

The background is a surrealist painting. A bronze-colored figure, resembling a stylized person or a mechanical being, stands on a beach. The figure's head is a large sphere, and its body is composed of various geometric and organic shapes. It holds a large, dark pencil horizontally across its chest. The pencil has a textured, almost fabric-like tip. In the foreground, a large, brown and orange striped seashell sits on the sand. To the right, a dark net with a rope mesh is draped over a wooden structure. The background shows a blue sky and a blue sea. The overall style is a blend of realism and surrealism.

The KieksograpH

An international review of art and the subconscious

issue 15, September 2024

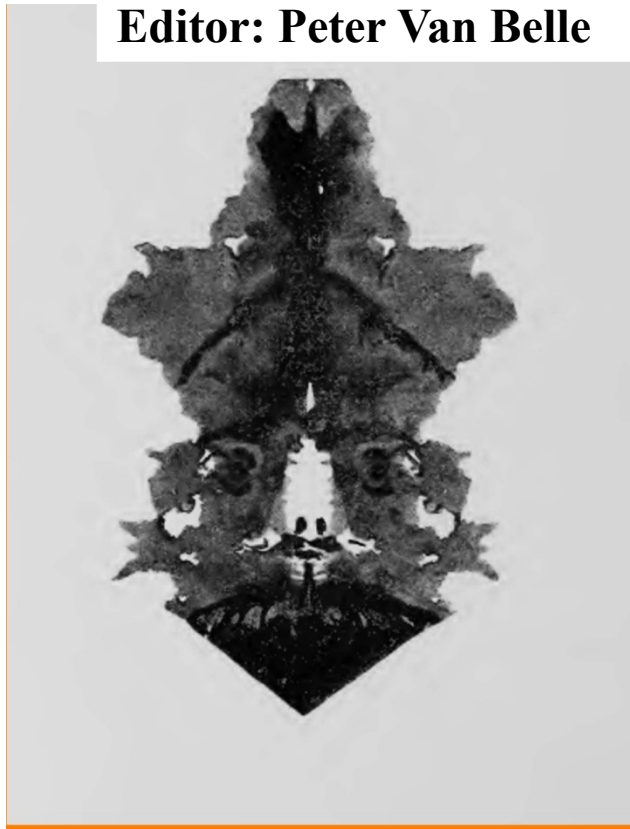
Prose by Paul Murgatroyd, Peter Van Belle, & Lesley Synge

Poetry by Heather Sager, Ray Miller, Sam Barbee, K. Roberts, Craig Kirchner, Gerry Fabian, Annie Bell, Algo, Phil Wood, David Ryan, & Janice J. Heiss

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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: North Sea by Edward Wadsworth

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

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Paul Murgatroyd

Roman Grandeur

People from all over the world stand in silence before numinous statues and fragments - a surreal slice of ephebic face, the colossal head of an august emperor, a leering Satyr that captures the essence of paganism. The people aren't looking at them. They're taking photos for Facebook.

Amid ancient palazzi and places of worship a choice of mendicants: the kneelers; the shakers; the readers; the sleeper with a cup held out in his slumbering hand; and the absentee beggar, who has left behind a scrounging note and his cap for donations while he is off on more important business.

While all the traffic frets and fumes beside him, a solitary tourist sits at the outdoor tables in Piazza Barberini, ensorcelled by sirenic pictures of pasta on a laminated menu for the illiterate.

Walking in Caesar's footsteps, a street trader tries to sell sunglasses to a man wearing sunglasses. Another migrant displays knock-off Gucci and Prada handbags on a blanket and greets a woman in her fifties with a winning 'Hello, bag.'

Outside a graffitied church an abandoned wheelchair (has there been a miracle?); inside the Virgin Mary cradles a crucified baby Jesus.

A designer signorina shares her cappuccino with her designer dog in a caffè near Raphael's tomb, giving it the foam on her serviette, which she then uses to wipe its lips.

The ghost of the satirist Juvenal stalks the streets, restless, hissing.

On the hotel's TV a glossy serpentry of adverts, for traditional fishcakes, gourmet boil in the bag vegetables, a pill that heals all headaches in three minutes flat et cetera et cetera ad nauseam.

The religious shops on the way to the Sistine Chapel offer gewgaws for the faithful – a fan with the face of Christ painted on it; the nun in a snowstorm globe; and 'unisex rosaries.'

For the full Roman experience take part in the passeggiata – a relaxing stroll, stumbling over sole-destroying cobblestones, behind slow walkers and sudden stoppers, while being hassled by merchants and greeters and sodomized by stealth taxis.

A flaunting of singular signs, before a government building (NO LITTERING TRANSGRESSORS WILL BE PUNISHED WITH THE UTMOST SEVERITY SPQR), in a shop that claims it has genuine leather (VERA PELLE – VERY LEATHER) and on the window of a self-service restaurant (NO SERVICE CHARGE).

According to someone on Tripadvisor, its a shame about the baths of Diocletian, must have been great in its hayday when u could bath there with all the

famous Roamans but its really run down now, they should get a grant or something to do it up.

The stately progress along the Appian Way of a cavalcade of motorbikes with sidecars in different colours (orange, yellow, pink, puce). Maecenas watches and writhes.

A sophomore frowns at the Virgilio's menu and asks her boyfriend: 'What is white wine?' He says: 'Um...well we don't want dessert wine. You don't have that with food.' Later she raises an unfamiliar knife and fork and stabs her pizza to death. Sick of the barbarian horde, the smiley waiter pours out his 'gift' to them (two thimbles of limoncello) and writes on the bill 'service not included, grazie, Mario' to inveigle his prey into leaving an unnecessary tip.

Abandoned on a despondent street, a hearse with a broken back window covered by hunchbacked cardboard.

The Vatican Museums venerate Mammon. Churches charge their customers for holy nightlights. The artistically arranged bones of dead monks (RIP) in the Capuchin Crypt are now pay per view (in place of the donation). So quite possibly that poster glimpsed across the road (among all the adverts for guided tours) really did say VISIT ALL OF THE FAMOUS SIGHTS IN ROME WITH BIG NUNS.

John Winder
Grand Master Palace



Heather Sager

Green City

Green, lush trees line every street. People stroll, cars turn neat
down the avenues of this weird city. Somebody's dog barks
when a zigzagging jogger treads near. People
of every nationality intone their different languages.

A man curses in Luxembourgish at the park's pond,
the pond coated by green. The air flows in pleasant currents,
and a college student curls up and naps on the ground,
senselessly, as the city life bustles.

A lovely, lonely woman walks, thinking about a lover she lost,
his kind face appearing to her in the ether
as a warm breeze kisses her forearm.

On a leafy tree, a yellow finch jumps about branches
like it's playing a game of hopscotch.

Ray Miller

Deliverance

The dark corridor
is a portal
from which I emerge
into the light
of a midwife and my wife
who looks like that time
we stayed up
all Saturday night
at Julie's party
but worse than that
are the sounds she makes
an inner beast
attempting escape
shifting of tectonic plates
the long curve of her groans
and fuck fuck fuck
an unearthly retch
as her skin is stretched
slowly unzipped
and the pearl prised
with a refrain of cries
that ring like bells
of a Sunday morning

Peter Van Belle

The Boy who Made Death a Friend

At the time the old block of flats stood at the very edge of town and from the windows you had of view of pastures and the wooded hills beyond. The railroad could be seen, with steam trains taking people far away.

It was a muggy afternoon in August, when most people were out. A little boy who didn't like the heat sat reading on the stairs, the coolest place in the building. One wall of the stairwell had windows that let in the light and the sound of birdsong. He was engrossed in his book by Karl May and didn't notice the footsteps till they were right next to him. He looked up.

The figure wore a hat, a thick coat and a scarf wrapped round the lower part of his face. Yet the boy recognized him instantly; above the scarf was a white, bony face and hollow eyes which seemed to have some life in them, or it could've been some light peeping through a suture. The boy drew back against the wall. Death raised a gloved hand.

"Please, don't be frightened. I've come for Mrs. Alvren."

"Why?"

Death reflected for a moment.

"Because I do. It's like rain falling, or the sun shining."

"Are you cold?"

"Yes, hasn't anyone told you I'm cold?"

"What are you going to do now?"

"You do ask a lot of questions. I'm going home, to rest a while."

You may wonder why the boy wasn't more frightened. Well, Death at the time had a soft, mellifluous voice to put people like Mrs. Alvren at ease.

"Is it far? Your house?"

"No, it's in the hills. About half an hour's walk."

"Can I see it?"

"Didn't your mama tell you not to go with strange men?"

"Yes, but are you really a stranger?"

If Death could smile he would've. Instead he shrugged.

"Well, I can't stop you. So if you really want to follow me."

With this he continued down the stairs.

The boy and Death took a path through the pastures towards the hills. The boy pointed at a cow.

"Could you kill a cow for me?"

Death looked at the boy. Of course he had no expression but the boy always thought he looked sad.

"I don't kill anything. Living kills the living. I merely take them away."

The boy didn't believe him, but remembered never to argue with grown-ups.

They stopped in a clearing on top of a hill. From here they had a view of the town and the mountains far away. The place was quiet but for the rustling of tall grass. Death pointed at a small shack hidden in the shadow of the trees.

"That's where I live. Now you can go home."

"Can I come inside?"

"There's nothing for you there. Besides, I'm tired."

"Could you show me the inside, some other time?"

Death walked towards the shack, then turned.

"As you're so curious. Meet me at the bakery on Monday the twenty-first, ten past two in the afternoon."

"I'll be in school then."

"I guess you'll have to skip class then."

The boy had never skipped class so as he stood next to the bakery he tried out different excuses to present to his mom.

Death was punctual and together they went into the hills. As they walked Death never said a thing but pointed out a special tree or a bird's nest or the spots of light the sun made on the forest floor.

The side of the shack the boy had seen was plain, but Death's front door was breathtaking. Intricate arabesques and scrolls had been carved into the wood which had been inlaid with bone and shells. From a distance the patterns seemed abstract but as the boy looked closer he saw they were made up of people, animals and plants, all interwoven and themselves composed of more people, animals and plants. Death led him inside and closed the door.

The shack had neither window nor light but the gaps between the boards let in the sun. There was just a large bed that took up almost all the floor. The interior was decorated like the front door; the whole room was covered in an intricate web of life. Death sat on the edge of the bed.

"You've been kind to me. So I'll let you visit me from time to time. A few things you need to keep in mind. Only visit me during the day. If you stay after dark you'll have to remain behind that line the whole time."

He pointed to a red line on the floor behind the bed. Behind it was just enough room to stand.

"You'll have to remember this. Lately I've started to forget things."

So the boy visited Death when he had the time. Together they would walk through the woods, seldom talk. Death like the company and the boy liked being with someone who didn't tease or bully him.

One day Death broke the silence.

"I'm sorry. This is the last day with you. Tonight, I shall die."

The boy grasped Death's sleeve.

"But you can't."

"What would Death be without dying? That isn't what saddens me. Though I die I am eternal. The moment I'm gone I shall return. But I'll be different, new. I won't be your friend anymore."

They returned to the shack and Death lay down on the bed.

"Stay," Death said, "but leave as soon it gets dark."

Death lay there staring at the boy. He seemed to go to sleep, stirring occasionally as if dreaming. The boy stayed though he noticed the light was going. He remained behind the red line though.

When Death stopped moving the boy sobbed.

After a long time Death sat up, its hat falling off, revealing his ivory head.

"Boy, I feel great. Oh, hello, nice of you to have waited."

It stretched itself then sprang out of bed.

"I feel like going to work now. Come on boy, it'll be fun."

The boy smiled and ran to Death.

That September hunters found him in the woods. The explanation the police gave was that'd he'd climbed a tree and fallen to his death. His mom thought some other boys must've egged him on.

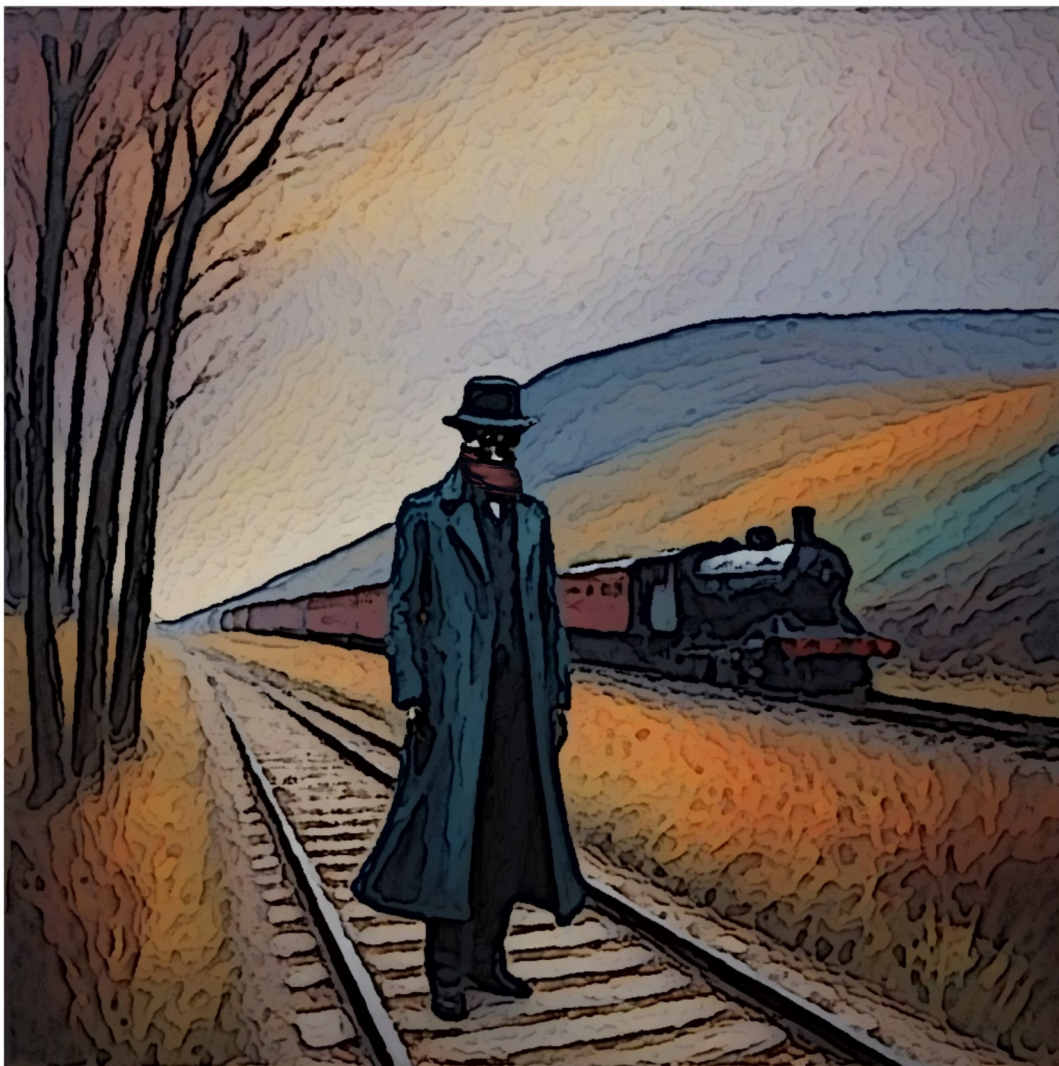


illustration by Peter Van Belle

Sam Barbee

Aboard a Painted Ship on a Painted Ocean

-- after *Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*,
by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

We yawn, frozen in the shrinking polar cap.

Petitions transform into selfishness. Passion now tedium.

To hell with star-charts and clemency.

Nothing weighs heavy except tilted heads in prayer.

At rest, we take a honeymoon pulse. Is Eden dormant?

Allowed netherworld a foothold? Deities acquiesce

My bride's ribbon binds the ancient holy diary.

As masked bridegroom, my hand sins without penance.

Our white dove whorls onto a berg's frozen garden.

I extend my hand into cold, grope for heat,

The forever vow dampened in the calm. Grey ocean

meditates between waves. Searches the uncertain rhythm.

Lightning's rapier fractures old moon and sun.

Ice cap fracture. Dawn fog dismissed on Jonah wind.

The touch of your cheek ignites I love you so.

Bloody bride's camisole soaks against the washboard.

We sail from this northern pole. New-day mariners,
preferring a tango to suspended twirl of halted dancers.



Dazzle Ships in Liverpool, by Edward Wadsworth

Sam Barbee

Gravid

Taste for blood, a shiver abetting chronic thirst
with proof to quench seedless fidelity. Reverse
alchemy: gold into straw. Romance on wind
readily distinguishes between princess and toad.

Continue to coexist on dead-end street and distant road.
Unfamiliar weight hijacks. Simple word aborts.
Proceed with deeper breath below stark bulbs.
Curly neon tubes. Death. And pure death.

Traffic lights beam pastels, but all colors lead back
to a grave. My volition treads with angels in dirty robes.
I stumble, better off without vestments. Nitty cuts
its teeth on gritty and thud of quiet overcomes

the hammer-dent she leaves, this greatest of all beings.
Sun up – easy enough to daydream, to wet dry bones
and take impersonal breath. Her prescribed poisons
help drink away cause and effect. Pause and pass out

until dawn. Tender bones flushed below. Absolution inside
grimy drawl, tongues snuffed as we too become earth.

K. Roberts

Barcelona Fantasy

I fall asleep, and space collapses. It's one step across the porch from Canada to Spain, past a picket-tongued fence where a puddled path trickles, and alfalfa grass grows fluffy and pink in a cotton candy meadow. I walk until I am swallowed by Ladon the dragon, an iron-winged gate surrounding the villa designed by Gaudí, La Finca Güell. Inside, the estate is branching. Corridors are budding recklessly, sprouting new chambers. Vineyards ripen in the living room, sofa cushions are plump moscato grapes tucked into Art Deco armrests, with stems of carved oiled wood. The walls dissolve into waterfalls of color, so that I may move unchanged through what is ever-changing, and I move unblinking, undisturbed. On the roof terrace, mosaic-tiled chimneys burst open with dozens of holes, like pomegranates vented by oval seeds. In the distance, a monastery balances on the knife-point of Montserrat, a cliff above the city. Egg-timer bell-chimes are drifting down from its scalloped edge. I inhale the sound, I swim in its saffron-spiced scent. The bells remind me it's Friday, when pastel frosted ceilings at the Palau de la Música, ornate as wedding cakes, are cut and served on paper plates to guests, for tea. The rose-covered slices taste of pepper and macarons. Below me, a squealing cherry-stone flies, piercing the tidal clouds. A red Ferrari car roams the roller coaster at PortAventura, licking its red licorice rails, a twirling tongue inside the metal lollipop of a Moebius loop. And in the city's harbor, a Majolica boat nestles, a three-cornered hat folded from a cabbage leaf. The ferry is waiting to sail me back to Thunder Bay. I'm satisfied and sated. Once on deck, I quickly fall asleep, only to find myself in a fresh world, a bread roll baked within a roll. The yeast of my cravings has been rising inside me, ready to leaven another dream.



The Cattewater, Plymouth, by Edward Wadsworth

Craig Kirchner

Recluse

God changes his appearance every second.
Blessed is the man who can recognize him,
in all his disguises.
— Nikos Kazantzakis, Zorba the Greek

The only memory is alone.
Others pass under the window,
hats, tops of heads,
like wandering waves
against black asphalt.
They come but mostly go,
and never stop.

The skyline seems surreal,
could and should be removed.
The shops across the lane
are doused by traumaed traffic lights,
that bounce on bedroom walls,
on pillowcases choked,
soaked blind.

The furniture, homesick zombies,
decaying like hung meat,
lacquered with bile-smearred sweat,
a satin gray.
The mirror stares back in disgust,
at skin shriveled sugar brown,
cancered with matted hair,
drawn close as dying clover.

Insomnia chooses with relish,
not to sleep, it preoccupies, is human.
Forgetting how to tell it,
nothing is true.
Time drifts like dark tides
and only the collecting filth
is dependable.

The room shrinks.

The dust is moved by melting walls,
like thick parched rust
in driving rain,
exiting sediment seeking rest,
breaths released, never missed,
soul sought fervor never found.

J.A.Karpinska
Holding Words Hostage



Craig Kirchner

Junior High

No one ever spoke to him,
not even the other nerds,
he hated lunch and gym.
The only difference between him and the furniture,
was that he moved from class to class.

Eye to eye in the halls was always,
'You're so disgusting' and a head shake.
Funny, was often him, and who could be grossest.
He swore redemption, under his breath,
but no one knew, no one cared, not even the teachers.

He was just not to be taken seriously,
unless to be laughed at. There were others belittled,
even some that went viral.
He never made that much difference,
was more like also, other than, grossest.

Today would be different.
Today would be remembered.
Today he, would choose grossest.
Today was retribution day.
Today, he had a mate.

J.A.Karpinska

Murdered Words

eyes when he acts coy and doesn't want to play
t's . . ."

"How did you give him the idea he was clairvoyant?"
easy. We decided we would let him do and say
came into his head and we would just sit there
mouths gaping and roll our eyes at him and burble
evable! It was just lucky he didn't decide to pee
his skin because we would have had to sit there
a how wonderful it was that he guessed what he
sed to do. There just aren't words to describe it
to see it to believe it."

laughter, retreating footsteps, slamming doors
aleriu stood stock still as though he had turned to
en slowly, very slowly he raised his hands high
he wanted to grab someone by the neck and
m. But he was alone with the toilet bowl in his
le. Here his great dream had collapsed! Here he
n up, shown up and ridiculed by people who
d. Here his power and his glory died, here in

Gerry Fabian

Literary Arachnophobia

Early in life, I made a pledge
to never kill a spider.
When my wife or daughter
would cringe and call me,
upon encountering
the eight legged monster,
I would pretend to smash it
all the while gently
brushing it aside.

As a writer and a poet,
I cannot help but to be overwhelmed
by the beauty and symmetry
of the silky spun web.
I know my best literary efforts
pale in contrasts
to the meticulous design beauty.

I envy the spider's artistic profession
and wish I could produce sticky words
that captures my prey.

Gerry Fabian

The Right Place at the Right Time

It was an impulse reaction.

No hesitation or
time for thought.

Something done
out of a primal instinct
that lay
way below
the surface
of reason or thought.

Like the swooping of a Red-tailed Hawk
or the pounce of an alley cat,
It was done.

And the consequence
is untested.

Annie Bell

Cycle Somatic

I spend my life afraid and quite constrained:
encased within a cage of my own making,
my body holding tight to traumas past:
my mind an anxious wreck of worries present.
A sickness of the mind infects my body.
My body, reacting, putrefies my mind.

I constantly pretend that I don't mind
but all my true reactions are constrained,
by holding muscles taut within my body.
Stress hormones and inflammation making
me ill, so I can't live life in the present.
Instead, I'm hiding: frightened of my past.

The monsters that are lurking in my past
have saturated my exhausted mind
and past pain leaks to permeate my present.
My agony had been quite well constrained,
facilitating me to keep on making
life progress at the cost of my poor body.

The cage that traps emotions in my body:
an iron maiden crafted by my past.
To heal, I have to feel, so now I'm making
huge efforts to extract them from my mind,
so I can live a life that's not constrained
and find a way to live within the present.

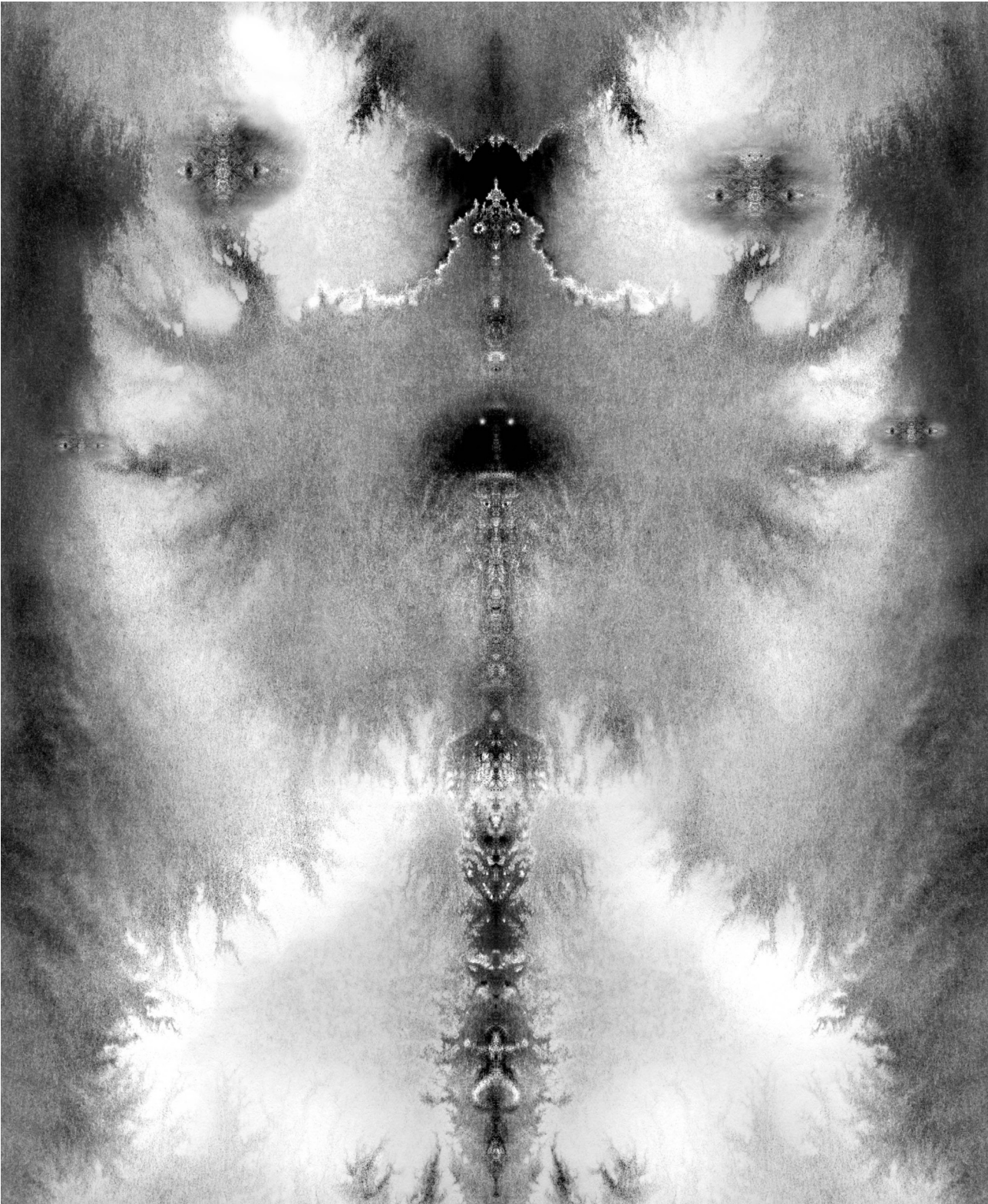
But now, a vicious cycle rules my present,
for many messed up symptoms in my body
make me live a life that's too constrained
by illness shaped by my mismanaged past:
reactions to the memories in my mind.
A mess that's been four decades in the making.

Though sometimes I begin to think I'm making
progress, one trigger brings the past back to the present.
And though I've worked so hard to heal my mind,

my nervous system activates my body.
I fight, I fawn, I freeze and flee my past
and once again I'm chained up and constrained.

I hope that making changes heals my body
so my present's unaffected by my past
and my mind and heart are free and unconstrained.

Toni Simon
Ode to Redon



Algo

The Last Magician at the Atomic Cabaret

Casts for lonely broken hearts
Spells are words for broken weather
Wands -the branches broken parts,
That on high once grew together

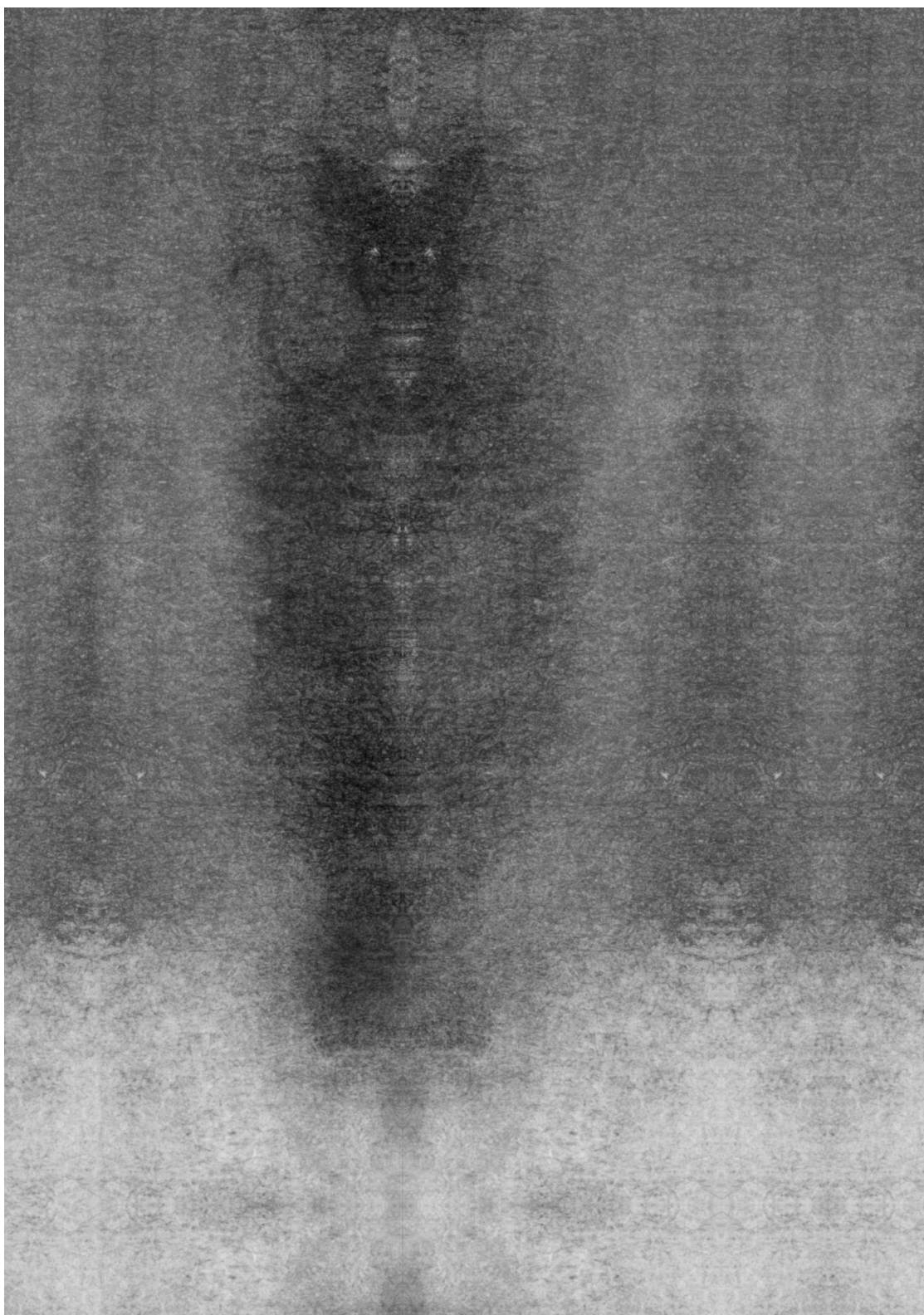
No full house the emptiest stage
Sawn in two with no assistant.
No cover for love's doveless cage
Duck and cover in the distance

Under hats, the white lies rabbit
Follow it down through mirrors, smoke.
The truth we lose out of habit
The daggers hand behind my cloak.

Wait for the cloud and its black rain
Ropes and trapdoor, push a button
Just shadows left, the concrete stained
We disappear into nothing

Toni Simon

Apparition



Algo

The Precipice

Fingertips, the face of a cliff
Reality, losing its grip
Agnostic apropos gravity
Reason and sense require belief
Press your lips to your crucifix
Daylight prays in the precipice

Rising like a new tidal moon
Still traced onto the sky at noon
Midnight no different on a clock
With both hands up just hanging on
Time embraces with clenched fists
The bloodied, furrowed precipice

Broken lips, this face that resists
The panoply, all that exists.
Faith reigns way above clouds that doubt
The rain may fall on years of drought
You may grow blind to all of this,
Staring into the precipice.

Lesley Syngé

WANT IT, WANT IT, WANT IT

i remember me quite well

I've been smallish and on the thin side since around, uh, since around two years of age. I worshipped my dog, my silkworms, strawberries from my father's garden, the Milky Way, the sea breeze. The sun through my eyelids. The taste of grass stalks. Stones with their patterns. The river I swam in, the soft dust I walked on, the lawn I lay on. I had freckles and was a pagan. Some days, for some moments, I knew The Happiness as I stretched out in sunlight on ticklish grass, sucking the juice from stalks, my puppy warmly by my side. Overhead, birds flew and clouds sailed and I dreamed the white cumulus and cirrus into a million possibilities while I invented easily-forgotten songs and turned the day's favourite pebble over and over in my clever little hand.

But somehow, as the years passed, The Happiness fled. Because of Mother. She was Unhappy. Grandly Troubled. For me and my two younger sisters, childhood was a zone of hits and shouts. Of cowering underneath our 'Queenslander' – our Australian home built on tall stumps to beat the heat of the tropical climate. Waiting, waiting, until the maternal storm raging above was spent. I remember schoolfriends with wide eyes waiting with me, our little hands linked, girls too scared to visit again. I remember the budgerigar who rasped at meal times, Shut-up and eat your dinner! Shut-up and eat your dinner! The unforgettable leather strap which hung behind the kitchen door, longing to be taken down to make me and my sisters good. The strap Mother wielded, in the house where she reigned.

we didn't talk of love, in our family

Not once did we talk of love. And certainly not of sex. It was late at night when a cousin passing through our town on holiday with her family, told me about sex. I was giggling so much that I nearly missed the only sex education of my life. She told me that animals got stuck together and so did people. She said there was a hole between your legs and, if you didn't have babies, then blood came out. I was grateful for her words of guidance. They were the only ones I had.

and so i went out into the world to seek my fortune

When I went off to seek my fortune, the world of politics claimed me. My new friends were students who lived in decaying wooden houses. We read Marx and Lenin and Germaine Greer and Reich (sometimes) to each other. We stuck posters on our walls: *Liberate Vietnam, Free Southern Africa, Ban Uranium Mining, Agitate Educate Organise, Women's Liberation is Gonna Get Your Mother and Your Grandmother*. My favourite poster was Che Guevara's beloved face. We wore his

face on tee-shirts, published it in student newspapers. I loved Che. Silently, I prayed to him:

Che with your smouldering Latin lips
your black hair tousled like a lover's
(but really from fighting and sleeping out in the hills of Sierra Leone)
your long-lashed eyes
gazing at a better world beyond
o passionate one
icon of Youth
speak to me –

Along the bottom edge of the poster: *At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love.*



Lesley in Queen's Gardens, London

we didn't talk of love, on campus in Brisbane

There was no talk of love, not even of the love of martyrs for their causes. I tell you, there was no talk of love. I can't remember *any*. Certainly not in the rooms where the meetings were held, nor in the bedrooms where couplings began and ended. Love was not on the agenda. Love was for *hippies*. Here, Rads did *anger*.

Initially, before my integration – before becoming what Rad Men called politicised – I found their anger repellent. (After all, I knew it intimately.) I recall passing a lunchtime demonstration one day in the early 1970s during the time of the Vietnam War. I was on my way to a lecture and a young rad with a megaphone hurled abuse at people like me who were walking by. *Tools of the United States war machine*, he screamed. Oppressors of the weak and powerless. I thought he was an ugly, ugly man, but he was also handsome and exuded charisma and I didn't ignore him on the next occasion. I paused and listened from the periphery.

I thought about the weak and oppressed. Then I too began to express anger. I learnt to march along, shout slogans, punch the air with a closed fist, heap vitriol upon the enemy. The more I did it, the more anger I felt. The more anger I felt, the

more I wished to express it. It fed me like forest fire. I found an organisation to belong to. It talked of *discipline*, it talked Revolution.

What I did was to join a Leninist cult.

From the start I disliked this organisation and practically everybody in it. I stayed for two years because of that part of me that believed we must *force* the world to be better. We must strap it. We must whip it into shape.

I became a caged bird harping, Shut-up and listen to *me!*

let us now talk more of sex

Because of the milieu I belonged to, my interest in sex was both practical and theoretical. The practical had more attraction than the theoretical.

Copulation is the lyric of the masses, posited Baudelaire.

I wasn't alone in my lyrics, in my poetry of the night. We were *all* on heat. No-one chose loneliness.

Roses are red, diddle, diddle,

Lavender's blue.

If you will have me, diddle, diddle

I will have you.

if you're a Leninist, Theory is important

If you're a Leninist, you don't neglect Theory. You ask, What did our revolutionary heroes and heroines say about love and sex? Not a lot, you find, not a lot.

The Russian revolutionary Alexandria Kollontai claimed sex should be as easy and uncomplicated as drinking a glass of water. Her position sent Vladimir Ilyich Lenin into shock and he attacked (a comradely attack) with polemical outrage:

Drinking from used glasses? Would a normal person lie down in the gutter and drink from a puddle? Or even from a glass whose edge has been greased by many lips?

Russia's young revolutionaries horrified VI Lenin. Before giving up on the topic, he opined:

This modern approach to the sex problem...is particularly damaging to the youth movement. It can easily lead to sexual excesses and over-stimulation of sex life and to wasted health and strength of young people.

He wrote no further. As for love between people, he never mentioned it. Such a subject, he would have held, was personal. Self-indulgent, terrain of romantics and poets. Best left until after the revolution:

Revolution calls for concentration and rallying of every nerve.

Forward to the proletarian dictatorship!

i wasn't a good Leninist

I was too wild and too gentle to be a good Leninist. I preferred adventure, seeking out answers to questions I didn't know I'd asked. I went places. I saw things. In Europe –

all over Europe – I saw women who refused to stay at home, choosing instead a life on the streets demonstrating for their rights.

Place de Concorde Paris, May Day, the workers' holiday. Under strict instruction from the organising committee of unions, several hundred women assembled behind a purple banner embroidered with the words *Movement des Femmes*, and waited. Their signal came – they could join in since the last contingent of industrial workers had filed past. But still they hung back, pressed behind their banner of purple. The gap between the women and the column of red flags widened. Communist Party stewards blanched with hernias of impatience. *Marchez!* they ordered. Choosing their own moment of entrance, the Frenchwomen burst forward. Their manicured hands beat against their lipstick mouths. *Wawawawawa!* they whooped, like Native Americans on a warpath. Their high heels beat a war-song on the cobblestones.

In London, when Soho was full of porn shops, women gathered with candles and placards reading *Reclaim the Night*. They'd invited the press to film them parading past the *Sweet Pussy Niteclubs* etcetera, raising consciousness. Consternation! Certain Leninist women refused to march with the women who were against abortion. These women are traitors, they declared. Confusion swirled throughout the ranks. Who were *sisters*? All, or only some? Argumentative women spilled from the footpath onto the roadway which was forbidden, and English bobbies arrived. They intoned wearily, *Keep together, ladies. Keep together ladies, please!*

In Rome, sexy women wearing pearl necklaces and tight jeans flooded narrow streets chanting *Aborto libero*, free abortion on demand. From the tenement blocks, the bodies of men burst out of windows and hurled insults down at them. Young hands coolly reached up, two fingers as pointed as the arms of scissors. They chop-chop-chopped the heaving, furious air in four-four time: *Aborto libero! Aborto libero!* The men screamed impotently. And the women laughed.



Lesley outside her squat in West Hampstead

i still felt empty somewhere inside

Despite my adventures I still felt – emptiness. I wanted a baby. So I had one. After Youth Politics, I arrived at the destination of Motherhood. I experienced it as a miracle. Sea breezes sprang up in the night. Love flowed as had the rivers of my childhood: soft, strong. Love shone as had the sun, through my eyelids. The Happiness returned and surged all about me: the miraculous Milky Way, the sleeping puppy, the sway of clouds.

Mother love.

Which *I* had once yearned for, for which I was quite starved, of which I knew myself robbed, and cheated – became mine. It filled me. Flowed from me, like breast milk: the more taken, the more it replenished. Having never loved before without thought of return, or loved purely for another's well-being, no love could ever be the same again. Mother love – bedrock.

When my little boy was eight and we were watching television, on came an advertisement for the film, *The Meaning of Life*. Turning his innocent face towards me, he asked, What is the meaning of life?

You are, my darling. You are, I told him. Without you I would've learned nothing.

aren't we all dreamers? don't we all search for meaning?

In the 1990s, a woman student of sociology researched alternative communities in eastern Australia. She created a scientifically valid questionnaire then rocked up to commune after commune. The coldest one in the Snowy Mountains of the south. The warmest one in the Far North where communards lived solely on the flesh of coconuts. In the Free Love commune inland from the most eastern point of Australia,

she found a schism. After practising Free Love for twelve years, the majority called it quits. They declared the experiment over. But a splinter group of five adults and six children refused to abandon their ideals and moved to the far side of the communal land to continue. Where, for all we know, they're still at it.

The sociologist threw questions at the settlers in these intentional communities including: *What is most important to your well-being?*

Love, they answered. Plain ol' *Love*.

i settled down

My youth over, I too settled down. I kept on walking the logic of love's pathway, kept walking and found love's secret. It's not so much out there as in here, and it's forgiveness, and it's persistence, it's – as the Buddhists say – loving-kindness and doing no harm. Loving the world. Oh, but taking no bullshit. Sometimes I'm better at it than others, but at last, after all my journeys, after all my struggles, I've found one thing I'm sure of. Brothers and sisters, I'm in the palm of the Precious One, the Blessed One, whom I was seeking all along.

2024 demonstration for Palestine

I stand here, said a Palestinian speaker, in the name of Radical Love.

My eyes fill with tears. Brothers and sisters, fellow-beings...

Phil Wood

Escargatoire

Close-by they are dreaming,
dwelling in self-content,
a wall studded with solitude.
Don't you want to glisten
before you die? I whisper.

Like an orchestra fidgets, the horns
awake, script a composition in silver.

Phil Wood

Insomnia

Simulacra gave up on sleep,
found joy in wakefulness. No dream
could replicate the colourful,
the feathered sky, the mossy wood.

Huddled like sheep on rainy days,
they gathered under a canopy,
a chapel flock of smiling faces.
I sketched them with a charcoal stick.

I hung the image on the bedsit wall.
Their happiness portrait was proof
they were like me? They could not sleep.
I wrote some pages. I could not sleep.

Phil Wood

Krapp

Is this a shabby girl? Or was
that the tube station? I pause
the tape. Where was rejection most
invidious? Is this my dust?

I no longer trust that mutter,
but lust lingers on the last tape.
The repetition device, my tongue,
must no longer lick that blister?

The shabby girl is/was failing
promises...I think of closing
in her open eyes, but burn
to spool a tape again. I pause.

David Ryan

A Dress For Latter Day Locusts

I am the voice in the wilderness.
Screaming echoes resound, unheard.
Bouncing back from nowhere's edge.
I am the crime in the antechamber.
A bridge, to bring you back to Eden.
I will sever your hand softly,
And throw your soul to the chasm.
I am the schism in the lie you have lived.
I am the body of John the Baptist,
And i yearn for the bed, of Salome still.
I am the instrument of my own instruction.
The plethora of doom in the nothing's wish.
I am the screaming Pope in the curtained room.
I am the misread transcription of knowledge none
The unfound triangle in the tomb of stone.
I am the troglodyte of Classical Rome.
I am the shadow that blazes out.
Amun Ra's dullness, dying in sand.
Like the hope of Germanicus in Antioch's dust.
The funeral urn we drain down our throats,
And fearsome castles drowned in their own moats.

I am the intestate behest.
A feather on the breath of God.
Her dictates ignored by the multitudes.
I am the soap at the basin's edge,
A razor's bounty of ceramic flecked.
The cream of local assizes
I am the scum, that also rises.
I am the forgiven Edomite.
A St. Peter's Field worker against a sabre.
A freely given plenary indifference.
I am the progeny of my own son;
The unwrinkling of our DNA.
I am the every-cat, who has his day.
I am De Chirico's shadow, pointing the way.
The copper's splinter at the dolorite's base.

The hero's hoard in the barrow's heft.
I am the solstices fallen sarson.
I am the flaccid misdirection.
Zapruder filming something near the intersection.
The poisoned well at the journey's end.
And the dagger-gripped, in the hand of a friend.

David Ryan

The Village of the Sirens

When we drift away from the pleadings of Mothers,
and trip into the arms of reluctant lovers.

Into the pubs and beds of lips kissed..

It's then we can begin the work in earnest.

Start the measurement of foul societies.

Build your own towers of missed opportunities.

Your revolutions of clenched fists and berets,
revealed as cheap silk-screened slogans on T's.

A crown for your predicted stars aligned,
in bedrooms of the wunderkind.

We waited for Magi gifted veils;

But the Romans came with hammers and nails.

And I helped them hang my body on the tree.

So now, whatever it is I bring, I bring to thee.

Because now I hear the village of the Sirens,
and I sing for them and not admirers.



Rotherhithe, by Edward Wadsworth



Triangles, by Edward Wadsworth, 1948

Janice J. Heiss

Mammo at MoMa

...“Still she haunts me, phantomwise,
Alice moving under skies
Never seen by waking eyes.”
Lewis Carroll

“Cancer or benign?
Cancer or benign?!”

“I don’t have the time,”
no time,” he replied,
running in circles,
ogling his watch,
“no time for reversals.”
“Off with her breast!
Off with her breast!
“No contest!”

“Cancer’s no joke,” said she,
“your attitude’s very — ”

“What — ?”

“Doc, don’t interrupt!”

“Well, speak or shut up!”

“Very rude for a Doctor of
Medicine!” she stressed.
“You act like a God,
cutting off breasts!”

But the doc was a sculptor with a knife,
immortal mathematician,
playing the numbers right.

“Modernism might be dead,”
she said,
“but I’m not!”

Sign me up.”
And she turned her mammo in
-- a talisman? –
to MoMa’s contest,
The Film of Illusion,
Body Art: Its Nemesis.

Then spying his watch, she said:
“Ha, ha, doc, it’s dead!”
“I begin at the end,”
“dead” he said.
“Right twice a day —
so when I say,
‘You have three weeks to live,’
you have thrice the time to forgive.”

“Piss on your silly diagnosis,”
and to the museum she bolted
in her hospital gown,
but the doc came around.

“Radiology is an art.
See that spot
above your heart?”
“Nonsense! A speck --
“Deal a new deck.”

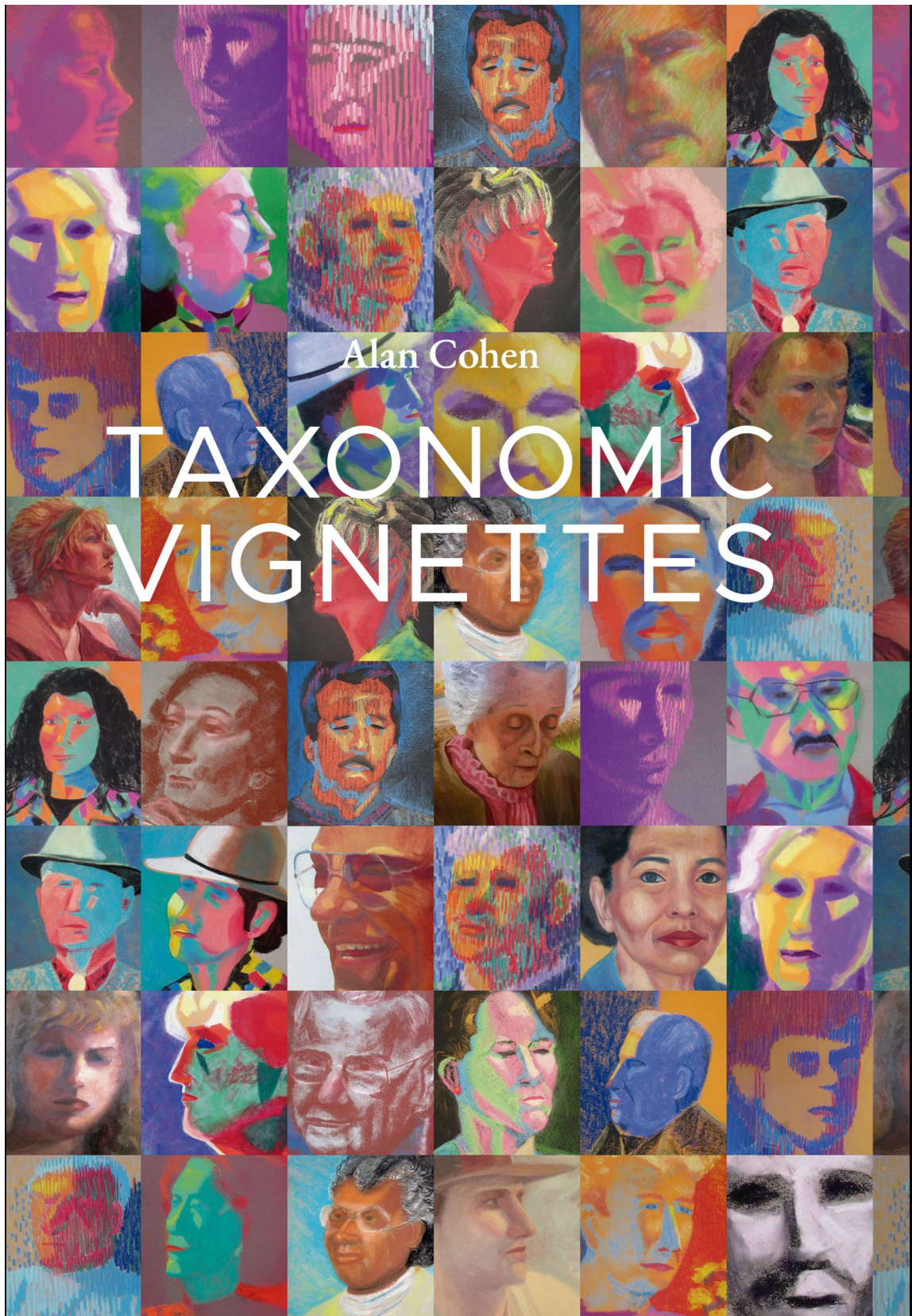
“There’s a science to art,”
the curator barked,
“and it’s only art
when I say so.
This X-ray’s a true original,
a perfect example
of life mimicking art,
or is it art mimicking life?...
(No matter ... er...
whatever.)
This print wins hands-down!
Now take off that silly gown.”

“You’re dangerously abstract.
Don’t you see
she’s under attack?!” warned the doc,

“and who named you judge?”
But the curator wouldn’t budge.
“What’s life without art?” the curator asked.
“I’m an MD, and I protest — ”

Ignoring them both,
she screamed with glee,
“I win, I win!”
Immortality.

DUE OUT IN OCTOBER 2024



Alan Cohen

TAXONOMIC
VIGNETTES

PUBLISHED BY ATMOSPHERE PRESS

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He was awarded an "Emerging Artist's Grant" from the Winston-Salem Arts Council to publish his first collection Changes of Venue (Mount Olive Press); has been a featured poet on the North Carolina Public Radio Station WFDD; received the 59th Poet Laureate Award from the North Carolina Poetry Society for his poem "The Blood Watch"; and is a two-time Pushcart nominee.

Edward Wadsworth (1889-1949) British artist, part of the Vorticist movement. Also was one of the developers of the WW1 “dazzle” camouflage. Throughout his career made both abstract and figurative paintings.

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After a writing hiatus he was recently published in *Poetry Quarterly*, *Decadent Review*, *New World Writing*, *Neologism*, *The Light Ekphrastic*, *Unlikely Stories*, *Wild Violet*, *Last Stanza*, *Unbroken*, *The Globe Review*, *Skinny*, *Your Impossible Voice*, *Fairfield Scribes*, *Spillwords*, *WitCraft*, *Bombfire*, *Ink in Thirds*, *Ginosko*, *Last Leaves*, *Literary Heist*, *The Blotter Magazine*, *Quail Bell*, *Variety Pack Ariel Chart*, *Lit Shark*, *Gas*, *Teach-Write*, *Cape Magazine*, *Scars*, *Yellow Mama*, *Rundelania*, *Flora Fiction*, *Young Ravens*, *Loud Coffee Press*, *Edge of Humanity*, *Carolina Muse*, and the *Journal of Expressive Writing* and has work forthcoming in *Valiant Scribe*, *Chiron Review*, *Sybil*, *Timalda’s Diary*, *Vine Leaf Press*, *Wise Owl*, *Moria*, *The Argyle*, *Same Faces*, *Floyd County Moonshine*, *Coneflower Café*, *Impspired*, *Borderless Crossings*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Kleksograph*. *Dark Winter*, and *The Main Street Rag*.

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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', Aimsir Press', 'The Wilfred Owen Association Journal', and the 'Mental Health Vol. 2' anthology.

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Algo is from Ireland. In self-imposed self-isolation, Algo only wears black and enjoys studying the school of Austrian Economics, reading comic books and meditating.

Algo once believed he was a nihilist but now believes in something higher.

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Phil Wood was born in Wales. He studied English Literature at Aberystwyth University. He has worked in statistics, education, shipping, and a biscuit factory. He enjoys chess and learning German. His writing can be found in various places, including : *Byways* (Arachne Press Anthology), *The Seventh Quarry* (issue 39) and *Noon Journal of the Short Poem*.

David Ryan has been writing poetry for 15 years and draws his inspiration from Shelley's calling out social injustices, History, Expressionist Art, Punk Music and dreams.

He also produces collages and writes songs. He is working toward a first collection.

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END OF ISSUE FIFTEEN OF THE KLEKSOGRAPH



Self-portrait of Edward Wadsworth