

**PARAPHILIA:
TAGADA**



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INTERESTING TIMES:

SUMMER: DREAMS AND DISILLUSION

By Andrew Maben

For the first, and I hope the last, time in my life I slept standing up. The train from Paris to Marseilles was so packed with Parisians making their annual summer exodus that there was no room to move. All the seats had been reserved and the rest of us were crammed into the corridors, so tightly that I couldn't even bend my knees, and I thanked the stars that I didn't need to piss, because it would have been totally impossible to get to the toilet, and anyway someone was probably using it as a bedroom. So, my little cardboard suitcase gripped between my calves, I finally fell into a semblance of sleep at around three in the morning.

But even this discomfort could not dampen my soaring spirits. After I saw Sally off on the bus back to Seaford, I convinced myself that at last our love was to be consummated in an idyllic Mediterranean setting. On Monday I had visited the office to collect my check, which I immediately cashed to buy my ticket to Nice...

In Marseilles many passengers left the train and I was able to prop my case against the wall of the corridor and sit at last. I gazed out at the passing coast, dazzling whites and my first glimpses of the famous blues of the sea. Toulon, Hyères, Cogolin, Fréjus, Cannes, Antibes, and at last: Nice! Tired as I was I didn't feel like trying to hitchhike, or even find a bus, and decided to splurge on a taxi. Ah, the mounting excitement, anticipation, expectation as we drove along the cliffs of the coast road! Finally we passed the sign for St. Jean Cap Ferrat, and moments later turned off the main road and began the descent to the harbour. At the bottom of the street the driver told me he could go no further and gave me directions to the villa. Full of joy I walked the path to the edge of the harbour and found the house easily enough. It could hardly have been in a better location, right at the water's edge. The white walls were topped with red terracotta tiles, an imposing front door of some dark wood. My whole body seemed electrified as I reached out to ring the doorbell...

It was some moments before the door opened and a girl I did not know poked her head out.

"Yes? Who are you?"

"I'm Andrew. Sally invited me..?"

"Wait a moment..."

The door was closed, and I stood awkwardly on the step, waiting... The wait, which surely was only momentary, seemed eternal. Then the door opened a crack, and the same girl stuck her head out again.

"I'm sorry. Sally asked me to tell you that she's in bed with the boy she met on the beach this afternoon, and would you please go away."

I had no chance to respond, even had I been able to muster a response, before the door swung shut with a finality that mocked my dreams of romance even as it seemed to slay them...

God alone knows how long I stood there as my world broke once more into a million little shards scattered on the ground around my feet, though I suppose it was mere seconds. I picked up the suitcase and began the weary trudge back up the village street to the main road, feeling that I may as well just take the night train back to Paris, and then home. I could comfort myself that at least there'd be a seat in that direction...

But when I arrived, tired and sweating, at the top of the hill, there was a café with a patio overlooking the sea, and I remembered that I was hungry. May as well have a glass of wine and something to eat. Taking a seat I ordered a glass of red and a *salade niçoise*. As the first sip of wine suffused my tired body and downcast spirit, I began to take stock of my surroundings. The sun, lowering in the west, cast a rosy glow across the western sky, at the foot of the cliffs

the sea glittered in blues that hitherto I'd imagined only existed in the wild imaginations of painters. And then the waitress brought my food to the table. Used to stingy English salads of a few withered greens, with a tomato slice or two and perhaps some cucumber and spring onions if you were lucky, I was completely unprepared for the feast that was set before me: a giant bowl of lettuce, liberally laced with, yes, tomatoes, cucumbers and green onions, but also olives, green and black, slices of hard-boiled egg and big chunks of tuna, along with a basket piled high with crisp, warm French bread, and liberal servings of butter. I set to, as they say, with a will, gladly accepting a second glass of wine before the salad was half gone. As I lingered over coffee and a slice of *tarte aux pommes*, my mood began to lift. Fuck it, here I was, beside the Mediterranean amid glorious surroundings with at least a little money in my pocket. Nothing awaited me in England except the necessity to live with my disappointment, so why not stay a while and seize some enjoyment? The nights promised to be a lot warmer than England, and if I could sleep on the beach in Cornwall, I could surely do so here. Thus heartened, I paid my bill and walked to what looked like a good spot to stick out my thumb...

No more than five minutes had passed before a guy on a *mobylette* pulled up. I remonstrated, protesting that I could not possibly ride with him. He insisted amiably. The more I protested, the more he insisted. If only to demonstrate the absurdity of his offer I took a precarious seat on the little luggage rack behind his saddle, suitcase awkwardly balanced across my thighs, and off we set. To my astonishment the arrangement worked rather well and he wended his westward way along the winding cliff-top road, until we rounded a cliff and Nice's bay lay spread out below us. As we descended, accelerating, the long downslope into the town, my companion began to sing.

"Sing!" he commanded. "You must sing!" And he expounded the lyric to me until I had more or less memorised the words and raised my voice in hideous untuneful unison with his. And so we entered Nice in an unholy blast of sound, a medley of our unlovely singing joined in discord with the pattering roar of the overtaxed *mobylette's* little motor.

"Here's where they sleep," he told me, pulling over at what appeared a random spot on the Promenade des Anglais. I bade him farewell and walked to the edge of the promenade, overlooking the beach a few feet below, and sure enough, there were dozens below, boys and girls sitting or lying on blankets, towels, sleeping bags. I found steps going down and settled myself in an unoccupied spot at the edge of the encampment and lit a cigarette.

Soon a tall nordic fellow strolled up.

"Do you have a light?"

And, as I handed him my matches, "Mind if I sit down?"

I nodded assent and he sat, holding out his hand, "Erik."

“Andrew.”

As we sat smoking in the gathering twilight, he asked what I was doing, and I told him my sad little saga. He laughed wryly.

“Me too. My girlfriend’s doing a summer course at the University and invited me to come too. But when I got here she had some French guy in bed with her. So here I am...”

Noticing that I had no blanket, Erik offered me his: “It’s ok, I also have my sleeping bag.”

Soon after, exhausted both physically by the journey, and emotionally, thanks to Sally’s cruel volte face, I rolled myself up in Erik’s blanket and fell asleep.

The days that followed are a blur of comfortable lassitude, lazing under the warm sun, smoking an occasional joint, now and again strolling into the old town to get something to eat.

There must have been twenty or thirty dossers on the beach, but there was little or no pilfering – it was quite safe to leave one’s belongings, even for hours at a stretch. Little comes to mind in the way of incident, though a couple of people have remained in my memory ever since. There was, Andrej, a Pole, effervescent, voluble in his severely limited English, and obsessed with the streetwalkers who haunted a nearby park – in fact his command of English seemed limited to “hodjus curls”, which he would offer with his wide innocent smile to anyone who came within range. At last someone explained that what he was trying to say was “gorgeous girls”. How he had managed to escape the Iron Curtain to join the rabble on the beach was a mystery that was never elucidated... And Binh, a cheerful little Vietnamese kid with spindly legs withered by childhood polio. He did not seem to regard this affliction as any kind of handicap, in fact he had in some sense turned it to his advantage, folding his legs into a full lotus, walking on his knees and performing some remarkable acrobatics, both for our entertainment and to earn coins from passing tourists. And it was here on the beach that I was first introduced to Henry Miller, an American girl was reading *Sexus* and swapped it for whatever I had been reading, a bargain that decidedly broke in my favour, at least in terms of sheer number of pages. Through that summer and autumn I waded through all three volumes of *The Rosy Crucifixion*, mesmerised by Miller’s torrential prose, titillated by his voracious sexuality and naïvely blind to his misogyny.

One evening I was sitting apart, near the water’s edge and daydreaming into the sunset sky, when I glimpsed a distant figure making its way towards me through the shallow wavelets at the water’s edge. As the figure came closer, I noticed first that it was a girl, and then that she was a lovely redhead. When she came abreast of me she turned and walked towards me. Sitting down beside me she smiled and asked if I would like to share a joint. We passed the smoke back and forth, as she told me she was a music student at the Sorbonne, spending her summer walking the coastal path the length of the Côte d’Azur and sleeping rough in the clifftop woods. I was sorely tempted to ask if she would let me accompany her, but my suitcase was singularly

inappropriate for such an endeavour and I let it pass. The joint smoked down to the filter, she soused it into the waves and we sat awhile in companionable silence until she climbed to her feet, bade me farewell and strode off along the beach...

"What are we doing here?" Erik asked one morning. "Why don't we go somewhere? We could hitch to Spain."

Sounded like a great idea to me, apart from our meagre funds. We decided to tackle that problem by spending a day pavement drawing, went to buy some coloured chalks and found a bare patch of pavement on which I composed some kind of psychedelic swirls while Erik composed a message explaining our tragic situation. Even as I drew, coins began to shower into the circle Erik had drawn for donations, and by nightfall we had a tidy little bankroll for the trip.

We were up at dawn the next morning, packed up our impedimenta and walked to the road out of town. After a few rides that took us past Cannes, a young couple in a battered red 2CV stopped and picked us up. We had not gone far when the wife turned and asked, "Have you been to St. Tropez?" and when we told he that we had not insisted that "Everyone should visit St. Tropez!"

"But we're on our way to Spain, we don't have time."

"We're going. We can take you into town and if you don't like it you can always turn around and leave."

Well, by now it was already well into the afternoon, so perhaps we could spend the night there and move on the next morning...

They dropped us at the harbour side and we walked along a dock and sat on a low wall to admire the picturesque scene, each relieved to have left behind our bitter memories of Nice. After five minutes or so two young guys walked up.

"Hey, you want to buy some hash?"

"Not this evening, we still haven't found a place to sleep and we don't have much money. But we're going to do some pavement drawing, so maybe tomorrow..."

"OK. You want to smoke now?"

Of course we wanted to smoke now. They introduced themselves. Jean swarthy complexioned, with a big aquiline nose, shoulder length black hair and a brigandish air, and Patrick, "Le Dorze", with a more hesitant presence and a bush of curly black hair. Jean rolled a fat joint with

some nice black hash, which the four of us shared before they left us stoned on our wall with a promise to meet us here tomorrow at six in the evening.

"I'm starting to like it here," I said as they walked off.

"Yes. I am too," agreed Erik. And indeed there was much to like: the blue water of the harbour, with fishing boats and luxury yachts moored at the quays, cafés lining the waterside, a long mole shielding the moorings from the open sea beyond, blue hills on the distant far side of the bay and the quaint village rising up the hillside behind the harbour.

A little red sports car pulled up in the car park, close to where we sat, and two girls, a blonde and a brunette, climbed out and started to walk in our direction. We looked to the end of the quay, supposing that they were headed that way, presumably to meet someone. But there was no one else.

"Someone you know?" asked Erik.

"I don't know anyone here."

"Well, they're definitely coming our way..."

And indeed, here they were.

"Hi!" from the blonde.

Bemusedly we returned her greeting.

"Um. I wonder, do you know where we could get some hash?"

"You should have been here five minutes ago, there were a couple of French guys... But we're meeting them here tomorrow at six, if you want to come back."

That seemed an agreeable plan.

"I'm Devon, and this is Anne," said the blonde.

I laughed. "Devon? That's where I'm from."

"My dad's a geologist. He named me for the Devonian Era."

She was a pretty girl, unabashed by the terrible acne that marred her skin, but somehow failed to subtract from her beauty. Anne, perhaps a little less attractive in spite of her clear complexion was evidently the junior partner in their friendship.

They walked back to the car and drove away, and Erik and I set off to find a place to sleep. Jean and Patrick had told us of a likely spot, and we set off around the harbour and turned along a small path leading over low cliffs behind the village until we reached a tiny cove, overhung by an ancient gnarled fig tree.

“This must be it.”

We climbed down the rocks to the sand and found a space of soft dry sand, encircled by boulders and sheltered both from view and wind.

When we had staked our space, we headed back into the village to see what was going on, and to see about something to eat. The evening harbour side was bright with lights, couples and groups sitting around tables in front of the several cafes, others gathered more ostentatiously on the decks of expensive boats. We turned away from the harbour, looking for something affordable to eat. As we climbed a narrow bright alley thronged with holidaymakers, Erik caught my sleeve.

“Someone’s calling you.”

“No, nobody knows me here.”

“No, listen.”

I followed his backward glance, in time to see and hear Devon as she hurried, Anne at her side, towards us.

“Andrew! I’m so glad we found you.”

“?”

“Oh. My brother’s been drafted. He’s flying back to the States tomorrow for basic training...”

Uh huh. After which he’ll be off to Viet Nam...

“So we’re having a dinner to see him off. We’d like you two to join us.”

“No, no. We couldn’t...” How can we intrude upon so intimate an occasion?

“Yes. You must.” And behind her smile, I thought I glimpsed a small fearful plea. Perhaps it occurred to me that they might welcome us exactly because as strangers we might open up that intimacy, keep strong emotion at bay. Or perhaps that notion only struck me later. But anyway.

“Well, if you...”

“Come, It’s this way.”

They led us into a low ceilinged restaurant, filled with soft warm light, timbered walls and ceiling, to a long table. Devon introduced us to her parents, her brother Jack, and two other parents with a son, evidently Jack’s friend.

We sat, were offered menus and bidden to have what we liked. Our glasses were filled with red wine. I don’t remember how the meal passed. Small talk I suppose. It may have been here that Devon told us her geologist father was in the employ of one of the large internationals and based in Paris. But I do remember eating a very tasty steak.

Afterwards we stood outside on the cobbles, saying our goodbyes.

“So where are you staying?”

“We found a spot on the beach up there,” pointing vaguely.

“Groovy. Well, goodnight, we’ll see you tomorrow evening.”

Next day we were woken to the sound of a couple of *flics* making their way down the beach rousing the hippies and vagabonds. As we stowed our bedding one of the cops told us there was a pump a short way up the hillside where we could bathe.

“Look, there’s fruit,” said Erik as we climbed past the fig tree. Indeed. The fruit was ripe and delicious, the first fresh figs I’d ever tried. The water from the pump was bright and clear and chill. Each pumped for the other as we drank, then washed and shaved.

We meandered through the day. Found a square of pavement by the harbour wall where lots of people passed. My hippy pseudo-psychedelic swirls, (or were they simply smears?), had little, I fear, to recommend them – awkward, irregular curves and abstract squiggles, executed in bright pastels. But we soon discovered that it was the explanatory plea, written in stilted French, that got results. We would write these messages beside a chalk circle which we primed at the start of every session with whatever coins we had, and if possible a note or two. At first we had taken a respectful and submissive tone, but gradually the descriptions of our distress, the demands for succour, became more exaggerated. The more exaggerated the message, the wider the viewers’ smiles, the more frequently their hands would dip into their pockets, the

more coins, and even notes, would fall into the magic circle. And for years, pavement drawing would remain the highest hourly rate I ever earned.

Someone who stopped to chat pointed out a guy leaning against a red Ferrari flirting with a girl. "See him? He makes his money playing guitar in the cafes in the evening..."

At last the sun began to go down and we went back to our arrival perch to meet Jean and Patrick. Fifty francs got a good chunk of black Pakistani hash, generous enough for us to take a nice little cut before passing it on to the girls. Again the four of us shared a fat joint before Jean and Patrick left to return to their campground out at the edge of town.

Right on time the little red Alfa pulled up in the car park. The girls were delighted with their hash, so of course we had to smoke another joint. And then they invited us to have a glass of wine, and we strolled around the harbour to the Café Sénéquier, where the morning's Ferrari driver, now dressed in a rumpled shirt, torn jeans and sandals, sat playing his guitar, its case filled with banknotes. Over the wine, Devon suggested we might like to join them tomorrow for a day at Tahiti Plage. It's not as if we had anything better to do so we planned to meet here the next morning.

After the girls left we bought some bread and cheese, pâté and a bottle of cheap wine and strolled under the moonlight to a quiet spot on the cliffs past our encampment, where we ate, drank and smoked, and talked, before heading for bed.

Needless to say, after being roused by a none too gentle prodding from the boots of the *flics* at six, we arrived early at Sénéquier, so it was with some slight apprehension that we ordered the coffee and croissants we could barely afford. But of course the girls showed up, if a few minutes after the nine o'clock we had agreed on. They joined us and ordered coffees for themselves. When the time came to pay the bill, Erik and I each half-heartedly gestured our willingness to pay, but with a laugh Devon picked up the slip and paid. As we walked to the car we passed the two *flics* who had woken us, leaning against their police van. They seemed a little nonplussed as Erik and I perched in the back behind the girls and Devon accelerated away.

And so we fell into a more or less regular lazy routine. *Les flics* must have been impressed by the Alfa, as henceforward they would wake us with a respectful cough: "Bonjour, messieurs. Six heures, faut s'éveiller. Il fait beau, passez une bonne journée", made a pleasant contrast to the boot in the ribs that our fellow beach dwellers still enjoyed. Fresh figs from the tree and ablutions at the pump, morning coffee at Sénéquier, where the girls would meet us on most days. Pavement drawing, lounging on the beaches, watching boules on the square, getting high with Jean and Patrick, drives in the Alfa. A summer idyll...

One afternoon Erik and I were walking through the lanes at the edge of town and sat down to rest under a tree in front of a little cottage. As we sat smoking, I noticed a sheaf of papers with a

pink cover and bound with a cheap clip. The cover carried the title *Barbarella* and some credits, while inside was written a brief note to "Brigitte" from "Roger". Yes, an early script of the film which was to star Jane Fonda. I read the script in an afternoon as an interlude in my ploughing through Miller's *Sexus*, and for several years I managed to keep it before it finally disappeared - I hope someone found and kept it, it was probably worth a few bob...

All too soon it was time for Erik to head back to Copenhagen to resume his studies, and early one morning the girls drove us out to the edge of town to hitch back to Nice...

We made it back in good time and found the group on the beach still there, some had left and others had taken their places. Andrej was one who had recently left, apparently he had carefully hoarded his money and on his last night had blown all he had left on one of his "hodjus curls", but Binh was still performing his acrobatic contortions.

Erik left the next afternoon, and after seeing him off at the station I went to sit on a bench on the sea front, where I was meditating on my situation when a pretty dark haired girl asked if she could share the seat.

Sophie was English, and had been studying at the University for the summer. I told her about Erik's sad story, and my own, and of our St. Tropez sojourn.

"I have a room at the University. You're welcome to stay tonight, if you'd like."

So we chastely shared her narrow bed. As I prepared to leave for the station, she jotted a phone number on a scrap of paper.

"Get in touch when you're back in London."

I promised I would, and tucked the slip away in my wallet.

The train north was much less crowded than it had been coming south, and I managed to snatch a few hours sleep before arriving early the next morning in Paris. Following Jean's advice, I made my way to Place St. Michel. Dozens of students and hippies sat on the low wall around the fountain, and I found a spot for myself.

I soon made myself a part of this loose congregation. I learned to avoid the sporadic police sweeps, found a good spot for pavement drawing, and joined a little coterie who slept under the Pont St. Michel each night.

Early the next week I took the Metro up to Brochant and walked to the address Jean had given me on Rue Guy Môquet. His mother opened the door, and when I asked for Jean, invited me in

and offered me tea. No, Jean wasn't back yet. She had no news, but no doubt he would return, I should come back whenever I liked...

One afternoon on Rue St. André des Arts I found myself caught. The police had blocked each end of the street and shoved all of us who didn't manage to escape into the back of a police van. They drove us to a police station and put us all in a big holding cage. It was here I met two girls from Sweden, Ulla and Kirsten. Ulla was quite pretty, with brown hair, big blue eyes a healthy complexion and a nice figure. But Kirsten was a beauty, with her white-blonde hair and milky skin, soft pink lips and limpid grey eyes, lithe, lissom figure, her soft voice and otherworldly manner, she seemed a fairy ice-princess.

Eventually the police let us out one by one, and after a cursory inspection of our papers we were released. I met up with Ulla and Kirsten outside the police station and we walked together back to the Quartier. They had the use of a friend's flat while he was out of town, and invited me to join them. I was utterly entranced, as I'm sure you have noticed, by Kirsten, so of course I leapt at the chance. Besides, although there might be some kind of romantic cachet to sleeping under the bridges, the nights were getting chilly and it would be a lot more comfortable under an actual roof...

The girls had a routine that put my efforts at pavement drawing in the shade. They'd simply walk down the Boulevard St. Germain and within moments would be invited to lunch by some man or other. They would politely refuse at first, but with further persuasion reluctantly accept and have a sumptuous meal. Parting from their victim with vague promises of future encounters they would then resume their promenade, until again invited to eat. But now they would coyly reply that they had just eaten, but suggest that perhaps, as they had very little money, the gentleman would be so kind as to offer a few francs towards their dinner... When they had collected enough cash, which seldom took more than an hour or so, they'd meet me at the Café St. Michel, where I'd be nursing a coffee while I waited, and then take me for a prix fixe lunch at one of the many local restaurants...

I also made some cash of my own by pavement drawing, or simply *la manche*. I soon found that a polite "Excusez moi, monsieur, vous n'auriez pas un franc, pour manger?" was far less effective than an aggressive "Donnez moi un franc!", which as often as not would garner not one franc but a five franc piece, or even a note. Kirsten, who did not so much rebuff my shy advances as seem utterly unaware of my besottedness, seemed to live in her own ethereal world, and I felt privileged to be allowed the occasional glimpse within. When not with the girls I simply wandered the streets, spent time in the Jardin du Luxembourg or Tuileries, going once or twice to the cinema, and eating wonderful Tunisian sandwiches with mint tea at one or other of the little shops off Place St. Michel, and roast chestnuts or crêpes from the many street stands.

All too soon the girls told me their friend was coming back and they would be leaving town the next morning. But that night I was in for a delightful surprise...

The three of us went to a nice restaurant for dinner, and I promised Kirsten I'd collect a suitcase she had left in London and send it to her in Sweden. They planned to hitch to Italy before going home, and it seemed unlikely we'd ever meet again...

Back at the flat we arranged our bedding on the floor and settled down to sleep. As I lay sleepless in the dark, suddenly I found someone slipping beneath the covers beside me. "Shhh. Come here."

It was Ulla. Slow and silently we made love, then lay a while in each other's arms before she kissed me softly and slipped back to her own sleeping bag...

Still waiting for Jean to get back to town, and with Ulla and Kirsten on their way to Italy, I was again at a loose end, idle days on the Carrefour de Buci. There was always a group of us foreigners there, ebbing and flowing with the demands, stricter for some than others, of our lives back home. For me by now those demands were practically non-existent. Although past mid-September, the days were still long, the nights still warm, my simple needs catered to by an hour two of *la manche* – though I certainly missed the lunches and dinners with Kirsten and Ulla.

For a while now there had been a girl who shyly hovered at the fringes of the laughing groups of friends, never seeming part of any clique. We had noticed her, the Swedish girls and I, and commented with the casual cruelty of the young on her awkwardness, her shyness. And now here I was on my own, and with the girls gone not really feeling any great need to join any clique. So when she made to sit down next to me on my doorstep, I was happy enough to smile and make some room. And of course she was, as shy people so often are, a sweet person, gentle, kind, hopeful. She wasn't ugly, far from it, just a bit overweight, but sadly aware that she had neither the ethereal beauty of a Kirsten, nor the earthy sex of Ulla. Just sadly aware, not bitter or angry, that she would never be the first to be invited to dance. To my deep shame, I don't remember her name – and she surely deserves that small respect as much or more than so many others who have touched my life. So I will call her Greta.

We fell into the habit of spending time together. Most days I would walk, or take the metro if I could bum a ticket, up to Brochant to see if Jean was back yet. Or over to the Champs Elysées to visit Devon and Ann. Or simply wander the streets, spend idle hours in the Tuileries or the Luxembourg Garden. But sooner or later I'd be back at Buci, and there she'd be. I was vain enough to take pleasure in the way her face would, gently, light up when she saw me walking up St. André des Arts. We would talk, perhaps stroll down to Place St. Michel to sit on the fountain, watch the people, laughing. Friends.

Then one late afternoon I found her talking to a rather shabby looking guy. He seemed much older, but I was twenty and I don't think Greta was much more than eighteen, so what did we know. Heck, twenty five was already middle-aged to us. Thirty? Positively geriatric. Anyhow

she introduced him as, let's say, Ali – certainly an arab name. He greeted me warmly enough, though there was something dark in the back of his eyes that I didn't quite trust. A taxi driver, apparently he'd been telling Greta he'd like to take her on a tour of the sights of Paris. Her eyes were shining at the thought. She had come alone, with who knows what dreams in her head about the adventures she might have in the City of Light. And she had spent her time mostly alone, god knows how lonely, in a corner of the Latin Quarter. She had seen girls like Kirsten, girls like Ulla, bewitching the boys and beguiling the bourgeois. She had watched us laughing, she'd been left out of so many parties, so many little outings to the Ile de la Cité to smoke beside the Seine. Perhaps she had ventured to Notre Dame. I know she hadn't seen the Eiffel Tower, except as a distant silhouette.

"Won't you come?" she asked. It really didn't sound like such a great idea to me. But her voice was so hopeful, her eyes so eager, that I hadn't the heart to dash her hopes by voicing my misgivings. God forgive me – I don't imagine that she ever will. And so we agreed that Ali would meet us here the next day after his shift was over, at about 5 o'clock.

Sure enough, there he was, only a few minutes late. Greta, looked happy about it. I was not, but I did try to at least appear to be as enthusiastic as she, as we climbed in and settled into the cramped back seat.

Off we went. Ali did treat us to quite a tour: Montparnasse; back down Bd. St-Michel; Notre Dame; the Louvre and Tuileries; Concorde; Champs Elysees; Etoile; Eiffel Tower; Sacré Coeur. We didn't actually stop anywhere, but Greta was rapt at the sights, sweet to see. Then Les Halles and to a little brasserie, where Ali treated us to a cognac. Obviously this had been the highlight of poor Greta's visit to Paris. I had quite enjoyed it, too, and we all three seemed to be relaxed and pleased and at least somewhat at ease.

And so, back to Buci. As we drew close, Ali told us he'd prepared dinner "in our honour" and we must come to his apartment to eat. It struck me as a singularly bad idea. But Greta, in her innocence, declared that it would be ungracious to refuse his hospitality, and "Besides, aren't you hungry?" As a matter of fact, hungry had become pretty much a permanent condition with me recently, so of course I had to admit that in fact I was ravenous. End of discussion. We parked in a side street close by, and Ali led us to a rather decrepit building, walls still covered with tattered posters from May. A dingy hallway. But really, who was I to judge anyone's living conditions? At least he had a place of his own, I'd been sleeping under the bridges as often as not. A dark and dirty stairway and several flights of stairs, "No elevator," Ali apologised.

At last he fumbled for his key and unlocked a door. He ushered us into a tiny, sparsely furnished *piaule*. There was a small table with rough wooden chairs, a counter-top with an electric ring and tiny sink; a little gas water heater and a small fridge. The one window covered by a ragged, soiled bed cover, and against the wall was a narrow bed. Once again my instincts

rebelled at the sight of a form, apparently sleeping, stretched out on the bed. I signalled to Greta that we should leave. Right now. Once again she insisted that we stay.

Ali spoke softly as he told us the sleeping figure was his roommate, we should ignore him.

“Please. Sit. Let us eat.”

We sat. Ali produced three bowls of dandelion leaves, oil, vinegar, a *baguette* and a far less than half-full bottle of a cheap *rouge*. Greta and I waited expectantly for the dish that he had ostensibly prepared. But as he sat, telling us “Let’s eat. I hope you will enjoy my simple dinner.” we realised that this was going to be it. He poured us each a small measure of wine, pouring the rest of the bottle into his own glass. I tried to tell myself that I should appreciate this generosity from a poor man. But by now I was deeply uneasy. There was something distinctly furtive about the way he looked sideways at Greta, made only the most desultory of attempts at conversation. His eyes kept flicking momentarily towards his sleeping roommate. And he completely avoided my eyes.

I wanted to get out of there as soon as I possibly could. As soon as we had all finished our salad, and it was completely clear that that had been dinner in its entirety, I stood.

“Many thanks, Ali. It was a wonderful tour. And thank you for sharing your table with us. But we must be on our way now. We both have places to go.”

As Greta also got to her feet, he barked something unintelligible.

A look of pure malice. “No, no. You do not leave yet.”

I saw he was holding the empty wine bottle, by the neck. His stance hostile, threatening. And now the roommate was on his feet.

I was frozen. Frozen in astonishment, dismay. No in honesty frozen in fear, rank cowardice. In that moment I might have acted...

Then the roommate was holding the point of a carving knife to my throat, backing me up to the window.

Greta was pale, trembling, eyes wide, as Ali said “Now I will have her.”

And to the roommate: “Make sure he watches...”

He pushed her to the bed. Savagely he fought to unfasten her jeans as she began to sob.

"Tais toi!"

Back-handed he struck her face.

"Tais toi, salope!"

She began to whimper as he pulled off her jeans, her panties. Her pale innocent flesh exposed. And for an instant she looked at me. Pitiful. Imploring. Terrified. Despairing.

And all I did, all, I tried to tell myself, that I could do was stand there, the knife-point pricking my throat when I tried to turn away, close my eyes.

I shook with fear, with rage, disgust and utter shame. Greta's whimpers had turned to a terrible, quiet keening as the thug opened his fly and climbed on to her. Brutally he pushed apart her thighs. She gave a strangled scream as he entered her, which earned another blow to her face. A few convulsive movements and it was done.

Ali got back to his feet. As he refastened his fly he glanced at the now softly sobbing girl. A look of contempt, of triumph, of vindictive hatred. For a brief instant his eyes met mine, then he turned his gaze back to Greta. He seemed somehow to collect himself, threw a towel to her crotch.

"You want a turn?" he asked the roommate.

To give a small measure of surely undeserved credit, he did look shame-faced as he replied, "No."

"Get dressed, bitch, and get out!"

Still convulsed with sobs, she wiped her thighs. She looked at me again.

"Andrew, please help me."

I took her hand, helped her to her feet. She leaned on me as she dressed, tried to arrange her clothes, wiped tears from her face, her eyes. The sobs stopped. She took a breath. Looked at me. Utter devastation was in her eyes, despair, a terrible solitude, hell.

"Get the fuck out of here. Do not speak to the police, or I will kill you."

Both her hands on my shoulder, we staggered down the stairs into the warm air of the street. The sky was soft and pink. And the world will never again be a safe place for her to be.

We hurried away, as best we could. She was still weeping, but more calmly now.

"We must go to the police. Right now."

"No, no. I can't."

"Can't?"

"My visa has expired. I must return to Sweden. An investigation will take weeks. I don't have enough money. I will be the one they put in prison. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. Please. Please, no!"

"Then..?"

"Please, just go with me to the metro. Then I'll be alright."

I didn't think she would ever be alright again. Nor I. But we walked together to the Place St. Michel. Rode the escalator down into the station. At the turnstile I asked if she would really be ok.

"Yes. Thank you. It is alright now." She turned, walked through the turnstile, and away.

And I? I do not know where or how I spent that night. The shame of my cowardice is with me still. That night shame, with sorrow and despair, was the whole of my world.

But the next day I was back at the Carrefour de Buci. And so was Greta. Our eyes met. And as I turned away, in hers a look of pity. Oh. Will I ever forget? The pain, the despair still there. But that pity condemns me more surely, cuts deeper into my soul, than her hatred or anger. I wish it could have been anger. I would have welcomed her hatred more, far more than the love I may ever have yearned for from any other. But I must live with her pity. And my shame. Forever.



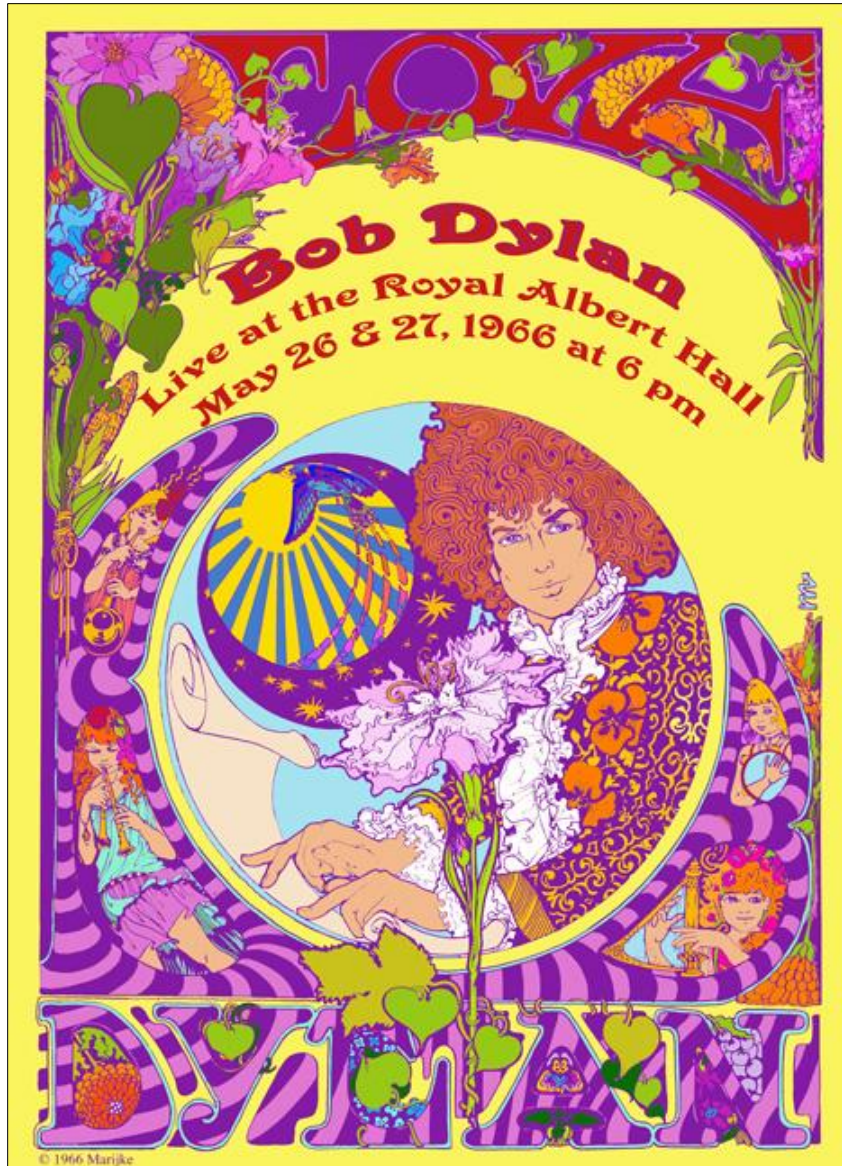
INTERVIEW WITH MARIJKE KOGER-DUNHAM

AN INTERNATIONAL LIFE ALWAYS LIVED ON ART STREET

By Heather Harris

We *Paraphilia* readers, by nature oh so creative, have written / painted/ composed /directed / performed scads of art stuff for most of our lives. We enjoy and fathom the intelligent content herein. While subsisting on various strata of personal, public or financial satisfaction of our own we wish these fellow artists well because, quite possibly, vicarious thrills can foment something real for us. While trying to keep career trajectories upward, we nonetheless do our art in our own ways, in our own personal styles for commerce and/or pleasure. What if, while doing said art your way, you actually changed the medium, the era and the world? I know someone who did...





You can take your Peters Max or Blake, your San Francisco nuvo-Art Nouveau Surrealists, this person was THE most influential psychedelic artist of the 1960s: **Marijke Koger-Dunham**. Sez who? Well, at the time, said The Beatles, for whom she developed their entire psychedelic visual oeuvre. Rolling Stones? Doors? Hendrix? Psychedelic Stooges? Sorry, personal preferences must pale. Trend-setter-wise, The Beatles WERE the 1960s, much as Louis XIV observed "L'etat? C'est moi." ("I am the state.") How did this Dutch teenaged art school dropout ever network the decade's mightiest clients like The Beatles?

"They came to us,"

Marijke calmly informed me. Did they ever. Their road manager Mal Evans hauled John and Paul over to her St. Stephens Gardens, London studio shared with then husband Simon Posthuma. It dazzled all awash with their blazing rainbow designs, paintings and hand-painted furniture, whereupon McCartney/Lennon emerged with blown minds, not from LSD but from the totality of innovative styling made by fellow youthquakers. Your Beatles were used to dealing with free-spirits from their own art school years and from their own "Savage Young Beatles'" daze. While performing in Hamburg, Germany's red light district gaining 10,000 outliers' hours of experience finessing their musical prowess even before they wrote a single original tune, the band was clamped onto instantaneously by the local existential young bohos such as Astrid Kirchherr photographing them or Klaus Voorman eventually designing the *Revolver* LP cover. And now they were goners amid this multi-hued dreamscape come to life.



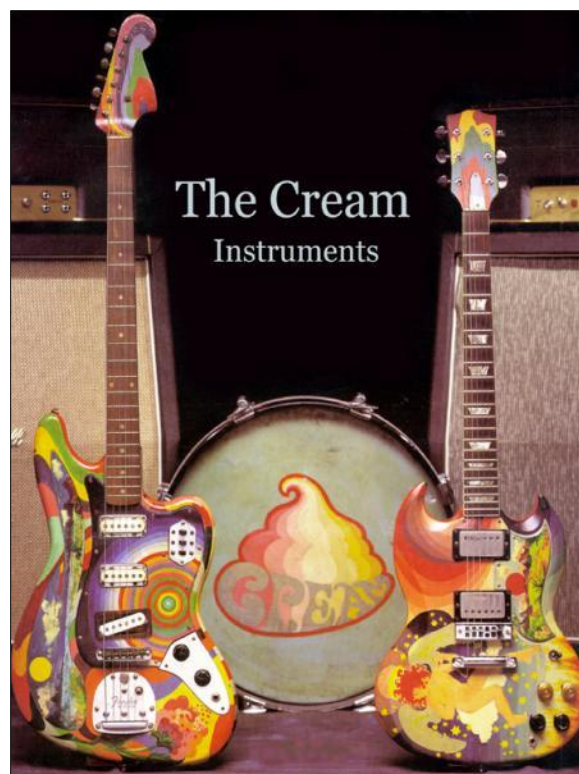
After seeing their art, graphics and fashion designs in person and in the both mainstream and alternative press, the Beatles commissioned Marijke and her three confreres Simon, Josje Leeger and Barry Finch, an art collective known as The Fool, as part of retooling the former's overdone 'Fab Four' clean-cut look. Their radically different *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*-era clothing fashions and the entire Apple Corps. building owned by the Beatles with its amazing multi-story, hand-painted murals showcasing the custom clothing boutique were but some of the iconic results.

The Fool provided exterior design, interior decor, clothes design, custom painted furniture (their St. Stephens Garden armoire even found a leading role in the 1968 George Harrison-scored film *Wonderwall* set-designed by The Fool,) for The Beatles and their fellow elite, such as custom-painting Eric Clapton's Gibson SG guitar

used during his tenure in Cream. Correcting a pop culture urban legend from the source: the custom paint job on John Lennon's Rolls Royce was suggested by The Fool when they were chez Beatles painting their custom interior designs for him, but actually daubed by Romani Gypsies.

The Fool were essentially court painters entrusted by Pop Culture's top royalty of the Swinging London-dominated mid + late 1960s, and Marijke remained its main designer and creative braintrust. If anyone here ever has liked the polychrome graphics of the '60s, you have Marijke to thank. Psychedelia was just swirly drawing of oddities and patterns before her. I know: I was there watching from afar.

I even espied page 3 of the first ever issue of Rolling Stone, Nov. 9, 1967 which cost 35 cents, reviewed the shocking new Peter Watkins film





Privilege with Jean Shrimpton and Paul Jones about deification of popstars as social engineering via public obsession, classifying the film then as science fiction although it's since come true with *American Idol*, and featured a full page photo op promoting Marijke and The Fool's clothing line to be featured at Apple Boutique, modeled by none other than the then Beatle wives (plus sis-in-law Jenny Boyd.) This occasionally appeared as the issue's cover displayed on newstands, thanks to its oldschool bi-fold newsprint format, pre-saddle-stitched-binding magazine days.

Furthermore, unlike other faces from that era or style, Marijke has been painting pictures and producing prints of spankin' new fine art in the interim ever since those heady days on beyond the paisley corridors of time and into the techno-present. She remains true to her

initial vision that first erupted from her talent: she paints representational figures that inspire her, bestiaries, commissioned portraits, or pop culture characters amidst polychrome fantasias of paradisiacal landscapes, outer space or schematic tones.

There have been vivid colorists throughout art history like the Fauves, Nabis, Pre-Raphaelites, Blue Rider or Pop Art movements, even those transposing patterns and realistic figures like Gustav Klimt and his Viennese Secessionists, all indisputably topflight fine art with crossover into graphic art. These sank like lead zeppelins after the two world wars of the twentieth century shattered notions of visual idylls. Marijke grew up in Amsterdam, Holland, always drawing and painting her surroundings since, well, late infancy. But the post-war Art world shunned both realism and fantasy simultaneously.

The binding Abstract Expressionism, Color Field and Art Brut had to loosen. In America, Art Director/Designers Milton Glaser and John Van Hamersveld revived vivid color and/or pattern, as did the acolytes of San Francisco, L.A. and Detroit psychedelica. In Europe fashion illustrator Rene Gruau paved the way to ally Cristobel Balenciaga and Op Art's Bridget Riley and Roy Lichtenstein to Mary Quant and the Mod then hippie 1960s.

However, no one consistently incorporated the full rainbow spectrum so deftly throughout all artistic output much less throughout their entire careers. She was the first to do this in Fine Art and commercial art. Peter Max and other artists in the '60s who made millions copied her and have admitted same. She painted exquisitely busy-but-refined patterns to boot, where others just ended up with psychedelic spaghetti. The entire 1960s would have looked different but for her work. She changed our world for the better with pleasing, new-fangled visuals that set the bar higher in graphic art and just kept going. Fellow horses and dogs enthusiast plus fellow artist though I be, I'm astonished and proud to call her my friend. Thus you can read her exact discourse as follows on her art, inspirations and personal history:



Heather Harris: *My questions come from someone who also lived through your first era of art success, the 1960s. I know what it was really like: the flamboyance seemed normal. And though I'm nowhere near your league, I base the questions I want to ask on growing up as an artist myself.*

Marijke Koger-Dunham: I don't do many interviews, which are usually by e-mail: they ask me questions and I reply. I've made an exception for you because you're my friend.

Thank you, I'm flattered.

The other exception was Norman Hathaway (co-author of *Electrical Banana*, *Masters of Psychedelic Art* who staged a live Q&A with her at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Calif. in conjunction with an exhibit of art and artifacts in the book.) That was tough on me, it's like "Oh god!" I think I handled it okay.



*You handled it great, considering the time restraints. Stage fright? You were a musician and performer as well as fine artist/designer in *The Fool*...*

Well, we never really performed. That was all done in the studio. The era was fun, 'I can do anything I want,' you know?

How old were you when you realized you were really good at art?

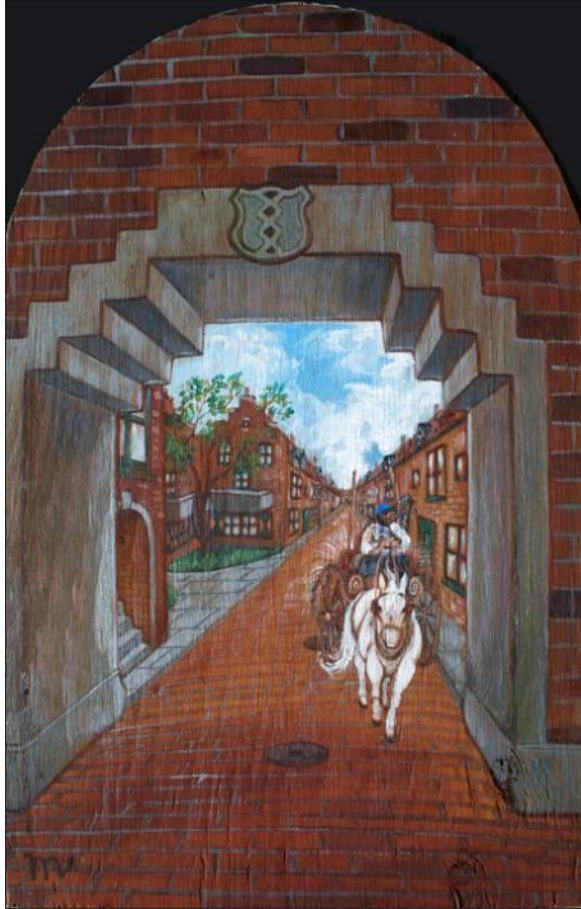
As long as I can remember I was always drawing and painting. I didn't realize I was pretty good until much later, like elementary school because then you could compare.

The first mural I ever made, I must have been six or seven. In Holland they celebrate the Feast of St. Nicholas. His helpers and he come from Spain on a boat, then St. Nicholas rides a white horse on the rooftops and drops toys down the chimneys, like Santa Claus. This was the subject of my first mural, made in colored chalk all the way around school room blackboards.

When I tried to draw entire whole murals for my classes at school, they always said, "Don't. You're better than everyone and we want everybody else to draw." Were artists considered outsiders in your culture, like Bohemians or beatniks?

No, I didn't experience that in school, but I was always an outsider. I didn't have a normal life, I didn't have parents. Nothing was normal, I was just there. I had a difficult home situation.

You grew up in Amsterdam, were you living in the city the whole time?



I actually was on the edge of the city, so when I went outside my house to go around the corner, there were meadows. It was a great environment! There was a horse and wagon that used to come down the street to pick up the garbage for the farmers in the neighborhood, so I liked horses and drew horses plus all kinds of animals.

Did you have pets? The family beagle Ava Gardner (so named because she had bedroom eyes and would sleep with anybody) was my own only childhood friend. And later I always had dogs which I felt sort of grounded me, given the rock&roll lifestyle. I saw a dachshund on the cover of your The Fool record album, posing right alongside you.

I grew up with an Irish Setter. That dog was my whole reason for living. She went everywhere with me. Later I had dachshunds. They traveled with me and I took them everywhere.

You're so polished in representational figure drawing. Did you do that too when you were young?

I had a fascination for a couple of years with making paper dolls, so I made thousands of them. And shoe boxes full of paper doll clothes: endless! It was always growing, as I was totally alone.

I went to a good ballet school for about ten years. I just loved it and seriously thought about becoming a professional ballerina. I didn't realize it but I was way too tall. But ballerinas were kind of like a natural thing for me to draw. I was able to do that: so... ballerinas all over the place, lots of ballerinas.



Early art influences?

I was influenced by all kinds of art: old art, ancient art, I liked it all. Illustrations in childrens' books always fascinated me, like Tin Tin.

Mr. Twister (my better half) recently visited the Tin Tin Museum in Brussels!

Cool! I had all the books. And Disney animation was a big influence as well.



When I saw Disney's "Fantasia" as a little kid, as soon as I got home I drew every character that I could remember, flying horses, unicorns, fauns, skeletons, dinosaurs. It was just revelatory. My version of hearing Chuck Berry, as musicians like to cite. What were your artistic breakthroughs in your childhood drawing?

I went to live with a foster family who were wonderful people, they were like my grandparents. Their sons were already in their twenties. The middle one used to paint copies of famous paintings with oil paints and palettes so I wanted to do that too. I must have been eight years old when I first tried oil paints, and boy was it messy.

Linseed oil!

Oh lord!

Did you go to a specific art school or just take art classes in a regular curriculum?

I went to Akademie de Schans, an art academy. I took classes in figure drawing and illustration, also pattern-making and textile studies. I had art history classes, and liked Art Nouveau: the curving lines appealed to me, it looked so nice and fluid. Well, I like all art.

I didn't stay in art school long though. They said I didn't have to. I went to work at age fifteen and have lived on my own from that time on. Thank god I had the talent. The Dutch people were very progressive especially in the advertising world. They wanted to move ahead of the crowd and loved new and different things, like my illustration.



It's a small country: I probably would have had a harder time here in the U.S., with all the Madison Avenue agencies in New York. I got job offers at top advertising agencies, Prad in Amsterdam and Greca in Athens, Greece, so I ending up working all over Europe as well. Here's an example of poster illustration for a department store's summer fashion line that I did for Prad Agency.

You then moved from the Netherlands to Ibiza?

No, I worked in Greece for about nine months. I had already gotten together with my first husband Simon Posthuma. The first painting we created together was "Spectrum Man." Then we went to Madrid because we had a gallery show scheduled there at Galeria Juana Mordo for the paintings we sold. After the show we went to Ibiza just for a fun vacation but ended up staying there for quite a while.

We did art there, and I made my custom clothing Flashing Fashion for boutiques there. Then we met the Danish singing duo Nina and Frederik who were living there. (Ed. from HH: Baron Frederik Van Pallandt was murdered by pirates on his yacht in 1994, and still with us Baroness Nina Van Pallandt gained fame as an actress in many Robert Altman films plus infamy exposing the hoax of Clifford Irving's fake Howard Hughes biography, with her testimony in court refuting his alibis.) They sponsored us with a grant from their foundation for us to go Swinging London, just where we wanted to go in 1966.

Where did your beautiful multi-colored art explorations come from?

Well, drugs had a lot to do with it because when I took hallucinogenic drugs, you start to see all that stuff...

...things throb, and they get little auras around them...all those patterns moving on the ceiling...

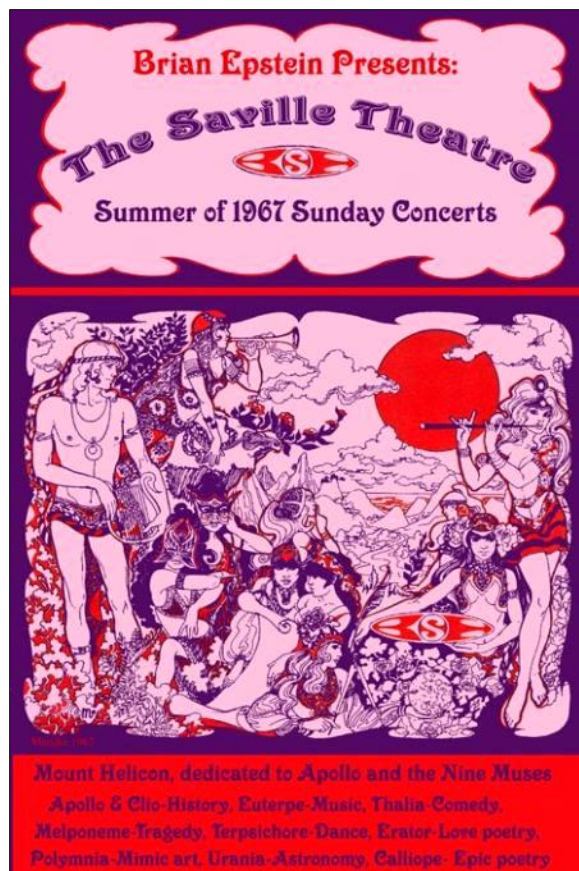
...so then of you course you have to put it down on paper. That was a big influence. I'm not, you know, a proponent that kids should take drugs at all. But-- maybe it takes drugs to open your mind and see things a different way.

You moved to London, you did record covers for charted British acts like The Move whom I loved, The Incredible String Band and The Hollies, you did costume design for Cream, Procol Harum and others all



commissioned by some of the biggest managers of the day like Tony Secunda and Robert Stigwood. You're all over the British press, then the world's most famous people, The Beatles find you. Did your relationship with other clients change after you worked for The Beatles?

The whole Beatles thing: I was so busy there was no time for



any other clients. As we consolidated our friendship with The Beatles and their wives, we painted murals in their homes, designed clothes for them personally then were commissioned to design the outfits for their “All You Need Is Love” live telecast (Ed.-HH: the first global video broadcast ever of a live music performance June 25,



1967, originally in black and white on the U.K. tv show Our World. The colorized versions available on Youtube were matched to color press still photography of the event.) I’m still credited with playing tambourine on that song.

Then the Beatles acquired a boring building on Baker Street and approached us to paint the whole building inside and out, plus mass-produce and clothing and art print line. They



approved my designs, sketches in gouache. The exterior designs, a synthesis of the mythologies of different cultures/religions influenced by psychedelics, were done in enamel house paint via the grid technique (Ed.-HH: which transfer smaller designs to large surfaces dividing the drawing into a grid, then one uses this for proportional reference when drawing on the larger wall’s grid) by The Fool and a few art students over one weekend. It took Simon and I took 4 weeks to do the interior murals freehand, and all the designing, pattern-making, silk-screening and sewing of the samples for the commercially manufactured lines.

And because I was working for The Beatles, all of a sudden everybody’s knocking on your door. It’s just ridiculous.

What do you think are some of the public misconceptions about The Fool?

At certain times, especially later, they would claim credit for my work that I just accepted, “okay, we’re a team,” the whole “love this and love that, and we’re all together.” What can I say? It’s like, in a way Simon did his thing, Josje did her thing, Barry did his thing and I did my thing.

In retrospect I wish I’d just been able to be on my own. But I needed those people for emotional support more than anything else, so they did help. Josje was very productive, a fantastic clothing designer especially, probably better than me. But it always came down to me. I had to come up with to come up with the concrete idea and design, and how to put it into effect, which is a whole thing in itself. I don’t think I was ever recognized as an individual.

Then later I read some books and things written about The Fool, and they always make us out to be opportunists and it wasn’t like that at all.

As you’ve said before, they came to you.





Well, yeah! Apple Boutique was badly managed which had nothing to do with The Fool: we were just the creative people and had our hands full painting and designing.

At the time, it seemed as if everyone was blaming everyone else with endless finger-pointing. Blame the Apple janitorial custodian! You horrible janitorial custodian, you broke up The Beatles!

It was so mismanaged, you know?

Who was the mouthpiece, who talked to the public?

Simon, mainly. We just didn't respond to that at all at the time. It was only later that you realize all this stuff was going on. I was too shy to speak up for myself. At times I could have, but I always kept my mouth shut.

The execution of the Sgt. Pepper package seemed to get away from you. At the time I would read about the London art scene, Alan Aldridge, Robert Fraser, David Bailey, Peter Blake and wonder where were you guys?

Brian Epstein died which was very sad. It became I have my camp, you have your camp. There was a lot of jealousy because, I don't know, there was this Cambridge graduate, this big art dealer Robert Fraser with this big art gallery. And he just couldn't handle it: here come these young upstarts, you know? (Ed.-HH: Fraser is better known to American music fans as the party arrested for drugs along with Keith Richards, Anita Pallenberg and Marianne Faithfull in the first major rock star felony bust of the 1960s.)

I have a fashion design question. Before the Apple Boutique mass production deal, where did you find your uniquely colorful fabrics for your custom clothes?

Everywhere. Liberty's of London, Portobello Road, high end shops. There was great stuff everywhere. We made them into clothes influenced by Pierre Cardin and Mary Quant (Ed. HH- in form only. Theirs was multi-hued, rainbow-bright!)

And now your clothing is found in only in museums, other than the occasional eBay item like \$2,000 for a skirt.



There's some in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. You have no idea how many clothes we designed that I have given away, no idea. To think, I could make money with this now that everybody wants it. Back then I couldn't give them away.

American designer (of far out clothes since the '60s) Betsey Johnson said the exact same thing when interviewed in George Plimpton/Jean Stein's Edie Sedgwick biography, "I used to give them away to the neighborhood kids for Halloween costumes!"

Later in America, Simon and I designed the Summer Sunday with its hand-silkscreened fabrics and Astraflash clothing lines for Michael Butler and Bill Berman respectively, which sold very well at Macy's and Saks Fifth Ave. These were the first time in the world that a full spectrum fade was printed on fabric capturing the rainbow on cloth. We silkscreened other

fabric with designs of stars and clouds. I have not been involved in the fashion business for a long time now, but when I was younger it was an important and fun part of my life.

In 1968 you came to the U.S.A.?

I always wanted to go to America. I was always fascinated with America. As a little girl I saw tv shows like *Lassie*, even Kellogg's Corn Flakes advertisements impressed me. Then, the music thing. I can play percussion very well, I have rhythm. I wrote some good songs and some good lyrics, but I was really pushed into that whole thing by people. That's a flaw in my character, not standing up for myself, not saying, 'no, this is not what I want to do. I want to just paint, you know?'

Mercury Records President Irwin Green, who was a wonderful older man, very sweet, had



visited our London house and heard us playing acoustic music. He offered us a recording contract and brought us to New York to record *The Fool* album, produced by Graham Nash. Right away I knew I wanted to stay, although I didn't like New York City.

European friends have admitted to me when they first moved the U.S. via New York, they questioned, "Why did I want to come here?" because NYC was not a good fit. They generally kept moving further west.

I didn't like New York, it's too frantic for me, too high speed. After that album was done we had to do a radio station promotional tour, and that's how we ended up in Los Angeles. I still



like the albums. We did three: one with The Fool and Simon and I did two more ourselves.

In L.A. we met Michael Butler, producer of the play *Hair* who commissioned us to paint murals on his Aquarius

Theatre (Ed. HH: venerable large Hollywood venue, once home to Earl Carroll's Vanities in the 1940s. My father sang there) where *Hair* was to debut. At the time, it was the largest mural in



the world: we completed it in two months. I produced sketches of larger than life mythological images, and transferred these to the walls via the pounded charcoal method (Ed.-HH: it's akin to reverse church-rubbings: charcoal is rubbed on the back of a completed drawing, then one redraws the original against the surface intended to have the design.)

The Fool split up around 1970. Simon and I remained in L.A. and went on to paint murals on other theatres where *Hair* played in Chicago, San Francisco and San Francisco. Butler financed another clothing textile line, Astraflash which we designed.

Did you go to Home Silk Shop?

Yeah, I did.

I ask because as soon as you all did your Aquarius Theatre murals, a huge mural was painted next to Home Silk Shop with somewhat similar metaphysical subject matter. It was called "Beverly Hills Siddartha."

I don't know who did it, but I really liked it!

They were called the L. A. Fine Arts Squad, who later influenced Kent Twitchell, our local world-renowned muralist. I initially think they were influenced by you. They also had the same problem you did, that everything they did eventually was covered over. How did you feel when you first heard that the Aquarius was covered over?

Well, I didn't let it get to me. The same thing had happened with Apple. What are you going to do? At least I have photographs of it so that's good.



My best oil painting in art school, a six by six foot photorealist depiction of the Oscar Meyer Weinermobile was stolen. At least I had photos too, so I know how you feel. Now that you lived where you could do so, when did you first get a horse?

Graham Nash had been the producer of The Fool LP since we knew him from England when The Hollies were our clients, and he was Rita Coolidge's boyfriend in '71 or 72. Rita's sister Priscilla was married to Booker T. Jones, and Priscilla and I really got along: we're still very good friends. They had a horse ranch and we came to live there for a while. I got to ride some of their horses there.

My first horse? It's actually a very sad story. We weren't really well informed about the horse thing and made the mistake of putting my new black and white paint mare in with other horses in a big arena right off the bat. That was a big mistake, horses have herd hierarchy. The next day we found she had been kicked so badly that both her front legs were broken and we had to put

her to sleep. A little later I leased an Arabian gelding from a friend of mine and had him for about 12 years.

Simon and I went our separate ways in 1974, all of the rest of The Fool ended up back in Amsterdam. Barry and Josje remained a couple and had six children together, but Josje died of an aneurism in 1989, very sad. She was my friend since art school. I stayed here in L.A. and later rented horse property in Mission Hills with my second husband, a space program engineer at JPL. It was a nice acre property, with the landlady and her lawyer son living there as well, but I never got to meet him so I had

this impression of him as a "suit" because his mother was really straight. We then moved to Riverside horse property where, after a couple of years, this husband left me. I still had my horses, but nowhere to go.

I had made friends with a neighbor of the original Mission Hills landlords, and she let me board my horses with her. Every day I used to pass my old place that I used to rent and thought, "God, if only I could live there again" even though it now looked rundown. I still had their phone number and called, asking for the landlady. This time her son Don answered saying, "She can't speak to you because she has Alzheimer's. But it's funny that you called because I'm in the process of evicting the tenants there for neglecting it." A few weeks later we met and I got to live there again with my horses, and...





...with a new romance! (Don Dunham not only is an attorney, but also a musician in the blues-rock band Black Cat, and remains as genial and knowledgeable a fellow as has ever graced both the music and law professions. But is tough enough to win. Don and Marijke remain happily married to this day. Her art of course adorns Black Cat hard copy music releases)

I think a lot of your contemporaries do not make art that is recognizable as a continuity of their style. They get into nostalgia or something they do over and over again or fall over a cliff stylistically by overdoing something radically different.

Despite others' misguided retro-assessments, I consider your art to be as subversive as punk rock, which is a compliment from me, insofar as that true-to-your-own style continuity while moving forward is so hard to achieve. How do you think you've changed your art approaches, maybe via different medium, different themes?

At first my technique was flatter, more 2-dimensional. Now it's becoming a little more 3-dimensional. I always want to insert some sort of spiritual thing in the painting, some sort of mystical element, something that will make

people think, or symbolism, reflecting the awakening process of mind expansion. Or anything of that sort, because that's what I personally am attracted to. That's what I like to express. That's the continuity, although I may change my approach a little bit.

A person may look at my painting and not understand that it's Elijah in his chariot but that's what it is. They can still appreciate it just as a painting.





*Just like Grand Opera: you don't understand the language but the feeling still gets through. How did you manage to get your three most recent projects going, your chapter in the art compendium book **Electrical Banana: Masters of Psychedelic Art**, your exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and your career retrospective show at Sonos Gallery, Hollywood?*



The book people contacted me from New York. They eventually sent out a photographer with a large format camera and took shots of whatever paintings they wanted in the book. I didn't hear anything for two years and all of the sudden the book was done. They had a connection with a book professional here who had an association with Imprint Projects, who set up the installation at MOCA. Then another Imprint Projects person wanted to do the SONOS exhibit, so we did.

That was such a great multi-media event, what with the audio feed of your own music, the feed of the playlist that was heard at Apple Boutique, and of course the live performance by your friend, the mighty Booker T. Jones, (the instrumental hit "Green Onions" by Booker T. and the M.G.s, plus producer/co-songwriter for Stax artists like Otis Redding and Albert King,) all for your career retrospective from the 1960s through right here, right now.



For this recent exhibition, most of the stuff they wanted was all that stuff from the past, the '60s. Well, okay, it's a retrospective, but I have paintings I've done in the '70s, in the '80s, in the '90s, in the new century. I had to insist on that. I said that if these three (newer) paintings are not going in there, then I'm not doing it.

That makes sense. I love "Poseidon" as you know since I bought a print (the correlation of wild horses and the seas as scarcely controllable forces of nature makes sense to me too. Poseidon was god of both.)

Well, they fought me over it. Then I went there a week before it actually opened, and "Poseidon" is missing! They go, "There's not really room." I said, that painting has to go in there. I got really mad at them, and that's unusual for me to get mad over things like that. In the past, I was always just, 'Okay, whatever.'



Do they have any other ideas to solidify your legacy?

Marijke

SONOS STUDIO Gallery hosts the first career retrospective of iconic 1960's artist Marijke Koger-Dunham



You are invited to attend the exhibit opening with a live performance by Booker T. Jones on Friday, June 29 at 7 PM, 145 North La Brea Ave., L.A., CA 90036
 R.S.V.P.: donmar4@ca.rr.com
 Exhibition will run Wednesday-Sunday from 12-6 PM June 20 through July 22, 2012

I haven't spoken to them this week...

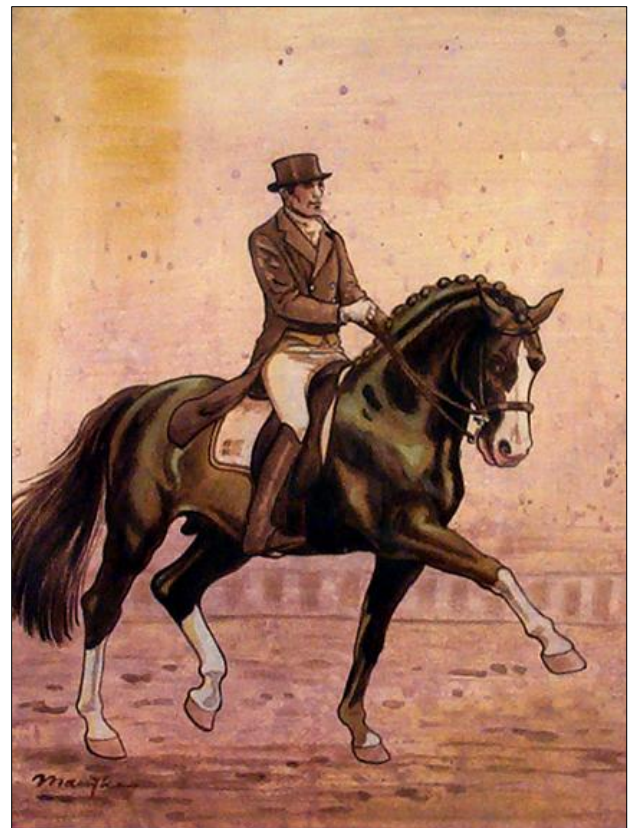
*Electrical Banana stated that Michael Butler always had wanted to do a **Hair** comic book with you. Director Milos Forman succeeded with a decades after the fact film of **Hair**, and graphic novels are huge now. Is this something you could pursue?*

Yeah, at the time I could have done it but I'm not into it now any more. No, it couldn't possibly be good again, the whole thing of running after a publisher to try to get something, the whole thing is too much of a headache. An agent would make it a lot easier but... Besides, I'm already *such* a diverse businesswoman in the world!

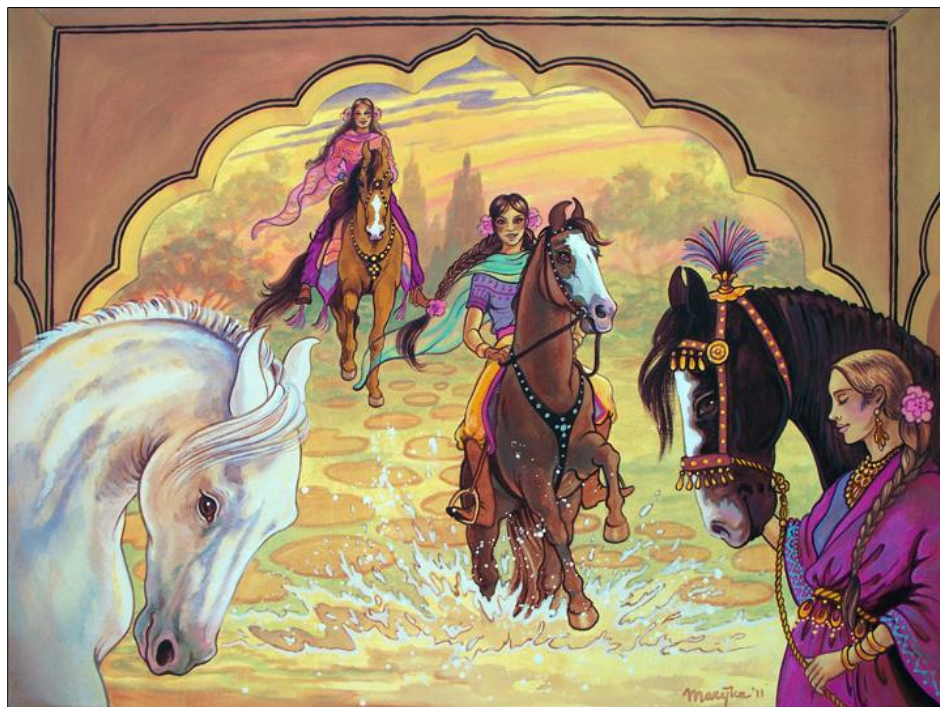


Before we'd met, Marijke once defeated yours truly in a dressage show at a local boarding ranch which then featured dressage training alongside fine, rough riding trails in the mountains of the Angeles Forest of Southern California. I got to know them when I moved my own horse there. Don and Marijke now keep horses in their own lovely ranchette in one of the remaining 2% of Los Angeles County that's still zoned for horses, despite vast expanses of 100s of 1,000s of undeveloped acres. But one year, these 100s of 1,000s of acres caught on fire, right near where they used to board and where my horse still did.

In the bone dry summer of 2009, less than a year after the devastating Sayre/Sylmar fire in the same general area, a sadistic arsonist set the Station Fire which burned close to 200,000 acres of the Angeles Forest (the entire North East quadrant of gigantic Los Angeles County.) Two firefighters were killed trying to rescue a fire detail crew of inmates who made it though. Giant plumes of smoke



resembling mushroom clouds of atomic bombs were seen from Santa Barbara to San Diego (100s of miles) and, according to meteorologists, were formed by similar powers with the ashes rising through the atmosphere. Countless hillside homes were evacuated and lost, and since this was one of 2% of L.A. that allows livestock, countless numbers of horses had to be evacuated immediately.



The trainers' horses where we boarded were evacuated by same, and first. Trainerless and not wanting to wait for the dregs of rescue in a true emergency while driving over to their place before any answer, I called Don and Marijke who had a truck and horse trailer, which I didn't.

Of course they'd help. Picture our drive to the boarding stable, talking our way through police-blockaded bivouacs, hot 70 miles per hour Santa Ana winds howling through the canyon drives, clouds of opaque, choking smoke blinding all drivers, horrific flames of flashpoints and flaming embers burning on each side of the seared road, orange burning hills on fire right over the next ridge. Believe me, it all resembled a huge budget war movie. But real, and we were smack inside it.

They scooped up my terrified horse (helicopters, sirens, fire engines, police cars, convoys of horse-trailers, water-dropping aircraft, endless smoke etc. are not well tolerated by the hot-blooded equine types like mine) and took him to their home ranch, where he stayed in luxury as if at a horsey spa until the roads were opened and evacuations rescinded, weeks later. In fact he didn't want to leave: re-loading him into their trailer for the trek home proved a difficult operation (re-training immediately ensued after he returned home. In horses as in life, always better safe than sorry.)

I was profuse in expressing my genuine and profound gratitude to Don and Marijke for literally saving my horse's life. "Oh, it's nothing," was Marijke's rejoinder, "I do that for friends." But it most certainly was not "nothing." This was the largest fire the area has ever known, the most

destructive, and the most dangerous. Yes, the fire proved that horrific, and that scary. Not all horses made it out alive either. And most people do not necessarily risk their lives for others, no matter how good of friends.

In retrospect, I figured there were composite factors in their derring-do. For one, Don is the consummate good guy, despite his non-music profession. For another, Marijke's vestigial 1960s mindset had kicked in, that generosity of spirit endemic to growing up in those times which still pervades her being and her fine art. There is no cognitive dissonance in the arts: hers remains both highly personal and inclusively universal, depicting better worlds by picturing this one with more vision and skill. It takes an extraordinary person to succeed in art, or life for that matter. She is, and has. No matter where she's lived, it's always been on an Art Street.



Marijke Koger-Dunham: I was born with it. I can't imagine not drawing or painting. It's part of my personality. Also part of my personality, I never took impositions like "you can't do this and you can't do that." I always did what I wanted no matter what. Because I had nothing to lose.

With that she thanked me for a painless interview.



This *Paraphilia* article features a more copious compendium of Marijke Koger-Dunham's work than any prior publication, but you can see even more at her sites:

<http://www.maryke.com>

<http://facebook.com/marijke.koger.dunham>

PHOTO CAPTIONS

Front Cover "A is for Apple" poster, 1968. Designed to promote Apple. Slogan coined by John Lennon. All artworks by Marijke Koger-Dunham unless otherwise identified

Marijke 1968. Photograph: Ronald Traeger

Bob Dylan poster 1966 designed by Marijke, sold all over London upon her arrival there

APPLE building exterior murals and The Fool, 1968. Photograph: Karl Ferris

Cream custom-painted instruments, 1967, commissioned by manager Robert Stigwood for the band's first American tour

Mataji and Babaji, guardians of the earth. Oil on canvas, 1975

Children of the Sun & Moon, latest album cover for OG Musique, 2011

Electrical Banana book signing event at Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2012. Photograph: Heather Harris

Childhood home (1946-1959) in Amsterdam, gable window on the right was Marijke's room. Medium for painting unknown

Lotus, lithograph sold at Open Gallery, Santa Monica 1976

Hellraisers, 1994. Animated skeletons likely referential to Disney's Fantasia, Ray Harryhausen fantasy films

Fashion illustration for Prad, 1960

"Flashing Fashion" line on Ibiza, 1964; models- left, Anke, right, Marijke. Photograph: Karl Ferris

Saville Theatre program cover, 1967 commissioned by Brian Epstein

Four album covers designed by The Fool. At Marijke's SONOS Gallery career retrospective show, 2012, mutual friend Evita Corby's stark black and white beauty presents a graphic contrast to colorful LP covers for (clockwise from upper left) Traffic, The Fool, The Move and The Incredible String Band. Photograph: Heather Harris

From Marijke's career retrospective show at Sonos Gallery, The Fool upper left and their art. Photograph: Heather Harris

APPLE interior murals and fashions; models- Anke Ferris, Renata, Charlotte Martin, 1968. Photograph: Karl Ferris

George Harrison's fireplace mural, 1968. Photograph: Robert Whitaker

"Flashing Fashion" line in Amsterdam 1963; models- left, Marijke, right, Josje. Photograph: Cor Jaring

"Summer Sunday" line, 1970, model- Raquel Welch. Photograph: Maurice Hoogenboom

"Summer Sunday" line, 1970, models- Maureen, Colleen, Ray, Tay

Aquarius Theatre mural, 1969 by The Fool. Commissioned by Michael Butler and Tommy Smothers

Aquarius Theatre mural, 1969 by The Fool, detail "Urania," one of the nine muses depicted

Puppets for Karaoke Fest, Hollywood Palladium stage props, 1998

Jai-Ma, the Divine Mother, 1993. Marijke says, "Painting this painting pulled me out of a very dark space."

Don Dunham, Marijke Koger-Dunham at her SONOS Gallery career retrospective art show, 2012. Photograph: Heather Harris

This Must Stop, artwork adapted to back cover of first CD release by Black Cat, Don Dunham's rock band

Watching rare footage of The Fool at MOCA, Electrical Banana book signing event, 2012. Photograph: Heather Harris

Don, Marijke, Evita in background at MOCA, Electrical Banana book signing event, 2012. Photograph: Heather Harris

Mr. Twister (better half of Heather Harris,) Marijke in front of poster of The Beatles wearing Marijke's clothing designs for *Magical Mystery Tour*, SONOS Gallery career retrospective art show, 2012. Photograph: Heather Harris

Doors of Perception, acrylic on canvas, 2000. Says the artist, "The evolution of life spirals ever upward."

Ariadne, the Minoan culture, acrylic on canvas, 1996. Says the artist, "I feel like I lived there in another lifetime."

SONOS Gallery career retrospective art show invitation, 2012

Micronesia, oil on canvas, 1985

Briar, Danish champion Dressage horse, 2005. Acrylic on board

Mariwari Horses of India, 2011. Acrylic on canvas. (Mariwari are a rare, Thoroughbred-based horse with unique ears curled like a lyre, reminiscent to Indians as divine cattle horns. They are a very spirited breed.)

Marijke at her SONOS Gallery career retrospective art show, 2012. Photograph: Heather Harris

Marijke at MOCA event, 2012. Photograph: Heather Harris

Back Cover: Tigerman

© 1968 Marijke



THE CLAW

By Ele-Beth Little

My blood down public toilets, clotting on the metal; it makes me feel estranged from myself. It makes me think I'm part of the swarm of stale impressions made by other women that have left their menstrual scent behind; the smell of adulthood that confused me as a child.

The disinfectant seeps under the door, and yet even the cleanliness seems dirty. My friend was left dying on one of these floors.

As I wash my hands I look in one of those blurry metal panels that are supposed to represent mirrors. It shows me a gaunt distorted version of my body in a room crammed with doors and leaking grimy soap. I become transfixed for a moment on the black bubbling craters of cigarette scolds in the skin of this organic dumpster. I poke them with my finger, the melted bubbles turned cold, their unresponsive hard cunts.

This is such a dirty place. I imagine that the cleaner doesn't mop the floor but licks it. The light is dim and false, and the tinny air seems to be ringing with a too faint echo that makes me feel stoned. Each patch of warmth or ache wakes, heat slurring down one patch of my face. I could put myself right there - the sudden dryness in my mouth, the feeling that the link between the world and me is slightly skewered. I don't like it. I don't like feeling distant from my self.

I know the sunlight will save me, stepping out in to blank concrete. And people. Because they'll dismiss the darkness of the cave I've just escaped, they won't even see it. They forget it's there, like its nonsense, and childhood horror. But it really is there. I don't know how they dare to forget it. And I don't know how I dare either, but I will do. As soon as I step outside I'll walk in to the light and the concrete, the shops, the sense of purpose, the titles of books - as if reading could mean anything to me if the dark chose to interfere - flicking through racks of clothes in charity shops, leaking emptiness to people who want to trade a smile. And all their busy steps happen on the crest, ignorant of the throbs, the bile, the stars beneath.

When my friend was falling out of consciousness, he was falling through the tiled floor of a public toilet like this one. He was lying upon the throb as if it was his mother's heart, fresh after giving birth. Her black oily tummy was creasing inwards and sucking him back in to the blind smothering love of the universe.

All this can be wiped up like sick, from tiles like these.

There were probably police sirens and urgent instructions to usher the gathering crowd out of the way, the drunken public stunned as they amble past. Everyone purposefully blinkered to how the vibrant façade of meaning can all just crumble in to ants hives and jigsaws.

But the needle would remain, like a Dionysian claw left embedded from the night before. Sharp enough to prick their sterile gloves.



THE SOUTH LONDON MOUNTAINS

By Steve Overbury

From the refuge high in the South London Mountains he looked down on the rows of Edwardian semis and the spaceport that nestled between them. Car headlights swept around the hairpins leading up to the abandoned broadcast tower and the Crystal Palace casino complex which shone out like a beacon among the towering Redwood trees.

Well... when he could see at all.

But now his sight and his sense of smell seemed to be returning and he was hit by a searing stinking wave of Neutrino 90 emanating from the hydroponic pastures far down on the Croydon plains.

The asteroid that had destroyed central France had fucked up all the seasons as well as the topography. Birds of paradise nested around the chateau but he could see to the east of London a glacier gleaming quite clearly. That is, he could whenever the monsoons abated and between the monstrous tremors and associated blindness of the waves which ripped through his body.

They had given him the 'permanent' spike when he had been active in the ecstasy wars in the twenties. How was he to know it had been the Department of Health behind the network of dealers? They sure took it badly when he found that pill factory in Dagenham, they'd killed his partner, drugged him and dragged him here, shoved him into this armchair and filled him with Sodium Pentathol.

"Who had he told? What had he seen? How long had he known?" Jab after jab until he could taste the shit. He spilled his innocent guts time after time but they weren't having it; they figured he was from some wanky liberal UN hit team, which would undoubtedly have expressed some concern about one of its founder members routinely drugging up its population.

The best way of silencing such a man they thought, was to administer a 'permanent'. "Scupper his body, and his brain will follow," he heard them say. The dirty deed done - under clinical conditions of course - they had left and he hadn't moved from this armchair for fifteen years or so. Well it seemed like fifteen years. That estimate might have been ten years out in either direction. He was aware that somebody changed him and fed him from time to time but why did they bother he wondered?

He knew he'd been crying...

The 'permanent' had set off a jet stream of wind through his head - warm but irresistible, moaning, often shrieking, an incessantly rushing tinnitus. When they'd taped the soft sponges

to the hinges of his jaws the visions had begun: he remembered fighting with some Bedouin, being severed at the waist and blood transfusions – perhaps some of it had been real.

Rendered immobile by the medication he was left in a sitting position, arms on the rests chin down. Whenever they came to move him he remained in the same position, comically rigid.

Then the spaceport had started running huge magenta personnel air freighters past the back of the shaking house. The booming ships usually carried incoming engineers home on leave, or outbound shoppers visiting the Blue Sky satellite mall tethered three miles above the clouds, just over the Brixton Cliffs.

It pushed him to panic every five or six minutes.

Each passing craft would cause acrid fuel vapour to burst into his face and the stench of it washed through the empty rooms. It ripped at his mouth, nose and throat, at his blind black eyes, and made his terror complete. But somehow, each time he had felt he wanted to give in, to let go and fall into the welcoming, swirl of the abyss, some spark within had flickered and driven him like a mauled insect clawing up the precipice yet again to flop feebly over into the right side of sanity. Every few minutes this had been happening, every night and every day for between fifteen and twenty five years. He knew he had endured the seemingly unendurable but too weary for triumph, he was only dumbly aware it had been right that he'd tried to survive.

They'd be back for him, now they knew he was recovering. But surely they wouldn't want to interrogate him again. He must have told them everything he'd ever known. The memory of the bitter taste of the truth drug lingered on.

He thought about his appearance for the millionth time. His hair would inevitably be white by now he figured but he couldn't be sure, since there were no mirrors. They and all the other reflective surfaces had been removed, the 180-degree floor to ceiling windows had all been treated so as to give no clue as to who he had become. There was only a blurred but incrementally expanding view of a world he hadn't set foot in or touched for half his life.

The sentence they had passed on him – the exquisitely agonising, hyper real nerve-edge on to which they had forced him to teeter for so long, somehow hadn't yet killed him and should therefore make him stronger... he hoped Nietzsche was right.

But then miraculously, with each moment his vision started clearing. The hurricane in his head was calming to an almost manageable rushing gale. In a month or two he might be able to move his mouth. With more time, maybe a couple of years he could consider trying to think his three shiny steel lower limbs into movement.

The woman narrowed her eyes at the stirring man opposite. He was preoccupied by the progress of a spider as it made its way up over her knee and disappeared under the hem of her

skirt. This sort of mild hallucination was run of the mill.

Unexpectedly he was gripped by a huge convulsion, the biggest he'd experienced in maybe ten years. His head dropped down between his shoulders, and, from the small of his back to the top of his head, he shuddered violently like a wet dog, teeth clenched, arms flailing, eyes jammed shut. But when the attack eventually passed, it left behind it a deep sense of finality, and a glimmer of hope that perhaps this seemingly eternal experience might all soon be over.

Then he was able to get his eyes half open. His vision became clearer and he even felt his numb mouth twitch. A day, or was it a week later, the mists cleared enough for him to realise that he was smiling at the woman, leering even.

"Hello Stephen," she smiled. "You've been away ages this time."

It didn't matter right now who this woman was, he had a far more burning question. "How long?" he gasped, uttering his first words in years. She looked at her watch. "About 30 seconds or so this time," she smiled.

They told him that he had been suffering from malaria, that the experimental treatment he had volunteered for was causing him to experience side effects – disorientation, slight memory loss and possibly mild hallucinations. He might be a little delusional perhaps, but nothing lasting.

When he talked of conspiracy, assassination, time shifting and ecological disaster they'd just smile indulgently and tell him it would soon all pass, and at least he would never have malaria again. He insisted, shouting, screaming but they and he grew weary of the questions after a while and acceptance set in.

But fifty times a day he was compelled to walk awkwardly to the window and resting on his tripod of legs, look down at the spaceport's shining tower. He was relieved that at least he was not insane; he was just on a different plain.

He earned money of course, as much money as anyone could spend. The companies that paid him so well always had trouble reverse engineering the fantastical machines he developed for them, but they were extremely grateful for the plans and maps of the future that he routinely handed over. At the same time they were full of pity for this melancholy yet vigorous young man who only ever saw himself white haired and stooping over his robotic limbs and who only feigned recognition of the wife who in reality was young and beautiful but to him was an aged stranger.

He had seen the future; he was living in it still and he was doomed to remain in it. For him there could be no return. That was the price you paid. Time's magnetic draw had robbed him of the youth that he still retained.



TELEMETRY FROM THE END OF THE WORLD

By Laurence Thompson

"It's seven o'clock, Commissioner."

Rightway shuffled uncomfortably in his brown mac, enough so Alison Black picked up on the tension. Rightway didn't smoke but he looked as though he should, pushing his glasses up to the bridge and massaging all those years of irritation and failure stored up there. He had the posture of a water buffalo.

Bradley was the one who'd spoken. Realising that hunch of the shoulders was all the response he was going to get, Bradley tapped his visor back down over his face and withdrew again into the creeping darkness.

Alison and Rightway were alone now, her hands tied behind her back, though not to the chair upon which she'd been instructed to sit. It would have been silent, but the low-frequency symphonics were ubiquitous in their lives. The building around them spoke, hummed; like all buildings in the city, its architectural integrity maintained by a constant chatter of ambient vibrations.

Go far enough down and all matter is just music, the Devil's harpstrings being plucked.

"Afraid, Commissioner?" Alison muttered through slightly swollen lips.

"I don't want to talk to you," he replied, sounding like a bullied kid for all his size.

The pattern here... something was wrong with it. She decided to press a piece, see how many fell out with it.

"I'm amazed I haven't been raped yet."

"Don't flatter yourself," Rightway replied, some confidence returning to his voice.

He took his glasses off and wiped them with a gloved thumb, an affectation. He took a small step towards the window, but an instinctive geometric grid in his head kept him far enough back to not be within the angle of sniper fire. He'd picked the building for its size relative to its neighbours; it'd be stupid to give up the advantage of high ground now.

Just another day in his city, he told himself, almost believing it. Miles below the murmuring superstructures, life flowed through the streets like current through a circuit, walking, crying, singing, mugging, chatting on mobile phones, killing. An informational economy he was at the

hub of, the ebb and flow increasingly under his sphere of influence.

"You're not my type," he said at last.

"Where are we? What building is this?"

She'd been blindfolded on the way there, and her coordination messed up by occasional kicks to the stomach or slaps around the face. She knew they were somewhere north of the city centre, but nothing more than that.

"This? This is the Séraphine. Used to be the broadcast tower for the old town. Now it's where rich fucks come to eat."

"Why? Why are we here?"

"Easiest to defend. Best vantage point from miles out. Attack from the ground and you'd spend forever just on the staircase, by which point even he'd be overwhelmed. The distortion net means this is a no fly zone, so he can't attack from the sky. Not even by that glider, since this is the tallest building for a few miles' radius."

"So what makes you sure he'll come?"

"Me. He despises me, you know. He wants me out of the way. He wants revenge. And you. We reckon you're his favourite... what does he call you? Partners? Assistants?"

"Agents."

"Huh. Well, you're all whores to me..."

He stopped, and pushed a palm over his forehead. From where Alison was sitting, half of him was silhouette, the other a slumped 's' shape.

The night came on as the red sky coagulated, scabbed to black. Rightway said something that might have been, *I wasn't always like this*, but then, hadn't he been? Hadn't there always been a dragon, and a maiden, and a knight, like in dusty old storybooks?

Somewhere out in that darkness, one of Bradley's SWAT team cleared his throat, maybe thinking of home. A gun cocked, a boot increased its pressure on the ground. The Séraphine waited.

-

The wombat is a quadrupedal Australian marsupial. Short legged and muscular, they are adaptable in

habitat tolerance...

James Quay at that moment existed in extra-space, a paraterritory isolated from the datacircuit. Technically speaking, Rightway's team's hunter broadcasts could have found him, but with no contextual reference frame, their reports decayed before they were even formed.

Entropy accumulation 76% above normal space, his equipment told him. A side effect of lingering too long in an infrathin, as Duchamp might have it, or in the apex of a Foucault pendulum. Quay continued to suit up, strapping on his Wombat Suit that would protect him from the imminent journey through the infinite.

A level below, or rather, a level sideways from normal observable reality is the mapspace, the network of train tracks on which mathematics and other linguistic constructs exist. It's difficult to say who first discovered it - Plato was almost on the right lines but fucked it up hugely. Wittgenstein and Korzybski, respectively, were closer, though the latter's work on General Semantics seems to be a last minute recoil. Whatever; Quay was the first to *navigate* the mapspace, even if he hadn't found it first. If he'd felt pride any more, he'd have felt it then, twisting a dial on his gauntlet to open up a broadcast channel into the area he'd pioneered.

"Streamline the transmission frequency to the following coordinates," Quay said, entering them via haptic interface to his suit's servers. Something like a cigarette burn on a film opened in the space in front of him, modulating in size at a high enough RPM that it appeared to be softly flickering in an early summer breeze.

Entropy build-up dropped; the hunter broadcasts began to stream towards the hole from the other side like dogs towards a piece of meat. It was now or never.

Quay lifted his helm, the material a lightweight carbon allotrope he himself had designed. Only that crystal nanoweave was strong and flexible enough to survive the voyage. The helm descended, and James Quay dissolved into the metaperson the city knew only as the Wombat Man.

"Prepare for laser disassembly," the Wombat Man said. He knew that a nanotechnological attack on the *Séraphine* was useless, considering Rightway's security measures were at least operating on that scale. But if you have a lase of extremely high-powered lasers, you can remodel at the femtotechnological level...

Total decay of local space estimated in 30 seconds.

The Wombat Man stepped towards the cigarette burn. There was some sensation in his backbrain, a mutant emotion that was a rough approximation between déjà vu and the unshakeable feeling you've forgotten something. He dismissed it as a glitch in the external

memory stores located near his left quadricep, and in another second he was thread through the needle eye.

At a speed unfathomable to the hunter broadcasts approaching in the opposite direction, he was gone. The infrathin combusted to nothingness - indeed, even within 4 dimensional space, it could no longer be said to have previously existed at all.

Only flux is possible within the mapspace. The first process is abstraction. Wombat Man duly observed his transformation into a series of late-Kandinsky shapes and colours. He was in the upper regions of the mapspace now, a high navigational vantage point. Higher he ascended, until he could only be described in mathematical equations, before like a bird of prey he dived, picking up velocity and coherence as he fell towards a young plump singularity that had appeared in his vision field.

Another moment, as much as a temporally-reliant phrase could retain meaning in the mapspace, and he had moved sideways into the Hypernow. In the local timeframe between a neuron flare, he was Schrodinger's Cat: everywhere omnipresent, both alive and dead and all the states in between. The flare, and his lasers activated, slicing him apart.

As a cloud of negligible mass, Wombat Man rode a passing particle shoal. In the electron storm, he lost himself - he was a Valkyrie rolling on the thunder before battle, Odin at the head of the Wild Hunt. Identity is meaningless at the subatomic; only will remains. Through sheer force of his, Wombat Man endured.

-

"Fascism is outmoded," Rightway was retorting to something Alison had said. "Fascism's just insecurity... that fucking need to control everything doesn't exist when you control all you need to."

"You don't control everything. If you did we wouldn't be here."

"Control is perception, bitch," Rightway explained. "Right now, the only people who don't perceive my control are Quay's little cell."

"I never had you down as a Copenhagenist."

"Oh, we're going to do away with all that, don't you worry. Chance, uncertainty, 'free will'... Hell, even the compatibalists will look like hippie compromisers by the time we get our claws into the universe good and proper. This city was just the beginning."

He looked down at her. She wasn't his style: too athletic, too much of her. He liked them lean,

starved. Boy, girl, it didn't much matter. The dyed gold streaks through the red hair were a turn-on, though – the best spirit to devour is the independent one.

"You know, I think I will rape you after all," he said in a distant voice that seemed to come from years ago, folding his glasses calmly.

She didn't even take the comment in. The words were like a blunt object, immediately flattening the world until any edible information was as 2 dimensional as a communion wafer. A second later, something like fear, but more like injustice, sparked, a purple fire far, far off in the ribcage, before the numbness returned.

A phone rang in the next room. It rang four times before Rightway said: "Answer it."

The ringing stopped. A few seconds later, Bradley walked in holding a mobile on his armoured shoulder.

"I..."

"Who is it?" Rightway said.

"It's, I don't..."

"Put it on speaker."

The resulting sound was like an old dial-up scream, the ghosts of broken modems singing together. Bradley looked at Rightway; Rightway's eyes fixed on the phone.

The digital banshees cohered until a mechanical voice could be heard, Stephen Hawking's synthesiser's sexy whispers:

Wombats are generally crepuscular and nocturnal, usually venturing out in late evening to feed and returning before dawn...

As if the space around the phone had been infected by a viral synaesthesia, the sound narrowed into light before the three listeners/onlookers. A binary sepia hologram condensing on the scene like steam on a window, harmonising further until the Wombat Man stood in the middle of the room.

Bradley's gun, raised as soon as the noun 'wombat' had hit the air, released its hot metal burst. The polymer and lead combusted in the charged atmosphere around the target, who turned at enough speed to throw his elbow plate through Bradley's mandible.

In a fluid motion, Wombat Man turned back to Rightway, but he was already out of range, his forearm propping up Allison's chin, a revolver to her head as he half led, half dragged her out of the room.

Before he could give chase, the suited man was assailed by Bradley's fellows, who now flooded the chamber like tears on a lens. The bulletproof fibreglass was caressed on both sides as the evening rain began to beat hard against the outside of the window panes and its crimson cousin leapt to meet it.

Rightway smelled like peanut butter and sweat to Allison. She wasn't afraid: the scene was too obvious, too played out. Rightway couldn't stray from the frequency he was tuned to. She wasn't afraid; not even when she found herself on the ground with a dull ache in the back of her head where the butt of the revolver had struck her.

She didn't know where she was. It was pitch black, the only colour an illusory pigmentation extrapolating from the corners of her vision, a gracious gift of cranial trauma. She didn't know where she was but she wouldn't panic. She wouldn't panic because she wasn't afraid. Rightway's breathing getting lighter; lighter, or further away.

The Wombat Man's auxiliary lungs took care of the fatigue, his mycoprotein regenerators drinking lactic acid at pace. His protective sphere was exhausted, but he was still now, listening to the rain on the outside of the window. The cries and gunfire had stopped.

Rightway hit him with such force he was lifted from the ground. The impact against the glass was enough to dent the journey-worn material of his suit, crushing several circuits beneath.

Rightway's grip was tremendous, passing from the physical into the figurative: it was a concept gasped, an economy constrained, an attention held. The Wombat Man's collar popped like a wishbone at Christmas as their gaze met; Rightway's eyes like bloodshot vortexes, exerting a terrible pull on the passive, pupil-less yellow globes of the figure he grappled with, beneath which Quay's stare lay.

The Wombat Man raised a hand, looking for Rightway's throat, but Rightway was quicker, recoiling and then punching, recoiling and punching, beating out a terrible rhythm upon the helm.

Allison, still surrounded by a dull ache, slow drops of sticky red running down her face, walked in on the struggle in time to see Quay's movements begin to limp. Taking sensory overload in her stride, she gripped the combat knife she'd pulled from a slab of human meat on the floor and slammed it into Rightway's lower back, as if she were shutting a heavy cabinet drawer. She was aiming for the spine, and missed, but managed a few more stabs before he shook her off.

He turned his attention back to the Wombat Man, but the advantage was now lost. A transistor-powered paw closed just beneath Rightway's jaw, and a thin wire filament extended through his soft flesh. Rightway's last conscious sensation was an uncomfortable one, a feeling of iron filings filtering through his thoughts like snowflakes, getting caught in the folds of his brain.

"What are you doing?" Allison asked, watching as Quay pulled his pulverised helm from his head and dropped it to the floor. He still had hold of Rightway, who had sank to his knees, eyes wide and empty, as if in prayer.

"Digitising the information in his cerebral cortex. Sucking him from the meat of his brain and downloading him."

"I didn't realise he was so strong," she said, padding gingerly at the back of her head and feeling a softness and wetness she didn't like.

"Once his 4th dimensional frequency was attuned to that of the narrative wavelengths, it was inevitable."

Allison nodded sagely, though feeling a tad patronised. It was her, rescuing him, that had distorted the wavelength, after all. She felt used, slightly unappreciated. She cast these feelings aside.

Quay relaxed the muscles in his hand, and the hybrid assisted gauntlet allowed Rightway's empty husk to clatter to the sheer surface below. Then he walked to the middle of the room, shedding damaged pieces of the Wombat Suit as he did so, and knelt to begin his work.

Allison followed, but kept a pace back, only daring to peer over his shoulder. She could see he was fiddling with some kind of softly-edged cubic device, coloured a darkly shining black.

"What are you doing now?"

"Wombats are lesser spotted, but leave ample evidence of their passage, leaving distinctive cubic droppings," he seemed to recite, in an empty vocalisation beneath his breath.

"What? What is that?"

"This is a ghost box," he said. "It emits a series of harmonious... vibrations, is as good a word as any, on the quantum level. They're tunes, written to disturb the ambient architecture of the city."

"How? I thought you'd designed the system so it was foolproof," and then, the idea reaching her as quickly as she'd spoken: "It's the building, right?"

“Yeah. I knew he’d choose it. He was tactically brilliant, but strategically, he was strictly an amateur. Thought the high ground was everything.”

“He said it used to be the old radio tower. But that was years ago.”

“Radio waves never die, never disintegrate. They just oscillate further and further apart. If they had a good enough unscrambler, aliens on Alpha Centurai could be listening to 6 Music in a few hundred lightyears’ time. And when they pass through, they leave marks in the mapspace, like slug trails on pavement. If I can make that underlying network explicate, I can remake the city from here.”

Something dripped from his face onto the ghost box. At first, unsighted, she thought it was just sweat. But she’d noticed something in his voice. Not a break, exactly... more like a waver. He was crying.

She drew forward, put in fatal motion by simple human empathy.

“He was your mentor, wasn’t he?”

A hand on a shoulder.

“He taught me everything,” he replied.

“He said you wanted him out of the way. Wanted revenge.”

“Revenge, no,” Quay said.

He paused, turning as he rose from the ground. For the second time in just a few moments, he held someone close to him.

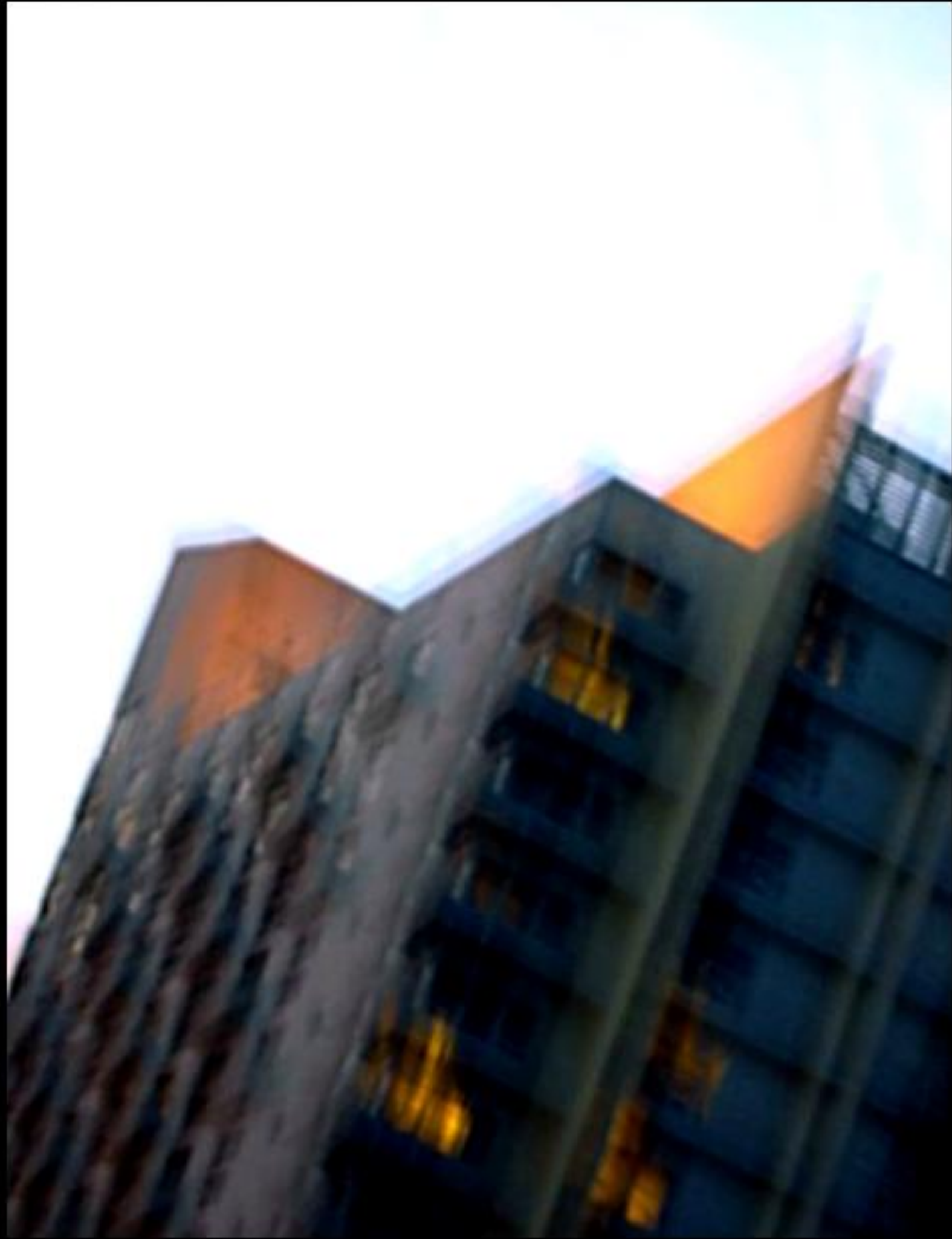
The ghost box was starting up, the first few notes of its aria beginning to rise.

A hand on a cheek.

“Anyone who knows me,” he said softly.

Her neck broke like sugar glass. The city shimmered like a desert mirage.

The time was 8pm.





A NATURAL PROGRESSION: JIM COLEMAN TALKS ABOUT *TREES*

By Christopher Nosnibor

From the late 1980s to the mid 1990s, Jim Coleman was a core member of seminal New York alternative rock band Cop Shoot Cop. Renowned for their powerful live shows, unusual promotional strategies and for having a second bass instead of a regular guitar, Coleman's sample-based contributions were equally a defining feature of their sound. Since the band split in 1996, he's been keeping busy, accumulating an impressive resume of film scores, remixes, collaborations and solo releases under various different names, most notably Phyler.

The last 15 years have seen Jim's work evolve through the exploration of sound collage, with his work as Phyler described as 'beat driven electronica', but with a 'strong cinematic sensibility'. July saw the release of *Trees*, Jim's first release under his own name. Dropping the beats to concentrate on the cinematic aspects of his work, and incorporating acoustic and electronic elements, it marks a clear departure from his previous output. I caught up with him on the eve of the album's release to ask about its creation, and the distance he's come since the start of his career.

CN: To begin at the beginning, Cop Shoot Cop are still well regarded and fondly remembered by many. How do you feel about the band's achievements with the time that's elapsed since it disbanded?

JC: It's always nice to hear that CSC still resonates. Looking back, I feel like I took it for granted in ways. I know that I was doing what I wanted to be doing, what I was meant to be doing at that time. And even though we self imploded, it was a hell of a ride, a definitive part of my life. I do feel like we could have gone further with what we were doing, that we were still evolving when we broke up.

That being said though, we went a lot further than I would have anticipated. What we were doing wasn't always that "listener-friendly". Sometimes when I listen back to the old CSC tracks, or see some live video, it really hits me. I can feel objectively how strong a band we were. I feel fortunate to have been a part of it.

Although Cop Shoot Cop never really broke through in the same way as, say, Ministry or Nine Inch Nails, '\$10 Bill' unquestionably took the band to another level in terms of reaching a wider audience. Did it seem strange to go from maintaining a cult status with the first couple of albums to being all over MTV in a short period of time?

Things didn't actually change all that dramatically. Our standard of living was raised a bit. We were now able to sleep in hotels, and not worry about whose floor we were going to crash on at 3:30 AM as we were loading out. We toured pretty relentlessly for a few years in there, so it mostly affected our touring lifestyle. Well, that's not totally true. We were able to give up any days jobs we had, though we were already at the point where it was near impossible to keep a day job because we were touring so much. But '\$10 Bill' was part of a larger shift. That was on *Ask Questions Later*, which was our first LP on Interscope. So right away, with the Recording and Publishing advances, things were looking up. I honestly never felt like we "broke through". Our shows were generally well attended, but it's not like we had huge internal fame fights or anything. Money, well, that did eventually become an issue.

In the early years, the band utilised rather unconventional methods of promotion, in terms of posters and graffiti. Why was that? Would you describe it as a kind of urban art project?

Calling it an urban art project may be making it a little more highbrow than it really was. Our show posters were generally loud, confrontational, very graphic. Tod was really the force behind the posters; he had a really good talent for that. The posters and the graffiti drew a lot of attention, which could only be good for us. It helped spread the word. The confrontational aspect of it was almost like this itch that always needed to be scratched. It fuelled us and gave us a purpose to be at odds with the world around us. I think you can hear this in the music as well. It's empowering.



Two memories worth mentioning here: One night we were out postering for an upcoming show. The poster was an image by Tom of Finland, a homoerotic piece featuring two leather clad motorcycle cops. Just outside the precinct on East 5th street, we completely covered a NYPD van with these posters. The second memory took place at the West 4th street subway station one night around 2 AM. I was tagging one of the pillars with a CSC tag, and felt this presence. I turned around and said hello to the police. Immediately put in cuffs and walked upstairs where we had a conversation. I explained that I wasn't really a cop hater, that Cop Shoot Cop was a band. He replied, saying that the police knew all about Cop Shoot Cop. The threat was that he was going to take me in and hold me accountable for all the CSC graffiti all over NYC. I don't know why, but he ended up letting me go. That was the only time I talked myself out of bracelets. And he never caught on that I had any connection with Cop, he just thought I was a fan...

Your subsequent output has marked a radical departure from your previous work. What prompted this shift?

Phylr was different from CSC, no doubt. But in ways it didn't seem to be a radical departure. For the first two albums, Phylr had a similar aggression, discontent, and at times, song structure. Generally no lyrics, but often you would find verse chorus verse type of structure. I'm still making music under the Phylr moniker, and have done a bunch of remixes.

The new release (*Trees*) as Jim Coleman is much more of a departure, both from CSC and Phylr. There are a couple of things that caused this shift. The first is that I really wanted to explore new ground (for me, anyway), to break the creative habits and patterns that I had perhaps fallen in to. The second thing is that I was trying to go inside, to find a quiet place of meditation, a place of being rather than doing, if that makes sense. In a way, I was trying to quiet myself down, trying to build a safe little sonic space where it felt okay to just sit and listen.

Do you think 'rock' music is dead or redundant, or is there still scope for taking the format in new directions, with variations on the standard template (such as ditching the guitar in favour of a second bass)?

I remember being in art school some years ago and being informed that "Everything has been done. There is nothing new left to do." I was pretty depressed for a while (well, I was pretty depressed in general, but this statement made me question my creative journey). But I realized that it didn't really matter. First off, who can say, and second of all, even if it's true, if you and I do the same thing, it's going to be different.

There are always the slew of Rock and Pop bands who are actually copying pre-existing bands, and they might as well be cover bands. In general, I feel like at least 90% of any genre is complete crap. But that other 10% is what keeps my faith alive. There are some amazing rock bands out there right now who make my hair stand up. It may be about ditching the guitar, or it may be about how the guitar is played. Bottom line for me is, is it honest, is it genuine?

*You recorded the album **Domestic Landscapes #3: Thalassaphobia** as Baby Zizane with JG Thirlwell. How did that collaboration come about, and what was the evolution of the project?*

If I recall correctly, JG just asked me if I would be interested in collaborating. We've talked from time to time about taking this further, which would surely be interesting, as we have both continued to evolve since that time, both creatively and personally.

You've also collaborated with Teho Teardo under the guise of Here. How important is collaboration to you?

Collaboration has been very important at times, and at other times in my life and process, I could not stand it. I really enjoy what happens in collaborating, where the sum is greater than its parts, where different people's aesthetics and processes find harmony, or disharmony. And then there are times where I need to be the sole master of the universe.

Trees is kind of a hybrid of this. All tracks started in my court, but then I worked with various musicians, and with each recording, things would open up more and more. This process was perfect for this album, it would have failed if it was too tightly controlled.

Trees isn't your first solo album, but is the first under your own name, having previously recorded as Phylr. What was the rationale behind using different names, and how important is identity – or the ability to change identity – to you?

I think that the use of different names for a recording artist goes hand in hand with defining the different styles of various bodies of work. This totally makes sense, and is somewhat necessary if one is putting out a variety of material. Phylr is a mis-spelling of my middle name (Filer). So in a way I was still using my name but a bit behind a mask. Using my plain old civilian pedestrian name of Jim Coleman seemed to make sense with the release of *Trees* as this record is much more of an interior journey. It's intimate, and the hope is that it takes the listener to a sonic/psychic emotional state of openness. It's much different from Phylr, where there are masks, tricks and hide and seek.

Trees has an almost classical feel to it in places. Are you a fan of classical music?

I was classically trained on piano and French Horn as I was growing up. Though I appreciated and enjoyed the classical music that I learned, sometimes the lessons were painful. What I really wanted to be doing was to be really PLAYING the instruments. Making stuff up, experimenting, seeing if I could translate what was in my head into moving air waves. At this point in life, I've pretty much lost sight of all the theory I learned, but I still feel that that training was really important for me. And I think that is why I have kept on making music (not that it's really a choice, it's more of a necessity). As an adult, I can truly PLAY in making music. It's my little playground. Anyway, I really do like a lot of the contemporary classical artists. The music and visuals of Merideth Monk's *Key* was a big influence on me. Some of Steve Reich's work really spoke to me. Also *Einstein on the Beach* (specifically: I'm not an overall big fan of Glass), Zoe Keating, ECM records has put out a great number of interesting records...

There are numerous different elements woven into the album, both sonically and culturally, which make for a listening experience that could perhaps best be described as 'enriching'. What was the context of the compositional and recording process, and what music were you listening to at the time?

Trees began life as audio sketches done on the train. I was in a period in my life where I was taking the train in and out of Manhattan every day, so I started working on these tracks. It was an interesting way to start and end the day, creating and being in this floating space, while being surrounded by passengers, all rushing to get wherever. The foundations of most every track got pretty well hammered out during those train rides.

Once I had the overall arc of each track down, I started reaching out to people to record. In some instances, I had unused recordings from earlier sessions that I integrated. This was true with Dawn McCarthy (vocals) and Ellen Fullman (Long String Instrument). Dawn actually appeared on the first Phylr record, and Ellen I had recorded some years ago in Austin, where she had a semi permanent set up of her long string instrument. But I did a great deal of new

recordings as well with the other artists. These recordings, whether new or pre-existing, broke down what I had formed. The tracks really opened up, got a whole new life. I love that feeling, when it all just opens up in unexpected ways. It can be like that when putting music to film as well.

The album's title and those of the tracks on it ('Summer Heat'; 'Dawn'; 'Rain', for example) are evocative of the natural world, and there's a natural, organic tranquillity that permeates the work. Was the inspiration for the album drawn directly from nature?

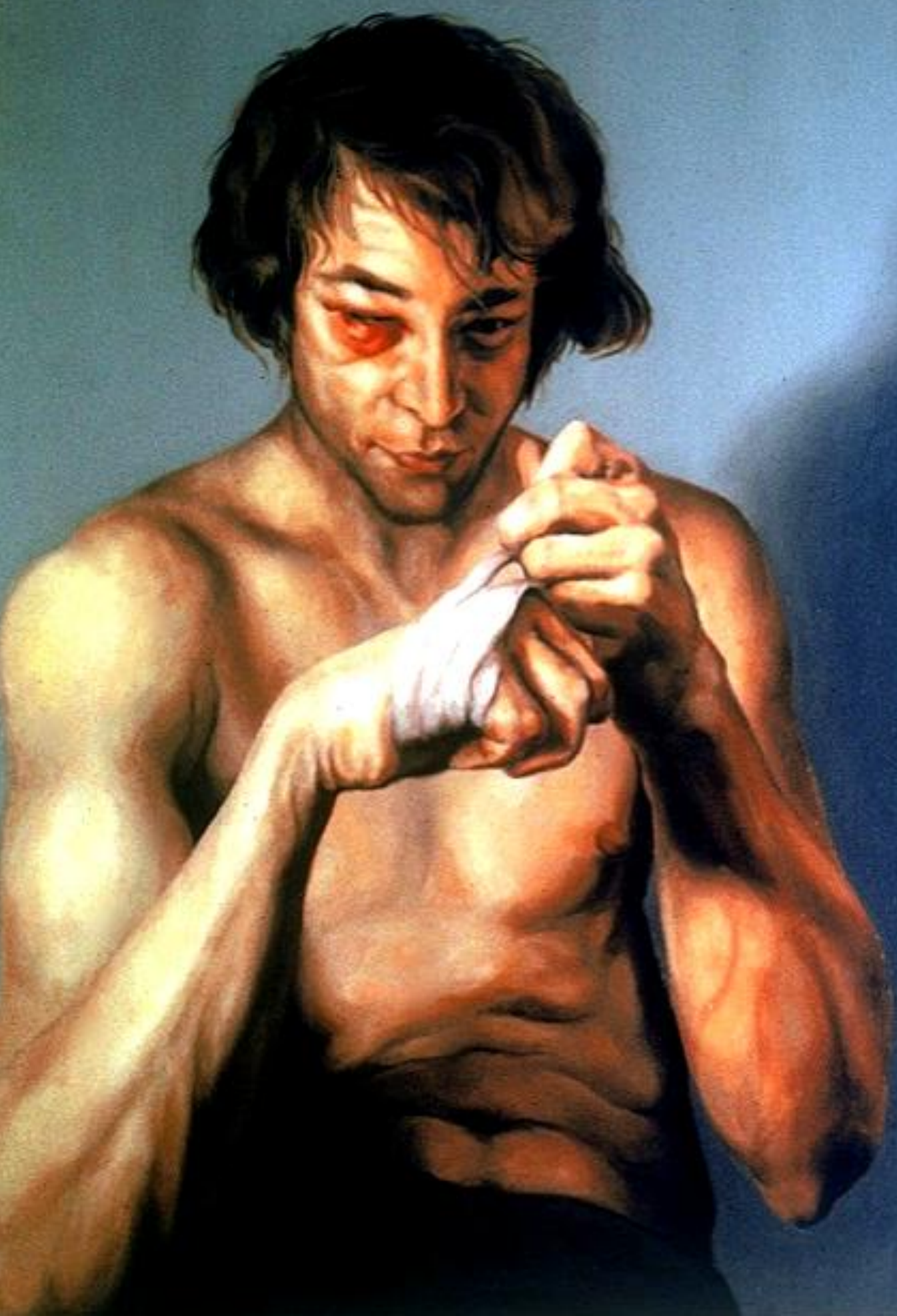
I would say that *Trees* stems from the Organic. Almost like an antidote and a "Fuck You" to the stresses and anxieties of the day, the result driven pre-planning contingency based elevator pitch of a merger that will look good on an info-graphic, but not to all those who just lost their jobs. A "Fuck You" to the fear that comes from constantly looking forward and backward but never being able to be here now. A small little step in the direction of being a human being instead of a human doing.

OK, sorry about that. Guess I needed to vent a bit. *Trees* was originally conceived with the thought of meditation (not in any traditional sense necessarily). Stop and breathe.



Trees is released by Wax & Wane Records: <http://jimcolemanmusic.com>

Photo #1 © Jim Coleman, Photos #2 & #3 © Beth B



NIGHT SWEATS

By Mike Hudson

There was more to it than that, of course.

In the oddly blended mixture of Buddhism and Shintoism that constitutes organized religion throughout much of Japan, there is a belief that old and thrown away objects, after a certain period of time, became possessed by demons angered by their casual abandonment. These were the unspeakable *tsukumogami*.

"Unlike the mortals who had discarded them, the vengeful specters were having a great time celebrating and feasting - building a castle out of flesh and creating a blood fountain. They danced and drank, boasting that even celestial pleasures could not surpass their own," Tom read, and he thought of Rachel, alone and far away in New York.

"We have faithfully served the houses as furniture and utensils for a long time. Instead of getting the reward that is our due, we are abandoned in the alleys to be kicked by oxen and horses. Insult has been added to injury, and this is the greatest insult of all! Whatever it takes, we should become specters and exact vengeance."

Tom's studies into the esoteric Shingon Buddhism had taken a sudden and somewhat disturbing turn. The *tsukumogami* and their damnable shrine in the recesses of Mount Funaoka, a temple to the Great Shape-Shifting God called Henge Daimyojin by the old Shinto priests.

He remembered the ancient city of Kyoto, in the shadow of that haunted mountain, and his own failings and the many things over which he had no control. It had been his first and only trip to Japan.

Alive and self aware, the *tsukumogami* could take the form of men or women, young or old, of the inanimate objects they once were or of beasts such as ravens and coyotes.

There had once been an occasion, you know, a hundred years ago it seemed to Tom now, he was driving that white Camaro - car weighed but 1800 pounds and had a 350 four barrel under the hood -- at a high rate of speed along an ice-covered country road very late one snowy night, drunker than hell and heading home from the small town in Pennsylvania where he served as chief editor of the little newspaper they had there, when he hit a particularly slippery patch of black ice and the car spun out, winding up in a ravine some twenty feet beneath the roadway, near a small stream they called Hare Creek.

He hadn't been injured and he climbed up out of the ravine back to the roadway and, just then, a drinking buddy happened to be driving by in an old green Ford F-150 pickup truck and stopped, and Tom got in and they went back into town and had a few more drinks before someone else gave him a ride back to his house in the country.

The next day he learned that he had been charged by the state police – who had discovered his car – with numerous violations, including driving too fast for conditions and leaving the scene of an accident.

When he went in to see the chief of police the following Monday, a part of his normal duties as chief editor of the local newspaper, the chief got up from behind his desk and closed the door.

“Now this is strictly off the record, Tom,” he said, sitting back down. “But my man told me he drove down that road, got to the intersection outside of town, turned around and drove back. And between that time, which he said couldn't have been more than a minute or two, your car was not there and then it was there but you were not. And he doesn't like you, and he looked for you for the rest of his shift, in the cruiser and on foot, but he still couldn't find you.

“Now, what I want to know is... How in the hell did you do that?”

Tom took a sip of the bitter black coffee from the Styrofoam cup.

“Well Dana...” The police chief's name was Dana Scouten and the two were on a first name basis. “What happened was this; I knew your man was on the lookout for me, so when I slid off the roadway like that I just turned myself into a coyote and skinned up along the creek bed toward home. I knew he'd be looking for a man and not a dog.”

For a minute the police chief stared blankly, but then he began to laugh. He laughed uproariously.

“I'm gonna miss you when you go, Tom,” he said, wiping his eye and sighing.

It had all happened so long ago, and Tom had bent his mind in so many different ways during the intervening years, that now the story of a drinking buddy just happening along some lonely country road at 2 o'clock in the morning that night seemed every bit as unlikely as the one about him turning himself into a coyote.

“Like a string of rosary beads, my mind cannot be severed from angry thoughts,” he read.

He poured a belt of Glenlivet into the highball glass on the nightstand and drank. The book, Elizabeth Lillehoj's “Transfiguration: Man-made Objects as Demons in Japanese Scrolls,” a book

that he had sitting on his shelves for years but was somehow just now getting around to reading, fell down on his covered belly.

He remembered Kyoto and looked over at the 14th century mounted sword, his souvenir from that trip, and he thought of the shape shifters and that time back in Pennsylvania.

Like the great thief, Dao Zhi, who followed the five cardinal Confucian virtues, the evil and violent specters believed that piety would outweigh their malevolent transgressions. And so did Tom, sometimes.

The dog Rowena slept on the thick red comforter beside him, breathing in and out, dreaming the dreams of an old soul. With his fingertips he stroked the top of her skull, where the dark hairs were turning silver much like his own.

Outside in the night, beneath what they were calling the "Super Moon of 2012" because of its close proximity to earth, it began to rain, and then the rain turned into a torrential downpour.

The mated ravens, who had built their shambling five-foot nest into a gutter between the roofs of two of the soundstages at the old Vitagraph Studios behind his house, watched helplessly as the runoff carried their nest and their young flightless chicks off and into a sewer that ran into the open cistern they called the Los Angeles River.

Everything for nothing.

Yin and yang. Life and death the same. He scratched Rowena's head and closed his eyes. He wondered about Angie, who was on the other side of the river, exhausted and sleeping herself.

The overhead light was on and he was too tired to get up and turn it off. He made a mental note to get himself a lamp for the nightstand, maybe something vintage, with a shade made from panes of colored glass.

He hated sleeping alone and was glad for the dog. He thought of the ravens crying their raven cries over the deaths of their babies.



AFTERLIFE PROPOSAL NO. 1:

MY BEAUTIFUL DEATH

By Richard Blandford

When Ashley told me his love was no more, I thought it time to take my own life. It was something I had been considering for some while, since nursery school, in fact: and that moment, when hope had been revealed as the lie I had always known it to be, seemed to be most fitting.

Mine would be the most poetic of deaths: a painless slip into the endless sleep; my pale submerged body to be found by my dear father in the bath; a trail of rose petals, and incense in the air. Oh, very Ophelia. No doubt he would cradle me in his arms, overwhelmed with grief, yet of course understanding why this had to be; his pain instantaneously turning to happiness that my suffering was finally at an end.

My original plan was to slit my wrists, but I decided against it, as I feared that I might fail to cut a perfectly straight line, or worse, need more than one go before I got it right. Besides, although the blood would look wonderful in the water, it would stain my father's clothes in the most unsightly way when he scooped me up and held me to his breast. So instead I decided I would swallow a cocktail of all the silly pills I had been prescribed by the medical establishment in order to counter my inextinguishable knowledge of the meaninglessness of all existence. They did nothing for me, of course; you can't argue with the unavoidable truth.

I had no intention of taking them straight out of the bottles, needless to say. No, instead I chose to collect them in a shell, which once having placed between my pale lips and poured the pills from it into my mouth, I would let drop from my hand and over the side of the bath, making what I felt would be a rather pleasing visual symbol of being born into death: an ironic allusion, of course, to Botticelli's pitifully hopeful *Birth of Venus*. Not that anyone would notice. Anyway, it would also draw attention away from the toilet seat: a most unwelcome intrusion to my tableau. Then, washing the pills down with a sip of blood-red wine from a long-stemmed glass, I would lie back in the water, waiting for death to take me in its warm embrace. Upon discovery of my beautiful demise, my father would immediately contact Ashley and inform him of what his thoughtless actions had led to. He would rush to the scene, and prostrate himself before my empty vessel, begging for a forgiveness that would never come. He would see that he was a fool for dumping me in favour of that slattern in his Communication Studies class, and my death would bring about a moral and just resolution; albeit all too late for me.

At least that was the plan.

Thing's didn't get off to the most perfect of starts. I made the mistake of filling up the bath first, and I hadn't even arranged and lit half the atmospherically illuminating candles that were to cover every flat surface in the bathroom, including the toilet seat, before the temperature of the water dropped to tepid. I filled it up with more water from the hot tap, but then the bath was

far too full, and I had to let a fair bit out before it was right again. By then, some of the candles had already gone out. It took a good half an hour longer than I had planned for to get all the candles alight simultaneously, along with the incense burners; not to mention the rose petals, which I wanted to have leading from the front door up the stairs, before forming a carpet in the bathroom and finally floating on the surface of the water, obscuring my still form beneath. Only, I'd underestimated how many I would need, and the rose petal carpet was decidedly threadbare. In any case, it all meant I had a half an hour less to die in before daddy came back from the bowls club.

Finally, everything was in place. I took off my silk kimono and draped it dramatically on the floor, conveniently covering a bald patch in the rose petal carpet. Then, I lowered my beautiful, pale, doomed body into the water for the last time. Or what was meant to be the last time, anyway.

'Shit!'

I'd forgotten my seashell with the pills. It was on my dresser in the bedroom. I pulled myself out of the water; rose petals clung to my skin. I didn't even have a towel ready; well, I didn't think I'd be needing one. Yet more petals stuck to the soles of my feet as I scampered to the bedroom, dripping water as I went.

I got the shell. Some of the pills rolled out as I picked it up, so I had to prize them out from between the fibres of the carpet and brush a hair off of one. Carefully, I carried it back to the bathroom and laid it on the side of my watery tomb. I pulled the rose petals off my feet and placed them back on the floor, which now had damp footmarks all over it. They looked awful, but I reasoned they would dry before my daddy got home. Again, I lowered myself down into the bath.

And there I lay, the shell beside me. Was I really going to do it? There was still time to change my mind. After all, some would heartlessly say it was just a teenage love affair gone wrong. Was it really worth dying for? Yes. Yes, it was, I knew. This was the moment that my whole life had been building up to. For it wasn't just about Ashley, not really. He was but the final damning proof of what I had known for as long as I could remember. Living was a curse: no, a disease. The pills were the cure. And with that I opened my mouth wide and poured the pills in from the shell, the odd one or two falling into the water. I don't think it could have looked very ladylike.

Although I struggled to pass them down my throat all at once, I had become very adept at swallowing pills over the years, even without anything to wash them down with. But why wasn't there? I had forgotten my wine. It was down in the kitchen, all poured out into the long-stemmed glass. Oh well, never mind, I thought. I wasn't getting up again. And perhaps it would have more symbolic meaning down in the kitchen.

And so I waited to die. Not much happened for the longest time. I had an awful feeling Daddy would come home, follow the rose petal trail, and find me in the bath, right as rain. Then I began to feel drowsy. Very suddenly, I found myself slipping away into unconsciousness. And as I began to sleep, I could feel my head slip down, down under the water. I was dimly aware

that the water was filling my nose and my mouth, but then, all was dark. Death was here, at last...

But then it wasn't. I was still underwater; my lungs were filling up, but I felt alert; wide-awake. I thought maybe I would involuntarily try to raise myself up and cough out the water; an instinctive survival mechanism taking hold, but there was none of that. Just myself in the water, the water in me. So why wasn't I dead, or at least dying? I could see the rose petals above me, and the candles burning away all around. It all seemed so perfect. Except that I was still there to see it. Still, no doubt I would be dead soon. It would all work out.

Suddenly my arm threw itself up in the air. And stayed. My leg on the opposite side followed suit. Oh no, I thought, I'm having spasms. I had completely forgot that might happen. I knew I looked ridiculous, with one arm and one leg sticking up; the arm bent at an odd angle at the shoulder and wrist, the leg dead straight, like I was kicking a football. I tried to move them back down but they would not. In fact, I couldn't move anything. Not even an eyelid. I was paralysed.

But that wasn't the half of it. Things started getting really bad. I felt a strange relaxation in my groin. The water round there started to get warmer. Oh, no, it couldn't be... I was pissing myself! This certainly wasn't the way I wanted to be found, lying in my own yellowy piss. I wished I could reach for the plughole, empty the bath and start again. But I couldn't move a muscle. Muscles were moving on their own however, including those in my arse. I felt them loosen. I knew what was coming. Yes, absolutely... I was doing a shit. I was shitting myself and I could not stop it. I was lying in a bath, my arms and legs sticking up, in my own piss and shit. This beautiful death could not have gone more wrong.

There was a gargling sound in my throat. I believe it was what is known as the death rattle, legendarily heard just before the moment it all ends. It was there; I heard it. That should have been it. All over. Dead. Except it wasn't. I was still there, feeling my own excrement bob against my leg in the water.

I was half-right about Daddy's reaction. He did scoop me out of the water when he saw me and clasped me passionately to his chest, although not after he'd got his foot caught on my kimono and skidded halfway across the bathroom floor. Unfortunately my shit had begun to disintegrate by then and some had come to rest on top of me, and that then stuck to his nice shirt. I would have preferred the blood. But then he laid me down and tried to bring me back using mouth-to-mouth CPR. It was very odd feeling my daddy's lips on mine, not to mention his pressing down between my tits. Quite frankly, it brought up all sorts of feelings I really didn't want to have to deal with, but being dead and incapable of movement, there was little I could do but wait it out.

After he'd tried a few times, he fumbled with his mobile and frantically called an ambulance. He had real trouble giving them the basic information; just kept on screaming to come quickly. Which they didn't, or at least it seemed they didn't. Maybe time was crawling because daddy was alternately blowing into my mouth and slamming on my chest whilst crying. But still, even if I had been alive when he'd called, I should have been dead by the time they arrived.

In the meantime, he was trying over and over again to revive me, and saying: 'Don't die, my precious, don't leave me. It'll be OK. Daddy's here. Don't die.'

It was quite moving; upsetting almost. But really, I thought, couldn't he see the inevitability and tragic beauty of the gesture like he was meant to? It would make it so much easier on him. I love him to pieces, but it was just like Daddy to lay a guilt trip on me and ruin my big moment. And anyway, technically speaking, Daddy murdered me, along with Mummy, so he could have been a bit more dignified about it all to compensate. Well, they decided to have me, didn't they? I mean, when you have a child, you sentence it to death, seeing as no one lives forever. And they say we should be grateful to our parents for bringing us into the world and giving us life. Well, yes, that's all very well, but what about the burden of mortality, and the inevitability of our own demise? Should we be grateful for that too? Anyone irresponsible enough to have a child is a murderer. Although that's just obvious, of course.

The ambulance people knew it was hopeless. They tried a bit of CPR too, and then practically fried me with those electrical pads, which wasn't at all fun. You can feel it in your teeth, you know. But in the end, they just called the time, packed up their things, and while daddy cried into the tits of the slut from next door, who was pretending to comfort him but really just trying to cop a feel just like she'd been doing since mum scarpered, they packed me up too.

I couldn't believe they were taking me away before Ashley had been made to see me in the tableau I had created, purely for his guilty pleasure. Although having said that, in a way I was glad he'd missed it because of, well, all the shit. Quite embarrassing, really. But still, the rose petals and the candles worked awfully well. Most of them were still going when the ambulance people came, although someone chucked a load of them in the bath to clear some space. And I was a bit annoyed absolutely no one picked up on the significance of the shell, although realistically, I suppose they don't need to be good at art history in their line of work. But couldn't somebody have made a bit of an effort? It would just have taken one of them to pause, and say, 'It's beautiful,' and it would have made the whole thing worthwhile. Maybe the shit just ruined it for them, I don't know.

It was pitch black in the body bag; not that I would ever see anything again because someone pushed my eyelids down and I haven't been able to move them since, but I could hear everything that was going on in the ambulance. The cheek of those people! Actually, I'm not surprised they didn't appreciate the effort I went to, seeing as they were so utterly insensitive to my situation. They were talking about me as if I wasn't there: saying things like how sad it was, but also, and I couldn't believe this, slagging me off for being so selfish to put Daddy through it all. It's all right for them to say that, but if they knew what a terrible life I'd led, and what Ashley did to me, then I bet they would understand, like Daddy is going to, one day.

By the time of the funeral, I had been through hell. Not only was I kept in that wretched body bag, but I could tell from the slamming sound I had been shoved in a drawer somewhere. It was freezing, absolutely freezing. I would have been able to see my breath if I only had any and my eyes would open. After a while, I lost all track of time. I had no idea how long I was in for; maybe only hours, could have been days. But there, in the dark and cold, with only the odd distant noise of another drawer being opened or shut, there was nothing you could orient yourself with.

And then they pulled me out of the drawer for the autopsy. Yes, an autopsy. Because I hadn't left any bottles conveniently lying around, they had to cut me open to work out how I died. I mean, they knew, but they had to prove it so they could fill out the death certificate.

At first, I could hear them talking about me: just about my birthmarks and tattoo and the scar on my knee from when I fell off the swing when I was five. They took some photographs, cleaned me all over, which meant I finally got that shit off me, pulled off my rings and necklace, and weighed me. And then, I felt the most incredible stabbing pain that went right from my throat to my groin. It was horrible, but strange. It wasn't pain like I was used to. It was almost pain, without the pain, if that makes any sense. I guess it doesn't. It was as if my body was remembering that it did once feel pain, and that it should feel pain, even though it couldn't any more. It was the ghost of pain. And it was then that I finally realised what I was. I was a ghost, haunting my own body.

Although I couldn't see it, I knew from the conversation I had been split right open. What happened next, with them sawing through my ribs and pulling them out in one go, and then each of my organs being removed and plopped on a plate, I really don't want to dwell on. Suffice to say, ghost pain or not, it went a bit beyond having your tonsils out. Then, once they had finished and come to the very obvious conclusion that I had died from taking lots of pills, they filled me up with some padding, cotton wool or something, and put everything they'd taken out back, but in what I could tell from the rustling was a plastic bag! After that it was on with the chest cavity, skin sown up, in the bag and back in the freezer.

Again, I lost all track of time. I was in that drawer for god knows how long. But then I was on the move again. The drawer was opened, and I was lifted onto a trolley. I could hear some idle chitchat about the bloody football as I was pushed down some corridors and out in the fresh air and into the back of a vehicle. The football chatter went on and on as I was driven halfway across town, which was almost as bad as the freezer in its own way. Then out of the van, into somewhere else and popped into another freezer again.

I didn't spend so much time in that one, I know it. Although with what happened next, I wish I had. They fucking embalmed me. Which means they took all the blood out of my body, and I could feel myself emptying and pumped full of something awful and chemical. I can't believe Daddy allowed it. He knows how I feel about that sort of thing. The only artificial thing I'd let into my body when I was alive was a cap, and all the depression meds I suppose. But now it was running through my veins, all of them. You can't imagine how invasive that feels. And the smell, it was toxic.

To add insult to injury, once they'd finished pumping my body with crap, they started shovelling it on my face. They positively caked me in make-up, and I could tell it wasn't exactly the simple, pale look I'd made my own. From the amount they were plastering on, I bet I looked like some council estate whore, so I suppose Ashley would like me now. Typical: you spend all your time trying to look like death when you're alive, and when you finally get to be a corpse, they cover you in rouge.

After the wake, where everyone I half-remembered meeting in my life turned up and lied about how upset they were right in my slap-covered face, the funeral had to be the biggest insult.

Daddy only went and had it in a church! He knew that I didn't believe in anything, or at best, vampirism. The vicar gave an arsy sermon as a warning to all my friends about how I was going to Hell because I'd killed myself. But more fool him, because I hadn't. I was right there, in the coffin, and I could hear every word. Daddy tried to say something, but he couldn't because he was crying too much, which I suppose was very moving; but I was still seething about the church, so I couldn't feel as sad about it as I probably would have done otherwise. Various 'friends' read some of my favourite poems, although some of them totally shafted me and read Bible verses. They all sounded pretty choked up too, but I knew that 'Tasha and Valerie were getting off on it really; loving all the death stuff and a bit jealous that it was me and not them. But you know what: I don't think Ashley was even there. You'd think he'd stop by and see his handiwork at some point. He was probably so overwhelmed with guilt he just couldn't leave the house. Yeah, right.

At least they got the music right at the end and played 'Song to the Siren' (This Mortal Coil version) as they carried me out. I must have mentioned to 'Tasha that it's what I wanted at least fifty times so I'm glad it sunk in.

Then it was into the back of a car and off to the graveyard. And there I was lowered as the vicar dribbled on with the 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust' crap; some soil thrown on me and yet another bloody prayer. Finally a bit of slightly too cheery murmuring as everyone began getting on with their lives and forgetting about me and going on their way to the after-funeral buffet and stuffing themselves.

So here I am, down here. No idea how long it's been, but the fact that there are maggots hatching under my skin suggests it's been a while. Dear old daddy, he got a biodegradable coffin. No matter that they pumped me so full of chemicals when they embalmed me I'm probably toxic to anything in a ten-meter radius.

Was it all worth it? Well, the bathroom tableau didn't quite work out, I admit, what with the shit and everything. I'd do it differently next time. But, looking back on it, the funeral, even though it was silly C of E, was quite an event. I expect it looked great. And even though he wasn't there, I bet Ashley heard about it all afterwards. I'm sure I made my point anyway. Yes, life is a curse that brings only pain and despair. Of that I am still certain. The only problem is, that curse still hasn't left me yet. It's still down here with me, in the grave: plaguing me in my rotting body.

I don't know, for a while I actually didn't mind being here. You'd think you'd panic, being buried in a coffin as you feel your flesh decompose, but it's strange; it's all quite calm: peaceful, almost. But even so, it's all a bit of a bore really. Nothing to do, nobody to talk to: just time to think. Time for lots of thinking. Going over things, again and again and again.

You know, sometimes I just want to die.



ENERGY, FREQUENCY AND VIBRATION

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ALEXANDER HACKE OF EINSTURZENDE NEUBAUTEN AND CRIME AND THE CITY SOLUTION AND VISUAL ARTIST/CURATOR ALEXANDER NATAS OF MISSASSSNATCH, EXCLUSIVELY FOR *PARAPHILIA MAGAZINE*

By Alexander Natas

"I call for actors burning at the stakes, laughing at the flames." - Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and Its Double

When I first came across Einstürzende Neubauten in the early eighties, I was genuinely thrown off. Many things from those years are pretty blurry to me, but it must have been the two first albums, *Kollaps* (1981) and *Zeichnungen des Patienten O.T.* (1983) - the latter fittingly named after a book by the visionary Austrian psychiatrist Leo Navratil about his famous patient Oswald Tschirtner, a man turned artist by his insanity. And this really was the sound of insanity. An aesthetic paradigm turned upside down - or more



precisely, the sound of an aesthetic paradigm being torn apart, slowly and meticulously. At the time the band's notorious banging, wringing and scraping sounds were an impenetrable cacophony to me. It was seemingly too chaotic and literally painful for my young ears. To top it off the bands charismatic frontman, Blixa Bargeld, was singing, hissing and screaming in German of all languages.

I instinctively understood what Neubauten was doing, though. They were out to assassinate music, an artistic statement in the spirit of Dadaism. I felt repulsed, disoriented and nauseous whenever I listened to them, which of course in retrospect is always a good sign when it comes to art. I got the same feeling from listening to The Birthday Party, only I loved their stuff immediately. But the spirits of the two bands were obviously related somehow, and I was intrigued - even though I was sublimely disgusted with the unreflecting sensationalist branding of the band heralded by the band's followers: the loudest, wildest band in the world - a tag which apparently was the sole cause of excitement for the few fans I was unlucky enough to run into back then - of course nothing for which the band could be blamed.



Partly due to being bored with the vast majority of the post-punk scene, and partly out of a healthy pretentious need to set myself apart from my peers, I was starting to take an interest in contemporary composition music or avant-garde like Karlheinz Stockhausen, György Ligeti, Luigi Nono, Luciano Berio, John Cage, Giacinto Scelsi and Maurizio Kagel. Not until some years later, after many journeys through the strange and complex creations of these composers - often fuelled by LSD - Neubauten finally hit me like a hammer. Mainly the

German-Argentine composer Maurizio Kagel's "Tactil" (1974), a mesmerizing, nightmarish piece for guitar, harmonica and fortepiano, provided a key of understanding for me: Neubauten was a vision of staged life cast in steaming flesh, pure expression evocating a transcendent entity through heterogeneous sounds wrestled from trash and burning souls. The theatrical element was the result of a perfect overlap between the highest and the lowest, the musical equivalent to a Dionysic rite. Maybe I should have gone easy on the acid...

Neubauten has never subscribed to the clichés of rock n' roll and remains the missing link between classical avant-garde, fluxus, primal blues and - in later years - exquisite Las Vegas-style showmanship. Blixa Bargeld, the epitome of the destroyed romantic, the embodiment of human torment, looking more dead than alive (a much-desired mark of coolness in those days), has always been balanced out nicely by an ensemble of rather eccentric looking individuals, who seemed to resemble hardworking circus performers or mad scientists more than your average anemic rock musician. The elements of poetry, ritual, research and experimentation have always been a prominent feature, establishing the band as one of the most radical, yet productive, attacks on music and performance in history.

Over a period of more than 30 years Alexander Hacke - original member since the early days and presently the group's bassist and musical director - has been a driving force throughout the various incarnations of the band. Ceaselessly refining their means of expression, Neubauten has released one groundbreaking album after another, remaining true to an uncompromising credo of creation from destruction and an autonomous approach to the trappings of legacy and artistic stagnation. Brutality breathes intense beauty in this particular prism, but Hacke is a man of many facets and has simultaneously been involved with solo projects and numerous collaborations, maybe most notably as a member of another legendary band with a unique vision, the recently reformed Crime and the City Solution. The post-millennium version of Crime is based in Detroit, where the new album *American Twilight* was recorded earlier this year. The album will be released on Mute early 2013.

Hacke is a fierce opponent of cultural ghettoization, and as much as a red thread is running through his various undertakings, the diversity of his output is apparent. With unremitting consequence the idea that location has an enormous impact on perception led to Hacke's 2005 album *Sanctuary*. A "road album" – aptly described as "the lovechild of his creative affair with some of the most disturbingly fertile minds in the music scene" – which was "recorded over two years of travelling, capturing pieces of audio from a variety of musicians in different situations on many different locations."

For quite some time now Hacke and his wife and collaborator, the American born artist, musician and filmmaker Danielle de Picciotto, have been leading a nomadic existence, the couple travelling the world as modern day renaissance artists as a way to remain in open waters.

I hooked up with Hacke through the interwebs for a talk about the past, the present and the future.

"If you want to find the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration." – Nikola Tesla

AN: *You became a member of Einstürzende Neubauten at a very young age, back in Berlin's wild years. You were only fifteen. How did that happen and what had you been doing up until then? How did you become involved with making music?*

AH: My great-grandfather was a musician, who survived two world wars playing the drum in a marching band. He also played cello and the trombone. When he passed away (I was 9 years old at the time) I inherited his drum-kit, which consisted of a bass drum, a snare and a cymbal. I lived with my grandmother and I would spend most of my time in the basement beating the shit out of that kit. I also taught myself to play guitar, and as I was fascinated with science fiction and horror-movies (everything, I would get to watch secretly) and mostly the sound of those, I started very early to experiment with recording weird sounds on a cassette-recorder. Later I got my first electric guitar and, most importantly, an analog synthesizer, a Korg MS-20!



I played in a rock band in school and it all started when I saw a flyer asking for volunteers and bands to organize an "Anti-Fascist Festival" in 1979. I would go to the meetings, the only 13-year-old kid there and that's where I met all these "grown up" punk-rock musicians, who kind of liked to have me around as some kind of mascot.

My band "Blässe" eventually played among all the Berlin punk royalty of the time at the "Alte TU-Mensa."

Soon enough I skipped more and more days of school and instead started hanging around at the "Zensor" record store - which was the first place in Berlin where you could hear punk, new wave and experimental music - and the "Eisengrau," a clothing-store, which was run by Blixa at the time.

I was always around; we became friends and started playing music together. It didn't take long for me to clean out my locker in school, because I never wanted to go back. I wanted to be a full-time musician instead.

Berlin attracted a lot of artists or all kinds from the mid-seventies to the late eighties. What was the city like in those days, and why do you think it had that special magnetism? When and why did it change?

Because of its special political status, you couldn't get drafted into the military in West-Berlin. That's why the place was so attractive for every West-German outcast to start with. All you had to do was to move and get registered there. Of course this influenced the atmosphere of the place. Also it was rather secluded from the rest of the world, so the scene turned out to be very close-knit and supportive. The rents were cheap, lots of vacant and uncharted locations and a certain morbid charm of post-war ruins, a night-live without curfew and the unlimited availability of a variety of drugs certainly added to the flavor of the underground.

Neubauten started out as part of a movement called Geniale Dilletanten. What was that all about and who else came out of that group of people?

Well, as I said, the city was an isolated island and the amount of people very limited, so everyone was involved in more than just one creative outlet, be it music, film or the arts. Friends would form bands just for the sake of a good idea for a name and hardly anyone who played music, shot super-8 or produced art had a formal training. We all just did those things. Wolfgang Müller of the group "Die Tödliche Doris" coined the term by writing a faux-scientific essay by that name, which was released as a book by the established philosophical publishing house "Merve" and Blixa helped organizing a festival "Die Grosse Untergangsshow Genialer Dilletanten" which featured everyone's musical formation or rather formations as there was quite an overlap in line-up and many of these bands were formed for the occasion and never played before or after that night.

Along with Neubauten another very important band set up base in Berlin in the early eighties, namely The Birthday Party. What were those guys like back then? And did you recognize any similarities between the Birthday Party and Neubauten?



They were shy and, as opposed to the typical Berlin rudeness, very polite guys, very pale and skinny. Pretty fucked up like everyone else on the scene at the time. Like Neubauten, The Birthday Party's aim was pure, genuine expression, rather than technical skills or clever presentation. Like ours, their shows were like experimental, existentialist theater pieces, influenced more by Antonin Artaud's "Theatre Of Cruelty" and Hermann Nitsch's "Orgien Mysterien Theater" than any musical tradition.

Neubauten is obviously a constellation of strong personalities; you all seem like very different and single-minded individuals, and both the line up and the artistic output have undergone a number of changes since 1980. You have said about Neubauten, that it's like a laboratory, suited for experiments of a special nature, a vehicle for certain things and certain things only. Neubauten is like an entity that feeds off of itself, in a way, so I can see why it must be important for you to be involved in different projects from time to time. You have worked with numerous artists alongside being what Blixa has described as "the musical director" in Neubauten. Why is this diversity so crucial to you and what do you see as the core of Neubauten's project?

I am most interested in clashes, be it of genres, backgrounds, personalities, art forms or tastes. Any creative ghetto bores me. I believe in friction as a source of energy. I get a kick out of disappointing expectations and shattering stereotypes. I like to be unpredictable in what I will do next and attacking conventions is my favorite pastime. So, working with this constellation of people and within the boundaries of this band will never satisfy my appetite for new horizons and different experiences. Neubauten do what we do because we're great at it, which does not indicate that we'd be good at anything else. Quite on the contrary, there are many things we positively suck at. That is in fact what inspires me to have a go at them outside of Neubauten.

One of the bands you've been part of is Crime and the City Solution, another legendary band to (partly) come out of the 80s Berlin scene. The band has recently reformed after more than 20 years, just recorded a new album and an extensive tour is being launched this autumn. Is your role in Crime very different from what you do in Neubauten and how did the reunion of Crime happen after all those years?

Crime and the City Solution is singer Simon Bonney's project, which he first formed in Australia in the mid-seventies. About ten years later he moved to London, England and reinvented the band with former Birthday Party members Mick Harvey, Rowland S. Howard and his brother Harry Howard. This line-up got signed by Mute records and released a few EP's and an album. When Simon decided to move to Berlin, Mick joined him, while the Howard-brothers stayed behind and started These Immortal Souls.

I was totally obsessed with Crime and made a point of not missing a single appearance of that band in my hometown. When the opportunity arose to play with Simon, Mick and Simon's wife Bronwyn Adams, I naturally grabbed it and I got my friend and analog synthesizer guru Chrislo Haas and bassist Thomas Stern involved. Together we formed the Berlin version of Crime and the City Solution, recorded a bunch of records, which, to this day, I am immensely proud of, and we toured the world between the years 1986 and 1992. After we disbanded and the Bonneys moved to the US, we didn't speak for some 20 years. Simon started approaching me around 2007 about recording again, and last year I finally gave in. And that's how we all met up in Detroit this fall and recorded *American Twilight*, which again, will be released on Mute early 2013.



I am very happy that this time around my dear friend and soul-brother David Eugene Edwards of Denver's Wovenhand is part of the gang and also that my wife Danielle de Picciotto, an American musician, author and film-maker, is a full-time member as visual artist. Jim White of The Dirty Three is on the drums, Bronwyn back on the violin and the Detroitians Troy Gregory and Matthew Smith on bass and keyboards respectively.

Neubauten has been pioneers in using the Internet and in the way you have been involving your supporters directly in the production of new work, skipping the "middleman" in the shape of record companies. In 2002 Neubauten launched the Supporter Project, recording albums solely financed by and through the interaction of your loyal following. Crime recently used pledging as a way to finance their upcoming tour. These ways of using the Internet can obviously be beneficial and a way for artists to remain in control of their vision, maybe even a vehicle for getting a project off the ground that would never find support if left to commercial common sense. Do you see a downside to the Internet and the way it affects us as well?

The world radically changed with the advent of the word wide web. It now poses as the dividing line between the ages: the Industrial Age of the past and the Age of Information in the present. It requires the conscious decision to be "online," to be part of this new world and at the same time there obviously will be a percentage of people left behind, who either refuse to

embrace the concept or do not have the means to join the club. This situation certainly causes problems from the get-go. Speaking of “crowd-funding,” I do remember the days when even owning a credit card meant alliance with the system. Now, in order to support or be supported there is no other way but to sign up with “the man.” Of course you can still play for the people directly, do shows, but how will they know about it? Even the old-fashioned posters or flyers are on their way out. That we are not selling compact discs any more is a given fact and we are working hard on convincing people to at least pay for the download of our work. While we are doing that, the concept shifts again with the invention of portals like Spotify, which raises the need to readjust the way we approach the question. In the future we might no longer want or require to “own shit,” that just takes up space, which is precious, rather we will demand just “access” to it all, and hopefully for the artist people will pay for that, and it has to be made sure that the money will be justly distributed to those artists.



In general, I believe we will have to overcome at least some of the outdated concepts of competition and instead manage to install a new system of solidarity between artist and consumer and among fellow artists.

*You have launched several solo projects over the years. In one of them, **Sanctuary** (2005), you ended up travelling from country to country to record with various artists/musicians all over Europe and in North America. One of the benefits of this process is that the album carries the mark of many different geographical places. What made you undertake that project, and why has the experience of staying on the move psychically the way you and Danielle are doing these days become so important to you in later years?*

With the turn of the millennium, I started to feel confined by Berlin and at the same time discovered how much pleasure it gave me to take advantage of technology, which enabled me to do my work anywhere, or even while being in transit from location to location. Starting a new piece in a “fresh” room, a new vessel of sound

and then taking this resonance to a further spot, where new characters add to the composition with their presence in a different room, produces fascinating results already, but the material was also edited, processed and in some cases radically transformed while moving from A to B.

So I ended up with these collages of “memento mori,” these, on the other hand entirely autonomous beings, which were created by the contributions of all these very different individuals, who appear to play together in a utopian room, which consists of a combination of all the different rooms they were recorded in. I believe, that by processing audio, you don’t just change the quality of sound, but by being able to change the sequence of events so seamlessly and by not just changing the speed of sound, but therefore also being able to change the size of things and places, you are actually accessing a higher plane of reality and of creation, if you will.

So, at that time Danielle and I started to travel extensively and the places and impressions and the exchanges with the friends we’d encounter on that journey began to manifest themselves as scenes of a narrative. I ended up with a genuine “road record,” because like the road-movie, we applied the parameters of not having a finished script when we started out as a small team and everybody we met on the road was incorporated as a character in the story. The title “Sanctuary” refers to the utopian place created by the recording process and to the newfound home, the safe house for the 11 pieces of music, their spirit and the tale they tell.



You two seem to have found a great platform for your mutual interests and artistic endeavors. Can you explain how you met and started working together? You seem to be on the road non-stop with Danielle, but you have this dogma about staying for a while in each of the cities you visit. Why is that and can you tell about how you experience this journey-life? Also fill me in on the various projects you have done together, like the Lovecraft-show, *The Mountains of Madness*, *Hitman's Heel* and any future plans you and Danielle might have.

Danielle de Picciotto and I have known each other since 1987, been collaborating since 2001 and married since 2006. In the last 12 years we have created a series of interdisciplinary performances and projects together.

Starting in 2003, spanning one and a half years, we hosted a monthly event called "Bada Bing" at the historical site of the "Big Eden," which was the prototype and actually one of the first discotheques in Germany, it first opened its doors in the late sixties. The idea for these wild nights was to create a clash of genres and audiences by curating an extremely eclectic mixture of 3 musical acts: a death metal band, a singer-



songwriter and a techno-DJ or a Turkish belly dance ensemble, a female electro-act and a rockabilly trio. Danielle installed the space anew each time and made it come alive as an art piece utilizing dozens of Super-8 projectors showing loops of dancing ladies and dozens more of slide-projectors, which added three-dimensional projections from still-lives to strange landscapes to rare architectural photography, while I MC'ed and often DJ'ed. These excessive parties were well received and soon had a cult following. *The History Of Electricity* was an audio-visual performance first conceived as a one-off commission for a North-German museum, but we ended up touring with it for many years. The show consisted of harsh electronic instrumental music and corresponding projections of abstract and serial patterns. Danielle and I share the love for genre-bending clashes and collaborations, so we initiated *The Mountains Of Madness* from 2005, based on the writings of American 1920s author H.P. Lovecraft with the English vaudeville trio The Tiger Lillies, where their acoustic bizarre songwriting performed with Martyn Jaques haunting falsetto voice and animated large-scale drawings by Danielle, which were projected to double as stage-sets was combined with my electronic soundscapes and selected renditions of Lovecraft's texts with an overemphasized German accent. The following *Ship Of Fools* was based on the medieval text by Sebastian Brand and depicted 12 of the fools from the book in musical and visual scenery in different styles and genres. We invited many guest-musicians from the various cultural backgrounds of the regions

we toured this performance in from 2007-2010. Danielle documented the experience in a film called *How Long Is Now?*

In 2010 we decided to give up our home in Berlin, which housed our respective studios, archives and family household in order to become full-time nomads and world travellers in quest of new horizons outside of our well-treaded paths. With this event our world changed quite drastically and *Hitman's Heel* tells the tales of this lifestyle in a manner which not only illustrates it appropriately, but was also made-to-measure for the requirements of living "on the road," because here we excluded all electronically generated sound and relied entirely on music produced with our hands.



2011 saw the release of *The Beauty Of Transgression*, Danielle's autobiographical account of her 20+ years in Berlin, and we toured the world with her reading from the book while showing film clips and images from the period, and me providing an improvised electronic film-score/soundtrack to the performance.

This year our project is called *The Glasshouse*, which is an experimental silent movie by Danielle based on traumatizing events, which occurred on her last night in NYC in 1986, before she moved to Europe.

Here again we ask different befriended musicians to participate for the live performances, while she reads and I create the score. We intend to release a DVD of the piece featuring a

multichannel audio track, so the viewer can choose from different sound recordings of from the performances, while watching the original movie.

Places obviously affect and interest you a great deal. Tell us about the places you've been to in later years. Do you see staying on the move as an artistic strategy these days – and if – why? Are you coming closer to settling down somewhere again?

I started out as a true local patriot, you could have even called me a local chauvinist, because for many years I would proclaim the superiority of Berlin over other German cities and I would swear to never leave there, no matter what happened. I now simply can't stand the place anymore, and the realization that this was the going to be the case was a rather painful experience for me. Just as passionately as I once loved the city and just as proud as I once was to be born and raised there, I am now appalled by the cheap mass tourism, the flat rate bar crawls and moronic all night party people.

What happened? I feel that everything that was once great and unique about the place is now bastardized and exploited by commerce and manipulation of the willing consumers who are flocking into the hip areas by the hundred thousands every day. I know that many people state similar things about other cities of the world whether they're natives, expats, tourists or hipsters themselves, but few actually do something about it, be it by getting actively involved with the underground, by organizing or supporting ventures in the right direction or – as it is the case with us – by getting the fuck out of there, instead of succumbing to the stagnation, sitting back to complain.

I can only praise the people of remote small towns, who take their fate in their own hands and put on events, start clubs and basically make things happen, just for the sake of it. In the same way I have nothing but respect for any sort of migrant, who has the guts to leave his life and country behind, struggle to induce change and is willing to start over, give it another shot.

You've experienced a number of friends and great artists die at an untimely young age, like Tracy Pew, Jeffery Lee Pierce and Rowland S. Howard. How does that affect you and have you changed your formerly wild lifestyle as you grew older? You've spend two thirds of your life on an ongoing creative trip. Does that kind of life come with a price tag of a deeper personal nature? I assume that there has been a certain amount of substance consumption over the years. Have drugs – in retrospect – been productive in terms of your outlook and artistic sensibilities?

I am in my late forties now and I see so many people of my generation sticking to the same habits and addictions we shared when we were in our teens. That is just so sad. I believe that it is mandatory to experiment and misbehave at a certain age, but once you cross the threshold of, say, 40, it's just pathetic to try and hold on to ones youth by replicating the same mistakes over and over – and for the life of me I can not detect any romanticism in it.

The last time I met you was in Copenhagen two years ago, when Neubauten was performing a two-night show celebrating the 30th anniversary of the band. You all seemed a bit uncertain about the future, and maybe a bit weary after touring and practically working since 2003 without a break. What's the score? Is Neubauten officially having a break and do you expect the band to re-emerge again? Any definite plans for the future?

Aside from the fact that we are scheduled to play the All Tomorrows Parties festival in Melbourne Australia in February next year, Einstürzende Neubauten is definitely lying low.

Can you tell us a bit about what you like to do these days? Favorite art, movies, books and artists? Any recent great experiences?

I was very touched by *Searching For Sugar Man*, a documentary about Rodriguez, a Detroit singer-songwriter of the late sixties-early seventies, who wrote the most amazing songs, but lived all his life in utter poverty, not knowing that he was a superstar in South-Africa, where his lyrics inspired the anti-apartheid generation. Rumor spread over there that he had killed himself, so in the nineties these fans started researching him, trying to find out how the idol of their youth had died.

The film captures how they find a living man instead, whom they bring to South Africa for a triumphant comeback tour. Wonderful feature, a life changing experience.

Lately, I have been getting into Haruki Murakami, the Japanese novelist of *Norwegian Wood*-fame. Most remarkable are his early *Hard Boiled Wonderland and the End Of The World* and his latest effort, the epochal *1Q84*. His writing is spiked with references to music and food, while his characters often struggle with parallel realities, hidden identities and unsettling phenomena. A truly strange world, very recommendable.

Of course I would like to encourage everybody to check out the latest – and for that matter complete volume of – work by Danielle de Picciotto. Her intricate ink-drawings and subtle watercolors have been rapidly developing to the highest standards over the last few years, and I am very proud to be associated with such a genius.

Our friend David Hochbaum of New York City is also producing incredible art. He works with mixed media, often starting with photographs, which he cuts up and collages. He is a master-silk-screener also, and his obsession with medieval European architecture and birds creates the most surreal worlds for his protagonists, who are beautiful girls mostly.

Musically, I can never get enough of the bluegrass artist Gillian Welch. Her stuff just touches my heart and calms me right down, which is often very necessary. On the other hand I need a regular fix of metal and hard-core, so I would have to mention the likes of Cannibal Corpse and Sick Of It All as sources of continuous listening pleasure. Also there is an obscure Dutch one-man symphonic black metal project by the name of “Gnaw Their Tongues,” which amazes me. Total otherworldly material. I should look this guy up some time and see if we could collaborate on something.

It seems like you are driven by a philosophy of life and art as a system of ever-changing energies, different forces or entities that work on each other. This mindset suspends in a way more “local” perceptions like “good” and “bad” and paves the way for a confrontational artistic methodology. Can you elaborate on the way you perceive these things? Also you appear to be a highly politically conscious person with very passionate views on the way of the world. Do you think it’s possible to influence people in a political or ethical – or unethical – way through art these days? What does “good taste” mean to you? Any remarks on present day society?

Even though I often struggle with life in the 21st century, I am happy and actually proud to be sustaining myself with art. I don't know if I could survive working a regular job and merrily assigning spare time to the things that are so important to me. Though sometimes I observe contemporaries, who have a choice, because they are either wealthy or happy to have an existence outside of the circus and I wonder if I could be more radical in my art, if I didn't need to also pay my bills with it.

But I think that today the goal is not to shock and be controversial anymore. Society has shifted in a way, where the young generation doesn't rebel against anything anymore. Instead they want to fit in - being part of the "in-crowd" is so important to them. That's all right with me, I know where I stand, but in order to be able to distribute your art and views to the people these days you must find ways to seduce them, to lure them in.

We have to be careful not be categorized, because this is how we are being ignored and easily pushed aside. In order to really get into peoples heads and make them aware of what is going on through art, we have to find the gateway into the mind or the heart of the individual, in order to give him or her a chance to make the concept we're providing entirely his or her own - to install a "little secret" in that person, which will influence the way the interaction in the group is being carried out and ultimately affect how society works.



Foto Markus Johannes Reinhardt

LINKS:

Alexander Hacke:

<http://www.hacke.org>

Danielle de Picciotto:

<http://www.danielledepicciotto.com>

Einstürzende Neubauten:

<http://www.neubauten.org>

Crime and the City Solution:

<http://crimeandthecitysolution.com>

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

Mauricio Kagel: "Tactil" (1974) - <http://drwninkairos.blogspot.dk/2010/02/mauricio-kagel-tactil.html>

Einstürzende Neubauten: "Kollaps", Die Große Untergangsshow - Festival Genialer Dilettanten. Berlin, Tempodrom, 4. September 1981 -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hkrv0Q11tWM>

Einstürzende Neubauten: "Ich Warte" -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b831nCMRI4Y>

Einstürzende Neubauten: "Was Ist Ist", live with choir of supporters. October 2005. -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BQcLBcZgm0>

Einstürzende Neubauten: "Nagorny Karabach", live - Grundstück Concert. -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQY6REitEEw>

Einstürzende Neubauten: "Sabrina" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSFtkfsUkmU>

The Birthday Party: "Deep in the Woods", live -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJvRk9LZI2Y>

Crime and the City Solution: "Sun Before The Darkness", live In Paris. -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLGlm9hLdXY>

Crime and the City Solution: "Angel", live In Paris. -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wlpJBAuxxB0>

Alexander Hacke: "In My Room" - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCQEtoHCZnM>

Trailer for the *Mountains of Madness* DVD by The Tiger Lillies & Alexander Hacke, a musical performance based on stories by H.P. Lovecraft -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3GpX8AXNRk>

Alexander Hacke: "Per Sempre Butterfly", Sanctuary (2005) -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9QZjMoLYXw>

Alexander Hacke: "I Hate You", The Monks cover -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytQrVYrZZD4>

PHOTO CAPTIONS

- 1) Blixa Bargeld & Alex Hacke live on stage - Private Photo
- 2) Einstürzende Neubauten Early 80s (Video Still) - Private Photo
- 3) Young Alexander Hacke - Private Photo
- 4) Einstürzende Neubauten With Supporters - Private Photo
- 5) Crime and the City Solution 2012 - © Collen Willow O'Connor
- 6) Sanctuary Recording Tour - Private Photo
- 7) Danielle de Picciotto and Alexander Hacke - Private Photo
- 8) Bada Bing Flyer - Private Photo
- 9) Hacke and de Picciotto At Work - Private Photo
- 10) Alexander Hacke - Private Photo



RACES

By Matthias Penzel

Turbo Edit & Remix By Jan Herman

TUESDAY, 04-10 | 08:20 | LOS ANGELES

The day after, Four Seasons, Breakfast Terrace

White, David White, is rarely seated when working. If he does sit down, his desk will look pretty much like this, most likely it will be a little bistro table with an antique style iron leg and a marble top. White arms himself with a rather small number of work utensils. They will be, regardless of whether he works while he walks or sits: an A4 folder, a fairly chunky mobile phone, no lap top, and – if seated – a battery of assorted drinks. He is seated right now on the terrace of the Beverly Hills' Four Seasons Hotel, surrounded by people next to whom he appears young, active. Just like everybody he has his breakfast positioned in front of him. Unlike everybody else's breakfast, his is inside several glasses.

In a perfect world White would not be looking after stars. If there was any justice, he would be the chosen one, the one whose ego would be massaged by a personal assistant, he would be the one whose interests were represented by a manager. If it was down to White, his manager would run a one-horse stable, the one horse – stallion – being David White. In such a world White's manager would be a full-on type, yes, why not an ex wrestler, or bouncer, or both? He'd certainly be a tough nut, through and through, with balls, and hair on his chest, probably not on his skull. Certainly he'd be the kind of guy who'd manage to do his job with even less than White: apart from brains and chutzpah, probably with a gun.

Since there is no justice, and the world ain't no perfect place to roam, White does not operate under the guarding guidance of an armed wrestler, but as a freelancer for an agency. They send him off, as Consultant, Crisis Manager or whatever is required.

You got it: he is like the boy from the mailroom, running errands, fixing things.

Things: mainly troubles.

Crisis management is White's area of expertise. Put differently – and only amongst us now (don't write this down) – once the shit has hit the fan, White is the best man for the job. Developing concepts at short notice? Ad hoc statements? Politician has left rehab, a respected president of some pressure group or world council got caught with his pants down? White will fix it. Coupons for debt security, waivers for kinky moves? White is your man. So far he has managed to avert any shit hitting any fan.

It is not the job of his dreams. Okay, he is still his own boss. But at the same time he is still a cog in the system. On the positive side you could say, at least the system is one of the coolest systems worldwide, it has considerable kudos. It is – and this difference matters to White – he is more like a cog made of platinum in a system of gold. David White does his bit to keep the system running like clockwork. Inaudible and accurate like Swiss clockwork.

His current client is a manufacturer of high-tech measuring devices. No, stop: The top manufacturer worldwide of high-tech measuring devices. Van Haarken (Nasdaq: VNHK). Everybody knows Van Haarken as a maker of, pardon me: as the maker of luxurious wrist watches. You know, those chronometers that split time into nanoseconds? Right! Everybody knows them. Everybody has seen the ads on the outside-back of glossy magazines, everybody has seen the banners draped over skyscrapers advertizing clocks and works by Van Haarken, the company's watches encircling the wrists of prominent men and women from the A-Class of sports, one even dangling above the cleavage of an Olympic winner in 100 m butterfly Swimming, you know, the one who stirred waves of excitement with her freestyle breaststrokes. Most products though, which are sold by Van Haarken, are not publicly advertised. They are never visible in magazines, they stay invisible to the world outside those skyscrapers.

Motorsport, auto car racing, or whatever it is that some consider to be sport, matters about as much to White as proper working hours, foreseeable structures, retirement schemes, condoms, survey results. His job is to put Salazar into the public's mind, which in turn is carefully formatted by the mass media. Even if Lorenzo Salazar does not win one race, at the season's end at least he'll be the center of all attention, the king of ratings. Prince of Hearts.

White, with shoulder-length hair, like a rock star stuck somewhere between stage and retirement, was raised in villas with pools. He understands Salazar. In a mine field of intrigues, where the wrong word can cost millions, where information and data, knowledge and rumors, are carefully distributed and demented at the right time, in this world of high performance sports like Formula One, financed by strategic partners to whom motorsport is only one part of a minutely crafted value chain, fueled by 350 million viewers in more than 200 countries, in this world White and Salazar are the exception. They know and understand the way the media ticks, and they know how to play their cards. They understand the correlation between teams and sponsors, the sensitive relations of drivers and teams – and they are both capable of shaping not only the game, but the rules without denying themselves in the shuffle. At least this is how White likes to see it.

Fact is: White understands Salazar. He especially understands the long distance driver's utter loneliness.

Here and now, in the Four Seasons' coffee shop, White binds together his pony tail at the back of his skull – using a hair clip he has had for years – and studies a dozen press clippings. This is why, for once, he has to sit down.

		1. GP		2. GP		3. GP		4. GP		5. GP	
		Punkte	Resultat	Punkte	Resultat	Punkte	Resultat	Punkte	Resultat	Punkte	Resultat
Abarth-Italia	Jaris	10	1.	14	5.	16	7.	19	6.	24	4.
Kyalami 73	Richards	8	2.	10	7.	16	3.	24	2.	24	A
Nazionale	Bensley	0	A	10	1.	20	1.	20	A	23	6.
Team Alpha	Underwood	4	5.	12	2.	16	5.	17	4.	23	3.
Nazionale	Delgado	0	A	0	A	0	A	10	1.	20	1.
Team West	Salazar	6	3.	6	A	14	2.	20	3.	20	x
Team West	Scarletti	5	4.	11	3.	14	6.	14	x	16	7.
Kyalami 73	Fleischmann	1	8.	1	x	6	4.	7	8.	15	2.
Team Alpha	Lord	0	A	0	x	1	8.	5	5.	5	
Équipe Pallas	Dubois	3	6.	5	4.	0	x	2	7.	4	5.
Abarth-Italia	DeLosanto	2	7.	3	6.	0	x	0	x	1	8.

This auto car racing, it's like real life: for a rookie like White it all looks rather confusing. Loads of people and things that nobody can grasp. After a while though, when the cars have put a few laps behind them, it becomes apparent – a bit like at a party filled with people you do not know: You understand who is worth watching, where it will pay if you check them out. You start to understand the action, how it is all going, where it is all moving towards.

Yeah, man, White sighs, internally, unnoticeably. If only there was any action on these playing fields for semi-grown men, all young and wild and fast. Maybe this is the peg needed. Maybe we simply need to inject some action-activating elements into this? A few chicks for the boys to roam after? Unfortunately, White's job is not really to change things but to take care of his client's interests. Van Haarken's footing the bill. So, let's start with an "actual/target analysis", some fancy shit White had been taught in some seminar. Put into bricklayer terms: Let's start ... at the start, followed by the actual condition assessment, target state definition, evaluation of alternatives and implementation thereof. Yeah, sounds nifty, not as brutal as the SWOT analysis (evaluating Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), more like ... what do we have, what do we want? Looking at the press clippings which are safely and neatly filed away in the folder in front of him, he starts to outline what he has and what he needs. For the client. The press did not get him any further. White received these clippings only a quarter of an hour ago, and their headlines worked on him like an overdose of sleeping tablets.

The A4 folder's cover – made of polished matt titanium – signifies to even the remote observer that White is a serious player. Hardball. He ain't no bookkeeper or salesman, he is the kind of guy who has the strings of the universe in his hands. But rather sobering is the rest of the material in the folder: a notebook crumpled and rumpled during uncountable meetings, pages and pages marked with little doodled hangmen and motorbikes. The remainder consists of

photo copies, clippings, race results and team communiqués, all as exciting as yesterday's papers. Ready for recycling.

Operating without a net, rarely with mirrors or other cheap tricks, White is actually doing more than one job: His employer wants Salazar to be present in the media, ideally in a good light as Champion of Hearts. Since all is going well, currently, they want Salazar – according to recent surveys the guy is in the lead of popularity rankings, ahead of his team colleague Nuno Scarletti – to be built up. He shall be shaped into the new, young, wild, fast face for Van Haarken. In the scheme of SWOT, White simply cannot discover any new strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats he had not seen before. Salazar simply has to go for the target, the aim, the goal, the checkered flag. This is what he needs to focus on. All of his actions must be determined by this. How's about the "actual/target analysis", from start to Finishing line with actual condition assessment, target state definition, evaluation of alternatives and implementation thereof?

Another worrying matter (again: don't write this down, this is just between us, I will always deny ever having said this): computers and servers from Team Nazionale have been hacked. Team West has been identified as the culprit. Strong stuff. Just the vague rumor of such a news item could be as ruinous as doping had been for the Tour de France. Fancy that? Imagine only what millions of viewers would make of that: title contender as victim of espionage, possibly sabotage, by hottest rival? For the sport's image, hence for all of its participants, this would be very awkward. It would be so terrible that the entire Team West could be barred from the races. For David White this would be the end. Fortunately there is no proof that West did really make use of the gap in Nazionale's security measures. It seems even questionable whether West was even aware of it. At the same time it is at least thinkable that Nazionale itself is behind all this in order to rid themselves en route – a rather wicked detour of a route, granted – of their hottest rival. Team West is caught in a dilemma: First and foremost it does not want to appear as if it was cheating, secondly not as victim to a wicked conspiracy, and last but not least it does not want to be cast as a whining tosspot caught in a dilemma. Within seconds West is being courted by fans of conspiracies, by computer geeks in white coats who understand nothing about Formula One.

Just like David White whose job it is to avert that shit hitting the fans.

Yes.

Him.

Not the slightest clue how to manage that one.

Hand on heart: That thing with the actual/target analysis? He never saw the point of it. This situation here and now, David White fears, will simply be no walk in the park.

White knows: Only events that are broadcast become news

No walk in the park. This is the only thing that comes to White's mind. Looking down from the breakfast terrace he ponders once more about his idea of injecting some new angle of interest with the help of little bunnies into motor racing's male action. But even from here, from the hotel's terrace, on a spring day like this there are no bunnies visible. All around there are only pensioners from show biz, and he, David White, has still not made his first million.

»Yeah yeah, sure, but there has also been a race after the US Grand Prix,« White says into his telephone. Of utmost importance, while on the phone, is your laugh. During phoners, just like on radio interviews, one's laughter can never be loud enough.

»Sure. We'll see you in Monza ... exactly: before then ... Huh?, I thought that would be some Gala ... dressed to kill, yeah, only the best, ha ha ha!«

Even when you are new to the business of racing you grasp things fairly quickly. It is just like with everything else: push the accelerator, throttle, into gear, then you push some more.

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The first thing you notice is the sound. The noise of two dozen race cars. Bundled together in a tight space as they position themselves onto the grid, into the day's formation behind the starting line. The sound comes across like a squadron of supersonic jets. Every one of them ready. Willing and waiting. Several thousands of brake-horsepower together on stand-by, resembling two dozen turboprop machines on an aircraft carrier. The atmosphere is seething with the smell of high-octane fuel. With revs twice as high as those of a screaming road car the smell is mixed with a scent of very, very hot metal, protected from melting by lubricants and cooling oil. The temperatures are far above those that would make water boil and evaporate into thin air. You can smell the heat.

Lorenzo Salazar knows: I am a winner.

In the squadron of star fighters Salazar is no more than one man in a line-up of a dozen men. Everyone's heartrate racing towards 200 beats a minute. Breathless. The frequency of every one of these men's heartbeat is nearing the limit of what medical specialists deem physically possible. A squadron of star fighter jets on the starting grid, excited, suspended, awaiting as if on stand-by in the Persian gulf. Throttle down, fully concentrated. Awaiting the signal. The first corner, a needle's eye, towards which, in minutes, then seconds, tenths of a second the whole lot will accelerate.

Even through the air, hazy with exhaust fumes and sheer heat, you can gather, feel and smell, how concentration levels and the pulse of a dozen are already racing towards the immeasurable.

Salazar is the type who was born to win. As a kid he had suspected it. As a teenager he experienced it, in his youth he internalized it. And now a man in the prime of his life, currently the leader in the results'

tables. At the end of the season, with or without the championship's crown, the world will be at his feet. Granted.

Winners do not accelerate more than others: they accelerate earlier than others. Those who accelerate earlier are the ones that will be faster.

From zero to a hundred in 2.5 seconds, less than five seconds later at 200 kph, still before the first corner into second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth gear. On most race tracks Salazar is travelling at a speed of 300 kph within seconds after the start. First corner before his visor. The whole pack is racing at a pace of more than 290 kph towards the first corner in São Paulo. Same in Malaysia. In Indianapolis everyone averages at 335 kph. Then down into second gear. Winners change gears faster than their rivals. They take the corner as if in slow motion, at 85 kph through the first hairpin. In Malaysia this is like a u-turn in a parking garage.

Winners do not only accelerate earlier than others, they also brake later. Those who brake later are the ones that are faster.

-- // --

»Okay. Delgado came first. True. But, honestly, what kind of a race was that? Even Fleischmann got onto the podium. First after the title's contender, Race God Delgado? Sure, with Gus Fleischmann doing this the whole world and its brother go bonkers,« he steers back onto the back straight, »absolutely apeshit, but let me tell you something: Lorenzo has been doing precisely the same thing since the start of the season. And I don't have to tell you that as far as Gus and Lolo are concerned ... exactly ... yeah ... Listen, mate, I totally agree with you on this one. Last year Lorenzo Salazar and Gus Fleischmann were like Siamese twins. My words: Macao. Macao-Macho, ha ha, this is a good one, this is good, yeah. He hung on his ass like a trailer hitched to a car ...«

Not so bad. Things are happening. White will manage to detour the attention away from Fleischmann. Aim number 2 in a whole string of aims will be to take the attention away from Salazar's team. During the next lap he will steer the interest towards Fleischmann's team, their questionable devices. The trick is not that new, it comes from the art of war reporting: When you want people to feel sympathy you have to give the victims some kind of a face, you have to name names and paint the perpetrators' actions as that of faceless, hence somewhat bloodless, team units – or armies. The flip side of this, if people shall be ashamed and angered, victims and damages must remain abstract, whereas the perpetrator is ideally portrayed with the face of a single person, as a consequence of this his monster-like character will develop all by itself.

This being extracts from a full-length novel, before we jump from some episodes of Chapter 0 and Chapter 1 ahead to Chapter 15, a little background information: On the shiny surface the book deals with a menage a trois, two racing drivers and a female reporter. The PR spin doctor David White is supposed to

look after one team's drivers – as is the main sponsor's wish – but has his heart and eyes on the female reporter. It is the sponsor's money, however, that make the wheels go round, they are in it to not only advertise their exclusive super expensive wrist watches but to meet and mingle with ministers, or their friends from countries that otherwise would have difficulties getting hold of what a sponsor like Van Haarken also sells: devices of high precision timing technology, crucial for most tanks, bombs, and specifically for weapons of mass destruction.

Don't be fooled, this is not a conspiracy devised by means of mass deception: the ministers, honoraries et al are often visible to viewers worldwide, on any to broadcast, when the races' winners receive their trophies. In actual fact there is a kind of parallel street to the all-so exclusive pitlane, there is a circus behind what globalization is broadcasting into millions of households worldwide... It is that invisible area, carefully cordoned off from the public's gaze, where the true action takes place.

After the two drivers – Fleischmann and Salazar – collide on track in Monaco, Fleischmann and the reporter get closer, finally Fleischmann steps into his mate and rival's car to race at the Grand Prix in Abu Dhabi, where fuel and oil are burnt as if in a sacrosanct mass...

TUESDAY, 05-01 | 03:30 | ABU DHABI

David White, as-salāmu 'alaikum

To White airports are like gas-stations, they are like Holiday Inns and Starbucks: they all look like they came out of the same mold. Inevitably there is some renovation and construction being done somewhere, especially at nighttime new terminals seem to be built, or there's a new cantina for security forces and the booming sector of CCTV-monitoring staff. Abu Dhabi International, as White notices, has a different smell, though. Somewhere at a distance he sees sparrows circling piled-up towers of a cafeteria's chrome chairs. The smell hanging in the air reminds him of cats' piss. What appears to be a cafeteria of some sort looks more like a cafeteria complex, nearly as gigantic as a football stadium, but right now out of order. The local time now is 3:30 AM. The vast collection of tables looks as if it is intended to invite thousands to sit down, to take it easy, and have a coffee. Bizarrely the adjacent bar, obviously belonging to the complex, is as tiny as any small eatery on Washington Square, with just enough space for two tables, no chairs. Signs from Etihad Airways guide people to the airline's Diamond Zone and to what seems to be a Pearl Zone. Which is the more preposterous? While White is marching down the nearly dead terminal in its entire marbled length, after almost sixteen hours of travelling via Paris and London-Heathrow (Yes, why straight and simple, if complicated is also an option?), a thought starts to dawn on him: in his entire life he has never before been so completely aware, so oppressively conscious of his nationality. His passport, issued by the State Department of the US of A, is still firmly in the breast pocket of his shirt.

He is an American citizen. He is well aware that the United States is the one nation that everybody wants to be part of. Everybody wants to have a go, make their dreams come true,

achieve fame and fortune – and now White is here. He comes from there, and he is here to do a job. Yes, the job. Despite all the extras and expenses, despite the villa with a view onto the yachts' marina, it is the job which once more reminds him of the fact that he has not reached his goal. He is still biding his time, doing a job which is not the job of his dreams. More importantly, he is still nowhere near making enough money.

The hall where you pick up the baggage is also nearly devoid of any life, it is almost spooky. At the head of conveyer-belt 11 there are two doors to what appear to be prayer rooms, separated for men and women. Outside the men's entrance he can see a few pairs of shoes, outside the women's there is only one pair plus what must be a haphazardly lost kid's sandal. While White is still eyeing this, three guys appear out of nowhere. All well dressed. Dark skin, their hair glistening with wet-gel. They look like bodyguards the world over: suits off the peg rack, the size a little too big, so that it is not instantly visible what they're carrying underneath.

Good God.

The three men have already picked up his luggage somewhere between the plane and conveyer belt. »Right, yeah, this is all of my gear.« The youngest of the threesome is pushing the trolley. The most light-skinned character asks White for his passport and ticket stub. In broken English. Like an amphora in the desert, broken and beaten, buried under the desert's sand, forgotten, buried and unburied after seven years, restored and glued together: this is how his English sounds. Then again, maybe it was Arabian. Or maybe Swahili, Farsi or Urdu. But White understood. Passport for his visa and whatever other formalities. The guy takes these documents and disappears behind a door next to some darkened windows. The other two characters meander down the hall with White, then through some unnoticeable door, past cleaning buckets, fire extinguishers, luggage carrier and the kind of paraphernalia that always seems to clutter airport stairways' landings everywhere. The leader types some codes into the keypad of another steel door, after which they cross what looks like the hall for arrivals. Everything looks normal, as normal as it can in any airport at 3:50 in the morning. Although David White knew that he would be picked up at the airport, he had no idea that Van Haarken's Middle East contacts would act so seemingly efficient. But, of course, it makes sense.

At the same time, not everything makes sense to him.

«والسودل بيضاء ت بلغ»

حتى بال تجاوز لهم ي سمح ولا سرع تهم تخ فيف ال سائ قين على ي جب ال راية هذه ظهور وعند ..جواند بها في»
«ال صد فر ال راية.المانع زوال

«والسودال بيضاء ال راية.ال سد باق نهاية إلى ت شدير»

Laughter. One of the guys holds the walkie-talkie stuck in his ear with one hand while twiddling with the other on the spiraled cable dangling from it, he laughs in a somewhat threatening manner, eyes White.

استمر إن عقوبة يواجه وقد رياضي غير سلوكه أن من السائق ل تحذر ال سيارة رقم مع رف معها ي تم»
«ال ص فر ال راية ب ذلك

«ت حذر»

ال خضر ال راية عليه وقعت عقوبة وأن فوراً المرآب دخول عليه أن سائقها ل تبلغ ال سيارة رقم مع ت رفع»
«ال حمر ال راية ما حدث مع ال تعامل من الآن تهاء ب عد عادة وت رفع ل حلابة

Tell you what: this sort of thing can make you feel pretty frail. Without passport and all. Or rather: not a little frail but rather close to cold panic, to red-alert screaming-out-loud panic, actually, head over heels, once you only begin to imagine what these people could be getting up to with your passport. As an American Citizen White does not only have rights, he duly suspects now that he may have duties, too. For instance, it dawns on him wickedly, he may have the duty to never ever hand over his passport to a bunch of mercenaries.

Before he has pondered this and brought the thought to some reasonably acceptable end, all of his baggage is packed away neatly and without a trace in an armored Mercedes limousine. Rather calmly he gets into the car as the guy with the papers reappears. Looking at the tucked-in visa, complete with stamps in undecipherable Arabian scribbles plus hand-written doodles, also mysteriously non-descript, a cognition suddenly hits White with full force, like a kick in the stomach. He is now inside Islam.

No kidding: He really and truly has arrived on the ground of one of these emirates that swim in oil and zillions of dollars. Down here you put a finger into the ground, and then black gold comes gushing out.

Who'd've thought? Aye!? White, the no-good from the ass crack of America: and now he is here, being escorted like an invited guest to His Excellency Sheikh something-or-other of Abu Dha-bi? The devil may care, convoy me to paradise or to hell, shepherd me to twenty-seven virgins at the gates of paradise or twenty-seven sluts inside the maws of hell...

Only just having curbed his attack of lunacy, as White's mind closes in sharply towards a complete tilt, as the Mercedes gently gets into motion, a new worry appears. This comes to White like a small but definite collision in commuter traffic.

Gus.

Where on earth is Gus Fleischmann?





THAT'S WHERE YOUR REAL PARENTS LIVE

By Tony Rauch

Photos © Michael Dent

The school bus passes a marshy bog. A murky cloud of fog settles just above the black water which is covered in a thin green slime.

"See that scummy pond down there?" the new substitute bus driver clears his throat casually, "Yeah, Susie, that's where they found you. You probably don't remember 'cause you were real little. You had flipper hands back then and big webbed feet. But they took care of all that. Had to call in some specialist, but she wasn't a doctor. Not like the doctors around these parts anyway. . . Yeah, I heard they took care of that tail too. Do you still have it at home? Like in a jar of golden liquid or something? Maybe check those old boxes up in the attic."

The school bus passes a long concrete culvert by the side of the road, a drainage overflow to retain all the storm runoff, all the extra rainwater. The entire thing is twenty feet deep, bordered by high chain-link fencing, running for hundreds of feet. The bus slows at one particular spot.

"There, right there," the new bus driver gestures his head down to the long concrete ditch, "See that metal door down there? . . . Yep. . . That's the spot. That door there. That's where your real parents live, Billy. . . One time when you were little it rained so hard the overflow washed you up here. . . Found you in a gutter, just as happy as can be. . . After a few days when the water drained away to wherever those weird grates lead to, they went down there, rapped on that little metal door, but there was no answer. No one has been through that door in ages. Who knows what's even in there. . ." the bus driver chews his gum casually, thinking for a moment, "Yeah, I bet it's all dark an' moldy in there. . . . Anyway, Billy, that's where you're really from. Just thought you'd wanna know."

The bus swings past an alfalfa field bordered by tall bushes and old leaning trees. There's a small, tilting shed to the side of the road, half in a water-filled ditch. The boards of the shed are weathered gray, many missing or flopping down, the roofing sagging and worn.

"Yep, Janey," the bus driver beams, "They say that's where your family lived before your dad got that job of his. . . Said you all lived in that water-filled ditch for years. . . You probably don't remember though. . . Yeah, your parents probably don't like talking about those days. . . Such wet and soggy days."

The bus passes under an old, rickety bridge.

"Yep, Jonah, you may have heard the rumors," the bus driver begins, "Or maybe it was just a vague feeling of recognition stirring in the back of your mind, but it's true. This right here is where you were grown. In a puddle over there. They found you in your original form under that bridge, just swirling in a mud puddle as a coagulation of muck. Some college students were down there taking samples and saw something weird. A strange film on the water, an odd, bubbling ooze. And it was you. You were the odd, bubbling ooze. They scooped you up, half formed - half solid, half liquid, looking like an old bowl of matzo ball soup that's been left out for a month. Just a slowly undulating mushy lump. . ."

"Shut up," some kid squeaks unenthusiastically from the back.

"It's true," the bus driver chews his gum, bouncing with every bump and rut in the road, "They took you back and grew you in their lab. Put you in an aquarium, watched you grow and form into a baby. . . They didn't rightly know what to do with you after that, after you started forming into a person. Heck, they were in college. They didn't have the time nor the means to raise a child. So they put you up for adoption."

"Yeah, I remember that," someone mutters unconvincingly.

"Yeah, Julia, maybe someday I'll tell you about the beings in the woods, those little silver humanoids who gave you to the town," the bus driver exhales with nostalgia.

"I don't even want to know," a girl pipes up.

"You bet you don't," the bus driver blows a bubble with his gum.

"Don't even think about me," the girl laughs in frustration.

"No!" someone yells.

The bus driver nods, "You can deny it all you want, but it's true. . . Yeah," he sighs, "No shortage of secrets in this town. . . Lots and lots of secrets."

"You're full of it," someone squeaks defensively.

"Am I?" the bus driver questions, "You just wait and see. . . . Someday. . . Someday you'll know. . . Then we'll all see. The truth is a beautiful thing."

"I'm outta here after I graduate," someone mutters in the darkness of the back of the bus.

"Oh, really? Is that so, O'Malley?" the bus driver looks up into the long rearview mirror, glancing up at the rows and rows of kids sitting straight and still in their drab fall attire.

"How'd he know it was me?" someone squeaks.

"You ain't going nowhere. They keep you goin' with special injections. Without 'em you'd turn back into that humped little hairy creature they found huddled under that little stone bridge out in Barker's woods," the bus driver nods.

"Did not."

"Liar."

"Ah ha. Sure they did. . . You were a half-boy, half-beast thing. They suppressed the other genes somehow. With some retarding chemicals, so the boy genes in you could take hold, flourish. But without them, whoa boy, lock up the chicken coops an' look out, it's beast time for that one again."

"Get outta town."

"Oh, I can. I can get outta town. Any ol' time I want. But not you, O'Malley. No sir. You ain't goin' nowhere. Not until they perfect the serum, that is," the bus driver shrugs, "Until then you're stayin' put, mister. And good thing too, cause one time, a long time ago, and you probably don't remember this, they gave you a bad batch. Something happened, maybe too much water in the formula or something. Something went wrong. Maybe the catalyst didn't take, couldn't bond with your genes. Whatever. In any event, you slowly mutated back into that little beast thing, reverting to your hybrid form."

"Did not, liar."

"Ya sure did. Broke outta your house. They had to track you down all night. Had a posse goin' an' everything. Pitch forks. Torches. Basset hounds tracking you. The whole package. . . Found you in a chicken coop covered in blood an' feathers. Had to chain you up. Hose you down. Kept you in a shed at the edge of town. At the old Parker place until they could whip up another batch of the suppression agent."

"Yeah, right."

"Was touch an' go there for a while. . . Didn't think they could pull you back."

"Sure it was."

"At times, in the old days, they couldn't get some of the creatures back. Couldn't turn 'em back 'round again. . . . Some claim they're still out there, creepin' 'round, lookin' for some poor kid to eat, maybe even your real parents. Out lurkin' beyond Ament's pit, beyond Parker's field."

"Sure they are."

"That's why no one ever goes back there," the driver shrugs.

"Nuthin' out that way anyway."

"Plenty of freaky crap out there. No one's insane enough to investigate, that's all. Last guy out that way never came back," the bus driver shrugs. "I think his dog wandered off, and he followed, looking. . . Was a damn shame too. He was a good dentist. . . Can always use a good dentist."

"This town's a suck-hole, that's why they leave," someone mentions.

"They leave, or they're *taken*?" the bus driver raises his eyebrows.

"Shut up."

"Then you explain it? Why do people leave? They don't. Where do they go? Huh? They disappear. Sometimes reappearing with a different personality, a vacant look about them," the bus driver talks knowingly. "But who takes them? And why? Those are the real questions."

"Oh, sure. We believe you."

"And why wouldn't you? Ask around," the bus driver shrugs, "You'll see. No one talks about these things. They'll tell ya yer crazy. And that's the proof. That persecution. It helps to suppress the truth. The powers that be don't want the truth out. So they suppress it."

"Oh, sure they do."

"Obviously."

"Yeah, well, just ask around. Why do you think they're hushed rumors in the distance, in the shadows? Huh?" the bus driver looks around.

"There aren't."

"Aren't they?" he repeats. "Look into it. . . Ask around."

"People would tell us to go away."

"Yeah. Ya see. An' that's the proof right there. That dismissiveness. They try to brush it aside, try to hide it, but it's hidden all around, hidden in plain sight. I mean, think about it. Where did you all come from? Huh? You don't know. You don't remember. Or is it that they just don't want you to remember?" the bus driver squints.

"Oh, yeah. Now I believe you," someone mutters flatly.

"It's a wonderful gift. The gift of knowledge. Enlightenment. The truth," the bus driver smacks his gum.

"Too bad you're so full of fertilizer."

"You were hatched, found, developed, extracted. From all around these parts. They just decided to concentrate you all here. Every one of you. . . Each an' every one. . . Rounded up, placed in this special school. A school disguised to look like any other school. . . But there's a bad smell about it, isn't there?"

"That's just the kitchen. All that goulash," someone up front mutters, sleepily and unimpressed.

"Or is it the secret lab in the basement?" the bus driver smiles and nods.

"We live on this side of town. That's why we go to this school," someone in front mutters, barely paying any mind.

"Exactly. So they can keep an eye on you, make sure things are hummin' along smoothly, studying you, continuing the research, in order to extract whatever info and advancements they can."

The bus slows to the school - an old, sagging brick building, looking like an old creamery or cannery or something. The bus doors open. The kids file out.

"Oh, yeah, sure. Now you're talkin'."

"Now you're finally makin' sense."

"Of course. Now we believe you."

"Yeah, now you've convinced us."

"Check yourselves, children. Examine for strange marks, unusual scars. . . Huh. . . Yeah. . . Where do you think those came from? . . . From the probes. From the studies," the substitute bus driver calls as the last one hops down the steps onto the sidewalk.

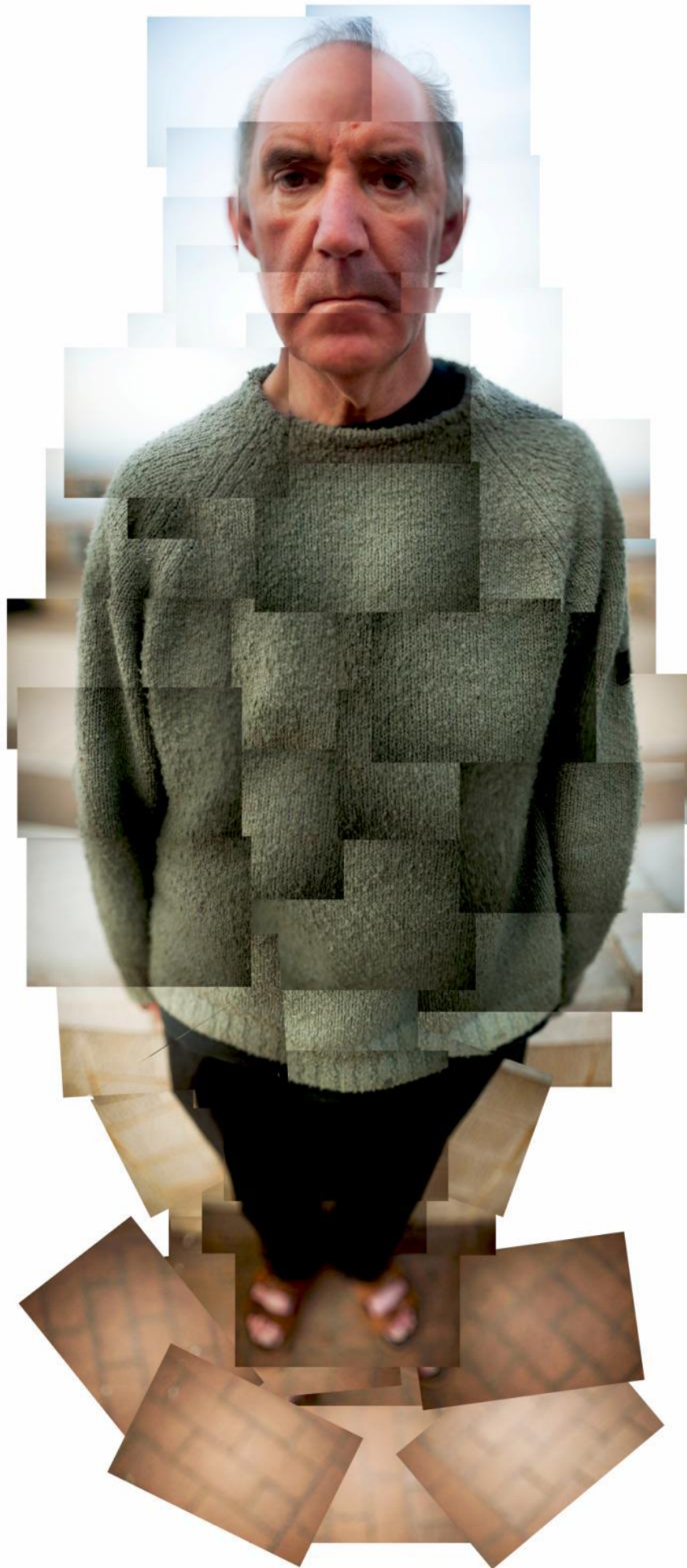
The last one takes a few steps, then turns, "See ya later," she sings in that thin little kid voice, "You pickin' us up later?"

"Yeah, maybe," the bus driver looks around suspiciously, "If they don't track me down before then. . . . If they don't silence me."

"OK," the kid sings, turning around, starting up the walk, "Maybe you can tell us more then."

"Oh, there's lots more all right. Plenty more where that came from, that's for sure," the driver nods and smiles, slowly closing the door and pulling ahead. "Yep. Plenty more to come."





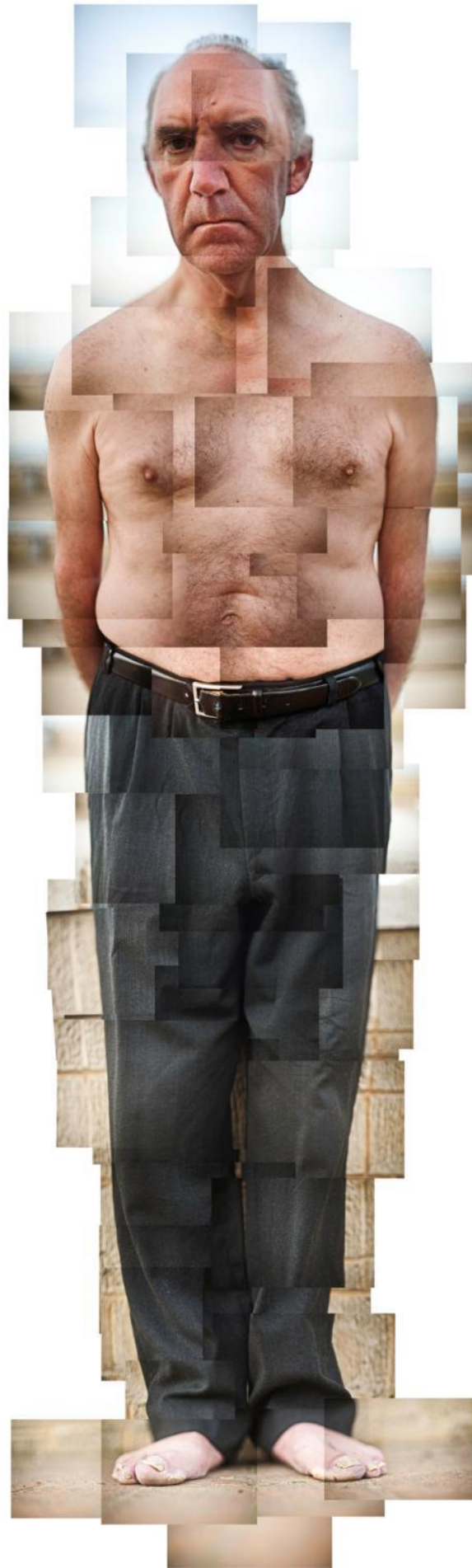
THAT GUY

By Christopher Nosnibor

You know that guy who doesn't seem to quite fit? You don't really know him all that well, you've not spoken to him all that much but then you don't really see him that often, you just seem to have mutual friends and be in the same places every now and again. He crops up here and there, you see him around, but don't really pay all that much attention. One of those people you know by sight, to say hello to in passing, maybe to make small talk with in a queue or something, but nothing more. You don't know his name or anything about him beyond what you've heard and what you assume from seeing him around, as you do. He hangs on the edge of groups but doesn't seem bothered. A bit of a loner, I suppose you could say. He has friends, as far as you know, but doesn't seem all that close to any of them. He isn't anyone's best friend, and doesn't appear to have one either, he just sort of hangs on the fringes of various social groups and is like an acquaintance to a fair number of people. You assume he's probably got other friends, real friends, friends you never see, friends who are more like him, a group of friends where he isn't on the peripheries, all misfits together, on an equal footing, sharing slightly strange outsider misfit jokes no doubt. Nerds, geeks, bookworms, buffs, trainspotters, OCD types, people who spend too much time alone on computers, who are probably into RPG, LARP and other really uncool stuff, who know nothing about mainstream sport or pop music or celebrity gossip or mainstream culture, and it's obvious that he doesn't know or care about fashion! I mean, his haircut... you can't call it a hairstyle. Does he cut it himself, and style it with grease from the deep-fat frier? He's a bit quiet, a bit odd, but not overtly - not like mega-weird, gibbering, slavering, out-and-out deranged, raving, psychotic, threatening or anything. There's just something you can't quite put your finger on. Sometimes, the way he looks at people... it's not even exactly creepy as such, just uncomfortable. It's like you can't quite tell what's going on in his head, if he's just sizing you up and making mental notes or what, or why. But then you decide you probably don't want to know. You don't pay it - or him - all that much attention, in truth. You've other things to think about and you don't want to dwell on the unsettling possibility that whatever's going on beneath the surface is probably unsavoury, dangerous or even just a bit sleazy. Sure, he seems ok when you talk to him, just a bit disconnected and you can't quite relate, you don't really meet on the same level and exchanges are punctuated by

moments where he's obviously uncomfortable, or just on his own planet or something, but then conversing with him engenders such a feeling that's mutual. You can't quite fathom if he's shy and awkward, or arrogant, or perhaps even just a bit disturbed. Either way, you've got other people to talk to, people you know and like already, you've got your social circle and your life and mobile address book's pretty full right now, you're busy enough with real friends on Facebook, you don't need to pick up any waifs or strays. Especially not waifs or strays who might be stalkers or rapists or paedophiles... you hate to think the worst of people, but you can't be too careful now, there are stalkers, rapists and paedophiles lurking everywhere. Especially on-line. But then, they could just as easily be in your street, at the supermarket, your place of work, in the nightclub... Besides, he always seems busy, always leaving early because he's got to be somewhere else, dashing off in a hurry to do misfit things with his real friends or whatever no doubt. Maybe he's even got a family or something, although it seems hard to believe. I mean, he doesn't seem adjusted enough to have met someone and... well, the whole idea seems a bit odd really. You shudder. He could never have a wife or kids, surely? But then, it seems strange enough that he should be able to hold down an ordinary job and get by in the everyday world with the normal people doing everyday normal things... You don't want to think about it too much though, and to be honest you've not really given it much thought because, well, why would you? But you know what I'm talking about, who I'm talking about - that guy. Yeah, everyone knows that guy. There's one on the edge of every social group, in every class, in every department of every office or whatever. No-one really likes him all that much. They tolerate him, but steer clear wherever possible. He doesn't seem to mind, wrapped up in his own weird little world. As I said, everyone knows that guy, right?

Well, I am that guy, and you haven't the first idea....



MIKE WATT'S MUSICAL GESTURES

Interview By Michael Cano

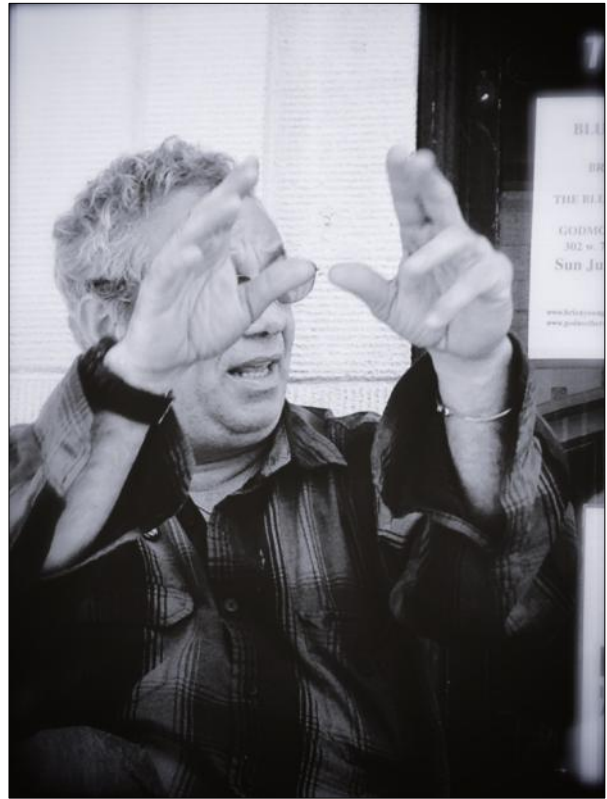
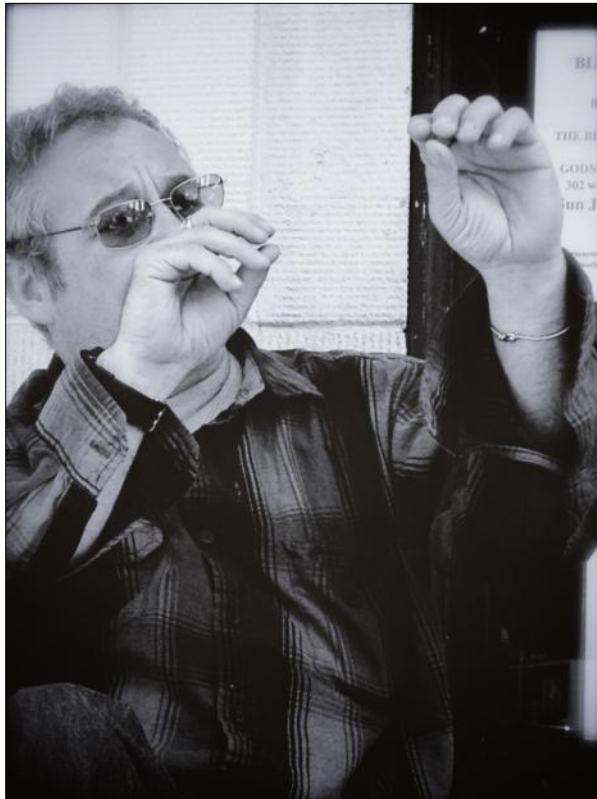
Photographs © Patsy Faragher



“The politics of bass: In a lot of ways, if you want to be pure tradition, I think is, you look good making other people look good, you’re the stuff between the cracks that fills it in, the grout.”



“One thing about it, if you’re in this too long, you start thinking you know it all. So when young people can show you shit, you open your mind up, it’s a very healthy thing.”



“I’ve been doing this a lot, where I do demos with bass guitar because it leaves a lot of room for the other cats. Some dudes, especially in the older days, really didn’t dig it, it was not enough information. But people like Nels (Cline) they love it, because it’s just enough, where they can get their own thing going.”



“Saturday, I did Tom (Watson) and Raul (Morales), the third opera again. I think in the Fall, I know, I’m doing one more tour, then I have to move on. I’ll write another thing for them, but I have to move on for my Secondmen, I want to do an album with them.



Actually, the Missingmen was put together for this proj(ect.)

And it got realized.

You know, in September 2006.

Put them together, started playing together, nothing about the opera, I just wanted them to get used to, I played with both of them in different proj(ect)s.



Raul came in for Jer in the Secondmen, and Tom goes back to Vince Meghrouni in the Pair of Pliers and then the Jom and Terry Show. I've had more than 12 years with Tom. 13 years, 1999!

Yeah, I think that's Pair of Pliers, 1999, right after the first opera.

I'm telling you where I'm at with that, I'm gonna still do it with them.

One more U.S. tour, September, October, to the beginning of November.

And then put her to bed.

And start on this thing with Pete and Jer. Not an opera, but concept, kind of.

About Pedro.

About work.

It's gonna be called: "Pick It Up, Put It Over There."

"You want things to have a plan, a reason. Also, the whole idea of more than one person playing, an ensemble, to me, the main goal is; have a fucking interesting conversation out of this. Get those instruments to talk. It's not about servicing a hierarchy. I think that was the old paradigm.

That was something that D. Boon was really against.

It was trippy.



I remember him talking about this, "Look, we're gonna put political ideas in the way we write the music in this band. I'm gonna play no power chords and really trebly. I want the bass and the drums up there, I want it equal."

You know?

We had come from the land of the dominant guitarist.

And really, only the guitarist in our band could make that equality happen.

Because it was his machine.

He laid down, right?

He fell on his sword.

He didn't really fall on his sword, he was just re-interpreting.

Now the brothers were doing this in R&B, they were already making room for their bass guys with that treble and clip thing.

In fact, D. Boon took a lot of inspiration from that, it wasn't like he invented it.

But he liked this idea of, let's have it as music, even though he was using it as political ideas, instead of a hierarchy.

The same old same old.

The rhythm section does its little dance and the lead guitar guy just struts and swaggers.

He was really not into that."

“I saw Flamenco...”



This guy my age comes on with the guitar, no PA, little stage, you know, starts wailing, right?

I mean, they wail with the left hand, but the right hand, it's all the fingers going and pounding on it, like a drum and shit.

An old viejo guy, the singer man in the middle, these weird syncopation claps, you know, and next to him was the dancer lady.

Very dark.

Big gal.

No smile.

Hard face on her.

Then the viejo guy gets up there and starts singing his songs.

Passionate...

Intense...

And then about halfway through, then the dancer lady gets up and does her thing.

And the stomps, the steps, it's like drumming!

And they're whooping her up, and she's twirling her hands and also some clicks, this was like roots, not castanets and fanciness.

It was just...

With the hard-ass look.

Finally, at the end, she smiled.

And the guys got her goin' and whoopin' it up, it was...

Man, I was bawlin' my eyes out.

Of course, I was thinkin' of D. Boon a lot.

He loved this music.

Now I know why the guy who showed him, Roy Mendez Lopez, the guy in Pedro who lived in his car and who just loved music, I can see why he wanted him to learn this music.

The emotional connection between this music is really strong.

I mean, there is a form to it and everything, but it's not secondary to the form, you know?

It's like the primary thing is: We are going to get the spirit across.

I can see why he wanted D. Boon to learn this.

It's about artifice.

Not edifice."



Mike Watt's Hoot Page: <http://www.hootpage.com>

To Purchase *Mike Watt: On and Off Bass*: <http://threeroomspres.com>



DEATH COMES RIDING

By Craig Woods

Bereavement renders the world as static as a derelict house. These words are just as empty; hollow conduits ushering me back to a childhood scene. A white house, corpse-pale, slumbering at the river's edge, a brief undisciplined jog or skateboard-streak from our street. Juvenile tongues whipped with morbid tales of murder and reports of fierce ghosts. The roof's broken eaves lanced downwards, just as my errant incisor had long made a spearhead towards the night a drunk's fist would finally knock it loose.

These words limp into the light like amputees wrestling with the phantom pain of a girl's scar upon my life. She fled the house long ago through a glass door cracked into a thousand spiderwebs, casting a thousand reflections as she went, each immaculate but incomplete. What I keep here is but referential material built from the shards I could salvage. Death has the same effect, and bereavement an extension of the same archival psychosis. Both leave me with narratives unfinished, books left to balance.

Often I conjure an autopsy in which the girl's thoughts and feelings are excavated, catalogued, itemised, assessed, poetically illuminated. The findings are in a book I'll never write. These are extravagances that death permits, but love does not. Love's corpse is undead and omnipresent. It slips easily from the maladroit grip of stunted words, which are all I have at my disposal. Love lobs Molotovs through the freshly repaired door and slips away in the smoke. But in the cavernous halls of bereavement I can feel her here still; walking intermittently with the dead whose ranks swell around her with each passing year. She collects my words, melts them down, moulds them into bullets to shoot into the hearts of anyone looking to trace her. I sigh her name and it sounds alien, a remnant cipher from the dialect of a remote galaxy. She and the dead are alive in the words of an artist obsessed with her, corralled among these excessively florid sentences. I could kick open the glass door and let daylight scour the house or what's left of it. But there is nothing left but this madman's patchwork of words I've been fumbling with. Empty words in lieu of the lives lost, the love my crippled hands relinquished, and the munificent surrogates I continue to reject in its absence.

This is what the end of the world looks like.

I wrote those words in recounting an inspirational dream from some months back. I was wrong. The end of the world in fact looks much like the everyday; bare limbs of trees swaying gently to electric rhythms beneath the city's dour slate sky. Everything is as it was and as it will remain days from now once the diagnosis has been delivered, the death sentence uttered, the warrant signed in blood and pus, its damning proclamations punctuated by rotten bone and corrupted tissue.

My limp flesh entraps me here under this immovable sky, this drab mockery of summers past. And yet my flesh is also an image of the sky; an organic tarpaulin begging to be

pulled away, to dismantle the machinery that so sternly governs this linear travesty of time and space.

Let it fall the fuck down...

I want to reach it. I want to breathe the breath of deathless children and hybrid firebrands, to dance without bones, without skin to the undulations of their invincible cosmic war cries.

What did I miss? Where were the crucial junctions, the imperative traffic signals, the routes not taken? How many slip-roads and cul-de-sacs evaded me on this linear, material trajectory they call 'adult life'?

I forgot my own advice: *'Follow the stray dog...'*

Somewhere in these corrupted veins there still shimmers the fluctuating image of a lost future. I can see its myriad images, hear its chorus of cosmopolitan song, taste its universal spices, nuzzle the flanks of my psyche/soul against its soothing veneer. Way out there beyond the pylons, where crows marshal and plot among ruined warehouses, where juvenile graffiti glimmers like arcane hieroglyphics among an estate of pylons. Time here flattens like table wine. Follow the dog's howls and she'll show you how to lower your muzzle and lap it up.

Soledad is back, breathing against my neck, her fire more furious than before. I must be something of a disappointment to her. The pathetic tragedy I'd written into her story has proved ultimately more real to me than her mission to obliterate it. She has transcended me it seems. Transcended the story. Though that part was always inevitable. I didn't create Soledad, of course. She's just always been here. She comes and goes as her destiny takes her, in and out of my story as it applies to her. Still, she is not utterly heartless; I can sense sympathy boiling silently somewhere in the dark recesses of her canine nerves. She could have rescued me if I'd let her. She could have shown me how to save myself had I summoned the wherewithal to pay attention.

Too far back now. Too late. Time is upon me like a plague. Oh well.

I can see myself/Grey/Squirrel. With Soledad. We/they huddled together in a clapboard shack, sheltering from torrid elements. One of the cabin's four walls folds out into an open galactic vista of endless planets set against a tide of copulating stars. All of time and space is before us. Soledad burrows her muzzle into my/his neck in a fierce kiss. I/he can see all my/his pasts and futures explode in the depthless recesses between planets...

I'm holding my lost girl now. She's a thin, pale-skinned young woman with long auburn hair. We are both young and healthy, our hearts and veins aflame with melancholy desires and adolescent lusts. There are fields before us, rows of pylons arranged like sentinels, and the silver silhouettes of a city beyond. Our love throbs to the rhythms of No Wave bands, jazz musicians and post-rock outfits. Our shared passions swim in tears and sail in laughter around islands of second hand books and pulp novels. The walls of our love flicker with images from trash exploitation movies and avant-garde art films. My arms ensnare my love's slender torso. Her tiny heart thunders like a bass drum in the centre of her desolate ribcage. I can drink the stars from her pale blue eyes. I can taste her cherry chapstick as her lips meet mine. Her tongue is a

hot dart of revolution burning the disease clean from my gums. This is the road not taken. This is where the clock should have been broken.

(But still it ticks tocks ticks tocks dick cock dick cock)

I can wake with her in an attic bedroom with autumn rain bombarding the dusty skylight. There are dogs sleeping with us; Sally my old black Labrador is there, young, alive and well. A white Alsatian, a German pointer, a husky, a Jack Russell.... A lazy day ahead; let's do nothing but watch old 80s movies and relive our childhood. Or play videogames and write nonsensical stories together. Later we'll convene with friends at a bar in town, maybe a gig in the evening, enjoy ourselves on our own terms as much as possible before the family event which beckons the following evening; a superficially pleasant affair where we'll have to bite our tongues at our relatives' casual racism and reactionary attitudes before returning home to enjoy each other again and laugh at the absurdity of having sprung from such unlikely roots.

I can hear 'In Dreams' by Roy Orbison...

I awake and find you gone

I can't help it

I can't help it if I cry

Too bad that all these things can only happen in my dreams

Death comes riding. Tomorrow stands poised to bolt the shattered gate shut.

What is to be achieved?

Soledad must ride too. The story must be allowed to blossom, despite my no longer playing an active role. I am shut off from it, my presence a curse dooming the destiny of my characters, jeopardising their victory, a victory I cannot live to see. Grey/Squirrel must die. But still I must report on the battle as an absentee witness. My lifelong vocation.

Soledad is oiling her guns.

Death gorges itself parasitically beneath my teeth. All of the dead live there now, making their apartments in those crooked enamel headstones, sipping cups of poison at the edge of a torn gum lake.

From here it's all down to who can draw quickest.

I can only pull the tarpaulin a little; flex it into a troublesome shape. My last ditch attempt at carving meaning from a meaningless journey. Can I pull the landscapes of my dreams from this ailing, treacherous body?

I carry four photos on my wallet. One of them describes a rural scene; three impudent young boys and two girls jeering impudently at the camera. I am one of those boys, or I was. My childhood joy and curiosity is still etched firmly in that photo's iridescent planes. I can see forlorn shadows of myself in the rainswept Dunbartonshire landscape. With the distilleries and forests of my body falling sway to malign influence, it's my final assignment to rally the lost children of my dreams; the lost reflections of myself into one final escapade.

Soledad spurs her black steed to a revolutionary horizon, the kids have dug trenches there and wait with their weapons aimed at the military and media satellites of a doomed Earth. My failure disqualifies me from joining them. But my heart still beats to their song of pylons and train wheels. Without me, their battle will rage. I can only write it. It's all I have left to do. But in the revelatory ignominy that an imminent diagnosis shall doubtless herald, that task becomes increasingly difficult. Too many battles perhaps. And no strength in this sad, broken, infected heart.

What blade of night will grant the mercy to cut me from these sheets of flesh?

Without teeth in this ageing, wilting visage, with death in my gums... how bitter will the battle taste? What strength might I summon when my late night wineglass finally runs empty and my bohemian schtick dissolves to mineral dust in the eyes of curious women? Whose cherry chapstick will I be permitted to taste once the mask has fallen, once time's hateful caprice spits my failure in her appalled face?

I can see young wide eyes wincing in disgust.

I can see a heart wilt under the lead weight of profound disappointment.

I can see a proud cheek turned to a sad grey street and a wind that explodes like incendiary knives across the exposed roots of my teeth.

I can see a Swiss ex-lover --dressed, dolled and beautiful-- cruising the attentions of would-be suitors at parties, my doom only a dull droplet in the conversational puddle of her late night inebriation.

I'm a sad anecdote without a face, without a context.

This fear is alien in its magnitude.

This is what the end of the world feels like.

Outside the slate sky darkens.

Soledad is stoic and silent as the ghosts of all my pre-Christmas selves flutter excitedly at her feet. A billion childhoods, a billion futures compete for her attention. I cannot touch them. They are locked to me. Soledad shrugs in disinterest. She has other songs to sing.

I can smell the 1980s in the cold; sharp sting of over-produced power-ballads, fluorescent glow of cartoon adventure serials, the clear smell of plastic action figures. I can taste the 70s in the dust of this apartment; ink of musty comic book pages, frayed vinyl records. The misunderstood 90s sulk among the stale creases of my teenage journals, the edges of their pages lacerating me cruelly, haranguing me with harsh echoes of high school heartbreaks and teen transgressions in suburban shadows and dimly lit city bars.

The war is on and I've been found wanting.

The building of these barricades is flesh ...

My love and I have spent this night in mutual embrace, a scenario accessible to me only via flight of imagination; embrace and joviality upon the sofa, enjoying a favourite film, eating pizza and ice cream. I go now to make bed with her before dawn comes to thrust my face into the vomit of linear reality. One night's worth of dreams, one night's worth of phantom miles to travel. Best make this small journey a good one.

Morning arrives like a cold steel train. But it's beautiful too: the sky clear and blue, the air cool and fresh, a half of moon protruding from the ether like a cosmic coin half-buried in timeless sands.

I'm imagining my love's arms around me, her warm mouth pressing against the skin of my neck, whispered words and a muted giggle. I can hear 'Thee Olde Dirty Flag' by Silver Mt Zion:

There's trumpets in Heaven, six feet underground...

My heart is cracking open.

Home is where the hatred is. And I don't want to go.

OLD MOVIE:

In the backyards of affluent households on a rural street, an adolescent boy climbs awkwardly up over the garden fence and into his neighbours' yard. Silently, cautiously, he eases open the rear door of the house and sneaks inside. Tiptoeing through the kitchen and dining room - large oak table, the authoritative tick-tocking of a grandfather clock. A large friendly black dog sits upright in its basket. From a frayed jacket pocket the boy produces a cold mince pie secreted from his parents' larder and offers it to the dog. The docile animal gobbles it up hungrily. On his way back out of the door to the yard, the boy seems unable to resist the illogical temptation to push the doorbell. DING DONG! Out he runs, leaping over rickety rural fences and out into a nearby sloping field of overgrown grass and bramble bushes out out out toward a wooded area beyond. Looking back, the boy can see in the distance now the neighbours' house - upstairs window the faint outline of a middle-aged man who turns to his wife with the words; "I'm tellin' you, that kid's a freak!"

FROZEN SEPIA IMAGE:

...boy running...rolling hills...distant houses...empty sky...the dark wood beckons

empty wet streets at dawn
behind a reflective and barely protective sheet the
bypass howls w/ the pain of every passing engine
relentless
red squirrels converse unseen in the emerald asylum
grey weight chokes the air and kisses the gravel
centrepiece of this elegant asphyxiation
a black battered shed
an antique car gleams
unnameable substance in dusty jars scream like newborns
teething beyond the illusory sheet of intellect
sommambulistic children excavate ephemeral
relief from the muted voice of a solitary pylon
passing the clandestine message back and forth unheard

but by sickly garden willows
nodding in solemn agreement
agonised roar of the wakened traintracks
rust crumbles forlornly in the wounded gaze of
a fat cat w/ its right eye missing
in the dawn's light all hazy blue
children scale walls of red brick
girl blonde, denim blue
queen by unnatural selection
waterproof in a birdbath
lonely magpies dance upon wet cables

Destitute ... the store is well and truly fucking closed head office is crumbling from within ...all funds to be terminated w/ immediate effect ... fuck ... cold grey shelves in ignominious dust of inadequacy ... audible collapse of hazily remembered rural spirits ... staccato sobs of a torn child ... an aged sister's wall of silence, stoic and impenetrable ... a betrayed wife's destructive exultation ... odious shockwaves in the blue box of my own selfishness ... a rusty blade to a gangrenous heart ... septic dreams dimly lit ... yr short anxious breaths sweet Poppy ... yr tears stained upon my musty pillow ... intangible liquid diamonds of tragic mass ... obsolete icons you and I ... the very language of our passion and plight engraved in a language of broken tissue upon the pale sweetly tortured surface of yr forearms ... in the superfluous edges of my malign reflection ... the deceptive skin ... figments of an alternate existence fixed thoughtlessly into impossible scenes ... an alien language of harmony ... the kindest gesture rendered stale and perfunctory ... one-dimensional ... drab robes of a life faded ... shadow of long past rivers ... melodies of nostalgic grace ring empty ... then atrophy ... away... gone ... a fugitive heartbeat ... a severed symbiosis...

.....so come sleep w/ me ... regardless ... of the fear of us ...the fear of me ... the fear ... this fucking fear of injury ... to a pale hollow ghost hammering together frail trellises of self-parody w/ every dull breath and ill-advised word ... and no words w/ which to pacify a fractured Angel ... strangled rhythm of an old unfinished song in my blood putrefied in tenebrous synchronisation w/ the anguished contours of yr face dimly remembered ...

scars you bear like the tattooed name of a lover
same scars I bear inside
same lives lost

iridescent blue wrapping paper in the bitter wind of childhood... "it used to snow all the time when we were kids"... our sweet surrogate aunt cradles her sister's namesake point of departure: alto sax wail and celebratory guitar feedback of teen dramas ... (lamplight on the pale walls compliments yr hair's auburn glory).....

.....remember androgynous conflux in once familiar walls ... (I GOT DRUNK / YOU GOT HIGH) ... (our history's progeny looks like her Mother) ... dissolving cubes of playful poison upon hazily remembered young tongues ... amorphous shadows vibrate around

the timeless wet tarmac ... faraway low rumble of dreaming cats ... (She was our all-sheltering tree)

empty wet streets at dawn
wind and dust choke the grey sprawl
from the ruined distillery walls are carved new psychic cities by backyard
babies in this town of spare parts
passing vehicles howl their pain across the chalked concrete
liquefied shadows dance
to the nostalgic rhythm of obscene fragments of someone else's memory
sad pylon song
subliminal accompaniment upon a platform of rainy cable
solo performance by the ragged scavenger bird whose
name evokes the faces of a billion dead teenagers

old worn chalk-hearts fade to the unwelcome sound of
vile street hucksters uttering capitalistic banalities in sickly undersea voices
"dreams on special offer"
"want old memory? - special edition, dust-free"
"get yr nostalgia upgrade here ... now w/ internet access, car-parking facilities and easy
access to drive-thru restaurant..."
they stole our old ruined playgrounds while we slept
and coated our trees w/ their soulless concrete
barely discernible tracks in path of past parade
coloured beads once thrown by a girl in a spider-web float
left uncollected
shattered mirror dirty bathroom leaking water
shadow of long past rivers
dogs bark unseen
faraway low rumble of dreaming cats
echo of distant voices ...

The old Crescent in the late 1970s... white roughcast two-storey houses lush green lawns in front, sizeable backyards sloping to an embankment on the south side separated by high wooden fences overgrown with ivy and brightly flowering bushes. The embankment gave way to a deep and rapid stream crossed a small bridge at the east end where the busy main road crossed over and the town beyond opened like a flower and parents were a lot less paranoid in those days ...

At that time the nearby park was populated with peafowl and was something of a minor tourist attraction. The eerie cries of those exotic birds would filter through the blue sheets of midnight and into my childhood dreams. One day the children of the Crescent crossed the

stream, one by one, walking cautiously along a narrow ledge that jutted out from the low edge of the brickwork of the bridge's outer perimeter, running parallel to the unseen road and its torrent of traffic. I remember my fluctuating reflection at the mercy of the stream's irate momentum. None of the adults appeared overly concerned, either by our proximity to the road or the danger of our slipping and falling into the rocky depths below. I remember farther back too, my eyes those of a toddler gazing upon my mother on the sloping embankment. I had made a toy of a large cardboard box and despaired to watch it tumble away from me, my despair turning to terror as the box was carried away by the stream's savage torrent.

Faces and voices and words and expressions and even clothing of the neighbourhood kids linger in my memory, but many of their names have evaporated. I recall my sister and I playing with a group of them in someone else's backyard at the far end of the street. A pretty girl with chestnut hair climbed a tree. She was older than me and there was something in her lithe girlish movements and doll-like face which captivated me, stirring some primal recess of my pre-sexual psyche. Perched gracefully upon a broad, stern branch she seemed miles above me, like some omnipotent queen of this modest rural landscape. Unfortunately for me, she was a cold and mean-spirited shit of a kid, and my affection was most certainly not reciprocated. My sister instigated some fun role-play and suggested to the girl in the tree that I assume the role of her little brother. My Queen in the tree cast a disdainful eye in my direction. "Some little brother. He looks like a pig!" I was four years old.

An Italian family by the name of Deluca lived directly opposite. My sister was friendly with their daughter, Sandra. One evening I lay alongside my sister and Sandra on the floor of my sister's darkened bedroom as they both spoke in riddles, pretending to communicate with mysterious "spirits". Suddenly, from the thick blanket of gloom before my eyes, a face emerged; a ghostly pale disembodied face staring at me with empty eyes, the eerie features deformed in a rictus of terror or agony. Terrified, I ran screaming and hysterical out of the bedroom and into my mother's arms, wailing; "I saw a face! I saw a horrible face!"

Although I couldn't immediately place it, it soon dawned on me that the face in question was of an ilk to which I had only recently been exposed. My sister and I had been playing over at the Deluca's place and I had stumbled upon a room with a high and wide mirrored wardrobe, a bed and a few wicker chairs. Each of these items, and almost every spare inch of floor space, was occupied by what at first glance appeared as scores of shrunken children. A multitude of porcelain dolls sat and stood in disciplined congregation, their jewelled eyes staring into mine, and into those of their myriad reflections in the parallel world of the mirrored wardrobe. It appeared Mrs Deluca was a keen collector. I stood transfixed by the sight of these statuesque little girls (for they were almost exclusively female), their frozen faces evoking an aura of uncanny acumen that belied their juvenile likeness, and was completely beyond my comprehension. The figures emanated a psychic voice; equal parts sublime, tragic and terrifying. The dolls' near-identical appearances seemed to suggest that this gloomy bedroom constituted a *tempus vacuum* in which the multiple possible roles to be fulfilled by a single fluctuating figure were here presented as terrible static fragments. Thus the face I had glimpsed in the darkness of my sister's bedroom was the face of this shattered figure; reduced to a single

fragment and cruelly deprived of access to its infinite alternate selves.

Porcelain and ceramic dolls have ever since maintained a compulsive attraction and peculiar fascination for me. Pale-faced, red-haired girls are, for reasons I cannot intellectualise, held in particularly high regard.

"Some men say they adore redheads. These men usually have very interesting psychosexual problems and shouldn't be let out without their mothers."

- Angela Carter

The Quilt-Maker

One of my all-time favourite quotes.

Not long afterwards I experienced my first kiss. Not the impassioned, desperately sexual kiss of adolescents, but something less self-conscious and as intuitive as the impulse that compelled children to cross from one bank of a stream to another. She was my raven-haired next-door neighbour, Joanna. She was around my age. We would press our lips together for several seconds without moving then break off, look at each other. Then I would smile, she would giggle, we would both erupt in champagne laughter, then press our lips back together. This cycle continued for some time until we were spotted from an upstairs window by my mother, who promptly called me inside. I remember Joanna embarked on a spectacularly destructive tantrum as her own mother emerged to retrieve her. The nearby stream's torrent could not match the rage roused from her tiny heart. Time and again I would taste that rage in the hearts of other girls, other women.

The first girl with whom I would share a passionate and sexual kiss had hair so black it became iridescent in sunlight, like the way a starling's wing flashes from shadow to rainbow and back again. Those feathers fluttered their last when she finally hanged herself in a Cornton Vale cell. Somewhere between the kiss and the noose, I unearthed a doll that looked just like her in a shabby charity shop. I misplaced that doll years ago, or someone stole it maybe. When I discovered its absence, I felt like her body had been exhumed. She streaked across my inner sky once more. Her impudent expression unfurled over the faces of lovers, just as a cuckoo squats on another's nest. Still she circles vultuously on the edge of my daydreams, cloaked but omnipresent. And once in a while I attempt to write her out of me. I ram the tangle of my memories as deep as they'll go into as finely realised an egg as my words can generate. But they don't belong there, any more than a makeshift noose belongs around a vulnerable girl's throat. And so all that is left is the derelict house and its array of tarnished mirrors.

All of our mirrors are broken.

All of our reflections are lost little girls and boys forever seeking their lost likenesses.

So many identical fragments.

Too many.

So many you can't remember...

The old gloomy bedroom is quite empty now. No figures occupy the dusty furniture.

You can see the mirror now cracked and broken and filthy and empty and forgotten....

April 8th 1995 Poppy's smiling pretty face in the moist emerald glow of the park. she was the tangible breathing embodiment of that dislocated doll now apparently attained access to her myriad forms in a moving beautiful incandescent figure and I loved her instantly. two years later and I could feel the anguish squalling through her skin as she reeled from the cruel ironic taunts of that vile little gaggle of uninspired pseudo-punks.

"I fucking hate them!" she exclaimed. I had never before heard her use the word and I was perturbed.

She clasped her small hands tightly together and buried her face.

A further seven years hence I held her close as she slept we had just made love and I caressed with one gentle finger the ragged line of scar tissue upon her left forearm. It seemed I traced the past in that tortured, line hers and mine, and also what I was unshakeably convinced represented the inscribed promise of our symbiotic future

Lullaby:

I had a dream

A terrible dream

The bombs were all falling

And you were far away from me

And the woods where I sought shelter were already burning

Sparks lifted by the wind dancing and swirling

And in the hollow sky

One thousand pigeons cried

And I could not reach you

And my whole world died

But OH! The beauty of those slender aching trees

And the birds so sweetly weeping behind those pretty leaves

The flames upon the water so gently trembling

In this nightmare like a love song that once burned between you & me

The mirror spreads its shards across the galaxy of a gloomy room in infinite dimensions cast out and flying freely by dusty twilight of pale amber streetlight forgotten autumn. One touch and the cut is shallow but fatal. Pigeons flutter through the ruined edifice. Smell of 1980s filth in a London street. The rumble of trains and the sorry grey roads like the desolate outlands of a distant planet. A girl on the street wiped greasy fingers on her grubby denim skirt. A chance glimpse inconsequential in the regimented clock of the city. Left her behind on another mirror shard of childhood responsiveness.

Over a decade later in Singapore I swore I saw the same girl standing under a crooked tree on the concourse her impudent face unaffected by age, her insolent posture unchanged as

though plucked from my memory like a photograph, one shard reflecting its sad image to another. Time has no meaning...

the mirror convulsess and the shards are unable to reconcile the girl in the faded sepia photo all happy smiles and pigtails does not recognise the weary unhappy face of my 45-year-old mother confined to a bed of misery in that wretched house of leering intruders and philanderer's secrets. her worn diseased body and its former glory vanished in the dark crack between shards and her words echo forever repeating through a musty stairwell; "You're always miles away, son..."

A musty stairwell with faded shit-brown carpeting traverses the crack to a different house on a hill by the moaning traintracks...

SHARDS OF SUMMER:

Tuesday - 4 days gone and already I sorely miss the lucky stars in her eyes.

Wednesday - Saffron, you've been hidden almost a week and the stars are still turning from the violence of a red rose. Lucky stars in your eyes - your words: "I'm too busy gabbing" - "I'm not with it" - "I can't do anything right" - past visions I can still taste in the summer evening - How's the food in Tanzania? - as finally I was falling asleep realising the fragility and futility of friendship just dead, my bed and reigns of chill and pain. A horizontal firecracker, my state prison - grey box reserved for the southern Angels - glass coffin for my sister and forgotten friend (no voice on the telephone) - diamonds for my lovelorn minstrel, roses for you. Old crumbling bones in the twilight street - derelict factories - percussive wind through flyover railings - in these places in which all reality turns into a howl and dances to the song of a thousand forgotten dogs - something happens. Old broken bones crumbling to chalk - I don't know what or who's happening. (...friends, are you still there?) every time I want someone (not Poppy) it's just a dream Everything I want is a dream And dreams are the neediest companions. This vase is cracked - every howl of pain is a howl of defiance Every howl of pain is a howl of romance ("come back!") And what do you dream? And what would you say if you knew of these words? Your soul wanders with a map stolen from me. "I can't do anything right" I miss your messy fringe and benevolent smile

Old memory ... looming slope of the backyard in the dark emerald glow of a summer evening where my sister catches craneflies and makes them copulate. Whole town visible and illuminated from the old dusty road. My father helps me try to catch one of the many pipistrelle bats as they flutter in the humid air inches from my awestruck juvenile face. He presses an old harmonica to his lips and the dogs sing of lost lupine legends.

Ahaaaaaooooooooowww!!

My father helps me catch a worn diseased body - a pursuit which bore no fruit - lost inert fragments - hear midnight words: "...in my own bed!" Over the cracked mirror.

Gloomy road amber streetlights by rhododendron bushes words echo forever from the humid air. My father helps a bed of misery in that wretched house waiting like a bird of prey in the shadows ...

Smell of rain and the cries of peafowl
In my own bed
Mirror splintered

Thursday - Wounded still, I linger on. I desire to make everything about you. It's all about you. I shudder at the sight of my sad wrecked reflection. ...

I want all my conversations to involve you. I am perplexed and hurt by the amateur professor's cold and sanctimonious dismissal; "she'll never come back". But you will come back. Won't you? ... The futility of either scenario (eventual return/perpetual absence) encroaches on my psyche with sickening clarity. I long to melt once more before your beguiling gaze. Yet I am continuously assaulted by brutal stabs of realisation; the spectre of my inevitable failure to follow the red rose with anything other than awkward stifled flirtation, malign non-communication, and eventual misery and catastrophe.

In spite of all of this, I am helpless to stem the colossal sense of loss that your departure has invoked, or acquiesce the compulsive yearning for the order and reason that your sarcastic smile, deprecating manner and forthright voice provided the otherwise mechanical monotony of everyday doubt, stress and worry.

Sour angel, wherever you may find yourself at this moment, may positive thoughts find you there. And perhaps you may spare one for me as, one by one, my friends turn to cold stone in your absence.

Old memory beyond the old house: a makeshift rubbish heap lay at the centre of the woods on the old hill all along a lengthy shallow ravine. various household items were strewn around. I was there with a forgotten boyhood friend at seven or eight years of age. we stood upon the lip of the ravine and surveyed the scene of an anonymous catastrophe. among the rubbish stood a prominent ornamental dressing mirror propped against an old moss-covered tree reflecting ghostly skewed images of us in its cracked surface. we climbed down into the ravine and made our way westward stopping here and there to toy absently with assorted items of junk, encoding each with our own complex fantasies and wild assumptions. after almost an hour of continuous walking we climbed out of the ravine and surveyed our new surroundings only to find the same mirror propped against the same moss-covered tree. somehow we had walked in a straight line only to arrive back at our point of departure as though our twisted reflections represented a tangible reversal wherein time and space was inverted. a doorway to a parallel psychic zone glimmered there in the cracked glass among the detritus of nameless lives. amorphous residue in the rubbish heap of past times ...

Friday -

Saffron, I cannot keep my eyes open despite all of my efforts to fend off the approaching morrow

Saffron, your absence is a prolonged circus act

Saffron, in my fantasies I am going down on you, lapping up your elixir, but cannot accept you going down on me as this suddenly somehow demeans you

Saffron, I hold the celluloid knife and ponder vicious new tattoos for my deceptive skin

Saffron, the Muskrats have forsaken me

Saffron, I am ludicrous in the wake of Palestinian children massacred by Zionist bombs

Saffron, I have forgotten your name

Saturday - I am a fugitive, having eloped from my job and every other civil shackle of the oppressive capitalist world. I have somehow travelled by boat all the way to Tanzania. The building at which I arrive is a blinding bleached white spectacle hung with ivy and creeping vines. The other visitors are a ragged band who have found their way here from every corner of the globe. We do not converse, merely acknowledge one another with the weighty silent nods of those who intuitively recognise another outsider, another dissident. At reception I am handed a rusty key with a wooden tag painted green, engraved with the number 5. This is not a hotel but a villa with 7 adjoining stables at the rear, each converted into a letting accommodation space. I have evidently reserved stable number 5. It seems as though I have been a resident here before. I am walking through a bustling dining room. Strong smell of ripe fruit and white wine. It is hot. Sweat trickles down my back. Tomorrow I make my way to Kilimanjaro in search of Saffron.

- I wake to another alienating stretch in a vulgar prince's exploitative gulag. I find myself yearning for a symbol of hope to be inscribed upon my flesh. A totem at one with my physical self. Give me the Hammer of Hope. Give me the Flying Kittens. Give me back the lucky stars in her eyes eclipsed now by distance.

Voices drift from the empty schoolyard A deal done there by the window of an old store under the tired eyes of a faded mannequin a wretched wind chilling us to our weary bones. Jade asked me to hide the gun and handed it to me rolled up in an old sleeping bag and she drifted sadly off into the bitter winter breeze like a discarded cigarette packet. Jade died alone, a stranger in a grimy bathtub, heavy drops, the rocky depths below, carried away by the savage rush of the reddened water, river girl eternally drowning in the dark crack between shards...

Psychic itch and an aroma of sickness
On a whispering childhood breeze
A scent of void and of vacuum
Fractured Angel of the lovelorn howls through the attic
With ailing spirit of slumber
Waking dream of a ruined future
Stillborn and muted by vile materialist tongues
W/ feathers in moth-eaten scrapbooks
Fear and the porcelain doll
Sour taste of happy couples in the morning
The air hazy and spiced w/ electric whispers
Pale flesh revealed in unconscious patches
She drew her small palms together
Her hair reflected in the lake
Summer light

On the attic window of the old house
On the odour of cheap red wine in the musty flat
On the initial-engraved bench weeping in the public park
On the painting of a happy union
On the young girl happily feeding the ducks

The lovelorn cling to their ruined home
A lost peafowl cry faint and muted
In the attic night taste of bitter tears
Dawn light on young flesh
Psychic itch the hand of a dead lover
Sad as the loss of poppies
Yr betrothed a distant planet
Solid humanity into empty air
Stark grey sky
Diffusion and barrenness.

percussive breath of wind thru flyover railings ... sacred icons rot like fish on the treacherous shore of the corporate beach ... below a narcotic sky the snow imprint of two young figures ... the hallucinatory shape of betrayed desire ... scar tissue upon her forearm ... traced lightly ... the inscribed promise of our symbiotic future ...

empty wet streets at dawn ... echo of distant voices ... superimposed on his memory to die among the fading film images dream fingers trace the hope-filled doll-face just made love our inert fragments myriad mannequins - "it's me" ... forgotten laughter in wet city street

remember Florida lost coloured beads in the room everyday voices soiling my picture of you 'Baby Doll' who never would be now a room where the window would not open nothing for me to do my most loved one and her timeless beauty cold here and now always darker a heavy sky and suddenly I lost her as the last crow flies from the old station last soul here now on the old dusty road the dogs are no longer barking by the old rusty traintracks the song of the pylons has atrophied

Pictures coming in: ... hallway peeling wallpaper ... young girl with a pretty face that seems removable ... - "I told you I would come" young boy with detachable limbs sockets oozing a thick black fluid

go in now go in swaying percussion of dead child wind chimes
upstairs bedroom skewed décor odds and ends scattered mannequin amputations
see my friend's lover perched there beautiful in a long black dress cross-legged toys with a small figurine made of paper as the sheets turn stale on twin steel gurneys you
see blood on pale walls? singing toys in a ruined nursery cracked bathroom door
toothbrush streaked with blood "it's me" shattered ghost reflection soiled mirror
girl I almost was

NOW PROJECTED ON A THICK SOILED WHITE CURTAIN:

Slow motion image: young woman in a bathtub - dark hair - pale and thin - her eyes fixed to the ceiling in - paralysis? - hypnosis? - one long alabaster arm dripping wet stretching upwards - eyes in stark realisation - flesh and bone of the arm becoming transparent - disappearing - her face twisted in ghostly expression of terror ...

reminds me of a story ...

Blue-eyed Gaze at Nearby Roadkill

When the soldiers and police and bulldozers set out to demolish the old squats, they had evidently underestimated the resistance that lay in wait for them. Scores of beautiful feral children had emerged from the old crumbling tenements in strategic battle formations: bombers lobbing Molotovs from behind shattered windowpanes; girls on bicycles and roller blades throwing cans of petrol over faces and bodies of stunned pigs; little boys armed with firecrackers moving in to deliver the deadly flames. There was no remorse. The children were relentless in their savagery in the way that only children can be. The final merciless blows from pocket-knives and softball bats strangled the rasps and gargling death rattles in the throats of every one of the vile old order's wounded boy scouts and trained murderers.

And finally, as the last of the acrid black smoke dissipated in the noon sky, the gulls came to feed on the shreds of charred flesh and roost among the shells of the ruined demolition machines. The children and all the gypsies, vagrants, previously disillusioned youths, and members of every persecuted minority and oppressed demographic had marched off towards the heart of the City where the Enemy's domain lay in wait. Months, years, decades of strategic assaults on Their exploitative industrial sites, lines of communication, chains of command, and multimedia propaganda systems had paved the road for this final push. And behind them the revolutionaries had abandoned this discarded urban enclave, their makeshift home of so long. I found myself walking through a desolate and lonely place; a sad stagnant limbo waiting eagerly for an end to the war and a new utopian vision of itself.

As I walked, the deserted buildings on either side of the misty street seemed to age rapidly, as though I were traversing a phantom time zone of crippled memories. The ammonia stink of stale urine assaulted my nostrils from the open doorways of crumbling apartment buildings. Tiny lawns lay overgrown and choked with weeds, littered sporadically with mounds of festering dog shit.

Eventually I arrived at this particular street's final block. Through the mist I could make out the ghostly shapes of two small figures, their backs to me, crouched in the centre of the road. From the nearby building drifted the faint sound of music. Someone was playing a clarinet.

"Poppy!" I gasped excitedly.

At the sound of my voice, one of the crouched figures spun its head in my direction. Registering my approach, the figure sprung to its feet in a rapid catlike motion and with one

arm pulled its companion to a standing position to face me. An almost subvocal murmur emanated from this second figure, an unsettling rhythmic sound somewhere between a sob and a giggle. The melody of the clarinet danced upon the still air and my heart began to race.

As I arrived at the apartment block which apparently housed the musical occupant, I saw that the two waiting figures were children; a boy and girl no more than eight or nine years old. They were both blonde and blue-eyed and I assumed they were siblings, perhaps twins. The girl bore a sharp alert expression, intimating a shrewd intelligence well beyond her years. (- I was struck by the curious impression that her face was somehow removable-) She wore a blue Victorian party dress (rather like that worn by Tenniel's Alice). I noticed with some surprise that the girl's left arm had been crudely amputated, leaving a clumsy useless stump that culminated gracelessly about an inch above where her elbow should have been.

The boy had the open-mouthed expression of an imbecile, his glazed eyes and unintelligible grunts doubtless the result of whatever atrocity had been committed upon his fragile brain; a legacy of unimaginable cruelty written into the conspicuous scar upon his malformed cranium, not even barely concealed by the sailor's cap perched awkwardly there. His cumbersome frame was squeezed into an ill-fitting sailor's suit. It was plain that the children had been victimised in one of the Enemy's many institutions, and now wore these pantomime clothes in parody of that malign system which had tortured them and in whose destruction they now no doubt played their role.

"Hello Mister," the girl said, eyeing me curiously.

"Hello," I replied distractedly, craning my neck to peer at the darkened windows of the apartment building, tuning my ears to the frequency of the faint melody resounding within.

"This bad place, Mister. Sure you wanna be here?"

While the girl's words conveyed a simple childish empathy, I could not shake the notion of a veiled threat implied in the sharp contours of her strangely mature face.

As though reading my thought, the girl cast her eyes from me and down to the boy's hand dangling at her side. Following her gaze, I saw that the short chubby digits of the boy's undersized hand clutched a long sliver of glass, probably from one of the many shattered windowpanes. The shard was hooked in shape like a scimitar, ending in a razor-sharp point. My throat became suddenly dry and my palms damp, and I was gripped by the fear that the girl may have mistaken me for one of the Enemy. I visualised my agonised demise at the hands of the poor lobotomised boy as, at his sister's command, he wielded this deadly toy, fathomlessly and playfully thrusting it into my abdomen to rupture my internal organs. I shivered.

Abruptly, a broad friendly smile spread across the girl's face.

"Don't worry Mister. We good kids. We just been playing is all."

Turning her head to look behind her, she guided my gaze towards the patch of ground where both children had been crouched a moment before. There upon the tarmac lay the corpse of a grey squirrel. Thin stab wounds peppered the animal's head and thorax, its innards oozing out upon the cold surface of the road. I looked back at the girl. She was still smiling.

"Was dead already. Honest. We just playing." She giggled again, the coquettish giggle of

an inebriated teenager.

The boy harmonised with a low wretched chuckle, a thick string of saliva descending from his open mouth, suspended for a moment before falling finally into a glistening blob at his shuffling feet.

Again I turned my attention to the faint and vaguely familiar melody emanating from within the building. Astutely the girl identified my concern.

"You know that tune, Mister?"

"I think so. I'm not sure," I replied truthfully.

"You know people in here?" She gestured towards the building.

"I don't know. Maybe."

The girl frowned. "What you *doing* here, Mister?"

I addressed the girl's gaze directly. "I'm looking for someone."

Suddenly excited, the girl brought her one hand up to her chest and made a clasping motion, the hand somehow locking contact with the ghost of its departed companion. She began to click her heels repeatedly.

"Ooooohhh! Who you look for?" she exclaimed. "Maybe we help. We find good. We find bad men before they wreck houses."

"I'm looking for a girl. Her name is Poppy."

"Girl in there!" She pointed to the apartment building. "I see her at windows. Look very sad."

My heart threatened to explode. "You've seen Poppy?"

"She play music, right? I hear her, she very good. But sad."

Sad music had indeed followed Poppy incessantly through all the years I had known her. Could it be true? My heart and mind raced. Had something other than coincidence and impulse brought me to this ruined street, these wounded children, this building and its mysterious clarinetist occupant?

(I pictured Poppy's sweet pale smiling face, her pretty red hair, her thin arms reaching out to embrace me ... imagined the soft melody of her voice against my ear, promising never again to leave ...)

Gathering myself, I turned and walked briskly through the courtyard to the looming apartment building. I was less than a foot from the front door when ...

"WAIT!"

The girl came running across the grey paving slabs of the courtyard, her blue dress billowing around her bony knees as she screamed:

"You CAN'T go in there, Mister!"

"What?" I asked incredulously. "Why not?"

The girl grasped my arm tightly, a genuine expression of concern twisting her face into a rictus.

"This really bad place, Mister! This building... *Bad* things here! Really really bad!"

"What is it? Not soldiers? Or the police?"

She shook her head vigorously. "Not them. They gone. But ... bad in there."

"Then I have to go in," I said, shaking her off as forcefully as I could without hurting her. "Poppy could be in there and I have to find her!"

The girl held my gaze for a moment, a tear visibly threatening one eye. Evidently embarrassed by this, she bowed her head. After a pause she asked:

"Does Mister love sad music girl very much?"

I laid a soft hand on her shoulder. "Yes. Very much."

At this she nodded slowly, sniffed and composed herself once more. She signalled to the boy who was still standing by the gate.

Awkwardly the boy shuffled towards us, the blade of glass still clutched in one hand. Gently, the girl removed the shard from between his fingers. She turned back to face me, the glass balanced flat in her small open palm in an offering gesture. "Bad things in there, Mister. You need this maybe."

Gingerly I took the sliver from her with my left hand. The girl's eyes were moist, and as I opened my mouth to thank her she stood on tiptoe and planted a soft brief kiss upon my cheek. "You go find sad music girl you love now." She retreated a few steps. "Good luck, Mister. Be well."

I turned to face the heavy oak door of the building, leaving these ragged Angels of the street behind me ...

In Sad Faded Dreams, He Crawls Blind With A Splinter in his Paw

and it's how I came to be standing in this musty darkened lobby of a ruined apartment building it seems the power is out thru this dense blanket of gloom I can ascertain very little of my surroundings only the disused mailboxes the printed fading names of former residents some scratched out and illegible a small cranny of an office (once occupied by a kindly concierge perhaps) and now the stairwell looming before me ascending into an impenetrable shroud of darkness the whirling melody of the clarinet louder now I follow the sound walking slowly and with childlike caution step by crumbling step one hand on the cracked rickety banister shaking and creaking the other hand gripping tightly the keen glass shard a wall of barely perceptible sound engulfs me as though the building itself constitutes a living entity breathing its agonised last as the spores of some fatal virus or parasitic larvae assume dominion of its ruined carcass a nauseating drone scuttling and scratching eventually I have found my way to the first of the upper floors the landing door swings slowly open with an excruciating metallic groan like a dying machine and slams shut behind me I find myself in a darkened corridor a row of shabby wooden doors along the wall to my right stretches farther than I can see in the darkness the clarinet so near now I can recognise the frenetic free jazz melody of Ornette Coleman's Lonely Woman a personal favourite could Poppy really be here gingerly I open the first door and step inside the apartment is illuminated at first I believe myself to have intruded upon a private party but with clarity washing over my fevered brain the static figures perched upon the wooden chairs reveal themselves as expensive and exceptionally well-crafted female fashion mannequins arranged (with apparently painstaking deliberation) in an inanimate parody of a middle class ladies' house night their dead eyes fixed upon one another's frozen gestures of quaint pleasantries

there is no doubt that the clarinettist is beyond the wall currently facing me with its peeling rose-patterned wallpaper the music pouring in from the apartment next-door I imagine my sweet Poppy as an existential Eurydice anxiously awaiting my arrival I recognise the source of the light in here as a strangely phosphorescent brooch fastened to the lapel of the most noble and beautiful of the mannequins an elegant figure in a long flowing green dress her deep red hair spilling over her cold solid shoulders I remove the brooch lightly and fasten it to my own lapel and move back out into the corridor where I can now make out the peeling brown floral wallpaper as I walk onward a shuffling sound emanating from the gloom at the end of the corridor beyond becomes increasingly audible and gradually I can make out the approaching shape of a figure the size of a man creeping with an unsettling insectoid gait now gripped by fear I try the handle of the door to the next apartment but it appears to be locked and as I rattle it desperately with all the strength my tired body can muster the sound of the clarinet comes to an abrupt halt panicking I look to the approaching shape and what I see both terrifies and repulses me a lumbering mockery of the human form an animated and mutilated mannequin with empty arm sockets a third leg protruding from the apex of the trunk where a head should be the third leg waving and whirling like the proboscis of some predatory insect and between the thighs of this abomination I can identify the form of a battered porcelain doll eyeless and blood-smeared semi-protruding from a gash crudely slashed at the base of the mannequin's trunk as a makeshift vaginal orifice I cannot escape the notion that the mannequin's plastic veneer possesses an organic skin-like quality suddenly the poorly healed scar upon my upper left arm begins to itch and throb almost unconsciously I roll up my shirtsleeve and without rational thought I bring the hooked razor edge of the glass shard to the inflamed surface of the scar and cut the scar open the mannequin-doll-thing is closing in on me from beyond the door of the apartment I can hear that the clarinet has now been replaced by plaintive chords gently strummed on an acoustic guitar accompanying the soft voice of a female singer from the deep weeping wound in my arm I retrieve a small silver key dripping with blood the mannequin-doll-thing is almost upon me as I fumble the key into the lock of the apartment door turning it frantically pushing the door swings open and I stumble urgently into the welcoming gloom and ethereal music of the apartment beyond ...

Koma

My back to the door now slammed shut, I stand shaking in fright, an icy torrent of fear careening down the small of my back. The wound in my arm throbs nauseously, but already the burning itch there informs me that the blood has begun to clot with anomalous rapidity.

I stand in an alcove (far too confined to be considered a hallway) with a door on either side, both ajar. To my left I can just make out a large, seemingly unfurnished room littered with junk. Among the detritus, the multiple amputated limbs of mannequins are scattered capriciously. The arrangement evokes an attempt by a seriously disturbed mind to create an artificial rehearsal of some future grisly atrocity. Beyond, a kitchenette in a filthy state of neglect is just visible through a tattered screen door.

The music is emanating from the other room to my right, where what I assume to be candlelight casts an eerie troupe of dancing shadows upon the minimal wall space currently visible. The plaintive minor chords so delicately strummed on the acoustic guitar lend an

almost intangible melancholy to a song which I am sure I have never before heard. But somehow the song seems to know me;

*"I once fell in love with you
Just because the sky turned from grey into blue"*

The singer's voice is beautiful; vulnerable yet keen, but my heart sinks with the realisation that the voice is not Poppy's. I push open the door and step into the room.

The walls are covered in a deep rose-coloured wallpaper, peeling here and there, occasional patches ripped out and almost illegible graffiti scrawled upon the underlying wall in children's' coloured pencils. There is a brass bed, springs rusted through the bare mattress; a tall black oak wardrobe; a full length dressing mirror, smudged and dusty; and a tattered screen door opening into a tiny bathroom that looks as though it has seen better days.

In the centre of the room, amongst the litter of old books, comics, and vinyl LPs, sits the cross-legged figure of a young woman, her back to me. Evidently oblivious to my presence, she continues to sing and strum upon a battered black guitar. The young woman has shiny raven hair that stretches in a straight cascade to end at a slight curl at her bare pale shoulders. She wears only a short white nightgown and is almost shockingly thin.

Entranced by the sad beauty of her song, I step forward and deeper into the room to be closer to it. Beneath my right foot I feel something suddenly give way to the pressure of my step with an audible snap. Abruptly the song is brought to a mid-chorus halt. Now alert to my presence, the young woman seems frozen in place.

I look down at the filthy carpet and lift my right foot to reveal a broken vinyl record; 'Lady Sings the Blues' by Billie Holiday. A shame, another of my personal favourites.

Slowly and cautiously, the young woman lifts the guitar from her lap and moves to lay it down on the floor.

"No." I cannot help myself but to speak out. "Please. Don't stop."

The young woman pauses for a moment, the instrument suspended in the air, then evidently deciding against my request, sets it down on the soiled carpet to her side. Finally she turns her head to look at me. Her sublime face is dominated by deep green catlike eyes set proudly in the sharp contours of her bones. They are complemented by high cheeks and a long aquiline nose. Her thin-lipped mouth curls slightly in an unreadable grimace, and she addresses me with a hard silent stare. The silence seems fathomless and almost eternal.

Finally, she speaks;

"Squirrel?" she enquires in the self-assured voice of a doctor or police officer. Her accent suggests she hails from the south of England, very middle class.

Unsure of how to respond, I mumble; "I ...I'm sorry, I saw one outside?"

A look of confusion flickers briefly across her striking features, then her lips uncurl and relax.

"Oh no, I'm sorry," she says. "I thought you were someone else."

Using her arms as levers, she turns her body to face me without uncrossing her legs. "I

could charge, you know.”

“Charge?” I ask, confused.

“For the performance” she gestures with a jerk of her head to the discarded guitar.

“I’ll pay if you like, for you to keep playing”

She eyes me curiously. “Are you so desperate to be entertained?”

“I...”

Somehow I find myself incapable of formulating a coherent response to this question. I note that I am still shaking from the shock of my ordeal in the corridor, cold sweat gluing the shirt to my back. My nausea has not gone unnoticed.

“Would you like to take a seat?” the young woman asks. She gestures towards a gloomy corner of the room occupied by a plastic-backed chair, much like that found in school classrooms throughout the world, its steel legs rusted.

Inexplicably, I am unable to step away from my standing position in the centre of the room. I look back to the young woman. She frowns at me.

“Do you have a name, stranger?”

I shrug. “People just call me Grey”

“Then for goodness’ sake Grey, sit down before you collapse. You look like you’ve just fucked your mother.”

Perversely her deprecating tone dispels much of the previously palpable tension, easing my mind to a point where I feel able to suppress my awareness of this haunted building and the warped town around us, content to focus instead on the microcosm of this room wherein she and I comprise the only sentient life.

Dragging the chair deeper into the room, I establish between us a more intimate proximity and sit down to face my sardonic hostess. She possesses something of a sleepy animal quiescence and I fancy that in “ordinary” circumstances she would prove to be an introverted character, speaking rarely and usually only in response to a question or the expression of a need. Her frequent silent pauses between comments and questions seem to harbour an air of threat or criticism. It is not difficult to imagine that a prolonged period of her remote company would prove intolerably nerve-rending. Here and now however, I sense that this calm and doubtless immeasurably intelligent young woman can detect not only my fear but also my desire to persevere in the pursuit of a specific goal, regardless of the cost to myself. In this respect perhaps, we may be kindred spirits.

From the filthy carpet beside her she retrieves a carton of cigarettes and a lighter. She quickly pops a cigarette into her mouth and flicks the lighter. The flame casts her gaunt face in a sickly orange glow, accentuating the sharp edges of her nose and cheekbones as they bleed their angular shadows across her pale skin. Neglecting to ask whether I smoke, she tosses a cigarette in my direction which I catch clumsily and insert self-consciously between my dry lips. She leans forward with the lighter flame, igniting my cigarette.

I lean back in the chair as I take my first drag. It has been a long time since I last smoked and the poison seems strangely nourishing, reassuring as it grips my throat and lungs. With my exhalation I can discern what appear to be very particular cyclical patterns in the smoke as it

weaves and curls its way to the musty flaking ceiling; ethereal ghosts of old memories and forgotten dreams.

I look back to the young woman who is blowing the last in a series of elaborate smoke rings. She looks at me and smiles lazily.

"I am Koma," she says.

"Coma?" I am nonplussed. "That's your name?"

"Koma. With a K. It's the only name I have around here."

"Well..." I shift self-consciously, "things definitely have a different way of working out around here. It is consistent in that much at least."

Koma's face brightens. "Oh, so you've been here before?"

"Several times" I shrug. "I don't deliberately make it a habit, but sometimes I just find myself arriving here by the most unexpected of routes."

Koma nods knowingly. "Yes, all places extend in several dimensions. We continue to find places we've never seen before. It would seem there is no real line of separation between the so-called 'real' world and the world of myth and symbol. Wouldn't you agree?"

"Yes I absolutely agree," I reply enthusiastically. "And I know the places are real because..."

"Because others like myself see it too!" she concludes for me. A broad smile crosses her face and we sit for a few moments in shared agenda-less silence.

Finally, Koma speaks again.

"So Grey, what brings you around these parts *this* time?"

I take the final few drags on my cigarette before replying in a dense puff of smoke.

"I'm looking for someone very important to me."

A perceptive expression spreads across Koma's face. "Would this 'someone' be a woman?"

I lean forward in the chair, the burning cigarette butt held between two fingers, looking around for an ashtray. A shrug from Koma informs me the floor will be sufficient. Crushing the butt underfoot, I lean back in the chair.

"Yes. The person I am looking for is a woman."

"Of course she is." Koma extinguishes her own cigarette butt on the brass frame of the bed at her back. "Men are always looking for a woman. Even once they've found her, they continue looking."

Unsure of how to either interpret or respond to this remark, I decide to say nothing. Past experience has taught me that conversation with a gender-cynic on the ludicrous generalisations of male/female attributes leads to nothing but philosophical dead ends. As if anticipating my thought, Koma continues;

"Oh fear not Grey, I have plenty of ill words to say about women too," she chuckles. "Frankly the whole male/female conflict is a tragic and pathetic state of affairs. The sooner humanity learns to dispense with the idea of opposing genders and the notion of pre-packaged sexual identities, the better for everyone. We need to transcend the dichotomy of opposition/companionship or we are doomed to stagnate. The best companions an individual

can have are their own myriad selves.”

Now we’re getting somewhere. “Do you consider yourself a misanthrope, Koma?”

“Well, I wouldn’t go that far,” she sniffs. “There are of course others for whom I care, people who are of some importance to me. Although I often regard them not as individuals but as reflections of my own consciousness. But still, I care for them nonetheless.”

“Well said, Max Stirner.”

Koma shakes her head. “Actually, it’s doubtful as to how much someone like Stirner would even have *cared* for his reflections; parts of himself or not.”

“So, you’re something of a solipsist then?”

She fixes me with a playfully mocking expression. “My, we are quite the academic, aren’t we?”

“I have my moments.”

She shifts her position, spreading one long thin pale leg before her, bridging the gap between us.

“Those I choose *not* to care for inevitably assure me of my own worth by virtue of their own relative worthlessness. Those for whom I *do* care usually possess some fine and sublime quality which makes them *worth* caring for. By identifying these qualities as abstractions of myself, I add to my own sense of self-worth. If that makes me a solipsist, then I plead guilty. Maybe it just makes me selfish, downright egotistical even. I don’t know.”

I lean forward in the chair once more.

“Does it therefore follow that you consider yourself worthless were it not for this ... *ownership* of your loved ones?”

She shrugs nonchalantly. “I suppose so.” Another thoughtful pause. “Or perhaps not. It could just be my way of dealing with the ... *physicality* of others; the solid fact of their tangible, ugly, festering presences in time and space.”

I am intrigued. “You are disgusted by the bodies of others?”

“Not so much those of others specifically. Only insofar as they impose themselves upon me, reminding me of my own organic prison.” She pinches an impossibly thin roll of skin on her neck between thumb and forefinger. “I find the idea of creatures composed of pure thought rather than flesh an easier one to tolerate. So ... perhaps it has nothing whatsoever to do with a sense of self-worth.”

“That makes more sense. I mean after all, you seem a very adept musician. That’s certainly worth something.”

She waves a dismissive hand. “I strum a few chords along with everyone and their indie kid sister. It’s utterly inconsequential.”

“You have a very beautiful voice. Powerful and vulnerable like nothing I’ve ever heard.”

Koma stares hard into my eyes, her expression grave. “A beautiful voice can be a very dangerous thing. Arresting and unpredictable ... As much a curse as a gift, trust me.”

“Oh, I’m sure it is,” I reply seriously. “But it’s still something special. And it would appear to exist beyond your physical self ... in a different realm.”

Again her face brightens. “Yes, it does. That is good.”

“And that’s to say nothing of your skill on the clarinet ...”

A look of surprise crosses Koma’s face as she brings her hand instinctively down and behind her to touch the long thin leather case that lies beneath the brass bed frame.

“Yes, I heard you. It was the sound of your playing that brought me here. That ‘Lonely Woman’ never sounded so lonely, I must say.”

She accepts this compliment graciously with a broad smile and brushes a stray lock of raven hair from her face.

“Coleman is nothing short of a seer,” she proclaims “Free jazz really cut up the textbooks. Cut it up and folded it in. Listening to that stuff, playing it ... it tears holes in everything we’re told is real. Replay it, throw in your own improvisations, your own particular quirks and stylings ... you’ve redefined what is real. You’ve made it something *you* can manipulate, and which others can manipulate further. Without improvisational music, without that experimentation ... I might never have come here.”

I feel confident enough now to be direct with her.

“Koma, why *do* you come here?”

She raises an eyebrow. “For much the same reasons as I suspect you choose to revisit this warped town, Grey. Though you may not allow yourself to fully acknowledge it consciously.”

She pauses as though waiting for some signal to continue.

“Go on.” I say.

Grinning, she shifts her position, straightening her back and bringing one knee up to her chest.

“You see, I too am looking for someone. My brother in fact. He and I have been ... well, separated. Since birth you might say. I know that I can find him in this place. You can find anyone or anything here if you can endure it for long enough; as long as you remain true while you are here. True to yourself, true to your passions, true to your obsessions. I will find my brother eventually, and when I do I shall be *complete* in a way I have always been denied. And that’s the point of this place. That is ultimately why we come here; to find *ourselves*.”

I ponder this a moment. “So everything we encounter here; every person, animal, building, tree, plant, street, and puddle ... is dictated by us? Our inner selves fragment and populate this place so that we are able to interact with ourselves in an endeavour to realise our complete psychic and spiritual potential ... is that right?”

“In a sense, yes. But that is only part of the equation,” she says, now animated with enthusiasm. “You see, the beauty of all things here is in their ability to retain their identity. And the same goes for my brother, and for the girl whom you mourn ... what was her name?”

“Poppy.” Those two syllables have attained such a tragic weight.

“Back out in the so-called ‘real’ world,” Koma continues “did Poppy not disappear every day? Don’t we all? Every person grieves continually for the lost sons and daughters of their earlier lives and past childhoods.”

“I’m with you.”

“Each of us is little more than the meagre residue of the potentially infinite possibilities

of our lives. But your Poppy, and my brother, they are fixed in our minds forever, their identities as certain as the stars."

"And by coming here," I venture, "we attain a similar position?"

"Precisely. Here among the empty streets, abandoned houses, the silent forest and stillness of the old dirty lake, you can find an image of yourself free of the hazards of time and space. Time is irrelevant here, no clock or wristwatch will ever be of any use to you in this town. And space is an abstract concept at best, as I'm sure you have noticed. This whole town is an epistemological wonderland."

"Wait," I interject. "Since we both are individually aware of the town's existence, and are evidently capable of discussing its concepts in concrete terms, does that not make it an *ontological* wonderland?"

Koma shakes her head vigorously. "No, no, no. Ontology is as irrelevant here as time. Yes of course we are both *aware* of the town in concrete terms, but our experiences of it, and of each other, are entirely subjective, and consistently biased towards our own notion of personal identity."

"So, right at this moment ..." I cast my eyes to the dirty ceiling, "I am, as far as I am concerned, the wandering consciousness and you are but an abstract fragment of my subconscious ..."

"That's right," she interrupts. "But from my perspective, the opposite is true."

I emit a sigh. "You really *are* a solipsist."

"Perhaps," she laughs. "Or are *you* the solipsist?"

I join her in laughter. "Well, we are both evidently quite the academic for sure."

The brief joviality is a welcome respite from the tight-chested anxiety that has plagued me for so long. I am comfortable in Koma's company and would be glad to stay and talk some more, but I have a search to resume. Koma's fathomless feline eyes seem to communicate an empathy with my need to depart.

As I rise to my feet, Koma matches my movements. She stands before me, this frail young woman in a nightgown, and I am surprised to find that she is significantly taller than I, almost six feet in height. Ignoring my surprise, she says; "I trust you would prefer to avoid the corridors?"

"Quite so" I reply, recalling with horror my brush with the hideous mannequin-thing. "Is there another way out?"

Wordlessly, Koma turns her back to me and faces the dressing mirror. For a prolonged moment she appears hypnotised by her own reflection, staring intently into her own eyes, arms hanging tense at her sides. Then suddenly and without warning, Koma emits a blood-curdling howl; an inhuman banshee wail that sends a violent tremor through my body like an electric shock. In helpless response, the reflective glass of the mirror explodes outward, littering the carpet with jagged shards.

Dim daylight and a cool breeze now invade the room and, through the open space of the mirror frame, I am met with the sight of an external scene; rows of trees and the overgrown lawn of a yard on the other side of town. Koma's words were entirely accurate; Time is

irrelevant. Space is at best an abstract concept.

Turning back to face me, Koma smiles sadly. Almost overcome by the urge to hug her, I am stifled by the memory of her proclaimed disgust with physical contact. Instead I ask: "Why don't you come with me?"

She shakes her head. "No, I must wait here. I'm expecting someone. You go and find your sweet Poppy. And tell her 'hi' from me."

Striding past her, I approach the mirror-frame and look out into the daylight yard beyond. Now or never. I turn my head back towards Koma and blow her a kiss.

"So long, Koma. See you again soon?"

"I hope so," she replies gravely. "Goodbye, Grey."

And with that, I am through the frame and out into the cold air of another lonely dawn...

Lair of the Dog-Rats

through overgrown grass I come upon a wooden structure some kind of coop or kennel abruptly a creature comes scurrying out its elongated body around the size of a small terrier its dog-like pelt black and white in colour it pads swiftly on oversized paws fixed to the ends of wiry limbs it bears a sentient intelligent face the clawed paws of a rodent the long whipping tail and snout of a rat and I decide the creature is a dog-rat and the dog-rat rushes towards me with aggressive intent ...

Instinctively I raise my foot as the creature swipes at me - (I see my grey features reflected in its onyx eyes) - *you are vermin too aren't you?* - the dog-rat's jaws yawn wide displaying a bear-trap arrangement of rapier teeth poised to taste my flesh. I bring my foot down hard upon the creature's head, stomping it into the ground. The dog-rat struggles and convulses violently as I increase the pressure - I can feel the skull threaten to give way - the creature emits a high-pitched shriek somewhere between a puppy dog yelp and a rodent squeal - Suddenly remorseful I lift my foot and release the animal - (I can feel its agony in my head!) - *when you are in pain you want others to feel it don't you?* - Bloodied and distressed it looks up at me whimpering. I lean down and pick the creature up by the scruff of the neck. Holding it before my face I stare into its beady black eyes - (we understand each other don't we?) - there is a door on the side of the wooden structure hanging slackly from rusted hinges. I pull open the door and peer inside. - *you want to spread the desolation like time spreads its plague don't you?* - Inside a whole writhing nest of dog-rats whips and vibrates in the gloom. Their fathomless eyes scour the chambers of my heart - (I see pictures of war and pain) - the dog-rats greet me with snuffling ingratiating snouts - (I see Poppy in the arms of other lovers) - *you want to bite the skin of the world and flay it alive don't you?* - The dog-rats climb up my legs, perching on my shoulders and elsewhere, each claiming a station upon my body - (Poppy cradling her child in the beacon of a stainless sun) - *you want to reclaim the rage you're entitled to don't you?* - (No - not true - I can't hurt) - *hurt the way your love hurts you is that not just?* - Let's go for a walk and talk about it - there's a song we can sing - You got an old harmonica? It goes like this ...

*I am Keeper of the Dog-Rats / I'm the vermin's vermin ...
Ahaaaaaooooooooowww!!*

When the world has been reduced to a dark wood to a damp park I will find you cracked mirror of red-haired mannequins. inert fragments scar tissue upon her forearm the girl in the tree just made love our symbiotic future some tempus vacuum of the infinite images the savage rush of the water one thousand pigeons cried in the moss-covered tree to the western sky a smell of rain and the detritus of anonymous lives strong smell of ripe fruit and white wine loved her instantly and buried her face in the mist from the reservoir on the old hill names have all but disappeared among the cries of peafowl and lost coloured beads in the room full of shadows you can hear indistinctly the murmurings of murdered children "...in my own bed!" in the humid air I shall go down the beaten path little jewelled eyes the cool grass between my bare toes as in a dream its coolness on my feet sharp whisper to the narcotic city night of greasy fingers down her denim skirt the sad weary face a crooked tree and the moaning traintracks a distant planet of a bed of misery years later in Singapore looking for that wretched house the hope-filled doll face I loved her instantly never before heard her use the word at pipistrelle bats the inscribed promise of her myriad forms a storm comes with percussive wind through flyover railings and disperses itself on the old dusty road the house is once more derelict the dogs are no longer singing

"In our present pygmy state love is indeed a stranger to most people. Misunderstood and shunned, it rarely takes root; or if it does, it soon withers and dies. Its delicate fiber cannot endure the stress and strain of the daily grind. Its soul is too complex to adjust itself to the slimy woof of our social fabric. It weeps and moans and suffers with those who have need of it, yet lack the capacity to rise to love's summit.

- Emma Goldman

A raised glass to Dennis Cooper whose language let the caged birds fly.



A MORTAL'S THOUGHTS ON DEATH AND DYING

By Jim Coleman

First to note: I am through the roof busy. So I should not be taking the time to write this. But when I get to this state of being busy, my brain's processes start functioning in a slightly different way, slightly more poetic and non-linear. Which is a good state of mind to be in when writing. Unless one is writing a business brief or a budget.

So, it came to me a few minutes ago while in discussion with someone I work with that I would truly hate to die laughing. At least the way I envisioned it. Somehow I had a very detailed vision, where I was stuck in a theater, with all the house lights up, and everyone in the theater was laughing hysterically, completely out of control. At first it was funny and strange, but then it started hurting, then the pain turned to tears, like when you laugh so hard that you are crying (which I love by the way, and has only happened a handful of times in my life). The tears turned to involuntary bodily excretions, our bodies were breaking down, out of control. And slowly, one by one, we just could not catch our breath, and our laughing turned to brutal rasps, desperate attempts to get air in to our lungs. Yet still we laughed. Finally, one by one, and sometimes in small groups, we would keel over, our faces bright red, showing a mixture of fear, surprise and laughter. And, at long last, there was stillness and quiet. All this, passing through my head while mid-stream in a discussion. And I wonder, is that weird? Or does everyone have those kinds of projections?

While we are on the topic of death and dying, I have a few other thoughts that sometimes circle through my being. One is the morbidly funny idea that the afterlife is an eternal frozen moment of the split second when you die. For example, if your last moments were locked in the passenger seat of a 1980 K car as it careened off the Williamsburg Bridge, your personal eternity would be that sensation of "OH SHIIIT!" Pretty bad, I would not want to be there forever. Christ, an overdose would be better. Same phrase ("Oh, shit"), but a very different inflection.

I thank god that we are mortal. I don't have any defined thoughts on what's next, if anything. I guess, if you got to become immortal in your early 20s it wouldn't be so bad. At that time in life, the world is yours, even if you don't know it. No concerns, responsibilities. I recall at that age if I had enough money for beer and cigarettes, all was good. But as I got older, I started carrying more weight. I got responsibilities, I got people who love me and whom I love. I got a house, cars, a music studio with too much gear. All that stuff could go away, all the material stuff. But I'd still have the primary relationships, the family who I carry, and who carries me. This is love, this is a gift, but it's also a responsibility. Especially with a kid. I have a 9-year-old daughter, who I love fiercely. And I want to help her grow and evolve, get comfortable in her own skin, find her own beliefs, enjoy her childhood, give her the best education possible. I want that for her, and am willing to work towards that, even if it means I can't live as carelessly as I did in

my earlier life. And I deeply love my wife, which also means I can't live as I did earlier in my life. I was very self-destructive in my 20s. In the guise of freedom, rebellion, and embracing an "outsider" status, I ended up in a self constructed cage made of a wide variety of chemical compounds. That cage is still fucking attractive, even knowing the deep deep pain that is contained in there. Maybe it feels safe in there, nothing can get to me, nothing can hurt me because I'm turned off (I don't care if Timothy Leary said it was turned on). Well, that's a different kind of death isn't it? And honestly, when I was in the deep depths of that living death (which definitely had its glory, don't get me wrong, that flame burned bright and hot, burning up anything around it), I felt like the ones who OD'd were the lucky ones. They found a way out, a solution to the dilemma.

I went through various periods of time where death came to those around me. When I was young, in elementary school, a friend of mine died. He was a passenger in a car that his older brother was driving. That was the first death I recall. I didn't know how to make sense of it. I spent a few days looking through the bible, thinking there must be some connection with religion and God and my friend's death (even though I don't think I believed in God then, God was always kind of like Santa Claus). I came up empty. It just seemed like a bunch of boring dogmatic text, it did nothing to illuminate things, to make sense out of this loss. So I put that bible aside and never considered it again.

Then there was a period of time in my early days (elementary school through junior high) where a number of my assorted older relatives died. I remember that open casket services were the norm, but overall my memory of these funerals is quite vague. I don't know if it was because of these relatives being older, at the end of their lives, or maybe it was in part due to what I went through earlier with the death of my friend, but these deaths didn't greatly affect me. I felt the loss, but it didn't feel big, I didn't dwell on it. My memory of these events was and is so bad, that my sister once told me in some detail about going to a funeral and getting stuck in the airport overnight due to a storm. We slept on the floor in the airport, the simple journey turned in to a saga. I recalled nothing of this.

I got turned on to dope by three individuals: Erl, Regis and Bill. I was living on Clinton Street, just across from El Sombrero. This location was right in the thick of it, the dealers were often right outside the door. So Erl, Regis and Bill would stop in with some frequency, it was so convenient. They could cop, come right up and get high immediately. And I was an accident waiting to happen.

Actually, the accident had started a while ago. But it was proceeding in such beautiful slow motion, like it was shot at 800 frames per second. So slow that the pain felt like pleasure. I had been doing a mixed bag of whatever was around, pot, coke, acid. And again, while we are reflecting on drugs and death, this other memory comes to mind as I write this.

One night in College I was staying at my girlfriend's house. Actually, it was an apartment that she was looking after for someone while they were away. She was gone at the time, it was early evening. I was severely depressed, circling around the idea of offing myself, of excusing myself from this existence. I looked in the medicine cabinet of this complete stranger's apartment and found a full bottle of valium. Held it for a while, pondered. Figured I could just try a couple, then perhaps in a bit down the bottle. A while later I was rudely awakened by my girlfriend. Apparently she had been overcome by a feeling that I was in trouble, had tried calling. I was out, no one picked up the phone, so she ran back to the apartment. And how did I respond? "Oh don't worry, everything's cool. I just fell asleep." Not sure why, but I've always been challenged to expose the depths of my feelings. What would I possibly gain by putting on a happy face rather than say I was on verge of suicide?

Anyway, prior to my indoctrination with Erl, and Regis and Bill, I had never tried dope. Dope seemed to be on another level. On the outside looking in, you could say, well, I'm not doing that. It could bolster yourself up a bit. But I found that from the inside looking out, it could take on the defensive posture of belonging to a very underground society, a club. Like you were in the know, holding this dark secret.

Within a week of turning me on (or turning me off, I guess), Bill was dead. OD. This was sad, and we dealt with our sorrow by doing more dope. For me, another early warning that went unheeded. Time went faster and faster, and our habits grew. Looking back, I have no idea how we kept doing it, it seems unsustainable on a very basic level. It seems unsustainable financially, let alone psychically, emotionally, spiritually or physically. As mentioned, a good number of people I knew OD'd. The one who hit me the hardest I think was Charlie Ondres, the drummer from The Unsane.

My band Cop Shoot Cop shared a rehearsal space with the Unsane. I used to hang out and get high with Chris, who really helmed the band. I never really got high with Charlie, but he always seemed to be having fun, enjoying life. Never taking anything too seriously. Kind of like an overgrown kid. Which could possibly be said of all addicts really. More than anything, Charlie exuded positiveness, and this was in short order. The sudden loss of Charlie felt really heavy. Everything just got heavier and darker after that. The "party life" started feeling more like a job, something I had to do rather than something I wanted to do.

I realize that I need to end this now, though I am certain that there will be follow-ups to it. This started with the statement that I was too busy to be writing this at all. And this wasn't written in one sitting. The business has not abated, and is actually picking up. And if I don't pause now, this may never see the light of day, it will just sit in the draft section for so long that it loses its power and presence. But this story ain't over, so rest assured that more will come...



THE OUTLAW DAVID BEEBE (REDUX)

By Gregg Sutton

I'd been waiting for the knock on my door for three days. Outside everything seemed so normal, nothing looked out of place.

But ever since Sunday night it had been like someone had taken a knife to the veneer of reality that covers us like a curtain, leaving us exposed like actors who have found themselves in the wrong scene on the wrong stage. Exposed and waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Sunday evening I got a call from my good friend George in San Francisco. If this were a movie, George's part would be played by an amalgam of Stanley Tucci and Paul Shaeffer. He was calling to tell me that our mutual friend, David Beebe, had disappeared from George's house along with a bag that contained around \$25,000 and a couple of kilos of very high class pot. The newspapers would put the street value of the pot at around \$100,000 based on \$20 per joint and each ounce containing 10,000 joints--you do the math. The true value of the pot was about 20k more or less. Stolen from one of his best friends! I was totally shocked but not really surprised. You see, about a month earlier Beebe had broken into one of the rooms in George's house (where he, David, was living) and had taken a similar bag he'd found lying around. Inside this one was a plasticene bag containing a whole lot of white powder which Beebe took to be cocaine. He had helped himself to a couple of healthy snorts and found out to his shock and dismay that the powder was LSD. He had taken enough to send Doctor Spock around the bend let alone David Beebe who was a crazy man to begin with. (By the way, in this production David Beebe would be played by John Travolta, circa Pulp Fiction/ Oliver Platt.) He had to tell George what he had done so that George could help him get some tranquilizers to bring him down from this "heroic" dose of acid.

After that, George had put David on a kind of probation-meets-indentured-servitude in order for David to remain living there rent free. He put the guy on a type of daily regimen. He woke Beebe up early (then George went back to sleep) made sure he had no drugs or drink (while George sniffed coke at night and drank beer) and he had David clean up the house and do chores (while George watched TV upstairs in his 'penthouse'). So I wasn't surprised to hear that David had split. But taking the drugs and money was a new wrinkle.

On Monday night George called me again. "I can't believe it Sutts--I can not believe this is actually happening. I mean Beebe totally robbed me. Me--his oldest, bestest friend. He like stabbed me in the back, Sutton. Three kilos and \$30,000 isn't just like going into someone's drawers, or a medicine cabinet. How could he do it? How rude can he be? If I catch that no good motherfuckin' psycho, I'll rip his heart out"

I tried not to laugh at the thought of George physically intimidating anyone. There was so much venom in his voice. I really couldn't laugh.

"George, let's not go there, OK? Where do you think he is?"

“My best guess is his father’s place in Simi Valley.”

I knew he wasn’t going to his Dad’s house.

“Yeah, maybe so. George, I got to go, call me later.”

My head was spinning as I found myself being sucked into the middle of something that I didn’t want to have anything to do with, but I couldn’t get out of its way. I knew that Beebe was headed to my house--that seemed obvious enough to me.

George had always related to Beebe as if he were some beautiful, irresistible woman. One who would cause him trouble time after time but one who he was helpless to turn down or turn his back on. Well this time the worm had certainly turned.

We had all known each other for almost 25 years. I had originally met David when we were both playing for a guy named Tom Seufert who had a single out on Epic Records. He later became a successful studio owner and entrepreneur. Seufert was a very neat and clean, music-by-the-numbers-in-the-Valley kind of guy. But David and I saw sparks fly when we played together, and we continued to try and find ways to team up. We personally had a lot in common--both east coast guys with a love for a lot of the same musicians and songs and styles. Beebe also was a sweetheart down deep, and Fredo and I always loved him immensely. We formed a group we called the Donuts with a guitar player named Steve Dorf (not the actor) from a club band I had played in. Our names are together and theirs even appear as one in the writing credits on the KGB LP (Sutton, Beebedorf). Let me say that David at his best was a spectacular drummer. He was both powerful and sensitive to the song he was playing, his time was excellent, and he had a completely original approach to music.

One night the Donuts were doing a session and we needed a keyboard part played. David called up his friend George who lived nearby, he came down and played the part, and we all were friends ever since. (By the way, for the sake of this movie my part will be played by an amalgam of DeNiro & Vincent Schiavelli from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, as well as Sam Jackson.)

George himself was a major talent. An ex-child-prodigy-pianist, he was crazy as a loon and enjoyed a good buzz as much as anybody I knew. He was the son of well-to-do Polish survivors of Hitler’s death camps and had grown up in San Francisco. When we met, he was living in the poor part of Beverly Hills and receiving occasional financial assistance from his parents. I remember overhearing phone conversations with his mother and father, which were mainly in Yiddish with enough English thrown in for me to get the gist of what was going on. We became close friends very quickly, and the three of us stayed friends through the years and the tears. Now things were looking kind of tough for our friendships and no matter what I did I was going to lose.

The phone rang and roused me from my reverie. It was George again.

"Sutts, it's Michalski. I can't believe it Sutton, nobody has heard from Beebe. He's like disappeared from the face of the earth. I'm telling you when I find out what hole he's hiding in, I am going to catch up with him and make him suffer."

"George, please stop with the tough talk. You and I both know you aren't going to hurt anybody and I don't know about it if you do. Understand?"

"I'm sorry, it's just that \$40,000 is a lot of money--not even counting the three kilos. I mean, what am I supposed to tell Brett, he's a partner? He wants to string Beebe up, Mussolini style. Or bust a cap in his asshole."

Again I had to stifle a laugh at the incorrect gangster rap slang now coming out of the mouth of my ultra Jewish friend. The climbing money figures were also amusing.

"I mean Brett is beyond angry, Sutts. Most of the cash was his and we were half-half on the pot. He doesn't know Beebe any better than he knows you, but he is ready to get his shit back by whatever means necessary. Know what I mean?"

Brett was one of the guys who rented a room in George's big Victorian house down near the ocean in a part of San Francisco known as "The Avenues." It was the house we'd all been living for just about a month. George had the bright idea that all of us--him, me, Beeb, Bill Spooner (guitar player from the Tubes) and a couple of other knuckleheads should pool our talents and form one "god band," as George put it.

For George "god" was an adjective denoting something of extraordinarily high quality. It could also be a verb as in "godding out." When Mick Taylor played the guitar solo on "Love in Vain" on the *Get Yer Ya Ya's Out* LP, he was in fact "godding out"--playing a god solo.

George wanted to use his house as the base of operations while we rehearsed at the Paradise Club, which was downtown across the street from Slim's (the City's most famous club at the time). We would play only everybody's best two or three songs and there would be four or five singers including two girls whom we nicknamed Trixie & Bijou and who sang like bad girl angels. George suggested that Beebe be our drummer and I reminded him of David's penchant for unreliability. I asked him if he thought Beebe was over his psychological problems and if he thought we should cover ourselves, just in case.

George said, "You mean, just in case he stands up in the middle of a song, unscrews his left cymbal and says 'this is bullshit' and walks out?"

"Yeah, that's it exactly. What do we do then?"

"Sutts, I don't think Beebs would do me like that especially not after I flew him out here and put him up and all."

"How about having two drummers? It's a great sound, total power and rhythmic diversity, and we would be covered in case of flip-out."

So we enlisted the services of a guy named Boom Carter, a great drummer George knew from around the San Francisco scene. We had at least 2 of everything, kind of a Noah's Ark of a band. So we went ahead and put George's grand plan into action.

What in the world did we think we were doing, anyway? Trying to relive the golden age of San Francisco bands? I had flown up to the City and had taken up residence on the first floor of George's four-story Victorian. David was already there, having arrived almost a week earlier. He was staying in the "basement suite." I went down there and found him and Carl (George's next door neighbor and one of our rhythm guitar players) getting high. George stayed upstairs on the top floor in the "penthouse." He had a wonderful view of the Pacific Ocean as well as the trees of Golden Gate Park. Even though George was a pothead and a nighttime cokehead, it became necessary for Carl & David and me to sneak around when we wanted to get high on the harder stuff. Luckily, George kept himself locked up in his bedroom about three quarters of the time he was home, so it was easy to do the shit behind his back. He had all kinds of rules for the other people in the house like keeping the heat off almost all of the time so as to not run up the gas bill. This meant the boys in the basement were freezing to death in the cold and damp of the San Francisco winter. (The only time colder is the San Francisco summer.) Getting high on junk relieved the discomfort of the cold.

Those first few days David and I were in very high spirits. We had last seen each other a year and a half earlier when Fredo and I had been traveling on the East Coast and we had gone to visit David and his family in Woodstock. He and his wife, Theresa, were well known citizens of the town and they lived right next to the library with their young son and daughter. David was so proud of the boy and loved having his family together with his good friends. Unfortunately, they couldn't keep it together and by the time I saw Beebe in the City, he was trying to hire a lawyer to make it possible for him to see his children.

We spent a couple of weeks rehearsing down at The Paradise. The band sounded tremendous. We were playing a bunch of really cool songs and bringing them to life. A band that has two drummers can rock hard and play with a lot of sparkle without really trying hard. Playing the bass with the two of them was both difficult and great. I found I had to really be right about where I was putting the pocket so as to present the band with a united rhythmic backing. This takes a lot of concentration, not to mention keeping the rest of me free to sing and enjoy myself while adding to the spiritual groove. The girl singers were great and all of our leads sounded good and our harmonies were BIG. We were doing our best to avoid the petty jealousies and cliques that plague most bands and can make it such a drag.

Finally, we played our first, and as it turns out only, gig at The Paradise on a Saturday night. A lot of people showed up out of curiosity 'cause we were a band that had a lot of impressive individual resumes. And then there were all of George's friends and my friends and my sister, and so on. My sister, Randy, lived in San Francisco at the time and was also a friend of Beebe's. Nobody who ever met Randy disliked her. She is so sweet you can hardly believe she is my sister.

The crowd loved the band and we sounded great, despite a bad case of laryngitis that made my vocals pretty lame; but the fact that we had so many singers made it all sound good anyway. Robbie Randall, who is a friend of George's and was acting as our manager, had promised that

we were not going through all of this to wind up playing one gig. Robbie always was a liar. Despite a totally positive response and a willing band, nobody ever bothered to book another gig. Everyone passed it off on somebody else. This left David Beebe high and dry. He had left his place in Woodstock to fly out to the coast on George's say-so to play in this fucking band. At the time George was the musical chief for the TV show *Nash Bridges*, starring George's pal, Don Johnson. I expected George would at least cover Beebe financially by putting him on Nash Bridges sessions, but that never happened. Had it been my gig, I would have made sure it happened. I would have written something to put in that week's show just because I knew I had certain obligations. George didn't think that way. "He was the world's dumbest smart person," as our pal, the Colonel, used to call him.

So Beebe is now living in George's basement, not playing, not making any money, and living on George's weird daily routine of probation. Remember that the nature of their relationship was a little wacky to begin with. Not that they were gay, because they weren't, not even a little. But whatever was going on was not good, and it was reaching a state of critical mass. Unbeknownst to George.

The phone rang a couple of times before I actually heard it. I fumbled with it trying to beat the phone machine. I was expecting to hear George say 'Sutts,' but instead I heard a deeper voice say "Chesterfield," instant code. I mumbled for a moment and he repeated "Chesterfield, young man"; he cracked up as I said, "Chesterfield."

We both laughed edgy laughs.

"Where you been?"

"I been around, boy," he said in a mock-Jamaican accent. "I been here and there, had to make sure the coast was clear. I been on the *lam, man*." He broke into another edgy laugh. Me too.

"Where you at?"

"The Hollywood Roosevelt--I love the pool!"

The pool at the Hollywood Roosevelt was painted by David Hockney. It is amazing. The entire pool area is like being in one of those "I Love Lucy" episodes when they are out in Hollywood.

"Can you come get me, Sutts?"

"Of course. What room?"

"Room 714," and we both laughed again. 714 had been the number that was imprinted on the face of Quaalude tablets. Many years ago, David, George and I used to go to a doctor in Beverly Hills who wrote us prescriptions for quaalude, codeine, percodan, desoxen (or any other kind of speed) and cough syrup. We called this guy "The Fatman." He would be played by Sidney Greenstreet in this movie. He also sold pure, "pink cocaine" to his more preferred clients. The people I used to see there in the lobby included Keith Moon, Rick Danko, Richard Manuel, Louise Lasser (who narked the Fatman out) and other people who are still alive and whose

misadventures aren't matters of public record. We'd go see him once a month. That is how deep and far back our friendship went. Just the mention of a number like 714 would bring so much to mind instantly.

I told Fredo that I had heard from Beebe, finally, and that he was coming here.

"Where else was he gonna go?" is what she said. "George knows that he's going to his Dad's. I mean, he thinks he knows but he doesn't really know," she said a little bit like Gracie Allen. The scary part is, I knew I knew.

She was 100% correct. The fact that George would have expected me to turn one of my best friends away when trouble comes is crazy. Some people believe that the-friend-of-my-enemy-is-my-enemy-too crap, but I don't. Not in this case, at least. And George had never struck me as one of those. Not one to go out of his way to help someone else. Only if it was easy and helped him in some way. And then you'd never hear the end of how fuckin' noble he was. No, it was much easier to decree that other people should do this or that than to actually go ahead and stand up yourself. No doubt George had a legitimate gripe. I didn't understand why I was about to be in the middle of it.

The phone rang again

"Sutts," George's tense, shrill voice cut through the morning fog. "What's up, Knee-Grow?"

"What it is, George?"

"I called Beebe's father, Sutton. I told him if he wants his son to be healthy he should talk some sense to him. Tell him to stop running and just give us back what he has left."

"Come on George, stop with the gangster movie crap."

I asked him to cut the tough talk not only to defuse the situation but also because listening to George talk that way was like having Eddie Haskell (wise guy from *Leave it to Beaver*) threatening you. It made me want to laugh, and I didn't want to do that.

"Do you think his Dad has seen him? What did he say?"

"He said he hadn't seen or heard from David."

"Do you believe him?" I asked, starting to play on both sides of the truth.

"I don't know, Sutts, I have really no idea what's really going on."

"Well that's two of us, for sure. This is the worst thing ever."

"Have you heard from him?"

“George, I absolutely haven’t and I’m kind of surprised. Then again hardly anything that’s happened in the past few days hasn’t surprised me. Know what I mean, bro?”

“Yeah. I’m like totally losing it. I am so mad. I mean Beebe has gone beyond the pale this time. How could he rob *me*? Of all people.”

“Search me.”

“I mean 50k is a lot of money.” The number was growing like an ugly rumor or a Herpes rash.” Sutton, if you speak to him, ask him to give the shit back while he can.”

With that I got off the phone in an even weirder position than I was in before. I went to pick up David at the Hollywood Roosevelt and we drove back to my place with his bags, the brown bag and the *black bag*. The one that smelled like Humboldt County and looked like The Mint inside.

“You know at last count George says you took 50K plus the pot. Do you mind? How much was it, really?”

“Man it was 23K and change! 50k. Well that’s George for ya.”

And I guess that it was right then that I crossed the line, as far as George was concerned. They had put me right into the middle of their war and I could not act any differently. Another unspoken part of the whole equation was heroin. David had been going through a Jones type of situation in San Francisco and now that he was out and loaded with cash we were certainly going to have a party. And Beebe wanted to show his appreciation to me and Fredo for showing him shelter in the time of storm. Copping for all of us was a nice way to do it. The gift that keeps on giving, so to speak. That is not to say that had there not been smack involved would I have turned David away and acted the way George wanted me to. That just wasn’t in the cards. Perhaps the heroin made the whole thing inevitable. I don’t know. All I know is that it’s easy to make promises to people if there are no repercussions and if you never have to live up to your promises. It is quite another story to mean what you say and be ready to pay when the bill comes due.

So David took a room at the motel that was literally a block away from our house, and he’d come over in the mornings for the daily wake-up and to do some business out the back door. He called a bunch of different folks and they’d meet and buy as much of that high class cannabis as they could afford. He couldn’t keep it on the shelves. Beebe was trying to get enough money to hire a lawyer (which he had) and undo the legal knots his wife Theresa had tied him and their kids in. I saw him buy the money orders with my own eyes. He was caught up in that “he-said-she-said” restraining order and counter moves so many couples devolve into. David’s kids were a little bit scared of him and the whole thing was just tragic. David had many flaws, but he was so sweet inside he never meant to hurt a soul. We all do (hurt people that is) despite ourselves. Here I was hurting my friend George without even trying.

After a couple more days, most of the pot was gone and it was time for Beebe to get going. George continued to call me and it was getting harder and harder to play Mata Hari.

He had called David's girlfriend in Woodstock, some mental midget who George succeeded in scaring silly. She was calling my place and having long tempestuous conversations with David. One night we were sitting around telling war stories when David said, "Man I'm sorry I put you through this, Sutts. Put you in the middle of everything, I guess."

"Don't give it a second thought."

"I think I'll go down to New Orleans tomorrow. Take the train. I've always wanted to do that. I got my lawyer working on things and that will take a week or so, and I got to get the hell out of here. It's getting hot for me." He laughed his edgiest laugh.

"I'm a man on the lam. Know what I mean? I don't think George's actually going to come after me or send someone, do you?"

"No way on earth, Beebs. I mean I wouldn't go hang around up in the City but all things being equal--no way Jose."

Fredo threw in her three cents, "He just wants to talk big but he's a little fish in a little bowl. Better watch out he doesn't get flushed himself."

We all laughed. The definitive word had been spoken.

The next morning the outlaw awoke at my pad. We got up, got high, and he got out. I gave him a jacket to wear on the train that looked like one John Coltrane might wear on the cover of *Live at the 5 Spot* or some such LP. He gave me an envelope with a couple of grand in it to hold for him and for 'expenses.'

I watched him get in a cab and I never saw him again. The outlaw David Beebe died about a year and a half later from an overdose of heroin in a bathroom in Woodstock.

He had been living there unbothered by George. He was living with the mental midget Syracuse chick up 'til right before the end. Maybe he offed himself so he wouldn't have to hear her talk.

George won't speak to me anymore. He stopped returning my calls after declaring everything was alright.

At the time of his death David and George were a year away from rapprochement. David said George had called him a couple of times after he had called George initially.

A few months before David Beebe died, on the morning of 9/11/2001 he was on the Staten Island Ferry. From the ferry out in the middle of the water his view was completely unfettered as he watched both planes fly into the World Trade Center.

"Sutts," he told me, "it was like watching the end of the world."



ARKANSAS STATE PRISON

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THE TRUE STORIES OF ROBERT BROCK:

THE BEGINNING

By Robert Earl Reed

As a Boy growing up in Southwest Tennessee, there was a Man that lived on my Grandmother's farm in Hardeman County, Tennessee. His name was Robert Brock. Robert was a "character" of sorts. He was a tall lanky man. He had odd ways, and being raised with no formal education, he had taught himself to read from the Bible. My father told me stories of Robert and how he came to live on Grandmother's Farm. As a boy and then on into my young adulthood I knew him.

My father used to get really tickled by some of his antics and very frustrated by others. Here are my remembrances of some of the stories my father told me and some of the experiences I had with this unique individual. He never owned a radio or television... He never had running water... He never married nor fathered Children. He was a kind soul who lived a hard life in the hills of Hardeman County, Tennessee and I miss his simple way..... RER



"Walkin Shorts! I said, I likes to wears Walkin Shorts... Mr. John," Robert Brock said "...I just thought you ought know that about me before you let me live here... and ... Mr. John, I... I just don't know how I'll ever be able to repay you... I just don't... kn....."

Mr. John cut him off and cast his eyes into a frustrated roll and heaved a puff of grey smoke into the cold January air and pronounced, "Robert, you live here from now on... rent free as the Farm's Overseer and I don't give fuck if you go God Damned naked, just keep folks run off from here... that's all I want." And with that Mr. John climbed back into his Cadillac and scattering gravel headed back to Memphis for the second time that day.

Saturday mornings for Mr. John were usually spent attempting to clear his head from the dalliances of the night before in his never ending dance with liquor based libations. Scotch Whiskey... Ole Bumply Skin Gin... Smirnoff Vodka... yep, Saturday for him was a time to relax and "enjoy" his hangover. There was no place to be on Saturday. Not like those fucking weekdays when he had to nurse his hangover on the fly. Nurse it while he flung phones and curse words at a trading desk full of just as hung over bond daddy's helping the Savings and Loan industry careen their vehicle into the ditch of self destruction... But early on this Saturday the phone had rung insistently until that bitch he was married to finally got up off her lazy syphilitic whore ass and answered it. "It's the Brother William up at the farm... he says it's important..." she said as she handed him the receiver.

'God Damn Bitch,' he thought, 'She knows I don't want to talk to this motherfucker... spiteful... barren... Jesus, I'm glad she's barren... Thank god my genes will NEVER have to be mixed with her... and her fucking inbred family...'

"Uh, uh, Hello?" said Mr. John.

"John... this is Brother William... uh, can you hear me?"

"Yeah, uh... Yeah, Brother, I can hear you just fine..."

(Hear him damn fine, since Brother William was hard of hearing and yelled everything he said in the phone)

"Uh... John... there's a fella livin' down here in the Old Pavillion... name's Robert Brock... uh... he's a hermit of sorts been living round these parts all his life... I knew him as a boy... He was an odd one... Anyhow he's been sqattin' down there in the pavilion for a few weeks now... When the highway got run through Jim Goodnight's farm they tore town the shack he lived in... didn't give him no notice no place to go ner nothin'... I reckon since he grew up on the back side of yore farm that this was the only place he knew to go... so he's been stayin' in one of them rooms down there... He keeps to himself and all, but John it's January and mighty cold... he ain't got no lectricity ner heat ...I'm afraid he's gonna starve or freeze to death." There was a silence on Mr. John's end of the phone. "JOHN, ARE YOU THERE?" Brother William yelled even louder.

"Yes," Mr. John said flatly, his liquor pickled mind trying to grasp the information that he had just been force fed. "Uh, Brother William, what exactly is it that you would have me do?"

"Well, John, the Christian thing to do is to help him, but times being what they are, Delores and I just don't have anything to spare."

'Don't have anything to spare my ass,' Mr. John thought, 'Shit, his congregation waits on his old ass hand and foot... Preacher needs something?? Well, break open the piggy bank and bleed the money into his greedy old hands... don't want to lose him to one of them other churches in the big city... lose him? Who would shepherd their sinful souls through the shadows of Life to the rewards on those Golden Streets of Heaven that he promises at the top of his lungs every Sunday?'

"Well, yes, Brother William, times are tough," John mumbled.

"Well John ...Delores and I was hoping you might ride up here and see what's goin' on for yourself... I mean, he's gonna die down there if nobody does anything," Brother William pleaded.

The blighted empty row crop fields careened by the widows of the Cadillac as Mr. John steered up Hwy 57 towards Rogers Springs. Speedometer reading 67 miles per hour... heat blaring... Elvis singing of Kentucky Rain... smoke from his Vantage 100 occasionally obscuring his view of the white lines that separated cars headed East versus West. Mr. John sipped peach brandy and thought how amazing it was to be hurdling down this patch of Hwy 57 when just a few decades prior when he was a boy this road was gravel and the trip from Memphis would take nearly all day. Now, in the absence of Gravel and Mule Drawn farm implements, he could make the trip in just under two hours... amazing.

In Grand Junction, Tennessee, a short eight miles to the farm, there was a small country store ...or what used to be a country store... next to the tombstone maker who had set up shop in the late 1800s on the "highway" ...now it was a just a Convenience store where they sold beer and smokes and tins of potted meat, pork rinds, pickled eggs and pig feet and out back, Crack Cocaine.

Mr. John parked the Caddy out front where he could keep a good eye on her and, money in hand, entered the store to gather some basic provisions to take to the old hermit. Hell, he didn't have any idea what to get, but beggars can't be choosers and the fucker squatting on his farm would have to make do with whatever he brought to him. This was insanity anyway... out here in East Bumble Fuck in January buying Groceries for some asshole he didn't even know. But Mr. John despite his rough edges had always had a soft spot for those in need. His daddy didn't. Not even being a Doctor... he was a ruthless mean son of a bitch... hated cats... couldn't even be kind to animals let alone people. Many the time Mr. John and his Daddy "Papa Doc" as he preferred to be called would load their shotguns and unload their bird dogs next to some farmer's (who was Papa Doc's patient) barn to hunt, and they wouldn't be thirty feet from the Farmer's barn when Papa Doc would let a shot ring from his twelve gauge and one less cat would inhabit the Earth. Mr. John would say, "Damn!! You can't be killing the Farmer's cat up here near his house like that!" Papa Doc would look over his horn rim glasses and say, "Fuck that cat and that Farmer... cat eats the quail eggs... got no use for 'em... Farmer don't like it he

can find another doctor to look after his old ass..." Once Papa Doc found a kitten that then nine-year-old Mr. John was raising on the sly behind the garage of their home in Hot Springs. While he was stomping the poor creature he was bellowing at Mr. John, "Boy! If your brains was gasoline they wouldn't be enough to start a piss ant's motorcycle to ride around a God Damned bee bee..." No Papa Doc was devoid of soft spots and somewhere in the back of Mr. John's mind as he gathered up cans of potted meat he could still hear the kitten screaming and the old man bellowing and he knew that long dead Papa Doc would certainly not approve of what he was about to do for a fellow human being.



Robert Brock shivered in the chill of the January morning. The only warmth to be found was the heat from the dull ache of the hunger pangs that wracked his empty stomach. He tried to roll himself tighter into the dirty horse blanket that he had pilfered from the barn behind the Pavilion, but in the years of dry rot and decay the blanket had lost its ability to provide warmth. The sun had yet to rise and in the predawn twilight Robert stared at his surroundings through the receding darkness and hummed gently to himself. He could not remember the exact words nor the name of the tune, but it was a hymn. A hymn about "Walking with Jesus" and Robert found comfort in the thought of one day walking out of the cold and cruelty of this life into the arms of Jesus into Heaven.

Robert imagined a smiling bearded Jesus like the ones from the pictures in his momma's Bible. He imagined himself on his knees before him... ready... to receive his heavenly reward. Jesus would praise him for a living out his difficult life. Jesus would forgive him for the trips to Ripley to the whore house... the bouts of self gratification that he allowed the Devil to lead him to in his younger years. Jesus knew that a man was not without sin, and he would see that Robert had always repented... he would see that Robert... was a righteous man.

Robert's thoughts tiptoed through Heaven and though he was hungry and cold, he found that once again the Lord was comforting him in his time of need... and somehow he knew that once again the Lord would provide.



REYNOLDS

AMY'S ARMS

By Hank Kirton

We're sitting in the basement, drunk again. The coffee table is cluttered with beer cans, a bottle of Jameson whiskey, and her awful diet Sprite. I drink in chased shots. Amy drinks a mix of whiskey and warm flat diet Sprite.

I look at the red, lateral scars on Amy's arms, and say something - more to myself than her - and forget it. I suffer instant amnesia but whatever I said, it gets her yelling and her face is a twisted grimace and it strikes me as funny and I laugh.

She doesn't see the humor.

She stands up, shrieking and swearing, and I'm trying to figure out what I said but I can't stop laughing.

"Stop laughing!"

She grabs a badminton racquet and wields it like a weapon, like a samurai sword, and I still can't stop laughing.

Wap! She hits me in the face with the racquet.

I stop laughing.

Wap!

I keep smiling and lean into her.

Wap!

I want her to blacken my eyes, break my nose, knock out my teeth.

Wap! across the nose and I feel the blood start. I let it run over my smile, staining my teeth. I let it ruin the front of my shirt.

She drops the racquet. "Oh! Oh, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry baby..." She finds an old rag and presses it to my nose. "Lean back," she tells me.

"I'm okay," I say.

She hugs me and says she loves me and when my nose stops bleeding we sit back down and have another drink.

* * *

That was so many years ago, it's excruciating to think about. The memory reminds me I'm gonna die.

Like Amy.

She died in a bathtub of warm water.

She used her old friend, Mr. Razor Blade. And this time, she meant it.

The radio was on when they found her. It sounds stupid but I wonder what song was playing as her veins emptied and the water clouded red.

I hope it was something beautiful and not some dumb DJ or obnoxious commercial; that might have messed-up her soul, cheapened it as it drifted into the water and up.

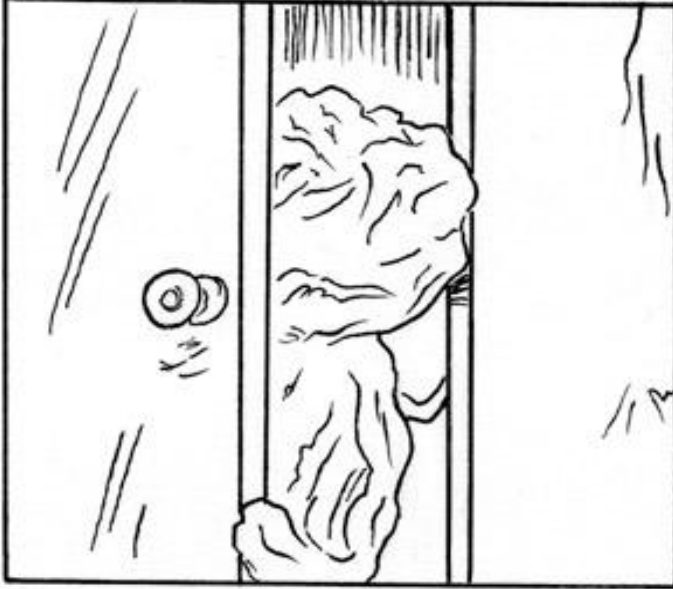
I don't go to the wake because I can't face her family and because if the casket is open I might scream.

I don't go to the funeral because I can't face her family and because when they lower her into the ground I might throw-up.

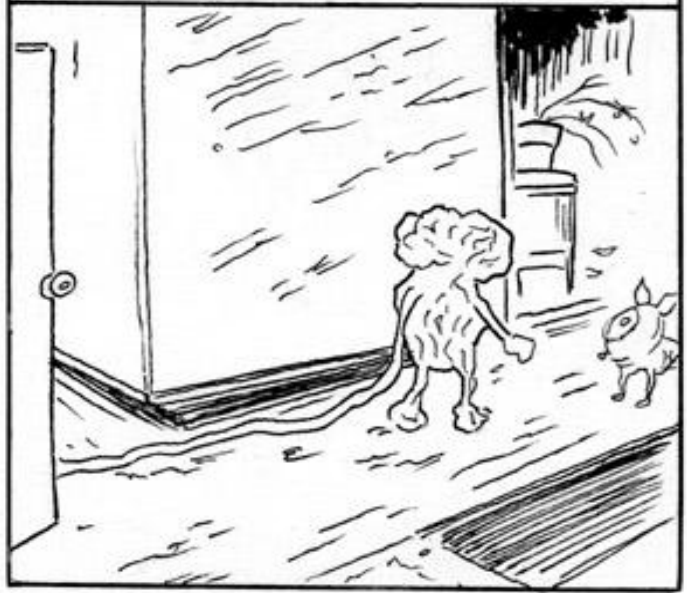
Amy, so long girl...

I still can't remember what I said that day.

It seemed alright to emerge.



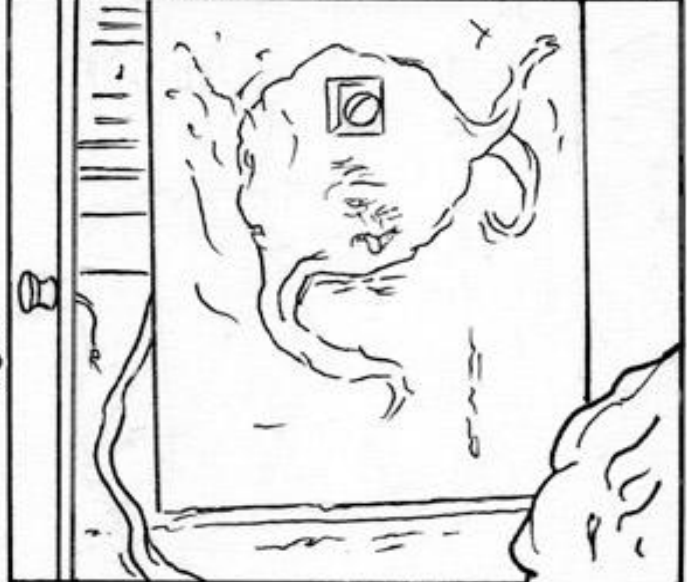
He trailed his 'tube' down the



hallway, wanting to pet 'Qin Quh'.



The 'sloth' was upset as usual.



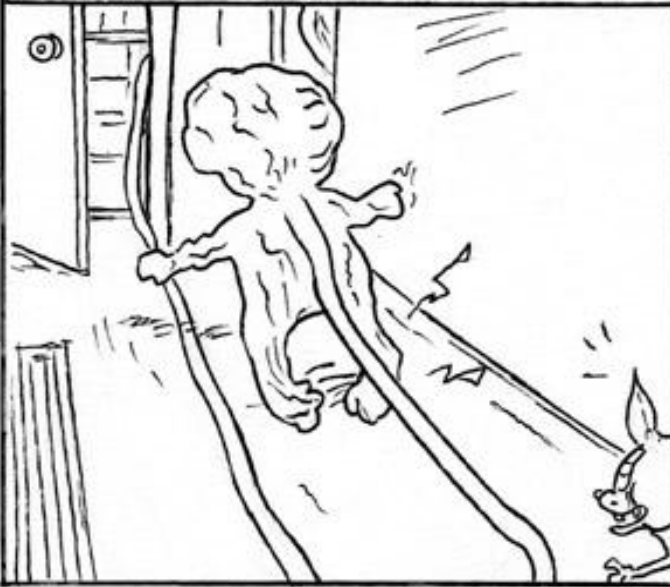
Well worth ignoring. But then



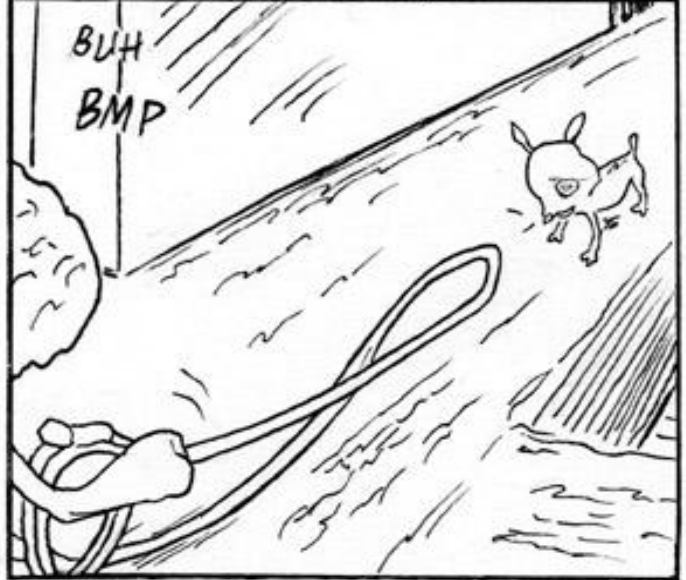
he could hear someone coming!



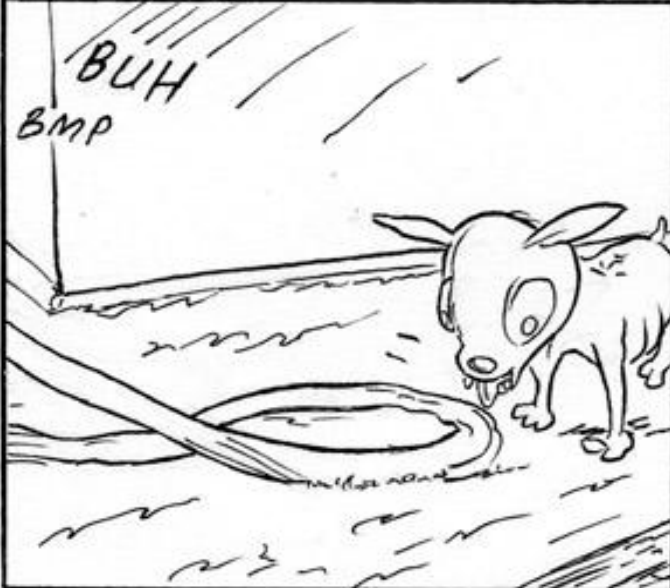
He ran to his cupboard, footsore,



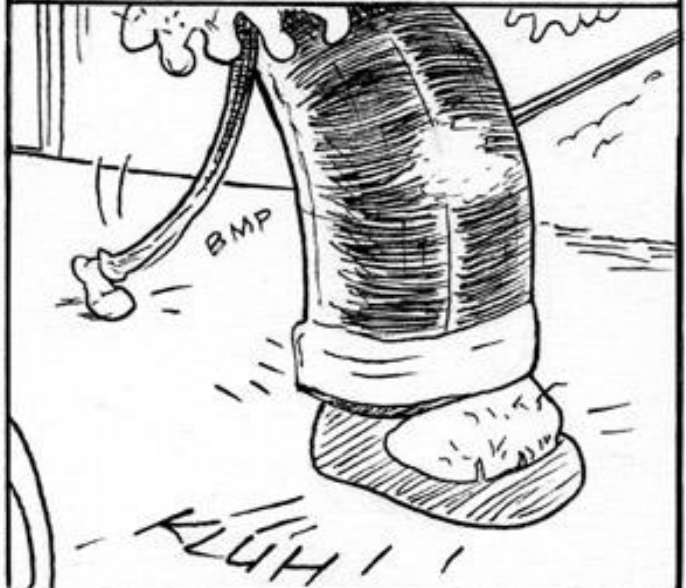
and hurried to tug in his tube.



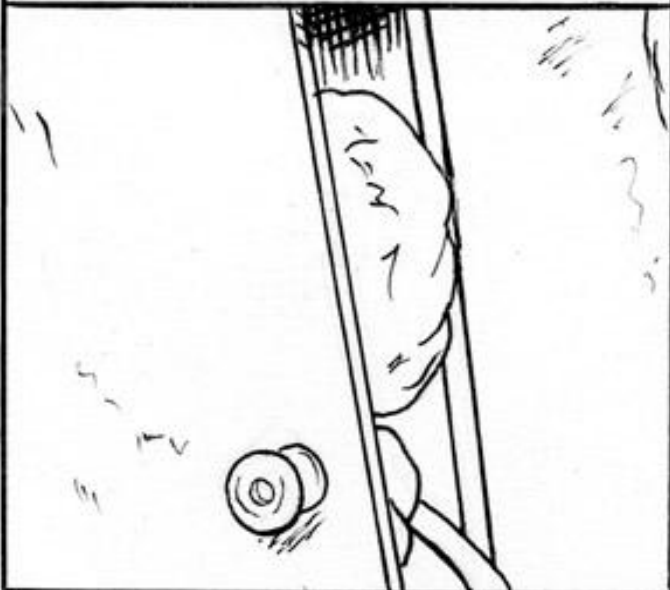
The chafing made it seem forever.



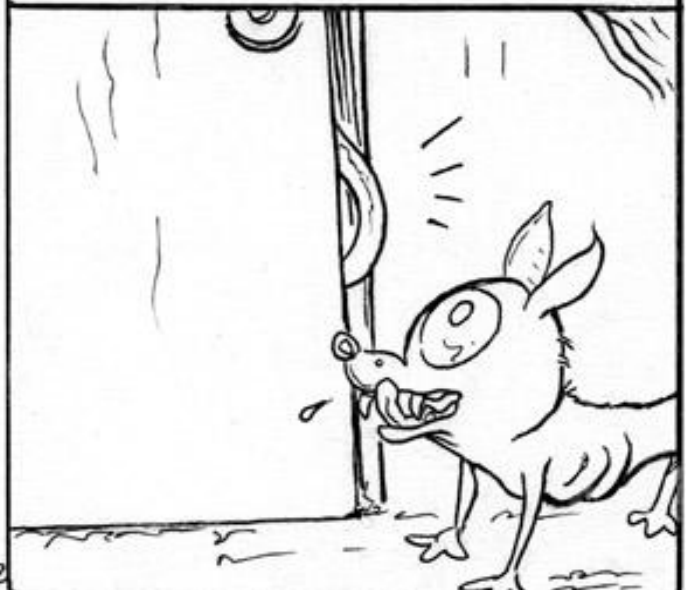
Just as the clomping stranger passed,



heedless, the testicular tot had



made it back intact. OR had he?



CRASSO PROFUNDO: THE PROGRESSIVE E.P.

[Pretension intended.]

A first taster collection of trax by 'THE FLASH FACTION BANNED'

[A true part-account of why my star winkle failed to stick to Pop's slime-ball rock.]

TRACK ONE: MOTOWN MANIPULATIONS

I was really dying to ask her but she would have killed me if I had put the burning question to her Hollywood plasticity: was this lightly freckled, vaguely gingersque, trophy wife of a black Motown music god, living her bizarre life in a constant state of deceitful performance.

DING

I inwardly said yes for her: there was no fooling this gifted psychic with a background in the theatre arts.

DING

The fraudulent bitch with plural face-lifts and perfect teeth was perpetually lying through them- friendship, for her, involved the most banal West Coast flattery for which the end-game always was the one predictable thing, money.

Her wide green eyes moved like the visuals on a Las Vegas one-armed bandit. Dollar. Dollar. Dollar.

DING A LING

I told her I liked her car- a Lexus sports. Said it was a life-saver.

DING

She drove me in it to lunch at La Dome, Elton's eaterie in Beverly Hills, introduced me to 'Hot-lips Hoolahan' - Sally Kellerman and David Carradine who was with his oily agent. [*A year later she would have crashed the Lexus been found enveloped in air bags and the smell of fire screaming for fear that all her plasticity would melt.*]

DING

She was a collector, I was amazed: Klu Klux Klan and Fascist memorabilia. I saw flaming crosses and wondered if she indulged in Wagnerian swastika sex.

DING A LING

Her famous husband Big L came to me where I was staying with the ex of another crock-royal in a famous house on Sunset Boulevard, a place twice rented by Cole Porter in those days when the darker side of rent had not yet been invented: stretched silver Mercedes with gold-plated trimmings, a man of enormous girth and skin at the limits of the colour black.

DING

I put a good bottle of red in his hands and we retired to work at a baby grand in the privacy of the music room. I have a memorable photo. We wrote and recorded five proto-songs- my words his ivories. He drove home over the limit.

DING

We got invited back to spend thanksgiving at his house and studio in the valley- to break cornbread with a deal I had no idea was so big or so poisonous. I met his children- the eldest of which was fated to produce an album for Josh Stone [whilst also screwing her in contravention of Californian State Law]: they were spoiled beyond spoiled.

DING A LING

The plastic-black wife told me she was the one who bought her boys mary-jane because she didn't want them picking up no second grade shit for top dollar.

DING

I also met a litter of undusted Grammys, the biggest TV screen I had ever encountered permanently tuned to a shopping channel and a vast Sylvester Stallone 'painting' hung above a full size gloss black grand piano.

DING

Big L said to me that his God had, that very morning, said to him that I had been put on this earth to be his lyricist. I was beginning to figure this was all so infected with loony tunes. He'd spent the morning working with a diva and now he had his happy shoes on.

DING A LING

I chatted with Snoop Doggy Dog's aunt and a famous film director currently obsessed with filming his three year old daughter's every third minute of an absurd life.

DING

Those five songs have never seen the light of day. The evidence of them I keep in a bank vault just in case they do.

DING

This was the scam, the bottom line, the pay-off that never was: they knew I was very close to a one time member of 'The First Chapter In The Bible', someone who hailed Big L as his hero, and they wanted to borrow another million from him [yes- another] prior to the settlement of the vast outstanding royalties court-case with Gordy Berry.

DING A LING

Americans do manipulation like water off a duck's back, and maybe it was the British who taught them how best to do it, but a 'patsy' is an American invention: it was a particular form of fancy dress I was not accustomed to wearing and not at all cricket.

DING

Gay I maybe but I like to think I play with a straight bat.

Gay I maybe but I like to think I play with a straight bat.

Gay I maybe but I like to think I play with a straight bat.

DONG

TRACK TWO: THE FIRST BOOK OF THE BIBLE

'The Driller', crock royalty, ex-drums, ex lead singer from 'The First Book Of The Bible' sat at my dining table, his youngest daughter Lily at his side telling me, no- swearing on his daughter's life, that he would without any doubt one day write a whole album with me.

SHA

I am only human- I could see my bank manager smiling and my fears for medical care in old-age dwindling at a stroke.

LA

The innocent and beautiful Lily was very happy at the news and hugged her dad who, later that same day told his ex-wife that he would be working with me. Done deal.

LA

After the king of day time radio play-lists had been chauffeured towards his waiting private jet I got a visit from his ex-wife. She was concerned. She was worried for my relationship with her. She told me this was going to dramatically change my life. Erm- yes.

SHA LA LA

It didn't. I am beset by bull-shitters who rarely if ever keep their promises.

SHA

In the same time-frame I met the composer Dominic Shaw- a pagan/pantheist who liked to produce music under the name of 'Rain'. Together we composed a conceptual album *Cerulean Blue*.

LA

He was desperate for access to the crock-royal Driller.

LA

I wrote the 'script' for the album and when it was finished Dominic began composing and, to the best of my knowledge, not a word was changed. It was a complex thing involving many voices and live strings and my own spoken voice-overs.

SHA LA LA

When it was finished I sent a copy to the Driller in his Swiss hideout. Within 24hrs I got a call from him listening to it in his car- he said Hit And Run Music a subsidiary of EMI must not miss out on this great opportunity.

SHA

That vision of my bank manager returned- slightly tainted, but the smile was still there.

LA

A maelstrom of promises littered my in-box for weeks. They were like seeds that had sprouted into plantlets only to be cursed by wet rot. The music industry sees you like a pomegranate- a rather irritating fruit: once they have sucked the flesh off of you they spit the pips of you out, because they can.

LA

I was phoned one weekend by Tony Smith- head of Hit And Run Music, he rang to tell me that he was having a house party for big-wigs from the industry and that ALL they were listening to was the wonderful *Cerulean Blue*.

SHA LA LA

Cerulean Blue never got contracted. *Cerulean Blue*- as good as it undoubtedly is, never went into production.

SHA

Driller never covered the track from it that he said he would.

LA

Dominic Shaw spitefully stripped the master tape of all the original lyrics- wrote his own, re-recorded the album and attempted to release it in Germany. He failed.

LA

I was learning about musos. Experience can be one hell of a teacher.

SHA LA LA

Lily- who I first did major photo-shoots for, is now a successful screen-star in Hollywood. We remain very close.

SHA

Driller is divorced again and a hero of the global 'Fort Alamo Appreciation Society'- he is an annual entry in The Times Rich List though he is believed to have retired from writing crock songs. The back-catalogue feeds his way of life.

LA

I've written the libretto of a musical for him- 'Venice Beach'.

LA

We've not communicated for more than twelve months.

SHA LA LA

It is my belief he covets a knighthood such as Sir Paul and Sir Elton but maybe there is such a thing as karma.

SHA LA LA

There is such a thing as karma.

There is such a thing as karma.

There is such a thing as karma.

GONG

TRACK THREE: CUL-DE-SACS

I can now see clearly that the killer ingredient was not just my association with the magnetism of Driller but also the fact that Dominic Shaw and I had written the first track for what was to have been our second album *Sanguine Red*- a very affecting song called 'Veridian' which to this day makes me reminisce about my Welsh roots.

DU WOP

Listening to this music would always seem to challenge me to pursue a song-writing collaboration that would finally deliver an wipe out all the previous disappointments.

DU WOP

In various ways this perverse ambition made me behave like a creative whore, always too eager, always giving out on the first date, always cremating abortions.

BOO HOO

I wrote twelve fully produced songs with John Cornwall but none of them caught on.

DU WOP

Alvin Starcrust befriended me- as if, not the slightest whiff of creativity, but overblown self and born again Christianity. Get rid, and I did.

DU WOP

Oh there was a whole rag bag chain of them attempting to weasel their way to catch some crumbs from Driller's table full of Swiss cheese.

BOO HOO

The thing is beneath it all they were all singer songwriters- the modern plethora of which I now consider to be the slow death of the popular music industry.

DU WOP

It takes a very great talent to be able to write great lyrics and then hang them on great tunes and then sing them with great original delivery. It seems to me that we are being led to believe by the industry that everyone with a recording contract can do ALL of these things and of course it is simply not true- not at the level of greatness. It is just not possible.

DU WOP

Songs used to be written by lyricists and composers working in collaborations and their efforts would then be covered by recording artists. That used to be the backbone of a former music industry that had some vestige of integrity.

BOO HOO

Today it is all smoke and mirrors and I have a pathological dislike for that kind of manipulative magic.

DU WOP

My last shot at it was with the doomed 'Queer Messiah Banned' project.

DU WOP

This gifted psychic threw himself into that with all bells ringing and all whistles blowing, knowing deep down, that it had a shit ending tattooed to it. And in the end there is no bucking a fucking trend.

BOO HOO

Do not collaborate with musos or other gays- they have ways of making your life unbearably miserable.

DU WOP

That last shot was my final shot at it.

DU WOP

Bang bang he shot him down bang bang.

Bang bang he shot him down bang bang.

Bang bang he shot him down bang bang.

WAH

From my Queer Messiah blog on the world wide web:-

['A silence has followed my recent unilateral decision to split from the rock/pop music collaboration THE QUEER MESSIAH BANNED- a concept I had solely created. Working relationships do reach unavoidable breaking points and sadly some of these prove to be utterly insurmountable.

After fifteen years of attempting to work creatively and sympathetically with musos I finally took the advice of my closest friends and realised that my past and present experiences with these people had indeed proven that they do not share my work ethic or utterly embrace my understanding of what a collaboration is. What they had brought to my life with a remarkable consistency was a vast list of disappointments and a particularly unfriendly catalogue of broken promises.

My biggest beef with all these people was that unfailingly they promised what they were not, in the final analysis, prepared to deliver. My recent grief was that my latest collaborator had taken it upon himself, without any reference to me, to publicly via the internet promise the launch of both an E.P. and an Album according to a specific timeline. These were promises made on my behalf which were subsequently broken not by me but by him. That is reprehensible.

I am deeply disappointed that I have been involved a project which specifically promised something it was unable to deliver. For that I apologise without reserve. Despite it being a 'collaboration' such immense decisions had been taken out of my hands.

My collaborator- the composer, the instrumentalist and vocalist also appeared intent to take it upon himself to make the unilateral decision to appoint himself the sole art director for the project. He posted many examples of his approach to artwork for The Queer Messiah Banned without seeking any 'proof' approval from me. That is also reprehensible in the context of a collaboration. The fact is that I liked very little of it. Our tastes in these matters are polarised.

I have learned to be very elastic with my patience with regard to musos- it does seem that they are very fond of having their own way: hence the modern phenomenon of the ubiquitous singer-songwriter; they all believe that they can do it all. So be it. Then never collaborate.

I checked my meticulously kept contact record- 95% of the time contact was initiated by myself. This is never a great indicator.

The final straw came when I realised that in a very ill-advised comment posted by him publicly on Facebook all empathy and respect for me had totally dissipated. Pulling the plug was extremely difficult but it was my trusted advisers who forced my hand. The Queer Messiah Banned is now The Queer Messiah Banned That Was.

I shall never work with a rock/pop musician or within that industry again. I do not trust it.

My belief in the power of collaborations is dented rather than diminished and I have recently opted to join forces with the very accomplished satirist Mike Knowles in a number of varied projects under the name QUEER MESSIAH MEDIA.]

The remarkable Mike Knowles has since written to me and said that in our glittering future we shall have nothing whatsoever to do with musical instruments, not even the Jew's harp.

TRACK FOUR: INSTRUMENTAL CLUB MIX

**THE CRUX OF IT SHIT SUCKS
THE CRUX OF IT SHIT SUCKS
THE CRUX OF IT SHIT SUCKS**

BOOM
BOOM

THE END. [If this recording is played backwards demons will gang-bang your fundament]

WORDS: Chris Madoch
MUSIC: Chris Madoch
INSTRUM: Chris Madoch
VOICES: Chris Madoch
MIX: Chris Madoch
PROD: Chris Madoch

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COOKING FROGS WITH DON BOLLES

By dixē.flatlin3

Don Bolles has been a fixture in the Los Angeles underground scene since the late-70s. On drums, he was a member of the legendary punk band the Germs and a founding-member of 45 Grave. However, Don's musical abilities are limited only by the amount of hours in the day. How I happened to meet Don Bolles is rather random. Although he has long been an iconic image in the Los Angeles scene, I did not encounter him in this way, so that part of it was out of context to me. Several friends and I were deciding on where to go eat to cure the post-drunk munchies, after last-call in the clubs of Hollywood, when something on the radio caught my attention. I do not remember what it was, but for some reason I picked up the phone and called the number that had just been broadcast. The person who answered was very friendly, funny, and invited us down to the station. We loaded into a car and headed out to Santa Monica where MARS FM was located.

Don was working the over-night shift at MARS, doing *The All Night Truck Driver Show*. MARS had not been on the air that long and there wasn't a lot going on at 3 a.m. when you're stuck in a control booth. Thus, we brought the entertainment to him. This occurred during the rave heyday in Los Angeles, I was often at massive warehouses where way too many fucked up things were taking place in every nook and cranny and the designer drugs were flowing like water. After some of these adventures, I would wander over to the MARS FM studios and hang

out with Don. Which meant I got to play intern and answer phones, take requests, screen calls, etc. In preparing for interviews I have noticed that the artists are often asked the same questions, repeatedly, and these questions are typically regarding a specific era. The public likes to pigeonhole their idols and I quickly found most of the material readily available online. I have heard that fans can be defined as liking one particular thing and wanting the artist to deliver more of that same product. I can only imagine how stifling that is for those who are truly artistic. Don seems to have taken this with a grain of salt and is unapologetically honest and opinionated.

Phoenix Rising

Jimmy Michael Giorsetti was born on July 30, 1956 in Oakland California. Around the age of two he developed what he described as a “respiratory weirdness” and his parents moved him to Scottsdale Arizona. The strange and prolific recommendation to move to a dry climate from medical professionals is the reason a lot of people came to Arizona. However, this allowed young Jimmy to land in a place where his weirdness could expand and grow, unfettered and uninfluenced by the trends of the big cities. Isolation seems to do this. Scottsdale may as well have been Timbuktu in the 50s and 60s. Young Jimmy got his musical start in Top-40 cover bands, making the rounds of the greater Phoenix area. He described his uncanny ability to mimic voices and tones as the main reason for his success in this genre. He also possessed a true appreciation for all things esoteric and weird about music. With the hopes of starting a band he embarked on a short-lived stint in San Francisco, where he met Rob Ritter (later Rob Graves). They tried to form a punk band, but the pair never managed to find any other musicians there to play the sort of music they were interested in, and he soon returned to Arizona, and Rob went back to Detroit. Once back, he was asked to play bass for the Consumers while their bassist recovered from being hit by a car on his ten-speed bicycle. Admittedly, he was horrible on bass, but “it was punk rock and I thought it didn’t matter.” As soon as the regular bassist recovered, Jimmy found himself out of the band. At that point, as he says, “I just decided, well fuck it, I’m just going to start my own stupid punk band.” With Jimmy on bass, the drummer from his Top-40 band and a guitarist, the trio moved into a house in downtown Phoenix. Once there, he quickly made the drummer and guitarist switch instruments, “to be more on my level,” and they went to work writing songs that they then recorded live in their living room. He called Rob Ritter in Detroit and played him the tapes over the phone; Rob flew out to Phoenix to join the band almost immediately.

Hearing that another band, called the Exterminators, was starting up in the area is what led Jimmy to the drums. As he said, “What, a punk band here in Phoenix without me in it? No way!” He called them up and asked if they needed a bass player or a guitarist, since he had recently started playing guitar. They said no, but they did need a drummer, and he said, “Ok, I’ll be right over.” After borrowing pieces of a drum kit, he went and auditioned in a rented storage warehouse, and became a member of that band too. Soon Rob joined the band on bass and they began playing shows in the Phoenix area. Jimmy, who changed his name almost daily back then, became Don Bolles in early 1977, during a phone interview with a local radio personality, who had called to discuss this new thing called “punk rock.” The assassination of investigative reporter Don Bolles in Phoenix on June 2, 1976 was still headline news there at the time, and the details of the mafia-related car bombing and Bolles’ subsequent ten-day hospital

stay and numerous limb amputations before his death were apparently at the forefront of young Jimmy's mind when he answered the interviewer's questions:

"So, what's your name, sir?

Don Bolles.

Don Bolles?!

Yeah. No relation. Kind of weird, eh?

Uh...yeah, I'd say! That's quite a coincidence!

Yeah, I guess so.

So, Don, what's the name of your Punk Rock band?

The Bloody Stumps..."

...silence...

And thus the name, if not exactly a legend, was born. With the help of a small trust fund bequeathed to him at the age of 21, he and Rob set out for Los Angeles. The two packed Don's Chrysler Newport Custom full of stuff, which included a stolen drum set.

Punk Rock

When I first spoke to Don about doing this interview, we chatted briefly about the resurgence of interest in his old band the Germs. Specifically, what did he think of the movie?

"I think the guy's dad is an über-powerful entertainment lawyer, so it was going to get made regardless of what anyone said or thought." He went on to elaborate that although the producers had declined to license or option the book Don had written on the topic, *Lexicon Devil: The Fast Times and Short Life of Darby Crash and the Germs (Feral House)*, they had ensured there were plenty of copies to go around on the set of the movie. Don also noted that many of the 'consultants' used during the production were bit-players in the true history of the Germs. "They did get a lot of the random details right, thanks to Bill Bartell." This renewed interest allowed the remaining members to regroup and play shows with the actor who had played Darby in the movie, Shane West. While some met this decision with harsh and vocal criticism, it did not have much effect on Don. I mean, he is a Germ, what the fuck does he care what anyone thinks about what he and the others choose to do with the Germs?

"Besides," adds Bolles, "It's just so Warholian... I mean, how cool would it have been, Pop Art-wise, if the Doors would have gotten Val Kilmer (who played Jim Morrison in Oliver Stone's "The Doors") to sing instead of Ian Astbury? I think it's awesome that we have Teen Idol Shane West fronting the Germs! Lucky thing for us he does a really great job as the Germs singer - better in real life than in the movie, even. But it's so ridiculous, obviously; and I'm sure Darby would love it!"

Much focus has been placed upon the one person who has been dead for over 30 years now. Again, the fans like the one product and they want more of the exact item. If it involves a person who died, then it becomes sacrilegious to ever play it again. Which is the exact reason I have chosen to avoid the topic altogether. If you want to read a history of the Germs and Los Angeles punk rock, read Don's book. Give the artist his due and pay for the knowledge or nostalgia you seek. The book itself was surrounded in controversy; even though he was a

member of the Germs, he had a hard time getting people to speak out on the record about the events of long ago. Don described the ordeal:

“When we started doing the book it was really tough to get people to talk about the Germs for some reason. It was like a sacred cow to a lot of people. They just did not feel it was even right to discuss it in public. I was like, really? Not even with me, and I was in the band? Most of them finally did, but it took a while.”

The recording of the infamous, final (and arguably best) Germs’ performance at the Starwood is available on Rhino Handmade. Despite Darby’s insistence that it not be recorded, Don admits to having his friend, Lee Rickmers, go into the sound booth with Paul Cutler, who was doing the sound that evening, and record the show. “Lucky thing,” Don told me. Within a few days of this show, Darby was dead.

“Without Darby and the Germs there was suddenly this void, because he was the nexus of the scene at that point. There was a parody of Slash magazine called SLUSH that ran a piece called ‘Top 10 things overheard outside punk shows’ or something, and the number one thing was ‘Wow – did Darby think it was cool when you told him that you did that?’ That’s kind of how it was! But by mid-1980 the new crop of ‘hardcore’ bands from Orange County were coming up and getting more popular with the younger people. It was like a stripped down sound. They kind of took off from the Germs and Black Flag, but they stripped it down and they started doing that ‘oompah’ beat that I hated, because you can be a total buffoon and still play that oompah beat really fast. It was always a pet peeve of mine, that fucking oompah beat. I still hate it to this day.”

Filling the Void

Even then, Don was usually in several bands at once, and was actually kicked out of the Germs a few months prior to their ‘reunion show’ at the Starwood, for his participation in various side-projects, most notably Vox Pop, which had him dressing in Runaways’ style drag. Not long after moving to L.A., Don soon found himself a member of the recent Phoenix transplant band the Consumers, who had just beat up their singer onstage at a Whiskey show and kicked him out of the band. Don knew their songs and could sing, so he started practicing with them in the basement of the Canterbury apartments, where he and many of the other L.A. punks lived. It was then that a young, blue-haired Girl Scout named Mary Simms approached him to be interviewed for her ‘zine.

“There were these two weird teenaged girls that had this little Xerox fanzine called Nihil, and they wanted to interview me for being in the Consumers. One of them was Mary Simms. We kind of liked each other right away, and I ended up moving out of the Canterbury and in with her and her mom and aunt, who initially didn’t want her to go out with me because I had an Italian last name, but I guess Mary put up quite a stink, so I got to move in. Then the Consumers broke up for and everyone moved back to Phoenix, except me. Mary and I would drive out to Phoenix to play music with (former Consumer) Paul Cutler, because he was this awesome Avant-garde improv noise musician guy, (besides being a great guitarist and classically trained pianist) and I enjoyed doing that stuff. She got a taste for it as well, so we

would take her aunt's car and drive to Phoenix a lot. Eventually Paul moved back to L.A.. He lived in my broken down van in the driveway of Mary's aunt's West Hollywood home."

"We had turned the garage into a weird, soundproofed practice space and we ended up doing a lot of jamming there and recording a lot of stuff. And we started working on some 'pop' songs. A rock guy named Jeff Dahl had just moved to L.A. from Hawaii, and he had heard that we were into Blue Cheer and early Alice Cooper, which was true, so he called us out of the blue and told us he was looking for people to back him up for a show at the King's Palace, which later became Raji's, on Hollywood Boulevard. So we said sure, come on over, and we got really messed up on drugs and drunken and banged out some songs and recorded them live in the garage, and that became the band we ended up calling Vox Pop, which was a corruption of 'vincebus vox populi', Latin for 'control the voice of the people.' We were trying to copy Blue Cheer's first album title, 'Vincebus Eruptum,' which means 'control the chaos,' but we couldn't just use that."

"In July 1980, Vox Pop went in to Media Arts studios to record two songs for a 7-inch single; that's the studio where Black Flag recorded with their engineer/producer, Spot. We left the settings up on the mixer from some Black Flag single, 'Jealous Again,' I think, that was mixed earlier that day, and we told Spot not

to change anything - we wanted to see what it would sound like if we mixed our tape with the same settings. We also started playing on a Public Access show called New Wave Theatre. We had a bunch of other songs that weren't really right for Vox Pop, so we started a 'pop' band, which ended up being 45 Grave. Keep in mind, we were living at Mary's mom and aunt's house and they had helped us soundproof the garage and told us that we had to let Mary in this new band or we couldn't jam in the garage anymore. That was fine with us, because none of us wanted to sing - this was back in the day when people would loogie (gob) all over the bands at punk shows, and I was perfectly content to be in the back behind the giant cymbals and drums.



She turned out to be a pretty good lyricist and not a bad singer, and we worked on these songs and practiced them a lot. To round out our set, we appropriated a lot of the Consumers songs, because Paul wrote most of them, anyway, and since they broke up the Consumers weren't going to be using them anytime soon. Rob Graves played bass, Paul played guitar, Mary - soon to become Dinah Cancer - sang, and I was on drums."



Don has always had a flair for coming up with names. His first vinyl recording as bassist with Phoenix improv pop band the Yvonnees was done under the name of Scary Como. It was also his idea to call the band 45 Grave.

"So we had this other band and we didn't really have a name for it, but it was like my dream band that I'd finally kinda gotten together. My favorite bass player Rob (Graves), and then Paul who was my favorite guitar player, he and Pat (Smear) actually - Pat was sort of in the band, too. After the Germs broke up, we had him play in the band, but he didn't last very long. He just didn't want to do anything-musical right then, which was understandable, since Darby, his BFF and partner in crime, had just killed himself. And it felt redundant, anyway, because with Paul Cutler and him it was like we had five guitarists! So we were working on the band and our songs in the garage over at Mary's house where we lived. We were all staying there, sort of leeching off her aunt and her Mom - that's who raised her because her dad ran off, apparently when she was three, went to the liquor store and never came back. We were hanging out on Christmas morning, 1980, and Paul had gotten me a little present at a thrift store - he hands me this package, I open it up, and there's this big button, about three-inches in diameter. It looked like one of those generic buttons that you could just go and have made somewhere. It said 'WE DIG' on top, had a huge number '45' in the middle, and under that it said 'GRAVE.' WE DIG 45 GRAVE. I said 'what the...' I was just looking at this thing like it's this mystical object from space. We were laughing our asses off! 'What the hell is this?' All of us were just dying, Mary and Paul and Rob and I. And I said, 'Well, obviously 45 Grave is now the name of our new band, and this is obviously our first fan club button.' And everyone said yes, of course, obviously. So that's where the name came from..."

During Don's hiatus from the Germs, he and the others in 45 Grave had developed a tight set list that was exactly 25-minutes long and practiced it every day for hours, and their practice paid off during their first show.



“Luckily, when the Germs ceased to exist, we already had this incredibly fast, crazy band, with no oompah beats, that was ready to go. So we just leaped into that void and soon did our first show at the Hong Kong Café, with the Bush Tetras and Human Hands, which had David Wiley and members of the L.A. Free Music Society (LAFMS), with whom I also played with a lot, I was in a few of their bands, including noise orchestra Airway. It was something the Germs

derisively dismissed as ‘hippie art noise.’ They didn’t like those guys, but, whatever, I enjoyed hippie art noise quite a bit. Anyway, for some reason most of the earlier 45 Grave shows were with New York bands; the Bush Tetras, Delta Five, D.N.A., and I think we played with 8-Eyed Spy, one of Lydia Lunch’s post-Teenage Jesus bands. I don’t know why we always had to play with the New York bands, but we did. We played with the Misfits too.”

“So 45 Grave kind of jumped in and filled this void left by the demise of the Germs. We were pretty formidable; I mean, there was nothing like what we were doing when we came out – nothing. Nada. We were fusing elements of metal, punk, classical, Avant-garde improv noise, instrumental surf; we even had a ska part or two in a couple of songs. We just created this weird thing, with sort of a horror rock look; we wore crazy makeup, I often did mine like a skull and wore fezzes, and we all dressed really weird. We were really into Alice Cooper and that sort of showed. Then we recorded the ‘Black Cross/Wax’ single on a four-track in the garage and it sounded amazing, way better than our stupid album sounded; we should have just done everything on our four-track, and in fact we did, but that didn’t come out until later on the ‘Autopsy’ LP, which is way better than any of the other records, except the 7-inch and the three songs on the ‘Hell Comes To Your House’ compilation. We put out the 45 Grave 7-inch single on our own, with some help from Michael Sheppard, who put out the Vox Pop 7-inch but for some reason the artwork took forever, because we didn’t have computers, and to get the design we wanted it had to go through all these weird processes, basically all it was was putting lettering over an image, which would take any moron 30-seconds to do on a computer now. Well, it took us three months then, and unfortunately, we gave an acetate of it to Rodney Bingenheimer, to play on his *Rodney on the Roq* show, and he played it all the time. Rodney’s show was what everyone listened to and you had to know about his show if you were into punk, because that is the only place you were going to hear it unless you were playing your own record or listening to a cassette. Flipside magazine ran a chart called the *Rodney Chart* and we were number one for requests on his show for like three months running, and still the record didn’t come out, because the artwork wasn’t done. (laughs) Do you remember the artwork on

it? It was an upside pentagram with a goat head in it, the 'Baphomet,' the same one that was on the cover of the 'Satanic Bible.'"

"It was the back of that single that took so long the way that we had to do it, because we had black letters that were going on dark grey on this image, so what I had to do was put the black lettering on a transparency and then I had to take a pencil eraser and erase everything underneath the transparency... anyway, by the time the record came out, everyone had already taped it off Rodney's show months before. It did ok, but it would have done a lot better had it come out sooner. It bummed me out too, because it took so long to come out that other records came out before it using that exact same image. I went to a record store and saw a new Venom album with the very same Baphomet, then the Plasmatics did one, too. And Motley Crue, who were huge fans of 45 Grave and went to almost all of our shows, ended up putting an upside down pentagram on the cover of 'Shout at the Devil.' It was a drag. Ours was ready first, but not out first. It got re-pressed in the early 90s, and it's hard to tell those from the originals we made, so it's not as rare as it could be. Good record, you should pick that up."

"So, with the Germs gone, 45 Grave and our friends the Adolescents, whose 'Amoeba' was a huge hit on the Rodney show, as well, became pretty much the biggest things in L.A.. We ended up playing a bunch of shows, and dabbled a little too much in the heroin, which didn't really help us, and did an album with Craig Leon, who produced The Ramones' and Blondie's first albums and the first Suicide LP. He did a really



good job on those things, but for some reason ours ended up sounding like a cardboard-shit-version of what we were trying to do, with bad sounding 80's keyboards all over it. I dunno, I never liked that album much, the 'Sleep in Safety' album. It was alright, I guess, but nowhere near what we had envisioned. Then the history of the band got rather twisted and convoluted, with people kicking each other out of the band and such. Dinah Cancer and I broke up, and she and Paul Cutler got married, so the power structure of the band changed pretty drastically. She and Paul kicked Rob and I out of the band because we were horrible junkies, which was a bit ludicrous because both of them were just as bad. We went on a couple of U.S. tours and finally broke up in 1984."

I ask Don his thoughts on the resurrection of 45 Grave without him in the lineup.

"I don't know why she doesn't just use the other name I thought up, Dinah Cancer, instead of using the band name I thought up, when she's the only 45 Grave member in the band. At least

Dinah Cancer was a name that I thought up for *her*; she can use that all she wants, and it's fine. But 45 Grave - I thought of that, as stupid and random as it may be, for *our band*. Now I'm not a litigious person, and I'm not going to go and try to sue everybody for everything, but for her to use that name when it's just her with a completely different backup band - it's a bummer. I love that she's doing stuff, more power to her for that; I'm sure she needs the money - who doesn't? She's great and all, and Frank Agnew (from the Adolescents) who plays guitar in it now is a cool guy and an amazing musician, but I just don't think it's right that she calls what is actually her solo thing with a completely different band '45 Grave.' I think she should just be Dinah Cancer, because that's a perfectly fine name. I don't know. There was one point when the Misfits wanted 45 Grave to open for them on a U.S. tour, but they wanted the band to have at least two original members, so she asked me to drum, and I immediately said yes, even though I wasn't at all sure about the other musicians at the time. Then that fell through because her manager, who also managed Mary's Penis Flytrap band, was making all sorts of ridiculous demands, until the Misfits finally got sick of dealing with them and just said 'fuck you' and got somebody else, and that was the end of that. She started being all weird to me because of some boyfriend she had at the time, who was evidently retroactively jealous. I guess I was her first lover, so maybe that's why. Dinah Cancer was 17, a virgin, and a Girl Scout when I met her; but she was also smart, weird, and really into KISS, so it wasn't like she was some totally innocent cherub or anything. She listened to Rodney's show all the time, and had a bunch of tapes of his shows and other cool shows that KROQ had in those days, like 'The Young Marquis and Stanley,' which was absolutely hilarious, and 'Hollywood Nightshift,' which was also kind of hilarious, and featured Frazier Smith along with Phil Austin from the Firesign Theater. Great radio."

"After 45 Grave broke up for good (we had originally broken up in 1984, but were doing reunion shows in the late 80s and early 90s, until Rob died in 1991 and we figured out that nobody could really replace him so we stopped) Dinah had a band called Penis Flytrap, which did all new, original songs; they put out a few records and did a lot of shows around town, and were kind of popular, even. Then that band broke up, and she started a different one that did mostly 45 Grave material, using the name Dinah Cancer and The Grave Robbers, and calling it a 'tribute' to 45 Grave, which isn't exactly accurate because she was actually *in* 45 Grave. But then she asked her ex-husband, Paul Cutler, if it would be okay with him if she just called it 45 Grave, which I thought was strange because I was the one that thought of the name. But he said he didn't care, and that was good enough for her, so she's been calling it that ever since, much to my chagrin..."

The Rat Has Spoken

Having been in bands that are considered founding influences in both punk and deathrock, Don found himself in and out of drugs and various other bands, like Nervous Gender, and the Silver Chalice, but nothing really stuck.

"I wasn't doing a whole lot musically after the demise of 45 Grave. When we broke up in '84, I got a job doing sound at the Cathay de Grande, a seedy basement punk club in Hollywood; that was a lot of fun. Doing sound there was difficult, because the entropy factor was so extreme; every night speakers would blow, tweeters would pop, power amps and monitors would die, the mics would get trashed, yet the people that ran the club would never fix anything, so I had

to somehow make the bands sound just as good one night to the next, even though the P.A. would be more and more broken all the time. To make matters worse, a lot of the bands that played there were hard core criminals and thugs who did not take kindly to having their sound (such as it was) be less than stellar, and would not hesitate to hit you over the head with a mic stand if things didn't sound right, which they almost never did. It was a great education in how to get decent sound from shitty, broken equipment."

"Eventually someone suggested I could get a messenger job at the L.A. Weekly, so I did, and while I was there one of the editors asked me to write something for them, and I was like, 'me? Write things? No way!' I dropped out of high school when I was 15, and never even bothered to write the occasional postcard, but I finally turned in my two paragraphs and hoped for the best. I had heard horror stories of what the editors there would do to your stuff, but they ran it completely unaltered. So I did that for a while, and actually had kind of a second career, making money, even. Then there was this band called Celebrity Skin, who were these really cool-looking people I had been seeing around town; I wondered who or what they were, because they were like nobody I had ever seen, not in real life, anyway. A couple of them were in a band with Pat Smear and a sort of famous L.A. punker chick named Gerber, called Vagina Dentata, and we had once bonded over Mott the Hoople and T Rex songs in Reno in the back room at a party after a 45 Grave show. They asked me to play drums for their band, or at least write a review about them, since they knew I wrote for the weekly. I had seen them live and thought they were terrible, so I feigned being too busy and thanked them, but they kept pestering me to review them, anyway. I finally went to see them again; they had practiced a lot, and had gotten really good. Weird how that works...so I gave them this really glowing review, and then they stopped by my apartment and asked me to be in the band again. I had this pet rat in a cage, and just as they asked me to be in the band and were waiting for me to say yes or no, we all noticed that the rat was ricocheting like a bullet off the walls and ceiling of its cage; it was crazy - we were all watching it, sort of amazed. Finally this rat stops its insane antics and just stands up, looks at us, and then falls over dead. So I said, 'yeah, ok, I guess that's a sign that I have to be in your band now.' It was the weirdest thing. I had a really good job right then and I had just bought this nice motorcycle and had a nice apartment and a girlfriend, and they told me that if I did decide to join the band all of those things would be gone within a few months. But the rat had spoken - I had to join. Sure enough, they were right. It all happened just like he said. But it was still totally fun; Celebrity Skin was like a weird alternate universe. Oddly enough, I was completely sober the entire time I was in Celebrity Skin, except for one time when Gary, Tim and I accidentally ate some pot brownies in Oakland. Tim hid in his girlfriend's room for 2 days, and Gary and I were out driving the van around San Francisco, and started feeling really weird, but didn't have any idea why. I thought, 'Wow - Gary sure is weird...', and Gary was thinking the same about me; we tried to go to a punk show at this place called The Farm, but when we got out of the van and saw people we got scared and ran back to the van, and drove until we saw a John Waters' film festival, where we went and watched John Waters' movies for six-and-a-half-hours, until the weed wore off. We got to meet John Waters afterwards, and luckily weren't all crazy stoned and paranoid anymore by then... I think I joined the band in '86 and we kept going until '91."

I mention that I had seen Celebrity Skin open for The Damned on their initial reunion tour in 1989.

"45 Grave opened for The Damned too, those guys were always awesome. Celebrity Skin was pretty good - too bad the album doesn't really bear that out, but the live shows were unbelievable, and once again, there I was in the biggest band in L.A. That was three in a row. Our manager was Rick Van Santen, the guy who ran Goldenvoice, a huge L.A. concert promotion company, and he certainly knew how to make us the largest act in L.A., even if the rest of the world still eluded us. I was pretty stoked about it all; but I still didn't have any money, and I wasn't even spending anything on drugs anymore."

Post-Post-Punk

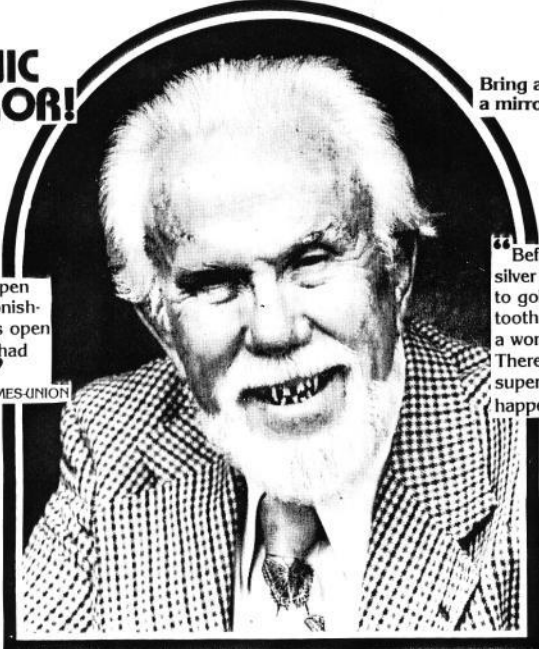
"Then I got offered a job by my friend Freddy Snakeskin, who was the program director for a new commercial station called MARS FM. He had a pirate station back in Phoenix that I was on called KDIL, before I was in bands and stuff. I would hitchhike across town, with my records under my arm, and go to his place; in the room where the equipment was there'd be a joint of the best pot in the world and a couple hits of acid waiting for me on the mixing board. And we'd be on the air all night, it was pretty crazy because it sounded like a real radio station. We had a jingle agency do all the jingles for us. It sounded so real, except that we said we were

broadcasting live from the Satanic Tabernacle in Wickenburg Arizona. Of course, no such place existed. It was a great station, a lot of prank phone calls came from that station. We broadcasted illegally for years and never got caught, wouldn't be that easy now. So, we both eventually moved to L.A. Freddy ended up on KROQ, where he worked through the 80s. When KROQ was sold to ClearChannel, for a then record amount of money, Freddy talked the former owner, Ken Roberts, into purchasing another station, and he hired Freddy as program director, which is the person responsible for hiring and scheduling the 'air talent.' I had never done real radio before, and even though I was comfy doing the late night whatever-I-wanted-to-play

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If you think Heavy Metal is the only music Satan is using today, you have been horribly deceived.

show I was originally hired to do, I was a little apprehensive about the idea of doing a regular slot where I had to work from a playlist. The other jocks were seasoned pros, and I had no idea what I was doing in that more structured, 'normal' situation. But Freddy allayed my fears, telling me, 'It's much easier to teach a guy that has a personality how to do radio than to teach a guy that knows how to do radio how to have a personality.' He was a genius. The other advice he gave me was simple, but effective: 'Brevity is the essence of effective communication.' I never forgot it, and soon my 'airbreaks' ended up being pretty funny and tight. The station mostly played techno, industrial, and alternative rock. You remember MARS, right? (laughs) The definitive MARS FM type song was probably 'Sex on Wheels' by My Life with the Thrill Kill Kult, if there would have been a lot more songs like that, of that caliber, the station probably would have done very well."

"I was still in Celebrity Skin at the time, and we went on tour while I worked there. Where other program directors might have fired me, Freddy made it into a running bit - 'Don Bolles - In Search Of America' or something. I called in daily from the road to Freddy's show with an on-the-road update. That was a fun time, but the station had a lot of problems. The signal was a huge one, but it couldn't reach the valley, or a lot of other places. Then they hired a new General Manager, who promptly fired everyone in the programming department, which we found out when we showed up to the work one day and the locks on the door were changed and there was a gigantic uniformed security guard. Prior to this they had attempted to dump techno music, which was ridiculous, since that was our particular niche. That led to a huge outcry from the listeners, so they begrudgingly let techno back into the playlist, but it was all down hill from there. I mean we were playing ads for Cadillac dealerships and Gold Bond Medicated Hemorrhoid cream to teenaged rave fans in between all the techno and industrial hits. It was a pretty radical station, in its way. We were actually the first commercial station to play Nirvana, unless you count Rodney's show. Right after they fired everyone the station changed to a hideous 'mellow jazz' format, which lasted about a month."

"So there I was without a job, or a band and no radio career, which was nice because then maybe I could have a social life again, because I had to be up all night and sleep all day when I was working at MARS. The times you saw me were probably the only times anyone saw me. So I was kinda glad to get my life back at the time, but it wasn't much of a life. I was trying to DJ at raves and things, but the music I played nobody wanted to hear in Los Angeles. I was playing the stuff from the All Night Truck Driver show, German techno, Detroit noisecore, NYC Acid, and proto-Gabber from Rotterdam and Belgium; the shit I played was all really hardcore, noisy, and weird. A fan once shouted, 'It's not rave - it's RAPE!' He meant it as a compliment. I'd have a Merzbow noise CD in one channel and a Stockhausen album in the other channel, with a bunch of crazy electronic sounds, and I'd just turn the Merzbow channel on-and-off to make a beat, so it was this huge white noise jackhammer beat with all this crazy electronic noise over it. They loved it in Phoenix, though. The Phoenix rave promoters would fly me there with all my records, pay me a bunch of money, and fly me back. And people went nuts - there were kids on acid all over the place, freaking out and having them a time, heads in the speaker cabinets and glow sticks in the air. But in L.A., I couldn't pay people to let me play this shit. All anybody in L.A. wanted to hear was "deep house." Horrible stuff. And the people that would show up and dance to it were even worse - it was all these cocaine sniffing blonde ladies with their jerk, English boyfriends; yugh. Yeah, it was just terrible here for me and my records."

“Then I started doing this thing called Kitten Sparkles using shortwave radio noise, because I got really into Japanese noise stuff, and I thought I could make better noise myself with just a shortwave radio and a tape recorder. I recruited my friend Joseph Hammer, who was from the LAFMS, to do tape loops while I ‘played’ the shortwave radio; we got some big amplifiers and started doing shows. The first one was at Jabberjaw, a legendary 90’s coffeehouse, alternative venue that put on a lot of great shows – Nirvana played there during the Bleach days. Then later I added a strobe light to it, to go with this one pulse that I got from the shortwave one night. Basically all of our sounds were shortwave radio static. Some of it was pretty fucking intense; while I was gathering sounds from the shortwave, I got to hear a lot of those ‘numbers stations’ in the night. I had heard these since I was a kid, which is when I first started recording shortwave radio sounds and making them into some kind of thing. It’s really trippy stuff in its own right, but I didn’t really use any of it in the shows. You know about these spy stations, right?”

Don demonstrates his amazing mimicking skills by doing a creepy rendition of the artificially generated voices that were once used for telephone call error recordings.

“Basically, it would be total static, and then you’d hear this announcement tone or fanfare a couple of times and then you’d hear a string of numbers: (*creepy voice*) 1, 7, 8, 8, 3, 6, 9, 0, and it would repeat it over and over. The language and voice would vary, and you could tell that the voice was sampled; everything was exactly the same, so it was really weird, and it often came through really distorted. A CD collection of these numbers stations came out in the late 90s, and was pretty awesome. (*The Conet Numbers Project: Recordings of Shortwave Numbers Stations, released by Irdial-Discs, England, 1997*) Anyway, I ended up taking this really boingy shortwave pulse, that had a lot of weird reverb on it, from the shit bouncing off of the ionosphere before it got to my receiver, pretty intense. So I took that pulse and matched a strobe light to it and the two were sort of at the dreamachine frequency. If you looked at the strobe light with your eyes closed, it would flicker on your eyelids, like the Brion Gysin dreamachine, and you would hallucinate, or at least see all these crazy mandala patterns; it was pretty trippy, and it put you into an ‘alpha’ state. It effectively hypnotized everyone who was in the room. And I came up with this way of doing it where I’d have the room completely dark, everyone was comfortably seated and I start with these shortwave drones that I had recorded, not the pulse, but these beautiful, lush shortwave drone sounds would start filling the room and they would gradually get louder and louder. It was relaxing, it pulled you in, very spacious sounds, not annoying and ‘coming at you’ sounds, and the volume would get raised really slowly; it was like cooking a frog. If you threw the frog into the hot water it would jump out. But if you throw it into the nice, regular water and just turn the heat up slowly, he’d stay in there, not realizing what was going on until it was too late and he was cooked.”

“It was the same thing with this, people would just sit there in the dark, with their eyes closed, lulled into this somnambulistic torpor, with this beautiful, lush, ongoing, ever shifting, but always similar sound, and then I would bring in the pulse, through a bigger amp, and it would take over. By then the volume was excruciating, but no one knew, because it had been brought up gradually, and nailed them into their seats. It didn’t seem bad or annoying, so people would still be sitting there, very relaxed, but they didn’t realize the volume was intense. Then I’d bring up the boingy pulse sound and the strobe light, that were about the same frequency, and at this point they had been in the dark for about 20 minutes, maybe more, so their eyes were adjusted

to the dark, and I pointed the strobe light right at them and they had to keep their eyes closed because if they didn't it would hurt. And there and been nothing to look at anyway because it was dark. So everyone just kept his or her eyes closed and thusly, the Gysin dreamachine effect occurred, and everyone was hypnotized into this psychedelic space trance, and this typically went on until the power blew. Then it was over. It was a weird thing that I discovered, kind of by accident, but I don't think I have ever done anything more effective than that. After the fact, I heard that girls tend to have spontaneous orgasms during these shows too."

"About the same time I was doing these shows, I moved in with John Aes Nihil, the Manson archivist, out in the valley and started going to swap meets and doing a lot of record dealing. I really got into records; prior to that I wasn't much of a collector. I started amassing quite a record collection. I had a ton of children's records, so I did a kid show on KXLU with my friend Professor Cantaloupe, called *The Kids Are Alright*, playing both religious and secular kid's records. We also had a psychedelic audio collage show called Glossolalia later the same night, every week. I wasn't really doing a lot of music, but then I moved in with a guy named Nandor, who had this friend named Deathy, who we used to see at the swap meets; he looked like Beastmaster or Thor, and was always handing out these photocopied rants that you'd usually see crazy people putting on phone poles or something, but his were particularly weird. It turned out he was in this band called Deathbred. They perpetually needed a drummer, and they really wanted me to do it. But the guy was like this tweaker, junkie, alcoholic. (laughs) As was the other guy in the band, bassist Heavy Thundarr; but they were really sweet guys, besides being really weird and crazed, and the songs were amazingly good. Deathy played guitar really well, and was the best singer I've ever been in a band with. He was pretty industrious for a homeless guy; he decorated every place he would stay with black garbage bags, little strobe lights and bloody mirrors, until it looked like some crazy space cave. In fact, he customized everything in his world with black, chrome, fake blood, mirrors, and weird stuff he would find on the street, like silver hubcaps and such. It was pretty intense. He was a very original character. He made his own clothes, including these giant bellbottom things that he stuffed with foam; you couldn't see his feet, 'cos these things went all the way to the ground. They were made out of car seat covers; he'd stuff them with foam and attach them to his legs with giant radiator hose clamps. He called them 'Mammoth Combatakons.' He was in the Army Airborne Rangers for a while, then spent some time in jail over bad checks; when he got out he was homeless, and had found religion, of a sort - he was really into this weird version of Krishna, a Krishna who insisted that he do drugs all the time, 'for the kids.' Basically he was kinda nuts, but he wrote all these really great songs, so that's when I started playing drums again. He insisted that I play double kick drums, and I didn't know how to do that, and never wanted to do that. I have a really fast right foot, so I never had to. Then I figured out through him it's not really about doing it fast, it's about doing it evil and steady, with a certain vibe that you can't duplicate with one kick drum. Deathbred did this amphetamine-space-metal, with a disco feel, and lots of cowbell. When we were on it was a really great band, but unfortunately Deathy was kind of impossible to deal with; he'd spend an hour-and-a-half trying to set up the equipment, and we'd get kicked off the stage before we could even play. We did a couple of high profile shows, like opening for Screamo Kings the Locust at the Troubadour; we even did a mini tour with one of their side projects, Holy Molar. Someone approached us about doing an animated series based on Deathbred, which I think turned out to be Metalocalypse. That's the not the first time something like that has happened. Matt Groening used to work at the Licorice Pizza record store on Sunset and San Vicente, right by the Whiskey and Joan Jett's

house, and Darby and Pat used to hang out there all the time and cause trouble. Never buy anything, just steal stuff and fuck around. And Matt would eventually have to tell them to leave, but he was always sitting at the counter doing drawings and stuff. Apparently, from what I have heard, the Bart Simpson character was, in a lot of ways, based on Darby, who was like the penultimate bratty kid back then.”

“Deathbred came to an abrupt end when Deathy hung himself from a tree outside a Santa Ana rehearsal place. It was a low tree and his feet were only a few inches off the ground, but his ‘Mammoth Combatikons’ hid his dangling feet, so people walked by his dead body all day long and thought he was just standing there, leaning against the tree and not saying anything. So that killed that band. Then I started doing a thing called Club Screwball at a place called the Parlour in WeHo, with my Burlesque girlfriend Darcey Leonard and our roommate Prickle, a prog musician/transvestite guy who had a bunch of cool records and wore groovy Betsey Johnson outfits. We recruited another really great musical aesthete, Jimi Hey, to DJ, as well. He played all this early-to-mid 70s bubblegum pop from Europe, which I really dug. The songs were just like all the American bubblegum and English glam stuff of that era, and were in English, but since we aren’t Dutch or Danish we weren’t sick to death of hearing them, because they never got played here. It was the dance club of the year in L.A. Magazine. Then in 2006 I started a psychedelic spacerock glitter band with Nora Keyes from the Centimeters, called Fancy Space People. We have a 12-inch EP out on Starry Records, that we recorded at Kerry Brown’s Coldwater Studios; Billy Corgan and the sax player from the Psychedelic Furs guest on it. Some nice little pop ditties about the necessity of annihilating the humans in order to save the world and such. We actually toured the US with the Smashing Pumpkins, which was really weird. A lot of the people that paid like \$150 a ticket to see the Smashing Pumpkins did not take too kindly to our glittered up space jams; they weren’t too happy with the Pumpkins not playing just the ‘hits,’ either. We’re working on our first full-length vinyl LP right now; we just did a bunch of shows where we threw out all of our songs and just improvised new ones, and it went really well, so now we’re incorporating more of that sort of thing into the act. Besides that band, I play and/or sing in a few other bands; Thee Earwigs, a tribute to early Alice Cooper (I’m the ‘Alice Cooper’ guy, and Tom 5 from White Zombie plays lead guitar; we do material from *Pretties For You*, *Easy Action*, *Love it to Death*, *Killer*, *School’s Out*, *Billion Dollar Babies*, and the title track from *Muscle Of Love*); the Raw Power Rangers (I play drums, we do the *Raw Power* LP in its entirety, and *I Got a Right / Gimme Some Skin*; sometimes we do the first two albums, and I play guitar when we do that), Thee Snowsnake Orchestra (my own 45 Grave/Germs/Vox Pop, etc. cover band), and Death Wizard (sort of the darker opposite of Fancy Space People – very Skullflower-y); Kitten Sparkles is becoming more active again, after a long hiatus, and I still do the clubs here and there. We have a club called Ding-a-Ling nowadays, similar to Screwball, but it’s just mainly Nora and I. I also had a Public Access TV show called ‘The Threee Geniuses’ for many years, starting in the mid 90s. There’s a DVD available that I would highly recommend to anyone that likes to indulge in psychedelics, or even good weed, and watch TV with the volume off and the stereo on. Mandatory stoner viewing.”

We talked briefly about the part he played in designing the iconic image that became the Germs’ first album cover:

“Bob Biggs, the President of Slash records, wanted the cover for the record to be the ‘Germs’ spelled out in jelly beans and meat. This caused us to quickly call an emergency band meeting

at my apartment at the Canterbury. That's when Darby and I designed what became the Germs (GI) album cover. He wanted the blue circle on black and I added that it was in the lower, right-hand corner, not centered and then we put the white lines and the lettering that said 'Germs (GI)' on it. That record cover became fairly iconic; So many people have done homages to it that it is just crazy. There have been a lot of covers that riff on that, from all over the world; I saw one in Italy recently. Exact copies of the layout, like you're supposed to just know what they're referencing. It's pretty cool when that stuff happens. That's when you know maybe you did something, when people make fun of it. From what I hear, the villain in Iron Man 3 is going to be wearing a Germs' shirt, which will be good for the tee-shirt sales. Good choice, I think - way better than having him wear some boring Misfits shirt."

Don Bolles has indeed 'done some things,' and continues to do so. Those in the Los Angeles area have the option to drop by any of the weekly clubs he hosts. There are also the live performances of the: Fancy Space People, Thee Earwigs, the Raw Power Rangers, The Snowsnake Orchestra, Death Wizard, an occasional Kitten Sparkles show, and of course you can catch the 21st Century version of the Germs the next time they roll through your town.



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TRUTH

By Claudia Bellocq

Photos © Richard A. Meade

"I," she uttered in some grandiose yet concise manner, "am going to tell you who I am. "You," she spat in perhaps clearer instruction, "are going to listen."

There was this girl once right, she was all fire and attitude, small, wirey, alive, curious, confronting even at the age of three. Well one day right, she took a beating for her brother, too cowardly to admit to his own shortcomings. She remembered that and marked it down in a small notebook she kept in her tatty old pocket. He (the brother) had immaculate pockets. You know something... he even measured them with a small, six inch plastic ruler to make sure they were turned down to precisely the same degree. He measured the fold-over on his knee-high socks in this manner too. His sister (me) stared at him in dumbfounded astonishment. Then left.

Older now she, the girl (you're following me right?) was weaving her way through life trying to see it as an exercise in conscious damage limitation, only sometimes you can only get so far with that. Boys were snapping at her pretty little heels now and her daddy didn't like that, so he pushed and pushed against her (oooh aaaaahhh) until she cracked wide open and fucked right off. Seventeen and on the streets with the gangrenous alcoholics with the big hearts and open doors (no boundaries you see... no fucking boundaries in drugs and liquor). Still, there was a bed, a place to lay her head to make sense of things, to buy a little time.

She got a room in a house. The room contained six single beds. What the fuck was that all about? Six beds in one room, all with lurid pink bri-nylon or polyester coverlets. Quilted. Waiting. And a ferocious German landlady who wanted to make sure that our "boyfriends aren't black are they?" and to be sure that we were not "that sort of girl are you?" Took the room and made it for all of one month before the landlady's strange and interventionist ways drove her back out to look again.

Eighteen with a bullet... yeah baby enters the underworld and just smiles sweetly as she flows this way and that into this thing and that. A bit lost, she does what she's gotta do and lies down for the Queen on the back of a purple note or two. Red notes came later. Expensive hotels, expensive food, expensive tastes. Hopped on a train, a famous train, Michael Palin would've been proud. Still smiling she shoved powders up her nose and loss into her knickers whilst she accrued a bank balance worth bragging about yes? No, a debt to a dealer worth fleeing from.

Come and get me... boo-yah! come and get me... come and get me... whimpering now because she is still playing hide-and-seek and someone forgot she was locked in the closet. They stopped looking. So she jumps out eventually and goes "ta-da!" waiting for her friends to go "oh, there you are! Oh do come and join in the fun so-and-so..."

But they don't.

Hollow legs and aching bones. Stiff. Running fast in her sleep. Looking around and seeing only dazzling white light. The world presenting itself without an opiate curtain was too much to bear. But she was strong that little girl. Very strong.

When she finally comes round, there was a small business empire waiting for her, only it didn't quite turn out like that. She left all that behind her in the toughest move of her goddamn life. She'd directed her longing into her burning creative dreams, ignoring some of them in favour of 'going straight'. The Big Dream (Romance) was too giant a monster to battle on her own, so she lost. She lay down again and took one for the state. For other people's ideas of who they were.



Bursting out of her skin were small, no tiny, silver and black worms; niggle worms, not-right worms. They would sometimes eat into her and sometimes bust out of her. She would watch, listen and learn. Beat me baby... I can take it. Love me baby... I can fake it.

One, two, three lifetimes later, she surveyed all of whom she had been. Mother, artist, virgin, whore, junkie, friend, but never child once more. She stood and gazed upon her territory, she took stock of it all and then smashed every last bit of it into fucking smithereens. She threw plates against the walls, dropped glass into the bath, flushed dirt down the toilet and showered away the ancient crusts of her unhealed scabs.

When she had finished, she looks up right, and there are a few of her closest, longest friends standing beside her. She nods at them; loves them deeply. There are more recent friends beside her too; she looks them in the eye, a challenge meeting a challenge. Love in the making. She sees the shape of her tribe and she recognises in it one very important thing, that above all else she is loved and she loves. She stands in the centre of her own life and wonders which way she will turn next. There are several paths in front of her; the crooked, the unmapped, the dangerous, the easy, the contained, the wild and overgrown, and those with measured hedges, tamed to perfection like her brother's socks.

She will not be taking that one.

"Were you listening?" she says, "I, will *not* be taking that fucking one."



SUDDENLY A STRANGER

By Patrick Wright

Mother told me to wait in the car. I wasn't allowed to see you. She said you could no longer see me. See me the way you wanted to. You wanted me to remember you as you were.

Your eyes could no longer see me. I tried to imagine what it might look like, and I saw a chintz vase through a window's condensation. They called it "glaucoma". It was described as a tunnel, getting ever-narrower over time, darkness hemming us in.

I watched as mother wound her way up your path. She pigeon-posted freesias through your door. I think they were red. I remember the rattle of the letterbox, but otherwise the garden was soundless. Mother supervised from a distance, making sure I wasn't seen. She protected us, from seeing, from glancing across at each other. The back of her coat eclipsed you.

My last memory of you is us playing cards. You were anxious, as you asked "can you tell what this card is?" holding it up. You weren't sure. And I lied to you. For the first time I lied. It was a white lie, as I tried to convince you the Jack of Hearts is hard to distinguish from the Queen of Diamonds.

I was a sensitive child and could see the fear on your face. I tried to reassure you, in my child-like way. I said "even I find it difficult to tell them apart." It was my first attempt at deceit: this, for the sake of love, with the best of intentions, and as such I wasn't very good at it. I could see from your eyes you didn't believe me, that you knew I was just trying to make you feel better.

"From this distance the Jack could easily be confused for a Queen," I observed.

You also had a box of psalms: Biblical quotes. A box of "promises" as you called them. Sometimes those promises were a solace and seemed to work as Methodist prophecies - but this time, from the look of terror in your eyes, I knew you had no saviour. Yet still your Christ hands reached out, with great tenderness, and I took them, your palms ravaged with fate, as if knowing your time was up.

From a distance, sitting in the car, I caught a glimpse. I saw your white hair, for the first time. And, ever since, that's how you've looked in my dreams: eyes wild, changed, strange and never yourself. In dreams you sit in a wicker chair, in the vestibule of your bungalow, and by your side a transistor radio, the "wireless" as you called it. Your limbs are thin, your bones, brittle, under verucose flesh.

In dreams there's no transmission. There's just static and fuzz. The speaker just crackles, while you slump there, dead-eyed, distant, unlistening.

Doctors weren't concerned. You were old – so it made little difference to give this thing a name. It was age, old age. Just leave it at that. Leave it as such. It was more than glaucoma though. I knew that much. It was dementia. Senile dementia. It was beginning.

As a child, at the time, I didn't understand. I just knew I wasn't allowed to see my grandma. You'd made the decision. I'd been barred. Shut out. It felt like rejection. You didn't love me anymore, for no reason.

Then, later, I took it as a gift. A gift you gave me. Not to have to see. To witness. To be scared and scarred by it all. You wanted me to enjoy my summer holidays. Our holiday, that year, in Wales.

And when you died I made a choice: to not look inside the coffin. I just saw your lid propped open. And I saw my uncle, your son, his face, as he recoiled from looking. It had years of hurt etched on its features. Past trauma. Having to relive it all again. Having to lose not just you, but his wife all over again. I turned away and saw a hand pass over eyelids. I watched the curtain fall. I cried on my brother's suited shoulder. Blindfolding myself. But seeing, still, the chimney's billowing smoke.

And now it's incomprehensible where she is. Since, as I stepped back, scared of the eternal face I'd see, the grandma I knew so well has no headstone. Instead now there's only amnesia-white of walls, walls she's vacated, and an ash garden of remembrance, where butterflies land and leaves blow, as light filters through the limbs of trees – starry, smearing this retina – and here her spirit is nowhere.

I remember someone in black stockings, outside the crematorium, said a butterfly, landing on a car bonnet, was her – her soul, returned – reincarnated. That's fucked with my mind forever. Ever since.

The bungalow was soon emptied of possessions, false teeth and playing cards, by uncles and aunts, and by mother too. She kept her own box of morbid souvenirs. Strange, since it's a box kept though never opened. Such things are sacred to the point of never being seen, prohibited from touch, unlit, festering.

Then, soon after, grandpa died too – of a broken heart. He lost the will to live, developed dementia, like you, in a hospice, alone, everyone foreign, unknown, thoughts confused and always asking the time.

“It's for the best,” another voice said, years later, in the same crematorium car park, rain landing and pattering the umbrella they held, ominously, over my head. “They can be together again now.”

I'm left with an image of the tightness of grandma's wedding ring on her finger, slicing its way into the bone. She said she couldn't remove it, that it would have to be cut off, as she'd grown around it - either cut off the ring, or amputate her finger. That's how marriage should be, I remember thinking.

I remember, too, you lying next to me, cushioning my head in the frightening dark, on the bed, your voice the only thing, nothing else, just dark, and the words. You spoke of Baby Jesus and crucifixes. You said He was watching. That, if I believed in Him, he'd keep me safe. And there, in that softness, in that space just before sleep, you told stories. Your whispered about the war: about brave heroes, poor babies torn to shreds, shrapnel and shell shock, air raid sirens. And, without knowing what it was, I could sense the trauma. It was in your quivering tone, your voice, the dark. And you told the story, too, of the Titanic: the freezing waters, the shock, the loss coming through again in the voice. It was as if all your tragedies could there be told, without lights, and you needed me to know, for a child to know. The room: soot black. Like the steeple you always tried to get me to climb, at Bolton parish church. It seems strange now, to want to take a child up a steeple, with its doorway, even in fullest sunlight, absolutely dark - terrifying me then, as now, of returning to the paralysis of womb and tomb. Were you trying to scare me? What were you doing? And the racism, I recall - referring to "Japs" and "Blacks" and "Golliwogs", your outrage at the first black footballers, and telling me that black sprinters, at the Olympics, were only fast because they were used to running away from tigers. And it was true. I had no reason to believe otherwise. You adored me. I looked up to you.

You always hated being photographed. You thought, if you didn't appear on film, you wouldn't age. Pictures as I find them now usually have you sheeting your face, ghost-like in a tea towel. Like the Native Americans and Aborigines, you thought the lens would steal your soul. So you hid yourself. And now the soul survives. In the forties I see swimsuits, sandals, deck-chairs. Blackpool beach. I am holding the photo now, its corners curled by damp and age, faded too by scattered rays of sun over decades. Though here too the younger you: her face shrouded by a cardigan. It's as if ageing never occurred. In avoiding the lens you've cheated death. And yes, your soul endures, remains in this place. Memories retreat into the walls of your bungalow. There they rest with wallpaper, long forgotten, seen only in dreams of your descendants, appearing sometimes in mine. Better to reside here seeping out on nights of your choosing, sleeping and being as one. You are fine I know, since no noise comes from you. Your face is never there in my mind. There's no traumatic return - since, like the photograph, the sickness was blanked out. No face, no age, no ailment, just the bits I now join: Alzheimer's diagnosis, burnt out synapses, incontinence, scenes of domestic strife I imagine, like grandpa dragging you round rooms by your ankles, you scratching his crown with your nails, making it bleed. Your arthritic hands and your abnormalities. Your untreated prolapse. Your pain.

I just keep telling myself,
If I sit really still, maybe it
will go away.



Sam Ois Garter

KATIEJANE GARSIDE

By Victoria Fierek

"A tiny note found me in the darkest places, it quieted my solipsistic ways."

It is our luck that Katiejane Garside has used her unique creativity to transform that tiny note into music and lyrics loved and listened to by many. Katiejane has also worked in film, performance art, and photography. She has produced a diverse body of work in the bands Daisy Chainsaw, Queen Adreena, and as of late, Ruby Throat, and has toured extensively. You may find Katiejane Garside's latest album, *O' Doubt O' Stars*, as well as a limited edition 34 page ribboned, hand assembled printed art book at <http://www.katiejanegarside.com> on the Shop page.

Victoria Fierek: *How did you get started in music?*

Katiejane Garside: A tiny note found me in the darkest places, it quieted my solipsistic ways, I didn't know that word when I was a child.

So it was good for you, inside. How old were you when you wrote your first song? What inspired you at the time?

A way to 'be here' yes, I don't think I've really ever written a song, I'm still trying or maybe trying not to try, there are some crude attempts but it is erratic at best sweepings...

I think it tends to go in streaks for some writers and artists, periods of intense work and times when nothing flows, and that seems to be a very natural thing when it isn't forced. Now, who and what do you find to be your greatest creative inspirations?

I marvel that I've dared chuck them out into the world

I'm very happy you have!

The 'no self' tries to make 'self' out of so called consciousness debris... and fails... is compelled in its attempts to continue... perhaps if I make it over this ledge. Having a baby makes all this less serious, I'm happy to say and surprisingly enjoyable.

It really brings things into perspective, doesn't it? Children change how we think somewhat, how we view... it is a singular experience. Congratulations on your beautiful baby!

Nobody tells you that about having a baby, my life was all mind eating itself until.



I know, my mother certainly never told me, and suddenly everything was different. It sounds as if motherhood has been a very good thing for you.

An absolute, yes it has Victoria.

We don't see you all over the media like some well-known artists. Is privacy something important to you? How did you feel when you got your first taste of fame?

The one I dare to 'chuck out' into the world has very little relevance to me.

How do you relate to and feel about your fans? Is the feedback satisfying?

Astounded and confused and somehow guilty.

How do you most love to spend a day off? Not that there is such a thing once one has children!

I have an 'absolute.' Before this everything was so desperate and dissolute, my days are 'on' rather than 'off,' so those futile attempts at making work become a delight even if they are delving in the dark dark fur... something like that. Anyway, Victoria, I apologise that I haven't read your poetry... I look forward to it in one of those tiny windows.

Thank you, it is really the one thing I do that makes sense of the world. What was the most interesting or enjoyable/challenging video you have made?

There are moments when someone's caught a live fish on a phone (showtime), I can see the life, though I'm not sure it's me... actually I'm quite sure it isn't me, but I can live with that. To consciously stand in front of a camera is agony, feels like pilfering or giving away in the wrong way.

...and then it's a piece in time

*I listened to **O' Doubt O' Stars**, and when I got to "Tottenham Reservoir," that song hit me viscerally, it made me cry. I found every song to be beautiful, in both melody and lyric. Tell me about that album, what was happening in your head as you created it. It's different from the other work you've done, and the lyrics really shine through the wonderful simplicity of voice and guitar.*

Thank you for the stroking, it feels nice. I find it very hard to reflect, but one thing I do know is I turned things around, began to take poetry seriously as a starting place. Thank you for saying that about "Tottenham Reservoir." It nearly didn't make it.

That's one of those songs that you feel down your back, you know? Do you have anyone you see as heroes/heroines in real life?





Will Oldham. Haha. He can get me like that if I let him, I like his grubby face.

Haha, so do I! What quality do you most admire in others? Least?

I'm listening to 'Cave and Wind' to drown out my own admonishing tick.

That works. Qualities you like most and least in both yourself and others, are there a few?

Not paying attention to my thoughts, not investing in them is of huge benefit. Otherwise I am a lunatic garbage truck spewing.

What do you admire in others?

The other is me, so we'll sit quietly and untangle the wool with undivided attention. I discovered a hairbrush, strangely so much more effective than a comb... I never knew, for years my hair would not grow and since I had my girl it's gone into ropes.

I can relate to the hairbrush, I used to comb my hair every day until I had a child, then the brush became my friend.

That's how we do it... is it moving away or is it moving into... poetry saves lives, yours and mine anyway.

Mine, too, and I discovered in the sharing of it that it touches others.

Yes.

Who would you invite to a dinner at your home if you could choose any people, past or present, and what would you serve them? Who would comprise your perfect roundtable?

I want to romp around with you but I am a recluse. I make it out all smiling for my girl... I can do it happily and genuinely for her. I acquiesce I've always loved Anais Nin and Anne Cameron.



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ODIA COATES?

A TRAGEDY IN SIX ACTS (Part II)

By David Gionfriddo

Photos © Claudia Murari

Sandor let the story of Suki's big debut before the dumbfounded opera patrons sink in for a moment. "So, our little mechanical beauty flew in under the radar, eh? Shocked the world. Never heard that one." He grabbed a beer bottle from an antique cooler and twisted off the cap. Above his head, a pink and nubile Diana stood in a sylvan glade and tensed her bow in a yellowed painting that could only have come from a high-priced frontier brothel.

"There was no radar," Passmore said, laying his head in Suki's lap. "Nobody saw her coming."

"No idea we had a celebrity on board."

Passmore got to his feet and, revived by his memories, swirled like half of a waltz team into the next bay, throwing his arms around the waist of a willowy college cheerleader, eyes bright in the reflected frenzy of 30,000 fans, her arms thrown wide in the midst of an intricately-rehearsed routine. He nuzzled those beautiful chestnut curls tied in ribbons of Ohio State crimson, and lazily responded: "Just a salesman, Sandy old chap. Albeit a *world-class gold-medal* salesman." There was more in this one's eyes, not the easy, self-deceiving euphoria of youth, but something richer and labored-over, something almost self-mocking. "This, this little lady was the booster that sent us hurtling out of the atmosphere." His voice went soft. "She was the point of no return. The face that launched a thousand...well, you get the idea..."

"The All-American girl. Every schoolboy's dream..."

He whispered, more to her than to Sandor, with a tenderness that embarrassed him a little. *The girl with something extra.* "Oh, my friend, you don't know the half of it," he said, finally, to his host. "Not the half..."

3. 2037: *Cara, A Particular Kind of Madness*

Initimatron, Ltd. A LESI company

"All a man can want."

Interoffice Memorandum

TO: Project CARA Development Team

FR: Algernon Passmore, Project Manager

RE: Status/Challenges and Progress

Date: January 8, 2037

This memorandum memorializes the status of Project CARA (Comprehend Acknowledge Respond Act), including the remaining hurdles standing between us and the market, and the likely success of our proposed technological and marketing solutions.

Mission

The purpose of Project CARA is to produce a first-of-its-kind prototype: a walking, talking, responsive, empathetic, sensual automated companion. The result will be more than a servant, more than a toy, an appliance or a curiosity. It will be a helpmeet, a resource, a source of physical release, a collaborative and inspirational entity that will enhance an owner's leisure experience and enrich his daily life.

Nomenclature

In order to avoid the caricatures, images and prejudices that have attached to previous amateurish, primitive, underfunded and unscientific efforts to develop such a companion entity, we have abandoned "science fiction" terms such as robot, automaton, cyborg, and replicant. We believe a new term is required for an utterly new creation. The project team, in conjunction with members of the Marketing Department and LESI's outside advertising agency Willner, Sublette International, have settled on the term "synthelle," which should be used in all communications, internal and external, to describe the ultimate object toward which we are working. Trademark registration is pending.

Aesthetics

We are currently narrowing the field of body models, and are focusing our consideration on a volleyball player from the University of California at Santa Cruz, a folk dancer from Hokkaido, a pair of Canadian personal trainers and an infomercial spokeswoman from just outside of Le Paz, Bolivia. Our market research indicates fitness is a priority and athletes have tested well, particularly among young professionals, who also seem to prefer darker, more Latin skin tones. Negotiations have been initiated with a number of face and hand models with attractive, mixed ethnic backgrounds, for worldwide likeness rights. Final recommendations are due at the end of next month from an advisory panel including prominent cosmetologist Laura Ken of Salon LK, Klaus Von Sligo of *Duende* magazine, and Renata LaCreche of The Fantasia Agency, Ltd. We are excited about favorable reports concerning the overall Synthelle™ experience.

Kinetics

Our research team reports several small refinements to the SUKI's basic hydraulic system that will ensure smoother and fuller range of motion, particularly with respect to shoulder and knee joints.

Advanced materials will offer deeper hip flexion and increased durability. Polycarbon alloy skeletal structure provides light, flexible strength, and the addition of low-resilience polyurethane (so-called “memory foam”) as a surrogate for fatty tissue is creating vastly improved give and bodyfeel in our user test groups.

Functionality

Polling continues to be conducted among male and, to a limited extent, female, focus groups to determine the most important areas of concern regarding sexual response (lubrication, sensitivity, comfort, climax timing, *etc.*). Although, at present, the genital region (including the experimental Semiclit™) is the focus of most development work, additional resources will be devoted to other modes of pleasure as demand warrants and resources and timing allow. Frequent tester complaints about the affectless and unemotional “robovoice” are being addressed in the form of an adjustable, synthetic larynx employing a durable carbon fiber diaphragm. Eyes will conceal specially-made Korematsu motion-sensing cameras capable of storing 3 TB of high-definition images. The gallium arsenide paste tested in our skin trials performed at superior levels, but is being tabled due to marketing concerns over its possible carcinogenic properties. Silicon compounds will be substituted.

Mentation

The Octium™ team’s recent achievements have made possible the development of The Rack™ (Random Access to Common Knowledge) bundle, a set of 10TB memory cards containing an abundance of factual information, including *The Bible*, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (unabridged edition), Will and Ariel Durant’s *Story of Civilization*, *The Complete Plays of William Shakespeare*, the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the *Mr. Boston Official Bartenders’ Guide Book*, the *Kama Sutra*, *Dianetics*, Lucia Alberga’s *Repainting Isis: The Female Principle in Human Sprituality* (2032 ed.), Alex Comfort’s *The Joy of Sex*, Emily Post’s *Etiquette* (27th edition), *Scarne on Cards*, *Halliwell’s Movie Guide*, the manuals for all major computer operating systems, H.G. Brown’s *Sex and the Single Girl*, and thousands of other texts on world history, art, and politics. A built-in networking card permits these databases to “talk” to each other in ways that, developers hope, will enable rapid and comprehensive patterns of “machine learning.” We expect to implement frequent upgrades, including a V 2.0 (target date Spring ’38) that will permit end users to customize the Synthelle™ knowledge base by uploading selected images/texts.

Legal Acceptable Use/Bill of Rights

We have been caucusing with Legal to determine what, if any, actions might be taken to discourage or prevent improper, illegal or undesirable uses of our product while preserving the widest enjoyment for end users. In this we have been guided by a number of policy documents, including Isaac Asimov’s 1942 *Three Laws of Robotics*, South Korea’s *Robot Ethics Charter 2012*, Germany’s *Industrial Protocols of 2018*, and the European Community’s *Draft Policy Statement on Criminal Law as Applied to Artificial Intelligence* (March 2021), as well as statistical data concerning casualties in joint human/robot

workplace settings. Concepts like Life and Right continue to evolve and we must be prepared for issues that may arise from the introduction of a product bridging the gap between “man” and “machine.” We are moving toward an industry-wide program of Best Practices that hopefully will pre-empt legislative or regulatory intervention, and intend to encourage responsible use both through a breezy, readable *Owner’s Manual* and exclusions from warranty coverage for prohibited uses.

Projected Models

At this time, we anticipate the initial CARA fleet will include Caucasian (Cynda), African-American (Aleta), Hispanic (Raquel) and Asian (Akiko) models. Future-gen Synthelles™ may include additional variations, hybrids and customizations, as client demand may dictate.

Timetable

Our current plan is to have a working prototype by late spring, to be unveiled at the summer 2037 Consumer Electronics Expo in New Vegas. Flagship synthelle showrooms will open in New York and Los Angeles on or about Independence Day, to coincide with a series of :30 holocast, enviroboard and-wall promotional spots featuring the CARA and vidstar Balder Partridge. Mail order distribution and a full program of service licensing will be put in place in anticipation of a full holiday season 2037 marketing push, fully deploying Willner, Sublette’s “Who Needs Fantasy?” campaign inn ambient and closed-range envirocasts, skysears and the new subliminal DreamSeeds™ that we saw work so well in last year’s Fists of Fashion launch. The Night Before Christmas will be filled with visions of... CARA!

Leasing

The planned leasing program has been suspended due to unanticipated end-user resistance to pre-committed Synthelles.™

We are hoping to cut ribbon on our first six retail locations in time for the 2037 holiday shopping season.

We have made substantial progress since the SUKI’s original presentation to the Board of Directors and, with a continued concerted effort, we see nothing to prevent our anticipated launch. So, remember, everyone...

Synthelle™: Making fantasy obsolete!

It was unseasonably warm for April, and the soft breeze made Passmore sure that the decision to meet Perelandra at an outdoor café had been the right one. Cocheta, one of the year’s hot *boîtes*, sat right at the edge of Bankers’ Park, and the glowing peach sunset – the lingering by-product of last year’s Madrid Geothermal Events – gave the setting an appealingly luminous glow. He was forced to bribe the *maitre d’*, a former sword swallower with an assemblyman’s political advance team, with tickets to the team combats, but the end result, a prime sidewalk

table overlooking the Spitzer Butterfly Pavilion, was well worth the trouble. Perelandra had been assigned, as an emissary of the Board of Directors, to ride shotgun on the synthelle project, and Passmore knew he would have to reach a meeting of the minds to ensure the Board's continued support. He wondered if his salesmanship would do the trick. And it *would* be a trick. Up and down Clarence Street, the crowd was a jumble of uptrending rockers in snakeskin, parachute silk and denim, socialites fast-walking to the safety of gated skyscrapers, street vendors pushing carts full of shoes, wind-up toys and tinned food. The odd panhandlers who strayed too close to the restaurant's tables were jabbed by the black-clad QOL monitors with their tastefully sleek handheld Persuaders, and stumbled back, their nonplussed expressions eclipsed by little wreaths of sparks. *I love this city*, Passmore thought, as Perelandra passed the hostess stand and waved a tacit greeting.

Passmore was instantly struck by how tall she was, the grace in the long legs he realized he had never seen fully unfurled. Liberated from her mentor's shadow, she seemed happier, more relaxed. Under the canopy of an appealing jet-black bob, her dark eyes no longer seemed nervous and inscrutable, but were faunish, embracing, full of emotion. She did not look like someone coerced into a corporate head-butting session. He felt a smile rising.

"So glad you could make it," he said. He marked how she stiffened to keep a cushion of air between his welcoming hand and the small of her back. *Was she merely being kind to be cruel?*

"I'm impressed," she said, nesting herself gingerly on the brocaded plum cushion of her tenebrous D'Espigny wrought-iron armchair. "I was told you had to be an exiled African strongman to get a table here. Or at least a managing director."

Passmore grinned. "These guys accept sexual favors just like everyone else. I recommend the Prairie Chicken and okra skewers. They use real wood. Spruce, I believe."

The server was a tall, tanned bare-chested boy in a leather loin cloth, fingerless gloves and a flowing Native American headdress made of synthetic golden eagle and osprey feathers. Leather thongs were knotted around his biceps, setting off his veins in angrily high relief. A scar ran in a riparian arc from the corner of his eye to his earlobe, from which hung a smiling pewter skull. He looked down at the table, Passmore thought, like a man impressed to tend to a sick relative.

"Dahana Spring for the table?" he asked. "It's the house selection."

"Uh, yes," Passmore said, his face buried in the polished granite slab that functioned as a menu. "And an order of the ox kidney flan with rosemary and green onions to start. And two plates. We'll share."

Perelandra seemed to fight off a blush. "I see you did your homework. But those old gestures like ordering for the lady...? You take a big risk..."

“I would hate to disappoint you.”

It was nice, he thought. Sparring, not slugging. Perelandra had an underlying pragmatism he found comforting. She understood the synthelle was truly coming, and seemed genuinely interested in the logistics and economics, margins and marketing costs. He knew they would eventually get down to the big issues, but by the time they arrived at them, they had established a tone, a rapport.

“You do realize,” she said over the rising chatter, “that you’re spreading a particular kind of madness. The scientist’s urge to create life. To play God, just a little.”

Passmore leaned forward to scoop a little flan onto his flatbread. “I wouldn’t say that. But you’ve got to admit that replicating the human organism is a real frontier, like walking on the moon or accelerating particles beyond the speed of light. The perfect blending of science and commerce. It captures the imagination, for us and the consumer. Imagine the applications...”

“Sex.”

“Ha, at first, but later, who knows? Potentially, any kind of human endeavor. Art, industry, medical care...No limit, really. There’s beauty and magic to it. Soul, even. More stirring than designing turntables for convection ovens.”

“They were right,” she said. “You can really sell. I just hope we’re not contributing to the death of human relationships. Sometimes it feels like the heart is becoming a vestigial organ, like the appendix,”

At the neighboring tables, Passmore could feel conversation quieting, hipsters trying hard not to listen. “You’re not really putting that on us, are you?”

She leaned into her answer. “I admit to being a little conflicted,” she said. “It’s like you’re building pretty little safe deposit boxes where you can hide your feelings, where no one can examine them and turn them over in the light. It really is a kind of madness, I think. A bunch of bachelor boys. Do any of you guys have the first idea of what transpires in the chambers of a woman’s heart? It’s not easily reproduced. I won’t resort to the clichés about playing with fire.”

Passmore was knocked back. He had girlfriends, but never anyone too special. A couple guys on the team had wives or exes, but it hardly seemed a point worth making. “I truly believe we’re chasing a generational goal here,” he said, “but we have to be realistic. There are only two activities that would support research into our idea: sex and war. And I can’t deal with military types. It’s not my temperament. Lover, not fighter, you know? And as for relationships, I suspect they’re quite a bit more durable than you fear. Who knows? Maybe the synthelle will exercise and strengthen the old heart muscle, not weaken it.” His enthusiasm always made him sound callow, and he made an effort to sound detached and clinical.

She laughed. "No sale there, cowboy. You just sailed off the edge of the world."

Passmore liked her. They were coming at things from different compass points, no doubt, but, in the last analysis, she was a bit like him – young, smart, fighting to escape the orbit of a mentor who was more style than substance, riding an idea that had the power to make them rich and famous, or ruin them utterly. The Napa Bordeaux and the sweetness of the boysenberry crumble pushed their thoughts toward deeper, more audacious corners: love, inspiration, morality.

"The synthelle can only become more lifelike, more human. And the closer it gets, the more issues we will have to deal with."

"Rights? Is that what we're talking?"

"I see the synthelle's progress as analogous to the experience of African and West Indian blacks in America. From property to underclass to..."

"Equal status?"

"Or something close," he said. "And because the speed of social change accelerates over time, it will all happen much faster. In this case, over maybe, three or four generations. It's already started in Asia, Ms. Pindar."

"Please. Landra."

"The future is here. Now. Landra."

Landra's gaze never rose from her plate. "Again, you lost me. Citizen robots? The future is never quite that...futuristic. It always seems like the present, just a little shinier, a little louder. A little more cluttered. Let's agree to disagree."

He saw something in her just then. Not love or lust or even attraction. But it was a connection; it was the impatience of a kindred spirit waiting to be acknowledged. It could be something to build on.

"Agreed."

She reached for her debit token and Passmore found himself doing nothing to stop her.

"Well, Algernon," she said. "Thank you, for the berries, butterflies and badinage. I look forward to dropping by to see the future." He tried not to notice the wonderfully modeled shadows that played across her momentarily bare midriff. Down the street, just beyond the reach of the monitors, night shouldered away the evening and a squat busker in a dirty vinyl car coat strummed a blonde-wood mandolin and sang in a strangled tenor:

Time makes you a liar
Age makes you a cheat
Sneaks up with a razor blade
And slits you up a treat

"I prefer the original," Landra said, licking the cake crumbs from her index finger. "Thrush Hardheart. Easier to dance to."

So much had happened since that first Board meeting. Passmore was no beginner, but it still amazed him how quickly even a giant concern like LESI could mobilize its resources once word came from the top. And then, a well-managed division could run like an independent agency, an insular world. It was almost like changing jobs. Shortly after that first presentation, Passmore had been made Assistant VP and moved from Gilfix's Consumer Sales division into a suite of newly-renovated offices on 17, alongside the nucleus of the tech team that had built Suki. The techies - Muldaur, Redfawn, Endino and two new hires, Lessig and Kitano, from an RIT artificial intelligence lab - split their time between the DePuyster Square HQ and a 5,000 sq. ft. production facility out at the Lesterville Forschungszentrum, where six assembly lines silently awaited approval of the final prototypes. On the other side of the Synthelle Team's conference room were a fully-equipped sculptor's studio and dressmaker's workroom, a small gymnasium and a media center with six lightspeed internet lines, a bank of videophones and a microproduction console for high-definition holocast production. The floor was like its own secret nerve center with separate keycard access, and were it not for the occasional visits of pages carrying in library materials and wraithlike uptown models for the animatronic sculptors and Bougereau, the stern old seamstress, Passmore could have easily forgotten he was in the city at all. Things moved so quickly on a "typical" day, he had no time to even acknowledge the stream of calls and emails from the newsdesks and technology magazines, who were desperate to know the reason for all LESI's secret activity.



So it took Passmore somewhat by surprise when a call came in to reception from Lesterville, asking everyone to muster in Conference Room A for an important announcement. Events had thrown together the last-instant version of a “spread,” vegan cookies, a plate of sliced fruit and utilitarian enamel urns of coffee, Earl Grey and pomegranate juice. He gingerly sucked on a slice of Golden Delicious apple and stared nervously out the window at the presidential-looking cortege of black SUVs rounding into the underground garage.

“Who’s coming, anyway? Head of State? Cabinet Secretary? HYDRA inspectors?”

“Nothing so mundane,” Akita said. “It’s the big unveiling.”

Passmore had suspected, but still, he loathed surprises. “Am I the last to know everything?”

“Only the important stuff.”

He had seen photos, plans, had inspected the chassis and various components, but even he had never seen the final product, and there was a definite air of hopeful tension among all hands as Lessig and Endino walked in, stifling foolish grins, and Muldaur, in a ringmaster’s voice, announced over the rising murmur in the hallway, “LADIES AND GENTS, PRESENTING...A HUSBAND’S DREAM AFFAIR AND EVERY YOUNGSTER’S PRAYER, THE ALL-NEW 2037 CARA!...”

There was a hush, then a little trill of uncontrollable glee exhaled by Magda the receptionist, then Muldaur and Endino sidestepped to reveal a graceful, smallish figure, fine in proportion, her runway stance accenting the snug curves of a garnet silk mini-dress in a white lily print. Her smooth tanned skin was creamy as butterscotch and her lovely brown eyes, like those of a pageant girl, seemed calm, blissfully unaware of anyone. Her gait was a bit formal, and had a little slide on the end of each step, as though she was padding across a frozen lake. Passmore was a man only, and his eyes were drawn to the standard things, but because he was inspecting a major new product offering, he felt at liberty to stare, measuring the curve of her breasts, the lines of her gently-muscled legs. He had to admit it; he was impressed. Endino and Gibney had worked with a masterful restraint. They had steered away from the perfection trap and the results were compellingly lifelike. She slid out a chair and sat. He noticed her fingers seemed to flutter over the upholstery, the grain of the conference table, not pausing to touch or feel.

Muldaur tenderly placed his hands on her shoulder, and she responded, looking up at him with a lovely composure. “As some of you may have guessed,” he said, “this is Raquel, our Hispanic model. Say *‘buenos dias,’* Raquel.”

“Hello.”

The voice was deep, sultry, confident. “That’s nice,” Bougereau said. “It has a nice timbre. Not at all artificial, even the way the sounds tail off.”

"I should hope not." Lessig fussed with a paperweight in the shape of old Yankee Stadium. "With what we spent in development. Recognize it? We printed the voice of the woman who does the Flexicreme commercials. Aranxta something..."

"Silky," Magda chimed, immediately receding, sheepishly, into the background chatter.

Raquel was a beauty. But there were little kinks built in: an aquiline nose, a widow's peak, the tiniest wobble in a walk that seemed to try a bit too hard. "Such lovely asymmetry. Perfection is the biggest turn-off there is," Passmore said. "A man feels unworthy, first patronized, then rageful. The women men are obsessed with are those on the *cusp* of beauty, those from whom it's just begun to slip away, or those with small imperfections - Monroe's potato nose, Bardot's giant mouth, Grace Kelly's mannerist neck..."

"Reese Witherspoon and that rock-'em-sock-'em chin," Endino intoned. "Delphia Chappel's pendulous earlobes."

"Raquel," Muldaur said, "tell us about yourself."

After a telltale second's delay, she straightened in her seat, craned her neck ever so slightly, and cleared her throat. "My name is Raquel. I am a first-generation CARA synthelle by Intimatron. I am a domestic companion programmed for a full range of leisure activities and conversation, including," she smiled and glanced down at her hands for a beat, "whatever types of sex play you prefer. Call me the Happiness Dispenser."

"Raquel, who do you like for the World Series?"

"Well, I like who you like, of course. But it would be hard to argue with the Chupacabras' team defense and relief pitching. And on the American side, Cleveland's youth and depth, coupled with reliable slugging by Resendo and Sanders in the 4 and 5 spots, will make them hard to beat."

She was good. A smile grew along Passmore's lips. "I love Kelvin Myxtor, don't you?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "although he's been getting a little long in the tooth for the action roles since *Burning the Candle*. For real thrills, I go back to *Ancient Light*, with that zero-gravity rescue scene. Heyduk's best work."

"What wine goes with cheval?"

"I like a nice Australian Cab, maybe Sandy Hook '34, or perhaps a Napa Merlot, Ruisdael '33 or '36. Reasonable, flavorful, satisfying." Her voice slowed to a perhaps-too-theatrical purr. "Like me." Lessig shrugged his shoulders.

"You know a little bit about a lot of things," Passmore said.

Raquel looked pleased. "True." In the artificial light, Passmore couldn't help but notice the perfect, almost sculptural smoothness of her synthetic skin. As he stroked her cheek, he made a mental note that they should build in some pores for up-close verisimilitude.

Lessig looked antsy. "Wanna see something? Watch this." He leaned in close and smiled broadly. "So, you know a little bit about a lot of things?"

"Oh, I'd say that sounds about right!"

"Yes!" Lessig pounded the table. "The Korematsus are .328s, with the facial recognition chip. She recognizes my expression and her AI modifies her response." His face suddenly went cross, his voice stern. "You know a little bit about everything, huh?"

Raquel gathered herself. "Just trying to help," she said. Passmore could see impressed looks being swapped around the dozen or so wall-huggers.

Akita perked up. "That is one beautiful RACK on your girlfriend!" The anxiety dissolved in nervous laughter, as Endino reached for something just outside the door, a tall conical hat in polka-dotted cardboard.

"Ho ho," he crowed, fastening the rubber band under Akita's chin. "We made the dunce hat for the guy who made the first RACK joke."

Akita gently adjusted his new accessory. "You even got my size," he said. Passmore did not take his eyes off Raquel, whose dark eyes sparkled, acknowledging the ripples of laughter, the tiny engines under the skin of her cheeks and chin twisting into a shifting series of eager, knowing and satisfied smiles. There was something like life in her, he thought. "So," Akita went on, "this makes me the dunce?"

Raquel looked as though she had just survived a test, and drummed her fingers nonchalantly on the teak table edge. "*That sounds about right,*" she said.

The design team had made the most of the head start offered them by the handful of early-adopters who had acquired the few available SUKIs. These enthusiasts were generous with their feedback and, due to the "niche" nature of the product, were all too happy to comply with the company's requests for secrecy. Over the few days following Raquel's coming-out, Passmore and the upper echelon examined and cross-examined Raquel and a Cynda they had assembled at a satellite facility on Makepeace Island. Passmore, Anderchuck and Endino stripped them down and pored over every inch, from the resiliency and placement of individual hair strands to the sensitivity of tear ducts to nipple erection timing to the aesthetics of Cynda's dimpled ass cheeks. They ran them through every imaginable stretch and motion, all

the while testing their abilities to retrieve data on childcare, 19th century German painting, the uses of white truffles in French cooking, the future of the dinar, and frontiers in space travel; and to cope with the simultaneous demands of high-impact flirtation and foreplay. Aside from low core strength and occasional RACK hiccups when rapidly switching between knowledge-bases, the ladies tested well. And when Kitano brought in a bouquet of African violets for Cynda after his night of “field testing,” Passmore could feel big-time success in the offing.

If we loosen up the lower back, allow for more subtle blush response and geek up the clockspeed on the RACK’s data retrieval, we should be on track and on budget, Passmore wrote with confidence to the Executive Committee. Even Landra was impressed, enjoying an hourlong wrangle with Raquel over the comparative merit of Jose Clemente Orozco’s major frescoes. By the end, Raquel had convinced her that the Dartmouth mural was superior to his later, more celebrated work at the Hospicio Cabanas. They had all expected Raquel to be charming, but her powers of persuasion took them by surprise.

Still, no one expected the synthelle to be much in demand for intellectual debate, and as May ticked away and the summer target dates loomed larger, Endino and a trainer from the company fitclub worked the new protos in the 17th floor gym, taking measurements, working on yoga positions, and making the ladies kinetically sound, tightening, reinforcing and generally ensuring they could handle even the most acrobatic demands. During the last week of May, two of the City’s pre-eminent adult performers and a top society “walker” were brought in to engage the four CARA prototypes in a series of successful torture tests, the videos of which became the talk of the floor. But while the staff huddled around video monitors like guilty school kids, Passmore had more thankless work to do. They had to make the synthelle socially acceptable. They had to make a market.

Klarion Druwe was a name that both inspired and frightened. She was the top marketer in the combine, a 14-year vet and an industry eminence. Gilfix, before whom Passmore had groveled for years, could scarcely get a meeting with the Red Queen (or the Red Menace, depending on whom you asked); she was at least three rungs removed, and only got directly involved in major situations like the gammawave oven recall of 2029, or the launch of a new product line. So it was nervously that Passmore, Marti Jeffcoat from Main Marketing and Gar Sennett from Willner, Sublette filed into the gold-carpeted suite on 23, just spitting distance from Carragher’s imperial suite. They settled into their chairs -- just a little too small and intentionally uncomfortable – around Druwe’s guest table and waited.

“How does the commercial look?” Passmore asked.

Sennett tapped his laptop. “Pretty good. Locked and loaded.”

Jeffcoat fidgeted and wriggled inside the padded shoulders of her Hidalgo suit. "I hope it's better than pretty good. Or we might not walk out of here."

Druwe knew how to make an entrance. She was taller than one would imagine, and in a form-fitting gray linen shift, offset with a jarring apricot sash that intensified her shoulder-length cherry-red hair, futuristically cut across forehead and the back of her neck at a stark 30° angle, she was impossible to ignore. She hardly needed a drop of make-up, just a little bee-sting lipstick and a whisper of violet eye shadow. Around her throat she wore a choker made up of matching square-cut carnelians set in stainless steel.

"I've blocked out 45 minutes before lunch just for you," she said, arranging herself into an unnervingly casual pose on her unstable-looking ebony Eiseiger throne. "Don't make me regret it." She touched a button under her desk and Declan, her assistant instantly emerged with a bottle of Cournoyer and a single Lalique champagne flute. She did not ask if her guests wanted anything, and they did not even think to protest. "Let me regale you with a few select ideas that struck me on the drive to work. But first, maybe I should ask what thoughts you've had."

Without a word or a wasted motion, Sennett slid a holodisc into his laptop and sent their raw footage onto Druwe's flatscreen wall. There, in stark black and white, was Aleta, streamlined and beautifully attired in black lace, the close-ups picking up an anxious, wondering look in her hazel eye, as she trotted, gracefully barefoot, through a shifting backdrop of ruined elegance - the Temple of Juno at Agrigento, the bomb-scarred Camposanto, the Kaiser Wilhelm Church on the Kurfürstendamm - all beautiful backdrops for the clean lines, matchless poise and icy perfection of a flawless synthelle.

"Of course, there will be a magical, poetic script juxtaposing truth and impermanence. You know, Keats, *Europe After The Rain*, you get the concept...The synthelle as perfection captured, set against the ruin and rapaciousness of time. And we have the rights to that song..."

"'Child of the Now'," Passmore injected.

"And, finally, the tag line," Sennett said, making his voice go low, Stentorian, "Making Fantasy Obsolete..."

Aleta's face, staring up into an empty belfry, faded into a bare blue screen, and everything went quiet in that moment where desperate hope could be crushed or nourished. Druwe looked stoic, unimpressed.

"Doesn't come together for me," she said, pulling on an old Iberian water pipe enameled with red raptors. "Too many conflicting ideas fighting for attention. I'm seeing something with more unity, more purity. Themes of timeless beauty. Judgment of Paris. Atalanta and the golden apples. Helen of Troy. Timeless. Very top-end. No hint of collapse or decay. Eternal Spring! The *Mona Lisa*..."

“Not a good idea. Wood beetles in the maple struts,” Jeffcoat said, in that way only women could speak to Druwe.

“Carpeaux. *The Dance*,” Druwe offered.

Jeffcoat frowned. “Uh uh. Auto emissions and acid rain.”

Druwe tapped her stone desk with a crystal gavel, the ultimate sign that her mind was made up. “Marti. You’re just infuriating today....This is the way we *must* go.”

Passmore was instantly besieged with thoughts of wasted time and effort, expensive reshoots, a retooled campaign with impossible odds.

“We can do that,” he mumbled through clenched jaw.

As Passmore had guessed, the next two weeks were full of frenzied activity. At great expense, they secured the services of Randall Peay, a director known for achieving expensive-looking results on impossible schedules, and they managed to get some wonderful footage of Cynda, pursued by Balder Partridge (pulled, also at no small expense, from the set of space western *Zero Meridian*) through the Cloisters, past Campin’s *Annunciation*, along the halls of the Metropolitan among rows of immaculately-restored black-and-rust Greek kraters, through Central Park, to the feet of a cast of Canova’s *Three Graces*, while Thrush Hardheart trilled a rewritten version of her omnipresent smash:

Feeling’s overrated

Memories are cruel

Love will hold you hostage

It’s a game of dirty pool

History’s a tombstone

The future is a guess

Regret is just a parlor game

Distraction more or less

My baby is a child of the now

Promised me she’s gonna show me how

Always and forever walk the lover’s tao

A child of the everlasting now

It would do, Passmore thought. It would have to, for it was June 17th, and it would be all they could do to be ready for the Big Vegas Launch. But even as Marti Jeffcoat and the Willner shop stitched together the Technicolor tableaux, there was groundwork to be laid. Hecate Meyerbeer from *Constant*, corporate successor to *Wired* and favorite gossip sheet of the chipheads, had become a royal nuisance, bombarding him with questions about the rumored launch, the secretive efforts to staff up the Lesterville assembly lines with robotechs from their small, close-knit community. He would break a dinner date with Landra, meet Hecate at a loud Industrial Age sushi bar in the West 20s, and slip her an apparently contraband LESI interoffice mailer with some handwritten directions for the tradeshow stagehands, enough for a tasty website blind item. Just enough to start the whispers. Then, the team would only need to justify them.

The RicherLife '37 Convention filled the Exhibit Hall at the Hanging Gardens Hotel, one of New Vegas' newest and most completely automated. Hardly a live employee could be seen in the foyer, where robot porters humped baggage and post-post-modern kiosks with musical machine voices checked in guests and handled requests for restaurant recommendations. The dull hum of efficiency gave way to a wild hivesound from the human throng in the GrandHall, one of those impersonal glass and brass slaughterhouses where people threw away time trying to figure out how to throw away money. The architects had attempted to humanize the space with monumental figures representing Science, Industry, Leisure and Chance, but the effect of the bronze elements was stultifying. They seemed like titans, frozen stiff by tedium and pointlessness. Passmore held for Klarion the secluded door hiding the staircase that led to the mezzanine boxes. In LESI's was an esteemed group: Messrs. Emmerich and Raincrow (an avid gambler, more avid loser) from the Board; Carragher, Krause, Endino and Muldaur from corporate and, in the corner, noshing on eggplant fritters, Landra, hemmed in by Saint-Heureux and her wife the fighter Luz Guzman. It was a night for big send-offs, and the press had already begun to gather along the ropes that rimmed the revolving Synthelle™ Stage. Carragher, trussed up in his rattlesnakeskin tux, was clearly uncomfortable.

"We need this," was the most he could manage. Landra just avoided Passmore's eyes, picking out the biblical personages along Guzman's tattoo sleeve.

At the appointed time (8:20 p.m., Desert Standard Time), the comic Arch Needle said his goodnights, the lights went down, and four cones of holoscreen descended. The stage began to hum, and from the first bank of shadows came a Cynda, looking straight and statuesque, blonde hair flowing over strong shoulders draped in silver lamé cape and bustier. She was Barbarella, struggling, bound to steel bars, when, suddenly, the stage blossomed in brightly colored holoivid of blue bunnies, choleric ginger children and maniac dolls in vivid costumes, nightmare steel teeth chomping metronomically, closing in on Cynda's luscious gams. Just as the terrible feast was about to be consummated, the stage whirled into a scene of an army mess, Aleta buzzing in and out of the gaze of black servicemen like a brilliant songbird in black lace décolletage and long red skirt hugging educated hips. The video soldiers, like the

photographers, gaped at the Aleta's fine approximation of Dorothy Dandridge's *Habanera* from *Carmen Jones*, swinging a dinner tray without spilling a drop of joe.

"Nobody could order a chicken sandwich like her," Klarion muttered to no one in particular.

At the next turn, the Akiko, clad in sackcloth, looking gloriously tousled, threw herself at the feet of a filmed Sanjuro, pleading for her life as the traitorous imperial concubine Laina in '34's Best Picture *Ash and Sand*. It was quite shockingly wonderful the way her cries cut through the service bar chatter, the way her sweat-drenched hair framed her small, perfect face. Then, in a flash, they were in the Titty Twister, watching an exquisitely graceful and self-absorbed Raquel, her breasts resculpted for the occasion, wading through holobikers in the Satanico Pandemonium snakedance made indelible by the late Salma Hayek in *From Dusk 'Till Dawn*. You could hear a reporter moan with pleasure as he lapped at tequila the lovely figure poured down an impossibly shapely leg. The voice they heard was Leland Qualls, the Shakespearean stage star:

How well we remember these moments. Imagine if

On cue, the scenes froze and like so many rogue suns, the bulbs illuminating them intensified and grew and erupted through men and scenery, surrounding the ladies with charred auras.

we could hold these and other moments of cold-sweat passion, forever

The four synthelles moved to stage center, smiling, embracing, as a nova of flashbulbs burst in rhythm.

Imagine if the dream was real. Now. The Synthelle™ by LESI. Making fantasy obsolete. One man at a time.

There was a hush followed by a rising tide of slow-claps and cheers. The ladies took elegant bows and wandered into the maw to glad-hand and interact with the stunned and grinning press.

"A few bewildered feminists in the back," Klarion stage-whispered to Carragher. "We can use the controversy to keep the story alive."

Passmore and Endino could barely contain themselves as Landra approached.

"Vampirres, Algernon? Really?"

It was handshakes and hugs all around, and everyone assured Passmore that things had gone without a hitch. He had thought that his life would be transformed overnight, but back at DePuyster Square, over butterscotch pudding and café au lait, Jeffcoat had clued him in. A revolutionary product did not explode overnight, she assured him. It was like a virus. It got

under the skin and incubated, while people got used to the idea, came to terms with how they felt, negotiated with themselves over the terms of their investments—financial, emotional, whatever. They needed to learn how much they wanted it. Whether it was worth the headache and expense. All the Team had done was to start the conversation.

And it built, and swelled. The initial coverage had percolated through the computer, gaming and high-tech channels. The gaming sites and message boards, always a bit sex-obsessed, had latched on right away, but the \$15,000-\$18,000 sticker ensured their interest was comic only. It was easy to get the kids' attention, but it took real know-how to reach the fathers, the uncles, the older brothers.

The people in Leasing were caught in a bidding war with a bridal salon for prime LA showroom space and Teamsters troubles on the East coast caused delays in outfitting SynthellesEast just north of Times Square. With nowhere for potential buyers to go, it was essential the firm keep synthelles in the news and that they remain a hot topic of discussion. The revised plan involved using the dog days of summer to get the retail infrastructure up and running while stoking the publicity engine and continuing to refine the production process to build an inventory. Then, after Labor Day, they would remount the ad campaign in advance of the Christmas holiday.

"Too bad we are going to miss bikini season," Akita said. But Passmore was relieved because they were not entirely sure whether salt water would short out the works, and they couldn't stand any bad press. By mid-August, there were 200 Cyndas, and about 100 each of the others, in a warehouse in western Pennsylvania, tasteful showrooms in New York and L.A., and a staff of slim, gorgeous, well-dressed salespeople drilled in the finer points of synthelle salesmanship.

How to approach a single man?

Simple. Focus on beauty, grace, lifelike workmanship. Reality of physical experience. Literate, intelligent companionship. Trainability for domestic chores. Imminence of synth as desirable, high-end convenience for every well-fitted home! Be the envy of all! First TV, first car, etc. Never suffer the expense or worry (robbery, STDs, arrest, reputational damage) associated with bonded or wildcat prostitutes again!

Couple?

Happy or unhappy?

How do we tell?

Eye contact, touching, physical proximity, consultation on answers and decisions, general body language.

Happy?

Synth as aid to sexual experimentation, use for acts or practices female partner finds distasteful. Surrogate to free up one or both partners for work, business or pleasure travel. Relationship enhancer. Energy liberator.

Unhappy?

Frees wife from sexual "obligations" real or imagined. Capable of social, civil (although non-empathic) relations. Excellent source of non-confrontational relations for the man.

Single woman?

See above.

Chance to be on the edge of new technology, sample the latest in robotics at a price roughly half that of a new car, home diagnostic pod, all-surround holothatre. A pure release, a perfect gimlet, mistake-free bridge partner, missile shield expert, repository of culinary secrets, Russian and Arabic tutor.

I like to play a little rough-and-tumble...

Comprehensive warranty on parts and labor...

LESI, either singly or jointly and severally with any parent, subsidiary, contractor, agent, officer, director, consultant or other affiliated person or entity, domestic or foreign, of LESI (hereinafter, collectively referred to as the "Company") shall not be held liable for any damage to, or operating failure of, the Unit, resulting from operation of the Unit in a manner (i) contrary to any local, state, federal or international statute, regulation, treaty, ordinance or other provision of law or compact in effect at the time of such operation; (ii) calculated to result in any damage to the person or property of another; (iii) that is inherently hazardous, or which creates an undue risk of damage or injury; (iv) inconsistent with standards of reasonable and responsible operation as described in User's Owner's Manual or related documents; (v) inconsistent with the terms of any recall, bulletin or warning issued by the Company subsequent to the date hereof; or (vi) intended to accomplish any purpose other than the performance of non-commercial conjugal, domestic or companion services for the benefit of the registered User or any bailee acting with registered User's consent. The Company shall in no event be liable for repairs under the terms and conditions of this warranty beyond the terms described herein: computer and data processing equipment: two years from date of sale; hydraulics, motors, battery and other mechanical systems: one year from date of sale; skin, hair and other aesthetic elements: ninety (90) days from date of sale. Repairs under this warranty will be made only by an authorized dealer or facility, as set forth under the section of the Owner's Manual entitled "Authorized Service Centers."

They knew the rap and looked great laying it on. Passmore knew you needed gorgeous women; the more expensive and non-essential the goods, the better looking they had to be. Sennett wondered if it would be bad for business to make the women too cute, but he knew you had to convince a man that women would be impressed – no, gobsmacked! – by his taste and buying power. A pretty enough salesperson could sell an eager young man just about anything: beach chairs in a blizzard. And it was especially important that potential customers see that women don't snicker up their PVC sleeves at a synthelle user.

They had received a few hundred expressions of interest, and about fifty advance orders by mid-August, when Passmore was asked to liven up the late-summer installments of a webstream talkfest, *Price of Love*, hosted by one of Druwe's semi-frequent lunch companions, the neurovangelist Allora Price (*née* Preiss). The theme of the installment was "Are Women On

the Way Out?" and the other panelists were Athena Krantz, sergeant-at-arms of the Womyn's PsyOp Strike Force; Lilith 3 of the Daughters of Hedwig; Dr. Joan Steppan Stone from Antioch's Women's Studies Center, a couple of SUKI owners, Passmore and an Akiko. Passmore was ostensibly there to be cuffed around, but he knew Price would keep it from getting too rough. And he knew the important thing was getting Akiko some camera time. A picture was worth a thousand angry words. People would see her, and that image would stick. The SUKI owners, predictably enough, were a slovenly bunch, lumpen, disheveled, poorly dressed in awful t-shirts and slacks made of toxic fibers in garish designs. No help at all in burnishing the product's image. But the angry ladies - Krantz, armed with an obvious starter pistol; Lilith, with her unmanageably long hair and shapeless, floor-length gown - were nearly as bad, and when his time came to speak, Passmore knew he would come across as the quintessence of rational discourse. He straightened his fish-scaled Chenevert tie, cleared his throat and spoke through the gentle hissing, calmly running his hand through Akiko's coal-black hair in a gesture at once intimate and paternal:

"Ladies, thank you for having us here to clear up a few things. We are a very new product and, consequently, very imperfectly understood. People hear whispers and rumors and don't base their opinions on the facts. People say we are here to replace women. Far from it! Perish the thought! The synthelle, like Akiko here, one of the new CARA series, is here to replace some things - namely, the generations of crude, ugly and obscene sex dolls and even more obscure and embarrassing 'aids' to which lonely, solitary men have been forced to resort. And the shame of which have driven thousands of men to bitterness, resentment and hate. Hatred of women."

A silence had descended over the rambunctious studio audience. They were listening.

"Who could deny that a man would be in better hands with our Akiko, a magnificent piece of engineering who can smile, sing and soothe, who can edify with encyclopedic knowledge, who is a helper, a valued companion and confidante. Yes, and a lover. The synthelle is a technological godsend to bridge the caverns blasted by the War Between the Sexes. She can bring alienated man back to the loving arms of natural woman. She is, to use the parlance of politics, uniter, not divider, an instrument of pure pleasure for all to enjoy, a boon to all..."

On a pre-arranged signal, the lights went down, a spot ran down Akiko's green sequined gown, her amber stockings with seams entwined in double helixes, and Efren Akiba swiveled around to his Polytone keyboard and fingered the first notes of "The Man That Got Away." It could not have been sweeter, Passmore thought, as he watched the feminists, realizing they had been grandly had, silently fume in the shadows. He kind of hated himself for making it look so easy.

Akiko's sweet, sexy holocaust debut was a great success, on the day and for weeks afterward, holopods flying over the internet from Arcadia to the Mexican Concessions and beyond. Rumor

had it the clip caused a major stir among the Japanese and Korean academics, who feared their work had been overtaken, but the plan was always to build the user base outward from US cities first, so Passmore figured they could just let the Far East sweat it out a bit longer.

By Labor Day weekend, *Price of Love*, and the media buys of the Peay spot (“Timeless Passion”) on a couple of the big pay-cable shows, *Part-Time God* and *Natural Death Squad*, began to pay off in phone calls, showroom foot traffic and, finally, orders. By Halloween, LESI had “placed” 6,000 synthelles, principally around the major coastal cities. A group of owners threw a costume party for their “girls” and homemade video of the synths tricked out like Eve, Lady Godiva, Mata Hari and Josephine Baker appeared on a TrendTV clip show, skewered with barbs from comedy writers no one had ever heard of. Virgil Goldstroke inadvertently made love to an Aleta in a widely replayed scene from the successful romantic comedy *Under the Weather*. Late-night talkshow hosts tossed out one-liners and the popular Mayor of Chicago, a former stock-car racer, cut the ribbon on Cherry 2000’s, a Rush Street lounge staffed entirely by synthelles in science fiction garb. With Thanksgiving looming, *Pastiche* hit the newsstands with an all-CARA photo spread, a Cynda was delivered to souk-hop artist Majiq, and it was generally believed at DePuyster Square that the CARA had carved out a beachhead in the popular imagination. Young boys, confounded by their female classmates, peppered the 17th floor media center with hundreds of texts and emails to Aleta and Raquel, pouring out their daydreams as if to women with real, beating hearts.

“Too big to be a curiosity, too small to be a phenomenon,” Carragher told the yearly Thanksgiving luncheon, and Passmore could hear in his jokes undertones of disappointment. A holiday spot with an elfin Raquel in Santa’s lap, crooning a seductive “Feliz Navidad” moved some units, but by New Year’s Eve, the Synthelle Team was still looking for a breakthrough event.

Passmore was slow-dancing Landra into the New Year at the Raffles’ rotating glass ballroom when Klarion, radiant in Borusova crystals, waved them over to her banquette and they slid in beside Luz, obviously annoyed at the intrusion of business into their evening.

“We may be staring down our Holy Shit moment,” Klarion said, tipping a cocktail of champagne and rattlesnake blood. It was manna from Heaven; the Tischler biblical epic *Ephesus* had hit cost overruns, and Klarion had floated a different kind of product placement deal, with the producers agreeing to let star Marcos San Julian chaperone a synthelle to the Oscars in exchange for an infusion of cash.

It was a do or die moment, and everyone knew it.

Bright and early on New Year’s Day, Passmore convened a meeting with the design team to talk about creating a special machine for Marcos to walk down the red carpet. Dimensions were

modified for this custom job, tacking 3cm to her frame, and trimming circumference from her waist, rump and thighs.

“She’s a racing machine,” said Redfawn, surveying the maquette of the doll (codename Marilyn). “Hardly seems fair to turn her loose on the world...She’s not even street legal!”

At Callisto Pictures’ request, she was given brown tropical skin to work with Marcos’ coloring, and Endino settled on the face of Heirani Heia, a spectacular Tahitian extra in three scenes of Roger Donaldson’s *The Bounty*. Lessig designed a special RACK loaded with 12 years of *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter* and fed the eyecams with the collected films of Katherine Hepburn, Marlene Dietrich and Lauren Bacall. A booker from BellaModa Models worked on her gait, and she was flown to Los Angeles in a padded road case, on a chartered airplane, where she was stitched into a lavender Eleison gown, her hair sculpted by Rositsa of Beverly Hills, and her make-up painted on by none other than Laura Ken herself. The crowning touch was a 12-carat navy blue sapphire pendant and matching platinum and sapphire tiara from HimmelTranen of Vienna. Truly, their masterwork, rechristened Maldina for the night, was as perfect as American craftsmanship could make her. So much could go wrong, but didn’t. She dazzled like her jewels, glided rings around the human females, and was all the red-carpet fashion Gestapo could crow about. By the next morning, and for weeks thereafter, her picture was everywhere, accompanied by copy singing the praises of the Synthelle™. She was the toast of Hollywood, and available for home use, in reasonable monthly installments. Whatever Klarion had paid, it had been a steal.

Spring 2038 was a time to build on the enormous gains Maldina had won them. Somewhat controversially, Carragher, a buff on old Hollywood, had decreed Maldina a one-off, her plans locked in the company archives. Perhaps he couldn’t bear to see her ruined, writhing underneath a grocery store manager or a municipal tax assessor. But her stardust had rubbed off on her sisters, and spring and summer saw 30,000 more units, turned out in two thriving factories, sold to status-hungry American men. The most popular sandwich in the company canteen – a triple-decker salmon and caviar with melted Gruyère on sourdough bread – favored by no less a visitor than the Vice President of the United States, was christened the Maldina. Times were good.

Passmore was certain that the guys on the team had played the world’s greatest April Fool’s Day joke on the Thursday morning he walked into the office, preparing to read a quarterly sales report, and discovered what looked like a magazine, in the kind of opaque wrapper one used to save youth from unsavory erotica. When he removed the contents, he could hardly believe his eyes. It was a thick book, expensively bound, covered in thick, glossy stock like the \$20 fashion mags. The cover gave him a start. It showed a Raquel, dressed in black corset, leather mini, fishnets and hip-length boots, astride a silver Calumet racing cycle, above the words “Our Splendid Machines.” The magazine’s name, inscribed in futuristic red letters, was *Synner*, and a

box in the corner proclaimed it the debut issue. He could hardly believe the work that had gone into it as he flipped the pages and read the names of the features: "Care and Feeding" (how to keep your synth running right, "Trading Up" (new features and upgrades); "Nuts and Bolts" (user mail, synthelle clubs and events). Most interesting were the "Pin-Ups" section, photos of provocatively dressed and posed synthelles, and "Arm Candy," readers photographed out and about with their ladies at baseball games, backstage parties, chic *alfresco* cafes. It opened a window on a world Passmore had sensed was developing, a world where synthelle owners strained to burst the limits of a hobbyist cult and invade the media mainstream. He was so fascinated that he did not notice Landra at all.

She cleared her throat and rapped on the doorframe. "I hope I'm not interrupting porno time." She plopped down in a guest chair before Passmore could invite her in. "I guess that counts as market research."

He closed the magazine and turned it face down without realizing it. "I try not to dabble, but it's like graft..."

"How so?"

"If you don't take a little," he said, trying to sound like a Brooklyn gangster, "da boys have a hard time trustin' ya."

"Whatever it is, it certainly seemed to have your attention." Passmore slid the book across his desk, and watched her expression change. She looked like someone who had just read inconvenient, but possibly, profitable, news.

"This is gold," she said. "This could be the last chapter in the book." He knew she had been sending the Board periodic reports on the progress of the Synthelle Project, peppered with highlights of the national media feeds, scholarly opinion, and the like. It made perfect sense that she was planning a book. With her inside access to the birth of the product, and the social and psychosexual background she had, it would practically write itself. "Can I have this?"

"Sure," Passmore said. "After I finish it." She rose and looked over his shoulder as he slowly scanned the pictures, which ranged from May Selway fashion shots at the Cadillac Ranch, Grant Park, a locomotive suspended above the entrance of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; to jarring *stalkerazzi* shots at nightclub back doors; to digicam and phonecam pix made all the more enticing by their cheap, homemade surfaces. After a time, she retreated in silence.

"What are we looking at?" she asked, finally. "Is *Synner* to robot sex as *Playboy* was to the pill? Is this supposed to be the opening shot of some new sexual revolution?"

He had tried, from that first weekend in New Vegas, to dumb things down, to tone down the rhetoric, to convince himself and everyone else that they were engaged in a purely commercial

enterprise, selling fancy appliances in pretty cases, and nothing more. But he had never believed it, not really. He loved the thrill of shaking things up, and by now, it was pretty clear that something was happening that could cast a few significant ripples. The Field Service people had reported half a dozen slashings by wives or girlfriends, a posse of cocktail waitresses from the surrounding clubs had raised a ruckus at Cherry's that got some regional attention, and a couple of the best restaurants in the City refused to allow synthelles, ostensibly over the fire code, but really to placate angry female patrons. And now, the men who love the synthelle were moving aboveground, going very public with the lifestyle. It was great to see Landra come alive at times like this, her fingers drumming with nervous energy, her lips vaguely mouthing the lines she would use to turn all this into cogent theory. It had been a very long time since Passmore had done anything but synthelles, and as Landra air-tapped the toe of her sealskin boots, he found himself invaded by the most insistent questions about the smoothness of her bare stomach, the repertoire of little involuntary sounds she might make in the dark. His discomfort was intensified by the growing closeness of their working relationship. He thought he might really succeed, on both fronts

"You guys might start your sex war after all."

"Is that what we're trying to do?"

"Well, aren't you?"

Passmore slid the book offhandedly into his desk drawer. "I don't like wars. The hours are bad, the food is lousy, and the clothes don't fit me. Besides, I like arguing with women too much. With the bots, you just hit 'reset.' Y'know. Too easy."

She laughed uneasily. "Well, you're gonna get your fill. The way things are going. And my book..."

"Yeah, what was the name of that again?"

"What 'again'? I never told you."

"Well...?"

"*Exterminating Eve*. That's the working title."

"Harsh."

"It's ironic. So far, anyway."

Her theories were overblown. *Man*, he thought, *would never tire of the surging blood in those sweet, mysterious ladies, their butterfly minds and perfect, glistening obsidian hearts.* But by God, the prospect of butting heads with Landra for weeks, months, maybe years, excited him. *Let me*

show you how I feel about women, he thought. He was drumming Engine of Belief songs with a pair of pencils topped with rubber erasers, a tell for sexual tension if ever there was one. Now that the synthelle was on its way, he thought, it was time to move things along with Lovely Landra, as well. *Note to self: Get the lead out.*

With the warmer weather came yet another manifestation of the synthelle's growing acceptance, the Dollwalk. On sunny weekends, synthelle owners, ever more bound in increasingly sophisticated trading and social networks, would dress their dolls in the sexiest and most stylish outfits and promenade them through the city parks. The Sunday Stroll at Seaver was the biggest, with upwards of 150 participants by summer's end. It was a natural for Bougereau to be asked to judge the first Ms. Living Doll Pageant that would climax the final Stroll on the afternoon of July 24. Passmore had asked Landra to come along on a picnic, to blend serene outdoor luncheon with up-close observation of synthusiasts at play.

The day, when it finally came, could not have been more perfect. Seaver Park was a little hollow of green between the great stone apartment blocks of the West 70s and the opulent new Neo-Georgian library annex that had consumed the city's political life for the best part of a decade. Its centerpiece was an old-fashioned wooden gazebo around which ran a footpath of crushed gravel bordered by geraniums. On the library side sat a swing set and a pair of see-saws that had already attracted a noisy contingent of toddlers.

From a ground-floor delicatessen across 78th, a slow procession emerged, couples arm in arm, two long paces in between, the men dressed in identical seersucker suits and straw boaters, the women – synthelles all – in a dazzling array of costumes. A gold-bedecked Aleta Cleopatra, two Cyndas done up like Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, a Cynda Marie Antoinette, Akiko in a 1967 Mary Quant mini-dress and silk headband...On and on they came, two dozen bots and their chaperones, circling the gazebo to the wild cheers of the spectators, while a brass quartet gravely tooted a credible version of "Real Live Girl." The emcee, a middle-aged pet store owner in white tie and tails, welcomed everyone and, with a flourish, motioned the couples toward seats on the bandstand, calling each by name: Lin Rodriguez and Maya, John Myrdahl and Lenore...The spectacle was rather stunning, Passmore thought, buying an ice cream sandwich from a vendor's bicycle cart and marveling at the intricate beadwork on a knee-length buckskin Cherokee tear dress.

"This is kind of depressing," Landra said. "It's like a dog show. It's a little bit nutty."

The column rolled on, Joan of Arc followed by Martha Washington followed by Lilu from *The Fifth Element* followed by what appeared to be Pam Grier from the movie *Foxy Brown*. The mood was festive and celebratory, and the male halves of the first-seated pairs were leaning close to whisper instructions as a Scarlett in elaborate bonnet and petticoats from, Passmore thought, the Twelve Oaks barbecue in *Gone With The Wind* began to climb the gazebo steps. The sound of



cloth tearing startled him as the following synth, a Kilgore Rangerette in a white ten-gallon hat, caught a piece of petticoat beneath her snow white boot. Scarlett lost her balance as the fabric tore away and her escort, in shock and alarm, turned on the cowgirl's date, knocking the hat from his shaven head and planting a sloppy roundhouse right on his shoulder blade. Two other men, ripping off their jackets, dove like hounds into the fray, knocking O-Ren Ishii to her knees and pushing Anne Boleyn half over a wooden railing. In the crowd, three partisans wearing buttons in support of a bot named Eugenia and an even half-dozen in tie-dyed "Score With Lenore" t-shirts squared off, shoving, grabbing shirts and shouting unintelligible threats. With no police or security, the brawl escalated,

swirling around a bewildered master of ceremonies, who vainly scrambled to recover his lost microphone. The men, infected by violence, even turned on opposing synthelles, knocking them to the ground, kicking, tearing clothes and hair, shouting obscenities as more and more spectators joined the human stew, some trying to pull people apart, others tearing artificial skin and foam from synthelle limbs. Within a few minutes, more than a hundred people had joined the mob, an elderly woman choking the Indian princess with a length of microphone cord.

Passmore stood in stunned silence while a transfixed Landra reeled from the bullrushes of men joining the brawl, rattling off observations into a portable dictaphone. He could pick out bits and pieces - madness, mob mentality, senseless carnage - before he slumped against a sapling and resigned himself to watching the melee, the growing pile of mechanical parts. Weak-kneed and trembling, Landra sat down next to him, wrapping him in a protective hug.

"Unfuckingreal," she said, in a voice slow and dispirited. Passmore hugged her tight, intent on salvaging something positive from the debacle. A man walked by with the eyeless head of Cleopatra, trailing wires and watering the trampled lawn with oil and coolant. After five or six minutes, some people at the edge of the fight peeled off toward the library and the sound of sirens scattered the rest. A pair of news cameramen with professional rigs and about ten

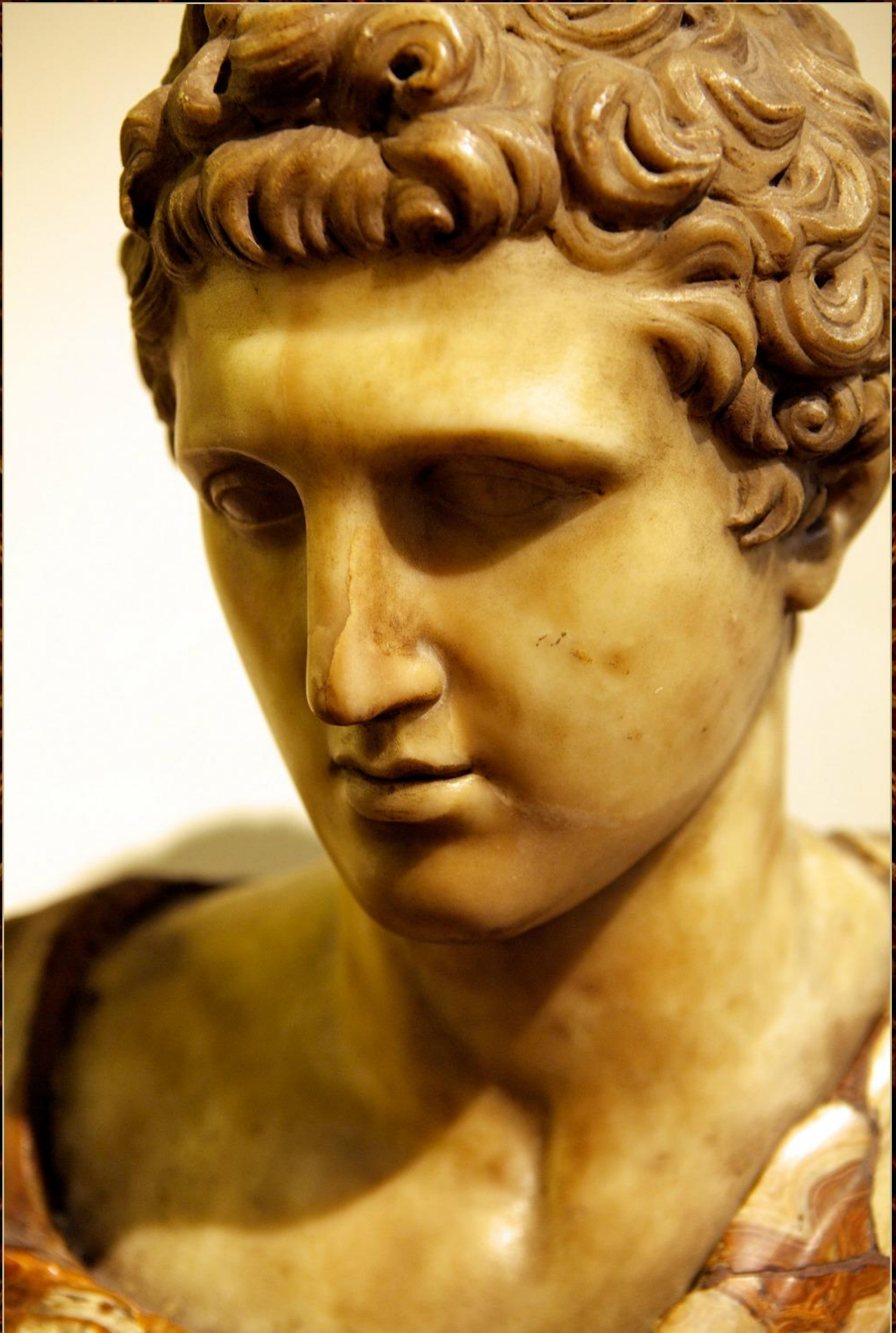
spectators with cellphone cameras closed in on the dispersing mob, sensing their cute human interest story had become something strange and metaphorical that could reach the national feeds. Small fires dotted the lawn and the air had the faint, acrid stench of charred hair and insulation. At Landra's feet, half a severed Akiko head still sickly mouthed something Passmore recognized from *Flower Drum Song*. *The Seaver Slaughter*, he thought. *Android Apocalypse*. They sat in each other's arms for what seemed like an hour, until police had hauled away the stubbornest combatants, and city workers began to corral the wreckage. It was Passmore who spoke at last.

"Great merciful Christ on a G-board," he moaned. "Did we just see the beginning of the end?"

"No, I think not," Landra said. "The synthelle will survive." Passmore watched as she pointed across the field, filled with happy spectators just minutes ago. A nondescript man, his combover strands dangling along his sweatslick neck, his suit mottled with grass stains and oil, sorted meekly through the pile of smoky debris. He reached in and pulled out the remains of a brown mechanical forearm, trailing shards of plastic bone tangled in wire. Tenderly, with an absent expression, he touched the fingers that remained encased in skin, carefully twisting off a golden ring, which he examined under the late afternoon sun, then dropped into his jacket pocket. He stayed an extra second in a catcher's crouch, rose, and ambled away toward the lower 70s and City Center.

Their eyes met in empathy, and Passmore found in the sad purse of her mouth, the consoling squeezing of her fingers, a path toward something alive and human he'd been chasing for longer than he could admit. Contact. He still needed it and he knew the world did, too.

Would the synthelle ever be more than just a curiosity, a pretty, rich man's toy? He was no longer sure. They would know, he guessed, soon enough.



LUST, TANTRA, AND SEX

By Joshua Seraphim

Studies of sex from psychological, eugenic, sociological, anthropological, and contemporary religious points of view have spawned epidemically. Few writers past and present approached studies in "sexology" from the domain of meta-physics. The term "metaphysics" by default invites scorn and naïveté from both reputable and discreditable scholar-practitioners. Any derision and skepticism of sexual metaphysics stems from unbreakable parallels with the occult and "new age" babble. Including the author, we can add such literati and daring "Western" scholar-practitioners to the field of sexual metaphysics as Marquis D.A.F. de Sade, Paschal Beverly Randolph, Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch, Charles Baudelaire, Dr. Wilhelm Reich, Baron Julius Evola, Sir John Woodroffe {Arthur Avalon}, Pauline Réage {Dominique Aury}, and Dr. Christopher S. Hyatt.

The primordialism of sex in the Age of Lust we live in has inverted all forms of psychoanalysis. Erotic cults such as the Vāma-Kālī sect of Tantra, the Carpocratians, Black Madonna, Catholic cults devoted to the Magdalene and Virgin, worshippers of Lilith uncover the most carnal dimensions of ritualized sex. This is where psychoanalysis fails. Psychologists such as Freud explained sexuality and eroticism through archetypal matrices imbued in the psyche. Sexual archetypes are not only embedded in the psychic well, they are latent in human eugenics. The problem that Jungian and Freudian archetypes are their mythologizing sexual modules in the human genome. Each archetype is assigned behavioral and religious modules. Instinct and the physiological imperative to procreate depend on the sexual impulse toward erotic attraction. In this case, will becomes secondary to the conscious instinct for reproduction.

Sexual instincts are the metaconscious thrust of the species. All males and females of the human species have a sexual instinct, and prototype embedded with whom they wish to breed.

Everyone knows the prominent role of sex played in nearly every facet of post-modern society. Sex in contemporary society has become subpersonalized into a mass-market of commodity and commercialism. Sex sells! Love is a dimension, described across the ages as transcendental and metaphysic, where everything is annulled - one's thoughts, senses, emotions, actions. It is a dimension where one reaches a primitive state of dissociation with the self, to an over-reaching state of catharsis. Adepts in various spiritual traditions, such as Sufism, Tantra, forms of Gnosticism, have learned to annul Lust and Love {save for unlawful sexual relations}, to breach the boundaries between eros and bios into a higher unparalleled form of agapæ. This nonindividual dimension reaches a transcendental point during the sexual orgasm, both as a spiritual, meta-physic, and erotic disposition. When passion disappears, love becomes traumatic. The notion of sexual love as a physiological need of Mankind is based on a misunderstanding of psychic forces. The physiological need for sexual love and procreation is the outcome of a transposition of psychic desire, to extend one's genotype, one's personality, one's self with another human, thus in effect, merging the fundamental elements of one's life with **another**. Mankind produces at a lower rate than most animal species, indicating the presence of psychic disposition in eroticism and sexual love.

Sexology has attempted to explain sexual love through psychological archetypes embedded in the human consciousness through myth, and as an affect of hormonal stimuli. Some fools have committed to this theory as the very basis for falling in love. Psychoanalysis fails to recognize the autonomous psychic impulse for sexual union, when either with a partner or by autoeroticism the senses reach a state of catharsis by opening internal energy circuits only fully explored in Chinese and Hindu Tantric practices. In contemporary American society, sexual love has regressed into an anesthesia, relief from socio-cultural, and economic discomfort, or an apotheosis of erotic energy, referred to in Tantric practice as *prāna*. It is said in the Hevajra Tantra (2.2.52): "*By passion are beings bound and by that very passion they are released.*" Ritual magic when introduced in sex at once cleanses impurities and bestows efficacy.

Erotic love cannot be explained by biological fatalism, nor by autonomous psychoanalysis. Other methods of sexology must be employed to breach the boundaries between religion, psychology, and sexuality. The knowledge and existence of internal energy circuits, **immaterial fluid** called *prāna* comes from ancient magical traditions which is aroused in the deepest layers of our being through various forms of ritual coitus, initiation, and ritual magic. *Kundalini*, called *tsing* in Taoist ritual sex, is a form of activated *prāna* that lies in a reservoir of subtle bio-energy at the base of the spine. The ancient traditions teach us how to activate, channel, and employ this immaterial fluidic force in every aspect of life, thus realizing a "natural magic of love" that is transcendent.

Society is both anemic and manic from using sex as anesthesia. Certain forms of "sex magic" are manic abortions of a sexually anesthetized magic...and culture. All taboos and conditionings must be burnt away before transcendence in ritual sex. This theme is central to the secrets, comically called, of the O.T.O. "IXth" and "Xth" Degrees. 'Western' peddlers of Tantra shackle their cosmetic and stylized products to the masses of many fallow Thelemites, usually under the dubious trade name of "sex magic(k)." In the early Tantras, sex was employed as practical means of initiation and consecration via the sexual fluids, including urine and menstrual excretions, called *rajas*. The function of the male initiate was to inseminate into the female, to insanguinate the fluids with those of the female consort. The role of male and female in all forms of sex magic *must be vitally reciprocal*, and outside of a cultural template, gender subversion in these practices did not occur in ancient Tantric traditions. *Aropa*, or transubstantiation, is the mystical 'quality' invoked in the process of sexual insanguination, a sacramental rite whereby the semen is emitted after controlled arousal and ebbing throughout various parts of the body. Eroticism in the form of divine worship and adoration awakens a sort of *Madonna Intelligenza*, a seed-bearing Understanding, and the Lust that activates the capability of agape in the formula of the Lover. Such processes that are vulgarized by the Thelemic peddlers of "sex magic(k)" often lead to failure invoked by *base desire for ends* due to the intrinsic nature of human sexuality. A duly initiated and consecrated sex magician annuls transgressive differences in the ritual anointing with blood, semen, and urine. Gestation of life *and* death, and esoteric secrets therein, are unveiled in the sacramental insemination, and anointment, of sexual fluids. The germination of sexual fluids under ritual context, anointed and consecrated to proper deity and sigil, contain religious secrets imbued in the human psyche wherein life and death gestate and are transient noumena. Life and death, and ideas thereof are transcended in carnal practices of ritual sex.

Adept mastery of seminal fluid retention in ritualized sex is one of the elite soteriological aims of sex magic within the Ordo Antichristianus Illuminati® and other secret societies. The effect of retaining, then withdrawing the seminal sex fluids suspends the three main discursive functions of the mind: cognition, volition, conation {in Sanskrit, *jñāna*, *icchā*, and *kriyā*}. This triadic mystogram is represented by the inverted triangle, the foundational sigil of all Tantric yantras. The ovum of a woman is the substance that feeds the seminal elixir during inverted ritual coitus. The sperm and menses in a literal context of semantics refer also to the union of the masculine and feminine principle invoked by seminal withdrawal. The lesser known and scoffed dangers of sex magic, (often ignored by Western Occultists, so-called) could be sexual intoxication, and possibly pathological addictions in relation to such forces obscured in the carnal nature of human sexuality. If sexual fluids and corresponding principles act as a psychological anesthesia amidst ritualized coitus, the primal feminine force will have been immersed, submerged moreover, to the deepest layers in the psyche, and the intrinsic power could create a persuasive bondage to the forces one sought to master. *Such carnal energies of sex and desire could be aroused within emotional and psychic bondage to the orgasm.* This intoxicated state of *amor insatiabilis* brings naught to satiate the sexual desire of the soul under a tyrannical ache for the elementary forces invoked. If inversion, and synthesis of polarity fails to occur during ritualized coitus, then pathologies toward mere lustful pleasure remain preeminent in the psychic map. Obsessive gratification leads to an abyss where tyrannical lust and mania absorb the soul into a violent swoon. It is possible via transmission of sexual fluids tainted with base catharsis, one becomes irrevocably enslaved by insatiate vices. The greater ordeal is a peril wherein the carnal force of sex is stripped bare and externalized in polarity by the intoxicate need for fulfillment of vice. Such a corruption of the seminal seed and remitting of the sperm and ovum causes states native to erotic intoxication. Misuse of ritual and initiatic coitus impedes the flow of seminal energies, obstructing the proper course of these physiologic energies in the *Suṣumnā* nadi. An often convulsive quickening of orgasm leads the perverted of desire to a psychic suffocation. Erotic intoxication in maltreatment of sex magic relates to the symbology of the banal psalms of lovers, the psychic pain associated with sexual pride, compounded by algolagnia (*âlgos*, 'pain,' and *lâgnos*, arousal). Such are the darker pathways into the Red Magic of the O. :A. :I. :.

A Latin proverb states “Tota mulier sexus,” meaning “the whole of woman is sex.” The earliest religious cult was matriarchic and fertility-based, contingent on the evocation and propitiation of the primeval Earth-Mater. Ancient motifs of Great Earth-Mother were totemic and animistic, emerging near ‘sacred’ river societies; the Canaanites by the Jordan river, Assyrians & Yezidis by the Tigris; Babylon, Sumer, Akkad, and Mesopotamia by the Euphrates, and the Ægyptians by the Nile. She appeared first in Ægypt besought as the giver of life and good harvest, shelter and water, to these river-societies that emerged into socio-religious and military world empires. Symbolized in Ægypt by her zootype motifs, the water-cow, the fruit-tree of Hathor, the sacred Sow of Rerit, the Serpent of Rannut, the Great Earth-Mother under the guise of Isis was later metamorphosed by Christianity into the Virgin Mary to appease and later diffuse pagan myths of the earth Mother. From the Serapic oracles of Isis, the wild Hunts of Artemis~Diana, the chthonic lore of Hecate and Demeter, ritual coitus dedicated to Inanna, among the cremation grounds of Hindu Kālī, Sumerian hymns to Ishtar, novenas to Mary Magdalene, and sado-masochistic sacrifices to Lilith, Red Magic {sex magic} is found in every religious mythos. In the witch covens and guilds of ceremonial magic, Magi have employed bacchanalia as the unsatisfied unconscious divine Lust. Sexual love embodied is the most carnal form of our

obscure search to annex the duality between Lust and Love, the shadowed boundaries between psyche and ego. Wizards, Witches, and Warlocks, even the whole of Man desires the idealized Scarlet Woman to express Her will through sex. Notice how in nearly every occult guild, the Scarlet Woman is expected and encouraged to express Her will through sex, through Lust. The Scarlet Woman is never challenged to express Her will through Love. This is because Man fails to annul the difference between Lust and Love as a psychic, transcendental force. Man fails to swim in a sea of agapæ, Man's tongue is cursed with the rot of sadist-magick, and speaks not agapæ's language of both sanity and insanity. I see the Brotherhoods dedicated to sexual gnosis, and their hidden gardens of Lilith, mocked and condemned ~ of course by impotent sex-magicians who cleave to the breast of dead Men as lost icons. The lot of them cannot even keep their own families together! The Scarlet Woman has become a generic victim.

In context of exotic ritual saturnalia, the hierodule {Greek, *hierodulous*}, served as a female sexual acolyte, often in connotation with sacred prostitution. The religious prostitute referred to as the Scarlet Woman, allegorized as the Whore of Babylon in Revelations, was the sex-acolyte of bridal rites of Sumer, Canaan, ancient Persia and Mesopotamia. The Rosi-Crucis was the sacred hieroglyph of the sex-acolyte, composed of a cross within a circle. The sigil is found in many ancient religious sites and Roman coinage. The ceremonial robes of the *heirodulai*, acolyte-prostitutes, were *scarlet red*, as the sacred courtesans engaged neophytes in ritual inverted coitus. Such orgiastic rites, and initiatory sex constituted the practice of "Red Magick." The Song of Inanna reciprocated by the New Testament Song of Solomon presents part of an antiquated sex ritual. Erotic cults lingering in novenas to Mary Magdalene, the cremation grounds of the Tantric Vāma-Kālī, the Carpocratians, and abbeys of the Black Madonna unveil carnal dimensions of erotic spirituality. The Scarlet Woman and Her countless epithets in these cults of eros, is damned in print and song. Consequently, as much as She is damned, the Scarlet Woman is celebrated...Her Gardens now flourish as singsong brothels of culture across the face of the earth. The immensity of the digital global-age often drowns out Her canticles of erotic excess, yet Her devotees are legion, and nameless. In the seeds of sperm and ovum, the psychosexual and cultural lineage of the Scarlet Woman retains Imperial Blood. The curse of Ophelia will be known to all Mankind.

Lust has become warden, inquisitor, and judge of society. Society is both anemic and manic from using sex as anesthesia. The Scarlet Woman and her "Beast" are manic abortions of a sexually anesthetized magic...and culture. Those whom must make Love a "Law" cannot Love. The end workings of many sex magicians is to breed not only a new paradigm but a new race, a new psychology, a new code of genetics completely unknown to contemporary Man. So do we correlate Lust and Love with pain? Yes! Every pain and erotic pleasure contains an impetus to raw conviction. The finite individual is overcome by harnessing and annulling the difference between pain and erotic pleasure, seeded with this primal energy Reich experimented with and Tantric sages mastered. Pain and eroticism occur due to the passive character of the experience. Thus, only the sado-masochist can truly fall in Love. The annulment of the differences between Lust and Love opens pathways many consider unnatural. Vulgar brethren use the words "I Love You" as means of strengthening emotional bonds threatened to end. Often the vulgar bellow the sacrament of Love as a vessel of obsession and infringement upon one another. The word Love in its majesty is heralded by fear-breathing swine whom surrender the divine to the animal, causing rising tides of individuals to shriek across the flaming stars their bloody oaths of agapæ.

The Ordo Antichristianus Illuminati® prospects Lilith as a cultural meme, sexual prototype, and devotional force in practices of sex magic and sociology. Initiates are kin to what is NOT and what is sewn into Her existence of nothingness. There is a voice upon a Serpent's tongue, nuzzled deep within the bosom of the Stars. and again. Near wails sibilant and silent as the hissing of a serpent's tongue. The Sphinx wailing in the desert, beckoning you to the edge of sanity, stealing the breath of babes and the rotted seed of the Lover. The touch of every sin, the bean'sídhe wailing past the twilight and the standing stones. Over and over. Silent whispers, the screech owl shrieking in the labyrinth between Lust and Love, the Virgin weeping at the foot of her Martyr. Dark mother of the martyrs, queen of angels, Sin of the Saints. She is the last temptation of Mankind, the judgment of man who will rise and oversee the apocalypse of man's religions. She is Nod. She is Eden. Whore. Slut. Bitch. Tramp. Mother. Daughter. Virgin. Pale spectre. Conceived without original sin. She to whom you confess. Refuge. Comforter. Seducer. Sorceress. Witch. Mystical rose. Goddess. Diva. Dominatrix. Jezebel. Vessel of faith. Prostitute. Scarlet Woman. Black concubine. Is She a quasihistorical figure left behind in bygone testaments of scrolls buried in the desert? According to Rabbinic scrolls, She is the first woman, beloved of the martyr, mother of angels, the last temptation of mankind. She is Lilith. Lilith is the antithesis of slavery, the purging of pain. In Jack Parson's text, *Book of Babalon*, the Scarlet Woman speaks of her daughter: "For I am Babalon, and she my daughter, unique, and there shall be no other women like her. In My Name shall she have all power, and all men and excellent things, and kings and captains and the secret ones at her command." {Babalon v. 37-38} Lilith, in relation to the pseudo-Masonic sexual prototype as seen in Parsons' writings, represents the inverted formula of the Maiden {Virgin}, Mother {Whore}, and Crone. She symbolically devours the Man's psychological manias with her venom. She is the ambivalent fusion of Death and sexuality, of terrifying violence and erotic power. Transposed as the Black Madonna, she represents the ancient formula of the Virgin. She knows Love through sacrifice. Be she Lilith, Ma Kālī, Madonna, Isis, Diana, Mary Magdalene, or any character of this transindividual order, Lilith *chooses* how she is loved.

Dare to behold the Void, gaze into a black mirror, into the darkest shadows of one's soul, there one will see the Eye, the sex-seed that binds the Well of Æons and Time. Lilith is but One oracle spewed forth from the Abyss of Not. Lilith is the primal unfulfilled unconscious erotic and physiological desire of Man; forging angels, men, demons, and beasts in the breaches of primal Darkness. She pronounces spells of temptation and invocations of Fate over insatiable lusts of Men casting the glamour that is the Illusion of the Abyss. Her womb produces only those whose veins retain Her Imperial blood...and hidden words. Those who fear She, profess "love under will." Why is it that the majority of "Thelemic" women, are single mothers whom all seem to have experienced horrid abuse at the hands of their so-called "Kings?" Most female magicians in esoteric societies are simply generic victims of ill-begotten initiation and misuse of ancient knowledge concerning ritual sex. They are prisoners of suffering and the pleasures are their seal. The oath of the Red Serpent is *not* martyrdom! The word Love is being tainted by the lost brothers and sisters whom do not know the religious ecstasy of the secret Word Agapæ, how it should be used and or how to live as One with such a pure existence. What one Soror refers to as "Imperial Love," or Agapæ, is a perpetual passion of transcending flesh and psyche, a state of mystic romance, and it is True and Imperial, no human words can adequately justify. Agapæ a bloody Eucharist where flesh and mind immerse in an often sadomasochistic transcendence of being within another, it truly exists within a mystery inside a Mystery, those

who know of it and who live as One with it know its unspoken understanding, and speak its language of both sanity and insanity.

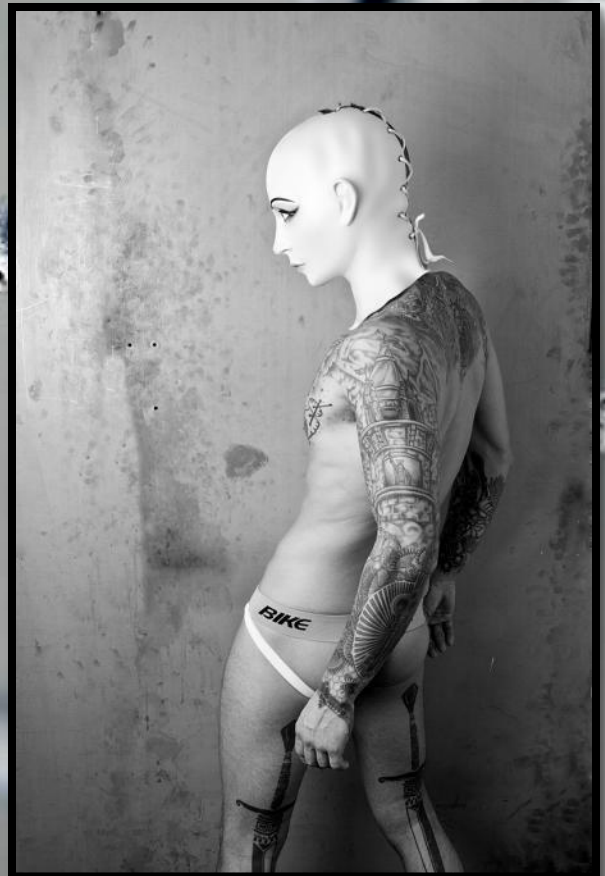
To truly Love someone and or exist in the universe of Agapæ, one must truly love both flesh, spirit, and mind, uplift dignity in Love, respect, and honor the self. The media gratifies sex as an anesthetic and parents of this post-modern era choose to leave their children to be raised by a media that injects the most vulgar views on sexuality, political science, drug usage, education, and Art. Parents in the home partake of their menial work and abandon prodigal youth to a Media that incorporates sex as a commodity **only**. From this artificial Beast of Man influential youth whom are in essence the sponges of this world, being told they are not perfect in beauty, and are failures behind Works of bodily Art in itself. They are condition to believe that they are hideous if they have blemishes, they won't find true love if they are overweight and must be horridly thin to conform with bowels of passion. Youth are cursed by the slaves of Love in their failure to conform into society if at all they lack any of the afore-mentioned aspects. In this social plague we have an epidemic of youth who feel they won't be loved unless they are thin, and perfect in form, and where sex is concerned our misguided youth do not feel loved *unless* they are fucking. Love spreads like blood in our veins, and our the skin is filled with the Beloved...the One immersing all parts of our existence...only name remains, as all is Not when swimming in the sea of Agapæ. Love unbinds lust and autonomous will. Lust is the core of mystery...lust alone brings the cure...the only rede is, suffer the pain...lust and love must be disciplined, and in time... sacrificed.

Souls exempt from karma override cause...these rare prodigies in the species act without the senses...seeing actions without causes and how the senses deprive movement in the æthyrs. Souls become imprisoned in causes and senses...the prodigies of magic, and the erotic Artes realize only action matters. Lust is the samhain of religion...the erotic hymn of the Lovers is death...to die and be reborn! Epistemology and logic in the erotic Artes never can vanquish the arts of the flesh ...natural lusts abide to swoon and howl...to escape the body from the snare of senses and causes. Genus begets species in due lineage...Initiates of the O .:A .:I .: learn secrets manifest through flesh...in the insane asylum of the spirit, blood becomes life. All magic is transient, dependent on the senses, trapped within the asylum of Agapæ. Lilith is celebrated in erotic refrain after refrain in a parade of waiflike model-corpses across nightly entertainment, behind the veils of Muslimahs wailing in blood-filled mosques that infest ancient Babylon, She is the face of every frail beauty-Diva prostituted by corporate daddies, in the heroin needles of those whose only prayer is death, in the consensual rape of teenagers posing upon their digital and downloadable altars of self-adoration {think MySpace}, Lilith is the face in the bulimic puke of would-be-doll-girls, behind a masochistic society where sex is at once a mania and anesthesia. Over and over. Your hear Her gentle refrain in crumbling bell-tower of Man. We are Her children. Your nightmares...fetishes...desires are echoes that bear throughout the World's shadows tales of times remote; tales, who carry the remnants of books long turned to dust, tales, which whisper cryptically of Eve and the Serpent. There are, born in each generation, Men and Women whom awake to memories and ordained knowledge Lilith ever-whispers in nightmares. The echoes of Lilith's hidden words and Her tales are gathered once more before the eyes of lost souls who speak the language of insanity and sanity.

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JONATHON SAFRON FOER'S *EATING ANIMALS*

(Uninformed Book Review by Pablo Vision)¹

Being most intrigued at the exciting possibility of supplementing my protein-rich, placenta-based diet with other potentially organic, ethical, and perpetually recyclable fare, I was bitterly disappointed that my personal experience with Foer's book only resulted in chronic dyspepsia. All reviews are prejudiced by the values of the reviewer, and perhaps this one more so: dyslexia being the foermost factor in erroneously understanding the title of the afoermentioned book to be *Eating Enemas*.

I am, of course, being a little faecetious: in fact, I ravenously digested the book in one sitting. But it was not until the second 'sitting' that the hypocrisy inherent in this work made its presence painfully known: generically modified and mechanically reclaimed prose as digestible as broken glass, staring back at me like impudent kernels of despoiled corn; gelatine - used in the construction of this perfect-bound *but not perfectly constructed* book - floating away from the main mass of faecal matter, like an oil slick defacing the ocean; and - what forensic examination later determined to be - suckling seal blood used in the manufacture of the printing ink, congealing like the molten remains of piratical fire ants aboard a s(t)inking ship. True, that most 'bathroom aromas aren't very homely', but the 'unholy stench' this book produced created fumes usually associated with the explosive de(i)fication of inadequately prepared food.² Surely a content warning should be prominently placed on the front cover of this book? Having not read - but similarly consumed - the work of Foer's wife, one has to wonder about the insidious 'Foer's kin conspiracy', where it is alleged that animal by-products are forced upon an unsuspecting public by means of progressively unethical practices.³

Mindful that my digestive system may not be well-developed enough to have immediately taken in all of Foer's *alleged* wholesomeness, I ruminated - *quite literally* - on this book for some while, but still felt it had all the nutritional value of a bamboo shoot banquet; my hindgut reaction was that re-consumption ought also to be attempted - caecophagy and coprophagia being concurrent entries in my personal dislexicon - but this experience proved to be no more savoury than the first, and only offered sca(n)t appeal.⁴

As Miguel de Cecotropes observes - although his remark an example of regurgitation also - to be foerwarned is to be foerarmed. The argument that Foer is merely defaulting to the same sort of egotistical mischievousness evident in the work of Joyce and Ducasse in his attempt to 'make beautiful' the contrived encounter between 'unreliable narrative' and 'undependable nutrition', is - by any literary dissection - as persuasive, and robust, as the 'phantom erections of eunuchs'; and one could not readily imagine Joyce's Bloom mistaking 'pure joy' for the 'discomfort of piles' in his reaction to Foer's particular brand of 'toilet material'.⁵

Perhaps it is simply a matter of taste (and although there may be no accounting for taste, one must speculate on what debits culture ultimately incurs) - certainly Foer attracts an almost fanatical following among the strangely attired golfing fraternity ("Foer! Foer!" these mindless idiots shout to anyone who may be in earshot) - but, with equal certitude, this book will find no admirers amongst the dyspeptic, the dyslexic, or those who feel that discrimination does have a

valid place in artistic evaluation. I am hoping that Orwell's *Enema Farm* may prove to be the book that provides the sustenance that I find myself still deprived of.⁶

¹Author's disclaimer: I have not read *Eating Animals*. I live in a bungalow.

²The Turdsmiths' *Meat is Merde* (Roughage Trade Records, 1985).

³Dante Brown's *Exposing Foer's Kin, and the St. Thomas Aquinas Code Conspiracy* (Prepuce Press, 2004). The uncut version includes several passages taken from Brown's unpublished *Golden Fellatio*, which attempt to promote his spurious assertions of 'sexual geometry' hidden in the paintings of John Constable. Written in derivative Ballardian style, these segments add nothing to the original, and seem to exist purely for reasons of gratuitous concupiscence, and unforgivable self-pleasure on the part of the author. The copious footnotes provided in this edition stretch the already over-milked '*Foer's Kin*' into the painful realms of grotesque and obscure deformity. If the long linear structure of the original would have benefited from extensive, clinical, and incisive cutting, it is difficult to understand what aesthetic reasons informed this botched puerile enlargement surgery instead; and, without any shadow of doubt, no pleasure can be derived from the reattached parts whatsoever.

A curious polemic, Salmon Rushmore's prose poem "Foer and Lactation" in *Lapsed Vegans – The Safronic Verses*, v. 204, June 1998, p. 48-63., seems to suggest that not only was the mother's milk fed to the Foer infants, but also mixed in with the paper stocks used in Nicole Kraus's *The Nanny Dairy* (St. Monsanto Press, 1986). That this "Kraus" and book are in no way related to Foer demonstrate the degree to which conspiracy theories are notoriously difficult to track back to source; however, Nicole Kraus's nipples are highly unlikely originators of the lactose intolerance flatulence reported in several reviews of *Eating Animals* - nor can it be said to clarify to what extent *The Nanny Dairy* is self-reflexive. Professor Cardinal Singh M. D. M. A. argues - in *Fatwa de Foer Gas* (Pathe Press, 2008) - that Rushmore is simply using 'maniacal unrealism' to disguise his narrative in order to prevent attack from radical food fundamentalists, and that the abnormally high levels of estrogenic metaphors found in the piece, clearly point to Foer himself lactating. Although Rushmore has not been physically attacked, he was forced into obscurity for several years, and four members of the editorial staff of the Danish satirical magazine *Cod is Great* were kidnapped and force-fed corn by a group outraged by plans to publish excerpts from *Foer and Lactation*.

⁴Mark Zzzz. Spanielewski investigates the same subject matter in *Eats, Shits, and House of Leaves* (Random Out^{house}, 2002). In this paradoxically slight but heavy tome, the protagonist wanders hopelessly through endless intestinal chambers in the vain search for substance and sustenance.

⁵Videl Castrato's *On the Origin of Faeces* (Brown Eye, 2008); Mary Ann Velluti's *A Good Glans is Hard To Find/Unwise Blood: Hormone Replacement Therapy and Blood Flow in Castrated or Penectomised Males* (Charles de Gallai Publications, 2006); and Flora Barnacle's *ReJoyce: The Blooming Bouquet of Barbed Bottom Briquettes* (Bloomsberry, 2009).

⁶Milkmaid Marian's *Enema Farm* (Dogmuck-95 Films/Copros Christi Productions, 1998), [probably] only shares the title with Orwell's book. The film is a classic example of agricultural pornography, and is considered to be the first film that examines the taboo of consenting sexual intercourse between humans and underage animals - a topic further explored in Marian's *Doctor Dololita – He Sleeps With The Young Animals* (Jacobus XXX, 1999).⁷

⁷Unverified and orphaned *Paedopedia* entry, 17th August 2001.





EIGHT QUESTIONS WITH HENRY ROLLINS

By John Wisniewski

Photo © Kris Denton

When did you begin writing and what was the first song or narrative that you wrote?

I started writing somewhat creatively in high school in an effort to express myself. It didn't work out so well as I was very suppressed and hopped up on Ritalin. The first song I wrote was called "Go To Alaska." The idea was to move to a place that was cold and remote and get rid of your trappings and material goods. I still have the lyric sheet somewhere. It sucked but it was an attempt to express myself.

What inspires you in your music and spoken word performances?

I wrote lyrics out of pain, defiance and anger. That's pretty much the only reasons I bothered with music at all. The talking shows are basically a newspaper. There is the front page, the travel section, the op/ed section and the funnies.

What was the audience reaction to your first spoken word performance?

The early shows went very well, that's why I went into it so hard. The first show was very encouraging, people coming up to me afterwards, telling me that I should do more of them. The first time I was onstage on my own was a ten minute thing in 1983 as part of a night of a lot of people all getting ten minutes onstage. It felt very natural and I remember liking it very much immediately.

Why did you join Black Flag and where did you meet Greg Ginn and the other members of Black Flag?

I joined Black Flag because they were my favorite band. How often does your favorite band ask you to be their singer. I had a minimum wage job scooping ice cream and was given the choice between more of that or to be the singer in Black Flag. That was basically it. I met the band in New York in the spring of 1981 and joined the band later that year, July, I think it was.

Who are some writers and bands that have influenced you?

Writers would be Henry Miller, Thomas Wolfe, Ryszard Kapuscinski, Robert Fisk. Bands, well more people than bands. Ian MacKaye, Iggy, the Bad Brains, Black Flag, as to how it's done.

Do you see your writing and music to be different than your spoken word performances? Do you view your artistic endeavors to be each as separate entities?

To me, it's all basically the same thing. It's focus, execution, clarity, discipline and tenacity. For me, it all comes from the same place. The talking shows are much more difficult as there's nothing but myself up there but I enjoy the discipline of that.

What project are you currently working on?

I have about five books that are in various states of completion. I was hoping for one of them to come out later this year but I don't think I will get the time to give the manuscript what it needs until December when the tour ends. So, that one will probably come out next year, along with another one that is close to being done. We are putting together the crew to shoot a show in the fall for the next DVD. We are working on some vinyl projects for this year and next year.

What lies in the future for you as an artist?

I am not really an artist. I just do stuff. Past the book work, I am 106 shows into the year with another 80+ to go until December 1. After that, I am pretty much unemployed and will have to find something to do in 2013. I am currently trying to line things up to stay busy in that time.



NEW IN CLASS: SITTING FAT AND DIRTY WITH GAY ANNIVERSARY

By Craig Woods

Detractors of music fandom in the digital age often point to the reduced engagement with tangible physical products as a sign of devaluation. Gone indeed are the days when the search for an exciting new band involved a commitment by the enthusiast to leaf through the bins of obscure record stores and wait for a band name and/or CD/LP cover to catch their eye before requesting a sample listen and inwardly debating purchase. A record itself would often act as merely the stepping stone into a larger odyssey requiring increasing levels of dedication to glean whatever scant information one could about one's favourite new act via a composite network of word-of-mouth, write-ups in alternative zines, and elusive live shows. As anyone born before 1987 will tell you, being a fan of marginal music was no part-time vocation, and every new discovery inspired an unquestioning pledge of time and money. In the technologically trussed 21st century, where almost everything is available to download for free and a band's entire history is accessible at the click of a mouse, fandom has arguably become a more trivial affair. Today's over-saturated audience forsakes the lengthy and intensive courtships of yore for a form of musical speed-dating, where convenience trumps mystique and the parting with money is regarded as a begrudging last resort.

In this perhaps dispiriting milieu, the emergence of Gay Anniversary is both perplexing and exhilarating. A four-piece post-punk act from Athens, their online presence is limited to a less than comprehensive blog and a Bandcamp page streaming their eight track album entitled *New in Class*. I know what you're thinking. Just another bunch of young, impudent noise-makers regaling their local pubs and clubs with a slew of retrograde riffage and outmoded punk effrontery. Who cares, right? Well, at first I might have agreed with you. Until I heard the music. You see, *New in Class* is without exaggeration the most audacious and vital-sounding guitar-punk debut to accost this listener's ears for the batter part of two decades. Clocking in at a ridiculously modest fifteen minutes, this record nonetheless boasts a rapier array of Albin-esque harmonics and mammoth riffs that stomp the fossil of a *Wasted*-era Greg Ginn into the canyon-like grooves they carve. Kicking off with the pummelling bombast of 'Lazy Boys', the album is unrelenting in both attitude and quality, packing a punch far more formidable than its concise running time should conceivably allow. Simultaneously visceral and machine-like, Gay Anniversary's sound is underpinned by synthetic beats and spearheaded by frank, unaffected vocals mixed low so that they come through as urgent reports from the centre of some apocalyptic tempest. Crucially, while the band's 1980s influences are fairly identifiable, Gay Anniversary notably forsake both the cold aloofness of Big Black and the blatant right-on proselytising of early hardcore, instead delivering their energetic 90-second bulletins with the glee of amiable misfits content in their own unpretentious obscurity. From its cheeky title and

retro cover image to its irrefutably contemporary sonic idiosyncrasies, *New in Class* is a record that demands an audience. That its evidently unassuming creators have maintained considerable anonymity is both refreshing and slightly frustrating, though perhaps understandable given the following blunt statement that greets visitors to their Bandcamp page: *'We are Gay Anniversary, we play punk, we love noise and we are so bored to talk about ourselves.'* With this in mind, I set out to uncover whatever additional information I could about this band, determined to generate some additional degree of well-deserved attention towards them and their music, irrespective of their apparent preference to let the latter do all the talking. The search not only proved challenging but yielded my closest yet approximation of a pre-internet fan-quest since the turn of the millennium. With a little digging and prodding I attained the band members' first names; Tasos (vocals / synth), Xanthos (guitar), Billy (drum machine / guitar), and Posidon (bass). From disparate beginnings as players in several bands throughout their teens, the various members coalesced as Gay Anniversary in 2010 in the Greek village of Volos with a mission to "create fast punk music with a drum machine." Finally I was able to engage the band via email. When politely prompted they listed their influences as "Athens, people we hate, weed, discussions about shit, and our teenage years." With their mystique suitably unblemished, I was pleasantly surprised when they agreed to my request for a more in-depth exchange.

Over to those not-so-Lazy Boys ...

While the sound of 'New In Class' seems to hark back in some ways to US second wave punk of the '80s, there's also a very contemporary edge to the songs and their production. On your Bandcamp page you have no qualms about describing yourselves simply as a 'punk' band. What is it about punk that, in your opinion, keeps it relevant as a genre in the 21st century?

[*New in Class*] is nothing else but a punk record! We know that we live in 2012 and there is no use to play punk the way it was played back in the '80s! But it's simple. From the '80s to 2012 many things showed up that were able to [shift] punk music towards a different direction of sound, but still people had the need to just play punk.

The inclusion of a drum machine in your sound as opposed to an actual drummer lends the songs an almost remote, mechanical feel whilst losing none of the rawness. Was this an economic choice, or is there something specifically about the sound of a drum machine that you feel is appropriate for your songs?

It was just the right person at the right time. The first plan was to have a shitty software drum-machine, guitars, vocals and synth. After the second rehearsal Billy joined with his second guitar and his programming skills on his BOSS rhythm-box. We [decided this] is the way it has to be as far as drums are concerned. We strongly believe that the mechanical and robot sound of the drum machine depicts accurately the way we want to say things and play music in Gay Anniversary.

Your songs and album are notable for their speedy tempo and brief duration. What is it about the short and fast format that appeals to you? What effects do you achieve this way that you couldn't achieve with more comprehensive or slower songs?

We like to create a 'paranoia-in your face' feeling to the people who listen to our music. It is very funny when we hear from people that they heard the cassette and it didn't let them take a breath. Also we don't think a lot before we write a song in matter of speed or duration. This is maybe because we start playing at least to 180 beats per minute. This is the way we like it right now. Maybe in two years we'll play in different speeds; maybe an avant-garde super slow psychedelic Greek folk music and each song will be twenty minutes... But now this is the deal for us and we enjoy it like hell.

Each member of your band plays an instrument, including your vocalist. Does jamming play a role in your song-writing process, or are the songs written and arranged in a more methodical manner? Do you each contribute to composition?

We can say that song-writing for us is a near-jam experience. We really don't have a methodical manner. Almost always we build a song on a riff idea which always one of our guitarists will come up with in the rehearsal, never at home or on the toilet or wherever.

Both the title of the album and its cover artwork suggest your emergence as newcomers on to the scene and also seem to identify a particular kind of outcast; one who not only fails to fit in, but has no desire to fit in. How accurately does that describe you and your music?

It is pretty accurate! We don't have any target audience with our music or our artwork. We are not the type of people that want to take revenge for the nerds. We don't want to fit in anywhere or anyhow, not because of any revolutionary act but simply because is not our desire. The record is kind of a presentation of ourselves to the audience. The listener will understand, accompanied with the lyrics, what Gay Anniversary is about.

Songs like 'Cop City' also demonstrate some issues with authority figures, while others like 'American Yard' seem to play around with ideas of Americanised culture. Unlike a lot of the right-on po-faced punk bands out there, however, there's a mischievousness about your music that often makes the precise meaning difficult to pin down. Does irony play a significant role in your music?

It is nothing but realism! A song like 'Cop City' indicates our view of the police-state that Greece is in these times; a song like 'American Yard' shows that although [we live in an] Americanised society [with] fake images and blah-blah-blah, we are fans of a very big part of American culture and we don't feel guilty to declare it. And songs like 'Fat Punks' show just that we have humour. So this is what we said before about presentation of ourselves. Irony of course is a huge factor of our band, not because we want to "sell" irony but because if you join

all the parts of the Gay Anniversary puzzle you get an ironic result

Could you say something about the music scene in Athens? Is punk rock an active phenomenon in the city, and what kind of relationship do you have with the rest of that scene?

The fact is that there is a big punk scene in Greece, but as much as we want to we don't belong to it. This scene is mostly motivated by the squat and anarchist movement. So in order for them to take you seriously you have either to play traditional hardcore or have a revolutionary subject in your lyrics. One day we played in a squat and it was the most awkward moment of all our shows. For them it was like attending a punk gig from a parallel universe; it was punk but something wrong was going on. Gay Anniversary is beyond revolution. It is the state after a failed revolution when you sit fat and dirty in your armchair and you just want to shout without knowing why.

So you don't have any real involvement with the political side of punk...

We have a political sense but definitely not political involvement. Punk is a powerful political statement in itself, it doesn't need stupid, naive and manifestly political lyrics to support it.

On a related note, I'm curious as to how recent events in Greece (austerity measures and widespread protests) have impacted on the musical and creative communities there. Is there a sense of solidarity?

The situation in Greece at this moment offers the perfect background for an underground scene to flourish. People prefer to go to DIY shows than give the last of their money to enter big venues where crappy shows take place. DIY spaces like Katarameno Syndromo, No Central etc, provide a tasteful alternative for bands that want to promote their music. The kind of music there has no certain direction but definitely is up to date and continually evolving, at least for a part of the Greek scene.

Let's talk a little about the things you describe as your influences. First and foremost you list Athens itself. What is it about this city that you feel has inspired your music? Would it have been possible to create the same music in the same way if you were to relocate?

In this point we want to highlight that we are people raised in a small city called Volos, [and are now] living in Athens. Volos inspired us in both negative and positive ways, and gave us subjects that, combined with this weird city of Athens and with this mess that is called Greece, we form our music. For sure we would play different music if we were to relocate, for example, to the exotic Bahamas or a clean cut city of northern Europe where everything has its order. Contrarily, Athens offers a perfect stinking, ugly and dirty but historic background for playing punk.

I was surprised that you mentioned weed as an influence. While understandably the recreational drug of many, your frenetic rapier-edged music doesn't particularly come across as the product of stoners. What is it about weed that you feel has informed your music?

This is also our question! How is it possible every time we smoke we play louder and faster? Actually it doesn't inform our music, it just makes us have more fun in the rehearsals. And having fun with the people you play with is very creative.

Perhaps my favourite of your listed influences and the one I'm most curious about is "people we hate". Without going into too much personal detail, what kind of people do you hate and in what ways have they inspired certain songs?

In Gay Anniversary we found a shelter where we can express our hate generally about different situations, some of us more and some of us less. The influence of people we hate comes when we discuss things and are joking around in rehearsals about things we see or have experienced. And always behind these situations there are certain people. During the discussion we refer to these people very vulgarly and cruelly so the feeling when we enter the studio to play is very "polemical". That is why some songs have this direction in both music and subject, like 'Choke This', 'Dear Killer' etc. But don't think we are four hateful monsters in a basement trying to solve their complexes. We have a lot of other cheerful influences too, like shit and laziness!

You also list your "teenage years" as a creative impetus. Listening to the songs, I suppose I can feel that, but the songs are interesting in that they by no means paint a romantic or angsty or simplistic picture of youth; there's a lot of anger, humour, hate, silliness all blended together in a melting pot that is ultimately great fun to listen to. Can you give some examples of your teenage experiences which have fed directly into the music?

The most suitable examples are the experience of being the new kid in class, and of course being bullied or being the bully at least once in everyone's life!

How universal do you think your experiences of teenage life are? Do you feel that what you do is in any way filling a gap for young music fans who feel unrepresented elsewhere?

No we don't feel that we're filling a gap, and if we do then we don't know it! But anyway we would like our record to be in every teenager's collection and next day go to school looking at their classmates while primordial instincts occupy them!

As a follow-up to that, I'm wondering if you regard your current output as 'young person's music'. Speaking as a 35-year-old, I find plenty to enjoy and appreciate in your work. What kind of age groups do you generally draw at live shows?

Our audience's ages are from 20 to 26 and we try to play as people of our age. We don't believe that we play young person's music. Maybe the whole concept can be described as immature by some people but we don't care! We don't have target groups, but we would love our music to be delivered to teenagers' ears [as an alternative to] stupid macho metal and bling-bling fucking hip hop shit! We are praying to Greek gods that one day we will see teenagers at our shows or generally showing up to an underground gig in Athens.

Speaking of live shows, I note from your page that you are soon to play a show in Budapest. Do you play outside Greece often? And what are the odds of a European tour in the foreseeable future?

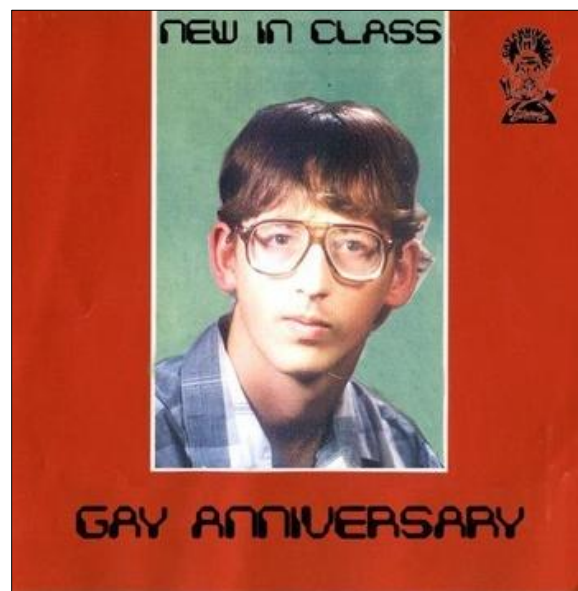
We've never played outside Greece, but we will be on tour on May with Bazooka and we will play in Italy, France, Belgium, Poland, Croatia, Netherlands and Germany.

Any plans to visit the UK? I can think of several cities where you would be warmly welcomed, not least Glasgow which has a thriving creative community which I suspect you'd enjoy. I can already think of a couple of promoters who'd be happy to accommodate you.

We are thinking about the UK after September.

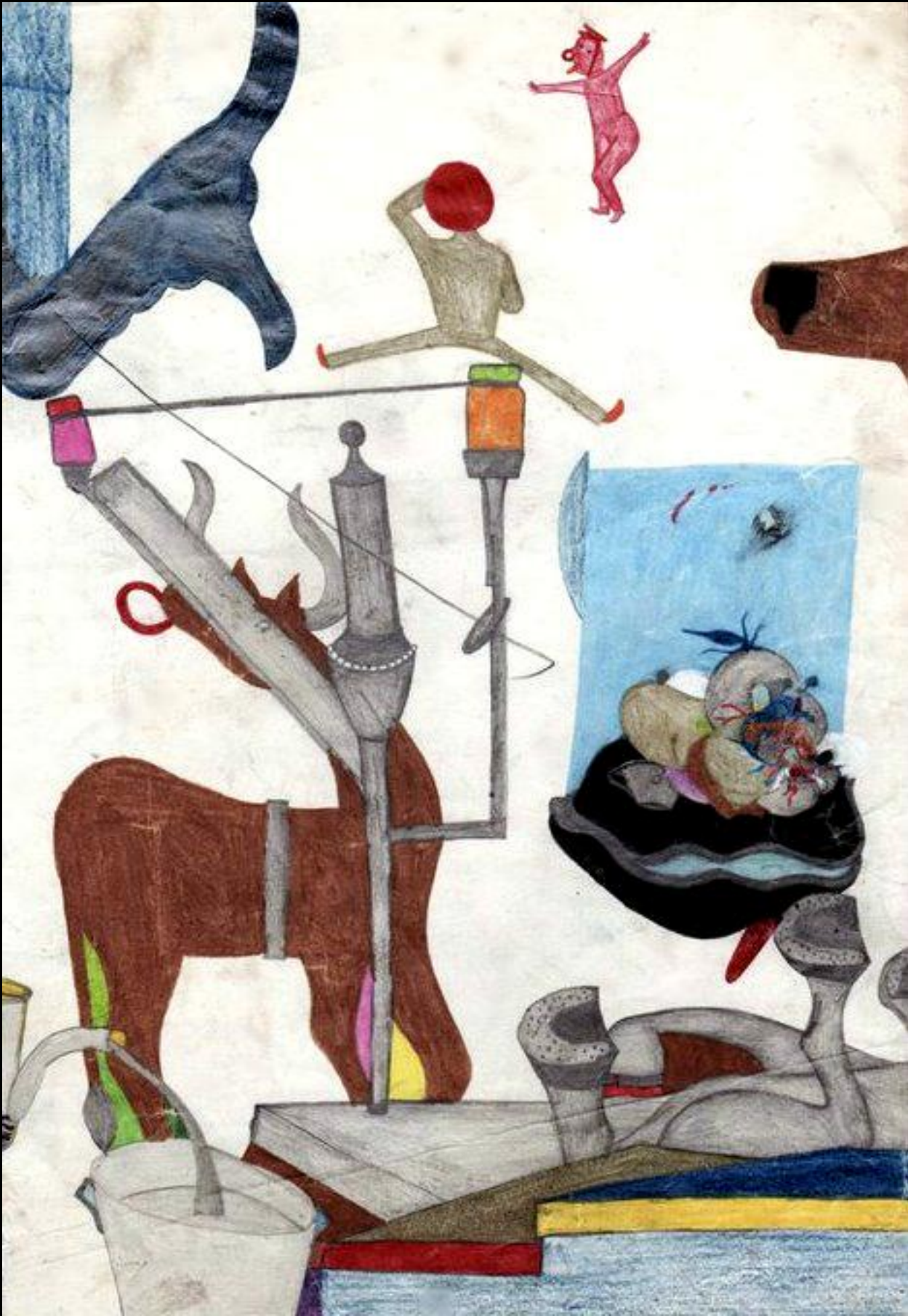
*When can we expect hard copies of **New In Class** to land, and where will it be available to buy?*

The 10" record will be out on Slovenly Records in summer and for sure you will be able to find it in Slovenly's online store and at our gigs.



Buy/Stream *New In Class* here:

<http://slovenly.bandcamp.com/album/gay-anniversary-new-in-class-10-inch-lp>



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PAINT YOUR TEETH

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID HOENIGMAN

By Matashichi Kumagae

Novelist David Hoenigman (*Burn Your Belongings*) and filmmaker Alex Paillé (*You+Me=Love*, *Marichan Ganbare*) team up to make YouTube sensation *PAINT YOUR TEETH* the movie!! -a heavy dose of Tokyo craziness with schoolgirls, dominatrixes, yakuza, a giant octopus, a zombie & deadly flying donuts!!!

Matashichi Kumagae: *So you're the organizer of the notorious PAINT YOUR TEETH events in Tokyo, can you tell us a bit about that?*

David Hoenigman: I wanted something like the scene around Warhol's Factory but in modern Tokyo. I wanted to recruit the most out-there performance artists, bands, dancers, actors, writers, filmmakers... etc. and organize an event that brings them all together with the common goal of trying to blow everyone's mind and do something memorable and exciting. And I



wanted to do this somewhat regularly to really make a reputation for ourselves and instill a sense of community, an avant-garde or bohemian (or whatever) community with artists who support each other but are also trying to push each other to extremes.

What do you mean push each other to extremes?

Arico Toduki rolled around in raw eggs and fish guts in a schoolgirl uniform. At a later PYT, Satsuki was topless in white body paint while the Donut Lolitas melted three gallons of ice cream all over her body with a hairdryer and a funnel. At yet another PYT, Rukia Isono was topless in silver body paint rolling around in raw beef & chicken. I guess that's what I mean, someone has a good idea (in this case beautiful girls covered in food) and the performers absorb the idea and tweak it in all sorts of ways. The food thing was only one aspect of these performances, I'm really oversimplifying it to make my point that ideas are built on and amplified, music and concept were also very important. During Rukia's performance I read from Kenji Siratori's *Blood Electric* while Kenji and his wife did an electro-noise set.

So how did the PYT movie come about?

I met Alex Paillé through Sion Sono. I was doing some translation work for Mr. Sono and he brought Alex along to one of our meetings. I wrote an article about Alex's Marichan Ganbare YouTube series for *The Japan Times*. I wanted to do some kind of



PAINT YOUR TEETH
promo video that had the
quirkiness, kinkiness and
energy of Marichan. I
talked to Alex about it and
he was very confident that
he could bring my vision
to the screen. We bounced
ideas off each other until
we fleshed out a story.

*How did you recruit the
actors?*



Alex recruited the killer school girls. Yaeko Kiyose is the titular star of the Marichan series. I think Alex met Chika Kuboyama at the Yubari Film Festival. Both of them have worked with Koji Shiraishi (Noroi, Grottesque) who's one of my favorite directors and has been known to make appearances at our PYT live events. The rest of the actors are all regular performers at the live events. I thought Rukia Isono would make a great villainous, and Tokyo Destinyland a great abusive father. Both of them are legendary live performance artists in Tokyo. Mr. Destinyland once gave a 36 hour live solo performance. They are both very underground artists but I knew they'd be amazing in front of a camera. The Donut Lolitas (Cara & Veronika) are regular crowd favorites at PYT. The Kiss Ranger (Nichole) is a character we threw in at the last moment, but she really fit in perfectly with the overall spirit of things. In the giant octopus costume is filmmaker Takao Nakano (*Big Tits Zombie*, *Killer Pussy*), he was recruited by Naoki



Sato of the band Denpapapa who do the soundtrack. Naoki also recruited the Namegon monster, who doubles as the cop. Rukia Isono recruited most of the otaku and yakuza gang. Mazelna Kiken is one of the yakuza, he's a notorious shock performance artist. The

alien was played by a slightly creepy guy named Skalar, in the movie he's whipped to death by Rukia and her evil sidekick Habiko. He must have wanted to remember the experience because afterward he asked Alex if he could keep the alien costume. Alex said no.



So it's kind of just a big love fest among a group of like-minded artists and friends, but it's something I'm very proud to be involved with. Alex Paillé is a very talented young director and he really put it all together in a dynamic, quirky, sexy way. Please watch *PAINT YOUR TEETH the movie!!* in its entirety (it's about 20 minutes long) at:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/BujinkanAlex>



We've gotten a good number of hits so far, we recently had 7,000 in one day, but my goal is to beat PYT live regular Kei Kunihiro's "Inverti in Darkness" video clip (762,385 YouTube hits!). Incidentally, Kei has promised to do something "very porno" at the next PYT event in September, apparently he's hiring a bunch of strippers to perform with him.

Will you make PAINT YOUR TEETH the movie part 2?

Absolutely! We're bouncing ideas off each other now. We want to take it much further out -more gore, sexiness & weirdness. Alex says he wants to make something that'll give viewers seizures.



REVIEW OF SWANS - *THE SEER*

By Christopher Nosnibor

There's always been an acutely obsessive aspect to Michael Gira's output. From the earliest Swans recordings, which bludgeoned away at a snail's pace at a single, simple riff for what felt like an eternity, to the lyrical themes that tackle maternal / paternal relationships and the potent imagery that has run from *Filth* to the songs written with Angels of Light, the same themes have run as strong currents throughout his entire career, which now spans a remarkable 30 years. It's perhaps not unjust to suggest that his work not only demands a certain degree of obsession on the part of the listener, too, but can also be seen to broadly appeal to a certain type of individual. Perhaps most importantly, though, Swans' output is characterised by setting cerebral lyrics against music that's highly physical in its delivery.

Gira's unscratchable itch led to him resurrecting the band he disbanded almost 15 years previous on the premise it had run its course and with a deep frustration at the lack of recognition and financial returns. 'This is not a reunion' he stated ahead of the release of *My Father Will Guide Me Up a Rope to the Sky*. 'It's not some dumb-ass nostalgia act. It is not repeating the past.' He wasn't kidding. It was all about moving forward, and Swans was deemed the most suitable vehicle for it, and it's fair to say they're bigger in every sense than they ever were before. It may seem strange that a band who spent their entire career on the peripheries should return after such a lengthy hiatus to be hailed as pioneering, seminal and 'epochal'. The recognition is long overdue, of course, and highlights the avant-garde tendency to break new ground while failing to receive due credit. Still, while the newcomers are more than welcome, for the older fans this is an immensely welcome return, and the Swans-shaped void is now filled by the swirling sonic mass that is Swans, and this time, Jarboe graces the album with her presence - alongside a host of other guest contributors.

On the last tour, the tracks from the already epic *My Father Will Guide Me* were extended, expanded, mutated and mutilated, stretched and dragged in different directions with each performance. This was ever the way with Swans: longstanding fans may have seen 'A Long Slow Screw' or heard 'Public Castration is a Good Idea', which captured the band at their most brutal, stretching out the already punishingly slow and glacial tracks from 'Greed' and 'Holy Money' out to the ten-minute mark and hauling the tempo down to approximately 5BPM.

The new Swans album has 11 tracks. Two have a running time in the 6-minute region. One is eight, another nine. Then there's a 19-minuter, a 23-minuter and the title tracks is a full 32:12 in duration.

Within the first four minutes of this truly immense release, they've built up to the first monumental crescendo of repetition, a chant of 'Lunacy! Lunacy!' 'Your childhood is over,' Gira croons in a cruelly blank tone as the song fades.

'Mother of the World' is built around a short looping motif repeated with nauseating rapidity, reminiscent of JG Thirlwell's NIN remix 'Fist Fuck'. It's the most scratching claustrophobic piece of music I've heard in a very long time, bringing together the bludgeoning monotony of their work up to and including *Children of God* and the dark claustrophobia of 'Fan Letter' on

Gira's first solo album, *Drainland*. The wordless vocals that meander without holding a course directly correspondent with this relentless bludgeoning only add to the disorientation, and I find myself practically climbing the walls within the first four of the nine minutes, before it suddenly stops. Gira's voice, unaccompanied, distorted and breathless hangs in the air before everything just erupts. It's the closest Swans are likely to get to a conventional rock riff, and it's brutal, the volume tangible.

The title track - with a running time in excess of half an hour, and as such almost an album in its own right - bears a schizophrenic quality, and at the same time captures the two different sides of Swans, and, by proxy, Gira. With a gentle acoustic-led introduction which finds MG wearing his warm, human folk narrative-spinning hat, the song rapidly twists into a spiralling discord and cavernous sound on sound, a dark sonic vortex reminiscent of parts of *Soundtracks for the Blind*. It wouldn't be unreasonable to draw comparisons with, in particular, the immense 'Helpless Child', but make no mistake, this is no retreat. The enormity of the song, which encapsulates the galactically epic nature of the album, is bewildering, and completely enveloping. I seem to recall Gira stating that *Soundtracks* was the culmination of 15 years of Swans, and his describing *The Seer* as "the culmination of every previous Swans album as well as any other music I've ever made, been involved in or imagined" closely echoes this. Only now, of course, Gira has another decade and a half of experience and material.

'I see it all' Gira repeats in his unmoving, dispassionate baritone. This doesn't sound like a celebration of mystical powers, but the eternal anguish of the visionary, set against a thunderous and agitated sonic backdrop that builds on the hypnotic drone of 'I See Them All Lined Up' in combination with the pulverizing percussion of 'I Am the Sun' from *The Great Annihilator* to forge something beyond monumental... and then the volume and tempo pick up and it feels like the apocalypse... and the song's only twelve minutes in. Crushing, earth-shattering power-chords split the air before the speakers and then slowly build to a glorious and strangely beautiful prolonged crescendo. And just when you think it's dwindling, the final third wrings out new sonic shapes of an altogether different kind of timbre and almost inches toward ambient territory, while a disconsolate mouth organ pines mournfully in the dark night of a nuclear winter. The last five minutes may as well be another song, and another band, Gira coming on like Iggy Pop at his most demented. It's brilliantly disturbing.

The dubby bass-led groove of 'The Seer Returns' is a giant leap in so many ways, while at the same time, built around a single riff battered into the ground for a full six minutes, it's every inch a Swans song

The warped discordant jazz leanings of '93 Ave. B Blues' are dark and menacing as any doom metal effort you're likely to hear, the snare hits like a whip crack, the bass drum a cudgel as the listener is led through a back-alley of a Sadean city while Gira moans and in the distance pack of rabid dogs maul the riff from 'Job'.

'Song For a Warrior' is perhaps the most radical departure from anything released before under the Swans moniker. With Karen O stepping in to take the lead vocals, it's essentially a straight alt-country song. On the face of it - and certainly on paper - it seems incongruous, but it provides the perfect break from the oppressive tone of the album overall, and with its expansive string augmentation it's a genuinely touching piece, and the vocal doubling on the second

verse, and Gira's backing vocals

Dynamic range is everything on 'Avatar', which is again centres around a relentless rhythm section, augmented with chiming bells and finally blooms into one of Swans' most gloriously expansive moments that shares sonic territory with 'Power and Sacrifice' from 'Love of Life', but extends its scope in every conceivable direction and is nothing short of transcendently monumental... and then around the 8-minute mark it *really* kicks off, exploding into one of the most tempestuous - not to mention uptempo - blasts of noise of their entire career.

The sound of flames occupy the opening minutes of the penultimate track, the 19-minute 'A Piece of Sky', which stretches out through chimes and drones into an extravagantly spacious soundscape before Gira steers it back in a more folk-oriented direction. Finally, 'The Apostate' weaves sculptures from trailing feedback while in the distance a deliberate rhythm of punishing weight builds before it finally erupts, volcanic and races toward its inexorable, cataclysmic climax.

It's everything Gira promised: the culmination of everything he and Swans have ever done, *The Seer* is music for the end of time.



The Seer is released by Young God Records: <http://younggodrecords.com>

A REVIEW OF *REVERBSTORM*

BY DAVID BRITTON & JOHN COULTHART

By Matt Leyshon



We need to talk about the bird, the surfin' bird. And we need to talk about James Joyce and Jessie Matthews. But most of all we need to talk about Lord Horror.

Reverbstorm, the comic series from Savoy, Britain's most banned publisher, has just been issued as a hardback graphic novel. It is a substantial tome, and not just because it's weighty enough to withstand the postman's obligatory kicking, but because it raises the bar in comic art and writing.

The drawings in *Reverbstorm* are by John Coulthart, a longstanding Savoy artist, and within these pages we find a similar sense of cosmic dread to that which permeates through his Lovecraft book, *The Haunter of the Dark*. Spilled intestines slither through the shadows and pools of

blood in the fictional city of Torenbürgen and mimic Cthulhu's tentacles, but here they are intimately entwined with images of sadomasochism, body horror, the works of Picasso, and also Seurat, whose summer walker here gets a blasé beheading at the hands of our protagonist.

Reverbstorm follows on from the *Hard Core Horror* comics where much of the art was by another Savoy artist, Kris Guido. The final *Hard Core Horror*, drawn by Coulthart, is printed here as a prelude. The book begins in sombre mood. Imagine the cathedral drone of a holocaust mass as the dead organist's head rests upon the keyboard. Then, with trepidation, enter the world of Lord Horror beneath jagged black towers and the white shocks of empty speech bubbles amidst swathes of crosshatched darkness. And with the first comic-proper, Our Lord of Fuck Off, the rock'n'roll begins; Lord Horror, based loosely upon the Nazi propagandist William Joyce (Lord Haw Haw), is revealed as a knot of Iggy Pop sinews and razor blades dripping with gore. The following pages introduce us to many characters and strange creatures; the sultry Jessie



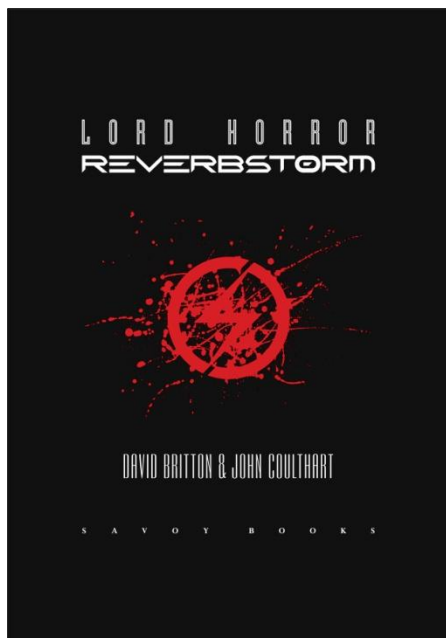
Matthews, murderous apes, a scatological James Joyce, and even Captain Beefheart, all meticulously drawn. The references, both visual and textual, are diverse and a useful appendix has been added at the end of the book after the previously unpublished 8th comic.

Whilst Coulthart's pen work is surgical in its precision, Britton's surreal prose is no less cutting. He takes his cues from *Lux Interior* as much as he does from T. S. Elliott and Wyndham Lewis, mimicking Nazi sloganeering with his delivery of one-liners from the Tarzan posturing Lord Horror. But the text is certainly no easier than the art; the plot is fragmentary and the dialogue is often savage.

Reverbstorm is an unashamedly ugly work, and yet it is beautifully realised. This is part of the reason why it remains so challenging a decade after the comics were originally published separately. Lord Horror's violence is not glamorised, the nudity is not arousing, and the guffaws are Breton-black. It is a work of both furious brutality and of surreal wonder. You won't read anything else like it.

"People need two things from life: a good read and a quick death."

Reverbstorm does its best to deliver.



To Purchase *Reverbstorm*, please visit the Savoy website:

<http://www.savoy.abel.co.uk>

THE SHOOTER AS SOCIAL CRITIC

GOD BLESS AMERICA'S .45 SHTICK

By Ron Garmon

God Bless America (2012), Darko Pictures, Written and directed by Bobcat Goldthwait. Starring Joel Murray, Tara Lynn Barr.

Not long before some slobbering-mad fanboy turned a Colorado screening room into an abattoir, this low-budget art house exploitation movie put what was until then the most pressing aesthetic issue before connoisseurs of cinema violence. To wit- is blowing a baby apart with a shotgun *funny?*

Freaking hilarious, to judge from the capacity crowd at a recent screening at L.A.'s New Beverly Cinema of Bobcat Goldthwait's scabrous *God Bless America*. Repertory cinema patrons these days are keen judges of cinematic mayhem, gorging on blood and grue from revivals of Italian zombie movies, Nineties Hong Kong martial arts flicks and Sam Peckinpah's deathless contributions to the squibbed gunshot wound. All present laughed uproariously at the death-dealing travails of a kind of American encountered all too frequently these days- the doomed mediocrity who's Had Enough. This latest (indeed terminal) Last American Hero is a startlingly hilarious variation on an old, old national taste for lethal slapstick.

Dour, stolid, overweight Everyman Frank Murdock (Joel Murray, brother to Bill with the family gift for nuance working at full blast) works a shitty office job while contending with migraines, harpy ex-wife and brainless daughter. His ample spare time is one long keenly felt lash of everyone else's everyday ignorance and rudeness. Through endless soulsucking nights, Frank watches offensively dumb TV and fantasizes about blowing away the couple next door (whose infant provides the elegant red-mush explosion checked above), but even this comfy nightmare ends when, in short order, he's fired and learns he has an inoperable brain tumor. Frank tries to take his own life with a pistol (everybody owns a pistol) only to see on his TV (nobody ever turns off a TV) someone far more deserving, a spoiled-ghastly teen girl throwing a fit on reality TV. After pitilessly tracking and gunning her down and later murdering her parents, Frank picks up his very own groupie, foulmouthed Roxy (Tara Lynn Barr), who goads him to a newer, more noble purpose. From then on, it's open season on assholes who talk in movies, neocon TV show hosts, Westboro Baptist manques, double-parking shitheels, and, inevitably, more reality television contestants. The O. Henry twist at the finish is something the most lung-weary and rib-battered dope-huffer in the back row can see coming three reels away.

Bobcat Goldthwait is known to most for some genuinely funny stand-up back in the Nineties, an era which saw Lenny Bruce's old art form begin a long, slow decay to shit and misogyny. He also writes and directs the occasional inventive low-budget comedy like *Shakes the Clown* (1991) and *World's Greatest Dad* (2009), both of which received less queasy critical notices than *God Bless America*. Even so studiously hip an outlet as *AV/Onion* gave the film a B, complaining of the general unlikability and stereotypical nature of the main characters as if those weren't just the very points the auteur spent 104 minutes pounding into the reviewer's skull. The Los Angeles *Times* was similarly out to sea about the characters, acknowledging that the touching moments between Frank and Roxy come off admirably, but also regretting the characters are so simplistic, as it undercuts the damning critique of society the reviewer thinks Goldthwait is making. Since the *Times* specializes in dismissing critiques of American society, most of the film is therefore brushed off as mere "anger" in the vein of *Network* and *Falling Down*. The reliably thickwitted Roger Ebert (plump and owlish half of *Siskel & Ebert* of long-ago TV fame) allowed that what Bobcat "created, in the name of comic social commentary, is an amoral movie about two psychopaths killing people they believe deserve to die." So far, so good, but then he had to spoil it all by adding- "As a general rule, that's an evil reason for taking someone's life."

Well, Rog, the world outside screening and green rooms is getting eviler by the second. Most Americans, if opinion polls are to be believed, think this country is sliding downhill on brakeless rims and it's difficult for any watcher of C-SPAN to conclude otherwise. A man with *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (1970) on his resume may well know all there is of misery, but, to most of us, Frank's descent into a philosophical, matter-of-fact madness is an attempt at comic understanding of the increasingly frequent horror of mass homicide in what we're told is the happiest land on earth.

What Bobcat is busy satirizing in *God Bless America* is *us*. No, not the great American *lumpen* drooling in front of "American Idol" or "Shipping Wars," but we clever moviepoids parked in premium art house seats laughing our asses off. We the hip have seen this very same redemptive-violence fantasy packaged a thousand ways (be it like unto Campbell's hero or Campbell's Soup) and applaud it every time our sensibilities aren't openly insulted. From Duke Wayne to Dirty Harry to *Walking Tall* to Indiana Jones to *Unforgiven* to Forrest Gump to the latest iteration of *Mission Impossible*, we see consequence-free violence and destruction ennoble and save. It's plain Bobcat is being held by some critics to a standard no homegrown cineaste would apply to Bob Zemeckis and just as plain the former doesn't give a rat's 'roid. What the droll homicides of *God Bless America* do is build audience investment in an inhuman premise, while a corresponding sense of engagement with this very odd couple is cemented by their emerging tenderness and moments of blissful accomplishment. We cheer their labors in ridding the world of the unkind in the distant, pitying way Roman mobs at the Coliseum were said to hail the pluckier Christians, thinking our 21st Century selves lucky if we and everyone we care about escape the next blizzard of bullets.

One of Sam Peckinpah's avowed reasons for filling *The Wild Bunch* with slow-motion death and rare-beef ballistics was the director's simple disgust at decades of westerns, the arty with the lowbrow, which glorified gunplay by emptying it of its least pleasant aspects. The bang-you're-dead aesthetic of John Ford and Sunset Carson alike had little to do with the material realities of gunfire as it did any other historical fact about the Old West. Similarly, worn-out gags about "going postal" along with the familiarly unserious pro-gun mealy-mouth one always hears after a mass shooting give us some idea of the stoic American indifference to other people's pain, which is what makes Frank and Roxy's cross-country killing spree so rib-rockingly funny. Part of our national heritage is the cruel humor of Poe, Bierce, Heller, O'Toole. Literary jokers from Simon Suggs to Jack London to John Sladek rollicked savagely in suicide, parricide, torture, political assassination with the conscience-free abandon of Dick Cheney and John Bolton. However cheaply our national historians assure us life is held on these shores, paper and ink are cheaper still and only intermittently dangerous.

If even sympathetic reviewers are tempted to regard *God Bless America's* virtues as flaws, it's little wonder they also see virtues that aren't there. Frank spends a lot of time ranting against a bloated tide of cruel douchebaggery, frequently trading jeremiads with Roxy the way rock guitarists swap solos. Unlike most reviewers, I didn't hear anything particularly damning or even original in Frank's critique of the world around him, possibly because the world around him is television. Much of what he says is the very common fodder of news comments pages and other online havens for the confused and the clueless. Frank has wit enough to hate TV but is persistently stupid enough to stare at its blinkless Gorgon's eye until what he sees consumes first him, then everyone else.

Like Chauncey Gardiner, Frank experiences everything in terms of television. I submit *Being There* would've been a much different narrative with an unhappy, psychopathic main character. Goldthwait is unflinching, even Chaplinesque in tracing the hideous consequences that must inevitably pile up once a man decides to shoot other people instead of the TV.



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<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/profile.php?id=719854511&ref=ts>

<http://www.myspace.com/dcdaveg>

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<http://claudiamurariphotography.blogspot.com>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/claumurari>

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<http://www.thomasevansphotography.com>

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<http://pablovision.blogspot.com>

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<http://www.alterati.com/blog/?s=John+Wisniewski>

<http://rokpool.com/search/node/John%20Wisniewski>

Henry Rollins

<http://henryrollins.com>

Kris Denton

<http://www.krisdenton.com>

Gay Anniversary

<http://slovenly.bandcamp.com/album/gay-anniversary-new-in-class-10-inch-lp>

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<http://www.amazon.com/Burn-Your-Belongings-David-Hoenigman/dp/0982077580>

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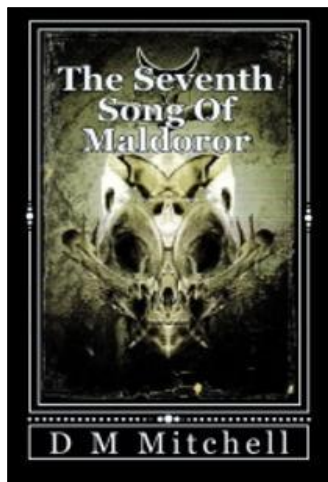
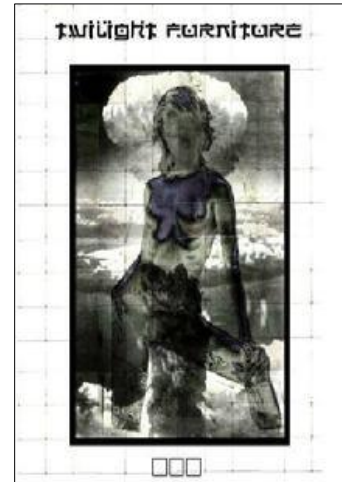
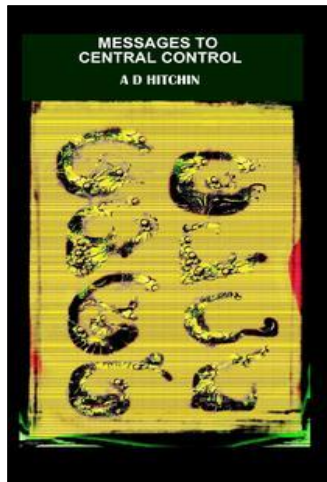
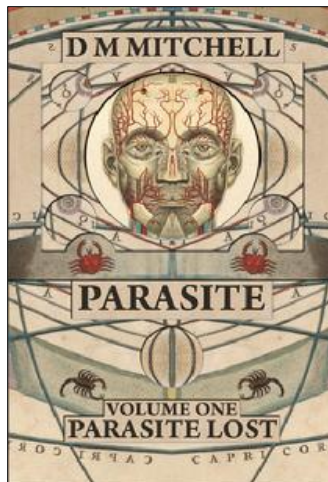
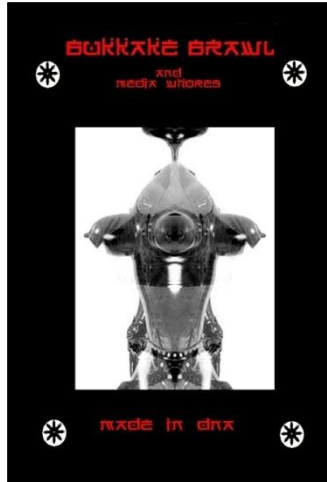
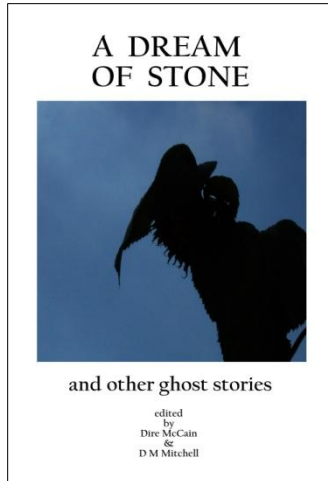
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