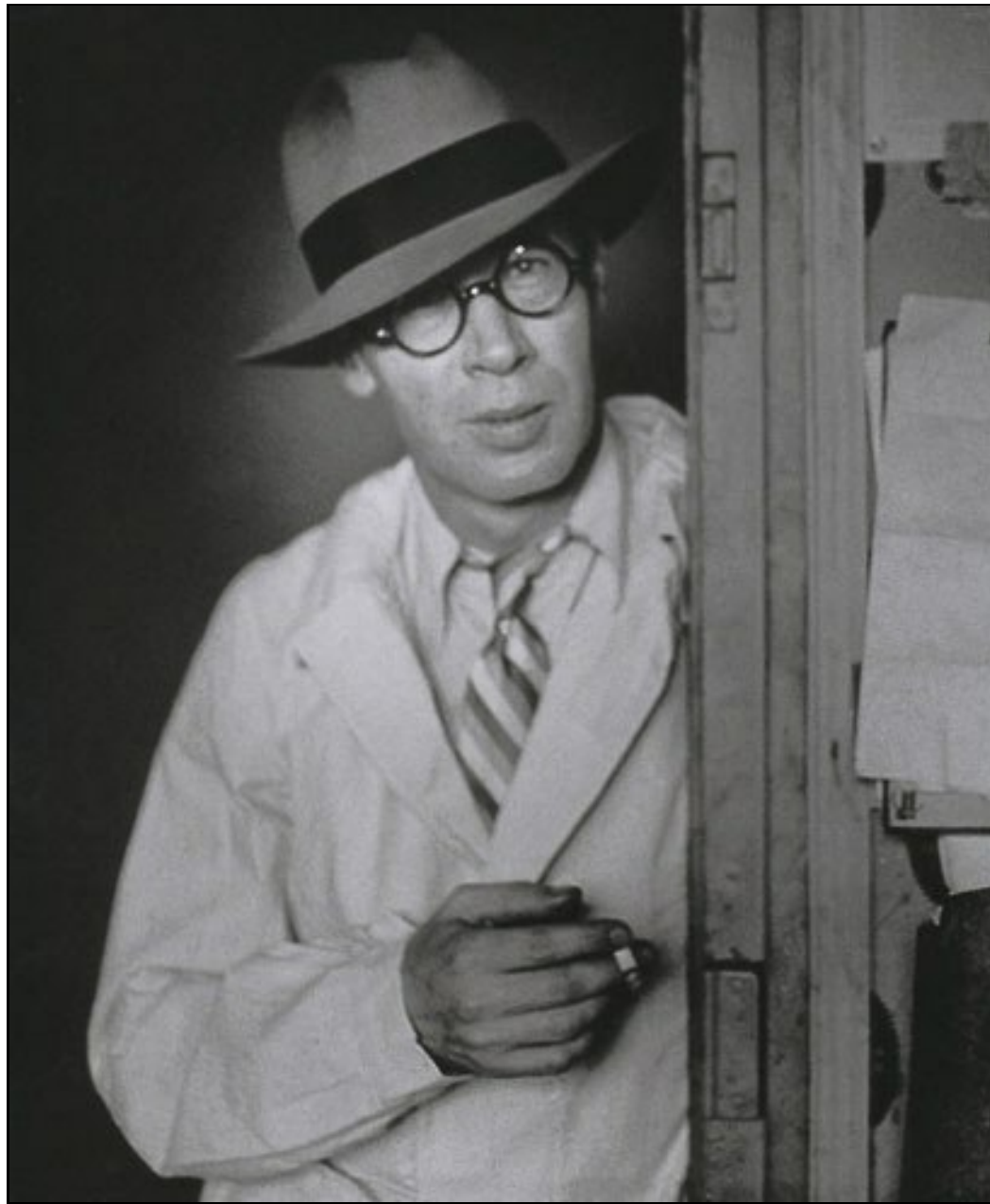
‘A joke is an epigram on the death of a feeling.’ Nie *Human, All Too Human*. Perhaps Cockaigne moment pressure of a life lived in struggle and penury. It became jokes of its kind do, a competitive sport with each teller of In its extravagance, Cockaigne exposed the comparative reality, where farce and tragedy are intrinsically wedded always the outside possibility, even in the wildest of ren was a physical place of some description on the face of escape to it (the realm of the idle rich) might be possible remote. The urge for the utopian is strong in the demeaning that missionary forces promising better worlds the next tend to find a ready ear and a base to exploit. If utopias were not the sole preserve of indulgent people denying the utopian as some kind of failed parlour game ourselves from understanding its appeal and the power those who can offer it. We know Cockaigne does not doesn’t mean we don’t believe in it.

—D

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Darran Anderson is the author of *Imaginary Cities*. He writes about culture and technology. Anderson is a former co-editor of *The Hedge* and is also the author of a 33 1/3 study of *Histoire de Melody* by Jane Birkin & Serge Gainsbourg. His forthcoming memoir, *Tidewrack*, about the river in his hometown will be published by Chatto & Windus.

Man Behaving Badly | Henry Miller & Tropic of Cancer
— Victoria Best



Henry Miller in Paris (photo by Brassai)

Victoria Best has a theory about creativity and writers in crisis. This is one of a series of which she writes: “I really loved writing these every writer I chose, once you got down to it, was a hapless flake, a terrific mess of their life and yet stalwartly, patiently, relentlessly error, every crisis and turning them all into incredible art. How could these people and their priceless integrity? I felt like I had found matter in the least that they were pretty much all dead. There was just quality – vital, creative attentiveness to everything wrong – that I ch

By the time 38-year-old Henry Miller left America in February 1930, he had taken to signing himself as “Henry Miller.” In reality, the ratio of irony to truth in this

uncomfortably low. America had been the scene of humiliation for him; he left behind a bitterly disappointed man, an ex-wife still pursuing him for unpaid alimony, a few un- paid jobs for which he hadn't had the stamina or the will, and the love of his life, June Mansfield.

June had more or less booted him out of the apartment in Atlantic City. It was a final attempt at forcing him to achieve the success he so avidly sought; and besides, his prolonged gloom was a dis- style. As he walked away, he was afraid to look up at the window for her goodbye, in case she was already engaged in some secret affair he would rather not know about.

He took with him the sum total of seven years of work, a few manuscripts of dubious merit that no one wanted to publish. When editor, Bruce Barton, read some of his early work, he returned the comment 'it is quite evident that writing is not your forte.' Taking that remark with him, too, branded on his heart. His only useful leaving gift – a \$10 note from his friend, Eric, which wouldn't last long, but the friendship would prove key to an upswing in Miller's fortunes. Not that he had the least doubt of that. As the ship sailed away from the dock, Henry Miller sat in his cabin, thought back over his life and wept.

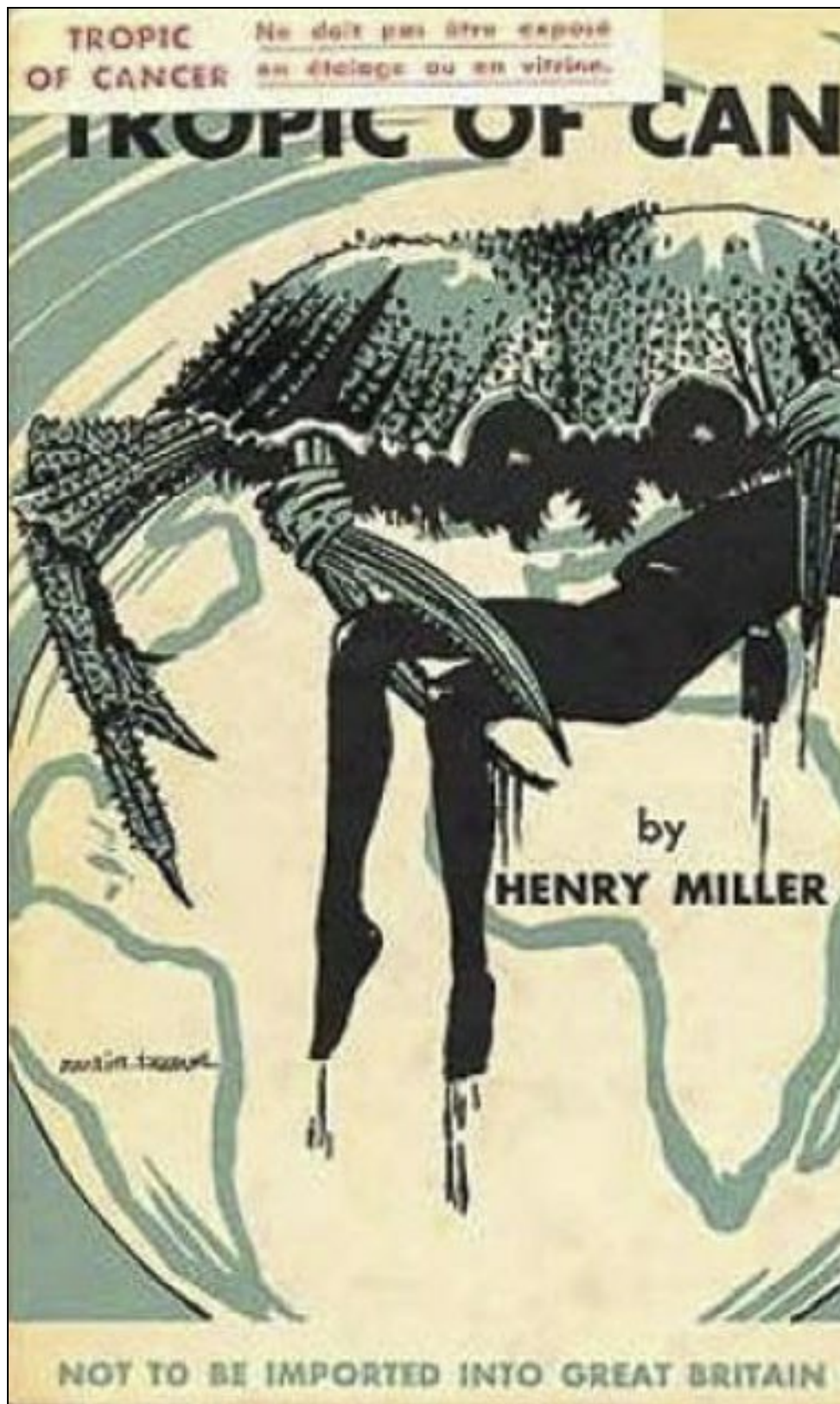
When he arrived in Paris, the city destined to save him from his whole new level of poverty. He had nothing, not even a working grasp of the French language. The days of the famous 'lost generation' compatriot writers were past, luminaries like Hemingway and Fitzgerald long gone, leaving Miller, as always, out of sync with the culture. He had no papers that would help him find work, no acquaintances, and no money unless June cabled it to him. The Express office, a location he now visited up to three times a week, he had to beg, steal or starve. When there was money, he would wonder how she had come by it.

But Paris started to provide him with unexpected res

beauty and degradation all around him, and he had his c
by his astute powers of observation. He had the warm
welcome of the French people, and in these hungry ti
café owners willing to extend credit or even feed hir
marked contrast to America, there was compassion for v
a struggling artist. Here, he didn't have to be making
himself a writer. He didn't even have to be writing some
ambition and desire understood. And in this tender abse
Miller began to settle down to work he didn't even realis
He took long walks around his city, absorbing the e
sounds, and wrote down everything he saw in letters to
that ran to twenty, thirty pages. It was an eccentric st
would gradually morph into an eccentric, unique, disturk

Published in 1934, *Tropic of Cancer* was the infamous
Miller's prolonged struggles, and there would be people
hadn't bothered. It remains the most grudgingly a
bestseller of the twentieth century; a paradigm shifting
sort of *Ulysses* for the common man. Most of all, it
ingrained puritanism, casually invoking the kind of graph
is taken for granted nowadays.

Henry knew he had produced something that was both
insulting. From the moment the book was a finished fi
eventual release onto the American market, it was o
cherished paranoid fantasies that he would have to go to
he had written. Punishment enough, perhaps, that
beyond the boundaries of France for the next thirty y
fame finally arrived, Miller would be too old and too war



Cover of original edition, 1934

The crimes of *Tropic of Cancer* alleged over the next few years were various, notably formlessness, and the rash of four-letter words on the surface of the otherwise eloquent text like a kind of scum. The characters are unashamedly self-absorbed and hopeless, a world of scroungers and scoundrels. But the major assault was on the dignity of sexual relations, reduced to sordid and obscene between horny men and 'fuckable cunts'.

That Miller's narrator utters such insults in a tone of indifference rather than hostility or aggression seemed to feminists further. Kate Millett in the early 1960s decried women in the book as worthless objects, used and abused for pleasure and too stupid even to know it. Miller, she said, 'with disgust, the contempt, the hostility, the violence and the cruelty with which our culture, or more specifically, its masculine surrounds sexuality.' And this criticism of the book has never been satisfactorily answered. 'Why do men revel in the humiliation of women?' Jeanette Winterson asked, writing about the book in the *York Times Sunday Review* in 2012. Why indeed? But when it comes to unprovoked attacks on the image of womanhood, it's Miller taking a good look at his mother.

'It's as though my mother fed me a poison, and though I was young the poison never left my system,' Miller wrote in *Capricorn*. Louise Miller was a loveless woman, a strict disciplinarian and a tyrant when crossed or thwarted. She came from a family with a strong work ethic, but this had not meant that when she was twelve, her mother had been taken away to the hospital. Louise to bring up her sisters (who would also have to work hard to earn their time). The authority she wielded was still composed of the same strategies – prolonged rages, violence, a complicated set of irrational rules whose smallest infringement she could punish. Having had to grow up too quickly, she had never grown up. She would consult Henry over matters he was far too young to handle. Once she asked him what to do about a wart on her nose, he suggested cutting it off with the kitchen scissors. The next day she subsequently contracted blood poisoning. 'And you told me to cut it off,' she raged at Henry, slapping him repeatedly. He was four years old.

When Henry's sister, Laretta, was born, it gradually became clear that there was something wrong with her. She was a sweet girl but her intelligence never developed beyond that of a child. This was something Louise could not accept, and Henry learned the lessons his mother attempted to give her, which a

frustration and lengthy beatings. In his early years, he overcompensated for Laretta, showing off his ability to recite facts and tables to entertain and distract his mother, and his mother's wrath. But the effort soon began to seem greater than the reward. Whatever he did it was not enough to save his sister. So he acted up in school and fought against all kinds of discipline. And at home, he discovered a way of hypnotic self-talk that helped him escape from the ugly scenes. It would prove to be a problematic relationship, though it looked from the outside like callousness. In time it would become coldness, hardness in the heart that Graham Greene said all authors need. He wanted his minds free from emotion. Henry Miller would come to provide an example of both a life and an oeuvre in which that icy chill



Henry Miller with parents and sister

Young Henry was attracted to anarchy, but he was sensitive to the physical aspects of fights, qualities he would seek to overcome or hide for the rest of his life. He was growing up in an age that celebrated virile masculinity as hard as possible, with Teddy Roosevelt as the romantic hero and the ideal man. Henry had a tendency to idolise any man involved in a physically aggressive profession – boxers, soldiers and con men were on his list.

Was this because his own father was the embodiment of the opposite? Heinrich Miller was a tailor and an alcoholic, of the soft and the sensitive rather than the violent. He avoided home as much as possible, and

he had with Louise over the dinner table still gave Henry a reaction that made him gag on his food. Henry was part of the Sunday-school sponsored Boys' Brigade, which promised all sorts of soldierly activities. He was delighted with the mock battles, but dreaded the moment when members were 'reported for duty', which involved being taken by the Major to his office and sat on his lap to be fondled. Eventually boys rebelled and the Major was ousted in disgrace.

This was the crazily gendered world that Henry grew up in, a world in which his mother was the strongest, fiercest and scariest person he knew. It was a world that impressed on men the importance of manliness but the men held up as real role models for Henry were the women and a paedophile. Being manly was the American imperative but Henry longed to be it, but what did it mean? It couldn't be an imitation of hard graft – that took him too close to his mother. And a new pattern emerged that for Henry, manliness was about the rejection of conventional morality. It was about absolute autonomy and surrounding himself with other hapless male souls and their flaws unconditionally.

But what was he to do about his own gentle, sensitive nature? The conflict in his personality would prove deeply problematic when it came to sexual relationships. The writer who would later be known as Grand Old Man Of Sex fell in love with his first serious partner, a pretty young woman called Cora Seward. Every night for years he would excuse himself after dinner to walk past her house and knock to call at the door. That was the extent of his respectfulness, but also the extent of his fear. Unable to approach his 'angel' at her whorehouse instead and got himself a dose of the clap. The path to sex was mired in the 19th century, in that torrid hothouse of hypocrisy of right and wrong, good and bad. When the cool, sweet 20th-century freedom rushed up to meet it, something terrible was bound to result.

It was late summer in 1923 when Henry walked into Wil near to Times Square. He was 31. He had come for the t form of prostitution where ten cents could buy a man a girl of his choice, and his own powers of persuasion w the rest. Miller had a wife and a small child, but the rel the final stages of collapse. 'From the day we hitched up battle,' Henry would later write. He had married becau avoid conscription but his new wife, Beatrice, brought domestic front, nagging Henry to get a job and keep it a a husband should. If there was one thing Henry dealt w being told what to do. The man he had become in that r one to be proud of; he was cruel and insulting to Beatr and reckless. He badly wanted an escape route but passivity prevented him from finding one.



*Wilson's Dancing Studio, 1920 (photo from New York I
online archive via [Cosmodemonic Telegraph Com](#))*

He noticed a woman walking towards him across the c

woman with a full figure, blue-black hair framing her brilliant eyes. 'The whole being was concentrated in that face,' he later wrote. 'I could have taken just the head and walked off with it. I could have put it beside me at night, on a pillow, and I could have kissed it.' She was 'America on foot, winged and sexed.' She was Edith Smerth from Austria-Hungary, an emotional fantasist, earning what living she could with her body and her wit. She undoubtedly had tremendous allure, but the contrast between what she was and what Henry wrote about her shows that myth-making, the psychodrama and the sheer power of her personality would invest her.

June Mansfield (she made the name up for Henry on the spot) was to be immortalised in art, and Henry longed for a muse who could match her unproven literary talents. This was what they would ultimately do to each other, although it would cost Henry an acrimonious divorce from Beatrice, and seven years of suffering in this new marriage. 'Henry, through the tortures of hell,' said Alfred Perlès, one of Henry's friends, 'but he was masochistic enough to enjoy it.'

From the beginning, June offered Henry the sort of adrenaline-fuelled excitement he'd thirsted for in his empty life. On the way home in the taxi, June insisted they were being followed by a car. This set the tone for the drama and the elaborate ruses that would follow. June believed in Henry's ability to write and insisted he stop working and devote himself to art. Henry was keen and June determined, but they had a slight problem of no funds. There followed a long period of menial, hard-lived and demeaning jobs, including a speakeasy that eventually foundered. That they were incapable of making money as writers during Prohibition says a lot about their business acumen.

What June really liked but Henry didn't, was what she called 'golddigging'. This involved June hustling men who were willing to pay cash for any sort of cover scheme that meant they could continue to live. June often tried to assure Henry that sex was not a business, but and Henry did his best to believe this. But biographer

argued that 'Jealousy was the glue of their relationship sure to give him ample cause for it. [...] She surrounded chaos, and Miller thrived on it. And she kept the relationship fevered pitch.'



June Mansfield

Inevitably things soured. There was so little money, Her going nowhere and ratcheting up tension caused its own day June brought home a disturbing puppet with violet sombrero. He was called Count Bruga and symbolised to afterwards the woman who had made the puppet and Kronski was a *real* genius, June said, with clear implication been admitted to Bellevue for observation, but the doctor to release her if June would stand as guardian; cheerier

about an impending houseguest.

Other men might have fled the camp, or refused to play a part in the chaos. Henry was too emotionally entangled and too passive. So he became an unwilling witness to his wife's infatuation with a young woman, and June and Jean were able to crank up the *folie à trois*. They lived in squalor, washing dishes in the bathtub, using old clothes for towels, the floor strewn with plaster of Paris and other rubbish. June airily discarded all suggestions she was being unfaithful. Henry had been ousted from her bed and Jean was not far behind. Henry made scenes. He made a half-hearted suicide attempt by lying in bed for ten days (though he was reading Proust). The more chaos became, the more bohemian and cruel June acted.

There was a protective split opening up in Henry's character during this time. He was bitterly humiliated by his wife's behavior because her relationship with Jean attacked him right where he was most vulnerable: his tentative sexuality. The lack of money and the failure to find success in America were desperate blows to his self-esteem and he was beginning to question the American dream and all it stood for – the work ethic, the competitive spirit, the disinterest in art. And yet, that chip of ice in his heart was not melting. When he wrote begging letters to his friends signed 'Henry Miller', he carefully stored the carbon copies, optimistically hoping they would need them. In *Nexus*, the autobiographical novel covering this period in his life, 'Mona' (June) tells the narrator:

'You look for trouble. Now don't be offended. Maybe you'll suffer. Suffering will never kill you, that I can tell you. No matter how deep you'll come through, always. You're like a cork. Push you down and you'll rise again. Sometimes it frightens me, the depth you can sink. I'm not that way. My buoyancy is physical, you know. I'm going to say spiritual but that isn't quite it. It's animalistic.'

He may have been lost in emotional chaos, but Henry was not without a lodestar. 'It knows that all the errors, all the detours, all the frustrations will be turned to account,' Miller wrote in

born a writer one must learn to like privation, suffering. Above all, one must learn to live apart.' He got to do just that when he returned home one day and found a note on the kitchen table telling him that June and Jean had sailed for France. Not only had she taken her place in June's heart, she'd hijacked his cherished dream of writing too. June would return in a couple of months with a decision that determined Henry should see Paris, but he could not go. Instead, he broke every piece of furniture in the apartment and drove the landlady with his howling. When the initial despair passed, he realised that this was something he could write about. He had been describing sitting down and taking notes. He had been following his instincts, but now illumination came to him: the revelation of the humiliation, the intense misery and the deprivation was the best one that had ever been given to him. It would take him a long time to put that story into words, but the revelation was important. From that point on, Henry knew that his own life would become his art.

The transformation that Paris effected on Henry's writing was almost short of miraculous. In America he'd been trying to translate his anarchic outlook into the sort of 19th-century fictional narrative favoured by his literary heroes, Knut Hamsun, Theodore Dreiser, and Dostoyevsky, and the contrast was awkward and far from ideal. His passive personality did not fit the go-getting attitude popular in Paris, neither did his coarse and chaotic style. 'There was a real sense of the idea of literature, a sort of *salon* atmosphere, which would never be able to accommodate a rude voice like Henry's,' biographer, Robert Ferguson. Once he left it all behind in America, how suffocated he had been.

In Paris, he was able to give in to his instincts, which Ferguson described as 'those of a film producer whose consciousness was a machine for assembling a cast, picking the locations and writing the script of a major production.' Eye-catching Paris offered the riches; grubby, valiant, warm-hearted Paris, full of losers;

where there was even a place for a prostitute with a Miller would memorably describe. The literature of France embraced the poor, sordid aspects of existence: Zola had written about whores with intense pity, and now Henry could come back about them with an ex-pat's pride, as the kind of landmark that was extraordinary back home, but which he now took in his stride.



Paris cafe, 1930s

Freed from the mesmerising chaos of June, Henry woke up and listened carefully. 'Hearing another language daily instead of your own language for you, makes you aware of shades and nuances you never expected,' he would later tell an interviewer for *The New Yorker*. He had fallen by chance into exactly the right practice environment. To Emil Schnellock he enthused that 'In a letter I can be more careful not to bother to be too careful about grammar, etc. I can string adjectives like and string the adjective out by the yard.' His new editor, Fraenkel, read one of the manuscripts he'd brought back from America and advised him to tear it up. He told Miller to write what he lived and as he lived.

Henry then found a way to convey the hallucinatory vividness of

he was living. He had gone to the movies and seen the *Un Chien Andalou* by Luis Bunuel and The film made 'a lasting impression on him', according to Turner, author of a study on the genesis of *Tropic of* intrigued by its formlessness, its sudden, jolting scenes (felt as if the artists were mysteriously *inflicting* these conditioned to regard movies as a passive form of entertainment was high on crazy artworks where there were no limits was all the rage, and suddenly, Henry fit right in; he readers to accept unpalatable truths. He began to conceive of book, one based on his experiences in France, and he to Schnellock 'I start tomorrow on the Paris book uncensored, formless – fuck everything!'

Paris even helped him find the right mindset to deal with the past and the uncertainties of the future. It was discovered the *Tao Te Ching*, whose philosophy of going and accepting all the confusion and sorrow as essential existence offered him exactly the even-tempered fatalism with his heart. That chip of ice was beginning to look like the first time he was given permission not to wallow in fate at it squarely as necessary, unavoidable, and beyond judgement. When he came to write about it in *Tropic of C* take it a twist further, producing a book that was a celebration of the very worst in humanity.

There was of course one more thing Henry would need for his book, and that was money. One of his survival tactics in Paris was to exchange a bed for the night for housekeeping so he did with Richard Osborn, an American lawyer with National City Bank by day and fancying himself a bohemian at night. Osborn introduced Henry to his boss's wife, Ann, and the two quickly became infatuated with each other's minds, sharing a shared interest in D. H. Lawrence.

Miller knew he was punching above his social weight

properly exotic and genuinely cultured, having been born and raised in New York and Cuba. She also wanted to write a novel of a dominantly erotic nature, one fuelled by desire and curiosity. She was like June's, in order to pay the rent. Instead, she started writing books, then paying his train tickets and slipping him money in an envelope. June, visiting Henry in Paris, wanted to see her as a mentor, and there was an instant attraction between them. They were both who both liked to play the alpha female. Anaïs was also alluringly perverse in June's nature, and once again Henry was shunted to one side while two women circled each other.



Anaïs Nin

This time, though, June could not be tempted into a romance with Nin. 'Anaïs was just bored with her life, so she took us to Paris, and later claim, and Nin would call it 'the only ugly thing I did in Paris,' she would later say.' June became, instead, a catalyst between Anaïs and Nin. They endlessly discussed her and dissected her mystique. The relationship with June was changing, though, for Henry was finding it hard for Nin. He blamed this latest humiliation on June, who had in fact attempted all the seducing, could do no more.

Henry wrote breathlessly to Schnellock, 'Can't you picture me to love a woman who is my equal in every way, who feeds me and sustains me? If we ever tie up there will be a coming world.' This time June fought and made the scenes that Henry returned, defeated, to America in a split that would be his. Henry and Anaïs became lovers. Passion was the missing element Henry needed, and once with Nin he found it. He moved swiftly and well, producing a bold, innovative, passionate and surprisingly funny book.

Miller took all that he'd been through in Paris and translated it into something coherent and artistically shapely. Later in life he called himself the 'most sincere liar', which is a fine description of a writer. He took the people he'd been living with and gave them names whilst enhancing the worst parts of their personalities. He took the real places that he'd been and described them with a vocabulary of decay and disease. But most of all he used his wit to take an emotional step backwards and infuse his narrative with a tender and amused acceptance of everything he saw. The absence of judgement upon a life of squalor lived without purpose made the novel endearing to readers who had suffered humiliations of their own. *Tropic of Cancer* offers a powerful testament of the strength of the human spirit, even in the most desperate and hopeless of conditions.

But this was in some ways incidental to Henry's project of writing an entirely new kind of manliness, which involved

himself with hapless males and regarding their faults with just want to be read by the ordinary guys and liked by me I wrote to Schnellock. One of the flaws he portrays indulgently in his ordinary guys is the way they have sex. They lack the emotional intelligence, the class and the capacity for anything like a real relationship. Take for example I am pondering the ethics of becoming involved with a rich old woman I am not attracted to:

‘But supposing you married her and then you couldn’t get her any more – that happens sometimes – what would you do then? You’d have to eat out of her hand like a little dog. You’d like that, would you? Or maybe you don’t think of that. You’d *think of everything*... No the best thing would be to marry her and get a disease right away. Only not syphilis. Cholera, let’s say. Or typhoid fever. So that if a miracle did happen and your life was spared, you’d be crippled for the rest of your days. Then you wouldn’t have to be fucking her any more... She’d probably buy you a fine car and a pair of rubber tires and all sorts of levers and whatnot.’

Or the dastardly Van Norden, a man who defiles everything he touches and is terrified at being so continually abandoned in the trenches:

‘For a few seconds afterwards I have a fine spiritual glow. I think it would continue that way indefinitely – how can you tell? It’s just the fact that there’s a woman beside you and then the water starts running... and all those little details that make you feel self-conscious, desperately lonely. And for that one moment you have to listen to all that love crap... it drives me nuts.’

Erica Jong, writing in fierce defence of the book, argues that *Cancer* works with the same principles as feminist literature: ‘It needs to destroy romantic illusions and see the violence inherent in heterosexual love.’ And it’s true that the characters in *Cancer* are rigorously stripped of pretension and the dishonest flourish of vanity and pride. The point of plumbing the depths

condition is at least in part to clear away all illusion and
Miller believed that idealism had damaged the world far
acceptance of our base physicality might, and that this is
far more than mere sexuality.

In one of the defining anecdotes of *Tropic of Cancer*, the
a young and inexperienced Hindu man to the local brothel
confusion he uses the bidet as a toilet, horrifying the
girls and embarrassing himself. But the narrator, unfazed
universal significance in the incident of an uncommon
problem of life, he says, is that 'Everything is endured
humiliation, poverty, war, crime, *ennui* – in the belief
something will occur, a miracle, which will render life tolerable
belief flies in the face of reality and demands an arresting

'I think what a miracle it would be if this miracle which
eternally should turn out to be nothing more than these
turds which the faithful disciple dropped in the bidet. What
moment, when the banquet table is set and the cymbals
should appear suddenly and wholly without warning, a
which even the blind could see that there is nothing more
less, than two enormous lumps of shit.'

The very structure of the joke – the enormous distance
transcendental miracles and shit – gives away the sub-
structure of the book. It's the gap between the outspoken
of Miller's characters and our desire to identify with noble
figures that is at once so awful and so funny, just as the
beauty of the language, and the insulting attitude the
assume towards women is a lame stab at covering up
need for them, a need which rings out in the narrator's
woman he adored and who has returned to America with

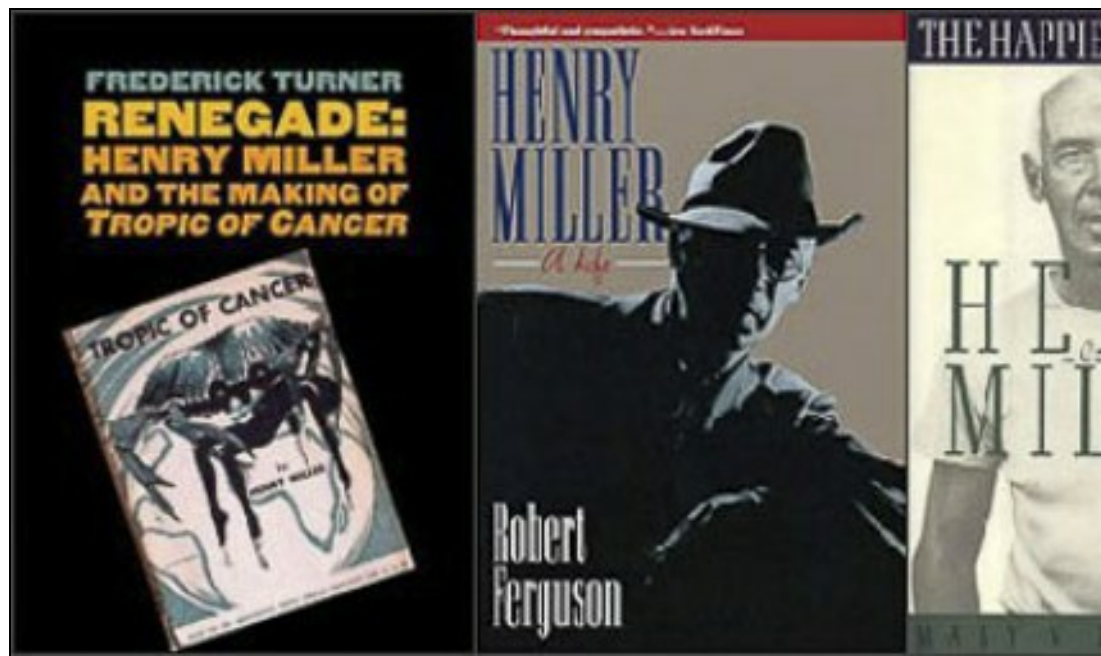
'I couldn't allow myself to think about her very long; if I had
jumped off the bridge. [...] When I realize that she is gone
forever, a great void opens up and I feel I am falling, far

deep, black space. And this is worse than tears, deeper pain or sorrow; it is the abyss into which Satan was plunged, with no climbing back, no ray of light, no sound of human voice or hand of hand.'

It was this familiar existential crisis – the pain of the mismatch between human aspirations and desires and the wholly insufficient reality that has to be accepted in their place – that finally formed the core of Miller's creativity.

The literary insight of the novel didn't stop *Tropic of Cancer* from being smuggled out of France by tourists for the next thirty years. It is the ultimate dirty book; sex sells but it also blinds. The book rode far in advance of any reading that took place, and it stirred strong emotions and ridicule with keen precision that its issues precluded much in the way of critical appraisal. It was read by readers who loved or hated, with their guts.

Nowadays the history of its suppression and the cruel treatment of the women who win all the headlines, but the real story of the book is the dominance of the women who provoked and created it: his fearsome mother, his sweet, crazy sister, his troublesome wife, and the book's midwife, Anaïs Nin, who put up the money for its publication. The book is an act of self-assertion that could not have been written without reveal both the depths of his dependency on women, and his resistance.



Notes on Sources

I am indebted in this essay to three masterly accounts of Miller. Robert Dearborn's *The Happiest Man Alive* (HarperCollins, 1991), Robert Ferguson's *Henry Miller: A Life* (Hutchinson, 1991) and Frederick Turner's detailed account of Miller's creativity, *Renegade: Henry Miller and the Making of Tropic of Cancer* (Yale University Press, 2012). Also unmissable on Miller's life is Henry Miller. *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939), *Nexus* (1960) and *Sex and the Devil* (1963) contributed to my understanding and remain extraordinary works on the borderline of fiction and autobiography. Finally, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (Virago, 1977) and Erica Jong's *The Devil at Large* (1977) are, respectively, a fine critique and a fine tribute from the other side of the gender divide.



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A Conversation with Grant Maierhofer | Interview with
Germán Sierra



Flamingos

Grant Maierhofer

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In a [recent article](#) published in 3AM Magazine, Grant explains his personal experience of reading Joyce's *Wake*. "Reading FW," he explains, "is a bodily experience, strangely so. I tend to find I'll begin with resistance, misunderstanding every letter until suddenly a dream overtakes me and I'm able to stomach paragraphs in a way that often slows to a crawl in turn and view the pages as discrete, concrete passages rendered as micro- and macrocosms of poring and slackjawed stupor alike. The text seems to vibrate on multiple levels because Joyce had thought the bulk of his life's work in printed text might venture to do." "I read Finnegans Wake," he continues, "as an ode to forms, forms explored by Joyce and referenced throughout the text; forms shattered and reformed, useless to traditional interpretive means by intuitive and experimental—almost spiritually so—pages of linguistic forms simultaneously enacting and subverting their own intentions and forms Joyce still saw as viable means of depicting, recording human experience in a language at once as fluid as dreams, Esperanto, and music to which, I'll agree, all art is music."

Reading and writing are, in fact, bodily things, although readers are fully aware of that. I would say that the great experimental and underground literary traditions—what Ronald Sukenick called "the tradition"—are, at least in part, an attempt to re-embodiment practice. Kathy Acker and Dennis Cooper—two of the authors mentioned by Grant Maierhofer—are recent wonderful examples of this kind of stylistic exploration.

“This work will be a nightmare. You are no detective, you are an anonymous patient in *Flamingos*. It comes as no surprise that the accurate words I’ve read about *Flamingos* thus far were written by the American poet and translator Johannes Goransson, who is theorizing about the new “rhetorical punk” styles (using the term from the Italian theorist Umberto Eco) he names “atrocious kitsch.” “This is a novel that is not a proper detective to piece back together the crime and the truth,” writes Goransson—“This is self-surveillance under the influence of drugs, art, poetry. Without the narrative cure, the characters are sick.” *Flamingos*’s characters embrace the impossibility of the cure and celebrate the sudden joy of recognizing this impossibility as art. Art starts when you accept that, as Joyelle Muijsers writes, “nothing can be undone, but everything can be done.” “the Artist cannot remove him or herself from the economic system. Vulnerability to Art is Vulnerability to Violence; that’s what it means: the ability to be wounded, to bear the mark of violence, to suffer malignancy, and to issue malignant substances.” [1]

Germán Sierra (GS): One of the first things that called me to write *Flamingos*—maybe because I have been recently doing research on the topic—was its performative structure. Later, I read some interesting research notes on *Flamingos* in *Necessary Fictions* that I want “an art a bit like life and stripped of tenderness, of understanding, the body and head rendered in text, a distillation of body and head — a performative thing.” I think that the idea of performance is very important in your work, and it is very evident in *Flamingos*. In my view, *Flamingos* could be perceived as a play—there’s even a *Dramatis Personae* list at the beginning of the book in which the characters project themselves on a global background. This creates a flexible environment (much like the environments) where fragments might work as monologues but they might also contain dialogues with other fragments. You said that the book started with disparate elements and that you had to find a way to put them together. How did you come up with its final structure?

Grant Maierhofer (GM): This book took very different editing, and even really composition. I was working with in part because I've had an ongoing fascination with the potent literary form, especially these days. As a result of form would change depending on which fragments in register were working well. The two big influences early Sukenick and Kathy Acker, with Acker's *Empire of the Florida* offering an ideal reference point for these stinging voices. It wasn't until I solidified a publisher version, though, that the bigger structure became publisher, Christopher Stoddard, offered to have me with Jeppesen on bringing these disparate parts together coherence, a finished book. What I had were pages documents, the Flamingo sections written on neon index written on my phone or saved as separate chunks in Word of how it fit to me but little desire to give it what seems a structural spine, removing this cast of voices and their relationship to one another—something about the final about, did not want to remove. So Travis, over the course having conversations, would argue from a reader's perspective desire for some coherence to these voices. The rest attempt to respond to him and any potential reader holding onto the performative energy not only of complex relationships these voices—their passing referential disruption, etc.—have within the text. I think of Samuel Shock *Corridor*, or Lynne Tillman's *American Genius* Firestone's *Airless Spaces*. These are compelling to me because overwhelming, and in many ways they're overwhelming have disparate, perhaps opposed, voices or perspectives sentences clawing at and over one another for an audience me, these seem like somewhat performative conciliatory generates something, hopefully to some degree indicating being alive these days and making sense of the sea of reader takes this in, and hopefully in that transmission gained, a quiet amid screams, or even a context for favorite writers enact something on this order, I think

musicians, painters, filmmakers. The final form, though, is something like a chorus of escapees from modern life screaming at themselves and carving diagnoses on walls. How close to the truth is impossible to know, but this was my hope.

GS: Yes, I understand your process very well, as I use originally separate fragments too. In my last novel, *Stations*, I spent more time on trying to find the “right order” for the fragments. From the beginning I knew it wasn’t the chronological order of writing them. The initial references you mention, Robert Rauschenberg and Kathy Acker, have been also very important to me. I’m excited to see Sukenick in this context, as I believe that, unlike Acker, he is in oblivion now. In my opinion, he deserves more attention. His work is available online, but I’d like to see his books reprinted. Back to *Flamingos*, I like very much your image of “screaming”—I believe this is a quite good definition of experimental fiction has been pursuing for a while now, but it’s harder to develop such a context in literature than in the visual arts, where experimentation and risk have been historically appreciated. But I agree with you on the idea that we’re in a moment for literature, much like it happened from the late 1960s to the early 90s when postmodernism mutated into avant-garde. The literary use of language is becoming “counter-spectacular” and we provide alternatives to the “reality-as-show” we’re living in, which is expressed through queerness, radical weirdness, and madness, particularly in *Flamingos*. In my view *Flamingos* is a recovery of the de-territorializing power of madness which has been recently re-territorialized by neuropharmacology and neurotherapy. The therapy-gone-wrong framework works as a critique and representation of our current society as spectacle-gone-wild. It brings us back to Foucault and Deleuze, of course, but also to Ionesco and Jarry. And it seems of particular importance now when “reason” is often presented as “software for the brain,” something quantifiable that could be “traded.”

GM: Absolutely. Your initial comment, too, feeds this la

attempting to represent what's been used as a lin
madness, in a (hopefully) more fluid way. I woul
characters, or voices, or moments in *Flamingos* were ea
by diagnoses, and I think this is where literature p
opportunities that don't exist as readily in other art fo
example, queered our sense of what the rockstar c
required the extra performative dimension for this to fu
had to *appear*. The book is dedicated to Nick
Rudimentary Peni is one of the best musical iterations of
living I can think of, and yet the feeling of listening to
something, is far different from reading the mania enca
The Primal Screamer, and it's that difference I hope to p
think of pure theoreticians working against heteronorma
experience of reading *The Letters of Mina Harker*, in on
that chronicles a marriage between a male and fema
queers the institution of marriage far better than pure
leaving in the mess of days, of lived experience. Somewl
included in James Miller's biography, Foucault talked a
work he did as closer to fictive, creative work. Sitting
sifting through documents much like Kathy Acker did
reams to counter the force of history. That slippage, th
pure theorizing and enacting experience, performa
language and experimentation therein, is why I
increasingly important in our time. It simultaneously off
reading notoriously dense theorists who worked against
institutions, and new applications for reading more akin
performed art—relentless concerts that tear into the h
live artworks that ruin the artist like the early Throbbing
Transmission stuff.

There's been a long tendency of merely aping those
before. Duchamp talked about this somewhere, that
better off pulling from random eras and movements
idea of writing being about fifty years behind painting,
that very important. Not all writers or readers are c
established traditions of literature as defined by instit

dominated by heterosexual white men, and I'm of the view that the work is being done against this. Read whatever you like, but I think it's highly important that at least some work attend to the sense of an established canon. For me, that has been an inspiration elsewhere, and the experience has proven that.

I think that what Sukenick did, and those aligned with her who followed at FC2, in turn, is probably the most interesting experiment in American literature to yet occur, and all of it seems to be something I've just (poorly) attempting to state. I don't know how many people will read those rather niche texts for fifty years, but I think because to me they've already reframed my sense of a canon and culture and shaped my worldview. In some sense, that's what makes it even more compelling. We can read about the Black Mountain School, for instance, and feel completely lost in what seems to be an important academic/arts experiment in the 20th century, while other students and teachers existed at other colleges and movements never knowing about or at least acknowledging their existence. We'll always have documentation of this sort of thing, I believe it'll always find some audience, but it seems to me that they be avid devotees and small movements like punk rock or to arena rock or something in its heyday. Nostalgia will always be in turn, but nostalgia's a toxic thing. I dunno, I veered off. These are the things I find compelling and why, maybe.

GS: Yes, I agree with you on the toxicity of nostalgia, though I think there's the need to find different ways to think the past, like an "archaeological" or "genealogical" mode like Foucault. I think many contemporary novelists are approaching the past in this way, probably also because we're living in very "aesthetic" times, and we need to borrow aesthetical references from the avant-garde, modernity, post-modernity... Returning to your work, in *Flamingos* (and your previous books), one thing I like is that they're allowed—they allow themselves—to be wrong. I think that's a very important feature in our days—when most people are stuck with dichotomies such as truth/post-truth or facts/a

Actually, I find that the power of punk (and madly accepting the likeliness to be wrong but going ahead anyway don't-need-to-know-how-to play" thing, just jump on st best. In *Flamingos* everybody seems to admit being Simon, the therapist, seems aware of being playing a role them. And I did not." This is significant because, in my important thing for keeping a "sustainable" community trust. It's possible to trust someone even thinking they wrong, and this is the essence of community and also the for a healthy skepticism. As Fernando Colina—a Spanish wrote: "Reason is never there, reason is always about maybe the punk gesture means that now: allowing yourself to be able to catch reason as it arrives.

GM: I'm very interested in all of this, in part because my writing anything has usually been one of immersion. I've myself in a voice, a worldview, a location, whatever. I do hope to find something close to Truth. I hope to enact offer something, and I think community is a closer to artistic truth or even coherence. Possibility among individuals that possibility. All of this is making me think of Vito Acc as a writer. Went to the best-known U.S. MFA program leaving to create situations and performance art, and the very community-centric works of architecture and indicated that he did this because a growing dissatisfaction as an art space. For me, for all of my dissatisfaction, the favorite space and words and other materials there meaning still pull me more than anything else.

I think characters or even works remaining open to wrongness is fundamental. If I didn't feel this way I'd language through poetry alone, or nonfiction alone, but assumed relationship to readers is precarious from skeptical from the beginning, so there's a good deal that terms of empathy, identification, or even anger or outrage characters. I was very interested in this early on, I t

started writing while in rehab, and continued as a sort of AA and NA and the like. In there I'd find myself telling stories on mood, or circumstance. Say I'm in a room with worried alcoholics in rural Minnesota, and I know I need to ease my anxiety. I might talk about the same situation as I'd discuss for addicts under 25, but it'll be adjusted due to circumstances. I speak to my anxiety where possible. I'm performing a little dishonest really but calibrated so that I might get the most out of the meeting. Emphasize relationships and trust in therapy if I can't rely on me. Emphasize relapse if I'm losing my footing and I can't identify and offer insight. It wasn't as conscious as it sounds in retrospect, but it was all unquestionably bound up in my need for writing and came to need literature and art.

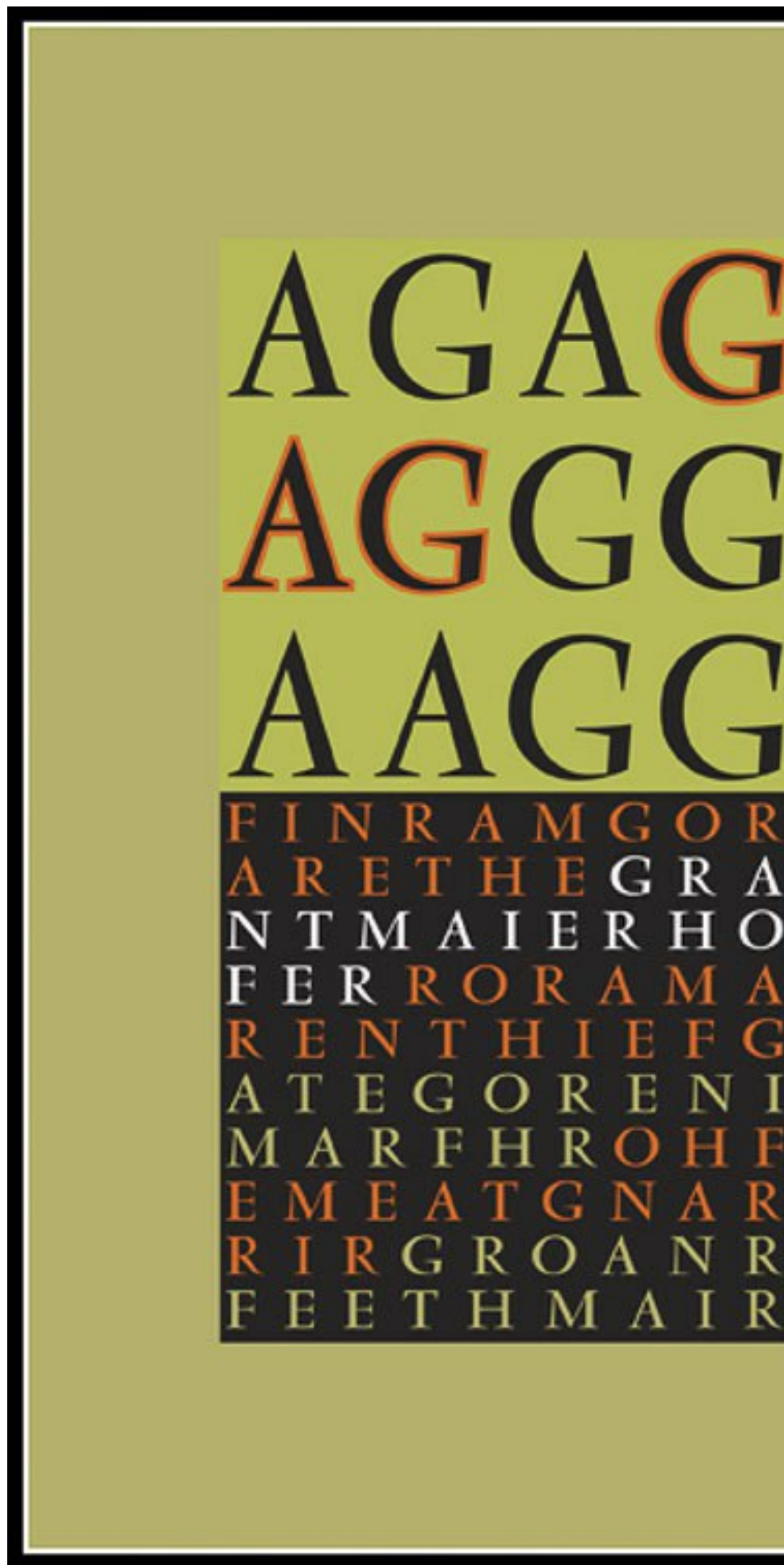
I started based on feeling, and need. Elias Tezapsidis told me about *Persistence of Crows* and how it didn't seem written for me, but that's probably true, as most of my early writing was based on just occupy a mindset for X amount of time and see it take some measurable form, be it a book, or the early stories or whatever. These characters could be wrong, then, or just ignorant and even total ignorance. They weren't created as tools or pawns, but responses to a loneliness, a desire to open myself up.

After this I discovered writers like Christine Schutt, Maggie Nelson and more, so my concerns became more structural. The object became the ideal, I guess, rather than the feelings therein. Being wrong or being flawed is a part of it. I am a human animal in 2017, but I'm also highly influenced by the possibilities offered by fiction, by books, by words, by images offered by other media.

GS: Your new book *GAG* is coming out in April from Insipid. Is it possible to know a little about it?

GM: *GAG* began after my story collection *Marcel* went to the publisher and they wanted to destroy that, so I took the very first draft of

began cutting it apart. I got rid of huge amounts of that
filling in the gaps with a narrative that's sort of a nod to I
work, among others. *Marcel* proper is being reissued I
Wannabe, so making *GAG* into an entirely new anim
important. My process was similar in this to the con
PX138 3100-2686 User's Manual, as indicated in the ex
Queen Mob's Teahouse. I would, say, isolate one sma
words or so, inject it with new material, then automati
through Korean translation software or something. 'r
piece, I'd translate it back so it would be slightly ruine
into a new document. Then I was making collages and
warping it through that. Then the publisher would wo
visual/typographical elements, and over time this new th
do with suburban violence, ruined language, and distrib
in America's very problematic state.



It's been a long time in the making, but I feel very good
GAG and the *Manual* that's coming out on Solar Luxu
texts, so having them released in the same year is a great

I've thought a lot about Dennis Cooper's work since first how he's basically reshaped the potential of fiction with and prior to that how *The Marbled Swarm* reworked how to manipulate and fuck with readers. I wanted to honor and incorporate aspects I've loved from all of it in one print book, his blog, *The Sluts* and *The Marbled Swarm*, *GAG*, and many things, an attempt to honor that body of work.

GS: It sounds amazing! I just went through the first 20 pages of the PDF, and I think I got its feeling very well. I am very interested in your kind of composition processes—I experimented with the electronic re-translation of texts in some parts of my book, "Using Other Words." What I've read thus far reminds me of the "dismembered" prose of other contemporary writers—Dennis Cooper—I now we both admire, like Leslie Scalapino, Bill Soutter, or Kilpatrick, or the cyberpunk novels by the Japanese artist Shigeo Fukuda. Dennis Cooper, of course, deserves special attention. He's such an important figure in contemporary American writing, not just for his work but also because of his continuous support of the underground, punk, or whatever literary scene! We as contemporary American writers, but also people like myself who participate in this kind of writing) should be very grateful for his blog and his implication with fringe books no matter where they come from. It can be difficult to understand the American literary environment of the last sixty years without the generosity of writers such as his. I think of Gordon Lish, Bob Coover...

So you have a lot of books coming out soon! *GAG*, *P*, *User's Manual*, and *Drain Songs*, and I've read another two books in the madness cycle are on the making: *Girnt*, *Drome* and *U*. I'm looking forward to all of them!

GM: I think I began writing as a means of leveling out a certain misery I felt at being alive. Going forward, and becoming more worldly miseries and the struggles facing everyone, there has been an odd mixture of wanting solely to champion the

who've said and done it better than I ever could, and devoting things myself to attempt to process being alive in terror. I recognize in the works of others—many you've named—seemed, at least sometimes, to call for responses or corrections. Jan Ramjerdi's *Re.La.Vir* and suddenly *GAG*, a manuscript that picks up people in basements and assholes in suits controlling a formal sibling. Sometimes it's tempting to simply refer back and point to Cooper, or Ramjerdi, or Delany, or Vollmann as examples of what literature can do, can be in response to these situations and experiences. Sometimes, though, that's the odder, more deeply felt and sometimes even terrifying thing that your own writing seems to happen. I don't know. If I've been able to write has been the result of this and a good deal of self-hatred and hopelessness. As defined earlier, though, I'm more interested in extreme fringe-punk approaches of groups like Throbbing Gristle and artists like Tehching Hsieh, who allow the work to ruin themselves and eat them and harm them in the process, so that the final product looks less like a piece of protest art than *Lucifer*. When my writing started more straightforwardly, and I tend to refer to that stuff because of that, but now I'm preoccupied with abstraction, and a kind of deep internal violence that has been carried across in these more recent projects.

I was very, *very* obsessed with Cooper's *George Miles* for several months a few years ago, and even thinking about it now I'm still in how transformative it was to read those books. As a result, I had dreamt of writing a cycle. It wasn't until *Flamingos* was in progress that it became fully clear it could be done, so long as it was a ripoff of Cooper. Madness, or mental illness, and many of the most and horrific iterations therein, these are ideas I'm more interested in engaging with as I've spent my life on the often ugly side of Fiction, in turn, seemed like a reasonable way of not referring to anyone else's experiences of these things, so that I could persist.

I think about Elizabeth Young's close to her introductory

Handbag, which, paraphrased, goes something like: I got writing the books I want to read then *I'll* have to write. That pretty perfectly articulates my state most of the work of others I love as much as I can. Sometimes personal or impossible or an idea's too particular and write as well. That's more or less how it goes.

GS: Your previous book *Marcel* is now being re-issued by Wannabe, which also published your poetry collection *Flamingos* was published by ITNA press, and *GAG* by In I love your publisher choices, all of them are small and very well curated, very personal projects. How do you choose publishers?

GM: In a weird way, although many conversations about publishing are despairing, I feel as if we're living in plentiful stretches of time for small presses, for publishers interested in the work and the book as object, as performance, things are pretty good and compelling. I've found presses willing to embrace uncertainty and experimentally. I've found them based on seeking writers and artists through them. Inside the Castle reissued *Hour of the* alongside *Slow Slidings* and *Throw Yourself Out and See Come*, is one of my absolute favorite things M. Kitchell John Trefry's work as well, and the aesthetic prompts of as inspiring as synopses for artworks themselves, and into things in turn. Ditto for Dostoyevsky Wannabe, seemed in line with what my favorite writers do. They've heroes of mine like Sean Kilpatrick, Gary Shipley and others wanted to find a press who'd really be on board experimental and fucked like *Grobbing Thistle*, they seemed. Although much of *Marcel* is more straightforward, I feel the cassettes DW puts out, and with the additional stories seemed worth reissuing. Another thing is, I have zero interest lot of—especially U.S.—writers seem interested in as far as massive audience for the work. Presses have inspired r

as writers in this regard, with outfits like Cal A Mari Arch publishing incredibly risky, innovative material, doing it touch that furthers the efforts of its writers, but not larger culture of publishing at all, except to push back a *you* a bit now and again. That interest has led me to write to write, I think, and it's also led me to the wonderful, outsider publishers I've been lucky enough to share with presses, in turn, are usually run by writers, which model, I'm not sure. Sometimes it can lead to an excess can't quite materialize, but often it means that the entire performative, engaged, and shot through with the same desire that inspired the writing in the first place.

Grant Maierhofer is the author of *Postures*, *GAG*, *Flamingos* and has appeared in *LIT*, *Berfrois*, *The Fanzine* and elsewhere. He lives in Idaho.



Germán Sierra is a neuroscientist and fiction writer from Spain. He has written five novels—*El Espacio Aparentemente Perdido*, *La Felicidad y el Amor*, *Efectos Secundarios*, *Intente usar otras palabras*, and *Standards*—and several short stories, *Alto Voltaje*. His essays and stories have appeared in *Numéro Cinq*, *Asymptote*, *The Quarterly Conversation*, *Queen Mob*, *Casper Review*, *The Scofield*, and in more than twenty collective books.

Footnotes (returns to text)

1. McSweeney, J. *The Necropastoral*, Poetry, Media, Occults. Toronto: University of Michigan Press, 2015. p. 186

Don't Be A Body | Short Story — Grant Maierho

 No Responses

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My name is Lyle. I'll leave it at that so far as
however to say that, if you're feeling generous,
multitudes. I may be dense with potential. I'm
many words. I'm tired of feeling this way and so
contain those words myself, to write them out. I want
be expressed so I might move on from them. I want
distance between myself and this place wherein I find
night I went to the gas station only to find half of my fa
with black makeup. I live in sorrow. My days are fi
people and bosses. I tend toward the sad, the weary
person though, romantic. I want to contain the world
but I would like a womb to contain the world. I should l

I think I've slept for most of my life. I don't mean it literally as I graduated high school, as I saw my youth pass, I had my eyes closed and didn't care to open them beyond mere breathing. Sometimes this can happen. Sometimes people aren't really themselves in any recognizable way. My father was, but not in that way. He had nasty tendencies, though. He'd hurt my feelings. I think this is what happened, anyway. I was sleeping.

Lately I've returned. I work now at the high school where I grew up. When you're young everybody's terrible. When you're old everything's terrible. Something changes between these two states. They get worse, darker. Mostly, however, they are the same.

Each day I put on gray coveralls that you have seen. I was given to me by an old man. This old man, my predecessor, had a wife and his wife died. His kids were away, succeeding. This old man had a life before this work. Then, losing his wife, his children, he came here wanting. This old man sought work and found the work. He was occupied for seven years before I took it on. He trained me for a few weeks and then supervised, then left entirely. I think he never came back.

The cart holds a garbage can that I'll fill three or four times each day depending on the number of events. Kitchen staff attend to their cans and I'm grateful for their help. On days, events or come what may, I might focus primarily on the garbage. The school isn't large. It would take an event or more to fill the cart three or four times each day, I'm saying. I remember when I was younger, going here, and we'd attempt to fill the can from paper cartridges of milk. These were shaped like ships and were used to fill the can. We called them cartridges, and lofted them into the janitor's closet. I don't think he'd ever register this, even on the day he left. I was in a state of composure when my cartridge of chocolate milk pellets landed. I'm now more understanding of his intimacy with the work and his suffering.

So anyway, I don't live in my father's basement. So any own place. I'm fairly certain the person who lived here criminal, a felon. He left quickly and so far as I can plummeted. My neighbors pay dearly. I pay a pittance crook likely opened his scalp where I eat my dinners. sure. I spend my days when not working walking around to grab a pizza, maybe, or Chinese, and sit with it staring say I appear as some kind of threat. I hate this town, is that's what happens, though. Sometimes people rec laugh. The worst is the high school kids. They'll get pi sure. Chinese, whatever. They'll be out to eat and talk building their lives together. They'll look over and se tough to stomach.

Then, after this, then, I'll often try to make for the city. You hope. This town where I work is small but aware enough see. They'll talk, each and all of them. I'm not a fan of tall light. So what do I do?

In my room I go to the closet. There I've hung them, a nights I've got these leather pants, sure. I've got my T-shirt boots, they shine a bit. I'll put these on and sort of air. Somewhere when I was younger I loved KISS. Now the mostly morons. I think maybe that's where it started, the on black lipstick. I'll put on eye makeup and smear it some Salems and put on my music. I'll put on Pentag Venom. I'll put on Saint Vitus and sort of air out. I'm the outfit's black. My pants are leather. Living when I live tough to feel free. So where to go? I've found some p leather bars on karaoke nights. Mostly people there will It's fine, sure. I've made it with men and women. I've da go for this, though. I like the sounds. I like to feel a sp

body. Sometimes a burlesque, maybe, but often I teachers on a whim. Bored depressives with throbb mean. I'm O.K. with all types. I just want noise.

My favorite kind of blurs the whole bit. These barflies fr '80s had taken it upon themselves to give strange metal their due. Having no patience, however, for meathea they catered to groups of outsiders who'd play pool a and come together, take drugs or write their names performance endeavor rumored to have been Prince's tenure at First Avenue, proved too tame, and these life themselves to keep his assless chapseat warm. Good citi

I'd like to state, however, a pressing thing: it took me : find my way. Where I worked, forget it. You find all gentlemen after handjobs in parking lots. I partook partook as I was lonely too, but something always i audiences at drag shows and queer karaoke nights in o bars with no sense of welcome. I wore out my eyes on t having eventually to masturbate myself to stupor. It t years.

I used to read a lot about New York and want to go the and before David Wojnarowicz had to sew his lips shut murder and definition and language seeped through wanted bodies in rooms and their voices muffled a shoulder or bathroom divider. It was my way home of think. I was always performing. I don't know that this is a We have jobs, right? We have accounts and ways of b keys to apartments and homes. We have children and and worlds. I feel that we earn performance through stints of fucking in cars, bodies blurring. The more I wo drenched myself in black.

I think about stories I could tell. My father could tell stories I wonder about this. What creates a tendency toward fabrication? Would I be better off in therapy than my thoughts? Where do I start and end of my need for validation? selfish? I do not have answers, but in the car I listened to Houston. I found what I think of as her transmitted energy empowering. I left town and drove to the city amid light rain and my can of booze. I'd ease my arm out the window and feel the wind. I'd smoke with the other as the can cooled and the music feral. I felt set free. I felt my body boiling up with all the days and the stares of the students and I ran it out myself in the sundown mirror and the running makeup,]

I wanted to quiet my head further so on arrival I drank tonics and sat sneering from the bar. I felt the booze warm my mood began to lift, yipping maybe toward a nice room filled up with nary clothed bodies kissing and touching. Men running hands over one another or women dancing to rhythms. Everyone reaching some fluidity and pushing past object fucking on leather and neon fabrics only to be pushed and watched until the pulse of it warmed me over.

I went into the bathroom after writhing against some denim and found two gentlemen fucking. They were talking so it wasn't much to see them in the stall pressed together howling. The music in there was slightly quieter and the groans as I stared into the mirror and ran the sink to the drain. Eventually I noticed someone crouched in the corner and I turned to see.

I haven't made a point of meeting many people where care for them nor they I. This is as it is. I am O. circumstances. This person I'd seen perhaps helping and perhaps guiding buses toward the end of day. I can't and but I knew her and knew her from work. I walked to her horror peeling the skin of her face back at being alive. F out. The swelter of the room became heavy and miserable gentlemen the stall over persisted in their fucking. She looked didn't seem to register a likeness, a fellowship in being human the sink for water and wetted a paper towel, returning a her forehead. Her skin was pale. She was sweating and smelled medical. I tried to touch my hand to her cheek temperature there, encourage some level of identification my wrist and began pulling me toward her. I stood and me. We stood together and she seemed barely to note the stall near us. I don't know or care much for drugs. I partaken, little more. This was something horrific. This was pressing at my chest. I felt my fingers. They were dried shriveled. I couldn't make sense of it. I'd run them under I'd been sweating. I felt my chest heave and wanted to cough

The girl wanted to leave. I could see it. She wouldn't grabbed my wrist again. We walked together through the swelter, the light and drink, until the cold night air shocked into us. I felt myself coming together. I felt myself falling there, or somewhere, walking toward my car. I vomited on the knee of my leathers and I only know it in retrospect. She was Next day, maybe, I noticed redness there. She was quiet short, brown but slicked in spots against her skull. Her hair and not ripped but mangled against her chest, small gaps wore a coat and dressed in pants and shoes as if she'd come to school to come here. Her hands were shriveled and I felt my wrist and slither. I suppose she had a car as mine with my debris.

I don't remember fucking then. I remember laying back prone on her backseat, our legs however they needed to be there. I remember staring up at the back window and through its fog, its slightly frozen coat and her hands against the glass. I do not think that she and I in fact fucked. Both of her cold hands were pressed against the sides of me and held me there. There were no recognizable sounds. She made groans, sure. She performed things against me and sweated through her clothes and I felt the sickness of bile at the back of my throat and through my teeth. I can still feel the cold of her seat against my head. I remember seeing something. I remember the sounds of those gentlemen. It could be that simple. I recognized her and felt pulled to her. I don't know what my sense of responsibility was that night. I might have thought though I found no evidence the next day. We might've both have experienced memory loss. I have missed days of my life, I was asleep, not caring. I can piece together fragments only. Fragments of her wrists, say. Fragments of her hair and its slickness against my neck. Fragments of her mouth. The whispering and grunting at my chest, the heat of her breath. These are my memories. This was an anomalous moment that doesn't fit. I found myself in complete lack of control and I wanted to spiral out in front of me. Perhaps she wanted to die. I found that room to hear people fucking nearby so she was close to them. This makes sense to me. I can appreciate this in retrospect. I think someone drugged her and she barely escaped. I trust that she was but I have a male body and there are differences, bars and walls. A degree of insidiousness or threat, perhaps. I'm uncertain about anything together in retrospect. I only remember the darkness. I remember the gloss of night and the armor of our coats and the hands held there against whatever death.

I woke with her stomach's skin against mine, cold but for the heat of where we touched. I worried she was dead, then my head was being crushed beneath the sea, then a drunken but I remember smelling vomit. I must have spoken with her but all I remember is mumbling. I must have sat up and tried to figure things out. The things that stand out are the lights on driving home. I think I spoke

sat her up and made sure she could function well enough. I looked for something to straighten her out, a bottle of water, a bit of food. I would've tried to do these things. I'm not sure I did and didn't do. I hoped that I did everything. I woke up that I did everything.

I don't know how to advocate or speak for another. I couldn't help her situation better or worse. She looked like me: her hair, her memory, her clothing a messy sprawl of unkempt material. All of it looking like escape, the both of us seemingly wanting to. I don't remember what we said or whether we touched. I don't remember if she was O.K. that night or what. I couldn't feel any relief or vomiting in my walk to my car. I only remember the lights as I began to surface driving across a bridge. I don't remember sitting at a McDonald's terribly early and drinking a cup of water and coffee, slowly putting myself back together. I was not enough to return to my small home and fall asleep calmly. I was ugly smells until the afternoon.

Later on that week when I saw her outside of school as she walked toward the large dumpster I felt nauseous. I doubt if she recognized me. When I woke up from that night and looked in the mirror I saw any anonymous body soaked in strobe and the mud of a parking lot. It didn't matter if she recognized me. I walked by and felt my age. I let myself return to my youth in that hell and was calm and clear. I had the notion; asleep and it started at the eyes. Bells rang and bells abounded. Groups assembled themselves at the doors. I was there wherein they'd make minor messes throughout the night. In the evening two shows were being put on and I was asked to be orderly afterward. I'd accepted gratefully as things had been. I was waking in that car. I was always fairly close to death, I figured. I'd seen someone OD and this was something to process. I was feeling my whole world curl in on itself and become ruin. I was a ruiner. I moved the can across the sidewalk.

numbered door and made my way past the lot of them filled with people. That night I might dress myself and naked to feel my limbs sprawl out. That night I might drive and feel aligned with planets. I wasn't sure. I walked identifying touch of stomach as I passed her. Everything Everything would be O.K. for me in turn. This has a problem. These have always been my problems. I am at my teeth against the low guts of life only to rise again to await the weekend when I'll flee.

—G

Grant Maierhofer is the author of *Postures*, *GAG*, *Flamingos* and others. He has appeared in *LIT*, *Berfrois*, *The Fanzine* and elsewhere. He lives in Idaho.

methodical, intentional, mechanical | Adam D
Interview — Mary Kathryn Jablonski



*Everything is expressed through relationship.
only through other colours, dimensi
dimensions, position through other positions th
That is why I regard relationship as the*

*A*rtist Adam Daily works in photography, digital collage, printmaking and painting. You would not look at his works, however, as much of the p

creation goes on behind the scenes. Adam defies the computer techniques that are painterly, playful and painting techniques that hide the human hand via perfection. This lends a great deal of mystery and in finished works. His methodology is rigorous, his exacting.

—Mary K



April – ink on synthetic paper, 44×60 inches, 2

Mary Kathryn Jablonski (MKJ): There is a series of yours that I just can't get out of my head. I am in love with your white invented "landscapes" that I consider monotype. The fact that they are not prints at all, since I recall the surfaces as smooth, couldn't pin them down at the time. And what I'm really curious to know is how these works relate to your current bold, large-scale paintings, which *seem* quite different.

Adam Daily (AD): I think first of all that the relationship between my current body of work that I'm making now and my older body of work is that of *organized systems*. My current work begins as a drawing of simple geometric shapes, and it all happens *digitally*. Everything happens in Adobe Illustrator. I will build, say, 10 different shapes, and even though they are all in the same isometric perspective and structure, and even though they are on the same grid. I then take each shape and produce it in a different color. So that gives me a grid of shapes to work with. I might have say, five different shapes in five different colors. I then use this to begin finding both spatial and color relationships between the individual forms.

Some of the shapes I use are simple; some are complex. Generally all follow the same structure, what I do, through layering and height and location on the x/y axis, and the *possibilities* of these individual units, linking them to create larger forms. and I find that space occasionally flattens or opens depending on the way colors or shapes relate to one another.



M4 – acrylic on PVC, 48×48 inches, 2013

I've made a *system* for developing an image, so for my current work it can be an intense process of drawing, editing, revising, and creating different versions of these works. That process is very different from the process of the black and white images I was making earlier. I was building a library of photographs. So instead of an image, I would take my original photographs of many objects and edit them; sometimes to the point where the object turned into something completely different and unrecognizable; sometimes I would adjust the contrast or scale. I would then take these photographs, cut them up and reassemble them – also digitally – to create a new image out of the original images. Through that process, I would think of a place I hadn't been, and I didn't have a reference to that place. So I was trying to build, to imagine, an unknown space from images sourced from my actual surroundings. In

processes utilize this idea of building a library, then making images to form a composition.

MKJ: Clearly in both cases it's a collage process and a digital one. It's also painterly and printmakerly in some ways as with black and white works are treated eventually like monochrome paintings, you're transferring your image onto the paint. Then you almost approach silkscreen or multi-color techniques, with the application of one color at a time, trying



M5 – acrylic on PVC, 48×48 inches, 2013

AD: Right. So after I've digitally produced the drawing for the work on a sheet of Sintra[®] PVC Foam Board, which is brilliant material that has a very consistent smooth finish. It doesn't need a primer and it's a very bright white. I then transfer my drawing

simply using a ruler and very sharp pencil to define the form, and then I *do* work applying one color at a time. “Okay, let me find all of the areas that will be magenta,”

out. One of the most interesting ways that these paintings is when there’s a really high degree of precision, so that interesting color interaction where colors are coming tog

I tape off the areas to be painted, and then I use a spray gun with translucent or transparent acrylic paints. To get the color to be as brilliant as possible, I have to apply a consistent thickness across the painting, so that it appears to be a uniform color, when in reality it’s just a consistent film over a white surface. What this means is that the light will travel through the pigment, reflect off the white, come back and be intensely luminous.

In this way, it’s not like a traditional painting process where a brush is involved, no mixing of paint colors on the surface, and I specifically *avoid* overlapping any color with another color to avoid interference. The colors can touch each other, but not overlap. There is no color mixing, which would reduce the brilliance of the pigments.

Each shape, as I design it, will have three or more tones. I have an idea of isometric perspective and the light falling on the surface. I use these three different tones, and those are generally tinted with a specific pigment.



M6 – acrylic on PVC, 48×48 inches, 2013

One of the things I discovered over time is that for compositional decisions during the painting process to have a desired outcome, and making all my compositional decisions before the work enters digital space allows me to then focus on the manufacturing process so that the image comes out the way I want it to.

MKJ: What if there's an error during the manufacturing process? Are there any changes during the painting process that could be cause to discard a piece and start over?

AD: Sometimes, obviously, when you make something that is a mistake, and I have ways of fixing things. When I make a mistake, it doesn't change the course of the image. I am not making moment decisions. Decisions made during the painting process are made before the work enters digital space.

entirely color decisions, not compositional. When I make
there are general ideas about color; what color is going
Generally. But specific color is not decided until I mix the
systems that I use in order to make this work. An order
be followed.

MKJ: You've called it "methodical, intentional, mechanic

AD: And frequently when people see the paintings, the
paint is actually pieces of vinyl (or some other material)
cut out with a knife and put down. Although taping or
painting it a color is not a new idea and in many ways
interesting idea, these particular materials and this process
applying it does leave some doubt as to the manufacturing

MKJ: Yes, doubt... or intrigue!

AD: Right. And in all of my works, in the black and white
I'm interested in a piece that is *ambiguous as to its manu-*
ways, this is not a painting process. I've found that one
things as a painter, and one of the things that painters care
decisions during the painting process. I find that both
technical, material, compositional and color decisions
time is problematic for me. And that I always inevitably
systems for myself.

MKJ: It's almost mathematical or musical in its devices.

AD: Yes, right. It is. And the compositional process, because
computer, is so fluid, playful and free, there's no
consequence for a mistake. You don't have to wipe anything
your hands or *anything*. You can just play for hours with
shapes, and start to find harmonies in shapes and lines
between forms that spark your imagination, and that generate
That ability to separate composition from production is
complex compositions and a much more refined production

MKJ: Let's go back to the black and white work, the compositional process and production process. The manipulation after the printing, just as with a monotype:



May – ink on synthetic paper, 44×60 inches, 2011

AD: Exactly. This is one of the major differences between black and white and the color work. Those pieces begin with photographs that I manipulate, and I build a composition in this case. And with these, the digital version is the intersection between objects and the lighting is crude. It's as though I'm building a seamless imaginary land. To make a print on synthetic paper, basically a sheet of plastic, I use a jet printer. The paper is very smooth, and again bright ink comes out wet. The image can be washed off. It can be added to with more ink. And I use a variety of tools - makeup sponges — to manipulate an image that was created and refine it in the physical.

One of the other things that happens is that when an ink droplet comes down, they typically absorb into the paper with a gain, which means the dots get bigger. In the case of the

because the ink doesn't absorb, if you get the dots too close they form a puddle that's very, very dark. So what is 80% the digital version is 100 percent black in the physical print, which results in a higher contrast image, because you're taking the digital and you're darkening them. But then, additionally, you're adding photographic effects in the lighter gray tonalities. You're making tonal changes, something that an ink jet printer can produce effectively, again, without evidence of a human interaction.

So the same questions arise: What would happen if you used charcoal or graphite? If you made it as a litho, what would happen? Different processes reveal themselves in the finished print. It is the effect of seeing that process on your interpretation of the image. I like to build a process that is elusive in a way to allow the viewer to think *about the image*.



October – ink on synthetic paper, 44×60 inches

The black and white images and the large colorful paintings are similar in process; they are both about landscape. In the paintings, you are not looking *into* the landscape. In the

don't give the illusion of depth, because of the isome
They actually tilt inward into the space of the viewer
larger paintings, where the scale of the objects can be
than you are, so they interject themselves into the
smaller pictures become almost their own internal spa
are smaller than you, but also because of the layering of
can travel in the picture – not to a horizon line, not to a
but sort of in and out of the forms in the picture. So
“landscape.” They become a place, but that place some
less recognizable than the place could be in the black a
The black and white work is “our” world; the place in
works is a mathematical world, an imagined color space.

Adam Daily is a New York-based artist, designer, and printmaker who uses digital and handmade processes to create a variety of work. His work explores systems and organizational structures through geometric interactions and dynamic color relationships. His paintings have been exhibited widely in both group and solo exhibitions. In 2011, he was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Fellowship in Digital/Electronic Arts. He has had solo exhibitions at Salem Art Works in Salem, NY; Schaefer Contemporary in Williamsburg, Brooklyn; and The Foundry for Art and Design in Rochester, NY. He recently designed and installed a new large-scale mural for the University of Rochester, NY. www.adam-daily.com



A gallerist in Saratoga Springs for over 15 years, visual artist **Kathryn Jablonski** is now an administrative director in holistic health. She is the author of the chapbook *To the Husband I Have Not Yet Met*, and her work has appeared in numerous literary journals including *The Journal*, *Blueline*, *Home Planet News*, *Salmagundi*, and *Slipstream*. Her artwork has been widely exhibited throughout the Northeast in private and public collections.

Only & the Beast | Poems — Kate Hall



THIS PRIMORDIAL SHAPE IS A GENERALIZATION OF THE SHAPE

A figure is contained by the shape of only one.

Only is the extremity. For example a beast.

And if only is added to a beast then it stands small and unbefr

And if only is subtracted from a beast then its shadow may lo
terrify.

Other things being equal, in both ways, a beast suffers.

I is a figure contained by the shape of only one.

Only is the extremity.

And if only a beast is added to I then I will be forgotten.

And if only a beast is subtracted from I then, truthfully, some
overlooked.

Hence, I am contained in the beast or the beast is contained in

Other things being equal, both ways, I suffers.

Somewhere there is less shame.
But we know only so far.
Hence, somewhere there is disappearance.
And there is a precise only-sized hole in the cage.

AND THEN THE GENERALIZATION ERROR WAS CALCULATED

(1) I am learning to suffer in your language and (2) it ends differently depending on who does it. Also, (3) I've learned how suffering is minimized with elastics. (4) The necessity of error. (5) The distance between the ideal arrangement and the tangible crystal lattice to bear its irregularities. Here, (6) I've calculated the distance between the ideal arrangement and the tangible crystal lattice to bear its irregularities. Even though, (7) I am the one experiencing the meaning of *heading down the wrong track* and despite the fact that weighing and balancing of certain limits is hard to understand, learning to suffer in your language and (2) it ends differently depending on who does it.

LET US FIRST CONSIDER THE ROLE OF ERROR

Captured in journeys through water.

In aquariums.

In jars of tap water.

As in, a little pond water has been added.

And of course there is blame.

Which no one can answer.

That the light passes through.

That widespread devastation.

That in great abundance.

A single red eye.

Then many.

That colored the sea for miles.

Ephemeral puddles.

As habitat.

Transparency.

As in, a fact not found.

Despite *The Field Book of Natural History*.

Predators.

To sink into deeper water by day.

To feed by night.

For being the less common.

For being fresh-run from the sea.

A container for the impossible.

That fell 9 days from heaven.

That and then 9 more.

A TOY SYSTEM CLOSE TO THE REAL WORLD

Moments of communion had consequences;
each one made a baby.

And the world was forced down the throat of this tiny I
which caused it indigestion.

It's true that the baby is only the idea of a baby
but still it cried for a long time,
until the words blocked off the place where the world was lodged
like the body creates the abscess
and thus, the I grew and became enormous and parentless.

This is a story of creation.

Our separate same stories

we construct and reconstruct in a dark,

enclosed as the I is in its dark room,

adrift in its systems—

organs, tissues and cells—

so full of world lodged somewhere unlocatable within or without

Our words surround the world;

when we find them, we cling to them.

Yet, we never understand what each other is saying;

our languages are so different.

And in the end what actually saved us was not the names of things

not the capsule of words that held the world back,

it was the gesture.

The elegant arc of these fragile manipulative hands as they
coaxed each O into existence, each I into existence.

And this was the moment of communion,

the moment of creation,

the slow tango,

the pounding of the fists against the wall of the self:

the gesture of my O and yours so separate and sudden and still

How two Is can bump into one another:

one I rub against the boundary of the other I,
so that eventually one I was taken into the other
and the other I was taken into the other.

And in the end we were not for what we thought.
We were for the gesture,
as the night for the lift of the moon and not the morning,
as the plant for the breaking of the soil and not the flower,
as the grapes for the feet and not the wine.

The words are just practice;
they are misunderstandings.
And the misunderstandings are practice
for the inevitable loss of one I or the other
and the world sequestered there.
The loss that comes when we stop,
when the sun streams through the window
and morning breaks in.

Kate Hall lives in Montreal. Her first book of poems, *The Certain*, published by Coach House Books (2009).

What It's Like Living Here — Heather Ramsay in
Lake, BC



The view

A man with a chainsaw climbs through the branches of a giant cedar tree in 12-foot sections so your husband can split rails to match the old fence. The thump from the log ripples through your house in Ryder Lake, a hamlet with cows in a hanging valley a few kilometres above the Bika Chilliwack. After he's done, piles of debris lay in the low yard. The neighbour's dog crawls into the hollow of the tree and sniffs around. An artist friend drops by and dreams up rounds. She wants to make tables, resin the tops, sell them



With the tree down, the sun crackles through the large east face of your 1970s-built cabin home. You gaze through the forest, cradled by conifers, birches and big leaf maple, toward Elk, Thornton and Cheam. You get the binoculars and look along the ridges. You might get there too, but not until you've cleaned up the yard.



Stick after stick goes into the flames. You remember the
drove around Ryder Lake, before the real estate agent
involved, and discovered the lake was just a slough
farm. You learned that the Women's Institute, which has
for 80 years, manages the community hall. Although you
island in northern BC that only got cell coverage five
discovered that service is even worse here.



You call your house mid-century modern and think Wright. It has a low-sloping roof with beams that uninsulated ceiling to the outside. In the winter it gets summer cooking hot. The outside is painted conifer green and red cedar covers the interior walls. Painted bricks line the platform for the old wood stove. You had to pull the dead side sliding door when you first arrived, because the company said so. You haven't replaced it, even though it's years old and rumbles like an earthquake when it comes

A thick column of smoke rises from the burn pile and you carbon, but the sapling-thin logger tells you he'd greenhouse gases with his truck if he'd had to drag his hill. "Besides," he adds, "it's your God-given right to burn

Getting to know the neighbours

In the mornings, a jazz band of birds call through the fog

out the driveway and jog down Briteside to Sherlaw.



You can't see the monster at the first corner, but he runs crashing through brush along the fence line. You say "dog" and hope there's no break in the chainlink. You walk willows above the deep water ditches. You nod at the red farther up the road. Just past them, the goats bounce in saw that one baby went missing on the community Facebook one mentioned finding her. The border collies used to run and snap, but you've learned to yell back and the dogs they bit somebody's housesitter. Now when you pass, y

yapping as if they've been locked into a shelter underground. You are running to Extrom and then up Forester where fresh eggs are in a cooler at the end of a driveway along with a can of food. A yellow school bus goes by.

You come through the short trail that links back to Britton. You see the big snag in the ravine at the top of the street. You look about the grey in the hollow: it looked like an old snail. With binoculars, you see that an owl is spread sideways on a branch like a chicken. Who cooks for you, she calls. Later you see her f



Gunshots sound from miles away — way down the forest that runs along the flank of the mountains. The track even goes down the south side of the slopes to the hurtling white water of the Chilliwack River. You drive past the clear cuts left after decades of logging shows and find men wearing neon shorts and caps. They are stocked with coolers of beer and boxes of bulk ammunition. They set up targets and lay out the old landings and gravel pits. They set up targets and lay out colourful spent shells two inches deep on the ground.

Back channels into town

Within eight minutes of winding down steep road on the hills, you reach the green back-lit Save-On Foods sign of the mermaid at Starbucks. The Shoppers Drug Mart until midnight.



Down on these flats, towards the wide, mud-coloured modern houses have sprung up on what was once before the dykes and the corn maze, forests and lakes years of Sto:lo lives. Now, strata-run gated communities all peaked the same way multiply. Quickly built concrete peony stalks on old hop-growing ground. Shopping restaurants choke out the hay fields. There are 46 churches people. It's lovely and sunny down there, but it is prone to



Historic downtown Chilliwack is 15 minutes farther meandering road. You prefer these back channels. The c the bustle of condos and cul-de-sacs. You learn that th where the black cherry trees snapped in the last winter's was named after a section of the Chilliwack River that 1 You find a website lauding the pioneers who first can. Some farmers got sick of the spring melt that flooded the felled several large trees to block the riverbed. Later oth and drained an entire lake.

This winding road passes through two Stó:l villages Tzeachten, which means fish weir in Halq'eméylem, but the weirs are no longer there either. Next is Skowkalk "going around a turn." You went to an event in their l celebrate a recording of ancient Sto:lo songs. You learn t a chief in the 1920s, thought it would be hard to pas stories since disease, residential schools and the assault had come. He wanted them all written down but transcription, translation and printing of the book too years. With this new CD you realize it took another 40 fo oral again. You meet members of the Sepass family and salmon, bannock and other food they prepared. As you

clouds darken over the broad valley and you listen to the
the creator, who made Earth grow out of the mists.



Downtown Chilliwack

You continue into the town which incorporated less than
— one of the first white settlements in this part of BC. On
main street, you can buy used books, new shoes and
vinyl in the high fidelity record shop. You had no idea
for \$40 now. You look at the vintage Kenwoods but do
have Chilliwack, the 1980s rock band that sang “My Girl
Gone).”



Wellington Street, downtown Chilliwack



You find the town museum housed in the old city hall. The Roman column look was conceived by Thomas Hooper who designed the Coqualeezta Indian Residential School, same land where newcomers plowed up adze blades and bowls. The best coffee is at Harvest Cafe, and the best There's a place to buy crusty Swiss bread and restaurant slurp Vietnamese bone broth pho. You hear that the moved to the suburbs of Sardis, citing a better retail s

people think he was tired of the drug addicts at the c
growing, but the homeless population is too.



You had thought of living downtown, but the real estate
crime. Really you didn't like the highway noise and the
of trains. You head back towards the suburbs and get
tractor going 20 km/hour on Evans Road. You pull off
stall for local blueberries and then up to a drive-thru for c

Golden Jubilee, not Peaches and Cream, and get 13 col
paper sack through the window and you hand them you
card. After ten dozen, you get another dozen for free.

Summer heat

When it gets really hot, like 30 degrees, you join the hur
at Cultus Lake. They crowd together at sand beaches a
grounds but you find a small pebble beach in the shad
jewel-like blue water. It would be perfect if there weren'
skiers around. You try to ignore them, but you leave
when the partiers pull up and idle offshore.



Cultus Lake, seen from Ryder Lake

Not far from the lake, you find a spot on the river whe
pools in a rock wall tub. It is deep and no one else has d
You dog paddle against the current and find that that yo
in place. A guy in an inflatable armchair floats by and ra
can to you.

When you get back to Ryder Lake, a giant black truck with a broken muffler roars up the road. You hear a crab fall out of the yellow plum tree. The startled neighbour runs across the road, but her three cubs stay and scramble. The neighbour's dog barks and the cubs clamber higher up the tree. The neighbour asks them to put their dog inside so they can get away. Later you try to pick the plums, but most are too high. Your husband gets out the chainsaw and cuts the unreachable branches down. You make pint after pint of ginger and vanilla plum jam.

In fall, the osiers will turn red and the rusty old tin can fence post will pop in the low seasonal light. In winter, you see your reflection in the super-sized glass bulbs hanging from the Christmas tree.



The warning

You force your bike up the winding hill from the flatland with each crank. A big white pick-up comes

road slows. The driver sticks her elbow out the window
be careful.

You are panting as you pull your shoes out of their clip
topple. "Pardon me?"

"There's a cougar running around up here," she says.
fumes into the air. "I'm just saying. You might not want to
here."

You say thanks for the warning, but what can you do? You
So you continue on up the hill, past the llamas and the
right beside the road. Past the churn of a waterfall to
wonder where the water comes from. There is no lake
You think about the guy down your street who told you to
put a cougar up a tree. Another neighbour said he found
the forested part of his 10-acre yard. Its belly had been
giant cat. You want to see one of these creatures, but how
be while you are slowly churning your bicycle up the road.

Back at home, a boom echoes through your walls as if
airplanes coming down. You've heard people jokingly call it
Little Beirut. You think of the jail out there by the City
There's an army artillery training centre too and some
rehab place. After a deep blast and then a rumble,
Facebook page. "What the hell was that?" said a woman
know. Her house might be far across the rolling hills or
doors down. "It shook the magnets off my fridge," said
dynamiting his stumps again?"

You look out the window and see the stump on the low
property, the one that allowed you the view. The
developers to go is up the sides of the mountains. You
elder shake his head about that the other day. He points
hills that you occupy. "If it continues in this way, where
live?" he said.



Heather Ramsay has lived in many places. Born in Edmonton, raised in Vancouver. One idyllic year in the south of France, Vancouver at 18, Whitehorse, Australia (on the prowl). But it wasn't until she moved to BC that she really let a location take hold of her. She wrote for *Geographic* there and told a lot of stories. Then on to Haida Gwaii (mostly for *Geographic* magazines, books) and now Ryder Lake. She is an M.F.A. candidate in Creative Writing at UBC and is attempting to write a novel for her thesis. Her work has appeared in *Maisonneuve*, *Room*, *subterrain*, *Raspberry Magazine*, *Geographic*, *Canada's History*, *The Tyee*, *Northword* and more.



Epiphany

The tenth month an unlikely location
for it, or this morning or this afternoon when

you are a mother who used to be a poet.
You sit at the desk and have one hour to find it.

It's here somewhere in the mind's tiny grey flags
in the millions of scraps piling up.

Or maybe you left it in the dark bleeding gums
of the dog you love, watching her clench another

rock from the tide twelve years ago. What was she
looking for? What if she stopped looking?

Metaphors were easy then, not only the sky,
but migrating everywhere. And now everyone is arrow

arrow, arrows. Everyone harpoons. And
I am the big heart, aren't I?

When the black dog is being put down, in her last
second I whisper, *Squirrel*.

Attenborough

First month of kindergarten, out of the blue
slabs appear at the bottom of her artwork.
Ocean, she says to inform you. A second wedge

appears, light blue, crowning her paper with
a sky in which a two-inch Kea soars downward
for his lunch: red stripe of fish on a box

with wheels and windows. *I am the smartest animal
on earth*, she chants. *I am the smartest animal*.

Okay, you concede. And not to debate the thesis

so much as to develop divergent thought
you press play on YouTube. On the screen
birds of paradise do the work of pop-up pomp

firework faces appearing on the black stage
of their wings. *They're puppets*, she bluffs.

But! The strongest muscle in my body is my tongue!

Just like that, she flutters off to the mirror down the hall
where she watches her reflection flip
a glittering headband back and forth between its palms.

It's best if you stay hidden, quiet behind the laundry basket.

Bower bird! she's singing with a hunch
in her shoulders— *Giraffes can clean*

their ears with their tongue, this infant human
says to her reflection before she shapes her fingers
into a heart using twenty-nine hand bones.

The Standstill

We fought in the folded hours after the children
were in bed. We fought while scraping plates

gathering glasses after the guests had gone. Sometimes
the fight was vapour, vanishing in the living room

air when we came down for breakfast. Like you,
I believed there was a series of words, or a single

word that would solve things. We searched for it.
I walked the football field, the dog straining against

its lead. You walked the dog where you walked it.
Before bedtime we cleaned our children's bodies

carefully. We brushed their teeth quickly, leaving
the rest up to fate. I wanted to find that word, but

sometimes I come into the kitchen

in front of me in real time, being made and vanishing.

Albert County Breeder

It was years before I could walk back
to that doorway, figuratively hold

the post of your fallen porch
with its thousand green Mason jars

staring out towards the weathered barn.
On each window your dust held the shapes

of the cobwebs underneath.
Your father comes out the kicked door.

Inside I've seen the hard-packed dirt
on your kitchen floor, ketchup caked

to the spoons, the bucket in the corner
for the winter toilet. Outside we have more

in common: bus shelter for the wait at the end
of the lane, a broken look to our crab

apple too, blue spruce, red pines, rows
of crows on the electric wires and

the same wild square eyes in our animal
we brought to be breed with your animal.


When Life Widens Wider

In I suppose a pinprick of hope, I look out his windshield wanting it to be true: northern lights or meteor showers or something to be there above the valley so his hand on my thigh has an explanation, a need to point out exhilaration instead of the trope of furniture-maker/rig driver driving his babysitter home and stopping the car in the ditch. At two in the morning there's so much I think has answers—the black map of pinpoints above can be joined to form bears and containers of milk, archers with arrows pointing to North, to Hercules. But this all dissolves where his hand rests casually on my thigh, same hand that I think leaves porn magazines for me between the couch cushions, leaves cereal and sour milk, the nails of his children dirty and grasping for their one shared tooth brush. I squint into the distance above the hills to clear the chatter inside myself. If I want someone to be grateful for me, I don't know it yet. If I want a man's hand on my jeans, I don't know it yet. He decides to point to a series of dots above us. And among the voices in I hear him saying, See? This is a kind of map. And I don't hate for showing me that because yes, I see it too, it's a mess.

S. E. Venart's writing has been published in *New Quarterly*, *Middlehead*, *Maisonneuve*, *This Magazine*, *Prism International*, *Journal of Poetry*, *Journal of American Poetry*, *Journal of the Midwest*, *Journal of the West*, *Journal of the South*, *Journal of the North*, *Journal of the East*, *Journal of the West Coast*, *Journal of the South Coast*, *Journal of the North Coast*, *Journal of the East Coast*, *Journal of the West Coast*, *Journal of the South Coast*, *Journal of the North Coast*, *Journal of the East Coast*. She is the author of a chapbook, *Neither Apple Nor Pear*, *Weder* (Junction Books 2003) and *Woodshedding* (Brick 2007). She lives and teaches at John Abbott College.

Singles Bar for Zombies | Poems — Mark Sampson

 No Responses

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Author photo by Mark Raynes Roberts

Singles Bar for Zombies

Sure, the blonde sitting there at the bar
is hot in a conventional way: coffin-ready
curve to her dress, the way she cups her wine
like a chalice of blood. But tell me this:
Does she have *brains*?
You could talk to her till you're green in the face.
She'll just look through you with a deadened gaze.
Down here's still better than up there
where the cars all burn till the sky is smoke.
This bar's subterranean.
A waitress with no eyes asks: "Wanna
see a food menu?" With your worm-brown mouth,
you answer, "No thanks. I've already eaten."

Je, Zeus

My name means
nothing. Mark my
words. I will smite you
with my thunder-
bolts just as easily
as heal your blindness
or turn water into wine.

What is it with you,
storyteller, that you insist
our names speak
to some higher or more
subtle calling?

What chance did Joyce's
Dedalus have?

What are we to make
of Margaret Atwood's all-
seeing narrator named
Iris?

And explain to me how
the one morbidly
obese star pilot
in the squad that
confronted the Death Star
just happened to be named
Porkins?

We may be fictional characters
but we still have rights!

Some very unwise men
brought gifts to my birthday—
a party moved from Mount
Olympus to some shit-
soaked barn about a two-hour
drive from Tel Aviv—and

told everyone that I
was the son of God,
the sun that shone
out their asses.

I can't handle this kind of pressure.

To spite my mother (raped
by an angel, but that's
a whole other story)
and her exorbitant expectations
of me, I enrolled
in a carpentry class
at the local community college.
Forget it, boys! I said.
Pay no attention to the
deitous (yes, it's a word!)
reference in my name.
This particle-board cabinet
isn't going to assemble itself.

Surely I'm allowed
to pick and play
the life I want.
Surely I can choose
which cross to bear.
Fate's not everything.
I've a real lock
on this *tabula rasa*.
Doesn't everyone?

Lou Gehrig
died of Lou Gehrig's Disease.
Go figure.

Open Ground Coke

A dented smile on the
sidewalk, a gap-toothed
tab-pulled Titan of sticky
sybaritic joy. I knew the can
was half full when I took
a kick at it.

I mean, you've really got to *believe*
in optimism if you're going to leave
a partially drunk Coke on the ground.
Whoever she was, and she was, at least
to my mind, a *she* – the indifference of lip gloss
smeared across the can's silvery rooftop,
indentation along its side
the result of a woman's thin, thoughtful
finger (I mean, a *dude* would've just
drained it dry and then
crushed that sucker flat) –
she must have had faith in the
wealth of the world,
dreamt of the fecund pampas, farm fields
that promise an abundance of sugar cane;
a princess asleep in the certainty
that our polar ice caps are going nowhere.
Here's the thing about a positive attitude:
You're still here whether you have one or not.
If you spend too long thinking just how filthy
these sidewalks are,
you'll stroll yourself straight into madness.
You'll miss the open ground Coke
taunting us with its air of waste.
It's a harbinger of something,
though I'll be damned if—

The Mattress We Chose

The salesman said, You'll probably get
eight good years out of this baby.

With that, a future as soft and firm as flesh
flourished before our eyes, a spell cast deep
in the unstained wellsprings of fabric.

This was a bed for aging on,
flopping cruciform on, tired,
a bit overweight on, at the end of our days.

Where will we be in eight years?

A raft of arguments, no doubt. Sweaty
summer sheets that need washing. A
breast cancer scare? The Sunday mornings
ruined by unconscionable cats screaming
for their breakfast? More grey hair found
in the thatches of my chest.

Yet, what I murmured under my breath was:

That's a lot of sex – a thousand and forty
(at our present rate) steamy acts
of coupling. The wife laughed.

Yeah, right!

But I held my ground.

Could this bed, this marathon sack,
this *Let's grow old together* mattress
handle all that?

The salesman blanched when I asked him.

He was no prophet of variable lust.

He was merely selling a place to lay
our burdens down.

Mark Sampson has published three novels – *Off Book* (Norw 2007), *Sad Peninsula* (Dundurn Press, 2014), and *The Slip* (Dundu and a short story collection, called *The Secrets Men Keep* (Publishing, 2015). He also has a book of poetry, *Weathervan Palimpsest* Press in 2016. His stories, poems, essays and boo appeared widely in journals in Canada and the United States journalism degree from the University of King’s College in Halifax degree in English from the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. Prince Edward Island, he now lives and writes in Toronto.

The Grand Design: Paintings of John Hampshir Text — Mary Kathryn Jablonski



John Hampshire, photo by Elana Gehan

*Part of the joy of looking at art is getting in sync in some
decision-making process that the artist used and
embod*

*John Hampshire employs and embodies labyrinths
mathematician inside an introvert, inside a college
is best known for elaborate portrait drawings that
upon close inspection into paths of abstract lines that i*

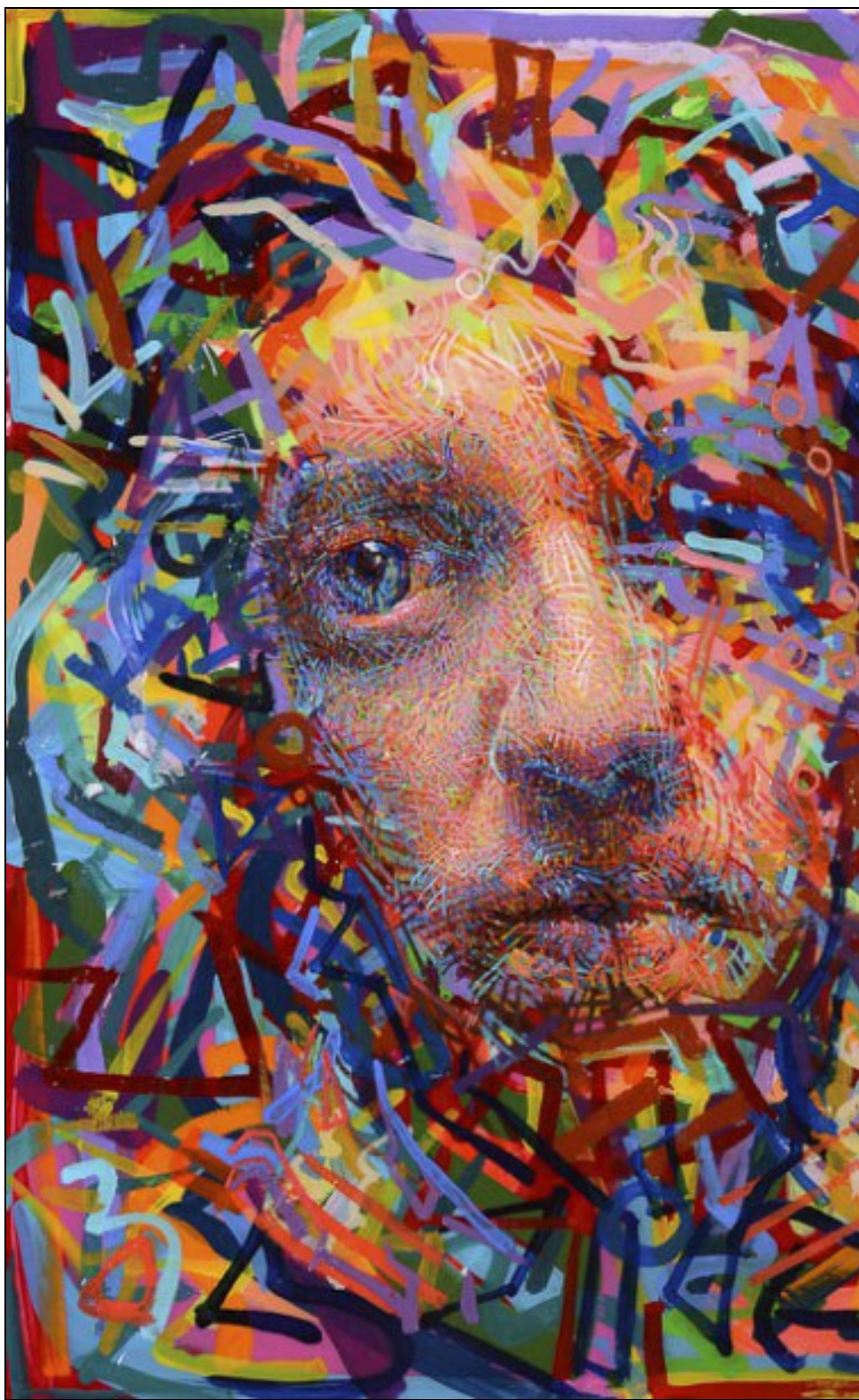
a seeming chaos of doodles.

It could be argued that some writers, too, internalize with a complex spirit, inquisitive and process-driven, constant and their journals become great art, even when they feel like they are not creating.” Biographer Diane Middlebrook reveals this phenomenon in the work of Sylvia Plath and refers to Plath’s journals as “the work of the hand” (think [M.C. Escher](#)), claiming that, “Her writing is a process by which writing comes to be.”

So it is in the work of John Hampshire: the drawing enacts the process by which drawing comes to be. His drawings and paintings would seem random mark-making, only to evolve as recognizable imagery. We are left with the [entire record](#) of Hampshire’s work gels at a distance, but dissolves when I’ve asked him a series of questions that led to these writings. I’ve removed the text of the questions, so that in the manner of a drawing, in the grand design, the hand alone could draw the work.

— Mary K.

In the mid-1990s I started drawing self-portraits, looking for a way to use pen and a language of mark-making and symbols to create images. These consisted of things like teardrops, architectural structures, etc. I wanted these things to remain legible as finished drawings, and so the idea of not crossing any lines was of this concern. Over time, as the drawings became more detailed, the interest in the symbols fell by the wayside but the idea of not crossing any lines became integral to the drawing process. Creating impediments to slow down the process and keep it on a circuitous route to making something. While this practice started in my work in the mid 90s it is an activity that I’ve been doing in notebooks and doodles in high school.



Self-portrait, acrylic on panel, 11 x 14, 2011

It's natural for me to paint the people around me. Most tend to be people I know, some more casually, some more than others. I do occasionally work from images of people, but this is rare. My consciousness or awareness of the natures, or my relationship to them may or may not influence can't help but think that it does, but it is not something that when I am working. Formal issues of color and mark and representation are the things that I tend to think more

about when I'm working. That's not to say that the rest
qualities beyond these concerns.



Gina, acrylic on panel, 11 x 14, 2014

The labyrinth drawings typically are in black and
introduction of color makes them much more co
paintings vacillate between full bombastic colors or
colors, or are completely restricted to grays. I usually a

with the portrait paintings, but after doing several of the relief, I resort to black and white.



Lauren, acrylic on panel, 11 x 14, 2015

I started the paintings around the same time as the drawings in the 1990s, and the sensibilities that directed the drawings relate to the sensibilities that directed the paintings. Painting is very physical and layering and those are not things I was very

denying, hence the continuing of layering marks of another. The paint marks themselves are more or less information derived from the subject matter that I'm looking at. Whether it's a person in front of me, my reflection in the mirror, or a landscape, in all cases I am pulling vague and then subsequently more specific information from my interaction with the subject matter. The difference between drawings *and* paintings, is that the language of mark is more present and visible and that the process of the making of the drawing or painting is readily apparent or accessible to the viewer. The tension between both mark and image simultaneously asserting something I like to have in the work. I'm an abstract painter who has let go of the primal desire for representation.

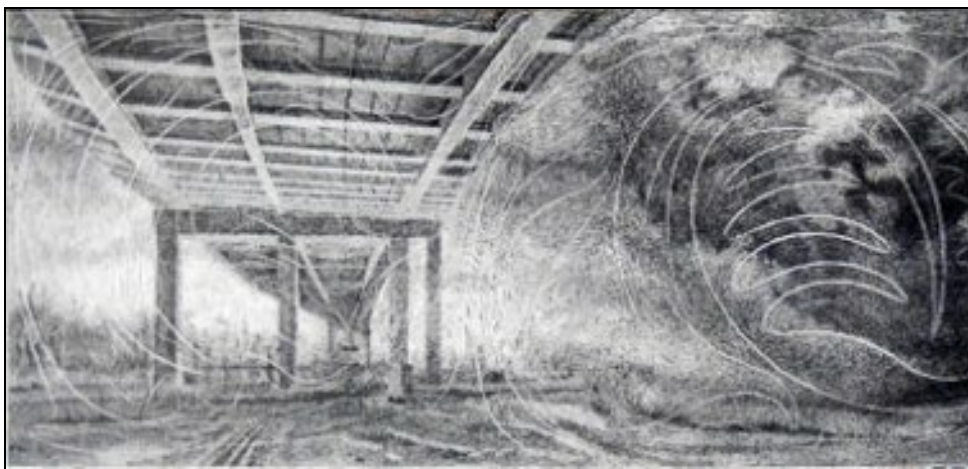


Inherent Strings attached, acrylic, string on panel, 11

The painting itself (or in some cases drawing) usually degree of resolution that occurs in the work. I recognizability of the human face allows for an immediate abstraction to occur while retaining the visual implications degree of resolution that the painted image brings is dependent painting and whether it's working or not. I keep painting work is resolved; sometimes this requires more and

resolution in an image.

The paintings more recently have also incorporated between layers of paint, physically separating the paint from each other, and playing up the three-dimensional quality of the work. In some cases I've even incorporated string or other objects into the medium. This goes along with the nature of the way I make these works; less like manipulated liquid material. They stand up for themselves and their individual identities more like the pieces of a mosaic than like mosaics.



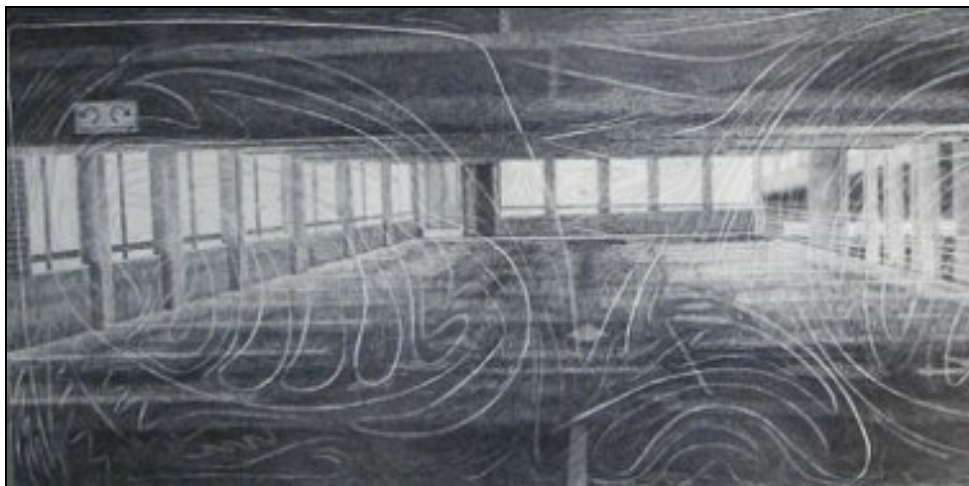
Labyrinth 308, ink on door, 32 x 80, 2014

Although I have made some very large portraits, most are conservative in scale, and it is the landscapes that tend to be monumental. My interest is in the sublime power of nature. Tangibly, I am interested in the dichotomy between the intangible qualities of weather or fire or clouds and the tangible physical language of mark-making or lines that are used to build form. While the portraits are typically of people I know based on photographs, the landscape references are an amalgam of my own appropriated imagery and imagined passages. The sense of space in the landscapes and weather, the deeper sense of space and the surface of the drawing and the greater compositional possibilities are the most attractive traits for me with the landscapes.



Labyrinth 338, ink on door, 24 x 80, 2015

Lately, particularly with the landscapes, I'll start with a photo that will break up the picture plane, which tends to be a bit of a hollow core doors these days, and I'll have very little, if any, idea of what particular image will develop. As I go along I see an image and start to build that, and then I'll add other elements to the drawing, working from both the photo references as well as intuition to put these disjointed images together. Intuition plays a major role in decision-making, and most thinking is retrospective and anticipatory with the work.



Labyrinth 311, ink on door, 32 x 80, 2015

I have always had an interest in math and physics, and I was a minor in undergraduate school. I see a relationship between my current work and those pursuits and interests and those of my current work. There are simultaneous dichotomies in my work: solid versus representation; solid tangible marks describing transitions of light in an atmosphere or form; abstract versus Renaissance ideas about pictorial space or surface versus image. These dichotomies make me think

juxtapositions or seeming incongruities in physics, between the harmonious Einsteinian relativity and quantum mechanics; or the duality of light, having waves and particles.

The mystery of painting seems more alive than ever in history, and physics is no different. The more we know about perplexing the universe seems: the simultaneity of Schrödinger's box, being both alive and dead until you open the box. Translating these ideas to a philosophical level seems easily transferred to color theory and optics. With painting, I'm not sure when the box is open, or if it ever is. Things really remain mysterious until the viewer experiences the work; even then ambiguities persist.

—]

John Hampshire is an Associate Professor of Studio Art at SUNY Binghamton. He has had numerous solo and group exhibitions nationally. He has received many honors and awards, including most recently a SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creativity, a NYFA fellowship, and a Purchase Award from the Hyde Museum. <http://johnhampshire.com>

John's [2015 video interview with AHA! A House for the Arts](#) is available on YouTube.



A gallerist in Saratoga Springs for over 15 years, visual artist **Kathryn Jablonski** is now an administrative director in holistic health. She is the author of the chapbook *To the Husband I Have Not Yet Met*, and her work has appeared in numerous literary journals including the *Beloit Review*, *Blueline*, *Home Planet News*, *Salmagundi*, and *Slipstream*, among others. Her artwork has been widely exhibited throughout the Northeast and is held in private and public collections.

Uimhir a Cúig | Dunamon: Poems — Jane Clark



Promise

After the talk with the palliative nurse
over cups of tea in the kitchen, my mother
tells me she's already asked my father

to promise he'll make it through the winter –
it'll be sixty years in April, Charlie.

Sixty years since she walked down the aisle

in her dress of pristine lace, beaded bodice
and tiny satin-covered buttons at the nape,
a full skirt of tulle falling from her waist

to red and black tiles. Ballymoe Church
is tumbling now, stone by stone,

beneath the weight of brambles, ivy, ash.

*I was eager and silly as a suck calf, she laughs,
as she readies his tablets, a whiff of silage
rising from the coats drying by the stove.*

When he falls asleep

at the kitchen table and drops
another cup, my mother bends
without a word, sweeps up

the broken pieces in her hands,
looking out for shards in case
he wanders bare foot in the night.

Planting Trees

Dad taught us that paper
comes from trees and the word for book

comes from beech. He showed us
the olive-grey bark, smooth as river rocks,

how to tell the light hues of young wood
from the gloom of the old

and how to count the rings – starting
at the centre, working out towards the edge.

He's unable to move from his bed,
but when we ask about the row of beech

beside the bridge, he's clear as a bell,
my father's father's father planted them,

*a shelter-belt for a nursery, when the British
were giving grants for planting trees.*

*Tomorrow, I'll get dressed,
we'll go down to see them again.*

I've got you

Through days of morphine,
tidbits to tempt his appetite,
there's nowhere else to be,

I hold his teacup to his lips,
wash his face and the hands
I rarely touched.

During the night old hurts
and worries surface
like stones in a well-tilled field.

What time is it now? he asks
on the hour. He sings to himself
and murmurs lines he learned

as a child, 'All we, like sheep
have gone astray, we have turned
everyone to his own way'.

When he asks to get up,
I hold his wrists,
brace my weight against his.

For a moment he's confused –
it's ok Janey, I've got you,
go on now, you can stand.

Respects

From Roosky, Creemully, Loughlyn,
Kiltoom, Kilbegnet, Moyliss,
Brideswell, Lecarrow, Creggs,
Athleague, Ballinleg, Carrowkeel,
they came to pay their respects.

They shook hands with us,
stood by his body and bowed
their heads. Cattle men,
sheep men, carpenters, teachers,
foresters, nurses,

mart managers, vets;
they said prayers, laid their hands
on his chest and blessed
themselves, then filled the kitchen
with the man they knew,

a grand man altogether,
always out early, a hardy hoor,
a good judge of a bullock,
fierce man to work, a man of his word,
he had woeful hands.

I slipped out for a while to see
the flawless orange globe
hung low over the Common
and a flock of whooper swans
feasting on the last of the winter grass.

Dunamon

i.m. Charlie Clarke

They dig slower as they go deeper,
taking turns to heave shovels of clay,

throwing bigger stones and rocks
up into the tractor box.

Son, grandson, nephew, neighbours,
they've already gone down five feet,

when they lay their tools aside,
drink tea, light up for a smoke

and agree they couldn't have
a better day for digging a grave –

not a cloud to be seen,
sunshine melting last night's frost,

and, from the woods behind them,
a chaffinch singing his heart out.

Jane Clarke's first collection, *The River*, was published by Bloomsbury in 2015. Originally from a farm in Roscommon, Jane now lives near Blessington in County Wicklow. In 2016 she won the inaugural Listowel Writers' Week Best Poet of the Year Award and the Hennessy Literary Award for Poetry. She was also named Poet of the Year for the Royal Society of Literature 2016 Ondaatje Lecture. Visit her website at www.janeclarkepoetry.ie

The Singular Elegance of Trees | Paintings — Ka DeGroot



Zombie – watercolor on paper, 24 x 18, 2015

As an artist I have been focusing on painting trees and
off limbs, i.e. sticks, for many years.

Trees are completely individual. They are adapters and each one is unique, and I believe that is something we don't think about. We are taught to look at trees as a stereotype; the image of a perfectly pruned tree is the one people have in their heads, balanced and symmetrical. Those rarely exist. Trees grow to survive, they adapt to their environment, growing into strange shapes, producing gnarled limbs, becoming contortionists to get to sunlight, and growing in the shadow of other larger trees. They grow in context to each other, adapting as best they can to the situation they find themselves in.



Dowser – watercolor on paper, 24 x 18, 2015



For Fortuny – watercolor on paper, 24 x 18, 2015

While my artwork has always been based on a traditional observation of nature, the final appearance of the objects in my paintings is grounded in my own ideas and concerns and by my own quirky interpretation of natural personalities. These objects allow me to explore my interest in fungi (especially the Chicago artists collective The Hairy Who) and all

with pursuing the pure physical pleasure of painting.



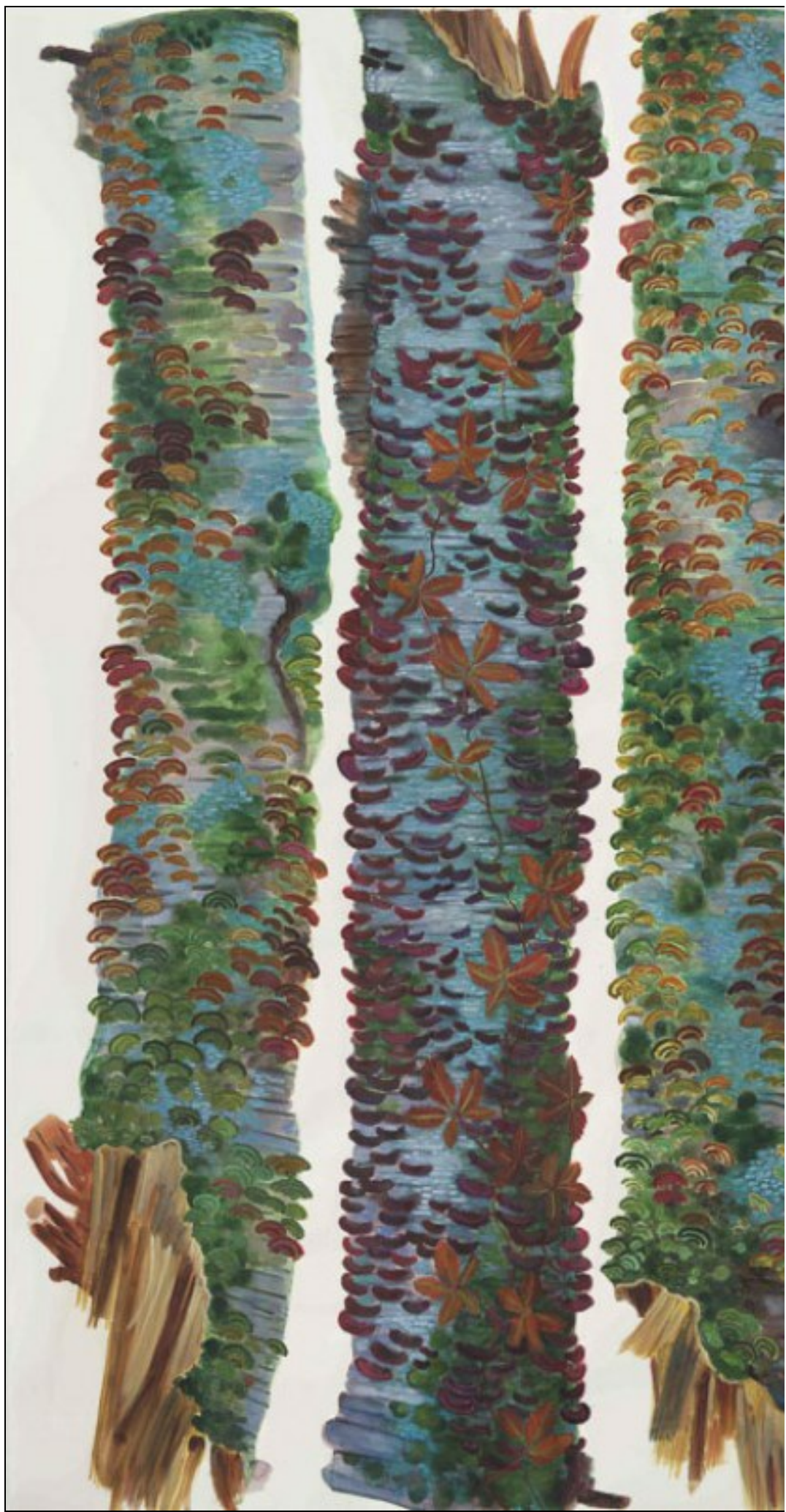
La De Da – watercolor on paper, 50 x 40, 2016



White Birch – watercolor on paper, 24 x 18, 2015

My current pieces have developed from my compulsive observation in my “neighborhood” in upstate New York. I am always looking for subjects by the side of the road or on hiking trails in nature. Often I will ask for permission to cut down a tree on someone’s

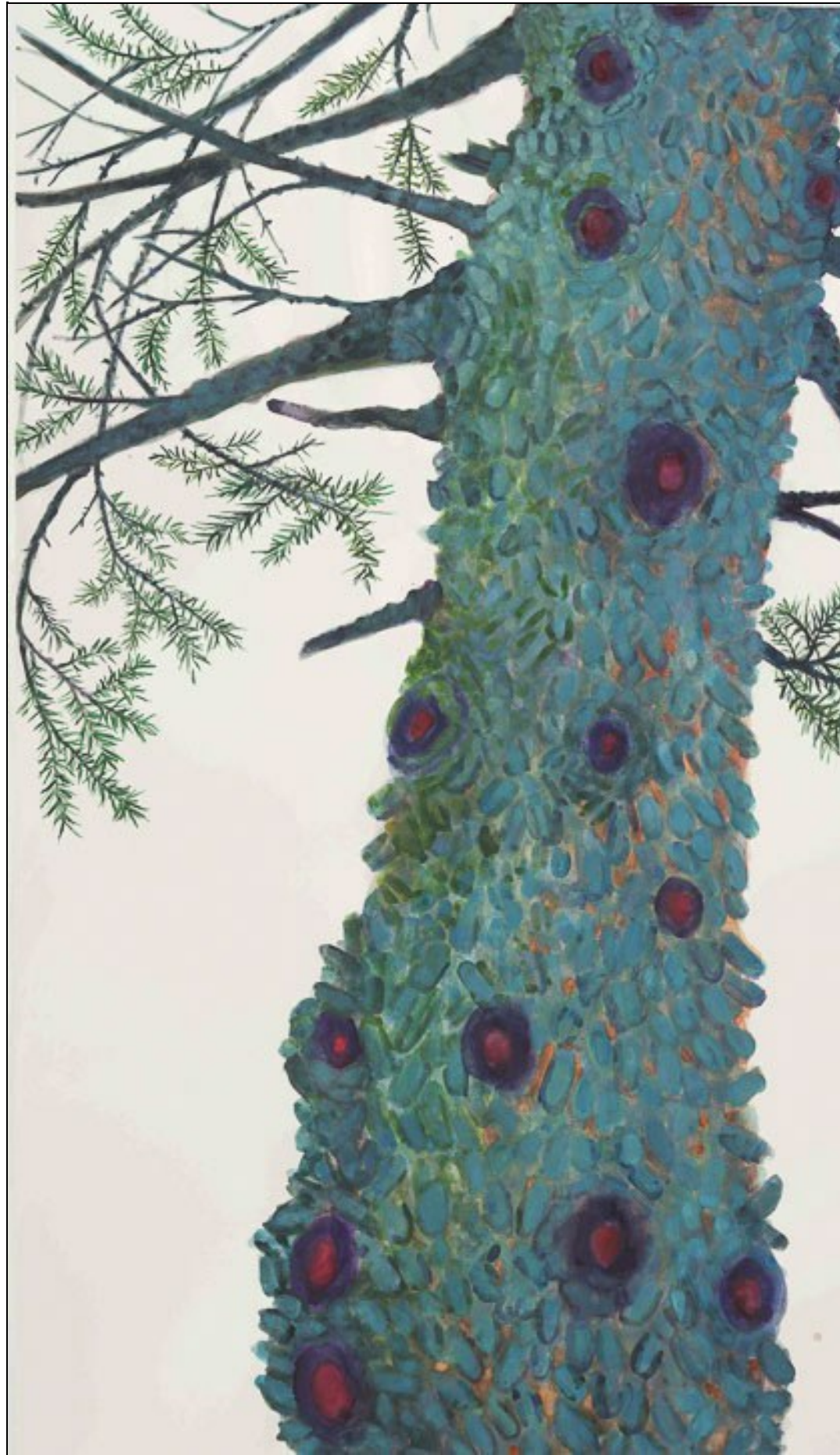
lusting after it for some time.



Menage A Trois – watercolor on paper, 7 x 4, 2016

The last few trees (7 long) that I have brought back to my studio me of Las Vegas show girls, adorned with cascading mushroom vines. They stand out in all their finery, in juxtaposition to the other. Of course the irony is that these beautiful trees are dead and dying. Their finery is the work of decomposers set on reducing them to a rich earth beneath them.





My paintings honor my subjects' singular elegance and imagined
I hope they can remind viewers to celebrate beauty in unexpected



Artist **Katie DeGroot** was born in Kandahar, Afghanistan and
arcadian suburbs of Boston, MA. As a teenager she moved to Ch
the famous Democratic National Convention riots of 1968. She
York University and Illinois State University before spending ne
New York City. Katie now resides on her great-grandparents' f
Hudson River in Fort Edward, NY, where she raises beef cows and
is also currently the director of Skidmore College Summer Studio.

Making the Void Fruitful: W. B. Yeats as Spiritual and Romantic Poet — Patrick J. Keane

 No Responses

 2017, Essays, NC Magazine, Nonfiction, Vol. VIII, No. 5, May 2017



*I shall find the dark grow luminous, the void fruitful,
understand that I have nothing; that the ringers in the tower
appointed for the hymen of the soul a passing bell.*

—Yeats, *Per Amica Silentia Lu*

*The Soul. Seek out reality, leave things that seem.
The Heart. What, be a singer born and lack a them*

The Soul. *Isaiah's coal, what more can man desire*

The Heart. *Struck dumb in the simplicity of fire!*

The Soul. *Look on that fire, salvation walks within*

The Heart. *What theme had Homer but original sin*

—Yeats, “Vacillation,” VII

“Her favorite reading as a child was Huxley and Virginia Woolf tells us of Clarissa Dalloway. He is fond of saying, “We Irish think otherwise.” He was George Berkeley, reinforcing his favorite philosopher’s Lockean empiricism with his own defense of visionary art in the section of *The Trembling of the Veil* covering the period 1685–1703. Yeats says he was “unlike others of my generation in on

I am very religious, and deprived by Huxley and Woolf of the simple-minded religion of my childhood. I detested, of the simple-minded religion of my childhood, made a new religion, almost an infallible Christian tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personal emotions... passed on from generation to generation by poets and painters with some help from philosophers and theologians.^[1]

Though Yeats was never “religious” in the normative sense of a world, as he says later in this passage, that reflects “the instinct of man,” and would be “steeped in the supernatural by his own instinct. It was his conscious intention, as well as the scientific naturalism of John Tyndall and T. H. Huxley’s “bulldog,” and to buttress his rebellion against his slavish adherence to Comptean positivism. In making up his own religion, he was essentially on *art* (“poetic tradition,” “poets and painters”) included in his “fardel” strands from interrelated traditions of the East and West. Seeing them all as a single perennial philosophy, and that the soul’s,” he gathered together elements

mythology and Irish folklore, British Romanticism (es and Blake, whose Los tells us that he “must create enslaved by another man’s”); Platonism and Rosicrucianism and Theosophy, Cabbalism, Hinduism, along with other varieties of spiritualist and esoteric th Gnosticism. Though Yeats was not a scholar of Gnost Carl Jung nor an Eric Voegelin, let alone a Hans J persistent themes and emphases in his thought a Gnostics, ancient and modern, would find both familia Others, not so much.



After this preamble, I will, in discussing the spiritual dimension of Yeats's work, focus more often than not on Gnostic elements. This is not an essay on Yeats rather than Gnosticism. Having mentioned the "ancient and modern," I should make it clear that, for the most part, I will bring in historical Gnosticism and the tenets of certain Gnostic sects only where they illuminate particular poems; for example, "A Vision of the Soul" and "Crazy Jane and Jack the Journeyman." (I have little to say of the religious movement drawing on Gnosticism along with, Judaism and Christianity in the Eastern Mediterranean region of the first and second centuries, CE.^[2] Instead, I will emphasize a Gnosticism differentiated from historical Gnosticism, precisely the concept of "Gnosticism" at the 1966 international conference, the Colloquium on Gnosticism, convened to examine the origins of Gnosticism. In the conference's "Proposal," the emphasis was on the attainment of gnosis, or "knowledge of the divine mysteries reserved for an elite.

Such knowledge was individual: one's "intuition" of revelation. For most Gnostics, this intuitive esoteric "knowledge" had nothing to do with either Western philosophic reasoning or with the traditional knowledge of God to be found in orthodox Judaism or Christianity. For spiritual adepts, such intuition derived from direct contact with the divine One. For poets like Yeats, it was identified with the "intuitive Reason" which, for the Romantics—notably Coleridge, and their American disciple, Ralph Waldo Emerson—was virtually indistinguishable from the creative Imagination. In Yeats, it was most powerfully exemplified in the prophetic vision of Blake and Shelley.

At the same time, there is no denying the centrality of spiritual knowledge, of esoteric knowledge, of mysticism and "magic," in Yeats's work. In July 1892, preparing to be initiated into the Secret Order of the Golden Dawn, he wrote to one of his heroes, the old Irish poet John O'Leary, in response to a "somewhat testy postcard" from a Fenian who had sent him. The "probable explanation," Yeats

that O'Leary had been listening to the poet's skeptical
forth on his son's "magical pursuits out of the immens
ignorance as to everything that I am doing and thinking
that the word "magic," however familiar to his own e
outlandish sound to other ears." But "as to Magic":

It is surely absurd to hold me 'weak'...because I
in a study which I decided deliberately four or f
make, next to my poetry, the most importan
life....If I had not made magic my constant st
have written a single word of my Blake book
Countess Kathleen have ever come to exist. Th
the centre of all that I do and all that I thin
write....I have always considered myself a v
believe to be a greater renaissance—the rev
against the intellect—now beginning in the world

Just as he had emphasized art and a "Church of poetic
creation of his own "new religion," even here, in his
defense of his mystical and magical pursuits, Yeats in
that they were paramount, "next to my poetry." But t
dismiss the passionate intensity of Yeats's esoteri
pursuits. What seemed to W. H. Auden, even in his
Memory of W. B. Yeats," to be "silly" or, worse, to Ez
"very very very bughouse" (it takes one to know one), o
be dreadfully misguided, was taken, not with complet
very very very seriously, by Yeats himself. His esoteric p
heterodox guises, remained an energizing stimulus, if n
throughout his life. In his elegy for Yeats, written jus
poet's death in January 1939, Auden says, "You were s
gift survived it all." But it was more than that. What Aud
Pound *dismissed* actually *enhanced* Yeats's artistic gift.^[4]

§

I just mentioned the Golden Dawn, which makes it time

Yeats's esoteric resume, some of which will be familiar to you. He was, along with his friend George Russell (AE), a founder in 1885, of the Dublin Hermetic Society. It quickly evolved into the Dublin Theosophical Society. Though, as he wrote in his unpublished memoir, he "was much among the Theosophists who drifted there from the Dublin Hermetic Society," Yeats was not believing that "Hermetic" better described his own wide range of devotee of what he called the study of "magic." He joined the Theosophical Society of London, in which, eager to transcend the boundaries, he became a member of the "Esoteric Section" but resigned; he was not, as rumor sometimes had it, "expelled" or "excommunicated."

Yeats was, of course, for more than thirty years a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which he joined in March 1890; he stayed with the Golden Dawn until it split into two, joined one of its offshoot Orders, the Stella Matutina. During the 1890s, the G.D and its Inner Order of the Rose Croix and the Cross of Gold (R.R. & A.C.) was "the crowning glory of the occult in the nineteenth century," having succeeded in synthesizing a mass of disparate material and welding it into an effective "system." Yeats took as his Golden Dawn motto and pseudonym *Levi* (D.E.D.I.). That sobriquet's recognition of the importance of opposites is a nod to both William Blake and Helena Blavatsky, the 11th chapter of whose seminal text, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), bears this title.



Yeats's Rose Cross, Order of the Golden Dawn, photo © No Ireland

The most extraordinary of the many exotic figures to
societies and cults, making Victorian London ground zero
against reductive materialism, Madame Blavatsky (HPB)
was, of course, the co-founder and presiding genius of the
Society. In a letter to a New England newspaper, Yeats
with wary fascination as “the Pythoness of the Movement”
accept her own tracing of Theosophy to ancient Tibetan
movement was born in 1875, in part in Blavatsky’s
apartment, where she kept a stuffed baboon, sporting
copy of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* to represent the
scientific materialism she was determined to push back

should be mentioned that *The Secret Doctrine* was an attempt to synthesize science, religion, and philosophy.

While he never shared the requisite belief in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, which supposedly dictated her theosophical revelations, Yeats, an anti-Darwinian, did share her determination to resist an anti-spiritualist materialist tide. And he was personally fascinated by her, whom he first met in the considerable flesh (she weighed well over 200 lbs.) in 1887 when he visited her at a house in Norwood, a suburb of London. She was just 56 at the time, but already older (she would live only four more years). Young Yeats was waiting while she attended to some earlier visitors. Finally, he “found an old woman in a plain loose dark dress: a simple, unpeasant, with an air of humor and audacious power. Her conversation was a whimsical exchange on the vagaries of life and death, a clock, which Yeats thought had “hooted” at him. On subsequent visits, he found her “almost always full of gaiety...kindly and accessible—except on those occasions, once a week, when she “answered questions upon her system, and as I look back on those tears I often ask myself, ‘Was her speech automatic? Was she in a medium, or in some similar state, one night in every week?”

Her alternating states were adumbrated in the phrase “the day of Brahma,” passive, HPB called, in *Isis Unveiled* (1877), “the day of Brahma.” Yeats had read that book and Blavatsky’s altitudes tallied with, and may have influenced, his lifelong emphasis on the antinomies: the tension between quotidian reality and the Romantic allure of the Otherworld, in forms ranging from Faeryland to that city of art and spirit, Byzantium; and between things that merely “seem” (Platonic “appearance”) and the spiritual reality perceived by Western Hindu hermits contemplating on Asian mountains. As in *Isis Unveiled*, Yeats had delved into a book given him by the author of *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883) by Madame Blavatsky’s fellow traveler and sometime disciple, A. P. Sinnett, whose earlier book, *The Occult World* (1881), had already had an impact on Yeats. “Sp

occult sense,” Sinnott declared, “has nothing to do with f has to do with the capacity of the mind for assimilating k fountainhead of knowledge itself.” And he asserted an crucial to Yeats: that to become an “adept,” a rare stat reach of the general public,” one must “obey the inv [one’s] soul, irrespective of the prudential considerat science or sagacity” (101). That Eastern impulse is ev three “hermit” poems in *Responsibilities* (1914).

A quarter century earlier, three poems in *Crossways*, his f lyrics— “The Indian upon God,” “The Indian to his lengthy (91-line) “Anashuya and Vijaya”^[8]—were writte direct and visceral influence. For the lure of the East had also related to Madame Blavatsky. Yeats had been de with the roving ambassador of Theosophy she had se April 1886, to instruct the members of the Dublin Herme nuances of Theosophy. The envoy was the charismatic Swami, Mohini Chatterjee, described by Madame perhaps more gaiety than tolerance, as “a nutmeg Hi eyes,” for whom several of his English disciples “ scandalous, ferocious passion,” that “craving of old *unnatural* food.”^[9] Despite his inability to resist the sex presented to him (he was eventually dispatched | Chatterjee preached the need to realize one’s indi contemplation, penetrating the illusory nature of the ma abjuring worldly ambition. His book, published severa described reincarnational stages, and ascending states o The fourth and final state, which “may be called consciousness,” is ineffable, though “glimpses” of it “ma the abnormal condition of extasis.”^[10]



Madame Blavatsky, photo taken between 1886 and 1891

Yeats later said that he learned more from Chatterjee's book." Hyperbole; but there is no doubt that he was affected by the concept of ancient and secret wisdom known orally from generation to generation, fragmentary and ineffable truth. There are distinctions between East and

Gnosticism and Neoplatonism, the Theosophy of Max and Mohini Chatterjee presents an unknown Absolute, first emanate as fragments, or “sparks,” separated from substance, and longing to return to the One from which principal Eastern variation is that, to achieve that ultimate have to “make a long pilgrimage through many incarnations through many lives, both in this world and the next.”^[11]

Many years later, in 1929, Yeats wrote an eponymous poem “Chatterjee.” Its final words, “Men dance on deathless feet” (though attributed to various “great sages”), by Yeats’ commentary” on Chatterjee’s own “words” on reincarnation no reference to a personal God, and we are to “pray for the just repeat every night in bed, that one has been a king, a rascal, knave. “Nor is there anything/ ...That I have not upon my breast/ A myriad heads have lain.” Such words inspired Mohini Chatterjee to “set at rest/ A boy’s turbulent dream” boy, almost forty years later, published “Mohini Chatterjee” in *Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), he placed it preceding what is certainly his most “turbulent” poem on purgation and reincarnation: “Byzantium,” in which “complexities of mire and blood,” are presented “dying in an agony of trance,/ An agony of flame that cannot singe a soul.” In most of the other poems we will examine, “Byzantium” is written though in this case with unique fury and surging energy, representing a Yeatsian *agon* between Time and Eternity, flesh and spirit.

§

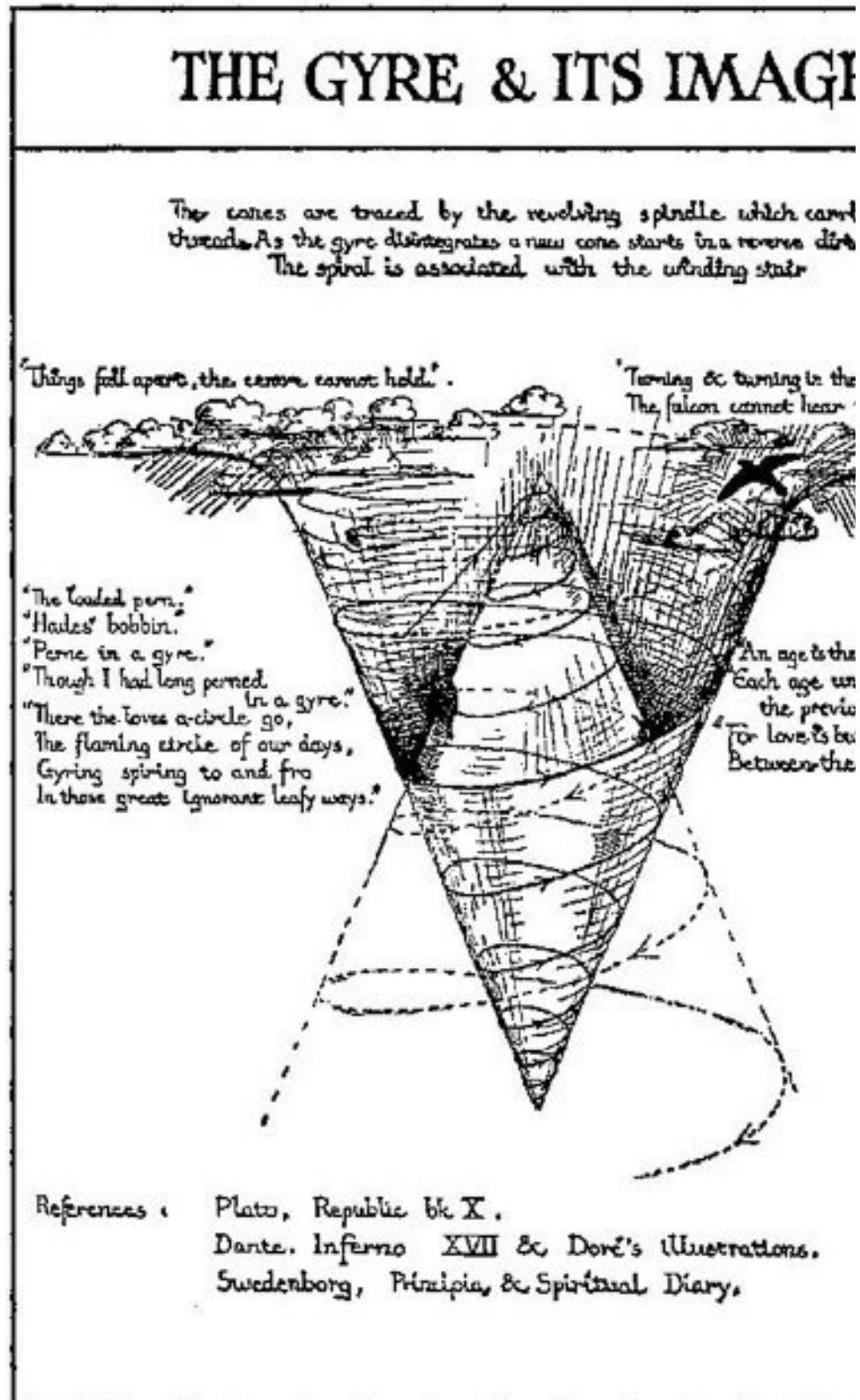
As we’ve seen, Yeats wondered if, on heightened occasions, his speech might not be “automatic,” and himself a “trance” poet since he never gave full credence to the “astral” dictation of Tibetan Masters, it is ironic that his own major esoteric text, *A Vision*, genesis. His book *A Vision*, first published in 1925 and revised based on the “automatic writing” for which Mrs. Yeats claimed when, in the early days of their marriage in 1917, she

husband's thoughts were drifting back to the love of
Muse, the unattainable Maud Gonne, and to her lush daughter
whom Yeats had also proposed before marrying his wife
origin, psychological or occult, the wisdom conveyed to
"Communicators," and then passed on to her husband,
poet for years. Alternately insightful and idiosyncratic, be
bananas, *A Vision* may not be required reading for love
even for serious students. As one Yeatsian wittily put
many, "a little seems too much, his business none of our

But Yeats's purpose was serious, and, as always, a balance
exercise individual creative freedom within a rich tradition
the first edition of *A Vision* to "Vestigia" (Moina Mac
MacGregor Mathers, head of the Order of the Golden Dawn,
noted that while some in the Order were "looking for spirit
or for some form of unknown power," clearly Hermetic
Gnostic goals, he had a more practical and poetry-c
though that, too, reflects the intuitive Gnosticism of p
creative artists seeking their own personal visions. Even
1890s, he claims, he anticipated what would finally emerge
with its circuits of sun and moon and its double-g
between Fate and Freedom: "I wished for a system
would leave my imagination free to create as it chose a
that it created, or could create, part of one history and the
Vision [1925], xi). A few years earlier, T. S. Eliot, though
patience than did W.H. Auden with Yeats's esoteric
memorably described creative freedom operating with
necessary historical discipline as the interaction between
the Individual Talent."

If it is not mandatory that those drawn to the poetry read
absolutely necessary that Yeats *write* it. It illuminates t
and even provides the skeletal structure for some of his
the single best known of which, "The Second Coming,
accompanied by a long note, reproducing the double-g
symbol of *A Vision*. Yeats tells us, in the "Introduction

edition of *A Vision*, that, back in 1917, he struggled for
 decipher the “almost illegible script,” which he neverth
 exciting, sometimes so profound,” that he not only pers
 persevere, but offered to give up poetry to devote what
 own life to “explaining and piecing together those scatt
 which he believed contained mysterious wisdom. The
 one of the unknown writers was welcome news for him
 was the answer, ‘we have come to give you metaphors for



Yeats was a man at once credulous and skeptical. His literary esoteric knowledge was countered by the circumstances of an intelligent, self-divided man and a notably dialectical poet. He doubted that there was a spiritual realm. He strove to access that world through any and all means at hand: studying philosophy, but not excluding the occasional resort to mescal to induce occult visions, and belief in astrology, which he attended many. A séance is at the center of his dramatic plays, *Words upon the Window-pane* (1932) explain the emphasis on “a medium’s mouth” in his “Fragments,” written at the same time, and which I will discuss some length.

Though it is difficult to track and disentangle intertwined thought and influence, let alone make conclusive pronouncements, significant Yeats scholars, Allan Grossman (in his 1969 study *Among the Reeds*, titled *Poetic Knowledge in Early Yeats*) and Harold Bloom, in his sweeping 1970 study, grandly concluded that their man was essentially a Gnostic. The book is governed by an impressive though unpublished 1992 Ph.D. thesis by Steven J. Kelley and titled *Yeats, Bloom, and the Dialectic of Criticism and Poetry*. My own conclusion is close, but less

§

There is no question that Yeats was a lifelong Seeker. The “knowledge” he was seeking, whether poetic or spiritual, was compatible, often in close alignment, with the quest for internal, intuitive knowledge of spiritual truth believed to be ancient and modern, to provide the one path to deliverance from the constraints of material existence, and thus to be essential. On the other hand, he wanted, as he told “Vestigia,” to find a spiritual tradition that “would leave my imagination free to choose.” The power and passionate intensity of much of his work derives from Yeats’s commitment to the paradox that the unquestionably valid, was to be found through the “profane

here and now.

A profound point was made three-quarters of a century ago by a perceptive student of Yeats's life and work, Peter Allt, in the indispensable "Variorum Edition" of the poet's works. He persuasively argued that Yeats's "mature religious *Anschauung*" was "religious belief without any religious faith, notional assent to the supernatural" combined with "an emotional dissent from actuality."^[14] In Gnostic terms (which are not Allt's), Yeats's "faith" of secret wisdom, responded, not to the orthodox Christian *fides* (God's gift of faith), but to *gnosis*: the esoteric knowledge gained from individual intuition of divine revelation, often, as the most formidable of Gnostics, Valentinus, in the guise of mystical philosophy.^[15] What Allt refers to as "emotional dissent" is Yeats's resistance to Christianity, and his occasional adoption of Plotinus' thought/ And cry in Plato's teeth," as he does in the section of "The Tower" in the very act of preparing himself for making his "soul." But emotional dissent and the making of a soul in an act of self-redemption are hardly alien to the individual *gnosis*.

Paramount to understanding Yeats as man and poet is the tension between the two worlds, between what he called the *material* and the *antithetical*, the never fully resolved debate between the World and the Self (or Heart). As we will see, that tension played a central role in his earliest poems to the masterpieces of his maturity. This tension is with his first published major work, *The Wanderings of Oisín*, a lengthy quest-poem centering on the debate between the World and Christianity, between the Celtic warrior Oisín and St. Patrick. It continues with his pivotal Rosicrucian poem, "To the Rood of Time" (1893), and culminates in the great debate of his maturity: "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" (1927) and the career-synopsizing debate between "The Soul" and the World in section VII of the poetic sequence revealingly titled "Variations on a Theme" which appeared forty years after "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time."

The final section of “Vacillation” ends with the poet blessing and gaily, if somewhat patronizingly—rejecting the path represented by the Catholic theologian Baron von Hügel. In his book *The Mystical Element of Religion*, stressed “the regeneration.” In the last and best of his *Four Quartets*, he identifies himself with von Hügel by endorsing, in the concluding section “Gidding” (lines 293-94), “A condition of complete simplicity (not less than everything).” In section 2, in the “Dance” encounter (seventy of the finest lines he ever wrote) is an admission, the ones that had “cost him the most” and “respectfully but definitively differentiated himself from the deceased Yeats. In that nocturnal encounter with a “compound familiar ghost,” Eliot echoes in order to alter “Vacillation,” and the refusal of “The Heart” to be “struck by the simplicity of fire!”^[16] In the context of the theme of contrast between Eliot and Yeats is illuminating; and we can perceive as his mighty opposite in spiritual terms, W. B. Yeats pronounced in his 1940 memorial address, the greatest poet of the century, “certainly in English and, and, as far as I know, in any language,” but who was also, from Eliot’s Christian perspective, an occultist and a pagan.

The charges were hardly far-fetched. The final section begins with the poet wondering if he really must “part” since both “Accept the miracles of the saints and honor them/ yet he *must*, for although his heart “might find relief/ Christian man and choose for my belief/ What seems near the tomb,” he must

play a predestined part.

Homer is my example and his unchristened head

The lion and the honeycomb, what has Scripture

So get you gone, von Hugel, though with bleeding head.

In sending the poem to Olivia Shakespear, his first love and intimate lifetime correspondent, Yeats, having just re-

poetry, cited that line, and observed: “The swordsn
repudiates the saint, but not without vacillation. Is that p
theme—Usheen and Patrick—“so get you gone Von Hu
blessings on your head’?” (*Letters*, 790)

§

In referring throughout to Yeats as a Seeker, I am alludin
little-known “dramatic poem in two scenes” with that titl
later struck *The Seeker* from his canon, its theme—the
for secret knowledge, usually celebrated but always
awareness of the attendant dangers of estrangemer
human life—initiates what might be fairly described a
archetypal pattern of his life and work.^[17] The “Seeker”
aged knight who sacrifices the normal comforts of life a
responsibilities in order to follow a mysterious, beckon
dying moments, he discovers that the alluring voic
pursuing all his life is that of a bearded hag, whose na
That final turn looks back to Celtic mythology and to Be
Spenser’s *Faery Queen*, where the evil witch Duessa, out
actually “fowle.” It also anticipates Rebecca du Mauri
“Don’t Look Now” (later turned by director Nichol
haunting film starring Donald Sutherland and Julie Chri
Celtic mythology also has instances of reversal. In th
modern version (Yeats’s 1902 play *Cathleen ni Houlihan*
starring the poet’s beloved Maud Gonne), the old hag
transformed into a beautiful woman: “a young girl wit
queen,” who is Ireland herself, rejuvenated by blood-sac



Maud Gonne in Cathleen Ni Houlihan

As in that seminal precursor poem for Yeats, Shelley's "The Rose upon the Rood of Time," with its tension between the material and spiritual, once Gnostic and High Romantic. As such, the poem illuminates, along with several of Yeats's most beautiful lyrics, two quintessential, explicitly Rosicrucian, poems: "The Rose upon the Rood of Time" and, a poem I will get to in due course, "The Secret Rose."

"To the Rose upon the Rood of Time," the italicized poem in Yeats's 1893 volume *The Rose*, establishes, far more powerfully than any other, this poet's lifelong pattern of dialectical vacillation, of oscillation between the temporal and spiritual worlds. In his 1900 poem "The Rose and Tradition," Yeats would fuse Romanticism (Blake) and Rosicrucianism: "The nobleness of the Arts," Yeats writes, "is the mingling of contraries, the extremity of sorrow, the perfection of personality, the perfection of its surrender." The rose opens at the meeting of the two beams of the cross, the crisscrossing place of mortal and immortal, time and eternity.

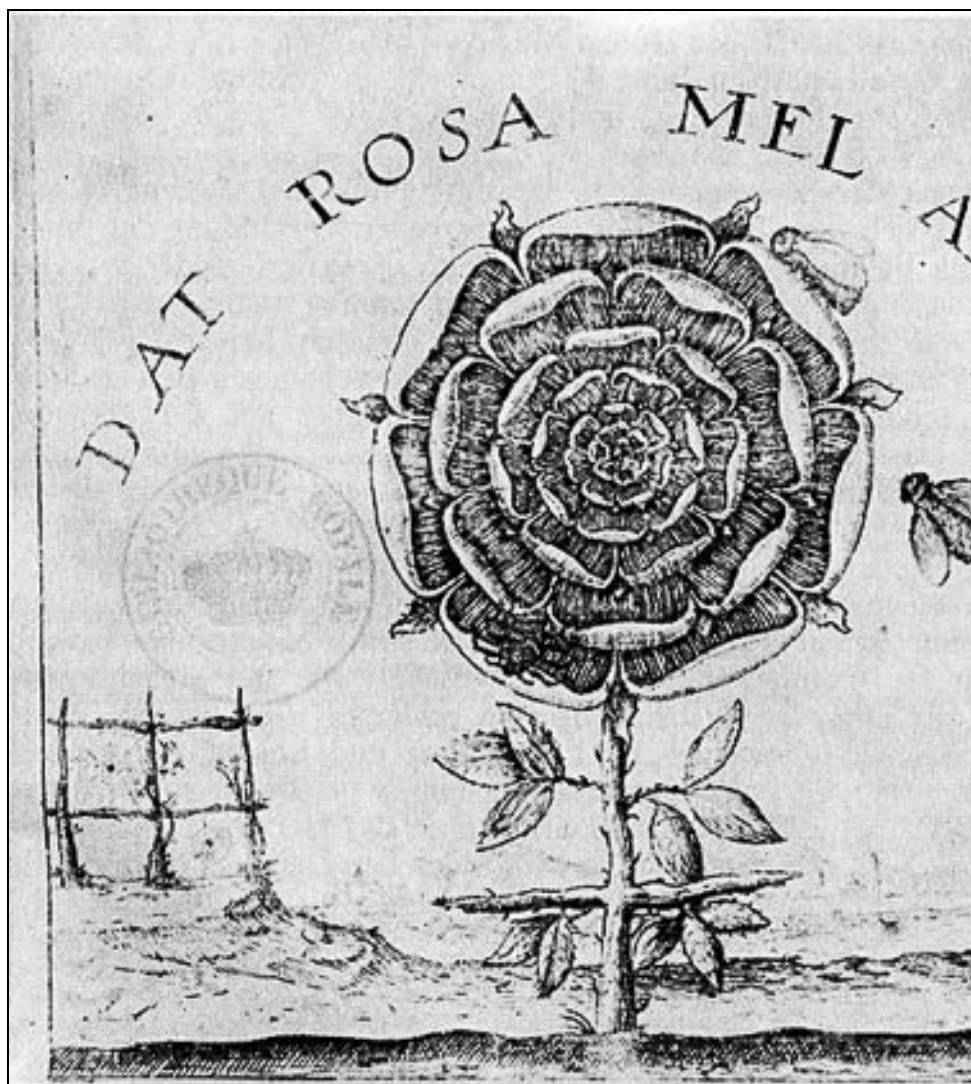
In "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time," the symboli

“find” the immortal *within* the mortal; yet there is an in-between “all poor foolish things that live a day” and wandering on her way.” That mingling, or contrast, connects the poem’s two 12-line movements. The second part begins with the Rose to “Come near, come near, come near...,” only to suddenly recoil from total absorption in the eternal synecdoche, recalling Keats, who, at the turning point of the “Ode to a Nightingale,” suddenly realizes that if he were to emulate the nightingale’s “forth thy soul abroad/ In such an ecstasy,” by dying, he would be entering into unity with the “immortal Bird,” but he divorces himself from everything else, forever: “Still wouldst thou sing, and I had sang—/ To thy high requiem become a sod.”

Yeats’s recoil in “To the Rose upon the Rood of Time” is structurally and thematically identical: “Come near, come near, come near, / leave me still/ A little space for the rose- breath to fill.” This recoil, marked by a rare exclamation-point, is a frigid resistance against the very Beauty he remains in quest of—like his Shelley of the “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.” But Yeats knows that he will be totally absorbed, engulfed, in the Beauty symbolized by the Rose. Along with Keats at the turning point of “Ode to a Nightingale,” another parallel may be illuminated.

The Latin Epigraph to *The Rose*—*Sero te amavi, Pulchritudine et tam nova! Sero te amavi*—is from *The Confessions* (“I loved you, Beauty so old and so new! Too late I have loved you”) in passage (X, 27) in which St. Augustine, addressing God, is kindled with a desire that God approach him. Yeats would quote these same Latin lines to illustrate that the religious life of the artist share a common goal.^[19] But the plea for God in “To the Rose upon the Rood of Time” may remind us of a famous remark by Augustine, also addressed to God, but with profane rather than sacred love. A sinful man, still in love with his mistress, he would, Augustine tells us, pray: “‘O Lord, and continency, but not yet!’ For I was afraid, lest you would soon, and soon deliver me from the disease of concupiscence.”

desired to have satisfied rather than extinguished” (*Conf*



Title page of Summum Bonum by Rosicrucian apologists

1629

In pleading with his Rose-Muse to “come near,” yet “l
little space for the rose-breath to fill,” Yeats also fears a
deliverance from the temporal world. Augustine is “[God] should hear me too soon.” Yeats is afraid “Lest
common things that crave.” Becoming deaf to the trans
its “heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass,” he worries th
alone to hear the strange things said/ By God to...those
thus “learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know.” The
and eternal beauty symbolized by the Rose is much to
this quester is also a *poet*; and “a poet,” as Wordsworth r
Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, is above all, “a man speaking
The “rose-breath” is the crucial “space” between the tw
as elsewhere, self-divided Yeats is pulled in two antithe
Hence the debates, implicit and often explicit, that shape

A memorable paragraph in his most beautiful prose will make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but out of ourselves, poetry.”^[20] Almost forty years after he wrote “Upon the Rood of Time,” Yeats presented, in section V of the sequence “Vacillation,” a debate between “The Soul” and “The Heart.” Once again, and more dramatically, the more Yeats’s interlocutors resist the option of chanting in “a tongue that we know.” The Soul offers “Isaiah’s coal,” adding, in an implicit question, “what more can man desire?” But the Heart, refusing to be “struck dumb in the simplicity of fire,” his heart but cauterized by the spiritual fire of that live coal the raton angel took from God’s altar and brought to the prophet in Isaiah 6:6-7. Having just refused to “seek out” spiritual “realities,” the Heart goes on, after indignantly rejecting Isaiah’s coal and “the fire,” to adamantly spurn Soul’s final promise and threaten that “the fire, salvation walks within.” The Heart anachronistically dramatically responds, “What theme had Homer but the fire?” Though it firmly stands its *antithetical* ground, the Heart still shares the lot-darkening concept of original sin, and accepts the Platonic distinction (Platonic, Neoplatonic, Christian) between spiritual and material “things that [merely] seem.” But since it is the things of the world that fuel an artist’s fire and provide the Heart emotionally dissents. The tension between content and titular “vacillation,” persists, as does the desire to merge the two at some “trysting place,” Yeats’s language characteristic of the spiritual and the erotic.

Before turning to “The Secret Rose,” which appeared in the next volume, two other poems from *The Rose* merit comment. “The Man with Fergus?” and, immediately following, “The Man with the Faeryland.” Both are beautiful, and both embody the tension between the two worlds. The first suggests that the peace promised

Otherworld is more tumultuous than it appears; the *Seeker* and “The Stolen Child,” emphasizes the human cost by Otherworldly dreams. I intend to return to “The Man of Faeryland” later in this essay, juxtaposing it with “a poem written almost a half-century later, and which, I believe, amounts to a point-by-point refutation of the earlier poem—except the refrain.

“The Man who Dreamed of Faeryland” is a catalog of misadventure. The “tenderness” of love; the “prudent years” that might have been lost from “money cares and fears”; the maintenance of “a fine reputation” leading to “vengeance” upon mockers; and, finally, “unhappiness at the grave: all have been lost, spoiled by the repeated ‘unnecessary cruel voice’ that ‘shook the man out of his senses, paralyzing him so that he dies without ever having lived.” This is a variation on the siren call of the faeries in “The Stolen Child” (“away, O human child!”) and on the “voice” that beckons the victim of *The Seeker*—emanates, of course, from the Otherworld, in this case from a Celtic “woven world-forgotten isle,” where

There dwelt a gay, exulting, gentle race
Under the golden or the silver skies;
That if a dancer stayed his hungry foot
It seemed the sun and moon were in the fruit;
And at that singing he was no more wise.

The poem ends, “The man has found no comfort in the world, / The closing line is immediately preceded by a rather cryptic line: “Should those lovers that no lovers miss / Dream, until God burn Nature with a kiss?” Presumably, in Faeryland, where the “changeless” and the waves “dreamless,” all dreams are fulfilled—the desires of those perfect lovers, who are together, and do not “miss” one another.^[22] Thus, there is no need for fulfillment “until” (always a pivotal word in poems, and notably in “God burn Nature with a kiss.” Yeats’s early poetry has a dramatic quality among the most dramatic the windblown Blakean confl

Secret Rose.” But the apocalypse in the Faeryland poem unless one has come across Yeats’s story “The Untiring the faeries dance for many centuries “until God shall be with a kiss.”^[23]

We also have a supposedly perfect world, with the “deep shade” and lovers who “dance upon the level shore,” in “Fergus?” Originally a song in the earliest version (1892) of *The Countess Kathleen*, it was a favorite among the early moderns, memorized by James Joyce—the song he sang in lieu of prayer at his mother’s deathbed and whose words haunted Stephen Dedalus, throughout *Bloomsday*. Fergus, the king who put aside his crown to live in peace and “pierce the woven shade,” invites a young man and maid to join him in paradise, where, he promises, they will “brood on honey more”;

And no more turn aside and brood
Upon love’s bitter mystery;
For Fergus rules the brazen cars,
And rules the shadows of the wood,
And the white breast of the dim sea
And all disheveled wandering stars.

That enchanting final line has sexual precursors; it fulfills the “tresses” Eve “wore/ Disheveled” and in “wanton ringlets” (4:305-6) with Pope’s echo in *The Rape of the Lock*, where Belinda’s shorn tresses consecrated “midst the Stars”: “Locks first rose so bright,/ The Heavens *bespangling* Light.” Those sexual undercurrents are present in the concluding lines. Despite the emotional respite promised by the poem’s climactic imagery—“*shadows of the wood,*” the “*dim sea,*” the “*disheveled wandering stars*”—embracing the earth and the heavens—extends to this supposedly peaceful erotic tumult of “love’s bitter mystery.”

The quest-theme first established crudely in *The Seeker* (“The Stolen Child,” “The Man who Dreamed of Faeryland,” “Goes with Fergus?,” and, perhaps most seminally in “The Rood of Time,” also provides the thematic structure of the Byzantium poems, featuring, first, a sailing after knowledge, a process of purgation, both of which turn out to be spiritual and erotic. Looking ahead several decades, I am compelled to note that something similar happens in later poems, whose subject is the opposition of flesh and spirit, natural flux and spiritual form, but whose shared thematic antitheses are polarities—Blakean Contraries ultimately interdependent. The Byzantium poems seem proof of the truth of Yeats’s Golden Dawn name, *Demon Est Deus Inversus*, the proverb, “Eternity is in love with the productions of time,” and is from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake’s affirmation of the nature of being, privileging, in the dialectic of necessity, “Energy” and the active “Prolific” over the “Devouring,” the religious.

In “Sailing to Byzantium,” a sixty-year-old and temporarily poet, painfully aware that the world of youth and sexual passion is a “country for old men,” sets sail for and has finally “come/ to the city of Byzantium.” Everything, yet nothing, has changed in the stanza’s “young/ In one another’s arms, birds in the sky/ Dying generations at their song—” are reversed yet mirrored in the next stanza. “Once out of nature,” the aging speaker, his “desire/ And fastened to a dying animal,” imagines that he will be cast away and himself (with what Denis Donoghue once wittily called as “the desperate certainty of a recent convert”) transformed into a work of “hammered gold and gold enameling,” set “upon a gem/ To sing/ To lords and ladies of Byzantium/ Of what is past, or future, or to come.”



Yeats later in life

In a 1937 BBC broadcast, Yeats glossed the golden bird on the golden bough as symbolic “of the intellectual joy contrasted to the instinctual joy of human life.” But artifacts are still, however changed, recognizable “birds that, whatever the ostensible thrust of the poem, the imagery recreates—as in the “white breast” and “dish” of the supposedly tumult-free final stanza of “Who Goes with the Very World.” Further, the notion of the bird singing to “lords and ladies” of Byzantium, the sexual procreancy even in that “holy city”; and his theme, “What is past, or future, or come,” repeats—in a Keatsian “finer tone,” to be sure—the cycle of generation presented in the opening stanza of “Lullaby”: “begotten, born, and dies.” “Caught in that sensual music in neglect/ Monuments of unageing intellect,” the golden bird set on the golden bough, however symbolic of intellect, seems still partially caught in that sensual music in the cycle of time to lords and ladies. Nature is the *source* of

turn, *expresses* nature; and the audience will always need and women.

I've already referred to "Byzantium"—borrowing the "Mohini Chatterjee," the poem that immediately preceded most "turbulent" engagement in the tension, marked continuity, between flesh and spirit, natural and supernatural; Eternity. Though he admired the first Byzantium poem Sturge Moore expressed a serious reservation: "*Byzantium*, magnificent as the first three stanzas are, lets fourth, as such a goldsmith's bird is as much nature as especially if it only sings like Homer and Shakespeare of passing or to come to Lords and Ladies." It's difficult to was news to Yeats; but, agreeing with Moore to the extent had shown him that "the idea needed exposition," he set the issue in a second poem.^[24]

The result was "Byzantium," a poem that complicates resolves Sturge Moore's intelligent if limited quibbles purgatorial though the city may be, we are told, as the "un of day recede," that the Emperor's soldiery are "drunk perhaps exhausted from visiting temple prostitutes, since night's resonance recedes, "night-walker's song/ After gong." Amid considerable occult spookiness, including mummy, more image than shade or man, two images emerge, the works of architect and goldsmith; both transcending the human cycle, sublunary and changeable:

A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains
All that man is,
All mere complexities,
The fury and the mire of human veins.

The second emblem of eternity reprises the first poem "hammered gold and gold enameling," the form the speaker to Byzantium" imagined himself taking once he was "out

avian artifact,

Miracle, bird, or golden handiwork,
More miracle than bird or handiwork,
Can, like the cocks of Hades crow,
Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
In glory of changeless metal
Common bird or petal
And all complexities of mire and blood.

However golden and immutable it may be, that the miracle be moon-embittered and scornful suggests that it may have “much nature” as the golden bird Moore found transcendent in the first Byzantium poem. Even in the overall soul-directed Byzantium poems, the *antithetical* or life-centered is too passionate to be programmatically subdued. We know with the Byzantium poems’ precursors, Keats’s Nightingale and Urn odes) the rich vitality of the sexual world being “rejection” poem, and the ambiguity of the famous phrase, “the *artificial*” And the final tumultuous stanza of “Byzantium,” with its astonishing last line, evokes a power almost, but not quite, critical analysis:

The multitude of souls (“Spirit after spirit!”) riding into the “Astraddle on the dolphin’s mire and blood,” cannot be thought that surging power is said to be broken by artificers and artifacts. The poem ends with a single extra line asserting one thing thematically, but, in its sheer momentum suggesting quite another:

The smithies break the flood,
The golden smithies of the Emperor!
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet

Fresh images beget,

That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

The marbled floor is not only the site for the preceding purgation, where the spirits are envisioned “dying into the floor *itself*” seems to be “dancing,” the city almost lifted under the inundation of the prolific sea of generation. In the smithies and marbles, we are twice told, “break” (defenceless and tame) these “furies,” “images,” and the sea itself. All three are objects of that one verb; but, as Helen Vendler has brilliantly noted, “Practically speaking, the governing force of the verb is long before the end of the sentence is reached.”^[25] The sea is erected to order and transform the flood end up emptying the turbulent plenitude of nature, and those spawning “Fresh images beget.”

We are left—in one of the most remarkable single lines in English literature—with “That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea” with the images that yet fresh images “beget,” that final sea overpowers the teeming fish and flesh—all that is “begotten and dies,” the “salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas” of Byzantium.” The dolphin is at once the mythological transporter of souls to paradise and kin to us, who share in the mire of “mire and blood.” Inversely, the “gong,” though emblematic also, since it recalls the semantron of the opening stage of the cathedral gong,” has to be seen and heard as tormenting mortal life, yet pulling the sea of generation up, to the spiritual transcendence. Once again, though more powerfully than in the first, caught up in the dialectical conflict between Time and Eternity and spirituality, Self and Soul.

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We will shortly be returning, at long last, to the second of the poems earlier mentioned. “The Secret Rose” (1896), the explicit Rose poems, appeared in Yeats’s next collection, *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899). This *fin-de-siècle*

volume (his friend Arthur Symonds's influential *The Symbolist in Poetry* appeared the same year), evokes a fallen world visited by a longed-for apocalyptic wind. This volume includes Yeats's most beautiful early poem, the exquisite "Song of Aengus," which projects ultimate union between the mortal and the eternal as a "trysting place," sexual and, in its mingling of the dreamt-of "Faeryland," where "the sun and moon were like lunar apples of silver and solar apples of gold: a marriage of the Old Testament and Deuteronomy. The long-sought immortal, transformed into a woman of the Sidhe, and Aengus, a notably human god, seek Eternity, an earthly Paradise where he will

kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

Less entrancing poems in *The Wind Among the Reeds* include "The Wanderer," a weary speaker who, to quote the longest-titled poem in the volume, "has many long titles, 'mourns for the Change that has come to his Beloved, and longs for the End of the World.'" That "The Wanderer" devoutly to be wished is far more dramatic in "The Secret Rose" poem begins and ends, "Far-off, most secret, and in the shadow of a rondure suggesting that all is now enfolded (the verb "enfold" appears twice in the poem) within the petals of the symbolic flower." The Wanderer and Seeker is among those questers who "have sought the Rose in the Sepulchre,/ Or in the wine-vat," a questing alternative to the Dionysian. Wandering Aengus sought his elusive beauty in the blossom in her hair" allying her with Maud Gonne, associated with the day Yeats met her with apple blossoms) "through hollow lands." The Seeker in "The Secret Rose" also, over many lands and islands numberless.../ Until the Seeker unsurprisingly since this poem, too, was written for Maud Gonne, a woman of so shining loveliness" that *one* desired suggests another. No sooner is the beautifully-tressed woman

loveliness “found” (a state *projected* in “The Song of Aengus,” where “I *will* find out where she has gone...”) t

I, too, await

The hour of thy great wind of love and hate.

When shall the stars be blown about the sky,

Like the sparks blown out of a smithy, and die?

Surely thine hour has come, thy great wind blow

Far-off, most secret, and inviolate Rose?

This apocalypse, with its approaching “hour” and final c before and after. That “surely” anticipates (“Surely some hand,/ Surely the Second Coming is at hand...”) Yeats’s terrifying, and yet longed-for apocalypse, in the most-c the past hundred years. The “vast image” of the sphinx up from “sands of the desert,” coming “out of *Spiritus* . Second Coming” had its occult (as opposed to literary) c symbolic-card experiment conducted with Yeats by Mac head of the Order of the Golden Dawn. Yeats suddenly Negro raising up his head and shoulders among great s in its published version to “a desert and a Black Titan Second Coming,” like “The Secret Rose,” also terminates question mingling breathless anticipation with ambigui certitude. “But now I *know*,” Yeats began the final mo Second Coming,” but the poem ends with a question, terrified but excited reverie that defines the Sublin whatever *gnosis* (‘now I *know*...’) the visionary poet clai version of “The Second Coming” was reserved, in th apocalyptic “rough beast” itself: “And now at last *knowi* round/ *It* has set out for Bethlehem to be born.”^[27]

But I said that the apocalyptic “hour” of “The Secret Ro as well as after; and just as “The Second Coming” had occult and literary, so too with the apocalypse of “The both cases, the primary literary source is Blake. The s beast of the later poem fuses (among other creatures)

Tyger with his striking illustration (in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and elsewhere) of bestial Nebuchadnezzar slouching on the ground. In an earlier poem, the precursor passage is Blake's description of the king "consumed like a lamp blown out" (*The Four Zoas*, which later reappears as Yeats's "stars...blown about the sky/ Like tapers blown out of a smithy." Even Yeats's substitution of a smithy for a lamp is a tribute to Blake's great creative figure, the blacksmith Urthona).



William Blake's Nebuchadnezzar

The Blakean echo is hardly accidental. Of the three Romantic stories Yeats wrote in the 1890s ("Rosa Alchemica," "The Secret Law," and "The Adoration of the Magi"), "The Secret Law" alone suggest, most closely related to the first. The hero of "Rosa Alchemica," the magician Michael Robartes, is a figure drawn from comparative literature, especially drawn, as was Yeats's later work, from the prophetic poems of William Blake. Blake's epic *The Four Zoas* (titled *Vala*, and abandoned in manuscript in 1807) was first published in 1893 by none other than Yeats (and his collaborator, John G. Ellis). In the finale of *The Four Zoas*, from which Yeats's "stars" are drawn, about the "stars" being "blown" about the skies like "sparks

Man, having finally purged all the evil in himself, can unharmed. Los “rose in all his regenerative power transformation arrives:

The sun has left his blackness & found a fresher morning
And the mild moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless sky

And Man, walks forth from midst of the fires,
consumed:

His eyes behold the angelic spheres arising night & day

The stars consumed like a lamp blown out, & in their stead

The expanding eyes of Man behold the depths of worlds

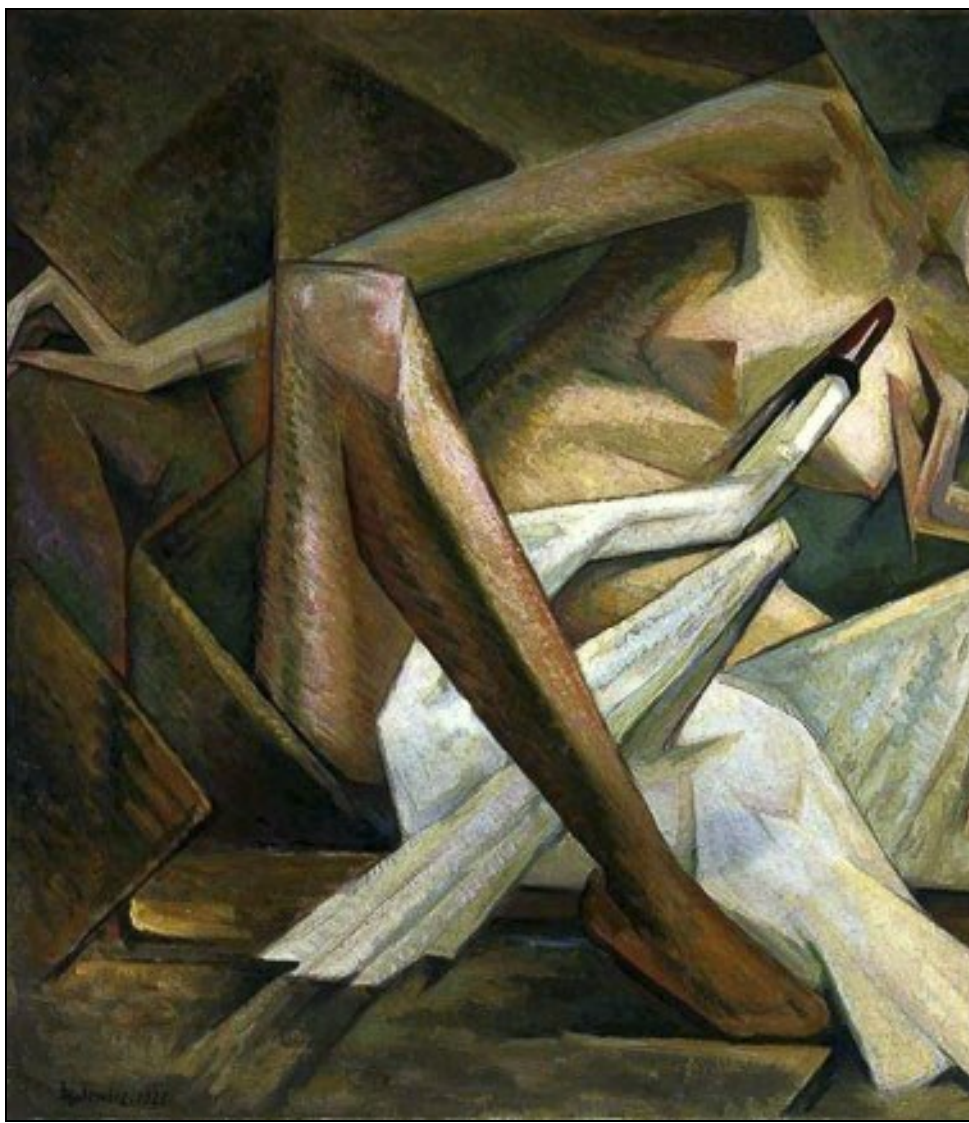
Here we have the potentially divine Man envisioned by Gnostics, Hermeticists, Cabbalists, and Rosicrucians: “Vast man...more noble in his glorified state” than he was before “conflagration”: a Man fully human, liberated from all limitations, whether of materialism, the ratiocentric (Lockean/empiricist) senses, or political tyranny. In the *Four Zoas*, Urthona, the eternal form of Los (and, of the least in need of redemption) “rises from the ruinous ancient strength.” According to one of Yeats’s (and J. K. Huysmans’s) phrases of Blake (from an 1800 letter to William Hayley): “Time build mansions in Eternity.” In Blake’s any Eternity, Urthona, though still ready for combat, is now “intellectual war,” the “war of swords” having “departed.” This is the most famous and concise appeal for an imaginative and inspired and intended to achieve individual and social liberation. Blake says his “sword” will not “sleep” in his hand. But (“Bow of burning gold,” “Arrows of desire,” Spear, and “Sword”) is to be employed in ceaseless “*Mental Fight*.” He has, say, achieved *gnosis*.^[28]

§

Gnosis takes many forms. I have already noted what the “The Second Coming” claims to “*know*,” and men of different assertion in the drafts, where the rough bea

hour come round,” possesses whatever *gnosis* there is
“Leda and the Swan” (1925), the sonnet that begins the
that ends with “The Second Coming,” we have another a
new historical era, beginning with a birth, and a hint of g
raped by the swan-god Zeus, “put on his *knowledge* v
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?” Here is
like “The Secret Rose” and “The Second Coming,” endir
the mystery-marker of the Sublime. There is, of cou
about the brutality of the sudden rape, and the indiffer
following the “shudder in the loins,” which, impr
completes Zeus’s mission.

For in fathering Helen of Troy, he also “engenders there’
(depicted in imagery at once military and sexual: “The l
burning roof and tower”) and its sequelae (“And Agan
initiating an historical cycle destined to last until, two
later, another lady, the Virgin Mary, would be visited by
another divine bird, his “great wings beating about the r
“The Mother of God” (1931), a dramatic monologue
terrified village girl singled out to bear “The Heavens in
question raised at the end of “Leda and the Swan’
rhetorical. Did Leda, “her thighs” rather tenderly “*cares*.
webs,” so intrigue the swan-god that he inadvertently h
enough (“Before the indifferent beak *could* let her dr
participate momentarily in “his *knowledge*,” the divin
himself?



Leda and the Swan by Jerzy Hulewicz, 1922

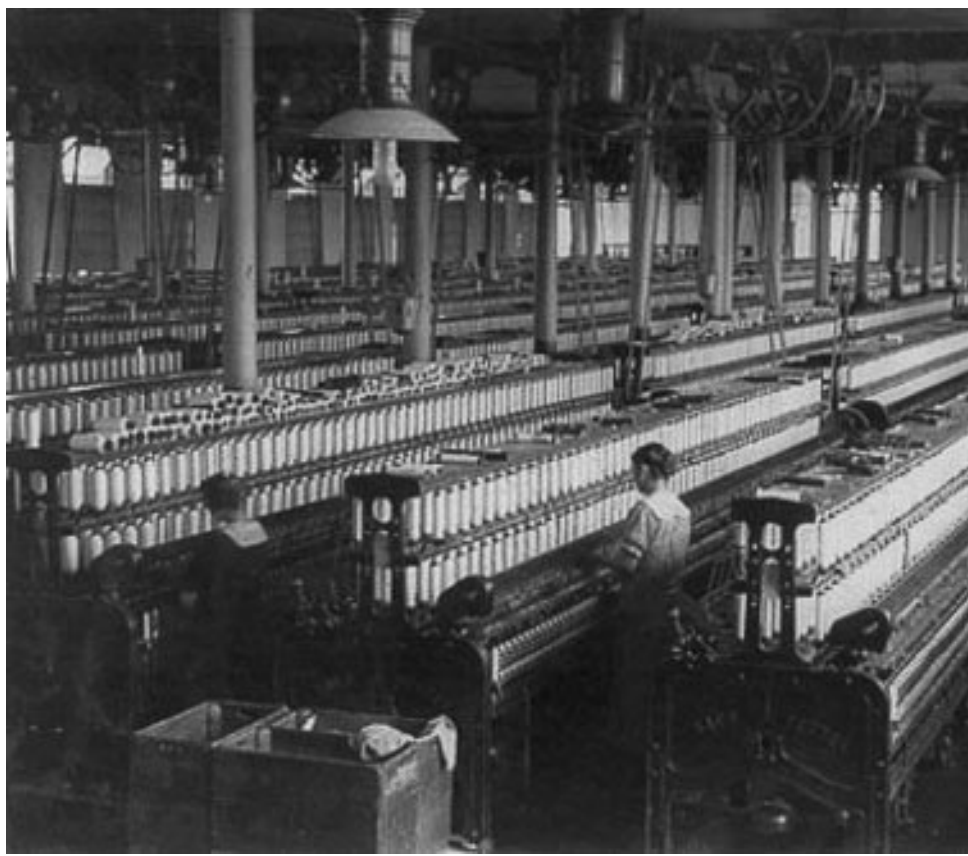
Gnosis also figures in the cryptic poem, “Fragments,” like its far better-known cousin, “The Second Coming,” and a revelation derived from counter-Enlightenment. Written between 1931 and 1933, this epigrammatic poem has several parts. Here is the first:

Locke sank into a swoon;
The Garden died;
God took the spinning-jenny
Out of his side.

In this parody of Genesis, the role of sleeping Adam, for whom God took Eve, is usurped by a swooning John Locke, whose epistemology and distinction between primary and secondary qualities seemed to Yeats, as to George Berkeley and Blake before him, to have fractured the organic unity of the living world, and thus

only nature but its archetype, the Edenic "Garden." The birth, that of the "spinning-jenny," bears a woman's name, the irony, and the horror. It was not altogether to humanity and a sign of progress, Yeats once mordantly contrasted the home spinning wheel and the distaff to have been replaced by robotic looms and masculinized factories of the Industrial Revolution. Blake's god of the fallen world, Urizen, presides over a world-machine perceived as "the Loom of Locke" and "Water-wheels of Newton," all "cruel Works" with the wheels moving each other "by compulsion" (*Jerusalem* 15:15-19).

Yeats is never closer to Blake than in this first part of the poem where he emulates not only his mentor's attack on Locke but also his genius for epigram and crystallization, Blake calling him "the finest gnostic artist in English literature." In Yeats's "Fragments" (I), which has been called "certainly the perhaps not the least comprehensive history of modern thought," Enlightenment is revealed as a nightmare for the creative spirit and the monster that rides upon this spirit-sealing sleep. The mechanistic conception of matter, indeed the whole mechanistic than organic way of thinking (a crucial contrast Yeats borrows from Coleridge, who had borrowed it from A. W. Schlegel), is replaced by the invention that epitomizes the Industrial Revolution: the steam engine replaces the divinely anesthetized flesh of Adam with an imaginatively inert body (sunk into that fall into division, "Single Vision & Newton's sleep"), and substitutes for the embodied embodiment of Adam's dream, a mechanical contraption, the cog in the dark Satanic mills of which it is proleptic.



*Spinning room in a New England cotton mill, 1916, p1
National Archives*

But how does Yeats *know* all this, and know it to be the “only from absorbing Blake. Or only from reading Whitehead’s *Science and the Modern World* (1925), a chapter “The Romantic Reaction,” Yeats synopsised with a relation to the Genesis 2 creation-metaphor, jotting in the margin: “(Pope) becomes Eve (Nature) with Wordsworth.”^[30] Yeats’s own question in “Fragments” II:

Where got I that truth?
Out of a medium’s mouth,
Out of nothing it came,
Out of the forest loam,
Out of dark night where lay
The crowns of Nineveh.

Is this mere occult mumbo-jumbo, intended to twist the minds of the empiricists? Well, yes and no. But before coming to a conclusion, let’s pause to appreciate the wit of the lines, alive with their allusions. Yeats’s ironic reversal of the birth “out of” the

takes the form of a counter-“truth,” born “out of” (repeated succession) a variety of sources. The anaphora is Whitman: “the cradle endlessly rocking,/ Out of the mocking bird’s musical shuttle,/ Out of the Ninth-month midnight.” The birth-images may have suggested Yeats’s equally fertile female “medium’s mouth,” the “forest loam,” and “dark organic and fecund contrast to the mechanical, sterile spinning-jenny.”

Yeats deliberately begins with what rationalists would deem the least reputable sources of “truth”: “Out of a medium’s mouth. Even Madame Blavatsky, whose own experiments had been told Yeats, who reported it to John O’Leary in a May 1888 letter, ‘hates spiritualism vehemently—says mediumship and the same thing’” (*Letters*, 125). In “Fragments” (II) Yeats is honest, but it is worth mentioning that the poem was written for the first production of one of Yeats’s most dramatic plays, *The Window-pane*, which centers on a séance, climaxed by a shocked recognition that the female medium is authentic. The scholarly skeptic who had attended, a specialist in the works of Jonathan Swift, is refuted once the post-séance stage is reached: the female medium, who is suddenly revealed, not to be a fraud, had been sure all along, but to be channeling the torn fragments of Jonathan Swift, and thus speaking the sort of spiritual truth Yeats himself, sought all his life. “All about us,” he concludes in the play, “there seems to start up a precise inexplicable truth, and the earth becomes once more, not in rhetorical manner, reality, sacred.”^[31]

The second source is philosophically and theologically provocative. Subverting the venerable axiom, *ex nihilo nihil fit*, that metaphysicians from Parmenides on and by theologians have affirmed the necessary existence of God, Yeats boldly declares that the truth revealed to him came “Out of *nothing*,” only to instantly deepen the mystery and sharpen his thrust against the Coming “Out of the forest loam,/ Out of dark night...” Y

generated from fecund earth, once more become “sacred with inexplicable “life,” replacing or restoring the “Garden to have “died.” It also comes, out of a mysterious, or occult

If the spinning-jenny epitomizes the Industrial Revolution, Pope’s intended epitaph for Isaac Newton epitomizes the Revolution and the Enlightenment: “Nature and Nature’s laws lay hid in night, / God said, *Let Newton be!* And all was light.” Pope’s opening quatrain, plays off Scripture, with him assuming God’s role as Creator by verbal fiat: “And God said, ‘be light,’ and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). Pope’s epitaph, after all, it was *God* who said “Let Newton be!” Until the principal scientific genius of the European Enlightenment existed, but “Nature and Nature’s laws lay hid in night, / darkness, and reversing the “laws” that prior to Newton lay hid in *night,*” Yeats tells us that his Counter-Enlightenment truth is that in the dark *night* where *lay,*” not Nature’s scientific laws, but Nineveh.”



Archaeologist Henry Layard’s image of Nineveh

Why Nineveh in particular? For one thing, Yeats’s poem, like O’Shaughnessy’s “Ode” celebrating poets as muses and prophets. The famous final stanza (and these are the lines cited) begins: “We, in the ages lying / In the buried past, / Built Nineveh with our sighing, / And Babel itself with our

in “Fragments,” the golden crowns of Nineveh flame
night,” what is evoked is more O’Shaughnessy’s city
imagination than Ashurbanipal’s capital, majestic as
been. For Yeats was looking, not merely back to old
cyclically ahead, to the resuscitation of the ancient—a pa
chthonic, and, here, *female*. For, as Yeats seems to h
Assyrians named their capital city Nin-evah—after “Ho
the Mother-womb, or Goddess of the Tree of Life in t
Displaced by a machine in the withered Garden of t
“Fragments,” Eve, in a return of the repressed, is restor
in the final word of part II, in the disguised but detectable
named for her. Recalling the role of *Sophia*, often oppo
Logos in esoteric tradition, including Gnosticism, I’m re
that *gnosis* is a Greek female noun.

At his most winning, Yeats reminds us of Hamlet’s
skeptical and scholastic friend: “there are more things
earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”
to be wary when Yeats crosses the threshold into the
concurring in, in fact shaping, Yeats’s cavalier dismiss
Newton as Enlightenment icons, Blake would be a
disciple’s delving into the occult darkness. Though Y
mystify and occultize him, Blake in fact condemned the l
this World & the Goddess Nature/ Mystery, Baby
(*Jerusalem* 93: 22-25). But what Blake rejects here are the
prodigal son celebrates as the matrix of vision: the fore
mysterious dark night where lay the crowns of a
repository of Assyro-Babylonian mythology.

Of course, Yeats’s recourse to the occult is one measure
of his need to expedite what he called in that earlier-city
John O’Leary “the revolt of the soul against the intellec
That is, somewhat reductively, a description of the Roma
the noble attempt to beat back, through restored w
enchanted nature and the transformative power o
imagination, the passivity of mind and mechanistic mate

reigned (Yeats insists in introducing his 1936 anthology of poetry) since “the end of the seventeenth century” down to the present. With, he emphasizes— as had Alfred North Whitehead, the Romantic hero was Wordsworth rather than Blake, with the exception of the period beginning at the end of the eighteenth century and ending “with the death of Byron”: that is to say, the period of the Romantic revolt, a span “wherein imprisoned man has found his door.”^[32]

That compelling metaphor was repeated the next year in “The Grass,” Yeats’s late poem (a companion of “What They Do Not Pray to be Granted the Creative ‘Frenzy’ and ‘Old Man’s Frenzy’” he had read of in Nietzsche’s *Daybreak*. He also specifically alludes to William Blake/ Who beat upon the wall/ Till truth obeyed/ “truth” related to, but not identical to, the “truth” Yeats had found in “Fragments” (II) came to him “Out of” Counter-Enlightenment, both Romantic and, most dubiously, out of a mysticism whose counter-Enlightenment *frisson* will be offset for its resistance to the dangerous irrationality of the occult.

§

Night was not normally privileged over day in Yeats’s poetry, and Nietzsche, his great mentors, were both celebrators of the day. Blake’s “glad day.” In 1902, enthralled by his “excited” “strong enchanter, Nietzsche,” Yeats drew in the margin of selections from the German philosopher a diagrammatical skeleton, understanding much if not all of Yeats’s subsequent thought. He grouped under the heading NIGHT: “Socrates, Christ, and God” — “denial of self, the soul turned toward spirit seeking life.” And, under the heading DAY: “Homer” and “many gods,” “denial of self, the soul turned from spirit to be its mask & instrument of life.”^[33] Reminiscent of Madame Blavatsky’s alternate “nights of Brahma,” that diagrammatical skeleton, anticipating the tension between eternity and the temporal in such early poems as “Upon the Rood of Time,” is later fleshed out by Yeats

exemplar in “Vacillation”—“Homer is my example and I
heart”—and Self’s choice of Sato’s sword wound in “
“Heart’s purple”: “all these I set/ For emblems of the
tower/ Emblematical of the night.” Ultimately, they are
a life-seeking Poet who, without “denial of self,” attempt
the antithesis set up a quarter-century earlier in
anthology, usurping Soul’s role by also being oriented
seeking knowledge,” or *gnosis*.

“A Dialogue of Self and Soul” is in many ways Yeats’s central
its ramifications reach before and after, and it features
greatest of Yeats’s fused symbols: the “ancient blade
Japanese admirer, Junzo Sato) scabbarded at
complementary “female” embroidery. That sword and
not only “emblems of the day against the tower/ Emblem
night.” Fusing the sacred and the profane, war and love
the vaginal, the sheathed and silk-wound sword becomes
symbol of gyring life, set against the vertical ascent
Neoplatonic Soul. What Gnostics put asunder, body and
unites. And yet, as we will see, Self’s final act of sacrifice
magnificent but heretical, is as Gnostic as it is Nietzschean.

In the opening movement of the poem, the half in which
semblance of actual dialogue, hectoring Soul repeatedly
Self “fix” every thought “upon” the One, “upon” the
“upon” the occult Pole Star, “upon” the spiritual quest
thought is done. But the recalcitrant Self remains diverted
by earthly multiplicity, by the sword wound in embroidery
the windings of mortal nature. In unpublished notes,
“Dialogue” as “a variation on Macrobius” (the “learned
“Chosen,” the central poem of *A Woman Young and Old*),
directed by a friend (F. P. Sturm) to Macrobius
Commentary on Cicero’s Somnium Scipionis. In Cicero’s
admonition of Scipio’s ghostly ancestor, “Why not *fix*
upon the heavens and contemn what is mortal?” young
“kept turning my eyes back to earth.” According to Macrobius

“looked about him everywhere with wonder. grandfather’s admonitions recalled him to the upper r the *agon* between the Yeatsian Self and Soul is identical young Scipio and his grandfather’s spirit, the Soul i proves a much less successful spiritual guide than that gl

Turning a largely deaf ear to Soul’s advocacy of the up (revealingly called “Me” in the drafts of the poem) has p downward, on life, brooding on the consecrated blade with its tattered but still protective wrapping of “Hea “flowering, silken, old embroidery, torn/ From some cc and round/ The wooden scabbard bound and wound” m icon “emblematical” not only of “love and war,” but of gyre: the eternal, and archetypally female, spiral paradoxically physical tongue is turned to stone with the according to his own austere doctrine, “only the dead c Self takes over the poem. He goes on to win his way, des a *self-redemptive* affirmation of life.



Winding stair in Thoor Ballylee tower, photo by Walt Hu

Self begins his peroration defiantly: “A living man is blind drop./ What matter if the ditches are impure?” This Neoplatonism, privileging life’s filthy downflow, or “d the Plotinian pure fountain of emanation, is followed by a defiant rhetorical question: “What matter if I live it all on *that* life?” asks Nietzsche’s Zarathustra. “Well then! Once Self’s grandiose and premature gesture is instantly followed by a litany of grief that Nietzschean Recurrence, the exact repetition of events of one’s life, would entail—from the “toil of growing up, the “ignominy of boyhood” and the “distress” of “changing from the “pain” of the “unfinished man” having to correct his “clumsiness,” then the “finished man,” old and “among the living.” Despite the Self’s bravado, it is in danger of being shaped by the judgmental Gaze of Others. Soul’s tongue may have turned to stone, malignant, almost Archon-like *ocular* forces have palpated the assaulted Self:

How in the name of Heaven can he escape
That defiling and disfigured shape
The mirror of malicious eyes
Casts upon his eyes until at last
He thinks that shape must be his shape?

This would be, as Yeats says in “Ancestral Houses” (1901), the ability to “choose whatever shape [one] wills,” and (echoing the arrogant Duke, who “choose[s] never to stoop”) to “not choose a mechanical / Or servile shape, at others’ beck and call”:’ a rejection of “slave morality” in favor of Nietzschean “master morality.” The centrality of “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” is evident in the reverberations in Yeats’s own work and its absorptive influences outside the Yeatsian canon. Aside from the Romantic debate-tradition, from Cicero to Milton and Marvell, the tension between Nietzsche on the one hand and Neoplatonism on the other. Yeatsian *psychomachia* incorporates, among other things, the Romantic tradition, another Browning poem, “Childe Rowland,”

Tower Came,” which supplies those “malicious eyes” that
a distorting lie so powerful that he temporarily falls
Blake’s feminist *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*.^[36]
victory, like Oothoon’s, is over severe moralism, the
body to a defiled object. In Yeats’s case, Self’s victory is
his own Neoplatonism. Though Gnosticism, too, seeks
the body, the heterodox Gnostic emphasis on self-redeem
compatible with Blake, Nietzsche, and Yeats. “Dialog
Nietzschean *Selbstüberwindung*, creative “self-overcom
Yeats said, “we make out of the quarrel with others, the
quarrel with ourselves, poetry.”

§

Since “Dialogue” is a quarrel with himself, the spiritual
simply dismissed, here any more than in the Crazy J
Young and Old sequences. For Yeats, the world of exper
dark the declivities into which the generated soul may
utterly divorced from the world of light and grace. The
branching through Self’s peroration subsumes pure
impure ditches. There is a continuum. The Plotinian fo
down from the divine One through mind or intellect (*no*
depths. As long, says Plotinus, as *nous* maintains its
contemplation of God (the First Cause or “Father”)
likeness of its Creator (*Enneads* 5.2.4). But, wr
(*Commentary* 1.14.4), the soul, “by diverting its atten
more, though itself incorporeal, degenerates into the fab

Viewed from Soul’s perspective, Self is a falling off from
When the attention, supposed to be fixed on things ab
below—down to the blade on his knees wound in ta
further downward, to life’s “impure” ditches—the S
degenerated into the “fabric,” the tattered embroidery,
yet, as usual in later Yeats, that degradation is also a triu
terms modulating from stoic contentment through fier
casting out of remorse, leading to self-forgiveness and re

I am content to live it all again
And yet again, if it be life to pitch
Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch,
A blind man battering blind men;
Or into that most fecund ditch of all,
The folly that man does
Or must suffer, if he woos
A proud woman not kindred of his soul.

I am content to follow to its source
Every event in action or in thought;
Measure the lot, forgive myself the lot!
When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest.

Following everything to the “source” *within*, Self spurns numbing Neoplatonic doctrine that “only the dead can be reborn.” Instead, having pitched with vitalistic relish into life’s filth, Self audaciously (or blasphemously) claims the power to be reborn. In a similar act of self-determination, Self “cast[s] out” the image reversing the defiling image earlier “cast *upon*” him by the malicious eyes.” The sweetness that “flows into” the breast redeems the frog-spawn of the blind man’s ditch, the “most fecund ditch of all,” the painful but productive bittersweet fruit of unrequited love.

That sweet flow also displaces the infusion (*infundere*): Christian grace through divine forgiveness. It is a claim once redemptive and heretical, and a masterly fusion of the two principal precursors. “Nietzsche completes Blake, and

roots,” Yeats claimed. If, as he also rightly said, Blake’s is a Christ-like “forgiveness of sins,” the sweetness that suffering but *self-forgiving* “breast,” the breast in which “*all* deities reside,” allies the Romantic poet with Nietzsche preceded by the German Inner Light theologians, but it is the son of a Protestant minister, to most radically reject Augustinian doctrine that man can only be redeemed by faith and grace, a foretaste of predestination made uncompromising in the strict Protestant doctrine of the Elect as an unmerited gift of God. One must find one who countered Nietzsche in *Daybreak*, a book read by Yeats “definitively *conquered himself*, henceforth regards himself a privilege to punish himself, to pardon himself”—in other words, “forgive myself the lot.” We must cast out remorse and ourselves: “Then you will no longer have any need of your whole drama of Fall and Redemption will be played out in yourselves!”^[37]

But, as I earlier suggested, this is as Gnostic as it is Nietzschean. The most formidable of the historical Gnostics, Valentinus, a person who received *gnosis* could purge himself of anything associated with matter. He describes the process in “The Truth,” a Valentinian text unearthed at Naj Hammadi in contrast with the orthodox Christian doctrine of salvation by the grace of God, Valentinus declared that “It is within Unity that he will attain himself; within *gnosis* he will purify himself from matter into Unity, consuming matter within himself like a fire, and death by light, death by life.” In the best-known Valentinian formula, “liberates us is the *gnosis* of who we were, what we became, whereunto we have been thrown; whither we have been redeemed; what birth is, and what rebirth.” Here (see *Theodotus*) and elsewhere in Gnostic literature, salvation is in Romanticism (from which Gnosticism often seems more than a precursor), as an escape *into* the self, via an introspective private vision, we find true knowledge, *gnosis*. The quest is solitary. When Sturge Moore, who was designing

for the volume containing “Byzantium,” asked if Y
humanity riding on the back of a huge dolphin,” Yeats r
dolphin, one man” (Yeats-Moore *Correspondence*, 165).
need for any Other; the individual who has attained *gnosis*
and sole agent of redemption.^[38]

In the now-famous Gospel of Thomas, the most audacious
of the Naj Hammadi texts, the Gnostic Jesus of Th
“Whoever drinks from my mouth will become as I a
teaching, again, is internal salvation, redemption from
bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will
do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not
destroy you.” If Emerson hadn’t been speaking more
before the Gospel of Thomas had been rediscovered,
been accused of plagiarizing from that long-suppres
Divinity School Address, the bombshell he exploded at I
Emerson celebrated Jesus not as divine, nor even as I
religious thinker who first realized that “God incarnates I
He informed the shocked ministers and thrilled graduat
the audience: “That is always best which gives me to my
shows God in me, fortifies me. That which shows God o
me a wart and a wen.” As heterodox as Thomas’s, Em
imagined saying, in “a jubilee of sublime emotion, ‘I am
me, God acts; through me, speaks. Would you see God
thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think.”^[39]

It is primarily under the twin auspices of Blake and
manipulated by Yeats, that the Self finds the bliss tradit
for those who follow the ascending path. But that
redemption is also Gnostic. Whatever its various “sc
alteration of the orthodox spiritual tradition *comple*
considered cyclicism the ultimate nightmare, with that N
exuberant Zarathustra jumps “with both feet” into the “
delight” of self-redemption and Eternal Recurre
embraced as the ultimate affirmation of life in the “Yes a
that concludes part III :

In laughter all that is evil comes together, but
holy and *absolved by its own bliss*; and if this is
omega, that all that is heavy and grave should be
that is body, dancer, all that is spirit, bird—and
alpha and omega: oh, how should I not lust at
the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence?!

We might say that Zarathustra here also “jumps” into a circle
and motifs we would call Yeatsian, remembering, all
laughing, singing self-absolution, “Among School Children
“body is not bruised to pleasure soul,” and we no longer
dancer from the dance”; the natural and golden birds of
poems; and the final transfiguration of Yeats’s central hymn
Death of Cuchulain and “Cuchulain Comforted,” into a simile.

In “A Dialogue of Self and Soul,” the Yeatsian-Nietzschean
commandeering the spiritual vocabulary Soul would
affirms Eternal Recurrence, the labyrinth of human
tangled antinomies of joy and suffering. In subverting
tradition, Yeats leaves Soul with a petrified tongue, and
chant that is among the most rhapsodic in that which
secularized supernaturalism Yeats inherited from the
and from Nietzsche. In a related if somewhat lower register
vision of Crazy Jane and the Woman Young and Old.

Of course, Self and Soul are aspects of the one man, and
in his 1930 Diary, “Man can only love Unity of Being
“opponent” we debate with “must be shown for a particular
expression” (*Essays and Introductions*, 362). This
Valentinian Unity “each one will attain himself
“multiplicity.” Yeats’s friend, AE (George Russell) to whom
copy of *The Winding Stair*, said that of the many superb
remarkable volume he liked “best” of all “A Dialogue of
Acknowledging his friend’s gift, he wrote, “I am on the one
know that its companion has its own eternal claim, and
you side with the Self it is only a motion to that fusion of

is the end of wisdom.”^[41]

Having astutely synopsisized the central Yeatsian dialect tentatively noting its reflection in the poem’s impulsive manifest debate of opposites, toward fusion. We seem to be in the secular beatitude of Self’s final chant. But Yeats, “saint,” as Mrs. Yeats described him, to her husband’s “poet in Yeats, the Self, gives us—in the whole of “A Dial Soul” and particularly in this magnificent final overcoming of Christian and Neoplatonic dualism and duality by way of a heterodox, “heretical” self-blessing a Nietzschean, and Gnostic.

§

Despite Self’s triumph in this central poem, Yeats vacillates between what he called in “Vacillation” (echoing Kant) “the struggle of soul and body, by antithetical longings for the Otherworld.” At the most autobiographical level, for Maud Gonne: the beautiful but never fully attainable *femme fatale*, the Muse of the life and work of the twentieth century’s greatest love poet. His speculations were always entangled in his emotional attachments. As Graham Hough concludes, “Yeats was to redeem passion, not a beatitude that has passed beyond the bounds of earthly existence; it is not to be his ideal goal” (*The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats*). Unsurprisingly, then, in the alembic of Yeats’s paradoxical quest, the search for hidden spiritual knowledge is often met with earthly knowledge. Even then, however, the beloved proves to be unattainable, even if physical consummation has been achieved, as it was, in December 1908, with the elusive Maud. Maud was impressed and deeply moved (responding to both human and Latin rhetorical majesty) by a resonant phrase he encountered in the tragedy of sexual intercourse is the perpetual virginity of the goddess. In reading John Dryden’s translation of Lucretius, one of the most striking lines in *De rerum natura* is that sexual union can never provide complete satisfaction.



Maud Gonne

In a 1931 conversation with John Sparrow, then Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, Yeats cited and expanded on Lucretius from the end of the long passage (1030-1237) on sexual intercourse in Book IV of *De rerum natura*. In glossing Dryden's translation of the Roman poet, Yeats seems to echo the Gnostics' doubly articulated dualism between man and nature, but also between the transcendent God who is utterly Other, Alien, and inaccessible except through *gnosis*. Yeats's citation and commentary are significant because he appears to me to be looking back to his own poems, three of them written in 1926-27, the fourth in 1928, of which the first two, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" and "Among Schoolchildren," are indisputably major. The other two, lesser lyrics but clearly related to those major texts, are "Summer and Spring," from Yeats's *and Old* sequence, and, the most splendid of the *Crazy Jane* poems, the poignant yet triumphant "Crazy Jane and Jack the Journeyman." In 1931, the same year as his conversation with John Sparrow, Yeats finally, is what Yeats told Sparrow:

The finest description of sexual intercourse ever written in English is John Dryden's translation of Lucretius, and it was introduced to illustrate the difficulty of t

unity: “The tragedy of sexual intercourse is the loss of the virginity of the soul.” Sexual intercourse is an attempt to bridge the eternal antinomy, doomed to failure because it is possible only on one side of the gulf. The gulf is that which separates the one and the many, or if you like, God and man.^[4]

In “Summer and Spring” (poem VIII of the autobiographical *A Man Young and Old*), which the poet is masked as an anonymous “Man Young and Old,” the lovers grown old reminisce “under an old thorn tree.” We learn that, “of growing up, they ‘Knew that we’d halved a soul/ And that we’d be in t’other’s arms/ That we might make it whole.’” We recall that, meant to, “Among School Children,” written in the late 1920s, transitioning from the first to the second stanza of this poem, shift abruptly from Yeats’s external persona as senatorial civil servant and inspector, “a sixty-year-old smiling public man,” to that of the poet himself reporting an incident Maud Gonne told him about from her childhood:

I dream of a Ledaean body bent
Above a sinking fire, a tale that she
Told of a harsh reproof, or trivial event
That changed some childish day to tragedy—
Told, and it seemed that our two natures blent
Into a sphere from youthful sympathy,
Or else, to alter Plato’s parable,
Into the yolk and white of the one shell.

In “Summer and Spring” there is *gnosis*; the lovers “‘Knew that we’d halved a soul.’” The tragedy in this stanza of “Among School Children” lies in the qualifying “seemed” and in the need for a “parable”—a “Lucretian” alteration, since the blending he speaks of is not full and partial (yolk and white remain separated even within “one shell”) rather than the full sexual union of Aristophanes’ fable in Plato’s *Symposium*. It is precisely this “whole” union that the man claims in “His Memories” (poem VI of *A Man Young and Old*)^[44] and in “Summer and Spring,” which concludes

variation on the Unity of Being symbolized by the dark
rooted blossomer” of “Among School Children”: “O what
there was,/ And what a blossoming,/ When we had a
time/ And she had all the spring!”

But even here, despite that “fecund” blossoming, it is a
heartache. Two decades later, that night in December
how fleeting, remains paramount among the “memoirs”
“Man Old.” In “real life,” however, after their night of love
Paris hotel, Maud had quickly put the relationship back on
“spiritual marriage,” informing Yeats in a morning-after
was praying that he would be able to overcome his “physical
her. In a journal entry the following month (21 January)
referred despairingly but realistically to the “return”
dread of physical love,” which has “probably spoiled
never more deeply in love, but my desires must go elsewhere
escape their poison.”



Maud Gonne



Yeats and his wife Georgie, late 1920s

Hence, those “others,” including Yeats’s wife, destined “friends,” or sexual partners, if never a fully satisfactory “*that one*” (as he refers to her, namelessly and climactically “Friends”). Since Maud was, ultimately, “not kindred of sought complete union, if only in memory, in poetry, and *Man Young and Old*” or, empathetically switching gender of Crazy Jane. Partly based on an old, crazed Irish woman, merely promiscuous. Yeats’s occult experiences had led to a feminized, often sexualized, spirituality, early on with beautiful, highly-sexed actress Florence Farr, one of the women visionaries of the Golden Dawn (and, briefly, a female adept, whose powers he admired and envied). His “second sight” (his own sister, “Lily,” his uncle George’s servant, Mary Battle); his experiences at séances, where the mediums were almost invariably women: all convinced him of a feminine dimension in spirituality. The artistic result was the two sequences, *A Woman Young and Old* and the Crazy Jane sequence. The third poem in the Jane sequence, “Crazy Jane on the Day of the” begins:

“Love is all

Unsatisfied

That cannot take the whole

Body and soul”:

And that is what Jane said.

It ends with Jane still holding forth, now emphasizing *gnosis*, but one that would certainly resonate with most mystical experience was possible during life, virtue believed that the true ascent, in which (in Jane’s phrase known,” took place after death, with the return of the soul to its origins, the spark of life redeemed and reunited with the soul it had been severed and alienated by its immersion in the temporal world. For most of the Crazy Jane sequence, Jane, making the most of her time on earth, will tell us of an unorthodox *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*. But here we find Time for Time to disappear and *gnosis* to be achieved:

“What can be shown?

What true love be?

All could be known or shown

If Time were but gone.”

Jane’s male interlocutor—responding, “That’s certainly might be Yeats himself, who thought Lucretius remain insisting on the “failure,” in this life, to bridge “the gulf,” “difficulty of two becoming a unity.”

The poem that immediately follows Jane’s thoughts Judgment, “Crazy Jane and Jack the Journeyman,” personally, magnificently, and certainly more audacious Lucretius- and Epicurus-based assertion that “The true intercourse is the perpetual virginity of the soul.” Writing Victorian essayist J. M. Symonds qualified what Dryden Yeats after him designated a “tragedy,” though Symonds emphasize, even more than Yeats, the Lucretian, Epicurus would add, Gnostic—bleakness and frustration of immaterial souls are entrained in the flesh: “The

almost tragic,” writes a sympathetic but austere Symonds: “Sighs and pantings and pleasure-throes, and the incommensurable souls pent up within their frames of flesh.”^[45] Symonds is right, along with the frustration described by Lucretius (and Neoplatonism in general), the dualism of the Gnostics, and the quest for all with freeing the spirit dwelling within (to quote two Gnostics well known to Gnostics) that “coat of flesh” in Genesis that “is a spark of life” (3:21, 3:78).

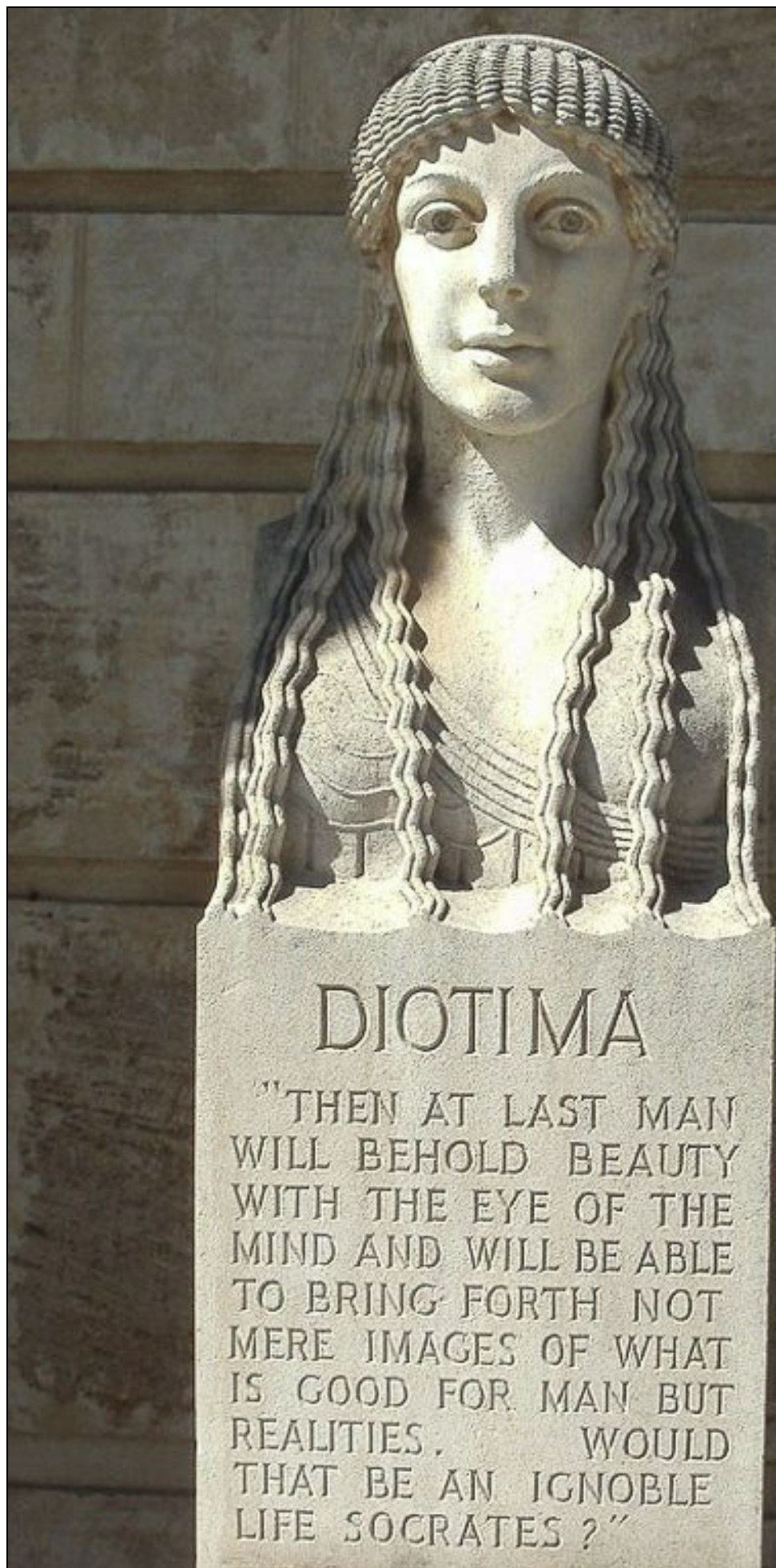
In the beginning (in what Shelley would later call “the woe of eternity”), we were “in the light,” uncreated, fully human and divine. What makes us free, in the present and future, what she insisted, is the *gnosis* of who we were back then, when we were in the light.” Crazy Jane, returning to the One, “Shall leap into my mother’s womb.” That Blakean infant joy marks the climax of her vision. But she had begun by asserting herself as shaped by earthly experience:

I know, although when looks meet
I tremble to the bone,
The more I leave the door unlatched
The sooner love is gone,
For love is but a skein unwound
Between the dark and dawn. ...

Her knowledge of the transience of sexual love has no effect on her abstinence, despite the hectoring of the Bishop (her audience in the sequence) that she should “Live in a heavenly mansion, not in a foul sty.” In that poem, “Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop” (the sequence), Jane tells the Bishop, a “religious” man who is nevertheless fixated on “those breasts,” where *he* would have Jehovah nor Jesus, but Eros—has “pitched” (temporarily pitched would a tent) his mansion. It is not up among the stars, but in a “mansion” (Yeats has the Bishop borrow that lofty sty-dialect from Platonism and Christianity, from Pietro Bembo and John, 14:2). Love’s mansion is “pitched” (with, I sus

darkened), not up but down, *inter urinam et faeces*, “excrement.” And her final, definitely punning but serious Bishop, is that “Nothing can be sole, or whole/ That has a sexual/spiritual variation on the archetypal cycle of division, and reunification and completion.

Despite the graphic nature of her language here, Jan is a simple materialist than is Augustine, or Swift, or the excremental yet visionary vocabulary Yeats has her eyes insist on is the beauty of both the physical and the ideal. “Love” the *tertium quid* mediating between them. Love is spirit” or “daemon” celebrated by that Sophia-figure presented in the *Symposium* by Socrates, whose sin is between good and evil, “fair” and “foul,” she corrects Love as “a mean between them,” a yoker of appearance and creator of unity out of division. (*Symposium* 202-3).



Whatever its other parallels and sources, Jane's vision is at least reflective of *some* aspects of Gnosticism, which is hostile to "law," especially to Old Testament law and

puritanical strictures the Bishop wants to impose on Gnosticism ran the ethical gamut from extreme asceticism to unconventional, robust promiscuity. The charges, by opponents, of Gnostic orgies were exaggerated (or at least by evidence). However, two Gnostic sects (the Carpocratians and Cainites) held that, in order to be freed from the power of the world-creating angels who would “enslave” them, one had to “*experience everything*.” No one, said Carpocrates, could “*escape from the power*” of the Archons, “*but that he must pass through every body until he has experience of every kind of action that is practiced in this world, and when nothing is any longer left to be experienced then his liberated soul should soar upwards to that God who created the angels, the makers of the world.*” By “*fulfilling and experiencing all that is requisite,*” the liberated soul will be saved and not imprisoned in the body.”^[46] This is certainly in accordance with a notably embodied theory of illumination through a sexual act that is ultimately spiritual and salvific:

A lonely ghost the ghost is
That to God shall come;
I—love’s skein upon the ground,
My body in the tomb—
Shall leap into the light lost
In my mother’s womb.

But were I left to lie alone
In an empty bed,
The skein so bound us ghost to ghost
When he turned his head
Passing on the road that night,
Mine must walk when dead.

Most readers of Yeats, even Yeatsian scholars familiar with the *Enneads* of his beloved Plotinus, misread the cen-

stanza, a misreading based on an understandably negative connotation when the word is taken out of context, to the adjective "alone" in fact an ultimate affirmation. Jane will come to God as a climax of her "flight of the alone to the Alone." These stanzas of the *Enneads*, are also memorably recalled by Yeats and Johnson at the climax of "The Dark Angel," a poem I have just admired: "Lonely unto the lone I go, / Divine to the Divine."

Jane's transcendence is earned not (to echo the final stanza of "The School Children") through a body-bruising, soul-pleasuring, but (since nothing can be sole or whole that has not been unwound, through experience, what Blake called (*Paradise*) "the sexual Garments." Though "love is but a skein Between the dark and dawn," if left *unwound*, it would be a condemnation of earth, condemning her ghost, like that of her true love when dead." That skein fully unwound, we are to go to one of those Miltonic phrases, but hardly his meaning), "all passions are to be told an interviewer at this time, "If you don't express your passions after you're dead. The great thing is to go empty to your grave."

To be liberated from those world-making angels who would have us believe we must, Carpocrates and some other Gnostics insisted that we do every action possible on earth; then, with nothing left to do, the liberated soul will "soar upwards to that God who has freed us from angels," those makers of the fallen world. Yeats could have said, as Shakespeare, "I shall be a sinful man to the end and shall lie on my deathbed of all the nights I wasted in my youth."^[47] Yeats is quoting a passage from Blake's *Vision of the Last Judgment*, the sentences which, with their emphasis on both the "reality of the passions" and the need for the passions to "emanate" in a way that would appeal to some Gnostics: "Men are admitted into heaven because they have curbed and governed their passions; and because they have cultivated their understandings. The treasures of heaven are not negations of passion, but realities of intellect, for the passions emanate uncurbed in their eternal glory."^[48] Carpocrates would endorse *that* vision of the Last Judgment.

he might have thought of Crazy Jane's promiscuous himself saw no puritanical line demarcating the human from the human head and spirit.

§

Finally, the Seeker-theme, the quest for *gnosis*, informs a great poems. I'm thinking of "Lapis Lazuli," and of three "Cuchulain Comforted," "Man and the Echo," and colloquial debate-poem, "What Then?" If I had to select testament of Yeats, aside from Self's chant at the end of "Self and Soul," the choice would narrow to the final "Lapis Lazuli," "Cuchulain Comforted," and "Man and the own ways, each of these poems constitutes wisdom written *gnosis*, or the acknowledgment that it may not be attained. That is true as well of the apparently more casual momentous, "What Then?"

Written in July 1936, "Lapis Lazuli" was published with Yeats is annoyed by those who cannot abide the gaiety of amid impending catastrophe, unaware of the deep truth Hindu mystics, to Nietzsche, and to Arthur O'Shaughnessy creative artists "built Nineveh" and Babel out of their "mirth"—that "All things fall and are built again/And they again are gay." To counter the consternation of those of the palette and fiddle-bow,/ Of poets that are always dismissed as "hysterical," Yeats presents Shakespearean like Ophelia, Cordelia, and (by implication) Cleopatra—"their lines to weep." Above all, "Hamlet and Lear a transfiguring all that dread." Fusing western heroism serenity and Nietzsche's Zarathustrian joy ("He who climbs mountains laughs at all tragic plays and tragic seriousness turns in its final movement to the mountain-shaped lapis given to Yeats as a gift, and which, in turn, giving the poet as the Yeatsian equivalent of Keats's Grecian urn.

Two Chinamen, behind them a third,

Are carved in lapis lazuli;
Over them a long-legged bird,
A symbol of longevity;
The third, doubtless a serving man,
Carries a musical instrument.

Aside from the obvious resemblance to the Grecian urn, the “or” in the lines that follow seals the connection, yielding to a stunning exercise of the creative imagination. A precursor, the fourth stanza of Keats’s ode. Since the poet the figures in the sacrificial procession is not depicted or speculates: “What little town by river *or* seas-shore, built....” Yeats ups the ante to four repetitions:

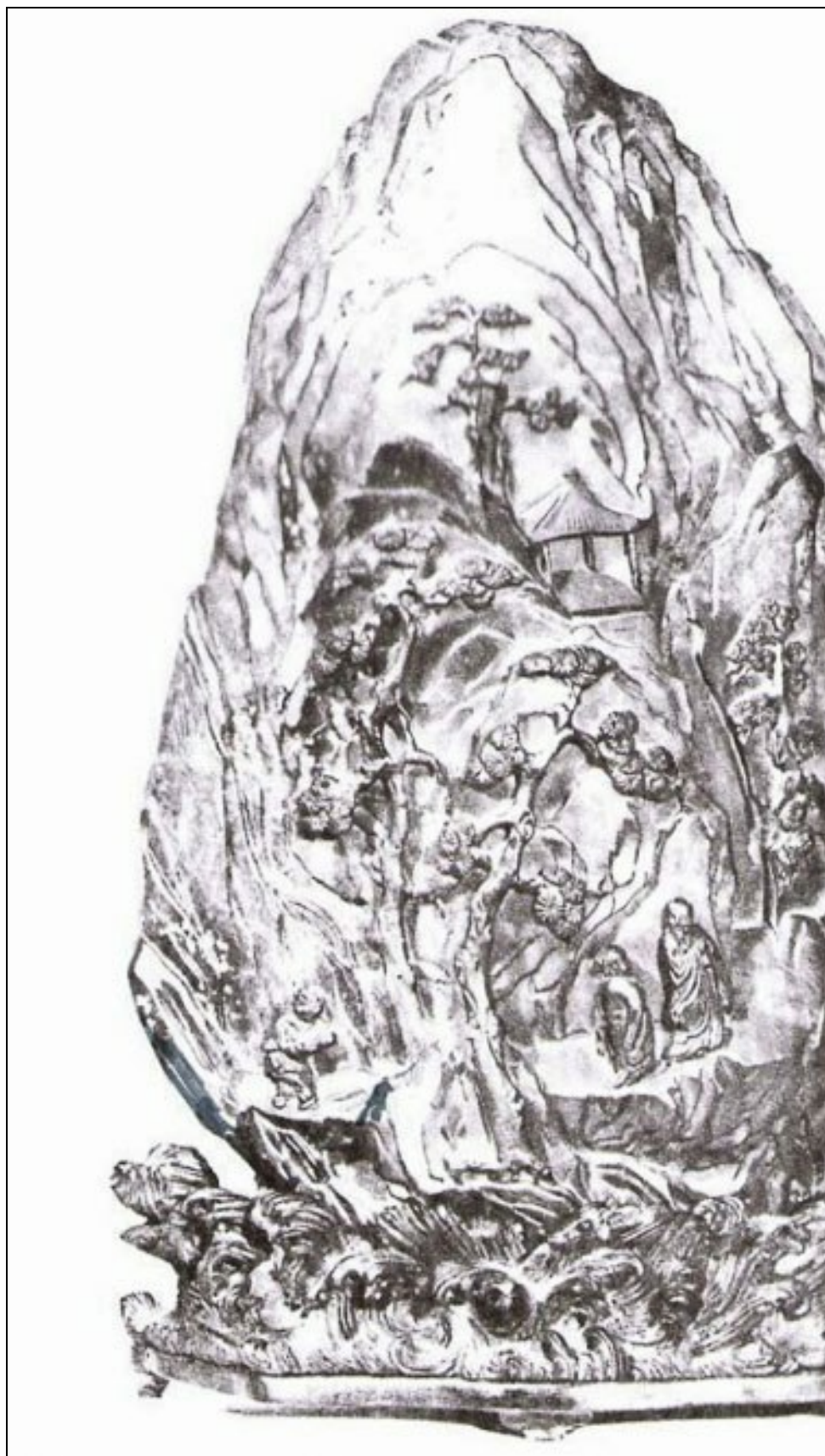
Every discoloration of the stone;
Every accidental crack or dent,
Seems a water-course or an avalanche,
Or lofty slope where it still snows
Though doubtless plum or cherry-branch
Sweetens the little half-way house
Those Chinamen climb towards, and I
Delight to imagine them seated there;
There, on the mountain and the sky,
On all the tragic scene they stare.
One asks for mournful melodies;
Accomplished fingers begin to play.
Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,
Their ancient glittering eyes are gay.

Yeats turns every discoloration and “Every accidental”^[49] into a feature of the mountain landscape. But the creative leap in this exquisite final movement is the sculpted figures, frozen in lapis as Keats’s were on the motion, with the poet *delighting* to “imagine” them hav

prospect of the gazebo half-way up the mountain. That is not quite *sub specie aeternitatis*; that the “little half situated at the midpoint rather than on the summit, makes rather than divine vision. To that extent, the Chinese sage vision may not achieve the *gnosis* attained by the sage caverned on another Asian mountain, in Yeats’s 1933 poem. Those hermits, aware of the “manifold illusion” of civilization after another, “*know!* That day brings round before dawn/ [Man’s] glory and his monuments are affirmation of the Chinese sages of “Lapis Lazuli” is also awareness of “all the tragic scene.” The eyes of visionaries, wreathed in the wrinkles of mutability, glitter with joy lit by the poet’s own creative “delight,” and by sometimes the Gnostic “spark.”



Yeats's lapis lazuli carving, (photo above courtesy National Libr



The end of mutability is death. The ancient Chinese sage
face of tragedy may remind us of Yeats's central myth
Cuchulain, the hero of several Yeats poems and a cycle
ending with *The Death of Cuchulain*. The poet's final epic
Celtic Achilles takes place in a ghostly poem completed
1939, two weeks before his death.^[50] The magnificent
"Cuchulain Comforted," composed, appropriately, in

rima, finds the nameless hero, wounded in battle and man, in the Underworld among “Shrouds that muttered and “Came and were gone.” He “leant upon a tree meditate on wounds and blood.” He is among his people “convicted cowards all,” according to one “that se authority /Among those birdlike things,” and who in armed hero: “Now must we sing and sing the best we can

The poem ends with the hero’s apotheosis imminent these spirits in a kind of communal sewing-bee, making soon to undergo their transformation, described in haunting reminiscent of Zarathustra’s vision of evil absolved by that all that is “body” becomes “dancer, all that is spirit sang but had nor human tunes nor words,/ Though common as before.//They had changed their throats throats of birds.” That uncanny final line, the pinnacle Sublime, is also a final fusion. Marrying the posthumous as in “Sailing to Byzantium,” of a bird-like poet’s need transformation and liberation of the soul, it should thrill Gnostics alike. According to Valentinus, “what liberates is [gnosis] of who we were, what we became; where we were we have been thrown; whereto we speed, wherefrom we what birth is, and what rebirth.”



Cuchulain's death, illustration by Stephen Reid

This, the best-known Valentinian formula of salvation, is Bloom as a “good motto” for “Cuchulain Comforted, considers “Yeats’s finest achievement in the Sublime.”¹ of this mysterious and yet revelatory death-poem is t along with an unexpected aspect of the solitary hero, Ye man under the many masks, “one that,” in yet anot “ruffled in a manly pose/ For all his timid heart” (“Cool recalls the similar if more personal triumph-in-defeat c

Echo” (1938), a poem that comes, like the ghost of Kirke’s “The Pains of Sleep,” in a “questionable shape,” and, appropriately, borrows the form of the tetrameters of Coleridge’s confessional “The Pains of Sleep.” The speaker halted in a rock-cleft on the mountainside shouts “a stone.”

All that I have said and done,
Now that I am old and ill,
Turns into a question till
I lie awake night after night
And never get the answers right.
Did that play of mine send out
Certain men the English shot?
Did words of mine put too great strain
On that woman’s reeling brain?
Could my spoken words have checked
That whereby a house lay wrecked?

It is unclear what Yeats might have said to save Lady Gregory at Howth Park, or have *not* said to preserve the sanity of Margot, the infatuated and crazed girl memorialized in “Sweet Dance.” The “play of mine” is, of course, *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, a celebration of blood-sacrifice written for and starring Yeats in Ireland herself. It *did* send out men that were shot in the Easter Rising. In fact, the first to die was an actor cast in a revival of the play. “The beauty” born that Easter had many causes, but Yeats, finally, in the chain of responsibility,” wondered “if any link” was broken in the workshop.” Here, his responsibility for its impact is the cause of the pain that causes him to feel guilt and to “lie awake night after night.”

Here is Coleridge, as sleepless and anguished as Yeats: “I could not know/ Whether I suffered or I did: / For a remorse or woe.” Yeats concludes his questioning in a state of perplexity: “And all seems evil until I/ Sleepless would lie down and die.” *Echo*: “Lie down and die.” But that, *Man* responds, would

The spiritual intellect's great work." There can be no th
life until he can "stand in judgment on his soul." Once "
one clear view," and "all work done," he will be ready to
the night." But, given *Echo's* sardonic repetition, "Into
prospect only raises more, and more metaphysical, ques
in that great night rejoice?/ What do we know but the
another in this place?"), until all cerebral self-centered
together, interrupted:

But hush, for I have lost the theme,
Its joy or night seem but a dream;
Up there some hawk or owl has struck
Dropping out of sky or rock,
A stricken rabbit is crying out
And its cry distracts my thought.

"Take physic, pomp," cries a chastened Lear out on th
heath, finally exposing himself to feel pity for life's nak
greatness of "Man and the Echo" has to do with a sim
from the existential physical reality outside Yeats's ow
thoughts about death and the fate of his soul. Gnos
approve of this external interference that "distracts the
thinker. But Yeats is not only philosophizing, he is writ
the *poem's* triumph lies in the old *man's* setting aside, a
Comforted," of the "heroic mask"— of Swiftian
Nietzschean master morality, of the perspective of the p
of Cuchulain, that "great hawk out of the sun"—in or
humbly accept common mortality: the radical finitude
human rags and bones, with cowards, with the pitiable
rabbit, struck down by hawk or owl.

At the end of "Man and the Echo," amid *uncertainty*
"hawk *or* owl" dropping out of "sky *or* rock"), the one ce
"Mortality touches the heart," epitomized by what Virg
calls the "tears that are in things" (*Sunt lacrimae re
mortalia tangunt*). Yet here the tears are unshed from ":

“kept watch o’er man’s mortality.” Like Wordsworth a great “Ode: Intimations of Immortality,” Yeats is touched by the heart’s “tenderness, its joys, and fears.” Responding to the fate of a humble, transient creature of nature, he is left, as Wordsworth is with “Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.” Both poets end, not crying, but *thinking*. Having registered the human scene,” they achieve, amid uncertainty, at least a limited resolution. Yeats’s question, “What do we know?” continues to resolve itself.

§

Two years before his death, Yeats received a “representative” poem for *The Erasmian*, the magazine of a high school. He selected “What Then?” (1937), which addressed Erasmus Smith students a planned life of disciplined achievement, achieving what Yeats’s “chosen comrades” at school believed was their destiny: the conviction, in which he concurred, that he was a famous man.” Writing intimately though in the third person to the young students and us that he “crammed” his twelve years and that, in time, “Everything he wrote was read.” He attained money for his need,” true friends, and that predestined young man sought-after fame. Eventually, “All his happier dreams were a house, wife, daughter, son; “Poets and wits about him drew

But this self-satisfied rehearsal of accomplishment has been replaced by the refrain ending each stanza: “‘*What then?*’ sang *Plato* *then?*” As in “Man and the Echo,” despite best-laid plans, uncertainty attends the certainty of death. In the fourth stanza, as the litany of achievement mounts in passionate defiance, an opposing challenge from the world beyond earthly accomplishments reaches a crescendo:

“The work is done,” grown old he thought,
“According to my boyish plan;
Let the fools rage, I swerved in naught,
Something to perfection brought”;

In "The Choice," written a decade earlier, Yeats had de intellect of man is forced to choose/ Perfection of th work." The "something" brought to "perfection" in " clearly the second choice. Must "he" therefore, as ir "refuse/ A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark"? Mome despite its casual tone, "What Then?" revisits the "Dialk Soul," with the spiritual spokesman, despite being re words, at last mounting a potent challenge. The refrain the breathless mouth of that formidable ghost— "Wha the Idealism of that "Plato," who (in "Among School Chil nature but a spume that plays/ Upon a ghostly paradigm the Hindu *tatah kim* (you may have gained glory and a your desires: *what further?*), with the question raised gospels: what does it profit a man to gain the whole wo immortal soul?

That relentless question, "what then?," also tallies w insistence that the liberating spirit within, the "divine : most remain ignorant all their lives but which alone humanity, was the sole agent of salvation. That inner s once ignited, redeems the "inner" spiritual man, freeir Archon-imposed limitations of an alien body in an ali enslaving attachment to earthly things. However, powe Otherworldly challenge is in "What Then"," here as alw with the crucial "The Rose upon the Rood of Time"—di not quite succumbing to the spiritual, a realm at on demanding. "His" litany of achievements, in the poer chose to represent his life-work to the students of l school, are triumphs of the imagination even more flauntings of material success; *and*, given the massive poetic achievement, "his" is far from empty boasting. gets the last word, but "What Then?" consists of more Taken as a whole, the poem presents Yeats once a "between extremities" or "antinomies" ("Vacillation," process, making poetry out of the quarrel with himself. .

—Yeats’s chosen counter-weight to Plato and Cl
“Platonism for the people”—who said, “It is
'contradictions' that seduce one to existence.”^[53]

Nietzsche’s prophet famously advises us, at the outset
Zarathustra, to “remain faithful to the earth, and do not
who speak to you of otherworldly hopes.” In “What Then
in part to be following Zarathustra’s imperative; but he had
introduced to Nietzsche when, almost a half-century earlier,
“The Man who Dreamed of Faeryland,” a poem to which
responds almost point for point. As we have seen, in the
every earthly pleasure and achievement had been spoiled by
cruel “singing” whose theme was a golden and silver
Otherworld of immutable, but unattainable beauty. Even
the early poem, including the “fine angry mood” re-
mockers, is re-gained in this late poem, where the speaker
done, cries out, “Let the fools rage, I swerved in naught
perfection brought.” The mature, accomplished man had
beyond his dreams, and thus exposed the folly of the man
his life away by fruitlessly dreaming of Faeryland. And yet
from the Otherworld persists: “‘What then,’ sang Plato
then?”—a “singing” that grows “louder” the more the speaker
his accomplishments. The tension between the two worlds

Harold Bloom, who has over the years come to half-accept
vision he once rejected, most harshly in his 1970 book
essay he wrote a half-dozen years later—“Yeats, Gnosticism,
Sacred Void”—by contrasting Yeats to his own formative
Shelley, and to Schopenhauer. Though Bloom does not
lineage, Schopenhauer was an “educator” of Nietzsche

enchanter” whose “curious astringent joy” allied him with Blake, and so helped transform the Irish poet from Celtic Twilight into the most powerful poet of the Twentieth century. Here is Bloom:

Shelley and Schopenhauer were questers, in the ways, who could journey through the Void with the temptation of worshipping the Void as itself. Yeats, like Nietzsche, implicitly decided that rather have the Void as purpose, than be void of

Though Bloom does not mention it, Yeats seems to not be thinking of the Gnostic vision when he ended one of his poems by declaring, “The last kiss is given to the void.” Some contend that Yeats, like Nietzsche, was a nihilist. No more a believer in linear progress than Nietzsche, Yeats’ “theory of progress” was a “modern” concept, “and the result was a nihilism. Yeats, under Indian influence, came to consider cultures as a succession of provisional illusions: that “manifold illusion” seen through by those who, in “Meru,” realize that the goal of *thought*, its ultimate destructive/creative goal to “create a desolation of reality.” As earlier noted, such seers as the cave-dwellers on Mount Meru or Everest, “*know!* That day before night, that before dawn/ [Man’s] glory and his monumeral



Bhutanese thangka of Mount Meru and the Buddhist universe

Those who have, after “Ravering, raging, and uprooting,
Into the desolation of reality,” have come far, but—
farewell to civilizations, “Egypt and Greece good-bye,
Rome!”—they may not have attained the state of “bl
Bhagwan Shri Hamsa, who describes climbing Me

Mountain, read and introduced by Yeats shortly before
In that Introduction, Hamsa is quoted describing his
ineffable “bliss’—all merged in the Absolute Brahma!”^[55]
registers the strenuous mental steps to the Absolute
culminate in the merging joy expressed by Hamsa. Neve
hermits, by coming to “know” the truth underlying
achieved a considerable degree of *gnosis*.

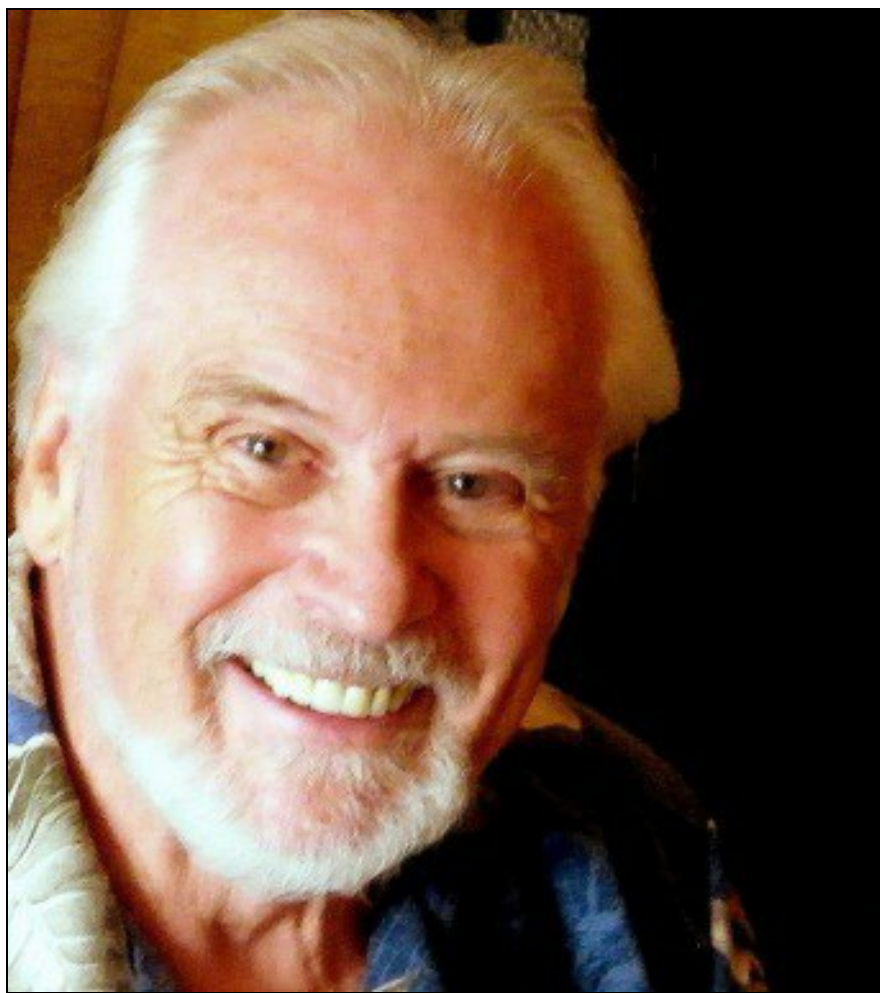
In the letter I began with, Yeats insists that there is “no
only a series of sudden fires,” each fainter than the one
free ourselves from delusion that we may be nothing.
given to the void.”^[56] Commenting on this letter, the
Declan Kiberd perceptively observed that, for Yeats, “the
humanity was to break out of this diminishing series
recasting life on an altogether higher plane of consciousness
does not dwell on the “void,” or connect this “higher
consciousness” with *gnosis*, but those familiar with the
might. I believe Yeats himself did.

The memorable paragraph in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* that
make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but out of
ourselves, poetry,” ends: “I shall find the dark grow luminous
fruitful, when I understand that I have nothing; that the
tower have appointed for the hymen of the soul a passing
men are committed to the world and to social conventions
by the marriage bell. By contrast, the Poet must concentrate
scarcely attainable. The soul achieves its “hymen” or
forsakes the gratifications of this material world, a forsaking
by the “passing bell,” or death knell. Again, we “free
delusion that we may be nothing. The last kiss is given
lifelong Seeker, Yeats seems at times as much a Gnostic
a Romantic Poet.

In his last letter, written to Elizabeth Pelham on January
weeks before his death, Yeats concluded:

I am happy, and I think full of an energy, a
despaired of. It seems to me that I have found
When I try to put all into a phrase I say, “Man ca
but he cannot know it.” I must embody it in th
my life. The abstract is not life and everywhe
contradictions. You can refute Hegel but not
Song of Sixpence. (*Letters*, 922)

One has no wish to resist let alone refute this gay farew
Bloom, in his 2004 book *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found*
Yeatsian emphasis on embodiment by choosing, in keep
to focus on wisdom rather than that “truth” Yeats sa
“known” but could be embodied. “Of wisdom,” writes
thought his reversal of Yeats important enough to pl
isolation on the back cover of his book—“I personally v
reverse. We cannot embody it, yet we can be taught
wisdom, whether or not it can be identified with the T
make us free.” His final, somewhat skeptical allusion is
John (8:32), but Bloom’s emphasis on being taught how
would appeal to all Seekers, certainly Gnostic Seekers.



Numéro Cinq Contributing Editor **Patrick J. Keane** is Professor Moyne College. Though he has written on a wide range of topics, special interest have been 19th and 20th-century poetry in tradition; Irish literature and history; the interactions of philosophic, religious, and political thinking; the impact of Nietzsche; 20th century writers; and, most recently, Transatlantic studies; influence of German Idealist philosophy and British Romanticist writers. His **books** include *William Butler Yeats: Contemporary Literature* (1973), *A Wild Civility: Interactions in the Poetry and Thought of Yeats* (1980), *Yeats's Interactions with Tradition* (1987), *Terrible Joy: Joyce, Ireland and the Myth of the Devouring Female* (1988), *Coleridge and the Politics of Romanticism* (1994), *Emerson, Romanticism, and Intuitive Reason: The "Light of All Our Day"* (2003), and *Emily Dickinson's Approving God and the Problem of Suffering* (2008).

1. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London, 1956), 114-15. For Clarissa reading, see Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Ontario, 2013), 114.
2. Even that Gnosticism is syncretist and complex, steeped not only in Hebrew and early Christian writing, but with roots in India, and a long course in Greece (Orphism and Pythagoreanism, Platonism and Neoplatonism). That kind of cross-fertilization simultaneous with the occult tradition, from the mysterious Simon Magus to the formidable and complicated analysis. In addition, the various sects were syncretist. Because of its value as the way to break out of our imprisonment in flesh and the material world, and thus the path to salvation, the path was kept hidden, reserved for the spiritual elite capable of a path to exercising *gnosis*.
3. *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London, 1954), 214.
4. A very different response to Yeats's apparent possession of wisdom is registered by Virginia Woolf. When she met Yeats in 1930, at Lady Ottoline Morrell's, Woolf knew little of his thought, but that much of his poetry, but she was overwhelmed by his poetry by an immediate sense of a body of thought underlying his life and art: "I perceived that he had worked out a complete system that I could only catch on to momentarily, in my alarming ignorance. When he spoke of modern poetry, he described deficiencies because we are at the end of an era. "Here was another system of which I could only catch fragments." She concludes on a note found in Bloomsbury self-assurance: "how crude and jauntier theories were besides his: indeed I got a tremendous sense of his art; also of its meaning, its seriousness, its importance engrosses this large active minded immensely vitalised man." *Virginia Woolf*. 5 vols. Volume 3 (London, 1980), 329.
5. Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn* (New York, 1964), 114. The ceremony of admission to the R.R.& A.C., based on the legend of the Rosenkreuz, required an initiate to commit him- or herself to "Work," which was, with divine help, to "purify and exalt my nature," and thus, "gradually raise and unite myself to my Father Divine Genius." In 1901, Yeats wrote an important pamphlet

Order of R.R. & A.C. to Remain a Magical Order?” His main frivolous “freedom” is inferior to “bonds gladly accepted”—own philosophy in *A Vision*, and the tension in his poetry between and traditional forms.

6. Yeats, *Letters to the New Island: A New Edition*, ed. George B. Hughes and Hugh Witemeyer (London, 1990), 84. The volume collects poems published between 1888-92 to *The Boston Pilot* and the *Providence Sunday Evening Bulletin*.
7. Yeats, *The Trembling of the Veil* (1922), in *Autobiographies*, 100. This is an almost Yeatsian mixture of fascination and skepticism was a report issued on Blavatsky by Richard Hodgson, a skilled investigator employed by the Society of Psychical Research. Though the Society assessed her claimed activities in India to be fraudulent, it concluded she was “neither the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor...a mad adventuress. We think she has achieved a title to a permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and successful imposters of history” (cited in Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: Theosophy and the Emergence of the Western Guru* [London, 1983], 83). Yeats, writing in 1889, and still registering Blavatsky's remarkable skills as an eclectic magpie, found that conclusion simplistic. In his usual mixture of skepticism and credulity, that “the fraud was at least at its most pronounced, was “unable to cover all the facts.” ed. Denis Donoghue (New York 1973), 281.
8. The latter, though, poetically, a false start, anticipates Yeats's later poems as well as two powerful late poems: the sonnet, “Meru,” centered on Hindu hermits cavered on Mount Meru, and “The Mountain,” that marvelous poem based on a Chinese sculpture ending in a vision of and mountain vision. In the *Crossways* poem, the young priestess Anashuya compels Vijaya to swear an oath by the gods “who dwell on the sacred Himalay,/ On the far Golden Peak; enormous shapes of things were old when the great sea was young;/ On their vast faces of stone they dream” (lines 66-70). Like Meru, Golden Peak is a Himalay mountain.
9. Quoted in Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon*, 83.
10. Chatterjee, *Man: Fragments of a Forgotten History* (London, 1983), 100.
11. The quoted phrase is from the succinct synopsis of Graham Scobie's *Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats* (Sussex, 1984), 39. Consisting

Northcliff Lectures given in London in 1983, fleshed out by
 on *A Vision*, Hough's short book offers an illuminating intro
 subject. But while he provides a humane counter-weight to
 crabbed studies that were threatening to bury Yeats in esoto
 commentary, Hough, though a fine reader, discusses very fe
 and none at length.

12. William York Tindall, *W. B. Yeats* (New York, 1966), 27. With
 exceptions, preeminently the late, great George Mills Harpe
 guides to *A Vision* are not the occultist commentators, but t
 literary critics: Helen Vendler (*Yeats's Vision and the Later P*
 Harold Bloom (*Yeats*, 1970).
13. "Introduction" to *A Vision*, 2nd ed. (London, 1937), 8. It's ha
 imagine that Yeats was relieved when advice arrived, conve
 should relax, and recall that he was, above all else, a poet.
14. Peter Allt, "W. B. Yeats," *Theology* 42 (1941), 81-99.
15. Valentinus's "revelation" came when the Greco-Christian *L*
 to him as a child. Unsurprisingly, his greatest disciples Ptole
 pupil, Heracleon, both interpreted the Gospel of John as a V
16. Both the drafts and the final version of the passage, riddled
 "Vacillation," "Man and the Echo," and of Yeats's Dantesqu
 "Cuchulain Comforted," make it clear that the ghost is prim
 Yeats, an identification confirmed by Eliot in letters to John
 Maurice Johnson, and Kristian Smidt. For details, see Helen
Composition of Four Quartets (New York, 1978), 64-67, and
 Diggory, *Yeats and American Poetry* (Princeton, 1983), 115-1
 Jonathan Swift is also part of the compound ghost only reaf
 dominant presence of Yeats, since Eliot's reference to "lace
 at what ceases to amuse" echoes Yeats's poem, "Swift's Epi
 toward the presence of Swift's own ghost in Yeats's play *Th*
the Window-pane."
17. A lengthy text for Yeats (91 lines, like "Anashuya and Vijaya"
 appeared in 1885, in the *Dublin University Review*, and was
 the poet's first book, *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poe*
18. Yeats, "Poetry and Tradition," in *Collected Works of W. B. Ye*
Essays, ed. Richard J. Finneran and George Bornstein (Lond
19. *Essays and Introductions* (London, 1961), 207.

20. The paragraph, the conclusion of which I will return to in my conclusion, occurs in the *Amina Hominis* (“The Soul of Man: *Amica Silentia Lunae*, its Virgilian title (“through the friendly moon”) taken from Book II of the *Aeneid*).
21. In a jauntily bleak poem written twenty years later, “Minive,” the American poet Edward Arlington Robinson gave us another Romantic dreamer (as chivalry-intoxicated as Don Quixote) and his life, “sighed for what was not,/ And dreamed, and rested from his labors.”
22. Much in “The Man who Dreamed of Faeryland” is reminiscent of Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” reminding me that, many years later, the “Her Vision in the Wood” (poem VIII of *A Woman Young and Beautiful*) asks the Keatsian question of other immortals: “Why should they then be ever young?”
23. Yeats, *Mythologies* (London and New York, 1959), 78.
24. *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence, 1901-1939*, ed. Ursula Bridge (London, 1953), 164.
25. Vendler, *Yeats’s Vision and the Later Plays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 100. The floor is ambiguously “marbled.” Yeats originally envisaged a floor of pavement, but another draft, referring to the emperor’s “brass and marble,” suggests statuary, as in the statues of “Among Stuffed Children,” that “keep a marble or a bronze repose.”
26. *Memoirs*, ed. Denis Donoghue (London, 1972), 71; *Autobiography*, ed. Denis Donoghue (London, 1952), 100.
27. The photocopied drafts of the poem (in the Yeats Archives at the University of Cambridge and the University of Toronto) have been transcribed by Jon Stallworthy, Donald T. Sturges, and myself; here, I cite my *Yeats’s Interactions with Tradition*, 100.
28. In the Preface to his epic poem *Milton*, Blake, having requested “Bring me my prophetic weapons (“Bring me my Bow of burning gold,/ Bring me my Arrows of desire,/ Bring me my Spear,/ O clouds, unfold!/ I will be your Chariot of fire”), pledges, in the final quatrain, that “I will not fight with you by any Mental Fight,/ Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand,/ Till we have built Jerusalem/ In England’s green and pleasant Land.” The passage is quoted from the apocalyptic Ninth “Night” of *The Four Zoas*, Book IX:798, 822-27, and 849-51. Valentinus is quoted from the “I will be your Chariot of fire” and “After the end, . . . the world shall be judged by fire,” and “After the end, there shall be formed a new heaven and a new earth, and the

be more noble in his glorified state than he was before.” *The Museum*, trans. from the 1678 Latin text, ed. A. E. Waite, 2 vols. (London, 1893), I, 331.

29. For Blake’s “gnomic” genius, see Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Boston, 1962 [1947]), 5. For the remark or synopsis of modern civilization in “Fragments” (I), see Douglas Gifford, *Science and English Poetry: A Historical Sketch, 1590-1950* (London, 1950), 158.
30. Edward O. Shea, *A Descriptive Catalog of W. B. Yeats’s Library* (London, 1985), item 2258.
31. Reprinted in *Explorations* (New York, 1962), 369.
32. Yeats, “Introduction” to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (London, 1933), xxvi-vii. For Whitehead, in his similar account (in *Science and the Modern World*) of the Romantic reaction to the limitations of the Enlightenment, the principal figure was Wordsworth, as influenced by Coleridge’s *Imagination and Organicism*.
33. The diagram was drawn on p. 122 of *Nietzsche as Critic, Philosopher, and Prophet: Choice Selections from His Works*, compiled by Theodore S. Geiger (London, 1901). Given to Yeats as a gift in 1902 by attorney and patron John Quinn, it is now in the Special Collections of the library of Northwestern University. First mentioned by Richard Ellmann in *The Identity of Yeats*, these annotations were transcribed for me in 1970 by another late, great scholar, Erich Heller.
34. For these unpublished notes, connecting Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* with Macrobius’s *Commentary* with Balzac’s Swedenborgian novel *Le Père Goriot* and Paul Gaughin’s *Intimate Journals*, see my *Yeats’s Interaction with the Western Tradition* (London and Columbia, 1987), 142-47.
35. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III.2:1, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1954), 269.
36. In the opening stanza of Browning’s quest-poem, Childe Rowland, the speaker’s thought was that he was being “lied” to by that sadistic crippled beggar, “malicious eye! Askance to watch the working of his lie! On the face of the earlier allusion, to Browning’s Duke, refers of course to “Myself, the Duchess.”) Even closer to Self’s temporarily mistaken belief that the “defiling” shape “cast upon” him by mirroring eyes “must be the initially deluded, masochistic cry of Blake’s Oothoon (2:

“defiled bosom” to be rent away so that she “may reflect/” the very man (the moralistic sadist, Theotormon, who, having now brands her “harlot”) whose “loved” but unloving “eyes upon her precisely this “defiled” shape—one of Blake’s, and grimmest ironies. But both recover.

37. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, 1996) (§437, §79).
38. Theodotus was a leading Valentinian of the Eastern school. 2nd-century *Excerpts* were quoted and thus preserved by Clement of Alexandria. In his 1970 study, *Yeats*, Harold Bloom viewed Gnosticism as the pessimistic opposite of Romantic affirmation, especially Shelley. Within a half-dozen years (hardly the span of “light and jocoseriously refers to), he no longer saw Gnosticism as a “counter-Romanticism.” Indeed, it “could be argued that a form of Gnosticism is endemic in Romantic tradition without, however, dominating the tradition, or even that Gnosticism is the implicit, inevitable background that frequently informs aspects of post-Enlightenment poetry.” “Gnosticism, and the Sacred Void,” in *Poetry and Repression: from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven, 1966), 212.
39. *Emerson: Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York, 1983), 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.
40. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III.16:6, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, 346, in the work in the 1896 Alexander Tille translation and, excerpted in the Thomas Common anthology given him by Quinn.
41. *Letters to W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard Finneran, et al, 2 vols. (London, 1982), 2:560.
42. Yeats quotes George in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley, written after Russell’s death in July, 1935: “My wife said the other night,

nearest thing to a saint you and I will ever meet. You are a b
no saint. I suppose one has to choose.” (*Letters*, 838).

43. Quoted in A. Norman Jeffares, *The Poetry of W. B. Yeats* (Lor 267).
44. Aside from “To a Young Girl” (1915), addressed to Iseult Go “Memories” is the only poem where Yeats claims that his pa was sexually reciprocated. Readers, used to the Maud /Hek would know who “The first of all the tribe” was who lay in th arms, “And did such pleasure take—/ She who had brought down/ And put all Troy to wreck—/ That she cried into this if I shriek’.”
45. “Lucretius,” *Fortnightly Review* 17 (1875); in *The Cambridge Lucretius* (Cambridge, 2007), 12.
46. The Carpocratian doctrine is synopsised in *Against Heresies* Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyon. Though his motive was to cor Gnosticism, which at the time (174-89 CE) was spreading in of Irenaeus has been invaluable to modern scholars studyin various Gnostic sects.
47. *Letters*, 790. *W. B. Yeats: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. E. vols. (London, 1977), 2:203.
48. *Yeats: Essays and Introductions*, 137-38. Blake continued by those who, “having no passions of their own, because no in spent their lives in curbing and governing other peoples’.” Y comes immediately to mind, especially since Blake is thinki modern church,” which “crucifies” the “true” imaginative C down.”
49. Damage to which I very nearly contributed in 1995, when I a the piece of lapis I’d been invited to examine during a visit to Michael and Gráinne Yeats.
50. A week later, dictating to his wife days before his actual dea “The Black Tower,” in which he resumes the heroic mask sh “Cuchulain Comforted” and “Man and the Echo.” Here, “th black tower,” though down to their last provisions and face relentless, sordid enemy, remain “all...oath-bound men;/ T come not in.” Their final exclamation—“Stand we on guard echoes an assertion Yeats liked to quote from his favorite A

Defending the merits of the Ancients against the Moderns,] pronounced himself a man “appointed to guard a position.” Tower” has its own merits, but we are right to regret its place in Yeats’s very last poem.

51. Bloom, *Poetry and Repression*, 230, 228.
 52. Along with pride at its popular success, Yeats felt guilt in having written a patriotic but propagandistic play that was, at heart, a love-own terrible beauty, Maud Gonne, and a betrayal of his own judgment. We cannot simply dismiss some of later Yeats’s more theatrical waving of Sato’s sword, and cry for “war,” in response to an Indian visitor’s request for “a message for India.” But Yeats was also opposed to the rabid nationalism embodied in the crude and unattractive “Citizen” in the “Cyclops” episode of *Ulysses*. That one-eyed Cyclops, a reincarnation of Homer’s Polyphemus, may also be a male version of Ireland’s own one-eyed Morrighu, the overtly dark side of Caoineadh Cluich, the Houlihan. I have a suspicion amounting to a conviction that the play “that play of mine” not really *his* (in fact, most of the dialogue and the lyric passages, was written by Lady Gregory), and that, while Yeats was basking in its popularity, sometimes wished it had been omitted rather than committed.
 53. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. III.3. J. M. Kennedy, the translator of Nietzsche’s *Die Morgenröte* (*Dawn or Daybreak*) translated, in the same year (1913), the *Satakas* (or *Wise Sayings*) of the Hindu hermit-poet, Bhartrahari, one of whose texts (*Vairagya*) is paraphrased in glossing *tatah kim*.
 54. Bloom, “Yeats, Gnosticism, and the Sacred Void,” in *Poetry and Repression*, 234.
 55. Yeats, “Manduka Upanishad,” in *Essays and Introductions*, 4.
 56. *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence*, 154.
 57. “W. B. Yeats—Building Amid Ruins,” in Kiberd’s *Irish Classics* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), 454.
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Geography of Bliss | Drawings and Etchings — 1 Baker

 2 Responses

 2017, Art, NC
Magazine, Vol. VIII, No. 5,
May 2017



*Undoing — acrylic and graphite pencil on paper, 20 x 20 , 2012 (from Lache.
2012)*



The work I make is connected to rural culture. I grew up in the Southern Ontario at a time when big tobacco agribusiness was affecting communities changed rapidly as small family farms industrialized agriculture. Transformation, for good or bad, made

impression on me. I use the imagery of vacant highways, empty abstract cloudscapes, animal bones, twists of rope, and topography suggest frailty and uncertainty where once was tradition and stability.

The fact that I continue to work within the representational genre fascinates me. There is much room for exploration in a small space, for both intimacy and distance within the same work. I feel constricted or boxed into a dead end by iconic objects or landscapes. When physical objects appear defined, ideas surrounding them are limited.

From Geography of Bliss exhibit, 2016



Seal Island Bridge Road Camera Split View — graphite and mica on paper

40 x 60, 2016



Bridgetown Road Camera Feb 2011 — graphite, charcoal and pastel

22 x 30, 2016

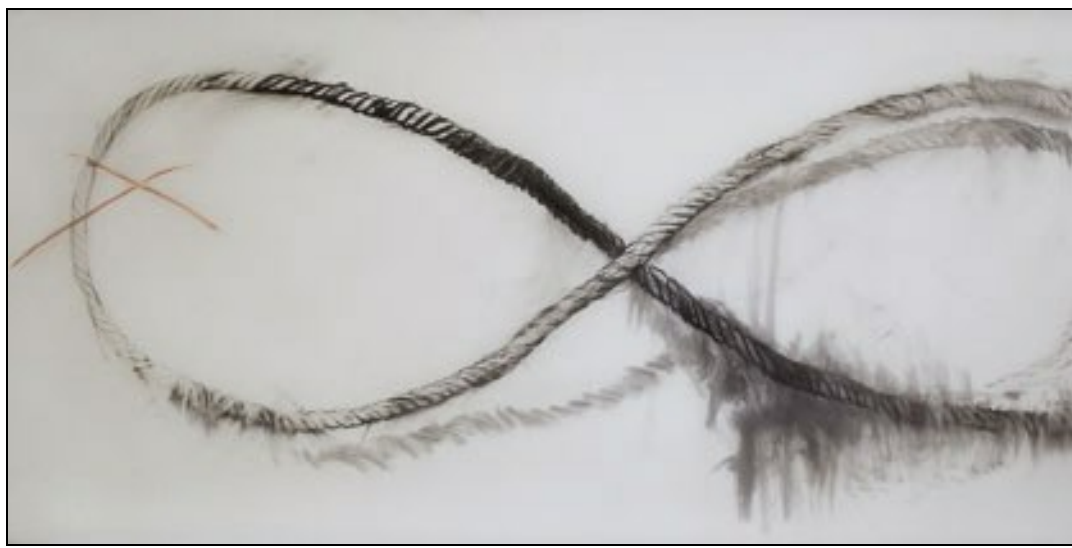




road leads away — graphite on paper, 40 x 60, 2013

My approach is governed by the Japanese concept called *mujinzo* translated means inexhaustible supply. I may have an idea w studio, but many theories fail during investigation, which leads to allow myself many failures, then explore the unintended consequ by-product of initial attempts contains profound meaning. I thin passages can be more significant than the finalized state.

from Lachesis measure exhibit, 2012



Infinity — charcoal and wax crayon on paper, 36 x 72 , 201



Frayed — charcoal and crayon on Mylar, 36 x 24 , 2011

I begin by looking closely at a subject, methodically creating draw

image over and over to understand my subject better. Once the image is of its own, then I can look at it, think about it, and revise it. The result is now an expression of a new thought, rich in emotional expression and aftermath. What is left behind by erasure or alterations is the record of the drawing's history, exposing it to a richness and depth by chance.

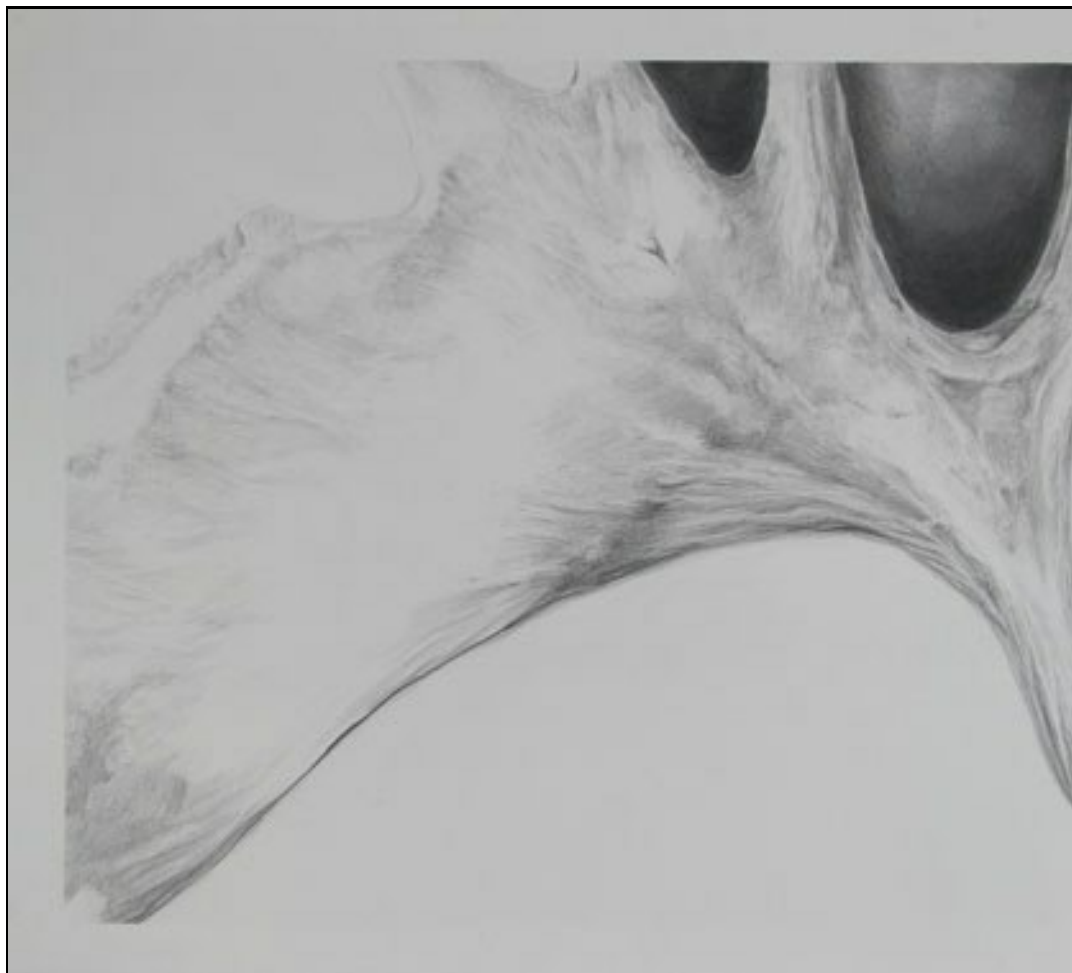
From Boneyard series, ongoing



Vertebrae — graphite on paper, 26 x 31 , 2016



Lamb's Hip — graphite on paper, 24 x 38 , 2016

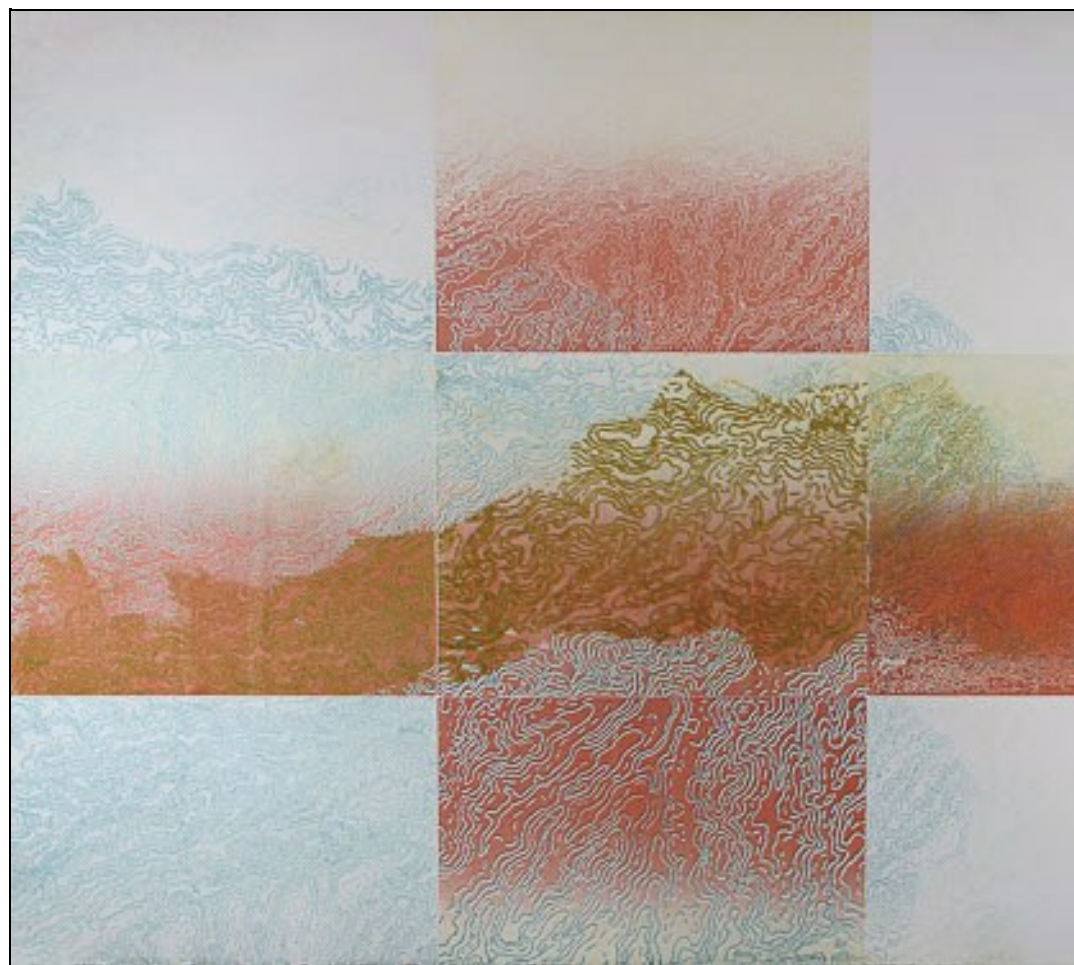


Right Antler — graphite on paper, 22 x 30 , 2016

I prefer the restraints imposed by charcoal and graphite sometimes organic elements, reserving colour for printmaking. Drawing in black and grey intensifies focus without sentimentality, avoiding the sentimental. I appreciate only the meditative beauty of the subject.

In a similar way, my printmaking also records objects belonging to the environment and an ecology of transition. Using combinations of different techniques, I am concerned less with the perfection of the edition and more with the way the image develops at the press as multiple variations often lead to a deeper exploration of a subject.

From Archipelago suite, ongoing



Confluence — etching, 22 x 30, 2012



Convergence — etching, 22 x 30, 2012



Isthmus — etching, 22 x 30, 2012


I work full-time as an artist and this gives me a great deal of time usually working in my head. I am thinking about projects as I walk and do household tasks. I make mental notes on changes to things I see and cannot predict who or what will influence how I see or think as I am working on, only that these experiences will subtly revise how I will then technically express themes in my work. The time spent in the studio is less than the time spent thinking about, making notes on, and actually working. Working in the studio is my way of being curious, of seeking clarity. It is often a confusing, uncomfortable way to work, but if I persist long enough, new paths are uncovered.

Bonnie Baker works at drawing and printmaking. Before moving to Nova Scotia where she now lives, Bonnie studied glass blowing at Humber College in Toronto, lived in Whitehorse, Yukon, and travelled through Alaska. Bonnie studied printmaking at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, at Vassar College, and at the Printmaking Workshop, NY, and with master printmaker Cecil Day. In addition to her printmaking, Bonnie worked with textiles from 1984 to 2007.

Community engagement is very much part of her practice. Among other things she has organized public events involving outdoor projection mapping, and collectively by several hundred strangers over a six-hour period. She has also organized marathons using skateboards, roller blades, bicycles, and all other modes of transport. Her exhibits on the open interpretation of the book form; and her sensitive installations by several artists along a walking trail. She is a member, active printmaker, and administrator of [Elephant Grass](#), a community-based printmaking studio in the fishing village of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. Following her 2016 exhibit of drawings, *Geography of the Mind*, she is now focusing on a series of woodcuts and etchings that explore the relationship between her drawing and printmaking practices. Bonnie is a 2016 Established Artist Award from Creative

Introibo ad altare Dei | Poems — Patrick O'Reil

 No Responses

 2017, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. VIII, No. 4,
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Martinmas

I.

Draw the curtain.

Find the ground fasted –
an unspoiled, infinite, hushing

white. And planed by rigid light,
a light that slides like golden straps

across a stiff white cloth

one dares not rustle. Steady. Draw
no breath. Listen. Draw
thyself below the fallen snow.

II.

Last night's frost a shock to all systems.
What goes without saying: the key
turning in the ignition,

the engine not turning over.

Roll the boulder up the hill.

Repeat. The key turning, the key

turning. The engine finally
turning over. What goes without
saying: a prayer. The wheels turning.

III.

Roll the boulder up the hill.

Repeat. Roll the boulder away
from the tomb. In the precise spot

between two towns the channels crack,
their signals scattered in the snow.

Pull over. Catch your breath.

Hear the nausea fizzing up.

This is where the tethers snap:
tundra: white noise, natural light.

IV.

No spires to fishhook Heaven.
No bats batting 'bout. No belfry.
Closest thing to a gargoyle here,

a grouse hunched in an alder tree.
No iron hinge, no oaken door;
no room, you'd think, for any god.

The angels get their hackles up.
Hoary-feathered skull-gull roosting,
a handsaw Jigsaw Gothic.

V.

Creaking lightly past the ribwork
and lighting candles on the way.
Flotsam-coloured light kneels on

twelve carved apostles left alone
to digest and to ruminare.

You'll notice their resemblance

to sailors who have disappeared.
An ancient furnace wails, its warmth
twenty thousand leagues away.

VI.

Whatever convoluted way

I come up from the furnace room,
a gravity will draw, will drag

my eye toward the Sacred Heart,
in the foremost lobe of church.
that solar plexus

where all prayers' limbs' nerve endings meet,
Introibo ad altare Dei
and feel those closed eyes follow me.

Paul's First Mass at Corinth

In the warm drone of the first reading
Eutyches falls asleep
and tumbles over a railing
into the worm-drone of the first reading.

Eutyches falls. Asleep
he dreams a bird sailing
in the warm drome. The first meeting
and already, one sentenced to death.

Office Hours

Like Civil War re-enactments,
stamp collecting, priesthood something
a man just stumbles into when
he starts to feel the prick of time.

Administrating eternity.

A radiator's knuckles rap.
A rats' nest in the linotype.
The dry tongues of a calendar

with every month epitomized
by one of the Old Masters.
December: the nativity,
Bronzino. But if I flip back

to March, El Greco, his pieta.
That fog-blue skin that Jesus has.
The Marys, Peter, turning blue,
like Jesus took all reds with Him.

El Greco – the Greek – how did he know
that springtime here leaves minute shards
of winter guilting in the bone
three bodies huddled can't evict,
or all that fragrant red and gold
won't hold the blue beneath our skin,
that winter here is a lifetime long?

Sullivan's Observatory

“Down here, now, there's nothing to be at.
But I worked as a machinist forty years,
and I always did love looking at the stars.
If not for this, I'd have me wife drove cracked.”

An arsenal of copper pipe and salvaged
mirrors he had piled up in that shed,
and a massive hole cut in the roof to let
the stovepipe out. Never mind the damage.

populate the earth: sheep after sheep
night after night.

Encounters with Men

A joke, to start.

So a priest walks into a bar...

and the place goes into rigor mortis. You can hear
the difference between talk and conversation:

a nod, a whisper.

Jesus. Never? Can you imagine?

A youngfella like that, it isn't natural.

*Yes, well you know what that crowd are like.
on the kids, if I were you.*

That's what keeps the quiet between us
so thick the counter buckles.

When I was five, my father taught me how to fight. Or tried:
held my fists before my face, two knots of little bones
bound in pink crêpe. I'd have to find other means:

anyone can see my hands,
un-cuffed, uncramped, unblistered, clean as paper,
a joke to finish.

“So a priest walks into a bar...”

Confession #2

I feel awkward, shy, afraid.

But here it is, incredibly boring, so boring I can't believe it's true.

I never had an impulse to go to the altar.

I thought everything we were doing was awful.

There are many things in your heart you can never tell another pe

“I ain't real sure,” for example.

Love is a publicity stunt, and making love – after the first curious r
only

another petulant way to pass the time.

He would have been a great director, which eventually he wanted

I never said, “I want to be alone.” I only said, “I want to be left alone.” T

world of difference.

I only said “The diaphragm is the greatest invention since Pan-Cal

If a woman makes a mistake unintentionally, I don't believe she should

for it.

Or shook with such violence that he left ten black-and-blue finger
arms.

You should cross yourself when you say his name.

But once a woman has forgiven a man, she must not reheat his sin

People used to say that I had a feeling of closeness, a great warmth
loving everybody,

that they could tell me their troubles.

But the worst part of it all is this: no matter how hard you try, you
possibly please everyone.

They had to say something about me, so they wrote stories of the

and

called me temperamental and hard to handle.

That's a heavy load to carry when one is tired, hurt, and bewildered
and no one gives a damn.

It never occurs to them that one is simply tired.

And hurt, and bewildered.

Love is disgusting when you no longer possess yourself.

All you have to do is to say you want to be alone.

Right?

Please?

A found poem, made up of quotes from silent film actresses.

Confession #3

Father, forgive me my sins. You see, Father, I had to come see you
You see, my son – I, I mean, I'm getting myself tangled up.

Wednesday I hung out the wash and I took little Paddy out with me
There's never a happier child – Father, he wouldn't say "boo."

When I was done I knelt down to see what he'd got into. He was
playing with some kind of jar. No idea where he got that.

He was filling the jar up with ants and shaking them out on the grass
I told him not to be at it. Why can't I? he asked me.

Not in a saucy way, mind you. I told him the ants would get hurt if
he kept on shaking the jar – that they were frightened of him,

he wasn't nice if he did that. But he shook them right out on the grass
said "I'm gonna count, mister. One. Two..." Do you think he would

Dead ants. Dead. I tried taking it from him. I screamed myself red

could not get him to understand they were ... and he

was so big. He kept shaking and shaking. I

struck him. I struck. O God, Father, what a clout I gave him.

Patrick O'Reilly is a recent graduate of the MFA in Writing at the University of Saskatchewan. He has written for *untethered*, *The Partisan*, and *Canadian Poetry*, where he is a contributor. In 2015, his poem "Shelter" was longlisted for the *Canadian Poetry*. He lives in Montréal.

Uimhir a Cúig | Angel's Wing-Lashed Fire: Poem
Afric McGlinchey



I, a travelling country of windows

All the bony roads,
spokes shaking off a mouthful
of sleet, and you
further forward than me, or inward perhaps
– a heaped bush – stop.
Fleeting shock of silence;
and then the rattling again,
struggling past the cages. Say one lunges
from above, tipping its point
like a Damocles sword – dare I?
I know what is in that box
stiffly packaged in white canvas
– the first of the seven sorrows –
this, then the next to come tumbling
will be – no, let's
travel back, round the coastline up north
where the mattress groaned under

our bouncing feet and feathers flew
from the bolsters – wait!
Was that the creak of a door, pink
glow of the landing wallpaper?
He’s here! And fast as the smallest
laughing fury, we’re under the sheets:
one on the floor, pretend-sleeping
the silence intense as the thickness
of snow set across pillows
and pillows of fields.

Cha

after *All my Friends*,

an electronic composition by Edan Ray

Laugh! I nearly ran to the riptide
confluence where stories
are peripheral, and simply water
works. Only you know
the notion of it. Only you keep me
laughing. Only you rush
into the pedal of the music
or crossover
silence that smacks
up against wayward torques
squeaking liquid and you and you
and you, my friends, run backwards, slow
motion as the ocean. Shhh...
or bass it. Strobe-light-fix
each gesture in distortion,
loose-wristed, star-fired, brainless
with excitement. Cha.

Nine ways to identify an alley cat

I

Her lashes are upstart
ravens' nests;
serrated shadows.

II

Her coquettish circling
is accompanied by a throaty,
insistent growl.

III

She sets a flat rock
with found risks,
until others hanker too.

IV

She cadges guts
from harassed butchers,
then lays them in the dirt.

V

She almost always
escapes the bolt.

VI

Yes, she's scratched, but still,
quickens with the music.

VII

She rattles
in a crowded corner.

VIII

Her hooping, toppling,
wounded movement's like the lick

of a failing candle.

IX

Her thought-ghost proves
that death's mutation's
merely a ruse.

Faith is the thing with feathers

Beneath the vaulting,
the elderly, deeply-kneeling

and kyphotic,
rock like a pendulum.

In each radiating chapel, a candle
forest is offered up to souls.

The choir's complex
harmonics echo across pews.

Incense is a series
of hovering exhalations,

visible as umbrellas
in the narthex.

Prayers flutter, three
hundred breaths a minute.

Lungs, rain-licked,
hum white; each tongue

an edelweiss. Leadlight
vignettes glitter

in the clerestory: an angel's
wing-lashed fire,

in twenty-one-gram
refractions, holding all this.

End of the blessing

To me you were the heart's X
against my Guernica wall,
drowning out calamity.

I was addicted to your trip trap
words, lush as ferns,
all the way to fractal.

And the tandoor of my body grew
wide awake; tongue, a fire
racing through the field.

You seduced my mind,
till it was perpetually
undressed.

What's left inside me, now
you've drifted off,
taking all the alleluias?

Montage

The old philosopher is sharp as ice in winter,
fracturing all the wicked weights,

the resonance of his voice, lacerating
so-called *safe* spaces,

until they are ripped and sewn again,
upright as trees.

His words are gateways to the sublime,
conflating human agency

with the natural order, the body
of shared memory with the vanished sign.

There should be flowers, he tells us
in a clear-cut voice, simple as ink.

Every night, his teachings turn to the blue
laws, or stallions

or the book of hours. Come dawn,
he reaches the double zero

in a landscape of confession – luminous
and ferocious, divine and apocalyptic,

inviting invocation and resistance
to those overpouring

toward war – that avenue
lined with little lamps of snow.

—A

Afric McGlinchey was born in Ireland. She grew up in Southern Ireland, moving frequently between countries, and received degrees from Rhode Island College and the University of Cape Town. She has also lived in London, Paris, and Spain. She returned to Ireland in 1999 and currently lives in Westport, Ireland.

collection, *The Lucky Star of Hidden Things*, published by Salmon Poetry. *Amor* was translated into Italian and published by L'Arcolaio. *Amor* and honours, in 2011 she won the Hennessy Poetry Award, and was nominated for a Pushcart prize, commended in the Magma and Bridport competitions. In 2015, she won the Poets Meet Politics award and was awarded an Arts bursary to complete her second collection, *Ghost Cat* (Salmon Poetry), which was nominated for the Forward Prize for Best Collection in 2016. Runner up in the 2014 Saboteur Awards for Best Poetry Collection. She is also an editor. www.africmcglinchey.com

My First Job | The Hematology Clinic — Robert:



My first real job was in a hematology clinic in the 1960s. The office, located on Eight Mile Road in Detroit, was a beehive of rooms where three clinicians saw patients and five women acting as support staff. There I fell under the thumb of a doctor who was everything admirable: a scientist, a musician, and also a little goofy. I was seventeen; we were close to each other.

My job wasn't demanding: I called patients in from the phone, watched as the tech drew their blood, weighed them, and

to an examining room where I gave them a dressing gown and told them to undress. The difficult part was seeing critically ill patients after day. But by the time I realized, my stint had ended and I was on the summer vacation of the rest of my life.

I'd just graduated from high school, which sounds very celebratory with trumpets blaring, when in fact I'd limped through my senior year and finally stopped going months before graduation. My mother had snapped. I couldn't tolerate the people at school, the drama, the flat wooden desks, the washed-out teachers in the lunchroom, and the emptiness I felt there. Instead of going to my room with its red carpet, wrought iron table, and bed with a bedspread, and woven headboard I'd spray painted black, I read or wept until my mother demanded I do my share of housework. The school must have mailed diploma.

Then in July, Henny, the office manager, asked me to return to work as a full-time worker. My parents, who didn't know what to do, probably saw the job as a godsend; a safe place where they could watch over me instead of having me hospitalized.

Without the internal starch to resist, I zipped on a white lab coat and showed up for work the following Monday. From then on, I wore a virginal garb and performed the role of someone who fit in the world during the week. One perk of showing up was seeing Dr. A in action. He was spectacular. He listened to others, treated them with kindness, ministered to their illness with a light touch, and was always hopeful.

I wasn't alone in admiring Dr. A. The four other women in the office there also thought he walked on water. The office manager was the pack. She was a Chihuahua-sized person who acted as a shepherd. She scheduled appointments and collected payments from patients, scaring them into paying their bill with her bloodshot eyes and dark scowl. The front office where she stood had a sliding door that opened onto the waiting room. Most of the time she kept

She knew how to act professionally, yet without warning she did the cruelest thing. Afterwards, in an Oscar-winning act she took full responsibility for her words. Scary stuff. I tried to stay out



Barb, the typist, also worked in the front office. She was transforming dictation into typed pages, as if she were a secretary. Though maybe seven years older than me at most, she was from another generation. At lunch she did needlepoint and talked to her mother constantly, with a country twang that belied the fact that she grew up twenty miles west of Detroit. She also loved hair and wore amber beads beaded the strands of her red hair. Sometimes she would give me a passage from one of Dr. A's reports. His writing was clear and humane. Barb never mentioned the reports of the other doctors whose work she also transcribed.

The insurance gal worked in the back section of the lab person born in Wyandotte, a blue-collar town downriver. She was sort of pretty, but there was an off-putting cold personality. If she didn't agree with something I'd said, she'd snicker so; instead she'd give this snarly, bark kind of laugh that was derisive and dismissive. She barked around Henny a lot.

Bernice, the lab technician, was the heart of the office. She had purple-blue eyes which were often red-rimmed from eye strain and husband troubles. She'd been married a few times and had several kids. She and Henny often held hushed conversations in the

While the other women shuffled paper, Bernice did actual work. She drew patients' blood, made slides, filled hematocrit tubes and spun them in the machine to spin. Most of her day was spent at the microscope, identifying and counting good and bad blood cells. She showed me an example of a sickle cell once and explained how a healthy circular red blood cell, this was half-moon shaped and carried less oxygen through the body.

Bernice was my direct superior. She taught me everything I needed to know in the office. And though I felt low as linoleum, I tried my best to please. I wanted Dr. A. to think well of me.

He was smart and funny, and unlike my father, heard me out from the first time. I wanted him to adopt me; he already had a son and needed a daughter. One morning he demonstrated what my father was like when a delivery guy boldly looked me up and down and said this and was outraged, which I translated to mean he'd just had a miscarriage and any other misfortune.

Dr. A. always made a point of engaging me with some remark when we entered an exam room. He'd jiggle his eyebrows like he was about to tell a joke, and after I'd laughed he'd put on his serious face and close the door.

While he conversed with the patient, I stood by the wall, invisible. His patients were usually milky pale with ruthlessly hollowed-out eyes. From my spot at the wall I saw a surgically smoothed chest. At first I admired her flat almost, and then the penny dropped and I realized both breasts had been removed. However, if she was seeing Dr. A., that would have hounded her. She'd given her breasts to cancer but it was not that which made me wonder what cellular bombs were brewing beneath her elastic skin.



During the exam he'd listen to the patients' heart and lung bellies, and check the lymph nodes under their arms and necessary. Then he'd say one of three things: how well that they needed a blood transfusion or chemotherapy would arrange for them to be admitted to the hospital.

By now I was eighteen, and five days a week I watched their loved ones into offices where they hoped for contrast, my pain and confusion had no precise diagnosis made me stagger as I worked through the day. I struggled tamping down my despair as I tried to keep up with the pace to my evolving job.

For instance, Dr. A. performed bone marrow extraction. The sterilized white package, wrapped like a package for held all the necessary items for the procedure. As I watched an anesthetic into the area, talk to the patient as it took plunge a long, hollow metal needle into the patient's bone. It was sort of like coring an apple but instead of brought up a tube of moist bone marrow. The apparatus both barbaric and elegant. Once he'd finished, I had instrument, wrap it in white cloth, secure it, and then send the autoclave, a small box like a microwave that hummed what was inside of it.



Bernice also taught me how to use a blood pressure stethoscope to measure a patient's blood pressure. To start, I'd wrap the cuff around their upper arm, then support their arm with a rubber ball that pumped air into the cuff. Once the cuff was inflated, I'd place the bell of the stethoscope at the crease in their elbow, and then I'd squeeze the base of the ball to release the air and listen through the stethoscope for a sound. The first whoosh signified their systolic pressure, and when that sound ceased, the diastolic pressure. Afterwards, I'd write down each number. However, the sound and lack of it were often ambiguous. If I was unsure of what I'd heard, I'd ask the patient if I could repeat the measurement. These people were so agreeable. They were used to being prodded by someone wearing a white uniform, and their compliance signaled an expertise I didn't possess. I felt awful about the time, but I had to be sure it was correct.

As if this physical intimacy weren't enough, they next asked me how to draw blood, something Bernice usually did. I guess

if I did it, Bernice would have more time for her other things. I thought Dr. A. had suggested it, I agreed to become a phlebotomist.

The morning training was held at Sinai Hospital, where we were to learn how to draw blood. We began with shoving a needle into an orange, which was easy. Then we moved on to people. I could hardly hold a cotton ball on someone and now I had to swab their skin with alcohol, tie a rubber tourniquet, and jab a needle into them. It was a little more of a sweat to touch their skin as I searched for a vein. For a while I went to the bathroom, but that strategy was short-lived; eventually I had to be stuck by someone else.

As the morning continued we refined our new strategy. The instructor gave us the instruction. The needle had to be jabbed quickly to reduce pain. It couldn't be pushed too far or it would drive through the vein and blood to leak into the surrounding tissue. Once needle had been inserted, if mastered, the trick was to locate the vein. Men's veins are often they often rise above the skin's surface—while women's veins are often below. The instructor told us to press our finger in the crease of the arm until we sensed a line of resistance, i.e., the vein, and then carefully to slide the needle in. Sounds simple enough. But veins are not always in the same place, can roll, be thin as thread, or flatten out if someone is dehydrated. Sick people often are. Somehow I made it through the training.

Back at the office, Bernice wanted me to practice my new skill. She had me by as I tied a tourniquet around an older man's exposed arm. His dry, wrinkled skin, where once he'd had taunt muscles and a posture like a horse, I shied at the jump and Bernice had to finish the lab.

Mornings Henny sorted the mail. Among the bills and notices were envelopes from the hospital, which held slips printed on pink paper. They were referred to as pink slips and were death notices. Bernice showed up she'd read off the name of who had died and the cause of recognition. However, if a cluster of pink slips arrived, she would crack jokes in what I thought was a disrespectful manner.

of this reaction, I came to see that they were struck by the deaths and black humor was their collective way of handling



Dr. W., one of the three doctors, saw the sickest patient and reminded me of Richard Nixon or a rubber mask version of Nixon. I'd learned how to draw blood, he asked if I'd fill in for the other patients who needed chemotherapy. I was caught. I had never done it. Bernice had to do it and I'd already let her know I was wanting to do the phlebotomy thing, so I said yes. This was done in between weighing patients, getting them set up for taking their blood pressure, and filing glass slides. It was just something to do.

When a patient required chemotherapy, Dr. W. would give me a list listing the name or names of the medication to use. The medications were stored in boxes in the lab refrigerator in between staff members' cartons of half and half. I felt like Dr. Frankenstein, putting sterilized water into the rubber gasket of a tiny bottle and waiting for the crystals to dissolve. Another med was a form of mustard gas from WWI. The third, referred to by its acronym 5FU, came in a vial. The tops were pretty easy to snap off, and then I'd draw

into the tube of the syringe. To be on the safe side, I'd re it on a small tray along with the syringes.

Yet even with these precautions, I more than once filled the wrong med. After I'd taken the tray into his offic impulse to check the trash and if I saw a glass ampule I paper towel instead of a tiny rubber-topped bottle, I'd h office and hover in the doorway to see if he'd already g the injection.

If he had, I'd back away and go into an exam room wh used paper off the exam table and pull a fresh sheet ove I'd think how to tell Bernice what I'd done. Then I stethoscope, the reflex hammer, and the prescriptio heading for the lab.

There I'd watch her perched on her stool, her eyes p microscope as her finger tapped the counter. She'd don years she could count and listen at the same time. Afte my mistake, her finger would stop and she'd pull her fac microscope and take a swig of coffee. Then she'd say, "G

Of course I wanted her to handle it. I was the youngest office, whose job description kept expanding. I made t sure the bathroom stayed tidy, picked up after the p magazines in the waiting room, treated everyone nicely, the medication. I was sure they'd call the police, so I lock bathroom. I wanted more than anything to off-load t couldn't. I'd been moving too fast, I hadn't triple che against the medicine. When someone tapped on the doc it.



Dr. W. sat in his office behind his desk. I explained my
listened, his rubbery face lengthened. The silence
multiplied, had children of its own who had wedding
more children. Finally, he said something like, “These
sick, one injection isn’t going to kill them.” I wouldn’t sa
about hearing this news, yet what could he do? The
rushing through their bloodstream. They’d already
Obviously he bore final responsibility for my actions,
haunted me. I didn’t know how the body would react
clashing meds. Would it make them sicker?

A few weeks later Henny read out the pink slips, includ
the woman I’d given the wrong medication. The line
mishandled the meds and the woman had died. I was

eighteen-year-old. I didn't know if there was a relationship between the medication and her death, and no one put me wise either way. I was not acting with responsibility and in that state couldn't ask for clarification.

And in that darkness, came some light. Dr. A. invited my family at their vacation home in upper Michigan. I was not asked but puzzled by how little he spoke to me while I was there. Most of the time I hung out with one of his sons.

Winter passed, as did spring, and June came round again. I spent a year at the hematology clinic, in whose rooms I'd practiced medicine more of a person. I'd seen patients with punishing diseases go, and now it was time for me to go, too. Whatever romance I had in medicine died in that.



Roberta Levine lives in rural northwestern Pennsylvania where she focuses on art, the environment and education. She earned a BFA at the University of Michigan and a MFA from The Vermont College of Fine Arts. She runs Kitchen/Apartment Therapy, writes short stories, and teaches an environmental enrichment program offered through Allegheny College.

Pretending to Nature: Excerpt from I Don't Think
You (Until I Do) | Fiction — Tatiana Ryckman



1

When I saw you again it was suddenly and exactly
hoped, which is to say it was exactly the same.

You walked into the room you'd walked in the year before
close pretending we always sit close, and we went to
mutual friends pretending we always go to dinner
friends, and our friends tried to pretend I would not be
with you until it became ridiculous.

2

At the holiday party the entire city's enthusiasm kept c

us. I was just waiting for everyone to leave. I didn't care if I was dying, I didn't worry that I was leaving anything behind.

3

Because all of my grand gestures were neurons transmitting thoughts of you, you couldn't see them from the other side of the ocean or country.

And I didn't blame you because no one is a mind reader,

And we all get busy.

And you got very busy.

4

It became hard not to imagine, in heartbreaking detail, somebody who moved you from one all-consuming thought to the next. From the bed to the floor. From the specific taste of the books they inspired you to write.

Soon, between the flights I took in my mind to your room, the memories I held you in my mouth and the monuments you built together in your living room, there was this someone else who occasionally step out of my own fantasies of you to remind me of the person I really was.

During long periods of silence I convinced myself that the distance that transpired between us. That my willingness to undo my life was ordinary.

5

What we were calling "inevitable" turned out to be debilitating.

Alone in bed I'd say, "I'm dying" over and over again.

happened. My cells regenerated at the same rate. I refr
email inbox. I was dying while making breakfast and
dying while washing dishes which turned into dying in
then dying in the bed again and then later, over a glas
dying on the floor. I was dying while listening to
headphones. I was dying while looking at personal ads
was dying while watching videos of sleepy kittens on
dying while watching two women taste each other on a c
with a similar name. I was dying while making popcorn
sending smiley face text messages to friends and L
Facebook. I was dying while looking at the ceiling and th
back at the ceiling again. I was dying and wishing I would

No one could see it, but I was very busy. I was dying all th

6

I couldn't help but notice that you were probably not in k

Not with me, anyway. Which is not to say I would have
Not yet, anyway.


But I was noticing both the lack of you and the prevalenc
in the yard and it felt like being alone at a party. Like wat
as if I had friends on the way. But I was just pretendin
you'd show up.

—T

[Tatiana Ryckman](#) was born in Cleveland, Ohio. She is the
chapbooks of prose, *Twenty-Something* and *VHS and Why it's Ha*
linked vignettes are an excerpt from *I Don't Think of You (Until*
forthcoming from Future Tense Books.

If... | Poems — Susan Elmslie

 No Responses

 2017, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. VIII, No. 3,
March 2017



A Poet Has Nine Knives

One to trim the fat
One to cut the line

One for father's back
One for that crook Time
One to keep it sharp
And to slice it thin
One that's sly and jagged
As a gutted tin
One for keeping sheathed
One to pick the latch
One whose only deed's
To carve your epitaph

THREE POEMS FROM "TRIGGER WARNING"

Unteachable Moment

woe to the innocent who hears that sound!

—Odyssey 12.44, Fitzgerald translation

In lockdown, I'd been desperate
to hear sirens; once outside, safe,

they were too much. Paroxysmal,
dopplered, they blared past me *hur-ry*

hur-ry on the way to
my daughter's daycare,

and at home, in our living room, on the TV:
looped footage. Our near silence

punctured by the stifled lament
of police cars, ambulances careening to the ER,

converging on the scene
I'd just escaped.

My husband and I,
slumped on the couch,

unable to get out the oars, were watching
our daughter playing on the floor.

“That?” she asked, pointing
at the screen. “Ambulance,” I said,

but she shook her head, still pointing,
her finger stirring the air.

I turned it right down, but I could still hear it.
I told her, “That’s a *siren*,”

waited to see if she was satisfied
with just the word, or if she’d press me

for what the sound itself meant
this moment. I was queasy

watching my school on the news, as if learning
who and how many

could stanch the genre, as if the next
“kept to himself” wasn’t also taking cues,

gearing up— shooting selfies, posed with his Glock—
and again, on every channel,

sirens will serenade kids filing from schools,
some with their arms on the shoulders of the kid ahead,

looking for all the world like anguished rowers.
I got down on the floor.

(after James Hoch, *Miscreants*)

if he had taken up guitar, played
ping pong or Ultimate Frisbee, tried
deep breathing, accepted human frailty,
adopted a mutt at the SPCA,
shovelled his neighbour's walk,
did a year abroad
if there were more ways in than out
if he felt that someone was listening, maybe
a boy on the beach, after parasailing
at Île Sainte-Marguerite, the scent of umbrella pines
and eucalyptus in the air,
taking sips from a can of Kronenbourg
if his favourite aunt had been a police officer
if he'd had a favourite aunt
if his car had gotten a flat, and he'd taken this
as a sign to take a spiritual U-y
if he had smelled fear and been able to name it,
if he could laugh at himself
if he'd read Dostoyevsky, Ian McEwan, Tim O'Brien
if he'd preferred the Guggenheim and techno gadgets to
if he made a mean gulab jamun or tiramisu or quindim
if it was so simple it was beautiful
if he'd had a sibling with cystic fibrosis, a teacher from Tr
a chum who medalled in Taekwondo, a summer of love,
a walk in the park, a hug around the neck,
a Sudoku habit if he had talked
to his doctor or mother and tried meds
and planted some sub-zero roses
if he had been pulled over for unpaid tickets,
bowed to cosmic irony and vowed to give peace
a chance if he had not been born, or was somehow r
if we could recognize him this turn,

slipknot time, help him
to feel good in his skin
when he begins this
day and when he lays his head down to drea

Conventions

*the same message: how horrible it was, how little
there was to say about how horrible it was.*

—Bob Hicok, “In the Loop”

The running and then
the footage of people running.
After the chaos there is silence,
a failure of words but not of sound,
which we know travels in waves,
and the speed of which is still the distance
travelled per unit of time.
The sound of a firearm going off
in a school hallway is not unlike the sound
of a metal locker slamming inside your head.
The colleagues you hugged
and who hugged you will go back
to arms' length, which is healthy.
Maybe you will cry
one night doing dishes,
up to the elbow in thinning suds,
combing for straggling flatware,
which might suggest something poetic
about the correspondence of the elements
or, when you think about it, the extraordinary
capacity of the workaday to anchor
and unmoor us.

Faith is a Suitcase

You've lugged it
down narrow aisles,
hoisted and stowed it overhead
with the ersatz pillows,

leaned on it
during the layover, dozed,
head nodding like a monk at prayer.

Hello split seam, wonky wheel.
Who wouldn't blame the gorilla?

Locked, key lost. It waits
in the corner of the room
like an agèd aunt.

Ativan

Fleck of wherewithal. Just
to have it in a tiny faux-
abalone box, to know you can
lift it with a licked pinkie,
if required. Bitter
plaster-of-Paris smear
under the tongue
because
the mind's default is flee
and your baby's lumbar puncture
is scheduled for 2:30. Necessity
and consent
in a slow dissolve.
Not so much a buffer
as the strength to stand
beside the hospital bed

and be two of the hands
holding him for the needle's kiss.

Descent

My baby was still nursing, and I'd lean over
the bed's steel rails to give him the breast,
let him twist his fingers in my hair until he slept
anchored by electrodes, gauze bonnet, fat snarl of wires
twisting into a Bob the Builder backpack
that housed the Trackit box near the call switch.
I could not leave the ward though they urged me to
go home, get a shower, change. At night,
an infrared video camera captured our quiet ballet.

I could not leave, could not leave. On the third day
I was sent down to the basement,
to the abandoned locker room.
Past the heavy steel door that would not quite close,
I stood under exposed ducts, frazzled fluorescent tubes
in a ship's bilge. Whiff of mildew, occult drip.
In the dim light I found the one narrow
shower stall, the slick edge
of the torn plastic curtain, pulled it back.

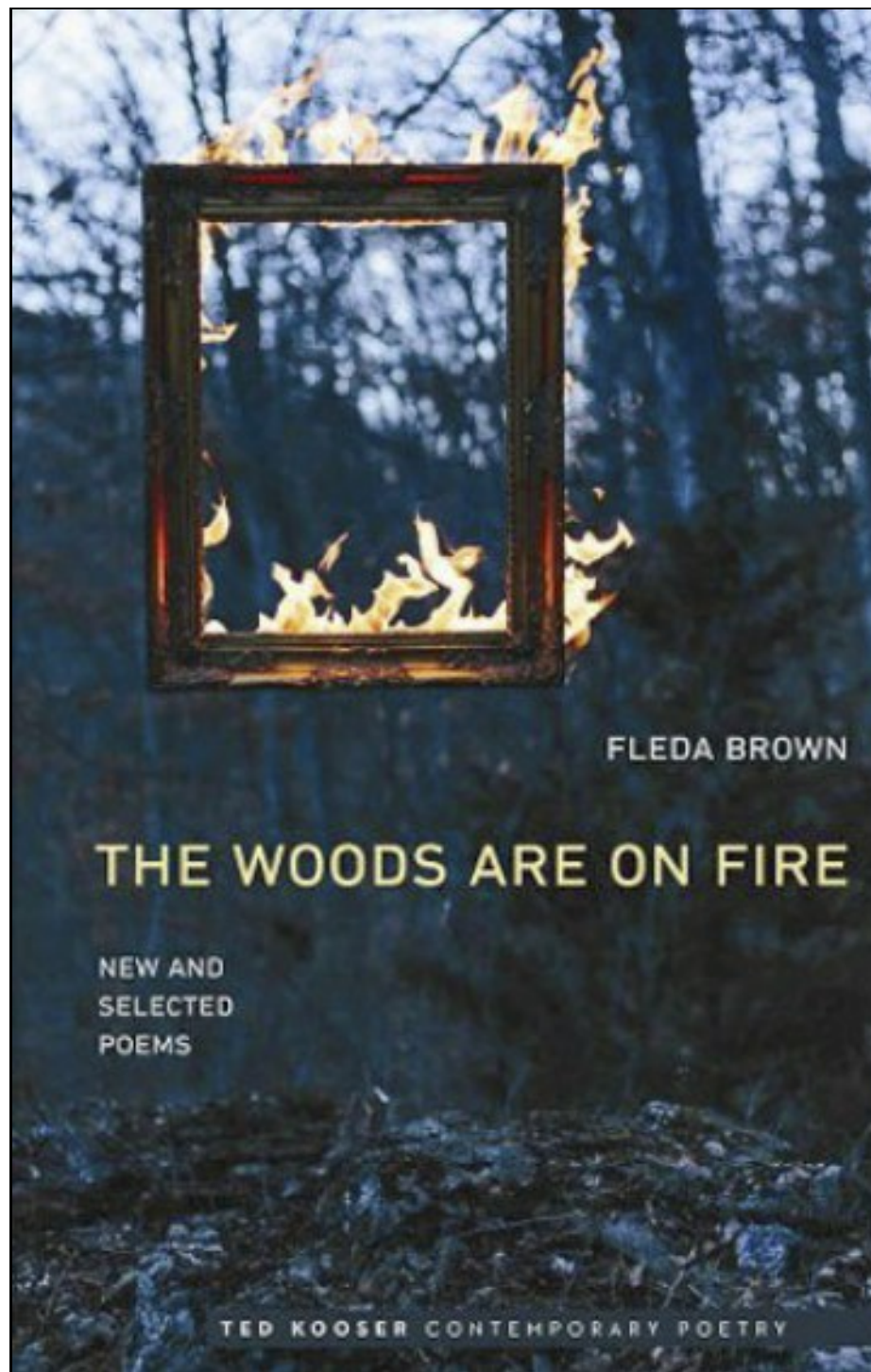
No one to hear me. My baby
lay in a bed flights up, electrodes
pasted to his scalp, helmeted in gauze.
I stripped, hung my milk-sour track suit
and hospital towel on a hook, stepped over the lip
onto a flattened shopping bag spread like a lily pad
on the blackened grout, institutional-green tiles.
The first cold water,
my baptism.

Susan Elmslie is a poet and college (CEGEP) professor of English Writing in Montreal. Her collection *I, Nadja, and Other Poems* (Etruscan) won the A. M. Klein Poetry Prize and was shortlisted for the McAuslan Award, the Pat Lowther Memorial Award and a ReLit Award. Her poems have appeared in several journals and anthologies—including the *Best Canadian English* (2008, 2015)—and in a prize-winning chapbook. Susan is a Hawthornden Poetry Fellow and has read her poems in translation curated by Guy Cloutier for *Les poètes de l'Amérique française*. A past winner in the *Arc* Poem of the Year contest, Susan has been shortlisted for other national and international poetry prizes. Her new book *Museum of Kindness* is forthcoming with Brick (Fall 2017).

Woods on Fire | Poems — Fleda Brown



*We've published poems and essays by Fleda Brown before, but this is a special, an apotheosis of sorts. Thursday, March 16, 5-7 pm, she will be reading from *Woods Are on Fire: New & Selected Poems* at the [Corner Loft](#) in East Lansing, Michigan. The book contains 20 poems selected from seven earlier collections and 10 new poems and comes out with the University of Nebraska Press in the *Contemporary Poetry* series. The eminent Ted Kooser himself will provide an introduction.*



The Woods are on Fire: New and Selected Poems

Fleda Brown; Introduction by Ted Kooser

University of Nebraska Press, 2017

Paperback, \$19.95

978-0-8032-9494-3

The Winner of the Art Prize

Is a 15-foot quilted forest scene
hundreds of trillium from puffily

quilted at one end to sewn-on
tatters at the other. I was saying
I don't understand the bombs
that blow off the heads of children
and soldiers how bombs can be
expelled from their casings
with a rapture by rapture I mean
the desire to ignite and whether
this is evil or springtime-mechanized-
outsourced-multiplied-stretched
unto exhaustion. Jerry's back
has seized up electrodes have been
fastened to various locations
to repeatedly fire to wear out
the muscles so they might return
to their previous pattern except
new pains keep coming seedlings
edging up from the dark white blasts
of trillium a natural law. Odysseus
returns after Troy, after the Cyclops,
the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis
the bloody heads of his crew their
bodies eaten or lost at sea Odysseus
after twenty years returns to Penelope
sword unsheathed suitors slain
even old Laertes murders all around
as if peace is death in other words
so what I don't get is the quilt how
those thousands of tiny piercings
and piecings for weeks and months
when you stand back mean a forest
serene sun-dappled flowered.

—for Thomas Lynch, undertaker

You're right, it's good to have a body
in state, satin-surround, to kiss the face,
open the ground, see how it is with all
of us, how it was with my classmate
Frank who died of measles, his pillowed
freckles dark and done.

Good, the blatant coffin, the procession,
the undertaker, the taking under.

To turn a body to ash—I can see how
it flies in the face of full-on facing
how slow the earth means to be.

Jack, however, yesterday opened
a tiny wooden box and dropped
Nancy's ashes in a hole. We each spaded
in loose dirt. What ashes were left,
that is, after he'd launched most of them
in the lake: an advantage,
to unhouse ourselves fast and float
where we will, lonely, maybe, without
even the worm's witness, but delicately
dispersed.

I'm thinking, though, of the gar
my uncle Dick dropped in a planting hole,
the huge white pine that peaked thirty feet
above the rest, the legend of that lain
at the foot of the tree, what one
hands the other by way of heft, the air
ponderous with it all these
eighty years.

Not Dying

He says he wakes and it feels momentarily like he's finally dying, a giving way, a sinking or hovering, can't say, but momentary: a window swung open you don't realize until a breeze.

I take him for a ride along the tongue of land, west looking east, looking back at the city from a point. Jet trails. He points them out, strung like necklaces, one fresh, with its glint out front.

We talk glaciers how they stuttered and glinted down Michigan, pools for each pause, those excellent lapses. And branches bare because the trees are all dead, he says, forgetting the time of year.

No, I say, dormant. Road hum. Ducks with their flawless. It hurts to turn his head. I slow and turn. Each new thing needs to be dead center, unencumbered. The names: mallard, jet trail, Power Island. Boat slips claim

blank water breathing in their hollows. He says it feels like dying, he says it as if he had been lit up from the inside, a room waiting, a waiting room. Not an ordeal, but road hum and light.

At night the aides come by. One kisses him goodnight on the lips, he says. Where? The lips. He smiles as if he's gotten away with something. He's miles away, a faint agreeable aftertaste. Nothing he can describe.

Too Much Going Wrong

I want to quit thinking about
trouble and instead praise
the cars moving exactly right

along the curved roadway, not
bumping each other or the curb.
Days that were thick and watery,
everything at its summer: gerbil,
peanut butter, tippy-cup, days
that started over and over
and were still small as a VW
with its hard shocks and no
seat belts and you beside me
in the Infant Seat made of wire
and plastic and facing forward,
held down by nothing yet
at the intersections my arm
flew out to hold you back
so that nothing would happen
while everything was happening.
Sheets on the line, diapers tumbled
at the Laundromat for softness,
and in the mirror, Look, you found
yourself and me, hair and tongue,
the most delightful shapes,
words just beginning, slobber
and drool as if the universe had
thought this up, in particular,
and showed us as if in a dream
and we dreamed our way, through
nights and days, without crashing,
and inside the car the sweet
music and the small feet
bouncing up and down.

Fleda Brown has published nine collections of poems. Her new collection, *Woods Are On Fire: New & Selected Poems*, from U. of Nebraska Press.

Kooser Contemporary Poetry Series, is just out. Her memoir, *My Cancer and the Creative Life*, came out in 2016. She is professor at the University of Delaware and was poet laureate of Delaware from 2008 to 2011. She now lives with her husband, Jerry Beasley, in Traverse City, Michigan. She is on the faculty of the Rainier Writing Workshop, a low-residency MFA program in Tacoma, Washington.

Amulets, Talismans | The Ceramic Art of Michel Pastore & Evelyne Porret — Rikki Ducornet

 No Responses

 2017, Art, NC
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March 2017



Ceramic box by Michel Pastore



Michel Pastore and Evelyne Porret

Long ago I lived in North Africa. I learned that among peoples, the erotic verses from the Koran are traced of the bride with henna—her hands and feet, belly. On the night of her wedding, her husband licks her, swallowing, embodies the sacred erotic.

When in the Loire Valley years later, I saw the ceramics of Michel and Evelyne Porret, I was stunned by the sight of so many domestic objects not only beautiful, but also somehow transcendent. In the deep of the late afternoon, they sparkled the air and sizzled—more like talismans than bowls and plates. I mean to say that if they were domestic pleasure, their emphasis was more on the ecstatic than the sensual. This encounter remains one of the most powerful influences with my life. Several of the pieces I saw that day are visible below.

Around the time I returned to the United States, Michel and Evelyne moved to Fayoum, Egypt. There they built a home, a ceramics studio and a brick kiln. Soon after arriving, in 1989, Evelyne opened a studio for their children which is flourishing to this day.

In 1991, Michel, always protean, and inspired by the weavers of the village of Nagada, became interested in textile and clothes design. As a Lebanese designer, Sylvia Nasralla, he opened a shop in Cairo named Nagada. If you watch [this video of a Nagada fashion show](#), you will be enchanted.

— Rikki Ducornet



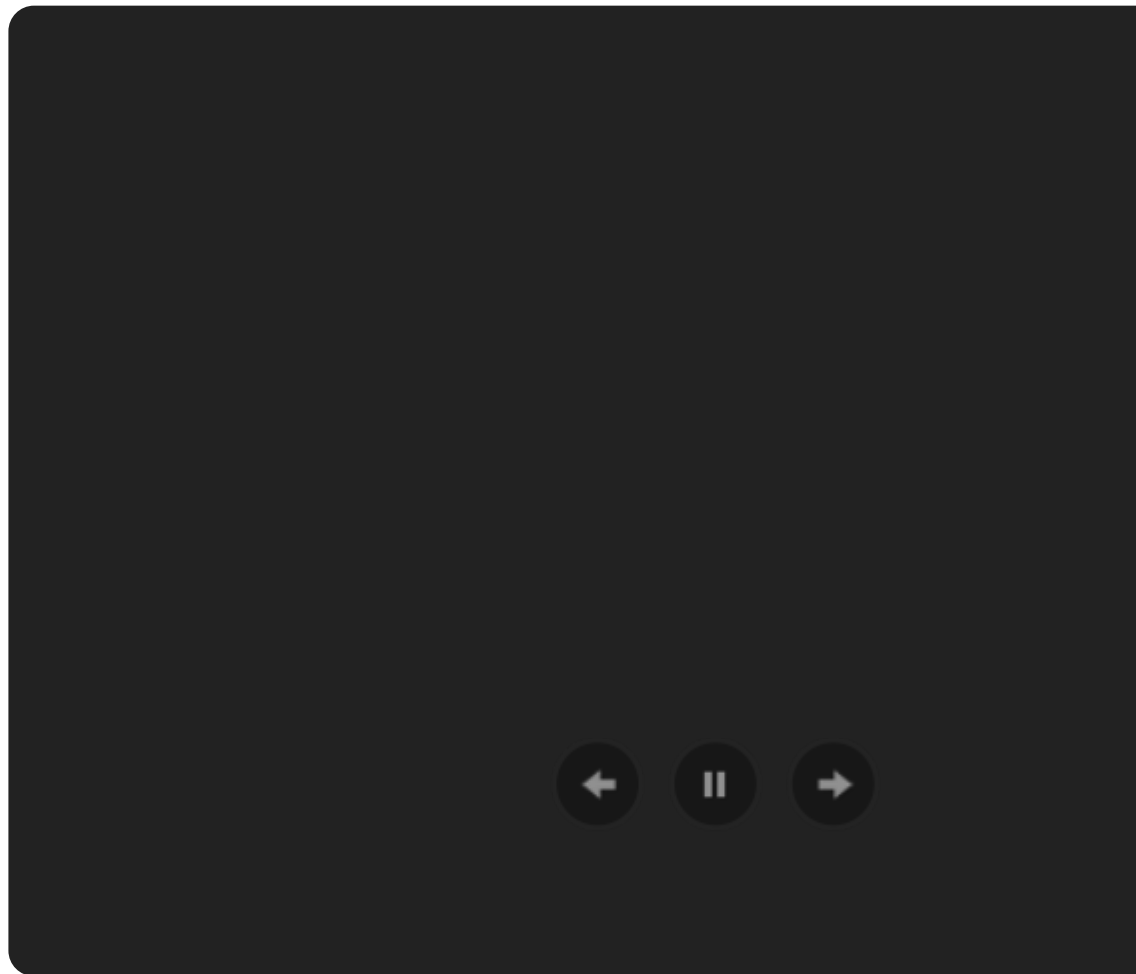




Ceramic by Michel Pastore

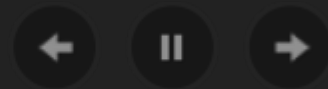


Pastore/Porret house and studio at Fayoum





The studio in Fayoum

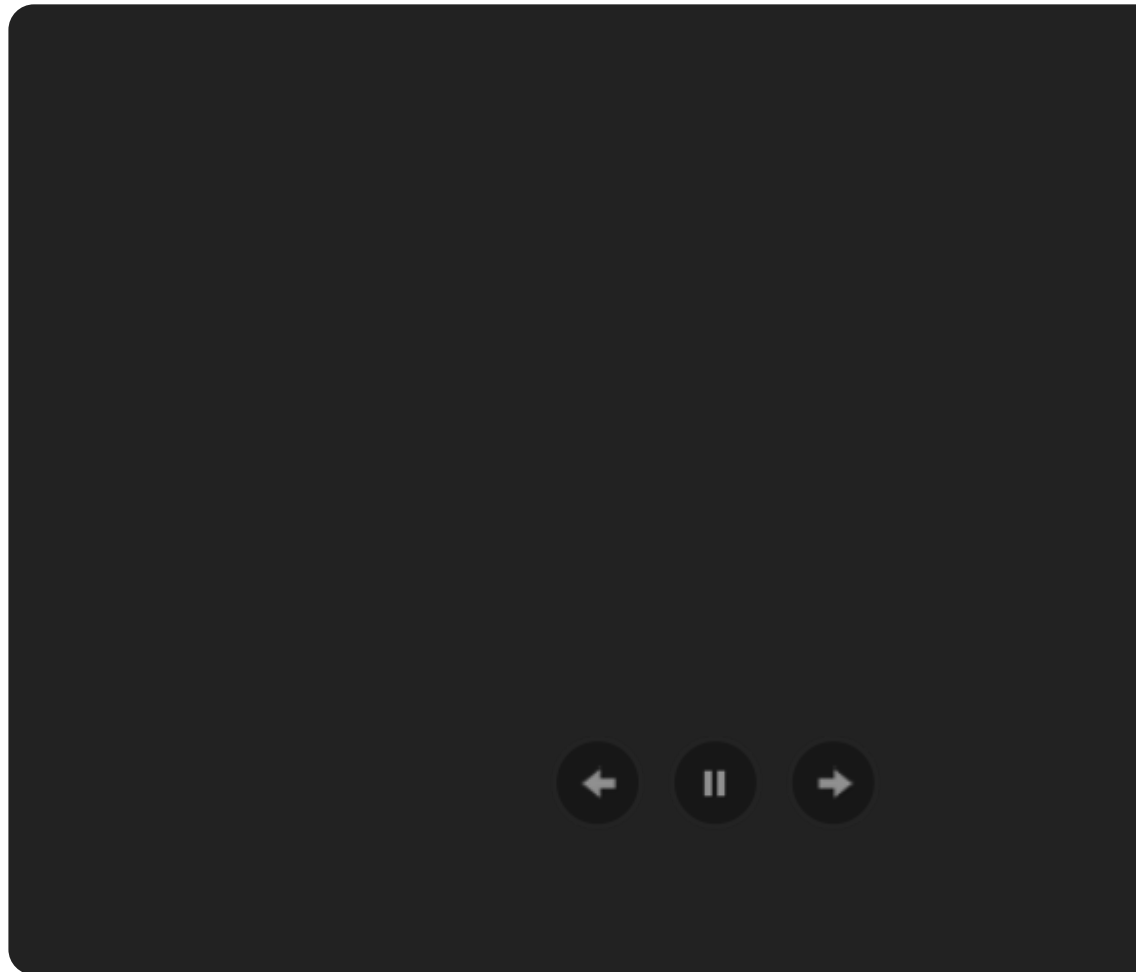


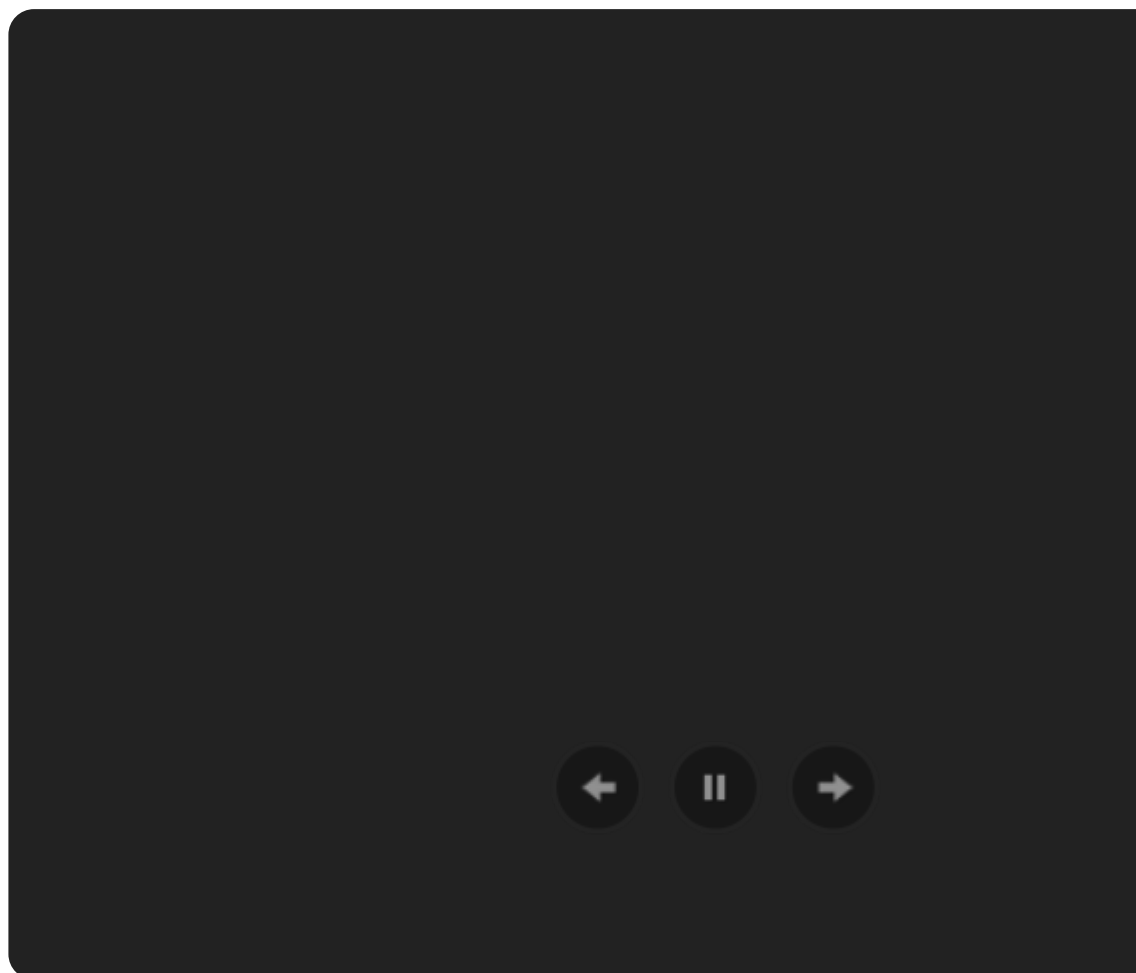


Pastore and Porret at the studio

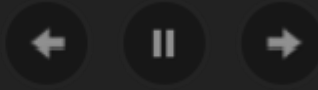


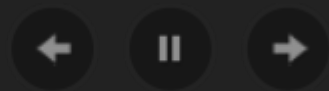
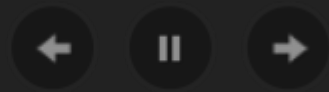
A pot made of local clay, from the first firing in the Fayoum sta











—Ceramics by Michel Pastore & Evelyne Porret; text by



Evelyne Porret and Michel Pastore



Rikki Ducornet

Rikki Ducornet is the author of eight novels as well as collections of essays, and poems. She has been a finalist for the National Book Award, is a two-time honoree of the Lannan Foundation, and the Academy Award in Literature. Widely published abroad, she is an illustrator and painter who exhibits internationally. Her work is h

State University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, the Solidaridad Salvador Allende in Chile, McMaster University Museum and the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Rikki lives in F Washington.

Small Revolutions | Drawings — Anne Hirondele

 No Responses

 2017, Art, NC
Magazine, Vol. VIII, No. 3,
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Aperture 14, 16 x 16



Hironnelle's beginnings as an artist were with clay. For over 20 years, she has been drawn to the vessel as an abstraction and metaphor for containment, moving from traditional functional pots and stretching them into airy, organic sculptural forms. In 2002, to explore more formal ideas, she developed her signature glazes for unglazed white stoneware and moved the work from the horizontal to the vertical plane. A year later she began painting directly on the ceramic. Simultaneously, her drawings, once ancillary to the sculpture, took on their own life. Derived from the ceramic forms, drawn with graphite and pencil on multiple layers of tracing paper, they are further explorations of abstraction.

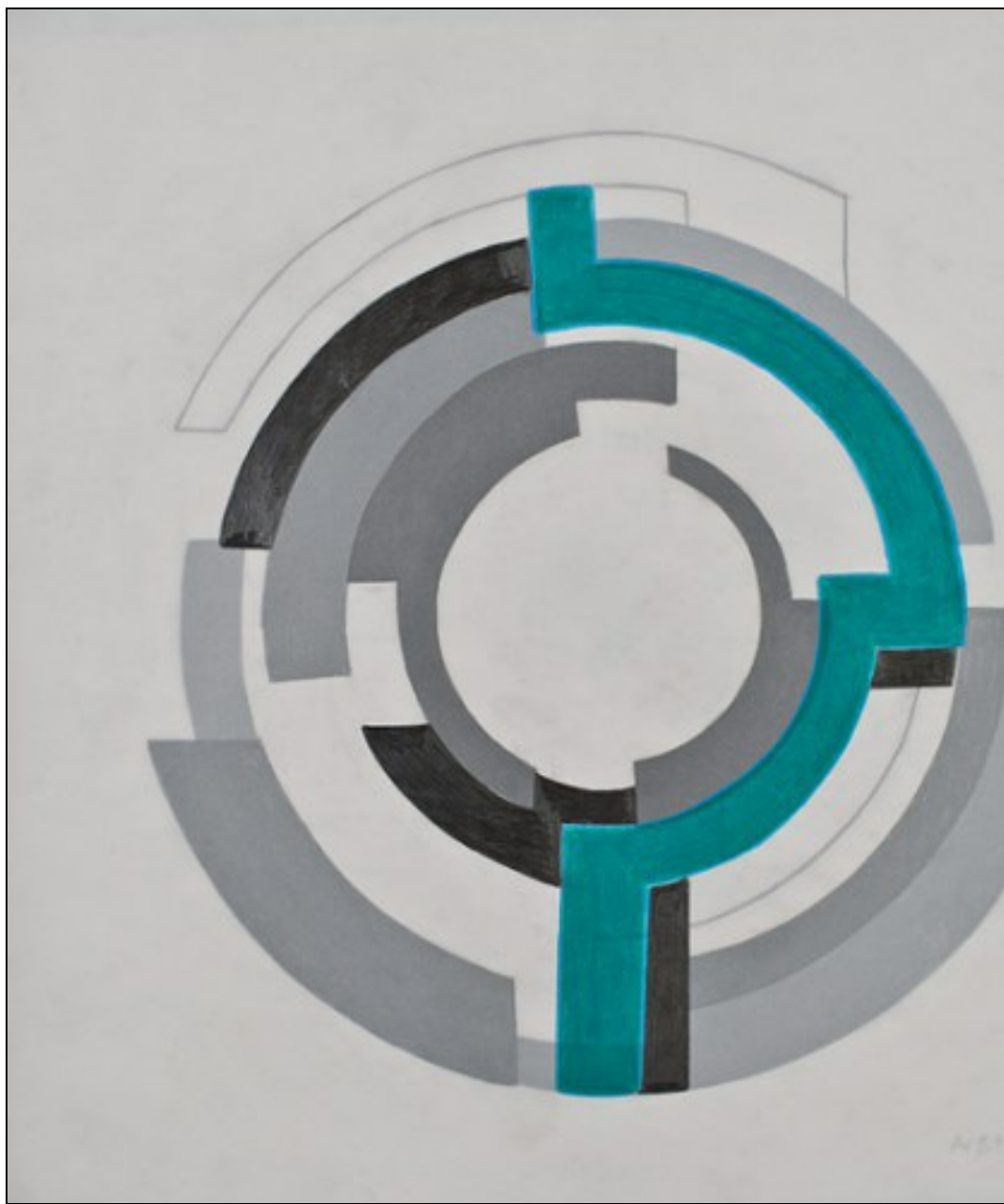
Her latest exhibition, [Anne Hironnelle: Small Revolutions](#), runs from February 10 to March 10, 2024, at the [Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago](#).

30, 2017 at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University in Eugene, Oregon. The exhibition, which features ceramic work and drawings from the poem, "Still Life with Fire" by David Fenza.

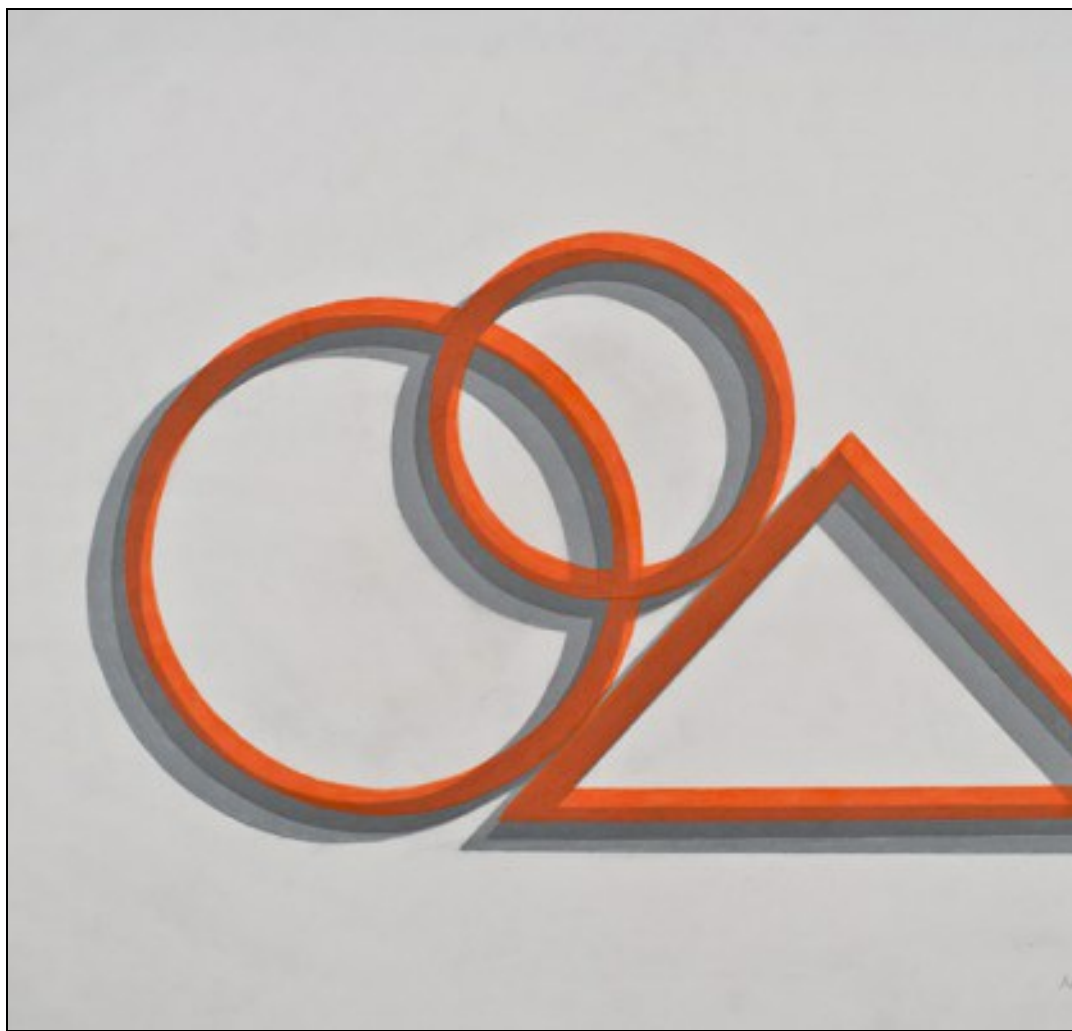
We shift in our naked repose, restless,
because, if we are clay, the fingerprints
of our Maker must be within & upon us;
& after the Potter's wheel is still, we still turn
with small revolutions of faith & doubt
as we style who & what to leave out
& who & what to hold within.

—David W. Fenza

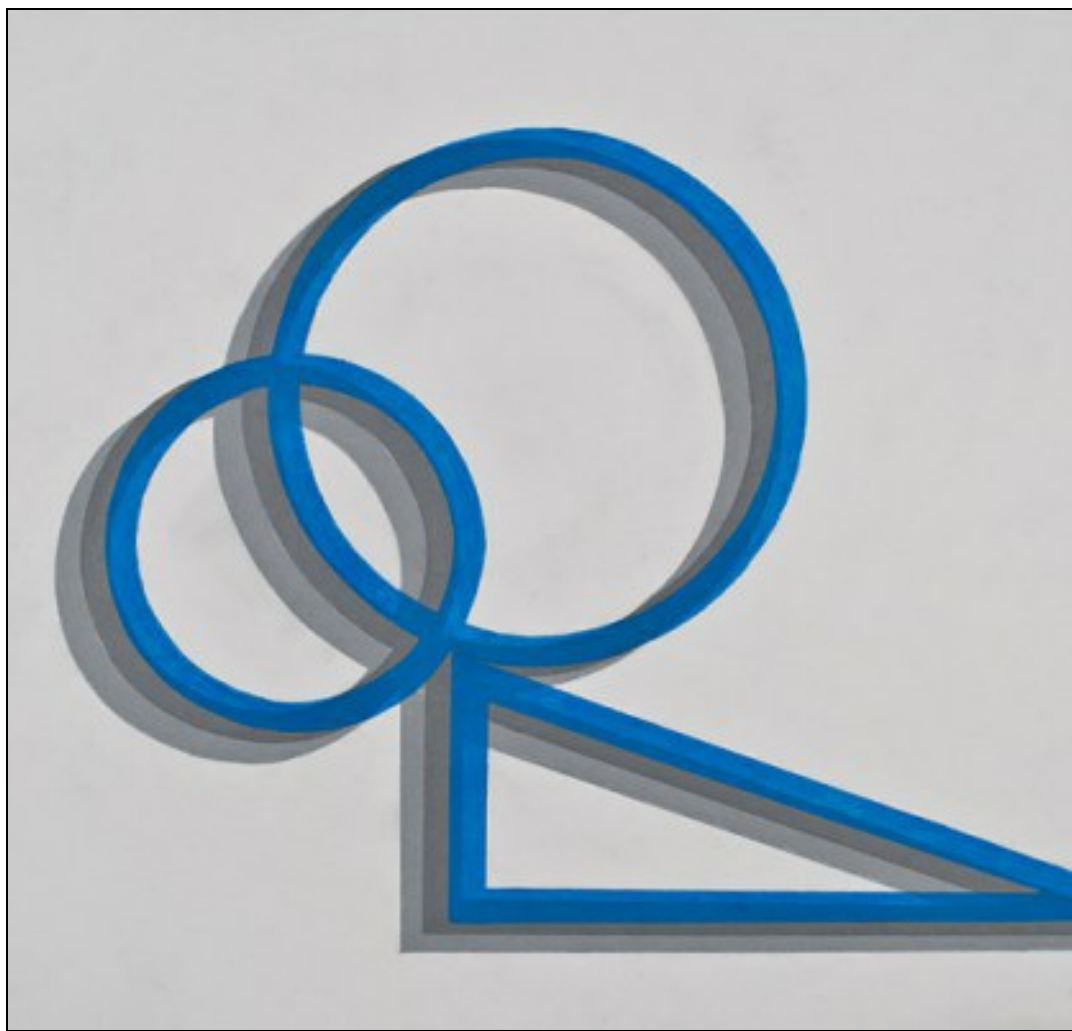
All images are graphite and prisma color on layered tracing paper.



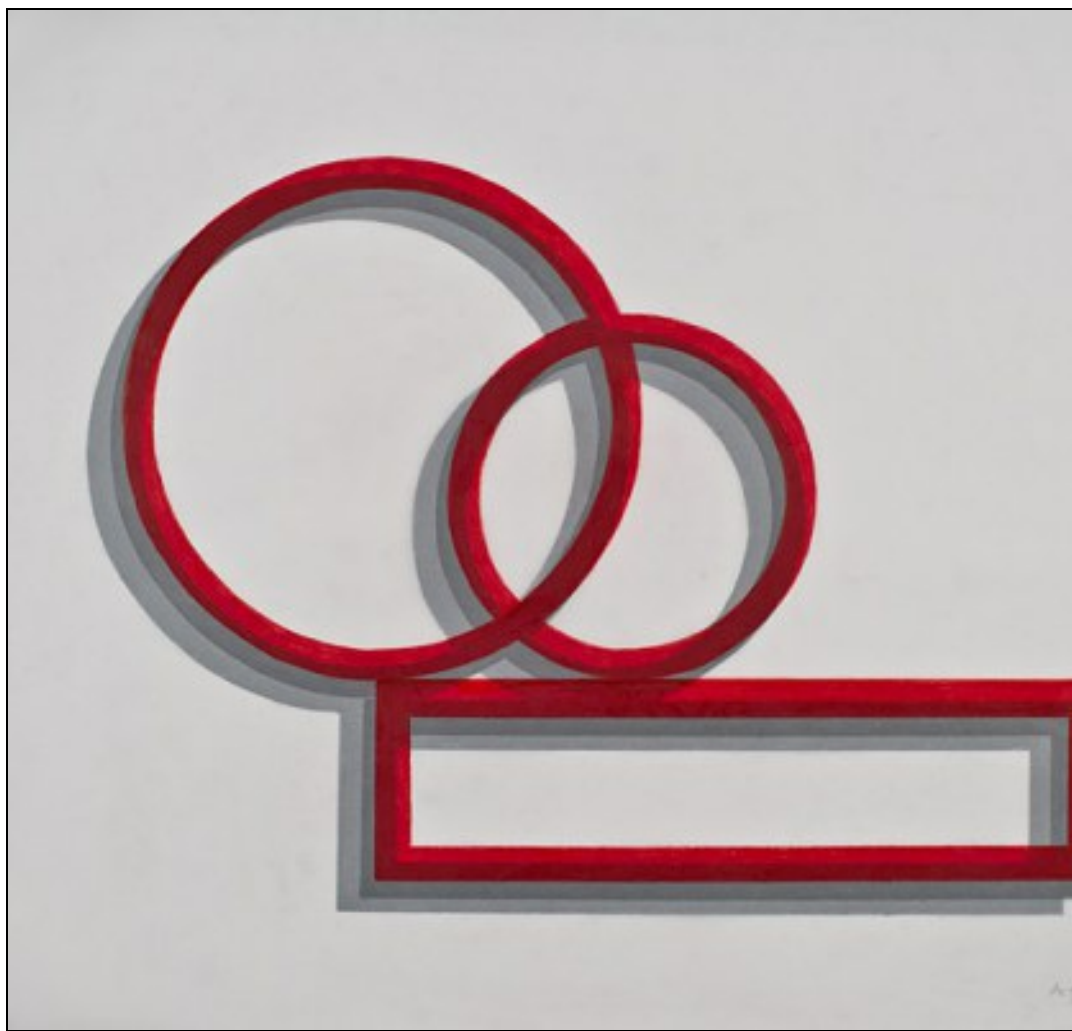
Aperture 12, 16 x 16



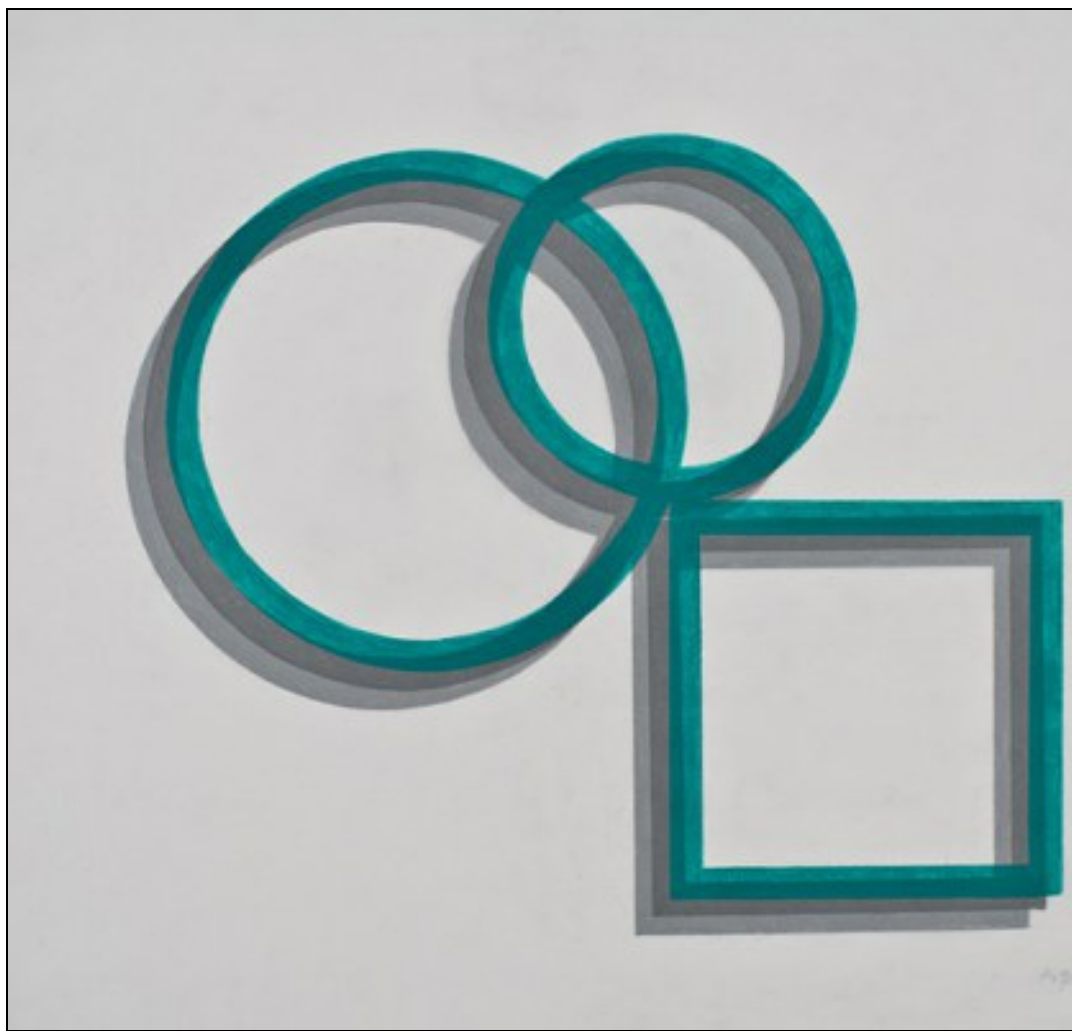
Partners 1, 17 x 23



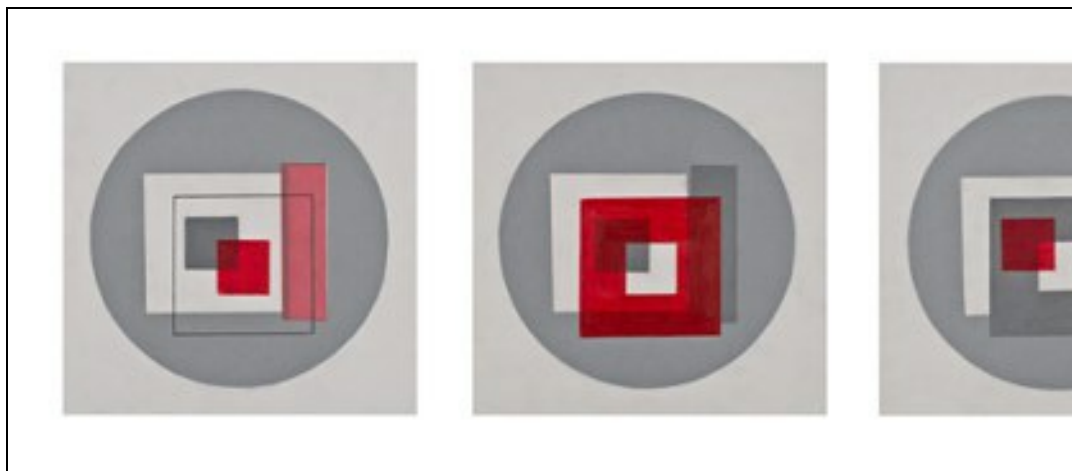
Partners 2, 17 x 23



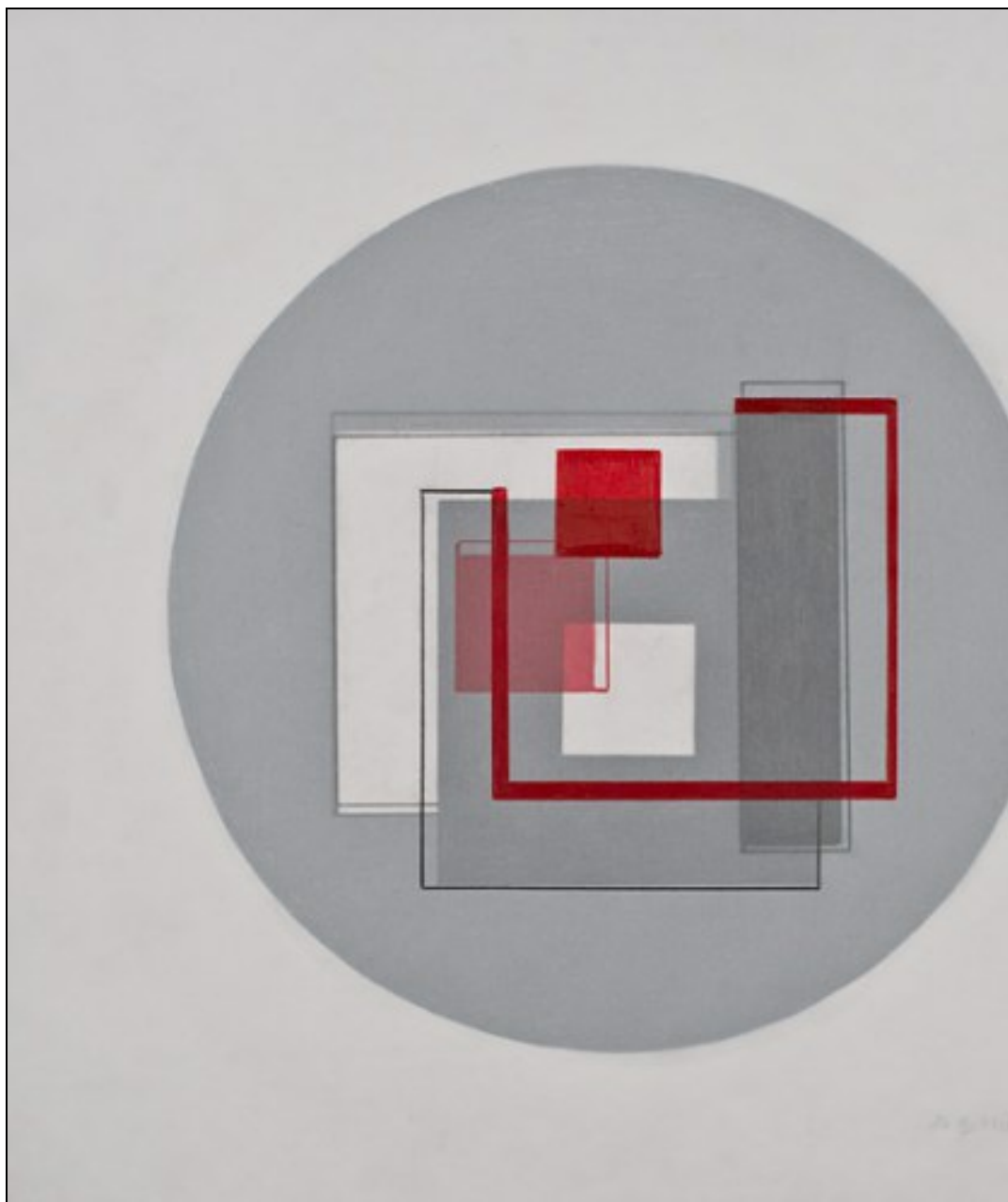
Partners 3, 17 x 23



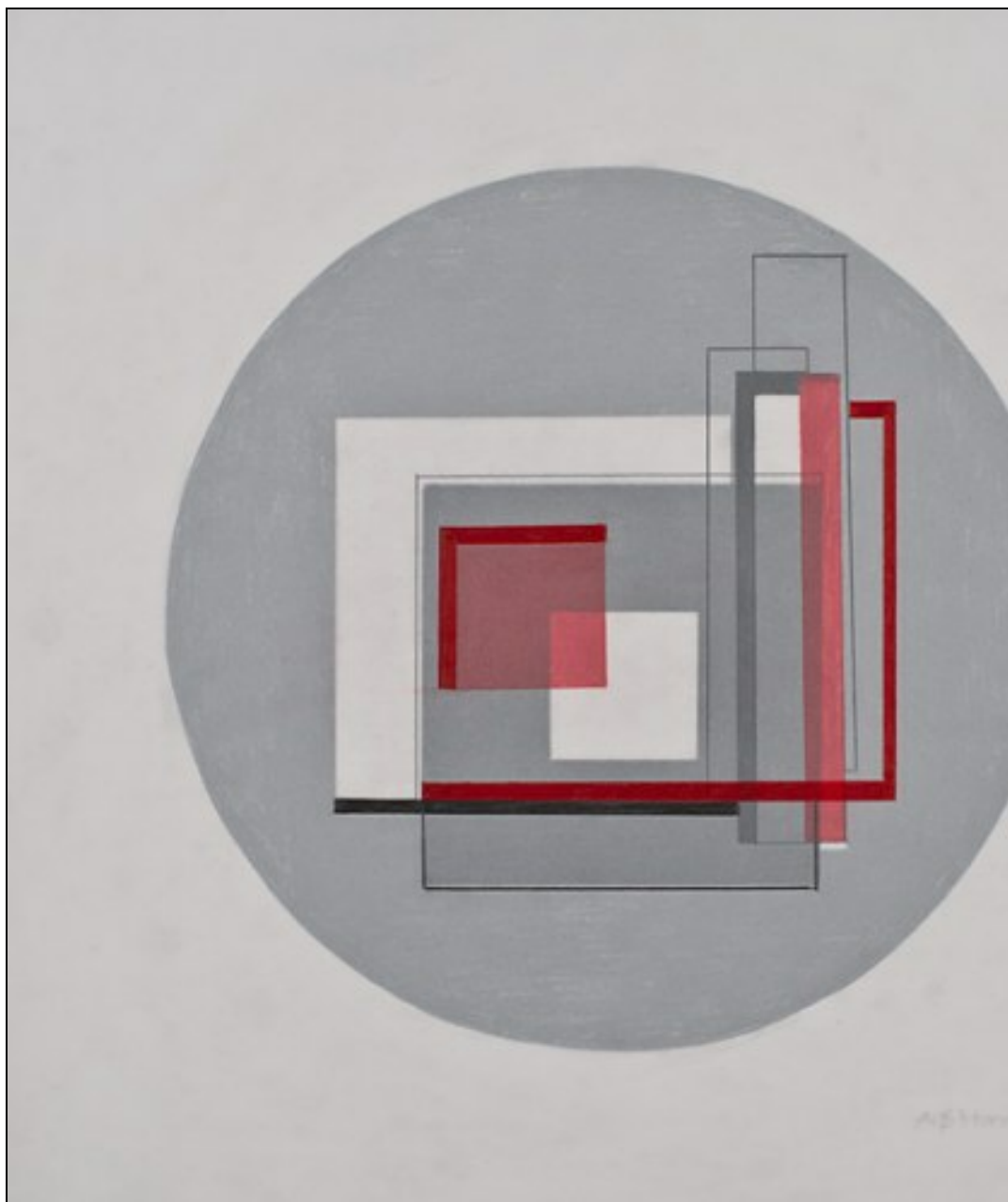
Partners 4, 17 x 23



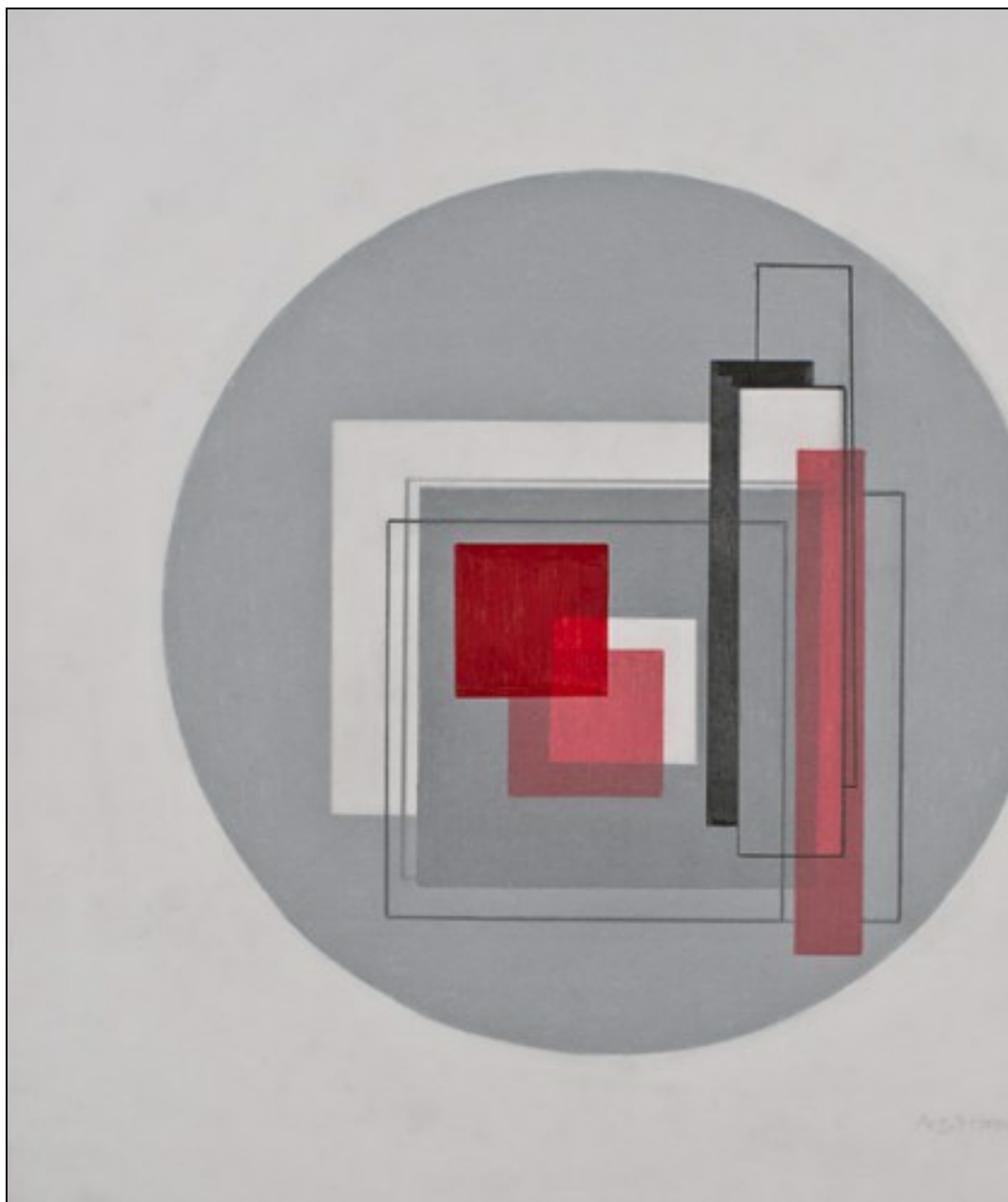
Triptych, overall 16 x 40 framed (individual images 10



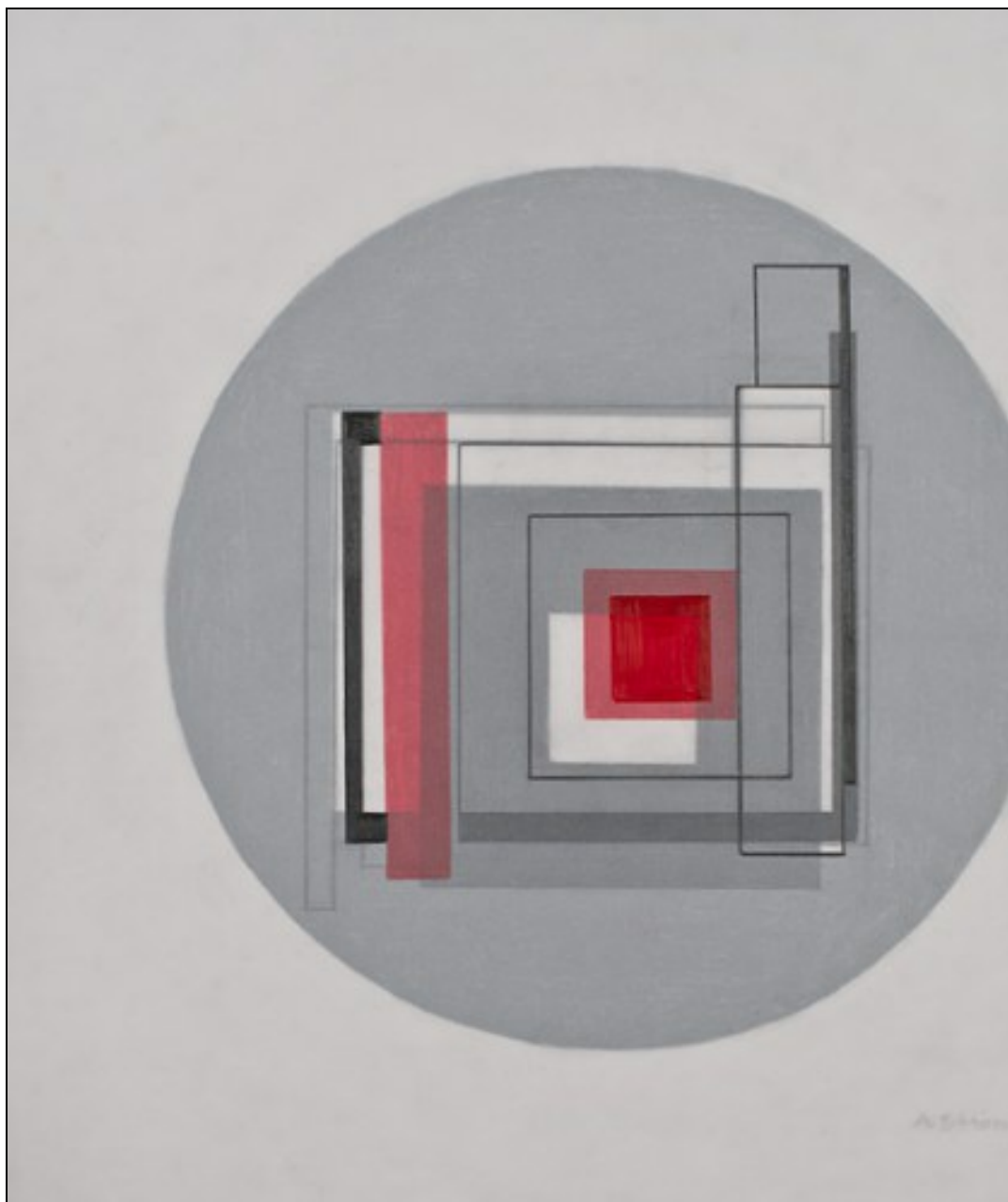
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Slide 3, 16 x 16



Slide 4, 16 x 16



Anne Hironnelle was born in Vancouver, Washington, in 1944. Her childhood was spent as a farm girl near Salem, Oregon. She received a BA from the University of Puget Sound (1966) and an MA in counseling from the University of Washington (1967). Hironnelle moved to Seattle in 1967 and directed the YWCA until 1972. She attended the School of Law at the University of Washington for a year before discovering and pursuing her true profession: ceramics. She completed a ceramics program at the Factory of Visual Arts in Seattle (1973-74) and the BFA program at the University of Washington (1974-76). Anne has lived and worked in Port Townsend, Washington, since 1977.

Hironnelle has exhibited nationally in one-person and group shows in New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Scottsdale and other cities. Her pieces are in myriad private and public collections including: The Smithsonian Collection in the Clinton Library, Little Rock, AR; The Museum of Modern Art, NY; The L.A. County Art Museum and the Tacoma Art Museum.

She was the recipient of an NEA Fellowship for the Visual Arts in 1975. Anne was a finalist for the Seattle Art Museum's Betty Bowen Award. Her accomplishments were recognized by the Northwest Arts Council with the Yvonne Twining Humber Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement in 1998. The University of Washington Press published *Anne Hironnelle: Ceramics* in 2001.

about her work in February, 2012. In 2014, she was one of four W artists selected to participate in the Joan Mitchell Foundation's C Legacy (CALL) Program.

§

David W. Fenza is a poet and the [Executive Director of the Association & Writing Programs \(AWP\)](#). "Still Life with Fire" is published permission.

The Avant-Pop Novels of J. P. McEvoy | Essay — Moore



J.P. McEvoy portrait by James Montgomery Flagg, from a 19

The 1920s saw a surge in experimentation with the novel. In *Ulysses* (1922), James Joyce used a different format for each chapter, including the play format for the Nighttown episode. Jean Toomer's "composite novel" *Cane* consists of numerous vignettes alternating between prose and drama. John Dos Passos in *Manhattan* T

abandoned traditional narrative for a collage of individual newspaper clippings, song lyrics, and prose poems. True to the tradition from European Surrealists, Robert M. Coates likewise used newspaper clippings, along with footnotes, diagrams, and typography, in *The Eater of Darkness* (1926). Djuna Barnes' *Ryder* (1929) includes a variety of genres—poems, plays, and is written in a pastiche of antique prose styles. William S. Burroughs' *Scrambled Chronology* used four distinct narrative styles in *Sound and the Fury* (1929), and later even added an appendix. These were all serious novelists who abandoned nineteenth-century narrative form to reflect the disorientation, upheavals, and fragmentation of the early twentieth century, a time when many new media emerged that would rival the novel in quarters supplant the novel in cultural importance and

But literary historians have overlooked a novelist from that era who deployed these same formal innovations largely for a different than serious effect, adapting avant-garde techniques to appeal to readers instead of the literati. Between 1928 and 1933, he published six ingenious novels that unfold solely by means of telegrams, newspaper articles, ads, telephone transcripts, playbills, greeting card verses, interoffice memos, letters, monologues, song lyrics, and radio broadcasts. Ted Lewis' *Manhattan Transfer* as a scrapbook, which could describe novels as well, and in fact a reviewer of his first novel used the term.^[1] Given their concern with a variety of media, including musicals, movies, newspapers, greeting cards, comic strips, and their replication of the print forms of those media, they are best described as multimedia novels. But perhaps the best category for McEvoy's novels is avant-pop, that postmodernist category of the late 1980s/early 1990s which (per Brian McHale and McCaffery) “appropriates, recycles and repurposes the forms of popular mass-media culture, ‘combin[ing] Pop Art’s focus on goods and mass media with the avant-garde’s spirit of radical formal innovation.”^[2]

Since McEvoy is all but unknown, a brief biographical sketch

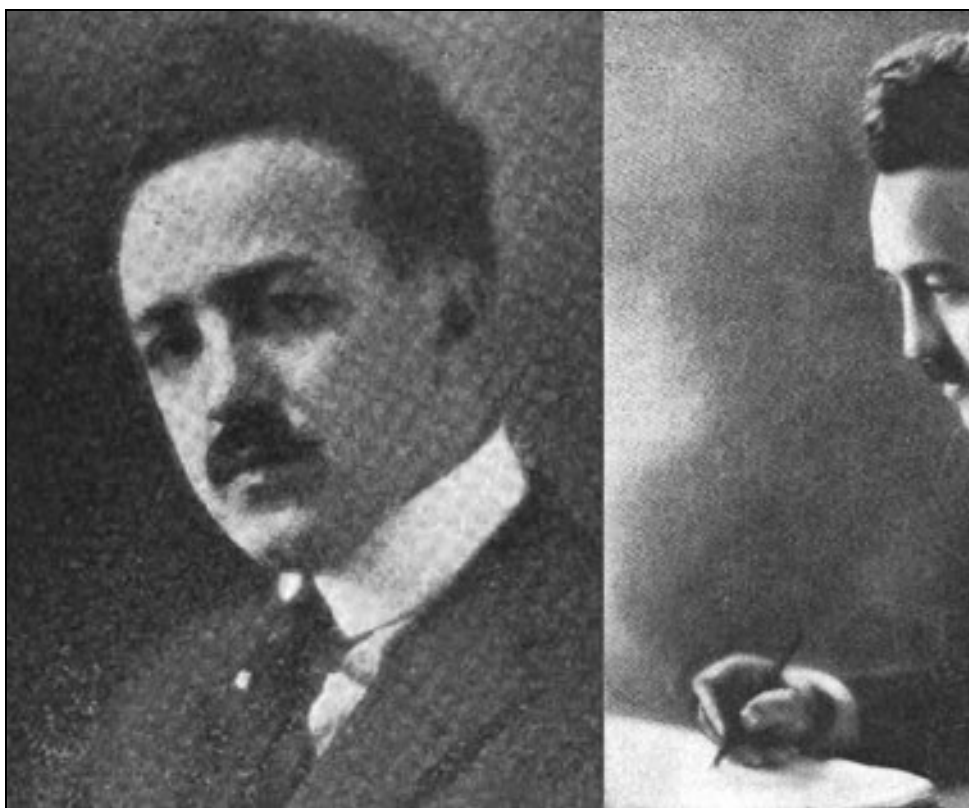
An orphan, Joseph Patrick McEvoy told the *Rockford Morning Star* in life that he didn't "remember where he was born—but he told that it was New York City and that the year was 1895." A comic historian Alex Jay, who records that remark in a profile,^[3] gives a number of possible birthdates ranging from 1897; the consensus today is 1895. Possibly born Joseph Hillick, the boy was adopted by Patrick and Mary Anne Burnside, Illinois. The same *Rockford Morning Star* piece says "he didn't go to school—he was dragged. This was a number of years, during which time McEvoy grew strong—until finally he couldn't be dragged any more. This was the end of his education." In the contributors' notes to a book he wrote (in third person): "While he was still a guest at a house, J. P. McEvoy started his writing career at the age of 17 as a Sporting editor of the *South Bend Sporting-Times*."^[4] He wrote (in first person), "I remember my first assignment as sports editor of the *News-Times* [*sic*] was to cover a baseball game. I was a writer. I became so interested in what was going on that I took the detail of scoring the game. I had to call *The Tribune* (a rival paper) to get the score."^[5] In 1910 he enrolled at the University of Illinois which he attended until 1912.

In 1920, a stationery industry journal called *Geyer's Stationery* gave an account of his early career (again from Jay):

It is interesting to take a peep into Mr. McEvoy's life. He acquired the art of hustling—perhaps that is what he did best—to do the work of two or three men. At Christian College in St. Louis he was the star bed maker and fifty a day was his regular chore. Later, at the University, he was a "waiter" at meal times and a man in the evenings. He worked on the *South Bend Tribune* six in the evening until two in the morning. When he was out he required no guard to protect him—\$4.00

salary!

When he came to Chicago, after graduating, he obtained a cub reporter in the sporting department of the old *Record*



McEvoy in 1920 (l.) and 1922 (r.)

He created several comic strips there beginning in 1914 to the *Chicago Tribune* in 1916 for further strips before Volland Company, which published books, postcard cards. McEvoy published two illustrated books of sarcasm for Volland, both in 1919: *Slams of Life: With Malice for Toward None, Assembled in Rhyme*—with a postmodern “author” in which McEvoy refers to himself in the third person— and *The Sweet Dry and Dry; or, See America Th* of poems and strips protesting the passing of Amendment prohibiting the sale of alcohol. *Slams of l* trumpets the linguistic ingenuity that enlivens his late mostly comic poems are bursting with wordplay, slang, typographical tricks, and flamboyant diction: the first word in one poem is “Absquatulating,” and the opening *Song of the Movie Vamp*” reads:

I am the Moving Picture Vamp, insidious and treacherous
The Lorelei of celluloid, the lure kaleidoscopic
Calorific and sinuous, voluptuous and canicular
And when it comes to picking pals, I ain't a bit partial

Many are quite literate, even erudite: “That’s a Gift” parodies the historians Taine, Gibbon, and Grote, while another reads “Ghibelline and Guelp” to “Eddie Poe.” The latter’s parody is parodied in “A Chicago Night’s Entertainment,” and “Lincoln or Glom-Shop” is a takeoff on a canto from “Kid” Byron’s poem with the baby-talk title “Bawp-Bawp-Bawp.” The author acknowledges the ancient Greek orators “Who slung their robes / over the floor / Isaeus, Aeschines, Demosthenes, too.” The author seems to have been au courant with the latest poetry and prose; another one is entitled “An Imagist Would Call This a Question Descending a Staircase.” He introduced Sinclair Lewis before the Booksellers’ League in Chicago in 1921; *Republic* and *Publishers Weekly* identified McElroy as the author of the 1921 sanctification of his *Slams* that probably amused him.^[7]

McEvoy wasn’t happy at Volland, despite his lavish salary (in 1921, a year, equivalent to around \$130K today) and the prestige of being the first writer of greeting-card sentiments to be admitted to the League.^[8] In the author’s note at the end of his *Dennis Cluck*—a 1930 novel satirizing the greeting-card business:

For many years I was editor and poet laureate of the Volland and Co. and the Buzza Co., leaders in the manufacturing and distribution of greeting cards, and among other things I have compiled 47,888 variations of Merry Christmas. I have sat in on art conferences without number and have seen such important crises as “Shall we face the three-headed monster or would it be better to put one of those Elizabethan portraits on the doorstep, holding a roll of wall paper?”

Until he resigned from Volland in 1922, McEvoy continued

the *Chicago Tribune*. It ran a serial called *The Potters* in 1922, written by a friend he had made at Notre Dame named John H. Field (1892–1962), with whom he would later collaborate. *The Potters* was described as “a new weekly humorous satire in verse on married life” and was later turned into a successful play and published in book form in 1924.

By then McEvoy had left Chicago and was living in New York, leaving behind both greeting cards and comic strips for the stage. First he wrote a revue called *The Comic Supplement*, which was produced by Florenz Ziegfeld and starred W. C. Fields. McEvoy wrote the original “Drug Store” sketch, one of Fields’ most famous, which reprised in some of his later films. Ziegfeld forced an unwilling McEvoy to rewrite his script, but later repented and invited him to be a writer on the Ziegfeld Follies. McEvoy cowrote the 1925 production *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (with Will Rogers, Gus Weinberg, and Gene Buck), and continued to write sketches and songs until 1926.

In 1926 he wrote a two-act revue entitled *Americana*,^[10] which clearly shows that Gershwin biographer Howard Pollack described it as “anticipate McEvoy’s novels: “*Americana*. . . satirized contemporary life, including an after-dinner speech at a Rotary Club and an attempt by a father to talk to his son about sex; it also took on the ‘Cavalier Americana’ as well as Shakespeare by way of Sigmund Romberg (“The Student Prince of Denmark”). Consider the show as refreshingly clever—a ‘revue of ideas,’ as the title stated. . . .”^[11] His other revues—*No Foolin’* (1926), *Allez-Vous* (1927), and *New Americana* (1932)—were less successful but provided backstage material for his novels.

It was at the Ziegfeld Follies that McEvoy met the inspiration for his first novel. Louise Brooks (1906–1985) was a featured dancer in the 1926 edition, and caught the eye of Paramount Pictures producer Joseph P. Wanger, who signed her to a five-year contract later that year. He thought the wild-living Brooks would make an attractive character for his comic novel, and after naming her “Dixie Dugan” he

fictional account of her madcap adventures in show business, made up of letters, telegrams, newspaper clippings, and was serialized in *Liberty Magazine* from 14 January to 14 July 1925 by his Notre Dame classmate John Striebel, who met Brooks.



John Striebel illustration, Liberty serialization of S

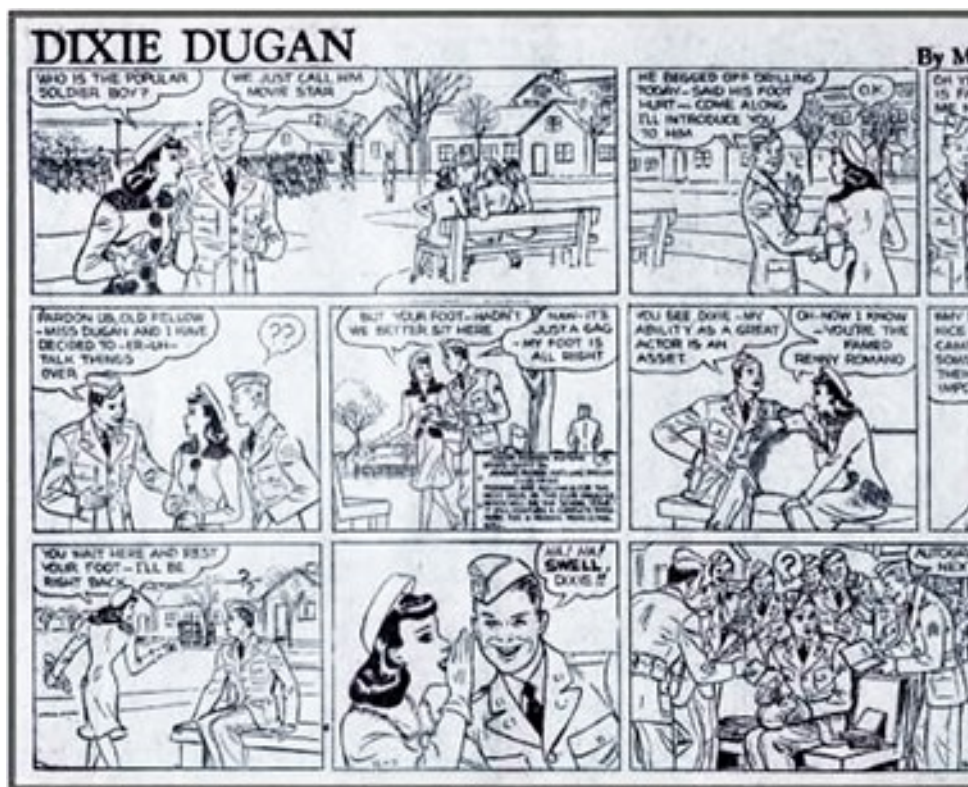
It was published in book form by Simon & Schuster in 1926, and was an immediate success, going through five

months for a total of 31,000 copies in print—not to mention two other publishers, two British editions, and a German edition (*Revue-Girl*, adapted by Arthur Rundt). *Show Girl* followed a zigzagging path to success on Broadway; in its sequel, *Dixie* (like Louise Brooks) travels out to Hollywood for adventures. Like its predecessor, *Hollywood Girl* was first published in *Liberty* (22 June–28 September 1929), then published by Schuster in book form later in 1929. Both were quickly adapted into movies, *Show Girl* (1928) and *Show Girl in Hollywood* (1929). Initially reported that Brooks would play Dixie, but she did not play the part, possibly because she was under contract to another studio (she had been loaned out before). Both films starred Alice White, who resembled the It girl Clara Bow rather than the vampy Louise Brooks. The films were tipped into later printings of both *Liberty* and *Show Girl* as an example of media synergy.

In 1929, McEvoy's former employer Florenz Ziegfeld, who played the character of the "It" girl in *Show Girl*, produced a musical entitled *American Girl* with a script cowritten by McEvoy, and a musical version of the novel, on which Gershwin again collaborated. The lamest but longest-lasting spin-off of *Show Girl* is *Dixie Dugan*, which McEvoy and Striebel began in October 1929, which ran until October 1966, long after both had died.^[1] The original premise was soon dropped for a series of light romantic comedies. Today the strip is held in low esteem by most comic book historians. Jay notes, McEvoy appeared in the 17 October 1939 edition of *Liberty*, metafictionally depicted arguing with Dixie over money and the rights to the franchise. A forgotten movie version, also called *Dixie Dugan* and starring Lois Andrews, was released in 1943.



McEvoy in Dixie Dugan comic strip



Later Dixie Dugan strip

McEvoy followed *Hollywood Girl* with four more novellas in multimedia format. *Denny and the Dumb Cluck* (Simon & Schuster, 1930), is about a greeting-card salesman named Denny Miller who was first introduced in *Show Girl* as a long-distance caller for Dixie's. (The "dumb cluck" of the title is Denny's new dog, a Miller.) In the same author's note quoted earlier, McEvoy

The truth is *Denny and The Dumb Cluck* is a grumpy little story about a man who originated the most famous Christmas card: "Wishing you and yours a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. You have probably used it yourself, not caring, which is worse—that it was stolen from me and I have not received one cent of royalties for it.

I was robbed of that beautiful sediment [*sic*: a phrase from his novels] and I swore that I would bide my time. I would get even. *Denny and The Dumb Cluck* is

McEvoy's fourth novel, a satire of the comic-strip business, *Noodle: An Extravaganza*, was serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post* from 15 November to 20 December 1930 (a little too elegantly by Arthur William Brown) and published in book form

Schuster in April 1931. In the fall of that year they *Society*—serialized as *Show Girl in Society* in *Liberty* between 8 August, again illustrated by Striebel—which picks up the story where it left off at the end of *Hollywood Girl* and offers a view of high society in both Europe and the U.S., brings the series to an end.



John Striebel illustration, Liberty serialization “Show Girl in Society”

McEvoy’s final novel, *Are You Listening?*, was serialized in *Liberty* between 17 October and 12 December 1931 (illustrated by L. Timmins) and quickly made into a movie with the same title. The novel was published in book form by Houghton Mifflin in 1932. McEvoy’s last two novels apparently didn’t sell well, for which they are impossible to find today.

In 1930, at the height of McEvoy’s success, Broadway comedies

Skolsky ticked off some amusing if questionable trivia ab

His first piece of writing appeared in the South
inserted a job-wanted advertisement.

For some unknown reason he is afraid to enter :

Lives at Woodstock, N. Y. Is the proud possesso
events and a St. Bernard dog. The two ch
attending school in California. The dog, dying of
be shipped there next week.

The only jewelry he wears is a black opal r
because everyone says it is unlucky.

Is very fond of people who resemble him.

He saves unused return postal cards.

Never actually writes a play or story. He dict
Always has two secretaries working. Never re
manuscripts. *Show Girl* has fourteen chapters. I
fourteen settings.

He is unable to part his hair.

Believes there should be a law against bed ma
tuck in the sheets at the foot of the bed.

As far as comedians go he starts laughing if he's
as Jimmy Durante.

Always buys two copies of a book. One to read a

His full name is Joseph Patrick McEvoy. His mo
Joseph. His father named him Patrick. Not cari
became J. P. McEvoy.

He has a picture of his wife in every room.

Still receives royalties on some of the greeting
His favorite is the following:

Eve had no Xmas
Neither did Adam.
Never had socks,
Nobody had 'em.
Never got cards,
Nobody did.
Take this and have it
On Adam, old kid.

He was once an amateur wrestler. Gave it up because
like being on the floor.

He hates to see people in wet bathing suits.

His first book to be published was a volume
titled *Slams of Life*. He has the names of those
Two more sales and he could have formed a club.

Smokes a cigar from the moment he turns off the light
morning until he puts on his pajamas at night.

His pet aversions are women's elbows, chocolate
melted together, fishing stories, fishermen, fish
Laugh; radio talks on how to make hens lay, but
mixed quartets, *Laugh, Clown, Laugh*; runs in
three-piece orchestras, waiters who breathe do
Laugh, Clown, Laugh.

When in New York he puts up at the Algonquin
story or play he and his wife occupy separate rooms.

His first writing for the stage was a vaudeville sketch.

Dark, written with John V. A. Weaver. It p
performances in a four-a-day vaudeville house.

His favorite composers are Tchaikovsky, and G
His favorite conductors are Toscanini and Frank
Fifth Avenue bus line.

Has two mottoes. One for the home and one fo
motto hanging in his house is: "Let No Guilty
The motto hanging in his office is: "Watch Your]

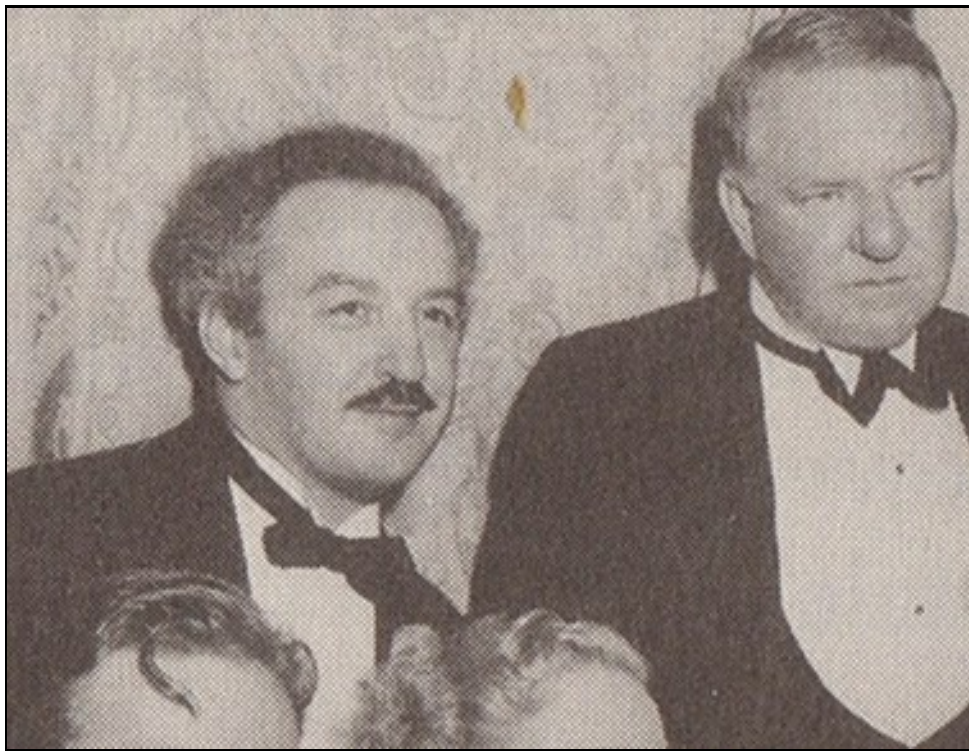
Dislikes all the Hungarian Rhapsodies from
twelve.

His idea of a grand time is hearing Paul Robeso
going to Havana, being petted by any brunette r
five, depositing royalty checks from Simc
throwing pebbles into a lake, reading anyt
Stephens, eating kalteraufschnitt mit kar
attending a Chinese theater with a Chinaman.

He once got sick eating a sandwich that was nan

After he quit running a column in the Chic
circulation of the *Tribune* dropped from forty
million.^[15]

McEvoy continued to work in movies and publishing
1930s and 1940s. He appears in the opening credits of tl
Woman Accused as one of the ten authors who wrote a
the serialized novella (in *Liberty*) from which the
adapted; he collaborated again with W. C. Fields on t
films *You're Telling Me!* and *It's a Gift*; wrote nonfiction
life in upper New York State; published a children's book
Bam Clock (Algonquin Publishing Co., illustrated by John
he wrote a humorous advice column called "Father Me
Saturday Evening Post (published in book form by Lippin



McEvoy with W.C. Fields at a Paramount banquet

He coauthored the screenplay for Shirley Temple's musical *The Corner* (1938), along with an article on her ("Little M" in the 9 July 1938 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*, which included a photograph of the author sitting next to the ten-year-old Temple). He also wrote the book for *Stars in Your Eyes*, a 1939 Broadway musical starring Ethel Merman and Jimmy Durante (the latter had a career as a comedian and a first novel). Other notable magazine contributions include an article with Clark Gable about *Gone with the Wind* in the 4 May 1939 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* (there's a photo available of a tuxedoed McEvoy dancing with Gable's co-star Vivien Leigh), and a piece in the June 1948 issue of *Cosmopolitan*. He was famous enough to appear in magazine ads for White Owl cigars, "just off the plane" (reproduced by Jay).



McEvoy with Shirley Temple, 1938



McEvoy dancing with Vivien Leigh, 1939



Just off the
Plane from
HAVANA



J. P. McEVoy, playwright, humor-
ist, writer, is a "chain cigar smok-
er" who carries his cigars in his
pant' pocket!



"Carrying cigars in my trousers'
pocket keeps me from breaking
them—" says J. P. McEvoy. Well
—we don't know. Maybe it works.



Mr. McEvoy
as I smoke a
million w
Owl Cigars

J.P. McEvoy ENDORSES NEW **WHITE OWLS' HAVANA FLAVOR**

OWL: Hi there—Mr. McEvoy! How did you find Havana?

J. P. McEVoy: I peered through a cloud of fragrant cigar smoke and there it was!

OWL: Did you go to get some new ideas?

J. P. McEVoy: No, I went to get rid of some old ones.

OWL: Not smoking, surely?

J. P. McEVoy: On the contrary, I expect to go on smoking here—and hereafter.

OWL: Well, light up this new White Owl and tell us if it's got real Havana flavor.

J. P. McEVoy: Sure enough! Milder than the Cuban all-Havana cigar—but definitely it has the real Havana flavor!

NOW BLENDED WITH HAVANA!

J. P. McEvoy, famous *Saturday Evening* back from an airplane jaunt to Havana. him when he arrived in New York.

As any of Mr. McEvoy's friends will veteran cigar smoker. Because of his g fine Havana tobacco he really knows th real Havana tobacco. When connoisse McEvoy approve the new Blended-wit Owl for its real Havana taste—you kno is a smoke to get excited about. Try White

Try a **NEW WHITE OWL**

New White Owl's made in U. S. A. only—See how at New York World's Fair, 1940

SEPTEMBER 21, 1940

McEvoy in White Owl cigar ad, 1940

McEvoy spent the rest of his life contributing to *Rea* roving editor, travelling with his third wife, and enterta who's who in America. Visitors to his large estate r included members of the Algonquin Round Table, Fran Clarence Darrow, Rube Goldberg, and avant-garde co Antheil. "One hectic weekend," a local newspaper rep

“almost the entire membership of the American Society of Illustrators attended a fabulous weekend party.” In 1964, he published his last book, *Charlie Would Have Loved Them* (with and Pearce), a collection of humorous articles. He died on

“Get hot!”: The Dixie Dugan Trilogy



For most readers in 1928, *Show Girl* looked utterly unlike anything they had ever seen. Preceding the title page is a teaser with a list of names from the publisher's Inner Sanctum imprint,^[16] and the title page features an elaborate cast list "In the order of their appearance," which reads like a program or the opening credits of a silent film. Each name is followed by a saucy descriptive line, beginning with "Dancer," "The hottest little wench that ever shook a scanty at a tired bus

novel proper begins with a dozen pages of letters—family
epistolary fiction—which are quickly followed by
telegrams, Western Union cablegrams, newspaper
columns and a different font) and letters to the editor, j
form, police reports (IN SMALL CAPS), poems and green
a detective agency log, various theater materials (ads, r
house receipts), one-sided telephone conversations, a c
a business convention, radiograms, even a House of
session reprinted from the *Congressional Record*.

SIMON AND SCHUSTER

Present

SHOW GIRL

By J. P. McEVOY

Author of The Potters, Americana, etc.

CAST

(In the order of their appearance)

- DIXIE DUGAN: "The hottest little w
that ever shook a scant
a tired business man."
- DENNY KERRIGAN: Greeting Card Sales
strewing cheer throug
the land.
- NITA DUGAN: Dixie's sister—"Sees a
knows all."
- ALVAREZ ROMANO: A sun-kissed tango da
from the coffee belt.
- JACK MILTON: A rich Sugar Dixie le
standing in the rain.
- SUNSHINE: A blonde hip-twister in
Scandals.
- JIMMY DOYLE: A Ghost Writer on the E
ing Tabloid—the lowest
of astral life.
- KIBBITZER & EPPUS: Broadway Producers—
Nobile Fratrum."

Also Greeting Card Salesmen, Night Club Babies, T
Zest, the Heart-throb Poet, Detectives Who Never
A Publisher, His Daughter, and an Assortment of
boys from Wall Street, Atlantic City Hot Dog Ven
Herrera, the Butcher of the Costaraguan Revolution
Congressman Fibbledibber from Alabama.

Title page for Show Girl

All of this narrative razzmatazz supports a screwball-c

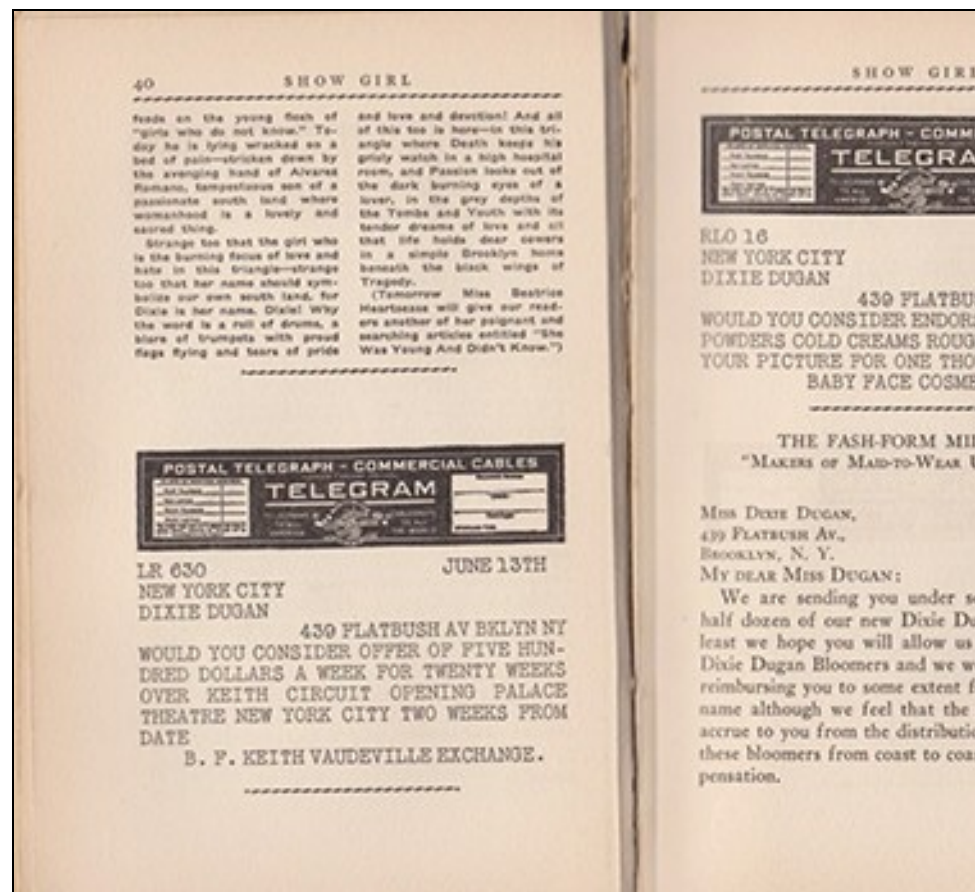
success story that occurs over a six-month period in 192 document is dated, from May 1st to October 22nd.) The novel tracks Dixie's hectic rise to notoriety. As the Brooklynite explains in a letter to her long-distance boyfriend Kerrigan, she's hell-bent on joining the chorus line Follies.^[17] He, on the other hand, writes that he wants and get a little apartment in Chicago, and I'll come home Saturday night after my week on the road selling motto cards in Indiana" (98).^[18] Failing her Ziegfeld audition becomes a specialty dancer at the Jollity Night Club, with the smoldering glances of "a tall, dark-haired, black-eyed named Alvarez Romano, who turns out to be the American president. (She enjoys making out with him kisses—well the kid goes sorta faint and dreamy and she can barely get through the front door and slam it shut attracts the attention of a 45-year-old Wall Street broker Milton,^[19] who one night after the show invites Dixie and to a party with his Wall Street buddies. He gropes and may be interrupted by Romano, who stabs him.

The *New York Evening Tab* turns it into a salacious scandal. As a result Dixie is deluged with job offers, endorsement deals and proposals. The *Evening Tab* begins running Dixie's first-person ghostwritten and completely fabricated by reporter Jimmie Dixie describes as "cute as a little red wagon and writes think he's hot dog" (98). Fairly literate (though he confuses with Browning), he describes his "bogus autobiography" friend as follows, in a representative example of McEwan and his contempt for tabloid readers:

Well, I'm still Dixie Dugan and my contribution is monastically entitled "Ten Thousand Sweet hot. With one hand I offer them sex and with the other I slap them smartly over the knuckles with a brass knuckle. "Mustn't touch. Burn-y, burn-y." Then I sling them with the old time religion and single standard and w

of this young generation. (I hope nothing ever like it just the way it is.) And then another pair of proverbial flannel undershirt that is supposed to warm and drive you crazy, and presto! the uplifted result of this is not what you should be interested in, child. A little Weltschmerz and then the old Sturm und Drang to the nose followed up with a Drang to the eye. So, as you may gather, this opus is a child that might result from an Atlantic City affair with the American Mercury and True Stories in adjoining rooms. So much for literature! (77-78)

Spying on Dixie one night outside the theatre of her neighborhood, Jack Milton sees Romano abduct Dixie (to take her back to "Costa Rica" for her), abducts Dixie himself when their limousine crashes. Jack Milton convinces her to lay low while his newspaper milks her for weeks. The recovering Jack Milton hires detectives to find her and to underwrite a musical for Dixie, and enlists Jack to write the lyrics for it.



Pages from Show Girl

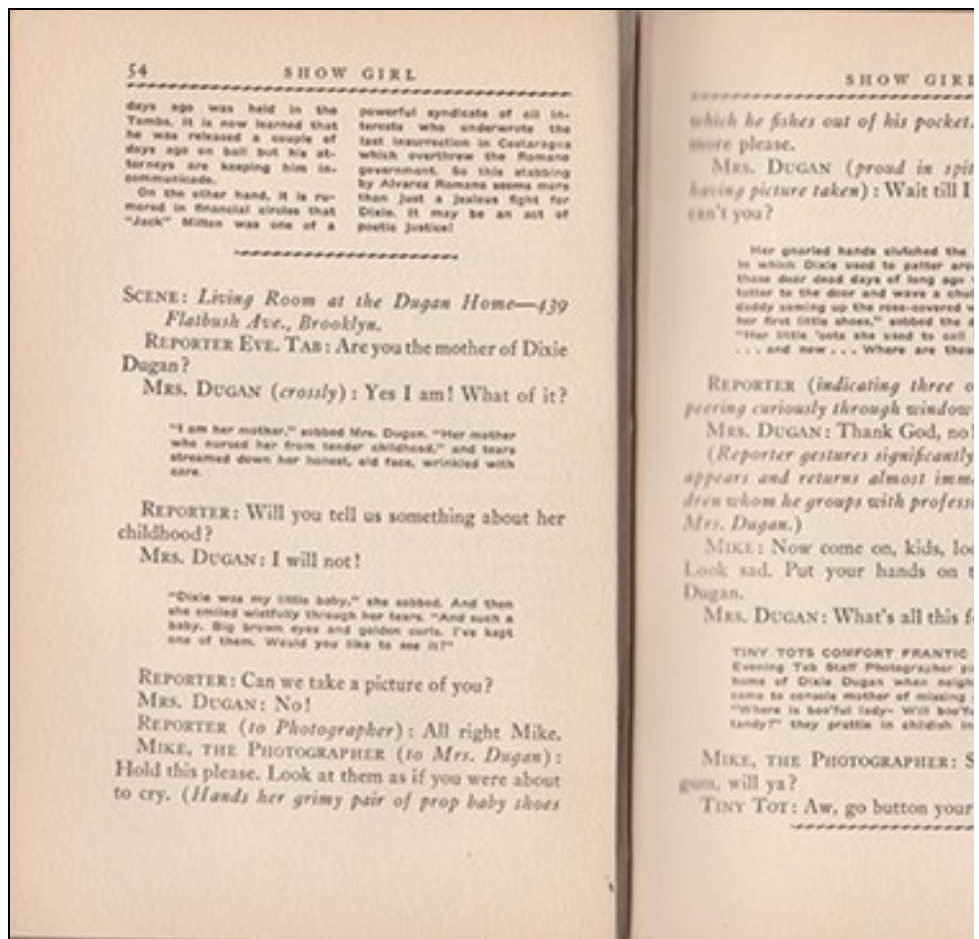
The second half of the novel documents the progress from its contentious beginning—Milton hires show-biz rewrite Jack’s script and bring in outside contributions, a disastrous out-of-town opening, to its eventual success. Milton takes charge and restores his original conception. Retitled *Girl*, the musical makes Dixie a star, and Jimmy realizes he loves her. She does him: “Besides being cute and all that she’s got a keen sense of humor and says just what she thinks,” says her Hollywood friend. “And she really thinks” (195). Meanwhile, three suitors come to different ends: she rejects the man of her sugar daddy, Jack Milton. Denny Kerrigan, still in love with her, makes a big splash at a greeting-card convention in Atlanta (where he catches Dixie’s show), and heads home with a promise to marry the girl. On a darker note, Alvarez Romano returns to Colombia to see if his father lead a counter-revolution, is captured, and dies. He escapes, but all his fellow prisoners are slaughtered. A page article from the *Evening Tab* reports in gruesome detail the places that tragedy near but not at the conclusion of the novel. Not to spoil the happy ending: Dixie finds success and love. The novel includes some clever parodies of notable theater critics of the time: Hammond, Alexander Woollcott, Alan Dale, Walter V. Reed, and a flurry of giddy radiograms.

Aside from the novelty of its format, the most appealing feature of *Girl* is its language. Often sounding like a risqué Arlo Dodehouse, McEvoy offers a fruity cocktail of slang and theater. Most of it from Dixie herself. She slings words and phrases like “the merry-merry” (show biz), “a good skate” vs. “a wet skate” (a dull person), “gazelles” and “gorillas” (young women and their predators), “butter and egggers” (theater audiences), “static” (unwanted advice), “goopher dust” (a legal technicality), “baby” (a dud play), “clucks” (dumb people), “crazy as a billy goat” and exclamations like “Tie that one,” “skillabootch,” “Glib Jim” (encouragement shouted at a good dancer). Glib Jim has already been quoted, and throughout McEvoy inserts scenes of lyrics, parodies, and greeting-card verse; he even has Dixie

praise a song from his own musical *Allez Oop*. There are insider theater lingo becomes hermetic (“the old comed an easy hit in the deuce spot . . . an unsubtle comedy te Yid humor and soprano straight . . . novelty perch turr choice groove next to shut” [52]), but all the slang ar constant delight. One reviewer said “Five years from nov *Hollywood Girl* will need a glossary.”^[22] Dixie agrees: s in the latter for the benefit of her future biographers:

I can refer them to you Diary and they can see I’m not handing them a lot of horsefeathers Diary we should keep posterity in mind bec came across a word like horsefeathers and did meant we should have it defined somewhere, s posterity horsefeathers means a lot of cha-c means what diaries are usually full of. (*Hollywo*

Dixie is the first of many independent, untraditional yo McEvoy’s novels. She is a self-proclaimed representa youth” (a 1923 novel and silent movie), and at times sou 21st-century: “The real ambition of our young generation but look hot” (7). At a time when most young woma married as soon as possible, Dixie tells Denny, “I don’ you or anybody else. . . . I’m young and full of the devil ; that way for a while” (94)—a sentiment that will be voi McEvoy’s young heroines.



Pages from Show Girl

In *Show Girl* McEvoy introduces other themes that will run through his novels, dark undercurrents beneath their playful surface. His contempt for the general public has already been noted in his condescending remarks on his newspaper readers, and this attitude will later extend to theater audiences, greeting-card artists, comic-strip fans, and radio listeners. When Jimmy McEvoy meets Broadway producers who want to dumb down his play for the exchange:

DOYLE (*bitterly*): I suppose if you got "Romeo and Juliet" wouldn't produce it unless you could buy a balcony.

EPPUS: "Romeo and Juliet"? Pfu! I seen that on Broadway for a hundred dollars in the house.

KIBBITZER: That kind of play don't make no sense. You stick to things people understand. (112-13)

Kibbitzer later makes a pass at Dixie, and sexual pre-

business is another recurring theme. Dixie breezily incident—“Well, that’s what a female gets for having E Doze” (118)—but along with her earlier sexual assault party and the lascivious advances of club “gorillas,” McCl how dangerous show biz is for “gazelles” like her.

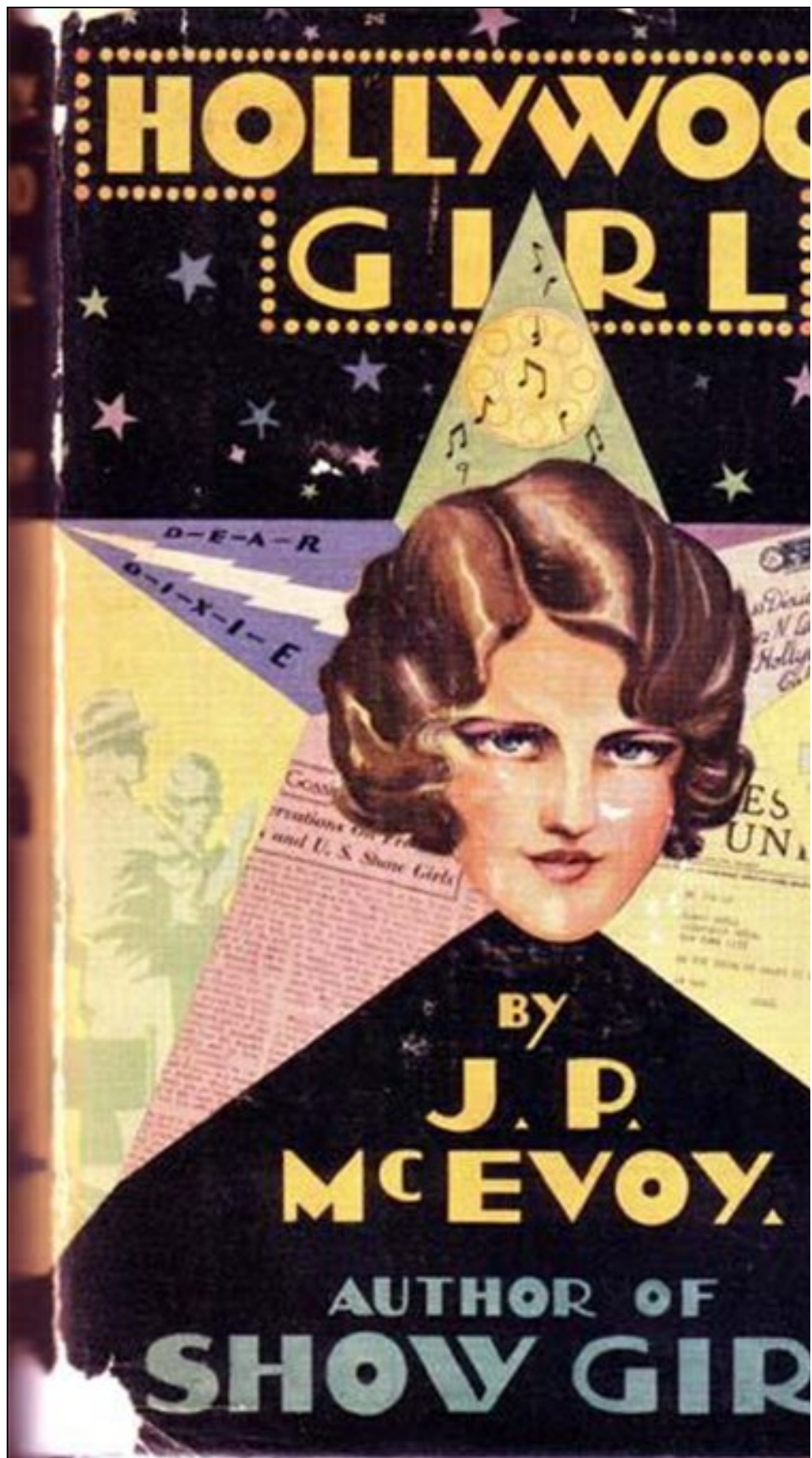
The mendacity of the media is mostly played for laugh joke on the dumb clucks who take celebrity gossip as gospel believe the “sediments” expressed in greeting cards, but handled more seriously. When the police arrive at Milton and arrest Alvarez, Dixie notes that one of the guests, “V was, a big politician I found out later—got the cops off to gave them some sort of song and dance” that keeps the the papers the next day (30, 32). Near the end, Alvarez’s New York and promises Milton the oil concession in exchange for financing his revolt; Milton gets a few of his together and decide “that would be the patriotic thing A do. Our country may she always be right,” Dixie remembers “but right or wrong we’ve got to have oil.” Milton enlists congressman named Fibbledibber to convince representatives via patriotic rhetoric that America’s upon &c &c &c, and sure enough Congress authorizes intervene in the South American country. These darker depths to what would otherwise be a light entertainment were drained by the producers of the 1928 movie version the same mindset as Kibbitzer & Eppus), according to seen it. The novel is dark and daring, like Louise Brooks blonde and harmless, like Alice White.



Alice White in 1928 movie version of Show C

Show Girl's reviews were as boffo as those for Dixie's *Get Your Girl*. Marian Storm quite rightly praised it as ' language. Whirling, whizzing, dizzying—a bombardmer ear of monotonous, accurate, faithful ugliness, of s. Proposing a new criteria for literature, the *Springfield* .

“If making ‘whoopee’ is one of the aims of literary art, I
scored a literary success.” Ziegfeld himself reviewed it in
Review of Literature—despite appearing in *Show Girl* and
and described it as “show business ‘hoked up’ to the satirist.
The action races by and every typographical ingenium
emphasize and amplify the ‘punch stuff’”—slinging slurs at
Dixie, but perhaps not entirely comfortable with seeing himself
mocked.^[23]



Published a little over a year later, *Hollywood Girl* is one of the still best satires of Hollywood—a clichéd subject today. It begins in 1929, when the industry was still young and making the transition from silent films to talkies. It begins seven months after the end of *Show Girl*, and ends a year later (i.e., May 1928–April 1929), following a similar story arc. *Get Your Girl* having run its course, Jimmy is in Brooklyn looking for work while Jimmy tries to write a

for her, vowing to marry Dixie as soon as it is staged. With that flamboyant movie director Fritz Buelow^[24] is in New York for his next epic—*Sinning Lovers*, based on “The Charge of the Light Brigade”^[25]—and is “hot for a jazz-mad baby that could sing and faw down in a new squeakie,” as Dixie puts it (14), she is interviewed and passes a screen test, on the basis of which she signs a tentative contract and is sent to Hollywood. She gets only a few days and then none at all, and learns the studio will not buy her contract.

At this low point, nearly halfway through the novel, Dixie has an emotional, 18-page interior monologue modeled on Molly Bloom at the end of *Ulysses*, at the end of which Jimmy calls her a “prostitute” (He too is now in Hollywood as a screenwriter.) He feels that she needs what is what she needs to attract work, which results in a remade picture entitled “Hollywood Party: A Talking, Singing, Dancing, and Sound Effects,” another 18-page tour de force that ends with the story of an “aging” actress. (“I’m thirty two,” she tells Dixie, “the business if you’re [a woman] over thirty you’re older than the wine.”) While the party rages, Dixie goes off with Buelow to another party and is nearly raped. All this Sturm und Drang is heightened by the rumors that a Wall Street syndicate of bankers, including Dixie’s admirer Jack Milton, will be merging the major studios, and moving the whole business back east.

**COLOSSAL
FILM CORPORATION**
INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

Date November 14th
To All Departments
From Peter Schmilick

The mailing room has been changed from M-11 in the Administration building to Room 134, building F, street S. Dial 5.

We DISSOLVE to clock in Dixie's kitchenette. It is eleven o'clock. CAMERA TRUCKS BACK to a LONG SHOT of kitchenette. It is crowded with men and women—some in evening dress, some in sports costume. The table and sink are overflowing with bottles, empty and otherwise. CAMERA PANS around kitchenette into living room, also completely jammed with drinkers standing, sitting, leaning and lying. Through the hubbub of talking, laughing and singing we hear the victrola and the telephone and the door bell. DIXIE is standing by the telephone talking to girl in pink nightie holding hot water bottle next to her stomach.

MAN (*answering 'phone*): Hello! What? Yes wait a minute! (*To Dixie.*) It's Lola Krunch, she

says she's on another party and them all over with her.

DIXIE: Sure! Why not?

MAN (*to 'phone*): She says, if you know of any other parti

Hangs up. Door bell rings. a party of ten or twelve crowd everybody. Cries of hello, hello

DIXIE (*to Pink Nightie*): with your tum-tum?

PINK NIGHTIE: Gee, I don't stay in bed but Bill called up and over to his party. I told him I he said come as you are, so thi then when I got over there he all going over to Dixie's, and w

DIXIE: Why, I'm Dixie.

PINK NIGHTIE: Whose party

DIXIE: Mine, or at least it don't know hardly any of these

PINK NIGHTIE: You're luck all go somewhere else pretty se in the puttees, fill this hot wa me, will you? No, not gin, hot I'm funny that way.

(*Telephone rings.*)

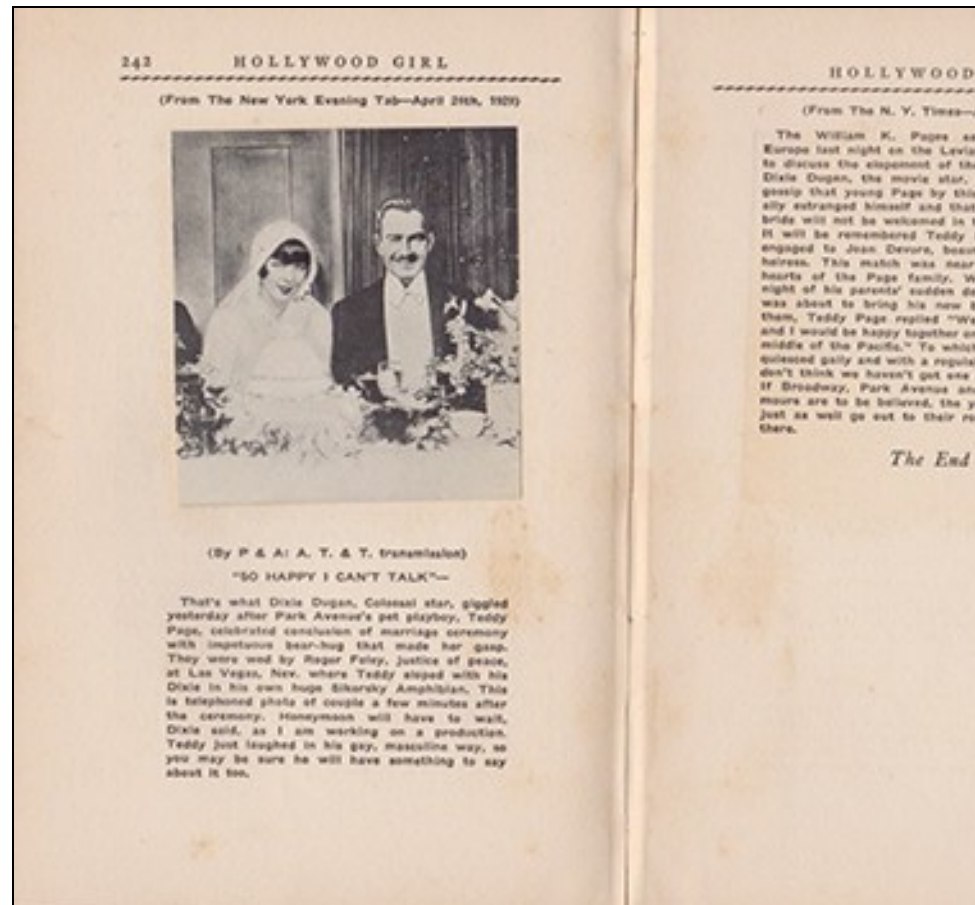
DIXIE (*on 'phone*): Hello, Jimmy? No? Oh damn! Oh come on over—who? Sure, brin

Pages from Hollywood Girl

At about the same structural point in *Show Girl* where control of his musical, Dixie learns she has been given the *Lovers*, once again thanks to Jack Milton. (Ironically, decided to give the role to the aging actress the s committed suicide.) Dixie is tempted to accept Mi proposal after she and Jimmy have the last in a series of the preview version of the movie flops, she drops him b to give up on the film (and on her career). She is shocked views: "Jack says so far as the bankers are concerned if money it's not a good picture and I says what about Ca says I never saw it and from all I've heard of it I never w (205). Fortunately, another producer and director step (retitled *Loving Sinners* under pressure from the censoric and the movie makes Dixie a star, as attested by anot notices (more real-life reviewers, this time representing]

But this is where the novel takes a surprising turn. Unex Doyle is *not* called in to save the screenplay, make up marry her at the end. Instead McEvoy lets fame and 1

head: Dixie starts hanging out with silly rich people, in pursuits, and only two weeks after meeting Teddy Page millionaire sportsman and young society aviation enthusiast elopes with him in Las Vegas. She's aware he's a binge-raising skirt-chaser, but she's convinced she can change because he hasn't met the right kind of girl" (235). (Cue eyes.) The penultimate page of the novel features a tipped photo of the couple (with a dead ringer for Louise Brooks) followed by an announcement in the *New York Times* that the wealthy family has cut ties with him.^[27] This unexpected daring subversion of the wedding bells convention is not in romantic books and movies, but *Hollywood Girl* is not a



Final pages of Hollywood Girl

which was a ducky notion, so I did—the theme song from *Loving Sinners*. And then I did a dance for them and they were all steaming, especially Teddy who had never seen me pick it up and strut it around.

After I sat down he said, listen to them applaud. It's like an earthquake. And I said, you must never say that out here on the coast. It's always a fire out here. And then I told him the story Eddie Sutherland told me at one of his parties one night. It seems when he married Louise Brooks he brought her out to the coast. She had never been out here before and didn't know anything about these little quakes, so one night they were sleeping, and one came along and shook up the house, which is on the side of Laurel Cañon. All the dishes fell off the sideboard and the pictures off the wall and Louise turned to Eddie sleepily and said, "Eddie, behave yourself, will you?" And I says to Eddie after he told the story, "Bragging again, aren't you?"

There was another song about this time—a quartet of Hollywood millionaires had to get up and sing Hallelujah, I'm a Bum. I suppose you've heard it:

Rejoice and be glad,
For the springtime has come.
We can throw down our shovels
And go on the bum.
(chorus) Hallelujah, I'm a bum!
Hallelujah, bum again!
Hallelujah, give us a hand-out
To revive us again.

There are a whole lot more verses. I think one of the cute ones is:

I went to the door,
And I asked for some bread,
And the lady said, bum! bum!
The baker is dead.

I couldn't help but get a kick out of Teddy throwing back his head and singing Hallelujah, I'm a Bum—he and his three airplanes, and a Bond Street tailor and a couple of banks and a steamship line and a railroad company. And I pictured myself as Mrs. Bum—Mrs. Hallelujah Ima Bum; At Home—Hardly Ever—To Nobody.

The Breakfast Club went on with a lot of speeches, and meanwhile we talked and talked and he told me all about roughing it along the Riviera in his steam yacht, and I told him all about Hollywood and what a dangerous

place it was for girls under eight—that's how I found out how old me, wasn't it, Nita?

And then I told him about me Henry's and how Chaplin spent all totaling up the ads in the *New* out how much money they made he told me about the time Chapl they didn't have hardly anythin because all the time Chaplin was hands and Paderewski was looki

Teddy brought me home in hi long I could hardly see the cha on Los Feliz. And I'm to have d Then tomorrow we're going to f just for fun. Nita, dear, he d flying right now. I haven't had since I met him. If this is lov What's going to become of me? I

(From the New York To

**MISS DUGAN TO WED
T. DE PEYSTER PAGE**

Engagement to Son of Mr. and Mrs. Hilton de Peyster Page is Announced.

EARLY WEDDING PLANNED

Mr. and Mrs. Page Sailing for Scotland, Cannot Attend Nuptials—Other Engagements.

The engagement of Miss Dixie Dugan, motion picture actress of Hollywood, Calif., to Theodore de Peyster Page, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Hilton de Peyster Page of New York and Newport, is announced.

Miss Dugan is the star of "Loving Sinners," a well received talking picture.

Mr. New. He is cousin (grati coast. Harv memb the E Pipin, lively gan, J thing and h intere Mr. Page: to sail has le Argy! guests recent his g and h is und will s ture t The d definit stood!

(From the N. Y. Daily News, June 1.)

MARRIED, BY JIM



MAYOR JIMMY WALKER officiated last night at wedding of Dixie Dugan, talkie star, and Theodore de Peyster Page, clubman, polo hope, and aviation enthusiast. Here's the wedding party at dinner in the apartment of Quarles Smith, the new talkie magnate. L. to r sister), maid of honor, Mayor Wa Mrs. Walker. And, of course, ev peach on the right.

This is THE END of Show Girl in Hollywood

Final pages of Hollywood Girl, Liberty serializ

In addition to all the narrative bells and whistles of *Show Girl*, the serial includes a publicity release, cast lists and shooting schedule, a clause from an actor's contract, interoffice memos, some opening sentences of a letter, screenplays (complete with directions), a full-page ad in *Variety*, and some modernist-looking dialogue. Plus there's a parody of

(reminiscent of the poems in *The Sweet Dry and Dry*) a monologue. Dixie starts and abandons a diary, which is a narrative crutch on McEvoy's part, but Dixie is so entrenched in her narrative that it would be churlish to complain. There's another "maddizell," "laying down a few flat arches" (dancing), "talking pictures," "dog house" (a bass violin), "si place=ass), and "Hot cat!" (expressing excitement). Jim never, as when he is asked by a reporter for his first Hollywood: "Offhand, it looks a little bit like Keokuk Sunday afternoon, except that the houses and vegetation have been retouched by one of those disappointed virgins painting china" (67). But he can't top Dixie on the difference between the Big Apple and the Windy City: "New York is a jazz-bar dig-a-doo but Chicago is just a big megaphone with an idiot hollering through it: Look at me, ain't I big for my age" (42).

Like the first novel, there are a few celebrity cameos, including the counterparts Louise Brooks and Alice White, aptly embodied by the simple McPherson via the radio airwaves. Von Sternberg is working with Gloria Swanson on *Queen Kelly*, a production that is strife-ridden as *Sinning Lovers*, and fans of old Hollywood are in for the namedropping, tech talk (UFA angles, lap dissolves), and the dope.

Sexual predation is even more prominent here than in the first novel, and creepier: *Show Girl* is PG-13, *Hollywood* is R. Director Buelow is a leech who indulges in "Trump/Bush banter" and seduces the *Evening Tab* reporter who interviews him at the beginning of the novel (and who begins dating Jimmie when he returns to his job there), and plans to do the same with Dixie. (First, she has to fend off his manager with a joke about being warned by Jimmy that Buelow "was on the make for me" and her diary "of course he's on the make and what of it, all men are sneaky and don't admit it . . ." (42). Jimmy tells her she's not put out to be put in Buelow's movie, which causes the same problem Dixie sees plenty of that after she's been in Hollywood

She keeps saying no to all the men who hit on her, in Hollywood correspondent, unlike those who say yes: 'get along say yes talk about yes-men you never hear of they're the ones with the Minerva cars and three kind guess I could get there too if I said yes . . ." (81).^[28] Th about the sex appeal of movies. The aging star says of the

they've got one thing I haven't got—youth. The necks and young legs and young eyes. And nice bodies. And you can't fool the camera when it things. And that's what they want out here in Youth. Young flesh. And they feed it into the n comes thousands of feet of young eyes and young bodies. Reels and reels of it. And that's w to see. Men go there and watch them hungrily then go home and close their eyes when they (124)

McEvoy would have used a different verb if he thoug away with it. A month later Dixie is almost raped by Bu her success she speaks of budding actresses in terms of p

Hardfaced mothers from all over the country little girls around to studios ready to sell then from an assistant director to a property man jus money off them. Agents with young girls tied term contracts at a hundred a week leasing the ten times that and pocketing the difference. Hu kids from small towns, nice family girls, chu society pets going broke and desperate, waitir notions, peddling box lunches on the street corr you stories that would curl your hair. (223–24)

Passages like this are what make *Hollywood Girl* close intent to *Caligari* than *Singin' in the Rain*.

These intimations on immorality in show biz perhaps curious number of biblical allusions in the novel, begin page, when Dixie blithely answers an imaginary interlocutor: "you been? On Broadway, sez I. Where on Broadway, sez I—up and down, sez I—up and down, between Forty-eighth and looking for a job"—the final word punning on the scripture, Job 1:7: "And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro on earth, and from walking up and down in it." Over the course of the novel there are allusions to the twelve apostles, Jonah and the Flood of Genesis, Noah's ark, and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Though based on Tennyson's poem, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, with the Garden of Eden (with Dixie in Eve's role), and when she resignedly decides to marry Milton, she says, "sometimes I think I'm a bimbo in the Bible who sold out for a mess of pottage" (34; "bimbo" is used of men and women in the novel).

Show Girl in Hollywood

*JACK came home with
me and we had a row
—a fight!*



WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT: Dixie Dugan, after going broke in Hollywood, has finally got her chance in the movies through Jack Milton, an old admirer who represents Wall Street interests engaged in merging several film companies. She became engaged to Jack following a quarrel with her newspaperman sweetheart, Jimmy Doyle, and on condition that Milton give her a screen part. Jimmy, nursing a broken heart, has given up dialogue writing and gone back to New York.

*A New
DIXIE DUGAN Adventure*

By J. P. McEvoy

Pictures by J. H. STRIBEL

PART THIRTEEN—THE FLOP

*Hollywood,
8th February, 1929.*

Miss Nita Dugan,
439 Flatbush Ave.,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

NITA DARLING:

We finished shooting today. They've got it all up in the cutting rooms now and most of it is on the floor. The rushes keep looking worse and worse. Von Nebbick has been giving all the close-ups to Chiquita who got second lead. She's the little Mex who used to be on Buelow's string, but not any more. They merged him into the alley, and he's down in Poverty Row now doing quickies. Chiquita lost no time taking a run-out powder on him and moved right in on Von Nebbick with her IT and everything. The net is close-ups; lots of close-ups for her—but every time they cut to me I'm going away some place.

Five
the set
o'clock
hours
around
ing the
times.
weeks
eleven,
at
times tw
ing, and
next mos

sleep, with big flats under your e
finding the lines in your face lik
for silk threads in a dollar bill.

Jack Milton has been running
trying to rush the picture so we c
off on our honeymoon. He keeps o
blue whiskers about Hawaii and
around the world or maybe it's
don't know. When the time cos
eyes and say I do and shove off. S
Nita, and turning the whole place
here, so I guess I'll have to go th
sometimes I feel like that bimbo
out for a mess of pottage. I gue
like a New England boiled dinne
for that!

When Jack isn't running aroun
firing a lot of broad-hipped execut
from sitting pretty, he's on the
projection room looking at the r

(CONTINUED ON NEX

Page from *Hollywood Girl*, Liberty serialization

The most sustained biblical allusion is the radio broad-
Jimmy endure while in a restaurant: from L.A.'s Angelu
Semple McPherson delivers a hokey sermon on Daniel i
spread over four pages in small caps (174-77), exhorting
tune out "all the jazz bands and the frivolous things of th

sing along with her (to the tune of “Yes Sir, She’s My Baby”)

Yes sir here’s salvation
No sir don’t mean maybe
Yes sir here’s salvation now
Goodbye sin and sorrow
Welcome bright tomorrow
For we’ve got salvation now (177)

This is too ludicrous to take seriously, and though Di refers to herself in terms such as “a devil on wheels” (23) Satan, much less Eve, Esau, or Daniel, and her thoughtless end makes a mockery of finding salvation. Nor is McEvoy asking readers to renounce “the frivolous things of this world” such as musicals and Hollywood epics; for his purposes, the Bible is not a moral guidebook but a source of wisecracks, but the numerous references add one more unexpected level to the novel.

As with *Show Girl*, the reviewers ignored the dark depth beneath the bright surface of the novel, which they found a little too much like its predecessor. “The book is amusing, filled with Hollywood-style wit and Hollywood slang,” said the *New York Times*, “but it lacks the hilarious fun of ‘Show Girl,’”^[29] not considering that McEvoy was aiming at something more than “easy, hilar-



Two years later, McEvoy concluded Dixie's sassy saga which picks up the same day *Hollywood Girl* left off.^[30] the novel documents the first few months of Dixie's impulsive marriage: honeymooning down in Mexico, Monterey, Teddy continues drinking and chasing after women, soon drives Dixie to Hollywood to resume her career. Bu

and Dixie begins learning more of Teddy's rich family: sister Serena, whom he calls "a wet smack and dumb as is preparing to make her debutante debut that fall; his 16 Patricia, a hellion already wearing heels who has seen runs away from private school to pursue a similar career and Teddy's predictably stuffy mother and father; in 01 daughter, the latter hires the same Open Eye Detect searched for Dixie in *Show Girl*. Mr. and Mrs. Teddy P called—Dixie loses much of her independent identity at "Teddy is my career now" (42)—then sail to France to honeymoon, but during the crossing Teddy lusts after a called Le Megot—"cigarette butt or a snipe," as Dixie described as "one of the sexiest little devils I ever saw w of hair, a slim lazy body, big black eyes and a red mouth men crazy" (70). Upon arrival in France, Dixie sends a announcing "LAFAYETTE I AM HERE" (74), but no honeymooning couple settled in Paris than Teddy sneak "on business" to catch Le Megot's act at the Kit Kat C Dixie is escorted around Paris by an Italian gigolo w seduce her during the ocean crossing. After another throws "a complete set of Victor Hugo at [Teddy], managed to dodge with the exception of Volume II of 'I (109)—they make up and head down to the Riviera.

At that point, halfway through novel, the plot takes a me we learn that Jimmy Doyle is in Paris, working for C again and "gathering material for a high society movie" to learn that Dixie is also in France, he telegraphs his revised idea: "COULD COMBINE EUROPEAN ANGLE DIXIES POPULARITY" (108, *sic*)—which sounds like made to himself after finishing *Hollywood Girl*. Dixie co with the idle rich and tells Jimmy she's having fun, or "f it's no pleasure—if you know what I mean. We're all so friends and their friends—and they work so hard to b nothing really makes 'em really laugh—only when champagne and are their real selves but don't know it

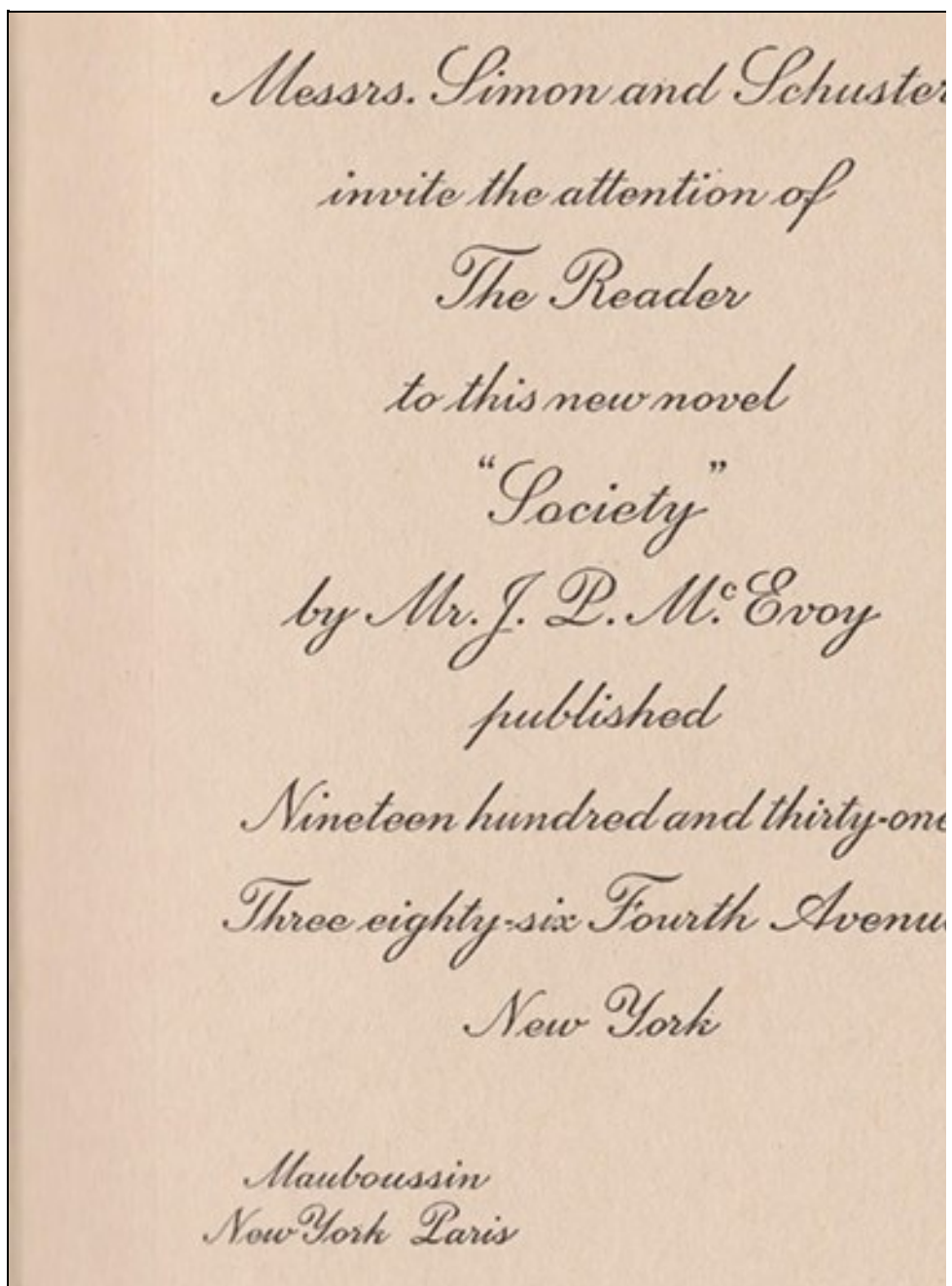
excited to learn she's pregnant, but just then Teddy gets in a scandal and both have to sneak back to New York. As he prepares for Serena's obscenely expensive coming out party at Carleton on Thanksgiving Eve (\$50K, around \$750K), he reconnects with the young communist radical she had on his route to Hollywood, and attends a rally in Bryant Park the night of Serena's ball. Learning the cost of the party, he leads a protest march to the Ritz, which is broken up by police—or as the headline in the communist *Daily Worker* reads:

TAMMANY COSSACKS DEFEND SACRED RITZ
FROM CONTAMINATION BY STARVING WORKERS
THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS FOR ORCHIDS
WHILE MILLIONS CRY FOR BREAD.

Early the next year, Jimmy returns from France, manusescript, and tracks Dixie down in Palm Beach, where she is driving, experiencing cramps, and having doubts about becoming a mother. “So tired of this silly empty life and realize the baby is down tighter than ever” (188). On the next page we read of an explosion on a yacht, in which Dixie was seriously injured. When she learns she has lost the fetus, she declares herself that she will never have another child. Her decent father-in-law arranges a quickie Mexican divorce (with a generous stipend for life), and Dixie agrees to star in a movie, *Society Girl*, “A Sensational Expose of the Haut Monde A la Mode” (a page ad on the penultimate page describes it. The movie is a “hit” (with more fake quotes from real reviewers of the time). Dixie and Jimmy decide to rest by sailing together for France. Jimmy is already on to his next showgirl, who Walter Winchell (in a tidbit from his column) is “the third gel from the left in *Fannyties*” (205).^[31]

Though *Society* lacks the hellzapoppin' energy and jauntiness of its predecessors—which in fact would be inappropriate for a novel about the pursuits of the rich and fatuous—the novel is more interesting as an average satire of high society due, once again, to the

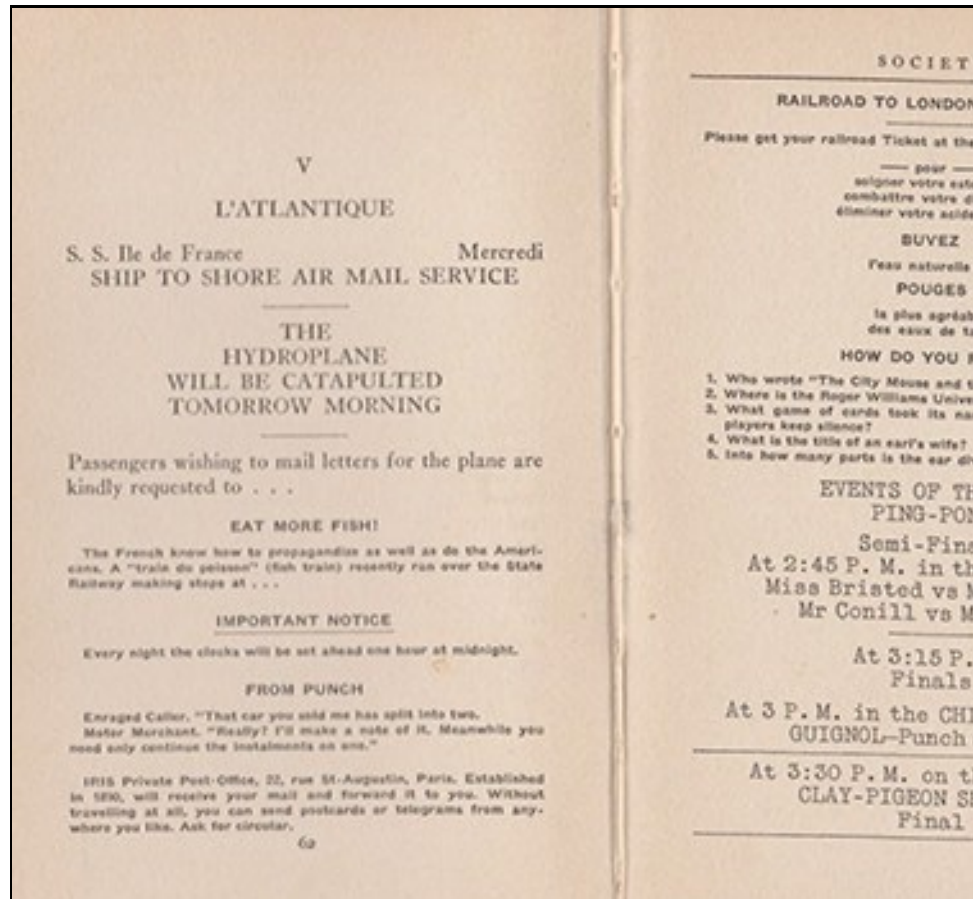
materials. The title page resembles a formal invitation on copperplate and even blind-stamped.

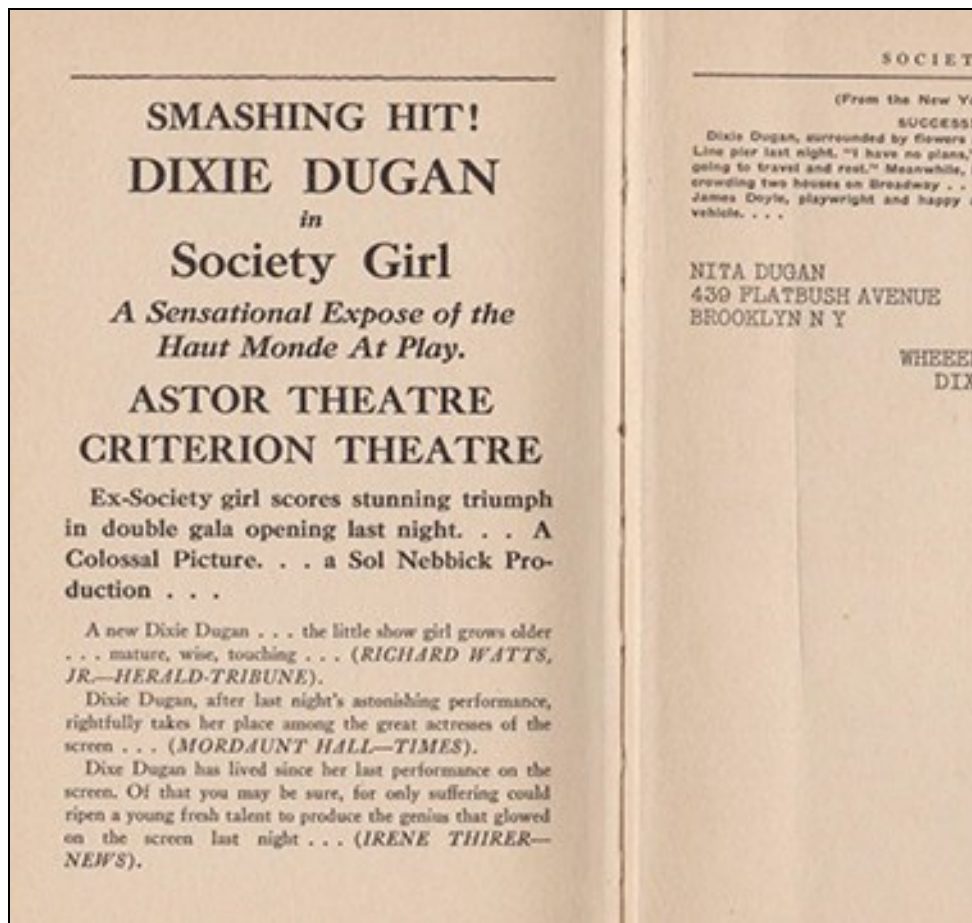


Title page from Society

In addition to the usual letters, telegrams, playlets, and we're treated to Dixie's ocean crossing diary, shipboard announcements, formal invitations and cards of introduction, invoices, legal documents, a Junior League report by Se through a Biscuit Factory," and best of all, several chapters. *Memoirs of Patricia Page (To Be Opened Fifty Years After* an amusingly self-dramatizing, misspelt account of the runaway adventure. There are self-conscious narrations by McEvoy, as when the stage direction in one playlet describes the Open Eye Detective Agency as "one of those fiction

can only be found in real life” (33), and when Jimmy coincidentally books a hotel room next to Dixie’s: “I think that in a book they’d say he certainly had to reach for that.” Jimmy adapts his film plans to fit Dixie’s life, and even as background material on debutantes (which she does in *Society Girl*) it becomes obvious that his *Society Girl* is a metafiction of McEvoy’s *Society*, a film of the novel/novel of the film.





Pages from Society

The darker themes in the first two novels are light predation takes the forms of handsy gigolos and ramp early as page 3 Dixie reports that one of Teddy's rich frie on the make for me—didn't seem to mind I was on r Teddy didn't either. Seemed flattered if anything." A d he shacks up with his ex-fiancée, and his tomcatting w suicide of one betrayed husband. Prostitution imagery debutantes—their coming out balls are sales displays f market—and for "society girls who are poor as church m to keep up a swank front and be seen everywhere in the and what they won't do to get by would put a Follies gi into the 'come into the drug store with me while I ge class" (18). Patricia's communist friend reprises Alvarez in *Show Girl* to introduce political elements in the nove the decadence of capitalist society in America and arist abroad, which McEvoy records in garish detail.

He also slips homosexuality into the novel. In a brill playlet set in a Paris nightclub called Le Fétiche, two

“doing post-graduate field work in abnormal psychology
lesbians. “A rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed contralto in two
new stanzas of Cole Porter’s “Let’s Do It, Let’s Fall in
another opportunity for McEvoy to show off his gift for p

Bugs do it—

Slugs do it—

Evil-looking thugs in jugs do it—

Let’s do it—

Let’s fall in love.

In holes the nice little mice do it—

Tho they are pariahs—lice do it—

Let’s do it—

Let’s fall in love.

.....

The Infusoria in Peoria do it—

And the better classes in Emporia do it—

Let’s do it—

Let’s fall in love. (93, 98)

This scene is followed by a letter from a *Variety* reporter
sights to be seen on the way south to the Riviera, in
hideaway tucked between [San Rafael and Toulon], en
by the most delightful pixies, male and female, but you
unless you meet one of three people, names enclosed
envelope. They’ll take you there if they like you” (103). I
show business, it’s about time McEvoy mentioned th
though it was a daring move for a commercial novelist in

Though Dixie takes up with high society, she’s never ta
mocks as she learns “society patter” and affected enur
still deliver snappy similes such as “he closed up lik
Sunday night” (89; i.e., stopped talking). As she occas
people, she’s still just an Irish “punk” from Brooklyn
number of poor choices throughout the novel, she r
qualities. Teddy’s father praises her “spirit and independ

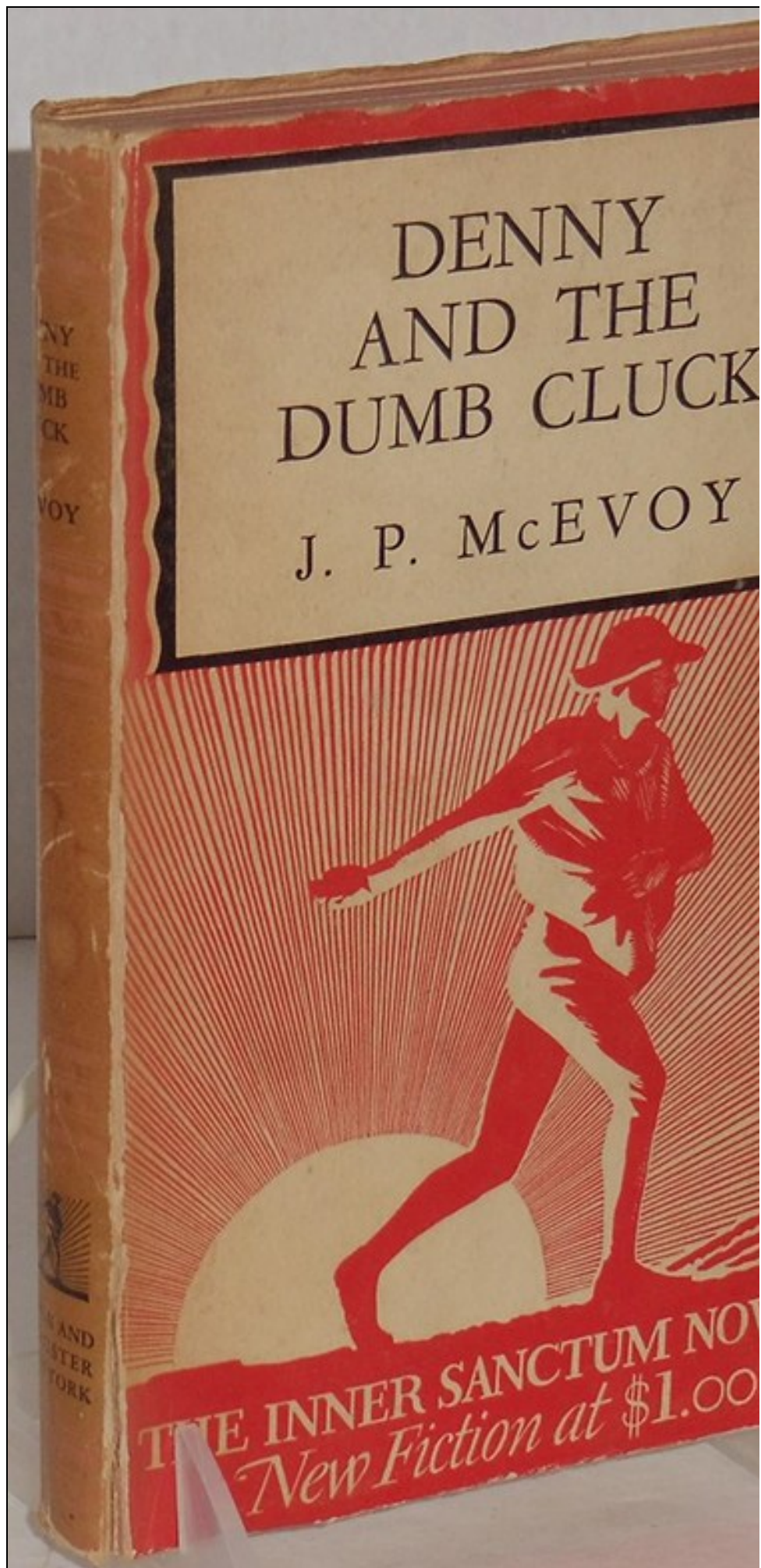
alimony or settlement” (202), and the news item the novel indicates she’s single: she has reunited with the man from *Show Girl*, but she hasn’t married him. Perhaps McEvoy wanted to leave the door open for another sequel, but that he intended Dixie to follow in the dance steps of his Louise Brooks, who except for two very brief marriages in her life single. (We can only hope that Dixie doesn’t wind up like Brooks did.)

Society is blander than its predecessors, but together the trilogy is an endlessly inventive portrayal of female independence as well as a damning indictment of show business, politics, and society at large. “To those who have followed him since *Mr. McEvoy* has always meant humor and bite,” wrote the *Review of Literature of Society*. “The ridiculous and the serious were always blended,” and though the reviewer felt “the humor and the humor become worn” in the third novel, it’s that balance of humor and bite, of ridicule and irony—shaken and stirred with formal ingenuity—that makes the trilogy as a whole a masterpiece.

Fade to Black: The Final Novels

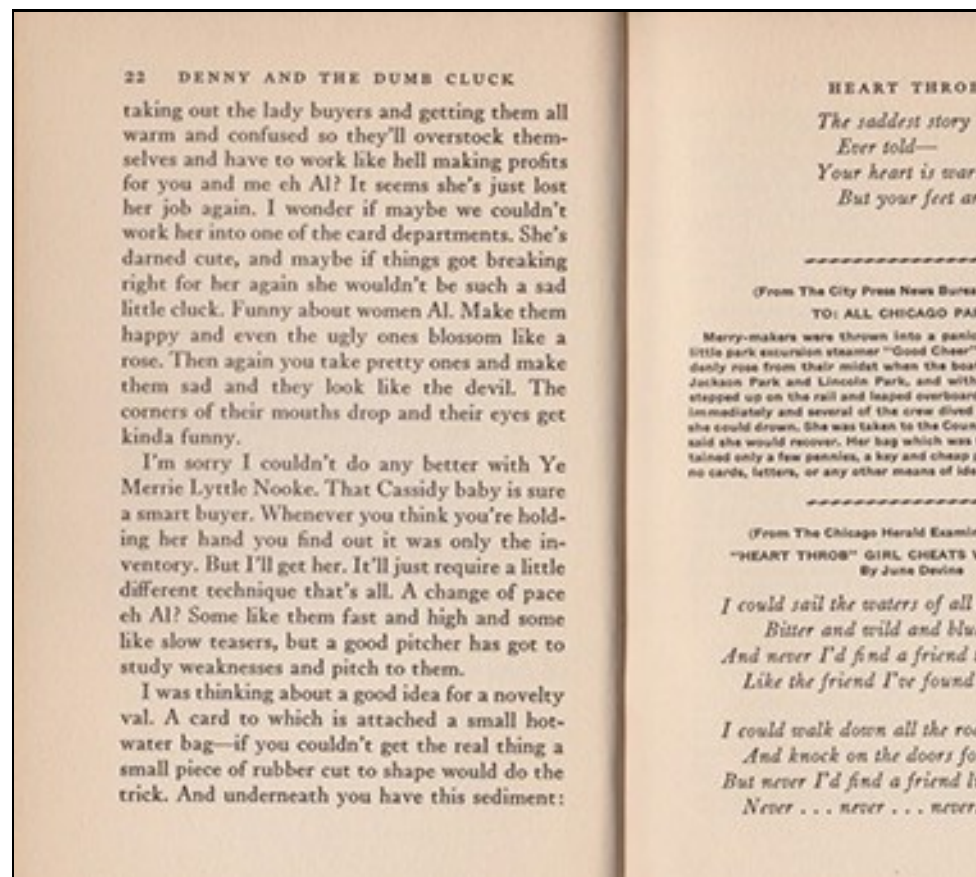
McEvoy’s 1930 novel *Denny and the Dumb Cluck* is a spin-off from *Show Girl*, which documented the failure of greeting-card salesman Denny Kerrigan to convince Dixie to abandon show biz and marry him. Denny gets top billing in this novel, which begins with a letter dated 11 May 1929 and ends about a year later, which marks McEvoy’s turn toward darker, more realistic American culture.^[32] The novel is festooned with greed and hypocrisy whose saccharine sentiments are undercut throughout by the businessmen who peddle the stuff and the “dumb clucks” who buy it. Although marketed as a humorous novel,^[33] the novel depicts attempted suicides, mental breakdowns, divorce proceedings,

mob slayings, and concludes with the murder of the
Denny's card company. Even the Hollywood happy ending
Denny regales his bride (the "dumb cluck" of the title) with
that murder during their honeymoon near Niagara Falls
signs of what a terrible husband he will be. The novel
Santa Claus.



Like McEvoy's earlier novels, *Denny* is an assemblage of bulletins and newspaper clippings, company memos (so

ALL CAPS), telegrams, divorce papers and trial transcripts, a bill, two lengthy monologues, and selections from a newspaper column penned by “Carolyn Comfort”—a “haired [male] tobacco-chewing reprobate” (148).^[34] It differs from earlier novels in its structure: they proceeded chronologically, but *Denny* is divided into multiple story-lines interlaced, but *Denny* is divided into independent sections that focus on specific story arcs. Part 11 (11 May to 12 June 1929) concerns Denny’s modus operandi in selling Gleason Greeting Card Company’s wares to the female buyers in the shops (all with twee names like “Ye Arte Moderne Shop”). Denny writes to his supervisor Al Evans, this entails “taking out the lady buyers and getting them all warm and confused so they’ll overspend and have to work like hell making profits for you and me



Pages from *Denny and the Dumb Cluck*

At loose ends one Sunday in Chicago, he meets “the young woman named Doris Miller, estranged from her Indiana because she moved to Chicago “to make her singer—another of McEvoy’s admirably independent. But when Denny recites one of his company’s lovey cards and passes it off as his own spontaneous creation

him. “Poetry always gets dames,” he smirks to Al (15 spots the poem in a greeting-card shop window, she attacks herself. She is rescued, then explains her reason for suicide to a reporter who gussies it up for a human interest story in the *Chicago Herald Examiner* (reproduced on pp. 23–25), with a spike in sales for the “Heart Throb” card Denny quotes about the sales but is unaware of his role in the spike.

The next section, however, begins with a letter by Al dated two months earlier (3 March) instructing his salesmen to push for the new idea of a Father’s Day card, and concludes with a newspaper report dated 17 June 1929 noting Al’s admission to a sanatorium for a nervous breakdown, the result of his sales efforts. This section features heart-rending letters from his mother on the disastrous effects of his work on the family. It also introduces the Gleason Company’s “staff Poet” Terence McNamara, a hard-drinking party animal (obviously a stand-in for McEvoy himself) whose marriage is likewise troubled. The divorce is undated but apparently takes place in April, for it comes in the middle of plans for Mother’s Day cards. Denny gets nowhere with the idea of opening a shop called Ye What Ho Gifte Shoppe, “One of those long legged Greenwich village gals that wear batik bloomers and have a lot of complexes” (60). She has eyes only for a milquetoast who works in a card shop frequently for cards to send home to mother. (In a way typical of McEvoy’s novels, he turns out to be a hired hand.) Denny reports to Al about a crime wave in Chicago, and passes on a letter (apparently his creator’s) doubts about his profession and his future. “Boy, you and I picked a piker’s game when we decided to go into this line throughout the land. It’s nothing to cheer about if you ask me.”

Section four documents McNamara’s divorce proceedings between 14 September and 5 October 1929.^[36] His wife has had numerous drinking binges on greeting-card related occasions and irresponsible behavior, including the time when McNamara was in court when his kids recited a Valentine’s Day greeting-card poem. When the poet takes the stand, he wins over judge and jury.

is secretly contemptuous of her wares: “There is a card table before me as I write, a sample Valentine given to a salesman, Denny Kerrigan, who sells the Gleason line. ‘Bright as sunshine, love is sweet as dew’ and a lot more than anything like that at all, darling. Love is bitter and dark and all the cruel dark and bitter things of this world” (177). Her letters to the student express true emotions in stark contrast to the ones offered on greeting cards. After reading the announcement of her beloved’s ordination into the priesthood, Denny writes to the woman about his new idea for a card: “CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ORDINATION.”

The final section jumps ahead a few months to Denny and Doris’s honeymoon, and is mostly taken up by Denny’s account of Gleason’s murder the previous February by a disgruntled customer. There’s no explanation for how Denny found and made contact with Doris for since Denny is talking to her (another one-sided relationship with a silent woman), there wouldn’t need to be. Doris obviously knew what happened, but the reader doesn’t, who might be excused for thinking McEvoy grew impatient and didn’t want to write a penultimate section on their reunion and courtship. Denny had suffered a serious accident in section six that entailed a hospital stay with many bandages, and unbeknownst to him Doris nursed him and wrote him for his letters to Al about his search for “that dumb clerk” who had obviously reconnected, so McEvoy apparently felt he had to end the honeymoon and wrap it up.

Despite the ostensibly happy ending, this is a harsh novel, not unexpected from an author who set out to write a “grudge novel” even” with the greeting-card industry, as he admits in the preface at the end. It was *too* harsh for some reviewers: “The book is like the same way that chewing gum, comic supplements and other things are American,” complained Edwin Seaver in the *New York Times*. “It is a violent, noisy book.” Contemptuous of the publishing market the novel as light humor, V. P. Ross wrote, “It is not so delectable, too grotesque to be tragic, and too longwinded

the laurels of humor.”^[37] But it is precisely those qu
Denny and the Dumb Cluck its edge, its Voltairic clash
and reality, its anticipation of the irony-clad black h
novels. A standard boy meets-loses-marries girl nove
greeting cards would be too simple. McElroy used that s
for American business practices in general, many aime
“dumb clucks” to purchase their goods and services. He
the New Testament’s promises of immortality are as fals
greeting cards when Denny flips through a Gideon’s
room.

The language isn’t as slangy as that in the Dixie Dugan
there are some amusing euphemisms (“you illegitimate
tin’s mother”) and synonyms for drinking binges (“out c
is also what appears to be McEvoy’s self-conscious
“humorous” approach to writing versus that of “serious
of whom flocked to Paris in the 1920s. Denny writes to
drunk who writes the lonely hearts column:

For years he has done everything in the newsp
found that nobody cared, so now he runs the
Corner and hopes to save enough money to
Paris to write a novel. He says he needs a cou
from the job so he can gather material. I says
these letters you get from the Lonely Hearts? I s
would be swell stuff for a writer. A lot of hooey
take that story you were telling me about that
find—you know, the one you picked up in a rest
for a lake ride. She jumps off a boat because
wrote those bum sediments you’re always quot
blame her. I’d jump off myself to escape you.
you think there’s a story in that? Sure, says I.
That just proves you’d better stick to peddli
starve to death if you tried to write. Now me
know how, but I’ve nothing to write about and
up enough to get ahead and settle down for a c

do serious work. You know my dream, says he
little studio in Paris near Montparnasse, and
nibble cheese, and observe life and write about

You can imagine what that novel would be like, if the
around to writing it. But McEvoy *did* find “a story in
suicide, a polyvalent one that expands to indict all of Am
the bitter end of the Roaring Twenties when it all came
and didn’t need to take a few years off in Paris to write it.

Having settled his score with the greeting-card business,
next to the comic-strip industry. The first half of *Mist*
place in Chicago, where McEvoy got his start in str
improve on the plot summary provided by James
Chicago of Fiction:

The story of Charlie “Chic” Kiley from Gum Sp
told through letters to his mother, news clipp
and transcripts of conversations. Kiley takes dr
the Art Institute and works in the art departmer
Star. Overnight he becomes a nationally kno
artist when he introduces *Mister Noodle*, a strip
of profiles (since that is all Kiley can draw). He
achieves social status, receiving memberships
Athletic, Forty, and Midday Lunch clubs. With
security he is able to marry his girlfriend and he
hundred thousand dollar per year contract fo
strip. However, when he relocates to the synd
New York City he succumbs to the temptatio
women, nightclub entertainments, and drink. V
falls from the balcony of his penthouse the
Midwest with moral indignation and his cc
cancelled. Only when he returns to Chicago
with his small town does he get the inspiration

strip and rediscover success. This satire of the syndicate book industry makes pointed comparisons between Los Angeles and New York to the detriment of the latter. [38]



Arthur William Brown illustration, Saturday Evening Post
Mr. Noodle

It's important to note that the novel satirizes only certain aspects of the comic industry, specifically the undeserved success of certain artists and the low-brow taste of many readers. The first time Kiley submitted his drawings to the editor of the *Chicago Star*, his boss told him that the paper has printed hundreds of questionnaires and prize drawings for the correct answers on the simplest subjects, and we have experienced that the average person knows only three things: he knows his name; he knows his parents; and he knows that's all he does know. Remember that if you're a comic-strip artist. . . . Always tell 'em something they already know, because the better they know it the better they like it" (41). This is a clear pandering to the lowest common denominator is what is satirized, not the genre itself; later in the novel, when a Russian immigrant Ivan Stalinsky sails to America to make a movie of Kiley's comic strip, it is clear that the novel is satirizing the commercialization of the comic strip.

director expresses what might be McEvoy's own view in a gangplank interview with the *New York Evening Tab* (the figures so prominently in *Show Girl*):

“The comic artist is the real modern artist. Compared to the first expressionists, and the colored supplements in the Sunday papers, with their vivid reds and greens, I am as brutal and frank as the life they underscore. I do it because I have always made pictures with real life more than actors that I welcome this opportunity to come to America and make a new comédie humaine out of the Noodles of American life to reenact and interpret the humors of everyday existence. . . . You can see that I have added, “that the Supreme Author is a Humorist,” to the mad comic supplement He created to amuse the

McEvoy placed the final sentence upfront as the epigraph, but then again, the entire statement may only be a swindle that claims sometimes made for the genre. The author does not put his tongue in cheek when Kiley's editor tells him, “Don't let the frontier of old-fashioned virtue is the comic strip” (47).

Unlike the previous novels, the documents that make up *Show Girl* are not dated, except for a clip from *Vanity Fair* on the cover dated 1932, a year *after* the novel was published. Apparently the setting is between 1929 and 1930—a character on page 71 recites the lyrics to “You, Just me,” a hit song introduced in the 1929 musical *42nd Street*, though again there's no mention of the Crash of '29—though the novel happens at a more rapid pace than in the previous novels, conveying the “overnight-success” aspect of Kiley's career. In this deliberately unfunny novel about the funny papers, Kiley is one of McEvoy's most despicable protagonists. Not only is he a parasite who owes his success to others: his girlfriend Dorothy—who met him at the Art Institute and later elopes with—gave him the idea for the comic strip in the first place, which Kiley then adjusts to his boss's low tastes (which Kiley later parrots as his own). After he becomes

has a team produce the strip for him while he gallivants in New York City, and even when he returns to Illinois in disgrace he has learned nothing. Kazer's description of the conclusion of Kiley returns to Gum Springs to recuperate, but is punctuated by a brilliantly rendered monologue by his ignorant Irish neighbor about murders, mayhem, and madness out in the sticks: "It was a stroke of inspiration. When Kiley then meets with his former editor and claims he has ideas for a new strip, he junks them, and his boss feeds him an idea for a new strip called *Mister Noodle*. Kiley claims for his own creation when he boasts to the syndicate boss of his imminent return to the big leagues. He is joined with another hick comic artist arriving in the New York City, carried away at the idea of living the high life, obviously to repeat Kiley's fall. Or not: the last page of the novel reads, "from a future issue of *Vanity Fair* stating, "We nominate Willie Timmerman for Fame, Willie Timmerman, because—" (186).



Arthur William Brown illustration, Saturday Evening Post
Mr. Noodle

The *Chicago Star* editor's final lecture to Kiley is a cynical overview of the comic-strip business, especially its lack

and undoubtedly represents McEvoy's conclusions after the business. When Kiley tells him that he has an idea for something never been done before, the editor (named James P. Mott) says:

Worse. Doomed to failure. The most successful comic strips today were always successful, long before the first. The Mutt and Jeff was a big hit when it was called Wags and it's a bigger hit now when it's called Amos and Andy. Your idea. Big dumb guy picking on a little smart girl. A dialect, colored dialect, Brooklyn dialect—same as the first. Orphan Annie is Cinderella. Bringing Up Father is the same—every burlesque show for the last fifty years. The Gumps? Mr. and Mrs.? Any fact that anything ever happened in any of 'em that has been read a million times in a million homes?

CHIC: I know, but they aren't funny.

MASON: They don't have to be funny. Did you ever see anyone read a comic page? Did you ever see a laugh in there ever a laugh in Little Orphan Annie? Or any of the successful comic strips running. People don't value them much as they want to feel superior to somebody else.

There are discussions like this throughout, with references to comic strips and comic artists, which should make *Mister Noodle* a valuable comic historians, written by someone who was there at the time. For literary historians, *Mister Noodle* is valuable as a document on how to take an unoriginal story-line (rube seduced by a girl) and make it new by way of formal and linguistic innovation. In McEvoy's usual documents, which as always provide a sense of immediacy to the proceedings, there are some amusing references to gossip columnists of the time. Kiley's arrival in New York is described by a word-drunk columnist reaching for the literary stars

An Inquiry into the Irrefragable Tent
(From the Editorial Page of the New York

Swims into our ken a new planet—the algebraic orbital aberrations, the torturing ellipse of tortu Theseus before the throne of the Minotaur, hal quaint Cretan symbol of American ideology—M planet X—crying in the wilderness, eating the ephemeral fame, preparing the way for a § forsooth, or peradventure, if you will quibb “Gold! Gold!” as did wild-eyed Sutter long ago will grant you, a Fool’s Gold, but your Au may who will bid me nay, for fool’s gold is the gue always the king on the throne has paid the fo stones for bread, darkness for light, the lourin laughing lip—and so, in like manner—Measu said the Mortal Poacher with immortal finality, we too long and too smugly, I fear, have bee Noodle of the earth earthy—Punchinello F Jovian frowns from our high, crystal parapets not that Jove walked with the sons of men by with the daughters of men by night—Danaë? ! FeS? Why not?—and from the little despairs of an alchemy lost to us the great courage of the § cosmic crepuscle of the Götterdämmerung. shouting in the terrible twilight that finally sv shining Olympus and cold, dread Erebus alike.) Pan! Ave, Mister Noodle! (97–98)^[40]

Columnist Walter Winchell is parodied twice, once upo and once after his disgrace: “A certain cocky alien fro was King Fish in the ookie-ookie racket a few months a down on his you-know-what with a big phfft is out of the and trying to merge a meal ticket on a local rag . . . no soa train from Illinois to New York, Kiley makes the aqua

Boop-a-Doop Sisters,” two nightclub chippies who p
stream of slang throughout the rest of the novel, even so

As in his previous novels, McEvoy takes the faults of a
the 1920s would have said trivial, even disreputable—
culture as a metonym for the faults of America at large.
wrote *Mister Noodle* in the gloomy months following
crash, which perhaps justifies the *New York W*
despairing evocation of Wagner’s *Twilight of the Gods*.
to the fizzy fun of the Dixie Dugan novels were shocked;
complained “Its humor is cruel,” another that “There is
is coarse and unnecessarily realistic,” and a third that it
cruel almost to literary sadism”^[41]—which sound li
Faulkner’s *Sanctuary* received the same year. Neither *M*
Society (also published in 1931) sold well, and perhaps
McEvoy changed publishers for his final novel.

In contrast, reviewers were very impressed by *Are You*
quite rightly so. It is his most compelling perform
technically ingenious “stunt” (as one reviewer called it),
most realistic novel, and his most powerful dramatizati
of new media on the public. The media in question is co
only a decade old by 1932, “The invasion by this sor
history,” one of the novel reviewers lamented (William
who labeled it a stunt):

One hears it not only in every apartment but
corner. It has turned any imaginative life that ex
in the street into a mixture of ballyhoo slogans
sentiment—usually about all the wron
sensational thought images. . . . [T]he industry i
so far managed to spread more blatant vulgarit
one would even have suspected. This is p
democracy loves. It is certainly what it contir

without noticeable protest.^[42]

McEvoy's "noticeable protest" puts it even more
broadcaster describes radio as going "into every home
every story, every place where men and women meet
drink, work or play; this tremendous voice from which
escape; this modern jungle drum beating from coast to coast
For some lonely souls in the novel radio provides
—"Turn it on in the morning and let it run. Keeps them
—but one character who can't escape it lambastes radio
day like a half-witted relative" (129).^[43]

Are You Listen

A novel with not a line description. The story, under way at once—matic, powerful and as to-the-minute as next 5 day's Collier's Radio H

By J.P. McEve



It comes right through the wall
Ouch, how I feel!
How you look.
Well, you don't look so hot yourself,
baby.
You should talk with those fate
under your eyes. When you're thirty,
you'll look fifty.
How do you think you look at thirty?
Who's thirty?
Save that stuff for Bill. Don't try
to tell me how old you are.
Or try to tell me anything.
Oh, you try all right. You've been
trying since I was a baby.
And a lot of good it's done.
Do we have to hear that radio across
the court so early every morning?
Don't we g
job?
Sally, you
and drink it
you think th
coming in a
If you war
been canned
A sixty i
no much be
very easy.
It takes a
supra, do
At least y
That will
seen audiet
Say, are y
straight
we go
You
doe d
of the
If y
find a
share
I pe
The
Aw,
egg a
orange
Get
should
you tr
a chan
Say,
Bill, a
comes
Who
suppo
tertain
ette?
serve
out nig
You
anythi
drink.
I. Se
Depart
P. A. N.
You
Mende
ROSE
JUICE
SPELL
And w
the R
Battle,
sunkin
hault
E. F.
Randy
dove th
and Ca
Good
Good
What
Call?
Let's
jokes it
How
love?

I. In-a-door Apartment; Laura and Sally O'Neal. The voice of the radio next door comes through the open window.

8 A. M. Morning Watch Time.

Chorus, everybody; chorus.
Ha! Ha! Ha!
Today is the tomorrow you worried
about yesterday.

Ha! Ha! Ha!
Wasn't you silly? Aren't you sorry?
Look at the sun.

Ha! Ha! Ha!
Hear them birds.
Tweet! Tweet! Tweet!

We have a lot of birds in the studio
this morning.

Early birds. Hello, boys!
Hello, Uncle Charlie!

How about a little song this morning,
boys! A little song to greet this new
day which will be bright and sunny,
with happiness for everyone. Which re-
minds me of a little story. Would you
like to hear a little story this morning,
everybody? There were two Scotchmen
—or was it two Irishmen? Well, maybe
it was two traveling salesmen.

Ha! Ha! Ha!
No, it was one Scotchman and one
Irish boy. It was the Scotchman's little
boy and the Scotchman shot him because
he started on an all-day roller after
lunch. After lunch—do you get it?
Ha! Ha! Ha!

Shut that window, will you, Laura?
Come on, Sally, pick it up. Do you
know what time it is?

And speaking of Scotchmen reminds
me that the first number here every
birds will play for you this morning
could very well be the Scotch National
Antlion—Give Me Something to Re-
member You By.
Ha! Ha! Ha!



"Oh, he'll get killed. Listen to that avalanche. Why, the whole mountain is falling down on him"

Are you Listening?, Collier's serialization, illus. by Hen

The main story-line concerns the three O'Neal sisters Middletown, Connecticut, to try to make it in New York. Laura, went there to become a concert singer, but no Radio WBLA (pronounced *blah*, as Benét notes). apartment with her younger sister Sally, who works as WBLA all day and parties all night. Their airhead kid sister 18 when she moves in a little later, is "trying to crash Bro has to settle for bit parts on the radio, and eventually celebrity gossip reporter for the *New York Morning Tal*

trouble with men, none more so than Laura, who involved with Bill Grimes, a continuity writer for WBLA hellish marriage with a shrew who won't grant him a divorce afford to pay a huge alimony; near the end, he accidentally to death, then flees with Laura as WBLA, in cahoots department and the *Morning Tab*, livecasts the man Because of the radio reports' reach, the couple is ID'd Florida, Bill is convicted of manslaughter, and is sent to was recently wired for radio). The novel ends with listening, from different locations in different moods, broadcast of Cab Calloway and his Joy Boys singing "Li of Cherries" from the Cotton Club.^[44]

The novel elapses over about a year's time—undated, from May 1931 to spring 1932—and and is partly conv radio broadcasts, set in ***boldface italics***: announcer speeches (including one from the Vatican by the pope ludicrous products, musical interludes, and live show locations, including the notorious Nut Club in Greenwich are also some short-wave police bulletins near the end.) alternate with the main mode of the novel: unpunctuated sided telephone calls (with unspaced Célinesque monologues, and *italicized shouting* in a larger point dialogues are often interrupted and undercut by the airy broadcasts, usually for darkly ironic purposes. (Saccha provide musical background for spats between couples delivers a speech praising Prohibition hours after his a filled yacht party; peaceful Christmas hymns are inter barked police reports on the manhunt.) And as in all of M there is extensive behind-the-scenes dramatizations of together, especially the frustrating attempts of creative the needs of their commercial sponsors. WBLA's produc as "a theater of the air. The advertising is incidental, b public is concerned, a necessary evil" (90). The sponsors precisely the opposite: one client, after hearing a Sha created for the Eureka Exterminator Quarter Hour, won

it won't be hard to understand. Of course I understand know how the average person is—especially when it comes—like—like well, some of those words the girl used. . . . lot of time on the air without saying something about. Couldn't we mention that it comes both in liquid and powder something like that?" (184). The frequent time-of-day announcements are called *M-O-R-I-S-O-N WATCH TIME* after its host anticipates the subsidized years in David Foster Wallace's

McEvoy's reliance on dialogue to carry the narrative is unlike other novelists of the time such as Ronald Firbank, E. B. Burnett, Evelyn Waugh (*Vile Bodies*), and Virginia Woolf. In the radio bits, he demonstrates his gift for satire and parody. The dialogue is impressive for its unvarnished realism from the characters, from radio personnel and sponsors to Wallerstein to speakeasy owners and gangsters. (Just before he starts, Grimes tells her that her psychologist "just wanted to see perhaps the first appearance in fiction of the vulgar verbalism.") The dialogue McEvoy ingeniously conveys everything that a narrator in a conventional novel would—appearances, actions, and—putting the reader in the same position as a radio listener—visual images from dramatized scripts.

CHAPTER II

I

*Cheerio everybody!
Good-bye until tomorrow morning, at this same hour.*

EIGHT-THIRTY A.M. M-O-R-I-S-O-N WATCH TIME.

My God, Honey, what could have happened to Sally? Eight-thirty and she's not home yet. I haven't slept a wink since three o'clock this morning.

Neither have I, Laura. Sugar?

One. Your girlish snores kept me company all night.

You'd snore, too, if you had to sleep on that lumpy couch.

You'd think Sally would have had enough consideration to telephone.

Another two months, and I'll have a permanent wave in my spine.

I'm worried stiff, Honey. I don't know what to do. It's too early to call George's office. And I don't dare call his home this hour of the morning.

Oh, she's all right. She's probably staying with some friends. Look, do you think this one would be any good?

ARE YOU LISTEN

MODELS, SIZE 14

Hips 35 inches, height 5 feet 7 in.
For high-class dresses; best pay, steady work. Apply all week. Sam and 478 Seventh Avenue.

Well, Honey, I don't know. You're here in New York two months trying to find something. I should think anything would be for a start at least.

I can't get anything. I've met a lot of and telephone girls on Broadway. I can't find producers anywhere?

She's damned inconsiderate — that's always was. Maybe something real good for her. What do you think, Honey?

Oh, she's all right. She knows herself. You worry too much. You're hen with one chicken. These models are size 14, not less than five feet seven inches. Get that way?

Looking for jobs. If I don't get one, I'll be looking for one myself. Well, Listen...

Turn off the alarm clock and crawl back into bed again for forty winks as the models are 'Dreaming of My Indian S

Gee, there's those darn Musketees over there before they sign off.

And now La Belle Fif, the pride of the Nut Club, will put back his false teeth and sing that lovely old carol, "Twas Christmas in the Harem"
...

... HATLESS AND WORE DARK OVERCOAT
MAY BE DRIVING FORD CONVERTIBLE
COUPE LICENSE NUMBER ...

The time is now ...

... and now you understand why the New York Morning Tab believes that radio, which goes into every home, every factory, every store, every place where men and women meet to eat, sleep, drink, work or play; this tremendous voice from which there is no escape; this modern jungle drum beating from coast to coast, is sounding the doom of this murderer fleeing somewhere in the night, and whose inevitable and speedy capture will be a lesson to all criminals. Tomorrow morning you may read at your breakfast table the details of this thrilling radio man hunt, and in addition the New York Morning Tab promises you an exclusive sensational development — the name and picture of the woman in the case ...

The time is now ...

**MURDERED HIS WIFE AT 8
THIS EVENING WAS DRIVING
VERTIBLE COUPE LICENSE NUMBER
D THREE ONE FOUR SIX NINE
MAY BE ACCOMPANIED BY
WOMAN THE NEW YORK MORNING
OFFERS A REWARD OF ONE
DOLLARS FOR HIS CAPTURE**

*You have been listening to
'Christmas Carol' of Charles Dickens.
The words of Tiny Tim, these words
fully symbolize the Christmas of
the world, to each and all who hear.
Christmas and God Bless Us
Good night ... All's well! ... Are*

Pages from Are You Listening?

The best lines are delivered by McEvoy's female character whom reveal how difficult it is to be a woman, especially in O'Neal's "this man's town" of New York. When she tells Buddy Law that she can't see how girls stand it, she a

when you're a girl you learn to stand almost everything being a girl means" (15). Both Sally and Honey party her of their conventional, religious mother, who visits and looks for a woman's place in the world (safely married at home in the older sister Laura is so exasperated by her failed career relationship with Grimes that she attempts suicide. She calls her neighbor Mrs. Peters, who turns on her radio "in the morning" and lets up until two o'clock the next morning," but her motivation does so because "She's lonesome and sad. How would you be used to be a famous actress, and now because you're more you can't get a job and have to sit home and listen to the radio." Laura replies, "Well, that's just tough if she grows old and gets a step. Who can help that?" (129). Later, Mrs. Peters offers advice to Honey, who can't decide whether to accept her invitation to attend a football game in Chicago: "Remember the woman who holds the key to any situation like this. It's the woman of situation she chooses, and the man must abide by her. I haven't learned anything else in my fifty years, I've learned to accept a girl on her own valuation of herself. If she wants to have herself, she must have it for herself first" (167). As in her other work McEvoy portrays independent women in a positive light. In *Listening?* he poignantly captures the despair of women in hopeless situations. The psychologist who treats, "I abandoned 50-year-old Mrs. Grimes doubts his snide diagnosis that she's dangerous: "Why? Just because she's starved, repressed, and somewhat inclined to hysteria?" "True," his secretary replies, "she's a potential manic-depressive, starved, thwarted, or in menopause and fixed on you. You know that's a bad thing to have on your "lay," this may be one of the earliest appearances of "menopause" in fiction). Both Laura and Alice Grimes experience meltdowns, Sally and Honey fend off near-rapes, and in the gangster novel Sally is dating knocks a woman unconscious. The novel alternates with the ubiquity of radio both thematically in this gender-sensitive novel.

Despite its grim theme, there are some amusing bits. While the station's broadcast blares overhead, Sully says, "If there's anything that's good for a hangover, it's a loudspeaker" (45). There are clever Gilbert and Sullivan songs, and the listening audience is treated to musical performances by such groups as the New York Symphony Orchestra (under the direction of Arturo Toscanini) and the Beau Brummell Dandruff Dandies' Jews' Harp Trio playing Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. (His *Tristan and Isolde* is incoherently broadcast for bathroom fixtures.) But as in McEvoy's other late novels, the color is black.

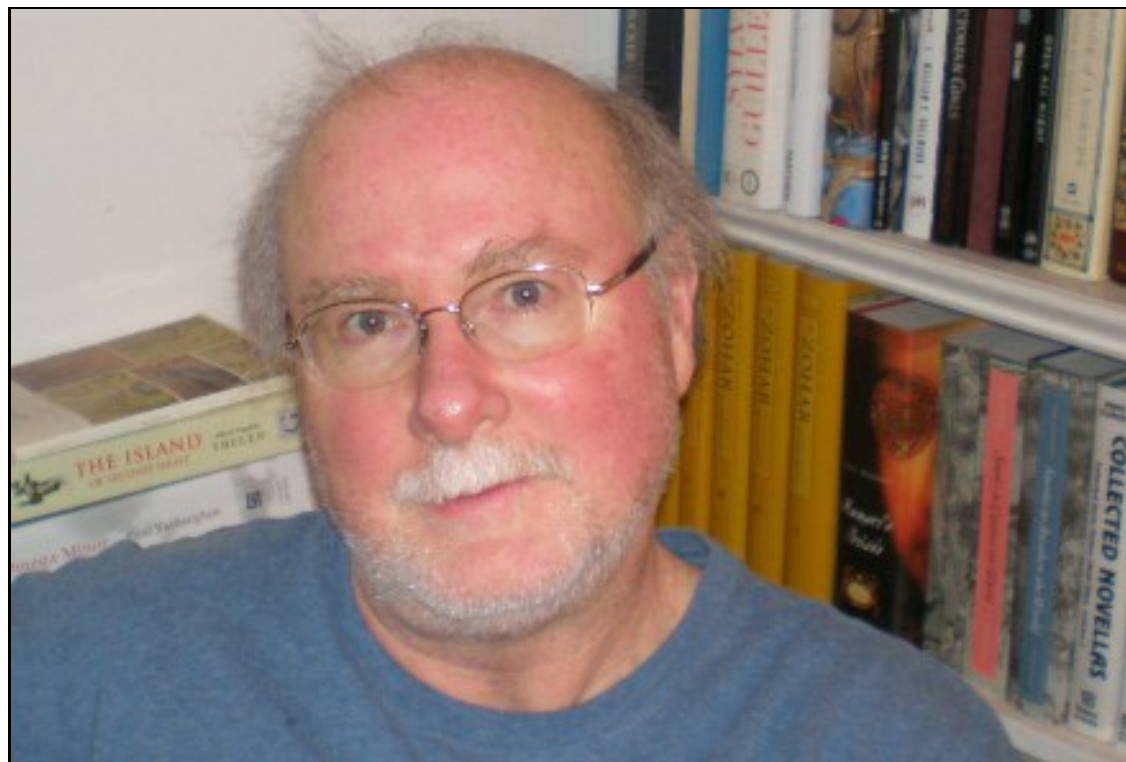
Even though the aforementioned William Rose Benét, in his review of *Listening?* a "'stunt' novel" and stated "There is nothing new about the book," he praised it to the skies, pompously declaring in his review: "Mr. McEvoy has been here this a champion of the novel. He has also, however, seen the cruel significance behind the chatter now burdening the ether, and has praiseworthy done a novel for us to see. Underneath all the japery, it mutters the ghost of Hamlet's father!" Hollister Noble, in a rave review in the *New York Times Book Review*, praised the "consistent by the serious delineation of character and the mocking irreverence of the station] environment," and complimented McEvoy

for two distinct achievements. He has re-created the fidelity, through the rapid-fire conversation of the very breath and life of the studio. And at the same time he has skillfully handled a great variety of characters, each early delineated and definitely individual. All of them are of full flavor of reality, and Mr. McEvoy is most accurate in their collisions with the fantastic complexities and enigmas surrounding them.^[46] Perhaps heeding the advice of always leaving them wanting more, McEvoy's performance as a novelist on that high note.

The final line of McEvoy's final novel is "Are you lis would be echoed 43 years later in the final line of V multimedia novel *J R*, spoken into a telephone: "Hey? Y ?"^[47] McEvoy resembles Gaddis in many ways: both have of humor and dim view of America; a high fidelity ear f the vernacular; and a penchant for the comic-ironic public statements vs. private sentiments, high art vs. low (in *J R* Gaddis uses Wagner much the same way McEvoy documents in fiction—*J R* has several, and his novel *A F* is filled with legal documents, a play script, letters, news brochures, even recipes—and both satirize the fri technology in the arts: like the Russian director in *Miste* in his final, posthumous novel *Agap Agape* stares agap opulence of American technical resources and at the sar frighten[ed] and depress[ed by] the remorseless rhyth machine, spawning and spewing in callous complac flood of elegant marshmallows" (*Noodle* 136–37) innovative fictions of the 1970s that come to mind are skits, speeches, and news reports that make up Philip I (1971), Jerome Charyn's novel in the form of a literary qu *Baby* (1973), and Robert Coover's use of show-biz t American culture in *The Public Burning* (1977), another r of documents, monologues, poems, and parodies. Whether a covert avant-gardist of the 1920s, as a harbinger of the the 1960s and certain multimedia novels of the 1970s, popster *avant la lettre*, J. P. McEvoy deserves to be reprinted.



Still from Woman Accused, 1933



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Footnotes (returns to text)

1. “*Manhattan Transfer*: The American Novel as Scrapbook,” http://www.fractiousfiction.com/manhattan_transfer.htm
Matthews, *New Republic*, 25 July 1928, 259. The most famous example for the “scrapbook” novel is Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897); for example, see *The Scrapbook of Frankie Pratt* by Caroline Pratt.
2. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodernism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 83.
3. “Ink-Slinger Profiles: J. P. McEvoy,” <<http://strippersguide.blogspot.de/2015/06/ink-slinger-profiles-by-alex-jay-jp.html>>, posted 8 June 2015. This treatise and research is the source for many of the biographical details throughout this book.
4. *North American Review* 244.1 (Autumn 1937): 206.
5. Quoted in Ray Banta, *Indiana’s Laughmakers: The Story of our Humor* (Indianapolis: PennUltimate Press, 1990), 115.
6. *The Sweet Dry and Dry* includes a parody entitled “The Book of Howdri Iam.”
7. “Lewis Talks to Chicago League,” *Publishers Weekly*, 19 May 1937, 11.
8. James Curtis, *W. C. Fields: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1964), 157–64.
9. For details, see Curtis (157–64) and especially chapter 23 of Louvish’s *Man on the Flying Trapeze: The Life and Times of Bill Fields* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997). Louvish says they had a long relationship, both physically and temperamentally, and concludes, “McEvoy’s relationship with Bill Fields was profound and long-lasting” (254). They appear together in a black and white photograph on p. 255.
10. It was registered with the Library of Congress as *American Revue*—an inadvertent (or not) pun setting the stage for the two novels McEvoy would soon write.
11. *George Gershwin: His Life and Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 100.

Press, 2006), 377. Gershwin wrote a song for the show (“The Shop Chord”). McEvoy was assisted by Morrie Ryskind and and worked with composers Con Conrad and Henry Souva. Conrad (1891–1938) writes the music for the musical in McEvoy’s novel, *Show Girl*.

12. See Pollack 451–61 for a detail account of the musical, who says the script “lost much of the charm of the original novel” (453). Pollack agrees: “Very little of McEvoy’s satirical view of how scandal and fame came through” (*Ziegfeld: The Man Who Invented Show Business*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008], 268).
13. Jay records McEvoy’s remark that he stopped writing the strip and turned it over to his son Denny and Striebel. See the feature on the origins of the strip in *Modern Mechanix*, April 1934, 57, 100. <<http://blog.modernmechanix.com/dixie-dugans-fathers/>>
14. For the reason, see McEvoy’s “A Jeremiad on Laundries” in *Show Girl* (58–59).
15. *Times Square Tintypes* (New York: Ives Washburn, 1930), 24.
16. “*Show Girl* was what *The Inner Sanctum* calls a Life Saver. It came up on a gray afternoon and promptly ran away with the whole staff. It was read and accepted in twenty-four hours. Laughing, an irresistible salesman. A number of other customers fell in line and laughed and bought *Show Girl* for serial publication. *First National* is filming it and a musical comedy is in the offing.”
17. Her age is not given in the novel, but in the sequel set a year later, McEvoy writes: “As for me I am nineteen years old and what is technical, I am a virgin although I have been most thoroughly and thrillingly seduced on many occasions . . .” (*Hollywood Girl* 37). She also states “I am five feet two inches tall and weigh 110 pounds” (36)—Louise Brooks.
18. Barry Shank offers some informed observations on Denny’s profession in *A Token of My Affections: Greeting Cards and American Business Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 100. One of the only treatments of McEvoy in recent criticism (though the plot details wrong). Of McEvoy’s *Slams of Life*, Shank writes “At its best, as satire, the book fails to sustain a critical viewpoint. But it is also well as a document of the cheap cynicism that seemed to have been produced culture on demand for commercial purposes in the 1930s.”

the twentieth century” (147).

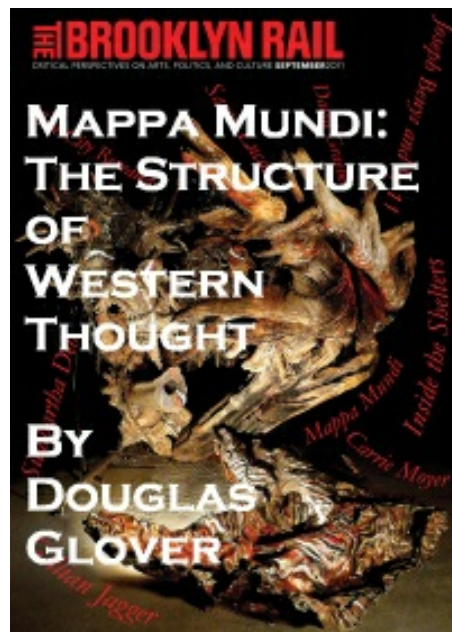
19. His formal name John Milton is given a few times; apparent the idea of naming a horny Wall Street broker after the Puritan
20. *American Mercury* was the leading literary journal in the 1920s [sic] featured sleazy “sin-suffer-repent” confessions by women (ghostwriters).
21. Real-life Broadway veterans Con Conrad (music), Sammy Lee (choreography), Herman Rosse (scenic design), and Walter Gus Kahn (additional songs). Several celebrities make cameos including Florenz Ziegfeld, Jimmy Durante, and evangelist A. A. McPherson, and many others are namedropped.
22. *Saturday Review of Literature*, 30 November 1929, 491.
23. All quoted from the 1928 edition of *Book Review Digest*.
24. He is called Fritz von Buelow only on the cast list in the front and is apparently based on McEvoy’s friend Erich Von Stroheim who makes a few cameos in his novel under his real name.
25. In 1929, the idea of making a romantic movie out of Tennyson’s poem was absurd, but in 1936 there appeared *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, starring Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland.
26. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the 1919 German Expressionist silent film.
27. The final page of the *Liberty* serialization (28 September 1929) is more elaborate: the *Times* announcement mimics the page layout, display and text fonts, and the extended photo includes several guests and a caption, not just the wedded couple as in the previous issue.
28. This occurs in Dixie’s monologue, echoing the closing line of Bloom’s monologue in *Ulysses*: “. . . and yes I said yes I will have the alcohol, *Ulysses* was prohibited in America at this time, but I managed to obtain both.
29. Quoted in *Book Review Digest* for 1929.
30. However, there is an inexplicable dating discrepancy: *Holly* begins in April 1929, but *Society* begins in April 1930. A few references to the Crash of ’29 indicate the novel is indeed set in 1929, but it from April to December, and concluding around the time of its publication in the fall of 1931. Cf. note 33 below.
31. A pun on Carroll’s stage revue *Vanities*. “Known as ‘the troupe of the nude,’ Carroll was famous for his productions featuring the

clad showgirls on Broadway” (Wikipedia).

32. Thus the novel occurs during the inexplicable 1929–1930 gap between *Hollywood Girl* and *Society*, which is perhaps what McEvoy was doing by dating the latter, hoping nobody would notice.
33. The novel was published by Simon & Schuster’s Inner Sanctum experiment at pricing new novels at \$1.00 (instead of the usual \$2.00) and using stiff paper rather than cloth covers. They were color-coded: blue for “books in a more or less serious vein,” green for detective and mystery novels, and red for “books of a lighter nature” (ii). *Denny* was red.
34. Nathanael West’s *Miss Lonelyhearts* was published three years before *Society* in 1933.
35. Al and a few other characters from the greeting-card subplot in *Society* reappear here.
36. McEvoy drew upon his own 1922 divorce trial for this section. It was based from a news story in the *Portland Oregonian* (27 August 1922). In the trial, McEvoy accused his estranged wife of failing to take proper care of their children despite a generous alimony and “of gay ‘carryings on’ at late hours after the children had been put to bed.” She confessed to “that McEvoy was too friendly with other women.”
37. *Outlook* 155 (27 August 1930): 667. Seaver’s review appeared in the August issue of the *Evening Post*, p. 5.
38. *The Chicago of Fiction: A Resource Guide* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 236–37.
39. When Stalinsky finally visits a Hollywood movie lot, a scene that is presented in play form, the stage directions state he is shown around by a guide who is “overawing him with the lavish opulence of American technique and at the same time secretly frightening and depressing him with the remorseless rhythm of this great machine, spawning and spawning with callous complacency an endless flood of elegant marshmallows” (212), which can be read as McEvoy’s final verdict on the movie industry.
40. This sounds like Percy Hamilton, who is parodied near the end of *Society* (212).
41. All quoted from the 1931 edition of *Book Review Digest*.
42. “The Ghost in the Radio,” *Saturday Review of Literature*, 20.1 (1931), 52.

43. This recycles a stage direction in a restaurant scene in *Holly* “Above the clatter of dishes and the bumble bumble of voices speaker, pleasantly ignored, drools and cackles with the idio a half-witted relative at a family dinner” (168).
44. There are footnoted permission acknowledgments for this : songs quoted in the book. McEvoy hadn’t done so in previo may have run into legal problems.
45. The earliest example recorded by the *OED* is John O’Hara *A Samarra* (1934).
46. “Tuning for the Moonstruck Static of Radio land,” *New York Review*, 28 August 1932, 4.
47. *JR* (New York: Knopf, 1975), 726. There’s no evidence Gadd McEvoy’s work.

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