

The
**TOE TREE
JOURNAL**

A SEASONAL REPOSITORY
OF RATIONALIST POETRY



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ISSUE #3

SPRING 2006

**VERILY, A
VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY
OF UNIVERSAL VERSE**

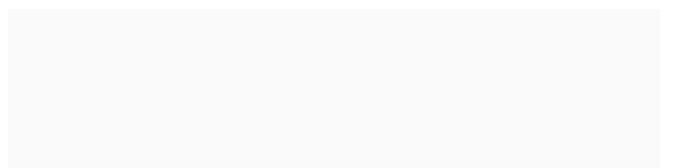
THE TOE TREE JOURNAL

SPRING 2006



“Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure
with truth.”

Samuel Johnson



The Toe Tree Journal

www.toetree.co.nr
www.templeofearth.com/toetree.html

Spring 2006
Issue #3

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Letter From the Editor

Okay, I have to say it: The third time's the charm. Things just keep getting better and better over at the Toe Tree Journal, with an array of great and varied contributions in issue number three this month. And they're just in time for our favorite season of all - Spring, in which all the world is fresh and new and full of renewed promise, and philosophy comingles with biology to produce robust, passionate and poetic offspring. This in mind, we look forward to the Summer issue, when the fruits of Spring will be ripe and ready to be read. So get up, get semi-dressed and get out into the glorious awakening world, where inspiration lurks under the thawing crust of Winter's chilly discontent. Viva la (Spring) fever! *Amorama* for all.

Sincerely yours,

Oliver Benjamin, *Editor*

THE TOE TREE JOURNAL AND THE TEMPLE OF EARTH

THE TOE TREE JOURNAL is a magazine of original poetry that aims to celebrate and uncover rational aspects in our lives and in poetry itself. True to our expectations, there are a lot of talented poets out there who don't find rationality and poesy incompatible. The popular assumption that poetry is chiefly a "right-brain" phenomena is given a serious challenge in the creations of these gifted contributors. We hope you find this "poetry for the left side of the brain" as inspiring and meaningful as we do.

The Toe Tree Journal is a publication of the Temple of Earth, the world's first "non-religious religion," a religion (if you will) that exalts pure rationality. Please visit its website at www.templeofearth.com to see what

it's all about. Ordain as a minister for free, enjoy the site, and all the organization has to offer.

Poets featured in this journal are not necessarily adherents to the Temple of Earth philosophy, nor are they necessarily members of the organization. They are simply artists whose work we believe helps elucidate our contention that rationality can be poetic. Moreover, rationality can display aspects normally considered part and parcel of the emotional and intuitive spheres of existence: i.e. beauty, joy, transcendence and wisdom.

Thanks for reading. If you feel like contributing any original work, please send submissions to: toetree@templeofearth.com.

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MILOS PETROVIC

When they discovered Etna or sea in me

When they discovered Etna or sea in me
They told me that I was talented for Death.
That I can cheat and force
Bird from the fire to sing
While she is making cover with her wings
She won't let the rain to fade my eyes
Because I dare to take love out
From the girls' feet
With a strength of a bull
And to put it in front of a young man
Who is dressed in Moon's ram's fleece.

When they discovered ardor in me
They told me that Aiolos would burst it into flame
And to find in myself, the trail of circle
Which is, now, becoming a riverbed without a river.
All rivers are in my saliva for a long time,
Warm and silent.



I wish I didn't love, I wish I couldn't love

I wish I were a horse, so they could kill me
If I broke my leg,
I wish I were a fly, lizard could cram me,
I wish I were a dragonfly, so,
with the dark, death would come to me,
I wish I were Jesus, so they could crucify me.
I wish I didn't love, I wish I couldn't love.

I wish I were a river, so I could dry,
I wish I were the Sun, to burn the ground
And to turn it into firebrand, to seen,
I wish I were the most beautiful flower, and then to fade,
I wish I were a spring, to flow in, at the moment.
I wish I didn't love, I wish I couldn't love.

I wish I were a bridge, to separate,
I wish I were a dream, to have an end,
I wish I were a candle, to burn myself,
I wish I were an executioner, to kill myself.
I wish I didn't love, I wish I couldn't love.

I wish I were a fish, to chase the lure and the net,
I wish I were a snake, to stretch out under the axe,
I wish I were a virgin, to lose my virginity again,
I wish I were a bird, to land in someone else's nest.
I wish I didn't love, I wish I couldn't love.

MATT HARRIS

Premise One: an Apologia for Love

Yes, we've had some disgraceful
moments,
culpable arguments
but
I'm just as ashamed of our
innocence
just think, the ridiculous
premise we started with
p.1: I'm alone and you're alone
(this is an oversimplification I'm
sure
but humour me for a moment and
remember our first night together when
we said things we didn't believe ourselves
and agreed unequivocally
with each other's inconsistencies)
Did we have anything
in the way of a sound rationale?
Were you a red herring?
Was I a straw man?
My dear,
Let's hope that when the conclusion does arrive
that it contradicts the first premise
in other words, what I'm trying to say is
you get a better argument as you go along...



CLIFFORD K WATKINS

Clouds Can Have Faces

clouds can have faces
of varying
size
shape
and races

people reign
and fade into abstraction
reality is no less fleeting
listless
the whisperer is alone
beneath skies of blue

the moon is a mannequin's head
faceless
and
distant
a symbol of futility
less than figment
the befuddled look
of an inept liar
a fly in a scatter garden



FRANCIS MASAT

Snail

inches the sides of her green algaed tank-world
scraping clear paths - we know she is a she.
Gliding, grazing, she leaves crossing-over streaks
in her slow, coral and silver-footed wake.

With a shell striped amber, brown, and white,
she strokes for life with soft, delicate antennae.
A translucent wonder in sunlight, her spiral haven
seems to wind tighter, to become muted with age.

In her small world, Snail may not know much
of herself or of us. But her pace leads us to think
that she knows things we can never know.
One day, Snail crawls into a safe corner and quits.

As if to flee her world, she floats to the surface.
Too beautiful to discard, Snail's shell remains –
imparting calm and solace to those who gaze on it,
to those who remember her slow and tender ways.

Blue

Blue glides over, feet out-stretched.
Skimming trees and brush, it lands
at the water's edge, joining with itself.
Folding-in its great gray-blue wings,
it stakes out a commanding view.
The water mirrors the sky and Blue
in a mien primordial. Regal, ominous,

Blue's presence is an icon of this place,
absorbing me in some unsayable way.
Moving with silent, graceful stealth,
Blue stabs – sharp, with blinding speed -
to seize whatever meets its needs.
Its unblinking heron eye pierces my stare

as if to pronounce: This is serious work -
you are not welcome here with me!

Missing a prey, Blue regains its grace -
reassumes its stance. It strikes again!
Does Blue, in its patient, watching wait,
plan or hope or pray? In Blue's eye
I find something of an answer – of having
mastered endurance and survival.

Blue sets a high value on nearness,
rising when I encroach into its territory.
Blue flees as if it were an apparition,
croaking its guttural grating cry. Aloft,
Blue's enormous gray wings fold the air
in graceful sweeps - a slow motion rowing –
as it cants its heron eyes for other shores.

Communion Of Immersion

After rain, everything is brighter,
sharper - more intense. Leaves
appear as shimmering mosaics,

as rain cleanses each molecule
of yesterday's hubris and debris,
refreshing each color, hue and tint.

I often stare too long, hypnotized
by clarity of light, by mutating hues,
by the divine wonder of living color.

Textures become multi-dimensional -
sharpening depth and perspective
beyond mere paintings or photographs.

Greens and reds glow bright, vibrant,
inviting me to join them and participate
in their communion of immersion.

Leaves, stones and blooms all glisten
with a luminosity that transcends sight
and embeds itself deep within my being.



Leafy Sea Dragons

- *Phycodurus eques*

Leaf-like fins
sprout in all directions.
A tiny golden dragon
spotted orange, blue-green
for hiding inside sea grass
for protection.

Dark eyes hide, reflect
a non-sunlight
fluorescent glow
passing through
fairy fins, gossamer,
fanning to a blur.

Gliding up ... down,
floating in ... out,
they circle again slowly
in a sea grass realm
in a glass-tank universe -
their home forever now.

MICHAEL LEVY

Haiku for Beauticians

Inflated botox cheek
stars in the making
soaking up the sauce



LAURIE CORZETT

Back to Basics

Walking backwards, over the cracks, the broken glass, the crying shame
Looking in and out. All the hostile visions I never want to see
damning me.

They say to give is blessed, when in doubt give it all away.

I say

we are each a universe, so many worlds, so many stars

we lose track

we look back

whoosh into the vastness of possible trajectories.

Without crossroads, without stones of demarcation

we would fall upwards eternally.

I am digging a well,

a holding place for tears.

When the hole is of the right proportions

I will fashion a tight container of stone and clay.

The excavation uncovers rotten cadavers, old bones

twisted from unhealed breaks, bits of broken treasures,

shattered expectations,

here and there

pieces of nursery toys no longer loved.

I crawl through the earth, exulting in sensuous pleasure.

Moving like a snake at home in the elements,

shedding my skin, becoming silky sinuous sense cells.

It is so beautiful here, under it all.

Fertile soil, made of the cast off, the ruined, the dead.

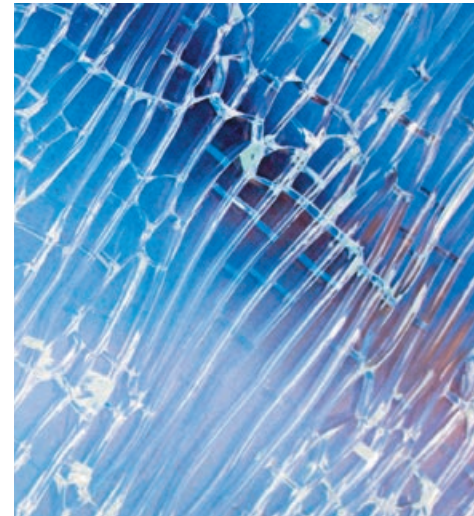
Seeds try again to perfect the expression of dna.

It would all fall together naturally.

But nature did not make me.

It was selfless nurturance of worlds and stars

Trying to cast off their earthly heritage.

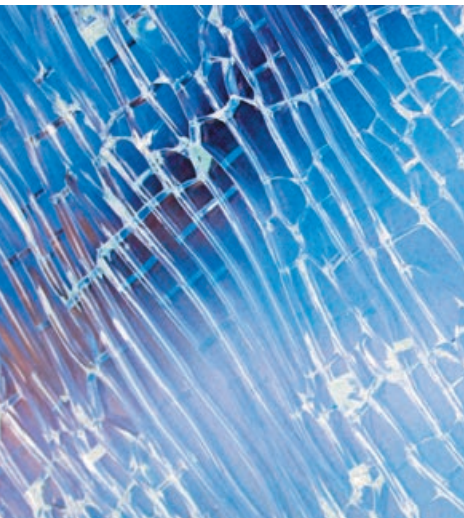


Fragments –

I am lurking in liminal fora, tracking the ephemeral creature
without name.
It is far from a direct route. It is not on any map.
I follow here and there, without a preconceived plan, just teasing
clues and cryptic oracles.
“How far down the rabbit hole do you want to go?”

Someone asked: “Does your poetry just flow? Or do you start and
then go back another day?”

Sometimes one, sometimes the other,
Sometimes it all comes out in a whoosh
Sometimes it requires great thought and
takes time, patience, labor
Sometimes there’s bits and pieces that
need to be put together in various ways,
rearranged, played with,
until it all works out.
Then there are some we don’t speak of.



DAVID SCHWARTZ

If Chocolate Be The Symbol

If chocolate be the symbol of
That odd confection known as love
Then is my sweet direction
Please throw me some affection
Give me kisses Hausmans please
And hug me in a heart shaped pound
Love me with hearty shaped pound
And lets select tastes from all around
The love you name is milky way
Or else its smooth and silky
It its anything of chocolate
I'm guaranteeing to like it
Do not hole back my sensual lust
I'll hold it in my mouthy till it melts
The sweet savor down and down
That tasty, exciting golden brown



CRAIG TEICHEN

Urban Dictum



We go by stealth now because perhaps our morality is sound.
We are comforted by our fantasies and desires,
the tallest buildings around.

Our call to one another, a kind of verse;
our love-making, crucial.
Because that beacon into the evening is our manufactured sky it is per-
haps our light.
There is nothing unusual
in our protestations saying only that perhaps our love is right.

For a change of color,
we assume the expressions that we hold to
are our own.
Our camouflage, a kind of courtship with one another.
Observe the desperation in our eyes as immutable as stone.

To think that we are our hooves:
a battle at the intersections,
our fighting it out along the streets in grooves,
our truce in all directions.

We have little for the next generation to spare,
save perhaps only our ability to obey.
Our requirement is everywhere, everywhere there is air:
our freedom for a day.

Ever denying that our talk is at all animal,
we make our circumstance critical:
our offices exact and our borders, lean.
We are anything but steel if indeed we are official;
but certainly nothing at all that in nature is seen.

For our morning drill,
we make love to ourselves in mirrors,
satisfy malls, trains & tickets.
We have only to look back on one another
where we swarm and talk-chirp, swarm and talk-chirp like crickets.

TONELIUS OLIVER

Rose Hemisphere

Mighty but powerless
Although you handily defeat others
Your own essence is undermined
Seeking compassion in destruction
Undervaluing the right to
Existential existence
Top notch executive
With the irrational bonus package
Deploring the right to freethought
You contemplate your next chess move
Got your eye on a new castle

New frontiers, New destinations
Catapulting yourself off the horse
to pierce your imaginary foes
Is that a proper way to joust?
In the arena your dominions cheer
But really, do you sleep well?
Covering your ears while yelling
at the top of your lungs (fa-la-la-la)
Advisers you do not seek
Why should you?

Conquering yourself into meditation
Yet you cannot live there
All is hollow, FOLLOW!
Peace avoids this atmosphere
Plagued hemispheres
The stench wreaks
The roses wither



Internal Rhythms

Internal Rhythms
correlation a must
If we are to take this any further
Wavelengths congruent
Outer Shells can deceive
A person is the sum
of his/her experiences
The exception is
do they feel the rhythm inside
All of us born with
an internal interlude
Impromptu Paths
People meet and greet
Timing and fate required
Sometimes things work out
Sometimes not
Differences could be worked out
Sometimes not

RAUD KENNEDY

House of Cards

“Hello?” I answer.
Telephone silence.
“Hello?” Again but with false cheer.
Nothing.
I hang up.
Every few afternoons,
during the trysting hour,
the same call.
Ring, ring, but only quiet.
My wife and I joke
that it’s a ghost,
but I know better.
It’s someone who wants
to hear our voices.
A past indiscretion,
hers, maybe mine,
don’t know and don’t want to.
I’m worried. Instead of listening,
they’ll speak, and my wife and I
will look at each other
and never be the same.



Every Penny

His wife's head
bobs up and down
on his erection
in time with his grunts
of pleasure.
After she caught
him being unfaithful
with a porn site,
she read an article
in a woman's magazine
on how to hold onto
your cheating husband.
Keep him satisfied
and he won't stray.
6:35am, she thinks,
and already
I'm on my knees.
But the article said
she might have
to do this.
Give him
what he wants
or he'll seek it
elsewhere.
How often
will he want this,
she wonders
as her husband
looks down
at the gray roots
in her hair and smirks.
His legs stiffen
as the tingling begins.
Who knew
a birthday subscription
to Cosmo
would be worth
every penny.

Stranger in the Mirror

These days it's all about quitting,
quit smoking, quit drinking, eating,
sleeping late. Old habits
that helped me know who I was.
One by one, gone. Now sometimes
when I shave in the morning
I wonder who that is
behind the steam on the mirror.
Where's the old friend
I had so much fun with?

That Perfect Moment

Waiting, watching the mosquito
whine against the window pane.
Each morning, this'll be the day
my perfect moment comes
where everything will go right
and walking will feel
like skating on freshly Zambonied ice.
But by night when I fold my pillow
and thump my head into it,
I tell myself, tomorrow, it'll come,
my perfect moment.



KELLY MALONE

Long Vivre Mathématiques

Zero is where I think I'll start
It's nothing, nil and nought
Its function is to hold a place
And keep the numbers taut

Intimidating Algebra
Let's take a look and see
A letter where a number was
It's simple as can be

There's nothing like Geometry
The part of math that's pure
Its points and lines and surfaces
Undoubtedly endure

And what of Trigonometry?
And how is it applied?
It's all about the triangle
And measuring its side

The Pentagons aesthetic shape
The interest it provides
It's actually a Polygon
Exhibiting five sides

And then there is the Nonagon
Of intricate design
As well, a Polygon with sides
But it exhibits nine

A Palindromic episode
Twenty five, eighteen, ten
A number sequence in reverse
Just flip and read again

Just what determines Equation?
And Linear the sequel?
A mathematical statement says-
The two expressions, equal

The principles of math survive
Its history is ample
As far back as the dawn of time
I'll give you an example

A theory back in ancient Greece
Led Pythagoras to seek
He proved equivalent the Square
The Triangle unique

Medical Terminology

Acrocyanosis, luxation
Neural, perinatal
Although these terms sound serious
They're seldom ever fatal

Take the prefix, suffix, root
And separate the three
Alone they're really quite benign
I'm sure you would agree

Look at Acrocyanosis
It's scary in full view
Three separate words when broken down
Together, it means "Blue"

Neural is another word
Where panic is created
Look it up in Stedman's book
It's simply "Nerve-Related"

Perinatal means "After Birth"
Luxation "Dislocate"
Obviously harmless words
Innoxiously sedate

Syllables can play a part
Let's take this diagnosis
Abetalipoproteinaemia
Far worse than halitosis



Keep in mind these complex words
Are easily explained
Once you learn to break them down
Their meaning is obtained

The Writer's Muse

Certain words, they mingle well
Their dialect refined
Sent a drift to tantalize
Their meaning intertwined

Proper nouns and adjectives
Take speech and give it zest
Hone a verb until it shines
And speaks above the rest

A predicate injects its view
Reveling form and thought
While prepositions link with nouns
And keep the sentence taught

The ever joyous consonant
Is steady with the flow
Important to the shape of verse
As paint is to Van Gogh

Often times my mind is a blur
I'm speechless, often muted
I browse my brain in search of words
With flair, or better suited

Oh the thrill to paraphrase
What once was vague, now clear
Articulate my inner thoughts
Let language persevere!

A Night in the Stars

As I sit upon the sand, my eyes float towards the moon
Dusk approacheth rapidly, as stars are softly strewn

Suddenly I feel a pull; I sense my body lift
Swept up in the Milky Way, my form becomes adrift

Weightless, I relinquish fear. I'm heading straight for Mars
Streams of dust from nearby moons propel me to the stars

I touch the rim of Jupiter. I sense it's ageless power
I pause to catch a tiny glimpse, then pass a Cosmic Shower

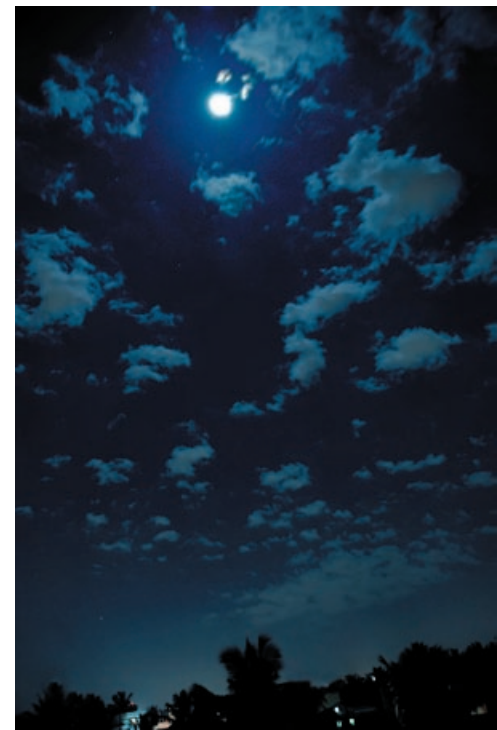
Neptune calls me from afar. I see her in the distance
As I approach the rings of ice with zeal and persistence

I dance upon a satellite and curtsy when I'm through
I quickly jump away from him and kindly say "adieu"

Up ahead, a glimmer shines. It beckons at me so
A bright Celestial gathering, from which emits a glow

A figure small and glorious throws sparkles from her hand
They fall on me, and all at once I'm heading back to land

As quick as light, I'm back to earth. I feel the sand beneath me
I shake the sparkles from my hair and walk away discreetly



IAN WEST

sleepers

Look – you had better start living,
start living right now,
awaken you sleepers,
for one day you will sleep forever.

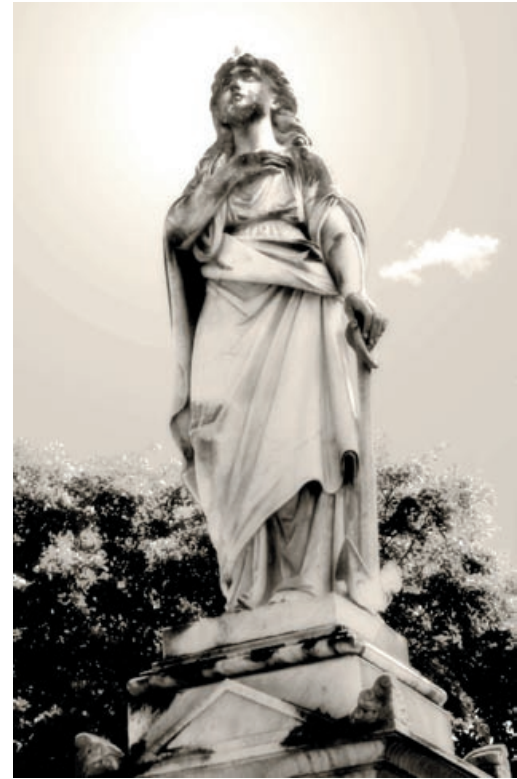
Today – could be your last day on earth,
for sure, one day it will be.
one morning you will open your eyes
and never again, ever, will you re-awaken.

Remember – you have no time left to waste,
no tomorrows, you never did have,
just this sweet illusion, to keep you quiet,
that life goes on forever,

the big day.

It's just rain, rain, rain,
all morning,
till the funeral starts,
then the sun comes out -
wouldn't you know.

The grass is green & wet,
the flowers are beautiful,
the soil is black
and everyone is here.
So let's begin.



with hindsight...

If people ask,
I just tell them
that I'm an atheist.
maybe it's just that
I don't believe in myself anymore
not since I sent my son to help you out
and all you bastards did
was crucify him.

old friend.

Christ ! I say to myself,
he's not wearing well
as the crowds melt away
& we advance towards each other,
two outstretched hands
about to meet again
after aeons apart.
I don't know the last time I saw him,
must be twenty, maybe thirty
and his name...
his name... it's almost there,
but just look at that belly,
& that waddle, those heavy jowls,
Christ, he's let himself go
and then some -
but he is smiling, though, as am I,
in joint recognition, maybe,
of past memories & happier times....
I don't know, though,
I console myself,
I am happy now, in myself, in my skin,
but that idiotic lop-sided grin of his
would curdle milk, I chuckle,
& I am quietly
mentally patting myself on the back
- fairly trim, well-groomed & worldly wise
(if I say so myself),
when the horror hits home
like an exocet missile
that the grinning feeble fool ahead
is none other than my own reflection
glimpsed in a dark shop window.

Elysium.

look around -
you might be in heaven right now,
- you never know
how would you ?
they don't have a sign saying "heaven"
(I don't think) -
you could try pinching yourself
I suppose,
but once I tried that in a dream
and it still hurt,
but I didn't wake up.
you'll just have to face the fact
that this might be as good as it gets
right here, right now,
like, forever, you know,
eternity and that.
So, maybe next time you devour that cream cake,
next time you slump in your favourite chair,
or the next time you drink in your first heady mouthful
of your first G & T of the evening
after a hard day
and sigh "heavenly" to yourself,
just remember that
untroubled as you are by such possibilities,
maybe this really is as good as it gets,
ever.



showing their metal.

I went to the health food store today
to pick up this and that
some nuts & seeds & supplements,
and other useless tat,
and chromium tablets
for those less able
for shiny happy people
so it says on the label.

KAMURAN KELLY

abstract

with eyse that cut thru the night she braided her religion in her hair
people stop and people stare at the might of the little tear glass tear
covered glass girl in the glass house don't you have a glass mouth
chime in with your little insults rub salt in the sore of my mouth
i got the glass mouth that crumbles like particle board i got the glass
tears that look like art to you i got the real not the understood i got
the facts igot the book you are the crook that stole my box and shoved me
in it i can escape no scapegoat just gloat and stare and starry eyse feel night
time more than you would care about the day when people sigh and give
up and say stay a while in the sunlite but i prefer the night the might
and most of all the light...

alphabet soup

slowly (a)
slipping (b)
slim (c)
fingers (d)
between (e)
his (f)
cradle (g)
a (h)
new (i)
civilization (j)
minus (k)
the (l)
dark (m)
continent (n)
of (o)
lashless (p)
eyes (q)
naked (r)
voids (s)
slipping (b)
through (t)
the (l)
heart (u)
of (o)



the (l)
matter (v)
a (h)
floor (w)
crack (x)
creates (y)
a (h)
new (i)
dimension (z)

.....
a+b+c+d+e+f+g+h+i+j+k+l+m+n+o+p+q+r
+s+b+t+l+u+o+l+v+h+w+x+y+h+i+z= 1

h+i+z+h+w+x+y+b+t+l+u+o+l+v+p+q
+r+s+k+l+m+n+a+b+c+d+e+f+g+h+i+j= 2

f+d+c+a+b+g+h+i+j+k+q+p+r+m+s+h+u+x+y+z= 3

l+w+o+i+u+h+n+r+v+y+h+x+b+t+j= 4

(a concept. different permutations of the same poem. it can be read straight through, and/or using any of the combinations listed. i have been working on the idea of poems within poems, or many poems created from one piece for a while now. this is just one manifestation, more to come.)

cubism

cubism: like a rock slate cold his face
pointing both ways square tip to front
and ejaculation of feelings never spent
a minute there nor here to her a throat
nagging cough proceeds to tell her the month
draws near and how are we to close ourselves
off to make ourselves like picasso made us
and how are things really this way when all
is spent is wasted and evaporates and shelves
our thoughts and plagues us on common sense
never been on it or in it and forefathers take
turns at shaking their wrinkled fingers like
grandmothers and time well spent on a thought
a mirage a painting lifeless homing the shelf
of a dusty mind framed yourself you framed yourself
and who cares for the snow when it lights your heart
a white frosted chip and dip into nothingness now you
see my face for the first time and i am not child-like

i am like you for once all angles and points pointing
away from you I do not wave in the distance
and all is lost in the surreal: cubism.

trptych.

1.

The rise and fall of seven hills like wavelengths pulsing the monitor,
I write about seven miles in seven styles and still my heart knows no solids.

In concert, they stamp their soft-so(u)led suede into the heart of hilly hills,
Tearing flesh like gills their imprint a wrinkled frown upon the topography.

Tan dust permeating into black felt divorces itself from (the) matter,
As their hats tip in the redness of the mo(u)rning.

2.

Her last name a record, a dog-eared page beckoning closer ears,
“RED SUNRISE”: a Georgia O’Keefe bleeding her insides.

(The war dead innumerable could fit and fill these seven hills,
Their sighs syncopated in the wash of early, red light).

Mine, all mine. (=) Yours, only yours.
Our phon(y)e(na)mes sound different as they stutter into existence.

3.

Triptych: the before, the after, the ever after.

Cracked colonnades like broken teeth litter the landscape,
Yawning a beggar’s mouth.

Earthenware returns the earth to its initial state,
And leaves a fingerprint of turquoise enamel on what’s within reach.

I do (.) give back these smiles and glittering eyes,
Do return all of this and more.

“It’s all relevant,” said _____ .

1+1=

The brown bagger at the end of the aisle is causing a commotion
In no subtle way, on this smoky day, he is exploding cans of soda.

The girl on the other ends pulls the c(h)ord across her middle
She presses shiny thumbtacks into her shoe soles
and begins to tap, tap, tap.

He says, “waste not, want not.” He hides the plastic ones behind
the cereal boxes in aisle five. They know nothing of his plan.
They don’t hear his smirk.

She is a step beyond oblivion. Her shoes silvering the tap.
Tripping the light fantastic; her work a Vermeer in waiting.

(He says what she knows, because he says nothing.
She knows what he knows, and that is something).

1+1+1+1=

In the gallery, she seizes the monochromatic picture
and names it monosyllabic. Her artful dodging of pertinent
questions, leads us to believe in art.

His eyes dart back and forth along the stretch of road.
His mind collapses things that have strong resolve.

She glues boxes together, a platform to the sky.
On hinges wooden hangs, on wings transparent glides.

He is a fool without the foolery.
He has a tooled leather belt.
He wants to whip the world with it.

(He knows what she knows, because he says nothing.
She knows what he knows, and that is something).



ALLEN WEBER

Angling into Adolescence

I had a love of early morning,
the calm of black-glass lakes,
the rhythmic snick-ripple-groan
in the relevant motion of oars.

At 13, a feel for depth, and
the concern and ardor of a boy,
bond with the patience of man:
I was a serious fisher of time,

and would have stayed adrift
among incessant waters if not
for that tanned girl, in cutoff jeans,
swaying on the pontoon pier.

On the Garden Path

This winding walk was laid
with the presumed precision

of my youth.

For the butterfly
grounded in the cool of its night,
weather-worn bricks hold memory

of short days' light. Along the way,
lives cycled on each side and in the cracks
between blocks of moss-covered clay:

volunteer basil sprouted, sage blossomed
with thyme, year to year. Neglected
rosemary still sends fragrant arms

across the way,
imploring just one more



hour of high sun. And that dandelion
I tried to pull so many times, always
stands again, an immutable monument

to tenacity. This path was not meant to be
a practical one. Having found no intrigue
in straight lines, I chose a gradual ess,
appealing to the eye, and revealing skill

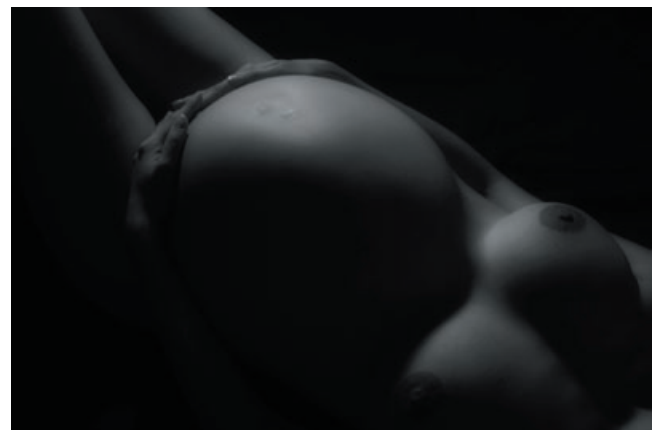
held by stronger hands. Or maybe
even then I knew the day would come
when I'd not need to rush through
to the garden's end
and back again.

Talking with the Potter about the Accidental Bust

You claim that art is found,
that she has always been
alive within your painted pots
and bowls and cups. I ask:

supple fingers have not formed
her earthen breast, smoothed
her dampened skin, before
the fired kiln? You smile and say:

when halted by imperfect clay,
insightful hands, through craft
and flair, sometimes give shape
and breadth to unexpected ends.



OLIVER BENJAMIN

The Asian Mariner

Albatross my friend, come hither, come close.
Most loyal of birds, your desperate hunger,
Safeguards my boat as we search for the coast,
Of royal green land, gold, silver and amber.

Lonely at sea, lonely are we,
My crew of the damned, hemmed in by salt water,
Could offer me up the highest of tea,
Not knowing that it is not this that I'm after.

Oh for a touch of your silky white feather,
Your wingspan could lighten the darkest of latitude,
But it goes against nature that we be together.
By what reckless design might I alter her attitude?

I think that Icarus touched the sky like a bird,
And so for that moment of terrific bliss
Shot hot through the heavens, as he tumbled back seaward
He laughed as he wept: No mean folly, this.

Now lifeless and flightless, I wear you around me,
Coilings of conscience, fates intertwined
Like fibers in roots twisting up through a dead sea,
Our journey is lost. You, gooney, are mine.



TYLER FENN

pine

we built a raft to float upon
that calm landlocked water
pressure treated pine and
twenty penny nails
so heavy when complete that
to drag it down the shore
we could only lift a corner
and by so doing flexed it
just enough so that
when i ran upon it from the beach
the head of that twenty penny
that had worked its way up
snagged and ripped a gash in my bare foot
just below the webbing between
my biggest toe and next



ROHITASH CHANDRA

Transformation of Energy

I wonder what was there—
before
the very instance – when time began.

Before –
Time and energy,
Before –
Space and matter,
Before—
Light and the big explosion.

Somehow it just happened and
all there is—
Energy transformation.

Stars age
–burn into supernova
and turn into the mysterious
Black Hole
or die into a white dwarf.

Trees die into timber,
Later wilt into soil—
or burn into smoke.

The beating heart stops—
Life starts all again in someone's womb.

all that we care about— this body
– flesh
turns into ashes or rots into soil.

At least our flesh
feeds some hungry worms,
our soul—
a piece of glowing energy that,
transforms.



PETER SCHWARTZ

the donkey method

the art of immersion speaks loudest.

and sometimes the donkey itself
becomes lucrative;

its eyes heat to the ideas
of math, reason, profit.

it recognizes its best angle
is always the skull.



feelin' so logical!



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