

THE KLEKSOGRAPH

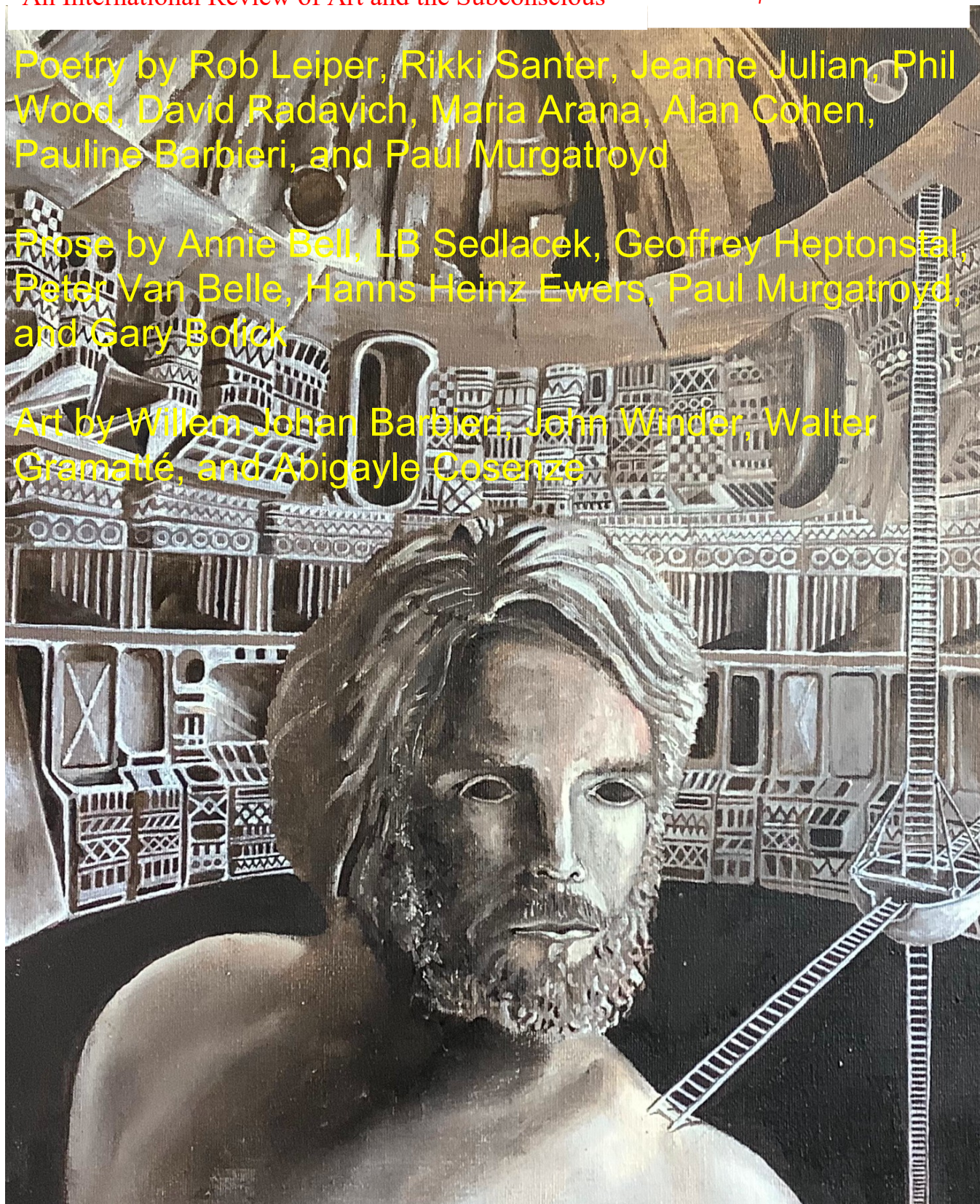
An International Review of Art and the Subconscious

Issue 12 September 2023

Poetry by Rob Leiper, Rikki Santer, Jeanne Julian, Phil Wood, David Radavich, Maria Arana, Alan Cohen, Pauline Barbieri, and Paul Murgatroyd

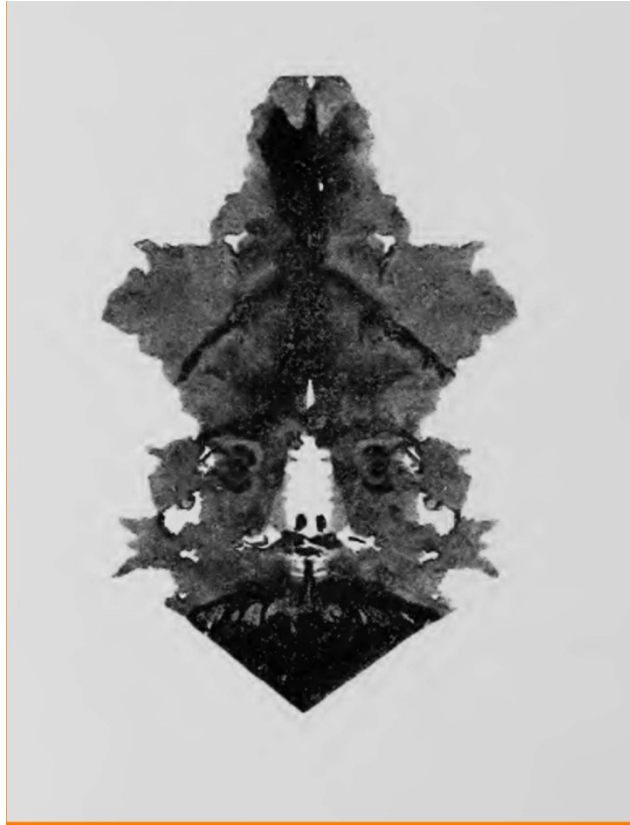
Prose by Annie Bell, LB Sedlacek, Geoffrey Heptonstal, Peter Van Belle, Hanns Heinz Ewers, Paul Murgatroyd, and Gary Bofick

Art by Willem Johan Barbieri, John Winder, Walter Gramatté, and Abigayle Cosenze



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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 (Klecks is the official German spelling) is dedicated to exploring and celebrating the relationship between the subconscious and art.

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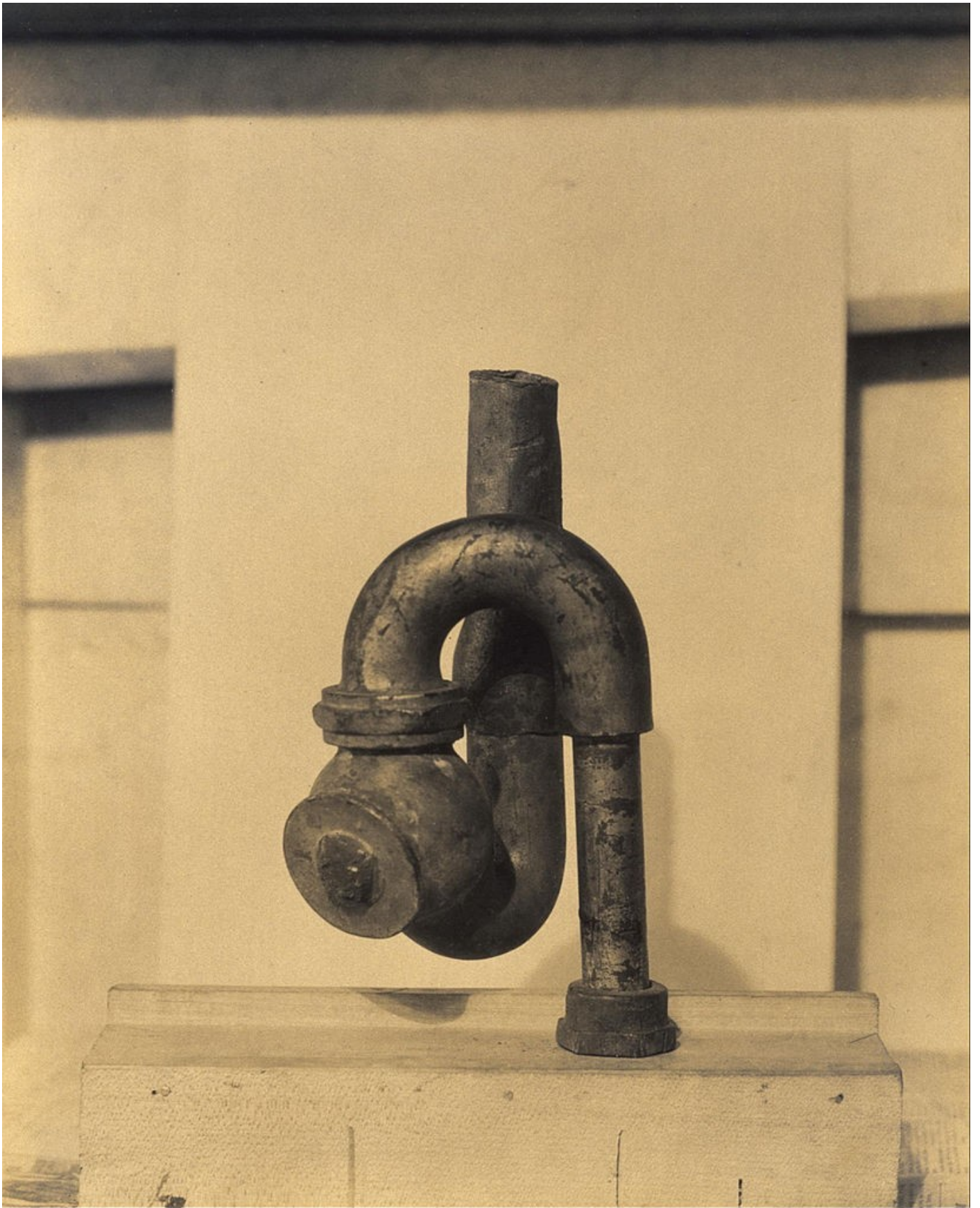
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God, by Baroress Elsa von Freytag-Loringhofen & Morton Schamberg, photograph by Morton Schamberg



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Annie Bell

Tutankhamen is in the Wardrobe

Cappoquin, 1990.

“Good night, Mam,” Aisling frowned, as her mother walked from her bedside to the door. “He won’t come and get me, will he?”

“Don’t be silly, Aisling,” her mother sighed, rolling her eyes and quickening her step across the toy-strewn rug. “Honestly, I don’t know why we let you stay up late to watch these grown-up programmes when you act like this.” As she approached the door, Aisling’s mum stumbled on a stray toy car. “Bollocks!” She shouted, before glaring at Aisling, whose wide-eyed face was only just visible, poking out from beneath the white duvet which was embellished with garish ticker tape patterns in primary colours. “Tomorrow, you’re going to tidy this place up. It looks like a bomb’s hit it.” With that, she snapped off the light and closed the door. “Night night,” came her parting words, muffled by the closed door.

As her mother’s footsteps faded away, Aisling looked around. The room was not entirely dark. Between the faint glow of the streetlights, though the pale curtains and the crack of light under the bedroom door, there was an ochre greyness to the place.

Aisling felt fear pinning her to the bed. She dared not move. He could be anywhere, or nowhere. There was no way she could know. From her position, laying on her side with the wall behind her, she was well placed to survey the room, with the knowledge that he couldn’t be behind her, and if he was here, she’d see him.

But he could be behind you, Aisling’s imagination - her greatest ally by day, but her most wicked enemy by night - spoke up. Aisling turned her head and, having established that there was no-one behind her, shuffled back until her body was firmly pressed against the wall. Now he had no way of sneaking up on her.

As her eyes adjusted to the low light, she could make out the vague shapes of the furniture: the desk, adjacent to the glowing square that was a window by day: the wardrobe and the chest of drawers. If she really squinted, she could just about see the Lego space ship she’d spent the afternoon constructing, together with its moon bases and cool astronaut Lego men.

As she gazed into the darkness, Aisling noticed faint colours appearing at various distances from where she lay. She couldn’t have fallen asleep if Mrs Ryan: the headmistress of her school had been standing over her, cane in hand, threatening to beat her. Although she had heard that corporal punishment had been outlawed, Aisling wasn’t sure. She had heard horror stories of other children getting The Cane. She didn’t like the sound of it and, somehow, she’d avoided it so far.

Aisling still remembered the time when she and Nessa Kennedy had come close. She'd not had any wicked intentions. Nessa had suggested that they throw stones over the school fence and had reassured her that nobody lived there, so no harm could be done. A few days later, they'd been hauled in front of Mrs Ryan. Aisling had been mortified, when Mrs Ryan had told her that the old man who lived there had complained and that she could easily have killed him. Aisling hadn't believed Mrs Ryan that throwing a stone would do any more than bruise someone but, when she'd questioned this, Mrs Ryan had relayed the story of David and Goliath, with extra emphasis on the bit where David's stone penetrated Goliath's forehead and he fell down, dead. That had been evidence enough for Aisling and for a few weeks, the darkness at night had been painted with images of the poor old man, who lived next to the school, screaming in agony as the stone Aisling had thrown sank slowly into his skull, as though the bones were made of plasticine.

It had been Mrs Ryan that had scared Aisling half to death on another occasion. This time, it had been Anna Kelly that has gotten her into trouble. Anna had lost an earring and was panicking that her newly pierced hole would close up, if a solution to the lost earring was not found. Aisling had wracked her brains and, in an innocent attempt to help her stricken friend, had pushed a staple through the hole. Anna had been delighted with Aisling's ingenuity but Mrs Ryan had seen things differently. She had taken Aisling aside and castigated her to within an inch of her life. That night, Aisling had gone to bed, with her imagination painting images of rotting, septic ears and Anna keeling over with her eyes dangling onto her cheeks, oozing with blood, just like Aisling's cat, Puss Cat's remains had been described to her, when he had been struck and killed by a car, outside their old house.

As she lay in the ochre grey, recalling those events, her eyes darting between imagined terrors, Aisling reasoned that she wasn't a very good girl and if he was to come for her in the night, she'd probably deserve it.

The cold of the wall against Aisling's back was uncomfortable and she wished she'd thought to tuck the duvet behind her. It was too late now. She couldn't move. If she did, he'd get her. She'd been foolish enough to watch that programme and now, she was cursed. She didn't know how or when he'd come for her but she was certain that he would.

The longer Aisling lay with her eyes open, staring into the night, the more she could make out. Her furniture began to shift before her eyes and she watched, in total horror, as the wardrobe altered its shape; narrowing until it was just a little wider than a grown-up person. The door opened and as it did, it became clear to Aisling that she was no longer staring at her wardrobe door, rather it was the heavily carved lid of a coffin. A golden glow emanated from within and behind it, she saw the gilded and decorated mask of his sarcophagus. The stripes of his regal head scarf: deep blue, seemed dull against the gleaming gold in between. Thick eyeliner surrounded his unblinking eyes, which gazed into her soul and saw everything.

Aisling wasn't entirely sure what a soul was. She just knew you shouldn't sell it or give it to anyone, otherwise your life would be ruined. Aisling was also fairly sure that one bad thing could cost you your soul and she'd clearly done more than one bad thing in her ten years. Now, he was here and she was very scared and bitterly regretful that she'd stayed up to watch that documentary. The previous five episodes had been interesting - the history of the dig, who Tutankhamen had been in life, how he'd died. It had all fascinated her. Tonight

had been different. She'd known, when the title of the final episode had come up: 'The Curse of Tutankhamen', that she'd be scared by it, but she had relished the opportunity to stay up an extra hour and now, she was paying the price. If Tutankhamen could kill the great archaeologist Howard Carter with a mosquito bite and a shaving cut, what would he do to a ten year old failed good girl from Cappoquin?

For hours, or at least that's what it felt like, Aisling lay rigid, staring at Tutankhamen's eerily perfect death mask, as it shone at her with menacing friendliness. Finally, she could stand it no longer and squeezing her eyes shut, with the obvious logic that if she couldn't see Tutankhamen, he couldn't see her, she leapt from her bed and went for the door, tripping on the same toy car that had upset her mother, before. She stumbled but somehow kept herself upright and carried on with her eyes shut. She estimated that she should have reached the door by now but her fingers still felt nothing but air beyond them. She could feel Tutankhamen behind her, drawing closer with every step she took. Finally, her fingers made contact with solid wood and reality. She fumbled for the handle, turned it and stepped onto the landing. The pink glow of her closed eyes comforted her and she opened them, blinking in the bright light. Without looking back, she closed the door on Tutankhamen.

The light was on in her parents' room. Not wanting to get into trouble for being out of bed so late at night, Aisling went into the bathroom. She sat on the edge of the bath tub and flinched as her little brother's Teenage Mutant Hero Turtle fell from the side of the bath into the tub, with a loud bang.

Immediately, she heard footsteps.

"What's going on?" Her mother's faintly annoyed voice sounded on the landing. The door swung open and Aisling gazed at the welcome sight of her mother's tall, slim frame with the mane of shocking red hair surrounding her familiar face. Aisling's mother's cross expression soon melted into something friendlier and she came and sat next to Aisling on the edge of the green bathtub. "What's the matter? Did you have a nightmare?" she asked, putting her arm around Aisling's shoulder. "You're sweating," she said. Aisling sat in silence, terrified. After all, her mother had watched the documentary too. Maybe Tutankhamen had come for them all, starting with her, as she had gone to bed the soonest. Aisling shook uncontrollably. "Come on," her mother insisted. "What happened?" Aisling shook her head. "What's wrong, Aisling? Is there a monster in your room? Do you want me to go and get rid of it for you?"

"NO!" Aisling shouted. "You can't go in there! He'll get you, too!"

"Who?" Aisling's mother asked.

"Tutankhamen." Aisling whispered. "The curse."

"Come on," Aisling's mother smiled, patting her on the leg in reassurance. "He's not there. I'll show you."

"NO! NO! NO! Mammy, he'll get you!" Aisling begged her mother to stay but she walked off.

A moment later, she returned.

"See, I checked and there's no-one in your room at all,"

"Not even in the wardrobe?"

“No, Aisling, not even there.”

Gripping her mother’s hand until her knuckles whitened, Aisling crept back to her room. The light was on and Tutankhamen’s sarcophagus, in the milky darkness, seemed a distant memory.

Aisling climbed back into her bed. Her mother stroked her head and read a few pages from ‘The Enchanted Wood’ by Enid Blyton, until Aisling fell fast asleep and dreamt of visiting magical worlds with Moonface and Silky in the Faraway Tree.

As Aisling’s mother left the room, she switched off the light but left the door ajar, just enough to keep the darkness at bay and Tutankhamen in the wardrobe.

Rob Leiper

Electric Blue

out beyond the stagnant orange
pools of sodium light splashed
round the ankles of the present
running down the normal channels
lurk white nights and the blue
electric shimmer of connection
crackle jump the gap across pole
points flashing azure cerulean
cobalt violet deep purple
there

in the evening sky reaching
out its net ensnaring you
as unexpected as the flicker
of that distant flash of glamour
the catch of ozone recollecting all
the other times the other lands
that others have inhabitation of
have glimpsed then disappeared
as by some sleight of hand

Willem Johan Barbieri

Terminus



with permission of Pauline Barbieri

Rikki Santer

Diaspora

after photographs of Frédéric Brenner

from Diaspora: Homelands in Exile

...a photograph is always invisible:

it is not it that we see.

—Roland Barthes; Camera Lucida

1

At the end of an alley,

it's Purim in Jerusalem,

shadows calculate

a black hat

in determined stride

through a proscenium

while in foreground,

a child with angel wings

skips atop cankers of stones

and impossible snow.

Esther's folktale delivers

to alley angels what's

tied up with a thorny bow—

annihilation could be averted

if one is pretty enough

and savvy enough to coerce

a ruler's scepter tip
for bending hope and history
towards justice.

2

We recognize her compiled
in the smooth, stone lap
of a Yemeni alcove,
this robed woman,
intimate text in diagonal.
Perfect folds of her robe
beguiling, the suppose
of her naked toe pointing,
the wealth of predicates
in her turbaned gaze
only for us. This place
she has taken at the climax
of your thread that glitters
with invisible jewels.

3

What they are and what
they are not. Tight across
the frame, a minyon of rabbinical
women lined up with each other,
all wrapped in tallis and binding

prayer gear. They seem resolved
in elliptical splendor—tall, short,
back-turned or shoulder leaning,
heads bold with hair styles, each
a proud note on this musical
scale of defiance.

4

To certify the flesh
of what had been,
bare chests of cyclops
mastectomies seated
at a long table, coiffed
Americans with tender
hands entwined, their eyes
locked on us to pronounce
womanhood still, Ashkenazi
triumph, Kinehora.

Rikki Santer

Shepherd's Hour

You've been a rusty parking lot for desolation
but this hour your night mind calculates
sheep bells deep in the belly of the ravine.

Your herd wanders through fog in syncopation,
their frosty breaths leave behind trails of
ellipses. You light another cigarette and

stumble down the steep hill of brambles
to crouch among their low bleats. Musk
of their matted wool drapes you in stillness,

stillness you're prone to making thick with
gloom and inertia. But this hour, listen to the
steadying of their hooves in high grass, place

your hands onto the rippling lilt of their haunches,
taste the haunting vapors of hallelujah, so strange
to your lips, secret chord ready to release you.

LB Sedlacek

Last Chance Fireworks in Tennessee

Barry wore a shirt that said “The Boss.” It was black and clean. It matched his black pants and the smock he wore to keep sub sandwich sauces off of them.

There wasn’t much work to be had at the state line on this side of Tennessee by the Cherokee National Forest. Turned out he was good at making sandwiches. Turns out sandwiches were like gold when folks went out fishing, kayaking, hiking, whatever in the river or the woods.

What he didn’t spend on black hair dye and hair products or earrings and rock tees or concerts, he spent on fireworks. Fireworks were easy to come by in Tennessee. Fireworks made the fishing easier, the kayaking trips lit, and they made hikes spectacular.

The trick was to keep the shooting off of the bottle rockets, Roman candles, fountains, Catherine wheels, mines, cakes, barrages and sparklers on this side of the state line. They were legal in Tennessee except sky lantern purchases had to be made only by fireworks professionals. Fireworks were not legal for purchase across the line in Virginia.

He sat his bundle by the creek. The weather had turned, it was cool enough and dry enough for him to hike to his favorite trail. He dropped his backpack near the hollowed in firepit. When the fire was roaring, he dragged his chair beside it and began heating up his favorite sub sandwich (chicken with garlic, tomatoes, olives, bacon, turkey and cheese). He’d wrapped it in tinfoil. It simmered over some hot coals he’d laid to the side of the pit. He popped the top to the cheapest tin can beer he could find, the first in his twelve pack, and sat back and waited.

About midnight, he lit the long match. It was the long kind used in fireplaces before lighters. It lit everything up better. Plus, he had a cylinder box of them leftover from his parent’s house. They were wooden match sticks with green or red matchheads.

This kind of match, when struck, shot out a big white yellow spark of flame. His fireworks bundle, placed along the creek’s sandy sliver of beach, zoomed and boomed above the trees, below the stars.

Blue light specials courtesy of a few Tennessee cops kicked the black back lit night into an eerie blend of flashes amid the trees. Barry jumped up from his lawn chair and hid amongst the deciduous trees. While the show of fireworks screamed and hissed in the sky, he’d be harder to find, he thought.

He used memory and the feel of bark beneath his gnarled bent hands. He couldn't do much with them anymore (no piano playing, no carving, no baseball hitting either) except light things on fire or put condiments, meats and cheeses on bread.

His bike was right where he'd left it in a grove a pines a few nights back. It was one of those spots where rumors flew about ghosts and such.

He popped a beer tab, took a sip or two then strapped his filled with all that he had left in the world backpack on and started peddling. The sky was still lit. It shone in booming bursts of yellow, green, red, blue, pink, and white.

He blazed through the forest until he hit the Virginia state line and the Creeper Trail. He rode on into the night heading towards Damascus. Every few minutes, the sky would boom and light up. It was just enough light so that if anyone saw him, they'd see him smiling between sips and posturing with each pedal promising himself that he'd start anew, fireworks or not.

~The End



Portrait of Marinetti by Ruzvena Zatkova, 1922

Jeanne Julian

Making Sense

On the canvas of the sidewalk
in autumn layers create
pattern sans symmetry.
Wait out ho-hum clamorous
reds and yellows. Let the fade
come. Let lack of blatant color
call you to make sense of
shape, juxtaposition, hue.

A sense of November.
Overcast. Cold cloud burdened
with snow, wind in the wire, suspended
over stratified structure: Anasazi
pueblos. Or, marble Venetian villas
lining a canal, antique silks
and brocades—periwinkle, violet—
glimpsed in upper windows.

A sense of fragmentation.
Letter torn unread, pieces
of piano keys, pottery shards,
gallery of empty frames. In them
you might see your own image, faintly,
as you discern a face in an old plaster wall.
Or as scrap, cracks, texture, partition
make of the sidewalk a canvas.

Jeanne Julian

“View from the Park” in Ink

The opposite of text: fine white on black:
a woman in a panoramic park
surveys a rural landscape etched in stark
chiaroscuro stitches—yet no lack
of life and color. Careful detail asks
you to look closely, concentrate, embark
on a journey of attention. So mark
line, shading, and shape. Draw upon your past
to add fresh scents from fields below, arrayed
in crops and grasses springing from rich loam;
a cricket’s dainty mantra; shadow-play
of sunlight on a hill. She is alone.
Join her. Let her warm glance, deft touch convey
the vivid nuances of monochrome.

John Winder & Phil Wood

photograph by John Winder



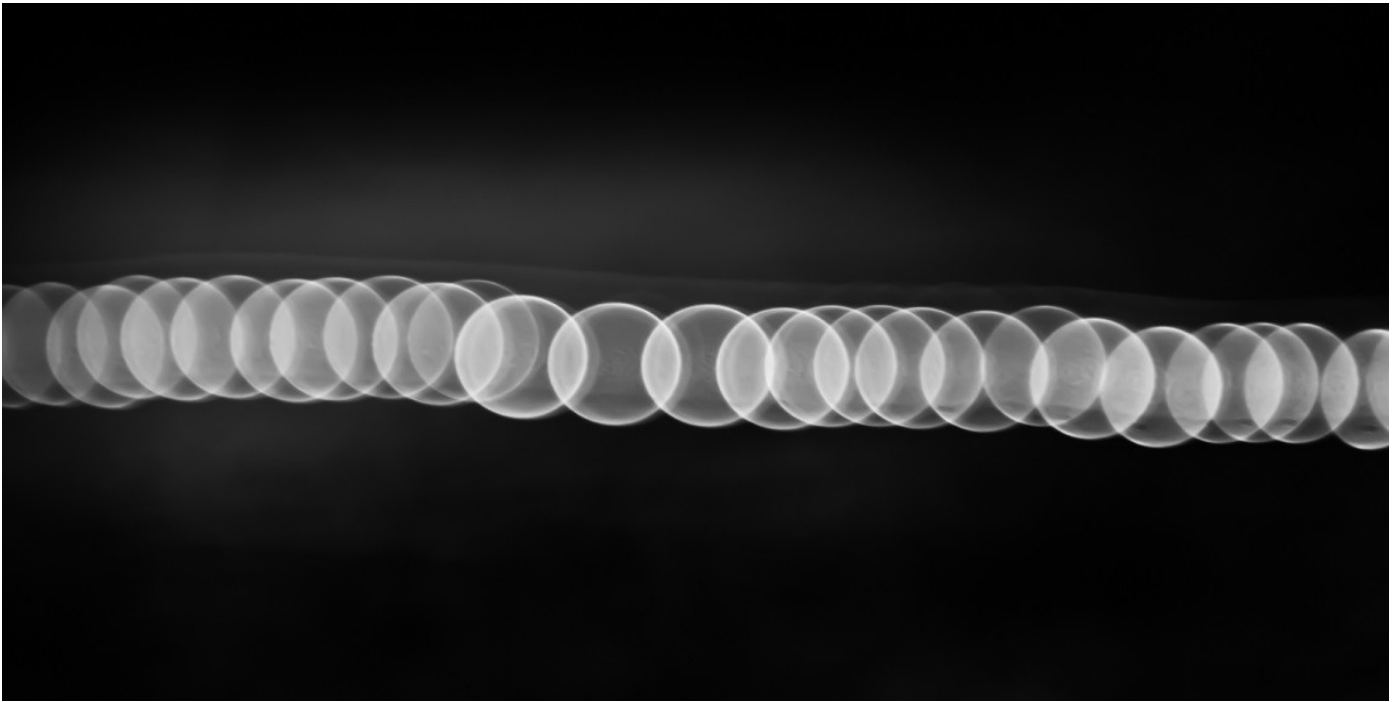
Abstraction

Presence concedes to absence
and nothingness consumes. The words
shrug off pretence.

Nonsense knows and everything
unclothed no longer exists. The seemingly
concrete was merely mime.

Shakespeare chuckles, Sartre grins
and Eliot nods as if asleep.
Can anything matter for eternity?

John Winder & Phil Wood



photograph by John Winder

Bubble

I wonder at the quiet.

Is this all mine? I ask.

Of course, there is no other.

No voice comes to mind.

I wander in the quiet.

Is this all mine? I ask.

Of course, there are no others.

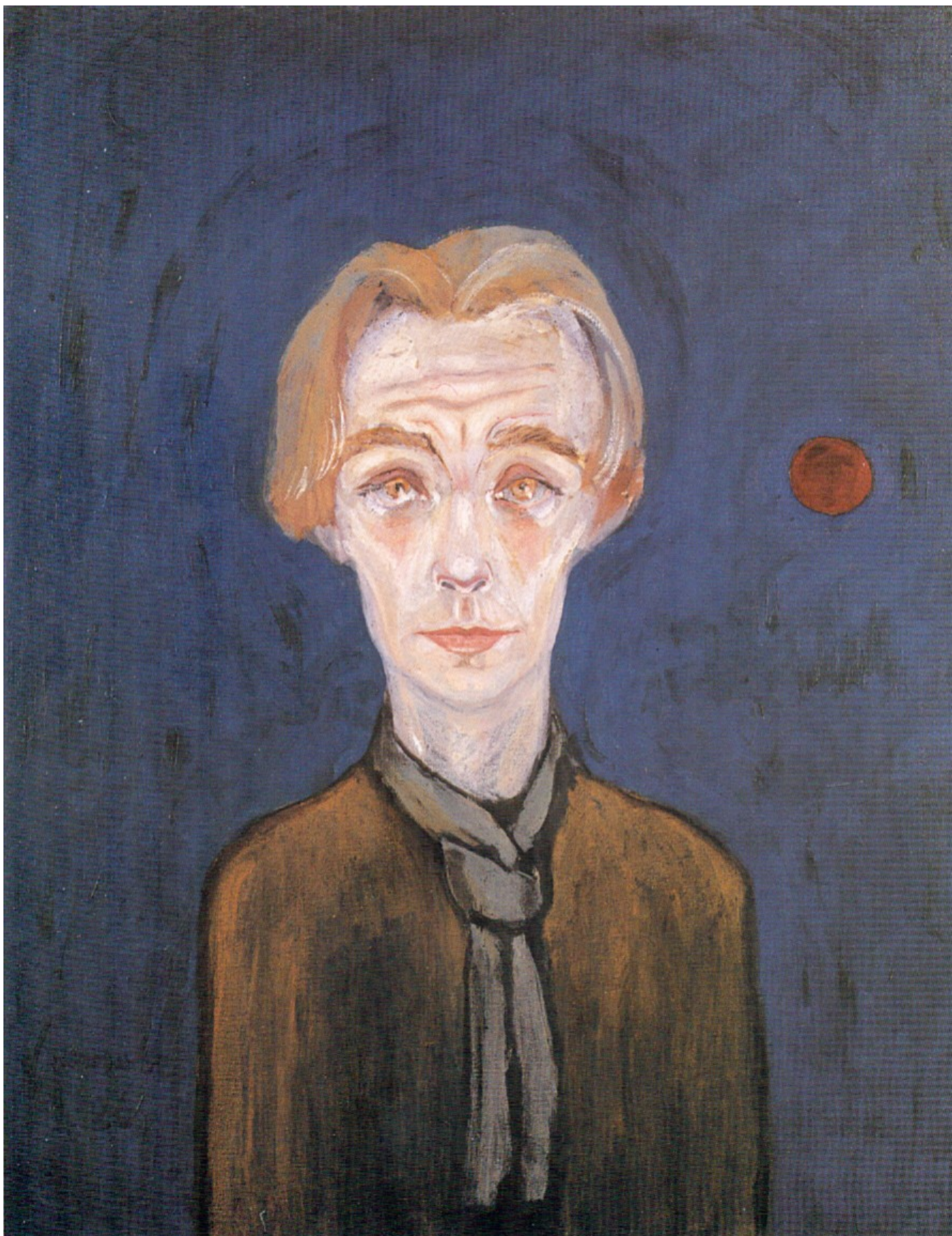
A thought coming to mind.

I wither in this quiet.

Will there be others? I ask.

The thought leaving no other.

The quiet gathers my mind



Walter Gramatté, Self-portrait with Red Moon, 1926

Geoffrey Heptonstal

Moonglow

Aunt Sylvia was not an aunt. She was nor even a great aunt. She was my grandfather's cousin. There's no word except some complicated cousinhood to describe the relationship, so aunt or great aunt will do.

Now I shall begin: Aunt Sylvia (who was not an aunt) moved down to New York (and became a New Yorker) she had been living with family in Quebec (although she was not a Canadian, originally). She was English at the beginning.

Years later she met someone at a party who said, "Do you still keep your hets in a het box?" She looked at this crazy guy laughing. "You don't remember me," he explained. "I met you, oh, maybe twenty years ago when you were a very English girl." Had she really been so terribly English? She wondered. After three years out on a prairie farm where French was spoken more commonly than English?

In England no doubt they would have thought her Americanized. The process of assimilation takes a while, if at all. Sylvia wished to be a New Yorker because New York was where she wished to be. You can live some place and belong elsewhere. Not Sylvia who was in and of the city that looked like the future rising in the distance as you looked.

Manhattan was exciting even if work as a store clerk was routine. Most jobs are routine, after all. Sylvia liked the work because the other girls were fun. They weren't all American-born. Irish, Central European (Jewish), Latin American. None were black, however.

One day she heard Conchita talk in Spanish to a customer whose English was confused. When Sylvia came over he turned to her and said, "Please excuse, but I want speak your language." Sylvia suggested he take classes he take classes, but immediately guessed from his response he had very little spare money.

"Actually," she said, "the best way to learn a language is to pick it up socially." The man looked puzzled. "By meeting others. Other people. Coffee, you know." Then an idea occurred to her, "Listen, if you've got time why don't you have coffee with us now, here in the store? At eleven fifteen?"

That was how they met. And that was how Sylvia ensured they would continue to meet. The encounter lasted a lifetime, as if you hadn't guessed.

José Salgado had jumped ship a few weeks before. Spain was sliding into civil war. It was a backward, superstitious country that offered few opportunities to a poor but eager young

man, (fewer yet to a poor but eager young woman). He took his opportunity on shore leave, a now or never decision he never regretted.

At first he rented a bunk in a crowded room in Spanish Harlem. Washing dishes, he learned some English, and even an occasional phrase of Yiddish, in the restaurant kitchen. There were a few dollars plus meals. He was poor but he wasn't hungry. This was a different poverty from life in an Andalusian village secluded in the hills where a century later people are not so poor, but still not much happens. Some things change over time. Sometimes time changes nothing much.

In New York everything was happening. Even if the Depression lingered and war was threatening the world there was so much life in the city. Just an everyday person could feel like a movie star because at times life felt like a movie. The soundtrack would feature prominently something by Artie Shaw maybe. Yes, definitely Artie Shaw. *Moonglow* perhaps? Yes, *Moonglow*:

It must have been moonglow, way up in the blue. Do-do-doo, dooda, di dada da.

That was what they heard, Sylvia and Joe when they took a walk in Central Park, then visited the Bronx Zoo, then Coney Island and then Fifth Avenue. All the inevitable places to see, so enchanting at first sight that they felt they were first, the discoverers of a new civilisation hitherto unsuspected and completely unknown. There was nothing like this anywhere on earth. They were on the moon. They were way up in the blue.

What began with a suggestion, Sylvia's, that they meet again, maybe for a walk on a Sunday afternoon, became an understanding they would meet again and maybe go on meeting if that was OK with you? Of course it was OK with Sylvia and OK with Joe. Meeting casually without any real purpose actually served a definite purpose of seeking out the other to see if the meeting could go a little deeper. They liked what saw of course. They wanted to see more.

They wanted to say more. So far they had talked about their work, and also about the movies they liked. Joe liked Ingrid Bergman. Sylvia was keen on Gary Cooper. About themselves they had said little. Sylvia had spoken vaguely about Quebec, Joe mentioned Spain. He had yet to tell her he was undocumented.

(Actually, she had guessed. There was something mysterious about Joe. Mysterious but not disturbing. He was not an escaped convict. He was not a spy. He was not a hoodlum. No, Joe was decent and honest but someone emerging from the shadows.)

In England he would always have been noticeably foreign. In Noo Yoik, where the accents were based on immigrant speech, Joe Salgado was another Hispanic, anonymous in the great ocean of cosmopolitan voices, some native, some incoming, all welcome. It hardly mattered. Origins were varied. Everybody comes from somewhere they probably want to forget. In

time Joe sounded and looked like a true New Yorker. Andalusia was so far away it might never have been.

Of course he was not going to tell the truth to the comparative stranger Sylvia was. He could not trust her to keep the secret. All she had to do was to confide in a friend, a friend who loved gossip, a friend whose brother was a cop. One word out of place and he was going to be back in Europe, a Europe of dictatorships and war. It was too risky. This risk did indeed shadow Joe until he could trust Sylvia.

In time he had to tell her. 'I guessed,' she said. The lowly job, the squalid place to stay pointed one way. He had not told Sylvia too much about where he lived. 'I share with others,' was all he said. It was all he needed to say. Joe was one of the multitude of the desperate and wretched in search of a better life. Yet Joe had kept his self-respect. He had hopes that were within reason if not yet within sight.

Joe was finding ways, with Sylvia's help, of bypassing the official routes to gaining legal status. He had no right to be in the United States, but he gained the necessary permissions to work. It was easy then to move away from dishwashing to working in a warehouse. That meant a place of his own, a tiny one room apartment in East Harlem on the bounds between the Spanish and Italian districts. Soon he moved again because the noise from the liquor store below was really too much.

Sylvia came up with the idea that he might apply to work in charge of the warehouse at the department store. That was a good position with a real salary and a certain amount of status. Joe felt his life was moving in the right direction.

It was moving ever closer to Sylvia. They were going to see more of each other during working hours as well as the many evenings they spent together. They listened to the radio. They played records. They went, but of course, to the movies.

At times it seemed that they had spent all their lives in the city. Life before New York was a preparation for what seemed natural if not inevitable. They belonged here. In the nightmare of war here was the sanity of a good life.

Joe's proposal did not come as a surprise, but it carried with it some doubts. He was undocumented. The fear of deportation was always there somewhere sequestered in their lives. Even if married they might face separation and an end to the only life either of them wanted.

Of course Sylvia said yes. The question then was how to turn that yes into a possibility. That required some ingenious, not to say devious, thinking. It was my grandfather who came up with the idea of marrying in Quebec before returning to New York as an American citizen with her husband. His citizenship would then be assured.

In Canada Joe was registered for all manner of things that establish residency. He even had a library card. In theory he rented a house. In theory he paid hydro bills. His phantom residence was enough for the marriage to take place in a simple civic ceremony. That was genuine enough, and it gave Joe easy access to the citizenship he needed to be the person he had become. He was not going to lose that, entwined as it was with his love for Sylvia.

So they married. It was going to be lifelong partnership, growing and changing but always, or mostly, fulfilling. Each had come to the city with hopes they were determined to see realized. However difficult things were going to be neither lost sight of that determination. Together, and so naturally, they saw those hopes rise. They found in a house to own, eventually, in Brooklyn. They raised two daughters. They shared in the prosperity of peacetime. They laughed at Lucille Ball's antics, and were compelled by the Alfred Hitchcock Hour.

Shadows fell inevitably, especially in the turbulent years when so many discontents raged. Life wasn't always bright lights on the Avenue of the Americas. Joe and Sylvia were relieved they had no sons to be drafted into an endless war. They had arrived in America to live their lives in peace. It was not always like that, however. Mr and Mrs Salgado were dismayed as Hispanics not be classified as white. That gave them common cause with others fighting for their rights as citizens. They thought Nixon in particular a jerk.

But through it all they heard the sound of that early promise. It was there as the credits rolled at the end of their movie. They had grown old without really noticing. Time had passed until one day it stopped. There was no conclusion, not really, just a sudden moment, and then another. Joe and Sylvia become telephone calls and letters of condolence, sparsely attended goodbyes and a For Sale sign.

Some things can never be for sale. They can be remembered, as they are now.

They are way up in the blue, of course. And also they are exactly as they were on the first day they met. They cannot be any other way, of course. There had to be a moon that night, whatever the almanac says. The sky was cloudless, and there was a moon, not yet full, but a moon that shone on the water, a moon that lit the darker side of the streets, a moon that lingered into the daylight so that it was visible at noon. Have you ever seen that? Did you know it happens? Look out for it, and in seeing it remember two ordinary people who lived ordinary lives full of love and hope. Did you know it happens? It did and it does.

David Radavich

Youth at the Lake

He's not sure how to live
under the dome of his body.

It bends and turns brown
under the sun, sex is never
far from his thinking

yet he is alone
and full of longing

that does not seem to summon
others to the same space.

These rocks make for easy
lounging, scrub-trees hang over
the rippling water, saints
or sinners basking equally.

Somehow this is an awkward
place, being naked in nature
like the beginning, unsure
what to do with flesh,

neither yet man nor fully beast,
vulnerable to skin burning
but not ready to secede.

A puzzling pageant of choices.

Maybe dive into the water
and swim out beyond where
it feels safe or sure

then stroke back to the shore
as if soliciting home.

His body moves in the waves
like fingers combing, hair globbed,
eyes translucent and moist,
legs pulsing as partners
in immaculate dance.

David Radavich

Reliving the Black Death

After Boccaccio

It is a ghost in the air,
just about to come
down and sing.

You can feel
its presence hovering,
historical
and remembering.

The old house turns inward,
quakes in expectation.

This evening will feel
different than before.

A scrape in time.

The mood will be alive,
and pungent. Food will taste
more flavorful,

the light of the moon
somehow more stringent
through the windows.

You and your lover
will sit there, glass in hand
with renewed interest,

eyes will sparkle
and seem to make music
through a concatenation
of dying words.

Maria Arana

you know what they say...

you know what they say
about lonely people
they harbor thoughts
of suicide
maybe murder
hiding secrets
scaring children
who dare look over walls
but no one bothers asking if
lonely people have words
they can share when raised
they even forgive
maybe forgive themselves

Maria Arana

Shy Moon

heavy feet trod
unforgiving orange patch
streaked two green lines
leading past cabin
lights to the right
the porch
dark under shy moon
tall trees
bars to this prison
the only solace
the pink blooming tree
yellow trunk holds
hope
landscape
inside my heart

Peter Van Belle

Pilot and Island

Should I tell it in the first, the second, or the third person? It's about you, and me, and another. It's also about a machine, my ARV Super 2, which took me over the ocean one day. The cockpit sits slightly in front of the high-slung wings, giving an excellent field of view in front and on the sides. I'd even say it makes flying over the ocean better than sailing across it, at least visually.

Yet that day, the ocean's expanse became emptiness, and the small green speck I saw gave me a sense of relief. I slowed to spiral down to this green keyhole in the corrugated blue, a stiff breeze tugging at my controls. I let the wind play with them, relishing how the plane wobbled.

The island was just cliffs and trees, but I loved dipping my wing at it and seeing my shadow rush across the treetops. It lacked a beach to land a boat, so I was the only one who could see the valley that lay like a fold in its interior.

That night I dreamt I was on the island, but it was daylight. I scampered under the tree cover as my plane passed overhead. I recognised the markings and especially the orange wheel covers. Then I raised my gun, cursing the fact the plane was so high.

"I had a weird dream last night," I said to my wife.

"What about?" she asked.

"I dreamt I was standing on the ground watching my plane fly over."

"So you were dreaming you were someone else."

"I guess."

I couldn't help taking the day off and heading for my island. This time I flew real low, scanned the trees for any movement.

Again in sleep, I raised my rifle, glad I was flying so low. I hesitated pulling the trigger through some odd uneasy feeling. When I woke I reasoned it couldn't be me in that dream. It couldn't be me who harboured such methodical murderous thoughts.

In my dreams he aims at my fuel tank. By now he knows my plane and how to send it down burning. He knows his gun too and all the variables that could send his shot wide, so he won't shoot yet. He can't risk a trial shot because that'd confirm my suspicions. He's counting on my uncertainty.

What a mathematician! From memory he's calculated the size of my plane, with that he can calculate my distance. From observing my shadow on the water he gets an idea of my speed. He shot at a distant tree to find out the interval between the moment he pulls the trigger and when the bullet impacts. He's slowly working up to the point where he'll know my speed, distance, the exact second when he'll aim and pull the trigger. In many way he's better than me. He's overcome all these obstacles. I have only one: I can't see him.

"For the hundredth time stop asking me about my plane!"

"Easy does it, we just want to know what it is."

"I'll tell you what it is, none of your business."

"Well, I guess it's okay. It'll cause some drag on one side though."

I'd installed a brace on my left window. Once in the air, it holds an old bolt-action rifle I got from a hunter. Operating it took some practice. Finally I tied a string from the trigger to my left knee and practised shooting at a buoy out at sea. Too bad I couldn't get my hands on a semi-automatic. I even went out to the island to take some pot-shots at it. But that night he didn't even notice the shots over the noise of my engine.

I thought I'd beat his maths with chaos: I tried to vary my speed over the island, but it started the crap up my engine. The prospect of crashing on that island scares me even more than my plane exploding. Then I read about a trick used by Russian pilots during the Second World War: shut off the engine on approach so as to gain maximum surprise, perhaps I'd catch him out in the open this way. But that night he stood under the trees, gun ready, knowing when I would appear.

No, the end would come when one day we'll see each other, aim and at that moment both will know which one will die. A moment of inevitability, of certainty, like an alarm going off, suggesting a mechanism operating the universe. We are part of a cogwheel turning in a great clockwork of which we don't know the function.

The same inevitability pervades my life now. My wife is leaving me. This morning she started sobbing. At first I tried to ignore it, not wanting to hurt her further.

"What's the matter?"

"You've changed. You've become so indifferent lately."

"Yes, I guess that's true, but then we all change."

"I want my husband back."

She thought I was cold, but actually I had these thoughts coursing through my head. Him on his island had a hand in it. To see her like that ripped me apart, so I touched her hand, and fortunately she didn't pull back.

I guess it's a contamination brought on by shared dreams. Now I know why he does it. He thinks I ruined his life, that because of me he's stuck on that island. Not that I abandoned him or anything. He's vague on details. He just blames me. Blame is even an understatement for the rage he has.

That night I clawed my pillow and buried my face in it to muffle my cries. I realised my wife had become part of another world. I see now it isn't like a clockwork winding down at all. It's continual, as if my movements keep the planet turning. But perhaps I could stop it. If I crashed on the island there'd be no plane. I would be able to see him and know he's not there.

Abigayle Cosenze
Sanguine Serenade



Alan Cohen

Chariots of Fire

Now that we have
Inadvertently
Betrayed the cause
What shall we do
Shall we suicide Like a semantic
Or should we begin anew White backdrop
What will be achieved To the colored intricacies
If we now are true Of a kaleidoscope's stones
The limpid cellular fluids
Each cohering once only
In this unique design
An architectural achievement
Entirely its own

I chose creation
I could not create As well denominated
I compromised Sylvia Plath's bedfellow
I chose healing She uncompromising
Chose sexual pleasure In her way
Chose comfort Her quest for death
I could not now slice To what end clutch
Through one moment Adulterated celebration
And stain the betrayal
In cross section
Though He trained and he trained
Once I had a remarkable He was the fastest of men
Energy to suffer In the world
That year
Death is an end But his dog beat him
And what happens before Out of the pen
Is not a secret door Any wart hog can do the mile
Is no final friend In 2:10

It is not that we fail
But that we fail to try
We can succeed
Raise a sail
No, we need not fly

You can measure
Your acts
But a mile to one
Is a foot to another
Only facts are facts

Hanns Heinz Ewers

Fairy Land (Das Feenland)

Introduction:

This story comes from a collection I bought in a book store in Golders Green, London in 1993. I'd read about this bizarre German author (1871-1943), world traveller, failed propagandist and spy, a nazi who fell out of favor with the party because he disapproved of anti-semitism. His works were said to be shunned both because of his political affiliations and because of their shocking content, yet everyone agreed Ewers had a talent for eliciting emotions, usually negative ones. So my curiosity was certainly roused.

*Carl Jung believed subconscious elements can be best analyzed through the patient's active imagination than through chaotic manifestations such as dreams. If we judge Ewers through his writings we get the picture of a very unpleasant character. In his three autobiographical novels, *Der Zauberlehrling* (The Sorcerer's Apprentice), *Alraune* (Mandrake), and *Der Vampyr*, the protagonist has many of the traits and experiences of the author, and at the same time comes across as a dangerous sociopath, using those around him for his own amusement.*

Though he's just the narrator of the following story, we get the sense of Ewers' Nietzschean persona, someone who stands on a mountaintop, laughing at what goes on below. He mocks the innocence of the Texan girl, and the Haitians are described by the negative impressions they make on the white tourists. In the original German he referred to the Haitians by the English racial insult for black people. I have changed it to "Haitians".

Matthew, verse 8

Port-au-Prince, Haiti, June 1906

The Hapag-steamer* was docked at Port-au-Prince harbor. Little Blue Ribbon rushed into the dining room. Out of breath, she ran round the table.

"Is Mommy here yet?"

No, Mommy was still in her cabin. Still, all the officers and passengers would've loved to have Little Blue Ribbon sit on their knees. Never had a little lady been so treasured on board as this smiling six-year old. Whoever let her drink tea from their cup, was the luckiest person of the day.

She always wore a white cotton dress, and a small blue ribbon kissed her blond hair. A hundred times a day she would be asked: "Why are you called Little Bleu Ribbon*?" She would smile and say: "As I will always be found when lost." But she never got lost,

though she roamed all alone the harbors they had docked at; she was a true child of Texas, and clever as a whip.

No one could catch her today. She ran to the head of the table and climbed into the captain's lap. The big Frisian* laughed; he was Little Bleu Ribbon's favorite, the only thing in the world he was really proud of.

"Dunk!" Little Blue Ribbon said and dipped her biscuit in his tea.

"Where have you been so early?" the captain asked.

"Oh, oh," the child said, her blue eyes lighting up brighter than the ribbon in her hair.

"Mommy must with me! She must! We're in Fairy Land!"

"In Fairy Land – Haiti?" the captain scoffed.

"I don't know what his country is called, but it sure is Fairy Land. I've seen 'em with my own eyes, fabulous creatures. They're under the bridge at the market square. One has hands as big as those of a cow, the next to him has a head as big as two cows! Another has skin like that of a crocodile! They're more beautiful and wonderful than anything from a fairy tale. Please come with me, captain."

She sprang up as a beautiful young lady entered the room.

"Mommy, drink up your tea, quickly, quickly! You must come with me, Mommy. We're in Fairy Land!"

So they all went with her, even the first engineer. He hadn't had time to have breakfast because there was something amiss with the engine and he had to work on it while they were in harbor. Little Blue Ribbon like him, because he gave her things he carved from tortoise shells. So he had to come along because Little Blue Ribbon was in command now.

"I'll work on it tonight," he told the captain.

Little Blue Ribbon, on hearing this, nodded in approval.

"That's okay. I'll be asleep then."

With Little Blue Ribbon leading the way, the company briskly walked through the filthy harbor alleyways. Everywhere the curious Haitians stuck their mugs out the windows and doors. The company had to jump a wide sewage ditch, and Little Blue Ribbon laughed when the doctor tripped and got raw sewage all over his white suit.

They continued on among the miserable stalls of the market, the ear-splitting sound of the shouting women.



Port-au-Prince Harbor, between 1905 & 1920, Library of Congress

“Look, over there! There they are, my darling creatures!”

Little Blue Ribbon tore herself from her mother’s hand, ran to the little stone bridge that stretched across a dried-up stream.

“Come, come quickly. Look at these wonderful creatures, these lovely things.”

She clapped her hands with joy and rushed through the scorching dirt.

There lay the beggars, displaying their horrible afflictions. The Haitians ignored them, but foreigners couldn’t pass by without throwing down some coins. They knew this; they read their onlookers: those that turned away quickly would drop quarter; a seasick lady might even throw a dollar.

“Just look, Mommy, the one with the scaly hide! Isn’t he beautiful?”

She pointed at a Haitian whose skin was being consumed by a horrible disease. He was greenish yellow all over, and scabs did indeed cover his skin in triangular scales.

“And that one over there, captain. Isn’t he a sight? He’s got the head of a buffalo and his fur’s stuck to his head.”

Little Blue Ribbon tapped her dainty parasol on a big black man’s head. He suffered from horrendous elephantiasis which left his head swollen like a giant pumpkin. His hair was terribly matted, so that it hung down in long rags.

The captain tried to pull the child away, but instead, she, shivering with joy, drew him to another beggar.

“Oh, my dear captain, have you ever seen such hands? Tell me, aren’t they wonderfully pretty?”

Little Blue Ribbon beamed spiritedly, bent down to the beggar whose hands were grotesquely swollen with elephantiasis.

“Mommy, mommy, look. His fingers are as thick and long as my arms! Oh Mommy, I wish I had such hands.” With this she lay her own little hand in the outstretched hand of the Haitian. Like a little white mouse it flitted across the giant, brown lump.

The beautiful lady screeched and fainted in the arms of the engineer. Everybody gathered around her. The doctor put eau-de-cologne on his handkerchief and lay it on her forehead. Little Bleu Ribbon, however, retrieve a bottle of smelling salts from her mother’s

handbag and held it under her nose. She kneeled by her mother's side, large tears dripping from her eyes, wetting her mother's face.

“Mommy, dear sweet Mommy, wake up, please! Please, please, please, Mommy! Wake up quickly, Mommy, so I can show you more wonderful creatures! No, you mustn't sleep now, Mommy, we're in Fairy Land.

translated by Peter Van Belle

*Hapag: a German shipping company of the era, sailing between Hamburg and the Americas

*Blue Ribbon: an award for excellence, hence in French: Cordon Blue

*Frisian: from a region on the North Sea coast in north-Germany and the Netherlands, with its own distinct language



marketplace in Port-au-Prince, between 1905 & 1920, Library of Congress



Hanns Heinz Ewers, showing off his mensur scars, photographer unknown

Pauline Barbieri

Portrait of the Artist's Wife

When she arrived home she found
the bedroom had been stretched into a blank canvas
and the tap in the bathroom dripping his favourite oil
Burnt sienna. She could hardly open the door,
a gooey mess straddled the carpet.
She had no turps to thin it down.
As she tried to pallet the mess, the colour
turned to cadmium orange; her favourite.
It started to lick her ankles, coat her legs.
It was just outlining her knees
when emerald green spluttered out,
spraying her new designer suit. She swore.
But then it looked more appealing
so when ultramarine started flowing,
the colour of her eyes, she let it
swathe her shoulders and connect to its base.
Finally she managed to close a tap.
But the other switched on, sprayed egg-shell
varnish over her new hairdo. She swore again.
The door opened and her sleepy-eyed husband
came in and nailed her to the wall.

Paul Murgatroyd

The Villa of Happiness

The second stone in his path that Mark kicked aside was brown and soft and some of it stuck to the toe of his shoe. But he didn't notice. He was on his way to see his aunt Lorraine in The Villa of Happiness and he was brooding. Having heard horror stories about old folk's homes, he wanted to check up on the place, especially because he was partly responsible for her being moved there after spotting her decline. He recalled the little things at first, some of them even quite comical. She'd complained of being lonely, but when he suggested she should join a club or do voluntary work, she refused, saying she couldn't stand the company. And she said she'd gone to a café and asked the waiter if they did an English welsh rarebit, but he said they only did a French welsh rarebit, so she had 'a boiled egg - you know, fried.' But later on the incidents became more disturbing. Like when he found her in her garden taking to a tree, and when she claimed she'd been speaking to uncle Ian, who was long dead. There'd been problems with leaving kettles and saucepans on too.

He felt for her. They'd always been close. She taught him to draw, and took him to join the library and always gave him books for Christmas and birthday presents. And she took hold of his hand when he got really upset at mum's funeral...She'd been lively, full of fun, and bohemian, always seemed to have a fag in her mouth and a glass in her hand. And she'd been a very efficient manageress of the arts and crafts shop. But now, thanks to bloody dementia, the system was shutting down, with different bits switching off, in a gradual disintegration of self. She was losing her personality, her spark. Not to mention her dignity. And she might as well not have lived her earlier life, for all she remembered of it. It was horrifying what was happening to her sharp mind, horrifying.

Her daughter Jean had a high-powered job and a busy social life, so she hardly ever went to see her mother. When Mark phoned and told her about Lorraine's state, Jean had her given a psychological assessment within a week and placed in an expensive home within a month. She viewed that as the problem sorted. But he needed to set his mind at rest by seeing what the place and the staff were like and how his aunt was coping with the sudden upheaval.

Mark pursed his lips as he approached the home. He was relieved to see that it was a Victorian mansion with a well maintained exterior and tasteful ice-blue paintwork. He signed the visitors' book in the porch and rang the bell. The door was opened by a young carer, who invited him in when he told her who he'd come to see. She said that Lorraine was in the TV lounge and led him down a long hall to see her there. He asked how his aunt was doing, and she replied in a matter-of-fact voice: 'She's settled in fine, but full assistance is necessary.'

He noted the carpet's thick pile and velvet curtains at the windows. Through one of them he saw a big new conservatory extending into the garden with its manicured lawn and colourful flower beds. As they walked past the main staircase, Mark heard a sob from upstairs. He looked up and caught sight of an old man in a nappy with his trousers around his ankles. Then they passed the kitchen, from which came a sharp smell of cooking broccoli. The home was so hot that he had to remove his jacket before he reached the TV lounge. In it much of the far wall was taken up by a massive TV, with the sound turned low. Twelve chairs were arranged in front of it in two curving rows. Several residents were sitting there, totally oblivious to a dramatic skirmish on the screen in the film *Zulu*. Among them was Lorraine. There was a vacant armchair next to her. The carer ushered Mark into it and said to his aunt with an affectionate smile that he found very reassuring: 'Here you are, love – a man to see you.' Then she left them both to it.

'A man? Who is it? Michael Caine?' asked Lorraine, turning to Mark.

He grinned. 'No such luck – it's just me.' He longed to give her a hug, but saw her blank expression and held back in case that upset her.

'Hello, me. Who are you?'

'Mark... Your nephew.'

'Oh yes of course. Have you come to take me home?'

Mark replied gently: 'This is your home now, Lorraine.'

'Is it?'

'Yes. Do you like it? I'm very impressed. It's all very elegant and really quite luxurious.'

'Well, it's okay, I suppose,' said Lorraine with a frown. 'The place is okay, but I'm not the person I was. I don't feel I'm achieving all I could.'

Mark gulped. 'But you don't have to achieve anything now. You're retired, a lady of leisure. You've got it made – all the people here to wait on you hand and foot. It's like a hotel, a swanky hotel.'

She shook her head and said: 'It's terrible, this – going mad, and not wanting to admit it to yourself, making up excuses and –'

'You're not going mad. Just get a bit confused sometimes. We all do. It's part of getting old. I often confuse dreams with reality. Wake up thinking something I've just dreamed actually happened.'

‘Do you? You should go and see a doctor about that. Sounds to me like you’re not quite right in the head, got a screw loose.’

‘You may well be right there,’ said Mark, managing a thin smile.

‘Before I started having problems and went funny I did so much. I used to hop out of bed straight into the bath.’

She looked so sad that Mark tried to jolly her out of it. ‘And you wondered why you always had a soggy nightie? Now it all comes out. The truth is revealed at last.’

When Lorraine grinned at that, he added: ‘Look, erm, you’ll soon be well. Don’t worry about it. Really.’

‘Well, when I get well, eventually get straightened out, I’m going to learn French, just like you.’

‘Sacrebleu! You remember I was a French lecturer. Not much wrong with your memory then. Unlike me. I’m always forgetting stuff.’

Lorraine sighed. ‘No, I do forget a lot actually. That’s why I’ve got this book, so I can write things down and remember them.’

She produced from her handbag a small black book and opened it for him. He read: I PAY IN TAX. POISON IF YOU LOOSE IT and EXPLAINING SAINSBURYS 10P BAG WICH WAS 1PENCE EACH NOW TEN PENCE and CRIPPLED AND IN GREAT PAIN WITH ROOMATOID ATHRITUS. BACK ON THE PILL.

‘You’re not on the pill, are you, Lorraine?’ he asked, nudging her. ‘Do you really need it? Have you got lots of fellers after you in here? Go on, I bet you have, a lovely lady like you.’

‘Well, there’s, erm, George. I feel very sorry for him. He moved in here with his wife (what’s her name) to spend their last years in comfort together, but after three weeks she died. He goes round saying: “I’ve lost my sweetie.” It’s so sad. I can’t remember what she died of. Actually there’s lots of things I can’t remember now. I’ve forgotten so much. Can you remind me of things, love, please?’

‘Of course, but it’s a bit like the blind leading the blind,’ he said. ‘I only retired last year, and already I’m not as sharp as I used to be, had to be for the job. But I’ll have a go. For you. Have a look at these.’

He spent the next forty minutes reminiscing about happier times. He’d brought a lot of old family photographs with him, to go through with her and jog her memory. When he showed her a snap of her husband Ian, at first she seemed to have forgotten him, but then she

suddenly said: ‘Oh him! I remember him. And I’m glad I’m on my own. He would never change the baby’s napkin.’

As an academic Mark automatically went to correct her, but then stopped himself in case that bothered her. As they chatted, he noticed that she was using periphrasis now and then. A kettle became ‘what heats the water.’ Some of her diction he found intriguingly quaint, as when she announced: ‘The yellow blouse fancies me tomorrow,’ and spoke of her goon slippers. Mark raised his eyebrows at that and said: ‘Goon slippers! Are there three of them, and do they make you laugh?...Er, remember The Goons?’

Lorraine gave a snort of disdain. ‘No, only two. You only have two slippers. Everybody knows that. That was a stupid thing to say, even for you.’

‘Sorry, just a little joke,’ said Mark. ‘A very little joke obviously. Infinitesimal really.’

Suddenly Lorraine shouted: ‘Ah, here’s my beauty girl.’

One of the carers had entered the room. She came over, gave Lorraine a hug and said: ‘Lunch time, Lorraine love.’ Then she added, looking at Mark: ‘Lunch is the main meal of the day, and visitors are welcome to join us.’ After that she alerted the others that lunch was ready, leaving him to escort Lorraine to the dining room. He helped her up, took her arm and gently led her along.

By the time they got into the hall most of the residents were heading towards the dining room, some with zimmer frames, others holding on to a rail on the wall, a few tottering along unsupported. A couple of carers came up the rear. Mark thought it was like an infinitely slow cattle-drive. When the residents got into the dining room, most of them came to a halt standing with their backs to each other and staring at the wall or the carpet. They stayed like that until the carers settled them in their places. Mark helped his aunt to sit down. When she started lowering herself a foot away from the chair, he quickly pushed it under her.

The room contained six tables with chairs, several Impressionist prints on the walls, a large sideboard with two vases of flowers and a hand-carved oak fireplace with a log fire in it. They shared their table with George, who immediately told Mark that he’d lost his sweetie, and with an old woman called Janice, who livened things up. She told Mark that she had a bisexual coat; he kept a straight face and said that he’d always wanted one of them himself. She had lost any inhibitions that she’d had before. When one of the carers gave them their bowls of tomato soup and walked off, Janice remarked: ‘She’s got a big bum.’ Then she added conversationally: ‘I began going with men when I was thirteen. I wish now that I’d never started.’

Janice examined the soup, and Mark thought he heard her say that there were squirrels in it. ‘Squirrels?’ he asked. ‘In the soup?’

She spluttered. ‘Not squirrels – swirls. I think they’re swirls of Worcester sauce. Bugger-lugs.’

Mark picked up his spoon and said: ‘Sorry. That was daft. My hearing’s going a bit.’

‘Going?’ teased Janice. ‘Going? It’s already gone.’

The main course consisted of beef, roast potatoes, broccoli and gravy. Mark was eating it with enjoyment when Lorraine complained that the spuds were overdone, the beef tasted horrible and the broccoli and gravy burned her throat. He made another little joke which misfired: ‘But apart from that the meal’s fine, hey?’ Then he went on: ‘Um, drink some of your tea to take the taste away.’

‘No. The tea’s awful too. I can’t stand this tea. You can tell it comes from a left-handed teapot.’

Mark tried again to get her into a better mood. ‘What about your beauty girl? You like her. What’s her name?’

‘I don’t remember.’

‘Shit. Sorry,’ said Mark.

‘It’s Veronica,’ put in Janice. ‘And don’t swear, especially at table. Manners!’

‘Shit, you’re right. Sorry, I mean: yes, you’re right. Excuse me.’

‘Just this once, but don’t let it happen again. Or I’ll have to castigate you.’

‘Right.’

George, who had been quiet so far, suddenly put down his knife and fork and announced: ‘I’ve lost my sweetie.’

‘Sorry to hear that, George,’ said Mark with a wince.

Janice added: ‘I used to know a George – Georgie Gothic. A lovely man. He used to cut my lawn. Then I learned that he interfered with little girls. I still let him cut the lawn. But I didn’t let him interfere with me.’

Mark’s lips twitched and he said: ‘Glad to hear it.’ As George was looking distressed, he went on: ‘She didn’t mean you, George. It was another George... Why don’t you eat some of your meat? Do you want some mustard with it?’

When George nodded, Mark put some on the side of his plate. George tasted a sliver of it on the edge of his knife and remarked: 'I've lost my sweetie.'

Mark gave Lorraine some mustard too, which seemed to improve the flavour of the beef for her, and then he started chatting with Janice, hoping that she would say something funny that would cheer up Lorraine. At one point Janice got on to the radio that her son had bought her and asked: 'Do you use the radio, Mark?'

'Yes. Radio 3 mainly. I like classical music.'

'Really? I watched something lovely on it when I got up this morning at two, no at two-thirty. It was Ave Maria. The Protestant version, of course. I have no time for the Catholic version.'

'Ah no, of course not,' said Mark.

'That's right. It says in the Bible call no man father but the Lord thy god. But they call the priest father, don't they? And do you know why the Pope won't let them have contraception?'

'Er no, he never told me, never took me into his confidence, the secretive old sod.'

'It's so their women will keep on getting pregnant and bringing more little Catholics into the world.'

'More little Catholics – what fiendish cunning!' said Mark, shaking his head.

Lorraine didn't even smile at that interchange.

When they finished the main course, Veronica came to remove their plates. She asked Janice if she'd seen the nurse yet. 'Yes,' was the reply. 'She said my water was all right. But she hasn't examined my business. I haven't had a movement today. Should I try again this afternoon?'

'Only if you feel you'll produce something.'

'I'll try. I don't want to be walking around farting all over the place.'

Veronica and Mark suppressed their grins, and she went off with the plates. When she returned with bananas for dessert, Lorraine crowed: 'Oh yum yum. The yellow things that you eat.'

She devoured her banana quickly, smacking her lips. Then she looked round. At the next table there was an old lady who was not eating but just staring into space. Lorraine got out of her chair, went down on all fours and crept along to that table. Then she suddenly

stood up behind the woman, grabbed the banana off her plate and gobbled it down. Her victim said nothing but looked outraged, and Veronica, who had seen what happened, said to Lorraine: ‘You shouldn’t have done that, love. That was naughty. Vera wanted that banana.’

‘Oh no she didn’t, she gave it to me,’ Lorraine assured her airily.

When she got back to her chair, Mark offered Lorraine his banana, and she accepted it eagerly. He said: ‘Not too fond of nanas, myself. Your thrifty sister used to keep a fruit bowl and always put the stuff that was starting to go off on top and made us eat it. Including blackening bananas. Mind you, throughout my childhood I was never at any time at all troubled by constipation...That’ll build you up, Lorraine, make you nice and healthy. A nana a day keeps the doctor away, so three of them today should keep you healthy for a good while.’

When the meal was over, Janice suddenly announced: ‘Right, that’s it, I’m off for an Eartha Kitt,’ got up and left.

Mark helped his aunt back to the TV lounge. Talking to her there was hard going. She seemed to sink into a decline, and another resident in the corner sang over and over again: ‘Show me the way to go home, I’m tired and I want to go to bed; I had a little drink about an hour ago, and it’s gone right through my head.’ Dave wanted to scream at her: ‘To my head, it’s gone right to my head.’ But he realized that he probably wouldn’t achieve anything, so he kept quiet and endured. In addition, the television was now turned up, so loud that even Mark could hear it clearly. Some cartoons were on, and all the others in the room were watching them intently.

There were occasional traces of the old Lorraine. When an advert for a sewing machine came on, she remarked: ‘That’s a good make, that one. It sews leather...And plants.’

‘Plants? How do you sew plants?’

‘When they’re seeds,’ she replied triumphantly. Then she asked: ‘Why didn’t you bring me a present? You always take people a present when they’re in hospital. Grapes or something.’

Mark flushed. ‘Oh, sorry. I’ll bring some grapes next time.’

‘Why? I hate grapes. Bring me cigarettes instead. Some of those wild cigarettes would be nice.’

‘Wild cigarettes? Do you mean mild cigarettes?’

‘Yes, that’s it. Wild cigarettes – that’s wrong, that’s hilarious.’

‘You haven’t smoked while I’ve been here, so I thought you’d given up.’

‘I have.’

‘So why would you – oh, never mind.’

Later a carer brought them some tea and digestive biscuits on a trolley, and Lorraine said: ‘Here’s that tray that’s not a tray. And those awful biscuits, can’t stand them. Indigestive biscuits, I call them.’

‘Very good, Lorraine,’ said Mark. ‘You’ve still got a way with words.’

‘That’s not a left-handed teapot, is it?’ she asked suspiciously.

‘No, certainly not, it’s right-handed,’ said Mark, picking it up with his right hand. He went to pour, and said: ‘Shall I be mother?’

‘Not unless you’ve had the operation.’

‘Ha. God, you’re sharp today. Watch you don’t cut yourself.’

When they finished the tea, she asked him: ‘What do I tell them to do for me? For dinner.’

‘Whatever you want to eat.’

‘Well, give me some ideas. So I’ll know what to say.’

‘Er, how about sandwiches after that big lunch? What do you like in sandwiches?’

‘Bananas,’ she shouted, and bit into a biscuit.

‘Not again! You’ll be scratching your armpits and grooming me next, if you don’t watch out.’

When Lorraine smirked at that, he grimaced and said: ‘Listen, Lorraine, I’ll have to go soon. Sorry, but I’ve got to get back home. An old student of mine’s coming to see me at half past three for some advice about his PhD.’

‘Will you write down in my book what we did today, so I can remember it later when you’re gone?’

He gulped. ‘Oh god, yeah sure, course I will. Give it here.’

Mark filled two pages, including as many positive and amusing details as he could think of. Then he handed the book back and said again that he had to go. She started crying, and he begged: ‘Ah, don’t do that, Lorraine love, please. I’ll come back and see you, soon.’

‘If I could just see you again, I’d get better. Right as hail, I’d be.’

‘Well, that’s great, because you will see me again. Next week.’

She finished her biscuit and said: ‘Just phone before you come, will you? So I’ll know to be in for your visit, and you won’t waste your time.’

‘Sure, of course I will.’

‘And when’s Jean coming? I miss her, never see her, you wouldn’t think I had a daughter.’

Mark squirmed. ‘Well, she set you up in this lovely place and she’s paying for it, a lot of money. I’m sure she’ll be along soon to see how you’re getting on in it.’ He smothered a sigh.

‘Huh...When you first came here, we didn’t know each other properly, did we? But we worked it out, didn’t we?’

‘That’s right, love. We certainly did.’

‘So, did you visit your friend while you were here?’

‘Er, which friend?’ asked Mark.

She said sharply: ‘Lorraine. Don’t you remember that? You said you’d come to see Lorraine.’

‘But you’re – oh, er yeah, I did see her too.’

‘That’s good, I’m glad about that, glad you didn’t just waste your time with me. I feel as if I’m in a dream sometimes, that I’m not really me...Anyway, next time bring your mum with you, so we can have a good old chinwag.’

Mark said in a low voice: ‘Lorraine, my mum’s dead. She died nearly ten years ago now.’

Her face crumpled. ‘Really? Nobody told me.’

‘Yes, sorry. So I can’t bring her with me, I’m afraid.’

Lorraine sagged in her chair. Then a few seconds later she said: ‘Well anyway wear white shoes when you come.’

‘Why?’

‘White shoes are best for walking in. Everybody says so.’

‘But why should white shoes be best?’

‘Oh I don’t know. You’ll have to ask them. Anyway let’s not have a long cremation about it. Ooh look, there’s Mickey Mouse on the TV. I love him. You can go now. You’re making me miss Mickey. I don’t want to miss him.’

‘Okay, I’ll go,’ said Mark. He took her hand, kissed her cheek and added: ‘I’ll come to see you next week, without fail, I promise.’

‘Right. Bye,’ said Lorraine. She gave the TV her full attention and immediately forgot all about her nephew and his visit.

Mark walked home, hunched up against the rain and trying to convince himself that Lorraine was not that badly off. She was set up in a plush place, not like the really grim homes that many people were stuck in, and she could be in a worse mental state. But he didn’t convince himself. Going senile was shit wherever you were, she hardly registered the place and she would soon be in a worse mental state, inevitably. As the rain became heavier, he thought of Saturn the Bringer of Old Age in Holst’s Planets Suite, making his relentless advance amid cold, desolate music, and he shed a tear, for Lorraine, and also for himself, fearing a similar fate not that far off in the future. Then he nodded slightly as he recalled that ancient tag: ‘Not to be born is best.’

Paul Murgatroyd

A Great Mum

Night after night
in the care home
just before bed
Beryl's wrinkled rote fingers
check that the windows are shut,
check that the door is locked,
just as she did
year after year
in her real home,
before her mind was dismantled.

Paul Murgatroyd

Colour

What is grey? Earth is grey,
from heatwaves and drought, as we splay
her legs for Death and Decay.

What is red? Blood is red,
the blood food-rioters shed,
when shot or coshed on the head.

What is blue? The sea is blue,
risen higher than you knew,
and coming soon for you.

What is black? Lungs are black,
under constant attack
from exhaust-fume and smokestack.

What is yellow? Rain is yellow,
bringing floods and loss and sorrow,
and making things melt and glow.

What is green? Corpses are green:
repelled, reviled as unclean,
refugees rot unseen.

What is violet? Clouds are violet,
flickering with the threat
of the worst wildfires yet.

What is orange? Why, an orange.
You must have heard of the orange -
the extinct fruit called orange?

Willem Johan Barbieri

Horse Power



with permission by Pauline Barbieri

Gary Bolick

Revelator Light

Rasp, pop: electric growl. Son House* on a vinyl seventy-eight, more gravel than interstate slowing the speed of light to a crawl.

(Hand clap): Tell me, who's that writing? (Hand clap) John the Revelator!

Light stilled/pond-face-sun-plated dropping all inhibitions allowing time and light to disrobe.

Unmasked/unfettered expanding into one another movement and illumination dance an Ouroboros jig. (Hand clap)

Sound becomes a boat—steady—on the new the ripples from a stone dropped through its face.

Swirling/snaking (Hand clap) through the auburn blaze—spirits—neatly poured breathing-bellows-like-in a cut-crystal-tumbler . . .

wearing the same face as the pit dug-by the wanderer's hand (Hand clap) . . .

in the Underworld. to summon and consult with the dead.

Desperate-runner-sailor searching lost souls for answers (Hand clap) and—home . . .

(Hand clap) . . . home? where the head implodes into . . .

Eight-year-old-legs (Hand clap) make the walk into the clouds—effortless and easy. His growling, his expansive and exploding—fits-of-crystalline-hot-and-heavy barks of used oxygen (Hand clap) dotting/punctuating the ice-cold-air with bursts of insistent-anxious-angst filled rage.

(Hand clap) Father! Risen from the dead before dying—he—looking for inclusion. (Hand clap) While blowing a rolling fog up and over me. (Hand clap) Hovering-forever, rising-falling, clearing then obscuring our Escher-like-climb-into-the light and clouds and chains that bound us/circled us. (Hand clap)

Heads or tails/ neither here nor there/ a circling dragon/ spins and burns/ burns and spins/centering and marking the time/without truce

One-switch-back-to-another—stopping-staring-returning-falling-gathering-moving sometimes flying (it seemed) all—his fire assuring—a revelatory light. (Hand clap)

“Up there the sun is new, the dew freshly squeezed from its womb. Chance will grant us a hawk-hanging like a water-fly-on-the-face of the water.” (Hand clap)

A ruse of a trail, claimed as his own. A random collection of lines extracted from his rage. Errant imprints, one foot placed here, maybe, today, or last week. Right, left, crossover the dead pine trunk, left back over the creek, north-from-the-Roman-nose-rock. (Hand clap) All of it a straight line, boring in on a locked tower. (Hand clap) A fortress willed to-me. (Hand clap)

In the cool of the day/ heads split clean/ blood pools as it breathes out steam/so that . . .

Light circles, bites the tail of its ghost forming spirits from underworld pits and cut-crystal tumblers, both burning to warn and warm the memory of our climb: hard-wired memory that refuses to quit imprinting more Escher-like (Hand clap) revelations that growl/ spit out revelator light.

In the soft/middle way of static life/ light never moves or thrusts, laughs or cries, but simply waits to wash another layer of me-away. (Hand clap)

Dragged skyward, then and now/ before and after/circling/ his voice crackling into a death rattle reaching up to caress her face,

“She, no, not . . . your mother, her voice, a pitch and timbre that-halted-the-meadow-here. Sky, hillock, green-golden-trees-chimed in concerted delight. Spirits cheat space and time, haunting us forever as they imprint themselves in light-forever. See her? Good. Let’s go.

Spirits sew themselves into the light/then laugh as they cast out one of their own.

Stumbling my own shadow falls from of-me. (Hand clap) The Revelator’s voice rings, as I nod and watch and listen to Son House*

that voice (Hand clap) often mistaken for God’s

rising up in Cleveland (Hand clap)

“It’s your dime!” shaking his head as he bends over to plug in the old Wurlitzer.

A wheezing jukebox producing more gravel than interstate, her eyes watered from,

“Side effects from, never mind,” she whispered, “so much, too much to understand and hear, with so little time, now.”

Curling my hair, smiling, her bandana was a collage of Blues, rock-and-roll . . .

“From the museum, the hall of fame, silly bucket list dream, still, it was mine, now-seen and heard.”

With the voice of god-growling I whispered,

“I’ve seen you. My old man dragged me up into the clouds. It’s you now. All clear . . . clean and new, again.”

Pulling the curtain open/ lake and light/one.

(Hand clap)

“Make love to me, one last time. No, no names, and in this light. See it? Sweeping across the face of the water/ hitching a ride on that egret’s wing . . . give us a kiss.”

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'.

Robin Leiper is a psychologist and psychotherapist living in Galloway, Scotland. His poetry has been published in various magazines and anthologies internationally.

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

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.

LB Sedlacek has had poems and stories appear in a variety of journals and zines. Her short story "Backwards Wink" won 1st Place Prose for "Branches" literary magazine 2022. Her latest fiction book is "The Jackalope Committee and Other Tales" published by Alien Buddha Press. Her fiction books include the award nominated mystery "The Glass River" and "Four Thieves of Vinegar & Other Short Stories." Her poetry books include "Swim," "I'm No Robot," "The Poet Next Door," "Simultaneous Submissions," "Happy Little Clouds," and "Words and Bones." LB also likes to swim and read.

Jeanne Julian is author of Like the O in Hope and two chapbooks. Her poems are in Kakalak, Panoply, RavensPerch, Ocotillo Review and elsewhere, and have won awards from Reed Magazine, Comstock Review, Naugatuck River Review, and Maine Poets' Society. She reviews books for The Main Street Rag. www.jeannejulian.com

Phil Wood (poet based in Wales) and **John Winder** (photographer based in Northern Ireland) have been collaborating for a couple of years. The purpose of the collaboration is to explore lines of communication between art forms. Each work consists of a poem and a photograph, one work an organic development from the other. This is a collaboration between a poet and a photographer seeking to cross divides. There is a natural conversation between each piece that proves boundaries can be crossed.

Walter Gramatté (1897-1929), a German Expressionist painter. His career was curtailed by illness and service in World War I.

Geoffrey Heptonstall's publications include a novel, *Heaven's Invention*, and a first collection of poetry, *The Rites of Paradise*. He was a regular contributor to *The London Magazine* for several years and lives in Cambridge.

Among **David Radavich's** poetry collections are two epics, *America Bound* and *America Abroad*, as well as *Middle-East Mezze* and *The Countries We Live In*. His latest book is *Unter der Sonne / Under the Sun: German and English Poems* (2021).

Maria A. Arana is a teacher, writer, poet, and editor. 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> or www.booksbymaarana.com

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.

Abigayle Cosenze a 34 year old artist and writer residing in Maine, USA where she is surrounded by nature's grace, alongside her husband, two dogs, and a lively menagerie of chickens, ducks, and goats, she finds inspiration in the world around her where nature's secrets intertwine with the tapestry of human expression.

Alan Cohen's first publication as a poet was in the PTA Newsletter when he was 10 years old. He graduated Farmingdale High School (where he was Poetry Editor of the magazine, *The Bard*), Vassar College (with a BA in English) and University of California at Davis Medical School, did his internship in Boston and his residency in Hawaii, and was then a Primary Care physician, teacher, and Chief of Primary Care at the VA, first in Fresno, CA and later in Roseburg, OR. He was nominated for his performance in Fresno for the 2012 VA Mark Wolcott Award for Excellence in Clinical Care Leadership. He has gone on writing poems for 60 years and, now retired from medicine, is beginning to share some of his discoveries.

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'.

After a long career as a professor of Classics (specialising in Latin literature) **Paul Murgatroyd** retired four years ago and started writing novels and short stories. Seventeen of the latter have been published or accepted for publication, along with three poems in English and over fifty of his Latin poems.

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.

END OF ISSUE TWELVE OF THE KLEKSOGRAPH



Walter Gramatté, Dreaming Boy