

THE KLECKSOGRAPH

An International Review of Art and the Subconscious

Issue 1 January 2020



POETRY BY SAM SMITH, JAMES
WALTON, SANJEEV SETHI, MARTIN
FERGUSON, and others

ARTICLE: ON PAREIDOLIA

Excerpt: DESCRIPTION OF A
STRUGGLE by Franz Kafka

SHORT STORY: MERCURY by D.H.
Lawrence

ART BY Guiseppe Arcimboldo and
others

THE KLECKSOGRAPH

Editor: Peter Van Belle

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In the mid-nineteenth century, Julius Kerner, published his book of "Kleksographien." Later psychologists used similar ink blots as a means to access the unconscious of their patients. The Klecksograph (Klecks is the official German spelling) is dedicated to exploring and celebrating the relationship between the subconscious and art.



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cover: Vertumnus, god of the seasons by Guiseppe Arcimboldo - collection Skokloster, Sweden

page 9: Four Seasons in One Head by Guiseppe Arcimboldo - National Gallery of Art, USA

page 2 & 15 - kleksographien by Julius Kerner

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This magazine can be downloaded free from www.kleksograph.be

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

Toni Morrison once said: “If there’s a book that you want to read, but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it.” I guess the same goes for magazines. I’ve always been interested in the sub- or unconscious and its relationship to art and life, so I felt I should start a magazine dedicated to it.

The term ‘subconscious’ (Unterbewusstsein) was first used by Sigmund Freud, but discarded in favour of the terms pre-conscious (Vorbewusstsein) and unconscious (Unbewusstsein). The term subconscious, however, remained in use among laypersons. In relationship to *The Klecksograph* the word refers to things beyond the deliberate consideration of the artist, as well as art that makes use of the subconscious or has the subconscious (such as dreams or waking fantasies) as its theme.

Inevitably such an approach to art is largely based on hypothesis. On the other hand, many artists can’t always explain the choices they make, and even creativity itself hasn’t been explained by science yet. Certain branches of psychology even deny the existence of the unconscious. They state, for example, that dreams are just a way of processing information gathered during the day. I doubt it, as I seldom dream of sitting in front of a computer.

Ideally we should all get paid for our creative work. However, we have to face the fact that in the cultural sector supply exponentially outstrips demand. To pay artists, I would either have to charge a subscription, which would make the magazine short-lived, or charge reading fees, which I think is a way of taking advantage of beginning artists. True, many magazines charge them to keep the slush pile down, but that’s not a problem at the moment. That’s why the magazine is online, as the cost of printing and distributing it would be exorbitant. To summarize, the magazine will be both free and non-paying.

The Klecksograph is meant to be inclusive, both in time and space. This means it’s intended to be open to present-day artists and those of the past. I hope to be able to publish artists from all over the world as well, so translations are more than welcome, as long as you keep possible copyright issues in mind. For this first issue I’ve had to depend on my own language skills, so only works from French and German have been translated.

SAM SMITH

Large thoughts about a small-headed pigeon
settled on a garden pergola

while we both indifferently watch
a pair of litter-picking magpies
work the roadside verges

Thinking about thinking
puzzling over the processes of thought
I note that a long green hedgerow
has one yellow brushstroke of gorse

In the centre of my children's brains
is the grape-size hypothalamus
controlling body temperature and rage
the close-by pituitary their hormone secretions

Pursed beak of pigeon turns to follow
the circular path
of a sunflower's pollinating bee

Mental illness can see Self as the centre of being
and, true enough, without Self there is nothing
Self however has to be subjugated by the Social
to be seen as well

Rural rattle of advancing machinery
prompts pigeon to unhurried flight
over the sloping wind-chopped lake
of a solar-panel field

Ongoing

Eyes get narrowed over the consideration that all life's fantasies are founded on false assumptions.

Such a thought, unborn, stays unborn unless given form. Unexpressed, this thought-foetus, disintegrating, becomes womb-toxic, gets re-absorbed into mind's metabolic processes, will poison, will occlude, all thought.

Cogitative process,
done and undone,
is unending, a job
that will not stay
finished: no-one
can be cured of this
life - think now

what it is
that is
trying to be
explained here.

Small between sea, grey cliffs and sky is the standing stone field, recently mown for silage; the lower stems of the cut grass pale, but with a green underglow. Cliff banks above are blue with massed scabious. Sleek swallows, sheen of the night sky on their folded wings, are perched in pairs along a barbed wire fence. The twin tracks of the mowing fan out around the standing stone, like the gravel-raked waves in a Zen garden.

I am carrying a large kettle without a lid up a metal ladder to the cliff edge. Climbing awkwardly step by step I almost lose my footing. But just the once. After that heart-lurch slip I take more care, place the small of my sole central upon each rung. Have to confess, and I know that he can't listen, but I often talk to John Clare, tell him now of my blunder.

Barking

Barking dog on a taut leash
pulls all the time away from
its owner. This mind too needs
shouting at, shutting up, sitting
down and told to be still.

Where am I
now that I need me?

A busy ginger man, divorced,
unmoored. A grown daughter
somewhere. He tells his truths
in the only language he knows
— of soaps, of thrillers, of westerns
and women's magazines. Is frustrated
when no-one seems to believe his truth.
Listening, he doubts it himself.

Where am I
now that I need me?

As many suspicions as a gossip
he looks beyond, behind,
distrusts his own conclusions,
thinks on it again. Something
is missing, or hidden.

Where am I
now that I need me?



ON PAREIDOLIA

by Peter Van Belle

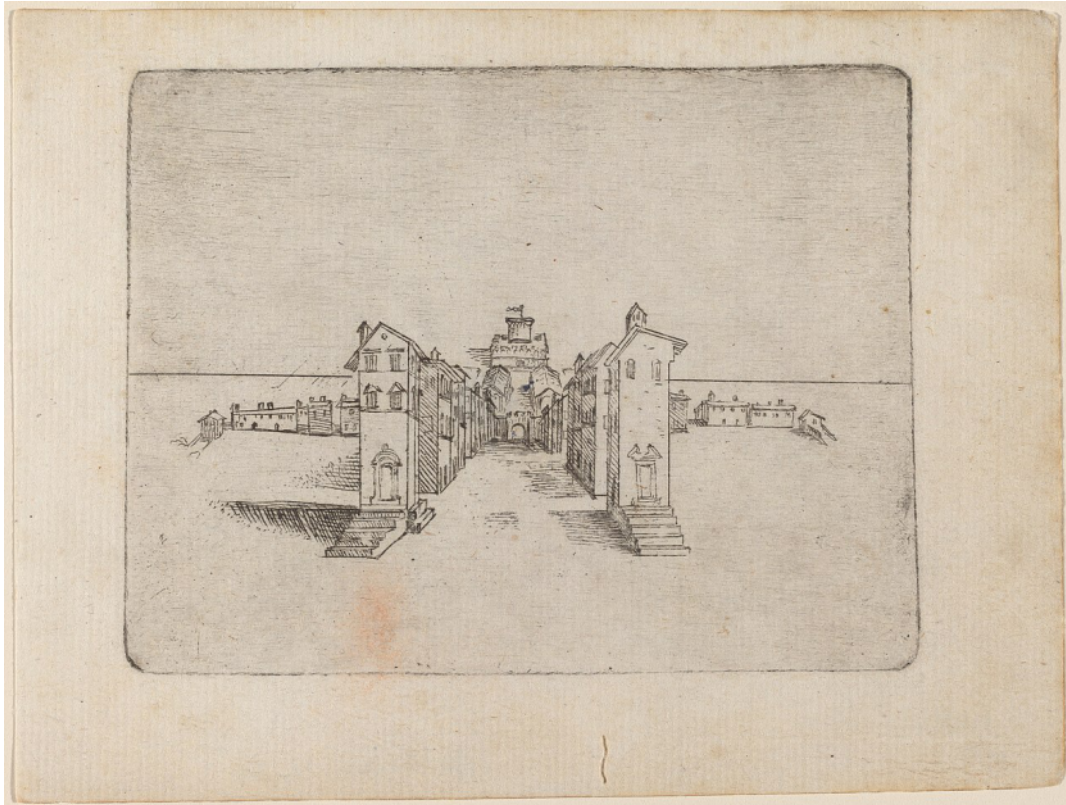
On the page opposite is the portrait of a crusty old man painted by Guiseppe Arcimboldo (1527-1593). Actually it isn't. What we see is a painting of a collection of twigs, leaves, and other plant parts. That we perceive a portrait is through pareidolia, a mental process where visual sensations are interpreted in such a way that they create new perceptions, illusions. It also makes us see faces in clouds or rocks, like the one in the photograph below.



Pareidolia has its origin in a particular evolutionary necessity: survival depends on spotting prey and predator in less than ideal light. Especially with threats we are conditioned to perceive them even when there are none, rather than not perceiving them and so endangering our lives. The use of scarecrows proves the same phenomenon occurs in animals. Often an illusion can be so strong, it trumps reality. Look at the photograph below. You have to look hard to get rid of the perception of the bearded profile and see you're actually looking at a little girl in a bonnet. I wonder how many double takes visitors made with that picture on the mantelpiece. And added quirk is that we can't have two visual perceptions at the same time. We either see one image or the other.



With the interest in perspective during the Renaissance came an interest in other visual phenomena. Guiseppe Arcimboldo made portraits out of objects, Giovanni Bracelli, in his sketch below, made a reclining figure out of a townscape. Despite the element of play, there was always present an element of logic and geometry, as well as mockery.



With the Industrial Age, with the physical world (apparently) mapped and science pushing back the boundaries of religion, many people, lacking the intellectual rigor for science, turned to the inner world. Julius Kerner, during the middle of the nineteenth century, took an approach more in keeping with the Romantic ideas of instinct and spontaneity. He manipulated images out of spilled ink and so created his 'Kleksographien' (Klecks is the German word for stain). Similar techniques were later used by Surrealists like Max Ernst. Scientists too began to take an interest in the inner world, and the psychologist Rorschach saw the klecksographs as instruments to bring unconscious elements in the patient's psyche to the surface. These were later replaced by Thematic Apperception Tests, pictures with ambiguous scenes that can be interpreted many ways, but this takes us away from pareidolia, and closer to creative writing.

Fiction writers face a particular paradox: needing the random building blocks life hands to them, but having to impose a structure on them. In short, to tell a story. An extreme example of a writer trying to inject randomness into his stories was William Burroughs. To write novels like *Naked Lunch*, he cut up typed pages and randomly glued them together again. Many others, like Kafka, used the illogical structure of dreams.

The American Civil War and World War One were both bloody conflicts where most of the dying was done by young men. It's no surprise then that the aftermath of both wars saw a boom in spiritism, as bereaved parents tried to contact their sons. No doubt many, if not most, of the mediums were frauds, but some may have truly believed they could contact the dead through certain techniques. Some of them used automatic writing, what later led to the freewriting used in many present day writing courses. You can, of course, wonder how free and random these techniques are. Certainly they're less random than the Klecksographs. A closer visual equivalent would be the drawings of the occultist Osman Spare. Another phenomenon to come out of the spiritism rage of the twentieth century is electronic voice phenomena, where voices are heard coming through white noise or radio static. Even the present outbreak of conspiracy theories could be seen as a form of pareidolia: a pattern is constructed out of the plethora of information coming through the Web.

GEORG TRAKL

Many of Trakl's poems have a dreamlike atmosphere. Nearly all of them mention night, sleep, but also death. Apart from that he was also influenced by the French poet Mallarmé, who said it was better to suggest something rather than name it. That's why much of the poem is vague. One salient object, though, is the toad in the third stanza. In Europe and the Near East, the toad was seen as a demonic animal, often also associated with witchcraft. The crystal eyes could refer to the old superstition that snakes and toads have gems in their heads.

Der Wanderer

Immer lehnt am Hügel die weisse Nacht,
Wo in Silbertönen die Pappel ragt,
Stern' und Steine sind.

Schlafend wölbt sich über den Giessbach der Steg,
Folgt dem Knaben ein erstorbenes Antlitz,
Sichelmond in rosiger Schlucht

Ferne preisenden Hirten. In altem Gestein
Schaut aus kristallinen Augen die Kröte,
Erwacht der blühende Wind, die Vogelstimme des Totengleichen
Und die Schritte ergrünen leise im Wald.

Dieses erinnert an Baum und Tier. Langsame Stufen von Moos;
Und der Mond,
Der glänzend in traurigen Wassern versinkt.

Jener kehrt wieder und wandelt an grünem Gestade,
Schaukelt auf schwarzem Gondelschiffchen durch die verfallene Stadt.

The Wanderer

The white night still leans against the hill,
Where poplars rise in silver tones,
Stars and stones are there.

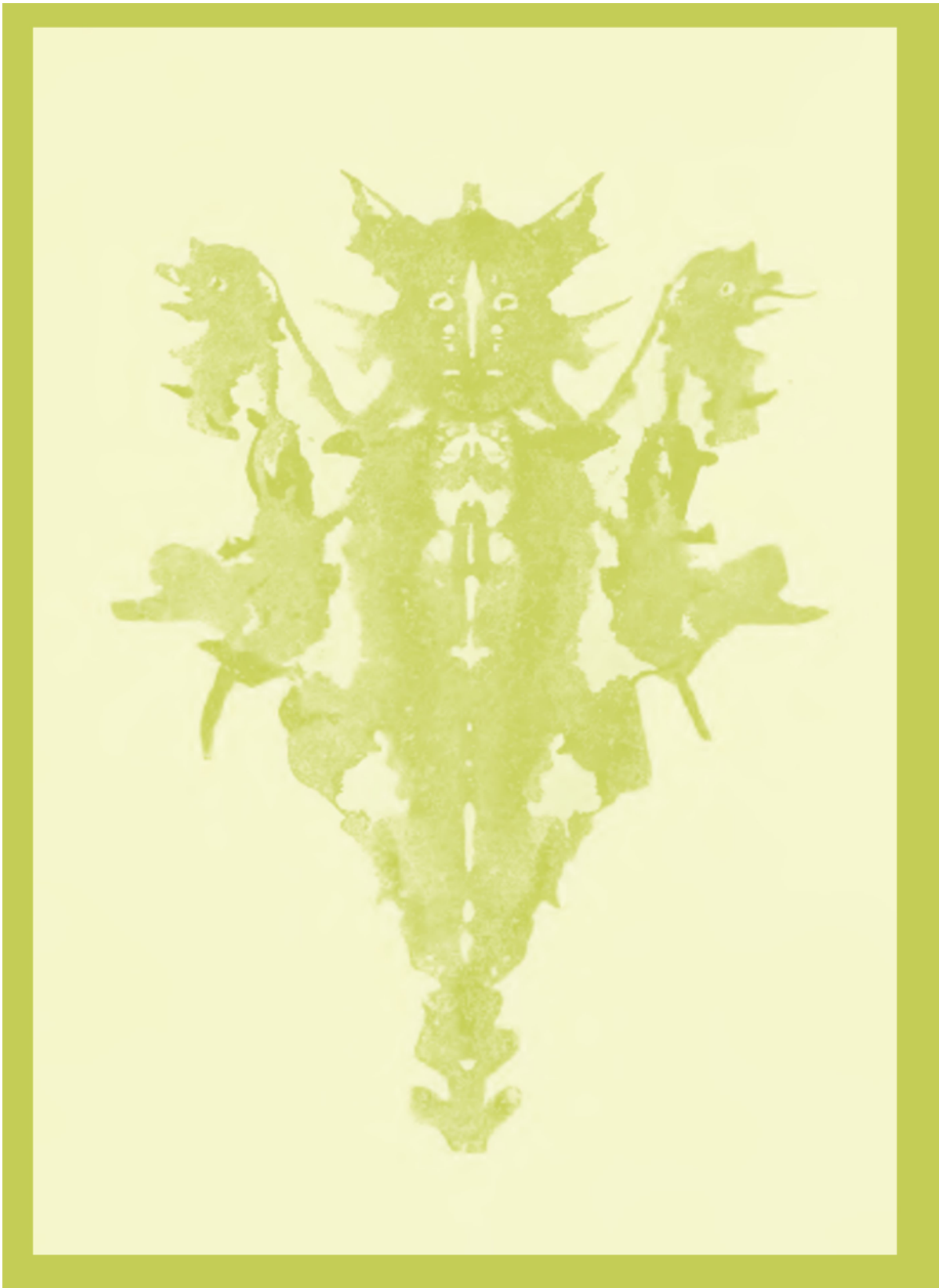
The path stretches sleeping over the drainage ditch,
A dead face follows the boy,
A sickle moon in red ravine

Distant praising herdsman. From old rocks
The toad watches from crystal eyes,
The blossoming wind wakes, the bird-song of one that seems dead
And slowly footsteps green in the forest.

This reminds us of tree and animal. Slow steps of moss
And the moon,
Shining, sinking in sad waters.

Those return again and walk along green riverbanks
Undulate on small black gondolas through the decayed town.

(translation: Peter Van Belle)



JAMES WALTON

by a suburban rear lane

every Sunday he cuts a rabbit's throat
but not the time the Christmas goose
overfed but not wanting to be stuffed
B52'd its way up onto the roof
honking at the peerless empty sky
wanting the ancient formation of brethren
to pick up the burletta straggler's call
a furry one held by back legs
the squeal of fear and protest
escaped to a week's reprieve
while his ninety-two-year-old wife
scaled the cyclone wire grape support
for a drumstick and breast that needed seasoning
when she wasn't next door over the back
her wheelbarrow full of bricks
the building crew had stacked wrong
relaying in perfect herringbone
a pattern from beneath the canals of Venice

Baker's Laundry of Souls

Hang it on the line Angel, wrung out for all to gander
(Weren't you told smalls on the inside)
go on then – let everyone see, the crease of living,
remorse and hope
a toffee sanctity will pull fillings out.
Let sag from pegs, stretch out like pastry so thin
reveals the other side to itself
give a beat and consequence, flap wings and squeeze grace
should have used a more reliable starter.
Never wanted to rise this much,
such irony in the drift as you take me away:
It all looks so beatified down there now
you could dip the tangential, drop like slow confetti
lay me on the old crust just a trifle longer.

woof woof woof

at 3am dogs bark
for the bone of moon

words spinning
jacks out of the boxes

that coil beneath the bony lid

of the sleepless too
reach out
you can touch them

some are untied knots
daisy chains of Mondays

so wide that bitter swell
the surprising taste
of second street laneways

kitchens light awake
but no doors open

to the moth of sentence
a batter of intrusion
the slipped anchor scrapes

there was a dancing pony
one made of naphthalene
a cajole of wakefulness

one last wear
a lover's parting gift

the last cold night of Spring

after the Solstice

a full moon comes
the sky wrung out in cold acrylic
a communion wafer

all day it has lingered
blown out of the night
now in anchor against drift

whispering

the falling point
of water
is the distance
between
a velocity of tears
and the upbeat
from anticipation
to departure

evening mist tangles wipers

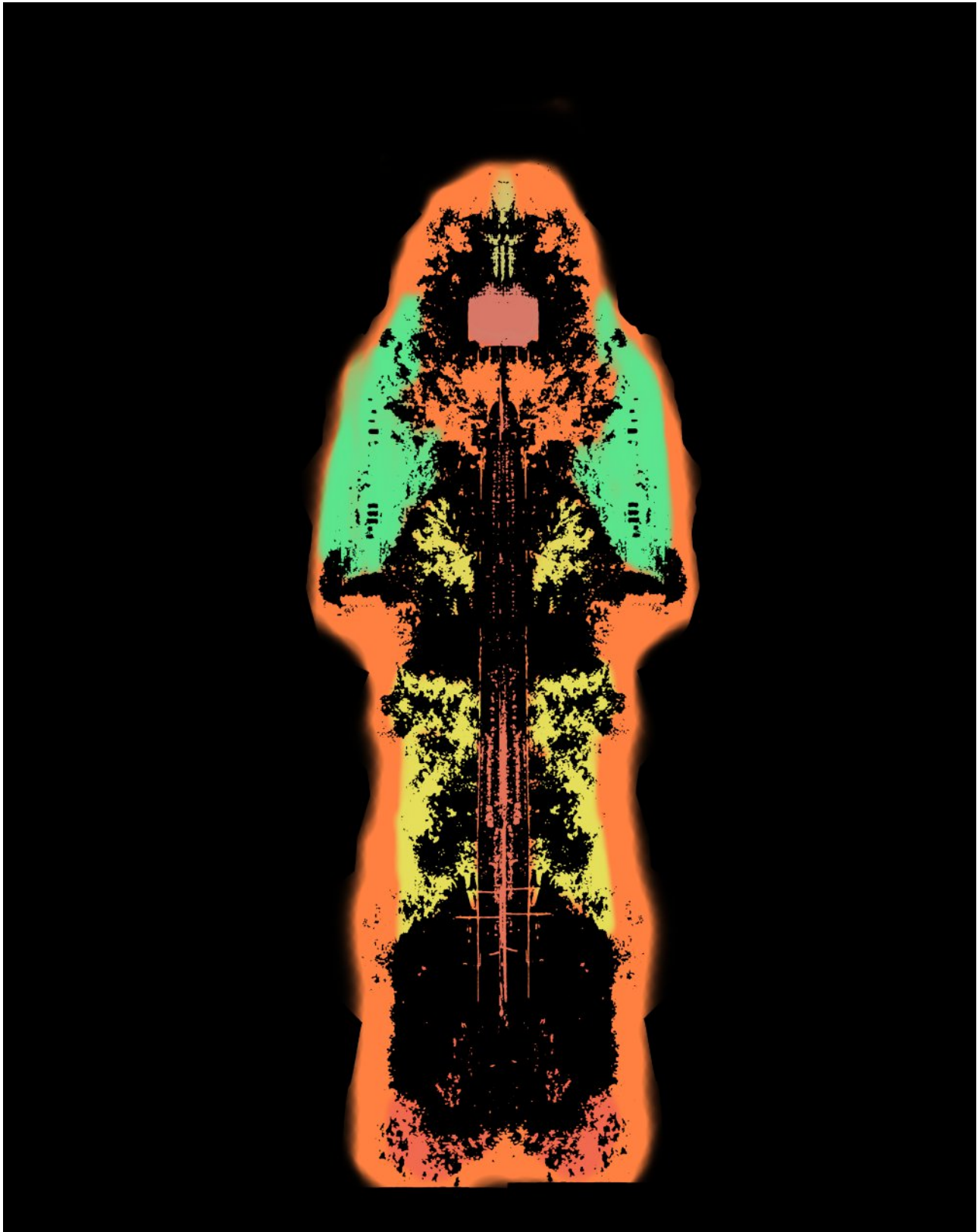
transfers the rest of my day
into a slower arc

this glove of Winter's challenge
a freckle on
sky in dawdle at light fall

your animal self knows the truth

make fire eat a warm meal
we settle in the spaces
of the splotchy engravings of living

where the lunar phases wait





FRANZ KAFKA

DESCRIPTION OF A STRUGGLE

(Excerpt)

I've chosen this excerpt because it conveys what you could call a 'dream logic' – events don't follow a logical path in the strictest sense of the word. Often events follow a path along the expectations of the narrator. In this example, for instance, he expects the bearers of the litter to cross the river and drown. It's his fear, in fact, so what he fears also happens. The character of the grotesquely obese man is also striking. His colour and pose seem to suggest an image of the Buddha or Hotei, the Japanese personification of contentment.

What happened before: a friend draws the narrator away from his tea and cake and takes him on a nighttime walk along the Moldau in Prague. Suddenly he slips and falls, and starts swimming through the air, meanwhile thinking about a girl he loves. His companion drags him back down. Now he sits on his companion's shoulders as they continue their walk. They're no longer in Prague, but in an unfamiliar countryside. His companion falls. The narrator abandones him to vultures he himself summoned. The landscape constantly shifts according to his whims, until he falls asleep in a tree. During his sleep he keeps hearing a voice. He wakes up afraid and runs until he reaches a river. The weather worsens. The narrator hears someone weep.

3

The Fat Man

a

address to the landscape

From the undergrowth on the opposite bank dashed four naked men, bearing a wooden litter on their shoulders. An incredibly obese man sat in oriental pose on this litter. Though he was being carried into uncleared undergrowth, he didn't move the thorny twigs aside, but parted them undisturbed with his immobile body. The thick folds of fat were laid out in such a manner that they covered the whole of the litter and even hung down like the fringe of a yellowish carpet along the edges, which didn't seem to bother him. His hairless skull was small and had a yellow shine. His face bore the simple expression of a man who's thinking, and not bothered by showing it. At times he closed his eyes: opened them again, contorted his chin.

"The landscape disturbs my thoughts," he said softly. "It rocks my ponderings like chain bridges in a furious stream. It's beautiful, and therefore wants to be contemplated.

"I close my eyes and say: Thou green mountain by the river, with your stone rolling at the

water, you are beautiful. But it isn't satisfied; it wants me to open my eyes to it.

"But when I say with closed eyes: Mountain, I don't love you. You remind me of clouds, a red evening sky and rising heavens and those are the things that make me cry, because they can't be reached when you let yourself be carried on a little palanquin. While you show me this, you sly mountain, you hide from me the vista that would refresh me, because it would show a nice overview of what can be reached by me. That's why I don't love you, mountain by the stream. No, I don't love you.

"But he'd be just as indifferent to this speech as to my previous one, when I spoke with open eyes. Otherwise he's not pleased.

"And should we not keep him well-disposed to us, just to keep him upright, him, with his moody love for the mush of our brains? He'd drop a toothed shadow on me, put up mute, terribly bare walls in front of me, and my bearers would stumble on pebbles in the road.

"But it's not just the mountain who's so vain, so pushy and vindictive, everything else is the same. That's why with round, wide eyes – oh, how they hurt – I always have to repeat:

"Yes, mountain, you are beautiful and the woods on your western flank make me happy. I'm also happy with you, flowers, and your pink gladdens my soul. You, grass, in your pasture you're already high and strong, and freshening. And you, strange undergrowth, stinging so unexpectedly, making my thoughts jump. But you, river, I like you so much, that I will let myself be born through your flexible waters."

Having repeated this praise ten times, while humble spasms ran through his body, he lowered his head and said with eyes closed: "But now, I beg you, mountain, flower, grass, undergrowth and river, give me some room to breathe."

A hasty shift in the surrounding mountains occurred. They withdrew behind hanging fogs. Though the lanes stood fast, guarding the breadth of the street, but they faded quickly. In the sky a moist cloud lay before the sun with a softly incandescent edge. The land sank in its shadow, while all things lost their beautiful outlines.

The footsteps of the bearers reached me on my river bank, and yet I couldn't quite discern the features in the dark square of their faces. I only saw how they bent their heads to one side and how their backs curved, because their burden was unfamiliar. I worried about them; I noticed how tired they were. That's why I looked on anxiously as they entered the grass at the river's edge, to continue with even tread into the wet sand, until they finally sank into the muddy reed beds, where the hindmost bearers had to stoop even lower to keep the litter steady. I wrung my hands. Now with every step they had to lift their feet high, so their bodies began to gleam with sweat in this unsettled afternoon.

The fat man was at ease, hands on his thighs: the long ends of the reeds brushed him as they reared behind the front bearers.

The closer they came to the water, the more unstable the bearers started to move. The litter, at times, rocked as if it were already afloat. Puddles between the reeds had to be jumped over or sidestepped because they could have been deep.

At one point wild ducks flew up calling into the rain clouds. Then I saw in a short movement the fat man's face; it was anxious. I stood up and ran in clumsy leaps across the stony slope to the water. Though it was dangerous, I paid no heed. All I could think

about was helping the fat man once his bearers could no longer carry him. I ran so heedless, I didn't stop at the water's edge but for a while ran into the splashing water and only stopped when it came up to my knee.

Over there the servants had brought the palanquin with twists into the water, keeping themselves above the uneasy water with one hand, while raising their litter with four hairy arms, revealing muscles that bulged in a strange fashion.

The water reached their chins first, then their mouths. The bearers' heads arched back and the litter's staves dropped onto their shoulders. Water played about the bridges of their noses, but they wouldn't give up, despite not even having reached the middle of the stream. A low wave spilled over the heads of the front bearers and they drowned silently, pulling down the litter with wild hands. The water gushed in after them.

From the edges of the great cloud burst forth the flat gleam of the evening sun, lighting up the hills and mountains at the edges of the panorama, while the stream and landscape underneath the cloud lay in a murky light.

The fat man turned slowly in the direction of the current and was carried downstream, like an idol carved from light wood, redundant and therefore discarded in the river. He passed over the reflection of the rain clouds. He was pulled along by long clouds and white curved ones pushed him on, causing a sizeable wake, which one noticed by the way the water hit my knees and the stones of the river bank.

Quickly I crawled up the embankment, so I could accompany the fat man on his way, because truly I loved him. And likely I could learn something about the peril of this seemingly safe land. So I walked along this sandy strip, having to get used to its narrowness, hands in pockets, and face perpendicular to the stream, so my chin rested just about on my shoulder.

Swallows rested on the river bank.

The fat man said: "Kind sir on the river bank, don't try to save me. It's the revenge of water and wind; now I'm lost. Yes, revenge it is, because how often haven't we attacked these things, I, and my friend the worshipper, by the song of our knife's edge, by the shimmer of our cymbals, the broad splendour of our trumpets, and the jumping glimmer of our drums."

A small mosquito flew through his belly, without it reducing its speed.

The fat man continued:

The fat man tells of a churchgoer he stalked and tormented. This churchgoer in turn then tells him a story. This feature is similar to the one used in Arabian Nights.

translated by Peter Van Belle

SANJEEV SETHI

Journeyman

Script your thighs never wrote on
cuss words on fallout of fidelity,
I never heaved at you. In the map
of mind, I altered lines that leapt
to you. In a sense it is easier to be
a cartographer for self-fulfillment
than otherwise. To seek a sharper
paraphrase of oneself.

Overview

Intellections crawl to plead for back-pedaling of
inaugural camaraderie, and its flight to another fix
when happiness came in effortlessly as hurting.
Smaze of another assembly swamps you, pushing
me to ponder how little we control? Anger in this
context is a sincere emotion but misplaced. Frot-
tage in public: vent of unfulfilled thighs butting
in on an unknown? As with expectations.

Head Trip

Éclat is for the assembly.

The unnamed emperor
of one's Cockaigne --
thriving in tabula rasa,
comforted with a cornucopia.

Is this gasconade of a bummer?
Or, whoop of the blessed?

Consenter

Pawky impressions park themselves
on your profile: the past is known to
spousebreach in unforeseen situations.
One is as bright as blindness of peers
and professional habitat. Parade of
pomposity is awkward and annoying.
Offer me unostentatiousness. Its flavor
gets my nod even as I accept every
faction is an encore of errors.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE AND CHARLES VAN LERBERGHE

Both French poems express renunciation of the earthly and a desire for freedom. Both also express a hatred for a god as the lawgiver and controller of the universe. In the second poem, the narrator becomes the murderer of his god. This is clearly a reference to Nietzsche, specifically the chapter entitled The Ugliest Man in Also Sprach Zarathustra.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

L'étranger (from Le Spleen de Paris)

- Qui aimes-tu le mieux, homme énigmatique, dis? ton père, ta mère, ta soeur ou ton frère?
- Je n'ai ni père, ni mère, ni soeur, ni frère.
- Tes amis?
- Vous vous servez là d'une parole dont le sens m'est resté jusqu'à ce jour inconnu.
- Ta patrie?
- J'ignore sous quelle latitude elle est située
- La beauté?
- Je l'aimerais volontiers, déesse et immortelle.
- L'or?
- Je le hais comme vois haissez Dieu.
- Eh! qu'aimes-tu donc, extraordinaire étranger?
- J'aime les nuages...les nuages qui passent...là-bas...là-bas...les merveilleux nuages!

The Stranger

- Who do you love most, strange man, tell me, your father, your mother, your sister, or brother?
- I have neither father, mother, sister, nor brother.
- Your friends?
- There you use a word which to this day remains meaningless to me.
- Your country?
- I have no idea on what latitude it lies.
- Beauty?
- Gladly I would love her, that immortal goddess.
- Gold?
- I hate it, like you hated God.
- Say, what do you love then, my extraordinary stranger?
- I love clouds...those passing clouds...over there...there...wondrous clouds.

translated by Peter Van Belle

CHARLES VAN LERBERGHE

Je l'ai tué, je l'ai tué!
Il tombe.
Ecoute. Uve voix dan le soir a criè
Sur la mer sombre: Tu l'as tué!

Comment l'ai-je tué, mon dieu, de ces mains blanches
Qui n'auraient pas blesse une colombe
Ni tué une fleure?

Ah! Rien ne savait qu'il vivait,
Et tout ignore qu'il n'est plus,
Et l'aurore se leve encore.
Rien ne le pleure.
Pas un sourire de la terre
Ne s'est effacé,
Pas une fleur, pas un rayon,
Pas une étoile de ma chanson.

Sans que j'y pense
Il s'est éteint dans le silence.

I killed him, I killed him!
He falls
Listen. A voice at evening cried
Across the dark sea: You killed him!

How did I kill him, my god, with these white hands
Which wouldn't hurt a dove
Nor kill a flower?

Ah! Nothing knew he lived,
And nothing knows he's gone,
And the dawn still breaks.
Nothing cries for him.
Not a smile of this earth
Has disappeared;
Not a flower, not a ray,
Not a star of my song.

Without thinking about it,
He's extinguished into silence.

translated by Peter Van Belle



MARTIN FERGUSON

Thomas at the Sea Life Museum

An immense entrepot filled with human sadness,

lifeless remains dragged from mortal half-dead oceans,

the real ancients, the precursors and relations,

displayed inert, behind screens of solid polished glass,

the Carcharodon carcharias's steel sprung vice,

cold and open as an elephant trap.

Then, tiny feet freeze, an excited little voice,

you look up beneath the Beluga's pectoral fin,

'Papa ! Skeleton hand !'

Virtual Self

He tools the dying diesel machine
through sharp edge sheets of winter rain,
a voice on the radio stirs him,
tells he has only been living,
at these latitudes for little
over four hundred centuries.

His car seat is electric heat
while his spinal cord
and brain are encrypted
with traces of older worlds,
his tail bone hurts
and his body is homesick.

He floats in full consciousness
above cushioned waves of air
over an abstract life sized road map,
streets of illusory realities.
He lifts his left dry gnarled hand
from the chrome centre embossed

Stadel lion-man precision loop,
and turns clockwise the plastic
heater wheel. Safely cocooned
in the comfort of multiple fictions,
he awakes, twenty five degrees
north, of the tropic of cancer.

Peturbation

Held in a bubble, isolated
fortress from the chaos,
grounded in a history of colonies,
guarded with paranoia's
unsettling discrimination

and a flotilla
of red and blue patrol boats;
a marigold hexagon imagined.

This image lines the limits
of a little peninsula
on the northern edge of Afro-Eurasia

where the woman who infantilizes
the atmospheric behaviour of the day
will become our normality judge,

reaffirm the borders of the weather map,
and recite, the flagrant frontiers of her world.

Her confidant, demonstrative voice,
conjures up our occasional surprise,
in the charting of her less amateur,
meteorological posturing.

Office Hours

You have become indispensable
by default. We hang Pavlovian
our expectations
on your hook barbed publicity,
we overrate you persistently,
are continually blighted
with you lack of spontaneity.

We activate you with our fingertips,
you depress us in return,
with your intangible psychobabble,
as you volley vacuous despatches
to and fro, from toil to quarters.

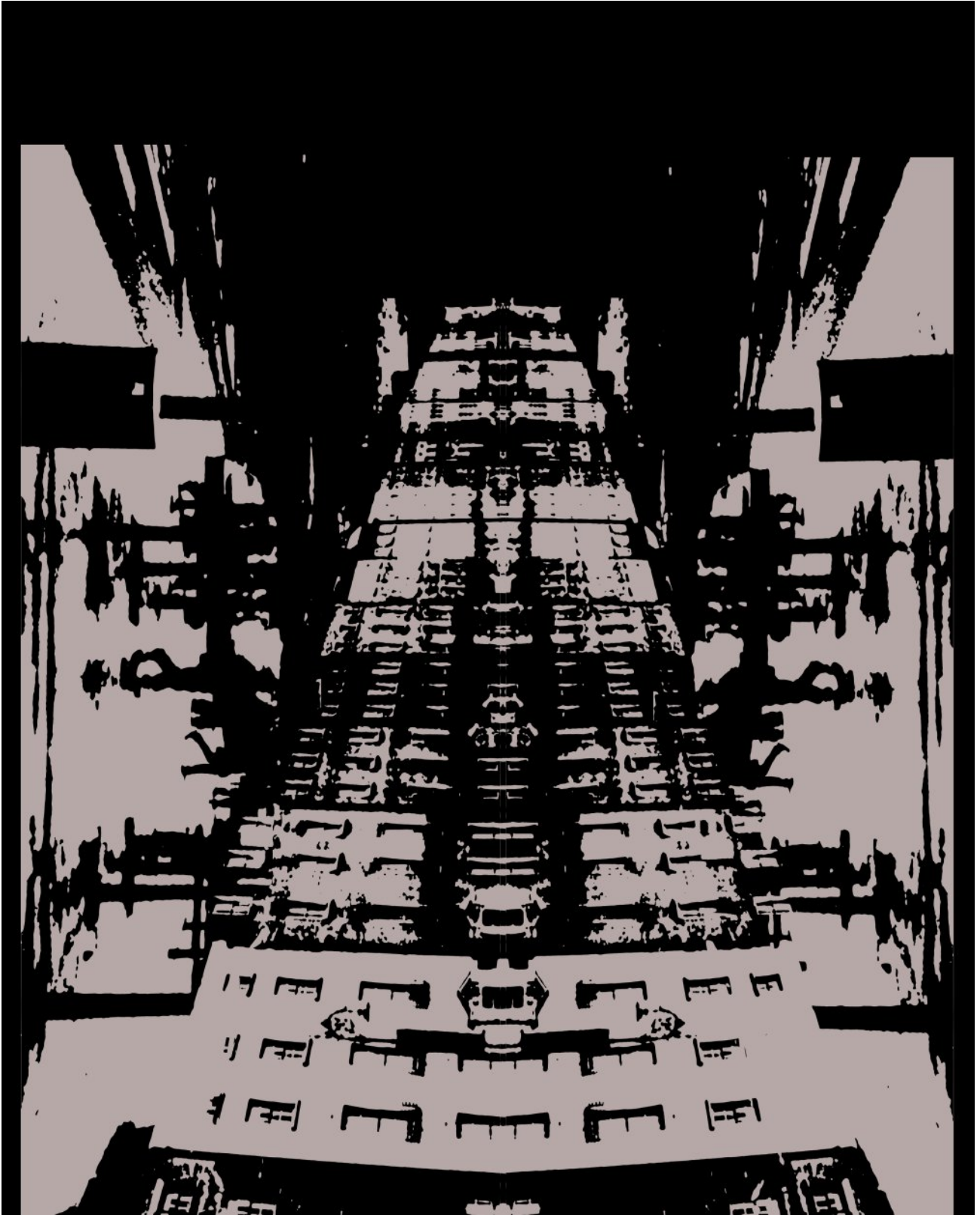
Carrying us you cripple us,
scorch our corneas,
devour our time and eat our children.
You are a vile god.

Why we are coerced to live
with such rodomontading ?

O electronic brain
of cricket whispering fan,
your silicon speaks –
Kleptomanian, your
omniscience frames us,
with its artificial need creations.

You hall of poisoned mirrors,
your thought sounds like a needle
running down the spiny teeth
of a fine nylon hair comb.
What choice, lulled into hypnosis
by your siren screen time,
your sockets and cavities.

But your disease, your viruses –
the hidden flowers of Elpis.





D.H. LAWRENCE

MERCURY

I don't know if this story was written when Lawrence became interested in Jungian psychology, but it seems likely. Here we have the encounter between a crowd of modern people and an ancient god, who seems to vent his fury on those who brought the crowd to his hill. Alternatively, the man of the funicular could have become possessed by the god, becoming endowed with feet of lightning, like the winged sandals of Mercury.

It was Sunday, and very hot. The holiday-makers flocked to the hill of Mercury, to rise two thousand feet above the steamy haze of the valleys. For the summer had been very wet, and the sudden heat covered the land in hot steam.

Every time it made the ascent, the funicular was crowded. It hauled itself up the steep incline, that towards the top looked almost perpendicular, the steel thread of the rails in the gulf of pine-trees hanging like an iron rope against a wall. The women held their breath, and didn't look. Or they looked back towards the sinking levels of the river, steamed and dim, far-stretching over the frontier.

When you arrived at the top, there was nothing to do. The hill was a pine-covered cone; paths wound between the high tree-trunks, and you could walk round and see the glimpses of the world all round, all round: the dim, far river-plain, with a dull glint of the great stream, to westwards; southwards the black, forest-covered, agile-looking hills, with emerald-green clearings and a white house or two; east, the inner valley, with two villages, factory chimneys, pointed churches, and hills beyond; and north, the steep hills of forest, with reddish crags and reddish castle ruins. The hot sun burned overhead, and all was in steam.

Only on the very summit of the hill there was a tower, an outlook tower; a long restaurant with its beer-garden, all the little yellow tables standing their round disks under the horse-chestnut trees; then a bit of a rock-garden on the slope. But the great trees began again in wilderness a few yards off.

The Sunday crowd came up in waves from the funicular. In waves they ebbed through the beer-garden. But not many sat down to drink. Nobody was spending any money. Some paid to go up the outlook tower, to look down on a world of vapours and black, agile-crouching hills, and half-cooked towns. Then everybody dispersed along the paths, to sit among the trees in the cool air.

There was not a breath of wind. Lying and looking upwards at the shaggy, barbaric middle-world of the pine trees, it was difficult to decide whether the pure high trunks supported the upper thicket of darkness, or whether they descended from it like great cords stretched downwards. Anyhow, in between the tree-top world and the earth-world went the wonderful clean cords of proud tree-trunks, clear as rain. And as you watched, you saw that the upper world was faintly moving, faintly, most faintly swaying, with a circular movement, though the lower trunks were utterly motionless and monolithic.

There was nothing to do. In all the world, there nothing to do, and nothing to be done. Why have we come to the top of the Merkur? There is nothing for us to do.

What matter? We have come a stride beyond the world. Let it steam and cook its half-

baked reality below there. On the hill of Mercury we take no notice. Even we do not trouble to wander and pick the fat, blue, sourish billberries. Just lie and see the rain-pure tree-trunks like chords of music between two worlds.

The hours pass by: people wander and disappear and reappear. All is hot and quiet. humanity is rarely boisterous any more. You go for a drink: finches run among the few people at the tables : everybody glances at everybody, but with remoteness.

There is nothing to do but to return and lie down under the pine trees. Nothing to do. But why do anything, anyhow? The tree-trunks, living like rain, they are quite active enough.

At the foot of the obsolete tower there is an old tablet-stone with a very much battered Mercury, in relief. There is also an altar, or votive stone, both from the Roman times. The Romans are supposed to have worshipped Mercury on the summit. The battered god, with his round sun-head, looks very hollow-eyed and unimpressive in the purplish-red sandstone of the district. And no one anymore will throw grains of offering in the hollow of the votive stone : also common, purplish-red sandstone, very local and un-Roman.

The Sunday people do not even look. Why should they? They keep passing on into the pine trees. And many sit on the benches ; many lie upon the long chairs. It is very hot, in the afternoon, and very still.

Till there seems a faint whistling in the tops of the pine trees, and out of the universal semi-consciousness of the afternoon arouses a bristling uneasiness. The crowd is astir, looking at the sky. And sure enough, there is a great flat blackness reared up in the western sky, curled with white wisps and loose breast-feathers. It looks very sinister, as only the elements still can look. Under the sudden weird whistling of the upper pine trees, there is a subdued babble and calling of frightened voices.

They want to get down; the crowd want to get down off the hill of Mercury, before the storm comes. At any price to get off the hill ! They stream towards the funicular, while the sky blackens with incredible rapidity. And as the crowd presses down towards the little station, the first blaze of lightning opens out, followed immediately by a crash of thunder, and great darkness. In one strange movement, the crowd takes refuge in the deep veranda of the restaurant, pressing among the little tables in silence. There is no rain, and no definite wind, only a sudden coldness which makes the crowd press closer.

They press closer, in the darkness and the suspense. They have become curiously unified, the crowd, as if they had fused into one body. As the air sends a chill waft under the veranda the voices murmur plaintively, like birds under leaves, the bodies press closer together, seeking shelter in contact.

The gloom, dark as night, seems to continue a long time. Then suddenly the lightning dances white on the floor, dances and shakes upon the ground, up and down, and lights up the white striding of a man, lights him up only to the hips, white and naked and striding, with fire on his heels. He seems to be hurrying, this fiery man whose upper half is invisible, and at his naked heels white little flames seem to flutter. His flat, powerful thighs, his legs white as fire stride rapidly across the open, in front of the veranda, dragging little white flames at the ankles, with the movement. He is going somewhere, swiftly.

In the great bang of the thunder the apparition disappears. The earth moves, and the house jumps in complete darkness. A faint whimpering of terror comes from the crowd, as the cold air swirls in. But still, upon the darkness, there is no rain. There is no relief: a long wait.

Brilliant and blinding, the lightning falls again; a strange bruising thud comes from the forest, as all the little tables and the secret tree-trunks stand for one unnatural second

exposed. Then the blow of the thunder, under which the house and the crowd reel as under an explosion. The storm is playing directly upon the Merkur. A belated sound of tearing branches comes out of the forest.

And again the white splash of the lightning on the ground: but nothing moves. And again the long, rattling instantaneous volleying of the thunder, in the darkness. The crowd is panting with fear, as the lightning again strikes white, and something again seems to burst, in the forest, as the thunder crashes.

At last, into the motionlessness of the storm, in rushes the wind, with the fiery flying of bits of ice, and the sudden sea-like roaring of the pine trees. The crowd winces draws back, as the bits of ice hit in the face like fire. The roar of the trees is so great, it becomes like another silence. And through it is heard the crashing and splintering of timber, as the hurricane concentrates upon the hill.

Down comes the hail, in a roar that covers every other sound, threshing ponderously upon the ground and the roofs and the trees. And as the crowd surges irresistibly into the interior of the building, from the crushing of this ice-fall, still amid the sombre hoarseness sounds the tinkle and crackle of things breaking.

After an eternity of dread, it ends suddenly. Outside is a faint gleam of yellow light, over the snow and the endless debris of twigs and things broken. It is very cold, with the atmosphere of ice and deep winter. The forest looks wan, above the white earth, where the ice-balls lie in their myriads, six inches deep, littered with all the twigs and things they have broken.

'Yes ! Yes !' say the men, taking sudden courage as the yellow light comes into the air. 'Now we can go!'

The first brave ones emerge, picking up the big hail-stones, pointing to the overthrown tables. Some, however, do not linger. They hurry to the funicular station, to see if the apparatus is still working.

The funicular station is on the north side of the hill. The men come back, saying there is no one there. The crowd begins to emerge upon the wet, crunching whiteness of the hail, spreading around in curiosity, waiting for the men who operate the funicular.

On the south side of the outlook tower two bodies lay in the cold but thawing hail. The dark-blue of the uniforms showed blackish. Both men were dead. But the lightning had completely removed the clothing from the legs of one man, so that he was naked from the hips down. There he lay, his face sideways on the snow, and two drops of blood running from his nose into his big, blond, military moustache. He lay there near the votive stone of the Mercury. His companion, a young man, lay face downwards, a few yards behind him.

The sun began to emerge. The crowd gazed in dread, afraid to touch the bodies of the men. Why had they, the dead funicular men, come round to this side of the hill, anyhow?

The funicular would not work. Something had happened to it in the storm. The crowd began to wind down the bare hill, on the sloppy ice. Everywhere the earth bristled with broken pine boughs and twigs. But the bushes and the leafy trees were stripped absolutely bare, to a miracle. The lower earth was leafless and naked as in winter.

Absolute winter!' murmured the crowd, as they hurried, frightened, down the steep, winding descent, extricating themselves from the fallen pine-branches.

Meanwhile the sun began to steam in great heat.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Peter Van Belle is the editor of The Klecksograph and has published poems and short stories in Great Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, the US, and Belgium. As a child he lived in the US, but now he lives in Belgium.

Georg Trakl (1887-1914), Austrian poet, grew up in Salzburg, became an army pharmacist in Innsbruck, where he met Ludwig von Ficker, who was to publish his poetry, was left to care for a field hospital full of wounded after the battle of Grodek, whereupon he had a breakdown, committed suicide in the garrison of Krakau with a drug overdose.

James Walton is published in many anthologies, journals, and newspapers. His collections of poetry include 'The Leviathan's Apprentice' 2015, 'Walking Through Fences' 2018, 'Unstill Mosaics' 2019, and 'Abandoned Soliloquies', forthcoming.

Collections available at:

<https://therawartreview.com/2019/11/07/announcing-the-publication-of-abandoned-soliloquies-by-james-walton/>

<https://booko.com.au/9781925949100/Unstill-Mosaics-The-Book-of-Love-Loss-and-Longing>

Franz Kafka (1883-1924), grew up in Prague where he worked as a civil servant. Had his stories published in German expressionist reviews and journals. His friend, Max Brod, ignored his wish to have his remaining works destroyed after his death and published them instead. Now seen as one of the major writers of world literature for stories like *The Metamorphosis*, *In the Penal Settlement*, and the novel *The Trial*.

Sanjeev Sethi has published over 1200 poems in more than 25 countries. He is the author of three books of poetry. *Wrappings in Bespoke* is Winner of Full Fat Collection Competition-Deux organised by the Hedgehog Poetry Press U.K. This is his fourth volume. It will be released in 2020. He lives in Mumbai, India.

Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), French poet of the Romantic era. Tried to make a living in Paris by writing articles and poetry. Also translated the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, which led them to becoming, at the time, more famous in France than in his native US. His poetry collection *Les Fleurs du Mal*, was banned and then censored. After his death, he became a major influence on Symbolist poetry.

Charles Van Lerberghe (1861-1907) French-speaking Belgian poet, travelled throughout Europe, but mainly lived in Belgium. Published a few poetry collections during his lifetime.

Martin Ferguson is a poet and English language teacher working in France.

He has been published in several UK poetry magazines including *The Journal* and *Ink Sweat and Tears*, and shortlisted in *Against The Grain Press*. His debut collection *An A to Z Art of Urban Survival Following Diogenes of Sinope* is available now through Original Plus available at:

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David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930), one of the major modernist writers in English, famous for his novels *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (banned upon publication in 1928). Also wrote a vast quantity of poems, short stories, essays, as well as travel literature.

Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526-1593), Italian Mannerist painter at the imperial courts of Vienna and Prague.

END OF ISSUE ONE OF THE KLECKSOGRAPH

