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Cover Art and Artist's Statement by Tim King: Three Finger Chord
From the Editor

These days, we see work emerging that gathers metaphor and momentum from technology.

What I mean by technology is accuracy, more a methodology of eliciting the palpabilities of experience—a real wrangling with the scale of things, even bringing technology in (science, engineering, mathematics). This sort of work tackles the difficulty inherent in bringing an authentic palpability out of words that immediately fall away from the idea they seek to muster. Like a mathematician’s desire to pin down the exact decimal point of pi: he could spend a lifetime mulling over the epistemological nature of repeating decimals or accept the transcendent nature of pi and use it as a given in a field of more pressing unknowns.

What technology gives us is a means to articulate these unknowns, the way desert architecture organically articulates the nature of its desert surroundings—buildings sprout up out of the sand and look like they were supposed to be there. The materials used to construct the buildings must be indigenous to the environment, and things like boundary, openness, perspective, and participation must come into play.

We’ve chosen work here that landscapes the interaction between the foreign and natural, that pushes its way toward consciousness through the known and inexplicable, the collapse of parts into a greater whole. There’s a bonding, an infusion: like a vapor trail that dissipates and becomes the sky it cut through.

Teresa Leo
The Great Bridge Game of Life

What with one thing and another they were all too complicated. I was seen leaving. Good grief, a frog. How funny that piece of scaffolding flits against yon crimson cloud, to their mutual betterment, actually. Try saying that aloud. A nice military mood and then where in the walk I was mistaken and that took again. We all fell over our numbers, if seeing is to believing as the flat wave is on the stair.

No, scars. You forgot to pack some. The world will live without them and we must scurry to dream up some other identical crisis. First it’s men and then it’s me, that stayed nights in a box, sometimes. Sometimes we were up and sometimes we were down. It takes one of us to reposition us and by that time danger has worn the day down to its nub. It’s best not to be here. But if we linger after waters and cents nothing is then too obtuse for the clime, the time and all we traveled backward for: one good image, the rest fenced off.

Do you think you’re better for all that clashing? The seesaw on the roof in Zagreb disappeared, part of it. There were no tonsils, no noodles in the paper that day.

One tries to keep oh so many foreign things in mind but as mustard seeps from a diary, the elegance had gone out of life. Now there was nothing to repair.
Laptop

I want to know by writing
if I live in writing lines
writing themselves to stand and measure
the warring holes between universal words.

Single body single life is not
the way it works. Bushels rot
on the docks, bodies along banks
of unpronounced rivers. Piles of large,
round numbers form a blurred gate
awaiting the triumph of the denominator,
single and uncountable. The founding fathers
guard the past as a limited
edition of statues of virtuous activity,
anchoring the feeling of free circulation.

At sufficient speeds, a picture of
financial health or bodily wealth almost
appears, floating just behind a landscape
of partial malls where to park

is to live out the Thanksgiving
logic of a progressive history without
classes, and to hope for nothing
but the best for the best.

For the rest, nothing. But there’s
no stopping here. The future milks
the venom of irony like night
swallows shadows. Burned out blocks mark

the sky as up, where frequent-flyer
miles build weightless bridges supporting settled
careers, knowledge of graduated languages substituting
for lives on a successive world.
Repetition / Revelation

Repeat, said no one in particular, repeat after me. In the beginning no one in particular saw a beast rise out of the sea, having 7 heads and 10 horns, and upon his horns 10 crowns. A rod of iron fled into the wilderness of number, that no man might enter save he had the mark of 40 mouths, 30 olives, and 144,000 accusers scored in sackcloth ruled by fear the name, father's name written in a great flame of rain and ash with voice to have power over matter and, in particular, over blood. And the testimony of the earth opened the woman's mouth, and the woman fled into the bottomless pit, where slain remnants gave great authority to that mouth in that wilderness. And out of the lamb's mouth, I saw the feet of a lion, and the mouth of a lion ready to devour the voice which was defiled by dead bodies, married under her feet that no man might buy or sell or see his own body dead standing before god within the sight of men, of women, of a loud voice saying in a loud voice, repeat, repeat after me, there is given unto him or her earth, sand of the sea, I saw a fly, I was in the air, flying, like before.

Any technology so mature is bound to have its jargon.

I the same as I
dreamed the same as dreamed
a dream the same as dream.
Beginning. Repeat.

I can't say what I think but I understand what I say.

And the voice went on to say how all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, as clear as words written on water, as smart as missiles fired from land to air, air to air, water to air, air to water, water to water, land to water, air to land, water to land, land to land. And none of them can be called back through the fence of the teeth.
I dreamed another dream.
I was in a body, diving downstairs
past trays of organs, edible arrays
of bite-sized color-coded pieces
spread out in layers,
glistening red disks
strung across sides of shiny yellow ovals.
We were going down to eat

Poetry perpetuates.
The poets like to impress this.
Theocritus upon Hiem,
Propertius upon Cynthia,
Catullus upon Lesbia.
Likewise Horace,
though in his case,
it is upon no one in particular.

“We” “wanting to” down stairs, mental representations the wrath of
I can say fornication.

The wheel has been screwed
too tight for the car to think.

The car has been wiped too clean
for the eye to leave it be.

The hand has been timed
too long to lift the glass
to the mouth that can drink
the wine of the wrath of her

fornication. What made
her so mad?
Yes, out of letters that get recited, conscripted fathers, the most revolting enemy armies murder and fuck and we are forced to speak it and know it, sick id crowds and all everybody wants the most, connections thrown under the surface of the sea for blank to frame formed victory because parts follow wholes we judge and say, formed, framed, thrown under, fucked, murdered, conscripted, recited, doubled in power, erased, parted. The brute exists now mute, a memorial to one’s number beyond desire.

The camera gets naked to apply such pressure to Barbarella at charged places that the frame snaps shut around the hole and we are caught one body behind, forever.

down a stone chute, into a hollow stone cube, the end, to die—but willingly, no connection to the usual senses of deprivation. The stone was final, like someone finishing a sentence.

The eye
gets named to feel
the texture of the words,
the push of sense
sticking out from
family resemblances
beyond the tiny edges
of inked fibers.

What I see
are my systems of belief:

“linden tree”
“trailing train”
“prisoner allowed to”
“melody about words varying quickly”
“about”
“ash”
and “and”
Looking for Halley’s Comet with Liz

for Joe and Gay Haldeman

I still call it Hailey’s
and I wanted to see a comet,
the kind you come to expect from
the significance everyone attaches
to their appearances and from some
sense of how things ought to look
when they are important. How
things ought to look when they
are important isn’t clear but
I’d want it pretty close to the
drawings in some of the books I
had as a child which held events
and facts in tension with their meaning—
their “meaning” not the truth, but a surprise:
sparks flying out of a long silver
tail which curved up out at you, stars
and crescent moons tumbled up in it
and some glitter falling on the roofs
of the tallest buildings that now
seem refreshed not in danger of
burning up—certainly not
a dim point of light you’re supposed
to look with binoculars on the
horizon for because the city
doesn’t have a horizon since that
represents potential and change
while this city floats in its own
reflected light like another planet
as if to say this is it, this is
what your potential meant—happy?
Although I was glad you could come up on
the roof with me because this kind
of thing has to be shared:
appearances count, and because
they do it was fun thinking of
somebody catching us up there,
imagining some domestic
comet blazing into sight,
the kind that really does resemble
the artist's sketch. As it turned out,
only the other Ed in our building
saw us: his face looks like what I
imagine a burned-out comet
on drugs looks like. He had been
listening to NCN too
when it was announced—a bulletin—
the comet would be visible
in half an hour. Now that I
think of it, what were they playing
while we were up there looking
for something we couldn't find and which
we can't repeat?

What we did see
was planes circling in slow-motion
over Queens waiting to land at
LaGuardia. The historical
present fails after three seconds
or three feet and I was annoyed
at having to concentrate on
the sky when what I really wanted
to do was look at the city
all lit up. The lower East Side
has a good view with the World Trade
Towers and the Empire State Building,
the Chrysler building, Con Ed,
and the Waldorf floating on
top of all the other lights where
people live. I never get
tired of this sight because it
reminds me of the rides I would
take into the city with my parents
on Saturday night, and the big
feature of the trip was driving
along the Bowery to look at the bums. 
I felt that this was really "life"
and what went on in flophouses
(all labelled, "A Lyons House")
must be wedded to truth. I'm sure
this is why I live only a block east
of there now. Sure, "the bunkers Born
and Died" group us finally but so what?—
returned and left do it in the
meantime, a series which is infinite
because you can always add on
one more episode, which means
the individual item is important—
it's already been added on
and predictability has nothing
more to do with it except as
the tail of ice and dust it comes
swinging into view with; the branching
way has been reached, all the tragedies
have found a place to park, and we
live accordingly: the fixed locale
and building height our book of hours
against a backdrop of dimly
perceived histories and astronomies,
and from here to there and back again
there are these landmarks we learn.
Your Next Interview

We needed you. What do you feel at the windows? (the divisions? that you are unprepared?) What language do you speak? Do you know what is under the cone at night? What does potential mean? The clouds are porous but are they fair? Doesn’t March feel like we register again? What tree do children fear most? Choose the right answer: a) Barring an unexpected turn of events (except it always feels like we should have expected it afterwards doesn’t it? That you forgot that at times there is no new vote on the issue in the way the air used to, before this, grow lighter toward evening and lift up like a parachute refitted as a balloon. But now it was going to be this way this time and there was nothing you could do about it.) Do we really laugh at nothing so that we feel foolish later on? What is consolation anyway? Up to our knees in folding chairs, the ends twist off and grow perfect. b) They were drifters. c) It bothered her.
The Same Song They Whistle In The Future

Devotional, and at sixty miles per hour
progressing like an awfully big bottle
near your head. Eros
and an outdoor movie in daytime
would be different depending on how powerful
the projector is. Either you could only hear
the sound without the picture,
a funny kind of unrelated story booming out,
surrounding the bushes,
or you could see a greyish clay or pastel
erasure taking the form ideas have
before we speak them: random little errors
changing hands: your hair tumbling out
like night forecast near the water, columnar
night marbled with the smoke rising out of
our mouths, straying up past the inscription
above the capital, In The Past, True—
And in the present? Paper hands
night blows on to columns
and love casting erasures.
Six Trilogies for Annie

cigarette, Giotto, tough guy Or you can track the mousy-brown aftereffects as twin aluminum dashes in the far wall. Near the Williamsburg Bridge an apartment building turns to the light. That you couldn’t be sure until now and that now you are sure move off in hunter’s plaid. Mousy-brown because the face is an angel’s and doesn’t need anything more, though since it is an angel nothing less. The aluminum dashes follow one another in a straight line, not one on top of the other like an equals sign: they are the highest form the short story can achieve. An angel because the amount of time it takes to arrive equals this.

posse, cupid, de-calibrate A comedy always has at least one person. Sometimes it has two people. Or it can have one person and an object, but it never has just an object, or only one person without at least an object or someone else. If it has only one person then it is a tragedy although it may not start out that way. If it has only an object then it is neither comedy nor tragedy, it is sculpture. Sculpture must never be comic: even statuary that looks odd or “funny” usually shoots us back to square one. If it doesn’t—the statue to Strauss in Vienna for example—generosity and affliction fail it. The tragic “may not start out that way,” but if something is going to become something else isn’t it always that? These are its attributes which we experience meanwhile.

clavicle, mega, x-axis Fried eggs’d be nice, you said. Fried eggs on night, I said, that’s what God eats—but since you had said it right the first time you didn’t know what I meant either. So we just looked at each other, crammed into one side of the booth while the other couple was figuring out what they wanted. And it was all so fast and so trivial there wasn’t much to say except that I had heard an order that could only be given in heaven.
anthology, wing, Abraham Lincoln. Some things we can know and they change or develop while others don’t. Just walking down the block seemed pleasant, friends went with you and if you didn’t think about it you could do it again and have pretty much the same feeling. This is true even now and still you don’t know why. Injuries meet this road to remind you of their goodly fellowship and the debt you owe. Meaning is right there for you to get at, know it, tell it to someone else without fear of being misunderstood.

It snowed when I went to bed.

valence, cherry, motorboat. Paint chipping and falling off, wrought-iron fence revealing a reddish-brown rustproof layer, collect their dreams too because they only got halfway and it’s beginning to sink in I’ll be lucky to get that far if distance is measured in terms of childhood coats that were a success. Just as you may find a sock or pair of panties on the sidewalk outside a laundromat, these leaves have fallen. When dignity held you in its arms it whispered You will make the same mistakes, the same failures will be yours. But that isn’t what you heard. Now it’s important to reconstruct what you thought it said, the ratchet-voiced next, you’re next, needs an answer.

ruthless, picture, Canal Street. It could be a catalogue of causes and effects or a transcript of what happens before something else happens—no cause implied therefore, or like plastic six-pack rings or a Cyclops, not enough of one. Meanwhile, the stage directions leave no hope of a conclusion to the absent drama: gilt plaster cornice, pigeons landing like sheets of pressed tin; man, face beaten color of plum, stumbles out of bar; late afternoon, blinds close slowly in upper-storey window; your eyes, not strictly speaking ailerons like aluminum gashes, take my breath away.
The Strategy of Appearance
(Virtual Reality No. 10)

Strikingly FAMILIAR, yet UNIDENTIFIABLE, a woman with large breasts and a mole over her mouth peeks out from behind a STAGE DOOR. Woman with a sheer pegnoir falling off her shoulders, head thrown back a la St. Theresa. Your uncle (a stranger) is NORMAL AT THE TOP, but his legs turn into the toothy jaws of a crocodile, his penis the parrot that rides its snout. THIS OCCURS IN DAYLIGHT. This stranger (your uncle, the crocodile) is not neutral; he contains the power to make you feel bad. Power is alive in his body. A distracted woman in BLACK BRA AND PANTIES slouches in a chair, hand lolling between her legs (What's my secret?). You stand in a doorway, carefully making up. Wondering: How does one defy GRAVITY, which is what spirituality is? What is it, exactly, that other people are HIDING? What do I think I'm going to LEARN in this world of wild extremes? You drop your lipstick into your bag and snap it shut. Your flashlight casts a feeble beam into an UNDERGROUND CHAMBER STREWN WITH RELATIVELY DARK IMAGES, the blacks remaining black, the grays and whites becoming colored—beautiful warm orange monochrome images. Again and again the sheets, wet where you have lain, come into view, always a little SMALLER, a little FARTHER AWAY, a little LESS REAL. You have only a couple of tools at your disposal to convey a spiritual dimension: you seize your bag, pulling out your COMPACT and LIPSTICK. There is not enough light to see your face in its little mirror; static charges cause permanent, unwanted additions to the negative—marks resembling LIGHTNING, TREE BRANCHES, FUZZY SPOTS. Stunning special effects with seamless realism. Rationally speaking, it's impossible for people to walk in the air or float. Cold
limits the flex of the film through the camera—still, you feel its heart jump. Dazed, it quivers in your hands. 
SUDDENLY YOU CATCH A GLIMPSE OF ANOTHER, PARALLEL UNIVERSE, a universe that can no longer be interpreted in terms of the distinction between surface and depth. Every action or gesture is a BILLBOARD. 100 and 150 watt bare bulbs positioned overhead to form pools of light. EVERY FRAME SHARP AND CLEAR. Motion looks truer to life and MORE APPEALING. There is a pungent smell of ponds and streams in the rain. You imagine sex with a FAT SPANISH MAN IN A BLACK-AND-WHITE-FLOWERED SHIRT. Every angle is good, though beginnings and ends of reels are short, cutting off lines of dialogue. This is where it gets interesting: rumbles, hisses, screeches, and other NOISE ARTIFACTS. Not a physical but an internal world. Wall paintings depict the sound of RECEDING FOOTSTEPS, the red ochre hieroglyphics complex as distorted perceptions—and they imitate courses of action, choices. You come to an area where the cavern's ceiling has collapsed, leaking daylight into the subterranean gloom, LEAKING HEARTBREAK into this strange dream. You wake up slowly and carefully. The river runs underground in darkness. THE WIND BLOWS AGAINST YOU, and the outgoing tide tugs you back toward the sea. Through holes in the wall, you can see into every apartment in the building: flash frames and superimpositions. Black-and-white Zeniths. Without a body of your own, you turn yourself into SMALL, PALE SEPIA IMAGES developed by the light of the sun—perhaps a celadon pot of lillies or a woman with airbrushed nipples mouthing a huge perfume bottle—any old hallucinogenic DOUBLE EXPOSURE with which to trap the desires of others. A WOMAN ALONE ON THE BEACH wearing a straw hat and wooden bracelets, pulling her
shorts down to bare her navel. Desire is a myth. You want to be immortal and live in an eternal present. CALL FOR FLOODS AND SPOTS, a little sparkle in the parrot's eye, a little more detail.
Collapse Body Text

A book lies open drawing attention away from a world you can’t make out.

Moving without movement through a sky of white vapor

kindred subjects, roofless houses used air exits standing in for

those who know an outline fits the crime they’ve lost since childhood sounded

like something recently disturbed where a word can’t help its nerve-
muscle contractions from looking funny to the stillness caught and verified above.

Blood is flowing where two eyes and a vast exception used to live.

The fearful anonymous letters of that one look, that one desire to intervene

made resolution come up short on the landscape opposite your artificial home.

But where should you really reside when death and pain deliver no end

of variants to remember while everything in your body overlooks the same

rigorous circumstance that prevents you from understanding why you’re wrong?
How will you make necessity
into something you can survive
if a moment you don’t recognize
is always standing on your head?

A perfectly understandable
human doorway might land you
on either side of this dilemma,
but that won’t stop all the silence
you don’t want to think about
from doing its appointed job.

A book lies open to a broken page
still marching over life’s most recent
black white object calling back a color
when the the absent shades of memory
leave no room for that special
kind of accident made up in advance.

The bright sun is shining
through a window you don’t notice
while you’re standing in the corner
feeling lost. A little bit further off

a road leading back to where you
came from is empty and glad.
Having Gone To Pick It Up

Today the prescription is vacant of instructions. Charred remnants had been recommended, after dinner; the pill of fire was coated with charcoal. On a limited basis, you could start your own cure, in some translation toward a transfixed scribble of specifics.

My swordplay with a deaf dwarf has swallowed “amazement” and sunken into a coralline remembrance, fine by me. I expect difficulties slope back toward the incontinent, vanished continent where valleys sigh because they’re eternally lost from fix and fixity, repair and snake- tonic.

Humans always back down from thin air, its heights, trying to get back, get hid in thick, really thick enclosures, protective lenses, safehouse walls. Let them, just let them. The cryptic doses itself. A back-pedalling glow knows peace is no open book and the peddler steps up to offer a genie in a bottle, dead from “the mix,” pickled. Cities go under, tides corral us; time drops its excuses and we reach for elixir. To think is better medicine but we don’t have inexcusable time. The sea covers its animalcule bones and the reef commences fencing itself in, hoping for the damnedest-the-best. An unhearing minor finds sins flaming-up but he can’t count on the stinging jellyfish to float-by their spoonfuls. Ideas, even, are ruse-laden and our supportive parley chooses to play, to take on touché, rejecting your indifference.

This is a letter with light, clicking sounds in place of insects, the dotted line trying to steel “the both of us” because the razor-thin marimba notes are trying to imitate the occasionally slaphappy arctic sea.
But subtler lightningbolts don't take by storm;  
by dose, we travel into the smallest confusion, ourselves,  
on it, on life. Not to be kicked. Somebody must be drinking  
blood. Or else the next skull has a thousand surfers  
about to burst from behind the brow; megabyte’s serum-bullet.

In chalky undertones, the doctor must strike up the band  
but the nurse is looking for that patient tuba player,  
undoubtedly high as a kite after coming-up for air.  
All this sweetness has got to hide something but it’s  
addictive syrup that slips from truth’s hung shingle,  
always the same: NO REFILL; sign of the irreversible times,  
signal that nothing is easily fulfillable, especially  
health; hellfire would hang-up the quietest hospital,  
but help as a daily reminder receives, at last, only a  
series of swallows, certain only of a chance at survival.
from *After Rimages*

1898—The creative energies of the American people can no longer be contained within their borders.

TV MANAGUA dog barks then howls you weren’t asked to share she says the one about the goat is my story margin to margin it’s the marginaise

the moon describes the stream he wrote stream pumping through glade Om I Nous scene of another early morning body dump there are no seasons on TV or Sandino’s last supper

strange as it may seem you are standing before a firing squad basic skills improved high degree of literacy does the mind play with an idea it’s a feeling of déjà vu

Foner says Latin America is the story of trying to sustain revolution and that’s our story too which revenge is the revenge of the real or destiny as lowgrade practical joke truth backfires outside window sound of truck one shot trick cigar pop goes weasel *agonia* nachos sunset

a sense perception induced by light entering the eye
Never A World But Lingering

for Chris & Katie

THEY IMPROVISED A BUCOLIC WORLD IN SOME WAYS, hinged on a rootless scale. That dance was forever turning black. The magic emerged from the stone. Their fingers curled secrets against cool white palms. But the way the solo changed during one scene was universal, a Zen case, so searing it was fiction. For pleasure someone threw his hat on stage, for madness followed with his gloves. Cold day, a lapsed sun. "Time elapses us old, so sing" was the gist of it.

STORM IS THE CHARM OF THE VICTIM, a matrix, a paradox, where the whole world wants. A maxim, a beatitude, but ignore it 'til it strikes, flense it 'til it folds. Beyond the pilgrimage, the precipice. And there's a bloom 'til it bends. He always hoped she'd visit, hoped this long before the meeting, the song said so. Perhaps citizenry changed it, another usurped Prospero off to the islands. Something, anyway: we missed calls, connections. Clouded over, a sky enticed one away.

THEY PLAYED HARD AT SPORTS, yet the mode in which something lingered would barely flourish. At best, a deep vision of the moment would be subdued. You start by augmenting the method & finish shouting. Motivation for the harbor as a modest fortress. Someone stays in the central city without lowering herself, gets letters frequently, wishes the implications weren't so unclear. But the second she replaces the gun in her eyes everything goes modern & soft. Another century wouldn't be half as fey as this. Somewhere in all, a conversion to excessive thought, timeline like a V of birds, migration of a language.

AN ABACUS TO KEEP THE WHITE CELL COUNT correct in Basho time, calligraphy to sign the receipt. He lived on a journey from province to province. Never the river before the idiom, rapid change or not. As if he was not able to be superimposed on his mirror image, he throws a full two weeks into another English
pop band, mostly kneeling, mostly serious, almost too well acquainted with what a guitar is for. Pulls each dance out of his forearms, the bloodstream, a Cadillac when summer was on, everyone high for light, for something to happen. “I amended my many labors,” he says “& I kept expanding.” As important as friendship, as poetry: lemonade & peppermint candy, a bassline you’d put on a leather jacket for. It’s all the same. Reasons for jumping the void.

LIKE A DESERT DWELLER, a peculiar taste for everything comes your way. The burn marks get smaller, the carbon fades into the impression of controlled surprise, you get bawdy like a girl, like a photo, like a road out of here. All I care about anymore is the next chance operation, the next walk across the Golden Gate, not sleep, not the fast fast useless trend, but the lingering world one stops for. They’ve watered down my hiphop so I can’t dance no more. It’s all flowers now. I can see the 8-ball spinning in your heart, like morality ushers in the present shame, & there’s the flaw, fatal, as a film you learned too much from.

HE’S GLIDING PAST BARCELONA, & she’s still sleeping. You have to paint a reprieve for it to happen these days. Nonchalantly usually means accidentally, the blossoming fists surge toward the accident of two lovers alien enough to have found each other after the landing. Technique goes walking, comes home a fine rich sound. In plain language, it warms your chest. Just give me a slap on the head if I was bred for war. Fifty years in the Parthenon & still the old cigar smell. Sensual, brief, cautious, you sweep each other with a quavering voice. The whisky, the violins, you fall silent on the train home, you’ve suffered twice as much as Europe has & the Blitz continues in your world. The ancient practice of the flatland stretches long into the morning. The ink’s dry so you talk, to a degree more than her correspondent, her satellite, her human dictionary. A romance for which there is no mathematic. Dream of a perfect circle, though waking it’s linear all the way, chromatic ascension, explosion-bound, taught to feel from the earliest years.
I COULD FAMILIARIZE MYSELF with just the way you handle outdoors & it would scare me from houses forever. No one ever minds the phrase never go back. Like a cat it is too beautifully put to hurt. Day breaks with the bones. All the books & records of your hometown. Another Burma song. I have been moved to think about a dimension. August, the angels singing, the whole rote process quashed & up one hand a message is layered

We are not doomed
but resting
easier test

when nothing
is important
and the space
    between
words reveals
both
relationship and absence
I think of her as a
dying star whose light
crawls like memory
through space
and it is not the slowness of
my perception that
gives into the illusion
but a constant in an equation
that I didn’t study
because I was too busy
praying for an easier test.
Sentences

It is raining in my heart, but I don’t believe that it is raining.
It is raining softly on the town, but I don’t believe the town exists.
It is raining softly on the tip of my tongue, but not now.
You say it is a sentence, but there is some possibility it is not a sentence.
It is a sentence, but it is very difficult to explain why it is a sentence.

My love is on the phone, but it is not now that my live is on the phone.
I have moved, but I do not know that I have moved.
I am in a position to assert the summer has ended, but I don’t believe it.
A raven screamed at one in the parking lot, but it was not a raven:
it was a prisoner.
My love is a double agent, and I hesitantly believe she is not.

Time is brutal, but I do not believe time is brutal.
Fact: Time is brutal fact, but it is not certain time is a brutal fact.
Fact: Time is a social animal, but it may be that time
is not a social animal.
Time satisfies all these conditions, but time does not satisfy all.
Time depends on future sentences: What I find hard to believe.

The book contains your barest preface, but I do not think it is a book.
The table of contents is unhelpful, but I do not think it is the contents.
Worst of all there is a key, but I believe there is no key.
The reader loses his way richly, but it is not certain that the reader loses.
Nevertheless, you found your way about, though I do not know you.
Second Diptych

Sun suspends itself behind recycled toilet paper. Polyurethane elephant skulls demarcate suburban roof gardens.

The dictionary contains three complete sets: one for elegiasts; one for mourners; one for nomads darting between their tidy subdivisions.

After grinding language's edifice into layers of different colored powders, the painter begins adjusting the light,

its resemblance to comportment chambers. Mattress forms pasted to doors. Pesticides for people.

He is a member of the Puffer Branch, and belongs to a tribe of dust selectors. Egyptian mummies make the best undercoating.

They leave their bodies in order to talk. Harsh gutturals pierce the cartilage. Stump twiddlers. Butterfly storage warehouse.

She detaches his hands from her mouth and returns them to their velvet case. A clock flickers near evening's residue.

Each animal is buried next to ones of similar size and shape. An alphabet made up of two letters.

Language as a shield separating the head from the feet.
separation * persons

The necessary of a person,
compiled in an instance, a sitting,
a setting, one changed as
light entering a room
or leaving with doubts

*
I dry the things that will
rust otherwise; in this manner
I become responsible

*

As dawn eludes a world
only an uncollected population will be its viewers;
and in this way will elucidate for me what
it is I missed

*
It was not the realization that a happiness
had been interred, but instead
a sinking every day; that was knowing

Perhaps in the separation we find loopholes, ways
out; or knotholes of a tree indicating
a thickness of feeling, I am sure
there are things that went unsaid,
silence to trees, desire to me;

*
In the understanding of distance, I lie
the only way I know of distance is
by walking it, at necessary intervals
in the year I binge on walks,
engulfed by surroundings, by the hour

*

Tipping leaves into my careful
and molded vision; not so sure comprehensiveness
is always necessary, wood planks under my feet
smell of the sea and aged

*

To be seeing this landscape, is to be a
member of the community of grains of sand
on the beach, to live through seasons,
responding ever so slightly, As if
winter were one of your wings, as it
lifted you into the turgid, cold wind

*
Pace after pace, a drum beat, a xylophone of cherry wood, my heels palms, knobs on the ends of long skinny sticks; There is a view of the bay coming up on the right, held obvious by its odor. Two women stand kissing as if a part of the bay, natural and expected.

*

So you pass the filter of nature and unripe blueberries and like the clear light that pigments undergrowth into a yellower-green, you enter my walk, my paces — perhaps your hands hold the skinnied sticks, are wrist to my palms — this I don’t need to know but am sure of, oh, if I could make you disappear like the unformed blue!

*
Too many relics could represent ourselves: photograph of an aunt with son in Dec 67, not Feb 68 as is crossed out, catalpa tree stands behind the tall two, dangling its offering of dried beans to the sky; snow tips this aunt’s black shoes pointed toes and if she walked forward the snow would crunch; another relic, the flowers as they rest in front of me, filling a room, seeming to draw in a morning breeze with their tilted song; a Mezzo Litro from Italy recalls the relic of memory: from in substance to a small town, enclosed with high ancient walls, guarded by the sound of a clock in every hour—pass to the woods, surrounding this old Italian village, a picture of Mary, hardly fading, perhaps a little dirty with the dust of the woods and a stream passes near, as you and I would stop, touch our faces with water...

*


The understanding of time that I find, 
is achieved only probably, as if in fermenting; 
the present is never understood.

*

We’re in the same room, sitting on a couch, 
your arm holds me in together, if removed 
who knows the limits of my skin; leaving 
takes away bits of air, I have less 
to breathe, but space in between 
the left air, bits like stars, 
charged with the heat and fury of future:

*
Artist's Statement

I am interested in the deployment of technology or the idea of technology as a tool by which to bring a sense of oughtness to a work. By oughtness I mean that which is accendant of spirit rather than merely practical. If through a necessary multiplicity a oneness is achieved, our cognitive powers will be engaged.

If through a rarification of the practical we can achieve the truly useful, then we can build a model of spirituality. By this we can loose upon passersby sheets of cognizance that stratify themselves into oneness, the oughtness of the work, a solidarity of spirit. They can take this with them. There is great power in this.
Logomachy

Some years a carpenter now, and not really knowing my hammer. Its parts I mean, by name. Specifically, the claw: whether or not it's a peen. Is that another word for it? What's another way of saying yank it down tight with your claw? Throw your peen in there and snug it up. Is it? Which is wedge-like?

Thirty-two ounces of burnished steel makes a rocket with a waffled face. Swing it from the sweet spot, there's another name for that thing. Do I name it if I use it? Does peen sound prise-like? Does claw sound like a cleft lever?

All day long I swing a hammer. Lucky enough I can use it. But does driving some kinetic blast mean swinging a hammer? Does swinging a hammer mean thinking about swinging a hammer all day long? Yes, sink that sixteen before it finds a boot heel means bury that nail.
Grief Stages

We carry the blood of recent wars. As much as flowed in all the films, more was spilled internally. It's on our tongues and in our eyes, the smell of blood, the look of it. It's in the genes that reproduce alien strains of bloodthirsty babies who can't account for their appetite. And so we've come to study death, not as a parched, ephemeral thing, but as the running of the blood, the thrill of watching a face laid waste, the candor of all stock cruelties, as though someone finally said, atrocities must be accounted for. We can do it scientifically. We now know there are five grief stages: imago, pupa, larval, nit. No, I'm on the wrong page. Anger, denial, barter, acceptance, here we go, the buzz words that will buy us time, to look more closely, watch a death like watching a movie, dispensed of all the set-up time, cut to the chase. Instant, total peripateia, slam bam thank you shazam, death hard-core. Anger accepted, all bartering denied. Or anger denied, all offers accepted, leaving the body like selling a house. All the stages intermarry, produce alien strains of bloodthirsty babies, who can't account for their appetite, who seem to need more blood than air. Grief is the study of hemorrhage, the running of the blood like bulls. Violent, we embarrass even the animals, who watch the killers watching them, from the relative safety of their cages.
Against Monogamy

*for Joseph McElroy*

The sky is high.
The tops of tendrils
have nowhere to cling.

Proust wrote...how shall we call it?
The most nourishingly hard to remember novel.

He portrayed things, not as he knew them to be,
but as the optical illusions with which
we mistake them the first time we see them.

What a lovely thing to see
Behind the paper windows whole —
The galaxy.

Couples are metaphors.
Homologies are natural correspondences
rather than metaphors.

Metaphors are equivalencies.
Couples are not metaphors,
but a plural set of apparent disorders.

A random possibility
temporarily arrived:
order.

We speak of fields instead of centers.
We are each dispersed, temporally arrived,
inside the other.

We have no existence
apart from the obstacles
to which we’ve reacted.
Parts of cells,
leading to limbs,
manage to find their way.

The irrational splendor of dispersed sperm,
randomly placed, continual waking,
provokes us all.

The vacuum in front
pushing from behind:
mind.
Yves de Lalande

Today nobody reads the novels of Yves de Lalande anymore, which makes one suspect that in the not too distant future nobody will read any novels at all. Yves de Lalande was a pseudonym: his real name was Hubert Puits. He was the first producer of novels on a truly industrial scale. Like everyone else, he started his activity on an artisanal level, turning out novels on a typewriter. With this method, however illustrious or primitive it may be, he required at least six months to conclude a work, and this work could scarcely be described as finished product. In time, Puits became aware that the idea of writing on his own something as complex and varied as a novel, so rich with diverse moods and situations and viewpoints, seemed a task better suited to a Robinson Crusoe than a citizen of the greatest and most advanced industrial nation of the twentieth century—France.

To begin with, the editor of the Bibliothèque de Gout, for which Puits was working at the time, demanded that his novels abound not only with adventures, but with scenes of romantic love. For six years, however, Puits had entertained an utterly normal relationship with his maid or housekeeper, a grey, miserly ex-nun who failed to inspire him with the slightest hint of romance. Hence, he was forced to extract it from other books, and there was always something that did not work. For example, when one of his heroines learned that she was the illegitimate daughter of the French king's brother, she drew her fiancé's sword and pierced her breast, but the scene unfolded in the metro between Bac and Solferino underneath the Ministry of Public Works, which might have seemed strange.

As for the adventures, once he happened to get stuck in an elevator for two and a half hours, and in fact this episode frequently reappeared in his novels, even in one with a Chinese setting, The Wild Beast of Cochin-China. But he knew that he could not exploit it ad infinitum. Puits was convinced that one man would not suffice to produce a good novel, that it took ten, perhaps twenty of them, Balzac, Alexandre Dumas, Maupassant, he thought, who knows how many employees they had.

Yet men are given to quarrelling among themselves: better
to employ five men of good character than ten incompatible geniuses. Thus it was that Lalande's novel works or factory got off the ground. Here we shall describe not the successive phases of its development, but rather its peak operation, that which permitted the still youthful Marquis de Lalande (the title was also invented) to publish, between 1927 and 1945, 672 novels, 84 of which were transposed to the screen with varying success.

The manufacturing process was rigorous, immutable. The workers were all healthy, mentally nimble girls, little inclined to self-assertion. When one of them showed signs of wishing to insert her own literary or otherwise individualistic aspirations into the mechanism of production, she was inexorably replaced. Together they took pride in the finished product. Nevertheless, the product was rarely one that could inspire the slightest pride, and in reality each of them worked, as was appropriate, for the salary, which was also appropriate.

Neither the praise nor censure nor silence of the critics touched the isolated walls of the petit-hotel in Meudon, where the novel factory was located. Contracts for publication, printings, rights, translations were all handled by the office designed for this purpose in Rue Vaugirard. The villa in Meudon was entirely dedicated to creation; inside it whirred a single mind. That house was a Balzac, an Alexandre Dumas, a symbiotic Malraux, a literary colony, a medusa. All the employees harmoniously formed the body of Yves de Lalande.

In his capacity as owner-director of the firm, Hubert Puits proposed every theme. The head of the Office of Basic Plots selected a plot suitable to the theme, updating it according to the reigning style; this choice was among the most compelling because it functioned more as an anticipation than a duplication of the style. The head of Characterization received the plot and accurately inferred the characters according to the proven formulas; then she conveyed them to the Office of Individual Stories and Destinies.

Destinies performed a combinatory role: the head made use of a roulette wheel, and for each character she drew three numbers corresponding to three index cards in the file of Basic Incidents, with which their destinies were rapidly composed. In the Office of Reconciliations, the individual destinies were reconciled among themselves, so as to prevent a character from marrying his son,
or from being born before his father, or other, similar anomalies. The Circumstances, now composed and reconciled, proceeded to the expert in Basic Styles who assigned the most suitable style to the novel, choosing among those in vogue at the moment. Finally, the girl assigned to Titles suggested from six to eight titles, one of which would be selected when the work was completed. This initial, preparatory phase required at most a morning's work; immediately afterwards the novel entered the phase of true and proper Manufacture.

This phase was the most serious, but at the same time the most inflexibly automated and least contingent of the entire manufacturing process. The so-called Scenario was conveyed to the expert in Graphs, a recent graduate in Projection and Programming, who through a shrewd use of various graphs—temporal, spatial, motivational, and so forth—coordinated the entire event into systems of numbered Scenes, both sequential and parallel. From here the work, thus schematized, proceeded to the department of Scenes and Situations.

Scenes and Situations occupied the entire first floor and part of the attic of the villa in Meudon, and it constituted an enormous, constantly growing Archive of scenes and situations for two, three, four or more characters—or even for a single character—narrated in the first and third persons, with dialogue, action, description, introspective passages, and similar narrative elements. These scenes, each four to eight pages in length, were catalogued and arranged according to the most modern methods of classification, which allowed for their almost immediate retrieval. A gang of young bungling arts graduates constantly replenished the firm's already considerable archive with new scenes and situations, in compliance with the laws of the market, and four especially quick-witted girls were assigned to various jobs of research and classification.

As soon as the archivists received the scheme of numbered Scenes and Situations—let us say 80, which made a novel of 450 to 500 typewritten pages—they proceeded to research pertinent treatments. They printed a copy of every scene, with the copying apparatus then in use, as cumbersome as it was efficacious; then they arranged these copies in order, and the novel could indeed be called mounted.

Naturally the product was still unrefined. For example, in every scene and situation the same character appeared with a different
name, the provisional name originally assigned to him by the anony-
mosous narrator. Two other girls, installed permanently in the attic
from where, moreover, a splendid vista of the railroad and environs
could be enjoyed, proceeded to apply the finishing touches.

The first girl, humorously dubbed the Iron by her colleagues,
adjusted the names of people and places, smoothed out the incons-
stistencies, and linked the scenes together (subsequently, as tastes
changed, this labor of linkage became unnecessary); at the same
time, a young typist prepared a fresh typescript of the so-to-speak
ironed text. The second girl, named Mimetica for her skill in imitat-
ing the style of any living writer with a good sales record, corrected
the whole according to directions already established by the ground-
floor Style office. In reality, her task was much less arduous than
it might have seemed; at most it required a quantity of detachment
and artfulness sufficient to recognize that each writer's style is
distinguished by a small number of simple obstinacies, foibles,
affections contracted in childhood, if not in old age, but nonethe-
less susceptible to imitation, whereas a plain, impersonal style
is granted to few, and not of course to a successful writer.

As far as the dialogue was concerned, Mimetica completed
Iron's work, properly bringing the protagonists' speech into line,
independent of their social status, nationality, dialect, age, sex,
occupation, and so forth. Yves de Lalande deprecated local color,
and justly.

At this point, the novel was virtually finished and consigned
to the Grand Consultant, a mature woman of vast experience
and singular memory, which made her a sort of living library in
the sense that not only had she read every novel of the Lalande
firm, but what is even more incredible, she remembered them.
The Grand Consultant removed possible coincidences in the names
of characters, such as would induce the reader to think that the
character had already appeared in another novel by the same author.
She was careful that the situations were not used too often, and
in any case that they had not been employed in the novels executed
by the firm in the last three years, the maximum period attributed
to the reader's memory by the experts. In a word, she gave a final
buff to the product before declaring it suitable and putting it into
circulation. The entire assembly process, from the choice of the
theme to the delivery of the typescript to the interested publishing
house, required no more than twenty days' work; if necessary, even two weeks at a steady rhythm were sufficient.

Yves de Lalande did not read his own novels. As everyone knows, he was crushed to death against a plane tree in April of 1942, having been thrown from an automobile while returning from a light supper with a group of jolly Wehrmacht officials in a room at Versailles. When the army of Liberation arrived, led by Jean Paul Sartre, the literary reviews in power decreed a ban, for collaborationism, on all the works of the petit-hôtel in Meudon. Today the building is leased by the Society for the Protection of Animals and, as they report, is completely filled with cats. Thus a powerful intellect falls into decadence, in the native land of Balzac, Alexandre Dumas, Malraux, and so forth.

J. Rodolfo Wilcock (1919–1978); 
translated from the Italian by Lawrence Venuti
Peer Pleasure

TENTATIVELY, a CONVENIENCE has one of the best art minds of his generation. Talk about imagination! His performances and his writing and his reshaping of thought in his writing and his films are each and all exemplary of heady and fun imaginative stuff.

Aka Michael Tolson.

He’s chosen to remain in and to do most of his work in Baltimore. I’ve never known him to make an exaggerated claim. His work is primarily the imparting of the absolutely nonvicarious pleasures he takes in life. His life is his best work to date and I’m sure it’ll remain so. There’s something compelling about someone for whom the individual work is an incident and for whom the life is a kind of lilting tautology that has no use for the word “is.”


The book is quite possibly (the book) tentatively an inconvenience in the matrix of what happens/happened. The title seems to laugh at itself in order to say something of the sort.

HMM for him. DAZE for days of daze. LUGGAGE for the weight. SOMEWHEN for somewhen. A little repeated cookie-shaped being with GIVE UP ART stencilled on its front. Vaudios for videos.

It may not seem like much at first but these sort of little mental ex/implosions are what friendship is all about.

So TENTATIVELY did the U.K. with or as Dorian Gray and/or others and seems to have had a hell of a time. It’s a hell of a lot better than Baudrillard’s blather about the U.S. of A. Closer to de Tocqueville and whimsically reminiscent of Bowles’ Their Heads Are Green. All done/given on xerox in a rather haphazard manner probably reminiscent of the pace of the trip. It’s news but news with no outside and no inside for that matter. It’s the way the world experienced the experiencer. Just enough body to give the head head.
And tENT's book How to Write a Resumé Volume II: Making a Good First Impression (evidently self-published with help of friends circa 1989) is the incarnate hilarity of self-promotion we all knew life in these S/states to almost always be.

To quote the blurb:

I could fill volumes trying to describe --------- -------- in so many words. Let it suffice to say he is one of Tintytown's true originals. Legendary in mythic proportions beyond belief. tENTATIVELY, a CONVENIENCE. BalTimOr. T.Ore. a cult figure without a cult. A Neoist, a mad scientist, and a hell of a nice guy in more lucid moments. He is a celebration
of all that is weird and wonderful. Dare to be different, you might like it. How to Write a Resume is a document of proof that one can survive the madness of a sane world and mirror life as _____ or _____ as life.

And in the Introduction we're given these basic understandings:

Anything is Anything, follow intuition & imagination, Overthrow Government, expand consciousness, Stop Normality Before It Stops You, fuck a lot. Simple, huh?

tENT's cult is actually the cult of the longevity of humankind and the cult of its happy thrusts. He writes about hitchhiking in a way that lets us know where he's been and's coming from and he writes about drugs with the same compassionate acceptance that say Henri Michaux did. "Just as with dreams, I often prefer to simply value it as something para to my norm." The kind of nutsness that tENT has means that his kind of health would actually be good for everybody.

tENT seems intent on finding new ways of talking with us. He is. But he won't furnish his reasons. I think it's because he doesn't want to confuse us. He's too im/polite. An exception: "Pondering potential names for this proposed band, I thought of 'tentatively, a convenience' since it so simply defines the function of a name while simultaneously hinting at much broader ontological considerations."

His scurrilous humanity is alive. More than we can say for... and... and... and... and

Also his pen is funny which is to say that the words come out funny and accurate and therefore all but a little off. The story for instance about Richard's unwitting D.C. trip is hilarious and full of punchlines about a punchdrunk guy.

They say you only live once. Which is a statement about what they know about it. I have a feeling tENT knows more. This is made evident for example in what the pun makes evident when it's made actual. And in his language distortions when they implore us to recognize the adequacy of their torque.

tENT doesn't believe in art's ways. He makes his own un/usual life as usual. He guts it of its acculturated and moneyed stuff and gives it back to us. The way it once was? It's certainly fresh when uncooked like that. He makes his statement (is it one?) without art. Just life with the stuff of incredible vigor in it. He does things.
performer-spectator distinctions are themselves
a "reality" maintenance trap.

He absolutely knows what he’s done/doing. And when he knows
other people don’t know what that was/is he gets pissed. Rightly
so. “Since I was the most honest individual I knew, I resented
their mob mentality rejection of me. As with the rest of society,
I was much more useful to them as a scapegoat.” He knows where
he’s not. He makes us wonder why we’re doing what we’re doing
while he’s doing what we’re not. Everything he did/does made/makes
love. Tomorrow? “I’m not redundant.” “Normality is what cuts
off your sixth finger and you fail.” “I’m a saint just by virtue of
my deeds.” “Furthermore, I avoid being overly associated with
art.” Go for it Michael.

Is it the mushrooms (thanks Akiro) or do the reds of the tulips
always look like that on the cover of Flower & Garden? And who’s
that woman on the cover (Nov. 91)? But Michael alive and well
and blotto with a head of light. Who knows what happens when
we’re in this non-frame frame-of-mind in light lights on it. Simple
light. Simple lovely light. Even the mint-green of TENT’s telepathy
book’s looking good. Everything is very light. Let’s accept.

Michael made it possible.
Nothing will ever tell us why anything else might’ve happened.

And his TELEPATHY RECEPTIVITY TRAINING (Destruction of
Environment for Almost Insignificant Gain PRESS, n.d.) book
is a blister of received half-asleep-half-awaky phrases somehow
gotten down over a sixteen year period. Of time?

It’s a whigged-out poem completely non-specialized. And it’s
that non- that keeps it aloft.

It’s the top of TENT’s brain as it occurs to him. As it occurs.

Nothing is obvious. Everything is exact and triggered. He’s
telling himself what he’s learning about himself. He’s writing.
Two Recent Books:


In a characterization of Harold Bloom and himself, Geoffrey Hartman writes “Though they understand Nietzsche when he says ‘the deepest pathos is still aesthetic play,’ they have a stake in that pathos: its persistence, its psychological provenance...whereas for deconstructionist criticism literature is precisely that use of language which can purge pathos, which can show that it too is figurative, ironic or aesthetic” (*Deconstruction & Criticism*, preface ix). In a blurb on the back of Alan Davies’ latest book *Candor* (O Books, 1990), Barret Watten claims that this book of poetry and essays is “anything but aesthetic construction.” I would say, rather, that Davies would be more generously and accurately understood as one who, at his best, is able to value aesthetic construction while maintaining a stake in something like pathos.

Maybe I’m misreading Watten, but *Candor* definitely has its share of almost strictly aesthetic and conceptual mediations (though they usually occur in the essays rather than the poems). At one point Davies quotes from a piece by Ben Friedlander:

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Declaimed, giving
precedence to facts
or wit?
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(p. 20)

This can be paralleled to a quote Davies extracts from Larry Price:

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Insight operates as little more than the space
between two constrained parts, the critical fissure
with which any present confines are embossed: A “buys” C.
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(54)

Insight is to wit what constrained parts are to facts. One is singular, the other plural. The insight or wit is the same in both poems; the
facts or constrained parts differ. Partisans of "content" may dwell on the similarities; partisans of "form" may dwell on the differences. Is there room for pathos here? Or are insight and wit as far from emotion as facts are?

Before elaborating on this and other dialectics in Davies, I'd like to show how dialectical strategies function in Lisa Robertson's first book, _The Apothecary_ (Tsunami Editions, 1991). I have a hunch that Watten wouldn't claim _The Apothecary_ is anything but aesthetic construction, nor do I know if a Hartmanian or Derridian reading would do most justice to Robertson's book. She writes in a dense, yet balanced prose, which at times almost seems to get away from itself. But it's held in check by a design that at times almost seems to be too stiff and symmetrical.

Here the urge is strong to choose confusion and recast my dialogue since I impose a skittish requirement which does not meet my real needs although I speak from the perch of a consonant too distant to be sedulous

(2)

Wondering why she calls the requirement she imposes "skittish," I reach for my dictionary. I never knew skittish could mean: wary, coy, bashful, restive, capricious, frisky, lively (7 dwarfs) as well as variable and fluctuating. Yet though there are many threads one could take up in discussion of this passage, I am most interested in showing that Robertson is aware of confusion as a choice. It is certainly a choice she succeeds in. One of the great qualities of this book is that it's easy to get lost in (though my exerptions may not give you a chance to see this crucial element in her work). This is true even though (or because) not a poem (are they poems?) escapes without her using the first-person singular at least once:

I want an ingenious fibre to be treated as funny tragedy expressing a classic argument against materialism

(3)

Confusion over materialism is what Robertson has in common with many a post-symbolist ethos. Is it possible that if the fibre weren't
ingenious it couldn’t be treated as “funny tragedy”? Or that if it weren’t ingenious it couldn’t argue against materialism because it would be nothing but matter? Maybe this fibre would still argue against materialism even though it would be arguing against itself. Would that make it hypocritical...or just plain stupid? Must one be a hypocrite to be immanent? If you know and say that you do what you condemn, are you a hypocrite? Perhaps, but at least you’re only hurting yourself. Maybe this is why Robertson’s requirement “does not meet (her) real needs.”

This could also be why she’s fond of the expression “decorative neuroses” (pp. 27 & 30), one of the many phrases she uses more than once in this short book. And why she writes such things as:

Shed by my own botched history
become a catalogue whose profile is
a parody of the rugged and elemental—

(18)

If you engage in an activity that doesn’t meet your real needs, at least you’re granted an activity that, far from being useless, isn’t met by your “real needs.” Sure, your “botched history” will say you’re not good enough for it, but you didn’t really want it anyway, so there!

Thus, the above passage can be read as a kind of self-reading; Robertson could be said to be moving from a reading that has “a stake” in pathos to a deconstructionist reading that purges the possibility of pathos. Yet as this 16 line, one-sentence piece continues, her neat self-characterization becomes beset, as it were, with a doubt:

but whether my misogyny
works effectively as a surface is a ques-
tion which should be addressed by an
expert in spatial adjustment—

(18)

The doubt is as to whether she’s aesthetically, not morally, successful. Even so, it remains a doubt, and thus teeters on the brink of pathos. She’s not even admitting it’s her doubt. Perhaps this is ironic. This particular piece seems to be more “about” spatial adjustment than misogyny, yet she amorally distances herself from both. Both stances are parts of the botched history that rejects her, yet the doubt remains
and gives her nothing but room to move around in. Maybe this is enough.

Though in my reading I haven't found Robertson using the word "doubt" at all in *The Apothecary*; she shows a healthy skepticism for both the personal and the impersonal. I say healthy because the personal and the impersonal seem to cancel each other out. There are many more examples analogous to the ones I've already cited to show her moving away from any "presumption of intimacy" (1). She seems to distrust the way some poets unreflectively throw the word "intimacy" around as if it's Godlike, comparable to Rilke's "coins of happiness." Perhaps, however, her distrust restores a more valid kind of intimacy, one that can't be made the subject of idolatry by a single word.

This "line" of thinking seems compatible with the spirit of:

I remember how a house falling
reveals an observable structure for an instant, then,
through a sexual process, becomes nostalgia. Several
parts of the body figure in this formula, but will not be
alienated in an image for which I am not prepared to
take responsibility.

(28)

This, perhaps, is not unlike what Wallace Stevens would call "the intricate evasions of as." As are these:

a

a technique is being handed on in the guise of a moral expenditure.

(29)

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1 She does use the word "undoubtedly" in the short piece "Throttled" (which first appeared in *Raddle Moon* as a section of "Parts"). I'll quote it in full to give a sense of an unexpurgated Robertson piece:

It is no accident that I differ from the closest experiment as I strain to address a monitor whose transparency leaves traffic unfulfilled and I notice that the withering meditation is undoubtable embroidered with goosebumps.

(15)
thought were not a practice both amorous and tension-fraught.

(31)

the notion of misunderstanding as an essay—

(5)

and:

as if a sense of religious emotion were a discretely hidden contusion within a much larger choreography

(27)

But for Robertson, these lines are linked with an urge to surmount not memory but "memory's jargon," the kind of jargon so often linked to Wallace Stevens. But perhaps Robertson is not all that different from Stevens when she self-critically writes:

In order to lend authority to a doctrine, a personal activity spreads and stains the unwholesome and disturbing privacy of the page.

(27)

But I just realized I have to be careful not to risk using Stevens to legitimize Robertson, or vice versa, depending on your perspective. I was going to write that the statement "The poet represents the mind in the act of defending us against itself" (Stevens, *Opus Posthumous*, 174) could be read as Stevens' commentary on the above passage. But now I'm not so sure. The subtle gradations of connotations are significant here. Does the staining hide or accentuate the "disturbing privacy of the page"? Maybe it's only the urge for authority that sees the "privacy of the page" as unwholesome. Whether or not that's true depends on what Robertson means by "spreads and stains." For the sake of argument I'll assume she means it, obscures it, thins it out. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? That depends on connotations. Is "authority" nothing but the urge for entitlement (like her earlier urge to "found a presumption of intimacy and station")? Or is the authority something the doctrine lacks (and wants) until the disturbing privacy of the page is stained? The second alternative seems more
plausible. Yet still the question remains: would you rather have authority or be disturbed by the privacy of the (blank) page? The way you read it will probably have more to do with your answer than with Robertson’s beliefs. One thing Stevens does write that works here is “Ethics are no more a part of poetry than they are of painting” (Stevens, O.P., 163). So even if Robertson can only achieve whatever she means by “authority” on the page, it’s no worse as a surface of jargon that must be as various as possible to suffice.

The extreme anxiety of self-disclosure displaces
the fantasy of politics with clots of phrase

(28)

Yet in the next section, a little lower on the same page, she writes:

Brazenly I tried to write as if nervous phrases shed
a history suggestive of appetite. The advent of
“biographies” was an effect of the displacement of
cleanliness

(28)

Aside from the fact that the first sentence here explains more clearly her dilemma of whether writing should meet her real needs or not (though, as already mentioned, it may not even be her own but “an/ erstwhile problematized notion of somebody else’s hunger,” 17—italics mine), the second sentence uses the word “displacement” to mediate between two very different terms. “The extreme anxiety of self disclosure” becomes “the advent of biographies.” These are virtual synonyms. But can we view “the fantasy of politics” as a kind of cleanliness? Would I have to be guilty of (if not the fallacy of the undifferentiated middle) thinking syllogistically and dialectically to claim that cleanliness and politics serve the same purpose here for Robertson? Not necessarily, for she seems to pull away from both of them to move toward the personal, but with this qualification:

Not that I intend quaintness as a method
—rather, I need to integrate a structure as an absent
cause, or as a shimmying isolation among compassions
and trussed vocabularies.

(28-9)
You could say Robertson is confessional, even though she only confesses her method. Often these poems seem more like comments on other poems already (or not yet) written. But they do work as experiences; she feels like theorizing. Maybe I only like her because she seems more comfortable with a polysyllabic vocabulary than I am, yet there’s always the possibility that her work is not just a put-on. And as long as pain’s a possibility, so is a kind of health:

so I need to beware mistaking my oblation or
my health for laconic machines partially guarded by a
miraculously intact narcissism, interpreted as a limp,
at once erotic and epistemological, inflicted on the
melody.

(29-30)

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On the other hand, a reader looking for a poem to get lost in is bound to be disappointed by Alan Davies’ Candor—but that is exactly Davies’ point here. To use Charles Bernstein’s schema, one could say that even though both Robertson and Davies use anti-absorptive means to achieve absorptive ends, Robertson’s means are more cerebral (as Davies himself is in earlier books like Active 24 Hours), while Candor uses koan-like devices that could justifiably be pegged as “anything but aesthetic construction.” Here Davies aims straight for the emotions:

When I see an abundance of formal concentration I think, the person
who did this is not very comfortable with what they’re saying.

(130)

Davies’ attack on the well-wrought urn, as it were, has something to do with why I feel it’s less of a violation to excerpt him, to wrench his lines out of context, than I do with Robertson. That Robertson at times isn’t comfortable with what she’s saying isn’t my concern here as much as whether Davies, by the mere act of eschewing formal concentration, has himself achieved a kind of comfort in Candor; just because there isn’t an abundance of formal concentration doesn’t mean one is comfortable with what s/he says. But it is a mistake,
I feel, to say that Davies doesn’t value comfort over formal concentration here.

In the essay on Luce Irigaray, Davies writes “There’s no reason to keep the idea going once it’s rested or died” (122). Perhaps that explains his willingness to utter bold statements without the accompanying structures of self-defense one almost expects from an avant-garde writer today.

When Davies writes “Deny the problem/ Deny the solution” (81), I wonder if there’s any way to read this without writing “but but but.” I was once told (in a rejection letter from an allegedly important NY poetry gazette) “for someone who’s not looking for any answers, you sure ask a lot of questions.” Perhaps some can’t handle having a problem unless they have a solution for it. Is a problem sharp? Does a solution sheathe? Is Davies telling us we shouldn’t read “Deny the problem/ Deny the solution” as itself a solution? And if so, is it possible that he too has no stake in pathos, but is a linguistic nihilist? Or am I reading too much into it?

If I, on the other hand, feel the inadequacy of any solution I’ve found for any problem, that any solution at best can only make a problem play possum (say that 3 times fast), is it because I’m attached to problems? Does it mean I can only be seen as acting out of my own avoidable neurosis?

Maybe solutions know they fire blanks, know that the problem would play possum at the exact moment they (the solutions) were fired just because it (the problem) was tired. Maybe I would say it even if it didn’t change you or me, if there was no self that is acted on by that which acts, if what I saw had no relation to what I did, etc. Am I saying I would rather let the problem live than futilely try to make it vanish? Probably. If I denied the problem without denying the solution, would I have all these solutions dressed up with no place to go? Probably. But why should I deny anything?

In “A Few Notes on Suffering and Happiness” (a 12-page romp through whatever “consciousness” refers to), Davies writes:

Why not
scratch a few notes on the walls of sentience? (sic)

We will have been here
If you won't hear things for what they are then you'll always be listening for more than what you'll ever get.

This is all there is to the world, uncustomized and uncustomizable.

(112)

But but but, I say, ever skeptical of this "poetry of the equals sign" (125). If it (the world) were not uncustomizable, the fact that it were uncustomized might be a source of despair or strife—especially if "despair" is just a word. Is "what (things) are" then automatically uncustomizable in Davies' metaphysic? Is this an attempt to resolve contradictions in a spurious harmony that refuses to acknowledge the contradictions, but rather compromises them by resting on a positive note?

Maybe in this instance he stops short of entertaining doubt, but I'll grant him this (what a skeptic would call a) lapse because he's, admittedly, "in the tub" and doesn't need discursive rigor (mortis?) when he feels "the centers of pleasure/are still so much better/ than any so-called moments of truth" (113). For it is there that he can say such off-the-cuff things as:

I'd like to introduce the you who said you didn't mean to to the you whose actions did.

(113)

It is a kind of consciousness where, to use his own words (in reference to Steve Benson), "The elements of the writing talk fully with the other elements" (80) that Davies has achieved here. Many of these "notes" are extremely generative:

There are many of us who travel down this road together but only a few who reach the end before they die and of those, only a few who go on.

(114)

The dialectic mind (straight man?) almost can't help but think... but there's obviously a few who go on even though they don't reach the end before they die. Davies may agree with that extension and/or objection. Or he may respond "But it wouldn't feel like going on if they didn't first reach the end." Perhaps Davies has simply lost
interest in the insight and wants to let it hang. Perhaps this is why he writes:

To stay with a thought,
to be attached to it,
how many times
are these two different things?

(114)

Being attached, one would (traditionally) think, has more negative connotations than merely staying with a thought. But if Davies is in favor of non-attachment, is he saying they *should* be two different things? Only if he feels that staying with a thought is worthwhile. Am I saying nothing more than what he says? (Reiteration in the guise of explication?) But just because he writes “There’s no reason to keep the idea going once it’s rested or died” (cited above) doesn’t mean he’d hate my elaborations, my divagations. *When* does the idea die; that’s the question. Bob Dylan sings “The fewer words you have to waste on it, then the sooner you may go.” But for some reason I continue. Do I fear that Davies’ provocative nakedness is really a lack of follow-through? Do I prefer the maximalist tedious of Beckett’s early novels? Are Davies and I of different sensibilities? Or am I just playing devil’s advocate?

Everything written can be disagreed with, especially the eloquent:

But reality is after all a personifiable reality
and so it contracts
into the young stalks of our children
that prevent it from being so

(82)

Why does it prevent it? Why can’t you personify a person?
Elsewhere, in the essay on Ken Edwards’ poetry, Davies writes:

It wonders at the fact that there must be a way of mastering the adventure without damaging it. That there must be a way without mastering it.

(83)

Once more, the play with connotations. If mastering *a priori* means damaging, then the second statement is not only as true as the first,
but truer. But on an (un)certaint level, neither Davies nor I know. Thus, Davies uses the inadequacy of words as a field for play. Of the many statements that radically question the importance of words in Candor, I'd like to focus on two (both from "A Few Notes on Suffering and Happiness"):

Poetry should be as well-written as silence.

(111)

This is as much of a takeoff on Pound as "No thought best thought" (109) is on Ginsberg. But such a stance is preferable because it doesn't oppose one side or the equation to the other; it doesn't necessarily subordinate words to silence. Even though a certain element of will is implied in both writing poetry and in remaining (or becoming) silent, it offers the possibility for fulfillment in either state. On the other hand, "No thought best thought" is too much like "Deny the problem/ Deny the solution" or "The blasphemous stupid inefficacy of words" (111) for my taste. It's not hard to conjecture that if Davies feels this angry about writing when he's writing, isn't it possible that he spends too much of the time when he's not writing looking over his shoulder?

Yet even though I may wonder why he uses words against themselves sometimes, at least I must admire the stake in pathos he has here. There are times when Davies does seem to believe that everything is words, but his brilliance is that he's able to do this without the irony that Hartman calls Deconstruction:

It's because they masquerade as images
that we wash ourselves with words all day long.

(117)

If all the aspects of life Candor takes on are reducible to words, then words are nothing more than realizations, events, in drag. When Davies writes "No one correctly understands that the pin-/nâcle of thought is where it begins to lose itself in/ thoughtlessness" (51), he's not saying that he understands it either. Davies is "merely" trying to get to the point that isn't "kind of off to the side" (15), to get you to really live the fact that the moments you're not writing are no worse than the moments you are. All of these varying ejaculations (whether
angry, tender, frustrated, awe-inspiring) are united in the urge for “the integrated self” (50), “when every ounce of my body weighs as much as every other ounce of my body” (11). To expect the koan-like means Davies uses to achieve this to be systemizable is not only unfair, but borders on the ridiculous.

Candor often comes off as didactic, but what’s more important than the role of teacher Davies often assumes is the fact that it’s a social role. Maybe it’s because he cares more about the emotion of thought than the thought of emotion that the essays and poems in Candor are more impressionistic and provocative than formally concentrated or sublimely agonistic. But this doesn’t mean that they’re not aesthetic constructions. Maybe that’s why an interactive talk/event hosted by performance artist Ian Wilson at the Gallerie Le Long (which Davies feels engenders the “palpable experience of thought as action,” 19) becomes an emblem for the kind of work or play Davies does and wants to do. Maybe that’s why, in his eloquent essay attacking Lee Bartlett’s attack on the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writers, he’s moved to write “They think their writing, and when they fail to do so they still manage to give evidence of a capacity to do so” (28).
UNDER THE EL
Some Thoughts on Gil Orlovitz

I've got this novel in me, one I've been teasing for ten or fifteen years now. Or it has been teasing me? It is set in Philadelphia, in the fall of '73. (Write what you know, they told me.) It is a father/son story, authority vs. individuality, a rites of passage story replete with sex and love, with music, adolescent angst, and the war. The protagonist is nearly twenty, and making his way. A pensive and artistic type, he spends a lot of time walking the streets, wandering and wondering. He's taken a break from school and has a warehouse job in center city. Riding home on the el one night he notices the headline in a newspaper being read by a guy across the aisle, an obituary: GIL ORLOVITZ, NOVELIST AND POET.

The young man knew of Orlovitz — in fact, Orlovitz had written one of his favorite novels. When the train pulls up to the Erie-Torresdale station, he gets off, even though this is not his stop. Then, while the rest of the commuters head for the revolving gates and stairs, he walks against them until he is alone at the end of the platform. The train is out of sight in no time, and all that is left is the scramble of rush-hour traffic where Torresdale and Erie Avenues intersect below.

From that corner of the el platform you can see the world. Or at least the world as he has known it. Right in front of him is the old high school, where he learned to think. Across the way is the dairy building, a huge white milkbottle standing like a nearly perfect soul on the roof, bright in spotlights, with a large black H on its chest. Beyond the school and dairy the streets are dark, mostly factories and mills that are shut down for the night. Beyond that, the neighborhoods roll out, each one different and each one the same, roll out to where dark comes on dark at the horizon. There, another beacon, a red electric message atop a downtown building, ICE NEVER FAILS, cold burning bulbs, ominous, portent.

This is the young man's stomping grounds, but also where Orlovitz walked, the streets where his novels and poems unwound. In fact, the first two volumes of his (alas, never completed) trilogy are right here: MILKBOTTLE H and ICE NEVER F. It was a simple case of Local Boy Makes Good (though very few notice it) and impresses the hell out of one young guy in the neighborhood. Our hero, you see, wants
to be a writer, too. Right now, though, he has bigger problems.

He'd read the novels — it was fun moving through the city in Gil's pages — and he'd even seen a few of his poems in the little magazines he'd sometimes pick up. In truth, though, he'd thought little about Orlovitz until that night on the train, the night he saw the obit in the stranger's Bulletin. Now, he was out on the Erie-Torresdale el platform looking down on his world, Gil's world, a dozen fictions of his own reeling through his head.

MILKBOTTLE H. ICE NEVER F. What about the third book? Somewhere out there, he knows, is another letter. Another sign. He looked from the black H to the red electric F. There was something more out there, somewhere.

* * *

Over the textile mills of Philadelphia's Kensington, above the Frankford El, can be seen day and night, illuminated diurnally by the natural resplendence of the sun, and nocturnally by banks of spotlights at its base, a gigantic reproduction of a MILKBOTTLE erected on the roof of the dairy it symbolizes and advertises. The MILKBOTTLE is dumbfoundingly and magniloquently white, and in cursive Tudor Black is the gigantic letter H on two sides of the MILKBOTTLE, arrogantly denoting the initial letter of the company whose cows and bottles serve the populace: Harbisons. True, there are other milk companies, Breyers and Supplees and Abbotts, whose wagons on puffy rubber tires first are pulled by horses and at last by engines. But if one raises one's eyes skyward, the Philadelphia horizon is instantly purified to a superral degree by Harbisons MILKBOTTLE, WHITE AND SQUAT, heretofore known by the lets change parties of all parts as MILKBOTTLE H.

I came to Gil Orlovitz's work because of passages like this. I'd heard about the novel, in a review somewhere probably, MILKBOTTLE H, set in Philadelphia, though published in England. A novel that plays out on the streets of my city — that wasn't so uncommon. I was already reading Goodis (THE BURGLER AND DON'T SHOOT THE PIANO PLAYER) and McHale (PRINCIPATO and FARRAGUT'S RETREAT) for the same reason, and there were others. But just as Wallace Stevens placed his jar upon a hill in Tennessee, Orlovitz put the Harbison Milkbottle smack in the middle of his novel and "it took dominion everywhere ...."
While both of contemporary poetry, drama, and novel— in brief, these art[s] have not developed, themselves in any way that is merely its other. Dina has written her heroic, published as it is, as it was in flipbook.

I hope she will expend it long for shishkab, transfigurations of Joyce, only Picasso achieved it, and hard, I mean in this fashion. Often, my friend: I discern very little velocity in modern art, but hardly, hardly, hardly, I discern very little compositional tension. Really, it would seem that contemporary science, especially in quantum physics, has surpassed it but most of the freakish qualities of great art, in relativistic physics, you will find, forever during unbreakable concepts and we are placed to behold in the tiled grace of a mosaic, the decorative whorls of non-objectivists, and the

Letter from Gil Orlovitz to Philadelphia artist Harold Mesibov.
So, maybe I came to Orlovitz’s fiction for the wrong reasons, but it didn’t take me long to figure out that there was more here than familiar streets, landmarks, and omnipresent signs. For one thing, the book was difficult reading. It challenged the mind and eyes, reading more like poetry, actually, “leaping poetry,” as Bly would have it, with a commitment to narrative, even if not to plot. This was the kind of thing I’d always called “experimental,” and pushed back onto the shelf. When I was in school I read the obligatory Joyce, what the professors were pushing, and the equally obligatory Miller, what my peers were caught up in. I didn’t go much beyond that, though. (Remember how the heroine of Sylvia Plath’s THE BELL JAR never got past page 60 or so of FINNEGAN’S WAKE because she was always interrupted by a suicide attempt?) When poetry demanded as much of me, it was no problem. I was more willing to work for that. In fiction, though, I wanted escape, an accessible world where things rolled out like a rug, and not like a carpet of stars. When I picked up MILKBOTTLE H I found an infinity of lights.

To call the novel “Homeric” might do it an injustice. More on the order of Joyce — sure, that’s easy. Everyone who taps into a stream of consciousness, and who concedes the field to the anarchy of words, is yoked with the cranky Irishman, and forced to march with the pseudo-hip Avant Garde. A more honest bond, though, might link Orlovitz with Samuel Beckett, or maybe Thomas Pynchon. V. is a blood relation of Orlovitz’s prose, even if only by coincidence. And a case could be made for Heller’s CATCH 22 or Miller’s TROPIC OF CANCER. The reviewers threw around terms like “surreal” and “dada,” but Hale Chatfield was closer, I think. In an essay he wrote for the KENYON
REVIEW, Chatfield linked Orlovitz to the Action Painting of Jackson Pollock, the way he let words take to the page as they were wont, throwing them, dripping them, pouring images, bits of picked-up dialogue, the subliminal messages of advertisers, and letting them be.

I can't remember, now, what first impressed me. The language, I think; the diction and the idiom. And its rhythms, its force. Call it passion. Read a passage aloud, and you see how it builds, how it runs away with your voice. Orlovitz is in control — every stop is calculated, every breath. It is almost impossible to misread.

... I can get you a job, Lee, if that's what you really want. You sure? Yes. Wally scribbles a name and a company on a scrap of paper, this guys the superintendent, see him Monday morning, I'll speak to him tomorrow, you're at the trolley's grinds along Allegheny Avenue and Lee steps off at G Street, a black unlaunched sheet in the Monday morning winterwind, hundreds of men carrying their nicked black metal lunchboxes, overalled, cap brims down in the scissle bluecold sky scraping its icy feet along pavement and cobblestone MILKBOTTLE H rearing over Kensington, the Philadelphia mill and factory section, the trolleys flapping open their green doors to clatter down the two gray wooden steps down which the passengers brogan and highheel, leather and woollengloved, a last cigarette before growling into the mill....

As novels go, this is a characters' romp. Special effects aside, linguistic acrobatics and poetry forgotten, MILKBOTTLE H is a madhouse of people coming and going. As is the companion volume, ICE NEVER F. (MILKBOTTLE H was published in 1967, three years before ICE NEVER F, but the second book was actually written first.) This is the story of Lee Emanuel, truly an original, a string-ball of neuroses, Portnoy to the tenth power, beyond that point where humor takes a darker turn. The other characters are hardly lesser characters; each one is a well of comedy, absurdity, and homespun wisdom.

If plotlines seem to ramble or seem somewhat thin, that is no matter. There are conflicts; there are resolutions. The soup gets its thickness and its tang from the characters, from their sharp, witty exchanges. And from the city, Philadelphia, which is like a character, too; just as sharp, just as witty.

*   *   *

72 Louis McKee
Gil Orlovitz was born in Philadelphia on June 7, 1918. He attended Temple University for a short time before signing on with the U.S. Army Air Corps for a four year stint. After the war he used the G.I. Bill to attend Columbia University. He never did complete a degree; the greater part of his education came from the time he spent in “The Heel,” the old Horn and Hardart’s cafeteria/automat on Broad Street. His grandfather had been the chief rabbi of Lithuania. His father, also quite knowledgeable of the Talmud, owned a coal yard and disliked America. His mother was born in Russia. His first collection of poems, CONCERNING MAN, was published in 1947, and it was just after this that he relocated to Los Angeles and began writing screenplays and hack TV scripts. As Gerald Stern has noted in his essay on Gil in AMERICAN POETRY REVIEW, Orlovitz “was already at the height of his powers in 1953, when he was 34 years old.”

California didn’t work out, and by 1958 he was back on the east coast. The winter ’58-’59 issue of THE LITERARY REVIEW focused on Orlovitz, the poems, short stories, and plays, including too, a three page autobiography:

The balance of adolescence hung on innumerable coffees at a downtown Philadelphia cafeteria, since demolished, where I had been preceded by some aging contributors to TRANSITION....

This is the ironic, happy voice of a man at the height of his power.

Life took some bad turns after this, and when Orlovitz died in New York on July 10, 1973 he was a tired, weathered man. So much of his decline is wrapped in myth and half-truths that I’d rather not deal with it here. There is this that I know to be true: Orlovitz collapsed on the sidewalk on 108th Street, a block or so from where he lived, with a high fever, and fell into a coma. He was taken to Knickerbocker Hospital, where he died the next day. According to hospital records, he died of pneumonia. The body was not identified until July 21, and it was not until September 8 that an obituary appeared in the NEW YORK TIMES.

By the time of his death, Orlovitz had published sixteen books (including the two novels). The poetry appeared in small issues from alternative presses — Banyan Press of Vermont; Inferno Press of San Francisco; Hearse Press of Eureka, CA; Fiddlehead Books of Canada; and so on. The novels had a better fate. Sort of. They were published, both of
them, by Calder & Boyers, Ltd., a respected London house. A year after it appeared in England, MILKBOTTLE H was published in America by Dell. It is a disgrace, but ICE NEVER F never has been published on this side of the Atlantic.

* * *

Gil is gone — and we will never know what the title of that third novel was to be. Fifteen years ago I thought I had it figured: at the end of my story the young man was going to head home, after another night of wondering led him to Erie and Torresdale Avenues. He walks through a December snow which is only just making the decision about whether to lay or not. I remember the image — it came to me the first night: he walks across the avenue, the snow falling in his face, into his eyes, blurring the colored lights that mark Christmas in the houses across the way. For a moment he looks up at a screeching train making the turn up ahead, then drops his eyes to the cobblestones and cartracks, and walks off under the el.
Contributors' Notes

John Ashbery's poem, "The Great Bridge Game of Life," will be appearing in a new collection entitled Hotel Lautréamont, which will be published by Knopf in the fall of 1992.

Ed Barrett's second collection of poetry, The Theory of Transportation was published in 1991. Poems in this issue of PBQ are from his third, unpublished collection, Deprivation of Equations. He is senior lecturer in the writing program at MIT.

Alan Davies' recent books include Candor from O Books, and LIFE (part of a longer, ongoing work) from Case.


Sean Killian has recently been published in New American Writing, Green Zero, Sulfur, Notus, and St. Marks Poetry Project Newsletter. He has work forthcoming in the Denver Quarterly. He works as a communications consultant for a Japanese textile company and lives in New York City and Catskill, NY.

Tim King is an intern architect at Image Associates in Monroeville, PA. He plans to obtain a professional degree and registration as an architect.

Louis McKee lives, teaches, and writes in Philadelphia, PA. Oranges (1989) is his most recent of five collections of poetry. His third book, The True Speed of Things, originally published in 1984 by Slash & Burn Press, was reissued in 1991 by Nightshade Press of Troy, ME. Included in this issue of PBQ is the elegy for his friend S.J. Marks, a fellow Philadelphia poet.

Shawn Orr is a sculptor, ironworker, foundryworker, and guitarist. He attended Cal Arts and Pratt Institute and now resides in Pawling, NY.

Bob Perelman is the author of numerous books, including Captive Audience (The Figures), Face Value (Roof), and The First World (The Figures). He teaches at the University of Pennsylvania.

Joan Retallack's book of poetry, Circumstantial Evidence, was published by SOS Press. Recent work, including a long interview with John Cage, has appeared in Aerial. She has had other work in o•blak, Avec, and Motel (a Canadian magazine). Her critical essays have appeared in a number of publications.

Cynthia Roberts is a senior majoring in English and Art at Brown University. She is editor-in-chief of Clerestory, the Brown University literary magazine. Her poetry has appeared in Passion Fruit Review.
David Rosenthal lives in Philadelphia, where he writes plays and poetry. "easier test" is his first publication.

Spencer Selby's work has appeared in Sulfur, Avec, New American Writing, Obelisk, Talisman, Caliban, and elsewhere. His most recent books are Barricade from Paradigm Press, and House of Before from Potes and Poets. "Collapse Body Text" is from his collection entitled Combat Without Weapons.

David Shapiro has published eight volumes of poetry, including January (1965) and A Man Holding an Acoustic Panel, which was nominated for a National Book Award in 1971. After a Lost Original was published in 1991 by Solo Press. He has also written books on John Ashbery, Jasper Johns, and Piet Mondrian. He is a full professor of Art History at William Paterson College and a visiting professor at Cooper Union School of Architecture.

Dan Slowpeach is working on an MFA in photography at the Maryland Art Institute.

Chris Stroffolino is the author of Oops (Backyard Press, 1991). He has published essays on such writers as John Ashbery, Bob Perelman, Bernadette Mayer, Kit Robinson, and James Tate.

TENTATIVELY, a CONVENIENCE: mad scientist/d composer/sound thinker/ thought collector/as been/psychopathfinding

William F. Van Wert teaches English/Creative Writing at Temple University. He has fiction forthcoming in TriQuarterly, North American Review, Western Humanities Review, Boulevard, Crosscurrents, and The Literary Review.

Lawrence Venuti is a translator of Italian prose and poetry. His most recent translation is I.U. Tarchetti’s Fantastic Tales, forthcoming from Mercury House.

Michael Weaver’s work appears in a recent issue of Green Zero. He is featured on a compact disc produced by We Press. This is his first appearance in PBQ.

Sometime resident of Philadelphia, Ed Webster is the poetry editor of Cipher, and the Elliston Poetry Fellow at the University of Cincinnati, where he’s working toward a Ph.D. He was awarded the Academy of American Poets Award at Temple University in 1990. His poems have appeared in The Cincinnati Poetry Review, The Cream City Review, Green Zero, and elsewhere.

J(uan) Rodolfo Wilcock was born in Buenos Aires in 1919 and later emigrated to Italy, where he died in 1978 at Biterbo. He was a poet, fiction writer, journalist, dramatist, and theater critic. In Argentina, he wrote in Spanish and associated with Borges' circle. He also translated from English to Italian; his translations include Christopher Marlowe's plays, excerpts from Joyce's Finnegans Wake, and a novel by Virginia Woolf.

John Yau, poet and art critic, is the author of nine volumes of poetry, the most recent of which is Radiant Silhouettes: New and Selected Work 1974-1988 (Black Sparrow Press, 1989). He has written art criticism for Art in America, Art Forum, Art News, Flash Art, and Vogue. He is a contributing editor to Arts Magazine.
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S. J. Marks
(1935 - 1991)

Entering the forest I don’t disturb a blade of grass,
entering the water I don’t make a ripple.

Jeff Marks’ poetry is unintrusive, much as was the man, himself. Chalk it up, maybe, to his training as a family therapist. He listened well; he paid attention. Then he turned the world around him, and all that was inside him, into tender lyrics and uncommonly honest meditations. Happily, Jeff lived to see his newer work published (Something Grazes Our Hair, University of Illinois Press, 1991) and got to bask for a time in its warm reception. Happily, we have the poems.

How delicious to walk into the stillness—
Project: Three Finger Chord

The intent is to use graphics as a method of seeing an idea, presenting that idea, and simultaneously extending one's vocabulary.

Three Finger Chord started by setting up a three-point perspective; from each vanishing point of that perspective came an arbitrary object, repeating in some rhythmical system. When the objects intersect something happens....