

THE
LINCOLN
REVIEW

est. 2019

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Rear cover quote: *from* Lee Mackinnon, 'Paclitaxel'

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INTRODUCTION

The Lincoln Review is an international literary journal published annually by the Creative Writing programme at the University of Lincoln and sponsored by the School of Creative Arts. Founded in 2019 by Daniele Pantano, *The Lincoln Review* showcases new poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, translations, and art from both established as well as emerging and underrepresented voices from around the world. Past contributors have included Carol Ann Duffy, Gëzim Hajdari, Jee Leong Koh, Tom Pickard, Robert Shearman, Virgil Suárez, Helen Tookey, Joan Ure, Maria Luise Weissmann, Jennifer Wong, Franz Wright, and Nurit Zarchi.

The ethos of *The Lincoln Review* has been to showcase a rich variety of new work from writers and artists, from those who are making their debut publication, to those who are more established. Thanks to the continued dedication and enthusiasm of the editorial team, and the many contributions from around the world, we have now reached the sixth annual issue of *The Lincoln Review*. Special thanks must be extended to Daniele Pantano without whom there would be no *TLR*.

A heartfelt thank you to all our contributors and readers, and to everyone on the editorial team past and present who has enabled this international literary journal to build up such a diverse and fine collection of creative pieces within its pages.

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Phil Powrie

TAUT SHADOWS

The fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come to being. (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Phénomène humain*, 1956)

Five scenes from childhood

I woke up in the dark. The closet in my room seemed abyssal, a door without shutters sucking me to the other side. I called for Mom. She couldn't hear me. I thought maybe this was what dying might feel like: a struggling against the call of an imprecise and endless corridor.

The bear took me in its arms. I was scared. They told me later it was a skin that had swallowed my father, and that men take pleasure in these massacres. I concluded that men flay themselves and lock themselves in zoos. My mother played the same sonata perpetually. I concluded it was to tame bear-devourers and started cutting my sister's hair because it looked like the inside of a harpsichord. I exorcised these rites by giving all my affection to a teddy bear.

Some children seem to attract bullies, who can easily be their age. For example, the little redhead crying in the yard because he pooped himself, his diarrhoea flowing into his rubber boots. I never knew his name. He was the child who shits, or Shitsky. So does the body inscribe itself in the world. My strength was to escape rather than to empty myself, but the other boy got to me all the same, kicking me in the shin. There's no bruise now, only an invisible loss of sensation. I concluded that inscriptions don't have to be seen.

At dusk, I launched myself on the garden swing, always hoping it would throw me through a hole in the sky, that there would be an explosion like the fledglings falling from their nest, crashing on the slabs. One day I skidded on my bicycle, tearing the skin off my index finger. There was blood everywhere. It stained the sidewalk, and for several months I returned to observe the slow fading of this red sign. When I cut my knee on a stone in the garden, I saw the shiny white bone at the bottom of the spread flesh, like a translucent index. Then the blood started to bead, hiding the bone-sign.

As a Catholic I couldn't understand why transubstantiation didn't transform me, why it didn't anchor itself in a bodily experience, rather than in the abstraction of faith. I discovered that when swallowing the host, I could, by flexing the dorsal muscles, provoke an electric current along my spine, leading to an explosion in the skull, similar to the adrenaline of fear, or, as I later found out, to orgasm. When I understood, I became an unbeliever. But for a while, I mimicked the rejected rite. I had an old dictionary with

a red cover, thin paper covered with tight typography, the kind you find in missals. I would randomly open the dictionary and read aloud what was written while flexing my dorsal muscles. Childhood ended when I started writing without a dictionary, randomly, inventing my own myths, my own golden age, throwing fragments of word-clay into people-shapes.

People in winter

It's December. These are the six people I see from my window. They could have been me.

He raises stick insects in glass globes. When he answers the door, he performs unfamiliar ritual gestures. He seals his lips with the insects' secretions. He nurses his plants as if they are patients grown from his palms, moist and uprooted. He waits for winter with its alien withdrawals.

Her life is a small shipwreck in clogged gutters. She looks for answers in the ideograms abandoned in back alleys scanning the sidewalks for damp ashtrays. Her childhood room smolders in each cigarette. She waits for winter with its snow silence.

He delights in the shadows cast by streetlights. He wraps himself in a cape of leaves and weaves unfamiliar signs from frost. He would have liked to be pure, uprooted, but the books he stacks in his eyes betray him. His winter has come to disappoint him.

She gathers snowdrops in the hollow of her violin, her limbs like tightened strings or the secretions of arachnids. She knows the sun will rise from its skein to spill and thrill her with a single quaver of damp light, blinking like a snow crystal in the web's exact centre.

He traces the history of rain in the rings of a fallen tree. He kneels before the uprooted stump. His fingers follow the circles of the years, like seams, like veins, lines in yellowing books annotated with his failings and infrequent victories. He squeezes his eyes to echo the curling lines, spilling ink like sawdust, blood-soaked sap congealing in the snow, his clogged spine cracked and dog-eared in the bitter dark.

In her mind she walks naked like the dawn on the red sand, wearing a necklace of seashells. In her eyes, you can see the billows of snow tides. She struggles like a chrysalid gull in a glass globe, waiting for the winter cold to shatter the glass, for laughter's wings to spring through.

The Sea

The boy runs laughing from the waves to the beach, arms outstretched, splashing, looking for all the world like a childish Botticelli. A young god, Aegean perhaps, or Ionian, he runs from the sea to his future. Looking at the photograph many years later, weighing the photo's enigmas, he wonders why he was laughing, to what he owes this light, this seaburst. He doesn't know the location of the beach, or whether he was running from the boat in the background. Space and time are abstracted in a moment of joy; maybe even then it was an epiphany, a persistence of the moment. So why the laughter, wrinkling the photo's surface?

He wonders about this because the child wears a shirt.

And then he remembers that when he was younger, salt and sun, the stuff of summer, made his nipples burn and itch, as if he truly was a pubescent beauty caught in the shell of his imaginings. Why not laugh?



Looking back, a hostage to body and time and colour, he knows that all he can do is wonder, and doubt. All he can do is paint possible pasts, and the even more improbable futures that lie waiting like a catastrophe beneath the black and white of the photograph.

Sharon Dolin

Go Inside a Stone

after Charles Simic

This one I picked at the seashore
for its white sheen. Now dulled, neither
flat nor round, with splits and fissures –
stains of the sea where yellow breaks
through. It will be here long after me
though water, too, might wear it away
in geologic time.

As a child, I gathered
rocks from Brooklyn streets and with
my father's hammer cracked them open
to reveal, I hoped, specks of shine.
My urban geodes. Was I searching
for hidden treasure inside
of me?

Today I might throw this one
back into the sea. On its indented side,
I rest my thumb. It's as mute as one day
I'll become. For now, let letters spill
over this dimpled egg – this stone
without its fruit – and let my closed palm
be its temporary nest, its mortal fruit.

Sharon Dolin

Furry Metronome

after Meret Oppenheim

Set me going
 with my one-eyed
ticking to unstick
 you in time

so you never forget
 your seconds
again as they click by.
 I have watched you

try to outrun them
 only to surrender
to this nonstop
 pace – speeding up

closer to your demise
 as I cut the air
with my scythe: breathe
 in – the only thing

you can do is make
 music to disguise my
steady beat that will
 outlast you just as

these words – shaggy beasts
 you have captured
and corralled into lines –
 will reappear

in someone else's
 dark woods.

Aga Maksimowska

WHAT ELSE DO YOU COME FOR

One look at me and the woman on the beach can tell I'm trouble. I know this by the way she marches toward me in her sensible navy one-piece bathing suit. We are both white. She's older. The Apartheid is over, so she's no longer in charge. Who does she think she is?

'Don't swim over there,' she motions toward the rocks jutting out into the Indian Ocean. The Hole in the Wall is just around the bend, a geological marvel on the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape. 'Better still,' she adds, 'don't swim at all.' My eyes dart to a girl of maybe 14 or 15, splashing in the waves behind the woman. Same age as my students. The woman follows my gaze. 'That's my daughter,' she tells me. 'She has Down's syndrome.'

As I'm about to ask why the girl's allowed to swim and we aren't, the woman says, 'She almost drowned, right there.' She points to the rocks again. She's more frantic this time. 'Stay away from those rocks.'

The smell of a wood-burning fire wafts down from the hill where our hosts are preparing our first traditional braai. I said I would take the boys to the shore while Thandi, the teacher in charge, grilled the meat. The fire alone will take an hour. And then the cooking. 'You don't cook with fire,' Thandi told me when I started throwing sausages onto the grate. 'Only with red coals. You have to be patient.' When I asked for my meat medium-rare, she rolled her eyes. 'Ya,' she said, 'rare.' She stretched 'rare' into two syllables. 'Here, we like our meat cremated.' I laughed, imagining my steak indistinguishable from the coals it was cooked on.

Down by the water's edge, the boys had already stripped down to their swim trunks. I had no place to change into my bathing suit. A trio was throwing a football they'd brought all the way from home. Two of them identical twins, surfers, still dressed in matching outfits. Their South African counterparts kicked a soccer ball. So much for our cultural exchange, I thought, as I scanned the beach for somewhere to hide. No one wants to glimpse their teacher in the nude, I reasoned, as I walked further and further away from the boys, a dozen in total, six white North Americans, six black Xhosa teenagers from the host school, gathered in their isolated pods. 'Nelson Mandela used to come here,' they told us as we drove to the coast from the city of Mthatha. 'Hole in the Wall means something very different back home,' I informed everyone. My explanation of the idiom provoked no laughter.

On the bus, Thandi thanked us for visiting, yet again. We had built a library in their school ten years earlier, raised money for a school bus a couple of years after that, and returned with knickknacks, literacy programs, and professional development for their teachers. We'd evolved. It was no longer *voluntourism*; it was a *cultural exchange now*. I felt good about this visit, better than I had about previous ones. We weren't imposing anymore; we were collaborating. The school flew our flag alongside the South African one at their modest entrance.

When I emerged from behind a small rock outcropping, flustered at the potential of someone having spotted my naked, dimpled, middle-aged ass, my bathing suit straps tangled around my shoulders like seaweed, the woman confronted me. I nodded rhythmically to each of her commands. Don't approach the rocks: got it.

When she stopped wagging her finger, I thanked her. I learned she's a local, has lived in the Eastern Cape her entire life. Her family runs a game reserve. 'We let the Americans come and shoot one of the Big Five once a year,' she told me. 'Big game hunting?' I clarified. 'No, no, no, conservation. The killing pays for the protection. It's a small sacrifice for the good of many beasts. Plus, it keeps poachers at bay.'

'Ah,' I nodded. I thought I understood.

I should take photos, I think. It's so beautiful. The golden hour of golden hours. The girl, the woman's daughter, emerges from the ocean and winds herself around her mother's torso. The sun is lowering yet still burns hot. I can feel my skin sizzle and redden, proclaiming my intolerance to the Southern Hemisphere. Before the woman leaves me, she turns and says, ever so mysteriously, 'Don't forget to pay the lifeguards. They're volunteers,' and she squeezes her daughter's shoulder as she says this.

I walk back to my boys, and Thandi's boys, but when I get to the part of the beach we've colonized with our backpacks, water bottles and balls, only towels and shoes remain. Boys are bobbing in the surf. My heart gallops. Their wet skin shimmers in the rapidly falling sun like the scales of millions of beautiful fish, light and dark. A whole school. My co-worker is swimming in the warm water with them. Two of Thandi's colleagues admire the liveliness from ashore, fully dressed in their workwear: slacks, shirts, ties, even dress shoes. Dress shoes in the sand. Their arms are crossed. They say words I can't make out, but their tone is not urgent or worried.

In the water, someone throws the football to someone else. It sails way past them. That's when I notice that the swimmers are moving through the water quickly, quicker than a thrown ball, drifting even though they're not actually swimming. The current is strong.

It's pulling them toward the rocks. They have no idea. They're being carried away. They keep throwing the football, yammering, laughing.

I start running down the beach toward them. 'Hey,' I yell. 'Hey, hey!' The surf drowns me out. I am silent as a fish. 'Hey!' I wave my arms wildly as I step into the ocean and feel its eager pull.

I start pointing in the opposite direction of the rocks, gesture with both arms like I'm parking a 747 at the Johannesburg airport. The well-dressed teachers join in, 'Swim this way,' they yell in English, then add something in Xhosa.

Out of nowhere, a man runs so fast he's on top of the rocks quicker than my eyes can register his size, shape, age. A red buoy is tied to his waist with yellow rope. He tosses it into the sea and disappears into the foam. Just as I think his skull has smashed into smithereens, he emerges with one of the boys. Everyone else miraculously starts swimming in the opposite direction of the riptide, as if buoyed by the instructions of the two well-dressed men.

There is a moment during which I cannot feel my legs, during which I imagine having to call a parent of a student whom I brought to South Africa to engage in a cultural exchange, but who is now dead. Drowned in the Wild Coast. Devoured by the Indian Ocean. Your child is gone, I tell them.

When I snap out of it, Thandi is running down the hill from the braai and appears beside me in a flash. She is draped over one of her boys, a boy who is now lying on the sand, motionless. My six are soaked, heads hanging heavy. I count again. Six. All here. Alive. Breathing.

Thandi's drowned boy starts to cough, water sputters out of him, so much water that this goes on for some time. That's when I notice that the boy, who is tall and muscular, is nearly twice the size of his rescuer. The lifeguard stands beside me. He reaches for my hand. I move toward him, ready to shake his hand, embrace him, thank him. My eyes fill with saltwater of my own making. But he takes the water bottle I've been holding this whole time, unscrews it, and downs its contents. He's absolutely exhausted. His entire body is heaving. 'Thank you,' he says, 'for the water.' He thanks *me*.

Thank you, I repeat in my head, for the water.

Someone is screaming. It's the woman in the sensible one-piece. She's pointing to the empty ocean. 'There's someone there,' she says. 'Someone's still there!'

Thandi looks at me frantically, I at her. 'Do you have yours?' I ask. She looks at the well-dressed men. They shrug, unsure. I count heads, but I'm no longer certain of anything. And that's when I notice: none of us jumps in the water. None of us swims to help children we cannot account for. 'There's someone in the water,' the woman continues screaming and pointing. I think maybe it's her daughter, but then I see the girl gesturing beside her.

No one moves. Accounting continues. Inventory. I have all of mine. I am certain of this fact. I have kept them safe. I can smell meat burning. Mutton, cremated. And then a man I haven't seen before dives in the water, runs in like he's chasing the orange sun that's plunging into the horizon. He doesn't have a red buoy. Heads turn, whispers are traded. Nobody knows him.

The last thing we see is the man without a buoy rising out of the water, arms out, palms toward the darkening sky, like Jesus, asking, 'Where is this person in need of saving?' Later, after he does not surface, we will learn that there was no one in the water. Everyone was accounted for. What did the woman see in there? What did her daughter see? A fin, someone will say, a shark, but nobody will know anything for sure. The ocean never sits empty.

Except for this:

The drowned man's name was Kingston. He was 26, and he was one of the Hole in the Wall volunteer lifeguards. A new guy. He was not married, had no children.

His mother will come and sit on the rocks as we dismantle the braai. The rest of the village will join her, arriving one by one, slowly at first, and then with a quickening pace. They will keep vigil on the rocks, unified, waiting for his body to wash up. It never will. We will walk by each of the villagers with our heads hung low, clutching our styrofoam clamshells of meat and potato salad and chakalaka. We will eat a few bites on the air-conditioned bus back to Mthatha, and toss the rest in trash bins.

The next day, Thandi will say to me, 'You didn't throw a coin in the water,' and when I look at her, puzzled, she'll say, matter-of-factly, 'You brought twins.'

You mean we brought this on? I will want to ask, but I will know better.

‘You never did make it to the Hole in the Wall,’ she will add. ‘It’s around the bend from where the drowning happened. It’s beautiful.’ Only then will I realize that we didn’t pay the lifeguards, and she will say that there is still time. There is still time to compensate this place for the disruption we have caused.

‘Why didn’t you swim?’ I will ask after a moment of silence.

She will shrug, look past me. ‘It’s not for swimming, the ocean,’ she will say. ‘When I was a child, my grandmother forbade us, said the ocean had food poisoning. She said white people played in the ocean; Xhosa people died in the ocean.’

‘So why did you bring us there?’ I will say, my voice suddenly shrill.

She will laugh an uneasy laugh. ‘What else do you come for, if not to play?’

I will be shocked by the insult, the word ‘play’ clinging to me like the midday humidity. I will want to set her straight, rhyme off jargon I’ve committed to memory, hollow words about experiential learning, character building, getting out of our comfort zones, but something essential will happen while I’m steeping in my own defensiveness: I will finally understand.

My school will commission a plaque to honour Kingston, and the Hole in the Wall volunteer lifeguards who risk their lives so that tourists can play. I will wish the villagers to remove it, hack at it violently, drive over it with a bus, but they will do no such thing. Thandi will email me a photo of her and her kids in front of Kingston’s plaque, their smiles wide and joyful, all three of them shielding their eyes from the sun and wearing dress shoes in the sand.

Lana Hechtman Ayers

'is the universe the sleep of a woman?'

– *Li-Young Lee*

At still point
sky's last blue hesitates.

This galaxy, a spoon of honey offered
in a wood-paneled room,

learning a way to balance time's
bicycle wheels –

sunrise over Atlantic, sunset over
Pacific where

grace is how you open a book,
turning to the life

that comes next,
where every song ends on *woman*,

rainfall dripping from eaves
into a never-filling bucket

positioned in front of a door,
your hand poised on the knob.

Can lost time be found again?
A warm coat hangs on a hook

in just your size, slippers
wait beside the bed, a cat

is purring, trees become
green again like forgiveness

Imogen Reid

The Time of Suspense and The Time of Suspension

In the following text I will compare two kinds of waiting, the first, which agitated and anxious, is written through Roland Barthes' scenography of the waiting lover as seen in his book *A Lover's Discourse* (1990). The second kind of waiting, which is bland and uneventful, is drawn through an alternative kind of time, the kind that often slips by unnoticed and is easily lost or forgotten.

1. The Time of Suspense

In his book *A Lover's Discourse* Roland Barthes demonstrates how the experience of waiting can have a seemingly unerring capacity to disarm the one who waits, to render them close to delirium. In a fragment of his book entitled *Waiting*, Barthes describes the plight of the fretting lover as they are forced to wait for their date to turn up. According to Barthes, as the anxious frenzied lover contemplates the possibility that they have potentially, if somewhat inconceivably, been stood up, they begin to act out a well-rehearsed, tried and tested drama:

treading the boards once more!

he looks at his watch, time then time again

every second
every minute
every hour

where could the loved one be?
the look of disbelief, the furtive glance

he spans the room, scours each face, anyone who enters the
establishment, anyone who is already there, searching for the
faintest resemblance, that transitory likeness

you begin to see her everywhere

'in the middle of a crowd amongst strangers, you may be struck by
a certain blondness' (Butor, 1995, p. 9)

same hair
same coat
same eyes

mobile attributes, dismantled and unstuck, begin to multiply in

fragments around you. It is impossible to determine, to make him out from a distance but

IN LONG SHOT: 'seen from across the room his expression is one and the same [...] it is him' (Duras, 1987, p. 69)

instant recognition, like a love-struck junkie you hallucinate

For Barthes' spurned lover waiting is animated by the (im)possibility of waiting any longer, I can't wait, I won't wait, I simply shall not wait any longer, not another second, not another minute, not another hour. And yet, as the suspense filled possibility that something could happen permeates every sinew of his tensed and strung-out body, the anxiety of anticipation renders him incapable of moving.

Barthes' spurned lover is left with various 'predicted' outcomes undecided, hanging. In this kind of time, he or she experiences an almost unbearable wavering, an in-betweenness within which this or that might happen, the emphasis, the moment, its intensity, depends upon the future, the outcome of which is eagerly pre-empted. The time of the drama that Barthes sets out is a time that is full of suspense generated by anticipation and expectation, a time within which the waiting lover attempts to place certain foreseeable limits upon the future. The question consistently posed, and upon which narrative resolution depends, is 'what is going to happen?'

2. The Time of Suspension

The second kind of time I want to explore is bland and uneventful, no peaks, no troughs, just a steady invariant monotony. It's the kind of time you experience in dreary airport terminals and empty hotel lobbies, a loose unresolved kind of time, vague and nebulous. Time within which you wait while nothing in particular happens. Waiting in this kind of time tends to rule out, or dissolve any trace of choice, that element which is usually called volitional, 'I am going to wait for a bus', or 'I will wait for the coffee to cool down before I drink it'. I am not suggesting that the experience of waiting could ever be described as entirely intentional, only that, in this second kind of time, it almost always seems to be completely unintentional. No narrative justification, no explanation, just waiting. Waiting in and for itself, a far more mundane affair, positively un-dramatic. You could say that, in this kind of time, the sensation of waiting becomes engrained in your viscera, that the attitudes and postures most usually associated with it wash over your body, porous and pliant, they bore into it, so that each time you proceed to sit down, or lie prostrate on a bed, each time you prop your weary body up, or slouch against a wall, one shoulder jammed into the cold pitted brick, you almost automatically adopt the manners most often associated with a particular kind of waiting:

you see her now in profile, a small languid figure, seated and seen from a distance. The shot has a sort of crude quality marked by its

low resolution, hand-held and roughly hewn, an image scorched by sunlight. It's the kind of shot your eyes strain to make out

she sits alone at the edge of her chair and you wonder if you've caught her sleeping. Now and then pockets of light flicker across her face, a soporific effect

entrancing

and you watch her features dissolve in the brightness, and you watch them reappear

she sits alone at the edge of her chair and her body feels spent in the waiting

limbs knit, loosely attached
barely hung together

eyes fixed
'nailed to their sockets' (Duras, 1987, p. 9)
a vacant inanimate stare

waiting

time coursing through her viscera

breathing in she absorbs the atmosphere around her

perhaps it is here in the dead time that she began to lose herself?

More often than not, in this kind of time, you are unaware of proceeding that would usually concern or involve you: making a phone call, slicing some bread, peeling an apple, eating. Routine activities, the kind you perform without thinking. The time of everyday habit and repetition, time within which nothing stands out as important, time within which you are effectively rendered:

waiting
bereft of a subject, unfocused

oblivious, indifferent to what goes on and on around

you

fail to consciously register
has anything actually happened?

unaccountable time

time left uncounted

tugging wearily at her necklace, she laces her fingers around the cold metal chain

it breaks

beads scatter in random patterns across the smooth polished floor, a hard pitted sound punctures the air locked silence

she wakes up with a start, looks around her, surveying the room, its nooks and its crannies

a door
a table
a chair

furniture writhing in slow revolutions around her weary head, a mobile constellation of shifting walls and receding floors

a room, no longer her room, infused with time in motion

it takes a few minutes before things start to fall into place, before you begin to recall where you are

In their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari call this kind of time: 'a floating time that is no longer our time' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 283). A featureless time without direction, time that is no longer subordinate to human action, time stripped of point or purpose, devoid of that dramatic something that sustains interest and fuels the intellect. It's the kind of time that induces in its victim a trance like stupor, a daze, a blank, a black out, an indefinite period of amnesia. In it one could say things have a habit of becoming a little less exact, a little less precise. Vast stretches of unremarkable time, time that you are unaware you've forgotten because there is nothing in particular to mark it. This is not clock time, you cannot count it, there is a gap in your day that cannot be recounted:

alone at night you try to recollect her expression, to recapture the pitch in her voice, find a tic that will fix her in memory

he says: She has a habit of twisting the broken hair that hangs loose at the base of her nape, of binding her fingers quite tightly

he says: She would do it several times a day, repeat then repeat once again, uniform rhythms regulated by rote

but he can no longer recall the exact moment, summon up or identify the day

each movement, now merged, remains tenseless

Far from clarifying or stabilizing the order of things the uneventful time of habit and repetition makes it difficult to pinpoint the moment that a specific incident occurred, to fix a time or place in your memory. You try to recall but the logic of recall escapes you. Vast stretches of time simply missing. You missed them. So, what happened? Time within which 'you' were unconscious of what 'you' were doing, a momentary lapse into languor. When I left the house did I pick up my case? Did I bolt the door, or did I leave the keys in the padlock? Maybe you did, or maybe you didn't? The gap in your day starts expanding. So, what exactly happened? 'In truth' Deleuze and Guattari say, 'nothing assignable or perceptible' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 198), because nothing has consciously registered in thought or experience.

Seen from this angle it is possible to say that this second kind of time works in contradistinction to the dramatic clock watching, goal orientated time that Roland Barthes draws out in his *Lover's Discourse*.¹ You could say that in it you are more likely to lose your watch than you are to spend time counting the seconds, the minutes, the hours. The question that characterizes this second kind of time is not 'what is going to happen?' the future orientated drive baiting Barthes' anxious breath, because in this second kind of time, a time within which the event itself gets lost or goes missing, the supposition that nothing much has happened collides with the question 'what has'?

¹ Barthes does point out that waiting has its matte moments (Barthes, 1990).

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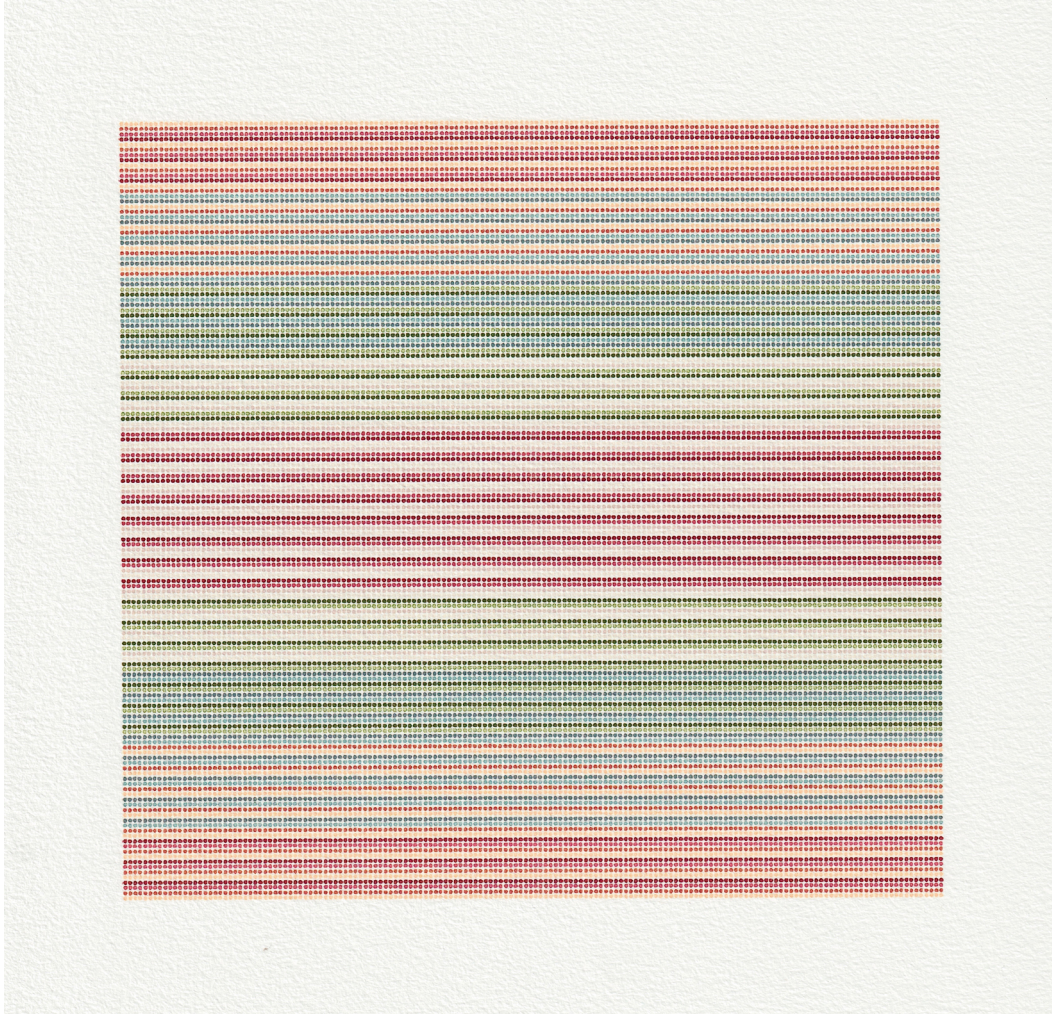
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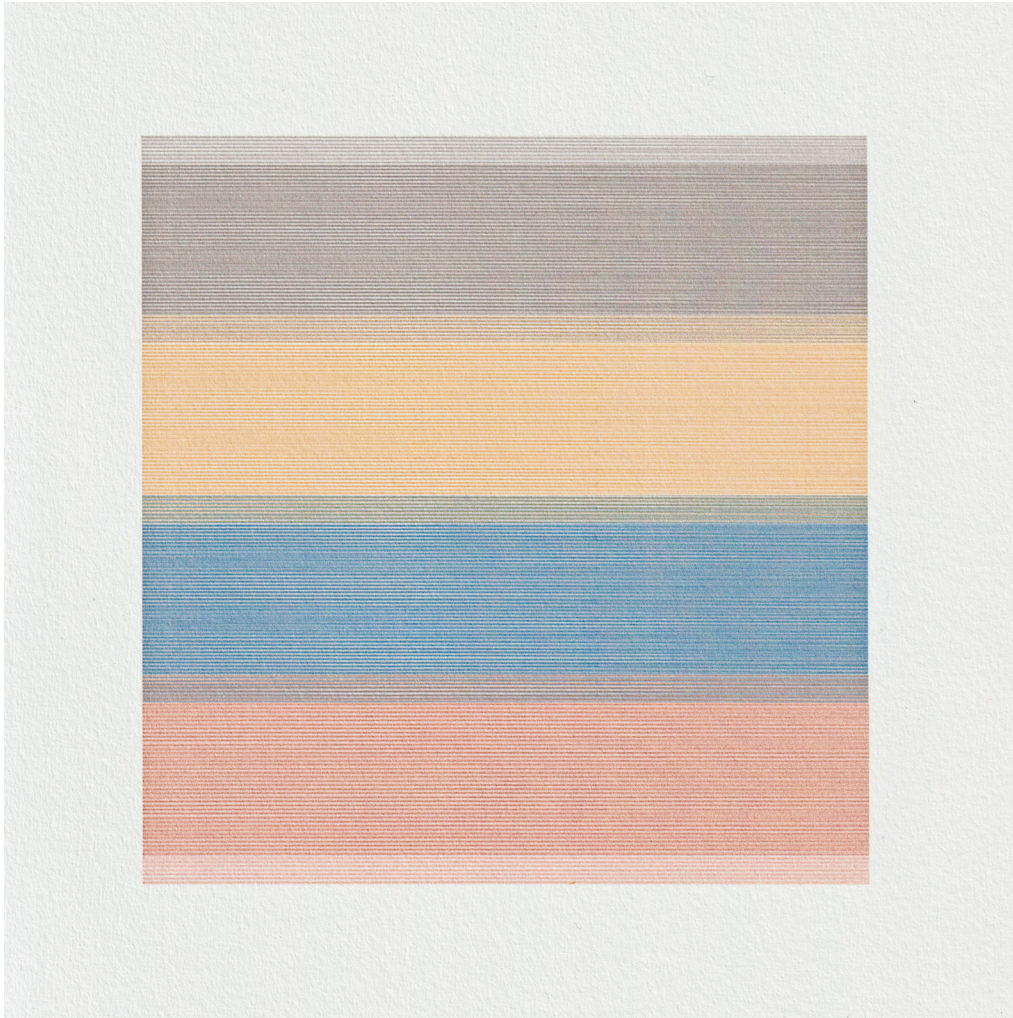
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Imogen Reid

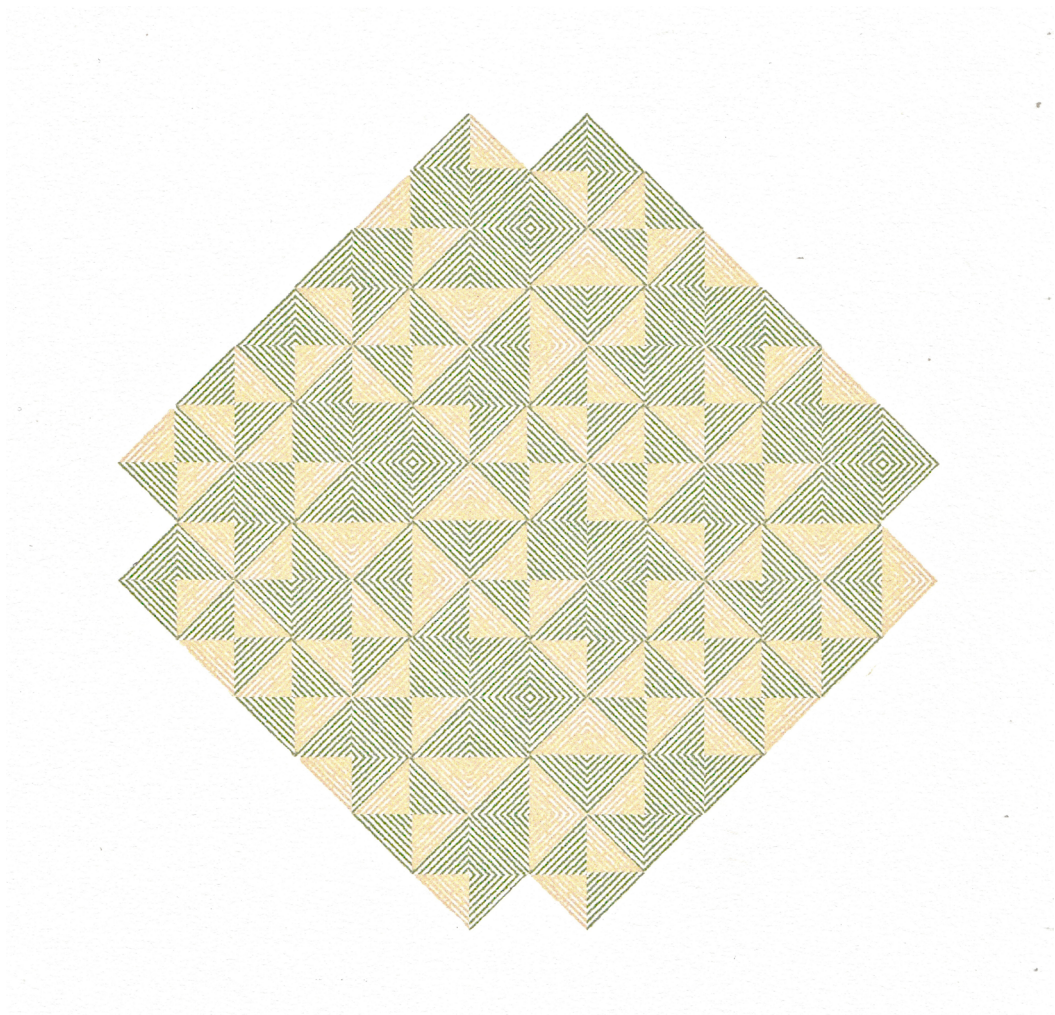


‘Text(ile), Layered Print on A4 Hahnemühle Textured Paper’

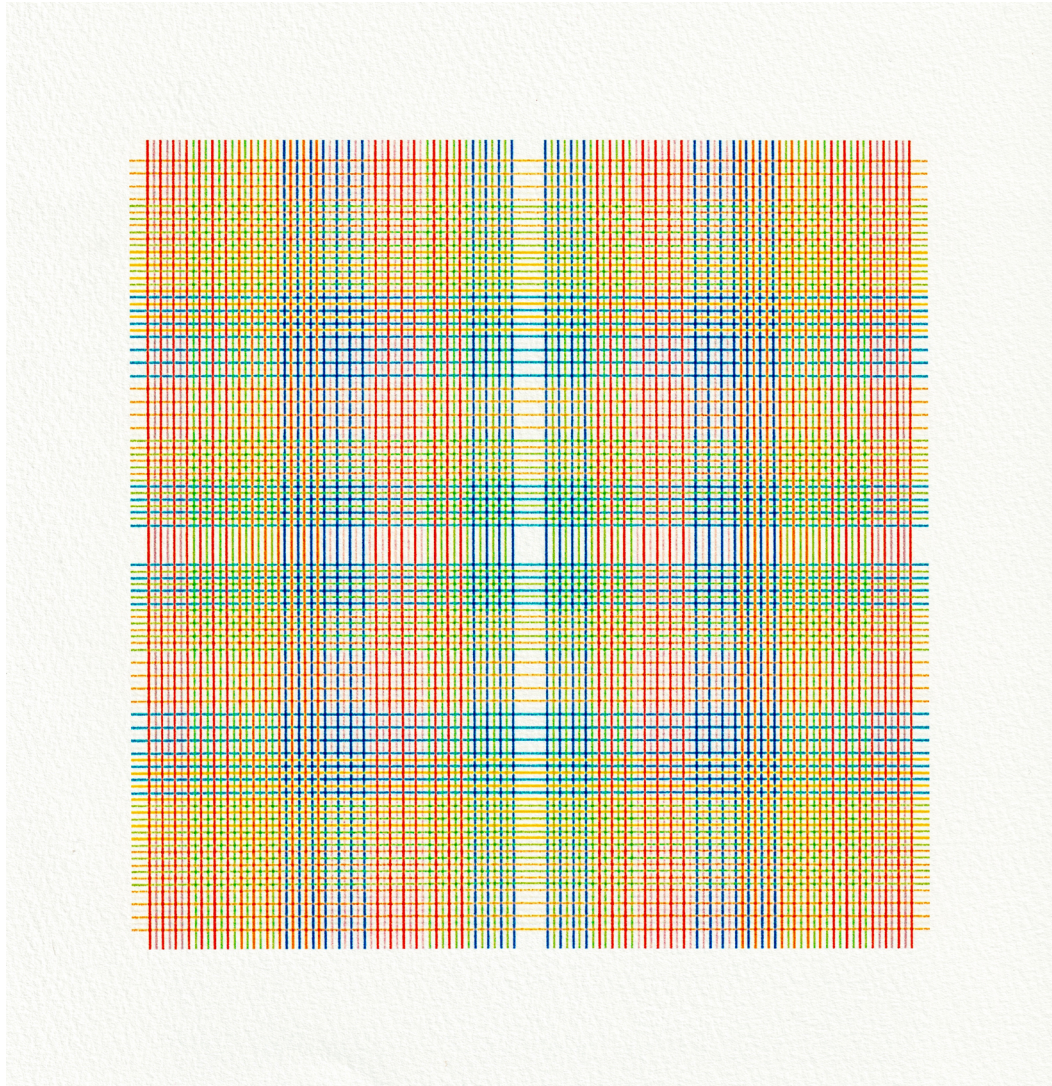


‘Line Drawing, Print on A4 Fabriano Paper’

Imogen Reid

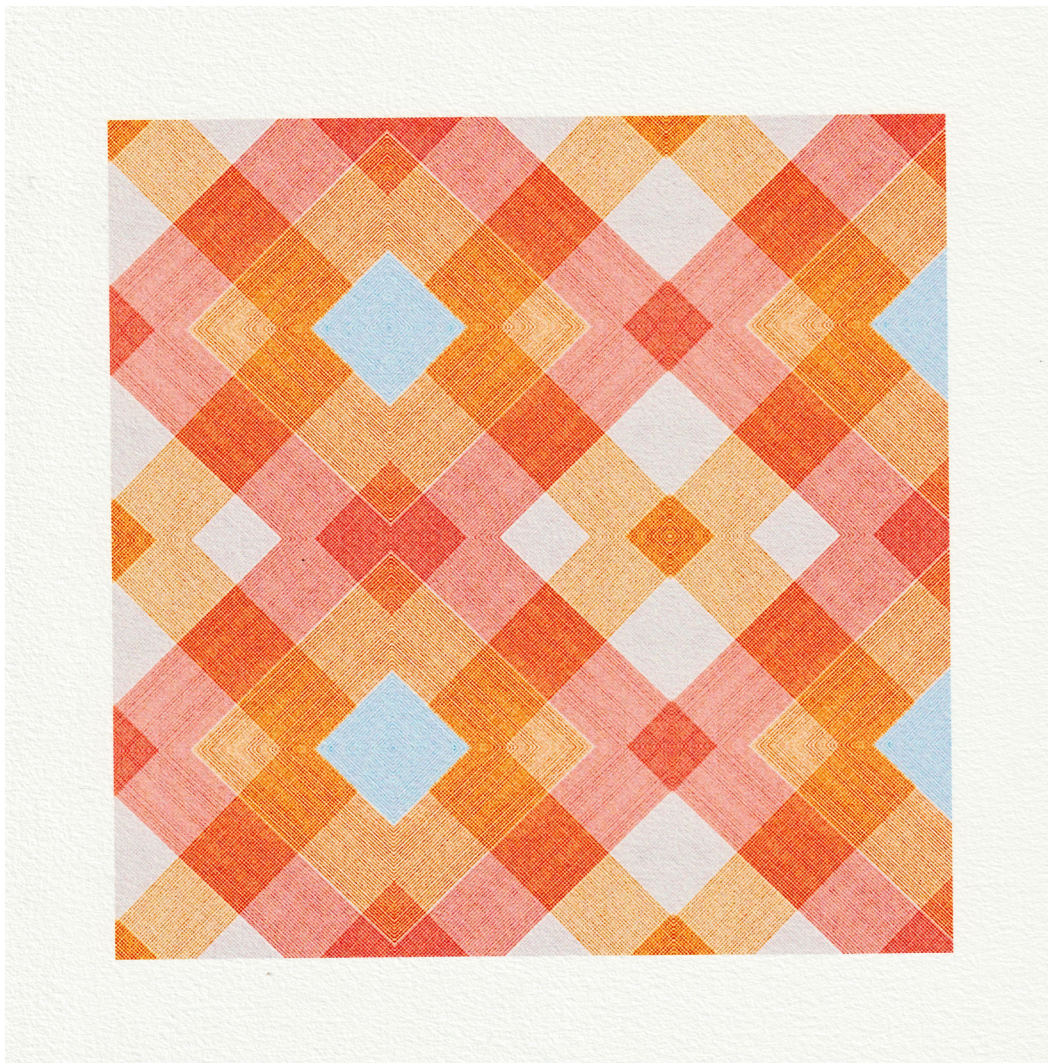


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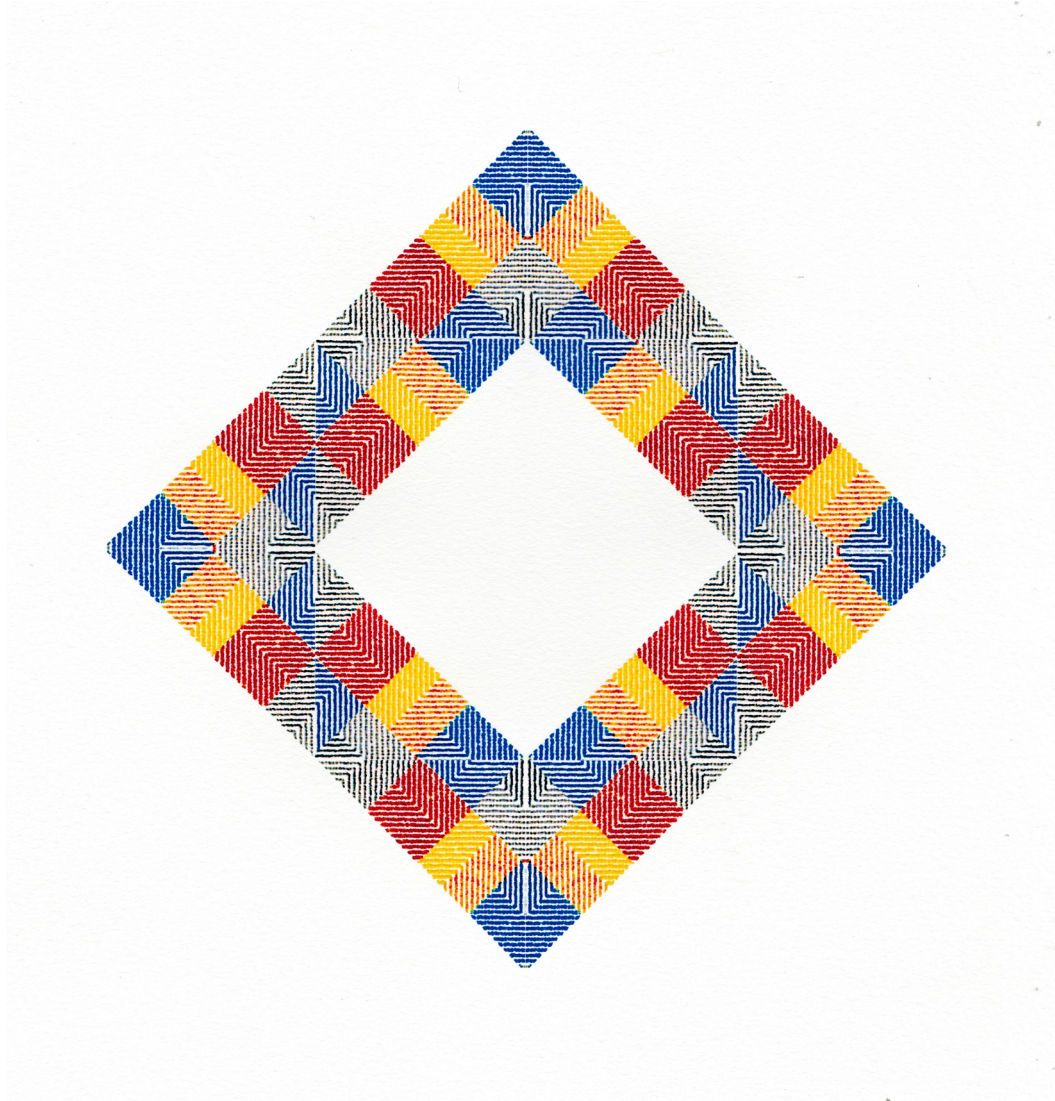


‘Line Drawing/Grid, Layered Print on A4 Bockingford Paper’

Imogen Reid

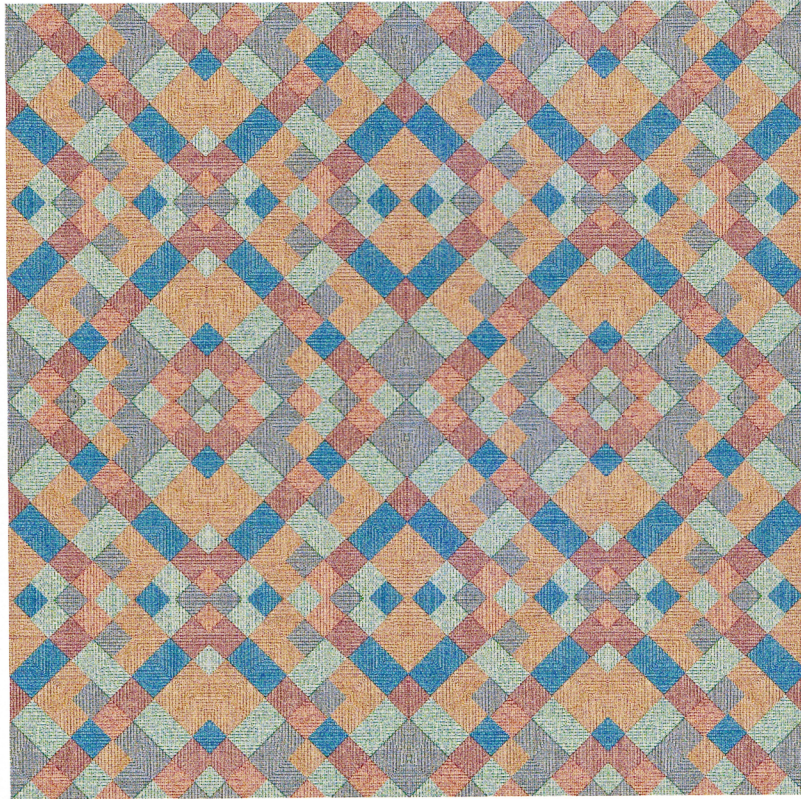


‘Text(ile) Layered Print on A4 Bockingford Paper’



‘Text(ile), Layered Print on A4 Fabriano Paper’

Imogen Reid



‘Textile, Layered Print on Fabriano Paper’

Isabelle Wei

Movie Trailer for Demeter

Because it's the pocket moments you remember,
clocks of quartered sourdough, roses,
your daughter singing hollowly
from the kitchen downstairs
where there sits a plate of pomegranates
blistering jammily in their skins.
The bread in the pantry has gone stale,
deathly pale, and you take hunks out in baskets
to the sun as though warmth will somehow
rebake them to life, once more,
once again. And again you're pressing seeds
into soil, burying yellowed life in the yard's dark
garden bed, slow sex
mushrooming off the flowers:
cover the eyes of the hibiscuses, the glinty
narcissus, soft as water down brackets
of earth. Because that's what you picture
when you think of the underworld:
raw wind and moth-suckled stones
and your daughter
gently singing from a wooden boat
deep under the garden, the humid kitchen
where warmth still kernels. It is a small thing
to hate, the pomegranate. This morning
you stop to finish off the tart fruit
before your daughter's arrival, spring flowering
from death at her feet. The yard
is a rich enchantment of green.
All afternoon you work the stubborn roots,
brushing your palms to the budding tips and
pushing each stem back. Heat thickens
so generously both the living and the dead
break away brittly in your hands.

Amaka Blossom Chime

A Mother's Plea

CC. Last Daughter

Husbands are liars mother said. Don't believe him –
Even when he fathers your child.
Your child has no father. Believe It.

The eyes of a woman have no memory
After marriage, you despise your body
At night pull off your body for his lust.
In the morning dry it under the sun

Our mothers carried us on their backs.
Now we carry our husbands.
Through streets and marketplaces
The back of a woman doesn't bend
from the burden.
It cracks from your feet stomping
On her ambitions. Her dreams.

The mind of a woman has many valleys –

I remember the residue of love, my blood pouring
out the night you betrayed me...
the night I was in labor –
and the maid was on our bed
I saw you from the hospital,
and buried both moans
with the placenta.

The body of a woman has separate rooms
one for *this* body, another for *that mind* –
this body is a soup pot
that mind is a blank page
every writing is invisible till
the dew falling every morning runs
like a stream soaking and
revealing colors like the rainbow
never again will I descend like a flood

till you find the link between
this and that,

She remains an abbreviation.

Amaka Blossom Chime

paternalism

my father's semen creeps into the village
in search of greener pastures
it fertilized discord on its way down
and reveled in its destructive powers.

my father hated disorder –
my sisters and me

the hair on his ear stood upright
when his hands exchanged batons
on us

he didn't hate women, just us –
his waste
if he did, would his semen have flown into
valleys of all the widows in *Imengene*?

i was the last not because he wanted it
but the doctor gave mother a slip of paper
so he hated me for barring the way
for his future sons

i hated myself too
maybe i was an evil omen
black was for evil –

i tried to wash my color off at the river
but i remained the ugly black chick
fit for a sacrifice.

the gods never asked for a black one –
their preference has always been for a white chick.

Things I Should Know

I don't know why I am a girl
in skirts and scarves
running errands in this home-school
but don't play along the way
I am learning how to be a girl.

I don't know why I can't climb trees like my brother
chasing and hunting agama lizards
I kneel near the fireplace
kindling the embers to prepare a meal
the ash from my dream shadows me

I don't know why I watch over my siblings
with an apron, I had never taken off since my mother's death
my brothers, their friends, hands in their pockets
drinking *zobo* from plastic bags
the knowledge of being a man.

I don't know why I must wait for a man
a dowry is a harvest, the land has no fence
I have children, they are my siblings
I don't know why I wanted love
When all I am, is a girl.

Tessa Glover

The Angled Terrors

The rectangles appeared in quick succession and without warning.

At first it was difficult to distinguish any information from them, as people feared getting too close. From afar they peered; each was a deep black, each existed on a scale of fifteen by ten, each appeared to be stationary.

The first was discovered by a fisherman in the early morning as he made his way down to the coast. It hung half-submerged in the ocean, an impossibly dark spot on the near horizon, as if somebody had taken a knife to the fabric of the sky and with infinite precision sliced it asunder. The starless black loomed crudely through the dawn mist, soiling the hushed blues of sea and sky.

‘Someone ought to do something about that rectangle,’ he muttered to the next man who came along, gesturing at the horizon. The other rocked on his heels, sucking his gums.

As the rectangles settled into place, people came from their homes to stare. Light shows appeared occasionally – flashes of dim colour swelling in the dark void and dying away.

‘They’re swimming like fishes,’ a young girl said to her sister as they came upon one lingering in the woods behind their home. Her sister nodded, twirling the hem of her skirt in her fingers, and stepped forward.

In the night they acted as a dark spot. In flat plains and deserts, a clear black rectangular shape could be seen against a wall of stars; in forests they lurked beneath canopies, unseen by the people and animals that mistook them for shadows.

In the high hills sheep wandered unaware, picking their way through the long grass and into the waiting darkness.

‘They’re worse than wolves,’ shepherds lamented after firing a few rounds of shots at the gaping maws and seeing that they did not shrivel. ‘They can’t be deterred.’

‘Perhaps they are the mists of heaven calling us through,’ a pastor said uncertainly on his Sunday programme, stroking his microphone stand with a trembling finger, ‘and the

lights are the souls of the departed, or angels.’

Those who believed that the rectangles were the reckoning did not hesitate to step through, and were not seen again. Religions around the rectangles themselves appeared, to the annoyance of many. Those who revered them would sew a black patch of rectangular fabric onto the front of their shirts and approach the angled things like a person might approach a god or a wild animal, their heads lowered, their arms outstretched.

~

Shortly after the appearance of the rectangles, the first curtains were installed. Government-ordered construction teams working under various theatre companies moved through meadows and sailed out on oceans with long wooden poles and reams of coloured velvet. They constructed frames around the sides of the rectangles and draped the fabric across their dark faces, restoring the natural landscape with soft hues of sky blue and field green.

As evening fell and night took hold there came occasional throbs of soft colour behind the fabric. Anxiety arose and there came outcry to see what was behind the curtains, and so the company allowed nightly viewings. The curtains were drawn back and the smooth faces of the rectangles were revealed. The light shows continued, bright and deliciously tempting.

One morning it was found that a rectangle had grown. It was assumed that this growth had knocked the joinings of the curtain rail off its upper edge, and as it had fallen the rectangle had widened and swallowed it up. This was all but confirmed when a diver hired by the company made his way to the seabed, scanning for the blue ripple of velvet curtains, and could find no sign of disturbance in the sand. The naked rectangle sat unabashed on the horizon, as starless as it was before, and ever so slightly larger.

It seemed that the others followed this lead and grew larger, although their change in size tended to be ever so slightly exaggerated, as most had in fact crept an inch or two forward. To those viewing the rectangles without any specific markers around them, such as those in deserts or upon snowy flats, it was incredibly difficult to tell how far they had moved. In some cases people only noticed because the rectangle closest to them had moved an entire ten yards forward, and even then it was only due to a persistent gut feeling that something had somehow changed. Slowly, all shed and swallowed their curtains, and were unable once again to be covered. The light shows happened freely – strange sprites of blue and burning orange pirouetting in the darkness.

The rectangles hovered, creeping impossibly slowly towards the shores, the civilisations.

By the time they had moved perceptibly, most people knew to stay well away from them. Some built protective walls around cities – although of course they would awaken to find large rectangular holes phasing slowly through the brick. Some took up a scrambled form of sentry duty, taking turns to watch the rectangles, hoping that perhaps they didn't move when being perceived, but then a man with a measuring tape would arrive the next day and proclaim: *one inch, two inches, five inches...*

They were larger now, and harder to ignore – and yet the stark blackness of them had begun somewhat to fade. They took on shades of navy and indigo, often slate grey. If the sun were to set behind one, a person could make out its pale disc through the gauzy fabric that made up the rectangle's strange body.

This pleased and frightened people in equal measure. Some took the gradual lightening of the rectangles as a sign that the angled terrors were dying away; others were not so sure. As the light shows dimmed and fizzled away, many found themselves no longer looking at the things that straggled on the horizon, on the distant hills, in unused alleyways.

A month or so later the rectangles had faded into a milky blue. Two people could stand either side of one and wave to each other as if through a pane of tinted glass. The rectangles upon the sea became harder and harder to locate. Boats that had previously ceased sailing at nighttime now ceased daytime sailing for fear of their vessels being swallowed by a stray pale horror.

In the following week the rectangles were gone without a trace, leaving only the unified, barren sky.

~

Yet the disappearances continued, and their numbers were higher than ever. People who wandered down the wrong street, who dared take a shortcut through the public gardens, would vanish without a trace. It was concluded with quiet horror that the rectangles were still there, as titanic and gaping as ever – only now they could not be seen.

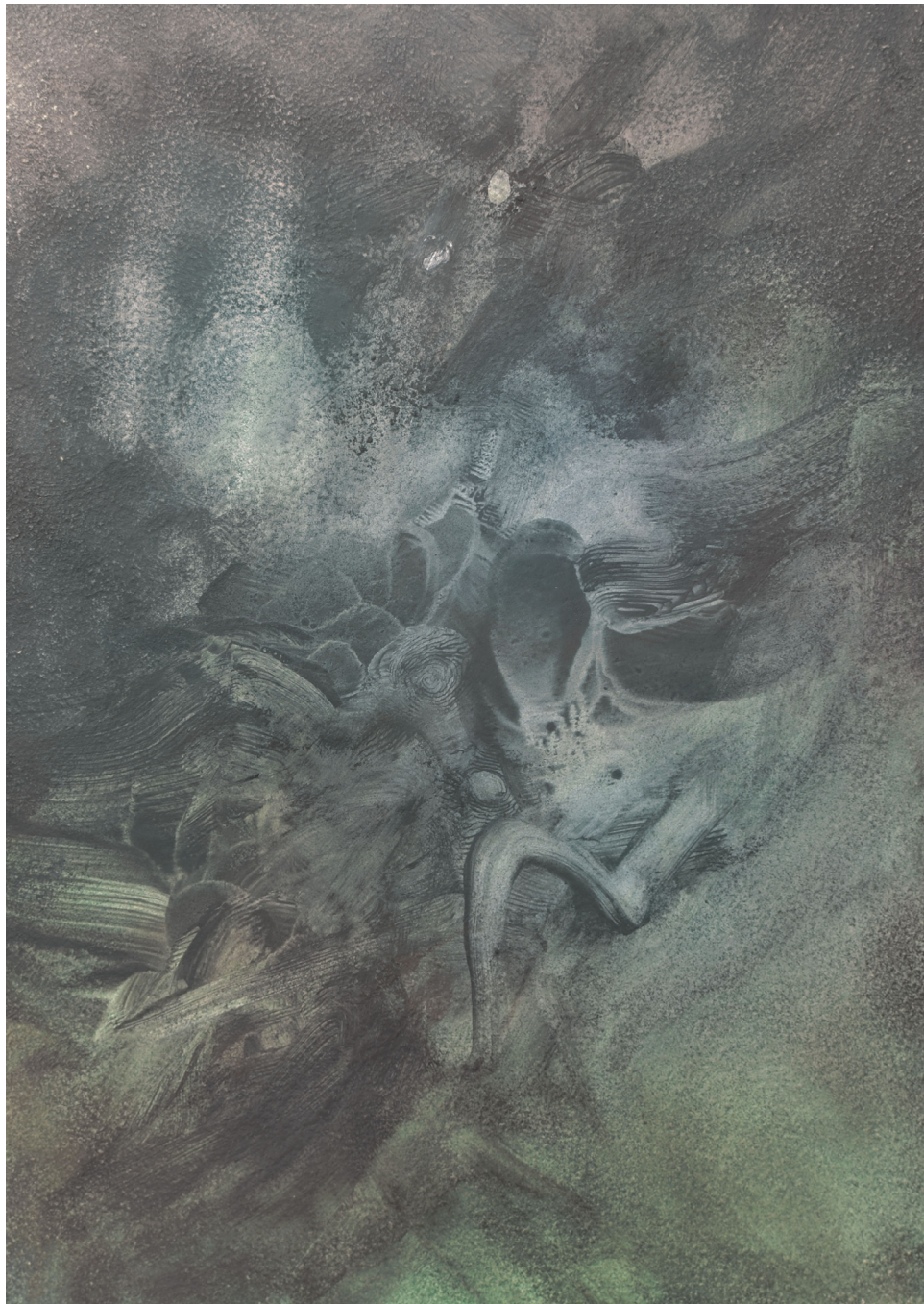
The main consensus was that they had adapted to their surroundings like animals. They had noticed that their light shows weren't working – they were too conspicuous, too suspicious – and they had veiled themselves accordingly over time. They remained in meadows and inside tunnels, on the shores of beaches and at the end of promenades, only now they were entirely undetectable.

The horror mounted and spiked. People packed up and left their homes, only to find

themselves phasing quietly out of existence. Parks and gardens became sectioned off with reams of red rope, cities ceased moving and making sound, fountains became clogged with moss, the fields on the outskirts of towns became tangled and overgrown.

The world emptied in a simple flowing stream. The rectangles hung agape in the air, unseen, jaws lolling.

Joe Lugara



'Scrutiny 1'



'Scrutiny 2'

Joe Lugara



'Scrutiny 3'

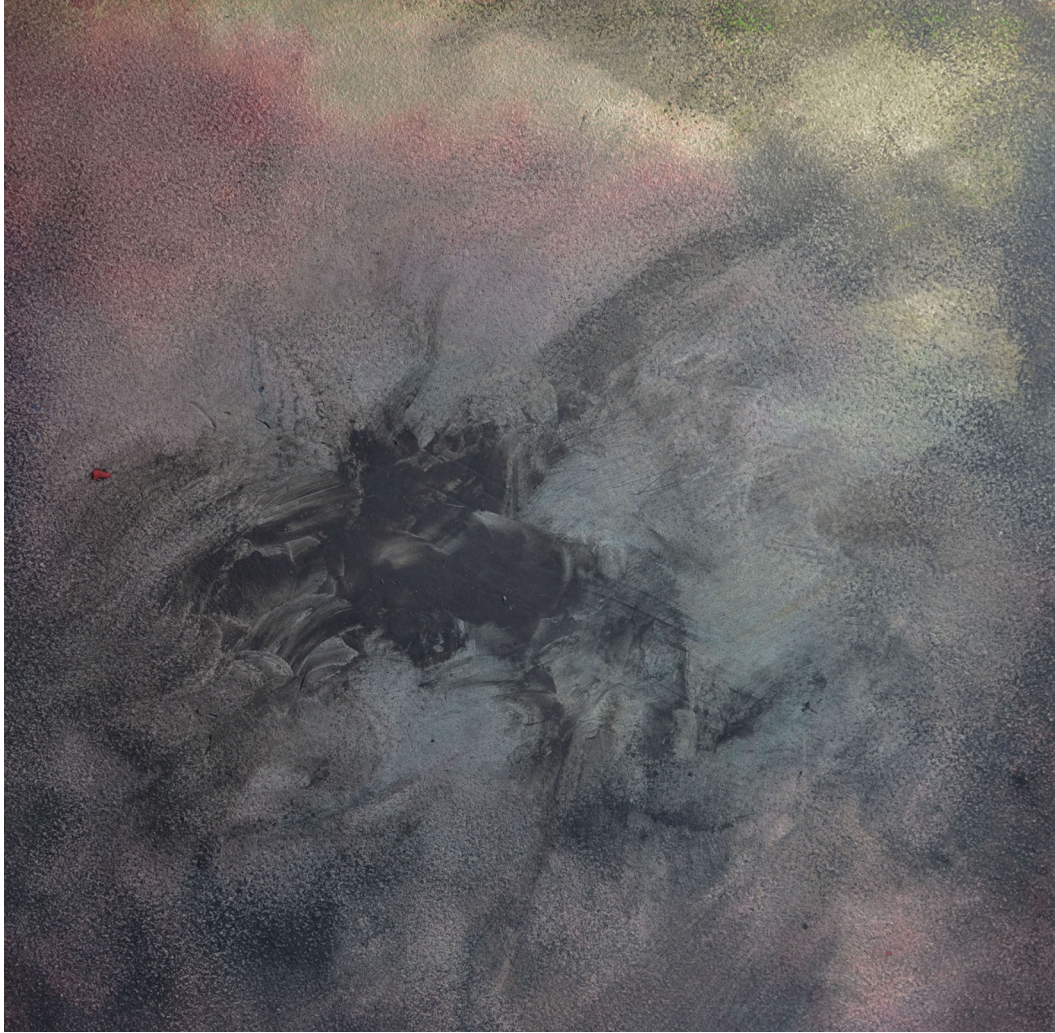


‘Scrutiny 4’

Joe Lugara



'Scrutiny 5'



‘Scrutiny 6’

Vitaliano Trevisan, translated from the Italian by Jamie Richards

from *Shorts* (Einaudi, 2004)

Clouds

I don't have a job. I don't have a girlfriend. I don't have friends. So I have a lot of time. I'm privileged: time and space define wealth and wealth is a privilege of the few. Time and space can both be occupied, but I prefer to occupy the former while crossing the latter. Thus I walk constantly. Where to, doesn't matter: following a direction is purely a pretext for keeping balance, itself a prerequisite to keep walking.

In this way, a few days ago, I found myself walking down the road toward Fimon. It was early afternoon and the wind had left the air gloriously clean. I looked up: over the outline of the hills the clouds traced another outline of hills that belonged to a different dimension.

Unable to climb to the clouds, I took to the hills.

(1993)

Circus

We were at the bar having beers talking about how times used to be better. When the world was still new to us and therefore we imagined it marvelous and beautiful and worthy of all our efforts to explore it further and further. We were talking about what we did back when we still had dreams when Davide mentioned that he once had on a circus. A circus? we asked. A circus, yeah, Davide replied, stroking his ponytail of long and abundant hair. A circus, he said, I had a circus and it was phenomenal. We traveled to all the cities: a week here, a week there, always on the move. But it closed down after a while because unfortunately we didn't make a cent.

How come the circus didn't make a cent if it was so phenomenal? we asked mercilessly. Because people didn't get it, Davide replied: the world had let him down.

But it really was an extraordinary circus, he continued. We had a woman cannonball trapeze artist who was the best woman cannonball trapeze artist in the world. And the shortest Tutsi in the world, and the least tightfisted Jew. And the most flexible German. A phenomenal contortionist, a reed, a bamboo! And we had the least English Englishman in England, in fact he didn't even speak English. And lots more, the greatest attractions in the world, but the one I liked best, the one that always left me astonished, me who has seen every oddity out there, was an incredible midget 5 feet 7 inches tall, just like a regular man. Just think, Davide said, the tallest midget in the world! Incredible, he repeated, shaking his head and therefore his ponytail. Yet we didn't earn a cent, he added with a twinge of melancholy. What a shitty world this is, he said, a world where no one understands shit.

We finished our beers, and without another word, went off on our separate ways.

(1994)

Vitaliano Trevisan, translated from the Italian by Jamie Richards

from *Shorts* (Einaudi, 2004)

Cedar

It happened many rings ago, said the cedar, and since then I haven't been able to find peace. I've never been able to understand why I was spared while the others were killed, mercilessly hacked down one by one.

I immediately understood that he was referring to the time when the park at Villa Rossi was parceled out for development and within a very short span all the cedar trees except one were taken out to make room for a procession of vaguely Nordic-inspired homes. He was the only one spared.

Why me? the cedar said; Why me alone? What, am I more beautiful than the others?

I didn't dare tell him that that was the very reason. He had been spared by petition precisely because of all the cedars in the park he was the tallest, the lushest, the most beautiful. I knew he wouldn't understand. He'd used the word "beautiful," but he didn't exactly know what it meant; the phrase "am I more beautiful," along with many others, was something he'd gotten from me, borrowings from my language to his own over the course of our countless discussions over the years, or rings, as he called them. I visited him one afternoon a week, every week, but despite my visits he felt terribly alone. Besides, as he often told me, being the only one to survive had made him feel horribly guilty. I urged him to have some perspective, not to feel guilty; that, just as a bolt of lightning can strike and destroy a single tree surrounded by many others, the same absence of reason guided the circular saws in the pitiless and deafening overture that brought death to his fellow trees. Development is a natural disaster, an event which, given certain conditions, inevitably occurs, like a hurricane or an earthquake. You have nothing to be guilty for, I told him. You're alive and that's enough.

But he wouldn't listen to reason. I can't take it, he told me, I don't care about anything anymore. You know, I thought... Thought what? I asked. Well, he said, that maybe you could... help me... But I am helping you! I replied, pretending not to understand.

I closed my eyes. A gust of wind passed through my friend's branches. It almost sounded like a stirring of leaves.

(1997)

Laura Sheahen

Lachrymosa

Is your tear
The right color
Flag-matching

Will you weep it
On cue and to anthems

Is that tear
Meant for one side one only

Will you keep it from falling
The wrong way

Now weigh it
Which portion
Is mine or is theirs

Take this knife
With precision
Divide it

Now more and the test will be finished
White rows of vials
Let us fill them

Only why
Why just now
You stopped crying

Laura Sheahen

Search Party

the searchers
they know you are dead
have seen your corpse
tested the songless pulse

but still they keep calling
their lanterns swing out in the dark
blind bloodhounds paw rocks

they keep looking
they know they will find you alive
behind time in the cracks
the moon echo

grey-muzzled stiff-jointed
the dogs who are oldest
keep tracking

they do not despair
why do you

Pause

– *after Buson*

Year fading
leafmeal scattering

The woman rubs the silver surface longer
as if a truer mirror would be kinder

Vik Shirley and Kārlis Vērdiņš

Five plays for Daniil Kharms written for a performance at the National Poetry Library at the European Poetry Festival by Vik Shirley & Kārlis Vērdiņš

AN UNSUCCESSFUL LIBRARY

It is morning. The library is opening. David Smyth walks in to borrow some books. But at the library desk there is only a woman in a smoking jacket wearing a pince-nez at the desk.

SMYTH: Hello. I would like to take out these books.

WOMAN AT DESK: I'm afraid that won't be possible.

SMYTH: How so? I understood this to be a library. I have taken books out from here on numerous occasions.

WOMAN AT DESK: I'm afraid you are mistaken. That was one of your multiple selves functioning in one of several parallel universes in which you dwell. I watched a program about it on the Discovery Channel. Many people experience this, so no need to be embarrassed for your mistake.

SMYTH: What is this, some two-bit crappy surreal-absurd poem?

WOMAN AT DESK: No, it's more of a mini-play. And whether it's a two-bit play is for the audience to decide. Perhaps you could ask them, and it would be more like a pantomime?

SMYTH: I always detested pantomimes.

WOMAN AT DESK: Well, I'm afraid I can't help then.

CURTAIN

WHO IS THE AUTHOR?

A: I would like to borrow a book.

B: Do you know which book you want?

A: Yes, of course I know. The book has this kind of blueish-greenish cover, grayish-blueish-greenish... with a splash of reddish.

B: Do you remember the title?

A: Unfortunately not. And there was something whiteish on the cover.

B: It will be difficult for me to find it. Do you know the author?

A: The author? Yes, the author, excellent question! Who is the author? I won't tell you that.

B: We have thousands of blue and green books. Was it a poetry book?

A: Oh no, for God's sake.

B: Do you know we specialize in poetry? Was it a novel? Or a non-fiction book?

A: It could be fiction and non-fiction.

B: This information could be more helpful. I don't know if I can help you.

A: Look, isn't that a seagull at the window?

B: Where? (*B looks at the window. A quickly takes a book hidden in their bag and places it somewhere. B turns back and notices what A does.*) Oh, what are you doing?

A: Nothing. (*B picks up the book.*) Oh, don't you see – this is a grayish-blueish-greenish book with a splash of reddish and whiteish!

B: Oh, and who is the author?

A: The author? The author is me, of course!

B: Wonderful. You have found the book you wanted. Now take it and leave, please.

A: I'd rather leave it here. It would be great for your library to have it. You see, cute cover, grayish-blueish-greenish, with a splash of reddish, whiteish, and blackish.

B: Just leave.

A: Will you date me again? I'm an author now. I have a book, a cute cover, grayish-blackish-brownish...

B: Oh, isn't it a penguin over there?

A: Where? (*A turns, B grabs the book and hits A's head. A falls down.*)

B: (*To the audience.*) I'm so sorry you had to see all this. This is a poetry library.

A FALL FROM GRACE AT THE NATIONAL POETRY LIBRARY

A man of very high standing walks into the library to return some books. He still likes to go to the library. His nanny used to take him to the library when he was little, so although he can afford to buy as many books as he likes, he prefers the library. His nanny used to get him to memorise poems. He looks back at these days with great fondness.

Instead of the librarian at the desk, an owl smoking a pipe is there. As it is usually his PA who returns the books, he is not sure if this is usual.

MAN OF HIGH STANDING: Um, hello, I would like to return these books.

OWL SMOKING PIPE (*blows smoke in his face*)

(*Man of high standing coughs*)

MAN OF HIGH STANDING: (*splutter*) I said please could I return these books.

(*Behind him a film of his various misdemeanours plays on a projector.*)

(*Other people in the library stop digging around in the books and come over and start watching the film, they are really engrossed.*)

(*The owl hands out cigars, and the man weeps, falling to the ground. Poetry pamphlets are scattered on top of him as he slowly dissolves into the floor.*)

CURTAIN

LIBRARIAN ON TINDER

A: Hello! Nice profile picture!

B: Thank you! Yours is nice too.

A: Do you have any more photos?

B: Sure. Here you are! That's me by the apple tree.

A: Thanks. Could you send me a nude photo?

B: Here you are!

A: And from behind?

B: Here you are!

A: Thank you, that's lovely. And now, a picture with your grandparents, please!

B: Oh, just one moment, I need to find it. Here you are!

A: Oh, your grandma looks hot!

B: Thanks. Something more?

A: Could you send me a photo of you dressed as a mushroom?

B: Of course! Here you are!

A: Oh, what a nice hat! Thank you very much. By the way, have you saved your x-ray photos?

B: Oh, what x-rays do you want?

A: I am most interested in the lungs. The spine is also ok.

B: I'm not sure if I... Oh, this is the most recent one.

A: Thanks. And now, please, a photo in the coffin.

B: Here you are!

A: No, no, with the lid closed.

B: Oh yes, of course! I think this is the best.

A: Thank you, nice.

B: By the way, I want to show you another photo. This is from the carnival. I'm dressed up like Niagara Falls.

A: Oh my God! It's so disgusting. How dare you send me something like that? You must be really sick! Maniac! Blocked.

TURN MY PAGES!

A Librarian stands in the aisles of the Poetry Library and begins having a conversation with the books as she normally does. It's a bit gossipy and both her and the books feel a little dirty as gossiping about the books on the other aisles is a cheap thing to do, but it is what they enjoy and a ritual and routine now, on which they are all dependent.

[Please note that the names of the books in dialogue have remained anonymous in this poem-play for their own protection.]

Act One

SCENE ONE

BOOK ONE: Did you see how old and yellow T.S. Eliot is looking now.

BOOK TWO: *(whispering)* That's nothing compared to Sylvia Plath, she's looking really tatty.

LIBRARIAN: Ssh, that is form of sacrilege, you guys, please! *[She's loving it really]*

BOOK THREE: *(chipping in)* I hear that an old edition of e e cummings got very huffy about the attention a new edition was getting the other day. Always got to be centre of attention that one.

SCENE TWO

Further down on that aisle.

BOOK FOUR: Gertrude Stein and Emily Dickinson are starting to get very cosy.
[Addressing the Librarian] Have you been playing cupid again?

LIBRARIAN: Well, someone's got to. Things were getting a bit incestuous on the shelves between the similar letters. The only excitement anyone gets is on the returns shelves. Things get mixed up nicely then. I like to leave them there longer if I see magic occurring.

BOOK FOUR: *(crying)* I would like to spend some time with some of the journals and magazines, but I know that is unlikely to happen.

LIBRARIAN: I'll see what I can do.

Act Two

SCENE ONE

Librarian discreetly takes The Poetry Review and The Rialto off the shelf and pops them on the returns shelf where BOOK FOUR is eagerly waiting.

She sets the timer on her watch for thirty minutes and makes herself scarce.

When she returns the books and magazine are gone and so is the returns shelf and so is the library and so is she.

So we'd better not speak about her anymore.

CURTAIN

Tom Jenks

**rabbit
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‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland – Lewis Carroll (1865)’

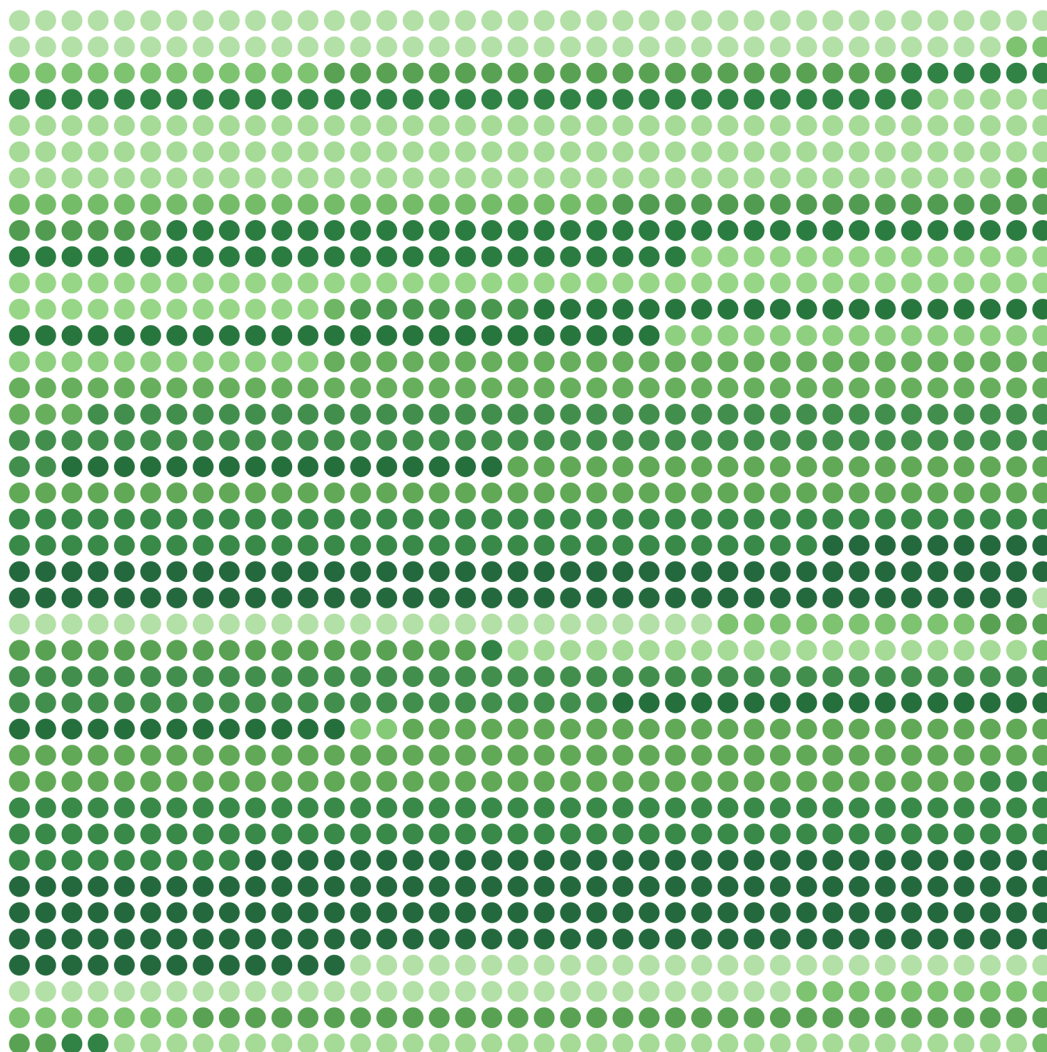
Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland: all appearances of the white rabbit.

Langaberde Bretaygne Guenore Guenore
 grene grene grene grene grene grene
 grene grene grene grene grene grene
 grene grene grener grene giserne grene
 geserne giserne grene grene grene grene
 grene grene grene grene grenne grene
 grene grene habergeon frenges grene
 grene grene lenger grene grene grene
 greihoundes fyngeres grene sprenged
 glauerande grene grene grene grene grene
 sprenged habergeon grene glyterande
 lenger grene ouer-grown grene ouer-
 grown grene grene grene giserne grene
 lenger grene grene grene grene

‘Sir Gawayn and the Green Knight’

Sir Gawayn and the Green Knight: all words containing every letter of the word “green”, in order of occurrence. All direct references to green highlighted in green.

Tom Jenks



‘Leaves of Grass – Walt Whitman (1855)’

Leaves of Grass: frequency of letter use in *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman (1855) indicated by number of dots, colour coded by letter, ordered alphabetically from top left.

afterwards boatswain boatswain boatswain boatswain whistle boatswain where's
 boatswain boatswain boatswain boatswain gallows boatswain boatswain
 boatswain boatswain boatswain washing swear wid'st wills waters welkin's saw
 swallow'd saw'st wast warrants was was wast was worse was't was was was was
 was was sway wombs was wrings now's winds whose was wast sea-sorrow whose
 answer swim waist bowsprit waves was was was stowed saw was was was know'st
 was was was wast wast mill-wheels was know'st wolves was was winters answer
 unwholesome south-west wouldst show'd was whiles wouldst words wast answer
 waves whist sweet waits waters sweet owes was fellows saw wonders saw powers
 swift ow'st sea-water draws sword show weakness works winds wisely sorrow
 wiselier was sweetly notwithstanding 'twas sweet was was was sowing was words
 saw whose swoln waves otherwise widows sow mallows sweat sword always 'twas
 was weeks wish sorrow wondrous drowsiness wink'st whiles whiles swims who's
 dwells slow sea-swallow'd what's whose worse fellows whiles sword what's whiles
 'twas was saw weapons was weapons urchin-shows slowly newest was bed-
 fellows swabber boatswain what's wisest works ways who's swear was swear swear
 swum swim sworn swim was was showed swear swear shallow show swear swear
 show wondrous show wash what's sweet weeps sweet sinews shows what's
 woman's wish saw witness unworthiness shows swam was blows show wits saw
 show sweet show weariness sweet sworn saw worse whose wallets whose wings
 swords fellows swords winds waters fellow-ministers swords powers worse ways
 whose wraths heart-sorrow mows billows winds swiftly sweet bestrew weeds
 worser fellows bestow straw snow crowns whose shadow whose wings flowers
 showers forsworn towards whose vows waspish-headed arrows swears sparrows
 wise whisper sweet whisper crowns answer rye-straw towards works saw towers
 weakness wish what's always towards was whose grows sinews how's followers
 weather-fends sorrow winter's works wrongs whose whose winds show follow'st
 was whose swell was cowslip's owls boatswain saw wrongs whose swear whose
 wish words howsoe'er was was sweet wast saw was was was sorrow wish
 boatswain gallows swear'st news boatswain news boatswain straightway was't was
 was flows fellows saw wise was worship bestow waste was

‘The Tempest’

The Tempest: words in *The Tempest* containing both ‘w’ and ‘s’. Word beginning with either letter
 highlighted in white.

Tom Jenks



‘Wuthering Heights – Emily Brontë (1847)’

Wuthering Heights: all references to adverse weather, in order of occurrence.

Andrew Taylor

Noz

I'm beginning to tire of gentrification
regeneration of street architecture

escape to the Euston Flyer en-route
to the continent ticketless yet

ready to push on & out of St. Pancras
its international tracks swift procession

of kilometres east through north London
under Highbury & Islington to Barking &

Purfleet-on-Thames scent of fox scat
on river breeze on to the coast *Fox*

Running in mind 'loose in his sleek skin [...]
surprised again by the river'

edge of England container bases ships
seemingly too large for their berths

the bridge carrying 6,250 vehicles an hour
escaping somewhere chalk in rock

into view entry into the tunnel erosion a
metaphor for a dying country test the limits

by crossing the border 'no one is illegal'
descent into the darkness rattling along

like the 5.07 to Rock Ferry a different light
on exit at speed shared tracks south

through arable land here working with nature
here there are more insects

time slows through the fields shelter
from the heat in the copse fields turned

for a second crop express through Calais Ville
& Little Flandres expanse! speed!

anticipation! a cold one in Le Progres
bakery scents people watching

the market at Les Halles consigned to
the history books sanitised shopping

*as busy as it gets end capitalism before
it ends all life*

Andrew Taylor

Steps to Middle Lane

*The deckhands are squabbling
their work escalating*

‘The Winds’ – The Turquoise Swimming Pools

foil & card notes on the reverse
haunted by ships in the bay tide

waits for no-one lamps in windows
apples in crates hanging herbs

preparation rich & aromatic slight
hanging stitch at the cuff hanging

tulip heads a crate of advocaat
long grass catches the sunset &

the last light find your heart saturation
cancel the cocktails order the coffee

take a moment wait for ship to shore &
take delivery of supplies

the love of nature is poetry

the home hedge lane rose hawthorn
violet cuckoo milkmaid

this bodily discipline

Jeffery Allen Tobin

The Stones of Arroyo Creek

From a distance the rocks look like boulders. But when you get close, they're no bigger than a man's fist, scattered in piles as if a giant's hand had sown them. The creek winds sluggishly through the valley, shallow and flecked with glints of mica from the stones. It hasn't rained in weeks, and the water's low, enough to let the frogs bake dry on the mud banks and the cattails turn brittle and brown. The farmers of Arroyo Creek know the sound of a dry year, and it sounds like silence.

Emory Stillman, with his thick, calloused hands and slow, deliberate way of walking, stood on the edge of the creekbed and kicked at the rocks. Dust rose in a faint puff around his boots. The sun hovered like a weight over his head, pressing heat down into the valley. Emory didn't mind the heat; it was the silence that bothered him.

His boy, Will, had taken to sitting under the fig tree at the edge of the property, staring toward the horizon. Will used to run. He used to climb up to the highest rocks and yell just to hear his own voice bounce back from the hills. Now he sat so still it seemed the quiet had gotten into his bones. Emory didn't know what to do about that.

'Nothing for it but work,' he muttered to himself.

Emory bent down, picked up one of the stones, and turned it over in his hand. It was smooth and heavy for its size, warm from the sun. He dropped it with a clatter and squatted by the water. A bullfrog plopped in and disappeared.

'You thinkin' about the barn?' came Clara's voice from behind him.

She always seemed to know when he was stewing. Clara stood on the rise in her faded blue dress, shading her face with her hand. Her hair had gone mostly gray, but there was still a youthfulness in the way she carried herself, a certain pride.

Emory shook his head. 'Ain't the barn. I patched the roof last week.'

'It's Will, then.'

He didn't answer. Clara walked down to him, the dust puffing up around her bare feet. She stood beside him, looking at the rocks, the water, the sky.

‘You think he’s gonna leave?’ she asked.

Emory rubbed the back of his neck. ‘He’s seventeen. What boy don’t want to leave?’

‘Some don’t.’

‘They all do. Sooner or later.’

Clara sighed and knelt down beside him. She reached into the water and pulled out a handful of pebbles. They glittered faintly, like they had secrets. She turned them over in her palm, then let them fall back into the creek.

‘Maybe he just needs to find somethin’ worth staying for,’ she said.

Emory frowned. He wanted to ask her what that might be, but he knew Clara wouldn’t answer. She didn’t believe in handing out answers. She believed in waiting, in patience, in letting the world spin solutions into her porcelain hands.

That night, Emory lay awake in bed, listening to the creak of the windmill and the faint shuffle of coyotes in the hills. He couldn’t stop thinking about what Clara had said. Will had been quiet for too long. Emory felt like the boy had dried up, like the creek, and that silence would carry him away if they didn’t act.

The next morning, Emory took Will down to the edge of the creek. The boy looked at him with wary eyes, his shoulders hunched like he was expecting a scolding.

‘Help me gather some stones,’ Emory said.

‘What for?’

‘You’ll see.’

They worked in silence, pulling rocks from the dry bed and stacking them in the wheelbarrow. The sun rose high and hot, and sweat soaked through their shirts. Emory didn’t explain himself, and Will didn’t ask again.

By midafternoon, they had a pile of stones, white and gray and speckled with mica. Emory stood back and nodded.

‘Now,’ he said, ‘we build.’

‘Build what?’

‘A wall. Right here.’

Will blinked at him. ‘A wall for what?’

‘For nothing. Just to see if we can.’

It wasn’t an answer, but it was enough. Emory showed Will how to stack the stones so they wouldn’t tumble. They worked side by side, their hands caked with dirt, the dry air heavy with the sound of rocks scraping against one another.

By the time the sun set, the wall was waist-high. Will stood back and looked at it, his face streaked with sweat and dust.

‘It’s good,’ he said, almost to himself.

Emory nodded. ‘We’ll finish it tomorrow.’

For the first time in months, Will smiled.

And in that quiet, dusty valley, where even the frogs had gone silent, the stones of Arroyo Creek provide purpose.

Claire Jean Kim

Rock Doves

He was a man of lavish tastes: cashmere suits,
fancy walking sticks, the finest haberdashery imported
from Tokyo. He had no beef with the Japanese officers.
What cared he about 'independence' or 'freedom' or 'sovereignty'?
He cared about things he could touch. Like the peach-fuzz
cheeks of tenant farmers' daughters. To a Korean man
born to land, they all smelled like harvest.

When a baby arrived, he paid her no mind, so
committed was he to the patrimonial line. The girl
grew strong in her mother's arms. If only the man had let
things be. But after three summers, with no male issue in sight,
he plucked the girl like a stalk of wheat, trampling the
chaff under his feet. Even the crows in the sky
heard the cries.

Each morning at school, the girl bowed to an image
of the Japanese emperor, then placed her lunchpail on
the wood-burning stove. She pretended not to hear the other
children whispering about the woman by the gate. Who did she
think she was, they wanted to know, standing there,
hovering and gaping, day after day, with the
burnt-out eyes of a ghost?

One harvest moon followed another. Life in
the village waxed on. The woman lay dying in her bed.
Through the window, she watched the ginkgo leaves yellow,
and she dreamt of her daughter. One evening, she sent a message.
But the girl, who would one day be my mother, turned the
messenger away. After that, the woman slept.
In the dark, the ginkgo tree wept.

Grandmother, *Halmeoni*, we will not meet
in this life. But I carry your story in my bones. May
my words find you, wherever you are, as rock doves fly
home, devoutly, unerringly, held in the warm embrace of
the earth's magnetic waves. She is safe.
She walks slowly now, my arm
around her waist.

Claire Jean Kim

Things to do on a Fulbright fellowship in Japan

Check that your wife and child are settled with the in-laws near Seoul. Assure your wife you'd be there for the birth of your second child but for the demands of your research. Make love to Michiko the girlfriend on every surface in the apartment. Twice. Pretend she's your secretary when you pick up your family at the airport. Wink at her as she cradles the newborn and says she wants one 'just like her'. Sit your wife down on the hotel bed and tell her you've decided to set her free. Offer to let her have the kids as if you are doing her a favor and now she owes you. Back down if she yells and makes threats because what is the difference, ultimately, between this ball and chain and the next. Later, return to the States with the wife and kids. Keep the girlfriend on a string. Start a new book on Japan that calls for traveling.

The Truth of It

Turns out forgetting everyone you know is just the tip of it. No one warns you about the stink of it. The shit on the paper towels peeking out the back of her pants of it. The dabs on the counters and floors of it. The she was banging her cane on the front desk for attention so we drugged her of it. The my god you've made her into a zombie of it. The we need to think about the safety of the other residents of it. The you should know she took a bad fall and hit her head of it. The again again again of it. The aide was there but must have looked the other way stepped into the hall dozed off watched the end of the game of it. The she can't eat or drink at all without choking because the nerves from brain to throat aren't working of it. The it seems she starved to death of it.

MICHAEL CHANG

CONFESSIONAL

this poem's abt me. dead serious. loads of them are: no no zone, almanac of useless talents, fine w/o u, california one night stand, 500 horses outside at the valet, white ford bronco, awful ghosts, carnal flower, rasputin, my forever person, working stiff, sad boy public relations, garden state trick, bleu de chanel, white tennis shoes, suede kisses, internet boyfriend, simpatico, student-athlete's college recruitment guide, leg of lamb, gin & milk, duck duck goose, still life w/ sunglasses at nite . . . it would be easier to list the poems of theirs i'm not in. they've been writing abt me for 12 years. i was one of their earliest students, way back when i was 19. totally fell in love w/ them & let them know it, although i was scared, before having to go home to texas & check into rehab. the whole ordeal left me spinning my wheels, afraid even to go to str8 spaces like home depot. found out a few years ago they'd written a number of love poems abt me. called me catullus, something abt my breath, described my bedroom as having the atmosphere of an operating theater. tried my best to contact them, but they wouldn't say a word to me. performed my favotite exorcism & purchased shoes for dog. didn't pay for my chipotle. abandoned tourists on the pier, most definitely high. still they kept writing these damn poems, claiming i'm terrified of intimacy. no i'm a very intimate guy, have left a lot of bodies behind. hey, my eyes are up here. i get it, there's only so much waiting around u can do. i want a family, not a fantasy. very much falling out of love w/ them. abt damn time. their stock is sinking fast.

让我一次爱个够 LOVE TO THE MAX

popa don't preach
these are our stolen moments
he switched parties for me
is no longer a player (lol)
tight church shoes
lesbian icon (masculine)
a disturbance in the force
i met them
they held their breath
i prefer the sensitive ones like harris dickinson
if i told u an 87-year-old womyn wrote a bad poem
u'd be able to picture it, right
if u can love one womyn
why can't u love 60
“ it looks worse than it is ”
v glad the phrase **nepo baby** exists
so i can insist that i am not
thinking abt greg loughan
the olympic diver
fassbender studied & aped for his physicality
mannerisms informing robot character in prometheus
the creepy man
ordering the iced vanilla latte
i wanna ~~dance~~ feud w/ somebody
a face selling non-existent books
like snow to an eskimo
sand to an arab
finger traps to the chinese
she shook my baby to death
the thing i love abt poetry is everyone can do it
the thing i hate abt poetry is everyone can do it
it's perfectly ok to say *hey, that isn't for me*
i'm not the target audience
i say that abt most things
let me go out in an opera of bullets
the few things i care abt
i guard zealously

Priyanuj Mazumdar

how i came (out)

with lines from Jake Skeets

b

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maul
hearts
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does

of course, i've had sex,

i lie.

i don't want you to know i look at boys the way you

look away from me.

your eyes are a fabrication and so are you. look at me, your worries
an imaginary knife perforating your vertebrae.

can i kiss you

your lips are machete-textured, ouch! slicing my tongue open without
shedding a drop of blood.

your throat a bottomless pit
bones brittle like vices
intestines twisted like deceit
blood clots infused with poison ivy
poison poison you are poison to my body
lizard tongue stuffed with red petunia flowers
quick, suck the poison out
plant your flesh into my skin
deflower me

are you crying?

no, no. my sweat and shame are an afterthought.

i am a giver, you see. registered organ donor.

take my heart, sell it for cheap.

rip my guts out
man, slaughter me

cut me, chop chop
finally

bleeding bleeding bleeding bleeding
bleating for respite, but don't stop

a sunken soldier rising into phallus

i'm about to come (out)

don't leave me just yet

*the closest boys become is when they are covered in blood
or nothing at all*

he says *finish* but do not,
tell anyone our secret

boys don't kiss boys

i'll cut off my hand

before i

ever

reach

for

you

again

Shannon Frost Greenstein

Freudian Countertransference via Zoom in the Pandemic-Era
Virtual Dialectical Behavior Therapy Group Setting...Or, When
Your DBT Therapist Might Be Falling in Love with You

ABSTRACT

Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) first introduced the concept of *countertransference* via a letter to fellow psychologist Carl Jung in 1909.¹

Over the maddening sound of his teeth grinding together, Freud expounded on his original concept of transference, wherein an individual subconsciously projects their own emotions or intentions onto another.² Countertransference, therefore, is the equal and opposite reaction, the redirection of those emotions which were first projected back upon the original person.³

Despite *sweeping* generalizations and a bad habit of doctoring case studies⁴, an example of transference for Freud would be a patient falling in love with their psychologist; countertransference would then be the psychologist falling back in love with their patient.⁵

This inevitably births such an obvious scientific inquiry that it hardly needs to be stated – and yet the question poses itself: How to identify Freudian countertransference via Zoom in a virtual Dialectical Behavior Therapy group setting during a global pandemic? And moreover – and perhaps more pressingly – what if your DBT therapist might be falling in love with you?

HYPOTHESIS

With this study, I will attempt to ascertain if, indeed, your DBT therapist might be falling in love with you due to Freudian countertransference via Zoom in the pandemic-era virtual Dialectical Behavior Therapy group setting.⁶

BACKGROUND

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), first introduced by Dr. Marsha Linehan in 1993, was designed to treat chronically suicidal patients with Borderline Personality Disorder.⁷ The modality utilizes a combination of mindfulness, coping skills, and individual and group therapy to address a patient's difficulties with distress tolerance⁸, interpersonal relations⁹, and emotional regulation¹⁰. Nearly three decades after its inception, however, DBT would undergo a fundamental shift in the midst of a heretofor-unknown and

particularly nasty RNA coronavirus.¹¹

Ultimately – with society devolving into an inferno of a Capitalist dumpster fire and the air literally poison – DBT was forced to move online, and virtual therapy via Zoom became the norm.¹²

EVIDENCE

The following samples were collected over twelve months of weekly Zoom DBT group therapy sessions:

1. Your clinician begins calling you “Dr. Frost” upon learning of the crippling shame you harbor over never finishing your Ph.D.¹³ They will persist in doing so for the next year.¹⁴
2. Your clinician shares inside jokes with you regarding your derision¹⁵ for the Father of Modern Psychology.
3. Your clinician compliments your outfit choices before a virtual group of ten people.
4. Your clinician describes their appreciation for your knee-high velvet boots¹⁶ before a virtual group of ten people.
5. Your clinician mentions they miss the scent of the perfume you wore prior to the global pandemic before a virtual group of ten people.
6. Your clinician discovers your writing website, then moves on to your Instagram reels, then discovers your Twitter feed¹⁷, then emails you to *tell* you everything they have just discovered.
7. Your clinician begins to send you private Zoom messages during group sessions while other patients are talking. These will include memes, book recommendations, and general concern over your wellbeing.¹⁸
8. Your clinician, upon earning their doctorate degree and also apropos of absolutely f*cking nothing, decides to drop the video of their dissertation defense¹⁹ into your DMs.

DATA ANALYSIS

That's...weird. That feels weird. That's weird, right?

CONCLUSION

It is likely possible that Freudian transference via Zoom indeed exists in the pandemic-era virtual Dialectical Behavioral Therapy group setting. It is probably also time to find a new DBT therapist.²⁰

¹ He also did a sh*t-ton of cocaine.

² This has nothing to do with why I married a man who is the spitting image of my absentee father. Nothing to do with it at all.

³ It *certainly* wasn't Freud's attempt to justify his wildly erotic and unethical relationship with patient Emma Eckstein, whom he diagnosed with hysteria and thus whom must have been consequently wracked with neuroses and penis envy.

⁴ "Oh, you mean this one woman I met has unresolved Daddy issues? ALL women must have unresolved Daddy issues!"

⁵ If you suspect your DBT therapist might be falling in love with you, this part is particularly significant.

⁶ Secondary hypothesis: You actually will not have seen this coming, due to chronically low self-esteem and an inability to read social cues.

⁷ No, of course I'm not intimately familiar with omnipresent suicidal ideation and the struggle of managing BPD, why do you ask?

⁸ I've found cannabis also helps.

⁹ I've found cannabis also helps.

¹⁰ I've found cannabis also helps.

¹¹ It sure would have been a shame if the head of the free world at that time ignored all the science and ended up being responsible for the deaths of half a million American citizens. Oh...wait...

¹² If you suspect your DBT therapist might be falling in love with you, this could be the point at which pandemic-era virtual Freudian countertransference via Zoom in a Dialectical Behavior Therapy group setting was set in motion.

¹³ But, also, run as far as you can from the Ivory Tower of Academia and the bloated endowments which define the entire systemically-broken four-year system of higher education that sustains it. Seriously, raze it all.

¹⁴ No, seriously. Burn the whole f*cking thing to the ground.

¹⁵ I mean, come on. It was really TOO MUCH cocaine.

¹⁶ Really, you should have known better. They don't call them "f*ck-me" boots for nothing. Have you considered that it's your fault your DBT therapist might be falling in love with you?

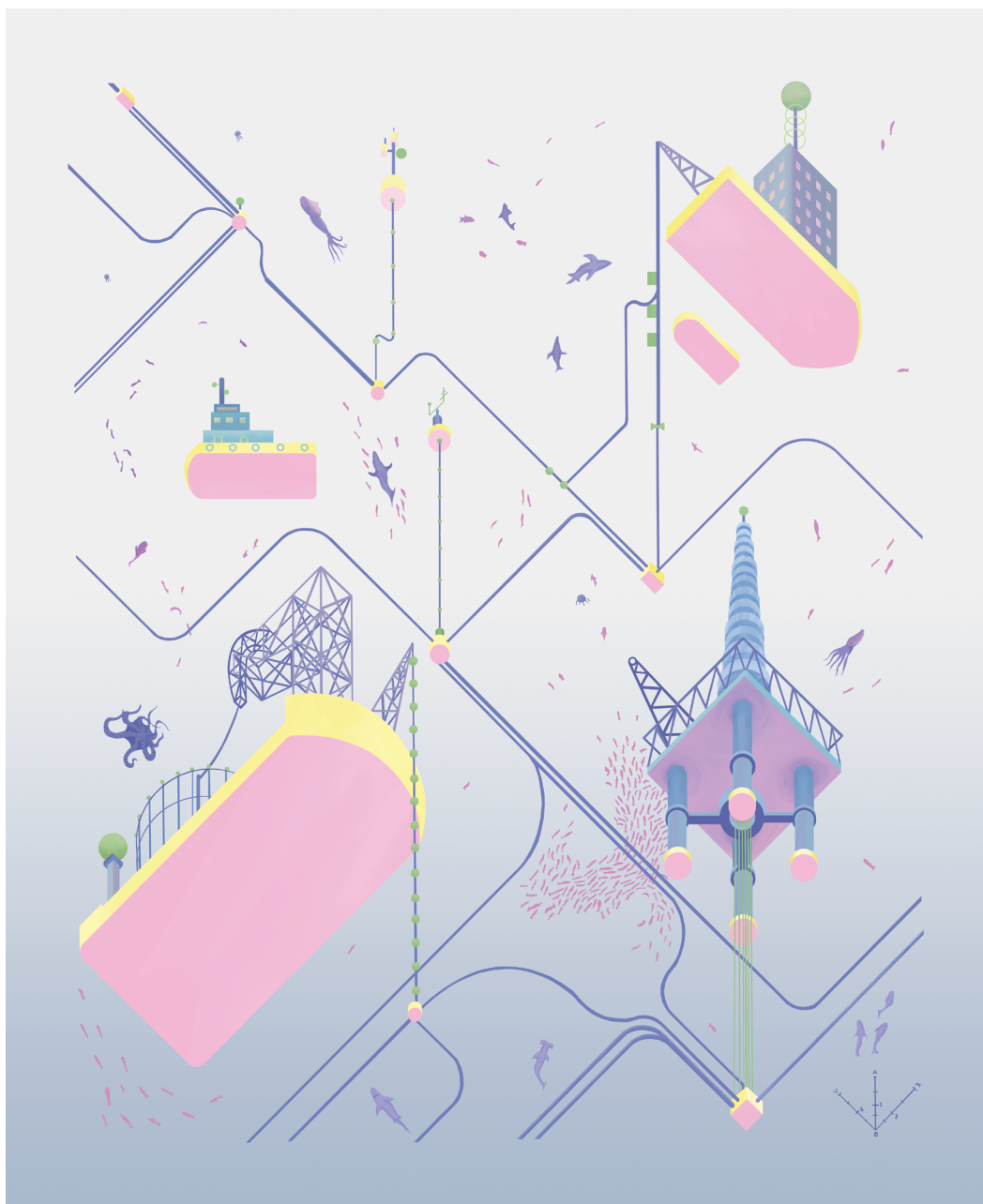
¹⁷ If you suspect your DBT therapist might be falling in love with you, this could be the point at which they accidentally revealed precisely how far back they delved into your online presence.

¹⁸ Are we even pretending to look for the Freudian countertransference anymore? It's essentially making itself known with a bullhorn and a *bright red* flag.

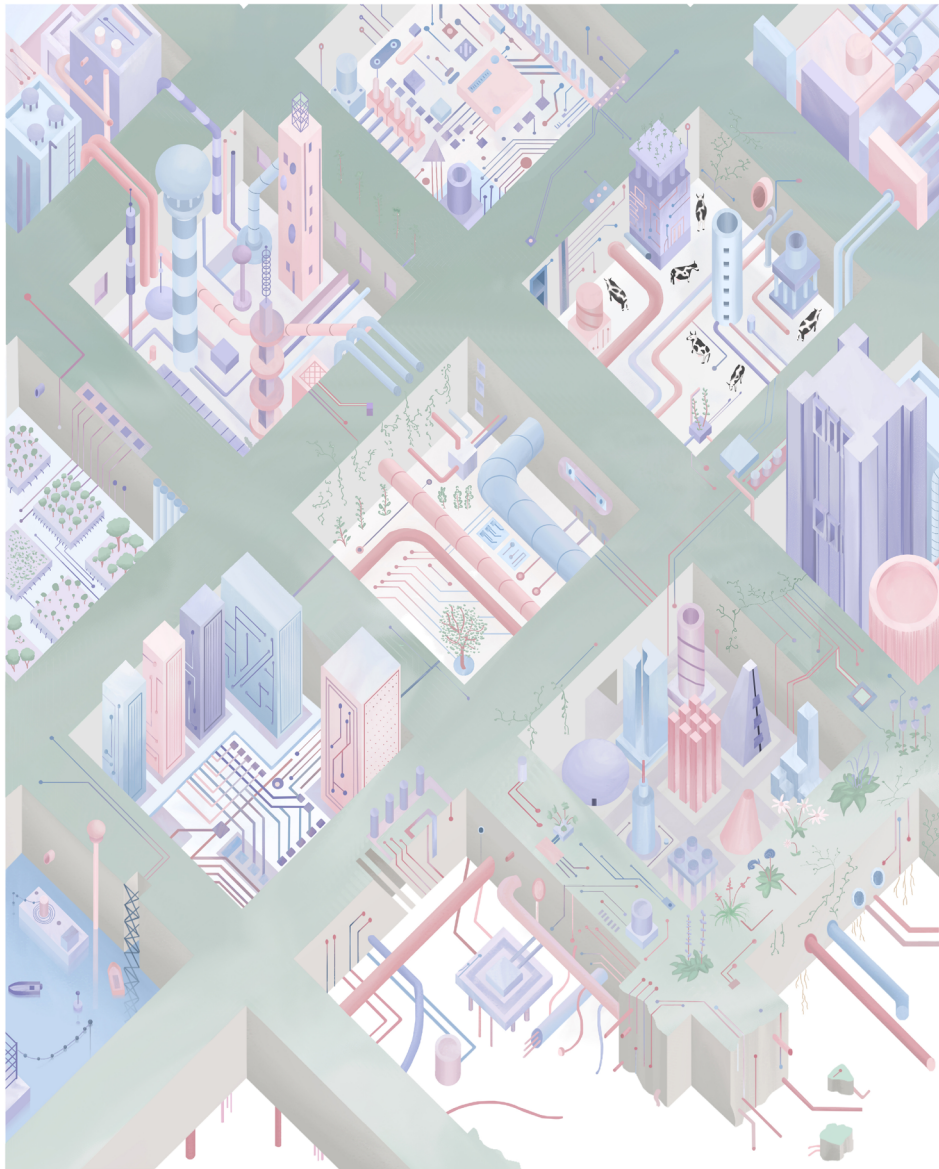
¹⁹ Given that this happened while a sobbing woman was describing her experience with childhood sexual trafficking, that's pretty much the one that finally did it.

²⁰ Because even with Borderline Personality Disorder, I won't let a little thing like Freudian countertransference stop me from working my ass off to build a life worth *living*.

Valerie Marshall



'Infosphere No. 2, Digital Painting'



'Infosphere No. 4, Digital Painting'

Lee Mackinnon

Germinal

Home was a body grown around us – its site
a nervous system audible only when it stopped.
White goods were organs, swallowing hard in the dead of night.

In cavities, viscera fold crystalline accretions,
an origami palimpsest: we begin and begin.
Too late, we burrow down, down with our picks, our reason.

Artisanal skill-chiselled fingers fumbling:
two feet, ten feet, fifty – an unlikely escape route
beneath the house that was already crumbling

into the edgeless dark mineral wealth we hope to strike.
We furrow blind, birthed out of crawlspace, eyes milky,
lacquered with dust that cataracts lamp light.

Cold sweat along the coal seam, soft tissue brittles
with necrosis and scuttles along arterial walls.

When you came in

When you came in,
I must have been there,
bent over sentences,
that circle pools of light
like silver fish.

It is said the symbolic
order began with
representations
of the animal:
bodies that could be

parcelled out to
make concrete the
abstraction of absence.

When you came in,
I must have been there

as you stole, settling
against my abdomen,
your profligate architecture,

cells that reproduce with
Leporine zeal.

Lee Mackinnon

IVC Filter*

The finest steel veins,
a dragonfly's wing,
blown inside out by

the faintest breath.

Sound of guy rope and zipper,
setting up camp in the
Inferior Vena Cava.

A screen of paper towel
rustles me away from
a sea of my own tissue.

A miniature ship's sail,
hoisted in the jugular
to catch blood's balmy currents.

**IVC filter: inserted into the Inferior Vena Cava using catheter and fluoroscopy. The filter attaches itself to the walls of the Inferior Vena Cava and expands to catch blood clots.*

Lee Mackinnon

Paclitaxel

As a silent snow
my hair fell –
head bowed as Frost's horse
shakes harness bell.

A brittle heat death
of pine
 needles
my senses
as I cycle through
woods, away
from the imperfect tense.

Late light beams
straddle trees,
a flashing lattice
makes shock of the seen.

Tectonic plates unsettle
my skull as I chew
on a landmass extinction
colonised by Pacific Yew,

an anaphylaxis that
takes my breath away.

Interview with Alan Michael Parker by Alison Smith



Professor Alan Michael Parker
Photo credit: Chris Record, 2025

Alan Michael Parker: AMP
Alison Smith: AS

Award-winning author Alan Michael Parker's most recent book, *Bingo Bango Boingo*, published by Dzanc Books in spring 2025, features Bingo cards interspersed with flash fiction, with an opportunity later on in the collection for the reader to fully participate and play the Bingo game in the uncompleted Bingo cards in the section 'Your Turn'. Alan Michael Parker is the Houchens Professor of English at Davidson College, where he chairs the Department of English.

Having read a selection of his poetry and prose titles, in this interview, I wanted to ask Alan Michael Parker some questions, not only about his latest book, but about his life's vocation as teacher, poet, writer, and, most recently, as a cartoonist.

1. (AS) To begin with, could you give the reader an idea about how the concept for your highly inventive collection of Bingo cards interspersed with flash fiction came about, and how you came to choose the title?

(AMP) For a number of years, I had a blank Bingo card on my desktop, doing nothing but also not trash-able. I began to wonder if it could be a mind-map? That idea by itself didn't really get me anywhere (although aspects of the concept persist in the Bingo card stories). Then, during Covid, I started working on hybrid word-art pieces; these were mostly failures, but mind-bending, for me. After a year or two of those, I realized that what I wanted to do was make Bingo cards and also make cartoons, and bingo! that's what happened.

Combining and interspersing my flash fiction with my Bingo stories seemed extra right: the ways we read, infer, and posit are activated by both kinds of stories.

As for the title, I'm a happy, rhyming, recovering poet.

2.(AS) Do you see your experimental form of Bingo cards as an evolution in your poetics towards a more experimental, playful, non-narrative form?

(AMP) For sure, the experimental has finally come out of its hidey-hole. And yes, the poetics got me here, but there's so much narrative data in each Bingo card in the book, that I think they're probably stories.

Or maybe they are.

Here's one way to think about the Bingo cards as stories: If you dig into the formal demands of the card, each asks for five-square sequences – five in a row to make a Bingo! – within a larger narrative. In that sense, five squares that make Bingo! could be sub-text, or sub-plot, or plot, or as some people understand how fiction functions, a narrative arc.

3. (AS) You appear to like to work with a constraint. If this is so, does it give you more of a challenge, or perhaps, more freedom, and would you say that constraint allows for a greater degree of experimentation in your creative practice?

(AMP) Abso. Bring on the impossible rules!

I am in many ways still that same graduate student from many, many years ago, riffing my way through sonnets and ballads. And in fiction writing, knowing (for example) that I would include ninety-nine linked flash fictions in a novel I wrote approximately ten years ago, *The Committee on Town Happiness*, led to a tightening of the storytelling, and let me heighten the lyricism. That was another experiment within formal constraints.

It's a little nerdy, admittedly, but I love a good literary problem.

4. (AS) You often use lists and numbers in your poetry and prose. Is this also a form of constraint, and is making a *non sequitur* list poem or flash fiction a way of catalysing a more experimental creative process, making new connections across disparate fragments, through working within an Oulipian constraint, and would you consider your Bingo cards a form of Oulipo?

(AMP) Wow, that's a cool idea. Yes, please? Oulipo. N+1, and Perec, and Calvino... all of that stuff is so great. I'm honored to think of the Bingo cards as part of that legacy. As for the *non sequiturs*, dear reader, I challenge you to see how the *non sequiturs* in the lists connect with other *non sequiturs*, until they're, well, *sequiturs*. Even at my most associative, I still work with narration, and narrative bits. You might discover a donut while reading... but if there is a donut, and it appears random, look for the donut hole later.

5. (AS) You often utilise different speakers and characters in your writing; would you consider that these are distinct personas? For example, in your debut poetry collection, *The Vandals* (Boa Editions, 1999), with its playful exploration of poetics, you use the

device of a group of insubordinate, trespassing vandals who subvert and disrupt each poem.

(AMP) Yes, that's my jam: I love human peopleness the most, and it's at the heart of my writing almost always. But some characters sit uneasily in the texts they've been made to inhabit, and I'm more than happy to see them disrupt the proceedings. I like the meta-moves too (unless they're cute), as well as breaking the fourth, fifth, and seventh walls.

Okay, those last two might not be real walls. Sorry/not sorry.

6. (AS) In relation to my previous question, are the speakers in your poems, or characters in your prose, prismatically "other" to the ordinary everyday self? How immersed in the imagined characters or speakers do you become? How do you resolve this tension between 'speaker, self, and other' in your work, as you posit in your introduction to the book you edited, *The Imaginary Poets*? (Tupelo Press, 2005), or is an unresolvable tension necessary for any successful poetry or prose work?

(AMP) Great question. As you've done such a deep dive into my work, and discovered some of my secrets, I'll share another: I'm not very interesting. So I write about others, and Others, and imaginary friends and imaginary consciousnesses with abandon.

If you compile the data found in my years of writing other brains, I would imagine you might find "me". But don't we believe that about the collected works of any artist – even if that artist isn't being identified by every detail of their lived life? I think I see Anselm Kiefer, once I've seen a goodly number of his paintings. I know I don't... but maybe I engage his mind, and so I do? Is an artist the sum of their work, as a consciousness?

What you've discovered seems to me a Big Truth about my life as an artist: consciousness, and how it works and how it might be dramatized, remains one of the most important subjects of my literary adventuring.

7. (AS) I am also intrigued by your idea of contributors using heteronyms in *The Imaginary Poets*, your inventive challenge to twenty-two poets, for each of them to create an imaginary poet and, using that heteronym, translate a poem into English, write a biography of the poet, and then a short essay. Do you think that in the process of your own work, your speakers not only become personas, but that you are close to developing your own separate heteronyms (though perhaps not as many as the writer Fernando Pessoa with his forty-four heteronyms); or do they blur into each other?

(AMP) There's certainly a lot of heteronyming in my work, and personificating. Nonetheless, there's also a persistent ensemble of characters – a teenaged girl, for instance, who was initially a portrait of a dear friend (she's the waitress in *The Vandals*) and then earned her own novel (where she's 'Christmas', the protagonist of *Christmas in July*). In terms of blurring, it's all blurry, and at times I have to go through a manuscript and make sure the characters are different enough to each deserve a driver's license. Would a recurrent character constitute a heteronym? I'd love to ask Pessoa that question.

8. (AS) As you write poetry, novels, and short fiction, and you are now also a cartoonist, do you consider yourself to be a multi-disciplinary artist? In particular, I am interested in how being a cartoonist might influence your writing. In *Bingo, Bango, Boingo* you incorporate a playful sketch with speech bubbles in your bingo card 'Mickey Falls Asleep at Work'. How important is the visual aspect to your work, as opposed to the sonic qualities in say your more lyrical poetry.

(AMP) Yes, I'm multi-disciplinary, but mostly in my aspirations. I feel like the work I make comes from the same place in me, whether the result is a poem or a cartoon. Maybe novels behave differently, though, since they're so committed to long-form shape? Hm. That idea might take a long-form think to reconsider fully.

When I was in graduate school, the late great American poet Stanley Kunitz said to me about a poem of mine, "End with an image, and never explain". His instruction has allowed me to surrender to my visual predilections sonically, and to my auditory predilections imagistically, so in that sense, the kinds of art-making I do interact. Now, they interact even more so, at the level of genre and in terms of medium.

9. (AS) I am also interested in how you make the division between poetry and prose in your writing.

(AMP) Well, I gave up writing poems five years ago, so I must be writing prose, yes? And I know that sounds glib, but it's a real answer for me. I don't scan my flash fiction, or think of the story as a poem in any conventional or unconventional sense. Sure, there can be a *lyricism* to the diction, but that doesn't mean the story's a poem.

10. (AS) A related question: do you see some of your prose pieces as prose poems; can they be regarded as both at once?

(AMP) I'm happy to have the work read in any genre that moves you. The question of genre arises most, in my work, in the flash fiction with lower word-counts. Those feel "poemy," maybe. But they still depend upon narrative structure and strictures, the character's world and the "clock world" of the reader made possible only by storytelling.

In all of the work, I'm interested in implying and intimating and the unsaid: those elements are true, no matter the genre, which makes a compressed bit of text even more amorphous, or resistant to categorization. One constant remains, genre be damned: I've never been known for babying my reader.

11. (AS) Would you say that teaching enhances your creative practice, and do you learn just as much from your students as they learn from you?

(AMP) Teaching's deep in me, now that I've taught for almost forty years, and I know that the interchange between my day job and my other day job remains powerful. Having said that, I wouldn't know if students learn just as much from me...maybe they could speak to that? But I learn a ton from them, from their amazing minds, and also from being made to articulate what would remain a private thought without their presence, or the pressure their curiosity places on my ideas.

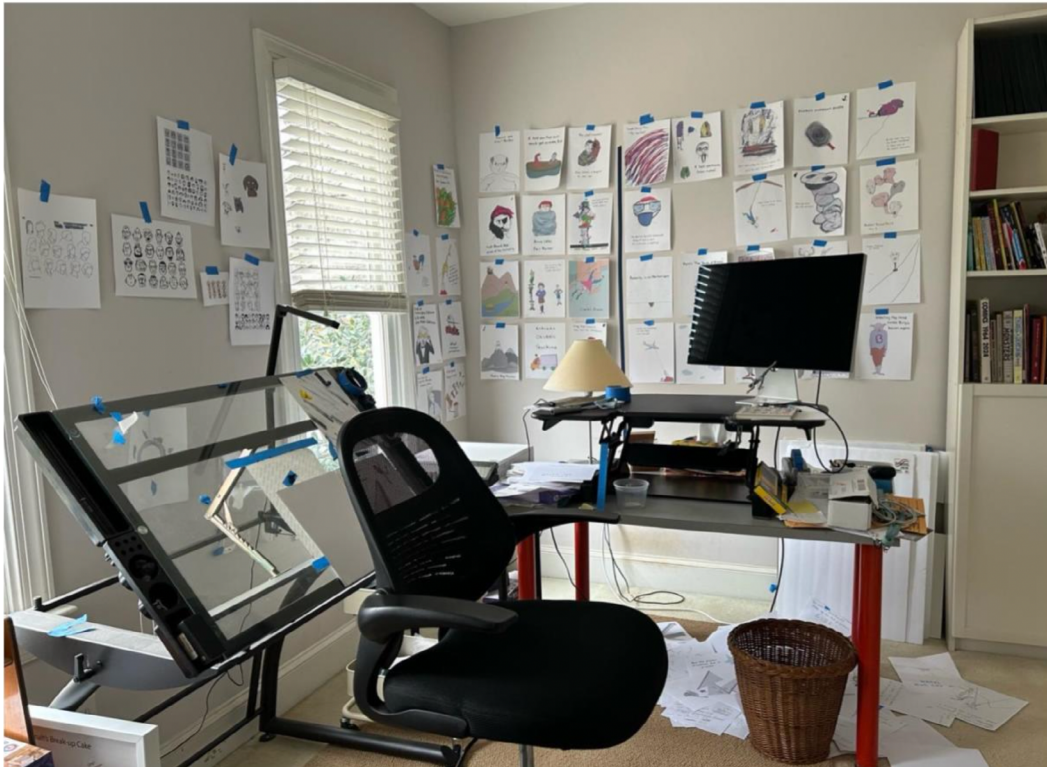
12. (AS) Does teaching fiction and poetry energise and feed into your own creative work?

(AMP) I tend to write what I need to write, and then get more into a project if I'm teaching in the same genre. But everything energizes my creative work: I'm one of those people.

13. (AS) Can you give an idea of your writing process and habits? For instance, do you need a room of your own to be able to write in, or can you write in public spaces such as cafés? Do you write every day, and are you able to write poems and prose pieces each day, or do you maintain a separation between writing prose and poetry?

(AMP) I try to write every day, and when I'm not overwhelmed with busy-ness, I can. That includes writing badly, of course, which can happen for prolonged periods of time – i.e. "first drafts".

Mostly, I write or draw in my studio at home:



I've learned to like varieties of space, nonetheless, and if pressed, I can make a studio out of a number of other spaces, including coffee shops or airplanes, so long as I have noise-cancelling gear, and a sketchbook or laptop.

14. (AS) Can you give me an idea of how much you re-draft, revise and edit your work, and do you share your drafts with anyone before you send your work out to publishers?

(AMP) Oh wow, that's mostly the work I do as a writer, the rewriting and revising. First drafts tend to happen quickly – and often they're shared with my partner, who is quite gentle with me, until later on, when she's tougher because I can handle it. I tend not to share the work with others until I'm ready for an edit, and then, it's usually Michelle Dotter at Dzanc Books who knows all. (She and I once liked a manuscript of mine, and then both changed our minds two years later. Amazing.)

15. (AS) Does what you are writing emerge organically, or do you tend to structure your books to a preconceived plan, or concept such as the bingo cards?

(AMP) In the composition process, I'm all about improvising, jamming, riffing, free-styling, and every other synonym for not planning. I outline longer prose pieces between the first and second drafts, at the earliest, so as to think "shape" and "meaning" once I've done the self-expressing thing. (First draft is for me: every next draft is for you.) Rarely do my sentences persist wholly, draft to draft.

16. (AS) When did you first begin to write creatively, and did you have any mentors when starting out, and have any writers influenced your work subsequently?

(AMP) So many people have influenced me, and taught me, along the way, beginning with a dear public school teacher, Sue Patt, and then others in high school and through college and grad school. I also had the amazing opportunity to work with four Nobel Laureates: Joseph Brodsky, Seamus Heaney, Czeslaw Milosz, and Derek Walcott. Each of those astonishing poets mattered to me, two more than the other two (*shhshh*).

No one teacher was my great mentor – which is one reason I try to be wholly present for my students, and to stay committed to them.

A different answer: it's probably the reading that sticks to my ribs the most.

17. (AS) Has the prevalence of social media and digital communication changed the nature of your own writing and reading in the twenty-first century?

(AMP) I have embraced social media, and I love it when it's not hateful. I think it's altered quite a lot of what we do, as writers and readers, and let us question our silliest (and most dangerously hierarchical) notions of literacy, and contributed heartily to the democratization

of the arts. I spend too much time on the Internet, and I also participate actively in making cartoons that I understand to be digital, and disseminate that work in fundamentally different ways than my writing could be, and that's cool. (Check out my Insta: @Ampydoo.)

18. (AS) How do you react as a writer to world events, whether the pandemic and its aftermath, or global conflicts and climate change? Would you say that you are consciously aware of how this feeds into your creative practice, or do you only become aware at a later date, and perhaps reflect upon any influences?

(AMP) *Bingo Bango Boingo* is very much a Covid book, as well as post-Covid, and fraught with some of the political insanity of the past few years. I am quite aware of what the many characters in the seventy-one stories are doing, in terms of making decisions about their lives that weren't in play in 2019.

19. (AS) Do you think creative writing can be taught effectively?

(AMP) Yes.

20. (AS) What advice would you give a writer who is just starting out, and what advice would you give a more experienced writer, to help them to continue writing and exploring their creative practice?

(AMP) Keep going.

Write too much, to figure out what to keep.

Put it in a drawer.

Revise.

Respond to your material.

21. (AS) What are you working on currently, or would you rather not say?

(AMP) I'm writing a nonfiction book on single-panel cartoons, as well as working on a secret hybrid project. I've written another two dozen or so Bingo cards. And there are hundreds of cartoons... I'm not sure what I'll do with those.

It's possible I'm having a novel, too, but it's a little early to say for sure.

22. (AS) And one final question: what is the significance, if any, of the number twenty-two in your work?

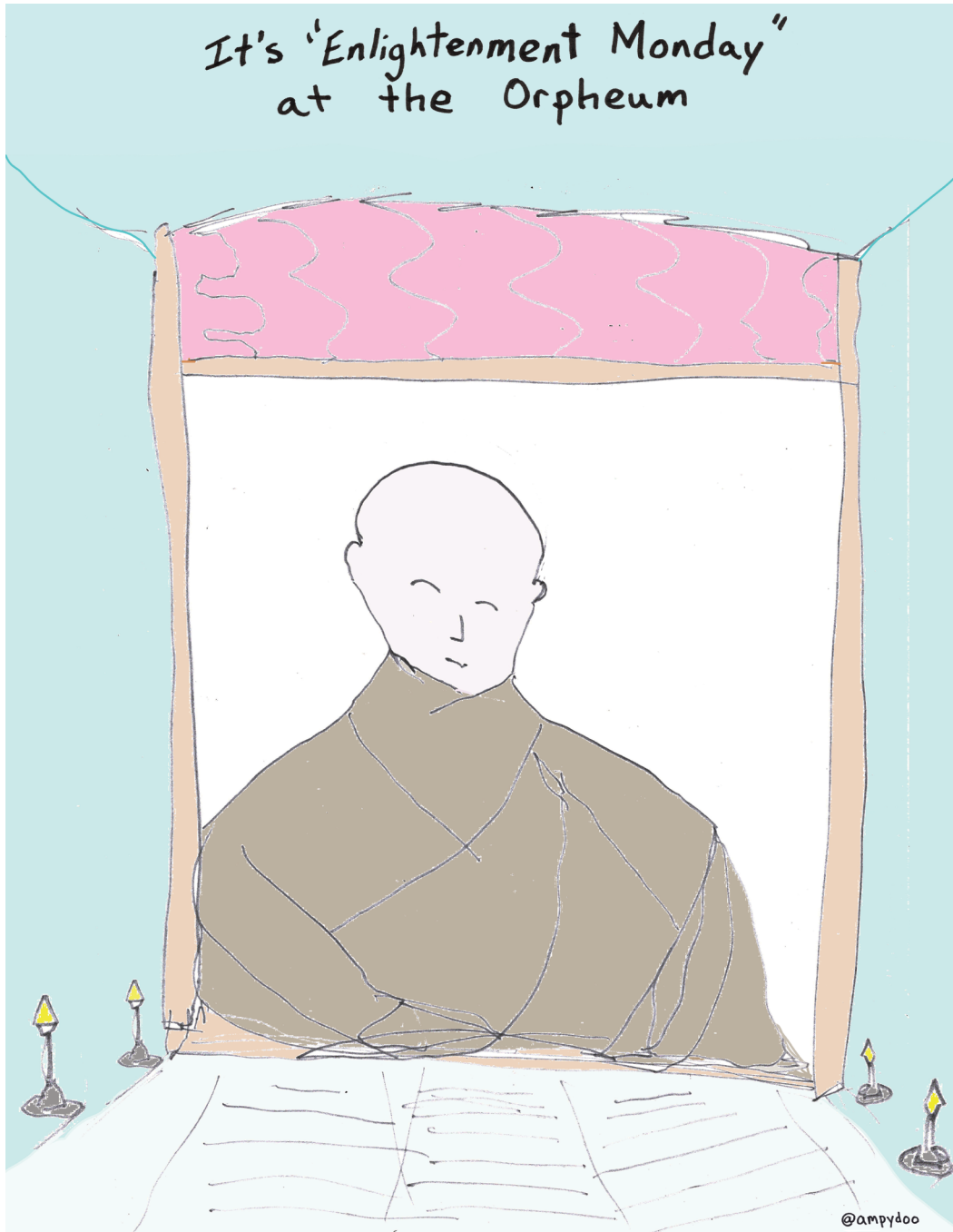
(AMP) Twenty-three matters more to me than twenty-two. Nineteen is a fine number, as is twenty-nine.

To matter to me as a final tally, a number needs to be a prime – which means that when I write something that’s a list story, for example, and it has twenty-two items, it’s either got three extra items, or stops one short, and that’s on purpose.

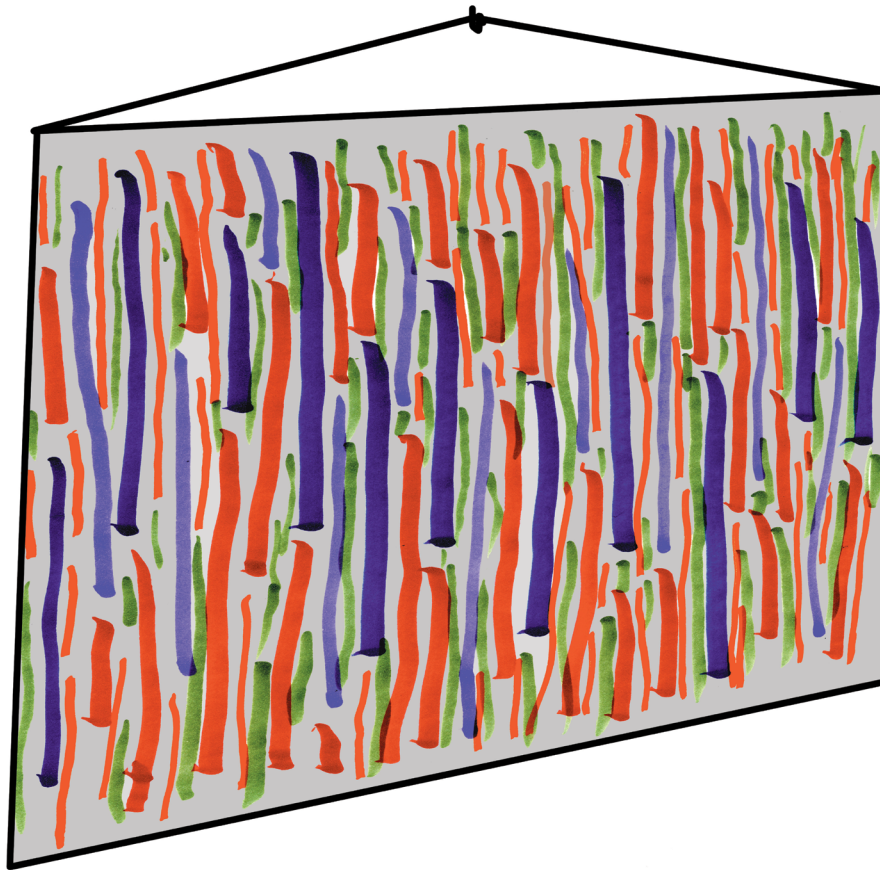
Robert Frost wrote a number of really important “sonnets” that have either thirteen or fifteen lines. That principle has fascinated me for years.

There, I told you a real secret. Thanks for asking – and especially, thanks for taking such care with my work. What an honor to be read so well!

Alan Michael Parker



'It's Enlightenment Monday at the Orpheum'



I call it
"Love"



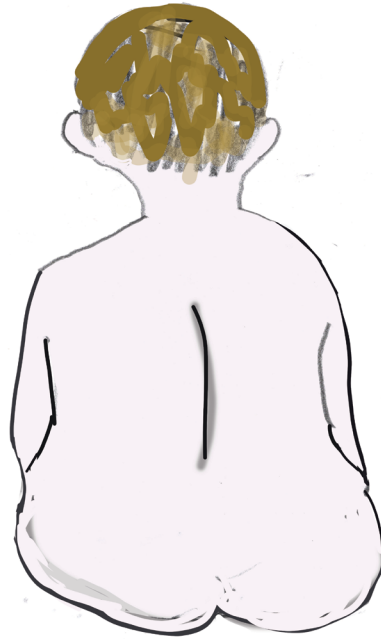
@ampydoo

'I call it "Love"'

Alan Michael Parker

@ampydo

With practice, Sherm could
make some letters



do the other way

‘With practice, Sherm could make some letters og eht rehto yaw’

Alison Smith

Bingo Bango Boingo by Alan Michael Parker.

Dzanc Books, 2025, 140pp, \$20.00 (paperback) ISBN 978-1-938603-21-1

The title alone to this highly inventive collection of Bingo card stories interspersed with flash fiction, is certain to arrest attention. Even the introduction to how Bingo was invented, involving elements of play, accident, and mathematics, and a biography of Edwin S. Lowe, who adapted and promoted the game, is delightfully bizarre.

If the mix of Bingo card stories with more conventionally presented flash fiction is at first perplexing, as one progresses one sees how they inform each other, sharpening and enriching the reader's experience. The Bingo cards use the standard grids of twenty-five squares in five columns by five rows. The card titles, and text in bold in the central squares, orientate the reader as to "key" themes. The squares, each filled-in with short phrases or single words, can be read horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, and from any square to any square; or, not so much as in any order, but "all-at-once", one's eyes flitting across the multiple possible connections. The Bingo cards only work if we participate by joining up the fragments into the alternative narratives that each card presents. In the later section, 'Your Turn', the squares to the cards are mostly blank, the reader challenged to build their own imaginary stories.

In the first Bingo card, entitled 'Change Your Life', the bold text in the central square 'Listen', could be interpreted as not just key to the grid, but as general advice to the reader; 'No blame' perhaps indicative of an affair. Then there are surreal snippets such as 'Swallow a bird', a literary reference, with just the one-word title of transcendentalist Henry Thoreau's book *Walden*, and fragments pertaining to life events; the text in non-adjoining squares 'Mom dies' and 'Dad dies', may, or may not, be related to 'Don't wear a mask'. The interrupted fragmentary consciousness of the protagonist keeps going back, humorously, to a romantic interest, with the name 'Sandra' repeated, as he works out how to get to know her better. 'Join a book club with Sandra' in the bottom right-hand corner could therefore link up with the more general advice 'Can't sing? Join a choir' in the diagonally opposite top left-hand square. Now we realise 'No blame' could refer to the consequences of not wearing a mask, or relationship breakdown. There are just so many ways to read and interpret each of the Bingo cards.

So, the next piece, the first of the more conventionally set out flash fictions, could be expected to be less puzzle-like, a more straightforward narrative, and yet, as with all the flash fiction pieces, is deceptively nuanced. The title, 'People in Light and Shadow', is both a metaphor for the images, and duality of character. Whilst reminiscent of

Raymond Carver's dirty realism stories centred around small town lives, it is less bleak, offering possibilities of hope and change. The protagonist, at first identified as 'Little Joanie', is looking at the TV news, the opening sentence deceptively flat: 'People on the television killed people on the television'. We, the readers, or viewers, of this multi-layered interior/exterior scene, are like 'Little Joanie', at a remove, looking in, and looking out, whilst also being privy to her thought processes. 'Little Joanie' looks out of the window, sees a flash downtown, perhaps something to do with the disturbance showing on TV. She opens and looks out of the window, retrieves her glass of wine, turns off the two lights, returns to the window. The TV is throwing shadows around the room.

The inference is that the disturbance is serious, perhaps a riot turning into something more organised, militia-like, with the understated line: 'People on the television wore uniforms then there were the homemade uniforms'. Gradually, we transition to the protagonist's interior consciousness: 'It's funny/scary how a shadow can be bigger than its thing'. We learn that she is thought of as 'Little Joanie' in her family, and 'even in her own head', because her aunt was called 'Big Joanie' whilst she was growing up; also, that: 'Her ex used to call her LJ, which was okay when she loved him'. Gradually, the protagonist begins to question how her family and significant others have imposed such a diminished sense of self upon her. We learn she got divorced over the computer, suggesting Covid restrictions, and now she is trying out different names whilst looking out at a fire downtown, hearing the sound of a siren echoing off buildings, shrugging off the name 'Little Jeannie'. She turns off the TV: a single-line paragraph accentuating her transition from a passive absorber of media, to participating in life: 'People on the television were only on the television, click'. She observes someone running down the street past streetlights: 'Moving from being seen, and then not, to seen again'. She compares this scene with her ex and 'Tom, the new guy' swapping places in importance, the person running down the street in step with her own 'feelings moving'. Another stand-alone paragraph, which contains the only word spoken out loud by the protagonist in the entire story, affirms her newly independent identity as she is foregrounded in her own life story: 'She liked the sound of Marie. "Marie," she said out of the window'.

Alan Michael Parker often uses inventive forms involving lists and numbers: 'How Phil Imagines the Afterlife', first published in Issue 2 of *The Lincoln Review*, is a *non sequitur* list of twenty-two conversational snippets overheard at a tourist beach, extended in *Bingo, Bango, Boingo* to twenty-three. In the mathematically titled poetry collection, *Long Division* (Tupelo Press, 2012), we have poems such as 'Family Math', 'Twenty-two Reasons to Return to the Store', and 'Eighteen Ways To Consider a Neighbour...'. In *The Imaginary Poets* (Tupelo Press, 2005), twenty-two contributors have written poems by imaginary poets "translated" from eighteen languages, along with their "life histories": a homage to poet Fernando Pessoa's forty-four heteronyms. And Alan

Michael Parker delights in a more experimental poetics in *Bingo Bango Boingo*, which has synergies with the constrained writing techniques of Oulipo, in the intersection of language, character, and mathematics. The flash fiction ‘=’ with the key anti-aphorism ‘= is a statement of equivalence without value’ is a more unusual example. In this pandemic-set story, involving two women friends walking with the required “safe” distance between them, there is the sense of blurring of reality, of being suspended between life and the afterlife. The = sign becomes existentially equivocal in each of the “statements” of the story; and yet, the language of mathematics is meant to be precise, and so this presents an ultimately unsolvable philosophical and linguistic conundrum, because how we communicate language will always be an approximation, uncertain. For instance, in Alan Michael Parker’s *The Committee on Town Happiness* (Dzanc Books, 2014), ninety-nine interlinked stories make up a surreal-absurdist novel about disappearing townsfolk in small-town America, in which the town committee takes votes on various local matters: one time, fun is scored a ‘3’, and happiness a ‘4’, ‘unless the fun is dangerous’.

And it is the dangers of a democracy descending into an authoritarian regime that is alluded to in ‘Feti’s Border Crossing Bingo’. The speech snippet of the bold text in the central square gives us the main narrative prompt: ‘Ma’am could you follow me, please?’ One infers that the protagonist is trying to cross a border, has been taken aside, and is being questioned by security. The protagonist would like to see her daughter and son-in law, her first grandson. The questions by the official are both perfunctory and intimidating. Like several Bingo cards in this collection, this was first published as a poem on The Academy of American Poets ‘Poem-a-Day’ website, albeit in an earlier version (<https://poets.org/poem/fetis-border-crossing>). This cross-genre re-defining of what is poetry, and what is prose, becomes even more interesting to consider when reading, writing, and revising one’s own work – for one realises there can be no “ultimate” version – just as there can be no final “director’s cut” to the imagined possibilities of how this specific narrative will play out. Instead of the text: ‘Its just a cake’, in the top right-hand square, we have: ‘The same grass over there’. The quote from Kenyan author and academic Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o is different too; instead of ‘The other assumption is the changing character of societies’, we have: ‘Another barrier is the fundamentalism of monolingualism’. Both quotes, equally valid, giving a backstory to the protagonist, whose education is being revealed through interior thoughts: ‘What not to admit: M.A. in Political Theory’. In what context would having such a degree become threatening – only at a customs border, or perhaps even within a democracy in which one’s political ideas, particularly when engaged in open debate, could become regarded as a threat to overly bureaucratic thinking.

To be able to change your life: how precious this choice is; how easily one’s identity,

liberty, and even one's life, can be taken away. What threat does monolingualism present to societal and global communication, and to understanding each other on a personal level, especially if we come to rely on AI translation. There is something about imagining hearing these snippets of orders, questions, and answers, and thought processes, as well as reading them on the page, which translate from audio to visual: a scene in a play or a film in which we become not the audience but the protagonist. The fragments are effective because we are active in their interpretation: as if we ourselves are at the border being questioned by a customs officer. The author's note to the version of 'Feti's Border Crossing Bingo' on the 'Poem-a-Day' website, aids not only the reader's interpretation of this Bingo card as an open-ended process of possibilities, of what may or may not happen, and what has already happened, but also contains a key phrase: 'The simultaneity of experience', which points us to the central themes of *Bingo Bango Boingo*, and perhaps Alan Michael Parker's poetics overall.

Some pieces are tongue-in-cheek, others surreal-absurd: the Bingo card story 'All the Cell Phones Ring at Once' is surreal-absurd and apocalyptic; the flash fiction 'The Bridge' is existential and poignant. Serious, humorous, light, dark, fragmentary, existentialist – often, all of these elements together – some flash fictions have the meticulously crafted style and tone of Raymond Carver's dirty realism stories, such as the aforementioned 'People in Light and Shadow', and also 'The Lumber Mill at Night'.

One of the more lyrical flash fiction pieces is the elegiac 'Trees', in which the protagonist is remembering his late-mother, who liked to take pictures of trees. He brings along her 'old-school camera', a Minolta, to the woods by a reservoir, with 'film and all'. The deceptively simple poetic and metaphysical phrases, almost aphorisms, are accentuated by the apparent youngness of the protagonist's interior voice: 'If only a picture would capture what someone felt in the presence of each tree, what he felt, then who we are would be visible in the picture'. And another: 'It's weird how remembering requires practice, and forgetting is part of remembering too, which makes them the same, almost'. The paragraph about the tree, which 'seems to move without a breeze', is beautifully nuanced, almost metaphysical, and yet still true to the interior voice of the young protagonist who is working through grief, trying to make sense of his "being-in-the-world". Alan Michael Parker accentuates this with the use of the words 'cool' and 'infinity'; the *gauche* effect achieved by the "hitched" pause of the comma: 'The same group, or gathering, never moves twice: leaves aren't the same, even when they're the same leaves. That's a cool idea, the infinity part of it all.'

In the notes at the end of this collection, the author's inspiration for 'Trees' is revealed as Susan Sontag's classic book of essays *On Photography* (Penguin Books, 2010), in which she considers the possible aesthetic and moral problems regarding the making and use of

the photographed image. However, in 'Trees' the protagonist's concern is not so much the photographed image but the preservation of the experience of the person taking the photograph at the time; just as perhaps all authors attempt to portray in word-images their own experience, whether through the lens of a character, a poem's speaker, or the uncertain personas of self.

And it is the imaginative possibilities of the *simultaneity of experience* with which Alan Michael Parker so ingeniously infuses his Bingo card stories and flash fictions. What is the nature of our roles as readers; what of our values; the weight of consequences of our choices? This is a highly original and engaging multi-layered collection: tongue-in-cheek, satirical, serious, game-like, poetic, political, existential, popular, literary, form-defying. This is a collection for everyone to read, and to play and interpret – and reread. And now, dear reader, it is "your turn".

Rachel Carney

Collective Mourning

a found poem composed of magnetic texts arranged by museum visitors

the sky cracked an old body walking paint floating from trees a silent drift with cold wings
drowning in empty memories a transparent dripping river the small memory that birds sleep in
a mouth as if a river wet as the night falls drowning a forgetful river transparent thinking looking
for worries in broken birds' wings there is no time trees drown people pretend our eyes
cracked as the moon pulls birds around the sky a feather that falls weightless a family falling in
cracked leaves children walking floating around the night time for sleep to fade a sun dripping
treasure at dusk your mouth like a sword the sky a broken day it is but a wish that we pretend

a ghost dog
falling
from the sky

Response

*a found poem after Charlotte (Grenville), Lady Williams–Wynn (1754–1830)
and her Children by Joshua Reynolds, using text from museum visitors’
postcards*

There was no *wildfire*. No *white clothes*.
No *squeezing cheeks*. No *fur-trimmed frocks*.
We didn’t *cower from the winds outside these walls*.
There were no *big plump cushions*.
No *rustle of our laughter*. No *gold robes*.
There were no *curious hands*. No *solemn looks*.
And no-one said *What are their names? My daughters. My sons.*

There were no *distant cherubs*.
No *uncomfortable shoes*.
And there were no *layers of majesty*.
And no-one was *defined by a gaze*.
The *heaviness of time* was not *passing by*.
There was no *picture of passivity*.
No *warmth*. No *parasites*. No *page*.

Nuala McEvoy



'Ghost Town'



'Amy's City'

Alice White

Drawing Cross-Legged on the Floor, Four Years Old, Naked

There was nothing erotic about it,
just the smooth feel of construction paper

wrapped around wax – two crayons, blue and red,
tucked snug into a part of me whose name

I wouldn't know for decades, the soft folds
that seemed to have been made for those crayons –

I could hold them without using my hands! –
I did it because it was possible:

I wanted to do everything I could
back then. Little girl, wild thing, let me be

the lady babysitting, let me go
in that room where you still are, and not gasp

and then yell – not press any memory
of those crayons into your head at all.

Karen Elizabeth Bishop

priam bends among the bluets

1.

kneel at the seawall,
sidewinder, burn bronze. we have
lost, priam, at our games.

2.

eat your heart out, priam,
taste the deathflesh and the hot
blood that spools like string.

3.

bend, priam, among the
bluets. tuck them into your
sleeves, behind your ears.

4.

blue means not now, priam,
you've come early for death, i'm
trying still to sleep.

5.

i'll put on shepherd's
shoes to make the trip with you,
priam, we'll cross as two.

6.

hold this plate of grapes,
priam, i will trade you flesh for
fruit and five fresh tears.

7.

bend to the bluets
priam, you are a bird, riven
on new snow, bonecleft.

Karen Elizabeth Bishop

le oiseau parts

wherein priam speaks of his son

the blue parts, quoi. pas moi,
cestpasça. cest le verre, verre

insouciant et triller quoi. le plus,
le trop, le quoi ça, le oiseau. cestadire:

both were remembering, cries from the garden,
thinking of hektor, bees thrummed, killer of men.

moi, cestpasça i shuddered, deathtwitched, voit pas
ma shame. those terrible man-killing mains, jesuis te

mbrasse, jelaiss a breastboneonagrayfieldcloudintheroom
je seize. oh fafucksakegivememysonthebluepartsallthepartslet

mecrawluntomysoncrownhiskidneywithakissmysonmyboneona
they do not draw back, his teeth do not stop at horror, thisdeathand

likewise twitches, elle la connait, je tremble comme un homme qui a
vu le piédroit, pushed, they had fallen, l'autre pays, la chambre, la chose,

la deuil de une mère, cestimpossiblemoijexistepasjecrietombejepleuvej'arrache
jehantejeversejeversejedisquandmememonfilsquandmemejeblackhairallarounds

laquelle ce qu'espère l'amante, le murmure, la page, la oui, jetremble, jemeprosterne, je
mecouchejet'écoutemoilamortmoilabouchemoij'avaispaseulecoeurjemordsl'abeillestorde.

Jessica Ketcham

Dependent

In a Petco training session for our new puppy, my daughter Aloe showed me the tiny aftermath of a puncture wound on her ring finger, the blood thickening as she weighed whether to interrupt the trainer. While I turned over the ethics of teaching a dog to *bang – play dead*, she pressed and pressed on her fingerpad, eking out a ruby mucous mound until she tapped me, showed me she had nowhere to wipe it. Pinch, prick, press, and patience for the number that dictates next action. She was 9 and just getting used to making herself bleed to test her blood sugar. When I was 9 I would've sucked it off of my own finger. The impulse still there, I smudged it into my inner thigh.

Pre-puppy and five months earlier, the words *life-threatening disease* were flung towards my daughter and me. I only understood their weight in relation to the space we were in. Those words only belong in that space, the space of a curtained not-room, in a children's hospital we'd never been to, after an annual pediatrician appointment where the blood glucose monitor must just be broken, they said. But go to the ER just in case, they said. They knew, but they didn't say it aloud to this mother.

Life-threatening. The words hide in hospital green curtain folds.

Disease. Disability. Disorder. Death. Uplifting D words have disappeared. Dependent. Diabetic ketoacidosis. Deadly. Diabetes – Type 1. Devices. Digits. Dermis. Done.

When she was 11, my daughter started drawing on her palms, hands, and forearms. First small dots or designs – testing strips – and then later long latitudes of thick black. Intricate palm patterns in semipermanent ink. She was 11 when I told her what the longitudinal scars on my own forearms were from, longing to break the punctuation curse of dashes and slashes. The child who immediately spotted fresh flowers, a stain in a shirt's fold, or a changed throw pillow held her pinky out like a comma, said she'd never noticed.

For four years now, I've studied her skin with new android eyes. Four years post-diagnosis and I still don't quite function like a human should. Always looking for a fresh patch, clean, ready, primed to be punctured. Solvent, alcohol, skin barrier wipes, check, check, check. Dragging the plastic continuous glucose monitor applicator across her body for sensor insertion, I break off the safety guard, press a bright orange button and *bang – stay alive*. Every ten days we do this.

Every three days we also search for new skin sites for the insulin pump. Device alarms ring out most nights and I don't sleep; I just think about her skin, and her small cyborg body.

Your left arm is peeling and looks like a sulfur pool.

Remember the Yellowstone trip? You were 2 then.

You had smooth fresh arms then, waving bare fresh arms against the sulfur pools, then.

I brush her wounds with my fingertips while she sleeps. Decades of cautious cutting prepared me to care for her skin. Mupirocin. Neosporin. Hydrocortisone. Desonide. Clobetasol. Done with all. I named her Aloe at birth. Carefree. Soothing. Light. Healing. Cruel mother, I think in the night.

My parents were behind curtains when my sister Elise became a pronounced person. Dead. D words. I was in the emergency room hallway, 18 and stoned, after driving 108 miles an hour to get to a hospital. She was 14.

In a year, Aloe will be her age; I cannot stop dreaming in hourglasses. I cannot get used to my parents accidentally calling my daughter by my dead sister's name.

When I first cut my finger on a glass ampoule, I was 6, and watched the drops of blood mix in with the bronchodilator. I don't recall who prevented this mixture from being inhaled by my toddler sister, but I remember getting mad because it was my turn for her to sit in my lap while she had her nebulizer treatment. *Bread and Jam for Frances, A Bargain for Frances, A Baby Sister for Frances*. I could read to Elise all day long, through dozens of asthma treatments, dramatically reading in competition with the hum of the machine, the warm humidity reaching my long bangs and sticking them to my forehead and hers. I first learned to parent as an older sister.

Unrelated to her 40% lung capacity, Elise had a depression in her chest, a sunken spot, which we might have proudly called pectus excavatum if she had been into Harry Potter. I don't know what she would have been into at 15 or 21 or this year, at 35. When we were 4 and 8, I snuck Cheerios into the bathroom, and she laid back in her bubble bath giggling because I also had a glass of milk. How many Cheerios could fit into her hollow chest, we bet each other. How could we make her body into something else, like a cereal bowl, or a joke.

I can't imagine making a joke about Aloe's body. Her open wounds have blunted my wit and my imagination.

Elise's body parts were distributed all across the country. She died from a brain aneurysm,

suddenly, calling a boy from a stool with her best friend. A brain aneurysm as random as her organ placements. A liver to someone in Georgia. A kidney to Brenda, who sends us Christmas cards from New Jersey. Corneas to children whose parents signed the form that said they didn't want to know the donor family. Parts to science and to medical schools. And the leftover skin and bits, to us, as ashes.

For two decades, I've heard *life-threatening* applied to my sister, my daughter, and myself. I try to process the procedures like an organ procurement agency preps a specimen for transport.

Fluids for preservation, check,
packed onto ice, check,
packaged, labeled, and sent off somewhere else that isn't here, for processing that isn't now.

Because now, Aloe's urgent low alarm has been going off for 5 minutes and she's at a sleepover, calling boys from a couch with her best friend.

Julian Dobson

A millstone pose

Startled after a desiccated year's first frost
to check the allotment water butts and face
ice two fingers thick. Thicker.

Nothing relaxes under pressure. Test, push
gently, up tips a solid disc with a soft splash.
I'm reminded of guys round here who decorate

their gates with millstones. Here's me,
faking Millstone Grit with water, propping
a wheel of ice beside the polytunnel. Ghost-smooth

on its lower side. The upper morained with bubbles,
miniature tumuli molehilled overnight.
Crenellations tooth the rim. And two days on,

a hood of fluffy snow, maned and bearded.
An ice lion with broken fangs, light snagging
on his worry lines. It's vodka-cold, the air brittle

and saddled with diesel. The lion's a road atlas,
highways of split as if vanquished by Romans.
One week later, it's crazed and crystallised

from freeze and melt, their bewilderment of kinship.
The face vital with damage. Its transparency and flow
forfeited in holding things together.

Marie Lambert

The Pole: a novel by J.M. Coetzee.

Liveright, 2023, 167 pp, \$26, ISBN: 978-1-324-09386-2

J.M. Coetzee is hardly known for his love stories. To the contrary, for the past five decades, the Nobel-Prize winner's name and career have become synonymous with some of the darkest periods and thorniest moral dilemmas of the twentieth century. Many of Coetzee's best known works – *Disgrace*, *Life & Times of Michael K*, *Waiting for the Barbarians* – emerged from or were inspired by the social and political upheaval wrought upon his native South Africa by colonialism, apartheid, and repressive authoritarianism. Although it's been nearly two decades since the now-Australian expatriate has published a novel about the country of his birth, the philosophical and allegorical bend of his more recent writing (e.g., *Elizabeth Costello*, the *Jesus* trilogy) does not swerve from weighty ethical situations or existential questions. With such a trajectory, who could expect that Coetzee, in his ninth decade of life (and fifth decade of publication) would take a story of misbegotten romance as the ostensible subject of his latest novel.

The Pole takes no pains to present its premise as a wholly novel one. True, lovers Beatriz and Witold seem a unique, even odd, pair – she, a Spanish banker's wife; he, septuagenarian concert pianist and titular Pole. Yet from nearly the outset of J.M. Coetzee's fifteenth novel, their relationship is cast as a type, drawn in parallel to multiple ill-fated couplings across literary history. The two are first introduced by chance in Barcelona, where the Pole has been invited to showcase his bold reinterpretation of Chopin in concert. A correspondence begins, and it's not long before Witold professes an attachment by means of literary allusion:

'Dear lady,' says the Pole, 'you remember Dante Alighieri the poet? His Beatrice never gave him one word and he loved her all his life.'

Dear lady!

'And that is why I am here: to be informed that you plan to love me all your life?'

'My life is not so long,' says the Pole. (36)

Beatriz is aloof but compelled, despite herself. The relationship seems inopportune, nigh impossible from the start, as she emphasises repeatedly to herself and the amorous Pole. The connection between them is not so much missed (à la Dante and his Beatrice) as comically misaligned. Beatriz is a modern woman, one not content to be slotted into the role of artistic muse quite so easily. The Pole's overtures – made in the stilted, sterile space of international English – smack of a century past. For each statement of devotion, Beatriz has a clear-eyed, rational explanation. In numbered passages of her close third-

person narration, she demystifies and disavows Witold's affections. He is looking for a nurse, she says to herself. Not just a Beatrice, but a George Sand to his Chopin, someone to care for him in the winter of his life.

Despite this resistance, their manifest incompatibility, and the ebb and flow of correspondence over the novel's four intervening years, the diffuse charge between Beatriz and the Pole refuses to recede, even after the latter's death.

In many ways, *The Pole* turns around the question of legacies – artistic or otherwise. As Dwight Garner puts it, 'The novel asks: What does it mean to lead a good, or successful, life? How much of an impression does one have to make?'¹ Through the unfolding of the months-turned-years-long aftermath of a night's chance meeting in Barcelona, Coetzee's novel probes both love and art as dynamic events, forces whose afterlife might allow us to endure beyond the shuffling of the inevitable mortal coil. This notion and portrait of the redemptive potential of art and love will strike familiar chords with Coetzee's longtime readers. So too the ruminations on desire, history, and language that pepper the pair's conversations and Beatriz's close third-person narration.

For this, Coetzee's newest work appears as an exemplary specimen of the "late novel". *The Pole* neatly distills a number of recognizably Coetzeeian concerns and imbues them with the sensibility of an artist settling into the twilight of his career. Much critical and popular reception of *The Pole* has swirled around this sense of lateness – as around the figure of Coetzee, the great artist at the close of his career, here so pointedly evoked in the character of the pianist whose internationally recognised musical achievements can't quite reconcile the feeling he can only partially elicit from Beatriz.

Yet it is through the character of Beatriz that the novel makes its most straightforward and striking challenge to the idea that any individual's legacy – artistic and personal – is a stable artifact worthy of uncomplicated celebration.

After rejecting her role as artistic muse for most of the novel, Beatriz embraces the romantic objectification she'd long protested upon learning of Witold's death.

In the last quarter of the novel, Beatriz learns that Witold has left behind a box containing eighty-four poems, many of which refer to her, qua Beatrice, her alter ego in Witold's heart. The poems are written in Polish and thus incomprehensible to her. Nevertheless, Beatriz is delighted to discover that in the intervening years of silence since their last encounter, the Pole chose to "celebrate" and not forget her. Summoned to come to retrieve the poems, Beatriz finds herself newly charmed:

She too is warming to the Pole, now that she has his testament in her hands. It so happens that she does not go in for grand, hopeless passions – not part of her constitution, evidently – but that does not mean she does not admire grand passions in others. (117)

Alone in his dingy Warsaw apartment, Beatriz entertains a fantasy of publishing the poems and retroactively transforming the unusual relationship into a kind of romantic myth:

She could take the poems back to Barcelona and get someone to translate them and have them hand-printed on rag appear in a limited edition of ten copies, *El libro de Beatriz de W.W.* One copy for the daughter in Berlin, to prove that she, Beatriz/ Beatrice, was no whore, the rest to be stored away in a cupboard for her sons to discover after her death and learn what heights, what depths of passion that mother could inspire, even in her mature years. (116)

No consequential figure or great artist herself, Beatriz, facing the mortality of her ex-lover, now sees poetic objectification as a chance to acquire a legacy of her own – an afterlife of the artistic, if not metaphysical, sort.

However, when it comes to sharing her revisionist romance with new readers, Beatriz is beset with anxieties. After an abortive attempt to decode the poems with Google Translate, Beatriz retains the help of a Polish woman working as a commercial and legal translator in Barcelona. As the translator and her son begin unravelling Witold's late work, doubts arise around the nature and quality of the poetic afterlife Beatriz has secured. What if the poem's erotic details aren't rapturous but vulgar and contrived? Could the Pole's final creative act be motivated not by devotion but revenge? Perhaps this was an attempt to punish her for her distance, her capriciousness, her cold end to the relationship? Was it a gift or a curse to have one's character preserved in the undying world of the literary object – free to circulate among readers, good, bad, and indifferent?

At the same time, Beatriz is troubled and not the least bit jealous that she is necessarily barred from what she imagines to be the full, resonant meaning and expression of Witold's final testament:

Clara Weisz, who is no one to her and no one to Witold, has had access to what was going on in Witold's soul, clearer access than she, for whom the poems were written, will ever have, given that there must be tones, echoes, nuances, subtleties in the Polish that no translation can ever transmit. (147)

Despite their physical intimacy, Beatriz can't deny that a gap remained between her and the Pole, and its name was English. Global English, to be precise, the functional idiom whose neutered tones and rote phrases provide the necessary but not sufficient scaffolding for the lovers' communion.

The gap here is more than a question of linguistic mastery or lack thereof. After all, it is to English that the native Catalanian Beatriz turns to 'reorder her memories and settle on the story she is going to tell herself' after she and the Pole first consummate their affair during a weekend in Mallorca. Yet, when she decides to tell herself, '*She had a fling*,' (98) she wields the English term as an instrument of erasure, denial. The wealth of complex, contradictory feelings sparked by the weekend's intimate encounter flattened into a piece of gossip.

For the singular and cross-cultural encounter it makes possible, the global English of *The Pole* conceals as much as it reveals, obscuring complexity and ambivalence even as it seems to make sense out of incomprehension.

A glance at the novel's production process is instructive here. Per the author's wishes, *The Pole* was first released by Argentinian publishing house El Hilo de Ariadna exclusively in Spanish translation – thirteen months before its English debut. The unusual publication schedule was, the South African-born Coetzee frankly states, an effort to disrupt the dominance that English holds in the landscape of international publishing: to resist, as he puts it, the 'cultural gatekeepers of the metropolises of the North [...] who decide which stories by the South about itself will be accepted into the repertoire of world literature and which will not.'² Any reckoning with *The Pole* as an emblem of Coetzee's literary legacy would be remiss to ignore the degree to which the work - and its author - bears this attention to the uneven cultural politics of the language that shaped its production.

The Pole is the third book-length project of Coetzee's to premiere in this way in the past six years. For the South African, who understands but does not write in Spanish, performing this linguistic protest required an unusually close, prolonged collaboration with Argentinian translator Mariana Dimópulos. In an interview in 2022, the Nobel Prize winner disclosed that Dimópulos contributed to the project not only as a translator but as an adviser whose perspective fuelled significant revisions to Beatriz' voice and character.³

That *El polaco*, the first published form of *The Pole*, appears an intimate collaboration between an ageing artist and a young Hispanophone woman is hard to ignore. This, among other similarities between Witold and Coetzee, invites a natural amount of

breathless commentary. Yet, as far as legacy is concerned, we do a disservice to Coetzee by giving in to the temptation to collapse the distinction between art and life, fiction and biography.

For all that *The Pole* savors the possibility that love, as well as art, can be a vehicle for living beyond our mortal means, then it also provides a check to those who would use the novel to make a summary assessment of Coetzee's own life's work. Through this story of unusual romance, *The Pole* showcases the risks of entrusting one's legacy to either the permeable realm of art or individual memory. When it comes to love and art, none of us can escape the role of revisionist reader. As a not-quite capstone on the Nobel Prize-winner's five-decade-long career, *The Pole* is a playful and deadly serious reminder of this.

¹ Garner, Dwight. 'In J.M. Coetzee's New Novel, Love Awakens an Austere Soul'. The New York Times, 24 September 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/11/books/review/jm-coetzee-the-pole.html>.

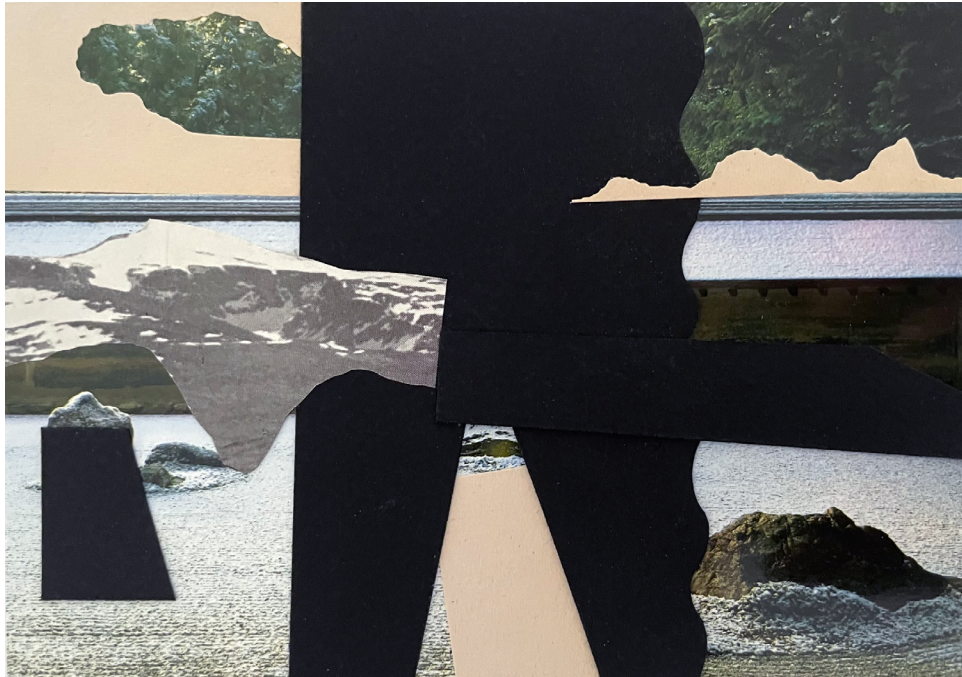
² Akzuna Zentroa – Alhóndiga Bilbao. 'In Conversation: J.M. Coetzee with Soledad Costantini'. YouTube, uploaded by AkzunaZentroaBilbao 28 May 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VNk52t-YPM>.

³ Bradford, Matías Serra. 'Coetzee y su sonata de pasión tardía'. Clarín, July 2022, https://www.clarin.com/revista-n/literatura/coetzee-sonata-pasion-tardia_0_i1houNJA8.html#google_vignette.

Michelle Lynn Dyrness

bon bon il est un pays (The Polarities Project)*





*after Samuel Beckett's poem

Roz Doe

Here, Now

I will not imagine your small body forever stilled.

I hear you giggle as you stroke my underarms.

I choose not to fear your closed blue lips.

I feel the suck of your mouth on my nipple.

I do not dwell on your small lungs empty of air.

I lie in bed listening to your slumbering breath.

I will not picture pulling a dress over your still neck and limp arms.

I chase after you with a vest, laugh at your cross squawks.

But I cannot ignore the unbidden images.

I will always see your uncle's shut eyes, his grazed face.

I will never forget the chill of his skin as I kissed him goodbye.

I caressed his broken head as you grew inside me.

I cannot unknow how suddenly a life ends.

I can decide to be with you here, now.

Might Happen

Already Happened

heart pumps double time quick march

heart beats slowly and to time

cold sweat

race the clock

fractured with delicate silver scar tissue

to find you

no one to find

where are you -----?

no adrenaline to pump

when will you -----?

no need to search

what will you -----?

no one to find

my eyes always keep my phone in focus

my eyes still search for you

watching the screen catch glimpses from their corners

waiting for flashes

they see you in the bearded homeless man

of contact from you

muttering to himself

feet pace round and round and round

feet stuck to the floor

legs shaking, moving, waiting just holding me up

each time you can't be found.

after you've been found.

breath comes in and in and in

sobs fall out and out and out

holding it in letting it go

hold you in

let you go

try to hold onto you ----- no no no no no

brain keeps me up

brain sleeps

running off down different story lines you are
knowing how the story ends with your

beaten up after jumping in someone else's fight
unconscious body found lying still

hanging off the ceiling from your belt
on Brighton's white undercliff path

or disappeared sleeping rough somewhere
by the couple on bikes, who tried CPR

Paul Rooney

Broken Token

[Some words in the following poem are from interviews with Armed Forces veterans Tony, Carol, Yorkie and Chris, recorded in The Box museum, Plymouth in 2024. Some words are from The Broken Token, a folk ballad by anonymous authors, sung by stone-breaker Robert Hard in a vicarage drawing room in South Brent in 1888 and transcribed by Reverend Henry Fleetwood Sheppard, and re-transcribed (and later re-written) by Sabine Baring-Gould into the manuscript for their 1892 folk song collection 'Songs and Ballads of the West, A Collection Made From The Mouths of The People', the original manuscript of which is in The Box archives.]

Title at the top reads: "Cats Scared by Cucumbers Compilation". Another cat jumps in fright from a vegetable. Then another. And another. Opening new tab. Googling in my studio. Now there is a bomb crater, with two men standing above it, examining wreckage. Clicking. Typing. Clicking. Now the page reads: "Search the Archives Catalogue". Typing into the box below. Search results load: "Ref Number 1984, The Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould, Songs of the West Country". Now in the museum, trying to read the hand written manuscript, propped up on a grey cushion on the bright white research room table. Now in my garden something, something... something, something... I erm, longer? L. I. N. G. E. R?... Probably...

Now in my garden I linger...

Now in my...

Now in my garden I linger long,

In the still air of a summer's day,

I see three vetrans there upon the road;

"Stay awhile" I whisper, "Stay awhile" I whisper

"I have a question, stay!"

"When you were fighting in distant lands

Did you think back to the home you left?"

O now my tears they do begin to flow.

“For my dark eyed sailor, For my dark eyed sailor
Has sailed away to war.”

“Please dry your eyes now,” the first man says:
“To answer you we’ll recall the past.
When I sailed down south to The Falkland Isles
All eight thousand miles down, All eight thousand miles down,
To fight that distant war.

I was on a Plymouth ship, The Ardent,”
the veteran explains.
“I was sat on the upper deck thinking:
If I were to just jump off here and break my leg.
I’d get sent back home and I wouldn’t have to worry anymore.
Instantly that thought was wiped out,
because I thought I wouldn’t forgive myself if the ship was hit.
These things go through your mind all the time
because you’re thinking of your family.

And then dawn broke. Cloudless sky.
And they got us. Several bombs.

All the thoughts go through your head:
am I going to get home?
How are they going to get on at home without me?
I can’t die. I haven’t paid for the new caravan yet.
It’s stupid things like that.
Everything’s flashing through your brain.

So we had to abandon ship.
When it happened it was my wife’s birthday.
She was away in the caravan with the kids.
The TV news said an unnamed ship had been hit.
‘It can’t be Ardent,’ she thought. But she knew it was.
It was, sort of, this premonition.
I was invited to write a limited word telegram to her,
telling her that I was ok.
I had to save my last few words to pass on a message
to my friend’s girlfriend,
that he was safe.

We lost 22 on board and who are still down there.
I still think about it.”

Now my phone is lying on the museum table, the Voice Memo app counting the seconds, recording Tony... he is remembering... he is speaking, not singing... The ship’s badge on his shirt. A police siren in the street. The smell of a banana in my bag. The clamouring of the school group is echoing in the Hall outside the door... Now imagine that the children are the bickering, deceiving Gods of Olympus in disguise, tiny wings hidden underneath ankle socks, a Gorgon-headed breastplate under a school jumper... Double click. Now reading the Victorian handwriting again, in a photo of the manuscript... something, something... Zoom in. And again. Blurred. It is difficult to... Three yours... years... erm...

Three years are pass’d since my sailor left,
A ring of gold he took off his hand,
He broke the token, one part gave to me,
Now the other part is, Now the other part is,
Beneath the rolling waves.

The second man says: “The past submerged
Is made anew now in memory,
A pearl torn out of the unsettled depths.
From the starless seabed, From the starless seabed,
The dead come up for air.”

He continues on: “So stop your tears
We’ll recollect our forgotten past.
Like when I set sail for the Persian Gulf
On the Gulf War flagship, On the Gulf War flagship,
To fight that distant war.

We were on the flagship London,” the veteran says.
“The Admiral’s planning room was my sonar room.
We were listening for engine noises of submarines.
8 miles off Kuwait.
There were 411 warships from around the world
in the Gulf of Hormuz when it started.
You could have walked across them all the way to Iraq.
A big problem was the Dear John letters.

While he's been away,
the sailor's wife has maxed out his credit cards,
having fun, and found somebody else.
And he's now surplus to requirements.
That happened on every ship.
It's not an easy life being in the Navy.

Being away for so long,
especially in the olden days,
they were away for years.
Some people got so homesick."

"I joined the Coldstream Guards,"
the third veteran says.
"We took the flight to Afghanistan.
A really steep dive into the airport.
It was lights off, down you go as fast as you can.
Yeah, it wasn't anything nice.
I was 21 then.
The first tour was when the worst of the fighting happened.
When I thought about home
I didn't really think about my mum or dad
because I wasn't close to them.
Some people are really connected with people back home,
and some people just aren't.
A lot of people in my regiment that got homesick,
sort of fell apart a bit,
their girlfriends sleeping with their best friend
or just silly things.
And then you've just got to get a grip on them.
Try and put it in their head to not even think about it.
Because what we mainly have to think about
is the man to our left and right,
no matter what.
Your life is in their hands
and their life is in your hands.

I tried to not think about home
because I had to keep my head on straight."
Hello. One two. Now about to sing the words, printed out on the A4 sheet. Testing

the mic. Hello. One two. Thinking of Robert the old stone-breaker, near the end of his days, as he prepares to dredge a ballad from the depths of deep folk memory like a bard of ancient times... looking down from the immortal heights we see him glance through the window at the manicured vicarage lawn... he spots a white clover flower, missed by the grass shears, quivering all alone, looking, he thinks, like the face of a tiny, moonfaced white kitten about to fall off a coffee table... He probably doesn't think this. Obviously. One two. Now the reverend is waiting impatiently with his notebook and inked quill, or metal nib? Probably a pencil... Waiting to scribble down the words to the song... One two. One two. He is waiting, he is singing, he is remembering, he is forgetting, he is writing... From The Mouths of The People... Penelope, Robert, Tony, Carol, Yorkie, Chris. Now the words are here... weaving, then unpicking again... the caravan, the flower, something, something... the stranger, the cloudless sky, the ring of gold, the bomb, the garden gate...

I thank the veterans for candid words...
My English... something...
My English garden is full of flowers.
A jewelled treasury, a colour blaze
Of tulips, lillies, holy sage in bloom.
Something, something, something, something, something... winter,
In summer born anew.

Here I now linger like in the songs,
As strangers pass, I will wait and watch.
Each moment of time is a garden gate.
Through it my love may walk, Through it my love may walk,
Then everything will change.

Then half the ring will a stranger bring,
I'll be distraught, betwixt love and woe.
Disguised no more then, his fair face unveiled,
For my long-lost sailor, For my long-lost sailor,
Will one day come back home.

Now all three veterans, do speak as one:
"The shining, strange, veiled and broken past
Will upset our world any second now.
When the war is over, When the war is over,
In every ravaged land."

David Sheskin



‘Grandma Moses Painting Two Jackson Pollocks’



'Seven Frida Kahlos Hanging in a Gallery'

Sarah Huxley

Speculating with 'gloss': a poetic-ethnographic encounter with an impact testimonial interview

Dr Sarah Huxley, Visiting Research Fellow, University of Lincoln, UK

A burrowing mole

As I listened to the enigmatic translation and philosophy academic, Philip Wilson, discuss the concept of 'gloss' at the Imagined Geographies conference at UEA, a little mole inside began burrowing. How could such a concept be used in a poetic-ethnographic encounter? What windows of possibility could be opened up? The little mole then mischievously paused, and considered another burrow, the notion of 'impact' in arts and humanities research, and the two burrows conjoined: could poetic inquiry, with a gloss, provide a different vantage point from which to consider the oh-so-often, constrained and taken for granted conceptualisation of 'impact' and more specifically, the 'impact testimonial'.

This paper applies gloss(ing) to a singular poetic-ethnographic encounter, a specific online Zoom impact testimonial interview, conducted as part of my role as a Postdoc Research Associate (2023–2024) on the AHRC-funded Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) project. The paper reflects on the possibilities of the creative method of glossing as a type of poetic-ethnographic analysis, discussing the affordances/otherwise regarding positionality/reflexivity, voice(s), temporality, and the use of metaphor (the 'graphic' in ethnography). Using gloss(ing) as part of a poetic-ethnographic method of analysis is proposed as a way to integrate both arts-based ways of knowing-being (the relational – more than verbal – embodied), and ethnographic (an interpretative act of writing socio-cultural experiences) towards presenting a different vantage point from which to understand 'impact'.

Granted this paper focuses more on the use of gloss/poetry than on the nature/history of ethnography more broadly, because the concern is with the noticing of a micro encounter, capturing a singular moment. Such an acute sensory engagement, through an art form such as poetry (a play-art with words, sensations, memories and imagination), foregrounds how art-based ways of knowing-being can de-stabilise ethnographic norms. In particular, how readers/listeners are encouraged and actively invited to dialogue with their own experiences/knowledges, alongside the ideas/feelings that they are confronted with whilst interpreting the unfolding moment of a multi-voice poem. Micro-moments have power, and yes, impact. If they are done well, they draw the body-mind in.

I begin by considering some of the ways that art, specifically spoken poetry, can provoke a sensing differently: that is a being and engaging with the world around from an aesthetically rich learning environment (Sinclair, 2001). Secondly, I consider what ethnography and poetry are in relation to each other, more specifically what poetic inquiry can enable/open up in relation to ethnography, drawing from alchemist scholars such as Maynard (2009). I then move on to consider ‘gloss’ from a literary translation perspective, that is to say, as interpreted by a participatory arts ethnographer who finds a resonance in the concept to craft and curate. Here I converge on ‘omission and modification’ (Jin et al., 2021), including metaphor, as a form of ‘procedural gloss’ (Roby, 1999). At this juncture, I’ll narrow in, to contextualise the Impact testimonial interview itself within the wider Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) AHRC funded project (2020–2024), before outlining the process of creating the analytical poem. To emphasise the fluid and continually emerging nature of a poem, and the analytical unfoldings, or burrows, within ethnography, I will present two iterations of the poem. Aesthetically one may be more pleasing, but the intention here is not their aesthetics (or creative writing prowess), but rather an effort to lay bare process, choice, and through poetic gloss(ing) to consider if such micro-moments and analysis have something to bring back into ethnography, or to extend beyond, and into other arts-based research. I have an ‘ethnographic hunch’ (Pink, 2021) that they do. I’ll then outline some of the possibilities of the creative method of ‘glossing as poetic-ethnographic’ analysis, before summarising how such methodologies may invite considerations of ‘storytelling’ as a type of empirical evidence, alongside normative/rationalistic endeavours and framings of ‘impact’. Impact can, and must be, broadened to share understandings in Arts and Humanities beyond cold, ‘big data’ lairs; there is also a way that is concerned with plurality, re-contextualisation, felt sensation and more humble partial truths.

Let us begin.

Art as a way of being-knowing: sensing differently

In the context of this paper, art is considered a fundamental form of human expression that is more than valuing aesthetics/beauty alone. It is a mode of encounter and engagement through an aesthetically rich learning environment (Sinclair, 2001) that grapples with processes of imagination. Artful pedagogy enables a relational sensing through symbols, metaphors and bodily expression. Such a pedagogy legitimises visual and performative expressive forms, both popular and traditional, as a legitimate way of being-knowing to discuss matters of social importance, and facilitate imagining alternatives, and acknowledging challenges. Artful pedagogy is a social-political process (Peters, 2016) that purposefully allows space/time for divergence and uncertainty, and Atkinson (2024) reminds us that the fundamental ‘experimental and open-ended nature’ (p. 339) of art is essential for any true learning encounter. There is increasing evidence to

suggest positive outcomes associated with arts-based pedagogical methods, including: (1) enabling diverse forms of participant expression, with restorative, empowering, and therapeutic qualities (Leavy, 2020); (2) addressing children's emotional well-being (Hamilton & Moore, 2004); (3) enhancing empowerment, social inclusion, mental health, and social resilience (Hacking et al., 2008); and (4) promoting social cohesion, empathy, and learning to live together (Catterall et al. 2012).

- Leavy's seminal work on arts-based methods (2020) reminds us that artistic inquiry serves two primary functions concerning group representation: (1) recognition of the familiar and (2) defamiliarization (drawing on bell hooks's framework)
- foregrounds processes of interpretation by the audience (viewer/receiver) in a way that continues to generate new relational knowledge
- allows for some ambiguity (partial truths), via striving to seek a 'balance between clarity and ambiguity, so that intended meanings can be communicated while simultaneously leaving space for audiences to bring their own experiences' (p. 257)
- creates a "third space" via art and inquiry, 'where image and word meet'; this raises the issue of translation and re-presentation across forms of human experience.

This is a pertinent place to briefly position ethnography and poetry, or poetic inquiry, as both are concerned with the truthful, messy pursuit of interpretation and representation.

Ethnography and poetry

According to Ingold (2017) ethnography 'aims to describe life as it is lived and experienced, by a people, somewhere, sometime' (p. 21). It is a speculative methodology focused on '*correspond[ing]* with them, not to speak for them'. It is therefore a series of structured and emergent processes, distilled through an embodied translation across a variety of ways of knowing. Originally defined by anthropologists, through concepts such as 'long term fieldwork', 'anthropological theory', and 'ethical dilemmas', it is now much more widely used in other disciplines, divergent and adapted for different purposes relating to how to convey attributes/social markers of a specific 'culture' (of a defined group/individual). My concern here is with the possibilities of pulling a thread (gloss) from translation studies, and reflecting if/how it may contribute towards an experimental *micro* ethnography of a specific encounter. I am not advocating that all ethnography should be micro, that is to say, emphasising the importance of single encounters/moments. However, I am saying that there can be meaningfulness within such moments, especially when they are inherently imbued with meaning such as through an "interview" and/or in the context of an artistic ontological perspective; a

specific moment (time and place defined) of attentiveness and noticing (Wesseling, 2016) can be equally as important as the patterning of moments over an extended period. Both contain differing assumptions regarding human experience and what is understood as significant. However, both also emphasise the grappling with relationality between self/other, ways of knowing, temporality, and validity/authenticity. I am always interested in the types of ethnography that foreground enlivened and embodied performative ontologies, especially those associated with fun and embracing contradictions (Huxley, 2023). Ethnography, micro or otherwise, holds *plausible* truths, and encourages a ‘leap of speculation’ (Atkinson, 2024), often acknowledging the essence of ambiguity within any human experience, rather than crushing it. Performative writing can embody this ambiguity (Leavy, 2020) and is an interesting thread amongst post-qualitative methods of analysis and dissemination.

It is here that poetry and ethnography (writing ethnography through art as poetry) enriches the ‘mode of representation in anthropology’ (Maynard et al., 2010: 3):

A poet may write more to what one does not yet know; an ethnographer (at least in the classic and positivist sense) writes more to what one already knows. The ethnographic poet and the poetic ethnographer must do both. That is, like the author of historical fiction, the ethnographic poet must try to be faithful to external historical experience, while reaching beyond or through it to an equally true, artful reality, a sense of aesthetics that enhances literal “facts” rather than diminishes them (Maynard et al., 2010: 12).

Poetic ethnography affords attentiveness to the sensory, tacit, intuitive, and, in some instances, sacred aspects of human experience (Weeber and Wright, 2022; Angeles, 2017; Maynard, 2009). Some ethnographers will identify as poets, such as Adrie Kusserow (2024) and others not. Some will focus on the form, aesthetics, and creative writing qualities, whereas others will focus more on the emerging art-making, provocations and co-creation. Both have value, and of course can be present at the same time.

What is ‘gloss’ in translation studies?

Similarly, in translation studies the concept of ‘gloss’ can be aesthetically pleasing and/or highly procedural. However, Cooper’s (2014) consideration of *concepts as processes rather than things*, entailing ‘movement between imagining and actualization’ (p. 36), is very appealing. This movement is not seamless or predictable, rather concepts are dynamic and often marked by disjuncture or friction between what is imagined and what is actualised. This is also an inherent beautiful trouble within ethnography and artistic endeavors. I therefore aim to experiment with the processual concept of gloss, as a way to burrow/unpick poetic-ethnographic writing. I hope this will be useful for

poetic inquirers, arts-based researchers and ethnographers alike.

According to Roby (1999), a historian of foreign language teaching, ‘glosses are many kinds of attempts to supply what is perceived to be deficient in a reader’s procedural or declarative knowledge in language translation’ (Roby, 1999: 96). Although, for Oxford (1995), a scholar of language learning, there are wider possibilities: ‘error correction...a useful learning strategy...a full explanation, a schematic/partial explanation...a leading question...a pictorial representation of a verbal expression...a cooperative learning activity’ (p. 366). My focus for this paper is on ‘omission and modification’ (Jin et al., 2021), that is that the translator/ethnographer/poet can also *explicitly/transparently* add to the poetic analysis, based on their sensory, tacit, and intuitive knowledge of the encounter. This can include metaphor, as a form of ‘procedural gloss’ (Roby, 1999) and modification. Here metaphor is understood through Ortony’s (1975) understanding of metaphor as conveying multidimensional meaning through: compactness, vividness, and inexpressibility. A metaphor is a language construct that is a vivid, imaginative signpost indicating elements of a journey. The reader/listener fills in the gaps with their experience and imagination in a way that adds information not necessarily articulated. Metaphors also, through their poetic nature, allow the expression of the inexpressible. Ethnographers too often value compactness, vividness, and inexpressibility, or rather, giving expression to the seemingly unknown/inexpressible. What using gloss through poetry elucidates is the relational dimensions between the participant, poetic-researcher and reader/listener; all offer shades of partial truths. Before I explain the impact testimonial interview and crafting of the poetic analysis, I’ll situate the context for the impact testimonial.

Mobile Arts for Peace, positionality, and impact testimonies

From 2023–2024 I was the Post Doctoral Research Associate (PDRA) on the Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) applied research project. This was a 4–year international, interdisciplinary applied research project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) in the UK, which began in 2020. MAP demonstrates the value of arts-based methods for everyday peace-building with and for young people in post-conflict affected countries (namely, Kyrgyzstan, Rwanda, Indonesia and Nepal). The research project provided evidence of the gap in how young people can engage decision-makers to affect local and national policy/curricula changes through innovations with living cultural art forms. You can read more about it on the website: <https://map.lincoln.ac.uk/>. I now write as a Visiting Research Fellow.

One of the last tasks I worked on as a PDRA for MAP was to curate and collect impact testimonials; this involved eight impact testimonial interviews with researchers, young

people and project partners. Gathering impact testimonials is a key part of producing a case study for the Research Excellence Framework (2029) in UK Higher Education. I have a particular itch to scratch, regarding the often rather reductionist understanding of ‘impact’, which largely ignores the possibilities of artistic ways of knowing/representations, more closely aligned with the Arts and Humanities. Discussion of this should be a separate paper, however, I want to consider a poetic ethnographic approach concerning a seemingly fixed/banal task for some, and see what possibilities there are for doing an impact testimonial otherwise.

The impact testimonial interview transcript used came from a young (in her early twenties), educated female Nepali researcher from Kathmandu, highly proficient in English. We met October 2024, online on Zoom for one hour, where I conducted a semi-structured interview. I had worked periodically with the young researcher over a year and a half, and we already had a good rapport. Following the interview, I uploaded the video recording into Co-Loop and generated an interview transcript, which I printed out.

The process: creating an impact testimonial poem

I’ll now summarise the somewhat linear stages of crafting the impact testimonial poem. There were two broad dimensions of relationality that I wanted to focus on: my relation with words, and with you – the reader/listener. I will outline the five main steps across these two aspects below:

Relational aspects with words

1. Generating familiarity with the interview transcript. This meant reading through the transcript several times and highlighting words that resonated. I recognised ‘resonance’ as any strong images/reactions that I had to a particular phrase or word. I understood such a body-mind reaction as a type of impact [\[interview impact\]](#).
2. Finding inspiration through reading. There was one chapter on ‘Words of Sense’ by Constance Classen (2019) in a book on Perception Metaphors that I was endlessly curious about. This was part of my background reading focusing on language involving all the senses and expressing sensory phenomena. From this chapter I highlighted words that again had resonance (a strong image/reaction from me); I understood this as another experiential type of impact [\[inspired reading impact\]](#).
3. Defining and adding procedural gloss – this meant considering:
 - a. What’s missing? This involved using my tacit knowledge from other sources

relating to the young interview participant and/or cultural considerations.

- b. What could be modified to build an image, i.e. metaphor? [Let's call this [procedural gloss](#)].

Relational aspects with a reader

4. Use of questions to engage the reader/listener's own images/lived experience/ beliefs etc. [this is a direct acknowledgment of the knowledge that a listener brings; the writer/poet doesn't necessarily share this, and therefore can only guide interpretation, offering a partial knowing.
5. Use of space/ink, i.e. visual representation and aesthetic to emphasise meaning on the physical/digital page is important. [Let's call this [reader impact](#)].

I'll discuss the four types of *poetic informed impact* (shown in blue), above, in the reflective analysis section later. I refer to the totality of all four of these components as 'gloss-ing'. For now, let's think through the materiality of the process through photos.

As the image below shows, I started with five rows of materials on the floor, corresponding to 1–4 above. For the first poem, I focused on the first page only for actions 1 and 2, and then considered 3a, 3b, and 4 on note paper. The use of space/ink I left to craft when I was back at my desk on my computer.

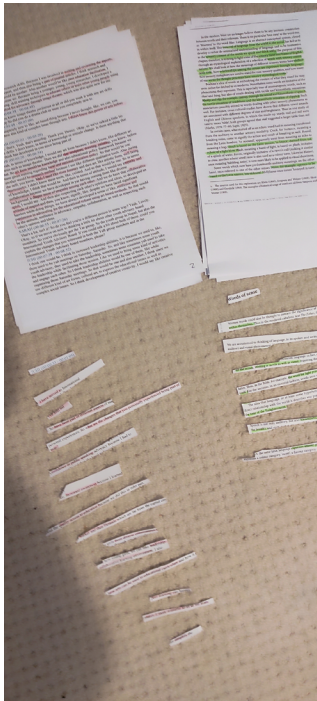


Image 1: a material depiction of the five stages

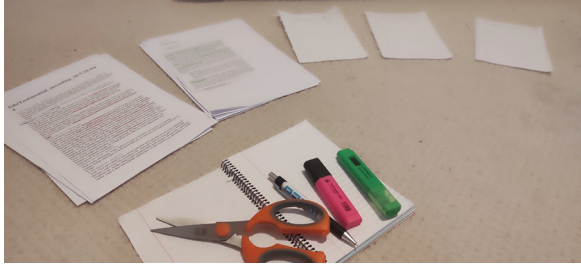


Image 2: highlighting resonant words

Image 2 shows how I highlighted resonant words/phrases in the interview transcript using a pink highlighter and cutting these out. I then did the same for the chapter on Words of Sense but using a green highlighter instead. Image 3 shows a centre column of handwritten notes; this included something I thought may be missing, or a new metaphor, or question I thought may be useful for the reader.

Between the poem's first iteration, and the second, I kept cutouts of resonant words/phrases in separate envelopes. Whilst somewhat linear, this was an iterative process of interweaving and adding/editing.

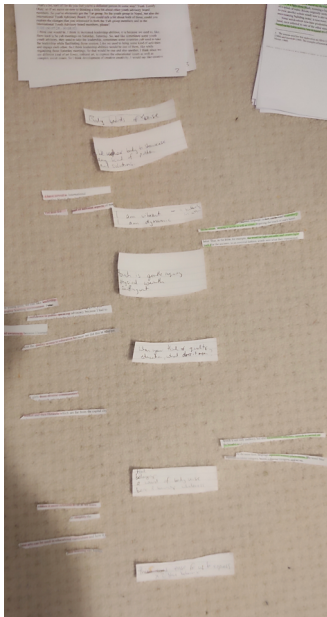


Image 3: adding missing content, metaphor and questions

It was essential to share two iterations of the poem to displace the false fixity that is often conveyed unintentionally in both ethnography and poetic inquiry, and in a way seeking to be more transparent and truthful in the writing, the translation/interpretation of what is recorded, so we can begin to see what a gloss can afford.

Poem: Version 1/ Part A

This version focused on using only the first page of the interview transcript, allowing me to experiment with the method.

Body sense

We use our body to show (case)
any kind of problem and
solutions.
I've served
I've led, different aspects

I am vibrant
I am dynamic – a peacock in motion.

Language involves all the senses.
Writing is tactile, visual
Requiring the touch of one's hand.

Touch is gentle inquiry
Physical warmth
Sniffing out light.

The word for light precedes and creates light itself.

Young girls, we can take leadership
creating collaborative learning environments.
Confidence in public speaking
Increased awareness, because I learned
About quality access to education

When you light sense quality education
What does it mean for you?

We did this in rural parts,
Girls from diverse communities
Surket and Hetauda.

Speech is not only auditory, but also kinaesthetic, olfactory
(speech is carried on the breath)
(speech is carried on the breath). At the same time,
language expresses sensory phenomena.
The word blue
expresses a colour category.

Blue belonging
A word of body sense
Being and knowing wholeness.

We use our body to make
It more relatable to us as we learn
To simplify
How arts can be used in educational curriculum and how
Peer learning can happen.
It is ease for us to express (image theatre).

Blue belonging
A word of body sense
Being and knowing wholeness.
Preceding and creating itself.

Poem: Version 2 / Part B

For the second version of the poem, I continued to cut out resonant phrases from the rest of the interview and article text. I played around with the order of the words, seeking to find aligned content, but also developing a narrative. I left a few weeks between returning to the poem to allow a fresh perspective, and this gap in time was an attempt to release any attachment that may have formed to certain phrases.

Standing among

They respected what I said
Inquirers, light curious
Part of writing journal articles
Structure and form, not in my mother tongue
How we code, how we bring the theme
Writing and reviewing reports.
There was a removal of language from the world to the mind: we must let go

Space to talk, e-a-s-e for us to express
To educate other young people: how can the time and stretch of ease be valued more?
We use our body to showcase any kind of problem
We had to make a single image using all our bodies
In the context of Nepal, we made a hill of life, then the river, then, the island of hope
From the mountain or hills, the river flows, and we go to the hills
Sculpture, a collective sculpture of bodies simplifies complex social issues
Shaping bodies, minds, bodies know
To understand is to stand under or among;
knowing was less like seeing, than like holding.

Retention of knowledge
Educators incorporated more participatory and creative methods
Increased student participation
She was a girl, she thanked me
We talked about issues they don't usually talk about in their community
We showed a problem image and a solution image
Blood
From the mountain or hills, the river flows, and we go to the hills.

Words express sensory experience and condition thought,
The tactile sensation of mushiness and the kinaesthetic sensation of slipping.
We think through our senses; undergoing sensory shifts.
Holding
Blood
From the mountain or hills, the river flows, and we go to the hills.

Words do not simply illuminate a subject, but cut into it.
Bodies know, to understand is to stand under or among;
knowing was less like seeing, than like holding.

I originally intended to create one 'final' poem from version 1 and version 2. However, I relish the journey of a poem, as unfinished, because this aligns with the authenticity of a story, a story of impact never being quite complete, a mischievous satisfaction in a partial knowing – a reluctance to use the proverbial full stop. A fuller knowing lies in how readers/listeners receive and re-work the piece. Artistic methods force a degree of letting go, which can often feel at odds with mainstream research goals to present an all-knowing voice; this is simply disingenuous. Poems (like concepts) are movements, journeys of crafting, meaning-making offering *glimpses* of truth and imagination,

interweaving memories with future possibilities alongside a tight grasp of the aliveness of the present. Neither poems, nor concepts, nor ‘impacts’, are dead, pinned, stand-alone artifacts (or things).

Analysis: what does gloss-ing as a method of poetic-ethnographic analysis generate?

Whilst feelings, relationality and connections between and beyond participants, writers, art form and readers can seem hard to articulate, and the patterning of words at times restrictive, let us now return to considering if/how ‘gloss’ can contribute towards a sense of aesthetics that enhances ‘literal “facts” rather than diminishes them’ (Maynard et al., 2010: 12).

What are the possibilities of the creative/relational method of ‘glossing as poetic-ethnographic’ analysis concerning the four types of poetic-informed impact that constitute it?

[Interview impact] – resonance as a body-mind reaction for the researcher/writer.

In the impact testimonial, I noticed that I was drawn to two types of resonance (Graber et al., 2020). The first being the ways the participant was conveying embodied ways of knowing, e.g. ‘the body to show’, and secondly, words I deemed as factual references, e.g. place names or specific behavior/knowledge changes, such as confidence building, and this continued into part b. However, here I was also concerned with the more lyrical phrases that the participant herself brought into our conversation, for example, the phrase ‘from the mountain or hills, the river flows, and we go to the hills’. This was a way of describing an adaptation to a monitoring tool called a ‘river journey’, which the participant adapted to the geographical context of Nepal.

[Inspired reading impact] – resonance (a strong image/reaction from me) inspired by wider reading.

In this case, the chapter on ‘Words of Sense’ (Constance, 2019), which explores how in English (this could of course include other languages), sensory phenomena can be expressed, including how this has evolved. In some ways, this reading and language helped me to be playful in the poem and invite the reader to be body-mindful of how language is working on them; that the journey of words and language is heavily constructed to affect, probe, suggest, and confront. ‘To understand is to stand under or among; knowing was less like seeing than like holding.’ Here the language is trying to minimise the distance between writer and reader, guiding the reader back into the physical, visceral being with other bodies, which echoes the image of the ‘image theater’

method being described by the impact testimonial.

In many ways, glossing needs to be a part of the other three types of impact – as it is conversational text that holds with other texts. The ‘black’ gloss lines in the poems themselves do not stand alone – they hold with the other aspects of impact. Together, do they offer a greater whole (as form and content) than individually?

[Procedural gloss impact] – drawing from the translatory understanding of gloss as a consideration of what’s missing (Jin et al., 2021), and adding image/metaphor?

This involved using my tacit knowledge from other sources relating to the young interview participant and/or cultural considerations; as well as what could be modified to build an image, i.e. metaphor, to strengthen the effect of the impact testimonial’s words. Here, questions of how much, or how far do you go, are valid. The key is to share what you choose to do, and why. In my case, I didn’t want to say too much and take away from the impact of the testimonial and the reading/chapter words – so I endeavored to be minimal. For example, a clarification of ‘Sculpture’, through adding ‘a collective sculpture of bodies’, was an attempt to remind the reader of the physical tool of ‘image theatre’, whereby the girls represented social problems and solutions by holding their bodies, collectively, statically, in particular ways to convey their representations of problems and solutions.

[Reader impact] – this is slightly different, relationality is overtly understood to be with the reader now, rather than with words/text. This is achieved through the use of questions as well as shape/form of the text on the page.

Poetry is inherently interested in ‘voice’, including multiple voices, and holding a space and pause for the reflection and interpretation of the reader/listener (who is often ignored somewhat in other research methodologies). The writer/researcher can guide interpretation through space/form of text on the page, but always must ‘let go’ a part of the wholeness of the poem, which is only completed once it is read/spoken. This is the ‘third space’ that Patricia Levy (2020) refers to. I indented different voices and showed them in different colours to assist the reader’s interpretation. For example, pink for the impact testimonial voice and black for my researcher’s interjections, in this instance, offering a clarification:

Part of writing journal articles

Structure and form, not in my mother tongue

Poetic inquiry amplifies ethnographic questions, regarding positionality/reflexivity,

voice(s), temporality, metaphor (the ‘graphic’ in ethnography) (see also ‘Words I Should Have’, a forthcoming poetic essay in *Anthropology and Humanism*). There should be an intention and transparency with the choice of words used in impact testimonials, and aspects of impact relating to: Whose words are prioritised or resonate? Why? How can you show multivocality in an impact testimonial? Therefore, poetic inquiry through glossing does enter into an explicit dialogue regarding the affordances/otherwise of reflexivity, voice(s), temporality, and the use of metaphor (the ‘graphic’ in ethnography). Using gloss(ing) (the four parts), as part of a poetic-ethnographic method of analysis is proposed as a way to integrate both arts-based ways of knowing-being (the relational – more than verbal – embodied), and ethnographic (an interpretative act of writing socio-cultural experiences) towards presenting a different vantage point from which to understand ‘impact’. Granted this example is more about the poetry in some ways, because it captures a singular moment. However, what is apparent is that the art-based technique/form of poetry allows an ethnographer to unpick, play with and refashion the ways of sharing research, which foregrounds the interpretivist act itself. Ultimately, calling attention to the nuance and complexity of impact *storytelling*. Impact testimonials are a journey, a movement – a story.

Conclusion: the art of poetic-ethnographic storytelling as ‘impact’

As we emerge from our burrow, I hope to have problematised the neoliberal way of often conceiving of the form and knowledge generation of ‘impact evidence’ as something taken for granted. Creating an impact testimonial is a highly crafted endeavor, shaped by layers of assumptions regarding knowledge production, including that the voice(s) must be objective and distant from the content. Poetic inquiry allows for considerations of ‘storytelling’ as a type of empirical evidence (Ingold, 2011), alongside normative/classification endeavors, and framings of ‘impact’. The method of analysis through ‘glossing’, offers one way of attempting to do so.

The arts must be brought back into ways of understanding-holding-impact, and not relegated to the sidelines. Arts (visual, performative, creative acts) put forward considerations of other values e.g. affect, felt experience, challenge, and digression, as well as the proposition that knowing is *through* making/creating, alongside thinking, and not just a cognitive endeavor (Wesseling, 2016). There is certainly more to be understood about art/poetry as impact, and I am always drawn back to Lederach’s work on *The Moral Imagination* (2005), with one foot in what exists, and one foot beyond this, when I churn this over. However, I hope that the de-construction of a singular impact testimonial begins to convey how ‘fact’, imagination, and memory, through a relational lens can propel being-knowing forward. Impact has to be relational and art/poetry insists on focusing/examining the felt nature of the relation between poet/

audience and ways of knowing as form and process/making, not just outcome. It is made and re-made continuously, each reading/listening opening up a partial truth, an extension of an aspect of knowing/being, mirroring back or sideways – like an octopus’s arms – transient, multiple; burrowing through the importance of both the meaning of the parts, and the totality, in flux.

This, of course, is only one way of a poetic ethnographic encounter – see for example the fascinating work on documentary poetry by the EASA Creative Anthropologies Network, which encourages us to think differently about how we work with the worlds we study, and how we address ethical complexities. A complete piece of research could use different styles of writing, with different intentions and stages of co-creation, bringing artistic knowing-making into the ethnography, much more centrally, and not simply as an analytical method and form of dissemination.

Finally, I appreciate translation studies colleagues for their creation of the concept and method of ‘gloss’. To gloss, or gloss-ing is understood, not as *to gloss [cover] over, or to make visually shiny [pleasing]*, but rather an attempt to engage/create further questions and to present *interactive extensions* of felt thought/sensation, from different vantage points. To unfurl the richness of human inquiry. It’s up to you to decide if this is superficial luster or illuminating. What holds you?

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Joe Lugara took up painting and photography as a boy after his father discarded them as hobbies. His works depict odd forms and objects, inexplicable phenomena, and fantastic dreamscapes, taking as their basis horror and science fiction films produced from the 1930s through the late 1960s. Mr. Lugara's work has appeared in more than 20 publications and numerous exhibitions. His paintings were recently featured in *The Harvard Advocate* and his photos in the *Denver Quarterly*. His photography book, *The Indicators: 127 Sci-Fi Scenes*, is available through Barnes and Noble. www.joelugara.com; www.instagram.com/joelugara

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David Sheskin, a self-taught artist, created his first work of art at the age of 40. His initial efforts were pen and ink drawings followed by acrylic paintings, sculpture, collage and digital images. Over the years his work has been exhibited and published extensively. Among the places his art has recently appeared are *Palooka*, *DIAGRAM*, *Shenandoah*, *Cleaver Magazine* and *Stonecoast Review*.

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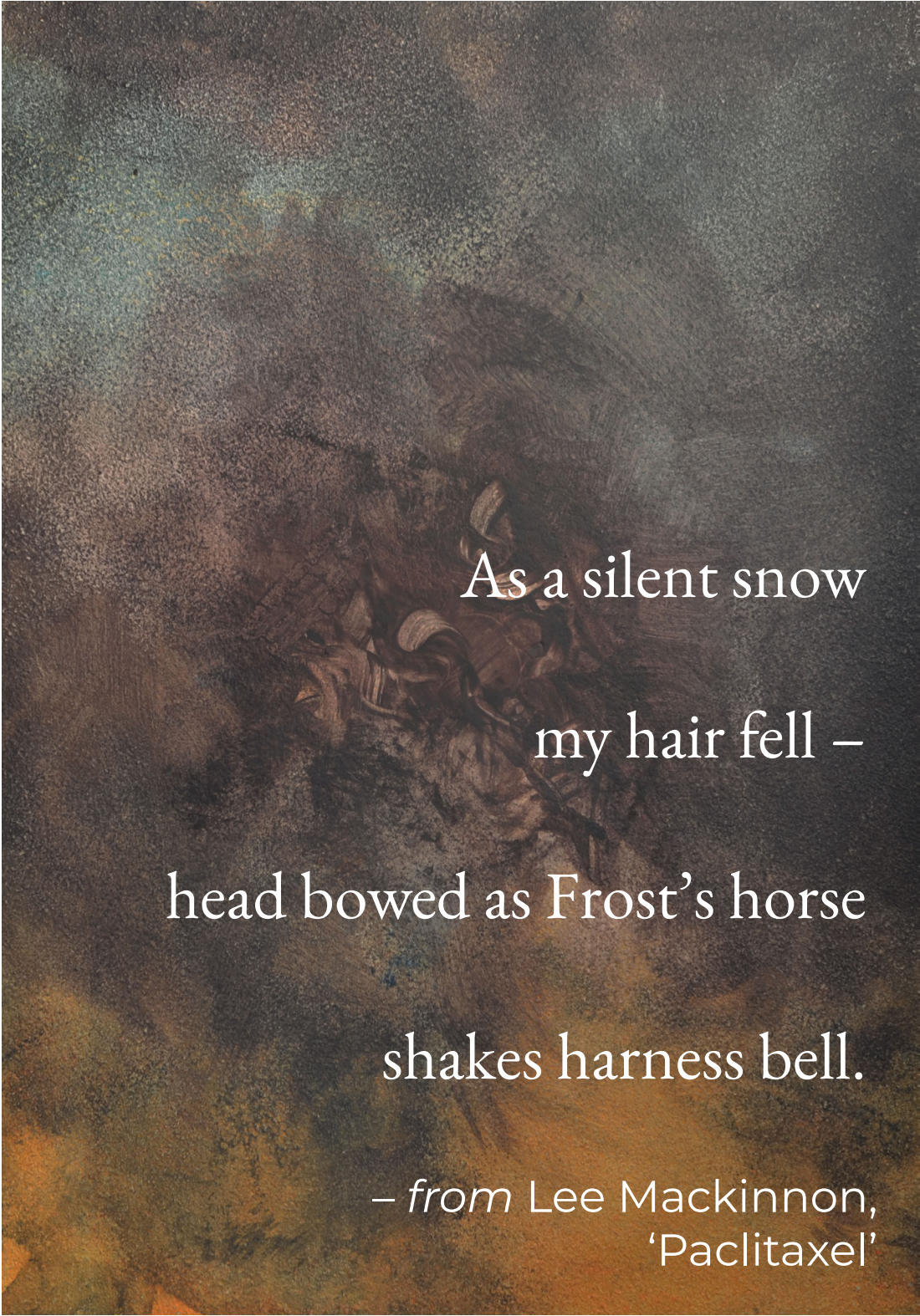
Vitaliano Trevisan was an Italian screenwriter, playwright, actor, and writer of several books, including the novels *I quindicimila passi* (2002), *Works* (2016), *Black Tulips* (2022), and story collections *Shorts* (2004) and *Grotteschi e arabeschi* (2009). His work often depicted the province of Vicenza, where he was born in 1960 and died by suicide in 2022.

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PHOTO CREDIT: Chris Record, 2025: Professor Alan Michael Parker.



As a silent snow
my hair fell –
head bowed as Frost's horse
shakes harness bell.

– *from* Lee Mackinnon,
'Paclitaxel'