

The **Kleksograph**

An international review of art and the subconscious

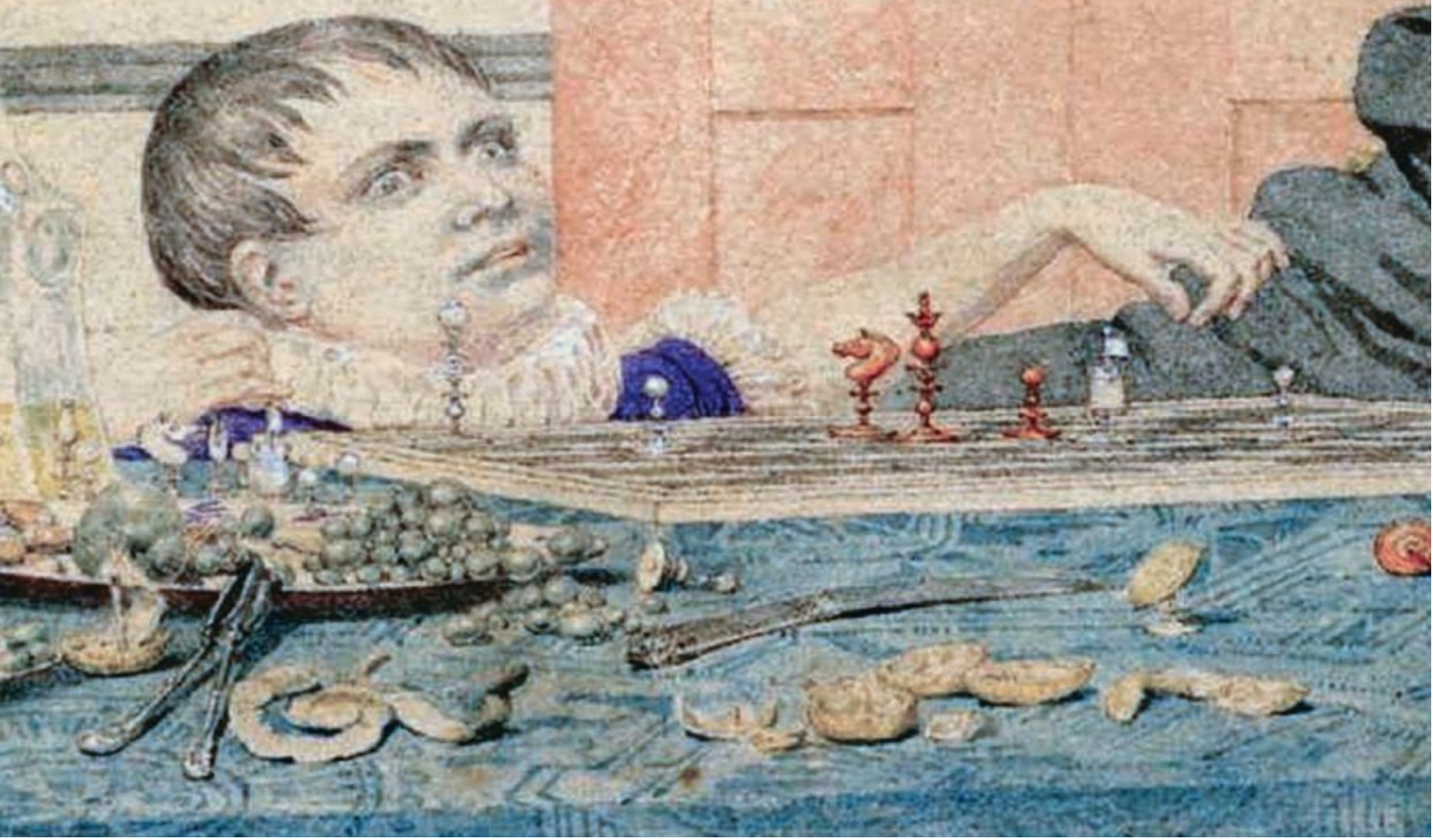
issue 14, May 2024

Article: Art from a Bedlam Cell - Richard Dadd

**Prose by Annie Bell, Gary Bolick, Nicolla Vallera,
Rebecca Pyle, Pauline Barbieri, Ian C. Smith, & LB
Sedlacek**

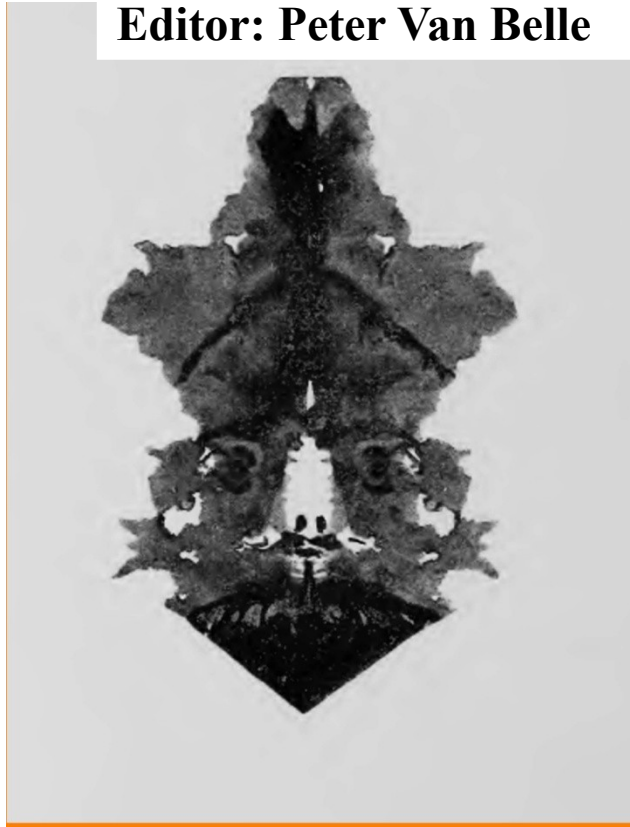
**Poetry by David Radavich, Ray Miller, Alison Black,
Paul Murgatroyd, Maria Arana, Craig Kirchner,
& Rikki Santer**

**Artwork by Hollie Bell, Richard Dadd, Rebecca Pyle,
& Willem Johan Barbieri**



THE KLEKSOGRAPH

Editor: Peter Van Belle



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In the mid-nineteenth century, Justinus Kerner, published his book of “Kleksographien”. Later psychologists used similar ink blots as a means of accessing the subconscious of their patients. The Kleksograph is dedicated to exploring and celebrating the relationship between the subconscious and art.

Cover: illustration fragment from *The Child’s Problem*, by Richard Dadd, 1857

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Annie Bell

Demon

I stand here, frozen, as my treacherous mind draws, in reflection, on your grey-blond hair: how it matched the sallow, yellow tone of your wrinkly skin: pinkish white, tinged golden, as if viewed through Sellotape.

I sit here, as unease creeps up the back of my neck, picturing your tiny, cruel eyes, framed by that royal blue liner that never smudged into the leathery furrows of your frown lines. I recall the expectation of my deference, in the smiling indifference of your expression: how it switched, in a flash, to contempt, when my back was turned.

I lie here, tormented - my self-worth still tainted by you - recoiling, recalling the fictions you dreamt up in your twisted and tangled mind. To fight, flee, freeze or fawn? Response triggered - my cheeks tingle as they tingled then, when I fawned over you, fled from you, froze up when faced with you and again, when I finally fought you. Adrenaline wasted. Damage done - again.

I gaze through the gauze of my memory, as you wander behind it, undermining and demeaning me from within.

And I wonder how it is that your lack of expression and want of compassion still haunt me.

The warrior smiles,
because soon she will vanquish
the demon within.

Hollie Bell
My Demon



David Radavich

Thinking of Kafka

Body is an aching prison.

Yet it remains
the fortress of consciousness

against which the soldiers
are charging, charging

with bayonets, catapults
and the plumes
of determined uniforms.

It is all one can do
to confess and hope,

to scrape diary entries
onto stone walls
that someone
someday may read,

to try again to sleep
amid sleeplessness
without dreams

amid the stale, musty air
of self that belongs
here in the end

a martyr's song.

David Radavich

Ruins II

Here is a collection of eyes

that once saw something
memorable—extraordinary—
but now are closed.

Scattered like dusted coins.

The stories they might tell
if tallied, reconfigured.

The dry soil is all
too welcoming,
an unofficial grave

of some war
that no one wanted.

No one won.

Let the bones somehow
get up and dance—

a new life on some future
planet of possibilities,

a mine of miracles.

Gary Bolick

Ruminations on a Stilled Point of Light

(dropping stones)

“What are the reciprocal relationships that take place on a dynamic or fundamental level when the four basic elements interact? How are we to define the notions of “essence”, “body” and “spirit?”
Jabir ibn Hayyân

More dream, than conversation. He reminded me of so many, and no one at all. His hand tapped the cover of the book sitting on my café table: Hesiod: The Theogony, then leaned over and whispered, “The most beautiful creature Man has ever imagined—Venus, drips and oozes the blood of a Titan’s testicles. She keeps us all up at night. Ever wonder what’s behind that double-edged projection? Haven’t read that far, yet? Buy me a drink?”

Four hours later, still in in St. Germain, the Latin Quarter, at an Islamic book store, desperate to find Jabir’s Sixty-Nine Treatises. It was one phrase he used—skimming it quickly, back and forth—there, I feel foolish, on the first page,

“When speaking of the animal’s design, contained therein, is theory, not practical application.”

He called Jabir, the Islamic world’s—Einstein, only a thousand years earlier. Now his words from the café were to mix with the source: Jabir, turning my head into a forge heating the bain-marie. The mixing and matching of words burned, melted and sublimated to form fluttering, floating multi-colored wings or powdery shavings to be dropped on a fire raging in the center of my head.

“Jabir was light years ahead of us,” he said, “understood a reversal was in order. Walk it back. Direct the probe inward. Find the point where that odd, two-legged, hot-wired monkey became Man, began to dream, reverse it and—go deeper.

“Dreams? A lot of fog and mist, soothing, but cloaks—everything; creates a life in arrears. It’s all we have, or is it? Where do we end up if we roll it back past the point where we began to dream? Ah, yes, but how?

“Build a stinking, hot-house lab in the desert. Sweat and swear over a forge, drop any and all concoctions, stir and watch as the liquid in the bain-marie—dazzles. A real lab? No, but useful metaphors for snapping, breaking down all logic, thought, but most of all dreams. All to prove that the hot-wired monkey staring back from the mirror is little more than an empty vessel, desperate to find a meaningful link to the world, but most of all—himself.

“Disarm so as to disrobe the conscious man. Let the big dog—the unconscious, your own self-designed Cerberus, all three-heads snarling and hungry—hunt! Follow him—down as he shreds, tears and mauls through a king’s ransom of buried—suppressed gold. Gold? The philosopher’s stone? Just a slight-of-hand to justify a metaphysical rumination, or if you will, to allow the alchemists to

work undisturbed. An illusion for the rest of us, the shills. Another dream on which to drape tinsel and hang baubles. Something we could chase, then call it living, while they plumbed the depths undisturbed, alone—content.

“Jabir, the other alchemists, had no interest in gold or a philosopher’s stone. They were after the slip-stream, a foothold onto and into the expansion of light. A few hours in the lab to quiet the mind, jump a beam of light, stop time—where the fun starts—as they step through the outside of themselves into a borderless, boundless expanse of indifferent perception.

“A moment-minute-hour or two toiling in their labs compresses all that was, will be or imagined down into a fine powder. Sprinkled onto the open flame, all conception-perception and illusion of life is extinguished and rises in a peacock’s tail of color leaving: no barriers, no self, just an empty vessel for the expanding light of the universe to stream in, through and transport them out.

“The rest of us? Telescopes wrestling with a cloudy night; shadows haunting our own universe. We look back and down, return to walk a familiar road amassing a grab bag of random impressions, ideas and experiences, to mold and fashion something resembling the same creature we last saw . . . yesterday, and ‘tomorrow and tomorrow creeps’ . . .”

His voice trailed off as he shook his head, rolled his eyes—smiling, continuing,

“Sorry, Shakespeare is not to be denied. Yes, Jabir. He found a stilled point at the center of himself, and somehow—remained intact. Amazing, could turn it off and on like a light switch. No fear, paranoia, psychosis, just this astounding portal into . . . us.

“My old man left me a copy of his book, along with his last, no, his only letter; a long one, telling me where he was and why he was there. By the time I found him, he was dead. Where? Yes, in the desert.

“His letter said that he was tired of being a shill for his dreams. He wanted to walk straight into the sun in a place that had no distractions, abstractions or interactions to water down his senses.

“His spot—there in the desert—was the old Salt Lake Line, in the American west. Started walking the forgotten train track until he found the remnants of an abandoned line shack. There, he pieced together a restoration of: ‘Something that was never there to begin with. When I finished building it, I could see that it was beginning to work,’ is what the letter said.

“‘Build something that will never matter in a place that has no life or meaning so as to open yourself up to perfect perception. If not this, then what and where and how? And when I thought that—it happened—the desert—sighed.’ That’s the part of the letter that got me interested in the book, and started nagging me like a bad rash or woman I desired, but couldn’t bed.

“‘It will always begin and end in this desert, the letter said, ‘for every grain of sand there, embodies a mirror of a random, unchecked particle or wave of light that will and can be experienced—uncluttered through—me—here in the desert. A

perfect closed loop that would make even Gödel smile. A place where you cannot avoid stripping out each and every illusion.’ And-”

He held his hand up, took a long breath, his eyes closed, his temples throbbing, pulsing, then expanding and reducing as if twin serpents were gliding past, just under the surface of his skin. I wondered, then, if I had just witnessed dragon biting its tail . . . the circulating light—there, through him?

When he opened his eyes, my own met—his. The jolt I felt, I was sure, was just an involuntary reaction, a self-inflicted pang of surprise. Yes, I was convinced, until I saw the young woman in his line of sight. She reached down, and began rubbing her leg, checking for a pin-prick, a barb, then looked in our direction, and smiled, her face flushed, then glowing.

“Old man, in that last letter—screamed, yes, screamed off the page. I still hear it, even here and now, deafening ‘Pay it son, pay it off! Everything!’”

“That’s when I began to thumb through the book, Jabir’s Treatises. Made me manic, twelve hours glued to the pages; they breathed. With each breath, I was pulling in or rather my breathing was beginning to match his, in his slot of time—there in his lab.

“I was a plumb-bob dropped into a well—me. A straight line down through consciousness-unconsciousness until I saw black, total vacuum of light that, then spread up-out and well, yeah, like a drill reversing its polarity: pressing down, but spinning up.

“Put the book down, looked straight up into the sun, down at my hands, over to the range of mountains that had become like ghosts, throbbing and waving in the heat. My senses were no longer separate. A gust of wind held me like I was in-utero. When I glanced over at a ’42 Hudson hubcap the old man had nailed to the wall, my face rounded, gleaming, arching . . . I watched as it all dripped down and melted down through the sand, then reflected back up, offering me as many questions, reflections and portals as they were grains-mirrors-sand.”

He paused, closed his eyes, smiled and whispered,

“And I was dead-cold—sober. It was then, I understood what and why the old man meant when he wrote, ‘Pay it off? No, not money, the debt, the mortgage owed on your dreams. Erase them all. Interest on illusions overwhelms all sense and purpose. Dissolve down into your own hollow vessel so that you can crystalize, sublimate into a sense that can attach to a point in the light that ignores the nagging reminders haunting the rear-view mirror; that refuses to accept all the litter behind you as real.”

Pausing, again, he closed his eyes and almost seemed to be losing mass as he smiled; becoming more hologram than man. I nodded to the waiter and he brought another absinthe and a side of water.

Looking out into Boulevard St. Germain, I saw the ghosts of the Café de Flore rising up from the cobblestones: Brèton, Camus, Man Ray and more, entering and exiting, their voices, their words, forming constellations burning around and through us. Looking over at him, he was staring at me, smiling.

“See? Sticks to the membrane—here. Breathe in the air and it returns, still, it’s all just more highway trash. More detritus and refuse dropped from a rolled-down window. A dream, living in arrears. S’why, I love the desert, I stayed and studied his, Jabir’s book, there. The desert is the closest imitation to what Jabir achieved in the center of his own consciousness. The only place you and I can begin to flirt with the basic elements, clear ourselves of us.”

Looking at the absinthe and water, he shook his head, then picked up the small carafe of water and whispered,

“Take this carafe of water, then scan the room. There, that man, perhaps he sees a “still life,” part of a Cezanne painting, the man adjacent only thinks of just another way to quench his thirst. Go across the room, and him? The laborer about to inhale his sandwich? Notice his hands, he already has a beer. Water? Wash up. His friend, already neck-deep in his soup, but still can’t keep his eyes off the co-ed. I’m sure he’d love to slowly dribble it over her blouse, watch it sculpt and mold around her breasts.

“Me, reminds me of the last time I made love. She and I were coupled as intensely as two humans can possibly be, yet we were still reaching and touching and feeling two separate things. Understand?

“Descend down, then go past where you were before the universe was even a possibility, that’s where the basic elements of your emptied and quieted self—flower. In the essence of your own basic elements, find the hum and jitter, the vibrations popping in the membrane lining the expanding light that never pauses.

“Yes, find that—pause, where even light cannot decide if it will continue as a particle or a wave; where time is—stilled—redemptive, forbidding all argument. Jump the light, enter the loop. A loop so quick, clean and sure, you find yourself in two places at once; Sisyphus, simultaneously, standing at the top and the bottom of the mountain. Pushing the boulder off and watching from below as it descends. Is Sisyphus a particle or a wave in the beam of his own light?

“Staying there? Us? Whoa, now! Hovering for more than a moment will not so much kill, but compress you down to a fine powder; readying you to be sprinkled into the flame. Not bad, really, to move on to the next level in a burst of refracted light. Still, the thought of it makes my knees start to buckle.

“The old man wrote of his stilled point; a sort of gift from the ancients, where the black hole is always widening. Called it an organic shutter: ‘The mind’s eye becoming a camera, the shutter expanding as it exposes one dark secret after another. But what if it gets stuck-open, son? He was a friend of mine.’”

He stopped, and left me for an extended moment. No, he was still seated at the table, but—absent. Yes, he was an empty vessel. When he surfaced, and tried to light another cigarette, his hands shook to the point of dropping his lighter. Embarrassed, he stared at the floor, but was unable to move. I reached down, recovered the lighter, placed it on the table in front of him—nothing.

Suddenly, the clatter, chatter and drone of the café crowd disappeared. We both turned and smiled. The front door was being held open for an elderly couple,

their nodding heads, glistening, hard frozen gray eyes—gracious and flickering, like a candle-flame desperate to stay burning, drew attention—senses through the double-front doors—opened and out.

No sounds from the café or street, only that of a flock of sparrows filling a tree Medusa-like across the boulevard washed in and through both of us. He nodded, whispered,

“An ignoring sigh, even a superficial connection to the greater expanding universe . . . light eliminates—us. We, the hot-wired monkeys are just an odd, awkward nuisance. Hurts to hear it, doesn’t it?”

He lit another cigarette, took a long deep, then when he started speaking of his father again, his tone became quiet and fragile; an octave lower as it struggled, paused, pushed, then finally extracted words, that only a few minutes ago, flowed freely. And now rather than refer to him as the old man he called him: Daddy.

“His . . . Daddy’s friend was named Sal. Quiet and hard-eyed, never saw anything, no. Sal’s eyes had become portals, widening black holes, shutters that expanded to suck up, no—siphon, everything he encountered. Hollow, with absolutely no hope, no—reason to fill up. Had taken up permanent residency on a stilled point of light.

“Approaching his farm, Sal heard the cries and moans a quarter mile away. One was higher pitched and hysterical, the other, forlorn. Sal was called ghost, he was a trapper without equal; surprise a deer in an open field, pick up a sleeping bear cub, scratch its ears and not wake it, or the mother.

“Sal appeared in the bedroom door, his little boy’s throat had been cut; his body tossed into a corner. His wife, Minnie, was tied to the bedposts, one had finished, and was watching as the other began to violate her.

“He was quiet and meticulous, the sheriff told daddy. Guted and fileted, those two drifters, put ‘um up in the smoke house. Sal fed them to his hogs. He buried his wife and son under a large willow overlooking a bend in the Yadkin River. Sal never stepped back into himself—ever.

“Daddy said, I’ve only known one man who was cast out—permanently—into the indifference of the universe; forced to live on a stilled point for what remained of his life.

A man who was dropped head first into the forge and burned down to a fine powder. Nothing left but the basic elements through which to reconstitute . . . no, not a life, but a testament and a reckoning.

“‘There is no time,’ Sal told Daddy, ‘Inside of what I once called—me is a just a blank sense of being—here. Funny, inside of stopped time and light, it, everything is an imprint—frozen, a photograph that is begging for a history, story, purpose or solution. Nothing, though. I can’t even make up a reason, or spin a tale, or feel the slightest connection to it.’”

He rubbed his cigarette out and smiled, then started tapping the café table with his index finger, then shook his head and whispered,

“Two portals, camera-eyes frozen open; riding a beam of light—expanding—Sisyphus pushes the boulder off the cliff, then watches as it hits him square—between the eyes. So? Want another drink?”

Ray Miller

A Poet Apprehended In Church Street

She catches him up and tells him how much
they all miss that laconic delivery,
enthusing about the open mic
at the Abbey Café of a Thursday.

He remembers clambering up on stage
too early, too late, the high coming from
how loud the crowd has applauded,
or lighting turned down like a thumb.

That utterance of himself being heard,
a piano stuttering down terrace steps;
his mouth dried up and a sideways look
at the bar so reflective and wet.

She says they've started serving beer
and the venue is small and intimate;
the iambic rise and fall of her breasts
is blinding him to their pointlessness.

Alison Black

Echo & Narcissus

My ex foster family were controlling,

I left them behind,

For pastures new.

No regrets,

Hurt though,

Pain showing.

I rose above the embers,

To loving myself again,

That I had lost myself,

I found me again.

Alison Black

The Sorcerer

I achieved goals,

Overcome obstacles,

In my path.

I rose to the challenge,

I rose above discrimination,

I rose to high heights.

I overcame my fears,

I saw the light,

I am a being of shine.



Richard Dadd, photographed in Bethlem Hospital, 1853, by order of Doctor Charles Hood

Peter Van Belle

Pictures from Bedlam – Richard Dadd

“The scale in the corner will enable you to overcome any difficulties in size or distance in the map, being constructed so that it is impossible to understand it and therefore you may say what you please about it.” Richard Dadd, Bethlem Hospital, 1858

Would we be as interested in his work if he hadn't stabbed his father to death and if he hadn't been confined to an asylum for the rest of his life? No, but for a more complex reason than is obvious. Studying his works, I concluded that the ones that fascinate us – the Passions, the Fairy Feller's Master Stroke, etc. - were the result of the conditions and the treatment he received at Bethlem Hospital. I would even say his illness and the murder he committed were peripheral to his work, but that his confinement had a crucial impact.

For the development of this article I'm particularly indebted to Peter Ogwen Jones's lecture, *The Symbolism of Richard Dadd*, a Jungian interpretation of Dadd's works, and Karen Stock's article, *Richard Dadd's Passions and the Treatment of Insanity*. Both are available online and certainly worth a read, though I object to certain terms used by Jones in describing Dadd's illness.

Some care must be taken in approaching the lives of artists, or others, who suffered from severe mental illness. Karen Stock, in this respect, points to the work of the 18th century playwright and critic Joanna Baillie. She wrote a series of plays on the passions and in an accompanying essay advised an attitude of compassionate curiosity when approaching a piece of art. To Baillie, the ideal audience member should be part aesthete, part alienist (the term for psychologist at the time). Yet this is a limited view of an audience. A psychological approach does not exclude aesthetic appreciation or other hermeneutics.

From Chatham to London

Richard Dadd's hometown was Chatham in Kent, at the time of his birth (1817) the site of a major dockyard and army barracks. His father was a geologist, lecturer, and chemist. His mother died when he was seven. He went to school in Rochester and when he left, he started sketching, his favorite subjects being ships and landscapes.

The family moved to London when Richard was seventeen and his father set up a frame-making and art supply business, which brought Richard into contact with many artists, who likely gave him help and advice. He studied at the academy housed in the National Gallery under Henry Howard, a painter of historical

works. At the time, a vogue for fairy paintings had started, a whimsical take on folk tales, and Dadd would have his first great successes in this subject.

Together with his fellow students, John Phillip and William Powell Frith, Dadd formed The Clique, a group of artists who rebelled against the then academic emphasis on drawing from statues. John Phillip married Richard's sister Marie-Elisabeth. Unfortunately both were extremely sensitive. While John Phillip painted, Marie-Elisabeth would sit behind him, but he'd fly into a rage at the slightest sound she made. In 1863 she had a breakdown and tried to strangle her youngest child. She was confined to an asylum, and John Phillip died soon afterwards.



Richard Dadd, portrait of a girl, possibly Elizabeth Langley

One of the salient parts of Richard's early work are the many portraits of a particular young woman. It's speculated that she's one Elizabeth Langley. We cannot be certain of this, but he appears to have painted her twice when he was 15, one oil painting and one watercolor, and then three times more, including in a watercolor of his family, even though she wasn't related to him. She also appears to have been one of the few people to inquire about him later in life.



Richard Dadd, family portraits, Richard is in the lower middle, Elizabeth Langley (again possibly) is underneath, Richard's father is in the upper right corner

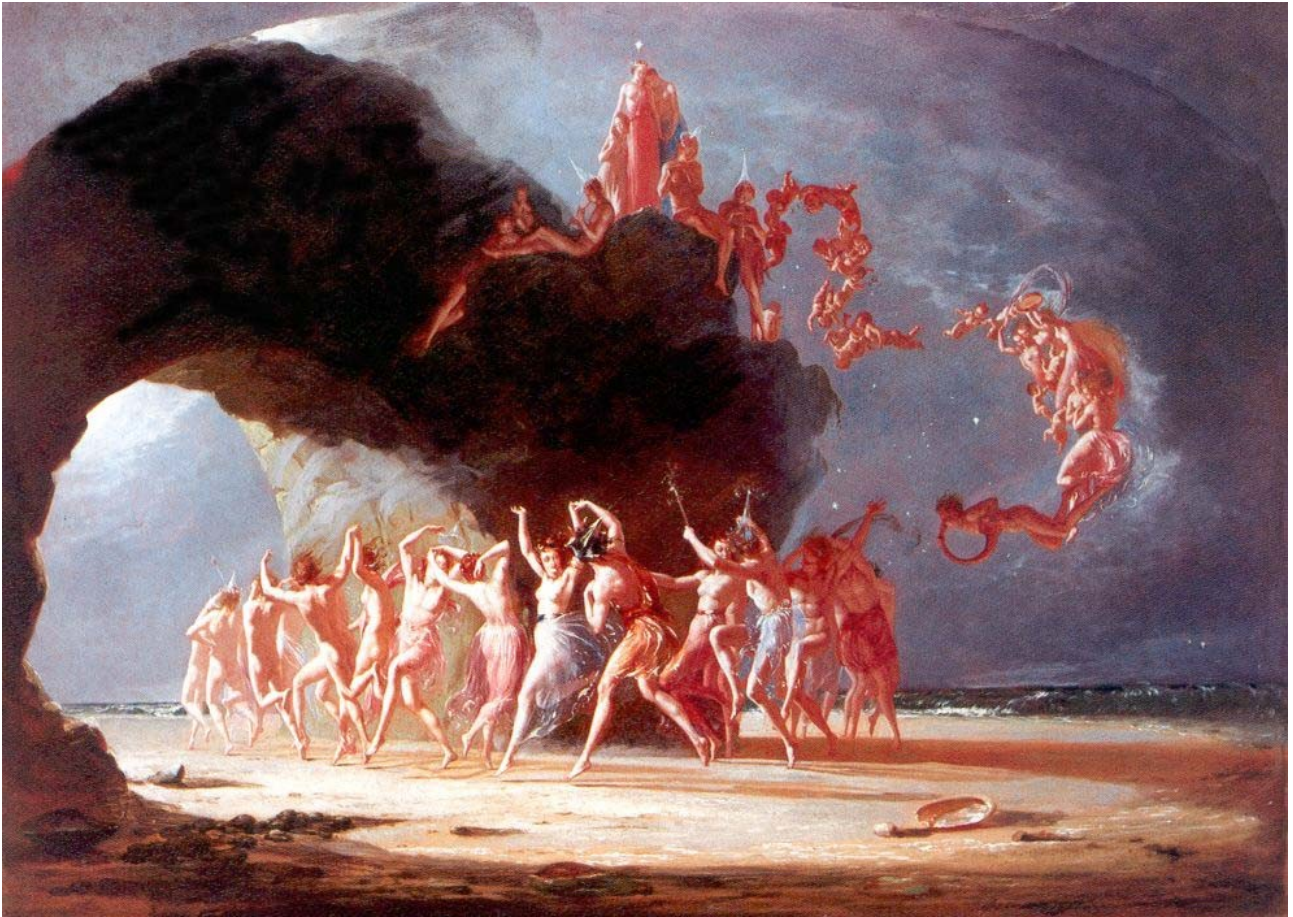
Dadd's career looked very promising. He'd won three silver medals at the academy, and in 1841 started a series of paintings based on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Among these were *Titania Sleeping* and *Puck*. In this play Puck admits to also being Robin Goodfellow, a Pan-like being from English folklore. A year later, Dadd would illustrate a series of ballads based on this nature god.

Both paintings show the swirls of figures also found in the paintings of Daniel Maclise, an influence on Dadd. The swirls in the first painting are especially effective, as they guide the eye up from the ground and form a frame around the figure of Titania. The swirls would be totally absent from the fairy paintings he'd make in Bethlem.



Richard Dadd, Titania Sleeping

Note how Puck (Robin Goodfellow) forms a frame over the scene with bats and other night creatures at his sides. This suggests he dominates the scene in secret, which is also evident in the play itself.

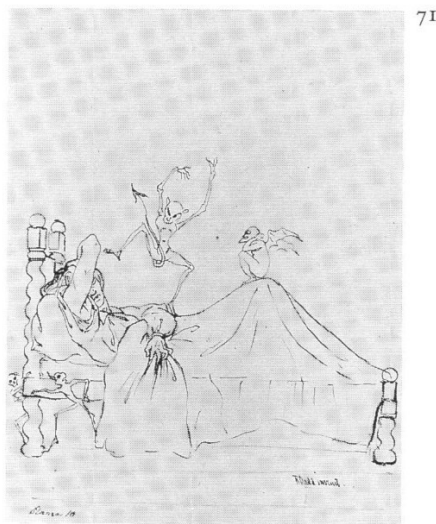


Richard Dadd, *Come Unto these Yellow Sands*

Come Unto these Yellow Sands is based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In this painting you'll observe the odd swirls in the right upper corner. I believe they are in fact Dadd's initials "RD". Here the fairies are entirely human, as opposed to those that frame Titania in the first. This caught the eye of the publisher of *Robin Goodfellow*, prompting him to tell Richard not to do draw human nudes in his illustrations of the ballads.



Around this time he also made an enigmatic portrait of an alchemist, who's hiding a picture from the viewer. He has strange growths on his chin, and an embroidery of Ouroboros on his sleeve, an esoteric emblem of eternity. In the same period, he also made sketches for Byron's *Manfred*, a tormented wanderer pursued by furies, Goethe's *Faust*, and *Walpurgis Night*, a poem he wrote himself, based on German legends about magic and devils. One of these sketches shows a student of the occult writhing in his bed as he's pestered by imps. It's a foreshadowing of Dadd's own fate, but also reveals he was already interested in the occult, something that would return, albeit surreptitiously, in paintings he made at Bethlem.



Egypt

In 1798 Napoleon set off from Marseille to conquer Egypt. He hadn't yet become dictator of France, but through his brilliant military campaigns had become the dictator of its military policy. France had wanted to take over Egypt even before the Revolution, to turn the Mediterranean into a French lake and to thwart British interests in the Orient. The time seemed particularly ripe: the British fleet had temporarily withdrawn to guard the homeland and the Mamelukes, the slave army that ran Egypt for the Ottoman sultan, was outdated, unpopular, and corrupt.

Napoleon meticulously planned the campaign. He had a printing press made in Arabic script to spread his promises of freedom and good governance to the population, and he brought along 160 scientists whose records would make France's universities the leading authorities on Ancient Egypt.

Though the French defeated the Mamelukes, the whole enterprise turned sour. The destruction of his fleet made Napoleon flee back to France and there were constant revolts by the local population, who weren't taken in by the pamphlets full of lies (such as that Frenchmen were Muslims), and which were also written in terrible Arabic. Yet the material gathered by the French scientists caused an Egyptmania in Europe. From here on, everybody with the required wealth had to include Egypt on his Grand Tour.

So too Sir Thomas Phillips, the son of a Welsh mine owner and mayor of Newport. He planned to take the traditional route at the time: Ostend, down the Rhine, Switzerland, Venice, Greece, the Levant, Egypt, then back via Malta, Rome, and finally Paris, taking in all sites in one go. Of course he needed someone to record it all, so he asked the experienced traveler David Roberts who he should take along as artist. Roberts gave him the name of Richard Dadd, because of his draftsmanship and congeniality.

Sir Phillips set off on the 16th of July, 1842. Conditions for Dadd were horrendous, as he mentioned in his letters. Sir Phillips would rush from place to place, never giving him time to sketch the scenery. From his sketches and letters it's also clear Dadd was more interested in the people than the monuments.

Once in the Levant, the discomforts increased. Most of the local population were Muslims and objected to being sketched. In Lebanon they ran into a snow storm, and in Jericho they were taken hostage by raiders. From Jaffa (present-day Haifa) they sailed for Alexandria.

Egypt cast its spell on Dadd. The Pyramids didn't interest him, but the combination of the landscape, the temples, and the local population resonated with his fascination with the occult. After all, Hermes Trismegistus, the mythical writer of the Hermetica, is supposed to be buried in Egypt together with the Emerald Tablet, and is identified the Egyptian god Toth.

The discomfort and lack of rest were later blamed for his mental collapse. Yet, despite what has been long presumed, schizophrenia (even the term is nowadays up for debate) is usually congenital, though trauma and stress can trigger its eruption. Richard Dadd (and his siblings) have a typical case story, with the symptoms manifesting themselves in the patients' twenties. In total four of Robert Dadd's children would succumb to mental illness.

On the way back, his symptoms became ever worse. Before he had complained how his overwrought imagination troubled him, but now he became convinced he was under attack from a host of demons who took on human form. Chief among them was Sir Phillips, the closest authority figure. In Rome, voices urged him to kill the Pope, but he backed down once he saw how well-guarded he was.

At the same time he and Sir Phillips also visited the studio of the German artist Overbeck, a member of the Nazarenes, a group of German artists who sought a spiritual revival. One of their great examples was William Blake, and one of them, Otto Runge, is sometimes called the German Blake. Sir Phillips was very enthusiastic of their works. Dadd's views on them aren't known, but if you keep the painting by Runge on the next page in mind, you will see similarities in the portraiture and the treatment of detail in Dadd's later works in Bethlem Hospital.

He left Sir Phillips in Paris and returned to London. There he sequestered himself in his room, subsisting on ale and eggs, the shells of which were strewn across the floor. He cut a birthmark out of his forehead, as he said Satan had put it there. Meanwhile he studied works on Ancient Egypt, in particular *The Ancient Egyptians, their Life and Customs*, by Sir J. Gardner-Wilkinson. It so happens I have a later edition, published in 1854, the edition Dadd read was published in 1836.

Wilkinson presents the Ancient Egyptian religion as monotheistic, with the many gods representing aspects of the one godhead, Amun. Osiris was the great benefactor, teaching the Egyptians agriculture and giving them laws, so, in short, the founder of their civilization. Likely Wilkinson based himself on Plutarch's text on Osiris and Isis. Wilkinson, and Dadd, also linked the religion of the Ancient Egyptians with Judaism, through Assyrian mythology. That Osiris was murdered and resurrected links him with agricultural gods, and, I believe, in the mind of Richard Dadd, also to Jesus Christ. At the time it was also thought Osiris was associated with the sun, due to the confused nature of Ancient Egyptian religion, and the various hieroglyphs used to write his name.

The trouble with the religion of the Ancient Egyptians is that it has no basic text, and that much of its practice was deliberately kept secret. Everything has to be gleaned from tales, magic spells, and inscriptions. This tempts people into projecting their own desires and fixations on it. Numerous esoteric groups, such as the Freemasons, the Rosicrucians do so; even Sigmund Freud at one time claimed Moses, the legendary liberator of the Israelites, was actually the pharaoh Eknaton or his disciple.

As far as I can tell, the Dadd family wasn't particularly religious, yet it seems Richard felt a spiritual need, as esoterism, and particularly magic, are substitutes for official religions. The stress of the voyage may have increased this need.



Otto Runge, die Hülsenbeck Kinder, 1805

The Murderer

His father had him examined by Doctor Alexander Sutherland, who told him his son was no longer responsible for his actions. His father minimized his son's problems though, blaming them on sunstroke. Yet at the time; George, another son of his, was also showing signs of mental illness. Richard himself later blamed his breakdown on smoking a hookah pipe for days on end until the gurglings began to sound like the voice of Osiris. At times he claimed his actions were to defeat the enemies of Osiris, at other times, he claimed Osiris was controlling him.

One watercolor from this period is *Caravan Halted by the Seashore*. At first glance it seems the sort of painting Sir Phillips would've wanted, a group of travelers by the seashore. Yet there's one figure who's out of place: the naked boy with his back to the viewer. There's no reason for him to be there, as he does not add to the composition. The figure is, in fact, based on a sketch Dadd made at the academy. In his subsequent major pictures, Dadd would nearly always include a figure whose face is hidden from the viewer. One could assume these figures represent Dadd himself, who now has something to hide from the outside world. The boy is looking at the jar being helped onto the head of the woman next to the man in the red turban. Dadd had written how he was amazed at the different sorts of vessels he'd seen in the Levant.



Richard proposed to this father that they go to Cobham Park, where he will unburden his mind to him. His sister Mary though, warned her brother Stephen she had a bad feeling about this.

On the evening of the 28th of August 1843, the father and son ate at the Ship Inn and then went for a walk in the park. When they were alone, Richard took out a spring knife and tried to slash his father's throat, when that failed he stabbed him in the chest. Dadd would later claim it all went quickly, but the autopsy and his other statements contradict this. His explanations for the murder also varied, at times his father was an impostor, at others Satan himself.

He'd taken along his passport and immediately left for France. So it's obvious he knew he'd broken the law. The next morning his father's corpse was discovered and at first it was thought Richard might've been murdered as well. When the police searched his room, however, they discovered, among other things, sketches of his friends and relatives, all with their throats cut.

Later Dadd would claim he left for the Continent to kill the Austrian emperor, others have speculated he might have wanted to return to Egypt to be with his "real father", the god Osiris. It was during a coach ride in France that he got the idea of cutting the throat of a fellow passenger. He looked out the window and decided that if a star moved in a certain direction, he would either spare or kill the man. This is typical of delusions, in that random events take on meaning. The star indicated he had to kill.

The passenger at first seemed to think it was part of a joke, but as he realized what Dadd was up to, he resisted. The coach was stopped and Richard Dadd arrested by French police. This was just two days after he had murdered his father. From his statements French police realized he was mentally ill and he was placed in an asylum. French alienists blamed his condition on religious mania, the stress of his travels in the Orient, and "early disappointments".

At the request of his family, he was moved to an asylum closer to England. They also sent him food and art materials. As the French doctors noted however, Dadd spent his days staring at the sun, whom he called "his true father." This is likely due to his reading of Wilkinson's book, which identified both the name Osiris and the word pharaoh with the sun disk. This is another mistake, as pharaoh means "of a higher house".

The British Home Secretary at the time wasn't keen on having a subject of the King locked up in France, so at his request Dadd was brought to England and locked up in Maidstone Goal. At the inquest into the murder, Dadd appeared at times raucous and incoherent, at other times rational. He'd grown a beard, but seemed in good health. The prison authorities reported on the behavior he'd show for the rest of his life: frenzied violence alternating with contrite friendliness.

What is remarkable is the treatment of the case by the Press. Unlike today when confronted with such cases, the general tone was of pity both for Robert

and Richard Dadd, though in part this may have been due to the influence of Dadd's family and friends.



Richard Dadd, the Murder of Henry the Sixth

The Patient

On the 22nd of August 1844, by order of the Home Secretary, Richard Dadd was removed to the criminal lunatic department of Bethlem Hospital, now (perhaps ironically) the site of the Imperial War Museum. The institution was no longer the “Bedlam Hell” it’d been in the previous century; patients were no longer chained or presented to the public as entertainment.

After the French Revolution, physicians such as Phillipe Pinel and Jean-Baptiste Pussin had set about reforming the treatment of mental patients, based on the idea that they could be healed. Pinel coined it “le traitement moral” - moral in the broad sense of the word. It was their ideas that determined the treatment Dadd received.

The physician in charge of Richard Dadd was Edward Monro, whose father, as a patron of the arts, had been friends with J.M.W. Turner and John Sell Cotman, among others. So it’s plausible that he facilitated Dadd’s return to painting.

The first painting we know of that Dadd painted inside Bethlem Hospital is *The Caravanserai at Mylassa*, (see following page) painted in 1845. Richard Dadd even writes he made it there under his signature. It’s obviously based on his sketches from the Middle East, but here as opposed to *Caravan Halted by the Sea Shore*, there’s no incongruous element.

As in the previously mentioned painting though, the figures all have a stilted appearance, as they are nearly all presented in profile. Dadd’s meticulous with detail, but here we can already see the phenomenon you’ll find in most of his oil paintings of the period: the cramming of detail in every corner of the painting. This could point to a *horror vacui*: a dread of empty space. This feature has been found in art by schizophrenic patients, such as Adolf Wölfli. The sky for instance has been equally crammed with birds. Wilhelm Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* stated that this was a feature of much of religious art, and that it pointed to a feeling of disquiet towards one’s environment, not surprising in Dadd’s case. After his childhood along a river and the surrounding countryside, the sights of the big city, and then the landscapes of Europe and the Orient, he was now confined to a room, a hall he had to share with other patients, and a flagstoned courtyard with high walls.



Richard Dadd, *The Caravanserai at Mylasse*, 1845

The Caravanserai at Mylasse is the sort of painting John Phillips would've expected him to make, and I feel this is the key to the painting: it was to prove to himself that his talent was undamaged, and it was also to please a benefactor, likely Edward Monro.

What followed are his most interesting works, and therefore I want to present them separately.

The Flight out of Egypt – 1849



The staff of Bethlem gave this title to the painting, though it doesn't really make sense. True, in the lower right corner of the painting is a blond boy with a star on the shield behind him, which makes it seem like he has a halo, but this is just an example of the red herrings Dadd used in some of his paintings, similar to what the writers of *Monty Python's Life of Brian* did in the 20th century.

Another example of this is the old man with the white beard. The gospels themselves don't say much about Joseph, but later canonical texts described him as being very old when he met Mary. The boy whispering in his ear is a familiar trope in some nativity scenes of the Renaissance: he's telling Joseph he's been cuckolded. As to the other children around Mary: some gospels also mention Jesus had brothers and sisters, which led to confusion and convoluted explanations as to how Mary could've been a virgin. One of them was that they were Joseph's children from a previous marriage.

Dadd had commented in letters on how crowded and frenzied the watering holes in the Levant were, and this painting clearly refers to such a scene. The true focus of the painting is the man under the palm tree, his face obscured by the

silver vessel he is drinking from. At first I thought he was a *signifer*, the standard bearer of a Roman Legion. Evidence for this was the skin he was wearing, his armor, and the helmets of the men around him.



the "high priest", the "young Jezus", and the boy butted by the goat

Peter Ogwen Jones, however, wrote that it is in fact, a pharaoh dressed as a high priest. It is true that I found an illustration in Wilkinson's book of the pharaoh as a high priest, and the leopard skin does indeed resemble that in the painting. Again, this might be a deliberate piece of ambiguity on the part of Dadd. The figure's special status is also accentuated by the fantastic, star-studded cloak he's wearing. The figure likely represents Dadd himself. As Peter Ogwen Jones points out,

Dadd's star sign was Leo. He also mentions the knot next to the leopard's head, which resembles the neck and head of a goat. This seems to point to the scene in front of him.



the pharaoh/high priest in Wilkinson's book

A boy is butted by a goat. It would seem he's being expelled from the Holy Family. Peter Ogwen Jones ties this to Dadd's expulsion from his own family. It should be noted that none of them visited him while he was locked up. At the other side of the stream another boy is splashing water over a third boy. To Peter Ogwen Jones this represents a baptism, that is to say, initiation, from the left of the painting come a pair of grasping hands ready to pull the boy into another world. I have my doubts about this interpretation, but I can find no plausible alternative. It could indeed be Dadd representing his own conversion from Christianity, or the goat could represent Satan expelling him.



the baptism and the grasping hands

Technically, the painting shows Dadd's problems with perspective, which appear in some of his other works as well, and which at times hampers an interpretation of them. There is the woman with her hands on the boy's shoulders to the left of the palm tree, for instance, who seems to be standing half in front and half behind the soldiers blowing the trumpets. The painting is also unfinished, as the water has not been colored in.

Two Portraits 1853

Dadd painted the portraits of two of his alienists. Both are similar in composition, so it would be interesting to compare them.



The portrait of Alexander Morrison is likely the first. He was the successor to Monro as the doctor treating Dadd. He was also the one who forbade the exhibition and especially the sale of the works produced in Bethlem, likely to avoid accusations of exploitation.

Here, as in other of Dadd's paintings, the perspective is off, making the fisherwomen in the background like tiny instead of far off. They are based on another picture of his, of a fish market, and the images are clearly taken from calotypes taken by David Hill in 1845 in Newhaven near Edinburgh. As they were taken after he had been locked up in Bedlam, he must've had access to the publications in which they appeared. The fisherwomen are of course a reference to the sea, but what I think interested Dadd more is the fact that their ankles are exposed. He would show women

in a similar dress in *The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke*, in which he exaggerated their calves.



In both portraits the physicians hold or have a piece of white cloth at hand, and in both paintings the cloth seems to be hiding something. In the portrait of Morrison it is a black book. Faces or objects being hidden often appear in Dadd's works, even before his mental breakdown. This ties in with the instances of hidden characters looking at the spectator, or others looking at the spectator as if to draw them into a conspiracy. This shows that Dadd had a secretive nature, and might explain why he was drawn to the occult and mysterious. I would also point out that Morrison's face resembles that of the cross-eyed pedagogue in *The Fairy Feller*.

The second portrait, painted in 1853, is likely that of Charles Hood, for whom Dadd painted *The Contradiction*, though from other portraits it seems the hair

color is incorrect. It might also be a portrait of G.H. Haydon, the steward of Dadd's ward.

In the reform of Bedlam, Charles Hood became the resident superintendent of Bethlem Hospital. The background in the painting is entirely invented, as Dadd wouldn't have been able to see nature, the courtyard of Bethlem Hospital being surrounded by high walls. In the painting of Morrison he is framed by a tree, but in this portrait the young man is framed by a gigantic sunflower, and is sitting on a bench made of vines, also unlikely to be found at Bethlem.

The right background has a lawn with a roller and behind it a Greco-Roman facade and beyond a castle on a hill. To me it seems he's combining views from England (the lawn), the Mediterranean (the cypresses and Italian poplars), and views from his travel along the Rhine. It shows his longing for the outside world.

The sunflower resembles those in Runge's painting, and if you look closely you'll see the leaves are covered in the same drops as in Dadd's previous fairy paintings. I believe Dadd is playing a joke on the spectator (the doctor). He's given the doctor an elfin appearance and he's dwarfed by the plant behind him. It is, however, possible that Dadd's perceptions were altered by his mental illness, and that he actually saw Hood this way.

Next to Hood rests a fez – which Dadd wore in the Middle East, roses, and a piece of white cloth, which just as in the portrait of Morrison, seems to be hiding something.

The Passions 1853-1858

The series of watercolors called *Sketches to Illustrate the Passions* was started the same year Charles Hood took up the post of resident superintendent at Bethlem. Hood had the windows to the wards enlarged and added an aviary. The day rooms were provided with more books and even statues.

Hood wrote in his casebook that Richard Dadd, despite his delusions and violent outbursts, was sensible, intelligent, and skilled. Hood must've concluded he was an ideal candidate for moral therapy. In 1805 a pupil of Pinel, Jean-Etienne Esquirol, had published his *The Passions Considered as Causes, Symptoms, and Means of Cure in Cases of Insanity*. So Dadd needed to master his passions, and what better way to do this than to have him portray them? So it seems Hood encouraged Dadd to start his illustrations of the passions (in the broadest sense of the world). As one of Shakespeare's qualities is in his portrayal of characters, and so also of passions, his plays were the ideal starting point for the endeavor.

The earliest in the series we know of are *Love*, taken from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Jealousy*, from *Othello*, and *Hatred*, from *Henry VI, part 3*.

From Dadd's comments to the staff as well as the hints he drops in the works themselves, we can conclude he doubted the whole process. The balcony scene in *Love* seems more like a joke, with Juliet smothered in clothing and the couple hardly able to make their head meets. *Jealousy* was copied from an existing illustration of *Othello*. *Hatred* (see next page), is more significant. Gloucester, looking at the blood dripping from his sword, is a self-portrait of Dadd, so it's not far fetched to conclude the painting is a reminder of the murder he committed. In the play, Edward IV says of Richard, duke of Gloucester: "He's sudden if a thing comes into his head." It's no coincidence either that Dadd shares the first name of the Shakespearean arch-murderer. Also note that the sword is pointing out of the picture, and that in this rendering of the scene, as opposed to the other, the victim's face is covered.



Richard Dadd, *Hatred*

Another telling detail is that Dadd often misquotes the lines from the plays. As he had access to the texts, this is not a lapse of memory. It shows his skepticism, either conscious or subconscious about the method he had to undergo.

Agony – Raving Madness is often seen as representing his own mental state. Yet the picture is clearly based on an illustration in Charles Bell's *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression*.

Grief is far more interesting. The figure of Death hovers over a grieving woman holding an urn between her legs. Peter Ogwen Jones points out the vessel is in the approximate position of the womb. This might be a rare instance where Dadd addresses the idea of motherhood, and the loss of his own mother at the age of seven.

The shadow-side of the feminine is revealed in *Deceit*. A pretty mask hides the scowling face of a harridan, her other hand resting on a skull. Peter Ogwen Jones comments on the surrounding vault, speculating that it is in fact the tomb seen in *Grief*. He also points to the organic nature of the seat, as if it's a womb. This would also explain the inset with Satan seducing Eve with the apple. That Satan has the face of Dadd's father is no surprise. Karen Stock, however, writes that the seat is actually made of paper, which is plausible, given the folds on the side. The significance of this might be to show that deceit is fragile.



Richard Dadd, *Deceit*



Richard Dadd, *Suspense*

An even more intriguing example in the series is *Suspense*. At first sight the scene seems mundane, a group of children playing with a broken doll and a little canon. The background is clearly Chatham, where Dadd grew up. The number of children corresponds to Dadd's siblings. Given these facts, it seems the oldest boy represents Dadd's oldest brother Robert. Richard himself would be one of the boys climbing the pole.

With this in mind, the picture takes a more sinister tone. You notice the helpless expression on the doll's face, accentuated by the fact she's naked and armless. Robert is holding back a smaller girl, and the expression on her face is one of terror, actually also taken from an illustration in Charles Bell's book.

An odd feature in the picture are the ruffs worn by some of the boys, a feature found in other pictures and which seems to indicate a way of identifying the Dadd children. They certainly weren't in fashion at the time. Also, Robert's visor has come loose and hangs over his head like a crescent moon. Could this be a sign that Richard thought his older brother was a lunatic?

In another picture in the series, *Want*, a set of tiny astrological marks were found hidden among the gravel of a road in front of the characters. They seem to be symbols of the planets as well as the symbol * which in astrology means sextile, a relative position of 60 degrees. On the back of another picture it seems Dadd has engaged in numerology, with the number 666 as a result. Clearly he hadn't lost his interest in esoterism.



Richard Dadd, *Patriotism*, 1858

To me the most telling picture of the series is likely also the last. *Patriotism* is a satirical take on the military maneuvers Dadd would've witnessed in Chatham. They were also described by Charles Dickens, a fellow inhabitant of the area, in his *The Pickwick Papers*. The two soldiers at the bottom are likely based on the two veterans in Lawrence Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. They are studying a map with place names like Olibolika, Bastardy, the Great Swindle Cathedral, and so on.

The picture was likely inspired by George Haydon, steward of Dadd's ward as well as a satirist for *Punch*. Down one side of the painting is a rambling text, but with one very revealing sentence:

"The scale in the corner will enable you to overcome any difficulties in size or distance in the map, being constructed so that it is impossible to understand it and therefore you may say what you please about it."

This reveals Dadd's attitude to the process, and also the viewer. He knew Hood or Haydon would see the picture, and sends him a message which speaks of some defiance and irritation.

On a side note, Charles Dickens read about Dadd's case, and would sometimes take guests to Cobham Park to reenact the murder.

Hood had his patients photographed, including Dadd (see the beginning of the article). This was in an attempt to catalogue the faces of mental patients in the hope of being able to diagnose their ailments on sight. The failure of this endeavor was best illustrated by the book of the originator of the idea, Esquirol, in which the pictures of a cured and sick patient were switched without anyone noticing the mistake.

The Contradiction – 1854-1858



Dadd painted this for Charles Hood. It derives from Act 2 Scene 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which he had illustrated with a series of paintings before he left for the Middle East. The play would've been important to Dadd, as it not only deals with dreams and drugs, but as I mentioned previously, in it Puck admits that he at times is Robin Goodfellow, a Pan-like nature god from English folklore.

This painting is entirely different from the previous ones, which were not as busy and had far more benign characters.

The scene is the dispute between Oberon and Titania over who should be served by the changeling boy Titania has adopted. The focus of the painting is Titania, who is no longer the dainty, sexualized figure of the 1841 painting. Now she's brutish, domineering, more akin to the harridan in the watercolor *Deceit*. Peter Ogwen Jones considers her a benign mother figure, but Dadd emphasized her brutality by having her crush a tiny fairy under her foot. This act, deliberate or not, causes much consternation in the lower quarter of the picture, and a small muscular faun even draws a bow at her.

Another example of Dadd's humor is the fact that Demetrius and Helena have stumbled on the scene, jumping their cue. They are the two figures on the far right of the picture. In the play they only enter after the fairies have gone.

Oberon and his retinue, meanwhile, have hooked noses, which Dadd often used to portray malevolence, such as in *Deceit* and his portrait of Lucretia Borgia. A break in the coherence of the picture is the huntsman behind Oberon, carrying several birds, even though in relation to the plants around him he's supposed to be the size of a mouse.

Behind Titania are a set of stages. The nearest has a jade egg and a globe, both with elaborate gold supports. Peter Ogwen Jones refers to them as alchemic vessels, yet those in my books on alchemy look quite different. Because the egg is the wrong way up, I believe Dadd is referencing another dispute in literature, that in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, where the Lilliputians are at war with their neighbors over whether a soft-boiled egg should be eaten with the thin or broad end up. On the other hand, the egg is a potent symbol of birth, and of unity because of its shape.

On the blue podium at the back we can see a bacchanalian procession led by a satyr playing the cymbals. Following is a hunting party carrying a deer, again an inconsistency as regards size.

At the bottom of the picture is a butterfly, a symbol of transformation. A representation of Dadd's desire for rebirth, either as the son of Osiris, or as a healed patient.

One figure has been overlooked by those who have written about the picture. At the very top of the picture, nestled among the grass stalks dripping with dew, sits a tiny figure, wearing a helmet, a green cloak and holding a staff. He's impossible to make out from pictures on the web, and I had to use my strongest magnifying glass to look at him in my book on Dadd. From the shape of his helmet, I surmise this figure is Hermes, the Greek version of the Egyptian god Toth. As such he also represents Hermes Trismegistus, the central figure of much of Western occult.

The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke – 1855-1864



Dadd painted his most famous work for George Haydon. Haydon clearly got on well with Dadd, as he was himself a satirist and had likely influenced Dadd

with *Patriotism*, his most satirical work. The germ of the painting comes from Mercutio's jesting speech in *Romeo and Juliet*, where he says of Queen Mab:

*"Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut
Made by a joiner squirrel or old grub"*

Once transferred to Broadmoor in 1864, Dadd wrote a long poem *Elimination of a Picture and its Subject* – called *The Fellers' Master Stroke*. The title itself contains a few puns already.

He starts off by telling us how the picture was composed:

*"Fancy was not to be evoked
From her ethereal realms
Or if so, then her purpose cloaked
...
Part from the shades designed
Part a vain fancy, all inclined"*

Dadd's telling us much of the painting came from his subconscious, and a times he admits not knowing why he included certain characters.

The night-time meeting ("*half twelve*") has been called by the man with the long, white beard.

*"This meet into the Patriarch owed
Say its conclave – and here to shew
His triple crown of subtle might
Weird in its form and shining bright
An arch magician ..."*

The triple crown could refer to the pope, whom he tried to murder in 1843. The words "magician" and "subtle might" however, suggest the character is Hermes Trismegistus (thrice great), the most important figure in Western esoterism. This shows Dadd's continued interest in the subject.

He then presents the feller:

*"See – 'tis fay woodman holds aloft the axe
Whose double edge virtue now will tax
...
Your mental method and decorum
Where all things show the quasi corum"* (half-hidden)

This is a revelatory passage. The axe is a symbol of the sudden application of force. As the earliest axes were made of flint, they would've produced

sparks when hitting stone. Therefore they became associated with lightning, and sudden enlightenment. The double axe was originally a prevalent symbol in Minoan culture, and later became associated with the Greek god Zeus. The axe in the painting looks very flimsy though and the blade hardly up to the task. The feller is trying to perform a mental task, and consequently it could be argued the painting presents a mental self-portrait of Dadd. Peter Ogwen Jones explicitly states this in his lecture when he presents Jung's definition of art; "subliminal activation of archetypal imagery, which is consciously elaborated and shaped into a finished work."

For Haydon though, Dadd was also willing to indulge in a lot of satire. After presenting the ostler and the monk next to the feller, he points out the dandy-satyr seated in front of the old man:

*"A satyr's head has, buckles in his shoes
Nurse one foot upon his knees amuse with him
Yourself he's a modern fay."
Then the politician standing across from the satyr:
"... with senatorial pipe
For argument or his opinion ripe.
A first chap Englishman at that sort of chaff.
To hear him talk, Lord!
How 't'would make you laugh."*



the yellow stripe indicates the line of sight of the feller, the circle, the "satyr"

But Dadd's aims his ire especially at the cross-eyed little man squatting in front of the patriarch:

"Below a pedagogue appears.

*A critic up to sneers and jeers.
 And by his faun-like ears he's wild
 Untamed himself, each fairy childhood
 He tames with many a look severe
 But if his glance is there or here
 'Tis hard to say. He squints to note
 You may. But he'll not meddle
 With a work so sharp.
 Waits in suspense and doth not carp.
 His business is to teach to do.
 Do it himself? Oh no! T'is you."*

Clearly Dadd had no love for teachers. The Youtuber Blind Dweller points out that the little man seems apprehensive at the Fairy Feller's action, and that the scene could refer to the murder. To me this is plausible as the Fairy Feller seems to be looking at the little man as he's raising his axe. On the other hand, the little man bears no resemblance to Dadd's father, who appears as the apothecary at the top right of the picture.



portrait of Robert Dadd as apothecary

On a side note. Peter Ogwen Jones points out that the nuts in the picture are actually Kent Cobbs, a cultivar of the hazelnut. This is clearly a reference to Dadd's childhood. Cobb, however, is also another word for head, and the nut about to be split seems to have a face on it. This could be a case of pareidolia on my part, just as Peter Ogwen Jones saw a skull in the unpainted nuts just behind the Fairy Feller.

Also scattered on the ground are the seeds of plane trees, recently introduced to London as they were more resistant to pollution.

From the left part (his right) of the magician's head stretches the sexual aspect of the painting. On that side of the hat is Queen Mab's chariot, drawn by:

*"... tiny female centaurs here do seem
Half beast and half a woman are.
With wings to sour away in regions far."*

The brim of the hat leads us to the two women standing next to the little man. They both have exaggerated breasts and calves, the latter a particular focus of Dadd's sexual thoughts.

*"They've got good legs and feet so small.
Bavaria, Flanders, Germany, and all
Can shew no more fantast limb"*

Just next to the little man's elbow is a face gleefully looking up the women's skirts. Dadd begs us to show understanding for this "satyr":

*"At this book
His right to look
I dare not dispute
Such secrets surely some must know
All are not saints of earth below.
Or if they know they are the same
Or are shut out from nature's game.
Banished from nature's book of life
Because some angel in the strife
Had got the worser fate.
And they close their eyes, that gate -
By which reminders enter.
And in a paradise of fools contented live."*

Hood described Dadd as being "perfectly sensual" and "unrestrained in speech and manner". And the satyr acts out the sexual frustration Dadd must've endured. His only encounters with the female form would've been through his sketches and possibly the art books he had access to.

Next to the soldier, who Dadd explains has been driven mad by war and debauchery, a face peeks at us from behind the scenery. Dadd denies knowing why he included him.

*"An elfin takes a peeping view -
Not at the nut but the spectator
He in this remarkable fudge
Or humbug gives the fatal nudge
Peepers is the wildest of the crew"*

*Cares naught fro them or I or you.
You from his cap with me perchance agree
Of the Chinese small Foot Societee,
he's a small member.
But if Confucius sent him
Now I can't remember."*

At the time, and indeed for long after, the Chinese and Asians in general were associated with treachery. Dadd himself had illustrated this "passion" with a Chinese scene in which an hidden assassin looks at the spectator. Yet the reason why Dadd included this character has to be found in his circumstances. The only spectators he could expect were the ones observing him, the staff at Bethlem. He wants to tell them that, just as they're watching him, he's watching them.

At the end of the poem he seems to offer an apology for the bizarre nature of the piece:

*"Turn to the Patriarch and behold
Long pendants from his crown are rolled
In winding figures circle round,
they represent the vagary wild
And mental aberration styled"*

He then ends the poem on a note of resignation:

*"For nought as nothing it explains
And nothing from nothing nothing gains.*

Richard Dadd, Broadmoor, Jan 1865"

Columbine & Crazy Jane



The first painting dates from June 1854, and the second from the year after, so at the same time he was working on the Passions.

The first is drawn from memory or a sketch, as the face is the same that of an unidentified girl he painted in 1841. He's painted her with loose hair, as in the original, but has added flowers, ribbons, and a leadline to her hair. That he remembered the portrait, even down to the gesture, shows how important the sitter had been to Dadd. She seemed someone who epitomized the sort of woman Dadd admired. In a letter to a friend he'd written how much he admired the women of Asia Minor, who were, in his words, "free of affectation" and who walked "upright without mincing."

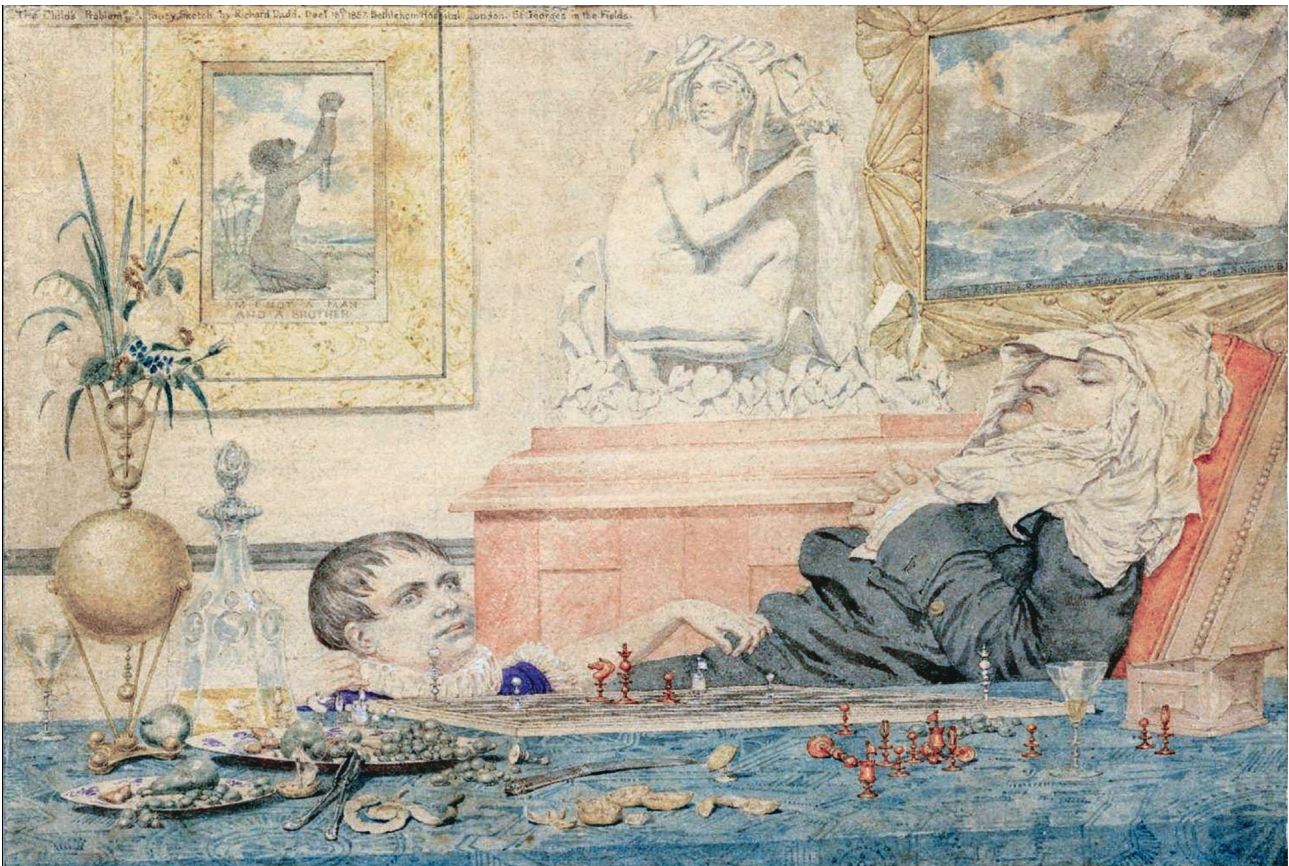
The character Columбина from the commedia dell'arte is a mischievous servant, the wife of Pierrot. In some versions of the plays she seduces Arlecchino, or just tricks him, but in others she's even a prostitute. The flowers in the painting aren't columbines, however, but those of the bindweed. That she also wears a leadline is clearly a reference to the sea. This leads me to conclude the painting refers to his youth in Chatham, and the girls he met there, especially Elizabeth Langley.

Crazy Jane seems a parody of the previous painting. The title derives from a popular ballad of the day about a man who meets a girl on a country road, driven mad by the desertion by her lover. The face in the painting is clearly that of a male, possibly an inmate, but I believe it could be that of Dadd as a young man. He certainly had little regard or affection for his fellow patients. During a visit by Frith, he grabbed the head of a fellow patient and turned it around, exclaiming "What could

any artist make of such an ugly fellow as this?" The stalks and the string of ribbons echo the flowers and leadline in *Columbine*. The previous painting proves he could draw female figures either from memory or from sketches, so why is Crazy Jane male?

The figure rears into the sky, as if trying to fly away, to escape the menacing ravens behind him. Yet the dark band along the bottom of the frock shows how the character is bound to the earth Bindweed makes another appearance in this painting, this time in the vines twisting around the stalk Crazy Jane holds up. The gesture in the painting also echoes that of *Raving Madness*, one of the Passions. Both *Columbine* and *Crazy Jane* are about escape, but the second is about the realization escape is impossible. But, seeing that the work refers to someone driven mad by disappointments in love, could it be Dadd is telling us something like that happened to him. This might also be what the French alienists meant when they mentioned "early disappointments".

The Child's Problem 1857



This painting is easily Dadd's most mysterious, as we have no idea of the theme. The scene seems domestic, a child solving a chess problem while the adult behind him takes a nap. Yet there's the unsettling expression on the child's face, similar to the one of terror the little girl has in *Expectation*. The child also wears a ruff, like two of the boys in that painting, which seems to suggest it is either Dadd or one of his siblings.

The key to understanding the picture seems the idea of polarity. The first clue is in the paintings in the background. On the left is a famous abolitionist print, on the other a painting of a slave ship. This is unlikely to refer to slavery, as this had already been abolished in the British Empire. Between them is a statue of Demeter, a goddess of vegetation. Peter Ogwen Jones links her to the mother-archetype, though I don't see how this would tie in to the rest of the painting. Rather I think she represents rebirth, as in Greek mythology she caused the change of seasons. In this, she is also linked to Osiris, another vegetation deity, as well as Dadd's desire for transformation.

Technically, Dadd's problems with perspective are once again in evidence: the chessboard appears to float, the distance between the sleeping figure and the table is ambiguous, and the angles between the plinth of the statue and the paintings behind it are off. The whole picture is unbalanced, as it is weighted to the right.

The title has a double meaning: the chess problem on the board is so simple as child could solve it. One move of the white queen would checkmate the red king. The incongruity lies in how the board is set up. From the position of the white pieces it seems either the sleeping adult or the child have set up the problem up from the black (or in this case, red) side, which means they've checkmated themselves. The viewer seems to be playing white, because the taken red pieces are on his or her side.

On the board the white queen and king are on opposite sides of the board, so to the polarity of white and red are added those of male and female, and of father and mother. So the child's problem is playing life's game between all these opposites, between his father and mother, all what they represent, and between the lighter and darker aspects of the psyche, with the darker side being something to have mercy on.

If we keep in mind only his doctors would have seen this picture, and assume the child represents Dadd, it seems Dadd realized he was in an impossible position. No move on his part would get him out of his present situation, his incarceration in Bethlem. I believe further hints are to be found in some of the white pawns scattered in the foreground. One of them has a nut shell on its head, the other is on its side next to a knife, and a third is in a nut shell, as if on a boat. This seems to refer to the murder and his subsequent flight.

And finally the sleeping figure. Its attire is masculine, except for the cloth covering its head. It has a hooked nose, which Dadd associated with wickedness and deceit. Is the figure asleep though? The cloth seems one used to cover the face of a dead person, and the hands are folded as if in prayer, the way people are laid out during a wake. If the child is Richard Dadd, could the figure behind him be his father?

Ambiguity usually enriches a piece of art, as it invites the intelligent viewer to interpret it, but here the level of ambiguity is too great, leaving no foothold from which to attempt to formulate a definitive meaning and leaving us confused.

Peter Ogwen Jones pointed to the strange vase on the left of the painting, writing that it was an alchemical device. Yet I haven't found anything to resemble it in my books on alchemy, or online. Yet I doubt whether such a strange object ever existed in reality. A reverse image search on the Web gave no clear result.

Mother and Child – Amor and Psyche



Both were painted in the same period, about 1860. The first is the only example of Dadd's take on a familiar theme in Western art, mother and child. Whether the woman is the Virgin Mary, however, is once again left ambiguous by Dadd, as her halo could just as well be due to the alignment of the sun with her head. The face of the child resembles that of those in Otto Runge's *The Hulslenbeck Children*, though I'm not sure he would've had the opportunity to see it in Overbeck's studio in Rome. The sea and the sailing ship in the background refer to his childhood, and his desire for freedom. The pigeon puffing up its feathers could be the Holy Ghost, which, as in the *Flight Out of Egypt*, could be another joke on Dadd's part (the Holy Ghost being the impregnator of Mary).

The second painting wasn't titled by Dadd. Peter Ogwen Jones points out that it could just as well be a portrayal of Amor and his mother Venus. In the story of Amor and Psyche, as told in Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, there's a passage of Amor and his mother enjoying long and tender kisses. Once again, Dadd seems to be deliberately ambiguous. Whichever way you interpret it, it is a disturbing scene, especially as the woman's posture seems to suggest sexual arousal. Her arched foot echoes the leg of the chair on which she sits. The chair is concealed under a cloth, but the foot underneath seems that of a dragon or a griffon, which points to the animal

nature of the woman, concealed under fine drapery. The figure and the drapery also recalls that of his earlier painting *Titania Sleeping*, which portrays an innocent woman, about to be tricked into falling in love with a half-animal.

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The Streatham and Brixton Chess Blog

Broadmoor, death, and rediscovery

Dadd was transferred to the new hospital at Broadmoor in 1864. For the first time in twenty years he could imagine he was in the countryside, as the hospital grounds had been designed in such a way as to hide the walls and allow views of the surroundings. Most of the works he'd started at Bethlem, such as the Fairy Feller's Master Stroke, he left unfinished. The subsequent pieces were largely decorative, such as that of Broadmoor's theatre. He pursued other interest, such as playing the violin, reading, and experimenting with other techniques, such as scratching designs into white-washed glass. There is also a conventional portrait, entirely unlike those of Morrison and Hood, and two related paintings, *The Crooked Path* and *The Temple of Fame*. Both show an edifice of fame on an inaccessible mountain peak. The latter was used for the drop-curtain of Broadmoor theatre. Clearly it is a comment on his own situation. By this time he was so obscure that some periodicals listed him as deceased.

His violent outbursts abated, but he still held on to his delusions, convinced that he was misunderstood. In 1879, Elizabeth Langley wrote to Broadmoor, asking whether he was still alive. In 1886 she received a reply telling her he'd died of consumption in January of that year. In her reply she referred to Richard Dadd as "her poor friend".

As the works he made in the asylums were never exhibited, Dadd and his works largely disappeared from the public view. Some of his works were exhibited before the 1930's, due to the sale of the estate of Charles Hood, but the true revival came during the 1970's, when the Tate Gallery held an exhibition of his work. In 1963 the poet Siegfried Sassoon had donated it the Fairy Feller's Master Stroke. The underground London magazine *Oz* printed an article by Peter Ogwen Jones on him, and the pop group Queen devoted a song to the painting.

Richard Dadd became a tragic hero to some in the anti-psychiatry movement. This movement originally came from within psychiatry and pointed out its many abuses: involuntary hospitalization, inconsistent diagnoses, and the copious use of chemicals. The whole concept of mental illness was even called into question. To many on the Left, psychiatry was a means of social control in capitalist society, to many on the Right, mental illness was a hoax to allow criminals to go unpunished. To the former, Dadd would've been a rebel, to the latter he was evil and should've been hanged as a murderer.

For all the romantic notions about him, it has to be kept in mind that he did murder his father, tried to murder a fellow traveler on a coach in France, and was at times violent to his fellow patients.

To judge his work aesthetically we have to disregard the facts about his life. The fallacy many made is to see in an imaginative work evidence of madness, something we wouldn't do when viewing the work of an ordinary artist. To prove this point, look at this painting below by Daniel Maclise, illustrating A Midsummer Night's Dream, definitely wilder than anything Dadd ever painted.

Before his breakdown he was a competent artist following a niche trend of fairy paintings while dabbling in more darker works on the occult. Much is made of the Clique's resistance to academic painting, but they never went into the radical direction French painting took with artist like Gericault, Delacroix, and Courbet. After his move to Broadmoor, his work became ever blander, almost perfunctory. It's not a good or compassionate thing to say, but what made his most remarkable works, and his reputation, were his mental state combined with the conditions at Bethlem Hospital.



Paul Murgatroyd

Sally Brown

After her husband Len died of a stroke,
his best mate Bert helped Sal with the funeral,
looked in on her the day after and came back
several times because she was so miserable.
One Saturday he finally got her to go to the flicks,
to see Oklahoma, which was on at The Rex.
After that she went with him to two westerns,
and quite enjoyed them, and was bought a Dairy Box.
Then she heard Her Next Door squawking to Mrs Jones
about that one off galivanting with her bloody fancy man
when her poor husband hasn't been dead three months,
so she told Bert she couldn't see him again.
Sal spent the next Saturday night at home on her own,
wishing that she could afford to buy a telly,
thinking what a gent (and not bad-looking) Bert had been,
staring at the armchair dented by Len, but empty.
When she realized Sal hadn't gone out that night,
Her Next Door pointed that out to her husband, smiled
a snide smile and celebrated with a bottle of stout.
Five months later Bert had a heart attack and died.

SALLY BROWN 1924-1961
BELOVED WIFE OF LEN

Maria Arana

obscure character

she laughs at things already said
recalling moments with temporary pleasure
not realizing that the moment has passed
strange the eyes seem to shift
each time a giggle leaves her bosom
could it be hiding inside
that thing which haunts our dreams
in life it shies away but the motions given taunt
and her smile fades with the tide

Maria Arana

you crawl from the womb

sliding on the wet surface stained with blood

when you can stand

you fall

head too heavy for the stars

first steps take you further

bloodied footprints left behind

days and nights

come and go like the tide

but your steps quicken

blood thickens

and the growth spurt takes you further

an enslavement of past suffering

the animal you became and the animal you kill

sometimes to survive

sometimes for sport

teeth grimy with fear

Nicola Vallera

205

It's the craziest day of my life, and I'm heading into the department stores for Christmas shopping. I wasn't planning on buying anything for anyone. I'm thirty-one, my folks are gone, and my relatives are memories. Thank goodness for that!

I'm trying to get myself a laptop—the 205. I'm not even sure what to call it. The ad was confusing. It's a quantum supercomputer that becomes a robot? Sounds strange.

Anyway, it's supposed to be a-m-a-z-i-n-g. It can sense your mood and help you with all sorts of computer-related tasks. But it's pricey—like ten grand pricey. That's not exactly chump change. But I want it badly. The 205 will be an excellent investment. It'll help me find a better job or even work from home.

After twenty years, I got fired from my call-center job. I told a Chinese customer I couldn't give her back the three thousand dollars stolen from her purse in New York. She wanted her money back from me because I'm American. She said I represent my country, and yada-yada.... for fuck's sake, what am I? An ambassador? Anyway, my boss agreed with her, so I got the boot.

I enter a department store and see a shop called “The Happy Geek—Computers, Robots, and Electronics.”

There is a young clerk who puts boxes up on the shelves. I try to get his attention by clearing my throat, but he doesn't turn.

“Hey there,” I say, waving.

He kinda gives a “yes,” but his eyes roll a great deal.

“Do you happen to have the 205?”

When he's about to reply, a lady in uniform walks in.

“Jimmy, please check if we have any printers in the storeroom,” she tells him.

The guy bounces outta here, shuffling along in his purple kicks.

The woman scans me. She gives me a once-over with a suspicious look. I can smell a funky odor that reminds me of mothballs mixed with sweat. The lady's forehead is oozing weird whitish stuff coming off her makeup. It's kinda gross!

“May I help you?” she says.

Her snob attitude is getting on my nerves.

“Do you have the 205?” I ask.

“The 205?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Why don't you try to communicate more positively?”

“What?”

“We should respect such impressive technology.”

I make a face but then quickly put on a grin.

“Are you interested in purchasing the item?” she asks.

“Totally.”

“It is worth noting that the item in question is not merely a laptop.”

“Wow, that made my day. Thanks for putting a smile on my face.”

“Transforming into a laptop is just a small part of its capabilities.”

“Cool!”

The woman’s smell is getting to me. And seriously, her nails are not doing her any favors. They’re such an ugly shade of pink.

She grimaces. “Unfortunately—”

“Any problems?”

“Please, allow me to talk.”

“Sorry.”

She shakes her head. It looks like she’s thinking of saying something not-so-nice.

“The 205 system is awe-inspiring in its abilities.”

“Super cool!”

“Its sophisticated technology and advanced capabilities make it a valuable asset.”

“That’s really awesome!”

“It can handle countless data. It’s extremely accurate and efficient.”

“I want it so badly.”

“And it does more than just calculate.”

“Alright, tell me everything. What’s the scoop?”

“It can explain philosophical ideas, like the purpose of life.”

“The purpose of life?”

“It can change into a robot that looks like a human.”

“Wow!”

“The device was first designed to look like a person but was changed to a laptop.”

“How can a humanoid fit into a laptop? I mean, it’s not possible, right? Where does all that metal go?”

“Are you familiar with quantum mechanics and quantum tunneling?”

I shrug. “No clue.”

“This technology exhibits a remarkable intelligence level and surpasses our capabilities.”

“That’s what I’m looking for.”

The woman sighs like her uniform is about to pop. And man, her perfume is giving me a headache.

“May I ask your name?” she says.

“Rob.”

“Rob, sometimes we need to analyze and think more carefully about the situation.”

“If you say so....”

“May I ask about the specific details and requirements for this acquisition?”

“What?”

“Unfortunately, you have not provided us with the necessary information.”

“Hey, didn’t I just say what I needed?”

“You could have done better.”

“What do you mean?”

“You should have tried harder.”

“Try... what?”

“You should have thought more.”

“Hey, are you gonna hand over the 205 or what?”

“May I suggest taking a moment?”

“A moment?”

“It appears that there may be a sense of unfriendliness.”

“I just wanna buy the damned 205, but you’re trying to talk me out of it. Why?”

“Because....” She hesitates.

I cross my arms and give her a bit of a frown.

“Because procedures hold great significance.”

“Procedures?”

She nods and gives me an awkward smile. I stare at her, racking my brain to figure out what she’s gonna say next. But I’m still in the dark.

She looks around. The store is so crazy now, with customers getting hyped up for the holidays. They’re all getting rowdy and loud.

“Would you mind coming to our office?” she asks.

She points to the emergency exit, her pink nail sticking out her plump finger.

She walks ahead, and I catch a whiff of her perfume. It’s definitely not mothballs anymore, but more like a mix of sewage, piss, or something. And her heels are so loud. Not to mention how she’s walking. She’s wobbling around like a tipsy duck.

We go through the emergency door and find ourselves in a covered parking lot. There are a few offices to our right, and we enter the first. As soon as I step inside, her stench hits me. She tells me to take a seat on a drab swivel chair.

Ugh, the chair smells just like her.

I sit down, facing a door window overlooking the parking lot.

The woman sits. “We need proper justification before selling our items.”

“Justification?”

She nods. But man, her scent is so strong that I must pinch my nose.

“I need a valid reason for any requests on our 205s.”

“Why?”

“It’s ensuring our company policies are met.”

“Hmm, that’s something I haven’t heard before.”

“Please provide more info on your need for a 205.”

“What kind of info?”

“We can explore viable options together.”

“Hmm, I’m not following you.”

“I was hoping for your cooperation.”

“How do I go about buying it?”

“You should have....”

I lean in, squinting a bit. “Y-e-s?”

She grimaces. “Do I have to tell you?”

“Don’t you wanna tell me?”

She dabs her forehead with a tissue taken from a pocket. I catch another whiff of her perfume, but now it smells like metal. It’s like she just stepped out of a metal workshop or something. The scent is overwhelming, and I tug at the collar of my shirt sticking out from under my sweater.

“Are you alright?” she asks me.

I’m like, “Yeah, sure, go ahead and talk,” but I guess I sound kinda annoyed because she suddenly gets all gentle. I nod but urge her to speak.

“You should have pondered,” she says.

I frown. “Why?”

“To understand.”

“Understand?”

“Do you really want a 205?”

“Fuck yes!”

“It may have been beneficial to seek guidance.”

“Guidance?”

“Exactly—guidance from a licensed mental health professional for further insight and support.”

“Hey, what kind of shop do you run? You guys must be nuts.”

“Really? Are we nuts? And yet you are the one who came unannounced.”

“Ugh, I’m so done,” I say, exploding from my chair.

“Seriously?”

“Seriously.”

“May I ask where you are going?”

“I’m gonna find a store that treats their customers right.”

“Will it solve your problem?”

“I’m not having any problems.”

“If you don’t have problems....”

I lean in. “What?”

“Why are you here?”

“I’m here because....” I can’t breathe. “Ugh, what’s that smell coming from you? It’s pretty gross.”

“Are you familiar with the latest innovation in tissue technology? They are commonly referred to as new-generation tissues.”

I shake my head, grimacing.

“Innovative tissue technology replicates human-like parts in robots.”

“So?”

“An unintended consequence is the emission of an odor. Some individuals may perceive it as unpleasant.”

“I’m not talking about any robot. It’s you who stinks like a goat. Honestly, even ammonia and rotting meat wouldn’t be as bad as this.”

Suddenly, the woman jumps up and lets out a crazy scream. It sounds just like the noises you hear at the mechanics. Scary stuff!

And then she starts growing, getting taller and longer. She gives me the shivers, and I can’t take my eyes off her. But I must escape the creepy thing, so I bolt for the door.

Four workers in blue overalls run toward the door, but one of them locks it before I reach it.

“No!” I yell, banging my hand on the glass. “Let me out, or she’ll kill me.”

“Sorry, pal,” a worker says from behind the glass. “It’s the procedure.”

The smell in the office is overwhelming. I can’t even describe it. It’s so strong that it messes my senses and numbs my head.

She’s getting taller. Her arms and legs keep stretching, and she’s getting closer to the ceiling. I freeze when she creeps at me. She looks like a wild animal, ready to attack at any second. Her arms are so long and thick that they rip off her uniform.

Oh man, she’s made of metal. Is she a robot or something?

She paddles her metal fingers and rotates her wrists. But their rotation is abnormal.

They spin around, resembling drills. I even hear the drilling noise.

Excruciating pain says my end is close. She drills my stomach with a push of her arm. Her spinning hand causes my flesh and blood to spatter into every office corner.

She stops drilling into my body. With a jerk, she withdraws her arm and recoils. There is a hole in my stomach. Slowly, my body slips down.

The people in blue overalls are talking on the radio. They say a malfunctioning robot is acting human.

Pretty wild stuff!

Before my life ends, I hear the voices of the men in overalls.

“It’s in the manager’s office,” a man says. “It’s just killed a man. There’s nothing we can do.”

“Is the glass door unbreakable, son?” a voice asks from the radio.

“Yes,” says the man.

“Do nothing and wait for us, son. We’re coming.”

“Hurry up. I’m not sure how much longer this glass will hold up.”

“I’m confused, son. How could the robot even break that glass?”

“Because that’s not just any regular robot. It’s a 205.”

“Then you’re in deep shit, son.”

Craig Kirchner

Hyde

Words dance, spasm,
bits of dirt on the page,
defying securities of postulate, finite.
Ink stretching fibers of paper,

filling microscopic spaces.
Manic glimpse of foreheads, breasts,
lope into corners,
square to meet the room.

Violent scrawling, no significance,
idle language molts charred flesh.
No morals.
Need, freedom to devastate.

White tablet raped of innocence,
pen molests meaning,
words become poem.
I am Hyde.

Pauline Barbieri

The Woman Who Collected Holes

Daydreaming on the front doorstep, I tuned into an adult conversation concerning a stray bomb which had landed in the middle of our street. Now the talk surrounding this man-made hole was quite alarming to me as a six year old. Apparently the adults were not too sure where this bomb came from, how old it was and whether it was dead or alive. To my way of thinking, even at that age, if you could still see it, it must be alive. And as if to prove a point, Teddy Slater from next door fired his catapult at it. Then they knew for certain as it made one 'hellova' hole in the front bedroom window. So I kept it as a souvenir and that's how my collection began.

As a teenager, I took to collecting keyholes after I'd heard about a peeping-tom. It seemed as though he was someone else who loved holes but only because he liked what he saw through them. Not at all like me! I always went looking for interesting keyholes and I was very careful not to find one with an eye in it. I mean there's no point in collecting holes if they're full of anything, especially eyes. Then you have to start collecting hooks.

Instead I took up knitting during the winters because I found I loved to knit around holes. I came across so many, mostly at the beginning. I would watch them grow, change shape, decline but what I really liked, was the fact that you never knew where they would appear. You were completely at the wool's mercy. The wonder was, when it was finished, the more holes you managed to make, the warmer you were. Then I started to ask myself questions. 'Did anyone else know this?' and more importantly 'Could I make money out of them?'

Button holes also became intriguing to me at that time but they were very hard to come by because men seemed to be particularly interested in them. Especially the ones left open, like those in the lace-up blouse Jane Russell used to wear in 'Cowboy' films when she felt really tired in the hay.

So I took to collecting other lace holes, in shoes and drunks. Then I got into holes in clothes. Take string vests, for example. As soon as I saw one, particularly one covering a greasy, hairy chest, my knees went weak. I would steal it while he was not looking. Usually when he was down a hole in the road. I would take it home with me, put it under my pillow. I didn't even bother washing it. The smell in the night was enough to give me repeated orgasms, like pleasant indigestion.

And holes in socks. Spuds! These were so delicious to look at. I kept all my own holes in an oak chest in my bedroom. The socks I threw away of course. I was

intrigued sometimes by the movies in which American College girls wore socks and jumpers with holes in them, not out of necessity but because they liked the effect. They were layered one on top of the other, like planets in different shapes and colours. Are we talking the universe here? Anyway I wanted to adopt this nonchalant look, because it would be so easy for me. I managed to get some socks, the colour of Bryn Mawr and a jumper, the colour of Smith, and then I knew what it felt like to be both rich and brainy.

I'm getting a bit worried that your suspenders, holding up your disbelief, might be starting too droop. But honestly, I've tried to keep all my holes on the ground, although, having said that, I've come to see over the years that most of the holes, I mean the really beautiful, dynamic, breath-taking and kaleidoscopic holes are in space. And what's space? Apparently a giant hole. Maybe even black so we can't see it anyway.

But while I'm in America, I should show you one of the most surprising holes, I ever got. If you go down East 69th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenue, and stop between numbers 147 and 149 (this is not the area the Mafia usually hangs out in) you'll spot a tall, thin door, black and shiny. And if you look through the keyhole you'll see a young, naïve English girl coming down the stairs, in the process of being taken for a ride. And behind me is an Italian 'shot-silk suit'. (Not a string vest in sight, not even a clean one, so I knew somehow it would all go wrong). Anyway, apparently this silk suit didn't belong to him, neither did the other forty nine lying in the boot of his 'limo' outside. So while he is shooting his Latin line and opening the door for me, I happened to be in the line of fire, coming from the true owner of the suits. so now I have a beautiful bullet hole alongside my belly button. Later, at the hospital, they said I was lucky to be alive but I said I was lucky I kept the hole and not the bullet.

As you can appreciate, not all hole collecting was pleasant. In fact a hole in my tooth was quite painful. But at the dentist's I managed to hide it under my bib and slip it into my bag without the nurse or dentist noticing. Then once back home, I cleaned it up. You know to get rid of the old, dried blood, bits of jaw and cotton wool before I put it under my pillow for the tooth fairy. Despite this, she never came. But now, come to think of it, she probably didn't recognise it without the tooth. I guess there must have been about ten under there, the last time I counted, along with a couple of holes from rings.

Gold rings! These of course are very painful. Too painful to even talk about. One Charlie! One Ben! Too painful even to look at. But well, I might as well tell you about Ben. He was one of those 'string vests'. One of the greasy ones, I mentioned earlier. Well, he was digging a hole in the road, after I married him, and he made another hole in a gas pipe. Well, as you can guess, he's now lying in yet another hole, not far from here, with some lovely grass on top.

I wonder if you've spotted the deliberate hole in this story. I think it's called a loophole. Or maybe I haven't got there yet. Anyway, I must have collected about forty seven thousand holes which must be at least as interesting as that old fellow in Oldham who is collecting dirty milk bottles. Ten thousand at the last count.

Of course, at certain times during my collecting life, I knew I would have to find something interesting to do with all these holes. I mean they were getting a bit out of hand in my bedroom. Most of them were in the wardrobe but there were also some on top and others squashed behind it. Some flat ones fitted under the bed and I even put some under the mattress, as long as they were not so thick as to make sleeping uncomfortable. Sometimes I had a hard time opening the bedroom door, because they'd fall off the top of the wardrobe and get lodged behind it. I really started to think seriously about whether I should get rid of some especially as I woke up one morning to find I couldn't even take a bath because it was full of holes.

Well to cut a holy story short, I had so many of these holes I didn't know what on earth to do with them. I mean what do you do with seventy five thousand holes, give or take a few. I mean there were far too many for a jumper, even a jumper with a matching hat. No! I had to find a good cause, one where I could donate them. Or even find a place to display them, to a good end.

That happened one day whilst I was walking alone along the south coast of Cornwall, after I'd come across a stone. Now I'd come across stones before, even stones with holes and collected them as you would expect. But this one was too large for me to lift, never mind to carry back home. At that time, I was living in a large white barn, surrounded by lots of black cows. Every day I went down to the sea to check out his holy stone and the more I saw it, the more I liked it. I noticed other people looking at it, even walking around it. This gave me an idea. I went back to the barn and took out all the holes I'd stored in wooden chests and cardboard boxes and began sorting them out. Before long, I found myself putting holes in all sorts of things; wooden poles, bronze balls and copper pipes. Although I didn't put them down the middle, as they were already there, but I twisted them around unknown, still to be discovered holes.

Soon people were stopping to look at my holes, the ones I'd put outside by the cows. They seemed to enjoy them. So apparently did the cows because their milk-output increased. Then one day, the postman called. I opened the door. 'Miss Hepworth?' He was new. 'Miss Barbara Hepworth? Obviously he wanted to make sure. 'Yes, that's me!' I replied. He handed me a package. It was from Yorkshire, Special Delivery. 'Sign here, please!' I took it into my studio and opened it up. It was a lovely hole from my friend, Henry. Henry Moore. So elegant, so white.

Rebecca Pyle

Lines in Front of the Bookstore, Porto



Rebecca Pyle

Escape, and Puzzles

The carousel or *guignol* was gliding to a stop, to disburse the rest and to let him on. He looked around anxiously: bad luck could even await you on a carousel. The swan with its high arched neck could inch just past you, giving you an ungraceful series of steps backwards to go sit within its high wings; the horse's heavy-lidded eyes might give you sudden weary glare. A coach, depending on the light which fell upon it, might suddenly look too horribly empty, far too big for one person fleeing a damp climate and unpayable, unplayable debits.

Warm, sharp rays of light suddenly bathed him, cutting through the moist constant haze of where he was. Very, very sharp rays of light, which you could even feel in your bones. This light almost felt like the herald of death: it frightened him. And a horse, a fairly ordinary-looking horse, despite its gilded bridle and its dark green shiny saddle, had come to a standstill next to him. An almost ordinary-looking brown merry-go-round horse, the kind which your father wouldn't bristle at the idea of your riding—you were not trying to be more than you were. A simple, dutiful, practical horse, always fresh yet always weary, because it was a merry-go-round horse, which would make him, the son with his plain face and worried eyes and strangely elfin haircut—no haircut looked good on him, and neither did a hat—look not too disappointing, too ordinary, himself, in comparison.

New land, he thought, take me there, he kept repeating in his head as he got on the brown carousel horse. He thought of his father's shoes, and his mother's red apron which she wore for everyday cooking. The carousel began to go, and he imagined those brown shoes of his father's and now that red apron of his mother's covered with hoofprints as the horse he had chosen (or which had chosen him) curved its tight way around the tight path of the merry-go-round creatures.

Look unexceptional, he thought to himself.

In his throat he felt a cough, and another cough, and another: coughs as constant as the apostle figures filing one by one quickly behind the dial of the Astronomical Clock in the square in Prague as it struck the hour. His cough became softer and softer, but still strident, as strident as the little skeleton rattling a bell over on the east side of the clock, warning everyone below in the square that soon they'd all fill the earth's graves. Unless you chose cremation, and you could fly above everyone's heads, even over the heads of tourists who could fill the square whenever it was about to chime, choking out the local residents: when tourists were dense, they avoided the square like the plague.

Have this tea, he could hear someone saying, in his head, though this made no sense: a carousel was not really a place for tea.

Sit in this sun, he could hear another voice saying. Or was it the same voice?

No, he said aloud, as you could babble any idiocy on a carousel and no one, but you, heard you. *Sit in the sun*, he heard again.

Have this tea, he heard again.

So he let himself imagine the tea which tasted like peppermint, the water not very hot, and the sun not too hot, but purely brilliant, and he suddenly saw behind the tea and the sun a framed painting of his mother and father holding letters with stamps on them, but he turned away, making that painting of them fall to the ground, stamp sides down. Almost where the horses and swans and swan-carriages and horse carriages could trample them, and make the names and addresses on the letters unreadable, even smashing their wax seals and making useless their stamps. Before him, now, catching his attention, was a typewriter proud as a grandstand. A good plain piece of paper was in it, one scroll of paper that would go on as long as a book, if he kept curling it up and curling it up as he worked.

The carousel was speeding up, rising into the air, and below the carousel now was the foamy ocean, always the most terrible symbol of possibly incontrovertible bad luck. The ocean did care about you but only after you were drowned in it, had become part of it; if you fought it, it would laugh at you. These things he was certain of. And as he was thinking these things he felt his terrible lungs almost certainly clearing, just in time to be brought to a land of staring-at-you sun and pine needles, and a desk with a floor of baked mud and straw. Straw and dried mud were now underneath his small, naked, sea-salted and nervous feet.

People small and large greeted him with a name he had never heard, but he liked at once, though he thought he should not admit that, and looked away as they spoke that name.

Now sleep, they said.

One was holding an unlidded bowl with freshly-fallen sun in it, and the other was holding an unlidded jar of unsteeped dark and pale green leaves and stems, with a big puff of snow on top. He could smell the strangely accusing, interrogatory smell of rosemary.

Now sleep, they said, again. He felt a convulsing motion in his throat and his stomach, and gripped his chest.

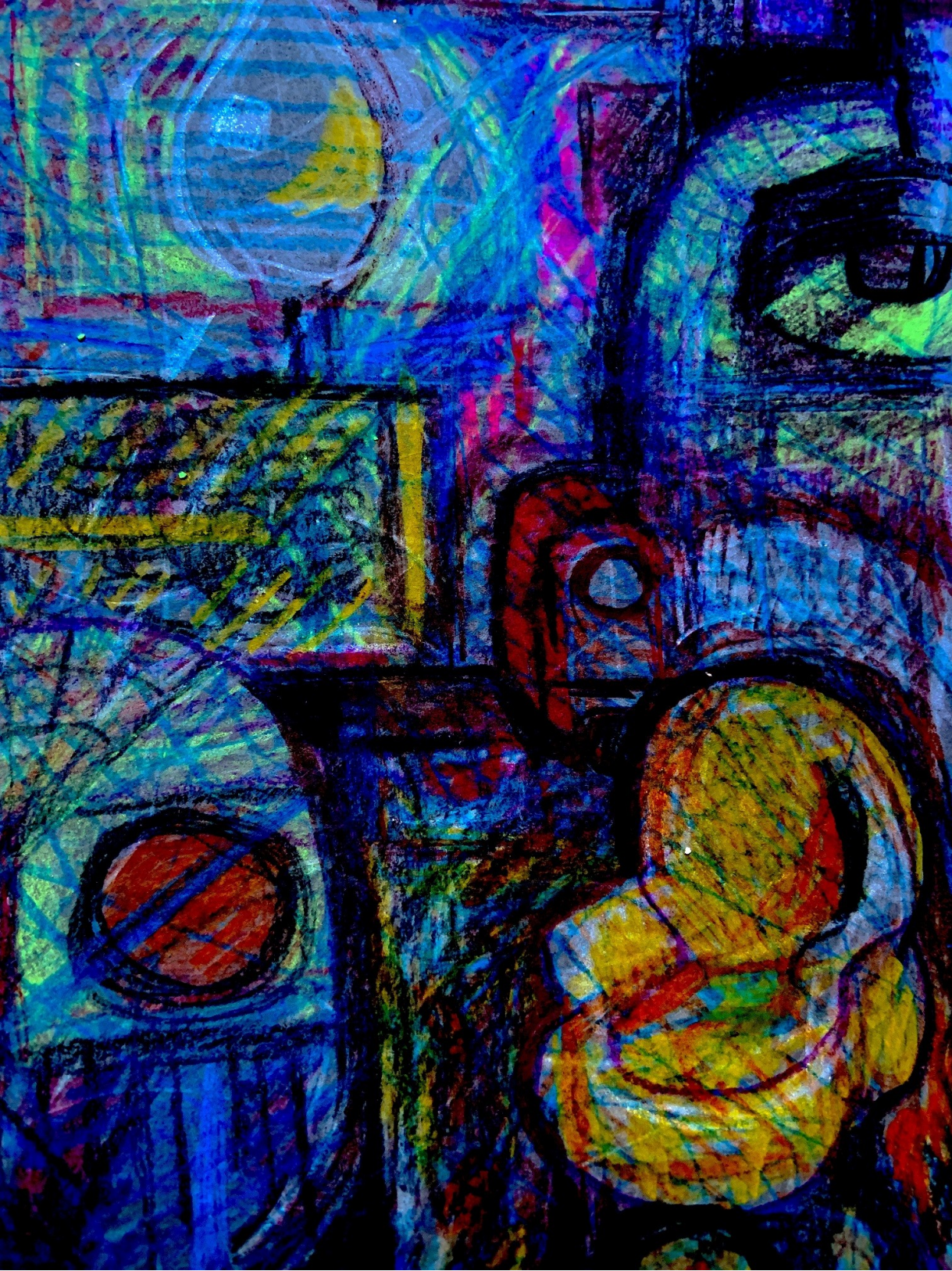
Nerves, they said. Such nerves. Sleep. We'll say thank you to the carousel we sent for you. For metamorphosis.

He smiled and died inside over and over, and they seemed to be satisfied, pointing to a cathedral in the distance which they reassured him he would never have to go in unless he wanted to. And one starry-eyed poinsettia almost as tall as a child's chair. They also pointed to people making things from silver and told him those people were simply forming luck for other people. They pointing to croissants in a pastry case and said croissants looked like him sleeping in his blankets for eight hours, which he was to do now.

Outside, horses were going by, and wagons, and people were walking by in dusty clothes. He felt anxious for no person. He only felt anxiety, suddenly, for the colors he was seeing: the battles reds were having with greens, the way orange seemed to run away from yellow, though orange really had no reason. And worry about how black kept cornering white, till white fled to the reds, and the reds fled to the yellow. Then green became a harbor.

An amber light fell over all. All troubled him, but he fell deeply asleep. Tomorrow he would dream about wars in the alphabets. Sleep was like a merry-go-round horse—only meant for escape, and puzzles.

Rebecca Pyle
Hungarian Apartment



Rikki Santer

Release Recurring

after Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

Amniotic churning of rough sea, the painter reinvents herself. Scaling pelvic bone of cliff, instinct will harness her hunger to be twinned. In an 18th century chateau immense quiet is alert to isolate each rustle of petticoat, shivering tongues of candle or fireplace, scratches from charcoal on tight canvases of uncalcined umber. Eyes of the painter and her muse agree in the craft of craving capture, rapture of their mouths sends paper lanterns to the moon, pubis cradles self-portrait, perfect skin luminous, beholder becomes beheld, beheld becomes beholder. Legend maroons them on this remote shore where time and timelessness intersect. Their gazes for each other fixed in tableaux. Color bars of Vivaldi, what another Orpheus chooses, wedding dress apparition portends. A woman's world takes charge—a cappella canticle with witchy bonfire, hem catches flame. With cedar root, pennyroyal and skewer, a young housekeeper brings down the flowers of pregnancy and painter takes her place as rare recorder. Art always seeks its fulcrum between liberation and captivity. Muse finally released to canvas.

Lovers released from patriarchy to the salve of recurring recollection
deep in their bones.

Muse finally released to canvas because Art always seeks its fulcrum between liberation and captivity. Young housekeeper brings down the flowers of pregnancy with cedar root, pennyroyal, and skewer, while the painter takes her place as rare recorder. Hem catches flame. A cappella canticle with witchy bonfire. A woman's world takes charge. Color bars of Vivaldi, what another Orpheus chooses. Wedding dress apparition portends. Their gazes for each other fixed in tableaux where time and timelessness intersect. Legend maroons them on a remote shore. Beholder becomes beheld, beheld becomes beholder. Perfect skin luminous, pubis cradles self-portrait. Rapture of their mouths sends paper lanterns to the moon. Eyes of the painter and her muse agree in the craft of

craving capture. Scratches from charcoal on tight canvases of umber. shivering
tongues of candles and fireplaces, rustle of petticoats. The immense quiet alert
to isolate in an 18th century chateau. Instinct harnessing the hunger to be
twined, she scaled pelvic bones of cliff. The painter reinvented
herself. Amniotic churning of rough sea.

Rikki Santer

Dear Isaac and Joseph

The black pointer with its gold tip glides
like a finger, right to left, beyond what

the census shows and leaves me at the margins
of grandfathers whistling on front porches.

Breath-length memories I am too late for,
but for. No fingertips on my eyelids, no wooly

voice calling me to your lap. Yet, thistles punctuate
your greying beard of what you said when you fled

to heave your family from buckling Lithuanian
floors. The peddler algorithm of your honey

and brine bartering schmattahs door to door,
then your American storefront stubborn for

closing on Sabbath. In your parlor, frayed
stacks of the Forward and socialist broadsides.

Bone dice in your pockets, pinochle in back
rooms. Late nights at the kitchen table, sitting

in the almost dark, you weep for Roosevelt,
draw in a braided wax taper to light your cigar.

Ian C. Smith

Anniversary

A slew of years all over me, I review a life that evolved far from how I meant to live. In these several cherished rooms I call my own, in which I read, think, and watch the sun emerge through gently rising river fog, I sit in a chair of the kind often found in hard rubbish, my reading glasses atop a second-hand book surrounded by mementoes, odd witnesses to this mute rhythm of prescribed days alone.

The last time she dropped by, disapproval palpable, triggering talkativeness in me, she showed me a yellowed card I gave her on our tenth anniversary. The date, a decade after we moved in together, was not our wedding anniversary. I suspect some sentimentalists celebrating round-numbered years as achievements might be putting cracks, so I mostly give them a miss. Although unspoken, I sense this could be yet another shortcoming peeving her.

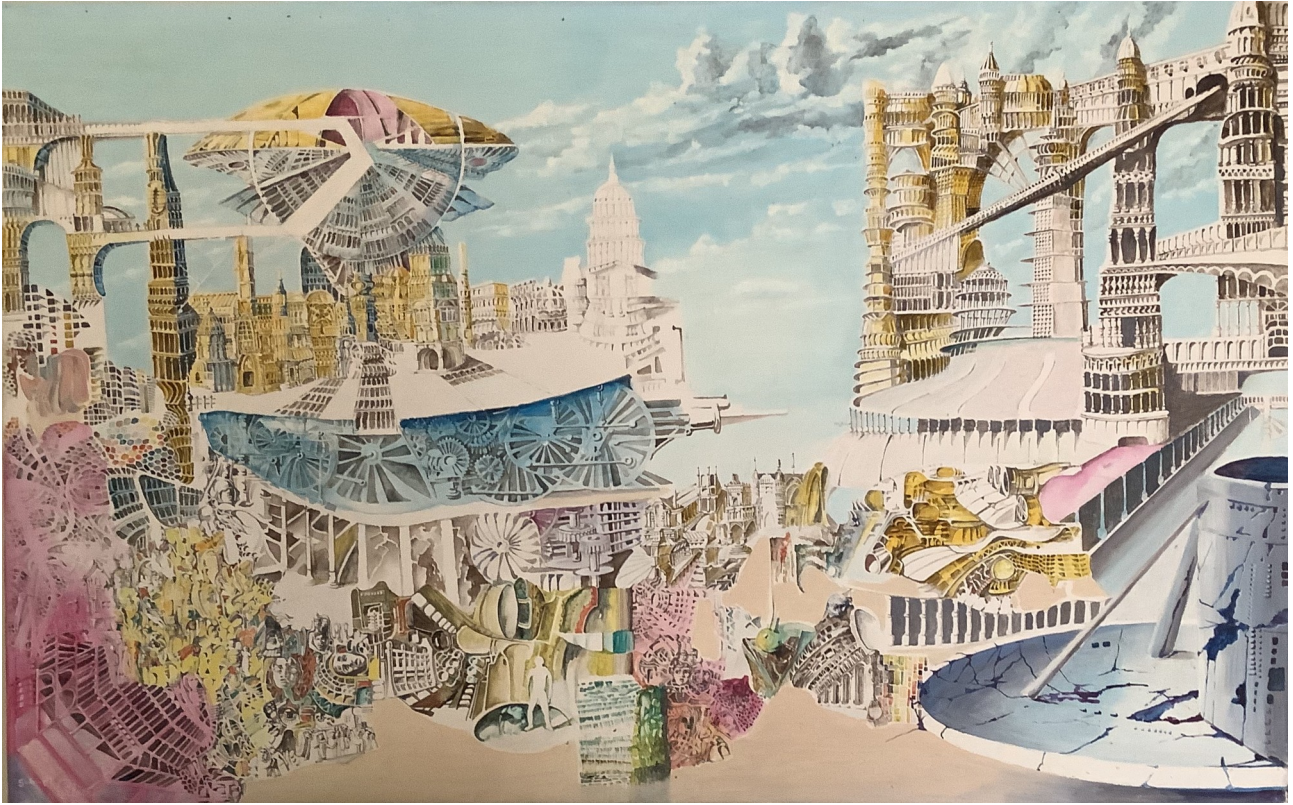
Interrogating scars on my inked skin, a palimpsest of hungry, dangerous days in the mean district where I dwelt long before I met her, I recall petrol fumes overlaid by cigarette smoke beyond grey windows that masked abysses of violence and sorrow. I trace boyhood memories back to when I embarked on long lonely walks after my spiteful family's meltdown. Eventually I journeyed from those stained brick alleys to a comparative cathedral choir of ideas leading away from misguided masculinity, superseding hurt.

A painting by a heroic Argentinean features on the card with a forgettable poem of mine. The picture is from a time of people disappearing from the streets, of terror, torture, and despair. A trade unionist who stuck to his beliefs, and ideals, and to his family, he used jail food to colour the painting for the son he wouldn't see until years after he and his pregnant wife were arrested.

My doggerel refers to us sharing rough hitch-hiking miles, my wild adventuring that had started as a boy endangering her, our personalities abrasive at such close quarters. This card is like a message in a bottle discovery. I think an optimistic prediction, now proven wrong, alludes to our sandcastle relationship. The boy who received the painting gift is an adult like our sons, his family reunited in America. I occasionally note our anniversaries when they sweep around again seeming far away like other old dreams.

Willem Johan Barbieri

The City is not a Concrete Jungle but a Human Zoo



LB Sedlacek

Shift

Fitz woke up with sand in his throat. He coughed and sputtered until the grains poured out of his cracked lips, over his swollen tongue. He swallowed. Started to rub his eyes. Stopped.

The sun glared across him like a sleeping giant. Had he been asleep? He pinched his arm. Then the other. His skin was tender and blazing bright red. He blinked in the light. He tried to move. In the distance, he heard music and laughter.

There was a burst of bright light. He knew the drill by now. He had to move through it, complete all the steps for the shift to dial and for him to move over another panel closer to home.

Fitz was nowhere near home, though. Where was he? What country? He looked around. There was sand everywhere. Had he grown up in a desert or at the beach?

He didn't think so. He didn't remember everything, every time the dial moved he felt like a piece of himself was left behind.

Fitz pinched his cheeks. His skin was raw and caked with dirt and stubble. He'd only been playing the game two days. He did remember that. He had to survive a whole week to get a chance for the big prize. You could only pick one: a residence, car, a trip, or money.

All of it life changing. Earth life had sucked for so many for so long after the last human war. Finally, everyone had smartened up enough to band together to fight off the true threat – beings from the outer reaches of the planet formerly known as Pluto. They were smarter. They could eliminate us in seconds, but hadn't and wouldn't as long as we kept entertaining them. Fritz was on one of their shows: Human Board Game aka Shift. The object – a dial is turned and the human must adjust to wherever they land.

There were only winners with Shift. At least, that's how it was advertised on mind TV. Close your eyes and think of what you want to see and then you do. One by one they'd enhanced us – some of us born that way thinking indeed we actually were born that way and were not souped up by an alien species.

A species with a penchant for destruction is so cliché. That's what else they advertised. And, if you lost Human Board Game aka Shift, they wouldn't kill you, no. They instead sent you to a Lab and experimented on you. No surprise they named that show Area 51.

Aliens, it seems, have a sick sense of humor. Fitz wasn't laughing now. He knew he couldn't, wouldn't last five more days of the seven days of game play, no, he had to find a short cut, to jump to day seven before the other contestants found it first.

He was in the desert. He sniffed. No ocean. No water for miles.

He hoofed away from the blazing sun towards what he called it back home in Tennessee - "town." But this was not an innertubes by the river, bike rental shops or touristy motels town. This was adobes and clay structures, camels and people smartly clothed to protect themselves from the sun.

He saw a well, a watering hole for horses and ran over to it splashing his face, neck and arms. Locals gathered and laughed at him. He observed each one. He knew one of them was an insert, a guide to the game.

It didn't take him long to figure it out cause he was the only one who wasn't smiling. Fitz followed the thin tall dark-haired man into his shop.

He smiled and blinked. It was a wine shop. He rubbed his hands together.

The shop keeper asked, "Would you like to taste something?"

His throat ached from the heat, the sun so he nodded 'yes.' He had no choice anyway. Move forward, like in Monopoly, in this game or die.

The shopkeeper stared slits of black at him. He slid a shot of clear liquid to Fitz.

"What's this?"

"Oh, my friend it's only water."

Fitz sniffed it, the tossed it back.

"These next three won't be so easy. You must identify the actual wine."

Fitz winced. Three shots of deep red liquid glistened and shook in front of him.

He could see the carafes of water on the shelves behind the shop keeper, a swinging door to a back room, and a coat stand with nothing on it. He slung his head low and sat on one of the leather stools. A coat of dust shook all around him.

"I just have to pick which one of these is the wine?"

The shop keeper smiled. "Simple."

Fitz didn't smile back. He held out his hands and pretended he was shooting an arrow aiming up, down and dead center at each jiggling wine glass.

The heat from his hands, the slinging of furious sweat, the tells from the shopkeeper zinged over each choice. He seized the one on the left.

"That's your choice?" The shopkeeper was no longer smiling.

"It is."

"And why is it your choice?"

"Because sweat is water and mine landed in all three glasses and this is the only one that didn't change colors ever so slightly."

"You are wiser than you look."

"Maybe." Fitz grimaced at his distorted balding head and bulging belly in the liquid's reflection.

He shook his head and drank. The first thing he noticed was the shopkeeper turned into something that would never be identified as human. The second thing he noticed was his slide through time, days clicking off one by one until the clicker stopped at seven.

He'd won. The other six contestants, well he didn't want to think about them and their certain deadly fates.

Once he'd signed all the waivers, they'd give him an unescorted shuttle ride home. He'd be glad to be chopping wood, hauling hay or whatever on the family farm. The games had no prizes only oodles of credits in your bank and a gag prize t-shirt with the HBG aka Shift logo on the front to keep as a souvenir.

He wasn't surprised at what awaited him on his sagging front porch (the credits would go towards fixing that first). It was a box of wine. Six bottles in the box or that was the equivalent. He hoisted it up on his shoulders, and hid it in the hall closet in case they came back for him again.

The one thing he knew they didn't know he knew. Aliens are allergic to liquor, most especially the fermented grapes in wine.

CONTRIBUTORS

Annie Bell writes on topics including the afterlife, mental health and local history. Originally from the UK, she lives in County Waterford. Annie's work has been published in 'A New Ulster', 'The Poet', 'The Kleksograph', 'The Waxed Lemon', 'Colchester Writenight Short Prose Collection' and 'The Wilfred Owen Association Journal'.

Hollie Bell is an artist, who creates art based around nature, fantasy, and invisible illnesses. She specialises in pen drawings and watercolours. She studied art, graduating in 2008 with a BA (Hons) in 3D Art and Design.
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David Radavich has published a variety of poetry, drama, and essays, including two epics, *America Bound* and *America Abroad*, as well as *Middle-East Mezze* and *The Countries We Live In*. His plays have been performed across the U.S. and in Europe. His latest book is *Here's Plenty* (Cervena Barva, 2023).

Gary Bolick is a native of North Carolina, where he now lives with his wife Jill. He lived and studied in Paris and Dijon for a year and a half before graduating from Wake Forest. At Wake he studied under and was mentored by Germaine Bree, who was very supportive of his writing and interests in surrealism and Carl Jung's work on the collective unconscious. He has published three novels. The latest being: *A WALKING SHADOW* (Unsolicited Press) published 2018.

Ray Miller is a Socialist, Aston Villa supporter and faithful husband. Life's been a disappointment.

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Maria Arana is an editor, writer, poet, and teacher. Her poetry has been published in various journals including Spectrum, The Gonzo Press, and fevers of the mind. You can find her at https://twitter.com/m_a_Arana and <https://aranaeditingservices.com> and www.booksbymaarana.com

Nicola Vallera is a certified English teacher with credentials from the University of Cambridge (Celta). He currently resides in Brazil and enjoys indulging in his hobbies of reading and writing. Vallera has published several short stories, including “The Endless City” (2019) in Deadman’s Tome and Datura, “The Beggar on the Bridge” (2023) in Fabula Argentea, “She Deserved to Die” (2023) in Adelaide Magazine, and “Tim” (2023) in both Modern Literature and Kathai Literary Journal.

Craig Kirchner has written poetry all his life, is now retired, and thinks of poetry as hobo art. He loves storytelling and the aesthetics of the paper and pen. The parallel, horizontal, blue lines on white legal, staring left to right, knowing that the ink, when it meets the resistance of the page will feel extroverted, set free, at liberty to jump, the two skinny, vertical red lines to get past the margin.

He was nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize, and has a book of poetry, Roomful of Navels. After a writing hiatus he was recently published in Poetry Quarterly, Decadent Review, New World Writing, Skinny, Neologism, Wild Violet, Last Stanza, Unbroken, The Globe Review, Your Impossible Voice, Fairfield Scribes, Spillwords, Ginosko, Last Leaves, Literary Heist, Blotter, Quail Bell, Ariel Chart, Bombfire, Cape Magazine, Unlikely Stories, The Light Ekphrastic, Edge of Humanity, Gas Blog, Ink in Thirds, Journal of Expressive Writing, Lit Shark, Loud Coffee Press, Rundelania, Teach-Write, Variety Pack, Witcraft, Young Ravens, Yellow Mama, Carolina Muse, and has work forthcoming in Chiron Review, Scars, Flora Fiction, Vine Leaf Press, Punk Monk, Valiant Scribe, Timada’s Diary, and Versification.

Pauline Barbieri was shortlisted for the Bridport Poetry Prize by the poet laureate, Sir Andrew Motion and twice for the Exeter Poetry Prize by Jo Shapcott and Lawrence Sail, respectively. She has had six collections of poetry published and was shortlisted for the Cinnamon Press Novel Awards for her book, 'Smoke and Gold'.

Rebecca Pyle is published in Gargoyle, Guesthouse, and Posit as a fiction writer; The Honest Ulsterman and The Penn Review as a poet; Muse/A and Common Ground Review as an essayist; and in dozens of art/literary journals as an oil painter and photographer. She is American, but named after the phenomenal British character Rebecca in the novel and film of the same name. See rebeccapyleartist.com.

Rikki Santer’s work has appeared in various publications including Ms. Magazine, Poetry East, Slab, Slipstream, PANK, Crab Orchard Review, RHINO, Grimm, Hotel Amerika, and The Main Street Rag. Her work has received many honors, including

five Pushcart and three Ohioana book award nominations, as well as a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Her eighth collection, *Drop Jaw*, inspired by the art of ventriloquism, was published this spring by Nightballet Press. Her website is www.rikkisanter.com.

Ian C Smith's work has been published in BBC Radio 4 Sounds, Cable Street, The Dalhousie Review, Gargoyle, Griffith Review, Honest Ulsterman, Southword, & Stand. His seventh book is *wonder sadness madness joy*, Ginninderra (Port Adelaide). He writes in the Gippsland Lakes area of Victoria, and on Flinders Island.

Willem Johan Barbieri (1948-2019), a Dutch/Italian painter, was born in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. He is the late husband of Pauline Barbieri.

LB Sedlacek LB Sedlacek has had poems and stories appear in a variety of journals and zines. Her poetry has been nominated for Best of the Net. Her latest poetry book is *"Unresponsive Sky"* published by Purple Unicorn Media. Other poetry books include *"Swim," "The Poet Next Door," "This Space Available,"* and *"Words and Bones."* Her latest short stories book is *"The Renovator & Motor Addiction"* published by Alien Buddha Press. Other fiction books include *"The Jackalope Committee and Other Tales," "The Mailbox of the Kindred Spirit,"* and *"Four Thieves of Vinegar & Other Short Stories."* LB also enjoys swimming and reading.

END OF ISSUE FOURTEEN OF THE KLEKSOGRAPH



The Enchanted Fairy Tree, by Richard Doyle, a contemporary of Richard Dadd