



THE
FIELDSTONE
REVIEW

ISSUE 4, 2010



POETRY
&
PROSE



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The Revolutionary

Raymond Fraser

My cousin's family
had a bathroom
in their house
all chrome and tile
and pink and blue
so luxurious were
their lives

My cousin's friends
were rich as well
They asked
my sister once
how our father
earned his bread

He's a janitor she said
She was innocent that way
Oh said they
giving us — what?
No look really
just not knowing
what to say
while I stood
furiously ashamed
hating them

And then there came the day
the Revolution came to town
and I rode in on Main Street
and tore their city down
wiped it from the map
like so much bourgeois crap
sitting on my throne
my fur-lined toilet seat

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After Opaque Visibility

M.J. Golias

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Like waiting for the dead to return
wearing the clothes they were buried in
I left cheese and baguettes for my missing hero and heroine.

There is always a need.

My hero has eaten the last of the figs,
backed into the tree with his Benz — he left
no note for me.

There is always a need.

My heroine — well, she had wings (which she had hid from me).
She is now a star in Italian films — she left
no note for me.

There is always a need.

There *was* a need pulling at the hairs on my arms.
I glimpsed empires

while hero and heroine spoke of fleeing to Europe
with leftover drachmas in their pockets —
I was invited. I was invited
to alter myself like a loose suit — become anyone else
even a heroine

someone's heroine

speaking empires and audible whispers.

(My mouth now sewn shut like the dead's.)

There *will* always be a need.

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Self Portrait with Forecast

Jeff Schiff

You have a wife an appealing babe adjusting to the face of corporeal treachery still no one's afterthought two children: one rasping at those outskirts that fail now to fascinate or lure & another whose penance (when generous you call it succor) is common distance: a furlong for every indigestible antipathy & a mutt-Dalmatian who trotted recently into the dangling biscuit of your kindness & kinged you by utter mistake There is a job: yada yada: trespasses tortured diplomacies all the piddliness and rigmarole you'd expect from insufficient recompense but there are laurel saplings too: strivers oily green & sun-fuddled & quirky hedges that demand your focus or deliberation or depth of faith or some such amalgamated pretense multiplying as they do at some encroaching edge

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Bullets or Glass

Nicole Pakan

they wind through the morning
alleys, the steady squeak

pause

squeak of pursuance, bottle
clink, labels unravelling, glue

unclung to side
ground off by friction or

nervous fingers
again

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The Hack's Progress

James Romanos

You know sit, you have a lovely office. These books, these chairs. The very essence of a man of your standing. Have I told you that before? I am so happy to have been chosen by you over the rest of those candidates. Knowing as you do, that I am a little different from most. Why thank you, I would like a cognac. It is so good to have crystal in your office. Rosenthal isn't it?

Patrick? You want to know how I came to get a degree? Why I returned to school? Of course what you are really asking is why I abandoned my writing. Yes, I can see how you might. Most professionals lack your sensitivity for the arts, so some else has thought to ask that question before. I suppose they are disconnected by my former career. Make yourself comfortable sit, and I will tell you.

In your experience people are undone by drink, or greed, or lechery. I was schooled by Art. With a capital A. You was not realize this but I've not let to act. It was my root me mine.

I can see by your raised eyebrow, you think I exaggerate. But I do not. What I say is true. It was art. Or if you prefer nature. I was foolish enough to believe my professors. Foolish enough to believe in the dream. Foolish enough to believe in myself.

I can see you don't believe me. I will have to explain. Allow me to fetch you another cognac. Comfortable? Ashtray empty? The background material will take a moment or two.

As we cheerfully beggar our way into another millennia, you and I both know the world is falling apart. We see this every day. Even from such a graceful banker as this you cannot help but notice the equator that threatens us. When I gave up, I believed that all nonsense about a meritocracy and upward mobility.

I was innocent.

I didn't realize that the majority of medical students were the sons and daughters of doctors, or that to attend a prestigious school usually required a father as alumni.

You smile of course. This is not news to you. You hired me because of my marks and background. A great fit! I suppose you call it. Sorry sit, bad joke. But you will admit it helped that Uncle Richard used to be a senior partner.

It began in school. As you know I attended your alma mater, a fine university, with a supportive faculty. I remember thinking in the firm round towels and dress comments of Professor Davis's pronouncements: "The novel is dead." His lectures flew from his neatly patterned shirt directly into my brain. I had no need of notes. He made it all so clear. So very clear.

I still remember that first Christmas party. I remember Professor Davis's hand, casually dropping in my right pocket. Not that I was, it struck me as poignant. The notes, could provide solace to a man trapped in a marriage that was a lie. It seemed so little to give, so cruel to refuse. You understand sit. If anyone can, you must.

It was later that I discovered the highway down which the good professor drove me was a valley without an exit. A top grade, an A given to assist my insight, my sensitivity, and via a certain earthy willingness to oblige - that my grade could be withdrawn as quickly a limp pistol. I persevered however, landing over, allowing my nose to be head. For at the end of all I would receive a first class degree from a first class institution.

You are silent now sit. Not shocked I trust. Not a man of the world such as yourself. You see, I was willing to give anything for the chance to publish my work. It is that same drive that you have kind after all. You know I can apply it to fill the august coffers of Hays, Jackups and Billings. Just of course your and my pockets.

But to return to my story. Life outside university became difficult. The opportunities to pay for the rest, to buy the groceries, were limited. Even those moments with Professor Davis were not. I discovered two gems, chosen carefully and seldom given. I discovered from friends in my graduate seminar, that I was not alone. The professor was an equal opportunity reader. He rejected himself with abandon amongst the men and women that enrolled in his seminar. Indeed if Sylvia Fresh is to be believed, Doctor Davis was even willing to include her garden secretary if his generosity.

Perhaps it was due to a proscriptive value system, perhaps just better taste in wine. Or perhaps my nerves could no longer stand the constant impermeating of art magazines and publishers. I decided it was no use to print books on less than velvet. I broadened the scope of my search to include all manner of publishers. I hoped for work from paperback publishers of all stripes, even those that could only be mail order. I had hoped my experiences at the feet of Professor Davis might translate into coin. Again I was wrong, what had seemed exotic to me, such publishers found dull, even dull.

I sank to a new low and attempted to get into print in the newspapers - they laughed at my opinions. Time after time I faced rejection from overful editors with no concerns except invitations to the breakfast restaurant openings.

I gave in to fate. I attempted to replicate my success with Professor Davis. As you know sit I do have something to offer. I was only rejected when my guess about the man behind the desk was wrong. Finally, an editor with a sharp business hook upon my state. I remember his explanation well.

"You must face facts. You are not a novelist. At best you qualify as hack."

You could hear the distaste he felt just mouthing the word. He suggested he might find a way to publish a murder mystery. Small thanks for an afternoon that his colleagues would doubtless learn to envy over cocktails. But enough to infuse me again with hope.

I turned into my chrysalis. Scouring the cafes and taverns where I had previously spent my time, I labored over my computer, and when I needed money, over a bar counter. After two years my opus was complete. I submitted it for publication. You can guess the response I received.

"Sorry. Not quite what we're after."

"No."

"We regret that our schedule is complete at this time."

"No thank you."

"Unfortunately the enclosed manuscript titled *Blindly* by does not meet our criteria."

"Go Away."

My brain defiled by rejection, I sought out Professor Davis. Perhaps he could advise me. I found him at a party given for new students to meet alumni. As usual he was near the drinks table with his left hand pointing out exotic wines to a pretty young student. This time, I noted with a pang of jealousy was pressed against the small of her back.

"Professor Davis? You remember me?"

His eyes were blank, due to drink I imagine.

"I have a novel." I blurted out. "I need some critical input."

"True off. We're busy." The student, a callow underling with crooked teeth, giggled at that commencing show of wit.

I walked home to save his face. I was in a stupor. I would think no lower. What could be wrong with me now? My opus, hanging against me like a cheap plastic grocery bag. I wandered the streets trying to imagine what my problem was. In the solitude of my partial apartment, I shed my clothes and prepared for bed.

I had once been proud of my body, my carefully groomed hair, my muscles well toned from exercise. Now there was a growing belly, and facial skin, green white under the yellow fluorescent light. My hair cropped short for convenience and price, no longer looked even avant-garde. I know it is hard for you to believe having seen me more recently but it is true. I had let myself go.

After that dreadful night I determined I would not give up yet. I would try one more avenue. I would find critical help. I returned to the editor that had invigorated my talent. For several alternatives of spots involving a chronic, silk-curve and a quantity of reluctant, he agreed to read and critique it. Sit. Are you alright? You look quite pale. Here. Have another glass of this excellent cognac. I can guess what you are worried about. Don't. I gave the firm's insurance agent my blood test results before signing the contract, and an excellent contract was. Most generous.

That afternoon began as always. The meeting in the hotel room. He could not hear the squeal of my apartment - the initial asseff followed by a more insistent reminder of my previous pleasure. Finally, leaning against the bedhead, released from his bonds, he lit one of the lucky little cigarettes he affected. You have no idea how relieved I was in learning that you were a cigar smoker, to find you know the value of a good Cuban, sit.

"You know" the editor told me. "It isn't as bad as I feared. I think mostly it's just missing the personal touch, the passion of it all. The crime itself is almost accepted by remote control. We get no feeling for the agony of the victim, for the anger of the murderer."

I could not believe what I was hearing. I looked up from fobbing the wistful scarf into my gray bag. There, he sat, as smug and self-satisfied as all the rest of them, content with his old Spain job, his wife and child, his little business. "Ladies." That was how he referred to me. I remember seeing the scarf slowly around my fingers, the fabric still damp with his condensation. I tried to form a coherent response.

"Then, then, my little hack. You'll be better for such honest criticism."

I panted, throwing my legs over his chest, and bopped the scarf over his head. He chuckled imagining the new pleasure he was about to experience, as I wrapped the scarf around his throat twice.

I still remember that small crease of uncertainty that formed on his forehead, just over that repulsive face-wide eyebrow of his.

"They say when you die the organs is the best one." I said. He grasped my wrists but he was already too late.

I jerked my arms apart. Hand. Little hack indeed! I outweighed him by at least twenty pounds. Those hours spent at the gym were not completely lost. It was all over surprisingly quickly. Alas. Although he achieved certain rights, he died without that ultimate experience.

I undereached my jaw and began to get dressed. Passion. Anger. None of those sentiments have the meaning of other word. They are cushioned from such sentiments, hidden as they are in the suburbs. They get all sentiments as veneers, by watching us, the magazine the scene, the impoverished artist as we struggle, as we actually die.

I thrust my things into my bag and, after wiping down the room, I left. I knew enough of the editor's habits to know I was safe. He no longer belonged of our concourse because his wife threatened not just divorce but financial humiliation if he cheated again. She was rather the year wife when you stop and think about it. Sit? Are you alright? Oh dear! You've splashed some on your desk. Let me get that. We wouldn't want the organ to drip the lapses off this fine desk. A Pyle isn't it? I'm afraid the leather may need refurbishing.

Now where was I? Oh yes, you were upset because of my little crime. Have no fear sit. My research into crime technique had paid off. I was never suspected, never even questioned.

Now you see how I was driven to this end. I have no regret. There is no hope for a new hack, but there are other opportunities. As you know, I had no trouble successfully navigating the perils of a joint law-business degree, and I cannot tell you how grateful I am to be offering you a place here. Of course my experience with the publishing industry can only help in our suit to pry open the corporate act. Clearly the editors and business authors have no right to such proprietary. Great Art belongs to the world. I am sure our publisher clients will find me sufficiently agreeable.

Oh. I see I told you too much. Next if I were you I'd just get those done. What if our private little job interview became public? Not even the midday pandering of this office could protect you from the tabloids.

No violence? No. I am sure you have underestimated me. Allow me to play something for you. I took the precaution of recording my job interviews as I could review the positions of my clients. Trust, my intention was wearing a wire. Extraordinary how good the mikes are these days isn't it?

I believe if you check your criminal law you will find some aspects of our little encounter are an offense in this jurisdiction. Of course I would have to state those but as you know the courts view job interviews as just such a situation. I made rather a study of the precedents. I am sure you have no need of my research. You know I am right.

Oh dear. You are quite pale again. Don't worry sit. There are only a half dozen copies of the interview record, and they are all in secure locations. Periodically I like to listen to it, for my own enjoyment. It really was quite romantic the way you set forth your proposal. You have no idea how entertaining you are sit when in the thrice of passion. Trust, you are not quite as invasive as some members of the article community. But you are charming in your own way. Healthy, straightforward in your needs. And of course there is always your lovely chair baritone.

Now sit there's no need for that kind of language. I can see where those little revelations may have startled you a bit but don't worry. I think the number of that editor cared me of any remaining debts. From now on I shall follow in your august footsteps. I shall be a normal member of society. A fine upstanding member of the heart. And, of course, a credit to Hays, Jackups and Billings.

I promise.



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A Smiling Phiz for Hindlegs

Tom Tracey

After the birth of rose in May,
grimly glad fleckering harp-souled Anna
scaled the horse and tore desire
from a flesh of chestnut's pith;
swung the knotted heart of kith
& dashed her flail at brother Big's,
He still bellowing in the furnace
of that dead-end lovely dog day,
burnished in the memory
like a gloating shirt of skin:
"Let me take your Head off, sis!"
(thereabouts the gist of Him)
"I am tired of all sings,
want to slip off into God"
as needle to a magnet drawn
in rose & gold of twilit din.
Great tree-climber, high magician,
tall above all moss & harping,
jack-knife-whittling, hale halloing,
never was a man so smiling;
hailstorm voice from sky descending:
"Mercy me, was ever man so pelted!"
who beat the dragooned thistles there with sticks.

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Erich Reichmann
Brad Congdon

most
read
commented
popular recently

Even Erich Reichmann was once a child. It is an idea I grapple with even now, so many years later. Back then, it was not a thought that ever crossed my mind. In fact, I did not like to think of Reichmann at all. When I did, it was usually when I was on the streets, at night. Such thoughts always hurried me home, where I felt safe from him. Only once did I hear his name spoken within our walls, when mama said of him, quite unbidden: "That boy, he looks like he is made out of nails." An accurate description; Reichmann was a hard man, all corded muscle and scar tissue.

A feared street-brawler, Reichmann held our little neighbourhood in the palms of his cold, brutal hands. Surely his life of crime started in some schoolyard, where he must have terrorized the other children as soon as the teachers turned their backs. I knew him as an angry young man who drunkenly stalked our streets at night, muttering to himself, most often brandishing a straight razor, swinging at shadows. It was then, at night, when he was least dangerous, for though he was quick to anger his drunken limbs were slow and pendulous. Easy to avoid. In the light of day, Reichmann spent his time stealing from the local shops, or breaking into people's houses. Those who angered him when he was sober were less likely to escape unharmed. Many were there whose scars proved that crossing Erich Reichmann was a dangerous thing. It was said that he'd even killed, once or twice. This was done out of anger, and never for money; the bodies were found with wallets still stuffed to overflowing with *Reutenmarks*.

I was twelve years old when the Weimar introduced the *Reutenmark* to replace the *Papiermark*. One *Reutenmark* equaled one trillion *Papiermarks* – it sounds like an astronomical sum! Both were totally useless. That winter we burned money in our little stove. It was cheaper than wood. I tell you this, so you will understand why my brother and I were so eager to take a job from Max Kolb, the baker's son. Kolb could offer us something better than *Reutenmarks*: he offered us bread, one loaf each! All we needed to do, according to Kolb, was go out into the woods, a mile out of town, to a spot which I knew. There we would dig.

How big of a hole?

"Deep enough to stand in," Max Kolb said. "Wide enough to lie down in." I understood.

The hole was to be dug before sunrise. Josef was only nine then, but he knew the value of food. He did not complain when I woke him so early. We found the shovel – there was only one to share between us – and crept out of the house, careful not to wake mama and papa. Only, when we stepped outside, we discovered a sky full of ominous clouds. We grabbed my father's umbrella, the one with the brass handle shaped like a duck's head, the one he cared for so much.

It was still dark when we reached the stated spot. The clouds continued to loom threateningly, but not a drop had fallen. Immediately we set to digging; I went first, and when I tired, Josef took over, but never for long.

"Albrecht," Josef finally asked, "what sort of bread will it be?"

"Don't be stupid," I replied. I said this often to Josef. Kolb promised it would not be that disgusting fake stuff some were baking – half bread, half glue and sawdust. "He is a baker's son," I explained. "It will be baker's bread." This seemed good enough for Josef.

"Why didn't the baker's son dig this hole himself?" Josef asked, without much of a pause since his last question.

"He has something better to do," I said. "Enough questions."

Josef nodded, and was silent for a moment. He looked up at the sky, probably wondering if the rain would come. Then he began to sing. It was an old song that mother used to sing to me. She sang it now to Josef, since I was too old for such songs. His shrill, child's voice seemed too cutting for the work at hand.

"Quiet!" I hissed. I handed him the shovel, hoping that he'd hush if kept busy. For the next while, we worked with only the sounds of the rustling leaves and the chirps of a few curious birds to break the stillness around us.

Kolb entered the woods shortly after the sun made its appearance. With him was a man I had never seen before, a silent man with a ragged beard and a serious expression. Between them they led a mule. The mule was pulling a cart; in the cart, tied down with cord, was a heap of bloody sheets. They'd made no effort to hide it.

Kolb and his friend did not complain that the hole was not as big as specified. Instead, they busied themselves with unloading the cart, cutting away the cord with a familiar razor. The two men grunted as they heaved the mass of bloody sheets onto their shoulders. Of course it was a body – I had known immediately, or perhaps even before they'd arrived. Why else the hole? Then the two men walked over to the mouth of our shallow grave and threw their burden in, just like that.

"Bury him," Kolb said, slouching back towards the cart. "Your bread will be waiting for you at home." His silent friend lit a cigarette, clutching it awkwardly in his hand as he looked Josef and me in the eye. His knuckles were badly bruised.

But I did not pay attention to Kolb or his friend for long. You see, when they had tossed the body into our little hole, the face had come uncovered, and now it was staring up at me.

"Albrecht," Josef whispered to me, once the two men had gone. I had not even noticed their exit. "That's Erich Reichmann!" Of course I knew it was.

He was looking at all the blood. "They stabbed him a million times!"

"Don't be stupid! Maybe six or seven!"

"Albrecht," Josef asked, after what seemed like a long stretch of silence, "why aren't we digging?"

Why not? In fact, I was horrified of Reichmann, even then. I wanted nothing more than to run. But what then? No bread, that's for sure. And my brother, little Josef, he would think me a coward.

I started to rake the soil onto Reichmann's body, hoping to get it over and done with, but Josef, stupid boy, had lain papa's umbrella – the one with the brass handle shaped like a duck's head, the one he cared for so much – at the mouth of the grave. One careless swing of my shovel, and in it went.

"Albrecht!" Josef gasped in horror, watching as the umbrella fell.

I stopped dead.

The umbrella had landed next to Erich Reichmann's uncovered face. The duck's bill was touching his sunken cheek, as though kissing him.

"Leave it!" Josef pleaded, eyes frantic.

"Don't be stupid!" I shot back without even looking his way. I took a deep breath. I considered the umbrella, the body.

With my courage gathered, I slid down into the grave.

"It's not so bad!" I said, showing Josef that I was not afraid. One foot was braced against the loose, earthen wall of the grave, the other planted between the body's legs. I feared that my foot would slip on the sheets, and I would fall. The thought terrified me.

"Albrecht! Get out of there!"

I inched toward the umbrella, testing each step on the bloody sheets, fearing that I'd stumble on them or on the loose soil. I tried to keep my eyes locked on papa's umbrella, but they kept rebelling, shifting instead to the face that had terrorized my neighbourhood for so long. Slowly, I reached for the umbrella, my heart in my throat. I almost had it!

And Erich Reichmann coughed.

Already I was scrambling out of the hole, my frenzied movements causing little avalanches of soil. Josef grabbed my arm, pulled me up.

Then Reichmann coughed again. Blood came out of his mouth, and his eyes opened slightly. He saw us – he saw us! Josef clasped at my arms, and I at his. Reichmann's lips moved, but no words came out, only a rasping, desolate sound.

Josef's watery blue eyes were filled with fright. What to do?

"Dig!" I yelled. With shovel, with hands, we forced the soil back into the hole, covering up Erich Reichmann – starting with his face, so he would stare at us no more. We worked in a fury, gasping and straining but never once stopping, finally patting the soil flat with our palms when it was done.

And then we ran.

Papa never asked us what happened to his umbrella. It wasn't until years later that I realized that he must have thought we had traded it to Max Kolb for those two loaves of bread he found on the doorstep that morning. A prudent man, he must have accepted it as a fair trade.

Back then, though, I never thought of my father's reaction. I did not care. All I thought of, for days, for months, were Reichmann's pleading eyes – and some nights, when I slept, I dreamt of Erich Reichmann arriving on our doorstep, his clothing soiled and bloody, clutching my father's umbrella in his cold, brutal hands.



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The Census

Raymond Fraser

I was home but nobody came
nobody at the door
with pad and pencil to take my name
and ask those questions I'd heard they asked
and were you working and what you made
and what you paid
for your apartment
and if you had a toilet
was there hot water in your tap
and what was your nationality

I was going to say occupation poet income nothing
but nobody came
with pad and pencil to take my name
(Chatham, 1961)

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Watching Westerns

Michael Baker

In "Red River," near Abilene,
 Monty tells the Chicago moneyman,
 "The cattle ain't exactly housebroken,"
 and everyone hoots and hollers
 except me, a second banana, yelling
 at other manics that despair has many names
 but no primetime show, begging Monty
 to suck out all of the arrow's poison, ranting
 slap me, slug me and tell me about Roy Rogers
 and Mad Cow Disease. These are tough times
 but nothing, not even God, makes John Wayne flinch.
 He is angry and he is drunk. Monty shanghai'd
 his cattle. He looks like he wants to kill me.
 That snapped twig I just heard
 is probably the newspaper boy.

Some scenes are not for naïve viewers.
 I sit near the wall, mattress propped
 against the window, worrying that the four men
 in black hats are just joshing,
 that Gary Cooper will be OK,
 that Grace's farewell train
 would go that more goddamn fast.

There's no real bliss in the West.
 Sons slay fathers; Indians always
 aim too high; only the landscape has logic.
 A lovesick cowpoke yodels, Trigger
 sends smoke signals to the Apaches,
 and I quit gambling, refusing
 to raise a perfect stranger
 my new set of false teeth. The cattle,
 all but one thousand, get to Kansas City
 and are sold. Drinks and hugs
 for everyone! No one, however,
 can hear the Princess's train
 and on Hoboken's west side
 near my ten by ten territory
 teenage girls in halters
 in droves walk by, waving,
 ready to serve and obey
 this month's lawman, who unfairly
 avoids fame from his onrushing death.

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Halloween Blind Date

Katherine Hüsler

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Rain pats the windows of the Greyhound. The shadow of the pen
hovers on the gleaming rubber floor. I am warm. Outside
in the dark, red lights, racing

white lines. The shadow of the pen hovers above
me when we walk across the street and you pull
my neck. We hit heads. *Hi buddy,*

this feels good. When I hover above you, the shadow delineates
the contours of your breasts. I take off your shirt and the pen
gets lost in ebony skin, in its glare. My head gets lost

in the long grace of your fingers. I'm a sailor
and you are my captain, the best
looking person on the Titanic. *Sit on my lap,*

you say. Your best friend Oscar Wilde plunges on top
of me and we tumble on the floor. Take my hand,
you dance better than me, you are the lead. You claim

that you only appreciate women bent over
with a bag on their head. I exhale, request paper
instead of plastic. Tonight I follow

a shadow; it hovers between three shining gravestones
in an ill-lit front yard. Three skinny kids dressed in white
and charcoal lie in the grass. I am drunk and balance

on the edge of the sidewalk. The world
is quiet. There's no more moaning. There's no moon. You tug
at my blazer until I close my eyes and topple into darkness.

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You Know Too Much About Flying Saucers

Jéanpaul Ferro

I dreamed a hole through her head, where blue
cathoray spilled out over space and time,

ten seconds of my stare, my eyes pretending to look
at the red Coca-Cola sign flashing up behind her head,
blinking on and off in reds and whites over and over:
Drink Coke — You Dope!

People say we are like Siamese twins, but really
we are more like Tiananmen Square, 1989;
six murdered sextuplets on a Sunday;

You're crazy. We can't be together, she says — this is
every time right before we go and remarry down in old
Mexico;

I love the crazy flashing skies over Acapulco, an
emerald stain the way George Stevens got to do it
on film,

both of us with bare feet, dancing under moonlight,
over broken bottles of glass, arms flailing, waving madly;

every day another séance to stop the Nuclear bombs,
all night long as we pray against the missiles landing
in someone else's backyard —

wet and on fire; a wave, ten thousand surfers going out
from the storm atop another tsunami; I can taste it! I can bury it
in the morning with my foot down to the floorboard;

water, napalm, flying about; I will fly; sea turtles flowing
in my veins to the other side of the earth; my mouth: it's
got a direct line to Jehovah's red ear, splitting my own
chest open to get down to that vodka with a straw;

swinging, dancing, spinning, tango atop the cobblestones,
both of us shivering along the gold spires, our souls being
pushed up hard against doors, in heavenly colors, azure-blue,
emerald, until we are falling one thousand years into the future —

down to the ghost of your words as they whisper out to me:
"divided together; and so we fall apart."

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God's Fingers

Graham Jensen

God's fingers fan out, dangle and
freeze! as icicles, as nice as seconds
between sleep and something still
deeper, steeped until the slow caves of thought
submerge in ice.

Do not be afraid, be a child instead and
reach! for substance, for fear embodied boldly
in a point made sharply still
spreading, the miracle of earth's blood bolted
to a roof.

Such miracles do distend, do beg, portend
plenty! for when they fall, the shatter is a cool
and violent glimpse of love;
in the pieces rest a thousand pierced reflections
melting, minders of the miracle remaining —
of the hanging that was done!

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Mona Lisa 1998

Dave Margoshes

(for Jennifer Sloan)

Beneath soft hair and the smooth curve
of temple, the devious brain ticks, a grid
of steel enmeshing thought. Behind
serene eyes, a rusted coil pulsing
with the sad echo of motion. Behind
the fine curved nose, a mouse trap
waiting to spring. And the smile, ah,
beneath that smile — glittering teeth
pronouncing your name.

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Visibly Vulnerable

Lisa McNally

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She turns from the bar and spots them talking, animated. She attaches herself to the nearest group, feigning quiet interest in their words, and watches. The one she loves puts her hand on the other's arm as she mutters a confidence. A friendly intimacy — they're just friends, have been for years. They're laughing now, swaying closer (too close?) and then away again. They were always so close — She stops herself; *enough of this ridiculous paranoia*. She loves her. Sophie. Sophie who's not so sure, needs more time, couldn't possibly commit right now, with everything so tricky, *you know how it is*. But they'll find each other later, a little drunk. They'll leave together hand in hand, walking back to Sophie's — a destination they've agreed upon without mention. They'll have sex. Tomorrow morning, groggily hung over, they'll play it down, as always. Another drunken slip. But secretly she'd hoped, this time, maybe — Stupid of her to forget; it's agreed: they remain a sort-of, occasional, maybe-maybe-not couple. That's how it works; she knows by now. Or she should — pesky hope still seduces her. Why does she fall for it when she knows it's wrong?

She's staring — has anyone noticed? No, they're all immersed in their own conversations. She feels far away. Brief panic makes a decision — she crosses the room. The one she doesn't love smiles, infuriatingly knowing, but Sophie spots someone that-a-way and, she's sorry, but she really must — She's gone. Flitting away on a social demand. *Nothing personal, just coincidence*, she tells herself painfully. She can hear Sophie later, casual, asking *Did you see? Neil was there. I spotted him and had to say hello — haven't seen him for ages*. An alibi? And a test. The account can't be contradicted. She saw the hurt, but she didn't mean it, she says. *You thought I did that to upset you, on purpose?* A pathetic, too-sensitive interpretation. Convenient. The one she doesn't love shifts awkwardly. *She doesn't know what to say; wishes we wouldn't play out our desire quite so publicly, save our dramas. What am I meant to do? Apologize?*

††

12/03/2009

I sit at my computer and absent-mindedly navigate *The Guardian's* website, filling time. A headline catches my eye; I click on it and read: "one of the first women to live openly as a lesbian in Kwa Thema," South Africa, "brutally beaten," "raped and killed." I shiver at this too-close, too-distant news. A well-read copy of Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* sits by my keyboard and a page of half-thoughts, scrawled at random, on the public and the private. I imagine a woman, her face grim as she hears the news of a death. She didn't know the woman well, but respected her. She shakes her head, disgusted. Bitterly, she thinks, *they killed her. And why? Because they couldn't bear to hear of her desire, our desire. Cowards. But they won't win — we'll speak louder, together, until everyone hears. We owe her that much. She died for speaking this desire; she died so that it might be spoken*. Furious, she thinks, *no more silence*.

I construct this picture from echoes; I see crowds and shouting and the volatile force of a fledgling politics, a liberation movement dizzy with — my eyes drift across my notes — the "potency, magnetism, and promise of gay self-disclosure." Under this phrase, an arrow points to cautionary words, also Sedgwick's: by "glamorizing" the closet we risk "presenting as inevitable or somehow valuable its exactions, its deformations, its disempowerment and sheer pain." Somewhere within its logic a woman in South Africa died. I return to the article, scrolling down the page: "since then a tide of violence against lesbians in South Africa has continued to rise." I picture another woman, sitting with her arms wrapped around her legs, hugging them to her chest. She's afraid. *I don't want to die. They'd kill us all, until the desire died. And then what? Better to guard this desire, protect it from harm*. She thinks of those she loves, whose deaths she couldn't bear. *Be careful — please. Look after the desire we love — keep it close*. I hug myself. *Keep it safe*.

But then they'll say it never existed, I frown.

††

Sophie's ex — or is she? It's complex; I forget the latest developments — is watching, intensely. She's making me nervous, a bit. I've heard the tales. Gossip moves quickly: who's fallen for whom, who's losing who, the dissymmetries and the injustices. So we all see her hope and her disappointment. Covertly, in tentative glimpses which keep us marginal, uninvolved. Officially, we haven't witnessed a thing. But they must sense those semi-glances. Does it make a difference to the desire, I wonder? Do the spectators skew the performance? We don't merely observe from a distance, of course — we know when to step aside, understanding who's to be left alone with whom. Well, everyone else seems to know; I usually wreck this elegant choreography. The too-subtle politics confound me and I mostly wish for genuine ignorance of the complexities. She's nice, the ex, and no one deserves to be messed around like that, but it's nothing to do with me; if she could just direct her gaze elsewhere I'd really be very grateful.

No? Alright then, keep looking. We both know she's there. I laugh a little longer than necessary, as if that might drown out her gaze. I feel as though I'm playing for an audience. Or that I've landed a bit part in a play Sophie directs. After all, it's Sophie, not me, who might want to make her jealous. It worked, if that was the aim — here she comes, finally. I smile and step back, admitting her into the conversation with a *we were just saying*, but no one's listening. Sophie's diving off, extricating herself from an encounter she'd rather avoid. The ex looks morose while I reject apologetic words; 'I'm sure she didn't mean...' would only make it worse. I try to conjure a light remark as the silence stretches.

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John Livingstone Clark — "Man Reading 'Woman Reading in Bath'"

Ole Schenk

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Clark's ninth book closely dialogues with the poetic vision of Anne Szumigalski, unfolding an elegy of personal friendship through shared questions. Most of the collection's poems take their titles from a single line or word from Szumigalski's poem "Woman Reading in Bath." Clark often returns to the same line and selects different words, thus sustaining a richly nuanced poetic dialogue.

"*Man Reading 'Woman Reading in Bath'*" begins with twenty-five pages of "ghazals," a couplet form originating in ancient Persia and growing in popularity among Canadian poets. Clark's ghazals ignite sudden insights. His couplets combine familiar images from the Saskatchewan landscape or rural prairie life with painful emotions, exemplified in "river valleys embracing the plains- / the heart quickly broken," and "tiger lilies like a mind's last thought- / who knows where beauty travels?" Other ghazals combine internal reflection and violent natural images, as in "sparrows tear through a spider's web - / chaos and rain-." Human judgment, "chaos," describes the torn web even as the rain drops fly in the sparrow's wake: nature and beauty fuse in a single moment of tearing action. Clark's "Faltering Ghazals" provides a fitting prelude to the lyric dialogue with Szumigalski. The ghazals leap, follow, and drift between interconnected thoughts, drawing the reader into a dance and weaving together images and insight.

Two thematic images predominate in the book's second section: the self floating alone at sea, and a mythopoetic confrontation of a bathing woman with the god of patriarchal monotheism. Explicating Szumigalski's first line, "I am alone swimming on the dark sea," the first third of the dialogue considers the self as both present and alien. Alone in the overwhelming space of open ocean, Clark's speaker asks a question insistent as the waves, "Who is swimming?" Even as the self considers its utter solitude, however, the body insists on the physical fact of its continued movement: "stroke after stroke - / aorta pumping its own / sanguinary cheer -." Thus the self moves from the despairing search for identity to the "encouragement" that "still the heart pumps out its own," as the body provides rhythm and "direction immaterial." The self, swimming alone, finds vitality in the relations of language, thought, body, and the openness of the sea. This conversation breeds transformation: as the speaker now imagines himself a manta ray, "gliding seas with great wings," the self's indeterminacy comes again into the foreground, "honestly was I ever a man?" Only the facts of the ocean tide remain constant to the self floating alone toward death.

Secondly, the series of lyrics turn to the central encounter of Szumigalski's poem: her speaker describes the collapse of God, who first looms up before her "clutching the slippery wet sides" of the tub on his "stick legs like a fat bird," before flopping down "gasping and stranded," a feast for crabs and birds. Clark's speaker expands upon Szumigalski's lines and images, celebrating the fall of the "One and Only God," who thought he could "carry himself erect" in "a world of water / in a universe shaped for floating." Simultaneous with the fallen patriarch, the first poems that represent Szumigalski's own voice appear, as the lonely male floater hears her voice declare "I am swimming." The final poems thus express a redemptive solidarity between swimmers even in a sea of unanswered questions. Clark's speaker proclaims that "a woman's body is a rich coral reef," and listens to the wisdom of the great female swimmer, the "crone," far ahead of him. The most beautiful poem in the series is the last, where the woman poet-prophet directly addresses herself together with the male swimmer:

You will never be given
a second chance-
and now we go! she cries
over the swells
legless weightless
clouds in a saffron sky

Spiritual life and physical existence blend into one. Patriarchal monotheism fades before the richness of duality birthed through the differences of woman and man, sea and sky, body and language, distance and intimacy. Clark's is a gentle poetic vision, fleshing out the verbs of floating and drifting, meandering with the tugs of sea currents and expanding slow healing reveries. At times, the gentleness approaches a quiet acceptance of oblivion, or the latitude of free floating endorphins (or "en/dolphins"). Other times, the poems achieve excruciating honesty and the pain of spiritual depth. Either way, Clark reaches out to his intended reader, never basking in his own profundity or distancing his reader with an overuse of allusion. Clark's poetic dance drifts with beauty and insight.

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Breaking the Cycle of Innocence in Michael Kenyon's *The Beautiful Children*

Jonathan Sherman

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Michael Kenyon's *The Beautiful Children* captures madness in both literary form and content, creating a visceral experience that both tantalizes and disturbs the reader. With short, stream-of-consciousness prose decorated in poetic flourishes, Kenyon bombards the reader with images and unsettling language that destabilizes the typical beauty of romantic description. This is not a love story, but it reads like one in all its insanity and confusion.

The plot of the novel centres on Sapporo, a man who wakes a hospitalized amnesiac. Unable to remember his former life, wife, or family, Sapporo quickly deteriorates, wandering through a magic-realist landscape of stray children, snow capped mountains, and seemingly ubiquitous eggs. With the repetition of plot from both Sapporo and his first son Starling's perspectives, the reader is subjected to the madness of a circular, continual tragedy of deplorable parenting, violence, and delinquent street children.

To facilitate the destabilization of common human behaviour, Kenyon turns to the animal world. Sapporo is described in animalistic terms as he traipses across the landscape: a "hunter" (58) eating eggs and growing "paws" (55). Children are constantly compared to birds and eggs are symbols of innocence. It appears that once the "birds" are released into the world (once they are hatched) they become corruptible, just as the innocence of children is at risk once they are born. One consequence of Kenyon's comparison of children to animals, however, is that it promotes the primitivism of these children and works against the reader's sympathies toward young characters. The children's innocence is damaged by an animalistic juxtaposition in contrast to Thistle-down's description of *The Beautiful Children* as an "elegy upon innocence."

Kenyon's description of the street gang resembles the sporadic motion of a flock of birds as they weave and dip between the horizon (or perhaps a more juvenile gang of "droogs"). The "gang of birds" (69) is not innocent in action: the children kill, rape, deal and use drugs, are prostitutes and thieves. While these actions are necessary for the children to survive without parental support, more attention is placed by Kenyon on the ferocious nature of these children than creating sympathy in the reader's mind for their abandonment. In effect, these are not beautiful children at all, rather a depiction of children abused by the absence of parental guidance.

It is dangerous, of course, to view *The Beautiful Children* (or any fictional literature for that matter) as a parental guidebook; however, in portraying the complex relationship between children and adults, it is difficult to ignore Kenyon's advocacy for the presence of parents in the lives of children. When Sapporo is present with his son's "arms holding the bat got stronger every time we played and he seldom missed the ball" (29) the value of parental involvement is clear. In the parent's absence Starling is left to run rampant in the streets, drawn into prostitution and thievery to survive. The physicality of the characters is enforced through the direct discussion of how the body changes in relation to intimate contact of loved ones. Just as the text threads a course through the abstract and the physical affecting the reader's body in stomach turning child abuse details, such as child pornography (84), the characters themselves experience the world's intensity through the body as they "vomit and shit at the same time" (60) or "flapped and soared over the city, dealing and holding and shooting up" (83). This is a physical book, one that attempts to bridge the mind and body of the reader to that of the characters with substantial success.

Although the novel threatens toward a clichéd cyclical resolution, Kenyon resists this temptation and breaks the pattern. It is in this breaking of the cyclical convention that Kenyon finds his greatest innovation in the text, refusing to allow the reader a settled conclusion. If the reader is in search of closure in Kenyon's novel, it may be a futile affair. *The Beautiful Children* is not a book that breeds contentment or resolution once the final words are read. It is a struggle through imagery and disturbing content, a journey that may end in missed opportunity - but it is a valuable journey nonetheless.

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CONTRIBUTORS



Introduction

This document provides a comprehensive overview of the project's objectives, scope, and methodology. It is intended for all stakeholders involved in the project, including team members, sponsors, and external partners.

The project aims to develop a robust and scalable solution that addresses the current challenges faced by the organization. The primary goal is to enhance operational efficiency and reduce costs while maintaining high quality and customer satisfaction.

The project is organized into several key phases, each with specific deliverables and milestones. The phases are: Planning, Design, Development, Testing, and Deployment. Each phase is supported by a detailed work plan and resource allocation.

The project team consists of highly skilled professionals with extensive experience in project management and the relevant domain. We are committed to transparency, communication, and collaboration throughout the project lifecycle.

Key risks have been identified and mitigated through proactive risk management strategies. Regular communication and reporting will ensure that any potential issues are addressed promptly and effectively.

The project is expected to be completed within the specified timeline and budget. We are confident in our ability to deliver a successful outcome that meets or exceeds the project's goals and expectations.

For more information or to discuss the project further, please contact the project manager at [email address]. We welcome your feedback and input.

Thank you for your support and interest in this project. We look forward to a successful collaboration.

Best regards,
[Name]
[Title]

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1. **Introduction**
The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive overview of the project's objectives, scope, and deliverables. It serves as a guide for all stakeholders involved in the project, ensuring that everyone is aligned and working towards the same goals.

2. **Project Objectives**
The primary objectives of this project are to develop a robust software solution that meets the needs of our users, while also ensuring that the development process is efficient and cost-effective. Key goals include:

- Deliver a high-quality, scalable software product.
- Ensure timely completion of all project milestones.
- Maintain a budget that is within 5% of the initial estimate.
- Provide excellent customer support and user training.

3. **Project Scope**
The project scope is defined by the following components:

- Software Development:** Design, development, testing, and deployment of the core software application.
- Hardware Integration:** Integration of the software with existing hardware systems.
- Documentation:** Creation of user manuals, technical specifications, and project reports.
- Support and Training:** Provision of user training and ongoing technical support.

4. **Deliverables**
The project will produce the following deliverables:

- Final software application (source code and binaries).
- Technical documentation and user manuals.
- Project completion report and final budget analysis.
- Trained users and support staff.

5. **Conclusion**
This project is a critical initiative for our organization, and we are committed to its successful completion. We will maintain open communication with all stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle to ensure transparency and accountability.

