

Alien Buddha Zine #14



Cover Art by Jeremy Gulley

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HEHE excerpt 6 **Daze of Spirit Sadness**

by John Miller

The day following the 'great morning of the spirit sadness', as it came to be known in Shiton Yu dojo lore, was the worst day in He He Ho Ho's young life. Despite his continual pleas for masterly attention, and his pleaded cries for forgiveness, he was completely ignored by the masters. Finally, depressed at being ignored and remorseful over his saki dropping, He He simply stood in a corner of the workout floor and assumed 'Crane' stance, a one-legged stance in which the other leg is placed on the practioner's head.

After the first hour his right leg, the one he'd perched atop his head while balancing on his left, grew very fatigued, and the fumble-fingered black belt switched legs. After another hour, he again changed.

He He remained in the stance, and excepting for the hourly leg switchings, he didn't move. The masters walked past him through the afternoon, the evening, and finally the night, without even turning their heads in his direction, thus making his woeful attempts at facial-contorting sympathy-seeking meaningless.

Unbeknownst to He He, his self-imposed suffering in silence pout-posture had been noticed by each of the masters who, hard as they tried, couldn't help glancing out of the corners of their masterly eyes at the radiantly glowing Ho Ho. At one point, while walking past the little saki-dropper on his way from an unsatisfying mantra-searching meditation-session, Master Sucky Mucky had almost blurted out, 'Did somebody leave a light on, or are we being visited by that wannabe Alan Watts spirit again?' Fortunately, Master Mucky had caught himself just in time, and had managed to turn his question into a seemingly innocent chanting of 'Diddy diddy wa wa, who left the la la.'

Finally, a full hour after the masters had slouched their somber, sober way to their respective chambers, He He sighed, planted both feet on the floor and, serving as his own glowing night-light in the darkened dojo, hobbled to his tatami.

The young black belt tossed and turned through the night, praying silently to Buddha to be allowed just one more chance. He He swore that he would never again drop a bottle of the master's precious saki, even if a whole field of fiery mushrooms should sprout around him. 'I will not drop a drop even if a million mushrooms drop,' he sighed and cried.

When sunrise finally came, He He had not slept a wink. His legs were so sore from the hours spent in 'Crane' stance that he had a great deal of difficulty standing up from the hard straw mat which set on the floor and served as his bed. He He suppressed the moans that ached for release from his achy quaky bones and forced himself to shuffle from the small room and out onto the training floor.

"He He come here!"

The child nearly fainted with joy as Master Goo Goo, who'd been standing near the temple door, graced his unworthy Ho Ho-ness with the grunted directive.

"Oh yes great master, what may your unworthy servant do for your preciousness?" He He ran towards his master, his hands flailing loosely, bounding with the giddiness of a new bride. He stopped and turned his cheek, flushed with hopeful slapspectation, toward Master Goo Goo.

"He He, though you are an unworthy slippery fingered little eel, and though I know that our esteemed founder, Master Satori Satire would frown on such liberalisms, I am going to give you a second chance. It is not because I think you deserve it, as the lack of control you showed is not befitting of a Shiton Yu blue belt, let alone a Shiton Yu black belt, but it is because I feel very benevolent today. It would seem that one day without saki drinking may have proved beneficial to my masterly disposition, though I wouldn't want to make a habit of it. More importantly He He, I was visited last night, while sleeping a most pleasant sober sleep, by a spirit."

He He gasped, but immediately regained control of his emotions.

"Yes, He He, a spirit came to me last night and spoke to me in my dreams. Though the spirit looked like a man, it was a man the likes of whom I've ever before seen. The poor spirit-man's face was mutilated almost beyond recognition. Huge

pustules and boils seemed to sprout everywhere from the spirit-man's face, and his skin dangled down as though it had been melted. What would you think of such a spirit, He He?"

The thought of a pustuled, skin-melted spirit dream sent a cold shiver down the child's spine. "Why master, I would think that such a spirit was a terrible spirit, an ugly, evil and frightening spirit. I would be very scared of such a spirit, master."

"Well, Ho Ho, as usual, you are wrong. Though the spirit was greatly pained, it was a most kind spirit. In fact, the spirit informed me that it had come to visit me for a special reason. That reason was to try to convince me that you should be given a second chance. The spirit asked me to please send you out to get the saki this morning just as I have done on all the other mornings before you demonstrated such pitiful lack of concentration yesterday by letting yourself be distracted by something as silly as a giant mushroom. I promised the spirit that I would give you one more chance. As I said, the spirit seemed very kind, but I am not one to risk the ire of a spirit. After all, if I failed to follow the deformed spirit's request it might feel the need to darken my dreams with its monstrous face every night. Believe me little Ho Ho, it would take a great deal of saki for me to sleep with that ugly puss beside me in bed night after night. Reminds me of what my worthy mother must have gone through having to share her tatami with my father. Anyway, that is beside the point. The point is that I also think it may be possible that the reason I had such a strange dream was that I had no saki to drink yesterday." He paused and pointedly frowned at the fumbler. "Perhaps the lack of spirits in my system left me open to invasion by weird spirits who were floating about looking for some sorry sober sucker to spook. I don't want to take that chance, and now that you have managed through your endless baby bawling to drive away all of the junior masters, there is no one left to get the saki but your sorry sober self." Master Goochy Goochy Goo Goo paused, realizing that all this unnecessary talking was making him very thirsty. "Go Ho Ho. Go and get the saki and be very quick. And this time," he snarled, "I don't care if you see a flying saucer woking through the sky stir-frying sprouted sushi balls. DON'T DROP THE SAKI!"

"Yes master, right away master." He He was so overjoyed at being given a second chance that he peed his pants as he pushed open the temple door and sprinted down the trail toward the Nagasaki Saki Works. The distillery was only 3.14 miles from the temple and He He usually ran the whole way, but in the past his pace had been more of a jog than a sprint. On this day, feeling as though he'd been granted a new life, his little bare He He feet patted a frenetic beat along the narrow dirt street. He ran like a monkey with a bug up its ass. He sprinted like a spirit on a spirit sprint team. He He Ho Ho flat out boogy woogyed.

He He's well trained breathing sounded a steady choo-choo train rhythm as he ran. Healthy Ho Ho farts blew out the bad air while his strong young lungs absorbed the good. He He stared at the ground just in front of his feet, concentrating on his mission, oblivious to the morning's slowly lifting fog, unaware of the foliage dew-dripping along the sides of the worn dirt trail. Little He He Ho Ho's focus was absolute, fixed on his goal in true zen no-mind motion. He was pure movement as he wound around the trail's bends. Running faster, faster, feeling as though his feet were barely touching the ground, feeling high, feeling mighty, glowing like a giant florescent firefly.

In spite of the young black belt's exuberance, and his ecstatic near-levitation sense of spiritual renewal, a nasty sensation began to permeate his aura's glowing bubble. It began with an involuntary alteration in his breathing.

At first He He, his spirit soaring and silently chanting its own morning 'la la' mantra, didn't notice that his body was having increasing difficulty maintaining its rhythmic oxygen-inhalation\carbon-dioxide-exhalation kata. His feet became heavy. His pace began to slow. His lungs began to burn. Finally, He He's spirit couldn't help noticing what his body was up to. It came crashing down from its ethereal la la land and demanded, 'What's the problem out there?'

He He stopped running altogether and doubled over, locked in the grip of a surprise attack, an environmental choke hold. The young black belt was having a coughing fit.

After several hacking minutes He He regained control, straightened up, and for

the first time since he'd exited the dojo grounds, he looked around. His jaw dropped, but he immediately re-snapped his mouth shut. "Yesterday the saki and today my own unworthy jaw. What will I drop next? I must have control!" He He's self-scolding drifted into the morning forest and was forgotten by the boy as he turned a slow circle, looking up at the trees.

Many of the surrounding evergreens, the very symbol of the Shiton Yu style, were covered in thick black soot. Though the morning fog had lifted, a heavy celestial darkness remained. He He had never in his short life seen anything like it.

The acridness which seemed to saturate the air, and which had caused his lung-invading coughing fit singed He He's nostrils. He found the act of breathing; the very act that served as internal physical symbol (paralleled by the evergreen as external physical symbol) of Shiton Yu, to be extremely difficult. The air tasted like soot and burned like fire. Stunned as he was by what he saw, He He fought to regain control.

"I must get the precious saki. It would be unthinkable to disappoint my masters a second time. I must run."

He He willed his tired legs to move. He knew that he was less than a mile away from the Nagasaki Saki Works and up-tempoed his quick walk to a jog. He He's breath came out in wheezes and he had to close his eyes. The strange dark enemy seemed to grow stronger the farther away from the temple he got. He allowed himself a glance at the trail side and saw that all of the few remaining evergreens were laden with black soot.

With each landed step He He's feet fought to remain glued to the ground. His breathing labored. The steady sound of well synched locomotion gave way to the bellows of a defective blast furnace. He spit out chunks of black soot, chunks of black...chunks of....chunks.

He He Ho Ho collapsed on the trail, his gasping mouth pressed against the hard dirt.

For the first time in his life, He He passed out. He had no idea how long he laid there, heaped unconscious in the middle of the hardly used footpath, when a hand touched his shoulder causing him to waken from system shut-down. He He stirred,

struggled his sleeping spirit awake, and turned his head to look up. The sight caused him to wail involuntarily. Little He He had never before seen such ugly faces.

He He winced, edged away from the hand which had awakened him, and hugged himself tightly against the ground, as though he might make himself smaller, perhaps even invisible, and thus escape whatever horror these hideous monster-people might have in store for him. Despite the sight's nauseating magnitude, He He could not take his eyes off of the flesh-mangled couple who stood bending over him. One of the abominations, apparently a man, had his arm down--stretched toward the huddled He He as though he'd frozen in position after nudging the boy to consciousness.

The second figure looked to be a woman, and though He He couldn't be sure, given the phenomenal distortion of her seared facial skin, he thought that she might actually be smiling. Like the surrounding trees, the figures were covered with thick black soot. He He rallied his courage, centered his spirit in the middle of its beneath bellybutton ki-cage, and spoke, his voice quivering.

"What do you want of me? What has happened to you? I...I..I am He He Ho Ho from the Shiton Yu temple. I am only going to get my masters' saki and mean you no harm. Please leave me be."

The woman turned toward the man and again seemed to smile. The effort caused a hunk of blackened flesh to drop from her cheek. He He's mind reeled in horror and for the first time in years he began to cry.

"There, there," the woman said. She leaned forward to pat He He's head, and though he tried to move away, he found his body frozen by shock. The hand began to stroke his head, causing electric charge sensations to surge up and down the boy's back. The hand felt fleshless, skeletal, as it petted him. The woman continued to coo, "There, there. Everything will be alright, little one."

He He could only lie there, unmoving. He hoped that this was all a very bad dream. Perhaps he was back on his tatami, asleep, and was now being victimized by spirits as punishment for his saki dropping. Soon he would wake up and find himself in his own room on his own mat. He tried to close his eyes but couldn't.

"He He Ho Ho," the man said, as though he were pondering the name. He looked at the woman and slowly nodded his head. "Twice the name we bargained for. Perhaps I should help him to his feet."

"Please, just leave me alone," He He pleaded. "I can get up by myself. I thank you, but I do not need any help."

Again the mutilations exchanged smiles. He He saw raw exposed bone in several fleshless places on each of their faces. Where skin remained, it nonetheless appeared as though layers had been burned away, leaving only a discolored waxy shell.

"We all need help my son," the man said, reaching down with both hands and gripping He He beneath his shivering arms. As frail as he appeared, he somehow managed to lift He He to his feet.

"Remember son," the woman said, "this world is full of manmade horrors. You must be always on your guard. Do not let yourself be led by demons posing as saints."

The man moved his outstretched arm in a slow semi-circle, indicating the surrounding devastated foliage. "Remember this, my son. This is the result of man's lust for greed and gold, his quest to subjugate his fellow humans and to subjugate nature. This is progress as measured by the yardstick of a creation myth in which anything, no matter how horrible, the mind can create, man will build. The inevitable planetary death born when the rational human mind is given free reign, the victory of mind over matter. An over-dose of thanatos, if you will, but never mind that for now. Natural harmony must be our goal, little one. Man is not God. Nature is God."

He He stood, stunned, and could only watch as the woman touched her transparent hand to her parched lips, kissed her fingertips, and touched the charred appendages to He He's forehead. The man sighed a low mournful sigh, stretched out his arms and squeezed He He's shoulders. To the great relief of the near-fainting child, the couple turned and slowly walked away.

It took a full minute for He He to move his feet, but only ten more seconds for him to break into a sprint. The air still seared his throat and lay heavily in his lungs

before reaching the point of maximum capacity and again being spit out through his mouth in great blackened gobs. Still, he did not stop nor even slow down. The unspeakable horror he had just experienced overrode all biological necessity, and, driven by his terror-filled spirit, he burst through the front door of the Nagasaki Saki Works without even breaking stride. Once inside he stopped, bent forward, placed his hands on his knees and wheezed spasmodically, his efforts to breathe fresh air mingling with his loud sobbing cries.

As his breathing normalized, the sweet air of the enclosed rice distillery began overriding the residual odor of the outdoor horror, and as he began to regain his self-control, He He felt a tinge of embarrassment.

From the second he'd burst through the front door he had not once taken his eyes off of the building's wooden floor. With great embarrassment, He He realized he must have made a tremendous spectacle of himself. Though he didn't hear the laughter from the distillery workers he expected, or, for that matter, any other sound, he knew that the former junior masters must be standing around and having great sport at his expense. He had, after all, been seen bawling like a baby, a most unbecoming behavior for a Shiton Yu black belt.

As much as he abhorred the thought of looking up and seeing the inevitable faces of the snickering jeerers, he knew that he was on an important mission, and the sooner he got the transaction over with, the sooner he could leave. He He moved his head slowly and looked up. Excepting for the presence of inanimate saki making equipment and accumulated rice wine inventory, the distillery was completely empty. Not a soul in sight, only bottled spirits, cask caged spirits, and silent mash making machines.

Momentarily emboldened, He He scanned the saki works walls but still saw no movement. He began to walk about the building, and though searching every knook, cranny, and corner, he found the place to be eerily empty.

He He knew that most of the saki works employees lived in Nagasaki, admittedly a fair commute away from the out of town distillery, but even during the worst snowstorms or foulest spring rains they had always managed to get to work on

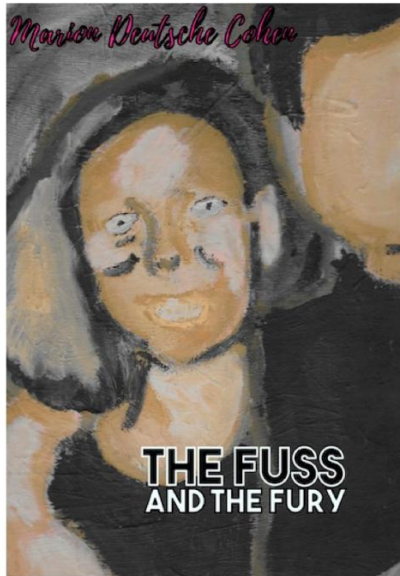
time. The mystery gnawed at He He's imagination, but again he remembered the primacy of his entrusted task.

Noting the cases of full saki bottles, ready for sale and piled against the shipping room wall, he opened the top one, extracted several bottles, placed them in a large gunny sack, and decided he'd simply tell the brewers to add it to the dojo's bill when he saw them on the next day's pick-up.

He He hurried out, closed the door behind him, and ran. Though it was still morning, it had already been the strangest day young He He had ever experienced. What the day lacked in giant mushrooms, it more than made up for in terror and desolation.

He He's fright again overrode the enormity of the devastated surroundings, and despite the difficulty he had breathing, he sprinted through the ash-blackened air like a man being chased by the devil. He clutched the sack of saki to his breast with an intensity that would have made Jim Brown proud, and plowed on through the residual atom bombed mess of man's inhumanity to all things holy.

A Preview of Marion D. Cohen's Poetry Book 'The Fuss and the Fury'



JUST RELEASED from
Alien Buddha Press:

The Fuss and the Fury

by Marion D. Cohen

Marion Deutsche Cohen is the author of 28 collections of poetry or memoir; her latest poetry collections are *The Project of Being Alive* (New Plains Press, AL) and *New Heights in Non-Structure* (dancing girl press, IL). She is also the author of two controversial memoirs about spousal chronic illness and a trilogy diary of late-pregnancy loss. She teaches a course she developed, Mathematics in Literature, at Drexel University.

This present collection is about the approximately seven years after the birth of her youngest baby, and is intended as a description of the ecstasies and Angsts of that post-partum experience.

LITTLE

Not little as a molecule
bee or bird
not epsilon-little, not delta-little probably, in fact,
greater than one.
And not little enough to hold in your palm or
keep in your pocket
or under your pillow.
But little enough to drape over one arm. Little
enough to put down on the bed and admire the
whole of him
in one glance.
And little enough so if he were to get lost in the
house we'd
tear out the walls in a frantic scream. I catch
myself feeling this way
and rush with him to the rocker
to feel this way some more.

This writer is a catalyst. She causes our
brains to think, our tummies to flutter, our
eyes to tear and our hearts to open. She
surprises us, delights us, warms us, shocks
and challenges us. This work evoked so
many memories of my days as a young
mother that I wanted to crawl inside the
pages so that I could "feel this way some
more." Her words linger. I marvel at her
ability to touch me deeply in places I had
forgotten still existed. I come alive again;
she helps me give birth to a part of me that I
realize needs to be birthed again.

— Nancy Wainer, CPM (midwife, author,
lecturer, educator), author of *Silent Knife:
Cesarean Prevention and VBAC*

Available from Amazon (<https://tinyurl.com/y2fkrtz>) and barnesandnoble.com

https://www.amazon.com/Fuss-Fury-Marion-Deutsche-Cohen/dp/1085987272/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=The+Fuss+and+the+Fury

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And not little enough to hold in your palm
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But little enough to drape over one arm.
Little enough to put down on the bed and admire the whole of him
in one glance.
And little enough so if he were to get lost in the house we'd
tear out the walls in a frantic scream.
I catch myself feeling this way
and rush with him to the rocker
to feel this way some more.

ONE WEEK

I don't want to place the plush tyrannosaurus rex first to his left, then
move it slowly to his right.

I don't care if his eyes follow.

I don't care if his eyes lead.

I don't want to make eye contact.

I don't want to make mouth contact.

I only want to hold him
in this still-spherical universe
and parallel-play.

OH, HOW COULD I EVER LIVE WITHOUT A TWO-WEEK BABY?

On my lap he sees
the lamp, the window
a doorway of air
an especially large wall.

In my arms he sees
on all eight sides
is happy seeing
kicking or still.

But suddenly it occurs to him:
he hasn't the foggiest what to do next
or how to go about it.

So he fusses.

Or furies.

Or calls.

Or whimpers.

Or just keeps on eating.

THE THEORY OF THE POST-PARTUM FETISH

A baby comes out smeared
with that wet sticky stuff
smelling even stranger
than seaweed or sex.
The mother, too, gets slimed
with something
something
yes, something has radiated
and stopped on her skin.
They wash it off the baby
as much as they can
and keep telling the mother
to go take a shower.
But the film persists
dense, solid.
The film insists
oily, dry.
It sticks to the skin of others
which explains why, when she touches, she lingers
and why, when she touches the baby, she lingers more.
It takes up space, possesses weight
and clings to the dust and air
which explains why she moves so slowly.

THE FURY OF MATERNITY #2

In fifty years or so
maybe I'll have a dying-fetish.
You know, "I-Marion-Cohen-actually-died."
Because no one will listen long enough, I'll write All About It.
What I said, what they said, how long it took.
I'll forget 16, 6, 3, 6, and 3 hours.
I'll forget "So we'll just do a C/ Section"
"If it doesn't hurt to push, push."
"Yep, you can push."
"Yeah, go ahead and push."
I'll forget "Baby, baby."
"Oh, baby, baby."
"I just had a baby."
I'll show everyone the new wound I died from.
"Hey, what're *these*?" someone will ask
as she comes across the old wounds, the two faded parallel arcs.
"Oh, those old things," I'll shrug.
"They're just... oh, whaddaya call them? .. Cesarean scars..."
Yeah, I'll forget how much better
the childbirth fetish is.

THREE WEEKS

That there is more than one face.

That there is more than one room.

That you can't see what you hug.

That, given two objects, they probably don't touch.

That, in fact, most objects
are far from one another.

All this he learns

shock by shock

and after each learning

he needs to eat.

That's what you do when you're a mother.

Absorb the shocks

one by one.

Art from Bob McNeil



"Bogart"

Poetry from 田宇 (Tian Yu)

Maybe Everything Last Night Was A Dream

The street was so blurred in the night.

Maybe so,

The light of the way out of crime.

Passengers in the curtain closed pages were in such a hurry.

Maybe as in reality,

At the moment,

they understand the mood best.

Oh dreams,

Tens of millions of twinkles last night,

Inevitably,

It frightens people inexplicably.

Oh dreams,

Thousands of words touched people last night.

What kind of things are always with you?

It hurts all of a sudden.

After that,

if everything is dim?

Take time in my hands.

Don't let loneliness destroy my life.

Maybe everything was like a dream last night.

All paid in the sky.

Hold the taste in my hands.

Don't let bitterness despise me.

Maybe everything was like a dream last night.

All paid in the sky.

The Night

The moonlight touched tens of millions of nights.
It turns into a dream like a long meteor,
Without a big smile.

There was a faint trembling of insects.
It's very quiet all around.
Everything is more relaxing in what a life.

If the water is telling quietly,
Is somebody in my dreams right now?
Maybe she is my favorite sunshine.

The stars are reflected in white.
A sea slowly enters the neon.
Tonight is a very good time.

《题月》

文/田宇

子玉簪成千迳素，山浮桂下夜难尘。
相怜白发堪如柳，共作秋丹胜比春。
酒对芳宵宵对世，金逢故月月逢人。
明朝一碧涵天海，万里同光莫不新。

【遥祝仲秋五涂，秋安康健】

The Moon

It seems to be a work of art carved from jade.
Mountains are now particularly beautiful against the backdrop of Osmanthus
fragrans.

The moon shines like white hair.
White light and faith are warmer in autumn than in spring.

On Mid-Autumn Festival,
people hold up their wine glasses and face the beautiful night.
They look at the round moon and miss their distant relatives again.

If the moon rises to the top of the sky one day,
Then the whole world will be shrouded in silver light .
Although they don't know what's going to happen.

[I wish all of you a happy Mid-Autumn Festival and good health.]

The Absolute as Subject (a love story)

By Jeremy Gulley

9:05 pm

I found her in the back of the crowded bar; sitting with a man I'd never met. The music was a gasoline lake – stagnant and dull like muskrat piss. Customers stood three rows deep at the bar, passing beer over their heads to cover orders made from behind them.

7:04 pm

The moon shone over the walnut trees and the stars popped like bubble wrap. I sat outside listening to the hawks chasing rabbits. I drank coffee and smoked a Tatuaje, smoke drifting off in swirls, swishing into nothing, seeking the vulnerable defect of lunar incandescence. I hoped we were the same, she and I, separated just like stars -- or perhaps because of the stars – inside, ready to dance the dance of indignation and embrace the incalculable options it offered.

9:09 pm

“Who’s this?” I asked, motioning to the man at the table. There are people in the world who aren’t afraid to get in a cage with a wild animal. They go in and they don’t take whips or chairs or any protection, they just go in. I tried to act like one of them.

“What ever happened to hello?” said Claudia.

“Hello,” I said, “who’s this?”

The man sitting at our table stared away at the crowd of people, oblivious and uninterested. He had the words “High Times” tattooed on his left forearm and each “I” was indicated by a drawing of a joint, but they looked more like tampons.

“It’s a busy place, people have to sit somewhere.”

“I thought we were going to talk.”

“So talk,” she said. “I’m right here.”

“How are you?”

“The night is young. It’s too early to tell,” she said.

7:10 pm

A smell like vomited scotch led me to an area under the deck where overgrown bushes, accumulated leaves and sticks provided plenty of shelter and a good place for a dog to hide. I removed a vertical slat in the deck and looked through the opening. I could see him five or six feet away, still and peaceful; his eyes open and his mouth pulled back as if in a smile.

9:11 pm

“I’m glad you called,” I said.

“I’m glad you came, I didn’t think you would.”

“I almost didn’t. I was thinking we could --”

“Slow down,” she said, “we haven’t even ordered yet.”

“Of course,” I said. She had on the dress I liked, the one she wore to church last Easter Sunday.

Here earrings were new, though, and I wondered if she’d been shopping, “what do you want to drink?”

“Just a Coke for now.”

“Two Cokes, then?”

“Two Cokes, if that’s what you want, too. Otherwise it’s just one”

“You order,” I said, “I want what you want.”

7:12 pm

I removed several more slats from the deck and used a rake to pull the dog’s body to the edge. I put down the rake when I could reach the dog with my hands. I lifted it through the small opening of the deck, first the rear end then the mid-section.

9:13 pm

Claudia motioned for the waitress. “Two Cokes,” she said.

The waitress rolled her eyes in a way that was meant for us to see but not to see at the same time.

“Is that all?” she said.

“For now, yeah.”

The waitress walked off quickly, maneuvering the crowd like a pinball dodging drunken bumpers.

7:13 pm

As the dog's head passed through the opening, its ear stuck on a nail. I jerked the legs and the thin flesh of the ear tore. I pushed the head forward and reached underneath to find the hole. Working with my fingernails, I wiggled the flesh down the nail shaft and stretched it, the ear hole forming tightly around my finger.

9:16 pm

"That waitress does not like me," said Claudia.

"She doesn't like what we ordered," I argued.

"Same thing," she said.

"Not really," I replied, "She makes her money on tips, and tips get higher in proportion to the amount of beer a person consumes."

"Or whiskey," she said.

"Or wine," I said.

"Not wine."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because people who drink wine are snobs, and snobs don't tip well. It's a proven fact," said Claudia.

"You drink wine, don't you?" I asked.

She fingered a napkin on the table. "Yeah," she said after a pause, "but I'm also a snob and I don't tip well. That's how I know."

7:15 pm

I stuck my finger further into the dog's ear, caressing the dry flesh inside. I felt bumps and jagged ruts and thought of Claudia. I watched the indentation and movement of my finger on the inside of the ear, moving in circles like a fool licking the inside of his cheek with his tongue. I tried to push my finger all the way through the ear, but the skin wouldn't break.

9:22 pm

The waitress returned and placed our drinks on the table. The tattooed guy looked at our Cokes and squinted. "I hope you have a designated driver," he said mockingly, pointing at our drinks with his beer bottle. As he pointed, beer splashed from the bottle and on to the table. It formed rivers that ran in three directions, two twisting toward the edge and dripping on the floor beside me, and one, the largest, an arrow that landed on Claudia's dress.

"I'm really sorry," said the tattoo guy. "I didn't --"

7:26 pm

"Walk free from your wound," I said. I heard that at a funeral or a hospital once. I thought about death as an onion and that if God loved us we got to break free from that one layer and into another.

9:25 pm

Claudia stood quickly and wiped the liquid from her lap with paper napkins from the table. The liquid dripped from her dress in tiny pools on the floor. I handed her the napkins near me and she brushed herself with them, wadded them together in a tight ball and threw them at the tattoo guy. They separated in the air and floated back to the table, innocuous but beer stained. “What the hell are you doing?” she said, then sat back down and stared at him.

7:28 pm

I turned the ear sideways so that the nail came free. I folded it backwards, exposing the pink flesh underneath. The skin around the ear hung limp, and several bugs climbed out. Running away, I thought, to find a better place.

9:29 pm

Claudia sucked her teeth when she was uncomfortable. She sucked her teeth now. It made her lips push together and her cheeks concave. I watched the angles of her mouth and wished she wouldn't do that. I loved her mouth when it wasn't messed up. Her mouth meant so much to me: her talking, sucking, chewing, spitting, galloping mouth.

7:30 pm

Dirty green liquid rolled from the dog's mouth onto my right hand. It snaked up my arm and underneath my shirt. I wiped the liquid with my sleeve, removed my shirt and wiped the dog's face. Its eyes stared at me as if apologizing for all the trouble. I spread out my shirt by the deck, and lifted the dog. His right front leg twitched as I set down the body. I remembered

hearing of a man who buried his dog in a grave in his back yard and then heard it barking during the night, having clawed itself free.

9:33 pm

“Well, that sucked,” I said, but they ignored me. She stared at him and he looked back apologetically. I remembered when she used to stare at me like that, like she was trying to push out my insides with her will. I used to have fun trying to make her smile when she hated the world. I remembered sitting on our couch reading Hegel. “Listen to this,” I said, and read aloud: “‘Absolute activity is the one with which the Ego posits its own being unlimited and unlesened by anything objective’. Isn’t that romantic?” She stared at me like she stared at tattoo guy, told me I was stupid, then left the room to make herself some tea.

7:32 pm

I wrapped my hands around the dog’s neck and squeezed until my fingers laced. The dry dirty fur pushed through the spaces between my fingers like tiny tentacles. His eyes bulged out from the halfclosed lids and more liquid spewed from his mouth. I squeezed tighter, just to be sure. The sound of bones cracking in his neck reminded me of Christmas, when we shake presents to see what’s inside.

9:34 pm

Claudia snapped her head from him to me. “You should have stuck up for me,” she said.

“What?”

“He was going to hit me. You saw what he did.”

“He wasn’t going to hit you, it was an accident,” I said.

“He might have.”

“He wouldn’t,” I said, “you’re overreacting.”

“I wouldn’t have,” said tattoo dude.

“See,” I said.

“You stay out of it,” she said to him and then “Good thing for you he didn’t,” to me.

“Yeah, good thing, I guess.” I sipped my Coke. Quietly.

7:32 pm

The earth ceased rotation and above me there was one star – one black star that refused to shine. No twinkle, no glow. Life revolving on a spit, dripping with fat, roasting, cursing, shrieking. A million skins have shed or I have lost count – invisible stars lost forever behind the horizon. If I had the chance to be God I would reject it.

9:38 pm

Claudia pushed her hair behind her ears and rubbed her temples. When we lived with her brother in that little room over Church Street, I rubbed her head every night, sitting on the couch watching the traffic – something about the air or the atmosphere gave her headaches. I missed the smooth skin of her temples: the bumps of her skull, the tiny hairs of her brow, the sharp landing of her cheekbones, the mindreading caress.

7:36 pm

I took the shovel from the shed and made the grave a foot away from where I buried the cat, who was dug up by the dog and used as a chew toy, guts and brains appetizers for the bones. I lifted the body and set it in the dirt, wrapped in my shirt. Ashes to ashes and something like that, I said to myself. I couldn't remember the whole thing.

9:40 pm

Tattoo guy stared off into the crowd.

"Who are you looking for?" I asked, trying to follow his gaze.

"My wife," he said.

"What does she look like?" I asked. "Maybe I can help you find her."

"Oh, I'm not married," he said. The corners of his mouth turned up slightly and his eyes narrowed. I laughed. Claudia didn't.

"Good luck, man," I said. "It could be a long night."

"I'll be fine," he said confidently.

He stood up, slammed his palm on the table, leaving behind several bills, nodded his head and walked away.

7:43 pm

I should have been a Russian poet so I could understand the intimate relationship between a hole in the ground and a dead dog. I rubbed my oily sticky dog-goo covered finger on my jeans and thanked

Christ, who may never come back, that I didn't have to hear the death rattle or the final gasp.

9:46 pm

I watched the tattoo guy fight through the crowd, disappearing into the faceless void. "I thought you were with him at first," I said.

"No way, not him. He just sat here, I don't know him."

"Well, he looks like someone you would hang out with."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing, I was just --"

"You're still on about all that, aren't you? When are you going to forgive me?"

I remembered finding out about her, the memories landing in little puddles in my mind: the car the rain the shock the betrayal the screams the end. Then the empty feeling of loss and the urgency to heal. I waited for them to separate and fall back harmlessly, but they stayed connected. We were friends, he and I – we were friends back then – before he and she were "he and she."

"I told him," I said to Claudia, "that he should do something every day that scares him -- but I didn't mean you."

7:44 pm

I saw the doors open to embrace him and Lazarus holding the leash.
He's in Nod with Cain and

Abel, I thought. He'll just sleep sleep sleep sleep with the father – assuming dogs go to heaven. They have to, though, because before he died, this dog, he was wild and open and bursting with life – which is as close to Godliness as any of us can ever hope to get.

9:48 pm

She tipped her glass and finished her Coke. The ice cubes rested on her mouth, and she let them

stay there longer than I thought she would. I could see the cold of the ice against the dryness of her lips.

She looked through the bottom of the glass, twirled it like a telescope and looked at me.

“Did you just come here to fight?” she asked.

“I didn't,” I protested.

“You did – you always do. You always make things more difficult.”

“So you are going to try to make this my fault now? Isn't that the way things work --”

7:46 pm

I need more words, I thought. I stood, shirtless in the moonlight, and closed my eyes. I raised my arms in front of me, palms facing the sky. My head fell back and I breathed – the night unclogged.

9:49 pm

She put down the glass, rested both elbows on the table, and stared away from me. I studied the crowd scientifically – intertwined by their hopelessness. They left behind a poison, a stench of desperation – a vomit of sorrow. Once upon a time I thought they were hypocrites, but I realized then that they weren't – they were just stupid. They shouldn't be blamed. They were here without whips or chairs – brave, but in the wrong cage.

7:47 pm

. . . undiluted, total, unconditional, unmodified, unequivocal, definite, sure, confident, pure, complete, unrestrained, solid, sound, infinite, living, harmonious, free, uncontaminated . . .

9:52 pm

“We used to be like them, didn't we?” I asked, motioning to the crowd.

“I'm glad we're not,” she said. Claudia turned to me, her eyes receptive and clear. She twisted

her hair and her face softened. “How is your Coke?”

“It's cold,” I said.

“Things are different now, aren't they?” she said.

“I guess they are.”

The waitress touched Claudia on the shoulder and asked if we wanted anything else to drink.

“No, thank you” said Claudia, “we’re about to leave.”

“We are?” I asked.

She glared at me transpiercingly and I understood that we were – the knower and the known -- together, awake and condemned to rush to a pause.

7:50 pm

I tried to put them all together in my head. The dog looked up blankly from the grave, the sky hung loose above – somewhere she was getting ready to meet me.

9:53 pm

“What are we going to do now?” I asked.

“What do you want to do?”

“I want things to be the way they were.”

“Me too.”

“What about – ?”

“I want things with you to be the way they were.”

“That would be nice.” I said, “I’ve missed you. I’m not the same without you.”

“Can we forget and move on?” she asked. “Can we just pretend everything is okay?”

7:51 pm

I covered the dog’s body with the loose dirt, patted it smooth with the shovel, ready to walk free from my wounds. She was buried in the tomb of my memory, and needed to be set free.

9:58pm

“I’ll pretend whatever you want to pretend,” I said. I wanted to climb into her and live. I wanted to kick at her insides and feed off her. I wanted to smell her in the present tense. I wanted to ingest the smell of her wet hair, the smell of her skin, the smell of her magical sensibilities. I thought I could know her from the inside - until she puked me out with a renewed understanding of her. I thought – at that point – I thought we were ready.

It Could Be Worse; It Could Be Raining

by Judge Santiago Burdon

Up, out of bed 3 pm Saturday San Jose Costa Fricking Rica. I can smell the rain with a mixture of car exhaust and diesel fuel. Gray skies gray world just the Gods reminding me what a hangover feels and looks like. The storm has already saturated the city, flooding streets and low laying areas. The smell triggers the Olfactory Memory Machine to recall fond thoughts of Mexico City. It results in a smile that occupies what feels like my entire face. It's replaced quickly with a grimace from the pain of this Cancer eating away at me like alligators gnawing from the inside out. The Godshilarious bastards yuckin' it up at the joke they have played. I could have contracted Lung Cancer. I've smoked everything that can catch fire...Liver Cancer, the fish drink like me. Quote from a past love Christina ... I drink like a fish...."no Santi the fish drink like you".....Cancer of my blood ...I've shot and tried to shoot everything that would dissolve in water....yep cough syrup with codeine as well. ..stomach Cancer never been a big eater...if you know me the thing I enjoy most.. Sex! So I get diagnosed with Prostate Cancer.

Those of you thinking Karma, kiss my ass.

You people piss me off more than christians. As though there is some cosmic cloud waiting to rain down retribution for malicious actions that I've performed during my present or past life. Now I am really agitating myself, past lives what a myth. Karma is a creation to pacify the Egos of those who are not willing to fight back.

Bad luck the culprit maybe? Luck doesn't exist good or bad. Just the consequence to an unforeseen event, nothing more. As it is there are those

that need to believe in some mystic force, an omnipotent deity controlling their destiny.

You think I'm coming off a bit self-righteous do you? My best character flaw. I'm out of coffee, cigarettes and morphine. Exit my place no umbrella, off to the Pulperia and Farmacia. The prostitutes flash their twenty dollar smiles and Los Bichos de Calle(street insects, bugs) are out early searching for Rocka Tocka(crack).

The deluge increases it's intensity the sky crackles with lightening. It could be worse. It could be raining.

Poetry from John Drudge

Rolling

There are always
Three sides
To every coin
Though most never consider
The edge an option
But a life worth anything
Is always found
On the razor's edge
Of things
A wheel riding out of itself
One grand rolling rapture
Affirming the pain
Of it all
Where we learn
To recognize
The depths of our own
Tapestries
And love's soft
Meeting eyes

Downtown

For fresh and fervent

Sensations

We set out

Between fear

And emancipation

Two-tone trips

Beyond the mountains

Of our growth

And the tripping stones

Of our thickening

Shouting passed

Shadows on the subway

Through tunnels

Of expansive thought

On our journey

Downtown

Parlor Games

A fissionable

Dispersion of desire

Within a specific

Certain similarity

The heedless pursuit

Of anything

That hits deep

In the pleasure bones

Plushy champagne dreams

And jumbled bawdy

Parlor songs

A lusting modern expansion

Cement bulges

And the hum

Of new commerce

Whip Song

We come to each
New precipice
Of uncertainty
To evoke
The higher potentials
Of our nature
Trials and revelations
And whip song ablations
The blues and hues
Of maturity
Where the consciousness
Of the mind
Submits and serves
The humanity
Of the body
To reach the freedom
Of spirit
Beyond the boundaries
Of imagination

Prepossessed

Beneath the inflections
Of stone and machine
In the contrasts of meaning
Where the garden begins
And life ends
A thunderbolt
Through the heart of things
In perpetual Illumination
Of the here and now
As we watch
Each other die
Forever
Beneath the innocence
Of our inner sense
And at the end
Of each of our own
Sacrificial little christs

Flash Fiction from Krzysztof T. Dąbrowski

Harvest has begun, there will be a lot of mowing. A lot of. Honestly, it all points to a bumper crops this year. It would be fine if not the fact that she does not like this tiring task. It is good for man, but not for woman. But what to do about this...

Sharpening a blade she winced sharply, as if she ate something spicy. A scythe. Why is it always a scythe? After all, the world moved on! As if she could not do it driving a tacky combine harvester.

And these rags – frayed, scratchy fabric. In winter it was too cold in those clothes, in summer too hot. Divine retribution! It is hard to be Death! All the more reason during the Third World War.

Dream holidays. Coach drive. Suddenly interrupted sleep. Tyres swish. Throwing aside. Bang! Shouts. Blood. Darkness. I am hovering. I am over the wreck. The others are hovering with me. Have we died? I think so. Final journey. Higher and higher. Something is sucking up us. Speed up. Dark tunnel. Darkly. Darkly. Some light in the distance. Is it approaching? No, we are rushing towards it. Are they escorting us? Who? I do not know, I cannot see them, only feel. We are stopping. Enormous queue of souls. We are waiting but we have time. We are well, blissful calmness encompassed us. Finally at home. My turn. I am standing in front of brightness. It is time to judgement. I was evil. Return to Earth – Hell.

Seneria, 1494 – occupied grounds:

Hagen approached to a warrior being on guard. That brighten in a smile.

- Hagen, long time no see! To tell the truth I should be afraid of you – he said to the friend.

They fell into bear hug. In the blink of an eye Haden took a dagger out.

Of course you should – he thought stabbing a blade in his friend's back.

- Forgive me – he whispered through tears supporting his twitching body.

Carefully, silently he dragged his friend's corpse into bushes. He will not even be able to bury him with dignity, what a time. Unfortunately, when the war is raging around, you cannot afford affection. Mission is paramount. They trained him that. However, he felt basely with it.

Jurek definitely too often submerged emotions.
Then he used to pupate, the tentacles grow him.
Organism was changing in semi-fluid pulp – shape-shifter.
In primary school he submerged hatred to some striplings.
When they wanted to take away his dough he transformed and surrounded them.
Glued by dense organic mass they were a non-starters, they suffocated to death.
Then there was unfulfilled love – knowing that **nothing will result from this**
He decided to scotch it before it devours him, burn inner life
And spit out like chewed chewing gum.
Eventually he grew up to submerge his self-admiration.
Unfortunately, he forgot that thereby he commits suicide through self-suffocation.

Early spring have came. Snows began to melt slowly. Thaw. End of winter, frosty, abject mediocrity. Depressing greyness and monotonous whiteness will soon disappear, the world will again be colourful, brighten by the sun.

Snowdrops – spring will soon come. Trees will cover with green leaves, meadows will put some flowers and will sound by insects.

Everything will slowly start to come to life.

They also...

Flowers will bloom and...

~¬ corpses will bloom.

This spring everything will really come to life. It is the last spring for mankind, Judgement Day will soon come. Lids of coffins will crack. Moving tombstones will shuffle. Cemetery gate will grate. The shuffle will peal. They will return for their things.

Art and Poetry from Daniel de Culla

ANOTHER VISIT TO THE ORWELL' FARM

We are fifteen friends, between women and men

To whom have invited to the Orwell 'Farm.

It's time for major elections

And that scream or cry so resonant

From the heads of the list asking for the vote

Rumbles in the streets, stables and pens.

This time, it's something extraordinary, magnificent!

Because are present:

The Pigs' Party

The Sucking Pigs' Party

The Fucking Pigs' Party

The Dirty Pigs' Party

The Hogs' Party

And the Motherfucker Pigs' Party.

We have sold the vote to each one

Asking for a good position

For us and our family

In the companies of the Ibex 35.

We are not voting, but yes of wine boot

And gentle aperitif

Waiting to make a hit with them.

In this confidence of reaching a prebend

Or a simple benefit

We play happily

Pulling on a table mat

An erotic die

With the obligation to fulfill each

With the luck that comes out.

The punishment for not fulfilling the fate of the die

It will be to give a blowjob

To a chosen wo/man among us.

So let's play beautifully!

With this die consisting of six sides:

The 1: "You will do a service to the she Elephant"

The 2: "You will exalt the ass ' cock"

The 3: "You will sing a heroic verse to the Giraffe s ass"

On 4: "You will masturbate the Mule's member

Until he lifts his neck to Heaven with panache "

The 5: "You will put the Cunt in the mouth of the Ass

Impelling your arsehole certain wind "

The 6: "You will manage, for one day

The Sex Workers' Block:
Mules, Donkeys and Jumentas
To whom men have good appreciation.
Did not give time to play at all
Because a big Hee-Haw made us stop
Forcing us to listen
To a Major pig
Who was the ruler, right now
The Farm Government
Who were they calling "Holy Pope"
Becvause always began his speech or homily
With these heartfelt words:
"A Holy Pope append myself I can"
And, before finishing his rant
That nobody listened or understood
He made a very pleasant observation:
"Here, in this endearing Farm
Give you an idea: our Farm!
There is only one Academy of literary scholars
What is that Donkeys' Corps
That illustrates the nation
In the language of the Hee-Haw

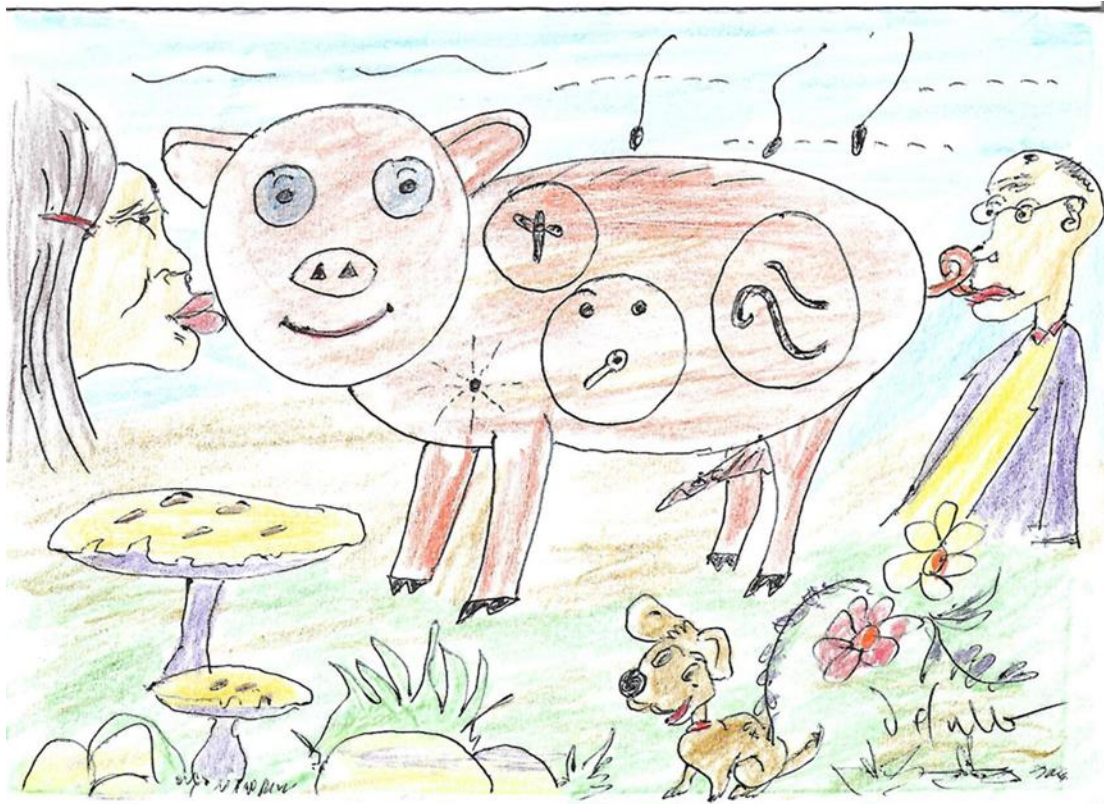
And its resonant echoes. "

"Vote, if you want

And if you don't want, don't vote

That here you will always be governed

With the Justice of the Ass. "



THE FROG THAT CREATED HAIRS

Gods shaken by an inextinguishable laugh

An Homeric laugh as Homer sang

In the song I of his Iliad

Made my frog Hela stop talking

From "Here she is"

That I had left at the waterhole

That there is

At the foot of the Moradillo de Roa' hermitage

From Burgos

Dedicated to the Virgin of Ejido.

I had brought it, the frog

From the "Puddle of the Frogs"

At the road junction that goes to Fuentenebro

Badly mounted on a winged donkey

Endowed with a golden tail

Thinking that a goddess lived in it

The one I would try to force, later

Although unsuccessful

At the foot of the trough
Experiencing a violent desire
Spiller of my sperm on earth.
From this sperm,
On both sides of the air
Drops fell on Hela's body
That made her hairs born
Without mediating loving union.
One day, furious, I grabbed her leg
Throwing it against the trough stone
Being half dead.
I kissed her later, skinned her
And I put it to fry wrapped in flour
Eating it with real pleasure
Knowing that I was going down
To Olympus from my guts
From where I still hear it croaking
As the young people
Who have come down listen

To feel my sumptuous weapon

Of adulterous loves

My zoology, its object and my parts.



SEPTEMBER IN ORBIT

There's nothing more to know

Than September Satellites

Touching the otherside

Of what we want to be.

Nothing but be quiet contemplating

This pure light shining steady

On the floor of the Rainbow

Thru: "To have more money

Than we have"

"To read more books

"Than we buy on hire-purchase"

"To be more stupid

Than we thought"

September has its Music

This headdress where i dream

Earth, Wind & Fire's "September:

"There was a Bade ya

Say do you remember

Bade ya, dancing September"

As a stream into a circle without doors:

Venus, Jupiter, Saturn

In the Summer Triangle
Leo in Virgo
Celebrating the equinox (equal nights)
Everywhere are both
Twelve hours long
And the New Moon
Always messing with our Love Life
Remembering the Global Climate Strike:
“This September, millions of us
Will walk out of our work places and homes
To join Young climate strikers
On the streets
And demand an end to the age of fossil fuels.
Our house is on fire
-Let’s act like it.
We demand climate justice
For everyone”.
September has its Music
Coming down the walls
And reaching the morning of our heads.
Here we’ll find
Radiance, quiet, and delight

And the Petra Markland' voice

Singing: "Even an angel

Can end up falling

Don't you cry because you're crawling

Start again, it's a beautiful morning

For satellites still moving.



“Willamena” by Kelly Glover

Willamena knelt in her overly manicured yard that hot Sunday afternoon. Salty beads of sweat dripped into the soil in which she was working. She peeled off her gloves and pulled her silver hair into a bun and surveyed her landscape while swatting at a pesky fat carpenter bee. The annoying hum of its wings irritated the old woman. In fact, it bothered her when any sort of bug or animal used her yard. They weren't invited and they caused all sorts of damage to her precious flowers.

Showing no tolerance for these trespassers, one time she caught a stray cat in a trap she had rigged up at the edge of the woods on her property. The poor thing was petrified, locked in a silver cage that would soon be its morgue. The old woman could have taken it to the other side of town or to the animal shelter, instead she placed the cat trap behind an older model Lincoln Town Car in her three car garage. Willamena threw a plastic tarp over the tail end of the car and covered the cage full of hissing cat, taking extra care to fully enclose the already trapped animal.

“Rock a bye baby on the treetop, when the wind blows, the cradle will rock...” she serenaded the creature as she turned the car on, then walked outside closing the door behind her to keep any fresh air out. She had half a

tank of gas in the car, which was more than enough to put the stray to sleep forever. At least it was a humane way to die. On other occasions she left out bowls of antifreeze spread out around the edge of her property. There was no counting the number of innocent pets, squirrels, and groundhogs the woman had murdered on that property.

Willamena didn't save her hatred for just animals. She treated people throughout her life with just as much disdain and disgust. Born with not just a silver but a golden spoon in her mouth, Willa grew up being rude to her family's servants and caretakers. She would often play cruel jokes on the maids, like purposefully breaking glass and hiding all of the brooms so the housekeeper would have to pick up the tiny shards with her hands.

Young Willa had also been known for leaving thorn laden rose stems in people's shoes. Many an unsuspecting toe has been stabbed by this trick. There was never a shortage of thorns in her garden as roses had always been plentiful on the family's property. Willamena put her gardening gloves back on after tying up her hair and resumed tending to her flowers. Vibrant reds and pinks made up the majority of the color sprinkled about in her yard, along with a few whites and yellows.

Her most favorite rose bush was an award winning soft peach specimen the color of golden blush. She had planned on entering one of the blooms

from this bush at the flower exposition of the county fair at the end of the month. Willamena daydreamed of the blue ribbon and fifty dollars in prize money she would surely secure with one of her peach beauties.

The large Victorian house that she grew up in was getting too much to handle in her older age, so she was in the process of downsizing. Willamena owned sixteen acres surrounded by dense woods. There was room for ten more houses on the land if that's what she wanted, but for now a small three bedroom, two bath house was in the works. Construction had been continuous for the past several weeks. She couldn't wait to landscape her new front yard and for all those workers to be gone for good.

Much to her horror and dismay, Willamena unfortunately witnessed the massacre of her favorite peachy rose. Some poor construction worker accidentally ran it down with his backhoe. *"Look what you've done, you Mexican shithhead! My rose will never recover from your fucking mistake!"*, Willa bellowed. *"Senora, it was accident, mam. I no see the flower! Please, I sorry am I, very sorry, Senora"*. Willamena had no desire for forgiveness. *"You know, Trump was right about you people being nothing but ignorant savages. I'll be donating a pretty penny to the cause in your name, Pedro. We are gonna build that wall and you greasy shithheads can go back to wherever it is that bad*

hombres come from. Do you hear me you worthless shithead wetback?!”,

Willamena raged. “*Si, senora*”, mumbled the dejected Mexican.

Being that it was Sunday, Willa had the yard to herself. There were no workers allowed on the weekends and she enjoyed the quiet. At least no one would run over her damn flowers today, she thought as she turned her face towards the sun to bask in its light. This was her time and hers alone. She lost any friends she may have had long ago and she never married or had any kids. She was too selfish to hold any sort of relationship with another person. Flowers, on the other hand, are silent beauties. Their companionship is all the woman needed in her final years on this Earth.

She walked over to a hydrangea bush in need of pruning that was beside the porta potty. These were required by law to be on any construction site, which is fortunate because Willamena would never let a laborer use her facilities. She hated that disgusting thing staring at her every day and she found herself holding her breath whenever she passed by. “*Fucking filthy eyesore*”, Willamena cursed just as the door to the portable toilet swung open, knocking her in the face hard enough to draw blood from her nose.

Before she knew what hit her, the Mexican had his hands wrapped around Willa’s waist. He picked her up and shoved her into the toilet stall where he forced her head down into the hole of feces and lifted her old house

dress above her hips. He slid his fingers down the crack of Willa's ass and grabbed her hard by the pussy while simulating doggy style on her. *"I show you the sheethead. I do now what you scare from. My name is no Pedro. Soy mal hombre, si si. Mala gringa no tiene corazon."* With those last words the Mexican knocked the old woman out cold by slamming her head against the side of that literal shithole.

There was no rape. That would have been too easy. He simply hogtied Willamena's arms and legs behind her back and rendered her speechless with a balled up blue bandana as a gag. He blindfolded the woman and pulled her out of the porta potty, dragging her behind it. He opened the hatch that allows for cleaning out the waste and shoved the unconscious woman into the small reeking hole, shutting the door and sealing her in.

She wasn't sure where she was or what happened, but her nose was throbbing something fierce. There was not much room to move, so she tried her best to relax and not let claustrophobia take over. After several hours locked in the awful tight quarters, Willamena began to drift in and out of a fitful sleep.

Awakened by the sound of a door shutting. Willa tried to decipher her surroundings. She heard birds chirping, had she been in this place overnight? She had no sense of time or sight. The first load hit her in the shoulder.

Instinctively, Willamena jerked and rolled over onto her side. The next one hit it's target on her left cheek. The steaming lump stuck there and was soon covered with a warm rain that dripped down her chin. The stench of an immigrant's excrement filled her lungs and that old shithead vomited, adding another bodily fluid to the mix that already dripped down her face. The flowers seemed to sway a little more gracefully in the garden that day.

***Eating Raw Meat and other nuances of life* by
g emil reutter**

Reviewed by Charles Rammelkamp

“Eating Raw Meat”

Poetry,

Alien Buddha Press, 2019

\$10.50, 100 pages

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Eating
Raw Meat
and other nuances of life

g emil reutter

A kind of melancholy suffuses Philadelphia poet g. emil reutter's work, owing to an awareness of the relentless passage of time. Indeed, more than half a dozen of these poems address the memory of people who have died, including the very first, "Abyss." ("The place I remembered no / longer exists and you a friend from long ago would / soon pass into the abyss."). Almost two dozen focus on the seasons, so brief you can almost see the decay before your eyes. "End Times" begins "Lives transient as annuals in an autumn / flower bed at first frost."

And in the end, nothing really remains. His poem "Winter Sleep" concludes:

As the full moon looks in on me, I remember those
warm summer days of loss, of departures. How we
only leave our mark on the ones we love and fade
into the distant memories of all the others.

And yet, there's redemption in the beauty of nature, no matter how evanescent. As Keats wrote in "Ode on Melancholy": "...glut thy sorrow on the morning rose...Or on the wealth of globed peonies." So reutter likewise finds solace in the riot of natural beauty as in poems like "Summer Heat."

Bed of tiger lilies bend, bow and straighten in a
rhythm that pleases them. Roses applaud the
planter of geraniums they surround at the summit
of the hill just off the porch as weeping cherry
trees rock slowly.

Gorgeous! At least ten of these poems blossom with flowers and another ten bow to the majesty of trees, and it is in these images that we find respite from the onslaught of time, though they, too, will soon no longer be with us.

These contradictory feelings of loss and beauty, especially as exemplified in nature, are captured so beautifully in the poem, "Before the Frost," which is about the loss of a friend.

I work the back garden, drag bags of mulch to the edge

to prepare for the coming winter. Hydrangea leaves are yellowing, wilted heads of Black-Eyed Susans hang from limp stems. I work around Azaleas, Rhododendrons....

And yet, the poet reflects that he and his friend “will never have that promised beer or read a poem.” True, the flowers are dying, it’s autumn, after all, but their beauty is still evident in their decay. The poet finishes his work just as the heavens open, and “no one / can see I am crying with the rain.”

Implicitly, human relationships are redemptive as well, even if they are doomed. This is borne out in poems like “Beautiful Silence.” “At sun’s first rise, I engulf you in my / arms your warmth against my flesh,” he writes. “It is in brief moments like these I find / destiny’s purpose....”

In the end, though, we are left with the brutal, sober reflection that concludes the final poem, “Hullabaloo”:

for there are no virgins in heaven
there are no four horsemen, nirvana
is empty, the second coming has
been cancelled.

The poems in *Eating Raw Meat* are unflinching, powerful and deep.

Charles Rammelkamp

Art from Red Focks



‘jUan jAne HorseFuckerMan’



'Fiberglass Cat'



‘Vindowz’

THE LIGHTS OF LORD BYRON ROAD

by Charlie William Chitty

Once upon a midnight plain,
riding home in pouring rain,
there came a sputtering from the streetlamps.
And a streetwise power cut forced me to decamp.
The surge was felt across the city.
Cold baths, fused sockets, not so pretty.
But as I stood on darkened sidewalk,
part of me couldn't help but bawlk,
at The Lights of Lord Byron Road.
They stood there shining, slightly haunting.
The work of private contractors taunting,
and we all know in our guts,
the rich don't suffer power cuts.
I saw in once in daylight clear,
In a last breath that felt so near.
And lights do fade from the eyes of come,
but yet sparks remain in the private surgery
of Lord Byron Road.

I pushed my bike home through the rain,
And when I got home, I remembered again,
The privatized army of London that miss you,
if you're led on the streets but haven't hired
that particular militia.

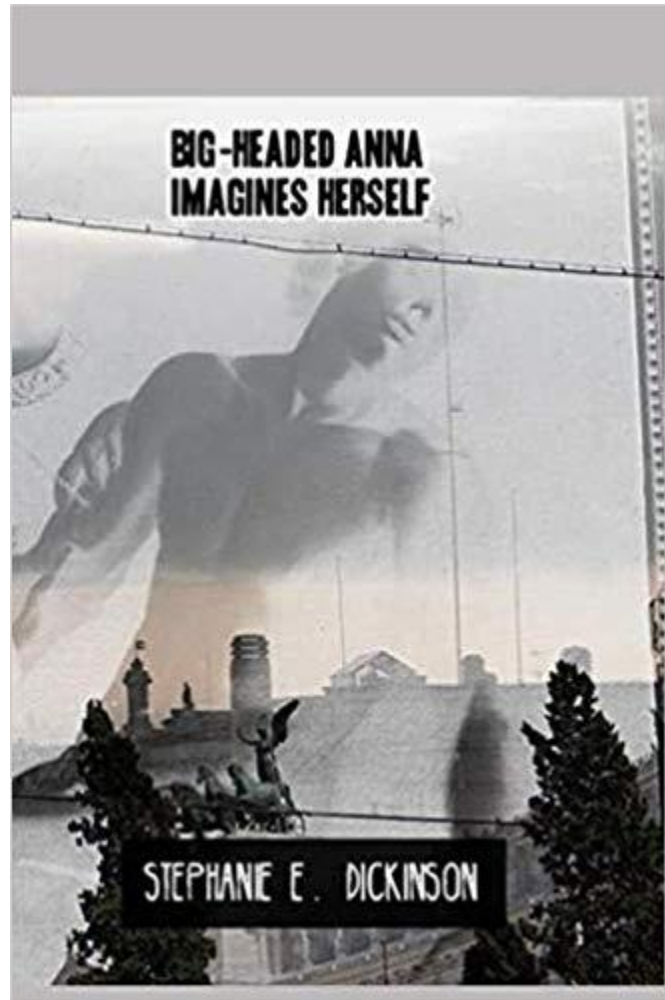
Whilst the rest of us with jobs, considered hobbies.

Have to be content with the regular bobbys.

So we're in the dark, our wiring's not up to code.

Whilst there's light and there's laughter, On Lord Byron Road.

**A Look at Stephanie E Dickinson's
“Big Headed Anna Imagines Herself”**



[HTTPS://WWW.AMAZON.COM/BIG-HEADED-IMAGINES-HERSELF-STEPHANIE-DICKINSON/DP/108723655X/](https://www.amazon.com/Big-Headed-Imagines-Herself-Stephanie-Dickinson/dp/108723655X/)

STATE OF CHIHUAHUA

Big-Headed Anna and the Baby Thieves Rumbling with Jaguar Hunger

Cuidad Jaurez. 1922. Tracking.

&

Before I crossed the Rio Grande half of me had already vanished years before. My hands were a mess, my lips welted with horsefly bites. I was that big-headed girl trying to nurse her baby girl. People said I was slow-witted and couldn't raise a wee one. The baby snatcher who stole her took her to a rich gringo in Monterrey. And there had been all the milk that my baby would have drunk, making my chest swell and my nipples crack, until I had to squeeze out the watery gruel. When I'd stood over the trough with a jelly jar of human milk, I tried some. It tasted sweet.

I was drawn to Mexico's yawning nostrils and ocher wind crying, *Death to the Wealthy*. I wasn't afraid of *campesinos* torching factories. I knew the rich had sent out buyers to find infants, men strong as horses who ate their stew in a street cafe manned by women missing fingers. When I came for my beans, I'd see a nick or a scar on a hand, and I wanted to ask how it happened. Thin girls frying tortillas in the bread line looked famished, their eyes black suns, their stomachs rumbling with jaguar hunger. Sometimes when I reached for corn bread I would try to touch their hand, but they always drew far away, as though it was the deer of the moon I was trying to comfort. *I'm not bad—you can see that, can't you?* I buy the day-old bread. I keep one eye watching my shoulder—the boss lady with her pretty face, her eyes of stone, lashes like glass splinters. Provincial, she is all things gnashing and flowing with lava, all things chaotic. Poncho Villa's cast shadow knows her. From the bodies in the

graves stubbed out or left cut into pieces by *Federales*, ghosts pick up the pole-axe, hammer, and puntilla. They stab until the mahogany earth bleeds, slowly. The deep dirt is bone. I keep following the milk scent of my baby through this land where guts nailed to trees are told to walk.

STATE OF CHIHUAHUA

Big-Headed Anna Walks Across the Border and Becomes the Blue Virgin

Pachuca de Soto. 1922. Becoming.

&

The half-ton pickup trucks ride the dust toward Pachuca de Soto, and when one stops for me, the bed jiggling, full of squawking chickens and the girls who tend them, I climb in. I tell them I walked from Texas searching for the half of me that had been stolen. I show them my feet to prove my journey. Still the girls do not believe these soles without calluses or blisters could have trod the Valley of Mexico, its volcano axis. Aren't you the big-headed Blue Virgin, daughter of the old god Teotihuacan, the one prophesied to return to the scorched land? The girls with long black braids touch my head; they use their palms, the tips of their fingers. A hen, brown and forgotten, settles in my lap; I stroke the clucking from her feathers, and she rewards me with a lapful of warm russet eggs. Wrists against my ears, the chicken girls say they hear messages from heaven and the serpent world, doves roosting in my ear lobes, manna snakes sunning in the hollow of my breastbone. I tell them I am a chicken-tending girl like them. They fondle the knots the bosses left on my body, their raised sticks thrashing me. *Into the hen house with you and the one who put a brat in your belly. Sleep with the droppings on the roost. Wash each blood-speckled egg with your vile tongue.* Years after my baby was taken I left for Mexico. The girls insist I am still sacred. My skin next to theirs looks blue, etched by purple tributaries that carry the forgotten rituals. Friend to the silky anteater and the giant leopard moth, Blue Virgin, listen. The first people (*mud people*, the conquistadors called them) are still dying of the influenza, the shivering and coughing.

You are the big-headed deity prayed for by their parched lips. The Blue Virgin appears barefoot. Not a mark on her soles, a braided girl says. She'll turn the

brackish waters fresh, another interrupts. Coyotes yowling from the deserted haciendas cower before her. Fires set by lightning, she quiets. The extinct lakes Texcoco, Zumpango rise from the earth at her beckoning. She'll command the breeze to sift through the heat-walking mesquite, the clouds to float three-headed birds. The hen's agony of watching death with her unblinking golden eye ends. No longer fodder for the kit fox's supper, I wait for the girls to laugh. Words fill my head until little room is left.

STATE OF TAMAULIPAS

Big-Headed Anna Arrested for Vagrancy Listens to the Rusty Keys Squeak

Nuevo Laredo. 1922. Jailed.

&

Glass lizards breathe from the passageway. Sun can't penetrate this deep stone. Stairs funnel up towards a cell, the rusty key squeaks open. A push inside. My hands find the bunk that pulls at its wall chains with the weight of someone. I feel her eyes open in the gloom. *Cabezóna Loco*, she sniggers, *who put you here?* Her fingers strike a blue sulfur match. A candle flickers, steeped in walls. *They stole your money, basket-head, and then said you were a vagrant. You sleep on the floor*, she says, *anyway I am a rebel. Las soldaderas.* I can call her Zorro, the fox. *What is inside that big-head of yours?* she laughs. *Stupidity?* The Fox tells me she no longer hopes to return as a jaguar, the dead god reborn. After her execution she'll hunt the vile Cortes into the afterlife. *Here, you look hungry.* She shares the goat chorizo and tortilla smuggled to her by the child with the withered arm. Zorro traces a mole on her upper lip, a scar across her cheek that the claw mark made—the last act of a rooster, its throat about to be severed by the she-fox holding him in her jaws. Hair unraveling, her nape smells of corn husks. *I fought in the revolution for the peasants*, she tells me. *I killed.* How many? *Many.* Then she orders me to listen, to picture the man's head, held firmly between her elbow and torso, see his lip and chin sweating. Sometimes she wedged the mouth open with a doorjamb. *I raised the pole axe at the base of the skull, one quick motion. The rebel leaders who ordered those deaths are dead. The slipper-orchid of blood still blooms in my sleep, the scorned men did not go easily. I'll adorn myself in the fragrant Belly-of-the-Night hyacinth. The guards will eat chili at the death squad's severing of my arteries. I wanted for little growing up, a stucco house, a courtyard, fiddlewood trees in a grove of black bark and white leaflets.*

I can see my mother and stepfather behind their high gates. My mother is beautiful. Look at how she lies on the bed. Red lips unsmiling. Her throat is cut and she tries to hold it together. The sheets glisten with passion fruit's tiny seeds. My stepfather's thumb is severed and some Federale stuffed it into his mouth. Here, big-headed girl, take my hand, hold it. They'll come for me in the morning, their eyes nothing but cinders of eaten stars.

THE BEHEADING OF AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST: DIRECTOR'S CUT

by Kurt Newton

A film by Aronofsky von Jaramusch.

A bleak, forbidding landscape. The camera pans until two men come into view. The first is dressed in dark clothing; a band of thick fabric masks his face. The second kneels at the first man's feet, dressed in a light colored jumpsuit, hands zip-tied behind his back. Both are facing forward, toward the camera.

"Who films in black and white anymore?"

"Only auteurs."

"This premiered at Cannes, right?"

"Shhh, just watch."

The man in black holds a card. He recites in Arabic a list of offenses the man in the jumpsuit has committed. His voice is soft and monotonous. The words string together to form a children's nonsense lyric. The static scene and the monotonous voice are designed to lull the viewer into an hypnotic state. At last, the words end, the card is put away, and a knife is produced. It's the kind of knife a butcher might use to shave meat off a large roast. The masked man

holds the knife with both hands and raises it into the air. The movement of his lips suggests a blessing or a prayer.

"I am He-Man! I have the power!"

"Stop joking. This is some serious shit."

"So far, it's kind of boring."

"Just watch."

The masked man kisses the knife, looks toward the man kneeling at his feet, then reaches out with one hand and grabs the man by the hair. Time slows. The knife descends in a smooth, sweeping arc. Tight frame on the executioner's masked face. Close-up on the exposed skin of the journalist's neck, carotid artery pulsating as if excited to meet the knife's edge. Interspersed with these images is a grainy montage of an AK-47 jumping in a freedom fighter's arms... rocket grenade explosions turning concrete to dust... a procession of mourners carrying a casket atop their heads like a crowd surfing rock star...

The knife still descending, sweeping toward its inevitable target.

The images become jumbled and quick, almost too quick for the mind to separate. Jesus carrying a soda machine on his back up the hill to Golgotha... two kittens drinking out of a bowl of milk as a drop of blood lands in the bowl turning the milk red.

"Color! Yay! We're not in Kansas anymore."

The two kittens, now feral, hiss at each other.

The knife drawing ever-closer to the journalist's neck.

The executioner's eyes now bloodshot red, the fabric around the eye holes damp with tears.

A series of flash images follow. Flies swarming a pile of corpses. A young black boy dressed in a tuxedo sits at a piano playing what sounds like ragtime, his smile fixed and brilliant white. A red sun setting. An explosion of fireworks, boom, crackle, hiss. A snake coiled around a rat, the rat's whiskers still shaking.

The executioner's face, this time without a mask. It's a terrified face, a resolute face. The face ages, grows wiser.

The knife finally greets the journalist's neck and light explodes at the point of contact. Light like miniature searchlights that shoot up toward the sky. Blinding light. Until there is nothing but the light, like a white room without definition, without boundary. Until a single seed breaks through the white surface where the ground should be. A seed shaped like a human embryo, like a clear plastic bullet, like the swirling architecture of a mosque or the arching interstices of a gothic cathedral. The seed grows until it becomes the knife again. The knife alone, sitting in silence, surrounded by the white sands

of the desert. Then the silence gives way to the rush of the wind. The knife dissolves, slowly, inevitably, reclaimed by the whims and vagaries of the desert. Fade to black. Credits roll.

No actors were harmed during the making of this film.

"So, what do you think?"

"Was that Jesus carrying a soda machine?"

"Brilliant, right?"

A long pause as the credits continue.

"So, what was it about?"

"Does it matter?"

Another pause.

"Any more chips?"

Poetry from Ann Privateer

Two to Too

A brown skinned woman
Holsters a crying albino baby
That dangles in front of her.

She strokes his cheek
At the airport, listening
For directions from above.

They sway gently
His pink rimmed eyes
Convey centuries of pain

Of too much reincarnation
That turns the two.

Trees

Do not feed them

The meadowlark knows

And recommends

A small cup of tea

Placed on a saucer

For the wolves

When they're done

Rolling dice

On the far pavilion

After all, it's only

An experiment

In the Garden

A dragonfly appeared today
Lined up so perfectly
It looked like a twig
Except for its lacy wings
Extending out in air.

Did it sleep there, so still
Immovable amid the shifting
Leaves in the garden.

Flash Fiction from Jacek Wilkos

Achoo!

He stood in the middle of the pavement, waiting for a sneeze.

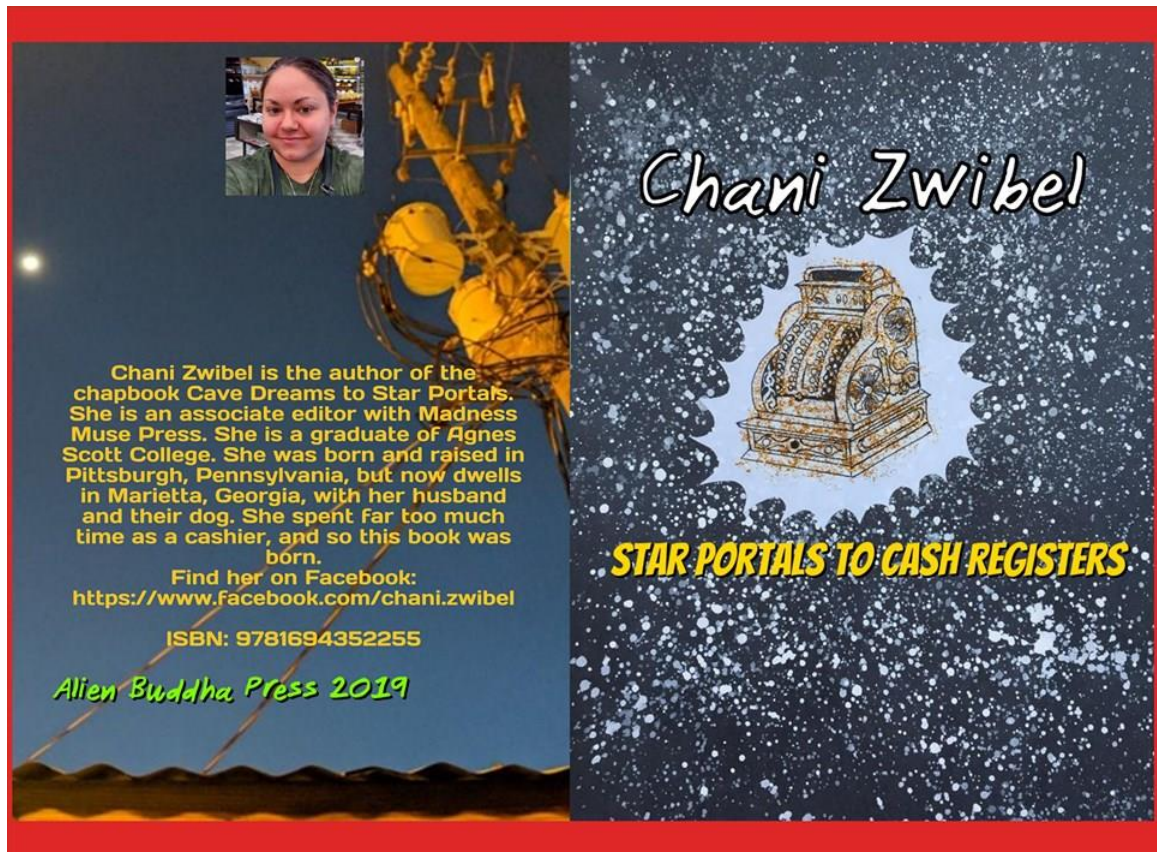
His nostrils were itching for about a week but he couldn't sneeze. He tried to ease himself in various ways: staring at the sun, taking medicaments, sniffing pepper, stroking with a feather. Nothing worked.

He was on his way to another doctor when he felt the desired moment of relief was near. He stopped and covered his face with his hands.

A sneeze ripped his head apart like a hand grenade. Fragments of brain and skull splashed people passing by.

Unknown organism proliferated and immediately found new hosts

A Preview of 'Star Portals to Cash Registers' a poetry chapbook by Chani Zwibel



OPENING

Grey morning in February,
with spring peeping
its head up through the soil,
small purple bonnets of hyacinth
clustered at my front step.

Early to work
and the parking lot is empty,
except for my car.

Two crows wing slowly overhead.

The store is asleep.

Who knows what dreams
visit its shelves and aisles,
dusty and dusky in the murky
light of the alarm system.

Supervisor arrives and turns on lights.

We lift the plastic flaps on the produce department,
count the money in the safe drop box,
move the little metal carts to position,
unlock the big metal carts,
switch on the automatic doors
and the electric OPEN sign,

Wait.

As we drink our coffee

and come awake,

sigh in and out,

the store does, too.

I maintain certain wisdom,

even though they have taken out

all four of my wisdom teeth.

I still have my grey hairs,

and I refuse to dye them-

I have earned them

and will not cover their silver glory

or forget the lessons learned that grew them.

One is this:

Open Slowly.

THE FALL OF

Already crumbling

Already ruins

Temples to our god; money:

Stores and car lots

People stacked like dominoes:

Don't push each other.



CASHIER LIFE

Dreams used to be more than wishing for a working credit or debit machine.

No negative thoughts, but do not use the word “no”.

Just a cashier today, not head cashier or customer service or even a writer;
just a cashier.

To scan and bag, to answer phone, to spray citrus cleaner and wipe off dirt.

An old man’s fingers,

Long and bony,

His hands are hairy spiders with skinny legs.

To take money and drink water and joke with the guys.

Electric starlight on the cove of nowhere

Blessed edge of forgotten worlds

Find me here, and in dreams.

Circular swing of time

Going round, spinning back in on itself,

Carries me to a place

Where all my past lives converge

And everyone I ever knew

Is there.

Memories live in the wings of music

Vegetables pay us no mind

We are poor vagabonds beside the doors of commerce

Echo me no angel's cry

I can't go back to those old days

The new me is where the old me cannot go

I am time's prisoner.

It's the slips of debit and credit cards held together with a paper clip.

It's the cloying smell of old ladies' perfume.

It's the dull headache at the top of the head.

It's the bump of the shark on the ankle, brief brush with the Dark Agency.

It's the face that haunts, vampire-like, the common place health food store that is my purgatory.

You know the people from past lives.

The same ones who broke you heart with their beauty,

the same ones who rush in every Fall,

Autumnal like the dying season, their poignant nostalgia, their cloves and crumpled leaves.

For every thick-headed slow-witted customer,

for every Senior who demands their discount,

the balances are disrupted with changing weights.

For dollars and cents

For returns and rents.

PLEASE REMEMBER:

I have been trying
To peel the world like my personal grape
But the skin will not come off
Under every layer is a new layer.

Whenever I write it sounds
Like your mother is calling you home for dinner;
I am only trying to explain how
Rocks whisper rocky songs
Trees can easily interpret for me.
Whenever I write it sounds like
Heavy metal rock music blasting
From your adolescent neighbor's car stereo.
Sometimes it morphs into hip-hop
And you unconsciously roll your windows up
And lock your door.
You have been watching local news too closely.
I am only trying to ask you for a cigarette.

Whenever I write it sounds like

Someone is dying;
I am only trying to harness the shadows,
But they keep slipping back into the stream.
Slick little grey minnows,
With curious mouths,
They examine the bread crumbs I toss.
If all I get are watery grey streaks,
I am only trying to paint with rain.

Whenever I write it sounds like
Someone is hammering a violin to death,
Like someone is yanking the strings
With the prongs at the back of the hammer,
Someone ripping its musical body
With grotesque vigor.
I am only trying to capture these little white moths.

WORK-A-DAY VISIONS AT THE GROCERY

My coworker has drawn

A little doodle man

Reading a little doodle newspaper

Placed just so

In the empty business card holder

So he looks like a tiny, two dimensional being

Sitting on a bench

Waiting for a bus.

A slow day, no customers,

My bored hands shift

The paper figure to the keyboard.

The newspaper reader

Squats,

His right foot on Power

His left on Wake Up

His hidden, paper genitals swing over Sleep.

The newspaper reader, tiny scrap-paper-doodle-man, peers up with round black eyes.

A SPECIAL KIND OF PURGATORY

This world is so like the other world you cannot know if you are dead or dreaming.

From the outside, and from the inside, it looks like a small, organic grocery store. You'll find all the Dr. Bronner's you can carry, arranged in a rainbow, Eucalyptus to Lavender. You'll find organic apples and bananas carefully placed to attract the eye of the holistic shopper or the paranoid shopper. Or the clueless shopper.

Here in this little building with moldy tiled ceilings and dirty grey and white blocked tile floors, you will find your past lives. It is a kind of purgatory, a kind of non-committal afterlife, so much like the day to day drudgery of waking life you hardly notice.

All the people from your past lives are there. Your brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, even lovers, greet you in new form as your apathy-bound coworkers. In Life, everyone is on a journey and everyone experiences suffering. In the dim fog of this weird afterlife, this shadow land of the modern world's imagining, are all the same elements that made your lives many thousands of times before.

Don't let it unnerve you too deeply. Play Grocery Store, complete with working checkout, or sit around reading articles on the internet with titles like
"Authorities believe Oregon farmer eaten by

**Interview with John D Robinson,
editor at Holy and Intoxicated Publications**



Portrait by Henry Stanton

ABP- Thank you for taking this interview, John. ABP is excited to have you on behalf of Holy and Intoxicated as our first press crossover feature of 2020. First off, I am certain that our readers and contributors alike who have not heard of your operation already would be eager to. For the writers, what type of books do you publish? Are you currently accepting submissions? Where can one find a list of your titles?

JDR- Firstly Red, thank you for asking me, it is an honour: Holy&intoxicated Publications is a very small independent press that publishes small limited editions chapbooks of quality poetry : Poets and publications are personally selected by myself and there is no direct submissions access/route to Holy&intoxicated Publications: I (Holy&intoxicated Publications) have no social media accounts, I like to remain in the shadows. I would have in 2019 published somewhere in the region of 18 chapbooks: producing, creating a chapbook is something that I love and get so much pleasure in doing: Holy&intoxicated Publications chapbooks can be found on various online sites, on the personal websites of the poets themselves, wonderful poets and publishers like Martin Appleby (paper and ink zine) Italian poet Mendes Biondo (Ramingo's Porch) Arthur Graham/India LaPlace (Horror Sleaze Trash) and George Anderson (Bold Monkey) have been warm and generous

supporters of my work and publications to which I am very thankful and grateful for: contact me directly at johndrobinson@yahoo.co.uk for any Holy&intoxicated Publications titles or for any of my own poetry books:

ABP- What can you tell us about the book “Talking Shit & Doing the Funky Chicken”?

JDR- Catfish McDaris is a legendary poet whose work I have admired for some time: I initially approached him for a contribution to the Holy&intoxicated Publications Poetry Card Series, that was a maybe a couple of years ago: I then approached him with the idea of a split chapbook and to my amazement and delight, Cat agreed and when he came back with that knock-out title I knew it was going to be fun: startling cover art by the Dutch genius artist Marcel Herms was simply perfect, of course ABP are familiar with his work: Cat has an awesome reputation as a poet, having published a book with Jack Micheline and Charles Bukowski, if you haven't got a copy of 'Prying' then get yourself a copy: Cat has known some legends of underground, small press literature: Ray Bremser: Charles Plymell just to name a few: and we all talk shit and do the funky chicken.

ABP- I see that you have produced some 'poetry postcards' with writer Jared A Carnie. What was that like?

JDR- The Holy&intoxicated Publications Poetry Card Series began about 3 or 4 years ago: in each series there are 5 poets: 2 poems from each poet, a double-sided broadside: 20 quality Cards each poet: This project has been thoroughly enjoyable and has given me the opportunity to work with fine and talented poets like the legendary A.D. Winans: Doug Draime: Gerald Nicosia: Adrian Manning: Bradley Mason Hamlin: John Dorsey: John Yamrus: I am too shortly publish Series 10 which is entirely dedicated to the work of the late great Doug Draime. That will be 1000 Poetry Cards out there somewhere in the world: I shall then take several months off from this project in 2020:

ABP- And what can you say about the 'Hang In There' collection?

JDR- 'Hang In There' was my first full collection of poetry, which was published by 'Uncollected Press' USA: it is the the publishing venture of 'The Raw Art Review' edited and produced by fantastic artist and poet Henry Stanton: Hank saw some of my poems online, I think it was 'Outlaw Poetry' and work on some other online publications, he purchased a couple of my books and then wrote to me asking me for some poems to showcase in 'Raw Art Review': Hank then requested some poems to be put into book form and 'Hang In There' was born: I am very pleased with this solid collection of work.

ABP- What does Holy and Intoxicated have planned for 2020?

JDR- I shall be slowing down in 2020, the amount of publications will be almost half of what it has been published in 2019: planned books for 2020 include chapbooks by Henry Stanton: Adrian Manning: Catfish McDaris: John Sweet: Marcel Herms: Red Focks:

ABP- You are a Hell of a poet yourself, John. Via Alien Buddha Press alone you have released 2 poetry chapbooks, 'Pushing Away The Hours' in 2018, and 'A Hash Smoking, Wine Drinking, Codine Swallowing Son of a Bitch' at the end of 2019. Tell us what went into the writing of those books, and how you feel about them now. Also feel free to tell us about any other books you wrote.

JDR- I am always bowled over when my work is accepted for publication, be that online or in print: Both these ABP publications are collections of my work written over the past 3 or 4 years from the previous 4 decades of my life, the experiences of addiction, the wonderful colourful people I've met along the way, the wino's and addicts and lost souls that roam this world looking for something and knowing there is nothing but carrying on with the fight day after day: and I consider them to be strong and diverse and honest, no bullshit poems of self expression that do not shy away from what is under your nose , I think that some of my best work is in these publications and the art work for these books by some guy called Red Focks are killer illustrations and manage to capture in someway the contents and the tone of the poems within: I've also published a chapbook with Analog Submission Press here in the UK: 'Singing Aria's' , I think a few copies are still available:

ABP- Thanks again for taking the time out of your schedule, John. The floor is all yours. Feel free to share anything you'd like with our readers.

JDR- Thank you for this opportunity, I have enjoyed this and appreciate all the time and effort it requires to get a quality publication together, keep up the great works at ABP:

In the early months of 2020 'Uncollected Press' will be publishing my 2nd full collection: 'Red Dance', this is something that I am very much looking forward to, the cover art is a beautiful painting by Henry Stanton and the title of the collection comes from the painting: I am hoping, and am in the early stages of negotiating with a publisher for a publication of 'New & Selected Poems' for a summer 2020 publication:

Pesky Ghosts by Mendes Biondo

to John D Robinson

lost things are everywhere
they surround us
they stare at us
waiting for our gaze

I lost two blank pages once
I was working on a chapbook with a pal
when they appeared
coming out from the printer
bright white pages
I smiled

no one cares of white pages
but I did that time
and my chapbook was really fine

that's why we lose things
and they are always ready to find us
even if there's a desert in the middle
even if we think they're not our oasis

Poetry From Heath Brougher

Right and Wrong

There are
"right" ways
and there are
"wrong" ways
and when
the day
is done
they're both
worth about
a billion bucks
of bullshit!

The Shove Tree

Have you been to the Brainwash recently?
Apparently it's supposed to be the new fad
just like going to Confessional used to be--
not that
there's very
much difference
between the two.

To Unplug

A go. Ago. Le' go. Let go.

Let go of all the agos

of man-made misunderstanding/abstraction

of negative occurrences/nuancelessness notions--embrace instead

the stance of a cultivated Self based firmly in Freedom

and the True Universal Realities

that seem invisible to most people.

Everyone should a go and let go

of the puppetstrings linking their Selves

to the rampant and poisonous Mainstream Thought.

The Usual

The other day
I heard some rustling
beyond my window
but when I looked
outside it was the usual.
Just God mindlessly
and apathetically playing
around in a sandbox.

Art From Marcel Herms







SHOULD HAVE STAYED AT HOME

by Bradford Middleton

I was trapped at home
Trapped by a book that I really
Really couldn't put down.
I tried to put it down at least
Half-dozen times in the seven
Hours I was transfixed by it.

But then finally I got to the point
The moment when my eyes began
Hurting, needed some form of
Relaxation or rest and I knew it
Was much needed. I put it down
At long fucking last and headed out.

The street was here but I was lost
In my head, thinking of the story
Thinking how it would end. It was
The same old street but way later
Than usual.

As I walked on out people swarmed
But, head down, I managed to negotiate
Until that moment I got right outside
My local pub. It was there I heard a voice
It came from across the street, calling my name.

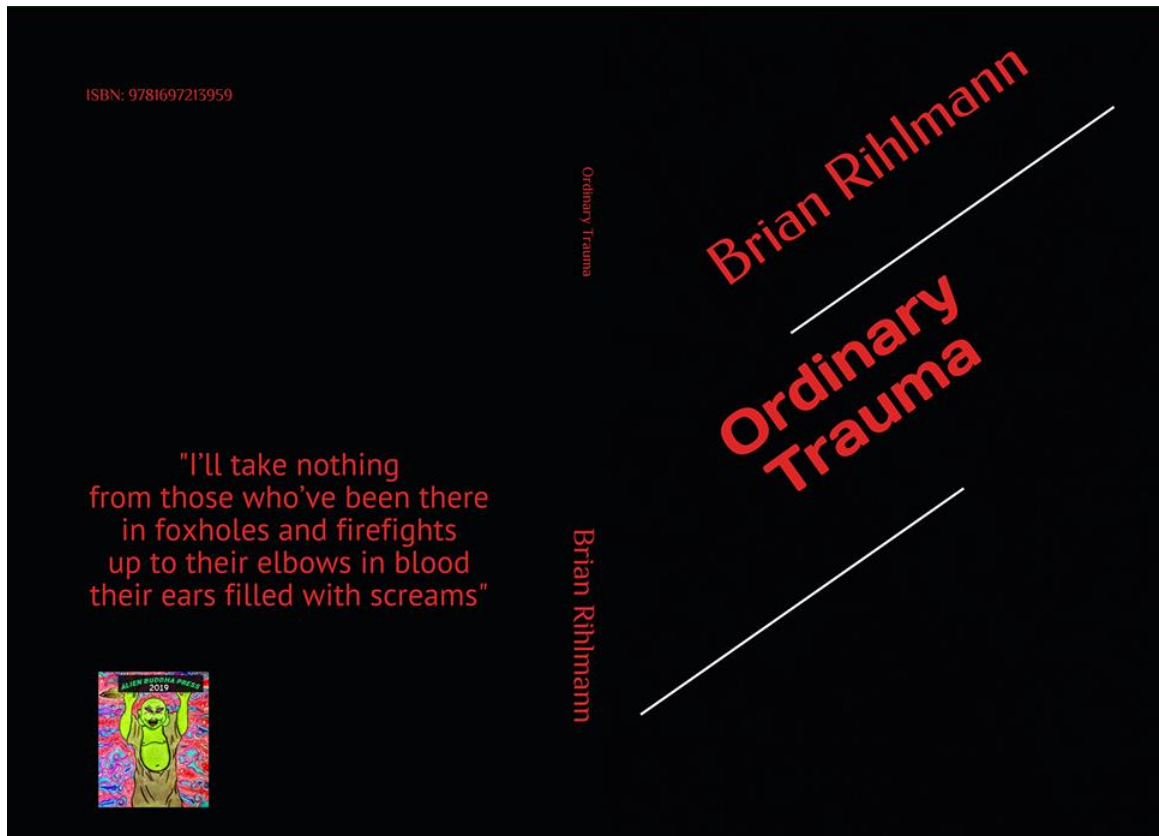
Surprised I turned and shit,
It was her! I made my excuses and
Carried on walking but only moments
Later I hear a different voice doing the same
But this time the talk turns to drink.

Today though I'm a good boy and
Make my excuses heading on further
Into town. When I get there my
Destination is shut however so I do
The honourable thing.

I turn and head on back, knowing
This time I won't be deprived. My
Destination is open and serving
Gorgeous cold beer which I shall drink
Whilst dreaming of Friday night.

After I discover a joint in a shirt pocket
I manouvre my mass from bar stool to
Pavement, getting pizza knowing how
The night will now transpire. Some more
Home alone beer and bad movies, away
At last from the hordes out there but
Only once I've finished this damn book

A Preview of Brian Rihlmann's New Poetry Book Ordinary Trauma



Ordinary Trauma

I'll take nothing
from those who've been there
in foxholes and firefights
up to their elbows in blood
their ears filled with screams

but after these lives
where we're beaten by bigger, older boys
ridiculed by teachers
shouted at by bosses

after the cacophony of machine shops
and construction sites
the jackhammers
the nail guns
the yellow beasts that strip the soil

even the more serene workplaces
have their bells and buzzers
a million notifications a day
bony little fingers that prod us
toward greater efficiency
as we labor under looming robot shadows
and insomniac camera eyeballs

we are goldfish in a tank
surrounded by mad children
tapping at the glass

back at home
the neighbors slam doors
punch holes in the walls
scream at each other
every Saturday night

a drunk wiggles his key
in the wrong door—
your door—

at three a.m.
then tries to kick it down

lowrider bass thumps
cars backfire
an occasional gun barks
in your neighborhood
everyone holds their breath

a cop lurks in the alley
with a flashlight
“It’s ok sir...just looking for a guy...”

you lie awake
sleep through the alarm
arrive late for work
the boss yells, again

daily, we watch
as the earth is raped
by sharp dressed men
with manicured hands
in clean glass towers

as the country’s wealth is looted
by those with bloated bellies
their insatiable mouths
still open wide, salivating

are we are supposed
to thicken to all this?

I am peeled thin and raw
as a pink newborn
the dust stings my skin

and at the end of each day
we drink down the gasoline news
chased with whiskey
to stoke our fires

we stash guns
at every door—
one in the car—
and tell ourselves
tell others
“I ain’t afraid of shit!”

Origin

first they were outside
the words
the voices
of parents and grandparents
teachers
and counterfeit gods

then came words
from other adults
from songs on the radio
from people on tv

from a barrage of ads
for things i should have
shiny things
that made people smile

and still more
from the mouths of classmates
in the schoolyard
hurled like stones
or sand in the eye

a blitzkrieg of them...
suggesting
advising
commanding
criticizing

i should be this
i should be that

and then one day
somehow
the voices weren't out there
anymore

they were in here

inside
closer than inside

like the ringing
of hammer blows
as a mob of blind sculptors
chiseled a beautiful stone
down to a nub

Owen's Water Chimes

The rain spatters against the window
and I am taken back to his dingy room
in that old flophouse on the north coast,

where we sat 20 years ago
chatting about books and drinking whiskey
during a winter rainstorm,

and he occasionally held up a finger,
interrupting me,
and saying, "Listen!"

He called them his "water chimes,"
the beer cans and bottles
he tossed out the window into the alley,

and heard melodies
in the plinking and plopping sounds
of raindrops on their hollow shells.

I was 25 then, he was 50 years older,
and I thought he was drunk,
or just a crazy old bastard.

Now I sit, listening to the rain,
windblown against the glass
drumming like tiny insistent fingers,

like someone waiting for me
when I'm running late,
but I'm not sure just what for.

Poet, Or Boyfriend

you just want an honest man
you say
one that won't play games
like the others

you don't
trust me on this

as for me
i now realize
i can be a poet
or someone's boyfriend
but not both

i suppose i could
write in secret
use a pseudonym

or else write nothing
but love poems
praising you and us

or about strangers i see
on sidewalks
at the supermarket
imagining their truth
their joys and sorrows

i could write about anything
but my own guts
and marrow
the heart that sometimes feels
like an alien presence
inside me

that tugs me
down strange roads
past signs that read

“do not enter”

all those shocking
and seedy tales
which drew you in
but now...

you're having second thoughts

Police No Come Here

I'm cutting across a corner
of the Tenderloin
on a Saturday morning
and just as I round the corner
onto Van Ness
I hear shouting

a small crowd has gathered
to watch two men shove
then throw punches
in the middle of a narrow side street

as one wrestles the other to the ground
and climbs on top of him
I yell to a security guard
across the street
"You gonna call the cops?"
he looks at me, shrugs

I set my backpack down
and fumble in the pockets
for my phone
but as I begin to dial
I look up
and it's already over

they're on their feet
taunting one another
as they shuffle off
in opposite directions

I walk over to the guard
ask if they'd called 911

he laughs, says
"police no come here
I try before
I wait three hours

they no come
not here
not for homeless person, fighting”

I nod, say
“have a good one”
then head back
toward the hotel

Portrait

It was not you,
but my fanciful brushstrokes
on your blank canvas
that I loved.

An abstract portrait,
beautiful in its impossibility,
loved even more
because of it.

But it was stripped from me
by shifting winds,
like a kite
that flew too high
and snapped its string.

It could not
endure the storms,
and crashed to earth
tattered and broken.

I knelt beside it,
gingerly touching
its torn edges,
brimming eyes gazing
at its still vivid colors,
wondering
if it could be
salvaged or sewn,

as you slipped
quietly out the door.

Psychologists

literally
those who study the soul
but make no mistake
it's a dirty swamp
not a sterile, pristine laboratory
and no one ventures in
who isn't broken
drawn to fog and darkness

it's a place to hide
like the church used to be
a place to put themselves
back together
or at least
seal some of the cracks

and maybe
they fix it
part of it
and crawl out again
all duct tape
and bailing wire
under business casual

it's not exactly
the blind leading the blind
but they're squinting
through the grey
same as you
believe me

and they don't know
where the snakes are
any better
than you do

Red Shoe

at the park
a single red shoe
lays on its side
in a grassy field

I wonder
how they can forget
such a bright
and beautiful thing
such a necessary thing
and won't they miss it?

I leave the park
I leave the shoe behind
in case someone
comes looking

as I walk the neighborhood
everyone I see
is missing a shoe
they limp or hop along
down the sidewalks
nod to one another
and wave hello
as though this is normal

when I arrive home
I notice
one of my sandals
has fallen off
somewhere
but I don't know how
or when that happened
or where to look for it

and suddenly that red shoe
glaring like a bloodshot eye
from the middle of that green field
doesn't seem so absurd

Renoformia

I see them at the corner store,
sleepy eyed Mexican men
caked in grey mud
and carrying hard hats,
fueling up on caffeine and sugar
at 7 a.m. on a Saturday,

so they can climb
three stories of scaffolding
and work all day
with trowels in hand,
finishing the exterior walls
of the new apartment building
next door.

Apartments they won't be able
to afford.

Apartments to house
more Bay Area refugees,
people who will see
1500 a month
for a one bedroom
as a bargain,
until they get a load
of the wages here
east of the mountains.

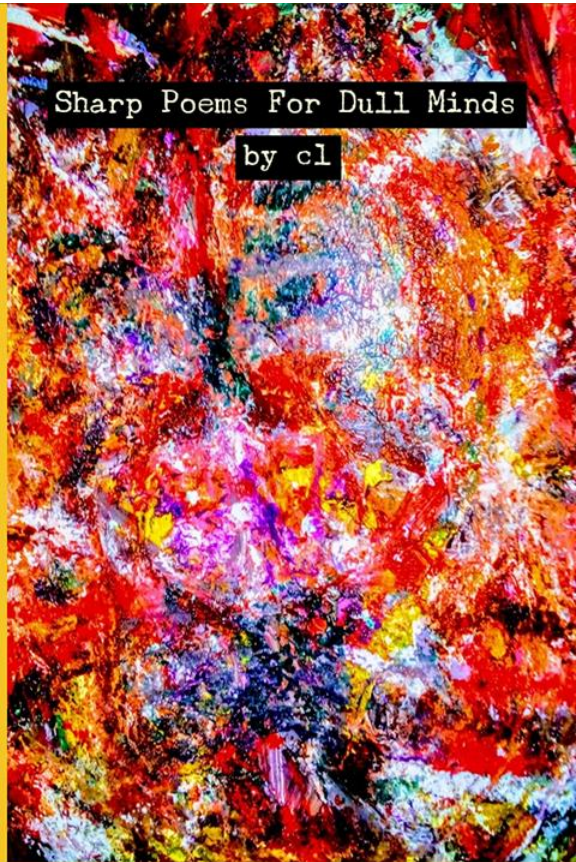
And soon it'll be
just like San Francisco,
where I once spent a pleasant
and sweaty evening
with a Salvadorian woman
in a studio apartment
divided between her

A Preview of CL's Poetry Chapbook
Sharp Poems For Dull Minds



ISBN: 9781697894639

Cover art by Red Focks



Sharp Poems For Dull Minds

by cl

Gun Show Runway Model

Your designer is the street—
that purse with the hidden zipper
should put down any loose zipper,
that purse is still hipper
than anything I've seen
at any indoor swap meet.

Catwalking pot-bellied men,
old ladies and plus size models,
and just for runway legitness
skinny pretty girls
who could barely pull a trigger
on most of Smith and Wesson's models.

Dudes rock NRA ball caps,
slick cut gray suits, slick shaped hair,
metal gray gun in hideaway pockets,
hideaway pockets everywhere—
in everything—in this fashion
hideaway pockets are *the* fashion.

Sweet spoken women,
average looking men,
people you think you can trust
with a gun, until
someone with a loose mind
accessorizes for the wrong reasons.

All Power, No Glory

It was the year 1994, in a post-apocalyptic Metal
Wasteland
brought on by Nirvana and Grunge, alive with
zombies
and wannabes. The setting was Goodies nightclub
in Fullerton,
California, on a hot July night—which hosted an
exotic male
review on the weekends (this was before male
strippers
were finally called male strippers, though they
were fucking
beat-up housewives in the backroom for \$200 in
any case.)

My hair at this point was very blond, half-way
down my back,
and I could get a proper circular head-bang going
with it,
along with crawling over barricades, getting on
stages, and diving
into crowds at Pantera and other concerts, or
slamming against
the direction of the pit at Slayer and Suicidal
Tendencies shows.

It was the best of speed metal, and the worst of
hair bands—
thanks in great part to MTV's illustrious
Headbanger's Ball.

That night, I was helping my friend Stoney Tony set
up his gear,
as he was a righteous lead guitarist who could rip
like Yngwie
Malmsteen, but was more influenced by Uli Roth of
UFO fame.
Tony could play classical-driven leads and bang his
waist-long
hair at the same time while alternating octave and
power chords.
I was moving his gear in—Strats, effects pedals,
amp and cabinets,
and helping the drummer as well, since drummer
ALWAYS need

Help. As we relaxed, drank, and insulted each other
while his band,
Salem, waited their turn to play, this White Zombie
wannabe band
rumbled away on stage with its Mesa Boogie amp
distortion, 4/4
rock beats, and looping bass lines, the Gorgon-

headed female bassist
slowly banged her head, the lead singer wore
reflective shades
(and yes, it was a dark nightclub, at NIGHT), his
beard and ass-long hair
gyrated with the groove, and the band banged and
shook like beheaded

Chickens at just the right song breaks—and
thought they were cool
doing it—and their friends in the audience (their
only audience)
thinking they were cool too, from overall
appearances, coaxed
the circus display (though they likely didn't have
high school GEDs,
so they weren't being called by CNN to be 'culture
analysts').

I spent a good amount of time pondering the
band's Teutonic-
sounding name—LICTÛR—(complete with Umlaut
over the 'U'
ala Mötley Crüe), as one ponders a ridiculous
vanity plate while in

Traffic. The answer came, not by my own puzzle-
solving skills,

but as the band had a break between songs 2/3rds
of the way
through their sham, the lead singer approached the
mic
and in a growling voice announced, "I LICKED HER
from the front,
and poked her from behind." Not to say the
cleverness of the band's
play on the English language utilizing a bogus
Germanic root word
could be doubted. It was another bad moment in
the history of forgotten
Heavy Metal, until this poem awoke it like
Dracula's ghost.

Voodoo Shaman
and the Lost Legend of the Blow Up Doll

In darkness of mind
Under a dim light
I can think whatever I want,
But it comes down
To this:

With the new moon
A native girl bathes in the ocean
Dyes her body black
Identifying with moon
Becomes something greater
Than herself
A woman
The universal house of life
And this one paints herself black
For some ritual
That men have created
That women accept and follow.

I drone a chant to her invisible nature,
To the invisible nature of all women,
Their universal darkness
A darkness of secrets
They share with no one,

A darkness shared only by hard men
Who have lived in fire and seen death
The way a woman sees her potential for life,
Some kind of renewal,
But ultimately defeating,
calling for surrender of the self
To a wider universe—
To laws of existence.

Then I create a chant

*You can say grace on higher tides,
You should say grace with higher tides,
There is no grace with higher tides,
Our grace will be overcome by higher tides,
You can say our grace will be overcome
By higher tides*

It is only a matter of time
Until we are immersed in higher tides
But her darkness will always exist
For it is allowed to exist in the now
That is enough to make it eternal.

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