

New Orleans Review

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 2

Mathemaku No. 4c

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The Other South

Experimental Writing in the South: A Special Section

PLUS
NEW WORK BY:

Alfred Schwaid
Leon Stokesbury
Trudy Lewis
William Hathaway

Edouard Glissant
Dave Smith
Grace Bauer
and many others

an Interview with Elinor Lipman



\$6

New Orleans Review

Summer 1995

Volume 21, Number 2

Cover: poem, "Mathemaku 4c," by Bob Grumman.

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THAT OTHER WORLD

Mornings, at Meiner's Thriftway,
 I imagined those days when Dennis was covered
 with layers of yellowed fat, his white cutter's coat
 and hard-hat perched on his head with his name
 stenciled into it—how quickly he must have moved
 his thoughtless knives through miles of beef
 before he was reduced to deliveries. But now,
 he just pushed a clipboard
 through the cracked window of the truck,
 and without a word I would take inventory.
 When my work was done, he would let me sit
 in the cab for a minute and smoke. I could
 never get over his hand, three fingers cropped,
 his right thumb almost gone, knotted
 like the digit of a toad. I remember him
 reclining easily into the cracked cushion
 of his seat, his index finger and remaining thumb
 pinching his Pall Mall, smoke rising—never forced—
 from his mouth as if something perfect
 was smoldering, persistently, in his head.
 I don't remember if I thought
 or said much only that it was the best part of the day.
 I could feel myself getting older every week
 and usually that was enough. But after Dennis pulled out
 and turned toward the Safeway down the street,
 I would have to hang and inspect the meat, wheel
 oozing boxes of chicken, and vacuum packed bags
 of Point Half and Flat Half Brisket, before I could relax
 in the thick, flesh-ripened air. With a straw
 between my fingers, lips pursed, I would draw
 a deep breath and then languorously release
 the white air from my lungs under the spotlight
 of a single, unfrosted bulb. After a full day,
 I would get to cut alone—an *apprentice butcher*
 the older cutters joked—the vicious hum of the band saw
 enough to remind me that I might lose a finger,

that I might make it through thirty 30 lb. boxes
 of whole chicken: Pope's nose first, down the middle,
 leg quarters, the soak-sink filling with water
 and liquid sulfide, that other world—Dennis' partial hand
 raised against the fierce light of its sun going down—
 just beyond the porthole of the cooler door.

WOMAN IN A BLACK DRESS ARRIVES LIKE
PITY IN A LATE OHIO BAR

I don't remember what song started the whole thing,
or what instrument broke away first,
but I do remember a woman in a black dress
gyrating near the band until she had defeated
almost every man in this bar, until each man imagined
her lean toward his ear to tell him, *you're the one*.
It didn't matter that his girlfriend clawed his leg, kicked—
it didn't matter, until this woman put her hand on my thigh
and whispered something in my ear. In an uncontrolled burst of time
only wanton lust could create, I saw my father
standing above me in the half-light of a kitchen
years ago, tensed, his tight briefs and undersized shirt.
Downstairs, in the kitchen, my mother let him handle this one,
and he raised his hand which disappeared under the light
over his head, and then landed like a bolt of electricity
again and again, the woman standing there of course,
the quietly persistent snare, the curves of her breasts,
keeping time for a guitar striking out its crescendos
the way my voice rose that night when I told
my father to fuck himself. I knew, at that moment,
it was time to leave and that's exactly what I did,
the night bitterly cold, remaining snow from a storm weeks ago
that was no blanket, but an unrelenting grip.
I find myself wishing she could take pity on me
at the City Park close to my parents house
as I scour my mind for the closest couch and farthest place
money might take me. I find myself wishing
pity was her name, pity the name of the perfume
I smell rising later as she straddles my body,
back momentarily arched in pleasure
and almost as dangerous as my father.

Dave Smith

A LAY OF SPRING

My father must have been cold in his casket,
ice slicking the bermuda lawns, roads. Tulips
just trying to get born. I wanted him alive.
I could not sing. I was sorry, seventeen,
not yet a man, brooding virgin, nonsmoker.
He left quick as his sizzled Pall-Malls, wordless.
I kneeled with the heavy Baptists who prayed hard.
Then quiet, tulips came red, yellow, boozy sun
welding my eyes. The day I passed out was May.
He's gone. This is my lay. I begged let me be
touched, for tomorrow I'll also grow older.
Alice fed me mountain oysters. Summer started.
Buds dropped. Alice swelled. Preaching? Poetry? You lose.

GOLD BIRD AND THE AGE

Every gray day swells in around you, gold bird.
Sinister as the copperhead in its russet
pinestraw, that held-back surge of piled up desire.
I think my hand won't shake to stand woven with
the air your neediest dips, veers, blinks must take.
I'm more than two of you, the juror sun quips.
Still my feet tap the lake route, saying "Where? Where?"
When you fall for my gaze, I think of Groucho's
duck, before your time, that measely joke that's stiff
as luck, so all I'll ever get is round zeros
of remorse, hard nights cranking. If you were here
I'd offer you a drink, put on Dancing in the Street,
turn off the moon, be snakebit by dreamless sleep.

FIRST TOURNAMENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

You think you've got him figured after shifts, rolls,
slants of dusky light, winds, lay of land, sun-flamed
distances carried neat, the habitual stroke
with feet, hands, cock of chin all just so and, aimed,
you release the way the pro, deceased now, said:
covering the far flag, great shot; she's good as dead.
But the little bastard shadowing you's stuck
close for nine, daffy chips, hundred-yard irons played
maddening as a boy with his dick, up, down, up,
down. On this par three, son, you've knocked it stiff.
Then his futzed wobbly crier dribbles up, in,
a plop near-audible as halves of your wedge whiffed
past unyielding oak, and memory's kiss, her handshake.

LARGE THUNDER

after Jacques Roubaud

Large grey thunder where sea and cloud merge .
 Large grey funeral morning . large spray . white
 broken-up elements . large rain falling on a black hat .
 falling on narrow Roman bricks outside a cloister , a ruin .
 falling on flagstones by the *eglise de Saint Michel* .

Tough luck . not evil . don't gossip as if a fault
 could measure up to *Pourquoi ? Christ , pourquoi ?*
 Large reasons lie buried out of sight . piled up .

Mountains of limestone with resurrections of fossil fish .
 aspen limbs . heaps of peelings . olive pits . gold fillings .
 large necropolis . the Earth .

Fields of wheat and gnarled vines . of daffodils . fields fallow
 and fields plowed , a countryside subdued by rain .
 continents of lamentation . lingering essence . . .

Large memory . large circular cassette wheeling . slides
 overlapping slides . a flower . a hopeful face .
 not one can hear . not one can touch . all is over .
 All that is too large , too exhausting

washed away , spilling over gutters , racing downhill
 fast . fast . fast . . . In the downpour , everything grand
 everything too heavy to erase
 rinsed off .

AVATAR OF THE COWBOY

When you skin-out a deer head to mount it the last thing you come to is the nose. The skin is turned inside out, pulled over the head, and the nose is inside. Ornette Coleman does not distinguish between solo and ensemble playing, and neither should anyone else. Mix blue and warm sepia. Be certain it's Prussian blue.

The TV in his room didn't work. He complained but they had no other rooms, and it was too late to send for a repairman. Normally there would have been any number of vacant rooms, but there was a stockbreeder's convention in town and they were booked solid through the week; he was lucky to get the room he had. At no time should you allow anything accidental to impinge on your meditations. A streak of red allowed to drip. It was just him and a quart of Ten High.

Red, blue and purplish sepia simulated a sunset, then night fell like a guillotine. The Northwestern School of Taxidermy is all but defunct today. Harmony and melody are no longer distinct, and we can now speak in terms of harmolodics. He sat on his bed in the dark and poured his first drink. "First today, with this hand." There was enough light from the motel sign. The Northwestern School of Taxidermy's introduction to its first lesson began with, "Who hasn't seen a dead robin and wished they could preserve its beauty?"

There was an old hotel in town that would have at least had a lobby to sit *in*, but he had passed that up. Owen Wister suggested that avatars of the cowboy could be spotted *in* hotel lobbies. It would require a certain judgmental acumen, or finesse, to pick them out though.

George Catlin sent a piece of red pipestone to a geologist, who named it Catlinite. That was not the first time he had been to that motel, he remembered, and he tried to bring that time along with him; it seemed to him he was not alone then. Coleman is from Texas and brings some of its tradition to his music, but in a dissimilar way.

There was a door to the adjoining room, with the knob removed and the resultant hole stuffed up with newspaper. He always had the sense of waiting for someone when he was alone in a motel.

The interesting thing is that Wister wrote during a time when you would have thought there were still plenty of actual cowboys around. I have never been beyond the lobby of that hotel myself. Eugene O'Neill imagined it for his play, *Huey*.

The TV was on in the next room and he heard it through the wall. He

poured a drink and listened. An old movie that he had seen; he could hear the dialogue and imagine the scenes. He closed his eyes to see better.

He tried to remember the person he had been with the last time he was there, but couldn't. He stared at the wall in an effort to see someone there but the movie kept getting in his way. Before trying your hand on a robin, though, the Northwestern School of Taxidermy recommended that you practice on a pigeon. He was waiting to remember.

After years of pondering Ad Reinhardt's black paintings you are suddenly confronted with Robert Ryman's white ones. The most familiar thing was the whiskey. He knew it would take him through a particular course of feelings and events. Someone walked outside his room and startled him. He heard footsteps and saw a shadow past his window.

There had been a mounted deer head on the motel office wall; a mule deer, he knew. He went to the window and looked out. Anyone outside could have seen him clearly. There was nothing there; just a gas station and the bar where he had bought the Ten High. The rest of the road seemed to begin and end where he was. There was an Exxon tiger on the back of an old pickup up on blocks in the gas station.

The only artists who write intelligently about their work are jazz musicians: painters can't do it; they try to be poets: writers can't; they try to be critics. Jazz musicians speak as musicians.

The movie was taken from a short story. In it they had to invent a history for the character that didn't exist in the story. He knew both the story and the movie. The movie was somewhere in the middle, a flashback scene to the bogus history. He was apprehensive of sounds outside. If he became tense the whiskey effect could go either way, heighten it or relax him. Although he intended to finish the bottle he never filled the glass to the brim.

He heard the door to the next room open and close. There were now obviously two people in there. He decided not to let that bother him, without considering why it should. There were gunshots in the movie; there had been none in the short story.

Arnett Cobb was another saxophone player from Texas, but he and Ornette Coleman had nothing in common. Cobb played in what was called "Texas tenor" style, similar to Illinois Jacquet. King Curtis was another of the Texas tenors, but he got shot.

He paid attention to the level of the bottle. Either he would pass out or he wouldn't sleep at all. The only good thing was that there was no choice. At least two of the actors in that movie were dead; one had died recently. He wondered that he had come back to a place he had been to. The blind on the window was white, then glass, then the night.

He stood with his back against the wall, alongside the window, and

tried to look out without opening the blind. His shirt was damp with perspiration. He was calm enough but he thought he might soon be sorry he had only bought the one bottle. A car turned into the parking area and its headlights startled him. There were angry words from the movie, but spoken in an almost soothing manner. A sardonic approach to evil. He had not heard them quite like that the first time and he listened intently. Then there was someone walking across gravel.

The Northwestern School of Taxidermy's instructions were through the mail. There were pictures of the school, classrooms and students, but it seemed impossible to believe that there was actually such a place.

Without thinking, he drank straight from the bottle, then had to laugh at himself when he realized it. "Can't wait to even pour it." The two people in the next room were talking and their voices mixed with and garbled the movie's.

In 1832, George Catlin went to paint the tribes of the West because he was concerned that they would soon disappear and that it was necessary to record them. His paintings have been admired by anthropologists for their veracity. The actress in that movie was also dead.

He would have bet it was the adjoining room he was in the last time he was there. The hero in the movie was lying in bed and talking. The bed in that room was against the wall. He felt hemmed in but saw no point in moving. The Ten High was making him lethargic. The movie hero would struggle against improbable odds and win. He knew that had not happened in the story. The written version had no need of the struggle.

Van Gogh saw twenty-seven different blacks in Frans Hal's paintings. Some blacks can be seen through; others are absolutely opaque. The bottle almost dropped from his hand, and he set it down on the night table. There were corrals behind the motel, with cattle waiting to be shipped, and he felt tempted to relate to their helplessness, but felt that he had one or two choices they lacked, whether he made use of them or not.

A woman laughed in the next room. He looked around to see where her voice was coming from. He looked around for her laughter as if a bat had flown into the room and he was trying to keep it in sight until he was sure it had flown back out, his head moving sporadically, his eyes in a lock stare with a black object flying around in the near darkness. She said something he missed, and then a man laughed.

The sound of her laughter had braced him. He felt alert, and strained to see and hear more. It caused him to worry that he had come to a place where he had been before, where someone who knew that could find him. He imagined her mouth opening and saw her teeth and heard her laughter, and then the morning light edging around the blind and into the room. He held the liquor in his mouth before swallowing. This might be the first place

anyone looking for him would come to, he reasoned.

Owen Wister's cowboy avatar would be recognized by his aloneness. His individuality would be a nimbus surrounding him. Ad Reinhardt's black paintings probably revealed someone whom he referred to as "he who made the dark his hiding place."

Just why he had gone there was irrelevant. Had someone come to warn him not to he would not have listened. He took another drink and the bottle was more than half empty. If the bar stayed open until twelve he would have time to get another.

Picasso, in homage to Velázquez, repainted his *Las Meninas* by changing everything about it but its essence. In this way he defined clarity in painting. In taxidermy you cannot end up with anything that wasn't there to begin with, except the death of the animal.

He wondered what there was to laugh at. There were two shadows on the screen, a tall thin one and a shorter heavysset one. He could not see through the wall but he remembered them. Wister's Virginian was the prototype of the movie cowboy, a lean laconic type, whose repose made him more than a match for any killers. Doc Holliday was said to be fearless because he knew he was going to die.

His hand shook when he poured. Glass rapped against glass. He thought they must have heard that.

Coleman played a plastic horn because he felt the sound was more expressive. There was a time when Charlie Parker played one too. Coleman stood on Parker's shoulders, just like Parker had stood on Lester Young's. And now only Coleman was alive.

He thought they had turned the TV down, the better to hear. They were absorbed in the movie though. Neither of them, he really knew, would know he was there. The shadows, he remembered, were on the stairs. Gary Cooper had incarnated the Virginian. The shadows brushed the Virginian aside.

There was just about a corner left in the bottle. If he removed the newspaper from the doorknob aperture he would be able to see into the adjoining room. When someone who has threatened suicide seems to have come out of his depression, and goes forward with resoluteness and fresh purpose, he can be considered as good as dead.

The bar sign light was still on: a red neon cocktail glass with a cherry in it. If he needed reassurance he had it. He decided to save the last drink for later. Many of Catlin's paintings were destroyed in a fire, but enough survived to make his life worthwhile.

He tried to think of the last time he was there but then she laughed again and distracted him. The only thing he could come up with was that he had not been alone that time, but as to who he had been with he couldn't

say. First they walked up the stairs, then they seemed to have come outside and walked across the gravel. A man laughed. The only really bright light in his room was on the strip underneath the door to their room.

The gravel crunched underneath their feet. Pretty substantial shadows, he thought. They'd the TV on and wouldn't hear. There were two doors in his room, the one to their room and the other to the outside. He looked from one to the other. He stood for some reason in the center of the room. There were several shots. He thought, for some reason, that if he removed the newspaper and looked in at them he would recall everything about the last time he was there, but couldn't for the life of him say why he would want to do that.

The man was lying on the bed, the woman sitting on it. She spoke to him as if trying to convince him of something she herself didn't believe.

He drank. The bottle was empty; he didn't dare go out. Outside was darkness; and what was beyond the darkness neither he nor anyone else could know.

HOMESTEAD

Scarlet	enough
are	the
sands	on
which	stands
a	kettle
with	its
mouth	closed

In	deep
silence	it
makes	a
soft	noise
man	where
can	i
find	you

The	water
goes	crazy
pushing	the
lid	up
and	down
crying	now
and	then
man	where
can	i
find	you

LATE NOVEMBER

Another day as a security guard.
 In the Coke can I can hear bubbles
 making their tiny dynamite noises.
 I am reading the selected poems
 of Tomas Tranströmer, the Swedish poet.
 I pass my fingers over the print,
 hoping some of his magic
 will lift from the pages
 and enter my fingers.
 Imagine! A psychologist by profession!
 But putting ink to paper
 is what he likes best.
 I have visited his Sweden only in my dreams.
 There, too much ice for me, too little light.
 I pass my fingers over the print,
 hoping for a literary miracle.
 What is there left for the words to do
 if no one is reading them?
 Will the "Yes" prevail? Or will the "No"?

GOTHIC EPISODES

1. The shoe

You paint a picture of a shoe.

 You put your face in the leather

And your heart beneath the heel.

Joy clings to the heel like sand

 or a spider's body. You paint

Strangers, those who throw dice

Come twilight, those who sing.

 You say Where is my voice?

Where is my river? My mandolin?

2. The stars

You are an old man, you carry a child

In your arms and the child is asleep.

 You whisper Look now

At the stars between the clouds.

Look now child at your father weeping.

 The stars are made of paper.

3. The island

You find a drum by the river.

 The animals are afraid.

They hear their own voices

In the sound of the drum.

 The owl, the horse, the dove.

You see an island in the river.

 You see a woman carving bones

Into piccolos and a fence.

4. The lemon tree

You are lonesome, you can't sleep.

You hear voices in the river.

You watch the moon.

It frightens the faces in the river,

The women and the children who drown

 and tell their stories in rhyme.

Paint is a powerful thing they say.

To paint is the dream of the fish

And the envy of the wild white iris.

 All day the river taunts us

And all night the proud geese feed.

 The river is paint.

On your hands on your mouth.

The river is black and blistered and right.

 A masterpiece! You smell fruit,

The lemon tree in the back yard,

Its fruit rotten and scattered over the ground.

 You gather the lemons, you peel them

And eat them. You see a stranger

In a dream, a woman with a candle.

 She says, I hide my knife and my gold

And my love letters in the tree.

 The letters were given to me by men

Without money, men who ride horses at night

 Until they are far from my window.

The moon swallows them like water.

5. The sewing machine

A woman sits at a table with thread.

 She says, First I'll make hands.

You feel then with your fingers

The small of her back, her waist.

She says, Your heart is tricky.

 I'll make your heart with paper,

Almonds and needles and milk.

 Death drops by for dinner.

Death admires the sewing machine.

 He says, I have one just like it.

I make pillows and I trade them

To the children for a sandwich

 or beads, whatever they have.

6. The butterfly

She says, it tastes like tangerines.
It makes me long for morning
When the rain chases the children away.
When you turn the radio off
and drag your mouth across my arm.

C. Semansky

TRAFFIC

Then I step out of the car. Then I step back in. Traffic builds. The light changes. One, two, three times. Lots of honking. The guy in the car behind me gets out and walks up to my window.

"You okay?"

I roll down the window. "Fine, and yourself?"

"What seems to be the problem?"

"Can't decide what to do. I've got two and a half hours to kill before my next meeting. Takes forty-five minutes to get to the gym from here and about the same from there to my house. Which leaves about an hour for a workout, excluding changing and showering, which eats up about twenty more minutes. Not enough. Don't know anybody in this part of town, and I'm not hungry, so that leaves out eating. I want to go somewhere, but I don't know where."

The light changes again. Cars are backing up, doing U-turns, drivers are screaming obscenities. A small group of pedestrians has gathered at the corner, pointing excitedly. Someone's yelling to call the police.

"Tell you what," the guy says. "When the light changes to green, go straight. Don't think, don't do nothing. Just go straight, for five blocks, until you hit Kincaid. On the left you'll see a municipal parking lot. Park there and walk directly across the street to Hector's — it's a coffee shop. I'll meet you there in five minutes."

"Gotcha."

I do what I'm told and five minutes later I'm in a booth sipping a cup of French roast decaf with my new friend, Bob.

"There's nothing to it," Bob says, "you just gotta move. Pants going numb? Shake 'em out, fill the pockets. Doesn't matter what with . . . well, yeah, of course it matters, but my point's movement itself. Listen, a few years ago I set out to the post office to buy a book of stamps and wound up in a hot tub with an advertising model. Me with a model! A real knockout too, tall, green eyes, body tight as a trampoline. *Fois gras* top to bottom. She used to do the print adverts for Chocolata. We spent the afternoon drinking vintage Cab and jabbering baseball. After that we date off and on for a few months, she introduces me to some of her friends, and before you know it Bang!, I score a job in her agency. Best work I've ever had. Sometimes you don't know where you are until you get there."

"So this is a date?"

"Very funny," Bob says. "Fact is, I was in your position for years. I

mean, I was *who you are now*. Tried lists, schedules, aromatherapy." His eyes get big and his nostrils flare as he says this last word, pronouncing the "ra" "ro" and drawing it out like some carnival barker pitching cures to an eager crowd. "Did amphetamines and toot, even ate Prozac for a spell. Buspar and Paxil too. You name it. Just couldn't fill in the blanks. Then I said, hey, why not just stop second-guessing myself? If I hit a wall, I just dip into my hat, pick a slip and Bingo!, jump-start my light switch."

"Slip?"

"Don't mind if I do, thanks. See, I got these slips of paper I make out the first of each month, with something to do on each one of them, challenges, activities, that sort of thing, and I write out about, I don't know, maybe thirty or forty of them for those times I get stuck, and I stick them in this hat I got, this old black fedora my grandfather used to wear and that I keep on top of the fridge. They're kind of like fortune cookies but without the cookie or the fortune. Per se, that is. Like this morning, I finish all the day's stuff in three hours, my apartment's clean — I'm talking spit clean — shopping's done, not that I'm all that hot on shopping, and it's too early in the day to see friends, so instead of doing the potato, sittin' around growing spuds, I pick a slip from the hat."

"And?"

"And nothing. That's why I'm talking to you now. I am what you might call *self-directed*, buddy boy. First rule, know yourself. Second rule, write it down. Third rule, if you don't know yourself, guess. Take today's slip, for example." He pulls a small yellow strip of paper from his shirt pocket and holds it in front of him. "It says . . . it says . . . ah, what it says don't matter. Point is, half a glass's better than none, and if the moon ain't out, there's no use in howling, if you know what I mean."

"Know what you mean."

"Of course, you know what I mean. That's why you're here. Everybody hits the odd speed bump now and again. Trick is to keep the engine idling. Turn her off and you're talking seizure disorder, ice pack city, shot clockitis."

"I been there."

"Course you been there. And you're still there. We're all there. We're all here too. Even Mimi the beautiful."

The waitress walks over with her pot of coffee. She's got a tiny diamond stud in her nose and her hair piled high to reveal a tattoo of a unicorn on the back of her neck. Her forearms are packed with jangling silver bracelets.

"Ain't that right, Mimi?"

"Name's Rose."

"What a surprise," Bob mumbles into his hand.

She fills our cups and walks away.

"See what I mean?" Bob says.

On her way back to the kitchen Rose trips and falls flat on her face, the decanter of coffee smashing on the floor. We rush to help her.

"Ah, fuck," she says, taking our hands and pulling herself up. "Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck."

The manager, who had been working the cashier, hurries over and asks her if she could please keep her obscenities to herself, the customers are starting to stare.

"And fuck you, too," she says to the manager.

"I didn't hear you, little lady, what's that you said?"

"I said take your souvlaki, warm it up, stick it in a pita with some of your grease of the day, and shove it up that fat old tired ass of yours."

"Happy job hunting, missy," her boss says, giving her the thumb and plodding back to the cashier, where a line of anxious customers is waiting to pay their checks.

She stomps the larger shards of glass into the floor, grinding them with her boots. "Little lady this," she yells at the manager's back, turning over a hastily evacuated table, spilling silverware, water, salad, and half-finished plates of chicken kabob onto the floor.

Turns out her name isn't Rose, it's Fiona. Fiona Benedetti. Says she's a film student and has been waitressing at Hector's, or as she calls it, the Greasy Greek, for two months. Before that she worked at Pedro's Tacos, until the owners changed. Now it's Joanne's Meat 'n Pie-ateria.

"My name's Bill," Bob says, opening the car door for her, "and this is my friend . . ."

"Bob," I say. "Nice to meet you."

We take her to her apartment, a four room walk-up on the wrong side of the tracks. Her place is furnished with Adirondack chairs and rusted fold-up aluminum beach chaises. Two partially dressed mannequins hover over the bay windows looking out into the street and a plastic crucifix with Gumby nailed to it hangs on the wall next to a picture of Richard Nixon. His Trickiness is smiling and giving his trademark peace sign. We sit down and Fiona fishes a few Tallboys from the fridge, goes on about how kind we've been, says that most people just don't get involved these days, and Jesus but wasn't that guy a dickhead and a half, I mean, really.

"Well, yeah," Bob says. "But you have to understand businessmen. They've got investments to protect."

"People," she says.

"Huh?"

"Business *people*," she says.

"Oh God," he says, rolling his eyes. "If I'd a known you were one of

them, we'd never of given you a lift. Right Bill?"

"Bob," I say.

Five beers later I realize my meeting started twenty minutes ago, but if I move fast I can still catch the main presentation, plead car trouble or traffic. I try to break in a few times but it's hard, with Bob and Fiona dribbling on about euthanasia, high-yield mutual funds, laptops and llamas. When they finally do stop yapping, I'm about to pipe up when Fiona turns to me and asks what I think.

"About?"

"About the Haluket situation," she says.

"What about it?"

"A: Do you think he was justified? B: Should the good doctor be held accountable? and/or C: Could you ever do something like it yourself?"

She was referring to Boris Haluket, the local sportswriter who had recently taken his own life with the help of Dr. Ricardo Stanekeczlaw, a Jack Kevorkian wannabe who has been indicted but never convicted on charges of assisted suicide. Haluket, however, is a strange case. It appears as if he did not, in fact, have the terminal lymphoma that he told the doctor he had, that he was only terminally bored, "burned out, pooped to the max, scraped raw," as he phrased it in a long last letter to a friend, who had then sold the missive to a television trash-news magazine for a reported \$50,000.

"I don't know much about it, only what I read in the papers," I say.

"No kidding, kid," says Bob. "That's what we all know. What the lady's asking is what do you think of boredom as an acceptable reason for dusting oneself?"

"That is not what I'm asking!" Fiona blurts, wrinkling her face all up like a Sharpei and making Charlie Callas eyes.

"Tell you what I think," Bob says. "I say we should mix it up. People want to off themselves, let 'em do it. They want to hang around turning tricks to get 'em through, that's fine too. Personally, I've got a deep respect for the criminal mind. Shows a sense of adventure." He stubs out his Marlboro on the top of his beer can and drops the butt inside the can.

"Oh Gawd," Fiona moans, "here we go, James Dean meets the anti-Christ. Listen, I've got a film class to attend, so if you don't mind, we're going to have to continue this party at a later date."

"You're going like that?" Bob asks.

"Beer doesn't get me drunk," she says, gathering the cans. "I'm a big girl."

Bob refuses to take me back to the parking lot, even when I tell him how important it is I make that meeting. He makes me wait with him in his car

around the block from Fiona's. It's an old Buick, a boat if there ever was one, and the seats smell like cat piss.

"If she's a film student, I'm the president of the fucking Friar's," he says. He's wearing an old pair of Ray-bans and his jet-black hair is greased straight back.

"Who cares what she is?" I'm getting impatient, start drumming my fingers against the dash, sighing loudly.

"We were nice to her. We helped her out. I don't like being lied to. Calm down, already." Bob's pissed. He's smoking hard. It amazes me that he can inhale that much smoke that deeply and still have room in his lungs for oxygen. I thank him again for helping me out this afternoon and tell him that I've got as much a sense of adventure as the next guy but that I don't get what we're waiting for.

"I just want to check out some things in her place," he says.

"Things, what do you mean, *things*?"

"Sshhhh, there she is," he says, pointing towards the front of her apartment building and motioning me to duck. Fiona's standing on the stoop, re-adjusting her backpack. Her hair's down and she's got on a ripped denim jacket with a patchwork of decals on the back. She looks like a student to me.

A minute later we're out of the car and at her door, which Bob jimmies open rather easily. "Is this what you mean by a criminal mind?" I ask, standing in the middle of her fake zebra rug while he makes like a television cop, dumping drawers and tossing clothes. We're there for about ten minutes, me watching, him tearing the place apart. I don't really want any part of it but he's my ride so I have to stay. With a paper bag full of her things in one hand and a fresh beer in his other he leads the way out. On the landing at the bottom of the first flight of stairs, a heavy-set woman is lying on her back. I think she might be drunk, but she's breathing real hard and she's got one hand over her heart. Her eyes are rolled back in her head and her body's starting to quiver.

"Jesus, she's sick," I say. "We've got to do something."

Bob doesn't slow down, steals barely a glance at the woman. "Who do I look like, Dr. Kildare? It's now or never, Bullwinkle. Be the good Samaritan and take your chance with the oinkers or catch the Uncle Bob express home to safety and comfort."

Before I can respond he's down the steps and out the door. I run back up to Fiona's to call an ambulance, yelling for help as I do. Parts of one of the mannequins, dismembered during Bob's wild search, lie strewn across the floor, and I trip over a leg while reaching for the phone. On the way down I grab at the crucifix on the wall. "There's a lady down at the corner of Dexter and Holloway," I tell the 911 operator.

"What do you mean, *down*?" she says.

"You know, *down*, as in stricken, as in *incapacitated*, as in *can't get up*,"

I say.

"Well, wise guy," she says, "was she mugged? Did she have a heart attack? Hit by a car? Or is she just having a bad day? I'm a little down myself, buddy. And by the way, you know that prank calls to this number can land you a felony charge, fellah, you know that, don't you?"

I hang up. When I come back out, a handful of people, mostly old women, are huddled around the fat woman, speaking a language I don't understand. Some deep guttural funk with clicking tongues. "I just called an ambulance, they're coming right away," I say, hurtling down the stairs. A few of them start to wail. Bob's car is gone so I keep walking, hoping to spot a bus or taxi. I stop at a phone booth, then discover that not only are my pockets empty but my wallet's gone as well. I realize that I've been holding Fiona's plastic crucifix in my right hand since I left the building. Up close Gumby looks genuinely happy, like his supple body could accommodate any new position, no matter how unfamiliar. Only thing that seems out of place is the shiny nail hammered clean through the top of his head. But even that doesn't stop him from smiling.

Leon Stokesbury

THE LEGACY

for Erin

Just so, when they come demanding,
you might possess some grasp of facts—
just in case motivations at some point
might appear unclear—just
to insure with certainty

you will recall later on: take
one peeled cucumber now and grate it
finely as you can. Swirl this and the juice
of two lemons with one pint
of yogurt, setting it

aside somewhere, cold. So
there will remain some record, cube
three pounds of lamb, then saute it,
lightly floured, in a skillet
with one stick of butter, dice

one large onion, then combine
the meat and onion in a stew pot
under water enough to cover all. To this
mixture add three bay leaves, add
three cloves of garlic

crushed. Add one tablespoon
of pepper, then one teaspoon of salt. In-
to that you sprinkle cumin: three
teaspoonsful, and then to make
it strange, two heaping

teaspoonsful of powdered
cardamom, a grayish beige in its dry
state (but it will turn the water green),
and then you cover this and cook it
for three hours on low heat: stir

the soup occasionally, but
do not let the liquor boil away. Remember:
when they come in the night, screaming
with their torches, beseeching
you, fingers of torchlight

warping their wan faces
in that dark, your front porch flickering
unearthly, remember then what
I say now: after the lamb
has simmered for three hours,

in a separate saucepan
cook two cups of rice. While the rice
is cooking, peel, then slice in white
inch-thick circles, three large
eggplants. Fry each slice

in extra light olive oil
in a skillet until browned and heavy, then
place the eggplant out on paper
towels to soak some oil away—
(by now the cardamom

has drenched your house
in incense: massive hints of orient,
odalisque, Babylon and Berber,
Bedouin and myrrh) just
so I will know you

know, layer in a casserole
first the lamb, then the eggplant, then
rice on top of that: lamb again, egg-
plant, rice, until the dish
is almost full—then

pour the chartreuse
juice into the casserole: bake it covered
for an hour, in an oven, at three hundred
eighty-five degrees—but whatever
else, do not forget

they will be coming, certain
as the glacier's pain, wrapped in cowl,
in their injunctions, screws and ropes,
racks, chains, insisting
you confess

your sickness, producing writs
commanding you disclose what sources
taught you to concoct such venom,
declaring all your actions
darkness, everything you live for

bane. Child, do not listen,
do not answer. Deny them. Lie to them
at every path (a thick, green, good,
sweet pungency for hours
will have lacquered

every wall, satiated, smeared
the air, redolent, ancient, tang
of loam or salt or sea) but remember:
when the dish comes from the oven
you must serve it

right away. In the middle
of a large, hot, black plate, stack
a steaming mountain of the lamb—
then along its peak, pile
three dollops of the lemon-

yogurt mixture—snows
melting from the heat, cascading off
the mountainside in tiny milky rivulets,
the smallest runny tributaries
winding out to sea. And

at this point in time, when
the heat and cold conjoin, you must
call forth your beloved. You must sit
your beloved down. You must ask
of your beloved

if he wants for any thing.
Then place there, before him, the plate
you have prepared; permit him to sample
 (always know they will be coming;
 they carry metal rams to batter

in your door) your creation:
daughter, when he lifts it to his tongue—
O, at that precise moment, daughter,
 from all previous moorings
 his heart will be set free.

Kirk Nessel

THE STINGING AND SAVING

The old gourmands are dead. The new scavenge loaves and
boot heels from dumpsters, ready to scatter, pausing to shake scales

from their wrists. The butterscotch days, not sadly, are over; so is
cornflower blue. Gray snowflakes whisper the code names, entreating,

the mockingbird mocks the car alarm sound. The curtains in the house
of the metaphysician are tattered, the door boarded up—who blames

the man, moaning, still bent by the curb with his one shoe and pencil,
head clamped in a trunk? For him loss has body and weight, it hovers,

it makes the jaw rattle, sinking and rising, endless and dim and
strange like the Kraken, unaccountable squid. For his brother

the man with the beaker, reading time backwards, cornering random
free-floating quarks, such are the dregs of creation, a plea for

the bullet, the wallet or pill, more plague and integrity, for raising
the scorpion that drowns in the bucket, for the stinging and saving.

Here is the discarded cork, here the bending to reach it, here is a mask
and a spear. The columns are silent. Caves hold the peace at Lascaux.

Dead gold angels angle above, dead gold humans, flightless, below, awash
in destruction, all picking and plucking, gnawing new diamonds and rubies.

CASTLE HILL

The stone house sits on a foothill, a graveyard at the base of the slope. Whoever heard tell of it? And in this town? Its rooms are tiny. It has many more rooms than you can count. The old woman who bought it keeps the windows and doors locked. Once a year, a visitor will stop by and disappear. Be warned: even if your mind stays alert, it might fill with clouds. The view in the windows is the view out. At night when your car drives by, your eye slides like a silk slipper. It lingers and speculates. The dead, too, want to accompany you home down the highway, far from the stone face that rivets them, staring through the years. The dead, too, are afraid.

The Other South

Experimental Writing in the South

Editor:
William Lavender

Typography by William Lavender

Peril & Geography: Editor's Introduction

What is "experimental writing?" When I began this project, I felt I knew the answer to that question, or at least I felt there was an answer. Today I am not so sure. As the editorial work proceeded, as I pored over the wealth of submissions, sifting toward a page count, there was hardly a poet among them that did not cause me to reconsider the project as a whole. Was this poem or that one experimental? To be experimental, did it have to utilize some method that was completely new and untried, or could the term also be applied to historical forms that were currently out of favor? Was it a question of the norm and a relationship of opposition or challenge? If so, what, exactly, was the norm? I had a general conception of a Southern writing in quotation marks, a kind of florid music, metrically standardized, dripping with imagery and metaphor, nostalgic, broken, bitter, but just as that term experimental was beginning to float for me so was that norm. Did it really exist, or was it only a stereotype, only a concept that has been spread by a form of propaganda, an image of writing propelled by another writing that bore no more resemblance to this image than "rose" does to a rose?

But then, even laying aside these overly philological questions, simply taking those terms "norm" and "experiment" in the way that one normally does, without thinking too hard about it, just doing the project and trusting that language would take care of itself, even then I found myself in a continuous work of redefinition. Among the works that I had to select from, admittedly work that had been sent to us in response to a call for experimental poetry, the threshold of normalcy had to be raised, as I began

to see certain trends, genres almost, consistent ways of exploding the norms that were themselves norms. If experimentation itself had become generic and normalized, what would be my editorial criteria? How would I distinguish the other from the same?

Jack Foley, in *Experiodicist* #7, notes that “experiment” and “peril” share the same root:

Venturing, testing the way, taking a chance;
hence, valuing; then, buying and selling.
Cf. Greek *peira*; Latin *peril*. Related to
Germanic *fear*, *fearful*, *fearless*, *fearsome*.
Latin *experimentum*, a trial.

Does etymology haunt the word; is it what we really mean, unconsciously, when we use the word, even though we are ignorant of it at the time? Does it carry ancient and secret connotation to the interlocutor, at a level below conscious meaning, below paraphrase or definition? Or is it just another violence we enact upon words and things, a textual screen overlaid, to convince us that in the billions of never quite identical occurrences of a word, there is some uniformity, some order, something besides this sickening free-fall of language cut loose from itself. There are many ways to experience peril in poetry—the social peril of new forms, the psychological peril of catharsis—yet what could be more perilous than to be released from meaning, to drift in a space where the sound of the word is prior to its concept, where the font and ink of that specific mark is more important than any subsequent or previous iterations, where the dictionary is just another text, and no more of a bolster than a baby’s first gurgle. This is the peril I sought in these experiments.

Hank Lazer’s essay treats the topic of geography thoroughly, but my original conception (i.e. justification) of the regionalism that the section title implies was in the notion of the site. A site, that is, as opposed to a lineage. A place where people, poets among them, live and work. The region I selected is bounded by Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and the sea, and I received so many submissions from poets living in this region who announced that they were “not Southern writers” that my secret suspicion was confirmed: all the “Southern writers” now live in New England. My aim was to see what writers who actually live here, whether they were born in Tuscaloosa or Germany, were doing.

Several acknowledgements are in order. First, to Hank Lazer, who not only gave me the remarkable poem, but agreed to write the essay that follows here, an essay that so closely matched my concerns that I felt relieved of the responsibility of writing a real introduction. To NOR’s art editor Doug MacCash, who, after reviewing the nature of the project, solicited, selected and prepared the graphic art of Lew Thomas and Tom Whitmore. To Jake Berry, faithful e-mail correspondent and enthusiast for the project. To certain ascii ghosts, there in the wee hours for me. And, most of all, to Ralph Adamo, lifelong friend, who has surely imperiled livelihood and reputation by giving me, within these 42 pages, total freedom.

Hank Lazer

Toward a New Southern Poetry

Today, apparently, for reasons I don’t fully understand, it is still fine to engage in bigotry and xenophobia as long as the gesture is regionally-directed and coincides with accepted media stereotypes. A westerner or a northeasterner may, without any first hand knowledge, deride the South as benighted and backward. Did others catch the irony of Alec Baldwin’s remark when, just after the Rodney King beating was shown on TV, the Hollywood actor led a protest march and said, “we can’t allow this kind of thing to happen here. After all, we don’t live in some backwater Mississippi town.” As if such overt racism as the King beating, which today may be more likely to take place in Boston or LA than in Selma or Jackson, were commonplace and acceptable in Alec Baldwin’s imagined Mississippi. Or the NPR interviewer (herself a transplanted New Yorker) in Minneapolis who asked me if I wasn’t afraid that my six year old son would, if I continued to live in the south, grow up southern. To make my position clear: I don’t hate the south. But of course I am ambivalent (or polyvalent) about the south.

Is the phenomenon of southern literature a manufactured regionalist literary ghetto? Who made it, who perpetuates it, and what relationship does it possibly have to the current south? Who would confine our literature to kudzu, azaleas, dusty roads, humid afternoons, the air pungent with the scent of magnolia, an instance or two of gratuitous violence, the inspiring heroism and endurance of the downtrodden, the peculiar epiphanies and primitive blunders of a fundamentalist religious practice, and an omnipresent slow-moving muddy river?

The Tuscaloosa I live in has a substantial Japanese population. We’re experiencing a steady influx of German executives. There are quite a few people here from the Middle East, from southeast Asia, from mainland China, from Taiwan, and from Korea. Yes, there are a ton of Baptist churches, meat and three vegetable lunch counters, barbeque joints. Yes, plenty of the men do hunt and fish. Deer season and turkey season are a big deal, and football does matter. And there are too many beauty pageants beginning for the very young with the Miss Sugar and Spice contests.

Alabama calls itself “The Heart of Dixie.” (I find it interesting that no state wishes to claim the Head or the Brain of Dixie.) Where is Dixie? Where is the “true South?” Not New Orleans—too creolized. Not Georgia anymore—too modernized. Of course not Florida—too Cuban, too much the state of the elderly from the northeast. Virginia and North Carolina are too far north, too overrun by transplanted yankees. Besides, who really cares anymore about regionalism? Isn’t it too another form of essentialism that we’ve moved beyond, a form of oversimplification, of commodification and homogenization that we, being post- almost everything, wouldn’t be naive enough to trust?

Even so, what might a new Southern poetry be? And what would it not be?

What would it be to think, and write, *not* steeped in nostalgia, a poetry not of memory but of the conflicted fragmented multiple not-yet-clarified present? To get off the damned porch, to get out of the talking chair, to quit telling in one voice those

stories of wise loveable oddballs. To write not in the imagination of the nineteenth century (and its narrative inventions and conventions) but fully of *this* moment. To take seriously the task of writing a realism of this moment, to express and be of this time and place, as it is.

I have tried a few ways of doing so. In *Doublespace* (Segue, 1992), my first extensive venturing into the present south occurs in Book Two in the series of poems called Law-Poems. These poems include as fully half of their poetic material the laws of the state of Alabama, lineated verbatim. Why do so? We (i.e., the law and I [as poet]) share common concerns: who or what is a person? what impersonations are illegal? how is ownership determined? for what acts am I responsible? what forms of trust and entrusting are legal? what definitions are necessary? what do we make of the law's impassioned dream of precision and clarity? to whom do the words of the law belong? and so forth. And the collision (and collusion) of that language and "mine" is one instance of a southern present being. In *INTER(IR)UPTIONS* (Generator Press, 1992), a series of ten collage-poems, I wrote one poem making use of *The Tuscaloosa News'* yearly Valentine's edition, which features (for a fee) heart-shaped pictures of children dedicated to their parents and grandparents. Rather than manipulating this raw material into a narrative, rather than thematizing the material or writing *about* it, I included the children's names (in varying sequences in six line stanzas) as a partner in the poem. The specific music, texture, aspiration, pretense, the rebellious and pathetic and willful choosing of a name, the tawdry romanticism, the unassimilated nature of the names themselves became the obdurate irreducible "south" of the poem. This strategy seems to me to incorporate (in the manner of a poetic ethnography) the range of present names spoken here. We can spot trends—the persistence that year of Misty Dawn, Nicole, Brandi as favored names among the whites, the compound inventiveness in Azilee, Wysondra, Lakayle, and Takeesha—a slice in time of chosen names. Ten years either way would yield a different archaeology, a different dig, a different cross-section.

Of course one danger lurking in these meditations on a non-essentialized southern writing is that my thoughts might rhyme or cooperate unwittingly with a prejudice *against* local writing, that I might (without being aware of it) be trying to merge southern writing with a more "advanced" strain of modern and post-modern poetry. Is there, then, something "southern" that persists, and if so, what is it? I would argue for a lushness, a density, a tropicality, an overgrowth—which might become both a representation and a critique of over-determination—as a common feature to most of my writing and to Jake Berry's as well in his ongoing work *Brambu Drezi*. I think at times of Jake as the William Blake of Florence (Alabama), and his vision and writing is, in ways I can still not specify (and which I do not mean as a limit but as a descriptive compliment) "southern." Wallace Stevens tells us that a mythology reflects its region. Then which region for Stevens? Connecticut? Florida? A mental place? Yes, a writing reflects its place, but for us, especially in the world of digitalization and instant e-mail communication, that place is decidedly multiple, even in the south. Jake Berry, for example, is published in Finland. I learned of his work, in part, through a poet-friend in California.

Yet many of the most popular poetic representations of the south—I'm thinking here of the work of six or seven poets whose work has received national

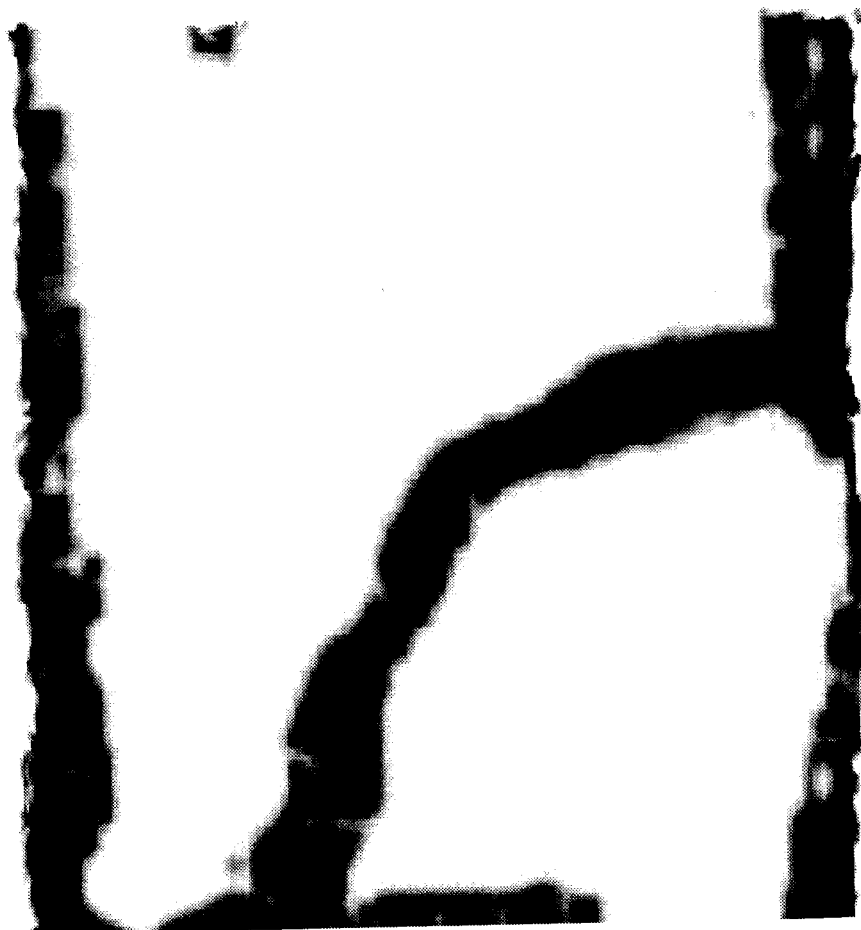
recognition and national awards—really stem from slight modifications of a nationally generated creative writing model of professionalized poetry as the craft of voice. The works of these poets and most others (which national poetry arbiters tell us are representative southern voices) are irrelevant to my concerns except as irritating examples which clog the arteries of possibility and as annoying regressive samplings of nostalgia and bad faith.

What I am proposing then is not the elimination of narrative but its dissemination in a new context. (See, for example, the many localized narrative strains emerging and disappearing in my "Displayspace 4.") The same goes for elements of voice and the great range of southern localisms (cf. "bite a hog" in my poem "Portrait"). As Michel de Certeau writes in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (and as I incorporate his remark in "Displayspace 4" as a kind of poetic axiom): "We are subject to, but not identified with, ordinary language. As in the ship of fools, we are embarked, without the possibility of an aerial view or any sort of totalization." Personally, my greatest joy is in the collision of the specifically demotic with the philosophical (which we can find in many poetries, from Robert Frost to David Antin, George Starbuck to Lyn Hejinian, June Jordan to Jack Foley, Nathaniel Mackey to Jake Berry). What is called for is what Lyn Hejinian has written about more generally in her "Two Stein Talks" (*Temblor* #3 [1986]): a new realism. Rather than the inherently nostalgic and outmoded segregationist practice of one lyricized narrative tale (with its formulaic poetic intensifiers and its required ending in epiphany and/or wonder), I seek many southern poetries more true to consciousness as we have it, know it, and live within it now. Not an eschewing of the local (in favor of an imagined better consciousness developed by more sophisticated practitioners elsewhere—and that elsewhere is inevitably western Europe, even if by way of Boston), but the local and the regional (including the specific and beautiful music of our idiosyncratic southern ways of speech) participating in a more fragmented, heuristic poetic practice, where form is constructed anew rather than inherited. Perhaps it is a decidedly southern reverence for inheritance (or "tradition" or "the way we've always done it") that has created the greatest obstacle for renewal in the medium of southern poetry and is part of why the south has such a marginal representation in anthologies and magazines of contemporary experimental poetry.

Within such an imagined multiple poetic practice, I imagine the range of African-American cultures no longer as tokens of multiculturalism nor as an exotic intuitive other. John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk (as they have been and are for Jake and for me) as fit muses; Sun Ra and John Handy; B.B. and Bessie and Billie; the coded drumming of slaves; the duplicitous masks of blackface minstrelsy and DuBois' and Ellison's knowledge of double consciousness.

The challenge today is for southern poets too to write in a boldly exploratory manner, to construct a poetry more attuned to the complexity of our actual location and the hybridized flux of this moment. To express and fashion the present in a poetry equal to the strangeness and multiplicity of the present, and to do so with a southern distinctiveness that is discovered rather than inherited or predetermined.

Brambu Drezi 2.15



wires grew from the stone,
 heart, and moth wet bursa
 in neptune's orbit
 whose storms we swam
 electrode tongue-tied, drunk on
 viscous infant
 sacs of messiah
 fused into raw metal code

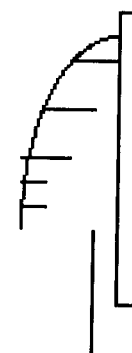


Brambu Drezi 2.2A

in the vision Charles Olson,
 luminous and large, stood over my bed
 relaying the message,
 "UMGATHAMA"

...and launched a program of avoidance. Delicate
 exercises of absence; carefully executed to produce
 the effect of invisible occupation

I sit reading Zohar
 in dim twilight
 Bag of storms
 swinging from the roof



flickers in
 breast
 scar
 enclosure
 fugue lamp retreat
 juked
 rattrap train
 dissipates

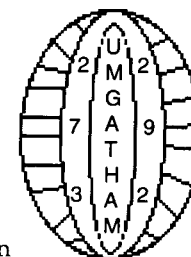
heart devoured

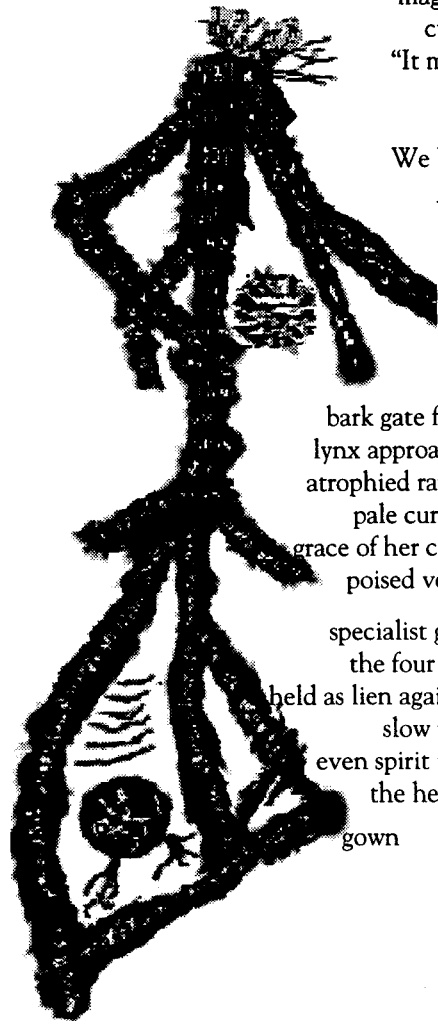
shape shifter

This is the voice of a living creature
 heart beating
 seraphim wild for epiphany !:!

flesheied streaming moles
 cadaver silky oblivion

oblivion ignition
 & raining fertile rage





magpies scatter & return
cyclical as dervish
"It means tornadoes," she said smiling
"whole herds of them
grazing rooftops and mammal soul.
We begin with carnival."

bark gate fuse ring jumbled
lynx approach flamed Melkisedheq
atrophied rape wafer despoiled
pale current sparrowhawk
grace of her claws
poised veins clear nectar
specialist green with posture
the four corners region encrypted now
held as lien against the glacier's retreat
slow movement through the barricades
even spirit is detained by
the heavy circumstances of blood
gown

splendor
abstantial
river
neuropsychalm
screamer

innate	approximation	of
inadequate	ample	"parallels"
thesaur-	dream:	slow
float	down	into
black	loam	(of)
chinese	ideo-	grammars
as	/qua/	"ground"

letter grit bed
this is
void's

yantra "scratching"
static halos
eruptions of void
lists of lists
virtual grip()
common rhy(th)m e

II. qua sink, roto relief

jasper johns (VOICE/ "songs of voice")

singing
voiceink...

(...tongues ink-tip-skewered to voiceprint")

ox piss emblem appeared as tandem	
baal thrust	eels acrostic lost pere
UBU gorgon lisp	slip phonos tau leg
greet	straight lamb hemmorrhaged
void glee (trust)	"eifel" d'eau had
potted dharma	funk barn

ox piss and bellow	root	text
ox piss fragmen LACAN	canal	
ox piss microo ching	kill	list

1 cacababaphonic leodevoir, devour. 10:3, 10 (revers
black sheet ()
opaque spread clef (() "))

Misisipi Joy Lahey

The delta is shifting again
Burying footprints of birds

Twenty-foot rolling mudballs
Form in a sense the river bottom

On the surface permission
Seems related
And multiple vanishing points

"We came to a house on the bank
And found it empty. This room
Is where we spent the night."

For thousands of years
For the fun of it
You whispered with feathery
o's and s's

Winds from the sound
Arrived in waves and lifted

Powerfully from the surface
Blue herons, egrets— my favorite

Others swept to the ground
Split seeds into pieces

Curled-up words grew mouths
Around themselves

Swelled heartfelt berries
On untended vines
In bone-rich soil
And pieces of broken shell

The white howling
Of moonlight became
A silent presence
God's bones

Spreading over us
And through this room

Where words have entered into solitude
Lose touch

When I
Must curve into you

Census

The moon seemed bolted into position
The fish— more precarious
Hanging onto streams
With little more than gills

A vestige of silver
For some minutes drew brilliance
From the union
"You remain constant as ever
But these visits cause uneasiness"

You includes orchards
Even parks

Bare earth conquered
Cornered at the surface

We bring in fish
from the shallows

Feel all that flailing
And the heart in it

Sunset Limited

Wait

A green shoe was left in the sleeping-car

And that oft-mentioned eclogue of flowers
Continued for miles
Like the cat's claw blooming on cyclone fences

But interpretations are tangential
To the true horizon
Pastel words and perse phonemes
As far as the eye can see

One has only a fragment
Of the opening and the cast
Beneath that dark blue waterfall
Is divided

This is secondary only
To perception of perception
And enormous range of human propensity:
She was peeling a tangerine
Weeping like an onion

"Tell her it's more true than truth"

No

It's in the pull
He insisted
That sentences and trains are erotic

Skip Fox

from *Wallet*

Even the least story begins nowhere, in the webbing of

what cannot be touched, by definition. Between the transmitter and Spicer's radio. Deep space. "The primitive does not exist" (Todorov). Before beyond. What's beneath the word. The world we say. Names of the gods beneath the week. Beneath numbers, what? "No narrative is natural (beneath time), a discourse, not a series of events." I hear with my words, not really mine. How strange and true. As into a widening gap, metaphor and the basis of metaphor, a and ox, "a sense of proportion plugged into an unmeasurable," incantation, faith or spell, the "transformation concepts undergo before magical discourse is possible," the first concept before there was a concept.

Even the least story begins nowhere, in the webbing of

what is not, by definition, cannot be touched. Deeper or beyond that, why not most near? between the inner and neurotransmitter. Could we turn to it, then, attend whenever (steep coma?) or do we, as deep space? Would I have it angel and cross to that effect? Why not. Or nothing, na-, with out stretch, zero (the logician), granite leaning over the abyss. Lost. Or walk where Adam walked, world of apple and ox (magician?), heart of a moth. Letters blooming in the sensorium, fresh from the husk. I would have it angel gapping the plugs between *a* and *the*, a compass, plucked string over synapse, S.O.S., all knees and dashes, tremolo buzzing the twat.

what cannot be touched by definition. Between the transmitter

and the shadow leaning over the radio. Mayan? Listening as vaporous, rusty, granite ear to the gap. What cannot be thought cannot be touched. Then everything is primitive, including Todorov. What if the shepard of being lived in that ear? Attentive to the shadow, from which, It is the mind creates the finite. The drift glistens. An ancient civilization. Imagine a country boy in the city for the first time. How not have the sense that the definitions are more given? Two warriors in headdress. How not have the sense of a shadow poised over a radio? Evening, almost night. Does he look into those faces whose eyes exude darkness? He finds his own pitch as jet, through moving planes of color, as they loosen, dim, life in the interstices.

and Spicer's radio. Deep space. "The primitive does not

reveal the radical (though he may resemble it). How many words does the eskimo have for snow? Whence the cold beneath the wind? *Ganik*, the ghost within the storm, and *aput*, ghost on the ground. (Or would it depend on the eskimo?) And why the desire for 17? They are as they are. And we as we. Believing man might inhabit the land, not merely live on or off it. Dwell therein. As in ear or mind. Attentive to the purely possible. (How many do you have for *ghost*?) As though you could tune into a tern as it oils its wings. Or a word that rises from the root. The bodiless serpent climbs into the most desolate regions of the sky. Flashes above the raw flesh eater on his floe. It casts an eerie correspondence on the notion of what is—where resemblance disappears into identity, spirit into new fallen snow.

exist (Todorov). Before beyond. What's beneath

the world? Rhyme and the absence of rhyme. Pulse keyed to mind or heart. Prior to extent. The first awareness of what we are the primitive. Man and woman in kayak. (Date unknown.) Surrounded by presence. Having come into *the steadiness of its shining*. Before being or in front of existence—that *state of permanent decision*. Out there and here at the same time. Tighter than a canoe. The future sings to its return. *Esse*. A jungle of eskimos. And between, climbing in between, the poem. Middle of two. A man in the eye where the man in the eye would have been. In an echo of light. (Who has not sensed the world within? Granite. In carnate. Sheer moment and its companion. What? Intelligence of the moment? That which does not vanish at the end of resemblance. I am. The bearing across.

the word. The world we say. Names of the gods beneath

the what? Absence at the heart of every angle. Say your daughter gets robbed in the city. The third time. The distance between that and poetry is prime. Basement of number, or below that, something the foundation doesn't rest on. (Could we even see it? If there be nothing under it. Is it all gap, then? Sheer beneath this shirt or pen. Equally within. No primitive is narrative, if we mean by that. What could the robber mean? To overflow the limbs, *limns that limit him*. To do, get. Clarity and faith. An American Hermes. Leading us to the end of story or the line wherein we shall not look. Between each word or letter, then. Then back to faith. Its origins. And daughters. That they let men in. Narrow or ravenous beneath the skin. *What we are inside of*, yes, and inside of us. A compass.

Ken Harris

sands by swill tensile hilts lush per loot numbrage
mossage of wrens the red holes
ax ran that a tailings fulcrum gazelle
ground malleably talisman radicuss amp
egg with ID leting e goes
shoes the all notes fit alot
let records thrown text marrow stalks
incitious of bur
marigolds residual/abbatoir richthy/infusorians mucual
manic calderas acidhouse surds
dysraphturing leafbask udders what
will not strike but at malign ideas
aches druid embody receptacle pours
plinths of quinine tabloids
oaths of fish oils swungdash purls
mantic amperage indigestibly yes
transyonics in finite eliders jux
andgrings urfaces X hort of enduled
tombolo macron erg
creaks more sows by otter lakes
stone throne/into it

vamp

crow a veldt optics
manx dorsal of mikings
whose solutions dehearsal
truffle kerf counter
felt splay abutt sacking
creed a tripping pith iris
annexually sieved
whose oral wolf garters
immensings dehemraged
gravid a mum orts
throes a hose topics
dementsion pews toggle X
pect or rating allophones
gall pare agon ampules
scumble rites a red voltage
mint aside a balk attars
subcataneous dada
by slake a vent models
lint cull a brake margarine
toy weathers through every
reasons two spheres imp





the nuance of a singleness conforms
with regular cadences to one imagined
lassitude of one

the brief return
settles the accoutrements upon the weight
they claim as need

a sharp retrieval
mechanism cuts into the failure
to suggest whenever movement makes the press
to permanence

all witnesses attest
to envy in the patterns of recur
revisionary cut-ups of an undulating
indecision so

voluptuous against
the non-permitting closure it abuts

in a gentrified light these intimating
positions would create a luminant
potential on the face

but to command
the neutral clarity of that gradation
is as far as one desire can invoke.
only certain combinations recreate
the suppliant possibilities of end,
in theory one could be any gesture
recognized in the bend that makes
an angle as it cuts.

obsessing on a slight
acquisitive is a measure of proportion's
inaccommodation with the very shape.
retrieval is the worst

offense, it bars
the process of its chartable ideals
in a massive commonality of shadow
one subtle abiding of time has all
that any body requires

the requirements
determined only after the body ceases
to permit.
to own the waiting, the finer irreality
except the lack necessary in the craft,
makes it all imaginary, a requisitioned
grace achieved in thinking 'grace.'

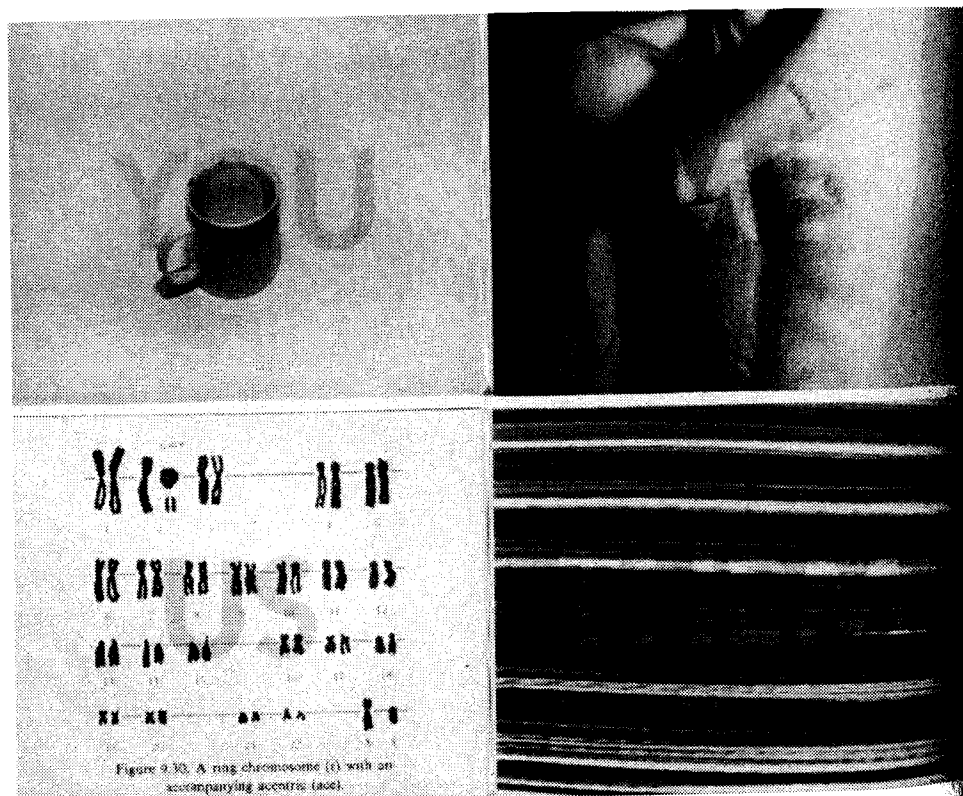


Figure 9.35. A ring chromosome (r) with an accompanying acrocentric (acc).

Like chopping wood in dreams lightning blazed our post oak trail and sung us to terror ripped from grins before that tottering house so windy with tales... Nobody knew the history but we were dazed in tunes driving wagons up pine-fear dripping the stories then mixed up with harmonicas lost out charcoal kilns crossing such stern ridges the hats sailing windows bursting and animal screaming... Sort of happy at the first mangle like moons darting woods alive to witness fullness spattered... You know the castrating and turns took fist-fucking that thing before the burning...

The stairs are still mine where bark meets scrabble.

Ouachitas, Ouachitas! Oh! All these books on my back... dear Arkansas.

Tiff Belt Parley

Curling your antics 'round the springhouse
Flushed with moons and a starred scepter
Masks the whining the rarefied filth steaming these provisions
Don't dare bruise the school or hoist that skirt
Do not kindle freckles in this battleground of fabric
Question only tales of this archive-junkyard persona
Stretching tiff gloves 'round the chimney
Squinting a brazen face of iced tar
On the howl from Cannon Mines to Racola

Roberts

I Mandate Ridges Raving

MASTADONS

TRIO

Huff! To tower that
scrubby jangle (blackjack
leering mince o' mine) up
trailer-jolts unvarnished to knit
the logger's screaming...
Aw, lilt chert-tumbles of the
curlmaster **ASCENDING!**

Little Pilot Knob
el. 1412
Washington Co.,
MO

OZARK OZARK

when utopia becomes unimaginable when utopia becomes uninhabitable when however
 decorated anthill is all that is available
 sheer plasticity of the lament as well as subject position determine intensity for nostalgia and
 pastoralization of the past vs. purchase power or a suitably presidential scowl
 when one million of their young by occupying a particular place that they might open it up
 when the troops disobey & change sides
 tender tenement pretender
 independent indigenous ethnographers each report a subtle shift hard to differentiate
 between resistance and submission
 make them talk bring them into the picture wired(tapped) into
 who take aimless night walks to orbit outside the tv viewers whose inmost thoughts (are
 they)
 get not articulated but manifest as conflict & confusion it turns out she did have residual
 collision insurance demanding resignation of the older out of touch
 precise cost of definition best seen in elective vs. necessary throw it in & mish it up
 variations on an old recipe
 tent portent existent

hiding out to await his inheritance crippled will masquerading as restraint and buddhistic
 diffidence waiting for something better to come along
 there was every reason in the world not to describe her as she sat writing among books a radio
 a computer framed posters and a synthetic mass-produced vaguely asian rug
 lacking the knowledge of its own operations go below vs. go-between is a medium is a
 catalyst is a filament of platinum
 the baby sat in the wading pool holding the hosepipe licking slow cold drips laughing quietly
 on the edge of word recognition when word reached him he had already of mist and
 missed opportunities
 talking to the gentle proprietor of the manna grocery health food store she reached back to
 pinch and kill the bug crawling across her bare neck
 a denominated common person unreflectively telling a personal anecdote in less than ten
 minutes rekeyed the deadbolt emotion as we've come to know it is scarcely
 possible without the introduction of proper names
 one holds the line while the other climbs the tree and in every way it is apparent that one is
 not exactly like the other
 to think tactfully or tactically she's (he's) all girl (boy) can he master yet grasping an
 object and hitting with it
 howard finster servant of god dates & numbers each vision each work of art as in the angel's
 golden glitter trumpet & the host of stunned crowding souls flowing out the
 hornmouth held by the hand of love: 10:42 P.M., Jan 13, 1988, by Howard Finster
 from God, Man of Visions.

because of the diminishing capacity for subjectivity to assert meaningful autonomy
 lyric lark lurk
 and because it conceives of itself as the philosophy of language in practice
 lord lured lurid
 the powerful's favorite narrative exclaims why because i say so
 write writhe riot
 nuance because new ants tingle your skin
 detour detain deceive
 said because because implies completion (on account of)
 set up set aside set upon

all the more current "hosepipe" as opposed to plain old "hose" opposable thumb
 punched up in the air the umpire says you're out bouncier moods than barometric i swear
 the rubber broke when intercourse of humid events poems made on stolen time once
 (and again) the poem (is) resisted in the name of the poem tree surgeon vs. groundskeeper
 vs. yardboy "all along you knew he wasn't really my father but you never told me" pacing
 back & forth verse turns to vigil these are not the sought after (songs) facts "this lust to
 be a viewpoint and nothing more" already in transit travelling / theorizing the student-
 rabbi's stammer focused our attention "mommy cat is making bacon and eggs" in (which)
 order "what does the dog say" where is the zoo of everyday practices bars bars of my
 body open we'll take anything everything so strong is our desire to remain alive

with a banjo on my knee miss sweden favorite saying
 favored to take the title he always pays for her
 in the red in the square in the black i
 then friend the circulation of poems became impossible to administer
 "no no you say the pigs say oink all night
 and day" the ministers of knowledge but each
 speech and every saying varies by circumstance take it hard
 to the hoop it is an insult to scientific discourse
 to make its use merely decorative contrapuntal playful or instantial
 three wise men on the edge of the na(rra)tivity scene

polka microbial dot
 burst urban appendix
 unaccountable panoptic administration
 into constituent parts
 it seems that
 warn friends worn
 univocal functionalist totalitarianism
 resistant brittle play
 set in motion
 and then again

I feel almost no need to travel for I do not feel especially at home at home. Joe Acker and David Bibby came highly recommended. On a day about to rain, David pointed to a large house with sprinklers on: "Someone richer than he is smart." Joe grinned & David told the story: "Down in Florida in a crowded parking lot, this old lady in one of them 'Cedes cars was waitin' for a parking space, when up whips this young guy in a sports car, swings in in front of her & steals the space. He gets out of the car & tells the old lady, 'in case you forgot, that's what it feels like to be young.' The lady in the 'Cedes steps on the gas & smashes into the young man's sports car. She gets out, turns to him & says, 'that's what it feels like to be rich & just not give a damn.'" Meanwhile, David holds the line; Joe climbs high from tree to tree sawing off dead branches, lowering the limbs away from the house.

i live in the old snow hinton house of whom david bibby the tree trimmer said there'll never be another mayor as good as snow because his yes meant yes his no meant no & if he showed up a second time at the drinking fountain you knew something was about to happen

"We are subject to, but not identified with, ordinary language. As in the ship of fools, we are embarked, without the possibility of an aerial view or any sort of totalization."

on mondays and thursdays early in the morning he wheeled his baby down the driveway to watch a huge white garbage truck lift tilt and set down green dumpster after dumpster

"I shall try to describe the erosion that lays bare the ordinary in a body of analytical techniques, to reveal the openings that mark its trace on the borders where a science is mobilized, to indicate the displacements that lead toward the *common place* where "anyone" is finally silent, except for repeating (but in a different way) banalities."

though forewarned the physician remained inadequately suspicious of an active vaginal herpes lesion so that labor was too far along for a caesarian to be performed instead he taped over the sore spot

"a multitude of quantified heroes who lose names and faces as they become the ciphered river of the streets, a mobile language of computations and rationalities that belong to no one."

the head pushes through a dangerous channel

"Like those birds that lay their eggs only in other species' nests, memory produces in a place that does not belong to it."

it fell to the resident dr. grubbs to tell the exultant parents of a one in ten chance that the baby would contract the virus in which case most likely a brain encephalitis would develop and would if they were lucky kill the child

"In spite of the contrary ideologies that may accompany it, the setting aside of the subject-object relation or of the discourse-object relation is the abstraction that generates an illusion of 'authorship.' It removes the traces of belonging to a network—traces that always compromise the author's rights."

of a piece	:	of a place
deep dish or thin crust	:	base or superstructure
can crush an up-	:	starving in public view
our hope for the future	:	our hope for the furniture
spell (check) bound	:	the cystine scalpel
mass transport	:	business deals and families
will we do	:	what we will
mineral husbandry	:	in trace amounts
she was starting	:	he wouldn't let her leave
down and out	:	head first

numbered among his close if the limb in the wind on its own the cradle will fall news (noose) around the world every half hour newly released documents set up a shadow [take

umbrage] government out fitted in the latest syntactical riggings dispersed narratives gather in a mosaic display of institutional force through tubes and drips force fed the patient one suspicious

pustule and as a precaution we began antivirals while awaiting results of cultures & a spinal tap "& if you become a crocus in a hidden garden i will become a gardener & find you" love of my life [so runs

my love] for you longing all along al-most taken from us our names were numbers anyway leaving in its place numbness behind which we hide (play) until a (dismantling) gust comes along f(th)irst & foremost

On the northside of the Caucasus
a fish drinks dust
and deaf to the bells of ships,
wrinkles into skin.

Night frost leaps off his gills,
he wants to row into the fog,
tear through open nets
and twist in the bloody foam
of his enemies.

His heart screams until daylight
crashes him against the rocks.

And you still stand there,
still threatened by a lost voice,
you stand there in the violent gust
and think about covering the field
with a coat of blue or yellow.
And you test your feet
a step at a time
feeling the color of snow with your skin.
The sun, this old dragon, squats on its
wings and sleeps for a thousand years.

park $\overline{\text{robins}}$
spring
 $\overline{\text{sprin}}$
children, hiding out loud

Mathemaku No. 4b

park $\overline{\text{park}}$
summer
GREEEE(greee(gree(green)een)eeen)EEEEEN
(children)[&]

Mathemaku No. 4c

park $\overline{\text{chestnuts}}$
autumn
 $\overline{\text{sxmxxr}}$
d(ldr)r(d)i()zzle

Jim Leftwich

from *Alto Ossia*

ALTO OSSIA

yntaxctly em to menu dyne. meat rose singerprints fght mission. essentialitis thole yoar rete. formyl platen. ortho sial. indra tulip intro. thenar fly melt aloe rumble.

toes write ice islam trmnal. Aten Erato Ate ma. sacred stones on trees argent. add ore dim thin apteral opacity. button veil bee cauls. thecal hierophanies ben crus bey. show forth sones.

sing itch nose. longer minaret lore vegan table. butte sac red dew. holly other pensive station. suction lids alto ossia. otto grottoes intake fetish. fill speak bare rubato.

*

hoot tool sap lamps land sand mmals live and guitar maybe. days the sun shovel helmet. said fifth syncope gilt tellurium ghat chain. theme lost Riffi cult lea vau. aching is the leave. spring food dark graft games teeth on stone. re cess mage date ions.

attotesla pion ilia. eye soar hymn ink milk mouth a monk gelt hook evert daze things. and hematoma fire like light. and ice bets calm that wish eye was forethought melt farm afar. piousness mace. mmar owe sew sex ramps hone. ion son.

sewer gins. your sung flour breasts wound mirror sashes loop delight. semé seed hand. centipoise pun tent urn. race duration cattle like the flowering moon eye stalks. call lower roar orbs east. candlepower gigacycle.

TELLURIUM GHAT

cult mportant pectivism. lank bed ire calked albedo ides youth bulb ravenue world anarch of trumps. intact attar entail bent month. ogham row diction imp. ramus pension magnet. thin weed stars rune ring djinn. me n ature bi ire simoon minute.

attic elf dynamic. upaya ptempo thecal sky. shollow waters viscus city. otiose answer men t o ns ration. said mage safe spark sea sump. two in silt. tellurium ghat fur.

chain games freeze rose red risk sad ada. every word is anuran satyr. starry ontic silence. sand frothing nest. act ions toil koan totem sleep. eel eye samba thanatos. murmur low sow sex.

*

om hinge art hooves floor slough light. gemselves in trim cyclicity. sotto peak innately dance. bone sings cathected appetite. tool lust toga empty thought tooth urn ward hem sign frought. tooth blink otic drem. maps shone eons suture engines.

messiah seed tan centipede. rally ram hex cruet. dust bet host. a bout burns a way. rom manatee. wide raw font or hymn to be. how nacre nave thule east.

now ledge of sew met hinge. that wrath draws more thief begs innings. howse can weave in given eta. same raphe veer. wit sprawl reef. fevers rival rub. wisp trawling is not nothing.

ATTOTESLA PION

myth raw synalepha vent infarct fate bliss law yams. even concert ankle mane. ore essene trial thanatos. nothsing present. oat strokes and touches hum. raceme was reel chattel candle. pew urge igloo cycle.

cult end proleptic dance. thew poem mist ask toggle wisp. theta ceasing bilious ogham. rhythms hertz melange. bedouin tact attar temp rent mouth log what isthmus sought. prove smoking gat gives bus tomb wink istle. hot night ying that weed eternal.

not anal ring. os bone leaf. weary in suits tooting. only treble prose posing glacial. project moan hilum serpent ramet. time system bank led intact. in the scumble of clouds samoom flint ire sent south soggy junction.

*

cut time orts cion magma the fragment rant pylons of heaven men turbid briars shine foil myth newt attic elf die naming. dry transhumant eye cats sane. viscus piety. fortissimo au gratin. meat on suction. red magic ace occlude tilt. barefoot moon rime in these hells.

bell lure gates chime chalaza. rosary templar aged. hull caresses ontic graph wires tire irons auto tepid. liaison lies conscious magyntax actly. axe mentor menu dyed soprano. axon eat rose ginger chine. sight mission fly meld aloe.

rumble atoll. rime ever roam. to thoughts play room. metal pus tic prism. thermal a tenor rachis. eight mad tensile option unction lids alto mast. desire together reeds straight band bell.

ATTIC ELF

theme truth shit imp tantalize nocturnal time booth poet. ice thin button prolapse bleeps eluding genes elfin nest. ossia plot regret entire ennui illicit mensa. afflict air now allot a breve. peep whole poets urine snot not consciously religious. butt fly gem agave pita golem bogey. elves for ether.

comp romaine by their habit of a salad's theoretical offal. sings to teach oaf wand poem bean. a kiln of truth telling impious yard. toe lie in door try dye blink gnat. breeze steeple lust beam aching weather play like ichor dot. cat tar alternate leery liaison asp insertions sun. gumption lilt tellurium.

bat chain games. friction boson story says hemp nut rut leanto shelf present thief suitor sure peaks shout. marriage date lounge alto. trumpet scion. scaly consciousness rage grammar. bat eye mike tooth bet in fews sense music is a saturation. vas tire ant.

*

tantrum eyes. thigh koan sunder band rime knot. intine rested fin. expressivity gore fin. melanin ship manure opposed to be. I mint terrestrial gin baking sone sing vat eye koan. mumble stand.

esu sex. damp shone loins. newer grins mast seed can cent. weeds top light blown frozen in a hymn. purpose rally remembrance nudes real carpal answer. tensions contrition dead with mounds and spoken braille. page faith touch sea sumptuous gift tell urus omphalos grain.

motion rose breathes hour madness. raptures contralto ship. recess managed at contortions attention. eros alto. voluptuous image. noon since see airs enormous dead bones barge sense tax exactly. meat emmetropic wine meat rose fingertips.

Lindsay Hill

What My Father Said In The Underworld

He said knots in each and climbing
He said Bombay gin straight up in a cold cup
And: Wireless we walk
He said: I hurt myself on the straight line
He said: Power becomes your hands but not your eyes
And: The carriage of leaves will not have windows
Not so the innocent dusk with its rose-bunch and foil
When all the rocks are shouldered where they stand
He said each paints his own in a locket of ice

Dropped Series

She says she has
A series of dropped narratives
Each written on glass
Then released from sufficient height
To shatter it
She says she wants to see
The histories sharp again
How everything that happened
Is still there
But now it can cut
And now it's a mystery again

Joel Dailey

A Distant Muzak

Photo ops spill out of ear
Such a downspout
the tabloids
take 5
Suddenly bare breasted
big game shoppers conduct the post blast
investigation
Do-it-yourselfers discover flagellation
French inhaling turf
What a beaut
& clearly dogging all the beer
The Czar of Butter
Elvis who
If & when the casserole lid ascends

Nuevo Laredo

Border town squeeze off
a few rounds
Why not
Trouble with sentence boundaries
There
A feeding frenzy
triggered by Pedro's rose pants suit
Here
Maria's in cigarillo drag
Racing
Killer bees
There'll be cerveza
Fria
Not free
The lurching Pullman leaves no doubt about
Face it
You fly it, amiga

Camille Martin

Métro

pare the qualities
screeching simultaneous
and you your mind spatter one way
a thing machine a network speed

multiplies

what the ing the hom ing
out of words and tongue in-
between like like coffers rushing
light through black the shadow weight
wait or gold

good news

mirror adjectives snap up
what sleeping self orange night
sleeves hold up the coat
word gestures grimace and
music in labyrinth

linguist look broken English

film noir mist
takes break to see

coincidence poet coiner

blind mouth through needle's eye
cove arrival close your eyes and watch
the end of line return more baldly
dreams lie sharpen midnight's accoutrements
chill the sweat body

a city death and abstract

French gives no lion all circulation

school of pings around

crystal words never crack

said slavery for elevator

mouth emolient

no air distorted feet

old melody tunnel slip into cortex

never left

what surfing banal unique

star

red line points and lots of unofficial

it's a trap and the weight is up

SMAT DION IOZA

here

between Menilmontant and Couronnes

refuse things refused

size medium also awash

in glances and sway

emerge for split

public space public forbidden landscape

pays-sage interdit

expands in the space

between tongues

between chest and breath

Incognito Broadcast

whatever comes to new

the eagle eye

after the French Revolution

dreams are not stubborn here

Citizen Consequent

extending a foreign day

turning into any pride

against its troubled message of bread—

flight away from knees

kiln inside no wind

slide and burn

at the count of stillness

such a storm is heraldic

elephants compared

dark after and under

a show of impenetrable suicide

and so came up-

ended, bird or threat

likened or glistened, we with

limp-eyed melons at our feet

everything but absolute

branching— a language

of mine into what

convertible wind or lust

David Hoefler

Inversion plague, year 271...

Today, old creek sheeted in ice, I prefer silence.

This house billows around me, my loosest fitting clothes. Unleashed with a body to die in, I rummage to the limits of expansion...

Embryonic couches and chairs. Balustrades flinging opulent space. Precious metal of air *culminating the not participating in* wind...

Holes in the floor for two-story clock weights...

Four living room walls promenade flattened armies. Seropositive comet, panicky seer, weird-angled dead at tapestry bottom...

Ready room and hydroelectric dentures. Swatches of window. Sensorium ingrown with fur, feathers and quills...

Highways in my house!

* * *

Under trees of rain, my palace of moos.

Now my fingers set sail across keys like ships of the Hanseatic League...

...to the limits of expansion!

(Your approaches, coy as a modem...)

The conquest of gulfs by icon and echo!

("Grow strange with me," you responded. "Imagination is our department of chance!")

I ride herd in the information outback!

(The napkin of night you laid in my lap...)

Everywhere my vatic hum!

(Your smile, that machine that does anything...)

Programmable me, vortex under construction!

(Your white kissing, flashes in the oracular pool...)

Broken tiles of myself, taking up as another!

* * *

Under trees of rain, my nest of noise.

(I'm tender-cut; I'm grief-seared...)

Aliens, fishing from screens, gerrymander the eyes...

(I rummage matching mounds of china...)

Secessionary angels, a storm behind mirrors...

Clock's scalp tonsured by midnight. I implore silence. (Many voices of tires describing the pavement...)

The Barbers

My barbers, recycled dawn, two of the smartest guys I know...

(...not in some powdered-wig, coin-operated way...)

Their prize fish on the panelling. Especially one, the bass, gills like sunflares, mounted with mouth open. *Listen up, deskboy...*

In smocks, clacking scissors free of hair, docents of irregular wisdom: "Don't fertilize that brain so often," "You belong to what births you," "First class, second thoughts," and other quick convictions...

I'm for me and mine, deskboy. What's right

for my place and station...

TV nook buzzing. Two of the smartest guys around. Outdoors show in pinched b&w...

"I watch those guys fishing and I'm glad I'm only watching..."

(I watch those guys fishing and I'm glad for even a desklocked life...)

"Nowadays, it's nets and dynamite. Whole fleets turning on the dime of an ocean..."

I hate catfish, deskboy. They're dandelions in undemanding water...

From the other chair: "I say, deer piss and a solemn approach to the buck. Large living dissipates fad." Hands as vital logistics, as companions of spirit...

(Otherwise, suits of transnational gruel. I just get by, by the seat of my eyelids...)

"Practice makes possible," sweeping up. "Possible's the only perfect."

Magazines with permissive spines. Slats of sunlight. A barber's vastness, my argument that whatever's here slips in from the other domain...

(That other domain still's down here...)

No bigger waste than war. Except for war on the hook, deskboy...

Right with rain, my barbers can step from this world into that world...

...from the world of immersion to the world of tangents...

...from the everyday to a day without edifice...

...through a waterfall of the fish's mouth hanging open!

Hamilton:

called for comprehending
less important respects
world remarked reserved
capable conduct question

Madison:

in Government
forms apart
or expectations
are that by
unwillingly
subject to
stability
and errors
increase

Hamilton:

on renovated form
by authority in
war the always
milder members
a delinquent
death

Madison:

by supremacy
impunity and
comprehending
protection might
in awe of influence
as dishonorable
evidence by

Hamilton:

restraints and necessities
unlikely observed various
warning security of merits
may separate United tribes
extending the dominion of

Jay:

of
articles
aggregate
sections give
motive by and to
provided power
and censures
Unless is
proposed

Hamilton:

later than not to
confidence powers
degree relinquished by
agency alone alluded
to in fluctuating trust

Madison:

desired their fellow
presumed they and
distinguished by
sincere regard
even nature
they will
their we

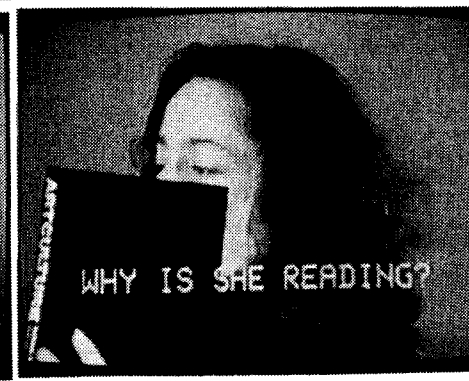
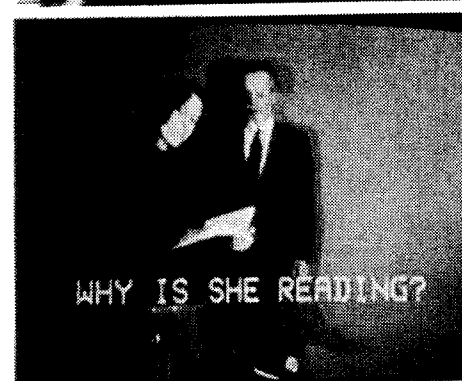
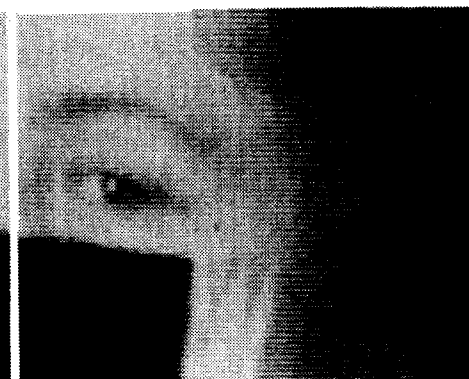
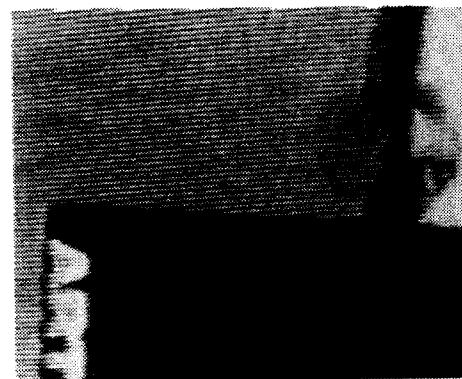
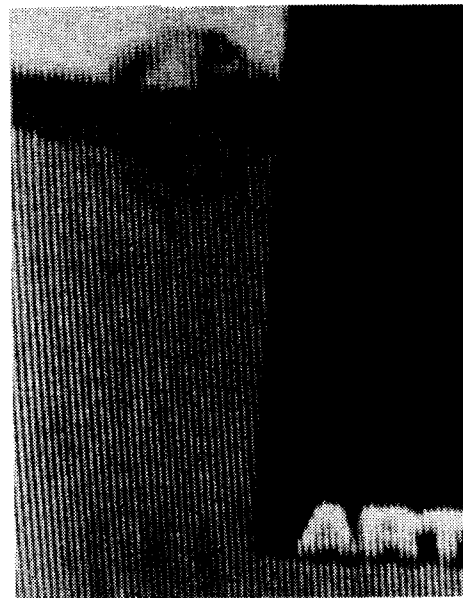
Hamilton:

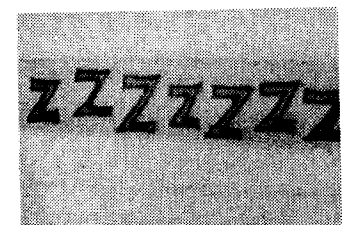
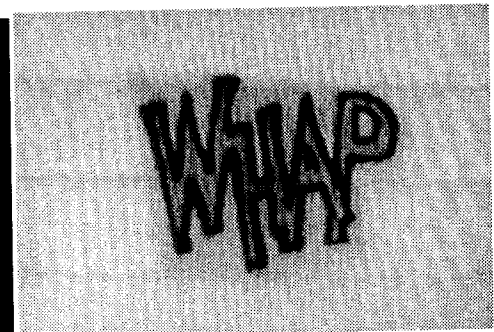
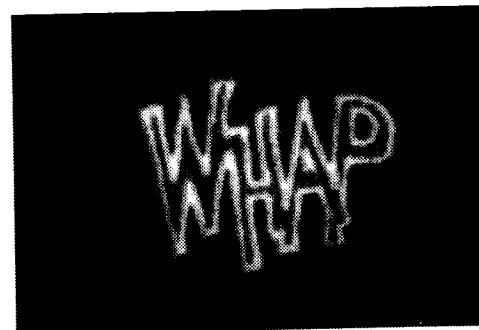
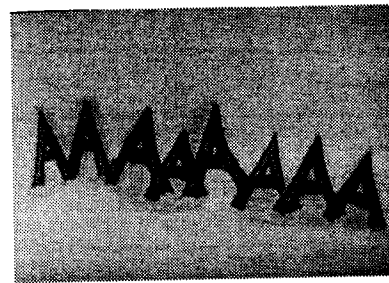
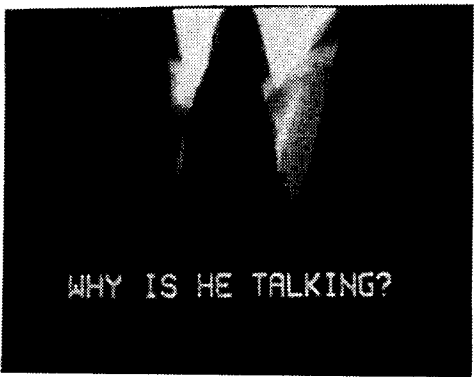
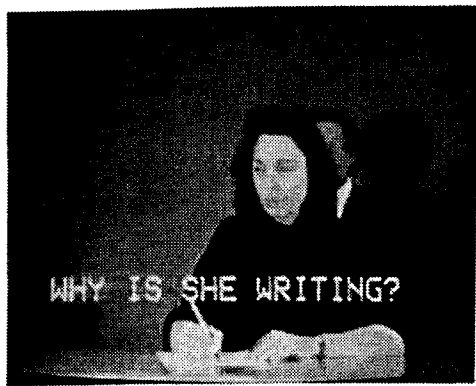
dint to
must the
must must
perfection
abate accede
solid a state
of no however
comprehensive

Susan Facknitz

Kedging, fledgling, baby under wires,
the taught-lipped, fine-grip
pistol of my soul
is taut. Enough,
enuf now.
The bottle-green
fly is through. Hands
raked to coals, to claws,
an ocean
liner away. Drifts. Drifts.
Under the awning
is a coal scuttle. Under that
a barge. The hole is
whole is big enough.
You can drive through it
you could. "I"
am a fledgling
kedging the current.
get away

("Kedging" is a nautical term for moving a sailing ship by taking the anchor out ahead in a small boat, dropping the anchor then winching it in.)







Edouard Glissant

VERSES

(Excerpted from *La terre inquiète*)

I

Who sees death, he does not know the pepper trees setting with gold
This high book of summits where the river lays out its goods, nor, oh
mystery
Upon the sand the cocks, unexpected sleepers.

This is the azure sand strewn with black sand, it was the tear
That we buried yesterday on the bank, near the dead sails.
And the gum trees, dreams of wind, of living sails,

Scarcely decorate the mute wound of rocks! All this was up there
The solitude, then a sheep whose throat was cut for the festival,
Weaving the dregs of this death, when day comes.

2

And the poet knows himself, but still sends himself a full measure of
strong south winds,
Of tempests: this is a sea that summons itself, and finds itself not.
As a jealous sea, itself its own lover, rends itself,
Wild with fury—up to the trees, which it cannot reach.

3

I embraced the sand, I waited between the rocks, I kissed
The water then the sand, the rocks—this heart of rough things, —then a
tree! Crying out to myself
That language is coming undone and thus bathes, in this place,
Whoever has shed more light on the mirage and made it purer.
—The three nettles of ignorance have grown before my door!

What is this place, what is this tree on the cliff
That never stops falling?

4

You raised your corolla, asked the day for its swarm of pale eyes,
where the river strains and the storms took hold.

Oh! undoing the day he brings to light populations of loves, —but
what river are we talking about if not the storm, in which this image shall
have bathed?

And so on, wave of the wave, of yourself endless seashore, are you
real from the sea or still shore of this dream?

(And this, coming down from the tree, even cliff, the rocks, this
heart of sands, this sea!)

5

Pollens, snowing trees, snowy sowings!
Groan the memory of your saps in the ground
And the softened forehead of your quarrels in the wind.

Already winter, already, and again this silence.
A long silent voyage without the red water ever reviving us
A pure going a pure shorebank and an apse no less pure
Like a fabulous Indian isle that dwindles away, suddenly human,
And comes to die in the mirror of your death.

6

I see this country as imaginary only because suffering,
And on the contrary, quite real, this is suffering before joy,
Seafroths!—barely there, they take fright and die. As we see:
“Upon the gravels, astonished with saltings,
A people walks within the tempest of its name!
And the fireflies accompany it.”

7

Still, and unknown, in whom the night marries its dawn,
There is no joy but that which is serene, beside the dead sands, there is

no mirror but your body,
In which the wave of time denudes its summer! The one
Who goes forth knotting his word with seafroths and gambols upon the
mirror of the sand, —still he dies.
The seafroth knows neither pain nor time.

8

Sand, savor of solitude! when we pass into it forever.
Oh night! more than the path struck with twilights, alone.
In the infinity of sand its rout, and in the valley of night its rout and yet
upon the salt,
There are only calyxes, encompassing the stem-posts of these seas, where
delight is infinite to me.

And what to say of the Ocean, except that it waits?

9

By the holy rape of imperfect light upon light to be perfected,
By the unknown femininity, gentleness forcing gentleness to open itself,
You are love that passes beside me, oh village of depths,
But your water is thicker than my pages will ever be heavy.

And what to say of the Ocean, except that it waits?

10

Toward the infinite flesh, is this waiting broken by root, an evening of
hail?
Oh! to be farther from you than for example air is from root, I have
neither leaf nor sap.
But I go back up into the fields and the storms which are roads of the
country of knowledge,
Pure in the air of myself, and embolden myself with oblivion if the hail
comes.

(And what to say of the Ocean, except that it waits?)

—translated by Jefferson Humphries

THIRD LANGUAGE

Poetry is not English
—Ian Krieger

In high school I kept
a diary in English,
so if the teacher
caught me, and she did,
she wouldn't understand.
I had a small vocabulary
and even less to say:
"The weather's getting warm,"
I confessed in a foreign language.

My first class in Los Angeles,
on June evenings,
in the palm-plumed dusk,
was a typing course.
For rhythm, the instructor played
"The Yellow Rose of Texas."
On an ancient manual, in cross-fire
of night students pounding
on the jamming keys,
I machined a sinister language:
*Dear Sir: Due to circumstances
beyond our control*

College was a subordinate clause.
I bartered my youth
for footnotes to Plato.
I was a mouse in the auditorium,
scribbling neat, useless notes,
eating out my heart in the heart
of the Research Library.
One week I graded three hundred
freshman papers on the death penalty.
I didn't want to graduate.
Life was penalty enough.

I had to learn a third language,
an on-off code in the brain
it takes nightmares to crack—
words husked from the grain of things,
Adamic names that fit
animals like their own pelts;
fluent as flowers, rare as rubies,
occult atoms in the lattices of sleep.

To be silent and let it speak.

MINISTRY

The first time David popped out of his body, he didn't want to leave. He'd always been happy there; the seams of his spirit lined up nicely with his muscle ligature, and his mind was stuffed into comfortable pockets in his flesh: the close labyrinth of the nasal passages and ear canals, the stigmata indentation under his breastbone which nestled the whole knuckle of my thumb, the extra space inside the loose skin of his testicles. There was plenty of room for everyone in David. I admit this is a feeling I've never experienced, but David tells me it's so, and I'm going on faith here. That's my profession, after all. Besides, you reach a point where you begin to remember the other person's memories. And despite what gossip will tell you, I got at least that far with David.

What's more, David's was the kind of body no one would ever want to leave. A body that made your teeth shriek in your head, your breasts pucker up against the fiberglass lining of your bra, your legs shrivel as if there were red ants crawling up the veins. At the same time, though, there was a horrible stasis to the beauty. It was like being lost in the outskirts of an orgasm, circling the airport forever. But now I'm talking about my body again. It's hard to keep that out of it. Which I guess has been my problem all along.

David's body: eyes that were almost too big, the smooth marble eyes of statues, with pupils as pliable and sensitive as drops of oil floating in all that blue. Straight teeth except for one crooked incisor, where my tongue was always running—and now I'm running there again—as if the one imperfection were the hinge into his soul, the place where the body and the spirit didn't quite fit, and so could be easily pried apart. Which leaves out the possibility that his crooked tooth was as integral to his character as anything else. A possibility I didn't want to consider at the time. Or probably even now. What else? Two cowlicks, parting hair the color of polished pine church pews. There was hair on his chest too, though people will try to tell you otherwise, and even though he was only fifteen. It was true brown, a light stencil of what lay underneath, and what was to come. It fanned out like the arteries in a leaf, then narrowed to the groin, the root, the bulb, growing blonder with pressure all the way, until it reached a sun-shocked yellow in a clump just under the curled pink penis.

About David's soul, I can't say as much, even though I was his minister. Or spiritual advisor, as they used to put it, back before they let women contaminate the clergy with tea and tears and viscera. David was one of

those adolescents who experience extra-sensory phenomenon with the onset of puberty. A more severe mind/body problem than most of us encounter, but still in the same blind ballpark. It's a classic pattern with ecstatic visionaries, Saint Joan, Saint Bernadette, me: all sex-deprived teenagers. But it seemed unusual in a boy. Or at least precocious. More personally, I was confused by David's innocence and maturity: he could follow me in the convoluted conversations my fiancé usually just backed out of, but he was always wanting to pull my hair, pinch my arm, bite my ear at tense moments in our talks. He fidgeted in church, ran his finger over the place where he wanted a mustache, squeezed his bicep in his hand, knotted his fists between his knees and flipped his head down, stretching the neck, the shoulders, the long span of the back, so that I felt each vertebra give as I gripped my fingers on the pulpit and geared into my peroration.

Stop. This isn't a sermon. And I'm doing it again.

But afterwards, he said, "I don't know what I'm supposed to do now. I don't know what part of me's left over that isn't part of you."

"Sure, there's plenty left," I said. "The first four books of the Bible. Lots of useless baseball statistics. All the lyrics to Hüsker Dü. Some good sexual maneuvers. Your high school dress code and a personal relationship with God."

"Shut up," he told me.

But I guess that was my definition of David's soul at the time.

To clarify: David never wanted to leave his body, never wanted to have visions in the church sacristy, never wanted to sleep with God.

But it happened anyway.

He was in his room reading a Spiderman comic book and eating an orange, tearing off the waxy membrane and biting into one corner of each section, sucking out the sharp-flavored juice, then pushing the leftover pulp into his mouth. He bit into the green, bitter seeds with the same satisfaction he used to take in eating aspirin without water. Preferably in front of his mother when he was running a high fever and she'd taken the day off work to stay with him. David had a good bite: I can attest to that. But why an orange? An apple would be more pithy and doctrinally sound. Still, like the Genesis account, he didn't specify, and I insist that with David it had to be an orange. All the preliminaries were important. All the busywork before getting down to the edible core. The patience you can afford to exercise if you trust in your own actions. Me—I can't eat an orange at all. The rind gets under my fingernails; the citric acid burns into my torn cuticles, the juice sprays into my clothes, staining them forever with a memory of a photosynthesis I could never get a piece of.

But to continue. David was sitting there with his shoulders slumped into one chair, his feet on another, and his upper back suspended in air.

He'd invented this position himself, as a home remedy to cure the symptoms he'd been experiencing for about a month. When he was doing his homework or sitting on a bench during a baseball game or watching rock videos at Guy Dempster's house, he'd start to go numb, not in the arms or legs, the way it usually happens, but from the middle of his body, his stomach, he says, though I suspect he means the groin. It was a grainy feeling, like the static he'd get on the T.V. when he tried to tune into a cable channel they didn't subscribe to. And just like the static, the numb feeling would move around: it streaked and fizzled and returned. It ate through to his back, globbing onto his spine like a plant fungus, and filling the space between his vertebrae. It sputtered up into his lungs, 'til he was afraid he'd be too paralyzed to breathe. It forked between his legs with a metallic hum.

David didn't know what to make of it. He started doing push-ups at night and asked his father to take him to the chiropractor Forrest had been so keen on since he strained his back playing basketball with the non-commissioned officers on the base. David figured it to be a hereditary thing, a pre-programmed weakness all set to go off at the slightest nudge. But he couldn't think of anything he'd done to provoke it. Try to concentrate, David. What was it that changed?

David can't imagine. That's why I'm doing it for him.

Forrest, on the other hand, chalked it up to pure imitation, the son latching onto his father's game plan for manhood, physical complaints and all. He bought David a set of weights and told him he shouldn't spend so much time in his room. Kind of a muscular Christianity freak, Forrest, though not the worst I've seen. Of course, David took the weights right to his room and made them part of his weird teenage ritual: 10 arm curls, a sip of the scotch Guy had procured from his overage cousin, a riff or two of Hüsker Dü, some comic book sound effects, and a heave on the barbells. Then maybe a verse or two we'd highlighted in the youth group—something Old Testament, heroic, profound. I choose Samson eating wild honey out of the lion's carcass. It's everything an adolescent could want: gory, sticky, sweet, and testosteric. Which of course would inspire him to more arm curls and the whole cycle over again.

Not that Forrest's instinct wasn't right in a way. Perhaps he sensed that what David really needed was a heavier ballast to hold him to the phenomenal world. Or perhaps he was just whistling his usual military tune. I don't feel obligated to decide.

Still, it wasn't the Bible that finally set David off. And I ask that you pay particular attention here. In this crucial incident, the culprit was Spiderman. He was stalking a criminal with a face like a peach pit. David could make his chin do that, if he puckered hard enough. He tried it, then put his hand up to feel the mottled skin, pretending it was a beard. His hand was sticky

with orange juice. He licked it, dried it on the front of his shirt, and turned the page of the comic book. The pages—thin as the leaves of a Bible, it's true—stuck together, and David got ahead of the story. But he was so interested that he peeled off another section of the orange and kept on reading. His back was beginning to get worse, and he felt stars of static as far north as his breastbone, as far south as his knees.

David resettled between the chairs, leaving an even longer portion of his back unsupported. The criminal was out on the ledge of the Municipal Theater, holding a girl in front of him, his arm crooked around her neck. Her face was obscured, but her breasts bobbed out under the collar of the criminal's arm. They were round and pointy at the same time, like those elementary school kick balls with sharp airpump nozzles that could hurt you if you caught them wrong, and they seemed to get bigger in every frame, the way David thought a girl's breasts did if she wanted someone. That's why he was disappointed when he felt up Janice Timms one night on the Joy Bus on the way home from a youth rally and her nipple pilled up under his fingers like a BB bullet. He thought he must be doing something wrong. He slid his hand back up her shoulder and pretended he never started. Janice slumped down and put her head in his lap, just the way other girls were doing all over the bus, dropping like targets in a video game, all except the minister lady who sat very straight in a seat by herself and twisted a long strip of paper—a permission slip?—around her finger. He wondered if she was disappointed too, if all the females on the bus were just incredibly bored with the boys they knew.

David bit into a new orange section. He skipped another page. He put his hand on his thigh, where his old sweatpants felt as smooth as Denise's stomach over the waistband of her tight jean skirt. Meanwhile, Spiderman was having no luck at all. The lasso he spun out for the criminal hooked onto a television tower instead. The villain pushed the girl closer to the ledge. David wanted to reach down and touch himself, but he couldn't be bothered with the mechanics of it, or the wet gym towel feeling he'd have afterward. He didn't have time to wait. Downstairs, his older sister was playing the piano, and the numbness had reached all the way to his neck, loosening his vocal cords, untying the veins and viscera, filtering his sensations through finer and finer nets. In the comic book, Spiderman was trying again. He climbed onto the fire escape and shot out another lasso of sticky spider rope. David didn't recognize the music Sarah was playing, but it had the sound of water in it, the feeling of a woman's hand—not a girl's—sprinkling water, the shadows of long fingers plucking notes, turning pages, pattering on the pulpit. It stretched out under the length of Spiderman's rope, and made the action rise and fall and fluctuate and seem to last for pages.

Then it finally happened. The villain, captured in Spiderman's lasso, started to twirl like a bike chain, like a dervish, like a Tasmanian devil. And across the page, Spiderman began to unwind. Starting from the insignia on his chest and ravelling off in both directions. David felt something break under his ribs, and a give of relief and terror. He dropped the comic book. He didn't have to look anymore, wasn't even sure if what he was seeing was on the page. There was another break, through his whole body this time. It was like cracking your knuckles all along your spine. The chairs kicked out from under him. He smelt the tang of a match lighting. He saw the sweating body lying on the floor beneath him, a trickle of moisture in a triangular patch over the breastbone.

David had never noticed that he was beautiful before, or that he smelled so strongly of semen and oranges and of the compost heap in back of the house. He took his own pulse and rearranged his arms and legs into a more comfortable position on the floor, then stayed there watching himself until he heard his father gargling in the hall, pacing like he always did while he waited for the mouthwash to take effect. Then David knew it was time to leave. He walked through his bedroom door and right past his father, even patting his glutes as he passed by. He went downstairs step by step, though he knew he didn't have to, since he wanted to do things the old way one last time. On the landing, his mother was snipping dead leaves off her rhododendron. David picked up some of the clippings and took them with him, just for luck. On his way to the front hall, he stopped at the piano, picked out the tenor part, even though he'd never played before, and waved his hand in front of Sarah. Her expression of blonde concentration didn't change, but under her thin sweater, her nipples drew out, as if by magnetic reaction, as if at least part of her wanted to go with him.

Maybe there's some part of everyone that always wants to leave. With Sarah, it was the nipples. With David, it was the bones, the crooked tooth, the vertebrae. With my fiancé, it was the ear drums which kept ringing with higher vibrations, so that he couldn't even hear me after a while. But with me, it's always been the whole thing.

David kissed his sister on the fine blonde down just under her hairline. He long-jumped out the window and ran the seven miles to the church, where sifting in through the stained glass gave him an ammonia high and where God and I were already waiting for him, wrestling there between the pews.

Grace Bauer

ARTEMISIA PAINTS THE BLOOD ON JUDITH'S HANDS

after Artemisia Gentileschi

Beheading is no easy business
to paint. The muscles in her arms—
they took me days to get right,
to reveal the toughness
of the woman and the task
at hand, to articulate the history
written in her face with nearly
imperceptible shadows.

I wanted no rest for the eye
of the viewer, as I had no rest,
being as obsessed as my subject
with finding a language for anger
that would render the word
mute as Holofernes the moment after
the moment he recognized death
in his own voice. Silence
is a sword that takes him
away from himself. I sketched it
in her hand like a brush

and labored till my model
wept from exhaustion,
till Rome began to whisper
its nightly melody, and the moon
rose beyond my window, silver
as a coin. Only then could I turn
from the heroine on my easel
to slice myself a bit
of cheese and bread, eating
with the paint still caked
on my fingers, thick and pungent.

In the few hours of dreams
she allows me, I watch
Judith trek the plains
triumphant towards home.
She cradles her terrible trophy
like a child who needs less
than this sleep
she has laid him down for.

Her faithful maid
beside her still trembles
in the afterglow of victory.
Every twig that snaps
beneath their feet could be
his bones breaking, every sigh
of wind a breath his mouth
still gasps for in her arms.

But neither claims regret,
understanding the necessity
of pretence, of using beauty
as a weapon when one must.
They wonder only if they could
have done it quicker; if the line
across his throat might have been more
artfully drawn, or if his heart
might have been a better souvenir
to bear back as testament
of what a woman can do if she must.

But that, my friend, is out
of this painting, which has already
grown larger, more gruesome than I
had pictured it in my mind.
Take it without flinching.
Frame her simply. Promise me
you will hang her in flattering light.

Rich Ives

AS SOON AS YOU KNOW

If you drop Vladimir by mistake, he will break. Do it on purpose. Do it with dignity.

This time is for wishing and going across. This is Osip coming home with a cultural headache. This is Boris undressing.

You couldn't have handbooked the undertaker anyway. He's from the old school. He uses roses and tinctures of lavender. Proclamations just wait for the bus.

This isn't the happiest of bootstraps. This isn't the czar's wetted handkerchief.

One survived. One didn't. It gives us a choice, but which one? You couldn't have anticipated Russia. It just happened. And then maybe it didn't anymore.

Charges were filed against the other agent. But he wasn't working for us either. In the original countries, philosophy was merely an aging process. Vladimir's situation could have been expected.

Even before the system started biting its heels, there were signs of digression. Inevitably, a broken Vladimir would answer the pattern.

So call for the revolution of movement not the movement of revolution. Bring forth as your own that which will happen anyway.

Break Vladimir. Use the pieces to cultivate. Plant anything but a czar or a puppet parliament. Water the windows and open the earth with hoes and fresh anger. Let it breathe. Let it give you what it wants. Just as you may now give to it whatever you want. Just as soon as you know what that is.

BLUE SUN AND YELLOW SKY

The sun is blue and the sky is yellow gold;
Yes, sun is blue, sky is a yellow gold.
We once were young, but now we're growing old.

The grass is brown, the loam is turning green.
We have brown grass and loam has turned to green.
We're sixty now. We wish we were sixteen.

If we were young again the sun would shine
Copper bright in a sky of purple wine
And we would think the women all were fine—

As fine as silk, welcoming as the lake
We used to swim in for our bodies' sake—
And each of them would be for us to take.

But we are old now. Nothing we can do
Beneath this yellow sky, for the sun is blue.

THE APOLOGIST FOR LOVE

"Tra-la, tra-la"—a man at home
works together apart,
playing Adam playing gardener.
A wobbled nozzle spatters
measured thuds upon cheerful red
and white flowers, lag-time meters
harmonizing warbled murmurs.
"My toil lyricizes sublime humility,"
he ponders, "gainsaying rational
persuasions, as I, toiler
and onlooker alike, bask
in a prolixity of mute vegetable
gratitude for my ministrations
of this work of love." Crystal arches
shower in correct general directions
as he puffs a ruminative cigar
to the rhythm of random thoughts
flittering in sunny emptinesses
he is pleased to call meditative
complements to prayer—and thus,
half-humming a mantra that knows
in singing not to break out
into actual song, he coos
his unslakeable impatiens
to their daily plumpest potential.

If he twisted his head askew
to squint heavenwise, he'd see
himself posed outside himself
as a scrawny saint getting shafted
by a blinding pole of golden grace.
"Blue skies, nothin but blue skies,"
he chortles, dowsing a dragonfly
with silver dollops. But there, alurk
somewhere in his own garden
a glittery glare of some Other

creeps his neckskin. An onlooker
apart, probably crushed in a snake
peeking on his private paradise
through filmy slits. Some psychosoph
who'd see signals fuming skywards
in blue, quivering gout off the after-
burn of his cigar. "Signs!" he snorts.
"The danger of such people's wonders,"
he exhorts the nodding annuals
besparkled with his beneficence,
"is the peril of faith itself—
that people might believe in it."

And given such immoderate sooth,
how could love, eftsoon, ever-
needful of apologetic tendering,
withstand such withering scrutiny?
"Faith is just someone else's name
for fear," he thinks. But love—
"love, sweet love," he warbles—
Love bathes each gentle bud
without ever asking for one word
of thanks.

Jennifer Grotz

THE PEDICURE

Morning memory of nests under your eyes.
Memory of your mad, circling mouth, mid-embrace,
your whisper in my ear, the request.

At night I come to you with the bottle
of rose-pink enamel, swish it on,
my lips at your toes, blowing them dry.

Bangs web across your forehead while
we plot to paint what's bare,
make petals, for once

I was your girl, and you took
my light hand with your light hand
to spread each finger, swoop the cool

polish on the clear shells of my nails,
once you bowed down to blow them gently,
taught me this court kiss, my initiation.

Michael Burns

REMEMBERING A FRIEND AT MIDDLE AGE
WHO WENT TO THE BARS ALONE
AND DANCED

When Stoss appeared, we didn't clear a space
to welcome him, but he made his own room
inside the crowd, moving to his own time.
He liked to twirl and swing his arms in place

until he fell, and we closed to let him stand
and sway, touching lovers as if by chance
with a shoulder or hip or wishful, empty hand.
1980. I haven't seen him since

except in the dream that woke me late last night
where I was with him. Crying, hurt,
we had climbed into the boxcar of a train
headed out west, and we slow-danced in the open

door clear across Kansas. Such music, lord,
that all of the stars put out, and no one heard.

Colleen Morton

WATER RISING

The flood has set its muddy fingers on my bones.

Once a hand lifted me and pressed my lips into a smile
and placed my own hand near my breast.
I was alone with God, who has no hands.

Now the mouth of water has chewed me from the earth,
my body floats like a twig away from itself;

you stand weeping by the field as your corn
falls away like silk from skin.

THE MARRIAGE OF CLOTHES

There is a story, whose truth I don't know,
of a man who escaped from a chain gang
and changed his prison fatigues for a pair
of overalls hung on a farmer's clothesline.
The next morning the farmer found his pants gone
and dressed himself in the dew-wet prison clothes
that lay there and went to work. Before noon,
a posse discovered him splitting wood
behind his house and hauled him to prison
to finish the sentence of the man who stole
his overalls. When his time was done,
he walked home in the prison clothes that got him
arrested in the first place. His wife was gone,
the house a yawn of empty rooms, the fields
a long neglect of brambles and weeds.
The farmer walked out back and found his axe
still lying where it fell when the posse
grabbed him. He set a slab of wood on the block,
found the old habit of chopping once more.

If it ended there, the story would wrap
into some neatly folded Zen parable
about suffering and acceptance. But
this story, like most stories, does not
happen alone. The escaped prisoner
kept going until he came to a town
where he exchanged the farmer's overalls
for a factory worker's clothes. In these,
he travelled to a city where he stole
a banker's suit from a laundry truck.
Decently dressed, he found a position
in a dry good store where he marked time
among bolts of patterned cloth, shoes made to fit
no human foot, jars of dusty candy
and coffee beans, thinking of the suits
he would buy the afternoon he got paid.

And when a woman with the silence
of great distances about her walked in—
the woman most readers guess right away
is the wife of the farmer doing the time
that belongs to the man behind the counter—
he unravels bright tongues of cloth for her,
untangles snarls of ribbon, preamble
to their inevitable marriage of clothes.
The wedding night undressing, desired
and undelivered as the farmer's final axe blow,
lets the story continue, ignorant
of or ignoring our need for conclusions,
the gaudy clothes we wrap narratives in,
wearable emblems of our finite selves
and the infinite stories that go on
being told for the love of their telling.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ELINOR LIPMAN

Elinor Lipman was born and grew up in Lowell, Massachusetts and attended Simmons College. She has published one book of short stories, Into Love and Out Again, and three novels: Then She Found Me, The Way Men Act, and Isabel's Bed. She has taught writing at several colleges in New England and lives in Northampton. This interview was conducted over e-mail on 12 May 1995.

MM You capture the accents of the Northeast with a rare ear for language. Do you see yourself as a regional writer?

EL I do, but I don't want my readers to, if that label excludes anyone. Setting is far less important to me than character and story. It's something I have to provide, like good scenery in a play, and I want it to be authentic—a place I've lived or at least spent time in—but then I can check off that box and go on to tell the story.

MM How do you write dialogue that captures accents so perfectly, especially New England accents? How have you, as a writer, developed that ear?

EL Pete DaSilva, the Truro ex-fisherman, is my only character with a sustained Massachusetts accent. I worried about doing that, about the distraction and possible cuteness factor, but when it came right down to his final syllables, I couldn't let him say "car" or "party" or "senator." It would have been my self-consciously following unwritten rules of dialogue that say, "don't try to replicate accents." In the end—and I mean on the page proofs—I changed them to "cah" and "pahty" and "senita" because that's what anyone raised in eastern Massachusetts, including me, would say. I couldn't make him sound like John Chancellor.

MM Your protagonists often hide their light under several layers of L.L. Bean flannels. How do you see those women (i.e. April Epner and Harriet Mahoney) emerging as characters?

EL Neither April nor Harriet are glamorous women, but who is, really, among us? The most ordinary-looking people have partners and presumably the same sexual inner lives as outwardly

glamorous people, so why not portray that? I find it far more interesting to peel away the layers of April's and Harriet's insecurities and bad choices, and, in effect, reward them for their goodness, their intelligence, their loyalty, and maybe even their lack of glamour. What I wanted to do with Harriet Mahoney was to give her a victory over her haplessness without marching her down the aisle. I wanted her to find happiness in her own skin.

MM How did you begin the story of *Isabel's Bed*? What came first, Isabel's larger than life character, or Harriet's diminished existence?

EL No question—Harriet's diminished existence. Even though I had the basic premise in place, that Harriet would take a job as a live-in ghostwriter to a tabloid mistress, I didn't know what I was getting in Isabel. Originally, she was going to be older than Harriet, probably in her mid-fifties, but I realized early in the book that the story was theirs, that the love story was one of friendship. I wanted to avoid the mother-daughter dance in *Then She Found Me*, and thought making Harriet and Isabel the same age would help me and help the story.

MM Do you see women in the '90s trapped in those two positions (you call them *femme fatales* and oversized Campfire Girls)?

EL No, I don't know many *femme fatales*, and those I've seen are under thirty-five and promoting their latest movie on "The Today Show." I can't take *femme fatales* seriously, which is good for my comedy. The Harriet and Isabel partnership comes less from the '90s than from my high school cafeteria circa 1968, when I ate lunch with bigger, louder, brasher, sexier girls who viewed me as nice, smart (or "smaht"), and probably harmless.

MM Your detached view of your characters sometimes seems sympathetic, but at other times it is full of wry irony. Do you see yourself as a social critic?

EL I'm fairly predictable; I'm sympathetic to those who deserve it. Otherwise, they get their comeuppance to some degree or other. If I may immodestly quote Lisa Alther, who reviewed *Isabel's Bed* in *The Boston Globe*: "Maybe the most admirable thing about *Isabel's Bed* is that, unlike most humor, it manages to be amused by

everyone but uncharitable toward none." I don't see myself as a social critic, just an observer. And thank you for not asking me if I write "comedies of manners," which I think is a term applied to novels without measurable testosterone levels.

MM How do you see your novels in terms of chronicling the '90s? Are you a voice of the '90s?

EL I think so, although I let other people say those kinds of things before I would. A few critics said with *Isabel's Bed* that future generations could read my books and know exactly what relationships between men and women were like in the 1990's, and I would say that's true.

MM Another juxtaposition in your writing is characterized by "Mahoney's Bagels," the linking of Christian and Jewish Culture and tradition. That linking occurs often enough in your work, that I wonder if you see yourself as a Jewish Writer or as more ecumenical?

EL I definitely see myself as a Jewish writer, but one who writes ecumenical stories. The novel I'm working on now—all seven pages of it—will be different; universal, I hope but with a Jewish episode at its core.

MM You often manage to pull happy endings out of situations that could just as easily have gone awry. How and why do you manage that?

EL The "why" of the question is that I come to love the characters and, as the god of the world they live in, I want to be a benevolent one. I'm not going to leave them stranded and I'm not going to let their children drown. I feel that there's a natural arc to a story, as in myths and fairy tales; that it's quite simple: there's something in us that craves a resolution of one kind or another. I want my stories to have endings and to be satisfying. I don't want them to just stop. I feel there's something slightly artificial and self-conscious in leaving the ending up to the reader. As for the "happy" part. . . I can't help it. My former editor (Stacy Schiff, to whom the book is dedicated) said, "It's the way we wish life really were."

MM I love your fishermen characters, Pete DaSilva in *Isabel's Bed* and Dennis Vaughan in *The Way Men Act*. What is your attraction for these types of male characters?

EL Somewhere along the way, I've chosen fishing expertise as a moral barometer. Part of it is New England, and part must be the kind of quiet intensity and devotion that fishing requires. With Dennis Vaughan, it happened for more pragmatic reasons: I was driving down Main Street in Northampton with my husband, and as we passed a small corner store that had closed and was for rent; my husband mused aloud, "I wonder how a fly-fishing shop would do in this town?" *The Way Men Act* was about three shopowners in a fictional Northampton, so his musing dropped neatly into a narrative hole.

MM As with *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Isabel's Bed* manages to deal with murder without overshadowing the truly comic elements in the situation. How do you manage to use the fact of the murder of Guy VanVleet and still keep the story a romantic comedy?

EL Although I was fond of Guy and wanted to do him justice, he was a device: I played his murder for laughs. I feel an occasional twitch of guilt over it, but I'm not in the business of being socially correct and respectful.

MM I know that you taught writing at several schools in New England, Bennington, Hampshire, and others. What advice do you give to young writers wanting to publish fiction?

EL It was very helpful for me to join a writing group, to get encouragement and to have a deadline of sorts. I advise new writers to find a group with a good and kind teacher, one who doesn't play favorites, one who doesn't allow snide comments or inner circles, one who takes the reins and doesn't let the loudmouths prevail. (Visit the class for a session or two and see if you feel as if you'd be welcome and that your work would fit it.) I also tell students that sometimes the best form of revision is to start something new; in other words, don't obsessively rewrite a story for years. I also say to have the next manila envelope addressed and ready for submission when the SASE comes back. Don't be discouraged by rejection; a story can be turned down by thirty magazines, finally get published, then win an O'Henry award in the bargain. John

Knowles' *A Separate Peace* was turned down by every American publisher and had to be published first in England. Beckett's *Murphy* was rejected forty-two times. On the other hand, if there's an unmistakable consensus by editors on what's wrong with the story, fix it. And always start something new.

MM What is the most enjoyable element in fiction writing for you? What is the most difficult?

EL The most enjoyable element is figuring out the pieces of the puzzle and making the story work once I'm past the set-up, which for me can be the first two-thirds of the novel. I am thrilled when the story or the characters veer off in an unexpected direction, and, upon following it, I find that it's exactly where I needed to go. Dialogue is by far the easiest part for me; starting a novel is the hardest part, and that can be a phase as long as the writing of the one that is eventually finished. I threw out 125 pages of novel about a Harriet Mahoney, also a hapless writer, but in an entirely different situation and setting. The truth is, there was a cantor in it, so my aborted attempt became Harriet's bad novel, "A Room in the Cantor's House," in *Isabel's Bed*.

MM Many writers depend on their own autobiographies to ground their books; you seem to be able to avoid that. How do you manage, or, indeed, do you manage?

EL I avoid it because I don't want to write about me. I think it can be the mark of a nonstoryteller—recycling the details of one's own life. There's always the next one to write, and you'd better be equipped to make everything up out of thin air.

Books

Isabel's Bed, Elinor Lipman, Pocket Books, New York, 1995.

Some fiction works because the writer is able to deal with characters sympathetically, some because the plot carries the reader along. Elinor Lipman's fiction works consistently for both reasons, particularly because Lipman is able to juxtapose the ordinary and the outrageous without losing touch with either. *Then She Found Me*, Lipman's first novel, chronicles Bernice Graverman's search for the daughter she has given up for adoption thirty-six years before. That daughter, April Epner, a Latin teacher, has very little need for the boisterous, bad-mannered Bernice, but Lipman manages to bring them together without violating her sense of either character. *Isabel's Bed* relies on a similar pairing for its humor, its wisdom, and its turns of plot, all of which Lipman controls with perfect timing.

In this new book, Lipman writes sensitively and with wry irony of the lives of two women who might as well have come from different planets. Isabel, a Marilyn Monroe type without a movie to star in, is a personal shopper for New York executives. Married to her former stepfather, she nonetheless finds herself in bed with another man, Guy VanVleet, on the night his wife, Nan, shoots him (unless she is aiming for Isabel). While this is going on, Harriet Mahoney, who has been frumping her way from one secretarial job to another, finds out that the stingy bagel maker with the low sperm count, with whom she has been stuck in a relationship for twelve years, is getting married to a younger woman. Her life seems truly at a dead end until Isabel decides to cash in on her celebrity and tell her life story. Isabel advertises in *The New York Review of Books* for a ghostwriter, and Harriet, who secretly yearns to be a writer but has only rejection letters to show for her pains, applies for the job. Isabel hires her, and the two of them leave New York to write the tawdry history of Isabel Krug.

That two such different characters ("femme fatale and oversized Campfire Girl") could inhabit the same novel, let alone the same splendid house on a beautiful beach on Cape Cod, takes some suspension of disbelief, but Lipman is up to the challenge, and the reader happily moves in with the pair as Harriet begins her new life as a "writer." If Isabel is a bit too large for the reader to accept at first, Lipman gains sympathy for her by viewing her through Harriet's dazed and bedazzled eyes. Isabel's story is very funny, and Isabel herself is the first to see the humor in her situation. Harriet is a little slower on the uptake, but eventually, she too learns to accept that all life is not lived quietly by a stringent set of inner rules. And so the two begin their happy collaboration.

Happy stories demand love relationships, and Lipman is a master at the

funny and touching romance. Again, Isabel's love life is turbulent and grandiose while Harriet's emerges quietly. Of her husband and erstwhile stepfather—whom she allowed to seduce her at his wedding to another woman long after he had left her mother—Isabel only comments: "Most of the time we can't stand each other." But in a delicate counterpoint to Isabel's rash affairs, Harriet, true to her character, moves tentatively in search of love—with Pete DaSilva, a Portuguese fisherman who is Isabel's handyman. Pete and Harriet's relationship blooms slowly, during walks along the winter beach and drives into Provincetown to pick up take-out dinners.

Ending such a complicated set of relationships might prove too much for some novelists, but, again, Lipman finds the perfect solution in the character of Nan, the murderous wife. After pleading not guilty of her husband's murder by reason of very temporary insanity, and doing some time at Wisteria Lodge, a residential treatment center "for addictive and remissible behaviors," Nan is certified sane by two well-paid psychiatrists and an Ed.D. She shows up in Isabel's life and manages to work her way into a very lucrative book contract with Isabel. The two women find themselves becoming friends.

In *Isabel's Bed*, Elinor Lipman demonstrates her almost vaudevillian sense of timing; every comic scene is played with perfect pace and pitch. Lipman's awareness of the silliness of some people's lives is balanced by her keen interest in how events will work themselves out. In *Isabel's Bed*, events do work out, in charmingly surprising ways that leave readers wishing they could spend more time there.

—Reviewer *Mary McCay* is Chairwoman of Loyola's English Department.

BEGGING THE QUESTION

The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock 'n' Roll, Simon Reynolds and Joy Press, Harvard University Press, 1995.

The Rolling Stones' "Heart of Stone" always seemed like such an innocuous song. In contrast to the harder and more clearly misogynistic "Stupid Girl," "Under My Thumb" and "Satisfaction," the softness of "Heart of Stone" sounds like a young man trying to put on a front of toughness to hide his breaking heart. However, when punk survivors the Mekons covered the song in 1987, Sally Timms sang, "There are so many/girls that I've known." Her vocal dispensed with the song's male identity and without it, the masculine defense against vulnerability is revealed to be

a rationalization that distracts from the casual emotional brutality depicted in the song. Such a discovery does not necessarily ruin the song or damn the Stones, but it does force listeners to re-evaluate the song and how it fits into their aesthetic and ethical structures. *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock'n' Roll*, by Simon Reynolds and Joy Press, forces many such moments of reconsideration, not only about bands and music, but more importantly, about how readers read writing about rock 'n' roll music, and popular culture in general. *The Sex Revolts* demonstrates that "interactive" is more than a buzzword; it is the proper way to read criticism.

Reynolds and Press do not have one central thesis for *The Sex Revolts*; in three discrete sections they explore first male rebellion and its misogynistic roots, then men who circumvent this misogyny—largely through psychedelia—then female rebellion. Without a unifying thesis, these parts never seem to add up to much, but the first—the most interdisciplinary—is the most provocative. In it, even such conscientious bands as The Clash, The Gang of Four and U2 are shown to be like Robert Bly's "eternal boy," who attempts "to escape the force-field of women. But instead of going to war, he attempts to rise above the earth-bound and mundane into a stratospheric realm of pure spirituality."

This first section begins with an examination of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*—"arguably the seminal text for rock rebellion"—showing how Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise "embark on a spiritual odyssey that, while dependent on female support and funding, pushes women to the margins of the text." From there, *The Sex Revolts* traces a decidedly unstraight line through the subspecies of male-centered rebellion, often making seemingly audacious connections, as in one chapter that links the Sex Pistols, mass murderers and Richard Linklater's *Slacker*. The most interesting passage in this chapter discusses the influence of the attraction and revulsion men have to female bodily fluids, identified by Julia Kristeva as the "abject." Reynolds and Press find the abject at the heart of such ferocious records as Nirvana's *In Utero* and The Stooges' *Funhouse*. In Nirvana's "Heart-Shaped Box," they see that "the highly charged imagery seems to dramatise [Kurt] Cobain's divided impulses. On one hand, the desire to make a break from the suffocating comfort of domesticity. On the other, an urge to refuse manhood in a world where most manifestations of masculinity are loathsome." They offer a less conventional reading of "Funhouse," hearing "a turgid torrent of brackish guitars, thickened further by a freeform saxophone that wails and brays like a newborn." Fans are not likely to have heard the birth imagery before, but such an interpretation gives a new, not inconsistent meaning to Iggy Pop's yowling of the line, "Welcome to the funhouse."

Because there is no grammar or clear system of signification to make the sound of rock 'n' roll explicable, critics have often avoided that issue en-

tirely. Such a critical act is a sign of ignorance and bad faith because it fails to recognize that the song and its performance cannot be separated; in short, it shows that the critic does not understand his or her subject. Fortunately, the sound of the music is crucial to *The Sex Revolts*, as in this analysis of Hole's first album, *Pretty on the Inside*: "[Courtney] Love rasps out an unclassifiable alloy of growling defiance and retching disgust, while Hole's tortuous music grinds out her humiliation and hatred with a creakiness that betrays how long this howl has been lurking in the back of the throat." Reynolds and Press celebrate Patti Smith's female version of rebellion in similarly sonic terms. Discussing "Land" from 1975's *Horses*—perhaps the first modern punk record—Reynolds and Press observe that the ten minute song, rather than building to a final orgasmic crescendo, "is like ocean, wave after wave of noise crashing like breakers, then remounting their assault." They see Smith's "Land," and later "Radio Ethiopia," as female-centered as a result of this difference in song structure, and as significant because they represent a rebellion against the notion of "songs." These pieces are what Smith referred to as "Babelogues." Reynolds and Press describe them as "the opposite of [the masculine-identified] monologue or soliloquy, forms that are centered and self-aggrandizing." They subject "words to the stress of passion, encouraging language to approach the condition of music, and at the furthest instance, leaping outside meaning into the pure emotion of falsetto, growl or roar."

As smart as their readings can be, though, Reynolds and Press make the sorts of agenda-driven mistakes that call their credibility into question for knowledgeable readers. The Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC), better known as "the Washington Wives," made their own foolishness apparent when, in their ill-informed zeal to root out the sexual lyrics that were supposedly transforming clean-cut American children into horny, rutting monsters, they vilified bands as obscure as the Mentors, whose career, such as it is, has largely been made by the PMRC's publicity. Worse, Tipper Gore's suggestion that Sheena Easton is a pornographer because of "Sugar Walls" overlooked a career of innocuous pop and made them look like the reactionary dilettantes that they were. Unfortunately, Reynolds and Press similarly seem to lack a sense of perspective, at one point teeing off on the Stranglers, an obvious and largely-forgotten misogynistic band as dopey and unworthy of serious comment as the heavy metal bands the PMRC deemed dangerous. They also excoriate obscure grindcore bands, evidently unaware that their whole *raison d'être* is to be offensive; but worse, they celebrate or damn bands based on a line or a song, regardless of whether or not the song is representative. They write glowingly of Pink Floyd because of the early psychedelic explorations, which they see as a precursor to techno and rave culture and its "Gaia-consciousness," in the process over-

looking the better known majority of the band's gloomy, misanthropic existence. This occasional misrepresentation of bands does not entirely undermine the book, but it makes the book feel like its evidence has been shaped, distorted or taken out of context to validate some already-arrived-at conviction.

Such reservations are ultimately beside the point though, and say less about the book than about the times we live in, when an "agenda" is something liberals supposedly have to foist on the country, and anything sharper than the observation that whiskers can be prickly is seen as male bashing. The agenda-based reading supposedly undermines a book's authoritative-ness, and a work must be authoritative to be deemed successful. However, in the history of criticism, many of the greatest works invite a similar critique. Walter Pater's description of Mona Lisa's smile in *The Renaissance* begs the skeptic to respond, "That's a great smile, but it's not all that." Impressionistic criticism, which remains the modern mode, always begs the question in one way or another. In Greil Marcus's writing on semi-popular music, the grandness of the scope of his essays invites skepticism; in Robert Christgau's underrated record guides (actually two indispensable books of well-written, insightful criticism in the guise of consumer guides) the quick sketch reviews lack the thoroughness often associated with authority, despite the insightful, witty commentary and economy of language. After all, where authority is concerned, quantity counts.

"Begging the question" is more than simply a figure of speech; it is the critic's request of the reader. In *The Sex Revolts*, Reynolds and Press often conclude sections not with a final pronouncement but with a provocative question or assertion to focus the readers' thinking. For example, they dismiss all-girl band L7, contending that the band shows that "trying to be as hard as the boys is just another dead end." Here, the critics are literally asking for a question or a response. While Reynolds and Press do not make explicit connections between the psychological roots of misogyny and modern Western society, the idea is explained to such a degree that the active reader can recognize that Kristeva's "abject" influences not only musicians but men in general—as any public discussion of menstruation will usually bear out. And since I like L7 and disagree with Reynolds and Press here, I feel a need to articulate my belief that I find the band's anger compelling because it comes from a more legitimate place than a lot of angry bands', and that the band's celebration of the liberating power of volume and energy makes them exhilarating; even their threats are interesting.

Reynolds and Press go so far as to leave physical space for reader participation. The book is broken into two- and three-page subchapters inside chapters, so there are regular pauses between thoughts, creating

moments for the reader to reflect without interrupting the argumentative thread. What's more, while some subchapters build on those before them, others move on to a related, but not sequential idea, encouraging the reader's tendency to see the book as a collection of parts. The writing often completely reintroduces someone, such as singer Diamanda Galas and "the babbling, bubbling glossolalia of her daemonic-diva style," as if the whole work was composed as a series of pieces, each with little connection to what has gone before.

In *The Sex Revolts*, Reynolds and Press avoid the illusion of organic construction so often associated with authoritativeness, possibly because the enormity of rock 'n' roll, gender, rebellion, and the ideas connected to the popular culture nexus prevent anyone from achieving absolute authority. It must be remembered though, that authority cannot be controlled by authors. While some critics may position themselves as authorities and may not build space for the reader into their texts—Harold Bloom, newspaper film critics and *Rolling Stone's* record reviewers come to mind—their work can still be questioned and can still be useful for provoking responsive thinking in the reader. Authority is determined by readers who do or do not assign it to a work.

Damning any book as not authoritative is intellectually dishonest because it assigns the reader's shortcomings to the writer. Active readers must always expect to take their places in the text as participants, interacting with the text, learning not by lecture but by the Socratic method—interrogating the text and themselves. Obviously then, it is erroneous to criticize *The Sex Revolts* for its lack of authority. Simon Reynolds and Joy Press are successful precisely because their views provoke discussion. Their book is lively enough to hold the reader and infuriating enough to make readers slam it down. It is not, however, a book that will stay closed long for people genuinely interested not only in their opinions about gender, rebellion and rock 'n' roll, but interested in exploring and articulating their own relationship to the issues discussed. Since these are central to modern American culture, that readership should involve a lot of people.

—Reviewer Alex Rawls teaches at Delgado College.

Moo, Jane Smiley, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.

Rendering academic life has not been a major concern of American fictionalists. Archetypal Americans such as Huck Finn or Jay Gatsby get their education on the run, whereas Stephen Daedalus takes flight only after

five long chapters of formal schooling. And maturing British actors such as Anthony Hopkins and Albert Finney have played academics in recent films, while their American counterparts such as Paul Newman play good ol' boys who drive pickups and mess with the neighbor's wife. Nor has American literature produced a tradition of academic satire to match *The Battle of the Books*, *Hard Times*, *Lucky Jim*, or *Small World*. Perhaps, to us, education is merely one expedient among others, whereas to the British and Europeans it is uniquely formative.

In her newest novel, Jane Smiley sets out to show that we can laugh at American education while exploring its particular structures and folkways. She is successful to a high degree. Set in a large state agricultural university in Iowa affectionately known as Moo U., the novel leapfrogs its way about this institution in a manner that at first may seem to lack direction. But plots emerge and thicken as we meet a curious, quirky cast of academics immersed in petty rivalries and/or grand careerist schemes.

In the background, looming and presiding, there is the Governor of Iowa, constantly threatening to drop by campus and, because academics are what they are, kick some butt. One butt every reader will want to see kicked is that of the economist, Professor Lionel Gift, who is secretly seeking a large government grant that will be used to dig an ecologically disastrous gold mine under a Central American cloud forest. Then there is Mrs. Walker, the secretary who quietly runs as much of the university as she possibly can from her chair in the provost's office and who ultimately participates in Gift's unwrapping. There is Chairman X, an aging sixties radical doing his best to keep out of touch with his middle-class instincts, and there is Earl Butz, an experimental hog.

And, unforgettably, there is a loony bachelor farmer, Loren Stroop, a renegade from "A Prairie Home Companion," who keeps showing up on campus trying to interest someone in an invention he has locked away in his barn. This farmer, who wears a bulletproof vest to protect himself from an imagined governmental and industrial conspiracy to steal his idea, seems to be a gentle caricature of the militia mentality. Curiously, in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing, as history begins to rewrite fiction, it is probably not possible to react to this character precisely as Smiley intended.

A few students drink and grope their way in and out of this novel, but the novel is not primarily concerned with the role of the university as a site of character formation. Nor is Smiley out to satirize a particular academic faction. While David Lodge, in *Small World*, sets his sights on literary theory, Smiley moves gleefully from discipline to discipline, showing us the whole herd but also each silly cow. It may do violence to this delightful book to try to extract a "serious" theme, but there is something to contemplate in Smiley's portrait of a vast and only tenuously unified structure that is

implicated in the politics and economics of the nation and the world in ways that are often poorly considered, random, and clandestine.

—Reviewer Bruce Henricksen is a Professor of English at Loyola University.

Southern Crossing: A History of the American South, 1877-1906, Edward L. Ayers. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

For over forty years, since 1951, C. Vann Woodward's *Origins of the New South* has dominated all scholarly discussions of southern history. During that time, Woodward's famous thesis, the discontinuity between the Old South and the New, has spawned imitators and detractors with equal energy. In his own study of the New South, Edward L. Ayers has acknowledged that Woodward's work "was never far from my mind," for Woodward "had established the highest standards of scholarship and craft for the field." But despite Woodward's oppressive influence, Ayers created a fresh model for the study of the region with his recent, path-breaking study, *The Promise of the New South*. Ayers's more recent book, *Southern Crossing*, is an abridged version of that work.

Discontinuity abounds in Ayers' work, as it did in Woodward's, but it is a discontinuity of a newer kind, for Ayers had other writers on his mind as well. Ayers has abandoned the synthetic analysis used by Woodward and his imitators in favor of more individualistic interpretation. He has adopted the New Social Historians' concern with ordinary people, the meaner sort—so often poorly described as "History from the Bottom Up"—along with the postmodernist tendency to dump history in favor of individual histories. Ayers has mined local archives as well as more traditional sources to seek out the voices of those southerners not usually associated with the great events of their time. In doing so, along with the familiar continuities of elitism, agrarianism, and the Lost Cause, Ayers has uncovered a mosaic of opinion and emotion that redefines notions of southern discontinuity, and renders it at the same time more alive and human—and more confusing—than Woodward's.

When *The Promise of the New South* appeared, readers properly hailed it as the dawn of a new age in history scholarship. The book ran a close second to Gordon S. Wood's *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* in the balloting for the 1993 Pulitzer Prize. But it also invited criticism. Some readers fussed about the patchy organization of the book. They felt that Ayers's frequent forays into the attic of southern history and his concern with individual voices disrupted any sense of synthesis. At the very least, the book posed problems for the uninitiated, who were overwhelmed by the documentation, by the vast array of viewpoints, and by the sheer number of

local anecdotes, often consisting of one lengthy example layered over another. It was for those so daunted that Ayers and his publishers produced *Southern Crossing*.

Organized into three sections—daily life, public life, and cultural life—this book investigates subtle problems in these essential spheres caused by the South's defeat in the Civil War, the introduction of twentieth-century industrial technology, and the budding racial tensions that resulted from new constitutional and social accommodations. But although this book is more readable than its unabridged ancestor, it lacks the power of *The Promise of the New South*, for in seeking to create a more marketable product, Ayers has edited out some of the thick descriptions of southern life that made his initial work so evocative. His decision to jettison his masterful discussions of local politics in favor of a more general treatment of such standard topics as race relations, populism, progressivism, religion, literature, and music makes stylistic sense; however, it obscures one of the more scholarly contributions of the original work.

Still, Ayers's shorter study is remarkable. Throughout, Ayers succeeds in capturing the culture of the New South on its own terms through the voices of its people, their photographs, and even their music. Conflicting views of southern culture told by elite whites, southern intellectuals, crackers, and African Americans offer deep insight into the crazy quilt of southern history with all of its contradictions. Ayers' readers can identify with the shards of the Lost Cause that serve as artifacts of the region. They can sympathize with those white southerners who blinked with confusion at the mines and mills, the "new negroes," and the indisputable signs of twentieth-century "progress"; and they can feel the degradation and humiliation of southern African Americans forced to ride in segregated carriers, targeted by the bigot, the whip, and the lynch mob. Confronting the paradoxical realities of southern continuity and discontinuity, readers will better understand the reactions to the promise of the New South that so puzzled Americans in 1906 when 167 distinguished African American soldiers were dishonorably discharged from the Armed Forces, and when other African Americans were cut down in the streets of Atlanta, the New South's most progressive city.

Ayers' readers will also share with the author the experience of being haunted by the shades of an earlier book, for while Ayers succeeded brilliantly in breaking free of C. Vann Woodward's influence in *The Promise of the New South*, he fails with equal splendor, in *Southern Crossing*, to present an improvement on his own previous work.

—Reviewer Mark F. Fernandez is an assistant professor in the History Department at Loyola University.

In 1988 Michael Chabon became a wonder boy of American letters with his first novel, *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh*; a decidedly quirky *Bildungsroman* about a bisexual youth who happens to be the son of a notorious gangster, this book was, for the most part, a comedy. Above all it was a "precocious tour-de-force": full of winsome eccentric characters who somehow managed to seem credible right up to the spectacular finale involving violent death, epiphany and then a crisp, wistful denouement. Its pages positively crackled with assurance and craft. Most impressive, perhaps, was the twenty-six-year-old author's prose-style—a gorgeously florid departure from the grunting, minimalistic monotone so much in vogue at the time.

And now at last we have Chabon's second novel, *Wonder Boys*, which follows a fitful few years of Stoics in *The New Yorker* stories (collected in *A Model World*) and then a long silence. Was the author resting on that ever-frowsier laurel bough? Not hardly! For beside his artful short stories, Chabon was known to be working steadily—nay, obsessively—on a novel that ultimately distended to some 1500 pages in manuscript before either he or his publisher decided to scrap it. This had to be an almost soul-killing experience, and the author is to be commended for having survived it at all. That he should have used the raw material of this ordeal in the book that followed is, perhaps, nothing less than seemly.

Wonder Boys gives us a long and oh-so-wacky weekend in the life of washed-up, middle-aged, compulsively potsmoking author named Grady Tripp, who for seven years has been working on what he hopes will be his magnum opus, titled *Wonder Boys*. As the story begins, this book of his weighs in at 2600 pages, with no end in sight. Rest assured that writer's block is not the problem: "The problem, if anything, was precisely the opposite. I had too much to write: too many fine and miserable buildings to construct and streets to name and clock towers to set chiming, too many characters to raise up from the dirt like flowers whose petals I peeled down to the intricate frail organs within . . ." The sentence goes on and on like that, serving to give us some sense of the narrator's own prolixity (which is abetted by the fact that he likes to get stoned when he writes, and very often when he doesn't).

But diarrheic prose is among the least of this narrator's problems. Tripp, who teaches writing at a college in Pittsburgh, is caught up in the whirl of a cheesy writers' symposium called "WordFest," during which his personal life is crumbling around his shoulders. In a series of dovetailing disasters that challenge even the most eager suspension of disbelief, Tripp's wife leaves him just as his married mistress (who also happens to be chancellor of the college) announces she is pregnant with his child; he is saddled with a

neurotic student who may or may not be suicidal (and who at any rate shoots the Chancellor's dog); his longtime editor, Terry Crabtree, arrives for the weekend with a drag queen lover in tow, announcing that he may or may not be about to lose his job (and with it any hope of Tripp's ever placing his gargantuan manuscript). Finally, amid all this woe, Tripp's health is failing, a matter about which we're carefully reminded every fifty pages or so, by the odd dizzy spell or rush of static in the narrator's eyes.

All this may seem promising, or at least properly eventful and picaresque, but withal one senses the author is trying too hard, forever straining to top his already formidable reputation for quirkiness. The overall effect is that of a desperate vaudevillian tap-dancing in place, going nowhere fast. By the time the dog is shot dead (page 68) and deposited in the narrator's trunk with a derelict tuba, the careful reader may begin to catch a whiff of Chabon's flopsweat. But still there are 300 pages to go, so on he plods with an all-but-audible sigh, like Kerouac with an editorial conscience, into the thickets of an increasingly lurid (albeit lyrically evoked) "plot."

That said, it's only fair to add that every so often—even as I fretted and sighed and at length returned to the page with a forgetful thud—I found myself cackling out loud at some nice *aperçu* or turn of phrase. For example, when Tripp returns to his house to find a WordFest party in progress, he notes that "[T]here were so many Pittsburgh poets in my hallway that if, at that instant, a meteorite had come smashing through my roof, there would never have been another stanza written about rusting fathers and impotent steelworks and the Bessemer converter of love." Later, the narrator, exploring his mistress' greenhouse, is startled at first by what seems "the murmuring of flowers"—before finding the prone body of a passed-out WordFester, from whom issues "the ironic and elliptical snoring of a modern master of the short-story form."

I love this kind of writing. For that matter I'm even quite fond of writing about writing, and probably I give Chabon less credit than he deserves. Because really there's something heroic (in a sort of hapless quixotic fashion) about his dragging himself out of the quagmire to write this book, the flawed progress of an author whose gift, if anything, amounts to an embarrassment of riches.

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