



syntax

Nº. 1



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{letter from the editor}



syntax

the online publication BEGAN THREE YEARS AGO OUT OF OUR EXPERIENCE **in the literary industry.**
we thought about denver, and the world, very differently then. AT THAT POINT, **we didn't know**
THAT HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE *would walk into our lives,* and that we'd be a part of theirs.

we have prided ourselves on LOOKING INTO THE SHADOWS of *denver*
and the world around us, *and sharing our findings* with everyone WHO WILL LISTEN.

we have been fortunate in our walk: WE HAVE HAD MULTITUDES OF PROFOUND
INTERACTIONS, *interviews and responses and moments that will never happen again.*
we have sat in rooms, in clubs and bars and theaters - and, at times, **been moved to tears.**

SYNTAX HAS SEEN UNLIKELY PEOPLE TO COME TOGETHER. syntax has seen relationships
grow into fiery love *and syntax has seen people explode into legends.*
DURING OUR THREE YEARS: **we have fallen in love a thousand times over,** gone to the nuthouse,
been married, HAD OUR HEARTS BROKEN, **lost friends,** *gained new ones,* embarrassed ourselves
and loved as much and long and hard as we could.

because *in this social experiment* we all learned:
that it's about **the striving toward** BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS *that counts.*

in this PRINT EDITION OF SYNTAX *you will find* some of **gems** from OUR JOURNEY.
THESE ARE THE BEST *writers* and **poets;** VISUAL ARTISTS and **musicians** *that we have seen.*

READwrite**art**musicLIVE*love*lust.

syntax

IS A DENVER-BASED LITERARY, ART AND MUSIC REVIEW
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THANK YOU TO EVERYBODY WHO HAS TOUCHED US. YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE.

summit studios
(the summit of sisyphus)



I WAS ONCE ASKED A SEEMINGLY SIMPLE QUESTION, "WHY DO WE ENJOY MUSIC SO MUCH"?

Immediately *I launched into the multitude of possibilities*. At first, I locked-in on the first, and most obvious word that came: rhythm. And after a couple tries at it, I even drew up the idea that our hearts beat - so, of course we should like music. We have heard rhythm all our lives, in our head, and in our bodies. Even in the womb.

All told, we both came up with good

& NIETZSCHE music

jonathan bitz

stuff, that day - but none of our impressive theories answered the question, exactly.

And to this day, five years later - I have yet to fully answer this question. I have always known that there was a correlation, somewhere, that worked. Sure, **rhythm**, *heartbeat*. MOVEMENT, fluidity, **dance**. Something. *But, what is it, really that makes music so interesting, so moving and so godlike?*

Well, as this question has turned into a mild quest of sorts - I have come, once again, across another answer. Another stab at the grand question. And maybe an end, at that.

The great German thinker and writer Friedrich **Nietzsche** was enveloped with music his entire life. From age fourteen, when he first wrote about its power - until he died. It was nearly an obsession. Relationships in his life, namely with the

great composer Richard Wagner, attest to this fact.

Nietzsche's famous quote about music, "without music life would be an error," is known world-wide, and repeated frequently. However, he stated some **more powerful and wondrous things about music**. Relative to our initial inquiry, of why we enjoy music so much, he said: "*Our true experiences are not garrulous (meaning, given to chatter). They could not communicate themselves if they wanted to: they lack words. We have already grown*

beyond whatever words we have. In all talking, there lies a grain of contempt."

Nietzsche furthered this by saying that,

"In comparison to music all communication through words is shameless. The word diminishes and makes stupid; the word depersonalizes: the word makes what is uncommon common." He said, simply, "music say(s) certain things that words are incapable of expressing."

AT THE END OF THE DAY, NIETZSCHE BELIEVED THAT LANGUAGE COULD NOT ELEVATE ITSELF BEYOND MERELY EXPRESSING THE SMALLEST PART OF EXISTENCE - "the most superficial and worst" *part, is what he said*.

Faced with his views on the importance of music, it is curious that Nietzsche ended-up spending his life immersed in words. Writing them, and using them. As an academic, and a professor, he was an erudite in philology (in the broadest sense: the study of language). But this does not mean he did not try his hand at composing. He did. *To the unfortunate end of which he was forced*

to admit that he hadn't the faculties to express all that he heard in his head.

So, he was relegated to writing. But, he wasn't a hack. Far from it. As was noted by some of his contemporaries, Nietzsche struggled endlessly to find the perfect words and phrases. He aimed at making sentences ring with as perfect of melody and rhythm as they could. And most scholars agree that he ACCOMPLISHED EXACTLY THAT: IT IS SAID THAT THE ONLY OTHER GERMAN THAT WROTE AS PRECISE AND BEAUTIFUL PHRASES AND COMPOSITIONS WAS THE GREAT POET, GOETHE.

And in extending this impact that music had on **Nietzsche's life**, when he wrote he was terribly fond of employing the unorthodox "dash". He used it nearly unabashedly. For him, it did not disrupt the continuity of a sentence, but rather, it served as the only grammatical tool which is able to create that kind of a space that only music is capable of creating. That kind of space, devoid of

morphemes, where words have no power to make what is uncommon, common. As

Nietzsche wrote to his sister, "*For me, (in my writing) it always begins only after the dashes.*"



So it is, that alas, I have a theory that can answer my initial question, with more explanatory power. THE CORRELATION that I have been searching for, about music and its impact, I believe, IS BETWEEN WORDS AND MUSIC. It may not be the final word, but undoubtedly, nearly anyone would agree that music expresses something beyond words. And to this end, it is curious that, to explain that-which-is-beyond-words, there is a word:

INEFFABLE -



*T*ACITUM EST
{julie payne}

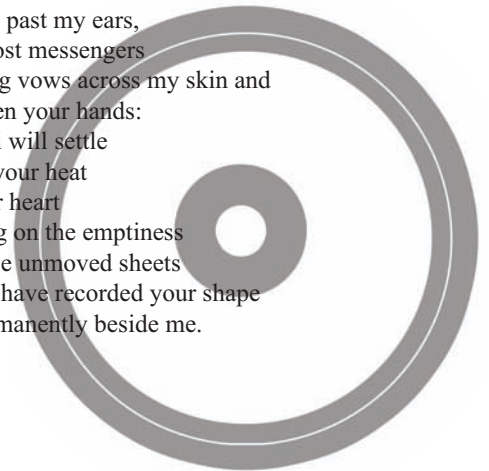
the day you said nope with a really hard p
abused my ears bilabially
illusions broke camp and headed home
plosives pushed through pops and bugs to part hair and wet cheekbones
your noise was everywhere
gutterals like like and sick brought kicks and grunts and cunts and pricks
and longg longg aching in my neck
in it seemed so quick and slim with silver soothing sibilants
highs and brights and lights and frees
moons and mmmms and sussurance
then out meant out and go meant go
the image hummed then shhhh it stopped

{poetry}

*I*WOULD OPEN MY WRISTS
{jp/p}

i would open up my wrists like the doors
of my father's art deco Chevy, to the sweet
blistering sound of your sub-Saharan voice.
and watch as the reds and rusted siennas fell
at my feet, burying me. burying the wishes
like water
from the mouth of my tub to the mouth of my head:
don't call here again.
call one more time and tell me
you love me.
like you do.
let me lick
the L's and V's
wrap my legs around your vowels,
go down on the spaces
arrested between hopes.

i would open up these wrists
for the sound of your ifs
turning into promises, just
hypervented oxide
sailing past my ears,
little lost messengers
pouring vows across my skin and
between your hands:
but i will settle
for your heat
your heart
beating on the emptiness
of these unmoved sheets
which have recorded your shape
so permanently beside me.



I SAID THIS TO MY DAUGHTER:

“IF YOU’RE BORED, WHY DON’T YOU GO BURN THINGS? THAT’S FUN. HERE, HONEY, YOU CAN USE MY LIGHTER.”

She holds the lighter gently in her fragile hand, and studies it. She weighs her words carefully. “This. This kind of thing,” she says finally, “is why the other moms don’t like you.”

“Fuck them,” I say.

“Things like that,” she says. “You see?”

“I don’t say it to their faces,” I tell her. “They don’t like me because

like the chair of Satan.”

She smiles and sits in the grass and weaves me a crown of pink blossoms, and then one for herself. We watch the chair burn until it is a black skeleton of a chair. A chair of death.

“I’m worried about what will happen to you,” she says, “when I leave. I don’t want you to be alone.”

“I’m a big girl,” I say. “Don’t be silly.”

“You’re just a little girl,” she says, only smiling a little.

“I have a plan,” I say. It is a lie. “I’m going to buy a mini van, and grow a big fat ass, and make silk flower

purple bathrobe, a broken table. A few bills I can’t pay. Broken branches from the lilac tree.

I don’t want to think about New York. She is right. I am terrified to lose her. I want to keep her near me forever. I will keep her safe, and far away from men, and her eyes will always look like they do now, like dark stars. Holy and pure and brilliant child. I say this to her:

“Run. Run away. Run as far away from me as you can. Go to New York. Go to Florence. Go to Athens. Go to Budapest. Fall in love. Buy beautiful shoes. Never buy a mini van. Don’t

YESTERDAY

you’re beautiful and they’re jealous.”

She sighs, and even the whisper of her breath is beautiful, and the sorrowful tilt of her head. “Mom,” she says. “Mom, you do. You told the PTA to fuck off.”

“No, I did not. I told them their idea was fucking asinine. That’s very different.”

“They didn’t think so,” she says. She is still holding my lighter. “What do you want to burn?” she asks.

We choose a chair I hate. We take it into the back yard, and douse it with charcoal starter. It flames beautifully. A throne of flames. Ashes float into the blue, and fall around us.

“Look at that,” I say, “Isn’t that gorgeous, in a scary way? Now it looks

i burned

{amy muldoon}

arrangements. I’m going to redo the house in American Country crap. Maybe geese, or something. Yes. Or cows. I won’t swear anymore. I’ll come to see you in New York, and say, Kate, take me to see Cats. Or Annie. Yes. I’ll be the envy of all the neighborhood moms. I’ll wear glasses. I’ll learn to golf. The other moms will love me. I’ll say, okeydokey.”

Okeydokey slays her, and she laughs until the pinks blossoms tremble in her hair. “Or not. Annie, for heaven’s sake.” She knows better.

We look for more things to burn. We add an ugly sweater, a Barney

things

worry about me. Swim in the Adriatic.”

“Why Budapest?” she asks, curious.

How the hell would I know? But it’s fun to say.”

“Budapest,” she repeats, and laughs.

My husband comes out, and looks at us, two bedraggled May queens, throwing branches on a burning throne.

“What the hell are you doing?” he demands. He looks baffled by the skeleton of the chair.

“Burning,” I say.

“Fucking nutters,” he says, and goes inside.

RUN, I TELL KATE. RUN.

SOMETIMES I'D GET LISA
TO TALK ABOUT HER KIDS
{justin hyde}

her legs
had been amputated
below the knee
as well as portions of three
fingers
on her right hand
it was her own fault
neglecting the diabetes in her
early 20's
she was at the Birch House in
Iowa City
for major depression
spent most of the time
in her room
listening to Metallica and eating
Cheetos
5 o'clock med line
she came out in a joystick
controlled wheelchair
I grabbed her insulin out of the
small fridge
without putting rubber gloves on
she had Hep C
but I figured
the last thing she needed
was another reminder

YOU BORE ME
{aaron belz}

You bore me. So be it.
I bore you and enjoy doing it.
Let us learn to bore each other
without worrying about it.
You act all shy around me,

and that's your prerogative.
If I act shy around you,
it's because you're pretty
and I want to kiss you.
I wish I were Canadian.

If I were Canadian,
I could be boring and
get away with it. You'd say,
This man is from Canada.
He bores me. He acts shy.

He wants to kiss me.
And you would let me
kiss you not only on the lips
but on the cheek, neck,
shoulder; belly, maybe?

Because I would be Canadian
and have scruffy hair
and big eyes. But, alas,
you bore me, too. You
act like you're from Michigan.

OUGHT
{jack martin}

There ought to be something.
Some nuance or subterfuge,
a wind beneath the skin,
like the blood only deeper,
a red happiness that lasts
longer than sunset,
or the eternal dawn,
but more obvious,
untucking the blue
until we understand
what cannot be understood,
but seen, maybe wept
or laughed, maybe breathed,
not staying in one place, like a fact,
but evolving through us
into something aesthetic
or larger, half-lidded sunset
that makes us all worthwhile,
a final apology.
This world is hard.
Among the hands,
the things we've built and been,
the lost and found,
or a laugh, enough,
or the realization,
that it ought.

THINGS I MISS {judy wolf}

I miss that day that Randy and I ditched school and the weather was foggy like today and we listened to Bruce Springsteen all day long because Randy was a fanatic fan and had every single thing the man has ever produced on tape. All we did is make out and kiss in his truck at the park and fuck in the backseat and I felt his hands and his back and his shoulders and played with his hair and stared and stared at his blue eyes and knew back at school and away from this day and this moment we would never really have this again. That it was just real for what it was, not anything we could take with us. That the world was that day, just only us in that truck and it was about being together and being in the fog and having the radio on and drinking a beer in the middle of the afternoon and being away from everything.

ARMY OF NONE
{michael macturk}

dedicated to allen glines with love

you want to suck the dick of fame
and let it cum for fifteen minutes
using words like renegade
describe yourself than as defected
or defective or deplorable
your poems are carbon copy
lacking shelf life
lacking anything
just lacking dot dot dot

and by the way i read your interests
see you fight for oppressed women
did it ever fucking dawn on you
that battle is their own
they do not need some cocky
wannabe to make them stand behind him
while he rhymes at all their enemies
the second shoe is dropping
get it right
you aren't a writer
the real ones
don't crave the spotlight
we accept it if it shines on us
find comfort in the dark
we are the bruised
the lost
the real life poems
no idealistic bullshit
talking bout
respecting women
you should start respecting bitches
like yourself
what kind of ego boost
can come with auto refresh
sure your name's atop the list
but you're the one that put it there

you are the fake
the starbucks coffee
the tit job so boys will notice
flashy sports car with the top down
smile holding your toupee
you fucking wanker
hang it up
or hang yourself
no one would notice
all the real writers
we live these fights
between the sheets and lines
we cannot stop
or we'll go crazy
turn it inward
body bag
(the one that you truly deserve but i will end up in
much sooner)

show me what you're made of glines
the circle i'm in deepens
and the scent of blood excites us
stay the fuck out of the water
glug
glug
glug

danielle spires {photography}



of curves A N D S Q U A R E S

(part two in a series)

duncan b. barlow

She waited outside the box. Something inside stirred. Through the shade, she could make out a misty shape, a series of boxes. She looked down; her body was not so much a series of circles, but a system of curves. She had once watched a creature with wings draw liquid from a flower – its wings too appeared to be a series of curves. She'd wanted to touch it, but feared being seen.

The body shifted in the dark. She focused her eyes. The body shifted again, she tried to focus but the figure moved so quickly she could only register a misty blur. She let her fingers drift past her bulbous stomach; she rubbed her knees and tickled the inside of her right thigh.

They stood there, watcher and watched. Thunder crept across the trundelic expanse of night, first at twenty-five kilohertz and soon beyond

either of their auditory registers. She felt a movement inside her series of curves.

A string of electricity divided the black sky. For the first time, she saw the form -- Statuesque -- as if a liquid should run down the layers. He saw her too. His eyes, two pits gouged in the surface of an otherwise flat face, closed. When he opened them again, the familiar dearth of night,

It was perhaps an illusion. He continued pacing.

She shifted in the shadows, careful not to disturb the balance of silence that protected her from the possible manifestation of the curious form. She might leave as she did every night and return the following night to watch. However, something kept her there, the promise of seeing even more than she had just seen. Many nights ago, she had fantasized about seeing the form; now she wanted to touch it, feel its sandy texture beneath her webbed hands.

Something stirred

beside her ear, a quick vibration, almost like a nervous spasm. It had moved beside her. She stood, breathless. He hovered inches above the ground, his cubic form occupying more space by the moment.

She spoke, but only fragments of an unfamiliar language manifested. She touched the form, her legs shook and a hole

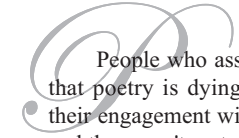
somewhere inside of her dripped.

He tried to speak, but a language of breath and clicks fell from him. He touched the system of curves, his body twisted and expanded at a quicker rate.

Somewhere in the dark a wind blew and silence returned.



john bonath (photography)



People who assert the tired old phrase that poetry is dying are really saying that their engagement with the art has atrophied and they aren't up to the task of recognizing the present shape of the art. Contemporary poetry is dynamic and difficult to categorize. That elusiveness means people who have locked into their minds what "poetry ought to be" find it easier to pronounce the art dead than to look closely and learn how it lives.

Poetry is often unique to its locality, flowing through a community the way a river flows through its banks, nurturing the deep roots of trees in a narrow zone. Define any poetry community-urban, rural, street, academic, east, west-and you identify the riverbanks that define the community and create borders. And while poetry may not leap its banks easily, it can flow to other communities since it's all poetry and it's all connected. The sea gives up moisture to clouds that drop rain to rivers flowing back to the sea. Cartographers map the globe and say it has seven oceans, but you know, there's really only one.

Unfortunately, short-sighted people often label someone else's poetics irrelevant or illegitimate, failing to grasp how an unfamiliar voice serves its community. This is especially true when the viewer looks at a different style from afar, without rolling up his pant cuffs and wading into the stream. This theory suggests why some academics can't appreciate street poets and vice-versa. It's why any sub-group is suspicious or dismissive of any other. Poetics mirrors the larger fragmentation of our society. I don't see poetry as polarized because that very concept presupposes but two perspectives, hence it's the realm of fools who desire or expect the entire scope of the art to conform to a certain dogma, to triumph over all the non-joiners that are lumped together as "imposters."

Mark Twain once said, and I paraphrase, it is not best that we should all

think alike. So contemporary poetry's greatest strength may be its diversity of voice and style-a strength perceived by small minds as a weakness. Poetry is this unkempt, fractious, elusive set of expressions and the resultant tension irritates some specifically because it encourages diverse voices to develop. Rules bind creativity and drive it to dormancy. Art exhibits over time an ebb and flow, the imposing of rules and then a series of reactions against those rules, leading to development and growth. The Egyptians locked into a rigid formality in their visual art for 3,000 years and little changed; the Greeks made marvelous, fascinating leaps of imagination in a comparatively short period, and oh my, isn't that tasty stuff.

T H E
cartography
of *poetry*
.....
CHRIS RANSICK

Denver Poet Laureate

I say we're in a dynamic time for poetry. Excellent work is flowing. Yes, a certain amount of hacking goes on everywhere, but when things are decentralized and democratized, as they seem to be now, you cede mass appeal to gain quirky, idiosyncratic, unique expression. None of us can see the future perhaps at some point these braided channels of poetry will flow back together for a time and cohere, if only briefly, in a realization of the present renaissance. Maybe we'll only be able to grasp the present renaissance once it's over and we can look back at it.

Any sense of polarization may be driven by the zeitgeist of the early 21st century. We're in an age of corporate media

that seeks gross profit by grinding down all diversity into a single product for sale to the largest number of people at the lowest common denominator. It's like songwriter Greg Brown says: "There'll be one corporation/selling one little box/it will do what you want and tell you what you want/and cost whatever you've got."

So even as this mainstream impulse tries to squish poetry, or dismiss it as dead, the best American poetry breaks free in a wild spirit that resists control, that rolls and changes, reinvents itself, circles back and leaps forward, splits and reforms. The best of it may burn you or freeze you but it won't bore you, which only happens when an art dies and fossilizes. Screw those knuckleheads who say the art is dead. They're just isolated literary critics who desperately want to believe their views dominate. They're sitting under the Big Top, acrobats flying above them while they stare into their own navels and say, "Ain't no circus in town because all I see is my own belly button."

Meanwhile, poetry acrobats fly in communities everywhere, far from the critics and poseurs, and audiences cheer. People write about things that matter to members of their community on the street, in the halls, in the valleys and on the plains. In the best cases, these poems make the leap to other readers, other communities, so the whole healthy, wonderful dance of connection goes on.

Apart from the "quality" of any poem, the act of making it typically benefits both the individual maker and the community into which it is released. Some poetry-the very best of it-manages to be transcendent, exquisitely and profoundly connecting present moment to ancient wisdom. I've been swinging through this whole spectrum lately-I teach poetry in college classes and independent workshops, working with people as young as 10 and as old as 80.

I work part of the time in academia, and then I travel around to community centers and hear people recite oral tradition poems, and then I sit in "gourd circles" and hear everything from new-age mysticism to poem/song/dance fusion. I go from recitations at Holocaust memorial events to swinging jazz improvisation recitations. Then I visit high schools and hear the urgent, lithe voices of young people on the cusp of becoming men and women. I go to slams and revel in the rants, and I attend events where school kids recite from memory classic works. Then I go home and get out several different translations of Beowulf, with the Old English for reference, and pore over single passages for the nuances to be found in the versions of language moving over 13 centuries.

Poetry is dead? I don't think so. One kind of poetry-my kind of poetry-is the right kind? I don't think so. When I hear people arguing that this is real poetry or that is real poetry, to the exclusion of all others, I see a bunch of little generals in silly hats waving rubber swords at one another. My sonnet is better than your asyntactical experimentation is better than your slam rant is better than . . . blah, blah, blah. In the end, what are they fighting over? What does "the winner" hope to attain?

In the moment, we write and send that writing out into a world where the noise from so many competing things tends to obfuscate the issue and make any judgment suspect. I think many writers take their instruction amid all this chaos I've discussed; at a certain point, when their own voice calls them away, they go to another place where they can hear that voice most clearly and they work the rest of their days in exploration and expression of it, hoping that some of their poetry makes it back to the world and connects with readers. If this isn't true for others, then at least it's true for me. I've found my voice and I'll keep tracking it while I appreciate as many other voices as I can, hoping to change and grow as long as I can hold a pen.

Chris Ransick took up the post of Denver Poet Laureate in March 2006, embarking on an adventure through the city's very-much-alive literary landscape. A Colorado Book Award winner for poetry (Never Summer) and a finalist for fiction (A Return to Emptiness), he has just published a new collection of poems, *Lost Songs & Last Chances*. Learn more at his website www.chrisransick.com.

THE ANGRY MAN EATS LUNCH ALONE {chris ransick}

All morning, I watched the traffic pile up
at the stoplight below
and later, I watched finches fight
a terrible November wind
to reach nests on my window ledge.
I know someone is dying somewhere
this morning, struggling to breathe
in a sunny room,
speechless, staring into the eyes
of his aged love, whose hand he grips
so tight with final strength
the last thing they share is pain.
You can judge me how you like.
I will never learn to forget this. I'm like
a child hungry in bed,
unable to sleep, headlights
passing across the torn paper
on the walls of my chilly room. I will wait
to grow more powerful, I will remember
whose teeth were black with lies.

6 A.M. {chris kornacki}

silence. except for a soft crackling
sound
from the end of my cigarette
whenever i take
a puff. i'm waiting for the city
to resurrect itself-cars honking horns,
dogs barking in alleys, birds chirping
in trees, cell phones ringing-then i'll get up,
close the open window, draw down the blinds,
shut off the lights, pull back the blanket
on the bed, and crawl under it
back into

silence.



**the bicycle is a direct descendent of
Napoleon Bonaparte**

The Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte often went to his mistress' apartment as what he called a bicycle (the old Corsican word for *secret* or *two wheels*).

'As a bicycle', he often said, 'I can mingle with the common folk and go unnoticed.'

And as a bicycle he was exiled to Denmark after Josephine mistakenly rode him to the market to buy some eggplants and a chicken. She leaned him against a fishmonger's stand, but his mistress was at the market also and thinking that Napoleon had come to rendezvous, hopped on his back and rode him to her apartment on Rue de Voltaire.

Tragically for Napoleon, Josephine arrived just as his mistress was in the act of dismounting him.

whim and a woman's ass

I'm riding my bicycle along Istedgade and plan to spend the day at the park, reading the collected letters of Napoleon, but I see a woman's ass that makes me change course. And so I wonder if in the *historias brevitatis* of this journey that I could have taken a different course that would, in turn, lead to different consequences. But I don't. And that is the dilemma (always in retrospect) that impulse and whim place on a man like me. Could it have been...? Did I...? Should I have...? Perhaps this...? Perhaps that...?

The woman sits at an outdoor café' (on

THE
genealogy
of
the bicycle

OR MARIA

(a true story)



SEAN BRIJBASI

brigid mcauliffe {photography}

that beautiful...), orders a coffee, and reads *the lady with the blue umbrella*. The summer breeze flirts with her hair.

the lady with the blue umbrella

Van Gogh's wheat bends beneath the rain, and the lady with the blue umbrella watches dark clouds roll from the horizon. There is something magical about her umbrella that calms her. Something magical about all umbrellas she thinks-like candles, bicycles, hats, and lullabies. Something that allows them to stretch their wills across generations and even centuries. Something about them that tells her that what was still is, will never change-and is, in fact, timeless.

**from the collected letters of
Napoleon Bonaparte
(to Mlle. Maria Elena de A.)**

Maria,

...I know that we have held each other before in an intoxicated world that never intersected with this one. But something came back with me the last time we held each other. Something that should be sown in a secret garden and allowed to grow if it will. It is not a convenient thing for us Maria, but it's too precious, too innocent to be destroyed-by me or by anyone...

*Napoleon Bonaparte
(Paris, Nov. 1798)*

the sigh of the universe

The rain falls and the wind sighs strangely, as if the universe is unburdening itself from a great weight. The woman is eating a peach. And I'm thinking about eating a peach also. Thinking of finding a strand of her hair on the café chair. Thinking that I want her to leave something behind. I was happier a few minutes ago. I was happier but didn't know it until now, because I see from the ring on her finger that she is married.

"Is it possible", I ask her, "for two corrupted people to create something innocent?"

"Yes", she says, "but it will happen accidentally, perhaps without the knowledge of either person.

(CONTINUED)

Regrettably, however, it will not last. The corruption will inveigle its way into the innocence and eventually kill it. The mere thoughts of the corrupted people will injure the innocence irrevocably. Better not to speak of it. Even better not to think of it."

But I do think of it and I slowly realize that the sigh of the universe is a sigh of regret.

maria

My bicycle carries me around strange corners and through strange streets, to a park and stops by the woman with the beautiful ass, sun bathing on a blanket.

passion

Napoleon placed the blue umbrella against the wall and opened the window to let in the rain.

THE genealogy of *the bicycle* OR MARIA (a true story)

(CONTINUED)

Maria moved to the edge of the bed and lifted her dress to her hips. Then they spoke about the empire, about the meaning of a few paragraphs in a novel. But it was an unspoken eroticism that their friendship was based on.

"If anyone else shares this with you, well then my heart would break into a million pieces", she said.

Napoleon kissed her tenderly. People are corrupt he thought, but passion is innocent.

"You've been thinking about me", she says.

"Yes", I say.

"My name is Maria", she says.

I hope that she has been thinking about me also. Like when she sees a bicycle out of the corner of her eye, or when the breeze

blows so faintly that she hardly notices and doesn't know why my face and the indescribable feeling of our first meeting come to her. I hope that invisible forces are at work for me.

"The trees are beautifully silent this time of the year", she says.

I nod in agreement and smile.

"A day can no longer go by that I don't see you," I say.

She takes off her ring and gestures me to lie down beside her. The leaves on the tree above us rustle suddenly. I look up and then look at her and realize that at this very moment in my life there is no other place that I should be.

from the collected letters of Napoleon Bonaparte

...you are right in saying that we are friends. And yet ours is a friendship that is

strange indeed. When you are in the room I watch you as I watch no other friend. From the very moment that I met you, a strange feeling overcame me, and I wanted to be near you. And now when I am near you I feel an excitement and I want to hold you. Our conversations disguise motives, our glances hide passion. Tell me what this is Maria? Politics and war are easy for me. But this...this confounds me...

*Napoleon Bonaparte
(Paris, Jan. 1799)*

that is me

Napoleon lifted himself to his full height, and turned towards Josephine.

"I will give you the pleasure of riding me back to the market", he said.

"No", Josephine said, "you are a bad bicycle."

Maria left the room.

"I am a man independent and strong enough to follow this or that impulse no matter where it takes me", he said haughtily, "and to say to the accusers of my indiscretions *so what, that is me. I am Napoleon and there is no other.*"

"You are, of course, correct my Emperor", Josephine said coldly, "but even the strongest man, independent enough to follow this or that impulse is often made a slave by them."

love

Think of it in this way...

You are walking down the street, but before you turn the corner, you can see what is already there: children running across the road, a man asking for directions, a newspaper leaf pausing in the wind. And then you turn the corner, but you see Maria waving to you from the distance, and a black bull chasing a cabaret dancer along the sidewalk, and a scarlet flag covering the sky. The statues in the park are sunlit bronze, the grass is green, and a bicycle leans against the spitting fountain...

maria, whispered

When I wake up I am on my bicycle. It takes me from Copenhagen through the Danish countryside. I pass farmers in Germany. Day turns to night. Night turns to day again. I sleep. I wake up. I yawn and stretch. I think about the hundreds of years that the trees have lived-lived in front of the houses that have been built, destroyed, and rebuilt. Kept every secret, even those of the most reviled men, and whispered nothing, not even to the wind. I say Maria's name silently to myself - *Maria*. And again, *Maria*.

(CONTINUED)

(GENEALOGY CONTINUED)

Maria. And again, *Maria.* Then thoughts about her and her husband, living in the same house, sharing the same bed make my bicycle race faster and faster. Such pain, I think. How is it possible that anyone could endure such pain?

**from the collected letters
of Napoleon Bonaparte**

Maria,

...this is my last letter to you. And this is what I want to tell you...that I will always think of you from time to time. That I want nothing from you that you will not give of yourself freely. That our friendship is rare. Rare in its intensity if not its duration. There is more that I should say, but there is a certain incommunicability of the heart. Something transparent, yet deep. You do understand. Maria, think of me from time to time. Think of me now that I am no longer Emperor...now that I am but two wheels, a broken bell, and a scrap of twisted metal...

*Napoleon Bonaparte
(Paris, Mar. 1799)*

.....

**VOYAGE OF A BEAGLE
{spencer dew}**

“It is reasonable to suppose that man’s capacities
As a knower
Are also a product of evolution, of nature”

I am thinking of your throat, its intelligent design
Backless, slinky, with a knack for the staggering

“Man’s knowing must be some kind of natural relation to his world.”
True sentences, is today’s trivial topic
The route of things, whether singing fancy songs helps songbirds

**NOTICED YOUR
CIGARETTE
{tasha klein}**

and
you smelled like a mouth
I had forgotten
hi
let's do it over there
on the plastic
in the back light of
something more broken
I said
you'd have bigger balls if you
shaved them
size doesn't matter
you smacked my ass and
bit my neck
called me
nipple-stand

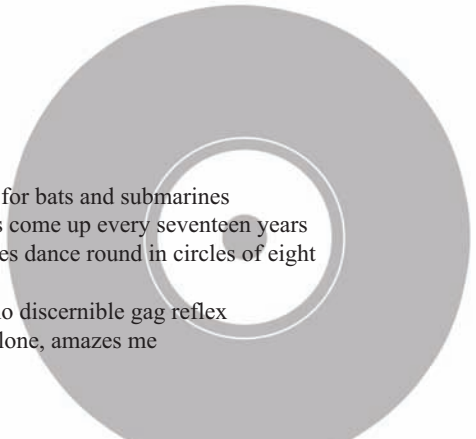
**SEA STORM
{holly dunlap}**

“a sudden wind and/an infinite shipwreck,”
Octavio Paz

an infinite shipwreck of lines
I am squeezing my bow too tightly
arrows run into each other
splitting apart mid-flight
stone cuts through my once new hand
coloring my water with rain
splinter is buried deep within me
an infinite shipwreck of lines
it is storming in my throat
limbs lightening through empty page
words tangle into my wet hair
my bones are splitting
an infinite shipwreck of lines

Like sonar for bats and submarines
The locusts come up every seventeen years
And the bees dance round in circles of eight

You have no discernible gag reflex
And this, alone, amazes me



summit studios
(baptism by fire}



schroedinger's CAT

.....
JONATHAN BITZ

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

brigid mcauliffe

I opened my door today, slow and with the hallway wind. Looking down at the threshold and there was a box sitting just beyond it. Any smaller and I would have surely tripped over it.

But, no, it was large. Like a buxom genie came out of it, to begin with.

The lid was closed. Folded over in quarters.

There was a note, on top. Taped.

It said, "Cat inside. Fragile."

The brain behind my eyes rattled like all those tea kettles steaming. Locomotives hauling.

There was no knock, no nothing. Somebody just left a cat. In a box. At my door.

Or, wait, was there even a cat in there?

Ms. Dunhill doesn't live upstairs anymore. I think she moved out.

She didn't say anything. I thought she would.

Ms. Dunhill and I, talked. We brushed hands when we left. Smiled over our shoulders. Had each other's phone numbers.

It's been awhile since I've seen Ms. Dunhill. Three months, maybe.

But I've heard things up there. Up stairs. Where she lives. I heard things up until a couple of weeks ago.

Surely, she would have said something. She wouldn't have just left...

I'm allergic to cat dander.

On top of that, I don't even like cats. Small cats. Domesticated cats.

I like big cats. That sprint, pounce and kill on the African Savannah.

Whichever kind of cat, I've never thought it a good idea to own any more than zero.

I can usually feel when they're in a room. Or have been in a room. Cats. The back of my nose tells me so. The corners of my eyes. My throat. Like I need to drown my entire head under the big bathtub raging faucet.

That being said, I didn't feel anything. This time. Standing over that box at my door.

Looking down at it and I heard nothing. Even in my quiet morning air, where I barely even breathe - I heard nothing inside that box.

Ms. Dunhill lived up above me, on the third floor. At night, I stared at the bottom of her bed. Sometimes it creaked. Like she was old.

But she's not. She's my age. Cute. Tiny. Affectionate. A yoga teacher.

We met, while passing. We introduced ourselves, while conversing.

The exchange was easy and we seemed to like some of the same things.

Ms. Dunhill touched me on the shoulder when she left. But not when she moved. She didn't say anything about that. Moving.

I had a crush on her. Still do, probably. But sometimes I forget what she looks like.

Did I mention that she's a yoga teacher?

I wasn't sure if I should pick-up the box. As though our neighbor was watching out her peephole, for this exact moment. Like it was the whole "adolescent-bag-of-shit-on-fire" trick again.

Which I've never fallen for.

Okay, once, I did. But it wasn't a bag of shit. It was a Mountain Dew bottle filled with warm urine. And yeah, I drank it. Then. It was only that once. I swear.

(CONTINUED)



schroedinger's CAT

(CONTINUED)

So, I leaned down to pick up the box. Because I couldn't just leave it sitting there.

At the knees, I thought about my bad back. And an excuse.

I stood back up.

I had a phone. I could make calls.

I gave Ms. Dunhill flowers once. Okay, twice. First time, I arranged this tree-sized vase of lilies and set it at her door. So she would get them when she came home from a long day of stretching into and out of, impossible body poses.

This is after we went to the symphony once. That was after she said she used to be a ballerina. But it was all before she told me that she was still seeing her "ex" boyfriend.

I didn't know this. That her ex-boyfriend was still lingering around. Close, like a cat.

But, he was. Around.

Because the next morning, I walked out my front door and found my flowering tree scattered all around our building's courtyard. From side to side. Lilies torn apart like a rejection letter. Stems on the steps. Like they were protesting their detachment. Petals heaped-up as a giant reminder of all those nights that didn't spell a path to bed. And a lover.

Ms. Dunhill called and explained. He is. Still. Around. She said.

Bending down, I stick my ear close to the box.

I don't see any air holes.

Guess it could breathe well enough from the space in the top.

How it's folded over and not taped.

I think of how, once, my roommate and I had a Nile Monitor. It ate mice. I thought

of how, one day, I went to feed the Nile Monitor. And how I picked up the bag, which had the mouse in it. And how, when I picked up the bag, the mouse flailed back and forth, inside. Like it had these genes already developed.

Like cattle. In line for the slaughter bin.

My roommate came home later that day. He said, "you didn't feed the Monitor..."

I said, "no fucking way..."

I left the bag of mouse on the counter. Right where it was last squirming.

Kneeling next to the box, I thought about that mouse. And its scamper of death. The I-don't-care-which-walls-I'm-crashing-into-with-my-skull-get-the-walls-outta-my-way bashing.

What was I going to do? Pick up the box, have the cat flurry about, crashing around? Pissed-off at these large creatures that put it in the box in the first place? Then, was I going to let it out, in my apartment - like it was a bag of shit on fire?

Probably with urine and feces all over it by this time.

I wrapped my arms around the box...

Since the flower disaster in the courtyard, I haven't seen Ms. Dunhill. And after her phone call, I haven't talked to her. Because of the ex-boyfriend. I assume. He stayed around.

He rode a bike. And worked in people's gardens for a living.

I think that Ms. Dunhill knew I had seen him. She never said anything. But she knew that I, like all of our other neighbors, have a peephole too.

It's on the way in and out of Ms. Dunhill's apartment. One floor and some steps, down.

So, we haven't talked. And she hasn't seen me. And it has been three months.

Then I get a box at my door. Says there's a cat inside. And, fragile. Like there should be air holes, or something to let it breathe louder than me in the morning.

So, okay, I pick-up the box, because I can't just leave it there. Sure, I neglect my mail for weeks on end. It falls out of my box, onto the table below where everybody else gets their mail. Somebody even put my two-week stack at my front door once.

So I can't just leave this impeding box-size-box in the hallway. Surely then, they'll think me dumb.

In my rise from my knees, up - I feel something inside. There's definitely something in the box. Weight only on one side. And not that heavy, my back says. The box is definitely not full. Like there really is a cat in there.

But the something inside still doesn't move. Or slide. Or purr. Or breathe.

Like there really is a dead cat in there.

Ms. Dunhill leaves for work early in the morning. Before I get up. So I usually didn't ever hear this. When she lived here, that is. But I did hear her coming home well after the sun had gone down.

Did I mention that I think Ms. Dunhill has just disappeared?

Anyway. She slams things. The front door. Her apartment door. Her bag on the ground. Her toilet seat. Even her television on the floor once. I think it actually fell. At 3 a.m. or so.

But Ms. Dunhill always takes her shoes off at the door. She prances around like a ballerina above me. On her toes. Floating.

From below, even in my quiet mornings in the evening, I can barely hear her.

(CONTINUED)

schroedinger's CAT

(CONTINUED)

Like she's suspended from my ceiling.

Ms. Dunhill wears this herbal oil on her body. I'm not sure, exactly where she puts it on her body. But, after a hug once, I went home and, two hours later, smelled her.

Vividly. Like she was sitting on my face.

Or at my front door. Listening to me, inside. In a yoga pose, with her feet tucked in. Like she did. At the restaurant where we ate after the symphony.

She smells like a Chinese apothecary. Like: Green. And leaves. And cedar floors without shoes.

You could find out what I'm talking about if you stood at her door. When she lived there. When it was open and you could see a yoga mat on the floor, inside. The giant plants standing up towards the ceiling.

Her ethnic figurines and images leaning against the floor and the wall. At an angle. Like Ms. Dunhill projected everything, up and out the skylight in her kitchen.

And I, on the second floor. Laying in my bed at night and staring at the underside of hers. For hours of pain-in-the-back nights.

Over my pillow, on those sleepless nights, I put together all the stories of my life.

And the life around me.

If there's something in the box, I don't think it's coming out. Into my apartment. Cats have claws. And don't typically like me anyway. I mean, I only touch them with the back of my

shirtsleeve.

I shut my door. And turn around to the box.

Ms. Dunhill isn't home yet. If she's coming back to this home at all. I can't hear the boards creaking. Above me. Where are you Ms. Dunhill?

For awhile, I heard loud feet in Ms. Dunhill's apartment. Like my flowers torn apart in the courtyard bonded them forever more. Like the boyfriend never left after he saw lilies from another man.

Afterall, he did work in gardens. He knew what lilies from another man meant.

For awhile, I could hear him, mulling around. Up there. In Ms. Dunhill's apartment. He hadn't the same Japanese customs as she. Apparently he needed to wear his shoes indoors for some reason.

Even when he was in Ms. Dunhill's bed.

Because on some nights, I'd forget. About him. And her. And then he'd bound out of the bed, with a long attacking gait, like he was charging something. What, I never was sure. But I did believe it was charging. He didn't look like the type of guy to do much dancing.

So there it is. A box, on my apartment floor.

I have yet to walk out my door.

There's things to be done today. Things I haven't done before.

But there's this box sitting on my floor.

Six weeks ago, there was somebody pacing back and forth. Back and forth. In Ms. Dunhill's apartment.

All hours of the day.

All hours of the night.

Here, there was no discrimination.

There was pacing, like there was heavy deliberation. Like decisions were being made. Like the boyfriend knew I could hear. Like he was rubbing it in.

Wish you were up here. Don't you? Is what the patterns said.

But the patterns were so intermittent and so capricious. I'd never heard anything like that up there before. That's when I began to wonder if Ms. Dunhill even lived there anymore. It had been awhile since I had heard her toilet seat slam. Her front door rattle. Her bed, creak. Albeit, there was that one night, when her bed creaked at regular intervals. For over an hour.

Sure, Ms. Dunhill exercised. But she did yoga. Yoga doesn't involve bouncing. Jumping-jacks. Trampoline stunts. No, I said to myself. The bed was creaking because her green garden boyfriend was plowing her field.

My back began to ache and creak and pop. The tension of possibly having a dead cat on my floor was making me sore.

Where was Ms. Dunhill?

My phone rang. I leapt at it. But it wasn't her. So I didn't answer. The caller left a message, but I was certain that it wasn't a clue.

Night fell. And I didn't move. Nor did anything in the box.

Maybe Ms. Dunhill and the boyfriend found a bungalow, high up out of the winter snow. Looking down over a garden in the morning light.

I had her cell phone number. I could call that.

For weeks and weeks, the patterns were irregular. After the pacing. Like somebody else had moved in to Ms. Dunhill's apartment, and needed time to get used to it. Right above me. Things were different.

(CONTINUED)

schroedinger's CAT

(CONTINUED)

I even heard furniture move.
And then, the sounds altogether,
stopped.

No goodbye. No nothing.

So I was sitting on my couch.
Leaning over and looking at the box every
then and again. Making sure nothing
crawled out. Hissing. At the head of the
couch. Inches from my face.

No overhead. No television blue
light. Just the flood of lights streaming in
through my blinds.

Then, I heard somebody walk in the
building door. Slam.

Came up the stairs. Onto my landing.
I held my breath.

Knock. Knock. Knock. Said a fist at
my door.

I bounded up, silent but skillful. Like
a preying cat. I looked through the
peephole.

It was somebody I hadn't ever seen
before. A girl.

I looked down at the box. It didn't
move. Or breathe.

The door creaked as I pulled it back.
Light from the hallway made me squint.

"Hello?" I spoke. Clearing my throat.
I hadn't spoken yet today.

"Yes, this is kinda strange, but... but,
somebody may have left something,
accidentally..."

"Yes?" I waited.

"Somebody left me a box..."

"Yeah. I have one of those. It's new.
Today."

"I'm so sorry. They addressed it to
Number 9. I'm in 19."

I pointed at the box. She stepped

inside and scooped it up. Haphazardly.
The floorboards below, creaked.
Like she had arthritis.

Like she was the genie that came out
of the box to begin with. A long time ago.

She turned and walked past me. She
looked over her shoulder, "I'm so sorry...
Thanks for keeping it..."

She began over the landing, down
the stairs.

"Hey, wait..." I lunged forward,
"what's in there?"

"A gift, from a friend..."

I stepped out, onto the landing.
Down the stairs, I projected, "Is there a cat
in there?"

I heard the front door open. And she
said something... But I didn't catch it.

Over an hour later and my
impression into the couch was only
growing deeper. I laid where I landed,
after the box, the cat and the girl, left. Like
the mouse in the bag I was.

Still no light. Still, I hadn't left my
apartment.

I was beginning to wonder about the
weather outside.

Was it a nice day, as they say?

Then, I resolved on this much: I
needed to go knock on Number 19's door.
I had to know.

Was there a cat inside the box? Was
it alive, or dead? Stuffed?

I heard somebody come in the front
of the building. Slam went the door.

Footsteps up and onto my landing.

And they didn't pass.

The only person that lived higher
than me, was Ms. Dunhill.

My mind, at this point, had ceased to
send any more signals. My hands, cold.

Like they needed light.

Then, feet shuttled up on the outside
and there was a knock at my door.

I looked through the peephole.

Somebody had their finger on it.
That meant only one thing...

I opened the door.

"Ms. Dunhill..."

"Hello..." her cloyingly sweet voice
came. Gentle. Like a breath. Her eyes
were as I had remembered them: Bright.
Wide.

I inhaled. Catching her breath in
mine. Ms. Dunhill herbs and scents swam
around me.

And I hadn't forgotten what she
looked like.

"Where have you been?" I asked.
Head tilted to the side where the delivery
was much better.

She tipped her head to her shoulder.
Mimicking. Smiling.

"I thought you moved..." I said.

She just smiled. "No..."

Her words. I wanted. To eat them.

"How are you?" She asked just like I
thought she would never ask again.

We were crossing boundaries.

Slowly. I knew it.

I opened my arms and welcomed her
inside.

Like she was the cat in the box.

Alive. Sweet.

ME & JEAN HARLOW
{william taylor jr.}

I was about 21
she was somewhat
younger
and looked just like
Jean Harlow
we'd get drunk
every night
simply because there was
nothing else
to do

I don't think nobody
got drunk
like we
got drunk
but I guess every drunk
thinks that way
anyway there was never
anywhere to go
so we'd just drive around
until we'd end up in some
lonely
neighborhood
or empty
park

somewhere the cops
wouldn't bother us
much
and we'd sit in the car
and drink and she'd
smoke stolen
cigarettes
but the best times was when
we'd get some broken down
room somewhere
I'd sit in bed

and watch her smoke
and walk naked
around the tiny
room
laughing and cursing
about something
or other
and I would just watch her
and write poems
inside my head
even now
I can't remember anything
ever being better
than that.



john bonath {photography}

A CONNECTION
{robert brewer}

From behind, I cupped her breast,
told her, "It will be all right,"
and tried not to let her know
I was turned on,
that I was focused on anything but her pain—
She then turned and kissed me hard
like she was trying to devour me,
and I swear
I almost cried out loud.

We wait in the unemployment line. The guy in front of me has a body-builder's body and a blond crewcut, just like me. We wait for a long time, looking at the back of the head of the person in front of us.

Then, fed up, me and the guy start pounding each other's shoulder blades-- boom! boom!-- over and over, like a toy where you pull a string. I don't know who started it. We butt our heads right against the other guy's shoulder, clasp our hands, raise them up, then jack-hammer them down. Man, it feels good.

+

We become buddies.

He steals my girl, I steal his girl.

When I fuck her, I picture him fucking the other one, and it's like fucking two girls at the same time.

We have achieved the impossible.

+

I carry a pocket magnifying glass with me everywhere. One day he falls asleep on the beach and wakes up to a bush fire in his chest hair. Ha, you lousy bastard, I yell. He beats at the fire with a paw like a large rock and just glares.

A few months later I wake up at a friend's house after a party, my toenails painted pink, lips smeared red, eyes this garish sparkling blue. Some joke, I say. He calls me Nancy. I have to hide my boner-- wherever that came from.

+

Sometimes we bang into each other like we're in a house of mirrors. Sometimes we laugh, other times we push each other away. Sometimes we butt our heads into each other's shoulders and pound away-- boom!, boom!-- breathing



butch



JAMEY
GALLAGHER

like bulls, like Muhammad Ali, the Rumble in the Jungle.

+

Who is this guy, my mother says. I don't like him, I don't trust him.

Then he brings her a Tupperware container full of chocolate turtles that he made. When we're leaving, she kisses him on the cheek and leaves a smear of brown.

I love this fucking guy, she says.

Was it just the turtles, I wonder.

+

To substitute for not having any work, we smash things with baseball bats. Old TVs, obsolete computer equipment, junkers that we steal from the street, sometimes driving them back with sparks flying from their rims. We hold our guns against our well-developed shoulders and target practice with the canned peaches my mother gives us. Later we throw them at each other. The mason jars crash and spatter, thick syrup running down our

chests, coagulating in our chest hairs.

We buy a big dog and the dog licks the syrup off us. We call the dog Butch and laugh because his head is a perfect cube.

+

I watch him sleeping sometimes and it's like I don't need to sleep myself. I've taken up origami. I make him a little paper AK-47 and plant it on the pillow next to him.

+

And, of course, there's the working-out.

+

We should start our own fucking war, he says, because we missed ours. Too young for the Gulf. He stares out the window wistful at the dying lawn.

Wait a while, I say.

+

We take Mom out for her birthday to some fancy bar where an old guy sings Frank Sinatra karaoke. The guy wheels around an IV machine and seems about to die. We order sushi and talk about our new dog and Mom's hormone treatment.

Then, at nine, they start the strobe lights and the dance music. It's like another whole place. He asks Mom to dance. Watching them, it's all I can do not to throw up my sushi. I swear to God she sticks her tongue in his ear. His huge hand rests on the small of her back. They are both laughing.

+

Everything's a fucking tragedy to you, he says.

(CONTINUED)

{butch}

(CONTINUED)

We're close, in the hallway, and I found him on the shoulder blades. Bam! Bam! I want him to fall on his knees, but we're too evenly matched. He's the same body type as me. We've been doing the same workout routine. Boom! Boom! I should get him drunk and do this, I think. Then we'd see who went down.

A fucking tragedy, he says again.

+

I drive his truck, he drives my truck. It doesn't matter. Sometimes we drive together, flipping other drivers the bird, yelling at the faggots, the losers, the morons who don't know enough to stay out of our way. This is our road, motherfucker.

+

Butch is incontinent and it's always me who's cleaning up after him, holding an old workout shirt to my nose, scrubbing with the special foaming spray. Butch gets the shakes at night and it's always me that holds him until he stops. Leave it to us to buy a dog with a terminal disease.

Poor, beautiful, dying Butch.

+

I get into the shower and start lathering before I realize that he's in there already. He narrows his eyes and smiles. He looks at me and I look at him. He is so blond, so cut. I only hope I look as good.

He steps out of the shower, leaves me alone.

+

Hey, I say. He smiles when I smile. He raises the same eyebrow I do. Then I realize that that's not him, that's my reflection in the mirror.

+

Back from the unemployment office, I find Mom in a black evening dress that's not like anything she'd usually wear, lying on the kitchen floor with Butch, who's panting raspily. He smells bad. Like death.

Mom's crying.

Your dog's dying, she says. And I'm so fucking old. Her hair is mussed and her face is lobster red. Upstairs I hear the shower going. He's singing something. It takes a second to place it. Frank Sinatra. "I've Got You Under My Skin."

I just stand there. Maybe the smell is not death, I realize.

+

He makes me a nice Caesar salad, watches me eat it.

Good, I say.

He shrugs and looks away. What's happening here?

+

I wake him up by punching him in the face. He just looks at me. Then he punches me in the face. I take a jar of peaches and pour the syrup on his chest. He lets me rub it in. Then he knees me in the crotch and I kneel him back.

+

I start bumping into walls, windows, mirrors. I'm like one of those birds that fly into the picture window. Dazed. I sit up with Butch, but I'm not sure anymore who's shivering and who's comforting.

I remember the good times, like fucking his girl and pounding him on the back, shooting jars, smashing an old TV, riding around in his or my truck.

+

You don't have to call me Dad if you don't want, he says.

He wrestles me onto my back. His breath smells like a strawberry daiquiri. I wrestle him onto his back. We punch each

other's faces. He's wearing a tux, for god's sake. Talk about tragedy.

+

Butch gets worse and worse, but I still don't believe he's going to die. I start bumping into Butch, because he's gone to Cancun with Mom.

I have three job interviews scheduled for Monday. I decide to shave my entire body. Afterwards, I look at myself in the mirror, and don't see him anymore. I look smooth and natural.

●●●●●●●●

NEIL YOUNG POEM {corey mesler}

In 1970 something
I saw Neil Young live
in Memphis,
scratching away at that
ragged guitar,
filling the air with that
off-key voice.
And it all added up to
something beautiful,
something
unlike anything else.
I still think of it
nights when
the crickets hesitate,
nights when I'm driven
backwards by
some radio crap.
Once there was a garden.
Once there were
players who, if not gods,
were chosen.
And they sang for us,
mortals living on a makeshift
planet, wanting jubilee

the STATE {of}
denver MUSIC

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Ricardo Baca,
Michael Roberts,
JOHN WENZEL

by

JONATHAN BITZ

laurie scavo {photography}

For the last several years there has been two questions floating around Denver's music community: Is there something happening in Denver? And, *really*?

The short truth is: Denver's music scene is as vibrant as it ever has been. Denver does, contrary to the pundit's word, have a wealth of talent. Evidence is in the fact that on most given nights, one should be able to find some music venue with a great show.

Still, the primary problem may just be, as Julie Davis (bluebook) noted, the fact that Denver has an "identity problem".

John Wenzel from *The Denver Post* stated, "Denver's music scene is strong and diverse, but fortunately not a tightly-packaged little 'scene' (trademark symbol) like in some cities."

And while the Queen City of the Plains may still be searching for its cultural identity, the fact is that Denver has produced a variety of music acts that have surfaced nationally. Devotchka, The Fray, Big Head Todd and the Monsters, The Samples, The Apples, and Dressy Bessy compose a few mentionables (Friends Forever still may have left one of the most interesting marks with a critically-



acclaimed, full-length documentary and a very favorable Rolling Stone review).

For Colorado-native, Ricardo Baca (*The Denver Post*), the Denver music scene is the most potent and creative and alive that he has ever seen it. And while Baca is not so much interested in gauging Denver's success through mainstream success, two local acts have gained sizable national attention, as of late:

The Fray, by winning three Billboard Awards and receiving two Grammy nominations; and Devotchka likewise scored a Grammy nomination for their work on the "Little Miss Sunshine" soundtrack.

The Westword's Michael Roberts agrees with Baca in that there is undoubtedly some talented musicians in town. For Roberts Denver's scene is in possession of a wealth of

high-quality music that can stand-up to groups from anywhere, in a wide variety of genres. However, there is not a recognizable sound in town – and while this is not a prerequisite, Roberts believes that a springboard effect may occur if there was a molded sound, like Houston and Saint Louis and their hip-hop culture.

But, as Baca pointed-out, there is one genre of sound that is idiosyncratically-Denver: the gothic country music genre most typified by Munly and the Lee Lewis Harlots, Wovenhand, Slim Cessna's Auto Club, (the now-defunct) 16 Horsepower and Bad Luck City.

While the issue of identity continues to be ironed-out and argued-over, many components to Denver's music scene are unmistakably well. One visible progression over the last three years has been Denver's expanded breadth of music venues. On account of the town's size, Denver is fortunate to have so many venues and that cater to such a wide-variety of genres – from big theaters to holes-in-the-walls.

Notables? The Fillmore's turn-around. The revamping of 7 South Broadway and the Hi dive. The Oriental Theater. The Skylark's move down the block into a bigger space. Bender's Tavern. The Lion's Lair is still steady and stinky. The Meadowlark. The Larimer Lounge and its new bathrooms. The Walnut Room. The Marquis' transition from Brendan's. Forest Room 5. Monkey Mania and its transition into its even more dilapidated state. The Cherry Pit's transformation into The Three Kings. The D-Note in Arvada. The Toad Tavern in Littleton. The Soiled Dove moving out East.

And there are a wealth of audio engineers working in this town, constantly impressing critics and fans alike. Some of the best engineered albums of this last year have been:

(CONTINUED)

The Hot IQ's, *Dangling Modifier*; Everything Absent or Distorted, *The Soft Civil War*; Januar, *The Way Back Home*; John Common, *Good to be Born*; Laylights, *Laylights*; The Swayback, *Forewarned*.

Baca encourages people to remain communal. He states, "We're in this together - the musicians more so than anybody else. We're at a point where the media is paying attention and the fans are following suit. The support is in high gear, and now musicians need to work together to build that momentum and push forward the creative boundaries."

Baca makes mention of an important component to Denver's cultural history when he points at "the collective-oriented bands that have been created, the labels/alliances, the warehouse performance spaces, the house parties, the like-minded friends, the guesting on each others records. It goes on, but as much as the sharing/helping spirit is alive in Denver, there are also those who would be a lot better and lending a helping hand - and

also asking for that help when it's needed."

And while we have all sensed this community-component to the scene (walking into the Sputnik most any night and it is palpable), Wenzel offers us a realistic warning when talking about disappointments.

What is his biggest disappointment?

"The fact that incredible bands (i.e., Blue-Blooded Girls, Cat-A-Tac, Porlolo, Red Cloud West, Bright Channel, etc.) can play to a mostly empty house. True, they can't always expect great showings, but when people congratulate themselves on what a sweet 'scene' we have, they should be supporting the bands by paying to see them. It's equally as important



as professing to like them.

"Playing music for its own sake is noble, but some of these people are trying to make a living."

In the end, Michael Roberts is very pleased that Denver bands are getting more attention, but still a lot bands should get more recognition. For Roberts the formula for Denver as a whole is simple: The more bands that earn success, the more inspired other artists will become. To this day, each time Roberts puts one of the multitudes of new CDs from the mail in the player, the hope is that it is THE CD.

For now, here is a small sampling of talent that is standing on the brink of the national attention:

The Hot IQ's, Born in the Flood, Photo Atlas, The Swayback, Everything Absent or Distorted, Lion Sized, 3oh!3, Gregory Alan Isakov, Machine Gun Blues, The Life There Is, The Laylights, Drag the River, Cat-A-Tac, Meese, The Vanity, John Common, Bright Channel, as well as:

Anybody who is brave enough to pick up an instrument and give a darkened room full of eyes your entire soul.





denver MUSIC

EVERYTHING absent or *distorted* (a love story)



Quite possibly Denver's most educated band, the seven members of Everything Absent or Distorted (EAOD) managed to create one of the best albums of 2006 in *The Soft Civil War*. Employing everything from drums and guitars, to keyboards, a banjo, an accordion and a trombone, EAOD has erected a wondrous and heady collective of compositions in *The Soft Civil War*. The album is remarkably dense, from its stylings which are wildly different on each track, to the arrangements and the careful implementation of each of their many instruments, to their wondrously strange, concise and intriguing lyrical catalog.

Scheduled to begin recording a full-length this year – Denver eagerly awaits more from EAOD in their working collective (EAOD and their other one, Needlepoint Records, headed by the guys from CAT-A-TAC). For the band, everything – absolutely everything is necessary, a still shot of life in which there is a great and obvious memorial dedicated to everything absent or distorted; lost and unseen; monstrous and beautiful – but maybe not observed or understood.

gregory ALAN isakov

The ambitious Gregory Alan Isakov is currently recording his fourth album - adding to his already masterful and precise musical landscape. Hesitant to be labeled as a singer-songwriter - the 27 year old Isakov has churned-out a catalog that is moody and rutted-out in some complicated and magical way – as though some grand disaster swept along his grassy plains, leaving only heartbreak and wind-torn hallucinations behind. Isakov traces-out careful characters living in a grayscale world. Always, his sketches are of people that possess an organic and all-too-human presence. In this, Isakov is drawing pictures of himself – but he is also coloring every one of us.

Dense and dark and sweet - Isakov's lyrics beg captivation. Worn and torn and grieving over loss and love - it is no wonder that many a room has been hushed by this Colorado player. A major undiscovered talent, music lovers in Colorado should be flocking to the small venues to catch him while you can.



{born} IN THE flood



Over the last two years, Born in the Flood collected momentum in waves. After releasing *The Fear That We May Not Be* in 2005, Denver is throttled to receive *If This Thing Should Spill*, in early February of 2007.

Sorrowful, charging and hypnotic, Born in the Flood is loaded with intoxicating moments. Several live performances have concretized the Flood as one of Denver's premier bands. Most notably in 2005 at the Acoma Center the short Flood set left many teary-eyed and in disbelief. It was then that the critics began to take serious notice - lumping *the Flood* in with the hierarchy of talent in town. Now with two solid years of working in the spotlight and under the pressure of their faithful's eyes and ear - *If This Thing Should Spill* is set to push the Flood over the top; possibly into the waning arms of national media.

For a band that put their drums together backwards the first time, the Hot IQ's have come a long way. Now one of Denver's hottest bands, the IQ's are standing on the brink of national attention.

And while it is axiomatic for most that the IQ's are very high and reverberating at the top of the Denver musical hierarchy, maybe someone needs to tell the band this much. Predicated on everything humble and hardworking, it seems that the IQ's have not taken any time to pour that flaky gold onto their chest. Relying heavily on their visceral rawness, the IQ's have remained where they began: just playing instruments. For the band and fans alike the allure is the sheer rawness of the IQ sound.

Back out on their own after working with Morning After Records the IQ's self-released EP, *Dangling Modifier* is reminding us all why Denver is so crazy about the Hot IQ's.



hot iq's

MATT boyer



After touring Europe with the acclaimed touring band, *Sun Kil Moon*, Matt Boyer decided not to go back to the town where his legend had been created. Instead, he made a brave decision to try something new and slowly that decision is paying-off in the Queen City of the Plains.

At the beginning of 2006 Boyer was unmentioned and unrecognized. But slowly the secret is becoming louder: Matt Boyer lives in Denver.

Boyer's guitar playing is rich, with lots of alternate tunings and use of open, bellowing strings. But just as often as his guitar work is hearty and thick in tone, Boyer's string work is also light, airy and melodic. And his dense, playful lyrics, penned in notebooks scattered around his life are, at times, brilliant. Poignant. Relevant. Statuesque.

With his new project, *Walking into Drawings* - Denver has just begun to see what Matt Boyer can do.

Coming of age in 2006, the expansive 5-man act of Achille Lauro is garnering some interesting attention - on account of their multifarious arrangements, their jazz-infused melodies and their altogether impossible-to-categorize sound.

Taken together it is difficult to see any gaps between the moving parts of this thing called Achille Lauro. The band's notions of space and dimension in their compositions are arresting. Their melodies push at all seams by every instrument and every player, at all times - but each ripple is without a fold. Where one instrument extends its hand, the others retreat in a graceful and complicated dance, meeting somewhere in the middle - with all hands unmitigated and sheer. And while, for most, a staple needs to be affixed to the band's sound - part of Achille Lauro's magic is the fact that they are too-complicated for one genre.

With their 2006 release, "You're Going to Live and Other Nice Things to Hear" Achille Lauro is rightfully looking to the future - of getting on the road and stunning more audiences with their altogether magical shows.

ACHILLE lauro



3 OH!3



If you haven't seen the 3oh!3 yet, then you haven't seen the most captivating and raucous act in town. Testament to the fact that the 3oh!3 may be the next big thing to blow-up is the fact that the duo has only been playing out since February of 2006 and already they are packing every venue imaginable.

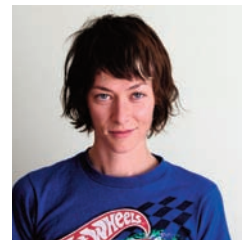
Heavy on the entertainment value, this hard-edged hip hop act will spin you feverishly through a gamut of aggressive, but redemptive, emotions. From their playful cover of "I Love Rock n' Roll" to their monstrous "Chokechain" and near-anthem of, "Holler 'Till You Pass Out", the 3oh!3 is big and bad – and their presence is not to be denied. Primarily a two-man act the 3oh!3's Matt Motte and Sean Foreman are a refreshingly powerful array of showmanship and wit, all reverberating in an apparently endless chasm of energy. With a sound and a presence that is simply, brilliant and an attention that drives at substance and wit over gimmicks, the 3oh!3 is looking toward 2007 for big things.

BLUEBOOK

Haunting but spiritualized with breathy incantations that picture life as a conversation, bluebook is one of the Queen City's most provocative and stunning music acts. The accomplished sound is predicated on the cadence of words and the choices within our daily diction. In this kind of landscape, bluebook is a collage of light and color.

For Davis, bluebook is a continuous spiral upward – with her music mimicking this airy flight. Arousing on account of its ethereal but rich textures, and its ability to elevate an entire room to a transcendental breath, bluebook is that kind of musical experience which possesses enough power to lift all willing hands and heads into the heavens above.

Now with a full band, bluebook continues to progress. With Mike Hall (Born in the Flood), Brigid McAuliffe (Pee Pee) and Carrie Beeder (The Wheel and Porlolo), Davis' compositions are sure to continue to evolve. Look for her sophomore album, due out in 2007 and being recorded at Helmut Room.



{die} pilot



The long history of (die) Pilot is a tale of proving grounds and a stable earth pulled out from under you. It is a history of dirty hotels, unkempt beds and embezzled lots on the black street.

The short history is that Gene Brown, the frontman and original member of the Denver-based band, (die) Pilot isn't going down without a fight. Determined and in possession of an incredibly strong work ethic and vision - Brown has his sights set dead-ahead on teh future, new recordings and the evolution all the collages of sound in his head.

No, Brown has been beat-dwon, bu he also has a long history of standing on his own feet. And his work ethic has come to light in his bands movement into the spotlight. With a new line-up that should be solidified for their future run, Brown and (die) Pilot are geared-up for a new album, a tour and a new lease on life. With their unwavering work ethic, Brown and the boys will continue to build on their work, blending modes of spirituality and life into a complex web of death, water, love and hope.

the life THERE is

The Life There Is created a stir in the Denver music scene in 2006 with their hearty compositions and heady lyrical content. And while brilliantly simple in essence, The Life There Is will give you every expression of a layered geologic band of textures in a way that is uncommon. To draw the analogy in clay, it's as if they take a mold and contort it into every possible amalgamation, taking snapshots along the way – saying, this is what it means to be, "Ok."

Several years into it now and the band has evolved from their staple track, "Ok". They have hired new members to round-out the sound and they have become more aggressive, not with the overtly machismo misunderstanding of what it means to be hard and tough with tattoos – but rather, with a more complicated understanding of how to draw-out a notion of aggression through everything entirely beautiful and without presumption or pomposity.

Living and striving through their work, The Life There Is will certainly be churning-out more gorgeous work in 2007.



IN THE NIGHT

{jack anders}

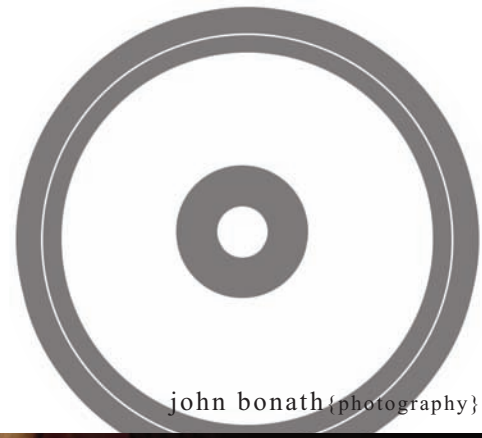
In the night,
The interiors of the convenience stores
Are crystalline, lit-up glass cubes
With the clerk slowly moving behind the counter,
The neat rows
Of candies and plastic soft drink liters,
Each lit up individually
As if being inspected by heaven,

The sky is so clear, I can see the stars
Revolving in their pinpricks
As I turn at the green light.

I think of a fly in amber,
Still flying through its prehistoric mist;

Of pennies glowing at the bottom
Of a cerulean blue fountain pool;
Loving faces suspended inside of light.

If I do not talk to you, it's because
Of the painfulness, trying to find
An appropriate grace,
For unlike fountains,
We have to think as we move,
But there is no guilt as a fountain releases itself,
Naked and shredded, blown-open, exposed --
Silvery misty cool spray,
The hard muscle of its arch
Turning away.



—Art is choice.

In all mediums: Oil, acrylic, charcoal, auditory, performance, all things visual and everything taken in through the senses – art is choice. However abstract, however obtuse – art is choice.

Illustrated:

Art is the clothes that you wear: The watch you bought. The shoes you slipped-on and never unlaced. The blue jeans you tore-up at the knees. That sweater that you wear – that’s much too baggy for your torso. With all these items, a choice was made: to wear them, to keep them, to buy them. Here the importance is in the choice. That you decided – however implicitly, or explicitly – to wear those clothing items. Together and apart. With that green tunic, or without it.

Art is choice.

Art is the choice you made – to layer the yellow oil over the charcoal sketch of your girlfriend. Art is the choice to make a sketch of your girlfriend at all.

Here, everybody is an artist. Here, everybody makes choices.

Here, the downfall is when the choices are not being made artfully. Carefully. With thought and a diction that comes only from examination into the aesthetic and the pride of ownership.

What goes unsaid is that everyone is an artist. Afterall, everyone makes choices.

The challenge is to make artful choices. To exert our creative forces on the world around us.

Now, with that said, there comes the grand critique of art – the one-act play that all egos so desperately want to play out. In the end, and admittedly, we are all itching to impose our rational faculties upon the world.

Because,

Undoubtedly, there is bad art.

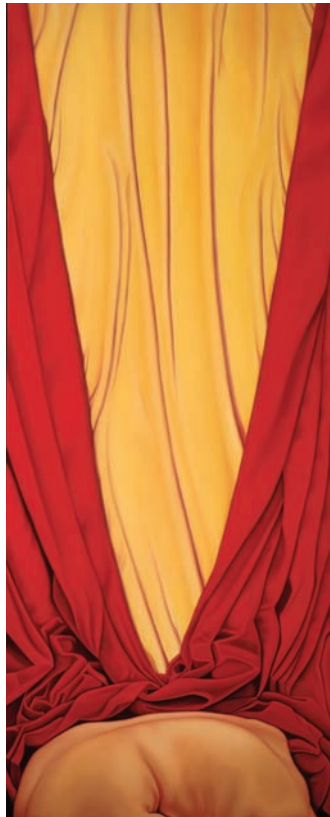
Undoubtedly, there is good art.

And while it may be true that this endeavor, like all other assessable endeavors, is not an objective pursuit – there are grounds

WHAT is

art

.....?
.....



jenny morgan {art}

by which to measure. For this author, the dichotomy in assessment is two-fold: that which can be measured qualitatively; and

that which can only be measured quantitatively.

A quantitatively measurable assessment can be made on the skill of the artist: The way in which the paint was laid onto the canvas; the aptitude involved in the sketch of the girlfriend; how adept the photographer’s eye is in creating a composition and texture.

But there are those components which cannot be measured by qualitative analysis – by a simple score on a chart. Qualitative analysis is the best form of assessment when it comes to the subjective, and personal, pull of a piece of art; of the way somebody wears their clothes; the impact of the lyrics in a song and the textures therein. Qualitative analysis is best-suited for the task of explaining why it is that something pulls you in, and something else pushes you away. A narrative account, a written or verbal explanation, is the only way to aptly, and comprehensively, describe why it is that something actually repulses you, instead of turning you on.

With these premises in-hand, I would like to turn to the notion of the artist’s aim.

It has often been argued that the artist – that human in the world operating on touchstones and baselines – doesn’t always hold regard for the opinions and critiques of others. More simply stated, the true artist does what s/he does only for their own personal sake of operation and satisfaction.

Here, for sure, there is a distinction that needs to be made: between professional and personal art. What I will argue is that the success of professional art is contingent on connecting with the outside world; and that, to some large extent – the professional artist is concerned with what other’s think and believe about their personal work. On the other hand, personal art is not necessarily contingent upon a desire to connect with the outside world.

(CONTINUED)

WHAT IS art ?

(CONTINUED)

There is this caricature of the artist, in his cave, his studio, his lofty perch – creating passionately and wildly and madly, work that is intensely private; work that is only contingent upon catharsis. Because the artist does not know what else to do. Because they have been cursed with this blessing of talents, to the extreme.

Here is the prevailing notion that the professional artist operates uncaring to the notion that they are striving to connect to their peers and contemporaries. However, I will argue that while this may hold true on some elementary level of construction – on the level of striving to turn their art-piece into a monetary value – the aim of professional artists is to connect with the world at-large.

Professional success is necessarily contingent upon this premise. The films that gross the most; the authors with greatest longevity; the musicians that endure throughout the decades – these are the ones that have connected with an audience; and moreover, retained that audience. This notion of connecting with an audience is, alas, what has made those that use their methods of choice and artform, successful.

Only because others see something familiar, and understandable in the work of the artist, does the artist find monetary success.

Personal success is not always contingent upon this premise of connecting with an audience. Personal success is often more ambiguous, and quiet in its means and end. For the clothes that one wears, may be for a myriad of reasons that do not concern the outside world.

Within this I will not neglect the fact that, every form of art is, at base, an intensely

personal experience – and that it is a private affair, created inside the artist. In the end, this may be the most interesting component to this whole situation: That, while the artists penultimate aim is to connect with an audience, to create understanding and familiarity – it is intriguing that, in order to connect with the world around them, the artist's process does involve this most personal and private component, wherein the artist retreats from the world – into his/her cave to conjure and create these wild works. There are multitudes of stories to back this notion. But even apart from these tales, it is also just a necessary part of the required processes – of writing; of painting; of composing, that the artist must retreat from the world in some capacity to spend time creating his/her work.

However, while the artist, immersed in their required process – must retreat from the world for a period of time – their ultimate aim is to communicate with that same world, from which they have sought solace from. In this way the cycle completes itself: In the striving to reach out and convey information and sensation with the world, with society, with gallery-goers – an artist must leave that same world in order to communicate what it is that they have set-out, implicitly or explicitly – to communicate.

Afterall, art is choice. And choice in communication.



brigid mcauliffe {photography}

XY

{jolie prather}

i counted
down
the
days

like a fool
like a man in prison

thinking, hoping - worse, believing:
he will come back for me

and lifting myself up to that glass,
day after day after night

waiting

my tiny allotment of time:

ten minutes
twelve days
twenty-six hours

an infinity of vacated seconds

and nothing

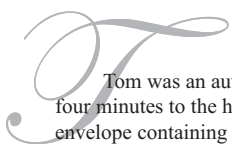
no one
not a breath
not a line of text
not a voice

just nothing, and:

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

of the happiest, foggiest, most wasted
days of my life.

thank you for that.



Tom was an automaton. At exactly four minutes to the hour he licked the last envelope containing the last piece of mail to be sent to the last customer of the day. At the same time, an ambidextrous chimp, he shut down his computer, tidied his desk, stacked his mail, scooped up his coat and put his chair under the desk and then there was no sign Tom had ever been there. His mail was tucked beneath his left elbow and he checked the bottom of his bag for dust.

I leaned forward confidentially so my face was near the little cubicle barrier between the monitors. I stared, intently, at the bridge of his nose, at the geometry between his eyebrows. I spoke thus:

“Every morning, at around half past seven, I shave my baby.”

He stood, stared, as if expecting confirmation.

I nodded my head. “Mmmm-hmmm.”

We remained so for some time. Then the chimp whirred back to life.

The shoulder strap on his bag was adjusted, the mail swapped from left elbow to right, and while doing so he gracefully left the office at exactly six. He entered the elevator, he entered the foyer, and then he entered the streets, where it rained, heavily.

It took me rather longer to finish; I went back to pecking at keys. I, unchimplike, dropped my mail and knocked over my chair and had to shut down my computer two times more than anyone else, but when I made good my escape, the rain had finished.

Morning – I could hear screeching. As I swept through the glass doors a mini-tube of Smarties hit me on the right breast. Theresa was crawling on the floor, sobbing.

Carina stood on her chair, throwing tiny packets of sweets at colleagues, at cleaning ladies, at passers-by on the street, at valuable breakables. Terry and Emma were screaming – coffee had been knocked over and spilled onto keyboards, mail, clothing and were calling Carina nasty names, including Bitch, Idiot, Drunken Hoor, and Cunt.

The team leader stomped up to me and demanded I pick the Gummi Bears out of her recently permed and heavily gelled hair. I did so, eating the least

by rowan martin

contaminated as I went. “Smell this!” I sniffed her hand.

“Mmmmm,” I said.

“Asda!” She cackled. “Fucking Asda! Tenner a bottle!”

“Ooooooh,” I said.

“Has anyone seen my glasses?” Theresa spoke weakly from the floor.

“Fuck no,” said the team leader.

Tom sat with his back to us but he did join later in when we sang ‘Happy Birthday’ just before lunch. His name was on the card, but he left no witty message, and chose not to write his name on the back of the 12” x 16” photograph of the massive pierced cock somebody managed to find somewhere, even though all the other boys did. He even kissed Carina on the cheek, just above the jawline, quite close to her ear.

It was a dry kiss and not at all wet.

Tom and I were eating cake.

Icing stuck to the corners of his mouth and I am certain that I had crumbs

and perhaps jam on my chin.

We had a plastic cup of champagne each.

Our colleagues had gone to Antipasti to take advantage of the ‘Two Courses for £6.95’ offer, and to take advantage of the cheap house red, and also maybe to take advantage of each other.

Tom used his napkin like a girl and he did not scrunch it up afterwards but rather folded it into a rectangle before

shark

placing it neatly in his wastebasket, which had no waste in it.

I had him on the floor of the mailroom, beneath a “HAPPY BIRTHDAY” banner. When he stood up afterwards the ‘R’ was stuck to the back of one of his thighs, which were curiously hairless.

Later, when we resumed our stations, he asked me, “Is it true, what you said about shaving your baby?”

“My son is fifteen. Any shaving he does, he does it himself.”

Tom looked briefly unhappy. Then, his face flattened and lost its shape and form and colour like recently sifted flour, and he looked exactly like anyone else.

I kept that ‘R’ and I used thumb tacks to attach it to the wall behind my chair. I could see it clearly if I turned slightly; Tom could see it clearly anytime at all.

THE MAN WITH A FACE LIKE A HORSE

{john dorsey}

said they are trading love
on wall street that's
why nobody has touched
my prick in over
a year though i've
ceased to worry about
grace i could never
walk on water while
making love to words
anyway

i could never whisper
sweet nothings under the
moonlight without thinking
about how the sun
was gift wrapping skin
cancer under my tongue
it always seemed like
a trick to take
the words
away

"enjoy life now" the
moon sang the moon
had tits like jayne
mansfield and would never
have even thought to
touch any part of
my being let alone
my
soul

cuz i wasn't hung
like james brown could
never sing like james
brown that godfather of
soul

i always wanted to
take the words out
on a date but the
girl of my dreams
had a sharp tongue
and a pussy that
was resistant to my
tongue's meager
wisdom

i wanted to say
to sparkling jayne there
are more of us
than there are of
you
baby!

an ugly ghost saw
you pick your nose
before purging in the
bathrooms of
heaven

my ancestors did an
irish dance spitting out
their teeth in praise
of the heavenly ugly
people

i'm glad there are
ugly people even people
uglier than me with
my horse face otherwise
how would the first
ugly person have ever
gotten laid? how would

the first poem have
ever been
written?

real beauty is the
dance on my tongue
true saints remember what
a nation of cameo poets always
seem forget hungry for
their 15 minutes of
virgin divinity false grace
held up to the
light for all ages
beauty was the first lie
god ever told
himself

while for centuries my
thoughts have stolen hungry
kisses from the mouth
of the
sun
moments like these i always
try to remember the
password to the first
speakeasy was a lovesong
whose meaning is worth
more than all the
gold records hanging on
the walls at gates
of
heaven



ray young chu
{elephants have blue tongues too}

BEAUTY LIES IN SIMPLICITY
{ray sweatman}

I lie spent on your naked back,
the village idiot fingering God.

jenny morgan
(recognizing the pattern)



EXPLOSIVE
{suzi q. smith}

I woke up with
your taste on my lips

gunpowder residue

I'm on fire
and fucked, useless flames
with nothing to burn
and you

with nothing to light you up

together

we scare everyone.

THE OTHER WOMAN
{suzi q. smith}

he fucked me like the other woman
kissed me like a clean slate
abounding freedom
unapologetic curiosity
my yielding flesh a sanctuary,
a refuge, breaking his fall
through the raging sky
never pointing a finger
or asking why



summit studios
(bird song)



Jonathan Saiz

"Ascending Descending (Folklore)"

93" x 34.5"

oil, acrylic and aluminum on wood panel

2006



Wes Magyar

 gallery



www.wesmagyar.com

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