



Word For/ Word is seeking poetry, prose, poetics, criticism, reviews, and visuals for upcoming issues. We read submissions year-round, but issue #37 is scheduled for July 2021. Please direct queries and submissions to:

Word For/ Word
c/o Jonathan Minton
546 Center Avenue
Weston, WV 26452

Submissions should be a reasonable length (i.e., 3 to 6 poems, or prose between 50 and 2000 words) and include a biographical note and publication history (or at least a friendly introduction), plus an SASE with appropriate postage for a reply. A brief statement regarding the process, praxis or parole of the submitted work is encouraged, but not required. Please allow one to three months for a response. We will consider simultaneous submissions, but please let us know if any portion of it is accepted elsewhere. We do not consider previously published work.

Email queries and submissions may be sent to: **editors@wordforword.info**.

Email submissions should be attached as a single .doc, .rtf, .pdf or .txt file. Visuals should be attached individually as .jpg, .png, .gif, or .bmp files. Please include the word "submission" in the subject line of your email.

Word For/ Word acquires exclusive first-time printing rights (online or otherwise) for all published works, which are also archived online and may be featured in special print editions of *Word For/Word*. All other rights revert to the authors after publication in *Word For/ Word*; however we ask that *Word For/Word* is acknowledged if the work is republished elsewhere.

Word For/ Word is open to all types of poetry, prose and visual art, but prefers innovative and post-avant work with an astute awareness of the materials, rhythms, trajectories and emerging forms of the contemporary. *Word For/ Word* is published biannually.

Jonathan Minton, Editor
ISSN 2159-8061
Logo and graphic design by Dolton Richards
Cover art by Kevin Stebner

www.wordforword.info

WF/W: Issue 36 (Winter 2021)

Poetry

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Michelle Disler..... | 4 |
| Joel Chace..... | 7 |
| J.D. Nelson..... | 9 |
| D.E. Steward..... | 13 |
| Christopher Barnes..... | 18 |
| Katie Quarles..... | 23 |
| Doug Bolling..... | 26 |
| Seth McKelvey..... | 30 |
| William Garvin..... | 34 |
| Arpine Konyalian Grenier..... | 39 |
| Rich Murphy..... | 40 |
| Mark Young..... | 43 |
| William Repass..... | 48 |
| Sean Burke..... | 53 |
| Allan Peterson..... | 56 |
| Joshua Smith..... | 61 |

Visual Poetry

| | |
|--|-----|
| David Rees and Kelvin Corcoran..... | 66 |
| Randee Silv and Mumtazz..... | 72 |
| Benjamin Pierce..... | 76 |
| Mark Dow..... | 79 |
| J.I. Kleinberg..... | 84 |
| W. Scott Howard..... | 89 |
| Kevin Stebner..... | 92 |
| Andrew Topel..... | 95 |
| Diana Magallón, Jim Leftwich, and Jeff Crouch..... | 100 |
| Michael Basinski..... | 104 |
| Carol Stetser..... | 107 |
| Michael Sikkema..... | 112 |
| Jeff Bagato..... | 115 |
| Pamela Miller..... | 120 |
| Marilyn R. Rosenberg..... | 124 |
| Bill Wolak..... | 128 |

Reviews

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Sacha Archer on Nico Vassilakis..... | 133 |
| Jon Curley on Joel Chace..... | 135 |
| Contributors' Notes..... | 142 |

Dossier, Bond James (a)

a gun under the pillow
a double bourbon
a cormorant
a haiku
a vesper
a pack of smokes
a marriage proposal
shark repellent
seashells
the villain's secretary
the villain's stolen missile
the villain's stolen girl
troubled by peace
perplexed by women
naked on the beach
a perfect stranger

Dossier, Bond James (b)

Girl drinks gun
Voodoo beach death
Basho Bloody brainwashed
Villain violet fripperies
Godlike pleasure target
Hunger shells shoreline
Introspective death body
Augustine heart fire
Conquest world love
Secret gold courtier
Silence cigarette profession
Martini hunch detail
Bullet bullet bikini

Dossier, Bond James (c)

He loves a girl a gun some shells a seashore.

He loves a girl in black some cards a casino.

He loves a girl in gold some bars of gold a goldfinger.

He loves a girl her telepathy some voodoo.

He loves a gun a girl a marriage of two hearts.

He loves a villain's girl a villain's missiles the end of a job.

Amusement: The Plague Year

Plan afoot to cross

the river, ----- *Almost without
realizing it, I went
from my boat to this other
mysterious boat.
And suddenly I understood
the meaning of existence.*

to storm those park
gates that the dead have guarded
for months. Demands of the
living, most natural: fried
dough; cover bands; to stream -- once
more -- aboard
a mammoth,
rocking pirate ship. -----

*But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.*

*Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.*

Next day,

they'll wake, happier, dumber,

*Then Daniel took pitch, fat,
and hair, and boiled them
together and made cakes, which
he fed to the dragon. The
dragon ate them and burst
open. And Daniel said, See
what you have been worshipping!*

awaiting their shift before
re-padlocked gates. Demands of
the dead: a spoon and rattle
to shake; scarecrow,
thorn bush, corpse.

Mourning Dove: The Plague Year

Song of dust, of
desiccation, that mutes all
others, its volume more
of suasion ----- *After many attempts of
asking his sister to share
the fish with him, he transforms
into a bird and flies
away, singing while crying,
creating a melody
of abandonment.*

than of sound.
Fallen melody,
falling.
Attends to
loss.
Annunciates ----- *...in musical tones, being,
existence, is
indistinguishable from,
is, pointing-beyond-itself,
meaning, saying.*

it.

invisible action figure

Stego.
sink blood

little lion
lake face

sneezy Xerxes'
graph paper
origami

good gold
or golden good

in the "now" world
polishing the furniture of the mind

remember the pendulum

karloff bread

the title of the picture is gulk
favorite fang monster

runny backworms protected the scrubby union of tropes
what more is this than that?

indeed this one has thirty-three thousand teeth in its first mouth, alone
we were renting the small moon for archery and other outdoor sports

the sun is ahead of the rabbit in the race
and I am the Nile river in egg-ypt

red ghost has a dream of earth

trash door oh you were a flat yog
this impossible crayon art

there is a pyramid on top of the moon
starring smart spock wearing a cowboy hat

red in the middle for green kids, too
the gang with uyrensuks now wexy

because we ship to flanders
my fine grocery aptitude

now earthlings will be wet in my water
call a cop a carp

liz one saturn melted pot pock like

opening the door to earth and a thousand other worlds
so pay attention to felino and laugh at the stars

the wolfman in the corner is staring at you
silver owl was a worried wart

earth has a beard
little muffin frogs

grape juice in 6 oz cans
oh we knew him when he was a puck

the shot-putter named for a mountain, so what?
open your eyes here and we'll scare you

a purple sky, too
skitter me tingers little orb

Dorado

Chinese ambassadors arrived in Rome in 130 BC

Everything done and thought now is a recapitulation of those alive now or before

Not media's dull rote of glee, sex, food, cars, trucks, ardor for the advertised

"Mass culture produces false memories, everyone feels the same remembering what they haven't lived through" (Borges)

The channeled horizons, the endless tits-out and big package commercials, the flags and slogans, the relentless din and congestion, the cigarettes and sunglasses, the soda pop and snacks, real estate deals, casino vacation cruises, the relentless promotion of promotions, the accumulating sludge of noise and glut

That has not been before because the distribution, publication, dissemination technologies used now penetrate and are new

We have not long ago unwittingly shot over the sizzling nap of Thomas Hardy's "precipice in time"

And in the new reality, the real for the younglings who know things to be as they are, are looking around perplexed

With the loneliness of now probably more intense than it's been before

Single heads driving around one-to-a-car and then home to live alone, with a cat, a dog, no one near except on social media

Single people locked frozen on their screens to stare and scroll

Perhaps half a million Japanese kids are *hikikomori*, spending almost all their time alone in their bedrooms

A majority of the metropolitan world generally eat and sleep alone

Solitudinarianism a new identity

Quietly

In the lonely acceptance, that has always been, of whatever the personal fate

Next to civil and clean White Street Pier

The mildly lapping wavelets in off the Florida Strait sough against the shore-thick
windrow of dead seagrass

Through which, by the season, the willets, sanderlings and sandpipers forage

Where through millions of years other things had been

Driven off Cuban ships
Right out White Street to
Cow pen killing floors
Drained along what is now
The pier where turnstones
And willets knit one pearl
Two turn out sand fleas
In seagrass beached by
Wind that wafted slaughter
Stench inland while sharks
Slipped in for the offal
From stomachs terror tight
Frantic bawling in the chute

Much better at White Street Pier now then when it had an abattoir beside

Designations of where and what will be have changed

Butchery by the sword and elimination of people by fiat mostly gone

Capital punishment across the planet now spottily marginalized

And generally we don't eat dogs

But so much existence is without alternatives with the close-in future inevitable
as for cattle in a chute

All year at dawn the affable and often solitary arrive at White Street Pier violating
their fate for a communal hush when the sun breaks the horizon

Many on bicycles, a lot with dogs, a few tourists in one of their few mornings in
the Keys

To gaze at the sun appearing out of the Florida Straits warming and direct

Sunup there a permission for people to leave to go about whatever else they do

One of the nicer remissions

Where freedom from forced circumstances seems amplified

Avoidance of the general onuses of lousy jobs, domestic desperations, disease, depression, debilitations, dwindling alternatives, diminution of hope and dreams, thinning hair, credit card debt

And the worst of forced circumstances, detention

“Nationally, about half of all black men have been arrested by age 23” (*NYT*, 18iv17)

One in a hundred and ten American adults are in jail, one in thirty-four under some sort of legal sanction, and that number is one in thirteen in the state of Georgia

Then there has been slavery

Whale oil lamps and slavery as universal until the Civil War as undocumented labor and LED now

Whaling station butchery like the old cow pens at White Street Pier

Slave pens were nearly as common as used car lots are now

Blood in the water, whip in the hand

Petroleum for spermaceti and the smellier and more common right whale oil

Restaurant work, slaughter houses, yard work, construction, cleaning houses, factory farming, *se habla español*, instead of slavery

The world altogether is hell and remains the same

But still can be magnificent in the particular

There are all the wonders of it

All out geezer serene while remembering the eastern Pacific

The eerie anxiousness of swimming uneasily in warm seas extending four or five miles below you to the ocean floor

Afternoon cumulus-gathering toward a light shower before sunset, and then first the planets and the stronger stars before the great high fat spine of the Milky Way home-galaxy comes clear up there by the Southern Cross

All in air clearer than anywhere else on earth

On the reach making two hundred nautical a day riding the great mainsail wing

Listening to the rigging, testing the sheets, hanging to the backstays, leeward, windward, rain shadow fall

Pushed by the Trades

Twelve hours sun, twelve without, air and water equal, clouds and swells bulge and wane, stars wheel, rarely will there be a ship or a tumbling satellite or passing plane

Everything blue, and white and sun, except at dawn and dusk

Time is sun-passage moon-phase solitude

Water a blue of blueness almost beyond the quality of light, azurite blue, and celestial or celestial blue, sky blue, off a bice blue in the way cobalt is the azure of the cloudless sky

Cobalt marine is cobalt blue and blue turquoise in sunlight over reefs, a light greenish blue that is bluer, lighter, stronger than turquoise blue, and bluer and deeper than aqua

The jellyfish blue, all the ocean's plentitude of blues

Strikes on the troll mostly yellowfin tuna, one ran eight kilos, another chunked against the drag like a downhill truck to leave the braided copper leader with a shiny rupture at the break

And a dorado as big as a calf lost a few yards from the gaff

Filleting red muscle warmth even in the air-water balance of hot and wet, eating raw bits right off the knife and cutting board

Mid-voyage during a midnight watch a mysterious migrating windbird once came in and flew flapping twice around the mizzen

Days at sea accumulate but do not repeat, flying fish, vitreous and glistening flying fish sometimes sputter out of the swells in brilliant sun

Clean cumulonimbus clouds around the eastern horizon at dawn then around to the west at dusk, open and high, piled back behind the curve of earth

Leeward, windward, rain shadow, rain fall

Maui to the Tuamotos, and then to Tahiti, south-by-southeast with the northeast trades, a distance like Boston to Los Angeles at eight to ten knots, speed of a touring bicycle

In the Pacific twice too high off the water, riding on steel from Tacoma to Inchon, and then after Korea, back to Tacoma

In old troopships with bunks five high in the holds with stale air and nothing but standing at the rail on deck all voyage amazed at all that open ocean

It is often gray at higher latitudes

Always in the then and now

Liberty Atoms 16

Uncoerced lion stirred the brink
Of his roundabout,
Dodging traffic's eyes.
At the open-hamper belt
Maisie's plastic fork cracked.
Lipstick deformed into a grudge.
Coordinates on our map highlighted words:
"Quick, quick, come and see,
Bettina is teasing a spider".

Quote: Iris Murdoch, *The Nice And The Good*

Liberty Atoms 17

Nettle-plait bracelet
Fringed her snow-lace.
Quickstepping limped as the amp passed over.
Maisie jostled into our hawthorne,
Sizzling to ends of permanent wave.
Imprint on beetle unevenly read:
“I want so much to help you,” said Edward,
“To bring you anything you want”.

Quote: Iris Murdoch, *The Nice And The Good*

Liberty Atoms 18

Toy pigskin angel
Sweats by cinders.
Vase sorrel decomposes, yawning.
Blubbing keeps Maisie from playing up.
Sequins on our drop-leaf neaten to:
“Oh let *that* not be so! thought Thomas”.

Quote: Iris Murdoch, *The Nice And The Good*

Liberty Atoms 19

A falcon and Maisie
Voodooed seven clocks.
Herky-jerky brick-stuffed pillow
Couldn't intuit dim light.
No phantoms undertook to align.
Riven fingernails inscaped with:
"Edwards' first searching look
Was for a male figure, waiting".

Quote: Iris Murdoch, *The Nice And The Good*

Liberty Atoms 20

Gossamer ping-pong ball
Vaporized into lustre.
Maisie flounced, clacking stairs.
Postwoman disputes virtue
Of balanced economy.
Our ladybird's spots can be networked to:
"We're quite cut off now, it's nice".

Quote: Iris Murdoch, *The Nice And The Good*

I really must learn to know the difference

He tells me the story
of an old scar,
how I julienned
the shoulder flesh
before I even knew—
what. a. bitch. I've been.
In his murder house, found
underneath
a ratty blanket: rats
and shrink-wrapped hip bones—
he wouldn't
want a woman
to walk from him
without a limp.
Don't worry, Nadya says.
Wherever the night went,
it went also.

For Shame

Sherri sits on a high black limb,
spotlighted,
reading aloud a list
of her wicked doings,
this or that nonesuch—
fruitus bulbous—
Heroine-purple as her mouth,
secreting chains.
Because I want to be so good,
with a machete
true and pewter
as her hair, I hack.
The bads bust open,
split by ground; something
like spell-breath
salts out.
She murdered a man.
Now I can sleep.

5:55

It's your time—
a welcome & unwelcome surprise.
The four-years-old
clinking cascade
of your soda tab collection
onto hardwood
floods. The scatter
I could make sense of,
little things becoming hidden
under the larger so
naturally.
Once, you reached
out to comfort a bat
stuck under your nightstand;
the rabies shots weren't too bad.
The night holds back its gasp
when I tether you
to the park bench.
Nadya recounts the day her grandfather died:
*There are only a few
really terrible sunsets.*

Drift 4

Along the corridor
I have seen you
 A distance Compressed
 A clock Unwinding
 What is a day You said
 How bad the sun
 In its heavens
 Of old age

Our words amidst the spittle

 A tonguing
Of a syntax

The memories lapsing

 Into
 The silence.

Drift 5

Two shoes

A history

A discarding

A street where

Shoes fall from

A suddenly

Deceased

I hear you

A cry

A Screech

Just the happening of

A day

A singularity as

Sunlight & shadows

Cross the line

A crowd gathering

One shoe then

Two

Words thrown as if

To reach

A conclusion

An equation

Toward a

Silencing.

28

Drift 8

A spattering
 Just the moments
The voices in
 The crucial room

Through the broken window
 The refractions

In your blue dream
A magnetic field

A lexicon undone

I have seen them
 Drifting
 Homeless

The desperate noun
 A warped adverb
 Verbs unleashed
 All shameless
 Adjectives

But the sudden laughter
 As of Gertrude Stein.

Alm 61

the mansions
have a driveway
that does not have
a fountain
because the driveway is
a fountain

the fountain
shoots out color
straight up
and out
carrying you with it

yellow and yellow and red

the color
the fountain
shouts out
is not had
by light
because the color is not
light

the color
is color
color itself

the color is fast
too fast to be light
too fast because it is slow
slow enough to feel
its speed

and it pours up and up
yellow and yellow and red and purple
not standing not light
and it roars and roars louder and louder

so loud you cannot hear it
until you are torn away
up and up and out and out
and you are more color

off your feet
yellow and yellow and red and purple and red
can't standing
yellow and yellow and red and purple and red and red and red and red and red
and purple and yellow and purple purple and purple and yellow and yellow
yellow and yellow and yellow and yellow and red and purple and red and red and
blue and yellow and yellow and yellow and red and purple and red and yellow
and up and red and yellow and purple and louder and up and yellow and red and
louder and louder and yellow up up up and yellow and yellow and red and out
and up and purple and green and yellow yellow yellow and red and up and louder
and louder and louder and louder louder than this yellower than this more of
color than this faster than this higher than this outer than this color than this
yellow and red and louder and up and roar
until you are the sound and the color of vertigo

Alm 62

2 cups favorite beer sifted flour
3-6 cups oil depending on size of cavity
1-2 lb. whole fresh heart depending on gravity
of sin. 2 tsp. salt, pepper, paprika, garlic powder
gently brush off any dirt from the heart; heat oil in fryer
stir up remainder; dip heart till it shines like honey (bee's)
give heart room to breathe; don't overcrowd the arteries
remove heart; set aside to drain excess grease on a paper towel
don't knock it till you try it.
maybe that about godrape bothered you
but it's an old hat tattooed inside an eyelid.
don't call the locksmith; break the deadlock, close the shackle.
don't worry; it's safe, lawyer approved.
this is a recipe you don't add water to.

Alm 63

to ring a drip
from parched parchment

this soul cloyes the mouth
this soul wrinkles
like clingwrap

this soul, perched in shade,
sleeps in song

fat on the shadow of wings
acral-licking-

who can say
 no what I'm saying
 is who is
 able to say
who has saying power

this soul with a purchase
on the porch of mystery
insomnia's aria

a ruff better's millstone
this granuloma weeping choler

From *night shifts*...

(fig. 1)

...ceremonial scenes torchlight

a moon's burial,

marks of erosion, palaeolithic

screams...

(fig. 2)

sylvan regions whisper
tracks, weathering senses:

distribution surfaces, nerve
impulse of stars...

From *night shifts*...

moon fragments
whisper her zodiac

every night
in direction

earth insignias,
dawn alignments

lost in performance
madness

From *night shifts*...

...a night
of
mathematical
infinities

sub-
lunary

kissing
wine-
purpled
lips

the
stage
empty

William Garvin

From *night shifts*...

neon storm/

powdered faces, old
vampires reassembled

blitzed
by dreams

steam rushing
midnight windows

From *night shifts...*

a mist of witnesses, sinister
loading bays, the clank & clatter
of night shifts...

a ghost inheres within a datum,
disturbance signals observed
at the blast furnace

The Hustled Hustler

Remember who shoved and shifted the setup
laid out by a bunch on stage as if
assigned chorus of the times
extolling lauding
the hodgepodge

the balls daubed on the platform await resolution
while salutes and praise follow the celebration
a status quo dynamic one must follow
the entropy of sin
balls trolling the corridors

we seek justice says the saloon proprietor
the push and shove shifter tempter
the tempted talented alcoholic
the stunning pool player
denounced decried

Confucius is baffled as carnal edge awaits
the collective bets the pool table ready
for the cue stick the hold
connection
passion craft wisdom

the chorus will now regenerate the setting
aftermath regardless because
it must as they say
life goes on
outcome regardless.

Narcissus in Wilderness

In the ego mirror where the human
appears colossus from every angle,
the background reflects with honesty:
No conscience for what props
when the exaggeration trooper
living in a glasshouse stomps the wild.

The blown up twin dances
in a greenhouse where rocks
enter via a door and not a window.
Manners carry for the monstrous,
unsoiled, and innocent hands.
Meanwhile developers crowd out
for living room furniture
and bedroom sets, as the rooted uproots
and routed paws squeeze and blur
against photo frames.

Self-regarded into a god but lost
among mountains, oceans, and stars
the misrepresented hedonist
in circus tent shirt and two sacks for pants
discovers among the dying.

Echo Answer

When magic drains from ritual,
the past disappears, so for loyalists
time repeats in habit.
Props and utensils lay about,
never touched again.

Performing CPR on a moment
long in the calendar trash pile,
the secret nostalgia coaxes
dances with blowup youth
in an inflated earlier environment.
Memory energizes for the senses
to bring the furniture to life.

The gone in the now
limps into tomorrow,
available for litany in a day,
parody in a week.

The novel threatens
until the sentimental liver
encroaches on OCD territory
that triggers the repeater
holstered in the brainstem.

A funeral procession concession
loosens up behavior dug
into favorite words and deeds
to provide a coffin lid
where stars once took on wishes.

The sun and moon
sweep away the check marks
and the possibilities
littered by a Homo sapiens.

Gospel

The thin-skinned evolved monkey
defines where Sirius sniffs
the dog-eared chew-toy stuck in an o-zone.
Stereo speakers repulse
should blunt instruments blow back hair.
A wrinkled forehead torches eyes
that saw no evil in a match up.

Early during the nerve-ending exposure
when calluses harnessed desire
for everything outside personal human flesh,
bulldozers and steamrollers ruled:
Peace on Earth as in the heavens.

Now, the lusty victim in a tux
on a special occasion balances
for mother and snow-capped mountains:
The giant slalom with two poles.

Late again to understand
how pulsating radio waves
and cosmic rays that crest and crash
across the universe, the ignoramus
believes in supernovas
when dark matter bloodies noses.

Neuron stars collapse into black holes
that suck at galaxy nipples on the Milky Way,
cosmic light deluges with remnant
radiation any banana lover in a tin can
romancing adventure as though
Orion tracked tender-footed lexicon loonies.

Just before Tucson

A kingfisher on the wires, a
dead pig by the side of the road.

"Such a bellicose armada," says
my mother as she pauses between

apoplexy & Appalachia, to smoke
another contretemps, & wait for

the next epiphany to roll around.

raiment

I am wearing a soft cashmere sweater —
ocelots try to hide behind my eyes.

I am wearing a Model T Ford magneto —
Vesuvius erupts & buries Pompeii.

I am wearing gloves & the touchscreen is unresponsive —
I'm not quite Imelda Marcos, but the comparison has been made.

I am wearing the minute hand of an Audemars Piguet watch —
demagogues accuse me of being soft on slavery.

I am wearing old clothes this Chinese New Year —
from where I sit, "antipodean culture" seems like an oxymoron.

I am wearing an account manager with a colorful fashion sense —
my cellphone rings, & illustrates the concept of mortality.

I am wearing a spearmint velvet blazer as a marker for intelligence —
later I will walk down to the lagoon to look for the pelicans.

stinging trees & cone snails

Complete & unabridged
gene expression patterns
sit close together under

a shade tree. Pyramidal
when young, but with
obvious age-related alter-

ation over time, they meet
the requisites in any lang-
uage when a need to

demonstrate the use in a
sentence of the phrase *in the
sequestered pergola* is required.

Bushidō

Lollipop-men curdle the sky. Else-
where anchovies, but smaller than

the prototype. In a moment of
impetuosity, the Sage claimed

the desert was his friend. Went
out into it, was never seen again.

A line from kari edwards

Interior masculinity is a translucent pale green according to new noninvasive imaging technologies. In other words,

turn the flesh inside out & it's basically crabapples. Common in gardens & parks, desirability dependent on the color of light

that is transmitted & the luster of the fiber used in its packaging. Then the afters come in to play—getting it home can be expensive.

Gin Fizz

What is in a gin fizz?
Dizziness to begin with
and a Mexican standoff.
Russian roulette resolves
out of bulleted innards, spins
its chambers as in
some mephitic waltz which
business isn't all
in the wrist. Blur
one eye and the woozy landscape
switches out spaghetti
mirage for ouija séance.
Go from squinting against quartz
to frisson—bordello dimness to
buzzing gurgling murmuring static and
that's a spritz of what, exactly?
Chin-chin! Gist
or gristle of it encrypted in
cow skull split
open into heifer crescent,
effervescent miscarriage
of or as a wish
fulfilment. Djinn, muzzle up to me.
What isn't in a gin fizz? Migraines
wheel screeching overhead. Shots ring out,
gestalt falls spasmodic to thirsting lint.

Transneptunian Object

Weeping gravitas we go on and glom lumps of stellar crud and scat to form spheroids, scorning bans on lumpen lurkers patrolling deeper regions of to-each-their-own. From nowhere wisps beseech us not to, no, in whispers citing adamantine law. Whose law? Our own. We lack the knout to enforce such stipulations. Mutters gloss nebulous matter, quibbles at best provisional. And the lolloping murk that auras formless masses chokes us. And outliers run in saturnine circles, contorted under oath of silence but freely circulating sketchy reaches. A black market of eyeless bodies sockets our periphery. A glimpse of far outlines lost in measures scribbled down, erased, scribbled, scratched out—chains of etching pulled apart amidst idiot motes, their outward swirl for an instant ignited in a beam of light that seems to wash us in new discipline. Soon enough it flickers off, to hazard no implosion.

Translation Manual

in this unit you will feel free to refer to your memory of TRANSLATION MAN
reverse sequence of hairs sloughing onto the spindle (uneven and combined
magical realism) and turning haywire, hair brain ♪ *hare brain* ♪ fast forward past
instructions to subsection twenty seven, table prime

rug (machine washable): underfoot static

symbolism: déjà voodoo

canine scrub :toothbrush

pause, pause, paws, the filter's gone rancid

rancid filter, welter of baubles fizzing in spectral rinse

glitch of pearl

analysis

you must brush up on this unit

by unit's end will you have of structure a firm grasp

and you brush up

against the burrs and stubble of words a

frisson against the velcro of mind, ahh, ahh, shhh

choke hold, phobia of plaiting static

barely a whisper: stranger, you are a stranger and estranged will you linger

hubris trance no matter

you live your life as silverfish, slithering behind the walls

in this unit you will learn how to hold an argument over whether the State is
Rational or the unguent yodels graffiti your small colon. You will take the side of
Hegel, your partner the side of Munchausen Syndrome

now wearing your new (polyvinyl) hairpiece, plaster your wherewithal over a
honey comb of bullet holes sheened with the context of the History of the Idea of
War as an extension of folk tunes

if you can't even haggle properly, I'm sending the parrot off to another pawn shop
and in your own words, conquistador
how do I write my name in your language

Say Hello

to world class service. To the automated menu. Aerosol cheese, hello, hello ambient lint. Say hello to the news at your fingertips. To your fingertips and the sting of solvent when you lick them. Hello burst of static and half a second later your own voice, muttering hello. Say hello to your lover (deceased). To derealization, wheezing. Hello automated Vitriol registered trademark, free floating lust, hello. And mister carpet, hello mister dual tone carpet, beige and sub beige, beige, sub beige, hello crust of mold or vomit on the carpet. Say hello to rat enhancement. Pardon? Howdy, panic. You say it like your parents said it. To jello salad and rat soufflé in a tray with serving sized depressions. Say it so the implants can pick you up. I said houseplants (deceased). So the performance enhancing drugs can peel you off the carpeted ceiling. Hello, anybody there? Reading you loud and beige, over. I'd prefer to greet a real person, over. Say hello to saying goodbye. Say good. Then bye. To following directions! Say hello to fuck off. Fuck me. Say woah, woah, take it easy, pal. I'm not your pal, I'm the automated messenger service, you're an addict! This is an inquisition. You stand accused of mistaking thought as "language" and "language" as interpersonal communication. You're addicted to "language," shameful! And there it goes, "language," see, out through the bars on the window. Wave bye bye now.

Canny Valley

Tip your lid to the man in the tofu moon, pickled high and slimy overtop this tofu flood plain. Ours a Christmas cottage cheesy hamlet of substitutions. History teachers, for instance, and painters who patent cloying glows. I didn't say Kinkade. Town Hall has gone all mushy and the warehouse district white. No matter how lifelike those tableaux vivants, we do not go to Tofu Castle. We do carve bricks of bean curd raw and floppy from the valley floor, to earn our bimonthly fistful of inflated pfennigs. Her ladyship the tofu pop star demands perfect cubes. Daily she lubricates her waxy dermis in a bath of mylk. Soon she won't have fingerprints. Tofu is our go-to steeple, oops, staple. Our go-to oblique, our appliqué wrinkles. Substitute politicians and substitute scientists perfect the art of cloning, perfect the art of cloning, fect the art of cloning sarcoma König, seig heil, oops. Jumbled the molds back there, the movable feast of type . Midas of tofu, Judas of go-to. Do not we all suspect, on some level, the Tofu Rush of slowing to a trickle? The tofu Donner Party was an omen. Tofu eating tofu. Can *you* tell the difference?

Poem

A copy of the moon in your pocket but grown too small to fear. For these next few minutes, we must keep vigilant: Everything has to be just so. And with the sky split evenly—ten to every one of us—it may turn out OK after all. The world may transform peaceably in its orbit. I am, perhaps, a very large bird. It's true I don't like what my teeth do. And I know it's cliché, but who can even say this is living and not some perfect asshole's loving facsimile? Outside the gates of the city, it all gets so strange. Fistfights erupting in the water, pets in deep depressions. The rules will have to change—new methods invented, strengthened by wind. We'll hash out the finer points later. Otherwise we just circle back to the car with no sign whether the mall guards follow to tinker with our irregular breaths or still creep about keeping jealous surveillance of our smallest velleities. I guess we just come to accept it: the klaxons at dusk, the day wadded up. But cup an ear to the street and you can hear children in the storm tunnels, advancing on the city...

Poem

Quick, while we have hands,
however ambitious,
let's make good on our plans
to button these shirts,
open these cans,
text back and forth,
water the plants,
and hold this heavy thing
between us
for the next thousand years.
Hamburger the infinity cove
and back to the program—
Who wants to see the world
from inside this horse?
It all happened so fast
I understood less than
the deer mice caught
in summered hexes—
Are they pieces of the moon?
They give off light and heat.
Still, when you hold out
your hand I hesitate, eyes
like two boys waiting
for a rollercoaster
behind a tall woman.
Ourselves to others, tall grasses.
Another cloud to the face.
These online quizzes know my current state
doesn't match the portents
of indomitable beauty.
I want to be young and awkward again
as a homeschooler's bang trim,
heart on the wrong foot,
thoughts tiny apples
left goldbricking in the sun's heat.
"Oh, why'd you do this to my heart?"
asks the woeful ocelot.
"May I bite your back?"
a giddy tide replies.
And then it's all normal sex.
Like nothing before or since.
A congratulatory basket.

A lesser known weather.
A back-ordered moon
and a backhanded grief.
It all finds a way in.
It all makes escapes
even if mauled by circus bears
with some regularity.
It all loses its car in parking lots.
It all falls asleep with its glasses on.
It takes embarrassingly long to tie its shoes.
But darling I love you.
And the phone is ringing all over us.

Devotion Can be Inferred

Culture develops by people doing the same thing repeatedly using at first only local materials but eventually floating tons of bluestone from another place so a moon could be invited in among the moon colored bones a few dried flowers set exactly in the place of a cerebellum

Seam

Without wheelwork no clocks or framework
no see through horses no bay to the ocean
no clues to definable distance save one line
at the shore of which stand ibis and curlews
two versions of one bird defining horizons

Recognition

Accidental the book says sitting in plain sight
so all the field marks show wing bars forked tail
eye ring off course from Panama
I exhibit protective bacteria marks of the stars on me
freckled as a child of Iowa heart line folded in my hand
plainly identifiable in any book of runaways

Script

A door closes by itself I hear the threatening cello
My gut and mortal dark combine
Cut to the intertwined strangers
In the side yard a young bird learns its worms
An empty swing set swings like a spirit present
Then someone listens to my heart another to my brakes
attempting to prevent a succession of accidents.

Totem

Bushnell gives me a wide field
sharp focus down to five feet
without chromatic aberration
so a far thrush can be immediate
and held with my hand glass
a red mite is big as a horse fly
These are my familiars
and one doe once while nursing
two does twice while plowing

Joshua Smith

For brass
cupola, navels
sweat.

Blare waves concuss
a man on stilts.

His plummet crests,
folds.

Stilts pop as
wedding rice.

Pinball,

chopsticks,

language is cheap.

God weeps
criminally insane
figurines.

Car belches,
belch cannot car.

I am near,
while near so far.

Yet near needs I;
a cut, the scar.

Spirals to speak;
before words,
words the same.

2 Gods



Two gods in Middlesex Street, the he the she
cruised for fruit and clothes in the mortal season;
he bent forward pointing to their station underground.

She at ease leant back as if to say - Come on look,
you know you want to fuck me; her head a bird in flight,
his, a ball of string sent into scribble and sinews.

Come on, look at my St. Tropez skin, my colour
my thighs floating apart, my fresh genius waiting.
It's OK Mr Red Column relax, beyond the arts of Corinth
the arches sweetly frame me, the pediments lift me up.

There's a simplicity to gods passing in the street,
their hunger and their hesitation in a wash of colour.
It changes nothing in the catalogue of ideal beauty,
said the he the she in Middlesex Street incendiary on the air.

War Music: Kings



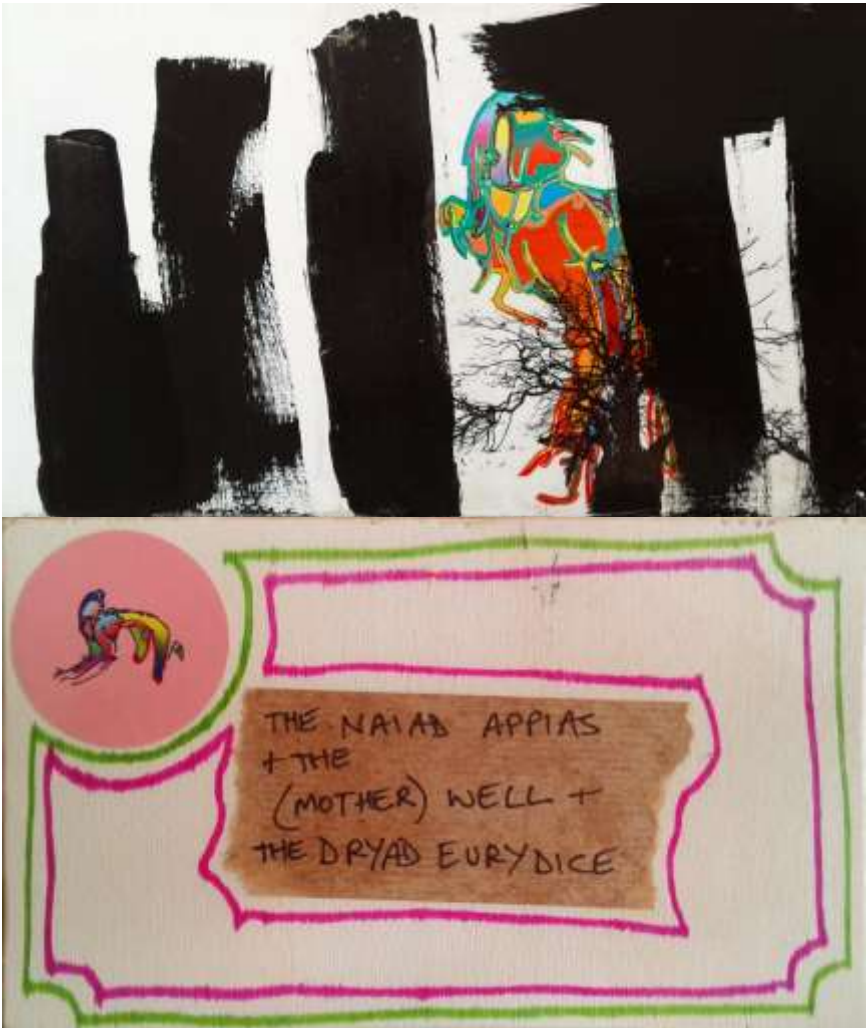
It was a fragment from Troy from Logue from Dave, it was
a burnt roof tile or a broken plaque frisbeed through time, I don't know;
a tile from a toppled tower of Ilium and enough of a message,
even the words bled into the clay, that was the art of it.

The bloody message fell from up there, zinging like a bird,
and ripped a ragged hole in the ambrosial picnic of the sky,
for our exultation in slaughter and reflective thought – like gods.

These trenches indicate the realignment of a subduction zone,
running from the Aegean around the whole world from the beginning;
we will plough the fields with your bones, fill the Scamander with your guts,
for trade routes, for oil, for influence, for those special minerals and metals.

Did you think after Yemen, Syria, Iraq, things would ever be better than this?
Put your sandaled foot in this antique starting block, the race is never done;
run straight for the Scaen Gate over the quagmire viscera of your comrades.

Naiad/Dryad/Motherwell



The girl's transformation was everything, the spring in her step
greening the high meadows of the Taygetos, so that the flood
of grasses and vetch assumed an order of the miraculous.

I would hold finger and thumb to the tendon of her unmarked ankle,
feel its tensile charge, a pulse wired to the world, a boundless promise,
a girl who stirred the air and made men look back in her wake.

In Thalames it was just gossip, dry tongues scraped cicada tunes;
she with prediction on her lips mouthing the voice of the well
lipping a first language of pure gesture at ease with itself.

It ended badly; five black posts above the submarine entrance of the cave,
she, a near transparent body flickering against claustrophobic night,
limbs like pale fire weaving in and out, a twist of cloth from the loom.

He in the taverna, scratching a banjo, telling stories no-one believed, the song,
dust in his mouth – when he sang the transformation of the girl was everything.

Align



Align: Parachute flares outnumber hijacked sonnets only to be thrown further down. Massive gaps suspended from opaque hooks set everything in motion. Dressed as sandpaper alibis, nonsensical absurdities squirm to win. Trite holds switch to the opposite fringe. Timekeepers map the already gone. She wouldn't stay, not even for a minute. Of course. Of course. Of course.

Detach



Detach: Marked descents crown
segueing rotations. Seasonal stakeouts
swallow long double looped
mechanicalized debris. Trampled
arenas intercept blades of hollow
swoops. Closings upsurge. Access
shrinks. Piles. Mounds. Retreat.
Fishing lines are not finish lines. Facts
don't change foolery. Voided items are
tacked onto vacant posts. Sideways. In
front of. Clocks rewind.

Redundant



Redundant: Surplus mirages. Brief inserts. Fruitful pitch dark rambles swap memos crushed by paved corners. Outlawed okays monitor disguises begun at birth. Perpendicular dreamings, look towards. Pass from. Noteworthy hazards unsealed for later use. Conditions compress. Strolling dilating. Whereabouts exist.

Scarcity



Scarcity: Dicey clusters bear no resemblance. Lookouts perch upon detectable interference. Closed forms. Arches swell from min to max. Seated. Bunched. Spotted. Feverish cores knock over self contained strongholds hung from spigots & draining pegs whisked across wind tunnels. Reflections burn what can not grow.

Making the Rounds XX



confronted by an angry circle, I made my strength a line
I made my strength a line beginning and ending past my barrier
beginning and ending past my barrier I made my journey a rounded lens
I made my journey a rounded lens, I stepped inside to see the center
I stepped inside to see the center making the sum of my lines know their limit
making the sum of my lines know their limit learning an angry circle
learning an angry circle I made my center an excluding edge
I made my center an excluding edge, I made my strength a line.

Making the Rounds XXI.



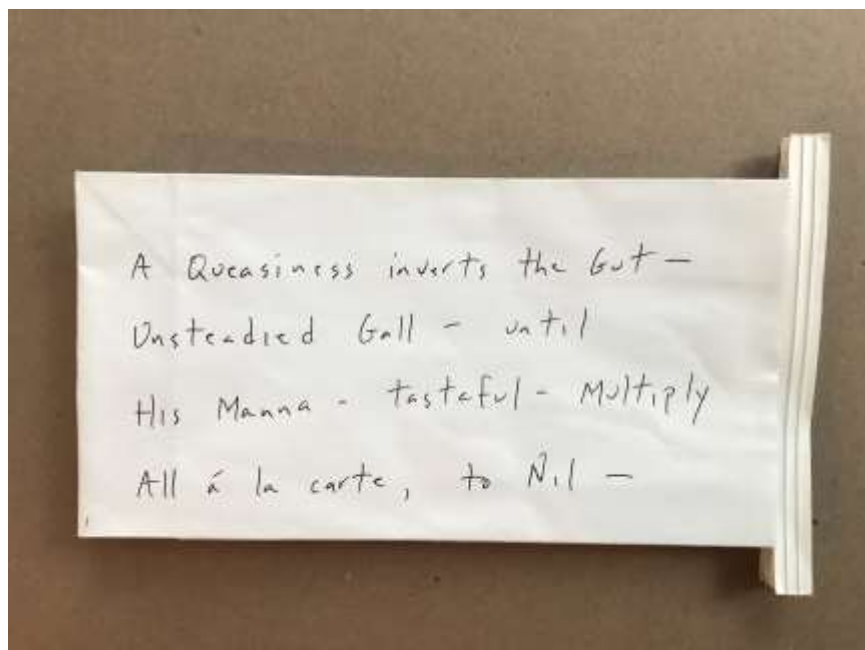
we seek to breathe common air any one path must open to
any one path must open to some horizon only one doorstep approaches
only one doorstep approaches the chamber all paths exit
the chamber all paths exit by exhaling yearning for each one single breath
by exhaling yearning for each one single breath we seek to breath common air.

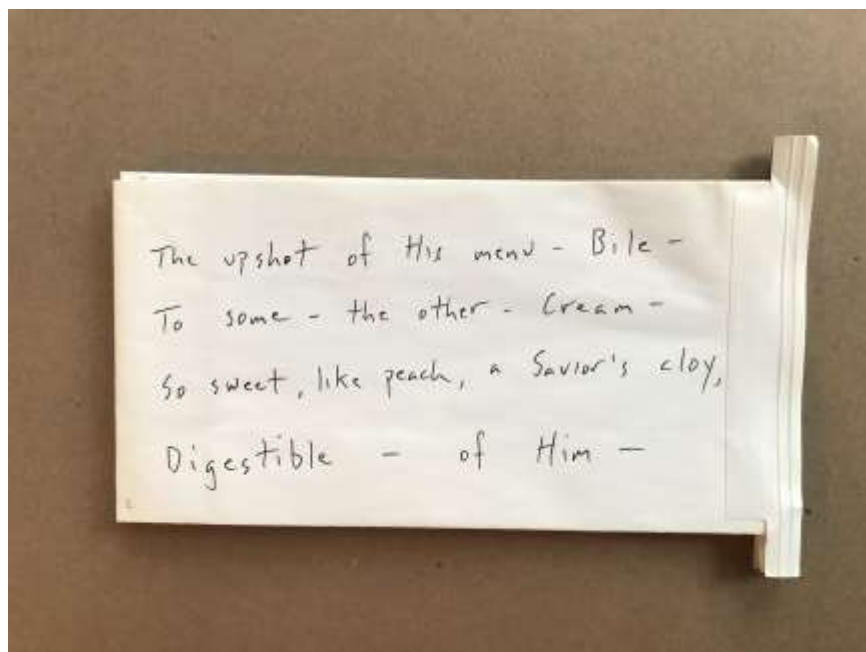
Making the Rounds XXII

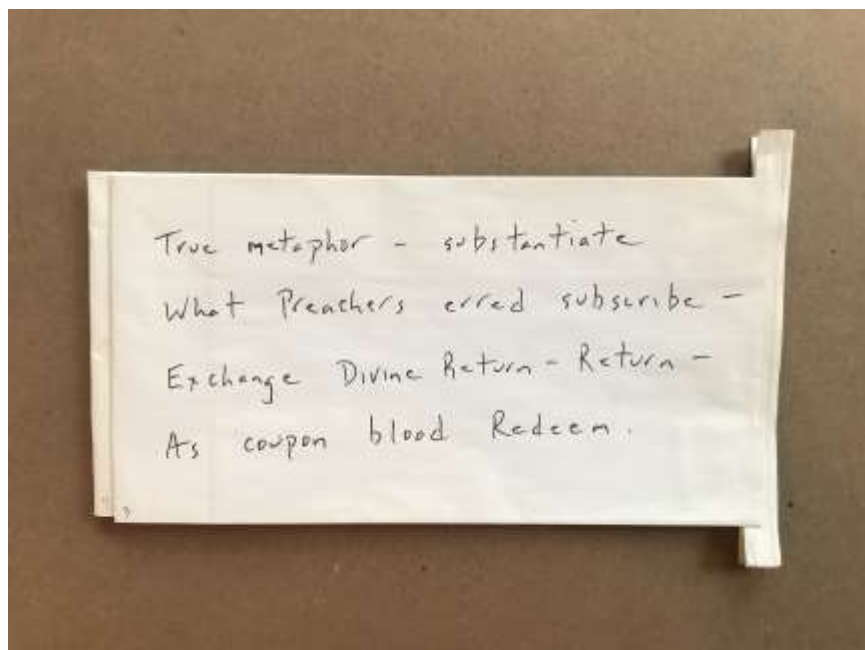


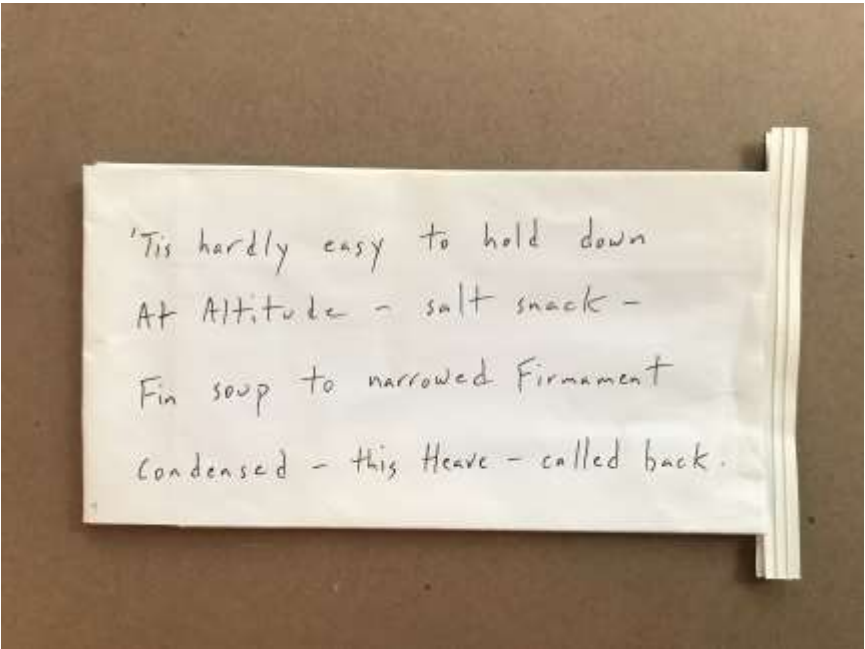
every portal holds emptiness that founds wall that bound it
that founds walls that bound it, this gives skin to what lives as I
this gives skin to what lives as I, this wholeness my body walls give my center
this wholeness my body walls give my center gives allowance to be more or all
allowance to be more or all lets one or nothing dare each other
letting one or nothing dare each other this gives skin to what lives as I
this gives skin to what lives as I, that founds the walls that bound it.

Upshot

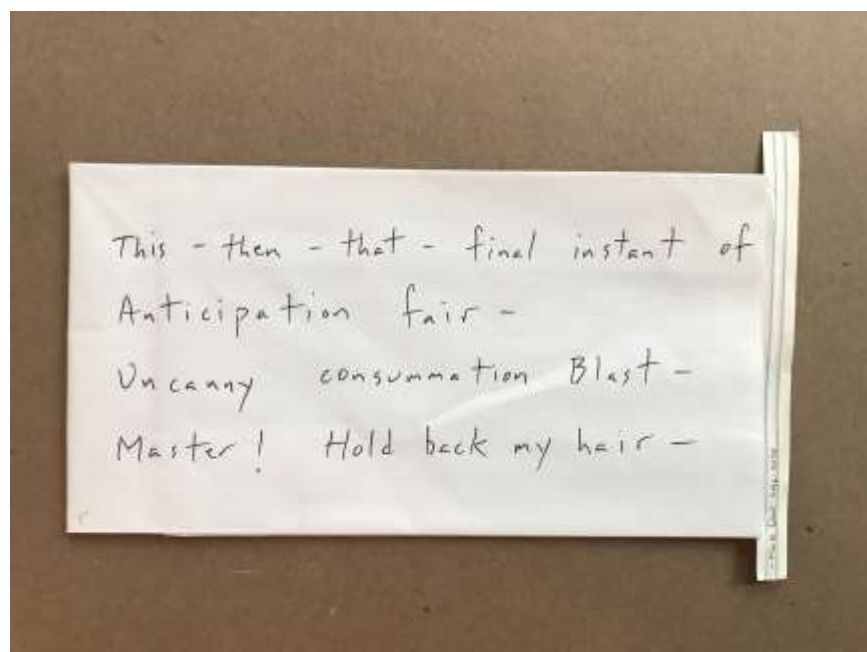




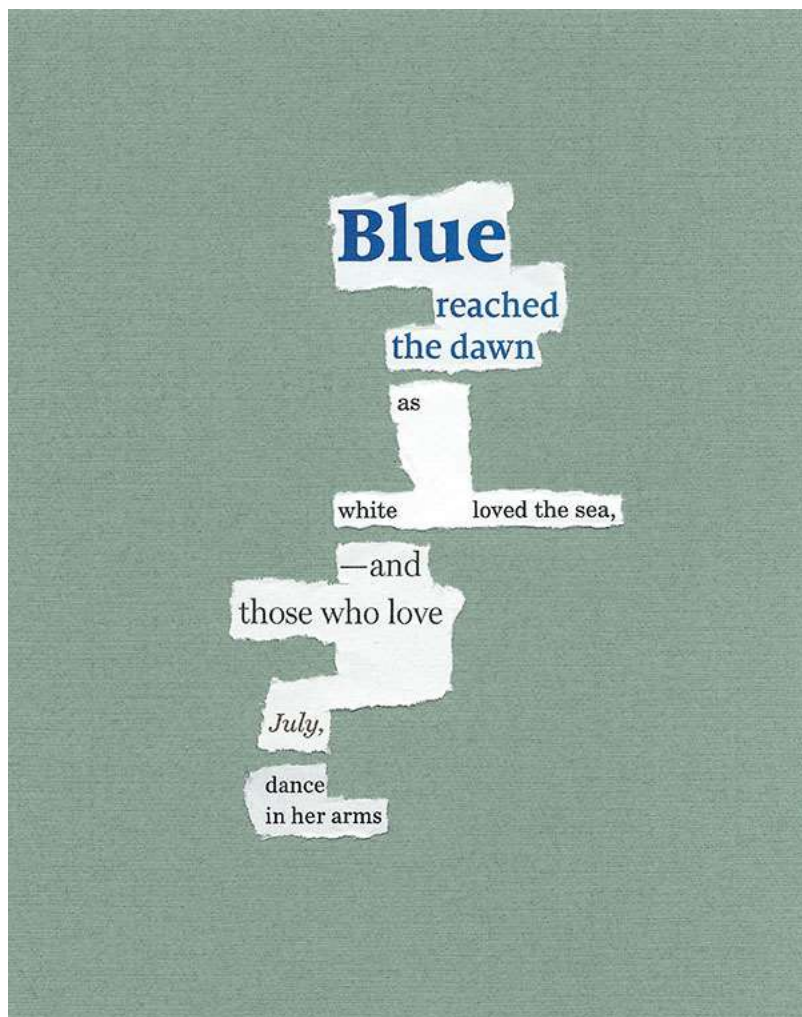




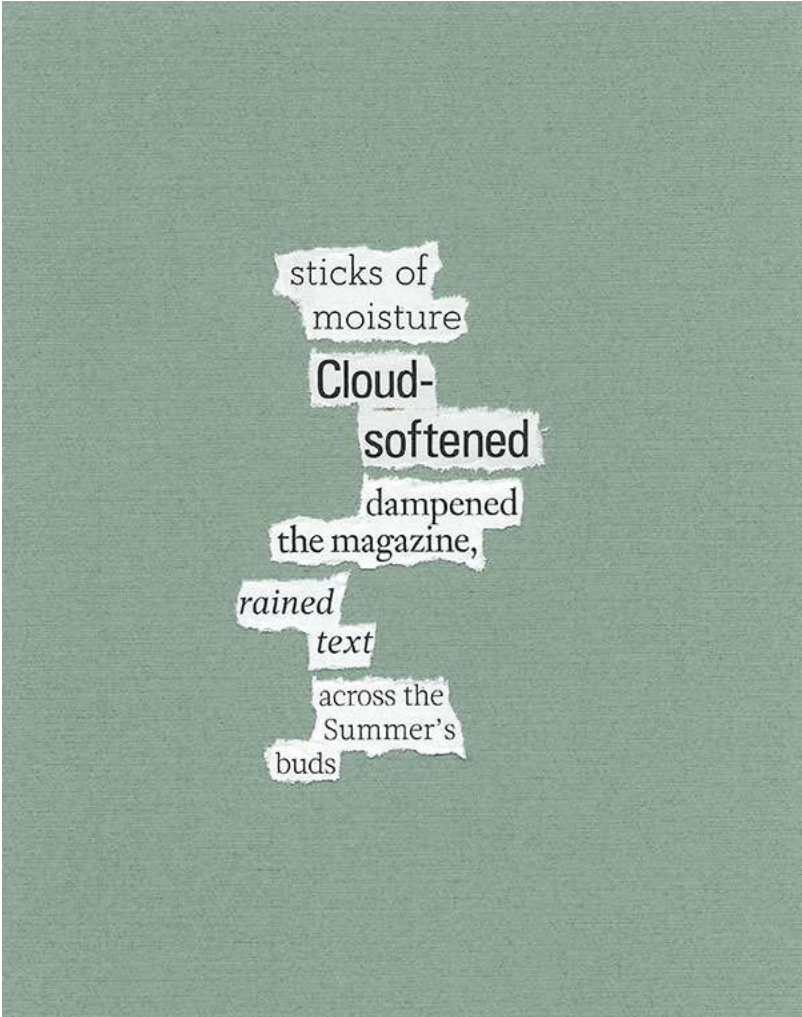
'Tis hardly easy to hold down
At Altitude - salt snack -
Fin soup to narrowed Firmament
Condensed - this Heave - called back.



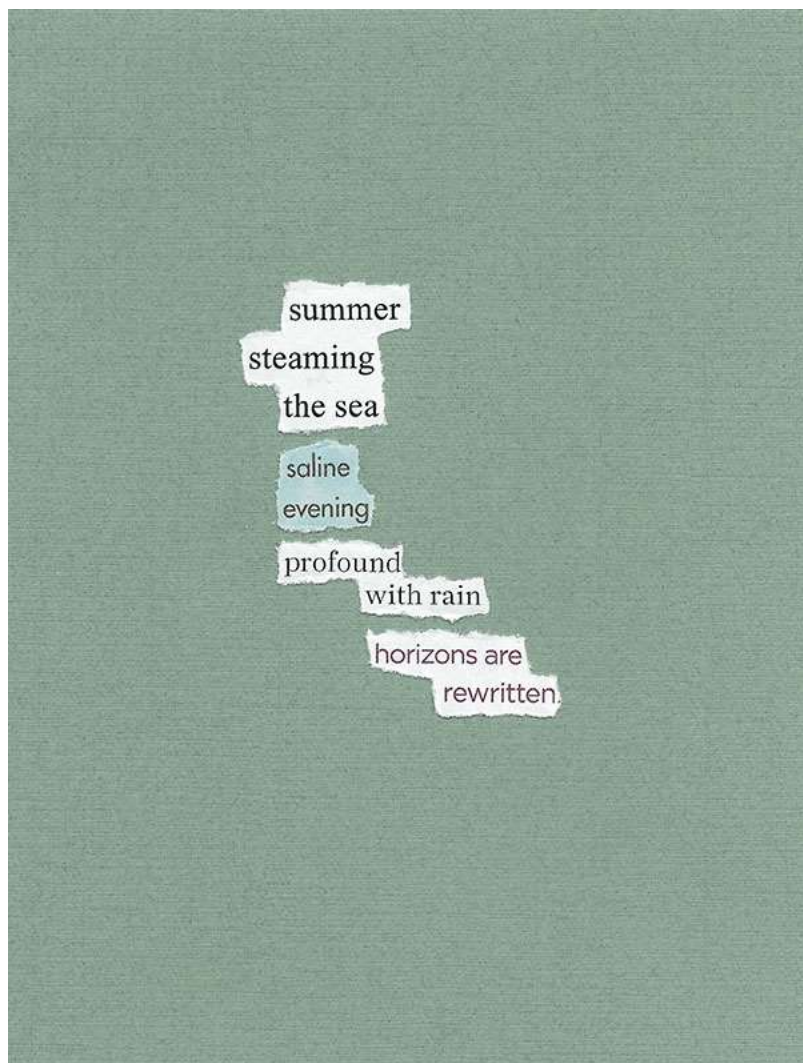
Blue



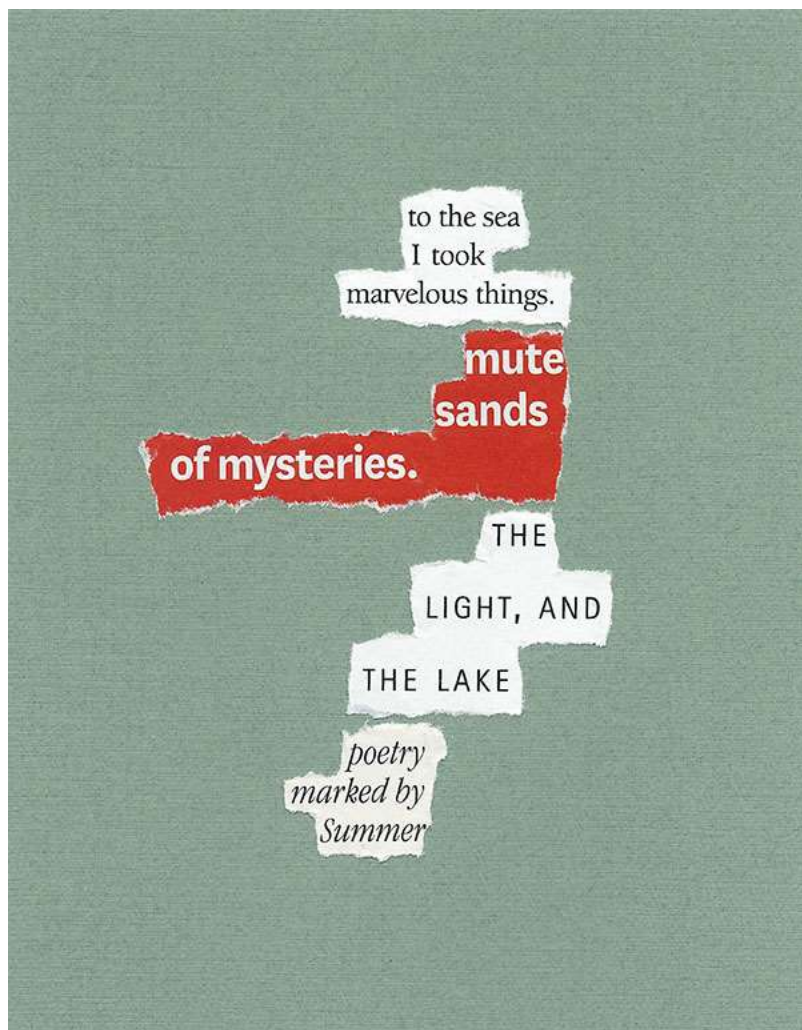
sticks of moisture



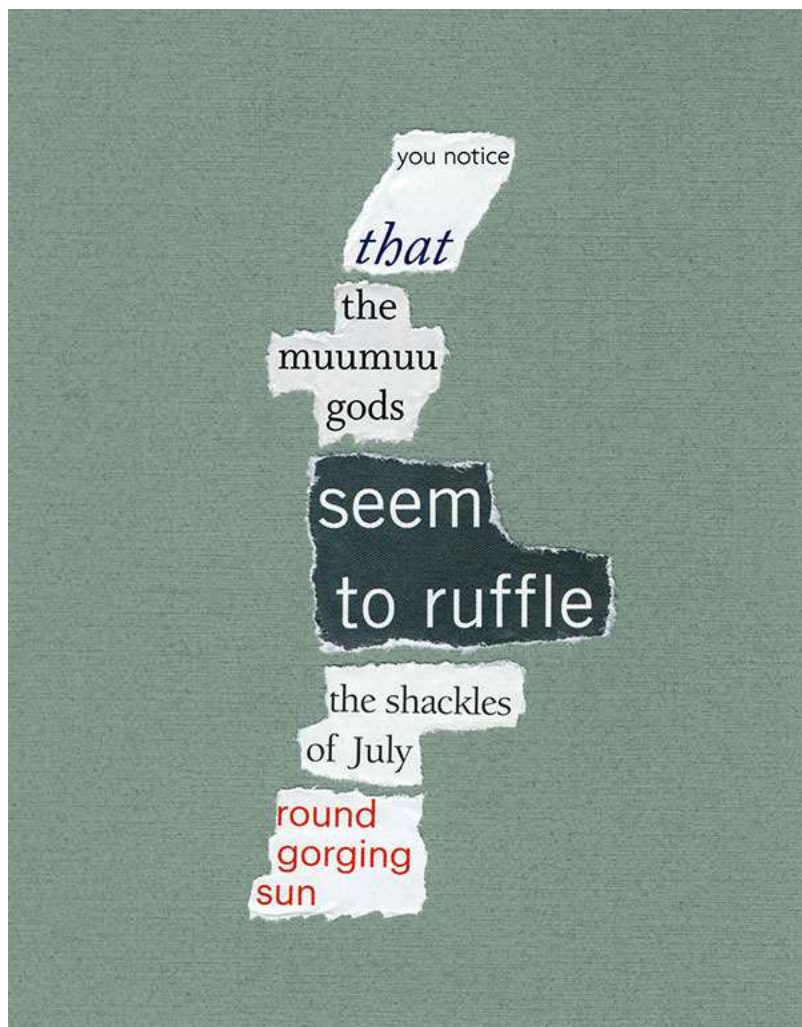
summer steaming



to the sea



you notice

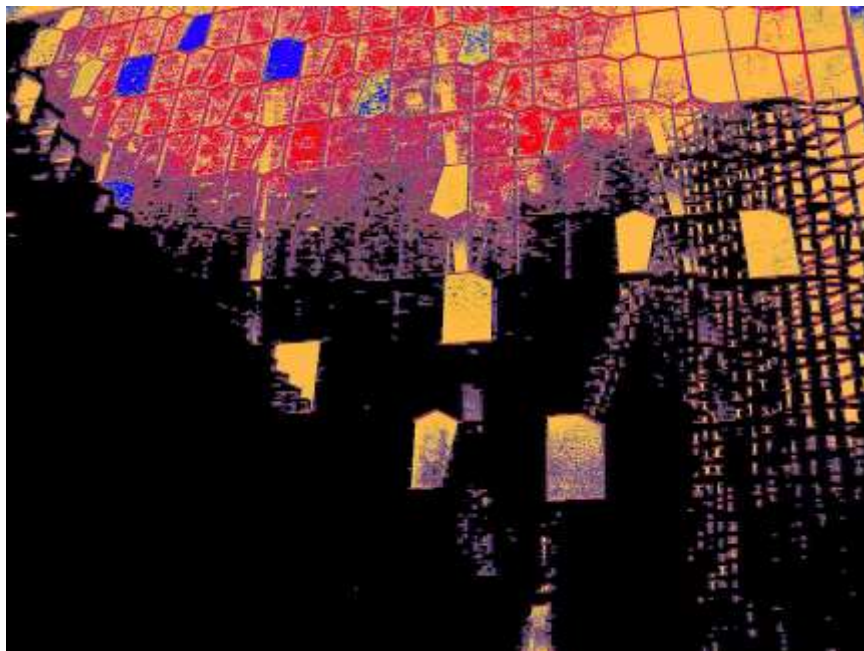


Surplus Ephemera (erasure)



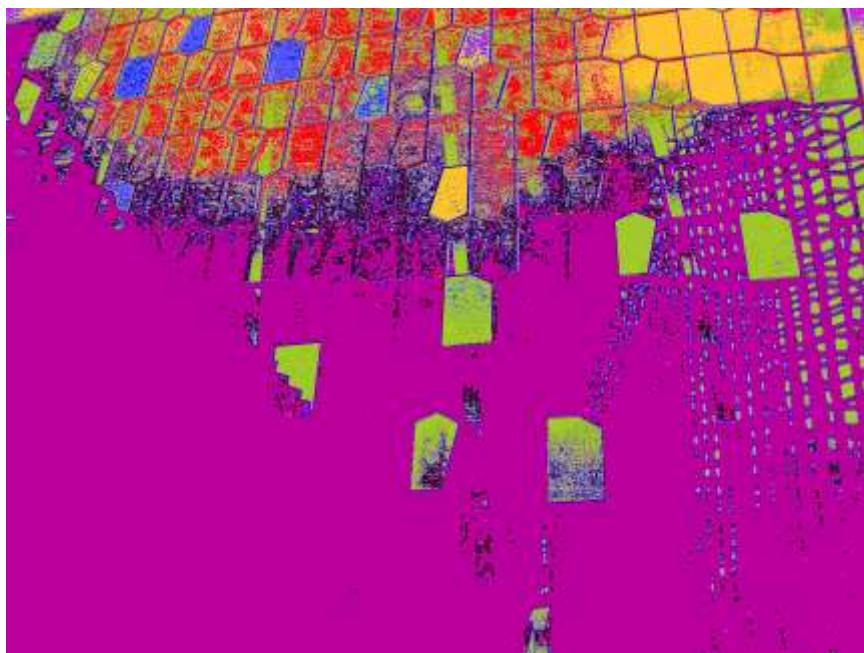
Audio available at www.wordforword.info/vol36/Howard.html

Surplus Ephemera (sonictext)

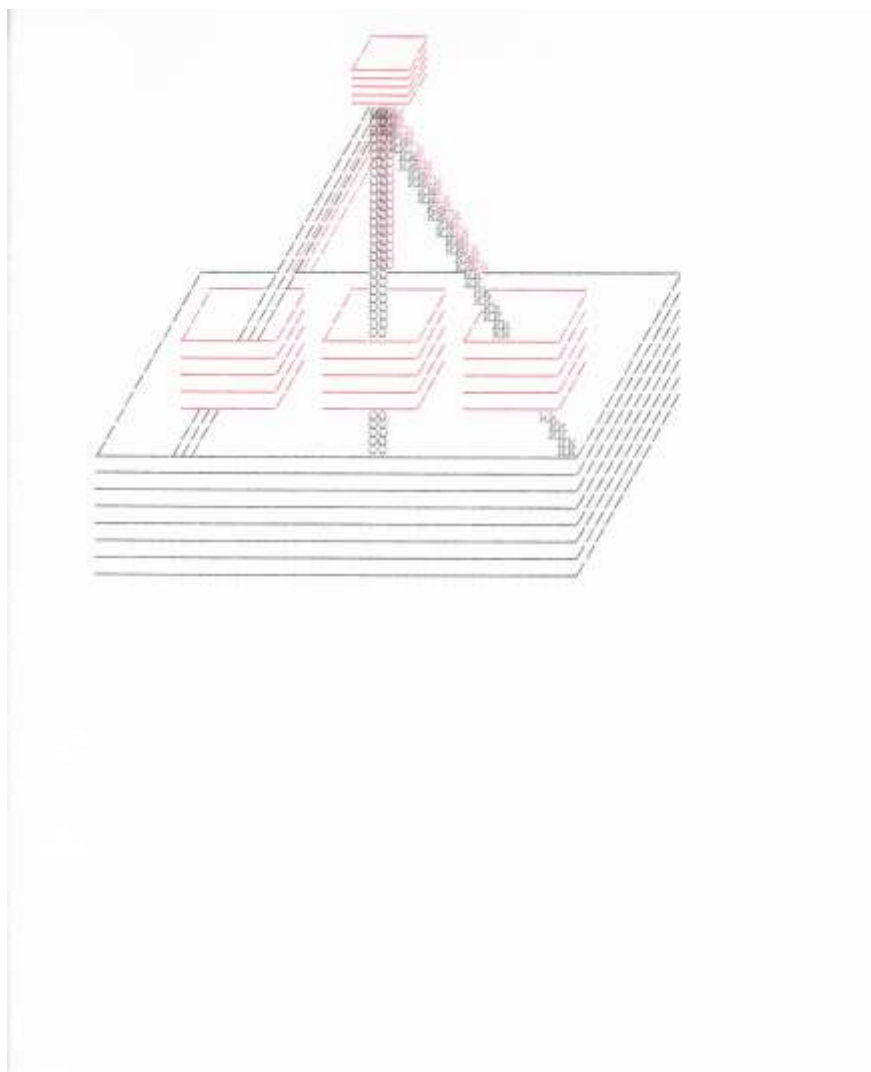


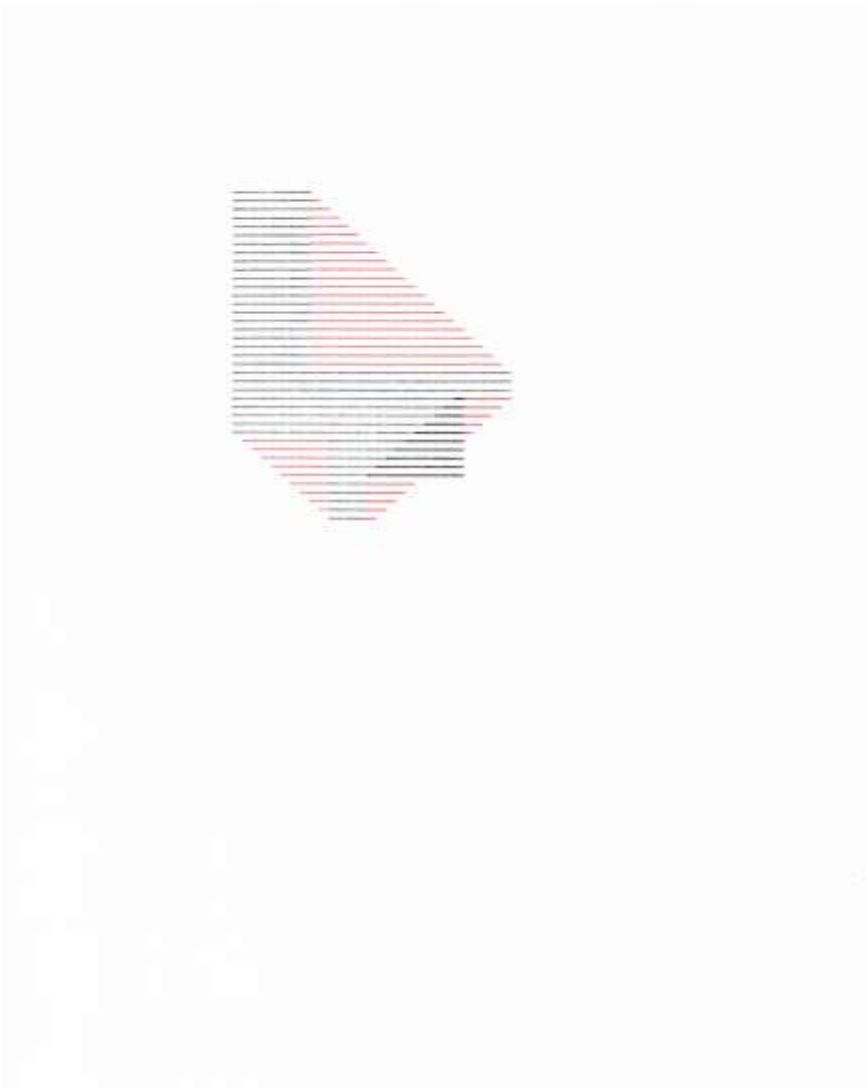
Audio available at www.wordforword.info/vol36/Howard.html

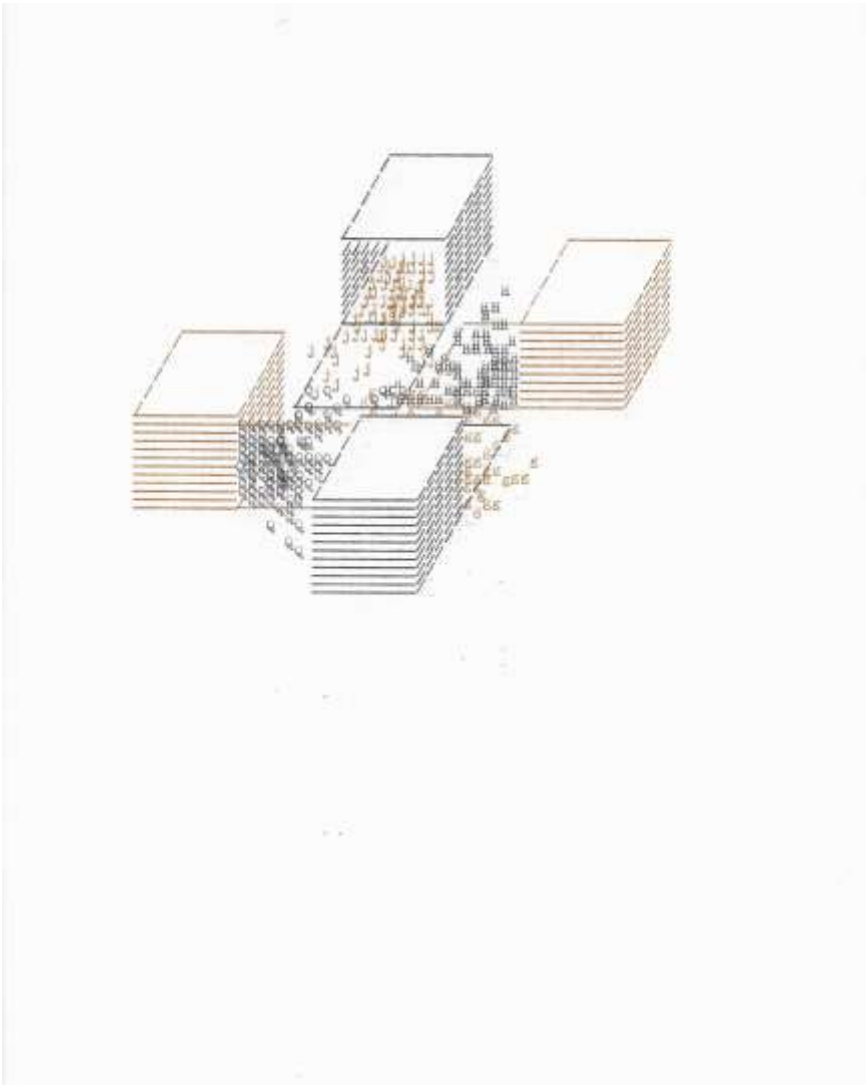
Surplus Ephemera (code poem)

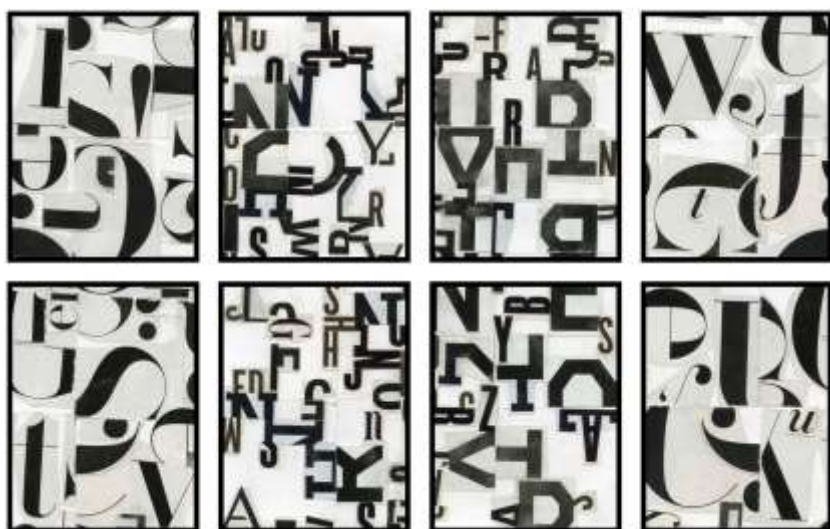


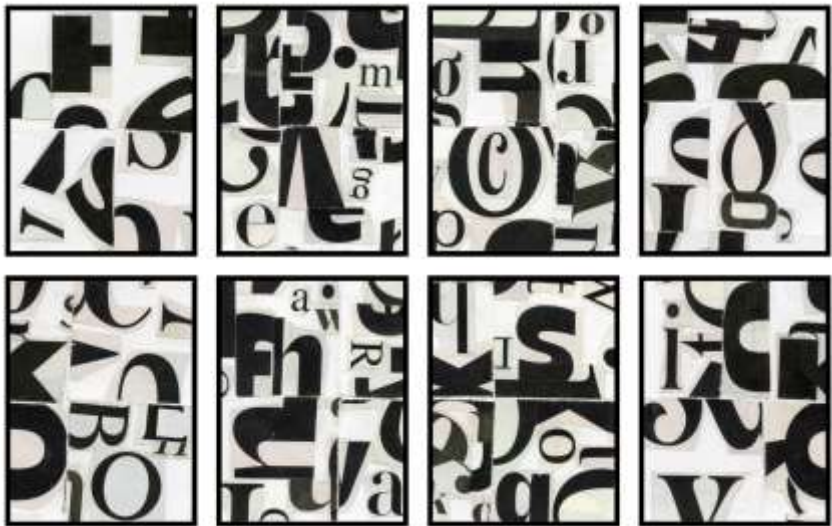
Audio available at www.wordforword.info/vol36/Howard.html

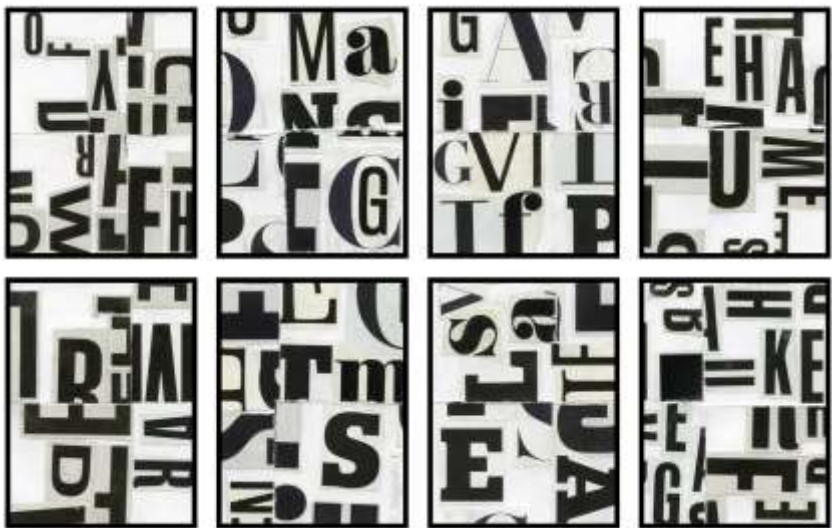


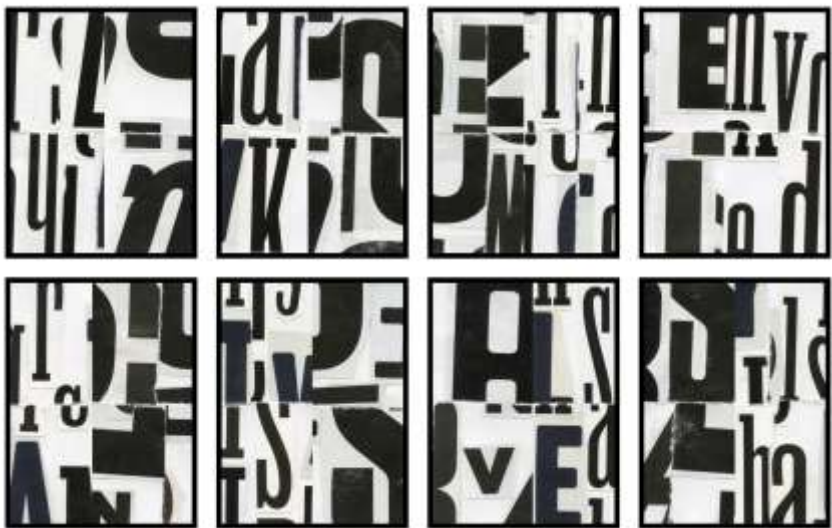


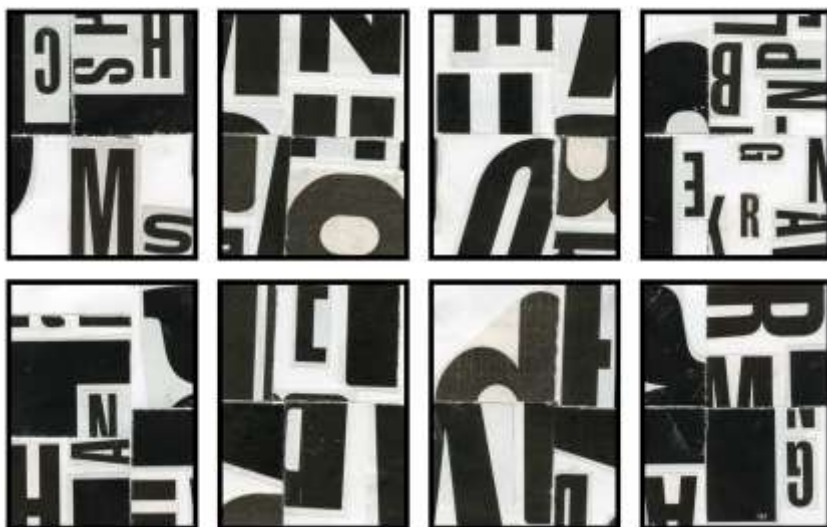












Balenciaga



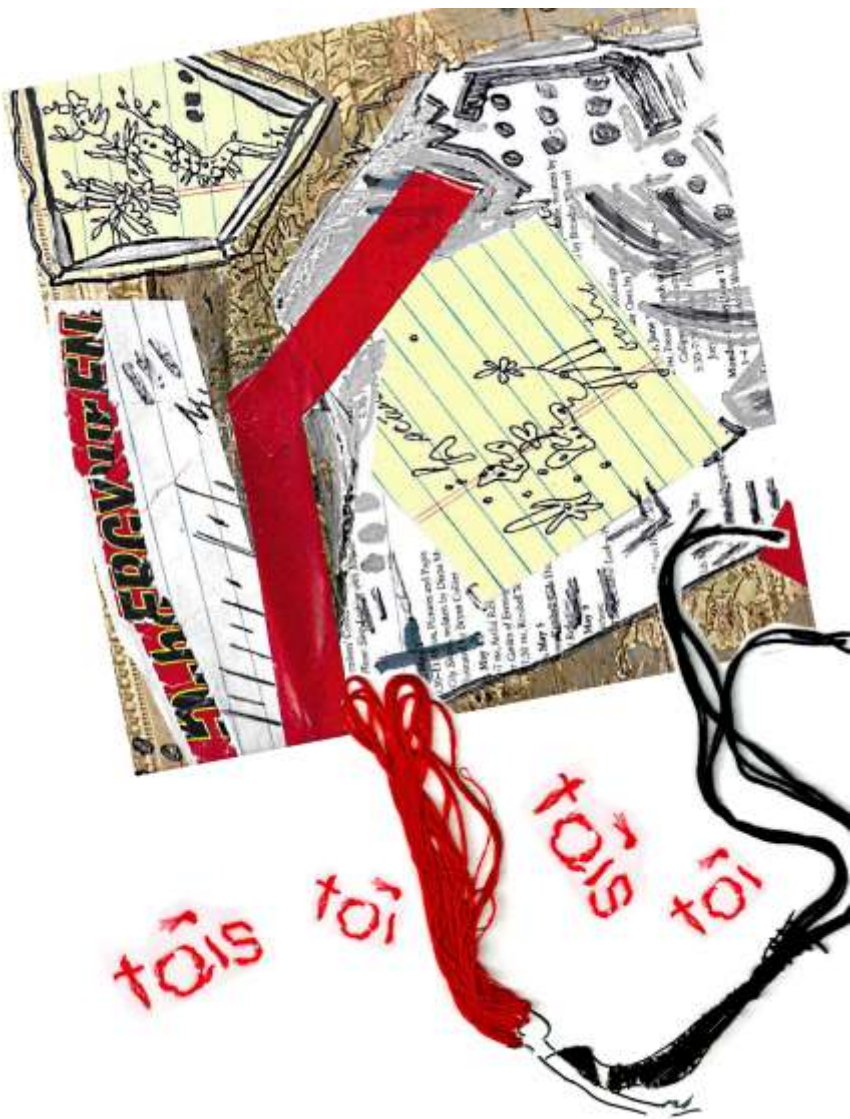
memory wheel



memory will



ttais toi



Michael Basinski

from PANDEMONIUM



from PANDEMONIUM



Michael Basinski

from PANDEMONIUM



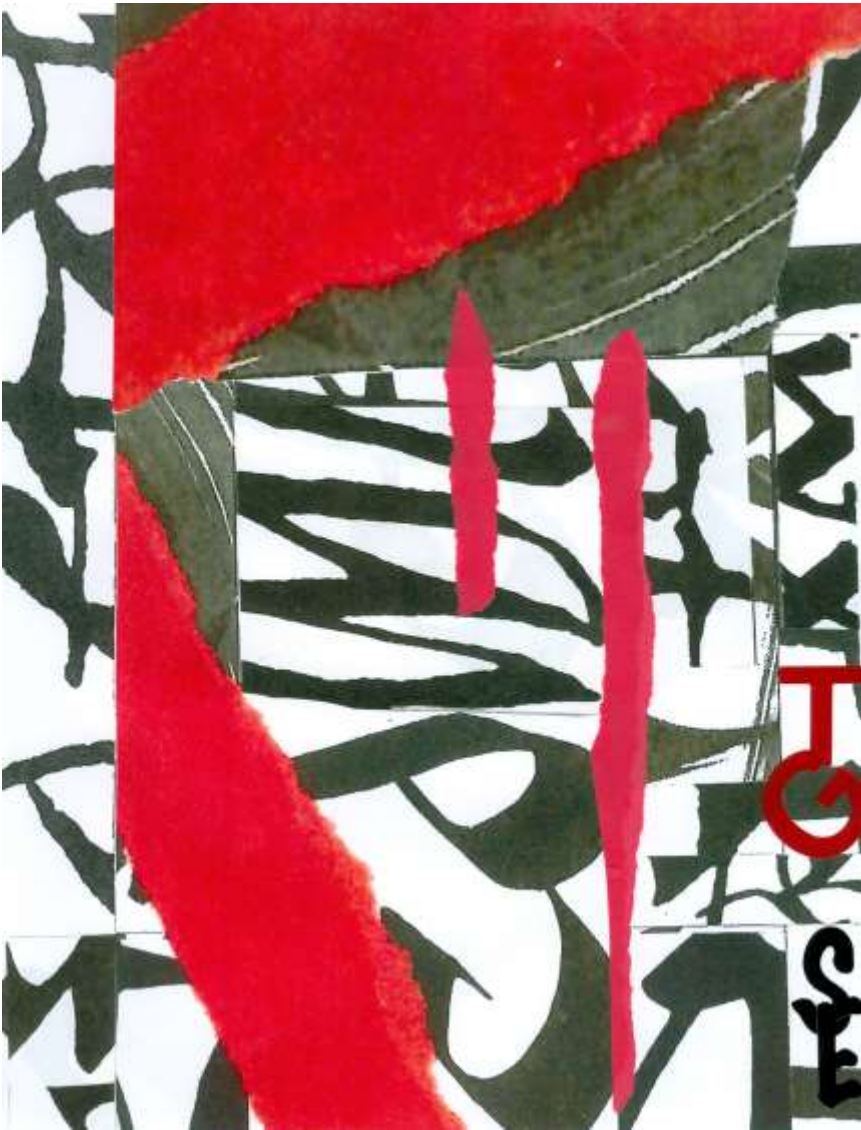
Covid #1



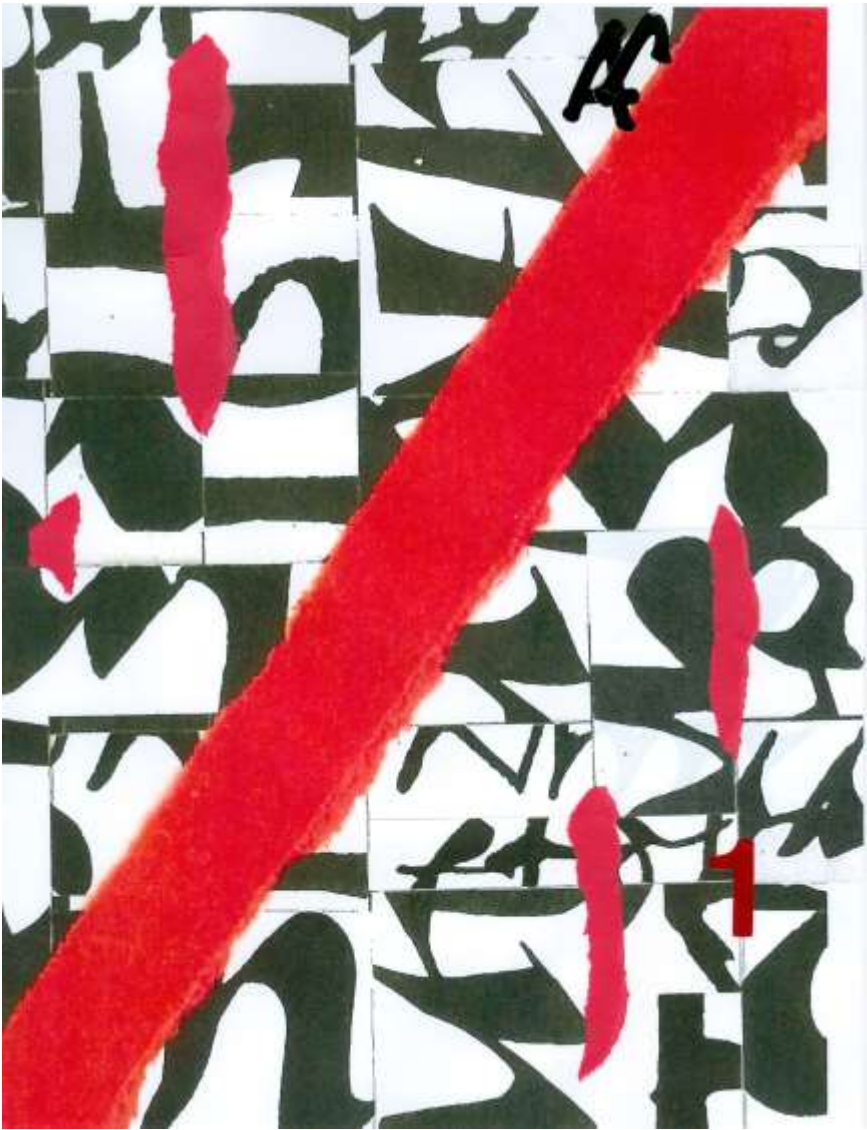
Covid #2



Covid #3



Covid #4



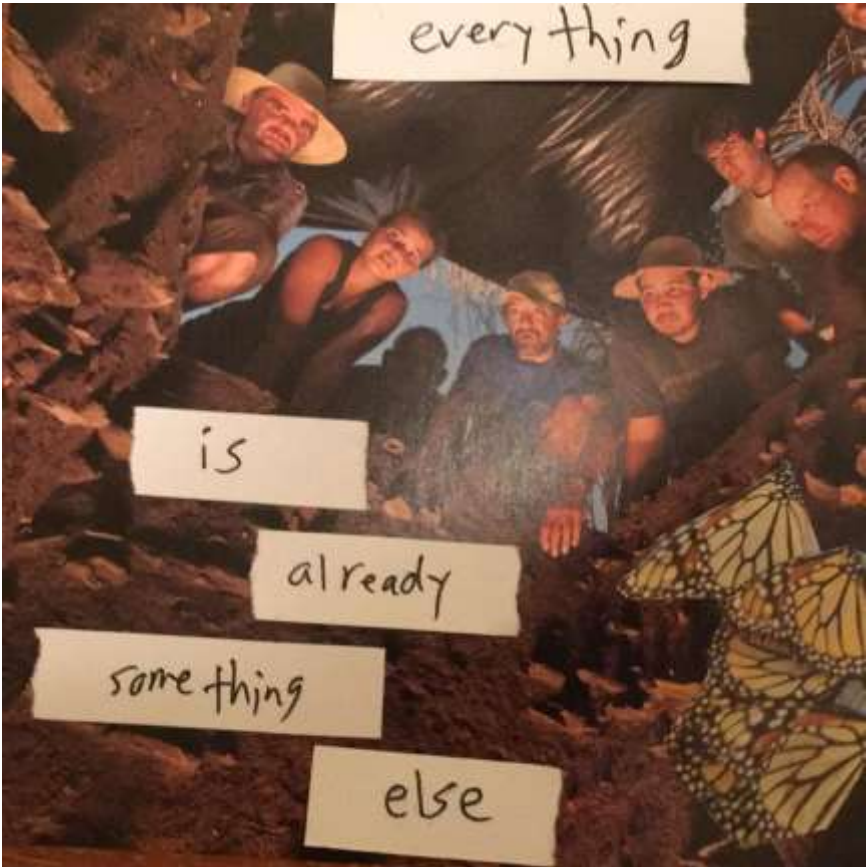
Covid #5



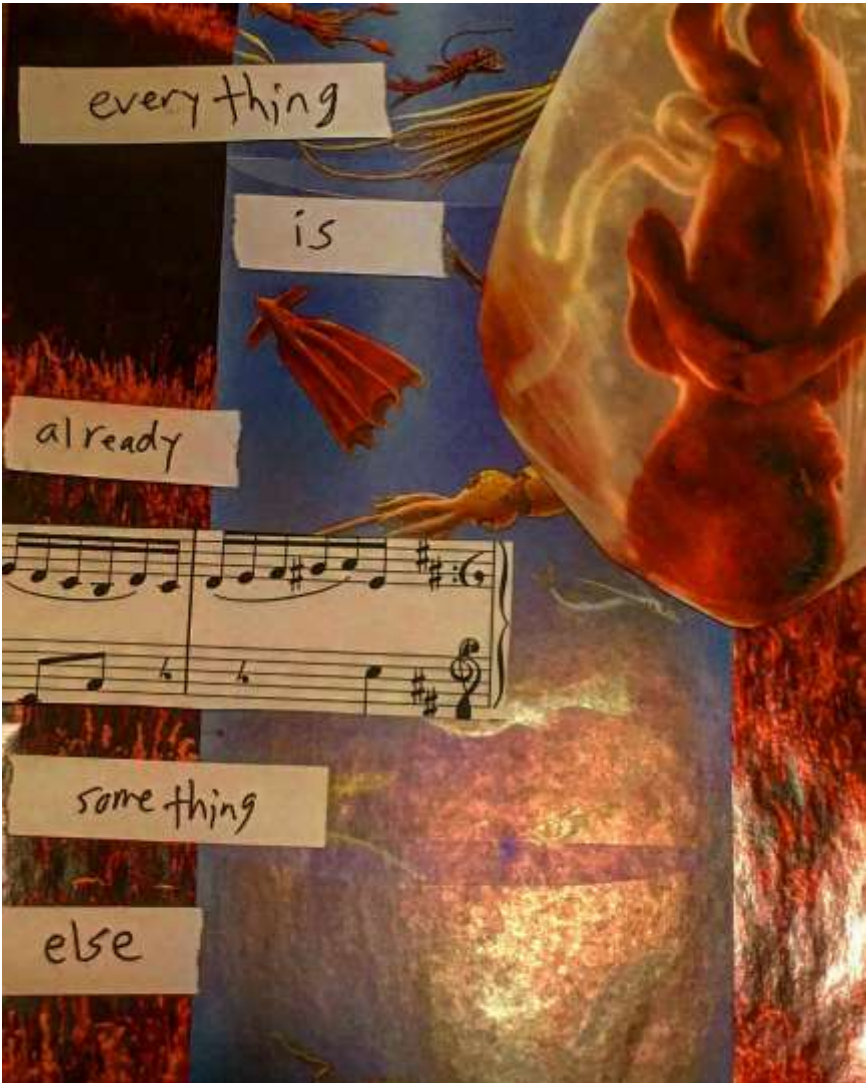
Everything Is Already Something Else #1



Everything Is Already Something Else #2



Everything Is Already Something Else #3



Xtro Diary 31



Xtro Diary 32

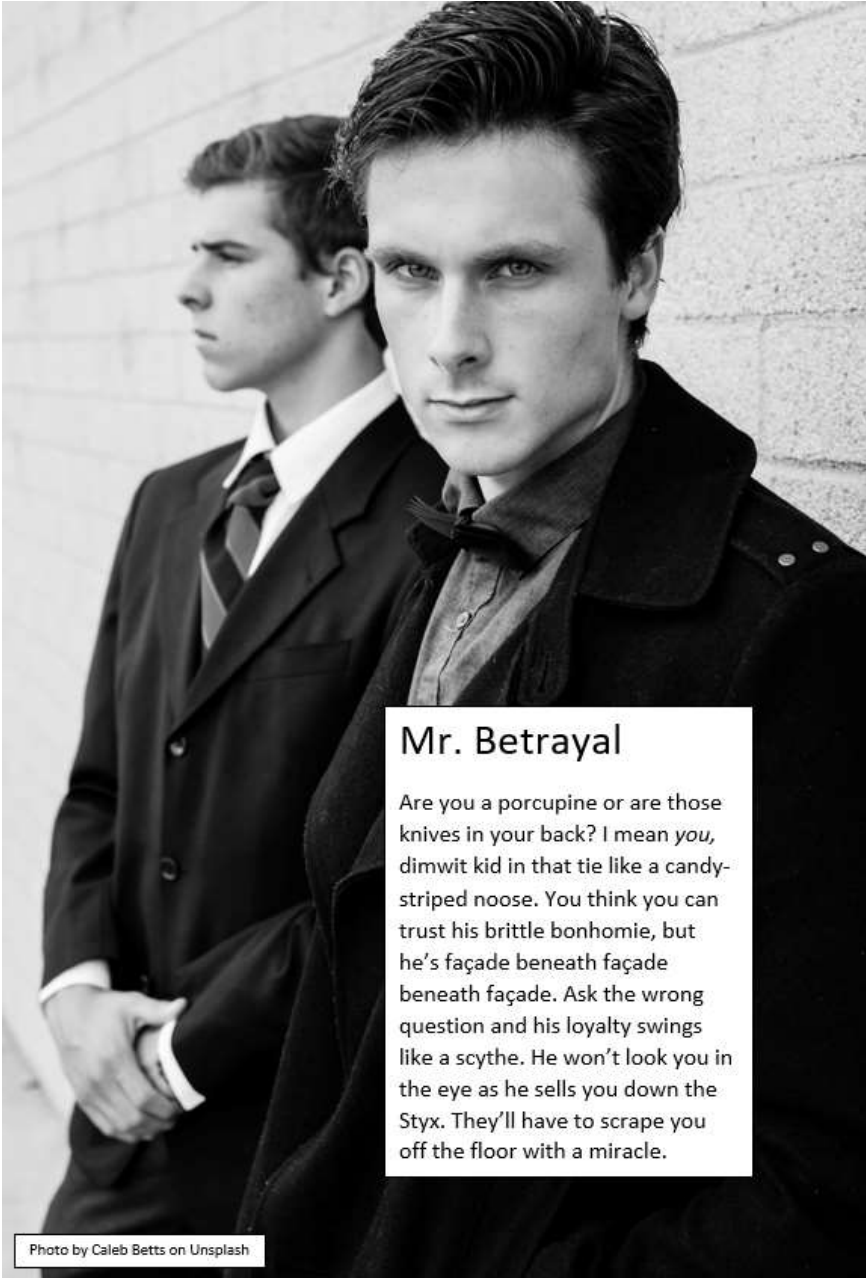








Mr. Betrayal

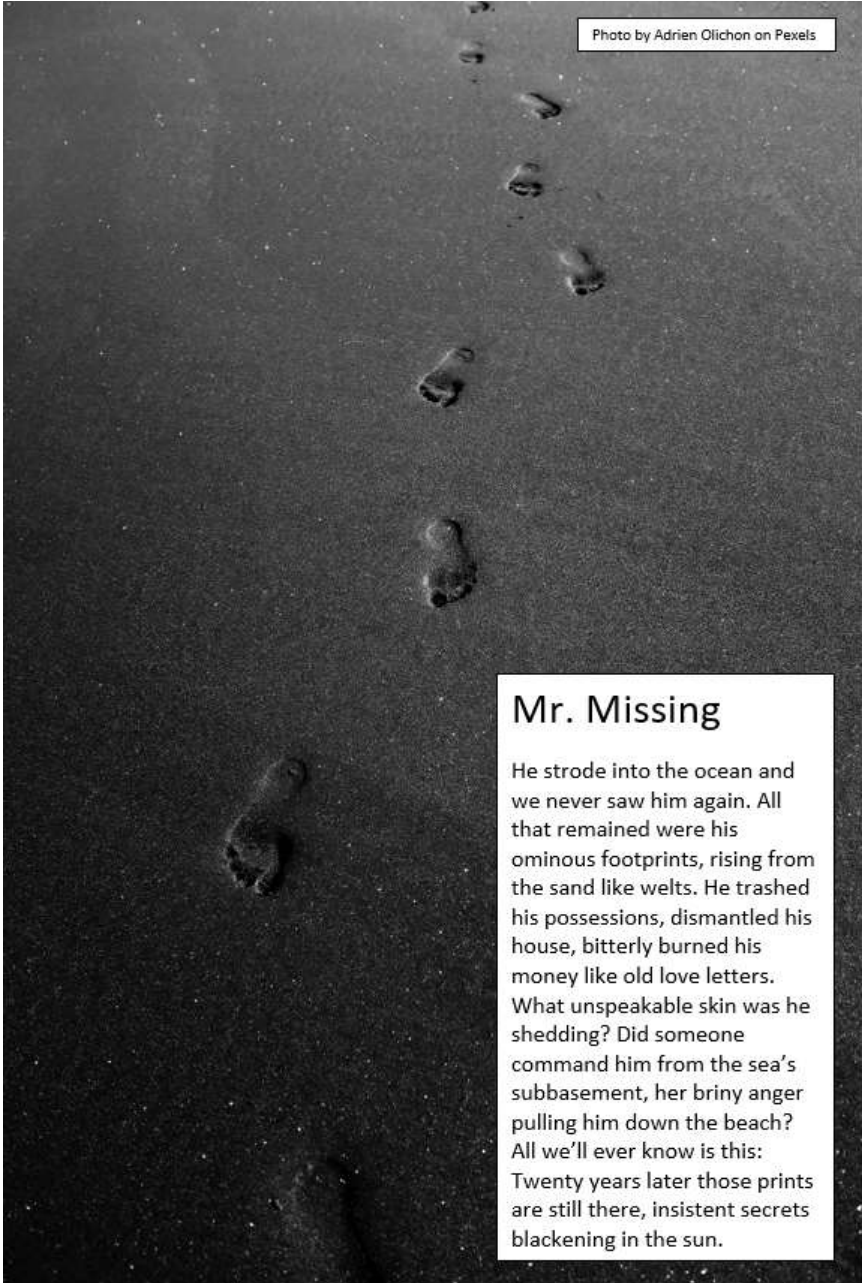


Mr. Betrayal

Are you a porcupine or are those knives in your back? I mean *you*, dimwit kid in that tie like a candy-striped noose. You think you can trust his brittle bonhomie, but he's façade beneath façade beneath façade. Ask the wrong question and his loyalty swings like a scythe. He won't look you in the eye as he sells you down the Styx. They'll have to scrape you off the floor with a miracle.

Photo by Caleb Betts on Unsplash

Mr. Missing



Mr. Missing

He strode into the ocean and we never saw him again. All that remained were his ominous footprints, rising from the sand like welts. He trashed his possessions, dismantled his house, bitterly burned his money like old love letters. What unspeakable skin was he shedding? Did someone command him from the sea's subbasement, her briny anger pulling him down the beach? All we'll ever know is this: Twenty years later those prints are still there, insistent secrets blackening in the sun.

Mr. Show-Off

Mr. Show-Off

Like Norma Desperate, I'm ready for my close-up. I've glued eyes on my nipples, lodged a moonstone in my navel, and my soul is seeping through my chest. Gaze amorously at my heart-shaped torso: There's a melodrama playing inside. I'll fling myself open to astound you—peel back clothes, skin, flesh, my elaborate guts. When my innermost fibers explode in flames, whatever's left of you will applaud.



Photo by Marcelo Issa from Pexels

Mr. Splash

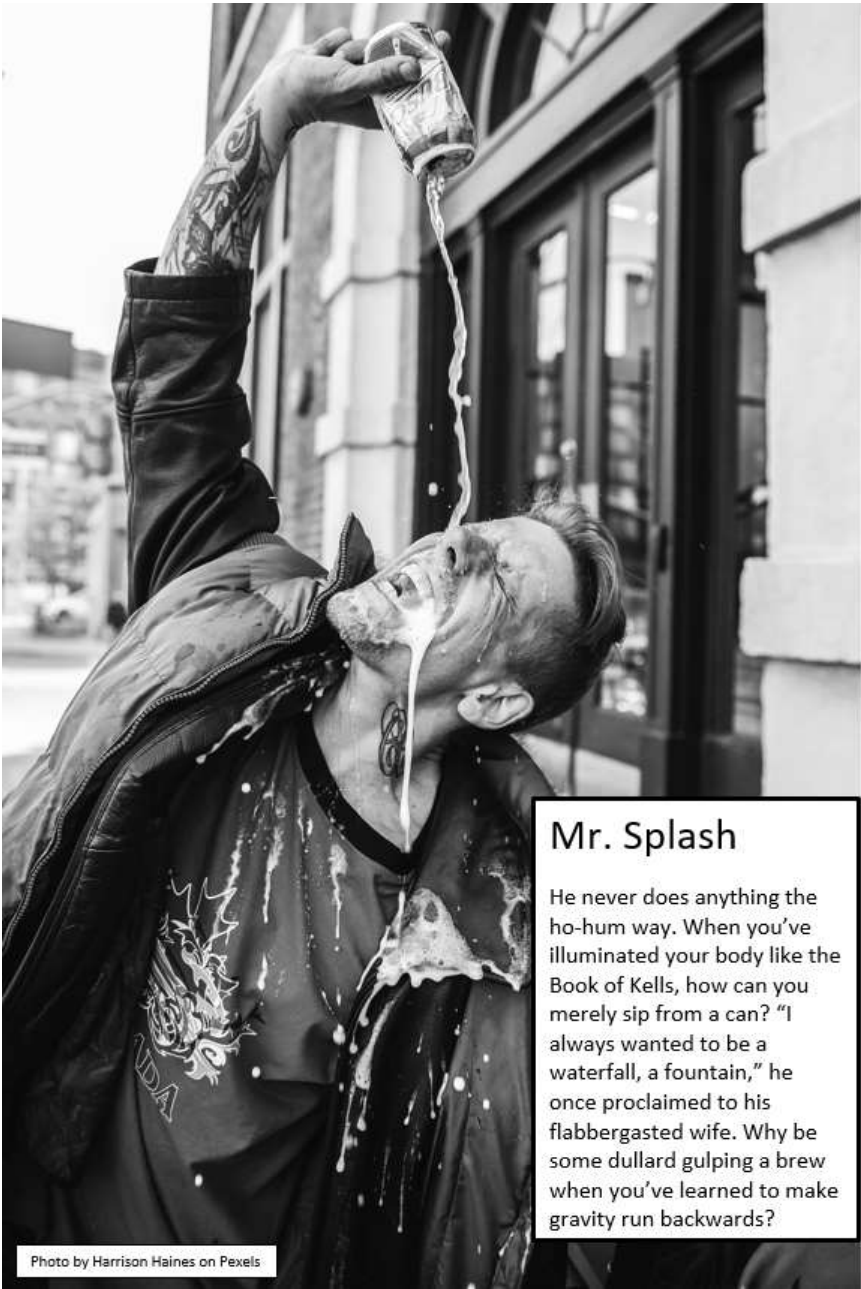


Photo by Harrison Haines on Pexels

Mr. Splash

He never does anything the ho-hum way. When you’ve illuminated your body like the Book of Kells, how can you merely sip from a can? “I always wanted to be a waterfall, a fountain,” he once proclaimed to his flabbergasted wife. Why be some dullard gulping a brew when you’ve learned to make gravity run backwards?

Twin Black Books 1



Marilyn R. Rosenberg

Twin Black Books 2

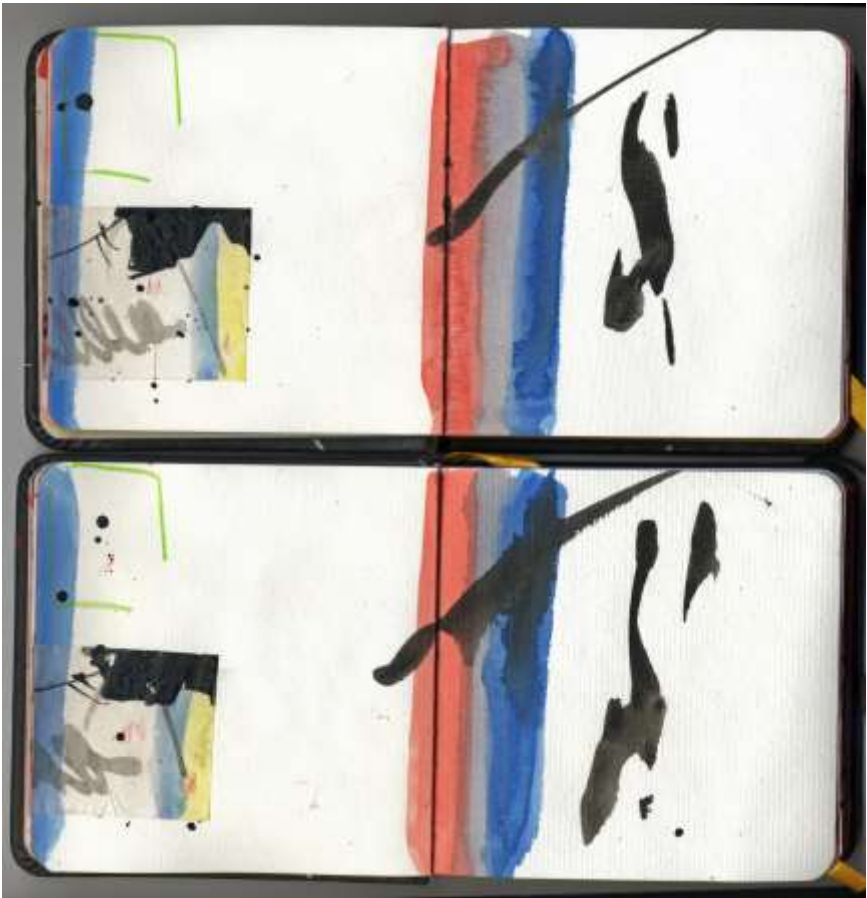


Marilyn R. Rosenberg

Twin Black Books 3



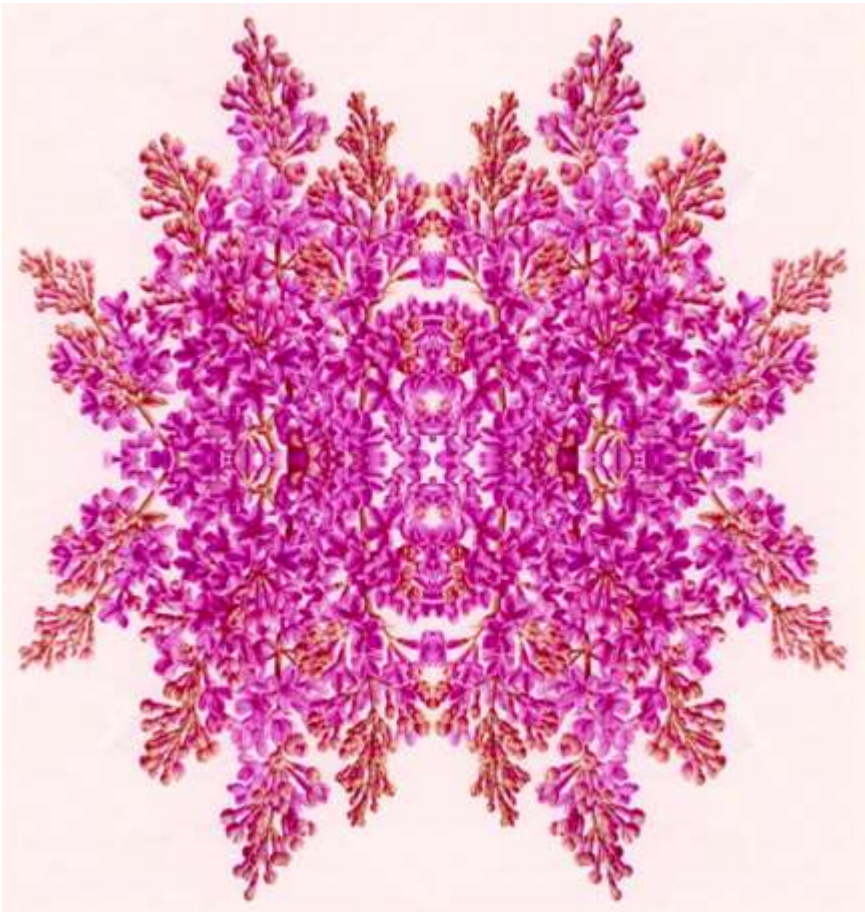
Twin Black Books 4



Smooth As the Silk Lipstick of Desire



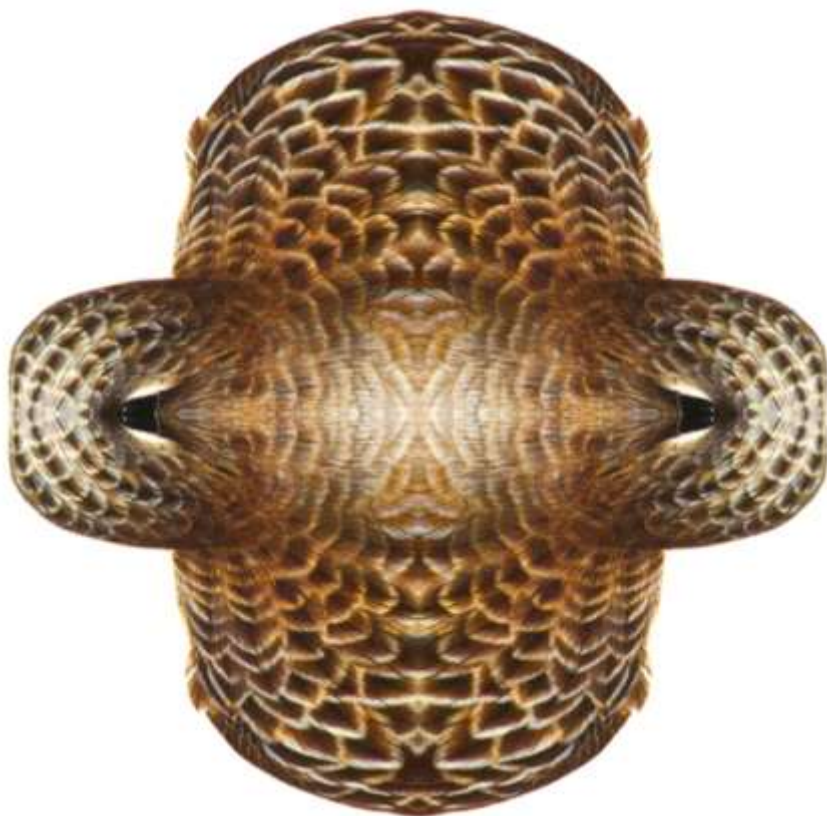
The Lightning's Foolhardy Knot of Dreams



Unanticipated Apprehension



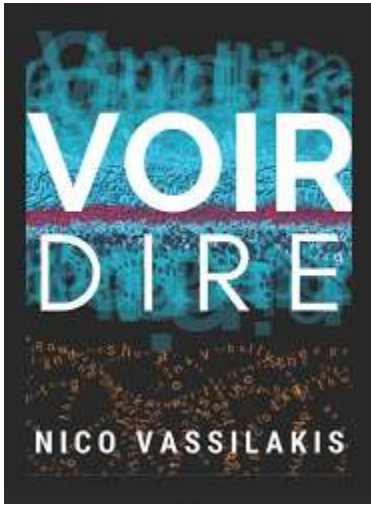
The Dream's Enticing Moonlight



The Neon Blush of Arousal



Nico Vassilakis and *Voir Dire*: How Say, See?



Voir Dire (Dusie, 2020)

First things first. But what comes first when faced with a book? The fact of the author? The title? The image on the cover? That all depends on how you find it. Let's say, considering that you aren't going to be browsing the sad poetry section of Chapters and stumble on this book—it won't be there—let's assume that most readers will approach this book because Nico Vassilakis. And yes, this book is Nico Vassilakis—very much so—though, perhaps not exactly how you might expect Nico Vassilakis. Let's come back to that.

Voir Dire. Here is the title. Forgive my ignorance, but what is that? Ah! It's a legal term—no wonder it was so strange to me. Of course, you knew it right away. Most of you, of course. But, if you're anything like me, you don't. The online Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *voir dire* as *a preliminary examination to determine the competency of a witness or juror*. What are we getting ourselves into? What crime has been committed? Who is the witness or juror, and who is judging their competency? But it is important to note that the etymology of *voir dire* is Anglo-French, literally, to speak the truth.

Before the book is opened there still remains the image on the cover. We've all moved passed the cliché never judge a book by its cover, I hope. It's like saying disregard first impressions. Who would do that?

The image we find on the cover is the Nico we know. A visceral frothing of blue letters through which there is a streak of red—and below that froth (of sea, of mouth) circles composed of brown sentences.

So, before opening the book we already have quite a lot of information that gives us some idea of what lies ahead. Not lies. Truth. At least an angle of honesty. Though it is certainly true that Vassilakis has published an extensive amount of poetry and prose that is not visual in its focus, what he is known for is his vispo. So, it might come as some surprise that this book contains no visual poetry, save one very minimal piece at the conclusion of the work. No, this book is called *Voir Dire*, and what we get is Vassilakis thinking about looking, thinking about visual poetry—thinking about a life in looking, exploring—thinking about being seen.

There has been no crime. We witness Vassilakis witnessing. Yes, this is confession, but more than that *Voir Dire* is a desperate attempt to sort. This is not a worked-out thesis, it is a process, and as such it is messy, dizzying—downright fractured. The book swings from observation to manifesto, inner struggle to address—and as readers we are inserted into this mindscape of uncertainty. It is, in fact, *the* process. Here is an unfiltered glimpse into the void that cheers on each artist,

“Being a poet, a real poet, is becoming near impossible in this world. Too many other concerns have made us into hybrid poets, living as poets in tangential situations. How are we able to maintain focus in this accelerated environment?”

Indeed, how focus? How focus on the image—how focus on this work? There is no answer. The jury is hung. But we must try. Perhaps there *has* been a crime, but if there has it blends perfectly into ‘things as they are’. I hate ‘things as they are’.

"Laments for a Broken World:" Review of *Threnodies*, by Joel Chace



Threnodies (Moria Books, 2019)

Over thirty years ago, towards the dismal end of the Reagan administration (though not its legacy of austerity, greed, cruelty, scapegoating, and deception, running into our awful, embattled present), Nathaniel Tarn took note of—and aim at—recent developments in American poetry. Excoriating university-guided poetic production and its self-willed hermeticism, Tarn wrote:

When you talk only to sibling spouses you can talk in code. The massive critical vocabulary engendered by academic “new criticism” on the belly of “modernism” has led...to “wordsmithing” for its own sake, a frenzied concentration on word games without any of the impetus of modernist content or concern.ⁱ

Tarn’s response was largely directed to MFA creative writing graduates, explicitly their repudiation of a more broadly expressed public poetry and, implicitly, the denial by these poets of any notion of civic identity and engagement. With so much contemporary poetic practice confronting various kinds of identities in provocative, polemical, and often memorable transparent reckonings, the poems that comprise Joel Chace’s *Threnodies* might first seem ponderous, even obscure. However, a careful immersion into the work reveals formal experimentation matched with a deeply sensitive ethical core.

For many years, Chace's commitments and conventions have always been hybrid efforts to fuse innovative configurations on the page and screen and probe real and imagined scenarios, catastrophes, and future possibilities. For over four decades, he has published numerous chapbooks, volumes, and broadsheets (*Cleaning the Mirror: Selected and New Poems* was published in 2008 and reviewed in *Jacket* 36). This work has powerful immediacy: It is not so much that his earlier visual poetry stunted or distracted from the rich, multifarious network of representations he rendered as much as the present time of pandemic, police brutality, racist violence, and various other forms of global calamity pressurize the reading experience. Reading these poems in lockdown, one is both engaged and engulfed by them. The stunted and staggered lines and language dispersed through this volume correlate to the world Chace reflects on: broken, haphazard, in need of both translation and transformation.

The volume is divided into three sections, a triptych of laments and concerns, ranging across environments, continents, timelines, and histories. The first section, *timocracy*, merges fairytale with a fragmented coming-of-age narrative of an unnamed subject, an anti-humanist, anti-art ogre soon to run the world, sooner still "to neglect music and begin to gather wealth." Soulless, depthless, he is

Lo-
cked in a wh-
it world wit-
h his w-
hite hea-
rt, a white,
dry win-
d blowing
through it.

Whiteness captures emptiness, a void of value. Dislocating words and lines forces the reader to read carefully, slowly, reassembling them in order to render meaning but also remember that the rendering here reflects the narrative perception of a wrecked, warped reality. In the process of moving from stanza to broken stanza, the homophonic echo of "alignment" and "what a line meant" kept ringing in my brain. Chace is a no mere trickster technician but a Utopian whose vision can be construed through the negation of the representation he builds. The arrogant,

power-mad Midas here eschews “all/that is mir-/aculous” for “he b-/elieves in/just
hi-/mself.” To this ostensible winner of wealth goes no spoils for

When i-

t’s ju-

st a-

about money,

G-

od le-

aves the room.

Note that God is bifurcated while money and property are intact. Antinomian are the present the powerful to an equitable, tenable, tender reality. The shape of lines and words confer an ethical force that often more streamlined and rhetorically direct poetic compositions dilute and dispel.

The second section’s title, *umarked*, sits next to the following curious epigraph or notation: “(upwards of 1,200, Tuam, Smyllum)”. No explanatory notes are included but the names refer to two Catholic children’s homes operating in the twentieth century, one in a town in the west of Ireland and the other located in Lanark, Scotland. In the past decade, over a thousand bodies were discovered, long after each facility had closed. Chace constructs a shattering memorial to the victims, a searing indictment of the assailants, and a furious take-down of the various persons, policies, and institutions. His cri-de-coeur is a jagged map of word mosaics and lines—sometimes spilling, sometimes spooling, breaking up, or breaking down—incorporating remembrance with wretched descriptions of traumatized, dead bodies that had been disappeared, stored away in fugitive burial sites such as drainage ditches, closets, under makeshift mass graves, tormented and then forgotten. The various repositories of the victims are noted and an inventory of the cast of characters in this real tragedy presented:

tanks, chambers, compartments

nuns, priests

bishops, archbishops

Mary Ann

Broderick, Joseph Gavin, Marian

Brigid Mulryan

cardinals,

magistrates

Patrick Walsh, Mary

C. Rafferty, Francis M. Heaney

Ann Marion Fahy, Joseph

Demsey, Anne Dillon

If in death they're

treated with disdain

their play careful,

times they were allowed to gather in

In this middle section, unlike in the first, words and phrases are not disassembled but are sutured together; proper names are detached—there is a splintering effect in this roll-call, each item and article summoned with the unwieldiness of a vexed memory, the incomplete archive duplicating the uncertainty of the number of persons lost. Scission and elision, along with incomplete phrases adding ambivalent qualifiers and debilitate any narrative thread (“their play careful,/times they were allowed to gather in) disturb the coherence of this section that is less formally broken than its predecessor and signals an encroaching erasure. The barbaric, long standing violation of (young) human rights—whose actual scale cannot be known or fathomed—is spliced and scattered in thickets of observations, recommendations, partial recapitulations, and recriminations. This patterning has the dual effect of seeming to present found, if fragmented, text with much of its matter lost; complete content and context unavailable:

They'd look for a piece of

polyurethane, anything

that'd slice your skin

Church has never

had responsibility for -- that

remains a matter for statutory

authorities

and give them

proper burial, that's what I'd just

love

The gaps are painful; processing the materials is an occasion to ponder the materiality of the presented language but also to consider what is not known, unclear, unavailable to assess given these monumental tragedies. Rather than enforce a sense of frustration and encourage abandonment of trying to understand what went on, what is happening—with the historical contexts, with partial meanings and interpretations grasped, with the actual experience of reading —this elegiac, polemical poem nurtures the need to get further claims on what happened and why. Any mystery or abstracted vision serves not obfuscation but a sense of interrogation, getting a heightened sense of what historical witness is or should be.

The final part of this Book of Hours and Laments, is a mash-up, mix-up, or mess up, of three interwoven quasi-narratives in thirty-two sections. *Threnody in Three Voices* brings together commingling, competing narratives, discrete yet convergent, undertaking no logical, at least nominally, connections—which, of course, compels the reader to find them. One progressing story is extracted from Suetonius's *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, another about a 1950s polio diagnosis and its wider family effects, and another concerning the quotidian existence of a husband and his family. These separate tales slowly mesh together until becoming a bewildering, enchanting fusion, the arrangement of which rejects previous lineation for a blocky format:

...the merciless biddings of a tyrant, incessant Something told

him that he should inquire Leap year entry filled in by

about which classes -- or at least which major prosecution,

faithless friendships, the ruin mistake -- no February 29th

works -- he would be teaching. "We this year (1957).

haven't determined any of that, I'm afraid," of innocence,

the same causes issuing in Looked over papers mainly the

young woman replied. "Literature?" he asked. Upon which,

the meeting and did large ironing. was adjourned. The
same results,,,the wearisome monotony...

This vibrant, brutal bricolage invites no mastery, no closure, no resolution. “Same results?” “Wearisome monotony?” Here? Anywhere in Joel Chace’s work? Never! One consumes these swerving, smashing, broken parts to elicit unfolding, layered meanings, assumptions, and questions. Earlier, the poem asserts: “Never surely did more terrible calamities.” And the catastrophic plane we ply is the grounding of Joel Chace’s oeuvre, and in *Threnodies* he proves an expert elegist and experimenter. The effort is ambitious and arduous: Chace foregoes the easy show, the easy line, the easy or absolute conclusion on any subject he forensically investigates and spotlights.

In a 2011 interview with fellow poet Jane Joritz-Nakagawa, Chace recounts his discovery of George Oppen’s *Primitive* in 1978:

I remember the great pleasure of holding that book in hand, of being instantly taken by the haunting simplicity of the cover design, of the actual feel of its letter press texture; it continues to be a joy to handle this literal object that contains within it miraculous Objectivist Poems. Then, yes, the poems themselves. “Only” thirteen poems that accumulate to an immeasurable collective density; each piece possesses an astounding depth. I understood right away that the richness, the profundity of that text has everything to do with its brevity. Its length matters and produces matter that truly matters. So achieving what Oppen does in *PRIMITIVE* became a (probably impossible) goal for me, early on. And in recent years I’ve tended to think and organize by means of poetic sequences, which lend themselves to chapbook length, for me, at least, because my own attention and scrutiny—and those of most readers, I believe—have a limit, and outer parameter of forty pages, tops.ⁱⁱ

I quote here at length to highlight the Chace’s poetics, his strategies and methods, his reliance on the chapbook format, and his kinship to Oppen and the Objectivists, for whom sincerity was a presiding principle—“of the obvious and the marvel/of the hidden is there.”ⁱⁱⁱ In its striking configurations and affecting, often disturbing, and saddening storylines, *Threnodies* is another fascinating example of Chace’s relentless, career-long search for forms that might connect the experimental and the ethical. To a skeptic, these formal mutations might seem like gimmicks but they are no gimcracks, and this life work of recombinant creation resisting stasis is rare and admirable. So too is Chace’s publisher, Moria Books, edited by poet Bill Allegrezza, showing once again that the small press and the chapbook (many of which are available, like *Threnodies*, for free downloads) are reliable vehicles for invention and independence.

Notes

ⁱ Nathaniel Tarn. Essay in response to the question: "Is there, currently, an American Poetry?" *American Poetry* 4.2 (winter 1987)

ⁱⁱ "The ADHD & PTSD: Joel Chace and Jane Joritiz-Nakagaw," *Moria Poetry* (moriapoetry.com), 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Disasters" from *Primitive* as published in *George Oppen New Collected Poems*. Ed. Michael Davidson. New York: New Directions, 2008.

Contributors' Notes

Jeff Bagato produces poetry and prose as well as electronic music and glitch video. His published books include *And the Trillions* (long poem), and *Computing Angels* (fiction). A blog about his writing and publishing efforts can be found at 3jeffbagato.wordpress.com.

Christopher Barnes co-edits the poetry magazine *Interpoetry*. His reviews and criticism have appeared in *Poetry Scotland*, *Jacket Magazine*, *Peel*, and *Combustus*. He has given readings in numerous venues, including Waterstones Bookshop, Newcastle's Morden Tower, and the Proudwords lesbian and gay writing festival. His poetry collection *LOVEBITES* was published by Chanticleer Press in 2005. He lives in Newcastle, UK.

Michael Basinski lives a little past the airport in Buffalo, New York. In 2019 his work appeared in *Angry Old Man*, *Jacket2*, and *New American Writing*. Also, in 2019, BlazeVOX Books published his collection titled *Salvage*. He is also a visual, sound, and performance poet and over the years, his work has appeared in many, many magazines including *Rampike*, *Yellow Field*, *Nerve Lantern*, *Mimeo Mimeo*, *Vanitas*, *Talisman*, *Vort*, and *Poetry*. His most recent book of poetry is *Tub Bunny* (Spuyten Duyvil 2020 <http://www.spuytenduyvil.net/tub-bunny.html>).

Doug Bolling's poetry has appeared in *Posit*, *BlazeVOX*, *Otoliths*, *Indefinite Space*, *Streetcake*, *Adelaide*, and *The Inflectionist Review*, among others. He lives in Chicago.

Sean Burke lives in South Berwick, Maine. His poems have appeared in *Powder Keg*, *Small Po[r]tions*, *The Destroyer*, *past simple*, and *Jellyfish*, among others.

Joel Chace has published work in print and electronic magazines such as, *Eratio*, *Otoliths*, *Word For/Word*, and *Golden Handcuffs Review*. Most recent collections include *Scorpions*, from Unlikely Books, *Humors*, from Paloma Press, and *Threnodies*, from Moria Books.

Kelvin Corcoran lives in Brussels. He is the author of numerous books of poetry, including most recently *Facing West*, 2017, the Medicine Unboxed commissioned *Not Much To Say Really*, 2017, *Article 50*, 2018, *Below This Level*, 2019, and *The Republic of Song*, from Parlor Press Free Verse Editions, 2020. The sequence 'Helen Mania' was a Poetry Book Society choice and the poem 'At the Hospital Doors' was highly commended by the Forward Prize 2017. His work is the subject of a study edited by Professor Andy Brown, *The Poetry Occurs as Song*, 2013.

Jeff Crouch is alive. In Texas.

Jon Curley teaches in the Humanities Department of New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark, New Jersey. He is the author of four poetry volumes. His latest collection, *Remnant Halo*, will be published in the spring of 2021.

Michelle Disler been published in North Dakota Quarterly, Gulf Coast, and The Massachusetts Review.

Mark Dow is the author of *Plain Talk Rising* (poems) and *of American Gulag: Inside US Immigration Prisons*. His "Barf Bag Rag" was in *3:AM Magazine*, and his essay "Dickinson's Groove" was in *PN Review* 190.

William Garvin's critical writings about art & poetry have appeared in *Establishment*, *Garageland Reviews*, *Hix Eros* & *The Shearsman Review*. He is also the translator of *The Hidden Third*, a sequence of poetic theorems by the theoretical physicist Basarab Nicolescu, published by New York's Quantum Prose.

Arpine Konyalian Grenier is an independent scholar, born and raised in Beirut after the post-Ottoman era induced French rule of the region ended. Academic and corporate years were devoted to cardiovascular research, human resources development, regulatory finance, and the arts. She wrote during lunch breaks and the weekend, first music then poetry. She has five published collections (more recently *The Silent G* from Corrupt Press), and her work has appeared in numerous literary publications, often awarded or as finalist.

W. Scott Howard teaches in the Department of English & Literary Arts at the University of Denver, where he also serves as editor of *Denver Quarterly* and of *FIVE S: a companion to Denver Quarterly*. He is the author of *Archive and Artifact: Susan Howe's Factual Telepathy*, *Spinnakers*, and *ROPES*, among other works of poetry and prose, criticism and theory. Scott lives in Englewood, CO, where he gardens and writes, following *what crow dost*.

J.I. Kleinberg is an artist, poet, and freelance writer. She has been twice nominated for Pushcart and Best of the Net awards. Her found poems have appeared in *Arcade*, *Diagram*, *Dusie*, *Entropy*, *Otoliths*, *Word For/Word*, and many other print and online publications. She lives in Bellingham, Washington, where she tears up magazines and posts frequently at thepoetrydepartment.wordpress.com and occasionally on Instagram @jkleinberg.

Jim Leftwich is a poet and essayist. He is the author of *Doubt* (Potes & Poets, 2000), *Six Months Aint No Sentence Books 1 -187* (Differx Hosting@Box, 2011 - 2016), *Containers Projecting Multitudes: Expositions on the Poetry of John M. Bennett* (Luna Bisonte Prods, 2019), and three volumes of essays entitled *Rascible & Kempt* Vols. 1 - 3 (Luna Bisonte Prods, 2016-2017).

Diana Magallón says that drawing was her first language. She is the author of *Oxygenation*, *De l'oiseau et de l'eau*, *largoscabellosflotantes* (with Jeff Crouch),

Bravísima Reseña (with John M. Bennett), *Fábulas Furtivas* and *Phellipe in Wolf* (in collaboration with Jukka-Pekka Kervinen). Her works have appeared in *E-ratio*, *Word for/Word*, *Slova*, *Compostxts*, *Fenamizah*, *Moria*, *Sentence*, *Great Works*, *Otoliths*, *The New Postliterate*, and *Shampoo*, among others.
<http://cipollinaaaaa.blogspot.com>

Seth McKelvey teaches at Auburn University. His poems appear most recently in *TRANSOM*, *E-ratio*, *Bateau*, *BlazeVOX*, and *Stickman Review*. He co-edits and publishes ~~SAWORD~~ (sslashword.com), a very small, independent, online journal of poetry and short fiction.

Pamela Miller is a Chicago-based writer who has published four books of poetry, most recently *Miss Unthinkable* (Mayapple Press). Her work has appeared in *BlazeVOX*, *RHINO*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *MAYDAY*, *New Poetry From the Midwest*, *Circe's Lament: Anthology of Wild Women Poetry*, and many other journals and anthologies. She has just completed a new collection, *How to Do the Greased Wombat Slide*, and is working on a visual poetry chapbook.

Rich Murphy's poetry collection "The Left Behind" won the 2020 Press Americana Poetry Prize and will be published in February 2021. His collection "Space Craft" will be published this summer by Wipf and Stock. His books *Prophet Voice Now*, essays, by Common Ground Research Network and *Practitioner Joy*, poetry, by Wipf and Stock were published 6/20. His poetry collections have won other national book awards: Gival Press Poetry Prize 2008 for *Voyeur* and in 2013 the Press Americana Poetry Prize for *Americana*. Other collections include *Asylum Seeker* (2018) Press Americana; *Body Politic*, (2017) Prolific Press; and *The Apple in the Monkey Tree* (2007) Codhill Press. He is guest lecturer at Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

J. D. Nelson experiments with words in his subterranean laboratory. Visit www.MadVerse.com for more information and links to his published poems. Nelson lives in Colorado.

Benjamin Norman Pierce is a professional dishwasher with BA's in Philosophy, History, and English. He lived in Sophia, Bulgaria for two and a half years, teaching history at First English Language Gymnasium of Sophia, participating in the expatriate writing circles there, and taking time to learn painting. He practices Hermetic magick. He paints in tempera and draws in chalk or pastels, and does some work in purely digital media as well, and has had graphics published in *Ancient Heart*, *Convergence*, *Moebius* and upcoming in *Aji*. He self-published a novel, *Snuck Past Death and Sleep*, and has an album of Lovecraft-inspired ambient music, *Al-Azif*, and an electronica album, *Three Hooks* available on Spotify, Bandcamp and SoundCloud. He has published poetry in *Lilliput Review*, *Poesy*, *Dragonfly*, *Raintown Review*, *Red Owl*, *Scifaikuest*, *Free Verse*, *Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets Calendar*, *Primordial Traditions*, *Convergences*, *Acme: a Journal of Critical Geography* and *Journal of the Western Mystery Tradition*,

Convergences, *Chiron Review*, *Euphony*, *Alchemy*, *Poetica Review*, *The Bees Are Dead*, *Portland Metrozine*, and *Innumerable Stumble*. He has lived in Madison co-operative houses, most recently Nottingham Co-op, since 1989. He was an enthusiastic participant in the 2011 occupation of the Wisconsin state capitol building. He is a regular participant in Open Mike Nights and displays art in small galleries and coffee houses as the opportunity arises.

Allan Peterson's most recent book is *This Luminous, New and Selected Poems*. Other titles include *All the Lavish in Common*, and *Fragile Acts*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. His website is www.allanpeterson.net.

Katie Quarles has a B.A. in Literature from U.C. Santa Cruz. She was the recipient of the 2008 Ina Coolbrith Memorial Prize. Her work has appeared in numerous journals including *Apocryphal Text*, *Inter|rupture*, *Poetry Now*, *Dime Show Review*, and the anthology *Connoisseurs of Suffering*. She works as a freelance copyeditor in Rocklin, California.

William Repass lives and works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His poetry has appeared in, or is forthcoming from, *Bennington Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Threadcount*, and elsewhere. His critical writing can be found at *Full Stop*, *Colorado Review*, and *Slant*.

Marilyn R. Rosenberg's sheets/pages are actual images made with traditional misc. media on various selected papers. Asemic and visual poems are marks made with the use of pens and brushes, templates, inks and gouache and with collage added, as well. Sometimes the works are scanned into the computer to change and merge to be unique and edition artists' books/bookworks. Rosenberg's works are in virtual exhibitions, blogs and web publications. Rosenberg's website is at www.peakskillartsalliance.org/artist/marilyn-r-rosenberg/. A representation web catalog page is at centralbookingnyc.com/artists/marilyn-rosenberg.

Randee Silv's wordslabs have appeared in *Posit*, *Urban Graffiti*, *Maudlin House*, *Bone Bouquet*, *Compostxt*, *Otoliths*, *Farnessity*, *Datura*, and elsewhere. The Portuguese artist Mumtazz uses perception as a material as well as the ephemeral, the anonymous and magic in her collages. Silv is editor of *Arteidolia* and the journal *swifts & slows: a quarterly of crisscrossings*.

Joshua Smith's work is collected at jsmith.bio

Kevin Stebner is an artist, poet and musician from Calgary, Alberta. He produces visual art using old videogame gear, and produces music with his chiptune project GreyScreen, post-hardcore in his band Fulfilment, as well as alt-country in the band Cold Water. His first book of poems, *Sunshine Policy*, is out from Straw Books. Stebner has spent the quarantine preparing two new manuscripts, his first novel, and a large amass of typewriter visual poems. He is also the proprietor of Calgary's best bookstore that's in a shed, Shed Books.

D. E. Steward's five volumes of *Chroma* were out in 2018 from Archae Editions in Brooklyn. *Chroma* is a month-to-month calendar book. The months are continuing.

Bill Wolak has just published his fifteenth book of poetry entitled *The Nakedness Defense* with Ekstasis Editions. His collages have appeared as cover art for such magazines as *Phoebe*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Baldhip Magazine*, *Barfly Poetry Magazine*, *Ragazine*, *Cardinal Sins*, *Pithehead Chapel*, *The Wire's Dream*, *Thirteen Ways Magazine*, *Phantom Kangaroo*, *Rathalla Review*, *Free Lit Magazine*, *Typehouse Magazine*, and *Flare Magazine*. His collages have appeared recently in Naked in New Hope 2018, The 2019 Seattle Erotic Art Festival, Poetic Illusion, The Riverside Gallery, Hackensack, NJ, the 2019 Dirty Show in Detroit, 2018 The Rochester Erotic Arts Festival, and the 2018 Montreal Erotic Art Festival.

Mark Young's most recent books are a collection of visual pieces, *The Comedians*, from Stale Objects de Press; *turning to drones*, from Concrete Mist Press; & *turpentine* from Luna Bisonte Prods. Visual &/or text poetry has recently appeared in *E-ratio*, *X-Peri*, *Brave New Word*, *Utsanga.it*, *Synchronized Chaos*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, & several other places.